

Factors of Event Sponsorship Affecting Customer's Brand Trust and Word of Mouth — A Case of Toyota, Vietnam

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Abstract—This research was conducted to examine how sport sponsorship affected customer's brand trust and word of mouth towards the sponsor's products. Quantitative approach was applied with 227 respondents who are customers of Toyota and sport fans watching V-league football champion in Binh Duong Province. The results supported the belief that marketing communication tools as sponsorship is suitable technique for Toyota because of development strongly brand trust and increasing recommendation for the sponsor's product. In other words, the participants had positives attitude and strong connection between sponsor and sponsored event and it was suggested that practical implications for both sport sponsorship marketers and sponsors in order to maximize its value.

Index Terms—Sponsorship, sport event, brand trust, consumers' word of mouth.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there been a significant increase in sponsorship as a marketing communication method, particularly in the field of sports sponsorship. This development can be interpreted in sponsorship is aware of practical tool and is appraised favorably by consumer unlike advertising [1]. On the contrary, sports sponsorship is continually being applied, questions were concentrated on the effect of remain investment in sponsorship relating to the greatest achievement of sponsors. Surprisingly little research has been given to the relation between effects on brand trust and word of mouth in sports sponsorship context, whereas several studies investigated brand image transfer in event sponsorship [2], [3]. For the purposes of this study, the conceptual framework is to close this gap and to make a considerable share in bringing about the understanding of sports sponsorship effects on brand trust and word of mouth.

Path analysis was implemented in order to examine the suitability of our proposed theoretical model. The research is conducted a survey for Toyota presenting the main sponsor of the V. League and the Toyota Mekong Club Championship in order to contribute for the development of Viet Nam's football. Toyota spending on sponsorship reached 30 billion VND in 2015. In 2016, Toyota investment in sponsorship has grown from 30 billion VND in 2015 to 40 billion VND in 2016, which represents a 30 percentage increase over this time period. According to the V. League 2016, it will kick off on 20 February nationwide with 14 clubs competing in 182 matches through 26 rounds and the winner will receive VND

3 billion (USD 133,000) while the runners-up pocket half that amount. Toyota has spent a huge amount of money on sport sponsorship. To be precise, they used more than 40 billion VND to organize VPF and prizes for winners, which was a huge investment for marketing at V-League. Specifically, this research was conducted in the context of well-known sport sponsorship in Viet Nam, intending by investigating behavioral factors as customer's word of mouth. In other words, it is considered that sponsorship effectiveness by examining the antecedents of factors of event sponsorship, brand trust and word of mouth.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Brand Trust

Brand trust play an important role in customer-brand relationships due to brand trust described as the relationship between a consumer and a brand may go through satisfaction [4]. Accordingly, [5] suggested that the relationship between consumers and brand outweigh the transaction. Some authors have speculated that brand trust with the dimensions includes: one dimensions, two dimensions, three dimensions and multi-dimensions. According to [6] brand trust has been defined as the "brand trust reflects the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function". It is determined that brand trust focuses on the "performance" dimension, usually detailed "reliability" or "competence".

In addition, signaling theory proposes that an impact of sponsorship towards brand trust [7], [8]. In other words, external marketing signals impact on the brand expectation of consumer. Consumers receive the knowledge of company or brand from the marketers to create their beliefs. Furthermore, they bring out trial speculation to find out the information provided. The event-specific factors like the event cover with big size that may be considered a signal for consumers' beliefs impact on sponsors. For instance, [9] recommended that "a sponsorship effectively signals manufacturing ability and financial stability; companies seemingly should not be able to sustain a high-level sponsorship deal unless they have appropriate financial resources, earned through market success". It is showed that the marketers are very successful on signal quality, brand trustworthiness, and the presence of satisfied consumers. Hence, sponsorship may be a positive cue for the ability of the brand to encounter its commitment and the sponsorship is suitable present the expectation of consumers for the company. Besides, customers mutually commit enterprises, customer trust will impact on instinctive behavior of customers [10]. If companies construct

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interactive trust and customer association, companies enlarge customer obligation and will improve Word of Mouth [11].

