

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE,
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT,
DEPARTMENT OF SPORT MANAGEMENT

**ATTITUDES OF COMPANIES
TO SPORT SPONSORSHIP
IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC
DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS**

EVA ČÁSLAVOVÁ, JOSEF DVOŘÁK, JOSEF VORÁČEK

ABSTRACT

This research presents the approach of companies to sport sponsorship in the period of time of the economic crisis in the European territory, specifically in the Czech Republic. The research included 100 companies based in the Czech Republic and the method chosen was electronic mail survey of managers responsible for this marketing activity. The results show trends in sport sponsorship from the viewpoint of companies and can serve as a base for strategic decisions about new ways of sport financing in 2012–2020 with which the relevant authorities of the public administration of the Czech Republic are currently dealing at this time.

Keywords: marketing communication, sponsorship, sport advertising, sponsorship package donations

INTRODUCTION

In this current period of time during Europe's economic crisis, marketing expenditure has often been among the first cuts made to company budgets, including expenses related to sponsorship. After several years of this strategy, however, companies working in the European environment have found that this approach is quite narrow-minded and does not provide the required innovation in communicative politics whose channels can also be sponsorship activities. How can sponsorship be topical even during the economic crisis? In our opinion, there are globally two reasons; firstly, companies try to save money and reduce expensive commercials on TV and sponsorship costs can be cheaper by placing the advertisements in sports arenas which then appear on TV during televised sporting events. Secondly, in our opinion, companies have to follow even more daring combined perspectives on their communicative politics and use new modern connections with sport where the target group can be better and directly approached. However, it depends on a detailed work out of sponsorship activities related to sport and on the level of their integration.

One example of sport sponsorship in the Czech Republic is that of Skoda Auto. Skoda Auto, which is known as a twenty-year-old leading sponsor of the Ice Hockey World Championship, is looking for a link between product image and sport image in the following qualities – dynamic, fast, team. Within this marketing strategy the company chose to expand its sponsorship program to another sport sponsorship which, in relation to their business targets, would increase Skoda’s sales in Europe. The sport chosen was cycling related to Tour de France. This sporting event has been held by Skoda Auto since 2004 as a main sponsor and it definitely brought the company a significant movement in economic results.

Naturally, the size of companies reflects in their marketing capabilities and therefore in the expected results. Big and medium companies paid attention to proving the efficiency of sponsorship as a contribution to fulfilling their marketing and mostly communicative targets. For illustrative purposes we present perspective on their size as defined by authors (Kraft et al., 2011) from the economics area (Table 1) according to the amount of employees and economic indicators. The purpose is, with reference to various results on sizes of companies, to present evidence on their apparent size.

Table 1. General size criteria for companies

Company categories	Number of employees	Turnover	Balance sheet
Big	250 and more employees	more than 50 mil. EUR	more than 43 mil. EUR
Medium	fewer than 250	less than 50 mil. EUR	less than 43 mil. EUR
Small	fewer than 50	less than 10 mil. EUR	less than 10 mil. EUR
Micro	fewer than 10	less than 2 mil EUR	less than 2 mil EUR

What are the targets which companies aim for regarding sponsorship? According to the German agency UFA Sports Hamburg (2000) everything is about prioritizing the most important marketing decisions that lead to the choice of sponsorship. These are:

- to increase company/brand awareness,
- an increase of company awareness as a sponsor of a certain sport club,
- improving goodwill towards a brand,
- updating a brand image,
- transmission of individual image components of a sporting field as a whole or a specially sponsored sport club to the core of the sponsor’s brand,
- “business to business” contacts in hospitality programmes.

The results available from the former research in 2000 (research plan MSM 115 100 002) showed that big companies use integrated sponsorship more, they combine sport products with non-sport products or with products loosely attached to sport.

Small companies are more oriented to the usage of individual products directly in the sport area or places connected with the sport area. What companies expect from sport sponsorship is derived from their own marketing targets and it has already been possible to observe several differences. Big companies prefer targets from their marketing

strategies exactly the same way they are stated in the enumeration of the marketing agency UFA Sports.

After complicated discussions on how the decline of sponsorship in the Czech Republic can influence the next development of sport, we decided to carry out marketing research from the viewpoint of companies in 2011 within the research plan of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Charles University in Prague, MSM 0021620864.

