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**INFLUENCE OF THE FORM OF BANK SPONSORING
APPLIED ON THE DECISIONS OF ENTREPRENEURS
CONCERNING THEIR CHOICE OF THE BANK**

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Key words: bank sponsoring, owners of small enterprises, choice of the bank.

Abstract

Banks in Poland, through various forms of sponsoring, try to attract friendly attitudes of the groups of current and potential clients that are ready to accept those activities less or more clearly. The results of own studies encompassing 370 owners of micro and small enterprises from Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship indicate that entrepreneurs accept in a positive, although highly diversified, way the allocation of a part of the banks' profits on sponsoring entities or projects from the social, sports, cultural-scientific as well as economic domains.

**WPLYW FORMY STOSOWANEGO SPONSORINGU BANKOWEGO NA DECYZJE
PRZEDSIĘBIORCÓW DOTYCZĄCE WYBORU BANKU**

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Słowa kluczowe: sponsoring bankowy, właściciele małych przedsiębiorstw, wybór banku.

Abstrakt

Banki w Polsce przez różne rodzaje sponsoringu starają się pozyskiwać przychylność grup aktualnych i potencjalnych klientów, które tę działalność mniej lub bardziej jednoznacznie skłonne są akceptować. Wyniki badań własnych przeprowadzonych wśród 370 właścicieli małych i mikrofirm z woj. warmińsko-mazurskiego wskazują, że przedsiębiorcy pozytywnie, acz niezwykle zróżnicowanie, przyjmują przeznaczanie przez banki części swoich zysków na sponsorowanie podmiotów i przedsięwzięć ze sfery socjalnej, sportowej, kulturalno-naukowej, a także gospodarczej.

Introduction

Philip Kotler introduced the postulate of sponsoring analysis in the categories of costs or investments to scientific circulation. In this approach it can be assumed that if such or other involvement of the sponsor to the benefit of the sponsored does not lead to increased sales of goodwill of the sponsor than for him it represents a cost. On the other hand, “companies that want such an expense to be an investment – Kotler says – must be much more careful in taking the decisions on what will be sponsored” (KOTLER 2004, p. 179). Other works on those issues highlight the necessity of continual well-considered care to maintain the logical relation between the goals of the sponsoring and the character of the activity sponsored. The more effectively “sponsoring contributes to achievement of the goals of the sponsor, the sponsored and the participants in the event that was delivered” (*Komunikowanie się w biznesie* 2002, p. 147), the more honestly the situation before undertaking the sponsoring activity, during its implementation and after completing it is analyzed. According to the contemporary economic or business knowledge, sponsoring is one of the important components in communication of the sponsor with a specific group of actual or potential clients, the social environment, public opinion, and it also happens that it is seen as a positive instrument of influence of own enterprise community, its shareholders and other targets.

As known, the key of that activity is building specific mental associations thanks to which the positive image of the sponsored is passed on the sponsor. De facto it is a “marketing activity promoting the company, service or product in association with an image or prestige, which is to give specific benefits to the sponsor, not necessarily in short term” (*Skuteczne techniki PR* 2005, p. 134).

Objective and method of studies

Studies, a fragment of which is presented in this paper, encompassed 370 owners of micro and small enterprises conducting their activities in Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodship. The studies were conducted during the years 2007–2008 and they were focused mainly on finding an answer to the question of what importance the owners of micro and small enterprises allocate to individual characteristics of the bank to which they would like to entrust financial servicing of their businesses. Bank activities in the field of sponsoring represented one of such characteristics. An attempt was also undertaken to assure representative character of the sample but for many reasons that could not be achieved. The statistics show that during conducting the studies over 54,000 micro-enterprises conducted active operations in the

region (although the number of such officially registered enterprises was twice higher). It should also be added that a significant proportion of their owners (for reasons known to them only) refused participating in the studies. Nevertheless, the number of enterprises from which information was obtained as well as their spatial diversification (over 100 localities) offer significant premises for formulation of conclusions concerning their owners from the region of Warmia and Mazury.

