

# Shifting Attitudes Toward Corporate Sponsorship of a Public Park Agency: Results From a 14-Year Follow-Up Study

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Public sector park and recreation agencies have become more entrepreneurial in their financing and revenue generation efforts. A number of phenomena, including decreased tax-based revenues, have created the need for alternative funding strategies. One such strategy, corporate sponsorship, has become increasingly common within parks and public spaces. While there is an existing body of research concerning sponsorship effectiveness and acceptability in park and recreation contexts, few studies examine the evolution or shift in constituent support for sponsorship over time. Given the increasing ubiquity of sponsorship in society, it is possible that the public has adapted and become desensitized to sponsorship—becoming more positive and favorable toward it across a range of settings. To assess this issue, this study examines whether constituents' opinions regarding corporate sponsorship of a metropolitan public park agency (i.e., Fairfax County Park Authority) have changed over the course of time. Data were collected in 1998 and 2012 through random surveys of subscribers to the Park Authority's monthly magazine. Surveys assessed participants' level of support for corporate sponsorship at the park agency, the perceived impact of sponsorship on the recreation experience, and the perceived appropriateness of specific corporate sponsorship activation activities and conditions. Comparisons between the two time periods were conducted with independent samples *t*-tests or Chi-square analyses (along with Cramer's *V* statistics) in order to determine whether there were significant changes in sponsorship attitudes and what the nature of those changes were. Results suggest that, over this 14-year period, park constituents became significantly more likely to support park sponsorships. There were significant increases in sponsorship favorability toward sponsorship and well as its perceived impact on the recreation experience. Findings also indicate more favorable opinions

toward specific sponsorship elements. Park constituents perceived a wider range of sponsor activities and conditions as appropriate. However, certain sponsorship issues remained problematic. For example, respondents still identified specific industries/products as more appropriate than others, were still wary of granting exclusivity to a sponsor, allowing naming rights, and eschewed visible sponsor recognition at trails and historic settings. Findings suggest that park and recreation agencies proceed cautiously and develop clear guidelines to maximize sponsorship's contribution and minimize its negative impact.

**KEYWORDS:** *Corporate sponsorship, municipal finance, public-private partnerships, privatization*

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## Introduction and Study Background

Corporate advertising, messaging, and engagement continue to permeate almost every facet of our daily lives, including public spaces. Over the past few decades, there has been an increased effort on the part of local officials to pursue public-private partnerships as means to sustain public services for an increasingly diverse constituency. Partnerships with business and industry can take many forms, but one common approach has been through corporate sponsorship. Corporate sponsorship is defined as “a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically in sports, arts, entertainment, or causes) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property (Sleight, 1989; Ukman, 2003). Sponsorship is conceptually different from philanthropy in that corporate sponsors expect some marketable return on their investment based on the sponsorship fees paid to public entities (Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007). Evidence indicates growing adoption of sponsorship among public entities, including park and recreation agencies (Mowen, Kyle, & Jackowski, 2007; Wartella, 2009), but it is unclear whether such activities are becoming more acceptable to the public. To assess this issue, this study examines shifts in public attitudes toward park sponsorship over time.

### Corporate Sponsorship of Public Sector Park Agencies

**Public sector sponsorship.** Sponsorship can offer a number of benefits to both public agencies and sponsors including expanded access to target markets, enhanced image/goodwill as a result of the association, and increased public sector resources through sponsorship fees/contributions provided (IEG, 2008). However, sponsorship agreements also carry potential risks (or costs) such as the potential for negative press, corporate influence in agency decision-making, as well as increased potential for public properties to become overly commercialized (Crompton, 1994, 2014; Mowen & Everett, 2000).

While sponsorships have flourished within the domain of professional sports, they are increasingly being embraced in public sector contexts such as education, libraries, transportation, the arts, and parks and recreation. Sponsorship activities that were once the purview of professional sports (e.g., title sponsorship, branded product agreements)

are now commonly used by intercollegiate athletics and are a growing feature of high school sports (Wartella, 2009). Public services (such as libraries and park departments) have also experimented with sponsorship as a means to support their services (Gladwell, Anderson, & Sellers, 2003). The spread of corporate sponsorship in the public sector has been accelerated by persistent budget austerity along with constituents' generally favorable views toward fiscal conservatism and neoliberal policies/practices (Mowen, Kyle, & Jackowski, 2007). Another factor contributing to its growth is the desire on the part of businesses to use sponsorship as a platform to promote important social causes and increase their brand image (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Businesses are increasingly viewing sponsorship of public services as a way to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental causes with the intent of creating goodwill among customers and across society-at-large. Among consumers, there has been an increased acceptance of corporations and business that follow this "doing well, by doing good" model. For example, in 2012, 76% of global consumers believed it is acceptable for brands to support good causes and make money at the same time, a 33% increase from 2008 (Cone, 2012).

As sponsorships have diffused throughout society and across various public services, one might wonder whether public opinions toward these activities have changed in tandem with such trends. Has early opposition to/critique of public sector sponsorship abated, or have sponsorship opinions become more entrenched over time? And, if so, what factors or phenomena explain such shifts? Moreover, are there aspects or activities associated with public sector sponsorship (e.g., naming rights, sponsor exclusivity) still considered "off-limits" to constituents? Answers to these types of questions can aid public agencies with their ongoing sponsorship programs as well as those considering sponsorship. Several authors have noted that public support is a critical factor in shaping successful sponsorship programs (Mihail Samnaliev, More, & Stevens, 2006; More, 2005; Mowen & Everett, 2000). Indeed, public sector sponsorships without an element of goodwill, or "buy-in" from key constituent or user groups (Mowen & Everett, 2000; Potwarka & McCarville, 2007) will not survive in the long-run. Assessing public support/opposition to sponsorship over time could help government agencies understand whether there is a basis for initiating, growing, or terminating their sponsorship programs. If trends in public sentiment point toward changing support/opposition to sponsorships, agencies might either consider expanding or scaling-back their efforts to procure sponsorships. Unfortunately, few studies have assessed trends in public perceptions toward sponsorship over time.

