Art Sponsorship Success: An Empirical Investigation into Sponsor Recall and the Ambiguous Role of Visitors’ Involvement

By Nicola E. Stokburger-Sauer and Verena Hofmann

This paper investigates the success of corporate art sponsorships with a special focus on sponsor recall and visitors’ involvement. A field experiment provides interesting insights into the relationship between two different types of visitors’ involvement and the sponsor’s corporate image, reputation and trust. While situational (i.e., art exhibition) involvement leads to more positive image ratings for the sponsor, high enduring art involvement has a negative effect. This latter negative relationship does not exist for those visitors who can recall the sponsor. Conversely, from the sponsee’s (i.e., museum’s) perspective, both art exhibition and art involvement have positive effects. Art exhibition involvement positively influences the sponsee’s reputation and art involvement positively affects the sponsee’s image and reputation. The results further show that visitors’ ratings of corporate image, reputation, and trust are higher among those visitors who can recall the sponsor after their museum visit. The findings provide a rich basis for deriving implications for the design of art sponsorships and for art sponsorships as a marketing communication tool.

1. Introduction

In Europe, art institutions (e.g., museums) are heavily supported by public budgets. In Germany, for instance, annual public support adds up to nine billion euros (Statistisches Bundesamt 2012), which makes up almost 90% of the necessary allocation (Gerlach-March 2010). Ever-increasing deficits in public budgets, however, lead to decreasing public support. The situation is worse in the United States, where public financing of art is comparably low. Here, art institutions receive 7% of their support from public budgets (Iyengar 2012). Since there is almost no public financing of the arts, sponsoring plays a major role in this area (Rowley and Williams 2008). In the U.S., art sponsorships accounted for 45% of art institutions’ income (Iyengar 2012). A sponsorship is regarded “as the provision of assistance, either financial or as an activity by a commercial organisation for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives” (Meenaghan 1983, p. 9). It is distinct from a charitable donation (i.e., a donation to some charitable organisation without a valuable mentioning), an endorsement (i.e., paid use of specified products or services by an individual performer, organisation, or club, such as a sports team), and patronage (i.e., an altruistic activity carried out with no expectation of return other than the satisfaction of knowing that good is being done; Diggle 1975).

Thus, “[w]hile these campaigns [i.e., sponsoring] do provide much-needed support to worthy causes, they are intended as much to increase company visibility [...] as to create social impact” (Porter and Kramer 2002, p. 57). On the one hand, corporate sponsorships and art patronage are becoming increasingly indispensable to keep art institutions alive (e.g., Swanson and Davis 2006). On the other hand, sponsorships provide a different way for companies to reach and communicate company goals to audiences (Rowley and Williams 2008). While corporate sponsors are more effective for such “cause-related”
marketing compared to traditional marketing mix instruments (Porter and Kramer 2002), little is known about consequences from sponsorships on attitudes and behaviours, compared to what is known about advertising effectiveness. Of the few studies on sponsorship effectiveness the great majority is in the area of sport sponsoring (Zdravkovic and Till 2012). The different sponsoring context (i.e., art versus sport), however, results in somewhat different stakeholder perceptions of the corporate sponsorship. While art sponsoring, for instance, is rather related to corporate social responsibility and public relations motives, sport sponsoring is more involved with corporate profit objectives and marketing thinking (Witcher et al. 1991). It is therefore the overall objective of this study to take the special art context into consideration and investigate the effectiveness of corporate art sponsorships in terms of corporate image, reputation, and trust by considering the relevance of visitors’ involvement and sponsor recall.

One of the main goals of sponsorships is the improvement of the sponsor’s corporate image (Carrillat et al. 2015; Meenaghan 2001a; Pappu and Cornwell 2014; Schwaiger et al. 2010; Simoes and Agante 2014; Zdravkovic and Till 2012), which is understood as a visitor’s overall evaluation of the sponsor (Fombrun 2000). Additionally, the relationship between sponsorship activities and corporate reputation (Schwaiger et al. 2010), which is defined as “[…] assessment of a company’s ability to provide valued outcomes to a representative group of stakeholders” (Fombrun et al. 2000, p. 243), has been established, but more research needs to be done here to clarify this link. On the one hand, sponsoring is commonly used to enhance a positive corporate image or reputation or even turn a negative one into a positive one (Grohs et al. 2004; Pappu and Cornwell 2014; Schwaiger et al. 2010; Zdravkovic and Till 2012). On the other hand, the literature shows that sponsoring might have negative effects on these outcomes (Javalgi et al. 1994), for example, when individuals already have negative associations with the sponsor. In sum, there is a general need for research into these proposed relationships. The literature has further established trust as an important outcome variable of marketing communication activities (Swoboda et al. 2016). Following the psychological approach, trust can be understood as one’s “confident positive expectations regarding another’s conduct […]”, whereby conduct is understood in a “very specific, but encompassing, sense, addressing another’s words, actions, and decisions” (Lewicki et al. 1998, p. 439). Thus, it is relevant for firms to establish trust in their customer-company relationships. Relationships with a high level of trust signal mutually confident and positive expectations in the future, which help companies to create interdependencies, and therefore, retain customers (Lewicki et al. 2006).

