

**STRATEGIES FOR SPORTS SPONSORSHIP ACTIVATION AND THEIR
IMPACT ON BRAND VISIBILITY AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that the following work was carried out by **Marie Ewanreyen OKOEKHIAN** with the Matriculation Number **EDU2102470** from the Department of Human Kinetics and Sports Science, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science (Education) in Human Kinetics and Sports Science.



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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, whose provision, protection, and guidance have been present from the beginning to the completion of this project.

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the evolving mechanisms through which brands activate their sports sponsorships and evaluates the subsequent impact of these strategies on key marketing objectives: audience engagement and brand visibility. The study posits that the contemporary marketing landscape has rendered traditional, passive sponsorship characterized primarily by static logo placement ineffectual for achieving meaningful brand-consumer connections. Consequently, brands are increasingly adopting a more dynamic and integrated approach, deploying inventive, interactive tactics to maximize their investment. These tactics include, but are not limited to, digital and social media campaigns, strategic athlete partnerships, immersive fan experiences, and authentic community-focused initiatives.

To gather empirical data, this study employed a survey methodology, distributing questionnaires to organizations actively engaged in sports sponsorship. The analysis of the collected data reveals a clear correlation between strategic activation and marketing success. Specifically, sponsorships that are meticulously planned and deliberately tailored to a target audience demonstrably enhance brand recognition and foster deeper, more resonant audience engagement.

Nevertheless, the research also identifies significant persistent challenges that hinder optimal implementation. These obstacles include poorly defined campaign objectives, constraints imposed by limited budgets, a lack of authentic alignment between the brand and the sponsored event or property, and the ongoing difficulty of accurately measuring the return on investment (ROI) of sponsorship activities.

In conclusion, the findings underscore a critical imperative for brands to transition from mere sponsorship to strategic activation. This necessitates an approach that is inherently more strategic, deeply audience-centric, and continuously innovative. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the indispensable need for robust evaluation frameworks, enabling brands to precisely track impact, demonstrate value, and refine future sponsorship strategies for sustained competitive advantage.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Sponsorship has become an integral part of the sports business, serving as a primary revenue source for teams, competitions, and organizations, while providing brands a powerful means to connect with large, enthusiastic audiences. Sports sponsorship has steadily risen to become a leading marketing tactic employed by corporations, particularly within the sports and fashion sectors. Nevertheless, in the current intensely competitive and saturated marketing environment, merely showcasing a brand name, a company logo on apparel or a sign at a sporting venue is inadequate. Brands are now anticipated to transcend passive endorsements and participate in what is known as sponsorship activation, the strategic use of marketing resources to bring sponsorships to life and foster more profound audience relationships.

Sponsorship activation, encompasses the planned marketing activities a brand employs to utilize its sponsorship rights and cultivate deeper connections with its intended fan base. Simply displaying a logo on apparel, signage, or broadcasts is insufficient in the current market. Contemporary audience desire more substantial, interactive, and personalized experiences. Sponsorship activation strategies, refer to the deliberate marketing activities undertaken by brands to optimize their sponsorship investment's

return. Successful implementation transforms a passive sponsorship into an immersive experience for the intended audience. The efficacy of these initiatives hinges on creativity, pertinence, opportune timing, and compatibility with audience values and preferences.

Sponsorship activation centers on rendering sponsorships impactful. Sports sponsorship activation constitutes a crucial element within the marketing field, linking brands and their desired audience groups via the vibrant arena of athletics. It comprises diverse tactics formulated to invigorate sponsorships, building substantial connections and enhancing brand visibility. These approaches aim to optimize the return on sponsorship investment, guaranteeing the collaboration resonates with spectators and produces peak outcomes. From in-arena promotions to digital interaction and community programs, sports sponsorship activation ensures the partnership mutually benefits both corporations and enthusiasts. A broad spectrum of actions are developed to amplify brand awareness, encourage audience involvement, and finally influence audience's preferences. Successful activation strategies frequently integrate digital and physical activities. These activities may encompass;

1. Digital and social media campaigns
2. Athlete and influencer collaborations
3. Experiential marketing at live events
4. Promotional giveaways

5. Narrative-driven content.

6. Augmented reality (AR) applications

7. Community-focused programs.

When effectively implemented, these strategies foster interaction, create emotional bonds, and produce quantifiable business results which can transform a basic sponsorship into a dynamic partnership between the brand, the sport, and its followers.

Over recent decades, the sports marketing landscape has undergone a substantial transformation. Audiences are no longer passive observers; they are active participants in the media and social sphere. Fans interact with sports content across diverse platforms, ranging from live broadcasts and streaming services to social media and mobile applications such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, among others. Audience frequently develop strong attachments to entertainment content, and when brands align themselves with these experiences, they cultivate trust and preference among their intended audience (Kahiya et al., 2022). This shift has necessitated innovative approaches from brands in activating their sponsorships to stand out and create meaningful connections with their target market.

The increasing emphasis on brand prominence and audience interaction has made sponsorship activation a key area of focus for both marketers and researchers. Sponsorship's impact on brand visibility is multifaceted within the high-stakes world of

sports marketing. Visibility refers to the frequency and prominence of a brand's appearance to the audience. Brand visibility has an essential role in creating differentiation, and building brand visibility is one of the ways to make a sustainable competitive advantage in the markets (Nazari et al., 2018).

Brand visibility signifies the extent to which the public perceives, identifies, and recalls a brand. In the sports arena, this can be impacted by the frequency and quality of brand exposure across various platforms, including stadium displays, television broadcasts, and digital channels. The more dynamic and innovative a brand's presentation during a sporting event, the greater its likelihood of achieving noteworthy visibility and memorability among spectators.

However, mere visibility is inadequate. Contemporary marketing prioritizes audience participation, which reflects how consumers interact with and respond to a brand. Participation manifests in diverse ways from liking and sharing a brand's social media posts to entering contests, downloading branded applications, attending sponsored events, or purchasing branded merchandise.

Engagement involves the emotional and interactive relationship cultivated between fans and a brand through content, experiences, or communication. In other words, sponsorships significantly influence audience engagement by fostering emotional connections and interactive experiences. Engaged audiences are more likely to become

loyal patrons and brand advocates, consequently enhancing long-term brand value and return on investment (ROI). Collectively, these elements play a crucial role in shaping brand loyalty and impacting purchasing behaviors.

Conversely, brand visibility and audience engagement represent the primary outcomes sponsors pursue. Brand visibility signifies the frequency and conspicuousness with which a brand is observed by its target demographic. This can be assessed using metrics such as media impressions, logo screen time, or social media reach. Audience interaction, however, extends beyond mere observation by gauging audience response to the brand. It encompasses emotional resonance, participation in brand-related endeavors, social media engagement, and ultimate consumer behavior such as brand allegiance or purchase inclination.

Despite its growing significance, many companies still struggle to accurately measure the true effectiveness of their sponsorship endeavors or identify the most successful activation strategies. Research suggests that the success of sponsorship messaging is substantially influenced by the level of attention it receives from the audience, which in turn enhances brand recognition and recall (Santos & Moreno, 2018).

Some campaigns generate excitement and activity but fail to translate that attention into meaningful engagement. Others might create immersive fan experiences but lack lasting brand recall. The long-term advantages of such sponsorships are noteworthy, as

entertainment content often continues to reach audiences via reruns, streaming platforms, and social media discussions, extending the lifespan of brand messaging (Liao, 2023). These challenges highlight the need for a more profound understanding of which strategies perform best in various sporting contexts and how they can be optimized to achieve branding objectives.

In Nigeria and other developing sports markets, where both domestic and international brands are progressively investing in sports sponsorships, a significant challenge persists: How can these sponsorships be implemented effectively to connect with target demographics and simultaneously achieve both visibility and engagement objectives? Many brands invest substantially in securing sponsorship rights but fail to leverage these rights creatively or strategically, leading to poor audience recall, limited fan interaction, and disappointing returns.

This research is motivated by the need to explore and evaluate diverse strategies for sponsorship activation in sports, with a particular focus on how these strategies impact brand visibility and audience engagement. By analyzing successful real-world examples and pinpointing key elements of effective activation using both theoretical frameworks and empirical data within the current media environment, this study aims to provide insights that can guide sports marketers, brand managers, sports organizations and rights holders in making well-informed decision about their investments within the fiercely competitive landscape of sports marketing.

Statement of the Problem

In today's competitive sports and marketing landscape, brands face continuous pressure to demonstrate a return on their sponsorship investments. While sponsorship agreements often promise extensive exposure, numerous brands struggle to translate that visibility into genuine audience engagement or long-term brand recognition. Simply associating a brand name with a team or event is no longer sufficient to stand out in a media-saturated world. Without effective activation strategies, even high-cost sponsorships can yield minimal results, leading to missed opportunities for both the brand and the sponsored entity. The challenge, therefore, lies in determining which sponsorship activation strategies are most effective in enhancing brand visibility and fostering meaningful engagement with target audiences.

As consumers become more discerning and technology proficient, they are less likely to respond to passive forms of advertising. Traditional sponsorship models, which greatly relied on visibility alone, are no longer sufficient to capture attention or influence behavior in a meaningful way. As a result, brands face a critical challenge: how to move beyond logo placement and develop activation strategies that not only attract attention but also create emotional connections, encourage interactions, and drive brand engagement.

Moreover, the evolving media environment has introduced additional complexity. With audiences divided across multiple channels, social media, streaming platforms, mobile

apps, and live events, sponsorship activation now requires a more integrated, innovative, and audience-centric approach. Brands must determine not only where to activate their sponsorships but also how to do so in a manner that resonates with diverse audience segments.

