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Brenda Carney

Department of Media Communications, Cork Institute of Technology, Cork, Ireland

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**The Place of Arts and Culture
Sponsorships within the Theory and
Practice of Public Relations**

Brenda Carney

MA in Public Relations with New Media

2011

Cork Institute of Technology



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Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Chorcaí
Cork Institute of Technology

**The Place of Arts and Culture Sponsorships within
the Theory and Practice of Public Relations**

Brenda Carney

MA in Public Relations with New Media

Supervised by Emmett Coffey and Frank O'Donovan

September 2011

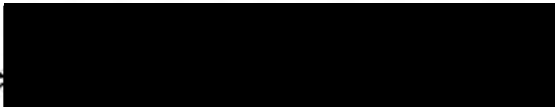
*Submitted to the Cork Institute of Technology in part fulfilment of the requirements for the
MA in Public Relations with New Media*

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of

Master's Degree (MA) in Public Relations with New Media

Is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment for any academic purpose other than in partial fulfilment for the stated above.

Signature  (Student)

Date.. Sept..... 2011.....

Abstract

This study is concerned with the role and position of sponsorship, specifically sponsorship of the arts, in public relations. It aims to add to the, as yet considerably sparse, body of knowledge that exists on arts sponsorships from the perspective of the public relations practitioner.

The literature reveals that while sponsorship is used as a vehicle for public relations, it is often activated as part of an integrated marketing and public relations communications campaign. It also highlights the importance of planned communication based on organisational objectives and the different approaches to public relations including relational theory and rhetorical theory. Both of these perspectives can be applied to sponsorship strategies where the focus is on stakeholder relationships and corporate identity respectively.

The research methodology employed was of a qualitative nature and features semi-structured interviews as a basis for primary data collection. In order to cover a broad knowledge base, interviews were conducted with public relations professionals, corporate sponsorship managers, and arts and culture event organisers.

A central theme of this study is to question why organisations choose to sponsor in the arts and culture sector and what benefits can be derived from such a sponsorship partnership. Research findings conclude that arts sponsorships are often profit driven where the bottom line is to increase sales. However it can also be concluded that organisations engage in sponsorship of the arts as a means of enhancing their corporate reputation. By generating goodwill towards the corporate personality, arts sponsorships provide creative opportunities and emotional links for corporations within the local community.

As a public relations tool, arts sponsorship must therefore be recognised as a strategic business arrangement involving professional relationship management, contract law and media engagement. This study provides public relations practitioners with a means of improving awareness of, and engagement in, arts sponsorship opportunities.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

'Life without industry is guilt, and industry without art is brutality'

John Ruskin, 1870

This study is concerned with the place of sponsorship, specifically arts sponsorship, within the theory and practice of PR.

1. Public relations and sponsorship

Communication has been around since time began with the earliest human drawings found at the Caves of Liseaux. Gunning (2003) cites the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Kells as early examples of written communication while Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in the 15th century lent itself to the modern idea of individuality, made modern science possible and led to huge changes in society.

Communication of an organisation's messages to its publics is an essential part of PR and how those messages are communicated is also a crucial factor in achieving organisational goals and objectives. Sponsorship, as part of an integrated PR communications campaign, can be used as a vehicle for the communication of company objectives to key publics.

Sponsorship, if well planned and activated, can be a powerful way to project messages to important audiences (Haywood, 1998) and it can provide a platform for organisations to add value and target key stakeholders.

When successfully managed by the PR professional to maximise opportunities, sponsorship is implemented as part of organisational goals and objectives. The three main public relations sponsorship opportunities are found in corporate sponsorship, which is concerned with the company's image and reputation, marketing-based sponsorships which capitalise on budget spend, and philanthropic or CSR-led sponsorships which focus on community relationships and the building up of goodwill.

Sponsorship is fundamentally about third-party endorsement (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:414) and so should be treated under the umbrella of public relations. When integrated with media relations and promotional activity, sponsorship can be an effective vehicle for creating awareness and engagement.

Elements of sponsorship such as building brand awareness, influencing corporate spending, and creating goodwill are controlled by the PR function. Public relations theory and practice provide a solid foundation upon which to build good commercial sponsorship strategies.

1.1 Sponsorship and the arts

The major focus of this study is to determine why organisations choose to sponsor in the arts and cultural sector, which is still seen as quite a niche market as opposed to the mass appeal of sports sponsorships. According to Haywood (1998:197), the “inability of some parts of the sponsorship industry to organise itself in a way that it can deliver measurable results” is one of the reasons sponsorship of the arts suffers.

New opportunities for sponsorship of the arts exist but many of those opportunities are underutilised and passed over in favour of sponsoring in other sectors like sport. This study examines reasons for this considerable discrepancy.

Arts organisations’ key publics include corporate sponsors, boards of directors, performers, media, competition, public funders, private donors, and the general ticket-buying audience (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Sponsorship of the arts allows for a focused campaign to be delivered and by leveraging the “emotions, qualities and values” associated with an arts event, business can stand out in a “cluttered consumer market” (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:415).

The implications for PR practitioners advising clients on the value of the arts and arts sponsorship strategies will be examined, as will the role the PR professional plays in bringing arts sponsorship away from its perceived niche position and in to the consciousness of the masses.

1.2 Research objectives

As the area of arts sponsorship is still in the development stages in terms of professionalisation, an opportunity exists to explore this topic in detail. The research objectives are:

1. To establish the role the PR manager plays in facilitating sponsorships within the arts/culture sector.
2. To examine sponsorship as an element of PR from a relationship perspective.
3. To ascertain where the promotional responsibility for sponsorships lie.
4. To explore the reasons why organisations choose to engage in sponsorship within the arts/cultural and entertainment sectors.

1.3 Research questions

Questions arising from the research objectives of this study include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. How do sponsorship relationships happen?

The PR professional's role in facilitating sponsorships for events (also called rights holders or sponsorship properties) and organisations (potential sponsors) looking to increase their profile and profits will be studied. The aim of this question is to establish the PR processes involved in establishing sponsorship partnerships. It will identify the stages from initial engagement to contract negotiation, objective setting, activation and evaluation.

2. Where does the promotional responsibility for sponsorships lie? Is it with the rights holder, the sponsor or the PR professional?

Sponsorships can be used as part of an integrated PR and marketing communication campaign. This question will establish whose responsibility it is to implement, activate, and promote the sponsorship and investigate the crossover between the PR and marketing functions.

3. How important are good media relations when building and cultivating relationships?

This question will examine the role the PR manager plays in influencing media coverage of sponsorships. It will also outline the proliferation of social media and how it can be used in generating awareness of sponsorships.

4. Does a company's CSR agenda feature in the arts sponsorship decision-making process?

Sponsorship is often classified in the realm of philanthropic donations and corporate giving. This question aims to deduce if a commercially-focused sponsorship can incorporate a community-driven CSR element and if it is likely to be successful.

5. Why do organisations choose to sponsor in the arts and culture sector?

This question will look at the benefits derived from arts sponsorships as opposed to sport sponsorship or CSR-focused sponsorships. Using relational theory as a basis for this question, the relationships between key stakeholders will be highlighted, as will organisations' reasons for choosing to engage in sponsorship within the arts. It will examine the benefits that are derived from sponsoring in the arts sector and any conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of sponsorship partnerships.

This study will be of relevance to any PR professional looking to engage or specialise in facilitating sponsorship opportunities, particularly in the arts sector.

It will also be of interest to arts organisations interested in harnessing sponsorships to achieve maximum benefit for their event. The business community will derive some

advantage from this research because it aims to show the effectiveness of engaging in a sponsorship with an arts organisation and the benefits that can be derived from it.

1.4 Thesis structure

Chapter Two reviews relevant literature by leading public relations academics. The main body of this section outlines the salient implications of sponsorship practice from a public relations perspective and includes sections on relationship management, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and media relations.

Chapter Three highlights the research methodology chosen for this study. It sets out the justification of decisions made in the execution of the research process and describes precise operational details of the research methods.

Chapter Four examines the findings that resulted from primary data collection and features a detailed analysis of them in relation to stated research objectives. Key theoretical themes of this chapter relate to those of Chapter Two and result in a critical interpretation of data.

Chapter Five draws conclusions about the place of sponsorship, specifically arts sponsorship, within the theory and practice of PR. Recommendations are made for areas of future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Public relations and sponsorship

There are many different perceptions of what public relations is and even with the plethora of definitions for the practice of it in relevant literature, a broad view entails that it is a wide-reaching discipline that encompasses and combines areas of “philosophy, sociology, economics, language, psychology, journalism, communication and other knowledge into a system of human understanding” (Gunning, 2003:6).

While the term public relations covers an extensive spectrum, the core tenets at the heart of PR theory and practice are the planning and management of communications, relationships and reputation. Carty (1992:2) contends:

Public relations is the management of all relationships which are important to an organisation... It is also the management of all communications within the organisation and between the organisation and its outside audiences... Public relations is also the management of the organisation's reputation.

Sponsorship, as a multi-faceted medium positioned within PR, allows organisations to effectively plan and manage their communications, relationships, and reputations in order to achieve their corporate goals. Media relations, building on corporate identity and goodwill, and creating brand awareness (Tench and Yeomans, 2009) are all elements of PR that are used in sponsorship and so help to justify sponsorship's *raison d'etre* within the wider realms of PR theory and practice

2.1 Sponsorship

Broadly defined, sponsorship is a mutually beneficial collaborative business arrangement where the investment is matched by a suitable return on investment. Most sponsorships are “hard-headed business deals aimed at a definite return” (Jefkins, 1987:37). Meenaghan (1998) defined sponsorship as an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential activity associated with that activity.

Not to be confused with charitable corporate donations or patronage – “the modern business is not a philanthropist” (Jefkins, 1994:393) – a sponsorship is a “mutually beneficial arrangement, with give and take on both sides” (Carty, 1992:147, 148).

A company’s sponsorship strategy should be devised as part of its corporate public relations policy and it involves teamwork and cooperation from the advertising and marketing departments.

Haywood (1998) argues that because of the complexities of managing an event, its messages and its audiences, sponsorship has become more professional in its approach and, used as an alternative to advertising, is wisely viewed as an aspect of public relations. Lacey *et al* (2009:127) state that sponsors should leverage events as a way to enhance attendees’ knowledge of the sponsor and if it is done correctly, attendees will have more favourable perceptions and behavioural intentions towards the sponsor.

According to Smith (2009) sponsorship comes under the remit of a proactive strategy as part of a planned PR programme, as would philanthropy and audience participation. Tangible deeds are undertaken by the organisation to help it gain visibility and respect among their key publics, and to create logical and emotional links between the sponsor and the partner.

Organisations that are looking for a sponsor must offer a tangible return on investment while equally the potential sponsor will want to know in quantifiable terms what the benefits will be. There must always be a logical link between the activity being sponsored and the mission of the organisation (Smith, 2009).

There are many reasons organisations engage in sponsorship including publicity, entertainment opportunities, favourable associations in corporate identity and image, brand awareness, media interest, goodwill, familiarity, and in place of advertising (Haywood, 1991; Tench and Yeomans, 2009; Jefkins,1994). According to Gunning, companies are constantly seeking new sponsorship opportunities which “fit their financial budgets, their

corporate image, and their customers' interests" (2003:213). It is important that an organisation finds a sponsorship with which it identifies.

All activities associated with sponsorship, including audience participation and engagement as a two-way communication tactic, rely on the PR manager's ability to target the right publics and the right fit – both financial and brand identity-wise:

“What matters is that the sponsorship ‘fits’ the company and that you are conscious of audience reaction from a group wider than your target audience... sponsorship should be viewed from the perspective of the company in the first instance, the participants in the second, and your wider public in the third” (Gunning, 2003:225).

