

Sponsorship in Grassroots Football

MATTHEW RUSSELL HINDMARSH

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John Moores University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Sponsorship and football have had a lucrative love affair since the mid-late 1970's that has witnessed unparalleled growth in investment over the past five decades. Yet outside of the professional game, the grassroots level continues to encounter increasing financial difficulties whereby clubs are required "to do more with less" as a result of the current volatile economic climate they find themselves in. Research across Europe highlights how non-profit community sport clubs are increasingly attempting to attract other forms of income such as sponsorship to diversify revenue and improve their financial sustainability, ultimately aiding them to deliver recreational and competitive sport to their members. However, little practical guidance supporting those responsible for managing sponsorship in grassroots football exists, with few studies investigating sponsorship in the community football setting despite its importance. Against this context, the thesis initially explored the academic coverage directed to grassroots sport sponsorship before empirically examining the landscape (i.e. how sponsorship is defined; motivations to sponsorship; how sponsorship is managed; the barriers to its implementation; and the factors crucial to its success) of football sponsorship at the grassroots level in North-West England (NWE). From this research, the study aimed to propose a sponsorship process model that both non-profit community football clubs (NCFCs) and small-medium sized enterprise (SME) sponsors could adopt to facilitate an effective deal at the grassroots level.

To address the study's aim and objectives, initially, a systematic review of literature pertaining to grassroots sport sponsorship was carried out. From this, the study employed a three phased mixed methods research design to empirically explore grassroots football sponsorship. Phase 1 consisted of interviews with 10 practitioners from NCFCs and SMEs engaged in sponsorship, recruited through a mixture of sampling techniques under a purposive criterion-based sampling strategy. Phase 1 findings led to the development of an online survey which was circulated via social media and gained 100 NCFC and 17 SME sponsor responses (phase 2). The triangulation of the study's findings subsequently provided the foundation for the development of an initial sponsorship process model. Phase 3 then adopted a two-pronged attack in which repeat interviews with those from phase 1 (9 out of 10 practitioners) assessed the model initially constructed. The model was then refined and subsequently subject to a further stage of validation in the form of a focus group with three football officers in a county football association, culminating in a final version of the process model being developed.

The study illustrated managing sponsorship in grassroots football comprised of nine stages from inception to end of agreement. Practitioners tended to approach sponsorship in an ad-hoc, informal, and relaxed manner whereby tasks were executed with celerity. Tasks and decisions during the process were found to be dependent on the organisations motivations for engaging in sponsorship as well as being influenced by the wider local to international climate (i.e. socio and political-economic environment; organisation reputation). Further, to ensure a successful sponsorship, both parties viewed four factors as needing to be maintained (trust; club satisfaction; respect; and honesty) with the NCFC listing two more (realistic expectations; and commitment). In contrast, for the SME sponsor, greater focus was found to be required on commitment, transparency, and reciprocity, while communication was revealed as needing concentration for the NCFC.

Overall, this thesis makes significant contribution to the research field because it is the first, and to date only piece of work to explore football sponsorship at the grassroots level



in the UK. Further, it is also the first study to create a sponsorship process model that reflects the practices carried out by practitioners in grassroots football team sponsorship from beginning to end. Practitioners ought to adopt or adapt the process model built from this research if they wish to enhance their relationship. Yet as this study evaluates the process model conceptually, further research which assesses its application in practice is prudent.

Key Words: (Grassroots Sport) Sponsorship; Motivations; Management; Critical Success Factors; Small-Medium Sized Enterprises; Non-profit Community Football Club.

Authors Declaration

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With this thesis I have combined my two favourite areas of grassroots football and sponsorship in a way that I hope will provide a true impact to those who this research aims to target. To get to this point there are so many people I need to thank, both academically and personally.

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List of Abbreviations

Annual General Meeting	AGM
Community Football League	CFL
Community Football Page	CFP
Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software	CAQDAS
County Football Association	CFA
Corporate Social Responsibility	CSR
European Commission	EC
Federation Internationale de Football Association	FIFA
Football Association	FA
Importance-Performance Analysis	IPA
Mixed Methods Research	MMR
National Governing Body	NGB
Non-profit Community Football Club	NCFC
Non-profit Community Sports Club	NCSC
North West (of) England	NWE
Premier League	PL
Research Objective	RO
Service Level Agreement	SLA
Small-Medium Sized Enterprise	SME
Statistical Package for the Social Sciences	SPSS
The Industrial Development Organisation of the United Nations	UNIDO
Thematic analysis	TA
Union European Football Association	UEFA
United Kingdom	UK

Preface

Bibliographical Background

In being asked “why research grassroots football sponsorship?” I respond with a question in kind of “what sponsorship agreements are you aware of?” This subsequently returns replies of the footballing heavyweights – Manchester United and Chevrolet (worth £53 million a season) or Liverpool and Charter Standard (worth £25 million per season), the list goes on. Yet such cries are not uncommon nor surprising given the amount of media coverage that is afforded both locally and nationally to the elite football backdrop as clubs come under ever-increasing scrutiny. Further, and as previously evidenced in the examples provided, the sheer financial value of these associations makes it difficult for one to overlook or even consider alternative settings wherein sponsorship takes place. It is thus from this pre-occupation and fixation with the professional game due to the factors mentioned above, people often forget that those at the base of the football pyramid – the grassroots game – equally, if not more, rely on sponsorship. It is from this monomania, which is also mirrored in academia, that has created a lacuna for research pertaining to the sponsorship of grassroots football and has acted as one justification towards this PhD research.

Indeed, my own journey in grassroots football from a player at the age of five through to present day – which comprises of playing, coaching, and being a committee member – has further fuelled my interest in researching this not previously studied topic. From these experiences, as well as my short period of time at one of the 51 county football associations, I have become all too well aware of the financial precarities grassroots football clubs face on an ongoing basis. You only need to browse social media to evidence the enormity of the situation with more clubs announcing they are to disband due to financial constraints that have stemmed from, amongst other issues, the inability to procure sponsorship. Such instances are potentially to rise with the current landscape in which the UK finds itself in. Perhaps now is the opportune time to provide support to such organisations who may not have the knowledge of how to approach this type of activity in what may become a difficult period for clubs’ and SMEs post Covid-19.

Structure of Thesis

The structure of this thesis is one that follows more of a sports management and marketing study, taking direction from previous PhD studies in these disciplines (Chadwick 2005;

Buhler 2006; O'Reilly 2007). To help answer the study's research objectives (ROs) as well as produce an original contribution that is of significance to both academia and real-world practice, the thesis is split into eight chapters in which figure 1 depicts the main components of the study. It is important to highlight that after the systematic review of literature (chapter two), the thesis has three main threads that run throughout the remainder of the research: (i) the organisational motives behind sponsorship, (ii) the management of grassroots football sponsorship, and (iii) the factors vital to forging and maintaining a successful sponsorship partnership.

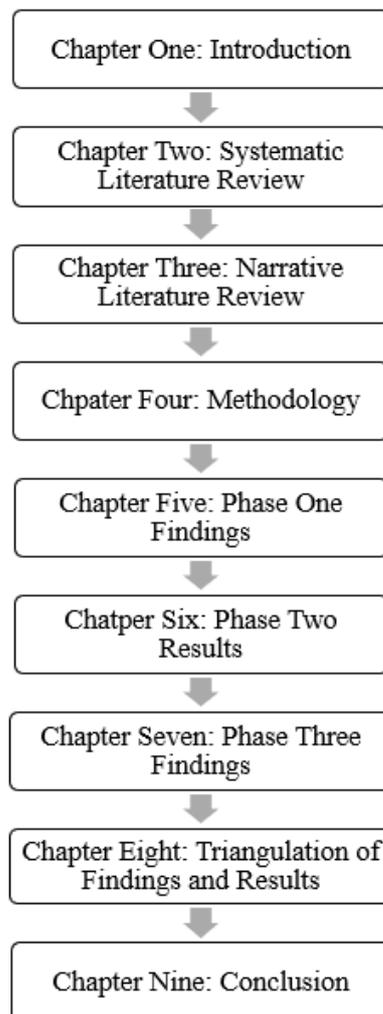


Figure 1: Structure of Thesis

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1: Overview of Chapter

This chapter sets out the purpose of this study through presenting justification into research surrounding the confines of (grassroots) football sponsorship. It details the saliency of study centred on football, grassroots football, and sponsorship premised on the contribution each area makes to the current sporting landscape seen today. It further dovetails this with the scholarly significance this research would fashion, namely as a result of the neglect of study towards the sponsorship of football at the grassroots level. The chapter concludes with a definition of terms to clarify the studies position before stating the overall ROs.

1.2: Rationale of Study

The sponsorship of grassroots football is an issue overlooked within literature and one that both clubs and their sponsors feel requires further exploration to understand current practice. Indeed, in light of the current funding crisis as a result of socio- and political-economic factors alongside the limited guidance presented by those in authority (e.g. the FA), understanding the relationship between NCFC and SMEs is more important than ever-before. Exploring the objectives, critical success factors and management practices behind sponsorship enables an appreciation of what is currently being experienced at the base of the football pyramid. This study will argue that although sponsorship is informal and ad-hoc, there is a need for a process model that highlights the management practices associated with sponsorship from inception to end of agreement supplemented by additional materials which will support any deal moving forward. As a result, the study ultimately calls for practitioners to adopt a more business-like approach to sponsorship and for academics to focus attention to this area.

1.2.1: Contextual Significance – Rationale to Research Football

“If you stepped back, you might see football for what it is: 11 grown men kicking a ball in one direction, while another 11 grown men try to move the same ball in the opposite direction. Ridiculous isn't it? Utterly without purpose or logic. Football's trick is to stop you stepping back. Once inside the football world, you are surrounded by multiple sensations: excitement, suspense, interest, fright, exultation and many more besides. You cheer teams but are not exactly sure why. You buy merchandise that displays your affinity, though the source of that affinity escapes you. You travel distances to watch games that will make no material impact on your life. That's how immersive football is:

no one notices how pointless and nonsensical it is. Nothing stands long enough to study it. In fact, why should we study it at all? Why should we care enough to enquire, examine, analyse, interpret, and evaluate a phenomenon that has kept us agreeably captivated for at least 150 years? The answer is how can we ignore it?”

Cashmore and Dixon (2016:2)

The somewhat profound introduction to football by Cashmore and Dixon (2016) questions how people become so seduced by something that is, at best, purely inconsequential. This can perhaps be best evidenced when noting that fans follow their team on a weekly basis despite paradoxically making them, on average, unhappier (Dolton and MacKerron 2018). Yet arguably the most fervent ‘how’ question posed by Cashmore and Dixon (2016) resides in how can football research be overlooked? This is particularly despite what Widdop et al (2019) highlight as an ongoing debate and dispute about the importance of research into football. Answering this exact question therefore acts as a wise starting point to this study.

Association football is perhaps the most important unimportant thing in the world. It is referred to as the ‘global game’ (Chadwick and Hamil 2010; Chadwick et al 2019) and is a language universally spoken across the four corners of the globe (Cardenas 2015). For millions of people, football is a way of life and draws otherwise different people and communities together under a common identity (Chadwick et al 2019). To put this into figures, nearly half of the world’s total population hold an interest in it (Repucom 2014), while an estimated 265 million people also actively compete worldwide (Kunz 2007). Further, the media now present wall-to-wall coverage with football-related content from a variety of platforms such as newspaper, radio, and television (Cleland 2011; Boyle 2017). For example, in an analysis of 80 newspapers across 22 nations, football accounted for 40% of all published sport articles with the next most covered sport being tennis (7%) (Horky and Nieland 2011). A conversation without football is thus largely inescapable across today’s society, even for those with the least proclivity for it.

The football industry is further estimated to be worth \$30 billion globally (Widdop et al 2019). Yet when analysed against other sports in terms of economic performance, football could be argued to be relatively modest. Only seven teams amongst the 50 most valuable sport clubs globally are linked to association football, with both American football (n=29) and baseball (=8) ranking ahead in the total number of teams listed (Badenhausen 2018). Nevertheless, the value of football continues to grow exponentially. The globalisation of sport, particularly football (Connell 2018), alongside other key drivers such as the

exploitation of brand loyalty that generates finances (in)directly through gate receipts and pay subscription TV, which, in turn, attracts sponsorship (Kennedy and Kennedy 2012) have each contributed to the commercial rise of the game. The annual ‘Deloitte Football Money League’ report which analyses the financial performance of the top 20 earning clubs across the world calculate that the total earnings over the past 22 years for clubs within this elite group has proliferated almost sevenfold from €1.2 billion in 1996/97 to €8.3 billion in 2017/18 (Figure 2). During this time, England and its teams have arguably been the key stimulators to the growth of football financially (Figure 2). Indeed, even when as few as six English clubs were listed in the 2012/13 top 20 highest earners, the next best nations in terms of representation, that being Germany and Italy, each only provided four inclusions in the money league (Deloitte 2014).

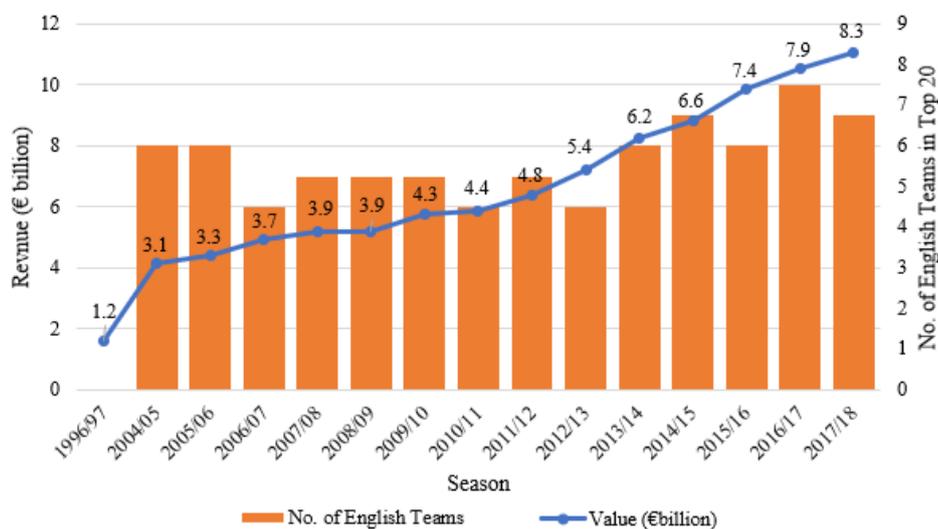


Figure 2: Total revenue for top 20 earning English football clubs

Source: Adapted from Deloitte Football Money League (2005-2019)

Yet the economic significance of football cannot just be noted to solely premise around a clubs’ financial performance. At the high-profile corporate end of football, the sport additionally impacts the wider economy. An EY Economic Impact Assessment endorsed by the Premier League (PL) estimated that in the 2016/17 season, the 20 PL clubs contributed a total of £3.3 billion to the UK economy in taxes, £7.6 billion gross value-added, and created employment for 100,000 people (PL 2019). In more regionalised cases, while Deloitte reported Liverpool FC boosted the Liverpool city region economy by £497 million gross value-added (Liverpool FC 2019), the estimated regional impact from Swansea FC for the city of Swansea was £46 million gross value-added (Roberts et al 2016). However, while the value of professional football is therefore largely

inescapable and undeniable, as detailed in section 1.2.3, this side of the game only forms a part of the football story that can be evidenced in the UK.

1.2.2: Academic Significance and Originality – Football Research

Four decades ago, literature from Dunning (1971) stressed academic research into football is a recent development. Since this point, study directed towards football has seen significant growth across a breadth of disciplines. For instance, when writing this, just circa of 500 doctoral theses had been written about football post 1975 when reviewing the British Library EThOS. In this time, football research has aligned to a variety of perspectives that include historical (Walvin 2000; Harvey 2013; James 2016); cultural (Rookwood and Chan 2011; Cleland and Cashmore 2016); sociological (Giulianotti 1999, 2008; Millward 2012; Cleland 2015); political (Kennedy 2011; Kuhn 2011); and economic (Ashton et al 2011; Dobson and Goddard 2011; Goddard and Sloane 2014; Palacios-Huerta 2014) outlooks. An increasing amount of publication further resides in the number of reports submitted by accounting and marketing firms that deal with the finances of football (e.g. Deloitte and Mintel). Yet arguably more fitting to the purposes of this research is the more recent links that have surfaced between football and the concepts of marketing (e.g. Chanavat et al 2017a), and business and management (e.g. Zhang and Pitts 2018; Chadwick et al 2019).

However, in review of such related literature, a notable narrative is the volume of work pinned to the apex of the football pyramid - the professional and corporate level. Research into the football pyramids base – otherwise known as grassroots, amateur or community football – has alternatively been largely ignored, with the little amount of research often being championed by O’Gorman (c.f. Lusted and O’Gorman 2010; O’Gorman 2010, 2012, 2016; Cleland et al 2015; O’Gorman and Greenough 2016; Potrac et al 2016; O’Gorman et al 2019) to resultantly tender, a single perspective that, although useful, may require an alternative outlook if research into grassroots football wishes to advance.

The reasons behind existing literature on sport and football sponsorship being dedicated more to professional sport as opposed to the grassroots level are clear to see (refer to section 1.2.4). Yet mirroring the contentions of Foster et al (2016) and O’Gorman et al (2019) to the increasing polarisation between grassroots and elite football, although “sponsorship is sponsorship” (Skildum-Reid and Grey 2014:173), the processes involved at grassroots level are profoundly different to its professional counterpart. For example,

in comparison to the business-like principals that are executed within the professional setting (Buhler et al 2007), sponsorship in grassroots sport is often driven through more person to person approaches (Slack and Bentz 1996; Pegoraro et al 2009). Further, and in a related point, sponsorship across elite football is highly structured and formalised (Douvis et al 2015), whilst being more leisurely and off-the-cuff within the community confines. Such differences may be as a result of SMEs – the type of business who typically sponsor community sport (Slack and Bentz 1996; Sintie 2011; McDonnell 2014) – often being run by more ‘generalists’ than ‘specialists’ (refer to section 1.3.3), while volunteers alternatively managing the sponsorship deal on behalf of the NCFC. In response, both types of entities may consequently fail to possess the necessary skill-set and/ or expertise to be able to operate sponsorship similarly to that seen at the top of the football pyramid. Finally, Skildum-Reid and Grey (2014) note several misconceptions including sponsorship being merely perceived as a handout unable to achieve ‘real objectives’, and non-profit organisations unsure of how to be real partners being just a few challenges such entities must overcome when engaging in sponsorship compared to the professional landscape. Consequently, exploration of sponsorship at the grassroots level is prudent in order to bridge the chasm that currently exists in football research.

Indeed, “very little is known about the grassroots football setting both empirically and theoretically” (O’Gorman 2016:794/795); subsequently offering an area with “fertile ground for future academic analysis” (O’Gorman 2016:797). This is none more so the case than with research into the marketing and management of the game that has received a further dearth of study to that of the already nominal amount associated to grassroots football in general. Such a point can be exemplified with the special issue from Soccer and Society (2016) that published eight works aligned to the grassroots setting (Howie and Allison; O’Gorman and Greenough; Tjomsland et al; Dunn; Temple and Crane; Mauro; Swanson; Potrac et al), in which no study investigated marketing or management principles. Further, and away from this special issue, the exploration of racism (Long 2000; Bradbury 2011; Lusted 2012; Kilvington and Price 2013), abuse of match officials (Cleland et al 2017; Webb et al 2017), and policy implementation such as the FA and its Charter Standard accreditation scheme (O’Gorman 2010, 2012) are some examples of the otherwise limited works positioned against the grassroots football backdrop.

One instance of research at the grassroots level focusing on the often-overlooked disciplines of marketing or management is from Breuer and Nowy (2015). Here, the authors assessed the differences in grassroots football clubs across Europe in reference to

organisational capacity. The paucity of study into these specific disciplines is nevertheless exacerbated when noting that in the most recent and arguably extensive research contribution to football business and management – the ‘Routledge Handbook of Football Business and Management’ (Chadwick et al 2019) – only one of the 47 chapters addressed the grassroots level. Yet crucially, and of relevancy to this research was that this chapter, amongst other topics associated to the amateur game, presented a brief exploration into the significance and issues surrounding the sponsorship of grassroots football in England (O’Gorman et al 2019) – a subject area this research intends to explore. Consequently, while such exceptions show a degree of inspection into the grassroots football milieu, and more specifically, the setting being vetted against marketing and management principles, clearly amateur football has still drawn little research attention and needs further investigation, particularly connecting to the disciplines of marketing and management. It is against this backdrop that the purpose of this study is subsequently directed towards the investigation of sponsorship in community level football to bestow much needed new knowledge in this area.

The extensive coverage of professional football from media outlets has potentially acted as a rationale for scholars to correspondingly pay credence to the elite and corporate end of the spectrum and veer away from articles that review football outside of the professional game. O’Gorman (2010) further points to national governing body (NGB) pre-occupation with performance and governance at footballs top-level – this is despite the NGB for English football, the Football Association (FA), asserting a key aim of their strategy is to provide “flexible, inclusive and accessible playing opportunities for everyone” (FA 2019a). The disproportionate amount of concern driven to the elite in comparison to community setting is both nevertheless and therefore not surprising (O’Gorman et al 2019). In light of this, the researcher ultimately poses the same question as Cashmore and Dixon (2016:2): How can we ignore it? This is particularly given that, as will be highlighted, “there is much going on in grassroots football to warrant some long overdue attention” (Lusted and O’Gorman 2010:140).

1.2.3: Contextual Significance – Rationale to Research Grassroots Football

The work from football historian Walvin (2001:252) offers notable insight into why study into the under-researched field of grassroots football matters, interlaced with further rationalisation behind the negligible amount of scholarly attention veered outside of the professional game.

“there is another football story to tell; about ordinary, run-of-the-mill football, about boys in the park, schoolchildren driven to games by parents, older men (long past their prime) struggling on bleary-eyed Sunday mornings to recapture their footballing best, and millions more simply kicking a ball against a black wall. It is generally untold because it is part and parcel of the world we live in. We see it, know it, have taken part in it, as children, parents, as players or spectators. At this level, football is just another feature of life’s weekly routine and scarcely warrants a passing thought. Yet it is this massive, incalculable substratum of popular football that sustains the professional game; the millions of ordinary players who nurture the national (and global) interest in the high-powered, commercially driven world of successful professional soccer. More than that, this popular attachment to the game takes us right back to the origins of the game itself. This is how football has always been; a simplicity and ease of play embedded deep in the routines and habits of ordinary people. That is why the game of football remains the people’s game, however lavish and often absurd the antics of the wealthy minority.”

For many, grassroots football is the ‘lifeblood of the game’, and a soundbite ubiquitously used by key drivers of the English game when broaching this agenda (e.g. Sir Trevor Brooking; Kelly Simmons; UEFA 2011). For some, grassroots football additionally extends past being played for sports sake, with it being increasingly continued to be exploited as a vehicle for social policy to deliver on a variety of outcomes ever since the Labour government came into power in 1997 (Tacon 2007; O’Gorman 2012, 2016). It is also at this level of football in which players, coaches, and officials are introduced to the game and subsequently developed (O’Gorman 2016; Breuer and Nowy 2018) and therefore the level that abets the professional landscape with a pool of talent in these areas. This is to such an extent that current England captain and striker Harry Kane attributes part of his success to the time spent at the grassroots level:

“I think that’s so important at that age. Without that foundation, I wouldn’t be here. I want to say a huge thank you. It made a huge difference to my career, all those men and women behind the scenes.”

(Edwards 2018)

Further, the grassroots landscape is a site that not only holds significant voluntary commitment but a setting that an abundance of adults ‘play out’ their leisure time in (Lusted and O’Gorman 2010). For context to this study, the FA estimate just over 11 million play some form of football within England (FA 2015). In the 11-aside format of the game specifically (the format of football this study investigates), approximately 400,000 people offer their services for free to allow football to occur to circa 1.8 million players in over 119,000 teams and over 1,200 leagues across England (FA 2019b). The fact that even past top-level, now ex-professional players such as Lee Trundle, Tony Hibbert and Paul Scholes are part of an umpteen list that have been seen to return to their

humble beginnings merely compounds the role grassroots football serves in people's lives.

Such participation has resultantly yielded significant health and social wellbeing benefits, and economic value. In the attempt to understand the social and economic impact of adult grassroots football, between August 2017 and March 2018, the FA (2019b) conducted the largest survey of its type for a UK NGB that accounted for all forms of football (bar Futsal due to low sample size; n=38), and consisted of 8,713 regular players over the age of 18 from a variety of ages, genders, geographical regions, disadvantaged and socio-economic groups. The survey consequently reported several key findings (highlighted in table 1) that, in turn, shows how the community level football setting is a salient topic for research given its social and economic value.

Table 1: The social and economic impact of grassroots football in England

Social and Health Outcomes of Grassroots Football	Economic Impact of Grassroots Football
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of happiness. • Higher levels of health. • Improved confidence. • Quality of life benefits. <p>* Compared to participants who play no sports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total value of £10.769 billion per year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct economic value of £2.050 billion per year. - Social wellbeing value of £8.712 billion per year. • Average annual spends of £326 per player. • Tax contribution to the exchequer is £410 million per year. • £43.5 million saving in the NHS with reduced GP visits.

Source: The FA (2019b)

Looking at grassroots football and its economic impact further, the setting additionally presents significant income to other stakeholders such as local authorities and private sector companies. For example, just to play football, each club will either lease or pay for pitches that are privately or council owned, whilst also hire out local facilities to train. This can typically cost a club approximately £1,500 over the course of a season, and, when multiplied by the number of clubs who use such facilities across the community, emphasises the financial contribution this group create. On top of this, players will individually purchase football-related products (i.e. boots, training apparel) for participatory purposes and, as a result, will account for a considerable proportion of the anticipated £4.49 billion generated in the football apparel marketplace in 2019 (Mintel 2014). Finally, the grassroots panoramic, amongst other factors, has given rise to the increasing commercialisation of elite football (O’Gorman 2016). Those playing or having previously played football are those who also tend to attend games, buy merchandise, and subscribe to satellite television which causes a growth in revenue for professional football

clubs either directly or indirectly. In this sense, the grassroots game could perhaps be its own worst enemy in that it continually aids to contribute to what some (Roberts 2017; O’Gorman et al 2019) report as an ever-growing chasm between the base and apex of the football pyramid. Nevertheless, when taken in conjunction with the previous points that highlight the value of grassroots football, this still helps to exemplify the wider credibility of conducting research into such a setting.

1.2.4: Contextual Significance – Rationale to Research Football Sponsorship

From a small-scale venture with humble beginnings, sponsorship has transformed to a global marketing phenomenon (Masterman 2007). Worldwide sponsorship investment has proliferated from \$4.1 billion in 1988 (ISL Marketing 1988) to an unprecedented \$65.8 billion in 2018 (IEG 2018), discerning a \$64.7 billion increase that is just over 16 times more than the original amount estimated three decades ago. In comparison to alternative promotional tools, although e-Marketer (2018) reported global advertising spend was anticipated to reach \$628 billion in 2018 – outlining the significant disparity relative to total expenditure – since 2006, sponsorship has continued to outpace advertising, marketing and other promotional strategies in terms of rate of growth (IEG 2009, 2013, 2015, 2018). Resultantly, sponsorship has now been labelled as one of the most established areas of marketing communication (Cornwell 2019) to the extent that it is argued by Renard and Sitz (2011) to be a part of the daily life of any business.

Like any industry, sponsorship is varied and segmented. The words of, or similar to ‘anything can be sponsored’ that are stressed by several scholars (e.g. Wright 1999; Smith and Taylor 2004; Fried et al 2013) is a simplistic but almost true reflection of the sponsorship panoramic – the caveat being this is only the case so long as both parties agree to the proposed asset to be sponsored and falls within regulations. As such, figure 3 details the variety of markets, assets and opportunities that both properties and marketers have aimed to exploit for numerous intentions. Broken down, figure 3 initially highlights the concept of marketing communications – the broad concept that sponsorship falls under – before filtering the types of sponsorship opportunities available until finally reviewing the panoramic this study seeks to examine football sponsorship within; the grassroots level.

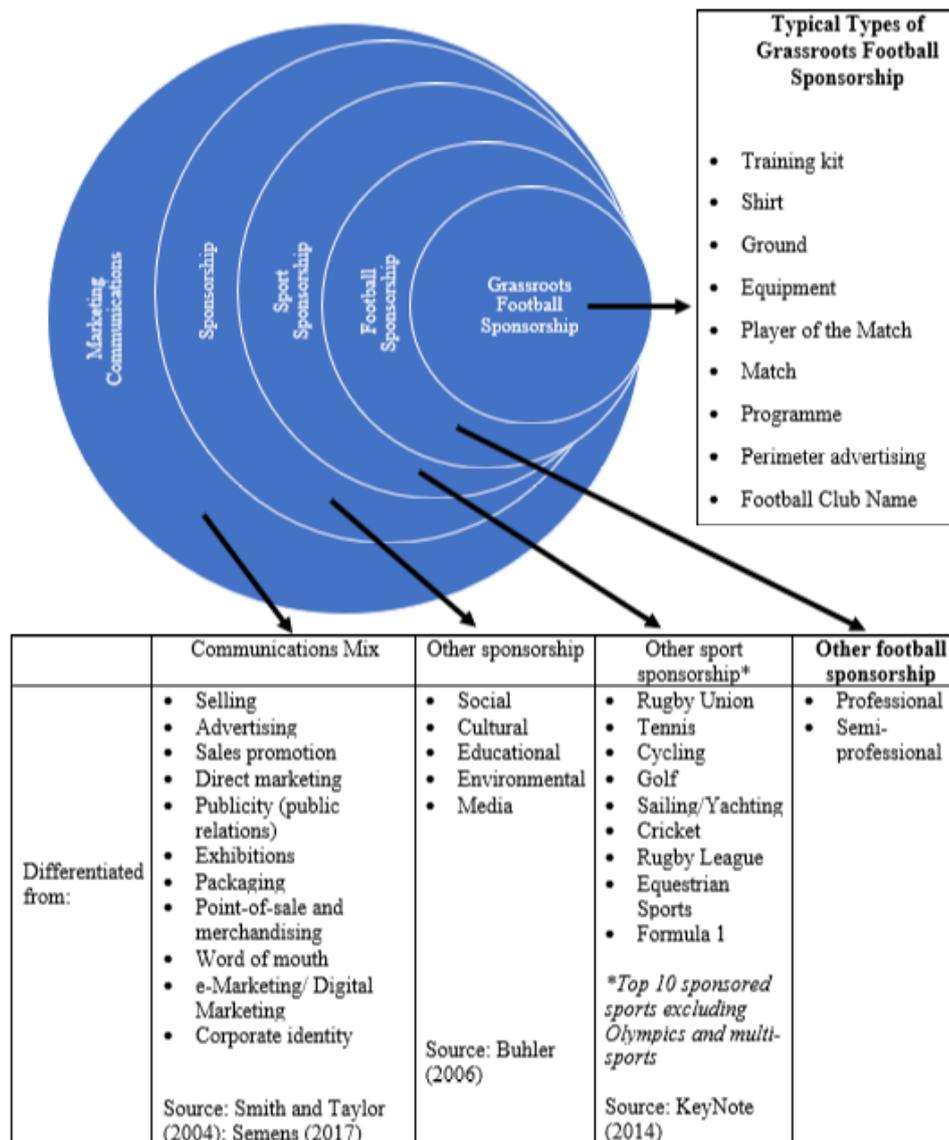


Figure 3: Divisions of sponsorship

Despite being expected by some to diminish because of escalation in prices to associate with properties and the opportunities made available for sponsorship becoming saturated (Quester and Thompson 2001), sport continues to dominate the sponsorship marketplace on both global and UK scales. Since 2009, IEG (2009, 2013, 2015, 2018) report that sport repeatedly accounts for between 68% and 70% of the total sponsorship investment globally, with in contrast, the next largest proportion of current spending in sponsorship being orientated to the entertainment industry (10%). In considering the UK specifically, over the last 37 years the sponsorship of sport has risen by over 13 times the original value of £30 million in 1980 (Dunn 2002) to £413 million in 2017 (Semens 2017). Of this ever-growing marketing communication phenomenon, football spearheads the sport sponsorship marketplace (Bridgewater 2014; Mintel 2019). KeyNote (2014), for instance,

note that of all new deals agreed in 2012, football attracted the greatest level of sponsorship attention with 113 agreed partnerships within the UK, valued at £234.1 million. This calculated to almost six times more than the amount generated by the second most gainful sport from sponsorship, rugby union that saw companies invest £39.9 million across 41 deals.

Sport and its general ability to transcend cultural and language barriers (Davies et al 2006), alongside people's emotional connection to sport that companies then exploit in order to transfer association from the sport entity to their own brand (Cornwell 2008; Wicker et al 2012a; Raddichi 2014; Walraven 2014), are some of the few reasons cited for sport sponsorships popularity with organisations. Finance and marketing agencies KeyNote (2014) and Deloitte (2019) further point to the emergence and development of digital technology as another driver to sport sponsorship growth given that they provide the sponsor with greater opportunity and new markets to engage and interact with their target consumers. Coupled with these reasons, football consequently becomes even more appealing to sponsors than other sports given it holds a high level of public interest (Nielsen 2018); passionate fan base (Buhler, 2006); and a wide range of media coverage, particularly in relation to the extensive levels of television broadcasting that creates significant exposure to potential target consumers (Mintel 2019). In fact, sponsorship appears to hold a unique and unheard-of position with football fans in so far as despite such individuals frequently being hostile to the processes of commercialisation, they surprisingly appear to be more understanding and accepting of sponsorship than the general public (Mintel *ibid*).

Yet given the current lucrative affair which exists between football and sponsorship today, it is somewhat surprising to highlight such ties may have never come to fruition in the English game. Popular belief would claim that the history of sponsorship in English football officially began in 1979 with Hitachi and their sponsorship of professional football club Liverpool (Buhler 2006). In some ways this is true, Liverpool FC were the first top flight team to benefit heavily from sponsorship. Yet it was three years earlier in 1976 and in the humble surroundings of non-league football which, in fact, saw the first UK football sponsorship deal be brokered between Kettering Town and Kettering Tyres (Murray and Walker 2008). This was swiftly prohibited by the FA, however, who disputed that clubs should survive from gate receipts alone and that any new forms of revenue would have a detrimental effect on smaller clubs (King 2002). Yet increasingly realising the power they held collectively, in 1983 a group of high-profile clubs threatened

to sign an independent television contract unless the opportunity to generate income through more sponsorship deals was approved (King *ibid*; Dixon 2016). Subsequently backed into a corner, the governing bodies of English football succumbed to make shirt sponsorships permissible in the game (Dixon *ibid*).

Almost a decade later, with declining attendances, deteriorating stadia and connections with hooliganism, football was threatened to such an extent where many questioned whether it could survive and continue to hold its place within English society (Gratton 2000; Kennedy and Kennedy 2012). In a bid to shake football from its social and economic stagnation, all first division clubs from the English Football League broke away and formed the PL in 1992 (Kennedy and Kennedy *ibid*). As a result, the inception of the PL ushered a new wave of commodification and financial expansion to English football, giving clubs greater commercial independence (Nicholson et al 2015). Since then, the combined revenue of top-tier English clubs has continued to proliferate annually over 28 seasons and is currently valued at £4.8 billion for the 2017/18 season (Deloitte 2019); 28 times the total £170 million revenues generated by clubs in the season before the launch of the PL (1991/92) (Deloitte 2016).

In considering sponsorship specifically, a further case in point to the role the PL played in the progression of football sponsorship can be exemplified with Liverpool FC who in 1991 had sponsorship deals worth £2 million that within the inaugural PL campaign raised to £3.2 million (Liverpool FC 1992:11). Indeed, fast forward almost three decades and such figures are now mere footnotes in comparison to their sponsorship portfolio for the 2017/18 season that brought income of £154.3 million (Liverpool FC 2018:22). As a result, while the innovation from Kettering subsequently did not open the flood gates with immediate effect, it has, alongside the ultimatum from heavyweight clubs to the bodies of English football in 1983 and the launch of the PL in 1992, formed watershed moments in football sponsorship history that have aided in unlocking the door to what can now be termed a multi-million-pound industry. It is subsequently this ever-burgeoning industry that makes it a landscape worthy for extended academic commentary.

1.2.5: Contextual Significance – Rationale to Research Grassroots Football Sponsorship

Despite the increases in revenue from a coalescence of matchday, broadcasting, sponsorship and other commercial channels continuing to underpin the growth for many

clubs at the elite and corporate end of football (Deloitte 2017), outside of the professional game, financial provision at the grassroots level is reported to not be quite as stable (Eurostrategies 2011). Indeed, across Europe, grassroots sport clubs are found to be likely to report notoriously low financial resources and problems (Wicker and Breuer 2014; Breuer et al 2015). For example, in the UK, Allen et al (2018) on behalf of Sport and Recreation Alliance – a body that reviews the grassroots sporting landscape – reported that although there has encouragingly been a marginal decrease (2%) in the number of non-profit community sport clubs (NCSCs) showing a deficit since their last survey in 2013, 22% of all NCSCs (n=1,611) still recorded a financial shortfall over the past year.

Yet in the UK, the toll of successive waves of ‘deficit reduction’ policies – otherwise termed as a period of ‘super-austerity’ (Lowndes and Gardner 2016) – has placed NCSCs in a precarious position financially (O’Gorman et al 2019). In fact, such measures implemented under the UK governments rhetoric of fiscal stabilisation has further led to several related consequences including a contraction of local authority sport services which, in turn, has transferred much responsibility for the delivery of sport to an over-encumbered third sector (Walker and Hayton 2017, 2018); placed operational strain on public sport facilities (Parnell et al 2019); and has compounded barriers to participation for ‘hard to reach’ groups (Widdop et al 2017).

As a result, the current economic climate has challenged NCSCs to “do more with less” (Hoeber et al 2015:220) – a soundbite coincidentally adopted by former Prime Minister David Cameron when announcing austerity measures in the UK would continue (quoted by Watt 2013). Indeed, while the impact of such government-imposed cuts to sport are largely unknown (Parnell et al 2016), Widdop et al (2017) finds that football, more than most sports, may witness some of the greatest repercussions from austerity at the grassroots level given it depends heavily upon local authority provisions such as pitch hire and maintenance. Indeed, the continuance of this cost-cutting fiscal policy has been seen to force local authorities across the UK to protect core services and increasingly tighten up their purse strings. In turn, this has meant many local authorities have subsequently viewed it wise to increase council pitch fees and lower the costs provided for pitch maintenance (Widdop et al *ibid*). A case to typify this trend is evident in the NWE borough of the Wirral that has witnessed significant increases of football club expenditure at the grassroots level being directed toward the payment of pitch fees. For example, adult category A pitch fees have soared from an average of £220 in 2004 to £654 in 2019 to show a 197.3% growth in pitch fees over a 15-year period. Further, in

Liverpool, youth and junior clubs which were once able to play on pitches free of charge are now being billed because of council cuts as such subsidy is classed as a non-statutory requirement. It is thus unsurprising that The Independent journalist Pitt-Brooke (2017) maligns how “it is austerity that has frayed the fabric of grassroots football, just as it has done so to much else of the fabric of modern Britain”.

Accordingly, the hikes in cost at the grassroots level, both regarding pitch fees and other forms of expenditure (i.e. hire of training facilities; personal insurance; public liability; league fees; county affiliation fees), has therefore added to the clubs growing financial conundrum. This indeed epitomises the entire grassroots setting with NCSC expenditure now averaging over £41,000 in 2017 (Allen et al 2018) as opposed to £40,824 in 2013 (Cox and Sparham 2013) and £34,585 in 2011 (Downer and Talbot 2011); an increase of 18.5% over six years. In response, NCSCs must consequently adopt one of three strategies or alternatively be placed at the risk of being unable to operate – (i) attempt to lessen their operational expenditure, (ii) increase their total revenue, (iii) or mix the two.

In some ways, it appears local NCFCs may have found keeping their organisation financially viable easier than other sporting entities with a 9% increase in the number of clubs recognised by the FA from 20,771 in 2015 to 22,572 in 2017 (Shibli and Barrett, 2017)¹. Notwithstanding this, many other NCFCs have however been unsuccessful in solving this problem. In a report from the FA (2015) into the state of the national game, a total of 2,360 local 11 a-side teams folded between 2010 and 2015. Somewhat aligned with this, Roberts (2017) further asserts grassroots participation in outdoor 11-a-side football in England has continued to diminish. In fact, data from the Active Lives Survey goes some way to reinforce this trend given overall football participation² by those aged 16 years and above has declined from 10.8% in May 2016-2017 to 10.1% in May 2017-2018 (Sport England 2019a), with participation³ in the 11-a-side version of the game also dropping from 3.9% to 3.7% in the same timeframe (Sport England 2019b).

Yet whilst each report failed to present reasoning behind this decline, others have frequently pointed to the costs of running a club as one of the core factors that caused

¹ Such figures may be a result of several actions including previously unaffiliated clubs choosing to formalise under the auspices of the FA; and/or the impact of the joint FA and Football Foundation *Grow the Game* initiative that aims to increase participation in the sport of traditionally underrepresented groups, or the setting up of new, self-organised clubs (Football Foundation 2019).

² Overall participation in football at least once in the last 12 months

³ Participation in 11-a-side football at least once in the last 12 months

clubs to struggle to offer football (BBC Sport 2014; Gibson 2014; Moore 2014). It is therefore largely unsurprising that, while continuing to decrease, a large proportion of NCSCs still identify generating enough revenue and increased costs as a core challenge faced over the next two years (61% - Downer and Talbot 2011; 48% - Cox and Sparham 2013; 44% - Allen et al 2018). Alternatively, research from Roberts (2017) may present a further or different rationale towards the decline in 11-a-side grassroots football participation – owing to shifts in the way in which people engage with sport. He continues by suggesting competitive team sports are now being ousted for more individualised forms of physical active recreation, with three alternative and typically commercial platforms emerging: health and fitness gyms; lifestyle, recreational or extreme sports (which are usually non-competitive in nature); and the ‘indoorisation’ of traditionally outdoor sports such as football. Relating back to the context of this study, this plurality of sport and leisure options may resultantly present a further issue that threatens the health of the grassroots sport sector, particularly given such NCSCs appear dependent on income sourced from inside (internal) as opposed to outside (external) of the club.

Indeed, across the world, NCSCs have been seen to rely heavily, if not over-rely on membership fees and monthly subsidies (Allison 2001 – Scotland (56%); Gumulka et al 2005 – Canada (56%); Ibsen and Seippel 2010 – Norway and Denmark (64% and 72%); Scheerder et al 2010 – Belgium (41.1%); Lamprecht 2011 – Switzerland (36%)). In the UK, NCSCs generate 35% of their total revenue via these streams (Cox and Sparham 2013). However, this appears to be growing continually with 42% of NCSCs either increasing their membership fees and/ or monthly playing fees in order to gain greater levels of revenue over the last year (Allen et al 2018). Yet the consequence to such actions can present adverse effects and go against the sole purpose of their organisation – which is to provide sporting opportunity – with the same report highlighting 12% of NCSCs (n=1,611) listed cost as a core rationale to members leaving their club (Allen et al 2018). For example, and in a football context, with the cost of living increasing, Gibson (2014) postulates how individuals have been found to generally possess less disposable income to finance the cost of football.

In the midst of this, NCSCs, particularly in football, must therefore instead veer away from over-relying on this particular income stream (i.e. weekly subs and membership fees) if they are to survive and ensure the sport is reasonably priced for its members, as without playing members there is in essence no club. Subsequently, what is now crucial to allow NCSCs to achieve their organisational objectives is their ability to diversify

revenue sources and acquire resources (Wicker et al 2012a; Wicker and Breuer 2013; Wicker et al 2013; Millar and Doherty 2016). Revenue diversification for non-profit organisations can be used as a risk-reduction strategy given it ensures alternative forms of income can counter any decline in other revenue, and, as such, create greater financial sustainability (Carroll and Stater 2009).

To support their financial position and ultimately deliver on their mandate of delivering sport, NCSCs have resultantly turned to a plethora of revenue streams to varying degrees. However, and as previously contended, a notable difficulty for NCSCs includes the access to alternative sources of revenues beyond member fees (Doherty and Cuskelly 2020). In a climate of austerity wherein the funding landscape is uncertain, Bingham and Walters (2013) advise that revenue diversification is imperative for sports entities, such as clubs, charities and trusts. Indeed, revenue is crucial to the longevity and sustainability of any sport club and is shaped by the concepts of revenue diversification and revenue volatility (Nagel et al 2015). The volatility of revenues can affect a sport clubs' income portfolio via changes in the national economy (systematic volatility) or by variations in club-specific streams (unsystematic volatility) (Nagel et al *ibid*). Internal revenues to a club are said to be a low-risk revenue stream as they are more projectable than short-term external sources such as government subsidy or commercial sponsorship (Nagel et al *ibid*; Wicker et al 2015; Coates and Wicker 2016). Whilst revenue diversification can minimise club-specific volatility, it is far less likely to mitigate against systematic volatility, with Wicker et al (*ibid*) stating that clubs that rely on membership fees are better insulated against both systematic and unsystematic risk.

In Greece, for example, sports clubs and federations have introduced fees to youth and recreational sport participants during a period of government-imposed austerity, and yet, an increased demand for sport participation at the grassroots level has been observed despite the additional cost to the consumer (Giannoulakis et al 2017). However, a potential risk that fee-based services pose is that they may debar those from lower-socioeconomic and disadvantaged groups from accessing sport services (Giannoulakis et al *ibid*), as previously stressed by Gibson (2014) and the report from Allen et al (2018). This point consequently becomes of salience to this research given the study investigates grassroots football clubs located within the NWE – a region that evidences some of the highest levels of deprivation (Noble et al 2019) and also three of the top five most

deprived local authorities in England (Liverpool; Knowsley; and Manchester) since 2010 (Penney 2019).

In response, NCSCs have begun to turn to other internal and external sources of revenue such as premise hire; service fees (i.e. coaching); general fundraising; donations; catering and hospitality; using community shares; and community and government grants in a bid to remain financially sustainable (Allison 2001; Gumulka 2005; Breuer and Wicker 2009; Ibsen and Seippel 2010; Scheerder et al 2010; Lamprecht 2011; Wicker and Breuer 2011; Vos et al 2011; Cox and Sparham 2013; Cox 2016; Allen et al 2018). Another widely accepted way NCSCs raise income at the grassroots level is via commercial sponsorship (Berrett 1993; Cousens and Barnes 2009; Misener and Doherty 2009, 2014; Giannoulakis et al 2017; O’Gorman 2019); the phenomenon this research intends to examine.

Yet as table 2 documents, the level of support private sector investment generates to NCSCs across the globe varies. The UK particularly trails behind in how much sponsorship contributes to a NCSCs revenue (table 2). This is perhaps surprising given that within a local neighbourhood it is often easy to locate firm logos brandished across kits of teams competing in domestic leagues, business boards surrounding private pitches, and framed photographs or jerseys of community sports teams in company shops and offices. Such disparities between countries could be attributable to several reasons including deviation into what each report constitutes as sponsorship or socio-economic and socio-political differences which may influence how sponsorship is prioritised across nations. Indeed, as Wicker et al (2012a) contends sponsorship revenues largely depend on wider economic conditions and can thus lessen, both in terms of number of deals and their value, during turbulent times.

Table 2: Sponsorship revenue NCSCs receive across countries

Literature	Country	% Sponsorship accounts for in terms of total NCSC income
Gumulka et al (2005)	Canada	15%
Breuer and Wicker (2009)	Germany	4%
Scheerder et al (2010)	Belgium	13.3%
Ibsen and Sieppel (2010)	Norway	25%
	Denmark	11%
Lamprecht (2011)	Switzerland	14%
Cox and Sparham (2013)	UK	3%

Nevertheless, the lack of intent to exploit sponsorship by NCSCs is showing signs of improvement in the UK, with 28% of all NCSCs (n=1,611) over the past year offering greater amounts of sponsorship opportunities or increased costs for companies to sponsor

as ways to increase their revenue (Allen et al 2018). Yet, in spite of this, sponsorships nominal contribution in terms of revenue for NCSCs in the UK still raises the question of whether both NCSCs and for-profit organisations are aware of the benefits of sponsorship pinned to the community locale. For instance, the multi-million-pound industry previously described at the elite level of football (section 1.2.1) has meant sponsorship is largely restricted to more free-spending (multi)national corporations who can comfortably out-price domestic firms (Mintel 2011). For those businesses with a dearth of human and financial resources and thus incapable of spending the inordinate sums of money to associate with such properties, the grassroots level is stressed as being ideal to reach target audiences in a cost-effective manner (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Day 2010; Kim et al 2010; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010). It is thus unsurprising that research notes that the sponsorship of community sport is typically championed by SME organisations (Slack and Bentz 1996; Sintie 2011; McDonnell 2014). Nonetheless, for NCSCs, and as already contended, sponsorship can form part of the financial arsenal utilised to be able to deliver on their mandate of delivering recreational and competitive sport.

Table 2 further suggests that organisations in the UK may struggle with sponsorship in terms of not fully understanding the practices required in order to acquire and maintain a partnership; an observation made by Reid Howie Associates (2006) when exploring the issues and constraints facing Scottish NCSCs in 2005. Indeed, it appears only a limited amount of practical support to understanding sponsorship, its benefits, and its management is provided to the NCSC, while alarmingly there seems to be no guidance with the SME sponsor in mind; the other party invested into any sponsorship dealing. The FA, for example, released a 15-point reference guide to the management of sponsorship at the grassroots level (FA 2017), which has, however, since been taken down. Sport England further launched Club Matters in 2015 – a platform created to provide resources that would equip NCSCs with advice to allow them to develop, grow and become more sustainable and successful (Club Matters 2019a). As part of this free resource, guidance into how NCSCs could utilise and approach sponsorship was incorporated as a core aspect of the marketing section (Club Matters 2019b).

Yet such support can only act as a starting point, particularly given such guidance: omits key issues that should be included in any deal if the sponsorship is to be effective (e.g. evaluation); is based on anecdotal as opposed to empirical evidence; focuses on the activities only one organisation responsible for sponsorship (that being the sponsee –

club) rather than both parties involved in the process; and is additionally too basic for what academics argue sponsorship to be, a complex concept (Barros and Silvestre 2006; Raddichi 2014; Chanavat et al 2016). Through empirical-driven research that considers both parties responsible for the sponsorship of grassroots football, this study intends to address the shortness and inadequacy of assistance by examining how sponsorship dealings at the grassroots level are approached and managed.

1.2.6: Summary of Rationale of the Study

The importance for research is the need to balance contributing something new to an existing or unknown body of knowledge (Grix 2019) while simultaneously delivering scholarly excellence with practitioner relevance (Pettigrew 2001). Figure 4 therefore provides a summary of the discussion presented in this introductory chapter about why exploration into sponsorship at the community level of football is needed for both practitioners and academics alike.

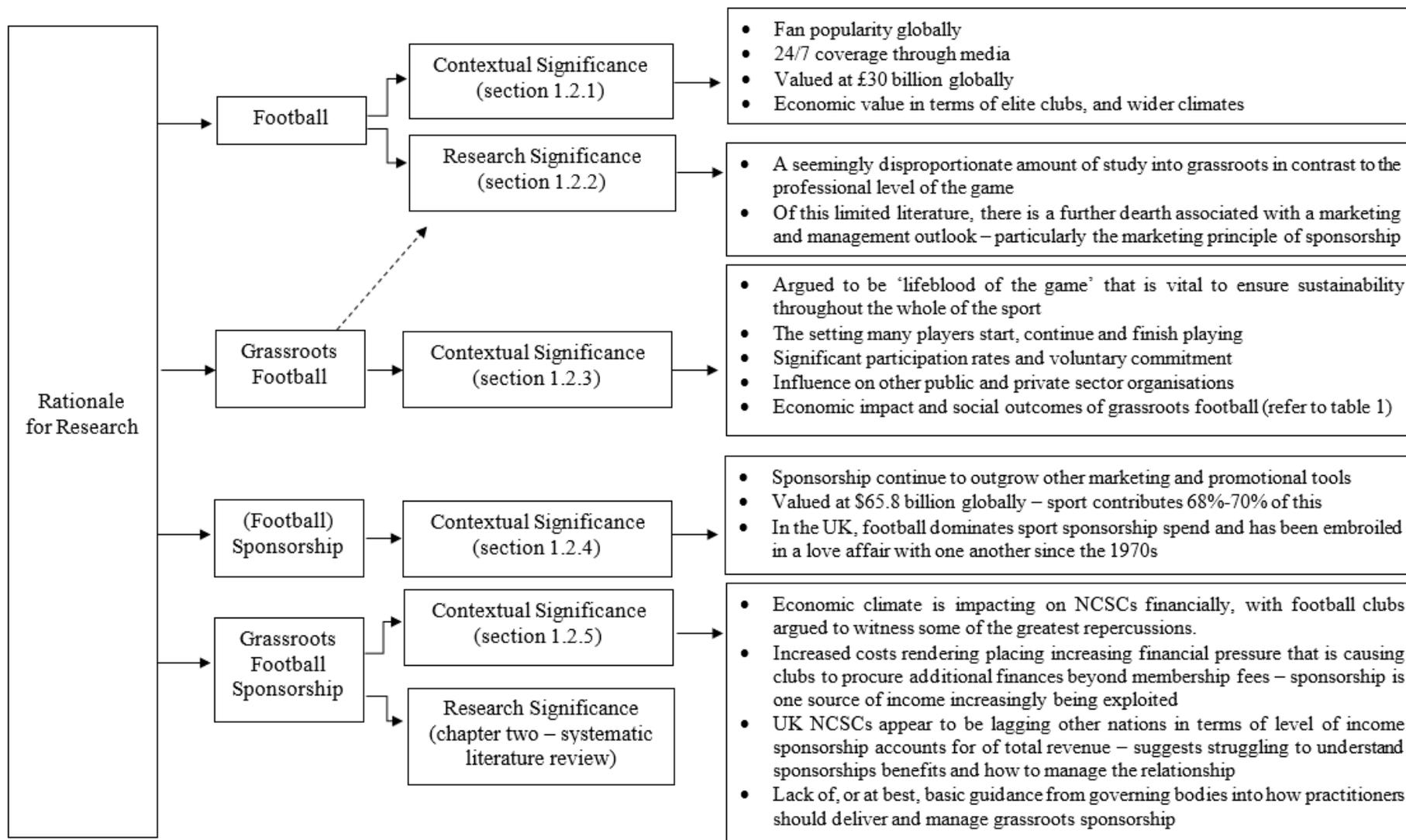


Figure 4: Summary of rationale of study.

To this end, grassroots football is a setting in which the foundations forged are contended to be vital for the sustainability of the whole game (Breuer and Nowy 2018). To neglect study into the base of the football pyramid could therefore potentially weaken the future of English football (O’Gorman 2010) and diminish the economic and social value of grassroots football. Yet this is what has precisely occurred in literature with significant focus on the professional rather than amateur form of the game. The further lacuna of management and marketing study into football outside of elite level has consequently acted as one rationale of this research. Aligned to this is the need for more empirical research to examine how football sponsorship at the grassroots level can be tackled and utilised, particularly during times of economic hardship where a vicious cycle engulfs the current landscape. Indeed, on the one side, NCSCs increasingly look to sponsorship as a source of revenue to offset the increasing financial costs incurred from its operations. On the other, companies perhaps now, more than ever before, appear reluctant to invest in the grassroots game. Understanding the benefits to grassroots football sponsorship, and the factors which are critical when organisations become involved in such partnerships is thus crucial to ensure a successful long-withstanding agreement. The subsequent creation of a process model that both NCSCs and their sponsors can follow may therefore be prudent in order to facilitate entire sponsorship dealings at this grassroots level.

1.3: Review of Definitions for the Study

1.3.1: Defining (Sport) Sponsorship

It is apparent across literature that a lack of consensus as to a universally agreed definition for sponsorship exists (Tripodi 2001). Indeed, the quest to define sponsorship has been tackled by a vast number of authors across an array of papers, textbooks and reports (appendix 1). Attention towards defining sponsorship began in the 1970s wherein the Sport’s Council for the UK (1971) created a somewhat misleading definition emphasising the notion of reciprocity between the sponsor and sponsee yet then using the word ‘gift’; a term typically associated with not expecting to receive any return for a provision or service. In another but somewhat similar definition, Moonman (1974) claimed sponsorship to effectively be a form of philanthropy where the sponsor paid the sponsee a sum of money in return for the intangible benefits of association. The recent developments of the sponsorship market have, however, meant the philanthropic view of sponsorship is largely discounted for when coming to define sponsorship (Chadwick 2005), as will be discussed later in this section.

As noted by numerous scholars (e.g. Walliser 2003; Johnson and Spais 2015), the majority of sponsorship definitions were supplied in the 1980s. The beginning of the 1990s then placed a greater emphasis on research differentiating the various forms of sponsorship, which subsequently reflected definitions being positioned against a certain setting (i.e. arts and social) (Buhler 2006). Perhaps due to this, more recent sponsorship publications have seen researchers now shift from re-defining sponsorship to just accepting previous definitions. For instance, work from Meenaghan (1991:36) has become one of the most cited sponsorship definitions within literature (e.g. Smith et al 2008; Chanavat et al 2009; DeGaris et al 2015; Wagner 2018). Appendix 1 nevertheless details some of the seminal, most popular or contemporary definitions associated to (sport) sponsorship in chronological order, ultimately supporting literature that asserts although definitions of (sport) sponsorship are rarely identical, many tend to more or less contain the same key elements and be merely modifications on existing definitions (Olkkonen 2001; Buhler and Nufer 2010).

One such commonality is that sponsorship involves a relationship between two parties; a company and a property. It is from this fundamental underpinning that a second accepted aspect when defining (sport) sponsorship exists. Most, if not all denotations detail the mutually beneficial exchange and reciprocal nature of sponsorship wherein the sponsor provides money, services and/ or know-how to the sponsee (sponsee benefit) in return for access to the sponsees rights (sponsor benefit). Crucially, the strong emphasis on commercial terms in sponsorship definitions is another frequent theme that has not gone unnoticed, and it is in this notion that subsequently brings another element of agreement across definitions – sponsorship is different to philanthropy.

Whereas philanthropic giving is seen as nothing more than a donation, sponsorship is alternatively seen as an investment (Porter 2006). Breaking this down further, given philanthropy is ultimately a gift, the donor therefore expects nothing in return and can thus be considered a practice that is one dimensional (Masterman 2007). Sponsorship, on the other hand, renders a two-dimensional process as it attempts to bring mutual benefit to the parties involved (Masterman *ibid*). This element of (or lack of) reciprocity and mutual return is subsequently integral to the difference between sponsorship and philanthropy (McCarville and Copeland 1994). Definitions of (sport) sponsorship thereby now reflect a plethora of study that underlines how sponsorship differs to philanthropy (e.g. Meenaghan 1991; Polonsky and Speed 2001; Calderon-Martinez et al 2005; Lagae

2005; Porter 2006; Masterman 2007; Wilson and Haber 2007; Bulut and Yumrukaya 2009; Fill 2009; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Brennan et al 2012).

Although each definition has its right to exist and builds on previous denotations and understanding, many present limitations. Chadwick (2005:28), for example, draws criticism to most definitions implying the sponsee is a “passive recipient of the revenue provided by the sponsor and not necessarily engaged in managing their relationship”. This suggests that there is a power imbalance in which the sponsor has a greater control over the association. In turn, bar the definition of Chadwick and Thwaites (2008), many denotations fail to identify the relational nature or network view of sponsorship, instead more commonly making inferences of it being no more than a mere one-off transaction.

Considering this, it is therefore unsurprising that only a handful of studies investigate sponsorship from a relationship or network perspective (e.g. Farrelly and Quester 2003; Farrelly et al 2003; Chadwick and Thwaites 2008). Yet most sponsorship relationships, as contended in literature, are complex to manage (Urriolagoitia and Planellas 2007; Jadogic 2011) and involve several activities during the partnerships course. Away from the initial exchange in resource, each sponsorship programme additionally needs to be leveraged (O'Reilly 2007; O'Reilly and Horning 2013) and evaluated (Stotlar 2004), for example. Further, each party in the association devotes their reputations and brands; provides advice and management; gives up time; and presents access to networking opportunities from their respective setting (Chadwick 2005). The narrative which is implied in most sponsorship definitions therefore does not reflect sponsorship seen today where partnerships, relationships and alliances are forged rather than being a simple one-off transaction. In this regard, the work of Wilkinson and Young (1997) appears somewhat ahead of its time, detailing sponsorship through the analogy of ‘dancing’ wherein each partner adapts their strategy based on the others in order to pursue a combination of self and collective interest.

In reviewing literature associated to football sponsorship, only Buhler (2006:69) seems to propose a definition orientated to this area. The need to submit research which can relate and be adapted to other fields in order to publish in high impact journals has potentially contributed to more generic as opposed to specific definitions of sponsorship. Additionally, and as previously pointed to, to create a definition specifically for football may be pointless given most definitions namely incorporate the same key elements. Yet a definition for grassroots football sponsorship may be warranted for the purposes of this

study, not least due to no sponsorship definition at the grassroots, let alone grassroots football setting appearing to exist. This may thus act as an initial contribution to an area that is currently in its infancy.

The definition from Buhler (2006) further solely focuses on the professional landscape which Foster et al (2016) and O’Gorman et al (2019) proffer as being an environment managed differently to the grassroots level. As well as this, in order to formulate his definition, Buhler (2006) integrates the array of definitions visible from literature, leaving open to question whether all denotations of sponsorship have been reviewed to create an informed interpretation. He further abandons the use of his study’s own findings which may well have provided useful and novel discoveries that could have aided in developing a more well-founded definition that incorporates both academic and practitioner insight.

From the concerns highlighted, this study ultimately develops a definition for grassroots football sponsorship detailed in section 8.2 – derived through practitioner insights as well as previous (sport) sponsorship definitions presented across literature. However, in order to provide context to the study, the key themes associated with sponsorship definitions detailed in appendix 1 are presented in box 1.

Box 1: Summary of key themes associated to definitions of (sport) sponsorship in literature

- An agreement between two parties – the sponsee and sponsor.
- An exchange in resources the creates a mutually beneficial agreement – financial, or in-kind investment in return for exploitable assets that meets individual organisations objectives in conjunction with collective objectives.

1.3.2: Defining Grassroots Football and its Organisations

Sport across Europe is traditionally organised via the level at which it is played at – either professional, semi-professional or grassroots (Arnaut 2006). Further, and like most market economies, the sports panoramic additionally comprises of three main sectors whose activities are independent from one another but are increasingly seen to overlap: (i) the private sector (for-profit), (ii) the public sector (government), and (iii) third sector (not-for-profit or voluntary) (Roberts 2016; Hoye et al 2018). This study ultimately positions itself against the backdrop that Nichols and Taylor (2015) stressed began to emerge in the nineteenth century; the grassroots and not-for-profit sector of sport.

According to Brandt and Bang (2012), the grassroots sports setting is said to comprise of non-professionals at a national or local level who neither spend the bulk of their time, nor take the bulk of their revenue from the practice of sport. Subsequently, under this landscape falls the NCSC whose purpose namely relates to delivering playing opportunities for recreational and/ or competitive sport to its members (Cuskelly 2004; Cuskelly et al 2006; Reid 2012; Misener and Doherty 2014) and thereby typically consists of small-scale operations that are often single-sport driven and ran by volunteers (Nichols and Taylor 2015). It is therefore unsurprising to note the grassroots, not-for-profit sector of sport is the environment in which the vast majority of sports organisations across the world operate under (Auld and Cuskelly 2012).

In considering football, however, changes in trends to its participation has manifested difficulties in clarifying the boundaries for what constitutes the grassroots game (O’Gorman et al 2019). This is epitomised by not one definition being accepted across the organisational footballing bodies that English NCFs are governed by.

As the world governing body for football, the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) merely define grassroots football as ‘football for all’ and ranges from all recreational activity to more organised structures in which people train and compete (FIFA 2019). Yet while this allows for all varied forms of the game worldwide to be included under its umbrella, the definition appears to be rather loose and vague. The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) take a slightly different approach to FIFA in being more precise with their definition. Here, the organisation distinguishes grassroots football from the elite and professional setting, further noting how participation and love of the game are the main driving forces. They continue by identifying the organised forms grassroots football comprises of, which includes, but is not exclusive to, children’s football; schools and youth football; amateur football; football for disabled players; football for veterans; and walking football (UEFA 2019). Finally, as the English NGB for football, the FA define the grassroots game as the setting in which “no-one is paid to play, and no-one pays to watch” (FA 2019b). Yet while this definition provides a clear demarcation line between what is to be viewed as grassroots and what is not, the English game is more convoluted than is being suggested in this connotation. Certain NCFs ask spectators to pay a small gate fee in order to generate revenue to be reinvested back into the club, for example. Accompanying this, and while unethical and indeed rare, there have been instances where players have received remuneration for competing at the lowest echelons of the game. In this regard, the point whereby grassroots football shifts

to being classed as semi-professional or professional is consequently difficult to distinguish (reflected by broken demarcation lines in figure 5).

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, the definition proposed by O’Gorman et al (2019:57) that is somewhat similar to the connotation presented by UEFA (2019) is adopted (refer to Box 2). In using this definition, however, it is crucial to note this study intentionally fails to examine the organised small-sided forms of the game (i.e. 5 a-side and futsal) as it is rare to observe sponsorship dealings within this particular format of football at the grassroots level.

Box 2: Grassroots football definition

Grassroots football is “the spectrum of organised football outside of the professional game, incorporating three distinct but inter-related levels: youth and junior football (boys and girls under 18), community football (male and female amateur leagues and organised small-sided competitions) and non-league or feeder league football (adult amateur/ semi-professional in the football pyramid below professional level).”

Source: O’Gorman et al (2019:57)

Yet in order to further better understand where grassroots football sits in the overall hierarchy of organised football, figure 5 has been created by the researcher to present a review of the current structure of the game in England – otherwise known as the English football pyramid. To provide additional context to this study, the pyramid has been applied to the NWE confines, detailing the number of North-West football clubs located within each of the first five levels of English football for the 2019/2020 season. This was indeed prudent given this is the region set to be explored in regard to grassroots football and its sponsorship dealings.

Level	Step	League(s) / Division(s)						
1		Premier League 20 Clubs (5 North-West of England Clubs) Burnley, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester City and Manchester United						Professional Football
2		Championship 24 Clubs (3 North-West of England Clubs) Blackburn Rovers, Preston North End and Wigan Athletic						
3		League One 24 Clubs (7 North-West of England Clubs) Accrington Stanley, Blackpool, Bolton Wanderers, Bury, Fleetwood Town, Rochdale and Tranmere Rovers						
4		League Two 24 Clubs (5 North-West of England Clubs) Crewe Alexandra, Macclesfield, Morecambe, Oldham Athletic and Salford City						
5	1	National League 24 Clubs (4 North-West of England Clubs) AFC Flyde, Barrow, Chorley and Stockport County						Semi-Professional Football
6	2	National League North 22 Clubs			National League South 22 Clubs			
7	3	Northern Premier League Division One North 24 Clubs		Southern League Premier Division 24 Clubs		Isthmian League Division 24 Clubs		
8	4	Northern Premier League Division One North	Northern Premier League Division One South	Southern League Division One Central	Southern League Division One South & West	Isthmian League Division One North	Isthmian League Division One South	Amateur Football
9	5	Step 5 Leagues (Combined Counties and Regional Premier Divisions)						
10	6	Step 6 Leagues (Combined Counties and Regional Division One)						
11	7	Step 7 Leagues (County Leagues)						
		Youth, Junior and Community Football						

Figure 5: The English football pyramid for 2019/20 season

Coupling the definition introduced by O’Gorman and colleagues (2019:57) with the footballing structure in England (figure 5), as highlighted in orange, those clubs involved below level four are ultimately viewed as being part of the grassroots game, with youth and junior football forming the foundations of the entire footballing system. Indeed, level four appears to be the point at which community and non-league or feeder football converts to being professional. Yet important to note here is how the demarcation lines between the three levels of grassroots, semi-professional and professional football are broken. This is because whilst most clubs will indeed fit within a set boundary, anomalies exist in so far as there may be some clubs that compete in the same league but categorised differently in terms of their level of professionalism. For example, the National League has a mixture of both professional and semi-professional teams (Reuters 2020), with this trend also filtering to level six leagues (Strachan and Moseley 2018). Further, the blend of semi-professional as well as amateur football clubs can be evidenced as far down as leagues positioned at level 11 of the pyramid (Strachan and Moseley *ibid*). While this study could have thus examined sponsorship practice between companies sponsoring NCFs competing in up to and including level five leagues, it instead focuses on the panoramic in which most grassroots football occurs within, those clubs who are part of leagues competing at level 11 or below.

1.3.3: Defining Small-Medium Sized Enterprises and its Organisations

Like other terms this study has scrutinised, it is difficult to find a universal definition towards what constitutes a SME. Indeed, Berisha and Pula (2015) contend how there has been little progression on an accepted denotation since Pobobsky (1992) noted the International Labour Organisation (UNIDO) identified over 50 definitions in 75 nations. Yet while varied SME denotations can be found across the globe (UNIDO 2004; Berisha and Pula 2015; Prowle et al 2017), surprisingly, disparities also exist in how the UK come to define a SME. Although SMEs are frequently labelled as the ‘backbone’ of the UK economy (Prowle et al *ibid*), and account for 99% of all UK businesses and 66% of the total employment in the UK (Rhodes 2019), the government alone adopts several connotations; this is before even considering other UK institutional definitions for a SME. Such ambiguity is argued to be, in part, due to the scale of business increasing over time, subsequently meaning the definition of what constitutes a SME shifts (Hyz 2019). Table 3 thus presents the various definitions UK government and other UK institutional bodies apply when coming to define a SME.

Table 3: Summary of SME definitions

	Purpose	Definition of SME
Prowle et al (2017)	Improving productivity in UK SMEs.	Satisfy two of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up to 50 employees - Up to £3.26 million net assets - Up to £ 6.5 million sales turnover • Medium: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Up to 250 employees - Up to £12.9 million net assets - Up to £25.9 million sales turnover
Companies House (2018)	Registrar of Companies.	Satisfy two of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 50 employees • Annual turnover must be not more than £10.2 million • Balance sheet total must be not more than £5.1 million
House of Commons submitted by Rhodes (2019)	Collection of Statistics for the Department of Business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 250 employees
Her Majesty's Royal Customs (2019)	Research Development Tax Relief.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer than 500 employees • Turnover of under €100 million or balance sheet total of under €86 million

For the purposes of this study, however, this research adopts the definition presented by the European Commission (EC) (2005) given it standardises what constitutes not only a small-sized, or medium-sized enterprise, but also micro-sized enterprise. This appeared prudent given upon initial scope for this research, many companies who sponsored football at the community level fell under this specific category of SME; a micro-sized enterprise (includes terms sole trader and partnership within this term). Box 3 consequently details how the EC (2005) define SMEs, highlighting what constitutes a SME based on the factors of staff headcount and financial thresholds.

Box 3: EC (2005) definition of SME.

<p>Micro-sized enterprise: Less than 10 employees AND turnover OR balance sheet equal to or below €2 million.</p> <p>Small-sized enterprise: Between 10 and 49 employees AND turnover OR balance sheet equal to or less than €10 million.</p> <p>Medium-sized enterprise: Between 50 and 249 employees AND turnover equal to or less than €50 million OR a balance sheet total less than or equal to €43 million.</p>
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Source: EC (2015)

As illustrated in box 3 and table 3, despite differences existing into what constitutes a SME, the language used in order to define SMEs often surrounds the use of numbers. The point stressed by Stokes and Wilson (2010) of SMEs being difficult to define precisely on paper, but often being easier to recognise after being seen in operation may consequently be well-founded. In this regard, UNIDO (2004) offers a compressive set of factors that are said to distinguish SMEs from larger corporations (appendix 2).

However, pertinent to this study is research that highlights how SMEs tend to operate with a lack of ‘specialist’ knowledge and are managed more by ‘generalists’ (UNIDO 2004; Gallagher et al 2012; Ruda and Dackiw 2013). Indeed, such employees within this type of organisation are found to perform an abundance of tasks that would otherwise, in a large corporation, be undertaken by a variety of departments (UNIDO *ibid*; Ruda and Dackiw *ibid*). With the purpose of this study in mind, the lack of marketing knowledge possessed in order to run the business more holistically is said to result in a deficiency in the strategic marketing approaches employed by SMEs (Gallagher et al 2012; Hyz 2019), further being hampered by limited resources in terms of finance and time (Gallagher et al *ibid*). Previous research, for example, emphasises the marketing practices SMEs undertake are largely absent in conventional practices implemented by large organisations as they tend to be haphazard, informal, loose, unstructured, spontaneous and reactive (Carson et al 1995; Gilmore et al 2001; Gallagher et al 2012). The way in which SMEs may approach and manage sponsorship could thus differ to larger businesses who sponsor sport and thus needs to be explored – this is particularly the case given scant amount of research appearing to exist on the sponsorship dealings of SMEs (e.g. Zinger and O’Reilly 2010) in comparison to those of large multi-national corporations.

1.4: Research Objectives

To suitably address the research aim of ‘to develop an management model to support the sponsorship process between the NCFC and SME sponsor’ the following three ROs have been devised;

RO1: To explore the state and focus of scholarly activity in grassroots sport sponsorship research.

RO2: To examine sponsorship within grassroots football.

RO3: To construct and evaluate a grassroots football sponsorship management model.

CHAPTER TWO: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: Overview of Chapter

The chapter presents a critical analysis of research concerned with the sponsorship of grassroots sport through the undertaking of a systematic literature review (SLR). This is to address the study's aim of to 'explore the state and focus of scholarly activity in grassroots sport sponsorship research'. To do this, the chapter initially discusses the rationale for conducting a SLR, before detailing the review process adopted which culminated in the retrieval of 33 articles deemed suitable for this research. A descriptive and thematic analysis (TA) of the recovered literature is then presented, prior to the chapter concluding with a summary of the SLR and the implications this had on the thesis.

2.2: Rationale for Systematic Literature Review

2.2.1: Systematic Literature Review Vs Narrative Literature Review

The review of literature is ubiquitously accepted as a crucial component of any given research project (Tranfield et al 2003; Andrew et al 2011; Booth et al 2012; Bryman 2016; Xiao and Watson 2017) and one which is considered to serve as the catalyst for all investigatory work (Ridley 2012). Indeed, according to Rhoades (2011), the value of a comprehensive literature review that synthesises findings from a number of studies relating to a given field should not be underestimated. To illustrate the importance of a literature review, Gray (2017:98) outlines five chief goals, those being:

1. Presents an up-to-date understanding of the concept being studied, its significance and importance.
2. Identifies issues and themes which offer future research opportunity, particularly where gaps in current knowledge exist.
3. Guides the development of research topics and questions.
4. Assists future researchers comprehend the rationale towards why research was undertaken, its design and direction, while support them to replicate the research process.
5. Details the observational instruments and tools adopted in previous study that may direct and shape the design of the proposed study.

According to Grant and Booth (2009), a total of 14 types of literature review that each present a different method into the analysis of previous research exists. Yet while the

rapid growth in undertaking reviews of literature has resulted in the emergence of a plethora of typologies (Arksey and O'Malley 2005) (cf. Grant and Booth 2009 for discussion into each type of review), a number of authors identify four forms of literature review still remain more common than others, those being; i) traditional or narrative, ii) systematic, iii) meta-analysis, and iv) meta-synthesis (Cronin et al 2008; Arshed and Danson 2015). The differentiating features between such types of reviews are argued by Massaro et al (2016) to be the rules that are employed to conduct the synthesis of associated literature, which can be subsequently presented on a continuum (figure 6).

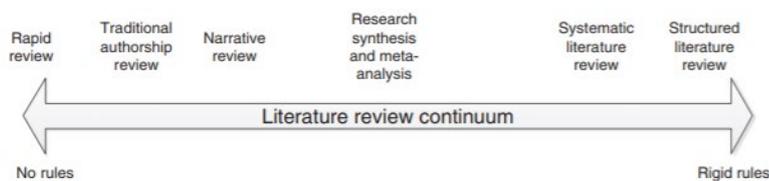


Figure 6: The literature review continuum

Source: Massaro et al (2016:769)

Within marketing and sponsorship research, reviews of literature typically appear to follow a more narrative or traditional typology that according to Denyar and Tranfield (2006) summarises research in more of a non-systematic fashion. In applying the literature review continuum presented by Massero et al (2016) highlighted in figure 6, such research is therefore commonly positioned more at the no rules rather than rigid rules end of the spectrum.

Although traditional reviews summarise previous work written on a given subject (Green et al 2006; Ferrari 2015), such a form of synthesis is typically both selective and subjective because they lack the explicit intent to secure the full scope of literature germane to a topic (Grant and Booth 2009; Pare et al 2015). As a result, such an approach opens sponsorship research to heavy criticism and questions regarding reviewers potentially choosing to limit the attention drawn to, or even completely overlook particular studies so that they can make a relative point. Further and somewhat in line with this, traditional reviews commonly fail to specify how the review of literature was conducted (Cronin et al 2008; Ferrari 2015; Pare et al *ibid*). In fact, Dijkers (2009:425) states that “even if no bias exists, the lack of information in the traditional review on how primary studies were searched, selected, and combined makes replication by others impossible”. This shortcoming coupled with the former issue subsequently renders a

traditional review more vulnerable to researcher bias than that of the systematic literature review (SLR) (Tranfield et al 2003; Green et al 2006; Pae 2015).

In response to these concerns, Tranfield et al (2003, 2009) suggests that management research should champion a more thorough and structured literature review practice. One such way is through undertaking a SLR which is widely accepted across research to offer a more objective, transparent, rigorous, comprehensive, accountable and replicable process compared to the narrative review (Tranfield et al *ibid*; Denyer and Tranfield 2006; Briner et al 2009; Mallett et al 2012; Ferrari 2015; Gough et al 2017; Fisch and Block 2018).

Although first applied to inform the medical sciences in the 1970s (Mallett et al 2012), the use of a SLR approach has veered to outside of the health care field and been adopted to examine a range of contemporary ‘real world’ issues (Petticrew 2001). Indeed, alongside the core domain where SLRs are conducted – medical sciences – reviews that are synthesised systematically can now be observed across disciplines such as education (e.g. Oakley 2003; Bearman et al 2012), public administration (Steinbach et al 2019) and, as noted above, management (Tranfield et al 2003). Further, and in a related point, at the doctoral level, the use of SLRs to synthesise research is growing as the approach has become increasingly renowned within the social sciences (Daigneault et al 2014). In fact, such is the popularity of SLRs that scholars in the fields of soft engineering (Kitchenham et al 2009; da Silva et al 2011), purchasing and supply management (Hochrein and Glock 2012) and software process improvement (Khan et al 2017), for example, have all felt it necessary to undertake what is described as tertiary reviews whereby research undertakes a systematic review of other published SLRs in order to answer more broad-ranging research questions (Kitchenham 2007).

SLRs are said to obey a set of well-defined steps that according to Dickson et al (2017:2) always follow a “definition of the question or problem, identification and critical appraisal of the available evidence, synthesis of the findings and the drawing of relevant conclusions.” Unlike narrative reviews, SLRs therefore alternatively aim to draw together all the available (un)published literature on a particular subject to “generate a robust, empirically derived answer to a focused research question” (Mallett et al 2012:446). This process consequently ensures that the review of literature is less susceptible to researcher bias compared to that of traditional or narrative reviews (Tranfield et al 2003, 2009). As a result, despite the enthusiasm to conduct literature reviews systematically not being

universally shared throughout the academic world (cf. Hammersley 2001, 2008), many still consider SLRs to be the ‘gold standard’ approach to synthesise previous scholarly study on a given discipline (e.g. Haddaway et al 2015; Dickson et al 2017); hence serving as one of the core rationales into this study conducting a systematic review of literature.

2.2.2: Prior (Sport) Sponsorship Reviews

Kim et al (2015) state that as study into sponsorship enlarges so too does the need to systematically review and integrate knowledge. Indeed, the fact that between 1983-1995 (Cornwell and Maignan 1998) and 1996-2017 (Cornwell and Kwon 2019) Cornwell and colleagues recovered a total of 1,241 articles across two SLRs pertaining to research on sponsorship merely exemplifies the need to systemically synthesise such study in this area. A review of previous SLRs concerning the phenomenon of this study – (sport) sponsorship – subsequently recovered a total of ten reviews which synthesised such research systematically. While seven of the SLRs corresponded to sponsorship more generally, (Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Walliser 2003; Ryan and Fahy 2012; Spais and Johnson 2014; Johnson and Spais 2015; Kim et al 2015; Cornwell and Kwon 2019) three instead synthesised research associated to the sport sponsorship setting (Santomier 2008; Papamiliades 2013; Kubacki et al 2018) (table 4). Yet with none of the ten previous reviews evidencing concern for the grassroots backdrop, a further justification into performing a SLR subsequently existed.

Considering the SLRs associated with sponsorship study in chronological order, the initial reviews from Cornwell and Maignan (1998) and Walliser (2003) both aimed to establish the value of a research area in its infancy, whilst simultaneously providing areas for future scholarly attention. Indeed, based on the number of citations in Google Scholar (956 and 515 in July 2019) such direction has arguably impacted on sponsorship research. Just under a decade later, Ryan and Fahy (2012) used a systematic review to track and understand the evolution of the management capabilities required to manage sponsorship. In 2014, Spais and Johnson examined how sponsorship research evolved between 2001 and 2011 via content analysis of word frequencies within abstracts before predicting research trends for 2012-2014. Through content analysis of abstracts, the same authors a year later aimed to semantically map the evolution of sponsorship research from 1980-2012 (Johnson and Spais 2015). In 2015, Kim et al undertook a meta-analysis that aimed to comprehend the key determinants which influence sponsorship outcomes. Finally, in the most recent SLR associated with sponsorship, Cornwell and Kwon (2019) analysed

the current state of sponsorship research between 1996-2017. Based on the study's inclusion criteria, the authors subsequently identified the shortages and surpluses within the current body of knowledge which could thereby drive under-researched topics while aid practitioners with management insights.

Unsurprisingly, SLRs that surround sport sponsorship specifically have received less attention to that of sponsorship more generally (table 4). Reviews into sport sponsorship such as Walraven et al (2012) and Jin (2017) are noted but not detailed further either due to their narrative form (Walraven et al *ibid*; Jin *ibid*) or their examination with general sports marketing literature (Jin *ibid*). The systematic review by Santomier (2008) centred on the current state of global sport sponsorship concomitant to new media developments. In 2013, the PhD of Papamiltiades was the first to attempt to provide a panoramic of sport sponsorship literature in its entirety between 1980 and 2009, highlighting the current state of such research and areas that deserved greater scholarly attention. The SLR of Kubacki et al (2018) arguably holds the greatest relevancy to this study given the review searches for literature connected to social caused-related marketing within sport sponsorship. A basic tertiary review that summarises the SLR articles in terms of topic, article type, number of studies recovered and reviewed, and the study's subsequent key findings is presented below in table 4.

Table 4: Overview of SLRs in (sport) sponsorship research

Author	Topic Area	Article Type	Number of Primary Studies Reviewed	Key Finding(s)
Cornwell and Maignan (1998)	Sponsorship.	SLR	80	Identified five topics addressed in sponsorship research: (i) nature of sponsorship; (ii) managerial aspects of sponsorship; (iii) measurement of sponsorship effects; (iv) strategic use of sponsorship; and (v) legal and ethical considerations in sponsorship.
Walliser (2003)	Sponsorship.	SLR	233 (includes 80 identified in Cornwell and Maignan 1998)	Extends on the review of Cornwell and Maignan (1998). Considerable research advances in the evaluation, management of sponsorship, and how consumers perceive sponsorship. Other areas of sponsorship widely neglected.
Santomier (2008)	Sport Sponsorship.	SLR	24	Value of sport sponsorship has been enhanced through thematically linked, integrated, strategic global marketing initiatives driven by new media applications.
Ryan and Fahy (2012)	Sponsorship.	Systematic historical literature review	141	Sponsorship research has evolved through five eras and approaches: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Pre 1980s: Philanthropic era (sponsorship as a gift) 2) 1980s – Early 1990s: Market-centred era (sponsorship as an investment) 3) Early 1990s – Late 1990s: Consumer-centred era (sponsorship as meaning) 4) Late 1990s – Early 2000s: Strategic resource era (sponsorship as a source of competitive advantage) 5) Present day: Relationship and networks era (sponsorship as interaction)
Papamiltiades (2013)	Sport Sponsorship.	SLR	221	Management of sponsorship deals strategically has become a widely accepted observation across research. Study into exploring differences in the sponsorship of local as opposed to global confines, as well as undertaking more qualitative research is required.