Involvement, which is one of the most important variables in the consumer decision-making and persuasion process, is highly relevant for the sponsoring context (Simoes and Agante 2014). The literature has suggested that involvement can be regarded a critical variable for the effectiveness of corporate art sponsoring (Pham 1992). According to Celsi and Olsen (1988), felt involvement results from a combination of enduring (i.e., intrinsic) and situational sources of personal relevance. Pham (1992) applies this concept to the sponsoring context and concludes that felt involvement with a particular sponsored event is driven by enduring involvement (e.g., involvement with soccer in general or a specific team) and situational involvement (e.g., involvement with the current opponent, the stakes, or the score). Both enduring and situational involvement are found to increase felt involvement, but enduring involvement does so to a larger extent (Celsi and Olsen 1988). The current research thus investigates the different effects of involvement. To shed light on this ambiguous role of involvement, we established a dyad of situational involvement (i.e., art exhibition involvement) and personal involvement (i.e., art involvement) and investigated their effects on the art sponsorship outcomes of image, reputation, and trust. Even though involvement is often considered to have a moderating role (Lardinois and Derbaix 2001; Meenaghan 2001b; Stokburger-Sauer et al. 2012), research also considers involvement as an antecedent (Meenaghan 2001a; Walraven et al. 2014) of sponsoring outcomes. The questions that we intend to answer in this research are: Do higher levels of situational (i.e., art exhibition) involvement have a positive effect, and do higher levels of art involvement have a potentially negative effect on the image, reputation, and trust of the sponsor and the sponsor (i.e., art museum)? Does sponsor recall make a difference?

Finally, research has found that sponsorship awareness in the sense of sponsor recall is important for sponsorship success (Javalgi et al. 1994; Pomerling and Dolnicar 2008; Sen et al. 2006). Little, however, is known about the effects of corporate art sponsoring from a longitudinal (i.e., before and after the event) perspective. Recent research in a related field, corporate social responsibility, suggests that in reality, consumers’ ability to correctly identify the corporate social responsibility activities of a company is quite low (e.g., Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Sen et al. 2006) as there is a lack of consumer awareness towards these activities (Pomerling and Dolnicar 2008). However, corporate social responsibility activities significantly influence corporate performance when they are successfully implemented (Kang et al. 2016), meaning that they need to be optimally communicated and spread by the company (Habel et al. 2016; Mishra and Modi 2016). Therefore, research is needed that gives more externally valid evidence using real-world tests of the relationships proposed by academic research. That is, sponsor recall should be assessed in field experiments in a real-word setting. The following question remains to be answered: Are the sponsor’s image, reputation, and trust more positive after the sponsorship “treatment” (t1) than before (t0) (i.e., after visiting the exhibition and being able to recall the sponsor vs. before visiting the exhibition)?
In sum, this paper contributes to sponsorship research and practice in three ways. First, by taking into account different types of visitors’ involvement in the sense of situational (i.e., art exhibition) involvement and enduring (i.e., art) involvement and relating the two involvement types to corporate image, reputation, and trust, this study helps to establish more profound knowledge on how art sponsoring success depends on visitors’ involvement. This study disentangles the potentially ambiguous role of these involvement types from art exhibition involvement, which generally exerts a positive influence, and art involvement, which generally exerts a negative influence on sponsorship outcomes. This knowledge enables museums and marketing managers to introduce art sponsoring activities based on their visitors’ needs which result in more positive responses.

Second, this study considers visitors’ sponsor recall as a moderator that creates sophisticated knowledge on how sponsoring can be made more effective and successful. Specifically, the field study conducted in this paper provides a real-world test that helps in examining the role of sponsor recall for corporate art sponsoring success in relation to visitors’ art exhibition and art involvement. Focusing on the interaction effect of sponsor recall and involvement on sponsoring success variables, this study helps to account for potentially different moderation effects of sponsor recall for art exhibition versus art involvement.

Third, this study focuses on the relevance of sponsor recall for sponsoring outcomes by taking a longitudinal perspective. By examining whether corporate image, reputation and trust are more positive after visiting the exhibition (t1) and recalling the sponsor, compared to before visiting the exhibition (t0), this study helps museums and marketing managers to introduce strategies to strengthen their visitors’ sponsor recall.

This article proceeds as follows. First, we develop a conceptual framework and model hypotheses. In line with common research approaches (e.g., Malär et al. 2011; Roggeveen et al. 2015), in a first step, we introduce the direct effects of our independent variables of involvement on the outcome variables; in a second step, we add sponsor recall as a moderator to the model. The hypotheses are tested in an empirical field study involving visitors of a German art museum. Then, the methodology, data analyses, and results are presented. The paper closes with a summary and implications for sponsorship theory and practice, as well as future research opportunities.

