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Professional Football Sponsorship — Profitable or Profligate?

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The results of this empirical study of the English Premier League and First Division indicate that the vast majority of companies express a very positive view of their experience with professional football sponsorship. However, there is evidence of a failure to employ a number of the techniques advocated in the literature. This suggests that for some companies opportunities exist for sponsorship to make an even greater contribution to their communication objectives. Key areas which need to be addressed are objective setting, evaluation, leverage and integration with other elements of the communication mix.

INTRODUCTION

While finding an enduring definition for commercial sponsorship has proved difficult, there is general consensus that it does not represent patronage or philanthropy (Norton, 1981; Townley and Grayson, 1984; Turner, 1987). Essentially it relates to the purchase (in cash or kind) of an association with a team, event, etc. in return for the exploitable commercial potential linked to that activity (Meenaghan, 1983; Otter, 1988). Although a number of distinctions between sponsorship and advertising are reported in the literature (Hastings, 1984; Jones and Dearsley, 1989; Meenaghan, 1991a; Marshall, 1993), confusion still exists and members of the public may still perceive sponsorship as advertising. This is particularly true of Germany and the UK but less so of France (Marshall, 1993).

During the past decade the number of organizations using sponsorship and the resources devoted to it have increased dramatically on a worldwide basis. While it is difficult to establish consistent figures for individual markets, Table 1 provides a guide to the spend directly related to the sponsorship property (rights fees and direct promotions, etc.) (Sponsorship Research International, 1992).

Despite this increased involvement in sponsorship activity, there is evidence to suggest that cavalier attitudes towards its management have resulted in a failure to achieve the real benefits of this adaptable medium (Gilbert, 1988; Meenaghan, 1991a, 1991b; Thwaites, 1993). The rationale for sponsorship involvement is not

Table 1 Worldwide sponsorship expenditure: 1992

	US \$ Millions	% of World Total
<i>Europe</i>	3,520	37.4
•UK	580	6.2
•Germany	705	7.5
•France	520	5.5
•Italy	550	5.9
•Netherlands	260	2.8
•Spain	485	5.2
•Sweden	145	1.5
<i>Americas</i>	3,550	37.8
•USA	3,200	34.0
<i>Africa</i>	50	0.5
<i>Middle East</i>	70	0.7
<i>Asia</i>	2,060	21.9
•Japan	1,550	16.5
<i>Pacific</i>	150	1.6
<i>World</i>	9,400	100.0

Source: Sponsorship Research International, 1992

always based on commercial logic, nor are the evaluation measures associated with other elements of the marketing mix as rigorously applied (Meenaghan, 1983, 1991b). It has been suggested that some organizations have joined the sponsorship bandwagon and invested in a medium which is 'flavour of the season' without developing an appropriate strategy (Thwaites *et al.*, 1992).

This article represents a response to calls for empirical studies into the use and applications of sponsorship and focuses specifically on relationships with leading English professional football clubs. The prime objective of the study is to determine the extent to which the rigorous framework for sponsorship management postulated by theoreticians is endorsed in practice.

SPORTS SPONSORSHIP

A range of activities have formed the basis for sponsorship programmes, although sport has proved the most popular sector with 75 per cent to 80 per cent of spending, both in the UK and US. Sport exhibits a number of advantages such as high visibility and the scope to attract a broad cross-section of the community. It can be used to target mass markets or specific niches and offers a means of transcending national boundaries and breaking down cultural barriers. It also attracts high levels of television coverage through the provision of all-round family entertainment and low production costs (Sleight, 1989; Thwaites *et al.*, 1992). The market for UK sports sponsorship was estimated at £239 million in 1992 as against \$238 million the previous year (*Sponsorship News*, 1993) which, given the depth of the recession, suggests a good level of satisfaction with the medium.

Association football is extremely popular in the UK and attracts more people, both to watch it and to read about it, than any other sport (Mintel, 1991). There is also a significant audience who watch football on television, and while there are slight regional, socio-economic and age variations, all categories are well represented, with the exception of women. While three in six men watch football on television, the proportion is only one in six for women (Mintel, 1991). Taking into account those who play, watch and read about football, the sponsor has the potential to reach one in two of all British males (Wright, 1988). Not surprisingly, football has proved a popular focus for sponsorship both at the professional level and through support of amateur, grass roots and community activities.

