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## **Sponsorship and Paralympic Games: Motives and Goals of Paralympic Major Sponsors and Reasons for Their Decision to Sponsor the Paralympic Games**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to analyse how far sponsorship has gone and what shape it has taken at the Paralympic games, how Olympic Sponsorship affects Paralympic sponsorship and how it is linked with Olympic sponsorship decisions. Literature, newspaper, magazine articles and coverage on the sponsorship of the Paralympic and Olympic Games were reviewed. A number of in-depth interviews were conducted with executive members of major Sponsoring Companies/organizations and the SPOC sponsorship department. They were asked questions regarding the motives that led them to associate themselves with the Paralympic Games, expected gains, the financial factors involved, the support of the sponsorship through advertising, the relation with the Olympic involvement and in if they believe that their financial contribution will enhance their image and add to their profits. The findings of the study suggest that there is a slight different nature of sponsorship involvement in the Paralympic Games. There is an interest for niche markets or defined target markets for the Paralympics, but more strongly the Paralympic movement offers -because of its ethical integrity- a strong vehicle in order to reach families, older people and children, and to present the company as a responsible corporate citizen. The Paralympic Games do not get the appropriate sponsorship according to their size, because the exposure of the Paralympic Games and especially Paralympic athletes in the media appear minimally. The inconsiderable small cost in comparison with the Olympic Games is an important reason to obtain sponsorship, while most of the sponsoring companies/organizations consider it as a good investment. The main conclusions drawn were that the Paralympic Games attract sponsorship on a different basis than the Olympic Games. Most sponsors are more concerned about corporate citizenship matters, social image in the community and company profile than in immediate commercial benefits. The strength of Paralympic sponsorship seems to be the integrity of image that it offers which has a very high impact on some populations. Its weakness is the limited promotion the sponsors can get because of the limited media coverage. Sponsoring companies show a big interest in Paralympic sponsorship once they are informed and educated about its opportunities.

**Key words:** Paralympic Games, disabled sport, sponsorship

### INTRODUCTION

Sponsorship has developed into an important marketing tool in the marketing mix for many organizations (Shilbury, Quick & Westerbeek, 1998). In North America sponsorship has tripled in value in the past decade, from \$2 billion to a reported \$6 billion, while worldwide expenditure in the sponsorship market was estimated to top 11.7 billion in 1995 (Sweeney Report 2000). Geldard and Sinclair (1998) suggest that sponsorship has developed into a discipline in its own right. It is a business tool such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing. Sponsorship is a business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or services and an individual event/organization which offers in return some rights and association that may be used for commercial advantage (Shilbury et al., 1998). But according to Geldard and Sinclair (1998) sponsors seek tangible benefits from their sponsorship. Amongst other things a sponsor seeks to increase brand, product and company awareness, media coverage, influence on opinion leaders, sales, goodwill and awareness within defined target audiences (Geldard & Sinclair, 1998).

Sponsorship has developed into a major funding source in sports. Following Shilbury et al. (1998), "...sponsorship is a huge pool of potential funds for sporting organizations". This is probably due to the fact that governmental subsidies have decreased and sports bodies have to search for funds increasingly in the corporate sector. For the Olympic Games it accounts for more than 32 % of the revenue of the Olympic Games (Cashman & Hughes, 1999; IOC, 1999). Sponsors are eager to become TOP Olympic Sponsors or National Partners of the Olympic Games. The amounts they are paying are accordingly high. Sums of more than 50 million US dollars for sponsor rights in Australia and Internationally are not unusual, but many companies/organizations seem to believe that this investment in sponsorship is worthwhile and continue their multimillion-dollar sponsor programs (Cashman & Hughes, 1999; IOC, 1999).

Sponsorship and marketing have become more prominent for the Olympics since the end of the amateur era under President Samaranch (Cashman & Hughes, 1999). The IOC following the Los Angeles Games has developed sponsorship programs to receive huge amounts in order to secure funding for the Olympic Games. Additional to these, there are also programs by the Organizing Committees (Cashman & Hughes, 1999). Not surprisingly the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in Sydney attracted a number of sponsors who had come to join either as TOP sponsors of the IOC or as "Millennium Partners", as the national sponsors are called, to contribute with large amounts to the organizing of the games.

The Olympic Games of Sydney had a multimillion-dollar sponsor program but what happened with the Paralympics? Although the core event of the disabled sport movement has developed into a very large event similar in size with the Winter Olympic Games or the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, the Paralympics, according to McDonnell, Allen and O'Toole (1999), are very close but not yet a Mega Event, it is sometimes considered as 'the ugly Duckling' next to the Olympics. This is probably the reason that disabled sport does not have yet such a high profile as Olympic sports. It does not get much television coverage and many people are not aware of it. Following this many argue that the low

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profile of disabled sport leads to less attraction of private sponsorship (The second report into Sports Funding and Administration, Can sport be bought? 1990).