There are many definitions concerning the area of sponsorship which analyse the mutual business relationship between companies and sport subjects. A wide range of authors from around the world have been dealing with this topic: Stotlar (1992, 1993), Pitts and Stotlar (1996, 2007), Pope and Voges (1994, 1995), Bruhn and Mussler (1998), Grey and Skildum-Reid (2003), Čáslavová (2009). Current sponsorship differs from the sponsorship in the 70s and 80s. Australian specialists on sponsorship Grey and Skildum-Reid (2003) say about the development in sponsorship: "If you want to succeed in modern-day sponsorship, it is important that everyone within your organisation understands that sponsorship is about creating win-win partnerships between your organization and a corporate sponsor. If the sponsorship is to succeed, you need to fulfil both partner's marketing objectives. This shift from fundraising and corporate philanthropy to marketing-driven sponsorship programs is the major point of difference from sponsorship programs in the 1970s and 1980s and sponsorship in the new millennium."

Topics of sport sponsorship are fundamental topics of sport marketing. These authors agree on the fact that current sponsorship represents communicative and marketing tools in the world of sport which lies in a clear distinction and performance compensation of the sponsor and counter performance of the sponsored entity. The differences between them are mostly in a various range of the relationship definition between the sponsor and the sponsored entity. However, the modern concept of sponsorship emphasizes these integrated programmes of this activity that are made-to-measure. It is basically a transition from classic sale to creating sponsorship programmed with a wide range of services offer enabling the company to fulfil their marketing and communicative targets. The interconnection of products goes beyond the framework of sports. The authors who support this aspect are for example Fullerton and Merz (2008) who do not emphasize either sides' aspects but present a so-called integrated marketing in sport based on very different products provided by both sides of companies and sport subjects which can even create a backbone of sport sponsorship.

Sport sponsorship can therefore be directly based on sports where companies choose the sports they want to sponsor, or at sporting events where they will be doing business. Sport popularity is very important within a specific geographic area, its ratings, number of fans, viewers' attendance at matches, advertising offers and spectator sport services in relation to sport venues and places that are at a sport's disposal.

Subsequently, sponsorship based on loosely affiliated products such as transport service to sporting events and competitions, medical services, refreshments, electronics and food are added to this aspect. The possibilities that can be offered in sponsorship are described by authors Grey and Skildum-Reid (2003). They analyze several types of sponsorship which can be based on the rights for using a name in the title of an event, premises, day, competition, rewards etc., various levels of sponsorship (e.g. leading sponsor × supporting sponsor), various levels of exclusiveness, distribution of licences and

official permits, public relations, hospitality programmes, information technologies, supporting events, provision of rights, labelling, researches and expertise etc. This enumeration can be taken as a key element even for designing an offer from the position of sport.

It is therefore obvious that sport and its environment is determining for sport sponsorship but according to Fullerton and Merz (2008) in relation to sport it is possible to base sponsorship even on products loosely connected to sport. However, to present on behalf of sport a motivating and modern offer of product that would match continuous requirements of companies' marketing and communicative targets is still alpha and omega of the success rate of sponsorship contracts conclusions. Sport sponsorship as a part of strategic marketing of sport is shown in a wide range of case studies done by sport organizations in relation to a wide range of stakeholders (Ferrand & McCarthy, 2009; Jurak et al., 2009).

The scope of integrated programmes is influenced by a sport's popularity with the public, or otherwise the popularity of a sporting event, direct spectator ratings of sport in competitions, fan support, media interest and the environment in which sport takes place, or else sport rules themselves. All these factors can be observed in mutual teamwork in football which is at the top of sport marketing events both in Europe and other continents. In Europe it can be illustrated in the studies of Deloitte (f.e., in 2011), more precisely its Sport Business Department.