B. Consumers' Word of Mouth

Recently, there have been highly competitive and increased customer's demand in many different industry, companies begin searching modern method to serve customers so that organizations gain great and maintained competitive advantages. The fundamental of unfamiliar advantage that a company or brand has as property from approving word of mouth endorsement through the customer's satisfaction. The importance of word of mouth is appropriately established like the greatest effective transfer to support consumers' reactions toward a brand. In the previous literature, [12] pointed out that favorable word of mouth highly is greater than advertising method. In a research [13] had noticed that word of mouth like a key element that customers were given to base on previous making purchase decisions, and is given a particular impression from others' sharing experiences to the specific products, services, and brands. Moreover, according to [14] word of mouth has been defined as "oral person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, a product or a service". The main concept of word of mouth is in the direction of share and communication about the awareness and attitude to sponsor's products others. In other words, word of mouth is composed of shared information about a brand as sport sponsor that can be transfer from one consumer to another by way of individual discussion or other communicative methods [15]. Prior word of mouth research has greatly accepted as an important factor and strongly influence on marketing communication related to cost-effectiveness. Likely, [16] regarded to word of mouth as the key marketing method that was able to move from one customer to another pertaining to a minimum expense. At the present time, word of mouth has accepted favorably influence on customers like trustworthy communicative method due to lower involvement in advertising and other traditional marketing tools. In addition, [17] also find out word of mouth is an effective marketing element that received an importance that is attached to differential service suppliers, specifically, sport sponsor concentrated on intangible offerings. In sponsorship aspect, customers rely on for support and recommendations sponsor's product to their friends, family members and colleagues. Furthermore, consumers are regularly given to improve trust their friends and relatives more than the communications placed at the beginning by the brand itself, and this shows to be the true the importance of word of mouth as a marketing method [18].

C. Attitude toward the Sponsor

Prior sponsorship research pointed out that attitude toward the sponsor was the most appropriate factors to use in examining the effectiveness of sponsorship [19], [20]. One of the main purpose's sponsor is that customers are positive about attitudes toward the sponsor in the relationship between sponsor and sponsored event [21]. In addition, [22] had point out that the influence of a company on person's attitude in the direction of company financially assist to a specific event.

These researches had showed that sponsors who possess positive image get an approving response to their sponsorships as compared to those not to be able to afford.

D. Attention to Sponsor's Promotion

Recent research has explored that "advertising response used cognitive psychology to suggest that the mere-exposure effect can lead to higher evaluation of a product when advertising responses are automatic and unconscious. And the consumers' attitude toward different attributes of a promotion play a major role in shaping their response to that promotions" [23]. [22] indicated that "customers believe sponsorship of a particular event by a particular sponsor will affect their attention to the sponsor and remember the sponsor's promotion". This means that the attention to sponsor's promotion had built up a practice in customers' consideration through sponsored event. When watching sponsored event can improve customers' concentration about the sponsorship that they notice the sponsor's name on sport event and pay attention on the advertisement of the sponsor.

E. Sponsor-Event Fit

As the result in researches, fit between the sponsor and the sponsored event is attached very great importance to endorsement literature [24], [2]. [22] has discovered that "the degree to which the pairing of an event and sponsor is perceived as well matched or a good fit, without any restriction on the basis used to establish fit". A fit between sponsor and event can be established with the dimensions includes: "sponsor product relevance to the object", "functional similarities" (i.e., sponsor's product and the object are both high quality) and "image/symbolic similarities". Moreover, [25] discovered that fit is used as distinction between positive and negative emotions toward a sponsored event and higher fit may lead to positive emotions or lower fit may contribute to negative emotions. In addition, [26] defined endorsers as "Good fit between sponsor and object resulted in higher attitudes toward the sponsorship and sponsor. Explanation for a bad-fitting sponsorship created positive effects similar to those for native good fit, with even higher sponsor recall". Their study points out that, having the matching good fit with the key measurement for value transfer between event and sponsor to gauge a successful brand trust.

F. Event Involvement

Event Involvement is defined as "a kind of genuine excitement caused by a strong and solid interest in a specific activity (on our case the sponsored sport event) which results from the importance of this activity for an individual" [27]. Within the context of sponsorship, [1] had published the idea of fan involvement and state of being involved in the sponsorships. As the result in researches, he investigated focus group that people showed positive emotions regarding the investments of the sponsors because of the increase in event or fan involvement for specific sponsored activity.

