


## Article

# Moving Away from Category Exclusivity Deals to Sponsorship Activation Platforms: The Case of the Ryder Cup

Yunchao Bai <sup>1,\*</sup>, Brian H. Yim <sup>2</sup>, John Breedlove <sup>3</sup> and James J. Zhang <sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup> Sports Business School, Beijing Sports University, Beijing 100084, China<sup>2</sup> School of Foundations, Leadership, and Administration, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44202, USA; hyim@kent.edu<sup>3</sup> Department of Kinesiology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, USA; John.Breedlove@uga.edu (J.B.); jamesz48@uga.edu (J.J.Z.)

\* Correspondence: baiyunchao@bjssa.org; Tel.: +86-13021199696

**Abstract:** As a biennial event, the Ryder Cup is a men's golf competition between teams from Europe and the United States. Ernst & Young (EY) and Standard Life Investments (SLI), who are in same business category (i.e., financial services), have served as official partners of the event in recent years. While the two firms are willing to move away from the traditional sponsorship practices of category exclusivity deals, both have been able to achieve significant success through their collaborative efforts in activating their sponsorships. This is a new, fascinating phenomenon in both sponsorship concept and practice. Through an exploratory inductive inquiry process, in this study we conduct a case analysis by examining the sponsorship activations of EY and SLI at the 2014 Ryder Cup event held in the UK. The findings demonstrate that social media plays an impactful role in the companies' ability to engage target audiences. EY used the Ryder Cup captain as a brand ambassador, who embodied its sponsorship theme of leadership and teamwork. SLI focused on running advertising campaigns to build company image and increase brand awareness.



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**Keywords:** sponsorship platform; golf; brand awareness; rights exclusivity; sponsorship sustainability; financial return; brand image; social media; fan community

## 1. Introduction

A growing number of sponsoring companies are enthusiastic about sporting events because they provide a platform to establish brand relationships with target markets [1]. Sponsorship is an important marketing and communication strategy that establishes mutually beneficial relationships between sponsors and fans of the event [2]. The primary focus of event sponsorship is to “promote an association between the event and the company or the sponsoring brand” [3] (p. 11). Event sponsorship enhances brand recognition among consumers [4]. Sporting events are unique because they create considerable excitement and emotional attachment among sport fans [5]. According to Cornwell et al., an effectively managed sponsorship can help differentiate a brand from its competitors [6]. In this way, sponsorship is a strategic approach to increasing brand awareness and stimulating financial growth [7].

In order to maximize brand awareness, sponsors often seek category exclusivity, which guarantees that a sponsor is the only brand within a product or service category that has a relationship with an event [8]. Exclusivity is particularly appealing for potential sponsors because it limits their competitors' access to the consumer group affiliated with an event [9]. According to the Performance Research Decision-Makers Survey, sponsoring firms perceived category exclusivity as the most valuable sponsorship benefit [10]. However, the proliferation of sport-related sponsorships poses a challenge to firms who seek a brand position apart from their competitors [9]. Conflicts between corporate rivals for exclusive sponsorship of major sporting events have led to notable court cases, including MasterCard

v. FIFA and AT&T v. NASCAR [9]. While category exclusive sponsorship might provide the most valuable position for sponsors, many firms cannot afford the high price tag of exclusive deals [11]. Instead, a growing number of sponsors seek ownership of specific activation platforms [11].

The Ryder Cup is one of the world's largest sporting events; however, this event is relatively under-researched when compared to the Olympics or other mega sport events. As one of the premier professional golf events in the world, the Ryder Cup is especially attractive to sponsors. A recent Ryder Cup held in Scotland of the United Kingdom (UK) had five major sponsors. Two of the sponsors, Ernst & Young (EY) and Standard Life Investments (SLI), were in similar business categories (i.e., financial services), potentially creating a sponsorship conflict of interest. Examining this case of a shared sponsorship spot will shed light on how sponsorship firms can compete and cooperate at the same time to achieve their promotional goals and each sponsorship can remain sustainable. One way is to move away from expensive category exclusivity sponsorship deals and pursue financial objectives through sponsorship activation. However, to date, no study has examined the sponsorship activation strategies under a condition of potential conflict of interest due to co-sponsors. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the sponsorship activations of EY and SLI by addressing four specific research questions.

RQ1. Why was the Ryder Cup event deemed a good sponsorship opportunity?

RQ2. How did EY and SLI use social media as a means of sponsorship activation to meet their business goals in the Ryder Cup event?

RQ3. How did the two firms use additional opportunities to increase the interactive nature of sponsorship activation?

RQ4. How did these two companies evaluate the success of their sponsorship of the Ryder Cup event?

Answers to these research questions should help organizers of the Ryder Cup and sponsoring firms better maintain financial sustainability and achieve sponsorship objectives. Building on a comprehensive review of literature, a qualitative research investigation was conducted in this study. The literature review section provides specific information on the Ryder Cup as a target of sponsorship, sport sponsorship activation, social media as a sponsorship activation platform, sponsorship evaluation, and identification of research gaps. The methods section covers data collection and analytical procedures. The results section summarizes themes induced from the extracts derived from interviews. An extended discussion section offers insights into sponsorship strategies of the Ryder Cup, social media development, event activation activities, managerial implications, identification of research limitations, and suggestions for future studies.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Ryder Cup as a Target of Sponsorship

The Ryder Cup is one of the most popular and celebrated sporting events in the world. Unlike other golf tournaments, the Ryder Cup is a team event in which golfers from the United States compete against golfers from Europe. The event happens every two years, alternating between a venue in Europe and a venue in the United States. The tournament ignites commercial activity and creates extensive tourism opportunities in the host region [12].

The Ryder Cup attracts the very best golfers from Europe and the United States. The most notable difference between the Ryder Cup and most other golfing events is that the team is the focus of the competition. Golf is traditionally an individual sport that rewards individual skill. The player usually relies on his or her own strategy against opponents. In other words, if a golfer wins or loses a tournament, the win or loss belongs to the golfer alone [13]. In contrast, competitors in the Ryder Cup represent their country or continent, encouraging them to unite in pursuit of a team win, not a cash prize. The captains of the European and U.S. teams are usually well-known older players who have had outstanding careers in the sport. The captain's role in the event adds to the excitement because he

or she must arrange optimal combinations of teammates before the competition begins. Therefore, Ryder Cup captains must demonstrate leadership and build a team of golf stars from different geographical areas, cultures, and language backgrounds [12]. The intricacies of this effort attract millions of passionate golf fans from all over the world. For example, the 40th Ryder Cup held in Scotland was broadcasted to 183 countries worldwide through a network of 43 providers, reaching more than half a billion homes on each day. During the competition, attendance reached nearly 45,000, including spectators from 75 different countries. This wide attention gave the Ryder Cup great commercial potential, and many corporations were interested in sponsoring the event.

