
An Assessment of the Relationship between Sponsorship and Consumer Patronage of GSM Service Providers in Kano Metropolis

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Abstract - This study attempts to explore the relationship between event sponsorship and consumer patronage of GSM service providers. A survey questionnaire was used to gather data from 395 consumers of GSM services in Kano metropolis, Nigeria. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient test was conducted. Weighted average was also used to analyze the relative influence of each element of sponsorship on consumer patronage. Contrary to priori expectation, it was found that sponsorship engagements by GSM service providers has no significant relationship with consumer patronage of their services. On the basis of this finding, measures needed to improve return on investment in sponsorship are recommended.

Keywords: Consumers; GSM Services; Patronage; Sponsorship

1. Introduction

The GSM service sector of Nigeria is becoming very competitive. This is largely due to the new Mobile Number Portability (MNP) policy. This policy was introduced by the regulatory body (the Nigerian Communications Commission - NCC) and it gives customers the opportunity to change their service providers while maintaining the same mobile number. This singular policy has, true to its intension, increased the competitive intensity within the industry with total number of subscribers switching providers (ported lines) across the four GSM operators within less than two years of introducing the policy standing at 452,107 lines (NCC, 2016). Analysis of this number indicates that Etisalat (also known as Emerging Market Telecommunication Services - EMTS) is the biggest gainer as only 28,164 subscribers ported out of the network compared to a total of 92,946 subscribers that ported in from other networks, cumulating into a net gain of 64,782 subscribers for this network. The second biggest gainer is Airtel with a net gain of 34,827 lines (85,918 ported in while 51,091 ported out). For MTN and Globacom (as presented in Table I), the numbers of customers abandoning them for other networks far outweigh those that are coming in. They both recorded a net loss of 80,062 and 3,935 lines, respectively.

Analysis shows that while 16,434 and 38,156 subscribers ported out of other networks and joined MTN and Globacom, a comparatively high number of subscribers - 96,496 and 42,091, respectively, abandoned both networks as at December 2014 (NCC, 2016). What makes this data troubling for these two networks is that they have hitherto held the largest shares of the market – MTN 44%, Globacom 21%, Airtel 20%, and Etisalat 15% (NCC, 2016). For the latest entrant and a network that has hitherto been at the bottom of the market to attract away a large swath of customers of the so-called market leaders signals that a big competitive war is in the offing.

Table 1: Overview of GSM Sector of Nigeria

Indicators	Airtel	Etisalat	Globacom	MTN	Total
Market Shares	27,556,544	21,103,749	28,219,089	59,893,093	136,772,475
Installed Capacity	51,012,688	40,000,000	38,631,800	80,000,000	209,644,488
Base Stations	6,186	4,756	6,677	12,557	30,176
<i>Ported In</i>	85,918	92,946	38,156	16,434	233,454
<i>Ported Out</i>	51,091	28,164	42,091	96,496	218,653
Net Gains (Loss)	34,827	64,782	(3,935)	(80,062)	

Source: Analysis of NCC's (2016) Reports

Given the current competitive scenario within the GSM market in Nigeria, operators are constantly sharpening their marketing swords and deploying unconventional or non-traditional tools to stay connected to subscribers in order to maintain a profitable share of the market. One of the most popular non-traditional communication tools that the GSM service providers in Nigeria have adopted to deliver their message to the target market is sponsorship. Sponsorship has been described as the most effective kind of marketing communication for reaching the target audience (Roy & Cornwell, 2003). As an important component of the modern marketing regimes (Lobo, Meyer, & Chester, 2014), sponsorship has experienced phenomenal growth in recent years recording an average annual growth of between 10–15 percent (Lobo, Meyer, & Chester, 2014) with a total annual value hovering around US\$51.1 in 2012 (IEG, 2013).

