

Emotion and Sponsorship: Case of Television Sponsorship

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Abstract

Sponsorship is a mode of communication that has led to the emergence of a growing body of literature. Most studies on sponsorship focused on the latter's effectiveness yet were limited to the study of the influence of individual and situational variables. It was only recently that research on sponsorship had developed an interest in emotions. Some authors have addressed this issue from an empirical standpoint. The present article attempts to examine the impact of emotional reactions to a sponsored program on consumer behavior in terms of the attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention. The empirical study focused on the case of television sponsorship and specifically on sports programs in Tunisia. A survey was conducted on a sample of 200 individuals. The results show the positive effect of emotions on attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention.

Keywords: Attitude, intention, emotion, sponsorship.

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Introduction

Built primarily around sports, sponsorship is a marketing technique and an integral means of communication (Anne and Cheron, 1991). This mode of communication has led to the emergence of a growing body of research (Cornwell and Maignan, 1998; Walliser, 2003). However, despite the abundance of literature on the topic, sponsorship is relatively under-studied in comparison with other areas such as advertising (Cornwell and Maignan, 1998).

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This communication tool is used in different areas such as culture, charity, environment and health. The practice of sponsorship has greatly developed considering the fact that advertisers have started developing advertising strategies using all media including television. In fact, investing in sponsorship is significantly increasing from one year to another and one can cite sports as a field that enjoys the lion's share of investment nowadays. Admittedly, the power of communication incurred by this social phenomenon has been adopted by most companies with a considerable emotional impact. In fact, it has been demonstrated that sports generate the widest and most powerful range of emotions (Broach, Page and Wilson, 1995). This is one of the main reasons behind the study of emotions in sponsoring research (Pham, 1992; Walliser, 1996; Abbassi, 2005; Bal, 2010).

Most studies on sponsorship focused on the effectiveness of the latter and were limited to examine the influence of individual and situational variables. It was only later that research on sponsorship has started focusing on emotions. The influence of emotional reactions on the effectiveness of communication has already been addressed in advertising studies (Barta and Ray, 1986; Edell and Burke, 1987; Golderberg and Gorn, 1987). Some authors chose to address this issue at the empirical level (Pham, 1992; Walliser, 1994b, 1996, Christensen, 2006; Bal, 2010).

The significance of emotions in the previously proposed models (Abbassi, 2005, Walliser, 2006; Bal, 2010) is still debatable. Some authors consider that emotions play the role of a mediating variable (Walliser, 1994b, 1996), others consider emotions as either an explanatory variable (Bal, 2010) or a moderating one (Abbassi, 2005).

The present article hopes to examine the impact of emotional reactions to a sponsored program on consumer behavior in terms of the attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention. The empirical study focused on the case of television sponsorship and specifically on sports programs in Tunisia. It is important to start by presenting the fundamental concepts of our research which are: emotions, television sponsorship, attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention. After the literature review, we will propose our research model. Finally, we will explain the methodology used in our empirical study and display the results and the related managerial implications.

Literature review

The objective of this part is to present the theoretical fundamentals of our work in order to justify the choice of the variables to be studied and the research hypotheses.

Emotion

There are many definitions proposed for this term and this may be partly explained by the nature and complexity of emotions as well as the different forms through which they are expressed. According to Goueron (1995), emotions are multidimensional. They represent a kind of a temporary reaction disrupting an enduring state. They constitute a momentary multifaceted and more or less intense affective response to a disturbing and external factor. According to Graillet (1994, 1996), an emotion is an

emotional, subjective, "experiential," momentary phenomenon and a multidimensional source of motivation, caused by factors that are external to the individual. An emotion interacts with the processing of collected information about an eating experience for instance or with behavior and consumption related experience in general.

These definitions show that emotions are at the same time a reaction and a process; therefore, there could be no definition over which all researchers would have consensus. Facing such difficulties, several authors prefer only to describe and specify the components of emotions (Ekman, 1977; Kirouac, 1993).

Emotion is a multidimensional construct with four dimensions which are: awareness by the individual, direction (polarity), intensity and content (Derbaix and Pham, 1989). Measuring emotions is indeed delicate and complex as researchers agree that no measuring instrument takes into account the four dimensions of emotions (Derbaix and Pham, 1989).

The literature review highlights two approaches to describe and measure emotions:

The categorical approach (Izard, 1977; Plutchik, 1980) in which emotional states can be explained by a set of emotions labeled as "fundamental," "basic" or "primary"; these are innate, irreducible and common among humans.

The multidimensional approach in which emotions are a result of a combination of two or three dimensions (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Batra and Ray 1986; Edell and Burke, 1987). The Mehrabian and Russell PAD (Pleasure, Arousal and Dominance) (1974) was the most used scale in measuring emotional states of individuals in consumer behavior studies and one that was validated by several surveys (Grailot, 1998).

