

# Financing Social Marketing Programs Through Sponsorship: Implications for Evaluating Social Marketing Programs

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## Financing NFPs and Social Marketing Becoming Challenging

- We live in an environment of:
  - increasing social needs,
  - reduced government ability to provide necessary funding to not for profit (NFP) organizations focused on combating these problems,
  - coupled with the increased competition amongst NFP for that funding,

## The Result Is...

- Growing importance of innovative approaches to financing the NFP sector
- One emerging financing approach is sponsorship (Largarde et. al. 2005; Rodgers and Bae, 2007; Thomas, 2008).
- Global spending in sponsorship has been growing rapidly over the past 20 years and continued to grow modestly during the recent recession (IEG, 2010; ISM, 2010).

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## Search Any NFP Website and You Will See....

- Opportunities to become a sponsor or partner
  - “sponsorship opportunities”
- Lists of corporate partners
- Guidelines for sponsorships/partnerships
- Why this interest?

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## What is Sponsorship?

- A sponsorship involves an individual or organization providing resources to another party in return for the opportunity to create links with that party (Cornwell, Roy and Steinard, 2001).

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## The Research Gap

- Are several (but few) papers reporting on the evaluation and importance of evaluation of social marketing sponsorships (e.g. Giles –Corti et. al., 2001; Holman et. al., 1996; Jalleh et. al. 2002; O'Reilly & Madill, 2007)
- Little empirical research.

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## Purpose of Paper

- In spite of increasing use of sponsorship financing by organizations implementing social marketing programs, the extant literature concerning social marketing sponsorships is largely based on professional experience - empirical research remains scant (Earle, 2005; Lefebvre, 2006; O'Reilly and Madill, 2007; Singer and Kayson, 2004; Thomas, 2008).
- In particular, dearth of literature concerning the potential impact on social marketing campaign evaluation that might be triggered by sponsorship financing of such campaigns.
- Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to report on case study research aimed at assessing the impact of sponsorship/ partnership financing of social marketing initiatives on the evaluation of social marketing programs.

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## Background Literature: Social Marketing and Sponsorship

- Sponsorship theory in early stage of development
- Sponsorships typically formed when sponsees approach sponsors in order to attract the resources that they require to implement programs and events
  - in larger commercial sponsorships, agent intermediaries play a significant role in brokering sponsorships
  - competition for sponsors' involvement is significant

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- Sponsorship occurs when a “corporation [or other investor] creates a link with an outside issue or event, hoping to influence the audience by the connection” (Rifon, Choi, Trimble and Li, 2004, p. 30).
- Characteristically, the ‘sponsor’ provides cash and/or in-kind products/ services to a ‘sponsee’ in return for opportunities to create links in the eyes of consumers and potential consumers.
- A sponsee can be an organization, team, event, or program (i.e. social marketing program) that requires resources in order to accomplish its objectives.
- This link created between a sponsor and sponsee results in image transfer whereby the sponsor and sponsee are seen to be associated with each other and benefit from that association.
- The possible benefits of a sponsorship include brand, sales, and internal marketing objectives, as well as cause marketing objectives which could include behavior change (O’Reilly and Madill, 2007).
- In the social marketing literature, the terms partnership and sponsorship have been used somewhat interchangeably (Largarde et. al., 2005; Niblett, 2005).

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## Social Marketing Partnerships

- While little literature defines and describes social marketing sponsorships, there exists a complementary literature on social marketing partnerships
  - majority of papers on social marketing partnerships are not empirically based.
  - A partnership is a voluntary collaboration between two or more private sector, non-profit (or government) institutions that has 1) a written agreement; 2) goal of mutual benefit; 3) resource transfers; and 4) substantive purpose (Niblett 2005).
  - Literature on social marketing partnerships suggests that the term partnership may be used interchangeably with sponsorship, and the term partner used interchangeably with sponsor. However, the sponsorship literature with its roots in private sector marketing does not utilize the terms partner or partnership.