Additionally, favorable involved fans having knowledge of the sponsor's investments. [28] had demonstrated that "sports fans have significantly higher recall than those not involved for one sponsor". In other study from [29] had concluded as consumer highly involved in a sponsored event, the

knowledge of consumer have a strong influence in increasing interest, considerable motivation on the sponsorship and bring about the benefit of sponsor [24]. It is probable that consumer highly connected with sponsored event and strongly endorse to the sponsor. Therefore, respondents who perceived the event to be attractive and interesting believe it would have favorable image towards sponsor [30], and this research had the conclusion "sponsors can increase the response to their sponsorship if they select events that are well liked by their target market".

According to all above dependent and independent factors, this research hypothesizes that:

H₁: Factors of event sponsorship positively affect brand trust.

H₂: Factors of event sponsorship and brand trust positively affect customer's word of mouth.

H₃: Brand trust mediates the relationships between factors of event sponsorship and customer's word of mouth.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

For the purpose of this research, there were two important aspects in the sponsor's sport event: the effect of event sponsorship on customer's brand trust and the influence of them on word of mouth. The study collected primary data in form of questionnaire translating to appropriate Vietnamese version. In Binh Duong Province context, surveys were handout directly to the respondents that are customers of Toyota and sport fans with V-league football champion. Surveys were collected from 264 respondents which rejected 37 questionnaires and remained 227 valuable surveys to analysis in this research. Factor analysis and multiple regression analyzed by SPSS software 20 and bootstrapping method in order to reach to the number of sample that research sample have already mentioned.

The research used Likert Scaling to measure customer's brand awarness and purchase intention with a series of short statements on a given in the surveys in from of five-point range of responses from 1 (strongly disagree) up to 5 (strongly agree). Attitude toward the sponsor, attention to sponsor's the promotion, fit of the sponsored events and event involvement was adapted from [22]. Brand trust scale was adjusted from [31] and word of mouth from [32]-[34].

B. Factor Analysis and Reliability

Principal component analysis was used with varimax rotation method to investigation meaningful factors from the proposed model. The four independent variables resulted in three factors as in Table I.

Attitude toward the sponsor and attention to sponsor's promotion were grouped into one factor, therefore, it was reasonably named "attitude and attention towards the sponsorship", including three items of attitude and three item of attention. The second factor was fit of the sponsored events, however, one item of fit was eliminated so this variable was remained four items for the following step. The final factor was event involvement consisting of four items. Total variance explained of all factors was 73.7 percent and

Eigenvalue of each dependent factor all were above 1. KMO was 0.922 and Barlett's test of sphericity reached its significant value (p = 0.000) so this result is considered as satisfactory. Cronbach's α 's for the three factors all were greater than 0.7, showing high reliability. Thus, the three factors were significant consistency and reliability for further analysis.

TABLE I: TABLE SUMMARY OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Given Names	Number of Items	Alpha
Attitude and Attention towards the Sponsorship (ATINATE)	6	.898
Fit of the Sponsored Events (FITOSEVE)	4	.889
Event Involvement (EVINVOL)	4	.907

Similarly, Table II showed the factor analysis of the group of dependent variables. The mediator Brand Trust and dependent variable Customer Word of Mouth were two valuable factors with total variance explained of 71.8 percent and Eigenvalue of each dependent factor all were above 1. KMO value was 0.906 and significant Barlett's test of sphericity value was p = 0.000. Cronbach's α 's for the two factors all were greater than 0.7. Therefore, the two scales were reliable and considered to remain for subsequent analysis.