However, these measures have their own limitations. One of the limitations of verbal measures is that emotions are difficult to verbalize which led to the emergence of other instruments to measure emotions such as non verbal measures.

The SAM (Self Assessment Model) is one of the best known nonverbal measurement tools in advertising and marketing communication research (Morris, 1995). This measurement tool was developed by Lang (1980) and was inspired by the Mehrabian and Russell approach (1974) in which all three dimensions (pleasure, activation and dominance) are represented by five figures. Compared with verbal measurements, the SAM helps save time for the respondent who can answer in less than 15 seconds.

Through the above displayed elements, it appears that the multidimensional approach is particularly designed for marketing research and that iconic nonverbal methods have many advantages both at the theoretical and the practical level.

Sponsorship

Due to disagreements over the definition of the concept, there have been several debates in this respect. In fact, various definitions from the literature (Meenaghan JA, 1983; Okter and Hayes, 1988; Sandler and Shani, 1989; Giannelloni 1990) are

indicative of attitudes about the diversity of this communication technique. We propose the definition of Laborde (2000). It defines Sponsorship as an act of communication by which an organization, brand or product voluntarily associate an event, a discipline, a group of people—for a certain period and in a socio-culturally independent environment—to an individual or organization in order to achieve marketing communication goals.

Sponsorship is considered as an integral, yet complex, communication tool (Anne and Cheron, 1991), the main characteristic of which is that it is a milder and more subtle form of communication that complements rather than substitutes traditional techniques. (Cegarra, 1994). It is used to target a particular group in order to achieve specific goals and it greatly differs from other media.

The objectives of sponsorship are highly heterogeneous. The firm can seek to widen its reputation, improve its image, increase its profits as well as the motivation of its staff and recruitment capabilities in addition to bonding with its partners (suppliers, customers, prospects) (Fuchs, 1995).

These objectives depend on a specific number of factors (Copeland et al., 1996). The latter may be the area of sponsorship, the sustained activity, the industry sponsor or the company size (Walliser, 2006). For instance, hospitality is a major motivation for sponsors of art (Walliser, 2006).

However, the most important goals of sponsorship are to improve the image or change consumer attitudes towards the brand (Giannelloni 1990; Didellon, 1997; Gwinner, 1997) as well as increase brand and company awareness (Anne, 1990; Walliser, 1994a) and to a lesser extent improve the purchase intent (Pope and Voges, 2000; Dees and al, 2008). However, most companies that invest in sponsorship already enjoy a strong reputation; therefore, their main motivation rests on the image. Sponsorship is specifically seen as a way to bring about positive change in addition to cognitive and affective reactions to the brand (Laborde, 2000).

Role of emotion in sponsorship

In the advertising sector, considering emotions as a rather explanatory variable was often exploited in marketing research due to the emotions' impact on attitudes towards advertising, beliefs, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention (Gorn, 1982; Batra and Ray, 1986; Pavelchak and al., 1988). These works were a source of inspiration and a starting point for sponsoring research in which the variable "emotions" paved its way. Most studies agree that sponsorship produces strong emotions.

Some surveys were mainly concerned with the effect of emotional reactions on memorization of sponsors and involvement in activities. According to Walliser (1996), the intensity of emotions aroused by the sponsored activity in the viewer has a negative impact on memorizing the sponsors' names. That is to say, the more emotions are generated in the viewer of an event, the less he/she would remember the sponsors. In a laboratory study, Pham (1992) showed a positive impact of involvement in the

sponsored event on the intensity of emotional reactions (arousal) and a negative impact of the intensity of emotional reactions on the recognition of sponsors.

Other researchers such as Abbassi (2007) studied the impact of the intensity of emotions between exposure and memorization on the one hand, and between exposure, brand image and the purchase intention on the other. Christensen (2006) has shown that emotional reactions can affect sponsors' attitudes. Bal (2010) has shown that emotional reactions promote purchasing for sponsors. And finally, Morris and al. (2002) detected a positive impact of emotions on the attitude towards the brand and on the purchase intention.

As part of a sponsorship campaign, the emotions experienced by the sponsored entity will shape the attitude towards the brand and cause purchase intentions (Stipp and Schiavone, 1996; Laborde, 2000; Pracejus, 2004; Courbet, 2005; Christensen, 2006, Bal, 2010). This leads us to formulate the following hypothesis:

H₁: Emotions have a direct and positive impact on attitude towards the sponsoring brand.

H₂: Emotions have a direct and positive impact on the purchase intention.

Research Model

The analysis of the literature allowed to formulate three hypotheses. Our research model is represented in the following figure (Figure1).

