


## Sponsorship policy

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Macedon Ranges Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land and waterways. Council recognises their living cultures and ongoing connection to Country and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. Council also acknowledges local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents of Macedon Ranges for their ongoing contribution to the diverse culture of our community.

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## 1. Purpose

Sponsorships support and enable Council to deliver a diverse range of infrastructure, events, and projects to meet the needs of the Shire's community.

The objective of this policy is to provide the community and Council officers with an understanding of how sponsorship activities can occur between Council and external organisations, by developing meaningful partnerships with other organisations.

This policy is intended to provide guidance for Council staff seeking or receiving sponsorship opportunities on behalf of Council.

It also provides guidance for requesting and reviewing responsible sponsorship naming rights requests from clubs and businesses, including temporary naming of assets and infrastructure at sporting grounds, for both applicants and Council officers.

This policy applies to financial and in-kind support received by Council provided by external organisations. Sponsorship support may also include State or Federal Government funding and/or components.

This policy does not cover capital grants, bequests, gifts or memorials, or philanthropic contributions received by Council. It is also not the intention of this policy to cover instances where Council is providing funds as a grant or bequest (where Council acts as "sponsor" by providing funding support) which imposes no obligations on the recipient, and which offer little or no rights or benefits to the provider. However, it does extend to arrangements where there is incoming support that is reciprocated by Council (through in-kind or other means).

## 2. Reasons for Policy

Council supports the use of appropriate sponsorship to make the most of financial and in-kind support for identified activities and events.

The community should see benefits of sponsorship arrangements through enhanced services, activities and events. Council must ensure that all sponsorship arrangements are restricted to appropriate activity, are transparent, and do not limit Council's ability to perform its duties impartially.

All sponsorship arrangements will be undertaken in a professional and co-ordinated manner, and in accordance with relevant Council policies.

Council recognises that a sponsorship policy is essential to:

- Ensure a uniform approach to sponsorship across Council including the opportunities and limitations.
- Provide a level of accountability and responsibility for sponsorship decisions.
- Establish Council's requirements for entering sponsorship arrangements or partnerships.
- Co-ordinate and maximise sponsorship and partnering opportunities.
- Ensure that the reputation, brand and public image of Council is protected.

- Ensure that risks are managed.
- Ensure a consistent, fair, impartial and transparent approach to sponsorship and the forming of partnerships.
- Provide clear guidelines on the nature of sponsors/partners that do not conflict with Council's vision and key objectives.

All sponsorship arrangements will be undertaken in a professional and co-ordinated manner, and in accordance with relevant Council policies and procedures.

### **3. Sponsorship opportunities and Sponsor classification**

Council will offer a variety of opportunities to local businesses, organisations, and commercial entities to sponsor Council activities, events and infrastructure, where appropriate. These sponsorships will be available as cash or in-kind, or a combination of both.

Sponsorships received by Council must:

- be registered and documented.
- be publicly reported.
- support the achievement of Council goals and objectives.
- be closely linked with key Council priorities.
- ensure value for money.
- demonstrate ethical, impartial and fair principles.
- increase effectiveness of Council's programs.
- be appropriate activity of Council, and not damage Council's reputation.
- not be a conflict of interest with Council's regulatory or other responsibilities.
- comply with the relevant Standing Directions of the Minister for Finance under the *Financial Management Act 1994*.
- provide Council with the opportunity to communicate key messages about Council's role and services to identified audiences.
- have an explicit end date.
- be evaluated on conclusion.

Approaches to potential sponsorship candidates should be consistent and uniform and ensure benefits that correspond with cash or in-kind value provided. Business Units within Council will determine appropriate financial levels of sponsorship available, in line with the nature of the asset, activity, or event being sponsored. Director discretion can be applied to ensure mutual benefit from any agreement and that Council is not undervaluing its assets or services.

Officers may determine the range and level, based on offers provided in response to approaches to potential sponsors. As a general guide, sponsors can be classified based on their *total* sponsorship contribution agreed with Council (and delivered) within a twelve-month period (although agreements may span more than a single year). This is *separate* to the partnership ratings that may be applied for individual activities or events (e.g., 'Gold' or 'Silver' partners for Shire seasonal festivals).

