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Utilising Junior Participant and Caregiver Perceptions to Understand
Food and Beverage Sponsorship of Sport

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of

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Abstract

Purpose: The alignment of sponsor companies with sport has been a long contested topic, particularly in relation to tobacco and alcohol. However, the appropriateness of ‘unhealthy’ food and beverage products in sport has also come into question. Research has shown children can be affected by sponsorship marketing, with the potential for their attitudes, preferences and consumption habits to be altered. Childhood obesity is a pressing issue in New Zealand, bringing to light the importance of sport as a setting for health promotion. To date, limited research has been undertaken in New Zealand focussing on food and beverage sponsorship of junior sport. This study explores how young sports players and their parents perceive food and beverage sponsorship.

Study Design/Methodology: A qualitative study that conducted 30-60 minute online Zoom interviews with children aged 8-13 years who were currently engaged in a team winter sport, and their parent. Participants were recruited from a variety of settings (schools, sports clubs) across the Auckland region.

Findings: Children generally felt positive about receiving things from sponsors but unanimously expressed a preference for activity vouchers or merchandise over food vouchers. A sponsor companies alignment with sport and the wider sporting community was important for both parents and children. Some parents likened fast food to alcohol, drawing parallels between the harm alcohol causes adults and the harm fast food can cause children. The majority of parents recognised the reliance sport clubs have on sponsor funds with many prioritising sport participation over sponsor restrictions.

Research Implications: The findings of this study recommend junior sport organisers consider a company’s connection to sport prior to enlisting them as a sponsor. These research findings could be used to inform policy both at the regional club level and national government level around sponsors appropriate to be involved in junior sport. The government would be well placed to support junior sport sponsor restrictions by providing an alternative funding source and using sport as a vehicle for promoting public health messages.

Key Words: Food, Beverage, Sponsorship, Sport, Child, Parent.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
CHAPTER 1	6
INTRODUCTION.....	6
AIM	9
OBJECTIVES	9
STRUCTURE OF THESIS.....	9
RESEARCHER CONTRIBUTIONS.....	10
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW	11
<i>Sport Sponsorship.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Food and Beverage Sponsors of Sport: History and current scope.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Views of the sporting community.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Sport Sponsorship in a New Zealand Context.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Significance of the Research Problem</i>	<i>21</i>
CHAPTER 3 – MANUSCRIPT	24
ABSTRACT	24
INTRODUCTION.....	25
METHODOLOGY.....	27
<i>Rationale for junior sport as a case study context</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Data set identification.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Data collection</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Data analysis.....</i>	<i>31</i>
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	33
<i>Current junior sport sponsorship setting</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Appropriate sponsors for junior sport</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Preferred sponsor involvement</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Inappropriate sponsors for junior sport</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Restrictions and policy</i>	<i>46</i>
CONCLUSION	50
CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	52
CONCLUSION	52
STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS	55
RECOMMENDATIONS	56
REFERENCE LIST	58
APPENDIX 1: STUDY ADVERTISEMENT	65
APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET	66
APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM.....	69
APPENDIX 4: SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE	70
APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS	72
APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW DISCUSSION GUIDE	73

Table of Tables

TABLE 1. CHILD PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS	29
TABLE 2. CODING PROCESS FOR INTERVIEWEE STATEMENTS.....	32
TABLE 3. FOOD AND BEVERAGE COMPANIES' AND PRODUCTS APPROPRIATE TO SPONSOR JUNIOR SPORT.	36

Chapter 1

Introduction

Sponsors often see benefit in leveraging off the values associated with sport and sporting communities (Batty et al., 2016; Carter et al., 2013; Cornwell, 2020). Participation in sport enables children to be physically active (Scully et al., 2020) and “achieve or maintain a healthy weight” (Dixon et al., 2017, p. 1176). Therefore, playing sport can reduce the risk of developing lifestyle diseases (Sport New Zealand, 2017), such as type 2 diabetes, heart and respiratory diseases and cancer (Ireland et al., 2019a). The benefits of sport are not just physical, participation facilitates building social connections (Scully et al., 2020; Westberg et al., 2021) and creates a sense of community (Ireland et al., 2019b).

An association with health and wellness is why sport sponsorship is a popular marketing medium, making up an estimated 75% of all sponsor arrangements worldwide (Kelly et al., 2011a). As a result, sponsorship is often used to market products that are not necessarily synonymous with a healthy lifestyle (Batty & Gee, 2019) in an attempt to influence consumption. Companies that produce products that pose a risk to health, such as foods (fast food) and beverages (sugar sweetened beverages) with poor nutritional value are frequently investing in sport (Maher et al., 2006). Such sponsorship relationships are facing increasing criticism from sport stakeholders (Batty & Gee, 2019). ‘Unhealthy’ foods and beverage involvement in sport sponsorship has become increasingly controversial (Sam et al., 2005) due to public health concerns regarding obesity, particularly in children, and its impact on health systems globally (Danylchuk & MacIntosh, 2009).

Some studies have shown food marketing influences children’s food preferences, and consumption (Carter et al., 2011; Dixon et al., 2017) and potentially contributes to an “obesity-promoting environment” (Kelly et al., 2011c, p. 72). Sport sponsorship has been identified as an additional setting that promotes unhealthy eating to a large number of children (Dixon et al., 2017). A systematic review by Carter et al. (2011) found food and beverage sponsorship at the junior level was dominated by ‘unhealthy’ food products. One of the studies referenced by Carter et al. (2011) was conducted in New Zealand (Maher et al., 2006). Maher et al. (2006) found for New Zealand sponsor arrangements that specified they sponsor junior sport, ‘unhealthy’ food sponsors made up 24.2 per cent of sponsors. This was

significantly more than all other sponsor types identified in this study. However, at the overall club level, ‘unhealthy’ food sponsors only made up 2.2 per cent of all sponsors. This suggests unhealthy food sponsors are more concentrated at the junior sport level. This is of concern as children are less perceptive of and more vulnerable to these marketing arrangements due to their limited cognition and experience (Bestman et al., 2015; Kelly et al., 2011b). However, the study by Maher et al. (2006) was conducted 16 years ago, in consequent years the food and beverage sponsorships that exist in New Zealand sport, may have changed.

Within New Zealand, childhood obesity is already a significant problem, with one in three 5-14 year-olds being overweight or obese (Ministry of Health, 2021a). To date, it appears no studies have been able to examine the link between food-related sponsorship and body weight (Dixon et al., 2019). However, exposure to alcohol sponsorship has been shown to be associated with alcohol consumption in children (Brown, 2016). Therefore, unhealthy food and non-alcoholic beverage sponsors may be motivated by the same outcomes and hence contribute to sport being an obesity promoting environment (Danylchuk & MacIntosh, 2009). Home to around one-third of the country’s population, Auckland is New Zealand’s largest city (Auckland Council, 2022). Auckland children have high rates of participation in organised sport. Latest figures suggest that almost 70 per cent of Auckland 8-14 year-olds are part of a club sports team (Sport New Zealand, 2020a). High sport participation rates illustrate the potential magnitude of exposure children can have to sponsor marketing due to the large amount of time they are involved in sport (Kelly et al., 2014). The impact of sport sponsorship marketing on children highlights how sport is an important setting for public health initiatives, such as the Childhood Obesity Plan (Ministry of Health, 2017) and brings to light the consequences of sponsorship by food and beverage companies remaining unregulated.

Another perspective to consider is the nature of the New Zealand sports industry, especially in terms of its size and access to supporting funds. Many sporting organisations in New Zealand are aware of the conflict of interest and consequent criticism of sponsor arrangements with ‘unhealthy’ food and beverage companies (Batty & Gee, 2019). For some regional rugby clubs, sponsor funds can make up to a third of their annual revenue. Earlier New Zealand research by Cordery and Baskerville (2010) found sponsorship income in Rugby, Netball and Hockey made up 14.4, 3.8 and 2.4 per cent respectively of their total

income. Sponsorship funds are reported as a significant income stream for rugby due to its high profile in New Zealand. However outside of rugby, sponsorships are very low level. Hence, the priority sponsor alignment has within a club can be affected by the sporting code, socioeconomic status and needs of the local community (Batty & Gee, 2019; Cordery & Baskerville, 2010). For some New Zealand sports clubs, the financial benefit of the arrangement outweighs their ability to align with ‘healthy’ sponsors (Carter et al., 2013).

Most of the existing research looking at food and beverage sponsorship in junior sport, has been undertaken in Australia by one prominent author (Kelly et al., 2011b, 2012, 2013). This is an issue as while there are some cultural similarities between Australia and New Zealand, the views and needs of New Zealand communities also have their differences. Research has shown sponsorship funding in New Zealand is not evenly allocated across the sporting codes, with Rugby being favoured (Cordery & Baskerville, 2010). Research suggests regional locations in New Zealand may have a greater reliance in sponsor funds (Batty & Gee, 2019) compared to junior sport in Australia where the financial contribution of sponsors was limited (Kelly et al., 2010). New Zealand also has a higher prevalence of overweight and obese children (Ministry of Health, 2021a) than Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022).

This research explored how food and beverage (non-alcoholic) sponsorship of junior sport is perceived by child participants and their parents. Children and caregivers are key stakeholders in sport and are ultimately the end consumer being targeted by sponsor companies. A focus on child and parent responses will allow for thematic analysis of how sponsor companies are viewed by this group. In noting the depth and breadth of junior sport participation and sponsorship across the country, this research adopts a first phase approach by assessing junior sport sponsorship within the Auckland region. Placing such a geographic parameter on this study enabled the researcher to better manage the data collection and analysis requirements within the time frame and expectations of a 90 credit Master’s thesis. In further establishing the parameters of the study, it is important to acknowledge that, while alcohol sponsorship does exist in New Zealand, it is not seen in junior sport due to Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) regulations (Advertising Standards Authority, 2020). Alcohol sponsorship has consequently been excluded from this research.

This research will contribute to existing discourse by providing insight into the food and beverage company sponsor environment in junior sport in New Zealand and how it is perceived by a key set of stakeholders. The findings of this research can assist in the formulation of sponsorship-based recommendations for New Zealand sports organisers. Presently, food and beverage sponsorship is only regulated by the ASA as part of general food advertising regulations. Prior research has suggested community sports organisations that are run by predominantly volunteers, may not have the expertise to design and implement necessary guidelines (Donaldson et al., 2019).

Aim

This thesis will utilise a health lens through which to explore how food and beverage sponsorship in junior sport is perceived by child participants and their parents/caregivers.

Objectives

The objectives that align with the thesis aim of are:

- To initiate a qualitative regional (Auckland) case study that establishes an initial understanding of the relationship between junior sport participation and engagement with sponsor products
- To conduct qualitative interviews with children and parents/caregivers in order to collate views on appropriate junior sport sponsor alignments
- To compile a set of informed recommendations that can assist junior sport facilitators to improve future sponsor alignments.
- To effectively design and facilitate a case study that can consequently inform further assessment of junior sport sponsorship across additional New Zealand regions

Structure of thesis

This thesis is structured as a thesis ‘with publication’. It consequently consists of four main chapters including: an introduction outlining the aims and objectives of this research project; a literature review; research study manuscript; and, a conclusion. A full reference list is provided at the end of the thesis.

Researcher contributions

Researcher	Role
Ella Brouwer	Primary researcher, who conducted, transcribed and coded participant interviews before synthesising the findings into the following thesis and manuscript. This research was completed as a requirement of a Master of Science specialising in Nutrition and Dietetics.
Dr Rachel Batty	Primary supervisor, School of Sport, Exercise and Nutrition, College of Health.
Associate Professor Kathryn Beck	Associate supervisor, School of Sport, Exercise and Nutrition, College of Health.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This literature review will provide initial background information, including a brief history on sports sponsorship, in relation to the scope of the research topic. It will then outline how the sponsorship of sport is positioned and regulated in New Zealand. This will be followed by an overview of the existing literature on the impact sport sponsorship can have on children, and parent and child perceptions of sport sponsors. Lastly, it will reconfirm how the research conducted for the purpose of this thesis will contribute to existing discourse.

Sport Sponsorship

Sponsorship describes a company's investment "in an event, person or activity, typically with the expectation of recognition or collaboration that supports the marketing goals of the investor" (Cornwell, 2020, p. 3). Sport sponsorship makes up the majority of global sponsor arrangements (Kelly et al., 2011a). Companies will sponsor individual athletes, teams, events, and governing bodies across all sporting codes from the elite to grassroots level. In exchange for the provision of cash or in kind services (Peluso et al., 2019, p. 339) that allow the sport to be delivered, sponsors are able to indirectly market their brand and/or products through the consequent association with the sporting activity (Dixon et al., 2019). Sponsors are often visibly present on signage displayed at the sport grounds and on player uniforms (Colantuoni, 2013). In the community setting, sport sponsorship can be used by companies as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. CSR's allow companies to demonstrate to stakeholders and consumers a social and environmental responsibility that extends beyond maximising profit. CSR's provide a way for companies to be present in, and have a real or perceived appearance of giving back to the community in which they operate. This is an effective means of generating greater consumer loyalty (Danylchuk & MacIntosh, 2009), public awareness, and associating the company's products with the values of the organisation being sponsored (Batty et al., 2016).

Food and Beverage Sponsors of Sport: History and current scope

Sport sponsorship has been described as "a prominent marketing tool used by companies, including those that promote alcohol, foods with poor nutritional value, and gambling" (Maher et al., 2006, p. 2). Companies selling alcohol and tobacco have long come under scrutiny regarding the appropriateness, and potential misalignment of these sponsor products

being involved in sport. This is driven by the perception that they contradict the “purpose of sport as a vehicle for health promotion” (Batty & Gee, 2019, p. 169). In New Zealand, tobacco sponsorship restrictions were imposed by The Smoke-free Environments Act 1990 which resulted in all sponsorship arrangements involving tobacco coming to an end in 1995. At this time, the Health Sponsorship Council was founded to replace the sponsorship previously provided by tobacco companies to sports and community events (Trainor, 2008). Currently, alcohol sponsorship, is not restricted in New Zealand but must be in accordance with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) Alcohol Advertising and Promotion Code. This Code includes guidelines that aim to limit the exposure of minors to alcohol sponsorship advertising (Advertising Standards Authority, 2020). However, in May 2021, a Private Members Bill was introduced proposing an end to alcohol sponsorship of sport in New Zealand. Chambers et al. (2021, p. 2) describes this Bill as an “opportunity to support sport as a whole to become the health promoting setting that it is”. In addition to alcohol and tobacco, sponsor companies producing “unhealthy foods have been identified as a further source of concern” in the sport sponsorship space (Pettigrew et al., 2013, p. 2197).