PURPOSE

The main aim of our research is the detection of current attitudes of companies based in the Czech Republic to sport sponsorship during the economic crisis. The development of sponsorship in the Czech Republic grew significantly after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. First of all, sport clubs started with sales of advertising to partners in the 90s, then after 2000 broader programmes of sponsorship started to be used including mainly titular sponsorship at various levels and in the following years even other sponsorship tools increasing the level of marketing communication. However, some cases in which companies terminated their partnership with the most popular sport branches in the Czech Republic – football and ice-hockey – are known. This raised a discussion on how the economic crisis would influence the finance and support of sport, especially when strong state support of sport is lacking. According to Novotný's study (2011) the share of the overall public sport costs on GDP are currently at 0.38% in the Czech Republic. The author states that this value corresponds with values of the former Eastern bloc countries. The share of governmental costs on sport is according to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports 0.07% of GDP in the Czech Republic. It is therefore obvious that sport sponsorship represents a significant financial source for sport organizations activity and its development is in the centre of interest of organizations responsible for sport management. These were the reasons why we outlined the research mentioned above whose main aim was to fulfil the following tasks:

- sport branches the companies sponsored and those they currently sponsors,
- factors that influence the choice of sport, forms and types of sponsorship the companies used and are now using,

- finance they provide for sport sponsorship,
- reasons for leaving the sponsored sport branch,
- reasons that can a priori discourage them from sport branch sponsorship,
- aims sponsors see beyond sponsorship,
- reciprocal services considered the most attractive,
- whether they support sport even with donations,
- differences among the data gained in relation to the company size.

METHODS

There was a questionnaire created for the purpose of the research which was designed for electronic questioning in the form of an EMS (electronic mail survey).

The electronic questionnaire was sent via email from 23. 2. 2011 to 29. 6. 2011 to companies that sponsors sport. The research group was comprised by companies sponsoring any sport branch in the Czech Republic. The final sample contained in total 100 companies which were chosen on the ground of their visibility on websites of randomly chosen sport organizations (clubs, events, unions) in the Czech Republic.

The questionnaire was divided into seven parts. In total it consisted of 20 questions.

The first part was focused on basic identification details about a specific company (where it is based, size, province, subject of business) by means of which possible relations and tendencies were detected in the issues of sponsorship. The second part investigates sponsored sport branches in the period of time just before the economic crisis (i.e. 2005–2008) and the period of time of the economic crisis (i.e. 2009–2010) and observes the distinctive reasons between these periods of time. The third part looks into specific forms of sponsorship and the fourth part into amount of finance provided by companies for sport sponsorship. The change in the period of time before the crisis and during the crisis was also a subject of investigation. In the fifth part the questionnaire identifies facts concerning the choice of sport branch for sponsorship and in the sixth part the aims of sponsorship for companies and the attractiveness of reciprocal services required. The last part then illustrates another possible sport organization support via donations.

Some questions in questionnaires were not filled in, however, these were kept to a minimum. Such questionnaires are still incorporated into the research because the information from other questions is beneficial and useful for this research.

Content validity of the questionnaire was provided by independent consultations with three experts from Charles University.

RESULTS

Information on researched companies

For the companies that participated in our research the position of their headquarters in the Central Bohemian Region and in the capital city Prague was significant. Out of 85 companies which answered this question, there were 23 companies (27%) which had

Prague as the base of their company headquarters. Although the sample of companies is not representative, the representation of other regions is more or less balanced and therefore, the obtained results can be considered as a relevant basis for the assessment of the situation in sports sponsorship in the Czech Republic.

Other results monitored representation in regions according to company size. There we can see a logical phenomenon because participating medium and big companies are based in the capital city of the Czech Republic. The representation within smaller companies is then more balanced, including Prague. The representation of companies is in the group researched according to number of employees (from which the size of a company is derived) is quite balanced, there are only fewer micro companies – micro companies (0–9 employees) 16%. Small companies (10–49 employees) make 29%, medium companies (50–249 employees) 28% and big companies (250 and more employees) 27%.

With respect to the scope of authority of companies surveyed, there was a sample researched (this question was answered by 99 companies out of 100) which was created mainly by companies operating on the international level (43 companies) or the nationwide level (38 companies). The companies operating on the regional level only were represented minimally – 7 regional, or more precisely 11 regional companies.

The last identifying figure was focused on the field of business. Therefore it is possible to discover which companies in the Czech Republic use sponsorship for their marketing activity and possible connections with other results. The division of research group according to field of business is shown in Table 2 which contains only the most frequent fields. 93 companies answered this question in total. Broadly speaking, every fifth company is, according to this research, associated with the building industry which is the most numerously represented in companies within the Czech Republic and at the same time includes companies of all size categories. Another interesting result could be observed in relation to the sport goods and services industry where it is frequently an obvious connection among services offered and fans, spectators and supporters of a specific sport. Other industries indicated more or less symbolic values.

