University of Southern Queensland

CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS
OF BRAND AUTHENTICITY
IN CAUSE-RELATED EVENT SPONSORSHIP

A Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Authenticity has been studied extensively in psychology and marketing literature. Likewise, corporate social responsibility has received increasing attention – both through scholarly interest and in practise as consumers demand companies demonstrate social goodness. Some companies have also realised there are additional benefits in communicating corporate social responsibility because it can help improve brand image and reputational damage. This is especially relevant in the financial services industry where the ongoing threat of cyber-attacks and data breaches, interest rate hikes and reported misconduct sours public opinion. The intended contribution of this work is at the nexus of studies on brand authenticity and corporate social responsibility, with cause-related event sponsorship providing a popular platform for brands to communicate their societal values. Its uniqueness lies in the consideration of the consumers' perception of brand authenticity and the need for consumers to pursue their own self-authenticating goals through participation in these events. Specifically, this multidisciplinary study investigates the relationship between perceptions of brand authenticity, self-authenticating goals, and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. Consumers residing in Australia who had participated in a cause-related event in the preceding three years were quantitively examined. The study answers several research enquiries with summative findings providing a way forward for companies at a time of increasing consumer skepticism about their profit-serving motives in sponsoring cause-related events. The findings firstly show there is a significant and positive relationship between the consumers' self-concordant goals, social identity and perceptions of brand authenticity. Secondly, a significant and positive relationship exists between perception of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes. It suggests that consumers must be able to meet their self-concordant goals and social identity requirements to generate co-creation outcomes. Independently, perceptions of brand authenticity also positively impact their generation of consumer-focused outcomes. The intention of this work is to offer sponsorship practitioners with a way forward to meet the growing consumer demand for social morality in general, and authenticity, more specifically, in cause-related event sponsorship.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I Caroline Campbell declare that the PhD Thesis entitled 'Consumer perceptions of brand authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship' is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Date: 11th October 2022

Endorsed by:

Associate Professor Melissa Johnson Morgan
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Associate Supervisor

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

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Chapter 1.1 - Introduction

This chapter outlines the rationale for the research and its contribution to the theoretical and managerial domain of cause-related event sponsorship. The background, purpose of the research, and justification for the importance of this work will be presented as well as the proposed design of the research and the research question. The chapter concludes with an outline of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Sports sponsorship is an increasingly important component of many marketing strategies (Fechner et al. 2022a). The global sports sponsorship market was worth an estimated 57 billion U.S. dollars in 2020 and is expected to grow to almost 90 billion U.S. dollars by 2027 (Gough 2021). Sponsorship has outpaced growth in other promotional activities such as advertising (IEG 2018b) largely due to benefits that include increased brand awareness (Fechner et al. 2022a), brand equity (Hsiao et al. 2021) and positive image transfer (Chiu & Pyun 2020). The context that sport offers has traditionally magnified these benefits due to its hedonic nature and allowed sport sponsorship to thrive as a marketing platform (Eddy et al. 2021).

One of the largest global sports sponsorship sectors is financial services (Alonso 2021). Financial service companies spent 6.92 billion US dollars in 2020 on sports sponsorship (Gough 2021). One reason for their growing interest in sports sponsorship can be attributed to the difficult market conditions in which they trade (Alonso 2021). The banking industry's shrinking physical footprint and consumer preference for digitisation and personalisation makes human connection difficult (Ahmad et al. 2021). Banks use sponsorship as a way to create human connection by connecting with consumer passions and interests (Scheinbaum et al. 2022).

One form of sports sponsorship is cause-related events (Daigo & Filo 2021). Companies are increasingly conveying their support for societal issues by sponsoring events that have a socially responsible mission (Close Scheinbaum, 2019; Pracejus, 2003). As an example, the Oxfam Trailwalker is a physical challenge event sponsored

by Deloitte, with teams of four walking 100 kilometres to raise awareness and funds in the fight against poverty.

Cause-related event sponsorship is a form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Kim & Lee 2019). CSR emphasises a company's obligations to society and stakeholders (Viererbl & Koch 2022). It is also a strategic business approach that provides companies with a competitive advantage (Cahill & Meenaghan 2013). Consumers are increasingly aware of a company's CSR activities (Viererbl & Koch 2022). While a company's support of societal goals can have positive brand effects for the sponsors of these events, studies have also shown negative brand effects when consumers doubt the sincerity of sponsors (d'Astous et al. 2020).

Foreh and Grier (2003) argue that consumer scepticism toward a company may also be driven by the perception the company is being deceptive about its true motives, not simply that the company's motives are self-serving. Many consumers perceive CSR to be a marketing ploy aimed at improving brand image, and question the claims made in the cause-related communications by some companies (Kim & Lee 2019). Overcoming consumer scepticism is necessary for companies seeking an emotional connection with their brands (Shankar & Yadav 2021) and to improve consumer-focused outcomes (Childs et al. 2019). How consumers view brand authenticity has become increasingly important to understand in both theory and practise (Fechner et al. 2022a). The opportunity is therefore ripe for this type of research that explores cause-related event sponsorship from a consumer's perspective.

Consumer behaviour research has shown that assessment of authenticity involves a very complex perceptual process (Kim & Lee 2019). When assessing the degree of authenticity, consumers observe various brand activations and subjectively judge them according to their own experiences and situations (Belk & Costa 1998). Further, Filo et al. (2010) showed that when consumers derive emotional, symbolic, and functional meaning from a cause-related event, their attitudes are more favourable towards the sponsors. To this end, exploring these antecedents is important because consumers rely on a range of perceptual cues to recognise the authenticity of brands

in cause-related event sponsorship (Guèvremont & Grohmann 2016; Guèvremont 2018).

An overview follows of a dominant category sponsor – the finance industry, along with a background on the growing consumer call for CSR; the growth of cause-related events as a CSR platform for companies looking to demonstrate their CSR; and consumer skepticism which undermine positive perceptions of brand authenticity. The call from scholars to understand the relationship between authenticity and cause-related event sponsorship is also provided to give context for the research.

Chapter 1.2 - Background

While practitioners are seeking to fulfil a range of marketing objectives through sports sponsorship, one of the most cited objectives is consumer-focused outcomes such as customer-brand engagement (Carvalho & Fernandes 2018; Wakefield et al. 2020). The realm of consumer-focused outcomes can differ greatly depending on the context of the study (Kumar 2020). Customer-brand engagement, as an example, is "expressed through varying levels of affective, cognitive, and behavioural manifestations that go beyond exchange situations" (Dessart et al. 2016, p. 409).

While physical cause-related event sponsorship settings remain relevant, many scholars now view sponsorship in a more digital and strategic way (Meenaghan 2013). Consumer-focused outcomes can be produced both on and offline given the increased reliance in sponsorship on digital and social interactions with consumers (Kumar 2020). Sponsorship activation, defined by Cornwell et al. (2005, p. 36) as: "collateral communication of a brand's relationship with a property", is widely viewed as one of the main ways to generate positive impact from a sponsorship (Kim et al. 2015). The nature of the sponsorship association, together with the manner in which it is leveraged, determines the performance of sponsorship in terms of a particular objective (Polonsky & Speed 2001).

Digital activation has grown significantly allowing sponsors to engage with consumers outside of the boundaries of a particular event (Weeks et al. 2008). Social media, in particular, has become a popular digital channel for leveraging sponsorships. Filo et al. (2013, p. 1) analysed the state of sport and social media research and acknowledged that social media has "profoundly impacted the delivery and consumption of sport". The ability to instigate direct brand engagement, both online and offline with consumers, makes sports sponsorship a highly sought-after marketing platform for brands (Delia & Armstrong 2015).

One of the most dominant sponsor categories is the financial service sectors. Banks, in particular, have embraced sports sponsorship as a means to engender themselves with consumers (Golob et al. 2019). Market forces and changing consumer behaviours means they are less likely to visit branches which is evidenced by the number of branch closures (Tang 2019). The four major retail banks in Australia closed 350 branches between January 2020 and December 2021 as the shift to digital gained pace (Frost 2021).

Branch closures and rapid digitisation is also a reflection of the changes in consumer preferences and behaviours (Raza et al. 2020). The inconvenience of switching and moving accounts to another bank, coupled with the infrequent opportunity for face-to-face interaction means banks are looking for other ways to deepen their connection with consumers (Deigh & Farquhar 2021).

Sports sponsorship has been embraced by the banking industry because it provides the opportunity to connect with consumers on an emotional level (Alonso 2021). Sponsors are seeking to adopt the emotional attachment or engagement that consumers have with sport and associate it with their brands which have little emotive appeal (Sheth & Babiak 2010). As such, global figures show spending by financial services on sport sponsorship far exceeds any other sector (Gough 2021) as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 – 2020 Sports sponsorship spending worldwide (in billion US dollars)
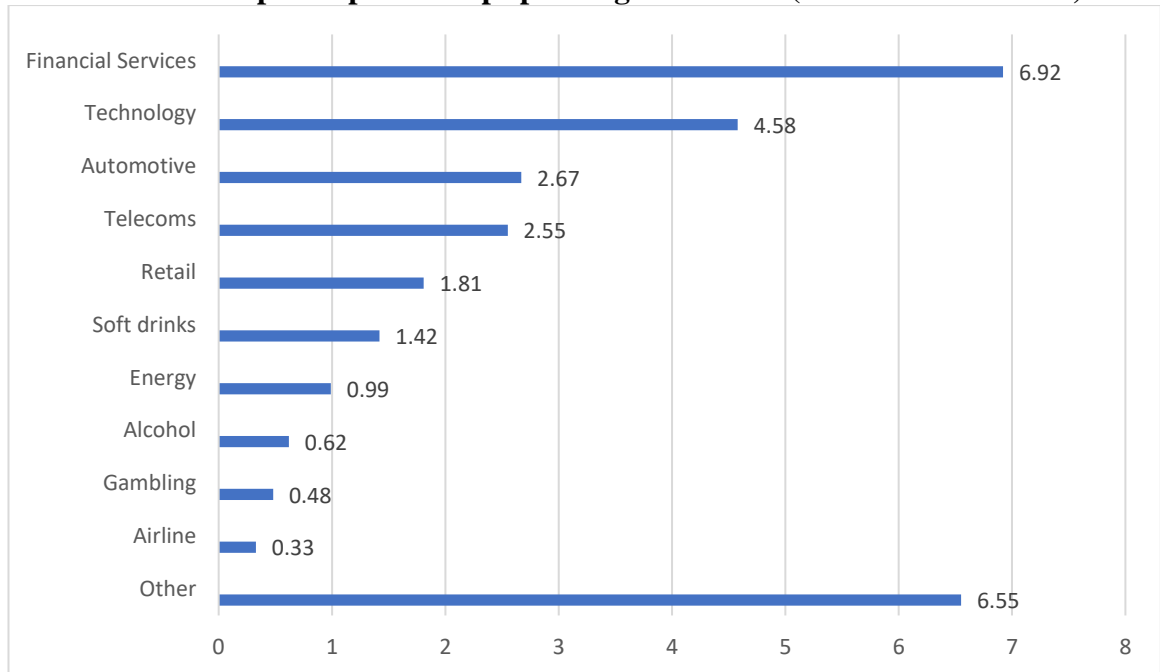
Source: Gough (2021)

Cause-related event sponsorship is a form of sports sponsorship that has become increasingly popular with the financial services sector (Fechner et al. 2022a). It has been argued that commoditised services such as financial, insurance and telco providers rely on cause-related event sponsorship because of its ability to deepen their connections with consumers (Alonso 2021). These events are typically open to the general public to register in and incorporate a novelty, physical challenge which participants use to promote awareness and fundraising for the cause (Filo et al. 2013).

This form of sponsorship is a popular platform for these service providers because of the homogenisation and digitisation of services (Alonso 2021). As such, the financial services industry is the largest investor in cause-related event sponsorship (Fechner et al. 2022a). It gives them relevance by aligning with consumer passions and interests (Cornwell & Kwon 2020). It's also been said that cause-related event sponsorship differentiates brands from competitors who may not be active sponsors of any cause or event (Wakefield & Rivers 2012). While these are compelling reasons for sponsoring cause-related events, further exploration of literature on the banking industry, in particular, reveals other reasons for the growing reliance on cause-related event sponsorship.

For several years the Australian banking industry has been plagued by scandal (Brueckner 2021) with allegations of fraud, deception, and money laundering to name a few of the issues (Hayne 2019). Media reports on misconduct and mounting pressure from the public paved the way for a Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry (Hayne 2019) further reinforcing the need to improve their brand image (Chiu & Pyun 2020).

The inquiry unearthed systematic breaches of corporate law by the banks as well as a failure to comply with statutory reporting responsibilities and impropriety in foreign exchange trading (Hayne 2019; Brueckner 2021). Other breaches included fees without service and inappropriate advice and conduct in the "pursuit of short-term profit at the expense of basic standards of honesty" (Hayne 2019, p. xix). Reputationally, the banking industry has been at its lowest point which explains the interest in cause-related event sponsorship – an explicit form of CSR enabling brands to demonstrate their commitment to causes and to the community in a very public way (Alonso 2021).

Several authors also argue the rapid digitisation of the retail bank industry is another compounding reason for banks to seek social responsibility as a salvation to their problems (Shankar & Jebarajakirthy 2019; Raza et al. 2020). With sales and servicing activities increasingly managed by a digital interface, and COVID-19 expediting the move to cashless transactions, the old customer service models of banks have been challenged (Alonso 2021).

The challenge for the banking industry is to assert a digital presence, giving consumers convenience and accessibility, while not losing the human touch (Accenture 2018). According to Accenture (2018), consumers still need trust, reassurance and empathy from their bank of choice. It seems consumers want to experience the human touch at critical financial times in their lives yet they want the digital convenience for other transactions. This is why cause-related event sponsorship is compelling. Literature suggests financial services such as banks embrace cause-

related event sponsorship because of the opportunity to engage with consumers face-to-face (Lyes et al. 2016) in settings that also deliver brand exposure and communicate the brand's message (Alonso 2021).

Cause-related event sponsorship is also a form of CSR where companies signal their intention to address social and environmental issues, while demonstrating a commitment to be ethical and sustainable (Sung et al. 2018). Consumers have a growing expectation for brands to be socially responsible (Viererbl & Koch 2022). Social responsibility efforts were published by 90% of S&P 500 companies via a sustainability report in 2019, significantly up from 20% in 2011 (G&A Institute, 2020). Furthermore, an IBM survey in February 2022 of 16,000 global consumers found 49% had paid a premium (an average of 59% more) for products branded as sustainable or socially responsible in the prior year (IBM 2022). Understanding consumer scepticism about the sincerity of a company's motives is important because it can otherwise undermine its effectiveness of the cause-related event sponsorship (Scheinbaum et al. 2017).

To meet consumer demand, companies are increasingly turning their marketing efforts to cause-related event sponsorship (Close Scheinbaum, 2019; Pracejus, 2003). Companies are conveying their support for causes by sponsoring events with socially responsible dimensions (O'Reilly et al. 2019a). Amongst the largest and most popular cause-related events are those that raise funds for cancer, heart disease and children's health (Horning 2018). When sponsoring cause-related events, the sponsor associates itself with the event, the charity and the cause (O'Reilly et al. 2019a). As an example, in a charity run for diabetes research, the sponsor is associating with the run, the charity and the cause of disease prevention.

Cause-related event sponsorship gives brands a platform to collaborate with the rights-holder and charity, and its cause, for mutual benefit (Lyes et al. 2016). As part of this increased complexity, the sponsor must balance its business objectives with efforts to support the cause (Viererbl & Koch 2022). Scholars have shown that to impact consumer perceptions, brands must share with consumers why and how they are involved in socially responsible activities (Viererbl & Koch 2022). Activations

increase sponsor involvement which raises consumer awareness and knowledge of the event-sponsor link (Grohs & Reisinger 2014). Further, Viererbl and Koch (2022) show the actual amount of CSR activity undertaken may impact whether CSR communications are received positively or negatively by consumers.

There are typically 21,000 cause-related events attracting 3.4 million participants annually in Australia (AMPSEA 2020a). These events benefit over 2,500 charities with around $70 million Australian dollars raised through these events each year (AMPSEA 2020a). The financial services sector is one of the largest category sponsors (Alonso 2021).

A review of the major retail banks in Australia, often referred to as the 'Big 4 Banks', shows a range of causes being supported including social inclusivity; diversity; gender equality; domestic violence; health issues and homelessness. The causes are promoted by the banks to help communicate their environmental, social or governance impacts (often abbreviated as ESG) – an increasingly important requirement for all companies. For many companies, CSR has been a way to differentiate their products to achieve competitive advantage (Golob et al. 2019). It also satisfies consumer and investor demand with companies believing they are gaining social legitimacy (Scalet & Kelly 2010).

According to Close Scheinbaum et al. (2019), consumers who identify as fans of the sport are more likely to consider the event as socially responsible, which in turn directly contributes to sponsor patronage. For this reason, amongst others, the financial services sector in Australia has embraced sport and cause-related event sponsorship to combat market driven pressures (Shankar & Jebarajakirthy 2019).

Critics, however, view these efforts as 'CSR washing', calling out the falseness of CSR claims, when the agenda is driven by reputational and relational concerns (Raza et al. 2020). Consumer scepticism is more likely to occur when a company is perceived to use cause-related event sponsorship as an overt, self-serving marketing tool, rather than for substantially altruistic reasons (Plewa et al. 2015).

A common perception of CSR shared by consumers is that it is an insincere endeavour that companies use to bolster their reputation (Park & Levy 2014). Given this mounting consumer scepticism and increasing accounts of CSR-washing, some companies have been opting to limit or avoid explicit communications and publicity regarding their CSR involvement (Ettinger et al. 2021). It's been called 'greenhushing' where companies deliberately choose to remain strategically silent engage despite their CSR practices to ward off potential criticism and consumer and activist scrutiny (Ettinger et al. 2021).

The debate continues about the ramifications of cause-related event sponsorship for companies and whether authentic initiatives are possible (Pope & Wæraas 2016). Given the complexities of the consumers' response to cause-related event sponsorship, the challenge for companies is to express their authenticity in a way that distinguishes them from companies whose goals appear to be more profit-driven (Raza et al. 2020). Kim et al. (2019) suggest consumers are able to recognise certain conditions or evidence to determine a company's authenticity. d'Astous et al. (2020) found consumer perception of sponsors to be more sincere and legitimate if they have already supported the charity financially prior to sponsoring the event.

On the other hand, research also highlights the risk of overpromoting sponsorship of a cause-related event because it can result in an increased level of scepticism towards the sponsor (Chaudary et al. 2016; d'Astous et al. 2020). As such, companies, and the financial services sector in particular, would be well served to understand how consumers perceive the authenticity of their cause-related event sponsorship efforts, and what influences could work in their favour.

The complexities involved in achieving positive sponsorship effects have prompted scholars to investigate the intersection of various aspects of marketing with CSR (Viererbl & Koch 2022). The existing body of literature does not communicate how sponsors can use the unique combination of sport and charity to enhance consumer perception of authenticity (Fechner et al. 2022a). More specifically, despite Fechner et al. (2022a) finding consumers largely participate for charitable reasons, the existing body of literature does not provide recommendations for how this unique combination of sport and charity can be used to achieve consumer-focused outcomes

for the brands that sponsor these events (Fechner et al. 2022a). These findings exacerbate the need for and focus of this research which explores the intersection that perceptions of brand authenticity have on consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

This section has highlighted why sports sponsorship is an increasingly important marketing platform, especially for the financial services sector; how companies have responded to the consumer's call for CSR by turning to cause-related event sponsorship; and growing consumer scepticism about brand authenticity, which may be inhibiting consumer-focused outcomes for sponsors of these events. The influences discussed here support the general contention of this research that consumer perceptions of brand authenticity impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events.

Three related models, proposed by scholars in the field, shaped the direction of this research. Firstly, Wakefield et al. (2020) propose a consumer-centric model of sponsorship effects. They describe a three-step consumer-centric model where there are consequences for the interactions between the rights-holder, brands and consumers.

The model suggests the thoughts, feelings and actions of consumers mediate consumer-focused outcomes such as brand awareness, knowledge, loyalty, preferences, purchase intent and sales (Wakefield et al. 2020). While the role of the consumer is also the central focus of this study, Wakefield et al. (2020) does not consider the role of authenticity in producing these consumer-focused outcomes, nor the specific consumer-focused outcomes of cause-related event sponsorship.

A second related view has been provided by Beverland and Farrelly (2010) based on the notion that consumers actively seek authenticity to find meaning in their lives. Beverland et al. (2010) find that consumers are motivated to focus on particular cues in objects or experiences that convey authenticity for them and that this decision-making process is driven by a desire to draw different identity benefits (control, connection, virtue). In doing so, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) demonstrate that the

process of authenticating an object or experience is contingent on the consumer's goals.

While this research importantly links goals and authenticity to social identity, it is not specific to cause-related event sponsorship. Supporting the need to test authenticity in a cause-related event environment, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) along with other scholars (Arnould & Price 2000; Rose & Wood 2005; Leigh et al. 2006) acknowledge that the meaning given to authenticity is both context and goal dependent.

A third related view has been put forward by Cornwell (2019), where she proposes a sponsorship engagement model based on authentic engagement and characterised by the interactions between and individual authenticity of the rights holder and sponsor. Cornwell (2019) posits that perceived sponsor motive for engaging in sponsorship is a relational characteristic that is fundamental to engagement. She maintains that the characteristics of the rights-holder and sponsor contribute to the potential for relationship authenticity (Charlton & Cornwell 2019), just as brand authenticity, depends on continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism (Morhart et al. 2015).

Cornwell (2019) concludes enacting authentic engagement begins with the partnership decision and is followed by leveraging and activation investments. What is missing from the model by Cornwell (2019) is the consumer's role in determining authenticity for self and sponsors of these events. As such, this research responds to the call for advancement in the study of authenticity (Beverland & Farrelly 2010; Gunnell et al. 2014; Plewa et al. 2015; Cornwell 2019) by seeking the views of consumers in a cause-related event context.

Given the investment in cause-related event sponsorship globally and in Australia, it is important to have a better understanding of the relationship between the sponsor, consumer, rights-holder and charity. If we know certain sectors in particular (such as the financial services sector), invests in this type of marketing activity to be seen to be more authentic, then we also need to understand what role the consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity plays in producing consumer-focused outcomes.

The consumers' perception of brand authenticity has been tied in several qualitative studies to their need for self-authentication i.e., to define their identity (Arnould & Price 2000; Beverland & Farrelly 2010; Morhart et al. 2015). These authors have found that consuming authentic brands plays a significant part in the self-authentication process. More recently, work by Kuchmaner (2020a) suggests consumers use brands to self-authenticate their identity by meaning appropriation or meaning creation. Their need for self-authentication dictates which brands they choose with those selected based on which brands are perceived to be self-congruent and authentic (Kuchmaner 2020a).

Beverland and Farrelly (2010) prescribe to the notion that the process of authenticating an object or experience is contingent on the consumer's goals. They say the decision-making process is driven by a desire to draw different identity benefits from authentic objects and experiences. These findings have significant impact on the current research which will operationalise the study of the consumer's self-authentication goals and the possible influence these may have on perceptions of brand authenticity in cause-related events.

To summarise, cause-related event sponsorship has become an increasingly popular way for companies to demonstrate their CSR (Plewa et al. 2015; Yeoh 2021). It provides their brands with the opportunity to build awareness while improving image and attitudes towards the brand (Nair et al. 2021). Despite clear brand benefits, consumers are skeptical about the sincerity of these companies (Guèvremont 2018). A better understanding of how consumers view brand authenticity, as influenced by their self-authentication goals (Morhart et al. 2015), is required to improve the consumer-focused outcomes for sponsors of these events. Figure 1.1 provides a conceptual model of the research to illustrate its focus and its purported contributions to literature.

Figure 1.1 – Conceptual Model – Consumer perceptions of brand authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship
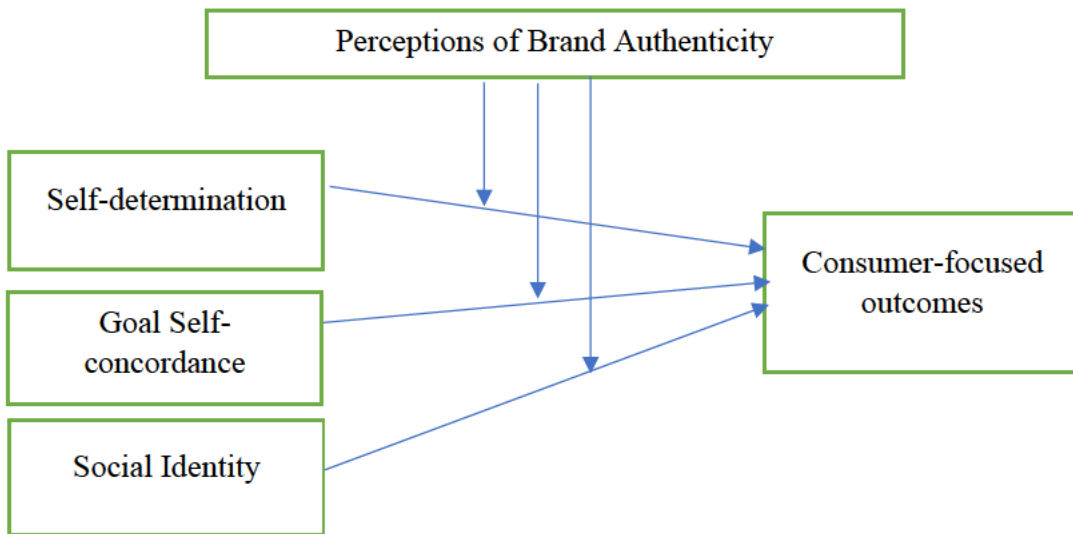
Source: Developed for this study

Chapter 1.3 - Purpose of the research

The purpose of this study is to address gaps in the known body of literature to explain the relationship between the variables under discussion. While recent studies have explored a range of consumer-focused outcomes (Sung et al. 2020a), perceptions of brand authenticity (Charlton & Cornwell 2019; Joo et al. 2019; Kim & Lee 2019; Popp 2020), as well as social identity (Kuchmaner 2020a), motivation to participate in cause-related events (Ko et al. 2017; Woisetschläger et al. 2017; Horning 2018; Mamo et al. 2019) and self-authentication (Arnould & Price 2000; Kernis & Goldman 2006; Beverland & Farrelly 2010; Morhart et al. 2015) none of these studies have examined the intersection of these concepts and whether a relationship exists between them.

This research intends to bridge the gap between the consumers' self-authentication goals, perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes to produce a new way of thinking that will better equip theory and the practise of cause-related event sponsorship. The findings of this study will be beneficial in providing an understanding of authenticity from a consumer perspective.

By providing a consumer perspective to the argument for brand authenticity, it gives practitioners a way forward in meeting consumer demand for CSR. This is important given the growing pressure by consumers for brands to demonstrate social responsibility (Chu et al. 2020) and the quick consumer response to delete brands that do not live up to social expectations (Chong 2017). Accordingly, this study is directed by the following research question: *How do brand authenticity and self-authentication impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship?*

To answer this question, this study considers the extant sponsorship literature on the relationships between perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes. CSR authenticity refers to consumer trust in how a company conducts its activities and is an essential factor influencing evaluations of authenticity (Kim & Lee 2019). Extant literature shows socially responsible companies are likely to be perceived as authentic, putting purpose before profit and contributing to society at large (Castro-González et al. 2019). While companies are increasing their commitments to cause-related event sponsorship (Palmer 2016), consumers are sceptical about the authenticity of their intentions (Chong 2017). Often these CSR efforts are viewed as marketing activities instigated for the purposes of improving company image or profit (Kim & Lee 2019).

A review of current literature has shown there is much research already on a range of consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship (Yeoh 2021). It has also been well documented that consumers participate in cause-related events to meet a range of self-determined needs (Bernhart et al. 2022). How these needs are met through cause-related events is partially explained by Wood and Masterman (2007) who argue that cause-related events are capable of creating a multi-sensory environment of emotional and cognitive involvement, as well as behavioural interaction and immersion. Other literature tells us that in cause-related events, the thoughts, feelings and actions of consumers as they process information from interactions with the rights holder and sponsors impacts consumer-focused outcomes (Yeoh 2021).

What we don't know is the relationship between the consumers' self-authentication goals; their perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. Thus, we advance three hypotheses to help answer the overarching research question. The first hypothesis is:

H1: Perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

Beverland et al. (2008) classified three types of authenticity as pure, approximate and moral. How the consumer identifies with a brand and its perceived authenticity is of particular significance where consumers in cause-related events may be seeking moral authenticity by aligning personal moral values with the event, the cause, and its sponsors (Beverland et al. 2008; Beverland & Farrelly 2010).

Södergren (2021) identified three streams of research on authenticity where it's either about distinguishing the 'real thing' from the fake; interpreting brand authenticity, especially when it is in doubt (Peterson 2005); and the subjective experience which describes one's state of being at a point in time (Luthans & Avolio 2003). Brand authenticity, from an experience standpoint, has little to do with the genesis of brand meaning, but rather how it makes the consumer feel (Arnould & Price 2000). This method is seen to be particularly useful when looking at self-referential elements of authenticity (Vannini & Williams 2009) where emotions are a critical component in the consumption process of authenticity (Illouz 2009).

Guèvremont (2018) further substantiates the active role of consumers in assessments of brand authenticity but warns brand consistency is critical if they are to be seen as genuine (Schallehn et al. 2014). More recently, Carroll et al. (2022) demonstrates a process from consumers' self-authenticity to perceptions of brand authenticity to purchase. They showed greater perceived brand authenticity was associated with greater brand loyalty and frequency of purchasing behaviour.

Perceived brand authenticity, according to Morhart et al. (2015) has four parts that consist of continuity (how true the brand is to itself), credibility (how true the brand is to consumers), integrity (its overall concern for society), and symbolism (how it supports consumers in being true to themselves). Authenticity has psychological, subjective, and symbolic significance, according to these four dimensions.

While the objective (relating to an object and its heritage (Napoli et al. 2014; Morhart et al. 2015)) and subjective (the socially constructed brand meanings as evaluated by consumers (Beverland & Farrelly 2010)) perspectives are interesting, it's the symbolism of brand authenticity that is most relevant to this research enquiry. What authenticity means is different for each consumer and is complex due to its subjective and contextual nature (Childs et al. 2019). The notion of authenticity is 'socially-constructed' where consumer perceptions depend on the situation and context (Beverland & Farrelly 2010).

Scholars agree authenticity is commonly perceived as multidimensional (Napoli et al. 2014; Morhart et al. 2015), however as Joo et al. (2019) put forward, there is still a need to better understand the dimensions of authenticity from a consumer's point of view within the CSR domain. Joo et al. (2019) developed a multidimensional scale of consumer-based authenticity with seven dimensions that include: community link, reliability, commitment, congruence, benevolence, transparency, and broad impact.

Recognising the importance of authenticity and how it assists consumers in being true to themselves, brands have responded in a number of ways. One of those is through CSR activities with cause-related sponsorship providing a fast-tracked way to demonstrate societal concern. Despite the growing reliance on brands to commit to cause-related programs, research in this space has been limited. Brand authenticity, according to Napoli et al. (2016), is a continuum where initially, the brand develops and controls their own narrative. The narrative soon moves from being internally directed to externally interpreted based on how the brand makes its consumers feel.

As such, this research proposes the consumer's self-authentication goals plays an important role in how they view the authenticity of brands in these events. The second hypothesis is advanced:

H2: The consumer's self-authentication goals significantly and positively impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events.

Self-authentication is broadly defined as the act of proving oneself to be real or genuine (Kernis & Goldman 2005). Scholars suggest there is a range of situations where consumers actively pursue self-authentication (Beverland & Farrelly 2010; Napoli et al. 2014). Cause-related events provide that platform for consumers because of the benefits of being seen to align with charity and socially desirable brands in a community-orientated event environment (Scheinbaum et al. 2017). As each event experience is unique, cause-related events and the brands that sponsor them may provide a versatile platform for consumers to express their 'true' self (Napoli et al. 2014; Pattuglia & Mingione 2017).

In such a situation, consumers focus on a particular cue or cues while disregarding others that do not serve their needs (Beverland & Farrelly 2010; Morhart et al. 2015). Rather than passively receiving certain information, they become an active consumer or co-creator of authenticity (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). The study of self-authentication, how it is achieved and what impact it has on perceptions of brand authenticity, will assist the overarching research question relating to consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

Self-authentication goals in this study are viewed through the lens of three related theories – self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity. This research favours a combination of the essentialist and existentialist perspectives as it appears there is a convergence between the theories on self-authentication such that an individual acknowledges the undercarriage of their less examined and innate true self, while at the same time, modifies their true self through consumption-driven behaviours. In this way, both nature and nurture play a role in who we are, who we want to be and the psychological needs that underpin this theory of self. Once those needs have been satisfied and wellbeing is experienced, the pursuit of self-actualisation becomes the focus. Each of these constructs will be detailed next.

Self determination

Within self-determination theory it has been stated that open awareness is particularly salient in enabling people to select behaviours consistent with their basic needs and beliefs (Deci & Ryan 1980, 2008a). At the core of SDT is basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) suggesting the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs, autonomy ("free to decide, express ideas and opinions, no pressure"), relatedness ("I like interacting with people, people care about me, mutual support"), and competence ("I am good at what I do, I feel a sense of accomplishment, I am learning interesting things"), "essential for facilitating optimal functioning of the natural propensities for growth and integration, as well as for constructive social development and personal well-being" (Ryan & Deci 2000).

A study by Heppner et al. (2008) provides further empirical support for a positive relationship between need satisfaction and authenticity. Their results provide support for self-determination theory with autonomy, competence and relatedness each uniquely related and that experiencing one's true self is integral to daily self-esteem (Heppner et al. 2008). While this research provides some empirical backing for a positive relationship between need satisfaction and authenticity, there are calls for further studies (Schmader & Sedikides 2018).

Goal self-concordance

Self-concordance enables a consumer to not only to achieve their goals, but to satisfy their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (dimensions of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan 2000) and ultimately obtain a lasting sense of well-being and fulfilment. The self-concordance model by Sheldon and Elliot (1999) attempts to account for both halves of this process: goal adoption and goal achievement, as well as the effects of goal achievement on well-being.

For Sheldon and Elliot (1999) goals are self-concordant when they are pursued because of either intrinsic or identified motivation. Internal motivation is generally the driving force behind attaining a particular personal goal (Rundio 2014). Consumers

develop a strong conviction in their own abilities and feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment when they attain their intended goal (Kazimierczak et al. 2019). Previous research indicates consumers pursue the consumption of authentic objects and experiences to meet these personal goals (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). These scholars state consumers derive distinct identity benefits from authentic objects by focusing on certain cues of the object are authentic to them.

The desire for control, connection, and to be regarded as virtuous, according to Beverland and Farrelly (2010), underpins judgments of authenticity. The study by Beverland et al. (2010) builds on prior research by examining the link between goal self-concordance and authenticating behaviours and the nature of brand authenticity. Their findings reveal that self-authentication is influenced by freedom, excellence, connection (being in the moment), and belonging.

Social identity

Social identity has previously been applied to help understand consumer attitudes and behaviours in a sports context. It also helps explain why the cause-related events remain popular for consumers as a way to build psychological connections. The often-quoted definition of social identity by Tajfel (1978, p. 63) is that it is: ''that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership''. This definition has also prompted a multidimensionality view of social identity that suggests we belong to multiple ingroups (Smaldino 2015).

Cameron (2004) developed a three-factor model of social identity suggesting that the concept can be represented through centrality (the amount of time spent thinking about being a group member); ingroup affect (the positivity of feelings associated with membership in the group); and ingroup ties (perceptions of similarity, bond, and belongingness with other group members). Meanwhile, Pattuglia and Mingione (2017) suggest consumers seek to reaffirm their social identity through having a high level of concordance with brands. They ascribe authenticity to a brand when the brand fits with their identity.

Although it is recognised that consumers seek to establish their identity by building emotional brand connections with authentic brands (Morhart et al. 2015), research by Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016) goes further. Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016) found that consumer attachment to authentic brands depends upon both situational variables such as the need to belong and the need to express the authentic self. Exploring how, if at all, the social identity of consumers alters the perceptions of brand authenticity will also assist answering the research question on consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. Given these findings, the third hypotheses is advanced:

H3: The relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is significantly and positively moderated by perceived brand authenticity.

Previous research suggests brand authenticity has a favourable influence on consumer perceptions (Nunes et al. 2021). As such, authenticity has been attributed with providing brands with a competitive advantage, especially when authenticity induces consumer-focused behaviours such as brand loyalty (Carroll et al. 2022). Morhart et al. (2015) found that brand authenticity increased the consumers affective response and word-of-mouth behaviour, while other academics found consumer trust (Moulard et al. 2016; Napoli et al. 2016); the perceived quality of the brand's products and services (Cinelli & LeBoeuf 2020); their relationship and intention to purchase (Pittman et al. 2022), as well as brand equity (Napoli et al. 2016) were all impacted by consumer perceptions.

Research shows consumers are more inclined to seek out authentic objects or brands that help them express their authentic selves (Oh et al. 2019) which often underpins their personal identity. This presents a unique opportunity for companies to position their brands, either explicitly or implicitly, as authentic (Nunes et al. 2021).

Several qualitative studies show that consuming authentic objects is an important means by which a consumer achieves self-authentication (Arnould & Price 2000; Beverland & Farrelly 2010). As an example, consumers of cause-related events

could amplify the charity aspect of the event to promote the self-idealised value of being benevolent. In other words, they would promote the components of the event experience that best meet their identity needs. Understanding authenticity through its motivational antecedents may provide greater clarity about the concept of brand authenticity as well as insights about how sponsors of cause-related events can leverage it to produce consumer-focused outcomes. Figure 1.2 provides a model of the hypotheses to further illustrate the focus of the investigation.

Figure 1.2 – Model of the Three Hypotheses
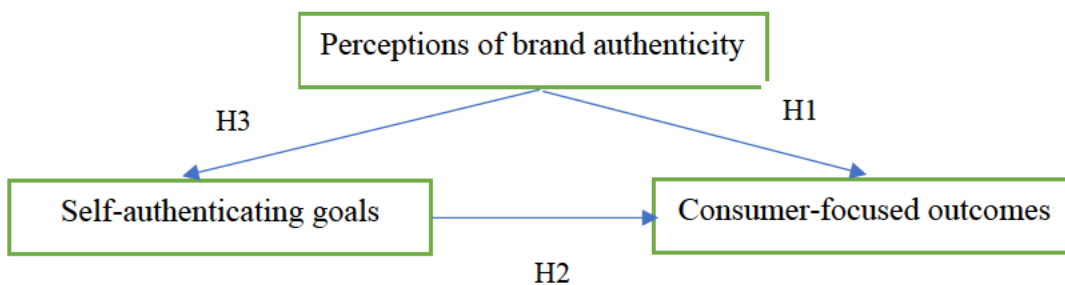
Source: Developed for this study

The proposed research will address the research enquiry through these hypotheses to provide insight into the relationship between the consumer's self-authentication goals; perception of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. This section has identified the research question and three research hypotheses that will guide the program of research and form the basis for data collection and analysis. The next section provides justifications for this research.

