

Events Sponsorship and Corporate Image: Viewers' Perspectives

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Abstract

This paper sought to investigate the implications of events sponsorship on corporate image. The currency of events sponsorship study is hinged on understanding awareness creating and image transferring capacity, sponsor-event fit dynamics, and viewers' perceptions on corporate image. The Ex post facto research design method was adopted where 180 copies of semi-structured questionnaires were administered to conveniently selected respondents in sports betting shops and shopping malls in Ibadan, Nigeria. The hypotheses formulated were tested with one way ANOVA and Ordinary least square regression method at 5% level of significance. The result shows that there are significant gender differences in viewers' awareness and perceptions of sponsored events. Also, the study reveals that the attributes of events sponsorship exhibit a strong, positive relationship with corporate image. This study therefore recommends that event sponsors should be cautious in the choice of events to be sponsored as they relate to the contents on display as well as avoid events that are sectional in nature in order to avoid unfavourable brand disposition.

Keywords: Big Brother Naija, Corporate Image, Events Sponsorship, Marketing Communication, Viewers' perspectives.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Events are a collection of activities that have a beginning and an end and they vary in nature. They could be recreational, cultural, religious, educational, entertainment or political. A common feature of an event is its ability to attract large audience. Essentially, these events are open to sponsorship. The place of events sponsorship has assumed a new proportion globally among corporate players, as majority of corporate giants have officers designated for events sponsorship. These managers primary responsibility is to evaluate every available sponsorship opportunity.

Notwithstanding the avalanche of events open for sponsorships, one common challenge confronting event managers is the lack of corporate sponsors. The solution to this challenge is not insurmountable as most corporate organisations are also in search of outlets that would enable them to reach their target audience. It is a common practice among firms to carry out among other things a cost-benefit analysis before deciding on the event to venture in. In addition, firms usually adopt the model applicable in celebrity endorsement. That

demand a high premium is placed on the congruency between event and sponsors, public perception of the event, among others.

Literature recognizes sponsorship as a component of the marketing communication mix. Of recent, firms' deployment of corporate sponsorship has assumed increasing importance. This is evident as a number of firms now embrace event sponsorship. This new craving is heightened as firms seek a fresh avenue to reach a targeted audience and enhance their image. Events sponsorship has become necessary as its usage enables firms' access its specific market. As a result of the specialized use of sponsorship, they are considered valuable as well as serve as a powerful tool for setting strategic communication links.

Evidently, as a firm openly associates its name with an event, it consequently shares in the image of the event in a similar manner as a celebrity that endorses a brand. Just as in celebrity brand endorsement, not all celebrities have a consistent positive public image. This implies that as a manager decides to sponsor an event

they have to critically evaluate the opinion of the audience with respect to its association with the event. It is generally expected that a synergistic association between a sponsor and an event should exist with the capacity of creating an atmosphere of amusement, entertainment, reliability, and variety (Stevens, 1984).

Corporate organizations increasing embrace of events sponsorship is not limited to Nigeria, rather scholars report that events sponsorship has assumed a new dimension in marketing communications among firms in developed economies. Several pieces of literature indicate that many research works have focused on the influence of events sponsorship on customer behaviour. Similarly, there are several studies that are concerned with creating a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Keller, 2001, Picton, & Broderick, 2005, Arens, Weigold, & Arens, 2011). In particular, Elham, (2016) investigated the mediating roles of brand image on attendees purchase habits of sponsored events in Amman, Jordan.

Despite the importance of corporate sponsorship there has been a scanty attempt to understanding the relevance and efficacy of corporate sponsorship of events in Nigeria. The crux of this paper is to unravel the impact of events sponsorship on corporate image. Specifically, this study seeks to ascertain spectators' level of sponsors' awareness, examine gender differences in sponsors' awareness and establish the nexus between the attributes of events sponsorship and corporate image.

From the foregoing, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

- 1) There is no significant gender difference in viewers' awareness and perception of sponsored event
- 2) There is no significant relationship between the attributes of sponsorship and corporate image.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Sponsorship

There is on gain saying the fact that marketing scholars considers sponsorship as a sub mix of marketing communication. What differentiates it from advertising is that the sponsor does not entirely control the channel of communication and its message. Events sponsorship can be regarded as the underwriting of an event. This demands that the sponsors offer monetary or other resources to cover all or a part of the expenses and other requirements associated with an event.