2. Conceptual model and hypotheses

2.1. Sponsor-related outcomes

Because of its association with corporate philanthropy, corporate art sponsoring is generally perceived very positively by the public (e.g., Porter and Kramer 2002). Therefore, one would expect a positive relationship between art sponsoring and the sponsor’s corporate image, reputation and trust. While both corporate image and reputation are corporate associations (Walsh et al. 2009), they are distinct from each other. Corporate image includes connotative attributes, while corporate reputation is understood as “attitude construct and, thus, is accessible only by denotative attributes” (Schwager 2004, p. 50). More precisely, the sponsor’s corporate image is defined as a visitor’s overall evaluation of the sponsor. The sponsor’s corporate reputation, however, can also include denotative attributes and is defined as “[...] assessment of a company’s ability to provide valued outcomes to a representative group of stakeholders” (Fombrun et al. 2000, p. 243). Corporate trust, which is a relevant outcome variable in relationship marketing and in sponsoring (Farrelly and Quester 2003), differs from corporate image and reputation because corporate trust is regarded as a “confident positive expectation regarding another’s conduct” (Lewicki et al. 1998, p. 439).

The conceptualisation of corporate reputation has been controversially discussed in the literature. The reputation quotient (Fombrun et al. 2000) is a widely used conceptualisation of corporate reputation (Sarstedt et al. 2013) and consists of six dimensions: emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace environment, social responsibility and financial performance. Schwager (2004) proposed reducing these six dimensions to a likeability dimension that captures affective judgments and a competence dimension that includes the company’s economic performance. Translating these views of reputation to the current research context suggests using one rather affective and one rather cognitive dimension of corporate reputation. This research thus includes the first two dimensions of the reputation quotient, namely emotional appeal (EA) and products and services (PS). Following Śwoboda et al. (2016), however, we exclude trust from “emotional appeal” as we view trust as a construct distinct from reputation.

The impact of sponsoring on corporate image, reputation, and trust is likely to be affected by involvement which is an important variable in the consumer decision-making and persuasion process (Simoes and Agante 2014). Involvement can be defined as how a person perceives the relevance of an object based on his or her inherent values, needs and interests (Zaichkowsky 1985). Research on the consequences of involvement goes back to the 1970s, when Petty and Cacioppo (1979) and Zaichkowsky (1985) claimed a causal model of involvement and information behaviour, saying that involvement influences the motivation to search for, process and save information. Involvement usually increases a consumer’s motivation for superior information processing and more analytic judgment and decision making (e.g., Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Petty and Cacioppo 1979; Zaichkowsky 1985). Poiesz and de Bont Cees (1995) add that involvement plays a vital role in a consumer’s attention processes. Visitors of art exhibitions with a high degree of involvement are expected to engage in more at-
tention and detailed information processing strategies than those with a low degree of involvement. High involvement would also lead to visitors paying more attention to the sponsor and (intensively) processing information relating to the sponsor. It has to be noted, however, that superior information processing and attention processes do not necessarily result in more positive outcomes for the processed object (e.g., sponsor or brand), but can, for instance, affect sponsor outcomes (e.g., corporate image) in either a positive or negative way. This ambiguity will be explained in the following section.

Given the positive effects of involvement on attention and information processing, this paper assumes a positive relationship between situational involvement and goals pursued by corporate art sponsoring. In terms of the latter, Sirgy et al. (2008) found that the participant’s involvement in a sporting event has a positive influence on the participant’s loyalty to the sponsor’s brands. From a theoretical standpoint, this relationship can be explained with the help of the elaboration-likelihood model’s (ELM) central path of information processing and communication persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo 1979). Similarly, the uses-gratification approach helps to explain the effect. Even though the uses-gratification approach comes from social media and social network research (Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008), it can be applied here as it suggests that a user’s involvement determines the usage of a specific content (Suckfüll 2004). That is, the level of involvement is decisive for one’s behaviour. In our context, this means that visitors who are highly involved in art exhibitions are motivated and better able to process sponsorship information because they are more willing to use this information and have the ability to do so. Thus, even though the ELM does not explicitly integrate the construct of involvement, the “motivation and ability for information processing” is highly related to the involvement construct. Given the two prerequisites of high motivation and the ability to process information, the visitors’ evaluation results in an enduring persuasion process when the arguments attached to an art exhibition’s message are strong and positive. In other words, visitors’ positive evaluation of art sponsorships comes along with positive thoughts and can thus lead to an enduring persuasion effect on the sponsor’s image and reputation. Conversely, when visitors are not motivated or able to process the information, there is no change or only a weak change in their attitudes. That is, the information process does not result in an enduring persuasion in the sense of a sponsor’s image, reputation and trust. Drawing on the ELM, Pope et al. (2009) found similar results. Those who are continuously exposed to sponsorship information assess a brand’s quality and image more positively than those who are not continuously exposed, as they do not actively think about the sponsor.

Connecting the situational involvement to image, reputation and trust suggests the following relationships:

**H1:** A visitor’s involvement in an art exhibition (event) is positively related to the sponsor’s a) image, b) reputation (emotional appeal), c) reputation (products and services) and d) trust.

