



UNIVERSITY OF PELOPONESE
FACULTY OF HUMAN MOVEMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE
DEPARTMENT OF SPORT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

THE SPONSORSHIP PROCESS AND CHALLENGES WITHIN A NATIONAL SPORT
ORGANIZATION: THE CASE OF OMAN ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION

By Jaber Mohammed Alshabibi

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Approved by the professor body:

1st Supervisor: Guillaume Bodet prof. UNIVERSITY CLAUDE BERNARD LYON

2nd Supervisor: Séguin Benoit prof. UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

3rd Supervisor: John Douvis prof. UNIVERSITY OF PELOPONNESE, GREECE

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ABSTRACT

The interest in sports started very late in Oman, when comparing it with countries worldwide. Its real start was in the 1970s. However, other countries which showed interest in sport in parallel time with Oman like Qatar and Saudi Arabia have been showing better progress in sport, this clearly appears in the overall position and results of Oman teams compared to Qataris' and Saudis' in the international events.

So far, Oman has gained no Olympic medal, very few medals in the Asian Games and continuous failing in most world and Asian championships in different sports, besides the unsatisfying numbers of people who participate in sports in general (Al-salmani, 2016). One of the main aspects why sports in the country are developing slowly is the deficiency in funding the sports organizations. Marketing is one of the main sectors that do not help sports to develop faster in the country. Clearly, the national federations are having deficiency in marketing themselves as an organization and how to present themselves to the community and sponsors since 80% of the federations' budget still comes from the government (Shura Council, 2017).

This thesis is written mainly to discuss the sponsorship process and challenges within a national sport organization (Oman Athletic Association). The federations and sports committees are running the biggest part of sports in Oman. Therefore, this thesis will be focusing on the sponsorship strategies of the Athletics Association, and in the literature chapter of this research clarified the most appropriate methods in developing a sponsorship plan for sports organizations. The methodology is used in this research is the qualitative method by using semi-structured interviews.

The results of the research represented significant challenges face Oman Athletics Association to implement sponsorship strategy.

Keywords: sponsorship, brand, Association, Oman

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Great effort have been made to come up with the presented results and recommendations, therefore, I hope this thesis will inspire readers to learn more about the sponsorship process within national sport organizations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In order to develop an organization you need to diagnose the main points of weaknesses and strengths. Since sports in Oman started to be important recently (AL-Busafi, 2012), many aspects have been deficient and need to be developed. The way that federations and sports committees have been developing in Oman is concerning, in many cases it is not developing (Al-salmani, 2016). Since reasons behind this problem can be wide and manifold; this study is focusing on the marketing sector in one of the most significant associations in Oman.

There is lack in researches examining the sponsorship strategies and marketing in general for sport associations/ federations in Oman. The researcher could not find any single research/ scientific paper discusses any of the marketing issues in Oman's federations. Therefore writing a research in this field may reveal significant information about the data of marketing in general, sponsorship in particular in Associations in Oman. Although the researcher chose only the Athletics Association for the study, it may be the start point for further studies which may be conducted on the other federations since other local Federations have some common issues and similar circumstances (AL-Busafi, 2012).

This thesis discusses **sponsorship process and challenges within a national sport organization applied on Oman Athletics Association (OAA).**

The literature Chapter discuss: **definitions of sponsorship in sport as a marketing tool, the necessity of sponsorship, sponsorship strategies development, and types of sponsorship.**

Additionally, from the main topic three main themes are discussed. **Theme 1 is sponsorship process.** It comprises the main steps of sponsorship starting from identifying the potential sponsors and the ways to find the right sponsors, creating association between the sponsee and sponsor, brand activation, developing sponsorship packages, and how to develop communication strategy. **Theme 2 is sponsorship from sponsors' perspective.** Each company has its own objectives when associating with sport's event or organization (Cornwell, 2014), thus it is essential to know what exactly sponsors seek for. This theme presented sponsors' main objectives, what to be sponsored in sports, and how companies chose the sponsored party. Analyzing this theme may reveal different ways to successful sponsorship strategy. **Theme 3 is measuring the effectiveness of sponsorship**". The aim of this theme is to explore how sponsorship can be measured and to give verity of ways to measure sponsorship. It contains the significance of determining objectives to assess sponsorship agreement, sponsorship assessment methods and sponsorship effectiveness on sponsee.

The literature review of the research is chosen to cover the main aspects of sponsorship in sports in relation to the reality of sports in Oman, bearing in mind to examine these aspects in the designed interviews.

In the methodology, the researcher used the qualitative method by using interviews. Furthermore, in data analysis, thematic analysis is used to analyze the interviews.

1.2 Research problem

Federations and Sport Committees are the main responsible about developing sports in Oman. However, most of these organizations are facing financial problems repeatedly. With the limited funding from the government (AL-Busafi, 2012), these organizations are still unable to solve their financial issues. Suffering from the financial issues prevents the sports organizations in Oman from developing their function, attracting more participants and the most important; winning in international competitions (AL-Zedjali, 2005). The sports' minister in Oman clarified to the Shura Council (parliament) that federations are facing financial challenges and the budgets that the government offers to these federations are not enough (Shura Council, 2017).

Without developing clear and written marketing and sponsorship strategies, these Federations will keep suffering from the financial problems. Oman Athletics Association is one of few federations which have gained Asian achievements – beside Arabs and GCCs (Gulf Co-operation Council) – nevertheless Athletics Association's progress is inconsistent and the financial problem is one of the main difficulties they are facing.

1.3 Purpose of Research

The purpose of the research is to examine the sponsorship strategy that Oman Athletics Association is conducting, and whether or not the strategy is implemented effectively, in addition the most important objective is to distinguish the gap between the sponsorship tactics in Oman Athletics Association and what is found in the literature. Furthermore, to discover the challenges face OAA to achieve significant sponsorship agreements that may secure sustainable income (Cornwell, 2014). It should be considered that the researcher could not find any scientific paper or research discussing marketing issues in the federations in Oman.

1.4 Research Questions

The main question of the research is “What are the sponsorship process and challenges in Oman Athletics Association”?

Moreover, there are four sub-questions emerged from the central questions and form the literature of the research:

1. Do people involve in OAA have a good knowledge about sponsorship in sport?
2. What are the main processes in implementing sponsorship strategy?
3. What are the main objectives of companies in sponsoring sports events/ organizations in Oman?
4. To what extent is evaluating the sponsorship agreements significant for both sponsor and sponsee?

1.5 Significance of the Research

The significance of the research is representing and clarifying the reality of the sponsorship as part of marketing system in Oman Athletics Association. The results of the research can be utilized in diagnosing the characteristics of challenges that this Association is facing.

The most significant advantage of this research is to find practical ways to develop sports in Oman by focusing on one of the main problems federations are facing, which is obtaining more finance for the organization (AL-Busafi, 2012). Moreover, to present the different aspects of the sponsorship, not only collecting money, but about the image, choosing the right stakeholders/ sponsors (Madill & O'Reilly, 2013; Cornwell, Roy & Steinard, 2001) and use the privileges of the non- profit organizations. Werther and Berman (2001) pointed in the chance that non-profit

organizations should utilize their uniqueness and find ways to alliance with other non-profit and/or for-profit organizations. Another significance of the research is to report the difficulties and barriers that limit Oman Athletics Association from having effective sponsors and sponsorship strategies.

1.6 Research Tools

The qualitative method research approach is used in this research, aiming to present rich data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The researcher used semi-structured interviews with specific sample participants who are involved in the Athletics Association to collect information on the sponsorship process and challenges in Oman Athletics Association.

The interviews sample was purposeful based on the researcher's background in the Athletics Association and sports field in Oman in general (Kumar, 2011) and by investigating about whom are the most significant people who involve in the research case. Moreover, further information about some of the respondents was taken from two of OAA executive board members prior confirming the sample. Choosing the purposeful sample can ensure to cover the topic in accurate way and from different views (Kumar, 2011). However, the interviewees were selected from different occupations and positions to obtain data from different perspectives. The participants who were targeted are: executive board members, administrators/ staffs, marketing managers from sponsor companies, and journalists who are involved in the athletic field.

1.7 Scope of the Research

With his passion to find practical solution to develop sports in Oman, the researcher examined the sponsorship strategy and process in Oman Athletics Association, then to declare

the challenges face OAA to have written and elaborated sponsorship and marketing plans to develop local events and accomplish international achievements (Bennett, Kim, & Loke, 2012; Brunette, 2015; IEG's, 2017).

Generally, the research is conducted in Oman, mainly in its capital; Muscat, because Oman Olympic Committee and the Athletics Association' headquarters are in Muscat, also big companies (sponsors) headquarter are in Muscat.

1.8 Summery and Organization of the research:

This research is organized in eight chapters. Chapter one is the introduction of the research, contains: research problem, aims, the main questions, significant of the research, research tools and scope of the research. Chapter two includes the relevant literature of the study, definitions of sponsorship in sport, sponsorship process, sponsorship from sponsors' perspective, measuring the effectiveness of sponsorship, sport in Oman. Chapter three presents the methodology of the study, research questions, selection of participants, methods of data collection, pilot study, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter four comprises the findings of interviews, participants demographic, and the main themes emerged from interviews. Chapter Five presents a discussion of findings, and summary of results. Chapter Six includes the conclusion of the study: strengths and limitations, recommendations for further research and a summary of the conclusion. Chapter seven reveals the Bibliography. The research concludes with Chapter eight (Appendices).

CHAPTER II

LITRERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

It is found that the first official sponsorship in sport was in 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam when Coca-Cola became the official soft drink for the Games (Sandler and Shani 1993). Nevertheless, the actual start of the sponsorship agreement and expenditures in sports was in the 1970s (Meenaghan, 2001a). However, the early understanding of sponsorship agreements was considered as part of donations given from individuals or institutions to an athlete or team or an event. Looking to sponsorship as philanthropy means there is no return to the first party of the agreement (the sponsor) except the public goodwill (Sleight, 1989). This common attitude toward sponsorship has changed in the last decades. Sponsorship has changed from typical philanthropic action to an investment and to be one of the marketing means leads to gain millions of dollars around the world. By the time, sponsorship markets big amounts of money and investments leded by professionalism in sports with the significant development of the media rights. As professionalism increased dramatically worldwide and the major sport events have been broadcasting all over the world, Sponsorship has become the rule rather than the exception in sport (Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994; O'Reilly, Pound, Burton, Seguin, & Brunette, 2015). It is important to mention that the rapid development of sports disabled governments from continue funding sports to the levels they had reached, and here the

significance of sponsorship agreements came to maintain the growth of sports and to help sports in countries with limited governmental funds to continue developing (Beech & Chadwick, 2004). This chapter discusses different aspects of sponsorship taken from verity of relevant literatures which discussed by scholars over time. The chapter comprises five sub-topics which are relevant to the research problem. It will start with “**definitions of sponsorship in sport**”, presents different definitions of sponsorship, the development of sponsorship strategies over time, the necessity to sponsorship and presents types of sponsorship agreements. Afterward, “**sponsorship processes**” will be discussed. The process section is demonstrating how to develop communication strategy, building sponsorship packages, identify potential sponsors and sponsorship activating (brand activation). The next topic to discuss will be “**sponsorship from sponsor’s perspective**”; this section contains sponsors main objectives, what to be sponsored in sports and how companies chose the sponsee to engage with. Also, this chapter will discuss “**measuring the effectiveness of sponsorship**” and reveal the significance of determining objectives to assess sponsorship agreement, ways to assess sponsorship and sponsorship effectiveness for sponsee. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief background about “**sport in Oman**” covering historical background about local and international involvement of Omani sport beside the current situation of sports in the country. This background is important for the research reader to link between the research problem and the current situation of sports in Oman.

2.2 Definitions of Sponsorship in Sports

It has been argued that there is lack in understanding sponsorship in a proper way, better understanding from sponsorship parties may bring much better effectiveness to the sponsorship agreements (Cornwell, 2008). Although scholars defined sponsorship in different ways and from

different perspectives, they all concurred that sponsorship is an agreement between two parties, the sponsor and sponsee (sponsored). One of the earliest definitions for sponsorship was given by Meenaghan (1983) when he described it with: “*sponsorship can be regarded as the provision of assistance either financial or in-kind to an activity by a commercial organization for the purpose of achieving commercial objectives*”. This approach in defining sponsorship directed it to be more philanthropic through providing money or in-kind to the sponsee than a mean to exchange benefits as the general perceive to sponsorship in the 1980s was. Meenaghan (1991) changed the way of considering sponsorship when he described it as an investment, meaning it is not a donation given from one side to the other without beneficial return. The new definition sets as “*an investment in cash or in-kind in an activity in return for access to exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity*”. Furthermore, one of the most common and classical definition of sponsorship was presented from O’Reilly et al (2015) as “*sponsorship refers to an organization providing financial contributions to another organization in exchange for the ability to promote its brand to its target group(s)*”. While Farrelly and Quester (2005) went further when they declared that the modern sponsorship is about relationships where both parties are exchanging objectives in order to achieve their framed strategic goals. Moreover, recently, strategic alliances or co-branding partnerships have been widely presented as a sponsorship agreement between parties in sport. The commercial value of associating business with a well-known property in order to achieve different objectives such as brand equity and raise awareness of the business in particular groups, or corporate image, social responsibility or assist in building new image of a business or brand, attitude change and goodwill generation (Meenaghan, 2005). The definition of sponsorship will be consider in this research is the one developed by Shilbury et al., (2009): “*sponsorship is a business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or*

services and an individual, event or organization which offers in return some rights and association that may be used for commercial advantage”.

