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“Reimagining the traditional sports sponsorship model through bespoke partnership”

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the sports sponsorship landscape and practices in Papua New Guinea, focusing on the current practices and attitudes of past, current, and potential sponsors of the National Olympic Committee at the publication time of this research paper. Through a series of qualitative semi structured interviews, key themes such as governance, community engagement, brand alignment, and return on investment were identified.

These findings indicate a strong emphasis on governance and accountability, with sponsors prioritizing sporting bodies that demonstrate strong financial responsibility and transparency. Community engagement emerged as another recurring key theme, highlighting the importance of youth development and social well-being through sports. Additionally, the interviewed sponsors sought alignment between their brand values and the team or event being sponsored, emphasizing the need for measurable return on their investment.

Challenges include inconsistent governance practices among some sporting organizations, missed opportunities for utilizing athlete ambassadors, and inadequate communication of sponsorship impacts through reporting. Recommendations include developing structured sponsorship proposals, enhancing governance frameworks, and fostering long term relationships with sponsors to improve engagement and ongoing support.

This research aims to provide actionable insights for the National Olympic Committee and National Federations to enhance their sponsorship strategies, ensuring mutual benefits for the sponsor and the sporting community in Papua New Guinea.

ABSTRAIT

Cette étude examine le paysage et les pratiques de commandites sportives en Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, mettant l'accent sur les pratiques actuelles et les attitudes de commanditaires passés, actuels et potentiels du Comité national olympique au moment de la publication de ce rapport de recherche. Par une série d'entrevues qualitatives semi-structurées, des thèmes clés comme la gouvernance, l'engagement communautaire, l'alignement de la marque, et le retour sur l'investissement ont été identifiés.

Ces conclusions mettent en évidence l'importance accordée à la gouvernance et l'imputabilité, alors que les commanditaires priorisent les organismes sportifs qui font preuve d'une grande responsabilité et d'une grande transparence financière. L'engagement communautaire a émergé comme un autre thème clé récurrent, mettant en lumière l'importance du développement des jeunes et le mieux-être social par l'entremise du sport. De plus, les commanditaires interviewés cherchaient un alignement entre les valeurs de la marque et l'équipe ou l'événement commandité, mettant l'accent sur le besoin d'un retour mesurable sur leur investissement.

Les défis comprennent des pratiques de gouvernance incohérentes parmi certaines organisations sportives, des occasions ratées d'utiliser les athlètes ambassadeurs et la communication inadéquate des répercussions de la commandite dans les rapports. Les recommandations comprennent l'élaboration de propositions structurées de commandites et de cadres de gouvernance améliorés, ainsi que la promotion de relations à long terme avec les commanditaires afin d'améliorer l'engagement et le soutien continu.

Cette recherche a pour but d'offrir des perspectives réalisables pour le Comité national olympique et les fédérations nationales afin d'améliorer leurs stratégies de commandite, garantissant un bénéfice mutuel pour le commanditaire et la communauté sportive en Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée.

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INTRODUCTION

Sport plays a pivotal role in society, and Papua New Guinea (PNG) is no exception to any other country wherein it shapes the community, cultural, and economic realities of the nation. Apart from generating national pride and unity, the utilization of sports as a platform by businesses necessitates further study. Corporates generate engagement through the promotion of their products and services through sponsorships, seeking alignment of values through initiatives such as community development, youth empowerment and social impact, which has been of great significance in the sports sponsorship space.

When looking at sports sponsorship one must view the transaction as being more than a mere financial contract as it represents the opportunity for long term partnerships to enhance corporate brand visibility, community initiatives, and support for grassroots development as a result of the sponsors doing business in a particular area. However, sports sponsorship can differ by businesses due to their varying attitudes and practices in relation to the decision making processes when it comes to sponsorships and their considerations.

This research paper examines within the Papua New Guinea context the current practices, attitudes, and decision making processes of past, current, and potential sponsors of sports organizations within Papua New Guinea with the key focus on identifying the key themes that shaped the sponsorship decisions. This paper also explores how these themes can inform improvement practices for the National Olympic Committee (NOC) and National Federations (NF) to strengthen their appeal to sponsors and sustain long term partnerships.

The Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee (PNGOC) has a long standing history of engaging with corporate and government partners to support its mission. As of 2025, the PNGOC has 14 corporate and governments state owned entity partners. Over the past decade (2015 - 2025) the NOC has averaged 13 sponsors per year, with an average annual sponsorship contribution of PGK 8,305,188.45 (USD 2,002,027). The highest number of sponsors was recorded in 2023 with 18 partners contributing through grants and sponsorships. The year 2015 stands out as the most lucrative, with sponsorships and grants totaling PGK 25,541,023 (USD 6,156,852) coinciding with PNG hosting the 2015 Pacific Games in Port Moresby. This pattern reflects a trend where sponsorships peak during major event years, particularly the Pacific Games, as these events offer maximum exposure and engagement opportunities for sponsors.

Among National Federations (NFs), several sports have demonstrated particular success in attracting sponsorship in Papua New Guinea. Cricket PNG, PNG Boxing, PNG Rugby Union, and especially Rugby League have secured significant sponsorships due to their domestic and international achievements and growth. Rugby league, PNG's national sport, has been the most successful, recently securing a landmark \$600 million AUD investment to join the Australian Rugby League competition with its own franchise team in 2028 . This deal, spanning 10 years, is heavily backed by the PNG government, is not only a testament to the sport's popularity but also a strategic move in sports diplomacy and foreign policy. However, this concentrated support for rugby league has created challenges for other sports as it draws a substantial share of available sponsorship and government funding, leaving a smaller pool for other sporting codes to access. This is due to the condition of the agreement where PNG has to be able to support the team itself after 10 years in the competition.

Sponsorship in PNG is not without its controversies. The NOC has faced challenges related to government funding decisions, which directly impacts the ability of businesses to allocate sponsorship funding due the announcements made in advance (Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee, 2024), however, funding is deferred or not received for preparations and participation at games. A notable incident occurred in 2024, when the NOC publicly called for transparency from the government after it failed to disburse K 3.24 million in grants, budgeted and approved for, and specifically intended for the 2023 Solomon Islands Pacific games for Team PNG. Similar issues have affected NFs, following suspensions by the regional body with local associations and clubs questioning the distribution and utilization of sponsorship funds received towards achieving the sports objectives, highlighting the need for improved governance and accountability (The National, 2024).

To remain competitive and attractive to sponsors, the NOC must be innovative and develop its existing inventory of assets, which include:

1. Brand and intellectual property rights – Use of official logos and emblems in sponsored campaigns
2. Sponsor designation – depending on the support, the agreement can indicate the use of official designations such as official partner of the NOC or proud sponsor or support sponsor of the NOC

3. Access to Team PNG Athletes – Opportunities for sponsors to engage athletes for advertising, appearances, and endorsements (subject to athlete consent and rights)
4. Access to Images and Videos – the provision of rights to use images and videos of Team PNG athletes
5. Athlete Stories – Unique narratives that sponsors can leverage for emotional and cultural marketing
6. Naming rights – the NOC has several events throughout the year which it offers rights to sponsors such as the Fun Run event and Prime Ministers Corporate Golf Challenge
7. Event Branding and Signage – branding opportunities at the events, team announcements, programs, farewell and welcome events/functions and presentations.
8. On-site activations - sponsors are given spaces to setup booths and displays at events and programs of Team PNG to engage with the public and fans to promote their products and services and collect data
9. T-Shirt Auctions – branding opportunities on fun run shirts, a unique PNGOC initiative
10. Media Coverage – sponsor acknowledgements and press releases, news articles, and interviews
11. Digital and Social Media – sponsors logos and message are featured on the NOC's official website, social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and X), and the NOCs electronic newsletters.
12. Print Media – inclusion in press releases and annual reports
13. Category Exclusivity – Exclusive rights for certain categories, such as official hotel or airline partner of Team PNG

The NOC recognizes the growing importance of digital technology and sponsorship value. As of July 2025, the NOC maintains an active presence on multiple digital platforms, including its official website and social media channels (Facebook, Instagram,X/Twitter) which has a combined reach of 101,000 as follows:

- Facebook; PNGOC -11,044 followers
- Facebook; Team PNG - 76,701 followers
- Instagram; PNGOC - 1173 followers
- Instagram; Team PNG - 3897 followers
- TikTok; PNGOC - 1188 followers
- TikTok; Team PNG - 2194 followers

- LinkedIn: PNGOC - 4030 follow his
- WhatsApp for Business - 66 followers
- YouTube: PNGOC - 67 subscribers

This digital footprint allows sponsors to reach a wide and engage audience through a variety of channels, including targeted campaigns, branded content, and interactive activations. Notably, Team PNG's Facebook page alone has over 76,000 followers, reflecting the strong national interest in Olympic and elite sports. The NOC's presence on emerging platforms like TikTok and established networks like LinkedIn further broaden its reach for both youth and professional audiences. A notable area of improvement in the digital platform space is the NOC website and existing email records it has to leverage for sponsorship activations and targeted email campaigns. These need to be analysed and centralised for sponsors to leverage.

