
FOOTBALL SPONSORSHIP IN LESS MATURE MARKETS: “GLOCALIZATION” PROCESSES AND CULTURAL NUANCES

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Synopsis:

This paper attempted to explore the sponsorship phenomenon in an effort to identify the underlying mechanisms and structures that generate the sponsorship activity. It seems that sponsorship is highly influenced by several cultural factors which are very important to consider when trying to understand the sponsorship activity in a given context

Abstract:

AIM

This study aims to shift the focus onto a relatively immature and less developed sponsorship market, in an attempt to gain insight into the sponsorship decision-making and management processes employed by sponsors in this specific context. The goal is to provide conceptual explanations based on theoretical foundations in approaching and investigating the sponsorship phenomenon. More specifically, the study aims at going beyond the sponsorship activity in order to identify the causal mechanisms and structures that generate the observed phenomenon.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Throughout the process of modernisation of football, the dynamics of globalisation were manifest, and this is hardly surprising when considering that sport and especially football is regarded as being “epicentral to contemporary globalisation processes” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004, p. 561). In fact, the diffusion of sport world-wide itself has been regarded by many authors as a product of, and as a vehicle for, globalisation processes (Maguire 1993). At the same time, Amara and Henry (2004, p. 2) have argued that the process of globalisation is often portrayed “as involving the spread of Western liberal values and Western norms of sports practice and organization”, an approach that, as the authors point out, fails to recognise the influence of local factors and their capacity to recontextualise global processes and products. Espousing the view expressed by Göle (1997), Amara and Henry stress the need to rethink the concept of modernity and its western origin, suggesting a local modernity

approach which “seeks a more exclusive and pluralist reflection towards modernity” that has both local and western manifestations (Amara & Henry, 2004, p. 3). Similar arguments have been made by Giulianotti and Robertson (2004), who conceptualised glocalisation projects as “the constitutive features of contemporary globalisation’ (Robertson 1995, p. 41), and they elaborated on “the interdependencies of the local/particular and the global/universal, and on how these are reflected in processes of glocalization” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004, p. 546). According to the authors, glocalisation processes have always been displayed within football’s realms, whilst they endorsed the view expressed by Robertson (1995) indicating that glocalisation is a term that enables us to capture the way in which the synergies between the local and the global differ according to particular cultural circumstances.

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA ANALYSIS

Considering the complexity of the sponsorship phenomenon, an exploratory research design was adopted, based on qualitative collective case studies. Specifically, the study focused on ten different organisations acting as main sponsors of clubs competing in Division I of the football championship. Semi-structured, detailed, in depth interviews were conducted with key decision makers, using an interview protocol aiming to enable the researcher to elicit rich descriptions on the sponsorship management practices. The researcher employed a within case analysis (providing a thorough understanding of the context and the complexity of each single case separately) and a subsequent cross-case analysis which involved a thematic analysis across the cases (Creswell, 2013). The data collected were coded through the use of the NVivo software package.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed the interdependence of global and local processes within the sponsorship-related practices, suggesting that sponsorship arrangements in this specific context are marked culturally by processes of glocalisation. Such processes appeared to be vividly expressed in sponsorship-related projects, and involved an amalgamation of several local and cultural factors such as a strong prevalence of localism, nationalism, political clientelism, and reliance on personal relations. Community pressures seemed to have a central role in sponsorship related decision-making, whilst sponsorship activity appeared also to be influenced by the structure of the sponsors’ industry, the organisational structure and corporate culture, as well as by the structure and local specificity of the football market in Cyprus. More specifically, competitive imbalance of the national league, politicisation of football, the level of competition within a particular industry, and centrality of authority and control (both organisational and cultural), are additional factors that appeared to impact sponsorship activity in the specific market.

In concluding, this study managed to provide conceptual explanations of the sponsorship activity which are based on theoretical foundations. The findings are important in that they have significant strategic implications and are relevant to the broader sponsorship context, and they are expected to be very helpful for both academicians exploring the sponsorship phenomenon as well as sport practitioners and sponsors operating in similarly developed sponsorship markets.

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