

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE STADIUM NAMING RIGHTS AS A SPORT MARKETING TOOL?

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INTRODUCTION

The placing of naming rights in the sector of sports has undergone a real boom in recent 10 years across Europe and particularly in Germany. For instance 14 of 18 1st division German football clubs have sold the name of their stadium/arena to a commercial sponsor (Wichert&Leda 2001; Sport+Markt 2007). While in the past sports venues were traditionally named after regions, districts, rivers or deserving public personalities, today the naming by a sponsor can be seen as an economically orientated alternative (Bezold 2005, 2006). Especially the naming of football stadiums and big multi-functional arenas by sponsoring companies against the background of many new constructions and reconstructions of stadiums and decreasing public support of the construction of sports venues has led to an intensified placing of naming rights (Petry 2002; Klewenhagen&Hohenauer 2006). A new record was set by the airline "Emirates" which bought the naming right of Arsenal's new "Highbury" Stadium in London. The contract begins 2006, lasts 15 years with a calculated paying of 9,5 Mio. Euro per year (Horizont Sport Business 2004). While the owner or operator of a sports venue opens in the first place an additional source of financing with the usually time-limited sale of the naming right, the usage of the naming rights means a highly promising tool within the scope of his communication and marketing activities for the name-giving sponsor (Kürbs 2004; Bezold 2005). The biggest communicative benefit for a sponsor can be derived from a clever integration of the naming right in a networked, strategically orientated corporate communication policy (Lohrer 2001).

METHODS

After an international outline about the historical and economical development of naming rights the presentation describes the various outward forms of naming rights in the marketing of sport arenas and events. Special emphasis will be given to a nationwide German online based questionnaire survey in spring 2007. The sample consists of 1148 sport interested people over the age of 14. The empirical study analyses the general public awareness, the acceptance of naming rights and the impact of commercial naming rights towards the consumer behaviour of customers. A special focus is given to the different target groups like supporters, stadium visitors and TV watchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data processing of the survey is not completed yet, but is expected at the end of May. The results will help to identify the strength and weaknesses of naming rights as a marketing and financial tool. Very interesting will be the results differentiated by the various stakeholder groups and the answer to the question, if there is a direct impact concerning the customers' buying behaviour (cf. Chadwick 2005).

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