Classification of sponsors will range from 'Foundation' for the lowest level of contribution and benefit through to 'Tier 1', which would be the highest level of contribution and benefit.

Examples of Tier thresholds and benefits are set out in Appendix 1.

Sponsorship Tiers and the value of relevant financial contributions (or cash and equivalents) for classifying sponsors will be reviewed each year as part of the annual budget process, and published for the public.

Sponsorship candidates should also be classified in relation to Council activities or service areas (e.g., 'arts partner', or 'events partner', 'community partner', 'corporate sponsor'), to ensure effective management of agreements, provide the basis for assessing the distribution of partnerships for sponsors, understand which categories of sponsorship are the most successful, help to determine any exclusivity arrangements, and enable effective reporting.

Suggested categories include:

Infrastructure, Arts, Community, Seniors, Youth, Events, and Corporate.

These categories may be updated from time to time to reflect the operations of Council and the most effective way to group and manage Sponsors.

#### **4. Limitations on sponsorship agreements**

Council will not accept sponsorship from any individual, organisation or commercial enterprise which has a matter that directly impacts them currently pending decision by Council, or that:

- has an unrecovered or written-off debt with Council in the past two years.
- has not met the reporting requirements of previous Council agreements, including sponsorship agreements, grant agreements, or commercial contracts.
- is prohibited by law from participating in sponsorship arrangements.

Discretion may be applied for special circumstances impacting sponsor candidates with written-off debts or unmet reporting requirements. Applications for exceptions must be submitted to, and approved by, the CEO.

Council will not allow any sponsor to determine the content or interpretation of any program or service or give sponsors influence over Council or access to restricted information, and explicitly

prohibits any arrangements which would personally benefit individual Council employees, or their friends/family.

Protecting Council's reputation and its compliance role will be expressed clearly in the sponsorship agreement.

Terms will be included in agreements to ensure appropriate protection of Council's reputation and community interests, depending on the nature and scope of the sponsorship. For example, Council should include explicit terms to ensure that:

- its logo is not used without its specific permission/approval.
- the sponsorship agreement will not impede Council's ability to undertake its regulatory and compliance roles.
- Council continues to own the intellectual property developed.
- Council information obtained by the other party during the term of the sponsorship is kept confidential.

Sponsorship candidates may be conducting or seeking to conduct business or investing or seeking to invest within Macedon Ranges Shire Council in other ways. Provided that the sponsorship agreement does not provide a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest with a decision or determination of Council, sponsorship may proceed with candidates that have multiple interests.

## **5. Exclusivity**

Council may consider offering a guarantee for exclusivity of presence or profiling for sponsors based solely on the business category or type.

Exclusivity within a business category for a sponsor must be outlined in the sponsorship agreement. Generally, Council will endeavour to limit the number of sponsors per activity/event who represent similar business categories.

Sponsor benefits will be tailored to ensure differentiation and maximum exposure for each sponsor, with consideration given to the following priorities:

- Prioritising local suppliers.
- Ethical and environmental practices.
- Maintaining a clear order of process.
- Maintaining an effective register of sponsors and managing administrative overhead.

## 6. Management, monitoring and accountability

Opportunities to sponsor Council activities be offered to an appropriately broad field of potential sponsors.

There are two key methods of facilitating sponsorship for Council activities, events, and assets:

- Public or confidential EOI.
- Direct approach.

Either method may be used depending on the value and nature of the sponsorship arrangement being sought by Council.

Sponsorship processes should be transparent, providing potential sponsors with a genuine opportunity to do business with Council and where possible, ensure competition among sponsors to provide 'value for money' offers.

In determining whether to publicly advertise a sponsorship opportunity, consideration should be given to the following:

- The total value of the opportunity.
- The possible forms sponsorship could take.
- The likely number of applicants or competitors.
- Potential negative impacts of advertising on existing sponsorship arrangements or existing offers.
- Timeliness.

Where it is deemed inappropriate to publicly advertise a sponsorship opportunity, Council may consider making a direct approach to a number of potential sponsors. In those cases, the rationale for the decision should be documented, and the size of the field considered should reflect the scale of the potential sponsorship.

