

Full Length Research Paper

Determinants of corporate sponsorship award opportunities for Soccer Premier League clubs in Kenya

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Corporate sponsorship is a common phenomenon in major soccer leagues worldwide. Studies in the area of sports sponsorship decision-making have been done from a global context but lack focus on a particular sport or a major soccer league. Little empirical evidence has emerged in the area of sport sponsorship decision-making factors. The purpose of this study is to determine the factors considered by corporate organizations in availing sponsorship to clubs in the Kenya Premier League. The study determined the influence of team-based, country-based and environmental-based characteristics on corporate organizations' decisions to sponsor, the first of its kind to be done on the Kenya Premier League. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from six corporate sponsors of community-based, privately-owned and military-based clubs in the Kenya Premier League 2018/2019 season, as well as club chairmen and treasurers. Interviews were also conducted on the managers and assistants of marketing/sales departments of the corporate sponsors. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics to rank the sponsorship factors in their order of importance. Regressions were done to test the hypotheses. The data obtained through interviews were sorted out according to the objectives and presented in a narrative form. The study revealed that team-based factors had the highest significant effect on sponsorship decisions, followed by country-based then environmental-based factors.

Key words: Determinants, corporate sponsorship, soccer, premier league clubs, Kenya Premier League, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, corporate sponsorship is common in major soccer leagues. In Europe, most clubs have a number of sponsors and sponsorship opportunities, for example, the

world record shirt sponsorship deal worth 559 million pounds signed between General Motors (Chevrolet) and Manchester United Football Club at the beginning of the

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2014/2015 league season, the biggest in recent times (Deloitte, 2014). Arshad, cited in Almeida and Amorim (2015), stated that the highest paid soccer sponsorship kit deals in the world were: Manchester United and Chevrolet, US\$ 80 million, Barcelona and Qatar Airways, US\$ 45 million, Bayern Munich and Deutsche Telekom, US\$ 40 million, Real Madrid and Fly Emirates, US\$ 39 million and, Liverpool and Standard Chartered, US \$ 39 million. Bello (2016) observed that all English Premier League clubs had an official shirt sponsor in the 2015/2016 season while the entire 18 clubs of the German Bundesliga had shirt sponsors. Further, Manchester United Football Club signed an 8-year training kit sponsorship deal with Aon Plc while kit suppliers Beko had a deal with Spanish club Barcelona. The acquisition of numerous sponsorship opportunities by soccer clubs in Europe was further reported in a study by Armstrong cited in Bello (2016) whereby Atletico Madrid Football Club had Plus 500 in front of its jersey and Azerbaijan at the back of its jersey. Furthermore, World Football (2014) averred that German companies invested 135 million dollars in soccer sponsorship in the year 2014; the biggest sponsorship market since the year 2005.

In Africa, financial sponsorships from corporate organizations cushioned clubs from financial shortfalls. For instance, in South Africa Premier Soccer League, it is most successful premiership club, the Kaizer Chiefs Football Club, boasted of different sponsors and partners. Its sponsorship revenue grew from US\$ 6,240 million in 2010 to US \$ 10,320 in the financial year 2011/2012, when it acquired Vodacom sponsorship (Mosola, 2017).

In the Kenyan situation, the League body was known as the Kenya Premier League (KPL), a private company incorporated in October 2003, under the companies' Act 486 of Kenya (Lwangu, 2013). The clubs participating in this league relied heavily on corporate sponsorship to cater for their needs as discovered by Thiga (2014), in a study which revealed that sponsorship from parent organizations accounted for between 60 and 100% of revenues of 57.1% corporate-based clubs, and the revenues of 55.6% of community -based clubs. Furthermore, the lion's share of sports sponsorship of soccer clubs is in the form of branded shirts which come from the private sector (Kiraguri, 2007).

As reported in studies, the sponsorship of the Kenya Premier League was majorly led by foreign companies. Lwangu (2013) reported that five years after the formation of the KPL, the South African company Super Sport International became its broadcasting rights holder and source of revenue, in a three-year deal worth 263 million Kenya Shillings. The KPL first injected 38 million Kenya shillings (49.11% of total revenue) out of 77.37 million to clubs, for their sustainability. Further, in the year 2013, Tusker which was also known as Kenya Breweries Limited signed a three year deal worth 270 million Kenya shillings (Mukasa Football Diary, 2018, May 25), while

the gambling giant Sport Pesa signed a four and half year deal with KPL worth 450 million Kenya shillings in the year 2015 (Nelson, 2015 August 7). These funds were channelled to the administrative costs for running the competition, facilitation, and payments to referees and match commissioners (Kenyan Premier League, 2019). The gambling giant further entered into a fresh 3-year sponsorship package with Gor Mahia, AFC leopards, the KPL and the Football Kenya Federation (Wanja, 2018, April 23).

On a sad note, Kenyan soccer clubs have endured financial difficulties majorly as a result of termination of sponsorship deals by league sponsors. Rintaugu et al. (2012) averred that football clubs in Kenya relied majorly on team registration fees to participate in competitions. Securing of sponsors by clubs had been erratic due to misappropriation of funds. Consequently, East African teams performed poorly in the African Cup of Nations competition and none had qualified to participate in the FIFA World Cup or the Olympics competitions. Mutua (2018, August 29) noted that under the four and a half year deal with Sport pesa, most clubs still struggled to finance their operations, as each club got only 3.4 million Kenya Shillings per season. Moreover, in 2017, Sport Pesa cancelled all sponsorship deals in Kenya following a prolonged fight with the Kenyan Government over 35% corporate tax imposed on gaming income. The move left such clubs as Gor Mahia and AFC Leopards with less than 35 days to source for an alternative sponsor before continental games in February 2018. Other affected entities included the KPL, the National soccer team's coach and technical director whose wages came from the gaming giant's coffers (Joshua, 2018 February 1). During the KPL 2018/2019, tales of soccer players going several months without pay due to clubs' lack of sponsorship abounded. For example, Nzoia Sugar Soccer Club staged a go-slow over unpaid salaries and allowances as the club sponsor, the Nzoia Sugar Company was in financial crisis (Teya, 2018 June 18). Worse still, in August 2019, Sport Pesa closed its operations in Kenya leaving the KPL, Gor Mahia and AFC Leopards football clubs in a dire financial state. The AFC Leopards club needed 20 million to sort out salary and rent arrears for three houses (office of the coach, club office and houses for two players) as reported by its then club chairman Mr. Dan Shikanda (Eshitemi, 2019, December). Even graver, at Gor Mahia, some players demanded to be handed release letters over unpaid salaries of up to four months while Sony Sugar Football club had to be relegated from the top flight league for failing to honour three league matches due to financial difficulties.

