

Ambush Marketing Landscape In India: Innovative Practice Or Parasitic Marketing?

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INTRODUCTION

The inevitability of competition in business is aptly exemplified in Gause's principle of competitive exclusion: '*no two species can coexist that make their living in the identical way*'. The increasing empirical evidences of ambush marketing across the world proves that competition in business need not be necessarily evolutionary, but is rapidly turning out to be revolutionary in nature. The recent incidents of Samsung ambushing the marketing events of Nokia in India resemble the legendary cola war fought across the global market. Though, initially, the ambush marketing landscape in India was limited to the national and international sporting events, but the recent ambush act of Samsung against Nokia signals the widening landscape of ambush marketing in India, and necessitates the debate on whether it is an innovative practice of marketing, or an unjustified case of parasitic marketing in the minds of marketers and academic researchers.

This paper analyses the origin and evolution of ambush marketing in India, and evaluates the series of activities considered to be as the act of '*Ambush Marketing*'. This paper also compares the global and Indian scenarios in the incidents and practices of ambush marketing and the available legal frameworks to counter this phenomenon. Finally, the paper offers suggestions for the marketers to defend themselves against the acts of ambush marketing within the perimeters of the legal landscape in India. In order to study and analyze the empirical evidences of ambush marketing in India and abroad, the present paper covers the most important incidents of ambush marketing from the period of 1984 to 2012.

THE PHENOMENON OF AMBUSH MARKETING: ORIGIN AND GROWTH

The humongous growth in advertising and official sponsorship of the global sports extravaganza coincided with the origin and growth of ambush marketing in both the global and Indian scenario. The reason being sponsorship of global events often give the sole rights to the sponsors to advertise their products in an uncluttered scenario, and offer a much more effective and better alternative to mass media advertising. As the popularity of sponsorship of global events increased along with its real and perceived benefits, the competition for getting these coveted rights resulted in higher bidding, more exclusivity, and increased disappointment amongst the competitive bidders. Ambush marketing thus arose when companies that were formerly able to associate themselves with certain high-profile events such as the Olympics became excluded from official sponsorship deals, either by way of increased costs or category exclusivities (Crow and Hoek, 2004).

Historically, the first incident of ambush marketing can be linked to the 1984 Olympic Games, where Fuji of Japan won the official sponsorship rights for the event against its arch rival, Kodak of USA. Undeterred, Kodak turned the tables against Fuji by getting the sponsorship of ABC network's broadcast of the Olympic Games and became the "official film" of the US track team. If Fuji played the role of a victim of ambush marketing in the 1984 Olympic Games, it took its revenge by playing a spoilsport to Kodak in the 1988 Olympic Games, where Kodak had won the rights for the event sponsorship. Irrespective of Kodak being the official sponsor of the event, Fuji aggressively pursued its own advertising campaign by promoting the sponsorship of the U.S. swimming team. The other famous incident of ambush marketing involved the Cola giants like Coca-Cola and Pepsi in the 1990 Football World Cup, where Coca-Cola won the worldwide official sponsorship rights against Pepsi. Unmoved and undeterred, Pepsi stole the limelight from Coca-Cola by sponsoring the high profile Brazilian soccer team (Falconer, 2003).

The widening landscape of ambush marketing even forced sport accessories giants like Nike and Adidas to confront each other on the occasion of the Olympic Summer Games of 2000. Nike was the official clothing supplier for the Australian Olympic team in 2000, but Adidas ambushed the event and stole the limelight from Nike by being the

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individual sponsor of Ian Thorpe, the champion swimmer of Australia. At the 1994 Winter Olympics, American Express, which had been replaced as an official sponsor by Visa, marketed itself worldwide with the motto: “*If You Are Traveling to the Lillehammer, You'll Need a Passport, but Don't Need a Visa.*” (Meenaghan, 1994). On the other occasion of the 1992 Winter Olympics, McDonalds was the official sponsors of the U.S. team, yet, Wendy's featured Kristi Yamaguchi, an Olympic champion figure skater, in its advertising (Jensen, 1995). During the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, Nike held press conferences for Olympic athletes it sponsored and displayed large murals of the members of the US basketball team on buildings in Barcelona, even though they were not the official sponsors (Lyberger and McCarthy, 2001).



