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Mega-Special-Event Promotions and Intent To Purchase: A Longitudinal Analysis of the Super Bowl

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Mega-special-event properties (sponsees) have the ability to attain significant resources through sponsorship by offering exclusive promotional opportunities that target sizeable consumer markets and attract sponsors. The Super Bowl, one of the most watched television programs in the world, was selected as the mega-special-event for this study as it provides a rare environment where a portion of the television audience tunes in specifically for the purpose of watching new and entertaining commercials. A longitudinal analysis of consumer opinion related to the 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 Super Bowls provides empirical evidence that questions the ability of Super Bowl sponsorship to influence the sales of sponsor offerings. Results pertaining to consumers' intent to purchase sponsors' products—one of the most sought after metrics in relating sponsorship effectiveness to sales—demonstrate that levels of intent-to-purchase inspired by sponsorship of the Super Bowl is relatively low and, most importantly, that increases are not being achieved over time. These findings have implications for both mega-sponsees and their sponsors as well as media enterprise diffusing mega-special-events.

As large global properties such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, the Super Bowl, the World's Fair, Mardi Gras, Wimbledon, the Running of the Bulls (Pamplona), and the Tour de France become central elements of an emerging culture

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(Wise & Miles, 1997) that is moving towards media-based spectatorship (Miles, 1998), sponsorship programs of these "mega-special-events" offer optimal positioning tools for corporations and other investors seeking to communicate global messages (Farelly & Quester, 1997). Although the price tag is typically in the millions of dollars, sponsorship of these large, global, mega-special-events delivers official association with the event and other associated sponsors, as well as direct access to very large samples of sponsors' target markets. Sponsorship theory supports that sponsorship of a mega-special-event could lead to increased interest, awareness, and intent to purchase the sponsor's products over time (Meenaghan, 1991; Roy & Cornwell, 2004; Thwaites, 1995), suggesting that the investment provides a greater return via the generation of competitive advantage for the sponsor (Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997; Amis, Slack, & Berrett, 1999; Cornwell & Coote, 2005; d'Astous & Bitz, 1995; Fahy, Farrelly, & Quester, 2004; Meenaghan, 2001; Payne, 1998).

In today's cluttered promotional media market, sponsorship might be more advantageous than advertising as it is able to achieve different objectives (Arthur et al., 1998; Meenaghan & Shipley, 1999). Sponsorship's difference from advertising is well highlighted in the literature. For example, Bloxham (1999) suggests three principal differences: (1) that sponsors are believed by consumers to be part of the program, (2) that sponsorship and advertising function differently, and (3) that sponsorship is felt by consumers to benefit a broader audience. Further, it is documented that advertising seeks to persuade the audience using emotional or cognitive appeals while sponsorship strives to connect with the emotion inherent in the property (e.g., sport) through the sponsor–sponsee association (Meenaghan, 2001). Additional studies (e.g., Crimmins & Horn, 1996; McCarville & Copeland, 1994) propose that the association between sponsor and sponsee, which enables sponsorship to persuade consumers indirectly, is the key differentiator from advertising (which is limited to direct persuasion).

The true long-term impact of a sponsorship on sales, or intent-to-purchase, however, is difficult to evaluate and, thus, often questioned. Walliser (2005) notes that the vast majority of sponsorship evaluation uses measure awareness constructs, with a limited number looking at image constructs, and only a very few exploring purchase intention. The reality of evaluation practice is counter to Crompton (2004) who suggests that the ideal measure by which to evaluate sponsorships is sales (traffic, leads, or sales figures), followed by intent to purchase which he deems useful, and finally media equivalency and awareness or recall studies which he defines as "common but flawed" (p. 269). This research extends the work of Walliser (2005) and Crompton (2004) to determine if purchase intentions are significantly influenced by mega-special-event sponsorship over time.

Of all mega-special-events, the Super Bowl is widely recognized as "the vehicle" for the launch of new and innovative television promotions that are anticipated by many viewers. These 30-second spectacles cost over US$2 million and provide an interesting context for assessing sponsorship (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2002; Newell, Henderson, & Wu, 2001). In 2004, for example, Fox television demanded US$2.4 million per 30 second spot (Feuer, 2004). The vast reach and attentive audience has driven corporations, to not only pay the significant fee, but to invest millions more on design, development, and creativity to avoid diffusing a 'bad' commercial, which could have a significant negative impact on the sponsor (Feuer, 2004).