Unhealthy food brands are observed investing heavily in sport due to its “widespread popularity and reach, and its unique potential to align unhealthy products with a health-enhancing activity” (Dixon et al., 2019, p. 481). This investment is shown to be prominent in the junior sport setting most likely because children are able to directly consume the sponsor product. A New Zealand study found for the most popular sports played by young people, ‘unhealthy food’ sponsors were the most common sponsor of junior players compared to all other types of sponsorship (Maher et al., 2006). Current examples of food and beverage sponsors in New Zealand include; McDonalds who is a sponsor of New Zealand Football, Nestle who sponsors Auckland Rugby Football Union, Harraways who sponsors New Zealand Rugby league and New World who sponsors Auckland Netball. McDonalds is a sponsor of all community football in New Zealand. Earlier this year they extended their sponsorship to include youth and senior football alongside junior football. They also support developing coaches and referees to participate in the game (New Zealand Football, 2022a). In 2022, McDonald’s provided Junior Football Packs which included player of the day certificates (with McDonald’s voucher attached), posters and game cards. Coaches are also provided with a beanie, notebook, game cards and an ice pack strap (New Zealand Football, 2022b). Based on images on their website, the McDonald’s logo is present on player uniforms, gear and signs at sports games. The marketing achieved through the branded

apparel worn and equipment used by the individual or team is the greatest, and most frequent benefit of sport sponsorship arrangements for sponsor companies (Carter et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2010).

Views of the sporting community

Kelly has done significant research in the junior sport sponsorship space in Australia. She has assessed the financial impact of sponsors in junior sport (Kelly et al., 2010), used previous findings of alcohol and tobacco sponsorship to determine the impact of food and beverage sponsorship on children's health (Kelly et al., 2011a), determined how junior players perceive sponsors (Kelly et al., 2011b), and assessed how the sporting community, including parents and children would view restrictions on food and beverage sponsors (Kelly et al., 2012, 2013). This research with relevance to other international studies and New Zealand research looking at junior sport sponsorship is summarized below.

Sponsor involvement

Kelly et al. (2010) found in Australia, food and beverage sponsorship was higher in clubs that had predominantly younger aged players. Additionally, over half of food and beverage sponsors of clubs who had mostly younger players did not meet the criteria to be deemed healthy and therefore, an appropriate sponsor. Furthermore, few food and beverage company sponsors contributed money directly to the sports clubs. The community-level children's sports clubs that did receive funds from sponsors, reported this money to make up less than a quarter of their overall income. Instead, support was provided in other forms, including vouchers for players, discounted or free sausages to be used at barbeques, free bread, branded water bottles, the use of a fast-food restaurant store to host events and rebates on products bought throughout the year.

Cost is a known barrier to sport participation (Kelly et al., 2013). Data from the New Zealand 2019 sport survey (Sport New Zealand, 2020a) found between 8 and 26% of Auckland children aged 8-14 years who wanted to be more physically active cited financial restraints as a barrier to increased participation. It is well documented that the financial gain clubs receive from sponsorship arrangements is why they are sought after. The direct funding provided by sponsors can subsidise the fees associated with participation, including the purchase of

uniforms and gear, and enable clubs to purchase up-to-date, safe equipment (Kelly et al., 2012).

Restrictions

Policies to restrict unhealthy food and beverage sponsorship have been shown to be supported by parents. This support was seen regardless of socioeconomic status and most parents reported that they would continue to support these restrictions even if it resulted in increased fees (Kelly et al., 2013). In earlier research by Kelly et al. (2012), parents also supported restrictions that would limit; the use of company logos on children's playing uniforms, the provision of vouchers or unhealthy food and beverages and visible signage at sports clubs. For the parents who supported restrictions on unhealthy food and beverage sponsorship in junior sport, two-thirds believed that the government should be responsible for introducing such restrictions

Similar findings were reported in other Australian research. Donaldson and Nicholson (2020) found 84 per cent of respondents, many of which were parents of junior sports players, would support fast food restrictions in junior sport. Sixty-six per cent indicated this support would continue even if it resulted in increased fees. An Australian survey, in which over one-third of respondents were caregivers, revealed 81 per cent supported the removal of junk food sponsorship at the community level entirely given this was financially supported by the government (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2010). This is echoed by a Regional Rugby organization in New Zealand that states the Government is the only organisation that could provide the funding required to replace the money received from fast-food and fizzy-drink sponsor companies. This could be a challenge as regional rugby clubs already require more money than what they are provided by the Government and Sports New Zealand (Batty & Gee, 2019).

Donaldson et al. (2019) found sport administrators felt that rejecting fast-food sponsorship "could place significant financial strain on their organisations" (p. 4) and that their organisation relied heavily on sponsorship funding. This may be why only three of the sporting organisations questioned had a fast-food free policy, none of which were a formal arrangement. This research suggests sports organisers in the community may not have the

skills to be able to set appropriate sponsor guidelines, identifying a gap that could be filled by a health promotion agency.

Impact on children

Sixty-eight per cent of the children who participated in a study by Kelly et al. (2011b) were able to correctly recall a food and beverage sponsor of their own sport. Only 47 per cent were able to correctly recall any sponsor of their favourite elite sporting team, with few identifying food and beverage sponsors specifically. This suggests children are more influenced by the sponsorship marketing they are exposed to through their own sport than of national or elite level sport. The children also reported they had positive attitudes towards sponsors, liking them more after receiving vouchers and certificates. The children liked the sponsor companies due to both the products they sell and their appreciation of the support they provide to the sports club. This appreciation was also cited by the children as a reason why other children like to buy the company's products, as in their words they wish to "return the favour" (p. 4). This is despite most children being aware that food and drink company sponsorship of sport is a marketing tactic and the only reason these companies sponsor sport. This research also found children had a greater recall of all available food and beverage sponsors of sports clubs compared to other types of sponsors. This is of concern as children's recall and positive associations with sponsors are likely to be indicative of their brand perception, preference and ultimately consumption (Kelly et al., 2011b; Kelly et al., 2013). This was demonstrated in a later study by Kelly et al. (2013) where in 41% of cases, sponsorship encouraged the children to buy more from companies they had previously purchased from.

Experimental research in Australia by Dixon et al. (2017) did not find the same association between exposure to sponsor marketing and increased brand preference in children. In this study, children exposed to non-food branding, compared to children exposed to healthy and unhealthy food branding respectively, were no more likely to choose these brands over non-food brands. These findings were unexpected and attributed to a lack of intensity in the experimental intervention. However, this research did find that the children who were exposed to healthy food brands or an obesity prevention campaign, showed reduced preference for unhealthy food sponsor brands. Despite this research not demonstrating the potential 'harm' of sponsorship increasing the preference for and consumption of unhealthy

products, it did show the effect of branding on children, even after a brief exposure. Similar results were seen in parents in experimental research done by Scully et al. (2020). Parents exposed to healthier food sponsorship and public health nutrition campaign sponsorship conditions were more likely to choose the healthier food sponsor branded product than those in the control condition. Corti et al. (1997) demonstrated the impact of promoting public health messages in place of sponsorship advertising with a ‘quit smoking’ message in Australian children who attended a football clinic. The children in this study had high recall of the ‘quit smoking’ slogan after being exposed to people on site wearing promotional t-shirts featuring the slogan. This research not only is evidence for the possibility of health promotion at junior sport but demonstrates how even logos on clothing can act as advertising to children. These studies suggest the choice of sponsor and sponsor alignment is important, if not for reducing harm by removing unhealthy food sponsor branding but making a positive impact on children and parents by exposing them to healthy sponsor branding.

Separate research by Pettigrew et al. (2013) and Bestman et al. (2015) found that over three-quarters of Australian children were able to correctly recall at least one sports team and sponsor brand alignments. In both studies magnets were used to measure recall. Bestman et al. (2015) found older children aged 9-12 years were more likely to correctly recall sponsors than children aged 5-8 years. This second finding is reported as being consistent with literature that younger children are less perceptive of advertising and marketing.

The impact of the sport food environment on New Zealand children was demonstrated in a case study in 10–12-year-olds from Wellington. This study found “the beverages the children associated with sport overwhelmingly had characteristics which do not support children in adhering to New Zealand nutrition guidelines” (Smith et al., 2014, p. 209). As sport sponsorship is part of the broader sport-food environment, sponsor alignment is an important aspect to consider.

Parent and child perceptions

A global systematic review of children's and parent's opinions on the sport related food environment by Smith et al. (2017) found that parents feel the food environment surrounding sport is unhealthy and consequently goes against what sport promotes and sends conflicting messages to children. It also led to parents feeling as though they are not in control of what

their child is eating due to unhealthy foods and beverages being widely available at sport. Additionally, parents felt the receipt of food vouchers, as a reward for doing well in sport creates disharmony at home when the children are prevented from redeeming the vouchers at fast food restaurants (Smith et al., 2017). In this situation, sponsors are overriding parental control and allowing children to bring the unhealthy sporting food environment home. Research undertaken in Australia found 42 per cent of parents felt that “fast food products or vouchers should not be used as prizes, rewards or fundraising at my child’s junior club” (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 150).

Research by Kelly et al. (2012) found Australian parents believed the most appropriate sponsor companies to be involved in junior sport were those who sell sporting goods, fruit and vegetables and groceries. With the most inappropriate being those that sell alcohol, snack foods like donuts and cakes, and soft drinks. In this same study, “most parents (86 per cent) thought that children were influenced by the sponsorship of elite sport, while only around half of all parents (48 per cent) thought that children were influenced by the sponsorship of their own sports clubs” (p. 291).

A New Zealand study by Signal et al. (2019) asked 11-13-year-old school children what they would do if they were ‘Prime Minister for a day’. When asked what they would do to address food marketing in relation to sport, responses alluded to the lack of alignment between unhealthy foods and sport. These included “they should promote healthy food, because they’re rugby players” (p. 41) which links to the children earlier identifying the All Blacks, New Zealand’s national rugby team, promoting Powerade and burgers in TV advertisements. And how it is “not very smart” to have unhealthy food marketing linked to sports as “when you do sports ... you have to try and be healthy” (p. 41). All the children in this study were reported as being able to distinguish unhealthy foods from healthy foods. One child in this study even identified the link between fast food advertising to children, and children getting diabetes. The children’s ability to identify the misalignment between sport and unhealthy food and beverage sponsorship of sport is consistent with the thoughts of parents and children in research by Smith et al. (2017) who believed the promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages in sport sends incorrect and conflicting nutrition messages to children.

Sport Sponsorship in a New Zealand Context

Policy and regulation

In 2015, the New Zealand Ministry of Health (MoH) launched the Childhood Obesity Plan. This plan recognizes that “obesity increases when there is greater availability and more invasive marketing of high-energy, low-nutrient food and beverages” (Ministry of Health, 2017, p. 1). This plan consists of 22 initiatives targeting obesity prevention through the promotion of physical activity and increasing the consumption and availability of healthy foods and beverages. Marketing and advertising to children is identified in this plan as a broad population approach that is important for reducing obesity. However, it is not clear in the Childhood Obesity Plan Baseline Report from 2016/17 (Ministry of Health, 2017) what has been done to address marketing to children and if this includes sport sponsorship at the community level. The New Zealand MoH has developed a Healthy Kids Industry Pledge. There is no information on this pledge and how it links to the Childhood Obesity Plan on the MoH’s website. The information available online describes this pledge as a voluntary partnership between food manufacturers and the New Zealand Government. Signing the pledge means companies are committed to the improvement of their products, this includes reformulation, improved labelling and responsible marketing and advertising (Cowlshaw, 2018). Some companies who have joined this pledge include; Sanitarium (Sanitarium), Nestle (Nestle, 2016), Fonterra (Fonterra, 2016) and Coca-Cola (The Coca-Cola Company, 2017).

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the “self-regulatory body that regulates advertising standards in New Zealand” (Advertising Standards Authority, 2018, p. 1). The ASA has created a Children and Young People’s Advertising Code which all advertising, including sponsorship advertising, is expected to adhere to in order to be deemed responsible advertising that is permitted by law (Advertising Standards Authority, 2017). The code includes regulations for ‘occasional food or beverage products’ specific to sponsorship arrangements. ‘Occasional food or beverage products’ are classified using the Food and Beverage Classification System which is based on sugar, salt and fat content, or the number of stars based off the Health Star Rating system. Rules 1(i), 3(a) and 3(b) mention sponsorship specifically, however children playing through sports clubs don’t appear to be well protected as club sport is not a school or children’s sporting event in which children would be deemed the target of such advertisements. Additionally, vouchers are still able to be given for player of the day and logos can be placed on uniforms and signs as they do not

show a specific product advertisement. However, there is criticism that as the code is voluntary it lacks the ability to protect children from food advertising (Signal et al., 2019). Sport New Zealand has a Sponsorship and Donations Policy (Sport New Zealand, 2020b) that indicates consideration is given to sponsor arrangements and that sponsors are obliged to consider “the special care we give our children and young people” and if “a relationship with the sponsor or donor harm our people, the sport or [organisation]”. However, it lacks specific guidelines, isn’t specific to ‘unhealthy’ foods and beverages and is another example of industry self-regulation. Although the Healthy Kids Industry Pledge, ASA Code and Sport New Zealand Sponsorship and Donations Policy are a step in the right direction, “industry self-regulation is unlikely to effectively reduce young people’s exposure to unhealthy food marketing, including through sports sponsorship” Dixon et al. (2019, p. 492). This is seen currently in New Zealand junior sport where food and beverage products and vouchers are given to young players as part of the weekly player of the day certificate.