2.2.1 Sponsorship Strategies Development

Over time the concept of sponsorship has developed as well as its operating strategies, Rayan and Fahy (2012) mentioned that sponsorship has noticed changing and development since the 1980s. This evolution of sponsorship strategies can be categorized into five main stages in this order:

1. The philanthropic approach: Starting from the ancient Olympic Games from 776 B.C up to 1980, sponsorship typically was perceived as giving from individuals or institutions to the activity without return to the first party. Generally it was a personal decision from CEOs regarding to their interests to choose who to sponsor. Since building goodwill is the most significant reason behind sponsoring activities, evaluating sponsorship was neglected (Meenaghan, 1991). However, early literature noted that what makes sponsorship perceived as philanthropy in this era is the failure to manage the process of sponsorship effectively (Beech & Chadwick, 2004)
2. The market-centered approach: The period between 1980 and the 1990s, noticed dramatic change in sponsorship agreements. Dealing with sponsorship as an investment and significant marketing tool, besides looking for return from this investment. In the current stage, brand awareness became priority in sponsorship contracts utilizing the media exposure and other exclusivities provided from sponsors (Cornwell, 2014; Meenaghan, 2001b).
3. The consumer-centered approach: This stage developed in the early 1990s, when consumers became the center of the sponsorship agreements. It focused at understanding

consumers and sponsorship is oriented to affect on consumers. Studies also focus on how sponsorship affect in the consumers mind (Cornwell, Weeks & Roy, 2005).

4. The strategic research approach: This approach appeared in the late 1990s. Creating a successful sponsorship agreement was a demand for companies in their competition between others. Sponsorship became an important mean in this competition. Here, sponsorship used for to create sustainable success and further investment (Cornwell, 2014). Rayan and Fahy, (2012) explained thoroughly this approach by saying: “The strategic resource approach serves to move the emphasis from a conception of sponsorship as a purchase of an exploitable property to one in which the value of sponsorship is seen as general and developed at the organizational and inter-organizational level”.
5. The relationship and network approach: From 2000 up to date, the understanding of sponsorship perceives as a mean of interaction between the two parties (sponsor and sponsee). Two points of view were developed in this case; the first prefers to focus on building relationship between parties and the other prefers to focus on network building process (Cornwell, 2014).

Beech and Chadwick (2004) mentioned that initial industries exploited sponsorship in sport were motors manufactures, tobacco and brewing, the success of these industries encouraged companies from other sectors to enter this field. However, companies from other industrial sectors have entered the sponsorship field afterward, such as: electronics, phones, financial firms, airlines and other food and beverages companies.

2.2.2 The Necessity of Sponsorship

There is need to sponsorship in sport from three parties; sponsee (sport organization/ event/ athlete) and sponsor (brand/ company). Each one of them has its own objectives/ needs but it remains important for both of them, beside the community. Companies' managers believe sponsorship derives for a strong contribution in the main elements of brand equity like: brand awareness, brand image and corporate image (Cornwell et al, 2001), other elements can be achieved too, such as: brand loyalty and perceive quality. In a study made to find the need of sponsorship from sponsors, Weight, Taylor, & Cuneen (2010) declared that firms/ brands are sponsoring university's athletics team in order to increase the brand awareness, establishing new image, achieving new customer groups as well as rise sales and revenue. In some cases sponsors are showing their social responsibilities towards the community, sponsoring not-for-profit or/ and charity organizations is the most common ways to give the impression of their social responsibility (O'Reilly et al, 2015). Companies are competing to show better contribution towards the community to win people's sentiments. Even when companies sponsor clubs or national teams is seen as society contribution (Eksteen, 2014). Fahy, Farrelly & Quester (2004) gave an explanation to the rapid increase of sponsorship which is the exclusivity offers from sponsorship engagements to sponsors.

From the sponsored perspective which represents sport organization, event, team or individual athletes; cooperate with sponsors in the classical agreements is mainly to achieve financial impact. Gaining money from sponsors help sponsees to achieve their objectives and maybe lead them to success in achieving more sponsorship agreements (O'Reilly et al, 2015). In most cases sport organizations do not seek for sales revenue from sponsorship agreement, but to collect

funds/services and use them to run the operations of the sport organization in a better way (Shilbury et al, 2009; Bennett et al, 2012).

The third party who is affected from the sponsorship agreement is the community. Sponsorship contacts contribute in developing the quality of life in communities because companies develop different aspect in society as part of the sponsorship agreement. For instance: build basketball court or provide sport equipment to the local juniors' team (IEG's, 2017; Bennett et al, 2012).

2.2.3 Types of Sponsorship

Various forms of sponsorship are developing day after day, especially in the sports field where the rapid increase of the investment. This research is developing the following criteria of sponsorship types in sports to differentiate one from others. The criterion depends on:

- The extent of sponsorship: The sponsor who has the exclusive sponsorship of an event is different than to have co-sponsorship or to be the main sponsor. Each one of these categories derives for certain rights and different share of communication. This may be noticed more in the major events such as the World Athletics Championship. Also through the naming rights of sport venues (Reiser, Breuer & Wicker, 2012), for instance: the name of Manchester City stadium is "Etihad" Stadium, which is an airline company.
- The frequent and scope of sponsorship engagement: There are two types of sports events; major events and ongoing events. Major events refers to events occur every few years such as Summer Olympic Games, Asian Games or FIFA World Cup. While ongoing events refers to the events organized annually or through the year such as: Spanish La Liga or the European Basketball league. Each one of these types of events demands different approaches of sponsorship agreement.

- Performance level of sponsorship agreement: The level of performance in events is essential in determining the sponsorship investment amount. Sponsorship engagement in professional event is different from non-professional or sport for all events. As well as youth, juniors or seniors events are different than disabled events (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013).
- Organizational unite of sponsorship: Sport clubs and teams gain more sponsorship agreement than athletes and federations. Here is the difference in the organizational category, association with Olympic sport federation/athlete are considered better than non-Olympic. Moreover, for sponsors to associate with a team playing frequently in the UEFA Champions League is different than associate with a team does not (Reiser et al, 2012).

2.3 Sponsorship Process

The effective and successful sponsorship contract has to be well-managed and compatible with both sponsor and sponsored overall objectives. A general concur in the literature that having sponsorship agreement incompatible with the company's general aims can create limitation in achieving these aims. Beech and Chadwick (2004) suggested the main steps to follow in the sponsorship process for sport organization:

- A. Review the marketing plan and its main objectives.
 - B. Identify the sponsorship objectives. It is valuable for the sponsor and sponsee to identifying their main objectives prior launching the sponsorship processes (Paine, 2010).
- An effective sponsorship agreement is the one where the sponsor and sponsee's

objectives match with the sponsorship intended outcomes. Further clarification will be discussed afterward (See 2.5.1).

- C. Identify the company's segment groups and list them according to their priority. Robust understanding of the target market for both sponsors and sponsee is needed in order to maximize the efficiency of the investment, psychographic and demographic of the segment group is needed to be identified clearly and to ensure that potential segment market for both brands are fit (Fahy et al, 2004).
- D. Develop the sponsorship proposal. In this stage, rigorous scanning for the potential sponsors can ensure creating sponsorship agreements which harmonious with the sport organization's vision. On the other hand, failure in determining weaknesses and strengths of the potential agreement can limit the effectiveness of the agreement.
- E. Implement the sponsorship proposal. Fahy et al., (2004) noted that sponsorship contracts normally lasted three to five years, and to be renewing in several cases. This duration is suggested to allow sponsors to derive benefits from the continuing association with the sport organization. Furthermore, effective sponsorship should be followed with significant marketing communication process (Cornwell, 1995; Meenaghan, 1991; Quester and Thompson, 2001).
- F. Evaluate the sponsorship success regarding to its main objectives.

2.3.1: Developing Communication Strategy

Developing a communication strategy is essential for sport organizations as part of the marketing and sponsorship strategy. Through communicating with stakeholders; organizations promote their vision and plans which are important to be known for the potential and existing sponsors. It

is a reflection of the organization's culture. In order to develop a communication strategy, a sport organization needs to determine the communication target, and the communication objectives according to its general marketing strategy. Other elements are needed too; the budget, tactics will be chosen (push or pull tactic), the media means, the nature of relationship with the target, and ways to assess the results of the strategy (Olympic Solidarity, 2007).

2.3.2 Sponsorship Packages

The fact that sponsorship is an agreement between two parties each of them can provides something for the other is what makes sponsorship agreement valuable for both parties. One side provides money and/or in-kind and the other provides rights. Sport organizations (Federations) are demanded to develop well-build and attractive sponsorship packages for the potential sponsors. Sponsors wish to receive a proposal from the sport organization which fulfill their expectations and match with their objectives. As it noted previously, sponsors objectives are different, so marketing crew has to satisfy each sponsor individually starting from the sponsorship package. In the sponsorship package, there has to be categories for sponsors, Olympic Solidarity (2007) suggested to have three in maximum to ensure managing it in the right way. In each category a number of potential sponsors are placed according to the return on investment and the quality of offers and exclusivity the organization is able to deliver. For example; the Organizing Committee of Sydney Olympic Games 2000 developed three categories of sponsorship packages: Sydney 2000 Supporters, the Team Millennium Olympic Partners and Sydney 2000 Providers. Each of these categories was developed to attract certain type and number of sponsors (Olympic Solidarity, 2007). According to these categories sponsors in each package is asked to provide certain cash or in kind and is receiving certain offers and right in

terms of the media exposure, exclusivity, hospitality, etc. At the same time, all types of packages have to fulfill the overall marketing and sponsorship strategy in terms of company's image, culture, values and objectives.

2.3.3 Identifying the Potential Sponsors

Identifying the potential or right sponsors is not a separate step; it is part of developing sponsorship packages process. It is essential for Federation -or any sport organization- to search for sponsors who are interested in its offers, correspondingly it is crucial to diagnose and then associate with sponsors who are compatible with the Federation's mission, values and objectives (Cornwell, 2014). In some cases in the final stages Federation's staffs realize that the potential sponsor does not meet the Federation's values or objectives then it is appropriate to terminate this agreement and pursuit for another sponsor (Olympic Solidarity, 2007). Robust investigation has to be implemented in order to find potential sponsors who has a segment target fit with the federation's target group - demography and psychography - (Fahy et al, 2004).

2.3.4 Brand Activation

Activation (other synonyms is used too, leveraging and servicing) is the various processes made to reveal the sponsor's brand and logo to the target audience in order to accomplish the sponsorship objectives that sponsors have (Olympic Solidarity, 2007). In a different approach of understanding, activation is "bringing sponsorship to life" (Carrillat, D'Astois & Charette-Couture, 2015). Brand activation also can be explained as the use of the marketing communication to utilize the commercial association between sponsor and sponsored (Weeks, Cornwell & Drennan, 2008). The critical role that activation played in the success of

sponsorship agreement makes it a significant stage in the sponsorship process. In fact, researchers went further than considering activation as a significant stage in sponsorship, it was simply clarified from Crimmins and Horn (1996) “if the brand cannot afford to spend to communicate its sponsorship, then the brand cannot afford sponsorship at all”. The value of activating in the sponsorship agreement appears when evaluating the success of sponsorship agreement for sponsors. Researchers have named a number of models to assess sponsorship; Cornwell et al., (2005); Davies and Tsiantas (2008) for instance have put activation as the main phase to start with when examining audiences feeling and outcomes.

Leveraging communication is one of the significant ways to activate sponsorship. More importantly is to make this process of communication active through involving audience in these processes (such as: active web site and sales promotions), however, significant number of sponsors are still use passive (nonactivational) communication with audience such as: print advertisements and large screen’s shows (Weeks et al, 2008). The value of activation is in expose the correct sponsors for audience helping them to recognize the sponsors and non-sponsors, enrich the sponsors’ image among audience and protect sponsors’ rights from ambush marketing other brands may involve in (Weeks et al, 2008; Quester & Thompson, 2001; Cornwell et al, 2001). Moreover, recently some new expressions appeared in the marketing researches, for instance: “experiential activation” and “emotional leverage” these terms demand for more engagement from consumers in order to achieve sponsorship desire. In this context, latest studies have revealed a development in the activation strategies; while typical activations were built in short-term awareness focusing in placing brand’s logo, new strategies is developed to accomplish long-term awareness through the experiential leverage and targeting consumer’s sentiments (Bal, Quester & Plewa, 2009).