Spais and Johnson (2014)	Sponsorship	Content analysis of abstracts	575	Identified a total of 19 key concepts with most frequently words used being 'sponsorship'; 'sponsor'; 'sport'; 'brand'; 'marketing'; and 'consumer'.
Johnson and Spais (2015)	Sponsorship	Content analysis of abstracts	841	Study identifies four foundational pillars towards sponsorship research: 1) Intellectual – Define the research domain and comprehend the fundamentals of sponsorship management. 2) Strategic – Examination of sponsorships strategic role. 3) Behavioural – Centred on consumer research (i.e. effects of sponsorship on consumers). 4) Relational – Developing the sponsorship partnership.
Kim et al (2015)	Sponsorship.	Meta-analysis	154	Review fashioned a framework of sponsorship effectiveness which showed three antecedent themes (sponsor-related, dyadic, and sponsee-related) which drove three sponsorship outcome themes (cognitive, affective, and conative). The framework also identified three sponsorship moderators (profit v non-profit, sport v non-sport, and prominent v non-prominent) along with three methodological moderators (real v fictitious brands, experimental v observational, and student v non-student sample).
Kubacki et al (2018)	Sport Sponsorship in Social Marketing.	SLR	17	Review provides detailed information from sport sponsorship for social marketing in public health on five areas: (i) locations and budgets, (ii) target audiences, (iii) sponsorship aims, (iv) evaluation, and (v) outcomes. Concludes that coupling of social marketing and public health sponsorship with policy changes in sport clubs and associations presents an effective means to achieve desired outcomes (e.g. behaviour change).
Cornwell and Kwon (2019)	Sponsorship	SLR	409	Initial broad-analysis identified three areas of research into sponsorship: (i) reviews and trends into sponsorship; (ii) management and strategy in sponsorship process; and (iii) measurement and effectiveness of sponsorship in relation to consumers. Of these three areas the review revealed a research shortage in regard to the management of sponsorship that led to further review in this subject area specifically. A total of six broad categories were then identified that could be broken into secondary themes: (i) decision making; (ii) target audience; (iii) objectives; (iv) measurement; (v) context; and (vi) external forces.

In analysing table 4, appraisal of the reviews showed that each SLR failed to examine the area of sport sponsorship research this study attaches itself to; the grassroots milieu. While the review of Kubacki et al (2018) somewhat concerns the community sport setting, the synthesis was confined to the specific issue of public health rather than all literature related to local sponsorship. Resultantly, it is apparent that no reviews have been conducted systematically that may inform future research and practice into the sponsorship of grassroots sport. Assessing and evaluating the current state of research pertaining to grassroots sport sponsorship through conducting a SLR has therefore never appeared more prudent. A review which systematically synthesises a complete census of available sport sponsorship research directed towards the grassroots backdrop is warranted to not just seal a gaping hole within sport sponsorship study but also extend and update sponsorship understanding. Following Papamiltiades (2013) and, more recently, Cornwell and Kwon (2019), this study undertakes a SLR with the purpose of to reveal the shortages and surpluses within grassroots sport sponsorship research. Dovetailed with this, the systematic synthesis of research associated to grassroots sport sponsorship research will also aid mould the narrative literature review which follows in chapter three. In this sense, the study conforms to advice from scholars who attest that SLRs should be considered a means to an end rather than an end in itself (Lichtenstein et al 2008; Mallett et al 2012). This research therefore becomes the first to provide a SLR into sponsorship of the local level, community sports setting and thus adds to this study's originality and significance.

The following section subsequently details the methodology followed in order to synthesise the current literature aimed at the grassroots sport sponsorship context.

2.3: Systematic Literature Review of Grassroots Sport Sponsorship

A number of guidelines into how to conduct literature reviews systematically exist (e.g. Tranfield et al 2003; Pettigrew and Roberts 2006; Kitchenham 2007; Centre for Reviews and Dissemination 2009; (PRISMA Framework) Liberati et al 2009; (Cochrane Collaboration) Higgins and Green 2011; Seuring and Gold 2012; Campbell Collaboration 2014; Easterby-Smith et al 2015; Boland et al 2017). Yet while each proffer nuanced differences in the way in which reviews are undertaken, there appears to be a broad consensus as to the major steps required. In considering each set of guidelines, this study selected the principles outlined by Tranfield et al (2003) owing largely to the process being applied within the management as opposed to the medical science field; the

discipline of this study. This also allowed for a more flexible approach to fully explore, discover and develop ideas (Tranfield et al *ibid*) that would have otherwise not been advocated if using alternative guidelines (i.e. those associated to medical sciences). Further, the acknowledgement from Armitage and Keeble-Allen (2008) who marked the guidelines as befitting doctoral standard research acted as supplementary justification. Indeed, many scholars argue for researchers to adopt the guidelines of Tranfield et al (2003) because they provide clear support in how to conduct the SLR and present subsequent results (e.g. Thorpe et al 2005; Rashman et al 2009).

According to Tranfield et al (2003), systematic reviews comprise of three main stages that can then be divided into ten sub-stages. In keeping with these guidelines, table 5 presents this review process which is subsequently followed for the remainder of this chapter.

Table 5: Summary of the systematic literature review process

Stage I: Planning the review – Section 2.3.1
Phase 0: Identification for the need for a review
Phase 1: Preparation of a proposal for a review
Phase 2: Development of a review protocol
Stage II: Conducting a review – Section 2.3.2
Phase 3: Identification of research
Phase 4: Selection of Studies
Phase 5: Study quality assessment
Phase 6: Data extraction and monitoring progress
Phase 7: Data synthesis
Stage III: Reporting and dissemination – Section 2.3.3
Phase 8: The report and recommendations
Phase 9: Getting evidence into practice

Source: Adapted from Tranfield et al (2003:214)

2.3.1: Stage I – Planning the Review

Prior to conducting this study’s SLR, the researcher firstly needed to understand whether there was indeed a need to undertake a synthesis of literature systematically (Kitchenham 2007). In part, this was dealt with within section 2.2.1 where the rationale behind why a SLR of grassroots sport sponsorship would be a shrewd task to undertake was determined. The tertiary review highlighted no paper appeared to systematically synthesise research positioned against the grassroots sport sponsorship backdrop and thus, by being undertaken in this study, would be the first SLR to do so.

Alongside this, a scoping search was also carried out to form part of the decision-making process. While a scoping review may be understood as a method in its own right (Arksey and O'Malley 2005; Grant and Booth 2009; Pare et al 2015), it is argued to be a method that can also be used to assess the size and type of literature available for synthesis (Boland et al 2017), as well as delimit the subject area or topic (Tranfield et al 2003). An initial scoping review would further support in identifying the research databases which could recover the greatest number of articles pertinent to the study (Jones 2004). The researcher subsequently ascertained whether enough research existed to make grassroots football sponsorship a worthwhile topic for synthesis by briefly scouring literature found within the university's database of 'Discover'. As surmised in appendix 3, literature pertaining to the fields of sport and football sponsorship was initially considered before then being narrowed down to the areas in which this study more specifically attached itself to – the sponsorship of grassroots sport and/ or football. The scoping study consequently contributed to determining that a SLR that homed in on grassroots football sponsorship would be unprofitable given a lack of studies appeared to be orientated to this area (appendix 3). The search was therefore ultimately broadened and opened out to the sponsorship confines of community level sport given such a landscape presented greater research attention to make synthesis more feasible, but, within the same breath, still somewhat mirror the setting of this study. The process noted above consequently lead to formulating the study's first RO which was to 'explore the state and focus of scholarly activity in grassroots sport sponsorship research'.

After arriving at a decision to conduct a SLR of the grassroots sport sponsorship panoramic, a review panel was formed to support negate the likelihood of researcher bias while also reducing the chance of errors and increase objectivity (Green and Higgins 2008). The review panel consisted of the researchers' supervisory team along with an academic liaison librarian who specialised in systematic searches. Given the potential for frequent discussions in order to resolve any disputes surrounding the inclusion or exclusion of given studies (Tranfield et al 2003), the panel was primarily selected based on the researchers' accessibility to each team member (Brown 2007). This was important because the researcher possessed no experience prior to this research in undertaking a systematic review which may therefore have otherwise impacted upon the validity of the review if not for a more experienced review panel (Uttley and Montgomery 2017). For example, during the review process, the panel provided advice ranging from the most

suitable search terms and databases to use, to subsequent discussions surrounding the inclusion of retrieved articles based on the criterion agreed.

The *raison d'être* behind conducting a SLR, namely to improve rigor and trustworthiness, can be largely owed to the documentation of the methodological approach taken to synthesise research – otherwise known as the review protocol (Shamseer et al 2015). In short, the review protocol ‘set out the methods of the review’ (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination 2009) and help negate the likelihood of researcher bias (Silagy et al 2002; Kitchenham 2007; Mallett et al 2012; Booth et al 2016). The development of a protocol also allowed for the methods of the review to be potentially replicated if desired, while additionally identify potential issues that may surface before the searching process began (Shamseer et al 2015).

Published systematic reviews, however, often fail to follow specific protocols (Littell 2013, 2016) and are thus more likely to draw criticism pertaining to bias and error, ultimately engendering an unstable basis for decision-making surrounding practice (Littell and White 2018). International institutions such as the PRIMSA-P Group (Moher et al 2015), Campbell Collaboration (2014) and Cochrane Collaboration (Higgins and Green 2011) are but a few that submit a set of standards for the reporting of SLRs. Yet while several types of review protocol exist, albeit to varying length, each often comprise of similar elements. Indeed, Booth et al (2016) contends that sections which appear commonplace in most protocols relate to the study’s background; research question; search strategy; selection criteria and procedures; quality assessment checklists; data extraction strategy; synthesis of extracted data; and projected timetable. In respect of the management field, however, Tranfield et al (2003) argues protocols present nuanced difference to those within disciplines such as medicine and health because of a lower level of formality and more flexible approach to systematic reviews. Indeed, the authors continue by stressing that to be constrained by a too stringent protocol would be unprofitable since it may suppress the process of exploration, discovery and development of ideas. Consequently, the study mirrored the protocol furnished by Tranfield et al (2003) given the nature of this study aligned to more management principles.

2.3.2: Stage II – Conducting the Review

As an initial starting point to the review, keywords and search terms were selected (Kitchenham 2007) based on those terms identified from the initial scoping study and discussions with the review panel (Tranfield et al 2003). Yet important to note here is

how the articles retrieved would be derived through the search terms used and, as such, saw the final search strings used for the study being the product of an iterative and incremental process. This subsequently involved the search strategy being continually assessed to ensure any terms that had been previously overlooked but had subsequently emerged during the review were included, allowing for all relevant articles to be retrieved. As a result, given this phase of the study intended to primarily ‘explore the state and focus of scholarly activity in grassroots sport’, the final search terms which were employed in various combinations are presented in Box 4.

Box 4: Systematic Literature Review Search Terms

```
spons*  
  
AND  
  
“grassroot* sport*” OR “non-profit sport*” OR “non-professional sport*” OR “not-for-profit sport*” OR “communit* sport*” OR “region* sport*” OR “amateur sport*” OR “local sport*” OR “volunt* sport*"
```

Considering box 4, the search applied Boolean operators to strike a balance between retrieving as much research pertaining to the research topic (OR), while containing all concepts relevant to the study (AND) (Brunton et al 2017). Moreover, the use of an asterisk (*) – otherwise known as truncation – within the search strategy allowed for singular or plural word forms to be identified within the retrieval of records. For example, it was important that spons* was used instead of sponsorship or even sponsor* given that sponsee is frequently cited within sponsorship literature. Further, inputting spons* into the search string ensured terms such as sponsor, sponsoring and sponsorship could also be retrieved from within the search. While this meant trawling through a greater number of articles that may well have been avoided if specifying sponsorship as the initial search term, Harris et al (2014:2764) contends how “it is better to manually review more journal title(s), abstract(s), and full-text article(s) in the database than to be too specific and omit potentially inclusive studies”.

Given the choice of database is argued to be controlled by the topic of interest (Grewal et al 2016; Jahan et al 2016) and the study’s objectives (Centre for Reviews Dissemination 2009), the researcher primarily referred to databases that specialised in the discipline of sport, business and management. Search terms were loaded into a total of seven bibliographical databases (see table 6) to heed the advice that a single database is

insufficient to recover all available literature on a given topic (Bramer et al 2013, 2016) and thus requires the search of multiple databases (Bramer et al 2017). However, given the differences in how each database operated impacted on the precise search string inserted into each engine, it was consequently necessary to adapt the search strategy in accordance with the specific database being used. The opportunity to truncate (*) words was absent within the ScienceDirect database, for instance. This thereby rendered the need to load completed terms into the search engine. From the search strings loaded into each database (box 4), a total of 12,521 papers were returned (table 6).

Table 6: Number of sources returned via initial search

Database	Initial Number of Sources Retrieved
ABI/Inform (ProQuest)	7,568
Business Source Complete (EBSCO)	90
Emerald	103
Science Direct	795
SportDiscus (EBSCO)	129
SpringerLink	1,314
Taylor and Francis	2,522
	Total: 12,521

Articles retrieved from the search in the databases of ProQuest, EBSCO, and Emerald were then exported into EndNote. This was to not only manage and code references (Peters 2017), but also concomitantly screen titles, abstracts and full-texts of the studies returned based on this study's inclusion and exclusion criteria. For SpringerLink, Taylor and Francis, and ScienceDirect databases, due to the engine incapable of exporting hundreds of articles across together, abstracts were instead assessed within the database itself. Studies which met the inclusion criteria were then individually loaded into EndNote. All retrievals from the initial search strings from the ProQuest, EBSCO and Emerald databases (n=7,890) coupled with the articles already scrutinised and deemed to meet the study's inclusion criteria in the remaining databases (n=7) culminated in a total of 7,897 articles being present in EndNote. From this, the researcher then screened for duplicates which removed 153 articles to leave 7,744 unique articles to be assessed for inclusion into the review.

In accordance with the objective of the SLR of to 'explore the state and focus of scholarly activity in grassroots sport sponsorship', any study fixated solely on sport sponsorship at the community and amateur level was deemed justifiable for inclusion. As previously noted, while this could have been perceived to be casting a too wide a net, the scoping study found that a review of literature geared towards the sponsorship of grassroots

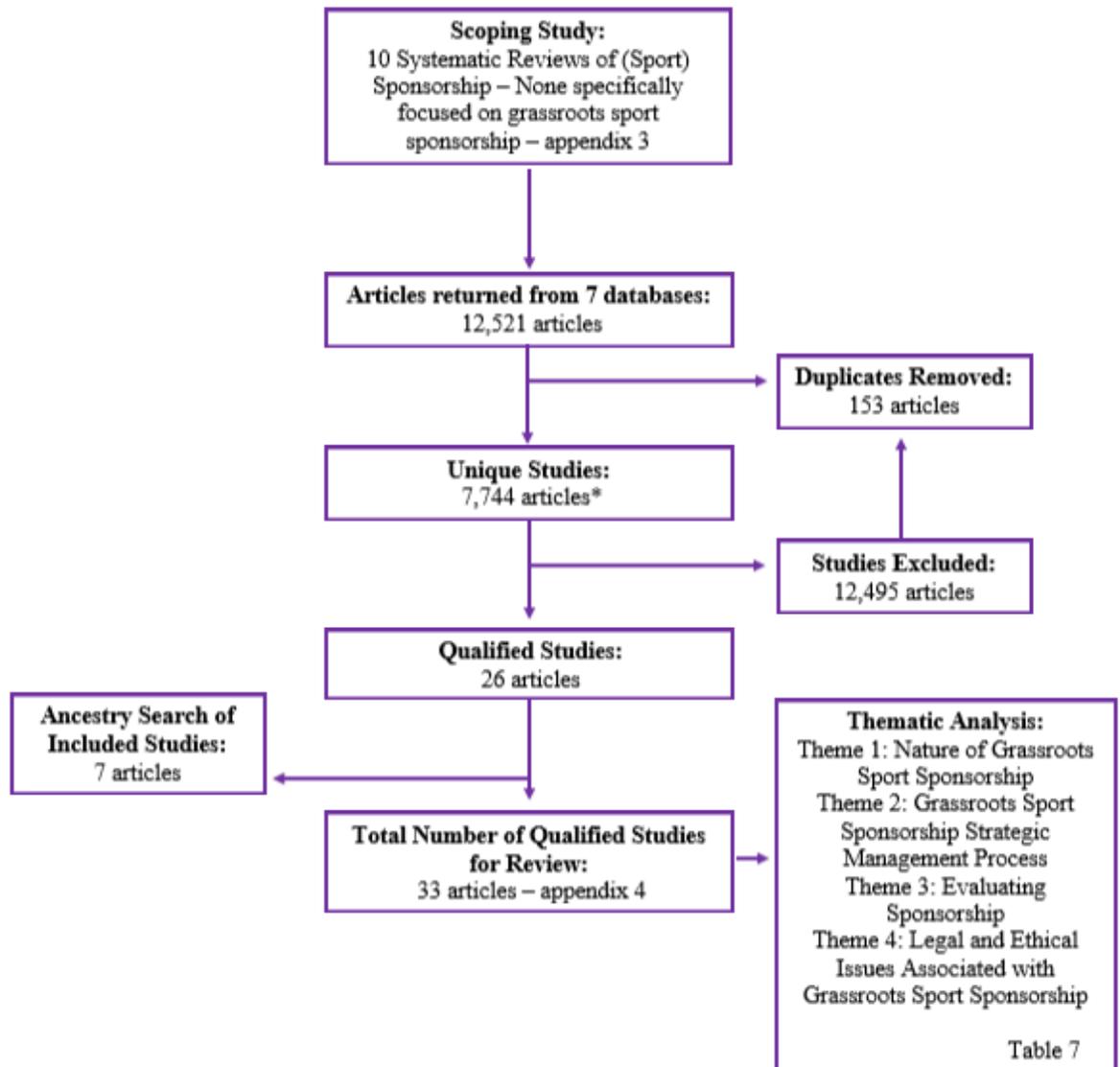
football would be futile given the lack of research present in this area (appendix 3). It was also key to collect all available literature pertaining to grassroots sport sponsorship to introduce the topic as no previous SLR had focused on this area (section 2.2.1), with the grassroots sports landscape itself still possessing some natural reflection into the specific setting this study attached to; grassroots football. Finally, the review intended to drive future research and support practice in the overall grassroots setting meaning that a broadened examination of literature was required.

The exclusion criteria subsequently reflected the study's inclusion parameters and were removed based on six determinants. Firstly, any texts not written in the English language were excluded. Secondly, any texts, theses, and conference proceedings were removed from the review. Thirdly, research into sponsorship within the commercial, professional and elite sport confines was eliminated due to the nature of this study focusing on grassroots sport. Fourthly, research into the sponsorship of (inter)collegiate sports were rejected as despite being considered amateur, the way in which such settings operate is vast in contrast to the landscape typically observed in the European panoramic when considering grassroots. For instance, the European community sport setting is grounded on promoting participation, whereas (inter)collegiate sports take a more professional and commercial approach. Fifthly, certain terms engendered articles unsuitable for the purposes of review. 'Amateur sport*' was often accompanied by articles that pertained to the Olympic Games, for example; a mega-sporting event that secures unprecedented levels of sponsorship investment, and, as such, varies greatly from the community level environment that sees a nominal amount in comparison. 'Non-profit sport*' and 'not-for-profit sport*' search strings also recovered pieces associated to the sponsorship of sport for development and peace programmes. Such initiatives possess a different mission and remit to those sport organisations that deliver sport for participatory and/ or competitive reasons. Finally, studies in which sport sponsorship emerged from findings but were not the explicit purpose for, or intent of the research were excluded (e.g. Gallagher et al 2012).

The application of the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria resulted in an extensive number of studies being removed (n=12,495) to render a total of 26 articles being suitable for the purposes of this review. Loosely mirroring other SLRs (Kim et al 2015; Kubacki et al 2018), included papers were subsequently subject to ancestry search whereby bibliographies of included studies were subsequently reviewed to verify no research relating to the sponsorship of grassroots sport had been overlooked (Kim et al *ibid*). This yielded a further 71 pieces of work for potential inclusion based on the research title, of

which the review of each abstract culminated in a further seven academic papers for inclusion. Figure 7 consequently surmises the search process adopted to procure the entire scope of literature surrounding the sponsorship of grassroots sport in preparation for full review and subsequent analysis.

Figure 7: Summary of the systematic search process



Source: Adapted from the PRIMSA-P Framework in the context of this study.

* All articles from the databases of ABI/Inform, EBSCO, and Emerald alongside those papers deemed suitable for inclusion within SpringerLink, ScienceDirect, Taylor and Francis databases.

2.3.3: Stage III – Reporting and Dissemination of the Review

As depicted in figure 7, the appraisal of articles derived from the initial database search in conjunction with papers retrieved via ancestry methods identified a total of 33 articles in peer-reviewed journals. In line with the work of Andreini and Bettinelli (2017) general information such as author, year and country of study alongside more specific information including nature of study (i.e. purpose and/ or aims), research methods and the study's key findings and/ or outcomes were recorded. Appendix 4 subsequently presents a breakdown to the literature that relates to the sponsorship of grassroots sport, which acted as the starting point for analysis. To synthesise this body of research, a dual analysis approach was undertaken through conducting descriptive (section 2.3.3.1) followed by TA (section 2.3.3.2) (Tranfield et al 2003).

2.3.3.1: First Analysis Phase – Descriptive Analysis

Within this form of analysis, a “ ‘broad-ranging descriptive account of the field’ derived through the simple categorisation of literature should be articulated” (Tranfield et al 2003:218). In response, this section presents a descriptive analysis of the 33 articles included to provide a mapping of the existing grassroots sport sponsorship-related literature in accordance with six core categories, those being:

- (1) Level of sport
- (2) Year of publication
- (3) Sport Sponsorship type
- (4) Geographic location
- (5) Perspective
- (6) Research methods

Level of Sport: Sport in Europe is typically organised via the level it is played at and, as depicted in figure 5 for the football context, can be classified as either being grassroots, semi-professional, or professional (Arnaut 2006). The opportunity for sponsorship can therefore also occur at any of these echelons. However, studies directed at the grassroots level (n=33) in conjunction with the sheer number of sport sponsorship related studies identified by Johnson and Spais (2015) in the most recent SLR of sport sponsorship literature goes some way to assume a disproportionate wealth of scholarly attention refers to the elite as opposed to the lower levels of sport. Indeed, this very point is raised in so far as Quester et al (2013) asserts that research into, and knowledge of, community level

sport sponsorship continues to be a maligned area of study compared to its elite counterpart. As such, delving into the community sport sponsorship setting would thus be prudent to both extend the body of knowledge associated to sponsorship while begin to bridge the chasm between the elite and grassroots sphere.

Year of Publication: A span of articles focused on grassroots sport have been published over the last three decades since the first published article for inclusion in this study in 1996 (Slack and Bentz 1996), with each decade seeing an increase in the volume of publication. Only one of the 33 papers included in this review was published during the 1990's (Slack and Bentz, 1996) with eight more up to and including 2009 (e.g. Seguin et al., 2005; Miloch and Lambrecht, 2006), and a further 24 articles in the last decade (e.g. Zinger and O'Reilly, 2010; Eddy and Cork 2019). The review thus contradicts Kubacki et al (2018) who noted a dearth of sport sponsorship research, although related to public health and social marketing, was published between 2006-2016.

Geographic Location: Applying the socio-economic classifications listed in the United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects Report (2019), all bar one study (Sung and Lee 2016) was affiliated to economically developed continents. Indeed, little or no study into community level sport sponsorship pertained to nations connected to the continents of Africa and Asia, with research by Sung and Lee (2016) thwarting the possibility of no investigation towards the Asian backdrop (South Korea). In contrast, the largest proportion of research was focused within North America (Canada and USA) (n=17) followed by 11 articles in Australasia (Australia and New Zealand). This dovetailed previous SLRs that found sponsorship attracted greater academic interest in North America compared to other corners of the world (Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Papamiltiades 2013). Previous systematic reviews into sponsorship (Walliser 2003) suggested the European context received a bulk of academic coverage. However, this was found not to be the case at a grassroots level wherein only a total of five studies were carried out across Europe (Wicker et al 2012b; Andreini et al 2014; Giannoulakis 2014; Miragaia et al 2017; Ivaskovic and Cater 2018). Notably for this research was that no study related to the UK context to thereby go against prior reviews (Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Papamiltiades 2013) that showed a swell of investigation. This subsequently begs the question as to why no empirical investigation into grassroots sport sponsorship in the UK has been conducted, but also presents an opportune time for this study to start to fill this research void by understanding the context, practices and processes experienced in this country.

Sport Sponsorship Type: The articles in this review cover a number of sports, yet just over half (n=17) dealt with the sponsorship of community sport events (CSE) to augment research that criticises sponsorship investigation of rarely veering away from the event confines (Resier et al 2012; Cornwell and Kwak 2015). Much of the research into CSE sponsorship was found to either concern multi-sport event state festivals (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Dees et al 2007; Choi et al 2011), participatory running events that were solitary or formed part of a race series (n=8), or (alternative) triathlon races (Pegoraro et al 2009; Kim et al 2010). While one study made no explicit reference to the type of sport events selected (Miragaia et al 2017), three articles adopted a multiple case study approach that focused on a range of CSEs (Lamont and Dowell 2008; Mackellar 2015; Batty et al 2016). The remainder of grassroots sport sponsorship research that specifically focused on one given sport entity either centred on the NGB (n=4) or NCSC (n=9) setting. Other studies alternatively placed greater emphasis on a combination of the sponsorship type (n=3) including NCSC and CSE (Slack and Bentz 1996); NCSC and NGB (Kelly et al 2012); or NCSC, CSE and NGB (Zinger and O'Reilly 2010).

Interesting in this section, however, are the patterns that begin to emerge when coupling the type of sport with either the geographical location of the study, or research being undertaken. Articles concerning the CSE context frequently aimed to examine how effective sponsorship is through a consumer perspective. Further, those articles that investigate CSE sponsorship mostly do so in the North American context. Alternatively, articles from European and Australasia nations appear to concentrate more on the NCSC milieu, with the exception to the rule being Miragaia et al (2017) who examine the sponsorship of CSEs in Portugal. In light of this, this study continues to follow the tendencies of European research by focusing upon the sponsorship of NCSCs in order to provide practitioners with support to forge the most effective partnerships between SMEs and NCSCs.

Nevertheless, and of significance to the context of this research was that football presented a dearth of investigation. Indeed, only two pieces of research explored the sponsorship of football (Sawyer et al 2012; Quester et al 2013). However, whereas Sawyer et al (2012) examined the four major footballing codes in Australia (i.e. rugby league, rugby union, soccer (UK football) and Australian Rules Football) and thus failed to examine association football in isolation, Quester and colleagues (2013) explored Australian Rules Football. The dearth of study into football (or soccer) sponsorship at the grassroots level subsequently goes against previous sport sponsorship reviews which

identified football to have received a large amount of scholarly attention (Papamiltiades 2013). Given the limited amount of research into grassroots sponsorship of association football in conjunction with the popularity of the sport in the UK, examination of this landscape is therefore well-warranted.

Perspective: Away from the studies included in this literature review, many academics argue how sponsorship literature often concerns a single stakeholder viewpoint, frequently pinned to the sponsor (e.g. Olson 2010; Toscani and Prendergast 2018a, 2018b). While the current review augments the stance above in so far as a total of 27 papers were written through the perspective of a single stakeholder, research concerning the sponsor was minimal (n=4). Instead, a wealth of study surrounded the consumer (n=15) and saw the sports property also receive more research attention (n=8) than that of the sponsor. Investigation into sponsorship from dual or multi-stance perspective at the grassroots level reflects the general sponsorship research picture with a nominal amount of attention being geared to this setting (n=6). Only two studies investigated the perceptions of sponsors and sponsees concomitantly (Seguin et al 2005; Lamont and Dowell 2008), with Smith et al (2016) adding consumer responses to these two stakeholders previously noted. A further two studies elicited the views of several groups in the sponsorship of CSEs and NCSCs (Kelly et al 2012; Batty et al 2016), while Berrett and Slack (2001) secured views from both NGB personnel and professional sponsorship consultants.

In this respect, research that explores both the sponsors and NCSCs outlook would consequently be prudent. Such a contention becomes accentuated with the call from Zinger and O'Reilly (2010) who stress future study should examine the SME-sports property relationship. This study thus aims to answer this call and thereby make contribution to contemporary sport sponsorship thinking and practice, particularly in the grassroots football setting, by examining sponsorship through both stakeholder viewpoints.

Research Methodology: The approach to the studies included has been largely mono-method, with only one study adopting a mixed-methods research (MMR) design (Smith et al 2016). Aligned to previous systematic reviews surrounding both sports marketing (Abeza et al 2015) and sport sponsorship literature (Papamiltiades 2013), over half of the research in this review (n=20) documented a quantitative research design through questionnaires. This is unsurprising given the consumer perspective features frequently

within the research retrieved (n=16), which when aligned with the more quantitative approaches creates a methodological fit. Nonetheless, this supports contentions made by Wakefield (2012) who argued that studies into sponsorship have frequently favoured a quantitative based approach to analysis in the effort to measure the impact of sponsorship (i.e. brand recall or awareness). A total of three studies used secondary data to examine their given issue (Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Wicker et al 2012b; Kelly et al 2014). Qualitative-related methods of inquiry were detailed within ten studies, each adopting either interview data gathering techniques (Slack and Bentz, 1996) or qualitative case study research designs that incorporated a mixture of collection tools (n=9). The all but non-existent use of a mixed methods research design to examine community sport sponsorship makes the type of approach this study intends to adopt salient as such a method of inquiry may provide a fresh and contemporary angle to the academic field which has been lacking to date.

2.3.3.2: Second Analysis Phase – Thematic Analysis

In the second stage of analysis, research included in the study was subject to TA in order to identify and construct salient themes (Tranfield et al 2003; Thomas and Harden 2008), and ultimately answer the reviews research question (Xiao and Watson 2017). The study chose to follow the process adopted by Thorpe et al (2005) and Jones et al (2011) who suggest inductively building themes through considering the core arguments on which each study's research questions, definitions, measurements and results were based. Because of the inductive data-driven TA approach taken, articles were iteratively read and re-read until the principal themes were constructed (Andreini and Bettinelli, 2017). The review of articles subsequently rendered a total of 19 basic themes which culminated in four higher-order organising themes. Table 7 details the themes constructed from the review of included literature whilst concurrently listing the relevant article(s) from which such themes were built from. Here, it is crucial to acknowledge that many studies included in this TA were not pigeonholed into one singular theme, and instead covered multiple categories due to the nature of the research and their findings. Using table 7 as a starting point, the remainder of this sub-section offers a comprehensive analysis of the themes identified and constructed from the 33 papers included within this systematic review.

Table 7: Thematic analysis of grassroots sport sponsorship research

Organised Theme	Basic Theme(s)	Reference(s)
Nature of Grassroots Sport Sponsorship	Nature of grassroots sport sponsorship agreements	Slack and Bentz (1996); Pegoraro et al (2009); Kelly et al (2010); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010); Sawyer et al (2012)
The Grassroots Sport Sponsorship Strategic Management Process	Pre-sponsorship	
	Sponsorship objectives (sponsor)	Slack and Bentz (1996); Seguin et al (2005); Doherty and Murray (2007); Lamont and Dowell (2008); Pegoraro et al (2009); Kim et al (2010); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010); Wicker et al (2012b); Batty et al (2016); Miragaia et al (2017)
	Sponsorship objectives (sponsee)	Doherty and Murray (2007); Wicker et al (2012b); Misener and Doherty (2014); Batty and Gee (2019)
	Motivations and rationale behind engaging in grassroots sport sponsorship	Slack and Bentz (1996); Seguin et al (2005); Lamont and Dowell (2008); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010); Mackellar (2015); Smith et al (2016)
	Initiation of agreement	Slack and Bentz (1996); Doherty and Murray (2007); Lamont and Dowell (2008); Pegoraro et al (2009); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010)
	Construction and communication of the sponsorship proposal or package	Slack and Bentz (1996); Miloch and Lambrecht (2006); Doherty and Murray (2007); Lamont and Dowell (2008); Kelly et al (2010); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010); Lough et al (2014)
	Selection procedures and decision-making processes	Slack and Bentz (1996); Berrett and Slack (2001); Seguin et al (2005); Doherty and Murray (2007); Kelly et al (2010, 2014); Kim et al (2010); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010); Andreini et al (2014); Lough et al (2014); Mackellar (2015); Batty et al (2016); Sung and Lee (2016); Batty and Gee (2019)
	Development of a sponsorship strategy	Doherty and Murray (2007); Pegoraro et al (2009); Kim et al (2010, 2018); Smith et al (2016)
	During Sponsorship	
	Issues and practices associated with sponsorship leveraging and activation	Seguin et al (2005); Miloch and Lambrecht (2006); Doherty and Murray (2007); Lamont and Dowell (2008); Pegoraro et al (2009); Kim et al (2010, 2018); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010); Choi et al (2011); Eagleman and Krohn (2012); Andreini et al (2014); Lough et al (2014); Mackellar (2015); McKelvey et al (2015); Smith et al (2016) Eddy and Cork (2019)

	Issues and practices associated with sponsorship evaluation	Seguin et al (2005); Doherty and Murray (2007); Lamont and Dowell (2008); Pegoraro et al (2009); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010)
	Other Considerations	
	Critical success factors to manage an effective sponsorship relationship	Misener and Doherty (2014)
	Barriers and sponsorship associated risks	Miloch and Lambrecht (2006); Kelly et al (2010, 2012); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010); McKelvey et al (2012); Lough et al (2014); Batty et al (2016); Batty and Gee (2019)
Evaluating Sponsorship	Measuring sponsorship effectiveness and impact on organisational strategy	Miloch and Lambrecht (2006); Kelly et al (2011, 2012); Eagleman and Krohn (2012); Lough et al (2014); Ivaskovic and Cater (2018); Eddy and Cork (2019)
	Factors that improve or diminish sponsorship effectiveness	Cornwell and Coote (2005); Miloch and Lambrecht (2006); Dees et al (2007); Kim et al (2010, 2018); Choi et al (2011); Kelly et al (2011, 2012); Eagleman and Krohn (2012); McKelvey et al (2012); Quester et al (2013); Andreini et al (2014); Lough et al (2014); Smith et al (2016); Sung and Lee (2016); Eddy and Cork (2019)
Legal and Ethical Issues Associated with Grassroots Sport Sponsorship	The Public Health Agenda – Unhealthy Food and Beverage Sponsorship	
	The landscape of food and beverage sponsorship	Kelly (2010, 2014); Sawyer et al (2012)
	Attitudes towards unhealthy food and beverage sponsors, and their restriction	Kelly et al (2011, 2012); Batty et al (2016); Batty and Gee (2019)
	Proposed restrictions on unhealthy food and beverage sponsors and its impact	Kelly et al (2010, 2011, 2012, 2014); Sawyer et al (2012); Batty et al (2016); Batty and Gee (2019)
	Effectiveness of (accidental) ambush marketing	Miloch and Lambrecht (2006); Zinger and O'Reilly (2010); McKelvey et al (2012)
	Legal structure and its impact on sport property sponsorship revenue	Wicker et al (2012b)

Nature of Grassroots Sport Sponsorship

The review revealed a small number of authors (n=5) commented on the nature of grassroots sport sponsorship and its agreements as part of their research.

Nature of Sponsorship Agreements: Those articles that surrounded this theme frequently documented the provisions both sponsors and sponsees received as a result of engaging in sponsorship (n=5). For the sports entity, financial support was the most cited provision afforded by the sponsor as part of the agreement (Kelly et al 2010; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Sawyer et al 2012). For example, in considering two of the three studies, 78% of all football clubs (n=101) (Sawyer et al *ibid*) and 76% of NCSCs (n=347) (Kelly et al 2010) received monetary provision as part of the agreement. However, support from sponsors was found to not just be purely financial, with research also listing a range of other provisions procured by the sponsee as part of the deals, including: receiving vouchers (Slack and Bentz 1996; Kelly et al 2010); free or discounted products or services (Kelly et al *ibid*; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Sawyer et al 2012); and the purchase of uniforms and/ or equipment (Kelly et al *ibid*; Zinger and O'Reilly *ibid*).

From a sponsor outlook, the small amount of research (n=2) aligned to this theme revealed an extensive list of assets sporting entities provide in return for company support. Indeed, Kelly et al (2010) tabulated a total of 15 different offerings sport entities presented to companies in order to secure sponsorship. In this study, the most typical pertained to being listed as an official club sponsor or partner (66% n=347), or the company's name or logo being brandished on the club's kit (54% n=347). This runs parallel with findings of Pegoraro et al (2009) who observed sporty entities agreed the main offering to sponsors surrounded the use of company logos to promote the sponsors brand.

Away from this, a smaller amount of research highlights the type of company which typically engages in the sponsorship of community sport (n=2). Both studies stress how small and local businesses tended to be the type of company that engaged in community sport endeavours due to personal connections with an individual responsible acquiring sponsorship for a sports entity (Slack and Bentz 1996; Pegoraro et al 2009).

The Grassroots Sport Sponsorship Strategic Management Process

Literature surrounding how to secure, maintain and utilise sponsorship to create an agreement that is of mutual benefit to both sponsor and sponsee uncovered the largest

proportion of research from the studies included in this review (n=28) (table 7). Yet within this high-order theme, bar two studies which detailed complete strategies (Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008), most studies failed to report on how sponsorship is approached and managed in its entirety – from inception to the end of the term deal. Instead, a vast majority of research tended to direct attention towards the key and specific management practices deemed necessary to the sponsorship relationship (table 7). Such individual practices were subsequently labelled into two distinct sub-themes, those being: (i) pre-sponsorship agreement practices, and (ii) during sponsorship practices. A third sub-theme – categorised as other considerations – was also established under the global theme of the management process towards sponsorship. This was in response to the additional aspects found within the recovered literature that revolved around how sponsorship was enacted at the grassroots level and the issues associated with the process of sponsorship but were not seen to fit under the preceding two sub-themes upon closer review.

Pre-sponsorship Agreement Practices

Pre-sponsorship agreement practices revolve around those tasks that should be undertaken by the potential sponsee and sponsor prior to the sponsorship being agreed and managed. As outlined in table 7, the review found six practices and threads relating to this sub-theme; (i) objectives, (ii) motivations, (iii) initiation, (iv) proposal, (v) selection, and (vi) strategy.

Sponsorship Objectives: A total of twelve papers explored issues associated with sponsorship objectives. Of those articles, eight focused from a sponsor's view, two from a purely sport entity stance (Misener and Doherty 2014; Batty and Gee 2019), and a further two which stipulated the objectives of both sponsor and sponsee (Doherty and Murray 2007; Wicker et al 2012b).

For sponsors, the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Slack and Bentz 1996; Seguin et al 2005; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Peoraro et al 2009; Batty et al 2016; Miragaia et al 2017) and enhancing company reputation and image (Slack and Bentz *ibid*; Seguin et al *ibid*; Pegoraro et al *ibid*; Kim et al 2010) were widely acknowledged across research. The use of sponsorship to achieve increased exposure, awareness and/ or sales were other objectives less frequently commented on (Lamont and Dowell 2008; Pegoraro et al *ibid*; Wicker et al 2012b) or alternatively found to be objectives of little significance

(Slack and Bentz *ibid*). Indeed, only Seguin et al (2005) found a greater impetus placed on increasing company awareness over other objectives. Other objectives noted in research included: enhancing employee motivation (Miragia et al 2017); and improving connections to the media, and blocking competitors (Slack and Bentz 1996). In turn, many of the objectives sought by sponsors appeared to fall under one of four types of objectives proposed by Chadwick and Thwaites (2004:40), those being: (i) marketing communication, (ii) relationship marketing, (iii) network, and (iv) resource objectives. Notably however, Kim et al (2010) argued that seeking traditional sponsorship objectives (e.g. increase sales and awareness) may prove fruitless in the grassroots setting, and that sponsors should instead acknowledge gratitude from the consumer as a result of the sponsors support as a prime objective. The work of Doherty and Murray (2007) further contradicted the rest of research included in this theme alternatively finding companies rarely possessed sponsorship objectives – this despite the need to formulate clear objectives (Zinger and O’Reilly 2010).

In contrast and relative to the sponsee, fewer objectives for sports entities appeared to be listed throughout the literature. Objectives commonly related to financial gain and offsetting the shortfall in funding to allow the NCSC to operate (Doherty and Murray 2007; Wicker et al 2012b; Misener and Doherty 2014; Batty and Gee 2019), or increased organisational and sport awareness (Doherty and Murray *ibid*; Misener and Doherty *ibid*).

Motives behind Engaging in Grassroots Sport Sponsorship: Whilst one may be forgiven to dispute sponsorship objectives and motives as the same thing (e.g. Papadimitriou et al 2008), this study identified several motivations perceived unfit to fall under the term objectives and thus needed to be commented on within its own right. For example, personal interest cannot be distinguished as a business objective. In this respect, just six articles explored the rationale and motivation as to why businesses engaged in sponsoring a sports entity. Within this basic theme, there was no research on this from a sports organisation viewpoint highlighting the unbalanced knowledge base from which the overall sponsorship process has been explored. Whereas Mackellar (2015:18) noted wider cultural motives such as ‘for the good of the town’ and ‘promoting a healthier lifestyle’, Seguin et al (2005) identified a total of seven rationales towards sponsorship relating more to organisational and personal specific reasoning which ranged from adding to the firms marketing mix to the interest of the CEO and/ or philanthropy. In fact, the latter motive surrounding a firm engaging in sponsorship of community sport for philanthropic purposes and/ or personal preference is one that is pinpointed throughout this thread

(Slack and Bentz 1996; Seguin et al 2005; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Zinger and O’Reilly 2010; Smith et al 2016). To exemplify this point, the case study research of Zinger and O’Reilly (*ibid*) notes that while at least one commercially-oriented objective was present for each of the six small businesses examined, every company still illustrated how the personal preference of the owner impacted on the decision to sponsor (see table 8). This suggests that even though sponsors place considerable emphasis on commercial return in comparison to pure altruism, philanthropy or personal interest still plays a core role in the sponsors decision to invest in community sport.

Table 8: Summary of small business sponsorship objectives

	Dickinson Insurance	Komputer Korner	Goliger’s Travelplus	RGK Wheelchair	Laking Toyota	Hunt Club Motors
Community goodwill	✓	✓			✓	✓
Company awareness		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employee relations					✓	✓
Commercial objectives		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personal Preferences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Zinger and O’Reilly (2010:294)

Initiation of Sponsorship Agreement: Five articles concentrated on how agreements were initiated and tended to be forged in a variety of ways, with some approaches more prominent than others. The use of personal contacts in which individuals responsible for seeking commercial investment for the sport entity knew a person who owned or managed an organisation was frequently adopted to begin to broker a deal (Slack and Bentz 1996; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Pegoraro et al 2009; Zinger and O’Reilly 2010). Indeed, only one set of authors alternatively noted the propensity for a switch in approach with the sponsor establishing contact with a sports entity, but continued to highlight its rarity (Lamont and Dowell *ibid*). When requesting sponsorship, the sports organisation tended to adopt a more formalised approach through the creation of proposals, both in written and/ or verbal formats (Doherty & Murray, 2007; Lamont & Dowell, 2008), with a more radical and infrequent tactic used by the sports entity being the employment of external agencies to procure sponsorship on behalf of the organisation (Pegoraro et al 2009).

Construction and Communication of the Sponsorship Proposal or Package: Seven articles resonated with this theme and focused on two key issues. Firstly, four studies proffered guidance around what to include when constructing a sponsorship proposal or

package (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Doherty and Murray 2007; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Lough et al 2014); an issue Zinger and O'Reilly (*ibid*) felt sport entities were well-versed in. Secondly, and in line with the first issue, four studies (one same as previous) considered how the proposal or package that had been created should be presented and disseminated to the potential sponsor (Slack and Bentz 1996; Doherty and Murray *ibid*; Lamont and Dowell 2008). Indeed, only the work of Kelly et al (2010) veered from these threads, and, even then, this research could still arguably be placed within the first issue given the scholars reported how 15 out of 108 sport clubs created sponsorship packages that detailed what a sponsor would receive based upon their level of investment.

Selection Procedures and Decision-making Processes: The largest body of research contained inside the pre-sponsorship practice theme centred on the processes implemented to select the most suitable organisation to collaborate with (n=14). Bar the exception of Slack and Bentz (1996), who outlined how sponsorship decisions often fell on a single person who was frequently the owner or manager of the business, research largely neglected discussion into the level of management responsible for the decision on whether to sponsor. Literature rather attempted to list criteria that sponsors and sport properties utilised, or alternatively, could employ when either screening or developing proposals. Ten articles alluded to the inclusion criteria sponsors adopted to select a given sports entity. Whereas some sponsees were found to be chosen due to manager interests or personal connections (Slack and Bentz 1996), other sponsors were more strategic in their selection of sport organisations via considering several issues that could ultimately engender a strong congruent fit between sponsor and sponsee (Seguin et al 2005; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Andreini et al 2014; Kelly et al 2014; Sung and Lee 2016). Indeed, congruent fit appears a principal criterion to the selection process with Doherty and Murray (2007) presenting similar observations but from a sponsee rather than sponsor standpoint. In relation to the sponsee, Kelly et al (2010) observed how seven clubs devised an exclusion criterion based on whether the prospective sponsor conducted business in an alcohol (n=4), tobacco (n=2), or gambling (n=1) related industry. This somewhat aligns with the findings of cognate studies (Batty et al 2016; Batty and Gee 2019), which infer the public health agenda and pressure from consumers ultimately served as an influential decision-making stimulator for both sponsors and sponsees.

Development of a Sponsorship Strategy: Issues concerning the creation of strategies were found to be relatively underexplored with five studies resonating with this theme. This is somewhat surprising given the call from Pegoraro et al (2009) for sponsees to

follow a more strategic approach to furnish long-term partnerships, alongside Smith et al (2016) who highlights how both sponsee and sponsor must collectively design a plan that fits their needs. Yet not too dissimilarly to research into selection procedures, most, if not all attention was drawn to how sponsorship strategies should be constructed and the processes behind such construction (Doherty and Murray 2007; Kim et al 2010, 2018). Doherty and Murray (*ibid*), for instance, presented a more holistic picture to the development of sponsorship strategies, identifying several items that Synchro Canada incorporated into their plan with sponsors and how it was subsequently reviewed. In contrast, the studies of Kim et al (2010, 2018) were more concerned with the concept of gratitude, and how it should be intermixed into a strategy tailored to the targeted consumer given gratitude is said to influence purchase intentions.

During Sponsorship Agreement Practices

During sponsorship practices are activities that are executed after the deal has been agreed and, more importantly, seen the sport entity secure the agreed provision from the sponsor. As opposed to the pre-sponsorship sub-theme that unearthed six core practices, during sponsorship instead identified two key practices, those being; (i) sponsorship leveraging and activation, and (ii) sponsorship evaluation.

Sponsorship Leveraging and Activation: The term leveraging, otherwise known as servicing, centres on the supplementary investment and/ or activity in a sponsorship beyond the initial provision afforded to acquire the entity (O'Reilly and Horning 2013). Out of all of the practices under the global theme of the sponsorship process, the leveraging and activation of sponsorship received the greatest level of attention (n=16) which, as discussed in a further theme, was a marketing-related practice reported to impact positively on a sponsorships success (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Choi et al 2011; Eagleman and Krohn 2012; Smith et al 2016; Eddy and Cork 2019).

Yet research associated with this practice largely focused on the strategies (advised to be) undertaken by both sponsor and sponsee to effectively leverage an association (n=10). Specific leveraging methods ranged from on-site promotional material (e.g. Pegoraro et al 2009; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Eagleman and Krohn 2012), and web and online presence (e.g. Andreini et al 2014), to the use of social (e.g. Kim et al 2018) and traditional media to add value to the association (e.g. Lamont and Dowell 2008). The multiple case study of Seguin et al (2005) further saw each firm engage in extensive leveraging

opportunities including special events, promotional activities, and internal communications. Yet other studies were alternatively less explicit in noting specific leveraging strategies and instead emphasised the need to ground such activities in relation to runner identity for running events (McKelvey et al 2012; Lough et al 2014), or gratitude for other participatory events (Kim et al 2010, 2018).

In an alternative discovery, Lamont and Dowell (2008) concluded limited awareness existed into how both the sponsor and sponsee effectively leveraged deals to facilitate an agreement of mutual benefit. Accordingly, the work of Mackellar (2015) may contribute towards understanding the variations in business leveraging by identifying six interrelated domains that were found to affect a firms' level of engagement with a CSE, those being: (i) event cooperation, (ii) tourism dependency, (iii) business size, (iv) promotional strategy, (v) strategic direction, and (vi) skills and knowledge. Further, the very need for continued development of activation strategies presents a ramification to the deal as it places increased demands on the sponsor (Zinger and O'Reilly 2010), serving as another reason for why a business may shirk leveraging the sponsorship. Research thus consistently concluded by calling for sponsees to assist their sponsors in leveraging the association in a bid to foster long-term relationships (Doherty and Murray 2007; Choi et al 2011; Andreini et al 2014; Eddy and Cork 2019).

Sponsorship Evaluation: The practice of evaluation demonstrated a significant gap in literature with only five studies found to refer to this theme, and each piece solely surrounding the strategies adopted by the sponsor and sponsee to measure the success of the deal (Seguin et al 2005; Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Pegoraro et al 2009; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010). This may be owed to the employment of case study research within these studies which, in turn, aims to explore a given phenomenon in its natural and/ or real-life context (Yin 2009). Nevertheless, in review of literature associated to this theme, a total of 22 different set of evaluative approaches were observed across all case studies. Presentation of this point can be noted in research that revealed two out of three (Seguin et al 2005) and four out of five agreements performed some form of evaluation (Lamont and Dowell 2008), albeit to varying degrees. Indeed, of those that undertook practices to measure the success of their sponsorship, such evaluative strategies were typically seen to be informal (Seguin et al 2005; Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell *ibid*; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010). In contrast, Pegoraro et al (2009) observed only one out of seven deals in their study conducted evaluation. As a result, these findings combined render it unsurprising that Lamont and Dowell (2008)

submitted evaluation was used sporadically to inform the decision-making process relating to sponsorship renewal.

Other Considerations

The third and final sub-theme – other considerations – refers to aspects which are pertinent and relate to the strategic management process of sponsorship at the grassroots level but are unable to be attached to the pre-sponsorship or during sponsorship practice sub-themes. As outlined in table 7, these other considerations referred to the two threads and surrounded: (i) critical success factors (CSFs) to manage an effective sponsorship relationship, and (ii) the barriers and risks associated to grassroots sport sponsorship.

Critical Success Factors to Manage an Effective Sponsorship Relationship: Just one article examined the core competencies and attributes required to forge an effective sponsor-sponsee relationship (Misener and Doherty 2014), in which a survey to be self-administered by NCSCs was developed based on the authors previous qualitative research into the relationship characteristics between the sponsor and non-profit sponsee (c.f. Misener and Doherty 2013). The study reported NCSCs (n=189) determined the attributes of dependability (i.e. trust and consistency) and balance (i.e. equal contribution and no loss in autonomy during deal), alongside operational (i.e. skills that aid in the design, preparation and implementation of activities) and relational competencies (i.e. interpersonal skills necessary to nurture connections) were all necessary to forge successful partnerships; although variances in their significance were notable (Misener and Doherty 2014). Indeed, dependency was listed as the most important factor for NCSCs when coming to build an effective relationship, while operational competencies were not viewed to be as valuable despite its potential to enhance partnerships.

Barriers and Risks: A total of eight studies drew attention to the barriers and risks cognate to grassroots sport sponsorship. While all studies documented the issue of risk, only one additionally commented on the barriers associated to sponsorship (Zinger and O'Reilly 2010). Most study in this theme fixated on the sponsor (n=4) (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; McKelvey et al 2012; Lough et al 2014), with three considering the sponsee (Kelly et al 2010, 2012; Batty and Gee 2019) and only one examined the risks and barriers to grassroots level sponsorship from a myriad of perspectives in relation to a CSE (Batty et al 2016).

In the only study to address the issue of barriers, Zinger and O'Reilly (2010) stressed small firms were commonly hampered by difficulties in communicating with target consumers and incorporating their sponsorship into an integrated promotional strategy. When alternatively considering risk, a trio of studies noted the potential threat of (accidental) ambush marketing as a potential problem that may affect sponsorships effectiveness for a sponsor (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; McKelvey et al 2012). An equal amount of study linked risk with organisational reputation (n=3). For example, adverse experiences towards a given sport entity was argued by Lough et al (2014) to impact upon the reputation of a sponsor. In examining unhealthy food and beverage sponsors, Batty et al (2016) further admitted that although companies exploited grassroots sport sponsorship to forge positive feelings from the consumer, such efforts were drawing criticism to the extent many sponsors from this industry were veering away from sponsorship in order to not diminish their reputation. Batty and Gee (2019) alternatively inferred association with unhealthy sponsors may present sport entities with greater reputational risk and increased criticism from the local community and other major stakeholders. Aligned to this, research has also presented the sports entity with an additional fear in that if they were to restrict the level of unhealthy sponsors this with would place them at greater financial risk (Kelly et al 2010, 2012; Batty et al 2016). Yet the passing of legislation to restrict unhealthy sponsors was seen to represent no major risk as sponsorship accounted for a relatively small proportion of income (Kelly et al 2010). However, as they would still need to find income to fill the gap (Kelly et al 2012), a danger thus still exists.

Evaluating Sponsorship

Upon review of the literature included, the largest proportion of research attention concerned evaluating sponsorship (n=18), with two key areas being identified. These related to: (i) measuring sponsorship effectiveness and its impact on organisational strategy, and (ii) factors that improve or diminish the effectiveness of sponsorship.

Measuring Sponsorship Effectiveness and its Impact on Organisational Strategy: A total of seven studies broached this sub-theme, with most research undertaken directed to the sponsor (n=6). Indeed, six studies assessed the effectiveness of sponsorship on cognitive and behavioural outcomes, measuring grassroots sponsorships impact relative to consumer recall and recognition (Lough et al 2014; Eddy and Cork 2019), consumer purchase intent (Kelly et al 2012) or a mixture of the two outcomes (Miloch and

Lambrecht 2006; Kelly et al 2011; Eagleman and Khron 2012). Only one study aligned to the sports entity wherein how sponsorship affected not-for-profit basketball clubs (n=73) strategies was examined (Ivaskovic and Cater 2018). The study observed whereas clubs who relied on a greater proportion of public funds consequently emphasised: (i) risk reduction over fast results; (ii) local community aims more than top sport results; and (iii) organisational growth more than cost reduction, clubs with larger levels of private investment instead placed importance on: (i) achieving results more than developing the community, (ii) cost reduction rather than growth, and (iii) accept a high degree of risk to achieve fast results.

Factors that Improve or Diminish the Effectiveness of Sponsorship: All research in this theme either alternatively, or in addition to examining the effectiveness of sponsorship, explored the role certain factors play in impacting on sponsorship outcomes (n=18). Nine of the 18 studies were more descriptive in nature as they reported on the effectiveness of sponsorship based on several outcomes or influential factors (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Dees et al 2007; Kelly et al 2011, 2012; Eagleman and Krohn 2012; Lough et al 2014; Smith et al 2016), while eight attempted to examine the factors that impact on sponsorship effectiveness through developing theoretical or conceptual frameworks. Finally, the two-pronged study from Quester et al (2013) opted for a combination of both approaches, initially investigating three determinants of consumer behaviour before, in their second study, testing a conceptual model constructed.

Like measuring sponsorship effectiveness, the abundance of literature related to the sponsor (n=14). Indeed, the work of Wicker et al (2012b) presents the only exception in that the study appears to explore this issue primarily for sponsee benefit. The research shows how the legal structure amongst other determinants such as paid staff significantly influences sponsorship revenue. Yet given the researcher perceives this to hold more credence with the global theme of legal and ethical issues associated with the sponsorship of grassroots sport, further discussion is provided within that particular theme.

From studies more for sponsor gain, many tested several factors in one study (e.g. Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Dees et al 2007; Eagleman and Krohn 2012; Lough et al 2014) or instead examined the antecedents that resultantly impacted on these factors (e.g. Cornwell and Coote 2005; Kim et al 2010, 2018). For instance, Miloch and Lambrecht (2006) examined recall and recognition and purchase intentions relative to six separate factors and found signage, activation, and level of familiarity with the CSE influenced consumer

recall and recognition, while age appeared to impact on consumer purchase intentions. Kim et al (2010) alternatively identified gratitude to be central to achieve sponsorship outcomes and found the perceived intent, value, and investment from the sponsor all impacted on gratitude, and gratitude ultimately affected consumer behavioural intentions. Nevertheless, upon the scrutiny of included literature relating to this theme, sponsorship effectiveness was seen to be influenced by three overarching factors, those being: (i) general demographics, (ii) marketing-/ sponsorship-related practices, and (iii) other related factors. In response, organisations involved in sponsorship must therefore deeply consider the myriad of factors identified when devising sponsorship programmes if they are to forge strong relationships that benefit each respective party.

Demographic Characteristics: Four studies documented the impact that demographics had on sponsorship effectiveness, with characteristics such as age, gender, income and level of education often found to not impact on consumers attitude, level of awareness, recall and recognition, and/ or purchase intents (Kelly et al 2011, 2012; Eagleman and Krohn 2012; Lough et al 2014). The study of Lough et al (*ibid*), however, presented some conflicting results regarding gender, with males exhibiting a more significant positive relationship with purchase intent compared to females. Further, Miloch and Lambrecht (2006) also found significant variance relating to the relationship between age and consumer behavioural intentions in those aged between 26-45, highlighting an increased likelihood to purchase a sponsor's product compared to those over the age of 55.

Marketing-/ sponsorship-related practices: A total of nine articles communicated how marketing and sponsorship-related concepts and practices impacted on the success of sponsorship. The congruent fit between sponsor and sponsee appeared to be one such related concept frequently noted as a factor that could positively impact on consumer attitudes towards a sponsor (Andreini et al 2014), recall and recognition (McKelvey et al 2012), and/ or consumer purchase intentions (Andreini et al *ibid*; Sung and Lee 2016). In stark contrast, Quester et al (2013) summarised there was no relationship when assessing whether perceived fit positively impacted on a sponsors CSR image.

The practice of leveraging and activation was also observed to impact positively on a sponsor given six studies underlined how more effective activation strategies correlated with a greater level of recall and recognition (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Choi et al 2011; Eagleman and Krohn 2012; Smith et al 2016; Eddy and Cork 2019) and consumer

purchase intent (Eagleman and Krohn *ibid*). For instance, Miloch and Lambrecht (2006) observed that compared to sponsors who did not activate their deal, those sponsors who leveraged their deal received double the level of recognition. Smith et al (2016) further exemplified this point by asserting that despite relatively similar levels of investment and continued sponsorship with the same sport entity over several years, the rate of sponsor recall from consumers diminishes without adequate leveraging. Indeed, the value to leveraging sponsorship at the community level was indicated as so significant that Smith et al (2016:89) concluded that “without exceptional leverage, sponsors simply get lost” inside a competitive and cluttered marketplace.

Yet while most research reports positive effects that both generic and more sponsorship-specific factors bear on consumer attitudes and behaviours, other marketing principles can in some instances not only be ineffective but be detrimental. In the only study within this review to specifically examine ambush marketing, McKelvey et al (2012) reports a strong consumer opposition and adverse view to ambush marketing, particularly as the level of the consumers involvement progresses.

Other Related Factors: The review further identifies factors away from demographical characteristics and marketing-/ sponsorship-related principles that favourably impact on grassroots sport sponsorship effectiveness. A swell of research asserted the level of interest, identification, attitude, and/ or (future) involvement toward a CSE (n=9) (Cornwell and Coote 2005; Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; Dees et al 2007; Choi et al 2011; Eagleman and Krohn 2012; McKelvey et al 2012; Lough et al 2014; Sung and Lee 2016; Eddy and Cork 2019) to be significant to how sponsors can utilise and exploit certain determinants to improve their sponsorship success. The level of consumer gratitude (Kim et al 2010); level of consumer goodwill (Choi et al 2011; Eddy and Cork 2019); image of the sponsor (Sung and Lee 2016; Eddy and Cork 2019); attitude towards commercialisation (Dees et al 2007); community commitment (Andreini et al 2014); and overall consumer satisfaction (Choi et al 2011) were all further factors determined to influence a sponsors success at the grassroots level.

Legal and Ethical Issues Associated with Grassroots Sport Sponsorship

The fourth and final theme constructed through the review of included literature surrounded the legal and ethical concerns associated to grassroots sport sponsorship activity (n=11). Within this global theme, the analysis uncovered a total of three streams

that referred to; (i) the public health agenda – unhealthy food and beverage sponsorship, (ii) (accidental) ambush marketing, and (iii) legal structures that impact on sponsorship revenue for sport entities.

The Public Health Agenda – Unhealthy Food and Beverage Sponsorship: The review illustrated that the bulk of research under the global theme of legal and ethical issues within grassroots sport sponsorship connected to the involvement of unhealthy food and beverage companies in grassroots sport (n=7). All articles located in this sub-theme were positioned against the Australasian backdrop, with one author appearing at the heart of this research with Kelly contributing to four of the articles (Kelly et al 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014). The review constructed a further three basic themes relating to this sub-theme, those being; (i) the landscape of food and beverage sponsorship, (ii) attitudes towards unhealthy food and beverage sponsors and its restriction, and (iii) proposed restrictions of unhealthy food and beverage sponsors and its impact.

The Landscape of Food and Beverage Sponsorship: Three studies explored the landscape of food and beverage sponsorship in grassroots sport. Initial work of Kelly et al (2010) aimed to assess the landscape of food and beverage sponsorship in children's community sport, finding 31% of 347 NCSC sponsors operated within the food or beverage industry in some form. From this 31%, half of such sponsors were found unable to satisfy the criteria set by 10 health experts deemed necessary in order to be appropriate sponsors of NCSCs. In a continuance of this study, Kelly et al (2014) then examined the levels of unhealthy food and beverage product communication children were exposed to, ultimately admitting that on a weekly basis a high cumulative amount of time existed for the sponsor to convey their message at NCSC members. Finally, Sawyer et al (2012) explored the current situation relating to alcohol sponsorship within the context of community football clubs, reporting 84% of clubs (n=101) procured sponsorship from the alcohol industry.

Attitudes Towards Unhealthy Food and Beverage Sponsors and their Restriction: A total of four articles examined attitudes of unhealthy food and beverage sponsors from four key stakeholder groups: (i) children, (ii) parents, (iii) sporting organisations, (iv) and sponsors. In an analysis of 103 children views across 20 NCSCs, Kelly et al (2011) reported 70% liked what experts perceived as unhealthy sponsors as they felt satisfied with the company's product and/ or appreciated the support given. In a study which alternatively focused on perceptions of adults, 64% (n=200) felt companies

who sold alcohol, snack food, fast food or confectionary related products were all inappropriate firms to sponsor community level sport (Kelly et al 2012).

The support for restriction to limit unhealthy food and beverage sponsors was resultantly largely supported across NCSCs (55%), sport associations (50%) and parents (69%), particularly from those parents who believed their child would more likely be influenced by sponsorship (Kelly et al 2012). Other research into NCSCs outlooks, however, elicited a more complex stance (Batty et al 2016; Batty and Gee 2019). Such stakeholders detailed how they were conscious of the need to balance the increasing public health agenda and ethical and moral considerations associated with unhealthy sponsors alongside their financial operations, particularly given such deals were not illegal.

Finally, only one study discussed the theme from a sponsor standpoint (Batty et al 2016). The authors noted that although many firms used grassroots sport sponsorship in attempt to counteract the negative perceptions associated to their products and respond to the public health agenda, the increased criticism as a result of this very agenda was forcing sponsors to question their alignments.

Proposed Restrictions on Unhealthy Food and Beverage Sponsors and its Impact: Debate around the regulation and restriction of unhealthy food and beverage sponsors was subsequently evinced in all studies relating to this theme (n=7). In a first point, research found that both the academic (Kelly et al 2011, 2014; Sawyer et al 2012) and sporting community (Kelly et al 2012) called for the limiting or discouraging of these types of deals. A total of five articles subsequently detailed strategies that could combat the swell of unhealthy sponsors observed in the community sport setting (Kelly et al 2010, 2011, 2012; Batty et al 2016; Batty and Gee 2019) – each noting government passing legislation and/ or sporting organisations internally creating a constitution that prohibited any asset to be sponsored by brands perceived to be unhealthy to be prudent.

However, studies then continued in acknowledging the challenges associated to restrictions in procuring sponsorship from such types of sponsors. For example, prospective restrictive actions were underlined to impact upon the sport entities financial viability (Kelly et al 2012; Batty et al 2016) – although, the extent to which the revenue would be impacted varied across literature. Whereas certain research suggested that sponsorship from unhealthy food and beverage companies was a major income stream and would thus considerably affect the NCSC (Kelly et al 2012; Batty and Gee 2019),

others posited such deals to be negligible and thus be easier to replace than other forms of income (Kelly et al 2010). Either way, the restriction of unhealthy food and beverage company sponsors was still noted to require alternative financial provision to be readily made available to offset this reduction in finance (Kelly et al 2011, 2012). Further, even if supplementary income streams were indeed located, several managers of sporting organisations still questioned how policy and regulations would be administered and by whom (Batty and Gee 2019). Such contentions may thus contribute towards why Batty et al (2016:553) stress such partnerships are “an ongoing issue yet to be resolved by a definitive solution.”

Effectiveness of (Accidental) Ambush Marketing: A duo of studies discussed (accidental) ambush marketing and/ or assessed the practices effectiveness in the grassroots setting (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006; McKelvey et al 2012). The study of McKelvey et al (*ibid*) examined race participant attitudes towards ambush marketing across two data collection points (2002 and 2008 New York Marathon), reporting 66% of race participants (n=3,413) held negative attitudes toward ambush marketers, with the level of runner involvement significantly resulting in greater adverse views of those companies who engage in ambush marketing. Yet in a contrasting finding, when alternatively assessing consumer recall and recognition at a CSE, Miloch and Lambrecht (2006) disclosed 29% of attendees (n=492) listed an unofficial venue sponsor as an official event sponsor. This therefore contradicts McKelvey et al (2012) who noted that respondents in their study possessed an exceptional ability to recall and recognise official sponsors. Nevertheless, with this marketing-related principle tending to befall the community sport setting more often than other landscapes because they are less likely to be able to be controlled (Miloch and Lambrecht 2006), practitioners responsible for sponsorship must be aware of, and possess solutions to this threat.

Legal Structures and Impact on Sport Entity Sponsorship Revenue: A small but notable theme was constructed from a single paper that referred to the impact that sport entity legal structures play regarding sponsorship revenue (Wicker et al 2012b). Through data from a previous study (Breuer and Wicker 2011), Wicker et al (2012b) used regression analysis to test if member associations of equestrian sport clubs in Germany (n=1,165) would receive higher levels of income from sponsorship compared to private firms (n=574) due to the sponsor being at a lower risk of hold-up. Whereas 6.7% of private firms received sponsorship income that averaged at €192 to account for 0.1% of total revenue, a total of 22.1% of member associations gained sponsorship typically valued at

€775, leading to sponsorship contributing 1.3% of the clubs' total revenue. The results consequently confirmed that the legal structure impacted on sponsorship revenue to the extent that the authors concluded the need for sport club managers to seriously consider the type of legal structure adopted.

2.4: Summary of SLR and Implications to this Research

This section of the study set out to undertake a SLR with the purpose of 'exploring the state and focus of scholarly activity in grassroots sport sponsorship research' in order to highlight the shortages in research that thereby merit further attention. Since no previous SLR focused on the sponsorship of grassroots sport, this review offers an original contribution to the field by synthesising the 33 articles this study found to pertain to this phenomenon.

Although the level of published works within grassroots sport sponsorship has increased over the last decade, it still remains an emerging field with no work focused within the UK. The SLR found that the largest body of research into grassroots sport sponsorship connected to the strategic management of sponsorship (n=28). This rather than focusing on the process in its entirety instead paid close attention to the specific actions taken throughout sponsorship in conjunction with other issues related to its practice (i.e. pre- and during sponsorship practices, CSFs, and barriers and risks). In fact, only two studies comprehensively reported how sponsorship of grassroots sport was approached and enacted from inception to completion of the deal (Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008), with each of these studies set away from the confines this research pins itself to; the sponsorship of grassroots football clubs. This deficiency of investigation into the entire sponsorship process thus opens opportunities to explore this further and add to this under-researched body of knowledge.

In the form of a flow chart, figure 8 filters the 33 articles retrieved from the SLRs inclusion criteria to the four global themes constructed as a result of the TA. The figure subsequently highlights the three issues this thesis intends to further explore in order to address the study's ROs that pertain to examining grassroots football sponsorship and constructing and evaluating a sponsorship management model aligned to this setting.

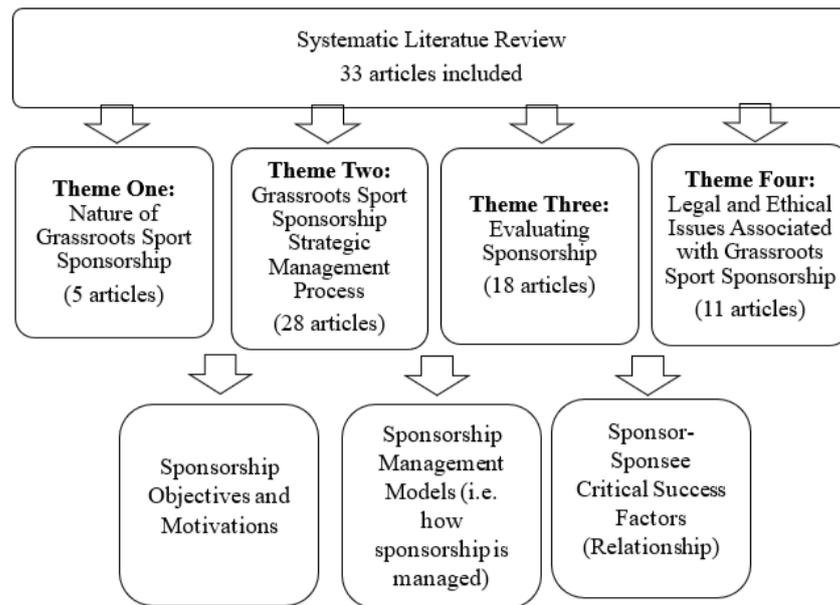


Figure 8: Flow chart of the key themes derived from literature.

CHAPTER THREE: NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1: Overview of Chapter

This chapter extends on the previous work undertaken as part of the systematic review of research positioned against the grassroots sport sponsorship terrain. Predominantly veering away from studies specifically concerned with the community setting – which has been discussed at length in chapter two – by using more generic (sport) sponsorship literature, the chapter provides a broadened examination of research relating to the three areas of which this study seeks to address and explore. The chapter subsequently concludes with a summary of the narrative review and the implications this has on this thesis.

3.2: Review of Sponsorship Objectives and Motivations

3.2.1: Objectives for the Sports Sponsor

Throughout literature there is wide agreement that sponsorship can support sponsors realise a broad-ranging set of objectives (e.g. Meenaghan 1983, 2005; Rines 2002; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004; Masterman 2007; Irwin et al 2008; Cornwell 2020). This is exemplified in the PhD study of O'Reilly (2007) who although examined the practices undertaken to evaluate sponsorship, listed a total of 61 different objectives coveted by the sponsor that were grouped into eight overarching objectives:

1. Efficiency of sponsorship versus advertising (i.e. impact/cost ratio).
2. Flexibility of promotional strategy both in its effects and in the objectives it can meet.
3. Builder of brand equity, including positioning sponsor as a good corporate citizen.
4. Direct contact with key decision-makers via hospitality, positive corporate citizenship and other leveraging tactics.
5. Ability to overcome market clutter and achieve media exposure.
6. Positive impact on employees (motivation and attraction of future staff).
7. Ability to enter new, international markets.
8. Management interest.

Indeed, efforts to categorise the vast number of objectives sought by sponsors have been carried out by a plethora of authors attempting to improve understanding (e.g. Gillies

1991; Iwrin and Asimakopoulous 1992; Crompton 1996; Dolphin 2003; Shank 2005; Jeanrenaud 2006; Fill 2009; Smith and Stewart 2015; Sa et al 2016; Slatten et al 2017). The seminal work of Abratt et al (1987) utilised literature as well as empirical findings to list five categories of corporate sponsorship objectives – (i) product-related; (ii) sales; (iii) media coverage; (iv) guest hospitality; and (v) personal objectives. Alternatively, several authors have used or adapted the work of Sandler and Shani (1993) who classified objectives as either corporate, marketing, or media related (e.g. Pope 1998; Van Heerden and Du Plessis 2003). Cornwell (2020) – a leading author in sponsorship research – instead pigeonholed sponsor objectives in line with two distinct levels that related to what they believed to be either basic or sophisticated sponsorship principles. Whereas the increase in awareness, gaining media exposure, and greater opportunities for hospitality were argued as basic objectives, gaining a competitive advantage or building brand equity were deemed as more sophisticated.

As can thus be seen, inconsistency across research in how to group specific objectives exists, with confusion furthered when stressing the potential for objectives to overlap between categories (Mullin et al 2007). Some authors in fact question whether placing sponsorship objectives into classifications is even worthwhile given each objective is ultimately connected to gaining a competitive advantage (Masterman 2007), increasing awareness and improving image (Sleight 1989), or resides in commercial motives (Nufer and Buhler 2010).

In this sense, the work from Zinger and O'Reilly (2010) that explores sport sponsorship from small business perspectives offers a marked contribution to the literature on sponsor objectives. Instead of categorising the wide-spread number of objectives into distinctive brackets seen across literature, the authors alternatively summarise the various objectives sought by a sponsor as part of a continuum – argued to be in response to sponsor outcomes not being mutually exclusive and thus needing to be placed on a spectrum. As figure 9 depicts, the continuum ranged from pure patronage to a fully functioning sponsorship and showed how once objectives moved past building public awareness and improving employee motivation, a relationship premised on more commercial as opposed to charitable giving surfaced. The generation of new sales consequently signified the creation of a fully functioning sponsorship that, in turn, was believed would engender longer-term relationships.

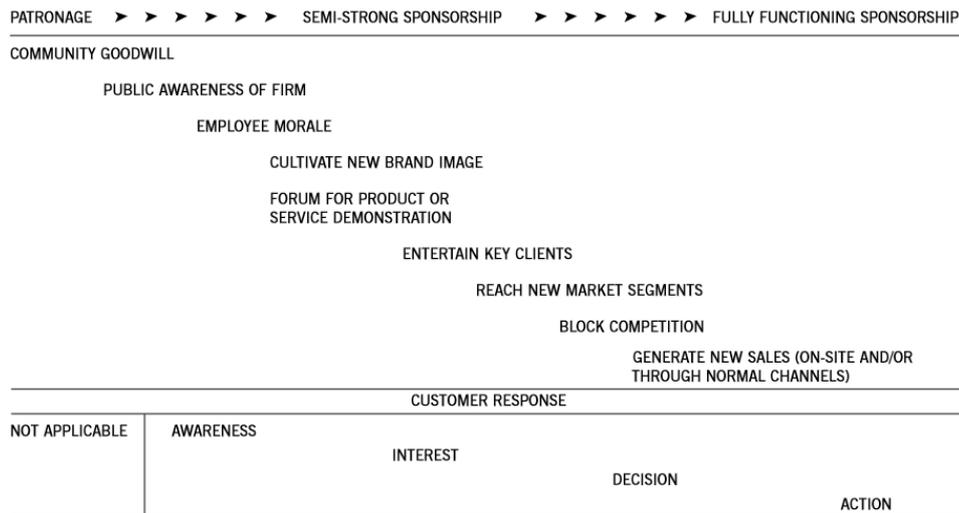


Figure 9: Aligning with sport entities – a continuum of sponsorship benefits
 Source: Zinger and O’Reilly (2010:299)

In analysing the specific objectives sponsors covet, objectives pursued often stem from several factors that can include: the stage of the company’s product or service lifecycle (Lough and Irwin 2001); the company’s size/ industry, and the type of sponsee entity being supported (Copeland et al 1996; Hoye et al 2018); and the level of sponsorship deal (i.e. community vs elite) (Gillooly 2016). Nevertheless, the seminal work from Irwin and Asimakopoulos (1992) that was then refined by Irwin et al (1994) and identifies several sponsorship objectives has been used by several researchers (e.g. Lough et al 2000; Lough and Irwin 2001; Greenhalgh 2010; Greenhalgh and Greenwell 2013). Table 9 consequently details these objectives structured predominantly around what Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) posit as four overarching sponsor objectives, those being; (i) marketing communication, (ii) relationship marketing, (iii) network, and (iv) resource objectives. The researcher deemed this wise given Greenhalgh and Greenwell (2013) argue the categories presented a more comprehensive outlook on the goal’s sponsors covet compared to other classifications. Further, most of the objectives posited by Irwin et al (1994) appear to fall under the categories. Indeed, engaging in corporate philanthropy and block competition were the only objectives ill-suited to any group and were thus placed in an alternative category of other objectives for this study. Each objective is subsequently discussed more thoroughly below.

Table 9: Summary of sponsor objectives

Type of Sponsor Objective (Adapted from Chadwick and Thwaites 2004:40)	Summary of its Features (Adapted from Chadwick and Thwaites 2004:40)	Specific Sponsor Objectives (Adapted from Irwin et al 1994)
Marketing Communication Objectives	Used as a promotional strategy often linked to a company's public relations and advertising.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase consumer awareness. • Enhance/ alter public image. • Increase sales/ market share (otherwise known as consumer purchase intentions). • Community involvement (otherwise known as corporate social responsibility).
Relationship Marketing Objectives	Used to build relationships with key customers including end-users, partners, and other properties the sponsor is connected to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trade/ business goodwill.
Network Objectives	Used to forge relationships with other related organisations.	
Resource Objectives	Used to exploit key resources such as human or financial to develop a relationship that will allow a sponsor to gain a competitive advantage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve employee motivations.
Other Objectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philanthropic giving (i.e. personal interest) • Block competition

Marketing Communication Objectives:

Improving Company Awareness and Public Image: Research outlines how awareness simply refers to the fame and memory of a product or service within a population, whereas image links to the consumers attitude that is attached to the sponsor (Ferrand et al 2007; Chanavat et al 2017b). Three IEG reports (2014, 2016, 2018) observe how raising company and/ or product awareness and cultivating a positive image were frequently listed in the top three sponsor objectives (table 10).

Table 10: Summary of sponsor responses to brand awareness and positive image objectives.

Objective	Percentage Response (Rank)
Building company and/ or brand awareness	2014: 67% (1 st) 2016: 64% (1 st) 2018: 50% (1 st)
Cultivating positive attitudes toward company and/ or brand	2014: 48% (3 rd) 2016: 47% (3 rd) 2018: 46% (=2 nd)

Source: IEG (2014, 2016, 2018)

Early reviews on sponsorship further noted research often found image and awareness objectives appeared to be the most coveted objectives in literature by the sponsor

(Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Walliser 2003), with this this trend appearing to still be prevalent across literature into sponsorship more recently (e.g. Dolphin 2003; Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2004; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004; Papadimitriou et al 2008; Greenhalgh and Greenwell 2013; Gillooly 2016). To exemplify this within a UK football context, Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) reported such objectives were the most coveted, with 93% of sponsors (n=37) listing the generation of public awareness as a core objective, while 88% of companies wished to improve their image. In a more recent study, Gillooly (2016) found the most frequently cited objective in press statements within the SportBusiness International Magazine (n=713) related to positive image transfer (39%), while brand awareness objectives were inferred by a smaller amount of companies (16%). The use of sponsorship in a bid to achieve such objectives has thus not waned, but as emphasised in the study's SLR, appears to not hold as much credence to the sponsor in considering community level sport.

Increasing Sales and/ or Market Share: Other literature such as that from Cornwell (2020) alternatively emphasises the outcomes sought by a sponsor have moved from company awareness and image enhancement to more behavioural- and market-related outcomes such as purchase intent and increased sales/ market share. In fact, several academics believe this to be the overarching objective coveted by sponsors (Shank 2005; Mullin et al 2007; Fullerton 2010; Chanavat et al 2017b). The fact several objectives noted by Irwin et al (1994) could be argued to be antecedents to increasing market share and/ or sales validates this point. As a result, such objectives are listed by some academics as the most popular sought by sponsors during agreements (Lough and Irwin 2001; Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2004; Irwin et al 2008). Yet while Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) found 80% of sponsors pointed to the objective of increasing sales, this was of contrast to Gillooly (2016) who found only 1.5% of all press releases (n=713) elicited tones referring to sales as a sponsorship objective. The latest IEG report (2018) nevertheless noted 62% of sponsors divulged the increase of market share and/ or sales as an objective – unsurprising given the growing focus sponsors place on a return on investment (Gillooly 2016). However, like exploiting sponsorship for increased company awareness, the SLR revealed increased sales to be an objective of less significance to sponsors attached to grassroots sport.

Community Involvement/ Corporate Social Responsibility: CSR alludes to the actions that extend beyond legal compliance by companies wishing to further societal good (McWilliams et al 2006). Research highlights sponsors have increasingly used sport

as a tool to showcase their responsibility and commitment to a community (e.g. Chadwick and Thwaites 2004; Irwin et al 2008; Plewa and Quester 2011), with this appearing to be none more so the case than in the grassroots sport locale (Slack and Bentz 1996; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Miragaia et al 2017; Batty et al 2019). Recent quantitative research by Miragaia et al (2017), for example, concluded that CSR was one of the four main drivers behind a sponsors' (n=80) decision to engage with CSEs. In a similar vein, but through qualitative research, Lamont and Dowell (2008) indicated local community support, together with obtaining media exposure, were the most frequently cited sponsor objectives sought. The work of Zinger and O'Reilly (2010) furthered this point by coupling the use of sponsorship to give back to the community in conjunction with its relative cost effectiveness when examining sports sponsorship from a small business perspective. Employing sponsorship for the purposes of community involvement or engage in CSR may consequently be one of the few sponsor objectives touching the base more than the apex of the sporting pyramid.

Relationship Marketing / Network Objectives:

Building Business Relationships: Strengthening and cultivating business-to-business relationships is another viable objective sponsors covet (Meenaghan 1991; Thomoe et al 2002; Hartland et al 2005; Irwin et al 2008; Cobbs 2011; Shank and Lyberger 2015), with Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) finding 77% of sponsors of English football clubs (n=43) used sponsorship to achieve this objective. To develop such relationships with both clients and suppliers, the use of hospitality opportunities is well-documented (Crompton 1996; Shank 2005; Masterman 2007; O'Reilly and Horning 2013). IEG (2018) highlight entertaining (prospective) clients was ranked fourth on the objectives most sought by sponsors, with 33% of companies indicating it was very important – a 9% growth on the 2014 report and 13% increase on the 2016 survey. The relaxed and informal environment that is set outside of the business setting is argued conducive for business proceedings and thus makes it appealing for sponsors (Crompton 1996). Taking this, it is clear to comprehend how sponsors of non-profit sports entities may seek to exploit sponsorship in order to solicit hospitality opportunities to consolidate loyalty and drive further business, albeit on a more constricted basis.

Resource Objectives

Improving Employee Relations and Motivations: Various literature lists employee-related outcomes such as motivation and pride (e.g. Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2004; Van Heerden and du Plessis 2004; Pichot et al 2008, 2009; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Khan et al 2013), and the recruitment of staff (e.g. Cornwell 1995; Ukman 2004) as objectives sponsors covet from sponsorship. Indeed, Fullerton (2010) asserts how the use of sponsorship can not only offer the potential opportunity to reward employees through hospitality, but also evoke a sense of pride as the employees recognise they work for a company who cares for others. Such objectives, however, are often placed lower on a company's agenda in comparison to others (e.g. Ludwig and Karabetsos 1999; Lough and Irwin 2001; Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2004; Greenhalgh and Greenwell 2013), with Zinger and O'Reilly (2010) exemplifying this point in that only two out of six small businesses acknowledged improving employee relations as an objective they coveted from sponsorship (table 8). Such an objective nevertheless shows how sponsorship can be employed by companies at all levels to pursue goals that are directed away from the end consumer in a bid to improve human productivity instead.

