The Influence of Sports Media on the Brand Awareness and Corporate Image of Sports Sponsorship Agreements within Sri Lanka Cricket; A Study of Moose Clothing's Sponsorship

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ABSTRACT : Sports sponsorship is a highly popular corporate communication strategy, with global investments reaching $44.3 billion in 2018 and projected to reach $62.2 billion by 2024. Sports media plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of sponsorships by positioning them as a marketing tool. The rise of technology and digitalization has led to an increase in sports media platforms, necessitating a deep understanding of how to reach the target audience effectively. This study aims to address empirical gaps in sports media and sponsorship literature, specifically investigating the influence of sports media on brand awareness and corporate image in Sri Lankan Cricket, focusing on Moose Clothing's sponsorship. A survey-based research design is employed, with a sample of 445 respondents selected using convenience sampling. A pre-validated self-administered questionnaire is used to collect data, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is utilized for data analysis. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression analysis are conducted to explore the frequency distribution, and relationships, and measure predictors. The results revealed positive associations between sports media exposure and brand awareness ($r = 0.259$) as well as corporate image ($r = 0.246$). Media exposure on TV and internet platforms demonstrated the most significant impact on both brand awareness ($\beta = 0.242$ & 0.224) and corporate image ($\beta = 0.149$ & 0.146). Conversely, media exposure on the radio shows a negligible negative impact on both brand awareness ($\beta = -0.128$) and corporate image ($\beta = -0.004$). The findings provide valuable insights for organizations and marketers seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their sports sponsorship initiatives. Engaging with multiple sports media channels can amplify the impact of sports sponsorship. Sponsors should carefully consider the target audience and choose media channels accordingly to ensure effective communication and engagement. The study's limitations include its focus on Sri Lankan Cricket sponsorships, potentially limited generalizability, and the use of self-reported data and a cross-sectional design. Future research should examine sports media and sponsorship effectiveness in various sports contexts and regions. Longitudinal studies can provide insights into the dynamic relationship between sports media exposure, brand awareness, and corporate image.

Keywords- Brand Awareness, Corporate Image, Sports Media, Sports Sponsorship Effectiveness, Sri Lankan Cricket.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The sports industry has witnessed a remarkable growth, becoming a lucrative market for brand promotion. Forbes reports that the North American sports market was valued at $60.5 billion in 2014, expected to rise to $73.5 billion by 2019, with media rights agreements projected to drive growth [1]. Globally, the sports industry is estimated to be worth around $100 billion, with increasing demand for sports-related products and services [2]. Marketing capability is now crucial for financial success due to globalization and digitalization, making strategic communication tools like sports sponsorship which is vital for differentiation [3]. Global investment in sports sponsorship was $44.3 billion in 2018 and projected to reach $62.2 billion by 2024 [4].

Sports sponsorship, defined by various scholars, is a popular strategy for enhancing brand recognition and loyalty among consumers. Research highlights its effectiveness based on customer-based brand equity, brand integration, brand loyalty, sponsor image, and stakeholder engagement [5]. To succeed, sports sponsorship must effectively reach the target audience and create positive brand associations [6]. Utilizing sports media platforms like television, print, online media, and social media is essential for effective audience engagement [7]. For instance, the National Basketball Association in North America leverages social media to engage with fans, while Nike utilizes its website to share brand and sponsorship information [8][9]. Overall, reaching the target audience and creating positive brand associations are critical for the success of sports sponsorship in today's digital age [10][11].

1.2 Problem Statement

Sports sponsorship through media platforms presents both opportunities and challenges for sponsors in promoting their brands effectively. Negative publicity or association with specific athletes or teams can tarnish a sponsor's brand image [12], while evolving consumer behaviors and media consumption habits require sponsors to continually adapt their strategies [13]. To overcome these challenges, sponsors like Coca-Cola and Nike employ digital hubs and social media platforms to engage with consumers authentically [14] [9]. While sports media can enhance brand awareness and corporate image, evaluating sponsorship solely based on media coverage has limitations [11] [15]. Therefore, understanding these dynamics is crucial for sponsors to refine their strategies. In the context of Sri Lankan Cricket, where research on sports sponsorship effectiveness is lacking, Moose Clothing's sponsorship offers an opportunity to explore how sports media influences brand perception. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate "How does sports media influence the brand awareness and corporate image of Moose Clothing as a sponsor within Sri Lanka Cricket?"