Park and recreation services represent a compelling context from which to understand these attitudes. Parks represent a shared public space where people contribute to and produce their own experiences—a place where they can be free to recreate and socialize without the intrusions or influences of a commercialized atmosphere. Consideration and adoption of privatization practices/policies of governmental park agencies (which include corporate sponsorship) spurred a vigorous debate in the 1990's and was a focal topic of debate at the 2005 George Wright Forum. Park privatization opponents lamented that such relationships and activities are inconsistent with the democratic ideals of public parks, could impact subsequent tax support/citizen engagement, and may change the quality of visitor experiences (Wade, 2005). They note the potential for privatized activities to over-commercialize public spaces (Wade, 2005) and result in preferential treatment of advantaged populations, special interest groups, and private firms, with respect to public agency decision making (More, 2005).

Privatization proponents, however, note that such practices are beneficial in that they provide services at reduced costs, introduce innovative ideas/practices into the public sector, and are quicker to adapt/respond to societal needs/trends (Donahue, 1989; Johnston & Seidenstat, 2007; LeRoy, 2005; Prager & Desai, 1996; Savas, 2000; Van Slyke & Hammonds, 2003). Other benefits specific to corporate sponsorship include not only acquiring additional resources (e.g., sponsorship fees; in kind personnel support), but also the potential for increased agency visibility through corporate sponsorship activation efforts (i.e., advertising and promotions; Bloom et al., 1996; Crompton, 1999).

**Public response to corporate sponsorship of parks.** Regardless of conceptual arguments for or against sponsorships and their merits as reported by businesses and public officials (Crompton, 1997), it is important to understand how external constituents (e.g., park users) perceive such activities. Only a handful of studies have examined perceptions of public sector park sponsorships from the user perspective. Rather, the focus had been on understanding sponsorship effects on consumer behavior and the sponsorship priorities/preferences expressed by business leaders and the agencies themselves (Crompton, 1997; Dees, Bennett, & Villegas, 2008; McCarville, Flood, & Froats, 1998; Moore, Mowen, & Hickerson, 2013; Potwarka, McCarville, Johnson Tew, & Kaczynski, 2009).

Beginning in the mid to late 1990s, scholars began to examine attitudes toward sponsorship of nontraditional properties (e.g., schools, parks, libraries, transit systems) from the perspective of public constituents. With regard to parks and recreation, several studies have found modest support for sponsorship of public park agencies, although certain sponsorship characteristics were perceived negatively (Evans/McDonough, 2002; Mihail Samnaliev, Stevens, & More, 2004; Mowen & Frankeberger, 1999; Mowen et al., 2007). For example, Mowen and Frankeberger (1999) examined park user attitudes toward sponsorship of the Fairfax County Park Authority. They found that 53% were somewhat or very supportive of this type of sponsorship, 15% were somewhat or very opposed, while a sizable percentage (32%) indicated neither opposition nor support. Further, only 15% felt that corporate sponsorship would have a negative impact on their recreation experience.

In a follow-up study of a general adult population (Pennsylvania's Greater Harrisburg CSMA), Mowen et al. (2007) found a larger majority (71%) supporting sponsorship of local park agencies while only 9% opposed such activities. Another survey of Seattle residents found similar levels of support for sponsorship (71%) as a mechanism to respond to critical budgetary shortfalls vs. other park financing alternatives (e.g., user fees, taxes; Evans/McDonough (2002). Finally, Samnaliev et al. (2004) studied alternative revenue strategies for public recreation lands and found that sponsorship of visitor centers and of education facilities (62% and 61%, respectively) were among the most acceptable revenue generation strategies for New Hampshire and Idaho residents. However, sponsorship of other facility types (e.g., scenic overlooks, hiking travels) were viewed less favorably (Samnaliev et al., 2004). Likewise, Mowen and Frankeberger (1999) found that the park setting context mattered with visible sponsorship perceived to be the most inappropriate at trails and historic sites.

When it comes to public attitudes toward park sponsorships, the "devil" may be in the details of the agreement. In addition to setting context, certain sponsorship activities and contractual conditions are perceived less favorably among constituents, and may sway the publics' overall sponsorship support. For example, Mowen and Graefe, (2002) found that sponsorship activities/conditions such as facility naming rights, sponsor advertising, and sponsor exclusivity were among the least supported by recreation constituents. Yet, exclusivity was one of the most highly sought after sponsorship condition reported by corporate managers (Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996).

Finally, Mowen, Kyle, and Jackowski's (2007) study of constituent sponsorship preferences asked respondents to rank order eight sponsorship scenarios based on: the location of sponsor recognition (off-site vs. on-site recognition), the type or locality of the sponsor (local vs. national companies), and the sponsorship fee (\$1,000 vs. \$500,000). Results indicated that off-site recognition was most preferable (e.g., among the top four ranked scenarios) with a secondary preference for local companies and high sponsorship fees. On-site recognition for national companies with small fees was the lowest ranked sponsorship package (Mowen et al., 2007).

**Sponsorship adaptation and desensitization.** Regardless of sponsorship's merits/costs for public services and the publics' early reactions toward this growing practice, it has continued to grow as a funding option; particularly among cash-strapped park agencies (Attwood, 2013; IEG, 2012). Some argue that people would adapt (or become desensitized) to corporate sponsorship across a wider range of contexts over time. In other words, as corporate sponsorships diffuse throughout society, and as public sector park agencies

adopt corporate sponsorship, initial public outcry over these activities would abate and acceptance, or at least indifference, would gradually occur.

One framework from which to explain or understand shifts in sponsorship attitudes is adaptation level theory (Helson, 1964). According to this theory, people respond to stimuli relative to the level that they have become adapted or desensitized to. Stimuli are processed over time, such that subsequent stimuli at the same level produce an indifferent response, while stimuli at markedly different levels produce positive or negative responses. Adaptation level theory could explain a decreased resistance to and growing acceptance of corporate sponsorship activities within the public domain. For example, as people are incrementally exposed to more corporate sponsorships and sponsorship messaging within public spaces, they might change their standards for what is normal or accepted in those contexts as well as their evaluation of brands who engage in these sponsorships. This theory could be used to explain why an individual who, for the first time, was exposed to park facility naming rights and perceive this to be “inappropriate” as judged relative to prevailing norms for park sponsorships. However, given a case where most other public park spaces have adopted facility naming rights over time, the reference point for that individual’s subsequent judgments would shift to a more neutral/indifferent or even favorable response.

