

## **Prior Knowledge of the Sponsor and Its Influence on Recognition and Image**

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**ABSTRACT: Purpose** -Sports sponsorship is a marketing tool that is used more and more because of the number of followers that sports have. In this research it will be demonstrated that the exhibition has a positive influence on the prior knowledge and in turn influences the latter's influence on the recognition and image of the sponsor.

**Methodology** -This research includes quantitative research, data collection in this study using a questionnaire design with google drive and the sampling method used is the snowball sampling method. The sample obtained was 424 valid questionnaires. The analysis technique in processing data uses the SPSS program.

**Research Finding** -The influence of the prior knowledge of the sponsor by the consumer on the recognition as the real sponsor and on the sponsor image has been demonstrated, besides checking that exposure to sponsorship in turn influences the prior knowledge of the sponsor

**Originality** -This study deals with the prior knowledge of the sponsor in addition to using the Olympic Games as a framework for research since few studies on sports sponsorship have used it.

**KEYWORDS** -Prior Knowledge, Recognition, Sponsor Image, Exposure, Sport Sponsorship

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

According to Roy and Cornwell (2004) the level of consumer knowledge changes the way individuals treat information about the event and the sponsor. In addition, the use or experience with the sponsor brand is an indicator of the knowledge of the sponsor's product category. Knowledge is therefore an important factor in determining the effectiveness of sponsorship (Karspinka-Krakowiar, 2013). Hence, a consumer's response to sponsorship is influenced by the consumer's level of prior knowledge of it and the soundness of consumer opinions about the sponsor (Speed and Thompson, 2000). In addition, the corporate image is directly influenced by the knowledge of the sponsor (Gilaninia and Abbaszadeh, 2011).

Thus, knowledge of the product or brand, conditioned by previous experience with the sponsor brand, generates in the consumer an attitude that can be positive or negative (Karspinka-Krakowiar, 2013). Shiffman and Kanuk (2007, p. 200) defined this attitude as a predisposition to behave consistently favourably or unfavourably towards a given object. If the attitude is positive, it can produce identification with the product or service, and leads to an individual commitment (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), which positively affects the image of the company sponsoring a given activity. On the other hand, if prior knowledge or experience of the product or brand has generated a negative assessment in the consumer, it may be transferred to the sponsor. In short, depending on whether prior knowledge of the product or brand gives the consumer a positive or negative attitude, the image of the sponsor will be affected in the same way (Gwinner and Swanson, 2003).

Therefore, that knowledge establishes a node in memory with the mark, which can then relate to a series of associations. One way to establish these associations is through the communications made by the brand, which can impact the value of the brand by influencing the memory of consumers (Anantachart, 2005). There are many types of information that can be linked to the brand in memory, including images, thoughts, feelings and attitudes. For these partnerships to take place, high levels of knowledge or closeness to the brand may be necessary (Keller, 1993).

In relation to other variables, few studies have analysed the previous knowledge of the sponsor (Grohs et al., 2004; Ko and Kim, 2008; Sirgy et al., 2008; Kim and Kim, 2009; Gilaninia and Abbaszadeh, 2011; Walraven et al., 2014). This research aims to establish the relationship between this variable and the recognition

that is the step before the memory (Anderson and Bower, 1972). Furthermore, it is one of the objectives pursued by the sport sponsorship as maintain Dees et al. (2008); Jagre et al. (2001), Wakefield and Bennet (2010); Carrillat et al. (2015). The second influence to demonstrate is on the sponsor image is one of the most pursued objectives in sponsorship (Abratt et al., 1987; Armstrong, 1988; Wolton, 1988; Meenaghan, 1991; Sandler and Shani, 1993; Farrelly et al., 1997; Cornwell and Maignan, 1998; Thjøømøe et al., 2002; Palencia-Lefler, 2017; Gómez, 2017).

Finally, the consumer's knowledge of sponsors is also influenced by the level of exposure, as this produces an activation in the link between sponsor-sponsored (Johar et al., 2006; Wakefield et al., 2007). Thus, the more a person is exposed to sponsorship, the more likely it is that a link with the sponsor will be generated, and therefore the sponsor will be stored in memory and remembered immediately (Meenaghan, 2005).