The effectiveness of sponsorship at the Super Bowl has been demonstrated previously (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2002), and it is an important revenue source for mega-special-events, as well as an effective promotional strategy for sponsors. For example, Olympic sponsorship in the 2001 to 2004 quadrennial contributed approximately US$65 million in cash, products, or services to the IOC (International Olympic Committee, 2001), whereas the significance of Olympic sponsorship has been demonstrated empirically (see Séguin, Lyberger, O'Reilly, & McCarthy, 2005). Given that sponsorship impacts are significant, and that it continues to grow rapidly (Kolah, 2003), a longitudinal understanding of the effectiveness of mega-special-events sponsorship on intent to purchase would be of significant value to events, sponsors, and potential sponsors.

The current work attempts to better understand the relationship between sponsorship and intent-to-purchase. It involves data generated from a longitudinal, empirical, mass-market study undertaken in multiple United States' markets following the 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 Super Bowls. Consumer perceptions on five index measures were assessed with the objective of exploring the effectiveness of Super Bowl sponsorship on consumers' intent to purchase the products and services promoted through the Super Bowl.

Review of Literature

The literature related to marketing promotions includes significant work on sponsorship and advertising; two well-researched and commonly adopted marketing practices. There remains, however, considerable lack of agreement as to how each of sponsorship and advertising fits vis-à-vis the other (i.e., as distinct elements of the promotional mix or where sponsorship is a subset of advertising) (Amis et al., 1999; Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Walliser, 2003). Although debate continues (e.g., Grewal & Pechmann, 1998), sponsorship is now widely believed to be different than advertising (Bloxam, 1998; Tripodi, 2001). Although a number of distinguishing factors are noted, the key one identified in the literature is the association (or 'goodwill') (Meenaghan, 1991) between the two parties (sponsor and sponsee), which enhances the relationship beyond a basic cash purchase of promotional value (advertising) (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2002; Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994).

The literature further emphasizes that sponsorship is rarely effective on its own and requires supporting leveraging activities. Defined as any marketing or promotional tactic implemented by the sponsor with the goal to promote the sponsorship, the leveraging of a sponsorship often involves an investment that is greater than the sponsorship fee itself (Meenaghan, 2001; Quester & Thompson, 2001). The leveraging often includes an advertising component, whereby the goal is to bring consumer attention to the sponsorship and maximize the effectiveness of the sponsorship and the overall marketing campaign (Cornwell, Pruitt, & van Ness, 2001; Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994; Ludwig & Karabetsos, 1999; Meenaghan, 1991). Clearly, it is important to combine sponsorship and advertising in an integrated marketing communications mix.

Advertising Effectiveness

An "advertising appeal is a conscious attempt to motivate potential consumers toward some form of activity (such as gathering further information or purchasing) or to influence them to change their attitude or conception of the advertised product" (Hetsroni, 2000, p. 58). There are several different types of appeals that can be used in advertising campaigns, and some of these appeals might result in better outcomes than others (e.g., Royne Stafford & Day, 1995). The effectiveness of an advertising appeal is often determined by the extent to which it persuades individuals. Although studies examining the effectiveness of appeals might take different approaches to assessing the performance of advertisements in the context of persuasion (Frazer, Bartel, Sheehan, & Patti, 2002), many examine the behavioral intentions and attitudes reported by respondents. For instance, purchase intentions have been captured using different measures including likely or unlikely to purchase the product (Vincent & Dubinsky, 2005; Ruiz & Sicilia, 2004; Royne Stafford & Day, 1995).

Sponsorship Effectiveness

Widely accepted as "an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity, person, or event, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity, person, or event by the investor" (Meenaghan, 1991), sponsorship is a promotional strategy that has increased in use significantly over the past two decades. Corporations around the world have recognized that sponsorship is commercial practice not philanthropy, which provides a cost-effective opportunity to promote their products as part of their promotional mix (Mason, 1999). Sponsorship has been growing steadily in use over the past 25 years, and global investment is now estimated to be approximately US$31 billion today (IEG, 2006). The torrid growth is forecast to continue into the future (Kolah, 2003). In terms of its contribution to promotional spending, sponsorship has increased in importance from 2.5–3.5% in 1987 to an estimated 5.8% in 2001 (IEG, 2004) suggesting that sponsorship has become an integral part of the promotional mix. Sport properties, such as the Super Bowl, remain attractive mediums for sponsorship as they allows firms to build association with popular sports and sports heroes (Quester & Thompson, 2001), to target niche markets (e.g., Meenaghan, 1991; Thwaites 1995), and to access substantial leveraging opportunities above and beyond the sponsorship, such as licensing and merchandising (Stotlar, 1993). Companies decide to sponsor an activity, person, or event for a number of reasons, most commonly to achieve purchase or intent to purchase (Cornwell & Coote, 2005) or to reach attractive youth target markets (Cornwell et al., 2001).