The essence of sponsorship is to facilitate the achievement of corporate objectives in the creation of corporate image, cultivating brand awareness, and directly stimulating sales of goods and services. Furthermore, events sponsorship is considered an

activity that demand huge financial investment as well as serves as a veritable avenue for firms to gain market exposure. Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, and Lampman, (1994) remarked that an individual or several of them can sponsor an event. This event can either be a one-time affair or a continuing series of activities. Furthermore, Anne and Chéron, (2011) as cited in Chebli and Gharbi (2014) identified direct and indirect audience as the types of exposure in a sponsorship deal. To the authors, the direct audience refers to the individuals following the event location while the indirect audience relates to the individuals following the event through the media. As a result of the unique importance of sponsorship, most firms now incorporates sponsorship in their communication strategy. In spite of the importance of events sponsorship, it should not be considered as substitute for other methods of marketing communication, rather it should be seen as a complement.

Organisations' choice of events for sponsorship varies from television and radio programs, sports, art, music, entertainment to educational programs. Sports sponsorship requires the sponsor to offer money, human resources, and equipment to sports organization that will facilitates their participation in the event. Globally athletes' sponsorship has gain prominence. Similarly sponsorship of television programs has gain relevance. This entails the dissemination of the sponsors' message in cooperation with the producer/ organizer of the program. Chandon, and Mazoyer (2010). Assert that sponsorship of television programs enable them certain viewers' perspectives from which support and loyalty can be inferred. Furthermore, educational sponsorship in essence entails the provision of financial assistance to students that enables them continue their education. Interestingly, literature acknowledges the events that attracts the highest global sponsorship are sport, art, and music events. It is noteworthy to remark that service intangibility has made sponsorship in the service sector relatively difficult.

Amoako, Dartey-Baah, and Kwesie (2012) remarked that sponsorship has the potential to nurture and sustain continuous customers purchase behaviour, enhance a firm's identity and image. In addition, it arouses customers' awareness, it serves as a channel of creating new users of the products and plays a crucial role in motivating staff and building morale. Reed (1994) opines that organizations invest in sponsorship with the intent of soliciting audience attention through the relationships created between sponsors and events. As Picton *et al.* (2005) pointed out, sponsorship serves as an avenue that exposes the targeted audience to a specific message. This suggests that sponsorship has the capability to influence all the stakeholders of a firm. Similarly, Meenaghan (1998) asserts that event sponsorship helps to reposition a brand. This suggests

that event sponsorship defines the character of a brand (Derbaix & Lardinois, 2001). Events sponsorship as a marketing communication tool enables firms to solely communicate on the basis of appearances and logos. The tone of the message communicated in most cases are subtle in nature and conveys meanings only the targeted audience can interpret. Deimel and Zentes, (2009) report that firms whose objective is to obtain positive customers attitudinal change towards the brand often crave for the transfer of the positive associations of the sponsored events with the brand. The association should also aim at creating and improving brand awareness. Pitts and Slattery (2004) recognized the exceptional role of sponsorship in marketing communication for its brand awareness creating ability and nurturing of continuous brand usage. Fineweek. (2007) opines that event sponsorship is a profitable investment to the sponsor, especially when the event is well-publicized. Similarly, event sponsorship is of great benefit to the sponsor as it provides the opportunity to display its logos, brand names and products. In addition, it serves as a vehicle that enables the sponsors to deliver a distinctive message.

2.2 Attributes of sponsorship

Several scholars have identified the following critical attributes of an effective sponsorship deal:

2.2: 1 Brand Awareness

Allen (2010) considers brand awareness as the position a brand occupies in a consumer's mind. This implies that brand awareness gives an indication of customers' familiarity with the brand. Also, Aaker (1996) portrays brand awareness as a proportion of the target market that is familiar with the brand name. Operationally, brand awareness can be measured with brand recognition and brand recall. This implies the extent a customer can correctly distinguish the brand from other competing brands as having been previously seen or heard. Obviously, one of the purposes of firms' participation in sponsorship operation is to improve its corporate image. In short, firms' partnership engagement in an event is with the belief that such relationship will engender in the targets' minds a transfer of its brands' values (Bovee, Thill, Dovel and Wood (1995). This implies that brand awareness is a measure of the level of customers' familiarity with a brand. In practical terms brand recognition and brand recall are the principal indicators of the level of brand awareness. Essentially brand recall/recognition entails accurately retrieving a brand name or symbol from memory. On the other hand, Didellon- Carsana and Ganassali (1999) identified high publicity of the sponsored event that promotes the sponsor and limit that of the co-sponsors as the conditions precedent to an effective sponsorship deal.

