

An Investigation into the effectiveness of the marketing campaigns of the I.R.F.U. in relation to the sales of premium tickets for the Aviva Stadium among the public and corporate sectors in Ireland.

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A report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for BA
(Honours) Marketing and Event Management

Dublin Business School

March 2010

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the teaching staff of Dublin Business School, especially the Marketing faculty for their guidance over the past three years.

I would especially like to thank Padraig Power, Commercial and Marketing manager of the Irish Rugby Football Union for being kind enough to take time out of his busy schedule to allow me interview him. Without him my research would have proved extremely difficult.

It is with the upmost gratitude that I express my thanks to my supervisor, Mr Dave Hurley. If it wasn't for him I don't know if this would have been possible, he pointed me in the right direction whenever consulted and went out of his way to ensure that I stayed on schedule.

A special thanks to all my close friends for understanding the work and stress that goes along with this thesis, apologies for any mood swings.

Finally, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to mother and father for helping me through this, proving themselves to be quite capable proof readers when required. I'd like to thank my sister Bronagh for putting up with my ranting and raving phone calls while stressed.

Authors Declaration

I, Killian Mullen, declare that I am the sole author of this dissertation, that during this period of registered study I have not been registered for any other academic award or qualification, nor has any of the material been submitted wholly or partly for any other award. I have personally carried out all the work of which this is a record. The programme of study which this is a part has been delivered by the School of Business, Dublin Business School.

Signed: _____

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Date: 12th March 2010

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop an understanding of the marketing strategy used by the Irish Rugby Football Union in relation to ticket packages for the redeveloped Lansdowne Road. The investigation for this dissertation was carried out with a broad research on significant literature and of primary research completed by a focus group which led to the research findings. The key findings point towards the fact that the I.R.F.U. offer a product that is popular, highly coveted and in small supply. It examines how the organisation did not have to implement specific marketing strategies due to the popularity of the product. It also looks the importance that sponsorship played in the redevelopment.. The research findings were implemented by a depth interview where questions were posed to a respondent whose views were applied to conduct primary research. The recommendations made for this study suggest that further research could be conducted at a later date to provide comparisons between contrasting periods. Going forward, success of the I.R.F.U. can be related to the success of the Irish rugby team, success on the pitch leads to sales off it.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The focus of this report is to explore the marketing of the redeveloped Lansdowne Road by the Irish Rugby Football Union to both the public and corporate sectors. This is an area that has had limited previous research due to the fact that the redevelopment is presently ongoing.

The subject matter of this dissertation has been confined to the Irish Rugby Football Union due to the limited area of research. The researcher had hoped to include the Football Association of Ireland in the study, however due to the lack of co-operation from the marketing department within the organisation this was not possible. Contact was made, and the initial reaction was positive, however communication ceased from the F.A.I.

Chapter 2 of this study provides an in-depth analysis of the literature associated with the areas looked at within the dissertation. The Literature Review is broken into two sections, academic and industrial. The academic side looks at IMC, Sports Marketing, Sports Sponsorship and Corporate Hospitality. The researcher felt that these four areas were essential to the research of the topic. The industrial section looks at available statistics in relation to three of the areas from the academic review, Sports Marketing, Sports Sponsorship and Corporate Hospitality.

Chapter 3 highlights the research methodology applied in this dissertation. The section explores what the objectives of the dissertation are, along with what the researcher is aiming to gain through them. It will also explore the different research design structures that can be implemented, looking at exploratory, causal and descriptive, which will result in one being selected

to utilise as the research design. The use of secondary is also discussed, along with qualitative and quantitative, resulting in the preferred method being selected. The researcher also selects the method of applied research, this was decided through discussing the differences between depth interviews and focus groups, with the researcher feeling that the most suited method to employ would be depth interview. This chapter concludes with discussion of research limitations associated with the study.

Chapter 4 investigates the findings of the primary research with the dissection of the depth interview that was carried out for the purpose of this study. It will explore the three research objectives set out separately, discussing them at length and making comparisons to the secondary research already completed.

Chapter 5 is the final section that leads the researcher to discuss conclusions and recommendations. The conclusion is a summary of the research conducted, while the recommendations will look at both academic and practitioner's areas.

The researcher choose this topic as it is a current issue. It was felt that the topic had not been the subject of a significant amount of academic research which created the opportunity to explore the subject in a more detailed nature, therefore creating structure opinions on the topic.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Hart (1998) suggests that a literature review as a piece of academic writing must be clear, have a logical structure and show that you have acquired a sufficient range of skills and capabilities at an appropriate level. McGivern (2009) states that a literature review should be a synopsis and assessment of previous research that has informed the research design, the analysis of the data or the interpretation of the findings. This review is narrative in nature.

2.2 Content of the Literature Review

This literature review is divided into two parts, an academic review and an industrial review.

The first part of the review examines Integrated Marketing Communications in relation to marketing, and more specifically sports marketing. Marketing within sport has grown significantly over the last twenty years due to the money involved in games along with large public interest. The review also looks at sponsorship as an IMC tool, as well as focussing on corporate hospitality in relation to marketing and sports marketing. The first part of the review examines the literature surrounding these areas and how they relate to sport in marketing. The review incorporates material from outside as well as from within the industry.

The second part of the literature review focuses on a comparative review of the available statistics in relation to sports marketing, advertising and sponsorship figures. This section will also look at the figures behind the naming rights to stadia across the world.

2.3 Academic

2.3.1 General Integrated Marketing Communications

Although Integrated Marketing Communications have been in use for over two decades it is still considered to be in development within academic and professional fields. Kitchen et al (2008) suggest that this has led to researchers and theoreticians being more direct in their efforts to meet the changes in the marketplace that are brought about by IMC. Awareness of IMC has come to pass too slowly as practitioners have focused on development of the process instead of measuring the value of it.

Shimp (2000) suggests that although IMC can be defined in different ways, that there are five significant aspects that relate to each definition. 1) The primary goal of IMC is to affect consumer behaviour through directed communication, 2) The process should start with the customer or prospect and then work back to the brand communicator, 3) IMC should use all forms of communication and all sources of brand or company contacts as prospective delivery channels, 4) The need for synergy is paramount with coordination helping to achieve a strong brand image and 5) IMC requires that successful marketing communications needs to build a relationship between the brand and the customer.

