

# The Communication Objectives of Sport Sponsorships

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**SPORT sponsorship is increasingly used as an organisational communication tool. Its effective use is generally diminished by a lack of coordination with greater organisational communication objectives. The alignment of the objectives of sport sponsorship with an organisation's greater communication objectives as a means of increasing sport sponsorship's effective use is discussed. The validity of differentiating between objectives of sport sponsorship for public relations and for marketing communication objectives was tested amongst a sample of South African sponsors, and a measuring instrument of sport sponsors' communication objectives was developed.**

## 1. Introduction

The sponsorship phenomenon has grown markedly from the 1960's. In Britain for example, sponsorship increased by 19% annually, to 50 million Pounds direct spending by 1981 (Campbell, 1984; Milmo 1981). Sponsorship is a global phenomenon. It reaches many spheres of community activity, but most notably that of sport. The reason for the increasing use of sport sponsorship is that it is a form of organisational communication, offering "a means of reaching various groups to draw favourable attention to the communicator, his brand or his products" (I.S.B.A., 1982, p.5). Sport sponsorship is not patronage. With few exceptions, a disinterested love of an activity is not a reason for sponsorship, true charity from industry is miniscule (System Three, 1973). Sport sponsorship has evolved into an organisational activity which is predominant enough



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to warrant the creation of sponsorship departments in certain organisations; is widespread and increasing; and which is gaining increasing legitimacy. Yet its practice is still widely characterised by poor objective setting; weak relationship to the marketing plan, market and image; uncertainty as to what is to be communicated; and a lack of evaluation (Sports Council, 1982). Sport sponsorship has not been evaluated or defined in terms of its primary characteristics or

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its relationship to a disciplinary system. This research attempted to grasp the essential nature of sport sponsorship and to relate it to organisational communication in theory and practice.

## 2. Sponsorship

Sponsorship is an agreement, condition or understanding in terms of which a company, association or person provides any payment, aid, or service, for the right to be associated with, or conduct any form of communication with, or to the members or activities of any company, association, or person, from which it hopes to obtain some benefit. (Adapted from Van Zyl, 1980).

## 3. Sport Sponsorship as Communication

Sponsorship is seen to be a multitude of things. The spectrum of views regarding sponsorship reflects the fragmented conceptions which sponsors have of it. For example, Skinner and von Essen state that sponsorship "must remain an extension of public relations for corporate or public self-projection" (1982, p. 92). Black (1972) and Hobbs (1979) support this view. Others see sponsorship as a marketing communication tool. In some circles in France, sponsorship is approached as part of an advertising campaign; Carson sees sponsorship as publicity (1979, p. 39); and Van Zyl as sales promotion (1980).

Some progress has however been made towards relating sport sponsorship to wider organisational communication. Chatburn (1978) noted that "hard" and "soft" sell approaches had developed; and Simkins (1980) that there was "advertising" and "public relations" approaches to sponsorship. The validity of this differentiation is supported by the growing tendency, especially in the United States of America, to view public relations and marketing as two distinct organisational functions. The importance of defining sport sponsorship as organisational communication lies not only in the definitions of sponsorship in terms of a theoretical model, but also in the creation of an effective framework for the practice of sport sponsorship. Only if sport sponsorship is planned and executed as an element of organisational communication, with organisational communication objectives, can it attain its full potential. The

determinants of successful sponsorship are the setting of objectives, the integration of these with other organisational communication objectives, and evaluation of sponsorships in terms of the objectives (I.S.B.A., 1982). If sport sponsorships as organisational communication is to be viewed holistically, then organisational communication itself needs to be clearly described.

## 4. Sport Sponsorship Objectives and Organisational Communication

The creation of sport sponsorship objectives which coincide with the organisation's broader communication objectives is one of the primary determinants of successful sponsorship. The organisation's communication objectives have therefore to be determined, with an indication of the communication forms to be used to attain these objectives. In both theory and practice there is however a lack of consensus on the nature of the relationship between the various organisational communication forms. The primary problem lies in the sphere of activities which are described as "marketing communication" and "public relations", and the relationship that these have to one another.