Consumer Interest

The relationship between consumer interest in a sport property and the impact on sponsor awareness and intent to purchase has received attention in the literature. Most have reported that although consumers might have a high level of interest

toward mega-events such as the Olympic Games or the Super Bowl, the impact on intent to purchase remains relatively low (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2002; Sandler & Shani, 1998; Séguin et al., 2005). It appears that other factors tend to drive purchase, although a basic level of interest is necessary for sponsorship or advertisement to be successful. Previous work by Lyberger and McCarthy (2002) suggests that there is a growing apathy towards sponsorship of and advertising during the Super Bowl. For example, corporations who sponsored or advertised were found to be less likely to be regarded as industry leaders in 2000 than in 1998 (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2002).

Awareness

As a mechanism through which a promotion is likely to function, awareness is widely accepted by practitioners and academics alike (Amis, 2003; Amis et al., 1999). A typical explanation on the functioning of awareness is: A consumer who attends an event or watches it on television is "exposed" to the brand or company name or a sponsor or an advertiser. Because repeated exposure to an object has been found to lead to positive effect toward the object (Zajonc in Pracejus, 1998), the consumer feels better about the brand or the company after seeing or hearing about the sponsor association several times. This good feeling then provides numerous benefits to the brand or corporate image, including, but not limited to, greater attention paid by subsequent commercial communications and greater chance of inclusion in the consideration set of consumers (Pracejus, 1998). It is argued by Meenaghan (1998) that awareness is created at events, and consequently sponsors or advertisers intrude on the consciousness of event audiences.

The literature on sponsorship is consistent in reporting that increased awareness is an important objective of companies sponsoring sporting mega-special-events (Ludwig & Karabetsos, 1998). An increased level of awareness has taken significant importance in light of ambush marketing and studies showing that consumers with relatively low levels of awareness of Olympic sponsors and advertisers are easy to deceive (McDaniel & Kinney, 1998; Meenaghan, 1994, 1998; Sandler & Shani, 1989, 1998; Shani & Sandler, 1993; Séguin, Lyberger, O'Reilly, & McCarthy, 2005).

Intent to Purchase

There has been a dearth of studies aimed at determining the impact of sponsorship and advertising on purchase behavior. Several have reported that consumers feel more positive towards companies that sponsor events that are of interest to them. For example, an IOC report suggested that all factors being equal, 22% of consumers, (nine country-study mean) would be more likely to buy a sponsor's product. Stotlar (1993) found that 66% of respondents indicated that a company's Olympic sponsorship favorably affected their purchasing habits. Results from a nationwide survey conducted by the Canadian Olympic Association (Charlton Group, 1998) during the 1998 Nagano Olympic Games found that 41% of those surveyed were more likely to consider a Canadian Olympic Team sponsor than nonsponsors. Séguin et al. (2005) in a three-country study of 2,602 consumers during the 2000 Sydney

Olympic Games found that 36% would be more likely to support a corporation that is an Olympic sponsor than one who is not. Few have examined, however, whether those feelings impact purchase intention or behavior. Intent to purchase, as studied by Lyberger and McCarthy (2002), was found to be less among respondents in a study undertaken around the time of the 2000 Super Bowl than among respondents to a similar survey undertaken around the time of the 1998 Super Bowl for both official sponsors and telecast advertisers.

The Super Bowl

A mega-special-event refers to a property that garners significant international media exposure, offers sponsors considerable promotional value, and has a global impact. As the promotional marketplace becomes more cluttered and competitive (Arthur, Scott, Woods, & Booker, 1998; Carlsen & Taylor, 2003), sponsorship has become a vital revenue source for mega-special-events, which have garnered significant resources by offering sponsorship opportunities guaranteeing 'exclusivity'. These significant investments have, in turn, resulted in an exponential increase in the investment required from sponsors to be associated with major properties (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001).