At the initial planning stages of a sponsorship deal, predetermined and concise objectives must be contractually and explicitly stated and written into the agreement clause so both the sponsor and the rights holder know exactly what to expect from the partnership (Haywood, 1991:98)

Elements of the contract would include audience reach, brand positioning and media coverage targets so that the sponsor is aware of exactly how the funding will be put to use. The sponsoring organisations must be able to “identify and cost the benefits of its investment” (Gunning, 2003:210).

2.2 Sponsorship and the arts

Jefkins (1994:389) asserts that the problem with the arts is that they represent minority public interests. By undertaking a sponsorship partnership within the arts and culture sector, companies adjust perceptions and enhance their reputation by being seen to finance diverse organisations as well as allowing them to communicate better with their stakeholders. It allows them to differentiate themselves from the competition (Caywood, 1997) and ultimately increase their return on investment.

While once artists, writers and musicians tended to be seen as unbusiness-like (Carty, 1992), the professionalisation of the arts in recent years has created links between the arts

and business communities and allowed for a more strategic approach and effective communications (Gunning, 2003).

As a professional organisation, Business to Arts acts as a broker and deals with the development of creative sponsorship partnerships between the arts and business communities. It recognises that a sponsorship relationship “can only be successful where there is a meeting of minds and a mutual understanding of the benefits accrued to all stakeholders” (McLoughlin, 2009).

It should be determined from the outset if a proposed sponsorship “merits the expenditure and promises the desired results” (Jefkins, 1984:396). However, when the PR function of sponsorship is augmented with advertising and marketing, corporate marketers now realise that with \$1 million spent on a festival they can reach a niche market segment more cost-effectively than with paid mass media advertising (Caywood, 1997). Sponsorships can “stretch a company’s promotion dollars much further than media advertising, at the same time creating more intensive relationships between the organization and its publics” (Smith, 2009:100).

2.3 Planned PR sponsorship programmes

As the UK’s Institute of Public Relations defines it, PR is the “planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics” (Gregory, 2008:3).

Implicit in this and the myriad other definitions for PR is that public relations – and sponsorship as an element of public relations – needs to be a deliberate and carefully-structured planned process. Public relations programmes don’t just happen; they are a result of systematic research, planning, and evaluation. PR is most effective within an organisation when the public relations practitioner helps to shape goals, identify publics and develop symmetrical communications programmes that can be implemented and evaluated (Austin and Pinkleton, 2001).

In J Grunig and colleagues' Excellence Study on how public relations contribute to an organisation's strategic planning and effectiveness, "public relations helps an organization identify its strategic publics and uses symmetrical communication 'to develop and maintain quality long-term relationships with these strategic publics'" (Toth, 2006:444).

A basic planning model involved in undertaking a strategically managed communications campaign includes awareness, formulation of strategy, implementation and evaluation (Gregory, 2000; Tench and Yeomans, 2009:178) and these processes can clearly be identified when looking at sponsorship proposals.

When seeking a sponsorship, companies need to define their objectives, define the target market/audience, set budgets, study the potential strategic development of the sponsorship, undertake a review, develop a detailed programme, implement the sponsorship, and evaluate the successes and failures. As Haywood (1998:197) noted "unless real objectives have been set for the activity, it is impossible to calculate how well it has performed".

Jefkins' Six-Point Public Relations Planning Model is often cited as the blueprint for many successful campaigns and it expands on the basic planning model to include carrying out a communication audit, defining objectives and publics, selecting media and techniques, budget, and assessment of results as part of a strategically implemented campaign (Jefkins, 1994:72).

Recognising the different models of communication developed by James E Grunig and Todd Hunt in their influential typology of PR, *Managing Public Relations*, first published in 1984, helps to establish the relevant planning processes when implementing an effective PR sponsorship programme.

2.3.1 Four models of communication

The four models of communications relationships — press agency, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric— show how the practice of formal public

relations has evolved and as they are the cornerstone of modern public relations theory, elements of all four are included in the area of sponsorship.

Publicity is a vital element of sponsorship and many events, including arts events, would not survive without the valuable work that publicists do (Gunning, 2003). Persuasion, as a “successful, intentional effort at influencing another’s mental state through communication” (Austin and Pinkleton, 2001:280), is used subliminally in sponsorship in creating brand awareness and name recognition. The function of public relations here is to tell the truth objectively, but also to create a buzz around the event by linking audience reach and persuasive impact (Smith, 2009).

One of the founding fathers of PR, Ivy Lee, was an advocate of the public information model of communications, believing that businesses should be less secretive about their work and release accurate information (Theaker, 2008).

Today the PR practitioner using this model functions, as an “in-house journalist, whose job it is to report objectively information about their organisation or client to the public” (Murphy, 2010:14). At sponsorship’s most basic level this entails releasing information about events, schedules and more importantly, box office locations.

In terms of sponsorship, branding and positioning also fall under the category of two-way asymmetric communication, which is used in an effort to change the behaviour and attitudes of the audience, not the behaviour of the organisation (Theaker, 2008).

The two-way symmetrical method, where there is a mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics, open dialogue and clear exchange of views, is also used when establishing a sponsorship plan.

It allows for levels of equality on both sides and is especially prevalent in social media. The two-way symmetrical model allows social media elements of sponsorship become a large part of the strategic plan and would include online competitions and ticket giveaways, live streaming of events, and a constant Twitter feed.

2.4 Stages in a sponsorship programme

Positioning the company so it can distinguish itself from other brands is an important aspect of establishing goals and objectives. Research is carried out on how the brand is perceived by publics (awareness) and which then identifies the position the brand would like to establish itself in, in order for it to achieve distinction from other companies. "It can be very important to establish both awareness and competitive position before drafting the public relations objectives" (Haywood, 1991:23).

The importance of establishing goals and quantifiable objectives, such as "increasing awareness, creating understanding, correcting negative attitudes and improving perceptions" (Carty, 1992:28) from the outset cannot be overstated and this is especially true when devising a sponsorship proposal. By using the public relations transfer process of converting negative attitudes to positive ones (Onabajó, 2006), understanding is created and public relations sponsorship programmes can be effectively implemented.

However, "as promotional campaigns become more symmetric as well as asymmetric, it becomes important to measure the co-orientational version of these effects as well" (Jenkins, 1994:370). According to co-orientation theory, "the most effective communication takes place when both parties agree and when they know they agree, which means they have achieved consensus" (Austin and Pinkleton, 2001:272) and the importance of focusing on the long-term relationship with stakeholders, rather than short-term successes, is emphasised here.

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This is especially true when looking at sponsorship as it is essential to the successful partnership that long-term goals are set. The sponsoring organisation and the partner have to have achieved consensus and mutual understanding before any plan is set in motion.

In establishing objectives — which should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time sensitive (Smith, 2009) — within the sponsorship realm, it is important to identify the people who are already active publics in order to communicate what is on offer

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to them. Identifying the right brand and the right fit for the sponsorship and event partnership is key.

After a detailed analysis of the situation is undertaken, often using environment-scanning techniques such as PESTLE and SWOT, and objectives are set, a target audience/public is defined and matched with objectives and a budget is put in place. The PR plan can be then implemented. In sponsorship terms having contracts and explicitly stating what each side will get in the brief is paramount to a successful partnership.

A timetable is also an important element of the plan so activities are scheduled to take place when they will have maximum media impact. Companies should look at the potential to develop their sponsorship and the effect it will have on the behaviour of the target audience.

“Ideally you want to enter a sponsorship arrangement at the bottom of the mountain (when interest is beginning to grow) and leave at the top of the mountain (when interest has peaked)” (Gunning, 2003:228). Some of the best opportunities in sponsorship require a long-term commitment of several years (Haywood, 1991:248) and the relationship should be monitored and evaluated regularly.

As Gregory (2008) points out, careful planning and management lies at the heart of communication. Developing relationships, building trust and achieving results are key to an organisation’s success.

2.5 Marketing

Having PR as a management function in an organisation means clearly distinguishing it from the marketing function and the relationship between the two disciplines has always been ambiguous.

Although PR techniques and tactics — product publicity, trade promotions, product editorial, events, and sponsorship — are employed in marketing and advertising to sell products, management should treat PR as the umbrella under which other activities occur.

Marketing is a function that offers products and services in exchange for something of value (Cutlip *et al*, 2009) and focus is on exchange relationships (Kitchen, 1997) whereas PR is about the establishment and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders.

“The strongest marketing campaigns combine all of the tools available to a corporation, by linking advertising, public relations, direct marketing, publicity and sponsorship. The use of all (or a combination) enhances the messages from each” (Gunning, 2003:214). It is important to note that if a trusting relationship between two or more parties in the marketplace exists, exchanges should inevitably occur (Gronroos, 1999:327).

Carty (1992:15) suggests that while “the psychological insights and communication skills of real public relations are vital in helping the marketing effort”, public relations goes beyond the marketing department and has a much broader remit than any other function or discipline within an organisation.

Put simply, marketing deals with markets and public relations with publics (Jefkins, 1994:19). Marketing creates exchanges with consumers using PR tools while PR creates relationships with publics who could impact on the business (Kitchen, 1997). Each contain essential elements that when combined make up a successful communications strategy and “to ignore one is to risk failure in the other” (Cutlip *et al*, 2009:28).

2.5.1 Integrated Marketing Communications

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) has developed within the fields of marketing and public relations and offers the most logical approach to the management of an organisation’s communication strategies. It is based on the holistic idea of “weaving

together the various strands of the marketing communications mix into a more cohesive and seamless entity” (Black, 1995:55).

It was defined by Schultz and Kitchen as “a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate co-ordinated measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences” (2000:65).

IMC suggests that organisations would have more effective communications by having a “synchronised multi-channel communication strategy that reaches every market segment with a single unified message” (Kitchen, 1997:231). According to Robinson (2005:256) marketing managers should embrace PR as an equal element of the promotional mix and take a proactive approach to enhancing customer interests, in both product and in the company as a whole.

The implication then being that all elements of the PR and marketing functions work best when there is a consistency of messages and a shared responsibility for customer focus (Heath and Coombs, 2006:31).

2.6 Different approaches to PR

For effective symmetrical public relations to occur, relevant theories of the discipline need to be identified and for this study the focus will be on a rhetorical approach in the context of establishing corporate identity and brand awareness as well as relational theory approach, where relationships between the sponsor, the event and the PR practitioner are analysed.

2.6.1 Organisation-public relationships

“It’s a good idea to remember that, in a social system always in flux, every relationship has the potential to affect other relationships” (Austin and Pinkleton, 2001:279).

A relationship view of public relations offers many different perspectives from which to examine the discipline (Tench and Yeomans, 2009) and scholars “have proposed relationship management as one of the key activities of public relations practitioners” (Toth, 2006:519).

Relationship theory is concerned with balancing the interests of organisations and publics by engagement with publics and effective management of the organisation-public relationship (Theaker, 2008; Ledginham, 2006). The relationship of an organisation with its publics is at the centre of PR activity (Ledingham and Bruning, 2000).

The relational approach to public relations focuses on relationship outcomes such as “control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship and communal relationship” (Hon and Grunig, 1999; Ki and Shin, 2005; Huang, 2001) and Ledingham proposed that adopting a relationship management approach to public relations would result “in mutual understanding and benefit for interacting organisations and publics” (2003:190).

Dozier noted that an organisation’s mission is affected by its relationships with key publics and said communication should be used as “a strategic management function [that helps] manage relationships with key publics that affect organizational mission, goals and objectives” (Dozier, 1995:85).

