

## SPONSORSHIP COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE ASTHMA SOCIETY OF CANADA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NON- PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN BANGLADESH

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***Abstract:** The Seja's Run is a public awareness building program conducted by the Asthma Society of Canada and the Alumni Association of the Toronto French School for the last 18 years. The empirical evidences have shown that the Seja's Run event can be expanded beyond its present limited audiences and community. The secondary analysis, in this paper, on the non-profit industry in Canada has demonstrated that corporations are significantly contributing to non-profit sector in the form of grants, donation, in-kind supports and sponsorships. However, non-profit organizations need to come up with well-designed communication strategy for soliciting and thereby convincing corporations for sponsorships. Over the previous years, the Seja's Run got sponsorship mostly through personal relationships and contacts of the people involved in the event committee. After evaluating the present scopes and future potentials of the Seja's Run, five major current donors of the event were interviewed regarding the event. Based on the comments and feedbacks from these donors, this paper also presents a guideline for designing sponsorship communication strategy for the non-profit organizations in Bangladesh.*

***Key Words:** Non-profit organization, Sponsorship, Marketing Communication, etc.*

### Definitions and Terms

- 1) ASC: The Asthma Society of Canada
- 2) Donor: In this article the term 'donor' was used to refer to the person or organization that gives, donates or presents something through a trust or a charitable contribution. As the main focus of this study was on corporations, who support various projects of the Asthma Society of Canada (ASC), the word 'donor' was indicating overall corporate donors of the ASC.
- 3) Sponsorship: In general, sponsorship indicates the mechanism of financing a project carried out by another person, group or business. In this report, the term 'sponsorship' was used to refer to the supports provided by corporations to non-profit organizations in a specific event or project.
- 4) TFS: Toronto French School
- 5) AATFS: Alumni Association of Toronto French School

### Introduction

Communication strategy is a key success factor for non-profit organizations in fundraising, improving public relation or marketing new products and services (Campbell, 2000). Mostly non-profit organizations work for social betterment by serving

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and touching different aspects of life. It is vital for non-profit organizations to decide the target audience, shape the message and then deliver the message in an efficient and effective way. Evidences show that non-profit organizations can design successful communication strategy if they can align the message with goals and objectives of the audience, and for this it is vital for non-profit organizations to know who their audience is and how that audience perceives the message being delivered. In fact, successful communication between a non-profit organization and a group of donors or other constituents is very similar to successful communication between individuals. In both cases the connection is greatly enhanced when there is feedback. The feedback allows the initiator to keep the communication relevant and motivating. Over recent decades, donors expect more from organizations than ever before. They expect excellent communications, their questions answered quickly, being thanked promptly, and being invited to events at times. If donors expect more, every part of an organization needs to be inculcated with donor-first perspective – a perspective that places the needs and desires of the donor squarely into forefront of an organization’s daily operation (Johnston, 2000). All those prevailing trends and shifts in donation practices have prompted the non-profit organizations to come up with specific and reasonable project plans and proposals. The Asthma Society of Canada (ASC), one of the emerging non-profit organizations in Canada, has redefined and redesigned its mission, vision and strategic plan in the year 2008. Currently, it is concentrating on its education and public awareness building programs to enhance the operations and to reach more people thereby. One of the ASC’s major projects, ‘Seja’sRun’, is expected to be enhanced and improvised over the upcoming years. The evidences and insights from ASC can be imperative for the non-profit organizations in Bangladesh as well.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Burnett (1996) claims that not all people fundraisers talk to are really donors. Only a small number have the potential to become real donors. Therefore, it is important to cultivate the proper targets: the people who are most likely to support a specific project and thereafter the remaining can be kept away from the prospect list. Thus, the study has been aimed to

- a) Understand the economic and strategic issues that affect the corporation’s donation decision and therefore lead to a sustainable donor-fundraiser relationship.
- b) Explore how the major donors of the Asthma Society of Canada (ASC) make the donation decisions on a specific project.
- c) Develop sponsorship communication strategy was developed for one of the ASC’s major projects known as Seja’s Run.
- d) Suggest the guideline and implications for non-profit organizations of Bangladesh.

### **Scopes of the Study**

In this research project, the corporate-donor psychology and persuasion methods was analyzed from theoretical perspective, and after evaluating the internal and external environment of the industry, an intensive communication strategy was developed for the

Asthma Society of Canada for pursuing corporations to grant funds for the Seja's Run project. We engaged ourselves in case-study method for understanding donor's attitude. We interviewed five major donors over telephone. The issues that we asked will be discussed in research methodology section in this paper later on. We also explored the prevailing donor-ASC relationships and bi-lateral terms and contracts to some extent. Overall, we incorporated the environmental issues like personal networks and corporate policies with the philanthropic concerns. And finally, lessons for the non-profit organizations in Bangladesh have been outlined from the perspective of imperative discourse.