Studies revealed that companies were motivated to sponsor soccer to achieve certain corporate objectives. As reported by Tinderet (2018), sponsorship had a positive effect on performance of manufacturing companies such as East Africa Breweries Limited and Tuzo Limited, Bidco Africa and Menengai Oil. Sports

sponsorship produced brand exposure, generated strong leads which could be converted into sales, provided reconnection with customers, increased market share, increased revenues and motivated organizations to produce more products. A number of studies were also found to have been done with emphasis on corporate sponsors' objectives (Bühler, 2006; Malin and Therese, 2006; Berkes, 2008). Andre (2006) argued that companies pursued three objectives in soccer: passion and image, wide audiences and different target groups and opportunities to reach business objectives on a national or multinational level. On the other hand, Malin and Therese (2006) highlighted several companies' objectives of sports sponsorship. These included: to increase brand awareness, to obtain public relation opportunities and to increase sales. Berkes (2008) found out that companies pursued sales objective as the most important sponsorship objective.

In addition, companies based their decisions to sponsor teams on some criteria. Two outstanding criteria for sponsorship selection were image association, that is whether the image of the sponsor and the team were similar, and popularity of the sport (Faed, 2007). Other factors that guided sponsorship decisions included whether the sponsorship offered correct positioning, connection to the brand, the right audience, fit into current corporate goals and hospitality opportunity. Lee and Ross (2012) grouped the criteria for awarding sports sponsorship into three categories: team-based, environmentally-based and country-based.

Sports team-factors are media exposure opportunity, sponsorship fit, team image, fan base strength, star player/ coach, team on-field performance, hospitality opportunity and facility average attendance (Lee and Ross, 2012). According to Mickle as cited in Lee (2008), David Beckham's signing with major league soccer increased the level of public interest in soccer within the United States of America thus rapidly increased ticket and sponsorship sales. Moreover, Ngan et al. (2011) argued that sponsors should pay attention to the perceived performance of any team they sponsor. Team performance was linked to consumers' purchase intentions for the sponsors' products. A winning team with a star generated the strongest purchase intention, while a losing team with a star produced the lowest purchase intentions.

Hospitality opportunity was concerned with the opportunity to demonstrate appreciation to customers and to meet face to face with the targeted audience (Faed, 2007). Rodgers, as cited in Henseler et al. (2007) asserted that it was important to have a good fit between the sponsor and the sponsored object, so as to attract consumers to purchase the sponsors' products. In a related study, Musante (2006) opined that sponsors associated with sports with an intention of transferring the image of the sport to their brand. Fan base strength was echoed by Ngan et al. (2011). They observed that consumers' intentions to purchase sponsors' products were more pronounced for casual (those who did not

know much about the team they supported and were a bit laid back) than for avid fans (those that had a keen interest in supporting a team). Sponsors preferred sponsoring a team that had a strong avid fan base.

Interest level in sport was closely linked to the level of interest that fans had for a team. For instance, Coakley as cited in Lee (2008) averred that interest level in sport could be measured by average attendance for a game. Moreover, match day attendance by club supporters should be enhanced to enable clubs to expand their sources of revenue (Kinyairo et al., 2017). Country-based factors are interest level in sport, political and economic state of a country. For instance, Jensen and Cornwell (2017) opined that in an inflationary economy, the prices of all goods and services including marketing expenditures and costs within the sponsor's country rise. Therefore, a sponsor's ability to sponsor becomes limited or constrained.

Environmentally- Centered factors are competitors, ambush marketers and League authority over sponsorship deals. Ambush marketing was defined as a planned effort by an organization to associate itself indirectly with an event, in order to gain some of the recognition and benefits that are associated with the official sponsor (Sandler and Shani as cited in Ellis et al., 2011). On the other hand, studies cited competition as a major factor that posed sponsorship risks to corporate sponsors (Lee and Ross, 2012; Jensen and Cornwell, 2017). Further, a governing body of each league, such as KPL, had uniform rules regarding sponsorship activities which encouraged or hindered a sponsor to get involved in sponsorship (Lee, 2008).

Notably, majority of studies on sports sponsorship focused on topics such as the measurement of sponsorship effects, sponsorship evaluation, sponsorship objectives, the renewal of sponsorships, management of sponsorships and investigation of sponsorship strategies and counter strategies (Malin and Therese, 2006; Ellis et al., 2011; Tomas, 2014; Jensen and Cornwell, 2017; Tinderet, 2018). Within the studies, sports sponsorship selection criteria were scantily mentioned. Moreover, most studies were conducted from a global context and lacked focus on a particular sport or a major league, with little empirical evidence emerging in the area of sport sponsorship selection criteria. Glaring exceptions were studies on sports sponsorship decision making focusing on criteria used by corporate organizations to award sponsorship to teams (Lee and Ross, 2012; Singh and Bhatia, 2015). Hardly has any research been done on factors considered by corporate organizations in availing sponsorship to clubs in the Kenya Premier League.

Problem statement

From the foregoing introductory literature, soccer clubs in the Kenya Premier League do not attract many sponsors in comparison to their counterparts in Europe and other

parts of Africa such as South Africa. Securing sponsors has been erratic due to misappropriation of funds (Rintaugu et al., 2012).

