

The Impact Of Marketing Strategy Of Ambush Marketing On Major Event Sponsorship And National Development

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Abstract

Marketing and its numerous activities is known to be the major driver of the economic development of a nation. Therefore, for a vibrant economy to be in place, vibrant marketing activities must precede and also sustain it. The marketplace nevertheless has been compared to a battlefield/warfront where competitors/contenders devise strategies to outsmart (if not overrun) the rest and remain dominant. This paper examines one of the new marketing strategies (Ambush Marketing) devised by marketers to ensure they remain strongly competitive in the marketplace. The study discovered that the strategy attracts a lot of legal attention as it offends major event organizers and sponsors alike. It is therefore recommended that a middle-of-the-road approach be adopted between the event organizers and sponsors on one hand and the ambush marketers on the other.

Introduction

National development is a product of efficient functioning of the different sub-sectors of the economy. It is holistic in nature and so entails full-growth and expansion of a nation's industries, agriculture, education, social, religious and cultural institutions (Bawa, 2019). According to his definition, national development can best be seen as "the all-round and balanced development of the different aspects and facets of the nation viz: political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material". Development is critically important to the sustenance and growth of a nation. A developed nation is the one that is able to provide good quality of life for her citizens. It is the goal of every nation to attain a higher level of growth which positively impacts on the lives of the citizenry. National development no doubt involves improvement

in diverse indicators like literacy rate, life expectancy and poverty rates, and increasing gross domestic product (GDP). These in the words of Obiesie (2016a) are made manifest in increase in the value of goods and services as well as exchanges that add value to the lives of the people. This is where economic growth holds sway. Economic growth involves the provision of inputs that lead to greater outputs and improvements in the quality of life of a people (Herrick and Kindleberger, 1983). It is qualitative and sustained increase in a country's per capita output or income accompanied by expansion in its labour force, consumption, capital and volume of trade and welfare (Jhingan, 1985 in , 2016a).

Economic and national development can hardly be achieved in the absence of a vibrant marketing cum business outlook. A nation with vibrant business outlook is more likely to achieve good quality of life for her people. Nevertheless, the business world is anything but easy. It is characterized by cutthroat competition, aggressive market drive, ever-changing technologies, improved and wide assortment of product brands, sensitive and high-tasted market composed of smart, more price conscious, more demanding and less forgiving customers. These leave no room for entrepreneurial carelessness, laziness and laggards. It is a dance for the survival of the fittest (Obiesie, 2000). Consequently, every business entity works hard to stay afloat. Each devise strategy(ies).to outsmart competitors and remain dominant and/or relevant in the marketplace. Programme/event sponsorship is one of the many marketing (promotion) strategies by which businesses make themselves visible in the marketplace and build/improve the brand public relations (PR). But not all the firms secure the sponsorship rights. Thus, apart from the few that secure the sponsorship rights, many others will still be interested and will want to be associated with the event and reap the benefits therefrom. Such companies do resort to ambush marketing or ambush advertising – a new strategy defined by Kelly, Cornwell , Coote, and McAlister (2012).as “the formation of an association with an event without securing official sponsorship rights”

Marketing Promotion

A firm can produce the best product, price it attractively, and distribute it widely as well; but, if the market for whom the product is meant for is not aware of it, all these efforts will amount to exercise in futility. It is said that knowledge is power. The only marketing mix variable that seeks to create knowledge in the market concerning goods, services or organization is promotion (Obiesie, 2014). Generally promotion refers to any marketing effort whose function is to inform or persuade actual or potential customers/the firm’s publics about the organization, its products, ideas and/or activities. In other words, all activities and processes designed to change or reinforce behaviour and/or ideas of the target market through communication in order to persuade them to “buy” what the organization offers are collectively called promotion.

Countless number of strategies can be developed and used to ensure continuous visibility and profitability of an organization. Of all these strategies, sponsorship and ambush marketing or ambush advertising is of interest to us in this paper.