The in depth-interviews with art experts (i.e., seven art history professors and two art gallery directors) conducted during this research project, as well as conventional wisdom, suggest that art enthusiasts (i.e., individuals who are very highly involved in art) do not want to have cultural goals, like those represented by the arts, mixed up with commercial goals that are pursued by commercial sponsors. Corporate art sponsoring thus might result in a “boomerang” effect that can be explained by the ELM (Petty and Cacioppo 1979). One can assume that visitors who are highly involved in art are able but not motivated to process the sponsor’s information. Conversely, they are motivated and able to think about the issue under consideration (corporate art sponsoring in general). The current attitude of the visitors who are highly involved in art regarding art sponsoring is negative. Thus, information processing of the topic of “art sponsoring in general” results in counterarguments and produces a “boomerang” effect. Art involvement is therefore negatively related to sponsoring outcomes. Similar results are found by Simoes and Agante (2014). Because many art enthusiasts share the impression that commercial sponsorships intrude in the cultural and creative freedom of artists and art institutions, the nature of the advocacy is counter-attitudinal and produces unfavourable thoughts. This leads to a negative relationship between art involvement and the sponsor’s image and reputation.

We propose:

**H2:** A visitor’s involvement in art is negatively related to the sponsor’s a) image, b) reputation (emotional appeal), c) reputation (products and services) and d) trust.

### 2.2. Sponsee-related outcomes

Similar to the reasoning that was put forward to the relationship between involvement and the outcomes for the sponsor, the sponsee (i.e., the art museum) also benefits from sponsorship activities, often both in monetary and non-monetary (i.e., attitudinal) form. Madill and O’Reilly (2010, p. 135) specify the latter in terms of the sponsee “gaining credibility through being sponsored/associated with organizations that may have positive images in the minds of consumers.” Just as the uses-gratification approach and ELM’s central path of information processing and communication persuasion provided help in explaining a positive relationship between art exhibition involvement and sponsorship outcomes for the sponsor, this also applies to the art museum as sponsee. Visitors who are highly involved in art exhibitions are believed to develop more favourable attitudes towards the art museum because this situational involvement allows for the motivation and ability to process museum information, produces positive thoughts and finally improves how the museum is appreciated in terms of the art museum’s image and reputation. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H3: A visitor’s involvement in an art exhibition is positively related to the sponsee’s a) image, b) reputation (emotional appeal), c) reputation (products and services) and d) trust.

Because of their wide knowledge of art (and things related to art), individuals who are highly involved in art are believed to hold a more positive image and reputation of the art museum that they decide to visit. Their high expertise in art gives them the capability to form realistic expectations about consumption objects and actions related to the arts (e.g., visiting an art museum). This makes them less likely to encounter negative results and dissatisfaction resulting from these decisions (Barnes and McTavish 1983). Thus, in their process of choosing to either visit or not visit an art exhibition, individuals who are highly involved in art are believed to be better able to select the exhibition and museum that they like. The following hypothesis is put forward:

H4: A visitor’s involvement in art is positively related to the sponsee’s a) image, b) reputation (emotional appeal), c) reputation (products and services) and d) trust.

2.3. The role of sponsor recall in the link between involvement and image, reputation and trust

Generally, sponsorship activities are driven by a variety of objectives; the foremost are to increase company awareness and to establish, change or strengthen corporate image, reputation (e.g., Grohs et al. 2004; Pappu and Cornwell 2014; Schwaiger et al. 2010; Zdravkovic and Till 2012) and trust in the company (Farrelly and Quester 2003; Ollkonen and Tuominen 2006). A number of studies have examined image effects of sponsorships (e.g., Carrillat et al. 2015; Grohs et al. 2004). Generally, a positive effect of sponsorships on corporate image is reported under certain circumstances; however, corporate sponsorship can also harm rather than enhance the image of a company. This effect can happen if the consumer has negative associations with the sponsor prior to the sponsorship. The sponsorship can then exacerbate that image (Javalgi et al. 1994). Gwinner and Eaton (1999) investigate the process of how a sporting (i.e., golf, auto race, soccer) event’s image is transferred to a brand. They report that when the event and brand match on either an image or functional basis, the transfer process is strengthened. Similar results are found by Coppetti et al. (2009) and Grohs et al. (2004).

Additionally, in one of the few sponsorship studies focusing on the cultural domain, Schwaiger et al. (2010) research into the relationship between sponsorships of art exhibitions, museums, classical music, and literature and corporate reputation, respectively. They show that culture-sponsoring activities have a positive and significant effect on the likeability dimension of corporate reputation, while no effect is found on the competence dimension of corporate reputation. Using festival attendance as a treatment group, Quester and Thompson (2001) show that the control group (i.e., participants not exposed to the treatment) gave significantly lower scores on sponsor attitudes, like the belief that the sponsor is involved in their community. Generally, prior research (e.g., Bhattacharya and Sen 2003; Klein and Da-war 2004; Lichtenstein et al. 2004; Pomerling and Dolnicar 2008; Sen et al. 2006) suggests that individuals who are aware of a company’s social initiatives, such as a corporate social responsibility activity or corporate art sponsoring, view the company more positively than those who are unaware.