According to Mason (2005), event sponsorship occurs when an organization finances a program (e.g., radio or TV program) or event (e.g., sports, lifestyle, or cultural events), in order to derive certain marketing benefits. Sponsorship may or may not include insertion of promotional materials (Akwensivie, Narteh, & Iden, 2014), but generally, sponsorship involves a commercial relationship between two parties: the sponsor and the sponsee – whereby – the latter generally develops and organizes the sponsored activity while the former exploits the marketing potential of the event (Yang & Ha, 2014) for a fee. There are two kinds of sponsorship: On-site or field sponsorship and televised broadcast sponsorship (Lardinoit & Quester, 2001). Field sponsorship refers to the placement of brand logos or billboards at the scene of the sponsored event (Mason, 2005; Lardinoit & Quester, 2001). Examples include Globacom's sponsorship of professional football leagues in both Ghana and Nigeria; MTN sponsorship of Polo Tournaments in Nigeria, etc. Televised broadcast sponsorship, on the other hand, entails funding of a specific TV or radio program whereby the sponsoring organization attempts to identify with the event as well as insert promotional materials (Mason, 2005; Lardinoit & Quester, 2001). Examples include: Etisalat sponsorship of *Nigerian Idol*, Airtel sponsorship of *Touching Lives* and *Nigerian Got Talent*, MTN sponsorship of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, and Globacom sponsorship of *African Voices* (on CNN) and *Dance with Peter*.

The key objectives of all types of sponsorship include: to psychographically connect with a target market, enable wider market reach, and generate purchase intention (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008). Other specific objectives include: to identify a firm or create awareness for its brands (Pharm & Johar, 2001), to boost the image of the brand (Woisetschlager & Michaelis, 2012), to enhance the credibility of an organization (Soderman & Dolles, 2015), to support efforts to boost market share especially in a saturated market (Yang & Ha, 2014), and possibly to generate goodwill from the larger society. However, the ultimate aim of sponsorship is to influence consumer attitude and thus behaviors in some desired way (Mason, 2005; Akwensivie, Narteh, & Iden, 2014).

Sponsorship leverages the concept of ‘halo effects’ to influence consumer attitude (Mason, 2005). The principle is that by identifying with an event or program about which a target market is passionate or committed, a company is able to get the consumers to perceive it favorably (Mason, 2005) and if the event has a good fit or what Woisetschlager and Michaelis (2012) refer to as ‘congruence’ with the offering of the company, consumers are likely to transfer the image of the sponsored event to the brand (Yang & Ha, 2014).

There are a number of forces or factors that have pushed event sponsorship to the present position of eminence that it currently enjoys as a marketing tool. According to scholars such as Akwensivie, Narteh, and Iden (2014) and Roy and Cornwell (2003), traditional marketing communication channels such as sales promotion and advertisement have confronted increasing challenges in recent time and have largely been ineffective in cutting through the enormous promotional clusters and marketing information overload and hence reaching the target consumers has become very difficult. Other factors that have fuelled the increasing growth of sponsorship include: greater media exposure of sponsored event, increasing restriction on advertisement, skyrocketing costs of advertisement, customers’ evasion of advertisements (through zipping and zapping), and decreasing ability of advertisements to enhance customer connection (Meenaghan, 1991; Olson, 2010; Roy & Cornwell, 2003).

Several scholars and practitioners have emphasized the benefits of sponsorship in the modern marketing milieu. Apart from having a positive effect on such elements of brand equity as brand awareness, brand image, positive brand association, and brand loyalty (Akwensivie, Narteh, & Iden, 2014; Keller, 2009; Woisetschlager & Michaelis, 2012), sponsorship has the potential to generate favorable publicity and enhance staff morale (Akwensivie, Narteh, & Iden, 2014). Sponsorship has also been noted to have a positive link with increase in sales (Pickson & Broderick, 2005), enhances the perception of good corporate citizen, and delivers superior competitive advantage (Arens, Weigold, & Arens, 2011). It has also been argued that apart from eliciting better customer engagement, sponsorship is seen by the public as being more legitimate and hence more readily accepted than traditional advertisements (Mason, 2005; Parker, 2001). Consequently, sponsorship casts a persuasive influence on consumers as they tend to see sponsorship as less commercially biased (Quester & Farrelly, 2009). Moreover, sponsorship has the capacity to facilitate the building of transnational brands (Marshall & Cook, 2002), a notoriously expensive and difficult process.