Cordery and Baskerville (2010) found sponsorship income in Rugby, Netball and Hockey made up 14.4, 3.8 and 2.4 per cent respectively of the sport’s total income. Sponsorship is described as very hard to come by in New Zealand, despite being highly sought after by clubs. Most existing sponsorships were described as the result of a personal connection between a sports club member and the sponsor company. Sponsorship funds are reported as a significant income stream for rugby due to its high profile in New Zealand. However, outside of rugby, sponsorships are very low level. Research conducted by Batty and Gee (2019) supports the findings of Cordery and Baskerville (2010). Batty and Gee (2019) found “many regional rugby organisations depend on sponsorships to fund required and desired activities” (p. 167). There is fear that any public health agendas affecting sponsorship arrangements will put the viability of these clubs at risk. This is demonstrated in comment made by a New Zealand sport facilitator: “so long as fast-food chains and fizzy-drink brands are permitted to sponsor sport, regional rugby organisations will continue to pursue and justify their acceptance of such sponsorship arrangements” (Batty & Gee, 2019, p. 176). Research has shown organizational change in National Sporting Organisations is dependent on how closely the change aligns with the organisation (Amis, 2002). In this case sponsor restrictions, would be less opposed if health promotion was a value of the club. However, when sponsor funds allow the club to be financially viable, alignment may remain a low priority for clubs without formal regulations.

Extent of Junior sport sponsorship in New Zealand

Research by Carter et al. (2013) and Maher et al. (2006) identified the extent of food and beverage sponsorship in the New Zealand sport setting. It was described as “not extensive” by Carter et al. (2013, p. 1) This conclusion was drawn following both key informant interviews and the presence of food and beverage company logos on national and regional sport websites. Stakeholders included participants, management and those involved in sport delivery such as Sport New Zealand. Research looking at sport sponsorship in New Zealand by Maher et al. (2006) analysed regional and club websites of the eight most popular sports for 5-17 years old males and females (athletics, basketball, cricket, netball, rugby, soccer, tennis, and touch) for sponsorship information. This study found for sponsor arrangements that specified they sponsor junior sport, ‘unhealthy’ 24.2 per cent were food sponsors which is significantly more than all other types of sponsors identified in this study. Additionally, this was concerning as at the overall club level, ‘unhealthy’ food sponsors only made up 2.2 per cent of all sponsors. This finding indicates unhealthy food sponsors were more concentrated at the junior sport level. However, both studies (Carter et al., 2013; Maher et al., 2006) used health classification systems and the presence of logos on websites to determine sponsor involvement which may have underestimated both the nature and extent of sponsorship.

New Zealand Health Demographics

Sport participation has many benefits including contributing towards better physical and mental health outcomes; greater academic achievement; development of leadership skills; and establishing of a sense of community and belonging (Sport New Zealand, 2017). These attributes and values of sport make children’s participation so important. However, as discussed earlier, sport sponsorship presents sponsor companies with the opportunity to associate their brand and company identity with these values (Colantuoni, 2013). Participating in sport is typical for New Zealand children. Almost 70% of Auckland 8-14 year-olds were apart of at least one sports team outside of school i.e. club membership, in 2019 (Sport New Zealand, 2020a). High participation rates indicate the large amount of time children spend at sport. As a result, children could be exposed to a significant amount of sponsor marketing (Kelly et al., 2014).

The concern that sports sponsorship may contribute to childhood obesity is particularly pertinent in New Zealand. The most recent 2020/21 New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of

Health, 2021a) reported 31.7 per cent of 5-9 year-olds and 34 per cent of 10-14 year-olds were overweight or obese. The prevalence of obesity in New Zealand's children is reported as much higher in those who identify as Māori and Pacific (39.6 per cent and 61.7 per cent respectively) compared to European (26.5 per cent). These obesity statistics have been stable in this age group over the past 10 New Zealand Health Surveys. Without action, this trend will likely continue. Childhood obesity is associated with a number of poor health outcomes including "obstructive sleep apnea; musculoskeletal problems; asthma; and psychological problems including body dissatisfaction, poor self-esteem and depression" (Ministry of Health, 2017, p. 1). It also puts children at greater risk of non-communicable diseases like type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and a high body weight can track into adulthood (Ministry of Health, 2017). Currently, the New Zealand Ministry of Health (2021b) identifies New Zealand as having the third highest obesity rate amongst adults in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

As shown by the obesity statistics, Māori and Pacific young people are more likely to be overweight or obese than their European counterparts. This is an example of inequitable health outcomes in New Zealand children. Māori have a right to equitable health outcomes as outlined in Principle two of Te Tiriti O Waitangi. Chambers et al. (2021) highlights how the proposed ban on alcohol sponsorship of sport in New Zealand will address the inequitable impact of alcohol on New Zealand's indigenous Māori population. Therefore, unhealthy food and beverage sponsor involvement in sport could also be contributing to these inequitable health outcomes. Especially when young people identifying as Māori had higher club sport participation in 2019 than those identifying as New Zealand European (Sport New Zealand, 2020a)

Significance of the Research Problem

"Children's exposure to the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages, including sport sponsorship, has been identified a potential contributor to the obesity-promoting environment" (Kelly et al., 2011c, p. 72). This is of concern as research in Australia and New Zealand has found that unhealthy food and beverage sponsorship is higher in junior sport settings (Kelly et al., 2010; Maher et al., 2006). In New Zealand, sponsorship is expected to be in accordance with the relevant Advertising Standards Authority Code (Advertising Standards Authority, 2017). However, as this code is voluntary, there are concerns it will be unable to protect children from unhealthy food advertising (Signal et al., 2019). Australian

research has shown parents would support restrictions on unhealthy food products being involved in sport sponsorship (Donaldson & Nicholson, 2020; Kelly et al., 2012, 2013; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2010). However, sport organisers have expressed concern that sponsor restrictions may affect their ability to operate and deliver sport (Batty & Gee, 2019; Donaldson et al., 2019).

To date, most of the research on parent and child perceptions of food and beverage sponsors in junior sport has been undertaken in Australia. The literature is dominated by one researcher (Kelly et al., 2011b; Kelly et al., 2012, 2013). Although there are cultural similarities between Australia and New Zealand, the views and needs of New Zealand communities will differ. As discussed earlier, sport in New Zealand has a greater financial dependence on sponsors (Batty & Gee, 2019; Kelly et al., 2010). Additionally, childhood obesity is a significant problem for the New Zealand MoH (Ministry of Health, 2021a) with one in three 5-14 year-olds being overweight or obese.

There are identified gaps in the existing literature and discourse on food and beverage sponsorship in a New Zealand context. New Zealand research on sport sponsorship (Batty & Gee, 2019; Carter et al., 2013; Cordery & Baskerville, 2010; Maher et al., 2006) and the sport food environment (Carter et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2014) is limited. Batty and Gee (2019) looked only at regional rugby union in New Zealand. Both Carter et al. (2013) and Maher et al. (2006) conducted a website analysis to describe the sponsorship environment of New Zealand sport. However, this analysis may have underestimated the extent of sponsorship and does not determine how the sponsor companies are involved. Research by Maher et al. (2006) was also conducted 16 years ago. Therefore, the results may no longer be an accurate representation of current sponsorship arrangements. Other studies were focussed on the sport food environment as a whole, rather than on sponsorship specifically (Carter et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2017).

This research will fill the identified gaps in the existing New Zealand literature on junior sport sponsorship by conducting qualitative interviews with young sports players and their parents. The qualitative interviews will allow the researcher to understand the unique perceptions and lived experience of this stakeholder group.

Chapter 3 – Manuscript

This manuscript is presented in alignment with the requirements outlined in the ‘MSc Nutrition and Dietetics Thesis Guidelines’. It purposefully excludes a built-in literature review and reference list. The primary researcher is intending to fully format this manuscript following completion of her Master’s and submit it, for the purpose of publication, to either a sport or nutrition focused academic journal.

Abstract

Objectives: Food and beverage sponsorship of sport exists worldwide across all levels of sport. There is concern that the inclusion of ‘unhealthy’ foods in sponsorship arrangements conflicts with what sport aims to promote. Evidence suggests the marketing power of sponsorship arrangements could affect the attitudes, preferences and consumption behaviours of children. Therefore, ‘unhealthy’ food and beverage sponsorship poses a risk of contributing to an obesogenic environment at sport. This study aims to explore how food and beverage sponsorship of junior sports in Auckland, New Zealand, are perceived by young players and their parents.

Methods: Children aged 8-13 years who played a team sport during the winter season of 2022 were invited, along with their caregiver, to participate in an interview held over Zoom. Participants were recruited from a variety of settings across the Auckland region including schools and sports clubs. Conducting interviews allowed for the understanding of how participants viewed junior sport sponsors involvement.

Results: The majority of children felt positively about receiving sponsor products at sport with many expressing a preference for branded merchandise over food vouchers. Both parents and children identified alignment with sport as a key characteristic of companies that would be appropriate to sponsor sport, identifying sportswear retailers and local business as preferred sponsors. Parents overwhelmingly agreed that age-inappropriate products such as alcohol and tobacco were inappropriate sponsors for junior sport and agreed these should be restricted. Some parents also put ‘unhealthy’ foods in this category. The majority of parents recognised the reliance sport clubs have on sponsor funds and although some would like restrictions on sponsors, the importance of children participating in sport was a priority.

Conclusions: Sponsor company alignment with sport and its innate values of health and community were important to both child and parent participants. In light of formal restrictions, the findings of this study recommend junior sport organisers consider a company's connection to sport prior to enlisting them as a sponsor. However, it is important to recognise and acknowledge the complexity of the relationship between the sport industry and sponsorship. Systemic change will likely need to be supported by the New Zealand Government in the form of policy.

Introduction

Sporting culture is big in New Zealand (Carter et al., 2013) with almost 70 per cent of Auckland 8-14-year-olds being part of a club sports team in 2019 (Sport New Zealand, 2020a). The potential exposure children can have to sponsorship marketing is high due to the large amount of time they are engaged in sport (Kelly et al., 2014). Sponsorship is a form of marketing that allows corporations to connect themselves with an event, activity, person or organisation to unlock its commercial potential (Peluso et al., 2019; Rifon et al., 2004). Globally, sponsorship arrangements are seen most commonly in sport (Kelly et al., 2011a) with sponsor companies investing in a variety of sporting codes from the elite to grassroots level. Sponsors support individual athletes, teams, events and governing bodies (Colantuoni, 2013). Sport is an attractive marketing medium as “due to its positive health associations, sport represents an effective vehicle for promoting products that are not necessarily perceived as compatible with a sport-health nexus” (Batty & Gee, 2019, p. 167).

Alcohol and tobacco companies historically sponsored sport and sporting events for many years (Danylchuk & MacIntosh, 2009). As a result of public health agendas and changes in social norms, the appropriateness, and potential misalignment of these sponsor products being involved in sport has been scrutinized in many countries (Batty & Gee, 2019). In New Zealand, tobacco sponsorship is banned (Trainor, 2008) and alcohol sponsorship is regulated by Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) codes (Advertising Standards Authority, 2020). More recently, “unhealthy foods have been identified as a further source of concern” (Pettigrew et al., 2013, p. 2197) as they have embraced the opportunity to associate themselves with sport (Batty & Gee, 2019), filling the gap left by alcohol and tobacco companies. Sponsorship allows fast food companies to “enhance their image in local markets and increase instore traffic” (Cousens & Slack, 1996, p. 170). This is why sport sponsorship

that promotes unhealthy food and beverages has been identified as a factor contributing towards an obesogenic environment (Kelly et al., 2011c).

Sponsorship of sport by food and beverage companies has been shown to have an impact on children playing sport. An Australian study found that children had a greater recall of food and beverage sponsors compared to other types of sponsors, and had positive attitudes towards and greater liking of sponsors after receiving branded vouchers and certificates (Kelly et al., 2011b). This study by (Kelly et al., 2011b) also reported children were more impacted by sponsorship of their own sports teams compared to sponsorship of elite sporting teams with 68 per cent of children being able to recall a food and beverage sponsor of their own sport, while only 47 per cent were able to correctly recall any sponsor of their favorite elite sporting team. “Children’s high recall of food and beverage company sport sponsors and their positive attitudes towards these sponsors and their promotions is concerning as this is likely to be linked to children’s food preferences and consumption” (Kelly et al., 2011b, p. 1). The impact of ‘unhealthy’ foods and beverage sponsorship marketing suggests restrictions in this area could be vital to protecting sport from becoming an obesogenic environment.

Policies to restrict unhealthy food and beverage sponsorship have been shown to be supported by members of the sporting community, including parents (Donaldson & Nicholson, 2020; Kelly et al., 2012, 2013). Kelly et al. (2013) found three-quarters of parents supported the restriction of unhealthy food and beverage sponsors in junior sport, regardless of socioeconomic status. The majority of parents would continue to support these restrictions even if it resulted in an increase in fees. For sports organisations however, sponsorship arrangements are an important revenue stream that sport delivery can be dependent on. For some, the financial benefit of the arrangement outweighs their desire for restrictions on who can sponsor junior sport (Carter et al., 2013). For example, for some regional rugby clubs, sponsor funds can make up to one-third of their annual revenue. Therefore, for some sports clubs, the priority of sponsor alignment is in part determined by the socioeconomic status and needs of the community in which they operate (Batty & Gee, 2019).

Most of the current literature examining the perceptions of food and beverage sponsors in junior sport has been undertaken with Australian participants by one researcher in particular (Kelly et al., 2011b; Kelly et al., 2012, 2013). Although New Zealand shares a similar sporting culture to Australia, the broader views and needs of New Zealand communities may

differ. The research suggests a greater financial dependence on sponsors in junior sport in New Zealand (Batty & Gee, 2019) compared to Australia (Kelly et al., 2010). Additionally, childhood obesity is a significant problem for the New Zealand MoH (Ministry of Health, 2021a) with one in three 5-14 year-olds being overweight or obese. Sport could be an important setting for reaching the targets outlined in the of the MoH Childhood Obesity Plan.

There are identified gaps in the existing literature and discourse on food and beverage sponsorship in a New Zealand context. This research aims to explore how food and beverage sponsorship of junior sport is perceived by the children and their caregivers who live in the Auckland region. The findings of this research will be used to inform future research and to formulate recommendations and clear directives for sport organisers regarding ongoing food and beverage sponsor alignments in the New Zealand junior sport setting.