Broom *et al* (2000) indicated that relationships are characterised by interdependence, they represent exchanges of information, energy or resources and have specific antecedents and consequences that must be taken into account when analysing them.

Key concepts of a relationship approach to PR include “degrees of co-orientation and transparency drawing on social psychology, interpersonal and organizational communication and conflict resolution and mutuality” (L’Etang 2009:254). Loyalty and quality of relationships with stakeholders are important here (Ledingham, 2006:4571) “as is the management of expectations and the public” (L’Etang, 2009:254).

A focus on the organisational-public relationships requires greater involvement from organisations, higher levels of engagement and genuine dialogue (Tench and Yeomans 2009) and so it stands to reason that social media is an excellent platform in which to engage in dialogue and enhance organisational-public relationships.

“If you listen to the conversations and follow the rules of engagement, the relationship will grow from there” (Solis and Breckenridge 2010:73). Ki (2004) found that “openness is the most common strategy for corporate Web sites, and the strategies of positivity, openness, and access showed significant results in differentiating industry types” (Toth, 2006:448).

2.6.2 Sponsorship relationships

From a sponsorship perspective then, Haywood (1998:166) observed:

The natural tendency of relationships, whether in marriage or in business, is entropy – the erosion or deterioration of sensitivity and attentiveness. A healthy relationship requires a conscious and constant fight against the forces of entropy. Public relations should be the regular breath of reality that keeps important relationships working to mutual benefit.

The length of relationships between corporations sponsoring an event and the event itself varies but it is widely accepted that the most successful sponsorships are the ones that last the longest, as in up to a period of ten years or more. Brand identity, awareness and trust are established and there are mutual benefits to all parties involved in the relationship.

The most effective relationship building occurs in a two-way symmetrical communication environment and so trust should take primacy as part of the relationship-building process with key stakeholders including the sponsoring organisation, the rights holder and the PR company.

As the cornerstone of strategic partnership, trust enables relationships to realise critical strategic opportunities and achieve optimal performance (Farrelly and Quester, 2004:212). When trust is established, a sponsor gets value from the relationship and therefore more economic satisfaction.

2.6.2.1 Strategies and outcomes

In analysing organisational-relationship management for strategic public relations programmes, including sponsorship programmes, three concepts have emerged. They are the types of organisation-public relationships, relationship cultivation strategies, and relationship outcomes (Toth, 2006).

In terms of sponsorship, relationship-cultivation strategies are used from the first initial contact that is made by an organisation or rights holder, through the negotiation, objective setting and implementation stages, right up to the evaluation period. At all times the relationship is at the fore, and future prospects emerge from the strength of it.

The types of relationships an organisation develops with publics is the deciding factor whether to use asymmetric or symmetric cultivation strategies, which include access, positivity, openness or disclosure, assurances of legitimacy, networking, sharing of tasks, and dual concern (Toth, 2006:460). All of these elements are involved in sponsorship cultivation strategies especially when at the drawing up of the contracts phase of the relationship.

“Some dual concern strategies are asymmetrical because they emphasize the organization’s interest over the public or vice versa, and will not be effective in developing and maintaining the most positive relationships over the long term” (Toth, 2006: 460) and which include avoidance, compromise and accommodation. This may explain why some sponsorship partnerships end after year one with often no clearly defined exit strategies in place.

Conversely, Plowman (1995) identified three symmetrical strategies as cooperating, being unconditionally constructive and stipulating win-win or no deal (Toth, 2006:461). Being clear from the very beginning and stating expectations in the contract is hugely important when it comes to the sponsorship relationship.

It is important to note that relationship cultivation strategies, in the similar vein of co-orientation approach, focus on the long-term goals rather than short-term benefits. This is also true of sponsorships.

As a means of evaluating, measuring and managing relationship outcomes, J Grunig developed the Relationship Index which measures the quality of relationships across four key dimensions: trust, commitment, control mutuality, and satisfaction (Toth, 2006:264). It is based on the notion that by establishing long-term relationships, organisations can effectively achieve their goals.

It enables public relations practitioners to successfully integrate strategic communication tactics into the overall sponsorship strategies of an organisation. Well-maintained relationships will lead to successful and effective sponsorship and media partnerships for the organisation and it is the job of the public relations manager to ensure the smooth development of relationships as they progress through the campaign from the planning stages to evaluation.

2.6.3 Rhetorical theory

A rhetorical analysis of PR includes visual cues, semiotics, and symbols, which are used in the process of persuasion. As well as debate and discussion, rhetoric “involves speech and symbols which can be analysed to understand meanings – shared or otherwise. PR people use signs and symbols to persuade and reflect client values” (Theaker, 2008:14).

Rhetorical theory helps in the process of establishing identity, be it organisational, product or service. It also helps to establish slogans and key terms which “shape the way people view themselves as consumers, members of a community, contributors to the arts, and myriad other ways” (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:160).

2.6.3.1 Corporate identity and image

Establishing a corporate identity and corporate image hugely benefits a company when it looks at sponsorship as a communications strategy. For many organisations, a failure to

control communications results in a poor perception of the company so the public relations manager, and the brand or sponsorship manager, must project a clear and consistent corporate identity.

Corporate identity has a historical background when names, logos, and slogans became synonymous with kings and popes, and in essence it is the physical manifestation of the design aspects of a brand. A company logo is one of the most important elements of identity and it is how people identify the company. Colours, symbols, wording and design should be simple, distinctive and meaningful (Carty, 1992:21) and enable people to immediately recognise the brand.

Corporate identity also includes elements such as “behaviour, culture, values, mission, communication style and associations” (Theaker, 2008:104) and correctly managed, it “can inspire loyalty, attract the best recruits, affect decisions, aid recognition and attract customers” (Carty, 1992:20).

Corporate image, on the other hand is the superficial perception of how publics view the personality and reputation of the organisation and while it cannot be controlled, it can also be managed in such a way that it will help motivate stakeholders and secure benefits for the organisation including increasing brand awareness and attracting customers to the company.

Harrison (2000:74) suggested that an organisation’s image arises from four interconnecting elements: personality, reputation, values and identity and pointed out that “the closer the image is to the reality of the organisation, the more likely it is that the organisation will be seen as trustworthy and honest”.

By engaging in a sponsorship partnership a company can enhance its corporate image and make its name more familiar by intensive repetition in the form of advertising and brand positioning.

The task of the public relations practitioner is to agree with management on the personality the corporation wishes to develop, thereby increasing people's awareness of the organisation and presenting a clear impression of the corporation and its intentions by eradicating confusion and misunderstanding (Jefkins, 1994:321; Haywood, 1991:14). Haywood (1991:16) argues that "true public relations is more than just skin deep" and the concept of a corporate personality, developed to reflect the style of top management and the business climate of the times, is preferable.

2.7 Corporate Social Responsibility

Communications and public relations are of "key relevance to social responsibility" (Moss *et al*, 2010:157) and businesses cannot be changed without communication; "communication is the essence of its interrelation with the society" (*ibid*). Many organisations that decide to get involved in sponsorship need to look at their company's attitude to corporate social responsibility (CSR). It plays a huge role in drinks companies' decisions whether or not to take on a sponsorship.

British drinks company Diageo initiated a selection of measures intended to promote responsible drinking, rather than waiting until they were forced to do so. They introduced an employee alcohol code, a responsible marketing code and got involved in national self-regulatory bodies. It also launched branded ads delivering a responsible consumption message (Crane and Matten, 2007) by pre-empting its social responsibilities.

Engaging in CSR enhances corporate reputation, raises brand awareness, increases sales and customer loyalty (Tench and Yeomans, 2009:345). If a corporation is seen as socially responsible, customers are generally more satisfied, employees want to work there, value is added to the corporation's products and services, and making a positive contribution to society creates a better business environment (Crane and Matten, 2007).

Friedman (1970) argued that it may be in the long-term interests of a corporation who is an employer in the local community to devote resources to that community in order to attract

desirable employees. This could be done by undertaking a CSR-led sponsorship within the local community.

Deontological ethics tend to be applied in relation to CSR and Bowen described them as ethics that “requires that the respect and dignity of others be maintained in ethical decision-making” (Toth, 2008:281). In looking at sponsorships in the arts/culture and entertainment sectors, many of which involve drinks companies, a deontological code of ethics must be implemented and maintained.

2.7.1 Corporate philanthropy

As a cousin of sponsorship and event management, philanthropy gives businesses the opportunity to fund community relations as part of its wider approach to CSR and is used as a tool to help foster a favourable corporate identity.

Companies will always seek ways to differentiate themselves from their competition and therefore they will look for ways to improve the perception of their business, service, or products by engaging in philanthropic donations aligned with the communications agenda and corporate strategy.

An essential element of the public relations function is to distinguish philanthropy from sales promotion, advertising, sponsorships, and event marketing even though they all come from the same strategic family. “All are intended to better ‘position’ the company in the minds of its stakeholders” (Caywood, 1997:150) and while rarely contributions will sell products, the long-term benefits of “building goodwill and establishing positive relationships with targeted audiences cannot be denied” (*ibid*:156).

Organisations are aware that their success depends in part on the goodwill of the community and the perception of the organisation as being a contributing member of society (Smith, 2009:101) and they use philanthropy in an effort to develop mutually beneficial relationships and enhance their corporate reputation in the community.

So while sponsorship is a business transaction made with very specific return on investment objectives, corporate philanthropy donations are made in order to give the organisation a better standing in the community, generate intangible benefits and potentially higher profits.

As with sponsorship, corporate contributions can help establish a favourable reputation, position the company in a more positive light, motivate employees by boosting their morale and improve the quality of life in a community. They also help to build goodwill and help to establish and sustain relationships; internally with employees and externally with key influencers. It is also in the company's best interest to keep their employees happy by maintaining a viable labour pool for future generations and linking its giving to the interests of its employees.

Sponsorship is often undertaken in an effort to generate goodwill towards the company and it is the public relations practitioner who will have the greatest influence in this area. "The goodwill related to the brand as a result of investment, promotion and fair trading methods has a measurable value" (Haywood, 1991:13).

2.8 Media relations

Developing goodwill can be greatly aided by media relations. Good media relations are a vital element in implementing successful PR communications strategies and include the use of publicity, newsworthy information and transparent communication (Smith, 2009:106).

When implementing a strategic sponsorship pitch, the use of media – both traditional and new – is key. Communication of an organisation's messages to its publics is a vital part of PR and how those messages are communicated is also a crucial factor in achieving results. The audience will be clearly defined and so it stands to reason that specific channels of media will be carefully targeted and then analysed for frequency and prominence of a sponsor's name.

Media relations play a key role in many sponsorship campaigns, one of the main objectives of them being to generate as much editorial coverage as possible. Relationships with editors are a major element of media relations as they, the editors as key influencers, ultimately set the agenda.

Because journalists and editors play an important role as gatekeepers of the press, the PR practitioner needs to earn and keep their respect (Cutlip *et al*, 2009). A sponsoring organisation has no control over what will be published or not but by developing a rapport with journalists, a solid, mutually beneficial, interdependent relationship is established.

Developing media and sponsorship partnerships is an effective strategy employed in PR campaigns. It is an excellent way of getting in-depth coverage for the event by using a stakeholder management approach. It involves being able to anticipate and fulfil each of the stakeholders' needs without compromising others and a detailed knowledge of each medium's news values, print and broadcasting timetables (Moss *et al*, 2010). It enables communication planners to predict which media opportunities will appeal to each audience and pitch that specific event to them.

The ability to understand multiple media partnerships and their likely interest can also lead to maximum media coverage. Often events will have a title sponsor, smaller sponsors, patrons, funders and friends and it is the role of the PR manager to manage these relationships and devise a comprehensive communications strategy, the aim being to achieve maximum coverage for the event.