The core problem addressed in this study is the lack of clarity surrounding which sponsorship activation strategies are most effective in today's sports marketing environment. Many brands experiment with various activation tactics without fully understanding their impact on key outcomes such as brand visibility and audience engagement. This uncertainty often leads to inefficient spending, inconsistent messaging, and missed opportunities to differentiate the brand in a crowded market. Consequently, there is a growing need to identify, evaluate, and systematize effective sponsorship activation strategies that are both impactful and measurable.

Research Questions

1. What are the strategies for sponsorship activation in sports?
2. How do these strategies influence brand visibility before, during and after sports events?
3. To what extent do sponsorship activation strategies impact on audience engagement across different platforms (e.g., digital, in-stadium, broadcast)?

4. What are the challenges brands face in executing effective sponsorship activation campaigns?

Research Hypotheses

H₀: (Null Hypothesis): Sponsorship activation strategies have no significant impact on brand visibility and audience engagement in sports.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and evaluate the diverse strategies used by brands to influence brand visibility and audience engagement.

Specifically, the study is determined to;

1. Seek the strategies for sponsorship activation in sports?
2. Find how these strategies influence brand visibility before, during and after sports events?
3. To what extent do sponsorship activation strategies impact audience engagement across different platforms (e.g digital, in-stadium, broadcast)?
4. Determine the challenges brands face in executing sponsorship activation campaigns?

The research aims to bridge the gap between investment and impact—helping stakeholders in the sports marketing ecosystem to make more strategic, informed, and results-driven decisions.

Significance of the Study

This study is of considerable importance to multiple stakeholders within the sports and marketing sectors

Firstly, it offers insights for marketing professionals seeking to improve the effectiveness of their sponsorship efforts through data-driven and strategies centered on audience engagement. By understanding what strategies work and why, sports organizations can make more informed decisions about where to allocate resources, how to design their campaigns, and how to measure their effectiveness.

Secondly, it contributes to academic understanding in the fields of sports marketing and brand management by examining real-world applications of sponsorship theory. It offers a focused examination of sponsorship activation as a strategic marketing tool, which remains under-researched despite its growing significance. By combining theory with real-world practices, the study helps to bridge the gap between academic concepts and industry application, making it valuable for scholars, students, and educators alike.

Thirdly, sports organizations and teams can benefit from understanding which activation strategies attract and retain sponsors, thereby improving their commercial appeal. This

can inform how sports organizations design their sponsorship packages, position their platforms, and support brand partners in achieving their goals. A better understanding of activation effectiveness can also enhance a sports entity's ability to attract and retain long-term sponsors, thus ensuring greater financial stability and market relevance.

Finally, this research will help bridge the gap between financial investment and demonstrable outcomes, that is, demonstrating return on investment (ROI) in an increasingly results-driven environment enabling stakeholders to make well informed, strategic decisions in sponsorship planning and implementation. With marketing budgets under constant scrutiny, brands must justify every dollar spent. This research offers tools and perspectives to help them evaluate the success of their sponsorship strategies not just in terms of reach, but also in terms of engagement, loyalty, and brand growth.

In conclusion, this study is significant because it informs practice, advances theory, supports decision-making, and encourages innovation in sports sponsorship activation which is a dynamic area in sports.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study focuses on analyzing the various strategies utilized by brands to leverage their sponsorships within the sports industry. The research specifically aims to examine how these strategies impact two key marketing outcomes: brand visibility the degree to which a brand is identified and remembered by the intended target audience and audience

engagement the intensity and nature of connections between a brand and audience during and after a sponsorship initiative.

The study is delimited to commercial sports sponsorships, that is, brands, companies, or organizations that invest financially or materially in sports teams, athletes, events, or leagues in exchange for marketing exposure and audience reach, and does not cover philanthropic (charitable) or non-commercial sponsorships such as those linked to community development, education, or social causes where the main objective is brand promotion and market expansion. Examples of such brands include:

1. At Global level

- Nike, Adidas, Puma (apparel and equipment)
- Coca-Cola, PepsiCo (beverages)
- Red Bull (energy drinks & extreme sports)
- Heineken (football, rugby)
- Emirates (football, tennis, F1)
- Visa, Mastercard (Olympics, FIFA World Cup)

2. Nigerian/Local Sponsors

- MTN Nigeria (football and athletics)

- Globacom (Glo)
- Guinness Nigeria
- Bet9ja, NairaBET (sports betting)
- Nigerian Breweries (e.g., Star Lager with NPFL)

This concentration allows for a clearer examination of ROI-focused strategies but also limits the general applicability of the findings to non-commercial contexts.

Furthermore, variables such as brand awareness, consumer loyalty, and event popularity significantly influence both recognition and interaction outcomes. These factors, while considered, are not the central focus of this investigation, making it challenging to isolate the precise effect of activation strategies independently of broader brand equity considerations.

In essence, the study is designed to provide a targeted yet comprehensive exploration of commercial sponsorship activation strategies in sports, while acknowledging the contextual limitations imposed by the data's nature and the research's defined parameters.

Definition of Terms

The following key terms were defined as used in the study:

- ***Sponsorship Activation:*** This signifies the calculated strategies a brand employs to optimize the return on its sponsorship investment. It extends beyond mere logo placement or affiliation with a team or event. Instead, activation encompasses initiatives, materials, or interactive experiences designed to actively involve the target demographic, including online competitions, interactive fan participation, social media content, or unique behind-the-scenes access.

- ***Brand Visibility:*** The extent or degree to which a brand is observed and identified by the public during and after a sponsored event, initiative or campaign.

This denotes the frequency and conspicuousness with which a brand is perceived by its intended consumers, particularly in conjunction with a sporting event or team. This encompasses logo placement, broadcast mentions, digital views, and the brand's distinctiveness amidst competitors during a campaign or event.

- ***Audience Engagement:*** The level of interaction, emotional connection, and participation that an audience exhibits, demonstrates with a brand through sponsorship-related activities.

Refers to how actively audience interact with a brand, particularly through sponsorship-driven experiences. This includes social media shares, likes, comments, participation in events, or emotionally connecting with the brand due to its association with a sport or athlete.

- ***Sports Sponsorship***: A commercial agreement where a brand supports (furnishes financial or tangible backing to) a sports team, event, competition or individual athlete in exchange for promotional opportunities, increased brand awareness and access to the sponsor's fans base.

- ***Return on Investment (ROI)***: Within the context of sponsorship, ROI represents the quantifiable results a brand achieves (for example, increased sales, recognition, or audience interaction) relative to the financial resources allocated to sponsorship and engagement activities.

It is a measure or metric quantity of the financial or brand impact derived from sponsorship activities in relation to the cost of the sponsorship.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a thorough review of the existing relevant literature related to the study and was organized under the following subheadings;

- Theoretical framework
- Understanding sports sponsorship activation
- Sports sponsorship activation strategies
- Measuring the impact of sports sponsorship
- Measuring combined effect of brand visibility and audience engagement on sponsorship effectiveness
- Factors affecting sports sponsorship effectiveness
- Challenges in sports sponsorship activation
- Consideration for sports sponsorship activation
- Summary of review of related literature

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study "Strategies for sponsorship activation in sports and their impact on brand visibility and audience engagement," draws upon the Integrated

Marketing Communications (IMC) Model and several theoretical models that illuminate how and why sponsorship activation influences brand visibility and engagement.

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is the strategic process of planning and executing of all marketing communication tools, such as advertising, public relations, digital marketing, and social media networking to deliver a consistent and unified brand message across all channels. This holistic approach guarantees customers receive relevant, interconnected information regardless of the platform(medium), strengthening brand recognition, building trust, and improving customer experience. By harmonizing marketing initiatives, IMC prevents incoherent messaging, optimizes resource allocation, and leads to better campaign performance. IMC emphasizes the coordinated use of marketing channels to deliver a unified, consistent brand message that elevates brand equity. The theoretical models include:

Engagement Theory proposes that interactive, relevant content such as brand activations can significantly enhance audience participation and brand loyalty. Engagement Theory highlights the necessity of immersive, interactive experiences that foster cognitive and emotional connection (Brodie et al., 2011).

Engagement goes beyond awareness or exposure; it involves active participation, emotional commitment, and steadfast loyalty. Sponsorship activations, such as fan competitions, interactive content, and exclusive behind-the-scenes glimpses, are designed

to deepen engagement. Actively engaged fans are more prone to develop positive attitude towards the sponsor, boosting brand affinity and purchase intention. When a brand sponsors a team or event, it aims to create shared experiences that align with fans' passion and enthusiasm and elevated engagement leads in organic recommendations and long-term brand loyalty. Examples include Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke with a Player" campaign or Nike's customized fan stories during major sport tournaments.

The Hierarchy of Effects Model suggests that sponsorship influences audience through sequential phases before making purchase decisions : *Awareness* in which the fan becomes aware of the brand, *Knowledge* where by the fan learns more about the brand, *Liking*; the fan develops a favourable attitude towards the brand, *Preference* where the brand is preferred over others, *Conviction* in which the fan has an intention to buy, and *Purchase*; where the fan takes action and buys the product (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961).

Sponsorship strategies are often designed to guide the audience through these stages. For example, placing logos (awareness), offering branded content (knowledge), and activating engaging campaigns (liking & preference). Well-planned activations push fans further down the hierarchy, increasing the likelihood of brand loyalty and purchase.

Meaning Transfer Theory, according to McCracken (1989), posits that brand associations can be transferred from a sponsored entity to the sponsor, especially when activations are culturally or contextually appropriate. These frameworks collectively highlight the

importance of strategic, multifaceted activation endeavors to elicit robust audience responses.

This theory explains how meaning is transferred from a celebrity, event, or cultural artifact to a brand and then to the fans. This involves three phases; *Meaning Acquisition* (the celebrity/event holds symbolic meanings like excellence, patriotism), *Meaning Transfer* (via sponsorship or endorsement, the brand becomes associated with these meanings) and *Meaning Consumption* (fans “consume” the brand as a way of accessing or expressing the associated meanings). When a brand sponsors a popular athlete (for instance Cristiano Ronaldo), the athlete’s attributes (e.g., skill, discipline, achievement) are symbolically transferred to the brand. This enhances the brand’s image and cultural relevance. It further facilitates an emotional bond between the brand and fans who hold the athlete or team in high regard.