Methodology

A qualitative interviews were used to understand how Auckland based children aged 8-13 years, and their caregivers, perceived food and beverage sponsor involvement and the alignment of sponsor products, with junior sport. The potential for differing views on sponsor appropriateness in junior sport, between communities based on cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic factors also supports the use of a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research methodologies were appropriate for this research that aimed address gaps in current New Zealand literature which to the best of the researchers knowledge has not assessed child and parent perceptions of food and beverage sponsors in sport. This research will offer unique insight into the New Zealand sponsorship setting that existing quantitative website analysis' (Carter et al., 2013; Maher et al., 2006) have not been able to provide. The data gathered will allow for the formulation of recommendations for sport organisers (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Ethical approval was gained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee who assessed this research project to be low risk.

Rationale for junior sport as a case study context

This research utilised Auckland junior sport as a case study to better understand how sponsorship arrangements affect junior teams and how children and caregivers, as key stakeholders, perceive such sponsorships. Case study research involves the “intensive study of a single unit or a small number of [cases], for the purpose of understanding a larger class

of similar [cases]” (Gerring, 2007, p. 37). A case study approach is appropriate for this research as it aims to broadly explore how Auckland parents and children perceive and interact with sponsor companies. This in turn assists understanding of their preferences and behaviour (Swanborn, 2010). It is acknowledged that the results of case study research can be difficult to generalise. However, they are able to offer empirical insights (Gomm et al., 2000) and serve as informed starting points for extended study.

Auckland children are highly involved in sport with almost 70 per cent of Auckland 8-14 year-olds playing at least one sport through a club, in 2019 (Sport New Zealand, 2020a). Such high participation rates illustrate the magnitude of exposure young people can have to sponsor marketing due to the large amount of time they spend being involved in sport (Kelly et al., 2014). With sport potentially contributing to the broader obesogenic environment (Kelly et al., 2011c, p. 72), it could be a setting in which the regulation of food and beverage company sponsors is necessary. Therefore, this research will aim to formulate recommendations and create consistent directives for clubs and junior sport facilitators, to guide future sponsor alignment to ensure it does not conflict with current public health agendas and to ensure future sponsor alignments consider the views of the junior sport community.

Data set identification

Auckland children aged 8-13 years, who were playing a team sport in the winter season of 2022, and their caregiver were invited to participate via a study advertisement. Recruitment occurred through schools and sports clubs. Participants were also recruited through word of mouth. Schools were selected as a recruitment setting as they are location where children gather and caregivers can be reached. Schools were selected for recruitment at random from an excel spreadsheet that listed all the primary and intermediate schools in Auckland (Ministry of Education, 2022b). Schools were eligible for selection if they were in a ‘Main Urban area’ of Auckland and were a state or state integrated school that was currently open. A total of 66 schools were contacted via email (sent to the school reception, deputy principal or the sports coordinator) and asked to share the call for research participants with their school communities. A total of 17 schools agreed to assist with participant recruitment, posting an advertisement in their school newsletter. A further 39 football clubs, 30 netball clubs, 19 rugby clubs, nine hockey clubs, and one combined netball and rugby club within the Auckland region were also contacted in the same manner. These sports were chosen as

they are popular winter sports in New Zealand. Clubs were identified through the Sport New Zealand website (Sport New Zealand, 2022). A total of 25 clubs agreed to assist with participant recruitment by sharing a call for participants with their club members. The geographical distribution of participants across the Auckland region was dependent on which schools and clubs agreed to assist with participant recruitment. Forty-four individuals expressed interest in participating in the study, with 25 parents/caregivers (along with their child) progressing to the interview stage. The other 19 participants that expressed interest did not respond to further follow-up. Only one participant was recruited through their school. School sport is not as involved with sponsor companies hence why it may have been a less successful recruitment setting. Participant characteristics are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. Child participant characteristics

Winter team sport(s) played	Age (years)	Sex (M/F)	Location of residence (Auckland region)	School decile*	Recruitment setting
Soccer	8	F	Auckland Central	10	Word of mouth
Hockey, Soccer and Basketball	8	M	Rodney	9	School
Soccer	8	F	Auckland Central	7	Sports club
Netball	8	F	South Auckland and Eastern Suburbs	8	Sports club
Soccer and Netball	9	M	Auckland Central	10	Sports club
Rugby and Basketball	9	M	West Auckland	7	Sports club
Netball and Soccer	9	F	Auckland Central	7	Sports club
Netball and Soccer	10	F	North Shore	10	Word of mouth
Netball, Soccer and Rippa Rugby	10	F	North Shore	9	Word of mouth
Rugby, Rippa Rugby and Basketball	10	M	West Auckland	7	Sports club
Soccer	10	M	South Auckland and Eastern Suburbs	10	Sports club
Soccer	10	M	North Shore	9	Sports club
Soccer	10	F	North Shore	7	Sports club
Soccer and Netball	10	F	North Shore	10	Sports club
Netball	11	F	North Shore	9	School
Soccer and Hockey	11	M	North Shore	6	Word of mouth
Soccer	11	M	Pukekohe	3	Sports club
Rugby and Rippa Rugby	11	M	West Auckland	7	Sports club
Soccer	11	M	Auckland Central	10	Sports club
Netball	11	F	West Auckland	7	Sports club
Soccer	11	M	North Shore	9	Sports club
Soccer	11	M	North Shore	6	Sports club
Soccer	11	M	North Shore	6	Sports club
Soccer	12	M	North Shore	6	Sports club
Soccer	13	F	North Shore	10	Word of mouth

*Decile is an indicator of the socioeconomic status of the community surrounding the school with a low decile reflecting a low socioeconomic community (Ministry of Education, 2022a).

Data collection

Participants were emailed a participant information sheet, a consent form, and a screening questionnaire to complete. The consent form, signed by the caregiver for themselves, and on behalf of their child, was returned via email prior to the interview being conducted. All interviews were conducted over Zoom video conferencing software (Zoom Video Communications, 2022). Conducting online interviews was appropriate for this study as the information being collected was not of a private or sensitive nature. Hence, physical proximity with participants to sympathize and comfort (Salmons, 2015) was not required, and the participant did not require a private or neutral location. Performing the interviews online provided greater flexibility for participants based across the Auckland region. Zoom (Zoom Video Communications, 2022) was used at no cost to participants and was able to be accessed via the web without needing to make an account, through a link sent to their email. Once an interview time was arranged, participants were asked a series of pre-determined questions pertaining to sponsorship of junior sport, including; how sponsors are involved in the child's sport both currently and in the past, perceptions of the sponsor and sponsor products, appropriate and inappropriate junior sport sponsors, preferred sponsor involvement, the need for restrictions and who is responsible for imposing such restrictions. Follow-up questions were formulated based on the information that was shared in the interview (Salmons, 2015). Each interview session was divided into two stages. The first stage involved questions directed specifically to the child. The second stage involved questions directed specifically to the parent/caregiver. See Appendix 8 for the interview discussion guide. Children were interviewed first in the presence of their parent in accordance with ethics approval. Research has found parent presence and contribution during interviews with children adds richness to the child's response and mimics the typical parent child relationship seen outside the interview setting (Irwin & Johnson, 2005). Therefore, parent contribution during the interview was not expected to compromise the quality of the data obtained. Children were given the opportunity to leave the interview once their set questions were complete. Interviews on average took 35-40 minutes to complete. Twenty-five interviews were conducted in total, data saturation was reached with this number of interviews. Reaching saturation with 25 interviews is supported by the literature as a systematic review of studies assessing sample sizes required to meet saturation in qualitative research found

most studies reached saturation with 9-17 interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Each parent participant was provided with a \$20 supermarket voucher via email at the completion of the interview as compensation for taking part.

Data analysis

The audio recordings captured using Zoom's (Zoom Video Communications, 2022). recording feature, were uploaded to Otter.ai (Otter.ai, 2022) which transcribed the interviews. Each transcript was then checked by the primary researcher for accuracy. Transcripts were then uploaded into NVivo (NVivo, 2022, Release 1.7) and analysed. The analysis process incorporated three levels of coding: open, axial, and selective. Using three levels of coding allowed the interview transcripts to be reduced to a set of key themes (Williams & Moser, 2019). Coding was done using inductive reasoning that emerged to the researcher during the transcription process and in consultation with the wider research team. Inductive coding was appropriate for this research project that aimed to address a gap in existing literature (Chandra & Shang, 2019). Open coding is the first level of coding. Open codes were established by the research team and entered into NVivo using the primary researchers in depth knowledge of the transcripts. The next level, axial coding, was completed using NVivo software and allowed for the data to be categorised within each open code theme (Williams & Moser, 2019). As the coding process progressed, some axial codes were collapsed to create distinct categories. In this research axial codes were further categorised based on their properties into specific subcategories to create selective codes. Due to the nature of this research topic, integration at a more abstract level was not appropriate for all codes (Walker & Myrick, 2006). In this case, selective coding enabled the researcher to capture the range of perspectives held by participants and quantify specific examples that emerged across several transcripts. The coding process is demonstrated below in Table 2.

Table 2. Coding Process for Interviewee Statements

Open code	Axial code	Selective code	Representative quotations
Appropriate sponsors for junior sport	Food and drink companies	Fast food Healthier fast food Supermarkets Cereal brands Fruit Sports drinks	“Supermarkets, there's a range of items. So you can go from the chips or what are, what are unhealthy to like, something that like, like energy drinks, sport drinks, and or like, fruit, even just fruit in general. Super foods and all that, yeah” (Child 42)
	Sport/activity related companies	Sporting retailers e.g. Rebel Sport, and sportswear brands e.g. Nike Activities e.g. Jump	“anything, that's, that's going to have a positive impact on the kids long term. So um, you know, any, any company that sponsors that makes sporting equipment or, or gear would be an obvious kind of first choice” (Parent 31)
	Other companies	Banks Tech companies	“Banks make a bloody billion dollars a quarter it seems, or half a year. Regardless of which bank it is in New Zealand they've got plenty of money for sponsorship ... they're relatively harmless industry. So yeah nice to see them put more into community sport” (Parent 27)

Results and discussion

Analysis of the interview transcripts identified emergent themes regarding sponsorship of junior sport. A variety of sponsors are currently involved in junior sport in the Auckland region, including food and beverage companies. Food and beverage company sponsors were typically fast-food outlets. These sponsors typically gave junior players a food voucher for player of the day to be redeemed in store. Participants felt appropriate sponsors for junior sport included products and businesses that align with sport and the values of the sporting community. Conversely, inappropriate sponsors were those that promote age-inappropriate products such as alcohol and tobacco. Instead of food vouchers, vouchers for activities such as tenpin bowling, or merchandise were preferred. Some parents expressed a preference for 'healthier' sponsor companies, but the majority expressed concern about the flow on effect of restricting who can sponsor junior sport on sport delivery.

Current junior sport sponsorship setting

Children in this study were targeted by sponsor companies through the company's affiliation with the sport's governing body, the sports club or through a personal connection with the team for example, a business owner being a parent to a child in the team providing sponsored jackets for the team. Sponsor companies that have arrangements with sport governing bodies, like McDonald's and New Zealand Football (New Zealand Football, 2022a) or Cadbury and Netball New Zealand (Netball New Zealand, 2022) will result in nationwide sponsorship. Nationwide sponsorship results in resources being provided to teams around the country enabling children to get involved in the sport or in the case of Cadbury, supporting Netball Volunteers. Participants in this study explained that McDonald's gives the club a certain number of player of the day certificates that are to be divided amongst the teams. It is unclear until what age the children receive a player of the day certificate, but some children indicated they no longer receive these. Parents who coached their child's team reported receiving a coach's pack. The pack included a McDonald's branded beanie, a coach's book, and coach's cards (Parent 27). Two parents who manage their child's netball team reported receiving Cadbury chocolate (Parent 7, 15). This was not given to the children. Other arrangements will be with local businesses and franchisees so will vary between clubs and teams. For example, New World's Albany store sponsors East Coast Bays Association Footballs Clubs Women's and Girl's football. Additional sponsors can be present due to a personal connection between the company and the team. Some of the children in this study

had received merchandise like a drink bottle or jacket from a sponsor company that was owned by a parent of one of their teammates.

Sponsors were most visible to children through the provision of player of the day certificates that have vouchers to be redeemed in store, at the sponsor company, attached. All the children interviewed had previously received a player of the day certificate and voucher at sport. Of the examples discussed, the majority were for companies selling food and beverages. For example McDonalds, Burger Fuel, Sal's Pizza, Subway, Pita Pit and Lone Star. The exceptions were a local nail salon voucher (Child 01, 15), a Butterfly Creek voucher courtesy of a Healtheries sponsorship (Parent 09, 19) a Game Over voucher (Child 11) and a voucher from Bunnings to receive a drink bottle (Parent 25).

The children interviewed typically had positive feelings about the vouchers they had received. For example, Child 29 noted "it's like something to aim [for] and achieve. And then go, oh, I get a nice reward". Similarly, Child 25 was "pretty excited because [Lonestar] is ... basically my favourite restaurant". Vouchers were reported as redeemed at least once by 88 per cent of participants. For some, redeeming the vouchers incorporated a special trip to the sponsors location. For other families, the vouchers were occasionally forgotten, or the monetary value was not significant enough to incentivize redemption. For two families (Parent 01; 18) player of the day vouchers were not redeemed as a sibling had specific dietary requirements that weren't catered for by the sponsor.