Some statistics about the core event in Disabled Sport, the Paralympic Games, show that the Sydney Paralympic Organizing Committee's budget was 156 AU\$ -later modified to \$136 million- which is considerably less than the AU\$ 2.55 billion Olympics budget (Evans, 1999). It had been promised \$25 million by both State and Federal governments, and received \$16.74 million from the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) (Annual Report 1998, Sydney Paralympic Organizing Committee, Sydney). That leaved a sponsorship target of \$60 million, with \$16 million to come from ticket revenue, \$5.5 million in entry fees from Paralympians and \$6.5 million from things like pins and other paraphernalia. The budget allowed \$15 million as a contingency for cost over-runs and revenue shortfalls (Ragg, 1999).

The Sydney Paralympic Organizing Committee planed to raise a large percentage of this sum, through sponsorship (Moore, 1998). It should be noted however, that the State Government does not underwrite the Paralympic Games as the Olympic Games. There is a government guarantee to pay for the Olympics, and their possible debts, but there is no guarantee on the Paralympics. This means that sponsors and other supporters will be less certain about the event that will have their name all over it. Serious funding shortfalls could mean a no-frills Paralympics and harm the sponsors (Moore, 1998). Following this, it could be assumed that it would be more difficult for the Sydney Paralympic Organizing Committee to organize sponsorship.

On the other hand, the Sydney Paralympic Organizing Committee had the huge advantage of riding on the backs of the Olympics as far as sponsors are concerned, and the sponsors knew that a good deal with the Olympics would require looking very favourably on Paralympic support (Ragg, 1999). Additionally the Paralympics also allowed the bonus of signage for sponsors at the sporting venues (Prendergast, 1999). In Atlanta some Olympic sponsors did not sponsor the Paralympics. These were called by the media "the Sinful six" (Aylmer, 1997). It seems that the Paralympic Games can on a big extend rely on the fact that sponsors who sponsor the Olympic Games can be approached in order to sponsor also the Paralympic Games.

The final sponsor catalogue of the XI Paralympic Games included 29 companies/organizations divided into three categories (Worldwide Partners, Paralympic Partners and Paralympic supporters) that offered money or products-services (value in kind) and became sponsors. Some of them were also Olympic sponsors while some were solely sponsors of the Paralympic Games. The sponsors were the following: Telstra, IBM (Worldwide partners), Motor Accidents Authority of New South Wales, Franklins, Westpac, AMP, Bonds, Energy Australia, Ansett Australia, TAFE NSW, Fuji Xerox, Fairfax, Swatch, Coca-Cola, Seven Network, Otto Bock, McDonald's, WeMedia (Paralympic partners) and Radio 2UE, Time Inc., Shell, Boise Cascade (Paralympic supporters). Further more there were a number of Paralympic providers who assisted through services and products.

The purpose of this study was to analyse the characteristics of Paralympic sponsorship (such as the attitudes, the perceived benefits, the compatibility of Paralympic sponsorship

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with marketing goals of the company and the awareness of disability specific target markets) and the motives that companies/organizations have to sponsor the Paralympic Games and the Paralympic movement and how “marginal” sports such as disabled sport attract sponsorship funding. Another purpose was to examine how far Olympic Sponsorship affects Paralympic sponsorship.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Since the number of the Paralympic sponsors was limited (2 Worldwide, 16 Paralympic Partners and 4 Paralympic supporters), 15 semi-structured interviews were used to collect information on the research questions. This approach seemed to serve our goals in a better way, firstly because the number of informants we could rely on was limited and secondly because the data we were trying to collect were based on privileged information and sensitive issues (Denscombe, 1998). A checklist was prepared with topics that were addressed during the interviews based on the conceptual framework of our study and according to data needs. Interviews with the representative of the sponsorship department, or a similar executive of the company, who had in deep knowledge of the Paralympic involvement were conducted. A sponsor representative was defined following Buck (1992), as an “individual responsible for selecting, negotiating, and supervising the market involvement of a company, individual or government department in a sporting event”, in the case of the current study the Paralympic Games. It was attempted to conduct interviews with a representative of at least one sponsor per category (Worldwide partner, Paralympic Partner, Paralympic Supporter). Additionally an interview with the responsible marketing manager was conducted. Further information was gathered through this interview. The research had the support and assistance of the SPOC marketing department in order to gain access to the responsible persons for the sponsorship in each company.

The interviews intended to explore: a) attitudes b) perceived benefits of Paralympic sponsorship, c) the compatibility of Paralympic sponsorship with marketing goals of the company and d) awareness of disability specific target markets.

