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The evaluation of sponsorship effectiveness: a model and some methodological considerations ⁽¹⁾

Introduction



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Sponsorship can be defined as a corporate or commercial method of communication implemented by an organization which aims at establishing - among different target publics - a privileged link between the institution, its brands or products, and a vehicle (often sporty or cultural) in return of a support provided to this vehicle. The sponsoring organization can then exploit this link to achieve corporate or marketing objectives. Recently, sponsorship has received increases consideration by advertisers (Gratton and Taylor, 1985; Gardner and Shuman, 1987; Sandler and Shani, 1989). According to one source (Meenaghan, 1989), in 1987 direct sponsorship expenditures worldwide was valued at 3.7 billion dollars. However, only recently has sponsorship drawn the attention of marketing scholars (e.g. Sandler and Shani, 1989; Meenaghan, 1983; Nebenzahl and Hornik, 1985; Hastings 1984; Grégory, 1984). The evaluation of sponsorship effectiveness still remains an acute problem among professionals (Gardner and Shuman, 1987; Mintel, 1986).

This paper addresses the problem of evaluating sponsorship effectiveness. It will focus on the evaluation of sponsorship operations which are primarily assigned image and awareness objectives. Indeed, surveys among sponsors consistently reveal that these objectives are the most often sought after (Otker, 1988; Otker and Hayes, 1988; Gardner and Shuman, 1987; Gilbert, 1988). It is recognized however that objectives such as boosting the employees' moral, public relations, social responsibility, are also common. Consequently, sales/market share analyses as measures of sponsorship effectiveness will not be treated in this article. In any case, "because of the complexity of establishing a direct relationship between sales results and sponsorship expenditure, measures of sales effectiveness are rarely appropriate and consequently seldom used" (Meenaghan, 1983, p. 51).

(1) The author thanks Kevin Hicks and Luk Warlop for their fruitful comments.

As a starting point for the discussion, a theoretical model is proposed for awareness and image objectives in sponsorship. It describes the sponsorship communication process from the management of the sponsorship stimuli (i.e. billboards, logos, flags,...) to the intended responses (i.e. awareness increases and/ or image shifts). The second part of the paper consists of methodological considerations for the evaluation of sponsorship effectiveness.

The orthodox scholar might regard the methodological arguments used in this paper as oversimplifications of basic scientific concepts. The proposed model might also appear too simple for the average consumer researcher. However, these simplifications are deliberate. This paper does not intend to display theoretical and methodological sophistication which most sponsor might find too abstract. The goal of this paper is instead two-fold. First, to provide sponsorship managers with a consistent framework that will help them to assess their current evaluation practices. Second, to propose several implementable considerations in order to improve these practices.

1. A model of sponsorship communication processes

It is obvious that awareness and image objectives cannot be achieved unless sponsors succeed in associating their logos, colors, billboards, flags with the sponsored vehicles (e.g. soccer or racing teams, tennis or golf tournaments, etc.). Understandingly, an important portion of the sponsorship management process consists of making one's stimuli clearly visible (or audible) to a target audience. *The sponsorship communication process starts when exposure to the sponsorship stimuli is created.* This process is displayed in figure 1.

Various factors may influence whether this exposure is effective or not. Some are under the control of the sponsor, some are not. First, the sponsor can and must choose the vehicle to sponsor. He can also determine several characteristics of the sponsorship stimuli: the location (e.g. where is a billboard more likely to be seen in a basketball arena?), the type (billboards vs flags, logos printed on a player's shirt, etc.) and features (size, shape, color, in motion vs static, etc.).

However, other factors *beyond the sponsor's control* will also affect the nature, size and quality of the expected exposure. The most obvious example in sports sponsorship is the performance of the vehicle.

