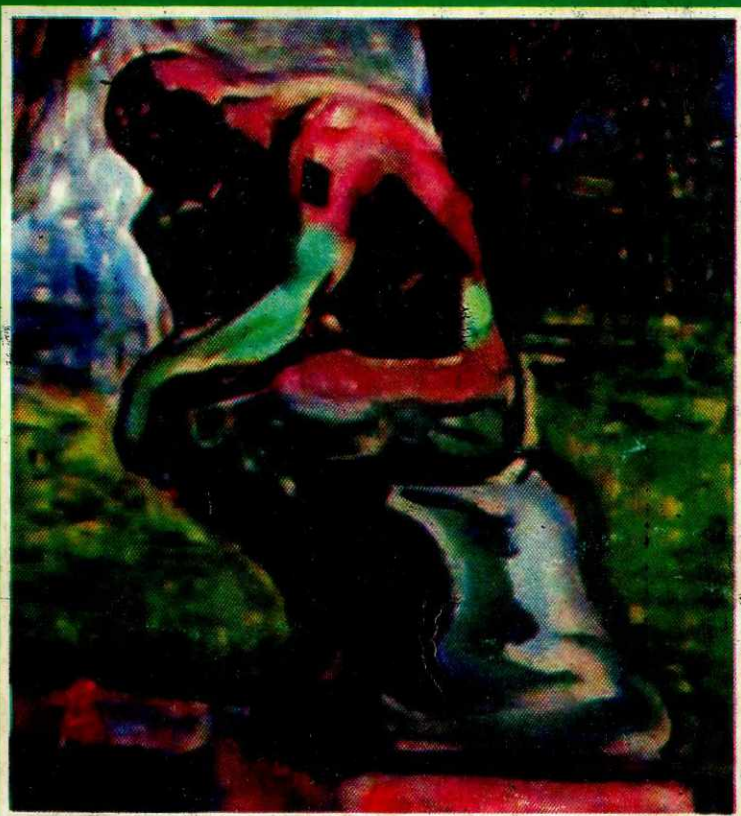


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SPONSORSHIP AND MARKETING STRATEGY: IMPLICATIONS FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS.

By

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Abstract

The present study attempts to examine the impact of sponsorship as a marketing promotional strategy and the implications for economic and social benefits. It was observed that sufficient literatures both in theory and practice supported the importance and benefits of sponsorship as a veritable means for executing organizational strategy and as a strong component of a proactive promotional mix. Organizations that identify with sponsorship programmes tend to depict a personality of corporate good citizenship, responsible businesses, a domain for quality human capital, and valuable relationship dividends. It is therefore recommended that for modern organizations operating in a more dynamic world requiring people and other units be heard, seen, and known should embrace sponsorship. This will go a long way to help them in the formulation and implementation of their promotional strategies and would earn them invaluable dividends such as goodwill, awareness, good relationship with stakeholders, employee motivation at work, media coverage, achievement of product and brand related objective, satisfaction of market segmentation and other benefits. These sponsorship activities include sports, broadcast programmes, college scholarship programs, festivals, community annual events, carnivals and various contest programme.

Keywords: Sponsorship, Promotion, Strategy, Organisations, Programmes, objectives, Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

The in-road into the market is increasing in many facets by the day. This is not without the consciousness of the dictates of the global marketplace which consists of an increasingly complex arena of competitors within a rapidly changing global environment.

New companies are formed on a daily basis, from small businesses, to internet-based operations, to expanding global conglomerates and major takeovers, and mergers and acquisitions. In view of these a variety of approaches as simple as using billboards to methods as complex as establishing global websites, the number and ways to reach out to customers continually increases (Amanda and David, 2001).

The marketer needs more than developing quality services, fixing very attractive prices and designing and managing value networks and channels. A firm must also communicate its service benefits, value and attributes to potential consumers, suppliers, middlemen and its other publics.