It is quite possible that people have adapted to or become less resistant to corporate sponsorship in public spaces based on its normative presence in society. Yet empirical evidence of this phenomenon is lacking. Have people built up a “resistance” to the presence of corporate sponsorship within the public sphere? More specifically, have public attitudes toward sponsorship of public parks followed the logic of adaption level theory, are they more accepting of sponsorships today than when sponsorships were in their relative infancy? At a more contextual level, do constituents support a wider range of sponsorship activation activities and contractual conditions or are specific sponsorship practices and conditions still “off-limits” or “taboo” within the context of public parks? Prior studies have assessed which types of sponsorship activities park constituents support/oppose, but no study has examined whether constituent attitudes have shifted over time and in what manner. If trends point toward stable or decreased acceptance, agency leaders might need to consider whether corporate sponsorship programs and activities are worth it for the long-term. Likewise, if trends are indicative of adaptation or increased acceptance, then agencies might consider expanding sponsorship.

Evidence from secondary and post-secondary education contexts suggest that parents understand and have become supportive of school-based corporate sponsorship over time, but there is still resistance to certain elements of corporate engagement (Molnar, Boninger, & Fogarty, 2011; Pierce & Bussell, 2011). Are these same shifts happening with regard to park and recreation agencies? If so, what are the implications for current and future sponsorship research and practice? To address these important questions, we compared constituent attitudes toward corporate sponsorship of a public park agency across two time periods. Specific research questions for this study are as follows:

- R1: Have there been significant shifts in constituent support for corporate sponsorship of park and recreation agencies as well as the perceived impact of sponsorship on recreational experiences over time?
- R2: Have there been significant shifts in constituents’ perceived appropriateness of corporate sponsorship activities and contractual conditions over time?
- R3: Have there been significant shifts in constituents’ perceived appropriateness of certain types of sponsors (i.e., by industry/product category) over time?
- R4: Have there been significant shifts in constituents’ perceived appropriateness of visible sponsor recognition at specific types of park facilities/venues (e.g., playgrounds, trails)?

## Methods

### Study Context and Data Collection Procedures

Data for this study came from two self-administered surveys of publication subscribers at Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), a metropolitan park agency located in suburban Washington, D.C. Surveys were conducted at two time periods; 1998 and 2012. Both time periods coincided with the Park Authority's interest to gauge public sentiment in developing sponsorship opportunities (i.e., 1998) and, after a recent sponsorship asset analysis, reassess public viewpoints concerning this topic (i.e., 2012). Findings from the original 1998 survey have been published elsewhere (Mowen & Frankeberger, 1999; Mowen & Graefe, 2002), and provide baseline data from which to compare changes with the more recent 2012 survey effort. FCPA operates a variety of facilities/ services in 423 parks covering over 23,000 acres. The park system includes a full spectrum of facilities ranging from nature centers and historic sites to trails to athletic complexes, recreation centers and golf courses. Annual park system attendance at the time of the 2012 survey exceeded 15 million. Like many municipal and county park agencies, FCPA uses a variety of funding sources to support its operation, including real property taxes, user fees, foundation support, grants, revenue and general obligation bonds and, to a very limited extent, corporate sponsorship. FCPA's corporate sponsorship efforts in 1998 were limited, focusing on program/event sponsorship, and by 2012 had changed little.

FCPA's publication subscriber/customer database provided a robust population from which to study the corporate sponsorship attitudes of park users in FCPA's jurisdiction. *Parktakes* is the principal customer publication of the FCPA. Issued quarterly, it advertises the programs, facilities and services offered by the agency. Households that subscribe to the publication use a wide variety of park facilities and programs and are captured in the subscriber database. At the time of the 1998 survey, the database included over 150,000 households. By the time of the 2012 follow-up survey, *Parktakes* subscribership had increased to 165,000 households, 82,000 of which were reachable via email.

Study populations were similar across the two study years, although survey modes differed. In 1998, a mail survey was administered to a random sample of 810 adults selected from the database of over 150,000 *Parktakes* subscriber households. A reminder postcard was distributed to non-respondents seven days after the initial mailing, followed by a final reminder containing another copy the questionnaire 10 days later. Of those invited to participate in the 1998 study, 415 returned usable surveys for a response rate of 51%.

Because it was now possible to reach a critical mass of the FCPA subscriber/park user database via email, the 2012 follow-up survey was administered online to a random sample of *Parktakes* subscribers ( $n=8,000$ ). A larger sample was developed for the 2012 survey in expectation of lower response rates associated with use of the online survey mode (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000; Couper, 2000). A reminder e-mail with a link to the questionnaire was sent 7 and 14 days after the initial mailing. Of those individuals invited to take part in the 2012 survey, 1,161 usable surveys were returned for a 15% response rate.

### Measures

**Demographic characteristics.** Respondent sociodemographic characteristics were assessed to compare the study sample against the population of Fairfax County residents as well as the target population of FCPA *Parktakes* subscribers. These characteristics included sex, education, income, race, and age. Respondents were first asked to indicate whether they were residents of Fairfax County, their sex, and their age in years. They were also asked to indicate their race/ethnicity by indicating the single response that best described themselves (e.g., White-Non-Hispanic, African-American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Mixed Race, and Other). To assess their education level, respondents were asked to mark the category that best described their last year of completed school (e.g., grade school, middle school, high school, technical school, college graduate, or graduate school).

**Response to corporate sponsorship of FCPA facilities and services.** The main focus of this study was to compare changes or shifts in public opinion regarding corporate



sponsorship of a public sector park agency. Respondents were first informed that FCPA wanted their opinions on sponsorships between businesses/corporations and FCPA; its facilities and programs. A working definition of sponsorship (IEG, 2008) was then provided, "agreements where a company contributes money, resources, and/or personnel in exchange for being recognized as an official sponsor" and respondents were asked to respond to subsequent sponsorship questions to the best of their ability, based on their own beliefs about corporate sponsorship and their personal experiences with corporate sponsorship of public parks. All sponsorship measures assessed in this study were comparable across the two study years.