In the Indian landscape, the first popular case of ambush marketing was witnessed in the 1996 Cricket World Cup, which highlighted this novel concept in India. During the 1996 World Cup, although Coca-Cola was the official sponsor of the tournament, Pepsi ambushed the campaign by coming up with the tagline “*Nothing Official About It*”. The other interesting incident in the Indian landscape of ambush marketing involved the top domestic airliners. Jet Airways came up with an ad campaign saying, “*We've Changed!*”. To ambush the campaign, Kingfisher airlines came up with “*We've made them change*”, which was further ambushed by Go Airways saying, “*We've Not Changed. We are Still the Smartest Way to Fly*” (Vadhera & et al.). In 2003, the ICC World Cup was held in South Africa, where Philips (a non-sponsor) ran a marketing campaign offering its customers the chance to win travel to South Africa and also win tickets to watch matches, thereby suggesting that it was associated with the event (Kaur, Remfry, and Sagar, 2010). However, the latest war was between Hindustan Unilever's shampoo brand “Dove” and Procter & Gamble's shampoo brand “Pantene”. P&G launched its intriguing ad campaign for Pantene with the tagline “*A Mystery Shampoo. Eighty Percent Women Say it is better than anything else.*” A few days later and before P&G could launch the new Pantene, Hindustan Unilever ambushed the campaign by placing an adjacent hoarding with the tagline “*There is No Mystery. Dove is the No. 1 Shampoo.*”

A cursory glance at the Table 1 would help in understanding the changing landscape of ambush marketing in India and abroad, and the same reveals that the theater of action has not just been limited to the national and multinational sports events, but is entering into the mainstream of advertising wars amongst the companies.

AMBUSH MARKETING: INNOVATIVE PRACTICE OR PARASITIC MARKETING?

Since developed, the topic of ambush marketing has captured the attention of both academic researchers and industrial managers. First, the debate between whether ambushing is a creative tactic or an unethical intrigue never stops. From