Since activation needs from sponsors to spend extra money than the amount they pay for property to hold the sponsorship's rights, it is concerning for sponsors to determine the amount of extra budget they need to spend to activate the sponsorship rights. Chadwick and Thwaites (2004) declared: "*there is still no consensus about which activities constitute the most appropriate form of leverage, and to what extent leverage budgets should exceed the value of a contract*". Nevertheless, several studies have noted the worldwide activation rate starts from 1:1 and recorded the highest rate 8:1 in order to obtain the maximum utilizes of the sponsorship agreement. The 1:1 ratio means to spend a Dollar in leveraging with each Dollar payed for the rights (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013). Furthermore, following the increase of activation's price throw the time, Séguin, Teed & O'Reilly (2005) noted that activation ratio should be equal to or higher than the budget spent in sponsorship investment. While O'Keefe, Titlebaum & Hill, (2009) mentioned that the most common and fit with the current market is in the range of 1-2:1. By the time, IEG 2011 survey shows 24 per cent of the companies in the survey are spending 4 dollars in each dollar invested in sponsorship, and 12 per cent of them spend 3:1. Nevertheless, the survey shows that total of 51 per cent of companies still spend the rate of 1-2:1 in activation. Another element also has to be considering in the activation; the size of property, which means the event itself. Major or professional event needs different amount in sponsorship activation than semi-professional event and so on (O'Reilly & Horning, 2013).

2.4 Sponsorship from Sponsors' Perspective

The development in understanding sponsorship effects and its potential to enhance the operations in companies brought a significant utilization for sponsorship agreements and help sponsorship to become more efficient. Also, the demands and expectations from sponsors

became higher than before. It is a significant question when people ask; why companies are sponsoring sports organizations/ teams/ athletes? And why they spend such big amounts of money in sponsorships?

On the other hand, the superior management in the sports organizations should comprehend the purpose behind engaging companies/ brands in sponsorship agreements, in order to use this knowledge in achieving better sponsorship contracts and reach sponsors expectations.

2.4.1 Sponsors' Main Objectives

Each sponsorship agreement has its own objectives from sponsors' perspective as well as from sponsored side. Olympic Solidarity (2007) sponsor's objectives are categorized into two categories: the commercial and the corporate objectives. The commercial objectives are where the organization seeks for the revenue and to improve functions from the sponsorship agreement by increase sales and brand awareness. The corporate objectives; where sponsor is working to reinforce company's values through sport; for instance promote the company's culture and demonstrate the social responsibility.

On the other hand, researches listed many different objectives; however this research classifies the objectives into four categories (Awareness, image, sales, internal promotions) which are the most significant points that make sponsors interested in the sponsorship agreement from the researcher's standpoint:

- **Awareness:** Many researchers concur in one most common objective for brands/ companies from sponsorship engagement which is to increase awareness (Walliser, 2003; Olympic Solidarity, 2007; Saritas, 2017). The media coverage in different means (T.V, newspapers, social media) is essential in sports events, especially television broadcasting

(Cornwell et al, 2001) which assess to raise awareness about sponsors' brands. Witcher, Craigen, Culligan, & Harvey (1991) noted that sponsorship can be included in different sectors and industries (such as: art) but sports industry remains the best to offer brand awareness and media exposure. Moreover, large scales of sponsors are sponsoring in sport activities to win a global recognition. A significant advantage in sport is the globalization of sports, and sponsors consider it as a perfect mean to achieve global recognition. The Olympic Games for instance provide this advantage to many local companies and brands when their country hosts the Games.

- **Image:** Sponsorship also utilizes change or reinforcing the brand's image. Many brands change their vision and identity when they fail in the market or when they fail to achieve their goals, so they need to change the image that people created about the brand using sponsorship agreements and associating with other organizations or events (Olympic Solidarity, 2007; Weight et al, 2010). Furthermore, some companies choose associating with sport organizations, events or athletes in order to demonstrate the quality of their products or services (Olympic Solidarity, 2007). In other words, when audience perceive celebrities using products from specific brand a positive impression will be formed in their mind about this product. This positive impression leads increase in the sales in the sponsor company. Hickman, Lawrence & Ward (2005) used the same approach when they differentiate the company from competitors as one of the most significant reasons which led companies to associate with sport organizations and events. Additionally, Firms realize the importance of showing social responsibility towards the community in their sales revenue and the image of the company. In a survey made by a financial company prior to its sponsorship engage with the Olympic Games, 64% of the respondent

clarified that they prefer to use products from a company sponsoring a local event and 42% of respondent have good feeling for a company sponsoring a national team. This survey shows the significance of the community contributions in people (IEG's, 2017).

- **Sales:** Increasing sales is also a very obvious and important aim for companies to sponsor, for instance airline companies. In fact, all kinds of companies may have this objective in their minds because increase sales is normally the general aim in companies (Shilbury et al, 2009). As well, targeting new market group and creating new distribution channels are significant objectives for some brands. Whether it is a developing brand or one of the major brands in the world, sponsorship is an important mean to achieve these objectives (Shilbury et al, 2009).
- **Internal promotions:** Some companies aim from associating with other non-profit organizations to provide their staff with special experience in the sport events by sending their staff to serve in an event full of celebrities and special atmosphere like the Olympic Games (Solidarity, 2007 & O'Reilly et al, 2015. Dolphin, 2003). Also to enjoy the hospitality that sport organizations offer in events as part of the sponsorship agreement. There are different ways that sponsee offers for the sponsors' employees.

On the other hand, some studies mentioned that one of the main objectives for small businesses in sponsoring sports events is "giving back to community". It brings back to what this research previously clarified, that sponsorship contributes positively in the community (Walliser, 2003).

2.4.2 What to be Sponsored in Sport

Sponsors may engage in several ways of sponsorship, and the sport property (sponsee) can be represented by individual athlete, for instance, the association between Nike and Cristiano

Ronaldo, Roger Federer, Tiger Woods and many celebrities around the world. Sport property also may be a national sport organization like the national Olympic Committee, local like the state/city club or regional organization. Furthermore, it may be international sport federation such as: International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF). The International Olympic Committee is also considers a sport property for sponsors. Moreover, there are sport events, local or international, professional or amateur. Additionally, sponsorship can be in naming the sport venue (stadium) with a company's name (Reiser et al, 2012). FC Bayern Munich Stadium is called "Allianz Arena Stadium"; however this naming started in 2006 and lasts until 2025. Other aspects for sponsorship in sports are found but the above mentioned are the most common.

2.4.3 How Companies Choose the Sponsee

Companies decide to engage in a sponsorship contract after measuring many aspects from the sponsee's side. It can be divided into scopes:

- The image, it is consider if the image of the sponsored perceived compatible with what sponsor is trying to establish. Moreover, whether the property is considered better than any of the competitors in the similar field (IEG's, 2017).
- Targeted group: the audience of the potential sponsored is the most important indeed. The geographic and psychographic of the targeted group. Moreover, the relationship with the audience is either by watching TV or there are ways of interacting with the sport organization (IEG's, 2017)
- The capacity to leverage: in this essential point sponsor brands also look for multi-brand involvement in the sponsored offers. Furthermore, the promotion channels access, and the

time period of the events. It is crucial to concur the duration of promoting with the exact time for the company to gain additional visibility (IEG's, 2017).

- **Media exposure:** As it was noted, media exposure is one of the main reasons why sport is having the utmost share from sponsorship funding. Therefore, media coverage is preserved from sponsors as a significant part of the sponsorship agreement. For companies, it is important to know the proportion of digital and printed coverage will be gained in the corporation (IEG's, 2017). TV coverage remains to be the most significant element, social media became important too when targeting teenagers for instance. Witcher et al., (1991) propose that from the media exposure point of view, sports events have an advantage compared with art events, although both of them are useful to promote the corporate image.
- **The exclusivity offered:** One of the main elements which make the sports field attracting sponsors is the exclusivity (Fahy et al, 2004). Some researchers argue there is exclusivity in sport especially when give examples about loyalty. Fans have massive loyalty to their teams and celebrities; loyalty is hard to be accomplished for lots of brands while sports provide them with it. What type of exclusivity sponsee will offer? Exclusivity may be in advertising, hospitality, the media exposure or even protecting sponsors from ambushed companies (IEG's, 2017). Even though Papadimitriou and Apostolopoulou, (2009) argue that having exclusivity in sponsorship, sponsors do not guarantee achieving results, other element are crucial too.

2.5 Measuring the Effectiveness of Sponsorship

It is essential for both sponsor and sponsee to assess the return of their investment, and the success of their association. Recent researches and reports concur on the importance of evaluating sponsorship agreements, in order to continue having successful agreements or to stop and rebuild new and strong investment. Walliser (2003) declared that there is lack in the studies that examining sponsorship process and results as there is concern in the ways to evaluate aspects like awareness and image. There is also lack in finding indices and statistics reveal the effectiveness of the sponsorship (Theofilou, Ventoura-Neokosmidi & Neokosmidis, 2009). However, there are companies and properties adopted evaluation as part of the sponsorship deals, for instance, the International Event Group's (IEG) has allocated 1% of their sponsorship budget for measuring the effectiveness and success of the sponsorship investment (IEG, 2009). Some researchers like: Thwaites (1995) and Bennet (1999) mentioned that there is lack in the methods for evaluating the success of sponsorship agreements. This lack is because of the "intangible nature of sponsorship" makes it enormously challenging for brands to prove the range of contribution that sponsorship offered. Another challenging point in measuring the effectiveness of sponsorship in sponsors is the difficulties to isolate the contribution of sponsorship engagement than other marketing mix tools that firms are routinely using (Meenaghan, 2001b; Shilbury et al, 2009).

2.5.1 The Significance of Objectives to Assess Sponsorship

It is known that in order to evaluate your effort in any aspect you need first to determine the main goals. Therefore, sponsor and sponsee have to start sponsorship processes with identifying their main objectives (Paine, 2010). In a study done by Mainostajen Liitto (2013) for

companies in Finland, it shows that 62% of the companies had achieved their target of sponsorship. On the other hand, the research reveals that 25% of the respondent companies did not draw objectives for the sponsorship engagement. An example is given to determine the objectives is when Heineken invested in a number of sports in Australia with more than \$10 million. The company sign agreements with Golf, Rugby Union and Tennis but the company has different objectives for each one of these sports (Delaney, McManus & Lamminmaki, 2016). The goals that the company set in its sponsoring of “Heineken Classic golf Tournament” are different from those it has in the agreement of “Australian Open tennis Tournament”. Hoek (1997) suggested that the reason behind the deficiency in having clear and achievable aims for sponsorship is the deficiency in resources, and the knowhow to assess sponsorship association between parties. Beside that nothing unique or special in measuring the sponsorship success and effectiveness, managers use the same ways which will be mentioned afterword (Cornwell et al, 2001).

2.5.2 Sponsorship Assessment Methods

Early scholars suggested some techniques to assess the effectiveness of sponsorship engagement for brands. Meenaghan (1991) proposed three main techniques based on: **a) effectiveness of sales, b) The media coverage, and c) Communicational effects on consumers.** Nevertheless, it can be argued that some of the techniques Meenaghan proposed may mislead the accurate results. For instance sales can be derived by other promotional mix methods too. Moreover, the media coverage in an event is broad, while the appropriate way to measure media coverage is not only to measure the length of media in a particular event but to measure the effectiveness of media on sponsorship audiences and consumers. Cornwell and

Meenaghan (1998) also developed three ways to measure the effectiveness of sponsorship based on: a) **Exposure**, which examine the media coverage and from it to estimate the number of audience. B) **Tracking Measures**, to examine the awareness, image and familiarity of the brand. C) **Experiment**, to evaluate different aspects of the sponsorship and its activation process. Experiment is considered a significant tool since the experimental projects control other variables (Pham, 1991).

Another technique of evaluation was developed in Olympic Solidarity (2007) in expression of “Return on Investment” (ROI). It assumes to evaluate two types of benefits from sponsorship; **hard benefits** and **Soft benefits**. Hard benefits is about media exposure, number of participants and spectators, while soft benefits is about brand awareness, perceived quality and brand image. IEG’s (2017) added, compare the value of sponsorship through media coverage to the cost company would spend in normal advertisement means considering time and space. From a different perspective, Delaney et al., (2016) adopted a category based on **formal** and **informal** evaluation method. Informal is through examining brand equity, customer satisfaction and the service quality, while the formal measurement is to estimate profits and sales. It appears that the evaluation methods which are developed by Cornwell and Meenaghan (1998); Olympic Solidarity (2007) and IEG’s (2007) are more appropriate and suitable from the tactic suggested by Delaney et al., (2016). Other studies suggested different evaluation methods, but what were found do not go beyond what was mentioned here. Almost all the researchers mentioned to measure the media exposure in order to assess the effectiveness of sponsorship, but how to measure media exposure? It is done by measuring how many times the brand mentioned or appeared on media, printed media photographs or newspapers and digital media through television and social media. It is literary counting how many times the logo appeared and for

how long, or for how long advertisement in broadcasting lasted? (For example: 25 seconds). Still there is no one specific method to measure the real number of viewers through broadcasting the event (Shilbury et al, 2009). Nevertheless, social media (YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram etc.) offer the feature television does not. Nowadays, sponsors and sponsees can estimate the number of people who watch the video (or photo) of their event. They can estimate the number of people who liked or disliked it and allow audience to react and comment on it or even share it with friends easily.

