

Increasing Animation Intensity Of Sponsorship Signage: The Effect On Sport Viewers' Attention

Otto, Felix; Rumpf, Christopher

German Sport University Cologne, Germany

E-mail: felix.otto@stud.dshs-koeln.de

Aim of the research

Visual animation of sponsorship signage has become a frequently used technique at televised sporting events with the aim to enhance sponsorship-linked communication and to achieve sponsors' corporate objectives. Signage is generally displayed on LED perimeter boards and animated in many different intensity levels. This study focuses on the effectiveness of animated sponsor signage at televised sporting events. Previous research has already indicated the advantages and disadvantages of animated signage (Breuer & Rumpf, 2015), but the importance of the animation intensity level to enhance sponsorship communication has so far been neglected in this context. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of increasing animation intensity of sponsorship signage on sport viewers' attention while they are watching a sport broadcast.

Theoretical background

The model of saliency-based visual attention provides the theoretical foundation of this research study (e.g. Itti & Koch, 2000). It implies that only sponsor signage that is perceived as visually salient receives the viewer's attention. Hence, motion as the key component of animation is applied to create saliency and to direct the sport viewers' visual attention to the sponsors of televised sport events. Attention is a necessary precondition to cognitively process the sponsorship information and to increase, for example, brand awareness (Breuer & Rumpf, 2012; Le Roy & Vivier, 2008). Furthermore, it is known that animation increases viewer attention compared to static signage (Breuer & Rumpf, 2015), but the relevance of animation intensity to enhance visual saliency of sponsor signage has yet to be examined.

Methodology, research design, and data analysis

In a laboratory experiment, the participants ($n = 52$) watched a video clip of an ATP tennis match. A fictional brand was incorporated into the stimulus films as the displayed sponsorship signage. The animation intensity of the signage was systematically manipulated in the sport video by using four different intensity levels of a running animation type (Breuer & Rumpf, 2015) as well as a static signage as a reference base. To assess the sport viewers' visual attention, the participants' glance duration to the sponsorship signage was analysed with the aid of eye-tracking methodology. Participants also answered questions about their sport consumption and sport involvement before the showing of the video. For the main analysis of this study, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed to test the impact of animation intensity on the dependent variable glance duration. The stepwise regression method was employed and, in addition to animation intensity, the following control variables were added as independent variables into the model: televised tennis event consumption, tennis event attendance, media consumption about tennis, and tennis sport involvement.

Results, discussion, and implications/conclusions

The final regression model ($F(2, 48) = 3.87, p < 0.05, R^2 = 0.14$) only includes animation intensity ($\beta = 0.82, p < 0.05$) and televised tennis event consumption ($\beta = -0.33, p < 0.1$) as significant contributors. The results show that increasing animation intensity of sponsorship signage positively influences sport viewers' attention. It is therefore concluded that higher levels of animation intensity improve visual saliency of sponsor signage in the viewer's visual field while they are following a sporting competition on the screen. This finding also reveals that not only animation as such, but especially the animation intensity is a crucial factor in gaining the viewer's attention. The negative influence of previous consumption of televised tennis events indicates that frequent sport viewers are able to ignore things happening on the screen when their main interest is to watch the sporting action.

This study demonstrates the importance of animation intensity for effective sponsorship communication at televised sporting events. The findings suggest the use of higher animation intensity levels to attract viewer's visual attention to sponsorship signage. However, sport marketers should also be aware of the risk of viewer confusion that is caused by intrusive sponsor signage at sport events as it may jeopardise the intended sponsorship effects (Breuer & Rumpf, 2015).

References

- Breuer, C., & Rumpf, C. (2015). The impact of color and animation on sports viewers' attention to televised sponsorship signage. *Journal of Sport Management, 29*, 170–183.
- Breuer, C., & Rumpf, C. (2012). The viewer's reception and processing of sponsorship information in sport telecasts. *Journal of Sport Management, 26*, 521–531.
- Itti, L., & Koch, C. (2000). A saliency-based search mechanism for overt and covert shifts of visual attention. *Vision Research, 40*, 1489–1506.
- Le Roy, I., & Vivier, J. (2008). Game, set, match! Brand eye tracking on TV sport programmes. In ESOMAR (Ed.), *World Multi Media Measurement 2008* (pp. 1–10). Amsterdam: Esomar.