

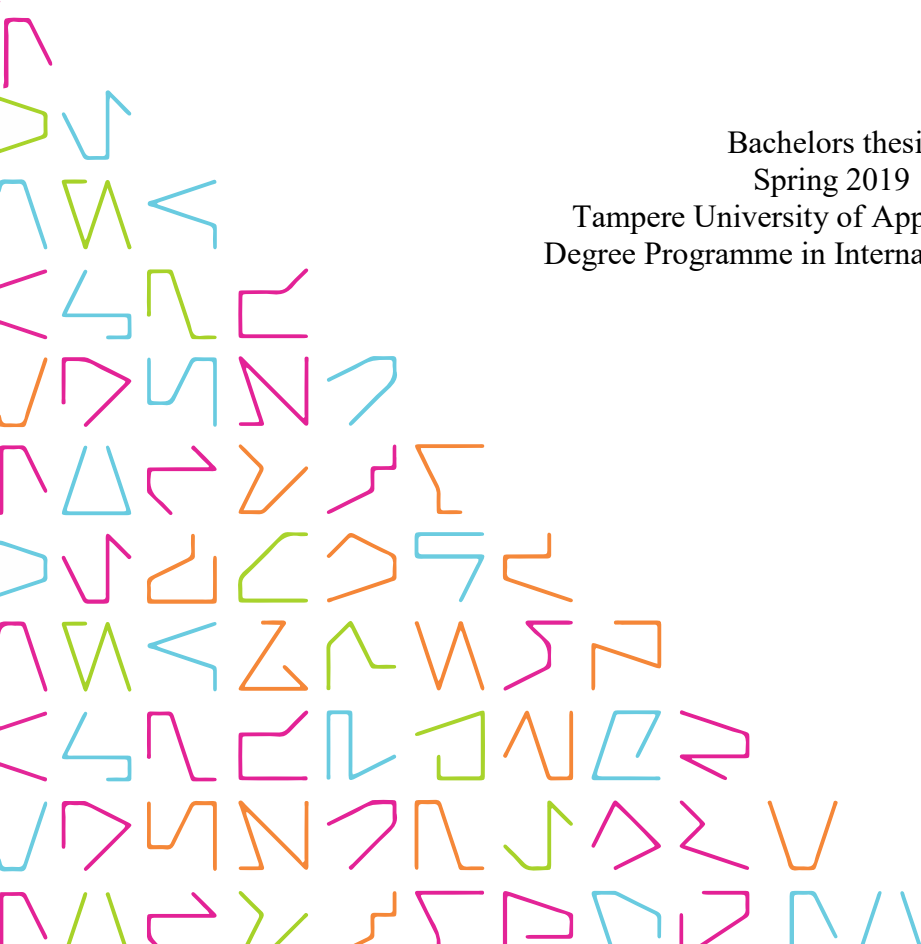


TAMPEREEN  
AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

# Improving sponsorship sales for Jukurit HC Oy

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## ABSTRACT

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The objective of this thesis is to find out what sponsors are looking for in the sponsorship with Jukurit and how they are measuring the results of the sponsorship. The purpose of this study is to provide Jukurit with suggestions on how the sponsorship communication can be improved in order to increase the satisfaction of the current sponsors as well as enhance the sponsor acquisition process for new sponsors.

Jukurit is an ice hockey team that competes in Liiga, the top ice hockey level in Finland. By player budget and turnover, it is the smallest team in Liiga which has encouraged the organization to seek further growth in the sponsorship sales. In order to do so, the current sponsorship deals need to be studied in order to gain an insight of the sponsoring companies' motives and objectives so that the sponsorship sales process could be made more efficient.

This thesis was carried out as a case study. The concepts relevant for the study were researched and explained in the theoretical part. For the empirical part of the study, qualitative research approach was used and current sponsors of Jukurit were interviewed. The interviews were analyzed, and suggestions were made based on the findings. The companies that were interviewed are not disclosed by names due to sponsorship deals being confidential in nature.

There were several notable findings done from the interviews. Overall, thus far the sponsors have in general been satisfied with their sponsorship with Jukurit but also, concerning issues were found. Many of the sponsors have had trouble setting clear objectives for the sponsorship and as a result of that, it has been very difficult to measure the results of the sponsorship. On the other hand, the communication between Jukurit and the sponsors has not been sufficient enough resulting in problems concerning the suitable contents for the sponsorships. It was brought up by several sponsors, that their main motive for sponsoring Jukurit is the desire to support a local sports team. In case Jukurit cannot provide the sponsors with tangible results from the sponsorship, the likeliness of the sponsorship relationship falling through is relatively higher than it would be if the sponsors gained satisfactory commercial results.

In order to increase the sponsorship sales, Jukurit needs to improve proving tools to measuring results so that the objectives set for the sponsorship are matched.

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Asiasanat: sponsorship, sports marketing, return on investment, brand

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Mikkelin Jukurit is a professional ice hockey team based in Mikkelä. Throughout its history, Jukurit has competed on several levels of the Finnish ice hockey system. Over the years, the team has persistently advanced from one level to another reaching eventually in 2016 Liiga, which is the top hockey league in Finland with 15 teams altogether ([www.jukurit.fi](http://www.jukurit.fi)).

The Liiga is the only fully professional sports league in Finland which creates a lot of athletic as well as economic burden on the teams. As the top national league in Finland, Liiga competes with other top leagues in Europe to have the best players available and it is done mostly by paying competitive salaries to the players. In order to cover the costs of running professional sports teams, the organizations supporting the teams need to come up with a variety of means to fill up the arenas for the games and acquire sponsors who pay for having their logos to appear in the arena during hockey games (Muotka 2018).

Jukurit currently has the smallest budget among all the teams in the Liiga and is seeking to increase the expenditure on the salary budget of the team as it was also the smallest out of the fifteen teams playing in Liiga for the season 2017–18 (Liiga 2017). Being a relatively new team to the league, Jukurit is continuously working to expand the network of companies interested in sponsoring the team. In order to do this more efficiently, it is important that the companies currently having a sponsorship deal with Jukurit are examined in order to find out how satisfied they are and what they are looking for in the sponsorship. Previously, this kind of research has not been conducted for Jukurit and is essential at this time, when increasing the turnover relies heavily on corporate sponsorship sales (Muotka 2018).

This thesis was conducted to get a more profound view of the sponsors' experiences of the partnership with Jukurit. For developing already existing sponsorships as well as acquiring new sponsors, it is relevant to understand the sponsors' point of view in matters such as what has been successful in collaboration with Jukurit and what could be improved in the future.

For the research part of the thesis, companies who have a sponsorship deal with Jukurit were interviewed and the answers were then analyzed. On the basis of the study, suggestions were made on how the sponsors could benefit more from cooperation with Jukurit and how Jukurit could improve interaction with sponsors. In addition, it is important to understand how the sponsors could achieve more wide-ranging and measurable results for their investments on Jukurit.

## 2 RESEARCH PLAN

### 2.1 Thesis objective, purpose and research questions

In order to grow the player salary budget to a higher level, Jukurit is aiming at increased income in the corporate sales sector. This thesis examines what kind of results sponsors are aiming to pursue in the sponsorship cooperation with Jukurit. Its purpose is to give Jukurit a more profound insight on what sponsors are looking to achieve through sponsorship, how they are measuring the results and how the results of this thesis can be utilized to generate more sponsorship sales. This will be done by examining what the objectives for the sponsorship of the current sponsors are and how Jukurit would be able to deliver more diverse solutions in order to grow the sponsorship base. The topic was chosen because there are not any previous studies conducted regarding the corporate sponsors of Jukurit.