In the fragment of the studies presented in this paper an attempt was taken at determining the influence of the form of bank sponsoring applied on the decisions of entrepreneurs concerning their choice of the bank. The objective of the study formulated in that way represented just a general attempt at gaining insight into profitability of bank sponsoring through a survey of motivations (preferences) determining the positive or negative attitudes of the owners of small and medium enterprises to the bank depending on their awareness of the type of the sponsoring activities of the bank, The traditional, or even already classical, survey method testing the opinions of respondents on the base of their responses to the questions included in the questionnaire of the interview containing mainly closed questions was applied. As concerns the type of sponsoring, among different criteria applied for classifying it (*Komunikowanie się w biznesie* 2002, p. 149) the ones considered were mainly those that indicate the areas of investments made by the bank, that is certain general characteristics of the activity sponsored¹. It is understandable that the attempt at assessing the effectiveness of sponsoring through that type of survey has its limitations. Analysis of bank sponsoring activities effectiveness would require applying another method for data gathering measuring, e.g. respondents acceptance (sympathy to) the bank before and after implementation of sponsoring activities by it, the length of their duration (Carry-Over, Time-Lag Effect) and other components influencing the effectiveness of that process.

The assumption was made that the attitude of the owners of micro and small enterprises to the method of spending by a given financial institution of a part of its profit generated from them as the customers (piggyback-trading) is the only criterion on which they can base their decisions concerning the choice of the bank for providing financial services to their enterprises. The set of nine different social objectives to achievement of which the bank could allocate a part of its profits was included in the interview questionnaire. The respondents were asked to indicate whether sponsoring of a given task, issue by the bank would encourage or discourage them to commission the financial servicing of their enterprises to it or whether it would be of no importance for them.

¹ Those areas of bank involvement can also be referred to as the "sponsoring areas" (ROZWADOWSKA 2002, p. 247).

Obtaining the attitude of the covered population as concerns the method of using a part of its profit by the bank can be useful in taking the decisions on revealing or propagating by the banks their contributions to such or other institutions, causes or achievement of specified objectives.

Bank sponsoring

Typologies concerning sponsoring are developed on the base of various criteria. The rule, however, is the basic division into the sponsors and the sponsored and in that earlier group banks as a sector have been included in almost every classification recently. It does not mean nevertheless, that all the organizations included in that sector use sponsoring in their marketing undertakings as an instrument always and everywhere, as, although banks operating in the area of Poland are the institutions operating within the limits of the banking law, but their status program profiles, organizational structures and scopes of activities are not always identical. They can be analyzed according to all possible criteria identifying banks according to, e.g. the volume of assets, legal form (cooperative, State-owned, in the form of joint stock companies) or type of activities (universal, retail, mortgage, automotive, investment). There is no doubt that all of them attempt at presenting themselves to the social environment from their best aide and engage defined funds in creating their positive image, their pro-social function, mission, etc. The same is done, up to their ability and capacity also by semi-banking institutions, e.g. SKOK (Cooperative Savings-Credit Funds). Generally, all those business entities start using sponsoring, although it is a relatively new marketing tool, and the current fiscal policy and legal regulations are not excessively encouraging development of that form of communication between the enterprise and its target social environment. In the national scale that is indicated by the studies conducted by the foundation Commitment To Europe Arts Business, which were carried out from July through December 2008 on the base of the questionnaire distributed to 500 enterprises that formed a representative group of business entities operating in Poland. Those studies indicate that as much as 72% of the respondents considered the current fiscal policy concerning sponsoring unsatisfactory and 40% of the respondents believed that lack of clarity in juridical issues discouraged applying it². Although in many legal acts numerous references to sponsoring can be found, in fact it remains the “unnamed contract” that is not regulated in the Civil

² Commitment to Europe, Arts & Business, Report from quantitative studies on sponsoring of culture and arts in Poland, <http://cte.org.pl> (access: 30.10.2009).

