Attitudinal Effects of Combined Sponsorship and Sponsor's Prominence on Basketball in Europe

An experimental study conducted in Europe examined the effects of two types of sponsorship activities, on-site sponsorship and televised broadcast sponsorship announcements, undertaken by basketball sponsors. A series of videos provided a variety of treatment exposures to four groups of young subjects, the usual target audience of basketball. The study revealed that the synergy often assumed between on-site sponsorship and television broadcast sponsorship does not exist. Furthermore, the main effect of either method were found to differ for each of the two sponsors of contrasted market prominence involved in the study.

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SPONSORSHIP ACHIEVED UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH in the 1980s, with current worldwide sponsorships estimated to reach USD 22 billion (16th annual projection from IEG Inc., 2000). Moreover, recent professional reports (U.D.A., 1996) show that 75 percent of marketing practitioners favor further developments of this communication tool. At the same time, many also appear to question the actual effectiveness of sponsorship (Abel and Long, 1996) and more than 65 percent of sponsors consider sponsorship as increasingly expensive (Lardinoit, 1996).

Responding to the need for valid and reliable evidence concerning sponsorship, some researchers have examined the effectiveness of this communication approach. One major obstacle they have faced stems from the mixed activities sponsorship entails and the confusion apparent in the literature regarding its definition. While there is a consensus that "... commercial sponsorship involves an investment in cash or kind in an activity, person or idea for the purpose of exploiting the commercial potential associated with this activity" (Meenaghan, 1991), it is necessary to clarify the differences between on-site and broadcast sponsorship.

Field or *on-site sponsorship* refers to the placement of logos or sports equipment and billboards at the scene of the event itself, whereas *broadcast* or *television sponsorship* refers to the practice favored by advertisers who seek to associate their name with a specific television program or its promotion—but excluding any direct or indirect commercial promotion of its product or services (E.G.T.A., 1993). TV sponsorship stimuli are "messages that are limited to the brand name or to a few words summarizing the brand's positioning platform" (Pham and Vanhuele, 1997).

Typically, such announcements take the form of "This program is proudly brought to you by Firm Z" and their background often reflects or even repeats the format of advertisements for the firm or its products that are included in the commercial breaks contained in the program itself. These short announcements (15s) all but replicate what reminder advertising spots aim to do when they are included in the same commercial break as a longer 30s advertisement: they reinforce the message the longer commercial contains. Broadcast announcements, in such contexts, could be perceived by consumers as short spot advertisements with a single message reminding them, namely, that "Firm Z sponsors this program." In such instances, the effectiveness of broadcast sponsorship could be measured in similar ways as that of short television advertising, in terms of awareness, recognition, and potential attitudinal change.

Measure of communication effectiveness of sponsorship is, however, made difficult by the fact that sponsors have sought to leverage their sponsorship efforts with simultaneous investments in supporting communication activities. For example, sponsors of the Euro '96 Soccer championship invested, on average, three dollars in such supporting activities for each dollar directly invested in sponsoring the event. The literature reveals a shared belief that the performance of a sponsorship program comes from its "leverage" in other forms of communication including television broadcast, publicity, or sales promotions (Meenaghan, 1989; Abratt and Grobler, 1989; Quester and Thompson, 1999).

Despite this, the majority of studies have merely involved the examination of "on-site" sponsorship and, more specifically, have examined the impact of sponsorship and logos on memory processes (Pham, 1992; d'Ydewalle and Tamsin, 1993; Quester and Farrelly, 1998). The poor performance of sponsorship on consumers' memory process (Pham, 1992), coupled with changes in sponsors' communication strategies (Meenaghan, 1991) fostered the emergence of Corporate and/or Brand Image objectives in sponsors' plans in the '90s (Burton, Quester, and Farrelly, 1998). An examination of sponsorship performance, therefore, should entail the assessment of its effect on such variables, although few authors have taken this path (Giannelloni, 1990; Walliser, 1994).

There has been, to our knowledge, no attempt at measuring experimentally the potential effects of combining on-site sponsorship and related leverage promotional efforts. While Quester and Thompson (1999) demonstrated experimentally—and conclusively—the direct link between the size of the leverage investment and the occurrence of attitudinal changes in audiences of arts events, their approach was limited to examining the ratio of total leverage investments over total direct sponsorship investment. Their results clearly identified synergetic effects between sponsorship and leverage activities, without providing any means to measure them.