As a mega-special-event, the Super Bowl is unique because it provides a variety of opportunities to communicate to the consumer (i.e., through the game, the NFL experience, print and television advertising, and a multitude of public relations opportunities). Many consumers might be drawn to observe game-time advertisements as much as they are drawn to the game. The huge prices that are charged to corporate advertisers and the high ratings that the telecast receives suggest an interest well beyond what happens on the field. Prices for a 30-second advertisement have risen from $42,500 in 1967 to $2.4 million in 2004. The telecast has received, on average, a 42.5 Nielson rating over the last 10 years, whereas the 1996 Super Bowl saw its largest television audience of over 90 million viewers, and the 2007 Game received a Nielsen rating of 42.6. In a variety of issues, Street and Smith's *Sport Business Journal* suggests its importance as a sport entertainment event. Although it is to be expected that the figures for a final game of the playoffs would be in excess of the regular season games, the ratings for the Super Bowl are nearly four times those of the venerable Monday Night Football. The average rating for Monday Night Football for 2004 was 11.0, whereas the rating of the 2004 Super Bowl was 41.4 (Street and Smith's Sports Group, 2005).

As might be expected, the Super Bowl has a significant economic impact for a singular event. Super Bowl XXXVII, attended by 67,603 spectators, generated a total economic impact on San Diego County of $367 million, according to a study by Marketing Information Masters, Inc. That impact compares very favorably with an impact of $295 million that Super Bowl XXXII had in 1998, the last time it was held in San Diego (National Football League, 2005). Super Bowl XL (2006) was held in Detroit and had an economic impact of $261 million. The Super Bowl was selected for this study because it is provides the rare environment where a portion of the television audience tunes in, not for the game, but for the purpose of watching new and entertaining commercials. Details of the five Super Bowls reviewed in this study are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Super Bowls Reviewed in This Study

					TV (for United States only)				
Year	Super Bowl	Location	Teams and Score	Attendance	Network	Neilsen Rating	Market Share	Cost of 30 sec Commercial	Halftime Show
1998	XXXII	San Diego	Denver 31 Green Bay 24	68,912	NBC	44.5	67 (~90 million viewers)	$1,300,000	Boyz II Men, Smokey Robinson, Queen Latifah, Martha Reeves and The Temptations
2000	XXXIV	Atlanta	St. Louis 23 Tennessee 16	72,625	ABC	43.3	63	$1,900,000	Walt Disney World, Phil Collins, Christina Aguilera, Enrique Iglesias, and Toni Braxton.
2002	XXXVI	New Orleans	New England 20 St. Louis 17	72,922	FOX	40.4	61	$1,900,000	U2
2004	XXXVIII	Houston	New England 32 Carolina 29	71,525	CBS	41.3	63	$2,200,000	Janet Jackson, Justin Timberlake, P. Diddy, Kid Rock, and Nelly
2006	XXXX	Detroit	Pittsburgh 21 Seattle 10	68,206	ABC	41.6	62	$2,500,000	Rolling Stones

Note. Information in the table sourced from the Definitive Guide to the Super Bowl.

Research Method

In his comprehensive review of the sponsorship literature, Walliser (2003) recommended that sample quality and size be improved in future sponsorship research including broader application, longitudinal study, and larger sample sizes. The method adopted for this study responds to Walliser's recommendation and analyzes large sample data drawn from consumer perceptions of promotions (both sponsorship and advertising) of the 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 Super Bowls. The data for this study were generated from a larger study using the Consumer Perception Index (CPI).

The CPI is a five-part questionnaire containing 52 items designed to measure consumer perceptions of sponsorship. The CPI battery was developed by the authors based on the evolution of indexes previously utilized by Sandler and Shani (1998) and Lyberger and McCarthy (2001, 2002). The CPI is designed to solicit and gauge consumer opinions of advertising, commercialization, sponsorship, ambushing; levels of interest, knowledge, volume consumption, purchase behavior; and demographics as they relate to sponsored sport events. A panel of experts consisting of executives and educators in the sport business ($n = 7$) reviewed the questionnaire before the implementation of a field test to a random sample of 60 adults. The experts reviewed item clarity, content, order, and question relevance. The experts were also asked to review format and wording of questions. Based on the suggestions of the panel of experts, additions, deletions, or modifications were made to enhance the content validity of the instrument.