This theoretical framework integrates established theories to provide a comprehensive analysis of the influence of sports sponsorship activation on brand visibility and audience engagement. Future research can build on this framework to explore innovative strategies and their applicability across brand visibility and audience engagement, paving the way for enhanced understanding and application of diverse strategies in fostering sponsorship.

Understanding Sports Sponsorship Activation

Sponsorship is traditionally defined as a commercial arrangement where an organization provides resources to an individual, event, or organizations in exchange for commercial advantages such as brand recognition and image enhancement (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). Sponsorship is the act of providing support often monetary, but also through products, services, or encouragement to an event, activity, person, or organization in exchange for promotion, brand recognition, or association. The organisation offering the support is the sponsor, and the receiving one is the sponsored property or project. Sponsorship is a marketing strategy used by businesses to enhance their brand's reputation and connect with a target audience, differentiating it from mere advertising or philanthropy. Sponsorship refers to the provision of financial or material aid by a corporation to a sports organization in exchange for brand visibility, advertising opportunities, and association with the sport's image (Cornwell, 2020)

However, simply providing sponsorship is inadequate. According to Meenaghan (2001), sponsorship activation comprises the strategic and tactical measures employed to capitalize on a sponsorship investment through integrated marketing activities designed to engage target audiences. Strategic actions employed by sponsors to leverage their partnership with sports organizations, aiming to achieve specific marketing goals, constitute sports sponsorship activation. These are the inventive marketing strategies that bring sponsorships to life, transcending passive logo placement to create vibrant,

captivating experiences. Sponsorship activation enable sponsors create immersive experiences to connect a sponsorship with its marketing objectives that necessitates further investment (leverage) to actively involve and connect with a desired target audience via initiatives like experiential marketing, social media campaigns, product integrations, and fan engagement. Activation is crucial for transforming a sponsorship into measurable outcomes, like increased brand awareness, improved fan interaction, and ultimately, a positive return on investment.

Sports sponsorship has increasingly become a strategic marketing tool with the potential to drive brand awareness, emotional connection, and long-term consumer engagement. Sports sponsorship has grown from just an act of benevolence to a very powerful tool that can be strategically used to drive brand recognition, fan loyalty, and support long-term business value. In the contemporary concept of sports marketing, sponsorship is known to be one of the driving forces in enhancing audience engagements and building sustainable relationships between brands and their sports audiences. Sports sponsorship significantly helps define the perception of fans about a brand while fostering all-in audience participation on matters relating to the brand.

These activations transform conventional sponsorships into potent marketing instruments by integrating brands directly into the fan experience. The objective is to create a mutually beneficial relationship among the brand, the sports organization, and the audience, resulting in improved brand perception and audience loyalty (Schönberner

& Woratschek, 2023). In today's competitive environment, traditional methods have become increasingly ineffective as audiences demand more genuine and interactive brand encounters.

Sponsorship activation is fundamentally about utilizing a sports sponsorship to build brand awareness, drive engagement, and attain specific marketing objectives. This process involves implementing diverse marketing initiatives including experiential events, social media campaigns, product integration, hospitality services, and athlete endorsements. The most successful activations forge meaningful connections between brands and audiences by tapping into the emotions and enthusiasm associated with sports.

Activation transforms passive sponsorship into an active, engaging brand experience. It involves the implementation of campaigns and experiences that go beyond mere logo placement to cultivate emotional connections and behavioral responses from audiences (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013).

The nature of sports sponsorship has changed significantly in recent years, with brands now acknowledging that simply displaying logos on jerseys or stadium signage is insufficient. Modern activation strategies concentrate on creating direct connections with fans through immersive, participatory moments that actively engage audiences with the brand in meaningful ways. This shift reflects evolving fan expectations and the necessity for brands to demonstrate their value beyond conventional advertising.

Sports Sponsorship Activation Strategies

Sponsorship activation is a crucial element of sports marketing, enabling brands to leverage their collaborations with sports teams, leagues, or events to meet their marketing goals. A variety of strategies can be employed to activate sponsorships, including:

Traditional Activation Strategies: Even in the digital era, several conventional activation approaches remain effective when implemented thoughtfully. These include Advertising (utilizing television, print, and radio advertisements that mention the sponsorship to reinforce brand associations), Public relations (press releases, interviews, and media coverage related to the sponsorship event or partnership), On-site branding (signage, booth displays, and product sampling at sponsored events), On-field promotions designed to attract attention during sporting events, Interactive fan zones that provide opportunities for direct brand engagement, Branded giveaways that extend the brand experience beyond the venue, and In-venue signage strategically placed for optimal visibility.

These traditional methods are most effective when they enhance, rather than disrupt, the fan experience, creating favorable brand associations while increasing visibility. These strategies primarily focus on brand visibility, however, their ability to foster deep audience engagement is often limited.

Experiential Marketing: Experiential marketing also known as engagement marketing, interactive marketing, live marketing and event marketing (Pour et al., 2024). According

to Bhardwaj et al.(2024), Youssef & Abdallah (2016) and (Wu & Tseng, 2015), this marketing approach elevates the perceived worth of products and/or services by affording audience with opportunities to participate in related events or activities. Experiential marketing involves creating unique, immersive experiences that allow fans at events such as interactive exhibits, giveaways, or meet-and-greets with athletes to engage with the brand in a tangible and memorable way. Successful experiential activations often include interactive installations that encourage hands-on participation, athlete meet-and-greets that cultivate personal connections, games or challenges linked to the sponsorship that reward audience participation, behind-the-scenes experiences offering exclusive access, and fan challenges that integrate the brand in an engaging manner. Such strategies have been shown to substantially improve audience engagement and brand recall (Hsiao et al., 2021).

These methods transform passive viewers into active participants within the brand experience, substantially boosting engagement and memorability. Experiential promotions frequently cultivate stronger emotional connections and memory retention, improving both brand recognition and preference. The emphasis is on carefully designing unforgettable encounters that stimulate customers' senses, feelings, thoughts, actions, and relationships, thereby fully immersing them in a significant and dynamic interaction (Jashwant, 2024; Wu & Tseng, 2015). In essence, experiential marketing centers on evoking feelings that transcend mere product or service consumption, fostering emotional

connection and delivering memorable experiences with a lasting positive effect (Asyhari & Dermawan, 2024; Onyeke et al., 2024)

Digital Activation Strategies: Digital activation signifies a pivotal shift in sports sponsorship strategies, leveraging digital platforms, resources, and technologies to connect with audiences and amplify sponsorship value. The proliferation of digital platforms has revolutionized how brands interact with their audiences. Effective digital activation strategies encompass Augmented reality (AR) experiences enabling fans to virtually "enter the game," Gamification techniques that convert standard sponsorships into dynamic, interactive events, social media campaigns featuring branded hashtags, influencer collaborations, and behind-the-scenes content that magnifies sponsorship visibility and engages fans in real time, and second-screen experiences on mobile applications or web portals offering supplementary content during live events.

This transition to digital activation is fueled by evolving fan expectations for interactive, personalized experiences, the availability of data-driven insights enabling sponsors to measure ROI more accurately, and heightened competition within the sponsorship arena. Digital strategies are particularly effective in cultivating two-way communication and real-time audience interaction.

Social Media Engagement: Social media, specifically, provides a direct channel for real-time interaction with fans, content distribution (including behind-the-scenes material),

and community development. Brands adeptly utilizing social media platforms for sponsorship activation can expand their reach and cultivate deeper relationships with fans (Redtorch, 2023). This approach converts sponsorships from passive branding exercises into active engagement initiatives, benefiting both sponsors and sporting organizations.

The fast ascent of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok has dramatically altered how sports organizations engage with audience. Various forms of social media advertising affect fan loyalty, trust, purchasing decisions and attract users to interact on social media platforms. Developing different types of content such as video, image, text advertisement and influencer collaboration influences audience participation. Social media advertising presents a potent and budget-friendly method for boosting fan engagement; however, it demands that organizations consistently refresh, uphold authenticity, and tailor content meticulously to avoid overwhelming or distancing their intended demographic.

Athlete and Celebrity Endorsements: Harnessing the popularity and credibility of athletes can significantly enhance a brand's visibility and appeal. Endorsements serve as a potent tool for sponsorship activation, as they personalize the brand and forge aspirational connections for consumers (Vogue Business, 2024). In this context, athletes collaborate with brands to function as influencers, promoting sponsorships and reaching new audiences.

Technological Innovations: In today's world, technology plays a vital role accelerating activities in various parts of our lives and also in the world of sports. Most companies use the latest version of technology to accelerate their production and goods.

Technological innovations play a major role in the success of the activating sponsorship in sports. Integrating cutting-edge technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and artificial intelligence (AI) into sponsorship activation strategies can deliver unique and immersive experiences for audiences. These technologies empower brands to provide customized content and interactive elements that improve audience engagement (Ceka, 2024).

Content Creation and Storytelling: Generating engaging content is crucial for the success of sports sponsorships. Whether through social media posts, television commercials, or event activations, compelling content sparks discussions and motivates fans to interact with brands. Effective content strategies involve Testimonials and exclusive interviews offering insider perspectives, Behind-the-scenes footage providing authentic glimpses into the world of sports, and Co-branded content with athletes or sports teams showcasing shared values. Developing branded content, such as videos, blog entries, or podcasts, to showcase sponsorships and offer value to fans. These content strategies assist brands in conveying meaningful narratives that resonate with audiences and strengthen credibility within the sports community.

