Sport sponsorship from athletes’ point of view

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1 Introduction

The goal of this first part is to give an overview of our paper and to explain how we have formulated our problem and by which ways we have tried to answer it. Discovering that only a few researches have been done concerning the importance of constitutive elements of sport sponsorship relative to athletes, we have asked ourselves how athletes choose their sponsors and using primary and secondary data we have seen that equipment, brand image and money are the three main elements in a special configuration that we will develop.

1.1 Background

A brand is a complex element constituted by several elements. At the centre of the brand we find the tangible product. Around it, other elements are set up. The basic brand, with the brand name, design, quality, etc.; the augmented brand, with service, guarantees, delivery and installation and credits and terms; and finally the potential brand (Doyle & Stern 2006), this is high added value that creates psychological benefits (Levitt, 1980). However, building a successful (Doyle & Stern 2006) requires other important points that have to be taken in account. Some mechanisms have to be created in order to provide a stimulus to the brand. This stimulus is mainly created by the company’s investment, promotion and advertising (Kotler in 1972 cited by Lendrevi, Levy, and Lindon, 2009). Sport sponsoring, being part of marketing mix (Smith, 2008), is also a part of stimulus needed to build a successful brand.

Sponsoring is an old phenomenon born when artists and philosophers received money and services from their arts. For ancient Greeks, according to Meenaghan, 1984, sponsoring is the provision of assistance, either financial or product type (food, etc.) in exchange of an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives. The types of sponsoring are now different, but the idea of investing in someone and receive something back is the same (Skinner & Rukavina, 2003).
We could say according to Skinner and Rukavina, 2003, that the real born of sport sponsorship was between 1910 and 1970. During these years, organisations began to sponsor some golf and motor tournaments as they did for their participants. The first companies were mostly tobacco, liqueur and motor ones. In these times, like today, companies were looking for a new way to get reputation and money. (Skinner & Rukavina, 2003). Since many years, sport sponsoring by tobacco companies are limited, and sometimes even prohibited for health reasons (Smith, 1982).

Even if this phenomenon is recent, it has extended rapidly. Today, a lot of money is used in sport sponsorship. Sponsoring became a lot more investment-based than philanthropic. Companies are looking for business benefits possible on athletes (O’Relly & Foster, 2008). According to Yu Kyoum, Smith and James (2010 p.55) in 2008, “the total economic value of the participant sports industry was between $39 and $46 billion”. In fact, some companies, not all of course, are today extremely implicated in sport sponsorship; a perfect example is the case of Red Bull, the Austrian energy drink company. In 2009, Red Bull was sponsoring more than 500 athletes in the world, mostly in extreme sports (Wood, 2009)

This company is experimenting new sponsors in some extreme sports like freestyle skiing or free climbing but Red Bull is also present in some niche sports like DJ battles, air shows through and whacky races (Gschwandtner, 2004)

1.2 Problem

A lot of researches have been done concerning sponsoring, but most of them are looking for how companies can do more profits with sport sponsorship, or to know if it is really profitable and how companies choose their athletes.

But it is really hard to find researches concerning benefits or risks of sport sponsoring for athletes. In fact, a lot of questions concerning athletes have not been solved. What are the important elements in a sponsor for an athlete? In what way the amount of money is important in comparison to the quality of the equipment given or the media coverage of the brand?
Therefore, we can ask ourselves “how athletes choose their sponsors”.

Thanks to the evolution of ways of communication and with the help of the Medias expansion, sponsoring is becoming more and more popular, especially sport sponsoring, like we explain below. A lot of companies invest huge amount of money to get benefits from communication around athletes and sports. In fact, there are different ways used by companies to sponsor athletes: money, equipment related to the sport, equipment non-related, and product related or not to the sport.

We suppose that all of these criterions have an impact on sponsorship, we will try to verify it, and look for a potential hierarchy between them, and see if there is some other important criterions.

Sponsorship is an interaction between several actors (Tiotsu, 2001) and particularly athletes. However, it appeared to us that theoretical elements concerning them are minimal or even non-existent.

### 1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate what is the importance of the constitutive elements of a sponsor in the choice made by athletes between sponsoring companies.

In order to answer this question, we first identify elements concerning sport sponsorship such as definition and after theories linked to the companies’ point of view (Kotler 1972 for example) or to the athletes’ point of view (Maslow 1954 for example). In a second part, we present the several methods used to collect data, which justify our third section: the analysis.

The originality of this work lies on the framework found to analyse and improve the sponsorship. We used some tools to identify athletes and companies’ needs to foster win-win strategies. The buying process behaviour theory is interesting to develop and explain the impact that sponsorship can have on consumer but also athletes. It also appeared to us that the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is totally adapted to our problem, especially to study the hierarchy between criterions of sponsor’s selection.
Concerning athletes, the global trends are that the amount of money allocated is an adjustment variable between the relevance of the equipment given and the brand image of the company. Concerning companies we have created a tool (figure 18) that could be ameliorated and used by them to improve their quality of offer in sponsorship and find other potential athletes.

1.4 Definition

We have seen the short but intense growth of sport sponsoring in our background. But we saw that the way of sponsoring has change too (McCarville & Copeland, 1994). Therefore, a good definition of sport sponsoring can be hard or tricky to find.

In fact, there are a lot of definitions of sport sponsorship in literature but, very often, they don’t take into account all the characteristics we expected. We have therefore chosen four authors to define sport sponsorship.

According to McCarville and Copeland (1994) cited in Tiotsu (2001) p. 559 “The most often used theoretical approach to sponsorship has been the exchange relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored guided by the tenets of rationality, marginal utility and fairness.”

The important points of this definition are: the word “relationship”, the expression “marginal utility” and the word “fairness”. These are important ideas to explain what is sport sponsoring in a global state of mind.

According to Walliser (2003) cited in Tiotsu (2001) p. 557, “sponsorship is a business relationship between a corporation and an individual, event or organization that is based on an exchange relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored, and where marketing communication objectives are pursued through associations.”

This definition explains us that the marketing communication objectives are important for companies doing sport sponsorship. Indeed, this is a really important to well understand the fact that sponsorship is a marketing tool for companies, and more notably in term of communication.
One of the oldest definitions we found was more complete in some points. Sandler and Shani (1989) p.9 explain us that sponsoring is "the provision of resources (e.g. money, people, equipment) by an organization directly to an event or activity in exchange of a direct association to the event or activity. The providing organization can then use this direct association to achieve either their corporate, marketing, or media objectives".

This definition is very interesting because authors are using the word resources to speak about money, people or equipment. This is one of our subject question => why choosing money or equipment concerning athletes.

Another important point of this definition is “media objectives”. That shows us that media objectives (TV viewer’s response for example) are really important for the sponsor.

We can say that one problem with this definition is that it don’t talk about the possibility of sponsoring athletes directly which is an important aspect of the sponsorship.

The best definition we found was the following:

“Sponsorship is a mutually beneficial arrangement that consists of the provision of resources of funds, goods and or services by an individual or body (the sponsor) to an individual or body (rights owner) in return for a set of rights that can be used in communications activity, for the achievement of objectives for commercial gain » (Masterman, 2007, p. 30).