Recent studies reported in the literature have also suggested that sponsors' prominence, as indicated by market share and top-of-the mind awareness, influences significantly sponsorship effectiveness in terms of memorization and recall. For instance, findings by Quester (1997) and Quester and Farrelly (1998) showed that market share and product category influenced the probability of being recalled as a sponsor of an event. A recent and comprehensive examination of sponsorship also demonstrated that "prominence" and "relatedness" both contributed to explain the degree of mental construction consumers engaged in when exposed to sponsors' messages and, thus, determined the extent of their accurate memorization of the sponsors (Johar and Pham, 1999).

Thus, this present study seeks to address the question of whether interaction effects exist (1) on television audiences' attitudes toward sponsors and (2) when combining "on-site" and "broadcast sponsorship." In addition, this study examines whether the prominence of the sponsor influences the effectiveness of its investment. Being the first empirical study of this kind, it proposes to do this in the specific context of basketball, a sport whose target audience is comprised mostly of young adults (St John, 1998). While this may preclude any broad generalization of the findings, this choice of a particular setting for the study affords greater internal validity and provides a potential methodological direction for future empirical work in this area. Furthermore, basketball is representative of a number of ball-based team sports where the audience attention is directed to a focal object (the ball) and/or the players, as opposed to any peripheral cues (D'Ydewalle et al., 1988, 1993). Since our research examines the potential interaction of on-site and TV broadcasting sponsorship messages—an occurrence associated with all major international sporting events with the exception of the Olympic Games—it is our contention that our study may provide some grounds for generalization to other sporting contexts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

One of the many unique properties of sponsorship is its greater acceptance by the public, allegedly as a result of the recognition that many events would not exist without such financial support (Stipp and Schiavone, 1996). The sponsor's attempt to exploit the event in the media, therefore, is usually perceived as legitimate by the audience. Parker (1991), studying consumers' attitudes toward some 350 companies or brands, found that the most favorable attitudes were exhibited by respondents aware of both sponsorship and advertising activities undertaken by the sponsors. Others found similar results when examining respondents' perceptions of Olympic Games official sponsors (Sandler and Shani, 1986; Quester and Farrelly, 1997).

These studies, however, are based on the assumption that sponsorship is the foundation upon which the effectiveness of further promotional activities depends. One could, however, suggest that the opposite may be equally true and that leverage activities are essential in determining the effectiveness of sponsorship. Indeed, Giannelloni (1990) demonstrated the influence that attitude toward the sponsor/sponsee relationship had over the ultimate attitude toward the firm. Television sponsorship broadcasts, therefore, by raising the awareness of the sponsorship association, may directly influence the attitude toward the sponsor. Even when the motivation to consider such sponsorship association is weak—a frequent case according to Krugman (1965, 1977, 1988)—exposure to the first stimulus (television broadcast) could enhance the processing of the second (on-site sponsorship). Stipp and Schiavone (1996) summarized such reasoning in the conclusion of their study of the impact of the 1992 Olympic Games on their sponsors' image. They identified three factors determining the effectiveness of a sponsorship campaign, namely attitudes toward sponsorship in general, perceptions of the quality of leverage advertising efforts, and visibility of the sponsorship campaign.

Several authors have suggested that synergies exist between television broadcast and on-site activities (Otker, 1988; Gross, Taylor, and Shuman, 1987; Abratt and Grobler, 1989). However, this does not necessarily mean that interactions exist between the two: attitudes are relatively stable and television broadcast sponsorship—generally limited to short announcements before and after the program—would be expected to have lesser effects than traditional commercials.

Young audiences are usually considered as major targets for large sporting events and their sponsors (Tavassoli, Shultz, and Fitzsimons, 1995; St John, 1998). Reflecting this and the fact that sports sponsors usually aim to reach a target consistent with the demographics of a given sports audience, our study aims to examine a number of hypotheses—based on the previous discussion—in the specific context of a particular sport (basketball) and its main target, namely young television viewers.

The first of these hypotheses clearly requires the isolation of the effects of on-site sponsorship from those of television broadcast sponsorship announcements and can be stated as follows:

H1: On-site sponsorship and television broadcast sponsorship interact to affect positively audiences' attitudes toward sponsors.

Attitudinal effects of on-site sponsorship alone

The unspoken nature of sponsorship message (Pham, 1992; Quester and Farrelly, 1998), the peripheral nature of the sponsor's on-site sponsorship at the event—resulting in a lack of attention granted such sponsorship by the audience—and the weak involvement of the audience attending the event (Hastings, 1984; Pham and VanHuele, 1997) all suggest that a cognitive model would be inappropriate to describe the effects of on-site sponsorship activities. Indeed, some authors have disputed any persuasion potential for on-site sponsorship activities, even in cases where longer exposures can be achieved. Crimmins and Horn (1996) and Otker (1988) deny outright the power of on-site sponsorship to generate dramatic changes in corporate image. Considering the relative stability of consumers' attitudes, therefore, one might predict that on-site sponsorship alone would be unlikely to provoke attitudinal changes.