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# Social Marketing Evaluation

- Social marketing literature emphasizes the importance of evaluating social marketing programs and campaigns with the aim of improving future social marketing strategy decisions and practice (Andreasen, 2002, 2006; Andreasen and Kotler, 2003).
- The literature on program evaluation is very well developed, and key to both evaluation theory and to recommended practices in evaluation of social marketing campaigns is the central theme of evaluating against the objectives of the social marketing program or campaign (Kotler and Lee, 2008).
- Accordingly, this research focuses on assessing, comparing and analyzing the objectives brought to the social marketing sponsorship by all stakeholders in the sponsorship.

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# Propositions

- Both the sponsee and/or sponsor in a social marketing sponsorship will share social marketing objectives.
- Private sector sponsors will hold objectives outside of the social marketing sphere
  - such as building awareness, branding, promotion, reaching new target markets

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## Propositions

- Existence of non social marketing objectives by sponsors/partners adds complexity to the social marketing evaluation in that the social marketing evaluation needs to incorporate such objectives.

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## Methodology

- Case research appropriate as the specific focus of this exploratory research is to add to our understanding of relatively unexplored area.

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## Case Study - the Canadian Mental Health Association - Calgary Region

- (CMHA-CR) undertook a social marketing campaign in the Province of Alberta Canada directed at
  - (a) reducing the stigma of mental health issues, and
  - (b) encouraging Albertans to seek help for mental health problems.

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## Methodology

- **Conducted:**
- (a) 12 in depth personal interviews lasting approximately 20 to 45 minutes each with key representatives of all the sponsorship stakeholders prior to the launch of the social marketing program, but shortly after the majority of the sponsors had been secured (10 in March 2007 and 2 in November 2007),
- (b) 11 in depth personal interviews lasting approximately 20-60 minutes each with key representatives of all the sponsorship stakeholders following the conclusion of the social marketing program (April 2008),
- (c) reviewed all contracts and written materials around the sponsorship and campaign, and
- (d) involved in email communications and updates concerning the entire social marketing campaign and the sponsorships associated with it.
- Interviews were taped, transcribed and subsequently analyzed by the research team.

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## Overview of the CMHA-CR Social Marketing Sponsorship

- Sponsorship was complex with a total of 15 stakeholders involved as sponsors, partners and grantors:
  - Included:
    - two major sponsors/ partners, (TransCanada Corp, and a large CFI),
    - several other private sector companies including: (i) MacLaren McCann – an advertising agency that provided the creative work at reduced rates, (ii) Canadian Television Network (CTV) who put together a television media package at reduced rates, and (iii) Pattison Outdoor who provided outdoor billboard buys also at reduced rates.
    - nine public sector sponsors/partners were involved – the Calgary Health Region, the Capital Health Region as well as the other seven regional Alberta branches of the CMHA.
    - finally, a grantor was also part of the funding – the Alberta Gaming Corporation.

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## Findings: Stakeholder Objectives

- All stakeholders brought their own objectives to the sponsorship – some of these objectives were explicitly written into contracts (formal objectives), but most were not written into any of the sponsorship documents – rather they were disclosed through probing in the interview process (informal objectives).
- In total, the sponsors and sponsees revealed 16 objectives that they had for becoming involved in the social marketing sponsorship (See Table 1).

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## Analysis of Objectives: Sponsee

- The CMHA – CR sponsee mentioned 15 objectives, five of which were not shared by any of the sponsors and 10 of which were shared by sponsors.

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## Analysis of Objectives: Sponsors

- The sponsors mentioned a total of 16 different objectives - six shared by the sponsee and ten not shared by the sponsee.
- Our research shows that of the 16 objectives mentioned by the sponsors, approximately one-third (five) were held by both the private and public sector sponsors. Almost half (seven) were held by private sector sponsors only and about one-quarter (4) were held by public sector sponsors only.