A question checklist was produced with 31 questions, which were used to collect answers relevant to all respective research questions. The questions were grouped into dimensions in order to group the area of interest. Each dimension contained 1-4 questions as follows: a) reasons, motives and expected gains b) attractiveness of Paralympic sponsorship c) Paralympic Games as sporting event d) ways of improvement e) change of awareness f) extent of leveraging of sponsorship g) financial factors h) interchange Olympic – Paralympic sponsorship i) niche marketing and special populations j) general involvement in Paralympic Sport.

The interviews were conducted before the start of the Paralympic Games from June 2000 up until early October 2000. Since the area of research was very sensitive concerning disclosure of information and sensitive information a special attention was given to confidentiality. It was made clear to all interviewees that their identity would remain at all stages confidential and that their names would be coded or changed to pseudonyms or case numbers, following Berg’s suggestion (Berg, 1995). It should be noted that like any research based on interviews there were limited ways to ensure that the interviewees are responding at all times truthfully. In the current study, every attempt was made to cross-

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reference any findings with relevant literature and other statements. However the possibility exists that some statements remain untrue. All interviews were audio taped and then transcribed verbatim for thematic and discursive analysis. Copies of the transcripts were made available upon request to the interviewees for verification. Additionally to the tape-recording field notes were taken.

### **ANALYSIS**

The analysis of the interview transcripts was based upon the conceptual framework and the research questions. The information collected was classified and organized. As Veal suggests (1997) ideas were refined and revised in the light of the information gathered. Coding for themes, concepts and ideas were made (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In order to test the interview procedure the first two interviews acted as a pilot survey in order to improve question checklists and to adapt the research questions of the project. It also alerted the researcher on any characteristics, idiosyncrasies or sensitivities of the responded group, which were not known previously (Veal 1997). The use of the first interviews as a pilot and a first rough analysis of the data gathered was made in order to redesign questions when necessary (Rubin & Rubin, 1992). In order to complement the above information secondary data was used. The review of newspaper and magazine articles and coverage on the Paralympic Games and the sponsorship of the Paralympic and Olympic games allowed the authors to form a complete image of the Sponsorship of the Paralympic Games. The analysis of the news coverage about the Paralympic Games and their sponsorship showed the development of the Paralympic efforts to rise sponsorship funding and the way it is presented in the press.

Following the grouping of the interview questions into eleven dimensions the answers were compared and stated below. The research tried to identify trends and common believes but also differences and discrepancies in these dimensions. This information was used in order to derive conclusions about the nature and form of Paralympic sponsorship. Subsequently these dimensions will be analysed in more detail.

### **Reasons, Motives and Expected gains**

#### ***Reasons***

As main reason for their sponsorship involvement the sponsorship representatives stated a variety of arguments that can be grouped as follows: Most sponsors underlined that they supported the Paralympic Games in order to improve their image in the community. As a company they wanted to demonstrate to the community that they are a part of it by showing that the company is supporting it actively. Additionally some sponsors stated that it was important for them to have the right to be present in the community underlining that they are the official partners with the Paralympic Games. This secured the opportunity to be present at certain events and having the opportunity to come in contact with representatives of the community, decision makers and potential customers.

Another often stated reason was the fact that the Paralympic sponsorship is a good supplement to the Olympic Sponsorship or as one sponsor representative expressed it, "it fits nicely with the Olympics". Many sponsors and especially sponsors who were also involved in the Olympic Games saw the Paralympic sponsorship as a good opportunity to supplement and enlarge their Olympic involvement and extent its time of use. By extending the period of the actual event from 16 to 60 days sponsoring companies had the

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opportunity to exploit their sponsorship in a better way and for a longer period. Additionally for some sponsors it was important to combine the sponsorship with the sponsorship of the Australian Team. Since many sponsored the Australian Olympic Team to show their support it was also important to sponsor the Australian Paralympic Team. This perception of the Paralympic sponsorship as an add on the Olympic sponsorship was encouraged by the unified perception that the political leadership showed since the undertaking of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was made clear to the corporate world that the Olympic and Paralympic Games are undeniably interlinked and could be seen as a “one off event” and invest in it. Furthermore as Hornery (2000) underlines “... SOCOG had heavily marketed the potential of the Paralympics when it was selling Olympic sponsorships...which paid off”.

Apart from these major reasons, which occur in almost all interviews, other reasons, which were stated, were that it is a good and worthwhile idea and that the Paralympics represent a good cause. This reason seems to represent an approach, which is based more on charity. However most companies showed that they wanted to use their involvement in order to promote it, exploit it commercially and looked not at it like a simple donation without any returns. This is in agreement with Shilbury et al. (1998), who point out that sponsorship involves a “reciprocal relationship”. This means that sponsorship cannot be seen as philanthropy or a medium that companies use just to supply some events with funds, but that it is a business transaction and the paying sponsors want to receive something for their money.