Table 2. Division of companies according to field of business

Field of business	Frequency	Expression in %
Building industry	20	22
Sport apparel and equipment, services	13	14
Tax and financial consultancy, insurance industry	5	5
Trade, retail trade, wholesale	5	5
Hotel industry, accommodation services	4	4
Car sale and service	4	4
Power engineering	4	4
Mechanical engineering	4	4
Foodstuff production, bakery	3	3
Air and sewage water cleansing	3	3

Sponsored sport branches

Furthermore, we were interested in the development of sport branches sponsorship before the economic crisis and during the crisis. The research showed quite a surprising result, i.e. sport was not affected at all. Between 2009–2010, 15 more different sport branches were sponsored. This result could be recorded even for the reason that individual employees changed in companies during 2005–2010 and therefore they do not have to have a complete overview of past years. However, this result can still be considered positive from the point of view of sport sponsorship. During detailed investigation of individual sport branches the results show that the most significant moves forward were detected within winter sports and of summers sports it was mainly athletics. On the contrary, basketball and cycling were worse off. The development is clearly depicted in Figure 1.

The answers contained a wide range of branches. In Figure 1 no sports are recorded whose frequency reached lower values than 4. Among some of those less usual sports sponsored in the Czech Republic were children’s sports days, alpine expeditions, shooting competitions, bikeball, jumping boots, bowling, in-line competitions etc.

The research was then focusing on the reasons why companies in between the periods of time examined left the sponsorship of some sport branch. The change in sport sponsorship was done by 33 companies, where the respondents could mark more answers. Three answers reached major figures: lowered budget; money was invested into a different area and advertising seemed to be ineffective. It is therefore apparent that some sport branches suffered from the consequences of the economic crisis because the companies’

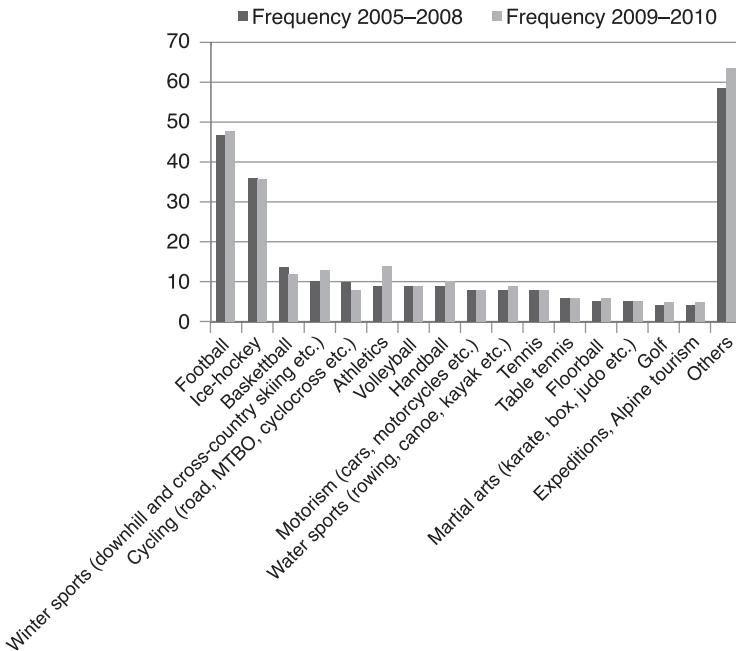


Figure 1. Sponsorship of sport branches during 2005–2010

representatives mostly gave answers related to finance. The answer represented the most frequently was on lower budgets in big companies where eight companies stated their withdrawal from a sport branch because of a lowered budget.

Forms and types of sponsorship

The part of the research focusing on used forms and types of sponsorship was also focusing on the past or the period of time closely before the crisis. Concerning both forms and types of sponsorship there was no significant change during the crisis in comparison with the period before the crisis. The influence of the economic crisis did not manifest at all in this area of sponsorship within the examined sample of companies. Table 3 represents the results of used forms of sponsorship.