Sirgy (1998) observed that although traditionally, the promotional mix includes four elements: advertising, sales promotion, publicity / public relations and personal selling; however, direct marketing, interactive / internet marketing and sponsorship are now modern day promotional mix element used by marketers to communicate with their target market.

Berrett (1993) defines sponsorship as: "a contribution to an activity by a commercial organization in cash, or in kind, with the expectation of achieving corporate and marketing objectives". It involves a company paying money to sponsor someone or some group that are participating in an activity such as, little league baseball and soccer teams, college scholarship programs, festivals, community annual events, carnivals and various contest programmes.

Achumba (2000) considers marketing promotional strategy as concerned with the role of integrating the promotional mix elements toward effective and efficient dissemination of information to customers, client or potential users. Promotion should be handled as a controlled integrated programme of communication method designed to present firms and its products and services to target

markets, emphasizing the benefits and need-satisfying attribute of the products or services to facilitate sales with a long run goal.

Engel, Warshaw, and Kinner (1983) posited a strong basis for why a modern firm has to communicate with its intermediaries, consumers, suppliers and various publics. He suggested that the firm has to manage a complex marketing communications mix, which is also called promotion mix: i.e. specific blend of advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing, sales promotion, and sponsorship that the firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives.

Cornwell and Maignan (1998) sees sponsorship as an investment in cash or kind in an activity, in return for access to benefits associated with this activity. The company promotes its interests and brands by linking them to a specific and meaningful event or cause and sponsor also actively markets its association with the sponsored event or cause. As part of the fulfillment of corporate objectives, sponsorship can be seen to have strategic recognition and may also be used for particular brand and marketing communications purposes invariably achieving specific marketing objectives. In a sponsorship arrangement, an advertiser assumes responsibility for the production and usually the content of the programme as well as the advertising that appears within it (Belch & Belch, 2001).

Sponsorship can be distinguished from charitable donations and patronage since many companies undertake charitable donations or engage in patronage. In sponsorship, organizations rarely expect public recognition for this type of contribution. A sponsoring company will view its sponsorship as a business relationship from which it expects to gain a competitive advantage.

The present study attempts to evaluate and examine the impact of sponsorship and the applicable marketing strategic implications for economic and social benefits to the firm and society respectively. The study will go a long way to accentuate the sponsorship paradigm as a welcome element in the family of the promotion mix and the need for firms to begin to consider sponsorship as a veritable promotional strategy.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Strategically, most sponsorship relationships are long-term, thus a well directed sponsorship could have great impact and enhance the perception of the company and most likely also the products and

all ill-designed sponsorship can generate little or no benefits to the company, or in the worst scenario it may backfire on the company (McDonald, 1991).

Kuzma and Shanklin (1994), observed that it is not easy to assess or measure the effectiveness and efficiency of sponsorship activities and the inability to measure results is often the weakest link in corporate sponsorship. Too often, companies make large investments without knowing how they will determine if they have reached their objectives or, management generally do not hold sponsorships accountable to the same extent as they do in other marketing communication media.

Javalgi and Traylor (1994), equally suggests that people responsible for sponsorship may be reluctant to examine the effects of a sponsored event. The reason behind this is a possible career risk, especially considering the large sums devoted to sponsorship. It can also be that managers simply are not concerned about the effect since it might depict a conflict between personal needs that might not be in line with conventional communication objectives. This has made risk to be considered as an inherent attribute of sponsorship due to the non-predictability of the outcome of events and impact on marketing goals.