For this study, five questions from the CPI were utilized as a means to measure consumer perceptions on intent to purchase sponsors products and services surrounding the 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 Super Bowls. Following minor revisions to the instrument after the pretest, it was implemented in eight Midwest, Northeast, and Southwest cities in the United States using a modified version of the mall-intercept technique, which involved randomly selecting respondents in high traffic, representative locations (e.g., suburban malls, downtown street corners) in each of the eight cities. This technique was repeated for all five Super Bowls. The mall-intercept technique affords opportunities to collect a wide scope of information economically from a large population, collect data within a real situation, and identify more specific issues that may enhance outcomes (Bush & Hair, 1985). From the results, trend data was assessed and key factors identified. Of note is the inclusion of a latent growth structural equation model, which is appropriate given the large and random sample sizes queried to investigate systematic growth over time (see Meredith & Tisak, 1990). Details of the five samples are provided in Table 2 below.

In any study that evaluates the effectiveness of promotional activities, the issue of attribution must be considered and explained. This refers to the ability of the evaluation research to attribute the effectiveness of the sponsorship as opposed to other messaging (e.g., advertising, public relations) on target group opinions such as intent to purchase. The challenge with these measures is that consumers are self-reporting their intent to behave in a certain way, which is not a normal way of thinking for individuals, meaning that questions remain over what intent to purchase captures (Schwarz, 1999). Of note here is the point that multiple influences drive most consumer decisions, and attributing the influence of each to a given result is

Table 2 Samples: 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006 Super Bowls

Year	Valid Responses	Age Range	Gender (Percentage Female)	Education: High School Diploma	Income Over $40,000/ year
1998	486	16–80	42.9%	96%	54%
2000	389	14–91	37.4%	94%	56%
2002	801	15–88	43.4%	91%	60%
2004	810	10–94	43.4%	93%	61%
2006	958	13–93	37.1%	96%	57%

difficult and based on many influences. Examples include (1) *social desirability* (Schwarz, 1999) in which a respondent might answer positively because it appears to be the appropriate thing to do or negatively because he or she does not want to be tricked by some promotional tactic and (2) *category exemplars* (e.g., Coke as an Olympic sponsor) or the most accessible top of mind answer in their memory (Feldman & Lynch, 1988).

Results and Analysis

Demographic Characteristics

Various demographic data was requested from respondents and Table 3 provides a sample of this data which describes the overall sample.

Consumer Interest in and Consumption of the Super Bowl

Although this study focused on the intent to purchase construct and its relationship to sponsorship and advertising, it is important to demonstrate levels of consumer interest and Super Bowl consumption to put the intent to purchase findings in perspective. First, drawing from the same data, a longitudinal comparison of the 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 Super Bowls reveals a gradual decline of consumer interest in each of the categories of "sport" (in general), "football", "NFL," and "Super Bowl" from 1998 through to 2002, whereas post-2002 measures indicate a steady increase to 2006. As Table 4 suggests, significant differences between mean scores among each interest category are present. Although relatively small in scale, the significant differences are present between consumer interest in the Super Bowl (3.98/3.77) and in sport (4.04/3.91) when comparing the years 1998 and 2006, demonstrating that cumulative change over the 8 years was limited at best.

Additional analysis with respect to respondent consumption of the Super Bowl finds that respondents appear to be watching significantly less of the game over time ($F = 41.770$, $p < .001$). Further, those respondents who do watch the Super Bowl are taking in less of the game over time ($F = 2.787$, $p < .01$). Another finding, perhaps indicating a decrease in Super Bowl parties or events or changing consumption patterns, reveals that respondents are more likely to watch alone over time ($F = 3.1$, $p < .005$). This trend is further supported by the finding that respondents are significantly more likely to watch at home or with a friend than in a public place since 1998 ($F = 9.554$, $p < .001$).

Table 3 Summary Sample Demographics (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006)

Demographics	Valid Responses	Result for All 5 Years
Age	2,886	28% under 18, 17% 45 plus
Gender	2,952	41% female, 59% male
Dependents	2,342	*M* = .94, Range: 0 to 12
Marital status	2,166	59% single, 18% married, 19% divorced, 4% common law
Education	2,931	6% less than high school, 14% high school, 67% college or some college, 13% graduate degree
Income	2,735	27% less than $20,000/year, 51% between $20,000 and $80,000/year 22% over $80,000/year

Table 4 Mean Interest Scores: 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006

Interest	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	*F*	Sig.
Sport	4.04	4.07	3.69	3.83	3.91	6.94	.00
Football	3.74	3.72	3.33	3.57	3.70	8.04	.00
NFL	3.61	3.56	3.20	3.37	3.61	9.76	.00
Super Bowl	3.98	3.82	3.53	3.75	3.77	7.18	.00

Intent to Purchase

The literature points to intent to purchase sponsors' products as an important way to view sponsorship effectiveness (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000; Jalleh, Donovan, Giles-Corti, & Holman, 2002;). Indeed, Cornwell et al. (2001) note that sponsorship does impact purchase intention, particularly if the association between sponsor and sponsee is a good fit. Although there is some criticism put forth in the literature that intent to purchase is not a perfect indicator of sales (Crompton, 2004), it is generally viewed as a good measure (Walliser, 2005). In order to delve deeper into this issue, the results present intent to purchase in two ways: an examination of descriptive results and a structural equation model of intent to purchase investigating the relationships over the sampled years.