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Major Objective: To explore sports media influence on the brand awareness and corporate image of Moose Clothing as a sponsor within Sri Lankan Cricket.

Specific Objectives: The specific objectives of the study are as follows.
1.   To identify the types of sports media that have the most significant impact on brand awareness and corporate image.
2.   To measure the relationship between sports media, brand awareness and corporate image of sports sponsorships within Sri Lankan Cricket.
3.   To provide recommendations for sports sponsors in Sri Lanka on how to leverage sports media to enhance brand awareness and corporate image.

2. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND OPERATIONALIZATION

Conceptualization involves understanding sponsorship effectiveness through consumer psychology and financial perspectives, focusing on Brand Awareness (BA) and Corporate Image (CI). Measuring BA involves assessing brand recall and recognition, while CI comprehends positive attitudes, reputation, and customer retention

likelihood. Media Exposure (ME) serves as a crucial mechanism for transmitting sponsorship messages and influencing BA and CI [16] [17].

This study explores the influence of media exposure on brand awareness and corporate image. Figure 1 illustrated the dependent (BA and CI), and independent (ME) variables used as the basis for the present study which shows by the conceptual framework.

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework
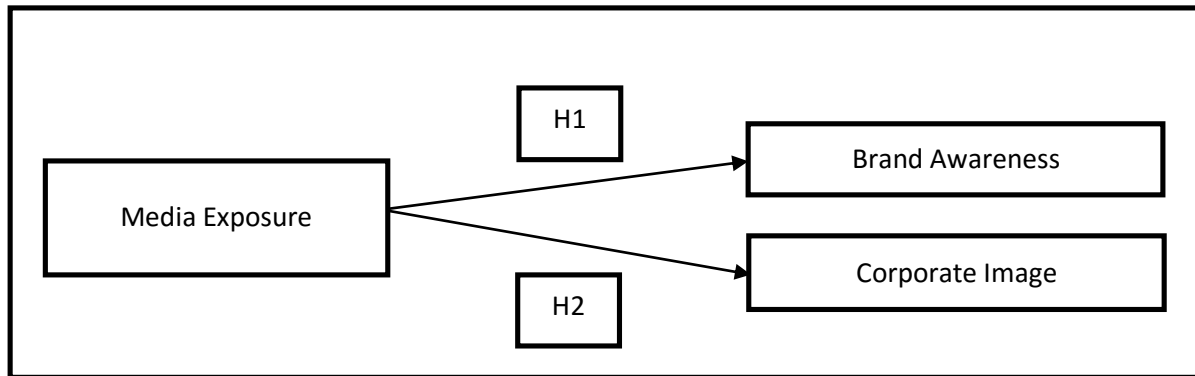
3. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

There are two hypotheses developed in this study. They are as follows.

H1- There is a significant relationship between media exposure and brand awareness.

Hypothesis 1 proposes a significant relationship between media exposure and brand awareness, accepted by various studies highlighting this connection [18] [19] [3]. Sub-hypotheses (H1a-H1d) further specify associations between different media platforms and brand awareness.

H_2- There is a significant relationship between media exposure and corporate image.

Hypothesis 2 suggests a significant relationship between media exposure and corporate image, as evidenced by research emphasizing the impact of media exposure on shaping and enhancing corporate image [20] [21] [22]. Sub-hypotheses (H2a-H2d) delineate associations between various media channels and corporate image.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study population comprises cricket spectators in Sri Lanka as there is a strong cultural affinity towards cricket in the country. A questionnaire-based approach was employed, similar to previous research utilizing convenience sampling, focusing on university students as they represent a significant proportion of the population and are avid cricket followers. The unit of analysis is the individual participant, with a sample size of 445 university students selected using a Google Form distributed to cricket fans. Data were collected during January – February 2023. Data gathering techniques will involve a questionnaire divided into two sections. The first part will collect demographic data and assess participants' engagement with cricket, following the framework established by [23]. The second part will contain Likert scale questions inspired by [24], focusing on participants' media preferences and usage frequency. Measurement of brand awareness and corporate image will be guided by methodologies outlined in the works of [25] [26].