### ***Motives***

Most dominantly motive that was stated was interest for the community. As were emphasized in many occasions the Australian community seems to have a strong affinity with Paralympic athletes. There exists a very formidable interest of the grassroots community in the Paralympic Games. This interest exists very strongly in members of the community that represent its pillars of social life like families, elderly people and children. The companies saw the sponsorship as a chance to support the community with money, resources and services through the Paralympic Games. By this involvement they could demonstrate their support and responsibility on matters that are important to the community.

Additionally many sponsor representatives stated that one reason was that their companies wanted to use the Paralympic Games for their employees through staff incentives programs. Many sponsors tried to involve and motivate their employees through performance awards or guest speaking Paralympic athletes. The Paralympic Games and especially the Paralympic athletes were seen as very suitable to speak about motivational issues. Many companies used Paralympic athletes as guest speakers in seminars and lectures. Moreover employees were encouraged to organize and participate in fundraising events for the Paralympic Games. Through their involvement many companies tried to achieve a positive climate with their employees. By supporting such an “inspirational” event as the Paralympic Games, which is perceived by the majority of the population as positive, the companies had the opportunity to improve their image with their employees.

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Other motives that were stated were that it is a moral and ethical obligation, that the Paralympics are not as problematic in handling as the Olympic Games and are not receiving in any negative publicity.

### ***Expected Gains of Sponsorship***

The gains that the sponsoring companies hoped to receive out of their involvement were multifaceted. The answers can be grouped in four categories. First of all companies seem to be interested in the improvement of their image in the community, wanting to tie close bonds with the community and underline that the company supports its endeavours. Secondly, the companies try to take goodwill and inspiration out of the sponsorship. Companies try to improve their image by adopting a good cause and by showing that they are embracing such an “inspirational” and positive event as the Paralympics. Thirdly, some companies try to shift the perception of their brand from a cold commercial image to an image of a responsible company that cares. By sponsoring the Paralympic Games these companies wanted to communicate that they are not “cold” corporate businesses but organizations that care about people. Finally, some companies underlined that they have an interest in using their Paralympic Sponsorship in order to promote disability specific services or products or they wanted to use the Paralympics to drive their business. Those companies wanted to use the Paralympic Games and Paralympic athletes in seminars, speaking gigs etc. Many of the sponsors are trying to use the Paralympics to approach older people, families and schoolchildren since they are showing a big interest in the Paralympic Games and are also convinced by the whole idea of the Paralympic Movement.

### ***Attractiveness of Paralympic sponsorship***

The second dimension covered the attractive and unattractive traits of Paralympic Sponsorship. As reasons for that attractiveness they emphasize: a) that the Paralympics have more than just a corporate perspective (in contrast to the Olympics) b) it is a very good proposition because of the relatively low cost c) there exist commercial but also community benefits d) the very positive attitudes of the Paralympians, which can be used by the company.

It should also be mentioned that some sponsors noted that the Paralympic sponsorship got more and more attractive as they went along learning more about their sponsorship and its possibilities. As noted by a sponsor representative “the Paralympic sponsorship is more rewarding as more time and effort you put in it”. Furthermore it was noted that the companies could get a longer live out of their Olympic involvement through their Paralympic sponsorship. Finally an important positive trait that was apparent in most answers was the fact that the Paralympic Games are not painted with any bad publicity.

On the other hand the Paralympic Games have also a number of unattractive characteristics: a) a relatively low spectator number b) low TV viewing audience c) low profile of the event d) does not get external coverage e) not much noise, not much hype about the Paralympics f) the Paralympic athletes believe that the public does not want to watch Paralympic Sport.

Some sponsor representatives lined out that the Paralympic Games is not such an attractive event especially if it is examined under strict commercial criteria. Another difficulty, which was underlined, was the fact that the Paralympic Games are running

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alongside the Olympics. The relation with the Olympic Games may have a lot of positive facts for the Paralympic Games but it also hides some disadvantages. These are that the sponsoring companies have spent large resources on the Olympic Games and often have no budget to cover also the Paralympics. The fact that the Olympic Games being the biggest global event, is taking away all space in the public sphere leaving very limited time and coverage of the Paralympics. This overleap limits significantly the coverage of the economically and publicly “weaker” Paralympic Games. However as demonstrated by the Sydney Games if the timing of both events is well planned both events can have their impact supplementing each other. The Paralympics can have their impact after the very “noisy” Olympics and bringing people back to basic and elemental values. Through their accessibility and family orientation they can help the people returning to the sport experience after the sometimes because of its size and complexity “alienating” Olympic experience. If the Paralympic Games can keep that high public interest it has created for the Sydney 2000 Paralympics it will become one of the most visited spectator events in the world. However, in terms of media and especially television coverage it still has some way to go.