The five questions used to capture the influence of promotional type to the intention to purchase products promoted during the Super Bowl are all Likert-type scales and include agreement ratings with "I am more likely to buy products from companies that are Super Bowl sponsors," "I am more likely to buy products from companies that advertise during the Super Bowl," "My purchase decision is more influenced by a company's sponsorship of the Super Bowl than by a company's advertising," "I am willing to pay somewhat higher prices for products of official Super Bowl sponsors," and "I try to purchase products which are advertised during the Super Bowl."

The table above shows the mean values (Likert scale of 1 to 5) for the five intent to purchase measures. The average scores for the measurement items are close to the midpoint of the scale indicating that Super Bowl promotions have a moderate affect on purchase intentions. An assessment of the changes over the years sampled shows that two items are significant at < .05, one at < .10, and two are not significant. The two measures significant at < .05 are identified in the table as "willing to pay somewhat higher prices for products of official Super Bowl sponsors" and "more likely to buy products advertised during the Super Bowl."

The two significant measures are presented graphically in Figures 1 and 2. The illustration in Figure 1 shows some variation in response to the query about willingness to pay higher prices for Super Bowl sponsors. The overall trend over the sampled years shows that this willingness is increasing, however. In a similar way, Figure 2 shows the average responses to the question about willingness to purchase products advertised during the Super Bowl. Here, the variability in responses also displays a positive slopping trend line indicating an increasing willingness over time.

Although the descriptive analysis demonstrates that some measures are significantly different over the sampling time frame, an examination of latent affects is required to more broadly explore the conative construct of intent to purchase. Intent to purchase is modeled using a Latent Growth Model analyzed using a structural equation model using LISREL software. The responses for the five questions are organized by year. To enable analysis using LISREL, the yearly sample sizes reduced randomly to datasets of 389 observations to match the lowest number observed. Measurement model testing was conducted for each year to identify which measures best reflected purchase intentions for that year. Examining the loadings of each variable and the fit statistics for the group guided the inclusion or exclusion of measures for structural model testing.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics: Intent-to-Purchase

	Mean						
Variable	**1998**	**2000**	**2002**	**2004**	**2006**	***F***	**Sig.**
Willing to pay somewhat higher prices for products of official Super Bowl sponsors	1.91	1.92	2.19	2.02	2.11	5.46	0.00
More likely to buy products advertised during the Super Bowl	2.50	2.29	2.43	2.38	2.52	3.86	0.00
More likely to buy products from Super Bowl sponsors	2.30	2.11	2.30	2.20	2.24	2.23	0.06
Try to purchase products advertised during the Super Bowl	2.07	2.06	2.13	2.16	2.18	1.29	0.27
Purchase decision is more influenced by sponsorship of the Super Bowl than by advertising	2.21	2.18	2.31	2.23	2.27	0.98	0.42

Note. MANOVA tests of overall differences of intent-to-purchase measures are significant at < .05.