The League Championship was sponsored during seasons 1983/4 and 1985/6 by Canon (UK) Limited and became 'The Today League' for season 1986/7. Barclays Bank entered the scene in 1987 and remained until 1993 when insurers Endsleigh took over. The League's major knock-out cup competition has also been sponsored since the 1982/3 season when the National Dairy Council signed a four-year deal. Subsequent sponsors have included the Littlewoods Organization, Rumbelows and currently Coca-Cola. The Premier League (established in 1992) became the source of UK sports' major sponsorship package when brewers Bass secured a four-year deal, effective from the 1993/4 season, at a cost of £12 million (Slater, 1993). The League runs under the title 'The FA Carling Premiership'.

In addition to sponsorship of competitions, attention has also focused on the competing clubs and the majority of teams are now sponsored. The Appendix illustrates the sponsorship arrangements for Premier League and First Division clubs for the season 1992/3. While the financial aspects of some deals remain confidential and the inclusive nature of packages differ, annual figures in the range of £300,000 to £1.25 million are evident in the Premier League.

A FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE SPONSORSHIP MANAGEMENT

If sponsorship is to make an effective contribution to the organization's communication objectives, it is essential to develop a comprehensive framework for its management. The application of a structured and systematic approach will militate against many of the deficiencies identified in earlier research. These issues are highlighted in the subsequent literature review and form the focus of the empirical section of this article.

Irwin and Asimakopoulous (1992) offer a simple conceptualization of the key stages in the sponsorship management process:

- Step 1:* Review of the corporate marketing plan and objectives;
- Step 2:* Identification and prioritization of specific sponsorship objectives (corporate and product/brand-related);
- Step 3:* Identification of evaluation criteria and assignment of relative weighting based on the prioritization from Step 2;
- Step 4:* Screening and selection of sponsorship proposals;
- Step 5:* Implementation of selected sponsorship proposals;
- Step 6:* Evaluation of the sponsorship's effectiveness in achieving prescribed objectives.

The need to consider the corporate marketing plan during the initial step serves to emphasize that sponsorship is part of a wider communication mix, which is itself an element in the overall marketing mix.

It is essential, at an early age, to establish where functional responsibility for sponsorship lies (Turner, 1987; Witcher *et al.*, 1991; Shanklin and Kuzma, 1992) and how sponsorship will be integrated with other communication and promotion activities (Otker, 1988; Meenaghan, 1991a; Parker, 1991; Witcher *et al.*, 1991; Kuzma *et al.*, 1992). Clear, concise, realistic and prioritized objectives should then be developed based on a knowledge of the market and the workings of the sponsorship medium (Meenaghan, 1983; Otker, 1988; Sleight, 1989; Shanklin and Kuzma, 1992). Indeed, one of the features of sponsorship is its ability to contribute to a wide range of objectives at both corporate and brand level (Meenaghan, 1983; Grattan and Taylor, 1985; Gilbert, 1988; Irwin and Asimakopoulos, 1992; Shanklin and Kuzma, 1992) and to target diverse constituencies (Crowley, 1991; Meenaghan, 1991a).

To ensure that sponsorship proposals are appropriate and will contribute to the organization's objectives, it is suggested that a comprehensive and rigorous screening model is implemented (Meenaghan, 1983; Irwin and Asimakopoulos, 1992). The criteria that are believed to influence this process of selection are well documented in the literature; for example, sole sponsorship, clean image, television coverage, length of contract, fit with corporate or brand positioning (Meenaghan, 1983; Armstrong, 1988; Otker, 1988; Sleight, 1989; Donaldson *et al.*, 1991; McDonald, 1991; Meerabeau *et al.*, 1991). Through the development of a range of specific sponsorship objectives, organizations have in place a benchmark against which to measure the effectiveness of sponsorship initiatives. While there are difficulties attached to measuring sponsorship because of the simultaneous use of various ingredients of the mix, the carry over effect of earlier promotions and exogenous environmental factors (Meenaghan, 1991a), there is general agreement that measures of exposure, awareness, image, sales effectiveness and guest feedback are possible (Meenaghan, 1983; Armstrong, 1988; Abratt and Grobler, 1989; Sleight, 1989; McDonald, 1991; Meenaghan, 1991a; Witcher *et al.*, 1991; Shanklin and Kuzma, 1992; Marshall, 1993). A range of tracking and *ad hoc* dipstick approaches, for example, before, during and after the event are advocated. A feature of the literature is the frequent reporting of the practice of recording the number and length of media exposures and comparing these to the equivalent cost of rate card advertising. As a measure of effectiveness, this practice is highly criticized in that it measures exposure rather than impact and effect (Meenaghan, 1983; Parker, 1991; Shanklin and Kuzma, 1992).