### **Paralympic Games as Sporting event**

#### ***Perception of the Paralympic Games as a Sporting event***

Almost all sponsorship representatives answered that the Paralympic Games is without doubt a sporting event. It was especially lined out that the more the sponsors came in contact with Paralympic sports and events by actually seeing them, the more the belief was fortified that the Paralympic Games is a sporting event, with all aggressiveness, cruelties and joys that are combined with sport. Many sponsors outlined that Paralympic Sport is brought to reality when people actually see it and experience it. They see “how aggressive” it is and how much Paralympic athletes reach their limits in their sport. Almost all sponsors however stated that they had a different perception when they first got involved into their Paralympic Sponsorship. Eventually they experienced Paralympic sport and started to see it as elite sport and got excited about it. It seems that the Paralympic Movement needs to do more on the side of informing the public about Paralympic Sport since many, and especially those who are not exposed to it, seem to combine it with a rehabilitation and more recreational character. However the Paralympic Games are strictly elite competition pursuing athletic excellence.

Many sponsors underlined that apart from its character as a sporting event the Paralympic Games have and are something more. Being described as an “inspirational event” a “different event” an “event with a social dimension”, and an event with an “uplifting side” to it. As one sponsor outlined “the spectators of the Paralympic Games experience a different emotion when they finally got to it”. This parameter does not necessarily mean something negative. It seems that the Paralympic movement can exploit sponsorship based on commercial characteristics but also sponsorship based on “the good cause perspective” being an event of weaker parts of the population that needs support.

#### ***Difference to other sporting events***

The Paralympic Games are much more invisible than other sport events. Although it is an international sport event surpassed in the number of participating countries only by the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games have had so far very limited access to media



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coverage and visibility. The sponsors have observed this and most of them state that one difference to other sport events is that it is not as visible to the society as other sports and has not yet reached a high level of public awareness. In contrary to “Saturday sport”, Paralympic sport is almost unknown to general public and only persons with some kind of affiliation with disabled persons really know about it. The level of awareness of Paralympic Games is significant lower than that of most sports. A few sponsors also mentioned the difference between attitudes of Olympic and Paralympic athletes.

### **Ways of Improvement**

#### ***Opportunities***

The companies/organizations describe the attractive features of Paralympic sponsorship as follows: a) the Paralympic Games offer more than just a corporate angle b) the Paralympic Games have a strong community perspective. This gives the sponsoring companies/organizations the opportunity to associate themselves with this event and present themselves as a “caring corporate citizen” c) since they are attached to the Olympic Games they offer the sponsoring company the opportunity to give its Olympic Sponsorship a “longer live”, to extend the period it leverages its Olympic program (60-day event) d) the Paralympians’ stories, their attitude of overcoming difficulties and diversity and striving for excellence. These characteristics make them interesting for companies/organizations who want to use parallels with business and everyday life e) the companies/organizations can use the Paralympic Games in staff incentive and trade motivation programs f) it can offer them a commercial benefit g) it is a good cause.

In general, the companies/organizations believe that Paralympic Games offer some very positive and very defined traits. Although these traits differ in a way from general sport sponsorship, they believe that if the company is in a position to use these traits in a creative and effective way it can offer most valuable benefits.

#### ***Difficulties***

The companies/organizations described the difficulties of Paralympic sponsorship as follows: a) many people are unaware of Paralympic sport and do not know what exactly it is b) low spectator numbers and limited TV audience. This has a negative impact on sponsorship since sponsors seek brand recognition and promotion through their sponsorship c) the timing of the Paralympics since they are happening exactly after the Olympic Games. Most sponsors who are also connected with the Olympic Games are committing a large part of their sponsorship and promotion budget either for their Olympic sponsorship contract or for the necessary “leveraging” of the sponsorship through advertisements etc. Therefore they don’t have the necessary funds available. Although the Paralympic Games are an attractive event, in comparison with its Olympic counterpart it is unavoidable that the Paralympics will be short of funding d) the disabled athletes believe that the community does not want to watch their sport on television or in the sporting venues (something that is not true since especially the Australian community has a very strong interest).

Generally, all sponsors see the Paralympic Games as an event with a very positive image, which they are more than happy to associate themselves with. However since every company assesses sponsorship funding very strictly, and return of

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investment is eminent, the above-described facts let the Paralympic Games despite their very positive image look more unattractive than other events with bigger coverage and public interest.

### ***Possibilities of improvement***

Most sponsors have also the perception that Paralympic sponsorship will grow in the future. It is something new but however has characteristics that will enable it to establish itself in the sports world. Companies realize that “it has value and adds value to the company”, as one sponsor executive/representatives underlined. Paralympic sponsorship will continue to grow once the profile of the Paralympic Games will be lifted and this will happen after the Sydney Paralympic Games. One of the most mentioned factors was the extend of media coverage. Once this parameter has improved Paralympic Sponsorship will be much more attractive.

