

*Thoughts of University Students about the Organizations That Undertake
Environment Sponsorship*

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The Asian Conference on Media & Mass Communication 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Sponsorship is one of the most important subjects in the public relations discipline. There are various sponsorship areas. One of these areas is environmental sponsorship. Organizations conduct environmental sponsorship activities to achieve several goals. This study aims to determine the thoughts of university students towards the organizations that undertake environmental sponsorship. Survey method was used in the study. In this context a questionnaire was applied on 400 university students from Selcuk University by using face-to-face technique. One of the results of the study indicates that most of the students have positive attitudes towards the organizations that undertake environmental sponsorship activities. Another result shows that most of the students approve that the organizations that conduct environmental sponsorship activities are more reliable organizations for them.

Keywords: sponsorship, environmental sponsorship, university students

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Introduction

Today increase of similar products and services and awakening of the consumers have raised the importance of the symbolic features in the relationships between the brands and consumers. Sponsorship practice is an important communication strategy. Consumers give more importance to sponsorship practices than advertisements which are broadcasted in communication tools by paying the price (Enginkaya, 2014).

Sponsorship is a support to a certain event which is not related directly with a corporation's normal activities or a person. Besides sponsorship is an important marketing communication tool which aims to reach proper advertising for a corporation or a brand (Cliffe & Motion, 2005).

Sponsorship was defined by Meenaghan from a marcom perspective by stating that "sponsorship is an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with this activity". According to this definition, it can be concluded that sponsorship is an independent marketing communication activity that ultimately attempts to impact a firm's bottom line positively. As a result of this, a claim stating that sponsorship should be considered as an independent marketing communication activity, which has shared goals with the traditional marketing communications elements and achieves these objectives in an indirect manner as general public relations and marketing public relations (MPR) do, would doubtless wring strong support from academia and practitioners (Erdoğan & Kitchen, 1998).

Sponsorship spending has increased significantly in the last 30 years, from just \$2 billion worldwide in 1984 to \$55,3 billion in 2014. The increasing of sponsorship activities reflects the growing belief that developing a brand through association with an event might be effective in building brand equity (Mazodier, 2016).

Sponsorship potentially provides the opportunity for brands to leverage brand experiences that would not otherwise be possible, by linking the event experience to the brand. Also, intense brand image and brand personality associations could be created and strengthened via the experiential aspects of sponsorship (Cliffie & Motion, 2005).

The expectations of businesses from the sponsorship activities are classified as indicated below (Çoban, 2003):

- Large scaled support activities cause image and assessments such as greatness about business, financial power, and international prestige.
- The aim of sponsor is to share the image and prestige of the event via associating the company name with the supported event.
- Businesses obtain an opportunity to reveal their responsibilities to society by sponsorship.
- The aim of the sponsorship usage in newly established businesses is to increase the recognition rate of business in the market. To realise this aim, the popularity of supported area come into prominence.
- The businesses can use the sponsorship activities to change their images.

- The businesses obtain the chance to announce themselves and their products on the media.
- Sponsorship is a marketing communication tool to create brand and corporate image for the businesses which manufacture advertising banned products such as alcohol, and cigarette.

In a study sponsorship aims are presented as below (Okay, 2005):

- To announce the advertising banned products on radio and televisions.
- To support the products.
- To use other advertising opportunities.
- To increase the recognition of brand and Corporation
- To support brand and corporate image.
- To reinforce corporate identity.
- To gain goodwill of the society.
- To draw attention of the media.
- To develop the motivation of employees and internal relations
- To promote a product
- To place a product in a market.
- To support the usage of product
- To increase customer loyalty
- To support the sellers
- To change the marketing policy.
- International marketing

It can be said that the environmental sponsorship have become popular in recent years. The environmental sponsorship has been conducted to inform citizens about the topics such as cleaning, environment pollution, afforestation and to support the precautions about these topics (Çoban, 2003).

Environment sponsorship give the opportunity to the businesses to show their responsibilities for their society and it provides large opportunities for small scale and medium scaled enterprises. About the environment, competitions can be organized, campaigns can be organized, the informing activities can be done, concrete aid programs can be prepared, sports competitions can be organized and a concert revenue can be donated. For this reason environment sponsorship can be appeared as an event or corporate social responsibility (Peltekoğlu, 2014).