The selective approach of the sponsor towards sponsorship events has been observed by Graton and Taylor (1985) as one of the most serious problems of sponsorship. According to them, sponsors in order to gain maximum publicity are normally only interested in the top, most prestigious events and make use of the elite performers and the superstars. They also, indicated that evaluation of sponsorship can be a problem, as it is often used in support of other promotional activities. Isolating the sponsorship effect may thus be difficult.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Berrett (1993) defines sponsorship as: "a contribution to an activity by a commercial organization in cash, or in kind, with the expectation of achieving corporate and marketing objectives". It involves a company paying money to sponsor someone or some group that are participating in an activity such as, little league baseball and soccer teams, college scholarship programs, festivals, community annual events, carnivals and various contest programmes. Cornwell

and Maignan (1998) sees sponsorship as an investment in cash or kind in an activity, in return for access to benefits associated with this activity. The company promotes its interests and brands by linking them to a specific and meaningful event or cause and sponsor also actively markets its association with the sponsored event or cause.

Earlier definition tended to reflect the philanthropic nature of sponsorship, while later ones reflect a business-based relationship backed by legal arguments, definitions of property right, returns-on-investment and the exploitation of mutually beneficial relationship (Cornwell 1995)

Sponsorship is a fairly new development and is an area of marketing where the basic principles are still being laid down (Meenaghan, 1991). The term sponsorship has its origin from the Greek *horigia*, which is a combination of the words *horos* (the dance) and *iigoumai* (I direct or I lead) (Quester, 2001). Many people have been under the impression that sponsorship has been around for centuries it was not until 1970s that the term sponsorship was introduced into the business world (Gronqvist, 2000).

Sponsorship grew in popularity during the 1980s, partly because of its attractiveness as a supporting element in the promotional mix, and partly because of the growing cost of media advertising compared with the potentially greater coverage of various sports and arts activities (Meenaghan, 1991).

Corporate sponsorship of sports and other events is one of the fastest growing areas in market communications. Corporate sponsorship spending world-wide was estimated to grow 12 percent in 2001. In that same year world- wide expenditures in 2001 was estimated at \$24.4 billion (Roy & Cornwell, 2003). It was estimated that world-wide sponsor expenditures will reach \$45.2 billion by 2005 (Verity 2002). Today it accounts around that region with the United States and Europe accounting for most of the sponsorships.

Two comprehensive sponsorship literature reviews, have served to provide practitioners and academics with a relative thorough overview of the sponsorship literature up to the point of their respective publication. The first by Cornwell and Maignan (1998) established the following four stream of research:

- i. The nature of sponsorship covering the development of sponsorship from its approximate foundation in the mid- 1980's in the USA.

- ii. Managerial aspects of sponsorship covering areas such as objectives and motivations.
- iii. Measurement of sponsorship effects suggesting that demonstrating the commercial value of sponsorship was probably the best way of legitimizing it as a valid marketing technique.
- iv. Legal and ethical considerations in sponsorship.

Thompson (2008) notes that although an arrangement between sponsor and sponsee often commences as a legally- defined, contractual agreement where by a sponsor contributes a sum of money in return for defined benefits such as seats at games or performances, the true value elements in the exchange are much more difficult to define.

An effective synergistic sponsorship relationship does not just require an injection of funds but the development of mutual understanding of the values and needs of both parties, leading to mutual value creation, with all parties actively trying to maintain and enhance the relationship with the discarding of unnecessary bureaucratic and legal agreements in favour of development of mutual assets (Gummesson, 1999). They suggest that when planning sponsorship, companies need to access not only the sponsored event/organization and its resources but its corresponding network (ability to link activities and tie resources with other actors), that is the “network identity” of sponsorship entity.

Sponsorship as a Promotional Strategy

Achumba (2000) considers marketing promotional strategy as concerned with the role of integrating the promotional mix elements toward effective and efficient dissemination of information to customers, client or potential users. Corporate sponsorship as a promotional activity has increased remarkably over the past years and has been acknowledged as an increasingly important element of the communication strategy used by marketing-driven corporations in order to reach their customers.