To sum up, the aim of the study is to demonstrate that exposure has a positive influence on previous sponsor knowledge and this in turn influences the image and recognition of the sponsor. For achieving this objective, this study is organized as follows. In the following section, a literature review is presented; this includes a review of the more important studies about prior sponsor knowledge and its relationship with other variables followed by proposition of hypotheses to be tested in the empirical study. The research then describes the methodology used, followed by a presentation of the results of the study. It concludes with a summary of the major findings, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

## **II. Literature Review And Approach Of Hypothesis**

First of all, it should be highlighted that according to consumer behavioural research, within the classic conditioning, have examined the impact on the response of the attitude toward the brand; arguing that, in the case of sponsorship, the level of prior knowledge and the strength of the opinions that the person has on the sponsor, determine the extent to which sponsorship is capable of developing a predetermined response (Stuart et al., 1987). In this way, when the consumer is aware of the fact that the firm is sponsoring the event and also identifies with it, the positive feelings of the consumer towards the event will extend into the image of the firm or brand (Sirgy et al., 2008). Regular brand users and spectators, for example, will have a strong and extensive brand association, plus they will recover from memory more quickly past interactions with the brand (Biehal and Chakravarti, 1982; Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Bone and Ellen, 1992; Pope and Voges, 1999; Pope and Voges, 2000).

In this line, Romaniuk and Wight (2009, p.204) underline that "consumers who have bought a brand have established memory structures on it through these interactions, which facilitates the processing and retrieval of brand information". Therefore, the brand users by virtue of their past experience, will have the brand most anchored in their memory, which will produce an improvement in the coding of this and therefore a better recovery of memory (Herrmann et al., 2014).

In addition, the investigations carried out within the classical conditioning, have examined the impact on the response of the attitude towards the brand; arguing that, in the case of the sponsorship, the level of prior knowledge and the strength of the opinions that the person has about the sponsor determine the extent to which the sponsorship is able to develop a predetermined response (Stuart et al., 1987). Thus, when the consumer knows the signature is sponsoring the event and also identifies with it, the positive feelings of the consumer towards the event will extend to the image of the signature or brand (Sirgy et al., 2008).

Therefore, it is necessary that for the development of the corporate image to occur, there must be a generalized knowledge of companies and brands, through the prior use of the product and other information received on the mark (Pope and Vogues, 2000). Thus, prior use of the mark has been shown to increase the strength of the attitude and improve the possibility of discrimination between marks (Biehal and Chakravarti, 1982). Moreover, as Bone and Ellen (1992) contend, image processing is higher among brand users than among nonusers of the brand. In the review of the literature realized, no specific definition has been found on the sponsor image, consequently, must stick to the concept of brand image, and then transfer it, to the concept of image of the sponsor. According to Aaker (1992, pp.109-110), the brand image is a "set of associations, which are normally organized in a meaningful way."

Therefore, consumer knowledge of the sponsor has an effect on the corporate image (Turkish, 1995; Kim et al., 2008). In this sense, Cornwell et al. (2005) maintain that it is the level of previous experience with the sponsor, can make the consumer better able to identify the sponsor marks that are known to him. It is therefore expected that the consumption of the sponsor brand and product category will positively affect the knowledge of the sponsors (Walraven et al., 2014) and that this knowledge has a positive impact on the image after the sponsored event (Grohs et al., 2004; Gilaninia and Abbaszadeh, 2011; Walraven et al., 2014).

Other research has also shown that individuals who could remember their sponsors had strong beliefs, that is, a more positive image of them than those who could not remember them. Sponsorship can improve the image of companies, especially when the company has a positive image before participating in sponsorship. On the other hand, corporate sponsorship could exacerbate a negative image if consumers have negative perceptions about the brand (Kim et al., 2008).

The experience with the brand varies in strength and intensity; that is, some experiences with the brand are stronger or more intense than others. As with experiences with products, may be more positive than others, and some cases may even be negative. In addition, some experiences with the brand occur spontaneously, without much reflection on it and are of short duration; others, however, occur more deliberately and their duration is longer (Reitcheid, 1996 and Oliver, 1997).

Satisfaction depends on the emotional and cognitive components that come from the brand experience, so the emotional impact of sponsorship can influence brand satisfaction. Satisfaction is defined as a “post consumption assessment, in which consumers can experience in a pleasant way the fulfilment of the expectations created by the brand, and is also related to consumption” (Oliver, 1997, p.13). Indeed, Ashforth and Mael (1989, p. 35) argue that such an assessment may be more positive since “individual identification with activities that are related to the consumer leads to commitment and satisfaction”. If extend this concept to activities that include sponsorship, when the consumer interacts with sponsoring firms, the level of satisfaction may be higher because they identify themselves as fans of such activity. Another possibility is that, even if the service, performance or outcome of the product is not favourable, this attitude is lowered so that it can be compatible with the pre-existing belief about the sponsor that was positive. In addition, favourable attitudes towards sponsor products may lead to interaction with sponsoring companies, attributing these attitudes to the sponsor (Crocker et al., 1984).