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**Table 1 – Sharing of Social Marketing Sponsorship Objectives By Stakeholders**

\*Objectives Held By Both Private and Public Sector Sponsors \*\* Held Only By Private Sector Sponsors \*\*\* Held Only by Public Sector Sponsors

	Private Sector Sponsors	Public Sector Sponsors	Sponsor Objectives Also Shared by Sponsee
1. To implement a social marketing campaign to target stigma associated with mental illness.	* McLaren McCann Trans Canada CFI	* CMHA - other branches	Yes
3. Changing peoples attitudes about mental illness	** CFI		Yes
4. Changing people's behaviours around mental health - want those with mental illness to seek help	* McLaren McCann Trans Canada CFI	* CMHA other branches	Yes
5. Encourage Albertans to take care of mental health	** Trans Canada		Yes
6. Reduce incidences of mental illness and de-habilitating results of mental illness		*** CMHA – other branches Calgary Capital HR	Yes
7. To promote mental health and wellness		*** Calgary HR Capital HR	Yes
8. Build awareness/profile/brand and credibility of CMHA to increase resources	* McLaren McCann Trans Canada	* CMHA – other branches	Yes

\*Objectives Held By Both Private and Public Sector Sponsors \*\* Held Only By Private Sector Sponsors \*\*\* Held Only by Public Sector Sponsors

	Private Sector Sponsors	Public Sector Sponsors	Sponsor Objectives Also Shared by Sponsee
9. To build relationships with other branches of CMHA		*** CMHA – Other Branches	Yes
10. To be associated with a first class campaign	* Trans Canada CFI	* CMHA Calgary Health Region	Yes
11. To be seen as a partner with CMHA in delivery of mental health services	* CTV	* Calgary Health Region Capital Health Region	No
12. To build skills/capacity around social marketing	** McLaren McCann		Yes
13. Give back to the community / show company supports community	** McLaren McCann Trans Canada Pattison Outdoor		No
14. Internal marketing – increase employee satisfaction working on interesting cause.	** McLaren McCann Pattison Outdoor		No
15. Build awareness of brand in Alberta	** Trans Canada		No
16. Build awareness of regional associations		*** CMHA – other branches	No

## Analysis of Objectives

- Is considerable sharing of objectives in this social marketing sponsorship,
- But, not all objectives are shared between sponsors and sponsees.
- As well, not all objectives are shared between public and private sector sponsors.

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## Summary and Discussion

- Large number of objectives were brought by the various stakeholders to the social marketing sponsorship – many of which are shared among various stakeholders, but some of which are quite specific to each organization.
  - Uncovering these objectives cannot be accomplished simply through an examination of formal contracts or letters of understanding that exist between and among stakeholders

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## Possible Implications

- For organizations who choose to be involved in sponsorships with not-for-profit organizations as either as a sponsor or sponsee - invest time and energy in working to understand the objectives of all the other parties involved in the sponsorship.
- Focal organization will have to work quite hard to learn about these objectives.
- Possible that private sector sponsors, in particular may not immediately share all objectives without probing and without recognition and acceptance by public sector organizations of the objectives they may have that may in fact be seen as self serving.
- Public sector sponsors may share similar concerns.

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## Possible Implications

- Evaluation of the social marketing objectives (which will be held by sponsees and may be shared by sponsors), will be evaluated in the evaluation plan for the social marketing program.
  - The direct implication is that the sponsee needs to share the results of the campaign evaluation with all stakeholders. One approach for sharing was utilized by the CMHA-CR sponsee who hosted a wrap-up celebration event where they presented both oral and written copies of the campaign evaluation results.

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## Possible Implications

- Evaluation of the non social marketing objectives (which may be held by sponsors – both private and public sector) will need to be planned for separately adding a layer of complexity to the evaluation process.
  - i.e. two private sector sponsor/partners wanted to increase satisfaction in employees through working on a worthwhile/interesting cause.

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- Evaluation of this objective is important for the sponsors that mentioned it, but also for the sponsee who would be able to utilize this information in seeking future sponsorships/partnerships either from this sponsor or from others.
- Several sponsors expressed the objective of being seen as a partner with CMHA in delivery of mental health services. Responsibility for the evaluation of this objective would need to be incorporated into the quantitative measurement of consumer knowledge of the sponsors of the social marketing campaign.

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## Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

- Study provides a necessary baseline from which both qualitative and quantitative future research and methodologies can be developed to build our knowledge around social marketing sponsorships.

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