Given the amount of money that GSM companies in Nigeria spend on sponsorship and the above highlighted benefits of the marketing communication tool, it is curious to note that research into the effects of sponsorship on the ultimate results of every marketing activity – consumer patronage, is still scarce (Akwensivie, Narteh, & Iden, 2014). Indeed, there is

virtually none conducted in Nigeria. More so, most studies so far conducted in other countries are only at the conceptual level (Akwensivie, Narteh, & Iden, 2014) and empirical understanding of the consumer patronage effect of sponsorship is scarce across the globe (Donlan, 2014). Even at the industry level, although marketers are aware of the need to evaluate the effects of sponsorship (Cornwell, 2008), there is usually no comprehensive efforts made in that direction (Donlan, 2014). Clearly, the need to justify every cent spent on marketing activities is increasingly becoming an important measure of performance by CEOs and their marketing executive. Hence, a study conducted to this end will arguably have a clear practical relevance. This kind of study will also serve to broaden the already shallow literature on the subject of sponsorship. Ultimately, this research effort will help to build a reliable body of knowledge in the field and make sponsorship a credible field of academic research. Therefore, this investigation is geared towards assessing the effects of sponsorship on consumer patronage of GSM service providers in Nigeria, particularly Kano metropolis, an ancient commercial nerve centre of the country and home to over 6 million diverse group of people. As a guide for the conduct of the study, the main research questions are: to what extent are consumers aware of sponsorship activities by GSM service providers? How much effect does sponsorship have on consumer patronage of GSM service providers? Consequently, the objectives of the study are to determine the extent of consumers' awareness of sponsorship activities by GSM service providers and more importantly, to assess the impact of sponsorship on consumer patronage of GSM operators.

2. Literature Review

Consumer Patronage/Purchase Decision Process

Consumer purchase decision process is referred to as the actions a person takes in purchasing and using products and services, including the mental and social processes that precede and follow these actions (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, & Ponfoort, 2010). This process consists of five stages namely: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase behaviour. The respective stages in the consumer purchase decision process are explained hereunder. *Problem Recognition* is the starting point of consumer buying process. At this stage, consumers become aware of and put a lot of interest into getting the problem solved (Kotler et al., 2010). *Information Search* connotes movement into a search mode once consumers recognize a problem to be solved. The level of the search could be *heightened attention*, at which stage 'a person simply becomes more receptive to information about a product' (Kotler & Keller, 2006: 181), or *active information search* where people engage in a planned effort to search for information such as talking to friends or reading materials. From the available options gathered, consumers set to *evaluate* alternatives that will best solve his/her problem by looking at the features, functions, and attributes of interest (Kotler et al., 2010) against consumers' own internal and external factors such as his/her lifestyle, age, sex, social status, economic conditions, social-cultural forces, and marketing mix forces (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008; Kotler & Keller, 2009). The result of the evaluation thus helps consumers to make a decision as to from which provider to *purchase*. Moreover, for most companies especially those in a highly competitive market that depends on consumers' repeat purchase, the last stage of patronage process – *post-purchase behavior* - is critical and needs to be carefully monitored. This is because it has been observed that satisfaction or dissatisfaction after purchase affects consumer value perception, consumer communication, and the possibility of a repeat purchase (Lam, Shankar, Erramilli, &

Murthy, 2004). Thus, in order to satisfy customers and assure that they continue to patronize a particular firm, experts have recommended that business firms must seek to measure such elements of consumer patronage intention as positive word-of-mouth, actual purchase intention, price sensitivity, and customer complaining behavior (Johnson & Sirikit, 2002).

Corporate Sponsorship of Notable Events and Consumer Patronage

One of the most generally accepted definition of sponsorship is the one given by the premier sponsorship think-tank – the International Event Group (IEG, 2016). Sponsorship is said to be a payment of cash and/or in-kind gesture to a property (usually a sport, entertainment or non-profit program) in order to secure the right to exploit the marketing potentials of the property (IEG, 2016). Although there are other definitions of sponsorship in the marketing literature, the above appear to be generally accepted for its simplicity and applicability for both academic and practitioners' discussion of the concept.

