Recall vs. Recognition: How the strength of sponsor awareness influences the perceived brand personality

ABSTRACT

Aims: The aim of this paper is to investigate whether the type of remembering a sponsor (recall or recognition) has an influence on the perceived image of the brand. Because brand personality is a psychological and multi-dimensional construct, it is worthwhile to investigate the influence of the information retrieval from the long-term memory.

Study design: The study contains two independent samples. On the one hand spectators were interviewed at different sport events that were sponsored by the same brand (field sample). Additionally, a representative sample of the population was drawn and questioned about the same brand outside the environment of sport events (online sample).

Place and Duration of Study: Both samples were collected in the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany within a period of four months.

Methodology: In total, 2761 questionnaires from spectators and 1000 questionnaires from the representative online sample of the population in the same region were collected. Regression analyses were conducted to compare the influence of the sponsor awareness on the brand image with other drivers of image transfer found in literature.

Results: Both tests (recall and recognition) show a significant influence on the brand image, but they defer in the extend and the addressed dimensions of brand personality. Logistic regressions show that a low sponsor awareness is sufficient to strengthen some general positive brand associations, whereas it requires a higher sponsor awareness to raise intended associations successfully.

Conclusion: The strength of sponsor awareness should be considered when selecting the test procedure (recall or recognition test) for measuring image outcomes – both in marketing research and sponsorship controlling. Depending on the type of objectives the sponsor wants to achieve, this can be crucial for a sponsor in strategic management.

1. INTRODUCTION

The sponsorship market has been continuously growing over the last decades [1] and was still expected to grow before the COVID-19 pandemic [2]. In 2016, the annual global expenditure on sponsorships exceeded $60 billion for the first time [2]. Most of the money is invested into sports [3]. According to the latest figures of the World Advertising Research Center (WARC), companies spent $46.1 billion on sport sponsorships in 2019 [4].

Parallel to the increasing financial volume, the need and interest in evaluating these investments is growing – both from practitioners and from researchers. Cornwell and Kwak [5] point out that there is still "the ever-pressing question of how to evaluate sport sponsorship outcomes" (p. 133). One reason for that is the variety of influencing factors on how it reaches the consumer. Cornwell et al. [6] structured these in their Model of Consumer-Focused Sponsorship-Linked Marketing and vividly described it as "opening the black box" (p. 21). Another reason is the variety of objectives that companies try to achieve through sponsorship activities [7]. Focused on the consumer, Cornwell et al. [8] differentiate between cognitive (awareness, image), affective (liking, preference) and behavioral outcomes (purchase intention, purchase commitment, purchase). Other authors classify image as an affective outcome [9].

Image improvement is one of the most frequently mentioned objectives in sport sponsorship [10]. Gwinner [11] tried to explain the intended image improvement through sponsorships with the image transfer model. It suggests that positive attributes of a sponsored (sport) event can be transferred to the brand in the heads of the consumers through the displayed connection [11, 12]. According to Grohs and Reisinger [13] image transfer can be explained using classical conditioning and the match-up hypothesis. So far, it is comparable to classical advertising. Therefore, Meenaghan [14] points out, that, in contrast to classical advertising, sponsors send the advertising messages indirectly and try to show goodwill. This is expected to better facilitate image transfer.

Many researchers investigated the influencing factors on image transfer. Olson [15] and Wakefield et al. [16], for example, examined a positive influence on the image if the sponsored entity and the sponsor fit to each other. Alexandris et al. [17] identified the basic attitude towards sponsorship and involvement as predictors for image improvement. Alonso-Dos-Santos et al. [18] and Tsiotsou and Alexandris [19] also examined an image transfer for participants with higher involvement. Quester and Thompson [20] found a positive relation between exposure and sponsor image. Grohs & Reisinger [21] compared the influence of the previously mentioned variables event-sponsor-fit, event involvement and sponsorship exposure on image transfer to each other. In comparison they found the event-sponsor-fit as the main driver for image transfer. In a later study Grohs and Reisinger [22] confirmed the positive effect of a high event-sponsor-fit.

However, the essential precondition for image transfer is the awareness of the sponsor-sponsee-relationship. This has been somehow neglected in most of the previous studies. Some studies did not control the sponsor awareness at all; others only used either a recognition or a recall test. Therefore, it is still unclear to what extent the strength of sponsor awareness (recall or recognition) has an influence on the perceived brand image.