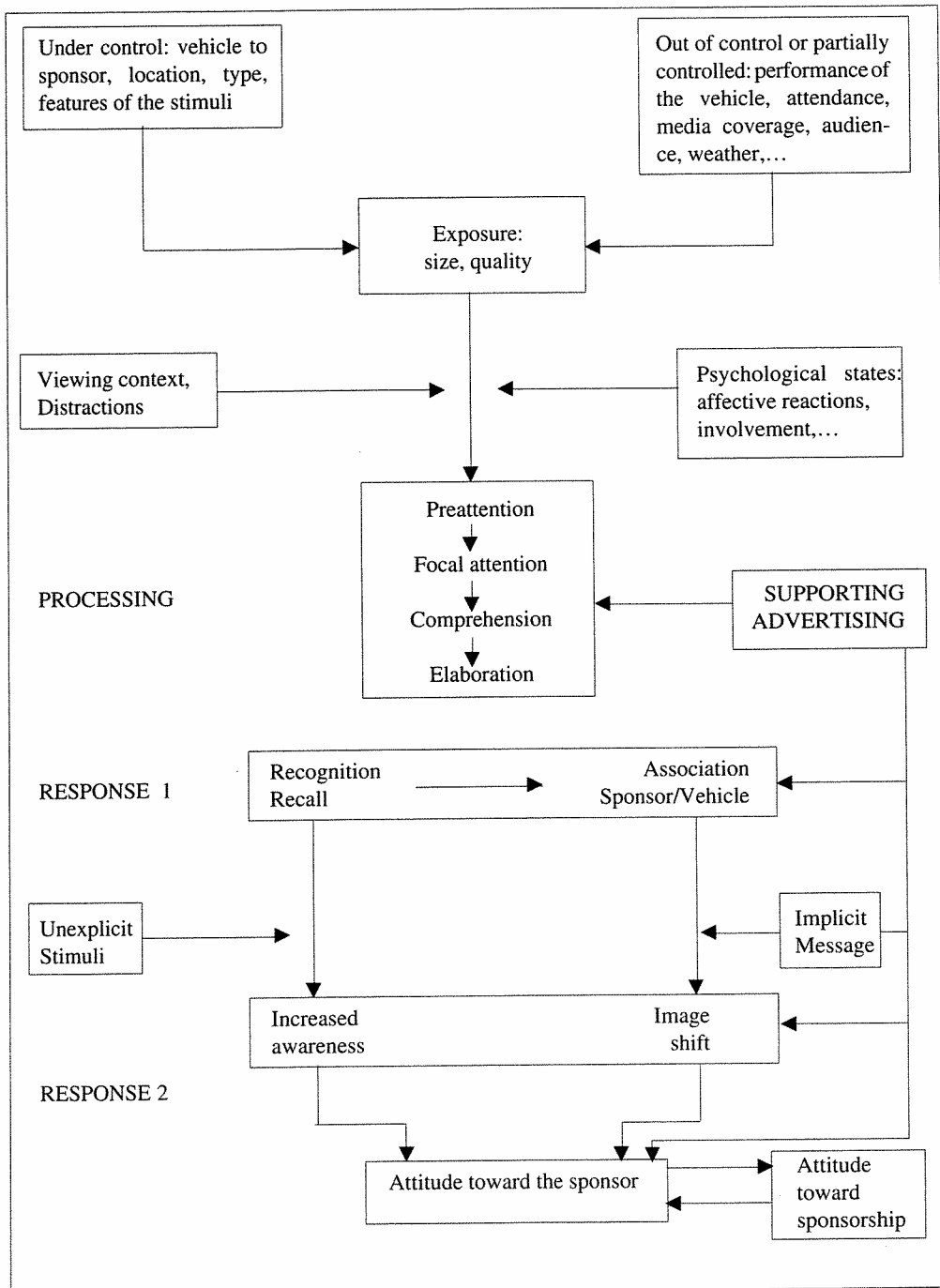


Figure 1: A model of sponsorship communication processes

Another major source of uncertainty is whether or not and to what extent the event will be covered by the media? What amount of time will the camera be focused on the stimuli? What will be the attendance at the event? What will be the indirect audience reached through the media? What will be the quality of the pictures in the print media? The weather might also affect the visibility of the stimuli. Most often, the sponsor can only make speculations on how these factors will affect the exposure to his stimuli.

By definition, if exposure is created, there exists an *opportunity* for the target audience to process the sponsorship stimuli. However, at this stage of the process, a response to the sponsorship stimuli is no more than a potentiality. It is not a necessary outcome of the exposure. Such a response will require that the stimuli be processed by the audience. The depth of this *processing* is function of the amount of attention paid to the stimuli and the audience's level of comprehension/elaboration. It can vary from a very shallow processing - it is often the case - to a very extensive, elaborate processing - actually less plausible.