IMC has progressed from its original conception as the coordination of communication tools for a brand, Krugman et al (1994) to being much more of a strategic conceptualization now, Duncan (2002). From the outset there has been different opinions as to what IMC specifically is, which led to the adoption of different approaches to creating messages for the IMC process, Carlson et al (2003). This in turn has led to contrasting opinions as to what IMC is within the field. Cornelissen and Lock (2000) argued that IMC was more a management fashion than a theoretical concept, while in return Schultz and Kitchen (2000) disputed that IMC was

an emerging paradigm whose progression as a concept and discipline is entirely suitable and in accordance with scientific theory. More recently Gould (2004) noted that even though IMC remains a controversial theoretical concept, it could be a powerful theoretical tool when viewed from a post-structural paradigmatic perspective on theory.

Gould (2000) suggests that the use of IMC within an area can depend solely on each individual manager's perspective of a situation; he suggests that IMC can be compared to God, in that there is no generic understanding. IMC can motivate and inform behaviour, it is treated differently in each area, it can appear in different theoretical situations no matter how it is studied or applied, and must be dealt with on an individual case by case basis.

The use of IMC can help a firm to build the brand equity of all their products and services through synergy; it can also be related to positivity that surrounds brand related performance. While looking at the service industry the use of successful IMC can generate positive customer responses as well as being effective in communicating with the intended market which may lead to improved financial performance through higher brand equity.

2.3.2 Sports Marketing

Sports marketing dates back over a hundred years to the Olympics held in 1886, the first of the 'modern' Olympics, with Kodak becoming a partner offering value in kind to the organisers. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympics is credited with starting the modern trend of sports marketing and turning athletics into a sponsored business, Schlossberg (1991), these Olympics were the first that had depended entirely on private funding, mainly through sponsorships.

Shannon (1999) suggests that due to growing interest in professional sports globally sports marketing has become big business. For these sports to remain professional they come with increasing expenses through extravagant wages along with state of the art facilities which have to be paid for, it highlights how sports are truly a modern day business venture .

According to Raynaud and Bolas (2008) it is only in recent years that the use of sports has become a highly strategic option in marketing, and has become the centre of some of the most successful marketing strategies for global brands. Sport can be used to market any product or service which has led to brands wanting to associate them with successful sports. There are prominent brands such as Adidas and Nike that associate themselves with teams and individual players to gain brand awareness globally, both companies compete against each other directly in the area

There are three specific areas that can be looked at in relation to sports marketing.

1. The growing importance of sport in society has led to marketers understanding that people associate with it. When the amount of public appearances sports stars make it can be argued that they are in fact

role models more so than movie stars or musicians, and thus are used increasingly as brand ambassadors in marketing campaigns.

2. The amount of sport being broadcast both locally and globally is steadily on the rise and has been for years. This doesn't just apply to the perennial mega events such as the Superbowl or the FIFA World Cup, competitions such as the African Nations or the Copa Libertadores have gained global following that have allowed for increased marketing opportunities. With the growth of the sport being broadcast some sports have made changes to allow them to be more marketable, an example being the Tri-Nations rugby competition that holds matches that are taking place in New Zealand and Australia at night time so they can be watched by European nations at a respectable time.

3. Accountability for all marketing has become very important. All investments that are made must be justified sufficiently and the return on investment needs to be clear. These results can be determined by research companies who use state of the art methodology and measurement systems. Brands are utilising sports as it is big, growing and its benefit can be measured both rationally and emotionally.

2.3.3 Sports Sponsorship

'Sponsorship can be defined as an investment in cash or kind in an activity, in an event, team or person, in order to secure access to the commercial potential associated with that event, team or person' (Meenaghan, 1994)

The primary objectives of sponsorship are to build awareness, to develop customer loyalty along with improving the perception of a particular brand or organisation. Smith and Taylor (2004) suggest that the main objectives of sponsorship are to:

1. Increase awareness
2. Image Building
3. Improve or maintain awareness
4. Increase sales and open closed markets
5. Increase sales (sampling and direct sales)
6. Attract distributor/agents
7. Create promotional materials
8. Circumventing advertising bans

Sports sponsorship has grown considerably over the last two decades, as Hollis (2008) suggested it is a trend that is fast spreading on a global scale, particularly over the past two decades with the increasing commercial exploitation of sport. It can be argued that sponsorship has derived from top end managers and the passion they hold for a particular team can lead to a preference of a sport. Lagae (2005) suggests that the

integration of sports sponsorship into the promotional mix has allowed it to become more of a creative and powerful instrument of marketing communications.

Companies across the world invest millions to become the official sponsors of global events. According to McKelvey and Grady (2008) through the publicity and large consumer audiences generated by these events provide an attractive marketing opportunity for official sponsors. One of the main advantages, supported by Gardner and Schuman (1987), that sponsorship offers over more traditional marketing tools is the ability to focus on specific target markets, which are often comprised of prospects who are emotionally invested in the sponsored event.

Sports sponsorship is very much applicable to the alcoholic drinks industry; it is possible for companies to use the association of sport and alcohol to support their brand. This sponsorship enables a company to target young male customers who can be a difficult market to reach through traditional marketing communication tools. Meenaghan (1999) suggests that the involvement in sport creates the positive image of 'being healthy, young, energetic, fast, vibrant and largely masculine'. This encourages companies to participate in the sponsorship of sports to build on these core values, in turn creating a positive image of their brand in the process. In certain cases of sports sponsorship it is possible for a company to gain a direct increase in sales. 'A beverage supplier can obtain the sole rights for selling beverages at an event, and in this way boost sales' (Lagae, 2005). As pointed out by Pelsmacker et al (2007) it is important that a company chooses the right event to sponsor. Ferreira et al (2008) suggest that the brand and audience fit is vital in a sponsorship

relationship as the promotional strategy is aimed at specific consumer segments and that it also may be part of a positioning strategy.