This definition is the more complete we found. All of the aspects of sponsorship are taken into account and it’s the best to get a good understanding of the term in his globality. The sponsorship is clearly related to the profits, not just for companies, but also for athletes as we will see further.

Moreover, Liu, Srivastava, and Woo, (1998) explain that consumers exposed to brand name and products during a sport event will be more disposed to that brand. They will more easily purchase some products after being in contact with the brand name or directly its products.

However, customers will be more receptive if there is a correlation between sport event or athletes and some points like their lifestyle or demographic characteristics. The message of the brand is also depending of the audience. (Lopatka, 2009)
2  Frame of references

The sponsorship is a changing term, there is a lot of definition to explain it and its evolution in the time. Therefore, we want to develop in this part two main theoretical ways, one regarding previous researches in the same area, another concerning analytical support adapted to sport sponsorship.

All of these theories are of course related to our topic, the sponsorship, and are developed in the aim to make understand to the reader the complexity of it.

This part help us to answer our main research question (Q4), divided in three following research questions directly related to our purpose and its analysis:

Q1 – Does image of the sponsor company have an impact on the athlete choice?

We want to show that for example, being sponsored by a condom brand can probably have an influence on the athlete, and therefore according to this image the athletes can ask for more or less support by the company.

Q2 – Does financial sponsorship have an impact on the choice of sponsors by athletes?

We want to show that the amount of money provided by the sponsors to the athlete is an important criterion in the choice of the sponsors.

Q3 – Does equipment sponsorship have an impact on the choice of sponsors by athletes?

We want to show that the amount of equipment provided by the sponsors to the athlete is an important criterion in the choice of the sponsors.

Q4 – Is there a link between image, equipment and financial sponsorship?

To answer this last research question is the goal of our thesis. Indeed, according to the research questions Q1, Q2 and Q3, in this Q4 we want to analyse links between them and show their importance in the athlete’s choice of sponsors.
2.1 Previous research in same area

A lot of researches regarding sport sponsorship have been made in the companies’ point of view. Indeed there is way less work made from the athletes’ point of view. In this part we will focus on both of them separately.

2.1.1 Companies’ point of view

In order to find the place of sport sponsorship in marketing term, it is important to focus for a time on companies’ point of view.

- Sport Sponsorship, part of the marketing mix

According to Smith (2008) we can see that sponsorship is part of the marketing mix of companies. It is easy to know that if a company does sport sponsorship, it is not only for the love of sport, but more to earn money, somehow.

We found that sponsorship today is a well-integrated part of companies marketing strategies and it is no longer a question of charity, but a case of give and take, in order to benefits both parties” (Jiffer & Roos, 1999, p. 63).
We can see, thank to that figure, that sponsorship takes place in the mix marketing of the companies. This is a real tool for them. Sponsoring has become one important element of the promotional part of promotion.

This figure is based on Kotler’s marketing mix from 1972. This theory is old but still used by a lot of author today like Smith (2008) or Lendrevi, levy and Lindon (2009). In this theory, Kotler explain us that the marketing mix is represented in four tools that allow users to analyse the market and help them to take decisions in four plans: The product, the price, the place and the promotion (Lendrevi, Levy, & Lindon, 2009).

In this model, Smith (2008) explains us that sponsorship is a relevant part of the promotion for a company. Sport sponsorship is therefore a part of the marketing mix for the company.

Figure 1 The sports marketing framework (Smith 2008)
• Benefits of sport sponsorship for companies

Dolphin (2003) shows that organisations that use sponsorship can see three types of benefits:
- Creating greater reputation.
- Creating brand awareness.
- Stimulate sales.

In that sense, sponsorship is a commercial tool as define by Masterman (2007). In one hand, the author explains that except the case of an anonymous donation, the companies always look for commercial benefits. In another hand, Calderon-Martinez, Mas-Ruiz and Nicolau-Gonzalbez (2005) define philanthropic sponsoring. On this concept, sponsorship is seeing like a tool for corporate image and social recognition.

However, most parts of sponsorship have business issues because of the globalisation that entrain a huge competition between companies, even in term of sponsorship.

In business or philanthropic sponsoring, one important point is the feeling of gratefulness of consumers. (Yu Kyoum, Smith & James 2010). In this study, authors have considered five hypotheses and tried to verify them. (Figure 2)

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Figure 2 Five hypotheses concerning feeling of gratitude (Yu Kyoum, Smith & James 2010)
Sport sponsorship from athletes’ point of view

Regarding hypothesis 1, participants are more receptive to philanthropic sponsoring.
Regarding hypothesis 2, participants believe that a good sponsor has to really help the person or organisation he is sponsoring.
Regarding hypothesis 3, consumers are able to measure the degree of implication of the sponsor, and so, to judge it. The deeper the implication is, the higher the gratitude will be.
Regarding hypothesis 4, there is a link between the gratitude and the intention of purchase. This is really important for the sponsorship.
Regarding hypothesis 5, consumers don’t want to be manipulated. Their gratitude effect created by sponsoring could be erased if they have the feeling that the brand use sponsorship only in order to create the feeling of gratitude.

With these verified hypotheses we can say that people are not easy to manipulate, they are able to feel the “real” investment of the companies who sponsors. Companies must then be more philanthropic in their sponsoring activities to prevent loss and generate benefits.

It seems here that the sponsoring activity concerns only the brand, the sponsored and the customer and their exchange and relationship, based on marginal utility. (McCarville & Copeland, 1994). However, Tsiotsou (2011) develops an interesting theory and works through a new angle, the stakeholders’ one. (figure 3)

Tsiotsou (2011) explains us that sponsorship involves not only the corporate brand, but also the other stakeholders like the Medias, which have a really important part to play in sponsoring. Indeed, sponsorship also involves all stakeholders, sponsoring adverts, new stakeholders like sponsored organisation, or person, sponsorship agency and sport consumers.
In fact, all the stakeholders have a role to play to lowering the sport consumer’s defence mechanism. After this “process” (if well-done) the targeted consumer is generally more receptive to the sponsoring brand’s products.

- Risk of sport sponsorship for companies

Sport Sponsorship has, however, not only advantages for companies (O'Reilly & Foster, 2008). There are some risks for companies that decide to invest in sport sponsorship, especially in extreme sports.
Sport sponsorship from athletes' point of view

If in one hand sport sponsoring creates benefice for the brand by associating it with an athletes and so beneficiate of media cover, on the other hand, if the athletes have a negative image, the brand linked with him, will endure the same negative image too. A perfect example of negative message is cheating, (like the doping) which can hurt very badly the image of the brand. This is a real risk for companies that have chosen sport sponsoring.

This schema develops the different dimensions of risks supported by sponsors. (O'Reilly & Foster, 2008)

Figure 4 Dimension of risks

The potential risk to sponsoring athletes can be summarised by the athlete achievement success (win competition, etc.) or athlete failure (drugs, death, etc.)

After seeing the sport sponsoring in companies’ point of view we will focus more in our core subject with the athletes’ point of view.
2.1.2 Athletes’ point of view

Being sponsored includes different aspect in the athlete’s point of view. It can have a real impact on his performance and more generally on his global lifestyle due to the money issues. In this part we will explain, according to different theoretical resources, these key points for the athletes.

We have seen that sport sponsorship could present a lot of advantages for companies. However, advantages are not only for companies, we can find some for athletes, of course.