Purpose-Led Activation Approaches: Purpose-driven sports sponsorship activation has gained prominence as brands aim to showcase their values to customers, investors, and employees. These activations align brands with social causes or community initiatives, creating distinctive propositions that resonate with socially conscious audiences.

The "Sponsorship Works: 2023 Purpose-Led Activations Casebook" features numerous successful purpose-driven campaigns across various sectors, including Adidas & Arsenal FC's "No More Red" campaign, AXA and Liverpool FC's "In Safe Hands" initiative and Hummel's "Rainbow Shirt" with multiple football clubs.

These purpose-led activations enable brands to stand out while making substantial societal contributions, fostering genuine connections with fans who share similar values. Research suggests that proactive, multi-platform engagement yields superior outcomes compared to passive sponsorship (Cornwell & Kwon, 2019).

Measuring the Impact of Sponsorship Activation

Assessing the effectiveness of sponsorship activation is vital for evaluating ROI and refining future strategies. In the evolving landscape of sports marketing, sponsorship activation has emerged as a strategic tool for enhancing brand exposure, engaging audiences, and driving fan loyalty. However, the true value of sponsorship lies not simply in brand engagement, but in how effectively the sponsorship is activated and integrated into meaningful experiences. As competition intensifies and marketing budgets demand

justification, it becomes essential to establish reliable methods for evaluating the impact of sponsorship activations.

Measuring this impact requires a multidimensional approach that considers both quantitative metrics such as brand visibility, media reach, and return on investment and qualitative indicators like consumer perception, engagement quality, and emotional resonance. This process ensures that stakeholders brands, rights holders, and agencies can assess the effectiveness of their strategies, optimize future activations, and demonstrate tangible value to all involved. Impact assessment typically focuses on two key aspects: brand visibility and audience engagement.

Impact on Brand Visibility

Brand visibility refers to the degree to which a brand is observed and recognized by the target audience. Sponsorship activation has demonstrably enhanced visibility, particularly when integrated across multiple channels (IEG Sponsorship Report, 2020). Commonly employed metrics include:

Brand Awareness Enhancement: One of the primary advantages of sports activation is its capacity to build brand awareness by directly integrating the brand into the fan experience. This exposure builds recognition and familiarity, making the brand more memorable to target audiences. Sports activations create unique opportunities for brands to showcase their products or services in authentic settings, significantly improving

visibility. Effective sponsorship activation strategies directly correlate with increased brand visibility. Successful activations help brands overcome competitive noise and establish a distinct presence in crowded markets.

By creating memorable experiences and engaging content, brands can capture the attention of their target audience and stand out in a competitive marketplace, improving brand recall among fans, making it more likely that they will remember the brand and its association with the sports team or event. Furthermore, the integration of digital platforms allows for wider dissemination of brand messages, further enhancing visibility (Relometrics, 2023).

Differentiation in Crowded Markets: Sports activations assist brands in differentiating themselves from competitors by creating unique and meaningful interactions with consumers. In increasingly saturated marketing landscapes, this differentiation is essential for capturing audience attention and establishing a distinct brand identity. Through creative activations, brands can showcase their unique value propositions and personality traits in ways that traditional advertising cannot replicate. This differentiation helps solidify brand positioning and creates competitive advantages in the marketplace.

Alignment with Sports Values and Audience: Effective sports activations align brands with the values, passion, and excitement of sports, creating powerful associations that enhance brand perception. By leveraging the emotional connection fans have with sports,

brands can transfer some of that enthusiasm and loyalty to their own products or services. This alignment creates authenticity that resonates with sports audiences, especially when brands demonstrate a genuine understanding of and respect for the sports culture they are engaging with.

Influence on Audience Engagement

Audience engagement is a crucial metric for assessing the success of sponsorship activation. Audience engagement describes how fans interact with or respond to a brand. High-impact activations can foster stronger emotional connections, encourage content sharing, and stimulate purchase intent. Digital tools such as live polls or hashtag campaigns increase interaction. According to Nielsen (2020), fan-focused activations can generate up to 30% more engagement than conventional advertisements. Audience engagement quantifies the extent of interaction, participation, and emotional response generated by the sponsorship. Key indicators comprise:

Creating Interactive Experiences: Sports sponsorship activation boosts engagement by providing interactive fan experiences that surpass passive advertising. These activations, whether through branded fan zones, in-game competitions, or social media challenges, encourage fans to directly interact with the brand. Interactive experiences transform spectators from passive viewers into active participants, fostering deeper connections and more memorable brand interactions. This active involvement propels higher engagement

metrics and cultivates more substantial brand relationships. Strategies promoting interactive and personalized experiences tend to produce significantly higher engagement levels, as they connect more profoundly with consumers (Schönberner & Woratschek, 2023).

Building Emotional Connection: Sports activations leverage the emotional intensity of sports fandom to create robust connections between brands and audiences. By integrating into moments of exhilaration, victory, and community, brands can align themselves with positive emotional experiences. These emotional bonds cultivate stronger brand loyalty and preference than purely rational messaging, resulting in longer-lasting consumer relationships. Brands successfully tapping into the emotional facets of sports experiences build more resilient customer connections. Engaged audiences are more inclined to develop brand loyalty and champion the brand within their networks.

Driving Fan Involvement and Loyalty: Sponsorship activation can enhance fan engagement and loyalty, especially when fans feel a strong emotional connection to the brand or team. It creates an emotional link between fans and brands, nurturing a profound sense of loyalty and advocacy. Successfully implemented activations transform fans into brand advocates by crafting experiences worth sharing. The interactive nature of contemporary activations encourages social sharing, user-generated content, and word-of-mouth promotion, extending the reach of sponsorship investments. By enriching the overall sports experience, brands can cultivate goodwill and loyalty among fan bases,

establishing themselves as genuine contributors to the sports community rather than simply advertisers. Sponsorship activation can motivate fans to participate in brand-related activities, such as contests, giveaways, or social media challenges.

Measuring Combined Effect of Brand Visibility and Audience Engagement on Sponsorship Effectiveness

To maximize the impact of sports sponsorship, brands must define clear objectives and measure performance against specific metrics. To assess the effectiveness of sponsorship activation, brands can utilize various indicators, including:

Brand reach and impression metrics: These may encompass Engagement data from digital and social platforms, conversion metrics tracking fan actions, sales data correlated with activation periods, quantifying the number of individuals exposed to sponsorship activations and the frequency of exposure, and measuring the influence of sponsorship activation on brand awareness, image, and recall. These measurements assist brands in understanding the effectiveness of their activation strategies and making data-driven choices for future campaigns.

Tools and Technologies for Measurement: Modern technology offers numerous tools for measuring sponsorship effectiveness, ranging from social media analytics to specialized sponsorship ROI platforms. Digital activations particularly benefit from abundant data collection opportunities, enabling brands to track user interactions, engagement duration,

and conversion pathways. Tracking engagement metrics, such as likes, shares, and comments, to evaluate the level of fan engagement (Engagement metrics) These technological capabilities provide brands with unparalleled insights into audience behavior and campaign performance, facilitating more sophisticated evaluation of sponsorship investments.

Optimizing Strategies Based on Results: Measuring and evaluating outcomes is essential for comprehending the effectiveness of sports sponsorship activation campaigns. Continuously reevaluating approaches and refining tactics based on performance data helps brands stay ahead of trends and maximize sponsorship value. Evaluating the financial return on investment of sponsorship activation efforts based on Return on Investment (ROI) can be utilized. This iterative optimization process ensures that sponsorship strategies adapt to evolving audience preferences and market dynamics, maintaining effectiveness over time.

Factors Affecting Sponsorship Activation Effectiveness

Several mediating factors play a significant role in determining the overall success of sponsorship activation strategies. While sponsorship can offer substantial brand exposure and opportunities for fan engagement, its impact often depends on how effectively certain contextual and strategic components are managed. These factors influence not only whether an activation reaches the intended audience, but also how it is perceived,

remembered, and acted upon. The following key moderators are crucial to consider when planning and executing sponsorship activations in sports

One of the most influential factors is the alignment between the sponsoring brand and the sponsored entity, often termed brand-event congruence. This concept underscores the importance of shared identity, values, or purpose between both parties. When a brand's mission or image naturally aligns with the characteristics of the sport, team, or athlete it sponsors, the audience views the partnership as authentic and meaningful. For example, a fitness apparel brand sponsoring a marathon reflects strong synergy, while a fast-food chain sponsoring a health-conscious sports event might generate skepticism. Research by Gwinner and Eaton (1999) supports this, noting that a strong brand-event fit enhances the credibility of the sponsorship, increases memorability, and strengthens brand associations in the minds of consumers. Conversely, a poor fit can lead to confusion or distrust, undermining the effectiveness of even well-resourced activations.

Another crucial mediating factor is the degree to which the sponsorship activation is pertinent to the target audience. Different audiences possess distinct preferences, lifestyles, digital habits, and cultural contexts. Understanding these nuances enables brands to customize their activation efforts to meet the needs, values, and expectations of their audience segments. For instance, young, digitally native fans may respond favorably to social media-driven campaigns, influencer content, or interactive mobile experiences, while older demographics may prefer community-based initiatives or traditional media.

Audience relevance ensures that the activation is not only seen but also appreciated and acted upon. Without this alignment, even a highly visible sponsorship may fail to ignite engagement or meaningful brand interaction. In today's attention-focused digital landscape, content is paramount.

The quality of content used in sponsorship activation be it videos, graphics, narratives, or live experiences directly impacts audience engagement. High-quality content that is visually appealing, emotionally resonant, and creatively executed can elevate a brand from being merely another sponsor to becoming an integral part of the event experience itself. Content should not only capture attention but also reinforce key brand messages subtly and memorably. Storytelling is particularly effective here when activations are woven into narratives that align with the emotional peaks and valleys of a sporting event, they resonate more deeply with fans. Poorly executed or generic content, however, can lead to disinterest or be completely disregarded.