One of the pitfalls for the newcomer to sponsorship activity is the need to leverage the sponsorship. A failing of inexperienced companies is that they expect sponsorship to work like advertising (Meenaghan, 1991b) and accordingly pay their fee under an assumption that it represents their total commitment. On the contrary, the sponsorship fee invariably represents the cost of an association, and further expenditure is necessary to capitalize on it. Sums of up to three times the original fee are quoted, depending on the nature of the contract and the company's objectives (Meenaghan, 1983; Armstrong, 1988; Otker, 1988; Abratt and

Grobler, 1989; Witcher *et al.*, 1991).

While the foregoing represents only a brief summary of the current literature, the key features in the development of an effective sponsorship programme have been addressed. Following an outline of the research methodology attention will focus on the extent to which the companies who sponsor Premier League and Division One football clubs have endorsed the theoretical prescriptions identified in the literature. In addition to this general objective, attention will focus on specific areas which earlier research suggests are key elements in successful sponsorship, but nevertheless receive insufficient attention from many sponsoring companies.

- 1 Functional responsibility for sponsorship activity.
- 2 Integration of sponsorship with other elements of the communication mix.
- 3 The nature and focus of sponsorship objectives.
- 4 Audiences targeted through sponsorship.
- 5 The selection of sponsorship opportunities.
- 6 Evaluation of sponsorship effectiveness.
- 7 Leverage – additional promotional support.

Comparisons between companies who sponsor Premier League and First Division clubs will also be made.

METHODOLOGY

Following a review of the sponsorship literature and discussions with managers involved in sponsorship activity a mail questionnaire was developed. This approach provided speedy access to a geographically dispersed population, although the weaknesses of this form of data collection are acknowledged. To militate against low response rates several techniques recommended by Watson (1965), Veiga (1974) and Jobber (1986) were utilized.

The questionnaire comprised dichotomous, multiple choice and open questions. Self-reported seven-point rating scales were included to provide quantification of essentially qualitative characteristics, with a view to further statistical analysis. The use of seven-point scales allows reasonable discrimination without becoming overprecise. This approach provides more reliable ratings than continuous scales (Churchill, 1987) and a more reliable measurement than a five-point scale (Churchill and Peter, 1984). While McGoldrick and Greenland (1992) highlight the limitations of such scales, they also acknowledge the lack of a viable and more rigorous alternative.

A pilot study offered useful feedback and formed the basis for some amendments to the original questionnaire. Telephone contact was made with sponsoring companies (see Appendix) to identify the most appropriate recipient. During February 1993, twenty-one questionnaires were sent to sponsors of Premier League clubs of which thirteen (62 per cent) were returned duly completed. Twenty-three questionnaires were despatched to sponsors of Division One clubs and generated seventeen responses (74 per cent). The overall response rate was 68 per cent. Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS package.

RESULTS

The responses to the survey highlight the interest shown in professional football sponsorship by companies spanning a variety of industrial and commercial sectors (see Figure 1). Invariably, these companies are also involved in further sponsorship activities, primarily other sports, charities and the community. Considerably less attention is paid to the arts or broadcast sponsorship.