One must look far back to find a study in which both a recall and a recognition test were conducted and brought into connection to image outcomes. Javalgi et al. [23] did a telephone survey (n=200) and found contradictory results for the five investigated sponsors. They found a positive relationship between sponsorship awareness and the corporate image for some sponsors, but a negative one for others. Therefore, they concluded that sponsorship activity reinforces prior beliefs about the company but cannot reverse prior negative perceptions [23]. This effect was stronger if the participants were able to recall the sponsor.

Since then, a lot of image research has been done and new methods have been developed. Javalgi et al. [23] used six dimensions to measure image: 1. Has good products/services. 2. Is well managed. 3. Only wants to make money. 4. Is involved in the community. 5. Responds to consumer needs. 6. Is a good company to work for. Nowadays, as multi-dimensional psychological constructs of brand personality have become established for image measurement [24, 25], this question should be taken up again.

Following this, this paper investigates the influence of the information retrieval from the long-term memory on reaching image improvement as a sponsorship outcome. In the end, management implications will be drawn from the results of the study. Previous studies have shown that main sponsors dominate recall tests [26]. If image improvement depends on the strength of sponsor awareness, it should be considered by companies when deciding whether to sponsor less events as a main sponsor or more events as one of many sponsors. This will be discussed in the last chapter as well as implications for further marketing research.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study design
This research is based on two questionnaire-based samples. In the field study, spectators of twenty-two different sport events sponsored by the same sponsor were interviewed on site in the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany (high involvement group, n=2761). Additionally, an online sample (panel data) was conducted in which 1000 participants were questioned about the same sponsor without the connection to a specific event (low involvement group). This sample is representative for the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate in terms of gender and age. Accordingly, the participants are from the same region as in the field study, which is important because of the regional sponsor.

The sponsor "Lotto Rheinland-Pfalz" was chosen for different reasons: Firstly, it is well known in the society as a regional brand of the nationwide Lotto group. Thus, hardly any people do not know the brand and cannot answer the questions about the image for this reason. Secondly, its sponsorship activities are widespread. According to the company, it sponsors more than one hundred sport clubs and thirty sport events in the region. In 2018 the sponsorship and PR budget was more than four million euros, which is around 1.5 million euros more than they spend for advertisement [27]. Hence, it can be expected, that many people were exposed to its sponsorship measures. Thirdly, the area of their sponsorship activities is limited to the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate, which has around four million inhabitants [28]. Therefore, it is possible to draw a representative control sample to question people about the sponsor apart from the arousal of sport events. Finally, the chosen sponsor is part of the gambling industry. Since gambling can lead to addiction [29], it could be a controversial sponsor. Therefore, it can be expected that participants will associate both positive and negative attributes with the brand.

Both questionnaires queried the sponsor awareness (recall and recognition), the image (brand personality) of the sponsor, influencing factors derived from literature and socio-demographic data. The only difference was that the questions in the field study were related to the respective sports club/event, whereas those in the online survey were related to sport clubs or events in the region in general. Instead of "Which companies who sponsor this sport club/event do you have in mind?" (field) the question online was: "Which companies who sponsor sport clubs/events in Rhineland-Palatinate do you have in mind?"

2.1.1 Spectator survey

To avoid biases due to the selected events, a heterogeneous composition of the sample was chosen. Twenty-two sponsored events in nine different sports have been selected to capture both the spectrum of performance level and the popularity of the sports. It is therefore a multistage sample [30].

Within the study, it was the aim to measure long-term sponsor awareness and stable attitudes towards the brand. Therefore, the spectators were asked to fill in the questionnaires before each event, so that they did not had immediate contact to sponsorship exposure until then. This was also important to ensure the comparability with the online sample.

At each sport event, we ensured that every spectator had the same chance to participate. Therefore, the researchers allocated themselves to all entries. They were advised to ask all spectators within their sector for participation. Once they had agreed to participate, they were given a questionnaire and then returned it. This made our sample somewhat a random sample, however in practice, this cannot fully be achieved due to the unwillingness to participate in the survey [31].