Studies thus far carried out on the effect of event sponsorship on brand patronage have not enjoyed the benefit of not being controversial in their findings. However, it is noted that in general, there are far more empirical findings in support of a positive link between sponsorship and consumer patronage. First, Yang and Ha (2014) attempted to determine the extent of brand knowledge transfer via sponsorship in a study that involved consumers of financial services in South Korea. It was found that sponsorship facilitates brand knowledge transfer for sponsors in terms of corporate image and brand awareness. This goes to affirm the earlier findings of Quester and Farrelly (2009) who submit that sponsorship transfers positive image connotations inherent to the event or individual athlete to the sponsor's corporate or brand image. It is however noted that for the positive relationship between sponsorship and image transfer to hold, sponsoring organizations must ensure that there is a good fit between their brand and the property – the sponsored event (Yang & Ha, 2014).

Similarly, Lobo *et al.* (2014) evaluated consumers' response to sponsorship of major sporting events in Australia. The main conclusion of the evaluation is that prior knowledge – good or bad – of the sponsor has a strong influence on consumer evaluation and subsequent attitude towards the brand. This suggests that consumers' evaluation of the effectiveness of a sponsored event is not done in isolation. The accumulated knowledge and experience that consumers have had previously about the sponsor do have an influence on whether they form a favorable attitude towards the brand. The other notable conclusions of Lobo and his colleagues are that sponsorship affects image transfer and image transfer in turn affects consumer purchase intention. However, unlike the conclusion of Mason (2005:34), who submits that sponsorship generates goodwill among consumers as it alters their 'cognitive structure' leading to the kind of behaviors desired by marketers, Lobo *et al.* (2014) found that consumers place little philanthropic value on sponsorship. This conflicting finding necessitates that sponsoring firms exercise some caution in attempting to achieve the objective of being perceived as a responsible corporate citizen via sponsorship. Perhaps one way to get around this is to be guided by the suggestion of Cliffe and Motion (2005) on the anticipated objective or strength of different kinds of sponsorship. It is suggested that mass-media broadcast event be used when the objective of the sponsorship is awareness creation; differentiated event be selected when the objective is to boost or reposition brand image; event communication to be emphasized when the objective is to create a unique brand experience and loyalty; and lastly, cause-related event

sponsorship be used when the objective is to generate or enhance goodwill (Cliffe & Motion, 2005).

Further, the study of Donlan (2014) involving consumers of financial services in the United Kingdom (UK) focuses on the brand-building effectiveness of sponsorship. The author concludes that brand-building is not guaranteed by sponsorship unless care is taken to only and always sponsor appropriate events, engage in only exclusive sponsorship to cut out clusters, and take measures such as integrated sponsorship activation tactics to leverage sponsorship engagement.

Further, a select number of other empirical studies (e.g., Akwensivie, Narteh & Iden, 2014; Woisetschlager & Michaelis, 2012; Roy & Cornwell, 2003) on sponsorship has brand equity as their main objective. In an effort to understand the connection between sponsorship and consumer-based brand equity behaviors, Akwensivie et al.'s (2014) study involving consumers of telecommunication services in Ghana concluded that sponsorship has a positive and significant effect on brand equity elements such as brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty. This suggests that in the long-run, sponsorship influences consumers' attitudes towards the brand and can potentially alter their patronage behaviors in the same direction. In a similar vein, Woisetschlager and Michaelis' (2012) study of T-Mobile – the German telecoms giant, concluded that although sponsorship recall is found to have a long-term effect on brand image, it is nonetheless not a valid explanatory variable for sponsorship effect. The importance of these findings is that although consumers may be aware of an organization's association with a particular event, that awareness or recall is not a guarantee that consumers will necessarily patronize the organization.

Moreover, notwithstanding the mostly positive research findings on consumers' behavioral effects of sponsorship, the modern marketing tool has come under heavy criticisms by some scholars (e.g., Akwensivie et al., 2014; Pickton & Broderick, 2005). The criticisms are basically three – the skyrocketing costs of sponsorship, the inherent inaccuracies in evaluating the actual effects of sponsorship, and the growing incidence of ambush marketing – action by some firms to reap the same or greater benefits as official sponsors, without incurring the same costs (IEG, 2016).

