

Does sport event involvement influence brand recognition of official sponsors and ambush marketers?

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Aim of paper

The authors made an attempt to understand the factors that may lead to misidentification of official sponsors and to verify how event involvement in the UEFA Euro 2012 influenced the recognition of both sponsors' and ambushers' brands.

Literature review

Ambush marketer misidentification occurs when “consumers incorrectly believe that an ambush marketer that does not officially support an event is an official sponsor of that event” (Wolfsteiner et al., 2015, p. 138). The biggest influence on a consumer's recognition of a sponsor's brand is the extent to which consumers are committed to a sport event, as well as their attention, focus on, and interest in a given sport (Meenaghan, 2001). Researchers call that event involvement which indicates increased significance of an object and is reflected in greater knowledge of a domain, such as a sport, and/or a boosted level of enthusiasm for a property, such as a sports event (Lardinoit & Derbaix, 2001).

Methodology

A survey was conducted in July 2012 by means of Computer Assisted Personal Interviews on a representative random sample of 1,000 Poles above the age of 15 years. In order to evaluate the brand recognition of official sponsors and ambush marketers in different groups, we adopted a typology of consumer behaviour during the UEFA Euro 2012 created by a hierarchical clustering with Euclidean metric. Brand recognition of official sponsors and ambush marketers was measured with Top of Mind (TOM) rate. The chi-square test of independence was performed for consumers to verify statistically significant differences between the measures of brand awareness of official sponsors and ambushers. Statistical analysis was performed using the IBM® SPSS® Statistics version 21 program.

Results

The highest TOM rate was observed in the group of heavy viewers. The lower the quantity and intensity of the matches watched, the lower the percentage of people who recalled a brand of the official sponsor at first. An inverse relationship exists in the case of people who identified the ambush marketers. Affiliation to a segment is a factor that influences brand recognition of the sponsors and ambushers ($\chi^2 = 195.066, p < .001$).

Discussion

Similar results were obtained through a research conducted during FIFA World Cup 2002 (Ko et al., 2008). Respondents who were more involved in the sport event performed better when identifying the official sponsors. The results they obtained provide strong evidence that spectators' sports involvement plays an important role in predicting their awareness of sponsor. Kinney et al. (2008) also documented that the involvement in the NASCAR racing explained 12 % of the adjusted variance in total sponsor recall scores.

Implications/conclusions

Higher levels of event involvement decrease ambush marketer misidentification in case of Polish consumers during UEFA Euro 2012. Therefore, it seems to be crucial to take into account dividing between fans and non-fans of the event and level of their event involvement while measuring brand recognition of companies carrying promotional campaigns during any sport event. The ambush marketing phenomenon does not seem to threaten official sponsors of the event among consumers involved in the event. Even though high TOM rates of ambushers' brand were found in non-fans – those who do not identify themselves with the event – those brands may be regarded as any brands carrying out promotional campaigns and communicating with the audience but they do not reach the association with the event.

References

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