Chapter 1.4 - Justification for the research

This research is justified on two main grounds. Firstly, this study responds to the call for further investigation into the role of authenticity in sponsorship (Cornwell 2019). Given the growing investment in cause-related event sponsorship, so too must its sophistication to ensure it produces the desired brand outcomes (Yeoh 2021). It requires greater understanding of the antecedents that lead to perceptions of brand authenticity. Secondly, the role of consumers has not been properly considered, theoretically or practically, in cause-related event sponsorship. Evidence suggests that some consumers participate to support the cause, while others participate for the

physical challenge or for its social benefits (Bernhart & O'Neill 2019; Bernhart et al. 2022).

Either way, consumers are taking part in these activities to achieve certain outcomes or goals. These goals are mainly aimed at satisfying and producing long-term changes in well-being when they are self-concordant – meaning they reflect the interests and values of the consumer (Sheldon & Elliot 1999). Understanding these motivational antecedents will help to clarify the concept of authenticity while also providing insights into the nature of consumption in general (Nunes et al. 2021). As well as self-concordant goals, scholars have suggested that consumers participate in cause-related events for other identity benefits (Filo et al. 2020).

Literature suggests consumers achieve identity benefits by aligning with companies they perceive to be socially responsible (Goodwin et al. 2017). Empirical research shows consumers are engaging with the event and its cause (Scheinbaum & Lacey 2015), but not enough is known about whether consumers use brands in the cause-related event context the same way they use brands in other contexts (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). How consumers use these events for self-authentication goals is important to know to grasp the full potential of cause-related event sponsorship for brands seeking consumer-focused outcomes.

It is contended the incumbent perspective of authenticity does not take into consideration the relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. This is an issue because cause-related events continue to grow in popularity as a platform for companies to deliver their social responsibility programs. This growth can be attributed, in part, to the omnipresence of social media which gives both consumers and charitable causes a share of voice. Consumers are demanding brands 'stand for something' which has spurred this growth in cause-related event sponsorship (Lyes et al. 2016).

Companies make a significant investment in sponsoring cause-related events to meet consumer demands for CSR. Until more is known about pivotal role of authenticity in this context, the efficacy of cause-related event sponsorship for

sponsors seeking consumer-focused outcomes remains unknown. This contribution is now examined in more detail in terms of its academic contribution.

Chapter 1.5 - Academic contributions

This study will make both theoretical and practical contributions. We start with its theoretical contribution which can be summed up by suggesting this study challenges previous research on cause-related event sponsorship. To date, researchers have failed to recognise the consumer's perspective on brand authenticity in determining consumer-focused outcomes.

This study both provides the consumer perspective on brand authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship and provides avenues for further research. Cornwell (2019) had already conducted a thorough study of the existing literature on sponsorship engagement, and her findings were the beginning for this research enquiry. She outlines the sponsor-rights holder relationship and the unique traits of each partner that determine the beginning state and trajectory of a relationship's authenticity. Applying the Brand Authenticity Scale, developed by Morhart et al. (2015), Cornwell (2019) explains how shared qualities are recognised and leveraged throughout the sponsorship to achieve engagement outcomes.

The issue revealed by a study of the engagement paradigm put forward by Cornwell (2019) is that it does not account for the consumers' perspective and their active role in brand authentication. Authentic engagement, according to Cornwell (2019), is enacted through collaborating, leveraging, and activation. The focus is on authentic brands and authentic relationships, and she says that authentic ties are the foundation for engagement outcomes like loyalty, attachment, passion, and love. Cornwell (2019) concentrated on the veracity of the sponsor-rights holder relationship. Examining the consumer-sponsor relationship is a natural continuation of work by Cornwell (2019).

Meanwhile, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) refer to the consumer's 'self-authenticating goals' with identity benefits that produce a sense of control, connection

and virtue. Beverland and his colleagues contributed a qualitative study that investigated authenticating objects, brands and experiences where cues in these may convey authenticity for the consumer. They claim the process of authenticating an object or experience is contingent on the consumer's self-authentication goals. This research will operationalise and quantitively measure the concept of the consumer's self-authentication goals put forward by Beverland and Farrelly (2010) in the context of cause-related events.

Lastly, Wakefield et al. (2020), proposed the importance of understanding the interactions between the rights-holder, brands and consumers, which are mediated by the thoughts, feelings and actions of consumer to produce both consumer-focused and brand-focused outcomes. It could be argued that while Wakefield et al. (2020) did not specifically include authenticity or cause-related events in their consumer-centric model of sponsorship effects, that authenticity could logically mediate (or moderate) consumer-focused outcomes. This research will test that idea.

Analysing the factors that influence a consumer's assessment of a brand's authenticity and examining the relationships among them is an important process in demonstrating the effectiveness of cause-related event sponsorship (Yeoh 2021). This study refines the results of previous studies by examining the consumers' perception of brand authenticity and by suggesting the self-authentication goals of consumers may influence their brand evaluation.

Earlier research did not put forward a comprehensive, theoretically integrated explanation of the importance of authenticity in cause-related events, nor the role consumer self-authentication goals play in determining consumer-focused outcomes. Extant literature explores the domain of authenticity in cause-related events from the scholars and practitioners perspective yet it is the consumers' perspective that is missing. As well as its theoretical contributions, the study will also make a number of contributions to practice, which will be discussed next.

Chapter 1.6 – Contributions to practise

The practical outcomes of the study are many. Companies generally enter sponsorship agreements because they seek to fulfil certain marketing objectives (Papadimitriou et al. 2016). Access to consumers is one of the key benefits of sponsorship in exchange for financial or in-kind support (Sharp 2013). Empirically exploring the self-authentication goals of consumers will explain, in part, why they participate in these events and what sponsors can do to produce consumer-focused outcomes.

There is value in this work for sponsorship practitioners who are under increased budget scrutiny by their employer, and have to date, fallen short in being able to articulate the consumer-focused outcome of cause-related event sponsorship (Yeoh 2021). Furthermore, at a time when social impact is demanded, many companies have shifted their strategy to incorporate activities for the greater good (Filo et al. 2010; Filo et al. 2020). Unfortunately, not all companies succeed with many efforts described as 'tokenistic' (Chernev & Blair 2015).

Establishing a relationship between the self-authentication goals of consumers and their perceptions of brand authenticity will help to combat the scrutiny and scepticism that undermines consumer-focused outcomes for sponsors. This approach demonstrates the importance of considering a strategy driven by authenticity, rather than opportunism. At a time when consumers can easily voice public outrage against brands via their social media accounts, maintaining positive assessments of authenticity have become critical to brand success.

Greater insight into how consumers identify with brands in these events could also assist practitioners in the acquisition, leveraging and activation of sponsorships. As sponsorship activation is widely viewed as one of the keys to generating positive impact from a sponsorship (Kim et al. 2015), having this kind of consumer insight will help direct activation strategies and spend. This research intends on closing the gap bringing insight and evidence to support the marketing objectives of practitioners where authenticity is one of the most sought outcomes (Nunes et al. 2021). This

chapter turns next to the study paradigm, research design, data collecting procedure, methodology, analysis, and findings.

Chapter 1.7 - Research paradigm

The proposed program of research is based on the post positivist paradigm. This approach has been chosen to enable the application of scientific methodology and to better understand social phenomena change. The justification for this paradigm and choice of research design follows.

The purpose of this research is to better understand the relationships between the constructs that include the self-authentication goals of consumers along with perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes. Therefore, to gain insights into both the concepts themselves and how they interact to produce stronger consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship, explanatory research will be needed (Zikmund et al. 2003). This method will allow evidence to be presented quantitatively (Sarantakos 2005), a feature of the positivist paradigm while the nature of the study means that it cannot be conducted under the conditions of the pure scientific method. The researcher's involvement is restricted to data gathering and objective evaluation through statistical analysis.

The study seeks to verify a range of hypotheses by building an understanding of the possibilities for brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. The methodology is discussed next.

Chapter 1.8 - Methodology

This research is theory building in nature and will be conducted in two stages. Stage one consists of secondary research, namely a review of the relevant literature and then development of an appropriate research design to answer the specific research question. Stage two consists of a quantitative descriptive phase designed to investigate the constructs in more detail.

This research intends to fill a gap by providing quantifiable, empirical evidence for the relationship that may exist between variables that include the self-authentication goals of consumers, their perception of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. Each stage will now be presented in more detail with a summary of the research provided in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 – Summary of the research program

Stage	Research Method	Sample	Data	Objective
1	Literature Review	N/A	Secondary	Review the literature and develop an appropriate research design to answer the proposed contentions.
2	Descriptive	305	Quantitative	Establish whether the self-authentication goals of consumers are strongly correlated in a cause-related event context.
				Determine whether there is a relationship between the self-authentication goals of consumers and their perceptions of brand authenticity
				Determine whether perceptions of brand authenticity influence consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events
				Develop a conceptual framework that considers authenticity and cause-related sponsorship from a consumers' perspective

Source: Developed for this study

1.8.1 Stage one: Literature review and research design

This stage of the research will include a literature review of the main variable and sub-variables identified by the research purpose (Chapter 2). From this, the research methodology will be developed to address the research question, the research hypotheses, and any contentions that will be developed, together with a preliminary theoretical framework of the variables being examined. To gain insights into consumer

perceptions of brand authenticity and subsequent consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events, descriptive research will be required (Sarantakos 2005). This research will adopt a quantitative research approach to better examine and define the problem. The quantitative research design will now be briefly explained.

1.8.2 Stage two: Quantitative study

The study will be quantitative in nature and will explore the key variables influencing consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. The study has been designed to answer a set of research hypotheses that enable conclusions to be made from the results. The study is also characterised as theory-driven research that attempts to build on key theories that underpin the research.

The first stage of the research is to identify a theoretical framework to assess the current status of the topics under investigation: the goal contingent nature of participation. A quantitative design process is then utilised to quantify consumer-focused outcomes and put a value on it in the sponsorship paradigm.

The results of the quantitative study will then be used to assist the development of specific contentions and to review and update the preliminary theoretical framework developed at the end of Chapter 2. The objective of the study is to explain the relationship between the key variables influencing consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. The next section will provide definitions adopted in this research.

Chapter 1.9 - Definitions adopted in this research

In this section, several key terms are defined to establish their basis and position in this research. Each of these key terms will be discussed in turn.

Self-concordant goals

Firstly, the research seeks to clarify how consumer goals may be defined. Literature suggests goals are unique cognitive structures, in that they are invested with

motivational energy and have a substantial degree of functional autonomy (Allport 1962). The self-concordance model proposed by Sheldon and Elliot (1999) connects goals, self-regulation, and basic need satisfaction presupposing these goals are in harmony with one's true self. The self-concordance aspect enables a consumer not only to achieve their goals, but also to satisfy their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness and ultimately obtain a lasting sense of well-being and fulfilment.

Literature suggests consumers develop a strong belief in their own ability and experience great fulfilment when they achieve their intended goal (Kazimierczak et al. 2019). This study assumes all motivated individuals pursue goals. Furthermore, this study assumes that anyone participating in a cause-related event is doing so to meet certain goals.

Self-determination

There is widespread agreement that, in order to be authentic, one must be able to access, accept, and act in line with one's own internal feelings, emotions, and thoughts, regardless of external influences (Ryan & Ryan 2019). Kernis and Goldman (2005) defined authenticity as living in a way that is self-authored. Albeit being slightly distinct constructs, authenticity is regarded as correlating with one's inner experience (i.e., physiological sensations, thoughts, feelings) and incorporates openness and honesty in behaviour and relationships.

Self-determination is grounded in Self Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci 2000; Ryan 2017), which is based on the idea that consumers share basic psychological needs – autonomy, relatedness and competence – that must be met in order for them to flourish (Vansteenkiste et al. 2020). Self-determination theory classifies authentic functioning as actions that represent individuals' true motivations and values (Ryan & Deci 2000). For the purposes of this research self-determination is defined as behaviours which occur when consumers reveal or create their true self (Arnould & Price 2000; Beverland & Farrelly 2010).

Social identity

Social identity is another dimension that is important to understand in terms of the reasons for participating in cause-related events. Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner 1986; Turner et al. 1987) provides a framework for analysing a consumer's sense of self in relation to their participation in a group. This study prescribes to the definition of social identity where a member of a subculture is expressed through norms and values, and it specifies certain behaviours (Gillespie et al. 2002). This definition has been chosen because scholars have suggested social identity can be divided into three categories: cognitive, affective, and evaluative (Bagozzi et al. 2006).

In the context of a cause-related event environment, cognitive social identity refers to a consumer's level of awareness of the event community; affective social identity refers to emotional involvement in the event; and evaluative social identity refers to the extent to which a positive or negative value connotation is attached to those who are participating versus those who are not (Bagozzi et al. 2006).

Sponsorship

Sandler and Shani (1989, p. 10) define sponsorship as: "the provision of resources (e.g., money, people, equipment) by an organisation directly to an event or activity in exchange for a direct association to the event or activity." According to Meenaghan (2013), sponsorship entails a mutually advantageous exchange of sponsor resources in exchange for promotional value associated with the sponsored entity or event. The operational definition that best fits this research is that of Bennett and Gabriel (1999) who defined sponsorship as a marketing communication activity that seeks to accomplish definitive publicity by supporting an activity not directly linked to the company's normal business to access a specific target audience.

Cause-related events

Cause-related event sponsorship is defined as a meaningful, mutually beneficial, and publicly communicated partnership between a rights-holder, a charity and brands that become sponsors within a sports event context (Yuksel et al. 2016). The events are either wholly or partly dedicated to fundraising for charity and its cause and range from marathons to mountain climbs, fun runs to ocean swims (Wade 2021).

Cause-related events attract a broad range of consumers who participate in the activity. While some are elite athletes, it's been well documented that many consumers who participate are simply "fitness philanthropists" or "weekend warriors" (Wade 2021). They register in these events for recreational reasons, health and fitness goals or because it's a fun way to support a charity and its cause (Filo et al. 2020; Yeoh 2021).

The operational definition which this study prescribes to is offered by (Lyes et al. 2016, p. 286): "Cause-related events enable corporates and not-for-profit organisations to collaborate for mutual benefit, within the strategic framework of a social partnership…. Events provide an opportunity to engage with stakeholders such as customers, community groups, NFP beneficiaries and benefactors, in a relevant and meaningful manner. Furthermore, in an era of media fragmentation, events offer corporates and NFPs a platform to build emotional engagement and deliver personalised experiences with diverse stakeholders."

Brand authenticity

While authenticity is experienced on an individual level (Nunes et al. 2021) where it is self-authored (Wild 1965) and self-determined (Deci & Ryan 1980), brand authenticity is considered a 'rationally created characteristic informing an individual's subjective perceptions' of a brand rather than a characteristic immanent to an objective reality (Bruhn et al. 2012, p. 568). Beverland and Farrelly (2010) found consumers can find authenticity in a range of products and experiences, including functional and ubiquitous objects, mainstream events and brands. Napoli et al. (2014) says brand

authenticity is a subjective evaluation of genuineness ascribed to a brand by consumers.

One of the most cited definitions of brand authenticity put forward by Morhart et al. (2015, p. 202) suggests it is: "the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful and true toward itself and its consumers, and to support consumers being true to themselves." The definition has been operationalised in this research because it defines the interconnectedness of authenticity from the viewpoint of the brand with itself; with the consumer, and the consumer with themselves.

How consumers perceive the authenticity of brands that sponsor cause-related events is especially important because it appears to be the missing link in generating consumer-focused outcomes. The more authentic consumers feel a brand is, the more likely they are to have a favourable attitude towards them; demonstrate emotional brand attachment; share in word-of-mouth communication, and the greater the likelihood is that they will choose that brand over others (Morhart et al. 2015).

Consumer-focused outcomes

While consumer-focused outcomes were presented by Wakefield et al. (2020), this particular study on consumer-focused outcomes relies on research by France et al. (2018) and the dimensions of their customer brand co-creation behaviour scale with items that are contextually relevant to the cause-related event environment and this study. The scale includes constructs such as brand self-congruity; brand community; consumer brand co-creation and advocacy; customer-perceived brand value and customer-brand engagement. With the operational definitions now clearly outlined, the next section will address the delimitations of scope for this research.

Chapter 1.10 - Delimitations of Scope

By framing the scope of the study, the specificity, context and sample used in the study will be explained. The data collected is quantitative, explanatory in nature

and focused on one specific antecedent to consumer-focused outcomes. The research design therefore has the following considerations in terms of scope.

Specificity

As this study is focused on capturing the relationship between authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes of cause-related event sponsorship in Australia, the sample will be limited to those consumers who have participated in a cause-related event in the last three years. The limit was set on three years because of the need to ensure consumer recollection of their experience was current. Thus, the findings will be specific to consumer perceptions of brand authenticity in cause-related events since 2018.

Context

Given the broad definition of CSR, of which cause-related events are one activity, it may be possible to apply the conclusions of the study to consumer perceptions of brand authenticity in other CSR activities such as cause-related marketing or cause-activism.

Sample

Although the study considers both self and perceptions of brand authenticity to be universal consumer concepts, the respondents surveyed will have participated in an Australian-based cause-related event. This sampling decision will limit the capacity to generalise the findings of this study more globally. Given the global growth and appeal of cause-related events and the consumer behaviours being investigated, it is nonetheless expected that responses captured within the study are likely to be consistent with global cause-related event experiences.

Chapter 1.11 - Outline of the thesis

This thesis is presented in five chapters. Figure 1.3 presents an overview of the structure.

Figure 1.3 – Outline of the Thesis

| Chapter 1 - Introduction |
| Chapter 2 – Literature Review |
| Chapter 3 - Methodology |
| Chapter 4 – Results & Analysis |
| Chapter 5 – Conclusion |

Source: Developed for this study

Chapter 1 provides an outline and justification of the research question and objectives and included an outline of the structure of the thesis, the contributions to theory and practice within the delimitations of scope of the study. Chapter 2 identifies the key literature that will guide the research and inform the understanding of the research question. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology for the explanatory research. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the data and presents the results. Finally, Chapter 5 draws conclusions from the entire research process and discusses these in terms of their academic and practical contributions. This chapter also highlights implications for future research and limitations. In the next section, we critically evaluate the existing literature identifying key authors and their work in the area.

Chapter 1.12 – Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an overview of this research. It has presented the research question and the research hypotheses to be investigated. Justification for the research was discussed and a brief outline of the methodology and layout of the thesis were given. Definitions of key terms and the delimitations of the research were outlined to ensure that the reader understands the parameters of the work and can view its contribution within these confines. The next chapter will present the key literature, which guided the research study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2.1 – Introduction

This chapter will outline and justify the theoretical foundations for this study. The research explores existing literature to discover major works across two key focal areas – cause-related event sponsorship and the search for authenticity by brands and consumers. Within the subject of sponsorship (section 2.2), the following topics are investigated: (section 2.2.1) cause-related events as a vehicle for CSR; (section 2.2.2) stakeholder relationships; (section 2.2.3) the consumer's perspective; (section 2.2.4) consumer-focused outcomes; (section 2.2.5) the halo effect; (section 2.2.6) CSR scepticism; (section 2.2.7) self-authentication goals of consumers. Within the subject of authenticity (section 2.3), the following topics are explored: (section 2.3.1) brand authenticity; (section 2.3.2) authenticity in cause-related events.

Section 2.4 highlights the key themes to emerge from the literature and discusses the implications from the literature for the conceptual framework of this study. The chapter will conclude (section 2.5) with a proposed theoretical model of factors impacting consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events, which will address the research question: *How do brand authenticity and self-authentication impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship?* The literature review sequence is shown in Figure 2.1, which is followed by an investigation into the current literature on sponsorship.

Figure 2.1 – Literature Review Sequence

2.1 Introduction
2.2 Sponsorship
2.3 The search for authenticity
2.4 Summary and implications
2.5 Conclusion
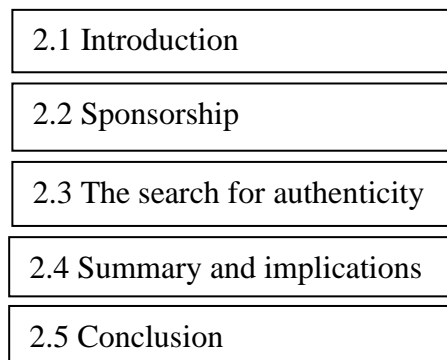
Source: Developed for this study

Chapter 2.2 – Sponsorship

Companies manage the relationship between consumers and their brands through a range of tactical marketing activities (Nesbit 2012). Sponsorship is one such marketing activity that is widely used to impact consumer purchase behaviour (Cornwell 2019; Melovic et al. 2019). Part of the appeal of sponsorship for companies is that it enables them, as sponsors, to connect with consumer passions (Wakefield & Rivers 2012; Cornwell 2019). As such, it provides a platform for sponsors to forge deeper emotional connections with their target market (Fechner et al. 2022a; Smith et al. 2022).

The appeal of sponsorship for companies is evident when we consider the global sports sponsorship market alone was worth an estimated 57 billion U.S. dollars in 2020 and is expected to grow to almost 90 billion U.S. dollars by 2027 (Statista 2021). The intensity, drama and emotion of sport provides a gateway to consumer passion and engagement, making it the dominant choice for sponsors (Bal et al. 2009).

The growth of the sponsorship industry has attracted both practitioner and scholarly attention over the last couple of decades, as both attempts to understand the nuances and efficacy of this tactical marketing lever (Roy & Cornwell 2004; Filo et al. 2010; Filo et al. 2020; Fechner et al. 2022a). Despite this attention, there is still a lack of consensus among scholars as to the role key stakeholders play within the networked system of relationships enabled by sponsorship (Olkkonen 2001; Cobbs 2011).

Scholars and practitioners agree that, at its most basic level, sponsorship involves an interaction between the rights-holder who owns the event intellectual property; companies who provide a cash or in-kind contribution to become sponsors, and consumers who play a crucial mediating role in the success of sponsorship

(Wakefield et al. 2020). The complexity of the relationships is further amplified when considering the multiplicity of outcomes that can be derived from sponsorship (Wakefield et al. 2020).

Practitioners are increasingly incorporating digital and social media into their sponsorship activities in an attempt to build relationships with consumers that extend beyond branding and extended advertising to reach them (Cornwell & Kwon 2020). These relationships are also beginning to extend beyond simple short-term transactions with companies seeking to align with causes, sports and the arts to meet both short and long-term objectives (Wakefield et al. 2020). As such, many of the earlier definitions of sponsorship are now considered to be too narrow in conceptualisation given the complexity of the sponsorship exchange (Fechner et al. 2022a). Further, they focus too much on the transaction over giving consideration for the longer-term relational benefits that can accrue from sponsorship (Wakefield et al. 2020).

Similarly, other definitions are too broad or general, failing to fully capture the essential difference between sponsorship as a marketing activity and other marketing communication efforts such as advertising w(Wakefield et al. 2020). Table 2.1 highlights this variation by providing a summary of the most cited definitions of sponsorship by scholars in this field.

Table 2.1 – Definitions of sponsorship

Author / Year	Definition	Emphasis
Meenaghan (1983, p. 9)	"Sponsorship can be regarded as the provision of assistance either financial or in kind to an activity by a commercial organisation for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives."	This definition promotes the commercial and mutually beneficial exchange between two parties.
Cornwell and Maignan (1998, p. 11)	"Sponsorship involves two activities (1) an	This definition emphasises the necessity for sponsors

	exchange between a sponsor and a sponsee whereby the latter receives a fee and the former obtains the right to associate itself with the activity sponsored and (2) the marketing of the association by the sponsor."	to leverage their sponsorship agreement with associated marketing activity.
Sandler and Shani (1989, p. 10)	"The provision of resources (e.g., money, people, equipment) by an organisation directly to an event or activity in exchange for a direct association to the event or activity."	This definition emphasises a reciprocal agreement where the rights-holder receives funding support and the sponsor is given the right to associate itself with the intellectual property of the event.
Woisetschläger et al. (2017, p. 3)	"Sponsorship is a cash or in-kind fee paid to a property in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential of that property."	This definition emphasises the commercial exchange between two parties that does not necessarily involve mutually beneficial outcomes.
Wakefield et al. (2020, p. 323)	"A series of exchanges between brands, sponsored properties, and consumers for contracted time periods, driven by brands' use of sponsored properties' communication assets, to influence consumer thoughts, feelings, and actions toward multiple, dynamic marketing objectives for brands and properties."	This definition emphasises the dynamic relationship that exists beyond just the rights-holder and sponsor to include the consumer.

Source: Developed for this study

As this table shows, most definitions emphasise the exploitable commercial nature of the sponsorship exchange (Meenaghan 1983; Sandler & Shani 1989), while very few stress the importance and quality of stakeholder relationships (Charlton & Cornwell 2019; Wakefield et al. 2020). Regardless of the various interpretations, there

is consensus among scholars that sponsorship involves either one of two critical elements. Firstly, sponsorship involves a series of exchanges between key stakeholders; and secondly, sponsors seek to leverage the association to influence the consumer's cognitive, affective and behavioural responses (Cornwell & Maignan 1998; Filo et al. 2009).

With the intention of incorporating both these principal components, this study will adopt the definition of sponsorship proposed by Wakefield and colleagues which suggest that sponsorship is: "…a series of exchanges between brands, sponsored properties, and consumers for contracted time periods, driven by brands' use of sponsored properties' communication assets, to influence consumer thoughts, feelings, and actions toward multiple, dynamic marketing objectives for brands and properties," Wakefield et al. (2020, p. 323). This definition of sponsorship has been chosen because it offers a holistic view which considers the dynamic relationships at play in sponsorship, and in particular, captures the consumer's perspective.

The ability to generate dynamic relationships between stakeholders is one reason that companies are investing in sponsorship (Meenaghan & O' Sullivan 2013; Alonso-Dos-Santos et al. 2018; Boronczyk et al. 2018). Companies are seeking a range of outcomes for their brands that include: identifying and engaging with the consumers' lifestyle, or passion; sales and promotion; client entertainment; employee rewards; and to communicate a commitment to CSR (Wakefield et al. 2020).

Sponsorship offers a range of different property types that companies may sponsor. A property is also known as a rights-holder, sponsee, seller and sponsorship seeker that has a unique and commercially exploitable asset of value to sponsors (Skildum-Reid 2008). The major property types include sport, entertainment, arts, cause, festivals and annual events, as well as associations and membership organisations (IEG 2018a). According to scholars, the strategic business goals and marketing objectives of a company determines which property type is chosen (Fechner et al. 2022a).

Wakefield et al. (2020) have been cited in this paper numerous times already as their work has provided a broad summary of the known literature about sponsorship and how it works. Their consumer-centric model of sponsorship effects offers a three-step process that provides consequences for the interaction between three complex entities – the rights-holder, brands and consumers. They conceptualise sponsorship effects in terms of antecedent factors (brand, property, and consumers), mediators (consumer thoughts, feelings, and actions), and potential consequences of sponsorship (for consumers and brands).

While Wakefield et al. (2020) provide a broad summary of consumer-centric sponsorship effects, their model doesn't account for the context of cause-related events. This research suggests the context of these events where there is a cause-related focus, might change how the models works. Further, this study proposes that the concept of authenticity, which has not been a feature of the Wakefield et al. (2020) model, may influence the antecedents and consequences of the relationship.

Cause-related events have emerged as a valuable sponsorship type for companies due to their small scale and close proximity to the local community (Plewa et al. 2015). Cause-related events are usually held annually; are participatory in nature; involve a physical activity in support of a designated charity or charities and attract more participants than spectators (Filo et al. 2011; Gibson et al. 2012).

Because of the not-for-profit nature of cause-related events and their heavy dependence on corporate support, sponsorship of these events may be interpreted by consumers as evidence of social responsibility (Kim et al. 2010). It therefore follows that as the demand for socially conscious companies continues to grow (Fechner et al. 2022b), so too does the expectation that cause-related event sponsorship has the sophistication to build relationships with and influence consumer perceptions (Wakefield et al. 2020).

2.2.1 Cause-related events as a vehicle for CSR

Cause-related event sponsorship differs from other forms of sponsorship because of the social responsibility aspect of the relationship (Sung & Lee 2016). Literature suggests several stakeholders collaborate to create the cause-related event experience (Daigo & Filo 2021). A range of exchanges take place between the rights-holder, sponsor and consumers, as key stakeholders, for the term of the contract. The relationship is influenced by marketing objectives set by the rights-holder and the sponsor as they seek to instigate, sustain and retain the consumer relationship (Wakefield et al. 2020).

Different types of cause-related events and platforms exist where the event is either specifically aligned with a particular cause, often called a 'charity sports event', or it may be aligned with a charity nominated by the individual participants in which case it is a 'charity-affiliated event' (Palmer 2019). In the case of a charity sports event, such as the Oxfam Trailwalker, event participants must often meet fundraising minimums to be eligible to participate with all the event proceeds utilised to support the cause (Inoue et al. 2018). Charity-affiliated events, such as the Melbourne Marathon, benefit multiple charities, where a portion of event proceeds are donated, and the fundraising aspect of the event is usually managed by an online third-party fundraising platform such as JustGiving (Inoue et al. 2018).

A distinguishing factor of both these event types is that they promote participation in a physical activity to raise funds and/or awareness for a cause – compared to events that are not affiliated with a charity (Inoue et al. 2018). Cause-related events are also distinguished from other 'charity events' – such as charity luncheons, balls, sports matches or other fundraising activities – by their inclusion of a physical challenge or activity. For the purposes of this study, the term 'cause-related events' will be used to encompass both the components of charity sports events and charity-affiliated events. Filo et al. (2013, p. 194) define cause-related events as: "any participatory sport event in which individuals pay a registration fee to partake in an

organised physical activity with all, or a portion of, event proceeds benefitting a designated charity."

Challenges can range from endurance runs to swims and cycles and provide opportunities for all levels of participation from elite to beginners as well as non-competitive activities that may include a walk, counting steps or colour runs (Horning 2018; O'Reilly et al. 2019b). Palmer (2019) refers to participation in cause-related events as 'fitness philanthropy', locating the event as part of a consumer-led broader social movement. She also makes reference to charity 'thons' and 'civic fitness'– all of which refer to and leverage the synergies between sport, leisure and charity, and represent a form of giving where displays of fitness also demonstrate good citizenship Palmer (2016, p. 226). In exchange for fundraising support, the charity provides meaning through participating in a fun, promotable sporting environment (Girish & Lee 2019).

Since 2020, as an outcome of COVID-19, many cause-related events have moved online providing a virtual alternative to the live experience (Donthu & Gustafsson 2020; Bjerkelund & Knudsen 2021). These live and virtual events have since merged to create new opportunities to connect with consumers (Nielsen 2021). Rights-holders now offer a range of unique consumer experiences which are enhanced by technology and reshape how consumers engage with the event and its sponsors.

Connected devices and continued adoption of over-the-top (OTT) options where streaming services deliver content over the internet have amplified the accessibility of content (Nielsen 2021). Consumer access to content has expanded and with it so has purchase intent. An analysis by Nielsen (2021) of 100 sponsorships between 2020 and 2021 in seven markets across 20 industries, found sponsorships drove a 10% lift in purchase intent by consumers exposed to the sponsorship. This is because sponsors and rights holders have structurally improved how sponsorship is conducted in this new digital landscape (Nielsen 2021). Increasing connectivity and growth in digital platforms has also created a significant rise in consumer-generated

content through social media platforms such as TikTok and Twitch. It means consumers are using these platforms for content creation in sponsorship as much as for sharing content (Nielsen 2021).

This reset in cause-related event sponsorship has shifted the focus to how each partner adds value to the relationship and to the event community they serve (Bjerkelund & Knudsen 2021). This reset also emphasises a fundamental aspect of cause-related event sponsorship that differentiates it from other forms of sponsorship and other forms of cause-related marketing activity (O'Reilly et al. 2019b).

Unlike other types of sponsorship, through the charity component of cause-related events, sponsors are able to contribute to a selected cause through the event experience (O'Reilly et al. 2019b). Although a monetary or in-kind commitment is still required with other forms of sponsorship, with cause-related event sponsorship, the sponsor relationship is more of a strategic alliance between several key stakeholders (Woisetschläger et al. 2017). This is also a key point of difference to other transaction-based cause-related marketing activities (Pracejus et al. 2020) where there is no event experience.

As well as its uniqueness, it's been found that sponsors of cause-related events may achieve consistently superior brand outcomes when compared sponsors of non-cause related events (Smith et al. 2015; Smith et al. 2022). Sung and Lee (2016) suggest there is mounting evidence that consumers will patronise companies that meet their own values and ethics. This is because consumers perceive greater advantages for themselves or for society (Lebar et al. 2005).

According to Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006), cause-related event sponsorship provides brands with a point of difference that other socially responsible brands aren't able to achieve without the marketing platform. Scheinbaum and Lacey (2015) maintains these event settings create a viable platform to demonstrate corporate

citizenship in ways that are unique and targeted to the consumer. The unique and competitive advantages offered by cause-related events have triggered their soaring popularity (Palmer 2019). Sponsorship expenditures in general were up 107% in 2021 versus the same period in early 2020. This suggests that the universal breadth and appeal of sponsorship continues well beyond any post-pandemic concerns.

Cause-related events further benefits companies that sponsor these events in various ways. Cause-related event sponsorship offer brands both a lift in consumer sentiment and an increase in sales (Nielsen 2021). Nielsen (2021) found 30% of cause-related sponsorship campaigns increased short-term sales by 50% and between 1.2 and three times over the long term.

Scholarly interest in cause-related event sponsorship has also intensified with companies realising its potential as a vehicle for demonstrating CSR ((Plewa et al. 2015; Bernhart & O'Neill 2019). Moreover, a unique dimension of cause-related events is the meaning consumers derive from being a part of the event experience because it aligns with what they hold to be important (Filo et al. 2010; Filo et al. 2011). Scholars suggest consumers willingly engage in positive relational behaviours toward socially responsibly companies that sponsor these events (Fechner et al. 2022b, 2022a). Given these clear brand benefits, it's been found that companies practice CSR as much to enhance visibility as to create a social impact (Barnett et al. 2020).

Companies are increasingly investing in CSR activities as consumers increasingly expect companies to act in a manner that benefits society (Viererbl & Koch 2022). Cause-related events have been proven to provide positive economic, social, and environmental outcomes when compared with sponsorship of other sporting events (Daigo & Filo 2021).

These events provide companies with a highly visible, promotable platform to communicate their support for societal issues (Fechner et al. 2022a). Growing demand

by a range of stakeholders for socially responsible companies provides further justification for why cause-related events are of particular interest in this research (Daigo & Filo 2021).

Companies are considering both internal and external stakeholder groups in their CSR programs in an attempt to be more strategic in their approach (del-Castillo-Feito et al. 2022). These stakeholders include consumers, shareholders, investors and employees (Sung & Lee 2016). The CSR activities of these companies are carefully considered in order to reflect the different stakeholder values and expectations (Bhattacharya & Sen 2003). As such, it is important for companies to understand the social issues that are important to their stakeholders and how they perceive social responsibility in order to improve engagement outcomes (del-Castillo-Feito et al. 2022). This study will explore the role of the different stakeholders in cause related sponsorship success next.

2.2.2 Stakeholder relationships

Cause-related event sponsorship entails an interaction between a wide range of interested and impacted stakeholders – more so than traditional sports sponsorship (Fechner et al. 2022b). The interconnectedness of stakeholder relationships in cause-related event sponsorship has been said to underpin its success (Scheinbaum et al. 2017).

The key stakeholders most often considered in the relationship include: the rights holder; the cause; the charity; sponsors and consumers (Schyvinck et al. 2022). These stakeholders will have varied relationships with and between each other that allow them to communicate shared values as part of a mutually beneficial arrangement that is in place for the duration of the sponsorship agreement (Scheinbaum & Lacey 2015; Horning 2018; Scheinbaum & Wang 2018).

Aligning with cause-related events to raise funds for a cause allows for a reciprocal exchange of valued benefits between the rights holder and charity; the rights

holder and consumers; consumers and the cause; the sponsors and the cause and the sponsors and consumers (Cornwell & Coote 2005; Alhouti et al. 2016; Lyes et al. 2016). Table 2.2. provides an outline of the key stakeholders and a description of their role in cause-related event sponsorship.

Table 2.2 – Key Stakeholders in the sponsorship relationship

Stakeholder	Description
Rights holder	The rights holder, usually a sports club or organisation, provides fundraising opportunities for the charity through admission to the event. The rights holder also provides an opportunity to stimulate emotional connections with participants (Horning 2018). The rights holder benefits from its relationship with the charity, cause and sponsors (O'Reilly et al. 2019b; Cornwell & Kwon 2020). Sponsors provide either financial or in-kind support, sometimes both.
Cause	A cause, also known as a charitable purpose, as defined by the CharitiesAct (2013) in Australia, lists several charitable purposes, with the most common causes supported by these events including the advancement of health; education; social, public, the environment or animal welfare; religion; culture; promoting reconciliation, mutual respect and tolerance between groups living in Australia, and promoting or protecting human rights. The cause provides a purpose for the cause-related event and attracts highly engaged consumers (participants and supporters) for whom the cause is meaningful (Goodwin et al. 2017).
Charity	The CharitiesAct (2013) states that as a charity, the organisation must only have charitable purposes. It can have other purposes, but these must only be incidental or ancillary activities that further the charitable purpose. Given the ubiquity of charities, cause-related events provide an alternative approach to finding new audiences and reaching fundraising goals (Bernhart & O'Neill 2019). Rather than just asking for donations, the charity trades a commodity in return for consumer fundraising (either from the consumer's registration fee or from personal fundraising efforts).
Sponsors	Sponsors exchange financial or in-kind support for the opportunity to promote their brand, connect with consumer interests, and show their commitment to community (Close Scheinbaum et al. 2019). As cause-related events are high in

	emotional and experience value, it provides brands with the chance to deepen their engagement with key stakeholders (Scheinbaum et al. 2017). Scholars have found that cause-related event sponsorship provides sponsors with a competitive advantage, enabling them to reach specific target markets and business objectives (Cahill 2013; Djaballah et al. 2017). Sponsor benefits can include increased media exposure, social awareness, staff engagement, word-of-mouth, and brand image enhancements (Bernhart & O'Neill 2019; Girish & Lee 2019). The cause component of these events, in particular, bestows sponsors with a platform to convey their social goodness, helping to foster goodwill and virtue (Scheinbaum & Lacey 2013; Djaballah et al. 2017).
Consumers	Numerous scholars highlight a range of motivations for participation (Scheinbaum & Lacey 2013; Rundio 2014; Scheinbaum & Lacey 2015; Horning 2018; Scheinbaum & Wang 2018), however the event's association with a cause may also provide a range of psychological benefits for consumers (Webber 2004). It is possible that consumers in cause-related events benefit through the extra meaning associated with the cause – meaning they might not have been able to leverage from participation in other sorts of sport events or activities. Aside from the obvious benefits of participating and the fulfilment of personal goals, scholars report the accompanying corporate social responsibility focus provides further psychological benefits (Rundio 2014; Plewa et al. 2015; Scheinbaum et al. 2017).