2.5.3 Sponsorship Effectiveness on Sponsee

The majority of studies discuss the effectiveness of sponsorship on sponsors' image and revenue. Few researches have talked about the effectiveness of sponsorship agreement on sponsees (sport organizations). As it is noted, the main and most common objective for sport organizations from sponsorship engagement is to generate revenue in order to develop the organization's functions (Cornwell et al., 2001). Nevertheless there are other profits sponsee is able to achieve, for example, being associated with brands that may have positive image among consumers (Madill & O'Reilly, 2013; Cornwell et al, 2001). Sponsee as a brand also needs to gain positive image and to raise awareness in consumer's minds, it gives sponsee a credit for more and higher sponsorships agreements in the future. Sponsorship also is a significant tool which may be used to give a sport organization a credit for further progress in different aspects. In order to enhance their image in consumer's minds, sport organizations and other not-for-profit organizations are associating with educational and social marketing programs (Cornwell et al., 2001). Sponsees demand to develop their image to enhance their value in the market by spreading awareness and increase the number of viewers and fans as well as the share from

media coverage. All these elements guarantee sustainable income and functional progress for sponsees. It is strongly recommended to evaluate the sponsorship agreement from the sponsored side. When a sport Federation investigates about the return on investment and reveal the value of sponsorship packages, the current and potential sponsors make the sponsorship agreement valuable. It also strongly contributes to achieve further sponsorship agreements with potential sponsors (Olympic Solidarity, 2007).

2.6 Sport in Oman

Oman, officially called the Sultanate of Oman is located in the south west of Asia, the south eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Its population is 4,428,946 of which 54.5% are citizens and the remaining 45.5% are foreigners (Oman Census, 2015). Its geographical area is 309,500 square kilometers. There is a geographical diversity in the county, with valleys, deserts, mountains and the long coasts. Ancient Omanis were well-known in the world as they travelled with their ships to trade and exchange goods. Back with the history, Omanis practiced sport and recreation activities since pre-Islam time (before 620 B.C) when the society lived in continuous civil wars between tribes. This style of life directed their interest in sports, because they practice sports which assist them to win the wars. The most popular sports were wrestling, horse-riding, fencing and archery (AL-Busafi, 2012).

AL-Zedjali (2005) and AL-Busafi (2012) argued that there is lack in research studies in the history of sports in Oman, especially the organized-sports. Since the country had lived in the closed door policy before 1970s, Oman witnessed recession in several sectors; economic, education and health. Therefore, it did not notice any kind of organized sport events or even not a single institution manage sport compared to the modern world countries. Therefore, when His

Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said came to the throne in 1970, sport in Oman witnessed a new era. Under the new Majesty's leadership, sport has received much better support from the government, yet it became equal to other main sectors in the country. The discovery of oil and utilizing it starting from 1973 took the Sultanate from small and poor country to modern nation, which affected significantly the sport sector. Moreover, the government started to build and develop modern sport facilities and recognize sport institutions like clubs and federations. That is why Oman considers as a late-comer to the sports field. The establishment of most of the national organizations for the major Olympic sports was between 1973 and 1988. The National Olympic Committee was established in 1982, the same year when IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch visited Oman (AL-Tauqi, 1998).

2.6.1 Development of Sport Administrations in Oman

From the revival of Oman in 1970, sport sector has been managed by different organizations in the country starting from Ministry of Transportation, Labor and Social Affairs in 1972. In 1976 Ministry of Youth Affairs became the responsible of sport sector, and then in 1982 it transferred to Ministry of Education. A Royal decree in 1991 transferred sports to be under the General Organization of Youth and Sport Activities (GOYSA).

Finally, the last change in the management of sport in the country was establishing the Ministry of Sports Affairs (MOSA) in 2004 (AL-Busafi, 2012). The Ministry of sports affairs was set up to cooperate with other governmental and non-governmental bodies to develop youth's skills, giving them the opportunities to express themselves, discovering their talents and directing them to the right field. Since then, MOSA has become the main supervisor and their main source of funding for the national federations and local clubs. Statistics shows that: 42% of the clubs'

budget and 80% of national federations' budget comes from the Ministry of Sports Affairs. Moreover, it reaches to 100% of the Sports committees' budget in most cases (Shura Council, 2010). In the 1990s, the authorities allowed the federations and clubs to communicate with companies and the private sectors to be their sponsors in order to give these organizations opportunities to receive more budgets than the annually budget they receive from the government which is limited. Moreover, in 2009 the Ministry of Sports Affairs set up a new strategy for sports in Oman after calling on many experts and counseling companies to the country to investigate and find solutions to develop sports in the Sultanate. Nevertheless many local experts in sports argued that MOSA did not follow this strategy at all and if they did sport would have been in much better condition (AL-Busafi, 2012). Currently there are 44 local clubs, 14 federations and 17 sports committees are following MOSA and Oman Olympic Committee (OOC). Yet many Olympic sports do not have an organization in Oman for instance: Gymnasium, fencing and badminton. The most popular sport in Oman is football (soccer); therefore a significant number of clubs has only one sport which is football. Statistics show that 14 from the 44 clubs has only football, 23 of the clubs are containing only 2 or 3 sports. That means other sports are not included in the clubs activities, meaning federations do not have connection with the local clubs to spread their sports locally, or clubs do not respond and cooperate with the federations to increase the number of the sport's participants (Shura Council, 2010).

2.6.2 The International Achievements

Although Oman has been participating frequently in the Olympic Games since OOC joined IOC in 1982, yet Omani athletes have never gained any Olympic medals. The first time to

participate in the OG was in 1984 in Los Angeles. In Rio 2016 Olympic Games OOC participated with only 4 athletes, 3 of them participated by receiving the invitation card and only one Athlete qualified to the Olympics. Four years before that the situation was slightly better than Rio although Oman also participated with only 4 athletes, two runners in 100m and 200m qualified to London Olympics, one in Shooting and one female athlete got the invitation card. Failure in the Olympic Games gives very clear image about the professionalism in sport in Oman, but still it does not mean that Oman has never won medals internationally. In Asian championships many medals have been gained in Athletics, shooting, bodybuilding, beach football etc. Bodybuilding is the most successful sport in getting medals in world championships since they gained three world gold medals so far and many silver and bronze, recently bodybuilding athletes won two gold medals and one silver medal in the world Championships in Spain 2017. Focusing on winning in Arabs and GCC championships and tournaments has distracted Omanis attention from the failure in the international events. Media has a big role in this distraction, since paid-journalists are misleading readers with their articles and fake news when national teams participate internationally.

2.7 Literature Review Conclusion

The preceding had discussed and summarized the relevant literature about sponsorship in sport from different aspects; it also outlined the history of sports in Oman, its development and the current situation. Although the majority of researches discuss sponsorship for sponsors only and how to develop it, this knowledge about sponsors is necessary for sport organization who seek for sponsors.

IEG, 2013 shows that two-thirds of the global sponsorship spending is directed to sport, several reasons are behind this dominance of the sport sector. Some researchers argue that the globalization of sports is attracting companies seek for idealistic platform to enhance their brands equity (Mullin et al, 2007). Another significant reason is the increase in the number of viewers and the level of involvement from sport's fans in events, beside the high level of loyalty from sport fans towards their teams and athletes leads fans to travel to support them internationally (Davies & Williment, 2008). Beside it imposes positive brand image; companies aim to change the brand image through sponsorship (Farrelly, Quester & Burton, 2006; Weight, 2010). On the other hand, sport organizations (national Olympic Committee, Federations, clubs) consider sponsorship agreements as a significant tool to generate revenue and to develop the organizational function (Madill & O'Reilly, 2013).

To assess a sponsorship agreement as a successful investment for both sponsor and sponsee (sponsored), bunch of elements have to be considered such as: the level of exclusivity given by the sponsee to sponsors in terms of competition, the level of association between these two parties, the evaluation plans, and finally the activation methods and offers. Moreover, the majority of sponsors measure sponsorship success regarding its financial revenue (O'Reilly et al, 2015) and the level of media coverage. It has also to consider the accomplishment of the main objectives for sponsors and sponsee which had been set earlier. Furthermore, Sponsorship is not only about investing money and profits from broadcasting, it means more for the community as it allows companies to contribute in the community to present their social responsibility and to help making the world a better place (IEG's, 2017).

As this research is made to investigate the effectiveness of sponsorship in federations (sport organizations in general), it also reveals the demands of sponsors which is becoming more

challenging over time. Federations have to show an effort in order to achieve sponsorship revenue and to build sustainable investment through sponsorship deals. For those federation and events with massive repetition and huge media coverage like: Super Bowl and FIFA World Cup, it is easier to find sponsors but for other developing organizations sponsorship needs big efforts to success. It is also strongly recommended for sponsee to focus on building strong relationships with sponsors using different communication tools (O'Reilly et al, 2015; Séguin, 2007).

CHAPTER III

METHADODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Generally researches imply a careful and systematic means of solving problems (Thomas & Nelson, 2001). This context drives researchers to choose methodologies which match with their researches, bearing in mind what Conrad & Serlin (2006) mentioned that some researchers choose a methodology and then try to find a problem to match with. Consequently, in this chapter the researcher selected a qualitative method using semi-structured interviews with twelve people who are OAA executive board members, OAA administrators/staffs, sponsors, and journalists aiming to cover the case and obtain rich information from different perspectives. This chapter also contains: the choice of qualitative method, the sample selected, verification methods, alongside with data collection and analysis.

3.2 Purpose of the Research

As indicated in the first chapter, the purpose of the research is to investigate the sponsorship strategy in Oman Athletics Association and how this strategy is implementing. Furthermore, the study aims at examining the sponsorship tactics in Oman Athletics Association and to distinguish the gap between these tactics and what is found in the literature in order to achieve better understanding in implementing sponsorship strategy and investigate its ability to develop the sport organizations in the country. Additionally, the research intends to reveal the challenges face OAA to achieve significant sponsorship agreements. Moreover, since this

research is one of very few researches that cover marketing sector in sports organizations in Oman, it is expected for the research to facilitate and stimulate further researches in this field.

3.3 Rational for Selecting Oman Athletics Association

It was clearly noted that the overall aim of this research is to identify some practical solutions for the sports organizations in Oman to achieve sustainable development in the sport field. Moreover, as the results further show, the challenges face the selected national sport organization to achieve significant sponsorship agreements and to maintain the relationship with sponsors and stakeholders. Nevertheless, the researcher selected OAA for this study for several reasons. First, Athletics is an Olympic sport and OAA is the only Association in the country which participated with athletes in all of the Summer Olympic Games since Oman was recognized by the IOC in 1982 (OOC, 1990). Moreover, athletics is one of few sports in the country which achieved Asian gold medals, and it is the most successful sport in the country related to its achievements internationally (MOSA, 2016; MOSA, 2017). These facts are considered in order to select a significant Association for the study in order to be the start point for further studies which may be conducted on the other federations. Second, OAA is one of very few sport Associations which has a marketing team. Third, OAA has one of the most packed calendar (events) between Oman's Associations, for example there were fifteen local events in 2017 only (MOSA, 2017). It is important to know how OAA market these events. Finally, the results of this research are crucial for other federations and sports committees because these organizations are working in the same society with similar sources, atmosphere and circumstances (AL-Busafi, 2012).

3.4 Qualitative Method

“There is no one better approach; rather the approach should be dictated by the research question” (Gratton & Jones, 2004). When discussing the most appropriate approach for data collection and analysis (qualitative or quantitative) in the sports researches, Gratton and Jones (2004) suggested to ensure selecting a method which is appropriate to the research questions rather than to the researcher preferences and skills.

Qualitative research is the approach used to capture qualities that are uncountable, such as experiences, feelings, thoughts and other concepts associated with interpretive approaches to knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Through qualitative research a wide range of dimensions may be exposed. It is the method which has the possibility to obtain rich, deep, context and complex of data in particular phenomenon (Mason, 2002). It was mentioned by Smith and Stewart (2001) that the qualitative researches are not fully exploited in the sport marketing field, suggesting two reasons for it: first, the uncertainty of the qualitative data collection compared to the quantitative methods. Second, the fact that managers prefer statistics and charts generated by quantitative approaches. On the other hand, Greener (2008) noted that there is an accepted increase in the utilization of the qualitative researches in the business researches. It appears that Smith and Stewart (2001) point of view is not convenient, and for several reasons the qualitative researches should be used in the sport marketing field especially when the purpose of the research is to obtain complex data.

The researcher came to a conclusion that implementing qualitative method is the most appropriate for this research. The method of data collection is interviews. The purpose of using qualitative method is to collect deep and rich data from small scale using semi-structured interviews with: executive board members, OAA administrators/ staffs, sponsors, and journalists.