3. Methodology

This study was conducted exclusively within the Kano Metropolis in Kano state, Nigeria. Kano is generally known to be a commercial centre with a location advantage over other cities in Northern Nigeria. The cosmopolitan nature of its metropolis in terms of education, diverse group of people, and the visible presence of virtually all the GSM service providers coupled with a large number of subscribers, both actual and potential, makes it quite suitable for this study.

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011) are of the view that a sample of 400 is enough for any population that is 5,000 or more. Although 500 copies of questionnaires were distributed, a total of 395 (representing 79%) valid responses were retrieved. As presented in Table 2, the major group of consumers that participated in the study includes students of tertiary educational institutions, employees of public and private organization, as well as private businessmen and women. The respondents cut across the four major GSM service providers that have been operating in the metropolis. These are: Airtel, Etisalat, Globacom,

and MTN. With the help of two research assistants, questionnaires were handed out to customers who visited the customer service centers of the four GSM service firms in Kano. Many of the respondents completed and returned the instrument on the same day while a few were retrieved about a week after. The whole exercise was conducted over a period of two weeks. Berg, Lune, and Lune (2004) believe that a delivery and collection method of this nature is an effective data collection strategy in an environment where research culture is yet to be sufficiently developed.

A 5-point Likert type rating scale was used to measure a set of attitudinal statements relating to the key variables of the study. Specifically, the variables were measured as explained below.

Consumer Patronage Intention - Johnson and Sirikit's (2002) scale was used in measuring patronage intention. This scale was developed and confirmed valid in a study on service quality and consumer behavioral intention in Thailand Telecommunication industry (Table 3). The 5-point Likert rating scale measures respondents' attitudinal behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth, purchase intention, price sensitivity, and complaining behaviors which indicates predisposition to patronage intention (please see Appendix I).

Sponsorship - Owing probably to the paucity of research in this area, there is no widely adopted relevant scale for measuring sponsorship. The only scale that comes close is that of Akwensivie, Narteh, and Ideh (2014). This is a 17-item scale used in the study of sponsorship and consumer-based brand equity behaviour in Ghana. This scale was adapted but reduced to 6-item scale to make it less cumbersome and relevant to the context of the present study. Guided by the position of literature, the key dimensions of sponsorship measured by the scale sponsorship of notable cultural events, sponsorship of sports events, sponsorship of musical programs, sponsorship of causes, sponsorship of learning acquisition events, and sponsorship of notable radio and TV programs (please see Table 3).

With regards to data analysis, a bivariate analysis was conducted. Specifically, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the linear correlation between consumer patronage intention and corporate social responsibility. Weighted average was calculated to permit the analysis of key dimensions of corporate social responsiveness as they affect consumer patronage intention.

4. Results and Discussions

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 22.0), a computer program for Windows, was utilized as the tool of analysis for the study. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the consumer patronage intention range from .70 to .83 (please see Appendix I) while that of sponsorship range from .72 to .87 (please see Table 3). All the coefficients are greater than .70, exceeding the recommended threshold of .7 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This indicates that both scales have highly satisfactory degree of reliability and internal consistency. The results regarding evidence of reliability were consistent with previous studies that used the adapted sponsorship scale (Akwensivie et al., 2014) and the patronage intention scale (Johnson & Sirikit, 2002).

Table 2: Biographic information of respondents.

S/N.	Particulars	Total Number	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Respondents' Primary GSM Service Provider</i>		
i.	Airtel	83	21%
ii.	Etisalat	67	17%
iii.	Globacom	85	22%
iv.	MTN	160	41%
	<i>Total</i>	395	100%
2.	<i>Gender of Respondents</i>		
i.	Male	233	59%
ii.	Female	162	41%
	<i>Total</i>	395	100%
3.	<i>Respondents' Years of Experience Using GSM Services</i>		
i.	10 – 15	119	30%
ii.	5 – 9	225	57%
iii.	1 – 4	36	9%
iv.	Below 1 year	15	4%
	<i>Total</i>	395	100%
4.	<i>Occupation/Employment Status</i>		
i.	Students	92	23%
ii.	Public Sector Employee	19	5%
iii.	Private Sector Employee	284	72%
	<i>Total</i>	395	100%