Table 1: Reported Incidents of Ambush Marketing In Chronological Order

Year	Event	Ambush Marketing Effort
1984	Summer Olympics (Los Angeles)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Fujifilm was the official sponsor; Kodak sponsored TV broadcast and the US track team. ❖ Converse was the official sponsor; Nike created murals near Los Angeles Coliseum featuring their sponsored track athletes.
1988	Summer Olympics (Seoul, South Korea)	Kodak was the official sponsor through the IOC; Fujifilm sponsored the Olympic Games through the Seoul Organizing Committee.
1992	Summer Olympics (Barcelona, Spain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reebok was the official sponsor; Nike sponsored press conferences with the US Basketball "Dream Team", and athletes sponsored by Nike (Michael Jordan for one) covered the Reebok logo with an American flag. ❖ Visa was the official sponsor; American Express ran ads correctly stating that visitors to Spain "Don't need a visa" .
1994	Winter Olympics (Lillehammer, Norway)	Visa was the official sponsor; American Express repeated their previous effort from 1992 with the advertising slogan "If you are traveling to Lillehammer, you will need a passport, but you do not need a Visa".
1996	Cricket World Cup (in India specifically)	Coca-Cola was the official sponsor; Pepsi countered with the advertising slogan "Nothing Official About It", got further exposure by flying hot air balloons near the venues with the Pepsi logo, and encouraged players who had endorsement deals with Pepsi not to go near Coke drink carts.
1996	UEFA Championships (England)	Umbro was the official sponsor; Nike purchased all poster space/advertising sites in and around Wembley Park tube station - actions that resulted in UEFA implementing policies to prevent ambushing by renting all advertising media within 1-3km radii of venues at future championships.
1996	Summer Olympics (Atlanta, Georgia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reebok was the official sponsor; Nike plastered their logo on billboards around the city, and on banners and merchandise handed out to people leaving public transportation headed to the Olympics. ❖ Reebok was the official sponsor; British athlete Linford Christie wore blue contact lenses incorporating the white Puma's logo in the center during a press conference before the 100m final.
1998	FIFA World Cup (France)	Adidas was the official sponsor of the tournament; Nike sponsored individual teams, including finalist Brazil.
2000	Summer Olympics (Sydney, Australia)	Ansett Air was the official sponsor; Qantas Airlines introduced a new advertising slogan "The Spirit of Australia" - which was very similar to the games slogan "Share the Spirit."
2002	Super Bowl (New Orleans, Louisiana)	More ambushing the event rather than an individual sponsor - Proctor and Gamble wanted to get its laundry detergent recognized in conjunction with the Super Bowl. Since they could not use the words "Super Bowl", they decided to have signage placed near the Louisiana Superdome that said "Because there are more than XXXVI (the roman numerals for that year's Super Bowl) ways to ruin your clothes. Enjoy the Big Game."
2002	Winter Olympics (Salt Lake City, Utah)	Anheuser-Busch was the official sponsor; Schirf Brewery, a local brewery, advertised on its delivery trucks during the Olympic Games as "Wasatch Beers - The Unofficial Beer. 2002 Winter Games"
2002	Boston Marathon	Adidas was the official sponsor; Nike has spray-painted "swooshes" past the finish line honoring the day of the race - not the race itself.
2004	Super Bowl (Houston, Texas)	Coors was the official sponsor; Near Reliant Stadium, Coors Light had a billboard that displayed the official NFL logo and gave the daily tally of the number of days to the Super Bowl - across the highway, a Miller Lite billboard touted the message "Our Super Parties, Our Beer" on top of a football and Texas-themed decal, but did not mention the Super Bowl.
2006	FIFA World Cup (Germany)	Budweiser was the official sponsor; Bavaria Brewery provided orange lederhosen to fans attending games - officials made them remove the lederhosen before entering the stadium - fans attracted enormous media attention by disrobing and watching the game in their underwear.
2007	Heineken Cup Rugby (Dublin, Ireland)	Heineken was the official sponsor; Guinness flew a branded balloon, tethered to a tree stump in a private garden, over the final of the tournament.
2008	Summer Olympics (Beijing, China)	Adidas was the official sponsor; Li Ning (iconic Chinese athlete) lit the torch at the Opening Ceremony by running around the rim of the stadium while tethered - spectators learnt that he owns a shoe company with the same name (which is well known in China).

Source : Compiled By The Author

the corporate perspective, how people think about ambush marketing mainly depends on who they are. Accordingly, the official sponsors of an event will accuse this practice, while their competitors who are not sponsors welcome this practice as a powerful marketing weapon. Besides, the event owners will do everything possible to protect their sponsors from ambush marketing in order to hold the sponsorship relationships. Despite the prevalence of ambush marketing in various countries, cutting across the business segments, hardly has there been a unanimous opinion on the ethical connotations of the practice. However, on the basis of ethical assumptions, the practice of ambush marketing is seen with negative connotations, but one should not forget that these ethical standards have got no basis in the court of law. As a result, many of the blatant acts of ambush marketing go unpunished, and on some occasions, may prove to be quite legitimate. The review of some of the interesting studies on the theme of ambush marketing would definitely clear the confusion and prejudices about the nature, practices, and methods of ambush marketing in India. Meenaghan (1994) was the one who first posed a tricky question of ambush marketing being an "Immoral or Illegal" practice and set the pace for the academic debate on the same. Conversely, Payne (1998) opined that ambush marketing is a pure case of immoral behavior, as it threatens the ability of event owners and official sponsors to sell events or recover investments made by them. Curthoys & Kendall (2001) defended the practice of ambush marketing by citing the example of Cathy Freeman's appearance in advertisements for both Telstra and Optus, where the former had official sponsorship rights, and the latter was an ambusher. Curthoys & Kendall are of the opinion that in order to escape from ambush marketing, the official sponsors should get into agreements with both individual and team sponsorships well before bidding for event sponsorships. McKelvey (1994), while defending the other forms of ambush marketing, noted that non-sponsors handing out coupons and caps to spectators, handing banners from the nearby tall buildings, running the 'good luck' and 'congratulations' ads, purchasing billboards around the venue, the use of temporary tattoos, or 'body billboards' on athletes are other legitimate forms of advertising. Sandier and Shani (1989) defined ambush marketing as a marketing practice by which "companies try to create the perception that they are associated with an event without actually being a sponsor". Cornwell and Maignan (1998) stated that although the practice of ambush marketing was considered suspicious or even illegitimate, it has involved into an acceptable marketing strategy over the years. Townley, Harrington and Couchman (1998) highlighted the dangers posed by ambush marketing and tried to develop a strategy to prevent the impact of ambush marketing by controlling the intellectual property, the event environment, and the event partners. McDaniel and Kinney (1998) designed an experimental manipulation to find out that ambushing can be effective and that consumers' recall of actual sponsors is fleeting, as well as that ambushers can benefit from purchasing media, which is already perceived and accepted by industries.