## 2.2. Sport Sponsorship Activation

An increasing number of companies are choosing sport entities as a platform to carry out sponsorship campaigns. Sponsoring companies invest in a sport entity (e.g., athlete, team, or event) to support organizational objectives, promotional strategies, and marketing goals [12]. Sponsorship is a mutually beneficial exchange between two parties. The sponsoring company benefits from association with a sport entity, and the sport entity, in addition to favorable association, receives financial support [13]. Shark summarized three primary objectives of sport sponsorship: awareness, competition, and reaching a target market. Sporting events provide a platform that helps the sponsor enhance awareness of its brand, services, or products [14]. At the same time, a highly regarded corporate sponsor can raise awareness of the event. In addition, sport sponsorship is a pre-emptive strategy for decreasing the threat of competition. For example, during the 1996 Olympic Games, Reebok invested a substantial amount of money in sponsorship; in response, Nike used ambush marketing to compete with Reebok during the event [15]. Another objective of sport sponsorship is to reach new target markets. One significant advantage of sport sponsorship is that it can establish brand relationships with multiple target markets by engaging sport consumers on an emotional level [1,14]. The emotional attachment to sport can make consumers more susceptible to the marketing initiatives of the sponsoring brand. In this way, sporting events provide an effective platform for the sponsoring company. Stipp and Schiavone pointed out that sponsorship is the foundation of business-to-business (B2B) relationships, yielding a synergistic relationship between the sponsoring brand and the sporting event [16]. Furthermore, sponsorship of sporting events continues to rise in popularity because it benefits the partnered entities [14]. For example, both sponsor and sport entity might gain financial or in-kind support from this win-win partnership. The identification of a prominent sponsor is preferable because prominent brands are more prestigious and enhance the perceived significance of an event [17]. Meanwhile, sponsorship helps the sponsoring company achieve its business objectives [3]. It differentiates the sponsoring brand from competitors and creates competitive advantage [18,19].

The word “activation” typically refers to “a ration of the additional investment to the cost of the right fees” [2] (p. 423). In marketing, activation is also a type of “leveraging”, which refers to “marketing activities that a company conducts to promote its sponsorship” [20] (p. 1). Thus, sponsorship activation or sponsorship leveraging is “collateral communication of a brand’s relationship with a property” [6] (p. 36). Some scholars and practitioners also use the term “activation” to represent all activities used to increase the effectiveness of a sponsorship [2]. Week et al. found that activation communication, which targets audiences involved in sponsorship campaigns through websites and social media, is more favorable than non-activation communication, which includes on-site slogans or signage mentions of a sponsor [21]. Sport marketers need to know which activation strategies are most suitable for a sport sponsorship program. Fortunato pointed out that activation programs are flexible enough to reach the specific goals of sponsors and to communicate their brands to consumers [22]. O’Reilly and Horning identified the most common activation methods of sponsorship: advertising (e.g., TV, radio, magazines, newspaper, brochures, outdoor signage); digital, social, and mobile media; and off-site events (e.g., direct market-

ing) [2]. Through these activities, activation provides various opportunities for a brand, including brand image enhancement, brand exposure, and record product sales [22].

### 2.3. Social Media as a Sponsorship Activation Platform

According to the IEG (International Event Group) Sponsorship Report, public relations (89%) and social media (88%) are two of the most common methods of sponsorship activation [23]. Others include internal communications (86%), hospitality (81%), traditional advertising (77%), online promotions (69%), business to business (60%), on-site sampling (51%), direct marketing (48%), and sales promotion offers (32%). As one of the more common strategies, social media includes platforms of digital communication that allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content [24,25]. In the modern world, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) have become important collaborative channels of interaction among sport consumers. Through social media, sport organizations can quickly publish messages to target audiences [26]. Social media offers unique and powerful sponsorship tools that strengthen social bonds by giving audiences the freedom to express opinions and participate in conversations.

Vernuccio demonstrated three ways that social media can contribute to an organization's brand-building objectives [27]: (a) "using existing social media in public relations programs to reach new online customers", (b) "using social media to listen to the voice of stakeholders", and (c) "using social media as a platform to maintain and enhance the brand's image, connection, and reputation" [27] (p. 5). This option is becoming increasingly important for B2B companies because online communications provide opportunities for collaboration in shared business experience [25]. Social media provides multiple benefits for sponsors [28]. For example, using social media as a sponsorship activation strategy can provide access to specific target communities [28], improve consumer perception of the brand [29], and provide activation opportunities at a lower cost than traditional marketing services [30].

Social media can also present many challenges. One primary concern is that the organization cannot directly control the information posted by athletes, affiliates, and volunteers through social media [26,31]. One controversial post from a player or coach could potentially damage the image of a sponsoring company. The money and effort invested in the social media components of sponsorship also might not directly improve business performance [30] but could result in wasted resources. The sponsoring firm should consider both the advantages and disadvantages of using social media for sponsorship activation before making the final determination.

### 2.4. Sponsorship Evaluation

Scriven defined evaluation as "the process of determining the worth, merit, or significance of entities" [32] (p. 80). Thus, sport sponsorship evaluation is the process of determining the effectiveness of a sponsorship. Appropriate measurement is not only paramount in the success of a sponsorship campaign but also a practical component of effective implementation and evaluation of a sponsorship [33]. However, effectiveness is difficult to observe, making return on investment difficult to evaluate [15,19,34–36]. Sponsors often have difficulty measuring the success of their sponsorship campaigns directly, and the challenge of finding suitable evaluation methods is a key concern [5,37]. For example, the most obvious benefit for the sponsoring company likely stem from publicizing the sponsorship relationship or exposing audiences to the brand [38]. Unlike sales revenue, these phenomena resist direct measurement.

Farrelly et al. argued that the ability to apply a sponsorship campaign using other communication tools is an essential factor in evaluating the worth of that campaign [39]. Cornwell and Maignan suggested combining sponsorship leverage with other promotional activities [34]. However, Hastings stressed that different promotional activities (e.g., advertising and sponsorship) might have different evaluation techniques and objectives [40]. One unique characteristic of sponsorship is that the brand name and image

can reach consumers before an event even begins. Integration of other elements, such as sales promotion or event and experience, can only occur during or after the sponsored event. Furthermore, sponsorship can benefit numerous additional corporate objectives simultaneously [38]. These objectives have different target outcomes, requiring more than a single measure [41]. Moreover, the timing of expected promotional activities related to sponsorship objectives might vary, potentially leading to outcomes that occur at different times [38]. Each of these factors presents a major obstacle to sponsorship evaluation.