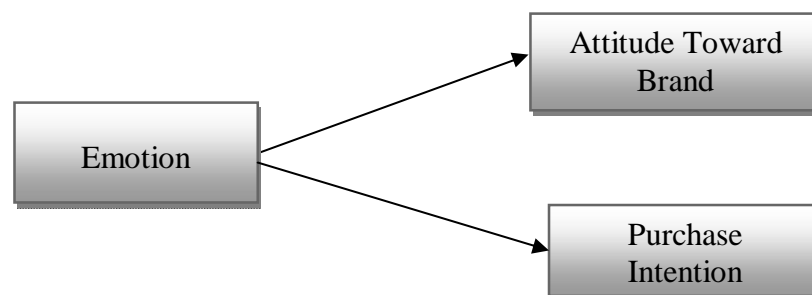


Figure 1 The conceptual model of the research

Research methodology

Context of the study

To validate our causal model, we opted for an experimental approach. We chose to conduct a post-sponsorship study, *i.e.* a study that is conducted after exposure to sponsorship. Our choice focused on a sports program called “Stade ettounsiya” sponsored by Ooredoo (a private telecommunication operator specialized in mobile telephony and internet in Tunisia). The choice of this program was initially spurred by the fact that this is a national program watched by Tunisian viewers.

Data collection

In order to reach our research objectives, we decided to conduct a questionnaire survey. We collected the data by administering questionnaires using face to face interviews and Internet. The respondents were selected using the convenience sampling method. Our survey was conducted from August 2014 to November 2014 on a sample of 200 individuals (58% of whom were men and 42 % were women). The Sample characteristics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample characteristics

Gender	%	Age	%	Educational level	%
Male	58	20-34	42	Primary	7
Female	42	35-44	27	Secondary	33
		45-59	26	University	60
		60 and over	5		

Measuring scales

In order to measure the model's variables, we used the measuring scales used in the marketing literature (See table 2)

Table 2 Scales of measurement

Variables	Scales
Emotion	Mehrabian and Russell, (1974), a 5-point scale: - Pleasure, - Activation
Attitude towards brand	Mitchell (1986), a semantic differential 5-point scale
Purchase intention	Mac Kenzie and al. (1986), a 5-point scale

To measure emotions aroused by the sponsored program, we used the Mehrabian and Russell scale (1974). The theory of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) is based on the idea that any emotional response can be represented by three independent and bipolar dimensions: pleasure, activation and dominance (PAD).

Pleasure refers to a positive affective state which appears to the individual as a feeling of joy, satisfaction and content (Mehrabian, 1976). Activation is generally the dominant component in the activation of a system. For human beings, it refers to the way in which an individual is active, gets excited, agitated, or becomes alert (Mehrabian, 1976). Dominance refers to the feeling of being detached from stress and being able to act freely and in many ways. Hui and Bateson (1991) define control as the need to demonstrate a skill, to show superiority and mastery facing an environment.

To measure emotional states, some studies retained only two dimensions of the PAD considering that a two-dimensional structure is enough to measure emotions (Hui and Bateson, 1991; Mano and Oliver, 1993). These dimensions are pleasure and activation.

Dominance seems to explain only a small part of the variance in emotional responses that are triggered by the environment (Russell and Pratt, 1980; Russell, 1980). This two-dimensional structure has been used in various studies on sponsorship to measure the intensity and quality of emotions at a sporting event (Pavelchak and al., 1988; Pham, 1992; Walliser, 1996; Abbassi, 2007) which is why we will retain it in our study. The two dimensions include six items each.

The attitude towards the sponsoring brand was measured using the Mitchell scale (1986) which is a widely used reference in the marketing literature. It has also been applied in the field of advertising.

Finally, to measure the purchase intention we used the Mac Kenzie and al. (1986) scale, also widely used in the marketing literature with the advantage of being easy to interpret. Cronbach's alphas are greater than 0.89. It has been applied in the advertising sector, too.

Survey results

Once we collected the data, we treated them with SPSS 18.0 and AMOS 18.0 softwares and analyzed them in order to obtain the survey's empirical results. The employed methods can be divided into two groups:

- Methods aiming at verifying the quality of the used measures. The exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses are the methods we used to assess the reliability and validity of the adopted scales.
- Methods aiming at verifying the research hypotheses. We purposefully selected the methods of structural equations for this research.

Purification of the measuring scales

We performed exploratory and confirmatory analyses on all the scales.