Where organisations solicit an unsolicited proposal to Council expressing an interest in sponsorship, consideration should be given to:

- Relevance to Council's needs.
- Whether the arrangement could provide better results with another party.
- Whether it is feasible to call for expressions of interest or to tender for the right to be a sponsor, and/or negotiate with multiple parties. This should consider any intellectual property or commercial-in-confidence material and ensure appropriate treatment.

The criteria for assessing the potential sponsors to partner with Council include:

- 1. Financial risk and stability:** Perform key checks on financial risks to ensure sponsors have a strong financial track record and the ability to provide the agreed benefits or funding.
- 2. Relevance to the community:** Consider sponsors that have a connection to the local community and whose products or services align with the needs and values of the community.
- 3. Reputation and brand image:** Partner with sponsors that have a positive reputation and brand image, as their association with the community can impact the perception of Council.
- 4. Community engagement:** Prioritise sponsors that are committed to engaging with and giving back to the community through their sponsorship.
- 5. Transparency and ethics:** Select sponsors that have transparent business practices and a commitment to ethical behaviour.
- 6. Alignment with Council's Vision and Objectives:** The sponsor and Council should share similar goals and objectives to ensure that the partnership aligns with the overall vision of Council.
- 7. Compliance with laws and regulations:** The sponsor should be compliant with all relevant laws and regulations.
- 8. Sponsorship history:** The sponsor's past sponsorship activities should be researched to understand how they've handled similar partnerships in the past and ensure that there is no record of issues of concern with the proposed sponsor.

Council officers must also carry out reasonable background checks on potential sponsorship partners to ensure that their full range of business interests and activities are understood, and any potential risks are identified. Records of these checks must be kept on the official system of record.

### **Sponsorship proposals and agreements**

All sponsorship proposals and agreements should be documented, and include:

- Clearly defined objectives, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) where appropriate.
- An evaluation strategy that measures the delivery of the objectives and/or KPIs.



- As assessment of the risks, costs and associated benefits.
- The nature, quantity and value of 'in-kind' benefits provided or received, identifying the full cost and benefit to Council.
- The terms and conditions of the arrangement, including the procedures for making payments and termination of the agreement by either party.
- The consequences for non-delivery of the benefits by each party to the sponsorship agreement.
- The end date for the arrangement.

## 7. Monitoring and reporting

Council will maintain a register of all sponsorships received, linking to the relevant proposal and/or agreement, and each coordinating Council department should produce a report at least once per year on the key sponsorships sought, new agreements, and the total value and cost to Council or sponsorships, including a summary evaluation of each in-force agreement.

Commercially sensitive information held in Council's register of sponsorships may be withheld or removed from public disclosure only on the basis that the information is sensitive and has the potential to cause detriment to the sponsoring organisation or individual to which it relates. This potential detriment must be weighed against the public interest, and information must be provided where Council is legally compelled to do so.

All sponsorship agreements should be evaluated against the objectives when concluded, and their outcomes documented. Evaluation of sponsorship agreements should also include review of adherence with the terms of the agreement and Council policies related to its implementation.

## 8. Ensuring, fairness and ethical behaviour during management

Staff involved in sponsorship management or decision making must maintain high levels of integrity in all official dealings including:

- Disclosure and resolution of conflicts of interest according to the Macedon Ranges Shire Council Code of Conduct and the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*.
- Maintenance of confidentiality regarding commercial-in-confidence, intellectual property and other matters under negotiation or any other confidential information.
- Very high standards of accountability.

Under this policy, all conflicts of interest are considered inappropriate and any staff with a conflict of interest must be removed from any decision making or evaluation process.

## **9. Managing Risk and Appropriate activity**

Council will ensure appropriate associations with sponsorship partners. 'Appropriate associations' are those made with sponsorship partners whose values, activities, products and purposes are consistent with the values, activities, purposes and goals of Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

A Strategic Risk assessment will be conducted as part of each sponsorship proposal an agreement process and will inform the determination of sponsorship agreements and their approval, as well as the ongoing management of sponsorship agreements. Risks for sponsorship agreements will be managed using Council's existing Risk Management Framework and processes.