O'Sullivan and Murphy (1998) indicated that four ethical perspectives, including utilitarianism (which emphasizes on the consequences), duty-based ethics (which emphasizes on the intentions of the decision maker), stakeholder analysis (which examines the impact of a decision upon a wide range of individuals or groups), and virtue ethics (which places the focus on the person or organization, and not on the decision) can provide a framework for the debate on the ethics of ambush marketing. However, in practice, it would be unfair to accuse a company according to the consequences of coincidental ambushing if there is no real intention, while, on the other hand, whether there is a real intention of ambushing cannot usually be perceived.

In summary, there seems to be a deviation between researchers' and stakeholders' focus on ambush marketing: researchers tend to find out the nature of ambush marketing and the effectiveness of different ambushing tactics, while stakeholders tend to discuss how to prevent or react to these sort of actions. And it is very important for marketers to learn what researchers have found in ambush marketing to either design relevant strategies or better, to react to the impact of it; furthermore, it is of benefit for researchers to learn what issues marketers are concerned with, and what language they are using in the content of ambush marketing.

AMBUSH MARKETING LANDSCAPE IN INDIA: THE IMPERATIVE OF LEGISLATION

The reasons for the ambush marketing of companies are diverse, but the same can be clubbed under four main important factors explained as under. Firstly, the lifespan of an ambush marketing campaign is very limited and short as they just focus on certain international sports events like Olympics, World Cup, Super Bowl and the Commonwealth Games, etc., which are conducted once in a while - that too for a short period of time. Hence, it becomes difficult for

the event organizers and official sponsors to initiate any legal recourse to repulse any potential ambush marketing campaign. Secondly, the existing gaps in the legal and judicial landscape of a country gives encouragement for ambush marketing. Moreover, because of the gaping holes in the legal framework and the amount of time, resources, effort, money and energy needed for the relentless pursuit of the culprits makes it a distant possibility of punishment. Thirdly, the ambush marketing campaign is not designed and implemented by any amateurish or greenhorns of the marketing community, but are well crafted, designed and implemented by the marketing veterans who are seasoned and savvy enough to protect themselves against any legal recourse. Fourth and finally, the halfhearted attempts and reluctance of the event organizers to resort to any serious legal recourse sends an open invitation to the ambush marketers. The organizations involved in hosting and conducting of sporting events are reluctant to sue due to the fear of alienating the large corporations who although, not current sponsors, might want to sponsor the event in the future (Lipman, 1992). Irrespective of these reasons and legal loopholes, there are some cases which came to court to punish the offender of ambush marketing, but the defendants were successful in evading the liability of an ambush. But certain vigilant countries like Australia, England, New Zealand, Brazil, and Canada have initiated their own laws to deal with the increasing instances of ambush marketing. The details of the legal landscapes available in the various countries have been explained in the Table 2.