The survey started two hours before the start of the competition and ended five minutes before. It was carried out by researchers of the university and students who previously received a training. They were advised to introduce themselves by 1) naming the research institution, 2) the umbrella topic of the survey ("sport sponsorship study") and 3) mentioning, that the club/event organizer has permitted the survey. Under no circumstances, they were allowed to mention the name of a sponsor or another company.

2.1.1 Online panel survey

The online sample was conducted during the same period. The study contained the same questions than the field study, but without the reference to the specific sport club/event. To achieve the goal of a representative population sample, a professional panel provider was engaged to collect a sample. Its panel was representative for the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate in terms of age and gender (n=1000). Thus, this was a quota sample [32].

2.2 Variables

The main interest of the study was to examine the influence of the strength of sponsor awareness (independent variable) on the sponsor image (dependent variable). Due to the variety of influencing factors on the sponsor image, that were identified in the literature, those variables were included in the study as further independent variables. In this way, the strength of sponsor awareness can be compared with other previously known influencing factors using regression analyses.

2.2.1 Dependent variable "Sponsor Image"

The image of a brand can be defined as "the set of associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory" (p. 2) [33]. Thereby, Aaker's [34] brand personality model has become established. It was also used in this study and measured in two steps.

First, the participants were asked to assign those attributes from a list that they perceive as fitting to the sponsor. Due to the culture-specificity of brand personality, the for the German cultural context adapted instrument from Bosnjak et al. [35] was used. It consists out of the four dimensions Drive, Conscientiousness, Emotion, and Superficiality. Compared to Aaker's five brand dimensions [36], the instrument has the advantage of also containing negative items. This should be considered in this study because of the controversial sponsor. In addition to the cultural aspect, branch-related adaptions of the instrument have been established [37]. Therefore, a group of researchers considered both the corporate mission statement of the sponsor and general associations with sport clubs/events. Five more items (safe, innovative, social, fair, and sporty) were added to the list of adjectives.

In the second step, the participants were requested to rate the strength of six key image attributions selected by the same group of researchers using a 5-point Likert-type scale in order to provide a higher level of measurement for statistical analysis. Thereby, also two negative items (boring and dangerous) have been selected that could be associated with the sponsor.

2.2.1 Independent variables

Both a recall and a recognition test were conducted to measure sponsor awareness. The terms recall and recognition are used inconsistently in literature. Additionally, specifications like unaided recall and aided recall [38, 39] or unprompted and prompted recall [40] can be found. The authors of this study follow the definition of Bagozzi and Silk [41]: "Recall is the

mental reproduction of some target item experienced or learned earlier, while recognition is the awareness of having previously experienced that stimuli" (p. 95). Transferred to the current study, recall means to name the sponsor without any help, while recognition means to identify the name of the sponsor from a list correctly.

These tests, of course, took place before the image measurement. The recall was tested first to avoid any influence by previously shown brand names [42]. To guarantee that the spectators did not have a pre-view at the later shown list of sponsors (recognition test) or image questions, a folded questionnaire was developed, which had the recall test on the front page and made the recognition test visible only after turning the page.

In the recall test the participants were asked to name sponsors of their own sport club/event (field) respectively of sport clubs/events in the federal state in general (online) without any hints. In the recognition test they were asked to decide, whether the brands from a list are sponsors or not. This list contained sponsors and non-sponsors as well.

The event-sponsor-fit and the attitude towards sponsorship were measured on 5-point Likert-type scales. In terms of brand familiarity, a differentiation was made between those, who have bought a product of the sponsor in the last twelve months at least once (high familiarity) and those, who have not (low familiarity). The two samples served to distinguish the involvement. Because of their presence at a sport event, participants in the field study were assigned a higher level of involvement, whereas those in the online study built the low involvement group.