### **Theoretical Model**

The basic hypothesis of the study was that corporations are willing to donate in social awareness programs, whereas if understood and communicated properly the donor's psychology can be significantly influenced by the non-profit organizations. This research dealt with the environmental analysis of the non-profit industry, the donor's expectations and motivational aspects for granting funds and finally the research concludes in developing a sponsorship communication strategy for the Seja's Run project. The first stage involved analyzing the internal environment of ASC. As mentioned by McLesih (1995), the fundraising constituents are becoming increasingly sensitized to the need for non-profit organizations to demonstrate performance and efficiency in both their fundraising and overall operations. It is evident that to succeed today, nonprofit entities must understand these intelligent clients, constituents, and donors. Quality of services – both by the non-profit organization in relation to those it serves and to those it fund its services – is extremely important. The assumption of 'blind allegiance' that so many non-profit organizations seem to believe in as it relates to their clients, volunteers, and donors simply not present in today's market. In this aspect, we conducted an internal analysis with those areas that either help achieve organizational goals or constrain the institution from achieving them. The objective of this step was to evaluate the viability of the organization's marketing and competitive actions, and to determine whether the findings indicate normal fluctuations of the organizational business cycle or deteriorating situations that deserve immediate attention. The following issues were expected to uncover through the internal analysis:

- a) The past and present performance of the organization with respect to clients and donors.
- b) The strategic problems that need to be faced by the ASC.
- c) The ASC's ability to overcome those problems.
- d) The ASC's fundraising and service costs and their performance.
- e) The organization's strength and weaknesses.

Secondly, the competitive factors were assessed through external marketing analysis. The basic issues that were explored in this process were:

- a) What groups comprise the ASC's market and constituents?
- b) What are the characteristics of each appropriate segment in each market?
- c) How the clients, donors, constituents, and volunteers feel about the ASC's programs and services?

- d) What do they expect from the ASC in the future regarding program and service development?
- e) Who are the major competitors in ASC’s business environment?
- f) What does the future holds in terms of increasing or decreasing competition?

The above mentioned issues were mostly analyzed from the research, titled as stakeholder survey, done by *Environics Analytics on behalf of ASC* in September, 2008. The survey was conducted mostly among NAPA (National Asthma Patient Alliance) members. The internal and external analyses provided the roadmap for assessing the means of communications with donors. A few social and psychological concepts were reviewed and then incorporated for understanding donor’s attitude. Thereafter, initiatives were taken for formulating a guideline for persuasive communication and its effectiveness. Then the prevailing donor’s expectations were assessed to investigate influential attitude changing factors. As noted by Cohen (1965), “under some conditions, behavior change may change to attitude change, belief change, or both, as a kind of feedback process..., the persuader would construct a message that includes reasons for accepting new beliefs. People most often identify strategies involving persuasive appeal: giving logical and personal reasons, lending expertise, and so on. Persuasive communication is reported more likely than tactics such as bargaining, flattering, threatening, and forcing” (p.105). Therefore, we believe that persuasive communication would be the most suitable strategy for developing donor-fundraiser relationship. Furthermore, the aspects of donor’s expectation regarding fund usages, monitoring and reporting have also been assessed. The level of aid evaluation has been assessed from practical perspective and internal records of the ASC. The other theoretical aspects assessed include current practice of corporate donations and philanthropies and practices performed by prominent corporations and their insights analyzed by experts and observers. The overall theoretical model was as follows:

Topic	Board areas	Analyzing factors
Non-profit industry	Environmental Analysis of ASC	- Past & present marketing activities Current sponsorship trend Future opportunities for Seja’s Run
	Competitive factors	- Analysis of 3 similar players in the industry - Analysis the operational strategies and norms
Means of Communication and relationship fundraising	Donor’s attitudes	- Current criterion for donation - Persuasive communications in practice - Donor relation management
	Donor’s expectations	- Goal orientation - Aid evaluation
	Corporate Philanthropy	- The convergence of interest (social benefit/economic benefit) - Elements of competitive context - Maximizing the philanthropy value

## **Research Design**

### *Stage 1*

Initially, literature review was conducted to analyze the non-profit industry and its trends. Major focus was on the fundraising practices and motives. The current fundraising approaches taken by ASC for Seja's Run project were reviewed. Initiatives were taken to check the activities that had been implemented over the earlier years for fundraising. Then to better understand the donor's psychology, prevailing theories of social influences and attitude changes were studied and incorporated with the research hypothesis. Key components of donor psychology were assessed thereby. Later on these components were used as the basis of motivational factors in developing the sponsorship package for *Seja'sRun*.