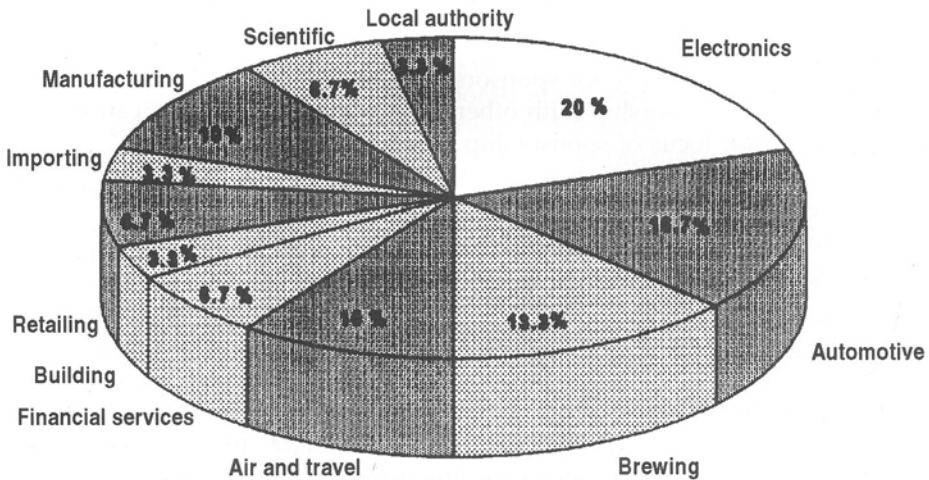


Figure 1 The sector in which the sponsoring company operates

Sponsorship is generally located in the marketing department and only four companies have a dedicated sponsorship department. While some companies devolve responsibility to specific areas of the marketing function, for example, advertising, only two place sponsorship under public relations (7 per cent). This tends to support earlier findings which suggest that sports sponsorship is more likely to be under the control of marketing than PR (Shanklin and Kuzma, 1992).

The length of involvement in professional football sponsorship reveals an interesting pattern, with fourteen companies (47 per cent) reporting less than three years' involvement. However, a further thirteen companies (43 per cent) have been connected with this form of activity for at least six years. This suggests both interest from new entrants and a degree of satisfaction with the medium which leads to continued involvement. The most popular term for the contract is two to three years (70 per cent), although a number of companies appear to adopt an experimental approach with a contract for a single season (22 per cent). Several advantages are suggested for professional football sponsorship over other forms of marketing communication, although the prominence of media coverage coupled with the high profile of sport are the most frequently cited (see Figure 2).

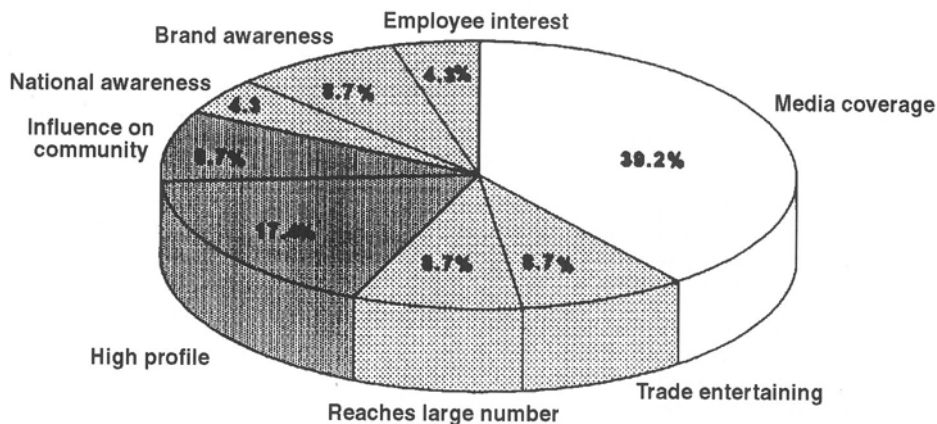


Figure 2 Advantages of professional football sponsorship

SPONSORSHIP OBJECTIVES

A valuable aspect of sponsorship is the ability to contribute to the fulfilment of a broad range of objectives at both corporate and brand level. Respondents were asked to rate the contribution of professional football sponsorship to the achievement of eighteen objectives identified in the literature (see Table 2). The pattern of responses favour the corporate dimension with high scores recorded for public awareness and media attention. Community relations, goodwill and trade hospitality also rate highly, while sales objectives receive considerably less support. The use of professional football sponsorship to develop and maintain staff pride and motivation is also worthy of note. The low score attributed to personal motives may suggest a more commercial and objective attitude which, if reflected in more professional management, represents a highly positive development.

While companies in general are aware of the roles which sponsorship can play, a number fail to develop objectives for particular programmes let alone conform to the rigorous approaches identified in the literature. Only 66 per cent of companies actually set specific objectives and of those that do, a significant proportion neglect to formulate them in a manner that allows for future measurement and evaluation. The impression gained from the analysis of several open questions is of broad and imprecise objectives which are not necessarily complementary to, or integrated with, those relating to other communication activities. Indeed, four respondents suggest that their sponsorship of professional football is tangential to other forms of promotion.