Due to termination of sponsorship contracts by corporate sponsors, clubs in the Kenya Premier League have had to endure sponsorship shortfalls, an issue that bedevils Kenyan soccer. Mutua (2018, August 29) reported that under the deal with Sport Pesa, each club got 3.4 million per season, a drop in the ocean in the light of money required for an entire season. In 2017, Sport Pesa cancelled all sponsorship deals in Kenya, following a tussle with the government over a 35% corporate tax that the government had imposed on gaming income. This left the Kenya Premier League in a precarious state, with many clubs being unable to pay their players. Nzoia Sugar Soccer Club staged a go-slow over unpaid salaries and allowances because the club sponsor was in financial crisis. Further still, KPL, Gor Mahia and AFC Leopards soccer clubs were left without an official financial sponsor after Sport Pesa stopped its operations in Kenya.

Due to the withdrawal of major sponsors and acquisition of limited sponsorship opportunities, KPL clubs would require new or additional sponsorships, such as shirt sponsors, kit suppliers and commercial partners. Consequently, an in-depth knowledge on how to meet corporate organizations' sponsorship requirements was required. Available academic research from other countries depicted an attempt to understand sponsorship selection criteria. However, a study that focused on the Kenya Premier League was lacking. Furthermore, there was little empirical evidence in the area of sponsorship decision making factors, a gap which the current study sought to fill. This study, therefore, purposed to find out the determinants of corporate sponsorship award opportunities for soccer Premier League clubs in Kenya.

Significance of the study

The study findings are significant in that they contribute to the body of knowledge on soccer sponsorship and this has implications on soccer stakeholders in Kenya such as the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Heritage, clubs' officials and soccer players. As clubs gain awareness on sponsorship requirements, the corporate sector in Kenya might benefit in terms of increased business resulting from increased sponsorship deals. Moreover, for KPL clubs seeking new or additional sponsorship, it would provide knowledge to officials and players on corporate organizations' sponsorship requirements. Further, the study would serve as reference material for future researchers.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

(i) To determine the influence of the following team-centered factors on corporate organizations decisions to sponsor KPL clubs:

- (a) Fan base strength
- (b) Star player/ coach
- (c) Media exposure opportunity
- (d) Facility average attendance
- (e) Team image
- (f) Team on field performance
- (g) Hospitality opportunity
- (h) Sponsorship fit

(ii) To appraise the influence of the following country-based characteristics on corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs:

- (a) Political state of Kenya
- (b) Economic state of Kenya
- (c) Perceived interest level in Kenya Premier League soccer

(iii) To establish whether decisions made by corporate organizations to avail sports sponsorships to KPL clubs were influenced by environmentally-centered factors which include:

- (a) Ambush marketing
- (b) Sponsorship opportunities
- (c) KPL authority over sponsorship
- (d) To determine whether team-centered, country-based and environmentally-centered characteristics differed significantly to the extent to which they influenced decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs.

Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses:

H₀₁ – The extent to which team-centered factors influenced corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions did not differ significantly.

H₀₂ – There was no significant difference in the magnitude to which various country-based factors influenced corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions.

H₀₃ – The extent to which various environmental factors influenced corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions did not differ significantly.

H₀₄ – There was no significant difference in the extent to which team-centered, country-based and environmentally-based factors influenced decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study utilized a modified concept of sports

sponsorship decision-making factors adapted from the study by Lee and Ross (2012). Sport sponsorship decision-making is dependent on the importance ascribed by the corporate organization to factors grouped in three categories: sport team-based, country-based and environmentally-centered factors. Therefore, in the current study the corporate organizations' willingness to avail sponsorship to a KPL soccer club was the dependent variable. The independent variables were in the three aforementioned categories which do not influence each other. These include team-based factors, country-based and environmental-based factors.

As highlighted in various studies, team-based factors are media exposure opportunity, sponsorship fit, team image, facility average attendance, hospitality opportunity, team performance on the field, star player/coach and fan base strength (Transparency International Kenya, 2004; Breuer and Rumpf, 2011; Lee and Ross, 2012; Wishart, Lee and Cornwell, 2012; Tomas, 2014; Singh and Bhatia, 2015; Bello, 2016; Wanjiku, 2016; Kinyairo et al., 2017; Origi and Deya, 2019). Media exposure refers to the exposure time that the team gets from the media (Berkes, 2008; Wishart et al., 2012). Some of these factors are found to be related. For example, competition between sponsors happens through the media and not just on field of play. The effect is that, if many sponsorship competitors are on the screen, it becomes difficult for consumers to memorize a particular brand (Breuer and Rumpf, 2011). Further, team image and fan base strength are found to be related in that image transfer in sponsorship deals is stronger for fans who highly identified with the sponsored than for casual fans (Gwinner et al., 2009). Further, sponsorship fit is the similarity between the sponsors and the sponsored aimed at attracting customers to purchase the sponsor's products (Rodgers, as cited in Henseler et al., 2007). Moreover, team image is described by Wang as cited in Coelho et al., 2019) as the opportunity of transferring the positive characteristics of the club to the sponsor's brand. Facility average attendance is referred to as the average number of fans who attend a game in terms of whether the stadium is packed or empty (Coakley as cited in Lee, 2008; Origi and Deya, 2019). Hospitality, on the other hand, is the opportunity to demonstrate appreciation to customers and meet face to face with the target audience (Faed, 2007; Wishart et al., 2012). According to Ngan et al. (2011), team on field performance is the performance of the team as perceived by sponsors. Sponsors are attracted to teams that have won some titles as this increases exposure to the team, players and the sponsor's brand (Tomas, 2014). Star player/coach refers to the celebrity status of a player or coach in a team (Charbonneau as cited in Lee, 2008) while fan base strength refers to whether the team has avid or casual fans (Ngan et al., 2011).

Country-based factors include interest level in sport, the political and economic states of a country. Jensen and Cornwell (2017) reported that during economic

inflation, the prices of all goods and services, including marketing expenditures and costs within the sponsor's country, rise. Thus, it is likely that a sponsor's ability to sponsor becomes limited.