### *Stage 2*

Based on the initial findings, secondary research was conducted. This was critical to find enough secondary research result on donor psychology and more specific to Seja's Run event. At first it was planned to conduct questionnaire survey among major corporate donors. However, because of the ASC's communication policies, we had to change to telephone interview instead. Moreover, telephone interview seemed to be suitable as the Seja's Run is a small-scale event and very few sponsors are well-informed about the event and the donation experience. As a result, five major corporate donors, who had been donating to Seja'sRun over the previous years, were interviewed. We intend to find out the major areas that donors like to grant funds. Besides, types of funds including terms and conditions for fund usage were explored too. It is important to mention that although the industry record shows that corporate donation toward non-profit sector is about 1.8% only (Statistics Canada, 2009), considering the current status and scope of the Seja's Run – we suggest that still corporate donation would be financially significant for Seja's Run to flourish further.

## **Questionnaire Design**

We interviewed the major donors regarding their donation practices. The issues to be asked were based on the general sponsorship practices, current involvement with Seja's Run, and the questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the ASC officials.

The key questions were as follows:

- 1) For how long have you been sponsoring Canadian charities?
- 2) How many sponsorship do you provide every year?
- 3) What is your total sponsorship budget each year?
- 4) How do the charities contact you for sponsorship? (Letter mail/phone/in-person/e-mail)
- 5) What is your main reason(s) of supporting Seja'sRun? (Because of ASC /TFS / Seja's family/ Promotion /Pure philanthropy...)
- 6) Do you believe that sponsorship of Seja's Run leads to an increase in business?
- 7) Do you want to be more active in Seja's Run, like joining the organizing committee/ forming a team/providing volunteers or by any others ways?
- 8) Do you think that Seja's Run should be expanded beyond TFS community? If so, do you have any suggestion?

- 9) Any other comment on Seja'sRun?
- 10) What would you like to see in a sponsorship package suitable for you?

The responses from the survey were used to find out three major areas: A) Donation policies and practices B) Reasons for donations in Seja's Run, and C) Sponsorship package preference for the event. In addition another concentration was on balancing the social welfare and economic benefit sought by the donors.

### *Stage 3*

The final analysis was conducted in this stage. As it was a case study based research and sufficient data on donor attitudes is not available in our parameter, the final analyses were performed on the outcomes achieved in stage two. We used the thematic research approach in this purpose. We incorporated the facts and insights of donor's as well as those of the Seja's Run projects. The key concentration was on how the Seja's Run project be presented to donor's table for getting the fund solicited. Utilizing the donor's preferences for donation decision explored in the earlier stages, We were able to design the sponsorship package accordingly. If the sponsorship package suits with donors requirements, they will be more eager to grant the fund and participate in Seja's Run project. The initial monitoring and evaluation guideline was also proposed in this aspect for getting the donor-ASC relationship sustained.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcomes of the project were:

1. Understanding the donor's expectations in the prevailing competitive environment
2. Developing a communication strategy for pursuing and convincing targeted corporations to provide sponsorship supports; and
3. Initiating integrated marketing communication tools for improving and sustaining the project performance.

### **Literature Review**

Non-profit and voluntary organizations are an integral part of society, serving as vehicles for engaging the efforts of millions of Canadians to address needs in their communities (Statistics Canada, 2009). In Canada the survey on nonprofit and voluntary organizations is performed in an irregular interval. The most recent "National Survey of Non-profit and Voluntary Organizations" was published in the year 2005 which offers the most comprehensive profile of non-profit and voluntary organizations ever done in Canada. However, the survey was based on the operation and activities of non-profit sector in the year 2003.

### **Reasons for Corporate Donation**

Chouinard (2007) found out that only 20 percent of Canada's 161,000 charitable and nonprofit organizations received corporate donation, grants, or sponsorships in 2003. According to the author, "Corporations generally contribute to charities for the following reasons: (a) to build their company's brand and reputation among consumers; (b) to build

strong communities; (c) to build social capital and support among citizens and governments in the communities in which they operate; and (d) to attract and retain employees by fostering pride and loyalty among their employees” (p.297). Canadians who responded to the 2000 NSGVP cited a variety of reasons for choosing to spend a portion of their discretionary income on charitable giving: 94% said they gave out of compassion for those in need, 91% gave to support a cause in which they personally believed, 69% gave because they had been personally touched by the cause supported by the organization, (e.g., they gave to a children's hospital that had helped a family member). These findings confirm focus group research done by the Angus Reid Group for the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (1999). This research showed that “for those who make regular donations, it appears that donation-practice can be a very personal activity, motivated by past history which makes the individual lean toward a specific charity, such as a family member passing away from a disease or from being helped personally by an organization. (p.8)” A significant percentage of donors gave out of a belief that they owed something to their community (58%) or to fulfill religious obligations or beliefs (31%). Only 13% of donors said they were motivated by the desire to get a tax credit, but tax considerations were important for donors at the higher end of the giving spectrum. About one in seven donations (15%) were made in response to a mail request in 2000. Older Canadians were more likely to give in this way. Over half (53%) of donors aged 65 and over made at least one donation through the mail, as did more than four in 10 (42%) 55 to 64-year-olds (McClintock, 2004).