Table 2 : The Legal Landscape of Ambush Marketing In India and Abroad			
Sl. No	Name of the Country	Act/Law Passed	Legal Implications
1	South Africa	Trade Practices Act, 1976 (Section D) & The Merchandise Marks Amendment Act, 2002	No person, shall in connection with a sponsored event, make, publish, or display any false or misleading statement, communication or advertisement which represents, implies or suggests a contractual or other connection or association between that person and the event (Ironsides S., 2008). Defines 'event' and 'protected event' and authorizes the Minister of Trade and Industry to protect certain events.
2	Australia	Sydney 2000 Games (Indicia and Images) Protection Act, 1996 and New South Wales Olympic Arrangements Act, 2000. Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games Protection Act, 2005.	All these games specific laws were enacted to prevent ambush marketing and provide for clean games venues to equip Australia for future sporting and large marketing programmes. They also banned the unauthorized use of trademark that contains or consists of any of the marks of the Olympic motto, symbol, torch, and any other design related to the Olympics registered as an artistic work.
3	New Zealand	Major Events Management Act, 2007.	Prevention of the unauthorized commercial exploitation at the expense of either a major event organizer or a major event sponsor (Vassallo et al., 2005).
4	China	Protection of Olympic Symbols Relations Act, 2002.	Protects Olympic symbols and names, but also includes an anti-ambush marketing clause (Collett & Johnson, 2006).
5	England	London Olympic Games and Paralympics Games Act, 2006.	Controlling of trading and advertising in the vicinity of Olympic event and grants the exclusive rights to the official sponsors. This law also mentions that any person who is not authorized to make a representation that may create an association between that person or company and the London Olympic Games in the mind of the public will be in breach of the Act and is punishable by fine (Lacaz, 2007).
6	Brazil	Civil Code and the Industrial Property Law	Prohibits any act that may cause unlawful enrichment or unfair competition practice, which includes undue association of a non-sponsor to a sport or cultural event (Kamath, 2008).
7	Canada	Olympic & Paralympics Marks Act, 2010. (Bill c-47)	Ensuring protection of trademarks related to the Olympic Games and protection against certain misleading business associations.
Source: Compiled by The Author			

The prevalence of wide safety measures adopted by various countries across the continents showcases the imperative of adopting certain legal constraints against ambush marketing to prevent sabotaging the national and international events in a marketing war. An event of national and international scale remains a catalyst for invigorating economics and sports systems as well as tourism, thereby giving a huge impetus to the economic growth of a country. Moreover, with the increasing phenomenon of fiscal deficit of the countries, it becomes too difficult to conduct events of such scale with the public money. As India prepares to host multiple major international sporting events in the next few years, the controversial practice of “ambush” marketing will come under the scanner. Therefore, it becomes imperative to protect the commercial interests of the sponsors, who are literally the lifeblood of any national and international event. Moreover, it cannot be denied that sponsorship involves a commercial agreement between the company and the event organizers to promote their mutual interests, whereby in return for a financial contribution, the company is allowed to use their name in the various activities of the event. If the organizers are unable to put to rest the threat of ambush marketing, it shall scare sponsors away from such events in the future. Prospective sponsors must be able to trust the organizer and the environment in which the event is to be held. To ensure the sponsors' safety in this regard alone, special legislation focusing on specific events of national importance is justified. The eventual success of the law will reflect upon the success of events protected, and would foster an environment that promotes many more similar events in India. Importantly, if one is to reconcile the public interest with limits on freedom and curbs on creativity and innovation engendered by an anti-ambush marketing law, the protected event should not lose the spirit of staging in trying to enforce laws with hyper-technical precision (Wall, 2001).