O' Reilly (2008) suggests that one of the most difficult tasks associated with sponsorship is being able to observe tangible results that can be attributed to a particular sponsorship programme. The impact that a sponsorship programme has on sales may only be measurable if it is localised or short-term, direct impact on sales can be measured through sales promotions carried out alongside the sponsorship. Lagae (2005) suggests that achievement of effectiveness can be measured on the basis of exposure. The monetary value of the exposure can be measured by the amount of air time that the sponsor receives.

For any sponsorship association to be a success the sponsorship manager must have developed strategies that can counter any attempt at ambushing by a competing brand. Due to the vast quantities of money invested in sponsorship the threat of ambush brands has intensified and led to measures been put in place to counteract any attempts to derail a sponsorship programme.

Hollis (2008) suggests the sale of naming rights can generate significant revenue which is in then used to finance a new stadium, thus buying an association with the new stadium which in turn creates a positive image amongst fans who may have had negative feelings about the commercialisation of the club or national team they follow.

2.3.4 Corporate Hospitality

'Within the corporate world it is now fashionable to think of a brand in terms of a relationship with live communication or event experiences building and sustaining these relationships between company and customer' (Getz, 2007). Due to this planned events have now become branding tools where experiences associated with them have to be evaluated to see if the corporate marketing aims were met. Competition to attract and engage customers is constantly growing; however this has led to short life-cycle events as something new will always be needed.

Collett (2007) suggests that a significant amount of money is spent by corporations on a yearly basis on sponsorships where the key objective is to secure 'money can't buy' corporate hospitality opportunities. Due to the nature of hospitality, the human contact along with the emotional value attached and a varying range of outcomes, it is one of the hardest forms of sponsorship to try and evaluate.

An issue that arises with corporate hospitality within most companies is that it is not treated as a marketing activity and thus not managed by the marketing function. 'This means that it is not afforded the same level of discipline and scrutiny as advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, public relation campaigns or individual sales performances' (Collett, 2007). Thus corporate hospitality is seen more as an activity more so than as an investment.

Corporate sports hospitality involves the distinctive organisation of relationship activities within various sports. Corporations use these sporting activities to supply a specifically tailored product with originality and quality. The possibility is that corporate hospitality can engage the consumer in a more personal approach leading to a memorable experience. The organisation of corporate hospitality can be on a

considerably large scale which leads Lagae (2005) to suggest that the corporation must evaluate who should benefit from the hospitality by classifying the stakeholders into specific groups as follows:

1. The dependence relationship between the public groups and the company
2. The perception by relationship groups of the company's image
3. The specific problem areas, disquiet or stability in the relationship
4. The demographic, socioeconomic, geographic and psychographic criteria
5. The public groups and the company
6. The communicative characteristics

In contrast to the global audience that can be delivered by television coverage, hospitality is a more targeted marketing vehicle. It can be used for networking, product displays and sampling, and it can serve as a powerful incentive (Delpy *et al.*, 1998). Kodak offered packages to the Sydney Olympic Games to distributors who achieved sales targets, and hospitality costs were more than covered by the incremental sales that were gained (Riviera, 2000). Ansett Airlines offered packages to the Sydney Olympic Games as an inducement to attract corporate accounts and as a consumer prize for those who flew with the airline during the period of a competition

The way in which a corporation deals with its hospitality can affect its corporate reputation. It is a measure of how an organization is perceived by both the public and corporate sectors. Mallen and Adams (2008) acknowledge that a company that has a highly regarded reputation will find considerable favour with stakeholders, employees and consumers.

Corporate hospitality is seen as an expense that must have a disciplined and objective process to it that should be able to calculate the projected return on investment. It is important that the consumer is at the centre of the decision and a situation where a decision is made on a 'Chairman's whim', where a personal preference by a senior member of management is made in relation to hospitality or sponsorship investments, does not arise.

2.4 Industrial

According to Schlossberg (1991) global spending in the sports sponsorship area reached \$2.5 billion in 1990. Although sales value that was associated with the overall sports market exceeded \$179, with growth expected to continue at approximately 20 per cent annually, per Schlossberg (1990)

According to IEG Sponsorship Report (www.sponsorship.com), sports sponsorship spending has been as follows:

- 2001: \$6.4 billion
- 2002: \$6.5 billion
- 2003: \$7.1 billion
- 2004: \$7.7 billion
- 2005: \$8.3 billion
- 2006: \$8.9 billion
- 2007: \$9.9 billion

Sports sponsorship in 2007 was distributed as follows:

- Motorsports: \$3.2 billion
- NFL: \$ 785 million
- College sports: \$ 515 million
- MLB: \$ 505 million
- NBA: \$ 490 million
- NHL: \$ 290 million

Sports sponsorship spending is forecast as follows:

- 2008: \$10.6 billion
- 2009: \$11.4 billion
- 2010: \$12.3 billion
- 2011: \$13.2 billion

\$16.4 billion is spent annually for arena/ stadium signage, billboards, and related promotions. Advertising signage space is sold throughout stadiums and arenas, inside and out. A prime location in most sporting arenas are the areas along the sideline, this is generally due to the fact these areas are in constant view of television cameras and suits computer generated advertising.

A European Sponsorship Association (2009) report highlighted that 88 per cent of sponsorship deals in 2008 were related to sports. PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007) reported that the global sports industry is set to grow to as much as \$124 billion in 2011.

It is evident from the above figures that sponsorship and the money spent on related forms of marketing has been steadily on the increase in recent years, and it is only set to increase more in the near future.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research can be defined as ‘the systematic collection and analysis of data that is relevant to the particular product or service. It is carried out in the context of political, economic and social influences, and it can apply to any aspect of the marketing process that requires investigation.’ (Rogan, 2007)

3.2 Research Problem Definition

Dillon et al (1994) suggest that the research problem can come about from a desire to either solve a current problem or to pursue an opportunity. A clear and precise problem definition allows the researcher to establish what information will be needed to formulate the research objectives. The general research problem is characterised as follows:

An investigation into the effectiveness of the marketing campaigns of both the F.A.I. and I.R.F.U. in relation to the sales of long term tickets for the Aviva Stadium among sports fans in Ireland.

Domegan and Fleming (2007) surmise that the problem definition results in a list of research objectives. These objectives should be specific, action-orientated statements of intent.