Sponsorship has come to be viewed as a cost-effective alternative promotion strategy with an ability to transcend national and cultural barriers (Meenaghan, 1998). Additional reasons for the growth in sponsorship of leisure activities is the greater media coverage of these events combined with the rising cost of media advertising and increasing public indifference to conventional forms of communications (Meenaghan, 1991)

Abratt, Clayton, and Pitt (1987) have defined sponsorship as “an agreement in terms of which a sponsor provides some aid to a beneficiary, which may be an association, a team, or an individual, to enable the latter to pursue some activity and thereby derives the benefits contemplating in terms of its promotion strategy”. (Meenaghan, 1991) sees sponsorship as “an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with this activity”.

Meenaghan (1983) continues by clarifying that the sponsor is essentially buying two things:

1. The exposure potential which the activity has in terms of audience.
2. The image associated with that activity in term of how it is perceived.

Hoek, J. Philip, G., and Rohan, D. (1990) observed that although sponsorship, just like advertising can be used to serve short-term goals, like product trial and market penetration, its main strength lies in the long-term support of brand awareness and brand image, and other IMC tools are needed to stimulate buying behaviour in the short run.

Sirgy (1998) sees sponsorship as a promotional strategy and suggests that the promotional strategies or mix consists of six elements of modern promotion: Advertising, Public relations, Personal selling, Sales promotion, Direct mail, Sponsorship.

Promotion serves four basic purposes. An acronym to help remember the purposes of the marketing communication is DRIP. That is, the purposes are to:

- i. Differentiate –it is widely accepted that marketing communications can act as a differentiator of products, especially in markets where there are many similar products.
- ii. Remind –promotional messages may be aimed at reminding people who already buy a products to reasons why they should continue to do so;
- iii. Inform – promotion provides a great deal of factual information about products and places of business such as where a shop is located.
- iv. Persuade –persuasion is a primary goal of promotion and encourages purchases or changes in attitude;

THE PROMOTIONAL MIX

Advertising

Advertising, according to the American Marketing Association is any paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of goods, services or ideas by an identified sponsor. Advertising seeks to make people aware of things they need and to make them want these things. It announces new product or services and describes new uses and improved features.

Sales Promotion

According to Brassington and Pettitt (2003), sales promotion is a range of tactical marketing techniques designed within a strategic marketing framework to add value to a product or service in order to achieve specific sales and marketing objectives. The extra value may be short- term tactical in nature or it may be part of a longer-term franchise-building programme. The word 'tactical' implies that this tool is mainly used to offer buyers or resellers additional value that stimulates them to buy a product 'now' rather than 'later'. Sales promotion is short term incentive to encourage purchase or sales of a product or service.

Personal Selling

Kerin, Hartley, and Rudelius (2004) defines personal selling as a two way flow of communication between a buyer and a seller, often in a face- to -face encounter designed to influence a person's or group purchase decision. Personal selling is also a form of person-to-person communication in which a seller attempts to assist and/ or persuade prospective buyers to purchase the firms products or services or ideas. It involves direct contact between the sales person and prospect and involves more immediate and precise response.

Public Relations

Kotler and Armstrong (2007) explained public relations as a very believable type of promotional tools, like news stories and sponsorship they seem more believable to target audience than adverts. Public relations can also be used to reach many prospects that avoid salespersons and advertisements as the message gets to the buyers as news not as sales -directed communication.

Publicity

It refers to non-personal communications regarding a firm, products, services, or idea not directly paid for or run under identified sponsorship. It is also referred to as the communication in news story form, about an organization, its brand, that is communicated through a mass medium at no charge. The main objective of publicity is not sales promotion, but creation of an image through editorial or independent source commentary. The public tools include- press releases, press conferences, media advisories, etc.

Direct Marketing

Picton, D (2001) defines direct marketing as 'the total of activities by which the seller in effecting the exchange of goods and services with the buyer, directs efforts to a target audience using one or more media direct selling, direct mailing, telemarketing, catalogue selling, cable television, etc for the purpose of selecting a response by phone, mail, etc. Direct marketing is an interactive promotional tool that uses one or more advertising media to effect a measurable response and/ or transaction at any location. Direct marketing requires a database of consumers' information.