Source: Developed for this study

While current literature points to the desirability of cause-related events for the rights-holder, the cause, charity and sponsors, it is less understood in literature the role consumers play in these events (Wakefield et al. 2020). The consumer perspective is important to consider because of the increasing demand from consumers for companies to demonstrate CSR. As more companies embrace CSR via cause-related event sponsorship, so too does their scepticism of companies whose motives appear self-serving (Viererbl & Koch 2022).

Until the consumer perspective is understood, scholars concur consumer-focused outcomes of cause-related event sponsorship may be underestimated (Wakefield et al. 2020). Sung and Lee (2016) agree little is known about the consumers' perspective in cause-related events. Their findings demonstrated that consumers of a specific cause-related event had positive evaluations of the cause, the event, and the fit between cause and sponsor and that this had a consequential positive influence on the sponsor's image (Sung & Lee 2016). Despite this, they also noted that different attributes of the event impacted the consumers in different ways, leaving the door open for other scholars to look more closely at the consumer's perspective in cause-related event sponsorship (Sung & Lee 2016). This paper will investigate the consumer's perspective in more detail.

2.2.3 The consumer's perspective

Filo et al. (2009) add to the body of existing knowledge on consumers in cause-related events by contrasting the influence of charity and physical or 'recreation' motivations for participating. They also look into the social motivations and found the charitable reason for participating was stronger when the cause was prominent, whereas motivations for recreation were higher when the reason was less obvious (Filo et al. 2009). Importantly, in both situations, the social incentive produced a connection to events, suggesting the influence of reference groups, such as friends and family, could be critical in cause-related event participation (Chiu 2016). This suggests consumers are using these events to meet other self-concordant goals (Sheldon & Elliot 1999).

It seems consumers are now integrally involved in the sponsorship relationship (Alves et al. 2016; Alonso-Dos-Santos et al. 2018) where mutually beneficial outcomes for stakeholders are attainable (Hollebeek 2011; Leckie et al. 2016). As brands lead consumers through the decision-making journey to purchase, consumer exchanges with sponsors can occur at any moment during the sponsorship's lifetime, whether at the event itself or in the future (e.g., online via the event portal, the rights-holder or sponsors' Facebook page and website) (Alonso-Dos-Santos et al. 2016). In

the same light, consumer attitudes and behaviours towards sponsors can change over the course of the sponsorship, reinforcing the dynamic nature of this marketing lever (Wakefield et al. 2020). It is because of this ongoing interaction sponsors have with consumers throughout the course of the sponsorship, that makes the study of consumers in cause-related events so important.

Understanding how consumers process cause-related event sponsorship could aid in the development of mutually beneficial relationships and in its efficacy (Sung & Lee 2016). Despite the literature generally supporting the importance of understanding the consumers' perspective, researchers are still criticised because: "…they have not yet fully embraced the engagement potential of sponsorship" (Cornwell 2019, p. 52).

One industry that has invested heavily in cause-related event sponsorship to improve brand engagement outcomes is the financial services industry. They are among the five most active sponsors of sport, entertainment and cause sponsorship categories in North America (IEG 2015) with figures showing the Bank of America spent more than $75 million per year; Citigroup $60 million; JPMorgan Chase $60 million; Wells Fargo $45 million and Barclays $25 million in 2014 (IEG 2014). This investment by the financial services industry has continued to grow because a proliferation of homogenised digitised and electronic services (Tang 2019) means companies must engage in CSR activities to engender consumer consideration (Fatma et al. 2015).

Cause-related event sponsorship is also a useful marketing platform for the financial services sector enabling them to connect with consumer passions and interests (Jensen 2017). Cornwell and Coote (2005) suggest they do this by weaving their brand message into social and digital communications that demonstrate their support for the event and its associated charity.

Wakefield et al. (2020) have classified the consequences of sponsorship for brands as 'brand-focused outcomes' (brand equity, return on investment, exposures,

engagement and stock price). The consequences for consumers are labeled 'consumer-focused outcomes' and include brand awareness; brand association knowledge; brand loyalty and preference, and brand purchase intent and sales amongst other behaviours. Wakefield et al. (2020) acknowledges these consumer-focused outcomes are not unique to sponsorship.

This research suggests the uniqueness of sponsorship is lost unless other consumer-focused outcomes are considered. For the purposes of this research, the customer brand co-creation behaviour scale (France et al. 2018) was used to highlight the redistribution of control from the company to the consumer. The notion of co-creation explains the active contribution of various stakeholders (Ind & Coates 2013) which supports the interactivity of these stakeholders already put forward by Wakefield et al. (2020). By virtue of this interactivity, customer brand co-creation behaviour becomes entwined in the customer-brand relationship (Payne et al. 2009) which is especially evident in the context of cause-related event sponsorship.

The customer-centric view proffered by France et al. (2018) aligns with the model by Wakefield et al. (2020) and includes brand self-congruity; brand community; customer brand co-creation behaviour and advocacy; customer-perceived brand value and customer-brand engagement. These particular items were extracted from the France et al. (2018) scale because they were contextually relevant to the study of consumer-focused outcomes in a sponsorship setting. We highlight each of these consumer-focused considerations before offering a conceptual model.

2.2.4 Consumer-focused outcomes

From a behavioural standpoint, consumer-focused outcomes may be defined as a consumer's discretionary commitment to a brand beyond any commercial transaction and is brought about by the consumer's response to the brand's actions (Viswanathan et al. 2018). Five core consumer-focused outcomes will be highlighted in this study. They are brand self-congruity; brand community; customer brand co-

creation and advocacy; customer-perceived brand value and customer-brand engagement – all of which are dimensions of the customer-brand co-creation behaviour scale (France et al. 2018) and are context specific outcomes in a sponsorship setting.

Brand self-congruity

Brand self-congruity is a conceptual framework based on Social Identity Theory, in which consumers seek relationships with brands to enhance themselves as part of the self-definition process (Bhattacharya & Sen 2003; Rather & Hollebeek 2019). Scholars have been able to show that this group identification happens without official membership (Reed 2002). It means consumers can choose to participate if they feel the brand will enrich their social identity (Ahearne et al. 2005).

The identification process begins when a brand prioritises its relationship with consumers and their community through socially responsible actions (Martinez & Del Bosque 2013). This finding suggests the sponsorship may play an important role for brands who are signalling to consumers their highly valued but often unobservable attributes (Su et al. 2016).

Brand community

The second dimension in the customer-brand co-creation scale (France et al. 2018) is brand community. Brand experiences help consumers fulfil their self-authentication needs (Bhattacharya & Sen 2003) while highly authentic brands form strong emotional bonds (Brewer 1991; Mael & Ashforth 1992). Highly authentic brands assist consumers in how they identity themselves and their place within the brand community. According to Aquino and Reed (2002), aligning with strong brands boosts the consumer's self-esteem while other self-definitional needs are also met that enhance the consumer's distinctiveness (Bhattacharya & Sen 2003).

To develop this argument further, literature reveals that identification with a brand (Turner et al. 1979) works through a cognitive categorisation process where the consumer sees themself as belonging to the brand's community. They try to find similarities between their social identity and the brand's identity (Fatma et al. 2018).

Mael and Ashforth (1992) demonstrate identification enhances the emotive link between the brand and the consumer's social identity because of felt 'oneness' with the brand. This was reinforced by Raza et al. (2020) who suggests a consumer affirms their commitment to the brand when that brand satisfies their identity-related judgments. The sense of belonging to a brand community is said to be heightened when a brand contributes to societal outcomes (Wallendorf & Arnould 1988). The consumer psychologically experiences, perceives and values their belongingness to the brand community (Rather & Hollebeek 2019).

Customer-brand co-creation behaviour and advocacy

Customer-brand co-creation behaviours are defined as an extra-role activity which is discretionarily offered to a brand by consumers and, while not required, provides overall benefit to the business (Bartikowski & Walsh 2011). These behaviours are voluntary, and in the aggregate, helpful to the brand (Gruen 1995; Groth 2005; Yi et al. 2013). Merz et al. (2017) suggests consumers who demonstrate a high level of customer-brand co-creation behaviour could be compared to taking on the role of an employee, such is their contribution to the business . Yi and Gong (2013) conclude feedback (consumer response based on their experience); advocacy (otherwise known as word-of-mouth recommendations to other consumers); helping (in this context, consumers help others participating in the event with race information or training programs), and tolerance (based on consumer attitude towards the brand) are four sub-dimensions of customer-brand co-creation behaviours. A study by Hur et al. (2018) concludes that consumers who perceives a brand's CSR positively might be more willing to think altruistically and engage in helping behaviour. CSR efforts are seen as a significant driver of advocacy behaviour, as evidenced by positive word-of-mouth, eWOM and resistance to negative brand publicity (Aljarah & Alrawashdeh 2020).

Pansari and Kumar (2017) support the literature and describe three ways consumers respond to a brand. The first is that consumers are more likely to value and repeat their brand experience in the near future; the second is that consumers generate positive eWOM; and the third is that they will participate in co-creation (Pansari & Kumar 2017). Because CSR strengthens the psychological bond between consumers and brands, it inspires them to volunteer more on the brand's behalf (Du et al. 2007).

Research has shown examples of voluntary behaviour include donating to the brand's charity of choice, volunteering in socially responsible programs and events, donating time to fundraising, and promoting awareness about the charity (Bhattacharya & Sen 2003; Peterson 2005; Berger et al. 2006). WOM and eWOM suggests consumers actively market the brand by recommending it to others (Romero & Ruiz-Equihua 2020). The consumer's desire to promote socially responsible brands is based on their identification with the brand since being the consumer of a socially responsible organisation satisfies their self-esteem (Currás-Pérez et al. 2009). A discussion on customer-perceived brand value follows.

Customer-perceived brand value

The fourth dimension of the customer-brand co-creation scale (France et al. 2018) is customer-perceived brand value. When consumers identify with brands that are seen to be competent, compassionate, and honest, they are more inclined to present a similar image (Keh & Xie 2009).

It's this set of distinguishing traits that consumers value, such as a sense of social responsibility, where the brand becomes an appealing target for identification (Pérez & Del Bosque 2015). Given the attraction of consumers to socially responsible brands, it seems logical that cause-related events that shares identity characteristics that are aspirational to the consumer are also a target for consumption. It's a boost for the consumer's esteem when the brand is perceived to be socially responsible (Filo et al. 2011; Filo et al. 2018).

The intellectual, social, and competency motives of consumers along with self-esteem, the desire to help others and to support the charity have been found to contribute to the appeal of cause-related events (Filo et al. 2008). Filo et al. (2011) further contend the needs and motives satisfied by participating in an event can take on greater meaning for the consumer by aligning with their core values.

To understand how customer-brand co-creation behaviours fit into a consumer's response, it is necessary to understand how the theoretical frameworks fit together. It starts with social identity theory, where groups give individuals a sense of identity and belonging; which then leads to identification, where consumers seek relationships with brands; and ends with customer-brand co-creation behaviours, where consumers go beyond what's necessary to engage in helpful behaviours towards the brand.

A consumer's positive response to a brand's CSR activities enhances the social identification process (Fatma et al. 2018). As an example, when a bank is considered to be going above and above its legal and moral responsibilities, consumers may reward the bank by engaging in customer citizenship behaviours such as information exchange, engagement, and value co-creation (Luu 2017). In doing so, consumers expect to have a positive influence on others who may be considering the bank's goods or services (Badenes-Rocha et al. 2019).

In summary, consumer reaction to brand authenticity is a complicated phenomenon with numerous underlying processes that are yet to be completely investigated. Much of the prior research has focused on the short-term impacts CSR has on consumer behaviour, such as attitude towards the brand, purchase intention and satisfaction, while studies on long-term engagement, such as co-creation are still being conducted (Ajina et al. 2019; Ramesh et al. 2019). Customer-brand co-creation behaviours are also said to contribute to brand engagement (Hollebeek et al. 2018) which will be discussed next.

Customer-brand engagement

Both scholars and practitioners agree brand engagement is a crucial factor influencing consumer decision-making (Potdar et al. 2018). Engagement generally refers to a consumer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investment in specific brand encounters (Hollebeek et al. 2014; Harmeling et al. 2017; Gupta et al. 2018). Despite its significance, there is a clear lack of consensus as to what constitutes brand engagement and what the antecedents and consequences are of it. It can be clearly concluded from the gamut of studies that brand engagement is indeed a multidimensional concept.

Some scholars have put forward definitions of brand engagement that are specific to the sponsorship context such as that by Wakefield and Rivers (2012, p. 146) who states customer-brand engagement is: "…the frequency of opportunities afforded by the property [rights holder] to interact with the audience directly on site or indirectly through property-controlled media before, during and after the event". Wakefield's engagement process, however, is limited to exposure and activation whereas marketing definitions are oriented towards satisfying emotional relationships that result in interactions with potential outcomes including emotional commitment, trust, word of mouth and loyalty (Vivek et al. 2012). Either way, the engagement potential of cause-related event sponsorship is further enhanced because of the halo effect that is generated from communicating CSR activities (Alonso 2021). This research explores the halo effect next.

2.2.5. The halo effect

The halo effect is described as a consumer's tendency for their views about one dominating brand association to impact their other brand beliefs (Leuthesser et al. 1995). The phrase 'halo' has also be referred to as the 'spill over' effect (Von der Linde & Schustereit 2010). Scholars describe it as a skewed appraisal of a brand's features resulting from a review of its other, unrelated features (Leuthesser et al. 1995).

Meanwhile, Newcomb (1931) defines it as a logical error that happens when consumers evaluate behaviours in the same way, despite being unrelated.

Many scholars suggest the halo effect influences purchase behaviour (Lichtenstein et al. 2004; Di Domenico et al. 2010; Mukherjee & Sahay 2018). Researchers agree that consumers make evaluations based on comprehensive impressions, rather than evaluating a brand or product based on specific aspects of its performance (Newman & Patel 2004; Van Heerde et al. 2007). Other scholars suggest a company's CSR activity can also create a halo effect that influences its reputation (Newcomb 1931; Lichtenstein et al. 2004; Luo & Bhattacharya 2006; Chernev & Blair 2015).

The halo effect in cause-related event sponsorship involves key stakeholders trading on the same intellectual property to produce mutually beneficial outcomes. According to Vance et al. (2016), the halo effect is assessed by combining sponsor awareness and the influence of goodwill on brand attributes. They say that 'community-oriented' sponsorships have the greatest halo effect because of the perceived benefits for the community and the positive impact on brand attributes.

Kim et al. (2019) furthers the case for a halo effect in sponsorship by stating that consumers are more likely to form a positive image of sponsors if the brand is involved in cause-related event sponsorship as opposed to mainstream sport sponsorship or other CSR activities. As consumers become increasingly concerned with social issues, so too does their evaluation of companies and their CSR efforts (Kim & Lee 2019). They found the charitable association assists consumers in forming positive perceptions and attitude toward the sponsor (Kim & Lee 2019).

Jin and Lee (2019) concur with these findings and suggest that when consumers are presented with negative information about a company, their attitude is likely to become negative, whereas positive information leads to a positive attitude towards the company. Jin and Lee (2019) take it further by suggesting that consumer attitude

towards a company is most affected by the halo effect over other variables such as purchase intention, corporate image and brand loyalty.

The literature clearly highlights the interconnectedness of these associations on consumer perceptions (Melovic et al. 2019). Scholars therefore recommend that sponsors of cause-related events take extra care to ensure how they are perceived so as not to have a detrimental impact on the "halo of goodwill" (Meenaghan 2001, p. 101). Jin and Lee (2019) suggest that only CSR activities that are highly congruent with a company's image or its products can produce positive and amicable reactions from consumers through the halo effect. It reinforces the need for sponsors to carefully balance the tension between consumer perceptions and being seen to commercialise and capitalise on the opportunity.

Sponsoring events associated with a cause or charity is a way to connect with consumers (Dreisbach et al. 2018) but it invites scrutiny of a brand's intentions if consumer perceptions are not properly considered. The intended positive sponsorship effects may be negated by overt brand promotion (Popp 2020). This suggests companies would be well served to understand how participants perceive the sincerity of their CSR program and what influences could work in their favour. We explore criticism of sponsor authenticity further in the next section.

2.2.6 CSR Scepticism

Consumer reaction to sponsorship has received extensive research attention, particularly investigation of how consumers cognitively process sponsorship (Cornwell et al. 2005; Close et al. 2015). What is less understood is the consumer's affective response and how their perception of sponsor authenticity and subsequent scepticism affects brand outcomes. Affective commitment refers to the consumer's emotional attachment and desire to develop a relationship with a company in response to its values and activities (Allen & Meyer 1990). According to Fatma et al. (2018), consumers develop an emotional attachment to a company out of want, not out of need.

Current literature highlights societal pressure on companies to demonstrate CSR. Societal issues such as gender equality and racial injustice; as well as environmental pressures, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, have prompted companies to broaden their focus from singular to multidimensional relationships across a range of stakeholders (Martínez et al. 2016). The central tenant of CSR, as agreed by all scholars and practitioners, is that companies play an integral role in society and must be accountable to the community it serves (Plewa & Quester 2011).

CSR has become a pervasive requirement for companies and is driven by increasing consumer demand (Singh & Verma 2017; Shah & Khan 2021). Increased consumer awareness of CSR has led to an increase in the number of companies reporting CSR (Stobierski 2021). This growth in reporting is evidenced by the fact an estimated 90 percent of companies on the Standard & Poor's 500 (otherwise referred to as the S&P 500) index in the US published a CSR report in 2019, compared to just 20 percent in 2011. In Australia, the desire to align with socially responsible brands continues to gain momentum, despite lagging behind global trends (Brueckner 2021).

According to several authors, CSR has been found to be a commercial necessity. It improves a company's reputation (Dalla-Pria & Rodríguez-de-Dios 2022); financial performance (Ghanbarpour & Gustafsson 2022); brand equity (Wang et al. 2021); emotional commitment (Hayat & Afshari 2022); positive word of mouth (Fatmawati & Fauzan 2021); customer co-creation (Ahmad et al. 2021), purchase intention (Zhang & Ahmad 2021) and brand image (Yang & Basile 2022).

As the number of companies embracing social responsibility grows, so too does consumer scepticism (Viererbl & Koch 2022). In the wake of increasing consumer scepticism, some companies are remaining strategically silent on their CSR activities (Carlos and Lewis 2018; Lindsey 2016). A phenomenon referred to as 'green hushing' sees companies intentionally under-publicising their CSR practices (Acuti et

al. 2022; Falchi et al. 2022) due to the growing distrust of consumers and company fear of consumer and activist backlash (Falchi et al. 2022).

In the same way, a company that engages in cause-related event sponsorship for its own benefit appears self-serving and results in reputational damage towards the company (Radema 2021). Brands are seeking to engage with cause-related event consumers to drive positive brand perceptions (Brunk & De Boer 2020). The pervasiveness of superficial endorsement by brands and short-sighted social activism is also doing reputational to CSR on the whole (Lombardo & D'Orio 2012; Woisetschläger et al. 2017). To avoid consumer scepticism of CSR, scholars say these activities should be genuine and must align with the core values of the company (Fatma & Khan 2022).

A study by Popp (2020) shares three important findings on how sponsorship is affected by consumer scepticism. Firstly, they reveal consumer scepticism can result from the belief that brand activities negatively impact the values of the event (Popp 2020). Secondly, they suggest consumers with lower levels of attachment to the sponsored event are more sceptical of sponsorship sincerity (Popp 2020). Lastly, Popp (2020) claim both the sponsor and event are negatively affected by scepticism towards sponsorships in general.

Current research takes the perspective that companies sponsoring cause-related events have two basic motivations: altruistic or egoistic (Woisetschläger et al. 2017). Consumers may perceive a company is sponsoring because it are motivated by self-interest, or they may view the company as having more altruistic intentions (Joo et al. 2019). Dreisbach et al. (2018) found the level of sincerity behind a company's communicated benevolence matters to consumers.

Carroll (1991) conceptualised the CSR Pyramid which shows four dimensions of CSR – economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. Uhlig et al. (2020) suggests that of all the dimensions, it's only the philanthropic dimension that determines the

relationship consumers intend on having with a company. Scholars contend the philanthropic dimension encapsulates a broad range of activities where companies may, for example, invest in education, donate to charity, or participate in activities geared towards preserving the environment (Carroll 1991; da Silva Junior et al. 2022).

Other literature reinforces this point and supports the view that there are a number of influences affecting how a consumer processes CSR activities (Mamo et al. 2022; Viererbl & Koch 2022). Among them are psychological aspects such as perception, motivation, beliefs, and attitudes (Jeong et al. 2022); demographics such as age, income, cultural background, lifestyle, and personality (Colleoni et al. 2022; Luger et al. 2022) and social aspects that include family influences; reference groups and social identity (Kim & Manoli 2022).

These studies, and the reported scepticism by consumers across sponsorship studies (Kang & Matsuoka 2022; Koo et al. 2022), suggests the consumer's positive perception of brand authenticity is an essential component in cause-related event sponsorship. Consumers are weighing a company's social goodness into their purchasing decisions (Castro-González et al. 2019). Tezer and Tofighi (2021) explain that through a spill over effect, positive information about a brand's CSR activities results in a negative attitude towards competing brands. Wong and Zhang (2022) conclude that some industries are more sensitive to negative ESG media coverage than others. They found stock markets are not as reactive to the heightened ESG reputational risks that would be expected with the 'sin' troika of alcohol, tobacco, and gaming. Instead, they found banking, insurance, confectionery and soft drink sectors were more significantly affected by ESG reputation risks (Wong & Zhang 2022). This finding both explains why these industries are amongst the most active sponsors of cause-related events; and the negative implications if their efforts are not perceived to be authentic.

CSR authenticity refers to consumers' trust in how a company conducts its activities and is an essential factor influencing evaluations of brand authenticity (Kim & Lee 2019). Within the CSR domain, authenticity is defined as 'the perception of a company's CSR actions as a genuine and true expression of the company's beliefs and

behaviour toward a society that extends beyond legal requirements' (Alhouti et al. 2016, p. 1243). Arnould and Price (2000) refer to CSR authenticity as the evaluation of how genuine, real and true something is.

Scholars agree, CSR is often viewed as a marketing activity instigated for the purposes of improving company image or profit (Kim & Lee 2019; Melovic et al. 2019). As an example, Marquis et al. (2016), and separately (Shim & Yang 2016), study how companies inform and emphasis the benign impacts of their actions. By overstating the actual outcomes, these authors suggest companies are hoping consumers will be satisfied with their promotional efforts. Other authors concur selective disclosure and greenwashing persist, making consumers even more sceptical of a company's intentions when it comes to CSR (Raza et al. 2020). All these studies reinforce the understanding that consumer awareness of social responsibility has grown, and with it, has the impression that CSR is merely a marketing tool to boost brand image (Kim & Lee 2019).

The challenges in obtaining positive consumer-focused outcomes motivated this study enquiry which is at the junction of understanding the impacts of the consumers' self-authentication goals and perceptions of brand authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship. While different aspects of CSR have been extensively studied (Close Scheinbaum et al. 2019; Joo et al. 2019; Kim & Lee 2019), the amalgamation of cause-related event sponsorship – as a philanthropic dimension of CSR – with perceptions of brand authenticity is relatively new and ripe for development. Even with the increasing reliance on CSR by companies as a way to attract and engage consumers (Camilleri 2022), its contextual nature makes conceptualisation difficult, while its practices, and consumer response, varies considerably (Fatma & Khan 2022). The debate continues about whether sincere CSR initiatives are possible (Zhao & Jia 2022).

Given the complexities of consumer response to CSR, the challenge for companies is to express their genuine CSR in a way that distinguishes them from companies whose goals appear to be more profit-driven (Zhao & Jia 2022). Osakwe

and Yusuf (2021) propose that regardless of a company's CSR motives, through brand trust and reputation, CSR values have an indirect impact on consumer loyalty. The findings of other authors corroborate the fact that consumers can recognise certain conditions or evidence to determine company sincerity (Kim et al. 2019). Given the existing literature, it would be expected that as consumer perception of brand authenticity increased, it would positively and significantly impact consumer-focused outcomes. This study therefore advances the first hypothesis (as shown in Figure 2.2).

H1: Perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

Figure 2.2 – Hypothesis 1: Perceived brand authenticity impacts consumer-focused outcomes
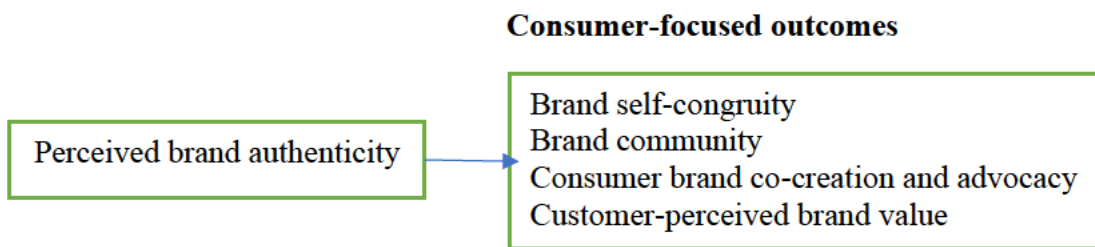
Source: Developed for this study

This study next explores three related theories that support the consumers' self-authentication goals in this setting – Self Determination Theory (SDT), goal self-concordance and Social Identity Theory (SIT).

2.2.7. Self-authentication goals of consumers

Self Determination Theory

Firstly, this research is based on the SDT paradigm where autonomy, relatedness, and competence are universal, innate needs essential to wellbeing (Ryan & Deci 2000). Within SDT, autonomy is described as the need to author of one's actions and for these to be aligned with personal values and goals. It is the feeling of self-authorship that leads to the experience of authenticity (Deci & Ryan 2000).

Heteronomy, on the other hand, is when a person feels their actions are imposed or controlled by others (Ryan & Deci 2006). Warmth, connection, and compassion are all feelings that are satisfied by belonging and having significant others (Deci & Ryan 2000). The opposite is experiencing feelings of social alienation, isolation, and loneliness (Deci & Ryan 2000). Competence refers to a sense of mastery and efficacy. It is satisfied when one successfully engages in activities that expands their skills and abilities (Deci & Ryan 2000). The opposite is feeling ineffectual and helpless (Deci & Ryan 2000).

SDT has permitted a deeper study and expansion of authenticity research due to authenticity being akin to autonomy (Deci 2004; Ryan & Deci 2006; Ryan 2017). From this perspective, the Basic Need Satisfaction in General scale (Kasser et al. 1992; Ilardi et al. 1993; Deci et al. 2001) explores these three dimensions further and how they may assist a consumer in meeting their self-authentication goals. The self-authentication goals of consumers are explored next.

Goal Self-Concordance

This explanation of SDT (Deci & Ryan 1985) leads to goal self-concordance which is the second construct within the self-authenticating goals composite in this research. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) describe how self-concordance enables a consumer to not only to achieve their goals, but to satisfy their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness and ultimately obtain a lasting sense of well-being and fulfilment. The theory suggests consumers tend to control and align their behaviours in highly self-determined ways to satisfy their basic needs (Sheldon & Kasser 1998; Sheldon & Elliot 1999). The self-concordance model begins when a consumer selects and commits to a set of goals; it then leads to goal attainment, and lastly models the effects of attainment on need satisfaction and wellbeing. Rogers (1961) reinforced the ideals of SDT leading to self-concordant goals, suggesting any reliance on external social controls should be replaced with internal personally congruent impulses. As such, consumers pursue goals, domains and relationships that allow or support their need satisfaction.

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), understanding the underlying psychological requirements that give goals their psychological potency is important to grasp goal-directed behaviour. SDT is considered essential to understanding goal pursuit with the 'what', being the content of what actually happens and the 'why', being the actual process of pursuing a goal (Ryan & Deci 2000). When these needs are met, goals are internalised, which is a requirement for authenticity (Sheldon & Elliot 1999). Social Identity Theory is discussed next as the third dimension of consumers' self-authenticating goals.

Social Identity Theory

This research is also based on social identity which is best understood through Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner 1986; Turner et al. 1987). Tajfel (1981, p. 255) defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept, which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership."

Consumers have both a personal and social classification for who they are (Tajfel & Turner 1982) where personal identity relates to their unique qualities, talents, and abilities, and social identity refers to their sense of belonging as a member of a group (Ashforth & Mael 1989). Social identity explains consumer variations in the inclination to seek socially acceptable goals given the tendency to perceive the true self as essentially good and therefore socially desirable (De Freitas & Cikara 2018; De Freitas et al. 2018). This is especially relevant in context of cause-related events where social identity supports feelings of self-esteem (Lee & Robbins 1998).

A study by Stoll et al. (2000) on the motives of runners in a marathon, a popular physical challenge that is often a feature of cause-related events, shows social identity to be a primary reason for participating. Stoll et al. (2000) claimed these events provide opportunities to experience belonging and acceptance, and depending on the cause and

the physical challenge, can illicit strong emotional responses that are perceived as uniquely authentic. In a study by Malchrowicz-Mośko and Poczta (2018), the feeling of being part of an authentic and positive experience is further compounded by the setting of the event, often close to nature and in bucket-list destinations.

A related study by Kuchmaner (2020a) details how the self-authentication process may be influenced by peer review of consumption choices which may authenticate or in-authenticate a consumer's identity. Baumeister (2019) has also emphasised the importance of external stimuli in the self-authentication process. Relatedly, Schmader and Sedikides (2018) found positive peer review encourages feelings of authenticity because the consumption choices have been validated.

Conversely, other scholars show consumers may not always engage in the self-authentication process (Kuchmaner 2020a). The 'identity' must have personal meaning for the consumer and be worth the authentication effort (Ryan et al. 2005). For example, if a consumer finds participating in physical endurance events relatively easy, they might seek to authenticate that identity by registering for the Oxfam Trailwalker event, a 100 kilometre walk which provides that physical and mental challenge. If, however, it is not that important to the consumer, they may not be motivated enough to authenticate this identity.

Other criteria in the self-authentication process, according to Ryan (1993), suggests that consumers are more likely to authenticate a voluntary and self-endorsed identity than one that is volitionally enacted. If a consumer decides the desired identity is worthy of being pursued, the environment must be conducive to the authentication process. Meanwhile, Kuchmaner (2020a) has suggested a consumer's level of self-confidence may also pre-empt authentication efforts. Those who are self-confident in their identity may not need to authenticate the identity frequently, or at all (Kuchmaner 2020a).

What is clear from this literature review is that personal identity is not something that forms independently of social interactions and commitments. The

social world gives consumers their social identity through shared interests and the internalisation of shared values (Lee & Ewert 2019; Yazici 2020). These findings support the idea that social identity assists consumers in meeting their self-authenticating goals.

Social identity completes the theoretical constructs that form the self-authenticating goals composite. The interplay between self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity is yet to be fully considered in a cause-related event context. The satisfaction of these self-authenticating goals has been highlighted by researchers as a predominant motive for participation in cause-related events (Bennett 2007; Filo et al. 2013; Rundio 2014; Cooper 2019). What is not known is how the consumers' self-authentication goals impacts consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. To this end, the second research hypothesis is advanced (as shown in Figure 2.3):

H2: The consumer's self-authentication goals significantly and positively impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events.

Figure 2.3 – Hypothesis 2: The consumers' self-authentication goals impact consumer-focused outcomes.

Self-Authentication Goals   **Consumer-focused Outcomes**

Self-determination
Goal self-concordance
Social identity

Brand self-congruity
Brand community
Consumer brand co-creation and advocacy
Customer-perceived brand value
Customer-brand engagement
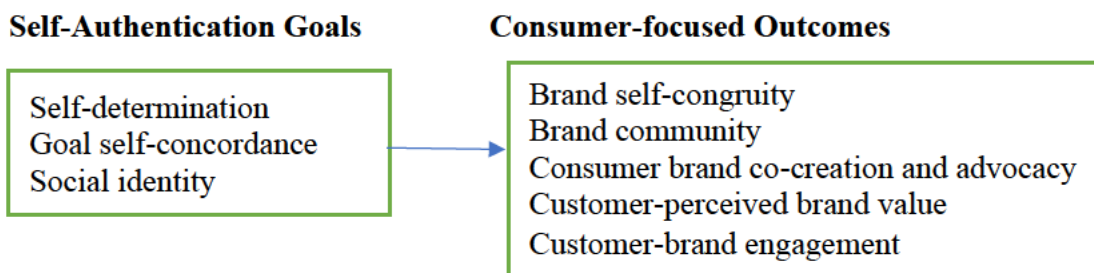
Source: Developed for this study

Given this review, it seems that cause-related event sponsorship has experienced significant growth because of its ability to produce experiences of authenticity. Authenticity, according to Charlton and Cornwell (2019), may be especially essential in a sponsorship setting since the connection conveys motives, goals, and a particular intent. In their study of how consumers perceive the authenticity of the 'social partnership', they found the perceived genuineness of the

relationship and attitudes towards each partner in the relationship were related. Reinforcing the call for authenticity, Joo et al. (2019) found it to be effective in predicting favourable consumer attitudes and intentions towards brands. In order to explore the possible interconnectedness of self and brand authenticity further, the dimension of authenticity will be explored next.

Chapter 2.3 – The search for authenticity

2.3.1 Brand authenticity

A review of current literature reveals brand authenticity is generally considered from three viewpoints: objective, subjective and existential, also known as 'self-referential' (Pattuglia & Mingione 2017). The objective component of brand authenticity is concerned with an object's history (Napoli et al. 2014; Morhart et al. 2015). The subjective viewpoint assigns significance to the brand (Beverland & Farrelly 2010) which increases the iconic relatedness consumers feel towards the brand (Arnould & Price 2000; Beverland & Farrelly 2010). The existential aspect derives from the self and assists in cultivating identities (Leigh et al. 2006; Morhart et al. 2015). It suggests a brand is authentic only if it is "a genuine expression of an inner personal truth "I like this because I am like that" (Beverland 2005, p. 1007).

Consumers use the symbolic resources of brands for help in their search for authenticity (Beverland 2009; Södergren 2021; Wickstrom et al. 2021). Given this self-referential dimension, brand authenticity has been described as "the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful and true toward itself and its consumers, and to support consumers being true to themselves." (Morhart et al. 2015, p. 202).

Early work by Kunda (1990) explains how consumers actively process information, giving preference to self or situationally relevant cues that assist in the authentication process. This processing entails motivated reasoning, as well as the selection and amplification of certain aspects of the information to use as 'evidence' for what is real (Kunda 1990). Other scholars suggest that because brand and identity

are so intimately linked in memory (Borah & Tellis 2016), a decrease in perceived self-authenticity also lowers brand authenticity perceptions (Wang & Korschun 2015).

Several scholars have examined the situational elements and individual characteristics influencing consumer perceptions of brand authenticity. Scholars Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016) discovered that social exclusion increases attachment to and valuation of authentic brands. This was particularly pronounced for consumers with a high level of enduring personal authenticity (Guèvremont & Grohmann 2016). As consumers are increasingly seeking authentic brands experiences, it necessitates a more comprehensive conceptualisation of authenticity (Tran & Keng 2018). To date, the call for a deeper exploration on how consumers access authenticity (Tran & Keng 2018) has been undermined by ongoing confusion surrounding the role of consumers and the role of brands.

While researchers have studied the relationship between authenticity and the consumer's psychological wellbeing (Baumeister 2019; Borawski 2019; Hicks et al. 2019; Josephs et al. 2019; Zhang et al. 2019); subjective wellbeing (Kernis & Goldman 2006; Wood et al. 2008) and self-esteem (Sheldon et al. 1997; Goldman & Kernis 2002; Kernis & Goldman 2006; Sheldon & Schüler 2011; Lenton et al. 2016), very few have explored the role of authenticity for meeting both the consumers' self-authenticating goals and consumer-focused outcomes for brands (Morhart et al. 2015; Guèvremont & Grohmann 2016; Fritz et al. 2017). Recent research shows the more authentic consumers feel a brand is, the more likely they are to have a favourable attitude toward the brand; demonstrate emotional brand attachment; share in word-of-mouth and demonstrate loyalty to the brand through increased purchase behaviour (Carroll et al. 2022).

Given its multiple applications and meanings, Södergren (2021) concludes that compressing the concept of brand authenticity into a single definition is not helpful. Further, despite several attempts to conceptualise and operationalise brand authenticity, its measurement, motivations, repercussions, and underlying processes

remain unknown (Napoli et al. 2014; Campagna et al. 2021). This deficit in study is highlighted by a lack of knowledge of the psychological and contextual antecedents to perceptions of brand authenticity, where self-authenticity plays a major role (Vess 2019; Campagna et al. 2021).

Notwithstanding these conceptual challenges, scholars and practitioners widely agree that perceptions of authenticity are personally determined and negotiated by consumers, varying by minute degrees (Gilmore & Pine 2007; Napoli et al. 2016). Authenticity can either be accepted or rejected by consumers (Peterson 2005) such that "authenticity is a moving target" (Boyle 2003, p. 39).

Beverland and Farrelly (2010) agree and suggest consumer goals underpin assessment of brand authenticity, preferring brands and experiences that reinforce their desired identity. These scholars suggest the goals are directed towards either control, connection or virtue and that consumers would systematically select experiences to achieve these goals (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). Consumers would experience positive identity benefits in terms of feelings of true self when conferring authenticity to certain experiences, brands, and events (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). They also discovered that depending on the consumer's particular goal, the same event could be considered either authentic or inauthentic by others.