3.3 Definition of Research Objectives

1. To examine the response of the consumer to the IMC process used and the subsequent uptake of available ticket packages.

*More specifically: To examine how the I.R.F.U. advertised the product.
To assess the response amongst the target market.*

2. To investigate the strategic rationale in the Marketing Campaigns towards two distinct audiences: A) Corporate Sector. B) Public Sector

More specifically: Determine who the I.R.F.U. targeted within the corporate sector and why they choose them.

Determine who the organisation choose to target within the public sector.

3. Investigate the strategic role of sponsorship as part of the IMC initiative

More specifically: To gain an understanding as to why the I.R.F.U. felt they needed to sell the naming rights to the stadium.

To examine the relationship between the organiser and the sponsors.

3.4 Research Design

Rogan (2007) states that it may be difficult for the researcher to pick a design for a specific area. The research design that is chosen depends solely on the research problem. Cost and time restraints can also be a factor in choosing a method of research design. The author suggests three types of: Exploratory, Descriptive and Casual research.

Research Design	Exploratory	Descriptive	Causal
Data Type	Qualitative	Qualitative and Quantitative	Quantitative
Aims	To explore, chart and identify	To describe, Quantify	The establishment of cause and effect
Nature of variables	Unknown, Uncharted	Known associations and documented	Known exactly, clearly supported
Degree of formality	Relatively little	Some to extensive	High mathematical content, highly formal
Data collection	Literature Review, Expert Survey, Focus Groups, In depth Interviews, Projective Techniques	Literature Review, Expert Survey, Focus Groups and Observation	Literature Review, Expert Survey, Experiment, Survey and observation.
Sample size	Small	Small to large	Large
Question types	Probing, Response driven	Some probing, Interview driven	No probing
Hypothesis	Generates, develops	Tests, and/or generates, develops	Tests hypothesis

Table 1: Source Domegan and Fleming, 2007.

3.4.1 Exploratory

The aim of exploratory research is to provide a marketing manager with ideas and insights about broad or vague research problems. Focus groups are an ideal form of exploratory research. Some examples given of the use of exploratory research by Malhotra and Birks (2003):

1. To obtain some background information where absolutely nothing is known about the problem area.
2. To define problem area fully and to formulate hypotheses for further investigation and/or quantification.

3. To develop an understanding of the structure of beliefs and attitudes in order to aid the interpretation of data structures in multivariate areas.

3.4.2 Descriptive

Descriptive research requires a planned and structured design; it can be an attempt to determine how often something may happen or the extent to which two or more variables are related. Effectively the aim of descriptive research is to describe something in particular.

3.4.3 Causal

Causal research is used by marketers to obtain evidence of cause and effect relationships, managers make decisions based on assumed casual relationships. The main method of causal research is experimentation. Causal research is appropriate for the following purposes according to Malhotra and Birks (2003):

1. To understand which variables are the cause and which variables are the effect of marketing phenomenon.
2. To determine the nature of the relationship between the causal variables and the effect to be predicted.
3. To test hypothesis.

The researcher has chosen to use a descriptive research design in this study as it is the method that is most suitable. An in-depth interview will be utilised as the method of primary research.

3.5 Secondary Research

Secondary research collection and analysis can enable the researcher to define the marketing research problem and develop an approach. The author felt that it was crucial to collect as much secondary data as possible that could be analysed before collecting any primary research. The majority of secondary data was collected before the research problem had been fully defined.

Secondary data has many advantages over primary data; it is easily accessible, inexpensive and can be obtained quickly. The collection of the secondary data did not allow the researcher to answer all relevant questions in relation to the research problem, however it did allow for the following to become clearer as suggested by Malhotra and Birks (2003):

1. Diagnose the research problem
2. Develop an approach to the problem
3. Develop a sampling plan
4. Formulate an appropriate research design
5. Interpret the primary data with more clarity

Although secondary research is quite advantageous it must also be said that there are disadvantages that exist. As the secondary data is collected before the research problem has been determined in full the usefulness may be limited in relation to relevance and accuracy. Due to the fact that the secondary data is collected previous to the research problem there are certain areas that need to be looked at to determine if it still remains relevant.

1. Content of the data
2. Accuracy
3. Research design
4. Does it fit the objective?
5. Is the data current?

The researcher conducted an expansive cross-section review of relevant literature from a variety of academic disciplines. These included academic journals, industry publications and books, which were consulted, reviewed and applied on order to provide a sound basis for this research.

3.6 Qualitative Research

Rogan (2007) suggests that the aim of qualitative research is for the researcher to gain an insight into a respondent's perceptions, attitudes and motives. The use of qualitative research has increased significantly in recent years. O'Leary (1993) found that the analysis from this research was primarily based on psychological and sociological dimensions.

There are generally three different ways in which qualitative research can be carried out. Depth interviews which are generally conducted individually and thus can be ideal for dealing with sensitive subjects.

Secondly there are focus groups which usually consist of between 8 and 10 people and a moderator who is the inquisitor for a discussion amongst the group concerning a specific subject. The participants are encouraged to openly discuss their attitudes, reactions, motives or feelings about the subject. The group will be recruited from a specific area that relates to the topic of research. The moderator must ensure that all conversation stays on topic and no one individual dominates the discussion.

The final area to be looked at is projective techniques, sometimes this can be used on both qualitative and quantitative research. The aim of projective techniques is to gain a better understanding on an individual's underlying motives and feelings towards a topic, this is often done by the respondent being asked to participate on word association and sentence completion exercises.

3.7 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research involves data collection by mail or personal interviews from a sufficient volume of customers to allow statistical analysis. Data for this analysis may be available from secondary sources or it may be generated by primary research. The main process of data collection for quantitative research is through questionnaires. They must be structured and be able to measure behaviour, demographic characteristics, knowledge levels, attitudes and opinions. The use of questionnaires can be very time consuming as the researcher has to design an adequate questionnaire that covers each area of the research objective, collect data from a large sample size and complete an analysis of the data to determine the results of the research.

The researcher choose to use qualitative research as it best suited the research design strategy that was being implemented for this study.

3.8 Selecting an Applied Research Method

While conducting secondary research a variety of methodological techniques were considered and examined, from this they were selected or discarded.

