



Sponsorship and marketing of food and beverages in national and regional sporting organisations

RESEARCH RESULTS SUMMARY

STUDY METHODS

Eighteen key informant Interviews were conducted between August and November 2010 with senior managers from national and regional sporting organisations (NSO/RSOs) and organisations supporting the delivery of sport in New Zealand (supporting organisations) including Sport and Recreation New Zealand, the Health Sponsorship Council and Regional Sports Trusts.

All interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide which explored the ways food and non-alcoholic beverage companies are involved in sport, food and beverage policies in sports organisations, use of sponsorship funds, food and non-alcoholic beverages availability, impact of removing food sponsorship from sport, and participant views on regulatory approaches to food and non-alcoholic beverage sponsorship.

Analysis of the interview transcripts aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of informants' views regarding the food and beverage environment in New Zealand sport and the effect food and beverage company sponsorship has. This summary represents a qualitative assessment of informants' opinions not a quantitative assessment of their views.

KEY RESULTS

Extent to which food and beverage companies are involved in marketing in sport

Most informants considered food and beverages companies undertook limited marketing via New Zealand sport and where this occurred it was limited to a few high profile sports. Informants saw these sports as more advantaged in all sponsorship categories because of their high profile.

Half the NSO/RSOs informants stated that their sport had no food or beverage sponsorship.

Sponsorships identified included: a national junior skills programme; a national team and volunteer rewards programme; sponsorships by a soft drink company and a cereal manufacturer; and sponsorship of player of the day certificates for junior club teams.

Sponsor Fit

Most NSO/RSOs informants and several of those from supporting organisations described how sports carefully considered appropriateness of a sponsor and potential negative impacts it could create to ensure a good fit with their sport that brought mutual benefits.

Benefits of Sponsorship

All informants identified the main benefit of sponsorship as financial, enabling more resource allocation to the sport. A small number of informants noted the provision of equipment to clubs, or the opportunity for clubs to provide something at no cost such as tickets to sponsored events or vouchers for player of the day.

Food and beverage policies

No informants were aware of national or regional sporting organisations that have a policy on marketing or provision of food.



Foods available at sports

All informants identified a similar food supply at sports events and commented on foods high in fat and sugar such as cakes, potato chips, hot fries, pies, savouries, sausage rolls and snack bars. While informants considered players and spectators still wanted these foods several commented on changes to the food supplied at sports events and thought this now included healthier items such as sandwiches and fruit.

Informants from sports that managed the food supply at events discussed how changing demands from spectators had influenced what was provided, resulting in a wider range and healthier choices.

Organisation and management of the food supply

Decisions about the food and beverages provided at events were made by either the sport itself, by the venues independently of the sport, or event organisers including regional associations.

When the venue organised the food informants (from sports that utilised stadia) said that they had no influence over the foods provided which food vendors and/or the stadia or facility determined.

All informants with responsibility for managing food provision at their events discussed the importance of providing varied foods including healthier options.

Use of sponsorship funds

Most informants described how sponsorship funding was usually incorporated into the general funds and used to assist in paying for varied costs associated with sport.

Impact of removing sponsorship by food and beverage companies

Only a few informants saw the potential impact of removing sponsorship as significant and most thought there would be little or no impact on sport if it did occur. Any impact would be financial, but food and beverage sponsorship was not perceived as a major source of income. Informants generally thought the impact at club level as likely to be less apparent than at national or regional levels.

Regulation of food and beverage sponsorship in sport

When asked what they thought about regulating the marketing of food and beverages in sport slightly more informants viewed this idea negatively. These informants thought regulation would reduce the sports' income and hence what they could provide to participants. Several also thought regulation would increase the burden on volunteers which could in turn reduce the number of people willing to assist in this way.

Informants who saw regulation as a positive concept saw a potential for regulation to limit the marketing of unhealthy foods while enabling those foods and beverages that were healthy to continue to be marketed through sport, and helping to deliver a stronger message about healthy eating.

Those who supported regulation thought it could limit the marketing of unhealthy food while enabling the marketing of healthy foods and beverages. Overall they thought this could deliver a stronger message about healthy eating.

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