2.2: 2 Image Transfer

Image transfer refers to the conveyance of customers' positive impressions concerning a brand or company to sponsor (Eaton & Gwinner (1999). The purpose of brand image transfer is to arouse emotions and attitudes toward the sponsor. This implies that image transfer takes place when the image of a sponsored event directly influence customers' perception of the sponsor's image. Picton *et al.* 2005 study reveals that the image of an event can be transferred to the sponsor. The authors assert that customers' perception of resemblance between an event and the sponsor, the level of sponsor's commitment, the commonness of the event, and the nature of the product are forces that facilitate the transfer of the image of the sponsor to the brand. In the same vein, Brown, Pope, and Voges, (2003) note that the type of event, its characteristics, and individual factors determine the image of an event.

Fleck-Dousteyssier remarked that perceived similarity between the event and the sponsor, the sponsor's involvement, the frequency of the event, and the nature of the product are the variables that facilitate the transfer of the image to the event's sponsors. This implies that consumers' perceptions of corporate image arising from events sponsorship emanate from the positive impressions formed about the firm and the level of consumption of firm's products.

2.2: 3 Viewers Perception of Event

Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent (2000) are of the opinion that viewers' perception of an event can be inferred from the extent to which the audience considers the event entertaining, pleasing, informative and interesting. Spectators in an event may consider it entertaining when it serves as a medium of relaxation. An event is pleasant to a viewer when the scenes do not display generally unacceptable behavioural patterns. Also, an event could be considered informative when it serves as a vehicle for knowledge acquisition. Similarly, an event is regarded as interesting when the activities involved or its contents are amusing. It is therefore important that every sponsored event should possess these critical elements for it to be considered worth the while to venture into.

Agbonifoh, Isibor and Okere (2016) identified audience involvement, connectedness, and program performance are the major shapers of audience perception of television programs. To the authors, audience involvement refers to viewers' perception of the importance of the program. This suggests that viewer's needs, values, and interests determine to a great extent the importance of a program. Connectedness on the other hand implies the level of intensity of the relationship the viewer's develop with the characters and the setting of the program.

2.2.:4 Event-Sponsor Fit

One essential criterion for effective sponsorship is the existence of congruence between the sponsor and an event. To Lacey and Angeline (2013) congruency between the event-sponsor refers to the extent to which a customer believes that an event and the sponsoring brand share almost the same characteristics. This tenet of congruity is the binding premise on which the image transfer principle of celebrity endorsement is hinged. It is generally canvassed that this principle finds a common application in the event sponsorship paradigm. For this fit to be established, the event organisers and the event sponsors must accurately ascertain the congruence before a sponsorship agreement is signed. The attainment of this congruence has become important as the image of the sponsor is expected to be transferred to the viewers through the viewership of the event. This suggests that positive attributes of the events are expected to be transferred to the sponsoring organization. Regrettably, negative vibes are also transmitted once there is a mismatch between the events and the sponsor.

Arens, *et al.* (2011) asserts that once a fit between an event and its sponsor is established, it is expected that its linkage with respect to image transfer will be very high. Eaton, *et al.* (1999) reports that the more consumers perceive similarity between the sponsor and sponsored event, the more they tend to exhibit a positive attitude towards the sponsorship. This suggests that the greater the congruence, the more successful the sponsorship deal. However, Meenaghan (2001) remarked that essentially it is the consumers' perception that matters in this respect. Several parameters can be employed to establish a state of congruency. Louis (2011) identified sponsors' image, demographics of the target audience as the basis for congruency. Other criteria, though not limited to appearance and the values of the audience, also serve as a basis for establishing a fit between the sponsor and an event (Tribou, 2011).