Understanding the NOC and PNG context, this study is guided by the three research aims: (1) to analyze the current practices and attitudes of past, current, and potential sponsors towards sports sponsorship in PNG; (2) to explore the decision making processes of sponsors in selecting sports organisations and events to support; and (3) to identify improvement practices that the National Olympic Committee and National Federations can implement to attract and retain sponsorships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been an evolution of sports sponsorship throughout the years. The traditional format started with simple brand visibility which then evolved into the use of emotions and gradually to the current models we see today which is based on performance outcomes. This gradual change to performance-based sponsorship is largely thanks to the changing technologies, and in particular the rise of digital platforms and the need to share the risk between the sponsor and sport property which has seen an increase in the demand for return on investment and accountability (Kim et al., 2015; Walraven et al., 2016). The purpose of this literature review is to explore the changing trends in sports sponsorship from the traditional model of sports sponsorship to the current model of performance-based sponsorship which is tailored to each sponsors needs whilst considering the emerging trends and gaps in the reviewed literature within the context of sponsorship in Papua New Guinea.

TRADITIONAL SPORTS SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship in Papua New Guinea, in particular at the National Olympic Committee level was obtained through personal networks, and more commonly through the cultural system known as the wantok system, wherein people who share the same language, tribe and clan can influence life, business and government exchanges, a similar concept that would be practiced in other parts of the Pacific and to some extent other regions and parts of the world as a method of obtaining sponsorship. This traditional sponsorship involved the receipt of financial incentives in exchange for the sponsors brand to be made public and associated with the sponsored athlete, team or event (Dees, Bennett, & Villegas, 2008; Dietl et al., 2017; Irwin, 1995; Kwon & Shin, 2020; Olson, 2010; Speed & Thompson, 2000). The purpose of this traditional model was to exchange financial incentives to transfer loyalty to the sponsoring organisation which is reasoned by McCarville and Copeland (1994) in their theory of exchange of sports sponsorship.

Over time this exchange moved from cash incentives to the inclusion of other beneficial contributions from the sponsor such as management skills, technical competencies and access to networks, products and services (Buser et al., 2022; Cornwell et al., 2024; Fechner et al., 2022) that would be of benefit to both the sport property and sponsor under the exchange theory.

Additional sponsorship objectives included increasing a company's image, building relations, enhancing employee relations, increasing marketing share and increasing corporate awareness, all of which are criterias set by the sponsoring company that influences their decision making process (Greenhalgh, 2010).

Abratt, Clayton and Pitt (1987) in their work stressed that the traditional sports sponsorship format allowed sponsors to reach a broader demographic, whilst providing opportunities for media coverage to enhance their image perception to the general public. Such publicity is important for companies to generate goodwill by staying connected with local communities in addition to raising awareness of the companies products and services which is one of the major primary motivators of sports sponsorship as a known marketing tool. This is especially important if a company is looking to alter its corporate image or build good will within the community it operates in, and to reassure its stakeholders and counter any adverse publicity (Datson et.al, 2021; Greenhalgh, 2010;)

It is to be noted that these investment levels vary by company due to their respective marketing or public relations budgets.

With the changes in time and growing expectations on good governance and return on investment, companies are now beginning to question the effectiveness of the traditional method of sponsorship (Bogina et al., 2022; Forster, 2006; Johnston & Paulsen, 2014; Kim et al., 2015). A well known case on good governance in sports surrounds one of the world's largest sports organisations FIFA who were caught in a corruption scandal that indicted 14 of its top officials on racketeering, wire fraud and money laundering as their major sponsors called for reforms and threatened to withdraw their sponsorship as a result of the scandal (Bodewig et al., 2016). Recent assessment of the sports operating environment by Price Waterhouse Coopers (2025) indicates that metrics such as social media likes, comments, shares are no longer a viable and adequate measure of performance that sponsors require to aid their decisions making, contray to this claim, in current practice this still remains a valid metric of measurement, and is subjective based on the the entity requirements (Bogina et al., 2022; Burton et al., 2024; McCullough & Trail, 2023).

EMERGING TRENDS IN SPORTS SPONSORSHIPS

Like entrepreneurs who take advantage of the upcoming trends to make a quick profit, sport properties like the National Olympic Committees must look at differentiation and bespoke sponsorship through unique methods and strategies rather than the traditional logo placements and name announcements at corporate events (Asada et al., 2023; Bogina et al., 2022; Dees et al., 2018; Kwon & Shin., 2020).

Organisations are now taking the risk away from the traditional sponsorship model where financial incentives are provided up front and replacing the sponsorship with a performance-based agreement. Under this performance-based agreement, the sport property, the entity being sponsored, is required to meet on agreed upon measurable outcomes that meets both the sponsor and sport propertys strategic objectives of the sponsorship agreement (Fechner, Filo & Woratschek, 2022; Kim,, Y., Lee, H. W., Magnusen, M. J., & Kim, M., 2015; Walraven, Koning, & Los, 2016). Whilst there is not set format on what the performance-based agreement

should look like, it can cover objectives such as increased brand awareness, enhanced fan engagement, or improved organizational performance ("Sponsorship Valuation," 2022).

Another emerging terminology in the sports sponsorship space is the corporate social responsibility objectives of sponsors. This is where a sponsor and sport property jointly conduct a socially responsible activity with the goal of having a positive impact on its stakeholders that extend beyond the organisations economic interests (Asada et al., 2023; Batty et al., 2016; Datson & Ozuem, 2021). With this trend, sport properties must find the ideal fit between the sponsor and the requested for support for the athlete, team or event in consideration. There is a growing consensus that a lot of the partnership proposals tailored towards sponsors must be aimed at community enhancement initiatives (Batty et al., 2016; Datson & Ozuem, 2021; Irwin, Lachowetz, Cornwell & Clark, 2003; "Sponsorship Valuation," 2022.). When approaching the potential sponsor the mindset of the sport property should be around helping the sponsor achieve its corporate social responsibilities through the existing events and programs of the sport property.

There are a multitude of societal issues whereby the sponsor and sport property share mutual beliefs and values on improving through a shared initiative. These mutual initiatives can generate an enhanced image and association, and at the same time be a defense mechanism against criticism of the products the sponsor produces, provided both parties are mutually and genuinely invested in the shared initiative (Asada et al., 2023; Batty et al., 2016)

Additional categories in the field for sponsorship consideration include online gambling and electronic gaming or e-sports. In the United States there are recent legislation changes that have made it possible for these entities to sponsor teams and events. Whilst applicable in the United States, in Papua New Guinea, there is a government entity established to provide funding to sports from gaming revenue – the National Gaming Control Board (NGCB). In Papua New Guinea foreign betting agencies are established in country and have been given licences by the government entity the NGCB, whose function is to regulate all forms of gaming, monitor compliance of licenced operators and enforce penalties of illegal gambling. Moreover, the NGCB are responsible for the collection of all revenues, including taxes, levies, penalties and fees from the gaming industry and ensuring they are reinvested into public causes such as sports, however, there is no transparency in the form of website or annual reports from the NGCB as to the annual percentage of takings that is distributed to sports and other public

causes. Furthermore, in their research on the consumer segments within the e-sports environment, Huettermann, Trail, Pizzo, and Stallone (2023) discovered that these new users within the e-sport environment were difficult to reach under the old traditional sponsorship model as they only engage with content through the online platforms. These new users are predominantly younger participants within the 18-34 age range and engage exclusively through online platforms by consuming live streams, highlights, interacting with social media content creators and other fans on online digital channels. Under a traditional sports sponsorship model, there would be reliance on a physical presence at a venue/facility, selling of merchandise and attending events and media consumption where sponsors have the ability to showcase their branding. With e-sports and the new consumers this traditional sponsorship model is not available as users can utilise ad-blockers, skip commercials and expect personalized interactive experiences (Bresaola, 2023; Greenhalgh & Kim, 2024).

The Paris 2024 Olympic Games provided some great examples of sponsorship activation which is another emerging and popular metric of performance-based sponsorships. From the Coca Cola and Corona huts and booths through to the Powerade mindzone virtual reality experience, sponsorship activation is a new trend that must be considered as it allows for a unique and memorable experience for fans to live through personalized digital content, which is fundamentally different from the traditional marketing and arena signage (Buser et al., 2022; Bredikhina & Kunkel, 2022; Hickman, 2020; Navarro, 2024; Smith et al., 2016). Adding to this is Hickman (2020) who concluded that sponsorship activations are a strategy that is needed to create lasting memorability, which is something that cannot be obtained through simple television viewership, an experience that needs to be personalised. With the changing technologies and consumer preferences, it is important to keep up with the times and create meaningful and personalized experiences and content to remain relevant.