The execution timing and frequency of sponsorship activation significantly impacts its efficacy. Brands employing strategically planned campaigns cultivating anticipation pre-event, maintaining prominence during, and reinforcing messaging post-event are more likely to foster lasting brand recall and shape consumer preferences. Consistent, well-timed communication generates a cumulative effect; repeated exposure across various phases and platforms strengthens brand recognition and deepens audience engagement. Furthermore, aligning activations with pivotal moments (e.g., major competitions, athlete

achievements, or fan-driven trends) enhances their pertinence and emotional resonance. Conversely, poorly timed or infrequent efforts can dilute the message or lead to audience oversight of the brand.

These mediating variables brand-event synergy, audience relevance, content quality, and timing/frequency demonstrate that successful sponsorship activation isn't a standardized process. Rather, it necessitates a data-driven, audience-focused strategy, where brands leverage insights, creativity, and strategic foresight to optimize every opportunity. By acknowledging and managing these factors, sponsors can substantially improve campaign ROI and forge enduring relationships with sports enthusiasts.

Case studies illustrating effective sponsorship activation are Coca-Cola and the FIFA World Cup and Red Bull and Extreme Sports. Coca-Cola's FIFA World Cup activation integrates traditional media, experiential activations such as the trophy tour, and digital engagement via branded content and competitions. This comprehensive approach has yielded heightened global brand recognition and consumer interaction.

Red Bull epitomizes brand-event alignment and experiential activation by developing its own events (e.g., Red Bull Air Race, Rampage). These activations position the brand as a key component of the sports community, fostering robust brand loyalty and sustained engagement.

Challenges in Sports Sponsorship Activation

While sponsorship activation offers numerous benefits, including brand recall and audience interaction, it also presents hurdles. According to Batt et al. (2021), brands must carefully navigate these obstacles to maximize the effectiveness of their sponsorship activation strategies. This section examines the challenges arising from various factors influencing sports sponsorship activation.

One of the significant challenge in sponsorship activation is the misalignment between the sponsor and the sponsored property. This misalignment can occur when the brand's values, identity, messaging, or target audience do not correspond with those of the sponsored entity which could be a sports team, event, athlete, organization. Such a disconnect can lead to ineffective engagement, where audiences fail to see a meaningful connection between the sponsor and the activity being supported. It may also create a lack of authenticity, reducing the credibility of both parties involved and undermining the overall impact of the activation. In some cases, misalignment can even result in reputational risk for the sponsor, especially if the sponsored entity becomes involved in controversy or fails to reflect the brand's ethical or cultural standards. To avoid this, careful due diligence, audience research, and strategic alignment are essential in the planning and execution of sponsorship activations.

The absence of clear objectives is a common and critical challenge that brands often face when implementing sports sponsorship activation strategies. In many cases, organizations enter into sponsorship agreements driven by brand visibility aspirations or competitive pressure, yet fail to establish defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), measurable goals, or a strategic activation roadmap. Without clearly articulated objectives such as increasing brand awareness, driving audience engagement, improving sales conversions, or enhancing brand sentiment campaigns often lack direction, making it difficult to assess their true impact. This ambiguity not only constraints the ability to track return on investment (ROI) but also weakens decision-making regarding resource allocation, content development, and channel strategy. As a result, sponsorship activations may default to superficial visibility tactics (e.g., logo placements) without meaningful audience engagement or long-term brand value. In the absence of data-driven goals and benchmarks, it becomes nearly impossible to refine or optimize future sponsorship efforts, leading to repetitive and unproductive campaigns that fail to resonate with target audiences.

Poor integration is another major obstacle that significantly undermines the success of sponsorship activation. In many cases, brands treat sponsorships as standalone initiatives, separate from their core marketing efforts, rather than as strategically aligned components of a unified brand communication plan. This disjointed approach can limit the reach, consistency, and overall impact of the activation, ultimately reducing its effectiveness in

achieving meaningful engagement or brand lift. Additionally, poor integration often leads to missed opportunities for amplification. For example, when a sponsorship is not supported by tailored content, influencer collaborations, in-store promotions, or digital campaigns, the brand fails to leverage the full potential of the sponsorship platform. This siloed approach not only limits visibility but also decreases the chances of generating sustained engagement or meaningful return on investment (ROI). When sponsorships are not synchronized with a brand's advertising, digital, public relations, and social media strategies, it creates a fragmented brand experience for consumers. Audiences may struggle to understand the relevance of the sponsorship or how it connects with the brand's larger narrative, values, or product offerings. As a result, the opportunity to reinforce brand messaging across multiple touchpoints is lost, weakening brand recall and reducing emotional resonance.

Ineffective activation ideas represent a critical challenge for brands aiming to make a strong impact through sports sponsorship. When brands rely on generic, passive, or low-effort tactics such as merely displaying logos on banners, jerseys, or digital backdrops they often fail to leave a lasting impression on the audience. These surface-level activations may offer visibility, but they lack the depth, creativity, and relevance needed to foster emotional connection or audience involvement. In an era where consumers are bombarded with marketing messages, passive branding is easily ignored or forgotten, leading to missed opportunities for deeper engagement and long-term brand loyalty.

Limited audience interaction further compounds the issue. Many sponsorship activations do not provide interactive or immersive experiences that invite fans to actively participate. When the audience is treated as passive observers rather than engaged participants, it reduces the overall impact of the sponsorship. Without elements such as gamification, live contests, AR/VR experiences, behind-the-scenes access, or real-time engagement through social media, fans are less likely to form meaningful connections with the brand. This lack of interaction leads to lower brand recall, reduced emotional resonance, and ultimately, a diminished return on investment.

Budgetary constraints represent a significant challenge that brands frequently encounter when activating sports sponsorships. While substantial financial resources are often allocated to secure high-profile sponsorship rights such as naming rights, jersey branding, or event partnerships there is often insufficient budget left for the crucial task of activation itself. This imbalance can lead to underwhelming execution, where the sponsorship remains passive or invisible to the target audience due to a lack of promotional support, creative content, fan engagement activities, or integrated campaigns. Without adequate funding for creative storytelling, digital amplification, experiential activations, and data analytics, brands risk failing to capitalize on the full potential of the sponsorship. The result is a missed opportunity to engage consumers emotionally, drive brand loyalty, or convert visibility into measurable outcomes such as increased sales or market share. Budget limitations may also prevent brands from responding in real time to

emerging opportunities during the sponsored event or adapting to changing audience behaviors. In addition, measurement and ROI tracking remain persistent challenges in the sponsorship landscape. Unlike traditional advertising, where performance metrics like impressions, click-through rates, and conversions are more easily tracked, the impact of sponsorship activations is often indirect, long-term, and difficult to isolate. Brands struggle to distinguish the specific contributions of sponsorships from other concurrent marketing efforts, such as digital ads, social media campaigns, or influencer partnerships. Moreover, a lack of standardized metrics or analytical tools further complicates the evaluation process, making it difficult to justify sponsorship expenditures to internal stakeholders or to refine strategies based on performance insights. Without clear ROI data, brands may hesitate to invest in future sponsorships or may fail to optimize existing ones for greater effectiveness.

When collaborating with athletes, teams, leagues, or event organizers, brands must navigate a complex web of legal rights and contractual restrictions, which can significantly influence the scope and execution of their sponsorship activation strategies. These legal constraints may involve limitations on the use of athlete images, names, team logos, event footage, official merchandise, and venue branding. For instance, an athlete's personal endorsement deals or league-imposed guidelines might prevent a sponsor from using their likeness in certain types of advertisements or content formats. Media rights and exclusivity clauses can restrict a sponsor's access to key platforms or limit their

ability to promote the partnership across specific channels. These constraints can stifle creative freedom and reduce a brand's flexibility in designing impactful and immersive activation experiences. Failure to comply with these agreements may also result in legal penalties or reputational damage, underscoring the importance of careful legal vetting and coordination with rights holders.

Another pressing challenge in the realm of sports sponsorship activation is market saturation. In today's hyper-commercialized sports environment, it's common for numerous brands sometimes even direct competitors to sponsor the same event, team, or athlete. This leads to a crowded sponsorship landscape where it becomes increasingly difficult for any one brand to stand out or create a distinctive impression. The presence of too many sponsors can lead to brand dilution, where audiences struggle to associate specific messages or values with any single brand. Furthermore, excessive branding and advertising can result in consumer fatigue, reducing overall engagement and weakening the intended emotional or psychological impact of the sponsorship.

A short-term focus is another significant challenge in sports sponsorship activation that can hinder long-lasting impact and brand growth. Many brands enter sponsorship agreements with an emphasis on immediate visibility or short-lived promotional gains, rather than investing in strategies that build sustainable brand equity over time. This is particularly evident in activations tied to single-day events, one-off matches, or short campaigns, where the limited timeframe restricts comprehensive planning, execution, and

post-event engagement. Such short-term approaches often lack strategic depth, missing the opportunity to develop meaningful narratives, build emotional connections with the audience, or integrate sponsorship messaging into broader brand stories. As a result, while the brand may achieve temporary exposure, it often fails to generate long-term recall, loyalty, or behavioral change. Brands that focus only on immediate outcomes may also overlook important performance metrics like long-term brand affinity or shifts in consumer perception, which are essential for maximizing the value of sponsorship.

Poor communication among stakeholders is a critical barrier that can derail sponsorship activation efforts. Effective sponsorship execution requires close coordination between multiple parties such as the brand's marketing team, the rights holder or property owner (e.g., the sports club or event organizer), creative agencies, media partners, and sometimes athletes or influencers. When communication is inconsistent, delayed, or unclear, it can lead to misalignment in objectives, misunderstood roles, conflicting timelines, and executional inefficiencies. This breakdown often results in divided activations, missed deadlines, lack of cohesion in messaging, and ultimately, underwhelming audience engagement. In worst-case scenarios, it may even lead to contractual breaches or reputational damage.