2.3 Composition of the sample

While the distribution of gender in the online sample (low involvement, n=1000) is almost equal, there is a significantly higher proportion of men (62.5%) in the field sample (n=2761). The mean age in the online sample (M=45.2 years, SD=15.17) is slightly higher than in the field sample (M=44.0 years, SD=16.07). However, a t-test shows a significant difference in the mean age between both samples (T=1.98, df=3408, *P=.048*). Regarding the level of education, spectators with a high education level (university degree) were over-proportionally willing to participate in the field sample (35.6% in comparison to 22.5% in the online sample). To control this, all socio-demographic variables will be included in the regression analyses.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Sponsor Awareness

27.5 percent of the spectators in the field sample recalled the investigated brand as a sponsor, 69.1 percent were able to recognize it. In the online sample, the recall rate was 14.8 percent and the recognition rate 52.9 percent. Accordingly, the recall and recognition rates were significantly higher in the field sample (Recall: χ²=64.400, df=1, *P<.001*; recognition: χ²=86.013, df=1, *P<.001*).

For further analyses the two variables "recall" and "recognition" were merged into one called "sponsor awareness", which has three levels (unknown, recognition, recall). Each participant can only be in one group. Participants who recalled the sponsor have been excluded from the recognition group. In this group, there are only participants who have identified the brand as a sponsor from a list (recognition), but not without help in advance. Consequently, they can be handled as independent samples.

3.1 Sponsor Image

Basically, participants with a higher sponsor awareness assigned more items as suitable to the brand (table 1). The ANOVA confirms the differences between the groups as significant (F= 32.552, *P<.001*). The Homogeneity of Variances must be rejected based on the Levene Statistic, *P=.04*). Therefore, Games-Howell Post Hoc Tests were conducted and show significant differences between the unknown and both the recall and the recognition group (*P<.001*), but not between the recognition and recall group (*P=.10*).

Table 1.   Number of image items checked in the different groups of sponsor awareness

	Unknown		Recognition		Recall	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Total number of image items checked	3.10	2.180	3.71	2.319	3.92	2.342

Positive image items checked	2.41	2.270	3.13	2.500	3.50	2.464
Negative image items checked	0.69	1.140	0.58	1.053	0.43	0.932

Moreover, participants with higher sponsor awareness assigned more positive and less negative attributes to the brand (table 1). Thereby, the brand personality change shows a two-stage pattern depending on the strength of sponsor awareness. ANOVAs confirm significant differences between the groups for both positive (F=47.211, *P<.001*) and negative attributions (F=13.787, *P<.001*). The Levene Statistic rejects the Homogeneity of Variances for both variables (positive: *P=.02*, negative: *P<.001*). Games-Howell Post Hoc Tests show significant differences between all groups concerning the number of positive and negative items.

Table 2 provides an overview of the 10 image items that were most often selected as suitable to the brand. Significant differences between the unknown and recognition group and between the recognition and the recall group are marked.

Table 2. **Differences in image attributions between the sponsor awareness groups (*P≤.05, **P=≤.01)**

	Checked as suitable to the brand			Unknown - Recognition (df=1)		Recognition - Recall (df=1)	
	Unknown	Recognition	Recall	χ^2	P	χ^2	P
proper	34.9%	46.1%	48.4%	29.955	*<.001***	1.078	*.29*
reliable	28.2%	38.4%	45.1%	26.957	*<.001***	9.586	*.002***
fair	23.8%	31.4%	35.8%	16.177	*<.001***	4.477	*.03**
sporty	23.2%	33.1%	42.6%	27.575	*<.001***	19.900	*<.001***
social	22.6%	29.5%	37.6%	14.102	*<.001***	15.198	*<.001***
responsible	19.9%	31.4%	35.1%	39.312	*<.001***	3.050	*.08*
competent	19.6%	29.2%	31.7%	28.315	*<.001***	1.466	*.23*
safe	18.1%	22.1%	23.9%	5.788	*.02**	0.879	*.35*
boring	13.1%	10.0%	8.8%	5.587	*.02**	0.839	*.36*
innovative	11.4%	13.3%	14.0%	1.927	*.17*	0.178	*.67*

Binary logistic regressions were run to determine the influence of the sponsor awareness on the chance whether an item was checked or unchecked. Therefore, the influencing variables derived from the literature (involvement, event-sponsor-fit, sponsorship attitude, brand familiarity) and socio-economic variables (gender, age, level of education) were included. In this case, the sponsor awareness variable was split into two dummy variables (recognition, recall) again to make possible differences visible.