Council will not enter a sponsorship agreement with any external individual/organisation seen to be in potential conflict with Council's responsibilities to the community, or whose reputation or image could prove detrimental to the public image of Council, including:

- Companies whose main business activity relates to the manufacture, distribution or wholesale of tobacco or associated products.
- Organisations that exist primarily for the purpose of gaming, including delivering, promoting or developing gambling products and services.
- Political parties.
- Companies whose main business activity relates to the extraction, production, distribution or wholesaling of fossil fuel or associated industries/companies
- Companies whose main business activity relates to adult services or associated industries/companies.
- Organisations that could be reasonably viewed as discriminatory, sexist, racist or disrespectful, or otherwise not consistent with other Council policies on equity, access, participation and human rights.
- Organisations that are not compliant with Council's environmental principles and policies.
- Organisations that do not support responsible drinking.

Council will consider sponsorship from local food and beverage manufacturers/businesses, provided they do not fall under any of the restrictions outlined in this section, and do not directly contradict the objectives of the Healthy Loddon Campaspe initiative. Responsible service of alcohol practices will apply during any sponsored activities or events.

Sponsorship candidates should ideally be based within the municipality or have an existing branch, depot, office, or retail outlet located within the municipality. Sponsorship candidates may also be conducting or seeking to conduct business or investing or seeking to invest within Macedon Ranges Shire.

Councillors and staff may not accept gifts resulting from a sponsorship arrangement, in line with relevant policies including the Council's Councillor Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy.

Further, to ensure ongoing management of appropriate association:

- All sponsorship agreements will provide for termination of the arrangement, should the association cease to be appropriate.
- Appropriate authorisation, through the CEO and to Council, is required for any sponsorship agreement that involves acquisition of naming rights for an external asset or capital infrastructure.

## 10. Financial risks

As part of the criteria for assessment, Council will ensure that sponsorship procedures ensure effective financial risk management through two key checks:

- Financial viability checks will be carried out on potential sponsorship associates to ensure that potential financial risks are identified.
- Sponsorship agreements should include procedures to recover or withhold financial benefits where there is inadequate delivery of agreed benefits by the other party, particularly if the sponsorship recipient becomes subject to Council's regulation or inspection while the sponsorship agreement is in effect.

## 11. Naming rights

Naming Rights may be provided as part of a sponsorship agreement. This includes, for a set period, exclusive rights to attach an organisation's brand and/or name to Council events, infrastructure or assets.

Naming of sporting grounds and public infrastructure must adhere to the regulations and guidelines on geographic naming, and therefore, Naming Rights are generally provided to infrastructure and assets, rather than to geographic locations or sporting grounds themselves.

The provision of advertising space for the sponsor at a named venue may also be included in naming rights, where it applies to the Council infrastructure or asset in question as part of related agreements.

Activity that involves community donors (individuals, businesses) being given the opportunity to contribute funds (generally equivalent to 'foundational' contributions of less than \$2000) in exchange for the right to temporarily rename a specific part or component of a Council building or infrastructure with their logo or name displayed, but no further formal obligations or agreements,

are not considered 'naming rights'. Rather, naming rights typically involve a larger contribution and a longer-term name change for an entire asset, such as a building, stadium, or court.

Where an activity to accept contributions for temporarily renaming a specific part or component of infrastructure is facilitated by Council, this activity should be treated as purchasing advertising space. For contributions made by individuals or businesses as 'donations', with no formal agreement made and no expectation of 'advertising space' from the donor, this is treated as a gift, and is not covered by this policy.

The sale of advertising space at sporting grounds (apart from that which is included as part of a broader sponsorship agreement) is also not covered by this policy. To understand the management of the sale and purchase of advertising space, including for infrastructure managed or owned by other community groups on behalf of Council, please see Council's leasing and licensing policy.

In some cases, naming rights of public assets or events funded in part by State or Federal Government grants may require consultation and authorisation from the relevant Government organisation to ensure compliance with relevant funding conditions.

Sponsorship that confers Naming Rights for Council assets requires endorsement at a Council Meeting.

## **12. Use of logos as part of sponsorships**

Council's Corporate Branding Policy and Guidelines indicating the appropriate use of Council's logo must be followed as part of any partnership arrangement.