The challenge now will be for National Olympic Committees such as the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee to understand the emerging trends and needs of their sponsors to create bespoke sponsorship packages that incorporate some of these elements with businesses increasing their dependencies on data to drive decision making (Nick, 2021). From a practical point of view, the National Olympic Committee can offer sponsors the following assets – the NOC marks and symbols, the right of association with the national team and its athletes, access to official events, hospitality and VIP experiences, traditional media exposure, access to its digital and social media platforms, collaboration on short-form video and storytelling, support

for its community and grassroots engagement programs. The organisation will then have to look into its assets to offer to sponsors, current usage of its social and digital marketing channels, existing sponsorship agreement, its methods of data collection and management, storage and retrieval to meet the expectation and demands under the new models of performance-based sports sponsorships. By leveraging the unique assets of the NOC, the organisation can differentiate itself in the marketplace by building compelling programs and athlete stories to build emotional connections with sponsors, highlight unique opportunities for corporate social engagements through its existing programs, create meaningful experiences through on site sponsorship activations, leverage digital assets and social media engagement, develop content for sponsored events that can be shared online that extends beyond the physical location, reaching a broad viewership, build a stronger link to the NOC and existing social and cultural issues.

Burch et al. (2016) in their works identified and stressed that with the rapid changes and engagement in technology, entities such as the NOC needs to be innovative and aggressive in an effort to educate and ultimately attract sponsors, donors, volunteers and partners to provide the value, reach and data required. These digital platforms offer an inexpensive method to enhance brand awareness, reach out to more fans and stakeholders, and retain public interest during non-Olympic games periods. They further stated that despite knowing this need, many do not employ their social and digital platforms in this manner to achieve these objectives and this could be due to a lack of understanding and determining what motivates sponsors, clear targeting and orientation, internet marketing practices and overall market sophistication.

Through mapping out and presenting its assets and platforms to prospective sponsors, understanding their objectives and targets, the NOC can tailor the sponsorship proposal to be responsive to the needs of the sponsor, engage with their stakeholders through the NOC available events, programs and platforms in a cost-effective manner through cost-effective initiatives.

REIMAGINING SPORTS SPONSORSHIP THROUGH PERFORMANCE-BASED AGREEMENTS

Walraven, Koning, Bijmolt and Los (2016) have argued that there is a growing demand for accountability and measurable outcomes when it comes to sports sponsorships, in particular

that of performance-based agreements. When looking into these performance-based agreements, there is no set structure in place, however, it can cover metrics such as increased ticket sales, media exposure, social media engagements, activation opportunities or improved team performances for future increase in sponsorship. These metrics allow the sponsor to share the risk involved in the commitment which is something that was borne primarily by the sponsor under the traditional sport sponsorship model.

Stotlar's (2004) sponsorship evaluation model is one that can be utilized and adapted for the Papua New Guinea or the Pacific regional context in addition to the Sport Sponsorship Proposal Evaluation Model (SSPEM), in particular the revised model by Irwin and Asimakopoulous (Irwin, 1995). The model looks at evaluating the mutual objectives of the sponsor and sport property, and is a departure from the traditional model where it was not possible to demonstrate to sponsors the clear return on their sponsorship investment. These models feature criteria that provide a framework to tailor a sponsorship proposal around, and ideally this is done after an initial meeting to gauge interest and collect data with the key decision makers before submitting a written proposal.

Taking into consideration the emerging trends, an understanding of the sponsors needs and objectives, and utilizing a modified model on sponsorship proposals evaluation, the National Olympic Committee can create unique tailored performance based sponsorship objectives that has key metrics that are measurable and of benefit to both the sponsor and sport property. The challenge with the performance-based model will be the allocation of resources and capacity of the in-house department and personnel in delivering on the performance based metrics to provide value and guarantee continued sponsorship and deliver on the mutually agreed upon metrics to provide a unique package that meets the sponsors needs.

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Whilst acknowledging the large body of literature on sports sponsorship, these studies focus predominantly on large well-resourced countries leaving a significant gap regarding the challenges faced by smaller nations and smaller National Olympic Committees. Existing literature for comparative purposes include case studies from the Caribbean and smaller African states, however, specific obstacles faced by these NOCs and states such as limited

corporate pools for sponsorship access, a smaller media market and cultural and socio-economic factors are underrepresented in the research, particularly in the Oceania and Pacific context.

There is a large body of literature on sports sponsorship, in particular that of the traditional model as well as that of the performance-based model, however, it is noted that there are critical gaps in the literature as there is limited existing literature on the challenges faced by less-resourced countries. Kim et al. (2023) case study on NOC sponsorship in small states focusing on the Caribbean region allows for learnings for similar comparisons to the Papua New Guinea NOC. However, these reviewed studies are limited by scope and numbers and lack a comprehensive analysis of the unique factors that these smaller nations and states face such as cultural and socio-economic factors that influence sponsorship acquisition and management in these small nations. Take Papua New Guinea for example, in an operational and cultural context, the wantok system is a traditional social system for exchange based on relation and knowing, and cannot be quantified as well as consideration and exploration of the limited domestic sponsorship market are rarely addressed in depth. Consequently these literatures do not explicitly state effective sponsorship strategies that need to be tailored to the needs and constraints of small NOCs, particularly within the Pacific context. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has created activation guidelines for NOCs, specifically for its NOC marks, however, the challenge for smaller state NOCs as articulated in the works of Kim et al, (2023) and faced in Papua New Guinea is the activation in country of the IOCs The Olympic Partner (TOP) program. Whilst the emerging trends are notable, addressing these gaps is essential in creating tailored and bespoke partnerships that is customized to the cultural and economic conditions in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific region to an extent. The identified gaps include:

1. Limited literature on PNG-Specific Sponsorship Dynamics – the majority of the literature reviewed was focused on sponsorship in well developed international countries with larger resources, advanced technologies and infrastructures and functional economies and government support systems in place. This lack of PNG specific research skews the practical perception and understanding of whether PNG can progress to performance-based partnerships and keep up with the data demands of its sponsors.

2. Underexplored Areas of Servicing in Sponsorship – sponsorship activation is well covered in the literature, however, there are no frameworks and structured approaches of this in action in Papua New Guinea for the NOC. The gap in particular extends to the activities of the NOC which currently lacks well developed activation strategies to service its sponsors. Having conducted an audit of the existing NOC assets, the PNGOC can identify and clearly articulate the areas of activation. This may include access to national team and athlete training sessions, official events, community engagements, digital media platforms and branded co-campaigns. The completed asset mapping is essential to tailor the activation strategies to align with the sponsors objectives and deliver mutual value to both the NOC/NF and sponsor. Addressing this gap enhances the sponsors experience, and also positions the PNGOC to capitalise on emerging trends in performance based sponsorship to ensure greater sustainability of the partnership and appeal in a small and competitive sponsorship environment.
3. Impact of Emerging Digital Platforms – technology is constantly evolving at a rapid pace, and a noticeable gap in the literature on sports sponsorship, particularly in the context of smaller NOCs like Papua New Guinea concerns the utilisation of its existing digital platforms and databases. In PNG the primary digital platforms in use by the NOC and sports organisations are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, LinkedIn and official websites, all of which provide access to engagement metrics such as audience type and growth, post interactions, video views through built in platform analytic tools without the utilisation of artificial intelligence at this point in time for quick standard measurements. However, despite the widespread use of these platforms, there is limited evidence to show that the NOC maintains a structured, accessible and comprehensive digital database of event participants, volunteers, donors. This represents a significant missed opportunity with literature stating that international best practice demonstrates that small NOCs can enhance sponsor value and stakeholder engagement by developing and sharing these centralized databases to enable targeted email campaigns and sponsor integration into existing activities of the NOC. By addressing this gap the NOC is able to deliver tailored communications which includes sponsor messaging and therefore providing quantifiable value to current and prospective sponsors and thereby increasing its sponsorship proposition and aligning with the global trends in sports sponsorship best practices.

Whilst identifying and addressing these gaps is crucial to creating a unique and customized sponsorship agreement within the PNG landscape, the valuable insights from the review of literature have proven that the sponsorship landscape is changing and there is a need to act now to prepare for the scenario where sponsorships transition to performance based models in Papua New Guinea.

DATA COLLECTION

In order to answer these research aims qualitative data was collected from interviews with sponsors that were grouped into past, current, and potential sponsors. Through the research and analysis six key themes were identified which were governance and accountability, brand alignment, community engagement, return on investment, long term partnerships, and organizational values.