Since this kind of research has not been conducted for Jukurit before and is relevant at this time because the growth of revenues relies heavily on sponsorship income from private companies and businesses (Muotka, 2018). Jukurit asked the author to conduct this research because he is occupied as a sales negotiator at the corporate sponsorship sales for Jukurit. The author carried out an internship with the Jukurit marketing department in the spring of 2016 and has since worked at the company full time in corporate sales.

The thesis aims at finding out what sponsors are looking for when having a sponsorship deal with Jukurit and how Jukurit as an organization can help them reach measurable results. It has been noticed by the Jukurit sales department that companies are generally becoming more aware of how much money they invest in sponsorships. From this awareness follows that they require more concrete results. So far Jukurit has not pursued any systematic evaluation on how the companies sponsoring the team measure the results in return for their investments. By finding out what kind of value companies are receiving for their money, it will be possible to come up with suggestions and new solutions both for Jukurit and the sponsors in order to establish stronger and more wide-ranging partnerships.

The main research question of the thesis is: What are sponsors looking for in the partnership with Jukurit? In order to answer this main question, there are two sub research questions: 1) How are they measuring the return on investment? and 2) How can Jukurit help the sponsors better reach their objectives?"

The first overall objective for this thesis is to find out how current partners are measuring the return on investment (ROI) or are they doing it at all. Investopedia (2019) states that ROI tries to measure directly the amount of the return on a particular investment, relative to the investment's cost. For the money invested, companies are seeking to get results, which usually means direct sales or contacts that could eventually lead to sales later. The second objective is to find ways to increase Jukurit corporate sponsorship sales by offering current and future partners more diverse ideas and solutions for utilizing the sponsorships efficiently. The results of this study will help Jukurit to understand and take better into consideration the sponsors' point of view in the context of developing sales and marketing strategies and practices.

The thesis consists of two parts, theoretical and empirical. The theoretical part explains the main concepts in general as well as the objectives of this thesis. The research part will consist of interviews conducted with current sponsors of Jukurit. The results will be analyzed and conclusions and suggestions will be made.

## **2.2 Concepts and theory**

In order to fully understand and further analyze the interviews made for this research, concepts regarding the topic need to be researched. There are three main concepts that were chosen for this thesis and they are explained in this chapter. The three concepts are sports marketing, brand and sponsorship. Sports marketing was chosen because it differs in some respects from the definition of marketing in general and it covers both marketing of the sports product to customers as well as marketing of companies through sports. An important role in the field of sports marketing is played by the sponsors and these sponsorship relations within sports organizations are in the center of this thesis while it aims to examine what sponsors are looking for in the sponsorship. This chapter explains sports marketing as a concept and is followed by a profound view on how sponsors understand partnerships with sports clubs or organizations. Return of investment is discussed in the

sponsorship section as well because it explains what sponsors receive or how they benefit from being in a sponsorship relation. Brand is an important part of this thesis as the attractiveness of the company affects the companies' interest in partnering with Jukurit. Also, companies represent their brand alongside with Jukurit. Thus, brand as a concept needs to be explained.

### **Sports marketing**

Watching and attending sporting events has become an important part of people's leisure time. Various sports are played competitively all around Finland and there are several levels from amateur to professional leagues. All of them are marketing their particular sport in one way or another in order to attract spectators and supporters for the teams. By definition, *sports marketing* means the application of all marketing related activities, structures and thoughts to the phenomenon of sports (Kaiser & Breuer 2015, 4). Successful marketing of sports to spectators and companies has a crucial impact on the financial well-being of the organization or the team in question. The main objectives for sports marketing are marketing of sport products to consumers and marketing of consumer and manufacturing products to consumers through sponsorships (Alaja 2000, 27). Sports marketing presents differentiation compared to the characteristics of marketing in other fields of business since it is impossible, according to Kaiser & Breuer (2015, 9), to promote the actual characteristics of sports goods. In the first place, this is due to the uncertainty of the athletic result of the teams or the individual performances of the players over the season. Therefore, all promotion has to be targeted on the facts, such as expected or objective qualities of the players, and circumstances of the production process of sports events and other related activities.

Activities and practices of sports marketing can be divided into two categories, namely marketing of sports and marketing through sports. Marketing of sports follows the guidelines of all marketing related activities with the special characteristics of it being a specific field of business. According to Parent and Smith-Swan (2013, 97) "marketing of sports refers to the practice of marketing as it occurs within a sports organization." Among other marketing activities sports club marketing in professional sports clubs includes negotiations with actual and potential sponsors. Internationally sponsorship is the most important



income for most sports clubs and the only exception are soccer clubs in Europe which receive more revenue by selling media rights (Kaiser & Breuer 2015, 6).

Jukurit relies heavily on the income from sponsorship and media rights, sponsorship being the largest source of income. Marketing of sports and marketing through sports go hand-in-hand as the level of enthusiasm towards the sports correlates to the visibility of the sports making it more exploitable for marketers (Muotka 2018). Strengthening the brand of a sports club through marketing of sports attracts customers and should be in the center of all marketing. A strong brand is not as dependent on success because the fans are committed to standing behind the team whether it achieves success or not. If the brand is weaker, the level of enthusiasm depends more on successful performances of the team.

## **Brand**

Jukurit is building their brand in order to have a more attractive product for the customers and sponsors. On the other hand, sponsors are connecting their brand with Jukurit and the purpose of this is to associate the company in question with the positive image of Jukurit in order to increase that particular company's brand visibility. Mäkinen, Kahri and Kahri (2010, 15) define *brand* as a name, concept, a symbol or a shape which differentiates a product from competitors' equivalent product. It provides added value to a product from which clients are prepared to pay the premium price (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010, 15). Furthermore, the brand is formed through an image and a reputation so it has to be actively created and built in order to make up a distinctive product or a service (Peltomaa 2017). Brand is an image which is combined of all knowledge and experiences one has of a particular product. It is always a subject of person's opinion which was formed in one's mind. People may have different images of the same brand (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010, 44).

In a situation where a customer has a need that they are looking to fulfill, the first step is to start gathering information about products and services that will offer solutions for the need. From a marketer's point of view, a brand must be made familiar enough so that the customer will turn to it when looking to solve the problem (Mäkinen, Kahri & Kahri 2010, 47–48). Jukurit does not directly compete with other sports teams in the area because it is the only top level team but it could be said that the competition rises from competing of people's leisure time and their attention. Jukurit offers a service that is unlike any other

in the area, thus being unique in its nature. Nonetheless, it does not remove the need of enhancing the brand. The same applied for sponsors promoting their brand through Jukurit. Having brand visibility through allows the brand to become more familiar in the eyes of a customer. A strong brand is based largely on its visibility and the core of the brand is its capability to stand out from other similar products or services. However, distinctiveness is not its core value, but rather it brings additional value to the brand. Marketing activities must align with the brand promise. Visibility in many forms allows a brand to be noticed in many different situations and in result of that, it comes up to mind first (Dahlen 2006, 46–47.) From Jukurit standpoint, the aspect of having the brand noticed in different situations is a part of the sales and marketing strategy in the process of acquiring sponsors. On the other hand, Jukurit offers companies a platform in which they can gain visibility through sports as part of their marketing strategies.