Event Sponsorship

Sponsorship has evolved from being a philanthropic activity to a key marketing communication tool (Desbordes and Tribou, 2007). In the words of Liu (2012), sponsorship has become a unique and distinctive approach for companies to reach large and diverse national or international audience in a single campaign. It is defined as —“the provision of resources (such as., money, people, equipment) by an organization directly to an event or activity in exchange for a direct association to the event or activity” (Shani and Sandler,1998). Meenaghan (1998) on the other hand saw it as —“an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity”.

Sponsorship puts the name of the company and its products across the audience and greatly enhance image (Obiesie, 2014). As a major marketing communication tool, its major objectives are threefold; - broad corporate objective, marketing objectives, and media objectives. These according to Meenaghan (1983) are specified as (i) to build and enhance corporate image,(ii) to promote the brand and increase sales, and, (iii) to effectively reach the target market and achieve cost-effective coverage. Liu (2012) also added that it is aimed at reaching and accessing specific audiences and achieve brand differentiation.

Advantages of Sponsorship

Sponsorship has benefits to a wide-range of parties including the sponsor, event organizers, the economy and the publics at large. Some of the benefits are;

Communication with global Audience

It makes possible direct promotion of the company's name and brand to a large audience (Obiesie, 2017). Worldwide major events, like the Olympic Games, FIFA world cups, etc provide sponsors with a platform to communicate with global audiences.

Positive impact on consumer perception of the organization.

In the words of Obiesie (2014), it create more favourable attitude of the audience towards the company and its products/brands. This is because, association with global or national events encourage consumers to perceive sponsors as leaders in their industry, socially responsible, dedicated to excellence, innovative, and leading edge (IOC, 1996).

Helps to Build Name/Product Recall

Sponsorship helps to enhance name/product recall in consumers/target audience, since the sponsor's name and products are mentioned frequently in the course of the event which usually lasts for a reasonable long period (Obiesie, 2014)

Others in the view of Muxworthy (2019) include the under-discussed:

Increases Company's authority and competitiveness

Sponsorship is a great way to increase your authority and competitiveness within your business' niche. It has the potential to improve the company's image, status and reliability and also provides the opportunity to get your brand in front of a new market of potential customers, exposing a variety of new marketing opportunities.

Brand Awareness. Irrespective of the nature and magnitude of the deal, according to Muxworthy (2019) and Leible (2017), sponsorship helps to increase brand awareness and visibility, as you will be promoting your product or service to a new, yet targeted, market.

Raise The Sponsor's profile. Sponsorship opens new opportunities for brands to receive publicity, which may not have been feasible before (Muxworthy, 2019). According to him, sponsorship is one of the most powerful opportunities a brand has to connect with the broader community and place the business within a meaningful context."

Stand out from the crowd. In saturated markets, it's easy for businesses to get lost in the noise, but not only will sponsorship help you stand out from the competition, also, as your company becomes more widely recognized, sponsorship deals should begin to correlate directly with your sales fluctuations. It enables you to prominently display your products and marketing materials instead of just handing out your business card.

Other marketing benefits listed by Leible (2017) are;

Exposure to your target market. If you sponsor an event where your target market is likely to be in attendance, event organizers will do a lot of the work for you in terms of advertising the event and bringing in attendees. It can be a highly effective opportunity for you to reach your target market. Use prominent signage, eye-catching displays, and professionally produced marketing materials to attract attendees to your booth.

Lead generation. Sponsoring a booth at an event can be a great way to generate leads. An easy way to get lots of leads is to encourage people to drop their business card in a bowl for a chance to win a prize, or you could encourage people to complete an action on social media that enables you to capture their contact information.

Shows community involvement. Smaller, less expensive event sponsorships enhance your visibility in the community. Sponsoring a community event such as a park cleanup day or food festival helps keep your brand top of mind with customers.

Brand recognition. By sponsoring an event, your business name and logo will be included in the event program, and you can further leverage the opportunity to promote your brand by offering an item to include in event gift bags.