Greenwald and Leavitt (1984), distinguish four levels of processing: preattention, focal attention, comprehension and elaboration. In the sponsorship context, these different levels of processing would reflect on the audience's responses. In the example of Formula 1 racing (F1), *preattention* would be indicated by a response like: "I think that there was large red and white sign near the circuit, but I can't tell you what it was about. You know, I don't like F1 and I didn't pay much attention to the race". *Focal attention* would be evidenced by a "Yes, I have seen that sign, it was for Marlboro. I can tell you that because I have looked it for a few seconds". *Comprehension* would be suggested by "It was Marlboro, it didn't surprise me because they also sponsor McLaren". *Elaboration* could lead to "As usually there was Marlboro everywhere. I thought that they must have a lot of money to be a sponsor in F1. It even reminded that I had to buy some cigarettes for my husband". It must be emphasized, however, that such an elaborate processing is probably rare.

Several factors will affect the opportunity, the motivation and the capacity to process the stimuli. The *context* in which the processing takes place will affect its quality. While watching a soccer game on tv, the exposed individuals may be reading the newspaper or having dinner. While attending the finish of a cycling race, they may be talking with friends. All these *distractions* reduce the opportunity to process the sponsorship stimuli.

In addition, several *psychological* characteristics of the individuals at the time of exposure will *mediate* their processing. For instance, the audience's affective reactions to, and involvement toward, a soccer game have been found to influence the recognition of billboard around the pitch (Pham, 1990).

When some processing does occur, a *response* may follow. Two types of responses need to be distinguished. First, "simple", *unelaborate* responses: the sponsor is better *identified*, his stimuli is *recognized* or *recalled* by the audience. These first responses may in turn lead to a second class of responses that are closer to marketers' concerns. These type-2 responses include increases in brand or corporate *awareness*, shifts in *image*, and possibly modifications of attitudes toward the brand/firm. These more *elaborate* responses correspond to the sponsors' objectives mentioned earlier.

But the type-2 responses will *not* always occur. Another constraint acts upon sponsorship stimuli, as compared to mainstream advertising. The sponsorship stimuli are *very unexplicit* (Hastings, 1984). They are most often restricted to logos or at most to the brand/company name. This lack of explicitness often restricts the ability of sponsorship to achieve awareness and image objectives *unless additional advertising supports the sponsorship operation itself* (Pham, 1988).

It is often suggested that companies spend at least as much money on supporting advertising as on sponsorship operations. As illustrated in figure 1, supporting advertising serves several functions:

- 1) it helps to attract the audience's attention to the sponsorship stimuli;
- 2) it enhances stimuli processing by providing more bases for elaboration;
- 3) it counterbalances lack of stimuli explicitness and therefore facilitates the step between response 1 and response 2.

As mentioned earlier, this model is essentially meant as a *framework* with respect to awareness and image, sponsors' main objectives. It does not deal with other important aspects of sponsorship communication such as public relations or social responsibility objectives. Consequently, it may appear less relevant to the purposes of some sponsors.

2. Methodological considerations

This section will illustrate to what extent the theoretical model depicted in Figure 1 can help in *assessing methods of evaluation* of sponsorship effectiveness.

2.1. Clear objectives and consistent methods

It is necessary to mention that no method of evaluation can be successful unless a *clear objective* has been assigned to a sponsorship operation. Sponsors should avoid vague objectives such as "showing our international dimension". A target needs to be defined (to whom, the actual customers, the potential retailers, the competitors?). A time horizon needs to be fixed (18 months, 5 years?). Several studies have revealed that many firms often set vague objectives or no objective to their sponsorship operations (Waite, 1979; Hulks, 1980).

Methods of evaluations must then be *consistent* with the target objective. If the main objective in sponsoring an event is to entertain customers for better trade relationships, then a small survey among those attending the event, questioning them about their level of satisfaction, would probably be more consistent than a large survey about the awareness of the sponsor.

2.2. Reliability and validity

Every method of evaluation necessarily involves some measurement. From a methodological standpoint, it is required to assess any measure with respect to its *reliability* and its *validity*. *The reliability of a measure refers to its consistency and its stability over repetition* (Nunnally, 1978). If two surveys run by two market research companies, on the same population at the same period, provide inconsistent results: an increase in top of mind awareness of 50% versus a decrease of 2 %, how confident can the sponsor be in the method used?