Other Objectives

Philanthropy/ Personal Interest: Although determined as an all but dead objective across literature (e.g. Cornwell et al 2001; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004; Buhler 2006), engaging in sponsorship as a result of philanthropy and personal interest is still prevalent in industry. This is none more so the case than in grassroots sport which frequently discerns companies engage in sponsorship because of the personal preferences of the owner (Slack and Bentz 1996; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Smith et al 2016). Indeed, even the heavily commercialised setting of the top two tiers of English football demonstrates a potential for decisions to be based on personal interest, with Chadwick and Thwaites (2005:332) noting a manager selected to sponsor a club primarily due to their support for them "and only secondarily on commercial considerations". Other research similarly shows sponsorship occurring because of the decision-makers fondness of a particular sports entity (Burton et al 1998; Thwaites and Carruthers 1998). Further, the use of sponsorship to advance the personal agendas of top executives through being provided privileges from the deal is also noted (Cornwell et al 2001). The balanced account of Masterman (2007) thus perhaps best reflects the outlook of this motive in outlining although the use of philanthropy and personal interest is not

an acceptable rationale to enter a sponsorship agreement as it cannot be justified corporately, it is still not unfamiliar to be observed in today's climate.

Block Competition: Despite a limited amount of literature covering this objective, companies have also been found to exploit sponsorship opportunities in a bid to thwart competitors position themselves in the same mind space of the consumer as them (Blakey 2011; Foster et al 2016). Yet not too dissimilarly to employee motivation objectives, research highlights little impetus is placed on this objective by sponsors (Lough et al 2000; Greenhalgh and Greenwell 2013). For example, the study of Greenhalgh and Greenwell (*ibid*) found that from the 12 objectives presented by Irwin and Asimakopoulos (1992), blocking competition was perceived as the least important objective for niche sport sponsors. Nevertheless, this objective is noteworthy to research given it reveals a more defensive approach to sponsorship in contrast to those other types of objectives sponsors solicit. Further, and as documented in the SLR, blocking competitors has been a sponsor objective sought in the confines of grassroots sport (Slack and Bentz 1996).

Setting of Objectives

Although an abundance of academic coverage has documented the objectives sponsors covet and the subsequent prominence sponsors place on these objectives, research has outlined the objectives set by sponsors are frequently not seen to be specific or measurable (Farrelly et al 1997; Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2004; Papadimitriou et al 2008) or even set (e.g. Rines 2002). This is alarming given what is clear across research is how ambiguity is of little value when coming to formulate objectives (Meenaghan 2005), with such objectives needing to at least be specific and measurable (e.g. Masterman 2007; DeGaris 2015) if not SMART (specific; measurable; achievable; realistic; and timebound) (e.g. Collett and Fenton 2011) given objectives which do not conform to this criterion are argued to be notoriously difficult to evaluate (Masterman 2007).

However, and of relevance to this research, Doherty and Murray (2007) found that Synchro Canada had to investigate their own sponsors interests and priorities as the company tended to possess no sponsorship objectives. In their study on professional shirt sponsorships of the top two divisions of English football, Chadwick and Thwaites (2005) observed just over half (54%) of sponsors (n=37) set objectives for their deals – 12% less than those sponsors who set objectives relating to football shirt sponsorships in 1993 (66%) (Thwaites 1995). This failure to set objectives was linked to the limited timescale

in which sponsorship decisions were made by both sponsor and sponsee, and the power of football leading companies to be motivated more by the desire to be associated with the sport rather than a decision built on economic rationale (Chadwick and Thwaites 2005). It is therefore clear that while academic coverage has stressed the need to formulate and articulate objectives which are specific and measurable, in practice, companies are appearing to not heed advice.

3.2.2: Objectives for the Sports Sponsee

Despite the various objectives sport entities are said to be able to achieve through sponsorship (Smith and Stewart 2015), little has been written regarding this issue (Blakey 2011). This may be owed to sponsorship research often concerning the perspectives of the sponsor as opposed to sponsee (Berrett and Slack 2001; Olson 2010; Toscani and Prendergast 2018a, 2018b) and allies to the study's SLR which showed a dearth of study resided in the objectives a sponsee seeks at the grassroots level (table 7).

The objectives sponsees aimed to solicit at the community level were documented in the study's SLR and related to: procuring finance to offset revenue shortages and thus be used to support club operations (Doherty and Murray 2007; Wicker et al 2012b; Misener and Doherty 2014; Batty and Gee 2019); or gain an increase in organisational and/ or sport awareness in the (local) community (Doherty and Murray *ibid*; Misener and Doherty *ibid*). Against the elite football backdrop, Buhler (2006) similarly found professional football clubs across English and German leagues engaged in sponsorship primarily for financial reasons before then highlighting sponsorship was also used to improve the clubs' image. Stotlar (2001) went further in declaring although financial resources may be the most crucial and immediate objective for the sports entity, enhancement of the clubs' image, increased exposure, and the potential for future deals and revenue as a result from the exposure of other deals may be sought. Finally, in non-empirical work from Smith and Stewart (2015), a total of 14 objectives that surrounded three broad and distinctive categories were listed, those being: (i) corporate, (ii) marketing, and (iii) operational objectives (table 11).

Table 11: Summary of sponsee objectives

Broad Sponsee Objectives	Sponsee Objectives
Corporate Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote public image of sports entity via credible association and brand match up. • Increase mass media exposure and public relations (directly via use of new funds, or indirectly via public relations completed by the sponsor). • Increase general public awareness of sports entity
Marketing Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase sport consumer awareness of a sport product/ service/ brand (directly via use of sponsor funds/ resources, or indirectly via public relations completed by the sponsor) • Increase credibility among consumers (via the sponsor) • Establish brand association between sport entity and sponsor to create image transfer • (Re-)position the sport entity in the mind of the consumer • Develop, manage and/ or change brand image. • To promote discounts and deals from channel members. • Develop new relationships/ new distribution channels.
Operational Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain funding, resources and/ or services to support the sport entity operate • To increase staff satisfaction (e.g. pride/ credibility in the association/ free goods and merchandise). • Promote credibility with stakeholders. • Promote satisfaction of shareholders.

Source: Adapted from Smith and Stewart (2015: 206)

As presented in table 11, several objectives the sponsor targets through sponsorship seem to resonate with the sponsee. However, given the all but non-existent level of literature surrounding the objectives a sponsee pursues when engaging in sponsorship, it is thus difficult to discuss each objective more thoroughly.

3.3: Review of Sponsorship Management Models

The SLR revealed a paucity of study explored how sponsorship is managed and was thus symptomatic of more general sponsorship research that argued an ongoing shortfall of sponsorship-related discussion was directed towards its management (Cornwell and Maignan 1998; Hoek 1999; Chadwick and Thwaites 2005; Cornwell and Kwon 2019). The systematic review of Cornwell and Kwon (*ibid*), for example, revealed that of a total 409 articles centred on sponsorship, 101 publications aligned to the issue of management. However, the calls into exploring and addressing how to manage the sponsorship process due to, amongst other rationales, the growth in sponsorship expenditure (Chadwick and Thwaites 2005), has guided an increased amount of research into this subject area.

The way a sponsorship is handled can influence whether a relationship is maintained, and the benefits the relationship can continue to accrue (Cousens et al 2006). Consequently, sponsorship literature concerned with its management is now awash with models that vary in how it contributes to sponsorship knowledge (e.g. Irwin and Asimakopulos 1992;

Cornwell 1995; Copeland et al 1996; Arthur et al 1997; Chadwick and Thwaites 2005; Cousens et al 2006; Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Douvis et al 2015; Sa and Manoel Cunha del Almeida 2016; Cornwell and Kwon 2019). Indeed, Cornwell and Kwon (*ibid*) identify four types of sponsorship models, those being; (i) concept-specific (e.g. competitive advantage; Fahy et al 2004), (ii) industry-specific (e.g. tourism, Lamont and Dowell 2008), (iii) aspect specific (e.g. evaluation, O'Reilly and Madill 2012), and (iv) organisation-specific (e.g. non-profit organisation; Doherty and Murray 2007). Yet whilst the majority of models depict a clear pathway between objectives, selection, leveraging, and evaluation, several limitations become apparent that engender the need for further examination into how organisations undertake the sponsorship process at the grassroots football level.

First, and quite simply, it could be argued some of the models constructed are now too outdated (e.g. Irwin and Asimakopulos 1992; Cornwell 1995; Copeland et al 1996; Arthur et al 1997) in comparison to how sponsorship is currently contended to be managed. One only needs to refer to Ryan and Fahy (2012) who outline how the study into sponsorship has evolved ever since the 1980s because of sponsorship management practices adapting. Table 12 summarises this work by detailing how the management of sponsorship over the past three decades has shifted in five distinct stages. However, the authors stress such approaches evidence overlap and should thus not be isolated by given time periods. For example, related to this study is the return of philanthropic approaches towards sponsorship via CSR. The evidential shift in sponsorship management as surmised by Ryan and Fahy (2012) nevertheless renders the need for a more contemporary account of the sponsorship process that occurs in the current sponsorship landscape.

Table 12: The evolution of sponsorship study due to shifting management practice.

Era	Approach	Sponsorship Perceptions	Management of Sponsorship
Pre 1980s	Philanthropic Approach	Perceived as a gift with broad corporate objectives such as developing goodwill.	Characterised as being ad hoc driven by CEO interests, with little or no formal approach to the selection of properties and measuring the effectiveness of the agreement.
1980s – 90s	Market-Centred Approach	Directed towards a return on investment, particularly focusing on cognitive effects such as awareness and image.	Recognised as being driven by the firms target market, with sponsorship being more formalised and objectively measured.
Early 1990s	Consumer-Centred Approach	Viewed as meaning creation considering congruent-fit, level of sponsorship (i.e. exclusivity) and sponsorship frequency (one-off or annually).	Shift from the management of media to greater emphasis on gaining a deeper understanding into how sponsorship works from a consumer response perspective.
Late 1990s	Strategic Resource Approach	Viewed as a source of competitive advantage in which investment alone was seen to be insufficient for sustainable success.	Greater level of investments in sponsorship-linked activities at the intra-organisational level.
Early 2000s-Present	The Relationship and Networks Approach	Considered as an interaction. Sponsorship is seen as one of two things: 1) a dyad between sponsor and sponsee. 2) a network whereby the dyad is embedded within a larger web of relationships.	Management focused on building relationships that are premised on longer-term contributions to both parties.

Source: Adapted from Ryan and Fahy (2012)

Second, some studies relied solely on theoretical frameworks and/ or sponsorship literature to construct their process model (e.g. Cornwell 1995; Arthur et al 1997; Cousens et al 2006; Cornwell and Kwon 2019). Except for Cornwell and Kwon (*ibid*) that used all sponsorship management literature identified in their SLR to inform the development of their sponsorship process model, all other studies appeared to build their model through articles recovered in a more unsystematic fashion. This therefore means potential research that could have informed the model and even impact on the models' content may have been overlooked.

Further, and in a related point, each of the studies developed their respective model without the use of empirical investigation that, if undertaken and reported on, could have further validated the sponsorship process built from the literature. This thus begs the question as to whether the models built truly reflect the reality faced by organisations. Indeed, Arthur et al (1997:231) admitted as much when calling for future research to examine the “applicability” of their model on a cross-section of organisations involved in the sport sponsorship process. In response, this study combats the criticisms of a lack of empirical investigation and systematic review of literature associated to the process of sponsorship by adapting and adding to the research design of Cornwell and Kwon (2019). It does this by initially gaining an understanding of the body of knowledge connected to

the grassroots sport milieu through a systematic review of all grassroots sport sponsorship research (table 7) before building a model constructed through insights from those responsible for managing sponsorship at the community level.

A third concern of the models is the imbalance in perspectives. Indeed, several studies that construct a model are directed to a commercial entity (e.g. Cornwell 1995; Copeland et al 1996; Arthur et al 1997; Chadwick and Thwaites 2005), whereas only one can be found to be targeted at the sponsee (Doherty and Murray 2007). Further, only a handful of models identified in this study draw attention towards how sponsorship is managed from a dual perspective of both the sponsor and sponsee (Cousens et al 2006; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Cornwell and Kwon 2019). Sponsorship is now viewed more relationally and, as a result, therefore needs to see any model that outlines the processes linked to the management of sponsorship reflect this stance – amplified in noting the SLR found only one of the two studies which created a process associated to the grassroots setting incorporated the company and sport organisation viewpoint (Lamont and Dowell 2008).

Fourthly, the generalisability of certain models in relation to the purposes of this research is a further issue observed. The model constructed by Cornwell and Kwon (2019), for example, surrounds sponsorship-linked marketing as opposed to sport sponsorship specifically. Yet while the model was constructed to veer away from the perceived abundance of specific sponsorship models, sport sponsorship holds defining features that mean the way in which sponsorship is handled may differ to that of alternative forms. To illustrate this point, Toscani and Prendergast (2018a) explored the differences between the sponsorship of sport and the arts. Several distinctions were identified, including: the level of investment; cost/ benefit to sponsorship; sponsorship awareness; and the evaluation of sponsorship.

By extension, a similar argument could be made for those models that instead of surrounding a specific sporting environment focus on sport in general (Cornwell 1995; Arthur et al 1997; Cousens et al 2006). While sponsorship occurs across all echelons of sport – professional, semi-professional and amateur – few studies have examined the intricacies that are presented at each level. A handful of works have explored the processes adopted for sport sponsorship at the elite setting (Copeland et al 1996; Chadwick and Thwaites 2005; Sa and Manoel Cunha del Almeida 2016). Alternatively, and of relevance to this research, fewer studies have examined the management of sport sponsorship against the not-for-profit sports backdrop (e.g. Doherty and Murray 2007;

Lamont and Dowell 2008). Yet at the amateur level, the actions associated with marketing are often hampered by a lack of knowledge from NCSCs (Gallagher et al 2012). As a result, creating an all-encompassing process model may thus not truly reflect the differences sport/ football sponsorship and, in turn, grassroots sport/ football sponsorship presents. Such an issue thus warrants further research attention, with any model constructed accounting for differences in sponsorship enactment at the grassroots level.

As noted several times in this research, only two studies developed a model that details how sponsorship is approached from the inception to end of deal at the grassroots level (Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008). Doherty and Murray (*ibid*) presented a two-phased study whereby the authors initially proposed a five-step prescriptive model for the sponsorship process informed through sponsorship literature (table 13). In the second phase, the paper then conducted case study research with the NGB, Synchron Canada, to ascertain the applicability of the sponsorship process model proposed. The published paper offered no real conclusions instead questioning the reader on what they felt were the strengths and weaknesses of the NGB’s sponsorship activities and how they could improve the likelihood of sponsorship success. The commentary ultimately suggested Synchron Canada closely followed the steps outlined within the five-step process model initially prescribed and highlighted in table 13.

Table 13: Sponsorship process model applied to NGB

Sponsorship Practice	Activities that relate to Practice
Sponsorship Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on sponsor and sponsee objectives, and the type and length of sponsorship deal being sought. • Identify sport entity assets and what makes sponsee attractive to sponsor – thus requires an understanding of the benefits sponsors achieve. • Consider risks of sponsorship.
Identifying Potential Sponsors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify companies who may wish to sponsor.
Sponsorship Proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a proposal that will aid inform and persuade the company to be sponsor.
Sponsorship Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sponsor and sponsee collectively come together to develop a plan detailing how respective organisational objectives will be achieved (must include timescales and individual responsible).
Sponsorship Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both sponsor and sponsee assess whether the objectives coveted at the start or during the deal have been met.

Source: Adapted from Doherty and Murray (2007)

The second study of Lamont and Dowell (2008) investigated the interactions that exist between five SMEs and regional sporting events. Informed through a combination of sponsorship-related literature and empirical findings from a multiple case study research design, the study culminated in an eight-stage model being devised (figure 10). As outlined in figure 10, the sponsorship process is encased within a broken rectangle that represents a regional community and realises the notion of an open-system wherein organisations consistently adapt to external forces. In this sense, it could be argued the model was grounded in similar theory to Cornwell and Kwon's (2019) generic sponsorship model; social eco-system theory.

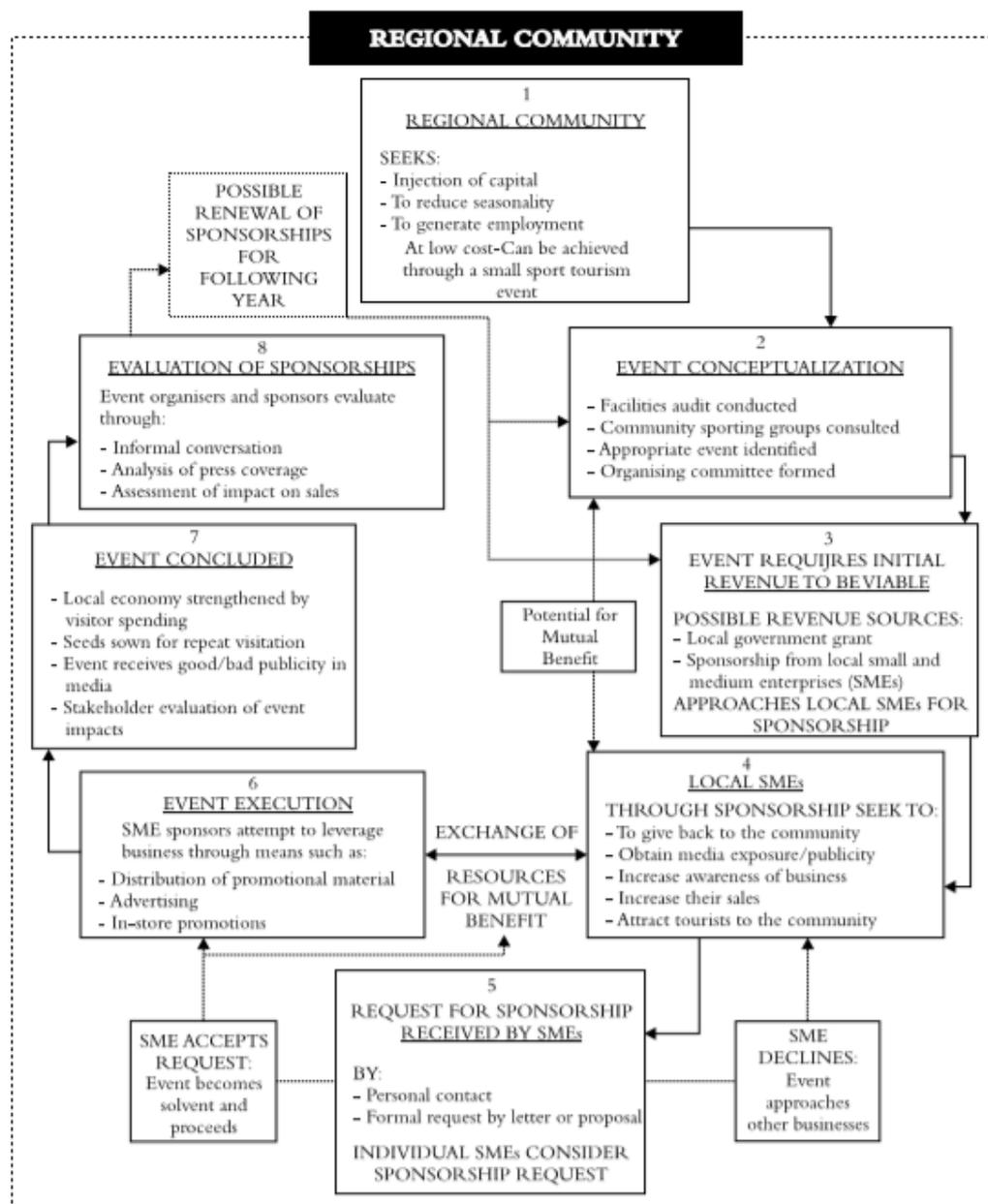


Figure 10: Sponsorship process model applied to CSE

Source: Lamont and Dowell (2008:261)

Although these papers are arguably of most relevance to this research as the models are positioned against the not-for-profit sport backdrop, they are still built for different contexts that this study focuses on. Neither paper is built for the European, let alone UK setting, with both models further failing to concern itself with team-specific sponsorship. To broaden sponsorship understanding at the grassroots level, it is therefore prudent to construct a model premised on the UK sport club setting as this could offer variation into how sponsorship is enacted. For example, (one-off) sport events could engender interactions that are shorter in timeframe and mean the management of sponsorship and its tasks to create a successful partnership need to be more aggressive if it is to succeed. This may vary to team-specific sponsorship which is often conducted over a more prolonged period.

3.4 Review of Relationship Quality Literature – Critical Success Factors

Research has pointed to certain sponsors and sponsees engaging in sponsorship for short-term objectives (Chadwick and Thwaites 2005; Nufer and Buhler 2011), rendering such deals to be little more than contracts between organisations who hold similar objectives or interests at a set point (Chadwick 2004). Yet while historically being observed as impersonal and one-off transactions whereby little contact between the parties involved in the relationship exist, sponsorship agreements have now begun to be carried out with a more relational view consisting of a number of inter-relationships and interactions (Chadwick and Thwaites 2008; Ryan and Fahy 2012). Further, in applying more generic relationship literature, Gronroos (1994) notes how all partnerships initially start with a transactional exchange before becoming more relational over time. This thus suggests that fully-fledged sponsorship partnerships will likely possess some transactional elements in the relationship between the sponsor and sponsee regardless of the attitudes of the organisations concerned.

However, although a growing research interest in the area of relationship marketing exists, few studies have attempted to investigate sponsorship from this emerging perspective (Farrelly and Quester 2003). Of note is the seminal work of Olkkonen et al (2000) and Olkkonen (2001) which may have acted as the catalyst to study sponsorship from a relational viewpoint. The studies theoretically (2000 article) and empirically (2001 paper) mapped how sponsorship research could be progressed by applying concepts affiliated to more interactional and/ or network approaches. Since then, several studies have appeared to ground sponsorship research with either a dyadic or network view (e.g.

Farrelly et al 2003; Farrelly and Quester 2003; Chadwick 2004; Farrelly and Quester 2005a, 2005b; Nufer and Buhler 2010, 2011; Chanavat et al 2016b), with the SLR revealing only two studies of this nature aligning to the confines of community sport (Seguin et al 2005; Lamont and Dowell 2008).

The first study of Seguin et al (2005) investigated the dyadic relationship between three Canadian NGBs and their sponsors in order to develop best practices that could be used for future agreements in relation to the setting of objectives, leveraging, and evaluation. In the second study, Lamont and Dowell (2008) explored five CSE-SME sponsor dyads in Australia to inform the creation of a conceptual model aimed to support practitioners understand how to approach and manage sponsorship from inception to the end of term deal (table 13). Consequently, it is clear study into sponsorship from a dual perspective of both the sponsor and sponsee has drawn minor scholarly attention, particularly within the confines of grassroots sport. The issue regarding what contributes to creating a quality sponsor-sponsee relationship has further been largely ignored across sponsorship research (Buhler 2006). Yet such exploration is vital given it is the quality of a relationship that often forges a long-withstanding agreement, thus meaning understanding the factors which drive this success is necessary (Nufer and Buhler 2010, 2011).

In work that focused on one factor noted throughout literature as being crucial to the success of sponsorship relationships, the PhD thesis of Chadwick (2004) explored the nature of commitment in relation to English professional football clubs and their shirt sponsors. The study found that of the nine antecedents contended to impact on commitment, commitment was driven by the determinants of shared values, perceived benefits and opportunistic behaviours. In a different study, Farrelly and Quester (2005a) examined the effects trust and commitment had on economic and non-economic satisfaction of 46 sponsor-sponsee relationships in the Australian Football League. The authors found that a sponsors' trust positively impacted on overall satisfaction and the decision to commit to the relationship. Further, the sponsors' commitment by leveraging the association was seen to generate significant economic but little non-economic satisfaction. Within the same year, the authors also investigated 28 Australian sponsor-professional football club deals as alliances, exploring the factors deemed crucial to the alliance's success. Alongside those contended in the authors previous study, strategic compatibility and goal convergence were additional factors found to be integral for successful relationships (Farrelly and Quester 2005b).

With the determinants of commitment, trust and satisfaction well-documented in the small amount of literature pertaining to factors that impact on relationship quality, more recent work questioned whether any further success factors were prevalent (i.e. Buhler et al 2007; Nufer and Buhler 2010, 2011). The empirical work of Buhler et al (*ibid*) used quantitative surveys aimed to support qualitative interviews and initially found five factors drove the success of the sponsor-sponsee relationship, those being: (i) trust, (ii) long-term perspective, (iii) mutual understanding, (iv) communication, and (v) co-operation. The subsequent survey with 21 clubs and 105 of their sponsors, however, revealed some discrepancies to the in-depth interviews. While the three factors of commitment (e.g. long-term vision), satisfaction and co-operation directly influenced the success of sponsorship relationships to support the study's interview findings, the survey showed trust and communication alternatively failed to show any impact. Each factor was nevertheless included in more recent papers that summarised each of the five factors in greater detail using literature (Nufer and Buhler 2011) accompanied with contemporary examples in the professional sports setting (Nufer and Buhler 2010).

What consequently becomes clear when reviewing the research summarised is that study directed to examine the relationship factors that impact on the grassroots sport sponsor-sponsee partnership has been largely overlooked. Indeed, as detailed in the SLR within table 7, only one study examined the core relationship attributes and managerial competencies of NCSCs, and their subsequent impact on relationship outcomes (Misener and Doherty 2014) (cf. section 2.3.3.2 for summary of results). Yet a notable limitation to this study was how only one side of the sponsorship relationship was presented, failing to account for the sponsors insight. Indeed, the researchers admitted as much, stressing the need for future research to include exploring this issue from the sponsors perspective as “this would provide a more comprehensive picture of the nature and impact of interorganisational relationships in the setting and thus continue to extend understanding of key factors in their effective management” (p. 504)

3.5: Summary of Narrative Review and Implications for this Research:

A swell of academic coverage has been drawn to the objectives that sponsors deem important (Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2004), with few studies being concerned with investigating the objectives a sponsee covets (e.g. Smith and Stewart 2015), let alone ascertaining which objectives are of greater importance to them. Although commonly seeking different aims to discern the partnership as being successful, the narrative review

showed certain goals resonate with both the sponsor and sponsee. It also showed sponsors alarmingly often fail to set specific and measurable objectives (Masterman 2007), despite such an action serving as the foundation for the management of deals (Chadwick and Thwaites 2004). Research into the objectives a sports entity seeks would therefore be warranted, particularly with calls by Toscani and Prendergast (2018b) for sponsees to acknowledge their motives for entering sponsorship agreements. Further, it is quite conceivable objectives have shifted in importance or even emerged for both the sponsor and sponsee as a result of sport sponsorship and its ever-evolving nature – to explore this would thus extend this body of knowledge. Indeed, a mixed method enquiry such as that adopted in this study would potentially offer further impact given no study fully investigates the issue of objectives through this approach.

The issue of the management of sponsorship has received negligible attention (Cornwell and Kwon 2019) but is starting to show signs of greater contemplation amongst researchers. To understand how sponsorship is enacted, a plethora of models have been constructed that Cornwell and Kwon (*ibid*) perceive to fit under four types. However, such models face a number of criticisms, including: being outdated in comparison to how sponsorship is currently managed (e.g. Copeland et al 1996; Arthur et al 1997); failing to be grounded in empirical investigation that renders difficulties in validating such models in regards to industry-practice (e.g. Cousens et al 2006; Cornwell and Kwon 2019); relying on a single perspective as opposed to multiple views (e.g. Chadwick and Thwaites 2005; Doherty and Murray 2007); and/ or being too generalisable (e.g. Cornwell and Kwon 2019), or specific (e.g. Lamont and Dowell 2008; Sa and Manoel Cunha del Almeida 2016), thus failing to account for the inherent differences in (grassroots sport) sponsorship settings may present when approaching (sport) sponsorship. In taking the limitations alluded to above, this study intends to explore how football sponsorship deals are instigated, agreed and managed, and then (dis)continued or terminated at the lowest level of the sporting pyramid – the grassroots locale. The study into such an area results in a sponsorship model developed through empirical data to enhance both academic and practitioner knowledge.

A limited amount of research centres itself around the factors which impact on the success of sponsorship, with commitment, trust, satisfaction, communication, co-operation, long-term perspective, and shared understanding each identified as integral determinants to the success of the relationship. With only one study set against the grassroots sport backdrop (Misener and Doherty 2014), however, this raises the question as to what extent such

factors apply to this level of sponsorship, if at all? A second question further surfaces in the face of whether other determinants that have been ignored or not identified but crucial to the success of the relationship between sponsor and sponsee in the confines of grassroots sport sponsorship exist? Answering such questions is important given the most successful sponsorships are those with a strong relationship (Nufer and Buhler 2010). Further, to maintain a partnership is easier than procuring a new one (Lagae 2005). An inability to understand what impacts on a relationship between sponsor and sponsee may thwart the effectiveness of deals and thus led to termination of agreement which renders what is considered a more difficult process – this makes such an area wise to investigate in a bid to mitigate such instances. This study subsequently intends to examine the factors both sponsors and sponsees perceive crucial to the effectiveness of their relationship.

In this sense, the study overall is expected to contribute to the body of academic literature that surrounds the fields of: sport and football sponsorship; sponsorship objective setting and motivations; management of sponsorship; and the critical success factors to sponsorship. Each of these are fields subsequently wrapped and explored in the grassroots setting from a dual perspective of the sponsor and sponsee – areas this research shows to be redundant across related areas (refer to table 7 and also section 2.4). A further anticipation is that the study will also help inform professional practice, particularly in relation to the management of sport sponsorship programmes at the grassroots level. The following chapter details the methodology this research adopted in order to attempt to address the study's ROs.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1: Overview of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the methods used within this research in order to answer the study's ROs and overarching research question. Shaped by the work of Saunders et al (2015a), before outlining the procedures the study implemented, the philosophical paradigm, research approach and methodological approach is discussed to provide a foundation for the data collection methods used. The chapter then details the techniques adopted to analyse the data and how such data will be reported. In a penultimate stage, limitations to the study regarding issues with recruitment are presented before finally concluding with a summary of the methods adopted.

4.2: Towards the Selection of an Appropriate Research Strategy

The question of which research methodology to select for a given study is one that is key to the study's overall outcome and one that according to Creswell (2014) and Saunders et al (2015a) involves a number of researcher decisions. For some, the research approach selected ultimately depends upon how the design aligns to the research question (Bryman 2012; Robson and McCartan 2016; Smith 2017), whereby only once the research question has been formulated can the direction of research methodology be truly envisaged (Blaikie 2010). By contrast, for others, the choice is more complex and requires a compromise between decisions informed through the researchers' philosophical position, choices influenced by practical constraints (i.e. gaining access to participants in organisations) (Gill and Johnson 2010), as well as the intended target audience for research output (Creswell 2014). Finally, Hakim (2012:1) deduces that a combination of all such decisions drive the choice of an appropriate research design, analogising this in respect to the construction of a house:

“Design deals primarily with aims, uses, purposes, intentions and plans within the practical constraints of location, time, money and availability of staff. It is also very much about style, the architect's own preferences and ideas... and the stylistic preferences of those who pay for the work and have to live with the result.”

To therefore provide direction to the research, the study drew on and was guided by the work of Saunders et al (2015a) and their 'research onion'. Whilst this study could have been guided by alternative research processes (e.g. 'the trunk' proposed by Easterby-Smith et al 2015), the onion has been applied by leading scholars within the field of sport

sponsorship (e.g. Chadwick 2004; Buhler 2006) to infer this may be accepted as the most apt structure when considering the best approach to be taken in order to address the study's ROs. Figure 11 illustrates how the model comprises of five layers to the research approach (i.e. research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, research choice and research time horizon) that in the opinion of Saunders et al (2015a) each need to be considered or 'peeled away' before reaching the onions core (i.e. data collection and analysis techniques and procedures).

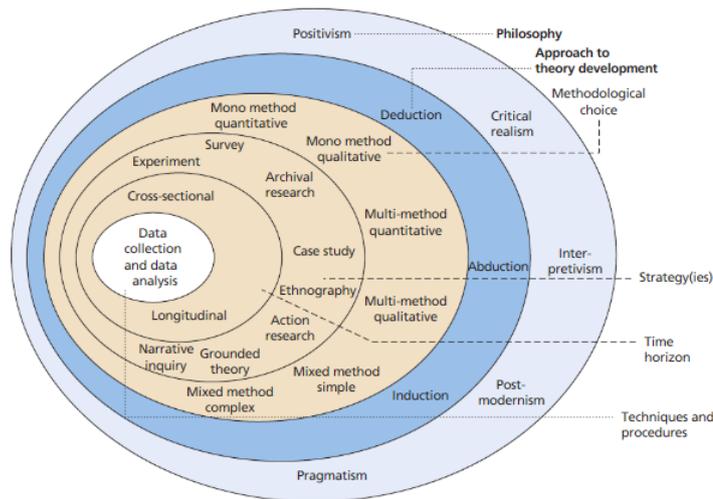


Figure 11: The 'research onion'

Source: Saunders et al (2015a)

4.3: Research Philosophy

As outlined in figure 11, the first and most outer layer of the onion relates to the study's research philosophy. Simply put, research philosophy refers to "the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge in relation to research" (Saunders et al 2009:600). In business and management literature, typically two broad approaches to research exist; positivism and interpretivism (Collis and Hussey 2014). This study, however, was framed through the philosophical assumption associated with pragmatism owing largely to the research adopting a mixed methods approach (Patton 1990; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004; Creswell and Plano Clark 2007; Morgan 2007; Onwuegbuzie et al 2009; Biesta 2010; Feilzer 2010; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010; Shannon-Baker 2016).

Perhaps somewhat crudely put, "...pragmatists do not "care" which methods they use as long as the methods chosen have the potential of answering what it is one wants to know" (Feilzer 2010:14). To a degree, this is why such a school of thought can boarder on an almost 'anything goes' tactic for some (Barnett 2000:122). Robson and McCartan (2016)

nevertheless stress that such convictions can be salvaged on the proviso that: a strong methodological rationale can be provided with the research giving clarity to the purposes of the study, presents a considered conceptual structure, and details appropriate research questions.

Indeed, for the pragmatist researcher, a method that is governed by the research question is often argued to be of greater importance than that of the method used or the philosophical position which underpins the method (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998, 2003; Bryman 2006; Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). The central notion behind pragmatism thus lies in ‘what works’ (Robson and McCartan 2016) and is subsequently more outcome orientated (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). It is for some of the reasons noted above that Armitage (2007) asserts a pragmatic paradigm can be adopted for social and management studies. Indeed, given this study aimed to inform practitioners into how they could approach and manage sponsorship in order to yield the best results from their agreements, the study’s ROs were therefore orchestrated via more pragmatic views as opposed to other philosophical assumptions. Being regulated by philosophical paradigms would have also been unprofitable as it may have constrained the choice of particular research methods or techniques (Robson 1993; Brannen 2005) that may have otherwise been suitable to answer the study’s ROs.

4.4: Research Approach

The second layer of the onion refers to the distinction between three approaches of deductive, inductive and abductive research. Simply put, the question of which approach to use is based on one's views on what should come first – the theory or the data. Deductive research involves the development of a hypothesis grounded through relevant theory that is then subjected to rigorous empirical testing (Bell et al 2018). In contrast, inductive research makes use of the study’s findings to then move towards formulating or building on existing theory (Bell et al *ibid*). Whereas deductive research is thus typically associated with more positivist and quantitative forms of study, inductive research is generally accepted to be cognate with interpretivist and qualitative methods (Gratton and Jones 2010).

While an abductive form of reasoning is often connected with a pragmatist perspective (Bell et al 2018; Mitchell 2018), an inductive approach to this research was adopted because of the dearth of existing literature that explores football sponsorship at the

grassroots level. Although conducting research inductively presents the risk that no useful data patterns/ relevant theory will emerge (Saunders et al 2009) and is also more time-consuming (Buhler 2006), such an approach can furnish new insights that thereby provide further explanations into a given phenomenon (Chambliss and Schutt 2013). In context, the inductive approach granted the researcher with the opportunity to both scope and, in turn, gain a deep-rooted understanding into the approach and management of grassroots football and its sponsorship; an area with no prior research.

4.5: Methodological Approach

Research toward the study of sport marketing has typically relied on a mono-method stance to date, specifically quantitative lines of inquiry. Indeed, a content analysis by Abeza et al (2015) identifies of the 451 sport marketing papers between 1992 and 2014, 247 articles were quantitative (54.8%), 132 studies were qualitative (29.2%), and 58 (12.9%) were conceptual articles, while only 14 (3.1%) linked to MMR. This appears to mirror sport sponsorship study, were merely 15 (7.1%) of the 211 articles included in the SLR conducted by Papamiltiades (2013) – for the purposes of her PhD thesis – combined the use of qualitative and quantitative methods. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that such low prevalence rates towards MMR in contrast to quantitative and qualitative methods are more or less comparable to other disciplines⁴. This may be attributable to MMR being heavily criticised for combining both quantitative and qualitative methods that are ultimately known to be derived from conflicting paradigms (Guba 1987; Sale et al 2002), otherwise termed the ‘incompatibility thesis’ (Howe 1988; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003). Another criticism to MMR is that such a research design functions on the assumption that study findings will coincide with one another and create positive contribution to research (Denscombe 2014). If such findings and results clash, however, the researcher can be subsequently faced with a problem.

Yet as Robson (2011) puts, if MMR approaches are increasingly being undertaken successfully, surely such arguments should be refuted. Further, in light of the advancement of the approach, many now accept MMR as the third methodological movement (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2003) or third research paradigm (Johnson and

⁴ In a study on prevalence rates of MMR within social and behavioural science disciplines, Alise and Teddlie (2010) found that 5% of sociology, 7% of psychology, 9% of nursing and 24% of education research is conducted through MMR. Alternatively, van de Roest *et al* (2013) observed 1.7% of articles within four sport management journals published between 1966 and 2011 relied on a mixed methods approach.

Onwuegbuzie 2004; Gunasekare 2015). In fact, Creswell (2017) anticipates MMR to be a design adopted more throughout the field of marketing in the future. The decision to consequently conduct MMR was considered prudent for this study for several reasons. Firstly, and as highlighted previously, MMR is well-accepted in literature to marry pragmatism (e.g. Feilzer 2010; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010) – the philosophical assumption this researcher takes. Secondly, adopting an MMR design would add a further string to the study’s original contributions given few sport sponsorship studies, particularly within the community domain have employed a MMR approach (Smith et al 2016). Finally, the beauty of MMR is that it enables the researcher to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods to allow for a more complete understanding of the research problem that may not be otherwise captured via either approach alone (Denscombe 2014; Creswell and Creswell 2017). This lies in the ability of MMR to not only maximise the strengths, but also compensate for the weaknesses of each method individually (Greene 2007; Descombe *ibid*; Gibson 2012).

In this sense, a core reason for applying MMR to this study pertains to triangulation, more specifically, methodological triangulation. The triangulation of methods attempts to seek convergence or corroboration of findings from different methods that study the same phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson 2004; Greene *ibid*). In other words, methodological triangulation allows for ‘an understanding of a social phenomenon from different vantage points’ (Denzin 1970 cited in Brannen 2005:176) and “the use of multiple techniques to study a single problem” (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). This said, triangulation thereby not only reduces bias triggered through a single method of inquiry (Deshpande 1983; Rothbauer 2008), but also enhances the validity or credibility of the research (Greene et al 1989; Carter et al 2014; Skinner et al 2014). For some, triangulation is therefore considered as the apex of the research design process (Chadwick 2004). However, along with triangulation, many scholars (e.g. Greene et al 1989; Brannen 2005; Onwuegbuzie and Combs 2011) identify five additional purposes for using MMR and combining the results of different forms of data, those being; (i) complementarity, (ii) initiation, (iii) expansion, (iv) development, and (v) contradictions. Considered relevant to this study were complementarity, expansion and development.

Complementarity was well suited to this study as it could allow for the integration of results from one method to elaborate or illustrate results from the other in order to “create a bigger picture” (Brannen 2005:12) or a “broader understanding of the research problem” (Gibson 2016:388). Expansion, somewhat similar to complementarity (Gibson *ibid*), was

additionally employed to extend the depth of findings and understanding by using one type of data analysis (i.e. qualitative findings) to add to the results from another (i.e. quantitative data) (Brannen 2005). Both were crucial as this investigation revealed how grassroots football received little scholastic attention throughout sponsorship literature (refer to section 2.3.3.1). Further, the study aimed to not just scope the grassroots football sponsorship milieu, but also present an overall panoramic of how it was navigated by both parties.

A developmental design was subsequently also applicable given the research intended to use the results from one method to develop other observational instruments (Greene et al 1989; Brannen 2005). Contextualised, this involved implementing a three-phased design whereby semi-structured interviews were initially used to scope the research landscape. Themes identified from phase one were then applied to aid inform the online questionnaire. The study’s findings and results subsequently fed back to develop a sponsorship model pertinent to the grassroots football level and, in so doing, supported guide the final (repeat) semi-structured interview/ focus group phase that appraised the model. Resultantly, and as depicted in figure 12, the research adopted a ‘iterative sequential mixed design’ as the study involved more than two phases that followed a chronological order (i.e. qualitative → quantitative → qualitative) (Teddlie and Tashakorri 2009:151). Section 4. 7 details both the rationale and processes behind each stage of the three-phased study.

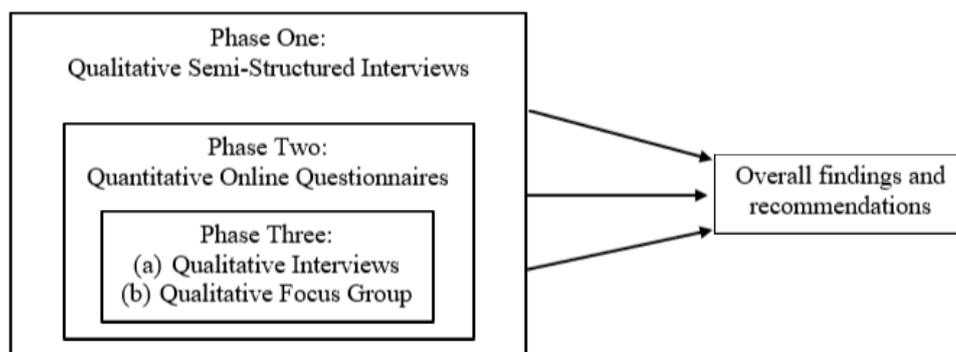


Figure 12: Summary of research approach

4.6: Time Horizons

The penultimate layer of the onion considers the differences between cross-sectional and longitudinal research. Whereas cross-sectional research explores a phenomenon at a particular juncture, longitudinal research conversely measures a given phenomenon over a continuous and prolonged period of time (Bell et al 2018). The inherent long-term nature

of sport sponsorship is well-suited to a longitudinal research design. Indeed, longitudinal research would have enabled the exploration of changes in the interface between NCFCs and SMEs over the course of a typical sponsorship programme. Yet more out of necessity rather than choice, this research favoured a cross-sectional research design. Using Kolah (2015) and his barometer of football shirt sponsorship deals lasting three years on average, it would have thus taken the researcher the same amount of time to conduct a comprehensive longitudinal study that was representative of the sponsorship landscape as it would have for completing the research in its entirety. As a result, the study adopted a cross-sectional research approach to provide a ‘snapshot’ of how football sponsorship is managed at the grassroots level. Although in such a design data is typically collected once from participants (Jones 2015), cross-sectional studies can sometimes be repeated at different times (Sedgwick 2014; Cohen et al 2018). This study did the latter by gathering data from some participants a maximum of three times (phase 1, 2 and 3). For future studies, however, it may be fruitful to examine the field more longitudinally than can be carried out in this study to fully observe how the sponsorship of grassroots football is navigated from the inception to end of the programme.

4.7: Data Collection Methods

This section details the data collection methods undertaken across the study’s three phases, which together, adopted an MMR approach. Before this, however, it outlines the study’s ethical considerations as well as detailing the piloting process implemented in prior to the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data.

4.7.1: Research Ethics

Any research that involves the collection of data from or about an individual – of which this study does – will in all likelihood tender ethical considerations (Denscombe 2014; Gray 2017). Research ethics extend beyond what is determined to be the most suited methodology to answer a study’s RO to consider whether the research being conducted is morally defensible (Gray *ibid*). Indeed, Iphofen (2011:7) declares that for a researcher to behave ethically, one must “plan a route through a moral maze”. One must also not overlook the role that ethics should play in the collection and storage of data, along with the presentation of the study’s findings (Saunders et al 2015a). To therefore act ethically within the study, it was prudent to embrace the key principles of research ethics. While Neuman (2014) contests that only a handful of ethical absolutes exist, many principles are still agreed upon. In a content analysis of nine renowned ethics codes formulated by

social research associations within the UK and United States, Bell and Bryman (2007:71) listed 11 principles of ethical practice; these are summarised below:

1. Ensure no harm (physical and/ or psychological) comes to the participants, researcher, or others.
2. Respect the dignity of the participants, researcher, or others and avoid causing discomfort or anxiety.
3. Ensure informed consent of participants.
4. Safeguard the privacy of participants.
5. Ensure the confidentiality of research data.
6. Protect the anonymity of participants and organisations.
7. Avoid deception through lies or behaviour which is misleading.
8. Declare any affiliations (professional and/ or personal), funding sources and conflicts of interest.
9. Ensure honesty and transparency when communicating about the research.
10. Ensure reciprocity whereby the research is of mutual benefit.
11. Avoid any misrepresentation or false reporting of research findings.

In conjunction with respecting the key principles submitted by Bell and Bryman (2007), it was deemed wise for the study to also act in accordance with Liverpool John Moores University’s Code of Practice for Research; knowing the research would be submitted in partial fulfilment of the institutions degree. Each phase of the research was submitted to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) for ethical review and subsequently granted approval (table 14).

Table 14: Dates of Ethical Approval by the UREC

Phase	Date ethical approval was gained	Reference number
One	6 th June 2017	17ELS-Hindmarsh
Two	5 th February 2018	18/SLN/003
Three	31 st January 2019	19/SLN/002

Prospective respondents were initially provided a participation information sheet (PIS) at each stage of data collection (refer to appendix 5 for example) to offer a robust understanding of the research (Jones 2015). The sheet outlined the nature of the study and what was involved; how participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time; the risks and benefits of partaking; how privacy and confidentiality would be controlled; how the study’s findings would be disseminated; and the researchers contact details

(Jones *ibid*). Why the respondent was chosen was also included (Neuman 2014). The URECs reference number was additionally presented to highlight the research had been reviewed by an independent body and met the committees' standards for practice. From this, consent of those who indicated an interest to partake was sought and obtained prior to the collection of data. For qualitative phases (1 and 3) this meant that written informed consent was obtained by participants signing a consent form at the start of the interview (see appendix 6 for example). Alternatively, return of the online survey from respondents of the quantitative phase of the study (phase 2) was taken as implied consent.

In respect the study's qualitative phases, an instruction sheet which was read out to participants prior to the interviews (phase 1 and 3a) and focus group (phase 3b) was used to remind participants to the purpose of the study and the requirements of the interviewees (see appendix 7 for example). This was undertaken in view of Robson and McCartan (2016) who argued that data generated from participants was to more likely be relevant, in depth and of value if they were aware of their role and felt fully informed of the study's purpose. The instruction sheet was further implemented to gain verbal (alongside written) consent given it included information concerning their rights to withdraw and confidentiality and anonymity issues. This was particularly important as the interviews were being recorded via a Dictaphone to build a greater rapport with each respondent and ensure the successful collection of raw data which could then be subsequently transcribed for analysis at a later date (Jones 2015).

In order to preserve both the participants and organisations anonymity and confidentiality, during transcription and analysis stages, data concerning the names of people, organisations, and places were removed – each an area Saunders et al (2015b) considers key areas to anonymise. Further, interviewees and their organisation were finally prescribed a pseudonym at the reporting stage of the research (Crow and Wiles 2008; Ogden 2008; Iphofen 2011; Robson and McCartan 2016). Such actions were vital to both initially consider and then communicate to participants given this could assure participants they could elicit their true thoughts without danger of it coming back to them, thus allowing for a more open dialogue (Fielding and Thomas 2008).

4.7.2: Pilot Study

Prior to the gathering of data, it was vital that all data collection methods were subject to pilot testing in order to determine whether the procedures selected would work as

intended and subsequently reduce the risk of research being significantly flawed (Zikmund et al 2013). Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2002) identify 16 reasons why conducting a pilot study is crucial to research in relation to improving internal validity. Indeed, a main purpose of pilot tests is to uncover issues that surround the research procedures, so the researcher can subsequently address concerns identified prior to the main study (Morin 2013). Because pilot testing can offer researchers ‘introductions to unknown worlds’ (Sampson 2004:399), it was further important that this study conducted pilot tests in view that published work relating to the sponsorship of grassroots football is still in its infancy and remains largely underdeveloped, if not non-existent.

To pilot the data collection instruments used for each of the study’s three phases, mirroring the advice of research that highlights two stages to piloting, in a first instance, each data collection tool was subject to pre-testing (Moore 2006; Gillham 2007; Magnusson and Marecek 2015; Saunders et al 2015a). As part of this pre-testing, the study’s (repeat) interview schedules, online surveys and focus group interview schedule were entrusted to an academic whose PhD research specialised in the field of sport sponsorship. A scholar who possessed a broad understanding and expertise of sponsorship as a concept was deemed imperative in securing feedback on the data instruments content and structure, to ultimately aid engineer content validity (Saunders et al *ibid*). Indeed, and as detailed in table 15, observations made by the academic largely centred on the design and questions of the data instrument. Having consulted an academic expert and making subsequent revisions to the relevant data collection instrument, two separate roads were then taken dependent upon the method of enquiry. Whereas the study’s quantitative phase (phase 2) continued to follow the two-stage process proposed by numerous academics (Moore 2006; Gillham 2007; Magnusson and Marecek 2015; Saunders et al 2015a), phases of a qualitative nature (phases 1, 3a, and 3b) were alternatively not subject to any further pilot testing.

Qualitative Research: Literature surrounding the use of pilot studies in qualitative research appears to present diverse feelings as to whether piloting on respondents similar to those the study will target ought to be undertaken. On the one hand, pilots can help to determine whether the questions posed to participants elicit responses which adequately answer the study’s ROs (Dikko 2016). It further allows for the researcher to gain the opportunity to self-assess their interview technique and experience the procedures to be implemented when managing the parent study’s data (Tolley et al 2016). By contrast, others dispute the practicality of pilots within qualitative research given the very nature

of its research presents “flexibility for the researcher to learn on the job” (Holloway 1997:121). Interviews inherently allow for questions to be modified if they appear ineffective (Gray 2017), with problems sometimes only emerging after a few interviews (Bryman 2016). Further, as highlighted by van Tejlingen and Hundley (2002), the gathering of data qualitatively could be argued to be progressive in that the next data collection point should be better than the previous one because the researcher may have gained further insights used to improve interview schedules and specific questions. The qualitative phases of this research therefore opted in favour of the latter argument with the pilot ‘wasting’ suitable participants that would be ever the more critical within the parent study given previous difficulties noted from other football and business research in recruiting participants. The pre-test phase with an academic in the sport sponsorship field was resultantly considered adequate enough for the piloting of the qualitative phases.

Quantitative Research: After the pre-test, and following the approach considered more traditional for a pilot study in research, the study’s online survey was assessed under control groups similar to those required in the parent study (Bryman 2016). It was more essential to pilot the study’s survey with those similar to the target group compared to data collected qualitatively as the survey is said to often offer a ‘one-shot’ attempt at gathering data (Gray 2017). In response, a total of four participants – two from NCFCs and two from SMEs – who would not be included within the parent study were asked to complete the respective survey. This was chiefly because the researcher being present was perceived more productive to the revision of the survey than if the survey was distributed under conditions directly akin to the parent study wherein the researcher would be absent. While being in attendance when the pilot was conducted engendered a smaller sample than usually used in piloting, Bradley (2013) asserts how the researcher can alternatively capture a respondents’ immediate reaction that may otherwise have been forgotten when they offered feedback after the survey was completed. As such, this was considered more critical as feedback became more in-depth because the researcher could discuss the feedback and their thought process in greater detail. The fact that the NCFC survey typically mirrored that of the SME survey therefore meant any ambiguity or problems notified in one also often transcended to the other.

The pilot test followed the guidelines of Bell and Walters (2014) and subsequently asked respondents to supply feedback on the length of time for survey completion; the nature, (un)ambiguity and content of questions; the clarity of instruction given to respondents; the layout of the questionnaire; and whether any additions or omissions were necessary.

On the whole, comments from respondents implied general satisfaction towards the nature, style and structure of the survey. At the end of the pilot participants were subsequently thanked for their assistance and removed from taking any further part in this phase of the study (Saunders et al 2015a).

Table 15 details the pilot process employed at each stage of the research prior to data collection. It further presents the subsequent action points taken by the researcher to mitigate the concerns raised by the academic expert and/ or participants similar to those who will be targeted in the parent study (i.e. NCFCs and SME sponsors).

Table 15: Summary of study’s pilots

Phase	Pre-test	Pilot Study	Response Rate	Issues and Actions
One	<p>Interview schedule distributed to three supervisors of the study.</p> <p>Interview schedules (NCFC and SME) entrusted to academic known to researcher and majored in the field of sport sponsorship.</p>			<p>Issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Length of interview schedules: Too long. 2) Closed-ended questions: Stops eliciting detailed responses. 3) Small terminology issues: Could hinder practitioner understanding. For example, the word ‘property’ altered to ‘asset’. 4) Replication of questions. <p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Re-structured and re-focused schedule to reduce schedule from 40 to 23 questions (links to issue 4). 2) Revised questions to become more open-ended. 3) Amended jargon (e.g. ‘property’ altered to ‘asset’).
Two	<p>Online survey distributed to three supervisors of the study.</p> <p>Online survey (NCFC and SME) entrusted to academic known to researcher and majored in the field of sport sponsorship.</p>	Online survey bestowed to practitioners.	<p>GFC 2/2 = 100%</p> <p>SME 2/2 = 100%</p> <p>Total 4/4 = 100%</p>	<p>Issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Length and structure of questionnaires: Too long – could impact on response rate (Burchell and Marsh 1992). 2) Link to PIS wouldn’t function. 3) Small grammatical issues: e.g. spelt received as ‘recieved’. 4) Brackets considered too loose to gain quality data. 5) Number of options within critical success factor question (Q17): Too many. <p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Re-structured and re-focused questionnaire to reduce survey from 38 to 19 questions for SME survey and 20 for NCFC survey. 2) Remedied issue. 3) Rectified all grammatical mistakes. 4) Brackets tightened, specifically lower ends, as practitioners felt more would be within the lower brackets for the purposes of this study: Number of employees, revenue, balance sheet in SME survey and income received from sponsorship in NCFC survey 5) Deleted factors including ‘expertise of sponsorship agreements’ and ‘confidence of sponsorship in relation to achievability’.

Three (a)	Repeat interview schedules (NCFC and SME) circulated to academic known to researcher and majored in the field of sport sponsorship.		Issue: 1) Avoid asking double-barrelled question (i.e. two questions in one) – this could confuse participants.
			Action: 1) Creation of a single question asking strengths of the model, and another question asking the models weaknesses.
Three (b)	Semi-structured focus group interview schedule (CFA) circulated to academic known to researcher and majored in the field of sport sponsorship.		Issue: 1) There is a need to understand whether the model is a tool that the CFA could endorse and how the model extends their knowledge, if it does. Action: 1) Inclusion of question 16 into the schedule.

4.7.3: Phase 1

4.7.3.1: Data Collection Method – Semi-structured Interviews

The amplitude of quantitative research associated to sponsorship has been maligned by several authors (e.g. Choi et al 2006) who subsequently aver that qualitative research designs can offer a rich understanding towards sponsorship related strategies and management. Qualitative work, and, in turn, methods such as interviews, further naturally attach themselves to topics with little or no investigation (Gill et al 2008; Padgett 2012; Creswell 2014). Phase 1 of the study thus not only represented a response to the call from Papamiltiades (2012) for greater qualitative insight into sport sponsorship research, but was even the more appropriate considering the study surrounded a domain that is still in its infancy in terms of study (refer to section 2.3.3). For example, Wicker et al (2012b) voiced how qualitative research may assist in clarifying the reasons for sponsorship by NCSCs, showing a further gap in literature, that if explored, would offer additional contribution to this area.

As such, an in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interview approach was taken in order to serve as a starting point to address this study's research aim and supplementary ROs. The use of in-depth interviews was considered critical to delve deep into a phenomenon that would otherwise not be able to be ascertained through quantitative methods alone (Silverman 2017), particularly given interviews presented the best opportunity for the study to obtain rich detailed data because of the flexible nature interviews possess (Smith and Sparkes 2016). Interviews further give the opportunity for participants to communicate about the social world they have actively constructed (Ritchie et al 2013), and thus allow for deeper exploration of new issues (Boyce and Neal 2006).

Of the three principal styles of interview – structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Robson 2011) – the study adopted to use semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews were inappropriate for the purposes of this research given their stringency and inability to probe with follow-up questions to responses which warrant further elaboration (Gill et al 2008). At the opposite end of the scale, whilst unstructured interviews would have offered a prospective solution to this criticism of its structured counterpart, the absence of pre-determined questions fosters little direction to the interview (Gill et al *ibid*). Since this study had to answer a set of ROs, an interview style that could explore experiences and enter new lines of enquiry based on responses relative to the research, but also possess an element of structure to ensure the coveting of appropriate material

was essential; hence why the study utilised a semi-structured interview approach (Gill et al *ibid*; Robson 2011; Sparkes and Smith 2014; Jones 2015).

Because the research sought to examine the experiences and opinions into the sponsorship of grassroots football from both sides of the agreement (i.e. NCFC and SME sponsor), two versions of the interview schedule were subsequently devised – one for the NCFC (appendix 8) and one for the SME sponsor (appendix 9). Differences between the two interview schedules related to two questions (2 and 5), altered to reflect how sponsorship would be typically used for that type of organisation (i.e. NCFC and income generation or SME and engaged promotional activity). Further, whereas words such as ‘your football club’ was used throughout the NCFC interview schedule, for SME sponsors, the phrase ‘your company’ was alternatively adopted.

Ultimately, each interview schedule comprised of a total of 23 overarching open-ended questions that were targeted at directly answering the study’s ROs derived through previous (sport) sponsorship, relationship and organisational literature (i.e. NCSC or SME). Interviews were subsequently structured in what could be referred to as an hour glass approach and guided by advice from Smith and Sparkes (2014). Discussions initially started with general questions relating to the research topic, which then became more specific and homed in on addressing the study’s ROs before finally broadening out through asking participants to raise any issues they felt were salient to their experiences but were missed during the interview or they believed required further elaboration. In line with the function of the semi-structured interviews, throughout interviews, the researcher employed a combination of elaborative probes to elicit a more in-depth response to points raised by the interviewee (i.e. could you expand on that?) alongside clarification probes to clear up any confusing information (Jones 2015). Such questions were communicated in a way that was unobtrusive and would make the participant feel their answers were valued. Accordingly, the questions typically focused on five core issues pertaining, but not mutually exclusive, to:

- Background to the organisation, its sponsorship dealings, and how the respondent defines grassroots football sponsorship.
- The organisations motives and objectives.
- How sponsorship was undertaken and by who.
- The critical success factors, issues, and barriers that enabled the relationship to either flourish or languish.

- How sponsorship could be advanced in the future.

4.7.3.2: Sample and Recruitment of Participants

According to Jones (2015), the first step in selecting the most appropriate sample is to define your population. Several stakeholders who hold an interest or influence in the sponsorship of grassroots football exist and range from the FA (in this respect CFAs), and parents and players, to consumers, government, and local authorities. In fact, investigation into each stakeholder would have been salient to present a broadened picture of grassroots football sponsorship given its limited academic coverage. However, this would have been beyond the realms of this study. Instead, this research intended to focus on the sponsor and sponsee because these are the two organisations which directly influence and hold the greatest interest in any sponsorship agreement (Wai 2015) and allowed for the study to address its ROs.

In turn, purposive criterion-based sampling was the main strategy implemented throughout this study (i.e. all three phases of data collection) to recruit participants because individuals were required to satisfy a set of pre-determined characteristics (Patton 1990, 2002; Sparkes and Smith 2014; Jones 2015; Gray 2017). The research needed to firstly explore how the sponsorship of football at the grassroots level is enacted, and, as a result, meant it imperative the research gained access to those individuals who had experienced sponsorship within grassroots football and could thus provide comprehensive insight into this area. Table 16 consequently details the inclusion criteria adopted for practitioners of each type of organisation.

Table 16: Participant selection criteria

Grassroots Football Club:
Participant must hold an official position at a North West NCFC and are held responsible for the NCFCs sponsorship agreement(s) of a corresponding SME.
Small-medium Sized Enterprise:
Participant must hold an official position at a North West SME and are held responsible for the SMEs sponsorship agreement(s) of a corresponding NCFC.

To gain access to this specific set of participants, the study additionally employed a combination of another three non-probability sampling techniques – convenience, snowball and opportunistic sampling. In an initial step, participants were firstly recruited through the researchers own previous and current connections with two NCFCs. While adopting a convenience sample strategy is said to increase the likelihood of researcher

bias (Dawson 2013), others defend its usefulness when conducting explanatory research (Zikmund et al 2013). The researcher was further all too aware of the difficulties faced by other academics who had either attempted to recruit participants that could create a complete sponsor-sponsee dyad (e.g. Chadwick 2004) or gain access to NCSCs (e.g. Byers 2009) or SMEs (Curran and Blackburn 2001; Whelan et al 2012). The use of personal contacts that met the inclusion criteria was thus considered a wise move given it was anticipated this would serve as an entry point to the setting in which the participants networks could subsequently be targeted.

Following interviews, practitioners consequently acted as informants by providing details of the other party associated with the dyad (i.e. NCFC provided SME sponsor and vice versa and endorsers of the researcher to provide details) alongside other contacts that were also known by the practitioner to meet the study's inclusion criteria – mirroring a snowball sample technique (Denscombe 2014; Robson and McCartan 2016; Gray 2017). The use of a snowball sampling strategy is considered valuable when attempting to gain access to participants who may be considered problematic to recruit (Robson 2011; Easterby-Smith 2015; Gray 2017). The personal networks of one informant, for example, listed three other NCFCs across Merseyside they had connections to along with their main SME sponsor. This thus showed the potential of snowball sampling before then even considering the domino effect which would occur from finding contacts from those NCFCs. Notably however, only one of these NCFC contacts was recruited successfully, thus augmenting previous work which observes difficulties in the acquisition of participants from football clubs (refer to section 4.9). Nevertheless, the use of informants to endorse the researcher and their research ensured that the study could gain an understanding of sponsorship from both sides of the deal, which could ultimately support address the study's research aim.

Third and finally, an accidental conversation with a NCFC at a league Annual General Meeting (AGM) supported in the recruitment of a further participant from a NCFC. From the outset of this study an opportunistic sample strategy was largely discarded because of its suggestions to be a haphazard and unplanned approach to sampling (Gray 2017). However, an informal conversation all things football related swung toward topics that tied closely to this research – namely difficulties in being financially sustainable and securing sponsorship for the 2017/18 season. Recognising the chance to obtain insights from an individual who spoke freely of their experiences, the researcher supplicated if they would be willing to comment on such issues at a later

date, of which the respondent expressed their interest to assist. This served as the catalyst for the researcher to subsequently seek further participants via informing the AGM attendees about the nature of the research, what would be expected from them and the benefits of assisting the study. The scenario thereby reflected an opportunistic sampling strategy as the approach related to taking advantage of an unforeseen circumstance when it arose within the research (Kemper et al 2003; Cassell 2015).

From the suite of sampling strategies employed along with a great deal of effort, perseverance, persuasion, and networking, the researcher consequently gained access to interview a total of five complete dyads (five NCFCs and five SME sponsors). While at first glance this may arguably bear a small sample size, the access to both parties turned out to be a significant problem – as highlighted in section 4.9.

With the amount of in-depth data potentially available as a result of conducting qualitative interviews, coupled with the challenges this research encountered in the recruitment of participants, consideration for when enough data has been obtained was thus crucial. In terms of quantity, Mason (2010) found that PhD studies typically carried out between 28 and 31 interviews. That being said, some argue that more qualitative data collected does not necessarily equate to greater information (Ritchie et al 2013) as qualitative methods of inquiry focus on meaning and making sense of an individuals' experiences (Sparkes and Smith 2014). In response, the concept of data saturation was established and relates to the point at which additional data is providing no new information, codes or themes (Fusch and Ness 2015; Braun and Clarke 2019), and thus ultimately not developing the concept being researched (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Yet while data saturation has been labelled as the “flagship of validity for qualitative research” (Constantinou et al 2017:585) or the ‘gold-standard’ to determining sample sizes in purposive samples (Guest et al 2006), a number of academics have begun to question its use (e.g. Mason 2010; Fusch and Ness 2015; Saunders et al 2017; Braun and Clarke 2019; Low 2019).

Nevertheless, fitting in with the pragmatic philosophy behind this study, Braun and Clarke (2019) suggest there should be a pragmatic approach to sample size that should take into account several considerations and not just data saturation. The fact that this study, as a whole, also incorporated the use of a survey, repeat semi-structured interviews, and a focus group goes some way to compensate for the research gaining access to five complete dyads. Indeed, when juxtaposed against not too dissimilar

research that centres on the relationship between football clubs and their sponsor, five dyads appears laudable given that Buhler (2006) dealt with the same number of complete dyads (n=5), whilst Chadwick (2004) managed to obtain access to six.

4.7.3.3: Data Collection

Upon the successful recruitment of participants, the setting and time of the interview was agreed, with the respondent deciding on these considerations – as advised by Jones (2015). Two days prior to the interview, the researcher provided a courtesy telephone call or email to confirm there was no change in circumstances that affected the possibility for the interview to be conducted (Sparkes and Smith 2014). At times, interview arrangements were altered because of other matters which took priority for the practitioner and therefore drew out the data collection timescale for this phase.

Interviews were conducted in private settings (i.e. workplace or club premises) in a bid to avoiding external pressures and background noise that could increase the likelihood of bias or alternatively hinder the exploration of the topic (Jones 2015). Carried out by a single researcher to ensure research consistency (Pegoraro et al 2009), interviews lasted between 50 and 108 minutes in length and took place between the 16th July 2017 – 4th February 2018. The prolonged period in which interviews were conducted alleviated the potential for the researcher to have an overload of information over a short period of time (Bryman and Bell 2007) as well as emphasise difficulties in pinning down participants to complete the interview. Table 17 subsequently provides a summary of the interviews conducted.

Table 17: Overview of semi-structured interviews

Dyad (Region)	Organisation (Participant Role)	Date	Time	Duration	Location
One (Cheshire)	NCFC SB (Secretary)	16/07/17	10:00 AM	1:31:40	Work office
	SME Bartender (Owner)	18/07/17	6:00 PM	1:29:23	Work office
Two (Cheshire)	NCFC 1907 (Secretary)	26/07/17	10:00 AM	1:26:00	Clubhouse
	SME Carpet Fitter (Owner)	15/01/18	3:30 PM	1:29:15	Work office
Three (Liverpool)	NCFC Town (Chairman)	28/11/17	6:00 PM	1:47:27	Work office
	SME Journalist (Owner)	22/01/18	10:30 AM	1:18:27	Work office
Four (Cheshire)	NCFC Yellow (Manager)	21/08/17	6:15 PM	1:30:32	Work office
	SME Accountants (Owner)	22/10/17	11:00 AM	1:24:18	Work office
Five (Cheshire)	NCFC Youth (Manager)	26/01/18	7:00 PM	1:33:17	Work office
	SME Restaurant (Owner)	02/04/18	2:00 PM	1:22:02	Work office

Throughout the semi-structured interviews, it was clear participants appeared comfortable discussing their experiences and opinions on the topics being tackled. Although this may

have been as a consequence of no sensitive questions being posed, the researchers position may have served as a key rationale for this. For instance, it is important to note that the researcher was a young white British male who, bar one participant (British Asian male), interviewed white British males – although, there was no differences observed in researcher-researched dynamics across the interviews. Further, with the researcher having shared experiences of procuring and maintaining sponsorship at the grassroots level, this potentially afforded them access to the ‘field’ being studied as respondents may have been more willing to elicit experiences with someone who they perceive sympathetic to their situation (de Tona 2006; Padgett 2008; Berger 2015). This shared experience additionally assisted in developing a rapport as it allowed the researcher to approach the study with some knowledge about the subject area, which potentially shaped the nature of the researcher-respondent relationship and ultimately affected the information participants were prepared to give (Padgett *ibid*; Berger *ibid*).

Yet although presenting benefits, this ‘insider’ position carried the risk of imposing the researchers own values, experiences, and ultimate biases on the research (Drake 2010), thus researcher reflexivity was crucial to improve the rigor of the study. Indeed, having a shared experience of sponsorship carried the danger of the researcher’s experiences being to such an extent that it blocked hearing other voices (Cloke et al 2000). As part of this reflexivity, the researcher initially considered and wrote their own personal insights, experiences and opinions relative to the questions included within the interview schedule. This resultantly allowed the researcher to be aware of their biases which consciously enabled the interviews to reflect the experiences of participants and elicit their stories rather than them being ‘led’ to certain points.

Being reflexive as a researcher was also important as 60% of the participants were known. According to McConnell-Henry et al (2010), this presents both positive and negative implications. For example, pre-existing relationships avoided time being ‘wasted’ establishing rapport with the respondent, while recruitment of these participants was more effortless than those not previously known to the researcher. Alternatively, issues concerning interviewees not wishing to fully disclose information due to the personal relationship or not stating facts they thought the interviewer was aware of were major dilemmas to the data collection process. To avoid this, at the start of interviews the researcher stressed to participants the importance of sharing; that all information was for the purposes of the study; no judgement to answers would be attached; and any data would

not be discussed elsewhere. The use of probes further counteracted the latter issue by asking respondents to not only elaborate where discussion may potentially have not been clear and required further delving into (Gill et al 2008; Jones 2015), but also where the researcher held pre-existing knowledge (McConnell-Henry et al 2010).

In line with advice from Sparkes and Smith (2014), after the completion of the discussion, the researcher thanked the participant for their time. This was particularly important given these practitioners were to be re-interviewed as part of phase 3 of the study and consequently needed to feel motivated to continue. Interviews with each respondent were transcribed verbatim by the researcher at the soonest possible point and then returned via email for participant review. This was to not just to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the transcript (Kornbluh 2015), but to also avoid errors which may have impacted heavily upon the quality of the transcript, the analysis and ultimately the entire research (Mero-Jaffe 2011). A key justification to the participant checking the transcript thus related to the opportunity for improved rigour of the interview (Hagens et al 2009). Each respondent who replied felt that the transcript reflected the interview, with the researcher assuming those who failed to respond after a period of time were content with the transcript. Transcripts were therefore then fit for data analysis (refer to section 4.8.1).

4.7.4: Phase 2

4.7.4.1: Data Collection Method – Self-administered Online Questionnaires

Rather than the semi-structured interviews being a means to an end in itself, phase 1 acted as the foundation for the overall study. Although serving a number of distinct purposes for this research, the approach still remains largely unable to detach itself from concerns relative to reliability, bias, validity and generalisability (Saunders et al 2009). Despite growing work into how to combat these concerns within qualitative studies (e.g. Leung 2015; Noble and Smith 2015), quantitative research nevertheless becomes a useful method due to its propensity to tackle such issues (Creswell 2015). For example, because phase 1 undertook a semi-structured interview approach and thus consisted of a relatively small sample size, a quantitative phase was paramount in order to corroborate or refute the study's qualitative findings – this is the main premise behind the idea of methodological triangulation (Greene et al 1989; Brannen 2005; Jones 2015; Bell et al 2018) (refer to section 4.5 for greater detail into the study's purposes for combining qualitative and quantitative data).

Taking this point of triangulation, phase 2 consequently involved the design, distribution and analysis of a self-administered online survey with the purposes of strengthening the validity to the research (Jones 2015). The study further used a self-administered online survey for reasons ancillary to the potential for improved validity as a result of triangulation. Firstly, employing questionnaires allows for anonymity that not only encourages honesty (Robson 2011), but is said to also increase response rates (Kreuter et al 2008). Secondly, justifications surrounding reduced administration costs; greater convenience for potential respondents; and efficiency in gathering substantial amounts of data in a short space of time (Hoonakker and Carayon 2009; Robson 2011; Jones 2015; Gray 2017), particularly across a scattered geographical sample (Bryman 2016) are also noted.

The final point of being able to collect data from an extensive population was particularly advantageous to this study as although the research examined the NWE as opposed to England as a whole, the region still covers 14,100 square kilometres (Young and Sly 2011). Yet interviews were conducted with NCFs and SMEs practitioners from only two of the six county FAs (CFA) (Cheshire and Liverpool – refer to table 17) as the researcher adopted a combination of convenience, opportunistic and snowball sampling (see section 4.7.3) to counter the difficulties other football research has experienced in the access to participants of clubs (e.g. Chadwick 2004). This introduced bias given the strategy inherently caused clubs and, in turn, SMEs from only Cheshire and Liverpool to be included in phase 1 of the study. The lack of generalisability noted within qualitative research was thus heightened as the study failed to gain an insight into each NWE region that may show certain elements of disparity in experiences and attitudes to the sponsorship of grassroots football. In fact, even if the interviews were conducted across each CFA region relative to this study, a lack of generalisation would still have existed. A self-administered online survey was consequently prudent to this research as it enabled the opportunity to gain a cross-section that was representative of the entire NWE population under study in this research, and thereby compensate for a key limitation of phase 1.

For the purposes of this research, self-administered (online) questionnaires were felt to be more advantageous as opposed to postal questionnaires for five reasons. First, online questionnaires are environmentally friendly given the lack of paper involved (Denscombe 2014). Second, responses to online questionnaires are traditionally quicker compared to postal questionnaires (Bryman 2012; Bell et al 2018). Lefever et al (2007) attributes this

to it being more convenient for the respondent to return the questionnaire via a 'click of a button' rather than travelling to their local post box or office. Third, online data collection protects against the loss of data and simplifies the transfer of data into a database for analysis (Ilieva et al 2002) meaning that as the researcher isn't required to input data errors from data entry are often averted (Bryman 2016). Fourth, research from Lonsdale et al (2006) infers self-administered online surveys present 'cleaner' data to be collected as fewer missing values are provided by participants in contrast to paper-based questionnaires. Fifth and finally, NCSCs are growingly using social media to communicate news across their community (Read 2010). This rendered the researcher to exploit such platforms to call for participants, meaning using online questionnaires thus sat in line with this recruitment technique.

In order to construct a questionnaire that would address the study's ROs, a review of relative literature formed the spine of most of the survey. Interviews from phase 1 of the study, however, additionally proffered some unexpected insights which needed to be included within the questionnaire. For example, question 17 of the survey intended to examine which factors were salient to allow grassroots football sponsorship partnerships to succeed. While studies commonly point to components including communication, satisfaction, co-operation, trust and commitment (Buhler et al 2007), other factors including honesty, transparency, respect and realism previously omitted within research all emerged from interviews as characteristics necessary to ensure prosperous agreements. This two-pronged form of attack thereby became crucial. The study could not only collect data that would test if previous research transcended to the grassroots setting but also test the generalness of the study's phase 1 findings in order to ultimately build on sport sponsorship understanding at both the grassroots setting and as a concept holistically.

As a result, online questionnaires were developed using Online Surveys (formerly Bristol Online Surveys) and were structured in a way that reflected the top-heavy hour glass approach adopted within phase 1 of the study (refer to table 18 for questionnaire content). The work of Poynter (2010) and Jones (2015) served as additional guidance in designing this study's online survey, including; providing a welcome page with all necessary information and link to the study's PIS (see appendix 5 for example); positioning all related questions onto a single page; provide an indicator of progress; allow for oscillation between pages. Similar to phase 1, two editions of the survey were produced – one for NCFCs (appendix 10) and one for SME sponsors (appendix 11). Each survey posed at

total of 20 questions that examined issues kindred to those within phase 1 and address the study's ROs. Despite the majority of questions being posed in both surveys being the same, subtle differences between the questionnaires existed. For example, Q14 of the SME sponsor survey which asked whether they were aware of the sponsorship of grassroots sport being tax deductible was omitted from the NCFC survey as the question was felt to not apply to this particular group of participants. Again, while words such as 'your football club' was used during the NCFC survey, for SME sponsors, the phrase 'your company' was alternatively adopted.

Regardless, both online surveys chiefly implemented closed questions which included categorical, scale or rank-order responses. Categorical variables – which are designed to ensure only one response is possible (Gray 2017) – were principally applied at the start of the survey to not only profile the respondents and their organisations background, but also depict the landscape of grassroots football sponsorship within the NWE. While certainly having its place in the questionnaires as a paucity of research examines the grassroots setting thereby rendering it worthwhile to gain a scope of the setting, categorical questions fail to emphasise a respondents' attitude (Bryman 2016). In response, Likert scales relative to level of agreement, importance, and satisfaction were used to measure practitioner perceptions toward the motives and benefits of grassroots football sponsorship; how agreements are approached and managed; and the factors considered salient in ensuring a successful partnership. The research used a total of four scale questions in the form of four and five-point Likert scales; as typically employed within social and business research (Hair et al 2015; Bryman *ibid*). Questions comprising of Likert-scales each concluded with an open-ended option for the respondent to supply additional information. This acted as a 'safety net' to allow for the identification of issues not covered within the closed questions (O'Cathain and Thomas 2004). Finally, the survey also included a single ranking question to collect data on how respondents prioritised each stage of the sponsorship process. Table 18 subsequently details the type of response employed within each of the six sections of the online survey.

Table 18: Online questionnaire summary

Section	Section	Question Type and Number in Survey	Purpose
1	Your football club.	Categorical: Q1-6 for SME; Q1-7 for NCFC.	To provide background information to organisations and scope the landscape in which grassroots football sponsorship is being conducted.
	Your company.		
2	Sponsorship of your football team/club.	Categorical: Q7-11 for SME; Q8-11 for NCFC.	To scope the landscape in which sponsorship of grassroots football is being conducted in.
	Your company and its sponsorship of grassroots football.	Categorical/ Likert scale: Q12 for SME and NCFC.	
3	Benefits of sponsorship	Likert scale: Q13 for SME and NCFC. Categorical: Q14 for SME.	Addresses RO2.
4	The decision-making process of sponsorship	Rank-order: Q15 for SME; Q14 for NCFC. Categorical: Q14 for NCFC. Likert scale: Q16 for SME; Q15 for NCFC.	
5	The sponsee-sponsor relationship	Categorical: Q17 for SME; Q16 NCFC. Likert scale: Q18-19 for SME; Q17-18 for NCFC.	
6	Further comments	Open-ended: Q20 for SME; Q19-20 for NCFC.	Allow for any issues overlooked during the survey participants felt necessary to identify/ and or provide opportunity to elaborate on answers provided during discussion.

4.7.4.2: Sample and Recruitment of Participants

Given the initial limited scope in terms of sample size and practitioner insight across the NWE (i.e. interviews conducted in two of the six county FA regions – see section 4.7.3), if the study was to strengthen its validity whilst explore current sponsorship practice, it was incumbent to obtain a larger sample that represented the varied regions and organisations with which this research was concerned. Yet although while “in an ideal situation the entire population should be studied, this is almost impossible” (Nayak 2010:469). This reflected the confines of this study wherein upon investigation no clear useful and public available data concerning details on NCFCs (and their sponsors) exist. While through the Whole Game System – the online platform used by the FA, CFAs and NCFCs for football administration functions – the FA, and, in turn, each CFA hold relevant lists of names of all NCFCs and their main sponsors, they are prohibited to make such information available to third parties because of data protection legislation.

In order to therefore gather a complete consensus, the researcher would subsequently needed to have created a list with each NCFC and SME sponsor. However, this would have been impractical for several reasons. Although with research of the Club Matters website NCFCs could be identified, this would still open the question as to whether every NWE NCFC had been listed. Once aware of NCFCs, identifying their sponsors would have then been further challenging given certain NCFCs fail to detail and recognise any support provided by companies. In fact, even with those NCFCs who acknowledged their sponsors, it was clear that, at times, this did not echo their current relationships whereby on communication with these companies they had not sponsored that NCFC for several years. Finally, it would be unclear as to if that sponsor was a SME unless the researcher then clarified this with the company or analysed their website.

Being unable to gain a complete consensus that could subsequently allow for the distribution of the online surveys directly to NCFCs (and their sponsors), phase 2 employed the use of two social media platforms to recruit participants – Twitter and Facebook. Social media is a tool that according to Gelinas et al (2017) is increasingly becoming popular by researchers. The fact that NCSCs are growingly using social media to communicate news and updates regarding their club (Read 2010) served as the main rationale to employ such platforms to distribute the NCFC survey, as well as the SME sponsor survey given such companies will often follow the club they partner with.

Only those individuals who met the study's inclusion criteria (i.e. person responsible for the partnership between NCFCs and SME sponsors) were recruited, with the need to be able to create a complete dyad omitted in this phase. This largely owed to the fact that the returned survey would be anonymous and thus be impossible for the researcher to connect the right NCFC with the right SME sponsor. Nevertheless, a key consideration resided in how the research could target the specific group needed for the purposes of this study given Arigo et al (2018) contended the challenges to the use of social media to recruit participants lies in avoiding responses from non-targeted users. Although the questionnaire was designed to be nationwide, the recruitment strategy within this phase of data collection was specifically focused on targeting individuals who held responsibility for grassroots football sponsorship dealings within the NEW (Cheshire, Cumberland, Lancashire, Liverpool, Manchester, Westmorland).

To consequently reduce the likelihood of avoiding none-targeted users and ensure the survey was completed by those who met the inclusion criteria, the researcher was guided

by Arigo et al (2018) and their three solutions. In a first step, along with the respective link in order to direct individuals to the online survey, the call for participants included a JPEG which outlined the research and its inclusion criteria. This allowed for individuals who had interacted with the post to ascertain whether they met the criteria for the study. Secondly, and with respect to Twitter and NCFCs, the username of high-profile users the researcher classed as ‘influencers’ for the study’s target population were included in several tweets relating to the call for participants. This namely surrounded people who were football officers at the CFA’s located in the North-West. Thirdly, the use of hashtags (e.g. #grassrootsfootball #volunteers #sponsorship #SME #smallbusiness) acted as a gateway to those individuals who actively take an interest or involved in an area; this not only is suggested to improve the number of individuals that see the tweet but also improve the chances of those users retweeting the recruitment tweet (Arigo et al *ibid*). In this sense, through respondents sharing the call for participants, the study employed snowball sampling alongside the initial purposive criterion-based sampling technique.

The ability to approach the targeted population of NCFCs further hinged on each CFA, along with related regional/ local community football pages (i.e. North West grassroots football community; Merseyside’s grassroots football) supporting in disseminating the survey link via social media to those that fell under their control or followed their communications. For SMEs, communicating the research to bolster survey response centred on contacting small business forums located on social media pages (e.g @bizMattersmag; @smallukbusiness; @ukbizforums; @smallbusinessuk), although this was unsuccessful. Indeed, despite little commentary within research methods literature on the role that endorsements play (Chadwick 2004), work details how endorsers can impact positively on response rates as prospective respondents may perceive the research to be more credible and legitimate (Rochford and Venable 1995; Chadwick *ibid*; Bednar and Westphal 2006) while also further improve the quality of responses (Armenakis and Lett 1982).

To further recruit participants from SMEs who sponsor NCFCs, the study adopted a snowball sampling strategy. At the end of the online survey, respondents of NCFCs were invited to register their interest in forwarding the SME online survey to each company who sponsors their club via giving an email address. While respondents may have thus felt responses would not be treated anonymously and thus affect the number of NCFCs who provided their contact details, it was important to note they were not obliged to agree to support the research further. Although the SME link could have

alternatively been appended to the end of the survey to evade all ethical considerations, adopting this strategy would have thwarted the opportunity for the researcher to convey the importance of the research to respondents of the SME and ostensibly reduce the number of responses. Those who expressed an interest in circulating the questionnaire were subsequently contacted and issued with forwarding instructions and a link to the SME survey.

As previously emphasised, in theory, a notable merit to the use of online surveys aligns to its relative ease in gaining notable amounts of data over quick periods of time (Hoonakker and Carayon 2009; Robson 2011; Jones 2015; Gray 2017). In practice, however, this study belied such contentions. Indeed, although the recruitment of participants was difficult for each phase (refer to section 4.9), the challenges were arguably more pronounced in this phase of the study than the others – particularly in respect to gaining responses from SME sponsors. Despite the numerous actions taken to reach this group, 17 responses was all that could be attained during this data collection period, thus highlighting the difficulties of researching all parties involved in the sponsorship of grassroots football.

4.7.4.3: Data Collection

Ultimately, the methods taken to recruit participants for phase 2 of the study between 6th April-31st August 2018 culminated in a total of 100 completed and returned surveys for practitioners of NCFCs compared to 17 for SME sponsor respondents. Because of the recruitment strategy adopted (i.e. use of social media), the researcher was unable to ascertain the number of potential respondents in the sampling frame and was thus powerless to calculate an accurate response rate for each NCFC and SME sponsor survey which could be compared to other similar studies. Clearly however, the level of disparity in terms of distribution of responses between practitioners of NCFCs and SME sponsors is severe. Notwithstanding this, phase two merely aimed to obtain a larger and more complete picture of grassroots football sponsorship in England by comparing and ultimately triangulating the results with those revealed within the (systematic) review of literature, and the findings of phase 1.