Based on the relationships posited in H1 and H3, art exhibition involvement is considered to have a positive effect on sponsoring outcomes. By adding recall into this relationship, we expect the outcomes with respect to the sponsor to be different for visitors who can recall the sponsor versus those who cannot. Referring to the ELM (Petty and Cacioppo 1979), those who can recall the sponsor after their visit indeed processed the sponsorship information. That is, an enduring persuasion effect takes root for those visitors who are highly involved in art exhibitions because they are more likely to recall the sponsor correctly. Conversely, visitors who have a low involvement in art exhibitions do not intensely process the sponsorship information and are less likely be able to recall the sponsor. The positive effect of art exhibition involvement does not exist. We propose:

H5: Sponsor recall moderates the relationship between art exhibition involvement and sponsorship outcomes. For visitors who can recall the sponsor, there is a positive effect of art exhibition involvement on the sponsor’s a) image, b) reputation (emotional appeal), c) reputation (products and services) and d) trust. For visitors who cannot recall the sponsor, no effect exists.

While H2 suggested that art involvement negatively influences the sponsor’s image, reputation and trust, H4 proposed that art involvement has a positive effect on these outcomes from a sponsee’s perspective. Referring to the uses-gratification approach as well as the ELM (Petty and Cacioppo 1979; Raacke and Bonds-Raacke 2008), visitors who are highly involved in art are, one the one hand, more motivated to process information about the arts in general. On the other hand, there is a “boomerang” effect because while visitors who are highly involved in art process information about the arts in general, they do not want to process information about the sponsor since they do not want commercial sponsors to harm the arts and art institutions (Simoes and Agante 2014). Thus, the opposite effect takes place. Similar to H5, we now add sponsor recall to the relationship proposed in H2 and H4. While art enthusiasts typically have a negative attitude towards art sponsoring, they are highly involved in the arts. The negative “boomerang effect” of art sponsoring proposed above is expected to diminish when visitors who are highly involved in art can recall the sponsor, as recall means that they not only processed
the information about the arts in general, but also about the sponsor. We, therefore, hypothesise:

**H6:** Sponsor recall moderates the relationship between art involvement and sponsorship outcomes. For visitors who cannot recall the sponsor, there is a negative effect of art involvement on the sponsor’s a) image, b) reputation (emotional appeal), c) reputation (products and services) and d) trust. For visitors who can recall the sponsor, no effects exist.

Additionally, research has found that attitudes, identification, and intention to consume the company’s products are more positive after an individual became aware of a company’s social initiatives (e.g., corporate social responsibility) than before the individual knew of the social initiative (e.g., Pomer and Dolnicar 2008; Sen et al. 2006). Javalgi et al. (1994), for instance, empirically show that individuals who can recall the sponsor have more favourable views of the sponsor than individuals who do not. The relationship, however, is found to differ between companies and context (e.g., sports, community, and fine arts sponsorship). Similarly, Grohs et al. (2004), for instance, empirically show that sponsor awareness is mainly driven by the event-sponsor combination, event involvement, and exposure. Research has found that the consumer’s correct identification of the sponsor is a matter of retrieval from memory that is highly dependent on constructive memory processes. Thus, sponsor identification involves a substantial degree of construction that ranges from pure guessing to more strategic inferencing driven by relatedness and prominence cues (Johar and Pham 1999). We propose:

**H7:** The perceived a) image, b) reputation (emotional appeal), c) reputation (products and services) and d) trust of the sponsor is more positive after the respondent visits the exhibition, was exposed to the sponsoring and recalls the sponsor than before the visit and exposure.

Fig. 1 shows the study’s conceptual model including the hypotheses.

3. Empirical study

3.1. Research design and sample

Data were collected during an art exhibition at an art museum in a medium-sized city in the southwest of Germany. Two companies, Deutsche Bank (i.e., a German bank) and Cine Plus (i.e., a German media services
company), and one charitable trust sponsored the exhibition. Their sponsorship appeared offsite on exhibition posters in the city. In the art museum, the sponsors were mentioned in the exhibition catalogue, on postcards, on two posters when entering the exhibition and on two large (7x4 meters) exhibition banners that were placed left and right of the museum’s entrance. On these banners with a pink background, the sponsors are discreetly mentioned in white writing with their company logos below a picture showing an art sample from the exhibition that makes up about three quarters of the banner.

During the exhibition, face-to-face interviews with 165 visitors were conducted just before they entered (t0) and after they left the exhibition (t1). The repeated measures occurred between 1.5 and 3.5 hours apart (given the length of the respondents’ exhibition visit); a time period we believe to be long enough that respondents could not readily recall the first set of questions and their responses to them. Given the nature of the sponsoring and how it was announced, all members of this test population are, in theory, exposed to the corporate art sponsoring information. Thus, the research design does not integrate a control group of test persons that is not exposed to corporate art sponsoring. However, information about the recall of the sponsor is collected in both waves.