However, a certain degree of distraction may in fact enhance the persuasion potential of the message. A positive attitudinal influence can result from the combination of audience distraction (induced by the event) and weakness of argument (Hawkins and Hoch, 1992). Taking into consideration the unspoken nature of the sponsorship message, one could expect that the audience's distraction might result in an increased importance of contextual cues. Gorn (1982) suggested that contextual affective cues would be all the more likely to influence attitudinal change that the underlying motivation is low, and this clearly describes the sponsorship context (Pham and VanHuele, 1997). This argument is also consistent with others' view that sponsorship persuades indirectly and by association (Crimmins and Horn, 1996). In other words, the process according to which sponsorship influences attitude could be described as "incidental" rather than central (Quester, 1997) and involves low-involvement learning (d'Ydewalle et al., 1988) more akin to classical conditioning or rote learning than to cognitive processes.

In his experiment, Walliser (1994) explained the absence of attitudinal effects following exposure to a televised sponsored sports event by the weak intensity of the emotions generated as well as by the very short duration of exposure gained by the sponsors' signage. This is consistent with Petty and Cacioppo's view (1986) that, in situations of weak motivation or lack of attention, changes in attitudes toward an object may result from its association with a strong affective component (positive or negative) or the continuous association with a weaker one. Hence, the second hypothesis examined in this paper states that:

H2: On-site sponsorship generates positive changes in the audiences' attitude toward sponsors.

Attitudinal effects of television broadcast sponsorship announcements alone

Television-broadcast sponsorship has received little attention from researchers, with the exception of a few U.S. studies examining the effect of sponsors' TV commercials during the Olympic Games (Sandler and Shani, 1989; Stipp and Schiavone, 1996) or the 1994 World Soccer Cup (Tavassoli, Shultz, and Fitzsimons, 1995). This is somewhat surprising when one considers the consensus that sponsorship effectiveness lies in its leverage promotional activities. Tavassoli, Shultz, and

Fitzsimons (1995) found that television-broadcast-sponsorship announcements, unlike advertisements, were not affected by the emotions generated by an event such as a World Soccer Cup final. This suggests that a different process is at play and explains why commercials used by sponsors of the Olympic Games may have captured their audience's attention (Stipp and Schiavone, 1996). If this is so, then TV-broadcast-sponsorship announcements are effective either because their weak message content is not adversely affected by a lack of emotional intensity or because they operate via an affective association.

Our hypothesis expresses our support for this view: we believe that this type of announcement could be strongly associated by the television audience with the sport event itself and, thus, consistent with observations made by researchers in the area of advertising (Soldow and Principe, 1981; Park and Young, 1986; Singh and Churchill, 1987; Sanbonmatsu and Kardes, 1988), we expect that a sport program could act as an environmental cue likely to induce a change in attitude toward the sponsor. Therefore, hypothesis H3 must be examined according to which:

> H3: Television-broadcast-sponsorship announcements generate positive attitudinal changes toward sponsors.

Effect of sponsors' prominence

Finally, this study proposes to examine empirically the effect of the sponsors' prior market position on subsequent attitudinal changes. While the previous hypotheses have been proposed regardless of the market prominence of the firms involved, several authors have suggested that the initial market position of a sponsor may well influence its ability to impress its role as a sponsor upon target audiences. Quester (1997) and Quester and Farrelly (1998), examining the vexing question of consumers' misattribution of sponsorship roles, suggested that market share position influenced sponsorship effectiveness and recommended that would-be sponsors examine with care their investment in light of their pre-existing top-of-the-mind awareness within given product categories. Similarly, Johar and Pham (1999) demonstrated empirically that consumers engage in a process of mental construction that favored prominent brands as well as firms whose activities could be related in some way to the sponsored event.

Overall, it appears that more prominent firms benefit from sponsorship in terms of recognition and recall more than do lesser established firms. However, it is important to note that these findings pertain *only* to memory processes and that they do *not* relate to attitudinal changes. According to the theory of attitudinal inertia (Derbaix, 1995), less prominent firms and brands enjoy less internalized—and thus less stable—attitudes than their more-established counterparts. As a result, they are more sensitive to advertising stimuli. For example, consumers familiar with a brand already hold well-formed attitudes toward it, and advertising messages would be less likely to affect these than would be the case for unfamiliar brands. Phelps et al. (1991) showed that attitudes toward the advertisement explained 12 percent of the variance in attitude toward familiar brands after exposure but 27 percent of nonfamiliar ones. Hence attitudes toward lesser known brands are more volatile and prone to change following exposure to marketing messages.