2.3 Corporate Image

The image of a corporation in essence denotes outsider impressions about a firm, its activities and products. Keller (1993) believes that the image of a corporation encapsulates a comprehensive impression that stakeholders have of a focal company and its brand. In short, a corporate image can simply be described as how the public sees the firm. The author further added that a brand image is all about people's beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and expectations concerning a brand. Furthermore, Syed, and Faridah (2009) considered the image of a brand as a consumer's emotional attachment to a brand. This emotional feeling enables the consumers to differentiate between alternative offerings. This encompasses the attributes, benefits and attitude a customer associates with a brand in his memory. This implies that the image of a corporation

captures the subjective perceptions of it. In simple terms, the image of an organization can be seen as the qualitative attributes of a firm. These attributes give an indication of its personality. Anne *et al.* (2011) opine that corporate image is a long term strategic and enduring asset that empowers a company to create customer loyalty, increase sales and earnings, attract new customers, attract good employees, and possess the capacity to obtain loans and increase stakeholders' trust in the company.

However, a firm's image is not limited to the name, symbol, or other distinguishing features but it also includes the knowledge of what the company represents and the functions it performs. In a competitive business climate, many businesses actively work to create and communicate a positive image to its stakeholders. It is pertinent to affirm that any organisation that fails to pay attention to issues concern its image is likely to encounter a number of challenges. The benefits accruing from proper management of a firm's image lie in its capacity to influence customers' patronage. In the spirit of image transfer, public perception of a corporate image has the potential to influence customers' beliefs and attitudes. The springboards of a corporate image are quality products, management quality, profit objective, corporate social responsibility, customers focus and employee relations. This suggests that the image of any corporation can be developed over time through the offering of quality products, involvement in corporate social responsibility, possession of a highly motivated workforce, satisfied stakeholders, advertising campaigns, and through consumer's direct experience.

Amoako, *et al.* (2012) posit that the worth of an organisation's image lies on in its ability to directly or indirectly facilitate business performance. In the same vein, the image of a corporation serves as a veritable source of product differentiation and a vehicle for competition (Amoako, *et al.* 2012). Johnson and Zinkhan (1990) are of the opinion that the creation of a strong corporate identity enables firms develop a positive image among her stakeholders. In view of the pivotal role corporate image plays in influencing firms' performance, several marketing scholars have beamed their searchlight on the need to simplify purchase decisions (Pitts, *et al.* 2004).

Despite the concerted effects managers make in the portrayal of a strong and positive corporate identity, public perception of this identity is of utmost importance. According to Johnson *et al.* (1990), the personality traits of a firm are the basic foundation of the identity managers desire to emphasize to the audience. This suggests that a firm's corporate identity is the ideal self-image that an organization projects to its stakeholders. The implication of a firm's corporate image is the value that the company desire to

communicate about itself. In simple terms the image of a firm denotes how the company wants to be perceived. Several studies affirm that a firm's identity can be deduced from the company's perception of itself, market positioning and the view of the firm stakeholders (Elham, 2016, Chebli *et al.* 2014). Indeed, the enhancement of corporate and brand image are the primary motives organizations engage in event sponsorship. Like everything else, the image of a brand can be built. This can be achieved over time through advertising, packaging, sponsorship, word of mouth, publicity, and consumer's direct experience.

2.4 Sponsorship and Corporate image

Literature acknowledged the fact that sponsorship, like any other marketing communication tool, is expected to have a direct impact on corporate image. The essence of a firm's corporate image is the creation and nurturing of brand awareness. However, Bovee, *et al.* (1995) conceives brand awareness as a proportion of the targeted audience that can recall the brand name. Javalgi, *et al.* (1994) sought to ascertain respondents' level of awareness of the sponsors of Barcelona 1988 Olympics. The authors found that apart from creating awareness for the sponsors, there was an increase in sales during the games for these firms. Arens *et al.* (2011) are of the opinion that event sponsorship is an effective marketing tool that has the potential to increase the value of a company's image, create greater awareness, and positively impact the visibility and location of an event.

Similarly, the study of Chandon *et al.* (2014) acknowledge the crucial roles of sponsorship in accelerating customers brand awareness, brand preferences, brand recall, and brand image. The study specifically revealed that event sponsorship positively drives sales, organizational goals and marketplace performance. Park (2020) study also found on one hand positive relationships between sponsor-event congruence and viewers attitudes towards the brand, viewers attitudes toward the brand and purchase intention. On the other hand, brand image and viewers attitude towards the image, and sponsors- event congruence and purchase intention.