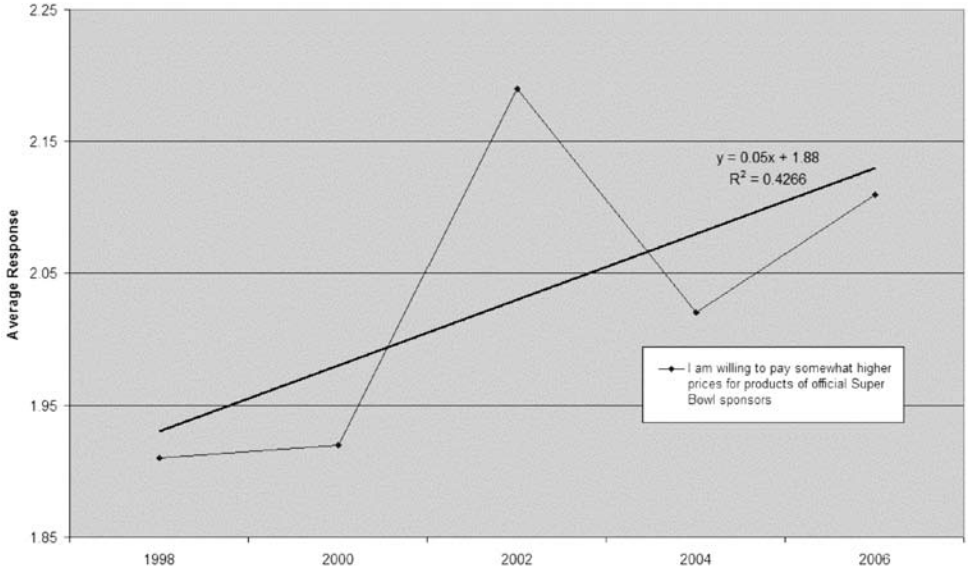


Figure 1—Trend for responses to 'willingness to pay higher prices for sponsors.'

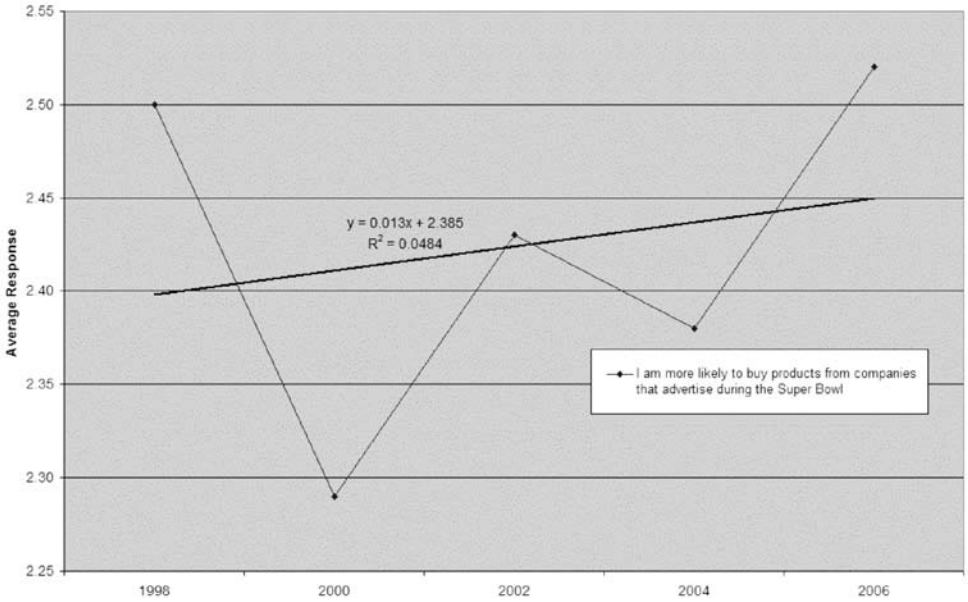


Figure 2—Trend for responses to 'likely to buy advertised products.'

The path model is represented with the measures of intent to purchase reflecting the construct with comparisons of rate of change between each year. The model is presented below as Figure 3.

The model reveals rate of change values between the Super Bowl years. There is very low or no change to intent-to-purchase during the period from 1998 to 2006. Moderate shifts in intentions are found in more recent years (i.e., from 2002 to 2006), however. There is a positive relationship with purchase intentions for years 2002 and 2004, whereas the relationship is negative for 2004 and 2006.

