

THE EMOTIONS OF THE GAME: HOW PLEASURE AND AROUSAL AFFECT THE ATTENTION FOR SPONSORS

Author:
Christopher Rumpf

email:
c.rumpf@dshs-koeln.de

Co-authors:
Breuer, Christoph

University:
German Sport University Cologne

Faculty:
Institute of Sport Economics and Sport Management

Abstract

Aim of the abstract

Sport sponsoring is widely used. However, we still know little about the reception and processing of sponsoring stimuli in the consumer's mind. As a consequence, a reliable value assessment of sponsorship activities is still to be developed. The first aim of this abstract is to analyze the impact of (1) sponsor logo exposure on the consumer's attention for sponsors. The second aim is to identify the mediating role of emotional responses to sporting action within the process of stimuli reception.

State of art

Wakefield et al. (2007) found evidence that a higher level of exposure to the sponsor brand produces positive effects on recall accuracy. These results were supported by Vale et al. (2009) who also found exposure to have a positive impact on sponsor awareness. In both studies an on-site sample was used whereas exposure was measured by means of sponsorship level, e.g. main sponsor vs. co-sponsor. But since corporate sponsors invest high amounts of money primarily into televised sport events in order to reach an audience of millions (Smolianov & Shilbury, 2005) research on the effect of sponsorship among TV viewers is highly relevant.

In sponsorship research on emotions Christensen (2006) found out that consumer behaviour often takes place [&] at the unconscious level, which makes it difficult to measure by means of traditional market research techniques that operate at the cognitive level (p. 63). Nevertheless, Christensen as well as Bal, Quester & Plewa (2010) used the method of questionnaires and thus

barely expanded the understanding of internal processes during the reception of sponsoring stimuli. Pham (1992) conducted a lab experiment to assess the impact of involvement, arousal and pleasure on the recognition of sponsoring stimuli. His approach focused on conditions for recognition and not on the analysis of the internal attention construct.

Methodology

A lab design was chosen to ensure reliability. Twelve different stimulus films taken from football and basketball broadcasts on German TV were shown to the sample of N=58 with a mean age of 29.8 years. Every participant watched three films with a duration of three minutes each. While one film was highly exciting with regards to sporting action, the second film was moderately arousing and the third film did not include any game action but preliminary reports or interviews from the venue. The sequence of films was randomized to control for order and fatigue effects. Since sponsoring stimuli access the consumer's attention predominantly through the visual path, the participant's eye movement was tracked. Subsequent to every film the non-verbal SAM instrument measured the participant's pleasure and arousal (Bradley & Lang, 1994). The level of brand exposure and the personal involvement with the sport event was measured beforehand by using the image recognition system Magellan respectively Zaichkowsky's (1994) RPI inventory.

Results

A multiple linear regression analysis was used to explain the level of visual attention (in seconds) by entering the on screen time and on screen size (both metric scales) as exposure measures, the moderating variables pleasure and arousal as well as the control variable event involvement (all quasi-metric scales). The results show an adjusted R^2 of 49%, which indicates an acceptable explanation of the variance in the DV. The analysis produced a significant effect for both exposure variables. The on screen time (Beta= .688, $p < .000$) shows the highest contribution to the prediction of attention, while on screen size (Beta= .148, $p < .000$) has a moderately positive effect. Surprisingly, the moderator pleasure (Beta= -.065, $p < .036$) affects the reception of sponsoring stimuli in a negative direction, while arousal (Beta= .195, $p < .000$), on the other hand, facilitates the attention for sponsors. This allows us to conclude that the emotional response to sporting action plays an important role. Concerning the control variable event involvement (Beta= -.047, $p < .010$) the model shows a slightly negative outcome.

Discussion

The emotional nature of sports is undisputed and one of the main arguments for the increasing investment of marketing money. However, too little knowledge exists on the moderating effect of emotional responses, since sponsorship research mostly neglected the internal processes within the consumer's mind. Since for any information processing a sensory input is necessary, the visual attention plays a focal role and represents the gatekeeper for a sponsoring stimulus. While sponsor logo exposure is essential for the creation of attention, emotional responses moderate this effect.

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