3.5 Purposive Sampling

The primary consideration for the researcher is to be clear about his sampling strategy and the sample size in his research and to be able to explain its logic (Mason, 2002). The sampling strategy of the research should comprise the technique of selecting this sampling method, for instance: snowball, random, purposive, etc. (Greener, 2008; Kumar, 2011). Selecting the sample has to consider whether it is able to provide sufficient data, and is it targeting the right focus which is blending from the research main question (Mason, 2002). Thus, this research uses a qualitative method, the sampling techniques applied is the Purposive sample.

There are two main types of sampling: probability (random) sampling and non-probability sampling (Sarantakos, 1998). **Purposive sampling** is one of the non-probability sampling, known also for some scholars as “theoretical” and “judgmental” sampling (Kumar, 2011). The purposive sample is used mostly with small samples or population (Greener, 2008). Researchers who indicate this technique are following their judgment and background to select the sample that is able to provide the most significant information to accomplish the objectives of the research. The researcher targets people who -in his estimation- are likely to deliver the right information and who are ready to share information in the study. This type of sample is widely utilized in the qualitative research mainly investigating historical reality or describing a specific phenomenon. It is useful also for some quantitative researches which cover only limited number of people (Kumar, 2011).

In this research purposive sampling is used in selecting participants for the interviews because the research issue is new for the people who are around Oman Athletics Association; purposive sampling is applied to ensure the obtainment of valuable and appropriate data. Interviews were made with twelve participants: executive board members OAA administrators/ staffs, sponsors,

and journalists. Each one of the interviewee was selected carefully: executive board members who are highly involved in the Association decisions, OAA administrators/ staffs who are responsible about the marketing of the OAA, sponsors from significant companies in the country and that deal with the Athletics Association, journalists who involved in the Athletics news and who had covered some of the significant events. Below is the rational of the participants' selection.

Table 1: Research Participants Rational

#	Participants	Characteristics
1	OAA executive board members/ staffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have good understanding of the vision and main aims of the OAA. - Have a voice in making decisions in the Association (the board members). - Have good background about the daily work in OAA. - Realize the hindrances and enablers that OAA faces in finding sponsors.
2	Marketing managers from sponsor companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have good understanding about their companies' main objectives from associating with sports Organizations. - Responsible for a sponsorship agreement with OAA. - Have good background about the outcomes from sponsoring sports organizations in general and OAA in particular.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Covered most of the main events that OAA organized for several years.

3	Journalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have good knowledge about main sponsors of OAA and other associations in the country (while covering their events). - Because of their job, they have good knowledge about the achievements and the failures of OAA during this decade.
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3.6 Methods of Data Collection

Each research requires different type of data collection depending on the research topic, available resources and personnel, the nature of the research, and the objectives of the researcher (Sarantakos, 1998). The researcher also has to consider the advantages and limitations of each method of data collection. However, the use of qualitative approach in this research drives the researcher to apply one of the most significant techniques of data collection in the qualitative researches. The researcher determined to conduct interviews with specific number of specialists in the Athletics field. The interviews were conducted to collect deep and rich data about the sponsorship strategy in the Athletics Association and its effects (Cohen et al, 2007).

3.7 The Interviews

There are several ways researchers follow in their research to achieve the research objectives, the interview is one of the most common approaches that sports researchers use to collect qualitative data (Gratton & Jones, 2004). According to Burns (1997: 329) “*an interview is a verbal interchange, often face to face, though the telephone may be used, in which an interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person*”. The researcher skills are essential in interviews, because the researcher is the key element in this approach. The

success of applying interviews to collect wide and rich data depends on the researcher knowledge and skills in conducting the interview (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

As it has been noted, the interview is normally linked to the qualitative data collection. Interview is the way to investigate the 'how' and 'why' questions of the issue, rather than 'when' or 'how many'. It means that interviews are the mean to obtain the data which are challenging to be measured (Mason, 2002). Interviews offer more intense data than other approaches in the quantitative methods like questionnaire. While questionnaires, for example, provide limited data from large sample, interview is suitable for obtaining richer data from smaller sample (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Additionally, the fact that the interviewee and interviewer are in face to face conversation adds another valuable dimension to the research concept. The interaction between the researcher and the interviewee is valuable in several ways: the communications between them lead to better understanding for both of them, ensure not to have mislead in the questions, it also helps to avoid misunderstanding the questions or not understanding them and therefore leaving them blank. Moreover, interviews help the researcher to investigate deeper in some facts (Greener, 2008).

Some scholars classified interviews under two categories: structured and unstructured interviews (Kumar, 2011). However the most common classification of interviews consists of four categories: structured interview, semi-structured interview, unstructured interviews and the group interviews or focus group (Gratton & Jones, 2004). This research utilizes semi-structured interviews. In this approach, the researcher prepared standard punch of questions, provided them to the interviewee and from the answers the researcher can develop other subsidiary questions or ask for further clarification which are not from the main questions. Each interview may lead the

researcher to create new ideas and subsidiary questions depending on the interview condition and the interviewee's answers.

Implementing semi-structured interviews in this study is to enrich the research with wide and deep information from respondents. It is the most appropriate method to obtain respondent's views, understanding, knowledge, interpretation and experiences (Mason, 2002). The interviews are conducted with respondents from different positions and occupations to achieve good understanding of the research topic. Moreover, applying semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to investigate further in particular cases.

3.8 Interview Questions

Identify sponsorship:

1. From your background, how staff and executive board members in Oman Athletics Association (OAA) perceive sponsorship in terms of its outcomes?
2. Do sponsors in Oman perceive sponsoring sports as philanthropy or as a strategic approach to benefit different parties? How?

Sponsorship process:

3. Do you think OAA follows a systematic process to achieve sponsorship agreements?
How?
4. What are the methods that OAA implement in order to activate the sponsorship?
5. In your opinion, does OAA focus on developing communication strategy with sponsors?
Why?

Sponsorship from sponsors' perspective:

6. What are the OAA's sponsors main objectives?

7. From your point of view, why would companies choose OAA to associate with? And what are the most significant features of OAA sponsors would be interested in?

Measuring the effectiveness of sponsorship:

8. How far do you think having significant sponsorship agreements may affect the OAA performance and achievements locally and internationally due to the current circumstances?
9. From your experience, does OAA normally evaluate the sponsorship agreement? How does that affect the process?
10. In your opinion, what methods should OAA implement to be effective in measuring the sponsorship agreement?

3.9 Interview Sub-Questions

The researcher asked the interviewees some sub-questions during the interviews in order to achieve better understanding of the issues discussed. Each interview had different sub-questions according to the interviewee's answers; nevertheless some of them were used frequently. Here are some of these questions which repeatedly were asked:

1. How far do you think TV broadcasting for OAA events may attract sponsors?
2. Do you think the activation offered by OAA keep pace with sponsors current requirements?
3. How far do you think sponsors are interested in the social networking media interaction from OAA?
4. From your background, does OAA consider as a brand deserves to be sponsored?
5. Why do you think OAA is not getting significant sponsorship agreement recently?

Moreover, the researcher asked for further explanations in some points where the interviewee answer the question in unclear way.

3.10 Pilot Interviews

It has to be known that piloting the questionnaire (interview questions) is as important as the main study interviews. Pilot interviews are a pre-test of the interviews before launching to the full sample (Kumar, 2011). In this research, two interviews were conducted as pilot interviews. The pilot interviews' conducted are significant for the research to examine the possibility of undertaking the interviews to larger scale. The pilot interviews are also important to ensure that the interview is the most appropriate method for collecting relevant information in this research (Kothari, 2004). It may reveal the weaknesses of the questions, check if the wording of the questions is clear, and to examine the time interval of the interview. Moreover, the pilot study (called also feasibility study) provides the researcher with a rehearsal in analyzing the data obtained from interviews (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

In this study, the pilot interviews were useful for the researcher to practice before starting the main interviews. They helped the researcher to get used with the questions, explain some questions without orienting the interviewee to specific answer. Furthermore, the researcher understood that he has to give further explanations for some words and expressions which the interviewees may not understand – as some of them are not specialized in marketing-, for instance: activation, communication strategy, sponsors main objectives. In addition, pilot interviews show that all the questions are appropriate and each one of them give opinions from different aspect. Finally, the researcher set 25 minutes for each interview nonetheless after the

pilot interviews it appears that each interview will last between 35 to 40 minutes. However, this information was important when setting appointment with the interviewees.

3.11 Data Collection Procedures

The main data of this research was collected by using semi-structured interviews as it has been noted. The in-depth interviews were made with highest authorities in Oman Athletics Association (executive board members), OAA administrators/ staffs, journalists, and sponsors. Each interview was conducted in the place that the respondent chose, depending on when they are available. Some of the interviews were held in the respondent offices, the library, or voice-call and most of them were in Muscat (the capital city). Each interview lasted between 35-40 minutes. All interviews were done by the researcher himself and each interview started with reading instructions and conditions. The researcher negotiated with the participants about the interview language. All preferred Arabic language. Furthermore, participants were promised that their identities will not be revealed before, during and after the research and confirmed that the researcher is extremely committed to the ethics of research. As the procedures in Oman require testifying your authorized study, the researcher received the authorized letter from Oman Olympic Committee and presented this letter to every respondent when arranging the interview and before the interview begins (See Appendix 2).

3.12 Data Analysis

The main objective for researchers who use interviews in data collection is to obtain rich and detailed data the informants express in the interviews revealing about their experience and perspective in a particular issue (Hudson & Ozanne 1994; Kothari, 2004). However, analyzing the context of data is an important stage in the researcher's paper. Lacey and Luff (2007) suggested

that “analysis unit as a general heading for sampling, recording and context affect the analysis of the data”. Furthermore, because the qualitative research methods in general are more likely to be subjective, (Rowlands, 2005) proposed for researchers to reflect their perspective and contextual understanding as well as expectations in the research when analyzing the data collected. In that matter, there are three types of context analysis stated by Cohen et al., (2007): transfer context, instructional context and orienting context. Each one of these contexts outlines the way the researcher applied in analyzing data in his study. It is also significant to mention the use of tape-record and how the interview transcribed word by word (Kothari, 2004; Greener, 2008). Moreover, as some of the interviews were held in Arabic, translating answers are carefully transferred.

The researcher used Thematic Analysis in analyzing the data collected from interviews with the participants. Thematic analysis is a significant type of qualitative analysis. It relay on categorizing the data to present the main themes of the data (Boyatzis, 1998).

Alhojailan (2012) clarified: *“The literature that relates to thematic analysis (TA) shows that there is a lack of descriptions issues exist due respect to the concepts, process, validations and clarifications that been used by researchers”*.

The researcher selected thematic analysis because it offers the potential to clarify and understand the research issue broadly (Marks and Yardley 2004). Furthermore, it is significant to clarify the relationship between the variables and factors to generate practical and logical chain of evidence. The researcher may also present different levels of themes using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In addition, graphs and percentages about the sample are presented.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical issues that may occur during the study; therefore, researchers have to be aware of these ethical considerations in order to avoid making such mistakes (Sarantakos, 1998). In this study, ethical issues were considered carefully, starting from selecting the sample of the research. Conducting purposive sample goes parallel with the ethical considerations since the researcher sought to ensure avoiding bias in the study. Furthermore, Kumar (2011) declared that: *“When you collect data from respondents or involve subjects in an experiment, you need to examine carefully whether their involvement is likely to harm them in any way”*. Consequently, it had been considered in this research to avoid causing harm for any participants before, during or after the interview in any way. As some of the respondents are executive board members and in a high positions in the country, the interview questions were sent to them prior the interview to prepare themselves and not to be embarrassed. Other considerations were taken as part of ethical issues such as: introducing the researcher identity to participants (Cohen et al, 2007). It is crucial for some of the participants to know more about the researcher and the purpose of the research (Patton, 2002). It had been clearly declared that the research has nothing to do with criticizing the Athletics Association’s situation or how the staffs conduct work. As it is normally required in the business research, respondents’ identities are anonymous in this research and all respondents were informed before the interview begins (Greener, 2008; Kumar, 2011). Researchers are required not to share information about the participants for other purposes than the research. Finally, it was explained to all participants that they are fully free to withdraw at any stage of the study (Patton, 2002). However in this research, one of the interviewees freely withdraws after she knew the interview questions.

3.14 Summary of the Methodology

This chapter presented the different aspects of the research methodology which has been considered. It covered the research method of data collection (qualitative method), the sample (purposive sampling), the interview questions, pilot interviews, data collection procedures, data analysis (thematic analysis), and ethical considerations. These elements of the research methodology are significant to determine the shape of the research as well as its significance to facilitate the researchers work. They are also crucial in enhancing the findings' contributions.

It is important to mention that emerging from the methodology chapter, the transparency in collecting and analyzing the data is considered although it is crucial to be rigorous and transparent in presenting findings of the qualitative researches (Greener, 2008).