**Sponsorship support and perceived impact on the recreation experience.** To measure overall support for sponsorships (R1), respondents were asked to indicate, on a 5-point Likert scale, their support or opposition to sponsorship between corporations and public park agencies like the Fairfax County Park Authority. Response items ranged from (1=*I am very opposed to such sponsorships*, 2=*I am somewhat opposed to such sponsorships*, 3=*I am neither supportive nor opposed to such sponsorships*, 4=*I am somewhat supportive of such sponsorships*, to 5=*I am very supportive of such sponsorships*). To assess the perceived impact of sponsorships on the recreation user experience (also R1), respondents were asked to indicate, on a five-point Likert scale, "In general, how would more sponsorships between corporations and FCPA affect the quality of their recreation experience at FCPA facilities/parks or during their participation in FCPA programs?" Responses ranged from (1=*a very negative impact*, 2=*a slightly negative impact*, 3=*no impact*, 4=*a slightly positive impact*, to 5=*a very positive impact*).

**Response to specific types of sponsorship activation activities.** Public attitudes toward corporate sponsorship are highly context and situation specific (Mowen et al., 2007). Thus, respondents from both study periods were asked to indicate their level of support (assessed via perceived appropriateness) for common sponsorship activation activities and contractual conditions (R2). Response items were developed based on core sponsorship activation activities identified by the International Events Group and/or were adopted from prior research of corporate business priorities (Copeland et al., 1996), at sporting event contexts (McCarville, Flood, & Froats, 1998) and at public park agencies (Mowen & Graefe, 2002). Specific sponsorship activation activities and conditions assessed included sponsor recognition options, sponsorship of free vs. fee-based programs/facilities, the type of sponsor (local business vs. national companies), the number of sponsors/exclusivity (only one official sponsor within a product/service category), duration of the sponsorship agreement, and provisions of the sponsorship for the agency and park constituents. Respondents were informed that these activities/conditions could be requested as part of a sponsorship agreement with FCPA and asked to evaluate the appropriateness of each item for FCPA on a five-point (1=*extremely inappropriate*, 2=*inappropriate*, 3=*neutral*, 4=*appropriate*, and 5=*extremely appropriate*).

Examples of sponsorship recognition included items such as "use of the corporate name/logo on FCPA magazines, brochures, and flyers," "Company name in the title of a FCPA special event," and "Company name in the name of FCPA facilities." Examples of free vs. fee-based programs/facilities included "sponsorship of FCPA programs/facilities that charge a fee" and "sponsorship of free FCPA programs." Examples of the type of sponsor were, "sponsorships with local or regional businesses" vs. "sponsorships with large, nationally recognized corporations." Items pertaining to the number of sponsors and exclusivity included statements such as, "sponsorships that use only one or two corporate sponsors," "A sponsorship contract where only one company in a product category can be an official park sponsor (or have exclusive rights)." Items pertaining to the length of the sponsorship agreement included statements such as "sponsorships last under one year" and "sponsorships lasting one year or more." Finally, sponsorship provisions were assessed with items such as, "Free product samples at special events," and "corporate sponsorships providing cash in exchange for sponsorship." A complete list of sponsorship activation and condition items is provided in the results section of this paper. These issues are grouped

under the following categories: duration, naming rights and advertising, program costs, provisions, and type and number of sponsors.

**Response to sponsorship industry/product categories.** Public response to corporate sponsorships can also be influenced by the type of sponsor and the “fit” of that company with the sponsored property (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006). Corporations that engage in sponsorship seek to gain access to positive images/initiatives associated with sponsored properties. Parks and recreation are a popular and well-recognized function of government that serve/address important social and environmental causes within communities. Companies whose brands/products that are aligned with such causes can enhance the image their own brand and build goodwill by positioning themselves along with these public services. Nevertheless, not all industries or products will be perceived as a good “fit” to public park agencies and is important to examine shifts in public acceptance of industries/products as park agency sponsors. Respondents were asked to indicate which industries/products (from a list of 14 categories) would be appropriate sponsors for the FCPA (R3). Response items represented diverse options such as health care, sporting goods, media, financial services, energy and cable services, home and garden, etc.

**Response to visible identification at specific facility types.** Sponsors may seek recognition for their contributions to a cause/organization and such recognition may be manifested in visible signage placed at facilities. Within professional sport and event management, it is quite common to see corporate sponsorship signage visible at prominent facility locations (e.g., sponsors posted on the outfield at a ball park). In this study, respondents were asked to indicate the appropriateness of visible identification of sponsors at, on, or near a variety of FCPA locations (R4). Specific locations included recreation centers, facility entrance signs, nature centers, playground equipment, athletic fields, trails, outdoor pools, historic sites, golf course yard markers/benches, golf clubhouses, and parking lots. Responses were on a five point scale ranging from 1=*extremely inappropriate*, 2=*inappropriate*, 3=*neutral*, 4=*appropriate*, and 5=*extremely appropriate*.

### Analyses

Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, standard deviations) were used to assess sample demographic characteristics, degree of sponsorship support/opposition, and perceived appropriateness of specific sponsorship attributes. Independent samples *t*-tests or Chi-square analyses (along with Cramer’s V statistics) were used to determine whether there were significant changes in sponsorship attitudes across the two time periods. All analyses were conducted with SPSS Ver. 19 and significance levels were set at  $p < 0.05$  except in cases when Bonferroni corrections were used for larger lists of statistical comparisons (e.g., 10 or more).

### Results

The demographic profile of survey respondents remained relatively stable across both study years and was consistent with/reflective of Park Authority records concerning *Parktakes* subscribers in each study year (Table 1). No major shifts were observed in demographic data with respect to race, education, gender, or age nor were there many statistical relationships between demographic characteristics and sponsorship perceptions. In both 1998 and 2012, the majority of the sample were White (>75%), highly educated (completed graduate school or more), middle-aged (46 years old), and female. Indeed, the demographic stability observed across study years improves our ability to make meaningful group (i.e., year) comparisons in subsequent analysis.