Despite these apparent deficiencies, all respondents feel that their involvement with this form of sponsorship has satisfied their objectives (however imprecise) and furthermore, 61 per cent of companies suggest that the outcomes are well above expectations. This degree of satisfaction is reflected in the fact that 77 per cent of companies feel that their experiences to date will make them more likely to undertake professional football sponsorship in the future.

Table 2 Objectives achieved through professional football sponsorship

Objectives	Mean	SD
Increase public awareness of company	5.76	1.57
Increase media attention	5.24	1.75
Community involvement	5.17	1.69
Build business/trade relations/goodwill	5.03	1.55
Guest hospitality	5.03	1.90
Enhance company image	4.90	1.35
Increase current product/brand awareness	4.28	2.34
Increase target market awareness	4.14	2.13
Enhance staff/employee relations/motivation	4.10	1.60
Increase sales	4.00	2.00
Alter public perception of company	3.97	1.70
Reinforce target market perception of product/brand	3.48	2.12
Increase new product/brand awareness	3.03	2.11
Identify product/brand with a particular segment	3.03	1.84
Alter target market perception of product/brand	2.93	1.75
Counter adverse publicity	2.10	1.76
Personal objectives (hobby motive)	2.00	1.44
Block competition	1.97	1.64

Note: Mean scores are based on a seven-point scale : 1 = no contribution, 7 = major contribution

Target audiences

In addition to contributing to a wide range of objectives, sponsorship can appeal to diverse constituencies. Table 3 highlights the internal and external publics targeted through professional football sponsorship. While sales objectives are not a major aim of sponsorship activity, it is clear from the high rankings given to both potential and existing customers that the attraction and retention of business is an underlying motive. In addition, sponsorship allows messages to be sent to key groups who are specifically involved with the company or are affected by its conduct or success. The importance of customers is in line with earlier findings (Crowley, 1991).

Table 3 Target audiences

Audience	Mean	SD
Potential customers	5.74	1.51
Existing customers	5.40	1.69
General public	5.36	2.02
Local community	5.18	1.96
Workforce	4.50	1.73
Business community	4.11	2.10
Distributors	3.60	2.22
Suppliers	3.46	2.13
Shareholders	2.32	1.83
Government	1.82	1.49

Note: Mean scores are based on a seven-point scale: 1 = not important, 7 = very important

Selection process

The decision to become involved in professional football sponsorship invariably involves the Board of Directors and to a lesser extent the Chief Executive. Functional specialists in marketing and more specific areas, such as advertising and public relations, have only limited influence (see Table 4).

Table 4 Key roles in the sponsorship decision

Role	Mean	SD
Board of Directors	2.70	0.65
Chief Executive	2.10	0.96
Marketing Manager	1.70	0.88
PR Manager	1.43	0.68
Advertising Manager	1.23	0.57
Sponsorship Manager	1.20	0.61
General Manager	1.17	0.53
Outside consultancy	1.07	0.25

Note: Mean scores are based on a three-point scale: 1 = no influence, 2 = some influence, 3 = major influence

The senior level input to the process may suggest that the decision is seen as an important one for the company, although conversely it may indicate that the hobby motive still lives on. The low score attributed to the sponsorship manager is a reflection of the small number of people holding this position and it seems reasonable to suggest that where such a post exists the incumbent will play an important part in the selection process. The low involvement of external advisers in the decision to undertake professional football sponsorship is a symptom of the overall attitude to external support. Sixteen companies (53 per cent) never seek any form of external advice on any aspect of their sponsorship activity. Of those companies that do seek guidance, advertising and public relations companies are the most popular forum.

A refreshing degree of proactivity is noted, in that 78 per cent of companies made a formal approach to a club or its agent regarding sponsorship, rather than waiting to be approached. However, companies tend not to compare several clubs before coming to a decision. Indeed, 67 per cent only consider one club, 11 per cent compare two clubs, while only 22 per cent compare several. Although a variety of reasons are offered for choosing a club, such as profile, potential for success, family philosophy and employee support, the key determinant is location. Virtually every respondent refers to this as an import factor in their choice. Involvement with a club based in a town or city where the firm's headquarters is located, or within key target markets, is highly significant, particularly for more regionally focused companies.