Brand awareness is viewed as a means through which individuals become informed and accustomed with a brand name (Barreda et al. 2015, 1). However, brand awareness is not just about customers knowing the brand name or having previously seen it but in addition, it involves linking the brand to certain associations in memory. From this follows that recognition and recall are the two important measures of brand awareness. Recognition is the ability of the consumer to confirm prior exposure to the brand, while recall is the unaided retrieval of the brand from memory (IEG 2017, 106). Building brand awareness The brand with emotionally based issues related to the brand have a remarkable effect on a customer experience of which the customer may occasionally be willing to give away if he/she is well committed to the brand. (Ahvenainen et al. 2017, 10). The brand must offer passion, excitement and surprises, but at the same time it must be something that the customer can feel safe and secure about. However, the brand cannot be built solely on some temporary hype because the customers are more quality-conscious than before and they want to know what they get as an exchange for the money they have put in. A well functioning brand offers its customers vivid experiences as well as a sense of security (Silen 2001, 120–123).

Companies need to consistently manage the message that is delivered to the customer in order to build a strong brand (Uusitalo 2014, 73). An important part of the communication are the stakeholders the brand is associated with. Sponsorship is an example of this kind of brand association (Uusitalo 2014, 84–85). A sponsoring company supporting a specific cause financially and having its brand shown alongside of it, identifies itself with the

target (von Herten 2006, 194). In today's competitive marketing environment, sponsorship activities are becoming more delicate since exposure and visibility alone may not be considered sufficient objectives. This means that brand activation is becoming very important for sponsors to increase their return as well as for properties to attract sponsors (Pons et al. 2015, 27). Jukurit is continuously working on building the brand in order to make it identifying for the sponsors. Sponsors differentiate regarding the motives for sponsoring but a common factor is that they need to find Jukurit brand worthy of sponsoring. In order to create a brand that companies can identify themselves with, Jukurit is building the brand comprehensively. The athletic success presents a major part but other segments such as the social responsibility program plays a role in creating a brand that will attract a wider range of companies (Muotka 2018).

## **Sponsorship**

The most well-known form of marketing through sports is sponsorship (Kaiser & Breuer 2015, 6). Modern day sponsorships started in the 1960s as commercial TV-broadcasts began in the United States. During that decade, sponsorships spread to Europe and Finland as well. After a tentative start, the amount of sponsorships increased heavily in the 1970s. More and more companies began to discover the possibilities that sponsoring could bring even if the sponsorships were still partly experimental. During the next decades sponsorships evolved towards a more cooperative and better organized direction delivering benefits to both parties of the deal. Since its early days sponsoring has evolved from charity and entertainment to being a relevant part of companies' marketing strategies (Alaja 2003, 118; Alaja & Forssell 2001, 11–12).

Erkki Alaja defines *sponsorship* as a process in which the sponsoring company lends a positive image of the sponsored company to deliver a message to a desired target group (Alaja 2004, 22). Another definition, provided by IEG, a US based company that provides data of the results of sponsorship, describes sponsorships as cash and/or in-kind fees paid to a property in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property (IEG's guide to sponsorships, 2017).

In 2017, the total amount used for sponsoring in Finland was 257M€, from which 149M€ was targeted to sports. The increase in money invested in sports sponsorship was 8,8%

compared to the year before. Even though there was an increase in total money spent on sponsorship in 2017, only 12% of the companies stated that they will be likely increasing their sponsorship investments in the future (Sponsorointibarometri 2017). This trend has been noticed at the Jukurit sponsorship sales department which means that it has become crucial to find out about the sponsors' motives and objectives in order to maintain and develop existing sponsorships and improve the process of acquiring new sponsors.

Sponsorship affects through image or association. It does not send a direct message or is not a suggestion to purchase but rather affects the target group indirectly associating the target and the sponsor together (Alaja, 2000). Sponsoring should always benefit both the sponsoring company and the target company. Whereas sponsorship is a marketing communication tool to a company, it offers competitive advantage to sponsee. It appears, that Jukurit has not been consistent in evaluating the sponsors' benefits. The response and the feedback has relied for the most part on the individual meetings and discussions with the companies. From the Jukurit point of view, the pressure of retaining the sponsorship is very high because sponsorship income forms a significant portion of the income budget and the pressure might sometimes overrun the true meaning of sponsorship which is delivering benefits for both parties and in this case, especially for the sponsor.

Sponsorship is used to indirectly influence stakeholders through the sponsored company (Alaja, 2001, 25) and should not be mixed with advertising, which aims at directly influencing targeted customers. However, advertising deals can be confused with sponsorship, which is often the case with advertising spaces at sports arenas and other event venues. Sponsorship is a more diverse partnership than advertising and if a deal doesn't fulfill the fundamentals of sponsorship, it should be clearly categorised as advertising or re-negotiated (Valanko 2009, 55). This matter is highly difficult to determine due to the fact that many of the sponsorship deals include so called direct marketing as part of the visibility in the arena. Due to the nature of this thesis, it is necessary to consider all partnerships as sponsoring even though they might include elements connected with direct advertising. As stated before, sponsorship stands for borrowing the positive image of the sponsored company in the sponsoring company's marketing activities, thus covering even the deals that are more difficult to define as pure sponsorship. The majority of the sponsoring companies fulfill the fundamentals of sponsorship but there have been occasions where Jukurit hockey games have served solely as an advertising platform for a company. These deals are not considered in this thesis as sponsorships because they are usually only for a

short term and advertisements are related to some other event, such as municipal or national elections, for example, taking place in the near future (Muotka 2018).

The companies sponsoring sports, should always have some kind of an objective for their involvement in order to have a well-founded basis for measuring the results. Alaja (2001, 24–25) divides objectives for sponsorship into five main categories, which are as the following:

- Corporate image objectives
- Product marketing goals
- Stakeholder goals
- Business goals
- Other goals

Objectives concerning the corporate image are considered to be the most important motives for sponsorship. These include brand building through visibility and enhancing the corporate image by choosing a sponsored target that matches the desired image. Addressing social responsibility is often a fundamental factor in sponsorships because most companies want to support some kind of a good cause. Furthermore, companies want to show their stakeholders that they are being good corporate citizens by being a responsible part of the community. Product marketing objectives somewhat overlap the corporate image objectives. Many sponsors increase the brand value of a product by associating it with the company name. Building brand awareness of a product follows the same principles as in enhancing corporate image which is by choosing the correct target to match the desired image. In order to reach the wanted target group for a product, the customer profile of the sponsored company must be identified. Sponsorship allows one to reach the target group more efficiently than it would with more traditional marketing communication tools. Finding out what the objective for each sponsor may be, is necessary for the sales process. When having negotiations with a potential sponsor, finding out the concrete objectives for the sponsorship helps Jukurit create suitable contents which can be properly measured.

Not all the sponsorships are the same. Contents vary a lot from one company to another depending on several factors such as, for example, the budget of the sponsoring company as well as the objectives for the sponsorship. Currently Jukurit has approximately one hundred and fifty corporate partners which are divided into two categories based on the

nature of the partnership as well as the monetary value of their investment. Main corporate partners or main sponsors have the most visibility. Main sponsors are also the most looked after because they bring in a significant part of the sponsorship income. The rest of the partners are categorized as corporate partners or sponsors even though the contracts include individual content for each partner (Muotka, 2018).