Shows attendees a glimpse into your business. Staffing your booth with employees that perhaps wouldn't ordinarily be visible to customers helps put a human face on your business. Consider showing a short video that provides a behind-the-scenes look at your company. When customers get to know your business better, they are more likely to remember you.

Inexpensive way to market your business. Advertising can be expensive. Sponsoring an event can cost less and provide a greater ROI by focusing your marketing efforts on your target audience.

New business partnerships and contacts. In addition to providing the opportunity for lead generation, an event sponsorship provides a great opportunity for networking with business leaders and identifying potential partnerships.

Heightened visibility. Positive publicity from print and electronic media helps increase the visibility of your company's products and services. Your brand will benefit from media coverage that otherwise could be prohibitively expensive.

Engage and interact with your target market and form relationships. By supporting events that are likely to attract your target market, you improve your company's image and standing in the community. You have the opportunity to engage with a larger segment of your target market and interact with business and community leaders. Event sponsorships are an excellent way to network and form relationships.

Social media. Consider running ads on social media to alert followers that you will be sponsoring a booth at an upcoming event. Then post photos and live videos while at the event. It's an effective and fun way to get attention.

Increased traffic. When you consider the amount of traffic you normally have at your store each day as compared with the number of people that are likely to walk by your event booth, there's a good chance you can get more exposure at the event than you would on a normal day at your store.

Interactive booth. When selecting employees to work at your booth, choose people with big personalities. An interactive booth with friendly and energetic employees makes your business seem fun and naturally attracts people to it.

Offer a free trial. Event sponsorship provides an opportunity to let potential customers experience what your business has to offer. Provide samples of your products or offer a free trial period for your service.

Create a lasting impression. With a well-designed event booth, some promotional giveaways, and a lead generation plan, customers will remember your company long after the event is over.

Ambush Marketing

Generally sponsorship is seen as a veritable cost-effective alternative to the long established promotional tool of advertising. Because of its effectiveness in creating brand awareness, positive attitude towards brand, enhancing purchase intention as well as giving competitive edge over competitors, many companies now leverage on sponsorship of major events to outshine their competitors and stand in front. But to successfully use this medium, one has to be/wins the official sponsor of the event. This is not easy as it requires huge amount of sponsorship fee. It is commonly said that if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. Hence, not all desiring firms can foot the bill necessary for sponsorship, but they can not fold their hands and watch the event pass them by. Consequently, due to this enormous sponsorship fees and category exclusivity associated with sponsorship rights, ambush marketing activities are born to exploit the benefits occasioned by major events.

Affirming this, Ukessays (2019) posited that global sports events programme like the World Cups requires huge investment fee but provides more promotion effects than it is expected. Therefore, many global companies expect infinite benefits through sponsorship activities and as such, they compete for official sponsorship. Yet, other companies cannot just sit and miss the opportunity offered by the season, so, they attempt ambush marketing. Thus ambush marketing is a growing alternative for non official sponsors that emerged on competing with rising cost for sponsorship rights (Tripodi and Sutherland, 2000).

As a new concept/strategy, it has continued to evolve and at the same time controversial in nature, and as such has fallen victim of definitional pluralism and lacking in consensus. This is because some people view it as a sound marketing practice/strategy, while some see it as unethical as well as illegal. Ukessays (2019) acknowledged this by saying that ambush marketing is the most controversial issues over large sports sponsorship. In the sense of sponsor companies, ambush marketing activities drastically infringes on their rights and sponsorship benefits. Thus, they seek protection. They get the protection via legal mean and legislations. However, survival instinct keeps the ambushers to discover ways of beating the legal hurdles and forge ahead.