Source: Research Survey, 2016

Consumers' Awareness of Sponsorship Activities by GSM Operators

It was thought that before attempting to determine whether a relationship exists between sponsorship and consumer patronage behaviors towards GSM service providers, there is a need to first investigate the extent to which customers are informed about the sponsorship activities of GSM service providers. Hence, using a Likert scale of 5-1 (with 5 representing 'Highly Aware' and 1 representing 'Not Aware At All'), respondents were asked to indicate their level of awareness of some identified sponsorship activities in which the service providers engage (Table 3).

Subsequently, weighted average and relevant percentages were calculated. Analysis of responses reveals that subscribers are highly aware of the sponsorship activities of service providers. Roughly 91% indicate that they are well-informed about the operators' sponsorship engagements. Further analysis revealed that consumers are more aware of GSM operators' engagement with the televised broadcast type of sponsorship such as broadcast of football tournaments, musical programs such as the *Nigerian Idol*, *Who Want to be a Millionaire*, *African Voices*, *Touching Lives*, etc. This is closely followed by operators' on-site sponsorship of musical concerts and sporting events. The plausible reason for the high consumers' awareness of these elements is the fact that they relate to the area of interest and passion of the respondents who are mostly young and outgoing. However, the element of sponsorship that consumers are least aware of is the operators' sponsorship of cause-related events as well as sponsorship of cultural events such as traditional festivals. Perhaps the reason for the low level of awareness of this element is the inadequate publicity that they attract, especially among young people. It may also have something to do with the level of passion and interest that the majority of consumers have for these types of sponsorship. This confirms the submission of Lobo et al. (2014) that

consumers are more passionate about sports sponsorship, which emphasizes its dominance as a common type of sponsored event (Roy & Cornwell, 2003).

Table 3: Subscribers Awareness of Sponsorship Activities of Service Providers

S/ N.	Sponsorship Engagements	Cronbach's Alpha	Highest Possible Weighted Score	Weighted Score	Ranking
a.	Sponsorship of cultural events/traditional festival such as <i>Argungu Fishing Festival</i> , <i>Olojo Festival in Ife and Igbo Day</i> .	.721	1,975	1,497	6 th
b.	Sponsorship of musical concerts	.711	1,975	1,693	2 nd
c.	Sponsorship of major sporting events and tournaments such as Football, Golf, Polo, Tennis, etc.	.721	1,975	1,654	3 rd
d.	Sponsorship of cause-related programs	.841	1,975	1,589	5 th
d.	Sponsorship of radio programs like <i>sports express</i> etc.	.722	1,975	1,598	4 th
e.	Sponsorship of television programs such as charitable programs like major football tournaments, musical programs like the <i>Nigerian Idol</i> , <i>X-Factors</i> , <i>Project Fame</i> , <i>Campus Vibe</i> , etc.	.871	1,975	1,750	1 st

Source: Survey Results, 2016

Effect of Corporate Sponsorship on Consumer Patronage of GSM Services

The main objective of this study was to ascertain the extent to which consumer patronage of GSM service firms is influenced by sponsorship of events. Hence, the hypothesis which states that 'sponsorship has no significant effect on consumer patronage of GSM service providers' was tested using the Linear Regression. The results show $R^2 = 0.02$ and P value = 0.121, which is not significant at 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported and this has some practical implications.