Even when an instrument is reliable, it is not necessarily *valid*. *Validity refers to whether an instrument - here a method of evaluation - really measures what it is intended to measure* (Nunnally, 1978). For instance, suppose a brewery decides to sponsor a tennis tournament with the objective of improving its trade relationships with its retailers. Does the number of beers sold during the sponsored event indicate the effective-

ness of this sponsorship operation? Although it can be measured reliably, this would obviously not be a *valid* measure of the improvement of the trade relationships achieved through the operation. As explained earlier, a post-event survey among the retailers (both the ones who came and the ones who did not) would probably be more valid. *Reliability* is said to be a *necessary but not sufficient condition to validity* (Churchill, 1979). Various dimensions of the validity of current evaluation practices in sponsorship will be examined later.

2.3. The use of exposure-based methods

The *media coverage approach* is probably the method most often used by sponsors to evaluate the effectiveness of their sponsorship operations (Waite, 1979; Hulks, 1980; Mintel, 1986; Quinn, 1982). Sponsors often calculate the number of tv/radio seconds or centimeters/column they have gained through sponsorship. It is consistent with the fact that they have been observed to rank media coverage as the main reason for an organization to be involved in sports sponsorship (Abratt, Clayton and Pitt, 1987). Refinements are sometimes added. Various weights can be applied according to the relative size of the brand name compared to the size of the picture where it appears, whether the picture is black and white or color, whether the brand name appears in the main title of an article, etc. (see for instance Piguet, 1985, pp. 237-238). A related approach is the *estimation* of the direct and indirect *audiences* of the sponsored event. These two methods involve the recording and the assessment of the *amount of exposure generated* by an operation. Sahnoun (1986) suggests a "cost-per-thousand" (CPT) based on these "opportunities-to-see" (OTS). He advances that if the so-computed CPT is below the CPT associated to paid-advertising, the sponsorship operation is a success.

The following excerpt about the 1986 Mundiale in Mexico typifies the media coverage approach:

"Marketers calculate that as cameras follow the action, each sign (billboard around the pitch) will be seen for an average of 7 1/2 minutes. With two signs, that works out to 15 minutes times the estimated 12 billion worldwide viewers - an impact larger than that of commercials" (Welling 1986, p. 21).

There are several factors explaining sponsors' interest in these methods. First, they are rather simple, inexpensive, and can be performed internally.

Second, they seem to be more "serious" and are therefore judged more concrete because they involve numbers. Finally, they are optimistic. Unless very ambitious benchmarks are fixed, they are likely to bring about the conclusion that the operation has had a positive effect. Thus, they comfort the sponsorship manager and the sponsorship agency about the worthiness of their sponsorship commitment.

2.4. The limits of exposure methods

Unfortunately, the various methods based on exposure also *suffer serious limitations*. Despite their relative reliability and apparent "scientific" character, they lack *validity*. Obviously, they do not measure what they are supposed to measure, i.e. sponsorship effectiveness. Media coverage results do not tell more about sponsorship effectiveness than a well-designed media plan would tell about advertising effectiveness. They *cannot be considered measures* of sponsorship effectiveness because achieving *media coverage is not an end in itself*. Remember that exposure, to billboards for instance, is not more than a stimulus. What should count for marketers is in fact the *response* to this stimulus.

Some practitioners may argue that they do not regard exposure figures as direct measures of sponsorship effectiveness but instead as proxy measures. It is true that proxy measures are often useful, especially when direct measures are expensive or impossible. However one needs to ascertain the *predictive validity* of the proxy. The main criticism to these methods is precisely that they lack predictive validity. This often results in making marketers *too enthusiastic*, as was the writer of the above-quoted excerpt.

Coverage and exposure figures are often *misleading predictors* of the expected responses. For instance, in a recent quasi-experiment, 85 subjects were shown 25 minutes of a soccer game. The exposure durations of 8 billboards (the sponsorship stimuli considered) were recorded. After the game, the subjects were projected 8 series of 4 billboards and asked to recognize which ones they had been exposed to during the game (each series contained three billboards snapped from another stadium). Table 1 exhibits the correct recognition rates of these billboards.

Sponsor	Exposure duration (in sec.)	Recognition rate (%)	Significance level
1	27.35	30.6	ns
2	186.54	81.2	p < .001
3	289.67	37.6	p < .01
4	55.65	32.9	ns
5	297.53	45.1	p < .001
6	24.65	28.2	ns
7	43.98	29.3	ns
8	19.93	44.7	p < .001

Source: Pham and Bomboir, unpublished data, 1990.