Even though Jukurit calls all the corporate partners as sponsors, they do not all necessarily represent the characteristics of goal-directed sponsorship. Sponsoring companies have different motives for sponsoring and they have distinctive characteristics to them. Figure 1 displays the sponsorship benefits scaling from community goodwill on the other end to the fully functioning sponsorship on the other end. It shows that not all sponsors have the same motives for the sponsorship and the need for measuring results may vary.

**FIGURE 1** Aligning with sports entities: a continuum of sponsorship benefits

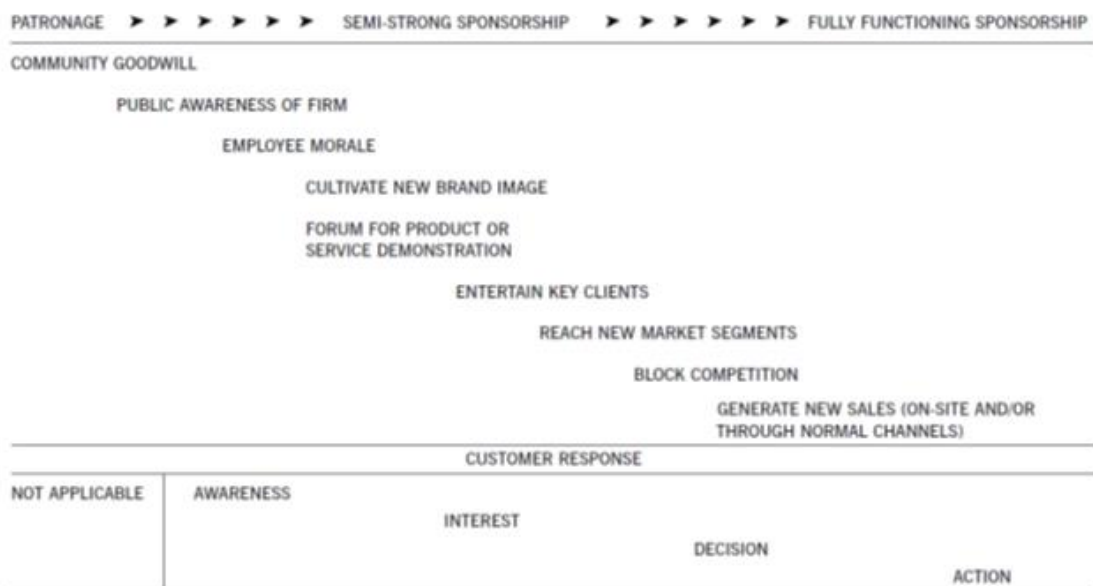


Figure 1 - Aligning with sports entities: a continuum of sponsorship benefits (Zinger & O'Reilly 2010, 18)

Measuring the results depends on the nature of the sponsorship and what the objectives are. IEG's guide to sponsorship (2017) states that there are three main categories of how the sponsorship can be measured:

1. Measuring awareness levels achieved or attitudes changed
2. Quantifying sponsorship in terms of sales results

3. Comparing the value of sponsorship-generated media coverage to the cost of equivalent advertising space or time

Sponsoring companies have so far been responsible for measuring the results but Jukurit wants to support them because having measurable results can be linked to profitability of the sponsorship. Jukurit is aware that if sponsors do not directly see the results of the sponsoring, it is harder to maintain or develop the sponsorship deal. It is in the interest of Jukurit that companies are able to see the results for two reasons. First, if the results are not as wanted, the cooperation can be improved and developed in order to gain better results in the future, and secondly, if the results are good, the sponsorship deal is easier to maintain. Listening to sponsor's experiences and opinions helps Jukurit evaluate the quality of the sponsorship activities in more detail.

### **2.3 Working methods and theory**

Quantitative and qualitative methods are two common types of research approaches applied for acquiring empirical data. Quantitative research approach displays the data in numbers and the results are often exact and systematic. Qualitative research approach on the other hand focuses more on motives and behavior and thus can not be expressed in such formal fashion (Kothari 2004, 1–6). This approach provides more in-depth understanding and analysis of the subject compared to quantitative method and interviewing is a commonly used data collection method within qualitative research. For the thesis in hand, qualitative research approach was the relevant approach to be applied because the data collected cannot be categorized beforehand and the results vary depending on the quality and expectations of sponsorship relations. Sponsors' motives for sponsorship are the key findings for the purpose of this thesis. Also, there was no previous research conducted on this topic for Jukurit so in order to discover valid results, there was a need for the interviews to be done.

As a research method, interviews can roughly be divided into structured and unstructured based on how strictly and conclusively the questions to be presented have been formulated. Surveys with exact questions and a limited number of possible answers can be seen as most structured interviews (Tiittula & Ruusuvuori 2009, 11–12). At the other end are interviews which have no predefined set of questions but proceed more like discussions

within an area of research interest. Somewhere in between these extremes are half-structured or half-standardised interviews of which a focused interview is the most often used. When doing focused interviews, the researcher covers the same topics and areas of interest but the formulation of the questions as well as their order may vary from one interview to another. The basic idea behind such interviews is that the interviewee is the one who has the best knowledge about the issues being covered and that same knowledge cannot be obtained in a similar matter from other sources. Focused interviews were chosen as a data collection method since perspectives, experiences and opinions of the sponsors are of the utmost relevance in looking for answers to the questions posed in the thesis.

Kothari (2004, 95–96) states that primary data are those which are collected for the first time thus being original in character. It is collected for the specific research through eg. interviews and surveys. For the thesis in hand, the only option was to collect primary data through interview and discussions as there were no previous studies conducted with Jukurit concerning this topic. The main source of primary data are the interviews with the selected companies having a sponsorship relation with Jukurit. In addition, informal discussions were held with the CEO of Jukurit, Tuomas Muotka, to gain a more profound view of the current situation from the perspective of the professional sports organization.

## **2.4 Thesis process**

According to Kothari (2004, 1) research in an art of scientific investigation. It seeks to find new knowledge to a specific problem through study, observation, comparison and experiment. This thesis process began when the Jukurit CEO presented the author a research problem having to do with finding ways to increase sponsorship sales. After having discussed this topic further with Jukurit sales and marketing personnel, three focused research questions were formulated based on these discussions. The target for the thesis was formed to get a deeper understanding of how the sponsorship relations and activities serve the sales of Jukurit as well as the sales of the sponsors involved. The next step was conducting an overview of the research literature and the main concepts relevant for this study. Relating them to the current processes at Jukurit was important for planning of the interview questions. In addition, primary data was collected from the discussions with the Jukurit CEO Tuomas Muotka as well as personal knowledge from the author based on



his experience in sales and sports marketing. After that the data gathered from the interviews with eight current sponsoring companies was analysed with the support of the concepts presented in the beginning of the thesis. Suggestions were made by examining the results from the interviews and supporting them with theoretical framework.

The main body of this thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction which briefly describes the basic idea of the thesis as a whole. The second chapter consists of a theoretical framework and presents the objectives of the thesis along with the main concepts applied in the study. In addition, it explains research methods used in the study. The third chapter introduces the case study and Jukurit as a sports organization in depth. It describes the current situation of co-operating with the sponsors and the issues surrounding the sponsorship process. In this chapter also the interview structure, actual interview situations and data collected are covered in more detail. The fourth chapter is an analysis based on a dialogue between information received through the Jukurit case and secondary data obtained from research literature and online sources. The last chapter presents the conclusions of the study and suggestions for the future processes.