3.0 METHOD

The methodology adopted in this study is the Ex post facto. This implies that the investigation was carried out after the occurrence of the event. This study focuses on the popular Nigeria Television reality show Big Brother Naija (BBN) Season 5. The 2020 edition première on June 18 and ran for 72 days. The reality show is very popular in southern Nigeria as all except one participant in the show are from the South of Nigeria. The major sponsors of the 2020 event were Betway, Guinness, Innoson motors among other five corporate giants in Nigeria. This study is restricted to the populace in the city of Ibadan, Oyo state. As a result

of the cosmopolitan nature of Ibadan, the study was carried out in the popular Iwo road section of the city. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 250 respondents in conveniently selected Sports betting centers and shopping malls at the Iwo road section of the Ibadan metropolis. This study was carried out five months after the conclusion of the show. A total of 180 duly completed copies of the questionnaire were found useful. This represents a 72% return rate.

A test retest of the research instrument was carried out on a small sample of the respondents and relevant adjustments were made to the final copy before the administration of the questionnaire. The research instrument consists of three sections. Section A contains the respondents' biographical data. Section B focuses on recalling the sponsors of the event. Respondents' were expected to respond to question items that demand their ability to recall the various activities sponsored by the companies. This, in essence, enables the researchers to ascertain the respondents' level of sponsors' awareness. A typical question item is to match the activities in the show with their various sponsors. Consistent with the study of Javalgi *et al.* (1994) only responses that correctly associate an activity with a sponsoring company were considered valid for analysis. Viewers awareness level of corporate sponsors were measured as very high (5), moderately high (4), high (3), low (2) and very low (1) Any viewer that correctly matches over 80% of the activities with the sponsors is rated excellent, between 60- 79% good; 40- 59% neither good nor bad; 20-39% bad; and below 19% very bad.

In section C, the researchers adopted and modified Elham, (2016) Amman Jordan study to measure corporate image. This variable was measured with the provision of superior quality products, promotion of national identity among the public, sponsoring local celebrities, commitment to corporate social responsibility, being highly credible among the public and achieving financial gains. Similarly, sponsorship was expressed as brand awareness, perception of the event, and event-sponsor congruence. In this study, the researchers relied on Chebli *et al.*, (2014) to measure brand awareness. We adopted and modified Agbonifoh, *et al.*, (2016) to measure viewers' perceptions of the sponsored event. Here, respondents were expected to rate the following attributes of the events as being entertaining, informative, educative, and pleasing using 3 point scale of positive, negative, and undecided or neutral. Finally, Lacey and Angeline (2013) provided the measure for event-sponsor fit. Using a five-point Likert type of scale (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree (3) Undecided (4) Agree and (5) Strongly Agree the respondents were expected to state their degree of agreement or disagreement. With the aid of SPSS 22 the statistical tools of one way ANOVA and

ordinary least square were employed to test the formulated hypotheses at a 5% confidence level.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A review of respondents' biographical data revealed that 54 percent (98) were female while males were 46 percent (82). Also, the most common age bracket of respondents' was 31-40 years (32%). This is closely followed by 21-30 years (22%). On the basis of marital status, the singles (101) 56 percent was the most

dominant among the respondents. Similarly, the highest educational qualification of the viewers is a first degree (65). On the basis of respondents' religious inclinations, 48 percent (87) profess to be Christians while Africa traditional religion (48) closely follows. The implication of these findings is that socio-demographic variables of viewers play a crucial role in creating interest in an event and consequently facilitates events recall (Anne *et al.* 2014).

Table-1: Respondents Recall of Major House activities and their Sponsors

Activities	Criteria	Number	Percentage (%)
Head of House Challenge	Excellent	65	36
	Very Good	34	19
	Neither Good nor Bad	12	7
	Bad	23	12
	Very Bad	46	26
Diary Sessions	Excellent	54	30
	Very Good	32	18
	Neither Good nor Bad	45	25
	Bad	30	17
	Very Bad	19	10
Arena games	Excellent	44	24
	Very Good	37	21
	Neither Good nor Bad	41	23
	Bad	11	6
	Very Bad	47	26
Saturday night parties	Excellent	47	26
	Very Good	29	16
	Neither Good nor Bad	28	16
	Bad	44	24
	Very Bad	32	18

Table 1 reports on viewers' ability to recall and correctly match an event with its sponsors. As seen in Table 1, 36 percent of the respondents exhibited an excellent ability to recall the weekly head of house challenge with their sponsors. Similarly, 26 percent of the respondents were unable to accurately recall and match the sponsors of the event. Also, the respondents' recall of the daily sessions reveals that 52 viewers were able to excellently recall the various activities and their sponsors. On the other hand, 19 viewers had a very bad recall capacity of daily activities and their various sponsors.