4.7.5: Phase 3

4.7.5.1: Phase 3a Data Collection Method – Repeat Semi-Structured Interviews

A major justification to undertake this study was to inform practitioners on how both NCFCs and SMEs who sponsor such NCFCs could deliver a successful programme. In response, the analysis of data from phase 1 and 2 was subsequently used to develop an initial model that could enlighten both parties into the best practices and processes of the management of sponsorship at the grassroots level. However, before this model could be communicated to the wider football and SME sponsor community, it was shrewd to first assess the processes authenticity to the grassroots panoramic. Ultimately, this was to check the model and its practicality, usability and relevance within the football settings.

Phase 3 consequently employed the use of repeat semi-structured interviews with those participants who were interviewed within phase 1 of the study in order to obtain feedback on the model from those who tackle such deals. Interviews with the same participants in multiple instances are rarely reported within the fields of sport and business research and the decision to conduct repeat interviews was one relative to originality and novelty. Further, and more importantly, it was felt a wealth of different perspectives would improve the model as their experiences would increase the likelihood of a well-rounded and informed model that could be applicable to all practitioners involved in the sponsorship of grassroots football.

In this sense, this particular phase conducted what are termed as member reflections given the purpose of the repeat interviews were to allow for “sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study’s findings, providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation and even collaboration” (Tracy 2010:844). Crucial to therefore note here is how member reflections should not be confused with member checking (Braun and Clarke 2013; Tracy 2020). Whereas member checking tests whether the researcher ‘has got it right’, member reflection offers the opportunity for ‘reflexive elaboration’ of the findings (Braun and Clarke *ibid*). As opposed to member checks, member reflections thus centre on participant feedback being valuable not in terms of validity, but more for additional insight and credibility (Tracy 2020). Indeed, this process allows for participants to respond, agree or point out issues with the analysis (Tracy *ibid*) – in this study this process especially relates to a definition of sponsorship and how sponsorship is broached and managed (i.e. process model) at the grassroots level.

However, criticisms of repeat interviews relate to the analysis and presentation of data which has been gathered (Thomson and Holland 2003; Thomson 2007), while also posing questions of an ethical nature because of the "confidentiality, privacy and anonymity generated through long term research relationships" (Henderson et al 2012:17). Grinyer and Thomas (2012) further stress how interviews across multiple occasions may not necessarily result in 'better data' as confusions within the research could arise. Yet despite such disapproval, repeat interviews can present opportunities that are unavailable if one was to employ a single-interview design (Vincent 2013). Although the main rationale behind using such an approach was kindred to gaining feedback on the model devised, being able to (re)read and (re)analyse data then follow-up on missed lines of enquiry from the first interview was pivotal (Elliott 2005; Vincent *ibid*). Indeed, the revisiting of certain points raised by participants in the previous interview not only illustrated interest and that they have been listened to, thus strengthening trust in the respondent-researcher relationship, but also offered the chance to get 'corrective feedback' on such inferences and comments (Reinharz 1992). Furthermore, while single-interviews present a 'snapshot' of experiences, repeat interviews provided opportunity to comprehend the transition and change (Vincent 2013; Ryan et al 2016) which had occurred within organisations and their sponsorships. Finally, repeat interviews allow for a greater flexibility (Vincent *ibid*) as subsequent interviews can be tailored to individuals based on their personality and comments from previous discussions (Farrall 2006).

Two versions of the interview schedule – one for the NCFC (appendix 12) and one for the SME sponsor (appendix 13) – were devised with both schedules comprising of the same 12 open-ended questions. While questions were standardised in terms of content, differences resided in to which organisation they concerned (i.e. 'the club' when relating to NCFC and 'the company' when interviewing the SME sponsor). Similar to phase 1 interviews, on top of the pre-created questions within the interview schedule, the researcher used probes where necessary to recover and uncover further information from participants and go deeper into their accounts, reactions and stories (Jones 2015).

4.7.5.2: Phase 3a – Sample and Recruitment of Participants

Intending on using those individuals from phase 1 interviews (see above for rationale), participants were contacted through either verbal (telephone) and/ or written (email) channels of communication. All but one practitioner responded and agreed to be re-interviewed, with the same settings to which they were initially interviewed being settled

on. Despite numerous attempts to reach with the practitioner from NCFC Town through a variety of methods over a prolonged period of time (call; voicemail; text; email), the individual failed to respond and was thus inferred by the researcher to be unwilling to continue with their participation.

4.7.5.3: Phase 3a – Data Collection

For those individuals who agreed to the interview, the researcher followed the same procedure adopted in phase 1 of the study to provide consistency for the participant. Two days before the interview, a courtesy call or email was given to remind participants. On the day of the interview, but prior to the interview being conducted, all participants were read an instruction sheet (appendix 7), while also confirming their consent to the study both in verbal and written formats.

Interviews were conducted between the 26th November 2018-9th February 2019 and recorded via the use of a Dictaphone. In a first step, the interviews began with an introductory set of questions that surrounded any changes to the organisations' sponsorship dealings along with discussion surrounding the definition towards sponsorship created by the researcher from the insights given within phase 1 interviews. Given the purposes of this phase, most attention in interviews was subsequently geared towards ascertaining feedback on the sponsorship process model constructed and informed from the study's phase 1 and 2 findings. To do this, the process model was issued to the participant to gain their initial thoughts. From this, the researcher then summarised the model and each of its phases, allowing for the practitioner to interject when they felt necessary. All participants were then asked to provide feedback on the process model, detailing its: strengths; weaknesses; areas for improvement; and whether they thought it reflected the grassroots setting and would be a tool that could be used by their organisation. Conscious that both NCFC and SME sponsors away from this research would be unable to employ the process model unless being aware of its existence, it was also necessary to question practitioners on the methods they felt were most appropriate to disseminate the model. Like phase 1, the interview concluded with asking participants to raise any issues they felt were salient to the research but were overlooked during the interview or they believed required further elaboration. Upon confirmation that the participant was content with what had been discussed during the interview, the researcher thanked them for their time. Interviews subsequently lasted between 50 and 85 minutes

in length. Table 19 subsequently presents an overview of the repeat semi-structured interviews carried out.

Table 19: Summary of repeat semi-structured interviews

Dyad (Region)	Organisation (Participant Role)	Date	Time	Duration	Location
One (Cheshire)	NCFC SB (Secretary)	26/11/18	9:30 AM	1:24:32	Work office
	SME Bartender (Owner)	01/12/18	6:15 PM	1:17:46	Work office
Two (Cheshire)	NCFC 1907 (Secretary)	09/02/19	10:00 AM	1:22:54	Clubhouse
	SME Carpet Fitter (Owner)	03/02/19	10:00 AM	1:04:21	Work office
Three (Liverpool)	NCFC Town (Chairman)				
	SME Journalist (Owner)	06/12/18	10:00 AM	0:50:14	Work office
Four (Cheshire)	NCFC Yellow (Manager)	17/01/19	6:30 PM	1:02:31	Work office
	SME Accountants (Owner)	21/01/19	9:30 AM	1:12:42	Work office
Five (Cheshire)	NCFC Youth (Manager)	12/01/19	7:15 PM	0:59:13	Work office
	SME Restaurant (Owner)	08/12/18	3:30 PM	1:09:24	Work office

Each recording was then transcribed verbatim at the soonest point and then returned via email for participant review. Like phase 1, those that replied felt that the transcript reflected the interview, with the researcher assuming those who failed to respond were content with the transcript; thus being ready for data analysis (refer to section 4.8.1).

4.7.5.4: Phase 3b Data Collection Method – Focus Group

While intended, the study's data collection from the first three phases of this research had all come from the examination of two core outlooks; the NCFC and SME sponsor. As previously illustrated, however, a myriad of stakeholders who are not only interested but also influence the sponsorship of grassroots football exist. Exploration of the grassroots football sponsorship setting from an alternative stakeholder perspective was thus shrewd in order to further triangulate the findings from the study's preceding three phases.

According to Sparkes and Smith (2014), a focus group consists of several individuals that collaboratively share ideas, attitudes, thoughts, experiences and perceptions surrounding a certain topic. Simply put, a focus group exploits the group dynamics in order to generate raw qualitative data (Gill et al 2008) by allowing for spaces whereby participants can challenge, extend, develop and undermine not only themselves but others in a manner that can resultantly validate or create different perspectives (Sparkes and Smith 2014; Bell et al 2018). Yet since focus groups depend on participant dynamics, a weakness of the focus group relates to how individuals may avoid eliciting their feelings freely or hesitate to contribute to the topic being debated (Nyumba et al 2018). This may be especially the case when one individual dominates the discussion (Breen 2006; Sparkes

and Smith 2014; Bell et al 2018). Taking this into account, it is consequently the researcher's role to be skilled enough to facilitate and moderate group discussion which creates focus without leading it (Gill et al 2008; Smith and Sparkes *ibid*; Bell et al *ibid*) and prevents debate being controlled by one figurehead (Gill et al *ibid*; Smith and Sparkes *ibid*). Although this consequently renders the researcher to take a more passive role during focus groups than when conducting interviews, it alternatively means that less bias is also presented (Doyle 2004).

The focus group was designed through a semi-structured interview style, with the interview schedule consisting of 18 open-ended questions concerned with three main areas for discussion (appendix 14). At the beginning, questions focused on background information relative to the CFA and the CFA officers (i.e. role of CFA; role of CFA officers). From this, the focus group then homed in on exploring the football officers' experiences of sponsorship and the role the CFA plays in the sponsorship of grassroots football. This was deemed crucial in order to gain an understanding into how football officers of the CFA, if indeed they do, support NCFs with sponsorship, and their rationale behind this. The remainder of debate centred on those questions asked during repeat interviews in relation to feedback on the process model created (phase 3a). Important to note here, however, was that the model had been further refined based on participant reflections from the preceding phase (phase 3a) analysis, thus meaning the football officers were reacting to a revised and updated version of the sponsorship process model. This added a further level of reflection from an alternative outlook and thus extended the authenticity and credibility of the model. Regarding ascertaining feedback on the process model, the researcher followed the same routine conducted in the repeat interviews to ensure consistency. The focus group ultimately concluded with the researcher presenting the opportunity for individuals to raise any issues that required further elaboration or had been forgotten in the discussion and were essential to the research.

4.7.5.5: Phase 3b – Sample and Recruitment of Participants

Given the intent of this research of to add another point of reflection on grassroots football sponsorship, particularly with respect to the process model, investigation of perspectives from those individuals working within CFAs was worthwhile for two reasons. Firstly, CFAs are delegated responsibilities by the FA relating to the sanction and control of NCFs, leagues and competitions within their respective boundaries, and thus govern

football in their region. Secondly, and as a result of this governance, football officers of the CFA experience more day-to-day contact with NCFs and are consequently more in tune with grassroots football within their locale. Taken together, and for the purposes of this research, this makes any opinions and insights from CFA officers to arguably be more authentic to those who work on a more national scale (i.e. the FA).

Originally, this phase planned to adopt a purposive criterion-based sample strategy, interviewing at least one football officer from each of the five CFAs located in the NWE. However, after initial email and telephone contact, the lack of positive response from figures within each respective CFA, namely due to individual workloads, culminated in gaining access to participants from only one CFA. It was for this very reason – the time needed for interviews and its impact on the organisation – that the Chief Executive Officer of the CFA whose football officers were willing to be participants declared single interviews were unable of being carried out. To consequently minimise the disruption caused to the CFAs operation, a senior staff team meeting was earmarked as a setting whereby the researcher could simultaneously question individuals who held key roles in the CFA on the topic concerned, those being the: Football Development Manager, Recreational Football Development Officer, and Football Services Manager. The convenience and amount of time saved for both the researcher and participants therefore served as a further advantage towards the use of focus groups (Qu and Dumay 2011).

In an additional advantage, Hennink (2014) argues when participants know one another – in which members of this focus group do given they are work colleagues – there may be more appreciation of other opinions to that of if the focus group consisted of strangers. A bonus to possessing relationships with other participants is that group members may also elaborate or add any forgotten detail to a point elicited from another respondent and thus enhance the depth and accuracy of raw data (Hennink *ibid*). In the same breath however, according to Bloor et al (2001), this may lead to ethical issues in the form of third-party breach confidentiality, whereby a participant may posit a personal view or experience of another group member that that individual otherwise feels uncomfortable divulging. Any such instance of this occurring within the focus group was anticipated to have little impact on the participant concerned as the topic of investigation was not deemed sensitive but was still closely monitored by the researcher.

4.7.5.6: Phase 3b – Data Collection

The course of action taken by the researcher before, during, and after the focus groups replicated those from the other two phases of qualitative data collection (i.e. phase 1 and 3a). A courtesy email was sent to each participant two days prior to the focus group as a reminder. At the time of the focus group, each of the three participants were read an instruction sheet, confirming their consent to partake in the study both verbally and written. The focus group was conducted on the 29th June 2019 and lasted 78 minutes, with the three members of the group set out in a semi-circle format in an attempt to facilitate interaction and ensure each voice could be heard on the recording (Sparkes and Smith 2014). Each participant was thanked for their time upon conclusion of the discussion, with the recording then transcribed and returned via email to each participant for review. Aligned to the comments of Bell et al (2018), the transcription process for focus groups was of greater difficulty compared to interviews and thus took longer as a result of needing to account for not only what was said but who said it. Each participant perceived the transcript to be a reflection of the focus group and thus be fit for data analysis.

4.8: Data Analysis

Fundamentally, data analysis concerns itself with the reduction of data (Blaikie 2010; Bryman 2016). Blaikie and Priest (2019) note that a critical issue for data analysis procedures comes from needing to match appropriate techniques with the type of data collected. Indeed, with both qualitative and quantitative phases yielding, in their own right, valuable sums of raw data, it was vital to use appropriate forms of analysis to extract the information that would thereby generate findings to address the study's principal research question and ROs. Accordingly, as the study adopted a three-phased research design (i.e. qualitative → quantitative → qualitative) an "iterative sequential mixed methods analysis" was employed (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009:274). Figure 13 summaries the type of data analysis employed for each method of data collection adopted in each phase of the study.

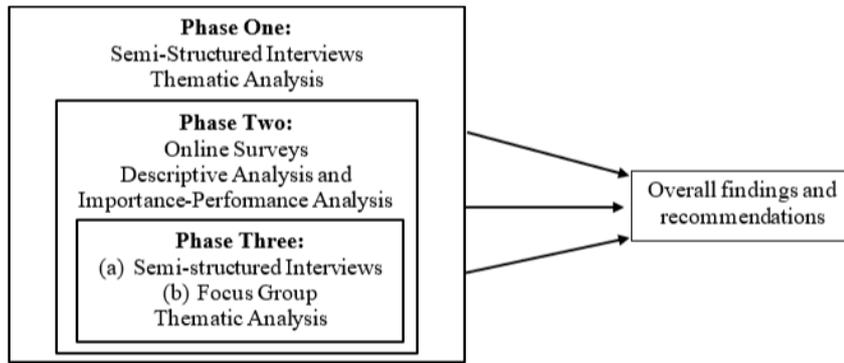


Figure 13: Summary of study's data analysis

4.8.1: Qualitative Data Analysis

As a preliminary stage to the analysis of data gathered in phases 1 and 3, the issue of whether to use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was settled on. A major concern of using CADQAS was the potential of to fall into a ‘coding trap’ whereby the researcher gets too fixated on coding that it comes at the detriment of the actual analysis (Richards 2002; Garcia-Horta and Guerra-Ramos 2009; King 2010), and thus decontextualizes the data gathered (Rettie et al 2008). In contrast, CADQAS can increase the efficiency, multiplicity and transparency of the research process compared to more manual methods (Hoover and Koerber 2011), while also, when used systematically, heighten methodological rigour (Lewins and Silver 2009). Garcia-Horta and Guerra-Ramos (2009:151) conclude that CADQAS “is of great help and can enhance interview data analysis”. In turn, the researcher used the qualitative analysis software package Nvivo 11 to aid analyse phase 1 and 3 of the study. Nvivo 11 was selected over other leading packages (e.g. MAXqda and ATLAS.ti) because of its availability to the researcher (i.e. the university purchased Nvivo license); which according to Garcia-Horta and Guerra-Ramos (*ibid*) is the starting point when choosing the most suitable software for qualitative analysis.

Although CADQAS is useful given it can ‘free up’ the researcher to concentrate more on the synthesis of data (Maylor et al 2017), consensus lies in that it is unable to ‘do’ the analysis and, as a result, control still falls on the researcher (Lewins and Silver 2009; Gray 2017). TA was subsequently used to identify patterns across the dataset and then interpret their meaning (Braun and Clarke 2006; Clarke and Braun 2013; Braun et al 2016). With phase 2 homing in on the analysis of data quantitatively, the significance of words or phrases in accordance to others within the text and other texts was felt to be more meaningful than that of alternative analytical methods such as content analysis which

seeks to quantify themes by observing the frequency of words or phrases (Smith and Sparkes 2014). Contextualised, this pertained to the experiences and perceptions of practitioners involved in the sponsorship of grassroots football and therefore fitted nicely with the use of TA as it suits such types of research questions (Braun et al 2016).

To thematically analyse the data, the principles submitted by Braun and Clarke (2006) which have been widely used across those studies which employ the use of TA (e.g. Hall et al 2012; Schinke et al 2013) were adopted. Table 20 outlines the six-stage procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) which was subsequently followed when analysing the (repeat) interviews and focus group within qualitative data collection phases of the study (phase 1, 3a, and 3b).

Table 20: Six-step procedure for thematic analysis

Phase	Tasks associated with each step
1. Immersion and familiarisation of data.	Transcribe interviews; read and re-read data; take preliminary notes and memos in preparation for generation of initial codes.
2. Generation of initial codes.	Code interesting features (semantic, content or latent) of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire dataset; collate all data relevant to each code.
3. Search and identification of themes.	Refocus codes into broader themes; gather all data to each prospective theme.
4. Review themes.	Level 1: Check themes work in line with the coded extracts. Level 2: Check against the entire data set.
5. Define and name themes.	Identify the 'essence' of each theme and what it captures; generation of clear names for each theme
6. Produce report.	Final opportunity to refine analysis as writing can lead to emergence of new ideas; select appropriate extracts; discussion of the analysis; relate back to research question or literature; produce report

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006)

With respect to phase 1, thematic network maps were typically formulated to not only act as a tool to visually report the findings from the interviews but also form part of the process towards understanding and analysing the data (Attride-Stirling 2001; Wallace and Van Fleet 2012). Maps were developed through the identification of low order themes which were subsequently grouped into more abstract principles that could then be drawn into themes that encapsulated the data overall. The making of such thematic network maps was crucial to the reporting of this particular research phase as they allowed the opportunity to visually emphasise the interconnectivity and complexity of themes

(Attride-Sterling *ibid*; Ritchie et al 2013) prior to further discussion. This differed to that of the reporting of the analysis for phase 3 which intended to follow the structure from O'Reilly and Madill (2012) by presenting no visualisation to the themes but rather discuss them in a narrative style alone.

4.8.2: Quantitative Data Analysis

Upon the closure of the surveys (31st August 2018), each data set was exported into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 – the most common software used in order to analyse quantitative data (Jones 2015). Before starting analysis, the data was 'cleaned' to check for any errors which could distort the results (Pallant 2016). An important stage here therefore was to inspect the data file for missing data as it can significantly affect the conclusions which can be drawn from the results (Graham 2009) – like with any errors within the dataset (Osborne 2008). The research followed the procedures outlined by Pallant (2016) for missing data and data errors, with any questions not answered by the participants being assigned the value 99, for example. Further, SPSS generated frequencies in conjunction with maximum and minimum values were scanned to detect data entry errors via ascertaining if values fell outside the prescribed range of possible values. Data errors and missing data posed relatively few problems, however, as exporting the data gathered from online surveys avoided the potential for human fallibility when coming to input the raw data. At this stage, most attention was paid to recoding scale items and its data given the standard order of such scales is from negative to positive rather than positive to negative (e.g. from 1 'strongly agree' and 5 'strongly disagree' to 1 'strongly disagree' and 5 'strongly agree') – something the researcher initially overlooked.

Descriptive Statistics: The decision on which data analysis techniques to select is said to depend upon the nature of objectives set from the outset of the study (Chadwick 2004; Williams 2009). This phase therefore relied predominantly on descriptive analysis to address the purpose of the research. The use of inferential statistics was alternatively avoided as the research did not intend to analyse associations or differences between two or more variables (Jones 2015). Descriptive statistics were used to not only characterise the sample from the study (Pallant 2016), but more importantly aid the phase 1 interview findings through narrating the landscape in which sponsorship of grassroots football occurs in. This was deemed vital given limited comments across literature as to the characteristics (i.e. sponsorship value,

length of deals and nature of relationship) of grassroots sport sponsorship exists, and thus needs publishing. Results pertaining to these two rationales in the form of frequency and percentage counts were subsequently reported through either tables or graphical form within chapter six.

Measures of central tendency were additionally used as part of the univariate descriptive analysis tools employed during this phase of the study. Methodological text highlights how the most commonly used measures refer to mean (the average score of all observations on a given variable), mode (the largest number of observations), and median (the mid-point in the distribution of values) (e.g. Jones 2015; Bell et al 2018; Blaikie and Priest 2019). Whereas the use of the mean score (parametric statistic) is employed when data is normally distributed, for data that is skewed the median (non-parametric statistic) is instead the most appropriate to calculate (Pallant 2016). In this phase, as the data used to perform such tests was normally distributed, the use of the mean score was most suitable to adopt. Field (2017) voices the mean should be approached with caution, however, as extreme scores can influence the measure of central tendency, especially if the sample size is low. Yet this study circumvents the prospect of extreme scores by adopting five-point likert scales. The results for such central measures of tendency (i.e. mean scores) are subsequently presented in tables within chapter six.

Scale Reliability: With the likert scales of this study in mind, Pallant (2016) argues it is crucial to ensure that they are reliable given one of the main concerns of using such items relates to internal consistency. To therefore measure whether the study's scales were fit for purpose, Cronbach's alpha was used given it is an indicator to demonstrate internal consistency that has been regularly adopted within research (Pallant *ibid*; Taber 2018). While values above 0.8 are preferable (Pallant *ibid*), according to convention, Cronbach's alpha values should exceed 0.7 (e.g. Cortina 1993; DeVillis 2012; Taber 2018). In cases whereby values fall below this level, items from such a scale should be pruned to increase its reliability (Chadwick 2004). However, as highlighted in table 21, the Cronbach's alpha scores for each of the scales in which data was analysed were greater than 0.7 to suggest each scale was reliable.

Table 21: Cronbach Alpha values for scale items

Scale Item	Cronbach Alpha
Agreement on objectives to sponsorship (NCFC) – Q12	0.802
Agreement on objectives to sponsorship (SME sponsor) – Q13	0.887
Agreement on selection of SME sponsor by NCFC – Q15	0.818
Agreement on selection of NCFC by SME sponsor – Q16	0.704
Importance on CSFs (NCFC) – Q18	0.966
Importance on CSFs (SME Sponsor) – Q18	0.940
Satisfaction on CSFs (NCFC) – Q18	0.954
Satisfaction on CSFs (SME Sponsor) – Q18	0.953

Importance-Performance Analysis: Importance-performance analysis (IPA) is a tool that has gained increasing popularity across research fields such as sport (e.g. Rial et al 2008), tourism (e.g. Oh 2001; Azzopardi and Nash 2013), education (e.g. O’Neill and Palmer 2004), healthcare (e.g. Abalo et al 2007), and e-business (Levenburg and Magal 2005) to name but a few. The origins for using IPA, however, lie in marketing whereby it was a technique implemented to develop programmes via measuring features considered important against their level of performance (Martilla and James 1997). Yet to the researcher’s knowledge, no study into the interest area of sport sponsorship, let alone at the grassroots level, has adopted such a technique to understand how sponsorship is managed and how it could ultimately be improved – creating a further element of originality to this study. Indeed, this is surprising given it is an easily applied and practical technique (Martilla and James *ibid*; Oh 2001) that can visually highlight what management actions should be prioritised with (limited) resources to create optimum performance (Rial et al 2008; Sever 2015). This study consequently performed an IPA with reference to the CSFs identified with literature as well as from those elicited by practitioners during qualitative interviews (phase 1).

To do this, the research was guided by the procedure discerned from those who first proposed its use (Martilla and James 1997). A set of attributes (in this case CSFs) were initially developed in which, through the online survey, respondents were asked to score each CSF in reference to its perceived importance and performance (for this study satisfaction) for their relationship. The mean scores for the perceived importance and performance of CSFs in the sponsorship relationship were subsequently calculated. Once quantified, the mean values of importance and satisfaction scores relating to all CSFs were then used as the crossing point for constructing the IPA grid

that consists of four quadrants – with satisfaction on the x axis and importance on the y axis. In this sense the research employed a data-centred approach rather than scale-centred approach to IPA as the former technique allows for “a better discriminative power” (Rial et al 2008:180).

CSFs observed as being of high-importance but of low-satisfaction to practitioners were thus expressed as “concentrate here” (Quadrant I), whereas any CSFs found to be both high-importance and high-satisfaction were labelled “keep up the good work” (Quadrant II). While CSFs discerned low-importance and low-satisfaction were tagged “low priority” (Quadrant III), those CSFs practitioners reported as of low-importance but high-satisfaction were voiced as “possible overkill” (Quadrant IV). The subsequent IPAs constructed in respect to both the NCFC and SME sponsor is reported and interpreted within chapter six.

4.9: Challenges with Recruitment

A copious amount of literature emphasises how gaining access to key informants is one problem experienced throughout organisational literature (Myers 2009; Bryman 2016); a key challenge that continued throughout this research. Considering the football context, Chadwick (2004:252) outlines how “prospective football researchers need to be aware that a culture of secrecy prevails in sport making access difficult to achieve”. At the upper echelons, clubs more focused on financial return are suggested to be less interested in exposing themselves to any research which may engender a slight risk of maligning them (Dunn and Hughson 2016). The grassroots level similarly observes difficulties, but with barriers to researcher access alternatively owing to the scepticism and/or defensive nature of the potential actors concerned (Byers 2009) – a rationale that also reflects the business setting (Laurila 1997).

The fact that phase 1 of the study wished for complete dyads to fully explore and comprehend the interfaces that exist, or do not exist between the NCFC and SME sponsor merely compounded the difficulties that would still otherwise have been presented. At times within this phase, the researcher gained access to one party of the sponsor-sponsee relationship, while being unable to clinch willingness from the practitioner from the corresponding side of the dyad. This frustratingly rendered the participant interested in the study to be unusable. For the second phase of data collection (phase 2), the need to be part of a dyad to undertake the research was removed, yet issues regarding the lack of responses to the survey, particularly from SME sponsors existed. A determining factor

behind this could have been the limited platforms available to target such a niche group of people. The penultimate stage of data collection (phase 3a) presented less difficulties in that all but one of the participants who partook in phase 1 interviews continued with their involvement. The final phase (phase 3b) tendered challenges in the access to football officers of the CFA, culminating in a single focus group consisting of three football officers within one CFA. At this stage, the disruption of individual workloads formed the main barrier to gaining a broader understanding of grassroots football sponsorship from an alternative stakeholder perspective. For any academic wishing to work in this research field, perseverance is thus crucial in a setting that although creates difficulties in recruitment, as underlined in section 4.9, is also a panoramic salient to study.

In his PhD research on professional sponsorship, Chadwick (2004) proffers how researchers must additionally be mindful of the temporal factors associated within football study. Yet when accounting for the NCFC landscape, not one specific timeframe appears to guarantee access better than any other. Figure 14 depicts the main tasks a NCFC volunteer would typically undertake throughout the year, while simultaneously working around their other personal and professional commitments; rendering the likelihood of participating to diminish.

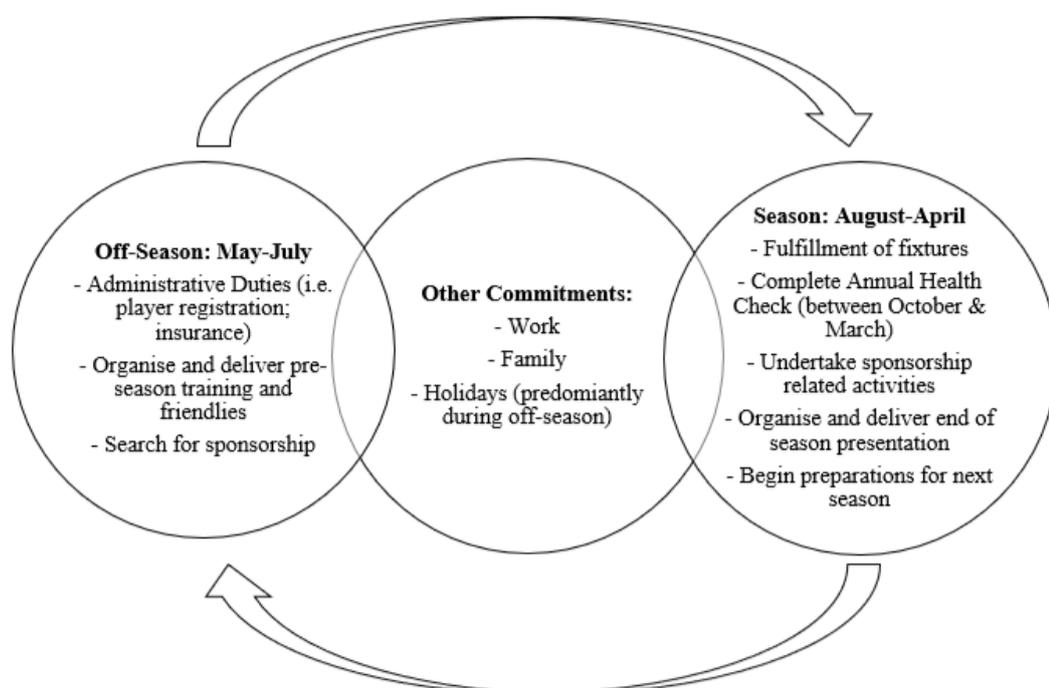


Figure 14: Duties of a NCFC volunteer

Not too dissimilarly, literature relating to the SME context suggests gaining access to such a niche business is problematic (Curran and Blackburn 2001; Whelan et al 2012). As previously highlighted, the managers of SMEs often deal with the sponsorship of sport at the grassroots level (Slack and Bentz 1996) and were thus most commonly the individual the research targeted to gain authentic and in-depth insights. However, such people typically possess a hectic work schedule (Easterby-Smith et al 2015). Alongside this, SMEs operate in arguably more turbulent environments than other organisations (Liao et al 2003). Managers are therefore more concerned with dealing with practical matters, meaning they can fail to possess the required time, or inclination, to be involved in study driven by the researchers attempt to explore theoretical issues (Saunders et al 2000; Whelan et al 2012).

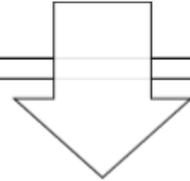
Considering these potential determinants that may have led to a reluctant from practitioners to be involved in the research, it was thus important to (continually) stress the practical outcomes and societal impact the research anticipated to generate. To do this, the development of a process model which could be adopted to support NCFs and their SME sponsors in their relationship as a result of their participation was conveyed through each of the phases PIS as well as any further communication channels.

4.10: Summary of Methodology

To conclude, this chapter has outlined the methodological techniques employed during this research in conjunction with the challenges the study encountered throughout this process. To address the study's principal research question and ROs, framed through the philosophical position of pragmatism, a three-phased iterative sequential mixed methods research design (qualitative → quantitative → qualitative) was adopted. This process is summarised in figure 15 that highlights the four data collection points, how participants were recruited for each phase, and the subsequent data analysis techniques employed to analyse the raw data gathered. In addition, issues of access to participants and their subsequent recruitment has also been paid attention, noting the hinderances faced during each phase of data collection. The findings and results from the analysis of data is subsequently discussed from the next chapter onwards.

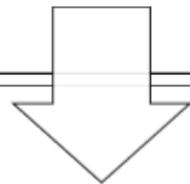
Phase One (16th July 2017 - 4th February 2018)

- **Data Collection Method:** Semi-structured interviews with 10 participants who are responsible for their respective organisations sponsorship deals - formed 5 complete sponsorship dyads (5 NCFCs and 5 related SME sponsors)
- **Recruitment of Participants:** A combination of purposive criterion-based sampling, along with convenience, snowball, and opportunistic sampling.
- **Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis.



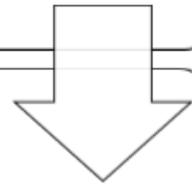
Phase Two (6th April 2018 - 31st August 2018)

- **Data Collection Method:** Self-administered online surveys that generated responses from 100 NCFCs and 17 SME sponsors responsible for their respective organisations sponsorship deals.
- **Recruitment of participants:** A combination of purposive criterion-based sampling along with snowbaling sampling - survey circulated through social media (Twitter and Facebook).
- **Data Analysis:** Descriptive analysis in conjunction with IPA.



Phase Three (a) (26th November 2018 - 9th February 2019)

- **Data Collection Method:** Repeat semi-structured interviews with 9 of phase one practitioners (5 SME sponsors and 4 NCFC volunteers).
- **Recruitment of Participants:** Those from Phase 1 (bar NCFC Town chairman).
- **Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis.



Phase Three (b) (24th June 2019)

- **Data Collection Method:** Single focus group with three football officers of a North-West CFA.
- **Recruitment of Participants:** Purposive criterion-based sampling.
- **Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis.

Figure 15: A summary of the research methodology

CHAPTER FIVE: PHASE ONE FINDINGS

5.1: Overview of Chapter

This chapter provides the findings of the data gathered from semi-structured interviews with practitioners of both NCFCs (n=5) and SMEs sponsors (n=5). Each sponsorship dyad varied in relation to the length of their association – some in their first association together and others experiencing multiple renewals. Although interviews intended to address the study’s aims and objectives, the researcher acknowledged the need for a broadened view of sports sponsorship at the grassroots level given the dearth of study applied to this backdrop. The in-depth nature of these semi-structured interviews (average length n) enabled the data to be detailed enough to draw out nuances that may otherwise have been missed and ultimately results in a model for practitioners to use.

In a first step, through a TA process that followed the six-step procedure of Braun and Clarke (2006), the chapter presents an overview of the phase 1 findings. From this, each global theme constructed and documented from the TA are then reported on, with the use of tables, and more commonly, thematic network maps to further understanding of the experiences and attitudes of practitioners towards the grassroots football sponsorship. Extracts of coded data were compiled into as many of the themes to which the codes were suited to and thus, in some cases, crossed-over between themes. As a result, six core themes from interviews were subsequently constructed which are depicted in figure 16.

Ultimately, the findings will show there is not one view to sponsorship; motives vary between sponsor-sponsor and sponsee-sponsee; there is a laissez-faire approach to how sponsorship is managed; personal characteristics were found to be important to strengthen the relationship, with more sponsor-related attributes aiding in the process; and the maintaining of a party’s reputation and autonomy were key concerns. The chapter ends with a recap of the key findings constructed as a result of the TA of the phase one semi-structured interviews.

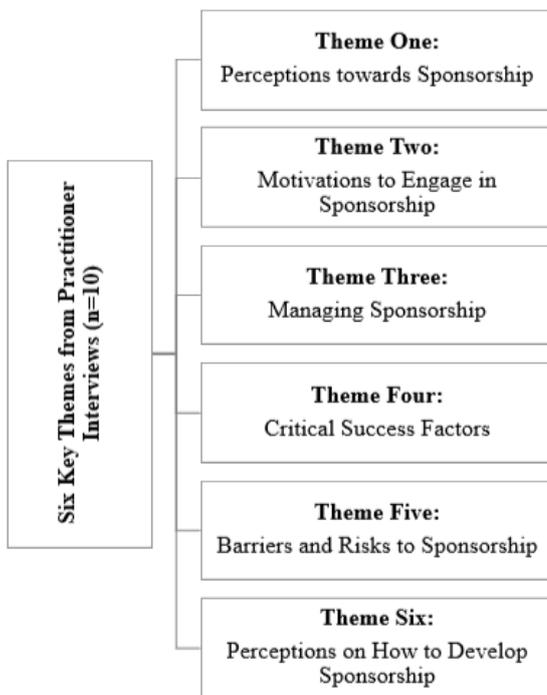


Figure 16: Summary of key themes

5.2: Theme One – Perceptions towards Sponsorship

How Grassroots Football Sponsorship is Understood

Table 22: How practitioners understand grassroots football sponsorship

Dyad	Core Aspects to Sponsorship
Dyad One	NCFC SB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mutually beneficial. - Finance for a return on investment through personal satisfaction or commercial gain.
	SME Bartender: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial investment in a non-profit football entity. - Finance for a return on investment through brand awareness or monetary gains.
Dyad Two	NCFC 1907: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two-way relationship. - Purchase of provision for a return through advertising the company.
	SME Carpet Fitters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A form of advertising to promote company.
Dyad Three	NCFC Town: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial or in-kind payment to club in return for promotion of business over an agreed length of time.
	SME Journalist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial investment in return for promotion of business.
Dyad Four	NCFC Yellow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial investment in return for the club to promote a business. - Differs to that of donation in which no return on investment is expected.
	SME Accountants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak word - Differs to advertising in that it's not driven with company in mind. - Sponsorship is a gift.
Dyad Five	NCFC Youth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business donates finance out of generosity to a sports entity in need.
	SME Restaurant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial offering in exchange for promotion of business. - Mutually beneficial.

As discerned in table 22, when asked how practitioners understood the term sponsorship, almost every practitioner explicitly referred to, or implied either some of or all the concepts associated with the conventional sponsorship definitions (see section 1.3.1). The notions of an exchange in finance or in-kind resources or provisions in return for commercial gain and an agreement between two parties that would be of mutual benefit were consistently prevalent.

However, despite many practitioners conforming to previous connotations, some held opposing views to the conventional outlook of sponsorship. In fact, within certain cases, practitioners from each party of the same dyad held different views to one another on what they perceived sponsorship as (i.e. dyad four and five). For example, in dyad four, whilst NCFC Yellow viewed sponsorship as an activity exploited for a ROI, the SME Accountant felt sponsorship was little more than a donation. Such a set of outlooks switched in dyad five, with NCFC Youth positing sponsorship to be gift in contrast to a venture that provided commercial opportunity that was delineated by the SME Restaurant. Yet regardless of what sponsorship represents for each party, such opposing views in the dyad could potentially tender future aggravation in the deal. This is as a consequence of the underpinnings behind sponsorship for one organisation not being reciprocated by the other, thus meaning the expectations towards the management of sponsorship may be different. Further, of considerable distinction were those practitioners that framed sponsorship through philanthropic and charitable notions rather than ideas surrounding the exploitable intent of the activity commercially (NCFC Youth; SME Accountant). In stark contrast to the philanthropic attitudes towards sponsorship, the SME Carpet-fitter alternatively placed a greater emphasis on commercial undertones to such an extreme that the term advertising was explicitly adopted.

Role of Grassroots Football Sponsorship

The second sub-theme surrounded the perceived role of sponsorship to both organisations. A consistent thread across both parties, irrespective of organisational type, was how sponsorship formed part of an integrated strategy. On the one hand, for NCFCs, sponsorship was implemented in conjunction with alternative sources of income such as player subs, gate receipts, signing on fees and general fundraising activities. On the other hand, the SME engaged in sponsorship alongside other marketing-related channels that included but were not exclusive to direct marketing, word-of-mouth, social media, general advertising, business-business marketing and cause-related marketing (the

umbrella of which grassroots football sponsorship may fall under). Whereas sponsorship therefore frequently served as a piece of the NCFCs integrated strategy financial-wise, sponsorship of grassroots football was typically exploited by the SME as part of an integrated strategy that related to promotions. The role of sponsorship in respect to the organisations integrated strategy is subsequently discussed.

NCFC – Financial Role: The research found a significant chasm in how sponsorship was prioritised by NCFCs. NCFC SB viewed sponsorship to be low in financial priority because other revenue streams could be relied on to allow the club to operate, proffering: *“Sponsorship is not the be all and end all. If we didn’t get any sponsors this season, we would find some way of surviving”*. Other practitioners (NCFC 1907, and Town), however argued the club counted heavily on sponsorship. For instance, NCFC 1907 indicated:

“We will always try and set out for sponsorship to hit at least between 50%-60% of our clubs’ annual income”.

Yet while the role and priority of sponsorship in these cases were viewed as something which is stationary, the remaining practitioners instead contended that the importance of sponsorship fluctuates and depends on considerations such as the time of season (NCFC Youth) or size of financial outlay required (NCFC Yellow). This is nicely summarised by NCFC Youth, who states:

“At the start of the season sponsorship is the most important thing. You’ve got to pay for your kit, league fees, registration fees, pitch fees, insurance fees. But then as the season goes on and you’ve used all that sponsorship money it’s the signing on fees off the lads. It’s then the subs that just keep everything rolling – referees, kit wash, etc.”

Despite disparity in what practitioners perceived about the role and priority of sponsorship, unanimous agreement from clubs existed in identifying the stage where sponsorship becomes of increased importance. All five practitioners commented on the value of sponsorship intensifying when outlays for the club to operate amplify. NCFC Yellow, for example, stresses the general cost of football now places him in a difficult position of whether to increase player subs or alternatively locate sponsorship:

“That really depends on the cost of football. If the costs for football go up and up, I suppose I don’t want people not to play football because they cannot afford it. I suppose in a way it’s an ethical decision which I’ve had to kind of make a little bit this year about whether you put the money on the parents, or you go looking for it.”

Another factor which would appear to steer a greater value being placed on sponsorship due to increased expenditure pertained to the clubs on the field success. Most practitioners underlined how success (i.e. promotions up the leagues) would create a double-edged sword in which costs to function at a higher level would increase and mean sponsorship would need to become more pivotal (NCFC Youth, 1907, SB, and Town). NCFC Youth stated: *“As you get higher up the divisions you then need more sponsorship”*.

NCFC SB alternatively presented a more detailed account of how success created the ramification of increased expenditure and sponsorships potential role:

“If we ever get into division one because the costs are greater. The league fees are the same, pitch fees are the same, kits the same. But in division two and three you only have a referee. In division one you’ve got a referee and two linesman. One bill maybe £125 in division one instead of say £30 in two or three because you also have to pay for travel and they may come from deepest Cheshire, Stockport, and Manchester. You can’t sustain that every week. Sponsorship would offset some if not all of the costs occurred here.”

SME – Promotional Role: Unsurprisingly, most SME practitioners stressed how their business operations came before anything else when questioned regarding where sponsorship was placed on their priority list (SME Carpet-fitter, Journalist, Restaurant). Yet in relation to the SMEs strategies employed to promote their business, practitioners showed a degree of disparity in how they prioritised sponsorship. Despite all the objectives and benefits to the sponsorship of grassroots football (refer to section 5.3), only one practitioner discerned sponsorship to be central to their promotional strategy – aligned to increasing consumer awareness:

“Sponsorship is quite high compared to other activities due to our business having the logo on the front of their shirts and people will see it”. (SME Journalist)

In stark contrast, three practitioners perceived sponsorship to be low in importance and an activity that merely supplemented other core marketing techniques (SME Bartender, Accountant, and Carpet-fitter). One reason listed for this related to the perceived limitedness of sponsorship regarding its ability to reach the core consumers the SME wished to target:

“Sponsorship is very low for us because of the market that we operate in. The people that play football are not the clients I want to specifically target... Yet sponsorship is used ancillary to these to not just satisfy my personal interests as a fan of football, but also allows for CSR and be something I can use to tell my clients kind of what we do and how we support the local community.” (SME Bartender)

An alternative determinant revolved around the mismanagement of sponsorship by the NCFC the sponsor was associated with:

“If I was to spend £10,000 on any other advertising outside of sponsorship I’d want a return of probably £20,000 over a two year period. The problem is that you put the money into grassroots football and it’s mismanaged. There’s no five-year plan but an immediate plan. I can’t then really get the returns I desire.” (SME Accountant)

The SME Restaurant was more neutral in his stance about where sponsorship of grassroots football was positioned compared to the other forms of promotion:

“For what your return on investment is, it’s pretty good. But the scope isn’t as big as what I get on Facebook or other social media platforms. It depends how you look at it. It would be low down on the list for your actual sheer return, but from what you put into what you get back it would be pretty high up.”

Interesting here is that the SME Accountant somewhat contradicts the SME Restaurant regarding the ROI received from grassroots football sponsorship when questioned at which point this form of promotion could increase in importance, simply stating: *“If I saw value to it.”* In fact, bar the exception of improvements in the financial position of the SME (SME Carpet-fitter, Journalist), the only other determinant asserted to increase the role that the sponsorship of grassroots football may play for a SME indeed resided in revealing a greater value (SME Accountant).

5.3: Theme Two – Motivations to Engage in Sponsorship

Understanding the intentions to engage in sponsorship was salient to this study as this potentially influenced how sponsorship is approached and managed. The results (n=10) showed a myriad of objectives, motivations and rationales for becoming involved in sponsorship existed for each respective party (figure 17). Yet whilst sponsorship motives and objectives differed from sponsor to sponsor and sponsee to sponsee, objectives and justifications centred around four principal objectives; (i) non-commercial, (ii) commercial, (iii) operational, and (iv) strategic objectives. Whereas non-commercial, commercial and strategic objectives typically represented the objectives that SME sponsors coveted, the overarching objective relating to operations largely characterised NCFC motives.

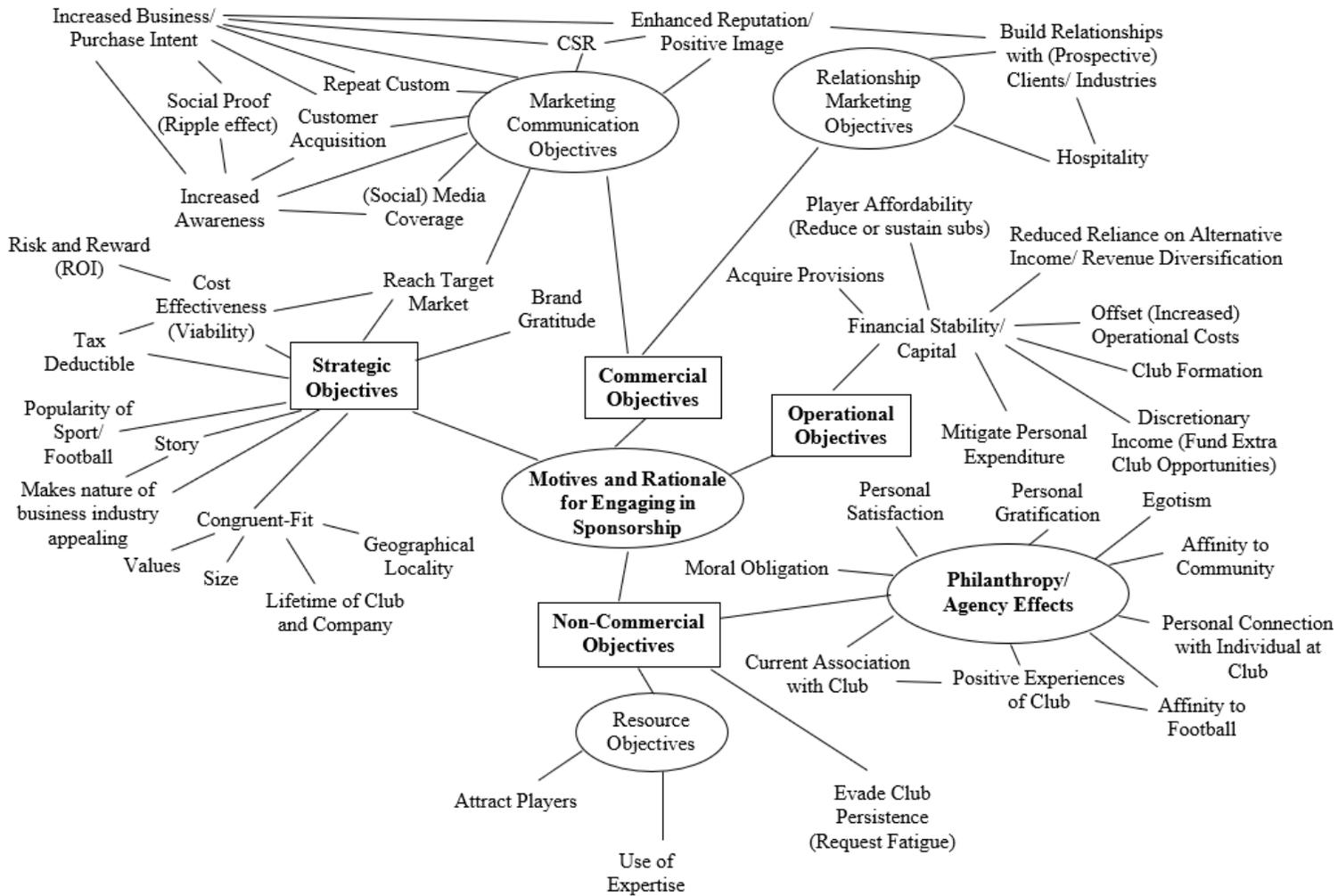


Figure 17: Overall thematic network map – motivations

Non-Commercial Objectives

Presented in figure 18, the interviews identified 11 specific objectives and motives grouped into two broader objectives that veered more to reasons and aims for sponsorship with no commercial agenda. An interesting and further non-commercial objective that however failed to fall into one of the two broader objectives was discerned by NCFC Youth. Here the practitioner jokingly recalled how he had secured sponsorship as a result of request fatigue whereby the SME merely wished to arrest the endless appeal by the NCFC for finance. Nevertheless, findings into the two overarching objectives surrounding non-commercial objectives subsequently follows.

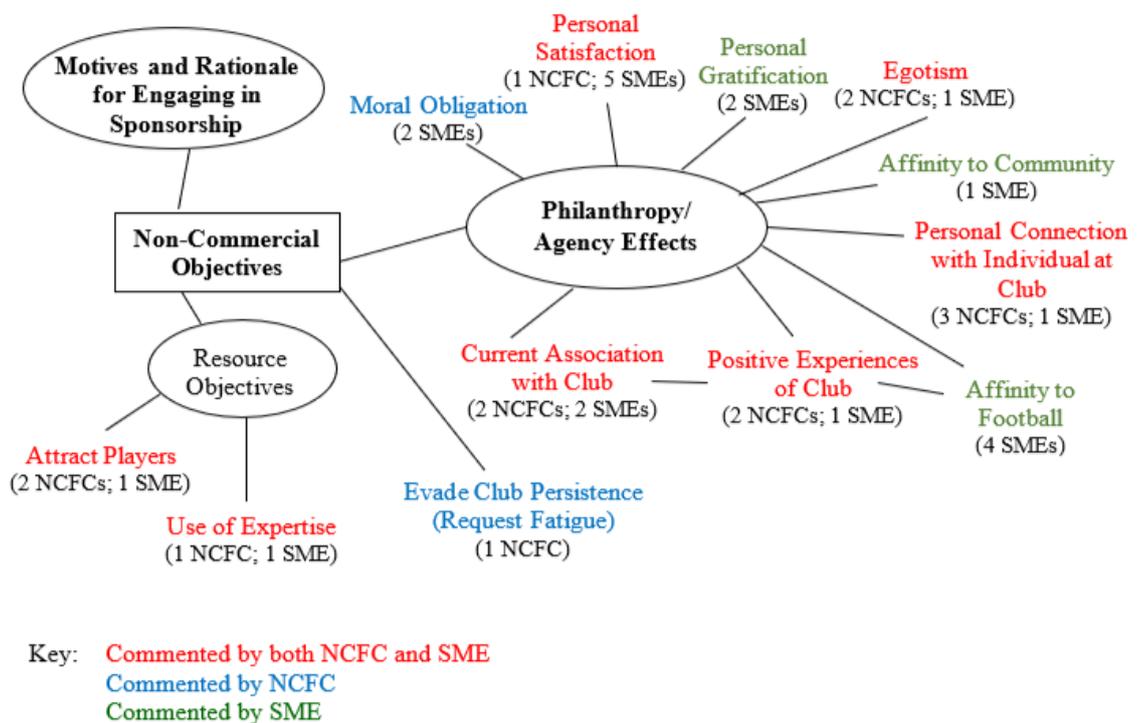


Figure 18: Thematic network map – non-commercial objectives

Philanthropy and Agency Effects:

In a set of motives only associated with a SME sponsor, a total of nine objectives surrounded the first broader objective of philanthropy and agency effects (i.e. personal interests over company interests) (figure 18). In fact, for each SME sponsor, there was a sense that such motives preceded and were prioritised above commercially orientated objectives. The quote from the SME Restaurant, for example, epitomises this philanthropic and altruistic outlook to sponsorship:

“The priority is to get a kit and it feels good to get a group of lads a kit with your logo on that... That really is sort of the motivation behind it. The fact that you might get business from it is very much a secondary thing.”

The SME Journalist further proved a respondent’s satisfaction acted as a driving force behind ultimately agreeing to sponsor grassroots football in contending that by supporting his local community he would feel a sense of self-pride: *“I suppose I did it to make me feel proud, you know, knowing that I am helping the community”*.

In another reason commonly highlighted by SME sponsors (n=4), bar the SME Journalist, was a personal interest and affinity in football and/ or the NCFC their company was associated to. Taking the former reason into consideration first, the fondness of football from the SME Accountant was to such an extent that this was noted to influence his decision to sponsor NCFCs as opposed to other NCSCs despite, in his eyes, appearing to be inferior in how they conduct sponsorship.

“Compared to football clubs, rugby clubs do it really well. Even cricket clubs do it really well. I have, and I’ll never have, any interest in rugby and cricket, however, so I don’t do it... This is again where I was talking about 50/50. I like football so I am more likely to take a gamble like I did with [name of NCFC] as when it’s something that you like the club have already got through the door.”

Second, affection of a specific NCFC that resulted in sponsorship was reflected in the SME Carpet-fitters account of the historical connection with NCFC 1907 which stimulated numerous positive experiences throughout his childhood and ultimately served as a rationale for his engagement.

“I’d say me and [name of NCFC] has a long history. My dad used to play all those years ago so as a kid growing up we used to go to [name of NCFC]... The likes of myself and my brother played football there also for the best part of 10/15 years. You know like I had good times there as a kid and good times playing football also, so that’s probably one of the reasons I’ve helped to sponsor the club.”

Resource Objectives:

Relating to only NCFCs, a few practitioners listed sponsorship was exploited to achieve two forms of resource objectives – those that allow the organisation to gain a competitive advantage and use of key resources. For those who highlighted such objectives, while these were secondary to the principal rationale across interviews, they still contributed to the overall narrative towards why they coveted support from SMEs.

In a first specific motive falling under resource objectives, NCFC SB and Town detailed their use of sponsorship in the attempt to attract players. Drawing on sponsorship to sustain or reduce player subs, each practitioner reckoned this acted as an incentive for players (from opposing clubs) to join. NCFC SB stated:

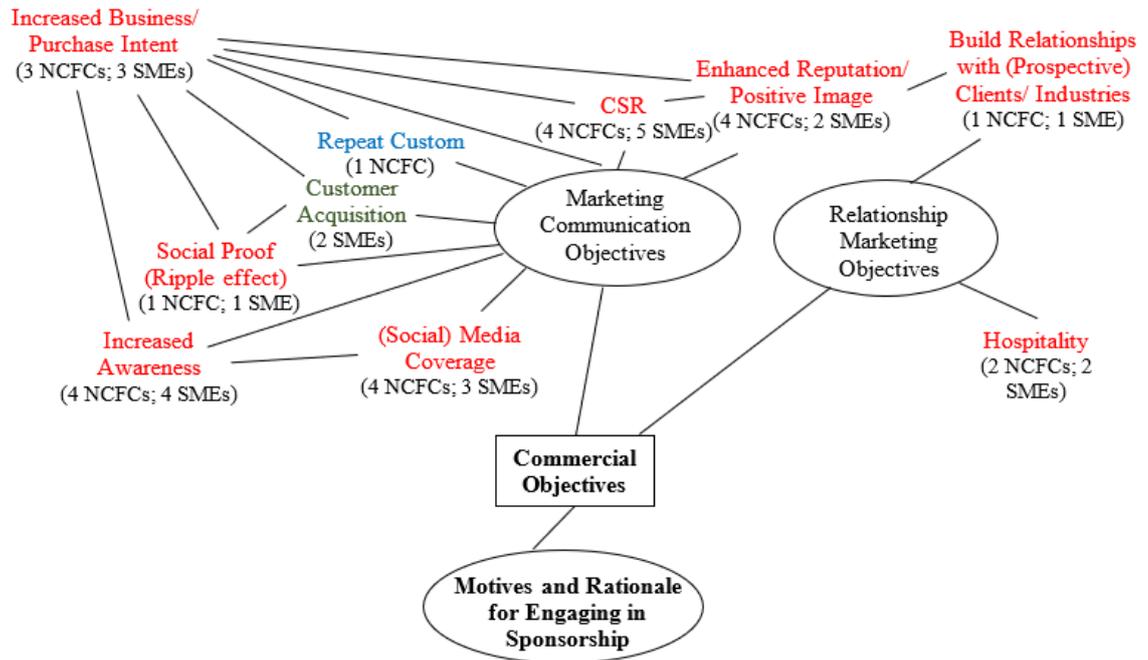
“The more money you can generate from sponsorship means you can actually start to charge your players less which then makes your club a little bit more attractive.”

Singled out by NCFC Town, gaining access to expertise within a SME was an additional resource objective for engaging with certain businesses. As a club who produce a matchday programme, a partnership with a journalist who not only supported the club with finance but could also write content regularly in return for publicity was adjudged prudent.

“[SME Journalist] not only gave us money but they have the skill sets, the technology and the resources to be able to produce work that we ourselves cannot do at this moment of time. It seemed wise to partner with them.”

Commercial Objectives

It was clear across interviews that such humanitarian thinking was additionally conjoined by more economic-driven impulses that also acted as (secondary) stimulators, highlighting the multiplicity of motives and objectives coveted across sponsorship relationships. Figure 19 delineates two distinct commercially-related objectives that encompass 10 specific objectives which both NCFCs, but more typically SME sponsors sought when coming engage in sponsorship.



Key: **Commented by both NCFC and SME**
Commented by NCFC
Commented by SME

Figure 19: Thematic network map – commercial objectives

Marketing Communication Objectives:

In the view of commercial-orientated objectives, discussion from SME sponsors resided in using grassroots football sponsorship to promote the business in a bid to raise brand awareness or create a positive image and, in turn, increase purchase intent (figure 19). In fact, throughout all interviews there was a sense that each specific objective which fell under marketing communication was commensurate to increasing the businesses bottom-line in some capacity. The desire to gain media exposure, particularly through social media channels, was frequently illustrated as an objective fastened to elevating the businesses’ awareness that was then attached to the business coveting increased levels of sales and/ or trade. This is best epitomised by the comments from the SME Journalist who stated:

“It’s very worthwhile because if I didn’t do it then hardly anyone would know about my company – which has happened because of Twitter – and I wouldn’t have been contacted to subsequently write stories.”

Yet at the top of this broad objective surrounding marketing communication, each SME alluded to the role CSR played in their decision to sponsor community football. Although, the wish to further societal good and “*put something back*” was one that was somewhat

muddled given close connections between CSR and philanthropic giving appeared to exist in certain cases. Of the five SME sponsors, three acknowledged how CSR could then subsequently be used to enhance the image of the business and ultimately improve the bottom line. The excerpt from the SME Accountant reflects on this outlook, noting:

“I think it shows that we’re not just about the pounds, shillings and pence because it shows that there’s another side to us by giving something back to the community. But at the same time there’s a level of [expletive] to that because from that judged goodness people may then come to us as a result.”

What was unexpected, however, was the fact that this argument to engage in sponsorship for CSR considerations and thereby gain favourable images of the organisation from the public, as highlighted by the SME Accountant, also resonated with NCFCs – albeit with a lesser frequency and without the link to bottom line. In the only case to evidence this, NCFC Town returned to their relationship with a charity partner:

“If you’re excluding the sort of financial gains, there’s the potential for good publicity. I suppose this relates to checking some of those social responsibility elements of your club. You know the work for instance of [name of charity]. Yes, they’ve given us some money, but had they not done that on this occasion we would still have developed that partnership as a charity partner because we think that the work that they do is good, and it sort of almost promotes the clubs’ social responsibility; you know, that we’re not just there to play football on a Saturday afternoon or a Tuesday night. So being associated with and being able to support a local charity I think says the right sort of things about your club.”

Relationship Marketing Objectives:

Although not to the same extent as marketing communication objectives that were sought by most SMEs, two sponsors (SME Journalist and Carpet-fitter) further entered grassroots football sponsorship for the hospitality opportunities offered by the NCFC. And while such experiences were unsurprisingly not as extravagant and lavish as those associated to the elite sport confines, both SMEs expressed their satisfaction as a result of attending matches and being made to ‘*feel special*’. Yet instead of NCFCs arranging hospitality for the purpose of boosting the sponsors’ satisfaction, the provision for hospitality was also craved by SME sponsors for the opportunity to be able to spend time with (prospective) cliental to strengthen or forge business ties, as evoked by NCFC Town.

“I think lots of companies that want hospitality see a social side to it. So they put a bit of money in and bring other firms they may want to do business with and they come and have a good night with us or a good Saturday afternoon with us. It’s something a little bit different to just discussing business over a table.”

Operational Objectives

The ability to allow the NCFC to deliver on their mandate of providing football either recreationally or competitively to their members – thus considered an operational objective – was at the centre of why NCFCs engaged in sponsorship. Within this broad objective, NCFC practitioners habitually stressed they coveted investment from commercial entities for financial purposes. Soundbites such as “*the main motive is money*” (NCFC Yellow) or “*money*” (NCFC SB) when questioning why a club sought sponsorship reflected this outlook. Indeed, such was the importance of sponsorship as a revenue stream that the NCFC Town labelled the acquisition of sponsorship to be “*the difference between the club surviving or not surviving*”.

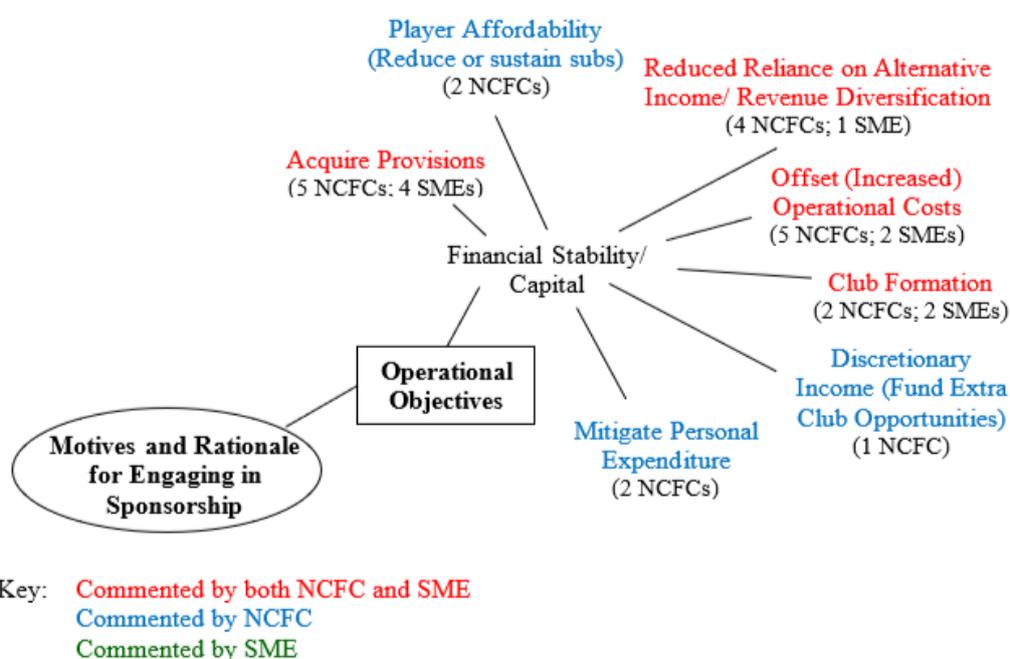


Figure 20: Thematic network map – operational objectives

Yet despite each NCFC noting sponsorship was exploited to ‘survive’ and provide financial stability, this research found that the financial objectives to sponsorship extended beyond this simple life or death ultimatum and were more deep-rooted, with seven specific motives connecting to finance in some form (figure 20). Of note was the fact two NCFC practitioners stressed they engaged in sponsorship to stop spending their own personal money to run the club. NCFC SB, for example, noted:

“You know, I’ve lost count of the amount of times I have had to finance certain costs and not been reimbursed. Sponsorship stops a huge amount of money coming from the people who are running the teams’ pocket.”

All NCFC practitioners further referred to making use of the finance received to acquire provisions to ensure they could deliver football to its players. In each case, this associated to the purchasing of a new kit (n=5), with the finances from sponsorship also commonly being noted to support in the acquisition of equipment (n=3).

Equally, each NCFC drew attention towards their club engaging in sponsorship to offset (increased) operational costs. The clubs' costs to ensure they could meet their operations could further be broken down into two forms of expenditure: (i) match-day, and (ii) administrative. Whereas the comments by NCFC 1907 typified the experiences of some NCFCs (n=3) who used sponsorship to alleviate the match-day costs, the statement by NCFC Youth emphasised how NCFCs (n=4) drew on sponsorship to finance administrative costs.

“Now before you kick a ball its nearly £100 just to pay the match officials. If you take into consideration all your kit-wash, the groundsman and the cleaning of the changing rooms it was £120 before we kicked a ball... and only sponsorship will pay for that.” (NCFC 1907)

“The sponsorship with [name of SME sponsor] financed our league fees, our insurance costs, our affiliation to the County FA and our pitch fees” (NCFC Youth)

Strategic Objectives:

As figure 21 exhibits, practitioners of both NCFCs and SMEs articulated a total of six motives that pertained to the perceived strategic capabilities of grassroots football sponsorship. Yet despite motives for sponsorship being noted by both parties, all these objectives were commented on in relation to the SMEs' purpose.

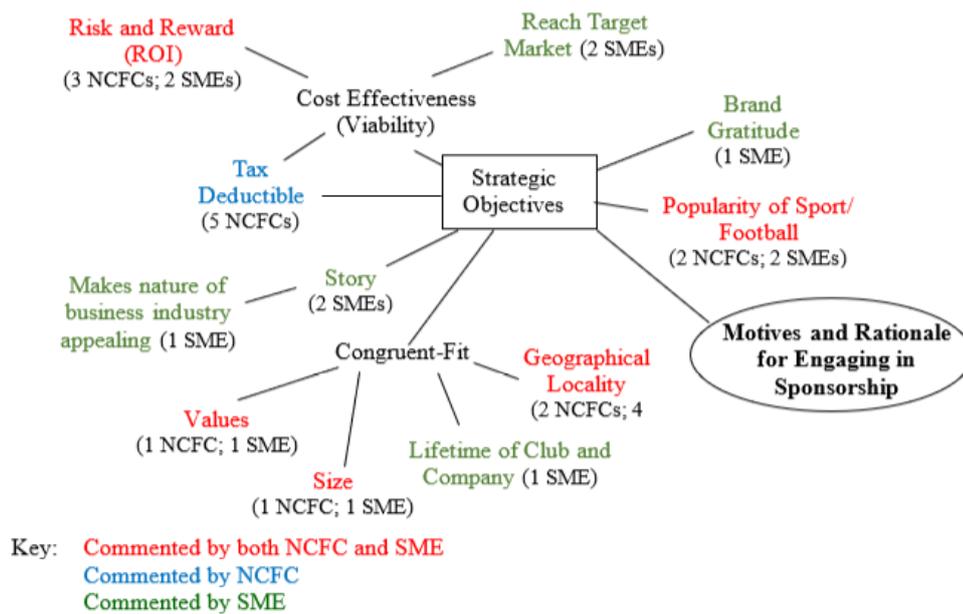


Figure 21: Thematic network map – strategic objectives

Most striking was that not one SME sponsor acknowledged contributions to grassroots sport could be deducted from corporation tax (figure 21). Instead, each NCFC practitioner explicitly referred to the potential for companies to receive a certain level of tax relief (up to £2,500) from their financial support to grassroots sport. This finding is alarming given such incentives may spur more companies to engage in sponsorship and resultantly aid the NCFCs greater.

Yet unlike the potential tax relief available to those organisations who sponsor grassroots sport, the viability and value of the sponsorship of NCFCs was a rationale that did not go amiss by most SME sponsors (n=4). Each of these respondents in fact submitted sponsorship of grassroots football was apt given they could ‘*never afford*’ to be able to partner with clubs at the elite end of the game. Somewhat allied to this, SMEs believed they could gain considerable value through NCFC sponsorship as a result of reaching their target market in a manner that was cost-effective. The SME Restaurant, for example, reflected on how his sponsorship of NCFC Youth allowed him to gain access to the youth market without significant financial investment is just one example to represent this point:

“Youth football is a good way of getting into some serious sponsorship but without breaking the bank. It’s a good target for us because youth love food and particularly pizza. So, you know, why not. Why wouldn’t we? There’s also no real risk to sponsoring really as there’s nothing really at stake at that level. But that would change if you were spending thousands and thousands of pounds.”

The little financial outlay required to secure the rights of the NCFC therefore served as a further cause for the SME to engage in sponsorship as the risks were consequently also perceived as negligible or non-existent (figure 21).

Equally, the interviews additionally revealed that the popularity of sport/ football rendered SMEs to covet sponsorship with NCFCs. Approaching from a NCFC stance, NCFC SB expressed football to be the ‘*the national game of England*’ which he perceived led companies to be more inclined to engage in this form of sponsorship over other non-profit community sport clubs. For SME sponsors, in commenting on the desire to generate increased exposure for his company, the SME Journalist voiced:

“You want your company to get more exposure and people are interested in football, so you want to sponsor a local club.”

Not too dissimilarly, the sponsorship of grassroots football was argued to be ideal to improve the relatability between consumers and the business, not least specifically within industry sectors that were otherwise labelled as being ‘*boring*’ (SME Accountant; Restaurant). The SME Accountant aired this rationale:

“What we do is boring. If you're amazon and you're selling a product, it's really easy. You like look at this at half price. For us, we're a necessary evil. People have got to pay taxes. They don't like to pay it and we can't write a story. By us sponsoring [name of NCFC] we get a little connection with people. So what people see is that little story, you know, [name of NCFC] have beaten whoever 4-0. That's an excellent subliminal promotion for us.”

Lastly, despite potentially aligning more to why someone specifically choses to engage in sponsorship with a given organisation, the perceived fit between sponsor and sponsee was prominent across interviews. Within this observation, while four determinants were identified by practitioners that related to this strategic objective, the geographical locality frequently served as a principal facet as to why SMEs agreed to sponsor a NCFC (n=4 SMEs).

“What sponsorship of community football gives us, and particularly with [name of NCFC] is local presence. Probably around 80% of our business is based in the North-West so sponsorship with a local community team is the ideal thing to be involved in.” (SME Accountant)

5.4: Theme Three – Managing Sponsorship

To address the study’s RO(n) and comprehend the processes and practices experienced within the sponsorship of grassroots football, each interviewee was asked to narrate how

their respective deal was undertaken from inception to the end of the term agreement, with three resulting themes.

1. Planning and approach to grassroots football sponsorship
2. Leveraging of grassroots football sponsorship
3. Monitoring and evaluation of grassroots football sponsorship

Figure 22 presents the overall thematic network derived from the TA before then being split into each of the three global themes and subsequently discussed in greater depth.

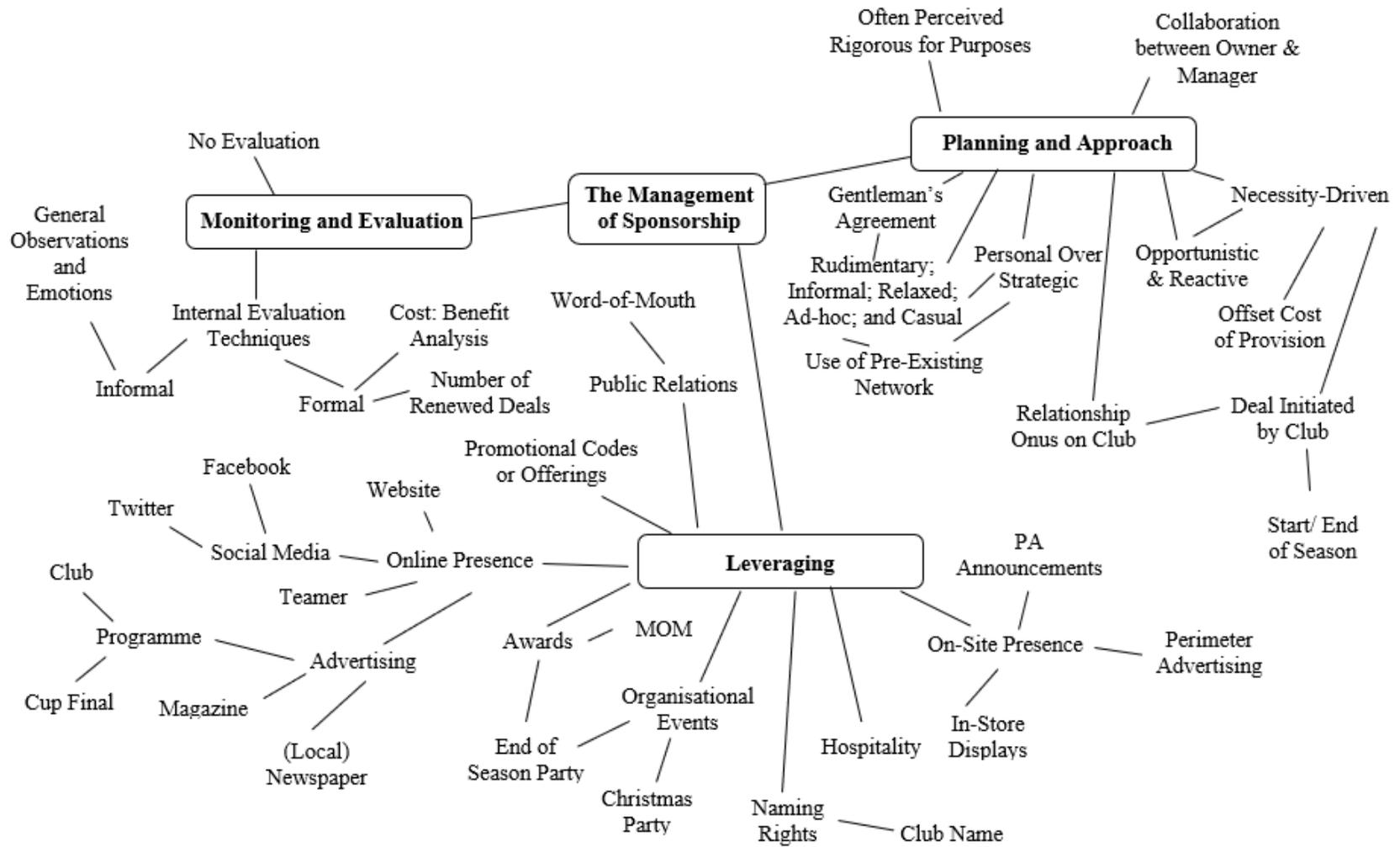


Figure 22: Overall thematic network map – management

The Planning and Approach to Grassroots Football Sponsorship

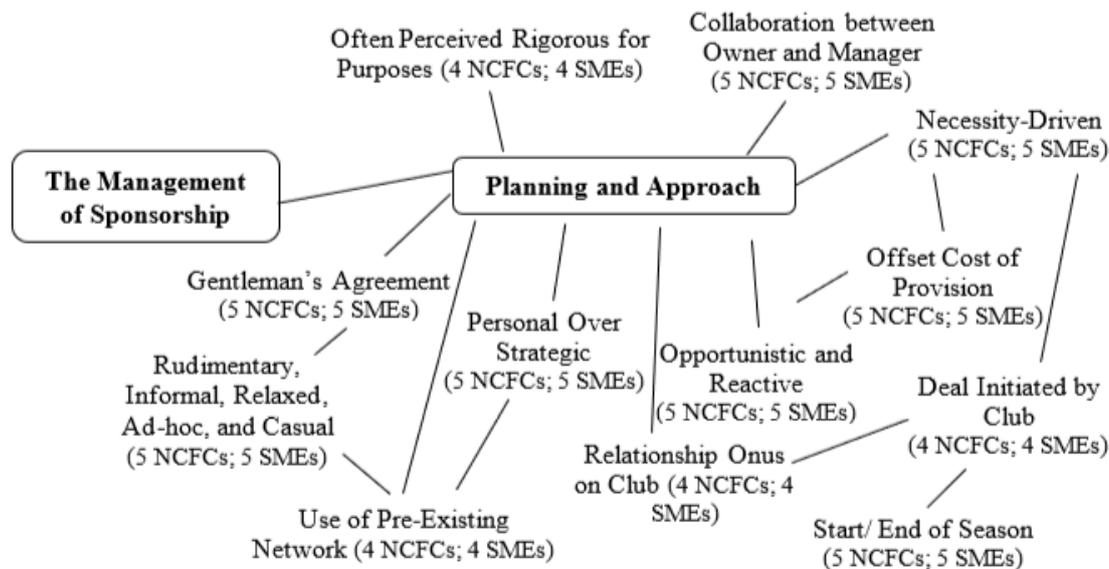


Figure 23: Thematic network map – planning and approach

Findings revealed that the way in which sponsorship was undertaken at its inception followed a certain sequence of events that occurred between the end of one season and start of the next (approximately May – August). Further, the NCFC was often opportunistic and at the forefront of creating deals with the SME sponsor. Indeed, within all relationships bar dyad three, the NCFC approached a prospective sponsor using their pre-existing networks to identify potential businesses willing to sponsor in the need for resources and/ or finances. The following excerpts from the practitioners involved in dyad five summarises the scenario typically encountered regarding the inception of an agreement:

“Last year the manager of [NCFC] contacted me saying he was wanting to essentially create this new team, but didn’t have the finances to do that and was therefore contacting me to see if I would be willing to sponsor the team... We only had a limited period of time as he contacted me in June or July and, as you know, the season starts in August... There’s a lot of things that were involved in starting a team up and my role as a sponsor was to pay for the equipment, kits, players insurance, league fees, and things like that.” (SME Restaurant)

“There’s not a great deal of talking. We went to [restaurant] with a couple of the lads that knew the guy who owned the restaurant and he just said to me that he knew I was going to be the manager and then asked what we wanted. I just said money and then we explained what it was for and that it would mainly be going towards the kit and the start-up of the club.” (NCFC Youth)

Alternatively, in dyad three, the opportunity for sponsorship stemmed via a social media advert: *“I saw the advert on Facebook and Twitter and just made contact as a result of*

that". Further, practitioners also indicated some of the deals that they engaged in previously saw the SME take control in creating the partnership. The SME Restaurant, for example, commented on a different sponsorship agreement with a junior NCFC whereby the company as opposed to the club acted on opportunistic instincts.

"It was a spare of the moment decision. I just on the off chance said 'do you want a kit? and they said 'Yeah. We are looking for a training kit.' They were taken aback when I just sort of offered [respondent laughs]. They just seemed surprised that someone would offer rather than being asked." (SME Restaurant)

A related theme surrounded how the planning and management of sponsorship deals at this level typically incorporated transactional elements to begin with before then exhibiting some relational characteristics once the fee had passed from the sponsor to NCFC. The SME Bartender, for example, stated: *"I wouldn't say it's a very, very deep-rooted relationship. But it became much more than here's the money, here's the benefits."* This inter-organisational relationship forged typically involved a small set of individuals responsible for the deal from inception to end of term deal – often the SME owner and manager of the NCFC. The fact that deals were only managed a nominal number of people did not go amiss by NCFC SB who stressed the benefit of undertaking sponsorship in this fashion:

"It was just me and him. The whole thing was subsequently speeded up because I didn't have to go back to a committee and sit through 20 minutes of everybody throwing in their own ideas which nine times out of ten would have been nonsense probably."

Throughout the agreement, sponsorship was commonly approached in an informal and casual manner, driven through more personal than business-like principals. The flexibility of each deal was to such an extent that the experience in dyad four between NCFC Yellow and the SME Accountant was commonplace across the setting. Here, NCFC Yellow recalled how their partnership was *"ad-hoc"* in which *"there was nothing down on paper and no formal arrangement"*.

Yet from an opposing view, the SME Accountant perceived the ad-hoc approach to the sponsorship of grassroots football was in fact the reason behind why the NCFC failed to procure additional investment as the company was unable to monitor the sponsorships value:

"It's been done on an ad hoc basis so we couldn't even put anything in place to monitor it. But this is why they're not getting anywhere near as much money as they could do."

With the off-the-cuff approach to sponsorship being prevalent across deals and subsequently rendering varied responses from practitioners, a central question therefore related to whether they deemed the planning of agreements to be rigorous enough for the purposes of football sponsorship at the grassroots level. In asking this, all but one organisation believed the approach taken was appropriate. The SME Carpet-fitter, for example, stated: “If I was to do it again, I wouldn’t do anything differently.” to suggest the sponsor was satisfied with the approach taken. From a club stance, NCFC Town noted: “I think probably from what the club has to offer then yes.” It is nevertheless notable that the only practitioner to feel the planning towards the sponsorship of grassroots football was inappropriate is also the only white-collar professional (i.e. SME Accountant). This may have resultantly impacted on his expectations of how sponsorship is approached given this line of work is more stringent compared to other SMEs engaged in sponsorship at the grassroots level.

The Leveraging of Grassroots Football Sponsorship

An understanding into how parties involved in grassroots football sponsorship add value to their deal was an issue crucial to understanding the management of sponsorship. In this study, all dyads executed some form of leveraging to go alongside their initial agreements that related to either kit sponsorship and/ or perimeter advertising, albeit to varying degrees. Figure 24 provides a summary of the leveraging tasks undertaken to add value to the deal.

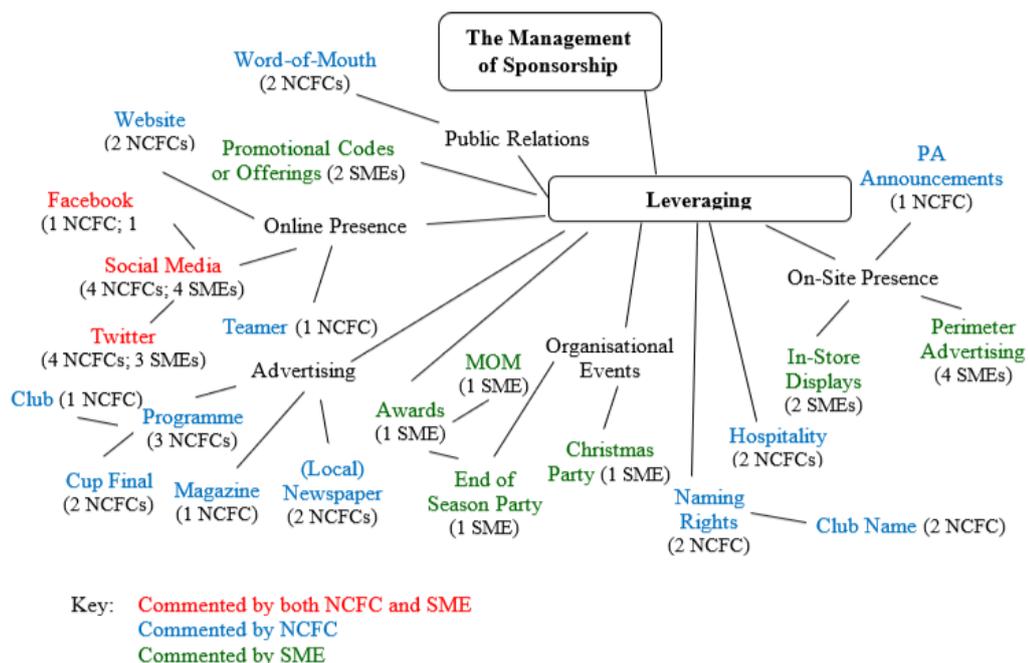


Figure 24: Thematic network map – leveraging

The use of social media and other online platforms were the most typical methods adopted by NCFCs to promote and nurture the agreement further (figure 24). This was not too dissimilar to the SME sponsor who to add value to the initial deal most commonly utilised social media and/ or participated in on-site leveraging – both around the club (i.e. perimeter advertising) and company (i.e. office) setting. From figure 24, it was therefore clear that most leveraging tasks exploited to add value to the agreement incurred minimal to no financial cost for the organisation yet still allowed to promote the association to consumers. Only attempting to create an on-site presence in relation to perimeter advertising incurred notable financial cost, typically priced at between £200 and £300. Indeed, this point of considering the costs induced by leveraging did not go amiss by the SME Restaurant when commenting on his use of social media to promote the partnership and target (potential) consumers through Facebook:

“Facebook is relatively cheap. You can put a post on Facebook for free and because we’ve got about 1,500 followers it will usually hit about three-four hundred people.”

