

Sponsorship in the 28th SEA Games

Sponsor Recall, Purchase Intention and Sponsors' Corporate Image

Leng Ho Keat

National Institute of Education
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore
hokeat.leng@nie.edu.sg

Abstract— Sports sponsorship in the Asia Pacific region has been growing. However, while there are many studies on sponsorship, comparatively, there are fewer studies focused on sports events in the Asia Pacific region. The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of sponsorship of an event held in the region. Out of 1,097 respondents surveyed, it was found that 59% of respondents were able to recall at least one sponsor. In addition, respondents reported agreement that after the event, they are more likely to be aware of sponsors and able to recognize their brands; indicate positive purchase intentions for sponsors' products and services and; indicate agreement with positive statements on the corporate image of the sponsors. This suggests that sponsorship in sports events can be effective.

Keywords- sponsorship; sports marketing; brand recall; purchase intention; corporate image; South East Asian Games

I. INTRODUCTION

The sports sponsorship industry has been growing over the last few years, particularly in the Asia Pacific market. According to industry estimates, sponsorship revenue in the Asia Pacific region is likely to grow from US\$9.8 billion in 2010 to US\$12.2 billion in 2015 [1]. In part, this has been driven by the increasing number of international sporting events held in the region. These include recently concluded events like the Beijing 2008 Olympics, the Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games and the Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Games. In the next few years, the region will also host the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup.

While there are many sponsorship studies conducted, comparatively, there have been fewer studies in the Asia Pacific region. The development of sports initially took its cue from Europe and North America. Extending from this development, theories in sport management and marketing necessarily reflected the perspectives of western societies [2]. As such, it becomes necessary to examine sponsorship in the Asian Pacific context.

The 28th South East Asian Games or SEA Games was held in Singapore from 5th to 16th June in 2015. This biennial regional multi-sports event was first started in 1959 in Thailand with athletes from seven countries participating in 12 sports.

By 2015, the event drew athletes from eleven Southeast Asian countries with athletes competing in 402 events in 36 sports at 31 venues. The event also garnered the support of more than 100 sponsors, providing more than S\$75 million in sponsorship. This provided an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of sports sponsorship in a country in the Asia Pacific region.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sponsorship of sports events is a commonly used marketing communication tool for many commercial organisations. The aims for sponsorship are varied. These include increasing public awareness of the company and its product, identifying the company with particular market segments, involving the company in the community, enhancing employee morale and achieving sales objectives of the company [3, 4, 5]. As such, sponsorship is not the same as advertising. It focuses on improving the image of a company and less on the sale of products [6].

As sponsorship requires monetary investment, companies are keen to evaluate whether such investment provide an adequate level of return. Consequently, there have been a number of studies conducted to measure the effectiveness of sponsorship. Most of these studies have focused on whether spectators are able to recall and recognise sponsors' brand after the event [3, 7]. A smaller number of studies have examined whether sponsorship of a sports event can lead to purchase intention and enhanced corporate image [8].

For this study, the effectiveness of sports sponsorship will be determined by examining the sponsor recall rate, the purchase intention of sponsors' good and services and sponsors' corporate image.

III. METHOD

Research assistants were deployed in two subway stations in the western part of Singapore to solicit respondents for the study from July 2015 to January 2016. 1,127 respondents agreed to take part in the survey. 30 of the responses were invalid and taken out of the analysis. The total number of valid responses was 1,097 responses.

The profile of the respondents is detailed in Table 1 below. The respondents were relatively well-distributed across gender with 48% of female gender. However, the proportion of respondents who were older than 45 years of age was slightly smaller than the other age groups (19%).