CHAPTER IV

THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is one of the most significant parts of the research, as it reveals the main outcomes of the study. It summarizes the data the researcher gathered from the interviews, and paves the way for the next step; the discussion. This chapter presents the main themes emerged from the interviews held with twelve respondents. The data are classified into seven themes, including: systematic process versus public relation, sponsors main objectives, developing a communication strategy with sponsors, the value of TV broadcasting and social networking media in sponsorship, activation methods available, evaluating the sponsorship, and the extent to which sponsorship agreements is able to solve OAA budget problem. Furthermore, this chapter reveals the sample demographic which is significant to express the value of the data collected.

4.2 Participants Demographics

The demographic variables of the sample may give an overview of the data collected value (Mason, 2002). As the research is applying purposive sample; the researcher selected the participants carefully to ensure collecting authentic data. Jennifer, Abigail, and Tenzin (2017) argued that revealing the sample demographic is significant for the professionalism and integrity of the research. Selecting the appropriate respondents is significant to provide sufficient and neutral data (Mason, 2002). Consequently, the researcher selected three groups of respondents – OAA executive board members and staff, sponsors, and journalists - in order to achieve three different perspectives. After that, identify the gap between them to provide realistic and logical

explanation for the research issue. The participants' demographics are presented in graphs to make it easier for readers to absorb the information (Kumar, 2011).

The interviews were conducted with five OAA executive board members and employees. OAA board members were selected carefully after investigating people responsible for the marketing decisions and in the general OAA significant decisions. OAA vice-president, secretary general, executive manager and board members were interviewed. As well as, marketing managers from four significant companies. These companies were among the first 5 places of the biggest sponsorship provided to sport organizations in Oman in 2017 (MOSA, 2017). Moreover, each one of these brands/companies has sponsored OAA during the last 6 years. Besides, 3 journalists were interviewed. The journalists selected are the most recognized reporters in Oman who covered OAA events and news for at least 8 years.

The majority of interviewees are males (n=11); only one female participated in the study, because the sport sector in Oman still consist of small percentage of females compared to males (Al-droushi, 2017). Moreover, half of participants was between forty one to fifty years old (n=6) while the other half was between thirty one to forty years old. Furthermore, the majority of interviewees had more than twelve years of experience in sport field (n=7), however the rest had eight to twelve years of experience (n=4), and only one of the participants had less than that, with three to seven years of experience (n=1). In addition, all of the interviewed participants are Omani (n=12). Most of the participants have a bachelor degree (n=8), some of them have a master degree (n=3), while only one has a diploma (n=1). In addition, half of the participants studied or attended courses in sport marketing (n=6), while the other half did not.

4.3 Findings of Interviews

As stated, the key objective of this study is to investigate the effect of sponsorship agreement on the function (operational aspects and daily work, administrations and staff development) and outcomes (the international achievements, local events quality, number of participants and the brand equity) of Oman Athletic Association. Moreover, the study will reveal whether the sponsorship agreements may solve the frequent budget issue –the deficit in budgets– that OAA and other Associations in Oman are facing. In addition, this study aims at investigating the process of getting sponsorship agreements in OAA, and whether this process is systematic.

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis to analyze the semi-structured interviews in order to achieve better understanding of the research topic. The process of data management and analysis are drawn from the dominant research paradigm. It is considered the significance of the findings for the research validity. The findings presented here are linked to the literature review in order to prepare it for the discussion chapter (Mason, 2002). After recurrent reading of the interviews transcripts and linking the answers together; some major themes emerged to summarize the research case. The themes are: systematic process versus personal relations, sponsors' main objectives, developing communication strategy with sponsors, the value of TV broadcasting and social networking media in sponsorship, activation methods available, evaluating sponsorship agreements, and the extent to which sponsorship agreements can solve OAA budget problem.

4.3.1 Systematic process or personal Relations?

The participants were asked clearly about the process OAA follows to achieve the sponsorship agreements. The vast majority (n=11) mentioned that OAA board members are

using their personal relations with people in high positions in major companies to get sponsorship instead of following a systematic process. Moreover, most of the respondents also mentioned that the reason of not following a systematic process is the absence of people specialized in marketing in OAA.

Participant 7, OAA board member said: *“there is no systematic process; almost all sponsorship OAA recently got is because of the relation of OAA board members with people of high positions in the companies”.*

Participant 5, a marketing manager in Sponsor Company with experience of more than 12 years in sport marketing added: *“No, we do not actually think that there is a systematic process, it all depends on personal relation with people in the companies’ senior management. There are no modern ways to convince the companies”.*

Participant 3, a board member stated: *We do not follow a systematic process, because there is lack in the marketing specialists in OAA, we rely mostly on personal relations with companies”.*

4.3.2 Sponsors’ main objectives

When asking respondents about sponsors’ main objectives, and whether sponsors perceive sponsorship with OAA as philanthropy or a strategic approach to benefit two parties. They showed two different opinions: all of the board members and some of journalists (n=6) believe that companies perceive sponsorship as a philanthropy or part of their social

responsibility from which they want nothing in return. **On the other hand**, marketing managers and some journalists (n=6) confirm that companies never pay cash or in-kind as a philanthropy.

Participant 2, a sport journalist with more than 12 years of experience stated:

“sponsors are mostly seeking to cover the percentage of social responsibility that government imposes on them. Companies do not look for return from sponsoring OAA”.

Participant 3, a board member added: *“most of the time sponsors give as philanthropy; other companies pay cash as part of their social responsibility”.*

Participant 11, a marketing manager confirmed: *“we always pay such amount of cash looking for a return when associating with OAA; if we want to donate we will go for something different than sports. We always look for ROI, even if it is not tangible”.*

Participant 12, a marketing manager said: *“although we are sponsoring events as part of social responsibility, we always study the sponsorship agreement and the sponsee carefully before we decide. There are always evaluation criteria we take into consideration before signing a sponsorship agreement. We never look at it as philanthropy”.*

4.3.3 Developing Communication Strategy with Sponsors

As it is one of the main marketing tools, participants were asked about the communication strategy with sponsors that OAA implements. Furthermore, either or not this communication strategy is effective. Most of the respondents showed negative attitudes toward this case, as nine of the participants believe that there is lack in the communication with sponsors especially after the events. Some of the board members (n=2) declared that they build communication by sending letters and reports to sponsors. However, as the researcher does not have access to these documents, this claim is hard to be proved. Furthermore, sponsor companies denied that they receive letters and reports after OAA events.

Participant 2, a sport journalist said: *“I witnessed more than 12 years in OAA with different board members; they had never achieved good communication strategies with sponsor brands. I also witnessed other sport associations in Oman that did very well in communicating with sponsors”.*

Participant 6, a board member and one of the main decision makers in OAA confirmed that: *“We have good communication strategy, we send letters and ask sponsors to approve the logos in the event printings. Moreover, after the events we send a file with all details about the event, including the return on investment for the company from this sponsorship and show how OAA activated the sponsorship”.*

Participant 10, a from sponsor brand said: *“I am convinced that the relation ends once the event ends. I believe they should build better communication with us. Maybe they are*

busy with their work agenda therefore they do not give enough attention to communication with sponsors”.

Participant 11, a marketing manager who cooperated with many sports association in the country declared that: *“As a company we do not consider it as communication, there is a big lack in communicating with us and the communication ends when the event ends. I do believe they should have better communication plan”.*

4.3.4 The Value of TV Broadcasting and Social Networking Media in Sponsorship

During the interviews the majority of respondents expressed that there is lack of media exposure for OAA events. So the questions were asked about the value of activating social networking media besides TV broadcasting. As revealed from the interviews, OAA events barely get live TV broadcasting or record for its events. Furthermore, OAA social networking media is not keeping pace with the current requirements. The vast majority (n=10) agreed that TV broadcasting is important to attract sponsors, while the minority (n=2) think it is not necessarily important. On the other hand, all participants concurred on value of the interaction on social networking media to attract sponsors (n=12). Here are the marketing managers’ responses about social networking media and TV broadcasting.

Participant 10 revealed: *“For companies TV broadcasting is one of the highest rated channels in marketing, so it is very important for companies that the event is broadcasted”.*

Participant 12 stated: *“We are extremely interested in social networking media but it should be implemented in a professional way. As I perceive there is no effective activation from OAA”*

Participant 5 added: *“I believe sponsors would like the events they sponsor to be broadcasted on TV. They are always looking forward to present their brand to be shown on TV”*

Participant 12 mentioned that: *“Social networking media is a significant part for companies when deciding whether to approve the sponsorship agreement or not, recently it became the most effective way to market and promote brands in Oman. I witness OAA has the potential to improve the interaction in their social networking media to attract other sponsors”.*

4.3.5 Activation Methods Available

The respondents replied to the question about the activation methods offered by OAA to sponsors, and the actions conducted by the association to ensure that the sponsor brands have return on investment from the sponsorship agreement, the majority of the respondents (n=10) explained that the options available are limited to some traditional methods like: banners in the event location, posts on social networking media, inviting members of the companies' managements to the finals, press conference and mentioning sponsors in newspaper articles.

Participant 6, a board member who started as a player then coach after that work as a board member for more than 8 years; revealed that: *“the activation is done by showing the*

logo of brands or companies through banners in the events location, and sometimes we ask people from companies to attend the ceremonies and participate in awarding”.

Participant 10, a female marketing manager in a national company: *“OAA has traditional activation methods; banners and advertisements, that’s why we normally measure their methods and contribute with our staff in the activation that ensure our ROI”*

Participant 11, a marketing manager in a national bank in Oman: *“activation is normally done through banners and showing the bank logo in the event location. We are actually looking for better activation through community serving, or courses that target different people in the society”.*

4.3.6 Evaluating the Sponsorship Agreements

The majority of respondents indicated that they did not receive evaluation from OAA for the sponsorship agreements they had previously (n=10). Some of them expressed that although they are not included in OAA internal daily work, but they should receive the results of sponsorship evaluation such as having the same sponsors for three years or more. Some of board members and journalists explained that there is no evaluation because OAA did not get significant sponsorship agreements recently, besides there are no indicators about relationship building with local and international brands.

Participant 1, a staff in OAA with 10 years of experience mentioned: *“There is no evaluation at all. If there is evaluation, companies will ask for sponsoring other events I am sure”.*

Participant 4, a staff in OAA added: *“There is no evaluation applied. OAA had very few sponsorship agreements recently and there is no evaluation for them. I believe that OAA has to build good communication and provide feedback to sponsors after the events”.*

Participant 5, a marketing manager in a major telecommunication company said that: *“I am not sure but I think there is no evaluation. I believe if there is such evaluation process, OAA staff will send us the feedback, but they never did”.*

Participant 8, a sport journalist with more than 12 years of experience added: *“I do not think they are evaluating. That is why OAA did not get significant sponsorship agreements recently”.*

4.3.7 The Extent to Which Sponsorship Agreement Is Able to Solve OAA Budget Problem?

One of the main research objectives is to find out how far sponsorship may contribute to solve the frequent budget issue that OAA and other associations in Oman face. Therefore, the study respondents were asked clearly if sponsorship may contribute to solve the budget problem. The answers showed different perspectives due to the interviewee's background. However, the majority (n=9) believe significant sponsorship agreement may affect the function of OAA and the local events quality which lead for better international achievements. On the other hand some (n=3) think that sponsorship agreements cannot solve the budget problem due to the current economic circumstances and due to the abilities of OAA staff to utilize sponsorship opportunities.

Participant 1, a staff in OAA mentioned: *“The budget set by the government is limited, so we must work hard to provide new ways of revenue and sponsorship is the most effective and reachable mean. Several clubs in Oman get sponsorship agreement, so it is possible to do the same in OAA”.*

Participant 2, a sport journalist stated: *“I think due to the current financial circumstances, it is hard to get sponsorship agreements which may negatively affect the quality of local events and international achievements, companies here do not believe in the impact of sport exposure”.*

Participant 4, a staff in OAA assumed that: *“The budget is essential to enhance the work of the federation. Also, the money we get from previous sponsorship agreements had enhanced the local events, its success and exposure”.*

Participant 5, a marketing manager in sponsor brand said that: *“I believe that proper sponsorship agreement may affect a lot in different aspects such as: the quality of local events, the number of participants, and the event exposure. Therefore, OAA staff should know how to use the money and/or in-kind coming from sponsors”.*

4.4 Summary of the Findings

This chapter gives an overview of two main aspects. First, the demographic of the sample who participated in this research. The demographic details revealed three groups of the participants in the interviews according to their occupation. Moreover, it revealed the interviewees' age, experience, qualifications, gender and nationality. Second, the main themes

which emerged from the interviews' findings. Due to the research data analysis method – which was mentioned in chapter 3 - there are seven themes that emerged from the interviews findings, each one of them covers the sponsorship agreements of OAA from different perspective. The research reveals the answers of each theme from different standpoint in order to form an overview image in each theme. The transparence in presenting the answers is considered in this chapter as it is significant in the qualitative researches (Greener, 2008).