As a result, the image items reliable, competent, and responsible were significantly positively influenced both by recall and by recognition. According to the classification of Bosnjak et al. [43] all these items belong to the brand dimension "Conscientiousness". In addition, the sponsor recall significantly influenced the image attributions social, sporty and safe, which were added to the instrument by the researchers. Table 3 provides the results of the logistic regressions for the image items that showed a significant influence of the recall or recognition test.

Table 3. Logistic regressions for image items that were significantly influenced by sponsor awareness (*P≤.05, **P=≤.01)

	reliable		competent		responsible		social		sporty		safe	
	B	*Sig.*	B	*Sig.*	B	*Sig.*	B	*Sig.*	B	*Sig.*	B	*Sig.*
Recognition	0.309	*.004**￼*	0.350	*.002**￼*	0.340	*.003**￼*	0.063	*.59*	0.127	*.26*	0.171	*.16*
Recall	0.536	*<.001**￼*	0.449	*.001**￼*	0.527	*<.001**￼*	0.409	*.002**￼*	0.408	*<.001**￼*	0.327	*.02*￼*
Involvement	-0.509	*<.001**￼*	-0.625	*<.001**￼*	-0.479	*<.001**￼*	-0.366	*<.001**￼*	0.004	*.97*	-0.611	*<.001**￼*
Event-sponsor-fit	0.470	*<.001**￼*	0.427	*<.001**￼*	0.608	*<.001**￼*	0.671	*<.001**￼*	0.695	*<.001**￼*	0.346	*<.001**￼*
Sponsorship attitude	0.184	*.003**￼*	0.203	*.003**￼*	0.171	*.01*￼*	0.184	*.009**￼*	0.166	*.01*￼*	0.076	*.28*
Brand familiarity	0.351	*<.001**￼*	0.287	*.002**￼*	0.210	*.03*￼*	0.306	*.001**￼*	0.080	*.39*	0.423	*<.001**￼*
Age	0.012	*<.001**￼*	0.004	*.15*	0.012	*<.001**￼*	0.011	*<.001**￼*	0.005	*.07*	-0.006	*.08*
Gender	-0.089	*.32*	0.055	*.56*	0.018	*.85*	-0.103	*.28*	0.040	*.66*	-0.145	*.15*
Level of education	-0.026	*.40*	-0.088	*.009**￼*	0.009	*.78*	0.002	*.96*	0.003	*.93*	-0.039	*.27*

For further analysis, the strength of the image attributions was used to have a higher level of measurement. Hereby the same two-stage pattern can be seen (figure 1). Participants with higher sponsor awareness perceive positive image items stronger and negative items weaker. ANOVAs confirm significant differences between the groups for all items (safe: F=35.518, *P<.001*; social: F= 39.948, *P<.001*; sporty: F= 54.363, *P<.001*; innovative: F= 7.951, *P<.001*; boring: F=25.083, *P<.001*; dangerous: F=29.358, *P<.001*). Post Hoc Tests reveal all pairwise comparisons as significantly different – except of between the recall and recognition group of "innovative" (*P=.12*).
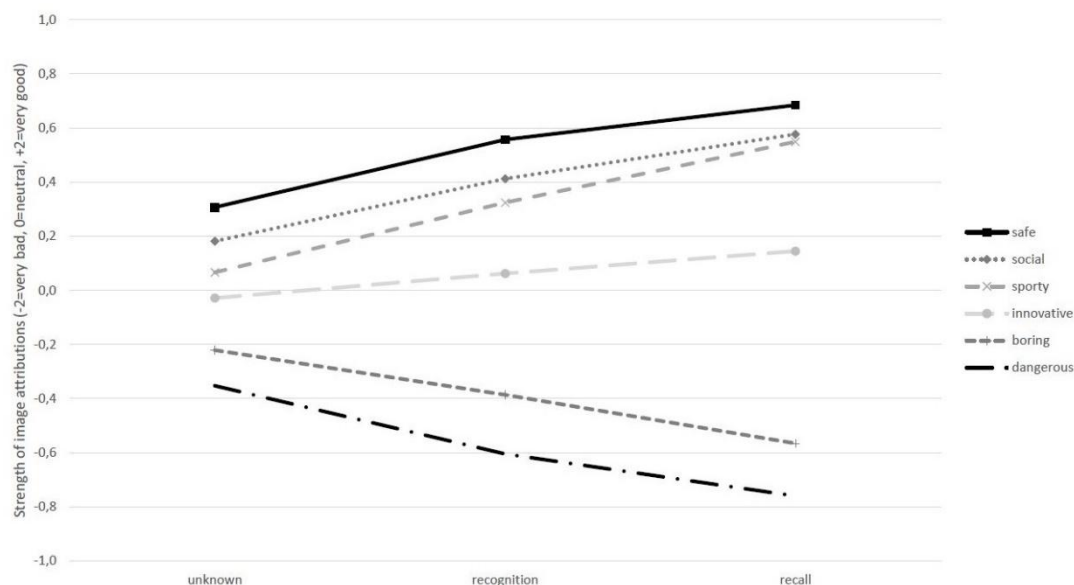
Fig. 1. Differences in brand personality between the different levels of sponsor awareness (5-point Likert-type scale)

