

Sponsorship strategies at the world table tennis championship

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Abstract: sponsorships from enterprises cast great influence on successful sporting events, especially on global games of diplomacy. For example, the world table tennis championship is a very important international tournament and consequently makes sponsorship from corporations essential. Therefore in this study, the purpose was to understand the principles and strategies of sporting event sponsorship and then to provide references for the planning of corporate sponsorship for the world table tennis championship. The reviewed literature in this study provides strategies including: (1) Level division of corporate sponsorship, such as title sponsor, presenting sponsor, financial sponsor and official supplier; (2) Construction of long-term sponsorship by setting up cooperation with businesses to produce win-win situations; (3) Correlation to the spirit of the tournament by attracting involvement from more corporations relating to their own ideal spirit; (4) Establishment of attractive conditions for potential global corporations; (5) Interaction with customers through leverage strategies such as public relations, Internet, visual systems, media, and products. In addition, suggested methods for the strategies are provided as follows: (1) Constructing levels of sponsorship for table tennis tournaments; (2) Providing long term corporate sponsorship opportunities; (3) Looking for corporations correlating with the spirit of the tournament; and (4) Manipulating the leverage strategies in order to draw more global corporations into sponsorship.

Keywords: corporate sport sponsorship, sponsorship strategies, world table tennis championship.

1. INTRODUCTION

People are getting more engaged in sports because of rising health issues and the increasing interest in national and international tournaments. Many countries also hold national tournaments to increase their revenues and their national profile [3]. Therefore, sporting events are not only about winning the games, but can also be a potentially profitable approach for corporate marketing strategies.

Since funds from government support for tournaments are limited, it is relatively important for the organizers of the tournaments to attract corporate sponsorship. Kaplanidou and Karadakis [15] mentioned that creating strategies and managing plans for a sporting event would allow stakeholders to increase opportunities and interest for corporate sponsorship. Moreover,

corporations reach their own marketing and advertising goals through sponsorship. Corporate sponsorship of sporting events generates awareness and creates brand image for the corporation/product or leads to an increase in sales [18]. In brief, corporate sponsorship for tournaments has become a popular trend.

The increase of public exposure and elevation of brand recognition have made sponsorship of important tournaments one of the marketing methods used for enterprises [17]. For instance, in the recent 2013 WBC (World Baseball Classic), baseball fans in Taiwan were encouraged to become fully engaged in the games, products such as T-shirts were roughly sold out and baseball application software was downloaded at an incredibly high record rate [19]. This created large revenues for twelve out of the sixteen sponsors which

included fabricating industries and telecommunication providers; they realized 30 million dollars in revenue.

Corporate sponsorship of sporting events has been recognized as a critical component of marketing strategy in recent literature [6]. In this study, sponsorship strategies and methods were reviewed through literature on the world table tennis championship, which is an important international sporting event with seven categories of participants, including men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles, mixed doubles, men's team and women's team [21]. The article discussed the effective methods needed to attract more sponsorship involving the establishment of setting up plans to raise company motivations in sponsorship contributions. Therefore, the purpose was to understand the principles and strategies of sporting event sponsorship and then to provide references for the planning of the corporate sponsorship for the world table tennis championship.

2. CORPORATION SPONSORSHIP OF SPORTING EVENTS

The targets for sports sponsors can be categorized into three different kinds: the sporting event, sports organizations and the athletes [5], with sporting events receiving the highest incentives. Enterprises make direct connections with the sporting events to increase public exposure and brand recognition. In the past, companies conducting sports sponsorship through identified fund donation did it only for self-marketing enhancement. However, the development of economic policies has changed it from single motivation to a combination and cooperation of more enterprises through the sporting events to achieve transferable marketing share. Transferable marketing means to promote the companies and their products from regional through to global sporting events, and reach the highest combination of the enterprise's sponsorship with the sporting events [22].