CHAPTER V

THE DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

After presenting the findings of the research, the researcher will link these findings with what is stated in the literature review about the research topic. As Gratton and Jones (2004) declared that “*methods of data analysis should always be related to the objectives of the research, that is your analysis should answer the research question or hypothesis*”. As it is stated in chapter 1, the research main question is: **What are the sponsorship Process and Challenges in Oman Athletics Association?** However, five sub-questions emerged from the main one in order to obtain a better understanding of the research question. The sub-questions are: 1. Do people involve in OAA have a good knowledge about sponsorship in sport? 2. What are the main processes in implementing sponsorship strategy? 3. What are the main objectives of companies in sponsoring sport events/ organizations in Oman? 4. To what extent is evaluating the sponsorship agreements significant for both sponsor and sponsee?

This chapter discusses the main themes emerged from the interviews held with the respondents, and synthesizes the data collected with the literature (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Greener, 2008). The main themes discussed in this chapter are: systematic process versus personal relations, sponsors main objectives, developing a communication strategy with sponsors, the value of TV broadcasting and social networking media in sponsorship, activation methods available, evaluating the sponsorship, and the extent to which sponsorship agreements are able to solve OAA’s budget problem. Greener (2008) assumed that the discussion part is a real test of the researcher ability to produce a synthesis between what is found in the literature and the data

collected from the interviews to come up with sufficient information about the research topic. The researcher's opinion is expressed in this chapter as it is significant, however the opinion should be expressed fairly and objectively. Moreover, the researcher's opinion must be stated based on evidence and logic (Thomas & Nelson, 2001; Greener, 2008).

5.2 Systematic process Versus Personal Relations?

The literature review declared that the sponsorship process, that sport organizations ideally should conduct, is one of the key elements of the sponsorship success. This research relied on Beech and Chadwick's (2004) model for the main steps to follow in sponsorship process for sport organizations. This model consists of six main steps to build successful sponsorship relations between the sponsee and sponsors in sport. According to Beech and Chadwick (2004) the sponsorship process should include the following: reviewing marketing plan and its main objectives, identifying the sponsorship objectives, identifying the company's segment groups, developing the sponsorship proposal, implementing the sponsorship proposal, and evaluating the sponsorship success based on its main objectives.

When the interviewees were asked about the process OAA conducted to achieve sponsorship agreements, the vast majority (n=11) declared that no systematic process was applied by OAA staff and board members. However, the interviews revealed that OAA board members relied on their personal relations with senior management in major companies in Oman to achieve sponsorship agreements. Moreover, all respondents from sponsoring companies mentioned that they normally receive a letter asking for sponsorship to OAA events. All of the sponsoring brands and companies confirmed that they never received an appropriate proposal or presentation from OAA when seeking for sponsorship. This statement reveals one of the main reasons why

OAA does not achieve significant sponsorship agreements recently. While Beech and Chadwick (2004) proposed six steps to achieve significant sponsorship, OAA does not apply any of these steps and rely on the personal relations that may be needed but are not considered as the core in the process.

Most of the respondents assumed the reason behind the lack of systematic process in achieving sponsorship by OAA, was the lack of specialized people in marketing. So far, OAA did not hire a marketing manager or a marketing company and did not establish a marketing department (Participant 3, personal communication, November 26, 2018). OAA staff and board members were asked about who is responsible for marketing for the Association, and the answer was nobody. One of the board members stated during the preparation of this study that the secretary general was heading the marketing commission in OAA, but when the researcher asked the secretary general about this commission he did not confirm this (AL-busafi. M, personal communication, October 15, 2018). Moreover, in the last version of the primary law of OAA – section 81- there are seven sub-commissions for instance: referees commission, events commission, athletes' commission, etc., however, the marketing commission is not one of them (OAA, 2017).

It is reasonable that there is a dire need for providing marketing plans in OAA. As Cornwell et al. (2001) proposed, it is essential for sport organizations to create marketing and sponsorship plans to generate revenue and develop the organization's functions.

5.3 Sponsors' main objectives

There are many aspects sponsor companies take into consideration when choosing sport events to sponsor. In this research, two different types of objectives were discussed. The first

type suggests the commercial and corporate objectives; on the other hand the second suggest four main objectives: Awareness, image, sales, and internal promotions (Walliser, 2003; Olympic Solidarity, 2007; Saritas, 2017).

The interviews showed that there is a big gap between what is mentioned in the literature and what is found in field in Oman. Specifically, the gap is between the attitudes and perceptions of the sponsors in Oman and OAA staff and board members toward sponsorship. As stated in 4.3.2, half of the respondents (all OAA staff and board members who were interviewed) believe that companies sponsor OAA and other sport organizations' events as philanthropy, without looking for a return from the cash or in-kind the company offered. On the other hand, none of the respondents who represent sponsoring brands agree with this claim. The marketing managers declared that it is not an option for companies to sponsor an event, athlete or a team without looking for the return on investment. This dissension appears when presenting two points of view from the interviews. Participant 3, OAA board member said: *"Most of the time sponsors give as philanthropy; other companies pay cash as part of their social responsibility"*. On the other hand, participant 11 a marketing manager in a sponsoring company confirmed: *"We always pay such amount of cash looking for a return when associating with OAA; if we want to donate we will go for something different than sports. We always look for ROI, even if it is intangible"*.

This statement shows the lack of understanding the sponsors' need and objective when seeking for a sport organization or event to associate with. It is mentioned in 2.3 that both sponsor and sponsee should identify their objectives before launching the sponsorship agreement (Paine, 2010). Moreover, Fahy et al, (2004) suggested that sport organizations has to implement robust investigation on the potential sponsors main objectives, while OAA model shows the lack in

investigating the potential sponsors objectives which led them to a wrong understanding of the sponsors orientations as the interviews revealed (Cornwell, 2014).

The term “social responsibility” has been widely mentioned in the interviews when seeking for sponsors main objectives from sponsorship. However, some of the marketing managers declared that there are sponsorship agreements they involve in as part of the company social responsibility. Nevertheless, they confirmed that even when the company associates with OAA as part of its social responsibility, the company seeks for broad media exposure to raise the brand awareness and enhances its image among consumers. This statement shows how companies work to maximize what they may accomplish from this sponsorship.

Therefore, OAA staff and board members have to attain better understanding of how companies in Oman perceive sponsorship and their main objectives in order to accomplish the sponsors’ expectations from the sponsorship. This step may help OAA to extend the duration of the sponsorship agreements and to achieve the maximum advantage from the sponsorship (O’Reilly et al, 2015).

5.4 Developing Communication Strategy with Sponsors

As stated in 2.2.1, the sponsorship strategies have been developed over time, since sponsorship concept appeared in the ancient Olympic Games. Rayan and Fahy (2012) presented five stages of developing sponsorship strategy. The stage we are currently witnessing is the “relationship and network approach” which started in 2000. In this stage, it is suggested that sponsorship is the mean to interact between the sponsor and sponsee. This was the reason we asked the research respondents about the communication strategy OAA implements to investigate its effect on the sponsorship process.

The interviews in 4.3.3 revealed a negative attitude towards the communication strategy that OAA staff and board members implemented before, during and after the sponsorship. The interviews showed that ten out of twelve participants believe that there is lack in communication with sponsors, especially during and after the events. Only two board members declared that there is communication during and after events, nevertheless, all marketing managers who were interviewed did not confirm this statement which makes the judgment about it uncertain.

Building on what the majority of respondents go for (lack in communication with sponsors). This fact essentially conflicts with what Rayan and Fahy (2012) suggested about the stage of sport sponsorship the world is currently witnessing. Cornwell (2014) strongly suggest for both sponsor and sponsee to focus on building relationship between the two through good communication. Moreover, as Fahy et al., (2004) suggested for sponsorship duration to last three to five years which may allow sponsors to derive benefits from the ongoing association with the sport organization.

The relationship between sponsor and sponsee is hard to last three to five years without building good communication between the two parties. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for OAA to focus on building strong relationships with sponsors using different communication tools (O'Reilly et al, 2015; Séguin, 2007).

5.5 The Value of TV Broadcasting and Social Networking Media in Sponsorship

Sport organizations pay great effort to attract sponsors in different ways. However, sometimes they do not know what the most effective ways to attract sponsors are. The researchers concurred on the reasons that stimulate brands to choose specifically the sport sector among other sectors. Two of the main reasons are the globalization of sports and media exposure

(Witcher et al, 1991). Therefore, sports organizations must utilize these significant features. Media exposure of OAA events were investigated, in particular; the utilization of TV broadcasting and social networking media. The vast majority of the research respondents concurred on the effect of activating social networking media to attract sponsors in Oman in the meantime. On the other hand, they believe OAA does not activate social networking media sufficiently to convince sponsors. Furthermore, the researcher came to know from the interviews that there is lack of broadcasting for OAA events. However, most of marketing managers declared that they give priority to sponsor the events that are broadcasted on TV sport channels. The fact that OAA staff and board members do not utilize the opportunity of social networking media and fail in convincing TV channels to broadcast the events illustrates one of the reasons behind failing in attracting sponsors. Cornwell et al. (2001) proposed that media coverage is essential in sport events as it helps raising awareness of the sponsor brands. Furthermore, media exposure is significant for sponsors because it reduces the possibility of ambush marketing (IEG's, 2017). OAA staff and board members should develop a plan for media coverage of the local events in order to attract sponsors and convince them to associate with the Athletics Association.

5.6 Activation Methods Available

Discussing brand activation in sponsorship is significant to understand that sponsorship success does not rely only on the sport organization (sponsee), sponsors effort is demanded too. The majority of respondents expressed that the activation options in OAA events are limited. Furthermore, the leveraging methods which are provided from OAA to sponsors are traditional and do not go in line with the requirements of the current time. The existing sponsorship

activation methods provided by OAA are: printed advertisements, newspaper articles, social networking media posts, inviting sponsors to the awarding ceremonies, posting logos. On the other hand, the interviews showed that the majority of sponsors do not pay extra effort to utilize the sponsorship privilege. Crimmins and Horn (1996) clarified that *‘if the brand cannot afford to spend to communicate its sponsorship, then the brand cannot afford sponsorship at all’*. The fact that sponsors rely on the activation made by OAA is not consistent with what most researchers suggested. However, Séguin, Teed & O’Reilly (2005) proposed that activation ratio should be equal to or higher than the budget spent in sponsorship agreement. That means each dollar sponsor pay to sponsee, a dollar or more should be paid for the activation. Nevertheless, several studies have noted that worldwide activation rate starts from 1:1 and recorded the highest rate 8:1 in order to obtain the maximum utilization of the sponsorship agreement.

Since the activation is implemented to increase the sponsors brand awareness on consumers mind, new strategies were developed to accomplish long-term awareness through the experimental leverage and targeting consumer’s sentiments. The experimental leverage showed better results on consumers brand awareness than the typical activations that are built on short-term awareness (Bal et al, 2009). Furthermore, emotional leverage and leveraging communication are two modern ways of activation which involve audience in these processes (for instance: active web site and sales promotions) (Weeks et al, 2008).

This statement reveals that activating sponsorship is not only OAA’s responsibility; as sponsors consider. OAA sponsors are demanded to pay more money and effort to activate the sponsorship. However, using the modern ways of activation methods like: communicational or emotional may insure long-term brand awareness on consumers’ mind.

5.7 Evaluating Sponsorship Agreements

The evaluation is an essential stage of any projects. Besides, it is one of the main steps for achieving successful sponsorship according to the model developed by Beech and Chadwick (2004). The respondents were asked about the evaluation methods generally implemented by OAA. The majority (n=10) replied that there is lack in evaluation of sponsorship agreements by OAA. However, most of the marketing managers (three out of four) declared that they evaluate the sponsorship from the sponsor side; on the other hand they never receive reports from OAA after the events.

This fact declared one of the reasons why OAA recently failed in convincing the same sponsors to continue sponsoring the events for more than once. However, the main significant step to evaluate the sponsorship is to set objectives of the sponsorship for both the sponsor and sponsee (Paine, 2010). There are many evaluation methods and some of them were presented in 2.5.2, however each sport organization can set its evaluation method according to the main objectives of the sponsorship. Nevertheless as previously sated, there is lack of management for the sponsorship process in OAA starting with setting the main objectives. Hoek (1997) suggested that the reason behind the deficiency in having clear and achievable aims for sponsorship is the shortage of resources, and the knowhow to evaluate sponsorship association between parties.

The researcher suggested two types of sponsorship evaluation. First: Hard benefits and Soft benefits evaluation. Hard benefits refer to assessing media exposure, number of participants and spectators. While the Soft benefits is about brand awareness, perceived quality and brand image (Solidarity, 2007). Second formal and informal assessment techniques. Formal assessment aims to estimate profits and sales of sponsors, while informal deals with examining brand equity, customer satisfaction and the service quality (Delaney et al, 2016). The researcher suggests these

two ways of evaluation are the most appropriate methods for OAA and sponsors to evaluate the sponsorship from different perspectives. However, OAA may conduct new method to assess, or to evaluate the achievement of the sponsorship objectives set by sponsors and the sponsee before lunching.

It is highly recommended for OAA staff and board members to evaluate the sponsorship agreements during and after the events to achieve the maximum of benefits from the sponsorship and contributes to achieve further sponsorship agreements with potential sponsors (Olympic Solidarity, 2007).