One of the earliest writers on ambush marketing, Meenaghan (1996) saw ambush marketing as a company's marketing efforts to intrude upon public attention surrounding the event for the purpose of deflecting attention to themselves and at the same time away from official sponsors. For Schmitz (2005), ambush marketing refers to the companies' marketing attempts to intentionally seek ways to piggyback on their rivals' sponsorship of major events. "Ambush marketing is the non-contractual exploitation of publicity associated with a sports event, or a participating team or individual, through deliberate 'parasitic' marketing activity"(Davey, 2019). Ambush marketing is also variously called coat-tail marketing, or predatory marketing (Shewan, 2018)

Methods of Ambush Marketing

Meenaghan (1994; 1996 in Liu,2012) and Ukessay,2019) described five methods widely practiced by ambush marketers. These are;

Sponsor media coverage of the event

Ambusher sponsors the broadcast on television or radio and they get an opportunity to associate itself with the larger number of media audience than on-site audience. According to Meenaghan (1994) "this exploits a perfectly legitimate sponsorship opportunities".

Sponsor a subcategories within the event and exploit this investment aggressively

Ambusher obtains legitimate sponsorship of a lesser category within the event by paying investment cost with intensive promotion which can be seen as cost-effective way. Ambusher uses this strategy to take benefits from making confusion.

Venue-related ambush marketing

Obviously, the venue of the event attracts audience's attention. Ambushers try to expose their brand in or near the venue. The traditional approach is busying advertising space for the event in the host place or 'sneaking' in some items with the ambusher's brand

Celebrities through endorsement contracts

This approach uses the global sports event as commercial as possible through endorsement contract. This strategy uses major figures from the sport and benefits from the celebrity.

Purchasing advertising time between broadcast programmes

With this ambusher seeks to purchase advertising time in the slots around television or radio relays of the event.

As to the effectiveness of ambush marketing as a marketing/promotional strategy, Burton and Chadwick (2008) averred that most of the ambush marketing campaigns have proved successful and effective in creating and generating awareness for the ambushing company's brands. The objectives of ambush marketing which range from economic (sales, market share, and profit), psychological (attention, awareness, topicality, image and goodwill), and competition-oriented (weakening competition, reduction of effectiveness of sponsorship (Hezog and Nufer, 2014) are extensively achieved by the ambushers. This keeps them alive and flourishing. Thus Brownlee, Greenwell and Moorman (2009) and McDaniel and Kinney (1996) in Liu (2012) affirmed that ambush marketing may be more effective/do as well or better than official sponsors in terms of purchase intentions. So it is a rewarding strategy which not only impacts on the firm per se, but on the economy at large. It helps to keep competition alive and sustains vibrant marketing/business activities. These turn the wheel of national development of country. Therefore, if each individual business within the economy grows, the nation will be the better for it as it translates to national growth and development.

Benefits/Reasons for using Ambush Marketing:

It is useful to both local companies and big Multination Companies (MNCs). According to Halvadia, Patel, and Nayak (2010), Ambush Marketing is useful to local companies which cannot afford the high amounts for sponsorships and still want to derive the benefits like, event publicity, increase brand visibility, increase brand and awareness, etc from event. Same also applies to MNCs which cannot sponsor each and every event considering high spending involved and want to get benefits by connecting its brand to the event without sponsoring events.

Furthermore, for every ambusher, they said, it increases its brand awareness and brand visibility at relatively low cost and also gets the high public attention at low cost. Also, and ambusher tries to discredit official sponsor's marketing effort.

Impact of Ambush Marketing on event, country and local athletes:

The impact of Ambush marketing is both in the positives and the negatives. In the words of Halvadia et al (2010);

Well-organized, international sports events have the capacity to invigorate economies and sports systems, increase global visibility of country, promote tourism and provide platforms to spur on local athletes. Major events need sponsors because they can't be held solely with public tax monies. Sponsors also want to get something in exchange for their contribution in the event. They never makes the sponsorship commitment unless they trust the organizer. If the organizers' quiver doesn't have enough arrows to quell Ambush Marketing, the sponsors will be scared away and they never ready to sponsoring the event. So, Ambush Marketing affects the total funding of event because sometimes it will be good for the company to be an ambusher rather than paying huge amount of sponsorship. So, it decreases the commercial value of the event.

Viewers of the event: Because of the Ambush Marketing viewers of the event not cleared about which company had the official connection with event. So, sometimes ambusher got good brand perception at low cost.