Meenaghan and Shipley categorize sponsorship types as sports, high art, mass art, social causes and environment programmes. When the sponsorship types in literature are examined they can be classified in main topics such as sports sponsorship, culture and art sponsorship, social sponsorship, media sponsorship, adventure and travel sponsorship (Ateşoğlu, 2010). Environmental sponsorship can be accepted as a sub-category of social sponsorship.

According to Head in general sponsorship can be illustrated as a mutually beneficial business relationship between two parties being named as sponsor (usually companies) and sponsored (e.g. actors in the field of arts, sports, education). Nowadays also other parties- e.g. sponsorship agencies and media organizations are getting involved increasingly (Olkkonen, 2001).

It can be said that in most instances sponsorship involves three actors: the sponsor, agency events, and consumers. The sponsor can provide financial support, equipment, or know-how; in return, the event organizer will help provide an image and awareness, promoting its event space for the sponsor (Cheblia & Gharbib, 2014).

Sponsor companies use various communication strategies, and 85% of companies see sponsorship as part of their marketing strategy. Nowadays sponsorship has become one of the most important factors in the marketing communications business (Cheblia & Gharbib, 2014).

The firms with their sponsorship activities which are to protect the nature and environment show their sensitiveness to these areas. Also they try to leave a livable environment for future generations by demonstrating a good example of social responsibility. Especially in recent years environmental issues which are universal like global warming reveal that both the corporations and the individuals need to give more importance to these environmental issues. The corporations, which prevent nature's and environment's renewal themselves and pollute the environment, are not tolerated by the society. The subject of environment is not only today's issue but also it is the issue of the next generations (Okay, 2005: 166).

In USA the firms conduct the environmental and nature sponsorships in the areas such as protecting the green fields for the city and monuments, regulating the traffic, determining the water conservation areas, creating shopping centers, protecting the parks, regulating the public areas. The sponsor firms try to inform their target groups about their sponsorship activities by denominating to their sponsored areas and activities. Corporations can link between their brands and their environmental and nature sponsorship activities. Also they can utilise from these sponsorships in their other communication activities like advertising (cited from Erdtmann; Okay, 2005: 164).

The corporations which damage to the environment with their products carry out some environmental sponsorship activities in order to demonstrate that they minimize the damage and their sensitiveness to the environment (Cited from Greener; Okay, 2005).

In Turkey some corporations and firms conduct environmental sponsorship activities. One of them is Konya Şeker draws attention with its afforestation works especially in Konya and its region. It can be said that these activities affect its target groups' impressions positively toward Konya Şeker and its brands.

Methodology

In this study survey method was used. A face to face questionnaire was applied on 400 participants in Konya. The questions were asked to participants in order to determine their views and attitudes about environment sponsorship. Data were analyzed by using various statistical tests. By the study the views and attitudes of participants about environment sponsorship was evaluated. Also whether the participants' views and attitudes are differentiated or not according to their genders and ages were examined.

Findings

In this part firstly the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are presented. Then the views and attitudes of the participants on environment sponsorship and the corporations which undertake environment sponsorship are mentioned.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

In this part of the study the data about the genders and ages of the participants are presented.

Table 1: Distributions of Participants According to Gender

Gender	N	%
Female	235	58,8
Male	165	41,3
Total	400	100

According to the gender distributions, 58,8 percent of participants are female (N=235) and 41,2 percent of participants are male.

Table 2: Distributions of the Participants According to Their Age Ranges

Age ranges	N	%
16-26	288	72
27-36	92	23
37-46	20	5
Total	400	100

Table 2 shows the distributions of the participants according to their ranges. According to the table, 72 percent of the participants are between the ages of 16-26; 23 percent of them are between the ages of 27-36 and 5 percent of them are between the ages of 37-46.

The Attitudes of the Participants to the Statements about Environment Sponsorship

In this part attitudes of the participants for the statements about environment sponsorship are presented.