Table 3. Currently used forms of sponsorship

Sponsorship (forms)	Micro companies	Small companies	Medium companies	Big companies	Total
Individual athletes	2	4	5	10	21
Sport events	6	17	12	13	48
Sport clubs	10	18	24	20	72
League competitions	1	6	2	3	12
Sport unions	2	–	2	5	9
Serials of competitions	–	6	1	2	9

Table 3 clearly shows that there are two prevailing forms within the set examined – sport clubs sponsorship and sport events sponsorship. It is then apparent that big companies support individual athletes much more. The least popular form of sponsorship is supporting unions and series of competitions.

It was also found that 81% micro companies use only one form of sponsorship, the figures concerning other company sizes are: small companies 38%, medium companies 50% and big companies 46%. It is interesting that the lowest percentage is shown by small companies, i.e. more than one form of sponsorship is more frequently used by companies with 10–49 employees.

The most frequent type of naming rights is definitely partner or product partner, then main partner, general partner and the least frequent is media partner. Still, there is one difference that should be noted between big companies in comparison with other companies. Big companies to some extent use the title main or general partner. It is obviously caused mainly by the fact that big companies can provide clubs with higher finance, therefore get a more lucrative contract which guarantees the above mentioned titles.

Finance intended for sport sponsorship

The key area for each company is its finance. This part of the questionnaire examined the situation reflecting providing finance to sport sponsorship by an examined group

of companies. This issue was not completed by 19 companies however the answers of 81 companies still have a great deal of reflective value. The overall results regarding the identifying division of companies examined clearly show that the overwhelming majority of companies examined invest in sport sponsorship max. 2% of their budget (52% of the examined group). There is one interesting fact which expresses that 24% of questioned companies spend at least 4% of their budget on sport sponsorship. It represents insubstantial amounts of money for sport branches which then become a significant communication tool. Examining changes before the crisis and during the economic crisis was also crucial for this research. Table 5 expresses that smaller companies registered increases in percentage of the budget for sport sponsorship, whereas medium and big companies registered percentual budgets lowering. Moreover, 43 organizations left the percentual budget share on the same level and 22 respondents did not answer this question.

Table 4. Frequency of percentual changes in budgets in comparison with 2005–2008

Change	Micro companies	Small companies	Medium companies	Big companies	Total
Increase	5	9	1	2	17
Decrease	2	4	6	6	18
Share without changes	5	12	16	10	43

However, the percentual changes must be completed with other data, regarding permanently changing company conditions and the size of their budgets. To give the complete picture about changes in finance provided it is necessary to complement the percentual changes with information about increasing or decreasing absolute amounts. Table 5 shows that the increase of the absolute amount reaches higher figures but it must not be omitted that medium and big companies registered a small increase in absolute amounts regarding the frequency. It is therefore very improbable that the total sum sent to sport sponsorship during the crisis was lower than before the economic crisis. However, it is still very interesting that smaller companies decided to invest more in sport sponsorship. It is evidence of small size companies realizing the need and advantageousness of marketing communication via sport.

Table 5. Changes of absolute amounts compared to budgets of 2005–2008

Change	Micro companies	Small companies	Medium companies	Big companies	Total
Increase	8	10	2	5	25
Decrease	1	7	6	8	22
Amount remained the same	3	8	14	7	32

The questionnaire was also focusing on the question of future plans with finance intended for sport sponsorship within the following 5 years. 65% of companies will keep

the finance for sport sponsorship on the same level. 14% of respondents are thinking about increasing invested finance in sport sponsorship and 20% are thinking about reduction. Unfortunately, 17 companies did not participate in this question. Generally, we can say that the future finance spent on sport sponsorship will be slightly declining.

Influence on cooperation and termination with a sport branch

Satisfaction of both parties in a business relationship such as sponsorship is a fundamental prerequisite for a satisfactory long-term cooperation. During negotiations with sponsors or potential sponsors it is necessary to know the important factors which could influence potential future cooperation. These factors can vary with each company.

The most significant factors that influence cooperation with sport branches by companies are: public popularity of sport branches, media attention, personal interest and spectator attendance. Another significant factor is sport popularity within a region and on the contrary an insignificant factor is the amount of TV broadcasts, even though sport popularity is interconnected with sport presentation on TV.