The consumer, according to Beverland and Farrelly (2010), is creative and capable of establishing authenticity in mainstream events and brands. The discovery of a contingent relationship between consumer goals and certain cues supports the contention of this research that there is a possible link between the consumers' self-authentication goals and perceptions of brand authenticity. This study looks next at authenticity in a cause-related event setting.

2.3.2 Authenticity in cause-related events

Cause-related events allow consumers to participate in shared experiences in which there is an idealisation of community (Scheinbaum et al. 2017). According to scholars, the communal aspect of participation is an essential aspect of the consumption-driven self-authentication process (Hopper et al. 2015; Kuchmaner 2020a). Relatedly, sponsorship of cause-related events provides a unique opportunity for companies to be viewed as authentic, either openly or implicitly, and become a part of the self-authentication process. How consumers perceive the authenticity of companies that sponsor cause-related events is especially important given that consumers are inclined to attribute either intrinsic (authentic support for a cause) or extrinsic (support is driven by profit-seeking) motivations to sponsors (Rifon et al. 2004).

Today, societal issues such as gender equality and mental health are central to the promotion of a cause-related event. The significance of authenticity as a research angle is therefore not to be underestimated given the growing prevalence for companies to champion societal issues through cause-related sponsorship. As posited by Cornwell (2019), authenticity is more important as a measure of sponsor engagement than previously thought.

Arnould and Price (2000) earlier identified two ways to achieve self-authentication that are relevant to cause-related events. The first is in authenticating acts, which are activities that induce a state of flow or intense joy; and peak performance or high-level functioning (Arnould & Price 1993); and the second is in authoritative performances, which provide a collective sense of identity, and a secure sense of belonging to a like-minded community (Turner et al. 1987). With both approaches, the consumer intentionally links the experience with their own personal narrative and identification with self. What matters is whether or not the consumer perceives the experience to be genuine, not whether it really is (Cohen 1988). The extensive acceptance of cause-related events as a place for authoritative performances

(Arnould & Price 2000) is bolstered by the widespread popularity of these events among consumers and brands alike.

External factors are exclusively considered in connection to authoritative performances (i.e. social identities) in the study by Arnould and Price (2000), while Kuchmaner (2020b) claims there's a social dimension to the external forces which also plays an important part in how personal identities are authenticated. She suggests external audiences are utilised for social comparison to explicitly support or reject the consumer's feeling of self-authenticity. This kind of sharing is likely to happen on social media, where peers are instantly accessible. Similarly, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) concur with Kuchmaner (2020b) that using social networks to validate the self-authentication goals online reinforces the perception the experience is authentic.

This extensive review of current literature clearly demonstrates there is broad agreement that authenticity is individually determined and socially constructed (Kuchmaner 2020b). The definition of authenticity varies depending on the context of the situation in which it's observed and the consumer's self-concordant (Kuchmaner 2020b). Personal aspirations can result in different conceptions of authenticity and consumers access different cues to activate the feeling of authenticity. These cues reinforce what the consumer hopes to construct in their definition of self, while at the same time, working towards long-term identity objectives that activities like supporting a cause can stimulate (Beverland & Farrelly 2010).

The literature reviewed has enabled the formulation of a third research hypothesis, relating to the relationships between these variables. While Cornwell (2019) talks about authentic engagement in the sponsorship relationship, unlike Wakefield et al. (2020) and Beverland and Farrelly (2010), she doesn't consider the consumer perspective. Cornwell (2019) considers relationship authenticity as the independent variable. She posits that authentic engagement is the outcome of the characteristics of the rights-holder and sponsor which influence the trajectory of relationship authenticity. Links based on brand and relationship authenticity (as

identified by Morhart et al. (2015)) are enacted through partnering, leveraging and activating (as the mediating variable) to produce engagement outcomes (as the dependent variable).

Both Beverland and Farrelly (2010) and Cornwell (2019) propose that authenticity is an independent variable. More recently, Carroll et al. (2022) measured the impact of brand authenticity perceptions and suggests it mediates the relationship between the consumers' authentic personality and brand loyalty. The study by Carroll et al. (2022) measures consumer behaviour and purchasing intent in a retail environment. This study proposes that these constructs may behave differently in a cause-related event context. This study suggests that in the case of cause-related events, authenticity moderates the relationship between the consumers' self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes i.e., that perceptions of brand authenticity affect the strength and direction of that relationship. Meanwhile, Wakefield et al. (2020) didn't consider authenticity in sponsorship at all. The interaction between the rights-holder, brands and consumer became their independent variable while their mediating variable is the thoughts, feelings and actions of consumer which then produced brand and consumer-focused outcomes as the dependent variable.

As such, we advance the third hypothesis, as shown in Figure 2.4, which is specific to the study of cause-related events where authenticity is suggested to be a critical variable given the brand association with a cause. Unlike Cornwell (2019) and Beverland and Farrelly (2010), this study proposes perceived brand authenticity to be a moderating variable that impacts the relationship between consumers' self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes.

H3: The relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is significantly and positively moderated by perceived brand authenticity.

Figure 2.4 – Hypothesis 3: The relationship between the consumers' self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is moderated by perceived brand authenticity
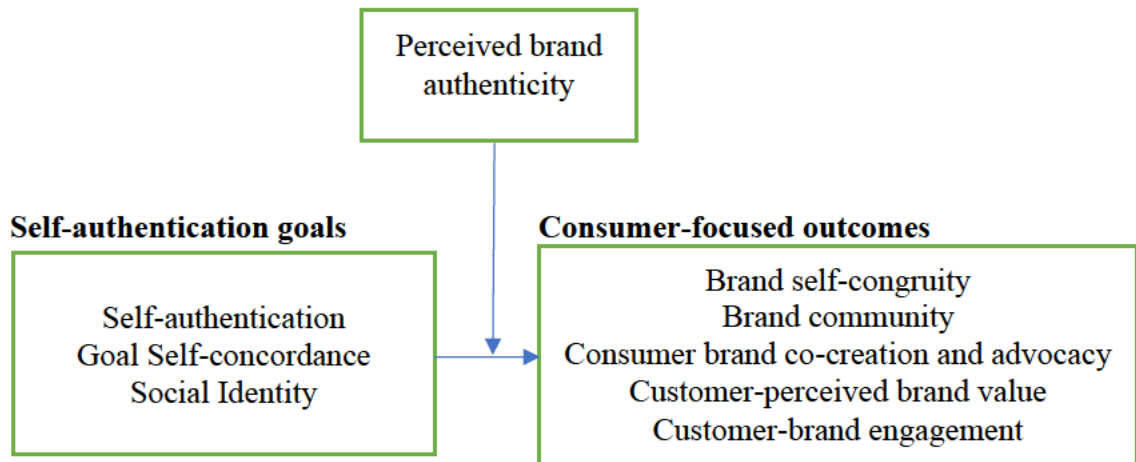
Source: Developed for this study

A summary and implications for the research will be provided next.

Chapter 2.4 – Summary and implications

For companies seeking consumer-focused outcomes through cause-related event sponsorship, this research will suggest that furnishing positive perceptions of brand authenticity is key. As this study has demonstrated, the role of the consumer cannot be underestimated. Scholars have already shown perceived brand authenticity adds value to the consumer experience (Goulding & Derbaix 2019); improves brand loyalty (Carroll et al. 2022) and boosts the overall value of the brand (Vredenburg et al. 2020). This research also suggests perceptions of brand authenticity moderate the relationship between the consumers' self-authenticating goals and consumer-focused outcomes.

Supporting this evidence, earlier scholars show that when consumers believe a brand to be authentic, it improves emotional brand connection and word-of-mouth; and drives brand choice likelihood for consumers who are self-authentic (Morhart et al. 2015). With further insight into the consumers' perception of brand authenticity,

companies will be able to better access the consumer-focused outcomes available through cause-related event sponsorship.

The goal of the study is to bring together related theories to address the research question: *How do brand authenticity and self-authentication impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship?* Before presenting the conceptual model, a general review of the theories that underpin the study is offered.

What is already known from extant literature is that authenticity is a socially created interpretation of what is observed, rather than intrinsic characteristics of an item (Grayson & Martinec 2004; Rose & Wood 2005; Beverland 2006, 2009). What is witnessed, like goal-driven behaviour, might symbolise who one wants to be (Cohen 1988). Literary findings demonstrate authentic brands play a key part in the self-authentication process where consumers seek to attain feelings of true self (Arnould & Price 2000; Beverland & Farrelly 2010).

Authentic brands feature strongly in consumers' self-authentication behaviours because of their important role in constructing identity (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). The degree of self-authentication varies depending on the consumer's personal circumstances (Gilmore & Pine 2007) and research already shows authentic brands are more likely to be chosen by consumers who are already high in self-authenticity (Morhart et al. 2015). Scholars broadly agree the concept of authenticity is both context and goal dependent. As authenticity is more likely to be discovered in activities that give purpose and self-fulfilment over those that are just enjoyable (Smallenbroek et al. 2017), this explains the popularity of participating in cause-related events.

Participating in these events offers consumers a way to achieve their self-authentication aspirations. To this end, this study seeks to discover how self-determined authenticity affects brand authenticity judgments in an environment that provides purpose and self-fulfilment. The necessity for this study is clear, as is the

likelihood of obtaining meaningful, relevant, and significant results, based on the current gap in literature and practise.

The implications from the literature review are many in that it demonstrates a clear need for scholars and practitioners to further understand how perceptions of authenticity may be influenced by the consumers' self-authentication goals to access consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. Cause-related events continue to grow in popularity for both companies and consumers, because amongst other benefits, they're a vehicle to demonstrate social goodness (Filo et al. 2011). The halo effect of sponsorship means the goodwill transfers to other attributes of the brand or the consumer (Hansson & Jonasson 2022). This study further suggests that through identification with and participation in these events, consumers can meet their self-authentication goals.

Scholars have thus far concentrated their efforts on a small number of antecedents, such as brand fit, that produce consumer-focused outcomes leaving views of authenticity untouched. This study suggests authenticity is foundational to producing consumer-focused outcomes. Given consumer scepticism of brand sincerity as highlighted in the literature review, this research will deepen and extend the study of authenticity. It justifies the proposed theoretical framework and research questions of this study.

With a detailed discussion of the self-authentication goals, perceptions of brand authenticity, and consumer-focused outcomes identified in past sponsorship research, the study is conceptualised in terms of the antecedent factors (the consumer's self-authentication goals), the moderating factor (perceptions of brand authenticity), and the set of consumer-focused outcomes specific to cause-related event sponsorship (brand self-congruity, brand community, consumer brand co-creation and advocacy; consumer-perceived brand value and customer-brand engagement).

A model, as depicted in Figure 2.5, reflecting all of these considerations summarises the proposed relationship between these constructs. As the exact

relationships between the proposed constructs are unknown, they are shown in the model to have equal effect. It is intended that this model will be reviewed following the completion of explanatory research when more information is known about the constructs and how they relate to each other.

Figure 2.5 – Preliminary Model – The role of brand authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship
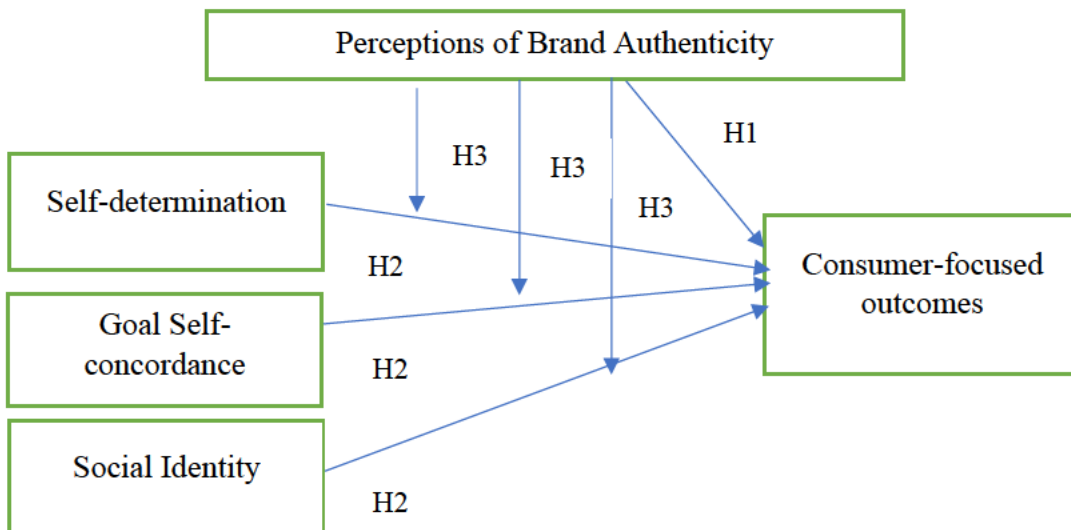
Source: Developed for this study

Chapter 2.5 – Conclusion

In this chapter, a theoretical framework for the role of brand authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship has been proposed. Three self-authenticating goals: self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity – provide understanding into this little researched relationship in cause-related events. The literature indicates that perceptions of brand authenticity are likely to be impacted by consumer self-determination; goal self-concordance and social identity and that these constructs are likely to influence consumer-focused outcomes. As this is still unknown, there is a clear need for further research to understand the relationship between these variables. The remainder of the study is organised as follows. The next section describes the methods and data which answers the set of research questions. Subsequent sections present the findings, offering implications for theory as well as practice, and suggests future research opportunities. The next chapter provides the methodology.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter 3.1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature and identified a number of constructs proposed to impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. The literature review provided evidence for the research question and hypotheses to be tested in this study suggesting consumer self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity may influence consumer-focused outcomes with sponsors of cause-related events.

Further, the literature reinforces the importance of perceived brand authenticity and its possible role in this relationship. As the relationship between these constructs is not known, and the combination of these constructs together in this study is unique, it is important that these constructs be explored more fully. Thus, this program of research will take the form of an exploratory study.

In this chapter, and following this Section 3.1 introduction, the post positivism research paradigm will be outlined in Section 3.2 with an explanation of the axiology, ontology and epistemology. Section 3.3 will discuss the methodology to be used in the study, the proposed research design, its reliability, ethical considerations, the survey instruments to be used to collect the data, development and pre-testing of the survey design as well as an outline and justification for the measurement items. Section 3.4 will detail the data collection phase of the study including the sample frame and sample size as well as the proposed process and timelines for completion of each stage of the study. Section 3.5 will present the proposed data analysis plan that will address the research question and hypotheses. Finally, sections 3.6 will discuss the potential limitations of the research, while 3.7 will conclude the proposed research design process.

The outline of this chapter is shown in Figure 3.1. The research paradigm will be discussed next.

Figure 3.1 – Outline of Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Research Paradigm
3.3 Methodology
3.4 Data Collection
3.5 Data Analysis Plan
3.6 Limitations
3.7 Conclusion

Source: Developed for this study

Chapter 3.2 – Research paradigm

A research paradigm is a "set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world" ((Filstead 1979) as cited in (Ponterotto 2005, p. 127). A researcher's philosophical assumptions can be based on numerous paradigms, or world views including positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism-interpretivism (Ponterotto 2005).

Research paradigms incorporate the "philosophical anchors of ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical structure, and methodology" (Ponterotto 2005, p. 130). It follows that the identification and selection of research methods, instruments, tools and potential participants should be led by the parameters of the chosen paradigm (Ponterotto 2005). The proposed research seeks to understand consumer goal self-concordance, social identity and self-determination and the relationship between these constructs, perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes.

The objectives of this research suggest it fits within the psychology domain which is predominantly grounded in post-positivism paradigms (Morrow 2005). Post-positivism, also known as methodological pluralism (Webber 2020), involves the subjectivity of reality as opposed to a purely objective stance which is adopted

by logical positivists (Ryan 2006). This paradigm is highly applicable to the chosen research, given findings will be reliant on consumer perceptions where reality is both imperfect and probabilistic (Hiller 2016).

3.2.1 Post-Positivism

Exploring this post-positivism further, objective reality is only known imperfectly and is contestable because of the limitations of human capacity (Hiller 2016). Findings require continual revision following the emergence of any new evidence from studies that are conducted within a post positivism paradigm (Healy & Perry 2000).

Meanwhile, post-positivism and positivism research share some similarities in that: they contribute to predicting and explaining phenomena (known as being "nomothetic" in nature); they adhere to universal laws and human behaviours with findings generalisable in their application (Ponterotto 2005); they are concerned with phenomena that can be identified and studied, including elements of cause and effect; and they can be biased by the inherent objectivity of the researcher (Healy & Perry 2000). As post-positivism is not strictly a quantitative realm, it means that this study can use a survey as a measurement instrument whilst acknowledging the human aspect of the research. Given the human factor, the purpose of the research has to be balanced with what the researcher values (Killam 2013). This is called axiology and will be discussed next.

3.2.2 Axiology

Axiology involves the values and role of the researcher. Post-positivists suggest personal values should not exist in scientific research, and that they should be eliminated or controlled by adopting standardised and systematic research methods (Killam 2013). The selection of the research topic has, nonetheless, been suggested to demonstrate values bias by virtue of the researcher's vested level of interest. As an example, the study of authenticity and social identity in particular, may be largely

precipitated by the researcher's observation of consumer behaviours and fakery on social media.

The researcher's world view is also demonstrated by the language used in the research. This rhetoric plays a representational role in the research exemplifying their axiological position. In the study on authenticity, the use of theories that underpin consumer goal self-concordance, social identity and self-determination guide the rhetoric. As such, the post-positivist stance "in which objectivity and a detached, emotionally neutral research role prevails, rhetoric is precise and 'scientific'" (Ponterotto 2005, p. 132) ensures that independent of the researcher, one true discoverable reality still exists.

As axiology addresses the nature of ethical behaviour, it means that decision making during the research process will be guided by basic beliefs about what is ethical. This may include which participants are most suited for the study and what questions are asked of the participants – especially given the motivation for some of them to participate in cause-related events (raising funds and awareness for causes such as cancer, heart disease, mental health and disability services) could be spurred by personal losses or misfortune. Given the central role of the researcher's beliefs about nature, there are three paradigmatic determinants – ontology (the reality studied); the epistemology (the knowledge of the reality), and the methodology or strategy used to seek the truth (Kvale 1994). The ontology of this study will be discussed in detail first.

3.2.3 Ontology

One of the main questions relating to ontology is "What is the form and nature of reality, and what can be known about that reality?" (Ponterotto 2005, p. 130). Positivism research takes on the position of 'naïve realism' where one true discoverable reality exists independent of the researcher (Bisman 2010). Post-positivist research suggests a 'psychological reality' exists which cannot be known or observed directly, otherwise called 'critical realism' (Ponterotto 2005).

The focus for positivists and critical realists is on the source of knowledge to justify knowledge claims. In this case, it means the onus is on understanding perceptions of brand authenticity as the source of knowledge in a cause-related event context. This is the opposite of social constructionism where the focus is on the source of knowledge in order to de-justify knowledge claims. It is not in the interests of this research to disprove the role that perceptions of brand authenticity play given its importance in a cause-related event context. Epistemology and methodology are driven by ontological beliefs (Killam 2013) which will be discussed next.

3.2.4 Epistemology

The key element of epistemology "is concerned with the relationship between the 'knower' (the research participant) and the 'would-be knower' (the researcher)", and what can be known (Ponterotto 2005, p. 131). Epistemology focuses on a process of continuous improvement to underpin theory development which takes place through the gathering of knowledge (Grix 2002).

Positivists follow a philosophy of 'dualism/objectivism', where the research participant and topic (i.e., dualism) are independently studied by the researcher with standardised research processes (i.e., objectivism) removing any potential bias. A modified dualism/objectivism is emphasised by post-positivists whereby "the researcher may have some influence on that being researched, but objectivity and researcher-subject independence remain important guidelines for the research process" (Ponterotto 2005, p. 131). Given the requirement for objectivity, the research will be informed by quantitative research data. It explains how the data will be acquired and how knowledge will be gathered (Killam 2013).

Psychology has been reliant on quantitative methods for gathering knowledge, which are widely perceived to focus on "strict quantification of observation (data) and on careful control of empirical variables" (Ponterotto 2005, p. 128). The measurement and analysis of correlational relationships between variables is a hallmark of quantitative studies. A discussion follows next on the proposed methodology, and how it will systematically be conducted.

Chapter 3.3 - Methodology

This study is directed by the research question: *'How are consumer-focused outcomes impacted in cause-related event sponsorship?'* The purpose of this study is to address gaps in the known body of literature to explain the relationship between consumer goal self-concordance, social identity and self-determination, perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes to produce a new way of thinking that will better equip theory and practise in cause-related event sponsorship.

The objective of this study is to empirically explore the relationship between the constructs that relate to the motivations and identity of cause-related event participants and how they engage with brands who sponsor those events. In particular, the study aims to identify the role that perceptions of brand authenticity play in this relationship.

The literature review conducted in Chapter 2, suggests the role of perceived brand authenticity is contested with a lack of agreement over whether it moderates, mediates or acts in its own right as an independent variable in understanding consumer-focused outcomes of cause-related event sponsorship. This study contends that it will act as a moderator of the relationship between consumer goal self-concordance, social identity, self-determination and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

The post positivist paradigm adopted by this study is determined by the research methodology and involves the collection of quantitative data (Krauss 2005). Methodology is concerned with the research process and procedures as part of finding what is believed to be known. Post-positivist methodology aims to control variables whilst rendering researcher emotion and bias as irrelevant through adherence to scientific methods (Ryan 2006). The main goal is to "uncover and explain relationships among variables that will eventually lead to universal or etic laws that form the foundation of prediction and control of phenomena" (Ponterotto 2005, p. 132).

In post-positivist quantitative research, the researcher is concerned with ensuring "internal validity (isomorphism of findings with reality), external validity

(generalizability), reliability (in the sense of stability), and objectivity (distanced and neutral observer)" ((Guba & Lincoln 1994) as cited in (Morrow 2005, p. 251)). In this research, internal validity will be sought by applying statistical control; external validity will achieved by ensuring the sample group is representative of the target population; reliability will be sought by ensuring the same result can consistently be achieved using the same methods under the same circumstances; while objectivity will be achieved by standardising testing procedures and minimising flexible data analysis and interpretation (Sukamolson 2007). While methodology is analysis of all the methods and procedures of the investigation, the method is the specific approach to collecting the data. The method used will be discussed next.

3.3.1 Methods

Methods explain the range of techniques and procedures used to collect and analyse data. Which method is selected depends on the research question; the data sources available; the research paradigm and methodology principles (Grix 2002). Good scholarship is considered to be "the result of how one employs, cross-checks, collates and analysis the data that methods assist one in collection" (Grix 2002, p. 181).

Research methods may include any one of several processes including experiments, focus groups, interviews, and observation. Different degrees of objectivity can result, depending on the chosen method of data collection. The method most congruent with the research paradigm of this study is a quantitative study collecting primary data from cause-related event participants via a survey. This method has been chosen because it is not only driven by the researchers' ontological and epistemology beliefs but because it is the best way to answer the research question. The method also informs the research design which provides a plan for how the research question will be answered. The proposed research design will be outlined next.

3.3.2 Research Design

The unique relationship between consumer goal self-concordance, social identity and self-determination, and the moderating effect that perceptions of brand authenticity may have on consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship is yet to be explored. Quantitative data will be collected to fulfil the study objectives and to help explain the relationships. A quantitative survey provides the best approach in answering the research question because of its ability to identify patterns of attitude and behaviour of a particular subset of consumers that may be applied on a larger scale.

Primary data collection will be the best method for addressing each of the research hypotheses because it allows for the collection of data specific to the purpose of the research (Rahman 2020). In contrast to the use of secondary data, primary data also ensures the most recent insights are gleaned on a particular research topic (Rahman 2020). The quantitative research design enables for the hypotheses to be supported or not supported and for results to be concluded.

A survey will form the basis of the quantitive data collection in this research. It will comprise of measures of the key variables of interest and their relationship to each other.

While four types of quantitative research design exist (descriptive, correlational, causal-comparative/ quasi-experimental and experimental research design (Williams 2007)), this study takes a correlational approach to theory. It enables a set of research hypotheses to be answered to help draw conclusions from the results. Generally speaking, correlational research uses statistical data to determine the extent of a relationship between two or more variables (Curtis et al. 2016). In this type of design, relationships between and among a number of facts are sought and interpreted.

While this type of research recognises possible patterns and trends in data, it does not attempt to prove how these observed patterns came about (Curtis et al. 2016).

This proposed design is the most appropriate for this study because the variables are not manipulated; they are only identified and are studied as they are reported.

In analysing the survey data, the aim is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the variables under discussion – namely perceptions of brand authenticity, the self-authenticating goals of consumers and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. This method and design approach is in line with recommendations by Punch (2013), which states that quantitative research produces a comprehensive examination of the population under study. The collection of large amounts of numerical data via closed-ended questions allows for generalised results.

Studies on the phenomena of authenticity have used both qualitative and quantitive methods. Where quantitative research design usually requires large sample sizes to produce a certain quantity of responses; qualitative research quantitative is more interested in the emotional insights that are gained by understanding how the research participant thinks, acts or feels in a specific context (Queirós et al. 2017). Given this study adopts a quantitive approach, it follows that the scales used in the research helps to explain the variables under examination. This study will adopt a similar approach to Adhikari and Panda (2019) who attempted to understand brand loyalty, one of many consumer-focussed outcomes.

While the range of consumer-focused outcomes, which include brand self-congruity, consumer-brand co-creation and customer-brand engagement have been independently measured by other scholars using the same tools, the research design has been selected first and foremost in response to the research question and paradigm. The fact that other studies, such as that by Adhikari and Panda (2019), have adopted similar designs, supports this research design decision.

Figure 3.2 provides an outline of the research design. The overall structure for the quantitative design is based on the scientific method using deductive reasoning (Andersen & Hepburn 2015). The first stage is planning where observations are made about something that is unknown, unexplained, or new. These observations are supported by a literature review and the generation of a conceptual model based on a

set of hypothesises which might provide an explanation for those observations. The second step is sampling (Ayres 2007). A quantitative design approach has been chosen because the intention of the research is to survey a representative sample to make generalisations about perceptions of brand authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship. The third step is to decide on the most appropriate instruments to be used. There are several methods to quantitatively collect the data including surveys, experiments, controlled observations, interviews, polls and longitudinal studies (Nardi 2018).

As surveys can be created and completed online, it makes them a convenient and accessible choice. As such, an online survey is the chosen research method to generate the quantitative data for this study. Data will be collected to investigate the problem and will be analysed to verify the findings. The final step is reporting. Conclusions will be made to either prove or disprove the hypotheses (Patton 1999).

Figure 3.2 – Research Design

PLANNING	• Review of literature • Generation of a conceptual model	**Research question** What are the factors that impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events?
SAMPLING	• Deciding sampling setting and audience scope	**Research sample** • Purposive sampling technique • 932 partially completed surveys • 305 fully completed surveys
INSTRUMENT	• Reliability • Validity	**Scales** • Basic Psychological Need Scale, Goal self-concordance, Social Identity, Brand Authenticity, Customer-Brand Co-Creation Behaviour
DATA ANALYSIS	• Quantitative data analysis • Conceptual model	**Exploratory Factor Analysis** • Version 27 of SPSS (IBM Corp 2015) • PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013)
REPORTING		**Results** • Results to summarise the outcome of the three sub-questions to answer the main research question on what factors impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

Source: Developed for this study

Findings will be reported using data, figures and tables that address each research hypothesis. Conclusions will be made based on these findings, while research hypotheses will be discussed in a way that expands on existing theories. Each of these methodological and design concepts will be discussed in more detail in this chapter. Next, the quality of the findings will be discussed in terms of reliability.

3.3.3 Reliability

The degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results is called reliability (Phelan & Wren 2005). Four types of reliability exist – internal consistency reliability, inter-rater consistency, test-retest and parallel forms (Heale & Twycross 2015).

For results to be considered stable, the researcher should be able to produce the same result a second time when measuring a certain variable using the same scale. To check the stability, test-retest reliability is often used where the same test is administered twice with a group of participants over a period of time (Polit 2014). The scores from each result are correlated to evaluate the test for stability over time. This approach can often be challenged, however, because there is an argument that the participants' responses may change between the two time points (Polit 2014). Applying this approach is especially problematic in the proposed study.

If participants recall different sponsors of different cause-related events, it can fundamentally change their perception of brand authenticity which is the primary variable under investigation. Regardless, the recall of sponsors, even without applying the test-retesting measure of reliability, could be problematic. For this reason, a hypothetical sponsor situation will be introduced to remove the recall issue.

The second reliability type is parallel forms reliability which is achieved by administering to the same group of participants different versions of an assessment tool (that still contain items probing the same construct, skill or knowledge base for example) (Phelan & Wren 2005). The scores from the two versions are correlated to

evaluate the consistency of results across the different versions. This type of reliability process, however, may also be challenged because the measures could be subtly assessing different things if there is no correlation.

The third type of reliability is inter-rater reliability which is a measure of reliability used to assess the degree to which different judges agree in their assessment decisions (Phelan & Wren 2005). Inter-rater reliability can be useful when answers to research questions can be interpreted in different ways. Judges may disagree as to how well certain responses demonstrate knowledge of the construct or skill being assessed. It is especially useful when judgements are considered relatively subjective.

Inter-rater reliability will not be applicable in the proposed study. Ambiguity is removed in the design process with definitions of key terms and examples being provided upfront. For example, the definition of a cause-related event will be provided to participants for the purpose of providing a clear and reliable definition upon which to respond to the questions being asked. In this example, a charity event will be defined as requiring physical participation; involves fundraising and can be sponsored by organisations e.g. The Oxfam Trailwalker event is a 100km walk to fight poverty and is sponsored by a number of organisations including Deloitte, Bendigo Bank and Paddy Pallin.

The fourth type of reliability measure, which is most relevant to this study, is internal consistency reliability. It is used to evaluate the degree to which different test items probe the same construct and produce similar results (Phelan & Wren 2005).

There are two types of internal consistency reliability – average inter-item correlation and split-half reliability (Phelan & Wren 2005). Average inter-item correlation is a subtype of internal consistency reliability gained by gathering all of the items that probe the same construct (e.g., social identity) and determining the correlation coefficient for each pair of items which are then averaged. This final step yields the average inter-item correlation.

Split-half reliability is another subtype of internal consistency reliability which will be used in this study. It takes place by splitting in half all items of a test intended

to probe the same area of knowledge (e.g., social identity) to form two sets of items (Matheson 2008). The complete test is administered to a group of participants and the total score for each set is computed. The split-half reliability is obtained by determining the correlation between the two total set scores (Matheson 2008).

Depending on where the split is made, an additional step is then taken to calculate the Cronbach's alpha (a). Cronbach's can range from 0.0 to 1.0, and is used to quantify the degree to which items on an instrument are correlated with one another (Connelly 2011). This is often considered to be the expected value of all possible split-half correlations – or as the proportion of observed variance that represents true variance (Connelly 2011).

3.3.4 Ethical Considerations

The first ethical concern of this study is participant consent. Participants will be given the opportunity to provide informed consent after learning about the aims and objectives of the research. The intentions of the study will be shred before any participant commences the survey.

Additionally, relevant ethical approval from the University of Southern Queensland Research Ethics Board will also be obtained before committing to the research process. See Appendix A for the ethics applications. The guidelines from the 2020 Code of Professional Behaviour (The Research Society) will also be used as a checklist at each stage of the research process. These guidelines outline the responsibilities of the researcher to participants which will now be discussed.

Participants in the research have the right to anonymity and to provide information voluntarily, without coercion or deceptive means employed to obtain data. Participants will be assured they will be safe from harm which includes taking care in the survey design to avoid questions that may be psychologically harmful or stressful to participants.

A brief outline of the research will be given to participants at the beginning of the survey including the identity and contact details of the researcher and the university's ethical clearance number. This will give participants the opportunity to find out more information or to have a formal means of redress if they feel threatened, harmed or unhappy with the process. It will also be communicated to participants that they may withdraw from the survey at any time without it being completed and without any negative consequences.

Bagozzi (1994) also states participants should have a right to privacy, confidentiality and sufficient information about the research procedures. Nonetheless, participants in this study will be given the opportunity to share their names on the survey if they wish to provide further information.

Finally, all collected data will be securely stored in a password-protected computer to limit access to any unauthorised individuals. The collected data will also be backed up on Google Drive using a password-protected email account. The raw data will be stored for five years before it is deleted or destroyed in accordance with recommendations by Creswell (2013).

3.3.5 Survey Instrument

While there are several methods to collect quantitative data, the most appropriate data collection instrument for this study is a survey. Other instruments available include experiments; controlled observations; longitudinal studies; polls and interviews (Nardi 2018). The benefits of using a survey include that it can be created and completed online; it is readily accessible and it can be rapidly deployed through various online channels (e.g., digital, social and email) increasing the potential reach of the sample (Ball 2019).

Online surveys also support flexible design with a range of question types, formats (including video or audio files) and automated skip-logic that may be cumbersome to implement with paper-based surveys (Ball 2019). It offers participants the convenience of completing the survey where and when it is convenient to them

and at their own pace, which may increase response rate (Callegaro et al. 2015). There are minimal costs involved with response capture being automated, eliminating the need to pay researchers to conduct face to-face interviews. Online delivery also ensures each respondent receives the survey questions in exactly the same way (Bernard 2017). The automation reduces the chances of data entry error (Callegaro et al. 2015) producing data which can be downloaded in a variety of formats and imported into analytical software packages (Ball 2019).

While there are some disadvantages with online surveys, these may be overcome with careful planning. Disadvantages include low participant engagement and survey fatigue which results in low response rates (Pozzar et al. 2020). These issues may be mitigated by managing the survey length, adding a progress bar, providing clear sections and ensuring questions are easy to read.

Online research methods may also be associated with unique threats to sample validity and data integrity (Pozzar et al. 2020). Careful selection of the distribution channels is a strategy that will be adopted to mitigate potential biased data and preserve data integrity. Links to data collection instruments will not be shared outside of the specific Facebook Groups, limiting the visibility of study-related social media profiles to audiences in the target market. The frequency and content of responses will also be monitored for suspicious patterns (Pozzar et al. 2020).

3.3.6 Development and pre-test

The scales to be used in the study will be designed through a standard scale development process (Bagozzi et al. 1991). The first step involves conceptualisation of the scales in alignment with the proposed definition of each construct. As an example, France et al. (2018) offers a typology that has been deemed a suitable classification to categorise the dependent variable – consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events.

This typology will be used to build a basis for the concept of consumer-focused outcomes. As such, this study has an exploratory structure, and does not attempt to

confirm the France et al. (2018) typology. Given the context of cause-related events, only some (and not all) of the proposed items will be selected from the scale by France et al. (2018) to represent the range of possible consumer-focused outcomes in these events.

The survey will be designed in seven sections to facilitate easy navigation and to minimise fatigue. A progress indicator will be provided to further encourage completion rates. The survey's mandatory items will be marked with an asterisk. Respondents will be able to drop out of the survey at any time, and selection of any one response option will not be enforced. Items in the survey will also provide the non-response option of 'rather not say'. A series of nominal and Likert scale measures will facilitate a range of sophisticated statistical analysis.

The five constructs under investigation comprise a total of 40 items. There will be two additional sections to the survey. The first section will ask four qualifying questions which will conveniently exit participants from the survey if they do not meet the requirements for participation. The second section will focus on goal self-concordance; the third section will focus on social identity; the fourth section will focus on perceptions of brand authenticity; the fifth section will focus on customer-brand co-creation behaviours and the sixth section will focus on self-determination. The final section will collect demographic information to provide richer insight into some of the responses.

In the section on brand authenticity, the study instrument will also include a fictitious sponsor scenario. The fictitious scenario will be designed to ensure participants have a reasonable opportunity to answer each question, removing other variables from the actual experience that may have hampered their ability to recall sponsors at the event. This will help ensure participants have the ability to complete the survey regardless of whether they recall a specific sponsor.

An online survey link is the most appropriate mechanic for this research given the community largely exists online. The survey will therefore be built and hosted utilising the USQ Survey Tool platform. Once the survey has been launched, the plan is to 'push the survey' making it easy for consumers to access the survey by providing

them with the survey URL in the Facebook Group posts. Frequent reminders will also be posted in the Facebook Groups, with (Zúñiga 2004) suggesting sending at least three reminders.

There will be one qualifying question for the study which is: a) Have you participated in one or more cause-related event/s in the last three years? If the survey respondent answers 'no' they will be immediately exited from the survey.

The survey link will be primarily shared with special interest Facebook Groups, but it will also be shared in emails to known consumers who participate in cause-related events. The survey will also be promoted in a banner-ad across the researcher's Facebook and LinkedIn pages and in the researcher's email signature. In each instance, the survey will link to the USQ Survey Tool hosting the survey.

The survey will be completely voluntary, and no incentives will be offered. If a participant says they have not registered in one or more cause-related events in the previous three years, they will exited from the survey after the first question. Some questions will only be presented conditionally dependent on responses to others.

Pre-test survey design

The survey material will be firstly prepared by consulting the literature for context-appropriate topics relevant to cause-related event sponsorship. Following this preliminary investigation, both existing and new instruments, adapted from existing scales, will be used changing the wording to suit the context of this study.

To further validate the items and constructs in the study, online Facebook Group posts that closely relate to consumers' self-authentication goals will be analysed and assessed. A five and seven-point Likert scale will be replicated to be consistent with the corresponding existing studies and applied to the new instruments to measure each dimension.

Consistent with previous research, a panel of expert judges composed of two event directors of cause-related events and three marketing academics will be invited

to review the proposed new instruments (Cheng et al. 2021). They will be asked to make sure the items properly reflect the construct of interest and will also be required to review the items for clarity and appropriate construction (Tian et al. 2001).

In particular, the experts will be asked to focus on any possible content ambiguity, redundancy and whether there is a lack of association between the items (Hardesty & Bearden 2004). Scale representativeness of the construct is also important (Zaichkowsky 1985). Further, the wording of each item will be examined and discussed to ensure the choices made are the most appropriate to measure the construct. It will also be important to ensure there is no overlap with other constructs.

As a way of assisting the panel, a seven-point scales anchored by ''not representative of the construct'' and ''very representative of the construct'' will be provided with each judge being asked to rate each of the adapted construct items. Any ambiguous item will be identified and the experts will be invited to suggest appropriate modifications. Items will be deleted if they are deemed too ambiguous or if the items rated less than the scale midpoint in terms of representativeness of each construct.

To further refine the items and ensure they make sense, a pre-test of the entire survey will be conducted with six consumers who regularly participate in cause-related events. The pre-test will be performed online in the same manner as the real survey, with consumers asked to send their feedback to the researcher via email.