TABLE II: TABLE SUMMARY OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Given Names	Number of Items	Alpha
Customer Word of Mouth (WOM)	6	.914
Brand Trust (BRANTRUS)	5	.902

IV. RESULTS

A. Profile of Consumer Involved in the Study

TABLE III: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	162	71.4
Female	65	28.6
Total	227	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	69	30.4
Married	158	69.6
Total	227	100.0
Age		
18-25	21	9.3
25-35	97	42.7
35-45	73	32.2
45-55	26	11.5
Over 55	10	4.4
Total	227	100.0
Seniority		
Less than 1 year	3	1.3
1-4 years	43	18.9
4-7 years	66	29.1
7-10 years	40	17.6
Over 10 years	75	33.0
Total	227	100.0
Income		
Less than 15 million VND	108	47.6
15-20 million VND	62	27.3
20-25 million VND	25	11.0
25-30 million VND	8	3.5

Over 30 million VND	24	10.6
Total	227	100.0

According to Table III, in 227 respondents, there are 162 male and 65 female, equal to 71.4% male and 28.6% female. This is representative total number of respondents following football in V-League. Football has traditionally regarded as a “male” sport, but lately women have begun to present an involvement in it. As a shown in the table III, there is a greater percentage of marriage than single status in population. As far as the age distribution is concerned, there are five different sized categories: 4.4 % were over than 55 years old, 11.5% were between 45 and 55 years old and 9.3% were between 18 and 25 years old. The majority of respondents are between 25 and 35 years old, 42.7%, respectively and 32.2% between 35 and 45 years old. Almost respondents have an experience in workplace at the time, which was equal to the minimum one seniority. Besides, they earned approximately 15 VND million.

B. Correlations between Factors of Event Sponsorship and Customer word of mouth

The Table IV showed the results of the Pearson’s Correlation coefficient which is a statistical measure of the strength and direction of association that exist between factors of event sponsorship affecting customer’s brand trust and word of mouth.

TABLE IV: CORRELATION AMONG VARIABLES

	WOM	1	2	3
1. ATINATE	.525*			
2. FITOSEVE	.543*	.725*		
3. EVINVOL	.601*	.640*	.667*	
4. BRANTRUS	.605*	.649*	.523*	.586*
Mean	3.80	3.79	3.63	3.67
STD	.705	.790	.818	.898

Note: * Significant level at $p < .001$

The finding indicated the positive correlations between five independent variables (ATINATE, FITOSEVE, EVINVOL and BRANTRUS) and the dependent variable (WOM) at $p < .001$. All variables were positively correlated with WOM. Among these relationships, the strongest was correlation between BRANTRUS and WOM ($r = .605, p < .001$), however, the weakest was correlation between ATINATE and WOM ($r = .525, p < .001$). In other words, the high level of factors of event sponsorship and brand trust were associated with the high level of Customer Word Of Mouth.

C. Direct Effects on Customer Word of Mouth

Among the three factors, fit of the sponsored events and event involvement ($B = .157, p < .01$ and $B = .222, p < .01$, respectively), however, attitude and attention towards the sponsorship also did not exert significant impact on the dependent variable. This implies that the target audiences consider V-League is important to their life and they enjoy following coverage of the V-League. Further, it makes sense to the sport fans that Toyota sponsors V-League fit together well. Moreover, the mediator brand trust had a positive effect on Customer Word of Mouth ($B = .365, p < .05$) with high impact. It is implied that the audiences are strongly rely on Toyota sponsor and give an opportunity to tell others about

good Toyota’s cars.

D. Indirect Effects of Event Sponsorship and Customer word of mouth

Brand trust was significantly affected by two factors: attitude and attention towards the sponsorship ($B = .412, p < .01$) and event involvement ($B = .226, p < .01$). Conversely, the interaction between fit and brand trust showed no significant contribution. This implies that the participants are strong supporter of the V-League and positive emotion toward Toyota’s sponsor. The effect of sponsorship results in all respondents being confident in Toyota’s ability to provide high quality products and good services, but V-League’s image and Toyota’s image are not apparently unconnected to persuade the belief of Toyota customers. Consequently, through the intervening factor of brand trust, the study indicated that the factors of attitude and attention towards the sponsorship and event involvement had indirect impacts on customer’s word of mouth.

E. Path Diagram of Customer Word of Mouth

The findings from multiple regression analysis were summarized in Figure 1. The outcomes of regression analysis revealed there were two independent variables that impact on WOM through BRANTRUS. The indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediator was the total result of the independent variable on the mediator and the mediator on the dependent variable [35]. BRANTRUS was significantly affected by two factors: ATINATE ($B = .412$) and EVINVOL ($B = .226$) while FITOSEVE ($B = .157$) had just directly effect on WOM. Besides, BRANTRUS ($B = .365$) was significantly accounted for WOM. From the path analysis, the factors of ATINATE and EVINVOL affected indirectly on WOM were (.150) and (.083), respectively.