Table 1: Recognition rates of the billboards

Although the average duration of exposure of the stimuli was very large (118 sec.), the average recognition rate was disappointing (41.2 %). It should be reminded indeed that the *a priori* recognition rate due to chance alone is 25 % (one correct answer among four possible choices). Besides, the memory task - the response - was relatively easy, recognition just after being exposed to the stimuli. Therefore, measures of exposure to sponsorship stimuli might well *overestimate* real effectiveness. Also observe that in this study, there was no simple linear relationship between exposure durations of the stimuli and their recognition rates. This suggests that *predicting* responses from mere exposure figures may be risky even in relative terms unless more is known about the sponsorship communication process.

Similarly disappointing results have been found by Nebenzahl and Hornik (1985) with billboards embedded in a basket game. Their exposure durations were very high, ranging from 3.8 to 17 minutes. However, on average, test brands were only recalled by 24 % of tv viewers. In a laboratory experiment, d'Ydewalle et al. (1987) monitored with eye-movement recorder the processing of billboards by subjects watching a soccer game. They found the total time gazing the billboards to be *extremely low*. Although significantly different from zero, memory for the advertised brands was low. On average the subjects could only recall 1.29 and recognize 9.64 of the 16 brand names appearing in the program.

To summarize, there are several problems with exposure-based methods. First, *exposure figures are not measures of sponsorship effectiveness*. Although often spectacular, they may be strongly deceptive, with a tendency to *overestimation*. Second, the coverage achieved through sponsorship *cannot be directly compared* to paid advertising

coverage as suggested by some professionals (e.g. Sahnoun, 1986). As Hastings (1984) stresses, "sponsorship works differently from advertising" (p. 171). Had an advertisement been exposed during 55 seconds (cf. sponsor 4 in table 1), its recognition rate among three other ads would obviously have been much higher than 33 %.

These empirical results may be interpreted by our model. Remember that processing of the sponsorship stimuli ultimately determines the level of response. This processing is itself mediated by psychological characteristics of the audience being exposed (Pham, 1990). The processing is also likely to be altered by distracting factors due to the viewing context. In fact, one should keep in mind that when people attend a sponsored event or watch it on tv, it is not for the sponsorship stimuli but for the event itself. It is unreasonable to assume that this *opportunity* to process the stimuli will always end up in a response.

Another aspect of sponsorship communication that reduces the validity of exposure methods, as far as marketing objectives are concerned, is that sponsorship stimuli are very *unexplicit*. They do not tell anything but the name of a brand/company. The product category/activity is not made explicit. As the typical awareness question is "What are the brands that you know *in a given product category?*", there is an obvious limitation on the ability of exposure to sponsorship stimuli *alone* to increase awareness whereas typical ads may be more successful (see Hastings, 1984 and Pham, 1988).

To conclude this argument, it is argued that any valid measure of sponsorship effectiveness *should be recorded "beyond" exposure to the stimuli*. This does not mean that media coverage or exposure data are worthless. They are certainly necessary as an *intermediary* control over the progress of a sponsorship operation *but not as measures of its effectiveness*.

2.5. Being discriminant in the survey method

Another approach is often taken for measuring sponsorship effectiveness, the *survey*. Whereas the exposure approach is based on the stimulus, the survey focuses on the response. Surveys about sponsors' image or awareness, consumers' attitudes toward sponsors and sponsorship, etc. thus answer much of the criticism addressed to the previous method. However, a question still remains. What do these surveys really measure?

Surveys will hopefully measure the effects of sponsorship. But they will also record something else, notably the effects of other marketing variables.

As sponsorship is probably not the only communication effort of the marketing plan, any survey that records a shift in image, an increase of awareness, a more favorable attitude toward the firm, is likely to display the *result of an integrated marketing effort, not only the outcome of sponsorship*. A more favorable attitude may be due to a decrease in the price of the company's products; an increased awareness may be caused by a greater availability of the products in retail outlets; more simply, a shift in image could be attributed to a well designed advertising campaign. To that extent, the survey method lacks *discriminant validity*, it can rarely discriminate between sponsorship effects and unrelated marketing effects.