Some of the feedback may need to be qualified, which may result in small language changes on some of the items. During this pre-test phase, the survey's usability and technical performance will also be evaluated for clarity. The survey will be completed in accordance with the guidelines. To help determine face validity, informal phone interviews will follow with the same of the six consumers who regularly participate in cause-related events to ensure the constructs being tested fit the research context.

The bulk of survey respondents will come from special interest Facebook Groups. The choice of promotional channels does not imply the sample is pre-selected or that the findings are manipulated in any manner. Consumers who regularly

participate in cause-related events are frequent users of social media platforms which is where most event updates are shared by event organisers.

A greater number of events are also being conducted virtually as well as physically, making social media an ideal place to source survey participants. The goal of the study is to gather as many survey participants as possible who have taken part in one or more cause-related events in the past three years.

3.3.7 Measurement items

Exploratory research is used to investigate a problem that is not clearly defined (Malhotra & Grover 1998). Consumers are sceptical about brand authenticity in CSR, yet at the same time demand brands stand for something (Cornwell 2019).

An exploratory approach to the research will enable a better understanding of the existing problem, despite not providing conclusive results. This is the preferred methodology because it will provide greater flexibility enabling the research team the opportunity to adapt to changes as the research progresses. It will also help lay the foundation for future research should it be warranted (Malhotra & Grover 1998).

The quantitative enquiry will cover a range of constructs and all of the scales in the survey will be modified from existing scales in the literature to fit the needs of the current study. Different applications of each construct will be considered from a range of studies to ensure a relevant measure for the purposes of this study.

New scales will need to be developed from existing scales for some of these constructs because the research is centred around theoretical models that have not been empirically tested yet. As an example, prior research suggests that demand for authentic brands is driven by consumer need for feelings of authenticity (Morhart et al. 2015; Guèvremont & Grohmann 2016). According to Beverland and Farrelly (2010), self-authentic consumers engage in authenticating acts through consumption behaviours. This notion, however, has yet to be qualified. This research is now

operationalising these constructs to test some of the relationships as outlined in Chapter 2.

Five constructs are explored in this research. These five constructs are self-determination; goal self-concordance; social identity; brand authenticity and customer-brand co-creation. In terms of item generation and reduction for each construct, the initial list of items will be developed on the basis of existing scales (Emmons 1986; Sheldon & Elliot 1999; Cameron 2004; Deci & Ryan 2008a; France et al. 2018; Joo et al. 2019) and will be reworded to fit the cause-related event context.

Each of the constructs to be included in this study will now be discussed in more detail. Included in the discussion will be details of where the instruments have been sourced; why different studies were used and why established measures were modified for some of these constructs. Pre-testing of each instrument will also take place to ensure its reliability and validity as appropriate measures to represent the construct.

Self-determination

Self-determination theory (SDT) provides the first theoretical foundation and construct for this research. The origins of SDT are based on the original work by (Deci 1971, 1975) followed by several developmental extensions (Deci & Ryan 1980; Deci 1985; Deci & Ryan 1991; Deci & Ryan 2000; Deci & Ryan 2008b, 2008a). SDT is a macro-level framework consisting of five mini theories that explain select aspects of human motivation, behaviour, and personal well-being (Deci & Ryan 2002; Vansteenkiste et al. 2010). The need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness was formally identified by Deci and Ryan (2000) as basic psychological needs.

The Basic Psychological Needs Scale (La Guardia et al. 2000) will be used in this study as it addresses need satisfaction in general. The original scale has 21 items concerning the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. These will be reduced in the proposed research to eight items which, based on literary findings, more

accurately measure basic psychological needs of cause-related event participants. A 7-point Likert Scale measures (1) not at all true to (7) very true.

The appropriateness of this study lies in the premise that SDT (Deci & Ryan 2002) may provide an understanding of the motivational processes related to participation in cause-related events. The BPNS is an established measure that, together with goal self-concordance and social identity, may help establish that self-authenticating needs play a role in why consumers participate in these events. It follows that need satisfaction will predict consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events because their satisfaction provides energy and direction to continue engaging in the behaviour (Ryan & Deci 2011).

Goal self-concordance:

As discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.8, this construct represents the autonomous goal-setting of consumers where their enduring interests and values are matched by their personal goals. Self-concordance enables a consumer to not only to achieve their goals, but to satisfy their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness and ultimately obtain a lasting sense of well-being and fulfilment (Sheldon & Kasser 1998; Sheldon & Elliot 1999).

To date there are no empirically tested measures of this construct that exist in the context of cause-related event sponsorship. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) assessed the personal goals of consumers using the personal striving construct (Emmons 1986) which had been previously identified as important dimensions to help describe goals (Klinger et al. 1980; Wadsworth 1984). For Emmons (1986), personal striving is a unifying construct because it has the ability to unite phenotypically different goals under different dimensions such as commitment, value, instrumentality and expectancy for success. As the goal self-concordance construct in the proposed research relies on the Sheldon and Elliot (1999) scale, the Striving Assessment Scale (Emmons 1986) will also be applied.

To limit survey length and respondent fatigue, a reduced set from each of the validated multi-item scales (Emmons 1986) will be used, each still demonstrating high

reliability. Specifically, the research will probe participants about dimensions of value, difficulty, instrumentality and social desirability.

Items that measure these dimensions rate: "How much joy or happiness do you or will you feel when you are successful in the striving?";" "How difficult is it for you to succeed in the striving?"; "How much does trying to succeed in the striving change your chances of success in other strivings?"; and "How socially desirable do you think the striving is?" (Emmons 1986). These specific dimensions have been chosen for their applicability to this study and will be modified to suit the cause-related event context.

The self-concordance of goals, which happens when consumers feel their goals fit with their underlying interests and values (Sheldon & Elliot 1999) will be considered next. The opposite to self-concordance would be to feel that the goal is being imposed by others.

To measure the self-concordance of goal pursuit, this research will adapt two items from the Sheldon and Elliot (1998) instrument. According to Sheldon and Elliot (1998), 'intrinsic' and 'identified' are autonomous motives underlying goal pursuit. The items are: "I pursue this goal because I really believe it is an important goal to have" (identified) and "I pursue this goal because of the fun and enjoyment it provides" (intrinsic).

As suggested by Judge et al. (2005), although past self-concordance research (Sheldon & Elliot 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko 2001; Koestner et al. 2002) uses an overall self-concordance composite that includes external and introjected goals, a more productive outcome for future research is to investigate the motives separately. Judge et al. (2005) found intrinsic motives being most strongly related to satisfaction. Because the intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions anchor the extremes of the self-concordance continuum (Sheldon & Houser-Marko 2001), Judge et al. (2005) suggest either one of these two dimensions may be the most appropriate to use.

Social Identity

The social identity instrument proposed in this study is based on the Three-Factor Model of Social Identity (Cameron 2004) which comprises of in-group ties, centrality, and in-group affect. For Cameron (2004), there are three components of social identity: firstly, cognitive centrality (time spent thinking about being a group member); secondly, ingroup affect (feeling positive because of group membership); and thirdly, ingroup ties (perceptions of belonging, bonding and shared similarity with other group members).

The theoretical basis for the multidimensionality of social identity stems from Tajfel (1978, p. 63) who defines the construct as ''that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.'' This definition has prompted several attempts to represent the three components in measures of identification: awareness of group membership; group evaluation; and the emotional aspect of belonging (Brown et al. 1986; Hinkle et al. 1989).

A set of seven items (taken from each dimension) will be included in the proposed study with 'ingroup ties': "I have a lot in common with other (ingroup members)"; "I find it difficult to form a bond with other (ingroup members)"; "I don't feel a sense of being ''connected'' with other (ingroup members)"; "I really ''fit in'' with other (ingroup members)" and "In a group of (ingroup members), I really feel that I belong," forming the basis of the modified items. As some of the ingroup tie items are very similar, an alternative item will seek the same information but will be worded to fit the context of the study and participants.

Two 'centrality' questions will be included in the proposed study and include:*"In general, being a(n) (ingroup member) is an important part of my self-image,"* and *"Being a(n) (ingroup member) is an important reflection of who I am."* Meanwhile, the two ingroup questions to be included are: *"In general, I'm glad to be a(n) (ingroup member),"* and *"Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a(n) (ingroup member)."*

Not all of the items from the Three Factor Model of Social Identity (Cameron 2004) are relevant to this study because their model is based on previous exploratory factor analyses of identification with gender and ethnic groups. As the proposed study is not concerned with gender and ethnicity, some of the questions would not make sense to the survey participant. Instead, the questions on social identity will be prefaced by giving the study's definition of a 'group' as an 'event community' which is being a member of like-minded people who share a passion for cause-related events. The community includes the event organiser, charity, participants, teams, sponsors, spectators, supporters and volunteers.

Brand authenticity

While much research has examined the impact of authenticity, there is a limited understanding within the CSR domain on the dimensions that influence consumers' perceptions of authenticity – and in particular, within a cause-related event context. As such, this study relies on the brand authenticity instrument provided by Joo et al. (2019) which is known as the multi-dimensional consumer-based CSR authenticity scale.

The seven dimensions of the consumer-based CSR authenticity scale which are anchored by 'strongly agree' (1) and 'strongly disagree' (7) are: community link, reliability, commitment, congruence, benevolence, transparency, and broad impact. The proposed study focuses on six of the dimensions of authenticity – congruence, reliability, transparency, community link, benevolence and commitment. The remaining dimension, being broad impact, will not be included as it was added in later in the testing and refining stage by Joo et al. (2019) and after the vast majority of their participants accepted the proposed six dimensions as meaningful components in evaluating a company's CSR programs. Perceptions of broad impact suggest 'impact' extends beyond the cause-related event environment. As this may be difficult for a research participant to assess based on a hypothetical sponsor, it was omitted from the survey. The six dimensions of authenticity will be discussed next.

'Community link', according to Joo et al. (2019), refers to the degree to which participants perceive CSR initiatives to benefit the local community (Beckman et al. 2009). Mazutis and Slawinski (2015) argue that social connectedness to communities is a core dimension impacting perceptions of authenticity.

'Reliability' is defined as the degree to which participants perceive the CSR program fulfils its promise (Beckman et al. 2009; Wagner 2010; Alhouti et al. 2016). It is not the result of spin or exaggerated claims (Grayson & Martinec 2004).

'Commitment' is defined as the degree to which participants perceive the company to be dedicated to CSR. They don't perceive it is a ploy to meet current trends (Beckman et al. 2009; Godfrey 2009).

'Congruence' is defined as the degree to which participants perceive there is an alignment between the company's CSR efforts and its core business (Mazutis & Slawinski 2015). Alhouti et al. (2016) suggest that 'fit' is a cue for perceptions of authenticity when the CSR activity logically aligns with the company's core business.

'Benevolence' is defined as the degree to which participants perceive CSR initiatives to be altruistic. They're not viewed as profit seeking (Leigh et al. 2006; Spiggle et al. 2012; Alhouti et al. 2016).

Meanwhile, 'transparency' is defined as the degree to which participants perceive CSR decisions, practices, and outcomes are openly communicated. The company makes such decisions and practises available to public evaluation (Basu & Palazzo 2008; Beckman et al. 2009; Godfrey 2009).

Perceptions of authenticity are frequently influenced by context (Grayson & Martinec 2004; Newman & Smith 2016) highlighting the need to understand the different dimensions of authenticity in different contexts from a consumer perspective. Authenticity, according to Charlton and Cornwell (2019), may be especially essential in a sponsorship setting since the connection conveys motives, goals, and a particular intent. In their study on how consumers perceive the authenticity of the 'social

partnership', they found the perceived genuineness of the relationship and attitudes towards each partner in the relationship were related.

Reinforcing the call for authenticity, Joo et al. (2019) found authenticity to be effective in predicting favourable consumer attitudes and intentions towards a company. As such, the scale by Joo et al. (2019) comes the closest to identifying the dimensions of authenticity in cause-related events. Joo et al. (2019) assessed the effects of each dimension of their scale independently instead of treating CSR authenticity as a composite which also enables a better understanding of the antecedents of each dimension of authenticity.

Theoretical conceptualisations of authenticity (Spiggle et al. 2012; Napoli et al. 2014; Morhart et al. 2015) support its multidimensional nature. While Morhart and colleagues (2015) consider differential effects of authenticity such as integrity, credibility, symbolism, and continuity on emotional brand attachment and positive word-of-mouth (WOM), most prior research views authenticity as unidimensional (Spiggle et al. 2012; Napoli et al. 2014). The benefit of applying the consumer-based CSR authenticity scale (Joo et al. 2019) to the proposed research is that it will produce differential effects of authenticity dimensions in the context of cause-related events.

It must be pointed out that while the authenticity conceptualisation put forward by Joo et al. (2019) was largely tested with programs drawn from the NFL, their identification of dimensions was tested across contexts to suggest that their dimensionality of CSR authenticity does translate in different situations. By applying this scale, it will also help an exploration to understand whether a direct relationship exists between authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes.

Consumer-focused outcomes

Consumer-focused outcomes provides the final theoretical foundation and construct for this research. The proposed research relies on the customer brand co-creation behaviour (CBCB) scale which was conceptualised and operationalised by France et al. (2018). The France et al. (2018) instrument assists with the enquiry on the possible consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events because it offers a

consumer-centric perspective. The instrument enhances an understanding of the consumers' relationship with the brand where the consumer, through their propensity to co-create, demonstrates voluntary participatory behaviours.

This voluntary aspect of co-creation (Merrilees et al. 2021) highlights the importance of co-creation as a brand engagement behaviour and highlights the redistribution of control from companies to customers. The proposed study will focus on specific dimension of the customer brand co-creation behaviour scale specific to the context of cause-related events.

The dimension to be included from the scale by France et al. (2018) include customer-brand engagement, brand self-congruity, brand community, customer-brand co-creation and customer-perceived brand value. There are two dimensions: category involvement and brand interactivity, that are not relevant to the context of the proposed study and will be omitted from the final instrument.

France et al. (2018) selected scales measuring customer-brand engagement (France et al. 2015), brand self-congruity (Chieng et al. 2022), co-creation (Merrilees et al. 2021) and customer-perceived brand value (Bu et al. 2022) because of their proven reliability and validity. Items measuring brand community membership were developed by France et al. (2018) from conceptual discussions with Fournier and Lee (2009), focusing on shared goals and values to form four items, as an example: "I share common values with other brand customers" and "I interact with other members of the brand community." All items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

Table 3.1 lists the constructs, survey items, the literature from which they were generated and how they were measured. All items on the Likert scale instruments have been included in the table, however, not all items are relevant to this study. Those items that are not relevant have been shaded grey and will be left out of the final survey. Additionally, to match this study's setting, some items will be rephrased, reworded or minor tense changes will be made where appropriate.

Table 3.1 – Constructs, items and their derivation

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
Goal self-concordance			
Value	I feel a sense of fulfilment from participating in the event [a] (influenced by Beverland et al. (2010))	How much joy or happiness do you or will you feel when you are successful in the striving? How much sorrow or unhappiness do you or will you feel if you fail to succeed in the striving? (Emmons 1986)	7-point Likert scale
	Participating in the event appeals to my values [a] (influenced by (Beverland 2005))	You pursued this striving because you believe it's an important goal to have (Sheldon & Elliot 1999)	
	Participating in the event is a reflection of my true self [a] (influenced by (Quester et al. 2013))	You pursued this striving because of the fun and enjoyment it will bring you (Sheldon & Elliot 1999)	
Difficulty	The 'challenge' of completing the event is my primary motivation for participating [a] (Influenced by Rundio (2014))	How difficult is it for you to succeed in the striving? (Emmons 1986)	
Instrumentality	Supporting the 'cause/charity' is more important to me than completing the 'challenge' of these events [a] (Influenced Filo et al. (2008)) (R)	How much does trying to succeed in the striving change your chances of success in other strivings? (Emmons 1986)	
Social desirability	Participating with others makes the event more enjoyable [a] (influenced by Bennett (2007))	How socially desirable do you think the striving is?" (Emmons 1986)	
Ambivalence	How unhappy are you when you are successful in the striving?	(Emmons 1986)	
Commitment	How committed are you to the striving?	(Emmons 1986)	
Importance	How important is the striving to you in your life?	(Emmons 1986)	
Effort	How much energy and effort do you generally	(Emmons 1986)	

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
	expend in trying to be successful in the striving?		
Causal attribution	Does success in the striving depend more on internal or external factors?	(Emmons 1986)	
Clarity	How clear an idea do you have of what you need to do to be successful in the striving?	(Emmons 1986)	
Probability of success	In the future, how likely is it that you will be successful in the striving?" (scale ranged from 0, no chance of success, to 9, at least 90% chance of success)	(Emmons 1986)	
Confidence	How confident do you feel about the probability estimation?	(Emmons 1986)	
Probability if no action	How likely is it that you will be successful in the striving if you do not take action?" (same 9-point scale)	(Emmons 1986)	
Impact	Success in how many other strivings depends on success in this striving?	(Emmons 1986)	
External	You pursued this striving because someone else wants you to or because the situation demands it	(Sheldon & Elliot 1999)	
Introjected	You pursued this striving because you would feel ashamed, guilty, or anxious if you didn't"	(Sheldon & Elliot 1999)	
Social Identity		**Three-Factor Model – Cameron (2004)**	
Ingroup Ties	Belonging to an event community is important to me [a] (influenced by (Beverland et al. 2010)	In a group of (ingroup members), I really feel that I belong	7-point Likert scale
Centrality	The event community does not influence my identity [a] (influenced by (Beverland et al. 2010)) (R)	In general, being a(n) (ingroup member) is an important part of my self-image	

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
Ingroup Affect	The event community is different to other groups [a] (influenced by (Beverland et al. 2010))	In general, I'm glad to be a(n) (ingroup member)	
Ingroup Affect	I feel I identify physically with cause-related event participants more so than individuals in other groups [a] (influenced by (Beverland et al. 2010))	Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a(n) (ingroup member)	
Ingroup Ties	I do not feel I have a lot in common socially with others in the event community [a] (influenced by (Beverland et al. 2010))) (R)	I find it difficult to form a bond with other (ingroup members). I don't feel a sense of being ''connected'' with other (ingroup members). I really ''fit in'' with other (ingroup members) I feel strong ties to other (ingroup members).	
Ingroup Ties	I feel I am on the same mental level with cause-related event participants [a] (influenced by (Beverland et al. 2010))	I have a lot in common with other (ingroup members)	
Centrality	Wearing the event merchandise makes me feel like I belong to the event community [a] (influenced by (Beverland et al. 2010))	Being a(n) (ingroup member) is an important reflection of who I am	
Centrality	I often think about the fact that I am a(n) (ingroup member).		
Centrality	Overall, being a(n) (ingroup member) has very little to do with how I feel about myself.		
Centrality	The fact that I am a(n) (ingroup member) rarely enters my mind.		
Centrality	I am not usually conscious of the fact that I am a(n) (ingroup member).		
Centrality	In my everyday life, I often think about what it means to be a(n) (ingroup member).		

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
Ingroup Affect	I often regret that I am a(n) (ingroup member).		
Ingroup Affect	I don't feel good about being a(n) (ingroup member).		
Ingroup Affect	Just thinking about the fact that I am a(n) (ingroup member) sometimes gives me bad feelings.		
Perceptions of brand authenticity		**Consumer-based CSR authenticity (Joo et al 2019)**	5-point Likert scale
		[CSR program] seems to align well with the NFL	
		[CSR program] will actually do what it promises to do.	
		The NFL's [CSR program] seems very transparent.	
		There is a positive interaction between [CSR program] and my community.	
		The support by the NFL for [CSR program] seems altruistic to me.	
		The NFL appears to be highly dedicated to [CSR program].	
Community link	I think people in my community will be helped by [CSR program].		
	I can see how [CSR program] impacts my community.		
	I think [CSR program] positively affects my community and the area around me.		
	I think [CSR program] is valuable to my community.		
	The brand does not appear to engage with the cause-related event participants. [a] (Influenced by Farrelly et al. (2009) (R)	There is a positive interaction between [CSR program] and my community.	

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
Reliability	The brand's motives appear sincere in sponsoring the cause-related event [a] (Influenced by Farrelly et al. (2009)	[CSR program] will actually do what it promises to do.	
	[CSR program] accomplishes what it says it will accomplish.		
	[CSR program] achieves its designated goals.		
	The results of [CSR program] are in line with the desired results.		
Commitment	The NFL provides a great deal of support for [CSR program].		
	The NFL seems to be highly committed to [CSR program].		
	The NFL seems to be highly involved with [CSR program].		
	The brand is more authentic than other brands who do not sponsor cause-related events [a] (Influenced by Farrelly et al. (2009)	The NFL appears to be highly dedicated to [CSR program].	
	The NFL seems steadfast in their support of [CSR program].		
Congruence	The NFL and [CSR program] fit together well.		
	There is a logical connection between the NFL and [CSR program].		
	The brand's values appear to be clearly aligned with the cause [a] (Influenced by Farrelly et al. (2009)	[CSR program] seems to align well with the NFL.	
	[CSR program] and the NFL seem compatible.		
Benevolence	The brand is authentic to me [a] (Influenced by Farrelly et al. (2009)	The support by the NFL for [CSR program] seems altruistic to me.	
	The NFL supports [CSR program] because they care about this cause.		

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
	The NFL is acting benevolently in their support for [CSR program].		
	The NFL is being philanthropic in their support for [CSR program].		
Transparency	The brand appears to be socially responsible because of their support of the cause-related event [a] (Influenced by Farrelly et al. (2009)	The NFL's [CSR program] seems very transparent.	
	All aspects of the NFL's [CSR program] are open to public evaluation.		
	The important features of the NFL's [CSR program] are accessible to the public.		
	It is easy to evaluate aspects of the NFL's [CSR program].		
	The NFL's [CSR program] exhibits a lot transparency.		
Broad impact	The NFL's [CSR program] positively impacts a lot of people.		
	The NFL's [CSR program] benefits many individuals.		
	The NFL's [CSR program] helps numerous people.		
	The NFL's [CSR program] positively affects many people.		
	The NFL's [CSR program] has a broad impact on many people.		
Customer Brand Co-Creation		**Customer Brand Co-Creation Scale 'Psychometric reflective measurement properties' – (France et al. 2018)**	
Category Involvement	I find the brand category is very relevant to my life		

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
	The brand category is a significant part of my life		
	I am involved with the brand category		
	I think about the brand category a lot		
	The brand category means a lot to me		
	I am interested in the brand category		
	I consider the brand category to be a central part of my life		
Customer-brand engagement	I would be enthusiastic toward the brand °	I am enthusiastic toward the brand	
	I would be passionate toward the brand °	I am passionate about the brand	
	I am [would] have a sense of belonging toward the brand °	I have a sense of belonging to the brand	
	When dealing with the brand, I am deeply engrossed		
	When interacting with the brand, I concentrate entirely on the brand		
	When involved with the brand, my mind is focused on what is happening		
Brand self-congruity	This brand would reflect who I am °	This brand reflects who I am	
	This brand image would correspond with my self-image in many respects °	This brand image corresponds to my self-image in many respects	
	This brand would be exactly how I see myself °	This brand is exactly how I see myself	
	This brand would be a lot like me °	This brand is a lot like me	
Brand community	I would share common values with other brand customers °	I share common values with other brand customers	
	I would interact with other members of the brand community °	I interact with other members of the brand community	
	I would consider myself to be part of a community of brand users °	I consider myself to be part of a community of brand users	

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
	I would share common goals with other brand customers °	I share common goals with other brand customers	
Brand interactivity			
	The brand allows me to communicate directly with it		
	The brand listens to what I have to say		
	There is good two-way communication with the brand		
	The brand encourages me to communicate directly with it		
	The brand would respond to me quickly and efficiently		
Consumer brand co-creation			
Development	I would take photos of myself with the brand and share them with others °	I take photos of myself with the brand and share them with the brand and others	
	I create advertising for the brand and share it with the brand and others		
	I develop new products or services for the brand		
	I would create online content about the brand °	I create online content about the brand	
	I develop ideas for the brand (e.g. when participating in competitions)		
Feedback			
	When I have a positive brand experience, I provide them feedback		
	I provide useful ideas on how to improve the brand		
	If I notice a problem with the brand, I tell an employee, even if it doesn't affect me I tell the brand my ideas for improvement		

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
Advocacy			
	I would recommend the brand to others °	I recommend the brand to others	
	I would say positive things about the brand to others °	I say positive things about the brand to others	
	I would spread the good word about the brand °	I spread the good word about the brand	
	I would encourage my friends and relatives to use the brand °	I encourage my friends and relatives to use the brand	
Helping			
	I help other customers of the brand if they seem to have problems		
	I give advice to other customers about the brand		
	I tell others about new things with the brand		
Customer-perceived brand value	Overall, the value of this brand to me would be high °	Overall, the value of this brand to me is high	
	The benefits of the brand would be high °	The benefits of the brand are high	
Self-determination		'Basic Need Satisfaction in General' instrument (Kasser et al. 1992; Ilardi et al. 1993; Deci et al. 2001) The scale is based on dimensions of self-determination theory, which has been shown to explore self-authentication (Zach et al. 2017; Cheng et al. 2021)	7-Point Likert scale
Autonomy	I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to life my life.		
	I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions.		
	I feel like I can pretty much be myself in my daily situations.		
	I feel pressured in my life.		
	In my daily life, I frequently have to do what I am told.		

Constructs	Survey items	Scale reference	Measurement
	There is not much opportunity for me to decide for myself how to do things in my daily life.		
Relatedness	I get along with people I come into contact with.		
	I really like the people I interact with.		
	I consider the people I regularly interact with to be my friends. °		
	People in my life care about me.		
	I pretty much keep to myself and don't have a lot of social contacts.		
	There are not many people that I am close to. (R)		
	People I interact with on a daily basis tend to take my feelings into consideration.		
	The people I interact with regularly do not seem to like me much.		
	People were generally pretty friendly towards me. °		
Competence	I have been able to learn interesting new skills recently.		
	Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do.		
	Often, I do not feel very competent.		
	In my life I do not get much of a chance to show how capable I am.		
	People I know tell me I am good at what I do.		
	I often do not feel very capable.		

Note – Items marked (R) were reverse-scored

a Item created for the purposes of the present investigation ° Item borrowed from other pre-existing scales

Chapter 3.4 - Data Collection

The sampling strategy should flow from the research design and research methods that have been chosen, as well as demonstrating ethical research practise (Lund 2012). This study will follow three steps to select the sampling strategy. The steps include understanding the key terms and basic principles of the research; determining which sampling technique will be required to select the sample units; and considering whether the sampling strategy is a practical choice (Morse 1991) that properly considers such constraints as time and access to participants.

This study will examine the perceptions of consumers who have participated in a minimum of one cause-related event held in Australia in the past three years. The cause-related event could be either a live or virtual event, that by definition, is a charity event that requires physical participation; involves fundraising and can be sponsored by Australian companies. These events must have been scheduled between the dates of 9 December 2016 and 9 December 2019. Research participants consent to their involvement on the understanding the research has the potential to add to the body of knowledge on the subject (Burgard et al. 2020).

The proposed research methods discussed in Section 3.3.1 and research design discussed in Section 3.3.2 suggests the audience is best sourced online using convenience sampling predominantly through Facebook Groups. Given cause-related events may be both virtual and physical, consumers rely on the online mechanisms to participate in the events. These online communities are highly engaged and use Facebook as a primary mode of communication outside of the event's online platform (which is used for registrations, to promote partners, event details and fundraising). The Facebook Groups range from running clubs and cause-related event groups to triathlon, cycling, community and charity groups. The participants come from all over Australia and generally range in age, in sex, in education and income.

Probability sampling is considered the ideal for research guided by a post-positivist research paradigm and a quantitative research design, as well as quantitative research methods (https://dissertation.laerd.com). Probability sampling will allow for statistical inferences to be made (i.e., generalisations) from the proposed

research sample of consumers to all consumers of cause-related events (Lund 2012). Such a probability sampling technique will also provide greater external validity for our findings.

There are three types of probability sampling technique that we could select: simple random sampling, systematic random sampling and stratified random sampling (Lund 2012). Because of the nature of this research, where consumers opt in to complete the survey, the most practical choice of sampling technique is probability sampling using the specific technique of simple random sampling. With simple random sampling, there would an equal chance (probability) that each of the Facebook Groups selected to join and share the survey link could be included in the proposed research sample (Lund 2012). With a desired sample size of around 300 consumers, each of these Facebook Groups will be sent an online survey link. The sample frame and sample size will be discussed next.

3.4.1 Sample frame and sample size

The sampling frame is different to the population in that the sampling frame requires consumers to have participated in at least one of these events in the three years preceding 9 December 2020. Meanwhile, sample size is an aspect of research design that needs to be considered to produce a statistically significant result. It is also a requirement of the sampling process that resources are used efficiently and ethically (Burmeister & Aitken 2012). Sufficient sample size is the minimum number of participants required to be statistically significant (Burmeister & Aitken 2012).

The proposed data analysis plan of this research suggests that a sample size of 1000 would be sufficient based on the fact that in 2020 there were typically 21,000 cause-related events attracting 3.4 million participants annually in Australia (AMPSEA 2020b). With the minimum sample size being 100 and the maximum sample size being 10 per cent of the population (provided it does not exceed 1000), in a population of 3.4 million, 10 per cent would be 340,000. This exceeds 1000, therefore the maximum sample size is 1000 (tools4dev.org 2022).

When considering an adequate sample size for regression analyses, Burmeister and Aitken (2012) suggest the 20:1 rule may be applied. This rule is appropriate for any regression including linear regression, such as in this study, which is used to estimate a relationship between predictors (independent variables) and a continuous dependent variable.

Nonetheless, nonresponse is a problem in social and behavioural research that challenges both the internal and the external validity of surveys (Hox & De Leeuw 1994). As nonresponse reduces the amount of data collected, it follows that a smaller sample size will lead to a larger sampling variance. The result of this is estimates that are less precise and overall lower statistical power (Burgard et al. 2020).

Given the impacts of nonresponse on external validity, this study will adopt two key tactics to draw attention to the survey and achieve a higher response rate. The first will rely on the power of social proof, a psychological phenomenon whereby consumers assume the actions of others in an attempt to reflect an agreed behaviour in the given situation (Cialdini 1984). Regular updates of the growing number of completed surveys will be provided to encourage others in the Facebook Group community to get involved.

The second tactic will be to humanise the survey by ensuring that Facebook Groups can communicate with the researcher. Schaefer and Dillman (1998) stress that personal contact is important because it provides potential respondents assurance the survey is not digital spam whilst reinforcing the value in completing the survey.

Other elements which can influence sample size include the homogeneity of the sample; the risk of error considered appropriate for the question being studied; the effect size and expected attrition for the study. The effect size, which is the difference or change expected in the primary outcome as a result of the intervention being delivered (Burmeister & Aitken 2012), is not relevant in this study.

Meanwhile, the homogeneity of the sample, which refers to how similar the participants in the study are to each other and is a reflection of how well the sample reflects the study population (Burmeister & Aitken 2012), is relevant to this study. Its

relevance lies in the fact that the participants in this study have all participated in a cause-related event and are members of Facebook Group communities.

As Nulty (2008) explains, it is reasonable to expect that some sampling error will occur and there may also be possibly of sampling bias when participants are sampled as part of a population. While online offer a fast, easy and cost-efficient way of deploying surveys (Cook et al. 2000), there are inherent issues due to a lack of representativeness of the population and nonresponse (Burgard et al. 2020).

Shi et al. (2008) revealed that online surveys yielded an average response rate of 34 per cent (when compared to a paper survey rate of 45 per cent). A decrease in online survey participation is also thought to be the result of over-surveying (Van Mol 2017).

Given the reality of declining response rates, a 34 per cent response rate based on a sample of 1000 would equate to roughly 300 as the expected response rate for this study. This sample size satisfies the data analysis requirement and is sufficient given the research question seeks to understand the factors that impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. The focus of the study is more about understanding the constructs proposed to impact consumer-focused outcomes than representations of the total cause-related event participant population.

3.4.2 Procedure and Timeline

To promote participation in the study, the survey will be available online and developed using the USQ Survey Tool. Despite the beforementioned issues with online surveys, its major strengths include flexibility, speed and timeliness (Evans & Mathur 2018).

Participants will be informed before commencing the survey via the introduction section about the research project's purpose; the identity of the researcher; that there will be no guarantee or promise of any direct benefits from participating in the study; and that any information obtained in connection with the study that could identify participants will be kept confidential.

In accordance with the research ethics approval for the study, personal information (obtained for the purpose of follow up interviews if necessary, and optional for participants to provide) will be kept confidential by separating identity information from the completed survey, and any data gathered as part of this research will be securely maintained in accordance with the University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Participants will also be advised the survey will take around 30 minutes to complete; that participation is completely optional; and that they may withdraw at any time, but that they would not be able to withdraw data about themselves. The range of Facebook Groups being targeted will represent a broad cross-section of members who are potential cause-related event participants geographically spread across Australia.

Chapter 3.5 - Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis is a process of collecting, cleaning, examining, and modeling data to derive useful information and insights for data-driven decision-making (Treiman 2014). Data analysis of the proposed research will be conducted in three stages.

3.5.1 Stage 1 – cleaning and screening, descriptive statistics

Stage 1 will involve initial cleaning of the data, calculation of sample statistics and reporting of sample descriptors (demographic data). Descriptives, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and regression will be used to analyse the quantitatively sourced data from the survey.

EFA and/or CFA will be conducted to test the internal consistency of the items to the construct. While EFA will provide guidance on factor number, CFA will confirm the scale structure and reliability (Ford et al. 1986; Costello & Osborne 2005; Haig 2005; Worthington & Whittaker 2006).

The descriptive statistics will include the final sample size and demographic data about the respondents which will involve the computing of histograms, scatterplots, averages and correlation coefficients. EFA using the principal component method will be conducted on the data set to identify the dimensionality of the authentication construct and to bring the intercorrelated variables together under more general, underlying variables.

The goal of the EFA is to assess the factor structure according to the correlations between the variables (Tabachnick & Fidell 2013). Next the quality of findings will be assessed in terms of internal and external validity, and construct validity.

3.5.2 Stage 2 – Internal / external validation and construct validation

Stage 2 will consist of construct validation. The existing and modified construct measures will be tested and validated to ensure validity. Validity refers to whether a test measures what was intended (Phelan & Wren 2005). As discussed in Section 3.3.3, while reliability is necessary, it also needs to be valid in that data is being collected from a sample that is representative of the population under study (McEwan 2020). Validity can be measured several ways.

Firstly, this study will seek face validity to ensure the measure appears to be assessing the intended construct under study. Face validity will be completed during the pilot phase and will be provided by expert judgement of the research supervisors. The items will also be critiqued by independent experts who will formally measure the content validity based on how they judge the items. Although this is not a scientific type of validity, if the experts do not believe the measure is an accurate assessment, it will be further reinforced if the actual population of interest does not interpret the questions in the manner which they were intended (Nevo 1985).

An alternative approach to face validity is criterion-related validity which is used to predict future or current performance (Phelan & Wren 2005). It requires the researchers to choose a standard for assessing the scale (Phelan & Wren 2005). This

is done by conducting a more extended measure on a few participants and correlating it to the existing measure (Phelan & Wren 2005). What this means for the proposed study is that item-rest correlation will be used, where a single item will be correlated to the other items, or item-test where a single item is correlated to the total (Zijlmans et al. 2018). By applying this approach, the plan is to mitigate or reduce potential validity issues both in terms of design and analysis methods.

Thirdly, this study will compare the participants who scored highly with some other marker – as an example, those who stated that belonging to an event community was important to them and those that stated they would be enthusiastic toward the brand. The study will then look at the correlation between these – and see if these responses were convergent as it would be expected that there is a positive correlation (Carlson & Herdman 2012). Likewise, this study will find another marker to measure that is expected to be negative to check divergent correlations (Carlson & Herdman 2012).

Construct validity

Construct validity is required to make sure the measure actually assesses the intended construct and does not measure other unrelated variables (Oliver & Benet-Martínez 2000). This assessment of validity is made possible by accessing a panel of experts familiar with the construct. Internal consistency is an aspect of construct validity that uses alpha and is often thought of as measuring both validity and reliability (Oliver & Benet-Martínez 2000). Item-rest correlation will also be used to measure construct validity (Oliver & Benet-Martínez 2000).

Sampling validity, as detailed in Stage 2, is similar to content validity, according to McEwan (2020). and will also be applied given its association with external validity. McEwan (2020) argues the selection of sampling frames and sampling participants should be clearly articulated because such decisions bring with them a range of biases that reduce the external validity of the research findings. Sampling validity in the proposed research will be conducted using panel experts to ensure the content area is adequately appraised. The panel will also be able to help limit expert bias conducting a

test to understand the researcher's opinion on the most relevant areas believed to answer the research question.

Reliability and validity of measures will be reported prior to testing the hypotheses in this study. It will include aggregate measures to collect a construct representation such as mean, spread, skewness and kurtosis. Issues of normality and distribution will be considered wherein a normal distribution requires the mean to be zero and the standard deviation 1 (with a zero skew and a kurtosis of 3). A standard deviation close to zero indicates the data points are close to the mean, whereas a high or low standard deviation indicates data points are respectively above or below the mean.

The next step will be to conduct an EFA on the total number of items to produce new factors based on the various structures under investigation. A reliability coefficient will be calculated, and any factor with a reliability coefficient greater than 0.6 will be considered acceptable (Cortina 1993). Chronbach alpha scores will also be computed to ensure the items are measuring a construct with statistical reliability. During this process, some of the items may be eliminated if they don't load and/or measure the construct. Certain items will also be reverse scored before this testing.

3.5.3 Stage 3 – Moderation Regression Analysis

Stage 3 will involve moderation regression analysis which will test the proposed model from Chapter 2; the research question, and hypotheses. A moderator variable explains variations that may occur between the X and Y effect (Aguinis 2004). That is, a moderator explains when or under what conditions X may cause Y. As noted by Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1176), "whereas moderator variables specify when certain effects will hold, mediators speak to how or why such effects occur."

The rationale for choosing a moderating regression analysis is based on the notion that a moderating variable affects the strength and direction of that relationship. In this case, the hypothesis in this study suggests that perceptions of brand authenticity act as a moderating variable. The level of perceived brand authenticity will explain

how much consumers' self-authenticating goals impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events.

In contrast, mediator variables explain the relationship between two variables (Aguinis 2004) by informing the researcher as to why or by what mechanism X causes Y. Given a mediating variable explains the process through which two or more variables are related, it means that if perception of brand authenticity does become the mediator, it has to be caused by the independent variable (self-authenticating goals) and impacts the dependant variable (consumer-focused outcomes).