The provision of player of the day vouchers is described by Carter et al. (2013) as a complementary marketing technique used to support sponsorship investment and encourage purchasing. Carter et al. (2013) identified New Zealand junior football and touch rugby as receiving sponsored player of the day certificates that included a voucher for a food item from the sponsor. The increased prevalence of vouchers in football and rugby is consistent with the findings of this study where children involved in these sports reported receiving vouchers more than children playing netball and hockey. However, the inconsistency in voucher redemption reported by study participants suggests they are not that effective at driving increased consumer purchase. Most vouchers the children received were from unhealthy food brands. This is consistent with earlier New Zealand research by Maher et al. (2006) that found junior sport in New Zealand had more unhealthy food sponsorship than any other type of sponsorship. The types of sponsor companies reaching the children in this study

suggests the food and beverage sponsorship environment hasn't changed over the past 16 years since research was conducted by Maher et al. (2006) despite industry self-regulation (Cowlshaw, 2018) and the MoH Childhood obesity plan (Cowlshaw, 2018; Ministry of Health, 2017)

Appropriate sponsors for junior sport

Appropriate junior sport sponsors identified by participants included some food and beverage companies, sport related companies, companies that are connected to the local sporting community and companies that would be able to provide adequate sponsorship funds. Alignment with sport and health was front of mind for most participants when discussing sponsors appropriate for junior sport.

Children's comprehension of sponsorship played a big part in their decision making. Most children were focussed on describing why a sponsor would be a suitable junior sport sponsor. For example, Child 01 noted that supermarkets would be a good sponsor because "New World or Countdown could send oranges or apples or something like that". Most children did not consider the provision of sponsorship funds and branded gear when considering the appropriateness of sponsor companies. For example, when asked how they would feel about receiving shoes with a McDonald's logo on them, Child 26 replied "they don't make shoes". The inability of children to separate a company from its products demonstrates how the children had a limited awareness of sponsorship and used sponsor product fit to judge the appropriateness of a sponsor (Cornwell, 2014). Children's limited cognition and experience consequently makes them vulnerable to these marketing arrangements making them an ideal target for sponsor companies that may wish to use sport sponsorship to generate public good will or increase their customer base (Bestman et al., 2015; Kelly et al., 2011b).

Food and beverage companies

Food and beverage companies that were frequently discussed with participants included various fast-food outlets, supermarkets, fruit stores, companies producing breakfast foods and sports drink companies. Associated perspectives of the children and parents/caregivers interviewed are presented in Table 3. Most responses from children were centred around what they would receive from the sponsor company and their personal enjoyment of that product.

Table 3. Food and beverage companies' and products appropriate to sponsor junior sport.

	Children	Parents
Fast food	<p>“Fast food, because a lot of people like that.” (Child 15)</p> <p>“[be]cause McDonald's and Sal's Pizza are really good, really yummy food” (Child 32)</p> <p>“In the past, I think they [McDonald's] um, helped a lot with the other football teams like giving them a lot of money to help them” (Child 35)</p>	<p>“[My child] loves McDonald's. So, you know, if it's there, then that's fine ... I think every kid deserves a treat, whether it's junk food or not” (Parent 19)</p> <p>“Do I have a problem with McDonald's sponsoring junior football? Absolutely not. Because it's again, it's up to the parents to make that decision whether they give their kids McDonald's five times a week or not ... take their money, they're a multinational company” (Parent 34)</p>
Healthier fast food	<p>“Subway is not exact. It's almost like McDonald's. But I guess it is a healthier version. So yeah.” (Child 14)</p>	<p>“Pita Pit would definitely be a preference ... kind of feels a lot more ah, fresh, nutritionally kind of dense food as opposed to fries” (Parent 01)</p> <p>“I do think probably something like Subway might be a little bit healthier um than something like McDonald's ... McDonald's is okay um. But realistically, possibly slightly healthier brands would be better” (Parent 36)</p>
Super-markets	<p>“They're nearly like everywhere around the community, and um, they just have really good big stores” (Child 35)</p> <p>“Because, like supermarkets, there's a range of items. So you can go from the chips or what are, what are unhealthy to like, something that like, like energy drinks, sport drinks, and or like, fruit, even just fruit in general. Super foods and all that” (Child 42)</p>	<p>“[Supermarket sponsorship] it's not then necessarily one food or one food type. It's just food you market” (Parent 16)</p> <p>“it's nice when you've got like a local, like a local supermarket supports some local clubs that, you know, that's kind of cool, too, when you've got, keeping stuff within the same community is nice” (Parent 29)</p> <p>“Pak'n'Save, Countdown, New World .. I don't see any harm there” (Parent 31)</p>
Fruit and vegetables	<p>“Ah fruit just being really healthy and good for sports. And like if at like halftime you got like a banana or something” (Child 11)</p>	<p>“A fruit and veggie shop or something like, [be]cause you're always like buying um oranges and all that sort of thing” (Parent 18)</p> <p>“I'd love to see Fruit World sponsoring people” (Parent 39)</p>
Breakfast foods	<p>“I eat WeetBix, but yeah, and they'd be pretty good [be]cause they, All Blacks like, they sponsor the All Blacks, they sponsor triathlon” (Child 23)</p> <p>“Because WeetBix are yum and good for you” (Child 34)</p>	<p>“Milk sponsorships like Anchor or um I think Happy Valley they're, they're pretty good. Milo, I suppose is a pretty good one. Um dairy companies, WeetBix, that sort of thing” (Parent 12)</p> <p>“The kids are getting up and they're getting, having their WeetBix, they're thinking about WeetBix ... you wouldn't have McDonald's before you went and had, played football, but you might have WeetBix in the morning before you go and play football.” (Parent 26)</p> <p>“breakfast foods or, you know, things, things that fuel kids to do better at sport” (Parent 32)</p> <p>“something like Sanitarium is, in general, promotes a healthy diet, whereas McDonald's doesn't” (Parent 41)</p>

Perceptions on fast food sponsors were split amongst the children. Some children expressed their preference for fast food and it therefore being a good sponsor. For example, when asked what food companies would be good to sponsor sport, Child 21 noted “Domino's, and KFC, [be]cause they're my favourite”. Interestingly some children identified fast food as being incompatible with sport; “[at] sport, you're getting healthier, like you're working your body. But with the McDonald's . . . it just doesn't really do the same thing.” (Child 14). This sentiment was echoed by Child 26; “sports like for healthy stuff and fast food isn't really that healthy. So it doesn't make much sense.” Similarly, another child described ‘healthy’ food and beverage sponsors as better “[be]cause then you can, stay fit. And, not be slower. And be better [at sport]” (Child 16).

Some parents didn’t mind fast food companies sponsoring sport, describing the receipt of vouchers to be redeemed in store as a “treat” (Parent 21, 19) and “I don't mind the takeaway companies offering a free burger. It's not like they're saying free takeaways for a year or anything like that, it's one burger” (Parent 22). Parent 41 described how they would have more of an issue with fast food sponsorship if

they [McDonald’s] were like, on site, you know, trying to sell burgers on the side of the field ... if they were getting, you know, getting vouchers handed out every week, you know, to ... several kids, that would be too much And I don't think it should really be on the uniforms. Like to be visible, you know visible every, every week, or on a daily basis

One parent identified that some fast food is better than others, (Parent 32) with two parents specifying they would be more against KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) sponsoring junior sport than McDonalds (Parent 42, 21). However, the majority expressed their preference for food and beverage companies that sell ‘healthier’ products to be sponsoring junior sport such as companies producing breakfast foods and supermarkets. Sanitarium and their WeetBix breakfast cereal was an example commonly discussed as they are a well-known sport sponsor due to the WeetBix Triathlon. WeetBix was recognised as being aligned with sport as it is something that children would eat before participating in sport (Parent 26, 32). With one parent describing them as a good sponsor “because of the health message ... something like Sanitarium is, in general, promotes a healthy diet, whereas McDonald's doesn't” (Parent 41). Parent 32 expanded on this idea, stating there is

nothing wrong with having it [fast food]. But I don't think I'd want to associate it...you need McDonald's to do well at sport, or you do well at sport, you get fast food. So it's that association thing, I think

This quote exemplifies how currently fast food sponsors are providing young children with vouchers which encourage the purchase and consumption of these products.

Supermarkets were identified by parents as favourable sponsors for a variety of reasons including; they promote food in general rather than associating a particular brand with sport which can impact purchase behaviour (Parent 16) and franchises are considered local businesses with their sponsorship giving back to the community (Parent 16, 29, 34). Parent 01 also mentioned if supermarket vouchers were provided as part of a sponsorship arrangement, they would be of more use, as shown in this quote;

I do like the idea of supermarkets [be]cause then you can use it [voucher], the family or child can use it for what they want. And if they want to use it to go and buy chocolate and chips, that's great. But also if they want to buy some veggies or some meat, you know, like something is going to be a bit more needed for the family.

Some children identified food and beverage companies, such as supermarkets and McDonald's as good sponsors for sport as the scale of their operation and popularity means they make a large profit and can siphon a larger portion of this to sport sponsorship arrangements. For example, McDonalds was identified as a good sponsor by Child 31 as "we'd get more stuff [be]cause McDonald's earns, they get quite a bit of money so they can donate more". Similarly, small or unpopular businesses were less favoured by children for the same reasons, "not that popular things make bad sponsors"(Child 36).

Children's perceptions that food marketing in sport should be healthy because sport is considered healthy, was demonstrated in a previous study within New Zealand (Signal et al. (2019). Children aged 11-13 years-old cited similar reasons to the children in this study to support this belief. For example, unhealthy products should not be promoted in association with sport "because when you do sports ... you have to try and be healthy" (p. 41). This recognition of the link between sport and health highlights the potential for unhealthy sponsorship marketing to send mixed messages to children. The influence of sport sponsors on children is supported by the findings of a systematic review conducted by Smith et al.

(2017). This review found that parents and children believed the promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages in sport sends incorrect and conflicting nutrition messages to children.

Parent preferences for healthy food sponsors in sport, within this study, is consistent with the views of the parents in research conducted by Scully et al. (2020). In their study, Australian parents with children aged 6-9 years-old judged unhealthy food and beverage brands to be less appropriate for junior sport than healthy food and drink brands.

Some parents in this study commented that they would be more opposed to KFC sponsorship than other fast food brands. This is similar to the findings of Cornwell (2014) who investigated the role of sponsorship fit with non-sporting based corporate sponsorships. In their study, participants perceived Subway as being healthier than KFC, and therefore a more appropriate sponsor due to the health association with the Australian Red Cross Blood Service and Leukaemia Foundation which were being sponsored.

Other companies

In addition to food and beverage companies, other companies appropriate to sponsor junior sport that were discussed by participants included companies selling sporting goods, banks, real estate agencies and building companies.

Sport related companies included sportswear brands and companies that sell sports gear. Sports stores like Rebel Sport and Stirling Sport were popular choices amongst both children and parents. Children identified they would also like sportswear brands like Nike, Canterbury, Adidas, Lotto, and Puma to sponsor them. For some children these brands were chosen as they sponsor elite level teams that they follow, for example Canterbury “[be]cause they do most Rugby things. They used to do like the Warriors jerseys and stuff” (Child 22) and Nike “mainly because my favourite team Chelsea is sponsored by Nike” (Child 36). Children thought that sport related companies would be good sponsors as they are directly related to sport and would be able to provide gear to assist in sport delivery and participation as shown by these quotes; “[be]cause they're like sports ones, they like, do sports stuff and like Rebel Sport do like soccer balls and soccer boots and drink bottles and stuff like that. And then Nike, do like shoes and make good soccer boots.” (Child 31), “they do ah sports ah related things and um, they help the community giving out sports equipment.” (Child 35), “if

you have good shoes, maybe it can like, make it better for you to move around and then get more engaged in the sport, or like better equipment so you can practice at home” (Child 15). One parent also described the receipt of sports equipment “I think it just lines up better with, with them. And I think it would actually be more appreciated by the kids ... that would be something that they would actually um appreciate more.” (Parent 21)

Participants also identified banks, real estate agencies and building companies. Within this discussion, some parents and children expressed a preference for local companies to be involved in sponsoring junior sports teams. As shown in this quote from Parent 11;

I'd prefer like, like real estate agents or people that local community ones rather than um, it being necessarily food products ... like local, local builders, local firms, local things. Um, I don't think it needs to be these bigger companies, they've probably got a big exposure anyway. Um. I think it would just yeah, it is a way for, for local companies to get involved in the community.

Real estate agents and other companies unrelated to sport were also preferred as parents felt they were not as recognisable to children (Parent 16) and targeted towards the parents (Parent 18) which in their eyes made them appropriate sponsors. Preference for local cafes and restaurants was also communicated by some parents as they enjoy seeing the “interaction between the sport and the local community” (Parent 41) and feel the arrangement is less driven by corporate motives (Parent 15).

Banks specifically were identified as an example of a good sponsor. One child and one parent identified banks as good sponsors due to their ability to provide adequate funds. Child 39 applied similar logic to what has been shown already citing banks as good sponsors “[be]cause they raise lots of money”. Parent 27 expanded on this saying;

Banks make a bloody billion dollars a quarter it seems, or half a year. Regardless of which bank it is in New Zealand they've got plenty of money for sponsorship ... they're relatively harmless industry. So yeah nice to see them put more into community sport.

The concept of banks being “harmless” was echoed by another parent; “I can't see any problem with things like banks sponsoring, um or things that aren't connected necessarily to unhealthy lifestyles” (Parent 42). And was also applied to technology companies by another

parent; “Samsung, or Sony or Apple or any of those types of tech companies. I guess that's neither a positive nor negative influence” (Parent 31).

Participants in this study identified companies appropriate to sponsor junior sport in a similar fashion to those identified in studies conducted by Danylchuk and MacIntosh (2009) and Kelly et al. (2012). In their studies, participants ranked companies producing sporting goods as the most appropriate to sponsor junior sports. Participants in the research conducted by Danylchuk and MacIntosh (2009) consequently ranked sports drinks and water, food not considered fast food (e.g. cereals), financial institutions and local businesses as the top five most appropriate sponsors of sport. For parents in the study conducted by Kelly et al. (2012), following sporting goods the most appropriate sponsor companies for junior sport were businesses that sold fruit and vegetables, groceries, and building supplies and hardware. The ranking of companies in both of these studies is very similar to the companies identified by participants in this study. Within this study, participants had a strong preference for sportswear companies as their products support sport participation. There was also preference for healthier options, such as healthy convenience foods (for example Subway and sushi), supermarkets, fruit and vegetable stores, and cereal brands. These findings support the idea that sponsor fit and similarity with sport's intrinsic values of health are important when considering appropriateness (Cornwell, 2014).