TABLE I. RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

Description	Number of Respondents
Female, <25 years of age	269
Female, 25 to 40 years of age	163
Female, >45 years of age	96
Male, <25 years of age	207
Male, 25 to 40 years of age	253
Male, >45 years of age	109
Total	1097

The survey instrument required respondents to indicate the sponsor for the event. When respondents were able to name sponsors for the event, they were asked to indicate their agreement to various statements on a 5-point Likert scale. These statements include awareness and recognition of sponsors; a 4-item Purchase Intention Scale adapted from earlier studies [8]; a statement on the association between the sponsor and sports and; a 5-item Corporate Image Scale adapted from an earlier study [8]. Responses were entered into Google Form and downloaded for analysis using statistical software.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Brand Awareness and Recognition of Sponsors

In earlier studies, while there were differences across studies, it was found that more than 60% of respondents were able to recall at least one sponsor [9, 10, 11]. In this study, of the 1,097 respondents, 650 respondents (59%) were able to recall at least one sponsor. This demonstrates that the sponsor recall rate was comparable to earlier studies.

The 650 respondents who recalled at least one sponsor also indicated that they were more aware of the sponsor and were more likely to recognise the sponsor after the SEA Games. On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree), the average score of respondents for the statements were 3.52 (SD=.89) and 3.51 (SD=.87) respectively.

These findings suggest that in terms of brand recall, awareness and recognition, the sponsorship of the event had been effective.

TABLE II. AWARENESS AND RECOGNITION OF SPONSORS

Item Description	Mean Score (SD)
More aware of the brand of the sponsor after the SEA Games	3.52 (.89)
More likely to recognise the brand of the sponsor after the SEA Games	3.51 (.87)

B. Purchase Intentions for Sponsors' Products and Services

The 650 respondents who recalled at least one sponsor also indicated positive purchase intention for sponsors' products and services on the Purchase Intention Scale. The Purchase Intention Scale has good internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .86. On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree), respondents reported a mean score of 3.54 (SD=.74). The scores for the 4 items ranged from 3.46 to 3.67. This is detailed in Table 3 below.

TABLE III. PURCHASE INTENTION

Item Description	Mean Score (SD)
I will try the brand of the sponsor when the opportunity arises	3.67 (.85)
I will seek out the products of the sponsor	3.49 (.91)
I will buy the products of the sponsor after the SEA Games	3.54 (.88)
I will recommend the products of the sponsor to a friend	3.46 (.89)

C. Sponsors' Corporate Image

Respondents who recalled at least one sponsor indicated that they are more likely to associate the sponsor with sports. On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree), the average score of respondents for the item was 3.40 (SD=.94).

In addition, respondents also indicated agreement with positive statements on the image of the sponsors after the SEA Games. Respondents reported a score of 3.50 (SD=.70) for the Corporate Image Scale. The scale has good internal consistency with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .87. On a scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree), the average score of respondents for the items ranged from 3.45 and 3.54.

TABLE IV. AWARENESS AND RECOGNITION OF SPONSORS

Item Description	Mean Score (SD)
I have a better impression of the sponsor after the SEA Games	3.53 (.86)
I am more likely to believe that the sponsor produces good quality products and services	3.53 (.83)
The SEA Games made me realise that the sponsor is a well-managed company	3.45 (.87)
I am more likely to believe that the sponsor is contributing to society.	3.54 (.86)
The SEA Games made me realise that the sponsor is a good company to work for.	3.46 (.90)

V. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The findings from this study suggest that sponsoring sports events in the Asia Pacific region can be effective. Respondents reported a sponsor recall rate that is comparable to earlier studies conducted in other geographic regions. In addition, respondents indicated that they have greater brand awareness and purchase intention for sponsors' products and services.

Respondents also indicated agreement with positive statements on the corporate image of sponsors.

In this study, as there were more than 100 sponsors for the event, the analysis did not identify specific sponsors for analysis. Hence, the analysis included brands that may be falsely identified as sponsors. By extension, this study did not examine the relationship between specific brands with the various variables in this study i.e. increased awareness and recognition, purchase intention and corporate image. This remains a limitation of this study.

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