Sponsors: Compared to paying high sponsorship for events, sponsors cannot capture the high brand awareness and high attention of viewers of the event. And also they cannot develop a desired brand image in the minds of target audience because of Ambush Marketing.

Challenges of Ambush Marketing

There is always loggerheads between the event organizers and official sponsors on one hand, and the ambushers on the other, as the former believe and rightly too that ambush marketing affects and diminishes the effects of official sponsors relatively. This has given birth to some anti-ambush campaigns and legislations. Experts in marketing such as Mark Stuart of Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) in Davey (2019) view such legislations as heavy-handedness and stifling the public's natural desire to connect with these events through all forms of harmless unofficial activities. He therefore condemn some of the provision of anti-ambushing campaigns which he said encroach into what used to be perfectly normal marketing practices.

Notwithstanding all these, the paradox of the moves to prevent ambush marketing is that when event organizer like FIFA, IOC clamp down on an ambush, the ambushing company gets far more publicity than it would otherwise received

Marketing and National Development

Growth and development of any country/economy is usually determined by certain indicators (World Bank,1999) such as ;

- (i) The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- (ii) Per capita income
- (iii) Welfare of the people
- (iv) Availability of social services and people's access to them.

Marketing through its numerous roles and functions positively impacts heavily on all these indicators. The strength of any economy is measured in terms of its ability to generate the required income within a given fiscal year or period. Therefore, such country's GNP must appreciate overtime. Marketing being the pivot and life wire of any economy, ensures success in this regard providing the much needed revenues thereby contributing to the Gross National Product (Obiesie, 2016b). It is capable of changing the entire tone of under-developed nations without making changes to their methods of production, distribution of population or that of income (Drucker, 1973)

The specific roles marketing plays in the economic cum national development as captured by Obiesie (2016b) are as follows;

Aggregate Demand Stimulation: When what is produced is not demanded or bought, more will not be produced. Through marketing function of promotion the needed level of aggregate demand is stimulated to match the level of production in the system. This enhances capacity utilization by various firms in the economy, thereby reducing unemployment. In the words of Qnah and Thomas (2004), marketing expands the market nationally and internationally. The creation of markets finally creates the effective demand, which in turn leads to more work, efficiency in work for earning more income for additional consumption and more production in all sectors of the economy.

Rapid Development and Maintenance of Economic Stability: Similar to the role of creation of aggregate demand, marketing plays significant role in the maintenance of economic stability and speedy development especially in underdeveloped and developing economies. It does this by ensuring that what is needed is produced, and what is produced is bought. By so doing, it helps to maintain a balance between production and consumption such that neither inflation or depression creeps into the economy.

Creation of Merchant Class/Entrepreneurs and Managers: According to Ifezue (2005) marketing is also the most easily accessible multiplier of managers and entrepreneurs in a developing area. Economic development is not a force of nature. It is the result of the action, the purposeful, responsible, risk-taking action of man as entrepreneurs and managers. Certainly, it is the entrepreneur and manager who alone can convey to the people of the country an understanding of what economic development means and how it can be achieved. These are the people that undertake the risk of running businesses of all kinds (manufacturing, trading, service, etc) that oil the growth of the economy.

Improving the Standard of Living/quality of life: Marketing links various communities (developed, less developed and local) together via its extension of markets. It removes the imbalance of supply by transferring the surplus to deficit areas. By this products required in different communities are made available thereby improving living standards of the people. This also encourages specialization and ultimately exchange in the economy. Sirgy (1991) affirmed that marketing really delivers goods and services that can satisfy unmet needs in such a way that enhances the quality of life of the people. This was corroborated by a study by Asikhia (2012) which revealed a strong positive correlation between marketing activities and quality of life.

Stimulating Capital Accumulation for Industrialization : marketing prides itself in stimulating the accumulation of capital needed for industrial development. Industrialization of any form requires huge capital outlay. Marketing via its various functions stimulates the accumulation of such capital to boost the process of industrialization of a nation.