Finally, the inclusion or use of the company’s name as part of the club name was an interesting leveraging strategy implemented by two NCFCs (NCFC SB and Youth). Such a technique, which again comes at no extra financial cost, was used as a method of increasing the company’s awareness because the sponsor’s company name could then be brandished across a myriad of platforms. The description provided by NCFC Youth summarises how including the company’s name to the club added value to the sponsorship relationship with the SME Restaurant:

“Of course, [NCFC Youth] is named after [SME Restaurant]. So naturally when people see the club name on the league website and local newspapers for the fixtures, tables and results etc. they also see the name of the [SME Restaurant]. This just adds another level of awareness to the company.”

Figure 24 indicates that NCFCs actively engage more in leveraging to generate value to the relationship in comparison to the SME sponsors who were laxer in their approach to this during-sponsorship practice. In fact, there appeared to be only one instance in where a SME sponsor (SME Accountant) perceived the leveraging undertaken by the NCFC to be inadequate, making the rather cutting remark: *“We need more than just for us to give the club money and not to hear of it again.”*

Nevertheless, when questioned on who should be accountable, nine out of 10 practitioners revealed that a collaborative effort towards leveraging should exist – the practitioner from NCFC Yellow was unsure. The SME Bartender states:

“Personally, I feel it should be a mixture. I think every company in the world many have a difference in opinion here. Some will believe because I am paying you [the sponsee], you should do it. Others will believe that because I am paying you, I can do it.

The Monitoring and Evaluation of Grassroots Football Sponsorship

Research in the SLR (section 2.3.3.2) recognised that despite the importance of evaluation to the management of sponsorship, it is a practice not commonly well-executed and figure 25 depicts the findings related to this.

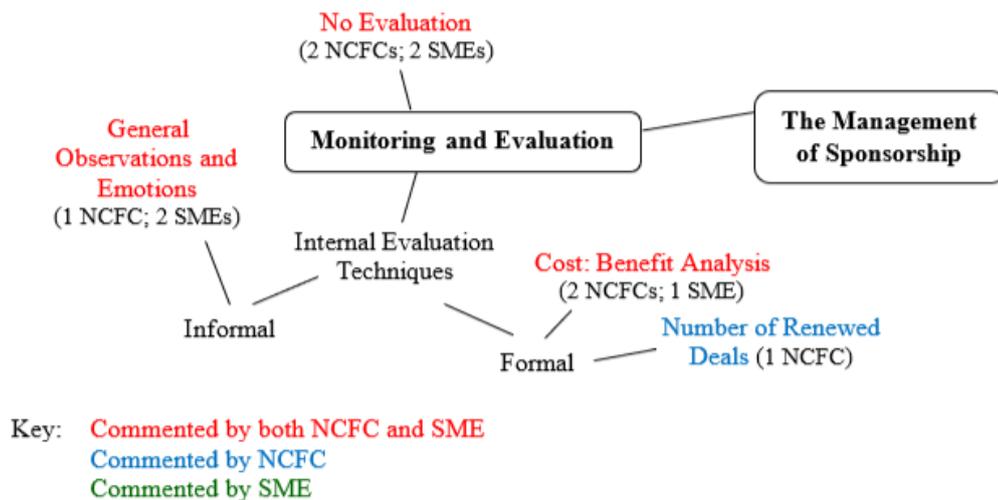


Figure 25: Thematic network map – monitoring and evaluation

Organisations (n=6; 3 NCFCs and 3 SMEs) who assessed the effectiveness of sponsorship did so through evaluation techniques that were rudimentary, inexpensive and non-systematic and all evaluation was conducted internally as opposed to employing an external agency. A final interesting point related to the four organisations which failed to evaluate their deal came from within the same dyads (dyad two and dyad four), epitomised by the abrupt response from the SME Accountant who stated: “*To be brutally honest, it’s just written off*”. The reasons behind the neglect to the monitoring and evaluation element are presented in the thematic network concerning the risks and barriers associated to sponsorship and its practice.

Out of the few tools NCFCs adopted, practitioners approached evaluation more formally, using cost-benefit analysis to a greater extent than general observation (figure 25). In considering the former evaluative technique, two NCFCs adopted cost-benefit analysis (NCFC SB and Youth). NCFC SB acknowledged the sum of money received for the sponsorship against the loss of rights to the entity’s asset or the potential ramification of no sponsorship:

“We evaluated it by knowing we got a kit out of them and it saved us £400 or whatever it was”.

In alternatively reviewing the second evaluative technique adopted, NCFC Town detailed using general observation in two ways in order to measure the success of sponsorship. In a first technique, he inferred an almost gut-feeling approach to evaluation alongside a second and arguably in a more formal evaluative strategy, assessing the number of renewals received for sponsorship.

“We have the anecdotal stuff of people being there and seemingly enjoying it, but we don't have any formal method of evaluating that... I suppose we have sort of evaluated previously by looking at the number of renewals and if we weren't getting renewals then we would assume that we were doing something wrong.”

In the case of SME sponsors, findings were reversed in that sponsorship evaluation was noted as being more informal than formal. Indeed, the use of general observations were more prevalent to that of measuring sponsorship effectiveness via cost-benefit analysis. Figure 25 illustrates only one SME sponsor adopted an evaluative technique centred on bottom-line and ROI principals through using cost-benefit analysis (SME Restaurant). The SME Restaurant highlighted how he compared the amount of money invested into the sponsorship deal against the revenue received as a result of that sponsorship to assert whether there was a ROI:

“It's easy for me to see it's worth it because if you look at it on paper you're spending 500 quid on a kit and you're getting back maybe 800, at least 800 across a course of the season from the players coming back after a game.”

Figure 25 further outlines two cases in which businesses used general observation, though monitoring social media, to evaluate the sponsorship relationship (SME Journalist and Bartender). A case in point can be presented in the comments of the SME Bartender who when questioned on whether they evaluate and, in turn, report any results back to the NCFC stated:

“We don't have them conversations because I have a close relationship with the football club. I know how many times I have been mentioned because I follow the accounts. Urm, now that is just passive. I don't write down the facts. It is purely a case of I know that every Sunday there will be a match report that will have a link to my website. I know at least two times a week there will be a tweet that has on the Twitter header link to my company. I know that every Monday there will be pictures of the shirts with [company] on. It's not something we talk about.”

From such findings it may therefore be ostensible to argue that organisations were content with the minimal to no evaluation of sponsorship so long as they can justify a positive influence on their development. Nevertheless, this lack of collaboration and communication across parties when undertaking evaluation is not uncommon in the grassroots football sponsorship setting. Not one organisation who conducted evaluation within this study (n=6) disclosed their results to their counterpart involved in the partnership. NCFC Youth noted as much by highlighting:

“You should evaluate your own situation – the club evaluates theirs to see if they got what they wanted out of it and the company evaluate their own situation to do the same. It’s not really my business to know what the sponsor has got out of the agreement and vi se versa.”

5.5: Theme Four – Critical Success Factors to Sponsorship

The review of sponsorship literature revealed that the quality of relationship between the sponsor and sponsee not just impacted on the management of sponsorship but also its success. With a further limited amount of study, particularly from the grassroots panorama, into the factors that determine the quality of sponsorship relationships, it was thus prudent to centre some discussion into this under-researched area. In turn, two key overarching determinants towards the relationship quality of grassroots football sponsorship agreements were prevalent from the analysis of interviews – highlighted in figure 26.

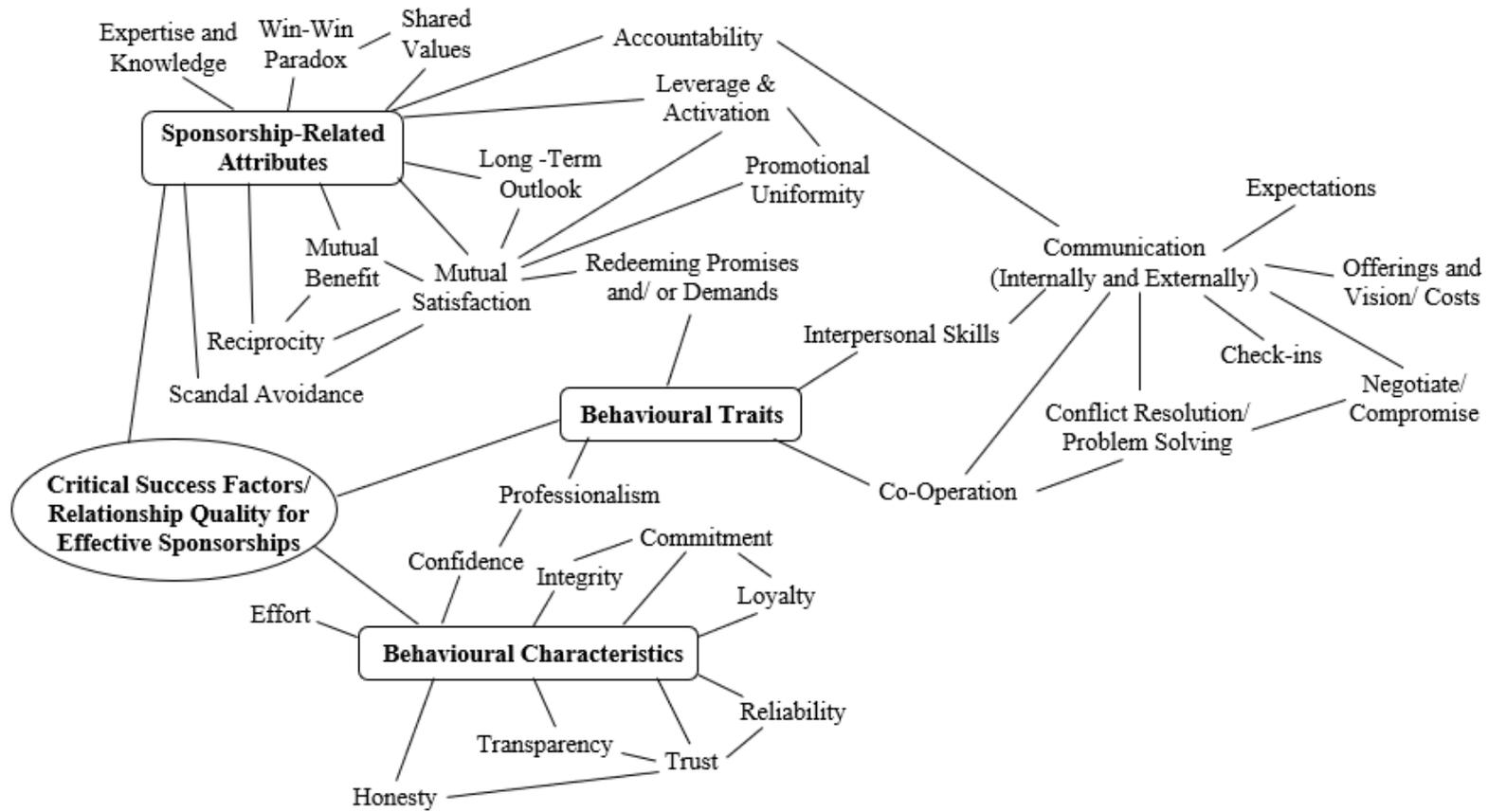


Figure 26: Overall thematic network map – critical success factors

Behavioural Traits and Characteristics

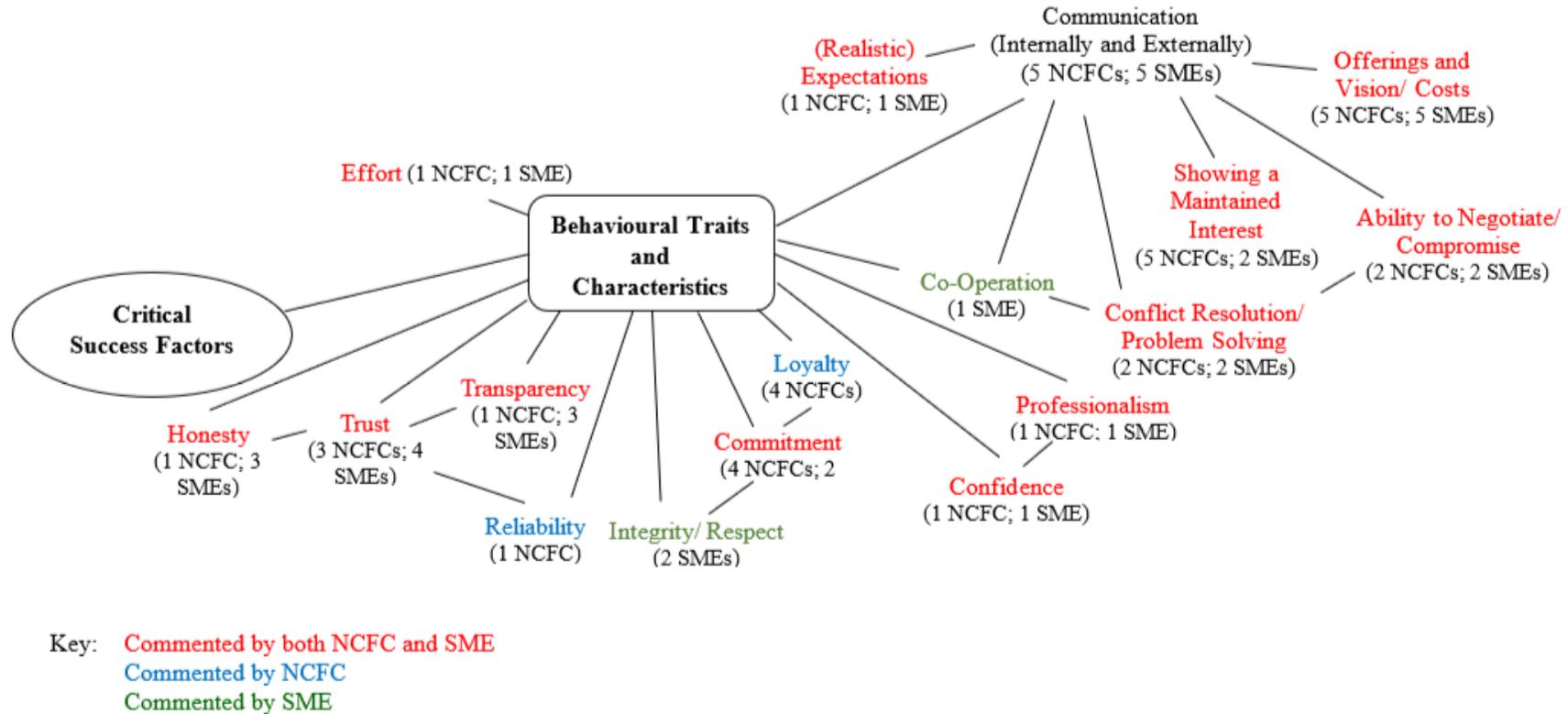


Figure 27: Thematic map – behavioural traits and characteristics

The interviews revealed practitioners highlighted 12 core traits and characteristics that affected the quality of relationship between the sponsor and sponsee (figure 27). The personal attributes of trust (n=7), commitment (n=6), transparency (n=4), honesty (n=4) and loyalty (n=4) were each mentioned by a notable number of practitioners to either positively or negatively impact on a partnership's quality. Nonetheless, with each practitioner (n=10) discerning and/ or insinuating communication as a key determinant, an individual's ability to effectively communicate seemed to act as the central pillar towards inducing a successful relationship. This view is best exemplified by NCFC Yellow who when asked what makes an effective relationship stated: *"It all boils down to communication doesn't it. You need to have good communication skills."*

Phone-calls, text messages, e-mails, and face-to-face (in)formal meetings were the most common communication channels used. Yet regardless of the channel used and the party practitioners were communicating to, communication typically fulfilled one of three purposes. First, and specifically prior to the sponsorship arrangement, both the sponsee and sponsor tended to communicate in order to discuss the sponsorship proposal (offerings, vision and costs), before then negotiating on the agreement initially submitted. Second, and specifically after the deal was agreed, the sponsor and sponsee communicated with their own organisations and/ or the other party in a bid to keep each other informed and/ or show a maintained interest in the relationship. Third and finally, each party also came to use communication in attempt to resolve any conflicts or problems that arose within the partnership.

"There needs to be clear communication. You know, this is the way it's got to be on our side and on your side what do you want from me. It comes down to simply as, if you've got a decent proposal that's clearly communicated to me, I can then look at it more sensibly and to come to a decision on whether to sponsor."

(SME Accountant) – Communication to discuss sponsorship proposal

"I think you've got to keep in touch with them... certainly keep them on board, keep them informed."

(NCFC 1907) – Communication to keep each other informed/ show maintained interest

"Any issues or problems that we have had in our relationship we have sat down and talked about it to come to a solution."

(NCFC SB) – Communication to resolve conflict

Yet despite serving a triad of purposes and being earmarked as integral towards the success of sponsorship relationships, it is somewhat paradoxical to note that in some cases

practitioners, specifically from SME organisations (SME Accountant, Carpet-fitter, and Restaurant), pointed to the level of inter-organisational communication as being insufficient. The comments from the SME Accountant represent a notable example of this occurrence, and one that was not only stressed to impact upon their satisfaction, but, as a result, impact on the potential to foster a long-withstanding relationship:

“We need more than just for us to give the money and not to hear of it ever again... It's just feeding back information consistently, and then they'll be happier, and I'll be happier. Rather than them getting the money and running away and not hearing from them until they need something else. That way will never produce a long-term relationship.”

This was particularly alarming to discover given the practitioner of the NCFC involved in this dyad (dyad four) not only felt communication was a central pillar to forging an effective relationship (highlighted previously – *“It boils down to communication”*), but further regarded this factor to be something well-delivered on in the agreement, stating:

“I would like to think that I communicate regularly enough with [SME Accountant] and they are happy with this level of communication.”

Nevertheless, and from a NCFC perspective, NCFC Youth emphasised the limited communication highlighting *“there's not a great deal of talking”* when it came to negotiate an agreement. In fact, the disregard for communication between the NCFC and SME sponsor occurred to a greater extent the further into the deal an agreement went. Indeed, interviews with three SME sponsors implied communication began to wane or even break down entirely once the sponsor provided (financial) resources or provisions to the NCFC (i.e. above quote from SME Accountant). This was only to, and to the annoyance of the SME sponsor, often see the sponsee re-surface upon a new deal or provision being needed and proposed.

Sponsorship-Related Attributes

As well as the 12 factors that relate to personal traits and characteristics which are argued to be necessary to engender an effective relationship (see figure 27), exhibited in figure 28, the interviews uncovered another seven core attributes directed more specifically to the hallmarks of sponsorship and its practice that determined the quality of the relationship between the NCFC and SME sponsor.

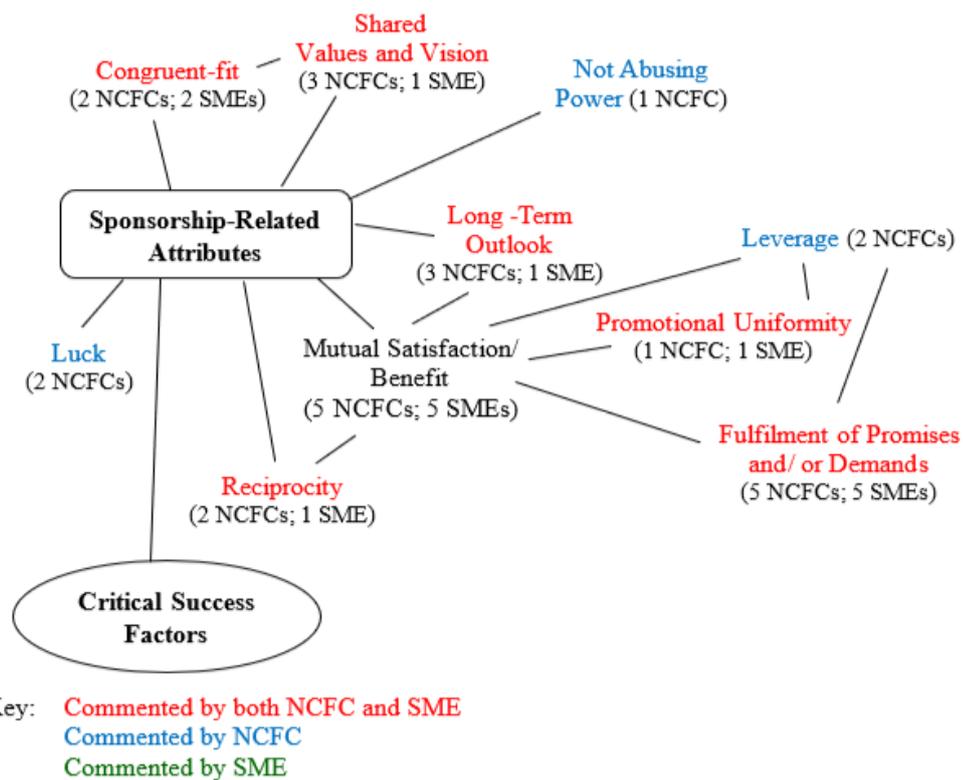


Figure 28: Thematic network map – sponsorship-related attributes

Within this theme, practitioners suggested that holding shared values and visions (n=4), possessing a long-term outlook to sponsorship (n=4), and boasting a strong congruent-fit between the respective parties (n=4) were crucial determinants to the success of the relationship. However, all acknowledged that effective football sponsorships were dependent on the ability to build a two-way inter-organisational partnership that could create satisfaction for both the NCFC and SME sponsor. This was unsurprising when referring to how the majority of practitioners came to understand sponsorship in terms of a mutually beneficial agreement (see table 22). NCFC Youth, for example, highlighted the importance of mutual satisfaction in that a continuous cycle can be formed when a sponsor is content as this creates an increased likelihood to sponsorship renewal which, in turn, satisfies the NCFC as they can ensure their intentions for engaging in sponsorship are being met:

“For us, if they’re happy with the situation and they’re getting something out of it they’re gonna want to carry on sponsoring us. That obviously makes us happy as we’re getting what we want to get out of it, which is a good sponsor, good money and somewhere to go at Christmas.”

To therefore achieve this mutual satisfaction, the need for each party to as a minimum fulfil on the assurances communicated at the beginning of the relationship or on the norms

developed from more long-withstanding agreements were either emphasised or insinuated across each interview. As highlighted in section 5.3, for NCFCs this surrounded financial support to operate, whereas SME sponsors expectations were more varied. Nevertheless, of considerable note was that apart from NCFC Yellow, each football club in fact endeavoured to go beyond the standard expectations of SMEs to be looked favourably on by the sponsor. The comment from NCFC Town best epitomises this drive to exceed a SME sponsors' expectations by reflecting on the leveraging exercises undertaken to add further value to the relationship away from the initial agreement:

“Often what we'll do is throw some of those packages that don't have any cost to the club in with some of our other packages throughout the agreement. So, for instance, you know [name of charity] is our charity partner and tracksuit sponsor. Originally that package didn't have any matchday sponsorship so we gave them a couple of each so that throughout the season they can buy some services along with being fussed over, have some photographs and so on. Just a bit of effort on matchdays from our point of view but no financial outlay... We're looking for them to be happy by the end of their overall agreed package.”

5.6: Theme Five – Barriers and Risks to Sponsorship

A central theme subsequently gleaned from the analysis of interviews revolved around the risks associated with football sponsorship and the obstacles that hinder the effectiveness of the sponsor-sponsee relationship. Figure 29 illustrates a myriad of risks and barriers which could consequently be seen to fall under four aspects of sponsorship activity – each to be discussed in greater depth.

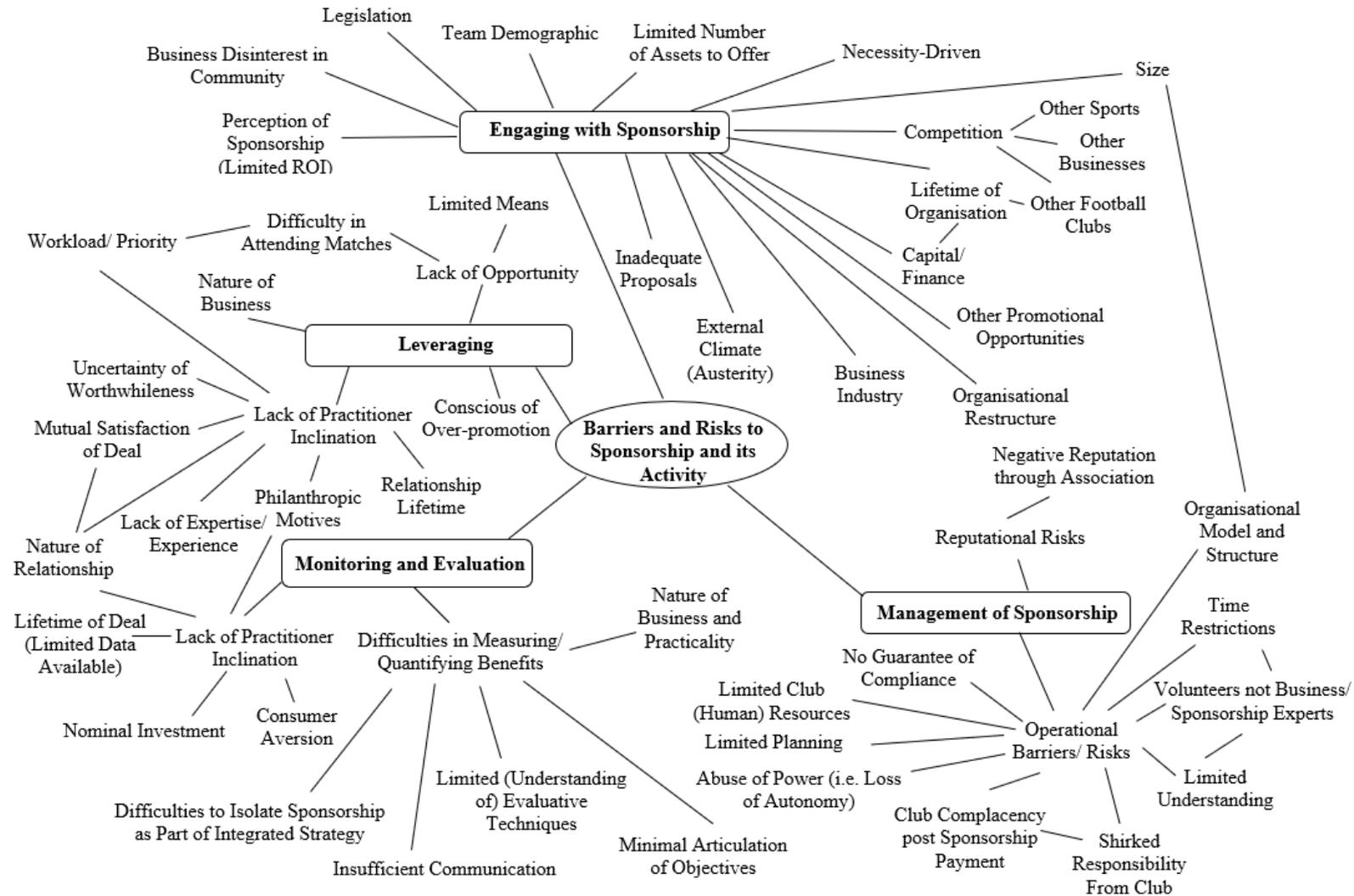


Figure 29: Overall thematic network map – barriers and risks

Engaging with Grassroots Football Sponsorship

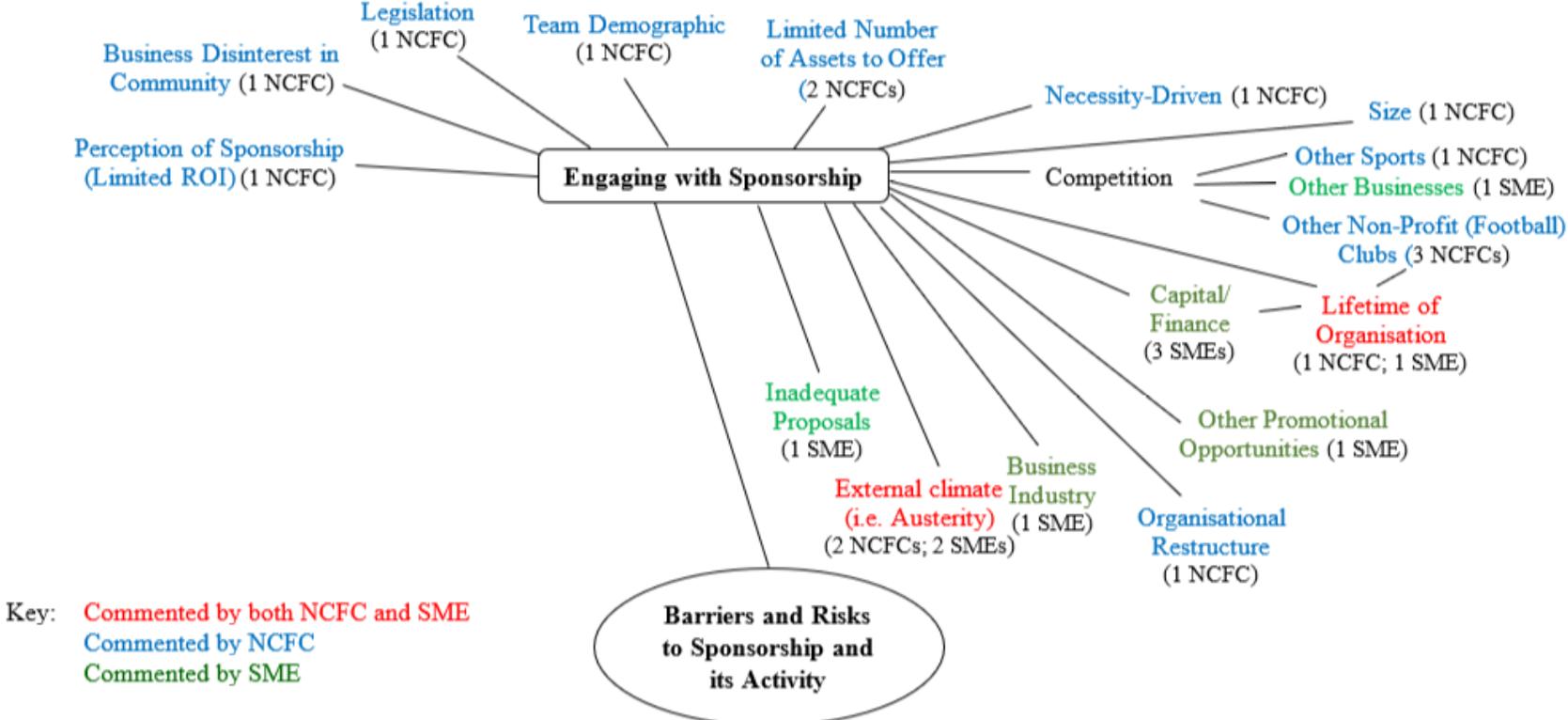


Figure 30: Thematic network map – barriers

Practitioners of NCFCs delineated the greatest number of obstacles (n= 10), with SMEs listing five, while a further two barriers were discussed from each viewpoint (i.e. external climate and lifetime of organisation). The socio-political and socio-economic landscape was one key issue that practitioners (n=4) identified as stopping SME sponsors from engaging with sponsorship opportunities. Positively for this study, NCFC Youth highlighted the saliency of this research in the face of the increased difficulties in acquiring sponsors due to, amongst other factors, the financial position of businesses as a result of the volatile external climate currently being experienced due to the recession and government-driven austerity:

“We need more discussion into issues like this. I think people need help with getting and maintaining sponsorship deals because it is getting harder. Everyone used to be prepared to do it years ago. As a business owner myself, it obviously also hasn’t helped with the recession and now austerity which means a lot of companies are financially on the edge.”

Further, the uncertainty surrounding the issue of Brexit served as an additional determinant that NCFC 1907 noted:

“We’re in dyer straights at the minute with your Brexit’s and all like that. I certainly think there’s nowhere near as money around as what there was. Firms are not doing as well as they used to. So I think as you or I would do when buying new clothes or anything you cut your cloth to suit and I think that is what companies are doing with sponsorship because of this Brexit negotiation.”

For NCFCs, bar the opportunity for commercial entities to sponsor a plethora of non-profit sport and/ or football clubs, no hinderance noted in respect to securing further sponsorship agreements was acknowledged repeatedly by practitioners. The competition from not only NCFCs but other non-profit sport clubs regarding the fight to procure sponsorship from commercial entities was highlighted from NCFC 1907:

“They wanted a big taxi sign, [name of company] stadium over there, like they’ve got over in [name of NCFC]. They also said they’re looking for someone to do stuff over here. They were looking at [name of rugby club] and [name of cricket club], but they were also looking at us as the biggest football club on [name of area] as well... We spoke to them, but nothing’s been done. It has gone quiet now.”

SME sponsors alternatively commented regularly on the issue of finance acting as a stumbling block in engaging in other sponsorship deals. For instance, the SME Journalist highlighted his desire to do more sponsorships, but how financial constraints as a consequence of the external climate impacted upon his ability to do so: *“I will always try and help clubs in whatever way I can, but at the same time I’ve got to keep an eye on my finances which is difficult during this time of austerity”*. The SME Bartender further

exemplified the issue of finances aligned to his business being at a start-up stage, stating: “Just capital. As a start-up it's very hard to get finances to obviously do these things”.

Of subsequent note is how the SME Bartender connects to NCFC SB whose practitioner not too dissimilarly claimed the club’s lifetime in comparison to other football clubs served as a barrier to acquiring sponsorship:

“We're not well known... I mean the last club I was with is 150 years old this season, so they're sort of well-known and so are the majority of clubs in [name of CFL]. So obviously they are quite attractive cause they're established, and people can see their track record unlike us being in existence for one and a half years.”

Management of Grassroots Football Sponsorship

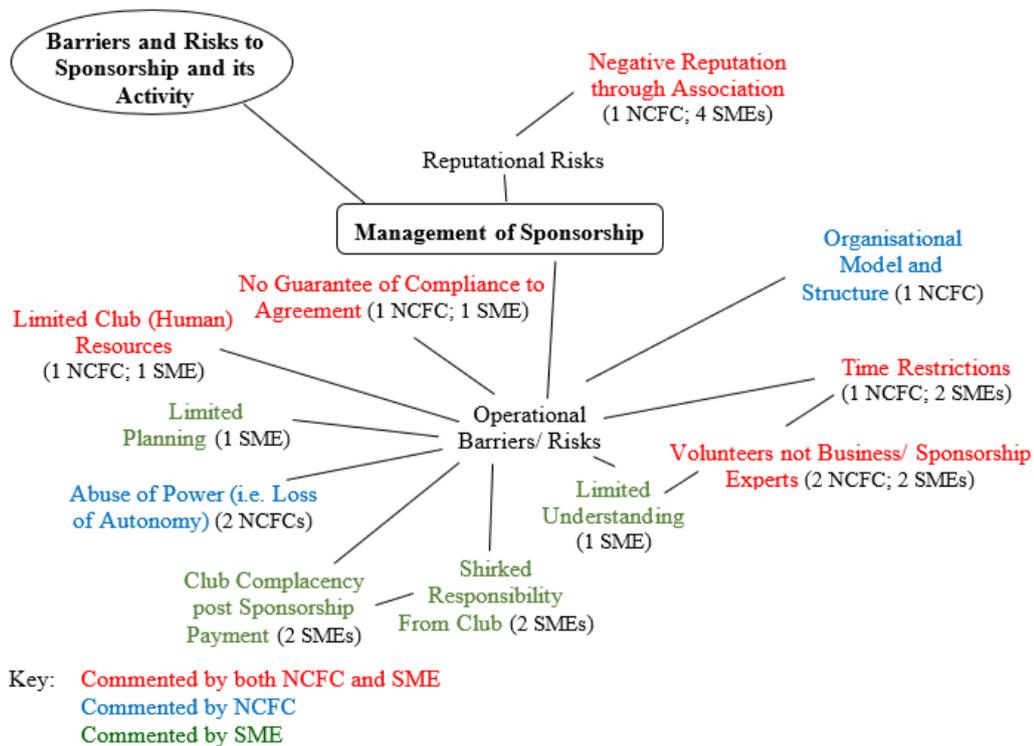


Figure 31: Thematic network map – barriers of management

The most recurring issue practitioners felt hindered the management of sponsorship associated to the fact that operations on the NCFC side of the agreement were undertaken by volunteers. In relation to this, practitioners of both NCFCs and SMEs acknowledged the amount of time volunteers possessed constrained the overall management of sponsorship at the grassroots level.

“For the manager of the team, it's not his job. It's a hobby isn't it really. They're not paid so anything that they do is gonna be on their own spare time and they probably don't have much spare time especially if they do the football.” (SME Restaurant)

“I’ve gotta work five days a week, as do everyone else that is on my committee. We haven’t got time.” (NCFC 1907)

In so far as time constraints, the same was subsequently said for SME sponsors in which the SME Restaurant noted: *“In the forefront of your mind is to run a restaurant. It’s not necessarily to sponsor a community football team”*. The SME Carpet-fitter similarly joked:

“Sometimes I don’t have enough time in the day to do what I really need to do. You know, as soon as I get in here it’s 9 o’clock and then it is 5 o’clock before I know it and I come into do a mound of things and I don’t get through anything.”

Nevertheless, further linking to volunteering, though via a different point, the SME Accountant emphasised how his deal was *‘mismanaged’* as a result of the sponsorship being *‘run by volunteers who are not businesspeople’*. While these volunteers may in fact be businesspeople in their respective lines of work, the SME Accountants experience nevertheless suggests the individual responsible for the association within the NCFC held a limited understanding into how to manage the agreement.

In considering the issue of risk, despite no organisation experiencing such a situation, this research revealed that the majority of SME sponsors were acutely aware of *‘reputational risk’* wherein negative perceptions or controversies associated to a given organisation transfer to the other respective party as a result of their involvement within an agreement. For example, the SME Accountant drew on his experience as an opposing player to a NCFC who held a negative image, highlighting how this impacted on his outlook of the sponsor and why he thus diligently considered which club to be involved with for his own deal:

“There used to be a football club called [name of football club], urm, in, I think in the [name of CFL]. Basically they were a football club that was sponsored by a double glazing company and the club just kept getting into fights. The club that I played for almost folded after a game with them. Straight away I thought just because of the way the players were on the pitch, they reflected that badly that I knew 20 guys would never use them because of it. It wouldn’t matter if the company were the best working ones, or you know the cheapest, or whatever you’re looking for. They were never going to be used because if you attach your name to something it either strengthens it or can have a massive negative affect... I took this type of risk into account when sponsoring [NCFC Yellow].”

This concern of the potential for a given organisations reputation to be adversely affected from sponsorship with a certain party was further observed from the NCFC outlook. NCFC Town detailed how *“there were a few raised eyebrows when we had an e-cigarette*

company on the front of our shirts.” Notwithstanding this, in contrast to SME sponsors and the issue of ‘reputational risk’, NCFCs were instead more conscientious of the potential for loss of club autonomy through the SME sponsor abusing their power. Such a risk could therefore be classified as an ‘operational risk’ whereby the sponsor exercises undue influence or pressure over the sports entity. The experience from NCFC SB exemplifies this risk to NCSCs, reflecting on the hold a sponsor possessed over the sports entity and one that ultimately led to the him being removed from his position as secretary at his previous club:

“I have had an experience of a sponsor who put money along with his own workforce to improve the ground and clubhouse of a previous club I was with... He started to make demands and get involved in the administration of the club. After numerous disagreements over a variety of issues, the club chairman was given the ultimatum of either I step down as club secretary or he, as the sponsor, leaves and takes away all of the cash invested and to be invested into the club. Needless to say, the chairman chose the money.”

For the SME sponsor, the operational risks highlighted were concerned with the potential for the NCFC to not fulfil or be able to comply with the deal agreed. Indeed, two SMEs noted how they had experienced a certain degree of shirked responsibility from the NCFC which came from an air of complacency that had surfaced after the company had fulfilled their side of the agreement (i.e. SME Carpet-fitter – not procuring a NCFC jacket as per the deal; SME Accountant – “*we need more than just for us to give the money and not to hear of it ever again...*”). This was an issue particularly disturbing for the SME Accountant as he questioned the grievance procedure and limited safety net provided should the NCFC not satisfy or renege on the deal negotiated in comparison to his other promotional activities:

“If we advertise with google and they don't do it there's a clear comeback to them. Going back to grassroots football, if they don't do it and then the club folds or whatever, who do we complain to that we put £2000 in. You know there's no security to us.”

Leveraging

This study previously reported on both parties involved in the sponsorship of grassroots football engaged in a myriad of leveraging practices that although incurred minimal to no financial cost promoted the association further (section 5.4). In the same breath however, it was also evident that practitioners perceived there to still be several barriers and issues that thwarted the potential to add greater levels of value to the agreement. As illustrated

in figure 32, a total of 11 barriers were extracted from the analysis of interviews and were grouped into two broad themes.

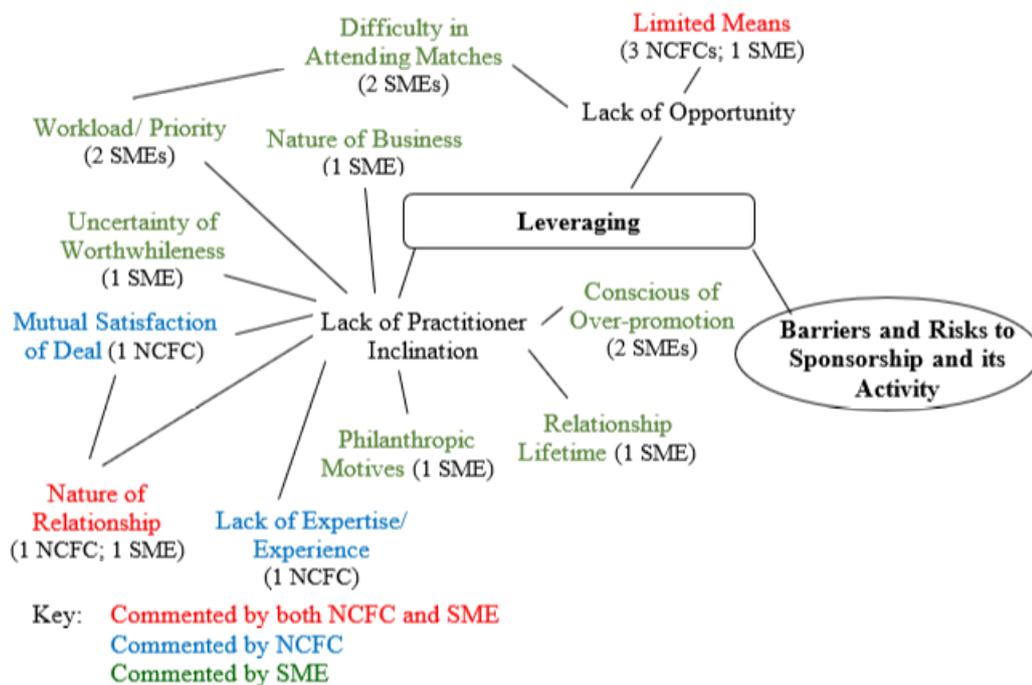


Figure 32: Thematic network map – barriers hindering leveraging

Findings revealed a perceived lack of opportunities to leverage deals, particularly in reference to the shortage of available promotional strategies. Two of the three NCFCs associated the scarcity of means to promote the relationship with their limited number of networks and business circles. For example, NCFC 1907 noted: *“Were not in a circle that could communicate the agreement”*. In contrast, NCFC Youth reflected on the paucity of ways to leverage the deal through alternatively focusing more on the limited specific platforms available by sarcastically questioning *“How many times can they have a team photo in their shop?”* This idea of limited channels to leveraging was further exemplified by the SME Bartender, who implied that he was also less inclined to leverage the agreement in fear of over-promotion.

“Well I don’t know what else I could do. I don’t know of any other avenue that you could promote it down more. And secondly, I don’t want to really push it into people’s faces. You know, like “look waaayyyy, we can’ as this could go against us with people.”

It was clear that an overall lack of desire from practitioners to engage in other leveraging practices also existed, with eight issues surrounding this broad sub-theme. Whilst most stemmed solely from a SME sponsors view (n= 6), only three issues presented any

agreement across interviews. Even then, these were still not commonly elicited, being identified by just two practitioners per barrier to leveraging.

One of these hindrances, particularly on behalf of SME sponsors, related to the leveraging of sponsorship being held in low regard in comparison to other operational issues. As highlighted previously, this was in fact symptomatic of how sponsorship of grassroots football was managed in its entirety. Indeed, and specifically reflecting on leveraging, the SME Restaurant unsurprisingly admitted: *“It’s not a priority. The priority is the restaurant and running it day to day. As a result, it’s one avenue that hasn’t had any thought even though perhaps it should have done.”* This suggests that in hindsight he felt more could have been done to add value to the partnership with NCFC Youth. Nevertheless, a not too dissimilar point was raised by the SME Bartender but instead concerned how NCFCs typically neglect to leverage the relationship because other pressing matters needed addressing:

“There are only a limited amount of resources that grassroots football clubs have... They need to focus on getting eleven players to turn up on a Saturday rather than how they’re going to market their club and how they’re going to make money for someone else.”

The overall nature of the sponsorship being reactive as opposed to proactive further rendered leveraging to not be considered a priority. Interestingly, this rationale was only stressed by the respective parties involved in dyad four (NCFC Yellow and SME Accountant), each revealing a different outlook and attitude to the neglect in leveraging.

“There’s no reason for us to do anything more than that... You know I would try to organise whatever he said, but the sponsor has never asked me to do more than that. It’s never cropped up, so I have had no need to do that.” (NCFC Yellow)

“Everything is so reactive, and you can’t do this type of thing reactively... This is the frustrating thing. If they had a long-term plan, we’d sink a lot more money into it. If I saw we were going to do this we’re going to do this and going to do this, we’ve got bigger pockets and we’d give more money.” (SME Accountant)

The comments of NCFC Yellow stressed that the only instance he would engage in further avenues to leverage the agreement would be on the behest of the sponsor. Yet this reactive as opposed to long-term approach that would be proactive came to the detriment rather than benefit for the NCFC gaining increased levels of income from the SME Accountant.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Findings suggest that monitoring and evaluation was either done badly or not executed at all. As such, it was therefore important to discern the key barriers that affected the practitioner's ability to effectively evaluate or, indeed, even evaluate sponsorship. Figure 33 reveals 10 obstacles gleaned from the analysis of interviews that are grouped into two main themes.

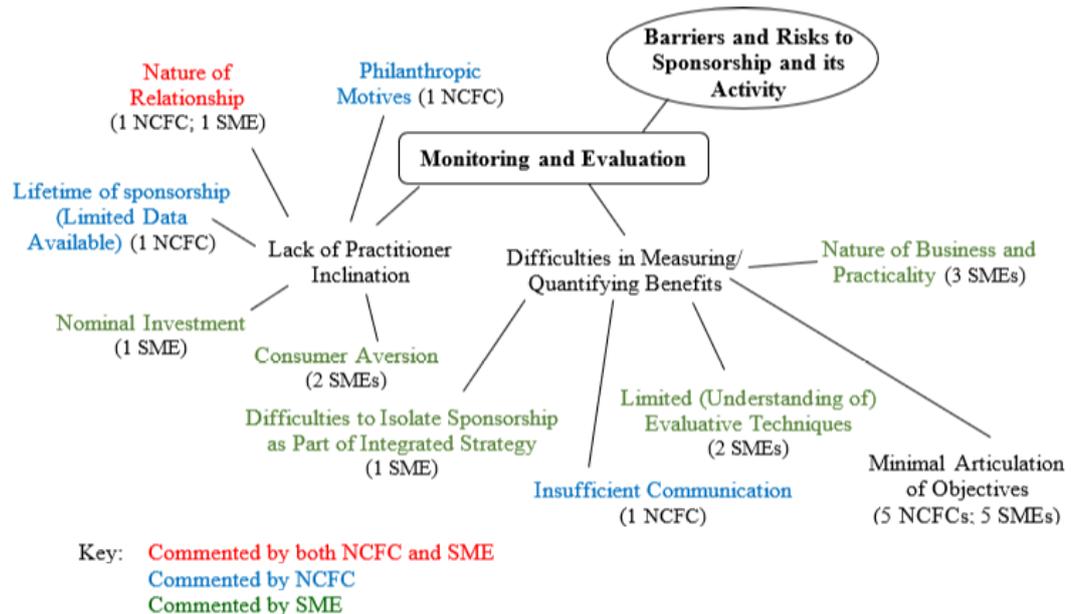


Figure 33: Thematic network map – obstacles impacting monitoring and evaluation

Despite not explicitly mentioned by practitioners, it was clear the minimal to no formulation and/ or articulation of specific objectives served as the greatest cause for difficulties in quantifying the success of grassroots football sponsorship. The study found that although each organisation documented what they wished to achieve via sponsorship (section 5.3), they did so vaguely, thus making evaluation difficult. To exemplify this point, the SME Accountant stated the objective coveted from his sponsorship of NCFC Yellow was “*getting the name seen by as many people as possible*”. While consequently linking to the objective of company/ and or brand awareness, this objective was nonetheless neither specific, measurable, nor time-bound and thus when evaluating sponsorship would have rendered difficulties in the Accountant concluding whether this objective was achieved.

Reflecting on the issues that hindered evaluation, the reactive as opposed to proactive nature of the relationship was once again earmarked by dyad four (NCFC Yellow and

SME Accountant). Of equal citation and unique to the practice of evaluation, however, was the fear from SME sponsors (n=2) that in attempt to evaluate there was the potential for consumer aversion. It is notable that such fears correlated to those SME sponsors who operated within the food and drinks service industry (SME Restaurant and Bartender). For example, the SME Restaurant attributed his nominal levels of evaluation to a sequence of events that concluded with concerns over the feasibility of conducting evaluation via consumer insights in conjunction with the potential harmful impact on the business:

“Unless you physically ask them, you're never gonna know. You know, it's not practical to ask every customer that comes in "How did you hear about us? [Respondent laughs]. So yeah, it's not ideal really, particularly as they also don't necessarily want to be asked how they knew about us. It may make them annoyed as they wanted to come and switch off instead of being asked questions and this may put them off coming again. So it's difficult to get feedback.”

5.7: Theme Six – Perceptions of How to Develop Sponsorship

Given the principal aim of this research intended to support those responsible for sponsorship, the closing stages of interviews homed in on where practitioners felt the sponsorship of football at the grassroots level could be improved. Notably, two practitioners struggled to find any advancements to their sponsorships or sponsorship more generally. Whereas the SME Bartender owed this to possessing no initial yardstick from which to form a judgement of his sponsorship from, NCFC Youth alternatively perceived sponsorship to be merely philanthropic that consequently meant any real improvements were difficult to identify. Nevertheless, from those who identified areas for bettering sponsorship, two overarching issues existed: (i) the management of the sponsorship relationship, and (ii) a tool to facilitate the bringing together of organisations.

The Management of the Sponsorship Relationship

Six practitioners offered ideas in relation to the management of sponsorship. Advancements to the levels of communication between the sponsor and sponsee were at the fore of suggestions, with four practitioners noting this (SME Journalist, Restaurant, Accountant; and NCFC 1907). NCFC 1907, for example, highlighted the improvement needed to, and importance of communication in stressing: *“Probably just more communication. When thinking about it, we need to keep them more informed as the deal breaks down if we don't”*. The limited amount of communication was further reiterated

from a SME perspective by the Accountant, signifying how progressing this success factor would garner greater satisfaction helping to develop a long-term relationship:

“We need more than just for us to give the money and not to hear of it ever again... It's just feeding back information consistently, and then they'll be happier, and I'll be happier. Rather than them getting the money and running away and not hearing from them until they need something else. That way will never produce a long-term relationship.”

Besides communication, a further five suggestions were elicited by practitioners. First, with previous sponsors comparing the sponsorship of grassroots football to the upper echelons of the pyramid, NCFC Town felt a SMEs understanding of the expectations realistic to grassroots football and the awareness of the limitations that exist against this backdrop was an issue needed to be improved upon. NCFC Town further highlighted the need for a greater support network of individuals who would aid in undertaking sponsorship within the club to stop the current and contrasting approach of *“leaving it one person in our organisation.”* Third, three practitioners (NCFC Town; SME Carpet-fitter and Restaurant) reflected on an organisations propensity to fulfil the assurances promised when negotiating on a deal. Fourth and linking to this point, greater development in the creation of sponsorship service level agreements (SLAs) that are signed and detail the terms and expectations of each respective party was noted by NCFC SB. This was in the wake of previous losses in club autonomy as a result of sponsorship and could be further used as proof of evidence for any disputes. Finally, and unsurprisingly, when noting that the sponsorship of grassroots football was *‘mismanaged’*, reflecting on an experience with another NCFC, the SME Accountant called for improvements in professionalism during the agreement on the part of the NCFC:

“If you go in with a professional approach people will know that you mean business. A while ago we had a football club who came in wanting us to sponsor their team sheet. But the manner they did it was ridiculous. This bloke came in with a blank team sheet and started drawing on it and writing [name of company]. It's like what are you doing. If you'd done this professionally and printed our logo on the sheet we could then see how it works. It's all about having a professional approach all of the time.”

A Tool to Facilitate the Bringing Together of Organisations

Findings also revealed how partnerships could initially be forged (NCFC Yellow; SME Accountant and Restaurant). Indeed, the SME Restaurant exemplified this point by initially contending *“the actual agreement isn't the issue. It's getting the manager and owner together.”* This was before then detailing, how an external platform that could

marry the sponsor and sponsee may be suitable (i.e. sponsorship database), particularly in light of his restaurants' coupling with NCFC Youth being more fortuitous and less calculated, and the difficulties he feels clubs experience in locating potential commercial entities.

“Maybe it could be a platform where managers of teams can easily find access to organisations who are willing to sponsor... A website, just any way to bringing the two together. ‘Cause the way me and the manager of [NCFC Youth] were brought together was just really by chance. They came in and we went from there. If we could have met in a way that was designed to promote grassroots football, then it would have been a lot easier.

In turn, the suggestion to create a sponsorship database echoed the comments from NCFC Yellow who proposed: *“How about a website where sponsors who are looking for a club to sponsor can go to and then the club can do the same. They can then try to marry up together.”* Such comments from both sides of the agreement highlights the value organisations contend a support system that acts as a mediator to connect interested parties may have and thus be a wise platform to develop.

5.8: Summary of Phase One Findings

In summary, the in-depth findings in phase one present an initial commentary of the opinions and experiences of practitioners and informed the development of a first version of the sponsorship process model which is the key purpose behind this study. The findings reveal there are mixed views as to what sponsorship comprises of; the reasons for engaging in sponsorship differ between each NCFC and SME; partnerships function in a relaxed and ad-hoc manner; attributes linked specifically to sponsorship were not as well-commented on compared to traits connected to individuals for when considering how to strengthen relationships; practitioner fears to sponsorship namely resided in damaged reputation or loss in organisational autonomy.

Going into greater depth of the study's findings, practitioners presented mixed perceptions in how they understood sponsorship proposing it to be a financial investment and to a lesser extent a medium for advertising. Albeit to different degrees, sponsorship was employed primarily for financial purposes for the NCFC in contrast to its use to form part of an integrated promotional strategy for the SME. In relation to why sponsor, there was found to be a mix of non-commercial, commercial and strategic objectives that shifted as the relationship developed.

The management of the sponsorship was found to be reactive, rudimentary, nonchalant, informal, and ad-hoc manner that incurred little human (i.e. time) and financial cost. Out of the practices undertaken, the most consideration and effort from practitioners was directed towards how they could add value to the relationship in which deals were leveraged through online and on-site presence, awards, organisational events, club naming rights, and/ or promotional offerings. In contrast, practitioners were least mindful when it came to the evaluation of sponsorship, with some not even undertaking any techniques to measure the success of the deal. Of those which did, these tended to be either through a cost-benefit analysis or more general observations and gut-feeling.

The CSFs of trust, commitment, transparency, honesty and loyalty were reported consistently with all practitioners acknowledging the need for the partnership to achieve mutual satisfaction. Practitioners also discussed how, a long-term attitude to sponsorship, holding shared values and visions, and showing a congruent-fit as other sponsorship-related attributes allowed for successful partnerships. However, practitioners expressed a cornucopia of barriers and risks that were not only perceived to threaten how sponsorship was exercised, but also hamper the initial forging of the sponsorship relationship in the first instance. In terms of development there was a clear need for greater communication and a platform that could support clubs locate sponsors, thus removing an otherwise time-extensive process, was seen to be a positive idea.

To this end, the findings from this phase of the study have subsequently been utilised to inform the development of a process model aimed to support practitioners forge effective sponsorship agreements. Further, the above findings are put into the context of this study within chapter eight, connecting the discoveries documented in this section with the remaining findings from each remaining phase of study (phase 2 and 3) along with the review of literature – carrying out the process of triangulation.

CHAPTER SIX: PHASE TWO RESULTS

6.1: Overview of Chapter

This chapter provides the results from the self-administered online survey generated from the responses of practitioners responsible for the management of sponsorship for their respective organisation (NCFC= 100, SME sponsor= 17) (see section 4.7.4 for methodology). Given the in-depth nature of the semi-structured interviews, phase 2 presents a widened view of the grassroots football sponsorship landscape and strengthens the findings from the TA conducted in phase 1 (section n) – thus cementing the validity and authenticity of the process model. Further, the IPA which is under-utilised in this area of research shows the majority of CSFs were often perceived by NCFCs or SMEs as needed to be maintained or improved to ultimately underline that sponsorship is more than a mere transaction.

It is important to thus establish that this phase of the study never set out to use inferential statistics, but instead rely on descriptive statistical techniques to give a base understanding of the results from the online survey responses. To do this, through a combination of percentiles and mean scores, this chapter details the demographic characteristics of the sample and the nature of their sponsorship dealings prior to reporting the online survey's results that address the study's ROs. To conclude, a summary of the descriptive results previously reported on in this chapter is then detailed.

6.2: Demographic Characteristics of Sample

As detailed in section 4.7.4, a total of 117 self-administered online questionnaires were returned during the five months the online survey was open. Responses largely emanated from a NCFC (n=100) as opposed to SME (n=17) outlook. The lack of parity between the number of returned questionnaires was, among other factors, attributed to the limited ways in which SME sponsors could be both targeted and identified in contrast to NCFCs across the NWE (see section 4.7.4). This section subsequently presents a summary of the characteristics of both the NCFCs and SME sponsors who participated in this online survey in preparation of reporting results that align with the study's ROs.

Non-Profit Football Club Characteristics:

With the study targeting practitioners in organisations located in the North-West of England, each NCFC was located within one of the six county FAs across this region.

The two CFAs of Cheshire (56%) and Liverpool (29%) returned the largest percentage of respondents (total= 85%), with the remaining four accounting for 15% of the total number of completed online surveys (Lancashire – 7%; Manchester – 4%; Westmorland – 3%; and Cumberland – 1%). Of those clubs who reported the state of their club financially (n=83), 43% were profitable, while 48% broke even and 9% operated at a deficit. NCFCs were often small with less than 100 players (41%), as highlighted in table 23 which summarises the size of clubs in this study.

Table 23: Size of NCFCs (n=100)

Size of Club	Responses
Small: > 100 Players	41%
Medium: Between 100-199 Players	33%
Large: < 199 Players	26%

Small-Medium Sized Enterprise Characteristics:

Mirroring the characteristics of the NCFCs and aligning to the confines of this research, each SME (n=17) that sponsored a football team was located within the NWE. As indicated in table 24, when applying the SME definition used in this study (EC 2005), just over half of the businesses who sponsored grassroots football were small-sized enterprises (52.9%), with seven (41.2%) being classed as micro enterprises and only one business operating as a medium-sized enterprise (5.9%).

Table 24: Type of Small-Medium Sized Enterprise based on EC (2005) definition (n=17)

Type of Small-Medium Sized Enterprise	Responses
Micro Business: - < 10 Employees AND - ≤€ 2 million turnover OR - ≤€ 2 million balance sheet total	41.2%
Small-Sized: - < 50 Employees AND - ≤€10 million turnover OR - ≤€10 million balance sheet total	52.9%
Medium-Sized: - < 250 Employees AND - ≤€50 million turnover OR - ≤€43 million balance sheet total	5.9%

Most SME sponsors operated at the local level (58.8%), with 29.4% alternatively conducting business on a regional scale, and two SMEs (11.8%) describing their client base as national. In terms of the industry the SME sponsors operated in, the highest percentage (47.1%) conducted business in the accommodation and food service sector, with the retail alongside professional, scientific and technical sectors each accounting for 11.8% of SMEs respectively. The industries of construction, manufacturing, social and

human health, and civil engineering accounted for the remainder of sectors – each 5.9%. As such, sponsorship of grassroots football can be seen to span a variety of industries and thus strengthens the argument for greater research give its widespread appeal.

6.3: Nature of Sponsorship Agreements

Type of Football Sponsorship:

The total sample that provided data (n=112) showed an array of sponsorship dealings, with many organisations, particularly from NCFCs engaging in multiple sponsorship opportunities. Figure 34 highlights the most common types of sponsorship deals engaged in by NCFCs and SME sponsors, with shirt sponsorships (94.6%) being the most popular arrangement by considerable distance. Other less popular deals related to man of the match and match ball sponsorship (4.9%). The freedom for respondents to further identify other types of sponsorships their organisations engaged in that were not included in the online survey allowed for the unearthing of four additional agreements; (a) letterhead sponsorship, (b) sponsorship of social media accounts, (c) fixture card sponsorship, (d) and matchday programme sponsorship.

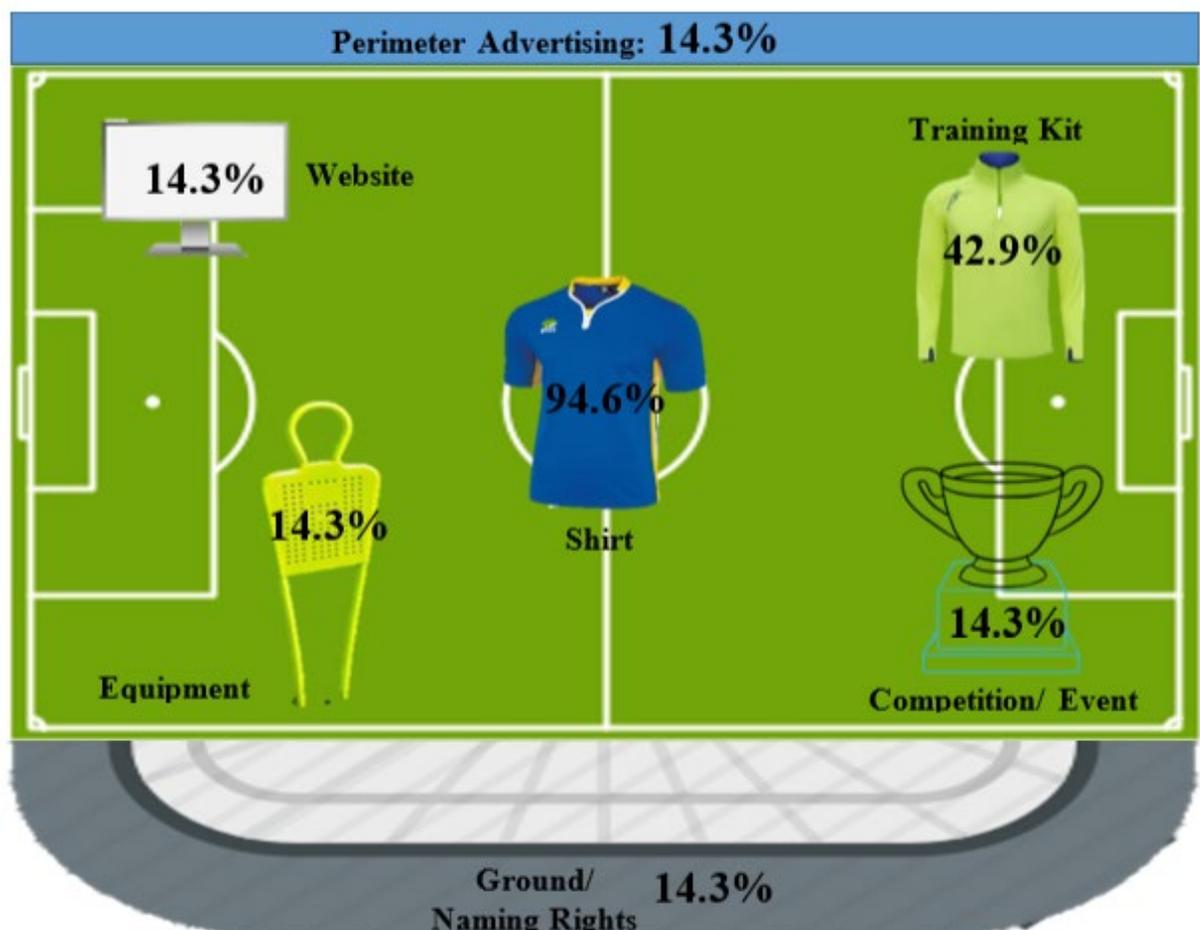


Figure 34: Type of sponsorship deal engaged in grassroots football (n=112)

Level of Financial Investment:

As far as the annual financial value of sponsorship in grassroots football, figure 35 indicates NCFCs generated varied levels of income, with the majority (56.6%) receiving less than £1,000 in revenue from their sponsorship dealings and a further 26.3% procuring less than £500. At the polar end of the spectrum, 9.1% of NCFCs accrued revenue of £5,000 or more through sponsorship. Finally, a total of 12 NCFCs were oblivious to their earnings from sponsorship investment, with an additional five not wishing to disclose their gains.

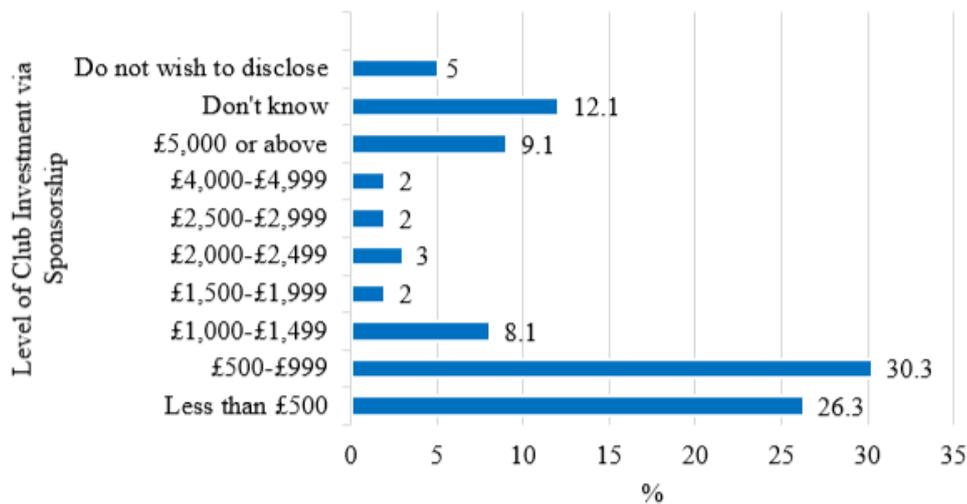


Figure 35: Club revenue received via sponsorship (n=99)

Of those SME sponsors aware of their company's promotional spend (n=15), each organisation allocated less than 5% of their total advertising budget towards the sponsorship of grassroots football. In terms of the specific level of investment towards grassroots football sponsorship, figure 35 illustrates how 52.9% of sponsors invested less than £500, whilst a further 17.6% devoted between £500 and £999. The largest sum of money spent by SME sponsors was between £1,000 and £1,499 (n=1) (figure 36). Interesting here is that the SME which invested this finance was also the only individual who both owned the organisation and had an association to the NCFC. Two SME sponsors were unaware of their level of investment and percentage of firms promotional spend towards sponsorship within grassroots football, while two wished to not disclose their level of investment (figure 36).

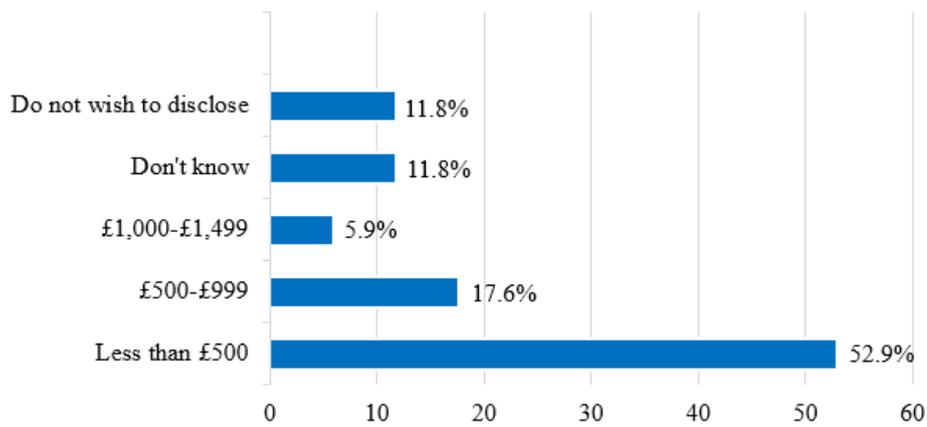


Figure 36: Sum of money granted by SME (n=17)

Length of Agreement:

As figure 37 proffers, the majority of deals within grassroots football were what could be considered as more short-medium term agreements. Indeed, while only 1.7% of respondents (two NCFCs) noted a significantly short-term sponsorship in which their deals typically stopped before a year, sponsorship deals in grassroots football most often tended to last one year (54.8%). Although a further 32.2% of respondents stated that their deals typically ended after two years, only 4.4% of respondents showed a longer-term attitude towards sponsorship whereby one arrangement lasts three years (0.9%) (SME) and four (3.5%) (three SMEs and one NCFC) have lasted over this period of time. Worryingly, 7% were uncertain of the length of their term agreement (one SME and six NCFCs).

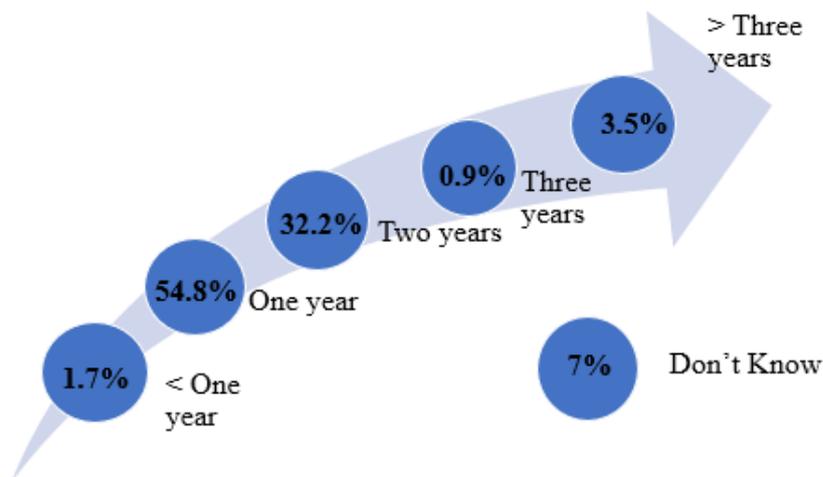


Figure 37: Length of grassroots football sponsorship agreements (n=115)

6.4: Motivations towards, and benefits from sponsorship

NCFC Motives and Benefits:

The results highlighted in figure 38 showed that not all clubs hold the same reasons for engaging in grassroots football sponsorship and NCFC rationale may, in certain cases, extend past mere economic gains. Nevertheless, NCFCs often engaged in sponsorship with monetary aims in mind, with 44.1% of respondents agreeing that financial reasons were the sole motive to partnering with companies. In contrast, 26.9% disagreed with the statement that their club became involved in sponsorship merely for financial investment, with a further 29% presenting non-partisan views by neither agreeing nor disagreeing that their sole intent was to secure financial provision.

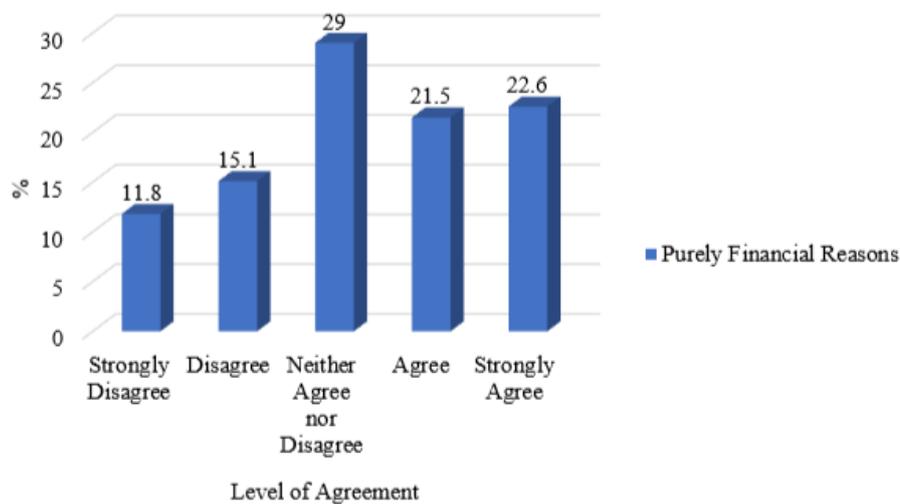


Figure 38: NCFCs financial rationale for sponsorship engagement (n=93)

As illustrated in figure 39, a non-partisan stance in terms of the overall benefits sponsorship provides the club for both during (41.5%) and after (50%) the deal existed. For those clubs with a less neutral opinion to the benefits gained via sponsorship, figure 39 shows how clubs felt they received substantial benefits during the sponsorship, with 41.5% agreeing in comparison to 17% disagreeing with the statement. A less positive outlook is provided when considering the benefits obtained after the association has finished. Here, a total of 26.1% of clubs disagreed that they received any substantial benefit to sponsorship in contrast to 23.9% that felt they had profited from sponsorship after association.

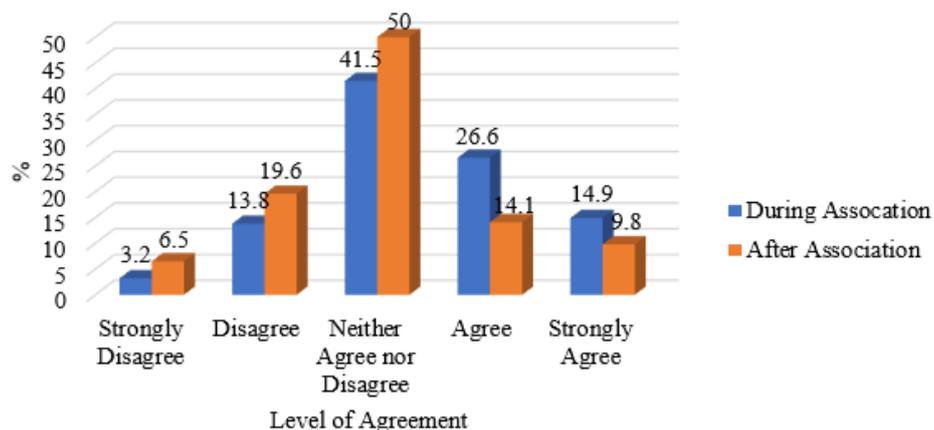


Figure 39: Benefits of sponsorship during and after deal (n=93)

In this phase of the study, NCFCs (n=92) often felt they benefitted more financially than from other potential merits when partnering with commercial companies. Table 25 details the mean scores referring to the benefits the club believe they gained from sponsorship. The opportunity for clubs to ensure short-term financial sustainability (mean= 4.17, SD 0.833) in addition to alleviating the demand placed on alternative club revenue streams (mean= 4.07, SD 0.992) – such as membership fees, subs, and grants – as a result of sponsorship were all considered high in agreement. The lowest level agreement related to sponsorship affording the chance for specialist support which could relate to law, finance and/ or other professional services (mean= 2.90, SD 1.130). Notably, the benefit for clubs to increase their awareness within the local community (mean= 3.91, SD 1.013) was deemed greater than long-term financial sustainability (mean= 3.55, SD 1.113). The mean score and standard deviation relating to the NCFCs level of agreement in relation to the perceived benefits received as a result of grassroots football sponsorship is depicted in table 25.

Table 25: Summary of NCFC benefits (n=92)

Sponsorship...	Mean	Std. Deviation
... provides the opportunity for short-term financial sustainability	4.17	.833
... presents the opportunity for long-term financial sustainability.	3.55	1.113
... reduces the pressure placed on other forms of income.	4.07	.992
... provides the opportunity to heighten the team/clubs' awareness within the local community.	3.91	1.013
... allows the opportunity for specialist support.	2.90	1.130

Overall, NCFCs (n=94) stressed that engaging in deals with SME sponsors aided in supporting them achieve their objectives (figure 40), with a total of 78.7% agreeing that sponsorship abated the club meet its objectives – 48.9% fervently.

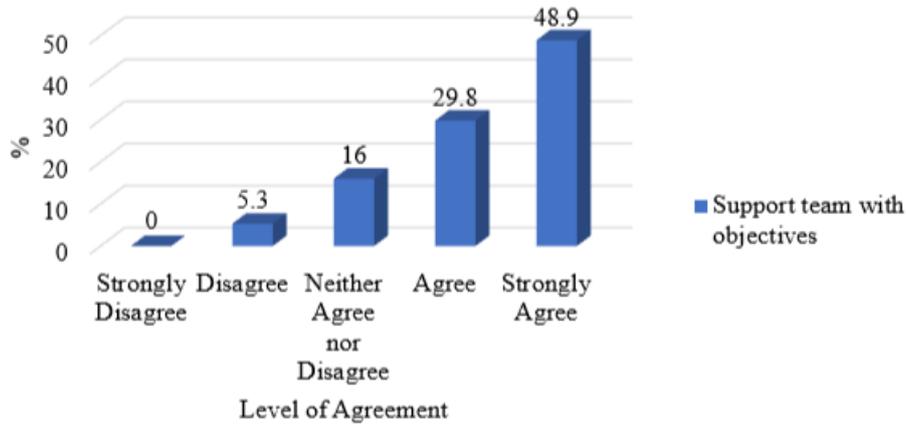


Figure 40: NCFC perceptions of sponsorships ability to achieve objectives (n=94)

SME Motives and Benefits:

The purpose behind SME sponsors engaging with grassroots football sponsorship typically aligned to more philanthropic and altruistic motives (mean= 3.20, SD 1.265) rather than commercial goals (mean= 2.13, SD 1.060). Indeed, figure 41 reveals that 66.6% of sponsors disagreed commercial aims were the overall motive for them to sponsor grassroots football clubs – almost double that of those SMEs which clashed with the idea that pure philanthropy was their sole motive (34%). This is further demonstrated in figure 41 which shows that sponsors list their involvement in grassroots football is grounded in philanthropic (40%) and opposed to commercial notions (13.3%); just over three times the level of agreement.

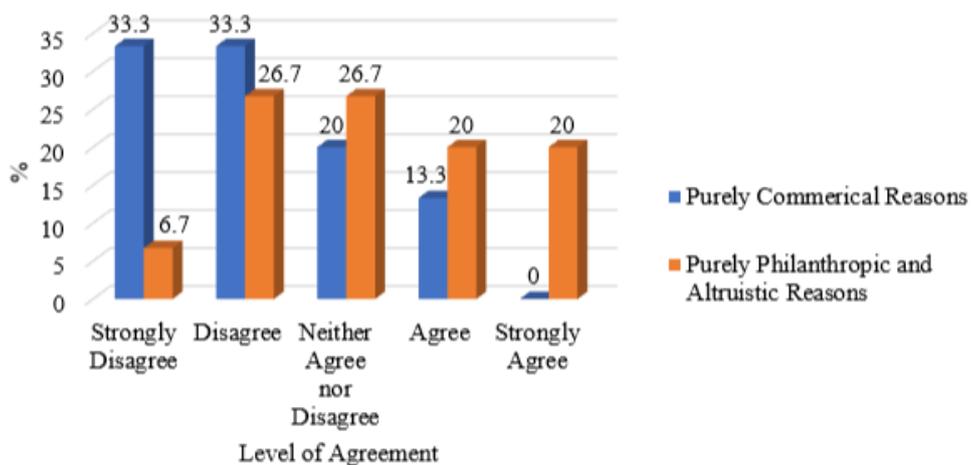


Figure 41: Sponsors philanthropic vs commercial rationale for sponsorship (n=15)

As indicated in table 26, when engaging in sponsorship, SME sponsors perceived the opportunity for them to give something back to the local community (mean=4.60, SD 0.507) as the most significant benefit they gained. In fact, this was by a considerable length when noting the next best merit from sponsorship was an increase in public awareness (mean=3.93, SD 0.884). Nevertheless, the fact that the variable of giving back to the local community eclipsed the rest of the benefits by some distance is somewhat unsurprising given figure 41 indicates companies often failed to be motivated purely by commercial interests but more inclined to engage for altruistic and philanthropic reasons. In stark contrast, the low mean scores for hospitality opportunities (mean= 2.27, SD 1.033) and increased employee motivation (mean= 2.47, SD 0.834) infers companies felt such benefits did not occur. Table 26 details the mean scores and standard deviation associated to the SME sponsors level of agreement in relation to the perceived benefits received as a result of grassroots football sponsorship.

Table 26: Summary of SME sponsor benefits (n=15)

Sponsorship...	Mean	Std. Deviation
... provides the opportunity to give something back to the local community.	4.60	.507
... allows the company to connect with difficult to reach target consumers.	2.80	1.014
... heightens employee motivation.	2.47	.834
... increases public awareness.	3.93	.884
... increases public purchase intentions.	3.07	.884
... increases the likelihood of repeat custom.	3.20	1.146
... provides the opportunity for increased media coverage.	3.00	1.195
... enhances/ sustains public image.	3.73	.704
... improves the company's customer recruitment (i.e. build customer databases).	2.87	1.125
... blocks other company's competitive advantage who engage in similar agreements.	2.60	.986
... secures access to hospitality opportunities.	2.27	1.033
... presents the opportunity for the company to network and strengthen relationships with other businesses that sponsor the same team/club.	2.93	1.280
... offers something different and unique compared to other forms of promotional activity the company engages in.	3.00	1.309

The results in phase 2 showed a relatively even split in the SME sponsors awareness of the potential for tax relief from sponsoring grassroots football, with nine SMEs (52.9%) unfamiliar to this perk in contrast to the eight SMEs (47.1%) who were mindful to it being tax deductible when calculating profits of a trade for tax purposes. This thus suggests that this financial benefit is something that is not well enough known to the SME sponsor and one that should therefore be communicated as a perk to sponsorship by NCFCs more often.

Figure 42 reveals only 13.3% of SME sponsors expressed grassroots football sponsorship enabled their firm to build a competitive advantage. This infers that most companies either approached and managed sponsorship in a fashion which failed to allow them to forge an advantage over competitors if coveted, or more allied to figure 41, reflects the sponsors philanthropic orientation towards the partnership. Figure 42 additionally details how sponsors more often agreed that grassroots football sponsorship enabled them to fulfil their objectives (40%) than in comparison to the 26.7% of companies who felt their objectives were not (being) met.

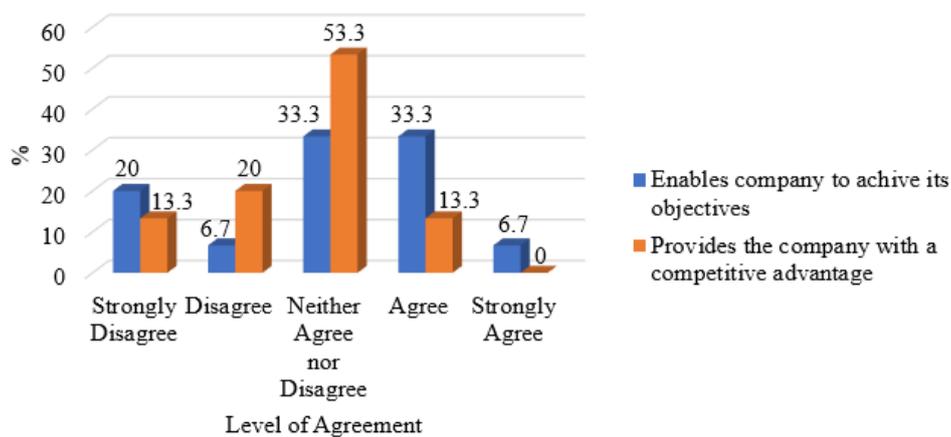


Figure 42: SME view on sponsorships ability to achieve their objectives and build a competitive advantage (n=15)

6.5: Managing Sponsorship

Initiation of Agreement:

Figure 43 highlights sponsorship deals tended to come to fruition as a result of an initial enquiry from the NCFC. While figure 43 shows the use of middle man networks – where people connected organisations with one another – was the second most frequent method to broker agreements (17.4%), the largest percentage of deals at the community level, and over three times as many deals were established by the club opening negotiations (58.3%).