Table 3 Results of Principal Component Analysis

Scale / Construct		Bartlett's sphericity test and the KMO index	Variance explained (%)	Reliability (α)
Emotion	Pleasure	KMO = 0,922 Bartlett's test = 0,000	Component 1 : 60,966	0,911
	Activation		Component 2 : 13,275 Total : 74,241	0,921
Attitude towards brand		KMO = 0,812 Bartlett's test = 0,000	Component 1 : 86,516 Total : 86,516	0,863
Purchase intention		KMO = 0,721 Bartlett's test = 0,000	Component 1 : 83,112 Total : 83,112	0,841

Table 4 Results of Reliability and Validity of Scales

Scale / Construct		Rho of Jöreskog	Convergent validity	Discriminant validity
Emotion	Pleasure	0,71	0,61	0,57 ² 0,34
	Activation	0,77	0,71	0,71 ² 0,34
Attitude towards brand		0,81	0,74	0,73 ² 0,34
Purchase intention		0,82	0,58	0,57 ² 0,34

The results of table 3 and 4 confirm that the scales used in this research have the following qualities:

- For all the scales, data were adequate to the factorisation (KMO indices present satisfactory values and Bartlett's test is significant). The percentage of the explained variance exceeds 70%.
- Cronbach alphas and Jöreskog's Rhôs are very satisfactory and exceed the minimum threshold of 0,7.
- The results of Rhô's convergent validity are superior to the recommended minimum of 0,5.
- The discriminant validity was verified as the extracted average variance is superior to the square of the correlation between the latent variables.

We can thus conclude that the measurement scales are reliable and valid.

Causal model and verification of the research hypotheses

The causal model helps verify the research hypotheses as well as the intensity and significance of the causality links between the latent variables. Table 5 shows that the causal model presents a good adjustment.

Table 5 Model adjustment

Indication	Chi-deux / ddl	GFI	AGFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI
Value	2,921	0,851	0,821	0,024	0,044	0,751

In the following section, the reading of the results is centered on the significance of the regression coefficients. Only the significant ones are retained. Only hypothetical relations with the student t (CR) in an absolute value that is higher than 1.96 (p less than 0.05) are statistically significant. The underlying hypotheses are then confirmed.

Table 6 Estimates of the Relationship between the Latent Variables

Hypotheses	Relation	CR	P
H1	Pleasure → Attitude	2,500	0,000
	Activation → Attitude	4,020	0,000
H2	Pleasure → Intention	2,012	0,000
	Activation → Intention	3,645	0,000

Table 6 shows that pleasure and activation dimensions have a positive impact on the attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention. Besides, we found that the effect

of the activation dimension on the attitude is more important than that of pleasure. In the same vein, the effect of the activation dimension on the purchase intention is more important than that of pleasure. This confirms hypotheses H_1 and H_2 .

Discussion and conclusion

Researchers and practitioners are giving more and more importance to sponsorship. The number of related studies has significantly increased in the last decade. Most of these studies have shown the importance of emotions as an explanatory variable.

Studies on sponsorship mainly focused on sports as it has been demonstrated by previous research that sports generate the widest and most powerful range of emotions (Broach, Page and Wilson, 1995). Most research on sponsorship focused on the effectiveness of the latter and only examined the influence of individual and situational variables. It was not until recently that research on sponsorship has started focusing on emotions.

Thus this article seems to examine the impact of emotional reactions to a sponsored program on consumer behavior in terms of attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention.

In this respect, we developed a conceptual model that integrates emotions, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention.

In order to verify the hypothetical links, we conducted a survey over four months on a sample of 200 individuals.

The empirical results that we obtained from our causal model show the positive impact of emotions on the attitude towards the brand and on the purchase intention. Actually, emotions raised by the program have made it possible to improve both attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. These results helped confirm hypotheses H_1 and H_2 and concur with the studies of Laborde (2000), Christensen (2006) and Bal (2010).

Our research has shown that the effect of emotions on the attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention was more important at the level of the activation dimension than at that of pleasure. Our study focused on a sports program and generally this type of programs do generate more activation than pleasure.

Our research provides arguments in favor of the use of television sponsorship as well as useful recommendations to make it an effective communication tool. In fact, during the implementation of an operation of television sponsorship, the manager must give importance to emotions. We found that emotional reactions to the program cause more activation than pleasure. Therefore, knowing the nature of emotions generated by the program would help highlight the features that best characterize the brand. This is done thanks to a suitable choice of program type.

Our research helped set the relationship between different variables that may explain the effectiveness of television sponsorship in a causal model and confirm the theory of sponsorship.

However, and like any other piece of research, this paper has some limitations. First, there is a methodological limitation related to the design of the study. Actually, we chose to conduct a post-sponsorship survey as it is difficult to conduct a pre-sponsorship one. The former approach helps analyze the change in attitude within each individual. However, this method has some disadvantages in the sense that it is costly and time consuming and requires the provision of a consumer panel in addition to collaboration with a specialized agency.

Moreover, due to the lack of time and resources, we managed to conduct a longitudinal study to take measurements over time. This approach is able to verify that the impact of emotions generated by the sponsored program has lasting effects on responses to television sponsorship.

It would be interesting to include other variables that were excluded from our model and that may influence the effectiveness of sponsorship (congruity between the program and the brand).

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