Isolating the effects of sponsorship alone is therefore critical, especially since sponsorship operations are typically supported by heavy exploitation campaigns (e.g. contests, coupons, paid advertising, etc.). Indeed, the common rule of thumb is to invest at least as much in advertising support as in the sponsorship operation itself.

To identify the real causes, the scientific researcher would typically run an experiment. Experimentation is indeed the only available method to ascertain causation (Aronson et al., 1990). While true experimentation is not managerially possible to this purpose, the "experimental spirit" might be of some help because of its will to discover real causal effects. Notably, it suggests a *higher control on the effect of extraneous variables* in order to isolate the effects of sponsorship. When any effect is recorded, the scientist will always try to identify *competing explanations*. The more competing explanations the researcher can rule out, the more confident he is about the validity of the results.

A first step is to identify all the factors that could reasonably account for a significant part of the results obtained in the survey. The sponsors should always ask themselves "Beside my sponsorship operation, is there any factor that would explain parts of my results?". One way to undertake this discriminant process is to have all managers involved in the marketing effort read the survey results. First, they are likely to be aware of variations in the marketing environment that could possibly account for some of the results. Second, they are likely to strive to attribute parts of the results to their own marketing policy. The survey itself should be designed to include not only response measures but also control questions about the real antecedents of these responses (e.g.

"You mentioned brand A, where did you last see/hear it?", "Where are you the most often exposed to it?"). This would necessarily result in longer questionnaires and more expensive surveys. On the other hand, their results could be more fruitfully interpreted and will also be useful for other managers involved in the whole marketing effort.

2.6. Comparing and recording changes over time

Another feature of an experiment that sponsors should copy is the possibility to compare. One way to *partially* control for alternative explanations is to conduct *before* and *after* studies. This has been done in the study reported by Otker and Hayes (1988) and in a recent study conducted by Suma Research International about the bicycle race "Torhout-Werchter Classic" (Service d'Etude Groupe Standaard, 1990). This design should be encouraged for all surveys intended to measure such a causal effect.

Although, sponsorship has been discussed here essentially in static terms, an evaluation plan should take into account the long term, *cumulative* process of sponsorship effectiveness (Shalofsky and San Germano, 1985). Response 2 in the model depicted in figure 1, probably takes place over *repeated exposure*. The antecedent processes have to be reproduced multiple times. Therefore, response 1 will eventually contribute to the building of response 2, but the latter should be recorded in the long run. In other words, the surveys are to be run periodically in order to record gradually any change in consumers' awareness and/or image about the firm. Note that a single survey run long after the sponsorship operation is started, would not be able to achieve the discrimination discussed in the preceding point.

2.7. Image objectives

A few comments are needed about the way some sponsors seek to achieve their *image objectives*. An *assumption* underlying sponsorship image management is that, with proper sponsorship, the "image" of the sponsored vehicle will be associated to the sponsor itself. Some possible psychological mechanisms that may explain this connotation transfer are suggested by Ryssel and Stamminger (1988). Whatever these mechanisms, it seems obvious that the first step to control of such image transfer is to *measure the actual image of the sponsored vehicle, not to merely assume it*. Images refer to the *subjective* perception of objects along several dimensions. They are not *intrinsic* qualities of the objects,

but rather their mental representations among individuals. As they are highly subjective and will vary from consumer to consumer, they cannot be estimated in a manager's office. Therefore, the image of potential sponsored vehicles (e.g. tennis players, soccer team, cultural activities, etc.), like brand image, *must be measured*. The manager's impressions or intuitions about the image of, say soccer, is insufficient.

Sponsors could take simple and relatively inexpensive measures of the *average representation* – image – of tennis players, for instance (see Ryssel and Stamminger, 1988). Such a study should of course be made among a sample of the *target* population. Besides, it should be performed *prior to* engaging in the activity in order to select the most suitable vehicle, i.e. the one whose average image among the target group is closest to the image sought-after by the sponsor.

Sponsors could then obtain consistent and valid measures of sponsorship effectiveness by periodically recording any shift in image of *both the sponsor and the vehicle along the same dimensions*. From this, sponsors could easily derive perceptual maps. A first measure of effectiveness would be the distance between the image of the sponsor and of the image of the sponsored vehicle. This index is in fact a control of the connotation transfer. A second measure of effectiveness would be indicated by the distance between the sponsor's image and the image sought-after. However, one should not forget that the image of the sponsored vehicle may itself evolve (e.g. the image of the Liverpool soccer team may well have changed after the Heysel tragedy).