Public relations is, with advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and sometimes publicity, seen as an element of marketing communication by numerous writers (e.g. Nichols, 1980; Stanley, 1982). However there is a strong argument for differentiating it from marketing communication. Public relations is the "deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics" (Skinner and von Essen, 1982:1). Public relations attempts to create a climate in which production, financing, marketing, and recruitment will thrive; but not specifically to execute these functions. It is a definition of public relations as such which warrants its differentiation from marketing communication, and which determines whether it will be "recognised as indispensable to the vitality of all organisations, or ... be relegated to merely carrying out a useful range of techniques" (IPRA, 1982:10). Marketing communication aims at the interaction of the company with the consumer, potential consumer, and intermediary, and not with a wider audience.

Internationally, sport sponsorship has been used to attain goals which relate to the spectrum of marketing communication and public relations goals.

## 5. Sport Sponsorship for the Attainment of Marketing Communication Objectives

Many commentators believe that sponsorship is a marketing tool (I.S.B.A., 1980; Lineberry, 1973; Scottish Sports Council, 1982). The view that sponsorship is a form of marketing communication is largely supported by those in advertising. Sponsorship has to be "dovetailed into the marketing plan if the maximum ... value is ... to be obtained" (I.S.B.A., 1980:2.) There are limitations to its capabilities as a marketing tool. It would appear that sport sponsorship cannot substitute direct advertising to any relevant degree, or be widely used as a direct stimulus to sales (System Three, 1973). There is evidence however, that sport sponsorship can effectively reinforce each element of marketing under certain conditions. Renault, the magazine L'Equipe, and Cornhill Insurance have claimed that their sponsorships have directly assisted the attainment of marketing objectives (Scottish Sports Council, 1982). Specifically sport sponsorship can be used for the attainment of advertising, sales promotion, publicity, and to a limited degree, personal selling objectives.

### 5.1 Advertising

Sponsorship can have a "considerable direct advertising benefit to companies with a brand name to publicise" (Black, 1972:93). Sponsorship and advertising can serve the same function where the aim is to make the consumer aware of the company or brand for the first time, and to increase awareness (Black, 1972). Sponsorship is more "passive" than advertising (Van Zyl, 1980). Although it generates exposure, it cannot contain the complex message that advertising can; yet it can create prestige, goodwill, and aspects such as long term publicity and interpersonal contact. Sponsorship is however used as "replacement" for advertising, where there is a restriction to the advertising of certain products like cigarettes on television, and in non-commercial media content.

### 5.2 Publicity

According to the System Three survey (1973), Crotty (1982) and Hobbs (1979) publicity is the most important reason for sponsorship. However, Bowman and Ellis (1969) feel that publicity alone, with no clear intention to give benefit or information should not be a reason for sponsorship. Publicity is not valuable in itself, but only when used as a means of attaining some objective such as increased product awareness. Sponsorship can gain specific and general publicity. Where the aim is to reach a large mass of the general public, sponsorship of the sports which gain the most media coverage would in most cases be logical. In certain communities there are obvious choices. In 1982 in Britain for example, 91% of sport coverage was of twenty sports, and 70% of coverage of only six sports (Koski, 1982). Sponsorship of such sports is generally expensive, but cost compares favourably to paid-for time. In most cases, publicity is sought for specific reasons, e.g. to assist in a change of image by association with a sport or to publicise a product to a particular target group. This can be attained by selection of a specific type of sport, or by regional sponsorship.

There are limitations to the use of sport sponsorship as publicity. "As far as is known, no company has conducted a successful general publicity campaign by using sponsorship alone" (System Three, 1973:41).