Over the course of four weekends and a national holiday, 165 visitors participated in the study by filling out two questionnaires (one before (t0) and one after visiting the art exhibition (t1)). Of those, only 15 indicated that they knew the sponsor prior to entering the museum. These 15 respondents are eliminated from further analyses. Due to incomplete answers, six additional questionnaires were discarded. Thus, the total database consists of 144 (pre-visit and post-visit) responses. After the visit (t1), 60 respondents (i.e., 42%) reported knowing who the art exhibition’s sponsor was. That is, these visitors correctly recalled (unaided recall) the Deutsche Bank as sponsor. Thus, the total sample comprises all visitors before the visit (pre-visit treatment group, t0) and after the visit (post-visit treatment group, t1). The post-treatment group consists of the group that was able to recall and the group that was not. Specifically, the recall sample includes those visitors who could correctly recall the sponsor after the visit, and the non-recall sample, those who could not. Fifty-eight percent of the sample is female; the average age is 37.7 years. The sample consists of 34.8% employees, 34.0% students, 13.2% self-employed respondents, and 18% other professions (e.g., workers, retirees). Tab. 1 summarizes respondents’ demographics and shows that all three groups are comparable in terms of their demographic profiles.

### 3.2. Measurement, reliability and validity

The study measures sponsor recall in terms of an unaided recall task asking visitors if they know who the sponsor of the exhibition was; that is, participants were not provided with different options and needed to recall the sponsor without help. All other items are measured on seven-point Likert scales that range from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Corporate image is measured by asking participants for an overall image evaluation consisting of three items: ([Company] is good, [Company] is positive, I like [company]; e.g., Bauer et al. 2004). To measure corporate reputation, Fombrun et al. (2000) suggest a 20-item, six-dimensional, two-reputation quotient scale. Following the theoretical reasoning above, two dimensions that seemed to be appropriate and most important in the current research context are included in the study: emotional appeal (EA) and products and services (PS). The items used to measure reputation (EA) are: I have a good feeling about [company] and I admire and respect [company]; those used for reputation (PS) are: [Company] stands behind its products and services, [Company] develops innovative products and services, [Company] offers high quality products and services, [Company] offers products and services that are good value for the money. Contrary to Fombrun et al. (2000) we do not consider trust to be a part of reputation (e.g., Lewicki et al. 2006; Swoboda et al. 2016), but rather as a separate construct that is measured with one item: “I trust [company]”. To operationalize involvement, four items taken from Zaichkowsky (1985) that cover the personal relevance, interest and importance of the target object are selected. The same scale was applied for both event and art involvement (e.g.,

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Tab. 1: Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pre-Visit Treatment t0 (n = 144)</th>
<th>Post-Visit Treatment t1</th>
<th>Nonrecall (n = 84)</th>
<th>Post-Visit Treatment t1 Recall (n = 60)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>41.7 %</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Female 58.3 %</td>
<td>58.3 %</td>
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<td>Average age</td>
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<td>37.7</td>
<td>37.8</td>
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<td>Profession</td>
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<td>0.0 %</td>
<td>5.0 %</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student 34.0 %</td>
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<td>30.0 %</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Worker 3.5 %</td>
<td>3.6 %</td>
<td>3.3 %</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Employee 23.6 %</td>
<td>20.2 %</td>
<td>28.3 %</td>
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<td>Higher management 5.6 %</td>
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<td>1.7 %</td>
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<td></td>
<td>State employee 5.6 %</td>
<td>6.0 %</td>
<td>5.0 %</td>
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<td>Self-employed 13.2 %</td>
<td>14.3 %</td>
<td>11.7 %</td>
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<td>3.6 %</td>
<td>5.0 %</td>
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<td>Retiree 5.6 %</td>
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<td>Other 2.8 %</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
To test hypotheses $H1$ – $H4$, we apply simple regressions models. While art exhibition involvement has a positive impact on the sponsor’s image ($\beta = .24, p < .01$), it does not have a significant influence on the sponsor’s reputation (EA) ($\beta = .13, p > .10$), reputation (PS) ($\beta = .11, p > .10$) and trust ($\beta = .11, p > .10$), supporting $H1a$ and rejecting $H1b$, $H1c$, and $H1d$.

Art involvement has a negative impact on the sponsor’s corporate image ($\beta = -.21, p < .05$) and a slightly significant and negative impact on the sponsor’s reputation.
(EA) ($\beta = -0.14, p < .10$), supporting $H2a$ and $H2b$. In contrast, no significant effect can be found for the influence of art involvement on the sponsor’s reputation (PS) ($\beta = .14, p > .10$), rejecting $H2c$. However, art involvement negatively affects trust ($\beta = -0.17, p < .10$). Thus, $H2d$ is supported.

Looking into the sponsee’s (i.e., museum’s) outcomes, the data shows that art exhibition involvement does not influence the sponsee’s image ($\beta = .05, p > .10$). $H3a$ is therefore not supported. Conversely, in favour of $H3b$, $H3c$, and $H3d$, art exhibition involvement positively affects the sponsee’s reputation (EA) ($\beta = .21, p < .05$), reputation (PS) ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) and trust ($\beta = .22, p < .05$).