### 2.5. Research Gaps

Although sponsorship has become a popular marketing communication tool for sporting events, research gaps exist. For many years, product category exclusivity has been a conceptual doctrine and traditional practice for sport sponsorship; yet, at recent Ryder Cup events, this idea and its parameter have been substantially transcended and even transformed at times. For example, both EY and SLI served as official partners of the event in recent years. While the two firms moved away from the traditional practices of category exclusivity deals, both have been able to achieve significant success through their collaborative efforts in activating their sponsorships. This new, fascinating occurrence needs in-depth exploration, understanding, and possible generalization. Furthermore, in recent sport sponsorship studies few scholars have examined how sponsorship participation is beneficial to a brand [2,6]. An area that needs more research attention is online corporate communication and sponsorship branding strategy from a social media perspective. Although firms increasingly use social media in marketing communication, scholars have overlooked this area. Scholars have rarely considered the mechanisms of sports sponsorship and perceived brand value within social media [27,30]. In particular, scholars have not investigated sponsorship activities related to the Ryder Cup. This biennial event, despite being one of the biggest sporting events in the world and attracting many prominent sponsors, has gained little attention from scholars interested in sponsorship activation [12]. Virtually no evidence exists about the way sponsors have evaluated their sponsorship campaigns for the Ryder Cup. The aim of the current study is to fill these gaps, contribute new findings to the overall body of sponsorship research, and offer constructive directions for future investigation of sponsorship activation of the Ryder Cup. Our findings should help relevant partners develop sponsorship strategies.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Data Collection

Considering the lack of previous research evidence and absence of available theoretical underpinning to guide the investigation, an inductive inquiry process was carried out in the current study. Using an in-depth qualitative research approach, we conducted a single case study to investigate how sponsorship activations for a recent Ryder Cup event held in Scotland, UK, contributed to the sponsor's brand strategy and how opportunities and tensions emerged during sponsorship activation. We focused on two official partners of the event (i.e., SLI and EY). We relied on interpretivism, a research philosophy that permits exploration of realistic issues via multiple perspectives, which is to use several sources of data related to each case or cases. Therefore, we collected both primary and secondary data.

Primary data came from interviews by using non-probability purposeful sampling, which involved purposefully recruiting "the person in whom the researcher is interested, professes no representativeness" [42] (p. 137). We collected information and ideas from relevant sponsorship stakeholders for the event, including the Ryder Cup Director of the PGA European Tour, Client Relations Director of the European Tour and Ryder Cup, Director of Sport and Sponsorship at EY, Senior Golf Manager of VisitScotland, and General Manager of the Gleneagles Hotel, the golf event hosting resort (see Table 1). After contacting the interviewees by email, we scheduled telephone interviews. The interview consent was sent to the interviewees by email before the telephone interview was carried out, through which we made sure that the interviewees were informed of the research direction and interview

purpose. The interview questions were of structured categories (19 questions for EY and SLI; 21 questions for VisitingScotland; 20 questions for PGA European Tour and Gleneagles Hotel) (see Appendix A). To protect the business benefit of companies, confidentiality was specially mentioned in the consent, which emphasized that the relevant recording of the interview and internal documents would be kept in confidentiality. The right of withdrawal was also particularly stressed in the consent form. The overall consent form was aimed to ensure that any recorded contributions, in both written form and on recording tape of the interviews by the interviewer, were used in accordance with the wishes of the interviewee. After obtaining the permission from interviewees, the research proceeded. Meanwhile, the entire article was written respecting the anonymity of the interviewees. All interview recordings and transcripts were confidentially maintained and safely guarded by the research team. Secondary data came from previous research findings, the official websites of the Ryder Cup, EY, and SLI, and some official event reports (e.g., Ryder Cup Legacy Story, Review of Ryder Cup, and Junior Report by the Chief Executive). We also examined internal documentation, such as sponsorship deals. Two academic journals, 13 websites, four official events reports, and four internal documents were examined.

**Table 1.** Interview participants profiles.

No.	Interview Date	Entity	Position	Experience
1	17 June 2015	EY	Directors of Sports and Sponsorship	Worked for EY for five years since 2010
2	24 June 2015	PGA European Tour and Ryder Cup Community	Chief Commercial Officer and Ryder Cup Director	Worked for European Tour for 11 years since 2005
3	24 June 2015	PGA European Tour and Ryder Cup Community	Client Relations Director	Worked for European Tour for six years from 2009 to 2015
4	24 June 2015	PGA European Tour and Ryder Cup Community	Sponsorship Client Relations Director	Worked for European Tour for 22 years since 1994
5	14 July 2015	EventScotland and VisitScotland	Director of Events	Work for VisitScotland for 18 years
6	14 July 2015	VisitScotland	Senior Golf Manager	Work for VisitScotland for 14 years
7	23 July 2015	Gleneagles Hotel	General Manager	Worked for the Gleneagles Hotel for 10 years

### 3.2. Data Analysis

Data analyses were conducted based on the ground theory, which served as basic phases of summarizing, comprehending, and synthesizing qualitative data from the interview [43]. To analyze the qualitative data from the interviews, we transcribed recordings. By using thematic coding, which is a generic method for analyzing qualitative data in an inductive way [44], we identified similarities and differences in the interview transcripts. We labeled similarities by using the inductive coding procedures. We then compared similar content, identified themes, and interpreted them in the context of literature for further discussions. The primary data were verified with the secondary sources in a rational way, which is beneficial to enhance the validity of the evidence [44].

## 4. Results

A total of 132 meaningful sentences were extracted from the transcripts. The meaningful extracts were categorized into 11 groups as identified by code (i.e., the return of the event to Scotland; local people keen to involved in the event; good sponsorship opportunities; high degree of concern and exposure; support from multiple categories of sponsors and different activities; strict access and competition for each of the sponsors; good opportunities for sponsors; advertising strategy for sponsors and the application of social media for both sponsors; ambassador strategies; finding and creating the match points between

the event and sponsors/focus on the leadership and team; involving different parts and carrying on different activities). From the 11 groups of codes, five themes were generated, including sponsorship strategy (i.e., extraordinary sponsorship platform, positive sponsorship strategy, and sponsorship activations), positive social media strategy, ambassador strategy of EY during the event, positive influence of sport sponsorship on the internal marketing of SLI, and sponsorship evaluation of the event.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Sponsorship Strategy of the Ryder Cup

#### 5.1.1. The Extraordinary Sponsorship Platform

Scotland truly is the home of golf, where the ancient game took root. Golf bloomed on Scottish soil and remains one of the greatest attractions of the country [45]. The Ryder Cup returning to Scotland provided great opportunities for business, tourism, and legacy opportunities, including an increase in the number of young people involved in the sport through ClubGolf [46]. As overseer of the event's hosting site, the General Manager of the Gleneagles Hotel stressed that the TV audience of the Ryder Cup ranked third in the world, behind the Olympic Games and World Cup, due to global broadcasting. The broader audience undeniably created an excellent opportunity for sponsors.

Golf is a key tourism market for Scotland, and the event greatly promoted local tourism. For example, approximately 62% of general ticket holders of the Ryder Cup event came from outside Scotland, and more than 75,000 spectators engaged in the "Scotland Welcomes the World Zone" in the Spectator Village [46]. Although the Ryder Cup Operations Director pointed out that arranging an international event of this size and status without some degree of impact on and inconvenience to the area was impossible, the organizers of the event minimized disruption while the event took place [47]. The magnificent setting of the Gleneagles Hotel showcased the world-class golf that Scotland has to offer. Meanwhile, the fine facilities and beautiful environment attracted the attention of thousands of people from around the world. Connolly and Connolly indicated that the prosperity of the competition is the foundation of sponsorship success [34]. In this regard, the Ryder Cup event provided an excellent opportunity for sponsoring companies to carry out a variety of sponsorship strategies.