### 5.3 Sales Promotion

Sponsorship has been widely used as sales promotion, as an "incentive for sales staff who realize that the company is aggressively backing up their product line (Van Zyl, 1980:80). It has been used to show a product in action, e.g. sponsorship of tennis players on condition that the sponsor's tennis rackets are used. Gould Inc. sponsored an American motor racing team, co-ordinating this with additional programs for sales force and distributor stimulation, with the use of competitions and exhibition (Mosser, 1979). Product-related sponsorship has been used extensively. Although sport sponsorship is often used to attain sales promotion goals, it is in many cases not a direct inducement, incentive to purchase, or a means of adding extra value to a product. It can overlap with or form

part of sales promotion, as it can with the other marketing communication elements.

#### **5.4 Personal Selling**

Of the marketing communication elements, personal selling is the least compatible with sport sponsorship. It has to a small degree been used to introduce and continue contact with clients. Few companies have been able to use sponsorship for a direct selling programme (Advertising Age, 1980).

### **6. Sport Sponsorship for the Attainment of Public Relations Objectives**

Numerous writers believe that sponsorship is a public relations tool (Black, 1972; Bowman and Ellis, 1969; Hobbs, 1979; Maian and L'Estrange, 1981; Nolte, 1979; Skinner and Von Essen, 1982). As with the other communication forms, sponsorship may overlap with public relations in some cases, but it cannot be specifically defined as public relations. Sport sponsorship has been widely used to attain public relations goals, especially as an enactment of social responsibility and for image control.

#### **6.1 Social Responsibility**

Sport sponsorship is a means of showing the good citizenship of an organisation, and was found to be the third most important objective of sponsorship amongst sponsors by Waite (1977). Many companies sponsor with social responsibility as a primary objective. For example, Standard Bank's support of tennis in 1979, Green Shield with junior tennis in Britain, and Esso's involvement in Scottish sport, were intended to indicate an active social conscience (De Vries and Palmer, 1976).

The sponsorship of sport is seen as socially beneficial because it promotes sport spectatorship and participation. However, there are few organisations that wish to engage in acts of social responsibility anonymously. Visibility is important. Miles feels that there is "fertile ground in which (industry) ... will get back some dividend ... for responding to the feeling of social responsibility" by sponsorship (I.S.B.A., 1980, p. 12).

#### **6.2 The Management of an Image**

Sponsorship of sport is seen as a means of image control. Although image "control" is not

always a public relations function, it is mostly seen as such where corporate identity and the communication of the organisation as a whole is concerned.

The System Three Survey found that sponsorship is used for image "reinforcing, changing, refurbishing or even creating ... companies are entering sponsorship for the explicit purpose of altering their image" (1973:41). Examples are the use of sponsorship by foreign companies to overcome their alien image, or when a company with a technological nature wishes to "humanise" its image (Simkins, 1980). Mere participation in sponsorship indicates the status of the sponsor. Readiness to sponsor "rises steadily with the size of companies' promotional budgets, a trend that is consonant with the concentration of sponsorship among the largest companies" (Van Zyl, 1980:49). In Britain in 1973 half of the known sponsors were in the top 1000 companies, and over a tenth in the top 100 (System Three, 1973).

#### **6.3 Other Public Relations Functions**

Van Zyl (1980) and Nolte (1979) believe that sponsorship of events of public interest benefits goodwill towards the sponsor. Sport sponsorship has been used by Schweppes to improve the "climate" for its selling staff, by personal contact with potential customers (Chatburn, 1978). The Royal Bank of Scotland approaches sport sponsorship as "Business Development Marketing" (Scottish Sport Council, 1982).

Sponsorship has been used for the entertainment of certain publics. Amongst his sample, Waite found that this was jointly the most important objective of sponsorship (1977). It has been used to assist in recruitment, by the sponsorship of sports with specific spectators and participants, or with a specific image (System Three, 1973; Simkins, 1980). Sponsorship has been used to make known an organisation's change in structure or new acquisitions (I.S.B.A., 1980).