3.8.1 Focus Groups

Originally the researcher explored the possibilities of using focus groups to gather the required information. Kotler et al (2003) suggest that focus groups have become one of the key marketing research tools for gaining insight into customer thought and feelings. Focus groups allow for the researcher to get a firsthand experience of a market. However, with the nature of the objectives this form of research would be impractical as it would not allow the researcher to gain the most complete understanding of this study.

However this methodological technique was not viable as the objectives that had been set out were unattainable.

3.8.2 In-depth Interviews

The researcher decided that the best course of research method to explore was in-depth interviews. 'A depth interview is a lengthy non structured interview between a respondent and a highly trained interviewer', (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). Interviews can be viewed as a psychoanalytic sessions where free association and hidden sources of feeling are discussed. The use of interviews can be quiet useful if the research deals with issues, suggested by Dillon et al (1994), such as:

1. A confidential, emotionally charged, or embarrassing matter
2. A behaviour for which socially acceptable norms exist and the need to conform in group discussions influences responses
3. A complex behaviour or decision making process that requires a step-by-step description
4. When interviews are difficult to schedule due to the population.

Malhotra (2002) and Dillon et al (1994) both suggest that the interviewer is pivotal to the success of any interview, and that they must ensure that the following are adhered to:

1. Avoid sounding superior or condescending, use familiar words to put the respondent ease.
2. Ask questions indirectly and informative.
3. Remain detached and objective throughout.
4. Do not accept brief yes or no answer
5. Probe the respondent for all details and feelings, encourage the respondent to talk freely, while keeping the conversation on target.

Depth interviews are used in an attempt to uncover content and intensity of respondents, feelings and motivations beyond what are deemed rational responses from the interviewee to the questions asked. The use of recording equipment allows the researcher to transcribe and read over the interview, and allows for a detailed analyse of the data collated.

Factor	Focus Groups	One-on-One Interviews
Value of interaction	Use when interactions of participants will spark new thought	Use when interactions are limited or appear to be non-productive.
Sensitivity of subject	Use when subject matter is such that participants will not withhold information or temper remarks	Use when subject matter is so sensitive that few respondents would speak openly in a group setting
Cost and timing	Use when turnaround critical and need to economise present	Use when turnaround not critical and budget will permit high costs of execution and reporting
Depth of information per respondent	Assumes most respondents can say all that they know in 8-12 minutes	Permits greater depth of response per individual, use when subject matter complex and participants very knowledgeable
Logistics	Assumes that an acceptable number of respondents can be assembled in one location	Use when respondents are geographically dispersed and travel costs prohibitive

Table 2: Source The Burke Institute.

3.9 Research Limitations

Due to the nature of the research topic the availability of material relating to the topic for secondary research was limited. Due to the time restraints and the lack of budget facilities the author felt disadvantaged as to the research that could be carried out.

The researcher was also limited in the availability of people within organisations willing to participate in interviews, specifically the F.A.I. whose marketing representative ceased contact after initial replies to requests for information. This was disappointing as it resulted in the researcher not being able to carry out a comparison between the I.R.F.U and the F.A.I. which was the initial aim of this study.

Chapter Four

Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher plans to explore the research objectives set out in detail through the primary research conducted. The researcher conducted an in depth interview with Pádraig Power, Director of Commercial and Marketing with the Irish Rugby Football Union. The aim is to establish how each of the objectives relates to the I.R.F.U. and the redeveloped Lansdowne Road.

4.2 Objective 1 Research Findings

‘To examine the response of the consumer to the IMC process used and the subsequent uptake of available ticket packages’.

The main reason for this objective was to discover how much a national sporting organisation relies on a marketing strategy such as Integrated Marketing Communications. The interviewee was not fully aware of the IMC process when initially asked, the researcher gave an overview of what it is and what the aim of it is in relation to a specific concept.

4.2.1 Ticket Allocations

From the interview it was discovered that the I.R.F.U. did not set out to use an IMC strategy to try and sell the 5,000 premium ticket they have. Instead they had put together a brochure highlighting what the packages contained. They had enough interested parties’ from people who had contacted them to express their interest. Although not directly implementing an IMC strategy they did follow guidelines seen earlier by

Shrimp (2000), they did this through direct communication through the mailing list and by setting out to develop a bond between the brand of the stadium (the brand) and the consumer. The response received from the consumer heavily suggested that the I.R.F.U. had managed to create a general positive feeling in relation to the product at hand.

It was very easy for the I.R.F.U. to market the ticket packages as the Irish team was on a high. This generated significant interest, which in turn led to sales. The tickets went on sale at a time when the economy was performing very well in this country, which of course played a part in people's decisions as they had more disposable income. However, due to the current economic climate some people who had committed to purchasing these tickets were no longer able to meet the payment deadlines. This led to the organisation being able to turn straight to a waiting list of people who were capable of making the payments.

'We have always had a demand that is over and above our ability to supply them' (Padraig Power)

4.2.2Croke Park Stay

While the Aviva stadium was being developed the Irish Rugby Football Union had an agreement in place with the Gaelic Athletic Association to use Croke Park for the duration of the construction period. This left the I.R.F.U. with what may have been perceived as a problem in trying to fill the 80,000 capacity of Croke Park, however it was never an issue, and overall the time spent in Croke Park has been a huge success. This is mainly due to the success that the Irish team has enjoyed in recent years. This led the researcher to question whether the Aviva was going to be too

small a stadium to host Irish games in the future, which was countered with:

'Who was to know that 80,000 people would follow Ireland? Who was to know that the G.A.A. would be so happy with the revenue they were getting that they wouldn't want it to finish? All of that it is hindsight and conjecture. We have built a stadium that we are very happy with.' (Padraig Power)

4.2.3 Stadium Restrictions

The interviewee made it quite clear that the capacity of the stadium was determined by the strict planning guidelines in place due to the surrounding households. It was not possible to build a larger capacity stadium, which in turn will lead to tickets being even more of a hot commodity in the future. Although the I.R.F.U. filled Croke Park consistently the same cannot be said for the F.A.I who struggled at times, which in turn seems to confirm the 50,000 capacity of the Aviva as adequate for two co-habiting organisations.