#### 5.1.2. Positive Sponsorship Strategy and Sponsorship Activations

To reach target communication objectives, effective implementation of a sponsorship framework is crucial [1]. The Ryder Cup event offered multiple categories of sponsorship. The five official partners—Rolex, BMW, Johnnie Walker, EY, and SLI—mainly provided financial support to the Ryder Cup. Twelve companies became official suppliers of the event. Four companies became team suppliers of food and drink to technology services. In addition, 20 companies were official licensees of the event's sponsorship. Brooks argued that the multiple sponsorship classifications can help event organizers avoid potential threats [48]. Unexpected costs almost always occur during a sporting event, and exclusive sponsors might hesitate to increase their financial commitment. Therefore, having multiple sponsors offered a range of support to the Ryder Cup event and ensured that the event ran smoothly. Gwinner [49] and Lee et al. [50] claimed that a large number of sponsors of a sporting event can lead to negative attitudes toward the event. Consumers might feel that the sporting event is over-commercialized. Nevertheless, "how commercialization attitudes may differ by type of sport or even region of the world" is unknown [49] (p. 7).

The Ryder Cup event saw as many as 250,000 people in attendance over the course of the week [46], making the event a great opportunity for sponsoring companies. However, the Sport and Sponsorship Director of EY argued that the event duration (i.e., only three days) was too short to be ideal for sponsors to implement their strategies. Matthews emphasized that the traditional concept of massive outlay and massive return might not apply to sponsors of a golf event because the duration is shorter than the Olympics, limiting the sponsor's ability to achieve the desired publicity [51]. For these reasons, the Ryder Cup event in

question focused on increasing the spectrum of sponsorship opportunities, enabling as many sponsorship activations as possible within the limited time to attract audiences.

For example, spectators who traveled to the event received a wristband embedded with a small identification chip. The chip had a unique ID that spectators could activate before the event through their mobile phone and link to their email and social media profiles. At the same time, “touch points” around the course were embedded into walls and signage by some official partners of the event (e.g., BMW). By touching their wristbands to these “touch points”, spectators could participate in various interactive activities hosted by the Ryder Cup or sponsoring companies. For example, they could explore Ryder Cup memorabilia or take a photo with a famous golfer and upload it to their social media accounts. In this way, sponsors could directly interact with the audience and also collect relevant consumer information and data, which are useful for business development [52]. The audience also had opportunities to share their experiences with friends and family. The European Tour Operation Director of the Ryder Cup explained that “the technology of wristbands amplifies the event experience beyond the course. In this way, the audiences who attend the event can feel that their ticket is more valuable”. In the meantime, every recorded interaction between the company and a potential consumer can enhance sales efforts and targeted promotions [36].

The Ryder Cup event focused on improving the experiences of its audiences. Cliffe and Motion argued that a deeper experience is the foundation of a successful sponsorship event [53]. The Client Relations Director of the European Tour and Ryder Cup stated, “There were a lot of audiences who came all day for the Ryder Cup but did not necessarily want to spend all day watching golf, so we needed to give them other things to do”. Therefore, the community organizers of the event provided a wide range of activities for audiences. For example, audiences could order a variety of foods in the Ryder Cup Village. The official partner and coffee supplier, Nespresso, also offered a free cup of coffee for ticket holders. In this way, audience members could eat, drink, and watch golf simultaneously for a good price. In addition, in the Ryder Cup Village, audiences could look at exhibitions displaying famous golfers of the Ryder Cup, providing more information related to the competition. Pine and Gilmore emphasized that giving the customer a unique and memorable experience is essential to creating a sustainable consumer relationship and competitive advantage [54]. The Client Relations Director of the European Tour and Ryder Cup explained that organizers of the Ryder Cup event “hoped to keep audiences involved in the event as much as possible. The various activities are beneficial to increasing the fan experience, and we also hope in this way to attract people wherever they might be watching the match”.

Apart from the event itself, the Ryder Cup ran a twin-brand experience, hosted by the PGA Europe Tour, at the event site and also at the Ryder Cup fan zones throughout Scotland, such as Glasgow, Perth, and Edinburgh. Fan zones in the city not only enhanced the intimate relationship between urban spaces and the mega sporting event but also increased the visibility of the Ryder Cup brand and the brands of its commercial partners [55]. The Senior Manager of VisitScotland pointed out that “Scotland wants more local people to be involved in the Ryder Cup”. In Edinburgh’s St. Andrews Square, big screens relayed live coverage of the tournament, and visitors enjoyed a mini-golf course. Different sponsoring companies were involved in this twin-brand experience. For example, SLI carried out a series of small games in the Edinburgh fan zones aimed at providing visitors the opportunity to win a trip into their favorite team’s locker room. The Senior Manager of VisitScotland emphasized that the fan zones outside the Gleneagles Hotel created a delightful environment even for non-golfers. The engaging activities directly attracted more people, who had additional opportunities to experience this event and gain a deeper understanding of the competition.

Companies often confront cultural and linguistic obstacles when extending their business reach, sometimes hindering meaningful communication with consumers [56]. The Marketing and Sponsorship Director of EY pointed out that the Ryder Cup provides special opportunities for sponsors because it brings together a diverse collection of sport stars from across Europe into one coherent and consistent team. The Ryder Cup Director of



PGA Europe also commented, “Compared to the Commonwealth Games, the participation of the U.S. team in Ryder Cup attracts more audience from overseas, so not only is it good for Scotland, but it also benefits sponsoring companies who have a globalized business”.

EY adopted the phrase “building a better working world” as its brand strategy. The company deeply understood that, with the Ryder Cup, the difference between victory and defeat can come down to the perfect blend of diverse talents and personalities of 12 individuals [57]. The Marketing and Sponsorship Director of EY pointed out that in this event, teamwork and pride take precedence over prize money and personal achievement, and the result of competition depends not only on good golf play but also on good cooperation. Thus, the overall sponsorship strategy of EY focused on the theme of teamwork and leadership.

The Marketing and Sponsorship Director of EY stated, “In order to be successfully involved in the Ryder Cup, the main sponsorship strategy of EY was to use the athletes as ambassadors in sponsorship activation, such as just pinning a logo on the players’ shirts”. If sponsors were only involved in the single category of logo activation, their competitors would have ample opportunity to engage in ambush strategies [58]. EY signed the European Captain, Paul McGinley, soon after his appointment and worked with him during his development as a leader to explore teambuilding and leadership principles. The firm made six short films to capture this process and posted them on social media platforms. In this way, EY effectively linked the Ryder Cup to the themes of leadership and teamwork, extending the sponsorship cycle.