### **7. Aim of the Study**

The study aimed to develop factorial scales for the measurement of the communication objectives of sport sponsorships, which were derived from all objectives for which sport sponsorships are known to have been used to attain; and to test the validity of differentiating between

objectives of sport sponsorship along public relations and marketing communication dimensions.

All known sport sponsorship objectives were used as constructs to build the scales. Because the theories related to sport sponsorship are undeveloped, factor analysis was used to develop, from these less well-defined constructs, those appropriate for the measurement of sport sponsorship's communication objectives.

## 8. Method and Results

The dimensions of sport sponsorship objectives as suggested in the literature were determined. From these, questions were derived for the measurement of the use of sport sponsorship for marketing communication and public relations objectives amongst a sample of South African sport sponsors.

A list of the registered national sport bodies was obtained from the Department of National Education. The sport bodies were requested to submit a list of sponsors involved in their sports. The population of potential respondents was limited to the 241 sport sponsors in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand area because these were immediately accessible, and because 53% of all sponsors were situated in the area. The population of sponsoring organisations were stratified into the industrial groups in which the organisations fell. A proportionally stratified random sample of 120 sport sponsoring organisations was obtained.

### 8.1 The Measuring Instrument

A complete summary of the characteristics, definitions and dimensions of objectives of sport sponsorship was made. These dimensions, characteristics, etc., were then rewritten as questions. Of these, thirty-five items reflected sponsorship with marketing objectives. The seventy items were then incorporated into a Likert-type questionnaire. The sponsors were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the objectives coincided with the objectives of their sponsorships. Of the hundred and twenty organisations first approached, one hundred returned completed questionnaires. All of the questionnaires received were used, because all had been correctly and completely filled in.

### 8.2 Factorial Structures of Sponsorship Objectives and Construction of the Response Scales

The seventy items which were used to determine the sport sponsorship objectives of the respondent organisations were firstly correlated. A principal component analysis of the 70 x 70 matrix of correlations was carried out to reduce the items to a smaller number of underlying dimensions. With the number of factors thus specified, a principal factor analysis on the 70 x 70 component correlation matrix was conducted.

Secondly, the clusters of items which were yielded by the factor analysis were meaningfully interpreted. Subscores for each respondent organisation were computed for each meaningful cluster of items and correlated. A principal component analysis was then conducted on the derived matrix of correlations. The number of factors was determined from this, and a second-order factor analysis was performed. The items were then divided into as many clusters as there were second-order factors, and separate item analyses were conducted on each cluster of items to form response scales with acceptable reliabilities.

### 8.3 Working Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were set up for research.

(1) Interrelations between the 70 items describing sport sponsorship are representative of either the marketing communication or the public relations objectives of a sponsoring company.

(2) A multivariate refinement of the items or coherent clusters of items indicates a clear differentiation between marketing communication and public relations objectives.

### 8.4 Results

#### (1) First-Order Factor Analysis

The principal component analysis yielded eighteen factors (determined by Eigenvalues  $>1,000$ ). After principal factor analysis (using varimax rotation) the last six of these factors were ignored. Five had only one significant loading each; and one had two, but there was evidence of factor fission. The first twelve factors, representative of 59,9% of the total variance, were analysed.