As depicted in Table 2, the results of the first independent samples *t*-test revealed that 2012 respondents perceived the impact of corporate sponsorships on the quality of visitor experience more positively ( $M = 3.67$ ;  $SD = 1.07$ ) than respondents sampled in 1998 ( $M = 3.36$ ;  $SD = .99$ ). The difference in the mean scores observed at each of these time points was statistically significant ( $t = -4.72$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In total, 56.1% of 2012 respondents were classified as being “positive” about the impact of sponsorship (i.e., perceived sponsorship



**Table 1***Demographic Profile of 1998 and 2012 Study Respondents<sup>1</sup>*

Variable	1998 Survey <i>N</i> (%) or Mean	2012 Survey <i>N</i> (%) or Mean
Fairfax County Resident	344 (97.2)	1041 (95.2)
Race		
White	313 (89.2)	848 (78.9)
Asian	23 (6.6)	116 (10.8)
Hispanic	7 (2.0)	41 (3.8)
African American	5 (1.4)	25 (2.3)
Other	3 (0.8)	45 (4.2)
Education		
Grade School	0 (0)	8 (0.7)
Middle School	0 (0)	0 (0)
High School	18 (5.1)	14 (1.3)
Some College/Technical	54 (15.3)	99 (9.1)
College Graduate	114 (32.2)	474 (43.5)
Graduate School	168 (47.5)	494 (45.4)
Gender		
Male	124 (34.9)	232 (21.4)
Female	231 (65.1)	851 (78.6)
Age <sup>2</sup>	46.0	46.3

<sup>1</sup> Respondents include only those that had visited the park in the past twelve months.<sup>2</sup> Age coded as continuous variable, actual age in years.

as having a slightly positive or very positive impact park visitor experiences) compared to 38.5% in 1998. These findings suggest that, when comparing the two time points, there has been a shift toward more favorable perceptions about the impact of sponsorship on park visitation experiences in Fairfax County. Much of this positive shift in can be attributed to fewer respondents indicating “no impact” in 2012 (30.4%) compared to 1998 (47.2%).

Table 3 presents the results of an independent samples *t*-test, comparing overall level of support for park-based sponsorship among 1998 and 2012 respondents. This analysis indicated that 2012 respondents reported a much stronger level of support for park-based sponsorship agreements ( $M = 3.76$ ;  $SD = 1.09$ ) than did 1998 respondents ( $M = 3.47$ ;  $SD = 1.03$ ). The difference in the mean scores observed at each of these time points was statistically significant ( $t = -4.32$ ;  $p < .001$ ). A total of 75% of 2012 respondents were classified as “favorable” in terms of their support for sponsorship (i.e., “somewhat supportive” or “very supportive” of sponsorship agreements) compared to 53.4% in 1998. Again, this positive shift was attributable to fewer 2012 respondents (10.8%) reporting they were neutral toward sponsorships (neither supported, nor opposed) than did 1998 respondents (30.9%). In summary, when comparing 1998 and 2012 data, there appeared to be a shift toward more positive perceptions of park-based sponsorships related to overall support for such agreements and the positive impact they have on visitors’ recreation experience.

To address research question two (R2), a series of independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to explore differences between 1998 and 2012 respondents with respect to perceived appropriateness of more specific contractual sponsorship arrangements (Table 4). These arrangements were focused on five themes related to the duration of the agreement, naming rights and advertising, types of programs for sponsorship, sponsorship provisions, and types and numbers of corporate sponsors. Several statistically significant differences about the perceived appropriateness of these activation activities and contractual conditions emerged across the two time points. These results collectively indicate an increased favorability toward sponsorships and these significant differences are summarized below.

**Table 2**

*Perceived Impact of Sponsorship on the Quality of the Recreation Experience – A Comparison between 1998 and 2012*

	1998 Survey						2012 Survey						t	p
	N <sup>1</sup>	Mean <sup>1</sup>	SD	% Neg. <sup>2</sup>	% Neutral <sup>3</sup>	% Pos. <sup>3</sup>	N <sup>1</sup>	Mean <sup>1</sup>	SD	% Neg. <sup>2</sup>	% Neutral <sup>3</sup>	% Pos. <sup>3</sup>		
Sponsorship Impact	298	3.36	.99	14.3	47.2	38.5	1032	3.67	1.07	13.5	30.4	56.1	-4.723	.000

<sup>1</sup> Impact coded as 1=very negative impact, 2=slightly negative impact, 3=no impact, 4=slightly positive impact, 5=very positive impact.

<sup>2</sup> Combination of "very negative impact" and "slightly negative impact"

<sup>3</sup> Combination of "slightly positive impact" and "very positive impact"

**Table 3**

*Level of Support for Park-based Sponsorship Agreements – A Comparison between 1998 and 2012*

Locations	1998 Survey					2012 Survey					t	p	
	N	Mean <sup>1</sup>	SD	% <sup>2</sup> Neg.	% <sup>3</sup> Neutral	N	Mean <sup>1</sup>	SD	% <sup>2</sup> Neg.	% <sup>3</sup> Neutral			
Level of Support <sup>1</sup>	332	3.47	1.04	15.8	30.9	53.4	1040	3.76	1.09	15.7	10.8	-4.320	.000

<sup>1</sup> Support for park sponsorships assessed on a five-point scale where 1= very opposed, 2=somewhat opposed, 3=neither supportive nor opposed, 4=somewhat supportive, and 5=very supportive.

<sup>2</sup> Combination of "I am very opposed to such sponsorships" and "I am somewhat opposed to such sponsorship"

<sup>3</sup> % Combination of "I am somewhat supportive of such sponsorships" and "I am very supportive of such sponsorships"

In terms of sponsorship duration, 2012 respondents' perceived that sponsorship arrangements lasting less than one year as significantly more appropriate ( $M = 3.35$ ;  $SD = .85$ ) than did 1998 respondents ( $M = 3.18$ ;  $SD = .87$ ). However, sponsorships lasting one year or more were perceived as most appropriate overall at each time period. With respect to naming rights and advertising, 2012 respondents perceived corporate logos on brochures and corporate advertising on park kiosks as significantly more appropriate ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ;  $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ , respectively) than 1998 respondents ( $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ;  $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ , respectively). While approaching a significant increase in favorability, having a company name in the title of the FCPA site remained the least appropriate contractual condition in this category.

Significant differences were also observed in relation to the types of programs most appropriate for corporate sponsorship (e.g., free programs vs. fee-based programs). We found that 2012 respondents perceived both free and fee-based sponsorship of free programs as significantly more appropriate ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = .89$ ;  $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ , respectively) than did 1998 respondents ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .98$ ;  $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ , respectively). Sponsorship of free programs was perceived more favorably than sponsorship of fee-based programs each year.