### ***Required changes***

A significant number of sponsors stated their need for further information and education on Paralympic Sponsorship. Since it is something new, and because of the fact that many sponsors signed on because of their affiliation with the Olympic Games, many did not know much about the Paralympic Games but also how to “exploit” their involvement. They demanded education on the opportunities and chances that they can create with their involvement. Many sponsors did not cater to plan for their Paralympic involvement and did not assign any budget for the leveraging of their Paralympic involvement.

Finally parallels were drawn between the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games underlining that the International Paralympic Committee has no similar developed marketing program as the International Olympic Committee has. This would include the opportunity for a sponsor to cooperate with more than one Paralympic Games. By inaugurating a program similar, probably in a smaller range, to the TOP program of the IOC the Paralympic Games could cooperate with sponsors for a longer period of time and offer them the opportunity for a long-term involvement. In the eyes of some sponsors this would improve the sponsorship opportunities for the Paralympic Games. The agreement between the IPC and WeMedia for a period of two Paralympic Games demonstrates that there already exists a need for long-term cooperation between companies and the IPC.

### ***Future***

Almost all sponsors stated that they believe that Paralympic Sponsorship offers a good opportunity for the future. Starting from the belief that the Paralympic Games offer a good value for their sponsors and because most of their marketing efforts were fulfilled during the time of the interview, most sponsor representatives expressed their satisfaction about the progress of their involvement. Especially sponsors which were also involved in the Olympic Games lined out that their Paralympic sponsorship was not so complicated and more flexible than their Olympic involvement.

### ***Change of Awareness***

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Many sponsors stated that they are more involved in Paralympic sport since the start of their sponsorship. Additionally they have gained a deeper knowledge of Paralympic sport. Moreover with the knowledge on Paralympic sports but also through Paralympic Athletes who are participating in programs by the companies or are working through Athlete support programs in the companies, general awareness and knowledge of Paralympic sport and Paralympic athletes has increased. This fact has led some companies to continue their involvement throughout the Paralympic Games.

### **Extent of Leveraging of Sponsorship**

#### ***Amount of Leverage / Advertising in conjunction with the sponsorship***

Among the sponsoring companies/organizations that were interviewed some had launched advertising campaigns for the Paralympics. McDonalds had started some advertising combined with its Olympic Sponsorship, while Telstra and Energy Australia were doing print media and radio, billboard advertising and Mail outs. It should be noted that very few companies (except of McDonalds, Holden, Telstra and Westpac) were doing any television advertising. This could mean that either there was no long term planning to include television advertisements or it was seen as too costly. There is also a possibility that sponsors want to try to use other media to channel their advertising effort to more defined target populations. A significant number of sponsors did not plan to make any advertising in order to support their Paralympic sponsorship. As stated most of them, they did not do any advertisements because they did not plan any budget to leverage their Paralympic sponsorship since they catered only for their Olympic involvement.

#### ***Financial Factors***

The cost of the sponsorship definitely plays an important role in any sponsorship decision. As most sponsors commented an important fact for any sponsorship decision is the return of investment they can receive from it. Therefore for most of the sponsors the relatively low cost of the Paralympic sponsorship played an important role for their decision. Most sponsors agreed that the relatively low cost of the Paralympic sponsorship compared to the Olympic sponsorship had an important impact on their decision to take on the Paralympic sponsorship as well. Although many stated that it still was a significant amount and therefore they had to consider their decision well in order to gain equivalent benefits. The companies/organizations sponsoring only the Paralympic Games stated that the cost of the Paralympic sponsorship was significant and relatively high. In contrast to the very large and often multinational companies/organizations who are sponsoring the Olympic and the Paralympic Games, the sponsors who only supported the Paralympics were mostly medium sized companies/organizations who are affiliated or offer services for disabled, a government agency to prevent motor accidents but also a nationwide supermarket chain.

As the research shows the Paralympic Games are not in a position to expect similar financial benefits from sponsorship as its Olympic counterpart. The limited media coverage of the Paralympics, the lower public participation and the lower importance in the public sphere nationally or internationally can be seen as reasons for the lower commercial interest by sponsoring companies. However the research has showed that Paralympic sponsorship is of importance to the sponsoring companies. If the Paralympic movement can improve its position by taking steps to increase coverage and publicity and educate people on the Paralympic Games it will surely progress the opportunities for sponsorship.

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The introduction of a marketing program respective to the Olympic Marketing program could ensure the research and improvement of all these factors.

### **Interchange Olympic – Paralympic Sponsorship**

At the questions if the sponsorship executives believed that the motives of sponsorship were similar to those of the Olympics the answers range. Many sponsors admit that they sponsor the Paralympic Games for similar reasons like the Olympic Games but it is eminent in almost all sponsors that another factor is also very important, the community perspective. They believe that they are helping the community by their support to such an event. Words like good cause, moral obligation or social responsibility suggest that there is a different dimension in their Paralympic involvement than there is in their Olympic involvement. Importantly, many sponsors underline that this perception has changed and they have started to see the traits of the Paralympics, starting to use them for commercial programs. However the majority of sponsors believe that the motives are different or at least were different at the moment of their sponsorship agreement.