Environmentally-based factors include competitors, ambush marketers and League authority over sponsorship deals. For instance, Sandler and Shani, as cited in by Ellis et al. (2011) define ambush marketing as a planned effort by an organization to associate themselves indirectly with an event in order to gain some of the recognition and benefits that were associated with the official sponsor. The presence of sponsorship competitors poses sponsorship risks to corporates (Jensen and Cornwell, 2017). Separately, league authority over sponsorship is a crucial factor, in that a governing body of each league has uniform rules regarding sponsorship activities, which encourages or hinders a sponsor to get involved in sponsorship activities (Lee, 2008; Lee and Ross, 2012). The three categories of factors discussed above are summarized in the model (Figure 1).

METHODOLOGY

A letter authorizing the study was obtained from the Graduate School of Kenyatta University. A letter of ethical approval clearance was obtained from Kenyatta University. A research permit was obtained from the National Council for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) before conducting the study. Consent forms were also given to respondents before administering the questionnaire. Participants' confidentiality was assured by advising respondents to neither indicate their names nor the names of their organizations and clubs in the questionnaires and interview schedules.

The descriptive survey research design was used in the study. According to Cooper and Schindler (2003), a study concerned with finding out who, what, which and how of a phenomenon is referred to as a descriptive design. The design was apt for the present study because it sought to find out how team-based, country-based and environmental-based factors influenced corporate organizations' willingness to avail sponsorships to clubs in the Kenya Premier League. Related studies had used company officials responsible for sponsorship activities. These included marketing managers, sponsorship managers, finance managers or any designated officials (Berkes, 2008; Lee and Ross, 2012; Singh and Bhatia, 2015). The current study targeted personnel in sponsorship, sales and marketing departments in corporate organizations that sponsored community-based, private and military-owned clubs during KPL 2018/19. The six corporate organizations were Sport Pesa, Betika, Elite Bet, Odi bets, Teke Taxi and Brookside Dairies. Responses were also obtained from club chairmen and club treasurers of community-based, private and military owned KPL clubs. These clubs were AFC Leopards, Gor Mahia, Sofapaka, Ulinzi, Mathare, Kariobangi Sharks and Thika United Football Clubs. Thus, 7 club chairmen and 7 club treasurers were targeted.

Purposive sampling was used. According to Kumar (2011), the primary consideration in this type of sampling is the researcher's judgment as to who can provide the best information to achieve the study objectives. In the present study, out of the 13 corporate organizations that sponsored the KPL clubs, a total of six (46%) which sponsored community-based, private-owned and military-owned clubs were selected. The six corporate organizations were:

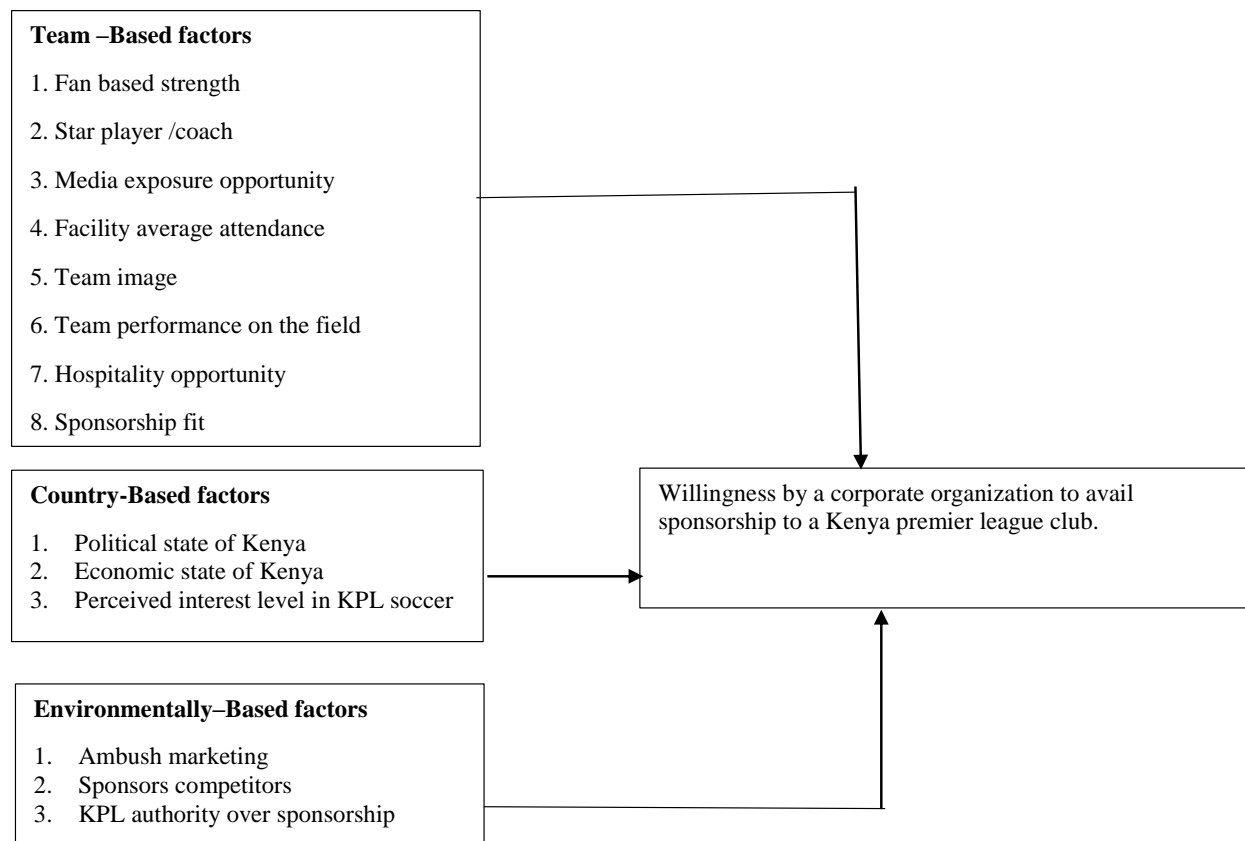
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

Figure 1. Modified conceptual framework for sports sponsorship decision- making factors.
Source: Adapted from Lee and Ross (2012).