In terms of sponsorship provisions, 2012 respondents perceived providing supplies and staff in exchange for sponsorship as significantly more appropriate ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = .87$ ;  $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = .92$ , respectively) than did 1998 respondents ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = .90$ ;  $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = .90$ , respectively). Moreover, providing coupons and special offers ( $M = 3.89$ ;  $SD = .87$ ), free trials at special events ( $M = 3.66$ ;  $SD = .91$ ), and sponsorships that include an onsite hospitality tent ( $M = 3.65$ ;  $SD = .90$ ) were perceived as significantly more appropriate among 2012 respondents. Coupons and special offers were considered the most appropriate sponsorship provision across both study years. Finally, significant differences between study years emerged with regard to the types and number of corporate sponsors. The 2012 respondents perceived sponsorships with local businesses, sponsorships that use one or two sponsors, and sponsorships that use three or more sponsors as significantly more appropriate ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = .84$ ;  $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .85$ ;  $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = .93$ , respectively) than did 1998 respondents ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = .84$ ;  $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .83$ ;  $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = .84$ , respectively). Sponsorships with local business were perceived as most appropriate at each time point. Table 4 provides a percentage breakdown of response categories for each item (i.e., negative, neutral, and positive).

To address research question three (R3), we examined the appropriateness or "fit" of potential sponsorship industry/product categories with the park agency over time (Table 5). It was interesting to observe that perceived appropriateness increased significantly for all but three product categories (i.e., food/restaurant, media, and infant products). The most significant increase was for financial services ( $\chi^2 = 18.14$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Here, 38.5% of 1998 respondents indicated "Yes" to the question of whether or not financial services were appropriate sponsors of FCPA sites compared to 51.4% of 2012 respondents who indicated this industry category as appropriate. Across both study years, recreation equipment was deemed as the most appropriate product/industry category (Table 5).

Our final research question assessed the recognition of sponsors across a variety of park settings/venues. Constituents' perceived appropriateness of visual identifying sponsors increased significantly for all types of locations but two (i.e., playground equipment and inside recreation centers). The most significant shifts in mean scores were observed for historic sites ( $t = -5.87$ ;  $p < .001$ ) followed by entrance signs ( $t = -5.56$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (Table 6). Here, 2012 respondents were more likely than 1998 respondents to identify historic sites as appropriate places where sponsors could be visually identified ( $M = 2.49$ ;  $SD = 1.21$  vs.  $M = 2.08$ ;  $SD = 1.12$ , respectively). In total, 25.6% of 2012 respondents were classified as being "positive" about visually acknowledging sponsors at historic sites (i.e., perceived the location as "appropriate" or "extremely appropriate") while only 13.0% of respondents in 1998. Similarly, 2012 respondents perceived identifying corporate sponsors on FCPA entrance signs as more appropriate ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ) than did 1998 respondents ( $M = 2.65$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ). A total of 43.4% of 2012 respondents were classified as being "positive"

**Table 4**  
*Perceived Appropriateness of Potential Sponsor Activation Activities or Conditions – A Comparison between 1998 and 2012*

Activities or Conditions	1998 Survey					2012 Survey					<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	M <sup>1</sup>	<i>SD</i>	% Neg. <sup>2</sup>	% Neutral	% Pos. <sup>3</sup>	M <sup>1</sup>	<i>SD</i>	% Neg. <sup>2</sup>	% Neutral	% Pos. <sup>3</sup>		
Duration												
Sponsorships lasting less than 1 year	3.18	.87	17.1	48.2	34.7	3.35	.85	12.2	44.5	43.3	-3.23	.001 <sup>4</sup>
Sponsorship lasting 1 year or more	3.36	.88	12.0	42.9	45.2	3.46	.89	10.6	38.5	51.0	-1.89	.059
Naming Rights and Advertising												
Corporate logo on brochures	2.95	1.06	33.7	29.1	37.2	3.37	1.04	19.4	26.1	54.5	-6.48	.000 <sup>4</sup>
Corporate name in the title of the special event	3.13	0.99	25.6	32.3	42.2	3.20	1.11	27.2	24.6	48.1	-0.98	.327
Company name in the title of the FCPA site	2.32	1.06	58.2	27.2	14.6	2.50	1.20	54.4	20.9	24.8	-2.80	.005
Corporate advertising on park kiosks	2.85	1.07	35.3	33.8	30.9	3.10	1.12	29.1	27.5	43.4	-3.73	.000 <sup>4</sup>
Program Costs												
Sponsorship of free FCPA programs	3.56	.98	13.1	27.1	59.8	3.81	.89	7.7	28.7	71.3	-4.36	.000 <sup>4</sup>
Sponsorship of programs that charge a fee	2.77	1.05	37.2	36.1	26.7	3.30	1.04	21.5	29.8	48.8	-8.25	.000 <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Individual activities or arrangements coded as 1=extremely inappropriate, 2= inappropriate, 3=neutral, 4=appropriate, 5=extremely appropriate.  
<sup>2</sup> Combination of “extremely inappropriate” and “inappropriate”  
<sup>3</sup> Combination of “appropriate” and “extremely appropriate”  
<sup>4</sup> Because 19 separate tests were conducted, a Bonferroni adjustment required a significance level of .003 (i.e., .05/19).