The rationale for questioning past research, which has positioned perceptions of brand authenticity as an independent variable, is because of the belief that perceptions of brand authenticity behave differently in cause-related events. The hypothesis of this study suggests that consumers participate in these events to meet their own self-authenticating goals which precedes and is independent of any other influences. As such, there is a strong theory-based rationale for utilising moderation regression analysis.

In total, there are five constructs applied in the study. All of the constructs in this study: self-determination, goal self-concordance, social identity, brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes have been adapted from existing scales to fit the context of the study. Further, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) have greatly influenced modifications of the consumer-based CSR authenticity scale (Joo et al. 2019) suggesting that various identity objectives (both personal and societal) might motivate participation in such events, and that these goals support self-relevant evaluations of authenticity.

To address the research question that asks: '*How do brand authenticity and self-authentication impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship?*' the following hypotheses were developed from the literature review in Chapter 2.

H1: Perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

H2: The consumer's self-authentication goals significantly and positively impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events.

H3: The relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is significantly and positively moderated by perceived brand authenticity.

The data analysis will be directed to addressing these three hypotheses in order before answering the research question.

3.6. - Limitations

Several methodological limitations can be identified prior to commencing the proposed study. One such limitation is that it is a quantitive study designed to explore the research problem. By not providing qualitative data, it limits the depth of feedback that would otherwise be available for examination. The decision not to apply a qualitative approach was based on the understanding it would be difficult to identify common trends and statistics. Instead, the study relies on the use of quantitative research to aid in data triangulation, which in turn helps improve the validity of the collected data.

The second study limitation involves the sample which will be restricted to cause-related events in Australia. While the results may provide well-defined insights regarding perceptions of brand authenticity in Australian-based events, the same results might not apply in other countries. This limitation further stresses the need to incorporate qualitative research and use a broader sample to collect information on the topic. The research can be improved in the future by adding additional stages to the research process and by accessing a broader sample.

3.7 - Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology to be used for the exploratory study in this program of research. The chapter commenced with a rationale

for using a quantitative methodology and mapped the research design. Survey development was discussed next. The survey instrument will be modified from existing measurement scales to ensure specificity to the context of the study, and to enable data to be collected that answers the research problem. Thorough pre-testing and subsequent revision of the online survey will be carried out to ensure it is reliable. The process will follow the research design which will aid in establishing the validity and reliability of the instrument used.

The target population for the research will be defined by whether the consumer has participated in one or more cause-related events in the last three years. The audience will be sourced using convenience sampling predominantly through Facebook Groups which will range from running clubs and cause-related event groups to triathlon, cycling, community and charity groups.

The major data analysis technique is described as a regression-based approach utilising the PROCESS macro (Hayes 2013) to version 27 of (IBM 2015). Ethical issues concerning respondents will be considered at each stage of the process and research design as well as acknowledgement of its limitations. The next chapter outlines the results of the data analysis.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 - Introduction

The previous chapter outlined and justified the methodology proposed to address the research question in this study. This chapter provides the detail about the results of the data collection phase of the research and is structured in the following way. Section 4.2 will report on how the proposed research design was implemented as well as the results of the data collection, data cleaning and data preparation phase of the research. Section 4.3 presents the data analysis which includes the descriptive statistics, scale development and hypothesis testing.

4.2 - Data collection

As discussed in Chapter 3, the population for this study consisted of cause-related event participants in Australia. Responses were gathered through a self-administered survey sent via a web link to 90 Facebook Groups that included cause-related event groups, running, swimming, cycling and triathlon groups (given these groups are frequent participants in cause-related events) across Australia. Appendix B provides a list of the groups that received the survey link.

As explained in Chapter 3, the survey was completely voluntary, and no incentives were offered. If a respondent indicated that they had not participated in one or more cause-related events in the previous (3) three years, they exited the survey after the first question. Some questions were only presented conditionally dependent on responses to others (the survey is provided in Appendix C).

The survey included an introduction section which briefly explained the purpose of the study as well as expected benefits, risks, privacy and confidentiality and contact details for concerns or complaints. It was aimed to reach a sample size of 300 which has been supported by Shih and Fan (2008) who suggest that online surveys yield an average response rate of 34%. Based on a sample of 1000, this would equate to roughly 300 which satisfies the data analysis requirement as detailed in Chapter 3.

To boost participation rates, reminders were posted on the various sites about completing the survey before the close date and regular updates were provided to the Facebook groups with a tally of the growing number of completed surveys during this period to encourage ongoing participation in the survey.

The survey was first issued on the 9th of December 2020 and concluded on the 30th of January 2021 with a total of 932 surveys collected. Unfortunately, many of these surveys were only partially completed and it was determined that any survey that was less than 95% completed would be removed from further analysis. This left a total of 305 fully completed surveys for use in the next phase of the study. As discussed in Chapter 3, no personal information that would identify the participants was retained.

4.2.1 Data cleaning

As outlined in the data analysis plan in Chapter 3, the data collected needed cleaning before proceeding to more specific statistical tests to address the research questions. The data from the 305 completed surveys was cleaned and all essential assumptions were verified. This included histograms, Q-Q plots, and skewness-kurtosis values. Inter-correlation between variables, as well as multicollinearity, normalcy, and homoscedasticity, were all examined (Tabachnick et al. 2007). The assumption of multicollinearity was verified with a correlation matrix inspection of each variable (as provided in Appendix D). While some items appeared highly correlated, none were greater than .90 being the cut-off for multicollinearity (Tabachnick et al. 2007). Characteristics of the incomplete and complete data sets were also explored with results showing the complete surveys were representative of the larger group.

The Mahalanobis distance was used to identify multivariate outliers for each variable in the study (Tabachnick et al. 2007). Values surpassing the critical chi-square were considered to be multivariate outliers with $p < 0.00$. This test identified five items with problematic outliers (1.6%) and these responses were subsequently removed from the final data set resulting in a final cleaned data set of 300 respondents.

4.3 - Data Analysis

This section will detail the analysis of data as outlined in Chapter 3. The section will commence with the descriptive statistics of the sample followed by the scale development and then hypothesis testing.

4.3.1 Descriptive statistics

This section provides a demographic profile of the final 300 respondents and Table 4.1 provides a summary of this profile. A descriptive analysis of the data set (n = 300) revealed the majority of respondents were female, aged 41 – 50 years, living in Queensland, with a post-graduate degree and an annual household income of either $101,000 – $150,000 or more than $200,000. This sample is reasonable consistent with previous studies with Rundio et al (2014) showing cause-related event participants were predominately female (56.5%), with an average age of 37.16. Rundio (2014) states that consistent with previous work on this demographic, most participants had a bachelor's degree or higher (85.3%), and over half had an individual income of $75,000 or more (56.7%). In contrast, non-cause-related event participants were predominantly male (63.3%). The scale development process will be outlined next.

Table 4.1 – Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 300)

Variable	Category	Count and (%)
Gender	Female	215 (70.5)
	Male	80 (28.2)
	Other	2 (0.7)
	Prefer not to say	1 (0.3)
	Missing	7 (2.3)
Age		
	Less than 25 years	4 (1.3)
	25 – 30 years	9 (3.0)
	31 – 40 years	51 (16.7)
	41 – 50 years	105 (34.4)
	51 – 60 years	85 (27.9)
	60+ years	41 (13.4)
	Prefer not to say	4 (1.3)
	Missing	6 (2.0)

Variable	Category	Count and (%)
Education		
	High school or equivalent	26 (8.5)
	Technical or occupational certificate	42 (13.8)
	Undergraduate degree	97 (31.8)
	Postgraduate degree	127 (41.6)
	Prefer not to say	7 (2.3)
	Missing	6 (2.0)
Household income		
	Less than $25,000	4 (1.3)
	$25,000 - $50,000	16 (5.2)
	$51,000 - $100,000	54 (17.7)
	$101,000 - $150,000	62 (20.3)
	$151,000 - $200,000	44 (14.4)
	More than $200,000	62 (20.3)
	Prefer not to say	57 (18.7)
	Missing	6 (2.0)
State		
	Queensland	84 (27.5)
	New South Wales	55 (18.0)
	Victoria	55 (18.0)
	South Australia	26 (8.5)
	Western Australia	27 (8.9)
	Northern Territory	1 (0.3)
	Tasmania	7 (2.3)
	Australian Capital Territory	25 (8.2)
	Prefer not to say	22 (7.2)
	Missing	3 (1.0)

Source: Developed for this study

4.3.2 Scale Development

In total, there were five constructs proposed in the theoretical model that represented the research question for this study as shown in the preliminary model in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.3). The dependant variable for the study was consumer-focused outcomes and the independent variables were perceptions of brand authenticity, self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity. One construct, goal self-concordance, was operationalised from two different scales – the Striving Assessment Scales (Emmons 1986) and the Self-Concordance Model (Sheldon & Elliot 1999) as a complete measure for goal self-concordance was not available in the literature.

In order to ensure validity and reliability of the measures and subsequent data analysis, each of the measures for the constructs were first validated to prior to moving to the data analysis phase of the research. In each case factor analysis (EFA and/or CFA) was conducted to test the internal consistency of the items to the construct. Exploratory factor analysis was used to evaluate the correlations between items for any new or composite measures adopted in the study and to validate the factor structure of those scales (Norris & Lecavalier 2010). EFA was first applied over CFA to ensure item quality and to overcome the possibility of incorrect assumptions being made about a construct's dimensionality (Watkins 2018).

While EFA explores the data and provides guidance on factor number, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) involves specifying factor number and the associated variables prior to performing the analysis. CFA was conducted on measurement items for pre-existing scales, to confirm the scale structure and reliability (Costello & Osborne 2005; Haig 2005; Worthington & Whittaker 2006; Kline 2013).

As part of the assessment of construct validity, all measurement items were examined in a correlation analysis with any highly intercorrelated items identified for exclusion from the measures. The sufficiency of the correlations among items were tested through Bartlett's test of sphericity. Bartlett's test proved that the correlations, when taken collectively, were significant at the 0.0001 level. In the next assessment, factor analysis was performed to eliminate unrelated items of the scales. Appendix C provides the correlation matrix. This analysis confirmed that no items were highly correlated.

Next, factor analysis was performed on all the measures to confirm the structure of the scales and as a further test of construct validity (Reise et al. 2000). As discussed, both EFA and CFA were used and any items that were problematic were removed from further analysis (Reise et al. 2000).

A reliability coefficient for each scale was calculated, with reliability coefficients between 06 - 0.7 deemed acceptable (Cortina 1993). The results of this process are reported for each construct commencing with self-determination.

Self-determination

The Basic Psychological Needs Scale (La Guardia et al. 2000) which comprises 21 items represented by three dimensions (autonomy, relatedness and competence) was modified, based on the feedback from the panel of experts and pre-test which resulted in 13 items being removed. These items were determined to not align with the context of the study and it was thought they may confuse and possibly confound the analysis. The new measure, comprising of eight items, was proposed to capture self-determination as a unidimensional construct (as shown in Figure 2.3). Table 4.2 which presents the summary statistics of the proposed items to measure this construct.

Table 4.2 – Item Statistics: Self-determination

	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Self-determination				
I get along with people I come into contact with	5.87	.786	-1.009	2.736
People are generally pretty friendly towards me	5.92	.756	-.982	2.022
I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my live	5.97	.928	-1.070	2.678
I really like the people I interact with	5.84	.831	-.856	1.820
People I know tell me I am good at what I do	5.63	.957	-1.159	1.986
Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do	5.48	1.117	-1.067	2.001
I feel like I can pretty much be myself in my daily situations	5.69	1.002	-.974	1.020
I consider the people I regularly interact with to be my friends	5.73	.960	-1.438	4.005

Source: Developed for this study

The psychometric properties of the scale were measured using Principal Components Analysis with varimax rotation. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to ensure all eight items appropriately represented the self-determination construct (see Table 4.3). This was shown to be adequate with all eight items loading onto one factor. The exploratory factor analysis shows the one factor explained 47.17% variance in the data.

Table 4.3 – Component matrix for the self-determination construct

	Component
Item	**1**
I get along with people I come into contact with	.788
People were generally pretty friendly towards me	.740
I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my life	.529
I really like the people I interact with	.769
People I know tell me I am good at what I do	.639
Most days I get a sense of accomplishment from what I do	.695
I feel like I can pretty much be myself in daily situations	.657
I consider the people I interact regularly with to be my friends	.641

Source: Developed for this study

Table 4.4 presents the correlation matrix for the eight scale items. A review of the correlation matrix reveals that are significant at the 0.001 level, which provides adequate basis to perform a factor analysis for each item. To evaluate the overall significance of the correlation matrix, the Bartlett's test was used again. The Bartlett's test found that the correlations, when taken collectively, were significant at the < 0.001 level.

Table 4.4 – Self-determination correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
I get along with people I come into contact with	1.000							
People were generally pretty friendly towards me	.612	1.000						
I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my life	.342	.253	1.000					
I really like the people I interact with	.515	.474	.331	1.000				
People I know tell me I am good at what I do	.530	.410	.201	.396	1.000			

Most days I get a sense of accomplishment from what I do	.474	.416	.329	.426	.349	1.000		
I feel like I can pretty much be myself in daily situations	.338	.429	.381	.414	.340	.460	1.000	
I consider the people I interact regularly with to be my friends	.417	.374	.230	.591	.272	.345	.280	1.000

All correlations significant at < 0.001 level.
Source: Developed for this study

Chronbach's alpha was also computed to measure the internal consistency of the items and to provide a statistically valid measure of self-determination. Chronbach's alpha indicated the internal consistency was acceptable for self-determination ($\alpha = .829$).

Goal self-concordance

The goal self-concordance construct was operationalised as a six-item scale developed from the Self-Concordance Model (Sheldon & Elliot 1999) and Striving Assessment Scale (Emmons 1986). An EFA for the scale was conducted to ensure all six items appropriately represent the construct of goal self-concordance. This resulted in the items loading onto two factors as shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 – Rotated component matrix for the goal self-concordance construct

	Component	
Goal self-concordance	**1**	**2**
I feel fulfilment from participating in the event	.898	
Participating in the event appeals to my values	.894	
Participating is a reflection of my true self	.860	
The 'challenge' of competing is my primary motivation for participating		.866
Supporting the 'cause/charity' is more important to me than completing the 'challenge' of the event	.409	
Participating with others makes the event more enjoyable	.322	

Source: Developed for this study

These results were problematic as statistically it is not appropriate to have a one item dimension (Reise et al. 2000). For this reason, the item, *'The 'challenge' of*

competing is my primary motivation for participating' was removed. Additionally, the item, '*Participating with others makes the event more enjoyable'* was also problematic in terms of the factor loadings suggesting that this item was not capturing the intent of this measure. It was also removed and another CFA was conducted (Costello & Osborne 2005; Haig 2005; Worthington & Whittaker 2006; Kline 2013). When CFA was run with one factor (see Table 4.6), all remaining items loaded well.

Table 4.6 – Component matrix

	Component 1
I feel fulfilment from participating in the event	.902
Participating in the event appeals to my values	.917
Participating is a reflection of my true self	.885

Source: Developed for this study

These three items were subsequently removed from the analysis and the Cronbach alpha supported this decision shifting from 0.56 with all six items to 0.88 with only three items. The psychometric properties of the new scale were measured using Principal Components Analysis with varimax rotation because some factors were expected to be correlated with each other. The factor analysis shows one factor explains 82.28% variance in the data. The one factor consists of three items, which seems to be a reliable measure of goal self-concordance, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) value of .882. Table 4.7 presents the summary statistics of the remaining items used to measure the goal self-concordance construct.

Table 4.7 – Item Statistics: Goal Self-concordance

	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Goal self-concordance				
I feel fulfilment from participating in the event	5.88	1.203	-1.652	3.654
Participating in the event appeals to my values	5.92	1.093	-1.631	4.186
Participating is a reflection of my true self	5.46	1.238	-0.926	1.023

Source: Developed for this study

Table 4.8 presents the correlation matrix for the three scale items. A review of the correlation matrix reveals they are significant at the 0.001 level, which provides adequate basis to perform a factor analysis for each item. To evaluate the overall significance of the correlation matrix, the Bartlett's test was used again. The Bartlett's test found that the correlations, when taken collectively, were significant at the < 0.001 level.

Table 4.8 – Goal self-concordance correlation matrix

	1	2	3
1	1.000		
2	.758	1.000	
3	.681	.718	1.000

All correlations significant at < 0.001 level.

Source: Developed for this study

Social Identity

The social identity construct in this study was measured using seven items from an adaptation of the Three-Factor Model of Social Identity (Cameron 2004) (refer to Table 3.1). An EFA for the scale was conducted and five of the six items loaded onto one factor while one item loaded onto the second factor (see Table 4.9 for results). The reverse scored item, '*I do not feel I have a lot in common socially with others in the event community'* loaded poorly onto either factor and was subsequently removed (Reise et al. 2000). This improved the EFA results with the two factors explaining 54.2% variance in the data. Cronbach's alpha statistics supported this removal increasing from .412 to .526 when this item was removed.

Table 4.9 – Rotated component matrix for social identity

	Component	
Items	**1**	**2**
Social Identity		
Belonging to an event community is important to me	.568	
The event community does not influence my identity		.776

The event community is different to other groups	.713	
I feel I identify physically with cause-related event participants moreso than individuals in other groups	.740	
I do not feel I have a lot in common socially with others in the event community		.724
I feel I am on the same mental level with cause-related event participants	.498	
Wearing the event merchandise makes me feel like I belong to the event community	.664	

Source: Developed for this study

As cited above with the goal self-concordance scale, these results were still problematic as statistically it is not appropriate to have a one item dimension (Reise et al. 2000). For this reason, the item, *'The event community does not influence my identity'* was removed as shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 – Component matrix for social identity

Items	Component 1
Belonging to an event community is important to me	.674
The event community is different to other groups	.638
I feel I identify physically with cause-related event participants moreso than individuals in other groups	.741
I feel I am on the same mental level with cause-related event participants	.544
Wearing the event merchandise makes me feel like I belong to the event community	.665

Source: Developed for this study

The one factor explained 42.98% variance in the data and the Chronbach's alpha improved again to reach .665. In the next assessment, descriptive statistics for the remaining items were sought and are provided in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11 – Item Statistics: Social Identity

	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Social identity				
Belonging to an event community is important to me	5.29	1.334	-1.004	1.245
The event community is different to other groups	4.62	1.271	-0.547	0.320
I feel I identify physically with cause-related event participants moreso than individuals in other groups	3.69	1.466	-0.054	-0.797
I feel I am on the same mental level with cause-related event participants	4.56	1.151	-0.592	0.830
Wearing the event merchandise makes me feel like I belong to the event community	4.71	1.630	-0.830	-0.148

Source: Developed for this study

Table 4.12 presents the correlation matrix for six items of the scale. A review of the correlation matrix reveals that 20 of the 30 correlations (approximately 66%) are significant at the 0.01 level, which provide adequate basis to perform a factor analysis for each item and for the overall basis. To evaluate the overall significance of the correlation matrix, the Bartlett's test was used again. The Bartlett's test found that the correlations, when taken collectively, were significant at the < 0.01 level.

Table 4.12 – Correlation Matrix: Social Identity

	1	2	3	4	5
Belonging to an event community is important to me	1.000				
The event community is different to other groups	.280	1.000			
I feel I identify physically with cause-related event participants moreso than individuals in other groups	.332	.404	1.000		
I feel I am on the same mental level with cause-related event participants	.232	.125	.300	1.000	
Wearing the event merchandise makes me feel like I belong to the event community	.336	.266	.312	.252	1.000

All correlations significant at < 0.001 level.
Source: Developed for this study

Brand Authenticity

Some of the wording for items in the multi-dimensional consumer-based CSR authenticity scale (Joo et al. 2019) were modified to capture the construct of perceived brand authenticity in the context of cause-related event participation. An EFA for the scale was conducted and five of the six items loaded onto one factor (see Table 4.13 for results). The item '*The brand does not appear to engage with the cause-related event participants*' (-.468) was subsequently removed. This improved the EFA results with one factor explaining 56.7% variance in the data. Cronbach's alpha statistics supported this removal increasing from .513 to .780 when this item was removed.

Table 4.13 – Rotated component matrix for brand authenticity

	Component
Items	**1**
Brand authenticity	
The brand's values appear to be clearly aligned with the cause	.774
The brand's motives appear sincere in sponsoring the cause-related event	.863
The brand appears to be socially responsible because of their support of the cause-related event	.764
The brand is authentic to me	.800
The brand is more authentic than other brands who do not sponsor cause-related events	.520

Source: Developed for this study

Table 4.14 presents the summary statistics of the remaining items used to measure the brand authenticity construct.

Table 4.14 – Item Statistics: Brand authenticity

	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Brand authenticity				
The brand's values appear to be clearly aligned with the cause	3.87	0.744	-1.789	3.661
The brand's motives appear sincere in sponsoring the cause-related event	3.84	0.715	-1.902	3.710

The brand appears to be socially responsible because of their support of the cause-related event	3.87	0.703	-2.135	5.322
The brand is authentic to me	3.83	0.662	-2.303	5.124
The brand is more authentic than other brands who do not sponsor cause-related events	3.50	0.983	-1.149	-0.059

Source: Developed for this study

Table 4.15 presents the correlation matrix for five items of the scale. A review of the correlation matrix reveals that all correlations were significant at the 0.01 level, which provide sufficient basis to perform a factor analysis for each item. To evaluate the overall significance of the correlation matrix, the Bartlett's test was used again. The Bartlett's test found that the correlations, when taken collectively, were significant at the < 0.01 level.

Table 4.15 – Correlation Matrix: Brand authenticity

	1	2	3	4	5
The brand's values appear to be clearly aligned with the cause	1.000				
The brand's motives appear sincere in sponsoring the cause-related event	.657	1.000			
The brand appears to be socially responsible because of their support of the cause-related event	.434	.576	1.000		
The brand is authentic to me	.456	.625	.526	1.000	
The brand is more authentic than other brands who do not sponsor cause-related events	.308	.263	.287	.338	1.000

All correlations significant at < 0.001 level.

Source: Developed for this study

Consumer-focused outcomes

The research relied on specific dimensions of the customer brand co-creation behaviour (CBCB) scale conceptualised and operationalised by France et al. (2018) as most relevant to the context of cause-related events. As discussed in Chapter 3, this construct has five dimensions: customer-brand engagement; brand self-congruity; brand community; customer-brand co-creation; and customer-perceived brand value. An EFA for the customer brand co-creation behaviour (CBCB) scale (France et al.

2018) was conducted to ensure all 19 items represent consumer-focused behaviours in cause-related events. The factor analysis showed the items loaded onto four factors rather than five, explaining 73.82% variance in the data (as shown in Table 4.16).

On closer examination it would appear that the dimensions of advocacy, customer-perceived brand value and customer-brand engagement are being captured as one dimension and not two as the literature suggests. Further two of the items, '*I would be passionate toward the brand*', and '*I would have a sense of belonging to the brand*', have marginally acceptable factor loadings however they were retained in the final measurement as it was determined by the expert panel that these items may provide important insights in the final analysis.

Table 4.16 – Rotated component matrix for consumer-focused outcomes

	Component			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Brand self-congruity				
This brand [would] reflect who I am	.335	.731	.194	.082
This brand image [would] corresponds with my self-image in many respects	.265	.796	.281	.079
This brand is [would be] exactly how I see myself	.142	.835	.166	.206
This brand [would be] is a lot like me	.191	.821	.279	.176
Brand community				
I [would] share common values with other brand customers	.300	.224	.786	.116
I [would] interact with other members of the brand community	.274	.272	.735	.199
I [would] consider myself to be part of a community of brand users	.226	.379	.641	.331
I [would] share common goals with other brand customers	.327	.217	.762	.186
Customer brand co-creation behaviour and advocacy				
Development				
I [would] take photos of myself with the brand and share them with others	.351	.190	.221	.785
I [would] create online content about the brand	.243	.162	.233	.829
Advocacy				
I [would] recommend the brand to others	.745	.192	.144	.346
I [would] say positive things about the brand to others	.810	.123	.233	.176

I [would] spread the good word about the brand	.841	.139	.206	.213
I [would] encourage my friends and relatives to use the brand	.740	.211	.153	.317
Customer perceived brand value				
Overall, the value of this brand to me [would be] is high	.738	.269	.298	.104
The benefits of the brand [would be] are high	.679	.289	.358	.004
Customer-brand engagement				
I am [would be] enthusiastic toward the brand	.673	.227	.321	.098
I am [would be] passionate toward the brand	.595	.289	.190	.379
I am [would] have a sense of belonging toward the brand	.526	.438	.200	.390

Source: Developed for this study

Chronbach's alpha was also computed to measure the reliability of the items and to provide a statistically valid measure of consumer-focused outcomes. Chronbach's alpha indicated the internal consistency was acceptable for consumer-focused outcomes (α = .951). Table 4.17 presents the summary statistics of the remaining items used to measure the consumer-focused outcomes construct.

Table 4.17 – Item Statistics: Consumer-focused outcomes

	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Customer-brand co-creation behaviours				
Brand self-congruity				
This brand [would] reflect who I am	3.12	1.114	-.569	-1.360
This brand image [would] corresponds with my self-image in many respects	3.06	1.123	-.490	-1.460
This brand is [would be] exactly how I see myself	2.62	1.169	.139	-1.572
This brand [would be] is a lot like me	2.80	1.172	-.088	-1.622
Brand community				
I [would] share common values with other brand customers	3.50	.969	-1.484	.629
I [would] interact with other members of the brand community	3.38	1.064	-1.117	-.333
I [would] consider myself to be part of a community of brand users	3.11	1.128	-.563	-1.343

I [would] share common goals with other brand customers	3.37	1.070	-1,218	-.192
Customer brand co-creation behaviour (CBCB) + advocacy				
I [would] take photos of myself with the brand and share them with others	2.91	1.310	-.311	-1.554
I [would] create online content about the brand	2.44	1.227	.362	-1.387
I [would] recommend the brand to others	3.32	1.146	-1.032	-.540
I [would] say positive things about the brand to others	3.62	.997	-1.744	1.810
I [would] spread the good word about the brand	3.51	1.033	-1.503	.765
I [would] encourage my friends and relatives to use the brand	3.18	1.175	-.697	-1.102
Customer-perceived brand value				
Overall, the value of this brand to me [would be] is high	3.51	1.007	-1.414	.578
The benefits of the brand [would be] are high	3.54	.975	-1.473	.791
Customer-brand engagement				
I am [would be] enthusiastic toward the brand	3.66	.898	-1.978	2.717
I am [would be] passionate toward the brand	3.14	1.185	-.637	-1.203
I am [would] have a sense of belonging toward the brand	2.98	1.202	-.380	-1.488

Source: Developed for this study

Table 4.18 presents the correlation matrix for the 19 items of the scale. A review of the correlation matrix reveals that every correlation was significant at the 0.01 level, which provide an appropriate basis to perform a factor analysis for each item. To evaluate the overall significance of the correlation matrix, the Bartlett's test was used again. The Bartlett's test found that the correlations, when taken collectively, were significant at the < 0.01 level.

Table 4.18 – Correlation Matrix: Consumer-focused outcomes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1	1.000																		
2	.735	1.000																	
3	.584	.672	1.000																
4	.613	.746	.800	1.000															
5	.438	.476	.410	.491	1.000														
6	.487	.507	.444	.510	.688	1.000													
7	.525	.549	.472	.572	.587	.633	1.000												
8	.415	.494	.417	.482	.682	.643	.672	1.000											
9	.388	.402	.387	.406	.416	.436	.544	.457	1.000										
10	.354	.364	.361	.393	.405	.430	.481	.437	.744	1.000									
11	.463	.424	.373	.417	.455	.483	.440	.457	.541	.521	1.000								
12	.426	.427	.321	.394	.474	.490	.432	.495	.513	.429	.724	1.000							
13	.437	.447	.336	.403	.463	.477	.447	.518	.527	.471	.774	.859	1.000						
14	.459	.435	.387	.406	.441	.464	.461	.477	.537	.498	.714	.674	.736	1.000					
15	.487	.494	.388	.450	.511	.488	.494	.518	.510	.412	.602	.642	.658	.642	1.000				
16	.511	.489	.373	.447	.511	.451	.516	.566	.432	.347	.537	.575	.617	.587	.747	1.000			
17	.421	.435	.382	.427	.512	.474	.474	.491	.436	.377	.553	.609	.633	.538	.651	.561	1.000		
18	.418	.398	.442	.452	.433	.457	.509	.481	.558	.452	.597	.535	.548	.599	.596	.565	.623	1.000	
19	.531	.499	.523	.553	.456	.490	.547	.518	.568	.480	.599	.493	.558	.604	.600	.566	.567	.753	1.000

All correlations significant at < 0.001 level.

Source: Developed for this study

Major study variables

Descriptive statistics of the major study variables (n = 300) were calculated and included mean scores, standard deviation, skew and kurtosis. Table 4.19 shows all the scale items and their psychometric properties.

Results showed item total correlations were high (r > 0.5) indicating self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity as well as perceptions of brand authenticity were relevant to the study. The mean scores of items in the adapted scales were between 5.765 and 3.197. The skewness and kurtosis values ranged between 3.685 and -1.647. The descriptive analysis showed self-determination (5.765) to have the largest mean, followed closely by goal self-concordance (5.754), social identity (4.573), brand authenticity (3.780) then consumer-focused outcomes (3.197).

Table 4.19 – Correlations between major independent study variables

	Mean	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Self-determination	5.765	.623	-.793	1.157
Goal self-concordance	5.754	1.061	-1.439	3.396
Social Identity	4.573	.902	- .302	- .127
Brand Authenticity	3.780	.561	-1.647	3.685
Consumer-focused outcomes	3.197	.806	-.952	-.235

Note: all correlations are significant at p< .05

Source: Developed for this study

4.3.3 Final scale development for hypothesis testing

A reverse score transformation was performed as part of the EFA procedure by first recording which items logically required reverse coding and then ensuring that the correlations for the reverse coded items were negative. Each independent variable was also checked in EFA for multi-collinearity. Correlation, tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) were reviewed. Of all the predictors, each had a VIF < 2 and tolerance < .66. This would suggest no multicollinearity.

Eigenvalues represent the total amount of variance that can be explained by a given principal component. Table 4.20 provides the eigenvalue percentages of variance and cumulative percentages and shows each factor has a positive variance greater than zero. The eigenvalue column gives the amount of variance in the original variables accounted for by each component. The % of Variance column gives the ratio, expressed as a percentage of the variance accounted for by each component to the total variance in all of the variables. The final model of 40 items explained 67.25% of the total variance. The variance for each construct was: self-determination (47.02%), goal self-concordance (20.22%); social identity (13.63%); brand authenticity (10.85%) and consumer-focused outcomes (8.25%). Meanwhile the cumulative percentages provide a running total of the percentage values occurring across the set of responses. The total increases to reach the highest value of 100%.

Table 4.20 – Eigenvalue Percentages of Variance and Cumulative Percentages

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Self-determination	2.351	46.43	47.02
Goal self-concordance	1.011	20.22	67.25
Social Identity	.682	13.63	80.89
Brand Authenticity	.543	10.85	91.74
Consumer-focused outcomes	.413	8.25	100.00

Source: Developed for this study

4.3.4 Hypotheses testing

Three hypotheses were proposed at the conclusion of Chapter 2 which will be tested in turn next. The results are reported with respect to furnishing evidence for the research question. The hypothesises of the theoretical framework are:

H1: Perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

H2: The consumer's self-authentication goals significantly and positively impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events.

H3: The relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is significantly and positively moderated by perceived brand authenticity.

Moderation regression analysis

When using regressions, four assumptions must be satisfied (Tabachnick & Fidell 2013). Firstly, the ratio of respondents to independent variables must be at least 5:1 and ideally 20:1. In the current study, 300 respondents and three independent variables (i.e., self-determination; goal self-concordance and social identity) were included in the final survey which corresponds to a satisfying ratio of 15:1.

Secondly, all outliers must be deleted or transformed. Outliers in the value of the dependent variable were identified by examining the standardised residuals, whereas outliers in the values of the independent variables were identified by examining the leverage values. In total, five outliers were found and excluded from the from the sample. This resulted in a final total sample size of 300.

Thirdly, correlations of the independent variables cannot be high ($r > .90$) nor perfect ($r = 1$) (Field et al. 2009). Collinearity statistics, and tolerance values in particular, were examined and it was found that there were no problems with multicollinearity. Table 4.21 presents the summary statistics in the test for multicollinearity.

Table 4.21 – Test for multicollinearity

	Tolerance	VIF
Self-determination	.944	1.059
Goal self-concordance	.685	1.460
Social identity	.735	1.361
Brand authenticity	.814	1.228

Source: Developed for this study

Fourthly, the residuals in the regression must be independent. If there is no autocorrelation (where subsequent observations are related), the Durbin-Watson statistic should be between 1.5 and 2.5 and the p-value will be above 0.05 (Lee 2014).

The Durbin-Watson scores were examined and as indicated in Table 4.22 and the residuals were not correlated.

Table 4.22 – Autocorrelations in the residuals of the regression

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.714	.619	.384	.63776	1.986

Source: Developed for this study

The overarching aim of the analysis, as identified through the literature review and depicted in Figure 4.1, is to elicit an informed understanding of the strength and direction of the relationships with the moderating variable M (perception of brand authenticity) being causally located between independent variables X (self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity) and Y (consumer-focused outcomes). Three separate regression models were created to calculate the direct and indirect effect coefficients, with the bootstrap method testing the effects for significance (Preacher et al. 2007). Analysis of the research data follows.

Figure 4.1 – Moderation Model with Three Independent Variables
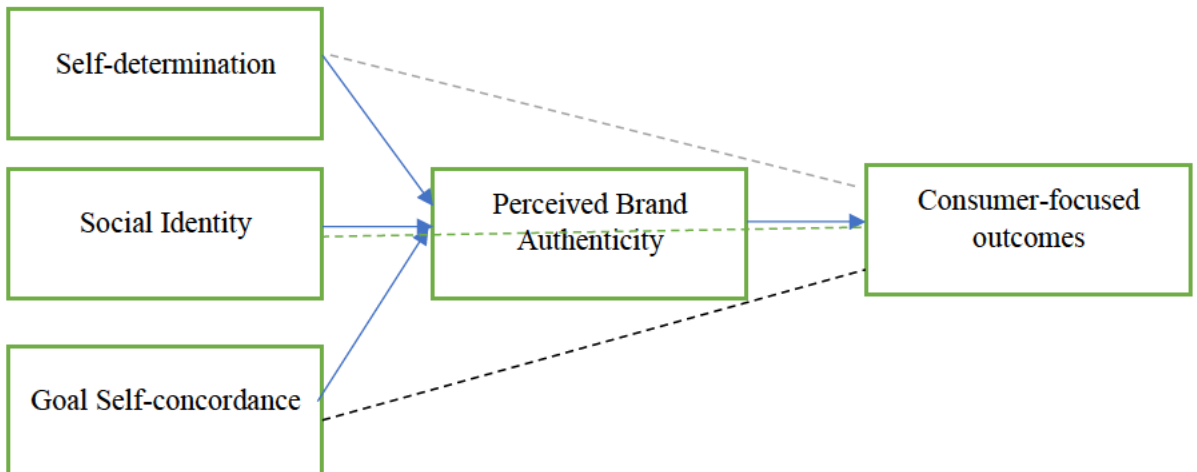
Source: Developed for this study

The correlation analysis will be reported next.

4.3.5 Correlation analysis

As outlined in the analysis plan from Chapter 3, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation (Rs) was conducted to assess the relationships between the independent variables. The results show that all correlations were significant except for self-determination and brand authenticity which was not significant (Rs = .097). Further, while significant, there was very little, if any, linear correlation between self-determination and goal self-concordance ((Rs = .290, p < .01). There was a moderate correlation between goal self-concordance and social identity (Rs = .485, p < .01) meaning the more self-directed the consumers' goals, the more it fulfilled their social identity requirements. There was a moderate correlation also between goal self-concordance and brand authenticity (Rs = .314, p < .01) and to a lesser extent between social identity and brand authenticity (Rs = .277, p < .01). What these two results suggest is that consumers were more likely to believe a brand was authentic if it aligned with their self-concordance goals, that being, the more the consumer had a sense of wellbeing. It also suggests that the consumers' social identity, as derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group such as the cause-related event community, leads to higher perceptions of brand authenticity. Table 4.23 explores the correlation between the constructs below.

Table 4.23 – Correlation matrix of independent variables: self-determination, goal self-concordance, social identity and brand authenticity

	Self-determination	Goal self-concordance	Social identity	Brand authenticity
Self-determination	1	.290**	.199**	.097
Goal self-concordance	.290**	1	.485**	.314**
Social identity	.199**	.485**	1	.277**
Brand authenticity	.097	.314**	.277**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Developed for this study

To understand the relationship between the independent variables and consumer-focused outcomes as the dependent variable, another Spearman's rho

correlation coefficient was computed. The results show correlations between the variables are all positive and all of the correlations are significant at either the 0.01 or 0.05 level except for one. Self-determination did not have a significant relationship with perceptions of brand authenticity. The strongest correlation was between perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes ($Rs = .487$, $p < .001$) where the stronger the consumer's belief that the sponsoring brand was authentic, the greater the likelihood they would generate consumer-focused outcomes.

The second strongest relationship was with social identity which was also significantly and positively related to consumer-focused outcomes ($Rs = .431$, $p < .01$). This means that the more cause-related events fulfilled the consumers' social identity needs and sense of belonging to the event community, the greater the likelihood was that they would generate consumer-focused outcomes.

Likewise, increases in consumer's goal self-concordance correlated positively with increases in the consumer's social identity ($Rs = .485$, $p < .001$); their perception of brand authenticity ($Rs = .314$, $p < .001$) and consumer-focused outcomes ($Rs = .385$, $p < .01$), despite the magnitude of the relationship still being low. This finding demonstrated that goal self-concordance, represented as the autonomous goal setting of consumers where personal goals match their enduring interests and values, leads to higher perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes. Table 4.24 identifies the overall strength and direction of each variable.

Table 4.24 – Correlation Matrix: Independent variables with consumer-focused outcomes (dependent variable)

	Self-determination	Goal self-concordance	Social identity	Brand authenticity	Consumer-focused outcomes
Self-determination	1	.290**	.199**	.097	.136*
Goal self-concordance	.290**	1	.485**	.314**	.385**
Social identity	.199**	.485**	1	.277**	.431**
Brand authenticity	.097	.314**	.277**	1	.487**

Consumer-focused outcomes	.136*	.385**	.431**	.487**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
Source: Developed for this study

With the correlation analysis completed, moderation regression analysis was conducted to address each of the hypotheses:

H1: Perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship.