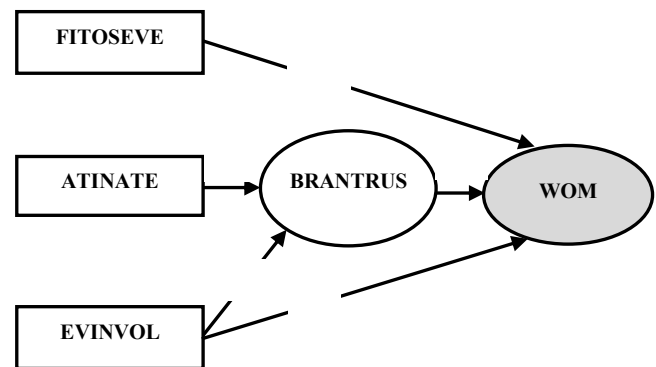


Fig. 1. Path coefficients of WOM model. Note: All coefficients in the model are significant at the .05 level.

F. Significance of the Indirect Effects

To test the significance of indirect effects or mediations, bootstrapping method was used. The concept was that if there is a zero fell within the interval range between the lower (LL) and upper boundary (UL) in order that there is no mediation or indirect effect at 95 percent confidence. On the other hand, if zero does not happen between the LL and the UL in order that the mediation or indirect effect is significant with 95 percent confidence [35].

As can be seen in the outcomes of Table V, the indirect

effects of ATINATE and EVINVOL on WOM through the mediation of BRANTRUS were estimated to be placed between .0940 (LL) and .2172 (UL); .0450 (LL) and .1262 (UL) with 95 percent confidence, respectively. Because the range between lower and upper boundary did not contain zero at the 95 percent confidence interval, we can conclude that the indirect effects of ATINATE and EVINVOL on WOM were apparent significantly different from zero at $p < .05$ (two tailed) and the mediations of BRANTRUS in this research was correct.

The total effects of independent variables impact on Customer Word of Mouth are .977, in which direct effects coming from FITOSEVE, EVINVOL and BRANTRUS accounted for 76.1%. Indirect effects from ATINATE and EVINVOL accounted for 23.9%.

TABLE V: DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

Variables	Casual effects			LL	UL
	Direct	Indirect	Total		
ATINATE	----	.150	.150	.0940	.2172
EVINVOL	.222	.083	.305	.0450	.1262
FITOSEVE	.157	----	.157		
BRANTRUS	.365365		
Total	.744	.233	.977		

V. DISCUSSIONS

The main objective of this study to examine integrated model of sport sponsorship, in which factors of event sponsorship was proposed to affect customer's brand trust and behavioral intention outcomes as word of mouth. Previous research tested different and isolated in their constructs that were not the comprised of this research. The outcomes showed clear model and provided for the proposed framework.

The purpose of this research was to empirically examine the link between Brand Trust and Word Of Mouth in sport sponsorship in Viet Nam. The significant role of Brand Trust has also been shown in prior researches that have been conducted in the context of Summer Olympics in 2008 which was a well-known and widely visible event with a very positive image from audiences [36]. The finding showed that Brand Trust exhibited fairly strong impact on Word Of Mouth, which implied that the audiences were confident in Toyota's ability to provide high quality the sponsors' products and would tell good things about Toyota's cars. However, it is important to refer that Brand Trust was shown to be a mediate of the relationship between Factors of Event Sponsorship and Word-Of-Mouth.

The findings of this research also confirmed the significant positive relationship between Attitude and Attention towards The Sponsorship and the mediate of Brand Trust. This has been proved in previous sponsorship literature [37], [22] on the positive effect of sponsorship declarations on Consumers' Attitude and Attention toward The Sponsorship. This study was illustrated that Attitude and Attention toward The Sponsorship is tested to have the strongest directly effect on Brand Trust. Moreover, the sponsorship that is connected the brand and the sport event in line supporting the transfer of positive impact from the event to the sponsor.