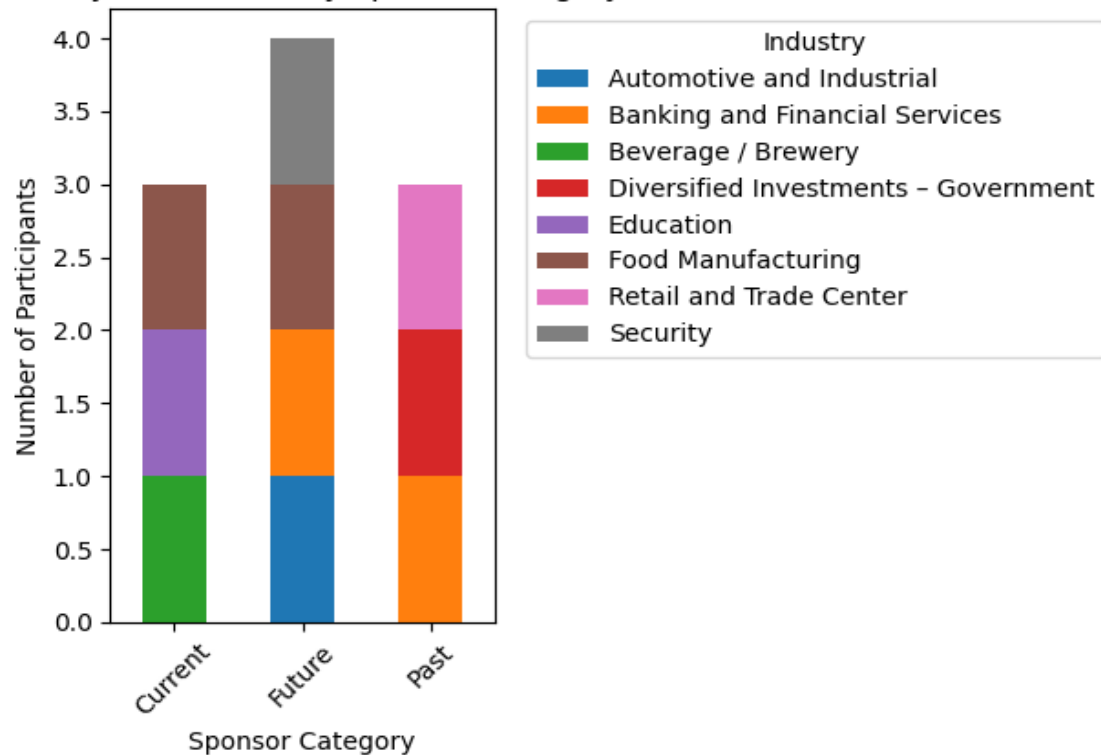
The objective of the data collection process is to answer the research question why do companies sponsor sports in Papua New Guinea and how can the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee attract and retain corporate partners.

In consideration of the cultural context and business environment in Papua New Guinea, a qualitative data collection method of semi-structured interviews with sponsoring bodies was determined according to the following groupings of past sponsors, current sponsors and potential sponsors of the National Olympic Committee. The selection criteria for these sponsors was based on their current status as a sponsor to the National Olympic Committee, past impact, presence within the country in terms of economical impact and revenue generation, industry and scale, and the ability of the sponsor to provide the requested for information. Importantly, the sample included companies that are sponsors of sports in Papua New Guinea but are not, or have not been sponsors of the NOC – three out of the ten organisations interviewed fall into this category. Including sponsors outside of the NOC context was intentional as it provides comparative insights into sponsorship drivers, barriers and perceptions within the broader sports landscape. The use of semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling aligns with best practice in qualitative research, particularly in a setting where context and depth of understanding are paramount.

From a targeted list of 20 sponsors, 10 responses were received and interviews were carried out and completed and coded as follows:

Category	Number of Sponsors	Industries Represented
Past Sponsors	3	Banking and Financial Services, Retail and Trade Center, Diversified Investments (Government)
Current Sponsors	3	Beverage, Food Manufacturing, Education
Potential (Future) Sponsors	4	Automotive and Industrial, Banking and Financial Services, Security, Food Manufacturing

Industry Distribution by Sponsor Category



From these interviews the researcher will explore and describe the relationships between the pre-determined themes from the literature review against the emerging themes from the interviews. Moreover, this method will allow the researcher to collect the relevant data to address the research aims of the current practices and attitudes, decision making processes and improvement practices to answer the overall research question.

A set of pre-determined questions was developed and further tailored to each sponsor group – past, current, and potential sponsors to capture a diverse range of perspectives on sponsorship practices. The majority of the interviews were conducted in person with only one interview taking place online via Microsoft Teams. In all meetings recordings were done using the phone application Voice Notes AI. All audio files were subsequently downloaded from Voice Notes AI and were uploaded to the transcription web based application Turbo Scribe AI to generate written transcripts. After the written transcripts were generated and downloaded, each interview transcript was throughoroughly reviewed and edited to remove personal identifiers, company names and confidential information mentioned by participants to ensure anonymity and to protect sensitive data. The anonymised and cleaned transcripts formed the basis for the subsequent qualitative analysis. Original audio files are securely stored and will be deleted upon completion of the research project, in line with ethical research guidelines.

DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

The qualitiative data captured in the semi-structured interviews were then analysed to understand the attitudes and practices of the three groups of sponsors interviewed.

Having conducted ten out of the possible 20 interviews for the data collection, the cleaned transcripts were then uploaded onto the data analysis software application N Vivo where coding of the 10 transcripts took place.

The researcher went through the data to identify codes established during the literature review phase and then proceeded to generate codes from reviewing the written transcripts that did not fit within the pre-determined codes from the literature review. The coding was done by research aims and naturally led to the identification of themes to address the overall research question. Note taking and reflections on the coding happened simulatenously during the data familiarisation process.

The next step involved the researcher reviewing the themes in relation to the coded data. As part of this review process themes were reconstructed and merged when there were over arching similar themes. The final step involved defining the theme from the detailed analysis, in particular looking at what the characteristics of the themes are and how do they address the

research question and interpreting the practices and perspectives from the three unique sponsor groups.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

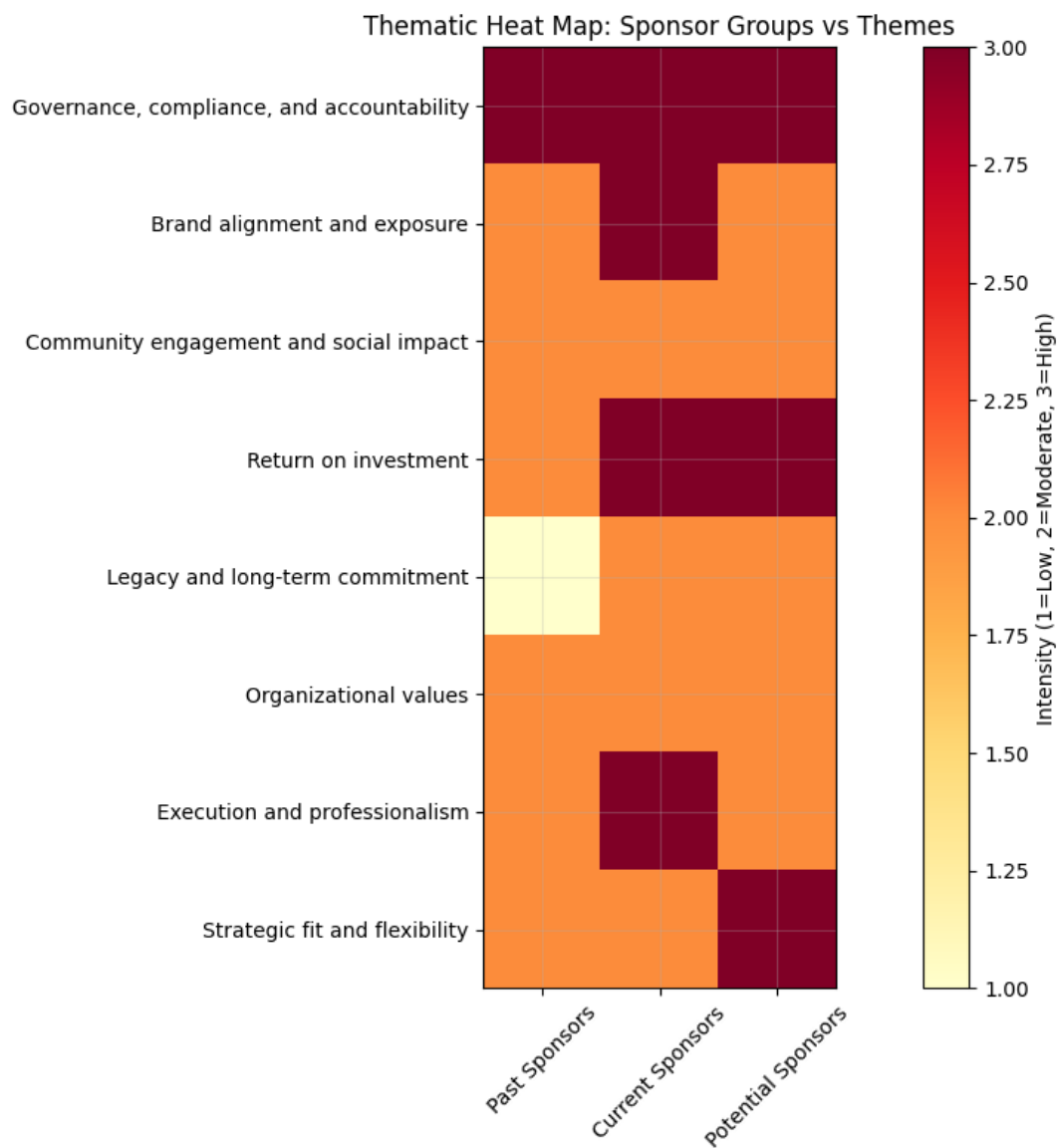
Ten interviews were conducted accordingly to the following three categories, three past sponsors, three current sponsors and four potential sponsors. These ten interviews were spread across the following industries – banking and financial services, retail and trade center, diversified investments, beverage, food manufacturing, education, automotive and industrial and security.

