

The Views of University Students on Sponsorship

Omer Bakan, Selcuk University, Turkey
Kadir Canoz, Selcuk University, Turkey

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Abstract

Sponsorship is an important work area for public relations academics and practitioners. Sponsorship connections between an organization and its publics can lead to mutually beneficial relationships and outcomes. Sponsorship is a way of achieving a number of public relations, advertising and marketing objectives for organizations. University students have various views on sponsorship. In this study the views of university students about sponsorship was analyzed. To accomplish this goal, a field research was conducted on the students of Selcuk University. Selcuk University is one of Turkey's largest universities. Face to face survey was applied on 404 students for data collection. The results of the research indicate that sponsorship is mostly regarded as a financial support, advertising and philanthropic act by university students.

Keywords: Sponsorship, university students, public relations

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Introduction

Commensurate with its growth as a marketing communication vehicle, sponsorship has, in recent years, been the focus of intense academic interest (Fahy et al., 2004: 1013). Sponsorship has grown a lot in recent years. The various factors which have been behind sponsorship's growth have been identified as: government policies on the advertising of some products, escalating costs of media advertising, new opportunities because of increased leisure activity, the proven ability of sponsorship, greater media coverage of sponsored events, inefficiencies in traditional media (Meenaghan, 1991: 5).

Meenaghan define sponsorship as “an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity, person or event (sponsee), in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity, person or event by the investor (sponsor)” (Farrelly et al., 1997:172).

Sponsorship is the act of supporting a person, organization, or activity by giving money, equipment, material, service, staff or other help. A corporation pays for all of some of the costs associated with a project or program in exchange for recognition. Corporations may have their logos and brand names displayed alongside of the organization undertaking the project or program, with specific mention that the corporation has provided funding. Corporate sponsorships are commonly associated with nonprofit groups, who generally would not be able to fund operations and activities without outside financial assistance. It is not the same as philanthropy (<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/corporate-sponsorship.asp>).

In the past few decades, many sports, events, festivals, and arts-related activities have come to have corporate sponsors (McAlister et al., 2012: 6). Sport sponsorship was an estimated 69% of the total sponsorship expenditure in 2012 (www.sponsorship.com).

Quite apart from its ability to target a wide variety of corporate audiences, the versatility of the medium enables it to fulfil many of the basic functions performed by other elements of the marketing communication mix. While its capacity to fulfil a public relations type function is obvious, the corporate hospitality component of sponsorship provides the context so eminently suitable for relationship management and fundamental to selling function (Meneeghan, 1991: 8).

Sponsorship can be considered as an effective public relations tool. Sponsorship may be undertaken for public relations, advertising and marketing objectives (Okay, 2005: 46-70). Objectives of sponsorship are (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998: 12):

- ⊙ 1. Improving goodwill
- ⊙ 2. Enhancing image
- ⊙ 3. Increasing awareness
- ⊙ 4. Improving profitability
- ⊙ 5. Management interest
- ⊙ 6. Staff recruitment

Enhancing employee motivation can be considered as an objective of sponsorship. Another objective of sponsorship may be to form relationships with customer (Dolphin: 2003: 177-182).

“Sponsorship of certain products –especially tobacco and alcohol- will also be the subject of increased attention. The development of legislation limiting the use of sponsorship to promote products detrimental to health can be expected worldwide” (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998: 18-19). Sponsorships of tobacco and alcohol manufacturers may be perceived unfavorable for some people.

Sponsorship has become elevated to the corporate strategic planning instrument and is more likely to be discussed in the context of integrated marketing programs that can take advantage of the reach of traditional advertising as well as the emotional and experiential benefits earned through partnerships with sports, arts, entertainment, cause and cultural entities (www.sponsorship.com).

In public relations literature there are a lot of studies about sponsorship. But in Turkey, the number of the studies to determine the image of sponsorship are limited.

In this study, it was aimed to determine the views of university students on sponsorship. For that purpose, a field research was carried out on the students of Selcuk University.

Methods

In this study, the views of university students on sponsorship were examined. In the study survey method was used. A face-to-face survey was conducted with 404 university students from Selcuk University. Selcuk University is one of the biggest universities in Turkey. Random sampling method was used in this study. In order to reveal the views of university students on sponsorship a questionnaire form which includes 3 sections was prepared. In the first part of the questionnaire, questions were employed in order to determine the impressions and opinions of students about sponsorship and sponsor organizations. In the second part of the questionnaire, five point likert questions (1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly agree) were employed in order to determine the attitudes of the university students on sponsorship. The third part of the questionnaire included questions to reveal the characteristics of the participants such as gender and academic units. Frequencies, Chi Square Test, and T Test were used to analyze data.