However, according to Jefkins (1994:397) media coverage is "not limited to the actual happening, but can extend before and after an event" so pre- and post- media coverage, as well as during the event, can make the difference between a successful long-term sponsorship partnership or a once-off ineffective failure.

Knowing your media is a crucial element of media relations strategies and can clearly be seen here. Ultimately effectiveness is only achieved if it conveys the right message via the right media to the right audience (Black, 1995).

2.8.1 Social media

Despite the long-standing role of editorial gatekeepers, communications have changed in recent years and the opportunity now exists to communicate directly with publics through social media. It plays a huge part in instigating sponsorship campaigns and building brand awareness. Facebook, Twitter, and websites are managed by the event, sponsor, or PR companies, and in some cases a combination of all three. Therefore the role of traditional media as gatekeepers or influencers is rapidly eroding.

Leading social media commentator and blogger Deirdre Breakenridge commented that social media “breaks the traditional mould and allows communications professionals to think, react and promote in a whole new way” (Solis and Breakenridge, 2010). PR professionals need to get involved and stay involved in conversations on the web in order to increase their profile and therefore that of the sponsorship.

In an assessment of social media and its relevance in PR communications, the Journalist Survey on Media Relations Practices conducted by Bulldog Reporter and TEK group International (2007) sought to establish benchmarks for journalists who use the internet to research and report on the news (Smith 2009:236).

Nearly 79 per cent of journalists identified their ability to use the internet to conduct their research 24 hours a day, 66 per cent identified access to media contact info online, 46 per cent of them access electronic press kits online and 43 per cent identified the ability to search corporate news archives online. More than 85 per cent of journalists visit a corporate website at least once a month; more than half do so at least weekly.

And so when undertaking a sponsorship campaign, it is clear that good media relations and intelligent use of social media are essential to success.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter concerns the research methods that were employed to allow for a detailed analysis of research questions. It focuses on the methods of research used for gathering data and it sets out a justifiable rationale for choosing those particular research methods over others. Primary and secondary sources of data are included as are operational details and methods of data collection.

For a study of this nature the research methods must be based on the research objectives. They are, as stated, to establish the role the PR manager plays in facilitating sponsorships within the arts/culture sector, to examine the relational approach to PR as outlined in the literature review and to explore the reasons why organisations choose to engage in sponsorship within the arts/cultural and entertainment sectors.

3.1 Qualitative and quantitative research

There are two key approaches to research: qualitative and quantitative research. In an effort to clarify why one research approach would be chosen over the other, Daymon and Holloway (2011) described the differing attributes of both.

The main focus of qualitative research is meaning and its approach is process-oriented, context-bound and broadly focused. Qualitative research aims to explore, understand and describe experiences by gathering participants and informants in a way that is purposive, flexible and theoretical.

Data collection methods include, among others, in-depth non-standardised interviews and participants' observations, with the outcome of the research being a story or a theory.

Relationships develop during the course of the research and therefore there is a trustworthiness and authenticity to it.

In contrast, quantitative research's main focus is measurement and its approach is controlled, narrow-focused, outcome-orientated and context-free, often conducted in a laboratory.

Its data collection methods include questionnaires, tightly-structured observation, and experiments, the outcomes of which have measurable and testable results. There is limited scope for development of relationships because there is limited interaction between researcher and participant.

Qualitative research differs from quantitative in that it is more theoretical and stems from psychology, philosophy and sociology. It is participants' perceptions, interpretations and own views of the world that are taken into account rather than statistical, calculated data.

Put simply, qualitative research explores emotions, experiences and the personal perspectives of participants, while quantitative research examines facts and numerical trends (Daymon and Holloway, 2011:105).

Because this study aims to examine arts sponsorship in the public relations domain, and looks at communications from a relational perspective, a qualitative approach was used. Public relations are shaped by the cultures in which they operate and so a contextualised, qualitative research approach offered a "powerful means to better understand communication relationships and the social world" (*ibid*:4).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2002:ix) "properly understood, qualitative enquiry becomes a civic, participatory, collaborative project... that joins the researcher with the researched in an on-going moral dialogue".

The nature and usefulness of adapting a qualitative research approach to the question of sponsorship of the arts in public relations allowed for interpretive thinking and examination

of managed communication. Qualitative methods were used to deduce what it means for public relations practitioners to be involved in arts sponsorship partnerships.

“Researchers... employ qualitative methods to examine communication as experienced by people not as something linear and logical but as typically open, complex and human” (Daymon and Holloway, 2011:6). It is this human element that strengthens the case for qualitative research and allows for the conflicting behaviours, emotions, and relationships of participants to emerge (Mack *et al*, 2005) throughout the course of the research process.

Criticisms of qualitative research put forward by Daymon and Holloway (2011) and Bryman and Bell (2003) include that it is too impressionistic and subjective. Often, they claim, qualitative findings rely too much on the researcher’s “unsystematic views about what is significant and important” and “on the close personal relationships that the research frequently strikes up with the people being studied” (Bryman and Bell, 2003:300).

However, the authors suggest that by paying attention to the criteria of authenticity and trustworthiness (or reliability and validity) of participants and researcher, the issue of being too subjective becomes extraneous.

Another criticism of qualitative research suggested that there is frequently a lack of transparency in establishing how the research was conducted, how participants were chosen and how the researcher arrived at the study’s conclusions. This contrasts with processes involved in quantitative research which include laborious accounts of sampling processes and typically detailed numerical formulations.

In defence of qualitative research, it is evident that the very nature of it is the opposite of linear, it is open to human interpretation and collaborative communication. Rather than seeking to generalise data, it allows a unique interpretation of events to be formed.

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011:14):

The primary goal of qualitative enquiry is to reveal and interpret what it means to be involved in or affected by public relations and marketing communications; this includes how stakeholders and practitioners make sense of activities, relationships and their worlds, and the subsequent implications for individuals, communities, organizations, professions and ultimately society.

Because this study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge of arts sponsorship in public relations, qualitative research was identified as the most appropriate research strategy to be used

3.2 Methods of data collection

According to Grix (2010) methods of data collection should be chosen for their appropriateness in answering the research questions posed at the outset. Not to confuse research methods with methodologies, Daymon and Holloway (2011:100) offer a PR-appropriate distinction:

Methods are the procedures and tools for doing the research, methodology refers to the principles, concepts and theories that underpin these methods... one way to distinguish them is to think about 'methods' as PR tactics and 'methodologies' as PR campaigns which include a range of tactics (methods) in order to achieve PR (research) goals.

Denscombe (2003) identified four main tools for the collection of empirical data as questionnaires, interviews, observation and documents. Using these tools allows facts to be ascertained and theories on the chosen subject to be established.

3.2.1 Interviews

Interviews give a depth of information that is not generally found in questionnaires or surveys because the interviewer can elaborate on answers given where appropriate. And even though the interviewer may have some things in common with respondents (age, sex, background), this should not be allowed to influence their relationship. Interviewers should not express opinions or engage in behaviour that might influence respondents' answers.

It is important for interviewers to be aware of the different kinds of questions (open, closed and leading), to know what order to ask them in and to be aware of the problems associated with the dual tactics of probing and prompting (Bryman and Bell, 2003:126).

The use of appropriate language and professional behaviour is an element of interviewing that is often overlooked but cannot be underestimated. Kane and O'Reilly-De Brún (2001:205) suggest that "sense, style, empathy, on-the-spot thinking, and responsiveness" are important attributes that will aid the interviewer in the collection of data.

It is also important to observe non-verbal signs of communication such as gestures, body language, hesitations, pauses and intonation (Kane and O'Reilly-De Brún, 2001).

Ethically, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure all participants are fully aware of the interview process, and the objectives and motivations behind it. Interviewees should have given an informed consent to voluntarily take part in the project and should be aware of what sort of research is taking place and why.

The question of anonymity must also be considered because some information given by participants, particularly in the workplace, could be sensitive, personal and potentially threatening to the participants' security of employment. Boundaries and safeguards must be set at the start of the process to ensure a comfortable level of privacy for all involved.

This is also true in terms of recording the interview. Participants must give their consent to be recorded and if something is said off the record, it should stay off the record. Once a level of trust has been established the interview can proceed.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Four broad types of interview can be used – structured, semi-structured, unstructured and group. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the primary research of this study because they have a clear, pre-determined focus. However there is some flexibility in how the questions are put and they allow for open-ended discussions of the answers (Kane and O'Reilly-De Brún, 2001). In this sense, they allow for the pursuit of unexpected lines of enquiry during the interview (Grix, 2010).

Semi-structured interviews allowed for the subject to be explored in depth while giving the interviewer some latitude to ask further questions “in response to what are seen as significant replies” (Bryman and Bell, 2003:119). Large amounts of data can be collected and feedback is instantaneous.

In selecting potential participants, a purposively strategic sample of representatives from the areas of public relations, arts events and sponsorships was chosen. This method of source triangulation gave a more holistic perspective by selecting participants from a diverse sample of backgrounds with varying opinions on the research topic. According to Denscombe (2003:138), the use of “triangulation focuses on the validation of the findings in terms of their accuracy and authenticity” and therefore participants’ responses often complemented and enhanced the data.

Secondary sources of data, such as academic books, journals, reports and articles were also used in order to complement the primary data.

3.3 Data gathering and analysis

Because the area of arts sponsorship in public relations is quite broad, potential interviewees were broken up into three sections: public relations practitioners, sponsoring organisations, and representatives from the world of arts, culture, and entertainment.

All were initially contacted by phone or email to arrange an appointment (see Appendix A) and depending on availability and suitability, a core sample of people was then selected to participate.

Through effective time management, the average length of each interview was 40 minutes with care being taken to stay in control of the interview by attempting to keep participants focused on the question asked. While the themes and core tenets of the research remained the same for all, questions were adapted in terms of interviewee suitability.

As sponsorship is employed as a public relations tool that allows companies to achieve organisational goals, PR practitioners were approached so they could provide an overview of their role in implementing sponsorship partnerships for their clients. They would be able to speak as facilitators for rights holders and potential sponsoring organisations, thus providing a theoretical umbrella under which to conduct other interviews.

The public relations professionals interviewed for the study were:

Tina Quinn of Cork-based firm H&A Marketing and PR

Deirdre Waldron of Fuzion Communications, Cork

In order to gain an insight into the process from a sponsoring organisation's perspective, three corporate managers were interviewed. They were:

Rory Sheridan, sponsorship marketing manager at Diageo

Julie Allman, brand manager at Carlsberg, formerly at Vodafone

Enda Lynch, sponsorship manager at O2

Because the study focuses on sponsorship within the arts, representatives from festivals and events around the country were interviewed. This strategic approach ensured a wide geographical spread of participants and therefore of data. Interviewees included:

Nollaig Healy, general manager of the Clonmel Junction Festival

Deirdre Finn, development and marketing manager of Cork Midsummer Festival

Tom Lawlor, marketing manager of Absolut Fringe Festival, Dublin

Olivia O'Reilly, project manager of the Tall Ships Races 2011, Waterford

Michelle Carew, former manager and director of Kinsale Arts Week

A final interview was held with the Chief Executive of Business to Arts, Stuart McLoughlin. Business to Arts is an organisation concerned with the development of creative partnerships between the arts and business communities and so the interview was conducted with a view to establishing the links that exist between organisations and the arts.

3.4 Limitations to Research Methods

Time constraints proved to be something of a restriction when using interviews as a research method. In logistical terms, interviews were held in Cork, Cashel, Dublin and Waterford so the physical act of travelling around the country proved time consuming, as did the initial setting up of the interview and preparation as well as the transcription of post-interview recordings.

