

Military Sport and Sponsoring



Forces

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Armed

What do we really mean by „sponsoring“?

Why do certain organisers find sponsors for all kinds of events?

Are they better in acquiring than the military – or just luckier?

... or do we simply have trouble bringing our projects in the right form to the right sponsors?

Sponsoring – not simply a recent fad

There is a long tradition of private companies supporting sport and cultural life as well as social charities. Going back in history we are able to distinguish between patronage, corporate-giving, and sponsoring. The Roman Gaius Clinius Maecenas (70–8 BC) is believed to be the forefather of the patronage of culture and arts. A friend and adviser to Emperor Augustus, he supported the most accomplished poets of his time. As we can see for example in the French „mécénat“, Maecenas is still remembered in many languages for this kind of patronage of culture and society.

Corporate activities like the so-called „corporate giving“ in the USA and other western countries are a further development of the above tradition. Corporate giving includes systematic support of public health, higher education, or cultural institutions like hospitals, colleges and opera houses, as well as social or religious organisations or political parties.

Sponsoring however is not the same as either patronage or corporate giving.

Definition

Looking at the development and use of the term „sponsoring“, we find that private companies, politicians, sponsored organisers, the media, or the public have a very fuzzy image of sponsoring.

The German verb „sponsern“ is explained as „to support, to give money with the goal of advertisement“. To the English Collier's Dictionary a sponsor is „1. one who assumes responsibility or support for a person or thing; 2. [an] individual or organisation, as a business firm, that finances some event or entertainment, as a benefit or radio or television programme.“

We understand sponsoring as private companies supporting athletes or events through the provision of money, goods, and/or services. This exchange has to be based on mutuality. From now on, we have to focus on making sponsoring both in a business and in a (military) sport perspective more effective and more based on effort.

Sponsoring means planning, organisation, execution, and control of all activities connected to the provision of money, goods, services, and/or know-how by private companies or institutions to support persons and/or organisations in the fields of sport, culture, social work, environment and/or media and at the same time to attain goals in corporate communication.

Sponsoring is a form of corporate communication and a form of relationship which has to be based on long-term benefit and return. The sponsor supports the sponsored with material and immaterial benefits and receives in return the right to use the person, institution or event for corporate communication based upon a contract. This way, the sponsor may profit from the potential of the sponsored, e.g. the image of an athlete, to attain his own business goals.

Corporate communication based on sponsoring may be targeted internally (employees) or externally (customers, public) and may include the following partial goals:

1. Create, stabilise, or increase publicity based on the publicity of the sponsored;
2. Create, tend to, or modify an image internally and/or to the public;
3. Tend to personal relationships with present and/or potential customers (hospitality).

Depending on the scope of the sponsor's involvement, we distinguish between full sponsors, main sponsors, co-sponsors, and suppliers. Especially full sponsoring which entitles the sponsor to the exclusive exploitation of the sponsored athlete's, organisation's or event's publicity allows a clear image transfer to the sponsor. Full sponsoring may even allow for an event to be named after the sponsoring (title sponsoring).

The sponsored, especially an athlete or team, on the other hand is obliged to fulfil the conditions for a successful sponsoring and to create the set return – normally commercial rights – to attain the agreed upon goals. From the point of view of the sponsored, sponsoring is thus a means to get resources.

Different kinds of sponsoring

We can distinguish between sport, cultural, political and social sponsoring. Historically, sport sponsoring was the first form to use the possibilities of target-group specific sponsoring. It was especially the tobacco industry, confronted with rigid advertisement rules in different countries, which looked for new ways to circumvent these constrictions. Nowadays, sport sponsoring is still the most often used kind of sponsoring. Its importance in Europe is still growing.

Sport sponsoring

Possible objects of sport sponsoring are sport goods, products close to sport and the like. Furthermore, we can make distinctions according to the type of sport (discipline), the kind of sport event (local, regional, national, international, global), the level of athletic accomplishment (top level sport, high level sport, mass sport), or the sponsored level (single athlete, team, sport association). The more individual and the more exotic a sport gets the higher the risks for a potential sponsor. However, even popular sports may face different image problems or scandals, among others doping (the Tour de France in cycling) or hooliganism (football).

When choosing the apt kind of sponsoring a high degree of affinity between the sponsor and the sponsored has to be attained to strengthen or multiply the emotional and material bond between them. In the field of sport sponsoring this would be a high degree of community between the sponsor (product, company) and the sponsored (sport, athlete). Common points may be the geographical origin of a partner, the brand itself, the life style, or the target group. Every sport has its intrinsic image dimension, be it its experience, its emotions, the individual fascination with it, or its communication value. These dimensions are also influenced by the spatial focus of the sport or the sponsoring respectively. At the same time, they are gaining in importance with the diminishing differences in quality in many markets, both objectively and subjectively perceived by the consumer. These close similarities demand an event oriented communication with strong emotional messages, which can be created and multiplied by, for example, sport events.

Effects

In the way sponsoring is done practically it attains its main communicative dimension.

Who (sponsor) says what (message) to who (target group) through what channel (persons, organisations, media, events) with what effect (return of the sport sponsoring)?

For the effect of the sponsoring the credibility of the communicator, especially the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored, is the main condition to gain the acceptance of the target group. Thus, producers of sporting goods may basically expect a higher credibility than companies without close ties to sport, under the condition that their messages are targeted cleverly.