4.3 Objective 2 Research Findings

'To investigate the strategic rationale in the Marketing Campaigns towards two distinct audiences: A) Corporate Sector B) Public Sector'

4.3.1 Public Sector

When examining the strategic role of the public in relation the Aviva it has become evident that the 5,000 10 year ticket holders and the 5,000 premium tickets holders are the only members of the public who have has reason to be affected by any marketing from the I.R.F.U. due to the stadium not being fully operational as of yet. As previously pointed out the marketing campaign was targeted directly at people who had expressed interest. The 10 year ticket holders were given the option of extending their relationship with the organisation or not renewing it.

The researcher felt it was important to explore whether the interviewee would do things differently if given the opportunity, the response was interesting as it showed the organisation was not just interested in making money out of there consumers

'The only thing you might say is did we go at the right price, did we go a bit cheaply? On balance I don't think we did, I think we went on a very good price, that was reasonable, it wasn't fleecing people. It gave us the revenue stream to put into the new stadium.' (Padraig Power)

Shannon (1990) earlier suggested that for sports to remain professional expenses have increased, yet this doesn't necessarily mean that the expense is passed straight onto the consumer. Another thing the researcher noticed was the goodwill from the I.R.F.U. towards its core supporters. The organisation has always distributed tickets for internationals through the club network, which in turn means the real core supporters are the people availing of the tickets,

'The tickets have always been a way to reward volunteerism' (Padraig Power)

4.3.2 Corporate Sector

When looking at the corporate sector it became evident of the importance it holds within the I.R.F.U. The new stadium has 36 corporate boxes which have been sold on a 5 year basis. This highlights the strength of the organisation as they can command 5 year contracts in the current economic climate. Although, just like the premium tickets there have been some issues,

'Some did come back to us, but we're in the process of selling them again, and are very confident that they will be sold, and done and dusted by the time we open.' (Padraig Power)

The fact the organisation is so confident about selling those shows the strength of their corporate image. The corporate boxes were first offered to the 25 sponsors already associated with the I.R.F.U. as these are the companies who are committed to the organisation on more than a short term basis. As discussed earlier corporations use these sporting occasions to supply a specifically tailored product with originality and quality.

A key staple of the corporate hospitality over the last two decades has been the financial sector, which is suffering a long term crisis at the moment. The interviewee didn't seem to see this as an issue as he felt that the I.R.F.U. is,

'A very strong marketing platform and a very strong marketing occasion on a match day' (Padraig Power)

They now see themselves as a vehicle for the financial sector to rebuild relationships that may have been affected over the course of the past two years.

During the interview process it was possible to gain a better understanding of the relationship that exists between the I.R.F.U. and The Hospitality Partnership. This joint venture is how the organisation handles the corporate side of match days,

'Effectively they run our match by match corporate hospitality. In the new Aviva on the South Terrace there is a restaurant for 640 people, we will sell that on a match by match basis, either buying a seat or a table of 10. The price will be set on a match by match basis depending on the opposition and depending on the demand for tickets.' (Padraig Power)

The researcher felt it was imperative to gain an understanding on how the interviewee felt about the difficulty the Football Association of Ireland was experiencing in selling their ticket allocations. The interviewee felt that it is a lot more problematic for the F.A.I. to sell their tickets as they are not aware of their opponents on a regular basis whereas the I.R.F.U. knows exactly who they are playing from year to year well in advance. It was also felt that unless the Irish soccer team have a top ranked opposition in qualifying stages of a tournament it is hard to create leverage, i.e. pairing tickets for a marquee fixture with a game against a much lower ranking team.

4.4 Objective 3 Research Findings

'Investigate the strategic role of sponsorship as part of the IMC initiative'.

4.4.1 Sponsorship

The role of sponsorship has been extremely significant in the redevelopment of Lansdowne Road. With the redevelopment came the opportunity for the I.R.F.U. and the F.A.I. to sell the naming rights to a corporation. These days, seemingly most of the larger and higher-profile new sports stadia around the world now have corporate sponsorships.

4.4.2 Naming Rights

The opportunity to sell the naming rights to Lansdowne Road was considered right from the outset of the project,

'To make the business model work we needed a naming rights partner.'
(Padraig Power)

This demonstrates how important the selling of naming rights to stadia has become globally. The finance that is secured by it allows an organisation to continue with development without burdening themselves with loans that may cripple them. The scope of naming rights has expanded in recent years. Not only is it the naming rights to the stadium, it can include signage on the outside of the stadium, advertising on or around the playing field, access to stadium hospitality and conference suites, corporate boxes, complimentary tickets and billboard advertising around the stadium.

The organisations did not want to find themselves in a situation where servicing large borrowings was going to eat into their annual income. This was a problem that affected Scottish and Welsh rugby. They had built stadiums they could not afford and thus found themselves with large amounts of debt that in turn affected their overall rugby structure.

4.4.3 Corporate Responsibility

The naming rights for Lansdowne Road were sold to Aviva, on a 10 year contract and the stadium will be known as the Aviva Stadium. Before deciding on a naming rights partner the I.R.F.U. and F.A.I. had to ensure that any potential partner would not interfere with any of their existing commercial partners

'We are like a three legged stool, there is the I.R.F.U., F.A.I. and the stadium. It's in nobodies' interest not to work together, nobody should be discommoded. We needed to make sure that neither of us had a competitor to Aviva. It suited both commercial programs, we weren't imposing on somebody who had been with us for years.' (Padraig Power)

Although there were other companies in the running both organisations decided that a deal with Aviva was best for both of their commercial interests.

4.4.4 Stadium Identity

The researcher thought it necessary to enquire about whether or not it was felt that by selling the naming rights the stadium would be losing part of its identity. The interviewee felt this was not the case as they had preserved much of the surrounding heritage that would leave long standing memories. It was also felt that although it may take a relatively long period for the public to get used to the name change, it would be accepted,

'Research that I've seen suggests that people are positively disposed to organisations that help deliver their sport.' (Padraig Power)

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The following chapter presents an overall view of conclusions and recommendations which have been collated from an extensive literature review and from the primary research findings.