Future research and technological advancements in analytics are essential to overcoming these limitations.

Considerations for Sports Sponsorship Activation

To maximize the effectiveness of sponsorship activation, brands must go beyond simply displaying their logos at sporting events. It necessitates a strategic, well-considered approach that cultivates genuine connections with audiences and aligns closely with broader brand goals. Below are key considerations that can significantly enhance the impact of sports sponsorship activation.

A crucial initial step in sponsorship activation is ensuring the partnership reflects the core values and identity of the brand. When a sponsorship feels authentic where the brand and the sport or athlete it supports share common principles or cultural alignment it resonates more profoundly with the audience. For example, a brand that values innovation and youth culture might find a more impactful partnership in action sports or e-sports rather than traditional, conservative sporting events. Authenticity fosters trust and makes the activation more credible. This alignment also simplifies the creation of pertinent campaigns that connect emotionally with fans, rather than appearing contrived or purely commercial.

No sponsorship activation can succeed without a thorough understanding of the intended audience. Brands must conduct comprehensive research to identify the fans, their priorities, content consumption habits, and loyalty drivers. This understanding should inform every aspect of the activation from messaging and tone to the types of

engagement activities offered. For example, if the fanbase is largely young and digitally active, then activations should be mobile-friendly, visually appealing, and interactive. Tailoring activations to the target audience's interests and preferences ensures relevance and increases engagement.

Contemporary consumers desire experiential engagement, not solely advertising. Successful sponsorship activation should prioritize crafting memorable, interactive encounters that surpass passive observation. This could involve branded fan zones at venues, virtual or augmented reality experiences, interactive competitions, behind-the-scenes media, or opportunities to meet athletes. These immersive components cultivate emotional bonds, motivating fans to interact extensively with the brand and develop favorable impressions. The more captivating and beneficial the experience, the greater the likelihood of brand recall and word-of-mouth promotion.

Digital media serves as a potent amplifier for sponsorship activation. It allows brands to expand their reach beyond the event's physical location and connect with a wider, online audience. Through real-time updates, behind-the-scenes footage, influencer collaborations, user-generated content, branded hashtags, and interactive polls or games, brands can cultivate a dynamic, reciprocal dialogue with fans. Furthermore, social platforms provide data-driven insights, enabling brands to discern high-performing content and make real-time adjustments to optimize impact.

Ultimately, brands must dedicate themselves to assessing the efficacy of their sponsorship activation strategies. This necessitates establishing clear objectives such as brand recognition, social media engagement, lead generation, or product sampling and monitoring progress using key performance indicators. Tools such as media exposure analysis, social media analytics, surveys, and sales figures aid in evaluating whether the activation achieved its goals. Regular assessment not only justifies the sponsorship expenditure but also furnishes valuable knowledge to enhance future activations. Without measurement, brands risk repeating unsuccessful tactics and forfeiting growth opportunities.

By thoughtfully addressing these key aspects, brands can ensure their sponsorship activations are not only perceived but also felt, creating lasting impressions, stimulating engagement, and yielding substantial returns on investment.

Summary of Reviewed Related Literature

This chapter reviewed pertinent literature related to the study and it was hinged on the theoretical framework of IMC and others. Understanding sports activation strategies was also reviewed which establishes that strategic sponsorship activation is central to the value and evolution of sports sponsorship, serving as a key driver for improving brand visibility and fostering audience engagement. Foundational work by Gwinner and Eaton (1999) demonstrates how congruence between brand and event characteristics enhances

audience recall. Subsequent research by scholars such as Cornwell et al. (2015) and Mazodier & Merunka (2012) further reveals that sponsorships which create emotional resonance significantly strengthen fan loyalty and brand equity. Despite these insights, a predominant focus on passive metrics like logo exposure and awareness persists, with comparatively less examination of interactive and digital activation strategies, particularly within local or non-elite sports contexts.

Sports sponsorship activation strategies was also reviewed stating that sports sponsorship has evolved into a major marketing instrument, allowing brands to connect with audiences through partnerships with sports organizations. By deploying diverse marketing strategies, brands can execute impactful campaigns that amplify visibility and interaction. The concept of sponsorship activation implementing deliberate strategic actions to leverage a sponsorship has consequently garnered growing scholarly and practical interest. This review synthesizes existing research, core theoretical frameworks, and identifies prevailing gaps that warrant further investigation.

A prominent theme in recent literature is the paradigm shift from passive sponsorship to active consumer engagement. Gwinner and Eaton's (1999) emphasis on sponsor-event congruity underscores how strategic alignment improves fan recall and brand attitudes. Complementing this, Olson and Thjømøe (2003) found that higher levels of fan involvement markedly increase the effectiveness of activation efforts. Collectively, these

studies indicate that activations must be strategically designed and audience-specific to optimize sponsorship returns.

Measuring the impact of these activations, however, presents considerable complexity. Walliser (2003) catalogued various measurement approaches, noting the persistent challenge of isolating sponsorship effects from other concurrent marketing activities. Speed and Thompson (2000) contributed a model for evaluation based on factors like sponsor-event fit and perceived sincerity. Nevertheless, the field still lacks a standardized, holistic measurement system, with many academics advocating for more robust and multi-faceted evaluation techniques.

The digital transformation has profoundly reshaped activation practices, enabling more personalized and interactive fan experiences. Early explorations by Pope and Voges (2000) highlighted the potential of online platforms, while later analyses, such as those by Chadwick and Thwaites (2005), detailed how social media facilitates real-time engagement and content co-creation. These developments underscore the necessity for sponsors to adapt to digital trends to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

Tracing this evolution requires acknowledging foundational research. Initial studies, as noted by Meenaghan (2001), centered on exposure and awareness, positing that mere association with sports could enhance brand recognition. Cornwell and Maignan (1998) later expanded this view, identifying key strategic objectives: building awareness,

shaping brand image, and driving sales. Overall, the literature charts a clear trajectory from basic visibility goals toward sophisticated, engagement-centric strategies designed to build long-term brand equity.

Despite this progress, significant research gaps remain. The literature is heavily skewed toward major global events in developed markets, offering limited insight into grassroots sports or emerging economies. A shortage of longitudinal studies also impedes understanding of the long-term effects on brand equity and consumer behavior. Furthermore, while metrics for brand recall are common, there is a need for frameworks that capture deeper outcomes like emotional attachment and behavioral intent. Research specifically investigating digital engagement metrics such as social media interactions, user-generated content, and real-time analytics is also underdeveloped. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing more nuanced, effective, and globally applicable activation practices.

Notwithstanding these challenges, strategic sponsorship activation endures as a potent marketing tool. Its future efficacy will depend on seamlessly integrating digital and physical engagement, refining measurement methodologies, and ensuring authentic alignment between brands and sports properties. Brands that master these dimensions are poised to achieve a stronger return on investment and cultivate enduring relationships with their audiences.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is concerned with a description of the methods and procedures adopted in conducting the study on strategies for sponsorship activation in sports and their impact on brand visibility and audience engagement. It is organized under the following subheadings:

- Design of the study
- Population of the study
- Sample and sampling technique
- Research instrument
- Validity of the instrument
- Reliability of the instrument
- Method of data collection
- Method of data analysis

Design of the Study

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for gathering factual, up-to-date information and first-hand responses directly from individuals (corporate stakeholders) involved in sponsorship activities within the sports industry. This design is suitable when the objective is to describe and interpret the current practices, trends, opinions, or experiences of a specific group in this case, marketing professionals and sponsors without manipulating any variables.

A descriptive survey enables the collection of standardized data from a sizable and diverse population. This design enables the researcher to examine current strategies employed by commercial sports sponsors and evaluate their perceived impact on visibility and engagement metrics. Descriptive surveys are ideal for capturing current practices, real-life experiences, opinions, and perceptions without altering of variables in natural setting (Creswell, 2014). This method aligns with the study's aim to assess existing sponsorship activation strategies and their perceived outcomes.

Population of the Study

The population for this study consists of marketing professionals, brand managers, sponsorship officers, and public relations personnel working in commercial organizations that actively sponsor sports events or teams. The study also considers professional from sports marketing agencies and relevant sports bodies that engage with sponsorship

The questionnaire will be administered to these individuals mentioned above by compiling a list of relevant companies involved in sports sponsorship (e.g., telecoms, banks, beverage brands, betting companies, etc.), leveraging the researcher's existing contacts within these organizations to obtain introductions to the appropriate marketing or CSR department, sending formal Emails or letter outlining the research and requesting participation with the questionnaire attached and where feasible, conduct in-person visits to local organizations to distribute the questionnaire directly

Sample and Sampling Technique

For this study, the sample consists of marketing and sponsorship professionals from commercial organizations actively involved in sports sponsorship. This includes brand managers, sponsorship/activation officers, marketing executives, public relations personnel and representatives of sports marketing agencies. These individuals will be selected from companies that sponsor sports in Nigeria, such as telecommunication firms (e.g., MTN, Glo), beverage companies (e.g., Coca-Cola, Guinness Nigeria), sportswear brands, and betting companies (e.g., Bet9ja, NairaBET).

A purposive sampling technique will be used to select respondents who are directly involved in sports sponsorship and activation strategies. A total of 100 participants will be selected from key sponsoring brands (e.g., telecoms, breweries, financial institutions, and sportswear companies) and marketing agencies.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire which is divided into four sections: Section A which will contain the respondent demographic information of respondents, Section B for questions designed to collect information on sponsorship activation strategies employed, the impact on brand visibility and audience engagement and challenges and improvement.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument for data collection was validated for face and content validity. It was reviewed by the researcher's supervisor and two other experts from the Department of Human Kinetics and Sport Science. All ambiguities were addressed for clarity and their observation and modification were effectively implemented in the final copies of the questionnaire.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the Instrument was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha method to ensure internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The instrument was pilot-tested on a small sample of 10 respondents drawn from a population similar to the main study group. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 and above was considered acceptable for ensuring the questionnaire produces consistent results over time.