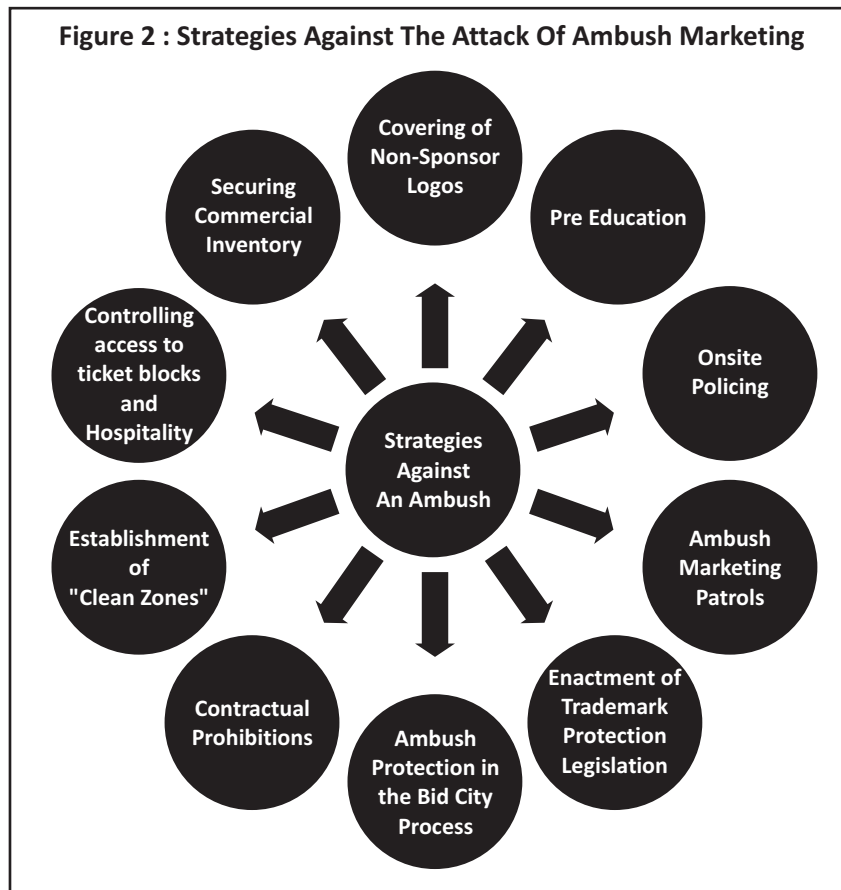
REPULSING OF AN AMBUSH : STRATEGIES AGAINST AMBUSH MARKETING

Irrespective of whether ambush marketing is right or wrong on ethical grounds, it becomes imperative to acknowledge that the sponsors are the lifeblood of any event, and have legal rights and ethical obligations to shareholders to maintain the salience of their brands during sports events. Being cornered between aggressive ambush marketers and due to the limited legal solace received from the courts, event organizers and corporate marketers have resorted to developing more effective sponsorship protection strategies. This sponsorship protection roadmap can be divided into ten overarching avenues, discussed in turn below :

1) Pre-Event Education: Many event organizers are implementing a proactive approach towards the experiment of ambush marketing through pre-event education and public relations initiatives implemented well in advance of the event. These initiatives are conceived to make sure that both consumers and companies involved in marketing understand the differences between official sponsors and ambush marketers, as well as the legal rights of the event organizer. This pre -event education imparts the details of the event to the target audience & the sponsors, by the way of press release, press conference & a small video clip which is released in the media. Other pre-event education measures used by more proactive event organizers include the production and dissemination of video news releases to the media, designed to generate stories about event organizers' intellectual property rights protection programs, as well as initiatives to publicize legal actions. Event organizers are also increasingly conducting “sponsor brand protection workshops” designed to educate sponsors about what they can do to assist in the ambush marketing protection process (McKelvey and Grady, 2008).

2) Ambush Marketing Patrols: No other anti-ambushing strategy is more effective than the onsite policing of the event venues to counter the unexpected threats of ambush marketing incidents. However, the flip side of this strategy is that an aggressive onsite policing may draw negative publicity to the event, sponsors and alienate the very fans whose presence and cooperation is very crucial for the success of an event. Hence, while aggressively patrolling the ambush marketing patrols, the event organizers need to be very much sensitive to these issues and should avoid any such unsavory incidents to protect the reputation of the organizers and the sponsors of the event.

3) Covering Non-Sponsor Logos: In order to avoid any such remote chances of being ambushed on the venue of the event, some of the organizers are going to greater lengths to remove the presence of any non-sponsors logos or identification in and even on nearby venues of the event. Though this strategy and task looks very cumbersome, but the prior securing of the strategic places of advertisements in and around the venue will help to implement this strategy.