The mutual benefit of the sponsorship is really important for involved parties (athletes and companies) (Roshandel & Skovshoved, 2009). Indeed, there is a deal between them and both have to get benefit from it. Generally for athletes the benefits came from sponsorship fees (essentially money), but also often form equipment or resources (utilities, accommodation, medical, etc).

An athlete has to take care of his different sponsor. He has to develop a strategy between having a lot of different sponsors or only a few of sponsors. The exclusivity principle is also important. Companies can force athletes to use only one sponsor. Indeed we can say that an athlete can sometimes win more with only an exclusive sponsor than if he had more sponsors. (Masterman 2007)

The sponsorship program is a choice between:
- Exclusive sponsorship = only one sponsors possessing all the rights
- Tiered sponsorship = different sponsors with a hierarchy in term of rights and exclusivity.
- Flat structured sponsorship = a lot of different sponsors, with a minimal exclusivity for each of them.

The major party of the organisations agreed to say that financials support are the easiest and simplest way to sponsoring. All companies want promotion of their products/services by the sponsored in exchange of this amount of money/assistance (Wennerholm, 2009).

To conclude with these facts we can say that an athlete have to choose between these different kinds of sponsorship proposed by the companies to get what he needs the most, money or assistance. In exchange he will have to promote the brand/product or service in his public.
A perfect example of this kind of choice is Usain Bolt (world record man in 3 sprints’ disciplines). Indeed, Usain Bolt is sponsored by the Chinese shoemaker “Li Ning”. The sponsorship contract include an amount of about 700 millions Swedish Kronor for him in exchange of wearing the company’s shoes at every competitions he make for 5 year. It is an exclusive sponsorship choice made by him and it is completely money-centred. (Wennerholm, 2009).

The equipment related sponsorship can have a huge impact on the athlete’s performances, but also on the sport itself.

A perfect example of this phenomenon is swimming suit. Indeed, in the last 3 years a lot of world records have been made in this sport, but a polemic has grown regarding to the equipment of the swimmer when they did these records. In fact the technology in the swimming combinations was responsible of these records, not the athletes. The international federation has subsequently banned the use of these combinations, because it’s destroyed the sport. The equipment was became the principle factor of performance, against the swimmer himself. This shows us the importance of the equipment for the swimmer but also the impact that equipment can have on a sport (Fullerton & Merz 2008).

The choice of good sponsor for the sports’ equipment has a substantial impact on athletes’ performances. According to Lopatka, J. E. (2009) p 751 “Participation in sports requires the use of equipment, and because equipment can dramatically affect performance, governing bodies often impose equipment standards on participants subject to their jurisdiction.”

These equipment standards can develop complains:
- The producer who developed new equipment to improve performances can complain if this equipment is declared, “not conform” because athlete will not be able to use it.
- The producer who developed new equipment to improve performance can create complains from the producers of the old equipment if this new one is authorized and take the place of the standard.

In the point of view of the athletes the second effect of equipment improvement can be really problematic for their performances if their sponsorship contracts are exclusive with producers of old equipment. Indeed it can dramatically affect performances in the wrong way because they will have to continue using old equipment compared to the other athletes who adopt the new equipment.
2.2 Analetical support

As we have explained in our introduction, we will use two main theories. In the first part we will focused on the consumer behaviour and buying decision process, and on a second part the Maslow’s hierarchy.

2.2.1 Consumer behaviour and buying decision process

Marketing seeks to influence consumers (or customers), but to influence them, marketers must understand, explain and predict their behaviour.

The study of consumer behaviour is not an infallible science, however it is based on psychology and sociology to allow a better understanding of psychological or sociological processes that influence consumers.

The sponsorship is an important marketing strategy with a huge impact in term of influence on consumers. We will explain here the consumer’s behaviour, to show in our analysis how the sponsorship can affect the buying process of consumers. In this part, we will describe consumer behaviour and buying decision process according to P.Pellemans (1998), Lendrevie, Levy and Lindon (2009) and Christ (2012)

**Perceptions, needs and motivations**

- **Perceptions.** Perception is the process by which sensations are selected, filtered and interpreted. Attention is a measure of concentration of our perception. We filter our perceptions and in fact are more or less attentive to messages and offers (Lendrevie, Levy & Lindon (2009). We interpret these sensations then to give them meaning. The role of marketing is to force the attention of customers and get the intended messages interpretation.

- **Needs.** Needs are physical and mental deficiencies. We act because we try to satisfy those needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs: physiological > safety > belonging > self-esteem > accomplishment. There is much talk of marketing desires, which are actually unsatisfied needs. To analyse them is an important inspiration for marketing, but there are many ways to satisfy his desires beyond the field of marketing (Lendrevie, Levy & Lindon (2009).
Motivations. Motivation is a psychological state of tension that leads to action to alleviate or eliminate this tension. The needs and desires are an important source of motivation. The needs can be active or latent: they do not always express themselves and that explain why the motivation depends on the circumstances. Moreover, the motivations are often in conflict, they are neither mandatory nor absolute. It may be interesting for people to study marketing motivations of customers and prospects to better respond or act on these motivations. (P. Pelleman, 1998)

Attitudes

Attitudes are predispositions of the individual to evaluate in a certain way the messages, objects or people and respond to them. They are more or less coherent sets of beliefs, feelings, predispositions that individuals have acquired or transmitted to them.

The components of attitudes are:

- The knowledge and beliefs (or cognitive elements)
- The Feelings (or affective/emotional elements)
- The Trends to act (or conative elements).

The traditional model of the hierarchy of effects is: 1 - you know (cognitive), 2 - Make love (emotional/affective) and 3 - Make action (conative).

(P. Pelleman, Le Marketing Qualitatif, 1998)

The sponsorship tries here to play an emotional/affective role in the consumers mind. The aim of that is to make buy the product.

We also can say that sponsorship is really dependant of the sport/athlete sponsored in term of cognitive effect. Indeed, a company have to target a sport knew by his targeted customers to make a good sponsorship.
**Personality and self-image**

Personality is a relatively stable set of traits that characterize an individual. The personality of an individual can help understanding and predicting its behaviour. Self-image is the representation we have of ourselves. We know that to flatter people is a classic way to influence them and marketers does it a lot! Many communications, brand and products are designed to return a flattering image of their clients so that they project themselves in the brand presented to them. (P.Pellemans, Le Marketing Qualitatif, 1998)

We can also say that companies who are doing sponsorship are trying to get a good self-image by associating themselves to the sport/athletes/event they are sponsoring and their values.

**Sociological variables**

- The family is an important variable for the marketing people, because a lot of analysis and action are based on the life cycle of the family (from young unmarried to seniors without children in the household) or the role of sex or children in family decision making process.

- Developed countries are marked by an aging population leading marketing people to study more precisely the age groups: children, preteens, teenagers, young adults, seniors, etc.. Membership in these groups may influence the needs, motivations, attitudes and buying behaviour.

- Group influence in purchasing behaviour is reflected in social norms and behaviour, the influence of opinion leaders and the reference groups. This element is important regarding sport sponsorship.

- Social classes are a well-known concept, but more difficult to define or operate. However, people use a lot of marketing concept like the SPC (Socio-professional categories). Membership in a professional category is often a good behaviour predictor.