### **Designing Corporate Sponsorship Package**

As mentioned by Talisman (2000), corporate sponsorships have got a new paradigm after 1990s. Now corporate sponsorship is no longer any simple gift or pure philanthropy, rather it has become a vital part of the company's marketing strategy. It is an opportunity to market their company or product directly to the non-profit organization's constituency. Therefore, sponsorship packages should offer corporations a variety of ways to reach out to their target audiences. Talisman mentioned that when developing a corporate sponsorship package, non-profit organizations should go beyond basic promotion of the special events. It has been found that developing an integrated corporate marketing program better serves the agency and their corporate partners. Talisman (2000) also suggested an approach to develop corporate sponsorship package. The major steps in this process are – first, the non-profit organization's development calendar should be reviewed. If the organization presents more than one event in a year, it should present one package that represents all the opportunities for sponsorship support. This will help the corporation make an informed decision, simplify the budgeting process and save valuable time for both you and the sponsoring organizations. The next step is to determine what levels of sponsorship the non-profit organization wants for each event or the entire program. Generally, it is easier to keep levels the same as much as possible from event to event and program to program – “Sponsorships for all events can begin at \$500 or \$1,000 and go through the same levels, \$2,500, \$5,000, \$7,500 etc. It becomes confusing when each event has different levels of sponsorship, so consistency here well advised, but not required. The different levels can be given names, such as Platinum, Gold and Silver level sponsors” (p.3). The author also added that once the non-profit organization has

determined the levels, all of the possible sponsorship benefits for each event or program can be divided among them. It is the easiest to start at the highest level and offer everything and then to take opportunities away as the fundraiser moves down through the different levels (Talisman, 2000).

### **Communication Strategies**

Non-profit organizations use persuasive communication strategy for convincing corporate donors. The focus is on building a bridge between corporate donation and image build-up for corporations. As mentioned by Cohen (1965), “when we consider this intimate relationship between the person and the social group, we can understand how breaking up a person’s relationship with the group about him can be an effective precursor to influencing him. ...because a person is so completely interdependent with others, disrupting the relationship creates chaos within him, it is therefore so important to him to maintain a close and stable relationship with others, those others can influence his behavior in variety of ways” (p.101). In the same way, corporations now-a-days cannot stay isolated from the society and its influences. The image of a company is significantly determined by how it is getting involved in and contributing towards social welfare. McLeish (1995) mentioned that fundraising is one of the key task of the non-profit organizations that has made the industry to an improvised ‘salesmanship style’ of operation. He also added that “non-profit organizations often find themselves looking for someone who has the ‘gift of gab’ as a spokesperson for the organization, trusting that the ability make small talk will lead an organization into dollars raised. The ability to raise funds and communicate effectively is crucial to any organization” (p-127). The message settings of the sponsorship seeker are also very important to be successful in non-profit industry. Donors are highly influenced by the message design and the way it is delivered. The source of the message may have other apparent attributes that provide a rule of thumb relevant to accepting the message. The source may appear similar to the audience, thereby encouraging social comparison and application of the “similar people usually like similar things” rule (Brock, 1965, p.264). Or the source may be known to be very trustworthy. Through normative social influence, other members of the audience may actually provide heuristic persuasion cues, too. Enthusiastic applause, for instance implies that many others agree with the message and, in turn, it must be valid. The same speeches have been found to be more persuasive when they are accompanied by applause than when they are not (Axson et al., 1987; Landy 1972). The communication materials are also very important in this aspect. As mentioned by Burnett (1996), fundraising publications must be above all inspirational. It has long been acknowledged that changing people’s attitudes is much more difficult than changing their behavior. Therefore, during fundraising the non-profit organizations should focus on inspiring corporations to contribute to social welfare. The fundraiser should be innovative in convincing the corporations that philanthropy provides long-term benefits and establishes positive corporate image. Burnett (1996) also added that the most successful organizations invest large amounts of time and energy in ensuring that they communicate effectively – the right messages to the right audiences in the right way at the right time. Non-profit organizations may have a cluster of audiences that seem to have importance in the process of fundraising, but in practice they are not significant to take into consideration