Code. "The situation is not changed by the fact that the notion has been defined in several legal acts as the definition in itself is not enough to construct on its base the »named« sponsoring contract³. It is possible that if the shortcomings of the legal definitions of sponsoring" had been less pronounced, then in practice, the phenomenon of sponsoring would have developed much more extensively than so far. Banks operating in Poland, as well as in the entire European Union economy, quite quickly assumed and are implementing the sponsoring based concept of marketing (KOLASA 2008, pp. 88–95). It composes less or more harmoniously with the entire range of promotional techniques usually called the "marketing mix". In bank practice focusing mainly on sales of services its fifth component, that is "personnel" with its main slogan "the attitude is the base" (referring to the employees) is exposed particularly strongly in the daily activities. With the passage of time the set of factors specified here was complemented by other factors creating in that way the complex of forms, methods and techniques through which banking institutions aim at achievement of their goals. Currently, sponsoring is included in that system increasingly commonly. Some specialists on the subject refer to it as the "indirect advertising" as it is known that "both advertising and sponsoring represent the tools of communication of the advertiser (sponsor) with the specific group of the targets. The different technique of that communication, however, is the difference. Advertising usually means information on specific goods, on their values and possibilities of acquiring targeted at the clients aiming at encouraging them to make the purchase. The advertising usually is planned for immediate effect. Sponsoring, in the other hand, represents a more subtle form of communication, usually with a longer time perspective in mind (disregarding current, individual undertakings the point of it is – according to some experts – to provide at minimum the 3-year average period of influence)⁴. Sponsoring, in *prima facie* approach, does not impose or recommend anything while advertising represents expressive promotion of a specific product or service. The aim of sponsoring is the communication of the sponsor with its clients through the sponsored. As a consequence, there are differences between advertising and sponsoring, between sponsoring and "product placement" (See: CZARNECKI 2003), "product publicity" or "product design" (STECKI 2004, pp. 273–284).

Sponsoring seems to be related the closest to the Public Relations, serving specific positive propaganda of the bank in its relations with the society. And

³ Examples of ambiguities in definitions contained in various Acts can be found at: <http://mojafirma.infor.pl/poradniki/287,1542.>, Wszystko-o-umowach-sponsoringu.html (access: 10.10.2009).

⁴ See: *Warszawska Szkoła Reklamy*, <http://szkollareklamy.pl/section-viewarticle-215-str-naj-w2.html> (access: 10.10.2009).

the measures aiming at achievement of that goal include, among others usage of various tricks from the domain of the so-called CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). Banks try presenting themselves as institutions that are friendly not only to their customers but to almost all stakeholders and communities. Motivated by those considerations they allocate certain funds or material resources to support of charitable actions (corporate giving). Such and similar actions result in undoubtedly positive perception of the bank among a specific social group, promotes its image indirectly although it not always represents sponsoring, as sponsoring means providing specified resources to the disposal by the sponsored subject in exchange for that subject providing significant services to the sponsor. Banks finance a given project, person or company in most cases in exchange for maintaining or improving their position, improving or changing their image, increasing identification of their logo or name and “associating it with noble activities while the recipient has no negative impression of being manipulated” (GRZYWACZ 2006, p. 179). Considering the fact that in modern bank marketing promotion is sometimes replaced by communication with the client (LACHOWSKI 2005, p. 20), it can be assumed that the techniques of sponsoring also complement organization of the bank work referred to as the CRM⁵ as those activities represent not only informative but also persuasive communication. This means that they are to promote the knowledge about the sponsor and influence a change in behavior, eliminate or strengthen through the sponsored specific relations or attitudes of social groups that for some reasons are within the circle of the sponsoring interests (JOWETT, O’DONNELL 1986, p. 16 and following).