Council will endeavour to deliver benefits to sponsors to build brand and/or product recognition and awareness and help partners to demonstrate good corporate citizenship and establish grassroots connections with the local community, however this is defined in the sponsorship agreement.

## **13. Assessment and approval**

Assessment of sponsorship proposals and agreements will be undertaken in line with Council's existing policies and procedures on financial and other delegations, with the addition of sponsorship agreements that confer Naming Rights for Council assets, which require Council endorsement at a Council Meeting as outlined elsewhere in this policy.

## **14. Gender Impact Assessment**

It is recommended that action is taken to deliver the sponsorship policy in a manner that ensures gender equity, this includes ensuring a fair and unbiased application of selection and categorisation criteria, and regular reporting on sponsorship arrangements including gender-relevant data where possible. Additionally, based on findings from the gender impact assessment, it is also recommended that as far as is practical, action is taken to ensure that for each potential sponsorship opportunity advertised to potential candidates, an assessment of the method to communicate, advertise, and accept applications includes consideration of gender at

the time of the proposal being made public. Additionally, to support an increased understanding of the gender impact of this policy, it is recommended that the following action is taken:

- Request gender data from organisations that propose or apply for sponsorship arrangements.
- Include gender data in reporting for rates of success for different cohorts, and the total value of sponsorship provided.

**Resources for conducting Gender Impact Assessments can be found on the intranet:**  
[mrsc.vic.gov.au/workplace/Working-here/Gender-Equality](http://mrsc.vic.gov.au/workplace/Working-here/Gender-Equality)

## 15. Definitions

Term	Definition
Advertising	In this policy, advertising refers to the process of publicising or promoting the sponsor’s brand, products, services, or cause, within the spaces or assets provided by the sponsorship agreement that are under Council administration or ownership. This could be physical space, such as on a billboard or a sports venue, printed material, such as brochures or programs, or digital space, like on a website or within an app. Advertising space and in-kind benefits should be valued at market rates.
Benefits	Benefits refers to what each party receives as part of a sponsorship arrangement. For Council benefits may be in the form of cash, financial investment, in-kind support, or a combination of these. For external organisations partnering with Council benefits may take the form of exclusive advertising rights, use of Council’s brand, advertising or signage space, marketing opportunities, etc.
Donations	See ‘Gifts’.
Expression of Interest	A process where organisations register their intention to compete for the opportunity to enter a sponsorship arrangement with Council.
Gifts	Gifts refers to cash (financial) support or other benefits (e.g. materials, equipment, labour) contributed to Council without an <b>agreement</b> or <b>requirement</b> for an expected benefit to the organisation or individual providing the gift, including through recognition or exposure. Recognition may be given voluntarily by Council of gifts made (e.g. publication of donors). Receiving gifts is governed by a number of Council policies, including the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy, Councillor Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy, Purchasing Refreshments and Gifts Policy and the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> (Vic). Receipt of gifts is not covered under this policy.
Grants and Incentives	Grants and incentives are controlled funding instruments by which businesses, individuals or organisations are provided with funding in recognition for a specific purpose outlined in the grant conditions and