Grainger et al. maintained that sport celebrities in sponsorship activations can help the sponsoring brand contact employees and consumers in novel ways that appeal to media editors [59]. Although ambassadors can negatively affect the brand image of a sponsor [60], the image of Paul McGinley was that of a strong leader, a public relations win for EY. A successful celebrity endorsement is beneficial to sponsors, reflecting a favorable brand identity [61]. Meanwhile, the spread of video content throughout social networks significantly enhanced consumer awareness, establishing a virtual association between the sponsors and audiences [52]. EY also carried out sponsorship activation in the areas surrounding the hosting community. For example, adding its logo to the taxi fleet in Edinburgh helped more people realize that EY was the official partner of the Ryder Cup event. O’Reilly and Horning stressed that implementing multiple activities during sponsorship is good for increasing brand awareness and strengthening long-term consumer relationships [2]. In this regard, EY created a positive attitude toward the brand and helped ensure the awareness of consumers by endorsing celebrity golfers and carrying out multiple sponsorship activations.

SLI focused on running a major international advertising campaign that related its brand positioning to the values of the Ryder Cup event. The Sponsorship and Marketing Director of EY stated, “the main difference between Standard Life Investments and us is that they were approached to do a lot of advertising, advertising in Scotland, advertising in London, advertising in the U.S., a principle market for the Ryder Cup. So, the main reason for sponsoring Ryder Cup was awareness, to raise awareness of the brand”. Keller stressed that advertising is an important communication method for building brand awareness for companies [62]. It is also a useful tool for directly demonstrating brand emotion, attitude, and value, which can effectively resonate with consumers [63,64].

Meanwhile, Gwinner stressed that exhibiting posters had two main advantages in transferring favorable images to audiences or potential consumers [49]. First, they help viewers hold a strong image of the event in their minds; second, they improve recognition of sponsors of the event. SLI showcased several posters in public areas of the United Kingdom, such as Heathrow Airport and Edinburgh Airport, which were two key gateways of the Ryder Cup event. The posters featured the slogan “World Class as Standard”, which aimed to promote SLI as a “World Class” brand. An appropriate advertising slogan can create a deep psychological interaction with audiences [6]. The intent of these posters was to improve recall and achieve image dominance throughout the Ryder Cup journey, improving brand image for relevant stakeholders and increasing awareness.

In addition, SLI's integrated campaign centered on a comprehensive bespoke website dedicated to the Ryder Cup event. This website included a range of content, including exclusive imagery and videos. It covered the history of the event and shared insider viewpoints from event ambassadors of the brand. Websites are ideal communication channels for sponsors with an international target market, for they reach more people than traditional media at a fraction of the cost [65].

SLI's website hosted a series of interesting online films called "World Class Ryder Cup Decisions", adopting the form of a talk show to demonstrate the former captain's view of teamwork and the Ryder Cup. For example, the first video was "Preparing to be a World Class Ryder Cup Captain—Part 1: World Class Preparation". In this video, a television anchor for Sky News, Sarah Stirk, speaks to former Ryder Cup captains Sam Torrance and Curtis Strange to discuss elements of preparation for a Ryder Cup. Combining dynamic visuals and bold messages about the work of Ryder Cup captains, the video series was available on a variety of innovative and influential media channels and platforms. For the sponsoring company, such content naturally aligned the sponsorship to its target markets, more easily establishing an emotional link between brand and consumer. For the sponsee, these website resources become strategic assets that add value to the sponsorship [36]. The Content Strategy Director of SLI reported, "We hope to use these videos to perfectly show the charisma of knowledgeable people and to perfectly engage our audience because the content embodies the substantial interaction between golf and our financial services" [66].

### 5.2. Positive Social Media Strategy

According to Dumitru and Nichifor, the transmission of the name or logo of a sponsoring company has two types [29]. One type of publicity is to directly engage audiences who are watching the event on the spot. Another type of publicity is to indirectly engage audiences who are watching the event through Internet or TV channels. The Ryder Cup event featured both types of transmission. In order to overcome the disadvantages associated with its short duration, the event focused on indirect engagement through social media. Social media has become an important battleground for sponsoring brands [57]: "It is also an effective way for people to interact in order to create, share, or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks" [25] (p. 3).

The marketing strategy of the Ryder Cup event was highly focused on social media. Established in 2010, the social media department of the Ryder Cup aimed to complement TV coverage and to make the event as engaging as possible [67]. Official Twitter and Facebook pages promoted the event, and event organizers encouraged audiences to share selfies taken during the event and any other photos related to the event on social networks. According to the Match Director of the Ryder Cup, "The event hoped to get people to share their stories online and feel part of the Ryder Cup. There are a range of fantastic activities around the course that use technology to improve the visitor experience, and these are integrated with social networks" [68]. Zwick and Dieterle emphasized that online interaction with consumers helps create customer relationships and increases brand involvement [36]. Through automatic social media updates on Facebook and Twitter, audiences could connect with family and friends around the world, making more people aware of the competition and capturing the attention of sport fans from all over the world.

Twitter and Facebook help sponsors communicate publicly with various stakeholders [25]. For this reason, SLI focused on the strategy of using the "hashtag experience" of audiences. To incentivize fans to share "support selfies" to show their passion for their team, the firm offered a chance to win a weekend at the event [69]. In this way, social media became an effective platform through which SLI achieved sponsorship activation.

EY also used social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to promote its tournament website. EY depended on these platforms to provide a compelling narrative for target consumers. First, the company published a series of stories about the teambuilding and leadership principles of the Ryder Cup on its tournament website. Internal and

external audiences could then transmit this content via Twitter and Facebook, extending the influence of the sponsoring brand [53]. Although negative comments are a possible outcome in this process, wider exposure to the story tends to outweigh this risk. Meanwhile, through the spread of information on social media, wider audiences learn about the brand value of EY and develop their own perceptions. Perceived brand value can favorably influence audience attention to and attitude toward a sponsor [49]. According to the Sponsorship and Marketing Director of EY, “our main channel for distributing Ryder Cup content was social media because that is probably the best way to engage audiences”.

EY also created a series of six short films called *The Captain's Leadership Journey* on the Ryder Cup website, one for each of six themes: Challenge, Greater Good, Talent, Team Culture, Heat of Battle, and Succession. The films highlighted the leadership journey of the European team's captain, Paul McGinley, during the event. The “Challenge” film, for example, demonstrated the obstacles Paul McGinley had to overcome, from preparation to selection of players and pairings. As the Sponsorship and Marketing Director of EY remarked, “The story around the captain, of course, is meant to engage the audience. It also highly embodies the themes of teamwork and leadership, which are the heart of the Ryder Cup”.

EY also made videos to tell the story of the team behind the team, including the greenskeeper of Gleneagles and the European team psychologist. Each online story revolved around the concept of inclusive leadership and diversity. The Sponsorship and Marketing Director of EY stated, “we want to show that teamwork is not just about high athletic achievement, but also about the people who have to come together from different disciplines to put on one of the most incredible events in the world”. These videos highlighted the importance of teamwork both to the event and to EY itself. Not only did the videos give consumers a better understanding of EY's scope of business, but they also generated favorable brand attitudes. Meanwhile, by tracking the repost and download rate and user comments on social media, EY monitored interest in the content, helping the firm adjust its social media strategy in the future.