- Lifestyles of social identities are more or less formal, which are transverse to social classes or SPC. They may have an immediate social visibility or be discovered through market research. They are analysed through psychographics studies. This element is also important concerning sport sponsorship.
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- Culture is a set of ways of thinking, feeling and acting, more or less formalized, learned and shared by a plurality of persons and which serve to create a community. National cultures often influence greatly the perceptions, motivations, attitudes and behavior, despite the world wide globalization movement.

(P. Pelleman, Le Marketing Qualitatif, 1998)

These aspects are more important in term of choice for the company. The companies have to adapt their sponsorship activities to the targeted customers.

Risk, involvement and learning

- Every decision involves some risks (functional, psychological, financial or physical).
- The higher the risk is perceived, the higher the consumer involvement will be. The involvement of consumers is the interest shown by them to a product category or brand: it depends on the risk factors of personal factors related to the product and the purchase situation. The more the consumers are involved, the more he will search for information and the buying process will be extensive. If he is less involved, his purchasing process will be developed and considered.

According to that (consumers with low or high involvement), marketers will adopt different marketing policies or communication strategies to reach their target.

Stages of the buying process

The buying process is a sequence of mental operations that lead a customer to select and purchase a product.
Figure 5 Buying Process source: Made by the author based on Mercator (Lendrevie, Levy & Lindon, 2009)

- Identification of need: the consumer becomes aware of a lack that will satisfy the purchase of a good or service.
- Research information: the consumer learns about the product, he uses his own experience and knowledge in the field. It also uses external information through multiple media. He finally established a comparison based on criteria that he determined.
- Evaluation and Purchase Decision: the consumer chooses the product that will best meet their needs
- Post-purchase analysis: the consumer evaluates the usefulness of the product and its adaptation to the need. If the actual utility exceeds the utility expected, it will become loyal customer.

In term of sponsoring, an important point to say here is that according to this buying process, companies will look to associate their products to the sport performances. In this way, consumers will accept the quality of the products before they even tried it.
The different types of purchases

According to Christ, 2012, we can say that there are different types of consumer purchase.

They are classified into three categories:

- The impulsive purchase: the customer buys when he had not expected. This concerns some purchases involving financially set values using techniques of communication and promotion.
- The purchase reflected: he relates generally anomalous products for which the consumer must be informed and make comparisons before buying. We also talk about reasoned purchase.
- The purchase routine: it involves consumer goods for which the client must periodically renew the purchase.

For companies, the mains consumer purchases they will try to generate are impulsive and routines purchases. Indeed, the purchase reflected is more complicated to influence by sponsorship activities that both others due to the comparisons process between products.

2.2.2 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

We have said that sport sponsoring can help to fulfil some athletes’ needs. When we can’t speak about needs without speak about Maslow. Abraham Maslow, an existential psychologist, has “develop one of the most influential theories about human needs” (Bolman and Deal, 2008, p.124).
This theory is based on the fact that people are motivated by wants. In fact, on this model, the more important needs are at the bottom of the pyramid, and the point is that in order to fulfil a need from a level, lower needs must be fulfilled before.

According to Maslow, basic needs for physical and safety are “predominant”. So they are on the bottom of the pyramid. Food and water are of course one of the most important needs for human. They are physiological needs. Then we can find Safety needs. When someone has fulfil his physiological needs, he can work on satisfy his safety needs. After these we can find Belonging and social needs. In fourth position there is Self-esteem needs. Finally we can find Self-Actualization needs. Someone trying to fulfil these final needs should have fulfilled all the other, and so, should be more full-blown.
Some author has criticized this model saying that this theory is hard to test (Aldefer, 1972 cited in Bolman & Deal, 2008). More than that, levels are not definitively locked, some parents could, in some condition put their children before their own safety. However, this theory is used in companies. Some of them like FedEx have built their entire management philosophy on this (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

More than that, this model can allow a company to know when human resources has to work on different steps for their employees. However, this hierarchy can explain when and why someone will focus on social or self-esteem needs more than other. This model can be used concerning sport sponsorship as we will see in our analyse part.
3 Method

In order to answer our purpose, we had to collect different kind of information. We will explain in this part the several research methods, the several type of research, and we will focus on the population and sample of our research.

3.1 Research method

There is two researches method depending linked to the type of data.

- Qualitative research method = collecting and analysing documents and interviews. This method is used to fulfil a specific question and permit to understand what people say and want to say (Mujis D, 2004). This is linked to the qualitative data.

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<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Complement and refine quantitative data</td>
<td>Findings usually can not be generalized to the study population or community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide more detailed information to explain complex issues</td>
<td>More difficult to analyze; don’t fit neatly in standard categories</td>
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<td>Multiple methods for gathering data on sensitive subjects</td>
<td>Data collection is usually time consuming and costly</td>
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- Quantitative research method = more mathematic/statistical method, logical and objectives (Mujis D, 2004). This is linked to the quantitative data.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Findings can be generalized, if selection process well-designed and sample is representative of study population</td>
<td>Related secondary data sometimes not available, or accessing available data is difficult/impossible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relatively easy to analyze</td>
<td>Difficult to understand context of program activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data can be very consistent, precise, reliable</td>
<td>Data may not be robust enough to explain complex issues</td>
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<td>Data collection is usually cost efficient</td>
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Qualitative research is the method, which is used to collect and analyse documents, and interviews it very useful in understanding deeply a process or a situation, cause it give the opportunities to have a lot of information, very clear, very rich and logical and it would offer better understanding of a given context and underlying motivations, values and attitudes. This method is successful if it is applied in order to fulfil a specific question.

Quantitative research is more a mathematic method, there is no different ways to solve the problem, it is logical, objective and is illustrated by statistics research generates reliable population based and realizable data and is well suited to establishing cause-and-effect relationships” (Mujis D, 2004).

In our work, we use qualitative method because of the small sample of population we have. More than that, we have to answer to a specific question so according to Mujis (2004), the best method to understand deeply a process is to use qualitative method.

3.2 Types of research

According to De Ketele and Roegiers (1996) there are seven different types of researches:

- The science-based approach inductivo-hypothetico-deductive: it starts with an exploratory (or heuristic), where the researcher produced a series of alternative hypotheses from data (inductive phase), to pursue a confirmatory research (or vérificative) with hypothesis testing and producing another supposition, more solid (phase hypothetico-deductive). This type of research don’t aims to the application but the attainment of truth.

- Technological research building tools for the practitioner-oriented decision making: This type of research is made for applicability. With his knowledge of scientific laws, the researcher built tools and instruments effective for the practitioner. Another goal is to create rules for technological development and use of a given instrument.
Sport sponsorship from athletes’ point of view

- Evaluative research with forecasting and prospective claim: it aims to account for the operation and impact of a program, an intervention strategy, tool, etc. to enable decision makers to take a position on the subject of evaluation (retention, modification or rejection) in a specific context. It does not require the generalization of results.

- Action research examining a situation from the point of view of the participants: This type of research needs problems perceived by practitioners rather than by the researcher. It adopts a posture exploratory in that it aims at understanding the experience as experienced by the practitioner (from his perspective) and placed in its contextual elements.