The motivations of the companies sponsoring the sporting events can be divided into two categories, which are the intrinsic motivation and the extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation is what the enterprises substantially receive; and the extrinsic motivation is the image or the recognition of the companies [11]. For intrinsic motivation, the idea states that the enterprises will encourage enthusiasm from its members, increase coherence, identification and loyalty to the companies through supporting the sporting events, such as McDonald's as one of the Olympic Games' main sponsors. They changed the image of "fast food" by providing athletes food that fit their tastes. On the other hand, the sponsorship of McDonald's also expresses their extrinsic motivation, and creates a successful public image and achieves an irreplaceable position in the fast food industry.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPONSORSHIP

The purpose of the companies engaged in sports sponsorship was to attract more trust, recognition, and feedback from its customers. The more positive the public image is through their sponsorship, the more acceptance and trust they gain from their customers [4, 7, 8]. In order to improve the effectiveness of sponsorship, it is necessary for companies to form definite strategies for marketing, which is called the activation of leverage. Koonin, the former vice president of marketing for Coca-Cola mentioned that the activation of leverage is like a toy and its battery: neither of them can be omitted, indicating that companies should join different marketing strategies to receive the highest benefits [5]. For example, Lenovo made a deal with the committee of the Olympic Games in 2004 and became one of the main sponsors by donating 800 million dollars to the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, and Lenovo themselves predicted to gain about 2 billion dollars as a result [1]. Moreover,

Kuo and Shao [16] found several positive influences from sponsorship in the case of the Amway WPA Women's World 9 Ball Open, which included the identification of the sponsored companies, cognition of the industries, positive images, and brand flavors for customers in buying similar products.

From 1980 to 1990, the goal of sponsorship was to increase marketing, but now the sponsor strategy has extended to the emphasis of awareness and images [9]. Therefore, the effectiveness of sponsorship lies in the combination of several factors such as population, marketing strategies, marketing activities, and advertisements, and can be evaluated through successful, positive recognition, and advertising [20].

4. SUCCESSFUL SPONSOR STRATEGIES

Sports sponsorships have become one of the main marketing strategies for enterprises. It is worthwhile to discuss how the tournaments attract sponsorships and how the companies design their sponsor plans. From the literature review, successful and useful strategies are as follows:

4.1 Level division of corporate sponsorship

Sporting events should divide the levels of sponsorship according to their funds and the kinds of sponsorship. Brooks [2] provided four kinds of sponsorship:

4.1.1 Title sponsor: the sports teams will be named after the enterprises to transform the image of the events into the enterprises; images directly and to prevent the same kinds of enterprises from sponsoring the events (e.g. Fubon Taipei Marathon, where Fubon acts as the main sponsor).

4.1.2 Presenting sponsor: these kinds of sponsors only have to pay one fourth of the funds that the title sponsor pays [13]. The companies sponsor sporting events by segmenting with similar enterprises, such as sponsoring table tennis tables and balls for the event.

4.1.3 Official sponsor: these kinds of sponsors only

have to pay one tenth of the funds of the title sponsor. Since their contributions are smaller, so are their privileges when compared to presenting sponsors.

4.1.4 Official supplier: the companies provide their products or services to assist the sporting activities, so the official suppliers are almost always providers of food, drinks or sports-related products.

4.2 Establishment of long-term sponsorship

Through formal agreements, the enterprises' images will be directly connected to the sporting events. This will not only create successful sporting events, but also positive marketing effects, and consequently achieve a win-win situation. For example: Coca-Cola has established a long-term sponsorship with the Olympic Games and has sponsored them since 1985 [5]. Coca-Cola has become one of the most famous brands through publicity gained from the Olympics Games.

4.3 Correlation with the spirit of the tournament

When companies correlate with the spirit of the tournaments, it provides the customers with a connection between the spirit of the events and the products, such as the sponsorship of Omega in swimming competitions. In addition, since large corporations own large funds, their sponsorships will benefit the games. For example, Samsung has been one of the long-term sponsors of the Olympics Games and their investment in the Games raises their public exposure, and makes the games more popular and successful.