Sport Pesa, Betika, Elite Bet, Odi bets company, Teke taxi and Brookside dairies. The number of questionnaires that was administered were 60. Moreover, questionnaires were administered to a total of 14 purposively selected club chairmen treasurers from AFC Leopards, Gor Mahia, Sofapaka, Ulinzi, Mathare, Kariobangi Sharks and Thika United Football Clubs. Thus, the total number of questionnaires administered in the study was 74. The researcher purposively interviewed two personnel; the manager and the assistant of sponsorship/marketing department in the six corporate organizations, thus a total of 12 participants. Some participants responded to questionnaires and also took part in the interviews.

Self-administered questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher based on the relevant content, the model espoused by Lee and Ross (2012). Section A of the questionnaire sought to obtain demographic information such as gender, age, duration worked. Section B of the questionnaire sought to obtain the criteria of awarding sponsorship which were scored using a 5-point type Likert scale (very important, important, non-committal, unimportant, very unimportant). Sports team factors had eight items while country-based and environmentally based factors had three items each. Finally, the question on how willing the corporate sponsors were to award sponsorship was posed using a 5-point type Likert scale (very very willing, very willing, willing, moderately willing, unwilling). The interview schedule was constructed by the researcher and had four questions for personal information, team-Based factors, country-Based factors and environmentally-

centered factors, respectively.

The questionnaire and interview schedule were validated by the two supervisors of the study who are experts in research methodology and sports marketing. Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure (Kimberlin and Almut, 2008). The experts identified weaknesses in the instruments which were adjusted, or amended, accordingly. On the other hand, reliability is concerned with the stability of measures and internal consistency of instrument (Kimberlin and Almut, 2008). Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) propose the test-retest technique for reliability testing by administering the same instrument twice to the same group of subjects. Test-retest technique was utilized whereby the questionnaires were administered twice to the 10 Posta Kenya respondents of the pre-test, within two weeks' interval, to allow for reliability testing. A Cronbach alpha of 0.78 was obtained from the team -based factors, 0.70 from country -based factors whereas Cronbach alpha of 0.71 was obtained from environmental –based factors. This was in line with Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) who considered a correlation coefficient of 0.7 and above as reliable and adequate for data analysis and reporting. The interview guide was given to the two supervisors of the study to check if they were reliable. No mistakes were raised; hence the researcher proceeded to the field. Reliability results are presented in Table 1.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was utilized to code and organize the data for analysis. The analysis used descriptive statistics of means, standard deviations and regressions. Multiple regressions were done to determine the

Table 1. Reliability results.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items	Comment
Team based factors	0.78	8	Reliable
Country based factors	0.70	3	Reliable
Environmental based factors	0.71	3	Reliable

Table 2. Questionnaire response from organizations and clubs.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Organizations		
Returned	44	73.3
Unreturned	16	26.6
Total	60	100
Clubs		
Returned	14	100
Unreturned	0	0
Total	14	100
Total questionnaires administered	74	
Total questionnaires returned	58	78.4

Table 3. Influence of team-centered factors on corporate organizations decisions to sponsor KPL Clubs.

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation(SD)
Fan Base strength	4.67	0.57
Team on-field performance	4.38	0.83
Stadium attendance	4.34	0.89
Media exposure opportunity	4.29	0.82
Team image	4.28	0.81
Hospitality opportunity	4.26	1.00
Presence of a star player or coach within a club	4.22	1.03
Sponsorship fit	4.02	0.96

influence of decision-making factors on corporate sponsors' sponsorship decisions and to test the null hypothesis. The 0.05 level of significance was used in testing the hypotheses. The data obtained through interviews was sorted out according to the objectives and presented in a narrative form.

RESULTS

Out of the 74 questionnaires administered to organizations and clubs, a total of 58 (78.4%) were properly filled and returned and, thus, the response rate was acceptable. This agrees with Babbie (2004) who asserts that return rates of 50% are acceptable to analyse and publish, 60% is good and 70% is very good. Based on these observations, 78.4% response rate was very good for the study. This is presented in Table 2. The first objective of the study was to determine the influence

of team-centered factors on corporate organizations decisions to sponsor KPL clubs. The influence was measured through eight items. The respondents were required to state whether the items were very important, important, whether they were non-committal about them, and whether they were unimportant or very unimportant. The results are presented in Table 3.

The statement with the highest mean score was fan base strength (Mean=4.67, SD= 0.57). This implied that the respondents perceived fan base strength as the important team-based factor in sponsorship decision making. They perceived that team on-field performance is the second most important team-based factor in making decisions on awarding sponsorship to a soccer club in the K.P. L (Mean=4.38, SD=0.83). They identified stadium attendance as the third most important factor (Mean=4.34, SD=0.89). This was followed by media

Table 4. Influence of the country-based characteristics on corporate organizations willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs.

	Mean	Standard deviation
Economical state of Kenya (current GDP)	3.90	1.04
Political state of Kenya	3.83	1.05
Interest Level in KPL soccer (average attendance for a game)	3.83	1.09

Table 5. Influence of the environmental-based characteristics on corporate organizations willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs.

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
KPL authority over sponsorship (favorable rules and regulations guiding sponsorship activities)	8.83	1.03
Ambush marketing (protection from other sponsors)	3.78	1.16
Presence of sponsorship competitors	3.67	1.16

exposure opportunity (Mean=4.29, SD=0.82) and team image (Mean=4.28, SD=0.81). On the other hand, hospitality opportunity was found to be the third least important factor in corporate sponsorship decision for KPL clubs (Mean=4.26, SD=1.00). Presence of a star player or coach within a club was the second least important factor (Mean=4.22, SD=1.03), while sponsorship fit was ranked lowest (Mean=4.02, SD=0.96). The second objective was to determine the influence of country based factors on corporate organizations decisions to sponsor KPL clubs. The influence was measured through three items where respondents were required to state whether they were very important, important, were non-committal about it, or whether it was unimportant or very unimportant. Results are presented in Table 4.