**Table 4 (cont).**

Activities or Conditions	1998 Survey						2012 Survey						<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>				
	M <sup>1</sup>	SD	% Neg. <sup>2</sup>		% Neutral		% Pos. <sup>3</sup>		M <sup>1</sup>	SD	% Neg. <sup>2</sup>				% Neutral		% Pos. <sup>3</sup>	
			Provisions															
Providing money in exchange for sponsorship	3.65	.91	9.1	27.6	63.3	3.59	1.01	14.4	22.7	62.9	-0.97	.331						
Providing supplies in exchange for sponsorship	3.55	.90	12.3	25.5	62.2	3.80	.87	7.8	19.2	73.0	-4.48	.000 <sup>4</sup>						
Providing personnel in exchange for sponsorship	3.20	.94	18.5	40.3	41.2	3.70	.92	9.9	23.9	66.2	-8.76	.000 <sup>4</sup>						
Coupons and special offers	3.45	.90	12.4	32.9	54.7	3.89	.87	7.6	14.8	77.6	-7.98	.000 <sup>4</sup>						
Free trials at special Events	3.34	.98	17.1	33.0	49.9	3.66	.91	10.7	23.3	66.0	-5.41	.000 <sup>4</sup>						
Sponsorships that include an onsite hospitality tent	3.51	.90	12.6	26.9	60.5	3.65	.90	10.9	24.6	64.5	-2.54	.011						
Types and Number of Sponsors																		
Sponsorships with local businesses	3.67	.84	6.7	28.7	64.5	4.05	.84	4.7	13.3	82.0	-7.19	.000 <sup>4</sup>						
Sponsorships with nationally recognized companies	3.55	.88	10.2	31.0	58.8	3.49	1.00	15.8	26.9	57.4	-1.10	.272						
Only one company being recognized as official sponsor	2.88	.94	27.1	50.1	22.7	2.82	1.08	35.4	37.9	26.7	-1.02	.309						
Sponsorships that use only 1 or 2 Sponsors	3.18	.83	14.1	52.2	33.7	3.44	.85	9.1	42.3	48.6	-5.14	.000 <sup>4</sup>						
Sponsorships that use 3 or more sponsors	3.17	.84	17.4	47.2	35.4	3.28	.93	15.5	44.2	40.3	-2.00	.046						

<sup>1</sup> Individual activities or arrangements coded as 1=extremely inappropriate, 2=inappropriate, 3=neutral, 4=appropriate, 5=extremely appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> Combination of "extremely inappropriate" and "inappropriate"

<sup>3</sup> Combination of "appropriate" and "extremely appropriate"

<sup>4</sup> Because 19 separate tests were conducted, a Bonferroni adjustment required a significance level of .003 (i.e., .05/19).

**Table 5**

*Perceived Appropriateness of Sponsorship Industry/Product Categories – A Comparison between 1998 and 2012*

Industry/Product Category	1998 Survey	2012 Survey	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i> (%) Appropriate <sup>1</sup>	<i>N</i> (%) Appropriate <sup>1</sup>		
Recreation Equipment	270 (75.8)	944 (81.7)	5.82	.011
Home/Garden	221 (60.1)	804 (69.6)	11.68	.000 <sup>2</sup>
Health Care	214 (60.1)	804 (69.9)	11.02	.001 <sup>2</sup>
Food/Restaurant	202 (56.7)	690 (59.7)	0.98	.177
Media	194 (54.5)	667 (57.7)	1.14	.157
Clothing/Apparel	160 (44.9)	615 (53.2)	7.43	.004
Child/Infant Products	187 (52.5)	619 (53.5)	0.11	.391
Financial Services	137 (38.5)	594 (51.4)	18.14	.000 <sup>2</sup>
Telecommunications	147 (41.3)	561 (48.5)	8.78	.002 <sup>2</sup>
Retail Chains	143 (40.2)	568 (49.1)	8.78	.002 <sup>2</sup>
Energy/Cable Service	135 (37.9)	549 (47.5)	10.06	.001 <sup>2</sup>
Vehicles (Dealer/Rent)	121 (34.0)	489 (42.3)	7.81	.003 <sup>2</sup>
Consulting Firms	122 (34.3)	472 (40.8)	4.91	.015
Chemical/Plastic	99 (27.8)	266 (23.0)	3.422	.039
Other	11 (3.1)	100 (8.7)	12.37	.000 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Appropriate industry or product category coded as 1=yes and 0=no.

<sup>2</sup> Because 15 separate tests were conducted, a Bonferroni adjustment required a significance level of .003 (i.e., .05/15).

about visually acknowledging sponsors on entrance signs (i.e., perceived the location as “appropriate” or “extremely appropriate”) compared to 27.6% of respondents in 1998. Visual identification of sponsors inside golf course clubhouses was considered most appropriate in both 1998 and 2012. Conversely, despite experiencing the most significant increase in perceived levels of appropriateness, identifying sponsors at historic sites was considered the least appropriate recognition location in both 1998 and 2012.

## Discussion

As corporate sponsorship continues to permeate public culture/life, there is a need to assess how sponsorship influences both the organizations they support and constituencies they serve over time. We found constituents are becoming more supportive of park agency sponsorships, more likely to indicate their positive effect on the recreation experience, and more likely to perceive a range of sponsorship activities, conditions, and platforms as appropriate. Do these findings support that adaptation level theory is at work; that people have become “desensitized” to the presence of corporate sponsorship? Our findings yielded mixed results. On one hand, one would expect adaptation to be reflected by a lower percentage of individuals opposing sponsorship and a higher percentage supporting sponsorship. Yet, while we found significant differences in the overall scores of support, the percentage who opposed sponsorship remained consistent across the two time periods. We believe those opposed sponsorship could be immune to the expected desensitization effects implied by adaptation level theory. Why is this? One could speculate that opponents’ philosophical views on the public nature of parks could have a greater role in shaping their sponsorship attitudes than any “numbing” effects expected by adaptation level theory.

Understanding sponsorship opponents has practical implications as well. While sponsorship opponents were in the minority, it is important to recognize that such individuals may become vocal and actively engaged in the decision-making process. In the public forum, it wouldn’t take many naysayers to derail an agency’s desire to expand



sponsorship efforts as an alternative revenue source. Recognizing the comparatively small size of the opposition and tailoring sponsorship policies/ efforts to address concerns might help agencies to transition into more serious pursuit of sponsorship in the future.

In addition to the consistent rates of sponsorship opposition, it is also important to note shifts in the percentage who were neutral and favorable over the two time periods. In 2012, fewer respondents were neutral and more were positive with respect to overall sponsorship support and impacts. Rather than being explained by adaption level, favorable attitudinal shifts could be attributed to increased crystallization of what park sponsorships would mean for users and the agency. In other words, people may be surer about what sponsorship entails and thus more likely to respond with more confidence. For Fairfax County Park Authority constituents, this overall response had shifted favorably.