#	Code	Description	Industry
1	P1	Past Sponsor 1	Banking and Financial Services
2	P2	Past Sponsor 2	Retail and Trade Center
3	P3	Past Sponsor 3	Diversified Investments – Government
4	C1	Current Sponsor 1	Beverage / Brewrey
5	C2	Current Sponsor 2	Food Manufacturing
6	C3	Current Sponsor 3	Education
7	F1	Future Potential Sponsor 1	Automotive and Industrial
8	F2	Future Potential Sponsor 2	Banking and Financial Services
9	F3	Future Potential Sponsor 3	Security
10	F4	Future Potential Sponsor 4	Food Manufacturing

Whilst it may be beneficial to have interviewed a larger pool of participants, practical constraints such as changing executive structures of the organisation, the expert being sought for the interview, experience of the incumbent officer or manager in the sponsorship role, time and limited focus on sports sponsorship in country and changing business priorities play a crucial factor in the final sample size for analysis. However, the smaller sample size allows the researcher to delve more into the perspectives of the interviewees with the chosen qualitative method being deployed time consuming had it been a larger sample size.

In reviewing the findings, the researcher chose a thematic analysis approach across the three different groupings. The thematic analysis revealed six major themes and two sub themes for a total of eight themes across the past, current, and potential sponsors with governance and

compliance being the most prominent theme across all three groups followed by branding, community impact and return on investment.



Thematic Heat Map – based on the data analysis, this thematic heat map shows the intensity of the identified eight major themes across the three sponsor groups past, current and potential sponsors using a color gradient where the darker colors indicate a higher intensity.

The common themes per groupings are presented as follows:

1. Governance, compliance, and accountability

The central focus around governance is the importance of transparency and proper structures and financial accountability when it comes to sports sponsorship. From the data obtained the sponsors consider and prioritize those sporting bodies that demonstrate sound financial and management practices, reporting abilities and overall adherence to good governance and ethical standards. Characteristics that were ascertained from the data include:

- A sponsor's requirement of evidence of financial compliance such as audited accounts and proper financial reports
- Appropriate governance structures in place and a review of those individuals on the board of the sporting body, the respective committees in place for the decision making processes to ensure accountability
- Reputation management was a critical consideration from the sponsors which is around avoiding organizations with a history of mismanagement or scandals in the country
- Consideration of sporting bodies that align with the corporate social responsibilities of the sponsoring organisation

Examples of governance requirements:

Current Sponsor #1 – “when was the last audited account? When was the last annual general meeting? Were they elected through a process? All those things are very critical in the decision making process”

Past Sponsor #1 – “we want to make sure that whoever we support is sound financially and in terms of reputation”

Potential sponsor #4 – “some organizations need to lift their game because they send acquittals of money but you know well it's not true”

This was the primary theme that was prevalent and consistent amongst all three past, present, and potential sponsors. Each of these three groups emphasized the importance of strong governance frameworks and the requirement for financial accountability for the sporting bodies that they are sponsoring. Within this primary theme was a sub theme of financial compliance where past sponsors emphasized the requirement for detailed financial reports and audits whilst current sponsors spoke and emphasized on the needs of critical decision making processes in place in relation to finance, and potential sponsors requiring evidence of responsible fund usage.

2. Brand alignment and exposure

When it comes to brand alignment this theme focuses on the sponsors brand values and the organization they are supporting or the event itself. Sponsors are looking to seek opportunities that enhance their brand visibility and in particular the resonance with their identity. Characteristics of this theme include:

- Ensuring a strategic fit between the sponsors values and the sponsored event or team
- Ensuring there is an emphasis on brand exposure through the media, the event being sponsored, and merchandise
- Having a preference for sponsorships that provide measurable marketing benefits, and increased visibility which translate into like sales and commercial benefits and overall consumer engagement

Examples of brand alignment and exposure:

Current Sponsor #2 – “how does that sponsorship align with the Current Sponsor #2 values, with the brand values? The Current Sponsor #2 brand values are all about strength, health, and keeping active”

Potential Sponsor #1- “we want our name out there saying potential sponsor #1 is supporting this particular brand or organization”

Potential Sponsor #4 – “we monitor digital engagement and media metrics to evaluate the success of our sponsorship”

The sub theme for this overarching theme is strategic fit where current sponsors wanted to ensure that the sport resonated with their brands as well as the company values whilst potential sponsors focused more on the visibility and recognition opportunities that they would have.

3. Community engagement and social impact

In relation to community engagement, this theme surrounds the role of sports sponsorship in fostering community development, youth engagement, and social change. The characteristics of community engagement and social impact drawn from the data and interviews are:

- Focusing on grassroots development and youth participation in sports
- Having an emphasis on reducing social issues through sports examples crime, unemployment
- Having a preference for sponsorships and activities that create actual tangible benefits for the local communities that they operate their businesses in

Examples of Community Engagement:

Current Sponsor #1 – “engagement of the youth, and you just get a healthier, a better country and community”

Future Sponsor #2 – “we see sponsorship as supporting the grassroots level of PNG society, where many athletes come from”

Past Sponsor #1 – “apart from keeping kids away from trouble, sports create an ecosystem where mothers can sell goods and feed their families”

The primary theme around sports sponsorship in relation to this topic was on using sports sponsorship as a vehicle for community development and change with the

subthemes being grassroots development with current sponsors focusing more on the engagement of youth, a healthier and active country and community whilst potential sponsors focused and emphasized more on youth development and the community benefit.

4. Return On Investment

A key theme emerging from the interviews was the balance sponsors are seeking between the financial and non-financial return on their investments. Consistent with the literature, sponsors in all three groups (past, current and potential) articulated the importance of not only generating tangible outcomes such as increased sales or revenue, but also of broad objectives including brand recognition, audience engagement and fulfilling community social responsibility goals (Batty et al., 2016; Kim et.al., 2015).

As highlighted by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (2025), traditional metrics like social media likes, comments, and shares remain relevant and in use but are increasingly viewed as insufficient on their own for evaluating overall sponsorship success. Sponsors now look for evidence of both return on investment, the measurable financial impact of sponsorship, and return on objectives, the achievement of strategic marketing or social goals such as enhancing corporate reputation or community impact.

From the data collected, the following characteristics of sponsor expectations emerged:

- Monitor the effectiveness of sponsorship through metrics such as the brand visibility, brand audit, audience engagement at an event, and community impact
- The sponsors have a preference for sponsorships that deliver measurable outcomes, whether financial (e.g. increased sales) or non financial
- In order to see an impact the sponsors prefer long term partnerships which they value for monitoring purposes in particular sustainability to see the overall return on investment

Examples Of Return On Investment:

Current Sponsor #2 – “we measured the performance of our brands with consumers through brand audits”

Future Sponsor #4 – “we correlate the amount of product sampled at events to understand the success of our sponsorship”

Past Sponsor #3 - “we want to see what the return on investment is whether it's medals won, jobs created, or other tangible outcomes”

This theme is about the balance between tangible returns for the organization and the broader social benefits of their sponsorship. A subtheme of the return on investment was the monitoring and evaluation metrics in use by the sponsor company such as past sponsors, who were focused more on measurable outcomes whilst current sponsors use multiple metrics including social media engagement as a form of measurement on return on investment.

5. Legacy and Long Term Commitment

This theme pertains to the preference for sustained partnership in order to build a legacy sponsorship and create a lasting impact for both the sponsor and the sponsored body. The characteristics as ascertained from the data in relation to legacy and long term commitment are:

- Sponsors valuing their long term relationship with a sporting body over the long term as opposed to a one off sponsorship
- Creating and sustaining a legacy sponsorship is seen as a way to build trust and credibility of the sporting body
- Having a sustained partnership allows for a deeper and long term community engagement and brand association with a particular event or sporting body

Examples Of Legacy And Long Term Commitment:

Current Sponsor #1 – “we've been with this platform for 20 to 30 years now. It's a legacy thing, and we want to keep it going”

Current Sponsor #2 – “weightlifting sponsorship is a legacy sponsorship that is synonymous with current sponsor #2”

Future Sponsor #4 – “one off sponsorships don't really help. It's got to be long term”

This theme was in relation for the preference of a sponsorship partner to have sustained partnership as opposed to a one off sponsorship to see the return on investment. A sub theme of this topic was the relationship building with past sponsors valuing the long term impact of the partnership, with the preference for engagements that span multiple years whilst current sponsors also valued this shared relationship with two current sponsors advising of the platform that they have built with the National Olympic Committee over 20 years and 30 years respectively resulting in the legacy sponsorship.

6. Organizational Values

This theme surrounds the alignment of the sponsorship activities with the corporate values of the sponsor and sound ethical principles. Sponsors want to see an engagement that reflects their commitment to social responsibilities and ethical practices when it comes to funding. This is characterized by the following:

- Having an alignment with their environment, social, and governance principles, and corporate social responsibility goals
- Having a preference for organizations that are similar to the corporate values and ethical standards they have
- Avoiding partnerships that could question the integrity and sponsors overall reputation

Examples of Organizational Values:

Past Sponsor #2- “past sponsor #2 is all about values of respect, initiative, integrity, courage, and honesty”

Past Sponsor #1 – “we want to ensure our values align with the organizations we support”

Future Sponsor #3 – “sponsors like to feel important and connected to the values of the organizations they support”

This theme is centered around the alignment between corporate values and the sponsorship objectives. A subtheme of this is the environmental, social and governance alignment with current sponsors stating that it is necessary for integration with environmental, social and government objectives whilst potential sponsors also focused on the value alignment and ethical considerations when it came to sponsorship consideration.