**TABLE 1**  
**First-Order Factor Analysis**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Objective Description</b>	<b>Proportion of Total Variance %</b>	<b>Item Type</b>
1.	Marketing Communication (Product-centred)	21,7	To what extent is your sponsorship an attempt to reinforce brand/product loyalty?
2.	Public Relations (Social Responsibility)	9,4	To what extent is your sponsorship an attempt to improve the social environment in which your organisation operates?
3.	Public Relations (Awareness of organisation)	5,0	To what extent is the aim of your sponsorship the creation of awareness of your organisation?
4.	Public Relations (Image control)	4,2	To what extent is your sponsorship an attempt to create a particular image of your organisation?
5.	Marketing Communication (Change of product image)	4,0	To what extent is it the aim of your sponsorship to change the image of your product/service?
6.	Marketing Communication (Product promotion)	3,0	To what extent is your sponsorship a means of showing your product in action?
7.	Public Relations (Personnel relations)	2,8	To what extent do you see your sponsorship as a means of improving employer-employee relations?
8.	Marketing Communication (Integration of marketing plan)	2,2	To what extent do your other marketing communication elements use themes from, or identify with your sponsorship?
9.	Public Relations (Corporate loyalty)	2,2	To what extent is an aim of your sponsorship the reinforcement of corporate loyalty by individuals outside your organisation?
10.	Public Relations (Long-term improvement in the operation of the organisation)	1,9	To what extent is your sponsorship an attempt to break down resistance to your organisation by the community or a part of the community?
11.	Marketing Communication (Market-directed communication)	1,8	To what extent do you use your sponsorship as a form of advertising for your product/service?
12.	Marketing Communication (Replacement of other marketing communication tools)	1,7	To what extent is your sponsorship a replacement of some of your advertising, personal selling, or sales promotion?

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Hypothesis 1 was confirmed as the items were reduced to twelve dimensions which could be interpreted, each factor representing either a marketing communication or a public relations objective type.

## (2) Second-Order Analysis

Principal component analysis on the intercorrelated subscores yielded four factors. From this the number of factors was determined, and the second-order factor analysis was accordingly conducted (using Direct Oblimin rotation), specified by Eigenvalues > 0,230.

Only Factor I representing a grouping of first-order factors could be interpreted. It was assumed that by specifying four factors, factor fission occurred, breaking up factor groupings. It was therefore decided to conduct another second-order factor analysis (with Eigenvalues >0,530) to derive three factors representing 46,8% of the total variance. The second-order factors are given in Table 2, with a description of their respective component cluster items and sorted rotated factor loadings.

All but one of the item groups (cluster 10), of Factor I (representing 32,5% of the total var-

iance) represented marketing objectives Cluster 10 was again analysed. Of its items, one dealing with a long term improvement in business, had marketing overtones and could be dually interpreted. Although originally retained, the validity of discarding cluster 10 was reinforced by the findings of the subsequent item analysis.

Factor II represented 8,2% of the variance. All the significant item groups which it comprised were public relations objectives. Factor III represented 6,1% of the variance, with the significant item groups being both public relations and marketing communication objectives. The problem with Factor III was that it comprised items describing both objective types. It could therefore not be included as part of a scale determining either of the two types of objectives. The items comprising the clusters as used did not appear to be weak items. To discard Factor III entirely was not considered because its proportion of the total variance would be lost. It was decided to rather consider the first two factors without Factor III. Because cluster 4 was significantly loaded in factor II (0,472) as well as in Factor III, and because it

**TABLE 2**  
**Second-Order Factor Analysis**  
Sorted Rotated Factor Loadings

Cluster	Description M → Marketing Communication PR → Public Relations	Factor I (M)	Factor II (PR)	Factor III
8	M	.785	.000	.000
1	M	.709	.000	.358
10*	PR (?)	.592	.000	.000
5	M	.586	.000	.000
11	M	.548	.000	.371
3	PR	.000	.656	.000
9	PR	.336	.572	.000
2	PR	.000	.544	.000
6	M	.000	.000	.596
				(discarded)
4	PR	.000	.472	.588
7	PR	.000	.463	.000
12	M	.348	.000	.000
Proportion of Total Variance:		32,5	8,2	6,1

\* This cluster was later rejected by item analysis.

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assisted in the interpretation of the factor as one comprising public relations objectives, it was decided to incorporate cluster 4 in Factor II, discarding only cluster 6, leaving two second-order factors. Each of these comprised one of the objective types. Having thus discarded cluster 6, but retaining cluster 4, there was a loss of a proportion of the variance, leaving only that of Factors I and II, which is more than 41% (because of the inclusion of cluster 4). This fell within the 40-60 percent acceptable border of total variance. Hypothesis 2 thus appeared to be largely confirmed, with certain reservations.