H2: The consumer's self-authentication goals significantly and positively impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events.

H3: The relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is significantly and positively moderated by perceived brand authenticity.
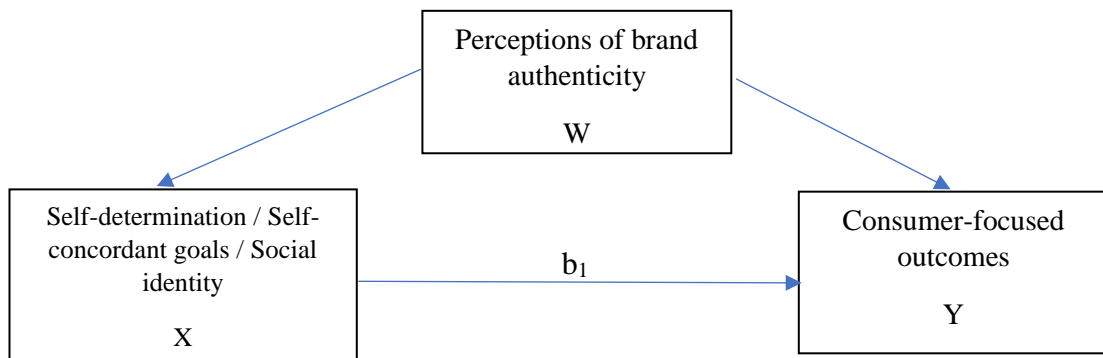
4.3.6 Moderation regression analysis

To test H1 - H3, a regression model was run with perceived brand authenticity moderating the relationship between self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity (independent variables) and consumer-focused outcomes (dependent variable). The PROCESS macro (Hayes 2013) version 27 (IBM 2015) was applied which gave a regression-based approach to the simple moderation. The PROCESS macro enabled an understanding of which elements were most important, what could be ignored, and how the factors interacted using regression analysis (Hayes 2013). While causation cannot be deduced, the research the process help establish which variable is the outcome and which variable is the cause of the outcome (Kane & Ashbaugh 2017).

Moderation regression is used to determine whether the relationship between two variables is dependent on a third variable that could affect the amount of the correlation and possibly change the direction of the dependent and independent

variables (Namazi & Namazi 2016). This process was completed one-by-one in this study controlling for the effects of the other independent variables. The moderator was perceived brand authenticity and the relationships between self-determination and consumer-focused outcomes; goal self-concordance and consumer-focused outcomes, and social identity and consumer-focused outcomes were tested.

Figure 4.2 – Brand authenticity as the moderating variable

Source: Developed for this study

The regression analysis was conducted where variables included in the model were entered in two steps to explain the relationship. The process was conducted three times – each time with a different independent variable. Step 1 involved measuring the independent variable's direct relationship with consumer-focused outcomes. At Step 2, perceptions of brand authenticity were entered to see how it moderated the relationship between the independent variable and consumer-focused outcomes and to answer the second sub-question. The sample size was $N = 300$. The results from Step 1 and Step 2 of the regression indicated that no statistically significant relationship existed for any of the independent variables – self-determination, goal self-concordance or social identity – either directly with consumer-focused outcomes or with perceptions of brand authenticity moderating the relationship.

Brief Discussion

These findings demonstrated the consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity did not moderate any of the relationships. Given this, the research looked next at the possibility of brand authenticity functioning as a mediator. This would replicate in

part, research by Carroll et al. (2022), who studied consumer behaviour in a retail context with perceptions of brand authenticity meditating the relationship between the consumers' self-authenticity (authentic personality) and brand loyalty. It would be interesting to learn whether perceptions of brand authenticity would also act as a mediator in a cause-related event context. To conduct the next stage, a series of regressions were conducted to test whether perceptions of brand authenticity mediated the relationship between consumers' self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity (independent variables) and consumer-focused outcomes (dependent variable) in cause-related events. A brief discussion on mediation regression follows in support of the next step of this research process.

4.3.7 Mediation regression analysis

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a variable functions as a mediator when it meets the following conditions: (a) changes in levels of the independent variable significantly account for changes in the presumed mediator variable, (b) changes in the mediator variable significantly account for changes in the dependent variable, and (c) when the previous conditions are controlled, a previous significant relation between the independent and dependent variables is no longer significant, with the strongest demonstration of mediation (i.e., full mediation) occurring when the relationship between the independent and dependent variable is zero. When the relationship between the independent and dependent variable is significantly decreased, the mediation is considered partial.

Researchers rely upon the significance test of the $X \rightarrow Y$ relationship to determine whether there is a significant total effect and whether it is suitable to examine the indirect effects, and assess the extent, and therefore the importance or completeness, of any observed mediation (Rucker et al. 2011). In this study, path 'a' calculated how much consumers' perception of brand authenticity influenced self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity. In comparison to the baseline measurement of goal self-concordance, self-determination and social identity, Path 'b' estimated how much the brand's authenticity affected consumer-focused outcomes. Change in this analysis is measured as the difference between a and b. The total effect

(under "total effect of X on Y") and a summary of the direct and indirect effects (a, b, c, and c' pathways) are labelled in the output. The research also applied bootstrapping (N = 5,000), a statistical resampling approach for estimating a model's standard deviation from a sample (Hayes & Rockwood 2017).

The PROCESS output involved four key variables: perceptions of brand authenticity (Outcome: BA) which was the mediator variable; consumer-focused outcomes (Outcome: CBCB) which was the dependent variable, and self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity which were the independent variables (Outcome: SDT, GOALS and IDENTITY). The separate regression models calculated the direct and indirect effect coefficients, with the bootstrap method testing the effects for significance. Self-determination was eliminated from the study because it was not statistically significant. Figure 4.2 illustrates the mediation model with perceptions of brand authenticity as the mediator and goal self-concordance and social identity which were individually computed as independent variables. The results show both relationships were statistically significant, however, the indirect effect where perceptions of brand authenticity became the mediator was weaker in both cases (goal self-concordance ($C_1 = .143$, p = .000) and social identity ($C_1 = .131$, p = .000)). The direct effects of the relationship between goal self-concordance and consumer-focused outcomes were stronger (C =.304, p = .000) as was the direct effect of the relationship between social identity and consumer-focused outcomes (C =.385, p = .000).

Figure 4.3 – Brand authenticity as the mediator
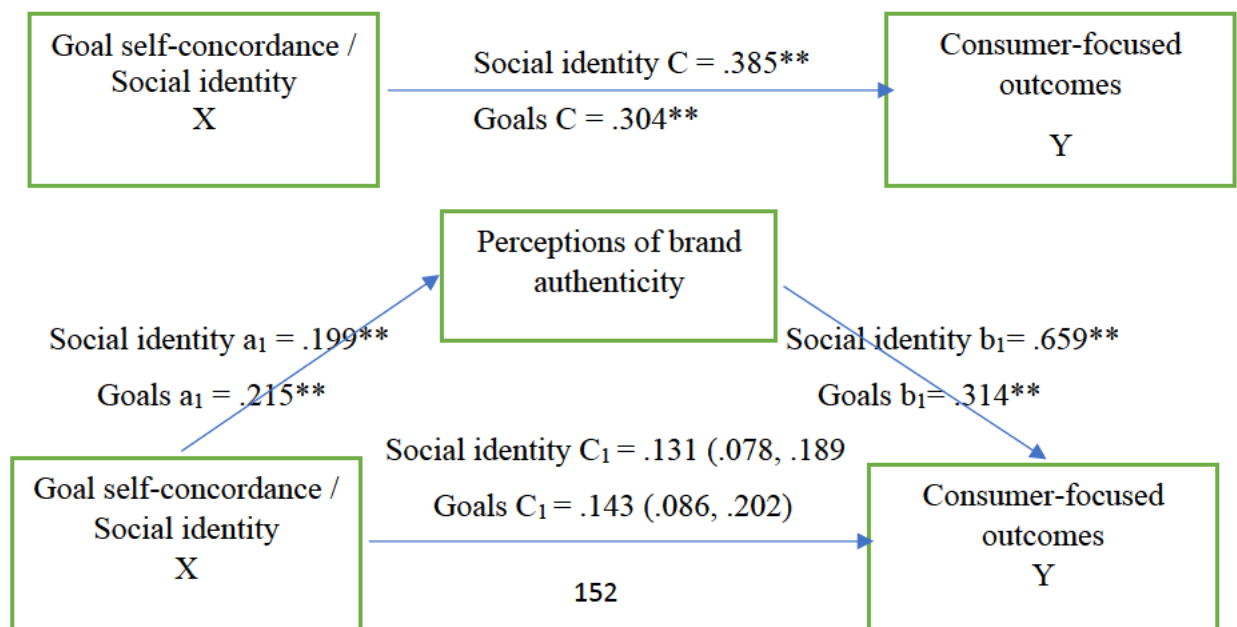
Source: Developed for this study

Despite being statistically significant, neither goal self-concordance or social identity were strong enough as the independent variables to affect the mediator variable and enable mediation to occur. For a mediating effect to occur, either goal self-concordance or social identity needed to predict perceptions of brand authenticity as the mediator and perceptions of brand authenticity needed to predict consumer-focused outcomes. While stronger results were produced, the mediating effect was not proven.

The results of mediation analysis revealed that goal self-concordance and social identity positively and significantly predicted consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. There was no finding, however, to support the suggestion that the consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity might mediate the relationship. This finding was not in harmony with Carroll et al. (2022), and as such, this study was not able to support or extend prior research showing perceptions of brand authenticity to have a mediating effect.

Brief Discussion

Despite these findings, it reinforced the strength of the relationship between the consumers' perception of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes. This was consistent with expectations derived from the literature. On the contrary, expectations of the relationships involving self-determination, goal self-concordance and social identity with perceptions of brand authenticity, either moderating or mediating the relationship with consumer-focused outcomes, was not confirmed.

Given these findings, it became apparent that a third regression would need to be conducted. Stepwise regression would enable the selection of which of these independent variables should be used in the final model (Sun et al. 1998). It involves adding or removing potential explanatory variables in succession and testing for statistical significance after each iteration (Sun et al. 1998).

4.3.8 Stepwise regression analysis

In this next stage, a stepwise regression was conducted with goal self-concordance, social identity and perceptions of brand authenticity as the independent variables. Self-determination was not included in the stepwise regression because it was already proven earlier in the data analysis phase to not be significantly related to consumer-focused outcomes. The model summary shows Model 3 of the regression, with perceptions of brand authenticity, social identity and goal self-concordance to have the strongest R square values (a = .383, p < .05). Model 3 was marginally stronger than Model 2 with perceptions of brand authenticity and social identity (a$_2$= .375, p < .05). Model 1 demonstrated perceptions of brand authenticity had the strongest relationship (a$_3$ = .300, p < .05). Figure 4.3 provides the model summary.

Figure 4.4 – Stepwise regression with three independent variables
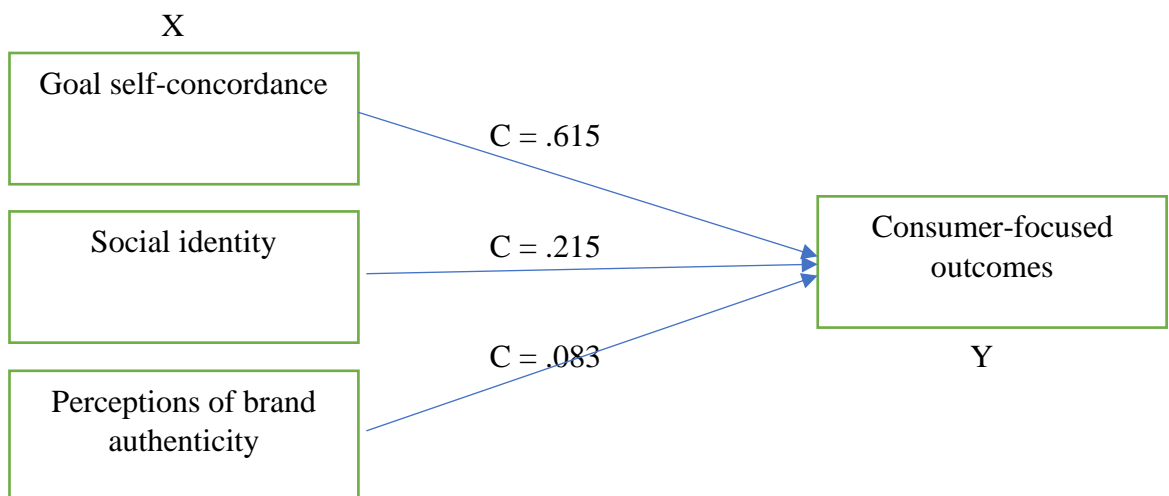
Source: Developed for this study

Brief Discussion

A stepwise regression was conducted because it was the logical next step following the discovery that perceptions of brand authenticity neither moderate nor mediate the relationship with consumer-focused outcomes. Nonetheless, given the

strong relationship perceptions of brand authenticity have with consumer-focused outcomes, it was important to see how it behaved as an independent variable. Results show perceptions of brand authenticity and social identity are the variables that have the strongest prediction of consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. The consumers' self-concordant goals only marginally predicted the results. While all three variables are important, perceptions of brand authenticity have the strongest predictive power. The current study, as opposed to previous research investigating these dimensions, gives new meaning to the study of cause-related events. This study demonstrates the magnitude of the relationship between consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity and the propensity to produce consumer-focused outcomes. It also demonstrates the significance of social identity and the likelihood that consumers will demonstrate co-creation behaviour and other consumer-focused outcomes if the consumer's self-concept is met through perceived membership in the cause-related event community.

The three hypotheses were specifically tested with results show all three hypotheses to be either fully or partially supported. H1 was supported in that perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. H2 was partially supported in that consumers' self-authentication goals significantly and positively impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. H3 was fully supported in that the relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is significantly and positively moderated by perceived brand authenticity.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

5.1 – Introduction

The previous chapter reported the results of the analysis of data gathered for the major study of this thesis. This chapter will draw conclusions and implications based on these results. The chapter has nine sections as shown in Figure 5.1. It will begin by summarising the earlier stages of the research (Section 5.1). A description of the theoretical model will be discussed in Section 5.2. The conclusions regarding the hypotheses assessed in Chapter 4 will then follow in Section 5.3 with conclusions relating to the research aim in Section 5.4. Following this, implications for theory (Section 5.5) and for practice (Section 5.6) will be presented. Finally, limitations of the research will be addressed (Section 5.7), and implications for future research directions will be proposed (Section 5.8) with the conclusions provided (Section 5.9).

Figure 5. 1 – Chapter Outline

5.1 – Introduction
5.2 – Description of the theoretical model
5.3 – Conclusions regarding each hypothesis
5.4 – Conclusions regarding the research aim
5.5 – Implications for theory
5.6 – Implications for practise
5.7 – Limitations of the research
5.8 – Recommendations for future research
5.9 – Conclusions

Source: Developed for this study

The purpose of this program of research was to explore how consumer-focused outcomes are impacted in cause-related event sponsorship, specifically addressing the role that perceptions of brand authenticity may play. In Chapter 1, the research

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objectives were outlined in Section 1.3 and a brief discussion of the increasing importance of authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship was presented to set the scene for this research.

A contextual and temporal gap in the cause-related event sponsorship literature was identified. Specifically, it was shown that published research and debate in these domains had not properly considered the consumer's perspective. There was a limited understanding of how the consumers' perspective would influence cause-related sponsorship outcomes, and of the strength of the consumers' self-authentication goals in these event settings. This deficit in literature created opportunities to investigate cause-related sponsorship from a consumers' perspective further. Simultaneously, the role that perceptions of brand authenticity may play had not been explored (Section 1.3). A two-stage research design was proposed to be the most suitable to address the research purpose (Section 1.4). These stages consisted of 1) a literature review; and 2) exploratory research which involved surveying consumers that had previously participated in cause-related events. The scope of the thesis was limited to cause-related events in Australia.

Following this, Chapter 2 reviewed the literature relating to the research objectives and identified that the incumbent sponsorship processes did not account for the direct impact of consumer's self-authentication goals, nor their perceptions of brand authenticity when it came to producing consumer-focused outcomes. This chapter commenced with an introduction of cause-related sponsorship literature (Section 2.2) and then moved onto a discussion of the search for authenticity (Section 2.3). The implications for the research were then outlined, particularly considering key components of cause-related event sponsorship.

Three key constructs relevant to consumers' self-authenticating goals were introduced in this section: self-determination, self-concordant goals; and social identity (Section 2.4). These led to a closer examination of the literature in relation to the impacts of these constructs on the consumer's perceptions of brand authenticity, why brand authenticity is needed to overcome growing consumer scrutiny, and the implications of these variables in terms of producing consumer-focused outcomes. From this a new theoretical model was proposed that captured the contentions drawn

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from this review of extant literature (Section 2.5). Following this, a review of the cause-related event sponsorship literature was conducted including justification of the constructs to be examined in this program of research (Section 2.6).

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology, which was designed to inform the theory generation process, to assist in the identification of constructs and the development and purification of measures. The chapter commenced with a discussion of the theoretical foundation and relevant research paradigm (Section 3.2). This was followed by a discussion of the rationale for the exploratory research (Section 3.3). As part of this discussion of the research design (Section 3.4), the survey design (Section 3.4.2), objectives (Section 3.5), justification (Section 3.5.1), and administration considerations (Section 3.5.2). Validity and reliability considerations were discussed in Section 3.6 including the sampling strategy (Section 3.6.2). Limitations were detailed (Section 3.7), and the ethical considerations were discussed (Section 3.8). Conclusions for the chapter were presented which summarised the methodological approach taken (Section 3.9).

Chapter 4 described the outcomes of the data collection stage and reported the results from the analysis of data from the surveys. The chapter commenced with a description, profile and analysis of respondents which was presented in Sections 4.2 and 4.3. An analysis of each of the three research issues was presented in Section 4.4, Section 4.5 and Section 4.6. Other considerations were presented in Section 4.7. Finally, in Section 4.8 conclusions for the chapter were presented.

In this chapter, conclusions will be drawn for each of the contentions and then the overall research question will be answered. This chapter will commence with a discussion on consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship and the consumer's self-authenticating goals that determine a brand's perceived authenticity (Section 5.2). The findings from Chapter 5 will be compared to the literature with particular reference made to the contributions of the research in understanding the research purpose (Section 5.3). The chapter concludes with implications of the findings for theory (Section 5.4) and practice (Section 5.5) followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study (Section 5.6) and implications for future research (Section 5.7).

5.2 – Description of the theoretical model

In comparing the theoretical framework (Figure 5.1) with the insights from the data, the findings in this stage of the research suggested that consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity are more important than existing theoretical models had previously indicated. Further new factors, not previously considered in cause-related event sponsorship, were identified by consumers as being important. Consumers indicated that certain self-authenticating goals were driving their participation in cause-related events and that these goals influenced their perceptions of brand authenticity. As these independent variables were new to discussions on cause-related event sponsorship, they will be discussed first. This will be followed by discussion of the impact brand authenticity which was another factor identified in the literature review to be relevant.

Figure 5.2 – Theoretical framework with three independent variables
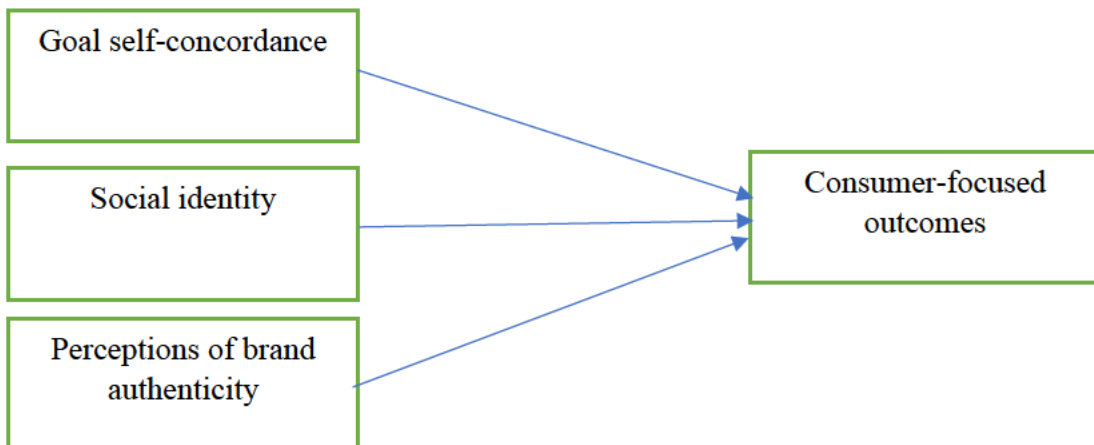
Source: Developed for this study

Researchers investigating the dynamics of cause-related event stakeholder relationship have, in general, emphasised the importance of brand authenticity but there's been no attention given to the self-authenticating goals of consumers and how this might influence their perceptions. As such, a novel contribution of this research is that consumers' social identity and self-concordant goals were found to be significantly and positively related to their perception of brand authenticity. This suggests that the more consumers seek social identification and self-concordant goals

through participation in cause-related events, the more likely they are to perceive brands as being authentic in their sponsorship. This research contends that brands assist consumers in fulfilling their self-authentication goals.

Other scholars agree that authentic brands play a role in self-authentication behaviours to achieve feelings of true self (Arnould & Price 2000). Beverland and Farrelly (2010) suggest two ways to achieve authenticity – either through individual authenticating acts or collective authoritative performances where communities help them achieve self-authentication. Community membership may be driven by both self and social identity goals (Beverland et al. 2010). This explains why perceptions of brand authenticity must be considered in context of the consumer's social identity and how they identify with brands (Dutton et al. 1994; Lee & Ewert 2019; Hur et al. 2020) as well as the consumer's own assessment of a brand's values, motives and overall CSR.

The importance of the consumer in cause-related event sponsorship is not to be underestimated. Specifically, while the consumers' self-authenticating goals have a positive and significant bearing in the cause-related event context, these types of exchanges emphasise another important consideration. That is, how consumers view the authenticity of companies that sponsor these events, together with the consumers' social identity and goal self-concordance, strongly correlates with the generation of consumer-focused outcomes from these events.

Supporting contentions from the literature, the findings indicated that perceptions of brand authenticity have a considerable impact on consumer-focused outcomes. This suggests participation in cause-related events involves an active (as opposed to passive) behaviour towards a brand. Respondents helped to progress the view of the authors with certain consumer-focused outcomes identified at a participant level. These responses were extracted through the customer-brand co-creation scale (Hollebeek et al. 2014; France et al. 2018). The behavioural activities that lead to consumer-focused outcomes are considered in the model which is important for understanding the possible outcomes for companies that sponsor cause-related events.

In summary, there has been limited study on cause-related event sponsorship, self-authenticating goals and consumer-focused outcomes. Despite this, the growing scrutiny of brand authenticity in CSR has received considerable attention. Likewise, scholarly interest in cause-related event sponsorship has grown as brands recognise its potential as a vehicle for demonstrating CSR (Plewa et al. 2015; Bernhart & O'Neill 2019). This research seeks to arrive at a deeper understanding of the multidimensionality of the constructs by linking consumer-focused outcomes in a cause-related event environment where pro-social behaviours can be seen to meet both the self-authenticating goals of the consumer and CSR requirement of brands.

Three important outcomes have been realised through the research. Firstly, this research has shown the consumer is a key stakeholder, and their role is more complicated than merely pursuing health or fitness goals in the cause-related events. Secondly, the importance of brand authenticity is not to be underestimated in this context. Thirdly, consumers are actively involved in fulfilling their own self-authenticating goals which leads to two other outcomes. Primarily, positive perceptions of brand authenticity; and then, a range of consumer-focused outcomes for brands that sponsor these events.

With the not-for-profit sector challenged by sustained financial pressure, and companies seeking relationships and assets that promote their social responsibility, there is renewed need to better understand cause-related event sponsorship (Scheinbaum & Lacey 2015; Scheinbaum et al. 2017; O'Reilly et al. 2019a). Despite the clear benefits of sponsorship and the increasing popularity of cause-related events (Gomez et al. 2022), the consumer perspective is relatively under-researched. Consumers are engaged with the event and the cause, according to empirical research, but little is known about how they view the brand authenticity of companies that sponsor events where there is a charity focus (Scheinbaum & Lacey 2015).

This study is highly relevant because CSR has become a global business priority, driven by consumers who demand companies make a long-term commitment to doing good. (Cornwell & Kwon 2020). Cause-related event sponsorship is a useful vehicle for demonstrating social concern. Furthermore, the importance of cause-related event sponsorship as an integrated marketing strategy has given rise to its

ability to create shared value. Today's experience economy has pre-empted this shift with increased attention on consumer-focused outcomes such as brand self-congruity; brand community; consumer brand co-creation and advocacy; customer-perceived brand value and customer-brand engagement (France et al. 2018) – all key components in the sponsorship value equation (Islam et al. 2019; Fatma & Khan 2020). Today digital and social media rights are a critical component of sponsorship deals as brands seek to build relationships and communicate socially conscious values (Fatma & Khan 2020). It requires interaction with consumers in ways that one-way advertising could never achieve (Mpehle et al. 2021). This makes sponsorship and customer-value co-creation behaviours more relevant than ever before (France et al. 2018).

CSR is a proven vehicle for achieving both business and community goals (Fatma et al. 2015). It's also effective in building and creating a strong brand (Ramesh et al. 2019). CSR activities helps lead to perceptions of brand authenticity (Joo et al. 2019), positive brand relations (Ahmad et al. 2021) and brand equity (Martínez & Nishiyama 2019). Baskentli et al. (2019) confirm positive pro-company behaviours increase when consumers' moral foundations are congruent with CSR activities (Rui et al. 2021). Other scholars have found brands actively engaged in CSR activities perform better than those that are not (Bhattacharya et al. 2009). This research contends that when companies sponsor cause-related events, they are perceived as more authentic than companies who do not participate at all, resulting in a range of consumer-focused outcomes.

Mamo et al. (2019) concurs with this research, finding consumers who are aware of the brand's CSR activities demonstrate a more positive attitude to the brand's image and behavioural intentions towards the brand than consumers unaware of the initiative. Their study reinforces the importance of communicating CSR efforts and the implications for consumer-focused outcomes where consumers invest their personal resources. While Su et al. (2017) showed that a consumer's favourable feelings about a brand's CSR assist the identification process, they also discovered that a consumer's negative reaction to corporate behaviour had no effect on the identification process. This research produced findings that add another layer to our understanding of cause-related events showing that perceptions of the brand's authenticity have a direct and positive effect on consumer-focused outcomes.

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This work helps to promote research in cause-related events and the growing prerequisite for authenticity – a desired perceptual state for consumers as well as companies. Consumers are innately drawn to authenticity and have been striving for authenticity for several hundred years (Grayson & Martinec 2004). The search for authenticity is a goal driven process as part of a consumer's identity project (Napoli et al. 2014). As such, brand authenticity represents a value proposition for consumers who seek meaning and true self (Grayson & Martinec 2004). Similar studies have shown the important practical implications of identifying with authentic brands (Fritz et al. 2017; Joo et al. 2019; Kim & Lee 2019; Popp 2020). Authenticity is an indication of both quality and differentiation. Gilmore and Pine (2007, p. 5) suggest: "Authenticity has overtaken quality as the prevailing purchasing criterion, just as quality overtook cost, and as cost overtook availability."

The results of this study support the findings of earlier scholars on the role and importance of authenticity. These scholars all suggest a relationship exists between the consumer's need for self-authentication and their attachment to brands they perceive to be authentic. Morhart et al. (2015) found that as consumers' self-authenticity increased, so too did the likelihood of choosing authentic brands. Carroll et al. (2022) found consumers who pursue authenticity in their own lives perceive authentic brands as more self-congruent. Conversely, they found consumers low in self-authenticity did not self-enhance through consumption of authentic brands. Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016) noted that consumers with high levels of personal authenticity were particularly sensitive to the capacity of authentic brands to satisfy their need to express their true self when feelings of self-inauthenticity arose. Just as this study has shown, these scholars have demonstrated that consumers high in self-authenticity seek self-congruency through authentic brands. Knowing this, it's even more critical that authenticity is understood in the context of cause-related events where it may positively influence consumer attitudes and behaviour towards the brand ((Weeks et al. 2008; Na & Kim 2013; Woisetschläger et al. 2017).

As the confluence of consumers' self-authentication goals and perceptions of brand authenticity in cause-related event sponsorship have not yet received academic or empirical research attention, it is critical this study determines their value before

considering their respective impacts. The implications of this are discussed in the next chapter. The associated contentions are discussed next.

5.3 – Conclusions regarding each hypothesis

This study was conducted to examine how consumer-focused outcomes may be impacted in cause-related event sponsorship, and to develop a theoretical model which would explain the influencing factors. Three main objectives guided the research enquiry given the study's specific aims and the multidisciplinary research gap on this issue. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the results of each hypothesis.

Table 5.1: Results of Hypotheses

Ref	Hypotheses	Result
H1	That perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. That is, the more authentic consumers believe a brand to be, the greater the likelihood they will produce consumer-focused outcomes (such as brand self-congruity and advocacy)	Supported
H2	That the consumer's self-authentication goals significantly and positively impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. That is, the self-determination, self-concordant goals and social identity needs of consumers influence the consumer-focused outcomes of these events.	Partially Supported
H3	That the relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is significantly and positively moderated by perceived brand authenticity. That is, perceptions of brand authenticity affect the strength and direction of the relationship between consumers' self-authenticating goals and consumer-focused outcomes. The level of perceived authenticity explains by how much.	Supported

Source: Developed for this study

5.3.1 – Hypothesis 1: Perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes

The study hypothesised that perceived brand authenticity would be expected to significantly and positively impact consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. This proposition was developed from the literature which indicated that because authenticity is socially constructed, consumers will have different perceptions and expectations of authenticity (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). It's contextual meaning that consumers may react differently to a brand's numerous CSR activities or to the same CSR activity in different contexts (Joo et al. 2019).

As literature suggests perceptions of authenticity are influenced by context (Newman & Smith 2016), it is important to study it in a variety of settings, including cause-related event sponsorship. What makes this study even more compelling is that companies have embraced sponsorship of cause-related events in response to consumer demand for social responsibility. As more companies try to convey social goodness through these platforms, the more sceptical consumers become of their sincerity. Understanding the role perceived authenticity plays in producing consumer-focused outcomes is necessary if brands are to achieve their sponsorship objectives.

To answer the call, participants in this study were presented with a fictional sponsorship activation and asked how they viewed the sponsor's authenticity. Findings showed participants believed them to be authentic. They generally agreed the values of the fictional sponsor appeared to be clearly aligned with the cause; their motives appeared sincere in sponsoring the cause-related event; they appeared to be socially responsible because of their support of the cause-related event and they were viewed as more authentic than other companies who do not sponsor cause-related events. The relationship between consumers' perception of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes was strongly correlated suggesting that the more consumers believed a brand to be authentic in its sponsorship, the greater the likelihood that they would produce consumer-focused outcomes.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that findings from this research may contradict past work because of the use of a fictional sponsorship activation. For

example, the sponsorship fee paid by a brand (whether that be $30,000 or $300,000) could greatly influence perceptions. Likewise, consumers' existing familiarity (or lack of) with the brand and the brand's origin (for example, their history, location, culture, public image, number of years sponsoring the event) would all be important determinants in shaping perceptions. While application of a fictional brand sponsoring a fictional event helped to alleviate issues around the respondents ability to recall such detail, the implications of this cannot be overlooked when comparing results with previous work. Even so, what this research has shown is the consumer is central to producing consumer-focused outcomes which is in turn significantly reliant on positive perceptions of brand authenticity.

This study challenges research by Wakefield et al. (2020) where their three-step model of sponsorship effects does not consider the role of authenticity at all. Rather, Wakefield et al. (2020) conceptualize sponsorship effects in terms of antecedent factors (brand, property, and consumers), mediators (consumer thoughts, feelings, and actions), and potential consequences of sponsorship (for consumers and brands). This study demonstrates that the consumers' perception of brand authenticity is a significant factor that was overlooked in their consumer-centric information-processing models.

While this study highlighted the importance of the consumers' perception of brand authenticity, these findings differ from those of Scheinbaum et al. (2017) where they combine social identity with congruity to argue the community component of sponsored events underpins evaluations of social responsibility. For Scheinbaum et al. (2017), perceptions of sincerity are judged by characteristics of the event i.e., the communal component of the event, rather than characteristic of those companies sponsoring it. To that end, this research challenges Scheinbaum et al. (2017) by suggesting consumers play an active role in perceptions of social responsibility and that while social identity and affect transfer contribute to assessments of event social responsibility, Scheinbaum et al. (2017) overlook the extent of the consumer's role. Scheinbaum et al. (2017) focused on perceptions of event social responsibility that influence perceptions of brand authenticity, while this research focuses on the consumers' perception of brand authenticity.

In a similar vein to Scheinbaum et al. (2017) where the focus is on event social responsibility over corporate social responsibility, Thuc and Khai (2021) show the value consumers bestow on cause-related events is high if they believe their participation in the event will help make a difference in society. Consumers with a high level of social sensitivity perceive high value in the events they participate in if the cause-related event helps to solve specific social problems (Thuc & Khai 2021). They also discovered that females place greater value on these events than males, and that physical involvement adds to the sensitivity (Thuc & Khai 2021). These findings correlate with the demographic profile of this research with a higher percentage of females participating in these events than males.

5.3.2 – Hypothesis 2: Self-authentication goals significantly and positively impacts consumer-focused outcomes

As the authenticity literature argues the search for authenticity in consumption is driven by individual goals and motivations (Arnould & Price 2000; Beverland & Farrelly 2010; Guèvremont & Grohmann 2016; Guèvremont 2018). The second hypothesis therefore proposed in this research is that there is a relationship between consumer's self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes. That is, the more consumers' self-determination, self-concordant goals and social identity needs are met, the more likely they will generate consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. This chapter next explores each construct in turn.

Self-determination

Given the supporting literature, this research drew on SDT to describe the consumers' desire for self-authenticity (Deci 2004; Ryan 2017; Guèvremont 2018). Despite findings lending considerable support to the concept, the three dimensions of SDT were not positively or strongly correlated in this study – either as independent dimensions of self-determination or as a whole. SDT was not significant enough to contribute to any consumer-focused outcomes. This might be explained by the fact that the measure of SDT was not as applicable in the context of cause-related event participation as self-concordant goals or social identity. Furthermore, the original scale

for SDT was reduced from 21 items down to eight items which only provided a narrow view of consumers' self-authenticating motives.

As documented already in literature, needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence are universal, intrinsic, and essential for wellness – therefore they are foundational to human motivation, and perhaps less readily detected through self-assessment. This view is supported by Baumeister (2019) who suggests consumers must possess an awareness and unbiased processing to behave in a self-determined way. For this reason, self-report measures are often problematic. Wanting to appear a certain way or lacking insight into behaviours that impact relations with self and others can often inhibit correct assessment and self-reports (Baumeister 2019). Baumeister (2019) thus concluded the true self might not be true after all – it could be the ideal self, in the same way as idealised goodness. Maintaining one's desired reputation explains why self-reports of authenticity are especially positive (Baumeister 2019). While the self-determination variable was not statistically significant in this study, self-concordant goals was both positively and significantly correlated with consumer-focused outcomes.

Self-concordant goals

Sheldon and Elliot (1999) extend SDT further by proposing a model of self-concordance. Self-concordant goals are those that match with one's actual self and satisfy basic needs (Sheldon & Elliot 1999). According to these scholars, when individuals strive for goals that satisfy them, they tend to govern their behaviour in a way that is very self-determined; they are intrinsically motivated to achieve them.

Self-concordance means that when goals are attained, they are likely to lead to the experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness that are essential to enhanced well-being (Sheldon et al. 1997). To the extent that goals do not represent or are not concordant with the true self (Sheldon et al. 1997), consumers may not be able to meet their self-authenticating needs. This explanation is inextricably linked with self-determination. As such, respondents in this study generally agreed they felt a sense of fulfilment from participating in the event; it appealed to their values and reflected their true self.

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Rundio (2014) compared the motivations for participating in cause-related and non-cause-related sporting events, finding significant variations in motivation. Self-esteem, recognition, acceptance, personal goals, and competitiveness were found to be more appealing to consumers in cause-related activities (Rundio 2014). In events that did not include a charitable component, consumers were found to be more motivated by weight loss incentives (Rundio 2014). These psychographic variations corroborate the findings of the current study which suggests the self-concordant goals of consumers influences cause-related event participation and likely consumer-focused outcomes from their involvement.

These findings, however, contradict other studies, which show that altruistic motivations exceed the competence or other goal-related benefits of participating in cause-related events (Bennett 2007; Won et al. 2010; Won et al. 2011). Yazici (2020) most recently examined the experiences, motivation, and behavioural intentions of consumers participating in a charity sport event in Turkey and found they were mostly motivated to contribute to a good cause. Literature shows the cause component of an event adds meaning for consumers and enables them to satisfy their altruistic needs. It's through being virtuous that consumer's self-esteem is enhanced (Rundio 2014). In the same way, Filo et al. (2009) found 'causes' provide symbolic meaning for consumers.

Won et al. (2011) discovered the most significant motivation for participating in cause-related events was philanthropy, followed by social contact with others and recreation. Similarly, Bennett (2007) found involvement with a good cause along with the event being an incentive to experience a healthy lifestyle, sports participation, and social contact were the most important motivators. Participation in these activities, according to Filo et al. (2009), helps consumers to feel as though they are making a difference by increasing awareness of the cause while simultaneously empowering and being inspired by others. Furthermore, research has shown that consumers are more driven by a desire to support a worthy cause (and are ready to pay a higher fee to do so) than self-gain (Yazici 2020).

The findings of this current study contradict previous studies and show the cause is not a substantial incentive for consumers to participate. Supporting the cause was no more important than completing the challenge of the event (with both items removed from the final construct due to not being statistically significant). Rather, the sense of fulfilment from participating in the event and the corresponding feeling that it was a reflection of the consumers' true self and their values correlated more strongly. These responses highlight the relevance of self-concordant goals and their positive relationship with consumer-focused outcomes. Of the three independent variables, social identity, as discussed next, correlated most strongly with consumer-focused outcomes.

Social Identity

Social identity means the individual views themselves as similar to others in their group (which might include other consumers, supporters, sponsors and the charity) but also distinct from members of other organisations (i.e., those not involved with the event). It is a statement of social affiliation, as well as a sense of collective self (Carr 2021). Consumers construct and identify themselves in accordance with the group's culture (Shipway & Jones 2007).