- Exploratory, phase heuristic to generate hypotheses: It is usually an inductive approach which aims familiarization and observation of a phenomenon to create research questions. It makes it possible to identify a problem by exploring the conditions under which the phenomenon occurs, the variables involved, relationships between variables, etc.

- The descriptive research, where the description and classification are mandatory: This type of research is often used to support other research (evaluative, among others) when the complexity of the situation requires first a rigorous description. However, sometimes it is a goal in itself, upon the establishment of classifications of behavior, for example (ethological research).

- Speculative research focused on the forecasting function: It involves the design of new standards, new theories. It is abstract research that can be performed without data collection.

Of these seven types of research, we use in this work the exploratory one and the action research one. Indeed, we have created research questions, worked on variables, relationship between them (exploratory) and try to use practitioner point of view (action).
3.3 Population and sampling of the research

• Definition of terms

Population is all possible elements for a study. It’s a group of people we are interested in, where we want to observe specific aspects or behaviour. The target population is generally too large and for reasons of cost and delay, it is almost impossible to study all members of a population (De Ketele and Roegiers, 1996).

According to Levine-Wissing and Thiel (2006) a sample is a part of the population. Depending on the sampling method, we can have several types of sampling.

There are two main types of sampling according to Levine-Wissing and Thiel (2006).

• Probability sampling method (or randomly). Here, every elements of the population has the same chance to be part of the sample. In these cases, results can be based on statistical conclusion
  - Simple random sampling: each member of the population has the same chance to be included in the sample. Every combination of the population’s member has also an equal chance to compose the sample.
  - Stratified sampling: We have to cut the population in subset (strat) and realise a survey with them.
  - Cluster sampling: We have to limit the geographical zones that are part of the survey.
  - Systematic sampling: There is a gap between every selected units inside the sample.

• Non-probability sampling method (or non randomly). The non-probability sampling method is used when it is not possible to create an exhaustive list of all the population. We have to identify in the population some significant repartition criterion, and try to keep this repartition in the sample chosen.
  - Quota: It takes place until a specific number of units (quota) for various sub-populations have been selected.
- Voluntary sample: We choose the sample inside a group of volunteer (usually people interested buy the subject).
- Convenience sample: Made up of people easily reached, based on some judgments about the entire population.

• Population and sampling in our thesis

The population of our thesis are individually sponsored athletes.
We have chosen a non-randomly sampling method because we were using a qualitative research method. For cost and time reasons, we have used a convenience sample by choosing athletes we had easy contact with.

The athletes we have chosen are essentially practicing “extreme-sport”. Indeed, we wanted to focus on these types of disciplines because in our opinion the sponsorship in “extreme sport” presents a lot of different aspect than in more “common sports” and it was interesting for us to focus on it. However, having one athlete interviewed practicing “common sports” can allow us to do some comparisons.

• Baum Samuel, 22 years old

**Sport:** Skydiving

**Athlete’s presentation:**
Born in 1990 in Gap. He began skydiving at the age of 15 years in an internship CAP. From the beginning he joined a team of flight relative to N2. He joined the France team category of hope fly free end of 2007. He won the France cup in 2008 and won the title of France champion towards 2008 Free fly N1. He performed in total more than 4000 jumps.

**Sponsors:** Vigil, Larscen, Icarus canopy, Boogie man
Observations: These sponsors are essentially equipment-related, but also street wear (equipment non-related). The notoriety of them is not important due to the sport himself (the skydiving is an extreme sport with a few number of athletes).

- **Lefebvre Alexis, 21 years old**

(Alexis Lefebvre with Tony parker)

**Sport:** Basketball

**Athlete’s presentation:**
Born in 1991 in Mont Saint Aignan. He began basketball at the age of 4 years, and at 15 years old was selected to the "Hope Pole" of the High Normandy. He was in the selection of the state "zone nord" during 3 years. He has been 2nd in France championship in 2008 with Mont Saint Aignan. He joined the professional formation center of Rouen in 2008 and at 18 years old, in 2009 he became France champion with the SPO Rouen. The following year he signed his first professional contract for 3 years. He was selected for the French Team in 2011 to play against the USA in Paris with Lebron James and Tony Parker in the "Grand Palais".

**Sponsors:**
Nike

**Observations:**
Alexis Lefebvre is sponsored by more than Nike in term of sponsorship, but they were club-sponsors (Ferrero and others). Nike was his only personal sponsor. Indeed he chooses Nike by himself, the year he was French champions with his team. This sponsor was equipment-related especially for basket shoes.
• Belbeoch Christophe, 22 years old

**Sports**: Windsurfing

**Athlete’s presentation**: 
Christophe is born in a family dedicated in the windsurfing. Indeed his father (Thierry Belbeoch) was an unavoidable personality in this discipline. Christophe has a huge reward list. He participated to an impressive number of championships in his short career. His best results are actually:
2010- 4th in a National French championship.
2009- 2nd in a junior European championship.
2009- 2nd in a National French championship.

**Sponsors**:
Isobois, DCNS

**Observations**:
Isobois is a financial sponsor; the activity of the company is completely different from the windsurfing. DCNS is an equipment-related sponsor, indeed they develop equipment in all waters activities.

• Airault Marie, 20 years old

**Sports**: Windsurfing/ fun board

**Athlete’s presentation**:
Mary is actually one of the best French girl in windsurf and fun board. She has an impressive reward list and she participated to a lot of national and international competitions in these two sports. The results of Mary Airault last year are really good:
2011 - First girl in the League championship on Fun board (third overall behind two boys),
- First girl in the windsurf championship of the Mediterranean
- Third girl at European Fun board Championship
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- Vice European Champion on Windsurf championship

**Sponsors:**
Zütee (surf wear), Loft Sails, Mystic

**Observations:**
The sponsors of Mary are getting more important as she is performing at the top level in these two sports. Zütee and Mystic are equipment non-related sponsors (surf wear, technical wears), Loft sail is an equipment-related sponsor.

- Bonnef Fred, 32 years old

**Sports:** Stand up paddle/ Fun board

**Athlete’s presentation:**
Fred Bonnef has proved that he is an exceptional athlete. At 32 years old he keeps winning on international’s Stand up paddle and Fun board championships, which is really rare for an athlete at this age.

**His last results:**
2010- Spanish champion on fun board
- 3rd European in the Sup Race European Tour

**Sponsors:**
Zütee, Fanatic, ION, North Sails, B3, TFC, Maui Sails, Wet Water sports

**Observations:**
Fred Bonnef got a lot of sponsors, which is the result of his exceptional career. He got, financial sponsors, but also equipment-related and non-related sponsors, and completely non-related sponsors.
3.4 Instruments of data collection

According to Twiss (2009), there is several ways of collecting data depending on the research method chosen.

- For quantitative method we can use:
  - Surveys/Questionnaires: Most often method used, either self administered or by someone else and done by telephone, mail or face to face.
  - Secondary data (Pre/post Tests, Statistical Analysis, Existing Databases): Often used in combination with survey data. This includes studies, statistics, reports, etc.