Another prominent activity in the Big Brother Naija Season 5, was the daily arena games. 47 respondents scored very low in recalling sponsors of arena games while 44 respondents were able to correctly match their sponsors. The Saturday night parties are another engaging activity at least from the viewers' perspectives. To this end, 26 percent were able to recall and correctly match the sponsors of these Saturday night parties while 18 percent of respondents were unable to correctly recall the activity with their sponsors. The most possible explanations for the variations in responses could be associated with individual differences and the duration of post-event information retrieval.

Table-2: Respondents overall Perception of the Event

Events Attributes	Viewers Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pleasant	Positive	25	14
	Negative	64	36
	Neutral	87	50
Informative	Positive	32	18
	Negative	63	35
	Neutral	85	47
	Positive	105	58

Entertaining	Negative	31	17
	Neutral	44	24
Educative	Positive	29	16
	Negative	88	49
	Neutral	63	36

Table 2 shows the viewers' overall perception of the sponsored event. On the basis of the event content display being pleasant to behold, about 51 percent (87) of the respondents had little reservation with the content while 14 percent (25) of the respondents had a positive impression of the content of the show. The most probable explanation for this result is that the show is ordinarily rated 18 years plus. This implies that content is only suitable to an adult audience only. Also, a majority (85) of the respondents are undecided as to whether the show is informative or not while 18 percent of the respondents affirmed that the show was informative. The most probable reason for this scenario is that television shows are generally not expected to be informative rather it is tailored to be entertaining (Agbonifoh, *et al.* 2016). [25]. In the same vein, 58 percent (105) of the viewers agreed that the show was entertaining while 24 percent were neutral.

This finding affirms the assertion of Agbonifoh, *et al.* (2016). [25]. Finally, on the issue of the show serving educative purposes, 88 viewers (49%) report that all the activities in the show do not contain educative material. In sum, the general perception of the viewers could be reasonably considered as mixed bag. This could be inferred from the respondents' perceptions of the events, which in nearly all indices the responses scored 3 on a scale of 5. The most possible explanation for this may not be unconnected with the highly religious nature of the respondents. In fact, most religions abhor the majority of the practices that were commonly on display in the show.

5.0 TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis One: There is no significant gender difference in viewers' awareness and perception of sponsored event.

Table-3: ANOVA of Viewers Awareness of Sponsored Events

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.348	4	3.087	6.279	.000
Within Groups	86.592	176	.492		
Total	98.94	180			

As seen in Table 3 above, the F-Stat is 6.279 while the associated p-value is 0.000. Since the p-value is well below the chosen alpha level of 0.05, we reject

the null hypothesis in support of the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant gender difference in viewers' awareness of sponsored events.

Table-4: ANOVA of Viewers Perception of Sponsored Events

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.824	2	6.412	4.297	.001
Within Groups	265.576	178	1.492		
Total	278.4	180			

Table 4 reports that the F-Stat is 4.297 while the associated p-value is 0.001. With the p-value below the chosen alpha level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis in support of the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant gender difference in viewers' perception of sponsored events. The possible explanation for this difference could be found in the genetic mapping of females and males [34]. Ewanlen (2016) reports that males are more sensation seekers than females. This, therefore, implies that male viewers tend to exhibit more awareness of the events happening

in their immediate environment than female viewers. In terms of viewers' perception of the sponsored events, females tend to possess a more positive perspective of the sponsors of the events. This may not be farfetched from females' general attitudes to viewership of television programs (Agbonifoh, *et al.* 2016) [25].

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between the attributes of sponsorship and corporate image.

Table-5: Model Summary of Regression of Sponsorship attributes and Corporate Image

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.672	0.613	0.595	21.3215

From Table 5, the coefficient of determination is 67% while the adjusted R squared is about 60%. This implies that sponsorship attributes of event awareness, image transfer, event-sponsor fit and viewers' perception of an event can correctly explain 60%

variations in corporate image. The implication is that a 0.6 unit increase in sponsorship attributes yield a corresponding 1 unit increase in the sponsor's corporate image.