This is particularly meaningful in the case of sponsorship because sponsorship communication is nonverbal and nonargued (Derbaix et al., 1994), suggesting a peripheral path for persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Hence, sponsorship should be more effective for less prominent brands because low-involvement learning such as classical conditional and rote learning is more effective in creating attitudinal change in the absence of strong initial attitudes and/or when the attitude object is little or not known (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Therefore, more prominent sponsors, enjoying more established and internalized attitudes, should experience less attitudinal changes as a result of their sponsorship involvement. Conversely, lesser known firms should stand to gain more from sponsorship in terms of attitudinal change. Hence our last hypothesis, H4, is stated as follows:

> H4: The effectiveness of sponsorship in terms of audiences' attitudinal change is influenced negatively by the sponsor's initial market prominence.

METHODOLOGY

As previously noted, the above hypotheses were examined in the particular setting of a given sport—basketball—and its intended audience (young adults). The choice of young subjects is particularly indicated for this study because they represent the target of several sports television broadcasts: 32 percent of 18- to 19-year-olds are passionate about soccer, and 28 percent are passionate about basketball. Furthermore, the average age of the NBA audience is only 36 (St John, 1998). In this experimental study, therefore, 240 young subjects (mean age 18.3 years, 56 percent female), were randomly assigned into four groups. Both treatments and data collection occurred in a laboratory setting with subjects taken, by groups of eight, into the experimental room. Each subject sat in an isolated booth in front of an individual television monitor. Then, preliminary questions concerning the subject's prognostic regarding the outcome of the game were asked before the treatment was implemented. A video clip emulating a television sports program and lasting 20 minutes was shown to each subject, who then completed questionnaires. The purpose of the study was disguised and post-experimental checks confirmed that none of the subjects guessed the actual aim of the experiment and that none had seen the game previously.

Since all Belgians under 18 have to attend school, we reached that population through schools. This also enabled us to mirror the social and intellectual diversity of this population. Respondents were recruited on the basis of the following criteria: age, sex, geographic origin, and type of educational network (public versus Catholic). The socioeconomic level is traditionally higher in the Catholic network than in the public one.

Table 1 compares our sample profile with that of the general young population. As can be seen from Table 1, while our sample precludes any general inferences about the general population, it is somewhat representative of the young adult population that comprises the target audience of basketball sponsors. The sample included respondents from all areas of the French-speaking part of the country and from both educational networks (see Table 1). Subjects came from 67 different schools (39 Catholic versus 28 public). These schools had between 480 and 1,200 students. The percentage of females was higher (56 percent) than in the general young population (49 percent), but our subsequent analysis revealed no gender effect on A_b X [t (238) = 0.272; p = 0.786] and on A_b Y [t (238) = 0.281; p = 0.779].

The recruitment of the sample was undertaken during an annual student meeting, the aim of which is to provide information on social services, studies, health, law, leisure, and so forth. With the help of the organizing team, we presented the cover story of the research four times: the study was described as research evaluating the factors of interest in sports broadcasts and was carried out on behalf of Canal+ (a European pay-TV channel). Respondents were told that they would receive $7 and two movie-theater tickets as a reward for participating in the survey. At the end of these presentations, 192 appointments were scheduled. To complete the sample, the same process was repeated three times in different schools (two Catholic, one public) as well as once with first-year university students, resulting in 72 and 17 additional appointments. Overall, 26 people failed to show up or arrived late at the meeting, 11 questionnaires were incomplete, and 4 others were removed because of suspected contamination. All subjects were then randomly assigned to the four test cells.

Two firms were involved in the study, referred to as X and Y, hereafter. Firm X, an insurance company, benefited from the least market prominence with an initial market share of approximately 4 percent and top-of-the-mind awareness of 5 percent. Firm Y (a publishing house), on the other hand, provided the experimental condition of prominence, with market share of 21 percent and top-of-the-mind awareness of 22 percent.