Evaluation of effectiveness

The nature of the company's objectives and the extent to which they are formulated in a manner which allows evaluation will clearly influence the choice of evaluation technique. Sixty-six per cent of companies actually attempt to evaluate

their sponsorship activity and endorse a range of measurement techniques. This corresponds to the number who set objectives in the first place. Reflecting on the earlier discussion, the major contribution of football sponsorship (see Table 2) is to increase public awareness of the company, increase media attention, secure goodwill in both the trade and the community and to provide hospitality. The key target groups are potential and existing customers, the general public, local and business communities and the workforce (see Table 3). Effective measurement should therefore assess the extent to which these objectives have been met within the target groups.

While in general the methods of evaluation used seem likely to generate information in the appropriate areas (see Table 5), the use of such techniques is limited. The responses to open questions suggest scope for greater sophistication and frequency of evaluation. The measurement of media coverage is very popular, but this should not be an end in itself. More emphasis on attempting to estimate the effectiveness of this increased exposure might have been expected. Ukman (1993) argues that measuring media coverage represents a record of take-offs, not landings. It is postulated that some companies may well be calculating their total exposure and translating this into the equivalent cost of rate card advertising (Parker, 1991). Such comparisons are flawed, not least because dozens of brief exposures, often fronted by more compelling sporting action, are unlikely to compare to a tailor-made and uninterrupted advertisement.

Table 5 Evaluation methods

Method	Mean	SD
Measure media coverage/exposure	5.80	2.04
Monitor guest feedback	4.40	2.23
Measure communication effectiveness (prompted/unprompted awareness)	4.15	2.21
Measure sales	2.90	2.15
Monitor sales leads	2.65	2.20
Monitor staff feedback	1.43	1.36
Measure awareness by trade contacts	1.25	1.19

Note: Mean scores are based on a seven-point scale: 1 = never, 7 = always

Leverage

To be truly effective there is a need to support sponsorship activities with a range of promotional media. Clearly, the extent to which this is necessary will be influenced by the specific aims of the programme and by contractual arrangements. The majority of companies secure perimeter and programme advertising and the use of their logo on club literature as an integral part of the agreement. Facilities for corporate hospitality are invariably included, although only 47 per cent have rights to player product endorsement.

Table 6 identifies the forms of promotional support used by sponsoring companies. Given the significant benefits which come from the use of sponsorship and advertising as an integral package (Parker, 1991; Boxall, 1993), greater advertising

of the sponsorship may prove useful. Access to club supporters as a focus for direct mail may also be worthy of greater attention.

The additional budget devoted to leveraging the sponsorship varies between companies, although there is little evidence of the levels of support identified in the literature. Forty-three per cent of companies allocate no additional funds, while a further 50 per cent only increase the original outlay by a quarter. This would appear to be a cause for concern and may suggest that some companies still view sponsorship as a form of advertising and are therefore under the misapprehension that the purchase of the 'sponsorship property' represents the depth of their commitment. While the inclusive nature of professional football sponsorships may offer some explanation, this is nevertheless an area which requires further investigation.

Table 6 Promotional activities used to support sponsorship

Activity	Mean	SD
Signs and banners	5.73	1.97
Hospitality	5.53	1.89
Public relations	4.93	2.17
Advertising the sponsorship	3.67	2.14
Competitions	3.60	2.14
Point-of-sale promotion	3.00	2.03
Advertising the event	2.76	2.30
Direct mail	1.60	1.19

Note: Mean scores are based on a seven-point scale: 1 = never, 7 = always

Critical success factors

Based on their experience with professional football sponsorship, respondents were asked to identify the factors which had a major influence on the success of the venture (see Figure 3). A clear rationale for sponsorship involvement and the development of specific objectives coupled with professional management are seen as highly important. Good communication between the club and the company through their nominated staff also receives strong support. These issues stress the need to develop an effective framework for sponsorship activity. The inclusion of features such as a high profile and a successful club are interesting in that profile is clearly an issue that a potential sponsor can establish, whereas playing success is highly variable and outside the sponsor's control. Take, for example, the case of 1991/2 League Champions Leeds United who were fighting off relegation only a year later.

PREMIER LEAGUE AND DIVISION ONE COMPARISONS

Comparisons between the sponsors of clubs in the two leagues are conducted using non-parametric tests available in SPSS (Chi-square, Mann Whitney-U).

