ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL: INSIDE UNICREDIT’S SPONSORSHIP STRATEGY

European banking giant sees across-the-board results from its sponsorship of the UEFA Champions League.

How does a banking giant with operations in 22 countries support a new master brand? For UniCredit, S.p.A., the answer is sponsorship.

Looking to unify its vast holdings under a common name, the Milan, Italy-based company in 2007 rolled out a master brand that saw it move from a “house of many brands” to a “branded house.”

The goal: To unify, endorse and enhance its local brands and allow each bank to be perceived as part of a leading Pan-European financial institution.

To support the strategy and generate excitement at the local level, UniCredit in 2009 signed a three-year partnership with the UEFA Champions League.

UniCredit in 2011 extended the tie through 2015 after generating the following results in the first two years of the partnership:

- More than five billion impressions
- Six percentage point increase in aided brand awareness
- Steady improvement in propensity to buy
- Effective sales conversion and leads
- Extensive media exposure from UEFA Champions League Trophy Tour
- 170 percent net return on comparable sponsorship costs

“The results were really good, so we decided to prolong the sponsorship,” said Daniele Penna, UniCredit’s head of strategic sponsorships.

Supporting The Master Brand Through Soccer

UniCredit in 2008 began to search for an international sports marketing platform to promote its new brand. The company opted for sponsorship due to the marketing medium’s growing popularity, the opportunity to tap into key passion points and assets that could be used for national and local activation platforms.
“A decision was made not to use a traditional advertising campaign. We decided to associate with a strong, well-known brand that could help position us in the right mindset with our end customers,” said Penna.

To make sure it was partnering with the right property, UniCredit established a sponsorship filter to vet opportunities. The goal: To identify properties that could provide a point of differentiation from competitors and help support the bank’s brand-building efforts through highly visible and relevant brand messages.

UniCredit established the following framework for the search:

- Build awareness and consideration across Europe and charge up the brand’s international image.
- Reach affluent men and women in the 18-29, 30-49 and 50-to 69 age groups
- Gain reach in UniCredit’s 22 European markets
- Access national and local activation platforms

The search led to soccer, a sport that could build brand awareness and consideration among all target groups and markets across Europe.

SPONSORSHIP FILTER RESULTS

Conclusion:

Sport definitely offers better opportunities for a European sponsorship strategy in terms of awareness than cultural or social topics.

Platform check:

Football is the most promising platform according to the interests of the relevant target groups in the representative markets of UniCredit.

Property check:

UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League are the strongest and most continuous football properties in Europe and highly designated to achieve the objectives of the UniCredit European sponsorship strategy.

International relevance of several topics and fit to the target group

- Target group affinities to platforms within selected topic
- International capability of platforms (multi-market relevance)
- Brand fit

- Available properties, first cost estimation
- Comparison of properties
- Recommendation

Source: UniCredit/ajoint.comunication
“The conclusion was that no other sport meets the requirements of UniCredit’s pan-European strategy than soccer,” said Penna.

UniCredit then set out to explore specific properties, with two organizations coming to the fore: The UEFA Europa League and the UEFA Champions League.

While the Europa League has a strong presence in Eastern Europe, the league is perceived as a second-tier property behind the UEFA Champions League, said Penna.

“We want to associate our brand with the best of the best on the ultimate stage.”

In addition to aligning UniCredit with perception drivers such as professional, premium and European across nearly every age and income segment, the UEFA Champions League affords tangible impact in terms of continuity (10 months a year), frequency (146 matches and 17 match-week) and TV coverage, he said.

Another benefit: The UEFA Champions League provides a Pan-European marketing platform that can be activated at the local level.

Since UniCredit’s marketing footprint did not exactly align with the UEFA Champions League’s primary markets, the bank modified the sponsorship package to support its awareness and brand-building objectives in Central and Eastern Europe, a region where although local soccer clubs may not be as great as the likes of Chelsea and Barcelona, the popularity of the UEFA Champions League as a top continental tournament was high and growing.

Specifically, the bank gained a greater TV presence in its 22 markets in exchange for giving back TV rights in the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Greece and other European countries where it has limited or no presence.

From Brand-building To Product Sales
While UniCredit initially partnered with the UEFA Champions League to build awareness of its master brand, it now uses the tie to drive consideration and product sales.