5.8 The Extent to Which Sponsorship Agreements is Able to Solve OAA Budget Problem?

It is important to find out how significant sponsorship may contribute to solve the budget issue that OAA is currently facing. In other words, do sponsorship agreements have the possibility to enhance the quality of local events and the international achievements for the sport organization?

The majority of interviewees (n=9) believe significant sponsorship agreements may contribute in enhancing the quality of OAA local events which may lead to better international achievements and attract more participants to athletics. On the other hand some of the respondents (n=3) think it is hard to get such sponsorship agreements according to the current economic conditions.

However, enhancing the quality of local events, and raising number of participants and international achievements are not the only sponsorship benefits for sport organizations. Other benefits may be achieved too; for instance, developing association with brands that have positive image among consumers (Madill & O'Reilly, 2013; Cornwell et al, 2001). Well-known brands may contribute to increase sport organization brand's awareness among public and potential

sponsors. Consequently, sponsorship may give OAA a credit for more and bigger sponsorships agreements in the future.

It is hard to measure if having significant sponsorship agreements for OAA may enhance the quality of local events, attract more participants or lead to international achievements. This research has declared the deficiency in different aspects of OAA sponsorship agreements with sponsors. Although the majority of respondents expressed positive attitude towards the impacts of significant sponsorship agreements on OAA, however, to assess these impacts OAA has to apply at least the main sponsorship process suggested by Beech and Chadwick (2004) or other scholars.

5.9 Summary of discussion

The chapter discussed the findings revealed from interviews and linked the results to what is stated in the literature. The researcher presented the main themes emerged from the interviews and analyzed them in order to achieve better understanding of the research main question based on what is mentioned in the literature. The main themes discussed in this chapter are: systematic process versus personal relation, sponsors main objectives, developing a communication strategy with sponsors, the value of TV broadcasting and social networking media in sponsorship, activation methods available, sponsorship evaluation, and the extent to which sponsorship agreements is able to solve OAA budget problem.

The researcher provided a number of facts about the challenges and barriers OAA is facing to achieve successful sponsorship agreements. The discussion shows that OAA staff and board members have to make serious decisions about implementing marketing and sponsorship strategy in order to achieve significant sponsorship. The marketing and sponsorship strategy may

lead OAA to gain cash and/ in-kind which may enhance the quality of local events, increase the number of participants and possibly achieve international achievements.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the researcher discussed in details the findings of the study. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the research, clarify the study strengths and limitations, and provide recommendations for further researches to be conducted in this field based on what have been found in this study.

This research is mainly written to have a better understanding of the sponsorship process and challenges within national sport organizations, Oman Athletica Association in particular. The sport minister in Oman clearly stated in Shura council (parliament) that sport Associations are facing budget issues as the budget allocated by the government is not sufficient to cover the sport's needs (Shura Council, 2017). However, the researcher suggested that achieving significant sponsorship agreements may help OAA to accomplish their goals in these circumstances. Therefore, the research discusses the reality of OAA and what is mentioned in the literature. The research conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve respondents. The respondents who were selected carefully are: OAA staff and board members, sport journalist and marketing managers from sponsor companies. The comparison between the responses of OAA board members and the marketing managers had presented significant answers and revealed the misconception of the sponsorship process between the two parties which may help to reduce the gap among them. Furthermore, seven main themes were discussed from the interviews to answer the research questions and to suggest practical solutions for successful sponsorship agreements. However, since this research is one of the firsts in sport sponsorship and the marketing field in

Oman, further researches are recommended to investigate the marketing issues in the sport field in Oman.

6.2 Research Findings and Summary

This study covered seven main themes to answer the research main question and the sub-questions. These themes which emerged from the interviews are the core of this study. The experience of the respondents played a significant role in data collected from them. However, the respondents are selected from three different occupations in order to cover the study case from different angles and perspectives. The interviewees are: OAA staff and board members, sport journalists, and marketing managers from sponsor companies in Oman.

The discussion of data collected from interviews and literatures presented some significant arguments about the sponsorship process and challenges in OAA. Here is the summary of the research main findings:

- Most of the sponsorship agreements OAA achieved previously were through personal relations of OAA board members with senior management in sponsor companies. Personal relations prevent sponsors to continue sponsoring OAA events because most of them did not succeed to reach the sponsors' expectations and failed to achieve the ROI.
- Following a systematic process is essential for sponsorship agreements. The research revealed that there is lack in conducting the main process in achieving sponsorship in OAA. The sponsee has to follow these steps before lunching: 1. reviewing a marketing plan and its main objectives, 2. identifying the sponsorship objectives, 3. identifying the company's segment groups, 4. developing the sponsorship proposal, 5. implementing the

sponsorship proposal, and 6. evaluating the sponsorship success based on its main objectives (Beech & Chadwick, 2004).

- There is lack in specialized staff in marketing in OAA. Therefore, OAA board members must hire a specialized marketing manager or associate with a marketing company to design the marketing and sponsorship plan, besides following up the implementation of the plan. Marketing aspects must constitute an essential part of the sport organization vision and main objectives (Olympic Solidarity, 2007).
- There is a gap in understanding the sponsors' needs and objectives from the sponsorship agreements. OAA staff and board members have to search deeply for the companies' vision, objectives and orientations to achieve better understanding of the potential sponsors. Understanding the sponsors objectives and needs may facilitate meeting their expectations from the sponsorship which is significant for the sponsorship success, it may also extend the relationship between OAA and sponsors (Cornwell, 2014).
- Companies may sponsor sport events as part of their social responsibility. However, even when social responsibility is the main purpose of sponsoring; companies seek to enhance the brand awareness and image. Therefore, the sport organization (sponsee) must understand that there are other objectives for sponsoring beside social responsibilities, and they must work on achieving these objectives (Fahy et al, 2004; Meenaghan, 2005).
- Designing a communication plan with sponsors is a significant element of sponsorship success. The study revealed that there is lack of communication with sponsors during and after OAA events, however, sponsors confirmed that good communication is significant for them to continue sponsoring a sport organization or an event. Reports, statistics about

the event and media exposure may help in building good communication after the events (Quester and Thompson, 2001; Séguin, 2007; O'Reilly et al, 2015).

- Media exposure is one of the significant features of sports; however the interviews showed that OAA staff and board members do not pay great attention to this aspect (Witcher et al, 1991; Meenaghan, 2001b; Cornwell, 2014). The deficiency in activating social networking media and TV broadcasting is one of the main reasons behind not achieving significant sponsorship agreements. Nevertheless, TV sport channels are responsible as well because they must contribute in supporting OAA by broadcasting athletics events.
- It is proposed that activating (leveraging) the sponsorship is important for sponsors because it is the way to raise awareness and enhance the image of sponsors (Weeks et al, 2008). There are several methods of activation, therefore, OAA and sponsors have to select the most appropriate and effective methods that match with the environment and audience. However, both sponsor and sponsee are responsible for the activation; sponsee by facilitating and proposing creative methods, and sponsor by allocating bigger budget and effort to achieve effective activation.
- Evaluating the sponsorship agreement is essential for both sponsor and sponsee. The research showed that there is lack of evaluation for sponsorship agreements in OAA, therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of the sponsorship process are unidentified. OAA is recommended to evaluate all the sponsorship agreements they achieve to ensure progress in achieving the sponsorship agreements and ensure success of the process and revenue (O'Reilly et al, 2015).

- Achieving successful sponsorship agreements and successfully managing the process and revenue of the sponsorship may be one of the significant solutions for sport organizations in tackling the budget issue (Shilbury et al, 2009; Bennett et al, 2012). However, with the limited budget allocated by the government; OAA is recommended to apply systematic marketing and sponsorship plan in order to overcome the deficiency in budget. Nevertheless, this research does not guarantee that implementing a sponsorship plan is going to solve the budget problem because the case study (OAA) does not apply systematic sponsorship plan to measure this hypotheses.

6.3 Strengths and limitations:

There are several strengths that facilitated working on this research and made this study significant in the sport field. This research is one of very few studies in the sport marketing field in Oman. Therefore, the research may be the start point and a reference for further researches in Oman. The researcher was supported by Oman Olympic Committee and Ministry of Sports Affairs which facilitate arranging some of the interviews with OAA members and marketing managers in major companies in the country. Moreover, the resources of sponsorship subject were available in the international magazines and websites.

On the other hand, there were some limitations that made conducting this research more difficult. Most of the resources were discussing the significance of sponsorship for companies in the sport field, while this the research discussed the process and challenges from the sponsee side. Few researches addressed the significance of sponsorship for sponsee, and the process that should be conducted by sponsees. Furthermore, arranging interviews with some of OAA board members was more complicated than expected and some of them refused to make the interview.

Interviews with marketing managers from sponsor companies were complex as well; some of them refused to participate in interviews because they do not want to talk about the company's marketing policy. However, some interview summaries were sent back to the company for approval. The companies wanted to make sure that the study does not mention the company's name and the marketing policy in details. The interviews took longer time than planned because of the long procedures.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Researches

This research shed light on the sponsorship process and challenges in national organizations. However, the study revealed the deficiency in understanding the sponsorship process within the national organizations. The researcher noticed that there is scarcity of researches conducted in Oman about sport marketing in general and sponsorship in particular. Therefore, there is a need to conduct further future researches on the following topics in order to achieve better understanding of marketing issues among the national sport organizations in Oman. Further researches is recommended to be conducted in: challenges and opportunities for national sport organizations to implement marketing strategies, understanding the companies' objectives and needs in Oman when sponsoring sport events, the role of social networking media in marketing the national sport organizations.

6.5 Summary of Conclusion

To sum up, this research attempted to achieve better understanding of the sponsorship process and challenges within national sport organizations in one of significant national sport organizations in Oman (Oman Athletics Association). This chapter presented a review of the research main objective. Moreover, it comprised a summary of the research findings. This chapter also clarified the strengths and limitations of the study. Finally, recommendations for further researches were suggested.

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APPENDEIXES

Appendix 1: The Interview

Dear candidates

This research is examining the process and challenges of sponsorship in national sport organizations, applied on Oman Athletics Association (OAA). The study intends to reveal if it is significant to develop sponsorship strategies in solving the continuous financial challenges that sports organizations in Oman face. The study is applied in OAA as it is a significant association in the country and to be a start point for further studies in this field.

Please notice:

- This research is under the supervision of Oman Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Academy, and their permission is taken to apply this study.
- Responding to this interview is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any stage of the interview.
- Your identity will be anonymous, and the researcher will not share your information for other purposes than the research.
- If any of the following questions is not clear for you please ask me to explain it before you give me the answer.

I extremely appreciate your collaboration in finishing this research

The researcher: Jaber Mohammed AL-shabibi

E-mail address: jbr.shabibi@hotmail.com

Mobile: +968 99774424

The interview main questions

1. From your background, how staff and executive board members in OAA perceive sponsorship in terms of its Outcome?
2. Do sponsors in Oman perceive sponsoring sports as philanthropy or as a strategic approach to benefit different parties? How?
3. Do you think OAA follows a systematic process to achieve sponsorship agreements? How?
4. What are the methods that OAA implement in order to activate the sponsorship?
5. In your opinion, does OAA focus on developing communication strategy with sponsors? Why?
6. What are the OAA's sponsors main objectives?
7. From your point of view, why would companies choose OAA to associate with? And what are the most significant features of OAA sponsors would be interested in?
8. From your experience, does OAA normally evaluate the sponsorship agreement? How does that affect the process?
9. In your opinion, what methods that OAA should implement to be effective in measuring the sponsorship transaction?
10. How far do you think having significant sponsorship agreements may affect the OAA performance and achievements locally and internationally due to the current circumstances?

Appendix 2: The Candidates Demographic

	Sex	Age	Nationality	Education	Occupation	Experience	Other Associations	Marketing course
P1	M	31- 40	Omani	Bachelor	Manager/ employee in OAA	8 – 12 years	No	No
P2	M	41 - 50	Omani	Bachelor	Sport journalist	More than 12 years	Yes	Yes
P3	M	41 - 50	Omani	Diploma	Executive board member	More than 12 years	Yes	No
P4	M	31-40	Omani	Bachelor	Manager/ employee in OAA	More than 12 years	No	Yes
P5	M	41-50	Omani	Bachelor	Sponsor Company	More than 12 years	Yes	Yes
P6	M	41-50	Omani	Master	Executive board member	More than 12 years	Yes	Yes
P7	M	41-50	Omani	Bachelor	Executive board member	More than 12 years	Yes	Yes
P8	M	41-50	Omani	Bachelor	Sport journalist	More than 12 years	Yes	No
P9	M	31-40	Omani	Master	Sport journalist	8 – 12 years	Yes	Yes
P10	F	31-40	Omani	Master	Sponsor Company	8 – 12 years	Yes	No
P11	M	31-40	Omani	Bachelor	Sponsor Company	8 – 12 years	Yes	No
P12	M	31-40	Omani	Bachelor	Sponsor Company	3 – 7 years	Yes	No