It is also important to consider whether public attitudes toward *specific* sponsorship activities and arrangements have realized a commensurate shift. With only a few exceptions, we found that constituents responded more favorably to a range of specific sponsorship activities, conditions, and practices. Consistent with adaptation level theory, such shifts were marked by a lower percentage of responses that were negative (e.g., inappropriate) or neutral and an increased percentage of responses that were positive (e.g., appropriate) and these changes were consistent with the logic of adaptation level theory.

Several changes or differences stood out as relevant for current sponsorship practice in parks and recreation. First, FCPA constituents are now more likely to report that sponsorship recognition on agency promotional materials/communications (e.g., use of corporate logos on agency brochures) were appropriate (55% support in 2012 vs. 37% support in 1998). This finding suggests that public park agencies might be in a better position to allow sponsor recognition on program guides and other communication outlets.

Despite increased favorability toward a range of sponsorship activities and conditions, it is important to note those perceptions that haven't shifted; those still perceived as inappropriate by a majority of constituents. Two items, in particular, stand out: title sponsorship of park facilities (i.e., facility naming rights) and sponsor exclusivity. Park facility naming rights continue to be perceived as inappropriate; possibly due to the meanings (e.g., history, memories) associated with recreation settings/facilities prior to naming, the relative permanency of facility naming (vs. naming rights at time-bound special events), and the symbolism that naming rights might convey, that the facility now belongs to the sponsor rather than the people (Mowen & Havitz, 2002). Public park agencies would be well advised to avoid pursuing facility naming rights as a first course of action when exploring sponsorships and only when that naming rights involve significant investment into a new facility (Mowen & Everett, 2000).

Exclusivity represents another thorny issue for public sector park agencies; one that remains to be problematic among constituents. Copeland et al. (1996) found that exclusivity was a primary benefit sought by corporate sponsors. However, our study found that park agency constituents rated this type of arrangement as inappropriate in both time periods. Here, "allowing only one company within a product category to be an official sponsor" was perceived as being highly inappropriate and declined in favorability across time. This shift may be indicative of the uneasiness felt when corporations receive exclusive terms or favoritism and goes against long-standing practice of allowing equal access to public services. While exclusive sponsor arrangements might yield higher sponsorship fees, they might also come with the risk of accusations of public agency favoritism among key constituencies as well as competitor businesses (IEG, 2015). In response to these concerns, some park and recreation agencies have developed corporate sponsorship guidelines/policies to minimize the risk of sponsors having an influence on agency decision-making. For example, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission has established sponsorship policy that stipulates no abrogation of governmental authority, no property interest in park assets, and no rights of control over park programs.

When comparing specific industry/product categories over the two time periods, we found increased perceptions of appropriateness across a wide range of categories. The largest shifts were for financial services, home and garden, health care, and other. Collectively, this might be reflective of public interest in and recognition of these products/

services in their local community (e.g., Fairfax County), but might also be a function of the publics' adaptation to sponsorships across a broader spectrum of businesses/industries. Across both time periods, we found that recreation equipment was perceived as the most appropriate type of sponsor industry/category, followed by home/garden and health care. This finding comes as no surprise given that park agencies provide opportunities for recreation, nature connection, and health and well-being (National Recreation and Park Association, 2010). Park agencies should consider prioritizing sponsors whose products/services fit within these particular categories. It is important to note that the "chemical or plastic industry/product" category was perceived as the least appropriate in both 1998 and 2012. Despite a chemical company's interest in supporting park and recreation agencies through sponsorship; it might be more acceptable to both consumers and constituents if they merely donated dollars to the agency without establishing a formalized sponsorship arrangement with its expected return on investment.

While generally unpopular among park constituents, visible sponsorship recognition can enhance consumers' awareness and attitudes of corporate brands. Hence, visible sponsor recognition or impressions is an important reason that corporations provide cash fees to the sponsored property (Ko, Kim, Claussen, & Kim, 2008). We assessed how certain park places/locations were perceived as venues for visible sponsor recognition and whether/how these perceptions changed over time. We found increased favorability across a number of locations. The largest shifts were for sport-related locations such as golf yard markers, inside golf clubhouses, and on ballfield fences. These locations were generally perceived as appropriate in 1998 and were perceived as even more appropriate in 2012. Recognizing sponsors at more pristine natural or historic settings, however, remains problematic. Less than 25% of respondents felt that sponsorship at trails and at historic sites was appropriate in 1998 and, while this increased in 2012, it was still a minority viewpoint. We conclude that, while constituents are more favorable about sponsorship recognition as a concept, there are still certain types of settings perceived as sacred or "no-go" zones. Companies who wish to sponsor such places/facilities may want to consider off-site (e.g., social media, agency brochures), rather than on-site recognition.

### Limitations

Despite study insights, we caution readers that our sample was comprised of residents of one metropolitan county in Northern Virginia and are not generalizable to the U.S. population as a whole. Further, while results suggest that people are adapting to corporate sponsorship at a public sector agency (e.g., responding more favorably to the concept, its impact on recreation, and to specific forms of sponsorship), we did not test the adaptation process directly. That is, we did not ask 2012 respondents whether their views on sponsorship have changed over time, in what manner, and why. Future studies examining adaptation to public funding could include these kinds of direct, retrospective questions. Finally, trade-off responses to various sponsorship scenarios were not assessed in this study and this represents an important topic for future park sponsorship research.

### Conclusion

Corporate advertising, messaging, and engagement continue to permeate almost every facet of our daily lives, including public services. Our comparison of park agency constituent attitudes over time provides evidence that society may be more accepting of corporate sponsorships in public park and recreation contexts. We found a more favorable environment to expand a range of sponsorship activities yet certain sponsorship activities, practices, and businesses (e.g., exclusivity, facility naming rights, visible recognition at trails/historic sites, chemical companies as sponsors) remain problematic for park agencies. As park sponsorships continue to evolve, there is a need to continually assess how key stakeholders respond to these activities and relationships. It behooves park and recreation agencies to assess public attitudes at the onset of a major sponsorship program and monitor whether support changes over time. Our data indicates a more favorable environment for a public park agency to cautiously pursue expanding sponsorships with the caveat that they keep the agreements nonexclusive, the recognition unobtrusive, and the sponsor brand/product line fitting with the image and purpose of public parks and recreation.

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