

Profiling Contemporary Sports Sponsorship Objectives

Dr Leah Donlan
University of Central Lancashire,
England

LDonlan@uclan.ac.uk

Literature Context: Sponsorship Objectives

- Corporate
 - Marketing
 - Media
 - Personal
 - Relational
- (Hartland, Skinner & Griffiths, 2005)*

- Empirical assessments of important sponsorship objectives :
- Image (*Witcher et al, 1991*)
 - Awareness (*Thwaites, 1993*)
 - Hospitality (*Quester, 1997*)

Importance of measuring sponsorship effectiveness against objectives
(Abratt & Grobler, 1989)

Research Questions

- **Research Aim:** To identify the most commonly cited objectives pursued by sports sponsors and to explore factors influencing these objectives
- What objectives are commonly being pursued by major sports sponsors worldwide?
- Are there differences in sponsorship objectives pursued by:
 - Sport?
 - Sponsorship type?
 - Sponsor product category?

Methodology

- Content analysis of press releases/articles to identify stated objectives by sponsors
- **Sample:** Sport Business International top 30 monthly sponsorship deals (January 2007 – September 2008) *plus* selected UK and Olympic sponsorships (sample size 402 sponsorship deals)
- Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests to examine differences in objectives pursued

Results

Objective	Freq.	%
Image	132	32.8
Awareness	73	18.2
Targeting Market Segments	63	15.7
Community Relations	39	9.7
Sales	13	3.2
Media Coverage	7	1.7

**Objectives pursued/
Sport:**
(χ^2 (42) = 88.827,
p = 0.000)

**Objectives pursued/
Sponsorship type:**
(χ^2 (42) = 77.752,
p = 0.001)

**Objectives pursued/
Product category:**
(χ^2 (7) = 20.886,
p = 0.004)

Discussion

- Image = most commonly sought objective
- Business-to-business sponsors pursue different objectives from consumer-focussed sponsors
 - *B-2-B*: image, community relations, showcasing product
 - *Consumer-focussed*: image, awareness, targeting market segments
- Difference in profile of objectives pursued through different sports
 - Community relations and showcasing product important for Olympic sponsors
- Objectives differ according to sponsorship type
 - Venue sponsorship primarily used for community relations and awareness

Future Research

- Research forms part of a wider multi-method, multi-stage project exploring sponsorship objectives, measurement of sponsorship effectiveness and the development of a sponsorship evaluation tool
- Interviews with sponsors and rights holders
- Questionnaires amongst sponsors
- Results of press release analysis, interviews and questionnaires to inform development and empirical testing of sponsorship evaluation tool

References

- Abratt, R and Grobler, P.S (1989) The evaluation of sports sponsorships, *International Journal of Advertising* 8(4), 351-362
- Hartland, T., Skinner, H. and Griffiths, A. (2005) Tries and conversions: are sports sponsors pursuing the right objectives? *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship* 6(3), 164-173
- Quester, P.G (1997) Awareness as a measure of sponsorship effectiveness: the Adelaide Formula One Grand Prix and evidence of incidental ambush effects, *Journal of Marketing Communications* 3, 1-20
- Thwaites, D (1993) Sports sponsorship: philanthropy or a commercial investment? Evidence from UK Building Societies, *Journal of Promotion Management* 2(1), 27-43
- Witcher, B, Craigen, J.G, Culligan, D and Harvey, A (1991) The links between objectives and function in organizational sponsorship, *International Journal of Advertising* 10(2), 13-33