From the research findings it could be seen that the I.R.F.U. did not have to implement an Integrated Marketing Communications strategy. This was due to the reality that the organisation was offering a product that currently has a high demand, and as discovered there is not sufficient supply to satisfy demand. Although an IMC strategy was not in place the I.R.F.U. did utilise direct mailing to spread the word of the availability, however this was to people who had expressed interest.

In relation to both the public and corporate sectors the I.R.F.U. reached the targets they had set out for themselves for the Aviva. This was done by exploiting the relationships that previously existed with Lansdowne Road. This was somewhat of a strategic move as they gave first right of refusal to previous ticket holders, as well as offering corporate boxes to the sponsors already involved with the organisation. Although some of the corporate boxes have been returned to the organisation, there is a positive feeling these will be sold. This shows the strength of the product even during an economic downturn.

The sponsorship deal with Aviva has allowed the I.R.F.U. not to burden itself with debts that could possibly cripple the organisation. It is a positive relationship that satisfies the commercial needs of the organisation without imposing on existing partners. This highlights that commercial sponsorship is still important within the business world, even during an economic

downturn. Aviva needed a platform to launch their new brand image to a nation and they felt that a deal to sponsor the stadium provided an opportunity to identify with the masses.

The researcher felt that by using depth interviews the research was somewhat more detailed than if a focus group had been used. It allowed for conversational discussion that was specific to the research objectives of the study.

5.2 Recommendations

There are recommendations for both academics and practitioners.

5.2.1. Academics

The researcher would suggest that further research could be carried out on the topic in the future. This could be after the initial five year period of corporate boxes or the ten year tickets and premium tickets have passed. This would allow for a comparison to be created between past and present figures in relation to the stadium and organisation.

It would be ideal if the researcher was able to interview a representative from the Football Association of Ireland which would allow for a comparison between the two organisations who are co-habiting in the stadium to be analysed

5.2.2 Practitioners

The researcher felt that only limited suggestions could be made from the research findings. The I.R.F.U. felt that they had sold tickets at a competitive fair and price. Although it could be argued that due to the demand for the tickets it would have been possible to raise the price of the premium tickets. This is something that could be looked at when the next allocation of premium tickets becomes available.

The naming rights of the stadium were sold at a competitively for a national stadium. The researcher feels that the organisation could try and negotiate a better deal when the initial ten year deal expires. While Aviva have the option to extend the deal for a further five years, when the ten year period expires, it may be an ideal opportunity to secure a longer term deal for a considerably higher sum.

Appendix

Interview with Pádraig Power. Director of Commercial & Marketing with the Irish Rugby Football Union.

KM: Good afternoon Pádraig, I'd like to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule for this interview, it is greatly appreciated. Before we start I would like to point out that anything said here today will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. It will only be seen by myself, my supervisor and an external examiner.

PP: Your welcome and I hope you understand that it will not be possible for me to confide any commercially sensitive information.

KM: That is fully understandable. Shall we begin?

PP: No problem, fire ahead.

KM: Well as I have mentioned in our previous correspondence I am currently undertaking a thesis based on the re-development of Lansdowne Road and how the I.R.F.U. have gone about marketing the stadium. I have broken down my assignment into three objectives which I hope to go through individually with you today. I'd like to look at my first objective which is 'To examine the response of the consumer to the IMC process used and the subsequent uptake of available ticket packages'. Are you aware of the IMC process?

PP: No, could you explain it to me.

KM: Yes no problem. The Integrated Marketing Communications is basically five different areas: Public Relations, Direct Marketing, Sales Promotions, Advertising and Personal Selling. Utilising these different aspects to establish one clear concept for selling the tickets.

PP: Yes, I understand now.

KM: How did the I.R.F.U. go about selling the long term tickets for Lansdowne Road?

PP: Very simple, for Aviva by the way. Very simple, we sold 5,000 premium level tickets. We didn't do any advertising, we didn't do any marketing, and we put together a brochure and sent it to a waiting list.

KM: That list was I already there I take it

PP: Yes, and that was the end of it. We did get some back due to the downturn I the economy, and we went back to the waiting list.

KM: There were takers there

PP: Yes, they were quickly taken up. We were very fortunate in that we haven't had to go public, we haven't had to go down any of the traditional routes of marketing or anything like that. Thankfully (touch wood) there is such a demand for the product at the minute and with the excitement around the new stadium that they went. Our timing was good to in the sense they went before the 2007 Rugby World Cup, the team was on a high, they were going well, expectations were on a high and we got most of them off, the economy was booming and we were fortunate to get them off when we did.

KM: So basically, there was no issue in selling the 5,000 that had been set out to sell

PP: No issue whatsoever.

KM: There was a report in the Sunday Business Report that there have been issues with people not being able to meet payment deadlines. Has this been an issue?

PP: There were three different payment instalments to be made for the €15000. There was an initial €7,000 payment upfront, followed by a €5,000 and a €3,000. There were a number of people who couldn't make certain deadlines, they were refunded what they had already paid.

KM: So it was then possible to turn to the waiting list

PP: Yes, we went back to it and straight away had interest from other parties.

KM: It was never really an issue then

PP: Never an issue, we have always had a demand that is over and above our ability to supply them

KM: That's great to be able to say.

PP: I know

KM: Looking back on it now is there anything that you would have hoped to do differently?

PP: No, I don't think so. The only thing you might say is did we go at the right price, did we go a bit cheaply? On balance I don't think we did, I think we went on a very good price, that was reasonable, it wasn't fleecing people. It gave us the revenue stream to put into the new stadium. It was a win win situation. With hindsight you can if we had known that now we could have gone up a few bob, but we went at a good price.

KM: Saying that though by staying at that price it kept the core supporter interested

PP: Exactly, we didn't want to feel like we were overpricing at the same time.

KM: Now some people have raised the issue that with success that Croke Park has been for the I.R.F.U. was there a demand there for a bigger stadium? Obviously it hasn't been possible due to the planning restrictions on the Aviva.