Term	Definition
	criteria, against which funding must be acquitted, or in recognition of defined local benefit. Examples of Grants and Incentives include Community Funding Schemes, Small Project Grants, Sustainability Grants and Rebates, and Events and Festivals Grants. These programs have their own policies, procedures and guidelines, not in the scope of this policy.
In-kind benefit	In-kind benefits refer to non-monetary contributions made by a sponsor to a public organisation as part of a sponsorship arrangement. These contributions can take the form of goods or services, such as advertising space, equipment, or event tickets. In-kind benefits are often provided in exchange for recognition or exposure for the sponsor's brand or products. These benefits are typically in addition to any monetary payments made as part of the sponsorship arrangement.
Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	KPI stands for Key Performance Indicator. It is a measurable value that indicates how well objectives or goals are being achieved. In the context of an agreement or evaluation, KPIs can be used to assess the performance of the parties involved and to track progress towards the agreed-upon targets, to ensure that both parties meet their obligations.
Local supplier	Refers to a business or organisation operating within or delivering services from within the Macedon Ranges Shire municipal boundary.
Naming Rights	<p>Naming rights refers to the practice of a commercial business or club purchasing the exclusive right to name capital infrastructure (such as a sports centre), or activity (such as a festival or event) typically for a fixed period. The business or club is then also provided rights to use the name of the activity or facility in their advertising and branding and may also receive other benefits such as signage and marketing opportunities at the event, venue or centre. This is often seen as a way for businesses to gain exposure and build brand recognition within the community.</p> <p>Activity that involves community donors being given the opportunity to contribute a smaller amount of funds in exchange for the right to temporarily rename a specific part of a Council building or infrastructure with their logo or name displayed, but no further formal obligations or agreements, are not considered 'naming rights'.</p>
Partnership	For this policy, a partnership is defined as a binding relationship between two or more organisations including communications and branding, for example, awards events having a media partnership at the corporate level. For the purposes of this policy, partnerships are assumed to have mutual benefits and therefore come under the definition of a Council Sponsorship. There are several different types of partnership; Council officers may need to seek advice to ensure they are applying the definition of partnership correctly.
Sponsorship	A contractual relationship between Council and an external organisation which has been entered into for the actual or expected mutual benefit of both parties, in which an organisation contributes cash (financial) or in-

Term	Definition
	kind support for a specified period, in return for negotiated rights and benefits.
Sponsorship candidate	A sponsorship candidate refers to any group, organisation, or corporation interested in securing commercial sponsorship of a Council asset, event, or activity. The candidate must meet certain criteria, as outlined in this policy to be considered.
Value for money	'Value for money' is not simply the highest price for seeking sponsorship. It includes consideration of other factors including strategic benefits and risks, capacity to advance Council priorities/ goals and objectives the best mix of funding sources (e.g., existing program budget, Community Support Fund grants, sponsorship, etc.), direct and indirect costs of servicing the sponsorship, value of opportunities for networking or reaching new audiences.

## 16. References

- > Victorian Government Sponsorship Policy and Guidelines
- > Standing Directions under the *Financial Management Act 1994*
- > Corporate Branding Guidelines

## 17. Related Policies

- > Councillor Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy
- > Purchasing Refreshments and Gifts Policy and Procedure
- > Community Grants Policy (and relevant funding scheme guidelines)
- > Geographic Naming Policy and Procedure
- > Macedon Ranges Shire Council Staff Code of Conduct
- > Councillor Code of Conduct
- > Macedon Ranges Shire Council Risk Management Policy
- > Leasing and Licensing Policy
- > Memorial Policy
- > Corporate Branding Policy

- > Related Party Disclosure Policy

## **18. Related Legislation**

- > *Local Government Act 2020*
- > *Financial Management Act 1994*
- > *Audit Act 1994*
- > *Geographic Place Names Act 1998*
- > *Gender Equality Act 2020*



## Appendix 1

The below table sets out example contribution Tiers for the initial implementation of this policy, with some examples of contributions and benefits for each tier. These will be set and reviewed annually.

<b>Sponsor Tier</b>	<b>Financial Contribution p.a.</b>	<b>Example Council Benefit</b>	<b>Example Sponsor Benefit</b>
<b>Tier 1</b> Highest level of sponsor contribution	\$10,001 and greater Highest level of financial contribution	Agreements may provide support across multiple activities, events and/or a season of events or annual program.	Naming rights for a limited period of an event or asset. Significant presence on marketing collateral related to the event, season, or program (including logo on all material). Opportunities for significant presence at events/activities in a premium position.
<b>Tier 2</b> Medium level of contribution	\$6,001 - \$10,000 Medium level of contribution to an individual event or activity	Moderate presence on marketing collateral related to the event or activity	Naming of individual award categories or specific events.  Opportunity for physical presence at events/activities.
<b>Tier 3</b> Low level of contribution	\$2,000 - \$6,000 Low level of contribution to an individual event or activity	Limited presence on marketing collateral related to the event or activity.	Limited presence in market campaign/s.  Visible signage with logos at Council buildings.
<b>Foundation</b> Individual sponsorships	Under \$2,000 Lowest contribution amount considered for an individual event or activity	1 social media mention Mention in speeches	Limited presence in marketing campaigns.