### 3 CASE INTRODUCTION

#### 3.1 Mikkelin Jukurit

Throughout its history, Jukurit has competed on several levels of the Finnish ice hockey system. It's history dates back to 1970 when two former Mikkeli based ice hockey teams, Mikkelin Palloilijat and Mikkelin Pallo-Kissat were merged into one. From there on, Jukurit has persistently advanced from one level to another reaching eventually in 2016 the Liiga, which is the top hockey league in Finland with 15 teams altogether (Muotka, 2018).

Overall, Jukurit is the most successful team so far in the history of the Mestis, which is the second highest ice hockey league in Finland. Jukurit played in the Mestis for fifteen seasons, from 2001 until 2016, winning seven championships. At the time, the Finnish Ice Hockey Association and the Liiga, the top ice hockey league in Finland had an agreement which allowed the championship winning team to apply for a Liiga license. Following the championship in 2015, Jukurit applied for the Liiga license and was eventually granted a promotion to the Liiga. The promotion was implemented in 2016 and Jukurit played its first season in the Liiga during the 2016–2017 season. (Muotka, 2018).

Jukurit plays all its home games at the Ikioma Arena seating a maximum of 4200 spectators. Mikkeli is the second smallest city by the population (approximately 54 000 inhabitants) hosting a Liiga team and this specific feature results in challenges within the financial structure of the organization. Teams rely on the attendance, i.e. the number of people present at a particular place or event and the sponsorships, which means that for a team located in a smaller city it is more difficult to compete with bigger cities when attracting more spectators and sponsoring companies.

The Jukurit hockey operations are being run by its background organization, Jukurit HC Oy. Jukurit HC Oy generates a turnover of approximately 4 million Euros. Approximately 2 million Euros is generated from corporate sales, including sponsorships and corporate tickets. Rest of the income consists of consumer ticket sales, fan merchandise sales and a broadcasting deal with a commercial networking service Telia (Muotka 2018).

Currently Jukurit has approximately one hundred and fifty corporate partners (Muotka, 2018). All the sponsorship deals are concluded individually and they are drawn up to match each company's particular requirements. Out of all the corporate partners, seventeen are called main partners which are classified by the monetary size of the partnership (Muotka, 2018). Main partners are companies that almost exclusively have their own marketing departments which makes the partnerships more active and allows more creative co-operation. Also the money invested in the sponsorship is significant meaning that they are more concerned of what they are receiving. The author, while being employed at Jukurit, has experienced that smaller companies usually make decisions based on personal interest in ice hockey. The decision making is more emotional than based on strategic choices. This thesis focuses on all sponsors regardless the status or the size of the company because the process of acquiring partners follows a similar pattern with all the companies and the practices applied to larger scale companies can be applied to smaller scale companies as well.

As mentioned earlier, some activities are mixed with sponsorship even though they don't necessarily meet the characteristics of it as they are officially defined. Jukurit can divide corporate partners in two categories; sponsors and advertisers. Some companies are in some occasions using the games solely as an advertising spot as the stadium offers digital screens on which ads can be run during sporting events. These companies are not specified as sponsors due to them usually being temporary.

A hockey team's income mainly consists of four sources; corporate sponsorship sales, ticket sales, TV broadcasting deal and other businesses. In order to increase the turnover, Jukurit is trying to increase the corporate sales because it brings in the most significant amount of income. Corporate sales are not so much location dependent because the team plays all around Finland and the games are broadcasted on television and thus is not so heavily affected by the rather small population of Mikkeli (Muotka 2018).

### **3.2 Research data**

Interviewing the representatives of the companies sponsoring Jukurit was necessary for this thesis to get firsthand information concerning sponsorship activities. There was no specific pattern on how companies were chosen but rather they were picked in order to present a wide range of different types of sponsorships. This was possible since the author

has been employed by Jukurit since 2015 and was well acquainted with the range of companies. The reason for choosing different kinds of companies was that Jukurit has a large variety of sponsors and studying only one group of sponsors would not have given a cross-section of the whole sponsor base. A total of eight current corporate partners were selected for a more thorough analysis and their representatives were interviewed individually. The data gathered with interviews will be presented in the next chapter. Companies were chosen in a fashion that they would represent a variety of sponsorships through differentiation in contents. This was done because Jukurit has partners of all sizes and it is valuable to find out the experiences of all of them. Thus, the aim was to examine what kind of variety and diversity there is in this group of studied companies. This approach was chosen because nowadays sports organizations have to deal with different types of sponsors and therefore with different types of relationships. The intensity of relationships with different sponsors may vary but nevertheless sports organizations have to manage all their sponsorships properly (Bühler & Nufer 2015, 216).

Question for the interviews were formed in such a fashion that they would provide answers to critical research questions. It was important to ask questions which would be considerably easy for the respondents to answer but at the same time they would make the respondent to reflect on what kind of a sponsoring relationship they were involved in. Asking fairly direct questions would ensure that topics that are vital for the study would be properly covered.

The interview was structured around eight focused questions starting with practical issues relating with how the sponsorship had started and how long they had a sponsorship deal with Jukurit. This was important for getting a view on what was the timeline in which the companies had pursued cooperation with Jukurit. Then the actual content of the partnership deal was discussed because it would help to analyze the answers in the subsequent questions about measuring the results. The following questions dealt with utilizing the opportunities of the sponsorship for investigating how the sponsors feel about the effectiveness of their sponsorship. The question was asked before asking about the objectives and the purpose was that the respondents would think of the benefits that come up to mind spontaneously. Then benefits and the objectives were covered in more detail, which was essential for the interview because it presents the level of activity towards the sponsorships from the sponsor's side. From that on the interviews continued on to questions opening perspectives on measuring the results gained from the sponsorship and finally

coming to the question of how Jukurit could improve the outcomes or the quality of partnerships.

### **3.3 Validity**

Validity measures if the research has been able to measure what was originally intended to be measured (Vilkka 2007, 150). If the measuring is done by using appropriate methods, the validity is fulfilled. For this thesis, the interviewed companies were chosen by utilizing the professional knowledge of the author and the interview questions were formed in a fashion that provided answers to the research problems. Thus, this thesis can be considered fulfilling the validity aspect of a research.

## 4 INTERVIEWS

In this chapter the data gathered through the interviews is presented and analyzed. The interview results were divided into three sections as follows: utilizing sponsorship opportunities, cooperation and communication between sponsors and Jukurit and measuring results of sponsorship. The purpose of displaying the results in this way is that conclusions and suggestions can be presented in the next chapter and also research questions can be answered. Topics covered in the interviews are presented in detail, they are examined in a more analytical way and answers for the research questions are discussed.

### **Utilizing sponsorship opportunities**

The first questions in the interviews focused on practical issues, namely on when and how the sponsoring relationship had started and how the sponsoring deals had been executed with different companies. Some of those findings will be presented later on in this chapter. Within the companies included in this study, varying lengths of the sponsorship relations were presented, the longest-standing sponsorship having started in the late 1990's. There were a few companies that had been sponsoring Jukurit for about 5 years but most had started since the Jukurit joined the Liiga in 2016. As for the type of sponsorships, there appeared to be almost as many forms of cooperation as there were sponsors and it was brought up throughout the interviewed companies. A common factor for all the companies involved in the interviews was that their sponsorship deals included brand visibility of some sort, for example, board advertisements. Some of the companies are cooperating in such a way that Jukurit makes counter purchases from the companies, for example, by ordering the beverages that are sold at the Jukurit home games. Other forms of cooperation mentioned in the interviews included for example, giving away VIP tickets for the customers and employees or reserving a suite for offering customers of the company a more exclusive experience of watching a game.