Another limitation to the process included the omission of information by participants, either for confidentiality reasons or simply a case of them presenting a biased view. "A common discrepancy is between what people say about themselves and what they actually do" (Gillham, 2000:13).

There was a clear discrepancy between representatives from small-scale arts events and those from multinational corporations. Similarly marketing professionals interviewed took a different approach to PR practitioners, each representing their view of the situation.

3.5 Conclusion

This proves that a qualitative approach to primary data collection was the correct route to take during the research methodology. It allowed for the conflicting opinions of participants to emerge and to be interpreted, analysed and presented for discussion. It also allowed for spontaneous and surprising conversations to develop thus lending a thorough insight into the psyche of the interviewees and therefore into the realms of public relations and arts sponsorship.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4. Introduction

The themes of this chapter are to examine the relational approach to PR as outlined in the literature review and explore the reasons why organisations choose to engage in sponsorship within the arts/cultural and entertainment sectors.

This chapter also aims to establish the role the PR manager plays in facilitating sponsorships within the arts/culture sector and how media relations and CSR can contribute to effective sponsorships.

Based on a series of interviews with professionals from the PR industry, local and national arts events representatives, and corporate sponsorship managers, this chapter presents primary data findings, critical analyses and discussion of said findings.

4.1 Relationships

As Kitchen (1997), Cutlip *et al* (2009) and Gronroos (1999) observed, PR is about the establishment and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders. Looking at the processes involved in developing relationships with sponsors, findings show that participants agreed with academic sources.

Stuart McLoughlin (interview with Stuart McLoughlin, August 9, 2011), CE of Business to Arts, took a public relations view: "Relationships are important in everything, personal or professional. They're founded on some basic criteria around mutual respect and understanding and acknowledging each others' roles."

In the arts sector, the level of the quality of relationship building varies massively, according to Stuart McLoughlin (McLoughlin interview), and taking the time to build up

lasting relationships will prove beneficial to each organisation involved, he said, echoing the sentiments of Hon and Grunig (1999), Ki and Shin (2005) and Huang (2001). He maintained that Business to Arts' relationship with Bank of America took nearly two years to develop:

Two years of engagement, of sharing. We were always upfront, honest, clear and we always knew exactly where we were. You have to be patient. If you want somebody to invest in you in any way, financially or emotionally, there has to be a level of trust.

These sentiments were also mirrored across the spectrum of interviewees from the corporate brand managers to the smaller event organisers as well as the PR agencies who guide the whole sponsorship process.

Rory Sheridan (interview with Rory Sheridan, August 9, 2011) of Diageo stressed the importance of approaching the sponsorship opportunity with good intentions. "If that happens then relationships happen naturally. It's all about communication, good intent, keeping the lines of communication open. Doing what you say and saying what you do," he said.

"Tell people and remind people what you're doing. Keep expectations high, because if you do that, then people will deliver on their promise, they'll be held to account and then a relationship will be built on trust," he emphasised.

4.1.1 Developing and sustaining relationships

When participants were asked how difficult it is to develop and sustain relationships with either rights holders or sponsoring organisations depending on which side they were coming from, responses varied from "quite difficult" and "very difficult" to "the easiest thing in the world".

From an events perspective, it can be quite difficult to bring sponsorship deals over the line and past rounds of negotiations, according to Tom Lawlor (interview with Tom Lawlor, August 8, 2011), marketing manger of the Absolut Fringe Festival. This, he believes, is because budgets have been more uncertain in the last few years.

“The importance of knowing your product and what you’re selling is huge when developing relationships,” said Olivia O’Reilly (interview with Olivia O’Reilly, August 10, 2011), project manager of the Tall Ships Races in Waterford. This is where the PR function is utilised to maximum benefit. “Having the likes of the website and a PR company and a creative agency up and running from an early stage is really, really important,” she reiterated.

Deirdre Waldron (interview with Deirdre Waldron, August 5, 2011) of Fuzion Communications believes the relationship with the sponsor is vital, especially when trying to establish a long-term partnership:

Our experience was we wouldn’t over-promise so we would have a package and step-by-step tell them what was happening. More often than not we would over-deliver so even before the event they felt it was value for money. That way we knew we had the sponsor hooked even for the next time around because you’re really selling on the next year’s event before this year’s even happened.

“If you’re good at your job and if you’re good at relationship-building it’s the easiest thing in the world. It’s the same as any business relationship,” said Enda Lynch (interview with Enda Lynch, August 17, 2011), sponsorship manager at O2, echoing the thoughts of Rory Sheridan (Sheridan interview) who said, “It’s easy when you know what to do and it’s easy when you’ve got money”.

4.2 How do sponsorship relationships happen?

Findings here describe the stages of a sponsorship from initial engagement to contract negotiation, objective setting, activation, and evaluation and show the importance of planning in PR.

As Gregory (2008) and Jefkins (1994) observed, strategic planning is an essential element of any PR campaign and so participants involved in all areas of sponsorship – including marketing, branding, and PR – were asked what communication strategies and tactics they

use when initially seeking a sponsorship opportunity and how they would implement a strategic plan.

When seeking a sponsorship opportunity all interviewees agreed with leading theorists stating that companies need to define their objectives, define their target market/audience, set budgets, study the potential strategic development of the sponsorship, implement the sponsorship, and evaluate its successes and failures.

Many participants agreed that drawing out the emotional connection of the consumer to the sponsorship (Smith, 2009) is an effective proactive strategy. “That’s what’s at the heart of any sponsorship strategies that anybody is undertaking,” said Carlsberg brand manager Julie Allman (interview with Julie Allman, August 16, 2011).

However, from an organisational perspective, Tina Quinn (interview with Tina Quinn, August 5, 2011) of H&A Marketing and PR, said that often “companies get sucked in [to sponsorship] for emotional reasons” and she would advise any organisation getting involved in sponsorship, to be very sure from the outset that it’s being run professionally and that it is a solid business arrangement.

“Be very clear in terms of the agreement and make sure there’s a written agreement that we’re involved in this for one year, two years, whatever the timescale is. We will commit X amount of money and no more,” she said, reinforcing the importance of planning from the beginning of the partnership that Haywood (1991) highlighted.

Findings indicated that many sponsorships occur because of historical precedent and past success.

Events or activities will often need to have a previous track history for companies to be able to assess whether they want to take part in sponsorship or not. Deirdre Waldron (Waldron interview) explained:

When you’re selling the first year it’s very hard to do that because you don’t have any proven track record. The first thing we would look at is how successful was the

event before. Our clients will want to know the column inches, how much press are they going to get out of it, how many people are going to attend the event.

She said this is particularly important in attracting potential sponsors. “The thing that really wins sponsors over is seeing the tangible result of press clippings... That is so important for selling on to a sponsor for a second year.”

Tom Lawlor (Lawlor interview) agreed that previous media coverage of the event should be used to leverage a sponsorship opportunity:

We contacted Absolut, introduced ourselves and created a pitch. The festival director and one of our board members pitched to Absolut the idea of coming on board as a title sponsor and we would have used our previous media and PR coverage as a way of proving our clout.

Olivia O'Reilly (O'Reilly interview) explained how they were able to base their 2011 sponsorship packages on the ones they offered in 2005 at the last event but they had to give them added value and more exposure.

When they secured RTE as a major sponsor of the event, they were able to entice other higher-level sponsors like Bulmers and 3. This in turn proved successful in helping to secure the lower-level sponsors from the local businesses community.

In the same vein, Deirdre Finn (interview with Deirdre Finn, August 10, 2011), marketing manager at Cork Midsummer Festival, said when seeking a sponsor, they build on relationships they already have through ongoing, year-round communication. “We built up a relationship with them [Heineken] over the years and they saw how the festival grew.” Similarly, Nollaig Healy (interview with Nollaig Healy, August 2, 2011) of the Clonmel Junction Festival said when she came on board some years ago, the relationships with sponsors were already well-established.

4.2.1 Strategic and organic processes of relationship building

According to Tina Quinn (Quinn interview) there are three areas in terms of sponsorship strategies – corporate sponsorship which is always relationship-focused, marketing-based

sponsorship which is more about big budgets, huge events and big sponsorships and community or philanthropic sponsorships which are concerned with goodwill and reputation.

When developing relationships, face-to-face contact and a personal approach to potentially suitable partnerships is hugely important for both the rights holders and the sponsors, regardless of scale. Participants agreed that the process can happen strategically or organically and is sometimes a mixture of both.

Taking a strategic approach from a sponsor's perspective would mean looking at how you're going to approach this rights holder, what is the best way to do it, who is the best person to deal with, what is the best way to deal with them and how to engage them. It's not an exact science but as Rory Sheridan (Sheridan interview) explained, "If you are a company and you haven't had experience in sponsorship you would have to go with a strategic approach because you don't have a relationship or precedence to base any future relationships on."

Julie Allman (Allman interview) suggested that if it's a bigger brand there definitely has to be a strategy in place. "When you're an established brand you nearly can't afford to fail so you nearly go with a secure, reliable event because there's too much at risk as a brand if you're in a market-leading position."

An organic relationship might occur in a situation like the Guinness Cork Jazz Festival where the brand has been involved with the event for a long period of time, so it's organic but based on good relationship cultivation strategies and good precedent. As Tina Quinn (Quinn interview) pointed out, "It has to grow organically as well because there's no point in coming in and making a diktat. There has to be buy in for it to work."

Similar to Toth's (2006) view of relationship-cultivation strategies, Nollaig Healy (Healy interview) said strategy should be about growing and managing relationships by communicating with all relevant stakeholders.

4.2.2 The right fit

A major theme that ran through all of the interviews was the importance of finding the right fit. As Gunning (2003) observed, a sponsorship has to fit with the organisation's overall goals and initially should be viewed from an organisation's perspective. According to Tina Quinn (Quinn interview), "you should always be able to trace back your sponsorship to organisational goals and if the sponsorship doesn't match them it's not the right fit."

Olivia O'Reilly (O'Reilly interview) cites Flahavan's sponsorship of the Parade of Sail breakfast (see Appendix F3) as an example of a good fit while Absolut's sponsorship of the Fringe Festival matched exactly the festival's core demographic: 22 to 35 age group, young, urban and creative.

Conversely, Rory Sheridan (Sheridan interview) believes that if the fit isn't right between the brand and the event there will be difficulties from day one.

Only get involved in something if you feel it's the right thing to do. If you have the company/brands you're representing totally aligned with you. You're then doing things properly on behalf of the company, to get things approved, signed off, contracts in place, fees approved, cheques raised. It's more straightforward and that's hugely important; and if you get them sorted then your conversation with the other party, which is the connection between the two parties as a relationship, can be done.

Similarly, when events are pitching for sponsorships, the real work is in terms of deciding on the right fit and being clear about those fits. "Don't waste your time on going to organisations that clearly have no reason or benefit from sponsoring you," said one participant.

4.2.3 Contracts

Every interviewee stressed the importance of contractual clarity, as did Haywood (1991) and Gunning (2003). "It's not just about a gut feeling, there need to be very specific reasons why you choose an event or a specific project that you want to sponsor," said Tina Quinn (Quinn interview). "There needs to be a clear business objective when looking at sponsorship," she said.

Participants described the importance of drawing up contracts from the very beginning of the sponsorship process as “vital”, “essential” and “paramount”. From a simply professional point of view, expectations need to be negotiated and agreed on by all sides from day one of the relationship to ensure that the contract covers all eventualities.