Sponsorship Activities and Management.

Gardner and Shuman (1998) define sponsorship as investments in causes or events to support corporate or marketing objectives. Sponsorship activities have long term relationship and profit potential for an organization whether profit or nor for profit, however, where the management issues involved are taken for granted, its value assessment may be difficult to measure which may result in management viewing sponsorship as a mere charity endeavour.

Basically, the objectives of sponsorship according to Hoek et al(1990) and Ukman(1996) is primarily concern with increasing awareness, enhancing image, improving goodwill, improving profitability and reaching otherwise unreachable customers, although sales objectives are sometimes specified and achieved.

Cornwell and Maignan (1998) indicated that despite the allocation of resources to sponsorship, literature reported that the processes underlying sponsor identification are poorly understood and that scholars have not adopted any specific theoretical framework guiding investigations of consumers' memory, recall, and attitude toward sponsorship

Typology of sponsorship

Abratt et al (1987) sees sponsorship as a flexible promotion tool that can be used in many forms and in various activities gives a comprehensive list of categories where sponsorship can be used: books (e.g. tax guides, encyclopedias, road maps and educational textbooks), exhibitions, education (e.g. scholarships), expeditions, cultural activities, local events, film, and sports.

Three major types of sponsorship can be discerned these include: Event sponsorship, Cause-related sponsorship, and Broadcast sponsorship:

Event sponsorship

Events can have a greater positive impact on the brand image than most other IMC instruments. By associating itself with a sports or cultural event, the company can position its brand in a pleasant and involving atmosphere. It can reach massive audiences or well – targeted segments, and it can link its products to a pleasant experience that is not purely product- related. Companies can create, organize, and sponsor tailor- made events for themselves. Companies can also participate in events that are organized by other organizations, or create its own ‘event in the event’.

Cause- related sponsorship

This is often referred to as cause-related marketing, because it usually involves much more than just sponsorship. Cause- related marketing is an important form of sponsorship and implies supporting a good cause or a social- profit organization, the activities of relief organizations or environmental projects. Usually, the sponsorship is transaction based: a brand promises to donate money to a good cause, a social activity, or a social profit organization every time a consumer in return for consumer’s patronage of the brand.

Broadcast sponsorship

The most obvious form of broadcast sponsorship is programme sponsorship where a brand announces a programme. Sometimes the association between the programme and the sponsor involves being able to use famous actors /actresses to endorse the product in advertising campaigns. The sponsored brand or product category can also be mentioned during the programme. The company can also sponsor prizes in a quiz programme, or develop the

programme in close cooperation with the television channel or product placement which is the use of a product or a brand name within a specific programme, paid for by the producer or marketer.

Reasons for sponsorship

Companies sponsor for a variety of reasons. Although, generally their aim will be to link their name or brand with an event, person or organization that is highly valued by their target consumer as observed by Zafer, Erdogan and Kitchen (1998) and this is illustrated in the table below:

Objectives	% Agreement	Rank
Press coverage /exposure /opportunity	84.6	1
TV coverage /exposure /opportunity	78.5	2
Promote brand awareness	78.4	3
Promote corporate image	77.0	4
Radio coverage /exposure /opportunity	72.3	5
Increase sales	63.1	6
Enhance community relations	55.4	7
Entertain clients	43.1	8
Benefit employees	36.9	9
Match competition	30.8	10
Fad / fashion	26.2	11

Source: Zafer Erdogan and Kitchen (1998)

Meenaghan (1983) argues that all business organizations exist within an environment. To some extent the success of companies is the result from companies' dynamic interaction between it and its environment and sponsorship programmes should be able to meet the firm's objectives.