All the three statements had a mean score above 3.5. This implies that all the three were important factors on corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. The statement with the highest mean score was the economic state of Kenya (current GDP), with a mean of 3.90, and SD of 1.04. This implies that it was the most important country-based factor on corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. Second was the political state of Kenya (Mean=3.83, SD =1.05), while interest Level in KPL soccer was third with a mean of 3.83 and SD of 1.09. The third objective is to determine the influence of environmental-based factors on corporate organizations' decisions to sponsor KPL clubs. The influence was measured through three items. Respondents were required to rate them as very important, important, non-committal, unimportant or very unimportant. The results are presented in Table 5. The results in Table 5 show all the three statements got a mean score above 3.5. This implies that all the three were important factors on corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. The most important factor is KPL authority over sponsorship (favourable rules and regulations guiding

sponsorship activities) (mean=3.83, SD=1.03). This is followed by ambush marketing (protection from other sponsors) (mean=3.78, SD=1.16). The least important factor is the presence of sponsorship competitors (mean=3.67, SD=1.23).

Further, the respondents were asked to indicate how they would rate the level of willingness of corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs. Majority of the respondents 29 (50%) indicated that corporate sponsors were very willing, 15 (25.9 %) were very, very willing, 13 (22.4%) were willing while only 1 (1.7 %) were moderately willing. This is presented in Table 6. The results in Table 6 reveal that corporate organizations were willing to sponsor clubs in KPL. No company was unwilling to sponsor KPL clubs.

The fourth objective was to determine whether team-centered factors, country-based characteristics and environmentally-centered characteristics differed significantly in the extent to which they influenced decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs. To achieve this objective, regression was done on the data obtained through questionnaires. The results are presented in Table 7. The results in Table 7 show that R squared was 54.6% implying that the independent variables that were studied explained 54.6% of the decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs. This implies that team-based, country-based and environmentally-centered characteristics were satisfactory in explaining the decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs.

The results indicate that the overall model was statistically significant as supported by a p value of 0.000 which was lesser than the critical p value of 0.05. This was supported by an F statistic of 21.64 which implies that team-centered, country-based and environmentally-centered characteristics were good predictors of decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs. The results further reveal that team-based

Table 6. Willingness by corporate organizations to sponsor kpl clubs.

	Frequency	Percent
Moderately willing	1	1.7
Willing	13	22.4
Very willing	29	50
Very very willing	15	25.9
Total	58	100

Table 7. Regression results.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate		
1	0.739a	0.546	0.521	0.473		
	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.	
Regression	14.497	3	4.832	21.644	.000	
Residual	12.056	54	0.223			
Total	26.554	57				
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta	t	p	
(Constant)	-0.875	0.717		-1.221	0.228	
team based factors	0.592	0.148	0.369	3.987	0.000	
country based factors	0.562	0.09	0.611	6.266	0.000	
Environmental based factors	0.320	0.86	0.372	0.372	0.011	

characteristics had a positive and significant relationship with decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs ($\beta=0.592$, $p=0.000$). The results further reveal that country-based characteristics had a positive and significant relationship with decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs ($\beta=0.562$, $p=0.000$). In addition, the results reveal that environmentally-based characteristics had a positive and significant relationship with decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs ($\beta=0.320$, $p=0.011$). The Beta value is a measure of how strongly each predictor variable influences the dependent variable. From the above beta values (β), it was deduced that team-based characteristics had the strongest influence on willingness by corporate organizations to award sponsorship to KPL clubs, followed by country-based factors then environmentally-based factors.

The first null hypothesis stated:

H₀₁ – The extent to which team-centered factors influence corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions did not differ significantly.

The results in Table 7 reveal that team based characteristics had a significant effect on decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs ($p=0.000$). This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected at $p<0.05$. Therefore, the findings from the study

are that the extent to which various team-based factors affect corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions differ significantly.

The second null hypothesis stated:

H₀₂ – There was no significant difference in the magnitude to which various country-based factors influence corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions.

The results in Table 7 reveal that country-based factors had a significant effect on decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs ($p=0.000$). This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected at $p<0.05$. Therefore, the study found out that the extent to which various country-based factors influenced corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions differed significantly.

The third null hypothesis was that:

H₀₃ – The extent to which various environmental factors influence corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions differ significantly.

The results in Table 7 reveal that environmental-based factors had a significant effect on decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs ($p=0.000$).

This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the study found out that the extent to which various environmental factors influenced corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions differed significantly.

The fourth hypothesis stated:

H₀₄ – There was no significant difference in the extent to which team-centered, country-based and environmentally-based factors influenced decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs.

Results in Table 7 show that team-based factors had the highest positive and significant effect on decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs ($\beta = 0.592$, $p = 0.000$). This was followed by country based characteristics ($\beta = 0.562$, $p = 0.000$). The last factor was environmental based characteristics ($\beta = 0.320$, $p = 0.011$). This implies that the three factors contributed differently to decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs. The most critical team -based factor was fan base strength, followed by team performance on the field, stadium attendance, media exposure opportunity, team image, hospitality opportunity, presence of a star player or coach and lastly sponsorship fit (Table 3). The most important country -based factor was the economic state of Kenya, followed by the political state of Kenya and interest level in KPL soccer (Table 4). Further, the most critical environmental-based factor was Kenya Premier League authority over sponsorship, followed by ambush marketing and, lastly, the presence of sponsorship competitors (Table 5). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study, therefore, concluded that the extent to which team-centered, country-based and environmentally-centered characteristics influenced decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs differed significantly.

