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Relationship Fading in Cultural Sponsorships

This study tackles the phenomenon of relationship fading in cultural sponsorships. The purpose of the study is to describe, analyse, and understand the process of inter-organisational relationship fading in the context of cultural sponsorships. A longitudinal approach is used to understand the content and temporal development of one focal cultural-sponsorship relationship. The process of fading in a cultural-sponsorship relationship over time is investigated using data collected from multiple sources. This qualitative single-case study evaluates both actors in a focal cultural-sponsorship relationship using a dyadic approach. The empirical case study examines one three-year cultural-sponsorship relationship between the Finnish Museum of Contemporary Art (Kiasma) and a Finnish media company (MTV3).

In this study, the triggers of relationship fading were first broadly elaborated into structural and situational triggers. Based on the literature review, the triggers of relationship fading were further categorised into structural predisposing triggers, situational precipitating trig-

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gers, situational attenuating, and structural attenuating triggers. The empirical study revealed that the triggers of relationship fading emanated both from the structural context in which this time-bound cultural-sponsorship relationship was embedded and from the situational process itself. Most of the structural and situational triggers were passive and indirect – that is, they initiated and contributed to the long process of fading, after which the cultural-sponsorship relationship came to an ultimate end. In other words, the triggers of relationship fading affected the development of the relationship by gradually reducing the sponsor’s motivations to invest and develop the cultural-sponsorship relationship. Some of the relatively enduring structural predisposing triggers existed for a long time before the relationship ended. These structural triggers occurred on various contextual levels – from the macro-environmental level to

the personal level. However, any structural attenuating triggers could not be identified in this empirical case. The cultural-sponsorship relationship also included various situational precipitating and attenuating triggers.

In terms of managerial implications, the results of our study enable practitioners to be sensitive to, and thus to identify, potential structural and situational triggers of fading in cultural-sponsorship relationships. To be able to manage these relationships, interacting actors have to take into account the possible fading of cultural-sponsorship relationships, and the reasons for this occurring. Successful management of cultural-sponsorship relationships requires the interacting actors to be aware of the structural and situational triggers of fading that can lead to the fading and potential ultimate ending of such a relationship. ■