In line with our hypothesis, art involvement positively drives the sponsee’s image ($\beta = .25, p < .01$). Similarly, the sponsee’s reputation (EA) ($\beta = .18, p > .05$), reputation (PS) ($\beta = .19, p < .05$) and trust ($\beta = .14, p < .10$) are positively affected, which is in support of $H4a$, $H4b$, $H4c$, and $H4d$.

Tab. 4 summarizes the simple regression results for $H1$ to $H4$ in the left columns titled “Total sample.” We also report the results of the simple regression models of the recall sample to give the reader a hint of the findings that will be obtained when testing the moderating effects of sponsor recall proposed in $H5$ and $H6$.

### 3.4. Sponsor recall as moderating variable

To test the moderating effects of sponsor recall called in $H5$ and $H6$, we apply moderated regression models. Interestingly, in the relationship of art exhibition involvement and the sponsor’s a) image, b) reputation (EA), c) reputation (PS) and d) trust, sponsor recall does not act as moderator. That is, in all cases the interaction effect is not significant ($p > .10$), meaning that visitors’ sponsor recall does not make a difference in how involvement in art exhibitions affects these outcomes. Thus, $H5$ needs to be rejected.

In contrast, sponsor recall is relevant for the impact of art involvement on the sponsor’s image ($\beta = .16, p < .05$), reputation (EA) ($\beta = .17, p < .05$) and trust ($\beta = .17, p < .05$), supporting $H6a$, $H6b$ and $H6d$. $H6c$, however, needs to be rejected due to insignificant results ($p > .10$). Thus, given that visitors can correctly recall the sponsor, a negative effect of art involvement on the sponsor’s image, reputation (EA) and trust does not exist, while a negative effect exists if visitors cannot recall the sponsor.

To gain additional insights, we apply simple regressions as post-hoc tests to examine the main effect separated for the recall and the nonrecall group. The results show that art involvement has a negative impact on the sponsor’s image ($\beta = -0.22, p < .05$), reputation (EA) ($\beta = -0.24, p < .05$) and trust ($\beta = -0.22, p < .05$) in the nonrecall group. Conversely, this effect does not exist for the recall group as the effect of art involvement on the sponsor’s image ($\beta = 0.08, p > .10$), reputation (EA) ($\beta = 0.01, p > .10$) and trust ($\beta = 0.05, p > .10$) is not significant.

### 3.5. The role of sponsor recall in the comparison of pre-visit versus post-visit treatment groups

To test for the relationships established in $H7$, we take a longitudinal perspective and apply $t$-tests in order to test for mean differences between the total sample before the visit (t0) and those who can recall the sponsor after the visit (i.e., the recall sample in t1). When comparing the means in the post-visit treatment recall-condition with the total sample in the pre-visit treatment condition, there are significant differences in how they rate corporate a) image ($M_{pre\ total} = 3.39$ vs. $M_{post\ recall} = 3.98, p < .01$), b) reputation (EA) ($M_{pre\ total} = 3.32$ vs. $M_{post\ recall} = 4.05, p < .001$) and c) reputation (PS) ($M_{pre\ total} = 3.81$ vs. $M_{post\ recall} = 4.49, p < .001$), in favour of $H7a$-c. However, the groups do not differ in their ratings on trust ($M_{pre\ total} = 3.01$ vs. $M_{post\ recall} = 3.55, p > .10$), rejecting $H7d$. Tab. 5 summarizes the results of the pre-visit and post-visit treatment groups. With regard to the sponsee’s outcomes, the total sample (pre-treatment, t0) does not differ from the post-visit treatment recall group (t1) ($p > .10$). Thus, the ratings are not higher after visitors have visited the exhibition and can recall the sponsor compared to before their visit.

### 4. Discussion

#### 4.1. Summary

In this paper, the effectiveness of corporate art sponsoring is analysed by relating corporate image, reputation and trust to the exhibition visitors’ (1) situational involvement with the art exhibition and (2) enduring in-

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Tab. 4: Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis/Path</th>
<th>Sponsor (Bank)</th>
<th>Sponsee (Museum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Sample (t1)</td>
<td>Recall Sample (t1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H1a/H3a$: Art Exhibition IV - Image</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>-.05ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H1b/H3b$: Art Exhibition IV - Reputation (EA)</td>
<td>.13ns</td>
<td>.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H1c/H3c$: Art Exhibition IV - Reputation (PS)</td>
<td>.11ns</td>
<td>.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H1d/H3d$: Art Exhibition IV - Trust</td>
<td>.11ns</td>
<td>.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H2a/H4a$: Art IV - Image</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H2b/H4b$: Art IV - Reputation (EA)</td>
<td>-.14ns</td>
<td>.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H2c/H4c$: Art IV - Reputation (PS)</td>
<td>-.14ns</td>
<td>.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H2d/H4d$: Art IV - Trust</td>
<td>-.17ns</td>
<td>.14ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** IV = Involvement; EA = Emotional Appeal; PS = Products and Services.