Despite the benefits of social media, the company cannot directly control such a public platform. Negative user comments might affect the image of the sponsoring company [26,31]. To minimize this risk, the sponsoring companies and the event organizers set up social media departments to maintain their accounts. Beech and Chadwick pointed out that both rights owners and potential sponsors have considered ways in which sponsorship rights might gain protection from ambush marketing [58]. In fact, U.S. hackers attacked the EY Facebook page for the Ryder Cup. According to the Sponsorship and Marketing Director of EY, the EY social media department took action immediately: “What we did is just close down the social media site for a couple of days. After understanding and dealing with the problem, we carried on”.

### 5.3. *The Ambassador Strategy of EY during the Event*

The right choice of ambassador can result in better consumer attention and recall and reinforce the image of a brand [70]. According to the Marketing and Sponsorship Director of EY, the principal activation of EY was to use an ambassador to increase audience awareness: “EY understood that the singularity and size of Paul's challenge in competition was to go from peer to leader, and to win, so we worked with him to explore the overlap between leadership in business and sport. The result of this work was incredibly successful”. Paul McGinley was not only an inspiring sports figure but also an inspiration to anybody who has ever had to work on a team or has worked with others to achieve greatness. Firms often use sport celebrities as “brand mercenaries” in the global market to help achieve its sponsoring objectives [61]. EY used McGinley to extend its duration of sponsorship activation. The Marketing and Sponsorship Director of EY said, “EY worked with McGinley soon after he was appointed captain and worked with him during his development as a leader to do some promotions. In this way, we could turn it from a brand-building exercise for a three-day event on the world's televisions to a half-year-long engagement program”.

Athletic ambassadors in sport sponsorship can help sponsors obtain a good image, but they can also help a brand make contact with its sponsored event, attracting the attention of more people [59]. McGinley believed homework is more important than psychology when leading people during the match [71]. By “homework”, he meant research about individual players to learn relevant information before the competition. This idea is similar to the core concept of EY: that homework leads to better decision-making and minimizes conflict during communication. In addition, both in sport and in business, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each person on a team is important, and team success comes before individual success. Commenting on the use of an ambassador, the Marketing and Sponsorship Director of EY stated, “We could authentically increase awareness of the same leadership and teamwork that we promote with our client base”.

#### *5.4. Positive Influence of Sport Sponsorship on the Internal Marketing of SLI*

Sport sponsorship also plays an important role in internal communication: a cohesive tool that can gather people on a shared project [58,65]. During the event, SLI ran a competition for its staff to win a ticket to the event. In this way, the firm tried to create the feeling that the staff were working on extraordinary sponsorship activities that could build organizational culture and generate team spirit. The General Manager of the Gleneagles Hotel and Senior Manager of VisitScotland reported that the event plays an important role in getting staff heavily engaged with the brand.

Meenaghan et al. suggested that for the internal staff of a single organization, sport sponsorship has the capacity to enhance staff pride and morale and that sponsorship activations carried out within a company can have a favorable effect on the sponsor’s image building [64]. During the event, SLI offered staff opportunities to volunteer at the event itself, and the company had so many express interest that it held a vote to determine who would go. In this way, sponsorship is an opportunity to leverage an internal brand experience, communicating brand meaning to employees. Meanwhile, it can generate a positive working environment that increases employee satisfaction and loyalty [53].

#### *5.5. Sponsorship Evaluation of the Event*

Sponsorship evaluation is no easy task for sponsoring companies. Sponsorship objectives can vary among companies, making some reluctant to evaluate their sponsorship rigorously. Thorough sponsorship evaluation might require significant investment of money and other resources [65]. EY and SLI chose different ways to evaluate their sponsorship campaigns for the Ryder Cup event.

The Marketing and Sponsorship Director of EY determined that the most effective way to evaluate sponsorship was to understand the reasons for sponsoring the event in the first place. In this regard, evaluation of the success of a sponsorship depends on its objectives. The sponsorship objective of EY was to engage people in the concepts of leadership and teamwork. The effectiveness of sponsorship might be hard to observe directly [15,19,34–36]. Therefore, EY chose an indirect way to evaluate its sponsorship involvement, emphasizing its long-term benefits. The Marketing and Sponsorship Director of EY pointed out that “the Ryder Cup was hugely successful for us. We engaged with over a thousand of our most important clients in the year leading up to the event and at the event itself. Those clients collectively make up a large percentage of EY’s turn over. We engaged. We had clients engaged from 37 different markets from around the world. We had staff applications to be part of our Ryder Cup team, so our staff engagement well with the EY Ryder Cup team, and then we selected 12 people to around the world to become a part of our team to help us on-site. We had applications for that in sixty different countries”.

However, EY did not measure values such as advertising dollars spent or the number of households who watched the Ryder Cup. Those numbers were not relevant to its sponsorship objective. Mathias and Erik stated that firms that do not directly assess sponsorship results might depend more on “gut instinct” [72]. This choice “creates a seeming paradox of satisfaction with sponsorship results without quantitative or qualitative

measures of what those results are" [72] (p. 10). In this regard, sponsorship evaluation might not always be objective.

In contrast to EY, SLI concentrated more on quantitative data. It focused on the thousands of competition entries, record interaction rates, oversubscription for various participation opportunities, and extremely positive feedback [67]. During the event, SLI evaluated its success based on statistical reports. The event led to 54,600 unique visitors from over 150 countries during one month in the SLI tent in the Ryder Cup Village and fan zones, a 2000% increase in Twitter followers in two months, a 26% increase in brand familiarity in the United Kingdom, a 30% increase in the same in the United States, an 82% increase in positive brand sentiment, and a 150% increase in Net Promoter Score among intermediaries [67]. Based on these numbers, SLI considered the sponsorship of the event an overwhelming success; however, these statistics primarily measure awareness. While monitoring social awareness through these mediums is undoubtedly beneficial, subsequent sponsorship influences, such as image transfer and sales, also merit consideration [65]. Thus, for a more objective assessment of its sponsorship, SLI might need to focus on additional measures, including exposure effects, awareness effects, image effects, and sales-related effects.

Cornwell et al. pointed out that the most successful sponsorship is continuous sponsorship [6]. For SLI, the Ryder Cup event was just the start, as the firm was already looking forward to sponsoring the next tournament in 2016 [73] at the Hazeltine National Golf Club in Minnesota. This commitment to future events indicates that SLI achieved great success during the event.

## 6. Conclusions and Managerial Implications

This case study highlights the sponsorship strategies for the Ryder Cup event. First, we investigated why the Ryder Cup event was a good sponsorship opportunity for high-profile companies. Scotland, as the home of golf, attracted significant global audiences. Approximately 250,000 people from 96 different countries attended the Ryder Cup event, providing numerous opportunities for sponsoring companies to increase exposure. Meanwhile, the success of the event contributed to the future development of the golf event. Although economic impact research of the Ryder Cup event is incomplete, the Director of Ryder Cup Europe Tour predicted that the legacy of the Ryder Cup would have a significant positive effect on the Scottish and UK economy. Support from multiple categories of sponsors was a major contributor to the success of the event. For example, the multiple sponsorship activations (e.g., fan zones) increased audience engagement and improved the fan experience. The use of social media in sponsorship activation as well as the application of new technologies (e.g., digital wristband) allowed sponsoring companies to influence more people. Findings suggest that these conditions successfully increased brand awareness and improved brand image [2].

