

Sponsoring the EURO 2008 football tournament: Analysing sponsorship awareness in Swiss and Austrian print media

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Aim of paper and research questions

The scale of sponsorship expenditure has increased rapidly over the last years. At the UEFA EURO 2008 football tournament in Austria and Switzerland, UEFA's revenues from commercial rights, including all sponsorships accounted for 280 m € (21.5 %) of the total turnover of 1,300 m € indicating that sponsorships are a necessary component to finance the tournament. It is mentioned in the press, that sponsors invested additional 200 m € to activate the investment. As sponsorship spendings increase, sponsors need to pay more consideration on planning sponsorship strategically, on leveraging their investment and measuring sponsorship effectiveness. The aim of this research is to measure sponsorship effectiveness by identifying and describing factors how sponsorship activities of the EURO2008 sponsors were perceived in Austrian and Swiss print media.

Literature review

Most sponsors treat their sponsorship investment differently in terms of evaluation (Meenaghan, 2005) and 75% of sponsors are showing very limited interest in evaluation (Crompton, 2004). There is a lack of publicly available metrics and only few sponsorship measurement tools (e.g. seconds of TV exposure time) are used, however their precise applicability still remain problematic (Cornwell, 2008). While inclusion of certain measures is critical for future research, evaluation of sponsorship must determine its effectiveness in achieving sponsors' objectives and its relative effectiveness (O'Reilly et al., 2007). The fact that sponsors rarely pursue a single sponsoring objective presents further difficulties when determining its value. In our approach sponsoring is supposed to be closely related to multiple means and is linked to the event. Both aspects are incorporated in a six factors' "means-objectives model" as follows for analysis:

Three means factors:

1. *Co-branding*: A symmetrical brand alliance between two or more established brands for mutual benefit. The sponsor's name is associated with the UEFA's EURO 2008 tournament. Co-branding is considered to be another way of gaining benefits from intangible assets and a brand leverage strategy (Filipsson, 2008; James, 2006).
2. *Revenue factor*: Aaker (1996), Cornwell and Coote (2005) argue that associations create value for the company by helping the consumer to understand information and to differentiate the brand, which subsequently gives the consumer reasons to buy and thus to create revenues.
3. *New customers*: Sponsorship can heighten the firm's brand and create awareness of your business and products in the minds of a new set of customers (O'Guinn & Muniz, 2001).

Three objective factors:

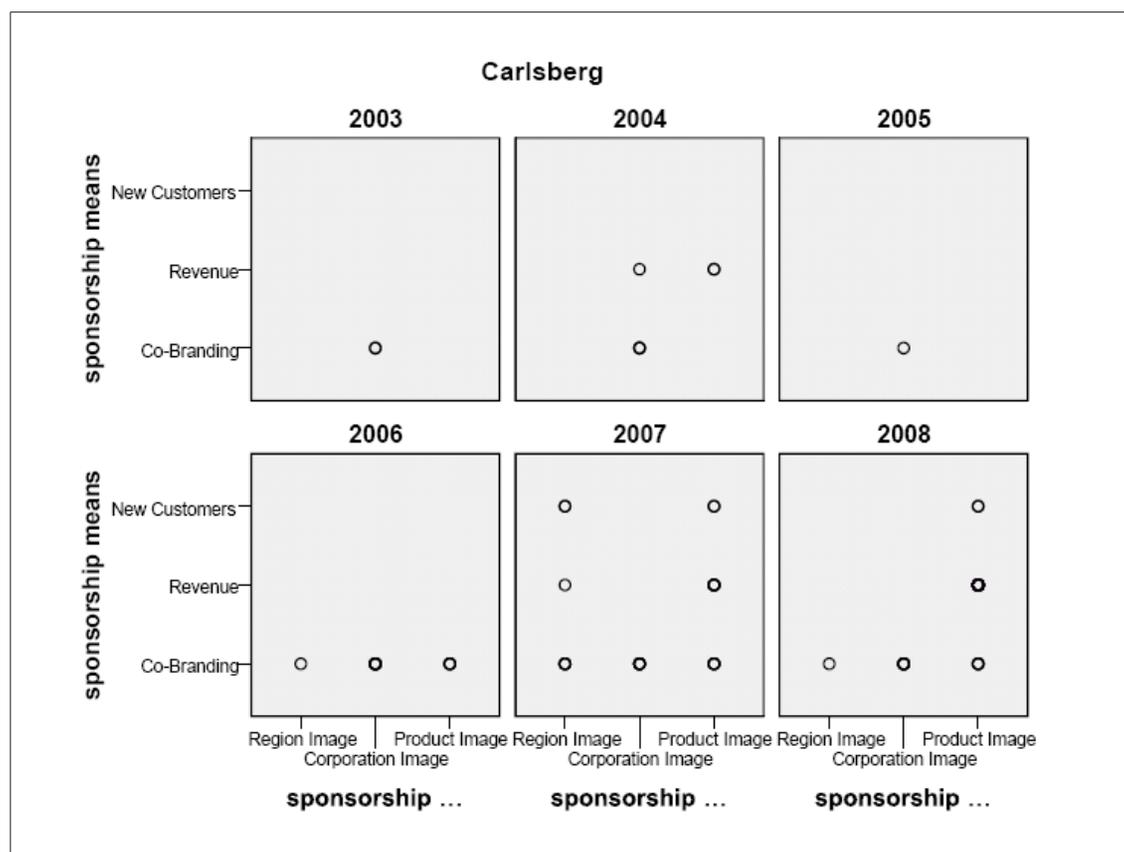
4. *Product image*: Firms prefer to use their existing brand, when introducing new products (Filipsson, 2008).
5. *Corporation image*: Branding has increasingly been applied to promote corporations (Chao et al., 2003).
6. *Region image*: Branding has also been applied to regions (Kotler et al., 1999; Kotler & Gernter, 2002; Rowe & McGuirk, 1999).

Research design and data analysis

The analysis is based on 1,144 collected independent press releases (ie articles) from Austria (www.defacto.at) and Switzerland (www.swissdox.ch) as well as UEFA press releases (www.uefa.com) covering the period 2002-2008 on “sponsoring” in connection with the EURO 2008 tournament. A qualitative content analysis using NVivo8 is applied following the structural approach developed by Mayring (1994; 2000a; 2000b) and Creswell’s (2003) suggestion by analysing indications towards the proposed means-objective-model as codes. SPSS is used for quantitative analysis of the collected articles.

Results

There is a positive correlation between the event and the number of articles. 63 % of the articles analysed where published in 2008. We also discovered remarkable differences in the frequency of sponsors addressed in the articles. UBS (149 articles), Carlsberg (144) and Coca Cola (116) are mentioned most frequently, whereas Canon (22), Ferrero (30) and UniCredit Group (30) seldom appear. Our analysis also indicates different means-objectives combinations in sponsorship leading to differences in sponsor awareness depending on the lead time to the EURO2008 (see eg Carlsberg, fig. below).



Discussion and conclusion

The empirical conclusions constitute an outsider's view on assumed corporate means and objectives distilled from the articles. Comparing the patterns of sponsor appearance (eg Carlsberg) between 2003-2005 to 2006, 2007, 2008 as seen in the figure we conclude from our data that the time gap between signing the contract with UEFA and the dates of the event influences the strategy of the sponsoring corporations. Marketing content towards the event changes over time and Carlsberg took different marketing strategies. When analysing the articles concerning Carlsberg, the focus is initially mainly on being associated with the event. Later in the articles, the association with the EURO 2008 tournament prevails but more emphasis was placed on the Carlsberg brand, revenue generation and attracting new customers.

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