Preferred sponsor involvement

Most participants expressed a preference for vouchers for activities like Jump trampoline park, Tenpin bowling, Butterfly Creek, and sports gear retailers like Rebel Sport, over food vouchers. Participants liked activity vouchers as they encourage being active (Parent 01, Child 42), the experience is more long lasting than eating food (Child 11, 41) and they make the activities more affordable (Parent 19, Child 36) especially for parents with multiple children (Parent 01). The value activity vouchers provide to the whole family is summarised in this quote from Parent 09 “yeah, I think that's, that's creating family time, and it's creating memories. And I think that's, you get a lot more out of a family trip, don't you then you would with McDonald's”.

Parents identified vouchers for sports gear retailers, like Rebel Sport, would help with the costs associated with playing sport even if vouchers were of a small monetary value. This is shown in these quotes: “the voucher from McDonald's, I suppose it's \$4.50 for the kids, and

then a coffee for the grown-ups, so you're getting towards \$10. So, say Rebel Sport did a \$10 voucher or, or some similar company. Um, you know, that would be, that, halfway to a new t-shirt or some sporting equipment or something like that" (Parent 21), "Rebel Sports giving a \$4.50 voucher, so we could go and buy our football boots, which we try to buy, at the beginning of season and the sales are always off, and we pay full price for them" (Parent 26), "I'd rather that the kids get um, you know, instead of like a voucher for McDonald's like a \$5 Rebel Sport voucher um, um or you know, or Stirling Sports ... I'd rather that my daughter ... got given a Soccer ball or shin pads or you know, or something like that, you know, that would actually encourage her to go out and, and do some more running" (Parent 39). Similarly, children liked the idea of getting vouchers for sports gear retailers as it would contribute towards them getting new gear (Child 11, 16, 36), and they can choose what they would like (Child 32). Child 11 said: "I'd prefer to get like, stuff like sports equipment and, like, things that would last you and would be more of a memory".

Most children would prefer to receive merchandise like balls, tops, and hoodies from sponsor companies. Most children would still like and use the merchandise even it had the sponsor company's branding on it. Children's preference for merchandise is demonstrated in these quotes: "no, it [sponsor logos] doesn't really make any difference to just ones with Nike on or something like that" (Child 11), "I wouldn't mind at all because a shirts a shirt and free stuff's free stuff" (Child 12), "I would like if it was anything [company logo] [be]cause, it would, it would promote them" (Child 23), "I'd still like it, [be]cause, like it, it makes the ball look different to other balls, [be]cause normally that, they're just plain" (Child 25). For some children (Child 21, 34) the appearance of the company's logo was important in determining if it is something they would like; "I really like the colour red on a Soccer ball, so I'd go for like New World, that's why I'd like their Soccer ball over a different company" (Child 21). For other children (Child 16, 19), they would not like to wear a logo of a company they didn't like; "yeah, I probably want to wear it [top with McDonald's logo] a bit less [be]cause I don't like McDonald's [be]cause it's, [be]cause it's McDonald's" (Child 16). Child 14 was the only child who considered alignment with sport when discussing branded gear; "I think companies like McDonald's and stuff which isn't related to football um in many ways and it's more fast food. I think I wouldn't exactly like the entire brand on the front of me because it doesn't represent like who I am as a football player". This sentiment was echoed by Parent 1 who felt branded sports gear was more appropriate than branded clothing; "it's much more of an

endorsement if you're wearing a t-shirt, an item of clothing rather [with a company logo], than using um, something [branded] that's got a purpose”.

Parents would like sponsors to make sport participation more accessible. Examples of how this could be achieved included sponsors providing uniforms, gear and equipment to clubs and subsidising fees. These suggestions come after many parents indicated the costs associated with participating in junior club sport are quite high. Several parents identified that some families would struggle to afford these costs and therefore sponsors could bridge this gap. This is shown in this quote from Parent 21

It would be nice for everyone to be able to join in, I guess it's yeah, sports, the um great leveller, it's, you know, something that everyone can participate in, you know, everyone can contribute something to the team. So it's, you know, I feel sad if people were left out because of that [sport related costs]. And I think if sponsors, if sponsors are looking for a way to, you know, can do something really useful and good. That [making sport participation more affordable] would probably be it, I guess.

One parent identified that sponsor support should be individualised to what each team needs to ensure resources are not wasted. In a similar train of thought, other parents identified that scholarships or targeted support for families who may not be able to afford the costs associated with participating in club sport would be a way sponsors could better support junior sport (Parent 09, 21, 31, 34).

This study established that participants would prefer to receive sports equipment, branded merchandise, and activity vouchers over food vouchers. This suggests participants were ambivalent when receiving food related rewards for sport participation. Lack of satisfaction with food related rewards was frequently associated with the perception that they did not contribute to sport participation. Preference for vouchers offering sports associated equipment, etc., were perceived as adding value to their sporting endeavors. Other studies have also confirmed that vouchers or discounted food and drink are more commonly provided to players by food and beverage sponsors than non-food sponsors (Gonzalez, 2020; Kelly et al., 2010). A move away from food and beverage sponsors in junior sport would allow for sponsor involvement, including the provision of product, to be more aligned with what the parents and children in this study would prefer.

Inappropriate sponsors for junior sport

Sponsors considered by child study participants as inappropriate for junior sport tended to incorporate companies with no direct alignment to sport. For example, banks, hardware stores (including Bunnings and Mitre 10) and car dealerships were identified by children as misaligned with sport. In such cases these types of sponsors were opting to utilise sponsorship to market their company and associated products through sport (Batty et al., 2016; Carter et al., 2013; Cornwell, 2020). However, the children struggled to identify the link and purpose between sport and the sponsoring company's products/services, thus questioning the appropriateness of the relationship.

Alcohol and tobacco

Although this study excluded alcohol sponsorship, participants raised some noteworthy points in conjunction with wider discussions on appropriate junior sport sponsorship. In comparison to children, parents were more concerned with the age-appropriateness of sponsor products when considering the suitability of a sponsor. Age-inappropriate sponsor products were identified by study participants as mostly alcohol (n=18) and tobacco (n=10) with vape, adult entertainment and guns also being mentioned. Such sponsor products were primarily identified by parents. One child described alcohol sponsorship as bad “[be]cause that's kind of like influencing kids to drink. But on an adult team, that wouldn't really matter [be]cause they're adults and they can do what they want” (Child 22). Reasons given by parents included; “beer companies sponsoring sport, especially for you know children, or even sort of young adults, it, it gives perhaps the wrong impression that um, these things are actually quite good for you. [Be]cause otherwise why would the sport be accepting a sponsor” (Parent 42), and

the alcohol, the tobacco, those kinds of things...the thing is, you're trying to get them into good habits, aren't you. You're trying to kind of form a, a work ethic, you're trying to form a sports, a habit, a, a good kind of team building, those kinds of things... so anything that I suppose doesn't tow that line ... that works against that, is a bit more questionable (Parent 11).

These reasons suggest parents believe sponsorship by alcohol companies at the junior level would have influences on future usage and health outcomes.

Parental opinion on the harms of alcohol sponsorship in junior sport further supports the conclusions of previous studies that have reviewed the specific impacts of alcohol sponsorship. A systematic review by Brown (2016) notes a positive association between alcohol sports sponsorship and increased drinking amongst both adults and school age children. Parental support for restrictions on alcohol companies sponsoring junior sport has been demonstrated in Australian parents (Kelly et al., 2012, 2013).

Non-alcoholic beverages

A number of beverages were also identified and discussed by study participants in relation to the appropriate alignment with sport. These included the likes of Coca Cola, sports drinks (including Powerade and Gatorade), as well as additional sugar sweetened beverages. Parent participants noted that sports drinks are not necessarily required by junior players and, in turn, were considered an inappropriate sponsor. For example, “very few people actually need that amount of sugars or anything...you've got to train pretty hard to . . . need that sort of thing” (Parent 1). Comparatively, child perceptions of similar products differed from those of the parents. When asked what food and drinks they thought they should have when playing sport, some children identified sports drinks. One child’s response was; “definitely some sort of energy drink, like Powerade, because we kind of run out of energy ... especially when next year ... we're playing the full court, we need some sort of source of energy to play.” (Child 36). Another said Powerade provides “good energy hydration for sports” (Child 29). A factor to consider in this light is the environment children are exposed to in certain sporting situations. One parent (Parent 23) highlighted such a situation when describing their club rooms as displaying sports drinks at the concession stand

it's being sold front and centre at our Rugby club, and they see the older boys and the older girls like the older kids that are, that they aspire to become, um our premier teams at the elite, at the club and stuff, they see these guys with, with Powerade's and Gatorade's um, it, it becomes in their psyche, um something that sportsmen drink

Child participants living in New Zealand aged 10-12 years old in research by Smith et al. (2014) agreed with the observations of Parent 23 that the “sport-related availability and promotion” (p. 214) of beverages not recommended by the MoH for daily consumption, including sports drinks, makes them more attractive and consequently more likely to be purchased and consumed.

Alternatively, another parent suggested child perceptions of particular sponsors products were influenced by elite level sport. “You [have] got 10 year old kids thinking they need [the sponsors product] to play sport. And that's not the local club that's doing that.” (Parent 27). An example in this case, could be the All Blacks alignment with Powerade and Gatorade (Thornton, 2016). The relationship between the All Blacks and Powerade was noted in previous New Zealand research assessing children’s views on food marketing (Signal et al., 2019). The recognition of Powerade and its association with the All Blacks shows children are aware of elite level sponsorship. However, research conducted by Kelly et al. (2011b) that suggests children are more influenced by the sponsors of their own teams rather than elite level teams.

Restrictions and policy

Identifying a need for sponsorship restrictions and sponsor boundaries

Most parents felt there was a need for restrictions on who can sponsor junior sport. Some parents felt restrictions were only required for age inappropriate products like alcohol and tobacco, (Parent 21, 22, 25, 34), with one parent also identifying coffee as age inappropriate (Parent 32). Some parents likened food and beverage sponsorship to alcohol and tobacco sponsorship which are restricted in New Zealand. This is shown in these quotes; “I guess they stopped alcohol and tobacco sponsorship a while back, didn't they. And I think that's, that was very appropriate. You've got to wonder if we've got to do that with, with sweet food as well” (Parent 16).

if you're [going to] say that, actually, you know, big ... sports teams and stuff shouldn't be sponsored by alcohols, tobacco, then actually, for junior sport, you probably shouldn't have um junk food, alcohol, anything like that, that's negative for kids really. (Parent 18).

When discussing restrictions, parents recognised that the relationship between sport and sponsors is complex. They identified that sponsorship restrictions may reduce the sponsor funds available to clubs impacting on participation. This is summarized by Parent 27 and Parent 31

you can make a moral judgment as to whether um the, you know fast food companies should be sponsoring sports. But as part of that judgment, you've

got to factor in, well what's the greater good, what if it's taken away and it's not replaced. (Parent 27)

I know that McDonald's is, is relatively involved in sponsoring sport ... so, getting that money from elsewhere might be more difficult. So in an ideal world, it'd be good if they weren't allowed to be associated with young kids. But um, in reality, I think it's just one of those necessary evils. (Parent 31)

The importance of sponsor funds for sport delivery is why some parents felt there was no need for sponsor restrictions; “to me, it's all about the support. So you know, whether it's McDonald's or um, Adidas ... no restrictions whatsoever” (Parent 19), “do I have a problem with McDonald's sponsoring junior football? Absolutely not ... [as] far as I'm concerned, take their money, they're a multinational company” (Parent 34).

When asked what restrictions should look like, parents were often general in their responses with most echoing themes from earlier discussions about appropriate sponsors. They expressed a preference for sponsors to be community-centric, have a positive influence and contribute towards health. This is shown in this quote from Parent 18

I guess it's just not, not having ... not a bad sponsor, but um, yeah, not having, well having a good sponsor instead like having a, a positive healthy um. I think with, with all the, with all the kids and obesity and all that sort of stuff. And it's, you know, it starts young kind of thing, then, you kind of, I guess you want to kind of counteract that really young. And you have some positive messages in there.

Some parents identified the visibility of sponsor marketing as an area for restrictions to be placed. “Maybe it needs to have a compromise of, of certain rules around when it becomes, when it [sponsor marketing] is visible and when it's not visible maybe. Maybe under a certain age it's not, can't be visible” (Parent 9), “probably the first step would be those sort of enticing offers to try and draw them into their establishments. So things like those coupons ... I wouldn't mind if those were, were outlawed” (Parent 31)

I don't know how, how you'd work it when someone walked up with a great big fat check for these clubs that are struggling to make it work. And it happened to be Coca Cola. I don't know what you do about that. Maybe you tell Coca Cola that they have to keep their beverages and um they keep their beverages out of you know, they're we're not going to give them free drinks and stuff. They can have their logo, maybe. (Parent 23).

Parental support of sponsor restrictions is consistent with the findings of three Australian studies that also showed parents would support food and beverage sponsorship restrictions in the junior sport setting (Gonzalez, 2020; Kelly et al., 2012, 2013). Some parents in this study, expressed their support for unhealthy food and beverage company restrictions. However, the majority identified alcohol and other age-inappropriate products as items that should be banned from junior sport sponsorships altogether. Parents with reservations about food and beverage sponsor restrictions cited the financial implications on sport, suggesting that such restrictions may not be feasible. These comments are in line with the views of sport organisers in existing research who felt rejecting fast-food sponsorship would limit their operation due to their reliance on sponsorship funds (Batty et al., 2016; Donaldson et al., 2019).

