

The passion of the fans

Octagon research shows sponsors how to unlock the triggers that positively impact a fan's interaction with their passion. Phase II of Octagon's proprietary research project, Passion Scan has recently been completed and uncovered some valuable information with regards to extracting maximum value from sponsorship activation campaigns around specific "passion platforms."

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The key to any passion branding initiative, is to align with an activity that one's target customers are passionate about, and then to leverage the association in such a way that the brand adds value to the fan's experience of their passion.

Passion Scan Phase I identified the sports, causes and cultural activities that South Africans were most passionate about whereas Passion Scan Phase II explored the triggers that impact on a fan's enjoyment of their passion and highlighted where sponsors should focus their attention to achieve more from their sponsorships.

The findings from Phase II identified many key insights for specific brands around passion platforms that they sponsor as well as these general insights:

Finding an appropriate link for your brand and the sponsored property results in much higher recall than run-of-the-mill sponsorships where the sponsor's presence did not impact consumers in a memorable and credible way. Where the passion is integral to people's lives – where there is a deep and lasting connection that spans all stages of their life – as is the case with gospel music, more than ever, the sponsorship must be REAL, making a real difference to the growth and development of young talent. Furthermore, sponsors operating in this arena must not erode the integrity of the sponsorship through over-commercialisation.

Geographical location can sometimes reveal different fan habits, ie, attending a soccer match in the Western Cape is much more of a family outing than in Gauteng, where attending a game tends to be a male dominated affair. Consumers value personal engagement and are more receptive to sponsors who take the time to address their needs and desires personally, ie, personalised invites to an exclusive event. Consumers also love to receive unexpected free gifts, especially those that have a lasting value. Consumers in the lower LSM groups tend to be less critical of sponsor involvement but prefer sponsors to address basic needs rather than sponsors bringing them once-off, "nice-to-have" events. Across the spectrum, the cellphone is an ever-present communications tool and most consumers are open to promotional SMS campaigns, provided they have given their permission upfront.

It is only through a thorough understanding of the way fans feed their passion for a particular activity, that a brand can truly harness the power of fan emotion as a means through which to enhance brand equity.

Passion Scan Phase II was preceded by a quantitative study which investigated the power of passion as a marketing tool. This gave insight into the sports, causes and cultural activities that South Africans were most passionate and also proved Octagon's claim that when a sponsorship is correctly attributed to a particular brand, the positive spin off for that brand is that, as people's passion for the activity sponsored increases, usage can be enhanced – according to Passion Scan, by an average of 3.25% and sometimes as much as 17.5%.

Passion Scan Phase I was conducted by AC Nielsen in February 2003 as part of their omnibus survey, using a sample of 2480 adults across South Africa. The questionnaire covered levels of interest or passion for a range of sports, cultural activities and causes; sponsorship awareness levels; usage of selected sponsoring brands and services and statements concerning consumer attitudes towards sponsorship and advertising. Phase II was conducted by Freedthinkers and consisted of qualitative mega-focus groups of people each around specific passions such as Gospel Music, Soccer, Comedy, Dance Music and Kids Development / Learning to establish the triggers that impact on the way people interact with these passion and its sponsors and the primary drivers of their loyalty.

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