Table 3: The Attitudes of the Participants to the Statements about Environment Sponsorship

Statements	Never		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The sincerety of the sponsor is important for me.	14	3,5	63	15,8	87	21,8	236	59
The image of the corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship is important.	17	4,3	61	15,3	122	30,5	200	50
The corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship draws my attention.	10	2,5	95	23,8	135	33,8	160	40
I think positively about the corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship.	15	3,8	89	22,3	136	34	160	40
My trust increases to the corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship.	22	5,5	77	19,3	154	38,5	147	36,8
Environment sponsorship provides that I consider the products of sponsor corporation.	17	4,3	86	21,5	165	41,3	132	33
Environment sponsorship increases the possibility of my usage of sponsor corporation's products.	19	4,8	102	25,5	153	38,3	126	31,5
I prefer the products of an environment sponsor to others even if its products are more expensive.	37	9,3	156	39	100	25	107	26,8
I prefer the corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship of which price and properties of its products are as same as others.	13	3,3	90	22,5	144	36	153	38,3
I trust local environment sponsor corporations more than foreign environment sponsors.	33	8,3	76	19	130	32,5	161	40,3
A corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship in my hometown is important for me.	34	8,5	72	18	129	32,3	165	41,3
A corporation which has undertaken environment sponsorship effects my first time preference of its products.	29	7,3	118	29,5	128	32	125	31,3
If a corporation undertakes more than one environment sponsorship activities, this situation effects my product preference.	17	4,3	95	23,8	132	33	156	39

About the statement that “The sincerity of the sponsor is important for me”, 3,5 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 15,8 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 21,8 percent of them answered as “often” and 59 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “The image of the Corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship is important”, 4,3 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 15,3 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 30,5 percent of them answered as “often” and 50 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “The corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship draws my attention”, 2,5 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 23,8 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 33,8 percent of them answered as “often” and 40 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “I think positively about the corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship”, 3,8 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 22,3 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 34 percent of them answered as “often” and 40 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “My trust increases to the corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship”, 5,5 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 19,3 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 38,5 percent of them answered as “often” and 36,8 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “Environment sponsorship provides that I consider the products of sponsor corporation”, 4,3 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 21,5 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 41,3 percent of them answered as “often” and 33 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “Environment sponsorship increases the possibility of my usage of sponsor corporation’s products”, 4,8 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 25,5 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 38,3 percent of them answered as “often” and 31,5 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “I prefer the products of an environment sponsor to others even if its products are more expensive”, 9,3 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 39 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 25 percent of them answered as “often” and 26,8 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “I prefer the corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship of which price and properties of its products are as same as others”, 3,3 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 22,5 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 36 percent of them answered as “often” and 38,3 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “I trust local environment sponsor corporations more than foreign environment sponsors”, 8,3 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 19 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 32,5 percent of them answered as “often” and 40,3 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “A corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship in my hometown is important for me”, 8,5 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 18 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 32,3 percent of them answered as “often” and 41,3 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “A corporation which has undertaken environment sponsorship effects my first time preference of its products”, 7,3 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 29,5 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 32 percent of them answered as “often” and 31,3 percent of them answered as “always”.

About the statement that “If a corporation undertakes more than one environment sponsorship activities, this situation effects my product preference”, 4,3 percent of the participants answered as “never”, 23,8 percent of them answered as “sometimes”, 33 percent of them answered as “often” and 39 percent of them answered as “always”.

The Relations Between the Statements and Genders

In this part whether the participants’ answers are differentiated or not according to their genders are presented.

Table 4: The Relationship Between the Statement “The image of the Corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship is important” and Gender

Gender	The image of the Corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship is important							
	Never		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	8	3,4	30	12,8	62	26,4	135	57,4
Male	9	5,5	31	18,8	60	36,4	65	39,4
Total	17	4,3	61	15,3	122	30,5	200	50
X² = 12,74; df = 3; p = ,005								

According to the answers 57,4 percent of females answered as “always”, 26,4 as “often”, 12,8 as “sometimes” and 3,4 as “never”. 39,4 percent of the males answered this statement as “always”, 36,4 as “often”, 18,8 as “sometimes” and 5,5 as “never”.

Table 5: The Relationship Between the Statement “If a corporation undertakes more than one environment sponsorship activities, this situation effects my product preference” and Gender

Gender	If a corporation undertakes more than one environment sponsorship activities, this situation effects my product preference.							
	Never		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	13	5,5	65	27,7	82	34,9	75	31,9
Male	4	2,4	30	18,2	50	30,3	81	49,1
Total	17	4,3	95	23,8	132	33	156	39
X² = 13,82; df = 3; p = ,003								

While the rate of male participants who give the answer of “always” for the statement “If a corporation undertakes more than one environment sponsorship activities, this situation effects my product preference” are higher than female participants, the rate

of female participants who give answers “often”, “sometimes” and “never” for this statement are higher than male participants.