### ***Relation between Olympic and Paralympic sponsorship***

It is a relation that has as much positive as well as negative effects on Paralympic Games sponsorship. As many sponsors stated there is a twofold effect in the relation between Olympic and Paralympic Games sponsorship. The negative has to do with the timing of both games. Both events are held at the same period. Since the Olympic Games are a very costly sponsorship and marketing project they are absorbing all funds and resources of the company and therefore there is hardly anything left for the Paralympic Games. On the other hand because both games are associated, the Paralympic Games have the opportunity to approach all Olympic sponsors and receive from most of them sponsorship. However the Paralympic sponsorship is often handled as “cheap” add on to the Olympic involvement. Additionally many sponsors are handling their Paralympic Games as an opportunity to extend the marketing period of their Olympic Games operation into 60 days (Olympic and Paralympic Period). This was also amplified by the stand that the Organizing committee took from the beginning that it is a 60-day event and both Games will be integrated. Many sponsors however stated that they would not be sure if they would be involved with the Paralympic Games if they would not be held with the Olympic Games and they would have not negotiated with an organization adducted to the Olympic Organizing Committee.

### **Niche Marketing and Special Populations**

Most sponsors try to reach specific target populations but these are not the disabled. Most are aiming at families, elderly, and schoolchildren. A special case is that of the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW. This government agency tries to use its Paralympic sponsorship and it's sponsorship of the Paralympic torch relay in order to promote safer driving. It's promotion aims mostly at young male drivers. Only one company of the interviewed was using its Paralympic sponsorship in order to reach a niche-marketing target. Except of the other two disability specific sponsors (Otto Bock and WeMedia), all other companies that were interviewed did not have a niche marketing perspective involved in their sponsorship. It seems that at the moment disability specific companies do not have the size to sponsor such an event as the Paralympic Games. This parameter may

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change however in the future with more globalized markets and companies that are offering services to people with disabilities in many countries.

### **General involvement in Paralympic Sport**

As shown, many sponsors seem to have had some kind of involvement in disability sport before. Especially the more disability-connected companies stated that they have some involvement of any kind in disability sport. Some were sponsoring the Australian Paralympic Committee or the Australian Paralympic Team some others were involved with Wheelchair Sport Australia. Almost all companies stated that they will have a stronger involvement in Paralympic sport in the future. They claimed that this will happen for two reasons: firstly, the insight and understanding that they have gained through their involvement for the Paralympic Games and secondly because most believed that they could use Paralympic Athletes in seminars and functions to reach their customers or employees better.

The above suggests that this sponsorship involvement can be an important step in order to consolidate Paralympic sport sponsorship in Australia. Through the publicity gained through the Paralympic Games, but also through educational programs that were running during the past years, the Paralympic movement seems to have laid the base and has educated the public and the business world to see it as something that is worth to sponsor. The companies seem to have discovered gains for their purposes. Through the relatively low cost compared with other sports or sport events and the specific gains this type of sponsorship offers for the image and community relations of the companies, the Paralympic Games look like a truly unique opportunity. The companies seem to have reacted to that and are embracing Paralympic sport more actively.

### **CONCLUSION**

Following the examination of the adequate literature and in combination with the findings from the interviews conducted with representatives of sponsoring companies for the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games, the research lead to the following conclusions:

- a) the Paralympic Games seem to attract sponsorship on a different basis than the Olympic Games.
- b) most sponsors who are sponsoring the Paralympic Games are more concerned about corporate citizenship matters, social image in the community and their companies profile than in immediate commercial benefits.
- c) the strengths of Paralympic sponsorship seems to be the integrity and strength of image that it offers which has a very high impact on populations like families, older people and school children.
- d) its weaknesses are the limited media coverage that is offered during the Paralympic Games and the limited promotion the sponsors can get because of that fact.
- e) most sponsors consider the Paralympic Games valuable for their sponsorship.
- f) the Paralympic Games do not receive similar sponsorship according to their size, because lack significantly in media coverage, public interest and funding.
- g) a general positive publicity has played a significant role for the sponsorship decisions since the Sponsors could use it.
- h) sponsoring companies show a big interest in Paralympic sponsorship once they are informed and educated about its opportunities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Future researchers interested in covering similar subjects or answering analogous questions could research fields as:

- The use of sponsorship in Disability sport on local and national level etc.
- Follow the present research for a different Paralympic Games. (e.g. Athens 2004 Paralympic Games) or compare between different games.
- The evaluation of the possibilities and opportunities that Paralympic Games offer in order to develop Paralympic sport but also to create a basis of commercial supporters.

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Interviews were conducted with representatives of the following companies: AMP, Bonds, Energy Australia, Westpac, Motor Accidents Authority, Otto Bock and Shell. Additionally interviews were conducted with a representative from the SPOC Marketing Department.