“It is really important at the outset that the battle lines are drawn. That there’s understanding on both sides. You have to have that clarity because if you don’t... it just creates tension and nobody benefits,” explained Tina Quinn (Quinn interview). Enda Lynch (Lynch interview) shared this view and elaborated on it:

When you design what you want the contract to look like, then it just becomes about basic business training. Can you sustain and build a relationship? Yes or no. Can you build the conversations and the negotiations in such a way that you get the rights that you wish to acquire to enable you to do the activation that you want to do? Yes or no. If the answer is yes, great. I have the relationship. I have the rights in the contract that I need, now let’s just go ahead and do the stuff.

“It’s logical and a practical approach,” said Rory Sheridan (Sheridan interview). He is of the view that if you have all those elements in place you can progress to having a very strong relationship. “You also have to work on the assumption that the person that you’re dealing with has the exact same position as you. They need to have all their ducks in a row,” he explained.

“If both parties come to the table, in good faith, look each other in the eye, and have good intentions from the offset,” he said, “contracts will be put in place and relationships will develop from there.”

4.3 Where does the promotional responsibility for sponsorships lie?

When it comes to responsibility for promotion of an event, joined-up thinking on PR, marketing and brand activation all featured in research findings (Heath and Coombs, 2006). Also the importance of having everything in writing in advance regularly surfaced as a basic prerequisite for establishing promotional responsibility.

Many participants believe that both the event organisers and the sponsoring organisation are equally responsible for promotion and marketing activation. If either has a PR team working on the sponsorship, the promotional responsibility will fall on them.

Using an example of, initially, a less strategically managed event, Tina Quinn referred to Ford Cork Week, which was run by a volunteer committee that had no professional marketers or communications experts.

Ford approached H&A because they knew if they were putting their reputation and money behind the event, they wanted to make sure they were getting PR value out of it for their funding.

The promotional responsibility then fell on H&A, as professional communicators, to make sure Ford were getting brand visibility and awareness, wide audience reach and substantial media coverage. The PR activation also gave the volunteer committee kudos and a professional feel where people saw the profile of the event rise and therefore attract other sponsors.

"It's our job to make sure that we leverage the sponsorship from a PR point of view on behalf of Ford, but also on behalf of Cork Week. So it's a partnership and it needs to be to work properly," she said.

Analysis of findings show that very often the promotional responsibility for an event will come down to the scale of the event that is being sponsored, the type of organisation that is sponsoring it and the intent behind the sponsorship (Jefkins, 1994).

For a smaller festival that would have a number of sponsors, the promotional responsibility would be the organisers' remit. "They [the sponsors] basically just give us the money," said Nollaig Healy (Healy interview). "... There'd be a joint initiative but predominantly it would fall on the festival's shoulders to do the PR," she said.

In high-profile events where brands become integrated, findings indicate it is likely there will be a shared promotional responsibility. One Cork-based former festival director argued the point:

If the sponsor is benefiting because it's a brand match, they want their name to be attached then there's every reason for them to integrate your event with their marketing. It makes a lot of sense because it gives a clear message being pumped out from both ends and this is where you're situating yourself or your organisation.

However, a sponsor's view of it is slightly different and, unsurprisingly, leans more in favour of sponsoring organisations. "Some festivals just do the basic level of activation around sponsorship," according to Rory Sheridan (Sheridan interview). He explained:

They want to have their proverbial cake and eat it by getting or expecting of the sponsor to do nearly all of the promotion or activation of their event. This is good in one way from a sponsor's perspective because it gives them a huge amount of scope to communicate their message wrapped into the asset.

Deirdre Waldron (Waldron interview) takes a similar – but more PR-slanted – view and argues the promotional responsibility should be with the organisers. However, she said, the sponsors will have a PR company on board and "it's very important for the organisers to manage that relationship with the PR company and enhance what they are doing".

Therefore, in a competitive marketplace such as the mobile phones/telecommunications area or drinks companies, there needs to be a strong integrated marketing and public relations campaign for the sponsorship to be seen as worthwhile.

The analysis of findings indicate that there is a crossover in terms of marketing and PR concerning promotional responsibility. The need for explicit contractual clarification of such responsibility was reiterated by all participants as it was by theorists in Chapter Two.

4.4 How important are good media relations when building and cultivating relationships?

An analysis of primary data showed that good media relations play a huge part in helping companies and events to promote its sponsorship partnerships. Participants described

having a media partner as a vital part of the awareness process, as did PR theorists Harrison (2000) and Jefkins (1994).

Findings indicate that the PRO's role here is essential in terms of delivering the message to key media in print, radio, and online, and in not alienating journalists by giving mixed messages. This happens if the public relations practitioner does not set down in the contract whose responsibility it is to deal with the media.

Deirdre Waldron (Waldron interview) explained that in her experience, organisations involved in sponsorship are best served by running everything past her first.

"They weren't allowed do anything unless I okayed it. It was just a control thing... if you agree things in advance there isn't an issue," she observed.

Tom Lawlor (Lawlor interview) explained that in terms of media mentions and named sponsorships, they have no control over subeditors and he pointed out that there can be difficulties trying to reinforce the name in everything that lands in the media. He said newspapers are sometimes hesitant to use the official title when there's a sponsor associated with an event because some subeditors would "just see that as a free ad".

Another participant agreed and said that while you, as the publicist, can litter the press release with the sponsor's name it doesn't necessarily mean that the paper will pick it up. The participant, Michelle Carew (interview with Michelle Carew, August 9, 2011), explained:

It's always a struggle trying to make sure the sponsor is getting place in PR and it's slightly more of a subtle art because you're dealing with the editorial side of things. The media are just running a story because it's of interest for a very specific reason, they're not interested in plugging your sponsor, that's what advertising is for.

Interestingly, Carty (1992:97) noted that "sponsors who are also big advertisers have more of a chance of their name being used" and findings showed this to be true, with Heineken and Bulmers just two examples of heavy spend advertisers with RTE, and whose company names never struggle to be mentioned in RTE broadcast media.

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4.4.1 Media partnerships

Participants were asked how important they believe it is to have a media partner on board with the sponsorship. From an arts events perspective, all interviewees agreed that it was “hugely important” to have a media partner. One even stated it was “vital”.

Reasons for this given included the fact that a media partner allowed events more significant coverage and placement within the media than they would have been able to do on an advertising budget alone. “It’s vital in terms of getting a bigger reach for your campaign,” said one participant.

“All of the major newspapers have a remit to cover cultural events and I think it’s within their remit to cover these events, that’s why they’re a media partner,” said another Dublin-based interviewee.

The other benefits of having a media sponsor include getting capacity in terms of audience development and reach and matched funding for pre-awareness, post-awareness and awareness of the event itself in terms of free advertising, competitions, exposure, printing and distribution of promotional material (Jefkins, 1994; Smith, 2009).

Deirdre Waldron (Waldron interview) believes there’s merit in both having a media partner and not having one. “If you get a media partner on board you may be cutting off your nose to spite your face. Because if you’ve one title on board maybe a competitor title would be less inclined to take the story,” she said.

“So unless it’s a really, really high profile media partner that’s going to guarantee you loads of coverage and free publicity, we would be hesitant in approaching media partners on sponsorship,” she cautioned.

However, a former director of Kinsale Arts Week (Carew interview) argued that smaller events can afford to have multiple media partners because, “the amount of national coverage we would be getting anyway would be very limited. If the media outlet has a very

good editorial standard or has integrity in their editorial that shouldn't be an issue," she said.

All research participants stressed the importance of building up good relationships with journalists as did Cutlip *et al* (2009). One Cork-based PR practitioner reiterated the point:

In PR you have to keep in with journalists. If you're looking for a career in PR it's so important, they're your bread and butter, you need to keep in with them and look after them any way you can. The worst thing you can do is criticise a journalist unless it's really blatantly slanderous, because even if it's kind of wrong, if you get in their bad books they'll never cover you again.

For the Tall Ships Races in Waterford this year, project manager Olivia O'Reilly (O'Reilly interview) said having RTE as a media partner on board from an early stage was critical to the success of the 2011 event in terms of exposure and in securing other sponsors.

She explained how RTE did a substantial amount of coverage prior to the event and in terms of evaluating the success of the sponsorship, RTE's media coverage played a huge role.

An independent report carried out by Kantar Media on behalf of the Tall Ships Races 2011, showed how much value media coverage was in terms of the coverage the event would have got if they had paid for it (see Appendix C).

The value of Irish media coverage generated for Waterford's hosting of the event came in at over €7.5 million with €5 million worth of print coverage and €2.5 million plus of broadcast. "Our marketing budget was just under €1million so it's huge when you put it into stats. If we were to buy it, it would have cost us that," said Olivia O'Reilly, backing up the analysis of findings with quantitative data.

4.4.2 Social media

With social media becoming an omnipresent feature of everyday life, findings show that all organisations have either a social media team driven by the PR department or in the smaller cases, one person, actively working on that side of the business. Analysis of findings

indicated that social media is employed as a means of using their sponsorship to get directly to people in a way that's engaging yet sharp, and to stay on top of – and part of – the conversation (Solis and Breakenridge, 2010). Using social media allows organisations to move away from passive awareness to active engagement (Smith, 2009).

Diageo, O2 and Vodafone are all leaders in the field of social media-based communication.

Enda Lynch (Lynch interview) of O2 extolled the positives of social media in sponsorships:

The great thing about social media is it adds character. It adds depth and definition of what you're talking about more than it just being a bland text on a phone that we'd send out. And it's a very immediate way to get in contact with us. In terms of pure sponsorship, all our sponsorships live in social media. We have a huge social media traction.

However, many research participants shared the view that it is still important to focus on traditional media like print and radio. A Dublin-based interviewee stated:

A media partnership will give you a reach and a talkability which social media can't guarantee you. You can't guarantee that your message will be retweeted by anyone. You might have 2,000 people read it and that's it. But you'll know that if you do a media station where there's 221,000 people listening to, like the Ray Foley Show at lunchtime, you know you're guaranteeing your audience.

From developing an interactive app (Absolut Fringe Festival) to live streaming of Westlife gigs (O2), it was clear from the findings that organisations and events are embracing social media as a strategic aspect of two-way communication. Data showed that the role the public relations practitioner plays for events and sponsors when dealing with the media is key.

4.5 Does a company's CSR agenda feature in the arts sponsorship decision-making process?

One line of questioning taken with the interviewees focused on the area of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the part it plays in organisations' decisions to engage in sponsorship.

Findings from the data show that all organisations take an active approach to CSR and a lot of sponsorship projects undertaken would have been done so with a view to protecting and enhancing their corporate reputation (Caywood, 1997).

Findings also show companies are strategically engaging in CSR as a means of being seen to do the right thing within the community, rather than, as one interviewee put it, “just flashing the cash and having a party on the ship” (O’Reilly interview). This view is shared by Smith (2009:101): “... organizations realize that their success depends in part on the goodwill of the community and their perception as being a contributing member of society.”

Typically CSR happens at the sponsorship planning stage and organisations will look at specific areas like education or sponsorship of events in the local community.

According to Tina Quinn (Quinn interview), employees will drive a lot of it because employees will very often be engaged themselves in charitable events or organisations. “You have employee involvement, employee engagement and that’s the route that most CSR programmes are taking now,” she said. Stuart McLoughlin (McLoughlin interview) agreed. “If you haven’t got employee engagement then it will never get embedded in the organisation,” he said, emulating the views of Crane and Matten (2007).

In terms of PR, Tina Quinn (Quinn interview) said the role of H&A would be to advise and counsel organisations to take a strategic approach to sponsorship by looking at what’s going on in the local community and then communicating with that community.