For example, UniCredit this year added a new asset to its sponsorship package: The right to produce the official UEFA Champions League Match Coin. The bank leverages the asset to offer customers and prospects the opportunity to hand the coin to the referee prior to the official toss.

“It offers tremendous power in terms of activation,” said Penna, noting that local markets can use to asset in product-specific promotions.

THREE EXAMPLES OF LOCAL MARKET ACTIVATION
UniCredit provides tools and assets that local markets can use to activate the UEFA Champions League sponsorship and support their specific marketing objectives.

Below, three examples of local market activation:

Romania: “Loan 11” product campaign.
Objective: Boost loan volume
Playing on the number of players on a soccer team, UniCredit ran a promotion that entered consumers who took out a loan into a grand prizing drawing. The team of 11 winners received the entire loan line at disbursement.

Slovakia: “Champions package” product campaign.
Objective: Acquire new customers
UniCredit’s Slovakia bank ran a campaign to promote a “Champions package” that featured a co-branded credit card with an exclusive UEFA Champions League design. The bank promoted the product through a raffle that dangled tickets to the 2010 UEFA Champions League Final in Madrid.

UniCredit ran the promotion in conjunction with MasterCard, the official credit card of the UEFA Champions League.

Germany, Austria and Italy: “Take a Ticket” raffle
Objective: Drive traffic to UniCredit.com, generate leads, collect data for follow-up marketing and present the bank as an innovative, international company
The “Take a Ticket” raffle offered tickets to UEFA Champions League matches to customers and non-customers. UniCredit ran the promotion in the first and second UEFA Champions League seasons; the bank touted the promo through digital, print, PR, point of sale and other channels.
UniCredit also hosts customers and prospects at the UEFA Champions League Trophy Tour, a road show designed to bring soccer content to the local level. “The benefits of becoming a UniCredit customer is not only about getting tickets to a final match, but having special access to the Trophy Tour,” said Penna.

UniCredit also uses the Trophy Tour and other assets to drive branch traffic and product sales. For example, the bank distributes coupons at Trophy Tour stops that consumers can use to request the exclusive UEFA Champions League prepaid card at local branches. Consumers that purchase and load 100 euro onto the card are entered into a sweeps dangling two tickets to the 2013 Final in London.

Given the affinity soccer fans have to the online world, social media plays a major component in UniCredit’s communication strategy. The platform centers on www.unicredit.eu/champions, a site that offers information on the sponsorship, league news, results and other content.

The online platform also includes banners on UniCredit corporate and affiliate web sites, banners on UEFA.com, a Facebook page and a dedicated YouTube channel.

UniCredit also activates the tie with local marketing campaigns, customer hospitality and corporate social responsibility programs.

Source
UniCredit S.p.A., Tel: 39-02-886-282-36
MOBILE PAYMENT PROVIDERS EXPAND SPONSORSHIP PORTFOLIOS

Mobile payment providers increase use of sponsorship to reach B2C and B2B targets.

The growing adoption of mobile payment is driving a new wave of sponsorship activity.

As previously reported in IEG SR (“Hot Category: Mobile Payment Providers” 08.15.2011), e-commerce services, credit card issuers, telcos and other types of companies are increasingly entering the mobile payment fray, with many using sponsorship to promote their goods and services.

In short, consumers can use the technology to make purchases with cell phones, tablets and other mobile devices. On the flip side, the technology offers merchants a low-cost alternative to point-of-sale terminals and other pricey equipment.

Most sponsorship activity in the category is focused on music, a platform that draws young, tech-savvy consumers and other early adopters.

Recent deals include PayPal and the Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival in San Francisco; Square and MusicfestNW in Portland, Ore.; and, more recently, Isis and the Nov. 2-4Fun Fun Fun Fest in Austin, Texas.

And the number of deals should increase as mobile payment grows in popularity. The transaction value of worldwide mobile payments will surpass $171.5 billion this year, a 61.9 percent increase from 2011, according to Gartner, Inc.
The information technology research and advisory firm expects the number of mobile phone payment users to total 212.2 million this year, up from 160.5 million in 2011. Gartner expects mobile payment users to total 448 million by 2016.

Other players in the category include Google, Inc. (Google Wallet), Intuit Inc. (GoPayment), MasterCard, Inc. (PayPass) and Visa (V.Me),

**Case Study: PayPal and Outside Lands**

The eBay Inc. subsidiary this year partnered with Outside Lands to accomplish three primary objectives: educate consumers about its payment service, build relations with merchants and enhance the festival experience.