TABLE 1

Comparison between Our Final Sample and the General Population of Young People from 15 to 19

	Final Sample (n = 240)	General Population of Young People from 15 to 19
Type of School (Public vs. Catholic) Origin		
	60.5% Catholic vs. 39.5% Public	58% Catholic vs. 42% Public*
Geographic Origin		
Province	%	%
Hainaut	29	32
Luxembourg	8	6
Namur	12	11
Brabant	32	27
Liège	19	24

Source: Ministery of the French community of Belgium, 1998.

***Source: National Institute of Statistics, Belgium, 1998.*

Experimental design

Two types of sponsorship activities were of interest in this study: on-site sponsorship and television-broadcast-sponsorship announcements. Table 2 illustrates the experimental design and shows how each of the four groups (n = 60) was exposed to one of four treatment videos produced by a French television channel (Canal+) and covering an edited summary of an official game of basketball opposing two National League teams. For the purpose of these films, the first half of the game was shot with all sponsorship obliterated (side boards as well as floor painted logos), whereas the second half provided "normal" conditions of logo ex-

TABLE 2
Experimental Design

		Television Broadcast Sponsorship	
		No	Yes
On-site	No	A*	C
Sponsorship	Yes	B	D

*Control Group

posure. Two video segments were therefore produced (with- versus without-sponsor sponsorship) resembling each other in terms of sport reporting format.

Each video comprised three parts, as follows: (1) a soccer segment (3'30"), (2) the treatment or control segment (12'30"), and (3) a soccer segment (2'30"). Linkages between segments were made by a professional sports journalist from Canal+. The videos also contained commercial breaks where broadcast announcements in favor of the sponsors were either present or not. The broadcast announcements were identical for both firms included in the study, comprising the display of their logo, in the same dimension and for the same duration (4.7 seconds), over a slow-motion basketball background. A voice-over announced in the same fashion that each of the two firms supported the broadcasting of the game. In the two experimental treatments involving TV broadcasts (i.e., TV-only and TV and on-site combined), the TV-broadcast announcement was placed right before and after the basketball game segment. The presentation of the logos in such a controlled manner enabled us to focus on our objectives: to test the interaction of TV- and on-site sponsorship messages and to examine the influence of sponsors' prominence, independently from the creativity that may be used to display the logo or format the message.

The four segments (on-site only, broadcast only, both combined, or none) were pretested in terms of emotion inducement with four groups of subjects ($n = 147$) and were found to be identical in terms of polarity ($F = .54$, $p = .65$), emotion intensity (Kurskal-wallis Chi = 2.14, $p = .54$), and dominance ($F = .27$, $p = .84$). Additionally, the prominence of the firms used in this study was confirmed by measuring the recognition scores achieved by X and Y in a paired sample of subjects. X (the least prominent one) achieved a score of 13 percent, whereas Y (the prominent firm) achieved a score of 35 percent, thus confirming their status as sponsors of contrasting prominence.

Dependent variables

The measure of attitude that would best serve our purpose is one that would encapsulate both affective and cognitive aspects of sponsorship communication. The scale proposed by Batra and Stayman (1990) and Batra and Stephens (1994) fulfils this requirement. Comprising 10 items presented in semantic differential format, it reveals, after factor analysis, two distinct dimensions (Olney et al., 1991): one reflecting a hedonic orientation (Pleasant/Unpleasant, Positive/Negative, Liked/Disliked, Favorable/Unfavorable) and one based on a more utilitarian evaluation of the interest toward the attitudinal object (Useful/Useless, Good/Bad, Precious/Worthless, High Quality/Low Quality).

Items relating to the hedonic dimensions were introduced thus: "Regarding this brand, one could say that I like it (dislike it)." The utilitarian version was as follows: "I can say that I find this brand useful (useless)." The full-color reproduction of the given sponsor's logo was printed above the semantic differential scale. The average score achieved over all items represented the global measure of attitude.

Since the study involved two firms, X and Y, the results of the study are articulated around two dependent variables being, on the one hand, the attitude toward firm X and, on the other hand, the attitude toward firm Y.

RESULTS

Our study examined the overall effectiveness of sponsorship on young viewers of broadcast sports. As a result, and to identify the common trend from the specific measures relating to the two sponsors under study, we used MANOVA on the experimental data generated by the design shown in Table 2. All necessary steps were taken to confirm the appropriateness of this analysis (e.g., multi-normal distribution, non multi-collinearity, etc.). In addition, and to reflect the fact that post-treatment attitudes would be determined partly by the brand's prominence, univariate analyses (ANOVAs) were also undertaken.