- For qualitative method we can use:
  - Observations: Looking for what is happening instead of questioning. Usually used for a certain type of population (children, etc.) in order to better understand behaviour and meaning attached to social context.
  - Depth interviews: Usually generate reach data and details about experiences of participants and their opinion. Using open-ended questions, it is a good way to collect information about detailed or sensitive subjects.
  - Focus Groups: In order to generate data and insights, this technic use group dynamic. The sample (from 8 to 12 people) is selected by non-random method. Open-ended questions are used to stimulate and create discussion around the topic.
  - Non-statistical (methods vary)

In these qualitative instruments of data collection the two mainly used are focus group and depth interview (Twiss, 2009). In our thesis we needed reach details about experiences of participants and sometimes concerning sensitive subject (money). We have therefore chosen to do a depth interview. A focus group could have been good too, but it was hard to regroup all athletes at the same moment.

We have developed our interview with questions related to our research questions in the aim of answer them. In order to be sure of the possibility of using the answers for our research question, we have first made a interview with mainly open questions.
After ending our interview, we couldn’t start to administrate it to any athletes. The next step was to test it. In fact, even if we thought that questions were clear, it is important to see if possible respondents thought it too.

We decided to test our interview with two types of persons. First of all test our interview on students that were making a bachelor thesis too. The idea was to see if, in a scholar way, it was well written. Their advices were to restructure it modifying the order of questions to get a better coherence in the whole interview.

Secondary, we decided to test the questionnaire with people from the world of sponsoring. We contact the Zutee company. This is a little company, owned by some friends of us that have created street wear clothesline. Since one year they are sponsoring professional athletes in wakesurfing, kitesurfing and windsurfing. So, they are involved in sport sponsoring without being athletes themselves. We had tested our interview on them, after explaining them our goal, to see if the questions were clear in a sponsoring way. Their responses were pretty encouraging.

Therefore, we could start looking for athletes.

Our researches were limited by the fact that we had to find athletes that were directly sponsored and not by the way of a club, an agent or something else. Therefore, we couldn’t make our interview with clubs or leagues; it would have been easier.

We decided to use our contacts. We have begun by the Zutee company that we have talked before.

Then we have contacted friends of our business school that were sponsored, one in windsurfing and the other in basketball that were sponsored personally.

Finally, we have contacted a friend of us that has created a sport consulting company for athletes looking for better performances. He has helped us to find athletes corresponding to our criteria.

Finally, we had to choose a way to do our interview. We couldn’t do it by Skype for example because of schedule problems with athletes. Therefore we have used a website specialised in interview. We have chosen this way to facilitate the responses from the athletes. Indeed, sending the interview in a word file by email could have complicated the way to answer for the athletes.
More than that, doing it by a specialised website allowed us to follow the rate of answer easily and to ask again the athletes to answer if they have not done it yet.

Our first interview was in main part constituted by closed question, but in specific points. We have then made a second interview, with, this time, open questions in order to see all elements linked to sport sponsoring in the athletes’ point of view. In fact, we have noticed that with closed question we could have missed some answers that athletes could have given to us.

Our work here is closer from a qualitative data research even if we have used some closed questions, often used in quantitative data research.
4 Empirical study

4.1 Description of the different empirical data source

There are two types of Data collected:

- Secondary data = “Secondary data are the data that may have been collected for a different purpose”. (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005)

The collection of primary data takes time and is quite expensive. The interviewer’s role is important.

- Primary data = “Primary data are more consistent with the research questions and research objectives as they are collected for the particular project at hand”. (Ghauri and Gronhaug 2005)

The collection of secondary data is cheaper and takes less time than for the collection of primary data, but it can be less relevant for the research.

4.2 Collection of empirical data

- Secondary data

In order to reach our purpose and to create a framework we have focus first our researches on secondary data. Before working on primary data we had to learn more about our topic and so, we have collected some information using one principal way. We have used internet and databases of scientific articles through our university library. But we have also used the secondary data from the articles we have found using their references. Internet and its databases are great tools to find secondary data. “The World Wide Web is a very useful source of material and the better search engines can be valuable in tracking down material” (Fisher 2007, p.81). We have also used books from our courses in the Halmstad university.

Of course, we have to be careful because we can found some low quality articles on internet.

However, an important part of our thesis is results from primary data collected by the way we explain in the following part.
Primary data

To collect primary data we have decided to make a interview with some sponsored athletes. With this method of data collection we were sure of the quality of the answers we needed.

We developed our questionnaire according to the facts that the choice of sponsor was made by the athletes themselves. We have also accepted the fact that the sponsoring is essentially an equipment/financial support for the athletes.

Here is our questionnaire:
1) Quel sport pratiquez-vous à haut niveau? / Which sport do you practice at high level?

2) Pensez vous que la discipline sportive pratiquée affecte le sponsoring en général? / Do you think that the sport you practice affect the sponsoring?

3) Pouvez-vous nous donner trois mots qui selon vous définisse le sponsoring / Can you tell us 3 words that according to you define the sponsoring

4) Depuis combien de temps êtes-vous sponsorisé? / Since when are you sponsored?

5) Quels sont vos/votre sponsors? / What are your sponsors?

6) Que vous apporte chacuns de vos sponsors? Détaillez votre réponse. /What bring you your sponsors? Explain your answer.

7) Pouvez vous classer ces apports dans les categories suivantes: / Can you classify this brings in these class?
-Physiologique (nourriture, eau, etc.) / Physiological (Food, Water, etc.)
-Sureté (Sécurité, abris, etc.) / Safety (Security, shelter)
-Appartenance (Amis, famille, communauté) / Belonging (Friens, family, community)
Sport sponsorship from athletes’ point of view

- Estime de soi (Aboutissement, maitrise, reconnaissance) / Self-Esteem (Achievement, Mastery, Recognition)
- Besoin de s’accomplir (Accomplissement, creativité, etc.) / Self-Actualization (fulfilment, creativity, etc.)

8) De votre point de vue d’athlete, quels sont les critères déterminants qui vous font préférer un sponsor aux autres et pourquoi? / From your athlete’s point of view, what are the determinants criteria that make you prefer one sponsors to the others and why?

9) Pourriez vous établir une hiérarchie d’importance entre ses critères? / Could you determine a hierarchy of importance between these criterions?

10) Celon votre propre experience, que pouvez vous nous dire plus précisément sur le role/impact de l’argent, de l’image de marque et de l’équipement dans le sponsoring ? / From your own experience, what could you tell us precisely on the money’, equipment’ and brand image’s impact in the sponsoring activities ?

11) Sachant que l’argent permet aussi l’acquisition de matériels, images,etc… serait’il juste de définir le critere de l’argent comme essentiel dans le choix d’un sponsor ? Développez.

The money allowed to get materials, image, etc. So is it true to say that the money criteria is essential in the sponsors choice? Explain your opinion.

12) Finalement, pensez vous que l’argent pourrait etre consideré comme une variable d’ajustement confrontée aux autres critères de choix des sponsors ?

Finally, do you think that money could be considerate as an adjustment variable in the front of the other sponsors choice criterions?
5 Analysis of empirical data

5.1 Relevance to frame of reference

- Validity and reliability

First of all, we have to explain this terms.

- Reliability:
Reliability of information is the degree of confidence that we can give. The reliability of the information is based on interrelated components, such as clear identification of the source, the accuracy of data and facts, but also the "freshness" of information.
Reliability requires the use of a single kind of instruments for data collection and interview methods that are designed to improve consistency. In fact, information is relevant if the author uses considered planning, this way information is clearly related to the audit objectives and is collected from sources able to provide it. In order to obtain complete and accurate information we need instruments for data collection and well planed interview administration methods.