The respondents presented several interesting comments in the option “other”, significant for them is: business relations twice, regional support twice, agreement with product sponsorship, usefulness of sponsorship, effectiveness of resources used, number of participants in sport including recreational sport, possibility of technological partnership, managing relationships with customers, development of youth and children, good experience. Even though these can be taken as a marginal category, there can be some trends observed positive for Czech sport and modern integrated sponsorship. Further on they stated rather significant: aspiration to healthy lifestyle and marketing usage.

Other results are focused on negative factors influencing mostly the risk of terminating the cooperation between a company and a specific sport subject. The companies clearly indicated that corruption and financial problems are reasons which would discourage them from sponsoring a specific sport and the cooperation would be terminated. Similar situation is with doping, only the result is not as significant as concerning the previous two aspects. The respondents even gave their own reasons: breaching the conditions of a sponsorship contract, decisions of shareholders/owners, personal changes in club leadership, interruption of business relationships, loss of development finance, disloyalty, loss of confidence, impossibility of promoting technologies.

Business targets and reciprocal services offered

Overall activity of companies and sport subjects is aimed at fulfilling business targets. That is the reason even for sport sponsorship as a marketing and communicative tool of companies to participate in fulfilling these targets. The results in Table 6 of which targets are the most important during sponsorships show those with the most significance are targets of rising awareness of the company name and creating a positive company goodwill. Third best was the target of rising awareness of a company product or service. On the other hand of the ranking was the target of co-workers' motivation.

Table 6. Targets of sport sponsorship based in the Czech Republic

Target	Frequency of marks given				Mean Value
	1 (very significant)	2 (rather significant)	3 (rather insignificant)	4 (insignificant)	
Raise the awareness of a product/service	55	23	12	7	1.70
Raise the awareness of company name	65	24	4	2	1.40
Support company identification via sport	38	36	13	5	1.84
Improve local company awareness	42	37	10	3	1.72
Create good company name	38	27	20	6	1.93
Contact with customers, business people, partners	38	24	24	11	2.08
Creation of goodwill	63	27	4	1	1.40
Usage for communicative targets	20	28	31	13	2.40
Co-workers motivation	8	28	31	27	2.82
Social responsibility	27	32	26	8	2.16

The results did not prove any significant differences among individual groups of companies from the viewpoint of size. All types of companies basically copied the overall results of this issue with minor changes. During evaluating attractiveness of reciprocal services offered the companies ordered individual reciprocal services on this scale: 1 = the most attractive, 11 = the least attractive.

Among the most attractive reciprocal services in the group of micro companies are: 1. advertising on perimeterboards and banners, 2. advertising on sportswear and 3. naming rights in the event title. On the other side the least interesting reciprocal service for micro companies is products/services as prizes for winners.

The results within the group of small companies show the following most attractive reciprocal services: 1. advertising on perimeterboards and banners, 2. advertising on sportswear and 3. company logo on promotional materials. The least attractive reciprocal service evaluated was again products/services as prizes for winners.

The most attractive reciprocal services for medium companies are: 1. advertising on perimeterboards and banners, 2. company logo on promotional materials and 3. naming rights in the event title. Medium companies are not interested in advertising on sport apparel and equipment.

The last group is created by big companies which find the most reciprocal services these following: 1. advertising on sportswear, 2. naming rights in the event title and 3. advertising on perimeterboards and banners. Together with medium companies the least interesting reciprocal service was for big companies advertising on sport apparel and