We also explored how sponsors use social media as a means of activation to meet business objectives and how other opportunities increased the interactive nature of sponsorship. SLI relied on social media to publish a series of videos about former captains of the Ryder Cup. These videos gained over 34,000 views on YouTube and Twitter. In this way, the company delivered core business concepts via social media platforms and freely interacted with various stakeholders. EY used social media such as Facebook and Twitter to deliver its sponsorship theme of leadership and teamwork, embodied in a series of films about the Ryder Cup captain's journey. Perceiving brand value, as transmitted through social media, many potential consumers of EY were engaged [49]. Meanwhile, the social media platforms of these two companies remained active after the Ryder Cup event, and the firms continued to publish company information related to golf and the Ryder Cup. In this way, sponsoring companies hoped to overcome the disadvantages associated with the short duration of the competition, turning a three-day event into a yearlong program.

Although EY focused on using social media platforms to attract and engage the audience, its principal activation was to use the story of its chosen ambassador Paul

McGinley to deliver its core sponsorship concept of leadership and teamwork. EY also created the concept of the team behind the team, highlighting the importance of gathering superb people to work together. In addition to social media efforts, SLI invested heavily in advertising. It ran a major international advertising campaign related to its brand positioning. This integrated campaign centered on a comprehensive bespoke website dedicated to the Ryder Cup event, and the firm also published in public areas outside the competition venue, such as the airport and train station in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The intent was to increase audience awareness by engaging those who were unable to attend the Ryder Cup. In addition, SLI carried out different sponsorship activations for staff. For instance, it provided people with volunteer opportunities, increasing internal loyalty to the sponsorship project.

To evaluate the success of sponsorship involvement in the Ryder Cup event, EY revisited its initial sponsoring objectives. The main purpose for choosing the Ryder Cup as a sponsorship opportunity was to convey the work of EY, which seeks to build a better working world. EY focused on both the number and quality of people who attended the event. The company also measured the increase in client and staff applications during and after the event. Results showed that the Ryder Cup event was an effective opportunity to enhance brand awareness and company business. SLI focused on the thousands of competition entries, record interaction rates, oversubscription for various participation opportunities, and extremely positive feedback. Based on statistical analysis, the company considered the sponsorship an overwhelming success. The Ryder Cup event was just the start for SLI, who planned to continue its sponsorship relationship with the event. To achieve more convincing results, scholars need to collect more data in this area. Scholars should focus on collecting more data from events, conduct interviews with management from sponsoring companies, and explore content strategies implemented by sponsors on social media platforms.

## 7. Limitations and Suggestion for Future Studies

Cornwell et al. pointed out that the most successful sponsorship is continuous sponsorship [6]. However, we focused on a recent Ryder Cup event as a single event. The Ryder Cup is distinct from typical professional golf tournaments because it is a team match. This discrepancy suggests that sponsoring partners might have special strategies for the Ryder Cup that do not apply to other golf events. Thus, differences in sponsorship activation between individual tournaments and team matches might be worth examining. Meanwhile, limited by time, manpower, material resources and money, we used telephone interviews, which might have some limitations compared to face-to-face interviews. For example, during a telephone interview, researchers will miss visual cues from responders, potentially limiting the flexibility of the entire interview process. In addition, the following year after the study was a gap year for the Ryder Cup due to its biennial schedule, so we could not conduct follow-up field observations of the Ryder Cup event sponsors or interview spectators. These limitations lead to gaps in the data. In future studies, scholars should investigate sponsorship activation for the Ryder Cup from a different perspective, particularly spectators and consumers.

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## Appendix A

### Interview questions for E&Y and SLI

#### Sponsorship

1. Why E&Y/SLI want to sponsor the Ryder Cup. Are there some criteria to select the event to sponsor? Are there some notable aspects of the 2014 Ryder Cup comparing with the others years Ryder Cup from you own perspective?
2. Can you describe the nature of the 2014 Ryder Cup sponsorship that you're involved in? What were the objectives for E&Y when it entered this particular sponsorship? Are these objectives being achieved?
3. Could you tell me some important supports that the E&Y/SLI provide for the 2014 Ryder Cup if it is not sensitive? Such as some funding support and in-kind products.
4. What is the target market of E&Y/SLI? Are there some systemic processes of implementing sponsorship?

#### Sponsorship activation

5. What sponsorships activation are E&Y/SLI involved in? (Such as social media traditional advertising); Were these activities of activation put in the same time? What are objects of these sponsorship activations respectively?
6. How to get the competitive advantages through the sponsorship activation; if E&Y/SLI wish to get the competitive advantages, are there some obvious differences of sponsorship activation compared with other sponsors such as Standard life investment.
7. Are E&Y/SLI using some strategies to avoid ambush marketing from other sponsors?
8. Was sponsorship activation of E&Y/SLI implemented before and after the 2014 Ryder Cup? If so, what is the purpose?

#### Social media

9. What purpose that the E&Y as a B2B company use the social media? What the target followers of the E&Y /SLI social media?
10. How to deal with or avoid some negative information that post by the audiences from social media?
11. Are social media has a certain degree of positive influence for the internal employees of the E&Y. If so, what influence?

#### Sponsorship fit

12. Why E&Y / SLI as an audit/ Financial firms choose to sponsor a sport event? Do you think the 2014 Ryder Cup is a good sponsorship opportunity for E&Y/SLI? Why?
13. Do you think there are some image fit or functional fit between the E&Y/SLI and the 2014 Ryder Cup? Or are there some similarities between the 2014 Ryder Cup and the E&Y/SLI?
14. Are there any image/meaning transfers from the sponsorship to the E&Y /SLI brand? What is the nature of these transfers? Image related? Brand Awareness?

### **Brand strategy**

15. What is the main E&Y/SLI 's branding strategy? What is this branding strategy trying to achieve?

16. What is the role of the sponsorship in the branding strategy? In broad terms what does E&Y/SLI want to achieve with its sponsorship? Why? How does this particular sponsorship benefit E&Y/SLI and the E&Y /SLIbrand? (Spinoffs and unexpected benefits?)

17. Are there some differences between online strategy and offline strategy of the brand? (For example, the target consumers might different)

18. Could you briefly talk about the 2014 Ryder Cup sponsorship create what positive influence to the consumers, employees and corporate stakeholders. Such as brand experience for consumers.

### **Evaluation**

19. Do you think the sponsorship involvement of the 2014 Ryder Cup is successful? If so, How did you E&Y/SLI evaluation the success of its sponsorship involvement in the 2014 Ryder Cup? Are there some official evaluation methods of E&Y/SLI were put in to use in the 2014 Ryder Cup.

### **Interview questions for the PGA European Tour**

#### **Sponsorship**

1. What is the target audience of the 2014 Ryder Cup?

2. Are there some notable aspects of the 2014 Ryder Cup comparing with other years from your own perspective?

3. Do you think the 2014 Ryder Cup come back to the Scotland that is the home of the golf is beneficial to sponsorship carry out? If so, what are the advantages?