4) Securing Commercial Inventory: The prior purchase of all available advertising space and commercial inventory in and around the venues is one of the most effective methods of deterring the prospective ambushers practiced all across the world. For example, before the Olympic Games in Athens, the organizers spent a small fortune in clearing the 10,000 billboards in and around Athens. Taking a cue from the organizers of the Athens Olympics, the organizers of the Beijing Olympics also adopted the same strategy of purchasing the entire available commercial inventory around the Olympic village.

5) Controlling Access To Ticket Blocks And Hospitality Opportunities: The denial of access to tickets and hospitality suites to the non-sponsors is one of the most popular strategies to counter the threat of ambush marketing. While implementing this strategy, the event organizers will prohibit the non-sponsors from purchasing large blocks of event tickets or suits and access to hospitality opportunities. However, the efficacy and success of the tactic depends on the market forces of demand and supply, as well as the operational logistics to implement the same.

6) Establishment of "Clean Zones": The establishment of "Clean Zones" through the legislations passed by the host city or government has been one of the most important strategies to adopt for countering the threats of ambush marketing. Under this strategy, the sponsors will pressurize the host cities or the governments to pass an ordinance to establish "clean zones" to protect the event organizers and their official sponsors from unauthorized businesses' ability to engage in ambush marketing.

7) Contractual Prohibitions In Participant Agreements: Another way in which event organizers have limited the potential for ambush marketing activity is through contractual prohibitions inserted in participant agreements. An often relied upon loophole by ambush marketers has been the commercial use of athletes with whom the companies have individual endorsement deals. These deals often conflict with the event's official sponsors. Event organizers have, however, become increasingly savvy in closing this loophole through language in participant agreements. In addition to the restrictions placed on participants and coaches, an increasingly common practice to combat ambush

marketing is the placement of restrictions on the spectators attending the event (NYC, 2012).

8) Ambush Protection In The Bid City Process: To successfully bid for the Olympic Games, a city needs to comply with the rules established by the IOC. Each city is thus required to provide its strategy for preventing ambush marketing. The city which is claiming to host the Olympic Games should honour the commitment that all signage on subways, buses, airports, transit platforms would be made available to the official sponsors from the four weeks preceding the games to the two weeks following (McKelvey & Grady, 2004) the games. Hence, event organizers and sponsors of the event can counter the threat of ambush marketing by seeking protection under the bid city process.

9) Enactment of Trademark Protection Legislation : An increasingly important tactic used to strengthen an event organizer's arsenal against ambush marketing is the passage of special trademark protection legislation by the host country or city. Such legislation is the result of conditions that are incorporated into an event organizer's documents dictating the terms under which a prospective country or city may be awarded the event. This tactic has been most often associated with host countries of Olympic Games. However, enacting special trademark legislation is not a phenomenon unique to the Olympic Games. In fact, it is now a common practice for organizers of major events to require appropriate ambush marketing protections to be implemented as a condition for hosting the event.

CONCLUSION

The present ambiguity and loopholes in the legal landscape in countries like India makes ambush marketing as a low-hanging fruit for the marketers, but poses formidable challenges to the event organizers and the official sponsors of the mega events. Though, the increasing incidences of ambush marketing have taught a new range of strategies and tactics to the event organizers and sponsors, they cannot totally rule out the possibility of being ambushed from the competitors. It would very unrealistic and naïve to assume that the above-mentioned strategies could be the “silver bullet” against the practices of ambush marketing, as some countries, which value the concept of free enterprise and their courts are likely to treat the practice of ambush marketing through a lens of “commercial pragmatism” or “innovative practice” and put a heavy onus on the event organizers to prove the illegality of the activities of ambush marketing. While the strategies examined in this article provide organizers of special sport events with some measure of sponsorship program protection against non - sponsors, the legal gray areas and practical loopholes that surround the practice of ambush marketing make it impossible for event organizers to ever entirely eradicate it. Ultimately, and ironically, it is the mere threat of ambush marketing that serves to benefit event organizers by keeping them vigilant in their efforts to protect the investments of their official sponsors.

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