- Validity:
The validity of information (credibility) allows to verify the reliability of a source, an author, competence and reputation for treating a subject. To assess the validity of information, some knowledge of the context or domain of study is desirable.
We speak of validity when we verify if the data collected are relevant to the finding and are sufficiently accurate and complete to support the conclusion. It is generally said that the validity answers the question "do we measure what we want to measure?"
Validity and reliability in our thesis

In our thesis, we have worked with a little sample of athletes, asking them directly the questions. Answers collected are therefore provided by athletes themselves and are on this point reliable. More than that we have used mostly primary data, so the sources are recent. Secondary data used come from university database or courses books that are reliable. However the small size of the sample may hurt the validity of our works. Our sources are relevant, but maybe another work on that subject could go deeper, if our first results are interesting.

Our work suffers of limitations.

The sample of athletes questioned is limited; we questioned essentially athletes in extreme sport that is why our results are maybe not representative of all sports.
The athletes we questioned are not very mediatised, and result could change with more mediatised ones. The duty of athletes to their sponsor is almost insignificant in our analysis and maybe these results are due to our limited number of athletes questioned.
5.2 Critical examination of the study’s descriptive results

5.2.1 Presentation of results and analyse of research questions of Q1, Q2 and Q3

In this part, we will focus on using the answers of our interview in order to answer three of our research questions (Q1, Q2 and Q3).

After our first interview, we have asked our athletes open questions. One of them (question 3) was very general in order to know “3 words that according to them define sponsoring”. The idea was to know if we have missed some points in our first interview containing mainly closed question. In the answer, one important point that comes often is “sharing”. For the majority of our athletes, sponsoring is sharing something between the company and the athletes; it’s a win-win situation. This is consistent with the definition of Walliser (2203).

Then, we can read for three of them that sponsoring increase accessibility to professional level for athletes and helps popularity of sports and athletes. But, to create a relation of sponsorship, agreement and accordance are very important.

Another point has to be showed off before starting explanations on our results. This interview has been made with athletes in extreme sports, or at least, not common sports. We can therefore assume that results could be different in other kind of sports.

We have seen in our interview that most of athletes interviewed agreed with us when we asked them “Do you think that the sport you practice affect the sponsoring?”. More than that, Christophe Belbeoch told us that sponsoring in extreme sports could be different because of risks.

• Q1 – Does image of the sponsor company have an impact on the athlete choice?

The goal of this research question was to see if the image of the company sponsoring had an importance for the athletes. We have asked the following question (8): “From your athlete’s point of view, what are the determinants criteria that make you prefer one sponsors to the others ?”
Four of the athletes we interviewed told us that the brand image is important. We can link these answer to question 7. Indeed, the brand image can be put in the belonging criteria of the Maslow’s hierarchy. Be part of a team is really important for athletes: we can say that because most of them classify their sponsors in the “Belonging” criteria. Only Christophe Belbeoch told us that the brand image wasn’t important for him in the choice of his sponsor.

We can understand that brand image is important for athletes because they told us that it could affect their own image positively or negatively. All the interviewed athletes underlined this fact.

We will go in deep in the reasons given by the athletes in the next part, but we can already answer positively to our first research question. Athletes care about the brand image of their sponsors because it could affect positively or negatively their own image.

• Q2 – Does financial sponsorship have an impact on the choice of sponsors by athletes?

Before answering our second and third research questions, we had to know what kind of sponsors our athletes had. We can see here that except Alexis Lefebvre, all of our athletes get a financial support from their sponsors. More than that they all get equipment sponsor, more than that, two of them also get non related equipment by their sponsors. That allows us to say that giving products is an important part of sponsorship.

Our second research question was linked to the financial aspect of sponsoring. The goal was to see if financial sponsoring had an impact on the choice of sponsors. We asked them several questions concerning the impact of money in sponsorship. They all confirmed us the essential place of money in sport sponsorship. Like Fred Bonnef explain to us, without financial sponsoring, athlete had to potential training time to work and get money. If they didn’t do that they had only cash price from competition, and therefore “not winning could mean not eating” (Fred Bonnef, interview). Having an adequate financial sponsorship allowed athletes to dedicate all their time to practice. Here, the physiological and safety needs of the Maslow’s pyramid are fulfil by the financial support.
Thereby we can say that financial sponsorship is overriding concerning performances. That confirmed Roshandel’ and Skovshoved’s theory (2009) showing that financial sponsoring was an important point of sport sponsoring, and so, our second research question.

Once more, we will try to balance this impact with others in the part related to our fourth research questions.

- Q3 – Does equipment sponsorship have an impact on the choice of sponsors by athletes?

In this research question, we wanted to be sure, like for financial support, that equipment sponsoring had an impact on the choice of the sponsor. We can see threw question 8 and 9 that equipment sponsoring affect deeply their performances.

In natation for example, 43 records have been realized in Rome’s world championship. Since then, new technology swimming suit have been forbidden and since then this records have never been beaten or even equalled (National French Federation of Natation, 2012).

In some cases, athletes will even prefer to have only one sponsor giving good related equipment than a lot of sponsors that cannot bring him that (Masterman, 2007).

Reveiling a high rate of importance, we can answer positively our third research question and say that equipment sponsoring affect the choice of sponsor.

This three important criterion, as we saw in this research question, can take place in the Maslow’s pyramid as showed below:
We will, in the following part, try to compare and balance these elements (financial support, equipment sponsor and brand image) in answering our fourth research questions.

5.2.2 Final analysis Q4 – Is there a link between image, equipment and financial sponsorship?

In this last part of analysis we want to focus particularly on Q4 and conclude with his viability by graphics created by ourselves.
That last research question is “Is there is a link between image, equipment and financial sponsorship?”.
Our questionnaire showed us that the duty to the sponsor got no importance at all for athletes we asked regarding the choice of sponsors. Furthermore the different answers we get show us the importance of the money, equipment-related and brand image criterions.

More than that, like we will discuss later, we can see that equipment seems to be the main criteria concerning the choice of the sponsor. This element has to be taken in account by companies. In fact, we have seen that in the buying behaviour (Lendrevie, Levy & Lindon, 2009) awareness of product is important. Seeing products on professional athletes can create the “perception” element of possible consumers. Therefore, sponsoring by equipment related seems to be the best creator of win-win situation.

The question 9 permits us to say that athletes prefer the equipment sponsoring. Indeed, equipment can strongly affect performances of athletes (Fullerton & Merz, 2008). However, companies agreed to say that financial sponsoring is the easiest way (Liu, Srivastava & Woo, 1998), there is therefore an opposition between them.

We can analyse this answer with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as explain in Bolman and Deal (2008). In this case, we can see that for the athletes we have studied, equipment seems to be more important than money. In this case, we can assume that these athletes have already fulfilled their first needs (physiological and security needs) and so, try to fulfil other needs, higher ones, like self-esteem with achievement and recognition.

For our athletes (question 8 and 10), we can see that the brand image can have negative or positive impact: negative elements can be: “an opposition between athletes’ and company’s values”, “bad brand image”, “scandal” or “fraud”. Positive elements can be: “company helps us to be knew”, “they can create word of mouth” or “they put us in front of the lights”.