Results of own studies

The information obtained during the study indicates that sponsoring of certain social activities by the bank discourages the studied population from entrusting it the financial servicing of their companies while on the other hand supporting other causes – more or less – encourages them to establish relations with that bank. The data provided in table 1 indicate that purchase of medical equipment for hospitals or subsidizing an orphanage by the sponsoring banks was received the most favorably. Allocation by the bank of a part of its profit to one or the other of those activities would encourage the respondents to commission financial services of their companies to it. It can be said that the entrepreneurs covered, similar to the majority of the Polish society, appreciate highly the activities supportive to health and existence of the children deprived

⁵ CRM is the abbreviation for the Customer Relationship Management (GRZYWACZ 2006, p. 188).

of the parental care. Banks investing in those areas (in the form of sponsoring or charitable activity) play on emotions and at a usually low expense gain the opinion of institutions that voluntarily support those in need. Such altruistic attitudes are still high in the rankings of values appreciated by the Polish society. As a result, prestige and positive image of the company among the clients is built⁶.

Table 1
Level of bank acceptance depending on the goal it sponsors (in %)

Type of goal, cause supported by the bank*	Encouraging	Discouraging	Insignificant
Purchase of medical equipment for a hospital	83.8	4.1	12.1
Subsidizing of an orphanage	83.5	3.8	12.7
Popularization of culture and arts	67.6	5.1	27.3
Support to a scientific institution (e.g. a university)	60.3	5.9	33.8
Building a shelter for the homeless	60.0	7.8	32.2
Support to an entrepreneur building a new plant	50.5	17.8	31.7
Subsidizing activities of a sports club	43.2	14.3	42.5
Construction/enlargement of a church/priory	15.1	41.6	43.3
Activity of a political party	3.8	71.4	24.8

* ranked according to the percentage of "encouraging" responses

Source: results of own studies.

Support to popularization of culture and art ranked next as concerns the number of respondents (67.6%) who considered it a strength of the Bank and although for around 27% of the respondents such expenditures were of no importance in choosing the bank, only 5% considered it a factor with negative influence on their choice of establishing the relation with it. Considering, among others, the preferences of clients expressed in that way and almost unlimited demand for support, mainly financial, of almost all the entities operating in the field of culture and arts, banks do not avoid sponsoring in that field of human activities. As any type of sponsoring it is also and maybe even first of all, to offer some measurable benefits. With that in mind, various conditions are formulated on making the sponsorship contracts, which highlight, among others, the subject adequacy of the partners, i.e. there must be such a link in contents between the brand of the sponsor and the sponsored

⁶ That fact was signaled in the publication: Badania ARC Rynek i Opinia "Sponsoring Monitor 99" – ogólnopolski sondaż na reprezentatywnej próbie $n = 1265$ mieszkańców miasta w wieku 15–50 lat, zrealizowany od 8 do 19 września 1999 pod patronatem Ogólnopolskiego Forum Sponsoringu, see: <http://marketing.wiedza.diaboli.pl/rola-i-rozwoj-sponsoringu/> (access: 15.10.2009).

project, which can be spontaneously noticed by an uninvolved observer. The contracts also contain provisions concerning media coverage, continuation, integration, neutrality or control of effects.

In the opinion of roughly 60.3% of the respondents the bank that supports a scientific institution (e.g. a university), research, publications, etc. deserves choosing. Generally speaking, sponsoring of science seems to be a particularly rewarding field for allocation of bank profits. While sponsoring involvement of banks in science and education should be no surprise as in free market economy also in those fields everything generally is a market product, subsidizing construction of a shelter for the homeless does not seem to be a kind of goods that the banks should be particularly interested in purchasing. Surprisingly, it was found out that only a minimally smaller percentage of respondents (60%) decided that they appreciate equally highly that type of bank sponsoring that in the questionnaire was represented by subsidizing construction of the shelter for the homeless. It is well known that banks apply diversified classifications of their clients, position them in different way and segment the market of current and potential buyers of their services (BUSCHGEN 1997, pp. 79–83). The homeless, the unemployed and the poor clients have been and are considered the target group in the strategy of probably none of the banks (for sure not a commercial one) as they are neither a lucrative nor a promising segment in the market of banking services. If, however, some banks undertake such or similar aid activities they should rather be considered a manifestation of charity and not an example of currently fashionable so-called social sponsoring⁷. The term applies to the situation when even if the control of economic or psychographic effects gives a negative result the compensating values of a different type can be obtained such as, e.g. cognitive (experience), emotional (satisfaction), public appreciation of the assistance in the social domain, etc.⁸