as far as donation potential is involved. It has been found that over the recent years donors are becoming more and more involved in the fund and grants utilization activities and donation evaluation. They are granting restricted fund in most of the cases whereby the granted funds should be used for a specific project directed by the donor. While donors have not involved recipients extensively in evaluations, there is a general feeling that this is an important aspect. There are two reasons for this: 1) to improve the evaluation by including fundraisers' perspective and by increasing the likelihood that the donors will have an investment in responding to recommendations, 2) to stimulate donors' own capacity for carrying out evaluations. However, the major problem is that recipients do not necessarily see the value of evaluation, and fear that negative results will mean the withdrawal of aid, or reflect poorly on them (OECD-1986). The fundraisers might be obsessive about their communications – not only about their inspirational content but also what they say, when and how often. A strategy is devised not only for each audience but for each category or segment of the audience. Theoretically, a communication strategy could be worked out for each individual, taking into account his or her experience, interest, past behavior, preferences and so on. This may be tactically impractical and prohibitively expensive for some organizations at present, but may not be forever. The fundraisers' ability to individualize is increasing and, generally, is becoming all the time (Brunett, 1996).

### **Balance between Business and Philanthropy**

Porter and Kramer (2002) added that most corporate contribution programs are diffuse and unfocused. Most consist of numerous cash donations given to aid local civic causes or provide general operating support to universities and national charities in the hope of generating goodwill among employees, customers, and local communities. Moreover, rather than being tied to well-thought-out social or business objectives, the contribution often reflect the personal belief and values of executives and employees. Nonetheless, the corporations need to match between the issue of pure philanthropy and pure business as far as corporate donations are involved. They depicted the position of corporate philanthropy in creating the economic value to the society. While corporate social responsibility has become a burning issue in corporate practices in recent years, corporations are also under pressure from investors to maximize the short term bottom line. Therefore, the donation decision becomes critical as the company needs to manage among so many issues to satisfy the stakeholders. Porter and Kramer (2002) explain that “this dilemma has led many companies to be more strategic in their philanthropy, but what passes for “strategic philanthropy” today is never truly strategic, and often it is not particularly effective as philanthropy” (p.5). Therefore, the fundraising activities have become two-folded dimensions whereby the non-profit organizations have to understand the trend and moves of corporate donation practices and then frame their fund seeking messages. Furthermore, in today's competitive and dynamic business environment, a well-designed sponsorship package can be a crucial tool to convince the corporations to grant solicited funds.

### **Seja's Run and the ASC at a Glance**

The Seja's Run was first initiated by the Alumni Association of the Toronto French School (AATFS) in 1996. It had two fold purposes – first, to show a memoir to Seja von Wersebe who passed away by suffering from severe asthma (Seja's Run, 2009). Secondly, it was also involved in creating awareness regarding asthma and then making the community aware of the disease and insights. However, the organizing committee of the event found a new window throughout the event and asked people to donate while participating in the run. The proceeds of the events were given to the asthma research and awareness program. Thus, the ASC got involved with the Seja'sRun for the first time in 2003. Later on, over the years, it was realized that if the ASC could be more active in the process throughout the supports of volunteers, asthma awareness materials and other approached. However, the most important reason for the ASC's involvement was to make a bridge among its stakeholders and Seja's Run event. This strategic involvement showed a new path for both the AATFS and the ASC. Being one of the prominent nation-wide organizations that supports asthma affected people, the ASC realized a tipping point opportunity for the event. Hence, the ASC played the role of “connectors, maven and salesman” (Gladwell, 2002) to inform more people regarding the Seja's Run. Firstly, the ASC acted like a connector between the Seja'sRun event and the target audiences. The ASC informed its operational partners, sponsors and NAPA (National Alliance of Asthma Patient) members regarding the event. The Seja's Run became one of the major projects of the ASC, whereby it was publicized through other public awareness initiatives of the organization. Secondly, the ASC is well-known as a trusted expert in the field of the asthma awareness building program, where by it passes knowledge on different related issues to the people. By delivering facts and insights of the Seja's Run, the ASC made more people aware of it. Moreover, the ASC was well aware about the event, its background and purposes. All the staff and volunteer member of the ASC therefore could build a sticky impression regarding the event among mass people. Finally, the ASC played the role of salesman as far as the issue of fundraising was involved. The Seja's Run has been taking place during the second week of May every year. Generally, the ASC starts contacting the prospective donors three-four months prior to the event and asks for sponsorships. Then the event committee that consists of the ASC and the AATFS outline the flow of activities and follow-up procedures. Since the year 2006, the number of participants and donors has increased steadily. The AATFS and ASC are using their communication channels and stakeholders bases for making the event more well-known. There is an organizing committee of the event who works throughout the year. However, the scope of the event has not been fully utilized for 5 major reasons:

1. Seja's Run has been branded as a TFS event only;
2. The event was not promoted outside local community in TFS area and the communication channels were very limited;
3. The event concentrated only on run rather having education and awareness programs;
4. The Seja's Run was not sponsored with any significant budget to expand the activities;
5. The event lacked the necessity of sponsorship packages customized to different need, want and capabilities of sponsors.