4.4 Usage of leverage strategies

In order to raise the effectiveness of sponsorships for marketing benefits, the leverage strategies indicate that more marketing plans, goals and operations should be established (Table 1). With leverage strategies, more positive sponsorship effects and revenues will be realized. Kolah [14] successfully explained the core concepts of leverage strategies, which included: (a) public relations, (b) internet, (c) visual systems, (d)

activities such as a lucky draw, (e) promotion of retail items, (f) authorized products, (g) special treatment.

Table 1 Leverage sponsorship strategies.

Sponsorship strategies	Contents
Public relations	Cooperation with media and public relations activities such as press releases, press conferences, community activities, or public services will increase media visibility
Internet activity	Many ways to leverage through internet activity which include: broadcasting on the website of the enterprise, setting advertisements on the sporting event's or sports organization's website, linking sponsored sites with sports sites, and planning events dedicated to the campaign website.
Using visual systems	The enterprises' logo should be shown at suitable occasions, such as attaching signs on boards at the press conferences, or showing their symbols on products and pamphlets.
Activities (lucky draws)	The sponsors can design lucky draw activities which may increase the visibility of the sporting event while promoting their products. These kinds of activities may be supported by the sports organizations or the sponsors.
Promotion of retail	Planning promotion activities to increase sales. For example, customers will be given discounts with the purchase of tickets.

Authorized products	Design authorized products to prolong the duration of sponsorships through close relations between the enterprises and the sponsored tournaments.
Special treatment	Special treatment such as feedback to the employees or the customers. The special treatment could be in the form of a meal, an awards ceremony, or seats for honored guests.

Resource: Huang [12].

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WORLD TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP

Several leverage strategies for the world table tennis championship are recommended as follows:

5.1 Building levels of corporate sponsorship for table tennis: building different levels of corporate sponsorship for table tennis games and constructing detailed processes for enterprises to clarify their goals and make the games successful.

5.2 Providing opportunities to obtain long-term sponsorship: the world table tennis championship should learn from the Olympic Games in seeking suitable long-term sponsors. This will guarantee the tournament and the companies profit from stable benefits.

5.3 Searching for enterprises that correlate with the spirit of the tournament: every event has its own characteristics and spirit. For example, Omega sponsored swimming events to show their care for accurate time; Rolex sponsored the Wimbledon tennis championship to show their honorable values. The game of table tennis with the spirit of being fast and accurate can also look for similar enterprises which hold the same spirit as the event.

5.4 Using leverage strategies to attract international enterprises: the international enterprises sponsor the

sporting events in order to increase the sales of their products, promote their image and improve their exposure. Through proper operation of the leverage strategies, there will be more opportunity to attract more international companies to sponsor table tennis events (Table 2).

Table 2 Strategies of leverage sponsorship for table tennis tournaments.

Sponsorship strategies	Content
Public relations	Using news and media to advertise the tournament before being held and plan related activities with the event.
Internet activity	Building a website of the table tennis tournament with detailed information, and linking it with popular websites such as Facebook and Twitter, and the sponsoring enterprise's website.
Using visual systems	Increasing tournament publicity with posters and flags for public places, such as schools or clubs. Creating advertisements in magazines or newspapers, and publishing professional magazines [10].
Lucky draw contests	Designing lucky draw activities and giving them at the entry of the games or with provided products from the sponsors as presents.
Promotion of retail sales	Planning promotion activities to increase sales: for example, customers can get a discount with the purchase of their tickets.
Authorized products	Design authorized products, such as memorial shirts for the events. The audience can get the

	memorial shirt along with their tickets in order to motivate spectators to participate in the games.
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6. CONCLUSION

In order to hold an international tournament, having sufficient funds is a key factor for success. It is nearly impossible to rely only on the government for funding and therefore it is important to search for enterprise sponsorships. In this study, we reviewed the collective literature and provided several effective strategies and positive effects for both the sponsored enterprises and the sporting events in the case of the world table tennis championship, and hopefully inspired improved strategies to attract more sponsors and to contribute to the development of table tennis.

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