DISCUSSION

Team-based characteristics

Fan base strength was the most important factor for making decisions on awarding sponsorship to a soccer club in the K.P.L. This implies that teams that had more fans got more funds as compared to teams with few fans. These findings agreed with those of Ngan et al. (2011) who observed that sponsors preferred to sponsor a team that has a strong avid fan base. Furthermore, the study findings also agreed with those of Tomas (2014) who asserted that the number of fans was an important factor to sponsors because sponsorships were meant to turn customers into spokespersons for sponsors' products. Further, these findings agreed with those of Hinson as cited in Schoop (2016) who observed that a strong fan loyalty towards their soccer clubs had a positive effect on

the company because the fans purchased products of the club's sponsor. Moreover, the findings concurred with the Kenyan Premier League (2019) that the improved level of competition and attention given to the Kenya Premier League by fans, led to an inflow of corporate sponsors such as Super Sport, Umbro, Puma and Sport Pesa.

Team performance on the pitch (if the team succeeds in competition) was also an important factor in making decisions on awarding sponsorship to a soccer club in the K.P.L. This implies that the sponsors of the soccer clubs looked at the teams that recorded better performance so as to give their funds. These findings build on those of earlier scholars, such as Tomas (2014), who observed that sponsors wanted teams that won some titles as this increased exposure to the team, players and the sponsor's brand. The findings also concur with those of Ngan et al. (2011) that team performance had a positive effect on consumers' purchase intentions for sponsors' products. They also support Kinyairo et al. (2017) who asserted that stable performance in the field of play led to more match attendance and more match revenues. Increased match attendances implied that corporate sponsors would come on board to partner with the clubs. On the contrary, the findings differed with those of Lee and Ross (2012) who found team performance to be the third least important factor considered by corporate sponsors due to its unpredictability on a daily basis.

In addition, it was revealed that stadium attendance (average number of fans who attended clubs matches) was an important factor in making decisions on awarding sponsorship to a soccer club in the K.P.L. The findings supported those obtained in the interview responses where the majority responded that they preferred teams with many fans since they gave them a wider marketing opportunity. The findings agreed with recommendations by Origi and Deya (2019) who noted that packed stadia would attract sponsors and increase revenue to clubs. Further, it concurred with Schoop (2016), that fan attendance is an important factor for companies to sponsor clubs, although fans do not take place in the sponsorship decision making process.

With regard to media exposure opportunity (how much time the media attends to a club), the results found that this was an important factor in making decisions on awarding sponsorship to a soccer club in the K.P.L. The findings echoed those in the interviews where most respondents indicated that they preferred to sponsor clubs which received with more media attention. The attention of the club's followers would translate to their company and products. This implied that clubs that had more media attention attracted more sponsorship as compared to those that received occasional or no media attention. The findings of the study endorsed those by Wishart and Lee (2012) that media exposure was the primary objective of sponsorship and the most influential variable that determined the sponsored property price or how much the sponsored received from the sponsor. It

concurred with Breuer and Rumpf (2011) concerning the importance of media to sponsors. The longer a sponsor's logo was presented on screen, the more likely the consumer would have a lasting memory of the sponsor. On the contrary, the findings of the study differed with those of previous studies, such as Wishart et al. (2012), Lee and Ross (2012); Singh and Bhatia (2015), which found media exposure to be the most critical decision making factor for award of sports sponsorships. The current study revealed that fan base strength was the most important team-based factor in decisions to award sponsorship.

The results further revealed that team image (if the team has positive characteristics that can be transferred to your brand) was an important factor in making decisions on awarding sponsorship to a soccer club in the K.P.L. These findings supported Chien et al. (2016) who observed that sponsors shied away from clubs that were damaged by scandals, as this translated to the sponsor, and might cause the sponsor to terminate sponsorship agreement. The findings further agreed with those of other scholars who expressed that the image of the club was a critical factor in the eyes of potential sponsors (Berkes, 2008; Gwinner et al., 2009; Singh and Bhatia, 2015)

The presence of a star player or coach within a club was also found to be an important factor in making decisions on awarding sponsorship to a soccer club in the K.P.L. These findings concurred with those of the interviews where the majority of the respondents indicated that clubs with a star player helped them to market their products and, thus, they sponsored them. These findings were consistent with that of Tomas (2014) who found that the celebrity status of coaches or players increased brand awareness for sponsors by transferring their positive image and increasing the sale of their goods and services. They were also consistent with those of other studies which observed that soccer fans might notice the brand of clothing or shoes which their favourite players wore, the kind of sports equipment they used, and the kind of beverage they took. The sports star influenced the consumer to reach his status or to adapt to his behaviour patterns (Breuer and Rumpf, 2011; Hoek, as cited in Breuer and Rumpf, 2011).

In addition, it was revealed that sponsorship fit (if there is similarity between sponsor's product and the team) was an important factor in making sponsorship decisions (Table 4). These findings were inconsistent with the findings in the interview where majority of the respondents indicated that sponsorship fit was not an important factor. These findings built on those by Henseler et al. (2007) who asserted that it was important to have a good fit between the sponsor and the sponsored object so as to attract consumers to purchase the sponsors' products. Further, the findings agreed with those of other scholars who observed that congruence between the sponsor's brand and the sponsored party

reduced the chances of sponsorship dissolution and helped to strengthen the relationship between the sponsored and the sponsor (Jensen and Cornwell, 2017; Wang, as cited in Coelho et al., 2019).

Conclusively, team-centered factors significantly influenced corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions. This implies that better team characteristics, such as good team image, good performance and presence of a star player would enhance the decision made by the corporate organization to sponsor the KPL to give more support to such a team.

Country-based characteristics

The study findings revealed that the political state of Kenya was an important factor in corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. The findings were inconsistent with the findings in the interviews where majority of the respondents indicated this was not an important factor to consider and thus had no effect on sponsoring decisions. These findings (the political state is important) endorsed those of Lee and Ross (2012) who opined that during political instability, people could not truly enjoy sports and corporate sponsors too could not achieve their marketing objectives via sponsorship.