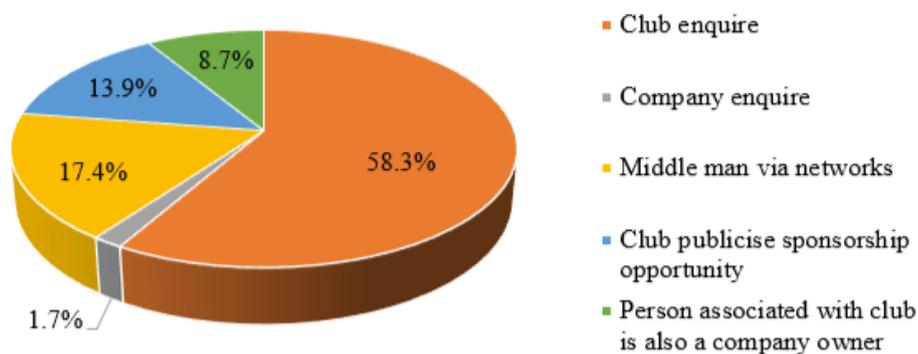


Figure 43: Initiation of grassroots football sponsorship agreement (n=115)

Taking this result that NCFCs (58.3%) as opposed to SME sponsors (1.7%) initiate the deal (figure 43), it is thus also prudent to not only understand the way in which sponsorship is approached but also who has responsibility for its procurement. Figure 44 highlights that the issue to acquire sponsorship is largely addressed by single teams under the name of a club (76%), while the NCFC, as a whole, typically took a back seat in the forging of agreements.

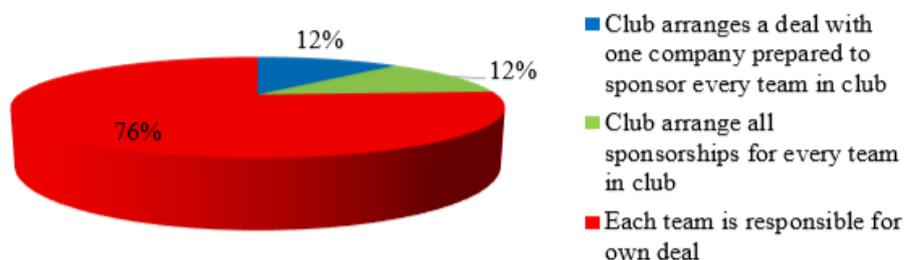


Figure 44: How clubs approach sponsorship as an organisation (n=100)

Taking this point, an overwhelming proportion of individuals (97%) could be seen to undertake sponsorship tasks in conjunction with their prime position within the club. Indeed, only 3% respondents (n=100) identified their role in the NCFC as being a marketing/ commercial manager, whereas most volunteers pointed to more traditional committee (76%) and/ or coaching responsibilities (70%). Interesting here is that each of the three clubs with a commercial/ marketing manager functioned with a profit.

The Selection of, and Decision to Sponsor:

The highest determinant which aided in the decision to approach a potential sponsor was personal networks (mean= 4.09, SD 0.941). Further, the potential fee gained as a result

of the sponsorship was considered of greater importance (mean= 4.01, SD 0.866) in comparison to determinants that could arguably foster an effective long-term partnership between club and company when selecting a sponsor. For example, a club and company holding the same values as one another (mean= 3.83, SD 0.871), and the club perceiving them, and the prospective sponsor to possess a strong congruent-fit (mean= 3.74, SD 0.954) each held lower scores than the sponsorship fee involved. This augments table 25 which noted clubs felt that sponsorship, more than any other benefit, allowed for short-term financial sustainability. Overall, the sponsors specialist skill-set was not only the lowest determinant as to why a club selects a given company (mean=3.02, SD 0.955) but was also perceived to hold the least amount of benefit for the club (mean=2.90, SD 1.130). Table 27 presents the mean scores and standard deviation for NCFC respondents' level of agreement when considering the determinants that may influence their decision to select a SME sponsor.

Table 27: Summary of NCFC selection criteria (n=96)

Determinant	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hold the same values as your team/club.	3.83	.871
Image of sponsor.	3.87	.854
Financial resources of sponsor.	3.79	.746
Industry sector of sponsor.	3.26	.931
Networking capabilities of sponsor.	3.51	.819
Sponsors' specialist knowledge and prospected provision of services (e.g. accountancy support).	3.02	.955
The sponsorship fee potentially involved.	4.01	.866
Locality of sponsor.	3.96	.849
Professionalism of sponsor.	3.95	.781
Existing sponsor(s) recommendation.	3.60	.823
Sponsor holds a strong fit to the team/club overall.	3.74	.954
Personal connections (i.e. family or friends or you are a member of the team/club and have an association with the company).	4.09	.941
No specific criteria.	3.05	.981

When deciding whether to engage in grassroots football sponsorship, less than half of SME owners 41.2% took the decision upon themselves. In this study, most cases tended to fall to others (58.8%), with the decision to sponsor either coming from the director or CEO (29.4%), manager of the company (23.5%), or the marketing/ commercial manager (5.9%).

Interestingly, SME sponsors showed a slightly higher level of agreement compared to clubs (mean= 3.05, SD 0.981) in stating they did not hold any specific criteria when deciding whether to sponsor (mean= 3.21, SD 1.051). Indeed, the use of personal

connections served as the key stimulator to agree to partner with a club (mean= 4.25, SD 0.931). This indicated a reduced level of strategic consideration within the decision-making process, particularly when noting the values of the club (mean= 3.87, SD 0.619) and sponsor-sponsee congruent-fit (mean=3.37, SD 1.025) were less than the influence of personal networks. More strategic considerations were however evidenced with companies selecting to sponsor a club based on geographical locality (mean=4.19, SD 0.544) – yet just not to the same extent to that of knowing individuals associated to the club. This is nonetheless unsurprising given the opportunity to give back to the local community was the principal benefit from engaging in sponsorship.

Alternatively, the networking capabilities of the sponsee were viewed as the least important determinant when choosing a sponsee (mean= 2.75, SD 0.683). This showed the greatest variance in agreement between company and club perspectives (0.76), given a mean score of 3.51 (SD, 0.819) is provided from club results (table 27). Other determinants that the sponsor and sponsee were at odds with whilst selecting an organisation two partner with surrounded an existing sponsors recommendation (NCFC score of 3.60 (SD, 0.823) and SME sponsor score of 2.87 (SD, 0.719) showing 0.73 difference) and the sponsorship fee involved (NCFC score 4.01 (SD, 0.866) and SME sponsor score of 3.31 (SD, 0.704) showing 0.70 difference) – each determinant of greater importance to club than company. Nevertheless, the mean scores and standard deviation in relation to the SME sponsors level of agreement when considering the determinants that may influence their decision to select a NCFC is presented in table 28.

Table 28: Summary of SME sponsor selection criteria (n=16)

Determinant	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hold the same values as your company.	3.87	.619
Image of club.	3.75	.447
Size of club.	3.31	.704
Type of club (i.e. registered as a charity or community amateur sports club).	3.25	.447
Networking capabilities of club.	2.75	.683
Professionalism of club.	3.56	.512
Club holds a Football Association Charter Standard status.	3.07	.594
Sponsorship fee involved.	3.31	.704
Geographical location of club.	4.19	.544
Personal affinity (i.e. you are currently/ or were previously associated to the team/club).	3.44	1.209
Personal connections (i.e. family, friends and/ or colleagues are/ were associated to the club)	4.25	.931
An existing sponsor(s) recommendation.	2.87	.719
Club shows a strong fit to your company overall.	3.37	1.025
No specific criteria	3.21	1.051

The Sponsorship Relationship:

The study showed sponsorship at the grassroots level operated on more personal than business-like principals, with the lion share of NCFC (39.8%) and SME sponsors (47.1%) – 40.9% collectively (n=115) – believing their deals were much more personal than business-like, and a further 18.3% of respondents feeling their deal is slightly more his way inclined (figure 45). This is somewhat unsurprising when reiterating organisations typically used pre-existing personal networks to take the initial steps to the procurement of sponsorship (tables 27 and 28). Notwithstanding this point, this is in notable contrast to a fewer number of organisations who express their partnerships to be either much more business-like than personal (5.9% of sponsors to account for 0.9% of collective responses) or slightly more business-like than personal (6.1% of clubs and 5.9% of sponsors to account for 6.1% of collective responses). Of note is that 14.8% of respondents (23.5% of sponsors and 13.3% of sponsees) discern no real relationship between the two parties exist to thus signify that sponsorship, in these instances, is no more than a mere transaction that potentially diminishes after the agreed terms have been fulfilled.

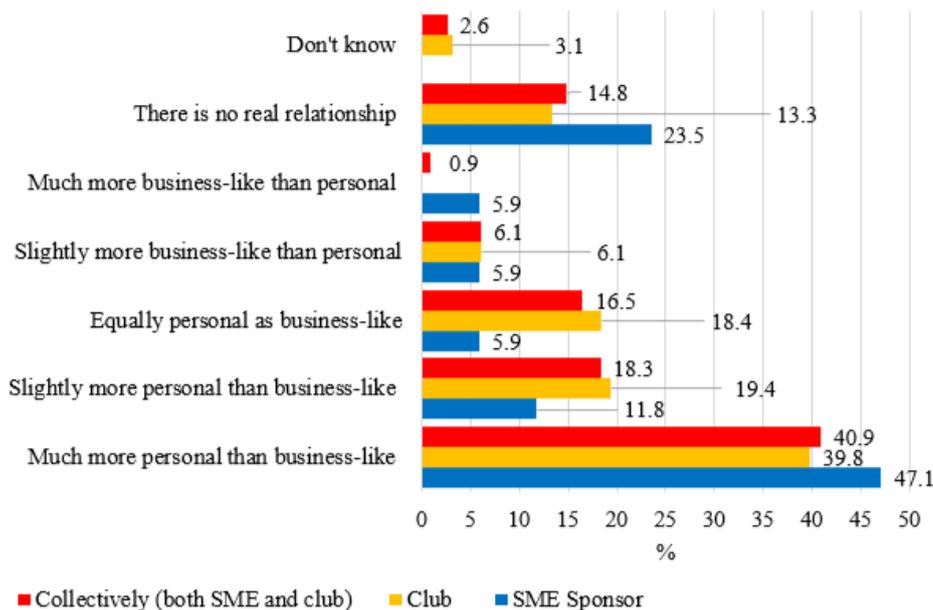


Figure 45: Type of relationship – personal v business-like (n= 98 clubs; 17 sponsors; 115 total)

An overwhelming majority of sponsorship deals in the grassroots panoramic appeared to match organisational expectations, with a similar and high mean score being displayed across NCFC (mean= 4.23, SD 0.835) and SME sponsor (mean=4.24, SD 0.752) results. Further, and as illustrated in figure 46, while a total of 86.9% of clubs and SME sponsors were either very satisfied (41.7%) or satisfied (45.2%) with their agreement, this was in

stark contrast to the small number of organisations (4.4%) who felt the deal left a lot to be desired and ultimately were either very dissatisfied (0.9%) or dissatisfied (3.5%). Away from the collective results, whereas the lion share of SME sponsors were pleased (58.8%) with the deal, most clubs held stronger levels of content with the relationship (41.7%). Only one organisation – that being a NCFC – was very discontent with the deal, with a further four NCFCs and one SME sponsor being dissatisfied.

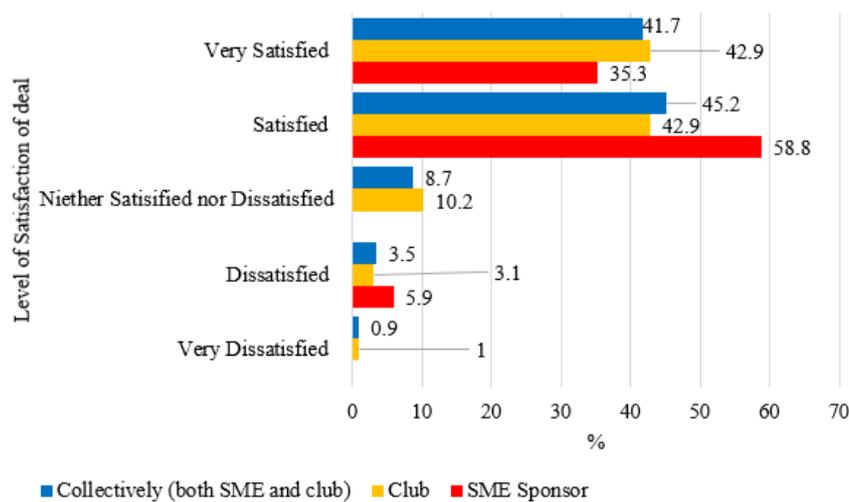


Figure 46: Satisfaction of sponsorship deal (n=98 clubs; 17 sponsors; 115 total)

6.6: Critical Success Factors to Sponsorship and Importance-Performance Analysis

The review of literature alongside findings from the phase 1 qualitative interviews furnished 16 CSFs which were argued to (potentially) influence the quality of the sponsorship relationship. To analyse this, table 29 details the mean importance and performance – in this case satisfaction – scores as well as the standard deviation for each of the 16 factors from a NCFC and SME sponsor outlook. Together with the mean and standard deviation, it further highlights the corresponding levels of discrepancy between each variable as found with other IPA studies (e.g. Rial et al 2008; Charafa and Rahmounib 2014; Deng and Pierskall 2018; Djeri et al 2018). The use of the median would have yielded results similar to the mean, and to thus avoid omitting additional information the mean contains (Martilla and James 1997), the mean values were used. Finally, only those practitioners who responded to each statement regarding their perceived level of importance and satisfaction were included in this particular analysis. Although this meant limiting the sample (cf. Pallant 2016) from 100 NCFCs to 40 and 17 SME sponsors to 10, it was more crucial to be provided with a full dataset of responses which could allow for a complete comparison of attitudes and perceptions.

Table 29: Mean scores of importance, performance (aka. satisfaction) and discrepancies of critical success factors

Code	Factor	Club (n=40)			SME sponsor (n=10)		
		Satisfaction (Std. Deviation)	Importance (Std. Deviation)	Difference	Satisfaction (Std. Deviation)	Importance (Std. Deviation)	Difference
1	Mutually Beneficial	3.30 (0.564)	2.93 (0.859)	0.37	3.30 (0.483)	2.40 (1.075)	0.90
2	Collaboration	3.20 (0.564)	2.70 (0.966)	0.50	3.20 (0.422)	2.30 (0.675)	0.90
3	Communication	3.33 (0.555)	3.05(0.920)	0.28	3.30 (0.483)	2.70 (0.823)	0.60
4	Commitment	3.50 (0.694)	3.23(1.037)	0.27	3.20 (0.422)	2.90 (0.994)	0.30
5	Trust	3.40 (0.591)	3.15 (0.949)	0.25	3.40 (0.516)	3.10 (0.994)	0.30
6	Transparency	3.50 (0.555)	2.93 (1.023)	0.57	3.20 (0.422)	2.80 (0.919)	0.40
7	Mutual Understanding	3.38 (0.856)	2.93 (0.971)	0.45	3.20 (0.422)	2.70 (0.675)	0.50
8	Shared Values	3.23 (0.620)	2.60 (1.008)	0.63	3.20 (0.422)	2.70 (0.823)	0.50
9	Compromise	3.25 (0.494)	2.58 (1.059)	0.67	3.10 (0.316)	2.30 (0.675)	0.80
10	Company Satisfaction	3.23 (0.577)	2.98 (0.947)	0.25	3.20 (0.422)	2.70 (0.823)	0.50
11	Club Satisfaction	3.38 (0.628)	3.30 (0.853)	0.08	3.40 (0.516)	3.00 (0.816)	0.40
12	Respect	3.60 (0.545)	3.28 (0.847)	0.32	3.30 (0.483)	2.80 (0.789)	0.50
13	Reciprocity	3.28 (0.554)	2.93 (0.917)	0.35	3.20 (0.632)	2.80 (0.919)	0.40
14	Honesty	3.53 (0.554)	3.38 (0.774)	0.15	3.40 (0.516)	3.10 (0.876)	0.30
15	Realism of expectations	3.38 (0.586)	3.05 (0.783)	0.33	3.20 (0.422)	2.60 (0.876)	0.60
16	Long-Term attitude	3.20 (0.608)	2.88 (0.992)	0.32	3.30 (0.483)	2.40 (1.174)	0.90

Table 29 indicates that honesty (mean= 3.38, SD 0.774) holds the highest level of importance for NCFCs in terms of factors deemed crucial for relationship success. Whilst club satisfaction (mean= 3.30, SD 0.853), respect (mean= 3.28, SD 0.847), commitment (mean= 3.23, SD 0.920), and trust (mean= 3.15, SD 0.949) accounted for the remaining top five factors, the ability to compromise was deemed of lowest importance (mean= 2.58, SD 1.059).

When coming to understand the factors SME sponsors felt to be crucial to forging a successful sponsorship relationship, trust and honesty (mean=3.10, SD 0.994 and 0.876) were found to be of equal most importance. To complete the top five CSFs, table 29 highlights SME sponsors believed club satisfaction (n= 3.00, SD 0.816), commitment (n=2.90, SD 0.994), transparency (mean= 2.80, SD 0.919), respect (mean= 2.80, SD 0.789) and reciprocity (mean= 2.80, SD 0.919) were of higher importance than the remaining factors. Like the NCFC outlook, compromise was deemed by SME sponsors to have the lowest level of importance (mean= 2.30 SD, 0.316), with co-operation and collaboration (mean=2.30, SD 0.675) adding a further factor viewed as not as important to a relationship's success.

Interestingly, each of the mean scores for the top five CSFs for a SME sponsor were less than the lowest score within the top five CSFs for a NCFC (trust – mean=3.15, SD 0.949). This suggests that NCFCs felt stronger as to the factors which supported them achieve a prosperous agreement. A further notable result was that the mean scores suggest club satisfaction was perceived as more important to both the club (mean= 3.30, SD 0.853) and SME sponsor (mean= 3.00, SD 0.816) than company satisfaction (mean= 2.98, SD 0.947 for NCFC; mean= 2.70, SD 0.823 for SME sponsor). This was somewhat surprising given that although both parties should indeed be satisfied with any agreement, in reality, the SME sponsor is investing into the club meaning the sponsors satisfaction is arguably the most important out of the two if the relationship is to be long withstanding. However, with companies holding this view of club satisfaction being of greater importance than their own, it further compounds the notion that sponsorship for the SME was grounded by a philanthropic rationale as highlighted in figure 41.

In considering the level of satisfaction towards each CSF, whereas NCFCs were satisfied more with the respect shown between club and company (mean=3.60, SD 0.545), SME sponsors were alternatively most pleased with the level of honesty and trust being evidenced in their relationship(s) (mean=3.40, SD 0.516). SME sponsors were irked most

by the level of compromise (mean= 3.10, SD 0.316) across their sponsorships, whereas for NCFCs collaboration and co-operation (mean=3.20, SD 0.564) alongside the ability to hold a long-term approach to sponsorship (mean 3.20, SD 0.608) presented equal levels of dissatisfaction.

Table 29 further shows the level of satisfaction was greater to that of the level of importance for all of the CSFs for both NCFC and SME sponsors, showing a positive discrepancy in each case. Overall, this thus re-enforces the results in figure 46 that reveals NCFCs as well as SME sponsors were content with the relationships currently in existence. The biggest discrepancy between satisfaction and importance when reviewing NCFC results related to the ability to compromise (mean difference= 0.67) and shared values between the club and company (mean difference= 0.63). Alternatively, for the SME sponsor, three CSFs equal showed the greatest discrepancy (mean difference= 0.90), those being: (i) the partnership being mutually beneficial, (ii) collaboration and co-operation, and (iii) the ability to compromise.

As previously argued, the utilisation of IPA can assist both NCFCs and SME sponsors improve the management of grassroots football sponsorship, not least through understanding where those responsible for sponsorship should allocate most effort to engender a successful relationship based on the positioning of a given variable on the grid (see section 4.8.2). Using the mean scores illustrated in table 29, two IPA grids which plot the satisfaction and importance levels from both club (figure 47) and SME sponsor perspectives (figure 48) surrounding the 16 CSFs are subsequently presented below.

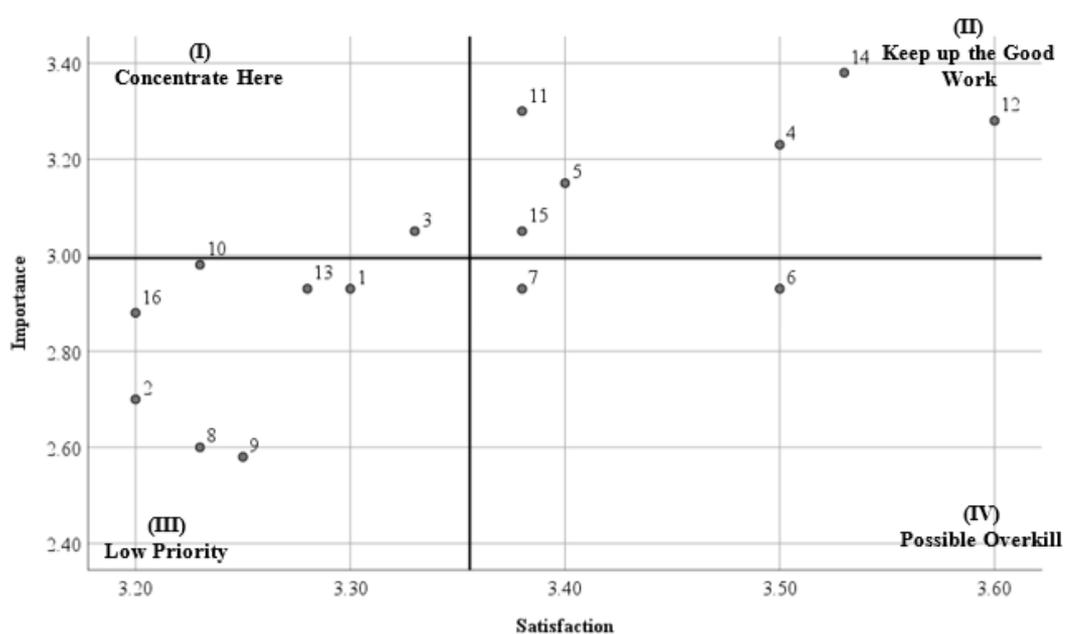


Figure 47: IPA graph for CSFs in regard to NCFC outlook

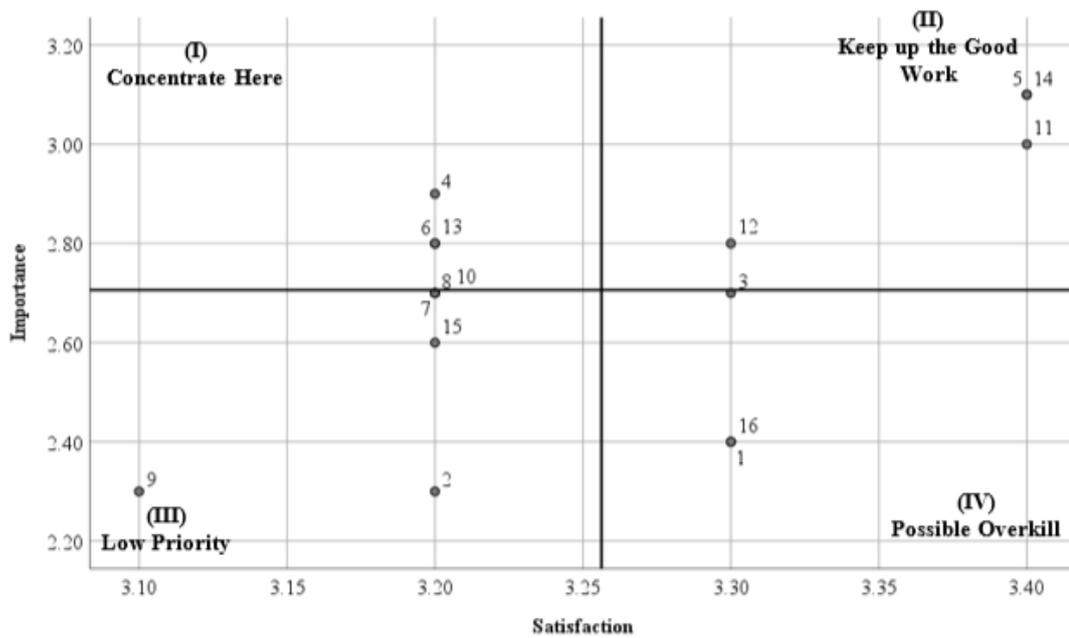


Figure 48: IPA graph for CSFs in regard to SME sponsor outlook

The research could have placed each parties' attitudes and opinions on the same IPA grid for ease of cross-comparison between NCFC and SME sponsor outlooks. However, given the crosshair was devised through a data-centred approach (refer to section 4.8.2), the disparity in importance and satisfaction scores between NCFC and SME sponsor viewpoints would have substantially influenced the point at which the axis would cross. In turn, this would have distorted the subsequent categorisation of variables and the ultimate courses of action the research would recommend for each side of the relationship. For example, when taken together, the CSF of communication would have been positioned within quadrant I for the NCFC. Instead, when isolating the IPA grid to the NCFC outlook alone, the same factor is placed in quadrant II (figure 47). To reiterate this point, and from a SME sponsor perspective, whereas if analysing the CSFs collectively there would be no factors placed in quadrant I, separately, three are now located in 'concentrate here' (quadrant I) (figure 48). A summary of figures 48 (NCFC) and 49 (SME sponsor) is therefore presented in table 30 in a bid to compare and contrast the NCFC and SME perspective whilst further outline what the position of each CSF means in terms of a subsequent way forward for each respective organisation. The table lists the respective factor in relation to the numbers presented within each IPA grid.

Table 30: Comparison between NCFC and SME sponsor IPA results

Quadrant	Critical Success factors study		Research Context
	Football Club Results (n=40)	SME Sponsor Results (n=10)	
(I) Concentrate Here	(3) Communication.	(4) Commitment. (6) Transparency. (13) Reciprocity.	Explanation: Factors having high levels of importance but low degrees of satisfaction. Action: Should be a greater level of effort on improving these factors.
(II) Keep up the Good Work	(4) Commitment. (5) Trust. (11) Club satisfaction. (12) Respect. (14) Honesty. (15) Level of realism in relation to expectations.	(5) Trust. (11) Club satisfaction. (12) Respect. (14) Honesty.	Explanation: Factors with high satisfaction which also hold high levels of importance. Action: Maintain how these factors are managed.
(III) Low Priority	(1) Mutually beneficial partnership. (2) Co-operation and collaboration. (8) Shared values and sponsorship goals. (9) Ability to compromise. (10) Company satisfaction. (13) Reciprocity. (16) Long-term attitude to sponsorship.	(2) Co-operation and collaboration. (7) Mutual understanding. (8) Shared values and sponsorship goals. (9) Ability to compromise (10) Company satisfaction. (15) Level of realism in relation to expectations.	Explanation: Factors low in satisfaction, yet also low in importance. Action: Although prudent to improve factors there is no real pressure to do so.
(IV) Possible Overkill	(6) Transparency. (7) Mutual understanding.	(1) Mutually beneficial partnership. (3) Communication. (16) Long-term attitude to sponsorship.	Explanation: Factors high in satisfaction but low in the levels of importance. Action: Potentially reduce the effort placed on meeting such factors.

Reviewing the two IPA grids (figures 48 and 49) as well as table 30, most CSFs when taken collectively are positioned in quadrants II (10 factors) and III (13 factors), with fewer factors falling into quadrant I (4 factors) and IV (5 factors). This indicates that in a large proportion of cases one of two incidents are occurring. Firstly, and in relation to quadrant II, individuals with responsibility for sponsorship are satisfied with the management of those factors deemed important to them – this falls in line with the overall satisfaction levels detailed in figure 46. Secondly and instead relating to quadrant III where the majority of CFS for each organisation are placed, whilst a level of discontent to how certain factors are managed exists, these are not deemed of enough salience to diminish the relationship.

Comparing the SME sponsor and club outlook separately, a more sporadic set of plots for the CSFs across the quadrants are presented by the NCFC (see figure 47) as opposed to SME sponsors which see a more densely populated grid (figure 48). Half of the 16 CSFs shared the same quadrants (II and III) in relation to club and company perspectives (table 30) to suggest there was a certain degree of similarity in how they view and experience each factor. Of the eight CSFs located in the same quadrants, half were positioned in quadrant II (keep up the good work) and related to: trust, honesty, club satisfaction and respect. NCFCs and SME sponsors also possessed similar stances in reference to the CSFs of co-operation and collaboration, shared values and goals, ability to compromise, and company satisfaction, falling under quadrant III (low priority).

In the same breath, however, the remaining eight CSFs were adjudged differently by NCFCs and SME sponsors in terms of their level of importance and satisfaction. First, while engaging in a mutually beneficial partnership and holding a long-term approach were of ‘low priority’ for SME sponsors (quadrant III), for NCFCs, these two CSFs aligned to ‘possible overkill’ (quadrant IV). Second, communication was placed in ‘concentrate here’ (quadrant I) for NCFCs in contrast to quadrant IV for SME sponsors (possible overkill). Third and in the reverse of the second difference, the CSF of transparency related to ‘possible overkill’ for the NCFC (quadrant IV), while alternatively being placed inside quadrant I for the SME sponsor (concentrate here). Fourth, the CSF of commitment was classified as ‘keep up the good work’ for NCFCs (quadrant II) rather than ‘concentrate here’ (quadrant I); the quadrant this factor was positioned in for the SME sponsor. Fifth, reciprocity differed between parties with the perspective of the SME sponsor rendering it as ‘low priority’ (quadrant III) in contrast to a ‘concentrate here’ factor (quadrant I) seen by the NCFC. Penultimately, the level of realism in regard to expectations saw SME sponsors again view this as a CSF of ‘low priority’ (quadrant III), but one which was instead placed in the quadrant of ‘keep up the good work’ (quadrant II) for the NCFC. Finally, whereas for the NCFC mutual understanding was situated in ‘possible overkill’ (quadrant IV), this specific CSF was alternatively seen to sit inside quadrant III for the SME sponsor (low priority). With this in mind, the triangulation of findings (chapter eight) presents an account of the actions both NCFCs and SMEs could take in a bid to create a more fruitful and effective agreement.

6.7: Summary of Phase Two Results

To this end, phase two has broadened the scope of the research and thus strengthened the generalisability of the resultant sponsorship process model. Phase two has further contributed to the overall study through highlighting five new CSFs not previously documented within literature which were additionally included within the model. This ultimately illustrates that sponsorship has moved from a mere transaction to a more relational approach, which, in turn, consolidates the need for a model that discloses how sponsorship is enacted from its outset to end of term agreement. Overall, the results from the analysis of phase 2 quantitative data extended across the following areas: (i) demographic characteristics of sample, (ii) the nature of relationships, (iii) the motives towards engaging in sponsorship, (iv) the management of sponsorship, and (v) the factors perceived crucial to a successful sponsorship relationship.

SME sponsors reported that they allocated less than 5% of their companies annual promotional spend to the sponsorship of grassroots football, typically investing less than £500. Agreements were short to medium term in length with the majority lasting either one or two years, the relationship was more personal than business, with shirt/ kit sponsorship being the most common deal. Volunteers within the NCFC were found to make the first approach to a potential sponsor, normally based on their personal networks. Finance was the key factor in agreeing any deal from the NCFC whilst the SME based this more on the strength of the personal connection with the club. From a NCFC perspective, sponsorship enabled the club to achieve their objectives whilst supporting their financial sustainability. The SME's were less certain that sponsorship allowed the company to achieve their objectives which could be attributed to a philanthropic rather than commercial rationale.

The factors of trust, honesty, club satisfaction, commitment, and respect were detailed as of most importance to both NCFCs and SME sponsors. Whereas NCFCs were most satisfied with the level of respect within the relationship, SME sponsors were alternatively most pleased by the degree of honesty and trust. In contrast, NCFCs were least satisfied with the CSFs of co-operation and collaboration in conjunction with the ability to possess a long-term attitude to sponsorship, while SME sponsors were more disgruntled by the degree of compromise shown in their deals.

Ultimately, to support in the enactment of sponsorship at the grassroots level, in conjunction with phase 1 findings (chapter five), the results from this phase of the study

have been utilised to inform the development of a process model. Further, the above findings are put into the context of this study within chapter eight, aligning the results of the online survey presented in this section with the findings of the qualitative (repeat) interviews (phase 1 and 3) and the literature review – accordingly completing the process of triangulation.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PHASE THREE FINDINGS

7.1: Overview of Chapter

This chapter presents the findings for the repeat semi-structured interviews of the research (phase 3a) as well as the study's focus group (phase 3b). It begins by introducing the initial draft sponsorship process model constructed from the findings and results from the study's two previous data collection phases. The chapter then reports on the responses towards the model elicited from those practitioners involved in the first set of semi-structured interviews which culminated in a second draft of the process model that is presented. Following on from this, in conjunction with insights of the sponsorship landscape, feedback on the updated process model from a CFA perspective is detailed, ultimately ending with a final version of the sponsorship process model being shown. The way practitioners believe is of most effectiveness to disseminate the model to the wider grassroots football and SME sponsor community is then presented prior to concluding with a recap of the phase 3 findings.

Within this phase it became clear that although the model mirrored the process and practices undertaken in the environment, the language used in academic writing varies to that in the practitioner setting. Consequently, academics need to use the language of the practitioner to ensure that ideas and models are written in such a way to straddle both stakeholders. The final model therefore reflects the voice of the practitioner to ensure its applicability to those working in grassroots football sponsorship. This is to such an extent that FA staff viewed the model and associated materials to be of significant benefit to the football community.

7.2: Phase 3a – Feedback on First Draft of Sponsorship Process Model

As previously detailed across this study, the findings from phase 1 interviews (chapter five) coupled with the results from the online survey (chapter six) were used with the purpose of to inform the construction of a first draft process model designed to facilitate more effective sponsorship dealings at the grassroots level. Figure 49 consequently presents the first version of the process model as a result from the study's phase 1 findings and phase 2 results.

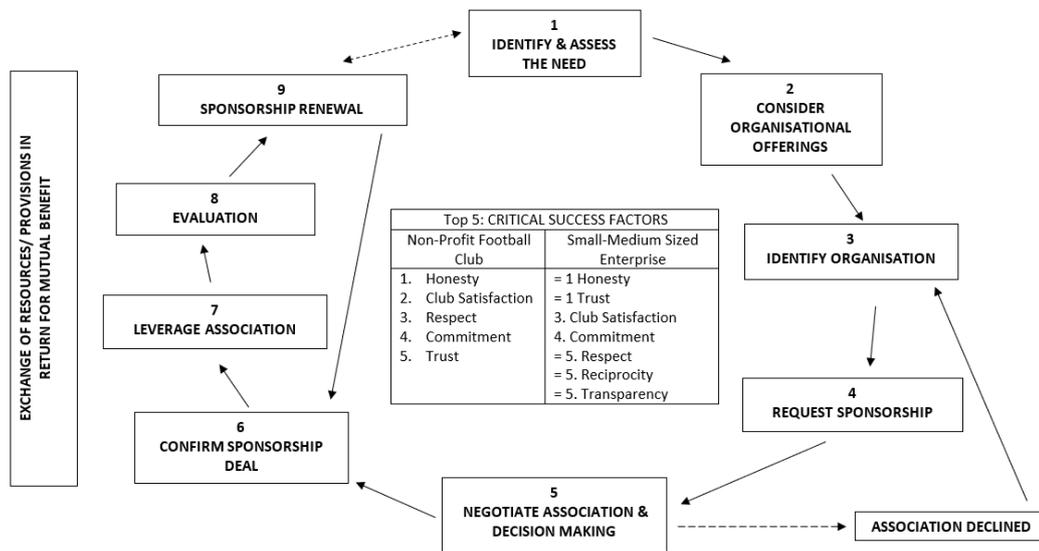


Figure 49: Sponsorship process model (version 1)

The principal intention behind repeat interviews consequently revolved around gauging practitioner thoughts on the process model in preparation to disseminate to the wider football and SME sponsor community. To do this, a two staged approach was taken. Repeat interviews initially began with presenting practitioners with the first version of the sponsorship process model (figure 49) allowing them as much time as needed to review the model and provide their initial feelings. Once practitioners had discussed their overall perceptions of the model, the researcher then detailed what each of the nine stages comprised of, giving them the opportunity to input any further insight or feedback to each stage. This was typically met with minimal or no interruptions, with discussion subsequently then progressing to four core issues relating to the model: (i) its strengths; (ii) its weaknesses; (iii) identification of where it could be improved; and (iv) how the model could be communicated to practitioners to support in developing more effective sponsorship relationships.

Following the work of O'Reilly (2007), sources of feedback relating to the process model were identified through two means. Firstly, feedback explicitly specified by the practitioner in answer to questions seven, eight and nine of the interview schedule (appendix 12 and 13) were initially noted. Secondly, additional insights to the model that were communicated by the practitioner implicitly during the rest of the discussion were then subsequently gleaned from the analysis. Practitioner feedback relative to the first

version of the sponsorship process model (figure 49) derived through the findings of phase 1 interviews and the results from the phase 2 online surveys subsequently follows below.

Strengths: Overall feedback showed that practitioners were unanimously positive about the initial model (n=9). All practitioners made some reference to how the process reflected the practices executed to manage the sponsorship arrangement at the grassroots level. Here, it could be argued this was somewhat predictable given the practitioners insight informed the development of the initial model. Nevertheless, the reflective nature of the process model was to such an extent that NCFC SB remarked that because *“everything [he has] ever done is on there, in that order, [he] could have written this process [himself]”*. NCFC Yellow further stated: *“everyone has to go through these steps to some degree. I think it’s good”* – inferring the model accurately disclosed the process experienced at the grassroots level. The SME Restaurant additionally supported how the model reflects sponsorship dealings but from a sponsor rather than sponsee viewpoint, commenting: *“every step of the process undertaken is on that model, so the model itself is spot on really”*. The SME Carpet-fitter simply put: *“It’s saying exactly how it is”*. Indeed, such was the level of agreement with the model that three practitioners (NCFC SB; SME Journalist, Restaurant) initially explicitly declared the model held no room for improvement, until albeit later raising some key revisions that were gleaned from the analysis and then applied (table 30).

Further, two thirds of practitioners confirmed a willingness to use the model (NCFC Yellow, 1907, Youth; SME Journalist, Accountant, Carpet-fitter). Those unenthusiastic attributed this to either the level of investment involved in the sponsorship agreement being too minimal to be concerned with following a process (SME Restaurant and Bartender), or alternatively, the self-acclaimed level of experience the practitioner held in managing sponsorship relationship made it futile to follow (NCFC SB). All practitioners except for one (NCFC SB), nevertheless, alluded to the potential for the model to be used as an example of good practice or guideline to support organisations. Given that one of the key purposes for not only building the process model but also conducting this entire study was to aid in contributing support to an activity that shows little or no guidance for NCFCs and SMEs into how to foster long-withstanding relationships, such findings were welcome. The need for enduring NCFC-SME partnerships was indeed exemplified when several practitioners noted how relationships are often easier to maintain than secure on an annual basis (NCFC Youth, Yellow; SME

Accountant, Bartender), and that the model was perceived to potentially aid develop prolonged sponsorship deals (SME Journalist, Bartender). The SME Bartender, for example, epitomised these points collectively when stressing:

“I think you’ve got a very good framework here. I think if every organisation followed this framework there would be a lot of healthier relationships out there and you’d also get more sponsorship renewals because I think if you ask most companies how long deals last for you wouldn’t get past one year... Ironically, it’s often easier to keep hold of an organisation than it is to find a new one as you’ve built a rapport and relationship with them.”

Another strength pertaining to the model was its user-friendliness. In a sweeping statement the SME Carpet-fitter, for example, asserted: *“I understand it and I’m not the brightest spark in the plug”*. More specifically, some acknowledged how the ‘neat’ layout of the model forged a clearly identifiable pathway that ensured ease of understanding for the practitioner (NCFC 1907; SME Restaurant). Others not too dissimilarly expressed how the model was easy to comprehend, but as opposed to the ‘neat’ layout, contended the model and its simplicity was its beauty (NCFC SB, Yellow). This was outlined when NCFC Yellow compared the over-complicated nature of other models they had previously observed as opposed to this when questioned on the strength of the model:

“It’s simplicity really. It seems to make sense and people can come up with some flowcharts that are very confusing... It’s like any model, the most important thing is that people are able to understand it, and I can understand it.”

Weaknesses and Subsequent Recommendations: A myriad of limitations and suggestions were proposed in order to improve the initial model (figure 49). Each piece of advice was subsequently reviewed prior to being considered an accepted suggestion. For instance, the SME Journalist made reference to *“say[ing] a bit more about the payment side of things... I paid in instalments, so you could talk about that”*. This alteration was in fact previously detailed during the breakdown of each stage and deemed clear by the researcher, however, and was thus contended to not warrant any further deliberation. Further, it is important to establish early on that not all ideas were drawn from the entire sample of practitioners. Instead, each accepted suggestion regardless of whether only one practitioner or all referred to the revision was included.

Upon review of the suggestions posed by the practitioners, alterations could be labelled into two categories: (i) content-related revisions, or (ii) grassroots-related refinements. While content-related revisions centred on the specific tasks undertaken during

sponsorship dealings, the latter referred to suggestions that could enable the model to further connect with the community as opposed to elite setting.

Content-Driven Revisions: The interviews found a total of 21 suggestions or issues associated to the process model that revolved around content. To advance the first draft of the model (figure 49), all content-related suggestions were initially added in an attempt to ensure the model avoided overlooking key tasks or pathways associated to the sponsorship process that were not originally included. Appendix 15 outlines the content-related revisions presented by practitioners, both nuanced and substantial along with the actions taken to remedy such issues. Yet the majority of recommendations or revisions presented could be contended as nuanced changes to the sponsorship process, with only four significant alterations being drawn from the second draft of the model (figure 50) in comparison to the first version (figure 49), those being:

- 1) The terminology used in steps three to six.
- 2) The input a pathway branching away from the model and its typical trajectory to evidence the potential for termination or discontinuation of the partnership between steps seven and nine.
- 3) Use of a coloured key to emphasise the organisation(s) commonly responsible for undertaking the respective step.
- 4) Model being encased in a broken rectangle to represent the factors practitioners deem ungovernable to the organisation(s) but may still impact on the management of the deal.

Grassroots-related Refinements: Away from the cornucopia of suggestions concerning the content of the process model, recommendations connected to how the model could be further moulded and shaped towards those who undertook sponsorship at a grassroots level were also presented. This theme was principally driven out of three practitioners (NCFC Yellow, 1907; SME Restaurant) explicitly emphasising the model mirrored more of an elite as opposed to grassroots panoramic. A case in point is from NCFC 1907 who reported: *“If you looked at a professional football club, for arguments sake Everton or Liverpool, this would probably work fantastic for them”*. Notwithstanding this, a further four areas of improvement that centred on the process model’s applicability to the grassroots setting were elicited during interviews. Yet given one of the primary rationales to undertake this study was aimed at facilitating learning and enhancing practitioner understanding specifically toward the bottom rather than apex of the footballing pyramid,

such issues relating to this theme were crucial to remedy. Table 31 presents such feedback while highlighting the subsequent action taken to resolve these issues.

Table 31: Grassroots-related model refinements based on practitioner feedback

<i>Practitioner Feedback</i>	<i>Example of Evidence</i>	<i>Action Taken</i>
Sponsorship jargon.	What does leverage mean? (NCFC SB) This leverage and activation, what does that involve? (SME bartender) ...some people will go "organisational offering, what does that bloody mean?" (NCFC 1907)	Entire process amended to include questions that summarise what each individual stage consists of.
Process airs a sense of formality to a venture largely executed on casual and relaxed principles.	I question whether the process would be as structured as that. (SME Restaurant) That's a formalised approach for something that's often done very informally. (NCFC 1907)	Researcher argues building any process without painting a structured approach is unavoidable. Embedded into the introductory section of the <u>model deconstruction</u> .
Condense model.	Just condense the model a little bit more into grassroots thinking. It's virtually two steps, perhaps three at most. (NCFC Youth)	Maintained the nine steps, but now also incorporate six overarching phases to simplify the process for practitioners.
Emphasise the speediness and celerity of tasks.	Well the first deal that we ever did took 20 minutes... It can be all done [points to model] in half an hour over a cup of coffee. (NCFC SB) People are more likely to do this process over a pint... It can be rattled through in a 20-minute conversation. (SME Accountant)	Embedded into the introductory section of the <u>model deconstruction</u> .

However, not all weaknesses or revisions argued for amongst practitioners were unanimously accepted. This particularly related to the formality of the process model. While practitioners unitedly stressed the model aired a sense of formalisation to a practice that typically exuded a relaxed and casual approach, a dispute into whether such a systematic process was positive existed (n=4 against formality of model; n=5 for formality of model). Intriguingly, bar the SME Restaurant, all other SME sponsors (n=4) argued the systematic nature of the process was a virtue rather than a drawback to the model. Apart from NCFC 1907, all practitioners from NCFCs (n=3) alternatively felt the model's formality was detrimental. A significant difference thus appears to reside in how organisations wish to approach and manage sponsorship deals across parties; SME sponsors more formalised, NCFC sponsees less so. This scenario is somewhat unsurprising given the sponsor is investing in a property and is therefore entering what they perceive is similar to any other business-like venture keen to avoid a situation where

there is minimal return due to missing key activities that could otherwise make the relationship flourish. This is emphasised by the SME Accountant who states:

“The formal approach is really important and more than anything it’s the company not the club spending the money... A formal approach creates the security that everything is going to happen.”

To this end, the remedying of issues along with following the recommendations elicited by practitioners culminated in the construction of an updated version of the sponsorship process model. Important to note here, however, is how such changes may not be directly illustrated within the process model itself but rather serve to refine the deconstruction of the model which forms a core part of the study’s triangulation (refer to chapter eight). Nevertheless, version two of the model presents several changes both in terms of content and its application to the grassroots setting.

7.3: Phase 3b – County FA Perspectives of Sponsorship and Feedback on Second Draft of Sponsorship Process Model

7.3.1: Perspectives Towards Grassroots Football Sponsorship

Given CFAs are regionally responsible for the promotion, development and organisation of football at the grassroots level of the game, it was prudent to gather insight into their experiences of grassroots football sponsorship as an authority. These organisations further dealt with NCFCs on a daily basis and could thus disclose issues that were commonplace to the environment being studied. Consequently, despite the focus group intending to principally gain insight to the updated process model, the need for a deepened understanding of CFA perspectives also existed due to limited prior knowledge of this phenomenon at this level. The subsequent analysis of the focus group presented one key finding discussed below.

Augmenting the view of NCFC 1907, a persistent line of discussion from the football officers related to assisting clubs with sponsorship support being dismissed as part of the organisations’ agenda. This was despite respondent 3 (the football development manager) contending that clubs (particularly start-ups), more than anything else, call for support in how to improve their financial position in order to deliver football to their members:

“It’s one of the most frequently asked questions we get – Do you know any sponsors? Do you know of any funding available? This is especially the case for new teams that are starting off. That seems to be kind of the biggest cost because obviously they’ve got to buy a kit or a couple of kits. They’ve got to buy all the equipment, pitch fees, league fees,

affiliation fees, insurance fees. Starting up they can get hammered by all costs up front. Those that have been running for a while will build that in and almost plan a season ahead. But it's definitely one of the most frequently asked questions we get – What's out there to help us financially?"

Respondent 2 (the player and coaching development officer), for example, stated *"if you gave us a priority list of where sponsorship would come into our organisations agenda, it would probably be at the bottom"*. This was a quote reinforced by respondent 3 who stressed *"in terms of sponsorship we pretty much do nothing"*. Indeed, such was the low-level priority for sponsorship within the CFA that respondent 3 further admitted they even failed to *"seek and secure sponsorship of their own county cups"* to ultimately conclude that *"although we'd love to be able to help clubs get sponsors, we also need to kind of do it ourselves"*. This football officer thus seems to self-question whether clubs would ask for support knowing the CFA ignore sponsorship themselves and, if they did seek assistance, whether they have the expertise to offer advice given the limited experience in the process of acquiring sponsorship.

From the discussions with the CFA several reasons were highlighted as to why they don't support clubs in gaining sponsorship. Overall, they believed that this should be the remit of the club and up to them to sort out as their responsibilities were driven from the FA not the clubs. Respondent 3, for example, asserted *"it's up to the club to go and approach companies themselves and kind of sell their project and club to that company"*. Whilst, respondent 2 noted sponsorship *"is not something we can control"*. In fact, the only time the CFA would appear to intervene with a NCFCs sponsorship dealings is when the agreement has the potential to go against FA rules and regulations on sponsorship – as highlighted by the following quote from respondent 1:

"Kids teams can be offered a good package perhaps off a betting office 'cause the lad goes in there every day and runs a kids football team. However, under FA rules and regulations then obviously anything linked to betting, alcohol, and tobacco cannot be on kids shirts and cannot be associated to the club. So there's a few boundaries there... We'd have to be upfront and honest and say you can't officially be wearing it."

Issues were also raised about a lack of expertise in this area and an absence of materials they could use to signpost and inform clubs who had sponsorship queries. For example, respondent 3 stated: *"Even just having this conversation is kind of flagging up things. Like we should have templates for where we can go to clubs and just say 'there'"*. A process model that surmises and provides guidance into how to procure sponsorship may

thus be timely to the grassroots football environment as both clubs (section n) and the FA ultimately appeared to call for greater materials to aid in sponsorship practice.

7.3.2: Feedback on Second Draft of Sponsorship Process Model

Figure 50 illustrates version two of the sponsorship process model refined through NCFC and SME sponsor feedback provided after being presented with an initial draft of the model.

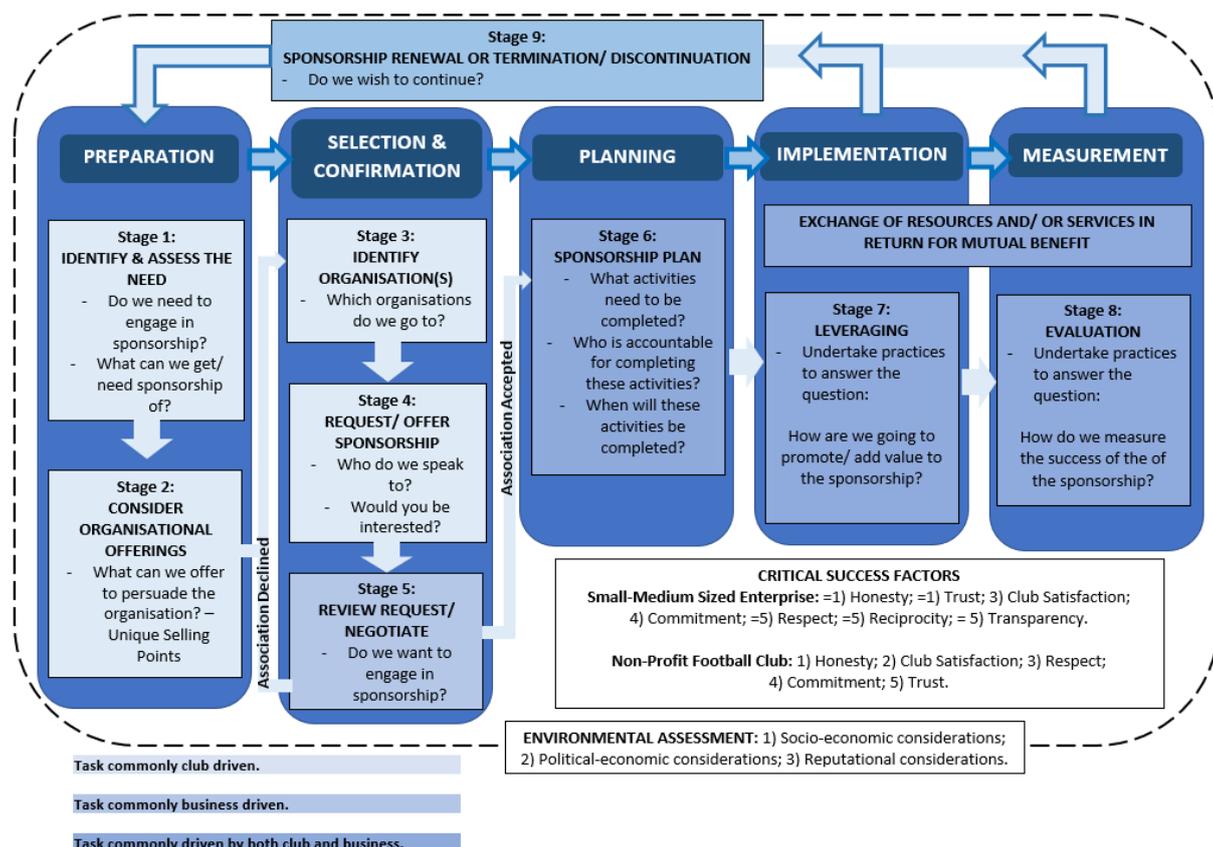


Figure 50: Sponsorship process model (version 2)

This segment of the study mirrors the structure used in section 7.2 but instead of asking for practitioner insight saw version two of the sponsorship process model being shared with the CFA officers for their initial thoughts prior to more in-depth discussion around each stage. It is important to note here that a large proportion of feedback was elicited by respondents 2 and 3. This may be ostensibly due to their own experiences in operating a NCFC voluntarily in addition to their paid role as a CFA officer. Feedback relative to the second draft of the sponsorship process model (figure 50) in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement is subsequently set out below.

Strengths: Refined from the recommendations of practitioners from the clubs and companies (section 7.2), officers of the CFA were ultimately supportive of the model

(figure 50). This was to the extent that each employee proffered the model to be a guideline that the CFA would endorse in the aim of supporting clubs gain sponsorship. For instance, while respondent 2 simply stated “*the model is good. I like it a lot*”, respondent 3 interjected and pointed to using the model within his own NCFC, underlining “*it’s definitely something that I would use as a club myself as well*”.

Specifically, and in relation to the models’ content (figure 50), two out of the three CFA officers acknowledged its comprehensiveness, and, in particular, its mirroring of each activity they felt was undertaken as part of a sponsorship deal at the grassroots level. Explicit in his feedback in relation to this point, respondent 2 stated “*it covers all of the bases associated with sponsorship when you look at it*”. Respondent 3 was alternatively more implicit in his comments of “*it breaks it down well*” still appearing to suggest the model echoed sponsorship dealings at the grassroots level.

Further, distinguishing the party most commonly held accountable towards undertaking each stage of the sponsorship process using colour coding did not go amiss by respondent 3. When questioned on the positives of the model, he noted: “*I also think the way it’s broken down into what’s the clubs responsibility, the businesses, and both*”. As such, while these content-driven strong points were unsurprising as the model had been derived through practitioner experiences before then being subject to feedback from those same practitioners in order to refine the model (section 4.7.5.1), such reactions were welcomed given the purpose of this study was to create a model that not only emulates grassroots football sponsorship dealings, but could also support facilitate future relationship development.

Away from feedback relating to the content presented within the model, a final strength noted by all CFA officers surrounded the theme of the model being user-friendly. For example, respondent 1 simply claimed the model was “*very clear and understandable in how to work sponsorship*”. Not too dissimilarly, respondent 3 discerned the model “*was pretty straight forward*”. Indeed, the suggested ease of understanding for the model was to such the extent that respondent 3 presented a somewhat hard-line and -hitting reaction of “*if they can’t grasp this then they’ve got no chance of getting effective sponsorships*”.

Weaknesses and Subsequent Recommendations: Although each CFA officer approved of the model overall, they also highlighted a small number of deficiencies and areas of improvement in order to heighten its effectiveness and return the best opportunity for

clubs to gain and maintain long-withstanding relationships with commercial entities. The focus group gleaned a total of three issues and suggestions from the CFA officers – one referring to the content, and two linked to its layout. Each frailty to the model is subsequently discussed before identifying the action taken to revise, and ultimately culminate in the creation of the final version of the sponsorship process model within grassroots football (figure 53).

Content-Driven Revision: In reference to the former type of revision (content-related), a consensus into the terminology being used within the model existed. Each CFA officer seemed to question whether or infer that the language adopted would confuse those practitioners attempting to utilise the model. Respondent 1 asserted that while they themselves understood the jargon used “*no disrespect to your standard secretary or whoever is going to pick this up, but they’d be going ‘what do you mean by that?’*” Further, respondent 2 epitomised the issue of the language used within the process model in his contention that, as a result of the words being used, the current model appeared to be more suited to those in academia rather than the practitioner; an argument respondent 3 agreed with.

“What about the naming of it as well mate? Like it’s very educational as though it relates back to your PhD. As opposed to selling it to your PhD tutors why not try and sell it to your grassroots practitioners... I think the best words are to say, and without any disrespect to clubs is to dumb it down a bit and word it in layman’s terms.”

(Respondent 2)

This quote challenges the essence of this research as the model was intended to be constructed for industry purpose, highlighting the need for further adaptation to ensure its relevance to its target audience.

Layout Revisions: In contrast to the striking issue of the terminology used potentially confusing practitioners, the two shortcomings that were identified and then constructed under the theme of layout revisions culminated in more subtle changes to the model. The first revision made from CFA feedback stemmed in response to respondent 3 questioning “*Where it says association declined, is that you’re saying you should be going back to stage two?*” The need to confirm where this outcome was placed initially implied that he was unsure of which stage the club should return to if no deal was agreed, and thus required further refinement. Further, the fact the respondent believed this connection related to stage 2 as opposed to stage 3 inadvertently opened the question as to whether clubs may, in some cases, need to re-consider their offerings before identifying other

organisations for sponsorship as this could be a rationale behind the company's rejection of the sponsorship request. To act upon these considerations, a new link between stage 5 and 2 was affixed, while the phrase 'association declined' was also re-positioned to show a stronger connection between stage 5 and 3.

Finally, general agreement from respondents existed in that the colour coding used for the model rendered difficulties in distinguishing the party held accountable for each of the nine stages. Indeed, respondents 1 and 3 came together to detail this point when questioned on the shortfalls of the model noting:

"Your colour coding. We see stuff internally were you're getting colour coding and your eyes go [respondent goes cross-eyed] 'cause its green, yellow and it's like a rainbow. So yes, I can understand the light blue and then the dark...."

(Respondent 1)

"... I think just choosing only subtle differences in the colour really. You can stick with the blue but just be a bit more diverse as the tones are a bit too close for me and make it difficult to see who is responsible for each task."

(Respondent 3)

Taking this feedback, particularly from that of respondent 1, it was important to not overpower the model with a varied set of colours as this would prove problematic when practitioners came to make sense of and apply the model. The use of two text colours (black and white) that complemented a single background colour (blue) to provide uniformity and negate sensory issues therefore remained as with the third version of the model. However, as highlighted in figure 53, the final reconstructed version was presented with a more differentiated pallet of blue shades with the respondents comments in mind. In the aim to further allow readers to easily distinguish which organisation was accountable for a given task, the key created as part of the third draft now additionally specified the respective stages.

In resolving the issues presented as well as taking the recommendations presented by CFA officers into account, a third and final version of the sponsorship process model was constructed. Again, while certain changes may not be directly reflected within the process model itself, the perceived drawbacks and suggestions have been used to develop the deconstruction of the model that can be seen within the triangulation phase of the study (chapter eight). The final version of the grassroots football sponsorship process model which takes into account a trio of perspectives – that being NCFC, SME sponsor, and CFA outlooks – is subsequently submitted within the triangulation of the study's findings

(chapter nine; figure 53). The chapter takes a more comprehensive look into the model and each of its nine stages that links to literature and further outlines the recommendations for practitioners who engage in football sponsorship at the grassroots level.

7.4: Dissemination of Model

Given one of the studies key principals was to facilitate practitioner learning and understanding of sponsorship dealings, it was prudent to discover the ways practitioners felt would be effective to disseminate the model (for the purpose of this section, the views of the three CFA officers have been grouped together under the collective organisation of the CFA). Indeed, as stressed by Chadwick (2005) it is important any research and findings are translatable, accessible and appropriate for the practitioner audience the study is targeting. Practitioners listed a total of six strategies deemed appropriate to disseminate the sponsorship process to (other) NCFCs and SMEs (figure 51) that could, in turn, be either separate or integrated approaches.

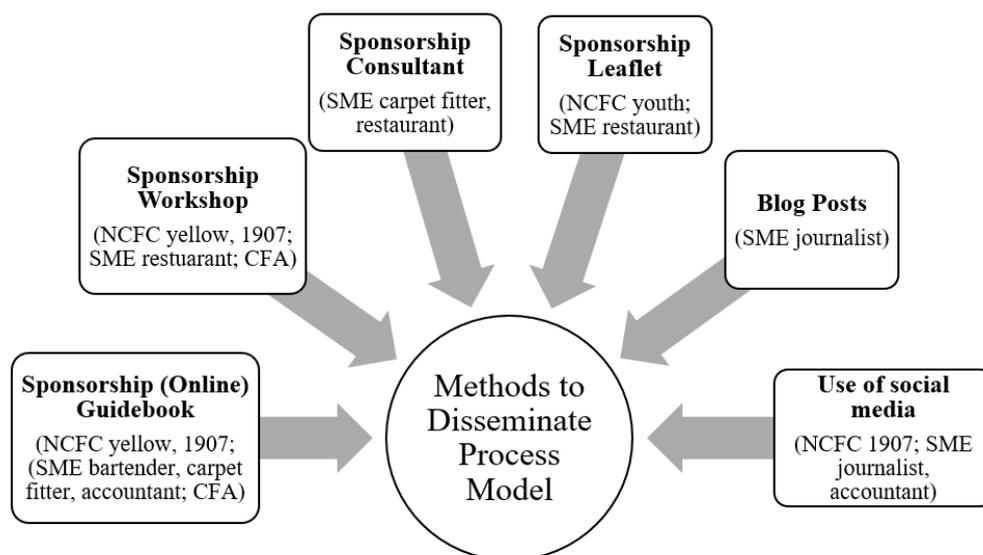


Figure 51: Methods deemed appropriate to disseminate sponsorship process model

A sponsorship guide was viewed as an effective method to communicate the model to the wider football community. The SME Bartender, for example, stated:

“I’d probably say a guidebook that takes the clubs step-by-step through the process... So what I mean by this is a chapter or a page on how a club can identify the need; another page on identifying a suitable organisation; another page on how to negotiate with an organisation. Every year this little booklet can be circulated to the clubs and they can then subsequently follow it.”

Similarly, the CFA suggested:

“I think it would be good to have a guide on the CFA website so when we get phone calls or emails we can just direct them to there and they can have a look and crack on with it... I think a platform on our website is essential as clubs will Google ‘sponsorship’ in [name of city].”

Included in this guidebook was the need for supplementary material (i.e. template sponsorship proposals and contracts) and case studies of sponsorship deals. For example, the SME Accountant recommended having *“a sample sponsorship pack that they [the sports club] could send out to potential sponsors”* as part of the guide. A similar notion came from respondents 1 who thought *“each stage could be on a main page and then we’d have something alongside this with ideas that could prompt them”* and 3 who suggested *“accompany this with templates and examples of this in practice.”*

Sponsorship workshop were another suggestion with local football leagues (SME Restaurant; NCFC 1907) and the (county) FA (NCFC 1907, Yellow) being identified as key collaborators. But while the CFA also self-claimed that they could deliver workshops, previous experience of undertaking such activities had not always been received positively:

“We did have a CPD programme in which we had one evening for sponsorship and funding... To be honest, the attendance was awful. I think we had one club on the night and we sat there for two hours.”

To a lesser extent, the use of social media wherein the model is communicated to practitioners through Twitter and Facebook was identified as a possible dissemination channel (SME Journalist, Accountant; NCFC 1907). Another prospective action pertained to the researcher acting as a consultant or mentor (SME Carpet-fitter, Restaurant). In this role, the researcher could enter organisations and offer support in relation to the enactment of NCFC and SME sponsorship deals – *“You could go out and explain yourself to clubs and companies and then go through each individual step”* (SME Carpet-fitter). Finally, the development of leaflets, and/ or production of blogs were further approaches identified to facilitate the circulation of the model. Alternatively, the CFA alluded to the potential for the model to be included in their CFA update that was emailed to all clubs under their region as an additional method to support clubs gain a greater understanding of how to approach and manage sponsorship.

However, dissemination strategies were not universally agreed and clouded in elements of doubt in some cases. NCFC Yellow, for example, questioned the suitability of social media to target the desired group that the model aimed to support, stating: “*You could stick it on Twitter or wherever, but whether that would get the right people or not it’s hard to know*”. The SME Accountant further raised concerns regarding sponsorship consultancy and mentoring in noting: “*Consultancy would definitely work. If you have something like this, however, you will give rise to, and it’ll happen because I’ve seen it before, of people being able to make money out of it*”. The potential for individuals to profiteer from the model by offering their services to secure sponsorship for an organisation in return for commission was therefore not only a potential consequence to consultancy specifically but also, more broadly speaking, a limitation to the general construction and dissemination of the model.

A further interesting finding surrounded utilising specific methods in order to target distinctive age demographics (NCFC 1907, Yellow; SME Accountant). Practitioners typically felt digital related platforms were more fitting to the younger generation in comparison to more traditional methods of dissemination for the older ages. The SME Accountant, for example, made explicit reference to adapting approaches taken to reach a specific age population:

“I think a booklet with the process would be nice. I would have a sample sponsorship pack that they could send out to potential sponsors. But this would be more for the old guard. So when you’re looking at the next generation social media is a potential option... You could have an online guide or even a five-minute video.”

For the process model, and its subsequent dissemination to be effectively implemented, over half of practitioners (NCFC 1907, Youth, Yellow; SME Bartender, Restaurant) recognised the need for the researcher to collaborate with other key stakeholders. Calls for collaboration and use of stakeholder institutions were often argued for in order to implement two core approaches to communicate the model: (i) circulate guidebook, and (ii) delivery of workshops. As such, two prospective collaborators were highlighted by practitioners – both of which could be argued to hold a strong affiliation to grassroots football but not necessarily the SME.

For NCFCs, local leagues were considered stakeholders that yielded effective platforms in which to disseminate the model and undertake the strategies identified in figure 52 (NCFC Yellow; Youth, 1907; SME Bartender, Restaurant). Somewhat reflecting a more regional or national strategy, practitioners also signified the FA as a second authority to

collaborate with (NCFC Yellow, 1907, and Youth; SME Bartender). Yet the lack of support proffered from the FA was an issue that did not go amiss by certain NCFC practitioners (1907 and Youth). In fact, NCFC 1907 felt this very point was something that they believed the model could assist in – by stimulating an increased agenda and attention towards such a venture:

“Offer things like going to end of season meetings, you know, [name of local leagues]. If you could go with that template [points to process model] and have it on a big projector. Then obviously if we take it one step further the bigger picture would be, in order to maximise it, would be to build a series of workshops. And if you got them through local FAs and got them involved then that would obviously be a big way of hitting the maximum number of clubs wouldn't it?... I mean it's always surprised me that an organisation of their standing don't have literally a dummy-proof, step-by-step guide taking a club through how they can maximise their sponsorship potential. And, you know, that framework would do the job.” (NCFC 1907)

7.5: Summary of Phase Three Findings

Phase three of this study was designed to serve as a reflexivity tool to the initial two versions of the sponsorship process model, with the final version utilising the language of the practitioner to ensure applicability to the grassroots football setting. This consequently allowed for the study's aim of 'to develop an management model to support the sponsorship process between the NCFC and SME sponsor' to be addressed.

To evaluate the model developed from the study's findings and results (chapters five and six), the model was subject to feedback through insights provided by practitioners involved within sponsorship (i.e. NCFCs and SME sponsors) as well as from football officers at one NWE CFA. Overall, respondents were supportive of the model and felt it reflected how sponsorship was managed within the grassroots setting. This was to the extent that six out of nine NCFC and SME practitioners voiced that they would adopt the model for future dealings, while officers at the CFA further stressed it would be a model they would endorse – particularly considering their limited support in aiding NCFCs with sponsorship. Although feedback was thus largely positive, respondents presented areas to develop the model which surrounded three key issues; (i) content-related revisions, (ii) grassroots-related refinements, and (iii) layout revisions. To disseminate the model, six methods were suggested to be useful with the creation of an (online) guidebook and the delivery of workshops being the most accepted strategies by practitioners. Crucial at the dissemination stage was the need for supplementary materials which could further

support the explanation of the model and abate the undertaking of it in practice (i.e. case studies and templates).

From the evaluation points, a final version of the process model is subsequently depicted (figure 53) and then comprehensively discussed in greater detail in the following triangulation chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT: TRIANGULATION OF FINDINGS

8.1: Overview of Chapter:

Illustrated in figure 52, this chapter triangulates the qualitative findings (phases 1 and 3) and quantitative (phase 2) results with the literature associated to (grassroots sport) sponsorship. In this sense, two of the four forms of triangulation discerned by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) were applied to this study, those being: (i) methodological triangulation (the use of various types of techniques to study a phenomenon), and (ii) data triangulation (the use of different data sources or different survey periods). This served to not only gain a more complete picture of grassroots football sponsorship within the NWE, but also tabulate how sponsorship is enacted. First, the chapter proffers a definition into the sponsorship of grassroots football based on practitioner perceptions. Second, the sponsorship process model devised as a result of the study's findings is subsequently broken down and detailed, with recommendations for each practice undertaken as part of this model additionally presented at the end of each stage. The chapter concludes with a summary of the triangulation of the study's findings, results and relevant literature.

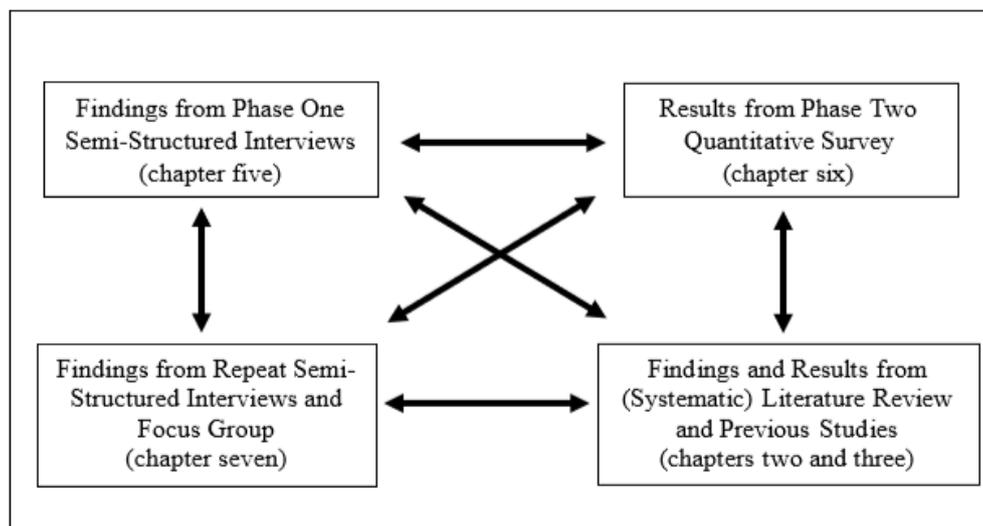


Figure 52: Triangulation of findings with literature

8.2: A Definition of Grassroots Football Sponsorship

This study has shown a need to increase practitioner understanding into what sponsorship consists of to ensure agreements start off on the right foot. As indicated by Buhler (2006:69), “every definition has its right to exist, though some definitions are more likely to be accepted than others.” Section 1.3.1 of this study detailed how the researcher argued the need to propose a new definition to sponsorship positioned against the grassroots

backdrop given no such definition appeared to exist. The definition to be formulated was one informed through both sponsorship related literature and practitioner insight. Indeed, the use of each practitioners' insight to develop a definition relating to grassroots football was considered crucial because any interpretation of sponsorship would ultimately reflect their experiences. For instance, it is not uncommon to find sponsorship deals between two not-for-profit entities whereby a club is associated with a business registered as a charity in order to enhance their reputation within the local community.

Box 5 consequently reveals this study's definition of sponsorship within the grassroots sport context, derived through a combination of analysis into sponsorship related definitions (appendix 1) concomitant with practitioner insights, delineated in table 22. To then further fully understand the definition conceived, the key terms are subsequently broken down and (re)defined or discussed.

Box 5: Grassroots Sport Sponsorship Definition

Grassroots sport sponsorship is the agreed grant and continual management of resources, financial or in-kind, between a business (sponsor) and a sports entity (sponsee) to forge a mutually beneficial relationship that is continually leveraged and evaluated, and forms part of the respective organisations integrated strategy that enables both parties to fulfil or partially fulfil their remit.

- *'Agreed grant and management of resources, financial or in-kind'*: It is important that both parties settle upon the provisions to be issued and how they are to be managed in order to avoid conflict. In grassroots football sponsorship, the research found that the sponsor typically provides finance in exchange for the rights and opportunity to associate with a given property. However, the set of terms highlights the bigger part that the sponsee plays a within sponsorship deal rather than just being the 'customer' (Chadwick and Thwaites 2008). 'In-kind' acknowledges provisions alternative to merely financial such as specialist services and know-how which can be used for the benefit of the agreement.
- *'Mutually beneficial relationship'*: The term 'mutually beneficial' is one which aligns to both the analysis of literature (particularly in more recent pieces) and observations in the study's phase 1 findings. This relates to the school of thought that sponsorship can add value and impact positively upon each respective party. The term 'relationship' reflects not only how literature now considers sponsorship

agreements to be inter-organisational partnerships, but also how they should not be deemed as a one-off transaction (Chadwick and Thwaites 2008)

- *'Leveraged'*: The term leverage alludes to all sponsorship- linked marketing communications and tasks supplementary to the sponsorship (Weeks et al 2008; O'Reilly and Horning 2013).
- *'Integrated strategy'*: The study found that sponsorship accounted for a fragment of each organisations approach respective of the entity. On one hand, sponsorship formed part of a sponsor's 'promotional strategy' in which sponsorship was employed alongside other marketing channels to reach their target audience. This included but was not exclusive to direct marketing; word-of-mouth; search engine optimisation; social media; general advertising; and cause-related marketing. On the other hand, sponsees used sponsorship in conjunction with additional sources of income such as grants, player subs, donations, signing on fees and fundraising to suggest sponsorship served as a piece of the clubs 'financial strategy'.
- *'Fulfil or part-fulfil organisational remit'*: This set of terms pertains to the parties universal rationale for engaging in sponsorship. For clubs, this term predominantly refers to the opportunity to provide football to their members to; the principal role of NCSCs (Cuskelly 2004; Cuskelly et al 2006; Reid 2012; Misener and Doherty 2014). Alternatively, two main intentions existed for the business; either pure altruism or commercial thinking.

Recommendations: The definition shows that practitioners ought to recognise that the sponsorship of grassroots football is not simply a one-off transaction or exchange but is more about the continued commitment to creating a mutually beneficial partnership.

8.3: Grassroots Football Sponsorship Process Model

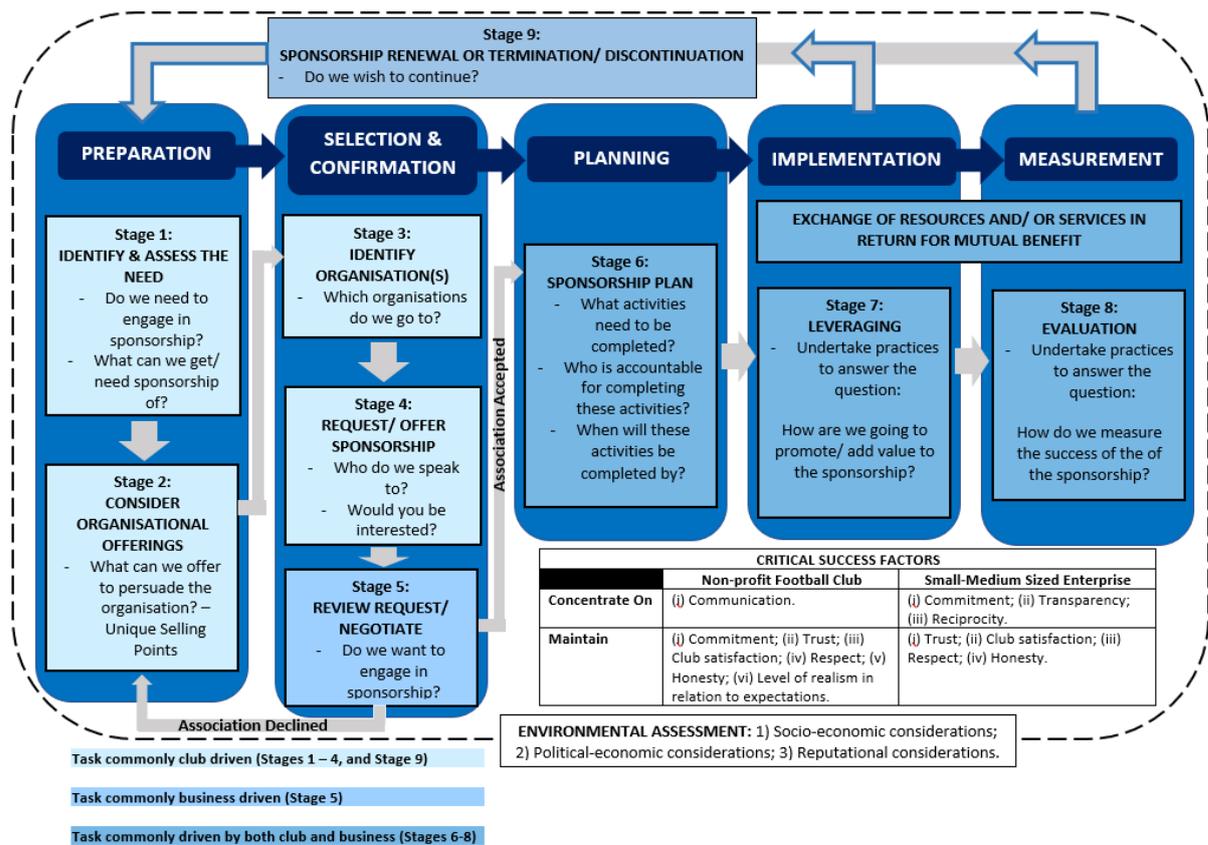


Figure 53: Sponsorship process model (final version)

8.3.1: Overview of Process Model

Depicted in figure 53, the model consists of a total of nine steps pigeonholed into six core phases which are encased in a broken rectangle. Prior research discerns how organisations need to continuously adjust to the landscape in which they operate (Lamont and Dowell 2008) and both influence and are influenced by the wider ecosystem locally to internationally (Cornwell and Kwon 2019). Indeed, the findings of this study suggest that there are several external factors that could induce a shift in an organisations (decision-making) process towards sponsorship at the grassroots level. Reputational drivers that pertain to any negative scandals with an organisation involved in the agreement that may affect the other party through association was one such factor typically noted to influence decision-making. Notwithstanding this, the interviews discerned that external factors impacting on sponsorship primarily related to socio-economic and political-economic considerations such as the recession, government enforced austerity, and the effect of Brexit. Such issues were found to often result in what this study terms as a ‘sponsorship standoff’ and presents a novel finding not otherwise documented across previous

literature. Here, the study uncovered that due to the issues noted above, NCFCs increasingly coveted commercial investment to survive and ultimately create opportunities for members to partake and compete in football. However, in the same breath, such external forces saw potential SME sponsors more reluctant to sponsor grassroots football as a result of needing to tighten their purse strings. This highlights the juxtaposition that both the sponsee and sponsor could be faced with in trying to engage and enact sponsorship deals. Subsequently, the broken rectangle in the process model represents the notion of an ‘open system’ wherein environmental forces uncontrollable to an organisation may ultimately drive and influence how sponsorship is approached and managed.

Specifically focusing on the practices undertaken during sponsorship, while the model depicts a sequential process and follows a linear progression from one task to the next, it is important to note the study found that the actual advancement of the deal is often dynamic and involves oscillations between each step; a claim also noted in the research of Cousens et al (2006). This was in response to both the SME sponsor and NCFC often aiming to enhance their relationship over the course of their association. A further key finding from this study centred on how sponsorship was considered more informal than previously described in literature. The research observed each phase of the model was typically executed with celerity and speediness in an approach that is relaxed, casual, and more personal over business-like. This study thus echoes a small amount of research both at the grassroots (Doherty and Murray 2007) and elite level (Athanasopoulou and Sarli 2013) which details sponsorship deals operated in a semi-formal and flexible manner.

8.3.2: Phase One – Preparation

The first phase of the model refers to sponsorship preparation and comprises of two core activities that the study found were frequently undertaken by the NCFC as opposed to the SME sponsor.

Stage One – Identify and Assess the Need

Forming part of the first stage of the model, prior to attempting to secure sponsorship, the NCFC addresses the question of whether sponsorship is indeed required. To do this, the sports entity considers their motivations and primary objectives to engage in sponsorship. The study’s findings and results run parallel to previous research at the grassroots level (Doherty and Murray 2007; Wicker et al 2012b; Misener and Doherty 2014; Batty and

Gee 2019) that underlines sponsorship was coveted primarily for financial and operational reasons. Specifically, the online survey mirrored the objectives discerned during phase 1 interviews in reporting that ensuring short-term financial sustainability (mean= 4.19, SD 0.833) and serving as a revenue diversification tool that supported reducing the pressure placed on alternative, and perhaps heavily relied upon income streams (mean= 4.07, SD 0.992) were the NCFCs core rationales. This study's findings thus falls in line with previous literature that highlights NCSCs are endeavouring to diversify their revenue channels in a bid to achieve their organisational objectives (Wicker et al 2012a; Wicker and Breuer 2013; Wicker et al 2013; Millar and Doherty 2016), with sponsorship being one revenue stream increasing in popularity (Misener and Doherty 2009, 2014; Giannoulakis et al 2017; O'Gorman 2019). Such motives towards sponsorship are unsurprising given finances to operate were frequently reported as one of the greatest concerns for NCSCs (Downer and Talbot 2011; Cox and Sparham 2013), additionally compounded by the current economic climate which is causing an uncertain funding landscape that is financially impacting on sports such as football more than others (Parnell and Widdop 2015a, 2015b).

Not unlike other literature (i.e. Stotlar 2001; Buhler 2006; Doherty and Murray 2007; Misener and Doherty 2014), the research also found non-financial objectives played a smaller role in a NCFCs desire to engage in sponsorship. The online survey, for example, showed that heightening the clubs' awareness in the local community also presented significant results (mean= 3.93, SD 0.884). However, while NCFCs acknowledged the reasons for their involvement in sponsorship, a key finding from the study's interviews not documented in prior works was that the objectives set by NCFCs were typically vague and basic without any timeframe. This may consequently serve as one rationale as for why sponsorship deals are more ad-hoc and informal or merely be symptomatic of the NCFCs apparent laissez-faire attitude to sponsorship. Nevertheless, such a finding is worrying given literature asserts the objectives an organisation sets out to fulfil ultimately acts as the catalyst for any evaluation (e.g. Meenaghan 1991; O'Reilly 2007; Smith and Stewart 2015).

Little discussion into the risks associated with grassroots sport sponsorship for the sponsee exists amongst literature (e.g. Batty et al 2016). This study revealed that the risks Crompton (2014) highlighted an organisation may encounter as a consequence of engaging in sponsorship at the elite level – operational and/ or reputation – also resonated with sponsees in the grassroots setting. Taking the latter risk of reputation into

consideration, similarly to the research of Batty et al (2016), practitioners of NCFCs were concerned with the potential of their clubs' image being damaged as a result of associating with a company perceived to be 'unethical' or who may become or is attached to negative scandal(s). In contrast, and in a novel finding that contributes to grassroots sport sponsorship research, operational risks were exemplified through the potential for loss in club autonomy or potential failure of payment for the deal by the respective company even after agreement. Yet importantly, such risks were found to not be considered by practitioners prior to engaging in sponsorship, but rather issues that had been experienced as the partnership continued.

Recommendations: Overall, NCFCs should take an objective stance to whether they should become involved in sponsorship. To do this, those responsible should list the reasons why they wish to engage in sponsorship against the potential risks and opportunity costs which may emanate as a result. The potential risks to sponsorship may also come to the forefront of the NCFCs thought process when attempting to identify suitable organisations to engage with (step three), and/ or in the negotiation of a deal (step five). However, possessing a level of awareness into the potential ramifications at this stage can enable the practitioner to not only fully assess if sponsorship will be of enough value to the NCFC but also begin to neutralise the likelihood of any of those issues identified occurring through relevant courses of actions.