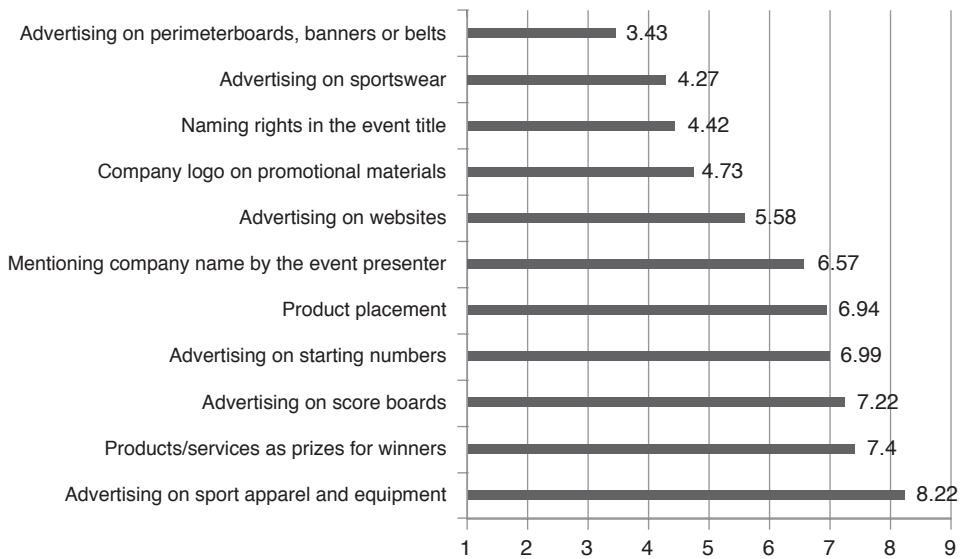


Figure 2. Sponsorship of sport branches during 2005–2010

equipment. The overall results without size company distinctions are indicated in Figure 2 where 1 is the most attractive and 9 the least attractive.

Among the most attractive reciprocal services quite unequivocally belongs to advertising on perimeterboards, banners or belts, advertising on sportswear and naming rights in the event title. These three reciprocal services appeared randomly on top places of particular company types from the viewpoint of their size. All in all, the least attractive reciprocal service is then within the examined set of companies and similarly to medium and big companies advertising on sport apparel and equipment.

Gift donations

The last part of the research, or questionnaire, was to discover whether the companies examined support sport branches also by donations. In total more than 64% of examined companies support sport also by donations. This form is mostly used by big companies, the least by micro companies. Small and medium companies are even in this issue. Managers stated that the trend of donations is declining in their companies.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Data presented in the research provided us with a lot of surprising findings about the direction towards which sport sponsorship is heading in the Czech Republic, i.e. the European environment which is affected by the economic crisis.

A very surprising finding for us was that sponsorship targets in the area of sport did not prove any significant difference among particular groups of companies from the

viewpoint of size. All types of companies basically copied the same targets, even though there were minor shifts in ranking. All types of companies prefer goodwill, awareness of company name, alternatively of product. Small companies and micro companies add even regional company awareness. In this respect we were expecting more regarding social responsibility and motivation of co-workers than fulfilling classic marketing targets. Unfortunately, social responsibility was stated in front positions only by big companies because this activity is there a part of overall strategy planned by multinational headquarters of a mother company. Unfortunately, this situation is usually in post-socialist states because managements of medium and small companies have already been catching up with marketing knowledge and big companies are one step ahead. Big companies represent this state by the usage of integrated sponsorship more and they combine sport products with non-sport or with products loosely attached to sport more. If we compare our results with a research with the same focus on Slovenian companies from 2005 (Jurak et al., 2009) the shift of targets is obvious in both states. Big companies in the Slovenian research from 2005 prefer targets connected with involvement into social environment, communication with public and increasing awareness of company name. To some extent purely business targets are not in the first place which are more presented by medium-sized companies. More important are the tasks of involvement in social environment which unfortunately is not represented in the Czech Republic. There were 494 companies participating in the Slovenian research.

Small companies are in the Czech environment more focused on the usage of individual products, sport or connected with sport environment. What companies expect from sport sponsorship is derived from their own marketing targets.

Another interesting aspect is that big companies do not find sport advertising ineffective, whereas small and medium companies have a different opinion. The reason can probably be that big companies can invest more finance in clubs and get a more lucrative contract and therefore they are more visible in media where the effect of advertising is highly increased. It is surprising that since 2000 medium companies have not learned how to operate sport advertising more. An important aspect can also be worsening sport results of the sponsored entity, but this possibility was given only by two medium companies.

Provision of reliability in case of a research like this is also a part of the discussion. According to time consuming workload of company managers responsible for sport sponsorship it is difficult, practically impossible, to repeat the research in a certain time interval. The problem can also be in circulation of employees in these managerial positions.

The research presented is more significant in comparison with research having been so far undertaken in the Czech Republic. More questionnaires were collected and above all this research can be applied to all companies sponsoring sport environment because it was not focused only on one sport branch. The results can be applied to all companies in the Czech Republic because the questionnaires were collected evenly according to company sizes.