Research questions are:

- 1-What is the first thing that comes to students’ minds when they hear the word ‘sponsorship’?
- 2-Which area is the most common area of sponsorship according to the students?
- 3- In which areas sponsorship should be done according to the students?
- 4-How are the students’ impressions, opinions and attitudes towards sponsorship and sponsoring corporations?
- 5-What do students think about cigarette and alcohol manufacturers which undertake sponsorship?

6-Are the attitudes of students towards sponsorship differentiate according to their gender and academic units?

Findings

Some Characteristics of the Participants

Some findings expressing the characteristics of the participants are as follows:

- From the point of gender, 45.6% of the participants is female while 54.4% of them is male. The obtained percentages have enough level to make comparisons from the point of gender.
- From the point of academic units, 3.5% of the participants are from Faculty of Medicine, 7.4% from Faculty of Communication, 17.1% from Faculty of Engineering, 12.6% from Faculty of Letters, 12.1% from Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 7.2% from Faculty of Sciences, 7.9% from Faculty of Law, 5.7% from Faculty of Technology, 3.2% from Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, 4.5% from Faculty of Architecture, 4% from Physical Education and Sports High School, 4% from Vocational School of Social Sciences, 2.5% from Faculty of Vocational Education, 0.2% from Faculty of Art and Design, 5% from Faculty of Health Sciences, 0.2% from Vocational School of Health Services, 2.7% from Dilek Sabanci State Conservatory.

Students' Impressions And Opinions About Sponsorship

When asked “what is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word sponsorship?” 34.7% of the respondents said “financial support”, 30.1% said “advertisement” and 18.8% said “philanthropy” (Table 1).

Table 1: The First Thing That Comes to the Students' Minds When They Hear the Word 'Sponsorship'

| | n | % |
|----------------------|-----|------|
| Financial support | 129 | 34.7 |
| Advertisement | 112 | 30.1 |
| Philanthropy/Charity | 70 | 18.8 |
| Mutual support | 16 | 4.3 |
| Image/Reputation | 12 | 3.2 |
| Sports | 11 | 3.0 |
| Others | 8 | 2.1 |

When asked “which area is the most common for sponsorship?” the order of the answers was such that 65.3% said “sports”, 22.4% said “culture/ arts”, 9% said “education”, 1.7% said “health” and 1.5% said other areas (Table 2). Many of respondents regarded sports as the most common area for sponsorship.

Table 2: The Most Common Area For Sponsorship

| Areas | n | % |
|---------------|-----|------|
| Sports | 262 | 65.3 |
| Culture/ Arts | 90 | 22.4 |
| Education | 36 | 9.0 |

| | | |
|--------|-----|-----|
| Health | 7 | 1.7 |
| Others | 6 | 1.5 |
| Total | 401 | 100 |

When asked “in which area do you think sponsorship should be done?” 47.3% of the respondents said “education”, 22.5% said “culture/ arts”, 15.6% said “health”, 12.4% said “sports” and 2.1% said other areas (Table 3). Almost half of the respondents think that sponsorship should be done in the area of education.

Table 3: In Which Area Do You Think Sponsorship Should Be Done?

| Areas | n | % |
|---------------|-----|------|
| Education | 191 | 47.3 |
| Culture/ Arts | 91 | 22.5 |
| Health | 63 | 15.6 |
| Sports | 50 | 12.4 |
| Others | 9 | 2.1 |
| Total | 404 | 100 |

When asked “what is the most important objective of sponsorship?” 41.9% of the respondents said “to promote brand/organization”, 31.8% said “to strengthen corporate image”, 15.3% said “to promote product/service”, 8.8% said “to increase sales”, 2.3% said other objectives (Table 4).

Table 4: The Most Important Objective of Sponsorship

| Objectives | n | % |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|
| To promote brand/organization | 167 | 41.9 |
| To strengthen corporate image | 127 | 31.8 |
| To promote product/service | 61 | 15.3 |
| To increase sales | 35 | 8.8 |
| Others | 9 | 2.3 |
| Total | 399 | 100 |

According to the results of chi-square test, there is no significant relationships between gender and the variables.

Students’ Impressions And Opinions About Sponsoring Corporations

When asked “which is the first corporation that comes to your mind as a sponsor?” 13.1% said “Ulker”, 11.7% said “Torku”, 9.5% said “Turkcell”, 7.8% said “Turk Telekom”, 5.8% said “Adidas”, 5.3% said Turkish Airlines, 4.5% said “Avea”, 3.9% said “Vodafone”, 3.9% said “Koç”, 3.6% said “Coca Cola” and 33.2% of the respondents said the names of other corporations (Table 5).