Enforcing sponsorship restrictions

Parents in this study identified sports organisations and the government as authorities that could impose sponsor restrictions. Some parents thought that sports clubs should adhere to sponsorship guidelines set out by sport governing bodies as shown in these quotes

Well, I think it should just come down to the club, I guess. Because each to their own. I think it should be, as a club, you should be, kind of left within reason to run your own club in a way that suits you and your demographic and your socioeconomic. Um, I suppose as a whole, like the Rugby Federation, and that should have um, you know, a sort of blanket criteria, but each club should be able to work within those parameters to how they need to. (Parent 25)

[New Zealand Football] should have guidelines around, around sponsorship in kids sports ... not a yes, no, you can't do this, you can't do that, but here are our guidelines, the, here are the recommended um, you know, things to think about when taking on sponsorship. And then it should be I guess, each club individually having the final say. (Parent 32)

This would allow for clubs to maintain some autonomy over sponsor selection and prioritise what is required for their individual club. Other parents felt restrictions would need to come from the government as they felt sports clubs would prioritise sponsor funds over sponsor alignment with sport. This is shown in these quotes

I think it would probably have to come right from um a government level probably ... money talks, and some of these massive companies can offer

these um clubs or sports or um places a lot of money to build stadiums to build club rooms to actually make it happen. And it doesn't matter I think, who fronts up, it just matters, you know. I think that there would, it would have to go right up to the top at a Government level, whether that's the Ministry of Health. (Parent 23)

I guess in an ideal world, the club itself should monitor that. But in reality, that's probably not going to happen. They'll just take whatever the easiest money is to get their hands on. Ah, probably at a government level, like they did with um, alcohol, cigarette advertising in sport. (Parent 31).

Additionally, other parents felt the government should be involved in junior sport restrictions from a public health perspective. As demonstrated in these quotes

[if] the government then put more money in to make up for any restrictions, or just to make sport more accessible for kids ... that would be a nice way of Government putting in some policy around um, obesity and childhood. (Parent 16)

They're [Ministry of Health], on one hand, trying to combat all these diseases, but at the same time, they could go in early intervention prevention, and actually do some thinking about how they get in instead of McDonald's ... to promote the positive, positive messages ... like Smokefree Aotearoa on the front of your shirt would be an awesome thing to be walking around with. (Parent 18)

Alternatively, a common theme in interviews with parents was personal responsibility and informed choice. This contrasted the views above about sport being a setting for public health initiatives. Some parents felt it was their responsibility to educate their child about the occasional foods they are exposed to at sport. This is shown in these quotes

Excluding a sponsor simply because they're unhealthy, I think is just a little bit naïve ... kids are going to want KFC, kids are going to want McDonald's ... as a parent, you can still say, you can have that once a month. (Parent 34)

You still need to take responsibility what you feed your children, you know, you can't just say, oh, McDonald's ... sponsors my child when they was five in the Football club, and now he's 25 and overweight ... just because they're sponsored doesn't mean that they make you an unhealthy human being. (Parent 35)

I think if you've got parental guidance on it that says ... that's an okay thing, but only in moderation um. I don't think it's bad thing. But I guess the problem is not every family has that moderation part to it. (Parent 36)

There's lots of other things that, that can help people make better um food choices like education and, you know, the government stepping in and, um you know, there's healthy food programmes in schools and stuff like that, you know, like, I, I feel like that there's other solutions rather than saying McDonald's shouldn't sponsor sport. (Parent 39)

This study confirmed that sport organisations and the government are perceived as authorities that could be responsible for sponsorship restrictions in junior sport. Furthermore, some parents felt sport organisations (clubs and sport governing bodies) are best placed to implement restrictions. This is because they know what their individual club or sporting code needs. Interestingly, this is not consistent with the findings of (Gonzalez, 2020) who reported that most parents did not believe that clubs should be responsible for restricting fast food sponsorship in sport.

Similar to the findings of Batty and Gee (2019) and Kelly et al. (2012), this study highlights that some parents believed restriction of this nature would need to come from a government level. The New Zealand Government could utilise their involvement in sport sponsorship restrictions as an opportunity to achieve the objectives outlined in the MoH Childhood Obesity plan (Ministry of Health, 2017).

One of the key findings from this study was the view held by some parents that exposure to unhealthy food marketing is separate to consumption decisions following such exposure. In this case respondents argued that the responsibility lies with the individual. This view assumes that knowledge is the only factor contributing to making healthy choices. However, food choice is multifactorial and in relation to sport sponsorship, studies have shown food advertisement can increase food consumption, even of foods that differ to the product being advertised (Bragg et al., 2018).

Conclusion

Sponsors deemed appropriate by children to sponsor sport needed to have a direct link to sport participation and delivery, with sportswear retailers a commonly discussed option. Perspectives on the appropriateness of fast-food companies as sponsors differed amongst the

children. Children who liked the company's food deemed them an appropriate sponsor, while other children identified the misalignment between fast-food and sport, feeling it was not an appropriate sponsor.

Parents were united in the opinion that R-18 products and activities such as alcohol and tobacco are inappropriate sponsors for junior sport. Some parents also identified sugar sweetened beverages as inappropriate sponsors with Powerade, and Gatorade also being mentioned in this category. Parents felt there was a need for restrictions on who can sponsor junior sport with many supporting restrictions on age-inappropriate products. Some parents also felt restrictions on fast-food sponsors was necessary while others weren't concerned about the implications of 'unhealthy' food and beverage company sponsors, citing everything in moderation. Overall, parents recognised the complexity of sponsorship funding and how often less-desirable sponsors are required for sport to be delivered. It was clear parents valued children playing sport and did not want restrictions to impact participation rates. Parents identified sports clubs, sport's governing bodies and the government as potential sources of sponsor restrictions. If the government were to step into the sport sponsorship setting, they could use sport as a medium for health promotion e.g., preventing childhood obesity or Smokefree Aotearoa 2025.

This study provides an up-to-date look into the sponsorship setting that exists within junior sport through assessing the perspectives of a sample of parents and children within the Auckland sporting community. This has allowed for the formulation of a set of informed recommendations designed to assist junior sport facilitators to improve future sponsor alignments. The study is a starting point in terms of exploring food and beverage sponsorship of youth sport within New Zealand. Such information will assist in the development of future sponsorship policies and guidelines, particularly in the current climate with childhood obesity a pertinent issue. Future research, pertinent to this study, will extend to other regions of New Zealand. In alignment with the broader topic of appropriate sport sponsorship, further research could include additional sporting codes that are not team based or take place over the summer season, a broader age range including adult sports players, and the perspectives of sport organisers.

Chapter 4 – Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study explored how food and beverage sponsorship in junior sport is perceived by child participants and their parents/caregivers. The main objectives of this study were met through the facilitation of 25 qualitative interviews conducted with Auckland-based parents and children who were currently engaged in a Winter team sport. Conducting qualitative interviews allowed for the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of this key stakeholder group to be obtained and compared with existing literature on sport sponsorship. The richness of the data that was collected highlighted the complex relationship between sport and sponsorship arrangements and allowed for recommendations to be formulated to inform future sponsor alignments.

When discussing appropriate junior sport sponsors, children were supportive of companies whose products were linked to sport. For example, children felt sportswear retailers were appropriate sponsors but were less certain about hardware stores like Bunnings and Mitre 10. Parent and child opinions on fast food were split. Some cited their personal enjoyment of the food products as a reason for them being a good sponsor, whilst others recognised the misalignment of unhealthy foods with sport. Some parents and children expressed a preference for healthier food products as these are more in keeping with sport and its values. Other parents adopted an ‘everything in moderation’ attitude towards unhealthy food sponsorship with some expressing it is their personal responsibility to educate their child about food choices. Parents agreed with children that sportswear retailers were appropriate sponsors. They also expressed a preference for companies like banks and technology companies, as well as businesses that were part of the local community, for example a local builder.

Children and parents expressed a preference for receiving activity vouchers and merchandise over food vouchers. These items were favoured over food vouchers as they are more in line with sport/can be used at sport, are an experience the whole family can enjoy, and are more long lasting. Most children would still like, and wear, merchandise if it had sponsor company logos visible on it. Parents wanted sponsor involvement to enable sports to be more accessible to children. In addition to merchandise, some parents thought sponsors could

target those who may not be able to afford to play rather than blanket sponsorship at the club level.

Most parents felt there was a need for restrictions on who can sponsor junior sport. Many supported restrictions on age-inappropriate products with some extending this to include fast food. Parents recognised the relationship between sponsor funds and sport delivery is complex and although many expressed a preference for restrictions, many did not want this to compromise sport delivery and participation. Some parents felt sports clubs and sport's governing bodies should impose sponsor restrictions whilst others felt this was the government's responsibility. Two parents suggested sport sponsorship could be used by the government as a setting for health promotion to address childhood obesity or Smokefree Aotearoa 2025.

The findings of this research are consistent with the current literature that sponsor fit is used to judge the appropriateness of a sponsor (Cornwell, 2014) which is why children think healthy products are more appropriate sponsors (Signal et al., 2019), that parents feel more positively about healthier food brand sponsors than unhealthy food brand sponsors (Scully et al., 2020) and consequently would support sponsor restrictions (Donaldson & Nicholson, 2020; Kelly et al., 2013).

This research has further contributed to the literature by providing insight into the attitudes and opinions of children and parents who are members of the Auckland sporting community towards food and beverage sponsorship in New Zealand. This research has addressed a noted gap in the literature examining child and parent perceptions of sport sponsors in New Zealand. Although some studies have taken place in New Zealand, they were limited to website analysis (Carter et al., 2013; Maher et al., 2006) were not focussed on junior sport sponsorship specifically (Signal et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2014), or were undertaken with sport organisers (Batty & Gee, 2019; Carter et al., 2019). Most of the existing research has been done in Australia and which is currently dominated researcher Bridget Kelly (Kelly et al., 2011b; Kelly et al., 2012, 2013). Although the results of this study support Kelly's findings, it acts as evidence to support future research and the development of sponsor restrictions in New Zealand junior sport.

The current rules set out by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) include both how ‘occasional food or beverage products’ are included in advertising including sponsorship advertising. In relation to sport, the code specifies the focus needs to remain on the activity and not the sponsor and that the composition of the audience (amount of children) should be taken into consideration (Advertising Standards Authority, 2017). As shown by the perspectives of parents in this study, there could be benefit from the development of sport sponsorship specific guidelines pertaining to who sponsors junior sport and how they are involved. With the current ASA codes, children are still exposed to ‘unhealthy’ sponsor advertising at sports clubs in the form of redeemable vouchers and branded merchandise. Sport New Zealand has a Sponsorship and Donations Policy (Sport New Zealand, 2020b). This policy however is not specific to unhealthy food and beverages. As parents in this study expressed their preference for ‘healthy’ food and beverage sponsors, sport-related company sponsors or large business e.g., banks, as sponsors, these forms of regulation could be updated to target ‘unhealthy’ food and beverage sponsors, restricting their involvement or preventing them from sponsoring junior sport entirely. However, these are both examples of industry self-regulation which may not be effective at protecting participants from ‘unhealthy’ sponsorship marketing (Dixon et al., 2019). Especially when sponsorship funds are so sought after by sports clubs. This suggests government level regulation may be required.

Government level policy to prevent some companies from sponsoring sport has already been done successfully in New Zealand with tobacco in the 1990’s following the Smoke-free Environments Act 1990. At this time the Health Sponsorship Council was founded to replace the sponsorship funds previously provided by tobacco companies (Trainor, 2008). As concerns for the viability of sport with food and beverage sponsor restrictions is apparent in this research and others in New Zealand (Batty & Gee, 2019; Carter et al., 2013), a similar model may be required if ‘unhealthy’ foods and beverages are to be targeted. As there is a high prevalence of childhood obesity in New Zealand (Ministry of Health, 2021a), such guidelines could be developed in conjunction with the MoH as part of the broader childhood obesity plan. This would help to restore sport to the health-promoting setting that it is and support the MoH’s population health goals.

Strengths and Limitations

The research conducted for this thesis solely took place in Auckland. Placing such a geographic parameter on the study enabled the researcher to better manage the data collection and analysis requirements within the time frame and expectations of her 90-credit thesis. Although case study findings are difficult to generalise (Gomm et al., 2000), case studies offer a holistic analytical approach that focusses on human behavior and provides detail (Gerring, 2007; Swanborn, 2010). Of note, this study was designed as a starting point, with future research opportunities extending to similar analysis across other regions within New Zealand.

Several strengths of this research are noted. The age range of the children interviewed (i.e., 8–13-year-olds) resulted in a range of perspectives being gathered as age affected the children's exposure, preferences, and priorities. Most children were able to articulate and independently express their opinions on sport sponsors. The children recruited played a wide range of winter sports. This diversity provided details of the sponsorship arrangements present in a variety of sporting codes. Additionally, several parents were involved either in the sports industry, the running of their sports club, or coaching/managing their child's team. This provided unique insight into industry and club specific factors that affect sport sponsorship.

A number of research limitations were also noted. First, the geographic distribution of participants was restricted by the schools and sports clubs that agreed to distribute the study advert. Consequently, almost half of the participants were situated on Auckland's North Shore. Second, children were interviewed with their parent/caregiver present. It is acknowledged this may have limited the children's ability to share thoughts freely, however in most cases prompts from parents enriched the discussion. Some children who were younger or more reserved struggled to answer the interview questions and had minimal engagement with the researcher directly. Conducting interviews online allowed participants to participate in the study from their home, the internet connections were often intermittent, thus limiting rapport free-flowing communication between the interviewer and interviewee. Although participants were initially attempted to be recruited through schools, feedback from parents and schools was that sponsorship arrangements were not present in school sports teams. This meant the results of this study are specific to clubs, this focus could have been

defined at the outset of the research and may have made participant recruitment more successful. Most children participated in football which has McDonald's as a sponsor, therefore sponsor arrangements were similar amongst this group. Extending beyond winter team sports to all team sports could have yielded greater diversity in sponsor companies and arrangements, providing more insight into the New Zealand sport sponsorship setting. It may have also helped with generating greater cultural diversity amongst participants as different sporting codes are popular amongst different ethnic groups. Ethnicity was not a recorded measure in this research however most participants were noted as being of New Zealand European descent. This may have narrowed the range of perspectives gathered. Similarly, this study was unable to recruit from a range of school deciles with all but one participant attending a decile 6-10 school. This suggests most participants lived in areas with a higher socioeconomic status. Priorities may differ between communities based on their level of deprivation which may in turn affect their beliefs regarding sponsor restriction. For example participants in this research were largely ambivalent about the receipt of food vouchers, for other families, food vouchers may hold a higher value. The level of homogeneity amongst this sample may mean not all perspectives on this topic have been captured. Future research could extend upon this study by including a larger geographic area, a greater variety of sporting codes, and recruiting a greater number of participants.