Since we have to expect a low level of involvement of the target groups because of the great variety of sports and media the message has to be shaped not to carry information but emotion like grace, dynamic, elegance, erotic, joy, colours, international flavour, or novelty. This kind of emotion maybe created, for example, by

employing athletes who through their attitude allow an apt image transfer from sponsored to sponsoring brand.

Possible sponsors

The basic question is what sponsors we might want to attract anyway. Do we limit ourselves to providers of the military or do we accept other local, regional, national, or international companies too?

Most important are for this are the company's level of publicity, the affinity to the sponsoring goal, the congruency of the target markets of sponsor and sponsored, the geographical closeness, and the material and financial power of the potential sponsor. Most bigger companies have clear sponsoring strategies which can be enquired after or found on the internet. A personal meeting with a representative of such a potential sponsor is recommended to receive all the necessary information.

Furthermore, let's not forget single persons (entrepreneurs, officers, fans...) interested in our event. They may have a broad range of personal motives for it, be it just for fun or to fulfil a dream, or be it to meet someone for private or commercial reasons (athletes or sport functionaries, businesspeople, politicians, representatives of the armed forces).

When we are looking for the right sponsor we have to keep in mind that the more information we have about potential partners the more effective and the more efficient we can find one. Sponsorship is not an anonymous transaction between entities but a form of human communication. It might take much effort to assemble all the necessary information but it will be worth the energy spent.

Sponsoring from the point of view of the sponsored

Sponsoring is a very important way to obtain money, goods and services, or know-how. Sponsoring allows to set projects in motion or to realize them in a better or more interesting way. Sponsors allow additional events which in turn attract additional visitors.

For CISM events everywhere the respective armed forces are without doubt the main sponsor. Therefore, we have to treat the representatives of the armed forces with the same courtesy we offer sponsors of the fields of politics, economy and sports and invite them to the respective sponsor events.

As sponsored organizations or persons we offer in return the participative use of our success, our name and our image.

Sponsoring from the point of view of the sponsor

Sponsors allow the sponsored to attain their goals, and demand in return a transfer of image. Figuratively spoken, who wants to be in the picture has to pay for it. To the companies sponsoring is a way to get in touch with their target group, to improve their degree of publicity, to sharpen their image profile, and/or to motivate their employees.

Sponsoring from the point of view of the consumer

Consumers nowadays choose a product no longer only based on quality, cost, and performance. The role of emotions leading to a decision is not to be underrated. It is in this field that sponsoring gives a sponsor an extraordinary chance to gain an advantage. The consumer should be the winner.

Sponsoring project

To develop a sponsoring project (not a sponsoring concept) it is best to have a working group identify and analyze several internal and external points as shown below.

Internal points/persons:

- Key personnel supporting the concept with their know-how;
- Communication (ideas for internal communication);
- Legal affairs/jurists (legal considerations);
- Finance department (financial processes);
- Argumentation aid for in-house use;
- Information flow (channels, time);
- Strengths – weaknesses / dangers – chances.

External points/persons:

- Key persons close to us;
- Potential “friends and foes”;
- Criteria: regional/national/international sponsoring;
- Main argumentative line;
- Information channels for external communication;
- Co-operation with agency/professional organisation;
- Co-operation with national/international sport organisations;
- Strengths – weaknesses / dangers – chances

Sponsoring concept

A sponsoring concept is indispensable for a successful event sponsoring. It has to be as comprehensive as possible but in the same time transparent and concentrated, showing the most recent figures, data and facts clearly.

Possible structure:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Short analysis of the basic conditions
- 3 Introduction to the event
 - 3.1 Facts and Figures
 - 3.2 Sponsoring organisation
 - 3.3 Benefits for the sponsored
 - 3.4 Return for the sponsor
- 4 Our sponsoring vision
- 5 Sponsoring target groups

- 6 Sponsoring goals / strategies / messages
- 7 Support / media
- 8 Control mechanisms

Media

The media are our partners in sponsoring since they will carry our sport even to actual and potential recipients (potential visitors and customers). However, the degree of media presence as well as the popularity of a certain sport can hardly be influenced by either sponsor or sponsored.

Control mechanisms

The sponsor's relatively high expenses demand control mechanisms to measure the achievement of the sponsor's goals (publicity) as well as to gain basic information for all partners. We can distinguish between measuring perceptions, memories, and opinions. This means we may measure for example how a logo is perceived, how a brand is remembered or how an event changed an image.

Since all companies, engaged in fierce competition, need a clear base for decisions in the growing sponsoring market, the importance of success control is increasing as well.

Conclusion

Sport sponsoring is an instrument of corporate communication. It cannot be an isolated instrument however but has to be used as a part of an integrated communication together with other marketing instruments.

Sponsoring projects and concepts have always to be based upon our relevant internal sponsoring directives and the sponsor's policies. Before we even start contacting possible sponsors, we have to be clear about what we have to offer and what we want in return.

Sport sponsoring should never be based on fixed rates but should depend both on the size of the target group and the quality of benefits and returns. A verbal or written sponsoring contract has to be negotiated based upon relevant legal constrictions – the countries of Western Europe have no actual sponsoring laws.

Finally after the event we have to think about

- What advantages did the sponsors get from the sponsoring of our event?
 - What were our advantages or disadvantages?
 - What do we have to improve next time?
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