Table-6: Correlation Coefficient of Events Sponsorship attributes and Corporate Image

			1	2	3	4	5			
1	Corporate Image	Pearson Correlation	1							
		Sig. (2-tailed)								
2	Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.638**	1						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000							
3	Image Transfer	Pearson Correlation	.273**	.049*	1					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.025						
4	Event-Sponsor Fit	Pearson Correlation	.512**	.653**	.009	1				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.450					
5	Viewers Perception	Pearson Correlation	.079*	.040	.050	-.094*	1			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	.343	.247	.048				

Table 6 shows the Pearson correlation coefficient of events sponsorship attributes and corporate image. The result shows awareness, image transfer, and event-sponsor fit exhibit a positive and significant relationship with corporate image while viewers' perception of the event reports a positive and an insignificant relationship with corporate image. In sum, the findings suggest that corporate sponsorship can enhance an organisation's image. It is however expected that the effects will differ among companies.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The concept of sponsorship has recently attained currency in the marketing communication landscape. This is because of its ability to reveal its relevance and importance in corporate communication. Lately, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the study of event sponsorship in order to gain an understanding of the operational effectiveness of sponsorship in corporate performance. This paper examined the impact of event sponsorship on corporate image. Events sponsorship like celebrity endorsement is a marketing communication practice that demands managers' diligence and cautions in decision making. In fact, a thorough cost-benefit analysis should be done before embarking on event sponsorship. In short, the benefits in terms of creating brand awareness, event-sponsor fit, seamless image transfer and customers' overall positive perceptions about the events should outweigh the amount invested.

Literature attests to the fact that awareness creating capacity of event sponsorship is not sufficient in itself for the formation of a strong, positive corporate image. Rather, several other sources of information shape consumers' perceptions of a company. These sources include personal contacts, equity holding, product usage, advertising, publicity, and even

employment. It is a proven fact that corporate sponsorship can positively impact on corporate image, but such an outcome is not spontaneous. This implies that it will be out of place to expect events sponsorship alone to overcome whatever negative opinions consumers might have held with respect to the firm. The consequence of it is that corporate sponsorships has the capacity to exacerbate an organisation's image if consumers initially held unpleasant impressions. The contrary will only be the case if the company had a pleasing image before the sponsorship.

As seen in this study, not all the respondents were able to recall the sponsors of the events. Without contradictions, this negates the sponsors' objectives of creating firm's awareness, brand image recall, and stimulation of sales. The implication is that firms' involvement in event sponsorship may not entirely positively influence the patronage decision of viewers. It is a truism that corporate sponsorship has the capacity to reinforce prior beliefs about a company. In fact, it cannot, by itself, reverse prior negative perceptions. Unfortunately firms whose public image is perceived negative could still not achieve their objective of image repositioning even after engaging in corporate sponsorships. Consequently, it is advisable that firms constantly evaluate their participation in an event with the intent of obtaining maximum benefits derivable in sponsorship programs. For the benefit of hindsight, once it is discovered a firm's self-assessment report is negative, it therefore becomes expedient that the management switch to new events.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent upon the findings of this study, the researchers would wish to offer the following recommendations:

- 1) Corporate sponsors' attempts at creating awareness should be improved upon. This should be done to prevent a situation where viewers are unable to recognize the event sponsors. To be able achieve the objective of creating awareness, event sponsors should make conscious efforts to display their name /logo at every activity point.
- 2) Sponsorship managers should be cautious of the choice of events to sponsor. This caution is necessitated by the possibility of ambush marketing. Also, cost-benefit analysis should be holistically done. In fact, managers saddled with the responsibility of making decisions on the events to be sponsored should be guided that event sponsorship does not impact all dimensions of a corporate image at the same time.
- 3) Corporate sponsors should be mindful of the moral contents of the events to be sponsored. This should be done to avoid a situation where a firm is closely associated with content that promotes immorality in a deeply religious society. Doing otherwise, we believe will be inimical to the corporate objective of the firm.
- 4) Events sponsors should be conscious of the reach of the sponsored events. Effects should be made to avoid the sponsorship of events that does not have a national or global audience. Rather, events sponsors that are conscious of its national image should proudly embrace events that are nationalistic, and not sectional in nature. Firms can achieve this through ensuring that there is a widespread of participants to give national outlook to events. Event sponsors, as a matter of a deliberate policy, should shun events whose participants lack ethnic-religious spread and limited viewership.
- 5) Marketing scholars could further expand the frontiers of this study by incorporating cultural and religious variables with the intent of unveiling the reasons why majority of the participants were from a section of the country and profess a common religious belief.

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