It was also revealed that the economic state of Kenya (current GDP) was an important factor on corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. These findings agreed with those from the interviews in which majority of the respondents indicated that when the economic state is poor, the government imposed high taxes on sponsors which affected their level of sponsorship. The following were some of the responses; *'when economy is not growing, the government imposes higher taxes on us to raise more revenue, this hampers our ability to sponsor clubs', 'recently we have incurred much taxation as the government tries to raise more revenue, and this hampers our sponsorship ability'. 'Steady economic growth will give us more sales hence we have more ability to sponsor clubs. It will also give us more profits hence we have money for sponsorship and advertising.'*

The findings agreed with those of Jensen and Cornwell (2017) that in an inflationary economy, the prices of goods and services within the sponsor's country rise and might constrain a sponsor's ability to pay. During inflation in the sponsor's country, the sponsor might not be able to justify large budgetary allocations, such as allocations for sports sponsorships. Moreover, the current study endorsed the report by the Business Today (2015, March 26) which reported that economic hardships affected both country and companies in the country. In view of this observation, Kenyan sugar millers, the Mumias Sugar Company had to suspend its sponsorship to AFC Leopards Football Club due to financial constraints.

In addition, interest level in KPL soccer was also an important factor on corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. These findings collaborated with those in the interviews which stated that Clubs with high match attendance attract more sponsorship since it gave them a wide market. The followings were some of the responses; *'many people attending matches gives as an avenue to advertise through branded shirt sponsorships', 'low attendance, we do not engage in sponsorship. We need masses to sell and advertise', 'high attendance gives us the platform to pass message to our customers and potential customers.'* The findings of this study therefore supported the report by Onyango (2019, September 9) which noted that due to Gor Mahia Football Club's loyal fan base, it was able to attract sponsors such as Tuzo and Sport Pesa.

In conclusion, country-based characteristics had a positive and significant relationship with decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs. This implies that favourable country-based factors would enhance the decisions made by the corporate organizations to sponsor the KPL.

Environmental-based characteristics

The findings revealed that KPL authority over sponsorship deals (favorable rules and regulations guiding sponsorship activities) was an important factor on corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. The findings collaborated with those of the interviews where most of the respondents affirmed that rules hinder them from sponsoring the clubs. The following were some of the responses; *'some rules keep us off when the governing body wants a share of the sponsorship money', 'if the rules are favourable to us then we sponsor clubs', 'we do not want league body to usurp their authority upon sponsors as this keeps us away.'* These study findings confirmed the report by Shabik (2013, January 9) the chairman of the league body demanded a percentage of sponsorship money before allowing a corporate sponsor to sponsor a club. The conduct kept away corporate sponsors from sponsoring soccer clubs in Kenya.

The results also revealed that ambush marketing was an important factor on corporate organizations willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. The findings disagreed with the results from the interview guide where most of the respondents indicated that they were not concerned with other sponsors. The followings were some of the responses; *'we do not mind other sponsors for the same club, so long as our name appears boldly on the shirts of the club', 'it doesn't matter, we just want our name to appear in the club shirts', 'many sponsors already sponsoring the club keeps us away from sponsoring the same club. We do not see the gain.'* These findings supported those by other scholars (Ellis et

al., 2011; Nufer, 2013; Tomanek, 2020) who observed that protection from other sponsors was an important factor guiding sponsorship activities.

In addition, sponsorship competitors were an important factor on corporate organizations' willingness to offer sponsorship to KPL clubs. These findings agreed with those of other scholars (McCook, as cited in Malin and Therese 2006; Jensen and Cornwell, 2017) who noted that sponsors were opposed to the involvement of more sponsoring organizations because it reduced customers' attention to the brand and minimized success in building brand awareness. In contrast, the findings differed with those of Thrassou and Vrontis as cited in Tinderet (2018) who attested that companies were attracted to sponsor, so long as the sport was popular, regardless of the presence of competing firms.

Conclusively, environmental-based characteristics had a positive and significant relationship with decisions made by corporate organizations to sponsor KPL clubs. This implies that better environmentally-based characteristics such as absence of other competitors would enhance the decision made by the corporate organization to sponsor the KPL to give more support to such a team.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for practice

- (i) Clubs should enhance their training so that they win more matches. This will attract corporate sponsors
- (ii) Clubs should strive to have packed stadia during their matches. To achieve this, they must win more matches which will, in turn, attract corporate sponsors.
- (iii) Clubs should maintain a good image devoid of hooliganism or scandals by players or coaches.
- (iv) Clubs should offer sponsors with opportunities for hospitality during matches, such as the opportunity to interact with fans or star players, and a chance to sell products after the match.
- (v) Clubs should strive to recruit star players or coaches because these celebrities will attract corporate sponsors.

Recommendations for policy

- (i) The government through the ministries of sports, culture and heritage, and finance should reduce the amount of taxes on the sponsors of soccer clubs, so that they are able to avail more sponsorship.
- (ii) The ministry of sports, culture and heritage should set rules and regulations that favor the corporate organizations' sponsorship decisions. Such rules include those to eliminate cartels and federation officials prying on sponsorship money at the expense of clubs. This will ensure that more money reaches the clubs.
- (iii) The Kenya Premier League should develop

legislations that protect corporate sponsors from extortion by the leagues' officials.

(iv) The league body should not limit the size of a sponsor's logo presented on uniforms or charge sponsors who wish to sponsor clubs. The main sponsor of the league should also be protected from other sponsors or ambushers.

(v) The Kenyan Government and political leaders must always strive to have political stability regardless of their differences. In a stable political environment, corporates are able to achieve their marketing objectives and are willing to sponsor clubs.

(vi) Media houses should develop a policy to broadcast and televise live KPL matches every week because in so doing, they will help to attract more fans to the stadia. More fans will appeal to more corporate sponsors because they can access a wider market for their products.

Recommendations for further study

There are other determinants that affect corporate sponsorship opportunities for soccer clubs which were not addressed by the study. They include length of sponsorship impact, the ease of planning the sponsorship, appeal to target audience lifestyle, and the relevance of the sponsorship. These factors can be studied by future researchers. Future research should address gaps such as the factors which make sponsors to pull out/ terminate sponsorships, and ambush marketing in Kenyan sports sponsorship.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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