Interaction and main effects

MANOVA ($F < 1$) and ANOVAs ($F < 1$) analyses dispelled any notion that on-site sponsorship and television-broadcast-sponsorship announcements interact. H1, therefore, must be rejected. This was equally the case for X and for Y. Furthermore, subjects exposed to both on-site sponsorship and TV-broadcast-sponsorship announcements did not differ significantly from those subjects who were exposed to either on-site only or TV-broadcast-sponsorship announcements only (for all one-way ANOVAs, using Least Significant Difference, $p > .05$).

Our analyses support H2 at a 90 percent confidence level: subjects exposed to on-site sponsorship alone were generally influenced positively by it (MANOVA: $F(2,223) = 2.54$, $P = .053$). However, the univariate analyses showed that the global effect suggested by the MANOVA only stemmed from the results of firm X. Subjects exposed to on-site sponsorship rated firm X more favorably (M = 4.18) than did subjects not exposed to such stimuli (M = 3.95; ANOVA: $F(1,224) = 3.98$, $P = .023$) whereas firm Y's performance (ANOVA: $F(1,224) < 1$) was not significantly different.

H3 also had to be supported at a 90 percent confidence level. The MANOVA carried out to identify differences between those subjects exposed to television-broadcast-sponsorship announcements and others showed a significant difference ($F(2,223) = 2.14$, $P = .06$). However, a situation similar to that encountered for the "on-site only" treatment was also apparent here: attitudes toward firm X were positively affected by television-broadcast sponsorship announcements (M = 4.18 versus M = 3.95, ANOVA: $F(1,224) = 4.1$, $P = .022$), whereas attitudes toward firm Y were not significantly affected by them (ANOVA: $F(1,224) < 1$).

Prominence effects

In the case of on-site sponsorship as well as in the case of television broadcast, we clearly observed a positive influence of sponsorship for the less prominent firm that was not observed in the case of the more prominent firm. Moreover, in the case of on-site and television broadcast combined, differences with the control group were not consistent for both firms. Compared to the control group, only attitudes toward firm X seemed positively influenced by the joint presence of on-site sponsorship and TV-sponsorship announcements (t (118) = 2.77, $P = .007$). With regard to attitude toward firm Y, no such difference is found (t (118) = .39, $P = .695$). Figure 1 illustrates our results. Based on those findings, it appears that firm X consistently performed better, benefiting from each of the three treatment conditions. Attitudes toward X were positively influenced, and this, significantly more than in the case of Y, by on-site, broadcast, and combined sponsorship. Our research design and the choice of these two firms were based on the assumption that more prominent firms would enjoy more established initial attitudes and, therefore, would suffer from attitudinal inertia that would prevent them from achieving great attitudinal change as a result of their sponsorship. Our results confirm that the less prominent firm, as opposed to the more prominent one, enjoyed greater attitudinal changes, supporting H4.