To prove if the strength of sponsor awareness is the reason for these differences and, if so, to compare the influence with other influencing factors, a linear regression was conducted. Therefore, the average strength of the six image attributes was used as dependent variable. In addition to the sponsor awareness, the influencing factors involvement, event-sponsor-fit, attitude towards sponsorship, brand familiarity and the socio-economic variables gender, age and level of education have been included. In total, the regression model explains 39% of the variance of the sponsor image (Adjusted R Square: .39). Table 4 provides an overview of the coefficients.

Table 4.   Linear regression model for the sponsor´s image (**p≤.01)

	Std. Beta	*Sig.*
(Constant)		*.000***
Sponsor awareness	0.059	*.001***
Involvement	-0.108	*.000***
Event-sponsor-fit	0.488	*.000***
Sponsorship attitude	0.114	*.000***
Brand familiarity	0.108	*.000***
Age	0.116	*.000***
Gender	0.008	*.614*
Level of education	-0.060	*.000***

The regression model supports the previous finding that the strength of sponsor awareness has a significant positive influence on the perceived brand image, but the extend is lower than from other influencing factors. Surprisingly, participants with higher involvement (field sample) perceived a worse sponsor image compared to those with lower involvement (online sample). This will be discussed in the following chapter. Significant positive influences could be found for the event-sponsor-fit, the attitude towards sponsorship and the brand familiarity. The event-sponsor-fit thereby had the highest influence on the sponsor image. Additionally, the age (rising) had a positive influence on the sponsor image and the level of education a negative one. The gender showed no significant influence.

3.3 DISCUSSION

Our study reveals that image improvement through sponsorship takes place in two stages. Even low sponsor awareness (recognition) strengthens some general positive brand associations. In particular, the brand dimension "Conscientiousness" was already triggered by a low level of sponsor awareness in our study. However, the data show that it needs a high sponsor awareness (recall) to strengthen those specific brand associations that the sponsor tried to

transport by its sponsorship measures. Thereby it is noteworthy that a stronger sponsor awareness is needed to strengthen the association "sporty", which is inevitably connected to sports, by the sponsor than, for example, the association "reliable". Considering that the sporting competition is based on the uncertainty of outcome [44], this raises the question if only the transfer of image attributions from the sponsored entity to the sponsor is responsible for image improvement through sponsorship or if new attributions can arise due to the joint appearance. Conversely, this means that a sponsor does not automatically acquire a sporty image just because it sponsors sport clubs or events.

Generally, participants with higher sponsor awareness perceived more positive and less negative image attributions. Therefore, the inclusion of negative image items has proven to be beneficial. In this regard, our results are contrary to the reinforcement hypothesis, that prior negative perceptions cannot be reversed through sponsorship activities [45].

As mentioned in the introduction, sponsor awareness is a precondition for a possible image transfer [46], but of course not the only influencing factor on the brand image. In accordance with previous studies, a positive influence of a high event-sponsor-fit, a positive attitude towards sponsorship and a high brand familiarity could also be found in this study. In comparison of all influencing factors, the event-sponsor-fit played the dominant role. This is consistent with the findings from Grohs and Reisinger [48].