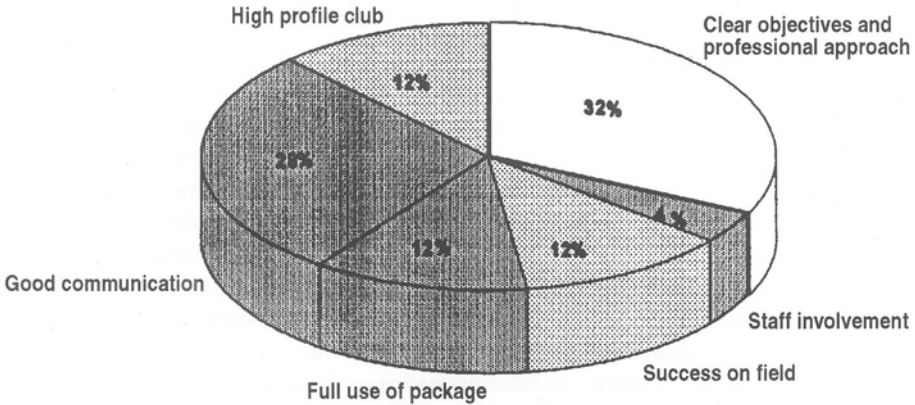


Figure 3 Critical success factors

Although seven-point scales may be viewed liberally as interval measures, the more rigorous approach adopted in this study based on ordinal measures necessitates the application of non-parametric tests.

Given the much higher fees demanded by the Premier League clubs and the corresponding resource commitment needed by sponsoring companies, it was hypothesized that such companies would adopt a more professional approach and illustrate this through a broader implementation of the procedures outlined in the literature. To some extent differences between the sponsors of Premier League and Division One clubs are apparent. Sponsors of Premier League clubs are more proactive in seeking and securing sponsorship opportunities ($p < 0.03$), compare more clubs before coming to a decision ($p < 0.04$) and negotiate longer-term contracts ($p < 0.03$). They also place greater emphasis on targeting the general public ($p < 0.02$) and the local community ($p < 0.03$) and make more extensive use of PR in support of their sponsorship initiatives ($p < 0.02$). Greater evaluation of media exposure ($p < 0.04$) and communication effectiveness ($p < 0.03$) is also undertaken. This suggests a more systematic and objective approach which includes not only short-term considerations of current customers but the use of sponsorship to develop positive corporate images in advance of customer conversion initiatives.

The sponsors of Premier League clubs are also more likely to have personal objectives ($p < 0.01$) which not surprisingly correspond with the greater involvement of the Chief Executive in the selection process ($p < 0.04$). However, the earlier evidence suggests that this personal interest is not necessarily divorced from wider business considerations.

CONCLUSIONS

Sports sponsorship now represents a multi-million pound industry. Professional football, through sponsorship of competitions and clubs, is a major beneficiary.

There is general endorsement of the view that it is a good thing to do, and the evidence suggests that a large majority of companies plan to extend their involvement. Particular qualities of professional football as a focus for sponsorship are high profile and large-scale media coverage.

Key personnel in the decision to become involved in professional football sponsorship are the Board of Directors and Chief Executive, who tend to consider location as a major influence on the choice of club. A wide range of objectives are prescribed for sponsorship, although these are predominantly corporate and include increasing awareness, media coverage, community benefit, trade relations and hospitality. The emphasis given to particular objectives and the target audience is influenced by the nature of the business activity, for example, consumer or industrial markets. However, potential and existing customers, the public at large and the local community are common to most companies. The workforce and a range of channel intermediaries are important audiences for particular companies.

The extent to which the body of sponsorship theory is acknowledged and applied varies across companies with examples of both good and bad practice. Several key areas would benefit from further attention. Objectives often appear to be imprecise and are not developed in a form that allows subsequent evaluation. Given that objectives represent the cornerstone of sponsorship activity, through the provision of a benchmark against which to assess performance, a more serious attempt to establish quantifiable objectives might have been expected. The relationship between sponsorship objectives and those relating to other elements of the communication mix is not fully explored and consequently there is a lack of effective integration.