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05; ns = not significant.
volvement with art. Additionally, sponsor recall as a moderating variable is tested in this relationship.

While situational (art exhibition) involvement in general has a positive and significant effect on the sponsor’s image, there is a strong negative effect of visitors’ involvement in art on the sponsor’s image, reputation (EA) and trust. This negative influence is, however, offset if one differentiates between visitors who are aware of the sponsorship and can recall the sponsor and those who cannot. For the recall-group, the negative effect diminishes. However, for those who cannot recall the sponsor, the negative effect of art involvement on the sponsor’s image, reputation (EA) and trust is significant. Distinguishing between the groups of visitors who can recall versus those who cannot recall the sponsor is crucial and helps in better understanding sponsorship effectiveness. Furthermore, involvement in art exhibitions drives the sponsee’s reputation (EA) and reputation (PS). In this case, there is also a positive effect of art involvement on trust. Similarly, art involvement has a positive effect on the sponsee’s image, reputation (EA) and trust.

Finally, this study shows that the sponsee’s image, reputation (EA) and reputation (PS) is more positive given that visitors can recall the sponsor in t1 after having visited the exhibition. This impact is not found regarding the fact that highly art-involved visitors are very knowledgeable and thus rate the provided products and services lower than those who are not highly involved. In sum, museum and marketing managers need to obtain information on their (potential) visitors to find out their level of art exhibition and art involvement, which will make it easier for them to introduce appropriate sponsoring strategies.

4.3. Implications for sponsors and sponsees

This research provides a good means for deriving highly relevant implications for art sponsoring practice. The marketing management of sponsoring companies is advised to take the findings of this research into consideration when planning and executing art sponsorships. First, the studies suggest that the sponsor should be careful when targeting individuals who are highly involved in art, since high art involvement has a negative effect on the sponsor’s image, reputation (EA) and trust. On the other hand, in the case of the sponsee, high art involvement has a positive impact on the sponsee’s image, reputation (EA) and trust, which makes it more important for museums to target visitors who are highly involved in art. However, art involvement negatively influences the sponsee’s reputation (PS), which might be explained by the fact that highly art-involved visitors are very knowledgeable and thus rate the provided products and services lower than those who are not highly involved. In sum, museum and marketing managers need to find out their level of art exhibition and art involvement, which will make it easier for them to introduce appropriate sponsoring strategies.

Second, marketing management should strongly cooperate with the museum management in designing an exhi-
bition that makes visitors highly involved in the exhibition, since high art exhibition involvement results in a sponsor’s positive image. The same effect is found for the sponsee, meaning that high art exhibition involvement positively influences the sponsee’s image, reputation (EA) and trust. High art exhibition involvement could be accomplished, for instance, by a special interior design that matches the exhibition theme, special guided tours or walkways through the exhibition, or a special lighting system, etc. Findings from the experience management and staging literature (e.g., Rowley and Williams 2008), the literature on sensory marketing (e.g., Krishna 2011) and examples of best practice from experts responsible for dramaturgy at theatre halls might be a good starting point because these people principally know how to stage an exceptional visitor experience involving all of the senses. To succeed in getting the visitors involved in the art exhibition, and thus to enhance the sponsor’s image and reputation, the exhibition design should be pre-tested before the exhibition starts.

The results focusing on the sponsee (i.e., the museum) additionally suggest that there are implications for museum management. Results showed that the negative effect of art involvement on the sponsor’s image, reputation (EA) and trust only exists for those visitors who cannot recall the sponsor. It is, therefore, important to make the visitors aware of the sponsor given that they are highly involved in the arts. This means that the art museum managers should first try to get individuals “in” (i.e., into the museum), thus, visiting the art museum and art exhibitions. Second, they should make them aware of the sponsor because sponsor recall also increases the sponsee’s credibility in the eyes of the visitors, in terms of the competence (products and services) dimension of the sponsee’s reputation. By successfully executing corporate art sponsoring, both the sponsor and the sponsee can benefit from art sponsorships, resulting in a win-win situation for both.

4.4. Limitations and further research

The research reported in this manuscript has a number of limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it would be interesting to see if the results hold true in a second arts context. Furthermore, a replication in another context other than the fine arts (e.g., performing arts) could be of interest in order to increase the applicability of our results to other cases. In this regard, research is also called for that compares the effects of onsite vs. offsite sponsoring activities. Second, future research should integrate additional antecedent variables and add economic success measures as consequences of the sponsor’s image, reputation (Katsikeas et al. 2016) and trust in order to calculate the sponsoring success. Third, future research is proposed to include additional moderators aside from sponsor recall. It would be, for instance, interesting to see whether the impact of involvement on trust and reputation varies dependent on visitors’ satisfaction with the sponsor and sponsee. Moreover, the role of the match between the event and sponsoring brand (Grohs et al. 2004) would be important to consider in this context. One might expect the event-sponsor fit to strengthen the impact of involvement on sponsoring related outcomes.

References


**Keywords**

Art Sponsorship Effectiveness, Corporate Image, Corporate Reputation, Corporate Trust, Enduring Involvement, Situational Involvement.