Contrary to the findings from Grohs and Reisinger [48] and other authors, a negative influence of the involvement was found in this study. This could be explained by the different operationalization of involvement. Previously mentioned authors asked the participants, how interested they were in the investigated event on a five-point scale. Alexandris et al. [49] and Tsiotsou and Alexandris [50] used two dimensions of involvement – the interest in watching the sport (attraction) and interest in the sport itself (centrality). In this study, it was assumed that spectators at sponsored events are more interested in sports compared to a representative sample. Either this assumption was wrong, or the circumstances of the spectator survey influenced the results. However, two suspicions are reasonable in this regard: First, the spectators might have been unconsciously in bad mood, because they were distracted from their plan to enter the event (even if the participation in the questionnaire was voluntary). This is supported by the fact that spectators selected less image items on average (M=3.48, SD=2.196) in comparison to the participants in the online sample (M=3.80, SD=2.526). Second, the higher percentage of participants with a higher education level (university degree) in the field study could have caused an "education-bias", because, at the same time, this group rated the image of the investigated brand less positive. This is also shown by the regression analysis.

Further limitations arise from the choice of the investigated sponsor and the sampling. The choice of the sponsor, which is well known in Germany, could have had an impact on the results. The recall and recognition rates might be slightly overestimated by the effect, which Pham and Johar [51] describe as market prominence bias. This is consistent with the results of Bennett [52], Biscaia et al. [53] and Wakefield and Bennett [54]. However, this should not have influenced the image measurement, because image improvement happens independently of whether a sponsor was identified correctly or incorrectly [55].

Furthermore, the dominant influence of the event-sponsor-fit should be further investigated, because at the time of the question about the event-sponsor-fit all participants were aware of the sponsorship due to the previous questions. The same problem of possibly biasing each other exists when asking participants about both the sponsor awareness and the brand image. In this study, all participants were aware of the sponsorship, when answering the questions about the event-sponsor-fit and image, due to the previously conducted sponsor recall and recognition tests. This could not be avoided, as otherwise mentioning the name of the brand before the recall and recognition tests would have influenced the awareness tests, which were vital for this study. Nevertheless, it could have affected the image measures of the "unknown" group. The more remarkable it is that differences between the "unknown" und "recognition" groups could be found. It indicates a relatively stable image. This phenomenon could be examined by an experiment, where half of the participants answer the questions about the brand image before getting any hint about sponsorship activities of the brand. The recognition test afterwards would probably affect a lot of false positive results, but the image measures of the "unknown" group were meaningful. Gwinner and Eaton [56] did a similar experiment to investigate the influence of sponsorship exposure on image transfer.

4. CONCLUSION

The study showed that the strength of sponsor awareness has an influence on the perceived brand image. This should be considered when selecting the test procedure (recall or recognition test) for measuring image outcomes – both in marketing research and sponsorship controlling. These findings result in several management implications. Inevitably, it is necessary for brands to be remembered as a sponsor to reach image objectives. Thereby it makes a difference if a brand is recalled as a sponsor or just recognized. This study indicates that a high sponsor awareness is necessary to transport

specific messages to the consumer and reach the highest image improvement. On opposite, even a lower sponsor awareness contributes to a general image improvement to a smaller extend. Therefore, the sponsorship strategy should be aligned with the objectives. In the end, it is a management decision whether to concentrate the budget on a few appearances as a main sponsor to reach higher recall rates [57] or to spread it more broadly. In any case, the sponsor should try to stay in the heads of the consumers through special exposure measures (e.g., extraordinary advertisements, giveaways). A positive influence of exposure on sponsor awareness has been found in previous studies [58].

The sponsor cannot control all significant influencing factors by itself. The general attitude towards sponsorship and the involvement of the spectators can hardly be influenced by the sponsor. In addition to increasing sponsor awareness, the sponsor should present itself as fitting to the sponsored club/event and search for possibilities to raise brand familiarity. Thereby it could be beneficial to get the spectators in contact with their own products or services at the venue (e.g., through hospitality or merchandise).

In summary, this paper has shown that it is worthwhile to consider the strength of sponsor awareness and the different dimensions of brand personality when evaluating image outcomes. In the end, sponsors also want to derive economic benefit from their sponsorships. The image of the brand is the link between awareness and purchase [59]. Therefore, it should be further investigated, which image dimensions lead to purchase intentions and how strong the sponsor awareness must be to achieve this economically.

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