The finding implies that sponsorship has no significant effect on consumer patronage of GSM service providers. Specifically, analysis shows that there is a positive but very weak relationship between sponsorship and consumer patronage intention. Elsewhere in the world, studies have not presented a firm evidence of overwhelming positive and significant link between sponsorship and consumer patronage (Donlan, 2014; Lobo et al., 2014; Olson, 2010; Roy & Cornwell, 2003). Indeed, this may not be unconnected with the possibility that sometimes, consumers may not ascribe a particular event to a particular company-sponsors due to sponsorship clusters (Donlan, 2014; Yang & Ha, 2014) and ambush marketing tactics of competing brands (IEG, 2016; Pickton & Broderick, 2005). The other reason that may be advanced for weak relationship between sponsorship and consumer patronage is the possible perception of mismatch or lack of fit between sponsored event and the primary business of the sponsor (Lobo et al., 2014; Donlan, 2014; Woisetschlager & Michaelis, 2014). The theoretical explanation for this can be found in the consumer-company identification literature which essentially posits that consumers would identify with companies whose corporate activities closely align with their passion and interest (Ashraf & Merunka, 2013; Marín, & Ruiz de Maya, 2013; Wu & Tsai, 2008). Thus, when a particular activity of a brand is out of sync with the interest of its consumers, it is unlikely that consumers will be influenced to patronize the brand as a result of the activity.

However, there is a sense that the impact of sponsorship is most felt in awareness creation for companies and their products. Indeed, many studies (e.g., Akwensivie et al., 2014; Roy & Cornwell, 2003; Woisetschlager & Michaelis, 2014; Yang & Ha, 2014) have found that sponsorship has incredible impact on efforts to identify and create awareness for a firm's products.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This research investigated the effect of corporate event sponsorship on consumer patronage of GSM Service providers in Kano Metropolis. The investigation used a structured questionnaire as the data collection instrument and Pearson's correlation as the method of data analysis. Findings of this study warrant the conclusion that consumer patronage of GSM service providers is not significantly influenced by the fact that GSM companies engage in sponsorship.

Given the above conclusion, a number of recommendations are hereby made. First, GSM service providers' investment in the sponsorship of notable events needs to be carefully reviewed. Specifically, there is a need for the providers to be selective in events they do sponsor. Events such as TV broadcast program to be sponsored must first be analyzed and looked at from the perspective of how consumers are likely to perceive the association. Since the ultimate objective of sponsorship is to influence consumers' behavioral response (Mason, 2005; Akwensivie, Narteh, & Iden, 2014), particularly purchase intention, sponsorship should therefore be packaged towards that end.

Secondly, a key objective of sponsorship is to secure some competitive advantage in the market and one major way to achieve this is through a clear, unmistakable, and consistent message to the consumers. However, clusters and ambush marketing have the capacity to distort the best crafted message. Therefore, companies should always seek to have exclusive sponsorship of an event in order to avoid sponsorship cluster and minimize the ambush marketing tactics of competitors. An excellent measure for avoiding clusters is the use of integrated sponsorship activation tactics such as ubiquitous promotion of the sponsored event (Donlan, 2014).

Lastly, since it is found that sponsorship has an impact on brand identification and awareness creation, measures must be taken to leverage this benefit. First, since the brand image boosting capacity of an event depends on the consumer perception of the event itself or the image of the particular event, there is a need for not just a regular assessment of sponsorship engagement but also a thorough assessment of the image of the particular event. Specifically, consumers should be engaged through a regular easy-to-answer pre-post survey to identify the extent to which a particular event fits favorably with consumers' perception before signing the sponsorship deal and to know how much the event influences consumers' perception afterwards.

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Appendix I.

Consumer Patronage Intention	Cronbach's Alpha
<i>Word-of-Mouth</i>	
I always say positive things about my GSM network to other people	.700
I often recommend my GSM network to people	.701
I always encourage friends and relatives to subscribe to the services of my GSM network	.722
<i>Purchase Intention</i>	
My GSM network is always my first choice whenever I need a telecom service	.700
I do not intend to reduce my patronage of my GSM network	.811
I do not intend to switch GSM service network now	.751
<i>Price Sensitivity</i>	
I will immediately patronise any other network that offers better tariffs on certain services	.832
I will continue to patronise my GSM network even if it increases tariffs for services	.714
I will continue to patronize my network even if competitors' prices are lower	.701
<i>Complaining Behaviour</i>	
I will immediately switch to another network if I experience a problem with my network	.724
I usually complain to people about problems I encounter with my network	.744
I would not mind complaining to the regulatory authority e.g., NCC if I experience a serious problem with my network	.812
I frequently complain to the customer service staff of my network whenever I have a problem	.701

Source: Survey Data, 2016