### (3) Item Analysis

The cluster of items of the second-order Factor I (marketing communication objectives) was placed into a grouping termed "Batch 1", and the items of the second-order Factor II (public relations objectives) into another (Batch 2), and item analysis of the items in each were carried out. The validity of discarding the rejected item group (cluster 10), of Factor I was first tested and confirmed, as one of the two items were rejected. An item analysis of Factor I's items was again carried out excluding cluster 10.

The Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficient before iterations was particularly high (0,923). The criterion was set at 0,33 with an increment step of 0,02 and a maximum of seven iterations. After two iterations the reliability coefficient was 0,925 with the loss of one item, and remained so until the seventh, when it rose to 0,926 with the loss of two items. It was decided to retain these as their loss was not justified by the slight improvement.

The Kuder-Richardson reliability coefficient of Factor II, before iterations, was also high (0,898). The criterion was set at 0,10, the increment step 0,02, and the iteration limited to seven. After two iterations the reliability coefficient rose to 0,903 with the loss of one item and remained unchanged thereafter. From the item analyses reliable scales for the measurement of sport sponsorship for public relations and marketing communication objectives were derived. The scale for public relations objectives comprised 25 items, and the scale for marketing communication objectives 22 items.

Both hypotheses 1 and 2 were essentially confirmed and the construction of two scales was accomplished. The results of the factor and

item analysis do however have certain implications.

## 9. Discussion and Conclusion

The fact that the public relations and marketing communication objectives were overwhelmingly grouped into factors which can be categorised as either public relations or marketing communication confirms the dimensionality of objectives, and hypothesis 1. The confirmation is reinforced by the fact that the factors comprised objectives which could be specifically be termed as subsections of marketing communication and public relations, e.g. social responsibility, sales promotion, etc.

The division of marketing communication and public relations as described by the authors and based upon the increasing distinction being made between the two, is not reflected in all cases in the response. This is the case with specific dimensions, particularly those related to social responsibility and image control.

The second-order factor analysis grouped the dimensions obtained in the first-order factor analysis into two overall types which can be interpreted as marketing communication and public relations objectives. This essentially proves the validity of the theoretical distinction made. As indicated in the item analysis, the items used in the scales yielded high reliabilities, indicating the validity of the questions in the determination of the results. Because of this, and because the item groupings as analysed in the second-order factor analysis are of clear objective types, the existence of Factor III is assumed to be the result of a lack of distinction between marketing communication and public relations amongst the respondent organisations in general. This confirms the belief that generally, public relations is not seen as separate from marketing communication by a significant number of sponsoring organisations. This is in keeping with the view that public relations is today very widely confused with marketing, and that it is not seen as a separate field of endeavour or as a separate discipline (Krause, 1977; I.P.R.A., 1982). However, it is possible that a third factor would not have manifested itself if a greater sample had been used.

It is assumed that the value of the scales which were constructed is that they may act as pointers to sport sponsors, especially those



who are uncertain of the validity of their sponsorships, in bringing the objectives of their sponsorships into line with the greater organisational objective. The derived scores will also give an indication of the type of sponsorship and sport which will best aid in the attainment of the objectives, as certain sports and types of sponsorships can generate different benefits.

A primary reason for the uncertainty with which many sponsors regard their sponsorships, is that the objectives of the sponsorships

are not related to the greater communication objectives of their organisations, namely public relations and marketing communication objectives (Sports Council, 1982). Because of this uncertainty, and because the goals to be achieved by sponsoring sport have not previously been considered in their entirety in relation to any other types of organisational goals, it is felt that this work may clarify this most basic problem of sport sponsorship and aid in the overcoming thereof.

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