After reviewing the agenda of previous years planning and activities, it was found that the communication channels were not used properly for reaching the target. From the ASC's part Seja's Run has been promoted through the website, NAPA member forum, e-newsletters and by some other word-of-mouth communication channels. Though the number of participants and donors has increased over years, it has been found that in recent years people are more interested to pay by online. The Seja's Run website includes a link of online donation. In the year 2009, about half of the donation came through the online grants. Over the next years, the ASC and AATFS are planning to enrich the event through:

- A. Increasing the number of participants
- B. Making the event familiar beyond the local community
- C. Promoting through print, electronic and web channels
- D. Soliciting more funds from corporations
- E. Gradually converting the run to a marathon event by inviting professional runners.

The ASC and AATFS are working together for developing an extensive action plan to expand the event in upcoming years. The ASC is working on developing a corporate sponsorship package for fundraising which in turn will be helpful in promoting the event.

### Major Research Findings

We interviewed 5 major donors regarding their donation practices. The interviewees were selected by the ASC officials based on the previous donations and significance of commitments. Although the interviewees were not true corporate by nature, the current practice in the ASC categorizes all organizational giving as the 'corporate donation'. Therefore, the public companies were identified as corporations in this report. We used the telephone interviewing method in this purpose. The interviews were taken during 27-30 July, 2009. Each interview lasted between 8-10 minutes on average. Notes on the interviews were taken immediately. As we followed a structured pattern of questions, after all interviews were taken we looked for similarities and differences in donor's comments. Thereafter, we did our further analyses. The demographics of the interviewed sponsors were as follows:

Donor ID	Type of business	Business experience	Operational area	Supporting the Seja's Run
Donor - 1	Architecture company	40 years	Ontario	3 years
Donor - 2	Steel industry	17 years	Ontario, Alberta	4 years
Donor - 3	Professional services	30 years	GTA	2 years
Donor - 4	Professional services	35 years	GTA	2 years
Donor - 5	Textile industry	20 years	Ontario, BC	2 years

All of these respondents were sponsors for Seja'sRun over the previous years. During the interview we concentrated on three broad issues:

- A. Experience with Seja's Run donations
- B. General charity practices
- C. Future sponsorship preferences for Seja's Run

We found that the donors shared some common views on general charities and on the Seja's Run event. However, they held quite different views on some aspects too. For the sponsorship package requirement, we found that donors are diversified with their need and demand. The outcomes of the interview are as follows:

### **01. Reasons for Sponsoring the Seja's Run**

All of the interviewees informed that they support the Seja's Run because of some personal relationships and connections with the people of event committee. The two major connectors in this aspect are: the AATFS and the ASC. Almost the entire respondents mentioned that they got to know about the event from their friends for the first time. Even the sponsorship decision was motivated by those friends. For example, donor-2 mentioned that, *"One of my friends had been a student of TFS and we are still very close in personal and professional relationships. Last year he came to me and asked for sponsorship supports for Seja'sRun. I was delighted to know about the event and then I decided to support the program"*. In the same way, donor-5 told that he had been personally known to some representatives of both the ASC and the TFS. Therefore, he was significantly motivated to donate to the Seja's Run. Moreover, none of the respondents was motivated by any communication material of the event; even those donors could not recall any communication material that they had seen on the Seja's Run event. In a word, the personal relationship with involved people was the main motivation for sponsoring the event. It is also important to note that the Seja'sRun event is small in exposure and reach. Therefore, the solicited amount is moderate compared to that asked by large-scale events, and thus the fund for Seja's Run is easier to get approved from the corporations.

### **02. Future Involvement with the Event**

Next, we asked the donors regarding their plan for future involvement in Seja'sRun. All of the respondents showed their heartiest interest to continue the donation for the event in upcoming years. They felt it reasonable from the personal and corporate view-point to support the event. However, when we asked about more involvement like participating in the event by sending volunteer supports, by being member of the organizing committee or being a channel to promote the event; most of the respondents were uncertain regarding providing support beyond financial sponsorships. For instance, donor-2 mentioned that he does not have any interest to be a part of the event committee and moreover he does not have enough human resources to send as volunteer supports. By contrast, donor-4 showed her curiosity to get more involved in the event. The interviewee mentioned, *"I have been financially supporting the event for last two years. Moreover, I went to the run and followed the activities physically. I feel that if I can join the organizing committee as a volunteer I can give my ideas to make the event more successful. However, it will depend on how the organizers evaluate my opinions"*. On the other side, donor-3, other than providing financial supports, had been planning to join the event next year as a runner. However, we strongly suggest that the corporate donors

should be included in the feedback session and the post-run review meetings. After all, donors' satisfaction is so vital to develop and maintain the relationship-fundraising.