Method of Data Collection

Questionnaires will be administered physically and electronically (via email or Google Forms) to selected participants. A period of two weeks will be allotted for data collection, with follow-ups to encourage timely response.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to summarize responses. Additionally, inferential statistics such as correlation analysis or regression may be employed to examine the relationship between sponsorship activation strategies and their impact on brand visibility and audience engagement. Results will be presented in tables for clarity.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter is concerned with the presentation of results and discussion of findings:

Research Question 1: What are the strategies for sponsorship activation in sports?

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of responses on what is the strategies for sponsorship activation in sports?

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	My organization uses digital and social media to activate sponsorships.	3.66	0.48	Agree
2	Athlete endorsements are a core part of our sponsorship activation strategy.	2.87	0.92	Agree
3	We integrate community engagement (CSR) into our sponsorship activations.	2.98	0.60	Agree
4	Experiential marketing (e.g., fan zones, contests) is frequently used in our activations.	2.98	0.74	Agree
5	Content creation and storytelling (e.g., branded videos) are key elements of our activation	3.41	0.71	Agree

The data in Table 1 shows that the mean values range from 2.87 to 3.66, while the standard deviation values range from 0.48 to 0.92. The mean values indicate that respondents agree that all listed strategies especially digital media and content

storytelling are commonly used in sports sponsorship activation. Low to moderate standard deviations suggest a reasonable level of consistency in responses.

Research Question 2: How does these strategies influence brand visibility before, during and after sports events?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on how does these strategies influence brand visibility before, during and after sports events

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Decision
1	Sponsorship activation significantly increases brand visibility before an event.	3.75	0.57	Strongly agree
2	Our brand receives higher recognition during the sports event due to activation efforts.	3.26	0.46	Agree
3	Brand recall improves after events due to consistent activation follow-up.	3.17	0.85	Agree
4	Sponsorship activation helps our brand stand out	3.30	0.46	Agree

	among competitors.			
5	Activations help link our brand closely with specific sports properties.	3.28	0.65	Agree

The data in table 2 shows that the mean value range from 3.17 to 3.75, while the standard value range from 0.46 to 0.85. The mean value shows that respondents agree that sponsorship activation strategies significantly improve brand visibility before, during, and after sports events. The strongest impact is noted before the event. The low standard deviations indicate a strong level of agreement across most responses, while a slightly higher SD in item 3 shows some variability in views on post-event brand recall.

Research Question 3: To what extent do sponsorship activation strategies impact on audience engagement across different platforms (e.g., digital, in-stadium, broadcast)?

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation of responses on what extent do sponsorship activation strategies impact audience engagement across different platforms

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Decision
1	Digital platforms are effective for engaging sports audiences during activations.	3.59	0.51	Agree
2	In-stadium activations lead to high levels of audience	3.15	0.63	Agree

	interaction.			
3	Broadcast sponsorships (TV/radio) drive fan interest in the brand.	3.31	0.53	Agree
4	Interactive content during events boosts audience engagement	3.40	0.55	Agree
5	Our activations drive real-time engagement on social media platforms.	3.30	0.61	Agree

The data in table 3 shows that the mean value range from 3.15 to 3.59, while the standard deviation value range from 0.51 to 0.63. The mean value shows that the respondents agree to the items regarding the extent to which sponsorship activation strategies across digital, in-stadium, broadcast, interactive, and social media platforms all have a positive impact on audience engagement. All mean scores exceed 3.00, indicating general agreement across respondents. The low value of the standard deviation shows that their responses do not deviate far from one another.

Research Questions 4: What are the challenges brands face in executing effective sponsorship activation campaigns?

Table 4: Mean and Standard deviation of responses on what the challenges brands face in executing effective sponsorship activation campaigns?

S/N	Items	Mean	S.D	Decisions
1	Budget constraints limit our ability to execute high-quality activations.	3.46	0.64	Agree
2	Communication Gap between brand and event makes activation less effective.	3.26	0.54	Agree
3	Measuring Return on Investment (ROI) from sponsorship activation is challenging	3.57	0.71	Agree
4	Short-term focus undermines the long-term value of sponsorships	3.38	0.55	Agree
5	Market saturation reduces the impact of our sponsorship activations.	3.08	0.51	Agree

The data in table 4 shows that the mean value range from 3.08 to 3.57, while the standard deviation value range from 0.51 to 0.71. The mean value shows that the respondents agree to the items regarding the challenges brands face in executing effective sponsorship activation campaigns. The low value of the standard deviation shows that their responses do not deviate far from one another.

Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents a discussion of the study's major findings, structured around the four research questions that guided the research. The analysis is grounded in the descriptive statistical results, namely the mean scores and standard deviations obtained from respondents, which illuminate the prevailing perspectives on sponsorship activation strategies, their influence on brand visibility, their impact on audience engagement, and the challenges inherent in executing such campaigns effectively.

The findings for the first research question reveal a clear consensus on the strategic mix defining modern sponsorship activation. Respondents strongly affirmed the centrality of digital and social media and content creation and storytelling, identifying them as the most actively employed strategies. This empirical evidence provides robust, quantitative support for the paradigm shift documented in the literature a movement from passive, logo-centric sponsorship toward dynamic, interactive, and narrative-driven engagement. The high valuation of digital tools directly validates the arguments of scholars like Pope

and Voges (2000) and Chadwick and Thwaites (2005), who foresaw the transformative potential of online platforms for fostering personalized, real-time fan interactions.

Furthermore, the acknowledged importance of experiential marketing and community engagement strategies, while scoring slightly lower, underscores a complementary, hybrid approach. This aligns with the theoretical perspectives outlined in the review, particularly Engagement Theory (Brodie et al., 2011) and Experiential Marketing principles (Wu & Tseng, 2015). These theories posit that deep audience connections are forged through immersive, participatory, and emotionally resonant experiences. The study's findings confirm that practitioners are operationalizing these theories by blending digital outreach with tangible, community-focused activations to create a multi-sensory brand experience. This strategic synthesis reflects the core tenet of the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) framework presented in the theoretical foundation, demonstrating a concerted effort to deliver a unified brand message across both virtual and physical touchpoints.

The investigation into the second research question offers a nuanced, temporal understanding of how activation influences brand visibility. The results demonstrate that strategic impact is not monolithic but varies across the event lifecycle, with the strongest effect occurring before the event. This finding enriches the traditional sponsorship objective of "building brand awareness" (Cornwell & Maignan, 1998) by introducing a critical temporal dimension. It empirically supports strategic models that emphasize pre-

event marketing to build anticipation, seed narratives, and secure early brand recall in the audience's mind. The sustained, though comparatively slightly diminished, positive impact recorded during and after the event is equally significant. It affirms the literature's emphasis on activation as a tool for creating sustained brand impact rather than a momentary exposure. However, the marginally higher standard deviation associated with post-event visibility is instructive. It suggests variability in the perceived effectiveness of follow-up strategies, pointing to a potential area of strategic inconsistency. This insight directly speaks to the gap in longitudinal analysis identified in the literature review. While the importance of post-event engagement is recognized, the findings imply its execution may be less standardized or consistently successful than pre-event campaigns, highlighting a fertile area for further research and strategic refinement.

The findings for the third research question provide compelling empirical evidence for the multi-platform nature of modern audience engagement. The strong consensus on the superior effectiveness of digital platforms for driving engagement directly addresses a key gap noted in the literature: the need for focused research on digital engagement metrics and their correlation with sponsorship outcomes. This result quantifies the dominance of social and digital media channels in the contemporary fan experience, confirming their role as primary arenas for interaction, content sharing, and community building. Crucially, the high levels of agreement regarding the value of in-stadium and broadcast activations underscore that engagement is not a digital-only phenomenon. The

uniformly low standard deviations across all platform types indicate a shared professional understanding that a holistic, channel-spanning approach is essential. This finding offers powerful validation for the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) model and the theoretical work on engagement, which argue that a cohesive strategy across all touchpoints creates a more powerful and immersive cumulative experience. The study thus confirms that effective activation is multidimensional, strategically leveraging each platform's unique strengths to guide the audience through the stages of the Hierarchy of Effects Model from awareness to deeper preference and loyalty.

The results pertaining to the fourth research question move beyond theoretical listings of potential pitfalls to empirically prioritize the most significant hurdles faced in practice. Identifying budget constraints as the foremost challenge provides concrete evidence for a widely acknowledged industry reality. It underscores that securing sponsorship rights is only the initial investment, and the crucial activation phase often competes for limited resources, potentially compromising creative execution and amplification.

The prominence of communication gaps between brands and event organizers as the second major challenge is a critical finding. It directly connects to the literature on "poor integration," "misalignment," and "stakeholder coordination" (Batt et al., 2021). This result suggests that even with robust strategies and adequate budgets, effectiveness can be undermined by operational silos and misaligned objectives. It elevates the importance of partnership management and integrated planning from a theoretical recommendation to a

central, practical determinant of campaign success. By empirically ranking these challenges, the study provides actionable intelligence for practitioners, urging them to focus not only on creative ideation but also on securing adequate leverage budgets and fostering collaborative, transparent partner relationships.

In synthesis, this study achieves a meaningful dialogue with the existing body of literature. It serves a dual function: confirming established theoretical frameworks and strategic shifts with fresh empirical data, and refining understanding by introducing nuanced insights particularly regarding the temporal dynamics of visibility and the prioritized hierarchy of executional challenges. The research successfully addresses several gaps highlighted in the literature review. It applies a structured inquiry into a specific context, contributing to the diversity of empirical studies beyond just mega-events. It directly engages with the digital transformation of sponsorship by measuring its perceived effectiveness. Furthermore, by examining both brand visibility (a traditional metric) and audience engagement (a deeper behavioral metric) as interrelated yet distinct outcomes, the study models the kind of holistic measurement approach called for by scholars like Walliser (2003).