7. Execution and professionalism

Under this theme the focus is on the importance of well organized and professionally executed sponsorship activities. The sponsors in particular value clear communication, timely reporting, and an overall effective delivery on the sponsorship outcomes as outlined in the agreement, this is vital if it is an event. The characteristics of execution and professionalism as drawn from the data are:

- Clear expectations and deliverables outlined in the sponsorship agreement
- Timely and transparent reporting on agreed impact and funding use
- Ensuring professionalism in the event organization delivery and overall stakeholder engagement

Examples of Execution and Professionalism:

Current Sponsor #2 – “we need a commitment that if you say you're going to do something, you deliver it on time”

Future Sponsor #3 – “sponsors want to see where their money is going and feel involved in the process”

Future Sponsor #4 – “timeliness is critical so many proposals come too late to act on”.

8. Strategic Fit and Flexibility

This theme centered around the need of the strategic fit between the sponsorship proposal and the sponsor strategic objectives while also offering the flexibility of accommodating the different levels of support that a sponsor can provide to a sporting body. These are characterized by the following:

- Having proposals that clearly articulate the sponsors benefits and also align with their strategic goals
- Having tiered sponsorship options to allow sponsors the ability to choose the level of their involvement based on their budget and current priorities
- Allow for flexibility in the sponsorship agreement to foster stronger partnerships

Examples of Strategic Fit and Flexibility:

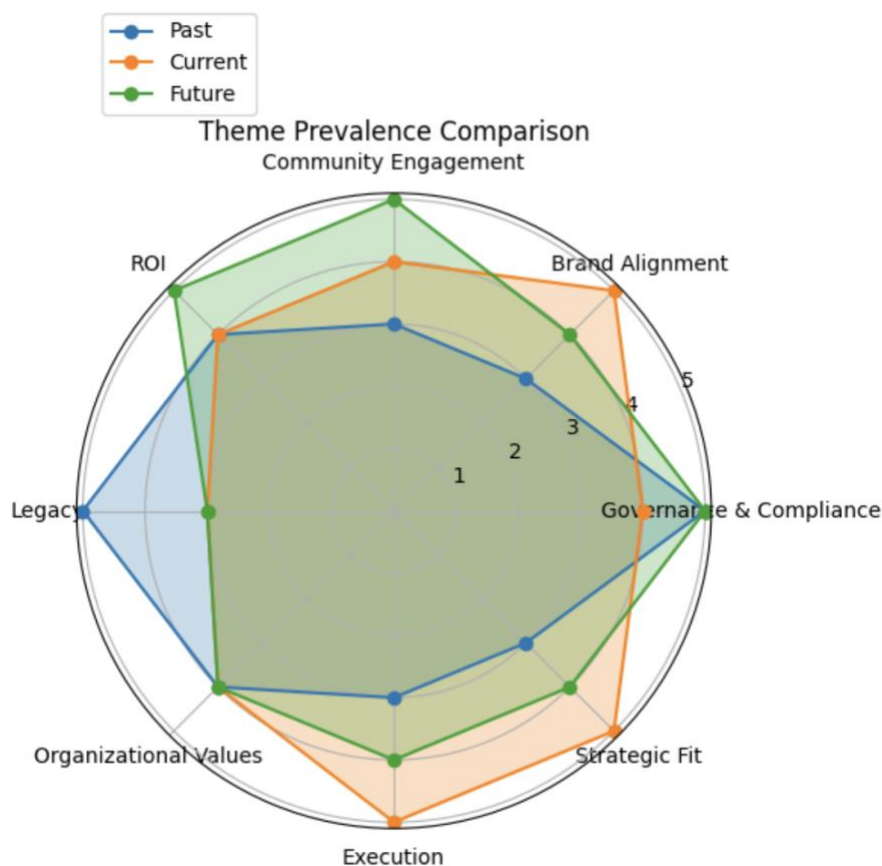
Current Sponsor #1- “we encourage requesters to provide tiered sponsorship proposals - gold, silver, bronze, so we can choose what fits our budget”

Future Sponsor #3 – “if you came to us with one standard 250K ask, we'd say no. If there were tiers, we might consider it”

Future Sponsor #4 – “we love to see the full width and breadth of what sponsorship gives us, from naming rights to smaller benefits”

These aforementioned eight themes and their characteristics provide a comprehensive understanding of the current practices and attitudes of the three different groupings of sponsors that were interviewed in understanding their decision making process when it comes to evaluating and renewing sports sponsorship packages. Each theme that has been defined reflects the current priorities, practices and expectations of these sample group of sponsors and offer valuable insights the National Olympic Committee and its National Federations when tailoring sponsorship packages and approaches within the Papua New Guinea context.

Group Specific Perspectives



When looking at the group specific perspectives the following assessments were drawn from the qualitative data collected:

Past Sponsors

The three interviewed past sponsors had a strong emphasis on governance and legacy in addition to a focus on tangible returns and financial compliance as well as valuing long term relationships and the impact that this sponsorship will have on the community.

Current Sponsors

From the perspectives of the current sponsors in relation to the themes, the current sponsors placed more emphasis on the highest overall theme of engagement and ensuring there was a balance between the commercial side as well as the social objectives and a strong focus on the strategic fit and brand alignment when considering their current practices and decision making processes when it comes to sponsorship.

Potential Sponsors

Potential sponsors place a strong emphasis on governance and compliance, viewing these as essential prerequisites for any partnerships with sports organizations in Papua New Guinea. They are equally focused on the broader community impact of their sponsorship decisions, particularly in relation to youth development initiatives. At the same time, these organizations require a clear return on investment, which they assess through established monitoring and evaluation frameworks, relevant metrics, and strategic alignment with their own business objectives. Collectively, these factors play a decisive role in determining whether potential sponsors choose to engage in sports sponsorship opportunities.

Key Attitudes Across The Groups

From the generated eight themes the interpretation that can be gleaned across the three groups are:

1. **A Positive but Cautious Approach** - the three respective groups all view sports sponsorship as a unique avenue to pursue but will require a good review of governance processes and decision making processes when it comes to consideration, with a strong emphasis on due diligence and evaluation.
2. **Strategic Integration** - this entails looking at the broader strategic objectives of the sponsoring body with a precaution that these objectives can change due to the business environment that they operate in as well as the strategic objectives. In addition there

needs to be a strong alignment with the organization's corporate values as well as the policies and practices on community goals which centers around the community social responsibilities.

3. **Long Term Perspectives** - whilst the current business operating environment in Papua New Guinea makes it difficult to provide long term partnerships, the interviewed candidates did advise for their preference to have sustained long term partnerships rather than a one off sponsorship with a focus on building lasting relationships that can have a longer term impact on their tracking.

These considerations need to be factored and prioritized when seeking sponsorship whether it is the National Olympic Committee or the National Federation, in particular the need for robust governance frameworks, clear impact metrics, ensuring strategic alignment with the sponsors values while consideration about flexible sponsorship options to ensure consideration of the sponsors ability to fund an event or a team considering the business and economical operating environment in Papua New Guinea.

The findings from this research has provided actionable insights for the National Olympic Committee and National Federations in Papua New Guinea to focus on strengthening their governance frameworks, aligning their sponsorship proposals with the corporate values, and the community measurable impacts that the sponsorship will make. By addressing these key themes, sports organizations can establish sustainable partnerships that will benefit both the sponsor and the broader Papua New Guinea community. This study not only highlights the critical role of governance and accountability but also underscores the potential of sports sponsorship to drive societal change in Papua New Guinea.

LIMITATIONS

Considering the sample size of 10 sponsors, there are noticeable limitations from this core research group of past, current, and potential sponsors which might not fully be a whole representation of the sporting practices attitudes and decision-making processes of organizations that support sporting bodies in the country.

1. Sample Size Representational Issues

A key consideration and limitation of this selected group is that there was no representation of grassroots or smaller business entities, or large multi corporate international sponsors, including TOP IOC (The Olympic Partners) sponsors as part of this group. As a result, the perspectives, sponsorship practices, and priorities of these key groups were not captured in this research.

Another limitation and consideration of this representative group is that there may be more niche businesses or industries that fund sporting organizations in Papua New Guinea that may have differing practices and attitudes when it comes to sports sponsorship and their insights and practices into sports sponsorship was not captured or considered as part of this research paper.

2. Sponsor Specific Bias

The qualitative data that was captured and analyzed within this paper was primarily from corporate entities, with one being a government entity. As a result, the perspectives captured were heavily influenced around their practices on branding, return on investment and governance. This focus may have inadvertently marginalized other important factors for sponsorships that are particularly relevant in the Papua New Guinea context such as cultural preservation through sports, and community development initiatives.

