

A STUDY ON CORPORATE DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA IN SPONSORING SPORTS EVENT TOURISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SRI LANKA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Growing trends in sports events have led corporations to consider sports sponsorship as an effective marketing tool to capture a distinct customer segment. This study was conducted to understand the corporates' decision-making process regarding sponsorships in sports event tourism through the lens of social exchange theory. Prior research has identified that corporations engage in sponsoring sports event tourism to achieve market-oriented objectives; however, exploring corporate decision-making processes regarding sports tourism sponsorships needs further enquiry. Therefore, this research attempted to study the nature and process of corporate sponsorship decision-making in the context of sports events in Sri Lanka. A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. Data was collected from 15 managers of local and international corporations who are actively involved in decision-making regarding sponsoring sports events. The sample was chosen based on the convenience sampling method, and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used as the analytical tool. The findings of the study identified the reasons for corporations to support sports event tourism, the rational process of sports sponsorship decision-making in corporations, and environmental factors that affect the decision-making regarding sports sponsorships. The application of social exchange theory enabled us to understand the exchange versus rationality, fairness and marginal utility from the corporate decision maker's perspective. This research offers to understand the relevance and decision-making criteria regarding sponsoring sports events for commercial benefits.

Keywords: Corporate sponsorship, Decision-making, Event tourism, Social exchange theory, Sports events