Recommendations

Junior sport organisers, such as sports clubs, should take interest in what sponsors they chose to align with. It is recommended they prioritise, and seek out where appropriate, sponsor companies that align with sport and the values of the sporting community. Participants in this study identified companies that produce healthy food and beverage products, or products that assist with sport delivery and participation, or their business is community centered as appropriate sponsors. This could be achieved at the national, and local level. National Sporting organisations like New Zealand Football and Sport New Zealand develop guidelines like Sport New Zealand's Sponsorship and Donations Policy (Sport New Zealand, 2020b), that stipulate the types of companies they align with and/or the nature of the arrangement (what is provided to players). This would result in these organisations seeking sponsorship arrangements with 'healthy' food and beverage companies, sports retailers, or large companies like banks, rather than fast food companies. This has been achieved already by Netball New Zealand who is sponsored by ANZ. This shows these types of sponsorships are

available and suitable in the sport setting. These sponsorships trickle down to the club level and provide sponsor support to teams that may otherwise struggle to secure such sponsorships. Similarly individual clubs could also produce a set of sponsor guidelines that would inform sponsor alignments that are specific to that sports club and local sporting community. These guidelines could be formulated in collaboration with the sporting community to ensure their preferences and unique needs are considered.

Junior sport sponsorship could be an impactful setting for health promotion initiatives led by the New Zealand Government. Current policy regarding sponsorship by food and beverage companies comes from the ASA and pertains more to marketing. As shown in this research, children are receiving branded gear, certificates, and food vouchers to be redeemed in store from sponsors. Policy could be in the form of guidelines for sports clubs and sporting organisations around the types of food and beverage companies allowed to sponsor sports. It is recognised such restrictions may affect the viability of sports clubs. The government could invest in sport sponsorship and use it for promoting public health messages such as Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 or achieving objectives outlined in the Childhood Obesity Plan.

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**TELL ME YOUR THOUGHTS ON FOOD COMPANIES
SPONSORING JUNIOR SPORT**

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO Both you and your child will take part in a 60 minute interview with student researcher Ella.

WHERE AND WHEN We will talk over Zoom, at a time convenient to you.

BENEFITS By taking part, you will be contributing towards the development of recommendations for sport organisers about how sponsors should be involved in junior sport. A \$20 Prezzy e-gift card will be provided to all caregivers.

To take part or find out more, email student Dietitian Ella:
e.brouwer@massey.ac.nz



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This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 2: Participant Information sheet



Utilising Junior Participant and Caregiver Perceptions to Understand Food and Beverage Sponsorship of Sport

Participant Information Sheet

We would like to invite you to take part in this study which will look at what children, and their caregivers, think about food and drink companies providing junior sports teams with sport sponsorship. Interviews will take place online using Zoom software for video calling. Each interview will involve the caregiver and their child, and student researcher Ella Brouwer asking questions.

Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate.

Researcher Team Introduction

Ella Brouwer is a postgraduate student in the School of Sport Exercise and Nutrition at Massey University and is conducting this research as part of her Master of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics. This research is being supervised by Dr Rachel Batty who is a senior lecturer in the School of Sport Exercise and Nutrition and lead of the Sport Development programme at Massey University, and Dr Kathryn Beck who is a New Zealand Registered Dietitian and Associate Professor in Nutrition and Dietetics in the School of Sport Exercise and Nutrition at Massey University.

Why is this research important?

Sport has many benefits, especially for our young people. Playing sport keeps us healthy, allows us to meet new people and be part of a community.

Companies that sell food and drinks can help sports teams by giving them money to pay for things like balls and uniforms. They can also give teams certificates to give to the player of the day or give teams food and drinks. This is called sports sponsorship.

Some people worry, that if the company sells 'unhealthy' foods and drinks, it doesn't match sport, which is a 'healthy' activity. Research has found that sports sponsorship can affect how much children like and want to eat 'unhealthy' foods and drinks.

This study will find out what Auckland children and their caregivers think about food and drink companies sponsoring junior sport through online interviews.

To participate you should:

- ☐ Be a child, or caregiver of a child, who is between the ages of 8 and 13 years, and is playing a team sport this winter season. Children and their caregivers will be asked to take part in this research together.

Each caregiver will be provided with a \$20 Prezzy e-gift card for choosing to participate.

What is going to happen?

Participating in this study involves being interviewed by student researcher Ella. The interview will take approximately 1 hour and will be audio and image recorded. In the interview, children will be asked questions about the sports they play, what things they are given at sport, what food and drinks they like, and what they would like to get given at sport.



Caregivers will be asked about their views on the sponsorship of junior sport, how they manage any sponsor products their child is given at sport and what preferences they have for the involvement of food and beverage company sponsors in junior sport.

The interview will be conducted online, using Zoom video conferencing software. This allows you to attend the interview from a location of your choosing. You can access Zoom via a computer or mobile device. You do not need to make an account with Zoom, or download the app to attend the Zoom interview. I will email you a private link, clicking on the link will open Zoom in your internet browser, allowing you to enter the Zoom interview. When clicking on the link, Zoom may suggest you download the Zoom app if you don't have it already installed. This is up to you.

You will need a good internet connection for the Zoom interview to work well and not be delayed. You are not required to have your video turned on so your computer or mobile device does not need to have a webcam or front facing camera. You will be able to see me during the interview. You do not require headphones, as long as your computer or mobile device has a built-in microphone and speaker.

If you chose to have your video turned off during the recorded part of the interview, only your audio and the name you have chosen to be known as in the Zoom meeting, will be recorded.

What will happen to the information you provide?

All information collected during this study will be confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this project. To protect your privacy your real name will not be used anywhere. We will provide you with an anonymous ID code to label any information relating to you such as the transcribed information from the recorded interview, or any reports or articles produced. Access to any information that links your personal details to the ID code will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at Massey University and restricted to members of the research team.

After completion of the data collection, the study findings will be written up as part of the main researcher's Master of Science Nutrition and Dietetics thesis project. Results of this project may be published or presented at conferences or seminars. No individual will be able to be identified.

All audio and image recordings and transcripts will be stored electronically in a locked file within a password locked computer. Any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for 5 years, after which it will be destroyed. The project findings will be available to all study participants.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part in this study?

- ☐ You will be given a \$20 voucher
- ☐ You will be contributing to a study that will potentially inform future sponsorship alignments in junior sport.
- ☐ It is not expected that there will be any discomforts or risks to the participants as a result of participation.

Who is funding the research?

The School of Sport Exercise and Nutrition at Massey University.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you and your child have the right to:

- ☐ decline to answer any particular question;
- ☐ withdraw from the study within one week after the interview;
- ☐ ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- ☐ provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- ☐ be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Project Contacts

If you have any further questions or concerns about the project, either now or in the future, please contact:

Ella Brouwer, student researcher

E.Brouwer@massey.ac.nz

Dr Rachel Batty, main supervisor

R.Batty@massey.ac.nz

Associate Professor Kathryn Beck, associate supervisor

K.L.Beck@massey.ac.nz

Ethics Committee Approval Statement

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

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Thank you for considering participating in this study!

Appendix 3: Consent form



Utilising Junior Participant and Caregiver Perceptions to Understand Food and Beverage Sponsorship of Sport.

Interview Participant Consent Form

I have read or have had read to me in my first language and understand the Participant Information Sheet. I have had the details of this study explained to me, my questions have been answered clearly and to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given enough time to consider whether to take part in this study, I understand I do not have to participate, and I can stop participating in this study at any time.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound and image recorded over Zoom.
2. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet.
3. I understand that all the information I provide will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law, and the names of all people in the study will be kept confidential by the researcher.

Declaration by Participants:

Parent or Caregiver:

I _____ [print full name] hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Child:

N.B. As children participating in this study will be under the age of 15 and accompanied by their legal guardian or parent, approval must be provided by that legal guardian or parent.

I, _____ [print full name and relationship to child],
hereby consent for my child _____ [print full name] to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

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Appendix 4: Screening Questionnaire



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Questionnaire for Caregiver Participants

Your name	
Your child's name	
Relationship to child	
Email address	
Postal address	
Contact number	

How old is your child?

What school do they go to?

What team sport(s) are they playing this winter season?

Do they play at a club and/or school?

If applicable, what club(s)?

What suburb do you live in?

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Do you know if your child's team(s) or club is currently sponsored by anyone?

Do you know if your child's team(s) or club has previously been sponsored by anyone?

If so, by who?

Thank you for answering these questions

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Appendix 5: Participant characteristics

Child ID	Age (years)	Sex (M/F)	Parent ID	Sex (M/F)
Child 1	10	F	Parent 1	F
Child 7	11	F	Parent 7	F
Child 9	8	F	Parent 9	F+M
Child 11	8	M	Parent 11	F
Child 12	9	M	Parent 12	F
Child 14	13	F	Parent 14	F
Child 15	10	F	Parent 15	F
Child 16	11	M	Parent 16	F
Child 18	8	F	Parent 18	F
Child 19	8	F	Parent 19	F
Child 21	11	M	Parent 21	F
Child 22	11	M	Parent 22	F
Child 23	10	M	Parent 23	F
Child 25	9	M	Parent 25	F
Child 26	11	M	Parent 26	F
Child 27	10	M	Parent 27	M
Child 29	11	F	Parent 29	F
Child 31	11	M	Parent 31	M
Child 32	10	M	Parent 32	F
Child 34	11	M	Parent 34	M
Child 35	12	M	Parent 35	F
Child 36	11	M	Parent 36	F
Child 39	9	F	Parent 39	M
Child 41	10	F	Parent 41	M
Child 42	10	F	Parent 42	M

Appendix 6: Interview Discussion guide

Opening statement:

Hi *insert names here*, thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me today.

The questions I will ask you are about sport sponsorship.

I am interested in hearing what you both think about sports sponsorship of junior sport teams. I will use this information, along with the information I collect from the other interviews, to report back to clubs and sport organisers about how you think food companies should support sport.

How this interview will work is that I will firstly ask *insert child name here* some questions and then move on to talking to you *insert caregiver name here*. The information that you share with me in this interview will remain anonymous in my final report.

I'm really interested in hearing your thoughts and there are no right or wrong answers.

Did you have any other questions before we get started?

I will start recording this interview now, would you like to leave your camera on for the recorded part of the interview?

Questions for children:

Tell me about the sports you play at the moment?

Do you know much about sports sponsorship?

Sport sponsorship is when sports teams and clubs get money from companies to help pay for things like uniforms and gear or for the maintenance of the fields, courts and club rooms. Companies that sell food and drinks can sponsor sports teams and sometimes in addition to giving teams money, they will give the, things with the companies brand on it, or free foods and drinks

Do you get given free stuff at sports? (may ask specifically about equipment, clothing, certificates, vouchers or food and drink)

What about in other sports you used to play, did you get free stuff then?

Real sponsorship

Does this stuff have logos on it? What does that look like?

Does your team have 'player of the day'? What does the 'player of the day' get?

Do you do anything at the end of the season, e.g. team go out for a meal, prizegiving's

Do you get given food and drinks at sport? What kind of food?

What kinds of foods and drinks do you think you should have when playing sport? Why?

Where do _____ come from?

Do you like having _____ ?

How does having _____ make you feel?

Does it make you want to get player of the day more?

Do you eat/drink/use/wear what you are given?

Does having _____ make you want to /eat/drink/buy this more....

When you played 'x' sport in the past, what things were you given?

Hypothetical sponsorship

If you were going to be given free stuff when you are at sport, what products would you like to get?

E.g. vouchers, hoodies, drink bottle, balls, food

What food shops do you like going to?

Would like e.g. hoodies, drink bottle, balls, with a logo from *company above* on it or plain? Why?

How would you feel if you got free stuff from *company above* and then you moved to different sports team that didn't get given any free stuff?

How would you feel if you got given a voucher for fruit instead of McDonalds? Would you still use it?

If a McDonalds voucher was given to the player of the day, would it make you want to play better to try and be the player of the day?

What if the player of the day was a voucher for fruit or a snack bar?

Additional questions

When you are at the courts/field, do you notice any signs? What kind of signs?

What do these signs make you think about?

Do you think it is good that food shops help sport by giving them free things?
Why?

What types of food shops would be best to sponsor sport?
Why?

That was very helpful, thank you.

Has us talking just now made you think of anything else about sport or food that you would like to tell me?

That's all the questions I was planning on asking you, I will now talk to *caregiver* you are welcome to stay and listen or you can go and do something else and leave us to it.

Questions for caregivers:

How did you hear about this study?

Are you aware of any sponsors being involved in your child's sport at the moment or previously?

What kind of things are they given or have been given in the past at sport?

Real sponsorship

What do you do to with the stuff your child is given e.g. vouchers?

How else is the sponsor involved in your child's sport?

How do you feel about food and beverage companies sponsoring your child's sport?

How does your child perceive the sponsor?

Hypothetical sponsorship

Do you think the sponsor involvement sends mixed messages? How...

Does this sponsorship make you or your child want to eat/ drink/ buy the product...

Do you believe your child associates sport participation with sponsor brands and products?

Could this be harmful?

Additional questions

What types of sponsors do you think are appropriate for junior sport? Why?

What types of sponsors do you think are inappropriate for junior sport? Why?

In what ways do you think sponsor companies should support junior sport?

In what capacity should food and beverage sponsors be allowed to be involved in junior sport, if at all? Why?

Sponsorship is a reciprocal arrangement, what sponsor marketing is appropriate in junior sport? Why?

What sponsor marketing is not appropriate in junior sport? Why?

What would you do if your child was given/exposed to one of these things?

Should restrictions be in place regarding who can sponsor junior sport? Why?

What sort of restrictions should be in place, if any?

Would you support these restrictions if it increased the costs associated with your child participating in the sport?

Who should be responsible for imposing sponsor restrictions? Why?

How can junior sport be better supported by sponsors?

That's all the questions I have, is there anything else you would like to share?

Closing statement:

That brings us to the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your time and valuable input. I will take the recording from today and analyse it along with the other interviews. Would you like to receive a copy of this research when it is finished?