For example, in Papua New Guinea, sports sponsorships are sometimes used as vehicles for cultural preservation with companies supporting events that blend traditional cultural practices with sporting activities. A notable example includes the sponsorship of the Hiri Moale Festival, which integrates cultural displays with sports, and partnerships with the National Cultural Commission and the PNG Sports Foundation to promote cultural heritage through sport events. These forms of sponsorship serve broader social and cultural purposes beyond the commercial interest typically emphasized by corporate sponsors.

Additionally, the findings may be skewed by the experiences of the sponsors being interviewed. For instance, sponsors who have had negative experiences with sports

sponsorships such as issues with mismanagement or lack of transparency may have placed a disproportionate emphasis on governance and compliance, while two other people interviewed were current or former board members of national sporting federations in the country. This can result in the data reflecting a stronger focus on governance related practices and criticisms of sports governance in Papua New Guinea, potentially overshadowing other positive or community orientated aspects of sponsorship.

Adding to this is a sponsor's negative experience on sports sponsorship, their role in their organisation and the industry they operate in may place an overarching stronger emphasis on governance practices and compliance issues which has skewed the findings towards a more focused governance related practice and criticisms of sports governance in Papua New Guinea.

3. Interviewer Bias and Familiarity

A further limitation arises from the potential for the interviewer bias, especially in the context of qualitative research and conducted in smaller communities. In Papua New Guinea, where professional and social networks are closely knit, there is a possibility that some interviewees may have known the researcher personally. This familiarity can introduce several biases such as:

- Social desirability - wherein the interviewees provide responses they believe expected or favorable rather than candid opinions especially if they wish to maintain a positive relationship with the interviewer
- Selective disclosure wherein the participants withhold negative views or criticisms, particularly if they perceive the researcher as being connected to influential networks or organizations
- Researcher preconceptions - this is where the researcher's own background and prior relationships with participants can influence the framing of questions and interpretations of responses

In this study, two of the interviewees were known to the researcher prior to the study, which may have contributed to the potential for interviewer bias.

4. Government and High-Level Influence on Sponsorship

Another limitation not initially discussed, but highly relevant in the context of small nations like Papua New Guinea, is the potential for government or high-level official pressure on companies to engage in sponsorship. In many Pacific Island countries, including PNG, government influence can play a significant role in shaping corporate sponsorship decisions. This influence may manifest as:

- Direct Pressure - companies may be encouraged or expected to sponsor sport teams or events as a demonstration of corporate citizenship or to maintain favorable relations with government officials or in preparation of upcoming election campaigns.
- Alignment with National Goals - sponsorships may be steered towards supporting government priorities such as community development, cultural preservation, or national unity, rather than purely commercial objectives.
- Foreign Policy and Economic Consideration - in some cases, sponsorship decisions may be influenced by broader geopolitical or economic factors such as alignment with foreign aid priorities or the interest of influential donor countries.

This dynamic can further complicate the interpretation of sponsorship motivations and outcomes, as companies may not always be acting solely out of commercial interest and community goodwill, but also in response to external pressures or expectations.

5. Limited Contextual Data

Another limitation of this sample size group is the lack of perspectives from external experts in the country such as marketing consultants or academics from educational institutions who could provide a detailed context and perspective into the sponsorship ecosystem within Papua New Guinea.

Whilst the focus was on the National Olympic Committee and the National Federations, the research excluded the main beneficiaries which are the athletes and the community beneficiaries such as the clubs and therefore it would have been more appropriate to include athlete voices and voices from the local clubs and communities and in particular the National Federations which would provide a more robust insight and sound basis to

this research paper as to the impact of the sponsorship decisions such as the National Olympic Committee competing for the same sponsors as the National Federation and the effects of such competition for sponsorship within a limited pool.

6. Cultural and Regional Bias

Papua New Guinea is an exceptionally diverse country, with over 850 languages and a wide range of cultural practices across its regions. This research focused exclusively on for-profit corporate entities based in the capital city, Port Moresby. Of the 10 entities interviewed one of them was a government state owned entity. As a result, the perspectives and sponsorship practices of entities from other major city centers, provincial territories, and especially small-scale sponsors in rural areas were not included. This limitation may have introduced a cultural and regional bias, as priorities and approaches to sports sponsorships in other parts of the country could differ significantly from those observed in Port Moresby. Consequently, the findings of this study may not be fully generalizable to the broader context of sports sponsorship across Papua New Guinea.

7. Subjectivity and Theme Identification

The thematic analysis method employed for the data analysis relies heavily on the researcher's interpretation of the collected data and coding which is prone to potential bias as the themes are influenced by the literature review and what the researcher has deemed important from the data as relevant. The issue here is the potential bias and oversight of nuances in the data if they are not in alignment with the predetermined themes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature review and qualitative data collection, the following two frameworks for the NOC and NF have been developed which focuses on the following key areas around sponsorship which are; governance, strategic alignment, community impact, brand value, measurement, and partnership development. These recommendations have emerged from the

literature review and data analysis which emphasized the need for long term relationship building, transparency, governance and an overall measurable impact on the community.

1) Core recommendations

- a) Governance and compliance** - actionable items around governance and compliance in relation to the captured data relate to the following initiatives applicable to both the National Olympic Committee and National Federations:
 - i) Establish a robust governance framework with clear financial and reporting structures such as policies and committees for decision making processes
 - ii) Implement transparent decision making processes and ensure regular audits of financials
 - iii) Create standardized reporting templates that can be used by either party for consistent reporting and communication to the sponsoring body. The reporting structure can also be determined in consultation with the sponsoring body.
- b) Strategic Alignment** - both the National Olympic Committee and National federations are to implement the following:
 - i) Develop proposals that demonstrate a clear alignment with the existing policies of the sponsors in relation to their corporate social responsibilities or environmental and governance responsibilities
 - ii) Consider the creation of tiered sponsorship packages (gold, silver, bronze) and clearly define the benefits and activation opportunities within those packages
 - iii) Consider a long term view of the partnership when engaging a potential sponsor rather than a one off event sponsorship or team sponsorship
- c) Community impact** - focusing on the impact on community, the National Olympic Committee and National Federation needs to consider the following recommendations:
 - i) Prioritize the initiatives that support youth development and community well-being
 - ii) Consider the implementation of measurable metrics for social impact. This can be developed in consultation with the sponsoring body by understanding their existing practices and stance and any internal policies that they have on their tracking and monitoring the community social obligations
 - iii) Develop a structured community engagement program that actively involves the sponsor as a partner, rather than limiting their role to financial support. For example, the NOC could collaborate with a sponsor to co-host youth sports clinics or health awareness campaigns, where both organizations contribute to planning,

implementation, and promotion. This approach not only helps to achieve the objectives of the NOC but also allows the sponsor to demonstrate their commitment to community development while increasing the visibility and alignment with positive social outcomes.

ACTION PLAN

Set out below is an action plan for implementation for the National Olympic Committee and the National Federations. In implementing the action plan the National Olympic Committee and the National Federations need to first and foremost prioritize governance reforms necessary as sponsors place a high value on financial transparency and good governance, and particularly the proper use of funds. This has been articulated in the data collection with a strong emphasis on regular financial reporting, conducting of annual general meetings, and ensuring compliance with good governance and financial standards.

In alignment with the Papua New Guinea Olympic Committees new 2025 - 2032 strategic plan, particularly the strengthen pillar and its National Federation's accelerator program initiative, the NOC will work on implementing a program to build National Federation capacity to implement concrete governance reforms to meet the NOC and sponsor expectations and drive long term sustainable sponsorships. Specifically, this involves publishing annual general meeting minutes online, including election results and approved budgets, on the PNGOC's official website to ensure transparency and public accountability. Regular financial reports should be made accessible to sponsors and stakeholders, detailing income, expenditure, and allocation of funds to various programs. These measures directly support the accelerators program's objective of building the governance capacity of national federations, restoring a culture of openness, and enhancing trust with current and prospective sponsors. To ensure these reforms are effective, the NOC will establish clear monitoring mechanisms, including periodic reviews and feedback sessions with sponsors, as outlined in the strategic plan. By operationalizing these governance practices, the NOC not only addresses the priorities identified in this research but also strengthens its position as a credible and attractive partner for future sponsorship opportunities.

Although not prescriptive in detail, the listed frameworks below serve as a guide to improve the sponsorship practices and relationships based on the current practices and attitudes identified throughout this research to lead sustainable sponsorship practices to for greater success.