The research study has several limits. The first limit is obviously the chosen period of the economic crisis which beginning is determined by the year 2008. Theoretically it could be assumed that the data of this period of time would always be unique or atypical and it could certainly be assumed that they would be unfavourable for the area of sport such as a wide range of professional articles focused on this topic shows. This is exactly

the reason why we considered this period of time beneficial for our research because the results can influence current managerial decisions in the area of sport financing which are currently being discussed in the Czech Republic and which should be influenced by sport financing from the state position. Because authors (Kraft et al., 2011; Lawson, 2009; Ohanian, 2010) dealing with the economic crisis in theory themselves state that it is important to not only understand but mainly deduce an appropriate type of reformatory arrangements.

The second limit is represented in the Czech conditions by company's willingness to make these data public, mostly those related to finance. In order to reach the amount of 100 companies in approximately the same amount we had to extend the questioning to the period of time of 3 months. In spite of the entire research team's effort, some questions remained unanswered, especially those related to financial investment in sport sponsorship, by approximately one fifth of companies, which has already been mentioned in the chapter dealing with this topic. It is difficult to motivate companies to publish information on invested finance for such type of research.

We think that further research on this topic would be required after new adjustments of managing and financing sport in CR are realized in practice and they gain a proper stability. Afterwards it would be desirable to gain an overview of trends in sport financing by business companies and create a new research. It is difficult to set a time horizon just now.

If we sum up the results of our research we can say that the economic crisis did not affect the sport environment in the Czech Republic as heavily as we had assumed. Moreover, the research results show that companies accepted more sport branches which they were willing to sponsor. However, it does not mean according to the results that there would be more finance in sport. The data gained show that mostly smaller companies registered an increase in their amount of money for sponsorships, whereas big companies registered the opposite tendency. It is possible to say that via the form of sponsorship sport in the Czech Republic has been receiving less finance since after 2008.

The development of sponsorship activity is mainly supported by sport having high public popularity and also media attention and viewers' attendance. It is mainly football and ice-hockey, traditional sports such as tennis, athletics, skiing, basketball, volleyball, cycling, swimming, handball including 1–2 sports as young as floorball or snowboarding which have increasingly boosted their membership mainly among the youth.

In spite of the fact that a decline has been recorded in the advertising activity of sport clubs, advertising is in the Czech Republic still the main reciprocal service offered to sponsors. Czech clubs mostly offer it to regional partners. In order to create sufficient incomes from this activity, which takes into account even prices lower for its saleability, a lot of marketing partners overstep these amount up to several tens. National partners, i.e. big companies are provided with complex marketing programmes by professional football and hockey clubs, from naming rights sponsorship to hospitality programmes but their part is also selling advertising.

It is obvious that the cooperation with sport branches in the Czech Republic is significantly supported by public sport popularity, media attention and spectator attendance. This would not be very special but another phenomenon dominantly projected into these factors is owners', agents' or company directors' personal interests. The reason why

personal interest influences the Czech sponsorship market is that the market is small. Therefore the personal relationship of managers to a specific sport is easily enforced because it culminates in company willingness to sponsor said sport.

What is not very satisfying among the research results is the lower ranking of social responsibility among marketing targets. If we at the same time take into account the trend in the area of donations, it is possible to say that there should not be expected any excessive commitment in charity. The only exception can be formed by big companies where this can represent a company-wide targets set up by multinational headquarters.

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POSTOJE FIREM KE SPONZOROVÁNÍ SPORTU V ČESKÉ REPUBLICE V OBDOBÍ EKONOMICKÉ KRIZE

EVA ČÁSLAVOVÁ, JOSEF DVOŘÁK, JOSEF VORÁČEK

SOUHRN

Tento výzkum prezentuje přístup firem ke sponzorování sportu v období ekonomické krize v evropském teritoriu, konkrétně v České republice. Výzkum zahrnoval 100 firem působících v České republice. Byla uplatněna metoda elektronického dotazování manažerů odpovědných za tuto marketingovou činnost. Výsledky výzkumu ukazují trendy ve sponzorování sportu ze strany firem a mohou sloužit jako podklad pro strategické rozhodování o nových cestách financování sportu na léta 2012–2020, které v tomto období řeší příslušné orgány státní správy České republiky.

Klíčová slova: marketingová komunikace, sportovní sponzoring, sportovní reklama, sponzorský balíček, dar

Eva Čáslavová
caslavova@ftvs.cuni.cz