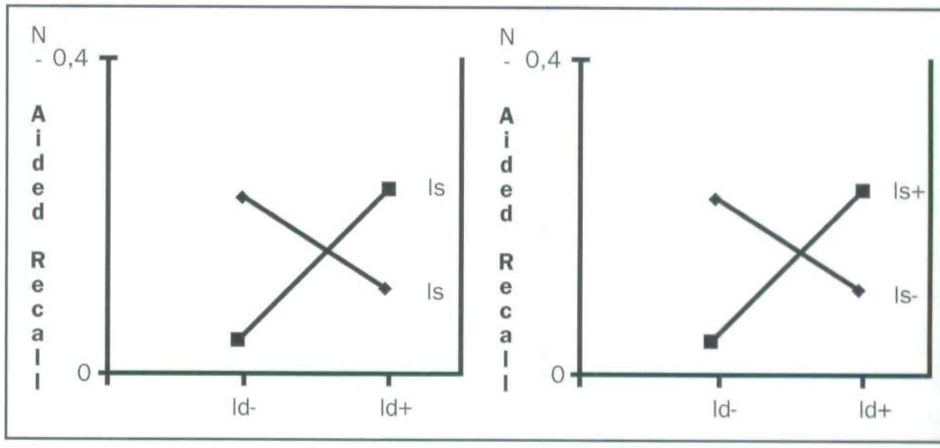

Figure 1 On-site and Broadcast Sponsorship Interaction on Attitude

DISCUSSION

Our results clearly support the null hypothesis that no interaction exists between on-site sponsorship and television-broadcast-sponsorship announcements, at least with the young audience sought by sponsors of broadcast basketball. Contrary to what has been mooted in the literature over the last 15 years (Sandler and Shani, 1989; Otker, 1988; Ryssel and Stamminger, 1988; Parker, 1991), broadcast-sponsorship announcements do not influence the effectiveness of on-site sponsorship and vice versa. The most notable finding in relation to this, however, is that it applies to both sponsors regardless of their prominence. In addition to the clarity of the MANOVA results, the strength and potential generalizability of the findings stem from a closer examination of the two dependent variables: whether "on-site only" or "television-broadcast only" exert a positive influence (as is the case for firm X), or whether they have no effect (as in the case of Y), combining the two generates no interaction effects. Compared to either treatment (on-site only/TV only), there are no significant differences in terms of attitudes toward each of the two firms. Only for one firm (X) is the combination of both treatments better than the control. Thus, in relation to attitudes, there appears to be no value in combining these two types of stimuli.

The inertia of attitudes, in our view, explains why the attitudinal impact of sponsorship treatments, for either of the two methods or for both combined, depends on the sponsor's prominence. Such attitudinal inertia would presumably require a strong emotional potential for any change to be observed as a result of a sports event. In this, we agree with Wallisser's (1994) assessment of the reason why no attitudinal changes occurred for the more prominent sponsor.

However, while we can reject outright the global effect of the combined on-site sponsorship and TV-broadcast-sponsorship announcement method, we must consider carefully the results concerning each of these two methods when used in isolation. The significance levels provided by the MANOVAs were such that the two methods could be considered as being effective, at least in the case of the more prominent firm.

The laboratory setting, arguably, limited or maybe prohibited, the full emotional impact of the sports experience to take effect. As a result, one could presume that the effects would be greater in a "real life" setting. Similarly, the case could be made that the specific creative elements—or lack thereof—used in this experiment might explain our results. However, beyond this simple explanation, one must look into the information provided by the mixed results of the univariate analyses. In all three treatments ("on-site only," "TV only," and both combined), only the attitude toward X has been influenced by sponsorship whereas no such effect was observed for firm Y. Presumably, the age of our sample made it less likely to be familiar with insurance companies such as X or their products. Sponsor Y, on the other hand, is a publishing group well presented in that part of the country and, as such, more likely to have benefited from definite—and more stable—initial attitudes.

Increasing the creativity of the broadcast messages would almost certainly have enhanced the effectiveness of this specific sponsorship method (Stipp and Schiavione, 1995). However, it is far from certain that this would have in any way increased the chance of interaction, as television audiences do not appear to link on-site and televised logos. Indeed, previous work by Lardinoit (1996) suggested that a combination of on-site and broadcast messages does not generate higher aided-recall scores. Only to the extent that the creative treatment of the message emphasized an existing relation between the sponsor and the sport would it be likely to influence any interaction effect. Our study purposefully used two "unrelated" sponsors and controlled the creative nature of the broadcast message, using the same voice-over and background images for the display of their logos and following the format used for such announcements by European Union channels. Such "standardization" of the messages enabled the identification of interaction and market prominence effects.

An argument could also be made that young respondents would be unlikely to be interested by, or familiar with, either of the two companies involved as sponsors in this study. Hence, the expected low level of involvement toward the two firms might be perceived to impact on our results. However, and as noted by d'Ydewalle et al. (1988 and 1993), television audiences pay spectacularly little attention to on-site sponsors, attending to their signage only for 3 percent or less of the total duration of the game in the case of soccer, regardless of the sponsors' prominence. D'Ydewalle et al. (1988 and 1993) further noted that low involvement does not affect, either negatively or positively, the attention paid by the audience to sponsors. Nonetheless, it is clear that both brands included in our study would be at the lower end of the involvement spectrum, especially for younger audiences. As a result, our findings are somewhat limited to other firms unrelated to the sport they sponsor as well as to relatively uninvolving brands.

Our interpretation of those results, however, is that on-site sponsorship worked better for X because low-involvement learning such as classical conditioning and rote learning is more effective in creating attitudinal change in the absence of strong initial attitudes and/or when the attitudinal object is little or not known (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). The supporting event or environmental cue did not appear as emotionally strong. However, a weaker element may contribute to a change if more continuously associated with the attitudinal object (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Hence, the lesser known character of firm X with the audience provides an explanation for its better performance in terms of attitudinal change, whereas the inertia of the preexisting attitudes toward Y precluded it from benefiting from this type of exposure.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The argument that sponsorship effectiveness in terms of consumers' attitudes lies in the generation of synergies between on-site sponsorship and leverage media activities has been a recurrent one. To our knowledge, this hypothesis has not been empirically tested before this present study. Our results clearly demonstrate that it is not supported by empirical evidence, at least when considering television-broadcast-sponsorship announcements. This suggests that future research should focus instead on potential interactions between on-site sponsorship and other media leverage methods, such as advertising or sales promotions.