To go deeper in our analysis, Sebastien Baum and Marie Airault told us that if the brand image of the sponsor affects them negatively they could accept it anyway with more financial support from this brand.
We have seen that the brand image could influence the athlete’s desire to show the brand logo. This element could influence the buying process wanted by the company. The more the logo could be seen, the more the recognition will be present, and the more impulsive purchase could be done (Lendrevie, Levy & Lindon, 2009).

Our analysis and interview permit us to say that there is a hierarchy between the 3 criterion, *equipment, money* and *image* for the athlete choice for sponsors. Indeed, according to our data’s collected we can say that the equipment is the criteria the most preferred by athletes, followed by the image criteria. The money is the less important criteria in the athlete point of view for the choice of a sponsor.

Furthermore we can say that the money is an adjustment variable for the athletes. Indeed, the athletes will ask for more money according to the more or less good brand image, but also for the more or less related equipment that the sponsor can procure to them. According to this analyse, an athlete will use this adjustment variable (money) to accept a sponsor or not.

Our analysis permits us to develop these two graphics, which are showing us more clearly the different links between brand image and money, but also between money and equipment.
In this graphic we can see that if a brand has a good image, the athlete will need less money to be sponsored by it. Conversely, if the brand image is bad, the athlete will ask for more money to be sponsored by it.

For example the point A could be the brand “Red Bull”, and the point B could be “Viagra”.

The choice of the brand “Red Bull” is a special choice. This brand is a particular case because of his investment in extreme sport, and we will explain thereafter why.
In this graphic we can see that if a brand procures some well related equipment to the athlete sponsored, he or she will need less money for being sponsored. Conversely, if the equipment (or products) procured by the company are not related, the athlete will ask for more money for being sponsored by the company.

Samuel Baum explained us that the price of equipment augments as fast as the technology advance and a lot of athletes couldn’t even buy it if their sponsors didn’t.
For example, in the windsurf sport, the point C could be the brand “Ultrasails”, and the point D could be “Mennen”.

This last graphic is the most significant in our analysis. Indeed we wanted to show clearly all the links between the 3 criterions we spoke about, equipment, money and image.

![Graph showing the link between equipment and brand image with the money variable](image)

**Figure 11 The link between equipment and brand image with the money variable (made by the authors)**

This graphic is the conclusion of our analysis. Indeed, it shows perfectly how the money can be an adjustment variable in the choice of sponsors by athlete according to the brand image and the equipment procured by the sponsor.

We put on it the same four examples that we use before but we also put one more example (example E) to complete it.
5.2.3 Explanations of the graphic:

Point A = “Red Bull” is a company with an extremely good brand image in the extreme sport due to his huge investment in these sports (mediatisation, events organisation, etc). But in windsurf, the Red bull’s products are not related to this sport. It is a special case, because for an athlete being sponsored by red bull is really good in term of mediatisation of the athlete himself, that’s explain why athletes will not ask for money in this typical case. We will explain more this example thereafter.

Point B = “Viagra” is a company with a really bad image, according to the product they sells. For an athlete, being sponsored by Viagra can have an impact on his own image (does he use it?). These products made by Viagra are not related to any types of sports and these two aspects (product and image) will create an important need of money compensation for the athlete to sponsors him.

Point C = “Ultrasails” is a company with a really good image in the windsurfer community. They are producing high quality equipment to practice this sport. These two points are essentials and explain why athletes will not ask for money, or not a lot, if this company want to sponsors them. The benefit that these products procure to them in term of performance is the main point and furthermore, the brand name is really appreciated in the community.

Point D: “Mennen”. Mennen is a cosmetic brand specialised in men products. This is an example of brand that is sponsoring athletes. Of course, if they give products to them, they are products non-related. In this case, even if the brand doesn’t have a bad image, the brand can’t mediatisate the athlete like Red Bull. Therefore, we can assume that athletes will ask more money than from Red Bull, but less than from Viagra.

Point E: “Decathlon”. Decathlon is a french brand that create its own equipment for a lot of sports. However equipment that they create are often lower quality than specialised brands. Therefore, we can assume that an athlete sponsored by Decathlon and not a specialised brand will ask more money from the brand in addition to related equipment than from a specialised brand.
6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary of central conclusion related to problem discussion and objectives

This work presents definitions and processes of sport sponsoring. We based our work on theories of marketing mix, consumer behaviour and buying decision process, but also theories of needs that lead to identify risk of sport sponsorship for companies and advantages and disadvantages of sport sponsorship for athletes. We used primary data collected by interviews and secondary data collected by a research work.

We developed four hypotheses to articulate our work and have been able to validate them. We are now able to say that:

Image of the sponsor company has an impact on the athlete choice
Financial sponsorship has an impact on the choice of sponsors by athletes
Equipment sponsorship has an impact on the choice of sponsors by athletes
There is a link between image, equipment and financial sponsorship

Thanks to that we propose a new tool to foster sponsorship based on: image of sponsor, financial sponsorship and equipment; three main criterion that justify sponsorship.

Our analyse permit us to say that there is a hierarchy between the needs of athletes. All of them are taken into account in the Maslow's Pyramid and can be put in specifically part of it regarding to their global accomplishment.
We can also say that these criterions have an impact on the consumer buying process and can create benefit or loss for companies but also for athletes.

More specifically to the athletes’ point of view, our analysis allowed us to say that the money criterion is the base of each other. It's essential for athletes to fulfil his needs before looking for other, equipment and image, even if they are also clearly related to the sponsorship activities.
6.2 Implications

Our work suppose that money is an adjustment variable for athletes in their choice of sponsors. With this information companies should be able to offer a better “package” for athletes sponsored to minimise these costs by giving them more equipment or stuff. Moreover, with a better understanding of the athletes needs, maybe a relation “win-win” between athletes and companies should be easier to reach by both.

The sample of athletes we questioned implicate different things to take into account:
- We questioned essentially athletes in extreme sports, thereby our results are maybe not representative of all sports.
- The athletes we questioned are not mediatised a lot, and results could maybe change with more mediatised ones.
- The duty of athletes to their sponsor is almost insignificant in our analysis, which is a fact surely related to the sample we have chosen.

6.3 Further studies

Based on our observation, we have identified some questions that would benefit of further researches.

We have seen little differences between the basketball player and the windsurfer. Does the level of mediatisation have an impact on the perception of criterion for athletes. This is maybe the reason why windsurf athletes are more sponsored by companies specialised in high quality related equipment, than bigger companies.
Sport sponsorship from athletes’ point of view

Is mediatisation a tool to touch more athletes and make change their perception? Red Bull for example is sponsoring a lot of unknown or not mediatised sport (Gschwandtner, 2004). This is a special case because this company prefers mediatised itself these sports by creating events or by Red Bull TV. This allows this brand to take unknown sports, to sponsor athletes with a lower amount of money, but to mediatise events anyway. Their high brand image facilitates this mediatisation.

Based on our literature review, we showed that sponsoring is a real lucrative market for companies. We wonder if a better knowledge of athletes’ needs would improve their sponsoring contracts, but also generate better win-win situations for both, companies and athletes.
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