

Business Brief

sponsorship decisions have been taken on the whim of a CEO whose particular enthusiasm for a sport (or an art) overrode any rational cost/benefit analysis. In the days of increasing accountability by managers, these times would appear to be well and truly over and sponsorship, like any other long term investment, needs to be scrutinised, costed and evaluated.

Key drivers of a successful sponsorship relationship include trust and commitment. That is, each of the partners (sponsor and property) must believe that the other would act in a manner that protects both sides and not just their own self interest. Moreover, commitment (the willingness to invest and commit resources to the relationship) is a key antecedent to sponsors' intention to renew. Hence, just as additional expenditures are required to win over consumers, additional resources are required to make the relationship work.

There is much scope for sponsorship to become a more strategic platform upon which both organisations can build stronger brands. The famous association between Credit Lyonnais (a French bank) and the Tour de France (a cycling event) is an exemplar of just how intimately linked two brands can become when they remain, as these two have, in a close relationship for over 50 years. Without the Tour, Credit Lyonnais would never have become the bank it is today and with the Credit Lyonnais, the Tour would never have grown as it has over that time.

Can sponsorship bridge the private/public sector divide?

Sponsorship requires a value proposition and it often hinges on the ability to communicate meanings: The glory of victory, the pain of defeat, the warmth of team efforts, the joy and exhilaration of surpassing oneself are all part of what a sponsor seeks to acquire when signing an agreement. Other, more subtle meanings are available too: Offering scholarships to students demonstrate an interest in innovation and knowledge, funding a Chair in a university is evidence of commitment to education and public good, just as supporting the development of a park or reserve can show concern for the environment. All of these decisions are laden with meaning and therefore part of what a company can say to consumers about itself and its products.

To date, however, only the biggest events and the loudest voices have been heard but sponsorship can be flexible and may communicate softer but equally persuasive messages. At a time when Corporate Social Responsibility looms large as one of the important concerns of today's consumers, sponsorship can play a decisive role in demonstrating involvement in issues and causes that resonate with the public. It seems that in relation to sponsorship, therefore, only the tip of the iceberg has been explored. ■

The above was delivered by Professor Pascale Quester at a lecture held on 17 April 2008 at the Sheraton Grande Bangkok attended by over 90 persons, many of whom were University of Adelaide Alumni. Professor Pascale Quester is the Inaugural Professor of Marketing at University of Adelaide. She has pioneered research in sponsorship effectiveness and management of events, publishing widely with case studies including the Formula One Grand Prix and the Olympic Games. In addition, Professor Quester has written or co-authored over 100 journal articles and conference papers and has published two leading academic texts on Marketing and Consumer Behaviour. The University of Adelaide Alumni in Thailand is seeking former students. The Bangkok group is supported by the University and meets for social/networking functions about two times per year. For more information regarding this group and to register your contact details please contact John W. Hancock (Honorary Chairman): John.W.Hancock@BAKERNET.com, Dr. Piyakul Oparakcharoen (Chairman): piyakulj@yahoo.com, Chris G Osborne at DLA Piper (Thailand) (Vice-Chairman): chris.osborne@dlapiper.com or John Anderson at Meinhardt (Thailand): johna@meinhardt.net.

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