Strictly speaking, neither on-site sponsorship nor television-broadcast-sponsorship announcements appeared capable of influencing consumers' attitudes toward sponsors. However, the borderline significance of the results, along with the heterogeneity of the outcomes of the univariate analyses provide support for the notion that the sponsor's prominence is a potential factor of sponsorship effectiveness.

Clearly, our results are pertinent for sponsors seeking attitudinal changes in the audience of the sponsored event. In particular, our findings suggest that sponsors should consider their initial market position before committing themselves to the substantial investment that sponsorship entails. Organizations fitting the profile of X can also perhaps be more confident that sponsorship will assist them in their performance. Similarly, the market situation of Y and the poor performance of its sponsorship efforts should be used as a warning to sponsors sharing its profile.

We do recognize, however, that some sponsors may seek to achieve other objectives than those examined in this study. For example, sponsors often state that they engage in sponsorship for public relations or internal marketing purposes. For them, our results provide little guidance and further research is needed to assist them in their sponsorship decision-making process. There is much research to be done to assess the effectiveness of sponsorship as a client-entertainment/relationship-building tool, or as a motivational factor for staff and/or channel-of-distribution partners.

There are clear limitations to this study. For example, a bias may stem from the "contrived" nature of the subjects' exposure to the broadcast. However, it should be noted that subjects were unaware of the aim of the experiment. Indeed, after the experiment, no subject had guessed the objective of the study and only one subject of the control group ($n = 60$) commented on the absence of logos around the court. While surprising, this is consistent with previous observations by Nebenzal and Hornick (1985) that almost 50 percent of an audience would be unable to state whether they had seen *any* sponsor at a basketball game they had just watched, even when these sponsors represented a variety of commonly used products. According to Quester (1997) and Johar and Pham (1999), respondents appear to "guess" who the sponsors are just as much as they retrieve stored information from memory. Another factor contributing to the realism of the experiment was the fact that in addition to the two firms involved in the study, some 24 other sponsors were present on-site in the television segments. According to McQuarrie (1999), ignorance of the objective of the study and presence of competing signals suggest that the experiment did not depend on "forced exposure."

Another limitation may have arisen from the relatively short duration of the segments (12′) as sponsorship effects may well be stronger given longer exposure. However, the need to control the independent variables for the duration of the experiment imposed this constraint. The fact that attitude measures were collected so soon after the treatment might also have biased our findings: the interval comprised only the time required to view a short 2′30″ soccer segment and to answer the initial part of the questionnaire including 21 questions masking the purpose of the study. While eliminating potential recency effects, this choice made our methodology differ from the usual day-after-recall used by advertisers.

Finally, and perhaps more significantly, our results are limited to cases where the sponsors' brands are unrelated to sports and relatively uninvolving. Neither firms included in our experiments engaged in any activity remotely related to sports and, in both cases, the nature of their activities made them unlikely to generate high levels of involvement, particularly in young adults.

From a methodological point of view and despite the difficulties apparent in the experimental approach described in this paper, we remain convinced of the need for rigorous studies of this kind to be developed, and replicated, in order to validate the considerable number of "theories" relating to sponsorship. This conviction is based on two simple observations. First, as we have shown, it is possible—although difficult—to exercise the necessary level of control when examining the separate and combined effects of several sponsorship components. Second, while experiments always imply that external validity be somewhat compromised for the benefit of internal validity, replications of such experiments in diverse contexts can—and should—compensate for this. The use of experimental designs for assessing the isolated and combined effectiveness of marketing communication tools, including sponsorship, suggests that a rich agenda awaits researchers in the area.

Clearly, a study such as this one can only be interpreted in a given context. We chose basketball and its young audience and collected data in a European setting. Our findings are thus mostly relevant to this context. However, as previously mentioned, basketball is representative of many other team sports and all major sports events but the Olympics associate on-site with broadcast messages, making our research pertinent to many other contexts as well. In this particular study, we found no support for a generally held belief that various forms of sponsorship generate snyergy, suggesting that it is both urgent and necessary to examine in turn other sports, audiences, and countries to determine whether there is *any* empirical support for the synergetic view. We also found that *market prominence hinders attitudinal change,* whereas previous empirical work in the area of sponsorship had suggested that *market prominence assists recall.* As such, our findings should act as an ominous warning to firms engaging in substantial sponsorship investments without proper consideration for their marketing communication objectives. JAR

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