Sponsorship objectives

Sponsorship objective according to Meenaghan (1983) hinges on the fact that business organizations exist within an environment and to some extent the success of companies is the result from companies' dynamic interaction between it and its environment. Meenaghan (1983) identified the following sponsorship objectives within this interaction:

Corporate Objective

Community involvement which sponsors involve themselves in improving the life of the community, either at local or national level is done in order to show their manner of good citizenship (Meenaghan, 1983). An example of a good way to raise a socially responsible and caring reputation for a company is to sponsor schools with, for example, low cost personal computers, and by supporting community programs. Other related corporate objectives include

Product-Related Objective

Although sponsorship should not be substitute for advertising it is more often chosen due to its ability to achieve product and brand related objectives and market segment (Meenaghan, 1983). Also in the opinion of Abratt et al (1987) sponsorship is used in order to achieve product or- brand- related objectives, and doing this, companies tend to link a brand name with a particular sponsorship (Abratt et al, 1987).

Sales Objective.

This objective according to Abratt et al (1987) indicated that the ultimate aim of sponsorship is to increase sales and profit and that although companies might not use sponsorship in order to immediately, or in the short term, increase sales results, this is still a long term aim.

The Achievement of Media Coverage.

The achievement of media coverage is one of the most important objectives for companies who are involved in sponsorship. However, even though media coverage is an objective, it is more an intermediate objective rather than end or final objective, such as market awareness (Meenaghan, 1983).

Guest Hospitality

The sponsorship of special events or activities can provide companies with the opportunity for guest hospitality in a suitable, informal environment. These may include opinion formers and decision-makers in both business and government circles, trade

acquaintances, dealers, wholesalers and retailers, the media the company's own staff and prospective consumers.

Social Responsibility Objective

Walker (1999) opine that sponsorship is also a way to expose the product or service directly to the market, while it also provides a superior mechanism for the organization to give back to the community by which it is supported.

Another important objective mentioned by Meenaghan (1983) is to increase the public awareness of the company. Sports, arts and other sponsorships have been very effectively used in order to increase public awareness.

Sponsorships of specific events and other activities provide companies with the opportunity to build goodwill among opinion-formers and decision-makers, and are therefore often stated as a specific objective for sponsorship involvement. Furthermore, companies can use sponsorship in order to reassure their shareholders and policyholders. This is of particular importance in the areas of banking, insurance and finance (Meenaghan, 1983).

Publicity Objective

Sponsorship offers the opportunity to counter adverse publicity, and is therefore brought up by Meenaghan (1983) as an important objective. As an example, a tobacco company can engage in certain sponsorship in order to move away from the negative association the tobacco industry brings. Furthermore, the desire to aid staff relations and aid staff recruitment are also stated by Meenaghan (1983) as important objectives. Sponsorship can aid staff relations by encouraging employee relations and improving the work environment.

Human Resource Objective

Potential recruits can be influenced by a company's image through its involvement in sponsorship, the particular sponsorship selected as well as the company's manner when selecting an event are also important factors (Meenaghan, 1983). Walker (1999) also supports the view that sponsorship is a perfect vehicle in order to improve employee's motivation.

Meenaghan (1983) further suggests that companies could have the objective to identify themselves with a particular market segment, since it can pay rich dividends.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Sufficient literatures both in theory and practice have supported the importance and benefits of sponsorship as a veritable vehicle for promoting the course of social, economic, and business objectives. Organizations that identifies with sponsorship programmes tend to depict a personality of corporate good citizenship, responsible businesses, a domain for quality human capital, and valuable relationship dividends.

It is therefore recommended that for modern organizations operating in a more dynamic world requiring people and other units be heard, seen, and known sponsorship build into the blend of the promotional mix will go along way to help them in their formulation and implementation of their promotional strategies and would earn invaluable benefits such as goodwill, awareness, good relationship with stakeholders, employees' motivation at work, media coverage, achievement of product and brand related objectives and market segmentation and other benefits

Therefore, sponsorship programmes/activities should be encouraged and engaged in by sponsors such as business organizations. These sponsorship activities include sports, broadcast programmes, college scholarship programs, festivals, community annual events, carnivals and various contest programmes and so on.

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