4. Which part of Ryder Cup mainly depends on the support of sponsorship? Does sponsoring firms provide the some support for Ryder Cup during the non-cup years?

5. You have mentioned that the sponsorship model of the Ryder Cup is same with the Olympic Games that a number of companies become involved into certain products and sectors. Could you give me a specific list of that? (for Richard Hills)

6. What are the selection criteria of sponsoring firms of the 2014 Ryder Cup? Are there some differences of selection criteria between the team event of golf such as the Ryder Cup and other types of golf events where athletes participate on individual basis?

7. Why choose the service based company E&Y and the Standard Investment Life became official partners of the 2014 Ryder Cup? Are there some special advantages of these two sponsoring companies?

8. Why Ryder Cup nails down its first global sponsors in the 2016 Ryder Cup? Particularly, why E&Y have no right to continue its sponsors?

9. Are sponsorship expense is fixed for each sponsoring firms and paid in advance of the association rights being available for the firms?

10. Why Standard life Investment has an opportunity that sponsors the both sides of the Atlantics in Ryder Cup, which have never happened before?

#### **Sponsorship activation**

11. What the most effective sponsorship activation methods of the 2014 Ryder Cup from your perspective? Why? (Such as traditional advertising, online promotions, public relations, and social media)

12. What role that social media played in the 2014 Ryder Cup sponsorship activation?

13. What help that sponsor activation can provide to the internal marketing of Ryder Cup organization or PGA Europe Tour?

14. How does the Ryder Cup use the different properties such as the players and the trophy to enhance the sponsorship activations? Or get audience in experiences?

15. I hope to know some detail information about the activations in the St Andrew square of Edinburgh in 2014. What is main purpose of this activity? Are there some



methods to give people a good mood when they involved in this activity? (Such as use some music and food to attract the people).

### **Brand Strategy**

16. What is the brand image of the 2014 Ryder Cup from your own perspective?
17. Are there some strategies aims to increase the spectator experience that they enjoyed and valued? In other words, how to get the audience involved into the event?
18. Could you briefly talk about the 2014 Ryder Cup sponsorship create what positive influence to the consumers, internal employees and corporate stakeholders? The promotions of the Ryder Cup are mainly through the direct way or indirect way?

### **Evaluation**

19. Are there some standards to evaluate the success of the 2014 Ryder Cup?
20. Can you briefly comment the sponsorship activation of the E&Y and Standard Life Investment from your own perspective? What the main difference of these two sponsoring companies from the perspective of 2014 Ryder Cup?

### **Interview questions for VisitingScotland**

1. Do you think the 2014 Ryder Cup was attractive from a sponsorship perspective? If so, why? Does the Ryder Cup have attributes for sponsors that other golf tournaments don't have?
2. Are there some notable aspects—from the perspective of marketing and influence—of the 2014 Ryder Cup compared with other mega events of Scotland such as Glasgow's Commonwealth Games ?
3. What support that VisitScotland provided for the 2014 Ryder Cup? In other words, what role of VisitScotland played in this event?
4. Do you think the 2014 Ryder Cup being in the home of the golf was beneficial for this event?
5. Does the Ryder Cup attract particular companies as sponsors? If so, why?
6. Are there some special advantages of sponsoring companies of E&Y and Standard Life Investment in the 2014 Ryder Cup from your own perspective?
7. What do you think these two companies are trying to do through their sponsorship? Did they activate their sponsorship rights differently?

### **Sponsorship activation**

8. What (do you think) were the most effective sponsorship activation methods of the 2014 Ryder Cup? Why? (Such as traditional advertising, online promotions, public relations, and social media).
9. What role that social media played in the 2014 Ryder Cup marketing activation?
10. To your knowledge, was there any attempt at ambush marketing before, during or after the 2014 Ryder Cup?
11. How does Ryder Cup and sponsors use the different properties such as the players, the trophy, the grandstands, to enhance the sponsorship value?
12. How important are these activations from VisitScotland perspective?
13. The Ryder Cup seemed to promote a 'green' (environmental) aspect and social inclusion aspect (help for young people)—is this helpful for sponsors?
14. There were some sponsorship activations in St Andrew Square of Edinburgh. What is purpose of this activity? Do sponsors place a lot of emphasis on providing memorable experiences for target consumers?
15. Do you know if the main sponsors used their rights to improve relations with their staff?
16. Do you know how they measure the impact of their sponsorships?
17. Did the event organisers do things to increase the spectator experience (get them involved) that, in turn, would aid the sponsors?
18. Do you think there were companies that you thought might sponsor the event but actually did not?

19. Do you think the financial recession impacted on the 2014 Ryder Cup sponsorship?
20. Do you have other thoughts about the sponsorship of the 2014 Ryder Cup that have not been covered in the above questions?
21. What influence the 2014 Ryder Cup to the tourism of the Scotland?

#### **Interview questions for Gleneagles Hotel**

1. Do you think the 2014 Ryder Cup was attractive from a sponsorship perspective? If so, why? Does the Ryder Cup have attributes for sponsors that other golf tournaments don't have?
2. Are there some notable aspects – from the perspective of marketing and influence of the 2014 Ryder Cup compared with other mega events of Scotland such as Glasgow's Commonwealth Games?
3. What support that Gleneagles Hotel provided for the 2014 Ryder Cup? In other words, what role of Gleneagles Hotel played in this event?
4. Do you think the 2014 Ryder Cup being in the home of the golf was beneficial for this event?
5. Does the Ryder Cup attract particular companies as sponsors? If so, why?
6. Are there some special advantages of sponsoring companies of E&Y and Standard Life Investment in the 2014 Ryder Cup from your own perspective?
7. What do you think these two companies are trying to do through their sponsorship? Did they activate their sponsorship rights differently?

#### **Sponsorship activation**

8. What (do you think) were the most effective sponsorship activation methods of the 2014 Ryder Cup? Why? (Such as traditional advertising, online promotions, public relations, and social media).
9. What role that social media played in the 2014 Ryder Cup marketing activation?
10. To your knowledge, was there any attempt at ambush marketing before, during or after the 2014 Ryder Cup?
11. How does Ryder Cup and sponsors use the different properties such as the players, the trophy, and the grandstands to enhance the sponsorship value?
12. How important are these activations from Gleneagles Hotel's perspective?
13. The Ryder Cup seemed to promote a 'green' (environmental) aspect and social inclusion aspect (help for young people)–is this helpful for sponsors?
14. There were some sponsorship activations in St Andrew Square of Edinburgh. What is purpose of this activity? Do sponsors place a lot of emphasis on providing memorable experiences for target consumers?
15. Do you know if the main sponsors used their rights to improve relations with their staff?
16. Do you know how they measure the impact of their sponsorships?
17. Did the event organisers do things to increase the spectator experience (get them involved) that, in turn, would aid the sponsors?
18. Do you think there were companies that you thought might sponsor the event but actually did not?
19. Do you think the financial recession impacted on the 2014 Ryder Cup sponsorship?
20. Do you have other thoughts about the sponsorship of the 2014 Ryder Cup that have not been covered in the above questions?

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