The company activated the tie with an on-site experiential area that offered mobile device recharging stations, a convenience store and other amenities. Consumers that visited the store could use PayPal to make purchases.

PayPal also used the tie to build relations with merchant partners. For example, Jamba Juice Co. sold smoothies and snacks in the branded area. The retailer this year began accepting PayPal at its brick-and-mortar stores.

Merchants used PayPal Here mobile card readers to accept payment, said Chad Issaq, executive vice president of business development & partnerships with Superfly Marketing Group, the marketing arm of festival owner Superfly Presents.

Attendees that visited the PayPal tent also could enter the Pin it & Win It sweeps that dangled a $500 gift card, branded sunglasses and other prizes. Attendees entered the sweeps by entering a four-digit number onto a PayPal PIN pad.

PayPal also activated the tie with a bracelet promotion that dangled same-day VIP instant upgrade tickets. The upgrades were distributed by a roving team of brand ambassadors who gave the tickets to attendees wearing the bracelets.

PayPal played up the safety of its service with on-site lockers where attendees could store their belongings or purchases. The company charged $5 for a medium locker and $10 for a large locker, with all proceeds donated to charity.

The company touted the sponsorship through a dedicated Web site that offered information on its mobile payment service. Consumers that visited the site also could sign up for PayPal to make purchases at the festival.

PayPal replaced American Express Co., which sponsored the festival last year on behalf of its Serve mobile payment service.

**Sources**

eBay Inc., Tel: 408/376-7400
Superfly Marketing Group, Tel: 212/375-9652
SPONSOR PROFILE

NO EXTRA BAGGAGE: SAMSONITE GEARS UP FIRST MUSIC SPONSORSHIP

Luggage maker uses music to build credibility among 18-to-22-year-old.

Although it is widely known for suitcases and toiletries bags, many consumers don’t typically associate the Samsonite brand with backpacks and other casual bags.

Hoping to change that thinking, Samsonite Corp. will soon make its first foray into the music space. The company will present Bonnaroo365, a 15-stop music tour produced by the organizers of the Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival.

The tour—co-headlined by White Denim and Maps & Atlases—will kick off Oct. 24 in Lawrence, Kan. and wrap Nov. 11 in Austin, Texas.

The luggage maker is using the tie to support the Samsonite Tough Tour, a two-year-old event marketing program designed to promote Samsonite backpacks to 18-to-22-year-olds. The company uses the program—which includes an armored car, obstacle course and other activities—to engage consumers and tout product attributes of toughness, durability and innovation.

Samsonite demonstrates those attributes by integrating backpacks into the event experience. For example, contestants wear Samsonite backpacks while competing in the obstacle course and other on-site activities.

The luggage maker is using Bonnaroo365 to enhance the event marketing program.

“We felt the association with Bonnaroo gives us more credibility and tremendous media exposure,” said Stephanie Goldman, Samsonite’s director of marketing and communications.

Samsonite played up an affiliation with music prior to striking the deal. For example, the company touted its backpacks as “The Only Thing to Survive the Music Festival Unaltered” on marketing collateral.

Samsonite will host the Tough Tour in each Bonnaroo365 market. Boston-based AMP Agency manages and activates the program.

In addition to the music stops, the tour visits college campuses, spring break events and Samsonite retailers.
Outside of music, Samsonite focuses on events and pro sports teams located near its North American headquarters in Mansfield, Mass. For example, the company last year partnered with the Head of the Charles Regatta, an event it activates with the Samsonite Tough Tour.

Samsonite also sponsors the NBA Boston Celtics and NFL New England Patriots. The Patriots tie affords “Make Your Case”—branded content on Patriots.com and the right to host the Tough Tour at training camp.

Source
Samsonite Corp., Tel: 508/851-1400
ABOUT IEG

IEG leads the way in sponsorship solutions. With over 30 years providing insights, evaluation, and guidance, our teams bring unparalleled perspective and proven methodology to every challenge.

We partner with top brands and properties to create fresh strategies, evaluate opportunities and maximize results. Our clients rise above competitors, meaningfully engage audiences and achieve lasting impact.

A unit of WPP’s GroupM, IEG is connected to specialty sibling communications companies in media, digital and activation. GroupM is the leading global media investment management operation that also serves as parent company to WPP media agencies including Maxus, MEC, MediaCom, and Mindshare.

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