Perhaps the uncommitted approach to evaluating the effectiveness of professional football sponsorship is not surprising given the problems identified with regard to objective setting. While those companies who do use evaluation methods suggest a variety of approaches, they are not particularly sophisticated and there is some doubt about the depth and frequency of analysis. Finally, the budgets allocated to support sponsorship activity are significantly less than the levels prescribed in the literature. Despite the comprehensive nature of some associations, leverage expenditure appears inadequate to optimize the relationship. Further insights into these issues could be gained by qualitative studies at the level of individual companies and this could form the basis for continuing academic research.

The paradox in these findings is the fact that a large number of companies can identify the criteria which theoreticians advocate as essential to successful sponsorship. Nevertheless, these measures are not necessarily adopted. This suggests either a lack of confidence in the validity and relevance of current theory or possibly insufficient knowledge of how these prescriptions can be implemented effectively. It is here that greater reference to external expertise may pay dividends.

A range of approaches to professional football sponsorship are revealed in the research. Some companies illustrate a clear rationale for sponsorship and put in place an effective framework for its management. Others adopt a very casual

approach which bears little relationship to the theoretical prescriptions outlined in the literature. While these companies do not subscribe to the view that their sponsorship activity is influenced by the hobby motive, the evidence suggests otherwise. The inclusion of a personal agenda is not of itself detrimental, as the interest and support of senior executives should ensure the commitment of other staff in the organization. Nevertheless, where personal motives are unhinged from business considerations and result in an unprofessional approach to the management of sponsorship programmes, companies not only do a disservice to themselves, but also to the sponsorship medium in general. Given that the vast majority of companies express a very positive view of their experience with professional football sponsorship and that there is evidence of a failure to employ a number of the techniques advocated in the literature, more specifically by sponsors of Division One clubs, opportunities clearly exist for the medium to make an even greater contribution to corporate communication objectives.

While sponsorship activity is popular in a number of European countries (see Table 1), there is evidence to suggest that the attitudes of customers are different and that sponsorship does not always talk the same language (Marshall, 1993). Further studies will be undertaken with a view to identifying the extent to which these differences are accommodated by companies who are involved in the sponsorship of teams in some of Europe's major football leagues.¹

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¹ In this connection the author would welcome approaches from colleagues in Europe with a view to collaborative research.

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APPENDIX A

The FA Premier League shirt sponsors – Season 1992/93

<i>Club</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
Arsenal	JVC
Aston Villa	Mita Copiers
Blackburn Rovers	McEwans
Chelsea	Commadore Computers
Coventry City	Peugeot
Crystal Palace	Tulip Computers
Everton	NEC
Ipswich Town	Fisons
Leeds United	Admiral Sportswear
Liverpool	Carlsberg
Manchester City	Brother
Manchester United	Sharpe
Middlesbrough	ICI
Norwich City	Norwich & Peterborough Building Society
Nottingham Forest	Shipstones (home matches)
	Labatts (all TV matches and away second strip)
Oldham Athletic	JD Sports
Queens Park Rangers	Classic FM
Sheffield United	Laver (Builders Merchants)
Sheffield Wednesday	Sandersons
Southampton	Draper Tools
Tottenham Hotspur	Holsten
Wimbledon ¹	-

1 Wimbledon had no sponsor at the time of the study

APPENDIX B

The Barclays League shirt sponsors – Season 1992/93

<i>Club</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>
Barnsley	T. Hayselden Ltd
Birmingham City	Triton PLC
Brentford	KLM Royal Dutch Airlines
Bristol City	Thorn Security
Bristol Rovers	Roman Glass
Cambridge United	Fujitsu
Charlton Athletic ¹	-
Derby County	Autowindcreens
Grimsby Town	Ciba-Geigy Chemicals Ltd
Leicester City	Walkers Crisps
Luton Town	Universal Salvage Auctions
Millwall	Fairview New Homes PLC
Newcastle United	Newcastle Breweries Ltd
Notts County	Home Bitter/McEwans Lager
Oxford United	Unipart
Peterborough United	Thomas Cook
Portsmouth	Goodmans
Southend United	Elonex
Sunderland	Vaux Breweries
Swindon Town	Burmah Petroleum Fuels Ltd
Tranmere Rovers	Wirral Borough Council
Watford	RCI
West Ham United	Dagenham Motors
Wolverhampton Wanderers	Goodyear

1 Charlton Athletic had no sponsor at the time of the study