

**THE IMPACT OF CUSTOMER PERCEPTION OF SPONSORSHIP ON
SPONSORSHIP RESPONSE WITH THE MEDIATION ROLE OF BRAND
ATTITUDE: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SRI LANKAN TELECOMMUNICATION
INDUSTRY FOR SPORT SPONSORSHIP**

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ABSTRACT

The Sri Lankan telecommunications industry plays a significant role in sports sponsorships. With the growing competition in Sri Lanka, telecommunications companies are increasingly engaging in sponsorships to enhance brand visibility and reach a wider audience. The objective of this study is to investigate the relatively unexplored domain of customer perception of sponsorship's impact on sponsorship response within the unique context of Sri Lanka's telecommunications industry. The key dimensions considered include event status, personal liking for the event, sponsor-event fit, attitude towards the sponsor, sponsor sincerity, and sponsor ubiquity, which are critical in building sponsorship responses and preferences. While earlier studies have explored customer perceptions of sponsorship and brand attitude across various sectors, a gap remains in understanding these factors' interactions in Sri Lanka's telecommunications industry, particularly in regional contexts such as North Central Province. Prior studies on customer perceptions of sponsorship's impact on sponsorship response, mediated by brand attitude, have not comprehensively investigated this regional context. This practical gap highlights that some companies in Sri Lanka view sponsorships as expenses rather than effective long-term investments. Using a cross-sectional survey design in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, this study examined the impact of sponsorship on 384 consumers using convenience sampling. SPSS analysis revealed that factors such as event status, sponsor-event fit, attitude towards the sponsor, sponsor sincerity, and sponsor ubiquity significantly influenced sponsorship response, whereas personal liking for the event did not have a significant impact. The mediation analysis indicates that brand attitude partially mediates the connection between customer perceptions of sponsorship and sponsorship responses. Key findings emphasize the critical importance of aligning brand communication with product reality to foster customer perceptions of sponsorship and sponsorship response. The limitations of this research include the use of convenience sampling, which restricts generalizability to the entire telecommunications industry in the North Central Province. Future research in Sri Lanka should include more provinces to obtain more comprehensive results. The study concludes that non-deceptive marketing practices that reflect genuine brand values can enhance brand attitude, ultimately boosting sponsorship responses in Sri Lanka's competitive telecommunications industry.

Keywords: Brand attitude, customer perception of sponsorship, telecommunication industry, sponsorship response, sport sponsorship