The Relations Between the Statements and Age Ranges

The answers of the participants about some statements were differentiated according to their age ranges.

Table 6: The Relationship Between the Statement “The image of the Corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship is important” and Age Ranges

Age Ranges	The image of the Corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship is important							
	Never		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
16-26	13	4,5	42	14,6	78	27,1	155	53,8
27-36	2	2,2	13	14,1	35	38	42	45,7
37-46	2	10	6	30	9	45	3	15
Total	17	4,3	61	15,3	122	30,5	200	50
X²= 15,83; df= 6; p= ,015								

The rate of participants who give the answer of “always” for the statement “The image of the Corporation which undertakes environment sponsorship is important” are the highest among the participant between the ages of 16-26. It is seen that the rate of the participants who give the answers of “often”, “sometimes” and “never” are the highest among the participants between the ages of 37-46.

Table 7: The Relationship Between the Statement “I prefer the products of an environment sponsor to others even if its products are more expensive” and Age Ranges

Age ranges	I prefer the products of an environment sponsor to others even if its products are more expensive							
	Never		Sometimes		Often		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
16-26	27	9,4	127	44,1	68	23,6	66	22,9
27-36	10	10,9	26	28,3	24	26,1	32	34,8
37-46	0	0	3	15	8	40	9	45
Total	37	9,3	156	39	100	25	107	26,8
X²= 18,06; df= 6; p= ,006								

The rate of participants who give the answers of “always” and “often” for the statement “I prefer the products of an environment sponsor to others even if its products are more expensive” are the highest among the participants between the ages of 37-46. The rate of participants who give the answer of “sometimes” for this statement are the highest among the participants between the ages of 16-26. It is understood that the rate of the participants who give the answer of “never” are the highest among the participants between the ages of 27-36.

The Interest Level of the Participants Towards the Events of Environment Sponsorship

In this part the interest level of participants related with the events of environmental sponsorship are presented.

Table 8: The Interest Level of the Participants Towards the Events of Environment Sponsorship

Interest Level	N	%
Low	54	13,5
Middle	210	52,5
High	136	34
Total	400	100

The participants were asked in which level they were interested in environment sponsorship events. For this question 13,5 percent of the participants answered as “low”, 52,5 percent of them answered as “middle” and 34 percent of them answered as “high”.

The Views of the Participants About the Practices Which Should Be Increased by the Corporations about Environment Sponsorship

In this part of the study the views of the participants about the practices which should be increased by the corporations are presented.

Table 9: The Practices Which Should Be Increased by the Corporations

Practices	N	%
Garbage collection	88	22
Protection of natural sources	131	32,8
Afforestation	172	43
To raise awareness of citizens about environment	8	2
Total	399	100

The participants were asked which practices should be increased by the corporations about environment sponsorship. According to the answers 22 percent of the participants answered as “garbage collection”, 32,8 percent of them answered as “protection of natural sources”, 43 percent of them answered as “afforestation” and 2 percent of them answered as “to raise awareness of citizens about environment”. It can be said that according to answers the rate of participants who think that the sponsorship practices related with afforestation should be increased are more than the others.

Conclusion

Most of the participants think that the sincerity and the images of environmental sponsors are important.

The results show that most of the participants think positively about the environmental sponsors and their confidence increases to the companies if they undertake environmental sponsorship activities.

Many of the participants stated that they might prefer the products of an environment sponsor even if its products are more expensive than the products of other companies. According to the results of the study it can be stated that more than 90 percent of the participants have a favorable image towards the corporations which undertake environmental sponsorship.

It can be said that female participants and the participants between the ages of 16-26 pay more attention to the image of the environmental sponsors than the other participants.

It can be stated that the participants between the ages of 37-46 tend to buy the products of environmental sponsors more than other age groups.

As a general result of this study it can be argued that the participants are sensitive to environment and give great importance to the environment sponsorships.

Acknowledgement

This study has been supported by the Scientific Research Projects Unit of Selcuk University, Konya/Turkey.

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