Providing Revenue to the Government: Through various forms of taxes (taxes on profit of businesses, personal income tax, VAT, etc), governments are empowered towards provision of social amenities and other developmental projects.

Creation of Awareness for Non-Business Item: Marketing assists in the creation of awareness for non-business items (ideas) that are of immense benefit to the society; such ideas like family planning, child labour/child abuse, polio immunization programmes, HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, etc are facilitated by marketing their resultant benefits to the society/economy are unquantifiable.

Optimum Utilization of Resources: Marketing enhances optimum utilization of scarce resources of the nation. With the use of marketing research, needs in the economy are identified, and ways and manners of satisfying them are specified and undertaken and ultimately facilitated through other marketing functions.

Creation of Employment: According to Nnabuko (2016), of utmost importance to the economy are the many exciting career offers and prospects created by marketing. She cited Lamb et al (2012) who said that between one fourth and one third of the entire civilian work

force in the United States perform marketing activities. This is not different from Nigeria as pointed by Ezeakafor (2005) that marketing provides job opportunities for millions of Nigerians, pointing out that about half of the population of the country are either fully or partially making a living by carrying out retailing, wholesaling, advertising, public relations, transportation and storage activities.

Developer of Standards

Marketing is generally known to be a developer of standards for product and service as well as of standards of conduct, integrity, reliability, foresight, and of concern for the basic long-range impact of decisions on the customer, the supplier, the economy, and the society.

Conclusion

Ambush marketing is a smart strategy to piggy-back on another brand's efforts. It is said to be the most controversial issue over events sponsorship. Moves to control it at events have been met with mixed reactions and reception; and laws enacted to curb it have equally been seen as more controversial than the practice itself, because, you don't have to kill a fly with sledge hammer. Opponents of anti-ambush marketing laws have argued that such laws can inhibit free expression, and hinder certain businesses like restaurants, sports bar, etc from even mentioning an event. The existing laws of the country on trade mark should be enough to protect organizers' intellectual property without granting them special powers (The Guardian, 2014 in Wikipedia, 2019)

Generally, both the official sponsor and the ambusher contribute to the media razzmatazz of the event. Like all forms of marketing strategies, the ultimate goal of ambush marketing is to generate money for the business. This is achieved via reaching wider audience at lower cost, creating goodwill for the firm, weakening official sponsors, exploiting the confusion of consumers and in the long run increase sales and profit. The effectiveness and efficacy of the practice is not in doubt and it is luring indeed. Therefore, no matter how much effort expended to control it, there must always be chance of some degree of ambush activities to occur and the business world will continue to be the better for it.

Recommendations

Having come this far, we wish to make the following recommendations;

1. It is understandable that (events) sponsors pay huge sum of money so as to advertise at such events. This is why they seek and get protection via legislations. But these legislations have been viewed as heavy-handedness, stifling the public's desire to connect with the events, and encroaching on normal marketing practice. Therefore we recommend a balancing of the impact of these legislations against unwanted accusations/criticisms.

2. There is this common saying that putting out the candle light of your neighbor in the dark will never increase the brightness of your own; and that your candle will not lose its light when it lights up another candle. This echoes the spirit of cooperation and live and let live. Also the paradox of the moves to prevent ambush marketing according to Davey (2019) is that when event owners clampdown on an ambush, the ambushing firm gets far more publicity. Therefore, aggression against ambush marketing should be removed. Granted that it diminishes the sponsors' gains, but both of them gain in the long run thereby adding the country's GNP

3. Lastly, as long as no logo or event symbol is used such association is legal (Fahy and Jobber, 2012). Therefore, ambushers should embrace this approach and get connected as this does not infringe on the law.

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A large, semi-transparent watermark of the journal's logo is centered on the page. The logo consists of a circular emblem at the top, containing a book and a torch, with the text 'INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF APPLIED SCIENCE RESEARCH' around it. Below the emblem, the acronym 'INJASR' is written in large, bold, purple capital letters.