### **03. Expansion Opportunities of the Event**

As mentioned earlier, Seja's Run is a small-scale activity that involves only a certain community. Considering the significance of the asthma awareness and capitalization ability of the event, the AATFS and the ASC are exploring the possibility of expanding the event. Therefore, we were curious to know donor's opinion in this aspect. As usual, most of the donors were optimistic regarding the event expansion. Donor-1 mentioned that if the possibilities exist, the organizers should consider the expansion of the event, but he (donor-1) did not have any idea how this could be implemented. Donor-2 had the same opinion as that of the donor-1. However, donor-5 was concerned about the image of the event. He was aware that over the decade the event became a part of the TFS's annual activity lists. Besides, the run was promoted mostly among students, parents and local communities near about the TFS area. Though donor-5 expected that the event could be expanded to more people he was not certain how this could be done. Interestingly, donor-4 suggested expanding the program within certain geographic location and relevant communities; such as other French schools, adult education center, and French learning centers and so on. Donor-4 added, "...such a community based program cannot be expanded significantly overnight. The scope is not there. However, I think that if the organizers can invite people from other French school and communities, surely Seja's Run will get more exposures". We think donor-4's opinion is a valuable issue to consider regarding the future expansion of the event. However, it should be taken into account that the Seja's Run has been an exclusive event to the TFS for years. Therefore, expanding the event needs to be discussed with and acknowledged by the stakeholders of the TFS and AATFS.

### **04. Business through Philanthropy**

As we found earlier in the analysis by Porter and Kramer (2002) that the issue of pure philanthropy and pure business in corporate giving became a decisive factor over recent years. Therefore, we were interested to know about the corporation's business generating possibilities from sponsorship in Seja's Run. Again, the issue of limited exposure was raised by the donors. For example, donor-2 mentioned, "*I am supporting the event only as a pure philanthropy. I do not believe that my company's target customers are coming to the Seja'sRun*". In the same way, donor-1 mentioned that business was not a major concern for sponsoring this event. It might make his corporation a bit familiar to other people only. Donor-4 considered the sponsorship as a charity only. However, there are some prevailing opportunities and scopes for corporate promotion to some extent. Currently, companies are being promoted through the logos and trademarks in t-shirts, banners, booths, souvenirs and prizes. Donor-3 was not sure whether his company could get business through supporting the Seja'sRun, but he suggested expanding the promotional scopes in future so that corporations get it worthy to sponsor and thereby can maximize the exposures.

### **05. General Charity Experience**

The donors we interviewed are mostly experienced in donation practices and have been sponsoring public awareness events for long. All of the sponsors mentioned that they have been donating in Canadian charities for last 10-30 years. They also believe that corporate donations increase the image of their company and provide competitive edge over competitors. Because of the long-term involvement in donation practices, the donors can effectively evaluate the sponsorship proposals and make the decision thereby. As mentioned by donor-2, *“My corporations have been sponsoring about thirty projects each year, but we get proposals from non-profit organizations ten times more than we ultimately support”*. This clearly depicts that non-profit organizations should be well documented with proposal while soliciting funds from corporations.

### **06. Annual Sponsorships**

All of the interviewed donors have been donating on average 10-25 events every year. The number of sponsorship is highly correlated with the year of donation experience. The longer they are in the donation practices the more sponsorship proposal they receive each year and thereafter grant the donations. Most of the donors do not have specific budget for sponsorships. However, depending on the quality of the sponsorship proposal corporations utilize the best scopes toward exposures and business. For instance, donor-4 told that, *“My policy is to donate 5% of my annual budget into charities; however I look for the trustworthiness of the events conducted by the non-profit organizations”*. On the other hand donor-1 stated that his annual budget for donation is about \$30,000, whereas donor-2 mentioned, *“We do not have any fixed budget for sponsorships; it depends on the quality of the proposal submitted by the fundraisers. After evaluation, if we find the proposal satisfactory, we grant the fund immediately”*. However, throughout the research, we found that mostly corporations are significantly motivated by the personal relationship with fundraisers. Therefore, non-profit organizations should focus on building, maintaining and capitalizing relationships with prospective corporations.