In terms of the formulation of sponsee objectives, regardless of the motives, the NCFC should set objectives that are considered SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound. In comparison to the setting of vaguer objectives, the forging of clear and SMART objectives would allow for a better basis for the NCFC to reflect on whether the purpose for engaging in sponsorship had been met both during and after the agreement. Further, as the purposes of sponsorship drive any actions, the setting of more comprehensive objectives would also act as a reference point when considering how to manage a given deal.

Stage Two – Consider Organisational Offerings

A core component of stage two surrounds the NCFC considering the range of assets that can be sponsored. Various research highlights anything can be sponsored (e.g. Fried et al 2013) – it is merely a matter of what both the sponsor and sponsee can agree to. However, this study showed the assets offered for sponsorship tended to be those required for

NCFCs to be able to fulfil their remit of providing members the opportunity to partake and compete in football, whereas those less frequently engaged in were considered nonessential to the clubs' operations but added to its overall offerings. Indeed, the online survey reported that 94% of clubs and companies engaged in shirt sponsorship arrangements – to match with other studies in the area (Thwaites 1995; Kelly et al 2010). In contrast, assets not directly necessary for the NCFCs primary operations of delivering recreational and competitive football, but still prevalent in the clubs' setting to create a greater experience for its members, such as training kit, website, and social media were less commonly sponsored but still notable.

A second element considered during this stage relates to the price setting for the sponsorship agreement(s) – an issue not covered earlier during the study. Such discussion into the factors that affect the cost of sponsorship has been overlooked across sponsorship-related research (Cornwell and Kwon 2019). To break this disregarded area, the findings of this study show that sponsorship prices were typically determined in accordance with a break-even pricing strategy (i.e. covering the cost of the provision) to reaffirm and demonstrate the necessity driven mentality held by NCFCs. In a small number of cases, however, a more strategic approach was adopted wherein the NCFC employed cost-plus pricing (i.e. cover cost of provision plus an additional pre-determined fee on top). Further, within the negotiation phase of the process (step five), at times, the price was lowered in response to what the potential SME sponsor deemed to be value for money.

A further decision considered during this stage related to the length of contract deal. The study's findings highlighted that the length of contract depended on the asset being sponsored. Whereas certain sponsorship deals were noted to run across the lifespan of the provision until needing to be replaced (i.e. kit, training kit, equipment), others had specified term lengths agreed before needing to be renewed (i.e. perimeter advertising, ground/ stadia). Deals were typically found to be short-medium in length, with 87% of agreements lasting either one (54.8%) or two years (32.2%). This study resultantly evidences that grassroots football deals were contracted for a lower number of years than compared to the elite level which, on average, existed for three years (Kolah 2015). Many sponsors may thus be content with short-medium term contracts as it affords them the opportunity to almost 'test' the waters of grassroots football sponsorship without needing to invest, what to them, may be a relatively substantial amount of money.

Recommendations: Like using sponsorship to diversify their revenue, the NCFC should try to diversify their assets which can be sponsored in a bid to generate longevity by mitigating the risk of an overreliance on one sponsorship agreement that if discontinued or terminated may leave them susceptible financially. That said, the NCFC ought to also determine how sponsorship of certain assets will allow them to achieve their purpose for engaging in sponsorship (considered in stage one). Alongside this, and in a task appearing to be overlooked, the NCFC should consider why a company may become involved in grassroots football sponsorship, further reflecting on what makes the club a more appealing investment opportunity compared to others. Indeed, this study revealed that is not just other NCFCs and NCSCs, but also other non-sport related activities (i.e. arts) who vie for what seems a short supply of businesses favouring sponsorship. It would therefore be wise for the practitioner to identify and then convey to potential sponsors what makes the NCFC stand apart from other properties. Put simply, the NCFC should consequently address the question of ‘what is/ are our unique selling point(s)?’.

In setting prices, the NCFC ought to deviate from the sponsorship fee solely matching the cost of the provisions. By continuing to adopt this almost ‘anything is better than nothing’ approach, they are consequently eradicating an opportunity for further influxes in finance that could go towards the long-term sustainability of the club. Adopting a strategy wherein sponsorship includes the value of the asset along with a rights association fee that is set or fluctuates on a yearly basis is shrewd and should be followed with all assets the NCFC owns. The initial fee commanded should depend on the package offered (e.g. deal length; the asset sponsored; whether business exclusivity in return for the partnership is provided; what the company will receive as a ROI), in addition to any other factors that could potentially drive the price of sponsorship (e.g. size of club; club prestige; social media presence). Finally, practitioners should try to hold firm in the price that has been pre-determined if the company attempts to drive down the cost of the deal. Whilst it may be tempting to succumb to the lure of procuring sponsorship as, especially during times of hardship, the NCFC will often need the sponsor more than the other way around, this sets a precedent that the company may take advantage of in the future.

Considering the length of contract agreements, engaging in a deal for a short-medium period may be wise to test the waters of the relationship. Further, if the deal is too short, the purpose for engaging in sponsorship may not be realised, whereas if too long, this could alternatively lead to problems in generating further value to the agreement once

objectives have been achieved. To consequently fully optimise the relationship, both NCFCs and their SME sponsors should attempt to renew their agreement if their contract lasts less than two to three years. Indeed, the creation of long-term deals can allow for greater understanding into the needs and wants of each respective party and then tailor such practices to suit them, potentially increasing the satisfaction of each organisation. To create these long-withstanding partnerships, the recommendations relating to the factors perceived crucial by practitioners towards an effective sponsorship offers significant contribution (section 8.3.8).

8.3.3: Phase Two – Selection and Confirmation

The second phase of the model contains three tasks that often occur at the end of the football season/ off-season (March-July) and culminate in the agreed partnership between the NCFC and SME sponsor. The study found this phase starts with tasks being frequently completed by the NCFC before the (potential) SME sponsor enters the sponsorship process and has a greater role in undertaking the final step. Due to the potential difficulties in reaching agreements, the study showed NCFCs may be required to revisit each stage presented in this phase on several occasions until a deal has ultimately been secured. At this phase, although luck appears to play a part, NCFCs more importantly show persistence, tenacity and flexibility when endeavouring to procure investment through sponsorship.

Stage Three – Identify Organisation(s)

In stage three, the NCFC identifies any commercial entities they feel may be suitable to partner with. Not too dissimilar to previous sponsorship research associated to grassroots sport (Slack and Bentz 1996; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Pegoraro et al 2009; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010), this research illustrated that the practitioner with responsibility for the sponsorship in the NCFC typically utilised their own personal networks to identify appropriate companies (mean= 4.09, SD 0.941). Indeed, the analysis of interviews found that drawing on family and friends associated to the NCFC who are employed by, or own a business, was the most common practice undertaken by practitioners when determining appropriate sponsors. This suggests that practitioners were pragmatic in how they identified suitable sponsors, relying on convenience as opposed to locating prospective sponsors driven through more strategic considerations.

However, at times, practitioners also implemented more strategic approaches that utilised a specific selection criterion either along with, or in isolation to their personal networks in order to select appropriate businesses to target. The study's online survey results, for example, reported NCFCs conveyed sponsorship opportunities to those companies who were geographically local to the club (mean= 3.96, SD 0.849), were perceived to be professional (mean= 3.95, SD 0.781), held a positive image (mean= 3.87, SD 0.854), and held values similar to the club (mean= 3.83, SD 0.871). This study is thus consistent with the little prior research into the criteria a sponsee adopts to select a potential sponsor which argued sport entities targeted companies deemed to show a congruent-fit (Doherty and Murray 2007; Douvis et al 2015).

In stark contrast, some practitioners noted the potential for NCFCs to adopt what this study asserts to be a 'scattergun' approach wherein all businesses could be targeted without any real criteria being set; a finding not documented in past literature. This was stated to be carried out in one of two ways. First, certain practitioners noted how some NCFCs they knew used cold calling strategies to ascertain if companies would be interested to sponsor (i.e. knocking on doors). Second, and in a strategy employed by one NCFC within this study, others opted to forgo identifying specific businesses to instead publicise the opportunity for sponsorship through social media. The rationale behind such an approach was that the NCFC could reach a greater number of businesses that would consequently increase the pool of potential sponsors and thereby result in at least one company expressing an interest in sponsorship. Publicising through social media was further reckoned to alleviate the potential for the practitioner to aimlessly contact businesses' who were always going to reject the proposal regardless of the NCFCs persuasiveness, thus reducing the time needed to be afforded by practitioners to locate sponsors.

Recommendations: Practitioners of NCFCs should continue to be pragmatic and adopt a mixed approach that veers away from employing simple cold calls when coming to identify prospective sponsors. Firstly, it is preferable for the practitioner to draw upon their vast span of personal networks both inside and outside of the NCFC, consolidated by strategic thinking that use factors such as geographical locality and the potential fit between the NCFC and business (criterion SME sponsors often adopt – refer to stage five) in order to discern those organisations most appropriate to partner with. By doing this, it is anticipated that the NCFC will have an increased likelihood of securing an initial agreement as not only are relationship traits such as trust already developed as a result of

the personal connection, but the business can also recognise the strategic value of sponsorship to their organisation. Secondly, utilising the ability of social media to share sponsorship opportunities may provide the NCFC with a pool of SMEs who may have interest and thus reduce valuable time otherwise exerted by the club trying to locate companies. However, further research into this type of strategy is required to ascertain the usefulness of such an approach.

Of considerable importance when identifying potential SME sponsors is that NCFCs must be fully aware of the advertising and sponsorship regulations set by the FA. Sponsorship from companies linked to betting and alcohol industries are prohibited in children's football, while the advertising of tobacco products is banned across all age groups. Being mindful of such regulations will resultantly stop any resources being misappropriated to sponsorships with industries that will ultimately never be able to materialise. Of similarity, although not under FA legislation, practitioners should also discuss, be conscious of, and determine the suitability of other industries that may be deemed 'unethical' in relation to the identity of the NCFC (i.e. 'unhealthy food sponsors') and may consequently adversely affect the clubs' reputation.

Stage Four – Request/ Offer Sponsorship

As part of stage four, the NCFC pinpoints which individual within a given company is responsible for the decision to engage in sponsorship. The study's findings show the choice to sponsor often falls on either the owner, CEO/ director or manager of the company (94.1%) to consequently reflect the seminal literature of Slack and Bentz (1996). For those NCFCs who alternatively publicised the opportunity to sponsor through social media, this task was already complete given the person at the company interested in sponsoring made initial contact.

Once identified, the NCFC subsequently contacts the respective decision-maker. This study adds to the body of knowledge relating to sponsorship uncovering that this occurred in one of two ways and depended on whether a personal relationship between those in the NCFC and company pre-existed. For those practitioners from NCFCs who contacted individuals from personal networks, a more informal stance was adopted by broaching the subject of sponsorship during general conversation. In contrast, those individuals from NCFCs attempting to establish new relationships with individuals from a company were

seen to be more formal in their approach and centred their communication around the opportunity for sponsorship.

Yet regardless of the approach taken, a major finding across the study's interviews related to NCFCs failing to produce a sponsorship proposal that could be handed to prospective sponsors to aid inform the company's decision. Although an issue previously overlooked in this research, this finding was particularly interesting given the study also revealed SME sponsors felt the furnishing of a proposal would enhance the likelihood of them forging an agreement because it showed a more professional approach. As such, despite the request for sponsorship appearing to matter for sponsors, it is a practice which clubs turn a blind eye to. Whereas such an oversight from the NCFC thus reinforces research which notes a limited number of NCSCs designed proposals (Kelly et al 2010), it alternatively goes against literature that argues sponsees are well-versed in undertaking such practices (Zinger and O'Reilly 2010).

Recommendations: To avoid prolonged periods of wasted communication with those that hold little to no sway in the choice to sponsor, NCFCs must make every effort to quickly identify and correspond with the most appropriate individual. As such, researching the organisation the NCFC is attempting to procure sponsorship from thus acts as a good starting point to find the contact details of the person most likely responsible to make the ultimate decision.

A crucial recommendation of this study relates to the NCFC developing a sponsorship proposal. By creating a proposal, this will provide the potential sponsor with the opportunity to come to an informed decision on if sponsorship is feasible and justifiable. It further improves the chance of success given a professional and business-like approach would match the attitude most SMEs expect. Consequently, each potential sponsor should be well-researched by the NCFC so that proposals can be subsequently tailored to each specific business being targeted for sponsorship. Proposals should primarily focus on the benefits for the prospective sponsor as opposed to conveying the needs of the sponsee, and regardless of whether being presented verbally or written should include several details, those being:

- 1) The rationale behind why the company should sponsor the sports entity – linking to their corporate objectives.
- 2) A background of the sports entity.

- 3) An outline to the specific demographics of the participants and spectators reached through the sponsorship.
- 4) The characteristics of the sponsorship (i.e. types of sponsorship available, length of deal, cost of deal(s), potential for exclusivity, the opportunities the sponsor can gain access to).
- 5) The potential risks to the sponsor that could limit the benefits a sponsor could gain from the deal.
- 6) How the deal is to be evaluated.

To support NCFCs further, in conjunction with the process model devised (figure 53), the study consequently discerns that a sponsorship proposal template which NCFCs can use, adapt and tailor before handing to those company's being targeted is warranted.

Stage Five – Review Proposal/ Request and Negotiate

Stage five of the model consists of the SME reviewing all information provided by the NCFC along with assessing other key considerations used to determine whether to engage in sponsorship. As such, stages one and three of the process that related to the NCFC assessing whether sponsorship is prudent now reverses, with impetus instead placed on the SME reflecting on these core decisions and ultimately ascertaining the appropriateness of sponsoring the sports entity. In the rare instances where the SME offers the club sponsorship, certain tasks in this stage may have already be completed by the company but are still noted here.

In this stage, the SME determines their motives to sponsor and their sponsorship objectives, along with considering the risks associated with sponsoring grassroots football. Taking the latter issue first, the research uncovered SMEs were only truly concerned by the risk of their business image being damaged as a result of associating with a club that becomes embroiled in controversy – thus reinforcing studies which reported similar findings (Crompton 2014; Lough et al 2014). Although more of an obstacle to sponsorship as opposed to risk, the socio-economic and socio-political landscape was shown to further serve as elements took into rumination when determining whether sponsorship was feasible.

Considering sponsor objectives, the study reaffirms the wave of literature that proffers sponsorship can support company's in realising a broad-ranging set of objectives (e.g. Meenaghan 1983, 2005; Rines 2002; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004; Masterman 2007;

O'Reilly 2007; Irwin et al 2008; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Cornwell 2020), revealing a complex panorama into the SMEs rationales behind engaging in grassroots football sponsorship in which a myriad of varied objectives are pursued. In fact, this study revealed motivations to sponsor comprised of a combination of three overarching objectives.

First, and of similarity to the classification of objectives noted by Chadwick and Thwaites (2005), SMEs used sponsorship to achieve commercially orientated objectives that surrounded marketing communication (i.e. CSR or increased awareness) and/ or relationship marketing (i.e. hospitality). The online survey revealed objectives associated to CSR (mean= 4.60, SD 0.507), increased business awareness (mean= 3.93, SD 0.884), and enhanced business reputation (mean= 3.73, SD 0.704) were the most coveted motivations to sponsor. This thus falls in line with prior research (e.g. Seguin et al 2005; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Miragaia et al 2017) that revealed sponsors frequently invested in grassroots sport to achieve these objectives.

Second, SME sponsors were motivated by the strategic objectives (i.e. popularity of sport/ football) potentially satisfied through sponsorship. Yet of interest is the benefits to sponsorship at the grassroots level that were overlooked by the SME in this study. Not one company during interviews identified the potential tax benefits received as a reason to engage in sponsorship – this was in contrast to each NCFC which did. Indeed, less than half (47%) of SME sponsors who completed the online survey were aware that the sponsorship of community football was tax deductible. This was consequently a notable finding to the study that contributes to research given no past studies highlight this as a motive; albeit one SMEs appear to be not commonly mindful of. However, given the small sample size of SMEs in reference to the study's online survey (n=17), further research to support or refute these findings is necessary.

Finally, the objectives noted above were shown to be integrated and underpinned by non-commercial objectives centred on the principal of philanthropic giving. This was additionally evinced through the study's online survey that reported SMEs principally sponsored grassroots football more for philanthropic (mean= 3.20, SD 1.265) than commercial purposes (mean= 2.13, SD 1.060). This consequently draws further attention to this area of study by contradicting research that emphasises deals being brokered because of philanthropy had curtailed (Cornwell et al 2001; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004; Buhler 2006). By the same token, it alternatively complements literature – interestingly at the grassroots level – which cites how philanthropy plays a core role in

why a company is motivated to sponsor (Slack and Bentz 1996; Seguin et al 2005; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Smith et al 2016). Moreover, this finding bolsters the work of Plewa and Quester (2011) who assert that despite sponsorship differing to philanthropy, the boundaries and distinction between such concepts have become increasingly blurred.

Yet despite the apparent multiplicity of objectives coveted by the SME sponsor, it was clear the objectives set by SMEs in this study were either not formulated at all or were ambiguous and unsophisticated with no timeframe provided. This was found to be as a result of sponsors embracing more of an opportunistic attitude in which the objectives emerged after the deal was being executed rather than being forged before. While the study thus runs consistent with a swell of research that asserts companies rarely created specific objectives (e.g. Chadwick and Thwaites 2005; Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Papadimitriou et al 2008) or even set objectives (Rines 2002), such a finding in this research, as highlighted previously is worrying given research discerns a necessary first step in how sponsorship is to be evaluated is through the specification of clear objectives (Meenaghan 1991; O'Reilly 2007; Smith and Stewart 2015).

During this stage, the SME also assesses the suitability of the club they are to potentially partner with. Significantly, the study's findings illustrate that the criterion adopted by SME sponsors when selecting a sport entity appears to mirror that of NCFCs when identifying suitable sponsor organisations. Aligning to the work of Slack and Bentz (1996), the SMEs decision to sponsor a given NCFC largely stemmed from personal connections with individuals associated to the club; a finding supported in the study's online survey (mean= 4.25, SD 0.931). To a lesser extent but more strategically, the prospective SME sponsor used the geographical locality of the club (mean= 4.19, SD 0.544), the club perceiving to hold values like the company (mean= 3.87, SD 0.619), and the image of the club (mean= 3.75, SD 0.447) as further criterion for when selecting a sponsee. The study therefore not only conforms to research that highlights a main factor in selection relates to club locality (Chadwick 2005), but also lends support to literature in the grassroots sports setting that emphasises the role congruent-fit between the sponsor and sponsee plays in the sponsors decision-making process (i.e. Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Andreini et al 2014).

A further task in the fifth stage concerns representatives of both parties coming together to reach an ultimate decision on the potential agreement. This study revealed one of five courses of actions occurred at the grassroots level, those being: (i) agree to the proposed sponsorship; (ii) agree to the proposed sponsorship on proviso of modifications to deal; (iii) interested in sponsoring but delay until a more appropriate time; (iv) interested in sponsoring but fail to reach agreement on either current or alternative terms proposed; or (v) deal rejected regardless of potential for alternative terms.

Any negotiations required were found to surround issues relating to the proposed content of the sponsorship deal (i.e. cost and length) to reaffirm the work of Douvis et al (2015). Such a process was shown in this study to be concluded instantaneously (during a single conversation) or, less frequently, undertaken over a prolonged period (over a series of conversations). When no deal was agreed, the study revealed NCFCs either returned to step three of the process and began to identify other businesses to partner with or waited to re-open negotiations at a time more convenient to the company. In a novel finding, deals agreed across this study were found to be often confirmed by a gentleman's agreement (i.e. handshake); this was in contrast to the formulation of a contract or SLA often noted across literature (e.g. Doherty and Murray 2007; Douvis et al *ibid*). In fact, only one partnership within the interviews evidenced a more business-like approach with an SLA being written by the NCFC that detailed the nature of the deal (i.e. cost, length of deal) and contained a signatory's section.

Recommendations: Whilst assessing the potential risks associated to the sponsorship of grassroots football, the SME must also consider the fundamental reasons for potentially sponsoring the NCFC – this is instead of adopting an opportunistic attitude wherein objectives emerge later in the deal. As such, a proposal created and then circulated by the NCFC would assist in this decision-making process for the SME (as recommended in stage four).

A further key recommendation for practitioners of NCFCs resides in making the potential SME alert to the tax benefits they could receive as a result of sponsoring a grassroots sports team. Indeed, the whole purpose behind the government proposed initiative was to incentivise local businesses to invest in grassroots sport through such expenditure being deductible when calculating profits for corporation tax (up to £2,500). Not making potential sponsors aware of this would be relinquishing a vital selling feature for the NCFC that could ultimately sway a SME decision to engage with sponsorship.

Despite objectives set by the SME sponsor shifting over time, the creation of clear and SMART objectives that are then communicated to the NCFC is still necessary given this will influence how the agreement is to be managed and measured from its outset. For example, if the SME implied sponsorship was little more than philanthropy, the NCFC may be forgiven in thinking the sponsor did not wish for something greater in return and thus act accordingly by shirking certain responsibilities that would otherwise be carried out in conventional agreements (i.e. leveraging the relationship). This could ultimately cause dissatisfaction if the company actually did wish for some form of commercial gain and thus emphasises the care needed when setting and communicating objectives.

Once both parties are satisfied in proceeding with the deal, an SLA (i.e. contract) should be drawn up and refined if necessary. This task should ultimately fall on the sports entity given they are the rights owners who are selling. By drawing up an SLA, this ensures that both parties within the deal are in full understanding and agree to the sponsorship presented, thus mitigating the potential for individuals shirking responsibilities alongside acting as a safety net for if either party begins to exert greater control than agreed on. Such a document should thus comprise of the following elements:

- 1) The parties involved in the agreement (i.e. sponsor and sponsee).
- 2) The terms of the agreement (i.e. length, type of sponsorship, the sponsorship fee, terms for renewal).
- 3) The sponsors rights and obligations.
- 4) The sponsees rights and obligations.
- 5) Breach in obligations.
- 6) A signatory section.

The study therefore suggests the creation of an SLA which NCFCs can adapt may act as supporting material to the process model (figure 53) that ultimately contributes to the delivery of a more effective sponsorship.

8.3.4: Phase Three – Planning

The third phase of the model concerns a single activity and refers to the planning of the association which the study showed was carried out by both parties involved in the partnership.

Stage Six – Planning of Sponsorship

In stage six, both the club and SME sponsor work collectively to devise a plan that will enable each party to fulfil their objectives. The research disclosed that the planning of grassroots football sponsorship was rudimentary in nature, with plans namely addressing the logistics of the deal transaction (i.e. resources needed to be provided, by who, and by when). However, any actions past the point of exchanging resources – including the leveraging of the deal alongside how the agreement is to be evaluated – were commonly not sketched out. Instead, such actions were undertaken during the implementation of the deal in more of an impromptu and offhand manner (refer to stage seven and eight). This study thus contradicts the only work to report on the planning of sponsorship at the grassroots level (Doherty and Murray 2007) which outlined that Synchro Canada developed strategies prior to undertaking these plans with their sponsors. Although, it is important to note that Synchro Canada is an NGB with greater resources, time and expertise compared to those which can be found within a voluntary NCFC; some factors Frisby et al (2004) argued led to the under-management of relationships. Nevertheless, given the limited amount of study surrounding this stage of the model, future research exploring how sponsorship agreements are planned is consequently warranted.

Recommendations: While plans will invariably change in response to the internal and external environment that the sponsorship is managed in, only as a result of careful designing of actions can there then be a clear direction and blueprint as to how the relationship will reach each parties' respective goals. Although an important element to this stage, the organising of the logistics in relation to the initial transaction between sponsee and sponsor (i.e. resources needed to be provided – kit or finance, by who – sponsee or sponsor, and by when) is just one aspect towards the effective planning of sponsorship deals. In conjunction with this, the NCFC and SME sponsor are well-advised to collectively plan and agree to the additional tasks that will be undertaken during the deal, those being: (a) the leveraging activities employed to strengthen the partnership, and (b) the measurement practices adopted to evaluate the success of the agreement based on objectives communicated. As part of this planning process, the timeline and person responsible for completing each action should also be detailed. Accordingly, alongside the model itself (figure 53), this study suggests an associated template which practitioners can implement to facilitate the effective planning of sponsorship deals at the grassroots level is required.

8.3.5: Phase Four – Implementation of Sponsorship

Phase four of the model involves both the NCFC and SME sponsor executing the agreement. Overall, this study contradicted other research (Doherty and Murray 2007) by finding each organisation carried out sponsorship mostly in a spontaneous, relaxed, sporadic and ad-hoc manner, with no prior thought to its enactment (bar exchanges of resources). In the same breath, however, the results corroborate literature that stresses the marketing practices implemented by both NCSCs (Gallagher et al 2012) and small businesses (Gilmore et al 2001) tended to be haphazard, informal, loose, unstructured, and reactive. This may be an output of sponsorship, amongst other factors, typically being undertaken by practitioners who were volunteers and/ or were not experts; a factor this study found to impact on how sponsorship was enacted which has not been previously documented in literature. As such, the model (figure 53) and associated suggested resources may be one way to support the skills of those practitioners working in this field.

In keeping with the research from Lamont and Dowell (2008), this study further found that the actual exchange of resources which ultimately intend to support both the NCFC and SME sponsor achieve a mutually beneficial agreement occurs within this stage (may also arise in stage nine). To provide an example, the NCFC receives at least some, if not all the resources and/ or provisions agreed upon from the sponsor (i.e. finance) in return for the asset settled on during the negotiation stage (i.e. company logo brandished on shirt).

Stage Seven – Leveraging of Agreement

The SLR highlighted that the issue of leveraging attracted the largest amount of attention across research affiliated to how sponsorship was enacted at the grassroots level (table 7). In order to add value to the partnership, this study showed that both parties engaged in a variety of leveraging activities directed towards achieving the objectives of each respective organisation. Whilst this research subsequently disputes that sponsors and sponsees lack awareness into how to effectively leverage deals to facilitate an agreement of mutual benefit at the grassroots level (Lamont and Dowell 2008), it also importantly illustrates that practitioners overlooked the significance of activation; a spin-off to the concept of leveraging which employs activities that can allow for the audience to interact or in some way become more involved with the partners (Weeks et al 2008).

Further, despite findings that sponsors invest the same (1:1) or as high as eight times the level of spend into their leveraging practices as their sponsorship fee (8:1) (most often 2:1) (O'Reilly and Horning 2013), this does not appear to be experienced in this study. Instead, the research findings alternatively support the work of Lamont and Dowell (2008) in highlighting most leveraging strategies adopted by both the NCFC and SME sponsor were unsophisticated and incurred minimal to no financial costs for the organisation concerned. The fact that this research further found that the NCFC made a sizeable if not substantial effort into trying to add extra value to the agreement is noteworthy given past research calls for sponsees to support their sponsors more when coming to leverage agreements (Chadwick 2005; Doherty and Murray 2007; Choi et al 2011; Andreini et al 2014; Eddy and Cork 2019). Indeed, the SME sponsors in this study were revealed to be lax when coming to leveraging compared to NCFCs despite practitioners in this study discerning leveraging is and should be a collaborative process. This finding is thus in accord with Zinger and O'Reilly (2010) who underlines small businesses have difficulty in incorporating their sponsorship(s) into their integrated strategy.

Nevertheless, drawn out from the study's interviews, specific leveraging practices frequently ran consistent with those unveiled across literature relating to grassroots sport sponsorship. Techniques relating to on-site activation (i.e. perimeter advertising; tannoy announcements) (Pegoraro et al 2009; Zinger and O'Reilly 2010; Eagleman and Krohn 2012), web/ online presence (i.e. social media) (Andreini et al 2014; Kim et al 2018), organisational events (i.e. end-of-season awards), and promotional offerings (Lamont and Dowell 2008) were all illustrated in this research and reinforced previous studies into this area. Alternatively, a strategy not previously commented on in grassroots sport sponsorship literature, but one found in this study pertained to the NCFC presenting the sponsor with the clubs' naming rights. Of further interest was that this research illustrated leveraging practices were not only identified to be executed for extrinsic purposes in the form of financial gains to fulfil commercial objectives, but also for intrinsic reasons wherein positive feelings such as joy and happiness, and more cynically, egotism, were enhanced through promoting the association. This only goes to highlight how sponsorship was leveraged often depended on and was symptomatic of the rationale behind engaging in sponsorship.

Recommendations: Each organisation involved in the sponsorship relationship should come together and execute their deal based on a combination of actions that react to the

current environment as well as the pre-planned tasks to manage the sponsorship (as recommended in stage six). During the execution of sponsorship, any exchange in resource(s) between the NCFC and SME sponsor should be directed at allowing for a deal that is mutually beneficial to both parties which reflects the objectives set. Once the club has started to acquire or acquired the finance, provision and/ or service from the sponsor, it is vital they avoid shirking responsibility or becoming complacent. In the same breath, the SME sponsor should likewise ensure they satisfy and fulfil the deal agreed upon. Where possible, at this stage, each party also ought to ascertain both invoices and receipts. This will not only allow for the validation of the pricing of goods and evidence their purchase, but also, and with the SME specifically in mind, be used as evidence to offset future tax liability.

In order to capitalise on and maximise the effectiveness of the sponsorship relationship, instead of leaving such tasks to the NCFCs discretion, SME sponsors are well-advised to do more and be proactive, employing a range of techniques. Here, the exercises to add value to the deal at the grassroots level do not necessarily have to be cost extensive as often suggested in literature. Companies using their social media accounts is one such example of how SME sponsors can target consumers and show their company in a positive light without incurring any financial cost.

As well as leveraging, activating the agreement is also recommended. By attempting to directly involve the consumer in the sponsorship, the organisation becomes more engrained into the individual's memory and can thus further allow each party, particularly the sponsor, achieve their purposes for becoming involved in sponsorship. Providing a targeted message and being innovative in how to leverage and activate is subsequently key as the partnership will have to fight through a crowd of other deals often looking for the same outcomes. As such, along with the process model (figure 53), supplying cases of good practice identified in grassroots football associated to the leveraging and activation of sponsorship, would be a worthwhile pursuit to further support practitioners in executing a successful relationship.

8.3.6: Phase Five – Measurement

Although the exchange of resources is the aim to achieve a mutually beneficial agreement may still occur at this phase, the penultimate phase of the model chiefly surrounds measuring the success of the partnership forged. Overall, the research showed evaluation

was ostensibly the biggest weakness within the entire sponsorship process at the grassroots level, to thus illustrate similarities to the argument presented over two decades ago by Copeland et al (1996).

Stage Eight – Evaluation

Research in relation to sponsorship evaluation either stresses how measuring the success of an agreement is rare (Stotlar 2004; Chadwick and Thwaites 2005; Pegoraro et al 2009; O’Reilly and Madill 2012), or when undertaken is rudimentary and under-resourced (Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008). This study revealed little disparity to the research noted above finding the evaluative practices employed by NCFCs and SME sponsors were commonly not well-executed or, in some instances, not even executed at all. Such a finding may be explained by the fact that the research highlighted few organisations possessed clear, if any, objectives when it came to their deals (detailed in stages one and five). This resultantly appeared to hinder the evaluation of sponsorship at the grassroots level and subsequently corroborated the research of O’Reilly and Madill (2012) who opined entering an agreement without clearly defined objectives limited any sponsorship evaluation process. After all, as emphasised by Chadwick and Thwaites (2004:48), “if there is nothing to measure, how can/do you measure it?”

When evaluation did indeed occur, the study illustrated that measuring the success of the deal was inexpensive and conducted in a formal and/ or informal manner, with the latter more commonly being undertaken to draw similarities to previous research at the grassroots level (i.e. Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008; Zinger and O’Reilly 2010). For informal practices, the study unveiled practitioners relied on qualitative information that used a mixture of observations, general conversations and gut-feeling to gain an understanding on the overall success of the deal. On the other hand, the research showed formal methods of evaluation referred to quantitative forms of measurement, namely web analytics (i.e. traffic analysis) and promotional code offerings that allowed for the tracking of consumers directed to their organisation as a result of the sponsorship. One NCFC further used the number of sponsor renewals at the end of a term agreement to ascertain whether the deal had been successful.

Of considerable note to this research was that although practitioners discerned the measurement of the sponsorships success to be a collaborative task, the feedback from an organisations’ evaluation when undertaken was rarely, if at all communicated back to the other party. This contradictory finding consequently affirms the literature of O’Reilly and

Madill (2012) which argued the communication between the sponsor and sponsee was a principal issue during the evaluative process. Yet communication is crucial not least in that an evaluative strategy is contended to only be productive when there is consistent feedback between the sports entity and sponsor (Doherty and Murrary 2007). Further, and as highlighted by Lamont and Dowell (2008), evaluation serves as the cornerstone to facilitate the renewal process of future sponsorships. However, this research has shown that evaluation and its communication is not undertaken with any regularity and therefore cannot be seen as the nucleus to the renewal process in practice.

Recommendations: Establishing SMART objectives is a recommendation that although does not directly occur at this stage (stages one and five) is still key to the evaluative process as it provides the foundations to assess whether the purposes of engaging in sponsorship have been met. Further, and as previously recommended, how the agreement is to be evaluated and the metrics to be used, if any, should be planned prior to the implementation of the deal (stage six). If evaluation merely becomes an afterthought and is thus not properly planned, any evaluative technique employed could be inadequate when implemented and ultimately lead to untrustworthy results.

Ideally, measuring the agreements success ought to be completed several times over the course of the sponsorship. As well as the continued monitoring of the relationship, a final evaluation of the agreement should be undertaken collaboratively prior to the cessation of the current contract. Both parties, especially the SME sponsor, should execute pre and post-programme evaluation to ascertain the overall costs and/ or benefits from the agreement. To ultimately undertake these tasks, both the NCFC and SME sponsor should employ a mixture of quantitative (i.e. assessment of impact on sales/ traffic analysis) and/ or qualitative measures (i.e. observation and discussions) in a formal and systematic fashion, in which the data generated is communicated to the other party. Therefore, key here is how the communication of any findings, results and thoughts is of equal importance to the actual undertaking of evaluation. A (series) of simple meeting(s) is thus just one method that could be adopted to remedy the lack of communication this study found to be experienced when coming to evaluate the success of sponsorship within the grassroots locale.

The carrying out of monitoring and evaluation presents several advantages which consequently makes it a crucial part of the overall sponsorship process. By continually monitoring the sponsorship, decisions on whether to either alter or continue the way in

which the current sponsorship is being managed can be agreed on. Alternatively, evaluation principally serves as a tool to decide on whether to continue the relationship. It can further, and with the NCFC in mind, any data gathered can subsequently be used to procure additional agreements through evidencing the outcomes previous sponsors had achieved as a direct result of associating with the club.

8.3.7: Phase Six – (Dis)Continuation/ Termination

Despite not being previously paid attention to within this research, the last phase of the model closes the sponsorship process and focuses on the elements of renewal, discontinuation, or termination of the agreement. This phase ultimately adds a notable contribution to the body of knowledge pertaining to sponsorship in that, according to the SLR of Cornwell and Kwon (2019), a dearth of academic work which addresses the issues noted above – in what they label as ‘subsequent decisions’ – exists.

Stage Nine – Sponsorship Renewal, Termination or Discontinuation

A potential decision made within stage nine resides around the NCFC and SME sponsor renewing the sponsorship. Given that NCFCs typically instigated the initial agreement (stage four), unsurprisingly, this study found that the renewal process was heavily pushed by the sports entity as opposed to sponsor. Negotiations pertaining to renewal of an agreement were shown to be spurred as a result of either the agreed term deal reaching its end (i.e. perimeter advertising or ground/ stadia) or, more commonly, the sponsored provision (i.e. kit, training kit or equipment) being, or on its way to becoming no longer fit for use and thus needing replacement. The research uncovered the renewal process consisted of all stages up to and including the planning of sponsorship – bar stage three (identifying suitable sponsors) – being revisited. Importantly, however, the actions taken when coming to renew were stressed by practitioners to not need to be as rigorous as with the initial agreement so long as there were no significant shifts which would affect how the management of sponsorship existed.

In contrast to the renewal of sponsorship, an alternative decision associated to this stage was found to relate to the discontinuation and/ or termination of the relationship. This study highlighted organisations, particularly SME sponsors, may not renew or may pull the plug at any time for many reasons. Such rationales were subsequently found to draw similarities to research that highlighted the break-down of relationships were classified into sponsor-related, sponsee-related, inter-relational, and external factors (van Rijn et al

2019) – although no factor had been experienced to lead to the ending of an agreement by any organisation in this study.

Considering the sponsor-related factors, the study revealed that the opportunity for the SME to engage with other marketing ventures was one reason for why a sponsor would break ties with a NCFC; a finding which supported previous research (Farrelly 2010; Dick and Uhrich 2017; van Rijn et al 2019). In another rationale cited in literature (i.e. Reed et al 2010; van Rijn et al *ibid*) that resonates with both the sponsor and sponsee, the study revealed that any scandal or controversy surrounding an organisation which could resultantly affect the other party through negative association could potentially cause the relationship to be terminated. Inter-relational factors refer to those determinants in which ending the agreement can be attributed to neither the sponsee or sponsor alone (van Rijn et al *ibid*) and in this study were found to concern sponsor-sponsee conflict that, in turn, created relationship dissatisfaction. Moreover, this research additionally highlighted external factors relating to socio-economic and socio-political issues (i.e. government-enforced austerity) impacted on a company's decision to sponsor to thus fall in line with similar findings that explored this area (Farrelly 2010; van Rijn et al *ibid*). Finally, and away from the classifications noted by van Rijn et al (*ibid*), the study showed sponsorship relationships had the propensity to naturally fade away over the course of an agreement to mirror past research from Olkkonen and Tuominen (2008). This is an important finding given practitioners in this study, alongside other academics (i.e. Lagae 2005), emphasise how it is more difficult to procure new sponsorship relationships than it is to maintain.

Yet regardless of the rationale provided for when a relationship breaks-off, the NCFC is subsequently seen to return to the start of the process outlined in figure 53 (preparation phase). In this eventuality, the process was shown to be completed in a more vigorous fashion compared to if a company was interested in renewing.

Recommendations: Within this stage, any information drawn out as a result from monitoring and evaluation should be used to facilitate the sponsorship renewal decision. Further, when discussing the potential for renewal, the NCFC should attempt to cross-sell or up-sell on the previous deal by providing greater offerings in return for higher financial investment from the SME sponsor. By doing so, if the SME sponsor has been satisfied with the previous deal, not only will they once again invest, but, more importantly, be likely to also invest more. Alternatively, the SME sponsor should attempt to get more for their deal, using their continued commitment as a bargaining chip to execute this. Such

recommendations thus highlight the complex juxtaposition which can be found in sponsorship whereby each party is seeking to maximise their investment and reward, whilst maintain a good working relationship.

If an organisation is alternatively veering towards discontinuing or terminating the agreement (most likely the SME sponsor), the other party must take a proactive approach and investigate the circumstances surrounding why they intend to not renew or end the partnership. This is important given, as highlighted previously, it is easier to build on an existing relationship rather than forge an entirely new one. By understanding the factors that have contributed to such a decision, an organisation may be able to either reassure the other party of their concerns or alternatively become flexible, modify the agreement, and change how sponsorship is being managed. With this in mind, it is important that both parties, particularly the NCFC, keep in constant communication so as to negate any potential difficulties. This would also thwart the likelihood of the relationship naturally fading due to the infrequent interactions.

8.3.8: Factors Critical to the Success of the Sponsorship Agreement

A final element not part of the specific sponsorship practices undertaken but still found to make vital contribution into how sponsorship is enacted at the grassroots level– and thus incorporated in the process model (figure 53) – relates to the factors crucial to ensure the sponsorships success. The study’s interviews revealed a total of 19 CSFs which broke down into two principal determinants, those being; (i) behavioural traits and characteristics, and (ii) sponsorship-related attributes.

Concerning the former determinants, the CSFs of communication (i.e. Farrelly and Quester 2003; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004, 2005; Nufer and Buhler 2011), trust (i.e. Farrelly and Quester 2005a, 2005b; Nufer and Buhler *ibid*; Misener and Doherty 2013, 2014; Morgan et al 2014) and commitment (i.e. Chadwick 2002; Farelly and Quester *ibid*, *ibid*; Buhler et al 2007; Morgan et al *ibid*) each well-documented across literature were all shown in this study to apply to sponsorship within the grassroots setting. Alternatively, and turning to sponsorship-related attributes, the research indicated mutual satisfaction as a key factor in generating a fruitful sponsorship relationship to draw similarities to previous studies (Farrelly and Quester 2005a, 2005b; Buhler et al *ibid*). Presenting a sponsor-sponsee congruent-fit and/ or possessing a long-term attitude to the deal were further cited as sponsorship-related factors pivotal to the forging of an effective deal. Such

findings thus support research discerning strategic compatibility (i.e. congruent fit between sponsor and sponsee) (Farrelly and Quester 2005b) and sponsorship being viewed as a long-term partnership (Buhler et al 2007; Nufer and Buhler 2010, 2011) as core factors affecting the quality of sponsorships.

To further examine the CSFs revealed from the interviews, the online survey asked participants to indicate their level of importance and satisfaction. The results were analysed through an IPA and the remainder of this section critiques those factors that were considered by practitioners to require further work or be maintained (figure 53). Originality to this study consequently comes from the fact that the sponsorship process model incorporates the factors crucial to sponsorship success; an issue that is overlooked in other models, bar Chadwick and Thwaites (2004, 2005) who identified the principles which make a successful partnership. Further, no research to date has investigated the organisations level of satisfaction towards CSFs, thus contributing to knowledge relating to this area.

Overall, a total of nine factors were highlighted as important to developing effective partnerships. Broken down, while five were considered crucial to both parties (commitment; trust; club satisfaction; respect; and honesty), two were deemed important from just the NCFC outlook (communication and realistic expectations of sponsorship) and two more solely from the SME sponsor perspective (transparency and reciprocity). Out of this analysis communication was deemed important but offered issues relating to satisfaction for the NCFC, and the CSFs of commitment, transparency, and reciprocity reflected this from a SME sponsor viewpoint.

Considering the CSFs vital to both parties, the study found two determinants previously documented in research. Both trust (sponsor mean= 3.10, SD 0.994; sponsee mean= 3.15, SD 0.949) (i.e. Farrelly and Quester 2005a, 2005b; Nufer and Buhler 2010, 2011; Misener and Doherty 2013, 2014; Morgan et al 2014) and commitment (sponsor mean= 2.90, SD 0.994; sponsee mean= 3.23, SD 1.037) (i.e. Chadwick 2002; Farelly and Quester *ibid*, *ibid*; Buhler et al 2007; Morgan et al *ibid*) were vital CSFs in establishing a successful relationship. In comparing levels of satisfaction to the importance of such CSFs, trust was illustrated as a determinant both sponsors and sponsees were satisfied with (sponsor mean= 3.40, SD 0.516; sponsee mean= 3.40, SD 0.591). The CSF of commitment, however, provided differences in attitudes, with the NCFC content by the level of

commitment shown (mean= 3.50, SD 0.694) while the SME sponsor was not as satisfied (mean= 3.20, SD 0.422).

Providing original contribution to the limited research, two new determinants that both parties illustrated to be a factor of importance to a successful sponsorship emerged. The first relates to respect (mean= 3.28, SD 0.847) were each individual responsible for the deal treats the other well, even if there are differences in opinion. The second concerns honesty (mean= 3.38, SD 0.774) and refers to the idea of speaking the truth regardless of the implications it may furnish. Each factor was found to show a high degree of satisfaction by both parties in comparison with the determinants level of importance – respect (sponsor mean= 3.30, SD 0.483; sponsee mean= 3.60, SD 0.545); honesty (sponsor mean= 3.40, SD 0.516; sponsee mean= 3.53, SD 0.554).

In a further interesting result, while mutual satisfaction is not only commented on in literature (Farrelly and Quester 2005a, 2005b; Buhler et al 2007) but also noted within the study's interviews as crucial, only club satisfaction (sponsor mean= 3.00, SD 0.816; sponsee mean= 3.30, SD 0.853) was considered a CSF to sponsorship by both parties. The study further showed that next to the importance of club satisfaction, both the SME sponsor and NCFC were satisfied with this CSF (sponsor mean= 3.40, SD 0.516; sponsee mean= 3.38, SD 0.628). Future work into the CSFs of sponsorship must consequently investigate and distinguish between sponsor and sponsee satisfaction as this research finds differences in the perceived importance of such factors. Indeed, given the sponsor is the party who provides finance and/ or in-kind, it would thus be logical to argue their satisfaction as opposed to the sponsee is of greater importance if the relationship is to be long-term and successful.

Moving on to contemplate the factors one side of the agreement viewed as pivotal to ensure a strong partnership, NCFCs identified communication (mean= 3.05, SD 0.920) to be a key dimension that consolidates past literature (i.e. Farrelly and Quester 2003; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004, 2005; Nufer and Buhler 2011) as well as the findings from phase one of this study. Yet when comparing satisfaction against importance, communication was shown to be more problematic than other factors (mean= 3.33, SD 0.555). Nevertheless, and with the SME in mind, even though satisfied, the fact communication (mean= 2.70, SD 0.823) was regarded to not be as crucial to the quality of a partnership compared to other determinants was an interesting finding given Chadwick and Thwaites (2005) highlighted such a factor to be essential to the sponsor.

This research sheds new light onto the CSFs to sport sponsorship in providing a further determinant not familiar in previous work but noted as crucial by NCFCs – realistic expectations (mean= 3.05, SD 0.783). This consequently linked to the study’s phase one findings whereby one NCFC practitioner voiced their concerns in balancing the sometimes-unattainable hopes of the company – largely due to pre-conceived ideas based on sponsorships that can be seen within professional football – with what is reasonable to their level. The factor revealed a high degree of satisfaction (mean= 3.38, SD 0.586) by the NCFC in comparison to the determinants level of importance.

Considering the sponsor, the online survey revealed two CSFs which SMEs identified as being of greater importance to the sponsorships success that were found to not be shared by the NCFC, or, in the literature; thereby advancing knowledge. The first was the level of transparency experienced (mean= 2.80, SD 0.919). This factor was an area some SME sponsors cited concerns with during interviews and referred to all actions encountered throughout the entire sponsorship process being carried out in an open and clear fashion. In a second CSF, reciprocity (mean= 2.80, SD 0.919) was found to be a key dimension – a practice wherein any gestures are returned. This result is unsurprising considering research shows that the very nature of sponsorship is founded upon this principal (i.e. Masterman 2007; Buhler and Nufer 2010) and is what makes sponsorship distinguishable to philanthropic giving (McCarville and Copeland 1994). Here, the SME sponsors illustrated low satisfaction levels (transparency mean= 3.20, SD 0.422; reciprocity mean= 3.20, SD 0.632) compared to their significance in forging a successful sponsorship.

Recommendations: When comparing the nine CSFs discerned by either one or both organisations involved in sponsorship to be most crucial to a partnership against the respective level of satisfaction to each factor, four determinants were viewed by the sponsor and sponsee as dimensions to be maintained (trust; club satisfaction; respect; and honesty) with a further two more relating solely to the NCFC outlook (realistic expectations; and commitment). In contrast, whereas the SME sponsor felt more could be done in relation to three CSFs (commitment; transparency; reciprocity), a single determinant was revealed as requiring concentration in respect to NCFCs (communication).

Considering those CSFs both parties illustrated a high regard for as well as being satisfied with, such factors should be subsequently maintained. For determinants relating to trust,

honesty, and respect, this research has shown that as grassroots football sponsorship is often established as a result of personal connections, such CSFs should be engrained within most sponsorships before an agreement is even reached. However, a raised awareness of the importance of these factors could help both parties manage the deal. Regarding club satisfaction, both parties should continue to endeavour to meet or even exceed the NCFCs expectations as well as carry on striving to achieve their objectives together. Further, given satisfaction is ultimately driven by the quality of experience in relation to the factors deemed important, each party should persist in trying to ensure they meet and show those determinants crucial to the NCFC. What is consequently key is that both parties, particularly NCFCs, communicate the CSFs of most importance throughout the sponsorship process. After all, how can one partner attempt to satisfy the other without knowing what factors impact on their level of content? – a question this research has explored.

Although commitment was deemed of importance by both parties, the level of satisfaction towards this CSF differed – a determinant of concern that required increased focus for the SME sponsor as opposed to one which should be maintained for the NCFC. To develop commitment, before an agreement has even been reached, organisations, particularly NCFCs, should ensure some form of shared values or shared objectives between each party exists. This would increase the likelihood of each side of the sponsorship following through with and fulfilling on their promises. Commitment may also be engendered from personal relationships outside of sponsorship and thus should not be overlooked at this stage. During the deal, undertaking leveraging and activation – whereby the NCFC engages in activities to add value to the sponsorship – is vital to displaying commitment as it shows a preparedness to go above and beyond the deal agreed. Such a recommendation (i.e. leveraging and activation) is further advised when coming to consider reciprocity; a CSF uncovered to be of concern for the SME sponsor, and one that resultantly requires focused management from each organisation.

Alongside commitment and reciprocity, SME sponsors felt transparency was another CSF needing increased attention. Recommendations surrounding how to improve transparency ultimately boil down to communication between the sponsor and sponsee. At the start of an arrangement, both organisations should be clear as to the reasons for engaging in sponsorship, and as the deal progresses state any changes to their rationale if presented. Each party during sponsorship, particularly NCFCs, would also be well-advised to provide regular updates on the deal, while informing the other party of any issues that

surface which may affect the management of the deal agreed. Providing the SME sponsor with both invoices and receipts is another prudent task which would only further bring an element of openness that then strengthens the transparency in the sponsorship.

In respect of the NCFC view, the CSF of realistic expectations was one that was illustrated to be maintained. To do this, the NCFC ought to continue to communicate the constraints that are inherently connected to this level of football sponsorship throughout the partnership, especially at the proposal stage. This would ensure each SME sponsor is not misinformed and goes into the agreement clear on issues which may impede sponsorship meeting their expectations. In this regard and with the sponsor in mind, SMEs should also remain understanding and be awake to the environment such an agreement is occurring in (i.e. not sponsorship within professional football), potentially even providing additional support to the NCFC that would enable them to achieve their own expectations.

Alternatively, and still considering the NCFC outlook, communication is the only CSF requiring further attention. Importantly, this is not a factor that can be addressed by one party alone, however, and thus needs to see engagement from both sides of the partnership. As a result, communication between parties should be a regular practice undertaken before, during, and after the agreement and occur in a manner that is open, and suits all concerned. Further, any issues that surface throughout the agreement ought to also be disclosed so that discussion can surround how to best proceed on the sponsorship. Overall, communication should be achieved through either verbal and/ or written formats and in a way that is clear, concise, informative and progressive but non-confrontational. This should subsequently support build a strong inter-organisational commitment between both parties that culminates in a 'win-win' situation materialising.

8.4: Summary of Triangulation

Considering the findings in relation to the sponsorship process model, the research concluded a total of nine steps existed that were shown to be able to be pigeonholed into six cores phases. Although tasks were found to be executed in a sequential process, the research highlighted practitioners oscillated between phases as the deal progressed, echoing past study (Cousens et al 2006). Drawing similarities to previous research (Doherty and Murray 2007; Athanasopoulou and Sarli 2013), the study further illustrated tasks throughout the model were carried out by practitioners with celerity and in a manner that was casual, ad-hoc, relaxed and informal. Further, the research unveiled that all

decisions throughout the sponsorship process ultimately resided within the wider local to international ecosystem – characterised by a broken rectangle which encased the nine stages and nine CSFs in this model (figure 53) – to draw similarities to the contentions of Cornwell and Kwon (2019).

Augmenting previous sponsorship research (i.e. Lamont and Dowell 2008; Papadimitriou et al 2008), objectives were found to be either ambiguous and vague or, in some cases, not even formulated. The findings further concluded that the rationales towards sponsorship differed from sponsee to sponsee, and particularly, sponsor to sponsor. NCFCs became involved in sponsorship chiefly for financial and operational objectives that consequently drew similarities to the nominal amount of study that discussed this issue (e.g. Misener and Doherty 2014; Batty and Gee 2019). For SME sponsors, the purposes for engaging in sponsorship were more complex, involving a multiplicity of objectives that typically converged with one another and related to non-commercial (i.e. philanthropy), commercial (i.e. marketing communication and relationship marketing), and strategic objectives (i.e. popularity of football). A further key finding here not presented in other related-studies was how such sponsor objectives developed as the sponsorship agreement progressed. The points at which objectives shift is thus an area requiring further research as a result of the findings from this study.

To ensure a strong sponsorship partnership during the practices within the process, practitioners from both NCFCs and SMEs revealed a total of nine CSFs. Whereas well-documented CSFs across literature were found to apply to this research (commitment; trust; communication; and satisfaction), the study further uncovered five new dimensions (respect; honesty; reciprocity; realistic expectations; and transparency) not previously acknowledged in work. In comparison to their level of importance, such CSFs showed variances in how satisfied organisations were. Both parties were content with four determinants (trust; club satisfaction; respect; and honesty), while the NCFC was additionally pleased with two factors (commitment; and realistic expectations). NCFC were alternatively not as satisfied with communication, with the SME sponsor also not content with three CSFs (commitment; transparency; and reciprocity).

The next – and final – chapter subsequently pulls all the study’s preceding chapters together by highlighting how the study has addressed its three ROs.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.1: Overview of Chapter

Pulling this together, the saliency of grassroots football and its sponsorship should not be underestimated or misjudged both in contextual or academic significance. Yet although football at this level is the ‘lifeblood of the game’ and brings forth social and economic value to England, a dearth of scholarly coverage is drawn to this area which has ultimately created a chasm between the amount of attention into the elite compared to community setting. This thesis argues that this is no truer than in the context of sponsorship where in spite of the grassroots milieu becoming growingly concerned with gaining commercial investment due to socio- and political-economic factors, a lacuna of study that explores this phenomenon exists. Indeed, in the only SLR exploring the state of literature associated to grassroots sport sponsorship (chapter two), no research focused on the UK nor association football. Further, while works that investigated grassroots sponsorship through the NCSC setting were scant, only two studies considered how sponsorship is managed from beginning to end, with another two articles examining sponsorship from both a sponsor and sponsee stance. Hearing the voices of practitioners from organisations typically involved in the sponsorship of grassroots football (i.e. NPFC, SME) as well as from those who govern and regulate grassroots football (i.e. CFA staff) was therefore key to inform these gaps.

The research consequently used qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a depth and breadth of opinions and experiences that ensured an understanding of the objectives, critical success factors and management practices behind sponsorship. This, in turn, culminated in the development of a nine-step sponsorship process model (figure 53) which was informed through the thesis’ findings and results to ensure it was fit for purpose; addressing the study’s aim. Of particular significance was to professionalise or make more business-like the way that sponsorship agreements and arrangements were carried out to veer away from the ad-hoc managerial approach.

This chapter provides an evaluation of the three ROs before discussing the study’s implications to research. It then subsequently highlights the areas needed for further investigation into the field of grassroots sport, and football sponsorship set against the limitations to this thesis as well as the study’s findings. The chapter – and thesis –

ultimately concludes with a ‘final word’ that summarises the contribution the process model makes to real-world practice in the grassroots football sponsorship panoramic.

9.2: Evaluation of Research Objectives

This study set out to gain a broad understanding of the landscape associated with grassroots football sponsorship, with the aim of designing a sponsorship process model that could facilitate in the forging and development of effective NCFC-SME sponsor partnerships. Table 32 to 34 consequently presents an overview of how this study dealt with the ROs that allowed this thesis to reach this aim. The three tables further provide a summary of the findings associated to each RO.

Table 32: Summary of research objective one

<p>Research Objective One: To explore the state and focus of scholarly activity in grassroots sport sponsorship research.</p>
<p>How this was Addressed: Chapter two conducted a SLR that both descriptively and thematically analysed articles which pertained to the sponsorship of grassroots sport, retrieved through following the protocol of Tranfield et al (2003).</p>
<p>Summary of Findings: The SLR offered an original contribution to research through being the first – and only – study to systematically synthesise literature associated to grassroots sport sponsorship. The review showed a paucity of coverage connected to the setting with 33 articles being recovered which revealed clear surpluses and shortages. While the number of publications had continued to increase, no work drew attention towards the UK confines with little examination affixed to team-specific sponsorship; both sponsor and sponsee perspectives; and an MMR design. Each of these gaps resultantly became areas this research intended to fill (refer to table 33). The SLR further identified the largest body of research connected to strategic management (n=28). Yet rather than focusing on the process in its entirety, most studies instead orientated exploration to specific actions taken throughout sponsorship in conjunction with other issues pertaining to its practice. Only two studies detailed how sponsorship of grassroots sport was approached and enacted from inception to deal end (Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008), with these set away from the confines this research pinned itself to. In response, the shortfall of study into the entire sponsorship process meant examination into the management of grassroots football sponsorship (i.e. pre- and during sponsorship practices, CSFs, and barriers and risks) was necessary for this research as it could add valuable contribution to this under-researched body of knowledge.</p>

Table 33: Summary of research objective two

<p>Research Objective Two: To examine sponsorship within grassroots football.</p>
<p>How this was Addressed: Overall, this pertained to the study’s three primary data collection phases (method and data collection techniques detailed in chapter four). Chapter five highlighted the findings from the qualitative interviews with practitioners after conducting a thematic analysis guided by the principles set out by Braun and Clarke (2006) (1). From this, the study subsequently carried out an online survey which results are presented within chapter six (phase 2). In a final data collection phase, chapter seven described the findings from repeat interviews with those practitioners from the first stage of data gathering (phase 3a) as well as those from the single focus group with three CFA football officers (phase 3b). Through data and methodological triangulation, chapter eight subsequently pulled together the study’s findings and results from each phase with literature associated to the issues presented.</p>

Summary of Findings: From the analysis of data, four key themes were constructed that underpinned this research: (i) perceptions of sponsorship, (ii) organisational motives, (iii) managing sponsorship, and (iv) CSFs to sponsorship. In reference to theme one, although practitioners provided varied outlooks into how they understood sponsorship, overall, it was viewed as a mutually beneficial activity whereby the sponsor granted financial or in-kind investment to a NCFC in return for rights to a particular asset (box 5).

Regarding theme two, motives differed for each organisation – particularly that of SME sponsors. Whereas for NCFCs financial and operational objectives were the chief purpose for sponsorship, SME sponsors coveted a multiplicity of objectives that converged with one another and typically referred to non-commercial (i.e. philanthropy), commercial (i.e. marketing communication and relationship marketing), and strategic objectives (i.e. popularity of football). The complexity to this issue was further compounded with sponsor objectives being found to develop as the agreement progressed. With all this said, however, practitioners rarely formulated objectives, and, when they did, these were often found to be vague and not communicated to the other party.

In relation to theme three, sponsorship was managed more personal than business-like. Accordingly, tasks were found to be executed by practitioners with celerity and in a manner that was relaxed and informal. Further, whereas actions were typically undertaken by the NCFC at the start of an agreement, as the deal progressed a more collaborative approach was taken wherein both NCFC and SME shared responsibility. Management decisions to sponsorship were found to be influenced by the wider local to international ecosystem with time constraints and practitioners, particularly on the NCFC side, not being experts being key factors to impinged on how sponsorship is enacted. Operational and reputational risks were further concerns identified by practitioners as guiding the management of sponsorship.

With respect to theme four, nine factors were identified across NCFC and SME sponsor outlooks as being crucial to ensuring an effective relationship. CSFs previously observed across literature were revealed to also relate to this study (commitment; trust; communication; and satisfaction), with the research also finding five new dimensions that ultimately added further originality to the thesis; (i) respect, (ii) honesty, (iii) reciprocity, (iv) realistic expectations, and (v) transparency. Each party was satisfied with four of these CSFs (trust; club satisfaction; respect; and honesty), while the NCFC was also content with the level of commitment and possessing realistic expectations. In contrast, the SME sponsor was not as content with three factors they identified as important (commitment; transparency; and reciprocity), while the NCFC was not as satisfied with communication.

Table 34: Summary of research objective three

<p>Research Objective Three: To construct and evaluate a grassroots football sponsorship management model.</p>
<p>How this was Addressed: The study's findings and results from the first (chapter five) and second data collection phases (chapter six) were used to build an initial model that illustrated the practices undertaken from inception to end of term deal and the barriers associated to how sponsorship is enacted within grassroots football (figure 49). From this, chapter seven revealed the findings of the evaluation of the model(s) as a result of a two-pronged attack. Thoughts of the initial model from practitioners involved within phase one interviews were presented in section 7.2 and lead to the creation of a more refined second version of the sponsorship process model (figure 50). In a second stage, section 7.3.2 showed the CFA football officers views of the revised model which, on analysis, culminated in the third and final version of the process model. Chapter eight presented the final model constructed (figure 53), triangulating the study's findings and results in conjunction with literature and research that connected to the practices undertaken.</p>
<p>Summary of Findings: Through three stages of development, the final process model was produced and consisted of nine steps pigeonholed into six core phases (figure 53). The model also included the CSFs practitioners felt were of greatest importance to support this crucial endeavour, set against their level of satisfaction to each determinant. Taken together, this ultimately highlighted whether those CSFs important to practitioners should be maintained or have greater attention placed on them. The sample of practitioners concluded the model had merit and could be used to aid both the NCFC and SME sponsor forge and maintain an effective agreement. The creation of an (online) guide and the delivery of workshops that showed how the model could be used in practice were considered the most suitable dissemination technique to convey the model to the wider footballing and sponsor community. To assist with this, practitioners identified the development of supplementary materials (i.e. case studies; proposal and SLA templates) which could add to the model would be prudent to further support in the process.</p>

9.3: Research Implications

To a certain extent, the implications of this thesis for practitioners have previously been set out in the form of the recommendations provided at the end of each stage of the process model (chapter eight). Research wise, despite the growing level of studies afforded to football across a broad range of disciplines, discussion surrounding marketing and management has only just begun to surface (e.g. Breuer and Nowy 2015; O’Gorman 2019), with a further dearth of study pinned to the grassroots sport (refer to section 2.3.3.1), let alone grassroots football sponsorship setting (Sawyer et al 2012; Quester et al 2013) where no research within the UK exists. Yet how this environment operates overall differs to the professional landscape (Forster et al 2016; O’Gorman et al 2019) and therefore needs to be distinguished in research relating specifically to the concept of sponsorship. This thesis consequently becomes the first, and to date only piece of work to explore football sponsorship at the grassroots level in the UK.

In addition to this, a further three points allowed this study to make a more general yet novel contribution to the limited research on grassroots sport sponsorship. First, existing

literature examines this setting largely through a single perspective. While most research applied the consumers viewpoint, fewer studies considered the sponsees outlook and even fewer the sponsors. However, only two studies investigated the sponsorship of grassroots sport from a collective view (i.e. sponsor and sponsee) (Seguin et al 2005; Lamont and Dowell 2008), and thus presented a gap in research which this study subsequently filled through exploring football sponsorship at the grassroots level principally from a dual perspective of the sponsor and sponsee. In this respect, the thesis responded to the calls for research to examine sponsorship from a relational outlook (i.e. Olkkonen 2001; Farrelly and Quester 2003) and, more specifically, the calls from Zinger and O'Reilly (2010) into the examination of the SME sponsor-sport entity relationship. Second, most research has been concerned with the sponsorship of CSEs – to support more general sponsorship research that criticised how it rarely veers from investigating events (Resier et al 2012; Cornwell and Kwak 2015). Yet it was felt that the type of sponsorship would render difference in how deals were enacted. This research therefore provided a wider context to the investigation of grassroots sport sponsorship in exploring it in association with NCSCs; a type of sponsorship with little exploration (i.e. Sawyer et al 2012; Quester et al 2013; Misener and Doherty 2014). Third and finally, to explore the panoramic, research typically employed a mono-method approach with the work from Smith et al (2016) being the only piece of research employing an MMR design. By conducting a sequential, three-phased MMR approach that used a multiplicity of data collection techniques and incorporated data and methodological triangulation, this study shows a strategy not previously evident in sponsorship literature at the grassroots level.

In considering the organisational motives and objectives behind engaging in grassroots football sponsorship, this study represents only the third study that conveys the objectives coveted by both sides of the agreement in a single piece of work (Doherty and Murray 2007; Wicker et al 2012b) and the only study to do so via an MMR approach. Indeed, not one piece of research examined the motivations to sponsorship from a quantitative method of inquiry – although Kim et al (2010) was quantitative it examined the impact of participant gratitude as a result of sponsorship and not the various objectives organisations covet – to add to this study's originality. This thesis therefore extends on previous work by not just discerning the objectives organisations covet through sponsorship (interviews), but then additionally understanding which are of most salience when coming to engage in sponsorship (interviews and online survey).

The study is additionally of academic significance to work that surrounds the management of grassroots sport sponsorship; an area that despite revealing little attention in general sponsorship research just over two decades ago (Cornwell and Maignan 1998) still shows a shortage of investigation to date (Cornwell and Kwon 2019). The present work grew on the limited body of knowledge via comprehensively exploring the practices carried out by practitioners throughout sponsorship of grassroots football from inception to end of agreement. This ultimately culminated in adding to the process models already evident across both generic (i.e. Chadwick and Thwaites 2005; Cousens et al 2006; Douvis et al 2015; Sa and Manoel Cunha del Almeida 2016; Cornwell and Kwon 2019) and grassroots sport specific research (Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008) by developing a six phased grassroots football sponsorship management model.

In this regard, the study offers five notable contributions to literature concerning the management of sponsorship. First, the model adds to the amount of research in grassroots sport that has been previously written in relation to the specific practices that are undertaken pre and during any sponsorship deal (refer to table 7). Second, the model is the first of its kind to apply to the UK sports club-SME panoramic and one which also accounts for the perspectives of both parties in its construction. Third, the model is only one of three sponsorship studies that illustrates how decisions made throughout sponsorship are influenced by the external climate (Lamont and Dowell 2008; Cornwell and Kwon 2019). Fourth, the model considers the issue of sponsorship renewal and discontinuation/ termination; a final decision that Cornwell and Kwon (*ibid*) highlight as being absent and overlooked in sponsorship-related study. Finally, the model includes the factors most crucial to sponsorship success that, except for Chadwick and Thwaites (2004, 2005), is missing in works relating to how sponsorship is managed. To this end, this thesis breaks new ground into areas previously untouched and unexplored within sponsorship (of grassroots sport).

With respect to the exploration of CSFs, according to Nufer and Buhler (2011:26), “the most successful sports sponsorships are based on a good relationship between the sports entity and its sponsor”. Yet although this may be the case, a scant number of studies address the question of which factors ensure a strong partnership (i.e. Chadwick and Thwaites 2004, 2005; Farrelly and Quester 2005a, 2005b; Buhler et al 2007; Nufer and Buhler 2010, *ibid*), with even fewer exploring this against the grassroots sports backdrop (Misener and Doherty 2014) and none from a dual perspective. This study thus expands on the thin knowledgebase referring to what factors are vital to forging a successful

partnership, becoming only the second study to explore this through an MMR design (Buhler et al *ibid*). It further provides another context of research in that it offers the first exploration into such an issue in relation to grassroots football sponsorship, while also being the first to simultaneously examine both NCFC and, the not previously explored SME sponsor viewpoint. Finally, before this study, no sponsorship literature had previously ascertained an organisations level of satisfaction to the CSFs deemed vital to their partnership's success. Indeed, while IPAs have been employed across a swell of studies (i.e. Martilla and James 1997; Rial et al 2008; Park et al 2017), this is the first to use this tool in sponsorship-related research to thus merely amplify the study's originality.

The study's findings also add greater value to the limited scholarly activity connected to this area in that four dimensions previously cited in research also applied to the grassroots sport landscape. Drawing similarities to other studies, the determinants of trust (i.e. Farrelly and Quester 2005a, 2005b; Nufer and Buhler 2011; Misener and Doherty 2013, 2014) and commitment (i.e. Farrelly and Quester *ibid, ibid*; Buhler et al 2007), were each revealed as factors both parties felt were pivotal to forging and maintaining an effective partnership. Club satisfaction was additionally identified by both SME sponsor and NCFC in this research – to thus link to one half of the overall factor of mutual satisfaction (i.e. Farrelly and Quester *ibid, ibid*; Buhler et al *ibid*). Aligned with the NCFC viewpoint, communication was the final CSF previously documented in research associated to determinants that affect a sponsorship partnership (i.e. Farrelly and Quester 2003; Chadwick and Thwaites 2004, 2005; Nufer and Buhler 2011). Adding a further level of significance to the study, away from the connection to previously established CSFs in research, the study introduced five new dimensions not acknowledged in work to shed new light onto the CSFs to (grassroots) sport sponsorship. Both parties noted how respect and honesty were crucial to a partnership's success. NCFCs further identified realistic expectations, while SME sponsors revealed transparency and reciprocity. Consequently, it is hoped that this study opens the door for future research into this relatively new research area, particularly with respect to the grassroots sport milieu.

9.4: Limitations and Future Research Agenda

Drawing on the study's findings and conclusions in conjunction with its limitations (to be discussed in this section), several areas for future research may be useful. Considering the research aim, despite two process models detailing how sponsorship is enacted regarding not-for-profit sport organisations or CSEs (Doherty and Murray 2007; Lamont and Dowell 2008), this research represents the first attempt to scope the management of

grassroots sport sponsorship in the UK, with particular attention to football team-specific deals. The need to further test the model constructed as a result of this research is therefore the most logical progression. To assess whether sponsorship deals at the grassroots level truly reflect the steps proposed in the process model, adopting a longitudinal ethnographic approach may consequently be prudent for the following reasons noted below.

One of the main limitations to this research concerned the fact that data was collected at a snapshot in time and was thus not recorded over a longitudinal basis. This research, however, revealed most sponsorship agreements at the grassroots level lasted either one (54.8%) or two years (32.2%). A longitudinal study that continuously tracked and documented the sponsorship of grassroots sport over a deal's lifetime could therefore aid in validating or refuting the process model constructed. For instance, adopting such an approach could recognise the points at which objectives and relationship characteristics shift during the agreement. Further, this research is largely reflective of practitioner experiences in a time of 'super austerity' (Lowndes and Gardner 2016) and uncertainty surrounding the impact of Brexit on organisations both sporting and business-related. Such socio and political-economic concerns invariably change over time and the use of a longitudinal ethnographic approach could thus capture the wide range of issues that surface as the agreement develops. Finally, according to Hurst (2008), employing one-off data collection techniques to track issues over time are problematic as tapping into a person's long-term memory creates the potential for the piecing together of disaggregated fragments and/ or projections of memories that render distorted accounts. Creating a model based on interviews, focus groups and surveys alone thus opens questions to its reliability regardless of the number of checking points to refine it. Accordingly, Delia (2017) stresses how ethnography would enable the researcher to observe or experience the naturalness of the setting as opposed to collecting data through more formal methods of enquiry (i.e. interviews or surveys). It is also a method becoming increasingly popular in order to explore the sport management field (Delia *ibid*), and an approach that Dunn and Hughson (2016) argue could be useful for organisational research examining sporting clubs at both the grassroots and elite level.

However, issues pertaining to gaining access to both NCFs and SMEs – as found with this research (refer to section 4.9) – act as a significant stumbling block (cf. Byers 2009 for NCF and cf. Curran and Blackburn 2001; Whelan et al 2012 for SME). To therefore conduct a longitudinal ethnographic study may prove to be fanciful as this would place increased demands on the parties concerned (i.e. researcher requiring consistent access)

and may make them even less likely participate than found in this current study. More broadly speaking and away from sponsorship study, greater investigation into how researchers can gain entry to this difficult terrain is thus warranted. Nevertheless, to counteract this difficulty in the recruitment of participants but still produce a longitudinal piece of work wrapped in an ethnographic method of inquiry, future research could employ an auto-ethnographic approach wherein the researcher essentially “becomes the primary participant and source of data” (Jones 2015: 122). Here, the researcher (of this study) could draw on their own (current) lived experiences of football sponsorship deals at the grassroots level to examine the model, making sense of this through reference to, refinement of and/ or development of theory (Anderson 2006; Adams et al 2015). This would ultimately create a significant contribution to research being one of the first studies employing (auto)ethnography to delve deeper into the phenomenon of sponsorship (i.e. Choi 2006; Delia 2017).

In a final point regarding the study’s aim, with this model built from research orientated to the NCFC setting, the scope of the model and its practices must be researched across an array of contexts. Indeed, this study was confined to the NWE which may render the findings and results to not be generalisable to the entire UK due to regional variances. Studies should thus expand on this and investigate these findings and conclusions on a national scale. Future research could explore and reconceptualise the sponsorship model against the elite sport/ football backdrop. Exploration into the sponsorship of other sports delivered at the community level (i.e. cricket, rugby) would also be wise given the practitioner of NCFC Yellow believed the nature, structure, and operations of certain sports inherently lent themselves to possessing a greater competency compared to NCFCs in regard to the management of agreements. Further, there is now a growing agenda from the FA, and indeed other NGBs to form strategies to improve the inclusion of marginalised groups – for football these include women, BAME, disability, LGBTQT, and refugees. Research that branches into understanding sponsorship of NCFCs comprising of such members of society in comparison to the traditional characteristics associated to those who partake in football would be a more contemporary issue and hot-topic that could produce knowledge in a field that is otherwise largely void of any scholastic attention.

A further limitation to this study resided in that it set out to explore the interface which existed between NCFCs and the SME sponsor. Yet while adding to literature given the

research is one of only a few grassroots sport sponsorship studies to examine sponsorship from a dual perspective of both the sponsor and sponsee (e.g. Seguin et al 2005; Lamont and Dowell 2008), it became clear that as the study continued, experiences were less about the sponsor-sponsee relationship specifically and more about the broader processes and opinions towards grassroots football sponsorship. Consequently, thorough discussion that is pinned to a relational view of (grassroots) sport sponsorship and establishes its implications would present a valuable contribution to literature. Yet the pragmatic catch all approach to this study (refer to section 4.3) has meant focus was given to practical results which may have resulted in missing the more theoretical viewpoint which Nowell (2015) suggests is a limitation to this paradigm. This study could have consequently examined the sponsee-sponsor relationship through strategic alliance or business-to-business theory given this study, as well as others (e.g. Olkkonen et al 2000; Olkkonen 2001; Farrelly et al 2003; Farrelly and Quester 2003; Farrelly and Quester 2005a, 2005b; Urriolagoitia and Planellas 2007) identify sponsorship to be a relational exchange. Indeed, only by using these types of viewpoints and theoretical underpinnings can there be any true recognition of the inter-organisational dynamics that sponsorship at this level entails.

A strong case for additional exploration into each specific practice that contributes to the grassroots football sponsorship process model constructed also exists. Although this study addresses the management of grassroots football sponsorship through constructing a model consisting of nine specific stages from inception to end of term deal, as revealed in the study's SLR (table 7), research associated to specific management practices undertaken at the local level is typically sparse. This is particularly when compared to the wealth of work positioned against the elite milieu. To some, the model may subsequently serve as a platform and foundation that can be used to drive future studies into examining specific aspects of the process rather the process as a whole and thus expand knowledge into given practices associated to the model. For example, upcoming research could look specifically at the either the evaluation or termination of grassroots sport/ football sponsorship deals; areas with no prior investigation, but this research finds forms part of the sponsorship process (figure 53). Tethered to a question posed by the SME Accountant, as well as the dearth of study into sponsorship pricing noted in the SLR of Cornwell and Kwon (2019), how sport properties come to determine appropriate prices for their agreements may be judicious for both sponsors and sponsees, particularly during times of economic volatility that impact on a SME sponsors decision to engage in sponsorship.

Moreover, given the limited sample size this study consisted of in regard to responses from SME sponsors (n=17), those individuals responsible for sponsorship within NCFCs may benefit from another quantitative examination into the issues this study explored (i.e. the SME sponsors motives towards the sponsorship of grassroots football, the selection criterion adopted, and the factors sponsors deem crucial to ensuring an effective sponsorship agreement). Addressing such research calls would subsequently contribute to the limited research linked to grassroots sport/ football sponsorship, and therefore deepen understanding while ultimately aid support practitioners manage their dealings effectively.

Finally, despite this study being principally concerned with sponsorship at the base of the footballing pyramid, in some cases, practitioners also drew attention towards the professional football field. Only the work from Toscani and Prendergast (2018a) appears to have compared sponsorship between two alternative settings through examining the distinctive features between arts and sport sponsorship. With the authors subsequently calling for alternative debate into additional sponsorship sectors, research centred on the parities and disparities between the professional and not-for-profit sport environment seems to present an opportunity to establish original contribution to the (sport) sponsorship field. This research has already served as a starting point through conducting a SLR of literature associated to grassroots sport sponsorship before empirically exploring the picture of sponsorship at this level. In turn, only a literature review of sponsorship research referring to the professional sport/ football backdrop is necessary to unearth the parallelisms or variations between the two sectors. More empirical-based research could then be subsequently conducted using practitioners involved with the sponsorship of sport/ football at both the base and apex of the sporting pyramid.

9.5: The Final Word

“I think people need help with it [sponsorship] because it’s getting harder and this research is assisting with that... Now it’s up to people to use the model that has been created.”

(NFC Youth)

In addressing the research aim of ‘to develop a management model to support the sponsorship process between the NCFC and SME sponsor’, the study has ultimately constructed a nine-stage process model that illustrates the practices that occur during grassroots football sponsorship (figure 53). The model drew on exploratory study into the insights, attitudes and experiences of practitioners from organisations typically involved

in the management of sponsorship deals (i.e. NCFCs and SME sponsors), as well as from those who govern and regulate grassroots football regionally (CFA). By proposing this process model and exploring its related aspects, the research tackles and makes inroads into an area of study the SLR found to be widely overlooked within sponsorship literature. It further responds to the minimal amount, and rudimentary level of practical guidance proffered with little to no experiential evidence by public sector bodies or organisations (i.e. The FA, Sport England, Club Matters, Sport and Recreation Alliance) to support NCSCs in their sponsorship dealings. What becomes a crucial factor moving forward therefore is disseminating the process model, as without this, both the NCFC and SME sponsor will be unable to gain the benefit this study could afford them. Within this research, practitioners identified six methods to successfully communicate the model, those being: (i) (online) guidebooks, (ii) workshops, (iii) consultancy, (iv) leaflets, (v) blog postings, and (vi) social media. Yet regardless of the approach taken, consensus in the model running in conjunction with supplementary materials (i.e. template sponsorship proposals and SLAs) designed to support in the sponsorship process was further essential.

For NCFCs and SME sponsors, the process model presents a tool to facilitate the management of grassroots sponsorship deals from inception to end of agreement grounded through empirical exploration. This is particularly important given such practitioners from both sides of the agreement often possess little training or experience in undertaking sponsorship and thus require greater guidance. The study further showed managing grassroots football sponsorship tends to be less sophisticated in a setting that is otherwise becoming increasingly formalised and professionalised overall. As a result, the model consequently draws sponsorship closer to how the grassroots football and SME community operate overall and thus is of considerable significance to continuing this trend. With this being said, although a process model has been created for the purposes of supporting NCFCs and SME sponsors with their deals, success will ultimately boil down to the practitioners responsible for sponsorship within these organisations and their attitudes. Indeed, the model itself can only contribute to their understanding of the practices of sponsorship, with onus on each NCFC and SME sponsor to adopt or adapt the model to suit their specific needs.

To this end, sponsorship at the grassroots football level is needed more than ever before, with this study arguing for a more professional and business-like approach to the sponsor-see relationship. The model presented within this study has been designed to support this practice and offers practitioners an understanding into the objectives, CSFs and

management processes behind sponsorship. The thesis consequently breaks new ground into an area previously under-explored and presents significance to future real-world practice.

Going forward I am committed to disseminating the model and creating the materials that can accompany this to support both NCFC and SMEs in forging these relationships which will only grow in importance amidst and post COVID-19. Indeed, exacerbated by the pandemic, at the grassroots level, we “may see many sport organizations facing a perfect storm of immediate impacts and longer-term threats” (Fullagar 2020) that clubs are only able to recover from if they can draw on critical resources (Doherty et al 2020). Sponsorship may consequently be one such financial resource increasingly sought after by NCSCs given revenues often dependant on membership fees may, according to Doherty et al (*ibid*) potentially decline. Yet the juxtaposition and standoff that exists is hard to ignore with the external climate forcing NCFCs to covet commercial investment for survival, while making SMEs even more reluctant than before to sponsor grassroots football in a bid to tighten their purse strings. In these unprecedented, uncertain and evolving times, it is therefore hoped that this thesis begins to address a complex problem that has been further exacerbated by COVID-19 and can aid in building a more resilient future for community level sport.

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Appendices

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Appendix 1: A Sample of Definitions to (Sport) Sponsorship

Author/ Report	Definition
UK Sports Council (1971)	Sponsorship is a gift or payment in return for some facility or privilege, which aims to provide publicity for the donor.
Waite (1979)	A commercial organisation provides resources for the benefit of a leisure activity. The sponsor does so with the expectation of gaining some commercially valuable benefit. The sponsored activity consents to the sponsor company using a facility it has to offer in exchange for the resources it accordingly receives.
CCPR (1983)	The support of a sport, sports event, sport organisation or competition by an outside body or person for the mutual benefit of both parties.
Bruhn (1987)	Sponsorship is the planning, organisation, implementation and evaluation of all those activities, which are linked with the supply of money, goods or services by companies to support individuals and organisations in the sports, cultural or social area in order to reach commercial marketing and communication objectives.
Gardner and Shuman (1988)	Investments in causes or events to support corporate objectives (for example, by enhancing corporate image) or marketing objectives (such as increasing brand awareness).
Otker (1988)	Buying and exploiting an association with an event, a team, a group, etc. for specific marketing (communication) purposes.
Sandler and Shani (1989)	The provision of resources (e.g. money, people, equipment) by an organization directly to an event or activity in exchange for a direct association to the vent or activity. The providing organization can then use this direct association to achieve either their corporate, marketing or media objectives.
Sleight (1989)	A business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or services and an individual, event or organisation which offers in return some rights and association that may be used for commercial advantage.
Roth (1990)	Sports sponsorship is the supply of money, goods, know-how and organisational



	services for sportsmen, sports clubs, sports associations and sports events for the purpose of receiving a commercial, relevant service in return.
Meenaghan (1991:36)	An investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity.
McCarville and Copeland (1994)	Involves an exchange in resources with an independent partner in hopes of gaining a corresponding return for the sponsor.
Ukman (1995)	A cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property... in return to access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property.
Busby (1997)	A corporation (the sponsor) provides funds, resources or services and buys rights and association with the sponsored firm.
Cornwell and Maignan (1998)	Sponsorship involves two main activities: (1) an exchange between sponsor and a sponsee whereby the latter receives a fee and the former obtains the right to associate itself with the activity sponsored, and (2) the marketing of the association by the sponsor.
Kolah (1999)	An investment in cash or in-kind activity, in return for access to the exploitable potential associated with that activity.
Crompton (2004)	Two or more parties exchange resources, and the resources offered by each party must be equally valued by reciprocating parties.
Fill (2009)	A commercial activity whereby one party permits another an opportunity to exploit an association with a target audience in return for funds, services or resources.
Lagae (2005)	A business agreement between two parties. The sponsor provides money, goods, services or know-how. In exchange, the sponsored party (individual, event or organisation) offers rights and associations that the sponsor utilizes commercially.
Buhler et al (2007)	A business-related partnership between a sponsor and a professional soccer club based on reciprocity and commercial motives. It therefore clearly distinguishes from other forms of sponsorship such as patronage or so-called sweetheart-deal.
Hardy et al (2007)	The acquisition of rights to affiliate or directly associate with a product or event



	for the purpose of deriving benefits related to that affiliation or association. The sponsor then uses this relationship to achieve its promotional objectives or to facilitate and support its broader marketing objectives.
Masterman (2007)	Is a mutually beneficial arrangement that consists of the provision of resources of funds, good and/or services by an individual or body (the sponsor) to an individual or body (rights owner) in return for a set of rights that can be used in communications activity, for the achievement of objectives for commercial gain.
Chadwick and Thwaites (2008)	Sponsorship is a dyadic inter-organisational relationship in which sponsor and sponsee engage in a process of exchanging and managing resources in order to achieve a multiplicity of objectives both within and without the relationship.
Shank (2015)	The consumer exchanges money or product for the right to associate its name or product with a sporting event.
Key Note (2016)	The funding of sporting activities by commercial organisations as part of their communications strategies, which often include PR, advertising and marketing activities.
Smith et al (2016)	Sponsorship is the allocation of resources in support of the event in an attempt to build brand equity (positive associations with the brand).
European Sponsorship Association (2017)	Any commercial agreement by which a sponsor, for the mutual benefit of the sponsor and sponsored party contractually provides financing or other support in order to establish an association between the sponsor's image, brands or products and sponsoring property in return for rights to promote this association and/or image for the grant of certain agreed direct or indirect benefits.