### **Χορηγία και Παραολυμπιακοί Αγώνες: Κίνητρα, Στόχοι και Λόγοι που Επηρεάζουν τις Αποφάσεις Εταιρειών να Χορηγήσουν στους Παραολυμπιακούς Αγώνες**

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### Περίληψη

Σκοπός της παρούσης μελέτης ήταν να αναλυθεί η έκταση και η μορφή που έχει πάρει η χορηγία στους Παραολυμπιακούς αγώνες, πώς η χορηγία στους Ολυμπιακούς αγώνες επηρεάζει τη χορηγία στους Παραολυμπιακούς αγώνες, καθώς και πώς αυτή σχετίζεται με τις αποφάσεις για χορηγία στους Ολυμπιακούς αγώνες. Εγινε ανασκόπηση της σχετικής βιβλιογραφίας, καθώς και των εφημερίδων και των άρθρων των περιοδικών που καλύπτουν το θέμα της χορηγίας των Ολυμπιακών και των Παραολυμπιακών αγώνων. Διενεργήθηκε ένας αριθμός συνεντεύξεων σε βάθος με διοικητικά στελέχη των κυριότερων επιχειρήσεων/οργανισμών που διετέλεσαν χορηγοί των Παραολυμπιακών αγώνων, καθώς και με διοικητικά στελέχη του SPOC (οργανωτική επιτροπή των Παραολυμπιακών αγώνων του Σίδνεϊ). Τους υποβλήθηκαν ερωτήσεις σχετικά με τα κίνητρα που τους οδήγησαν να εμπλακούν στους Παραολυμπιακούς αγώνες, τα αναμενόμενα οφέλη, τους οικονομικούς παράγοντες που υπεισέρχονται, την υποστήριξη της χορηγίας μέσω της διαφήμισης, τη σχέση με το Ολυμπιακό κίνημα, καθώς και αν πιστεύουν ότι η οικονομική τους συνεισφορά ενισχύει το προφίλ τους και αυξάνει τα οφέλη τους. Τα ευρήματα της μελέτης συνηγορούν στο ότι υπάρχει μια μικρή διαφορά στη φύση της χορηγίας στους Παραολυμπιακούς αγώνες. Υπάρχει ενδιαφέρον για συγκεκριμένες αγορές για τους Παραολυμπιακούς αγώνες, αλλά κυρίως το Παραολυμπιακό κίνημα προσφέρει ένα σημαντικό όχημα για να φτάσει στις οικογένειες, στους ηλικιωμένους και στα παιδιά, και να εμφανιστεί η επιχείρηση με ένα υπεύθυνο πρόσωπο στους πολίτες. Οι Παραολυμπιακοί αγώνες δεν απολαμβάνουν χορηγίες ανάλογα με το μέγεθός τους, γιατί είναι ελάχιστη η έκθεση στο κοινό των Παραολυμπιακών αγώνων και ειδικότερα των αθλητών των Παραολυμπιακών αγώνων. Το ασήμαντα μικρό κόστος τους σε σύγκριση με τους Ολυμπιακούς αγώνες είναι ένας σημαντικός λόγος για να δεχτούν χορηγίες, ενώ οι περισσότερες από τις επιχειρήσεις/οργανισμούς θεωρούν τη χορηγία σαν μια καλή επένδυση. Τα κύρια συμπεράσματα ήταν ότι οι Παραολυμπιακοί αγώνες προσελκύουν χορηγίες σε μια διαφορετική βάση απ' ό,τι οι Ολυμπιακοί αγώνες. Οι περισσότεροι χορηγοί ενδιαφέρονται πιο πολύ για το πρόσωπο που θα εμφανίσουν στην κοινωνία και για το προφίλ της επιχείρησης γενικότερα, παρά για άμεσα εμπορικά οφέλη. Η δύναμη της χορηγίας στους Παραολυμπιακούς αγώνες φαίνεται να είναι η εικόνα της τιμιότητας που προσδίδει στην επιχείρηση/οργανισμό, η οποία ασκεί μεγάλη επίδραση σε ορισμένες πληθυσμιακές ομάδες. Αδυναμίες της αποτελούν η περιορισμένη προβολή που γνωρίζουν σαν αντάλλαγμα οι χορηγοί λόγω της περιορισμένης κάλυψής των Παραολυμπιακών αγώνων από τα μέσα μαζικής επικοινωνίας. Οι επιχειρήσεις/οργανισμοί δείχνουν μεγάλο ενδιαφέρον στη χορηγία των Παραολυμπιακών αγώνων εφόσον ενημερωθούν και γνωρίσουν τις ευκαιρίες που προσφέρουν.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: παραολυμπιακοί αγώνες, χορηγία, άτομα με ειδικές ανάγκες

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