Findings show that from a PR perspective, in recessionary times organisations are reluctant to really shout about their CSR sponsorships, especially if there have been pay freezes or redundancies in the company. “They’ll still do things, they might be just more under the radar. Or they’ll pick and choose more carefully,” said one Cork-based interviewee. “It’s a balancing act and people see that community projects and community efforts still need funding... It’ll be just more carefully managed which is fair enough given the current climate.”

Eli Lilly's sponsorship of Kinsale Arts Week was done as part of their wider CSR programme, according to a former director of the festival:

We would have made the case to them that, because we were slightly more organised and run by professionals, we had the capacity to get them more reach with their monies. We could reach more elements of the community and they were hitting lots of different targets through us.

Stuart McLoughlin (McLoughlin interview) argues that there is a huge amount of rhetoric attached to CSR and is opposed to what he calls the culture of hut painting that has emerged, where there is no sustainable value or mutual benefit (see Appendix F1).

However, his views have shifted in terms of looking at corporations as citizens and recognising appropriate behaviour for them in society.

"Corporations have started to realise that they can actively play a role enriching society and they have a responsibility as a citizen to be part of that," he said. There is an opportunity there then for arts and culture to feature on an organisation's CSR agenda, which he believes, isn't happening in a massive way at the moment.

From a drinks company perspective, a lot of CSR has to do with building up of goodwill by promoting responsible drinking (Haywood, 1991; Tench and Yeomans, 2009). Findings show that until recently there was no strategic approach to it but many of the participants agreed that that is beginning to change. The promotion of responsible drinking and working with drinkaware.ie is "paramount" to Carlsberg's business, said Julie Allman (Allman interview). "If we fall down on that it's going to have massive implications. And therefore we have to be very careful about the type of sponsorship we get involved with."

From a "cold-hearted PR point of view" Deirdre Waldron (Waldron interview) said because she often deals with clients whose message is extremely commercial, the organisation or event is far more likely to get coverage if it's associated with an activity that's got some charitable element to it. "It's really good for corporates to be seen to be engaging with charities," she said, which lead the research to explore the reasons companies engage in arts sponsorships.

4.6 Why do organisations choose to sponsor in the arts and culture sector?

The overarching theme of the research undertaken was to gather data to show why organisations choose to sponsor in the arts/cultural sector.

A report by Business to Arts (see Appendix B) where respondents were asked to identify the reasons for their involvement in arts sponsorship found that 74 per cent of them did so to improve their company profile. Almost 50 per cent of participants gave brand development, CSR goals, to enhance public opinion and invest in local community as further reasons for engagement in arts sponsorships.

Research findings mirrored and expanded on the reasons outlined in the Business to Arts study. The level of exposure an event or an organisation gets when undertaking a sponsorship featured prominently among participants' responses. While the arts have the capacity for a wider reach and audience development, there is a scale issue that can be a determining factor in organisations deciding to engage in sponsorship. Former festival director Michelle Carew (Carew interview) explained:

If you're Ulster Bank Dublin Theatre Festival you can give your sponsor a lot of bang for their buck in terms of reach. You can give them data on socio-economic bounds that you're meeting, you've got your numbers, you've got large amounts of people and you've got much bigger advertising and marketing campaigns.

4.6.1 Sponsorship as a vehicle for sales

There are intangible benefits for a brand that wants to communicate a certain image and the arts play a role in aiding that, according to participants. Being a key arts supporter is a significant part of many organisations' brand identity and positioning including Absolut, Diageo and O2 but, as Tina Quinn (Quinn interview) pointed out, the tangible benefit of increasing profits is often the reason brands engage in sponsorship. "If you're selling a product your ultimate aim is to find more people to sell the product to. That's the reality," she said.

Stuart McLoughlin (McLoughlin interview) is of a similar view and cited the Absolut Fringe Festival as an example. "The reasons Absolut sponsor the Fringe is because there's a connection between the brand and culture, but they want to sell more vodka. It's that simple. The sponsorship of the festival gives them a vehicle to do that," he explained.

"It's about building awareness of the brand and ultimately driving sales. They're investing over a sustained period of time, multi-year investment, trying to drive some commercial benefit," he said.

For an alcohol brand, sponsoring within the arts increases awareness and visibility in a realm where, according to one marketing manager, it's tough to stand out. "Using the right platform like an arts event gives you a quieter spot to be able to advertise in a slightly more creative and engaging way," he said.

In this sense, said Tina Quinn (Quinn interview), it's quite simplistic:

It's about reaching as many people as you possibly can. It's about getting your name out there, your brand out there, which is what Vodafone, Meteor and O2 are all about. It's all about bums on seats. How can I explode my brand out there in the marketplace and make sure that I'm reaching the people I want to reach and that I'm basically sucking them in so that I can steal those from other providers?"

4.6.2 Organisation perception

Moving away from the profit-driven bottom line approach to sponsorship, another hypothesis that emerged during the course of the research is that sponsorship of the arts is about creating links with the local community, creating awareness of their brand and being seen to be a good corporate citizen by highlighting the organisation's positive image, identity and thus corporate personality.

In their analysis of rhetorical theory based on corporate identity and corporate image, Carty (1992), Theaker (2008), and Harrison (2000) examined organisation perception or the 'being-seen-to-do-good' mentality of companies as part of a holistic approach to the corporate personality.

For community-based festivals like Kinsale Arts Week or the Clonmel Junction Festival, local companies associating with them and engaging in sponsorship can see the benefits of how a festival feeds back into the local economy. They are enhancing their corporate reputation in the community and creating goodwill towards them, including that of employees.

“Clearly they’re not selling a product but they are positioning their brand in a community,” said Nollaig Healy. “Their business is not going to increase because they’re sponsoring the festival. They believe having a festival in Clonmel makes Clonmel a nicer place to live for the few weeks and a nicer place for their employees to live,” she explained, (see Appendix D).

“Seldom do [contributions] directly move a product off a shelf or out of a showroom. Yet their long-term benefits in building goodwill and establishing positive relationships with targeted audiences cannot be denied” stated Caywood (1997:156).

Tina Quinn (Quinn interview) of H&A Marketing and PR works across the corporate PR side of sponsorship where she advises clients on CSR sponsorship strategies. Many of the organisations she deals with are multinational pharmaceutical or medical devices clients who are manufacturing products, not selling.

“They’re not really in the business of shouting from the rooftops about their sponsorships,” she said, echoing the claims made by Caywood (1997:163) that when combining corporate philanthropy with event marketing, keeping a low profile works best. He also asserted that if a lot of advertising is done surrounding corporate donations, the purity of the event and the act of giving would be undone.

“What they’re interested in doing,” explained Tina Quinn (Quinn interview) “is more about cementing their role in the community so it very much speaks to the CSR side of things.”

She elaborated:

For them it’s about looking to their employees, looking to the local economy, what are they providing for the local economy? Typically it’s employment, the knock-on

benefits, obviously the financial link to suppliers etc. They're not selling so it's a very different mindset as well.

Companies feel that if their employees become involved in the local community it's actually more difficult to uproot and move.

This theme continued across all interviewees. For a larger event like the Tall Ships Races, Olivia O'Reilly (O'Reilly interview) said some of their bigger sponsors like PWC and Flahavan's didn't want to just be seen to give money but to actually engage with the community. PWC did this by sponsoring the Captain's dinner while Flahavan's did it with the Parade of Sail breakfast.

It's a business decision that can be public affairs driven, according to one participant (McLoughlin interview).

US inward investors need to be seen to be active in this market. They need to be seen to be engaged in Ireland, not just as an organisation that drops out of the sky, sets up an office and if the conditions change they'll leave.

4.6.3 Creative opportunities and emotional links

Deirdre Finn (Finn interview) believes, as did the majority of interviewees, that the arts can offer something different to companies looking to engage in sponsorship as long as it's the right fit for the brand.

It's more creative, more fun. Everyone would love to be able to sponsor sporting events because there's such a massive audience. But for the arts and the likes of the Spiegel tent it's really creative and it's a lovely fit for certain brands. It has to be the right fit.

To get the right fit, according to Julie Allman (Allman interview), "you need to ensure you've got the right insights on your consumer and that the sponsorship is going to fit [them]. The fit is absolutely key so that your criteria are established and the sponsorship will resonate with consumers," she said. This view was shared by many of the participants, as is the importance of the right fit with organisational goals (Austin and Pinkleton, 2001).

Many participants were of the view that the sponsorship of the arts and culture, when done correctly by the PR team, provide people with a very emotional experience.

Findings show that the arts is a good facilitator for brands whose identity is based around the idea of providing people with memorable and lasting experiences. This is particularly true of alcohol brands. One Dublin-based participant explained:

It provides a way for a brand to be seen as more creative. I'm not sure Cilit Bang give a care about sponsoring an arts event but certain alcohol brands who are moving into that sphere of own creativity would be ones that would benefit specifically from arts.

Often for arts and culture events, there is a shortage of funds so sponsorship benefits them hugely in terms of cash and in kind (Meenaghan, 1998). If they don't have sponsorship they won't be able to run or stage the event. Organisations that know the value of the properties they're in and recognise the value of the arts create long-term mutually beneficial sponsorship partnerships.

4.6.4 Issues for arts sponsorships

Analysis of findings shows that most arts organisations don't yet have a business development understanding of sponsorship, an issue Carty (1992) and Jefkins (1994) touched on. According to Stuart McLoughlin (McLoughlin interview), "If you look at the festivals, the only major festival in the country that has a full time development person is Dublin Theatre Festival."

In his experience, there's a very low level of awareness of the PR opportunities that exists in arts and culture. "It's on our list of things that need to be sorted." He said PR agencies that are strong in the area of sponsorship are actually strong on sports sponsorship. "People aren't as comfortable sponsoring in the arts. There's a whole process of education to go through," he explained.

Sponsorship managers in the large corporates (Diageo, Carlsberg and O2) who were interviewed all agreed that there tends to be one key sponsorship area that nearly all big

brands want to be involved with: sport. By sponsoring large-scale events like the GAA or IRFU, people begin to see what the brand represents and engage more fully with the brand.

“Everybody knows what the GAA does and everyone knows what the FAI and the IRFU and so on. And the IRFU especially do it phenomenally well and the GAA do it quite well, the GAA brand is very strong,” said Stuart McLoughlin (McLoughlin interview), who agreed that the same could be said of large-scale music events.

However, when you get down to the arts level, people don’t quite know how to do the sponsorship, explained the CE of Business to Arts:

It’s a two-way thing. What the arts sector needs to do is get better at communicating and thinking about how they can activate and how they can leverage sponsorships and in the PR community as well they need to have a slightly wider view on what the opportunities are and keep their eyes open to other things.

Tina Quinn (Quinn interview) believes there is a “sort of grá and a notional thing almost. Typically the arts and culture are always struggling for funds so very often it’s an emotional reason with culture and the arts” that companies choose to sponsor in this sector she maintains, as did Tench and Yeomans (2009).

In terms of funding for arts organisations, Tom Lawlor (Lawlor interview) agreed and pointed out that brands are starting to see arts sponsorship as a more viable investment than it would have been seen ten years ago, where it was seen as more philanthropic. “I think arts organisations have just learned that sponsorship actually requires a return on investment from a brand,” he said, then elaborated:

Arts organisations now are keen to work with the sponsors that they have, to ensure that the return on investment is met with a view towards keeping them on as a sponsor. But also being able to understand and recognise the fact that sponsorship deals involve compromise on both sides. That’s something that’s become a lot clearer as organisations have had to adapt in the absence of guaranteed funding.

To conclude, research findings and subsequent analysis showed that organisations have to get value for their investment from the arts. They have to see a return on their investment through sales. They also need increased media exposure to justify their sponsorship and to enhance their reputation in the community through association as supporters of the arts.