PP: It wasn't possible due to the planning permission granted. At the time, when we applied for planning permission it was on the context that we had only every had a full Lansdowne Road, we had never been to Croke Park and we built the stadium against the back drop of the G.A.A. very generously letting us in, on the pretext that when the Aviva was finished that was it, you're not going to play here anymore, and there's legal documentation to that affect. We had to plan for the stadium in where we were and where we thought we would be. Who was to know that 80,000 people would follow Ireland? Who was to know that the G.A.A. would be so happy with the revenue they were getting that they wouldn't want it to finish? All of that it is hindsight and conjecture. We have built a stadium that we are very happy with, we had 5,000 10 year ticket holders and we'll now have 5,000 premium ticker holders along with those 5,000 10 year ticker holders. We have corporate facilities for 36 boxes, which allow us to service a certain market, along with the remainder of tickets that go to the clubs and to the schools. While it will be hard, and tickets will be a hot commodity, it helps drive revenue streams around the place.

KM: One thing that has always been at the heart of the I.R.F.U. has been the uptake of tickets. If there has ever been tickets sent back by the clubs, they've gone back to the branches. The organisation doesn't seem to need to use ticket agents, which shows that there is a solid fan base there.

PP: Well the tickets have always been a way to reward volunteerism, so they've always gone to the clubs and stakeholders in the game. Similarly we have our ticketing selling vehicle, so we don't need an external agent to look after that for us, also it is very rare that we get tickets returned.

2nd

KM: The second objective I am looking at is the 'strategic rationale in the marketing campaigns towards two distinct audiences, the corporate and public sectors'. How they were distinguished as separate commodities. Have the corporate boxes been based more so on a year to year basis instead of long term deals due to the current economic climate?

PP: We sold the boxes on a 5 year basis.

KM: You managed to shift all of them

PP: Yes, some did come back to us, but we're in the process of selling them again, and are very confident that they will be sold, and done and dusted by the time we open. With England and France at home next year there is a demand. At the end of the day professional sport is about making money, running a team doesn't get any cheaper, our business

model is predicated on the money we make in and around the internationals funds everything else. All of that money funds the grassroots rugby and club rugby. Our amateur leagues don't make any, they're not supposed to, the aim is to develop rugby programs, to do that we need the finance, and the cash cow we have is the Aviva stadium and the team.

KM: During my research I discovered that there's an existing relationship between yourselves and The Hospitality Partnership.

PP: We have a joint venture with The Hospitality Partnership, and effectively they run our match by match corporate hospitality. In the new Aviva on the South Terrace there is a restaurant for 640 people, we will sell that on a match by match basis, either buying a seat or a table of 10. The price will be set on a match by match basis depending on the opposition and depending on the demand for tickets. We are also looking at putting marquees up in and around the stadium. For an England game for example you could put up as many marquees as you like and sell tickets to them. So we'll still be dealing with them, on a match to match basis just like currently.

KM: For the corporate boxes were you targeting companies that we involved in the old Lansdowne Road or were you looking to forge new partnerships for the Aviva?

PP: Well we have 24 or 25 sponsors in our family so they got first offer on them. Traditionally hospitality has been an area where financial services are strong, at the end of the day banks don't sell products, they develop relationships, and we feel that we're a very strong marketing platform and

a very strong marketing occasion on a match day. We would feel more fortunate than the F.A.I. in the sense we know who were going to be playing for the next million years unless teams break into the top eight, and with the way the 6 Nations fall with the 3 home games 2 away games, followed by 2 home 3 away, it gives us time to plan.

KM: The F.A.I. seem to have had more of an issue n selling their ticket allocations

PP: It's harder for them as it depends on whether they get a high ranking team in qualifying stages to use as leverage.

KM: With the rugby be team being on a high it helps though

PP: Yes it did, but there in a much more competitive market

KM: Compared to yourselves who really only play against a core nine or ten teams

PP: True, there's a lot more competition in world soccer than rugby, it's not apples and apples.

3rd

KM: My third objective is looking at the 'strategic role of sponsorship as part of the IMC initiative. With the stadium now being referred to as the

Aviva, was the selling of the naming rights always something that was being looked at from the outset of the planning stages?

PP: Well yes it was. To make the business model work we needed a naming rights partner.

KM: For financial reasons I take it

PP: Yes, I sold the naming rights, we were very fortunate the Hibernian were rebranding themselves to become Aviva and they needed a platform, yet again it comes around to the financial sector through insurance and assurance. They needed to get the brand out, and we were the platform for them to develop relationships. From our point of view it's about having a credible, strong forward looking type of organisation like Aviva. They delivered us with a revenue stream that allowed us to do what we wanted with the stadium. We didn't want to follow the examples of Scotland and Wales who built themselves magnificent stadiums with large capacities but bankrupted themselves and their game in the process. Scotland are still struggling and trying to get out of it at the moment. Wales have finally got up and running. We didn't want to bankrupt ourselves and be left with a brilliant stadium but no team to play in it.

KM: Considering the Aviva is the host to both yourselves and the F.A.I. was the process of finding a naming rights partner complicated by this?

PP: There were certain commercial areas that each of us had to look after. We're like a three legged stool, there's the I.R.F.U., F.A.I. and the stadium. It's in nobodies' interest to not work together, nobody should be discommoded. There could be a case where we have Coke and they have Pepsi as sponsors. We needed to make sure that neither of us had a competitor to Aviva, although we did in a small way through V.H.I. but it wasn't huge. It suited both commercial programs, we weren't imposing somebody who had been with us for years.

KM: I presume it wasn't a one horse race and that there were other companies in the running

PP: There were other companies but Aviva was the one we thought would best suit our commercial interests.

KM: Do you think with the selling of the naming rights could be an issue with supporters?

PP: Well it will take a while to get used to, but from the research that I've seen suggests that people are positively disposed to organisations that help deliver their sport. From that point of view all the research shows that it will take a bit of time. We need the media to get on board, just look at the O2, it's not often you hear The Point being mentioned anymore.

KM: Do you feel the stadium has lost its identity because of this?

PP: Well it's a whole new stadium. We have kept a lot of the heritage around the place. Due to its location we have a kick ass stadium and hopefully a kick ass team to play in it.

KM: Well hopefully we will! Thanks a million for your time. I really appreciate all of your help and co-operation with me for this.

PP: No problem, it was great to be able to help. I hope everything works out well for you, and good luck with completing your thesis.

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