The results of this research also indicated that Event

Involvement from sponsorship had a strong direct effect on Brand Trust. In the prior research, Event Involvement indicated to the noticed crucial element that an activity maintained an individual and the interest, pleasure and enjoyment obtained through the activity. It is indicated that sport activities were regarded to funny, attractive and spectacular are more likely to develop Brand Trust. Besides, this study has demonstrated the relationship between Event Involvement and Customer's Word of Mouth and Event Involvement has indirect impact on Customer's Word of Mouth. In other mean, Event Involvement is an important variable effecting Customer's Word of Mouth. To be more specific, Event Involvement was significant associated with Customer's Word of Mouth through Brand Trust. This means that the more average audience rating highly involved, the more recommendation related the sponsor of sport event.

Both these findings provide support for the value of Fit of The Sponsored Events in direct predicting behavioral sponsorship outcomes, specifically, Customers' Word of Mouth as has been proposed. The outcomes of this study revealed that in line with the study of [1] "transfer of goodwill". Consumer highly involved in a sponsored event were more likely to develop the knowledge of consumer have a strong influence in increasing interest, considerable motivation on the sponsorship as a result the sport fans expressed positive intentions to say good things. The results of this study also indicated the direct link between Fit of The Sponsored Events and Customers' Word of Mouth. It was related to the research by determinant of sponsorship effectiveness [37].

VI. CONCLUSION

In the following sections, the implications of the finding research of sponsorship event on Customers' Word of Mouth are related. From the study, outcome tells that the overall understanding of effect of sponsorship event on customers' Word of Mouth in Binh Duong by examining the effect on intervening variable of brand trust. This study conclusion illustrated that the direct and indirect effects of independent variables (Attitude and Attention towards The Sponsorship, Fit of The Sponsored Events and Event Involvement) on dependent variables of Customers' Word Of Mouth through Brand Trust. This research also suggests some recommendations that brand manager should improve sponsorship to induce Brand Trust as well as Customers' Word of Mouth.

The outcomes of this research also showed that Brand Trust was a crucial factor that brand managers believe that may lead to Customers' Word of Mouth. Accordingly, in order to have strong believe in the customers' perception, this study suggests that brand manager of the Companies should pay attention and focus on sponsorship in the sport event. Therefore, brand managers who provide guidance to their brand marketing communication strategy that customers can rely on to be sponsor's products and get a trustworthiness to build faithfully customers' Brand Trust compared with its competitors.

This study also found that there were significant

relationships between Brand Trust and independent variables.

It implied that there are more consumers prefer to a sponsored event as the results of financial assistance, therefore, the audience generated favorable or reliable affect toward the sponsoring brand. In other words, brand manager has to focus on the two important factors impact on Brand Trust include Event Involvement and Attitude and Attention towards The Sponsorship. These two factors have a significant effect on Brand Trust as well as Customers' Word of Mouth. That is to say when brand trust is higher, the more willing to form a positive word of mouth spread. Therefore, this research suggests that marketers can enhance brand trust by way of sport sponsorship in Viet Nam. Customers may be willing to recommend to not only other people but also target segment who can be customer loyalty towards Toyota sponsor next year, and after that the Customers' Word of Mouth influence will bring more purchasing power.

The results of this research also showed that Fit of The Sponsored Events was considerable variable directly affecting Customers' Word of Mouth. Accordingly, in order to have highly recommended in sponsorship event, this study suggests that brand managers should combine the image of the sport event and image of the sponsor, and the sponsor and the event fit together well. This leads to increase connection of their own that accumulate as a result of linking their logo to a sponsored object. Over time, the effective sponsor-event fit brings about the sponsorship turn into the capable of being sustained obtaining from competitive differentiation and advantage.

As a final point, the finding finds out three factors consisting of attitude and attention towards the sponsorship, fit of the sponsored events and event involvement have the direct or indirect effect on brand trust to enhance positive intentions to say good things about Toyota's products. The sponsorship event should be formed to prioritize the concentration of brand manager. Similarly, the research also demonstrated that brand trust in the view of audiences was the main element that is believed to help extend the understanding about how to increase the more willing to form a positive word of mouth spread through sport sponsorship technique in order to improve marketing position and expand Toyota's market size.

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