2.8. Identifying guessing and ambush marketing from the noise

When taking measures of effectiveness, the sponsor will inevitably face some *noise* beyond the effects of changing factors in the - notably marketing - environment of the target. For instance, when asking respondents to identify the sponsors of some vehicles, many wrong responses will occur. Rather than ignoring *these wrong responses* (cf. Gardner and Shuman 1987; Ryssel and Stamminger 1988), *sponsors should take them into account* for two reasons.

The first reason is mainly methodological. Wrong responses may indicate some *guessing effects*. In such a case, the number of right responses clearly overestimates the real effect. Corrections for guessing should be applied (see Nunnally 1978 for an introduction to corrections for guessing, and Pham 1990 for an application).

The second reason is more substantive. Wrong responses may also indicate that someone *other* than the real sponsor has succeeded in associating himself with the sponsored event/vehicle. Sandler and Shani (1989) have called the "efforts of an organization to associate itself indirectly with an event in an effort to reap the same benefits as an official sponsor" *ambush marketing* (p. 9). It has notably occurred during recent Olympic Games.

2.9. Sampling bias and sampling error

Besides wrong responses, whether due to guessing or to ambush marketing, additional noise or uncertainty is introduced by the fact that surveys are, by definition, conducted among a restricted number of subjects, the sample. Sponsor should thus ascertain whether the sample is *really representative* of the target population. If the target of a sponsor is "male and female adults, living in the Brussels area" an obvious *bias* will be introduced by running a survey at the exit of the stadium after a home game played by Anderlecht.

Finally, when recording differences (in attitude, image, awareness, recall, etc.) in a pretest-posttest study, sponsors should be conscious that part of these differences may be attributed to *chance* – or more precisely, to sampling error – even if the sample is not biased. In most introductory statistics and marketing research manuals, the cautious sponsor can find simple methods of assessing the level of *significance* of an apparent sponsorship effect. This significance, usually called risk α (to be minimized), should be interpreted as follows. If in reality, a given sponsorship operation has *no effect* (the "null" hypothesis), there is nevertheless a probability of α that, due to sampling error, the data would display an effect at least as large as the observed one. Sponsors should consequently beware of slight observed differences, especially when the sample size is low. For instance, in a pretest-posttest study conducted by Suma Research International (Service d'Etude Groupe Standaard 1990), the awareness of Lotto had apparently increased from 81.4 % to 84.0 %. The authors concluded that "an increased awareness of the brand is displayed" (p. 97). Actually, this increase was not significant. A test of hypothesis would have revealed that, due to sampling error, even in the absence of any true effect of sponsorship (the null hypothesis), there was a probability (α) of 20 % that an increase of at least 2.6 % would have been obtained. Yet, in this study, the samples were relatively large ($n_1=311$ and $n_2=282$) in the pretest and posttest, respectively). An effect of the same size obtained from a smaller sample would be even more suspicious (for instance with $n_1=n_2=80$, α would

be about 33 %). In sum, sponsors should look for *truly significant effects*. They cannot be satisfied by results which may have stemmed only from sampling imperfection (the usual standard is to set $\alpha=5\%$).

3. Conclusion and future directions

In raising these considerations, the intention was not to *criticize* sponsors but to help them in assessing and possibly improving their evaluation practices. It is argued that sponsors should be more rigorous in this key management function. Such rigor could be attained at a reasonable cost, given the amounts usually invested in sponsorship.

Exposure-based methods of evaluation are not valid. When resorting to surveys, sponsors need to achieve better control in designing them, and to be more cautious in interpreting their results. There is not a single perfect method of sponsorship evaluation, but there are several ways to improve present ones. Experimentation could be a viable alternative, and should always be referred to as a model when using other methods.

The model proposed in this paper should encourage sponsors to heavily support their sponsorship operations by paid advertising. Besides, in the future, it will be necessary to measure the images of the wide variety of sponsorable vehicles among different target populations or segment. A joint effort from an eventual Association of Sponsors could be considered. Sponsors should also be aware that the practice of ambush marketing is likely to increase. Finally, more research needs to be undertaken to better understand the whole sponsorship communication process. This is in fact a prerequisite for the improvement of evaluation practices. The proposed model could serve as a starting point.

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