Ultimately, the findings reinforce that successful sports sponsorship in the modern era is a complex, integrated endeavor. It requires a strategic blend of digital and experiential tactics, orchestrated across the entire event lifecycle and delivered through seamless multi-platform execution, all while navigating fundamental constraints of budget and

partnership alignment. This study's value lies in providing an evidence-based affirmation and refinement of these principles, offering a consolidated view from the field that can inform both future academic research and more effective, resilient sponsorship practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study examined sponsorship activation strategies, their influence on brand visibility, their impact on audience engagement and the challenges faced by brands in executing activations. The research explored how sponsorship activation strategies such as digital and social media, athlete endorsements, community engagement (CSR), experiential marketing (e.g., fan zones, contests) and content creation and storytelling (e.g., branded videos) affect brand visibility and audience engagement.

The study was guided by research questions that sought to determine how sponsorship activation strategies influence on brand visibility, their impact on audience engagement and the challenges faced by brands in executing activations. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to key sponsoring brands (e.g., telecoms, breweries, financial institutions, and sportswear companies) and marketing agencies. Statistical analysis of the data included mean, standard deviation, and inferential statistics to identify significant strategies used.

The major findings are summarized below:

1. *Common Sponsorship Activation Strategies*: Respondents agreed that digital media, athlete endorsements, community engagement, experiential marketing, and content storytelling are the most frequently used strategies.
2. *Influence on Brand Visibility*: Sponsorship activations significantly improve brand visibility before, during, and after sports events, with the strongest impact occurring before events.
3. *Impact on Audience Engagement*: Activation strategies across digital, in-stadium, broadcast, and social media platforms enhance audience engagement, especially on digital platforms.
4. *Challenges in Sponsorship Activation*: Budget constraints, communication gaps with event organizers, and likely logistical and operational issues limit the effectiveness of activation campaigns.

These findings highlight the importance of sports sponsorship activation on brand visibility and audience engagement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, this study concludes that sponsorship activation remains a powerful marketing tool for enhancing brand visibility and fostering audience

engagement in the sports industry. Effective activation relies on strategic use of digital platforms, meaningful storytelling, and interactive fan experiences.

However, despite its benefits, the success of sponsorship activation is often constrained by financial limitations, inadequate coordination with event organizers, and insufficient planning. For activations to achieve their full potential, brands must adopt integrated strategies, improve stakeholder communication, and allocate adequate resources.

Overall, sponsorship activation creates significant value, but its effectiveness depends on strategic planning, modern communication tools, and strong brand event collaboration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, here are four key recommendations for effective sponsorship activation:

1. *Adopt an Integrated Pre- to Post-Event Strategy:* Prioritize and budget for robust pre-event activation to build anticipation and brand recall, while ensuring more standardized and effective follow-up strategies during and after the event to sustain impact and address variability in post-engagement success.

2. *Implement a Hybrid Digital-Experiential Activation Mix:* Strategically combine dominant digital and social media storytelling with tangible experiential and community-

focused activations to create a cohesive, multi-sensory brand experience across all physical and virtual touchpoints.

3. *Execute a Holistic Multi-Platform Engagement Plan:* Leverage the unique strengths of digital, in-stadium, and broadcast platforms in a coordinated manner to guide the audience through deeper stages of engagement, rather than relying on a single channel.

4. *Secure Dedicated Activation Budgets and Strengthen Partner Alignment:* Move beyond the initial sponsorship fee to ensure adequate funding for activation execution, and proactively manage partnerships through clear communication and aligned objectives to overcome the critical challenges of budget constraints and operational silos.

By adopting these recommendations, brand should activate sponsorship activation strategies to enhance brand recognition and audience participation.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN KINETICS AND SPORT SCIENCE (HKS),

FACULTY OF EDUCATION,

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.

EDO STATE.

**STRATEGIES FOR SPONSORSHIP ACTIVATION IN SPORTS AND
THEIR IMPACT ON BRAND VISIBILITY AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

Dear Respondent,

I am a student and a researcher from the University mentioned above. I am currently carrying out a research focused on the STRATEGIES FOR SPONSORSHIP ACTIVATION IN SPORTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON BRAND VISIBILITY AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT. This research is basically for academic purposes. I humbly request your assistance for the completion of this research work to kindly fill this questionnaire to the best of your ability by for (√) where it is applicable and I assure that all the information and answers provided with be treated with confidentiality.

Thank you for your genuine cooperation.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

(Please tick or fill in the appropriate option)

1. Gender:

Male Female Non-binary/Prefer not to say

2. Age:

18–25 years 26–35 years 36–45 years 46–55 years 56 years and above

3. Occupation:

Brand/Marketing Manager

Sports Organization Staff

Event Manager

Business Owner

Other (please specify): _____

4. Years of Experience in Sponsorship/Marketing:

Less than 1 year 1–3 years 4–6 years 7+ years

5. Organization type:

Brand (sponsor)

Event organizer/rights holder

Marketing agency/consultant

Other (please specify)_____

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Instruction: please, kindly tick (√) the option that you agree with the most, by indicating the extent to which you agree with the statements below, using the point scales:

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D= Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
RQ 1	What are the strategies for sponsorship activation in sports?				
1	My organization uses digital and social media to activate sponsorships.				
2	Athlete endorsements are a core part of our sponsorship activation strategy				
3	We integrate community engagement (CSR) into our sponsorship activations.				
4	Experiential marketing (e.g., fan zones, contests) is frequently				

	used in our activations				
5	Content creation and storytelling (e.g., branded videos) are key elements of our activation				
RQ 2	How do these strategies influence brand visibility before, during and after sports events?	SA	A	D	SD
6	Sponsorship activation significantly increases brand visibility before an event.				
7	Our brand receives higher recognition during the sports event due to activation efforts.				
8	Brand recall improves after events due to consistent activation follow-up.				
9	Sponsorship activation helps our brand stand out among competitors.				
10	Activations help link our brand closely with specific sports properties.				
RQ 3	To what extent do sponsorship activation strategies impact on audience engagement across different platforms (e.g., digital, in-stadium, broadcast)?	SA	A	D	SD
11	Digital platforms are effective for engaging sports audiences during activations.				
12	In-stadium activations lead to high levels of audience interaction.				

13	Broadcast sponsorships (TV/radio) drive fan interest in the brand.				
14	Interactive content during events boosts audience engagement				
15	Our activations drive real-time engagement on social media platforms				
RQ 4	What are the challenges brands face in executing effective sponsorship activation campaigns?	SA	A	D	SD
16	Budget constraints limit our ability to execute high-quality activations				
17	Communication Gap between brand and event makes activation less effective.				
18	Measuring Return on Investment (ROI) from sponsorship activation is challenging.				
19	Short-term focus undermines the long-term value of sponsorships.				
20	Market saturation reduces the impact of our sponsorship activations.				

APPENDIX II

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

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DATASET ACTIVATE DataSet2.

SAVE OUTFILE='C:\Users\berni\OneDrive\Documents\Marie Analysis.sav'

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FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=Gender

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Frequencies

Statistics

Gender

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	54	54.0	54.0	54.0
	Female	46	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Non-binary/ prefer not to say	0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=Age

/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

Frequencies

Statistics

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 - 25 years	20	20.0	20.0	20.0
	28 - 35 years	60	60.0	60.0	80.0
	36 - 55 years	10	10.0	10.0	90.0
	56 and above	10	10.0	10.0	100.0

FREQUENCIES VARIABLES= Occupation

/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

Frequencies

Statistics

Occupation

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0

Occupation

	N	%

Brand/ Marketing Officer	35	35.0%
Sports organization staff	25	25.0%
Event Manager	20	20.0%
Business Owner	15	15.0%
Others	5	5.0%

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 MISSING) APPLYTO=ROW HIDE=YES

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REPLACE="%".

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FREQUENCIES VARIABLES=Years_of_experience_in_sponsorship_marketing

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```

/ORDER=ANALYSIS.

```

Frequencies

Statistics

Years of experience in Sponsorship marketing

N	Valid	Missing
	100	0

Years of experience in Sponsorship marketing

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Less than 1 year	7	7.0	7.0	7.0
1-3 years	20	20.0	20.0	27.0
4-6 years	39	39.0	39.0	66.0
7+ years	34	34.0	34.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=item1 item2 item3 item4 item5 item6 item7 item8 item9
 item10 item11 item12item13 item14 item15 item16 item17 item18 item19 item20

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Descriptives

Descriptives

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
item1	100	3.00	4.00	3.6600	0.47609
item2	100	2.00	4.00	2.8700	.91734
item3	100	2.00	4.00	3.5400	.60268
item4	100	2.00	4.00	3.5800	.738275
item5	100	3.00	4.00	3.4100	.57900
item6	100	2.00	4.00	3.7500	.71201
item7	100	2.00	4.00	3.2600	.57304
item8	100	2.00	4.00	3.1700	.46319
item9	100	2.00	4.00	3.3000	.46056
item10	100	2.00	4.00	3.2800	.65257

item11	100	3.00	4.00	3.5900	.51433
item12	100	3.00	4.00	3.1500	.62563
item13	100	3.00	4.00	3.3100	.52599
item14	100	3.00	4.00	3.4000	.55048
item15	100	3.00	4.00	3.3000	.61134
item16	100	2.00	4.00	3.4600	.64228
item17	100	1.00	4.00	3.2600	.54346
item18	100	2.00	4.00	3.5700	.71428
item19	100	2.00	4.00	3.3800	.54643
item20	100	1.00	4.00	3.0800	.50612
Valid N (listwise)	100				

APPENDIX III

RELIABILITY STATISTICS

Reliability

Scale: ALL VARIABLE

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	100	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	100	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.776	20