The interviewed people were asked about how the companies they represented had made use of the opportunities within cooperation. A view from one of the companies (C7/19.10.2018) on this was that they had utilized quite well the opportunities of attaining brand visibility through the sponsorship. Also, the staff of the company had given positive feedback for getting season tickets from their employer. This was valued for offering good counterweight for work. In the company it hadn't been really thought over whether

the sponsorship could have been utilized more efficiently but surely it might have been possible. For the money invested, they estimated that altogether the contents of the sponsorship deal had been satisfactory.

One of the larger companies told about utilizing the opportunities of the sponsorship as having given “significant brand visibility through Jukurit during the last two seasons and have been able to promote their new product locally and nationwide. As a relatively new company though, there are a lot of moving parts and work to do which means that more could have gotten out the sponsorship if there was more time to work on the sponsorship” (C5/19.10.2018). An interviewee from another company stated their part in the deal along the similar vein and gave quite a low grade for the company concerning their own activity in utilizing opportunities of the sponsorship cooperation saying that “one should look in the mirror and think about what could have been done otherwise. We have tools for this, they could have been used more but it was totally up to us that we haven’t done this. We could have used more our VIP season tickets especially by bringing our customers to watch the games, but on the other hand they were used instead by our own employees for their recreation.” (C1/22.11.2018.)

In order to find out about the benefits of the sponsorship, financial or other kinds of gains brought to the sponsoring company while sponsoring Jukurit was discussed. It was brought up in one of the interviews (C4/22.11.2018) that the biggest gains from the sponsorship are increased sales and building a wider customer base as well as brand visibility. For this particular company, it is easy for them to sell their services thus increasing sales as they produce the brand materials for the arena and they receive customers directly from Jukurit. The brand visibility they obtain is significant and for a medium-sized company as they are considered, being a sponsor for Jukurit benefits them considerably. Another company (C3/17.10.2018) stated that “the visibility offerings at the games are very versatile for our marketing activities and we reach a large quantity of people at the same time. There are no similar options in Mikkeli area for marketers and advertisers considering Jukurit has 30 games during the season with about 3000 people attending the games each time.” This statement clearly relates to Alaja’s (2001, 25) remark on how sponsorship is easily mixed with advertising. In many ways, they are connected, but sponsoring is not the same as advertising even though in this case the sponsor appears to draw a parallel between them.

For one of the interviewed company representatives (C1/22.11.2018), the biggest gains from the sponsorship was having their brand and logo shown at Jukurit hockey games. In their opinion, having a sponsorship deal is important for their customers, meaning that their customers attend the games and they value the company being involved in the Jukurit sponsorship network. They have also taken their staff as well as their customers to the games and have held business negotiations at the games. The benefits they receive come mainly from the positive feeling pride that arises from having a sponsorship deal with Jukurit as well as having a feeling that they are a part of something that unites people of the same interest. If they had felt otherwise, they would not be sponsoring quite as heavily financially. This interviewee crystallizes quite well what is the strength and speciality of sponsorship, namely, as it has been stated by Leah Gillooly (2015, 143), “its ability to allow brands to develop an attachment with target audiences by associating themselves with emotional brands, such as sports teams.”

### **Cooperation and communication with Jukurit**

It is important to strive for better profitability and developing sponsorship relations and sponsorship activities is in the interest of Jukurit sales personnel in order to improve the sales. In order to do that, the companies were asked about how the sponsorship could be improved seen from their point of view. One of the views pointed out a project for the main corporate partners of Jukurit which was arranged at the Helsinki ice hockey arena in the regular season of 2017–2018 (C4/22.11.2018). Jukurit organized a work shop in which the main corporate partners of Jukurit came together and set up an event where they all had their own stands in the arena during the game between HIFK Helsinki and Jukurit. The main sponsors were able to invite customers and fans to the game and they had a chance to present their companies’ offerings for the spectators at the game. The event was heavily marketed in Mikkeli as well as in Helsingin Sanomat, a nationwide newspaper. It received a lot of media attention and led the main sponsors of Jukurit to work together and come up with ideas which could help better utilize the sponsorship. The sponsor in question was looking for a bigger event such as the one described to be arranged the next season too and hopes that something like this will be done in the upcoming seasons. Forty percent of this company’s customers are in Helsinki area and they were pleased to have been able to invite clients from that area to the event and would like to have more similar kinds of activities being done in the future.



Another suggestion had to do with having the right contents in the sponsorship deal. The sponsor would like to go over the options for the sponsorship more thoroughly and try to figure out if the present content of the sponsorship deal suits them well or are there anything that could be improved (C1/22.11.2018). More suitable options could be found through conversations between the Jukurit and the sponsor. One of the partners was pleased with the sponsorship as it is but would perhaps also discover other contents to the sponsorship through e.g. ticket offers to their customers with the Jukurit tickets (C2/22.11.2018). On the other hand, one of the respondents suggested that the sponsorship has already been developed throughout the years and they have been very satisfied with it as it is (C6/17.10.2018).

In order to being able to improve the sponsorships' efficiency for the Jukurit sponsors in the future, dialogue between Jukurit sales personnel and the sponsors plays a major role. For that reason, it seemed appropriate to ask the suggestions directly from the interviewed companies on how Jukurit could help to improve the sponsorship. For improving sponsorship cooperation with Jukurit, one suggestion recommended arranging a brainstorming session with a group of sponsors in order to come up with ideas on how sponsorships could be improved. Having the presence of multiple sponsors in the meeting might help to generate ideas that have not been come up with in the individual meetings between Jukurit and a sponsor (C3/17.10.2018). There was also desire for Jukurit to have events outside of ice hockey, for example concerts and fairs (C5/19.10.2018). This would add more to the sales of beverages which are purchased from the sponsor.

Additionally, what appeared in the interviews somewhat surprising in some cases, was the lack of cooperation between the sponsor and the Jukurit. It became obvious that the sponsors would like to develop the sponsorship and it was said that going over the possibilities that can be implemented more profoundly could be the a solution. This raises a concern if there is too little dialogue in the sponsorship meeting or Jukurit sales personnel are assuming that they are well enough aware of what the sponsor wants. Nonetheless, having more conversations and listening to the sponsor could reveal new possibilities on how to improve the sponsorship. Even though the answers indicate that sponsors are relatively satisfied with the sponsorship, there has not been enough dialogue with the companies which seems to enable the best possible improvement in the partnership. According to Bühler and Nufer (2015, 217–218) cooperation is an important issue in successful sponsorships. One form of cooperation is involvement in each other's marketing and planning

efforts, which helps both partners to achieve their sponsorship objectives. In addition, successful sponsorships require effective communication between sponsor and sponsee. It is important for sporting organizations to make sure that sponsors get adequate information about themselves and recent developments.