Table 5: Which is the First Corporation that Comes to Your Mind as a Sponsor?

| Corporations | n | % |
|--------------|----|------|
| Ulker | 47 | 13.1 |
| Torku | 42 | 11.7 |
| Turkcell | 34 | 9.5 |

| | | |
|------------------|-----|------|
| Turk Telekom | 28 | 7.8 |
| Adidas | 21 | 5.8 |
| Turkish Airlines | 19 | 5.3 |
| Avea | 16 | 4.5 |
| Vodafone | 14 | 3.9 |
| Koç | 14 | 3.9 |
| Others | 119 | 33.2 |
| Total | 359 | 100 |

When asked “which is the most successful corporation with its sponsorship activities?” 11.4% of the respondents said “Ulker”, 11.4% said “Torku”, 9.2% said “Turkcell”, 8.9% said “Turkish Airlines”, 5.5% said “Efes Pilsen”, 4.9% said “Koç”, 4.6% said “Turk Telekom”, 4.3% said “Coca Cola”, 4.3% said “Avea”, 3.7% said “Adidas”, 3.7% said “Nike” and 28.1% said the name of other organizations (Table 6).

Table 6: The Most Successful Corporations with Their Sponsorship Activities

| Corporations | n | % |
|------------------|-----|------|
| Ulker | 37 | 11.4 |
| Torku | 37 | 11.4 |
| Turkcell | 30 | 9.2 |
| Turkish Airlines | 29 | 8.9 |
| Efes Pilsen | 18 | 5.5 |
| Koç | 16 | 4.9 |
| Turk Telekom | 15 | 4.6 |
| Avea | 14 | 4.3 |
| Coca Cola | 14 | 4.3 |
| Adidas | 12 | 3.7 |
| Nike | 12 | 3.7 |
| Others | 91 | 28.1 |
| Total | 325 | 100 |

When asked “what do you think about the cigarette manufacturers which undertake sponsorship?” 32% said “very negative”, 27.3% said “negative”, 26.8% said “neither positive nor negative”, 8.7% said “positive” and 5.2% said “very positive” (Table 7). More than half of the students think negatively about the cigarette manufacturers which undertake sponsorship.

Table 7: Opinions About the Cigarette Manufacturers which Undertake Sponsorship

| Opinions | n | % |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|
| Very negative | 129 | 32 |
| Negative | 110 | 27.3 |
| Neither positive nor negative | 108 | 26.8 |
| Positive | 35 | 8.7 |
| Very positive | 21 | 5.2 |
| Total | 403 | 100 |

According to the results of t test, there were no significant differences between the opinions of male and female students about the cigarette manufacturers which undertake sponsorship ($t = .114, p > .05$).

When asked “what do you think about the alcohol manufacturers which undertake sponsorship?” 35.3% said “very negative”, 23% said “negative”, 24.8% said “neither positive nor negative”, 10.6% said “positive” and 5.9% said “very positive” (Table 8). More than half of the students think negatively about the alcohol manufacturers which undertake sponsorship.

Table 8: Opinions About the Alcohol Manufacturers which Undertake Sponsorship

| Opinions | n | % |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|
| Very negative | 142 | 35.3 |
| Negative | 93 | 23 |
| Neither positive nor negative | 100 | 24.8 |
| Positive | 43 | 10.6 |
| Very positive | 24 | 5.9 |
| Total | 402 | 100 |

According to the results of t test, there were no significant differences between the opinions of male and female students about the alcohol manufacturers which undertake sponsorship ($t = -1.94, p > .05$).

Students’ Attitudes Towards Sponsorship and Sponsoring Corporations

Some judgements were presented to students in order to determine their attitudes towards sponsorship and sponsoring corporations. Students’ attitudes towards sponsorship and sponsoring corporations are given below.

Table 9: Mean Scores of Attitudes towards Sponsorship and Sponsoring Corporations
5= strongly agree, 1= strongly disagree

| | Mean | Standart deviation |
|---|------|--------------------|
| Corporations reach advertising goals by undertaking sponsorship | 4.13 | 1.24 |
| Sponsorship contributes recognition to a corporation | 4.07 | 1.41 |
| A corporation enhances its image by undertaking sponsorship | 4.03 | 1.30 |
| Corporations can’t get any benefits by undertaking sponsorship | 1.93 | 1.24 |
| Sponsorship budget of a corporation is unnecessary | 1.82 | 1.26 |
| There is no need to undertake sponsorship for corporations | 1.73 | 1.27 |

When we compare the mean scores of the judgements “corporations reach advertising goals by undertaking sponsorship” has the highest mean score with 4.13. The judgement “there is no need to undertake sponsorship for corporations” has the lowest mean score with 1.73.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that sponsorship is mostly regarded as a financial support, advertising and philanthropic act by university students.

According to the views of university students;

- corporations reach advertising goals by undertaking sponsorship,
- sponsorship contributes recognition to a corporation
- a corporation enhances its image by undertaking sponsorship.
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Some of the sponsoring corporations that come to university students' minds are Ulker, Torku and Turkcell. According to university students the most successful corporations with their sponsorship activities are Ulker, Torku and Turkcell.

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Contact emails:

obakan@selcuk.edu.tr

kcanoz@selcuk.edu.tr