CHAPTER 5:
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Conclusions

Sponsorship, as a public relations tool, is about relationship management, contract law and media engagement. It is also about understanding the PR professional's impact and the nature of relationships between sponsors and arts organisations.

Sponsorship is now very much a strategic business arrangement with benefits for all involved.

Conclusion 1: Arts organisations need to realise that sponsorship is a tangible business transaction

Arts organisations need to become aware of the fact that sponsorship is not undertaken randomly; it is a strategic business proposition employed by organisations for tangible benefits as outlined in previous chapters. For this reason, the arts need to become more professional in their approach.

Many interviewees said how in previous years sponsorship of the arts would have been looked on as a "nice" thing to do, "aren't we great, we're sponsoring the arts", leading to the conclusion that arts organisations need to move away from that line of thinking and into the domain where sponsorship is approached as a professional business deal.

It was established that major sponsoring organisations are at that stage in part, due to their huge budgets and corporate mentality.

Conclusion 2: Arts sponsorships can be used by PR as a tool for differentiation

There is a case being made for the niche factor of arts/culture events and how big companies like Diageo or O2 can use their strong experiential marketing and PR experience

to leverage that. Sponsorship can also be used as a way for organisations to differentiate themselves by positioning their organisation with an event that is the right fit and harnessing the benefits associated with that partnership.

Because the large organisations are focusing more on targeted PR and marketing, there is definitely more scope for the arts sector to take advantage of that and become the vehicle for it. This has implications for the PR professional.

Conclusion 3: Public relations needs to work harder to bring arts sponsorships to fruition

Companies no longer can afford huge advertising budgets and cost containment is everywhere, regardless of the organisation. So they are engaging more with PR companies, they're seeing the value of PR, and the ability of PR to engage with their publics. In this sense, PR practitioners need to become more visible in the arts sector to act as professional communicators in first developing relationships with potential sponsors, finding the right fit and then implementing the sponsorship.

From the corporations' perspective, and also from the point of view of established, large-scale arts events, it can be concluded that they realise the value of the arts but also the value a public relations professional can bring to the sponsorship. They can get more 'bang for their buck' in terms of the right sponsorship partnership, developed by their PR firm.

Findings showed that smaller arts events and rights holders are beginning to realise the value a PR professional can bring to their event in terms of maximising media exposure, long-term relationship development and increased box office sales.

A public relations-run sponsorship partnership can bring huge kudos to an event by having the right brand associated with it and communicating that effectively to relevant stakeholders.

Conclusion 4: Arts sponsorships can be undertaken as part of an organisation's CSR strategy

CSR and public relations are about an organisation protecting and enhancing its reputation. CSR policies are increasingly becoming more important to companies, especially when looking at potential arts sponsorships.

If they are community based, opportunities exist for the organisation to enhance their reputation and increase goodwill as part of their organisational goals and objectives.

Conclusion 5: Successful sponsorship partnerships benefit all involved

It can be concluded that while it isn't the main reason for the success of an event, effective sponsorship partnerships, when activated and promoted intelligently especially in the arts sector, definitely help the process.

This is especially true when looking at smaller, less-established events where funds are low and a sponsor's contribution adds value not only in cash but also in kind. In terms of media spend, the more investment in it there is to promote the event, the more successful the event will be because of increased awareness.

In the arts and culture area where smaller events are struggling, events need to be clever with the type of brand they get on board and be sure that the brand believes enough in the event that they're willing to invest enough of a budget to fill the awareness.

If the sponsor takes over the activation of the event it takes a huge pressure off the rights holders in terms of PR, advertising and promotion, where the PR team will head the promotional responsibility. This leads the research to the conclusion that organisations don't affect the dynamics of the business of sponsorship, they inherit the benefits of being the sponsor.

5.1 The future of arts sponsorship

Throughout the course of the interviews many clichés were bandied about such as “building for future success”, “thinking outside the box”, and “going forward” but this doesn’t detract from the conclusion that the overall feeling for the future of arts sponsorship is pragmatic and upbeat.

The growth of sponsorship of the arts will continue, according to one interviewee. One reason he gave for this was that it has grown massively in the US; and Ireland is usually three to five years behind the States in terms of business acumen.

This finding was backed up by many of the participants, many of whom mentioned Business to Arts as facilitating sponsorship partnerships by looking at new ways of doing them based on US models.

The organisation is working with the government looking to put in place incentives that will bring more private support into the arts, including sponsorship. A working group for Arts and Culture Minister Jimmy Deenihan TD (2011:1) stated their mission:

To recommend to the Minister a relatively small number of swiftly implementable actions to realise the commitment in the Programme for Government, to develop new proposals aimed at building private support of the arts in Ireland to explore philanthropic, sponsorship and endowment fund opportunities.

As long as arts organisations continue the professionalisation of the sector by continuing to engage with PR companies, there are opportunities there for them to leverage sponsorship to their advantage.

New opportunities are emerging, stated Stuart McLoughlin:

So although it’s not easy and sponsorship never was easy to be honest – there’s a lot of opportunity out there. It’s just you have to focus on it and you just have to make it central to the agenda. Professionalisation is a big thing.

Some participants spoke about the rumours that alcohol sponsorship of sport will eventually be banned. This, research concludes, will present an excellent opportunity for the arts. Relationships are being developed on a macro scale between the arts and

sponsoring organisations and building on relationships now for the future will allow the arts sector to potentially get the big alcohol sponsors on board. It's a more natural fit, said many participants.

5.2 Engagement through awards incentives

Business to Arts run an annual awards ceremony which, in a stakeholder audit, proved to be an event that is important to both the business and the arts communities. The awards recognise examples of excellence in arts and business partnerships and include a best relationship management award, a best corporate social responsibility award and best large and small sponsorships.

The benefits for businesses of the awards are that they like to be acknowledged for what they've done and they like to be perceived by their peers as leading in terms of thinking or behaviour.

For the arts sector, the awards are an excellent way of engaging sponsors and it allows rights holders to celebrate effective partnerships and the relationship between the two sectors. The awards provide a platform for advocating for partnerships between the business and the arts community and at a local level, interaction between communities and local businesses.

5.3 Recommendations

Following on logically from the conclusions, a number of recommendations can be made. According to Tench and Yeomans (2009:424):

To further develop the discipline in a marketing environment, PR practitioners must think creatively from both a strategic and tactical perspective. Grabbing the attention of consumers is increasingly difficult and PR must evolve in a professional and ethical manner to ensure that it continues to enhance its reputation in a commercial context.

When looking at sponsorship of the arts, the public relations professional must always:

1. Find the right fit for an event and a sponsor.
2. Develop and sustain strong relationships.
3. Clarify objectives in the form of detailed contracts.
4. Offer something different.

5.3.1 Be innovative

Tench and Yeomans assert that “Creativity is king” and “the application of superior creativity” will help organisations gain “marketing advantage in the battle for hearts, minds and wallets” (2009:419).

It is recommended that the PR professional looks at new and innovative ways of leveraging sponsorship opportunities for arts events. There is a need to break away from the standard, traditional, safe strategies and tactics used in the acquisition and promotion of sponsorships for arts events and to develop more creative ways of differentiation.

Freud (www.freud.com) and Naked (www.nakedcomms.com) are two dynamic agencies that use different ideas and strategies and the PR professional in Ireland looking to break into the arts sector should look at these as a model of excellent and innovative communication.

5.3.2 Sponsorship packages

It is also recommended that when involved with arts events, the PR agency should be clever by designing different sponsorship tiers and packages. This will facilitate ease of decision-making for potential sponsors and, in the current economic climate, avoid any uncomfortable classification in terms of how much money companies are or are not spending.

It will also allow for the sponsor to integrate with the theme of the event, create links and build on relationships for future success.

Good use of sponsorship packages can be found in the Tall Ships Races 2011 marketing plan where they had the Admiral, Commodore, Captain packages, all offering different levels of investment for potential sponsors.

In the current economic climate, people do not like to be classed in accordance with the amount of money they spend, so by being creative with different sponsorship packages it would not be that obvious to people how much each sponsor was spending on the event.

Sponsorship packages can also be used to tie into the theme of the event, particularly arts events. It is recommended that the PR company working on the sponsorship come up with original and relevant terms of reference for the packages.

5.3.3 Use media

It is also recommended that PR agencies continue to use media to stay ahead of the game in terms of arts sponsorship promotion. Use social media and key editorial influencers to leverage media opportunities on behalf of the sponsorship partnership.

Continue to embrace social media and all the advantages it can offer an arts sponsorship in terms of live streaming and digital consumption of events as proven to be a successful strategy by Diageo and O2.

A new online service sponsormonster.co.uk was launched in the UK in August. According to its website, it brings “a rich source of sponsorship opportunities” to the marketplace by filtering searches based on audience demographics.

Potential sponsors can use the site to identify new sponsorship opportunities and listings include events, sports, arts, media, education, charity, conference, and public sectors. It is recommended that a PR agency set up a similar Irish-based social media tool to match sponsorship opportunities with potential sponsors.

5.3.4 Awards

PR professionals should also look at the Business to Arts awards model and implement something similar that will engage arts organisations, public relations firms and potential sponsors.

This year Business to Arts chose Roddy Guiney of Wilson Hartnell to judge the awards in order to get an outsider's perspective and to help make people aware that there is deep engagement and many opportunities in sponsorship of the arts. It is recommended to speak to him regarding this and elaborate from there.

5.4 Further research

Future research on the topic would include looking at how sponsorship of arts events has evolved over a specified timeframe. The option to compare and contrast current PR practices with older ones would add an interesting time-specific angle to the research.

Because the arts, culture and entertainment area is quite broad, a possible future study could examine the PR sponsorship activation of a single, annual event and the impact the PR function had overall.

A Business to Arts study (2011:10) reported that 61 per cent of arts organisations surveyed said they would reject sponsorship from tobacco companies while only 34 per cent said they would reject alcoholic drink companies. This could warrant a further study of arts organisations that have actually rejected sponsorships because of moral or ethical implications of forming partnerships with tobacco or alcohol brands. Interestingly in another survey carried out by Business to Arts (see Appendix E) where consumers were asked to identify which companies were the best sponsors of the arts in Ireland, alcohol brands were named as four of the top five with two more (Bulmers and Jameson) in the top ten.

As a further area of exploration, a quantitative study concerning the economic impact PR-led cultural events have on local communities could be carried out.

5.5 Overall conclusion

It can be deduced from the research that in times of recession people turn to the arts. The PR practitioner must continue to engage with arts and cultural organisations to leverage the sponsorship opportunities within the arts, and prove to sponsors that they will get value for their money, a return on investment and enhanced reputation.

The importance of building relationships and creating opportunities for the future should not be overlooked by PR professionals. The arts sector is still relatively underdeveloped in terms of sponsorship, especially compared to sports. It is recommended that a PR firm uses its extensive communications knowledge to become dynamic and influential leaders in arts sponsorship.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Sample email

Hi _____


My name is Brenda Carney, I'm a student in CIT and I'm writing a thesis on the place of sponsorship within the practice of public relations, focusing on arts and entertainment events.

As part of the thesis we have been asked to interview someone within the relevant field and I thought of you. I would be grateful if you would agree to do an interview with me.

The general gist of it would be looking at arts events from a sponsorship and public relations perspective. Questions would include with whom does the promotional responsibility fall, why do companies choose to sponsor cultural events, how do they engage with the event and what kind of PR tactics/tools are used for sponsorship to be effective.

I appreciate summer isn't the best time to catch people but if you could spare some time for an interview next week I would really appreciate it. I am based in Cork city so can meet you when and wherever would suit.

Look forward to hearing from you,

Kind regards,
Brenda Carney


End of Thesis