Quite clear acceptance of such activities by the studied population of owners of micro and small enterprises proves relatively high level of understanding (at least in declarations) for that type of “bank generosity”. It is worth considering, however, that for more or less every third person it does not matter whether the bank sponsors science or construction of the shelter for the homeless for their decision concerning the choice of the bank to provide services to their own businesses.

⁷ In the literature and practice of social sponsoring (with multiple meanings of that term) it includes allocation of funds to the three domains of socio-economic life, i.e. health, science and education as well as ecology and environment protection. See: T. TEMME, Besonderheiten des Sozialsponsoring, <http://mel.fh-osnabrueck.de/~temme/tutor/sponsor/sozial.html> (access: 25.10.2009).

⁸ Sponsoring stops being the machine for generating financial profits when, e.g. the sponsor establishes the relation with the sponsored subjects of variable reputation, e.g. scandals related sportsmen applying doping (HAMANN et al. 2007, pp. 17–18).

Bank involvement in the form of sponsoring construction of a new plant would be the activity in the field of socio-economic domain highly appreciated among the respondents. Even the most global banks use their potential to participate in local purely economic or public-community projects on the base of sponsoring⁹. Additionally, numerous marketing studies indicate an increase in demand for products of companies that support the initiatives “dear to the heart” of the community in which such companies operate (GRZYBEK, WOŹNIAK 2007, p. 22). In the here reported studies, although every second respondent would be encouraged to cooperate with the bank supporting the entrepreneur constructing a new plant, almost 18% would consider such a situation as contraindication to establishing closer relation with such a bank.

In the studies reported here sports sponsoring received relatively low appreciation among the respondents. The studies indicate that few respondents (43.2%) would be encouraged to commission financial services for their companies to the bank sponsoring activities of a sports club. On the other hand, support of that type is insignificant to almost the same percentage of the respondents (42.5%) as those that would be encouraged to collaborate with the bank by it. That result is slightly contradictory to the (silently) assumed hypothesis concerning the prominent role of sponsoring sports in reaching the hearts and minds of the clients somehow “through the back door”.

According to marketing experts, companies sponsoring sports gain an immense opportunity for promoting both the brand and the company itself. Sports events, clubs, teams and individual sportspeople represent typical areas of sponsoring. They allow reaching not only the current but also the potential clients, also during their free time. Sponsoring of sport events allows avoiding the crowd of various imposing promotions that the given communities deal with in daily life. It is understandable that individual sport events attract different groups of fans with different demographic, socio-economic and other profiles. Sponsoring of a sports club is mainly the name of the location; it is the town or the region that is reference to the local solidarity and a kind of identification with the entire local community (NICHOLLS et al. 1999, pp. 365–369). The more famous the given sports club is the easier it becomes for the banks sponsoring it to overcome the antinomy of values ‘local-global’ that the banks usually know well. Nevertheless, aiming at the maximum use of all the available resources and means for achievement of the highest possible profit under specific conditions is a characteristic of contemporary commercial

⁹ Bank Zachodni WBK S.A. as of 1991 has the highest membership status (Principal Member) in the VISA organization, and as of 1996 in the Master Card organization. That Bank, based on several years of experience, offers collaboration in sponsoring other Polish banks of that organization. See: *Sponsoring w organizacjach płatniczych*, <http://www.obslugabankow.bzwbk.pl/55071> (access: 28.10.2009).

banking, and probably for that reason sponsoring of a small, local sports club may be unprofitable to the banks. Also, for numerous reasons, it may not deserve appreciation among the current and the future clients.