Appendix 2: Differences between SMEs and Large Corporations

Category	SME	Large Company
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proprietor-entrepreneurship • Functions linked to personalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager-entrepreneurship • Division of labour by subject matters
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-round knowledge • Lack of university graduates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialisation • Dominance of university graduates
Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly personalised contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly formalised communication
Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative position not defined and uncertain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong competitive position
Buyer's Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on long-term contracts
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour intensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital intensive, economics of scale
Research Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the market, intuitive approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalized
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of family funds and self-financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversified ownership structure, access to anonymous market

Source: UNIDO (2004)



Appendix 3: Scoping Review for Systematic Literature Review

Search Strings: Use of Boolean search strategy	Total Number peer-reviewed	Total Number
sport sponsorship	5,646 (1947-2017)	27,865 (1935-2017)
football sponsorship	852 (1978-2017)	6,681 (1951-2017)
football sponsorship OR soccer sponsorship	1,129 (1974-2017)	8,274 (1951-2017)
 		
sport sponsorship AND relationship OR association OR dyad OR alliance OR interrelationship OR relation OR interrelation OR link OR bonds OR partner OR partnership OR marriage OR connection OR ties OR management	3,485 (1947-2017)	11,219 (1935-2017)
football sponsorship AND relationship OR association OR dyad OR alliance OR interrelationship OR relation OR interrelation OR link OR bonds OR partner OR partnership OR marriage OR connection OR ties OR management	554 (1978-2017)	2,698 (1951-2017)
football sponsorship OR soccer sponsorship AND relationship OR association OR dyad OR alliance OR interrelationship OR relation OR interrelation OR link OR bonds OR partner OR partnership OR marriage OR connection OR ties OR management	731 (1974-2017)	3,286 (1951-2017)
 		
sponsorship AND framework OR model OR theory OR process OR procedure OR practice	8,999 (1927-2017)	13,426 (1927-2017)
sport sponsorship AND framework OR model OR theory OR process OR procedure OR practice	1,941 (1978-2017)	2,723 (1952-2017)
football sponsorship AND framework OR model OR theory OR process OR procedure OR practice	267 (1988-2017)	504 (1988-2017)
football sponsorship OR soccer sponsorship AND framework OR model OR theory OR process OR procedure OR practice	363 (1988-2017)	636 (1988-2017)
 		
sponsorship AND motives OR motivations OR rationale OR rationality OR reasons OR reasoning OR intent OR intention OR purpose	4,023 (1936-2017)	7,379 (1929-2017)
sport sponsorship AND motives OR motivations OR rationale OR rationality OR reasons OR reasoning OR intent OR intention OR purpose	1,395 (1988-2017)	2,289 (1963-2017)



football sponsorship AND motives OR motivations OR rationale OR rationality OR reasons OR reasoning OR intent OR intention OR purpose	204 (1993-2017)	405 (1993-2017)
football sponsorship OR soccer sponsorship AND motives OR motivations OR rationale OR rationality OR reasons OR reasoning OR intent OR intention OR purpose	291 (1993-2017)	549 (1993-2017)
sponsorship AND perceptions OR perspective OR viewpoint OR outlook OR standpoint OR view OR take OR attitudes OR opinion OR experience OR insight OR understanding OR wisdom	8,044 (1920-2017)	16,530 (1920-2017)
sport sponsorship AND perceptions OR perspective OR viewpoint OR outlook OR standpoint OR view OR take OR attitudes OR opinion OR experience OR insight OR understanding OR wisdom	2,289 (1973-2017)	4,720 (1952-2017)
football sponsorship AND perceptions OR perspective OR viewpoint OR outlook OR standpoint OR view OR take OR attitudes OR opinion OR experience OR insight OR understanding OR wisdom	308 (1988-2017)	849 (1988-2017)
football sponsorship OR soccer sponsorship AND perceptions OR perspective OR viewpoint OR outlook OR standpoint OR view OR take OR attitudes OR opinion OR experience OR insight OR understanding OR wisdom	449 (1988-2017)	1,121 (1980-2017)
sponsorship AND sponsor OR sponsee OR sponsor-sponsee AND perceptions OR perspective OR viewpoint OR outlook OR standpoint OR view OR take OR attitudes OR opinion OR experience OR insight OR understanding OR wisdom	1,869 (1936-2017)	4,000 (1936-2017)
sport sponsorship AND sponsor OR sponsee OR sponsor-sponsee AND perceptions OR perspective OR viewpoint OR outlook OR standpoint OR view OR take OR attitudes OR opinion OR experience OR insight OR understanding OR wisdom	951 (1987-2017)	1,838 (1978-2017)
football sponsorship AND sponsor OR sponsee OR sponsor-sponsee AND perceptions OR perspective OR viewpoint OR outlook OR standpoint OR view OR take OR attitudes OR opinion OR experience OR insight OR understanding OR wisdom	133 (2000-2017)	341 (1990-2017)
football sponsorship OR soccer sponsorship AND sponsor OR sponsee OR sponsor-sponsee AND perceptions OR perspective OR viewpoint OR outlook OR standpoint OR view OR take OR attitudes OR opinion OR experience OR insight OR understanding OR wisdom	203 (2000-2017)	442 (1980-2017)



sponsorship AND “small-medium sized enterprise” OR “SME” OR “micro business” OR “small business” OR “medium-sized business”	106 (1977-2017)	512 (1938-2017)
sport sponsorship AND “small-medium sized enterprise” OR “SME” OR “micro business” OR “small business” OR “medium-sized business”	11 (1996-2014)	69 (1989-2015)
football sponsorship AND “small-medium sized enterprise” OR “SME” OR “micro business” OR “small business” OR “medium-sized business”	0	8 (2000-2015)
football sponsorship OR soccer sponsorship AND “small-medium sized enterprise” OR “SME” OR “micro business” OR “small business” OR “medium-sized business”	0	8 (2000-2015)
sponsorship AND non-profit sport OR grassroots sport OR amateur sport OR community sport OR regional sport OR local sport	790 (1975-2017)	2,481 (1954-2017)
sport sponsorship AND non-profit sport OR grassroots sport OR amateur sport OR community sport OR regional sport OR local sport	789 (1975-2017)	2,480 (1954-2017)
football sponsorship AND non-profit sport OR grassroots sport OR amateur sport OR community sport OR regional sport OR local sport	102 (1990-2017)	361 (1990-2017)
football sponsorship OR soccer sponsorship AND non-profit sport OR grassroots sport OR amateur sport OR community sport OR regional sport OR local sport	137 (1990-2017)	480 (1990-2017)



Appendix 4: Summary of Articles in Systematic Literature Review

Article	Country	Theoretical Framework	Aims/ Purpose	Method	Findings/ Results/ Outcomes
Slack & Bentz (1996)	Canada		Examine the strategic decisions of small firms towards the sponsorship of sports teams and sport events, and explore how such agreements serve as a strategic resource for these types of organisations.	Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with small business owners/managers who sponsor a sports team and/ or event (n=11).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The choice to sponsor commonly an informal process and one put on a single decision-maker, often the manager/ owner of the company. - Decisions appeared to be either proactive (i.e. seek sponsorship for competitive advantage) or reactive (i.e. deal with ‘off the street requests’). - Motives to sponsor reflected a managers or owners personal preference, increase brand image, CSR, relationship networking, build a competitive advantage, block competitors, and drive potential (repeat) custom.
Berrett & Slack (2001)	Canada		Examine the strategic approaches taken toward sponsorship by NGBs and identify the factors that influence the likelihood of sponsorship success.	Qualitative, multiple case study research design which consisted of semi-structured interviews with marketing personnel employed in NGBs (n=34), alongside semi-structured interviews with professional sponsorship consultants (n=6).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate decisions to sponsor a NGB relate heavily to two key determinants; media exposure and participation base. - Constructs a framework that classifies NGBs into one of five categories based on their levels of media exposure and participation rates to assess how much each organisation can influence these



					elements critical to sponsorship success.
Cornwell & Coote (2005)	Australia	- Social Identity Theory.	Examine how consumer identification of a non-profit organisation may impact on how consumers perceive and respond to their sponsors.	Quantitative self-administered questionnaire distributed at two events prior to the race (n=501).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisational prestige, years of participation in event, and primary motivation each impacted positively upon sponsorship-linked purchase intentions, mediated by identification. - Identification with a non-profit organisation positively influences sponsorship-linked purchase intentions.
Seguin <i>et al</i> (2005)	Canada		Review current sponsorship practice in successful agreements of NGBs.	Qualitative case study approach that comprised of semi-structured interviews with marketing personnel from NGBs (n=2), and semi-structured interviews with decision makers of corporate sponsors (n=3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGBs faced difficulties in the procurement of corporate support but did engage in successful agreements when the needs of both parties were met and exceeded. - Decisions to sponsor are driven by either philanthropic or strategic tendencies. - Amateur sport organisations advised to employ sponsorship strategies used in professional sport setting (e.g. hospitality to leverage the association).
Miloch & Lambrecht (2006)	United States of America		Measure consumer awareness of grassroots and niche sports event sponsorship via the examination of their	Quantitative, self-administered questionnaire handed out randomly to participants, spectators or volunteers of a 'State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recall and recognition rates ranged between 55%-66% with location of sponsor signage at the venue in highly visible places, activation and leverage of the sponsorship



			recall and recognition rates and ultimate purchase intentions.	Games' grassroots sport event (n=492).	<p>agreement, and level of familiarity and interest in the event all positively influenced event attendees recall and recognition levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 29% of attendees identified an unofficial venue sponsor as an official event sponsor to potentially devalue official event sponsors. - 45% of attendees stated a likelihood of purchasing a sponsor of the events product, with volunteers and respondents interested in the event, and attendees aged between 26-35 and 36-45 reported higher levels of purchase intentions than those in their relative groups.
Dees <i>et al</i> (2007)	United States of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schema Theory. - Attitude Theory. 	Assess consumers attitudes and purchase intentions towards the sponsorship of a state sports festival.	Quantitative, self-administered questionnaire distributed by graduates to participants and attendees of the 'Florida Sunshine State Games' (n=538).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall, respondents showed positive purchase intentions towards a sponsor of the Games product. - Attitude towards the CSE positively influenced consumer purchase intentions. - Level of involvement, devotion and enjoyment relative to the CSE impacted significantly on purchase intentions.
Doherty & Murray (2007)	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Alliance 	Delineate the strategic sponsorship process through the case of	A single case study research design that used the strategic sponsorship process detailed to evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Synchro Canada felt they had more often than not followed the sponsorship process; merely wishing



			Synchro Canada – a NGB.	Synchro Canada’s sponsorship activities. ** Reflects an assignment paper written to draw readers to evaluate Synchro Canada’s sponsorships and consequently respond (asks questions for conclusion) **	to accommodate and be more attractive to potential sponsors. - The NGB secured 50%-60% of their sponsorship budget; also stating only a few of their deals were successful based on the association forging a two-way relationship and leverage of the agreement.
Lamont & Dowell (2008)	Australia		Investigate how sponsorship agreements are instigated; the sponsorship objectives of SMEs; and the leveraging and evaluation practices undertaken to satisfy the primary purpose of to propose a model that depicts the sponsorship process and interactions that occur.	Qualitative, exploratory multiple case study research design (n=5 sporting events) that consisted of semi-structured interviews with event managers (n=5) and an owner/ manager of the SME who sponsored the respective event (n=5).	- Construct an eight step conceptual model that illustrates the processes and interactions in sponsorship agreements between regional CSEs and SME sponsors.
Pegoraro <i>et al</i> (2009)	Canada		Explore the potential role of gender-related grassroots sponsorship in an organisations’ corporate social	A qualitative, exploratory multiple case study approach (n=9 triathlons) that implemented in-depth telephone interviews with race directors (n=7).	- Develops a conceptual framework which illustrates how gender-based grassroots sponsorship can be employed by an organisation as a vehicle of CSR.



			responsibility (CSR) programme.		
Kelly <i>et al</i> (2010)	Australia		Determine the nature and extent of food and beverage sponsorship of children's sport.	Quantitative, semi-structured telephone questionnaire conducted with children aged 5-14 from sports clubs (n=108 sport clubs) of the nine most popular sports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food and beverage (inc. alcohol) firms accounted for 23% of all sponsors, with 50% of such organisations failing to meet the criteria for a healthy sponsor. - Sponsorship deals related to club shirts (53%), vouchers to players (29%), and allocation of rewards (24%). - Concludes the diminution of unhealthy food and beverage sponsorship in children's sport would not create significant financial difficulties as it yields a small proportion of a clubs income.
Kim <i>et al</i> (2010)	United States of America		Examine the potential of the participant sport industry for prospective sponsors and construct a sponsorship framework grounded by feelings of gratitude.	Quantitative, cross-sectional survey sent by a weekly online newsletter to participants in a triathlon competition (n=272).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gratitude was positively influenced when the motives for sponsorship were perceived to be benevolent rather than profit-driven. - Level of gratitude increased when the impact of sponsorship was of a greater perceived value to the participant sport organisation. - Level of gratitude positively relate to the perceived investment of the sponsor. - Gratitude positively impacted on participant purchase intentions.



					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gratitude mediates the participants perceptions of sponsorship and their purchase intentions.
Zinger & O'Reilly (2010)	Canada		Identify the spectrum of opportunities available to small firms relative to sport properties, while evaluate the interface between small businesses and sport properties from a sponsor standpoint.	Multiple case study approach (n=6) drawn from two secondary data sets in which cases from the Institute for Sport Marketing (n=80) report were chosen based on the study's definition of small business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community goodwill, business awareness, employee motivation, identifiable commercial objectives and/ or a decision-makers personal interest act towards a firm being involved with a sport entity. - Overall, small firms tend to treat properties as a philanthropic endeavour with few objectives that are commercially orientated. - Constructs a philanthropy-sponsorship continuum. - As the relationship progresses from mere patronage to fully functioning sponsorship so too does the organisational complexities in delivering such an association.
Choi <i>et al</i> (2011)	United States of America		Explore how the interrelationship between satisfaction with event sport sponsorship, goodwill and fan identification influences consumer purchase intentions.	Quantitative, self-administered questionnaire circulated by trained (under)graduate sport management students to attendees of the 'Florida Sunshine State Games' (n=351).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goodwill has a positive impact on overall satisfaction with sponsors. - Feelings of consumer goodwill translate to favourable purchase intentions of an event sponsors product and/ or services. - Overall satisfaction with an event sponsor positively influences consumers purchase intentions of a sponsors' product and/ or services.



					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall satisfaction with an event sponsor mediates the relationship between consumer goodwill and purchase intention.
Kelly <i>et al</i> (2011)	Australia		Appraise children's awareness, perceptions, attitudes and behavioural intents of sport club food company sponsors.	Quantitative, interview-based questionnaires conducted at clubs with children aged 10-14 (n=103).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 74% of children able to recall at least one current or past sponsor of their sport club, while 51% could recall at least one current or past food or beverage sponsor. - A greater number of children able to identify food and beverage sponsors compared to alternative sponsor companies. - Fewer children (59%) could recall elite sport team sponsors compared to their community sport club sponsors. - 59% of children indicated increase purchase intention toward a food and beverage sponsors product.
Eagleman & Krohn (2012)	United States of America		Explore participant recognition, attitudes and purchase intentions toward sponsorship of a road race series relative to changes in participant demographics, level of identification, and use of website and/ or Facebook page.	Quantitative, online questionnaire circulated by email to participants who took part in at least one of the seven races associated with the Magnificent 7 road race series (n=168).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant involvement in the race series positively impacted on purchase intentions of a sponsors product and/ or service. - Frequency of usage of the series website and Facebook page positively affected the level of sponsor recognition and influenced participant purchase intentions.



					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term sponsors with presence at the event observed greater rates of recognition than those with merely website exposure. - Sport participants and spectators may be more closely related in regard to their level of sponsorship recognition and purchase intentions. - Participant level of identification with the series offered the greatest disparity to sponsor recognition, attitude towards the sponsor and purchase intentions.
Kelly <i>et al</i> (2012)	Australia		Determine stakeholder perspectives on policy interventions to restrict unhealthy food sponsorship of the junior sporting community.	Quantitative, interview-based questionnaires conducted with three stakeholders; parents of children that were members of sport clubs (n=200), sport club officials (n=20), and NGBs (n=20).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sports community endorse the introduction of regulations to limit unhealthy food and beverage sponsorship in junior sport, particularly uniform sponsorship and provision of vouchers from companies. - Unhealthy companies considered the least appropriate to sponsor children's sport, while firms selling sporting goods, hardware, building supplies and healthy products deemed the most suitable. - Concerns with the potential ramifications on the cost of child participation and financial viability



					of sport clubs if restrictions were enforced.
McKelvey <i>et al</i> (2012)	United States of America		Assess participant attitudes toward ambush marketing of the New York Marathon.	Quantitative, online survey randomly circulated by email to participants of New York Marathon in 2005 and 2008 (n=3,413).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants reacted negatively towards the practice of ambush marketing. - Runners were able to correctly identify most official sponsors through aided recall and recognition. - Length of sponsorship agreement bared no statistical significance on participants propensity to recall or recognise a sponsoring company. - Level of participant involvement (i.e. beginning to competitive) positively affected sponsor recall and recognition, and disapproval to ambush marketing strategies.
Sawyer <i>et al</i> (2012)	Australia		Explore the landscape of alcohol-related sponsorship within community football clubs.	Cross-sectional telephone survey with representatives from community football clubs (n=101).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 84% of clubs reported alcohol-related sponsorship agreements with no notable disparity between the code (i.e. soccer or Australian football), size, geographical location, or socio-economic area of the club. - 78% of clubs received monetary provision as part of the deal, while 28% obtained free or discounted alcohol. - Football code showed differences in the number of clubs receiving free or



					discounted alcohol (Australian football 43% whereas soccer 8%).
Wicker <i>et al</i> (2012)	Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Platform Theory. - Property Rights Theory. 	Assess whether sponsorship revenues in equestrian sport differ with regards to the legal structure of the sporting organisation.	Secondary data via the Sport Development Report for Equestrian Sports (2009), using member associations (n=1,165) and private firms (n=574) to participate in the study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The institutions legal structure has a significant influence on sponsorship income, with member associations obtaining greater levels than those of private firms.
Quester et al (2013)	Australia		Explores three antecedents that impact on congruent-fit for Australian Rules Football Clubs before then exploring and modelling the process by which community-based sponsorships deals support sponsors help achieve their communication objectives.	<p>Study One: Quantitative online survey emailed to club members (n=226).</p> <p>Study Two: Quantitative online survey emailed to club members (n=319).</p>	<p>Study One:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The antecedents of corporate positioning and attitude similarity impacts on consumer perceived sponsor-sponsee congruent fit, whereas CSR similarity shows no influence. <p>Study Two:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The sponsors perceived CSR image by a consumer mediates the relationship between the perceptions of a community-based property's CSR image and consumers' self-congruity with the sponsor. - The perceived congruent-fit between sponsor and sponsee moderates the relationship between property and sponsor CSR image, attitudes toward CSR moderate the association



					between sponsor CSR and self-congruity.
Andreini <i>et al</i> (2014)	Italy	- Theory of reasoned action.	Assess how members commitment to a non-profit sports community and attitude to sponsors developed through sponsorship on-site, and sponsor-sponsee congruent fit, impact on the effectiveness of online sponsorship.	Quantitative, online survey published through a web portal which acts as an online platform for websites of non-professional sport communities (n=272).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community commitment positively impacts on attitude to on-site sponsors brands and positively influences consumer purchase intentions via the website. - Sponsor-community fit positively affects attitude to on-site sponsors and shows a direct correlation between sponsor-community fit and consumer purchase intention through the website. - Attitude to on-site sponsor brand positively impacts on consumer purchase intention of the online sponsors brand via the community website.
Kelly <i>et al</i> (2014)	Australia		Determine children's exposure to organised sport, and compare the time spent with trends of food and beverage sponsorship identified in Kelly <i>et al</i> (2010) to estimate their exposure to this form of marketing.	Secondary data via the Australian Sports Commissions Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey calculated weekly participation figures which were then applied to estimate the cumulative weekly exposure of food and beverage sponsorship at sport clubs based on the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children who participate in rugby league, athletics and cricket exposed to food and beverage sponsorship promotions more than swimming, football (soccer) and tennis. - Corporate decisions to sponsor not grounded solely on the basis on popularity of sport but other determinants including demographics and alignment with sponsorship of elite level sport.



				previous research of Kelly <i>et al</i> (2010).	
Lough <i>et al</i> (2014)	United States of America		Analyse runner identity and the effectiveness of sponsorship in regard to the Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon via the examination of participants recall and recognition rates, as well as their purchase intentions towards the sponsor.	Quantitative, email survey circulated to all participants of the race (n=1,388).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Runner identity impacted positively on participants recall, recognition and purchase intentions. - Male participants observed increased purchase intentions to the sponsor compared to females.
Misener & Doherty (2014)	Canada	- Interorganisational Theory	Understand the nature of the NCSC-sponsor relationship through examining the relationship processes and the impact on such sport clubs, while develop measures of such relationship processes and outcomes.	Quantitative survey distributed to presidents of NCSCs via email or post (n=250).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship and management attributes associated to sponsorship revolved around four key competencies: dependability (i.e. trust); balance (i.e. equal contribution); relational competencies (i.e. interpersonal skills); and operational (i.e. technical and conceptual skills). - Improved program/operations quality and heightened community presence are determined as core outcomes of the CSC-sponsor relationship.
Mackellar (2015)	Australia		Explore local business engagement with sport events and identify	Multiple qualitative case study research design (n=3 sport events) that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determinants to business engagement in sport events related to six factors: (i) level of co-operation;



			determinants to sport event leverage.	comprised of semi-structured interviews and <i>in situ</i> conversations with local businesses (n=112), alongside use of on-site observation and analysis of websites, event reports, and local and government documents.	(ii) tourism dependency; (iii) size of business; (iv) promotional strategy; (v) strategic direction; and (vi) the skills, knowledge and experience in event leveraging.
Batty <i>et al</i> (2016)	New Zealand	- Stakeholder Theory.	Review the nature of CSR sponsor deals with CSEs to examine how the public health agenda affects such programmes and the consequences potentially created for CSEs from food and beverage CSR sponsorship initiatives.	Multiple qualitative case study approach (n=4 CSEs) which employed in-depth semi-structured interviews with stakeholders associated with the CSEs; event owner or manager (n=4), sponsors (n=3), facilitator (n=4), corporate team (n=1), volunteer group (n=1) and recipient charity (n=1).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies perceive sponsorship of CSEs as a quintessential defence mechanism to alleviate criticism of the products they produce; but sponsors in fact encounter further condemnation. - The public health agenda is impacting negatively on several CSR-related CSE sponsorship deals as the call for unhealthy food and beverage companies to withdraw their sponsorship of CSEs are detrimental to the financial viability of CSEs.
Smith <i>et al</i> (2016)	United States of America		Analyse participant recall of event sport sponsors over a five-year term deal.	Mixed methods approach that consisted of a yearly self-administered online survey forwarded to all race participants (n=988), yearly <i>in situ</i> observations and field notes which were	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-year sponsorships positively impacted on the sponsors ability to build recall. - Top tier sponsors and/ or firms who leveraged their deals exceptionally enjoyed positive results of unaided recall.



				then confirmed through interviews with key sponsors and event organisers, and analyses of past promotional materials over the 5 years.	- Increased clutter engenders the potential for companies to be lost in field with other sponsors, unless they can significantly leverage their association.
Sung & Lee (2016)	South Korea		Investigate the relationship between participant involvement, attitude towards a sport event and the perceived sponsor-event fit in affecting corporate image and consumer purchase intention.	Quantitative self-administered questionnaire randomly distributed to female participants prior to running the Pink Ribbon Love Marathon (n=650).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate image positively affects consumer purchase intentions. - Involvement with breast cancer in some way positively impacts on purchase intentions mediated through corporate image. - Participant attitude toward an event indicated an indirect impact on purchase intentions via corporate image despite no direct effect. - The sponsors congruent fit with the event positively influenced corporate image and participant purchase intentions.
Miragaia <i>et al</i> (2017)	Portugal	- Social Entrepreneurship.	Identify why organisations choose to sponsor CSEs and recognise the drivers which support the decision.	Quantitative self-administered questionnaire handed to CEOs, vice presidents, directors and organisational managers of businesses who sponsored a CSE (n=80).	- The rationale behind companies sponsoring community sport surrounded four rationales: (i) CSR; (ii) customer loyalty and employee motivation; (iii) innovation and opportunity; and (iv) reputation and social networks.
Ivaskovic & Cater (2018)	Bosnia and Herzegovina; Croatia;	- Resource Theory	Determine how private funding influences non-profit basketball clubs	Quantitative self-administered survey distributed to non-profit	- Higher divisional clubs received a greater percentage of private funding compared to lower divisional clubs;



	Serbia; and Slovenia		strategic decision-making and overall organisational performance.	basketball managers (n=73).	<p>the former stressed the pressure to achieve sporting results over local community interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall, the choice to prioritise local community aims over sporting results serves as the mediator between public funding and organisational performance.
Kim <i>et al</i> (2018)	United States of America	- Attribution Theory.	Analyse gratitude as a core element of the sponsorship model by exploring which strategy most effectively generates gratitude toward sponsors and gratitude's role in rendering consumer reciprocity.	Two study research design in which the relevant study, study 2, used a quantitative online, self-administered questionnaire circulated to all participants registered for a local running event (n=317).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feeling of gratitude significantly influences participants positive word of mouth behaviours and purchase intentions. - Gratitude mediated the relationship between participant perceptions of CSE sponsorship and reciprocal intentions.
Batty & Gee (2019)	New Zealand	- Stakeholder Theory. - Ethical Leadership Model.	Explore how the public health agenda may impact upon regional rugby union organisations in fast food and beverage sponsorship negotiations.	Exploratory, qualitative approach that incorporated semi-structured interviews with sponsorship managers or CEOs of regional rugby associations (n=6), along with analysis of regional rugby union organisation websites and annual reports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The public health agenda is impacting on organisation decisions to find or accept food and beverage sponsorship, with managers acting more cautiously in their approach. - The public health agenda is pushing for restrictive sponsorship legislation. - Regional organisations, particularly in more rural areas, stress the disapproval of, and imminent restrictions on, food and beverage



					sponsorship will have a detriment on the delivery of rugby.
Eddy & Cork (2019)	United States of America	- Belief-attitude-intention (Theory of reasoned action)	Measure participants awareness of sponsorship and evaluate a framework developed to predict their behavioural intentions towards the sponsors of a new race series.	Quantitative survey passed to participants over the age of 18 distributed by research assistants via intercept method at post-event socials (n=95).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants recall and recognition rates to the sponsor was tenuous. - Increased likelihood of purchase intention by participants when sponsors perceived to be aiding the organisation or community. - Feelings of goodwill positively impacted on participants image of sponsor. - Framework to predict behavioural intentions toward sponsor depicted a moderate-poor fit.



Appendix 5: Example Participant Information Sheet (Phase One SME – Semi-structured interview)

Title: *A sponsorship framework for grassroots football: A North-West of England study to explore the perceptions of the relationship between sponsor and sponsee.*

Name of Researcher: *Matthew Hindmarsh*

Name of Institution: *Liverpool John Moores University*

Name of Faculty: *School of Sport Studies, Leisure and Nutrition*

I am pleased to invite you to take part in a research study as part of a student PhD thesis. Before you decide whether to participate in this research, it is of importance that you understand why the research is being undertaken and what it involves. Please take your time to read the following information carefully. If you have any concerns, questions or there is anything that is unclear in regard to this study, please do not hesitate to contact me. Take as much time as you need to read and decide if you wish to participate or not.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is a student led research project which aims to examine how grassroots football sponsorship operates in the current economic climate. Specifically, the study will seek to gain an insight into the relationship between amateur football clubs and small-medium sized enterprises within the North-West of England. From this, it is expected that the research will support in the delivery of future football sponsorship programmes at the grassroots level, while ensure each party can draw the most out of their associations.

Why have I been chosen?

Firstly, it is important to note a further 4-6 participants from another 4-6 small-medium sized enterprises will be involved. A total of 5-7 participants from amateur football clubs will also be invited to participate in this study. You have been invited because an amateur football club has identified you as a sponsor of their club. You also appear to fulfil the criteria of this research, that being:

- You hold an official position at a North-West small-medium sized enterprise and are held responsible for the company's sponsorship agreement of an amateur football club.

Do I have to take part?

No. After reading this information it is up to you to decide if you would like to take part or not. If you agree to partake in the study you will then be asked to sign a consent form. Even after this, you are still free to withdraw from the research at any time, without needing to provide any reason for doing so. The decision to withdraw will not affect your rights or any future treatment/ service you receive.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in an interview that will ask you to communicate your opinions and experiences of your company's involvement in grassroots football sponsorship. The interview should last approximately 60 minutes and, if consent has been agreed, will use a recording device for later analysis. It is important to note that each question has been tested on the research supervisory team and thus considered



appropriate. Throughout the interview, you will be free to ask any questions that may arise from the discussion. After the interview has finished, further contact may be needed to clarify certain points made from this discussion.

Are there any risks or benefits for me to be involved?

Other than your own volunteered time, there are no costs incurred. The researcher is DBS verified and has thus undergone a satisfactory criminal records check. The study will deliver wider rewards to society and you. As a token of your time, a copy of the final project can be forwarded to you if you wish. This will hopefully assist you in understanding the benefits of sponsorship, and the actions required to maintain and improve your relationship with your sponsee (football club). The researcher would also be happy to discuss their findings at the end of the research upon request.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

Your involvement in this study will be kept private at all times. The information you provide will only be viewed by the researcher and his supervisory team. Any quotes you provide may be used as part of the study's thesis, research papers, and conference posters, but will remain anonymous. All information during the research will be stored on the university system which will be password protected and away from individuals not associated with the study. No names will be used in reports and transcripts. Instead, pseudonyms will be used to help protect the identity of individuals and organisations. Personal data will be destroyed one year after thesis submission.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

It is expected that this research will publicise its findings in several journal articles. Like this study, all results published will remain anonymous throughout each paper and use pseudonyms to protect the identity of individuals and organisations.

How can I access contact details?

Contact Details of Researcher: Matthew Hindmarsh
(M.R.Hindmarsh@2017.ljmu.ac.uk)

Contact Details of Director of Study/ supervisor: Dr Sarah Nixon
(S.Nixon@ljmu.ac.uk)

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee
(rec ref:)



Appendix 6: Example Participant Consent Form (Phase One SME – Semi-structured interviews)

Title: *A sponsorship framework for grassroots football: A North-West of England study to explore the perceptions of the relationship between sponsor and sponsee.*

Name of Researcher: *Matthew Hindmarsh*

Name of Institution: *Liverpool John Moores University*

Name of Faculty: *School of Sport Studies, Leisure and Nutrition*

[] I confirm that I have had the details of the study explained to me.

[] I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these questions answered satisfactorily.

[] I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any stage, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights.

[] I understand that all information gathered will remain anonymous and be held in strict confidence.

[] I agree to participate in this study's interview.

[] I give my consent for the interview to be recorded audibly.

[] I understand that parts of our conversation may be used verbatim in future publications or presentations but that such quotes will be anonymised.

Name (Participant):

Signed:

Date:

Name (Researcher):

Signed:

Date:



Appendix 7: Example Participant Instruction Sheet (Phase One SME – Semi-structured Interview)

Good [morning/ afternoon/ evening]. Firstly, thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. My name is Matthew Hindmarsh and I am a PhD student at Liverpool John Moores University, within the faculty of sport studies, leisure and nutrition. I am undertaking research in relation to grassroots football sponsorship, specifically focusing upon the relationship between amateur football clubs and small-medium sized enterprises.

To do this, I will be collecting information on yourself, the organisation, your experiences, your knowledge and your opinions of community-based football sponsorship. Questions in this discussion will often relate, but not be exclusive to the motivations towards grassroots football sponsorship, the relationship between amateur football clubs and small-medium sized enterprises, and the processes that are undertaken, or not undertaken, with regards to grassroots football and its sponsorship.

You were selected because you met the following inclusion criteria;

- You hold an official position at a North-West small-medium sized enterprise and are held responsible for the company's sponsorship agreement of an amateur football club.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You can choose to refuse to answer any question, stop the interview at any given time, and if concerned request certain information not to be included in the study. All questions have been discussed with the researchers' supervisors and been deemed suitable to ask. Both the study and its questions have been granted ethical approval by the university's research ethics committee:

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee
(rec ref:)

At this point I would like to again make you aware that all information gathered will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, stored securely and will use a pseudonym to ensure you and the organisation cannot be identified.

Are you still happy to participate in the study?

Do you have any questions?

Could please sign the consent form in front of you and confirm that you meet the study's inclusion criteria. Thank you.



Appendix 8: Phase One NCFC Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Introduction: Good [morning/ afternoon/ evening], my name is Matthew Hindmarsh and I am a PhD student at Liverpool John Moores University undertaking research in relation to grassroots football sponsorship. Firstly, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study as I realise that your time is valuable. All questions included in this discussion have been tested and deemed suitable for use. It is important to note that certain questions may focus around finances. However, as with all questions, you can refuse to answer and, if concerned, can request certain information to not be included in the study. Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your knowledge, and if needed please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. In front of you is an instruction sheet which outlines all of this in more detail. Can you please confirm that you have read this instruction sheet and meet the study's inclusion criteria? Finally, can you please fill in this consent form?-this shows that you agree to participate and be recorded during this interview. Please be aware that you can withdraw at any time.

BACKGROUND TO CLUB AND SPONSORSHIP

Introduction: The first set of questions within this discussion are for me to gain an insight into this football club and the ways in which sponsorship is used.

- 1) **Can you please provide any general information about this football club, and the role(s) you undertake within it?** (*year established, number of players/teams, mainly adult or junior? female or male? (non)disabled?, FA county and status, rate of growth, how club markets itself and why, the clubs limitations around marketing; title*)
 - a) What is the clubs mission and key objectives? Have these changed from previous seasons? If so, why?
 - b) How long have you performed this type of role at this, or at another football club?
- 2) **How does this football club currently generate its income?** (*grants, membership fees*)
 - a) What factors do you feel limit the clubs' ability to obtain greater levels, or other sources of income? – provide examples. How would you define the clubs financial position? Has this changed from previous seasons? If so, why?

MOTIVES AND BENEFITS OF SPONSORSHIP

Introduction: The next set of questions intend to focus on the value your football club places on sponsorship, why your club engages in sponsorship, and the benefits such association provides your football club.

- 3) **Can you provide some background information into the sponsorship agreement(s) that your football club is currently involved in?** (*number of other sponsorship agreements, sponsorship of a single team or the club overall?, type and length of deal? Instigated by? Type of relationship?*)
- 4) **From your experiences as a football club, how would you define sponsorship?** (*factors which have contributed to your definition*)
- 5) **In relation to your football clubs' current sources of income, where would you place sponsorship on your list of priorities?** (*percentage of income*)



- a) What factors have led this football club to prioritise sponsorship in the way it does?
 - b) At what point in the future will the importance of sponsorship increase further for this club, if at all? – explore why. (*Brexit*)
- 6) What are this football clubs' main motives behind wanting to be sponsored? - examples to prove motives are worthwhile (e.g. *reduce subs for players*).**
- a) Is sponsorship for your club more than a matter of financial investment or does it merely revolve around economic motives? – explore why. (*historical*)
- 7) As a football club, what benefits do you feel you have gained from being sponsored?**
- a) When thinking about the football clubs' benefits to being sponsored are these mainly long-term, short-term or do you not even consider this?
 - b) As the recipient, what do you expect from the relationship? How is this made clear? Has this been achieved? (*efficacy*) If any, what unexpected benefits from being sponsored have you received?
 - c) From your experience, how does grassroots football sponsorship provide mutual benefit to both this football club and the company who sponsors you?
 - d) What does the sponsor expect from the relationship? How is this made clear? Do you feel this has been achieved? (*efficacy*)
- 8) How do other organisations (e.g. amateur sport clubs, other sponsors, potential sponsors and other companies) perceive the football club as a result of your sponsorship deals? – explore why.**
- a) Do such deals encourage other relationships or partnerships to be formed? If so, how and with whom? If not, why?
- 9) From your current experiences, how worthwhile is sponsorship in supporting this clubs' ability to achieve its missions and objectives, both in the short and long-term? – explore why based on answer provided.**

STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SPONSORSHIP AND THE RELATIONSHIP

Introduction: These next set of questions plan to grasp an insight into the approaches taken toward sponsorship within this football club, and the reasons behind why such processes occur within the agreement. It also intends to gain an understanding into how the relationship between this football club and the company who sponsor(s) you functions.

- 10) Can you describe the sponsorship agreement that your football club is currently involved with [name of company]? (*sponsorship of a single team or the club overall?, number of other sponsorship agreements, type and length of deal?*)**
- 11) In your opinion, what makes sport and grassroots football a more attractive proposition for a company to be involved with compared to other promotional activities a company may engage in (e.g. radio or newspaper advertising)?**
- a) What benefits does sponsorship of grassroots football offer that high-profile and professional football sponsorship may lack if it was to be engaged in? In other words, what does grassroots football sponsorship potentially offer a company which would not be received if that company were to become involved in the



sponsorship of a professional football club, such as Man Utd? (*how does grassroots sponsorship differentiate to professional*)

- b) Considering this, what do you perceive make a company more likely to sponsor this football club over other grassroots sport clubs?-your USP? How do you convey this to company's who may be interested in sponsoring you?

12) What assets of this football club do you find easy or difficult to gain sponsorship for?

- a) Why do you feel that company's want to sponsor certain assets of this club more than others? For example, a football kit over the clubs' website.

13) Can you talk me through the complete step-by-step process for the sponsorship between this football club and [name of company] from initial contact through to completion of term deal?

- a) Who is involved within the decision-making process? The length of the process? When undertaken?
- b) How does this football club determine how much a company must pay to sponsor this football club? What is the range or average amount requested to, or provided by, the sponsor? Can this football club and its sponsor be flexible if needed? – explore why. (*economic climate*) How was the deal paid (i.e. cash in hand or cheque?)
- c) On average, how many sponsorship requests does this football club receive or make each year? Namely received or made? Why?
- d) What factors impact this football clubs' decision to be sponsored by a given company? In other words, how does this football club select which company to sponsor? Is this more due to a personal decision, strategic decision, or a mixture of both? (*company's networking and resource capabilities, sponsorship fee, asset being sponsored, geographical location, congruence fit etc.*)
- e) Were different sponsorship packages made available to the company? If so, how did this aid the process? If not, why?
- f) Was the company handed a proposal? If so, how did this aid the process; Was this tailored or generic? If not, why?
- g) From your experience of the sponsorship process, what obstacles hinder or stop sponsorship from being successful? – provide examples. How are these challenges overcome?
- h) Do you feel that what this football club does is rigorous/ well thought out enough for the purpose of grassroots sponsorship?

14) From your experiences, what do you believe are the key success factors required for delivering an effective grassroots football sponsorship strategy?

- a) Is this football clubs' sponsorship strategy developed strategically or on a 'Chairman's whim'? (*strategy differ to other sources of income? why?*)

15) Do you feel that the sponsorship programme this football club is engaged in with [name of company] is well planned? Why? – provide examples. (*collaborative? set objectives? why? link to the company's sponsorship objectives? are they communicated?*)

- a) What are the challenges associated with planning? How are these overcome?

16) How does this club and [name of company] promote the association to add value to the relationship? (*social media, newspaper, attend events, website*)



presence etc.) – Why do you believe it is important that you use this avenue to promote the association further?

If they do; What costs are incurred from undertaking such exercises? How do you know it adds value to the association? Who initiates this process? What do you feel stops you and the company from promoting the association further during the agreement?

If they don't; What hinders this football club and its sponsor from promoting the association during the agreement?

- a) Which organisation do you believe should be accountable to promote the sponsorship further during association? The football club, the company, or both?- explore why.

17) How does this football club monitor and evaluate the success of its association with [name of company]? (*techniques employed*)

If they do; What are the main difficulties associated with the monitoring and evaluation of sponsorship? How are these overcome? What are the benefits from monitoring and evaluating? If any, what funds and resources are committed to the process of monitoring and evaluation?

If they don't; Why? (*not important enough?*) What barriers hinder this football club from undertaking monitoring and evaluation? If you chose to, how would you evaluate the success of your association with [name of company]? How beneficial do you feel it would be if you evaluated the agreement?

- a) Who should monitor and evaluate the sponsorship of a grassroots football sponsorship programme? The club, the company, or both?-explore why.

18) What information relating to sponsorship have you as the property, or [name of company] as the sponsor, provided one another to assist in monitoring and evaluating the sponsorship agreement? (i.e. “*We as a football club mentioned your company 15 times on Twitter in January*” or “*Our business got an extra 20 people through the door from the sponsorship*”)

- a) How does this impact upon your relationship and whether you continue sponsorship with [name of company]?

19) What negative, or potentially negative outcomes, do you consider this football club encounters when it becomes involved in sponsorship? – provide examples.

How are these mitigated? How did this impact upon the relationship? How would such negative outcomes be avoided in the future? Does this impact on your future decision to be involved in sponsorship? If none; Why? If any, what negative outcomes do you feel may arise in the future?

- a) What would make this football club feel it is necessary to stop or not continue the relationship with [name of company]? (*scandal*) When does this football club become aware, or make the company aware of the agreement being stopped or not being continued?
- b) In light of this, what would make this football club actively seek additional sponsors and when?

20) As the recipient, how would you view and describe the sponsorship relationship with [name of company]? – explore points which have contributed to this viewpoint, and obtain examples of this. (*equal? (in)formal? why?*)

- a) Do you consider your sponsorship relationship to be transactional or much more than just a transaction (*i.e. an inter-organisational relationship*)? why? examples.



- b) In order to deliver an effective sponsorship, what do you believe is important in the relationship between you and the sponsoring company? (*communication, cooperation, trust, shared values, mutual benefit and commitment etc.*)
- c) From this, what influences the quality of the relationship characteristics you deemed important in delivering an effective sponsorship deal? (*duration of deal, time constraint sponsorship motives, number of agreements previously conducted, value of agreement size of company/ football club, resources available, skill-set/ competencies, economic climate*)

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

Introduction: The final questions build upon the answers provided in the preceding sections to then make you consider where you believe grassroots football sponsorship can be advanced in the future.

- 21) From your experiences, what advice would you provide a football club that was about to engage in its first sponsorship with a company? (*then a company*)**
- 22) Overall, what do you perceive needs to be improved within the sponsorship of grassroots football to ensure that this football clubs' agreements are fruitful and successful?**
- 23) Finally, from this discussion, are there any areas that you feel have not been explored or you consider to be worth of note for this research?**

Conclusion: That concludes this discussion. Once again, thank you for participating in this research and providing such detailed answers to the questions. If possible, I would like to email you a copy of the transcript to make sure you are happy with all the information collected from today. It is important to again note that all information collected will be treated with the strictest of confidence. As a gesture of goodwill I am happy to email a copy of my final findings upon completion of this study if requested. I am also prepared to discuss any of my findings if you wish. If you have any questions now or before the end of the research I will happily answer these to the best of my ability.



Appendix 9: Phase One SME Sponsor Interview Schedule

Introduction: Good [morning/ afternoon/ evening], my name is Matthew Hindmarsh and I am a PhD student at Liverpool John Moores University undertaking research in relation to grassroots football sponsorship. Firstly, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study as I realise that your time is valuable. All questions included in this discussion have been tested and deemed suitable for use. It is important to note that certain questions may focus around finances. However, as with all questions, you can refuse to answer and, if concerned, can request certain information to not be included in the study. Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your knowledge, and if needed please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. In front of you is an instruction sheet which outlines all of this in more detail. Can you please confirm that you have read this instruction sheet and meet the study's inclusion criteria? Finally, can you please fill in this consent form?-this shows that you agree to participate and be recorded during this interview. Please be aware that you can withdraw at any time.

BACKGROUND TO CLUB AND SPONSORSHIP

Introduction: The first set of questions within this discussion are for me to gain an insight into this company and the setting in which sponsorship is being engaged in.

- 1) Can you please provide any general information about this company, and the role(s) you undertake within it?**
 - a) What is the company's mission and values? Have these changed from previous years? If so, why? (e.g. financially focussed or community orientated)
 - b) What are the company's key objectives? Have these changed from previous years? If so, why?
 - c) How long have you performed this type of role at this, or at another organisation?

- 2) What forms of promotional activity have this company engaged in, both previously and currently? How would you describe the level of success for these promotional activities?-explore further.**
 - a) What factors do you feel limit the company's ability and desire to engage in more promotional ventures? – provide examples.

MOTIVES AND BENEFITS OF SPONSORSHIP

Introduction: The next set of questions intend to focus on the value your company places on sponsorship, why your company engages in sponsorship, and the benefits such association provides your organisation.

- 3) Can you provide some background information into the grassroots sponsorship agreement(s) that your company is currently involved in?**

- 4) From your experiences as a company, how would you define sponsorship?**

- 5) In relation to your company's current promotional activity, where would you place the sponsorship of grassroots football on your list of priorities?**
 - a) What factors have led this company to prioritise sponsorship of grassroots football in the way it does?
 - b) At what point in the future will the importance of grassroots sponsorship, in particular football increase further for this company, if at all? – explore why.



- 6) What are this company's main motives behind wanting to sponsor a grassroots football club?**
- b) Is sponsorship of grassroots football more than a matter of financial investment or does it merely revolve around commercial motives? – explore why.
- 7) As a company, what benefits do you feel you have gained from sponsoring a grassroots football club?**
- a) When thinking about the company's benefits to sponsoring a grassroots football club are these mainly long-term, short-term or do you not even consider this?
- b) As the sponsor, what do you expect from the relationship? How is this made clear? Has this been achieved? (efficacy) If any, what unexpected benefits from being sponsored have you received?
- c) From your experience, how does grassroots football sponsorship provide mutual benefit to both this company and the football club it sponsors?
- d) What does the football club expect from the relationship? How is this made clear? Do you feel this has been achieved? (efficacy)
- 8) How do other organisations (e.g. other companies and amateur sport clubs) perceive the company as a result of your sponsorship deals? – explore why.**
- a) Do such deals encourage other relationships or partnerships to be formed? If so, how and with whom? If not, why?
- 9) From your current experiences, how worthwhile is the sponsorship of grassroots football in supporting this company's ability to achieve its mission, values and objectives, both in the short and long-term?**

STRATEGIC APPROACH TO SPONSORSHIP AND THE RELATIONSHIP

Introduction: These next set of questions plan to grasp an insight into the approaches taken toward sponsorship within this company, and the reasons behind why such processes occur within the agreement. It also intends to gain an understanding into how the relationship between this football club and the company who sponsor(s) you functions.

- 10) Can you describe the sponsorship agreement that your company is currently involved with [name of football club]?**
- 11) In your opinion, what makes sport and grassroots football a more attractive proposition for a company to be involved with compared to other promotional activities your company engages in (e.g. *forms of promotion company gave in Q2*)?**
- a) What benefits does sponsorship of grassroots football provide that high-profile and professional football sponsorship may lack if it was to be engaged in?
- b) Considering this, what made you more likely to sponsor [name of football club] over other grassroots sport clubs?-their USP? How did they convey this to the company?
- 12) As a sponsor, what assets of a football club do you find easy or difficult to gain sponsorship for?**
- a) Why do you feel that company's want to sponsor certain assets of a football club more than others? For example, a football kit over the clubs' website.



13) Can you talk me through the complete step-by-step process for the sponsorship between this football club and [name of company] from initial contact through to completion of term deal?

- a) Who is involved within the decision-making process?
- b) How does this company determine whether the cost of sponsoring a grassroots football club is feasible? What is the range or average amount requested by the football club? Does this company calculate the property's potential benefits to sponsorship: spend ratio (i.e. potential return on investment)? Can this company and the football club you sponsor be flexible if needed? – explore why.
- c) On average, how many sponsorship requests does this company receive or make each year? Namely received or made? Why?
- d) What factors impact this company's decision to sponsor a grassroots football club? In other words, how does this company select which football club to sponsor? Is this more due to a personal decision, strategic decision, or a mixture of both?
- e) Were different sponsorship packages made available to the company? If so, how did this aid the process? If not, why?
- f) Was the company handed a proposal? If so, how did this aid the process; Was this tailored or generic? If not, why?
- g) From your experience of the sponsorship process, what obstacles hinder or stop sponsorship from being successful? – provide examples. How are these challenges overcome?
- h) Do you feel that what this company does is rigorous enough for the purpose of grassroots football sponsorship?

14) From your experiences, what do you believe are the key success factors required for delivering an effective grassroots football sponsorship strategy?

- a) Is this company's sponsorship strategy developed strategically or on a 'Chairman's whim'?

15) Do you feel that the sponsorship programme this company is engaged in with [name of football club] is well planned? Why? – provide examples.

16) How does this company and [name of football club] promote the association to add value to the relationship? – provide examples.

If they do; What costs are incurred from undertaking such exercises? How do you know it adds value to the association? Who initiates this process? What do you feel stops you and the football club from promoting the association further during the agreement?

If they don't; What hinders this company and the football club it sponsors from promoting the association during the agreement?

- a) Which organisation do you believe should be accountable to promote the sponsorship further during association? The football club, the company, or both?- explore why.

17) How does this company monitor and evaluate the success of its association with [name of football club]?

If they do; What are the main difficulties associated with the monitoring and evaluation of sponsorship? How are these overcome? What are the benefits from monitoring and evaluating? If any, what funds and resources are committed to the process of monitoring and evaluation?



If they don't; Why? What barriers hinder this company from undertaking monitoring and evaluation? If you chose to, how would you evaluate the success of your association with [name of company]? How beneficial do you feel it would be if you evaluated the agreement?

- a) Who should monitor and evaluate the sponsorship of a grassroots football sponsorship programme? The club, the company, or both?-explore why?

18) What information have you as the sponsor, or [name of football club] as the property, provided to assist one another in monitoring and evaluating the sponsorship agreement? (i.e. "Our business got an extra 20 people through the door from the sponsorship" or "We as a football club mentioned your company 15 times on Twitter in January")

- a) How does this impact upon your relationship and whether you continue sponsorship with [name of football club]?

19) If any, what negative outcomes have resulted from the sponsorship agreement between this football club and [name of company]? – provide examples. If so; How are these mitigated? How did this impact upon the relationship? How would such negative outcomes be avoided in the future? Does this impact on your future decision to be involved in sponsorship? If none; Why? If any, what negative outcomes do you feel may arise in the future?

- a) What would make this company feel it is necessary to stop or not continue the relationship with [name of football club]? When does this company become aware, or make the football club aware of the agreement being stopped or not being continued?
- b) In light of this, what would make this company actively seek additional sponsors and when?

20) As the sponsor, how would you view and describe the sponsorship relationship with [name of football club]? – explore points which have contributed to this viewpoint.

- a) Do you consider your sponsorship relationship to be transactional or much more than just a transaction?
- b) In order to deliver an effective sponsorship, what do you believe is important in the relationship between you and the football club being sponsored?
- c) From this, what influences the quality of the relationship characteristics you deemed important in delivering an effective sponsorship deal?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

Introduction: The final questions build upon the answers provided in the preceding sections to then make you consider where you believe grassroots football sponsorship can be advanced in the future.

21) From your experiences, what advice would you provide a company that was about to engage in its first sponsorship with a grassroots football club?

22) Overall, what do you perceive needs to be improved within the sponsorship of grassroots football to ensure that this company's agreements are fruitful and successful?

23) Finally, from this discussion, are there any areas that you feel have not been explored or you consider to be worth of note for this research?



Conclusion: That concludes this discussion. Once again, thank you for participating in this research and providing such detailed answers to the questions. If possible, I would like to email you a copy of the transcript to make sure you are happy with all the information collected from today. It is important to again note that all information collected will be treated with the strictest of confidence. As a gesture of goodwill I am happy to email a copy of my final findings upon completion of this study if requested. I am also prepared to discuss any of my findings if you wish. If you have any questions now or before the end of the research I will happily answer these to the best of my ability.



Appendix 10: Phase Two NCFC Online Questionnaire

This study is part of a wider PhD research project that intends to examine how grassroots football sponsorship is approached during the current economic climate, and gain an insight into the football team/club-sponsor relationship. To take part in this study, your football club must be:

- 1) *A non-profit amateur football team/club.*
- 2) *A football team/club that currently holds a Charter Standard status.*
- 3) *A football team/club who is currently sponsored.*
- 4) *A football team/club who falls under a county Football Association (FA) located in the North-West (i.e. county FA of Cheshire, Cumberland, Lancashire, Liverpool, or Manchester).*

*You can find a copy of the participant information sheet by clicking on [**this link**](#). Please be aware that by completing this questionnaire you are giving your informed consent to taking part in this study. The questionnaire should take no longer than [number of minutes].*

Thank you for your time.

SECTION A: Your football club

Please tick the most appropriate response for each question below, unless stated otherwise.

1. Please indicate if you are answering this survey as a **football club** or as a **team that is part of a football club**.

a football club a team which is part of a football club

2. Which county FA does your team/club fall under?

Cheshire Cumberland Lancashire
 Liverpool Manchester

3. Which Charter Standard status from the FA did your club most recently achieve?

Charter Standard Club Charter Standard Development Club
 Charter Standard Community Club not a Charter Standard Club
 don't know

4. In terms of the number of players at your club, how would you describe the size of your club? **Please be aware that this number should include all players across junior, adult, male, women's and disabled football teams within your club; not just within your team.**

Small: Between 1 and 99 players
 Medium: Between 100 and 199 players
 Large: Over 200 players

5. How would you describe your team/club financially?

in profit in deficit breaking even
 don't know do not wish to disclose



6. What are the key objectives of your team/club? **Please state in the box below.**

--

7. What is your role within this team/club? **Please tick all that apply.**

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson | <input type="checkbox"/> Secretary | <input type="checkbox"/> Press officer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treasurer | <input type="checkbox"/> Welfare officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Website editor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respect officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing/Commercial manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Team manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Team Coach | <input type="checkbox"/> Team Assistant Coach | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: |

SECTION B: Your football club and its sponsorship

Please tick the most appropriate box that best reflects your football team and/ or club for each question or statement below, unless asked otherwise.

8. How does your team/club approach sponsorship as an organisation?

- the club arranges a deal with a company willing to sponsor every team in the club
 the club arranges a deal for each individual team associated to the club
 each team is responsible for arranging their own deal
 the club appoints consultants and agencies to recruit and handle sponsors
 other, please specify:
 we don't engage in sponsorship agreements
 don't know

9. How long do sponsorship agreements in your team/club commonly last for?

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> more than 3 years | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know |

10. How much income does your team/club approximately receive annually from sponsorship arrangements?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than £1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> between £1,000 and £1,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between £2,000 and £2,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> between £3,000 and £3,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between £4,000 and £4,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> between £5,000 and £5,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> above £6,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> do not wish to disclose | |



11. How significant are the types of sponsorship that your team/club are engaged in when generating revenue through sponsorship agreements? *Please answer by ticking the type of sponsorship your team/club engages in. And then, in considering this type of sponsorship, select the level of importance to the team/club, using the scale:*

*1 = Very Important
Unimportant*

3 =Moderately Important

5 =

Type of Sponsorship	Do you engage in this type of sponsorship?	Level of importance				
		1	2	3	4	5
Shirt sponsorship						
Training kit sponsorship						
Ground/ pitch sponsorship						
Event/ competition sponsorship						
Perimeter advertising						
Equipment sponsorship						
Website sponsorship						
If other, please specify;						

12. Please tick one box which best represents your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

Sponsorship...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) supports the team/club to achieve its objectives.					
b) provides the opportunity for short-term financial sustainability.					
c) presents the opportunity for long-term financial sustainability.					
d) reduces the pressure placed on other forms of income (i.e. grants, membership					



fees, subs etc.)					
e) provides the opportunity to heighten the team/clubs' awareness within the local community.					
f) allows the opportunity for specialist support (e.g. in law, finance and/or other professional services).					
g) generates substantial benefits throughout the agreed association.					
h) generates substantial benefits beyond the agreed association.					
i) is a financial tool and lifeline.					
j) will increase in importance, both financially, or otherwise, in the next five years.					
k) is engaged in for purely financial reasons.					

13. How important are the following features to the programme(s) you currently engage in? ***Please answer by ranking each feature in order of importance whereby 1 is of most importance and 4 is of least importance.***



Feature	Level of Importance			
a) Sponsorship preparation; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establish team/club objectives for sponsorship, and what can be offered to a prospective sponsor. ❖ Determine the sponsorship deal to be sought – level (e.g. exclusivity); type (e.g. shirt or website); length of deal; and sponsorship fee. ❖ Consider the potential risks to sponsorship and how to manage such prospects. ❖ Conduct research into prospective sponsors and develop a sponsorship proposal specific to that sponsor. 	1	2	3	4
b) Selection of partner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ If the team/club instigates the association: how the team/club selects which company to sponsor them. ❖ If company instigates the association: how the team/club decides whether to engage in the proposed agreement. 	1	2	3	4
c) Sponsorship planning; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Work with sponsor to ensure each party is aware of each organisations objectives to then form a plan which respects both parties' expectations. ❖ Create a list of activities to be undertaken during the sponsorship deal, alongside the set timescales and people accountable for those exercises. 	1	2	3	4
d) Monitoring and evaluation; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Develop an approach to monitoring and evaluation, while identifying possible opportunities that could mean evaluation is avoided. ❖ Construct SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) objectives prior to the deal and gather pre-sponsorship data relating to those objectives. ❖ Monitor the sponsorship deal several times throughout the agreement to then ultimately evaluate at the end of the deal against your own team/clubs' and sponsors' objectives. 	1	2	3	4

14. Considering your team/clubs' experiences, how would you describe how sponsorship partnerships in grassroots football are first approached?

[] your team/club ask the company to sponsor the team/club.

[] the company ask if they can sponsor your team/club.

[] a middle man via networks (i.e. "I know someone who may be interested in sponsoring you.")



15. In relation to your answer to question 14, please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements as to why you select a company to sponsor the team/club or you agree to be sponsored by a company.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) The company hold the same values as your team/club.					
b) The image of the sponsor.					
c) The financial resources of the sponsor.					
d) The industry sector of the sponsor.					
e) The networking capabilities of the sponsor.					
f) The sponsors' specialist knowledge and prospected provision of services (e.g. accountancy support).					
g) The sponsorship fee involved.					
h) The locality of the sponsor.					
i) The professionalism of the sponsor.					
j) An existing sponsor(s) recommendation.					
k) The company shows a strong fit to the team/club overall.					
l) Personal connections to the sponsor (i.e. family, friends and/or member of the team/club have an association with the company).					
m) No specific criteria.					

16. Are there other reasons not mentioned above as to why your team/club are involved in sponsorship?

yes no don't know

If you ticked *yes*, could you please state the reasons? *Please complete as appropriate.*

17. How do you view the relationship with the company who sponsors you?

- Much more personal than business-like
- Slightly more personal than business-like
- Equally personal as business-like
- Slightly more business-like than personal
- Much more business-like than personal



don't know

18. In relation to your sponsorship agreements, how important and satisfied are you in regard to the following statements? *Please answer by ticking one box that represents how important you consider each factor to be in delivering a successful partnership. And then, in considering your partnership, please then tick one box which best reflects how satisfied you feel in regards to this factor.*

Level of Importance Scale:

1 = Very Important 2 = Important 3 = Moderately Important 4 = Unimportant

Level of Satisfaction Scale:

1 = Extremely Satisfied 2= Satisfied 3 = Dissatisfied 4 = Very Dissatisfied

	Level of Importance				Level of Satisfaction			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
a) A partnership that is mutually beneficial to both parties.								
b) Co-operation and collaboration.								
c) Communication.								
d) Commitment.								
e) Trust.								
f) Transparency.								
g) Mutual understanding.								
h) Shared sponsorship goals and values.								
i) Ability to compromise.								
j) Company satisfaction.								
k) Club satisfaction.								
l) Respect.								
m) Reciprocity.								
n) Honesty.								
o) The level of realism in relation to expectations.								
p) The ability to hold a longer -term approach towards sponsorship.								

19. Are there any other factors not mentioned above that you believe are critical in the delivery of an effective sponsorship agreement?

yes no don't know

If you ticked *yes*, could you please state the reasons? *Please complete as appropriate.*

20. Overall, how satisfied are your team/club in relation to your sponsorship agreement(s) you engage in?

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Unsure

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied



As part of the study, we are also interested to hear the views of companies who sponsor your team/club. If you would be willing to forward a relevant survey link to the firm(s) who sponsor your team/club for them to complete the survey, can you please provide your name and contact details. Your involvement would be of significant help to the continuation of my study.

Contact name:

Contact email address:

Thank you for taking the time in completing this online survey. The answers you have provided will assist my research greatly and your help is very much appreciated.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you want to make any further comments in support of any answer in this survey, or would alternatively like to make additional comments about your relationship with the sponsoring organisation, please do so below:



- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than £250,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> £10 million-£14.99 million |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between £250,000 and £499,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> £15 million-£24.99 million |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between £500,000 and £999,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> over £25 million but under £34 million |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between £1 million and £4.99 million | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between £5 million and £9.99 million | <input type="checkbox"/> do not wish to disclose |

5. Which industry sector best describes your company's operations? *Please complete as appropriate.*

6. Primarily, how would you best describe your company's client base geographically?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Global | | | |

7. What is your job title within this company?

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Owner | <input type="checkbox"/> Partner | <input type="checkbox"/> Director/ CEO |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Company Secretary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: | | |

SECTION B: Your company and its sponsorship of grassroots football

Please tick the most appropriate box that best reflects your company for each question or statement below, unless asked otherwise. Again, please be aware that some questions ask for financial information of your company in relation to grassroots football sponsorship. These are optional and if you wish you do not have to disclose any information.

8. Where is the football team/club your company sponsor located?

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheshire | <input type="checkbox"/> Cumberland | <input type="checkbox"/> Lancashire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liverpool | <input type="checkbox"/> Manchester | <input type="checkbox"/> none of these counties |

9. Approximately, what percentage of your company's annual promotional spend is orientated towards the sponsorship of grassroots football?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than 5% | <input type="checkbox"/> 10% and over |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between 5% and 9% | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know |

10. How much did your company spend on sponsorship last year in total?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> less than £1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> over £5,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between £1,000 and £2,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> between £3,000 and £4,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> do not wish to disclose |

11. How long do the sponsorship agreements your company engages in with grassroots football teams/clubs commonly last for?



- less than 1 year
 1 year
 2 years

- 3 years
 more than 3 years
 don't know

12. In relation to delivering your company's promotional objectives, how significant are the types of grassroots football sponsorship you engage in? **Please answer by ticking the type of football team/club sponsorship your company engages in. And then, in considering this type of sponsorship, please select the level of importance in relation to delivering the company's promotional objectives, using the scale:**

1 = Very Important

3 = Moderately Important

5 = Unimportant

Type of Sponsorship	Do you engage in this type of sponsorship?	Level of importance				
		1	2	3	4	5
Shirt sponsorship						
Training kit sponsorship						
Ground/ pitch sponsorship						
Event/ competition sponsorship						
Perimeter advertising						
Equipment sponsorship						
Website sponsorship						
If other, please specify;						

13. Please tick one box which best represents your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Sponsorship of grassroots football...					
a) enables the company to achieve its objectives.					
b) provides the opportunity for the company to give something back to the local community.					
c) allows the company to connect with difficult to reach target consumers.					
d) heightens employee motivation within the company.					
e) increases public awareness of the company.					



f) increases public purchase intentions.					
g) increases the likelihood of repeat custom for the company.					
h) provides the opportunity for increased media coverage of the company.					
i) enhances/ sustains public image of the company.					
j) improves the company's customer recruitment (i.e. build customer databases).					
k) provides the company with a competitive advantage over other businesses.					
l) blocks other company's competitive advantage who engage in similar agreements.					
m) secures access to hospitality opportunities for the company.					
n) presents the opportunity for the company to network and strengthen relationships with other businesses that sponsor the same team/club.					
o) offers something different and unique compared to other forms of promotional activity the company engages in.					
p) is a cost-effective tool in the company's promotional arsenal.					
q) will increase in importance over the next five years.					
r) for the company is for purely commercial/business reasons and to gain a return on investment.					



14. How important are the following features to the programme(s) you currently engage in? *Please answer by ranking each feature in order of importance whereby 1 is of most importance and 4 is of least importance.*

Feature	Level of Importance			
	1	2	3	4
a) Sponsorship preparation; ❖ Establish company objectives for sponsorship, and what can be offered to a prospective football club. ❖ Determine the sponsorship deal to be sought – level (e.g. exclusivity); type (e.g. shirt or website); length of deal; and sponsorship fee. ❖ Consider potential risks to sponsorship and how to manage such prospects. ❖ Conduct research into prospective football clubs and set a sponsorship budget based on initial fee and the promotion of the agreement.	1	2	3	4
b) Selection of partner; ❖ If the company instigates the association: how the company selects which team/club to sponsor. ❖ If team/club instigates the association: how the company decides whether to engage in the proposed agreement.	1	2	3	4
c) Sponsorship planning; ❖ Work with the football team/club to ensure each party is aware of each organisations objectives to then form a plan which respects both parties' expectations. ❖ Create a list of activities to be undertaken during the sponsorship deal, alongside the set timescales and people accountable for those exercises.	1	2	3	4
d) Monitoring and evaluation; ❖ Develop an approach to monitoring and evaluation, while identifying possible opportunities that could mean evaluation is avoided. ❖ Construct SMART (i.e. specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) objectives prior to the deal and gather pre-sponsorship data relating to those objectives. ❖ Monitor the sponsorship deal several times throughout the agreement to then evaluate sponsorship at the end of the deal against your own company's and football clubs' objectives.	1	2	3	4

15. Considering your company's experiences, how would you describe how sponsorship partnerships in grassroots football are first approached?

the football team/club ask the company to sponsor the team/club.

your company ask if you can sponsor the football team and/ or club.

a middle man via networks (i.e. "I know a football team/club who is looking for sponsorship.")



16. In relation to your answer to question 15, please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements as to why you select a grassroots football team/club to sponsor.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
n) The football club hold the same values as your company.					
o) The image of the football club.					
p) The size of the football club (i.e. number of players).					
q) The type of football club (i.e. registered as a CASC or charity club)					
r) The networking capabilities of the football club.					
s) The professionalism of the football club.					
t) The football club holding a Football Association Charter Standard status.					
u) The sponsorship fee involved.					
v) The geographical location of the football club.					
w) Hold a personal affinity to the football club (i.e. you are currently/ or were previously associated to the club).					
x) Personal connections to the football club (i.e. family, friends and/ or colleagues are/ were associated to the club).					
y) An existing sponsor(s) recommendation.					
z) The football club shows a strong fit to your company overall.					
aa) No specific criteria.					



17. Are there other reasons not mentioned above as to why your company are involved in sponsorship of grassroots football?

yes no don't know

If you ticked **yes**, could you please state the reasons? *Please complete as appropriate.*

18. How do you view the relationship with the football team/club you sponsor?

- Much more personal than business-like
 Slightly more personal than business-like
 Equally personal as business-like
 Slightly more business-like than personal
 Much more business-like than personal
 don't know

19. In relation to your sponsorship agreements, how important and satisfied are you in regard to the following statements? *Please answer by ticking one box that represents how important you consider each factor to be in delivering a successful partnership. And then, in considering your partnership, please then tick one box which best reflects how satisfied you feel in regards to this factor.*

Level of Importance Scale:

1 = Very Important 2 = Important 3 = Moderately Important 4 = Unimportant

Level of Satisfaction Scale:

1 = Extremely Satisfied 2 = Satisfied 3 = Dissatisfied 4 = Very Dissatisfied

	Level of Importance				Level of Satisfaction			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
a) A partnership that is mutually beneficial to both parties.								
b) Co-operation and collaboration.								
c) Communication.								
d) Commitment.								
e) Trust.								
f) Transparency.								
g) Mutual understanding.								
h) Shared sponsorship goals and values								
i) Ability to compromise.								
j) Company satisfaction.								
k) Club satisfaction.								
l) Respect.								
m) Reciprocity.								
n) Honesty.								
o) The level of realism in relation to expectations.								
p) Long-term perspective towards sponsorship.								



20. Are there any other factors not mentioned above that you believe are critical in the delivery of an effective sponsorship agreement?

yes no don't know

If you ticked **yes**, could you please state the reasons? *Please complete as appropriate.*

21. Overall, how satisfied are your company in relation to your football team/club sponsorship agreement(s) you engage in?

Very satisfied

Dissatisfied

Satisfied

Very dissatisfied

Unsure

Thank you for taking the time in completing this online survey. The answers you have provided will assist my research greatly and your help is very much appreciated.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you want to make any further comments in support of any answer in this survey, or would alternatively like to make additional comments about your relationship with the football team/club, please do so below:



Appendix 12: Phase Three NCFC Repeat Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Introduction: Good [morning/ afternoon/ evening]. Firstly, I would like to thank you for once again agreeing to participate in this study as I realise that your time is valuable. The questions in this discussion have been tested and deemed suitable for use. Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your knowledge, and if needed please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. You can refuse to answer any question and, if concerned, can request certain data to not be included. In front of you is an instruction sheet which outlines all of this in more detail. Can you please confirm that you have read this and meet the study's inclusion criteria? Finally, can you please fill in the consent form? Please be aware you can withdraw at any time.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION(S)

- 1) Could you detail any notable changes regarding the club and its sponsorships since the last time we spoke, if any? (change in how sponsorship is prioritised? – why)**
- 2) Based on your perceptions, how accurate do you believe the definition outlined on sheet 1 to be? (Positives and drawbacks to definition)**

FEEDBACK ON PROCESS MODEL QUESTION(S)

- 3) After reviewing the model constructed and outlined on sheet 2, what are your initial thoughts on the model?**

<i>BRIEFLY SUMMARISE EACH STAGE OF THE FRAMEWORK TO RESPONDENT</i>

- 4) What are your opinions on the model outlined after it has been explained?**
- 5) Out of preparation, selection of partner, planning, implementation, and M&E, which phase of the model do you feel is the most important? – Explain.**
- 6) Reflecting on the model, what factors outside of the club and companies control impact on sponsorship? (i.e. Socio-economic and socio-political factors)**
- 7) What do you believe to be the strengths of the model?**
- 8) Alternatively, what do you perceive to be the weaknesses of the model?**
- 9) How could this model therefore be improved?**
- 10) Overall, do you think that the model adequately reflects your experiences from your sponsorship dealings?**
 - When looking to frame your sponsorship deals, would this model be something you would use? – Ask respondent to expand on answer.
 - How does the model add to your sponsorship knowledge that already exists?



11) To effectively convey the model to community football clubs and their sponsors, what approaches do you feel would be suitable? (i.e. Social Media; Blog; Guide YouTube; Podcast; Presentation; Workshop; Webinar; Mentorship)

12) Finally, are there any other comments that you believe to be noteworthy?

Conclusion: That concludes this discussion. Once again, thank you for participating in this research and providing such detailed answers to the questions. If possible, I would like to email you a copy of the transcript to make sure you are happy with all the information collected from today. It is important to note that all data collected is treated with the strictest of confidence. As a gesture of goodwill I am happy to email a copy of my final findings upon completion of this study. I am also prepared to discuss any of my findings. If you have any questions now or before the end of the research I will happily answer these to the best of my ability.



Appendix 13: Phase Three SME sponsor Repeat Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Introduction: Good [morning/ afternoon/ evening]. Firstly, I would like to thank you for once again agreeing to participate in this study as I realise that your time is valuable. The questions in this discussion have been tested and deemed suitable for use. Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your knowledge, and if needed please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. You can refuse to answer any question and, if concerned, can request certain data to not be included. In front of you is an instruction sheet which outlines all of this in more detail. Can you please confirm that you have read this and meet the study's inclusion criteria? Finally, can you please fill in the consent form? Please be aware you can withdraw at any time.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION(S)

- 1) **Could you detail any notable changes regarding the company and its sponsorships since the last time we spoke, if any? (change in how sponsorship is prioritised? – why)**
- 2) **Based on your perceptions, how accurate do you believe the definition outlined on sheet 1 to be? (Positives and drawbacks to definition)**

FEEDBACK ON PROCESS MODEL QUESTION(S)

- 3) **After reviewing the model constructed and outlined on sheet 2, what are your initial thoughts on the model?**

<i>BRIEFLY SUMMARISE EACH STAGE OF THE FRAMEWORK TO RESPONDENT</i>

- 4) **What are your opinions on the model outlined after it has been explained?**
- 5) **Out of preparation, selection of partner, planning, implementation, and M&E, which phase of the model do you feel is the most important? – Explain.**
- 6) **Reflecting on the model, what factors outside of the club and companies control impact on sponsorship? (i.e. Socio-economic and socio-political factors)**
- 7) **What do you believe to be the strengths of the model?**
- 8) **Alternatively, what do you perceive to be the weaknesses of the model?**
- 9) **How could this model therefore be improved?**
- 10) **Overall, do you think that the model adequately reflects your experiences from your sponsorship dealings?**
 - When looking to frame your sponsorship deals, would this model be something you would use? – Ask respondent to expand on answer.
 - How does the model add to your sponsorship knowledge that already exists?



11) To effectively convey the model to sponsors and community football clubs, what approaches do you feel would be suitable? (i.e. Social Media; Blog; Guide YouTube; Podcast; Presentation; Workshop; Webinar; Mentorship)

12) Finally, are there any other comments that you believe to be noteworthy?

Conclusion: That concludes this discussion. Once again, thank you for participating in this research and providing such detailed answers to the questions. If possible, I would like to email you a copy of the transcript to make sure you are happy with all the information collected from today. It is important to note that all data collected is treated with the strictest of confidence. As a gesture of goodwill I am happy to email a copy of my final findings upon completion of this study. I am also prepared to discuss any of my findings. If you have any questions now or before the end of the research I will happily answer these to the best of my ability.



Appendix 14: Phase Three CFA Focus Group Schedule

Introduction: Good [morning/ afternoon/ evening]. Firstly, I would like to thank you for once again agreeing to participate in this study as I realise that your time is valuable. The questions in this discussion have been tested and deemed suitable for use. Please answer each question honestly and to the best of your knowledge, and if needed please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. You can refuse to answer any question and, if concerned, can request certain data to not be included. In front of you is an instruction sheet which outlines all of this in more detail. Can you please confirm that you have read this and meet the study's inclusion criteria? Finally, can you please fill in the consent form? Please be aware you can withdraw at any time.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION(S)

- 1) **Can you provide an overview of the County FA and the organisations objectives?** (i.e. Responsible for)
- 2) **Based on your perceptions, how accurate do you believe the definition outlined on sheet 1 to be?**
- 3) **How high does assisting amateur football teams gain sponsorship and/ or improve existing sponsorships sit on the list of County FA priorities?** - Explain.
- 4) **How frequently do amateur football teams approach you directly to seek support with their sponsorship dealings?**
 - Why? (Why do you feel they seek your support? **OR** Why don't they seek your support?)
 - How do they seek support from you?
- 5) **What type of support is offered by the FA and County FA to assist with issues associated to sponsorship?** (i.e. Direct support – How? Signposting to useful links – What links?)
- 6) **As part of the FA, do you feel that you do enough to promote the benefits of sponsorship to teams in your region?**
- 7) **In addition, as part of the FA, do you feel that you do enough to support teams in issues associated with sponsorship?**
 - What type of additional support already provided do you think you should offer teams within your region? How?

FEEDBACK ON PROCESS MODEL QUESTION(S)

- 8) **After reviewing the model constructed and outlined on sheet 2, what are your initial thoughts on the model?**

BRIEFLY SUMMARISE EACH STAGE OF THE FRAMEWORK TO RESPONDENT

- 9) **What are your current opinions on the model outlined after it has been explained?**



- 10) What do you believe to be the strengths of the model?**
- 11) Alternatively, what do you perceive to be the weaknesses of the model?**
- 12) How could this model therefore be improved?**
- 13) Out of preparation, selection of partner, planning, implementation, and M&E, which phase of the model do you feel is the most important? – Explain.**
- 14) Reflecting on the model, what factors outside of the club and companies control impact on sponsorship? (i.e. Socio-economic and socio-political factors)**
- 15) If you could list five critical success factors you feel are necessary to ensure a successful sponsorship relationship, what would they be?**
- 16) Overall, do you believe that the model outlined could be a tool endorsed by the (County) FA to assist clubs in their sponsorship dealings? – How does it add to your knowledge?**
- 17) To effectively convey the model to both community football clubs and sponsors, what approaches do you feel would be suitable? (i.e. Social Media; Blog; Guide YouTube; Podcast; Presentation; Workshop; Webinar; Mentorship)**
- 18) Finally, are there any other comments that you believe to be noteworthy?**

Conclusion: That concludes this discussion. Once again, thank you for participating in this research and providing such detailed answers to the questions. If possible, I would like to email you a copy of the transcript to make sure you are happy with all the information collected from today. It is important to note that all data collected is treated with the strictest of confidence. As a gesture of goodwill I am happy to email a copy of my final findings upon completion of this study. I am also prepared to discuss any of my findings. If you have any questions now or before the end of the research I will happily answer these to the best of my ability.



Appendix 15: Practitioner Content-Related Revisions (Feedback on Version One Model)

Step(s)	Practitioner Feedback	Example of Evidence	Action Taken
1	Note how clubs may identify reputational risk as potential hazard to sponsorship.	Negative scandals work both ways. A potential risk for the club may be scandals with the business that then impact on the club because of association. (SME Accountant)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 1.
1/2	Greater clarity in steps 1 and 2 to describe the tasks undertaken.	I class those two phases [points to stages one and two] as a single entity. When I think of 'identify and assess the need' I straight away think of I need a kit rather than I need sponsorship. There is perhaps a difference between the two phases, but this needs to be made clearer in the framework itself. (NCFC 1907)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Steps 1 and 2.
1/2/3/4	Emphasise first four steps in model are typically undertaken by the sponsee.	The most likely scenario between phases one and four is that the club look for a sponsor rather than the sponsor looking for a club. (NCFC Yellow)	Inclusion of a coloured key to highlight the party (sponsor; sponsee; or both) who typically undertakes the respective phase.
2/5	Inclusion of the concept exclusivity.	We will always insist that we are the only accountants that they are associated with. That would be something that we'd always push because it's at the point that as soon as you see two names, OK we could hold the bigger presence, they may see the other accountants a few times and think they're much of a muchness and choose them. So it's just like if you're going to see an accountants name it's going to be ours. (SME Accountant)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Steps 2 and 5.
3	Plurality for step 3.	When looking at stage 3 you are not only attempting to identify one organisation but multiple organisations and should therefore be plural. (NCFC 1907)	Step 3 changed to: Identify organisation(s).
3	Inclusion of 'scattergun' approach in detailing the identification of organisations.	There is also the scattergun approach sometimes – Any businesses are targeted. (SME Accountant)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 3.
3/4/5	Transition between steps 3 and 5 may be on multiple	Quite often you go from step three to five about four or five times until you get someone, unless you're lucky. (NCFC Youth)	Embedded into deconstruction of model:



	occasions until agreement with organisation can be reached.		Introduction section of phase 2.
4	Need to include sponsorship offered in step 4 of model.	There wasn't really a request for sponsorship I offered sponsorship. (SME Restaurant)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 4.
4	Highlight company will only initiate deal when potential commercial return on investment is prevalent.	I think the only time a company approaches the club is when they see an opportunity to increase their customer interests and make money... If I approach a team it's because I think I can make money out of this so I'm gonna go to this team. (SME Restaurant)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 4.
5	Include 'potentially in future' decision to step 5.	There's a fifth one – Well not right now, but in a years' time. Because the problem is that a lot of the time it will be driven by the club and within certain periods of time companies will have already allocated their budget so may therefore say "see us in February". (SME Accountant)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 5.
5/6	Greater clarity in steps 5 and 6 to describe the tasks undertaken.	I think that step six could be something such as to just outline specific responsibilities of both parties whereas five could be about confirming the deal... (SME Bartender)	Step 5 changed to: Review request Step 6 amended to: Sponsorship plan. Embedded into deconstruction of model: Steps 5 and 6.
5/9	Inclusion of 'Terms of Agreement' or contract when negotiating sponsorship partnership.	Ideally you would include an exit strategy so that if we said, "we've got a sponsor for next year", the [SME] can't say "well hang on we were going to do it" as it would be in the contract. (NCFC SB) It's really important that there is a timeline for the club, but also important for the company to know I'm only tied into this for 12 months. You want something in	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Steps 5 and 9.



		writing really because it could reduce conflict further down the line. (SME Accountant)	
6	Need to specifically discuss planning of leveraging strategies to be undertaken within step 6.	When it says leverage, wouldn't all of that be discussed in the confirming phase? (SME Restaurant) And when it comes to leveraging and activation strategies would all of that be agreed and confirmed in here [points to stage 6]? (SME Bartender)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 6.
7	Clarify sponsorship leveraging may be undertaken for purposes other than monetary gain.	When you talk about leverage and activation it depends on leverage of what because you are kind of implied to think its monetary based on what you have said rather than the leveraging of joy and happiness. So, you know, leveraging can be emotional rather than just money but your brain kind of reads it and thinks cash. (NCFC 1907)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 7.
7	Need for documents to allow sponsorship to be transparent and tax deductible benefits.	Not only is the deal agreed but an invoice and subsequently a receipt needs to go out. (SME Accountant)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 7.
7	Stress clubs must not shirk responsibility once the provision/ service agreed has been acquired – a typical occurrence.	So it's important that between steps seven to nine that you're in constant communication. However, clubs don't do it... Again, 'cause its not-for-profit football most of these managers are dads and have full-time jobs and have responsibilities in the week outside of football so can you blame them for not contacting and giving them regular updates. (SME Bartender) Where a lot of club's fail is the renewal process. It's like business. Once I've got somebody through the door its ten times easier to keep them than getting a new person. My experiences with football clubs is that they'll have someone there and then once they've paid they'll forget about the partnership. (SME Accountant) I think in reality steps seven and eight don't really happen... It sounds horrible to say but in reality, step one to six reflects what activities do happen to procure the	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 7.



		sponsorship, but when we get to step seven due to time constraints this is often done with less vigour. (NCFC 1907)	
7/8/9	Model fails to account for deals naturally breaking down.	Towards the end of the season they've got everything that they need, and you haven't heard from them in a while so it's whether they want to come back and [NCFC] never did so it just sort of finished. (SME Restaurant) I mean it's not as much as it ceased but rather had run its course. It's time for renewal and no one from the club has approached me. (SME Accountant)	Inclusion of a separate pathway which evidences the possible break from traditional trajectory of process from step 7 to 9 of the model.
7/8/9	Model fails to account for experiences in which there is termination.	Whilst the sponsorship is being implemented you could say "I'm not happy with this. This is not what you said you were going to do." [Respondent moves finger away from model]... You'd have to have almost like a separate path where you go to when you're not happy, potentially have another meeting and then it would either be OK its sorted so we continue or it isn't and then the agreement is stopped and then the organisation would need to go back to the start. (SME Restaurant)	Inclusion of a separate pathway which evidences the possible break from traditional trajectory of process from step 7 to 9 of the model.
9	Highlight in step 9 that clubs must attempt to cross-sell.	As a club what should be happening is that they should be cross-selling... At the renewal stage I should always be offered an upgrade because once the foot is in the door I'm more likely to be like "Do you know what, OK". (SME Accountant)	Embedded into deconstruction of model: Step 9.
9	Step 9 should link to step 5.	You've got point nine, which is sponsorship renewal. That should really come back to point five of negotiation and what have you. (SME Accountant)	Arrow omitted from model as organisations will still need to undertake each phase of process, emphasised by SME Journalist: "If you are renewing it you've got to go through all the phases again."



<p>Entire steps within process</p>	<p>Economic, political, and reputational factors may contribute to how sponsorship is approached by organisations.</p>	<p>You've got Brexit at the moment and no one knows what is going to happen... In my game I buy a lot from abroad. I buy carpet in Turkey that then needs to get to Belgium and then across to here. They're looking to put an extra 40p so it's going to seriously make me think about if I would be able to sponsor because it's going to cane me. (SME Carpet-fitter)</p> <p>If we look at Brexit from a club point of view, I know some clubs who have gotten grants from the EU. Now if we do leave the EU I don't know whether that would put a halt to this. Would clubs therefore try and locate other sources of finance to negate this? Possibly (NCFC 1907)</p> <p>Anything can affect it can't it. It could be the image of the club. It could be the image of the company vi se versa. (NCFC Youth)</p> <p>One club I've been at had complete control of its own ground and sold advertising boards which were hung around the perimeter fencing. We use a council pitch and we're not allowed to do that because we are under council control. That certainly cuts of a revenue stream. (NCFC SB)</p>	<p>Process encased in broken rectangle to evidence forces outside organisation(s) control but may impact on how deal is approached.</p>
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