In research by (Filo et al. 2009), consumers believed partaking in the cause-related event gave them a sense of belonging or camaraderie by being surrounded by like-minded consumers. Other scholars have discovered that social contact (Won et al. 2021) and reference group influences such friends and family (Chiu 2016) are reasons to engage. Moreover, these experiences support the notion that feelings of belonging lead to a sense of community among consumers (Peloza & Hassay 2007).

In this study, social identity was the most useful predictor variable in producing consumer-focused outcomes. Consumers had a strong sense of social identity agreeing that belonging to an event community was important to them; the event community was different to other groups; they identified physically with cause-related event consumers more so than consumers in other groups; they felt on the same mental level with cause-related event consumers; and wearing the event merchandise made them feel they belonged to the event community. This research concurs with

previous findings of Filo et al. (2013) in discovering that the more consumers were motivated by a sense of community, the greater the community's capacity to achieve desired outcomes. They identified factors such as social ties among consumers; attachment to and involvement within the event and charity; ritual occasions to the event itself and merchandise; and similarities and common beliefs amongst consumers helped foster a sense of community from the event (Filo et al. 2013). This study has confirmed this to be the case with the social identity strongly and positively correlated with consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship. The final contention in this study is presented next.

5.3.3 – Hypothesis 3: Perceived brand authenticity significantly and positively moderates the relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes

Based on the literature review in Chapter 2, it was expected that the relationship between self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes would be moderated by perceived brand authenticity. That is, the consumers' perceptions of the brand's authenticity in sponsoring cause-related events would affect the strength and direction of the relationship. The results of this study show that this moderating effect did not occur and the relationships were not significantly correlated.

Given these results, the relationship between the variables was reassessed to align with other literature where there was agreement on brand authenticity acting in some kind of mediating or moderating role. Carroll et al. (2022) studied the relationship between self-authenticity and brand loyalty with perceptions of brand authenticity acting as a mediator. While Carroll's consumer behaviour study was designed to assess customer loyalty in a retail context – not cause-related events – the author agrees that the consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity is an important consideration. As prior research indicates that perceptions of brand authenticity mediate the consumer's behaviour, this study sought to explore this in context of cause-related events.

Step 1 results of the mediation regression analysis showed two of the three self-authenticating goals –goal self-concordance and social identity – were positively

and significantly correlated with consumer-focused outcomes. As expected from previous results, self-determination was not statistically significant. Step 2 results which analysed perceptions of brand authenticity as a mediating variable, showed the direct effect between both of the independent variables and dependent variable was greater than the indirect effect. The result is in contrast to findings by Carroll et al. (2022), however it may be explained by revisiting research by Beverland and Farrelly (2010). These authors suggested authenticity was an independent variable – not moderating or mediating another relationship.

To test this related finding with the third contention of this study, a forward stepwise linear regression was used to identify possible predictors of consumer-focused outcomes from the following variables: perceptions of brand authenticity; goal self-concordance and social identity. As self-determination was already found to not be significant, it was excluded from the regression. At each step, variables were added based on p-values, and the AIC was used to set a limit on the total number of variables included in the final model. These independent variables were all found to be good predictors of consumer-focused outcomes, suggesting they would be worthy of exploring in further studies.

This finding that perceptions of brand authenticity is a good predictor of consumer focused outcomes contrasts that of Wakefield et al. (2020) with the authors implying a number of other underlying antecedents influence motivation, capacity, and opportunity to process sponsorship. The mediators proposed in their study included the consumers' thoughts, feelings, and actions as they process information from interactions with sponsors, other consumers, the event itself and the charity during the experience. As consumers observe individual characteristics of the event and individual differences among consumers, they suggest the nature of processing that information is either positive, negative, or neutral. Wakefield et al. (2020) does not consider the consumers' self-authenticating goals, or the influence of brand authenticity, which this study expects would outweigh any cognitive processing of a sponsorship. While Wakefield's dimensions impact the degree, direction, and valence of how consumers process sponsorship, they do not account for the influence that these other factors have on consumers. Furthermore, the self-authentication goals of

consumers are not based on cognitive processing of the sponsorship but are innate and essential to wellbeing. That point has been proven in this research.

5.4 – Conclusions regarding the research aim

In summary, the key findings of the research substantiate the research aim with several outcomes being achieved. The present research contributed methodologically by offering a valid and reliable multidimensional scale measuring factors that might explain how consumer-focused outcomes are impacted in cause-related events. The scale provided the perspective of 300 consumers across 40 items composed of five dimensions: self-determination (8 items), goal self-concordance (3 items), social identity (5 items), brand authenticity (5 items) and consumer-focused outcomes (19 items). All the constructs under investigation were consistent with literature on self-authentication goals, brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes.

A major contribution of this work was the validation of interconnected relationships in cause-related event sponsorship that leads to highly sought consumer-focused outcomes such as brand self-congruity; brand community; consumer brand co-creation and advocacy; customer-perceived brand value and customer-brand engagement. Consumers choose to engage based on the valence of these relationships. When consumers engage with brands, their experience of the brand is altered, co-creating brand value (France et al. 2018). The consumer benefits from this new co-created value paradigm experiencing a concept of self that ties in with the overall brand experience.

There are two key findings. Firstly, there is a significant and positive relationship between the consumers' self-concordant goals, social identity and their perception of brand authenticity. Secondly, there is a significant and positive relationship between perception of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes. What this suggests is that for consumers to generate co-creation outcomes, they must also be able to meet their self-concordant goals and social identity through these events. Independently, perceptions of brand authenticity also positively impact the generation of consumer-focused outcomes.

This study contributes to the literature in considering the utility of perceived authenticity in a cause-related event context. Studying consumer perceptions contributes to the theoretical understanding of cause-related event sponsorship in ways not previously identified by former research which has largely focused on the direct outcomes of sponsorship (Scheinbaum & Lacey 2015; Scheinbaum et al. 2017).

Further, the study empirically verifies the value of considering consumers' self-concordant goals and social identity when understanding the impacts of brand authenticity on consumer-focused outcomes. This research reinforces the hyper-authenticity construct put forward by Rose and Wood (2005) where consumers frequently build individually valuable conceptions of authenticity. This research also corroborates with findings by Beverland and Farrelly (2010) in that, depending on the goal, the same event might be considered authentic or inauthentic by the same or different consumers. Previous studies on cause-related event sponsorship have not evolved to consider the one-on-one communications that these brands have with consumers (Wakefield et al. 2020) through social and digital channels which are utilised as leverageable assets. The one-on-one dialogue is symbiotic of the customer-brand co-creation behaviours measured in this study (France et al. 2018).

Co-creation as a term is widely understood but barely valued as an imperative in cause-related sponsorship. Co-creation is an active behaviour that requires effort (Ind et al. 2013), which distinguishes it as a behavioural phenomenon underpinned by interactivity, where the contribution of multiple stakeholders interact to create the brand (Ramaswamy & Gouillart 2010). This kind of interactive experience is precisely what is offered up through the cause-related event environment. While the practise of cause-related event sponsorship continues to grow in response to consumer demand for socially conscious brands, rarely do sponsorship practitioners realise the value of consumer-focused outcomes such as co-creation. Consequently, the real potential for cause-related event sponsorship as a vehicle to generate consumer-focused outcomes is missed.

This study's intended contribution is at the confluence of authenticity and cause-related event sponsorship – a collaboration that demands brand authenticity

given the association with a cause. The study advances theoretical models put forward by four earlier groups of scholars. Firstly, Wakefield et al. (2020) offers a three-step consumer-centric model of sponsorship effects that provides consequences for the interaction between the rights-holder, brands and consumers. Wakefield et al. (2020) suggest a set of consumer-focused objectives (such as brand awareness, knowledge, loyalty, preferences, purchase intent and sales) are mediated by the thoughts, feelings and actions of consumers, but acknowledges they not unique to sponsorship and does not consider the role of authenticity at all.

Meanwhile, Cornwell (2019) introduces the importance of authenticity in sponsorship with a Horizontal Marketing-Partnerships Authenticity construct. Cornwell posits via this construct that authentic engagement is the outcome of the characteristics of the rights-holder and sponsor which influence the trajectory of relationship authenticity. Authentic engagement, according to Cornwell, is implemented through partnering, leveraging, and activation. Cornwell's construct does not consider the consumers' perception of brand authenticity nor their active involvement in it.

Nonetheless, this paper responds to the demand by Cornwell (2019) for new research to better understand the complex nature of sponsorship. She says that scholars haven't paid enough attention to the sponsorship eco-system, which she describes as a "web of relationships" with a variety of motivations and effects. Cornwell (2019) believes the multifaceted attributes of authenticity need to be considered for the engagement potential of sponsorship to be fully realised.

A third defining influence on this study has been the work of Beverland and Farrelly (2010) who propose consumers seek authentic experiences by searching for authenticating cues in products and experiences. Beverland and Farrelly (2010) highlight the link between determinations of authenticity and informant personal goals (i.e., the desire for self-authentication). When conferring authenticity to commercial objects such as experiences, brands, and events, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) informants realised positive identity benefits in the form of a favorable characterisation of the true self. Three distinct personally relevant benefits (also

referred to herein as goals) were evident across their cases: control, connection, and virtue.

Both Beverland and Farrelly (2010) and Cornwell (2019) propose that authenticity is an independent variable in the relationship with Beverland and Farrelly (2010) stating that the consumers' self-authenticating goals (control, connection, virtue) mediate specific consumer experiences. This research, however, proposes that these constructs may behave differently in cause-related events.

Lastly, this study replicates and extends findings by Carroll et al. (2022) in important ways. While Carroll et al. (2022) showed self-authentic consumers tend to perceive greater brand authenticity and, in turn, exhibit greater loyalty towards the brand, this study shows a greater impact of that relationship confirming the relationship between the consumers' self-concordant goals, social identity and perceptions of brand authenticity.

Firstly, the study shows that self-concordant goals, social identity and perceptions of brand authenticity are all significantly and positively correlated with consumer-focused outcomes. Secondly, the study shows *how* these three variables come together in a causal sequence. The more the cause-related event enables consumers to realise their self-concordant goals and social identity, the greater likelihood is they will produce consumer-focused outcomes.

Similarly, the more authentic a consumer believes a company to be in a sponsoring cause-related event, the greater likelihood is they will produce consumer-focused outcomes. In other words, the relationship between self-concordant goals, social identity and brand authenticity does not simply end there. Rather, it results in a particularly important range of consumer-focused outcomes for brands. The findings discussed in Section 5.4 have both implications for theory (Section 5.5) as well as practical implications (Section 5.6). These implications are considered next.

5.5 – Implications for theory

In recent years considerable research has been undertaken toward a better understanding of cause-related event sponsorship. Many of these studies have sought to discover theoretical explanations related to the various influences and outcomes of cause-related event sponsorship. For example, the customer-value co-creation behaviours model put forward by France et al. (2018) offers a consumer-centric perspective and enhances an understanding of the consumer's relationship with brands that sponsor these events.

The various aspects of co-creation such as brand value (Tajvidi et al. 2018); brand identities (Kennedy & Guzmán 2016); the role of social support in co-creation (Nadeem et al. 2020); the difference between user and brand generated content (Badenes-Rocha et al. 2019) as well as the link between CSR and loyalty (Raza et al. 2020) have all be examined in previous studies. This study found support for proposition that consumer-focused outcomes are a significant outcome of cause-related event sponsorship

Despite the relevance of the consumer perspective to this field of study, practitioners have to date under-researched and under-utilised the impact of their perceptions on consumer-focused outcomes (Sung et al. 2020b). This study highlights the significance of consumer-focused outcomes such brand self-congruity; brand community; consumer brand co-creation and advocacy; customer-perceived brand value and customer-brand engagement – all of which is manifestly evident as outcomes in cause-related events.

In addition, consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship can be further enhanced by paying attention to the consumer's own self-authentication goals and how this shapes their perception of brand authenticity. Until now, there has been no attention given to the self-authentication needs of consumers beyond basic exploration into the motivations for participating. Consumers in cause-related events are often viewed as autonomous and achievement-oriented as they strive to meet a personal goal, such as improving their health and fitness (Rundio 2014).

Previous studies have found the desire to self-authenticate through brands the consumer perceives to be authentic is stronger in specific situations and for specific consumers (Gilmore & Pine 2007; Beverland et al. 2008). Authentic brands have a competitive advantage with Kumar and Kaushik (2022) finding that brand authenticity positively influence brand engagement which in turn influenced brand usage intention and willingness to pay a premium price. Other scholars (Napoli et al. 2014; Carroll et al. 2022) suggest that brands perceived as authentic generate greater word-of-mouth; are more trusted and have a heightened emotional customer–brand attachment.

Authentic brands also become symbolic resources providing a sense of continuity while helping consumers find meaning in their lives; define who they are and their shared identity (Fritz et al. 2017). There was evidence in the findings of this study that consumers are seeking to have their self-authentication goals met through these events.

Consumers are utilising these occasions for identity benefits that are acceptable or even aspirational to others (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). Verification of their 'goodness' is accomplished by integrating a brand with comparable characteristics in their own persona, making it appear organic within the co-created content. As Cornwell and Kwon (2020, p. 1) states: "The sponsorship phenomenon is a social, cultural and commercial plethora of connectivity."

Until now, researchers have predominantly focused on physically staged events in understanding the motivation for participation (Poczta & Malchrowicz-Mośko 2018; Nikolaidis et al. 2019; Malchrowicz-Mośko et al. 2020). This research, which comes in the wake of COVID-19, reflects the explosion of hybrid events, where virtual events run alongside physically staged events, and where consumers walk, count steps or contribute to social causes, by participating in activities that are developed for and participated in online. A suite of fundraising tools and virtual promotional assets (e.g., social media tiles and posters), as well as symbols of reward and recognition (e.g., medals and certificates) have added a level of sophistication to cause-related events, with a range of consumer-focused outcomes not previously known or understood.

This transformation has led to the creation of niche brand communities, often in the form of Facebook groups, which are frequently created and managed by consumers who participate in cause-related events. The group gains membership because of their shared experience. Members of the group share their memories and past experiences, training goals and fundraising accomplishments; whilst learning about and preparing for upcoming events. The gamut of consumer-focused outcomes is unlimited because cause-related sponsorship also lives online with assets that include live and streamed content shared that move consumers effortlessly between the physical and virtual event experience.

As Cornwell and Kwon (2020) suggests, cause-related event sponsorship is both embedded and engaged and plays a more benefactory role than commercial sponsorship. The opportunity for brands to be viewed as socially relevant, is often more desirable and valuable, than the commercially negotiated assets of the sponsorship agreement. The ability to interact with consumers enables a more authentic and personalised experience, which this research has shown results in consumer-focused outcomes such as customer-brand co-creation and advocacy.

Numerous implications for scholars in the field of authenticity and cause-related event sponsorship have emerged. The most significant learning from this study suggests consumers' perception of brand authenticity should not be under-estimated for companies seeking to engage with consumers of these events. The way brands are consumed has changed forever, thanks to the democratisation of information communication and exchange, which has fundamentally shifted the balance of power.

Furthermore, today's consumers demand authenticity. This reinforces the importance of brand authenticity in these settings. How a brand leverages its sponsorship communicates the brand's motives (Kim et al. 2015; Cornwell & Kwon 2020); as does the terms of the agreement, whether there is a long-term commitment; the agreed benefits; what investment the brand is making and how else the brand is supporting the cause and sustaining the event for future success (Woisetschläger et al. 2017). Brands must carefully construct and activate their sponsorships to ensure their intentions are interpreted positively by consumers.

The second most significant learning from this study is that consumers' social identity is a strongly correlated with the generation of consumer-focused outcomes. Not only is the consumer buoyed by the identity benefits of participating in cause-related events but the event community also provides social identity where relatedness is defined by the shared experience, norms and values of the group. This identity is often instigated and nurtured well beyond the actual physical event in online communities. While brands do not necessarily play a role in these groups, consumers identify with the brand through customer-value co-creation activities. By applying established theory from the literature review to the context of cause-related event sponsorship, this study has shed light on the relationship between these variables.

Lastly, the consumers' goal self-concordance also plays a role, albeit a lesser one in the generation of consumer-focused outcomes. Brands act as vehicles enabling consumers to meet their self-authenticating goals. The consumers pursuing self-concordant goals are more likely to attain them because they put a more sustained effort into achieving those goals. These consumers also reap greater well-being benefits from their attainment which is mediated by need satisfaction, i.e., experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness that accumulate during the period of striving.

This study digs deeper into the issue of authenticity by looking at how consumers use cause-related events to satisfy their self-authentication goals and what impact this could have on perceptions of brand authenticity and subsequent consumer-focused outcomes. The context of cause-related events is especially relevant for any discussion on brand authenticity, and as such, it should be treated very differently both in academic pursuits and in practise.

5.6 – Implications for practise

Consumers are sceptical of brands that use causes as a vehicle to meet commercial objectives. Exploitative marketing techniques, referred to as 'woke-washing', are commonplace where brands attempt to appeal to consumer consciousness without integrating the espoused values into the core brand proposition (Vredenburg et

al. 2020). Brands need to closely scrutinise how their sponsorship will be perceived by consumers in order to preserve the inherent goodwill of sponsorship. Noting the long-term repercussions on perceptions of brand authenticity, sponsorship practitioners should be wary of short-term strategies to gain market share.

Notwithstanding the sales function required to achieve profit, brands need to be weary when it comes to using financial instruments at sponsored events – especially in a cause-related event environment. While coupons and discounts provide an easy way to capture data, research by Dreisbach et al. (2018) shows financial benefits are not as effective as symbolic and social benefits in engaging consumers.

With a clear and strong link between perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes, this study underscores the emphasis that should be given to managing consumer perceptions. While symbolic value and social benefits may be more difficult to implement and measure, due to the extra layers of inherent complexity in understanding consumer motivations for participating, the additional effort may be worthwhile.

Consumers have expectations of companies that they did not have a decade ago. Changes in how consumers interact with companies have dramatically increased due to social and digital channels enabling more dialogue and deeper, co-created outcomes. COVID-19 has expedited the growth of virtual events, many of which run alongside physical events, adding to the urgency for companies to adapt.

It's been a period of rapid change, where logo placement on marketing collateral is no longer effective without being complemented by the interactive opportunities that consumers have come to expect. Cause-related events now provide an omnichannel event experience whereby customer-brand co-creation behaviours have the dual function of helping consumers meet their self-authentication goals.

Companies need to consider the consumer in their decision to sponsor these events and be transparent about why they're getting involved. When the event includes a charitable component, marketing efforts should emphasise how participation in the event and supporting the cause helps to bring about social change. This both clarifies

the company's intent for targeting future consumers (Rundio 2014) and conveys the brand's long-term commitment to the cause.

Companies should also use their understanding of the relationship between perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes to guide their communication tactics. For example, a company could enhance the fundraising aspect of the event by committing to an employee volunteer program where employees are paid one day a month to work for the cause. Companies could also provide ways for consumers to promote their involvement or their fundraising efforts, amplifying their identification with the event.

Consumers leverage their involvement in these events by accessing specific cues in the cause-related event environment to reinforce what they hope to construct in their definition of self (Beverland & Farrelly 2010). At the same time, these consumers are working towards long-term identity benefits which activities like supporting a cause can stimulate (Beverland & Farrelly 2010).

The consumers' need to self-enhance is linked to customer-brand co-creation behaviours where behaviours such as eWOM help fulfill the consumers' need to be relevant. A key recommendation for brands from this research is to provide opportunity for customer-brand co-creation behaviours to be shared. The readiness by consumers in these events to share on social media and create eWOM has unparallel marketing value. Consumers need to view brand efforts as authentic because their self-authentication goals rely on it in these environments. This may explain the popularity of these events where being seen to be socially good is a shared and mutually benefical endeavour.

The knowledge produced by thesis results in further managerial contributions. As an example, sponsors may improve perception of brand authenticity in cause-related events by understanding the demographic makeup of the participants, and by acknowledging the range of needs participating are fulfilling through their involvement. Social identity and the opportunity to promote a sense of belonging with a group of likeminded individuals whose moral goodness is aligned, is one such factor that positively contributes to perception of brand authenticity at these events. Sponsors

can leverage this knowledge by providing activations within the event environment that encourage shared zones, chill out lounges, the sale of merchandise and social 'selfie' sharing opportunities.

For the financial services industry in particular, cause-related event sponsorship provides a highly emotive consumption experience which can help offset the increasingly digitised nature of how they do business. Online banking has replaced in-branch interactions decreasing the number of touchpoints with consumers. These events can create 'lived experiences' for financial service sector brands and their consumers, whether that be by providing themed recovery stations on course, entertainment or encouragement via branded t-shirts and corflute messages.

While brands have genuine potential to convey societal concern through cause-related events, they give consumers the opportunity to identify with them at these events in ways that emphasise socially desirable attributes. The pursuit of authenticity, by both brands and consumers, adds a new and fascinating dimension – and possible explanation for the explosion in cause-related event participation. Such knowledge may also be used by rights holders to differentiate their events. Rights-holders are able to utilise the cause aspect of their event, and the opportunity to raise significant funding for that cause, to attract lucrative sponsorship dollars. It's a valuable selling proposition for rights-holders who are offering more than just a list of sponsorship benefits that build brand awareness and engagement. They're providing a channel for sponsors to communicate their CSR and build brand value.

Findings clearly suggest the self-authenticating needs of consumers who participate in cause-related events is unique and more complex than simply participating in events for health and fitness or altruistic reasons, which was previously concluded. Consumers appear to be drawn to a mix of advantages brought about by a gamut of event experience components. Brands must also recognise the impact that perceptions of brand authenticity have on producing consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related events. Because the consumers' self-concordant goals and social identity have an indirect and positive relationship with perceptions of brand authenticity, there is a compelling argument for brands to align more closely with the self-authenticating goals of consumers who participate in these events.

The cause-related event sponsorship context also enables a unique environment (much of which takes place online) for customer-brand co-creation behaviours to take place – more so than the commercial sponsorship context. The full potential of sponsorship, however, is missed because practitioners do not yet understand how these mechanisms are used by consumers to construct their authentic self. Brands are yet to take advantage of these learnings or to apply them in the sponsorship context. Consumer perception of authenticity is argued in this study to be foundational to consumer-focused outcomes with research already demonstrating consumers are inquisitive about the motives of sponsoring brands (Kim et al. 2015).

Finally, this study strengthens the argument for cause-related event sponsorship as a powerful tool for conveying CSR (Marti & Gond 2018). Nonetheless, it comes with an important caveat: brand authenticity is socially constructed and individually assessed. Further, companies that ostensibly address social concerns through cause-related event sponsorship while ignoring their broader moral duties may suffer considerably more reputational harm.

Sponsorship practitioners must discover a means to authentically convey their CSR efforts. Typically, this entails building a long-term commitment to a cause that defines the business, its employees, and its activities beyond the event experience. In this way, when consumers see the brand's activities, they come to the correct conclusions. It is believed the findings of this study will offer scholars and sponsorship practitioners with a path forward in fulfilling the growing consumer demand through the delivery of more authentic social responsibility.

5.7 – Current limitations and recommendations for future research

Several recommendations have emerged from this work. Firstly, there is a compelling incentive to better understand the role of authenticity in cause-related events given the growing scrutiny of brand sincerity (Alhouti et al. 2016; Vredenburg et al. 2020).

Despite recent studies on the significance of authenticity in sponsorship, what's lacking is a thorough, rigorous knowledge of authenticity in the cause-related event context. To that end, this research aimed to bridge the gap by offering empirical insight into the consumers' perspective. This study has shown there is a strong relationship between perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes. There is also a relationship, to a lesser extent with goal self-concordance and social identity with consumer-focused outcomes. Despite this, the study has some flaws.

These shortcomings might be overcome in future study. For example, the use of a hypothetical sponsorship situation involving a hypothetical sponsor is a limitation of the work. This needs to be acknowledged because it contextualises the results, and while valuable results are attained, findings would likely vary in a real-life context. The sample size was also limited to the study of cause-related events in Australia. Another avenue for future research could be to investigate perceptions of brand authenticity in other CSR activities; in other countries; for specific consumer segments or causes.

In terms of the consumers' self-authentication goals and how these influence perceptions of brand authenticity, there are other flaws. We note that our perspective does not preclude acquired or hereditary consumer differences in the consumers' self-authentication goals. We suspect that these innate individual differences may influence the consumers' experience in a cause-related event setting and moderates the effect of different types of experience upon well-being. While this study nonetheless contends self-authenticating influences still apply, it is an important topic for future research.

Other research that takes into account additional psychological characteristics like cognitive bias, confirmation bias, drive theory or social desirability bias might also be beneficial. As Wakefield et al. (2020) points out, the study of consumer characteristics is restricted, and more research is needed to expand on the effect of demographics, psychographics, and other psychological elements that appear to be

significant in other fields of marketing research. Whilst this research goes part way to discovering the influence of these self-authentication goals, more work is needed to fully understand their impact on perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes.

Furthermore, the study was limited to cause-related events as one of numerous possible CSR activities. It would be interesting to look at other CSR activities such as cause-related marketing (CRM) and cause activism to see how they affect consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity and what influence they have on consumer-focused outcomes.

It would be fascinating to learn how and by how much consumers' social status is changed through customer-brand co-creation behaviours and the esteem benefits of aligning with a brand. Similarly, a study of reputational outcomes for brands might be an interesting line of research for scholars and sponsorship practitioners interested in learning more about the influence of brand authenticity. The findings of Baskentli et al. (2019) on consumer reactions based on the individual or group's orientation should be evaluated in conjunction with this study. Södergren (2021) states there is an opportunity for future research to explore the complex process by which consumers form judgements about the motives of CSR activities by brands.

Furthermore, Beverland and Farrelly (2010) propose that achieving one's self-authentication goals, such as through social media validation, may give a more meaningful evaluation of authenticity than actual elements of the event itself. Future research might broaden the theorising by examining the impacts of self-authentication goals in commercial sponsorship contexts.

Scholars have previously shown the importance of authenticity increases in 'transformation stages' in which individuals examine their identity and seek to uncover their true selves (Guèvremont & Grohmann 2016). Turner and Manning (1988) state that the desire for authenticity is especially strong in times of change and uncertainty when individuals search for something to rely on that offers them continuity. This can be seen through the brands they consume. Given the changed environment as a consequence of COVID-19 and its many disruptions, it would be

interesting to know whether consumers are turning more to brands to give that continuity and affirm their sense of self.

These findings, along with those put forward in this study on consumers' self-authentication goals, have implications for how brands should communicate their CSR activities. With brands usually engaging in several CSR initiatives, is it plausible or possible to align CSR communications with diverse consumer segments and moral underpinnings? What impact will a brand's communication of their social contributions have in terms of customer-brand co-creation behaviours as well? Future research possibilities are both limitless and fascinating.

5.8 – Conclusions

The data has been arranged to correspond to the study's main goals. Three key hypotheses were put forward by the present study that help to make several theoretically and statistically useful contributions to literature. First, to explore whether there was a relationship between perceived brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes in cause-related event sponsorship; second, to explore whether there was a relationship between the consumers' self-authentication goals in cause-related events and consumer-focused outcomes; and third, to understand whether the relationship between consumers' self-authentication goals and consumer-focused outcomes is moderated by perceived brand authenticity.

While the central focus of the research is on authenticity, there are a few key concepts which are explored to further examine the relationship perceptions of authenticity have with consumers' self-authenticating goals and consumer-focused outcomes. Authenticity is first investigated in the context of self-determination theory where autonomy, competence and relatedness are three psychological requirements to experience wellbeing. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), understanding the underlying psychological requirements that give goals their psychological potency is important to be able to grasp goal-directed behaviour. This leads to another important aspect of the study which is the concept of goal self-concordance (Sheldon & Elliot 1999).

The model proposed by Sheldon and Elliot (1999) builds on and complements Self-Determination Theory (Deci 1985; Deci & Ryan 1991). According to Sheldon and Elliot (1999), self-concordance refers to an optimal mode of goal-striving in which a consumer has an innate interest or value-based identification with their goal.

This work is further supported by the concept of Social Identity Theory which suggests that consumers define who they are based on personal and social aspects (Tajfel 1982). Personal identity depicts a consumers' personal traits and abilities while the social identification aspect refers to the perception of belonging to a group (Ashforth & Mael 1989). Together these self-authentication goals (Beverland & Farrelly 2010) provided a sound theoretical base for exploring their relationship with perceptions of brand authenticity and consumer-focused outcomes.

Understanding these consumer motivations is the starting point to exploring the possible consumer-focused outcomes for companies sponsoring these events. The literature on the growing scrutiny and scepticism of CSR (Joo et al. 2019; Kim & Lee 2019; Mamo et al. 2019; Popp 2020), reinforces the supposition that consumer-focused outcomes can be difficult to achieve for companies that sponsor cause-related events (Hickman 2015), especially if perceptions of authenticity are not considered (Wakefield et al. 2020). To meet the call for an exploration of consumer perspectives, this study set about establishing constructs that centred on perceptions of authenticity to help sponsorship practitioners improve their consumer-focused outcomes.

The customer brand co-creation (CBCB) scale proposed by France et al. (2018), relied on in this research, sought to operationalise brand outcomes from a consumer perspective. France et al. (2018) put forward a four-dimensional construct that refined previous work by Yi and Gong (2013). The construct adopted three behaviours (feedback, advocacy and helping) and added a fourth dimension (development) to co-create brand value. The CBCB scale includes a range of consumer behaviours (two of which are brand engagement and brand self-congruity) and brand interactions (brand communities and brand interactivity) which were particularly relevant to this study.

Finally, the findings of this study are combined with existing research to create a comprehensive conceptual understanding of authenticity in cause-related events that is theoretically underpinned by weaving together the consumers' self-authentication goals with how they perceive brand authenticity. Previous research has failed to capture the distinctiveness of these characteristics in cause-related sponsorship, as well as their interconnectivity. Previous research has also failed to give a complete, theoretically integrated account of both the direct and indirect impacts of brand authenticity.

With companies increasingly accessing cause-related events to promote CSR, the interaction with consumers is critical to understand. The reality is, there is a lacking systematic review of what is known about cause-related sponsorship today since much of the existing academic research focuses on the one-dimensional interactions that pre-dated the active involvement of the consumer. What is needed is a rigorous understanding of the complex, multidimensional relationships that involve consumers in today's hyper-connected sponsorship landscape.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A – Participant Information Sheet

Project Details

University of Southern Queensland

Participant Information for USQ Research Project Survey

Title of Project:	Authentic Corporate Social Responsibility
Human Research Ethics Approval Number:	H20REA186

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Ms Caroline Campbell

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Supervisor Details / Other Investigator Details

Assoc. Professor Melissa Johnson Morgan

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Professor Jane Summers

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Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctorate of Professional Studies research program at the University of Southern Queensland.

The purpose of this project is to measure participants unimpeded operation of 'true self' and examine how individual differences in authenticity relate to perceptions of brand authenticity in cause-related events.

The research team requests your assistance because without your involvement we would not be able to adequate understand your self-authenticating needs or how to address them through corporate sponsorship.

Participation

Your participation in Study 1 will involve completion of an online questionnaire that will take approximately 30 minutes of your time.

Questions will be from a pre-tested and approved survey called the Basic Need Satisfaction in General Scale as well as survey questions relating to sponsor identification and engagement.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You will be unable to withdraw data collected about yourself after you have participated in this questionnaire. If you do wish to withdraw from this project, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland.

Expected Benefits

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any direct benefits from participating in this research; however, the importance of the work is not to be underestimated. By participating, you'll be helping to build an understanding of consumer's psychological needs and how they impact perceptions of brand authenticity and corporate social responsibility. Critically, it will provide a guide for what brands need to do to ensure their socially responsible activities are perceived as genuine to encourage greater co-creation and citizenship behaviour.

Risks

There will be no risks of participation in this research greater than inconvenience. The inconvenience is less than 30 minutes of your time required to complete the survey. There is little to no risk of any emotional or physical harm as a result of this data collection.

In the unlikely event you feel any distress or discomfort from participating in the research, Beyond Blue is a free health services provider available by phoning 1300 22 4636. This may be organised on your behalf.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

By signing the consent form, you consent to the researcher collecting and using your personal information for the research project. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential. Personal information will be kept confidential by isolating your personal identification detail from the completed survey. Your responses will only be used for the purpose of this research and it will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that the participant cannot be identified, except with your permission.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.

Consent to Participate

Clicking on the 'Submit' button at the conclusion of the questionnaire is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in this project.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 1839 or email researchintegrity@usq.edu.au. The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

Appendix B – Facebook groups receiving the survey link

Facebook group	
Trail Running SA Lounge	Bikepacking Australia
Parkrun WA Forum	Monthly Running Challenges Group
Running Wild Australia	Heart Foundation Walking
Hikers for Climate Action & Climate Justice	Kokoda Challenge Support Crew
Post/Pre Great Cycle Challenge Friends Australia Only	Girls That Run
Rise Together	Oxfam Virtual Trailwalker Community
Perry Lakes Parkrun Community Group	Parkrun ACT and surrounds
Walk4BrainCancer	Sunshine Coast Running Chicks
Run4Fun	Solo Ladies Running Adventures
The 10X Rule Becoming Ten Time Better	South East Queensland Triathletes
CoolRunning Australia	Trailblazers Running Club - Sydney
Women On Walks	QUT Running
Bald and The Beautiful Team Oxfam 2019	Gold Coast Trail Tribe
Walking 4 Warriors	818 Sydney Hiking Group
Our Oxfam Trailwalker Journey	Brisbane Trail Runners
South Australia Parkrun Group	My Fitness Journey Trailwalkers
Phatboyz Cycle Corp – Mackay Rides	Central Coast Women's Hiking Circle Group
Running 4 Heroes Virtual Charity Challenge Group	The Kokoda Challenge Community
Friends of Perth Triathlon Club	Run With Us Melbourne Community Group
Hard Core Hikers	Team Jeans for Genes
Running Mums Australia Community	Ocean Swimming Enthusiasts
The Run Club – Adelaide	Perth – Sydney Marathon
Friends who love the Melbourne Marathon Festival FB Community	Mum Runner Run Down Under Club Members
Coast to Kosci	Sydney Wild Swimming Hiking Group
Adelaide Run Night	Mum Runners Running Challenge Ladies Group
Leigh's Half Marathon Challenge	Oxfam Trailwalker Australia Volunteers
Cycle Events	Runmum RunCrew
GoodRunnings	Run Forest Run Family
Official City2Surf Free Training Runs	Two Bays Trail Run Group
Brissie Running Women	Heart & Soles Virtual Runnings
Official Trailwalker Melbourne Community Page	Ultra Perth 50k/25k
Adventurous Women – NSW	Sunshine Coast Trail Runners
Noosa Road Runners	Manly Beach Running Club – Running Group

Sydney Harbour Runners	Beginning Running and Beyond
MS Moonlight Walk Community Group	Triathlon Mums Australia
Adelaide Trail Runners	IronMums
JDRF One Walk Australia	Gold Coast Trail Runners
Free Radicals Tribe Triathlon Club – Townsville	Wide Bay Running Chicks
Women's Running Community	ParkRun Australia unofficial ED/RD community
Sole Sisters Run Club	Trail Hiking Australia – Community
Sunny Coast Dark Runners	Frankston to Portsea Road Run
Albany Running Exchange	Distance Running in NSW
SMH Half Marathon Official FREE Training Runs	Redlands Cycling and Multisport Club

Appendix C – Complete Survey

	Constructs	Items
	Qualifying questions	Have you participated in one or more cause-related event/s in the last three (3) years?
		How many cause-related events have you participated in over the last three (3) years?
		Was the event physical, virtual or a combination of both?
		Did the event start before COVID-19 (prior to 17 March 2020) or since?
Q1	Goal Self-concordance	I feel a sense of fulfilment from participating in the event
Q2		Participating in the event appeals to my values
Q3		Participating in the even is a reflection of my true self
Q4	Social Identity	Belonging to an event community is important to me
Q5		The event community is different to other groups
Q6		I feel I identify physically with cause-related event participants moreso than individuals in other groups
Q7		I feel I am on the same mental level with cause-related event participants
Q8		Wearing the event merchandise makes me feel like I belong to the event community

Please read the following hypothetical situation:

Brand X is a sponsor of the event you named in Section A. Brand X pays $30,000 a year to sponsor the event and has been a sponsor for the last 3 years. They have signage at the event precinct and their logo appears in advertising pre, during and post the event. They have a dozen employees that also participate in the event and wear branded corporate t-shirts promoting their support. Brand X also promotes their support of the cause-related event on social media and asks the public to join them in participating in the event or donating to the cause.

Q9	**Brand Authenticity**	The brand's values appear to be clearly aligned with the cause
Q10		The brand's motives appear sincere in sponsoring the cause-related event
Q11		The brand appears to be socially responsible because of their support of the cause-related event
Q12		The brand is authentic to me
Q13		The brand is more authentic than other brands who do not sponsor cause-related events

	Customer-brand Co-creation Behaviours (CBCB)	
Q14	*Brand self-congruity*	This brand [would] reflect who I am
Q15		This brand image [would] corresponds with my self-image in many respects
Q16		This brand [would be] exactly how I see myself
Q17		This brand [would be] a lot like me
Q18	*Brand community*	I [would] share common values with other brand customers
Q19		I [would] interact with other members of the brand community
Q20		I [would] consider myself to be part of a community of brand users
Q21		I [would] share common goals with other brand customers
Q22	*Customer brand co-creation behaviour (CBCB) + advocacy*	I [would] take photos of myself with the brand and share them with others
Q23		I [would] create online content about the brand
Q24		I [would] recommend the brand to others
Q25		I [would] say positive things about the brand to others
Q26		I [would] spread the good word about the brand
Q27		I [would] encourage my friends and relatives to use the brand
Q28	*Customer-perceived brand value*	Overall, the value of this brand to me [would be] high
Q29		The benefits of the brand [would be] high
Q30	*Customer-brand Engagement*	I [would be] enthusiastic toward the brand
Q31		I [would be] passionate toward the brand
Q32		I [would] have a sense of belonging toward the brand
	Self Determination	
Q33	*Autonomy*	I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to life my life.
Q34		I feel like I can pretty much be myself in my daily situations.
Q35	*Relatedness*	I get along with people I come into contact with.
Q36		I really like the people I interact with.
Q37		I consider the people I regularly interact with to be my friends.
Q38		People were generally pretty friendly towards me.
Q39	*Competence*	Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do.
Q40		People I know tell me I am good at what I do.

	Demographics	Which state do you usually live in?
		Which of these best describes the general area where you live?
		Which of these best describes the highest level of education you have completed?
		What is your total annual household income?
		What is your age range?
		What gender do you identity as?