### **Measuring results**

Answering the main research question for this thesis required finding out about the objectives of the sponsorship for Jukurit sponsors. It was vital to reflect on the objectives and motives for sponsorship in order to be able to view if or how these objectives relate to expected outcomes. One of the sponsors (C3/17.10.2018) named three concrete objectives for the sponsorship with Jukurit as follows: 1) bring visibility to a new product and services along with the brand, 2) support the only significantly important common thing for Mikkeli and 3) deliver added value for the customers, for example by offering them VIP tickets. Having objectives so well thought out was quite unique among all interviews. The second objective was very interestingly formed as it describes Jukurit as the only important common thing for the whole city of Mikkeli. As told before, Mikkeli is a relatively small city and Jukurit is the only top league team among the mainstream sports in Finland, including ice hockey, soccer, floorball and Finnish baseball. Other sports in Mikkeli have teams in lower-level leagues resulting in attendances and financial significance being a lot lower than what Jukurit generates.

On the other end of the line there is a company sponsoring Jukurit with a very different approach meaning that they haven't had any objectives for the sponsorship defined beforehand (C2/22.11.2018). They could not name any particular objectives for the sponsorship because in their opinion their brand is already quite well known but they want to have their logo on display so that it will remain well known also in the future. Supporting a local ice hockey team was brought up as the main objective for the sponsorship in one of the interviews (C7/19.10.2018). This company also stated that supporting Jukurit youth hockey teams is important to them which derives from the employees in the company having family members and relatives playing in the Jukurit youth teams. They have realized the value of having a Liiga team playing in Mikkeli which then affects the quality of youth teams' operations positively.

Measuring results of sponsorship was one of the sub research questions for the study. The methods and activity of measuring results varied quite a bit amongst the companies from not measuring at all to using some very advanced methods for measuring. One of the most advanced methods of measuring results was explained this way: “We ask our new customers how they found us in the first place. Every once in a while, we arrange a Facebook questionnaire or go out in the streets to find out where people have seen our company brand or the logo. Last season we gave out fifteen 100€ gift cards for our services during Jukurit home games. Afterwards we asked a hundred people who had attended the games if they had noticed those giveaways. During the games, there was an announcement in which the giveaways were told of. None of the people had heard of it. In those hundred people, there were ten very active fans who attend at least seventy-five per cent of the games and even they hadn’t heard of it. Nonetheless, all the gift cards were used and I know for a fact that the gift card receivers’ inner circles heard of our company so at least some attention to the brand was gained. What comes to measuring the results in general, there are as many ways to measure the results as there are ways to sponsor.” (C3/17.10.2018.)

A development idea concerning measuring results was brought up in one of the interviews that Jukurit could provide methods for measuring the results of the sponsorship for the sponsor but that being said, the company representative in question had been satisfied how the sponsorship has worked out for them so far. This is something that could be examined in more detail especially since measuring sponsorship results is not a very simple task particularly due to varying motives and objectives for becoming a sponsor. (C4/22.11.2018). Based on research literature on it seems that finding a satisfactory model for evaluating sponsorship results as a whole is quite challenging but measuring concrete activations may be quite fruitful assuming that objectives for the activations have been clearly defined (Sá & Cunha de Almeida 2015, 107).

Overall, the views of how or if results are measured varied quite a bit and there were three results in which it was told that the results are not being measured at all. According to one of the companies that are not measuring results, it was said that they are not measuring the results in any way but anything positive that comes out of the sponsorship, they are pleased with it (C1/22.11.2018). On the other hand, one of the ways to measure results that was described was to look at sales produced through the Jukurit games (C5/19.10.2018). This particular sponsor has a sponsorship deal in which their beverages

are sold at the games and so they can measure results through quantities sold. Comparing the results between seasons will generate results on how the sponsorship has benefitted them and if it has evolved in to a direction that satisfies them. Other aspects the same company is paying attention to are the brand visibility through the sponsorship and how it affects the sales evolving locally in Mikkeli and nationwide. One of the companies interviewed was offered a chance to have their brand visibility measured by a third-party sponsorship research company but they have not taken an advantage of that so far. However, they are considering doing it in the future as they are trying to acquire more business outside Mikkeli and are interested in how well their brand is displayed nationally through Jukurit (C4/22.11.2018).

Another sponsor was already satisfied with the sponsorship as it is at the moment but they were hoping for Jukurit to have better athletic results (C6/17.10.2018). The literature review presented methods for measuring the results of the sponsorship but it was found out that they generally describe results connected mainly with commercial objectives (cf. Sá & Cunha de Almeida 2015). During this study, it became clear that some of the sponsors define the success of the sponsorship also on an emotional level instead of focusing just on commercial results.

The objectives for the sponsorship that are considered being commercial and receiving good results works as the motive for continuing the sponsorship relationship from one season to another. When discussing the objectives for the sponsorship, most of the companies described that aiming for an increase in the brand awareness was one of their goals. However, if the results are not measured consistently, it can be concluded that the primary motive for the sponsorship appears to be giving support to a local sports club, namely Jukurit in this case.

One of the objectives for this thesis was to find out how Jukurit could help the sponsors to get better results and reach their goals. It was discovered from the interviews that cooperation with Jukurit sales personnel has been adequate, however, points of improvement were brought up. Some of the interviews pointed out that it would be important to examine different opportunities or alternative activities for the sponsorship more profoundly. It would be necessary to develop new products or services to be offered to the companies so that they could achieve better commercial results as well as social and emotional experiences through the sponsorship. The significance of the athletic results was

brought up and it was stressed that having better results on ice would help the sponsors to be more satisfied and reach their goals as supporting a local sports club.

Recognizing the fact that companies that are having proper commercial objectives for the sponsorship have been satisfied with the results, which in fact shows that athletic success is not a pivotal factor in the sponsorship for them but rather building brand awareness through different means of brand visibility successfully. In relation to brand awareness it might be fruitful to consider a recommendation made by Rumpf and Breuer (2015, 78) that “viewer attention and awareness should be regarded as critical sponsorship performance. As attention capacity of sports viewers is not unlimited, it represents a chronically scarce resource from the sponsor’s perspective.” As a main challenge for sponsorship management they suggest maximizing viewer attention instead of focusing only on increasing viewer exposure.

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that sponsors are having difficulties measuring the results of the sponsorships. There was a large scale of activities done between Jukurit and the interviewed companies in the form of sponsorship but almost none of them has led to organized measuring of the results. It appeared that only two out of eight companies consistently measure their sponsoring results. From the Jukurit point of view, this raises many concerns. In order to maximize the outcome of the sponsorship, it is necessary that the sponsors are able to receive more concrete results. If the sponsors can see the value of the sponsorship, it will be easier to maintain the partnership in the long run and hopefully increase and develop it.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The main objective for this study was to find an answer to a question of what are sponsors looking for in the sponsorship with Jukurit. The sub research questions supporting the main topic dealt with measuring the results of the sponsorship and finding out how Jukurit could provide the sponsors with better opportunities to be successful with the sponsorship. The study was conducted by taking a profound insight of the literature around the topic and for the empirical part of the thesis, Jukurit sponsors were interviewed for getting firsthand knowledge and personal experiences from companies having a sponsorship deal with Jukurit. Data was gathered from eight companies having different characteristics according to their size, marketing efforts and sponsoring histories. Based on the analysis of the data research questions were discussed thematically.

The conclusions are not presented in specific order since determining the order of importance is difficult. In general, it can be stated that Jukurit has been able to build a strong network of mainly satisfied sponsors. In order to increase the amount of companies in the network as well as the income revenue from the current sponsors, Jukurit needs to address issues that came up in this study and require more attention as well as active measures of improvement. All the findings should be considered carefully because they all represent an issue that needs to be addressed properly.