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS 22.0, the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 22. After entering the gathered and cleaned data into SPSS, missing values were checked and found to be absent. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were computed to summarize the data and offer insights into participant demographics and response patterns. To ensure data quality, responses which identified the specific brand name (Moose Clothing) were only filtered for further analysis. Subsequently, reliability and normality tests were performed as a part of the initial statistical analysis. Following this, hypothesis testing was conducted to explore the correlations between variables. Spearman's correlation coefficient was employed to examine these relationships. Additionally, regression analyses were carried out to assess the predictive influence of media exposure on brand awareness and corporate image.

5.2 Test of Reliability

The reliability of variables was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha values, with Table 1 displaying these coefficients, which indicate acceptable internal consistency with values of .7 or higher.

Table 1. Reliability of Variables

Variable	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Media Exposure	12	0.825	Reliable
Brand Awareness	6	0.866	Reliable
Corporate Image	9	0.944	Reliable

5.3 Test of Normality

Table 2 presents the outcomes of the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, commonly used for evaluating data normality, with the Shapiro-Wilk test preferred for smaller sample sizes. This test examines significance values, where a value above 0.05 suggests normal distribution, while below 0.05 indicates non-normality.

Table 2. Normality of Variables

| Variable | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Media Exposure_Mean	0.898	351	**0.000**
Brand Awareness_Mean	0.940	351	**0.000**
Corporate Image_Mean	0.995	351	**0.383**

5.4 Hypothesis Testing

The study utilizes SPSS version 22 to conduct hypothesis testing, focusing on examining correlations between an independent variable and multiple dependent variables, employing the non-parametric Spearman correlation method due to the non-normal distribution of data. Additionally, Spearman correlation was utilized to assess the correlation between study variables, as indicated by Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Correlation Tests

Hypothesis	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Accepted or not	Relationship
H1	0.259**	0.000	Accepted	Moderate
H2	0.246**	0.000	Accepted	Moderate

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Sub-hypotheses were analyzed to examine the associations between various media platforms (TV, Radio, Internet, newspapers) and both brand awareness (H1a-H1d) and corporate image (H2a-H2d). According to the previous research, significance values below 0.05 were considered significant. Table 3 presenting the overall results of multiple regression analysis and the hypotheses tested in this study.

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis of Sub Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Coefficient	Collinearity Statistics		Accepted or not
		Tolerance	VIF	
H1a	0.242***	0.734	1.362	Accepted
H1b	-0.128*	0.728	1.374	Not Accepted
H1c	0.224***	0.771	1.296	Accepted
H1d	0.095*	0.726	1.377	Not Accepted
H2a	0.149**	0.734	1.362	Accepted
H2b	-0.004	0.728	1.374	Not Accepted
H2c	0.103*	0.771	1.296	Not Accepted
H2d	0.146**	0.726	1.377	Accepted

*p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.001

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, recommendations for corporate entities aiming to boost brand awareness and corporate image through sponsorship include optimizing media allocation to TV and internet channels, as these platforms yield the greatest impact. Enhancing the content quality across media platforms is crucial, emphasizing engaging and relevant material aligned with audience preferences. Employing a cross-platform integration approach spanning TV, internet, radio, and newspapers can reinforce brand message consistency and bolster brand perception.

6.2 Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be addressed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Firstly, the exclusive focus on Sri Lankan Cricket may restrict the generalizability of the results to other sports contexts or regions, considering that sponsorship dynamics can vary across different sports and cultural contexts. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data from participants introduces potential response biases and measurement errors, influenced by social interest bias or recall bias, leading to data inaccuracies. Moreover, the language barrier in the questionnaire may have impacted participants' understanding and response accuracy, despite efforts to translate and pilot test it in Sinhala and English. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design limits establishing causality between variables, providing only a snapshot of the relationship between sports media and sponsorship effectiveness, warranting longitudinal studies to track changes over time for a more comprehensive understanding.

6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of sports media on brand awareness and corporate image in the context of Sri Lankan Cricket sponsorships. Methodologically, it employed a quantitative approach, utilizing online questionnaires for data collection and conducting regression, and correlation analysis as the data analysis. Findings revealed that media exposure, particularly via TV and internet channels, significantly impacted brand awareness and corporate image. Consequently, recommendations for sponsors in the Sri Lankan sports industry include strategic utilization of media channels, tailored advertising campaigns, and continuous monitoring of sponsorship effectiveness. Overall, this study contributes to understanding the interplay between sports media, brand awareness, and corporate image within Sri Lankan Cricket sponsorships.

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