### **07. Preferred Sponsorship Package**

Although donors were influenced by the relationships and connections with the people who solicited the fund, it is also vital that they evaluate the sponsorship proposal and package for official approval and monitoring and evaluation purposes. When we asked donors what they would like to see in a sponsorship package for Seja’s Run event most of the donors mentioned that currently they are not solicited for funds through a sponsorship package. Instead, someone from the event committee, who is known to them, requests for certain funds and offer some promotion features which is not organized to note officially. Donor-1 wanted to see the event details and promotional opportunities in a sponsorship package. Whereas donor-2 was more concerned about the organizing committee, *“I would like to know the people or institutions behind the event. I feel confident when I find well established organizations are involved in a project”*. Donor-5 mentioned that a sponsorship package should include details of the organizers, the event itself, past record, event planning, location, sponsorship tiers and sponsorship policies. Donor-3 wanted to see the scopes of exposures and audiences in addition.

### **Implications for non-profit organizations in Bangladesh**

The above mentioned findings from ASC for Seja's Run event create a benchmark for similar non-profit organizations. To build a sustainable donor-sponsor relationship, the outcomes are vital for non-profit organizations in other countries as well, especially in Bangladesh, where non-profit organizations do not practice notable marketing communications. As a good number of non-profit organizations are working toward social betterment and community welfare in developing countries, the regular inflow of financial supports, including trust and faith from donors, are vital for smooth operation and survival. Therefore, before approaching a prospective donor or sponsor, a non-profit organization should take the following issues into consideration as a guideline for better performance.

#### **01. Introduction of the Organizers**

Sponsors are eager to know about the organizations and key persons who are involved in the event. This provides the ground for trust and confidence for donation. The new and potential donors will also get the chance to check the organizer's background from website or other available sources. Therefore, the non-profit organizations should provide a brief history of itself, mission, vision, key functional areas, audience type, business location, contact details, etc.

#### **02. Briefing on the Event**

There should be precise details of the event mentioning the background, goals and objectives of the event. The sponsors would like to get the information on the frequency of the event, the target audience of the event, past activities, future plans and actions. If the corporations know about the target audience of the event, nature of the activities, participating organizations and other details, they (corporations) can evaluate how much the event aligns with the goals and objectives with the corporation itself.

#### **03. Sponsorship Options and Spots**

It is evident that corporations hold different capabilities and willingness to sponsor certain event. As we have seen in the budget issue of donations, corporations have different viewpoint on donation, grants and sponsorships. Corporations look for suitability in the sponsorship options. They evaluate the amount of fund asked for and the scope of exposures together, and then make the final decision on sponsorship. Although in case of pure philanthropy corporations are not much curious about promotional exposures, in the current competitive business environment the corporate think-tanks are under pressure to capitalize on the activities that show the signs of Corporate Social Responsibility. After all, those philanthropic involvements would give competitive edge in marketing warfare.

#### **04. Guidelines of the Sponsorship**

The sponsorship package should include clear guideline for sponsorship. It should include a clear guideline for donation and contact details. There should be e-mail contacts, postal address and telephone number for further enquiries.

### **05. Activity Details**

There should have a clear event calendar that would include – registration process, refund policy, souvenir pickup, run-routes, location details, and food and drink facilities and so on. A well-organized event plan in sponsorship package will surely influence corporations to make donation.

### **06. Sponsorship Form**

When the corporations make final decision on donation, the next step would be to contact with the organizing committee and send consent on sponsorship. This should be a clearly defined stage of communication. The sponsorship package should include a sponsorship agreement form with all financial procedures, policies and specific details.

### **07. Post-event Report**

In traditional marketing, experts emphasize on consumer-orientation and long term relationship. In case of non-profit organization the fact of relationship cannot be ignored as well. In so many cases, the non-profit organizations do not report to the sponsors after the event and the sponsors feel unwillingness to support that non-profit further. Therefore, post-event report plays a key role in building a positive and sustainable relationship with sponsors.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we conducted analysis on the non-profit sector in Canada, the activities of the ASC and the prevailing scopes of the Seja's Run event as far as the donation practice is concerned. It became evident throughout the study that the competitiveness in the non-profit sector, which has further been magnified by the issue of corporate social responsibility, is heading toward a new direction whereby corporate donation needs clear goals and objectives to be granted. Even with limited exposures, the Seja's Run event of the Asthma Society of Canada holds significant scopes and opportunities for future expansions. To make the event familiar to more audiences and getting more funds for asthma research and public awareness program – it is vital to target more corporations for funds. It is also acknowledged that corporations in recent years are capitalizing more and more on their philanthropic activities, the current personal persuasive strategy for fundraising needs to be enriched through an official sponsorship package proposal. The sponsorship package should have customized options to get aligned with corporation's business nature, donation ability and other preferences. Moreover, we strongly believe that under the prevailing environment and scopes, the non-profit organizations in Bangladesh can take the Seja's Run project as a model and design the sponsorship communication strategy for building a sustainable donor-sponsor relationship.

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