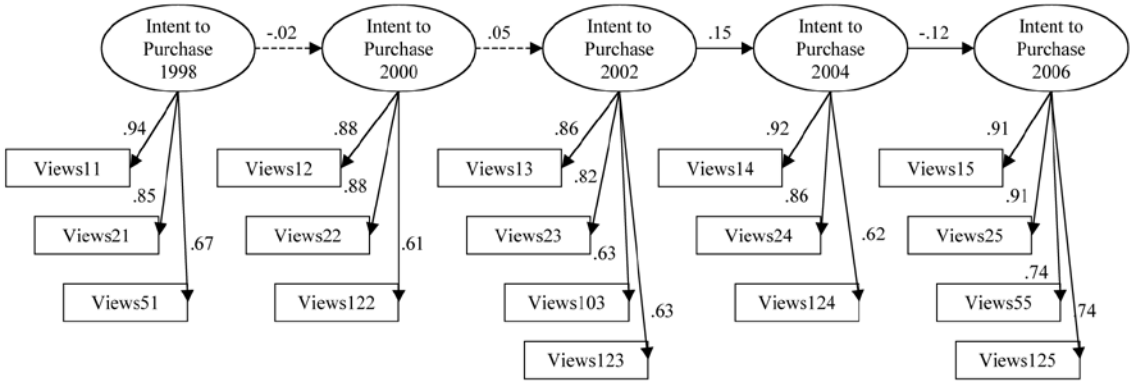
Several measures of fit were used to evaluate the structural model. The chi-square χ^2/d.f. indicates the model has a good fit with a statistic of less than five (Taylor & Todd, 1995). Further, the RMSEA statistic provides evidence that there are no significant problems with the model as the statistic is less than 0.1 (Kline 2005). In addition, the CFI, GFI, NFI, and NNFI statistics—other common SEM measures of model fit—also indicate a good fitting model with values in excess of 0.9.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study examined consumer perceptions of sponsorship in the context of five instances of a mega-special-event, the Super Bowls of 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006, specifically with respect to the intent to purchase that sponsors' products achieved. Three items of note are revealed.

First, the results indicate that sponsorship and advertising can have significant effects on intent to purchase. The moderate strength of intentions around buying goods advertised during the Super Bowl and willingness to pay higher prices for sponsors' products suggest that marketers might want to utilize both strategies. The advertisements foster a readiness for consuming a product, whereas sponsorship of the Super Bowl substantiates a premium position in the market. Future research exploring the duration of the effects after the event is needed because it could provide insight for developing a pricing strategy. In addition, it also should be recognized that even modest intentions to purchase a sponsor's products or services in the extensive Super Bowl market could have significant financial rewards for sponsors.

Second, there is an overall increasing trend for the promotional outcome, intent to purchase. Specifically, the intention to buy sponsored products and the willingness to pay higher prices for these products is shown to increase over time. Although the promotional outcomes are increasing, it is interesting to recall that advertising costs and sponsorship fees for the Super Bowl have grown over the period of the five Super Bowls which were studied. *Advertising Age* indicates that the price of a 30-second Super Bowl ad in 1998 was $1,300,000, whereas the cost of a spot in 2006 was $2,500,000. The substantial increase of $1,200,000 over the 8 years of Super Bowls studied masks some interesting intrabowl differences. For instance, the difference in cost between the 1998 and 2000 games was an increase of $800,000, whereas the difference between 2000 and 2002 was a decrease of $200,000. The differences between the 2002 and 2004 games was an increase of $350,000, whereas the increase from 2004 to 2006 was a more modest $250,000 (*Advertising Age*, 2007). Allowing for these intrabowl gyrations, the increase over



Fit Statistics

X^2/d.f.	2.51
NFI	.92
NNFI	.94
CFI	.95
GFI	.92
RMSEA	. 062

Figure 3—Structure equation model: intent to purchase.

the 10 years studied is appreciable but perhaps justified in the context of the intent to purchase changes found here.

Third, the results from the latent growth model indicate that there is potential volatility in the responses to promotional stimuli over time at mega-special-events. Although this response instability exists, it might be influenced by a number of extraneous factors including varying sponsor objectives, presponsorship awareness levels, the presponsorship image of sponsor and sponsee, decreasing interest in the Super Bowl, existing brand associations, changing consumption patterns of Super Bowl viewers, increased clutter in the market place, the influence of ambush marketing, or poor activation by sponsors. One acknowledges that such volatility might exist with mega-special-events. Although future research might isolate and explain some of the volatility, the overall trend of appreciating intent to purchase levels and a willingness to pay higher prices for sponsors' products is an indication that the market is relatively satisfied with its offerings.

In light of these results, both sponsors and sponsees of mega-special-events might wish to prioritize exclusivity in negotiations, holding the mega-sponsee to their commitments on controlling ambush marketing and adopting strategies to reach targets through the cluttered marketplace. On the sponsee side, the very large fees currently commanded for sponsorship rights will only be maintained and increased if good value to sponsors is provided. Given the increased focus on sponsorship evaluation, mega-sponsees must focus their efforts in this regard.

The Super Bowl will remain as an attractive mega-special-event because its reach and marketing potential will continue to be attractive to sponsors. Its ability to truly drive sales might be further considered. A broader based sample of mega-events might also be researched (i.e., Olympic Games, World Cup, America's Cup) so that the concept of intent to purchase can be examined before it can be justifiably claimed that the sponsorship of mega-special-events has the ability to influence consumer intentions.

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