Framework 1: for the National Olympic Committee

Priority	Recommendation	Actions Required	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical Success Factors
High	Strengthen Governance and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct the IOC Annual Self Assessment - Establish governance frameworks (review and update key policies, map out all existing committees and working group within the NOC) - Review and update the board charter - Map out and Review Existing Board Committees and Update their Terms Of References (Purpose and objectives, membership criteria, roles and responsibilities, meeting frequency and quorum) 	Secretary General, Treasurer, Audit And Investment Committee	Time Auditors, Governance Advises	Within six months of the end of the financial year	Transparency and trust established with sponsors

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review Existing Financial Policies and Ensure Transparency • Conduct Regular AGM's And Communicate Decisions To all stakeholders • Upload key governance documents onto the NOC website 				
High	Develop A Tiered Sponsorship Package	<p>Create sponsorship packages (gold, silver, bronze) with clear benefits for the sponsor</p> <p>Include options for in kind and financial contributions</p> <p>Introduce tiered sponsorship packages example naming rights, event level sponsorship, all in kind support</p> <p>Incorporate all reach and statistics for all digital platforms, database and demographics of participants and volunteers for existing events, and programs</p>	Marketing and revenue committee	Marketing Materials, Graphic Designer	Within three months	Clear alignment of sponsorship value with sponsor needs
Medium	Ensure proper use of sponsorship funds	<p>Create a transparent financial tracking system</p> <p>Provide regular acquittals to sponsor to show how funds were used</p>	Treasurer, Secretary, executives	Financial templates , financial tracking tools	Within six months	Accountability ensures that sponsors have confidence in the use of funds and strengthens their position

						on support and renewal
High	Improve sponsor engagement	Schedule quarterly meetings with sponsors to provide updates Develop a quarterly newsletter to highlight sponsorship outcomes and athlete achievements	Corporate manager, media and communications officer, marketing and revenue committee	Communication tools, newsletter templates	Within three months	Frequent communication to maintain sponsored trust and interest
Medium	Showcase measurable impact of sponsorship	Develop event reports in collaboration with sponsors for key information requirements Develop post event evaluations for sponsors such as reports on return on investment including branding exposure, community impact etc Share success stories with sponsors	Marketing and revenue committee, media and communications officer	Data analytics, reporting templates	Within six months	Sponsors are able to see clear returns on the investment, improving the willingness for renewals
Medium	Build Strategic Partnerships	Identify potential sponsors and conduct face to face meetings. Consider the usage of the term sponsorship and changing it into partnership to foster long term relationships	Corporate Manager, Marketing And Revenue Committee, Secretary General	Sponsor contact directory, marketing and revenue committee outreach	Ongoing	Sponsors associate their brand with the national team and events and thereby increasing visibility and goodwill
High	Leverage athletes as brand	Include athletes in sponsor events to	Athletes commissi	Athlete training	Within 6 to 12 months	

	ambassadors for the sponsors	promote the sponsor brand Increase athlete participation in existing sport for development programs sponsored by partners Train athletes on media presentation and brand advocacy	on, programs coordinator, olympians association	programs, media toolkit for athletes		
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Framework 2: for National Federations

Priority	Recommendation	Actions Required	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Critical Success Factors
High	Strengthen governance and compliance	Conduct the NOC Online Self-Assessment (Readiness Assessment Tool) Establish governance frameworks such as, financial policies, Register and maintain online records with the investment promotion authority annually (lodge financials, update board member information etc)	Executives,	Governance advisors, legal support	Within three months	Sponsors will view the national federation as a reliable and compliant organization
High	Develop clear sponsorship proposals	Draft professional sponsorship	Marketing team	Proposal templates,	Within three months	The proposals clearly communicate

		<p>proposals with different levels including details on funding requirements, metrics, anticipated return on investment, branding opportunities.</p> <p>Introduce tiered sponsorship packages example naming rights, event level sponsorship, all in kind support</p> <p>Incorporate all reach and statistics for all digital platforms, database and demographics of participants and volunteers for existing events, and programs</p>		graphic designers		the value to the sponsor
Medium	Focus on community impact	<p>Create or partner with community programs example youth engagement, grassroots sporting initiatives</p> <p>Highlight these programs in the sponsorship</p>	Volunteer, executives	Community engagement volunteers, program volunteers, program partners	Within six months	Sponsors are able to see a direct link between this support and the societal impact

		pitches and on website				
Medium	Ensure proper use of sponsorship funds	Create a transparent financial tracking system Provide regular acquittals to sponsor to show how funds were used	Treasurer, secretary, executives	Financial templates , financial tracking tools	Within six months	Accountability ensures that sponsors have confidence in the use of funds and strengthens their position on support and renewal
Medium	Showcase measurable impact of sponsorship	Develop event reports in collaboration with sponsors for key information requirements Develop post event evaluations for sponsors such as reports on return on investment including branding exposure, community impact etc Share success stories with sponsors	Volunteer Executives	Data analytics, reporting templates	Within six months	Sponsors are able to see clear returns on the investment, improving the willingness for renewals
Low	To build long term relationships	Conduct post event meetings with the sponsors to discuss the outcomes of the support and areas for improvement Send personalized	Secretary, executives	Communication tools, letter templates, reporting templates, time	Ongoing	Sponsors feel appreciated and are more likely to continue their involvement

		appreciation letters and reports				
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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: Use of You.com AI Search Engine in Literature Review Process

1. Introduction

This appendix provides a detailed account of how You.com's AI Search Engine (2023) was utilized in the literature review process for this research. The purpose of this disclosure is to maintain transparency and adhere to academic integrity standards while acknowledging the role of AI tools in the research process.

2. Description of You.com AI Search Engine

You.com is an advanced AI-powered search engine that leverages artificial intelligence to enhance the search experience. Its key features include:

- **AI-Enhanced Search:** You.com uses AI to provide tailored search results, aiming to deliver the most relevant information for each query.
- **AI Overviews:** The platform generates AI-powered summaries of key information, along with links for further exploration, streamlining the information-gathering process.
- **Generative AI Capabilities:** Similar to other advanced search tools, You.com incorporates generative AI to provide more comprehensive answers to user queries.
- **Exploration Features:** The platform suggests related questions and topics, facilitating deeper exploration of subject areas.

3. Specific Use in Literature Review

You.com's AI Search Engine was employed in the following capacities during the literature review process:

- **Initial Literature Exploration:** Used to generate comprehensive search queries related to sports sponsorship, performance-based agreements, and sponsorship activation in Papua New Guinea.

- Filtering and Sorting Results: Leveraged AI capabilities to filter and prioritize search results based on relevance, publication date, and academic credibility.
- Summarization of Key Findings: Utilized AI Overviews feature to generate initial summaries of key papers and research findings, which were then critically evaluated by the researcher.
- Identification of Research Gaps: Employed exploration features to identify potential gaps in the existing literature, particularly regarding sponsorship dynamics in Papua New Guinea.
- Cross-referencing: Used to cross-reference findings from traditional academic databases, ensuring a comprehensive coverage of the research topic.
- Thematic Review: to ensure there was no bias from the researcher, the AI was leveraged to cross-check the pre-determined themes with the coded themes from the interview transcripts

APPENDIX B: Past Sponsor Questionnaire

The focus of this questionnaire for this group is to reflect on experiences with the PNG NOC and sponsorship pitches from a historical/traditional as well as evolving, performance-based perspective. The intent is to learn what helped or hindered past success and what could be done differently now to keep sponsors:

1. Background and Experience

- Could you describe your role in relation to sports sponsorship?
- What are your business objectives around your current sports sponsorships?
- How did you learn about the opportunity to become a sponsor?
- What sports do you currently sponsor?
- Probe: When reviewing proposals and deciding on a sponsorship, what criteria or factors impact your decision most? Which channels (e.g., personal networks, referrals, digital research) were most influential in your decision-making process?
- What, if any, challenges did you face during this identification phase?

2. Evaluation of Sponsorship Proposals

- Thinking back to when you received sponsorship pitches, what key elements in those proposals caught your attention?

- Probe: Were there any performance-based metrics or clear activation plans that made a difference?
- Were there examples of customized proposals? How did these impact your decision?

3. Experience with Performance-Based/Pitch Customization

- Did the proposals you evaluated include measurable performance outcomes (e.g., ticket sales, digital engagement data)? How persuasive were these metrics?
- In instances where a more customised approach was proposed, how did this compare with more traditional, standard pitches?
- How important is corporate social responsibility in the overall sponsorship submission, and why?
- When evaluating a sponsorship proposal, what specific CSR initiatives or community engagement activities do you look for?
- How does your organisation measure the impact of CSR elements included in the sponsorship, and what metrics are most useful?
- Considering Papua New Guinea's unique cultural and community values, what CSR initiatives would make a sponsorship pitch from the PNG NOC more compelling?

4. Lessons Learned and Gaps

- What were the main reasons your organisation decided to sponsor the PNG NOC? (e.g. brand exposure, targeted audience, CSR, activation opportunities)
- How well did the sponsorship meet your organization's expectations in terms of performance outcomes, activation strategies, and overall value?
- Which aspects of the sponsorship worked well, and where did you feel the approach fell short (e.g., in data transparency, customization, or accountability)?
- Were there any challenges related to the monitoring, reporting or communication of results during the sponsorship?
- Can you explain the primary factors that led your organization to end the sponsorship with the PNG NOC?
- To what extent did issues such as unmet performance targets, lack of tailored engagement, or inadequate communication play a role in your decision?

- In hindsight, what do you believe the PNG NOC could have done differently to retain your sponsorship? How might a more tailored, performance-based approach have helped?
- Based on your experience, what improvements in sponsorship activation or data transparency would you recommend for future partnerships?
- Is there anything different you would suggest the PNG NOC offer to sponsors to ensure the company goals and objectives are met?
- Is there any additional insight you would like to share about your sponsorship journey with the PNG NOC that could inform better proposal submissions in the future?