Overall, sponsors expressed having taken advantage of the opportunities provided by Jukurit. That being said, most of the companies were not measuring results which raises a question whether the sponsors are really utilizing the opportunities effectively or are they actually just convincing themselves it to be so to justify the sponsorship to themselves and the company they represent. Regarding the utilization of the sponsorship, the issues concerning the contents of the sponsorship were also brought up, which indicates that the companies are, at least to some extent, uncertain if they are able to gain the maximum benefits of the sponsorship. This issue should be approached by spending more time with the sponsor discussing their motives and objectives for the sponsorship. It is important for the Jukurit sales personnel to treat every sponsor as an individual and find out what they are specifically looking for in the sponsorship in order to provide each company with the most suitable content.

The sponsors are looking for Jukurit to provide more opportunities for discussion and brainstorming on utilizing the sponsorship more efficiently. Also, a need for more diverse range of sponsorship solutions was brought up, meaning that Jukurit should aim at being more approachable for companies of all sizes. This piece of information can be linked to the findings mentioned in the previous chapter as the communication between Jukurit and the companies plays a major role in the journey of Jukurit becoming a company that is able to attract a larger range of sponsoring companies which can receive tangible results for their investment.

When viewing the motives and objectives of the sponsors profoundly, it was found out that a substantial part of those interviewed for this study, are sponsoring Jukurit because they want to support a local sports club. Having this as their main motive for the sponsorship has led to a situation where measuring the results has not played any significant role. However, the study shows that there are also companies that are consistently measuring their sponsoring results even though they mentioned supporting as one of their motives. This issue is somewhat problematic in a sense that if for some reason the sponsor decides that Jukurit is not worth supporting financially, it will be rather easy to give it up and from the Jukurit point of view, it will be difficult to make the sponsor overturn that decision. On the other hand, if it can be shown that sponsoring Jukurit produces results that in some way benefit the company commercially, it is much harder for the sponsor to make a decision to quit sponsoring if there are no compulsive factors such as financial matters.

The companies that have measured results, used several different methods to do so such as social media reach, customer surveys and visibility research provided by third party companies. The results that have been received with these methods were apprehended from the sponsors' point of view as being sufficient and there were no obstacles for continuing the sponsorship relation. On the other hand, the companies that had not been measuring results but rather stated supporting a local sports club as being their motive for the sponsorship, were more uncertain of the future of the sponsorship relationship. This result is quite concerning for Jukurit because the success of the sales and the marketing within the organization relies more on the team's performances. If the team and Jukurit as a whole stay continuously interesting and attractive, it means that they have to resonate emotionally and competitively with the companies in order to keep the sponsors and have them feel that sponsoring Jukurit is meaningful. It became clear that if Jukurit can help

its sponsors to reach commercially measurable results, it is easier to please sponsors even if the athletic success of the hockey team varies during the season or between different seasons. The same goes for attracting new sponsors, especially with companies operating nationally, since their basic premise or motive is not in supporting the local team as such but reaching measurable commercial results instead. This came out clearly in the interviews with nationwide companies which told that their targets are purely commercial.

Some of the sponsors had set specific objectives for the sponsorship and it became clear that in those cases, measuring the results is possible. Regardless of the results, having concrete tangible objectives will result in better results in both Jukurit and the sponsor. If the goals are reached, justifying the continuum of the sponsorship is easy but in case they are not, having clear objectives provides Jukurit with tools to adjust the content of the sponsorship to a more suitable form through conversations with the sponsors.

The data from the interviews indicate that currently Jukurit sponsors are satisfied with the sponsorship cooperation but at the same time it can be concluded that the operational environment is vulnerable for Jukurit. This vulnerability is caused by the sponsors' lack of measuring the results of the sponsorship systematically which leads to companies being involved in sponsoring Jukurit for their emotional reasons rather than commercial.

It was also found out that providing the sponsors' with tools for measuring commercial results is a key in increasing the level of satisfaction with the sponsorship. By doing this, the motives for sponsorship which are emotional or stem from the social responsibility, play a smaller part, thus leading to a larger variety of gaining good results.

A research of this nature had never been conducted for the Jukurit before so having it done now brought up several findings on the topic researched. The results will be utilized in the Jukurit corporate sponsorship sales strategy. As a conclusion, it can be said that there are several issues that need to be improved at the Jukurit corporate sponsorship sales process in order to serve the clients better even though the sponsors considered the sponsorships having been satisfactory.

Based on the findings in this study, recommendations for the future implementation can be done and there are three main suggestions presented which should be considered in the future. First of all, Jukurit has relied on personal interaction by the sales personnel with



the companies in the process of sponsorship sales. Jukurit should consider arranging sessions for groups of sponsors for brainstorming purposes. These events would make it possible to come up with ideas that have not been considered before and for some reason haven't come up in the private discussion between Jukurit and a single sponsor.

Developing methods of measuring results of the sponsorship and providing them to sponsors will increase the level of interaction and increases the possibility of developing the sponsorships to a desired direction. As soon as the sponsors understand the benefits of the sponsorship for their business it will be much easier to maintain the current sponsorship relations. The same goes for acquiring new sponsors since presenting the importance of having clear objectives can be reasoned with methods of then measuring them and gaining results. This being said, it must not be forgotten that having supporting a local sports team as a motive for sponsoring should not be viewed a negative issue since it emotionally ties up the sponsor with Jukurit and in some cases can even be decisive factor between choosing Jukurit or some other marketing platform.

Jukurit should also look in the sales process and go over the selling points comprehensively. It is important that the sales personnel is able to ask the right questions and based on the answers can lead to providing solutions that the company in question will find beneficial for them. The motives and intentions of companies are versatile and cannot be generalized as was found out during the interviews. The key to success is to serve every sponsor as unique and to show that the money invested in the sponsorship is justifiable in terms of having results that match the expectations of sponsorship.

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### **Interviews**

C1 22.11.2018 Interviewer Väliisaari, E. Mikkeli

C2 22.11.2018 Interviewer Välisaari, E. Mikkeli

C3 17.10.2018 Interviewer Välisaari, E. Mikkeli

C4 22.11.2018 Interviewer Välisaari, E. Mikkeli

C5 19.10.2018 Interviewer Välisaari, E. Mikkeli

C6 17.10.2018 Interviewer Välisaari, E. Mikkeli

C7 19.10.2018 Interviewer Välisaari, E. Mikkeli

C8 17.10.2018 Interviewer Välisaari, E. Mikkeli

Muotka, T., Jukurit CEO. 2018. Interviewer Välisaari, E. Mikkeli

## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1. Questionnaire

1. Kuinka yhteistyö sai alkunsa ja kauan sitä on kestänyt?
  - How did the partnership begin and how long has it lasted?
2. Mitä yhteistyö sisältää?
  - What does the sponsorship include?
3. Kuinka hyvin yhteistyön mahdollisuudet on mielestänne hyödynnetty?
  - How well have the opportunities been utilized?
4. Mitä hyötyä koette saavanne yhteistyöstä?
  - What benefits are you gaining from the partnership?
5. Mitä tavoitteita olette yhteistyölle asettaneet?
  - What objectives do you have for the partnership?
6. Miten mittaatte yhteistyön tuloksia?
  - How do you measure the results?
7. Miten yhteistyötä voisi mielestänne kehittää?
  - What could be developed in the partnership?
8. Miten Jukurit voisi auttaa yhteistyön parantamisessa?
  - How could Jukurit help in improving the partnership?

