

Why sponsorships fail from a marketing view

A total of 64 FIFA World Cup matches will be played over a period of 25 match days from 11 June to 11 July 2010. Whether you will watch the games on television, online or inside the stadium, it will be impossible to escape the colourful logos and slogans of sponsors.

 By [Thabani Khumalo](#) 8 Jun 2010

From old-fashioned advertisement boards, multifaceted merchandise, electronic images chasing each other around the ground's perimeter to ground paintings, sponsorship marketing has become synonymous with sports, particularly soccer. But does sports sponsorship generate any business spin-offs? Or is it enough to say glibly that sponsorship raises brand awareness, builds brand profiles, contributes to sport development or is it done because competitors do it?

Sponsorship, a vehicle to achieve commercial goals

The days when companies used to sponsor the chair's or CEO's favourite hobby are over, and today's companies sponsor to achieve definite commercial objectives. Marketers who wanted to focus their communication and capitalise on a captive and attentive market - pre, during and post 2010 World Cup have incorporated soccer sponsorship into their integrated marketing mix.

However, some corporates will fail to reap sponsorship benefits because they handed over their cheques to FIFA and LOC, and appear to sit back and do nothing more than monitor on- and off-site branding, media coverage and corporate VIP hospitality. Why do most sports sponsorships fail from a marketing view?

Sponsorship works well in a marketing team

From a marketing point of view, sports sponsorship cannot operate in isolation. It should be supported beyond its direct cost, and leveraged across a holistic marketing communication mix in-order to achieve maximum benefits. It takes extra resources to make the sponsorship work. Sponsors can invest vast capital into brands promotion technology such as billboards, electronic images or multifaceted merchandise, but nothing replaces the power of human voice.

Successful sponsors invest more resources in order to make their sponsorships work. It is within this context that most World Cup sponsors are concurrently running intensive print, television and radio commercials featuring soccer national players, followers, experts and the general public.

The latest advertising trend report ahead of the tournament revealed that advertisement in general is more buoyant than previous years. And sponsors such as Telkom, McDonald, MTN, FNB, Castrol, Coca-Cola, Adidas and SABC have spent a lion's share of their corporates' marketing budgets on tournament-related advertisements. Wise decisions indeed.

Sponsorship should be executed like sports

A well-executed sponsorship campaign should not be an expense but an asset that gives the sponsor a competitive advantage on the economic landscape. Therefore soccer sponsorship, like a soccer match, should be managed closely, monitored consistently, and be executed within a clearly defined game plan,

tactic and technique to achieve positive and tangible business results.

While celebrating the first world cup on African soil, I wish sponsors, thousands of players and officials, hundreds of journalists and soccer experts, billions of television and online viewers, and thousands of games' spectators, a successful, victorious, exciting, and entertaining tournament. I am convinced that global citizens will enjoy an African experience, direct and indirect.

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