Straight forward political sponsoring enjoyed the lowest popularity in the population studied. Only 3.8% of all the respondents would be encouraged to entrust collective services to the bank that sponsors a political party. Such sponsoring was considered unimportant by almost 25% of the respondents while for 71.4% it would be the signal to keep far away from such a bank. Similarly, only 15.1% of the respondents would be encouraged by construction or extension of a church or a priory co-financed by a bank to open their banking account in that bank.

The results of studies also indicate that opinions of owners concerning the here presented issue are diversified depending on the parameters of their businesses and socio-demographic characteristics of the entrepreneurs. From among the set of characteristics duration of company operation (its operation by the current owner), employment, composition of employment, business type, geographic coverage with operations, financial results, location of the business and use of credit were used for the business segment analyzed here. As concerns the results obtained it is worth mentioning here for example those concerning simultaneous classification of the respondents according to the geographic coverage of their businesses and opinions concerning individual activities sponsored by the bank.

In the question concerning the geographic coverage aimed at determining the area within which the majority of goods products or services is sold. The local, regional, national and international coverage was identified. That characteristic correlates in a statistically significant way ($\chi^2 = 12.728$; $df = 5$; $p < 0.048$) with the perception concerning sponsoring of a sports club by the bank as it is so that the wider the coverage area of the company is the rarer the owner of the business accepts such spending of a part of the profit by the bank. This is understandable because, as it has already been pointed out, sponsoring of a club represents first of all its location of domicile. During "global" operation the 'local' context can often represent a serious obstacle, so when it is not in the interest of the company to identify itself with the local community but it focuses its operation on the national or foreign buyers and partners, investing in promotion of the company domicile as a consequence must lose on importance (See: DOMAŃSKI 2007).

Interesting results were also obtained as a result of simultaneous classification of the respondents according to the financial result generated by their enterprises and the activities sponsored by the bank. The vast majority of the respondents (70.8%) informed that the business generated profit, 24.9% that it generated neither profit nor loss and only 4.3% that the business generated losses. Entrepreneurs, whose businesses generated profits were more positive

in their perception of the bank spending a part of its profit in case of all the project types included in the questionnaire than the entrepreneurs that generated neither profit nor loss. It can be said that entrepreneurs generating better results have more understanding for involvement of the banks in various types of sponsoring activities.

Conclusion

1. Banks in Poland take the effort to gain sympathy of the groups of current and potential clients that are more or less ready to accept sponsoring activities through various types of such activities. Sponsoring in bank version, although frequently integrated with other instruments of communication (including charity of philanthropy) represents an institution offering the sponsoring institutions measurable benefits (POLAKOWSKA-KUJAWA, KUJAWA 1994, p. 27 and following).

2. Studied owners of micro and small enterprises receive allocation by the bank of a part of its profits to sponsoring entities and projects in the social, sports, cultural-scientific as well as economic domains in a positive, although highly diversified, way. Sponsoring of church facilities and involvement of banks in financing of political parties receiver relatively low levels of acceptance in almost all groups of the respondents. That type of sponsoring would represent the weakest motivation of the respondents in choosing the bank to provide financial services to their enterprises.

3. It can be assumed that outlays of banks on sponsoring of sport activities will be increasing. Larger outlays for that activity generally seem more effective than advertising spots on television, the Internet or leaflets distributed by mail, etc. The costs of advertising and prices of goods or advertised services influence each other (KARASIEWICZ 1997, p. 30 and following), but even for the banks it is increasingly difficult nowadays to attract attention of the targets by various traditional forms of advertising with the expectation that they could be helpful in gaining new clients through them. For sure, among other activities, support to sport activities by banks could be the antidote to that problem in the future¹⁰, although, as the studies reported here indicate, the effects of that involvement so far measured by the sympathy of clients to the bank sponsoring sports should be considered rather mediocre.

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¹⁰ Before the outbreak of the current financial crisis the US banks were considered the largest single sponsor of sports (CONRAD 2007, p. 20).

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