To conclude it should be noted that the consumer’s exposure to sponsorship is one of the factors influencing a greater knowledge about the sponsor (Johar et al. 2006; Wakefield et al., 2007). First, the concept of exposure that according to Sandler and Shani (1989), refers to the amount of time viewers are exposed to the sponsor’s message. This exhibition can occur directly during the sponsored event or in the mass media behind it. The knowledge that the consumer has about the sponsors depending on the level of exposure, since this produces an activation in the sponsor-sponsored bond (Johar et al., 2006; Wakefield et al., 2007). Thus, the more a person is exposed to sponsorship, the more likely it is that a link with the sponsor will be generated, and therefore the sponsor will be stored in memory and remembered immediately (Meenaghan, 2005).

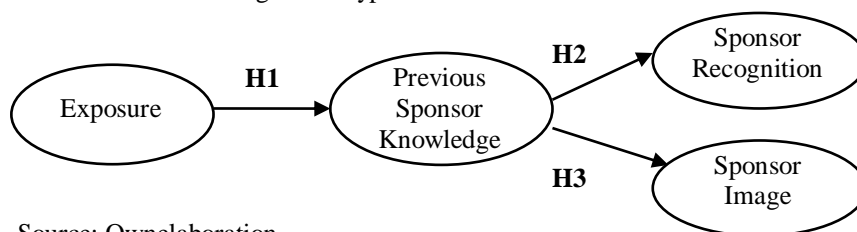
After the above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

**H1:** Those consumers with a higher level of exposure to sponsorship will have a higher level of knowledge than those who are less exposed.

**H2:** Consumers with a higher level of prior knowledge will have a greater recognition of the sponsor.

**H3:** Consumers who have more prior knowledge about the sponsor brand will have a more positive image of it.

Figure 1: Hypotheses raised



Source: Ownelaboration

### III. Methodology And Results

The methodology that has been followed in the research is described, as well as the results obtained in the empirical study carried out.

#### Justification of the choice of sporting activity

The Olympic Games have been chosen for several reasons: The Olympic Games both by tickets sold and by viewers is the sport event with the most audience worldwide (Vallejo, 2017). On the other hand, there is a wide variety of sports activities so that you can reach different types of audience, as well as support Lardinoit and Derbaix (2001) these competitions show the logo of the sponsor that appears on screen simultaneously to the own images of the competition. It finally must emphasize the variety of sponsors opens many possibilities to this research, and the economic contribution supposes for the Olympic Games of these that according to Perez (2016) is of 20% of the total of the budget.

#### Questionnaire

In most of the questions, the number of response options chosen in this research have been 7-point Likert type scales. This type of scale according to Thwaites (1999), gives a fairly high discrimination, and a more reliable measure than the 5-point scale. The exposure of the subjects to the Olympic Games of Rio 2016 was measured following the scale of 3 items proposed by Trail and James (2012). For measure the prior knowledge of the product / service, the scale proposed by Gwinner and Swanson (2003) has been followed. These authors have been used to measure knowledge with 4 items and employ attitudinal aspects such as satisfaction with the sponsor; according to them, this is justified by the fact that by using a certain product or services, generate favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards the product, and therefore, towards the sponsor's label. In relation to the dependent variables, in the case of the Sponsor's Recognition, the procedure used by Levin et al. (2001) through the suggested memory. To do this, the names of 22 companies were used (since the 11 sponsors or TOP partners of the 2016 JJOO were taken as references), among which there were names of companies that served as control. These control companies were not real sponsors, but they belonged to the same or similar markets to the companies that really were. With the inclusion in the study of these non-sponsor companies, the sincerity and the quality of the respondent's memory could be verified and confirm that did not remember sponsors that had not been; In addition, a balance was achieved between sponsors and non-sponsors of the event studied. For the measurement sponsor image, the scale used was of Gwinner and Swanson (2003) was used, making three different valuations for the same item.

#### The survey and the sample

The collection of information was carried out through the survey, since it allows interviewing a large number of individuals using a previously designed questionnaire (Malhotra, 1996); as well as sustains Kerlinger (1986) it is considered as the most powerful tool and useful in social research. The sampling method used is the snowball sampling method, which for Ochoa (2015) is based on using the social network of some initial individuals and subsequently access a collective. Although this type of sampling has advantages and disadvantages, most authors consider that the benefits of this type of survey are superior to the disadvantages

(Hung and Law, 2011, Campon et al., 2014). The survey was carried out online, for which the forms' tool provided by Google Drive was used, having several advantages among which emphasize that there is no limit to the questions and answers, in addition to collecting the data automatically. The link to the survey was sent by email, as well as by social networks on Facebook and LinkedIn, and thus obtain a greater scope.

424 valid questionnaires were obtained, regarding the socio demographic characteristics of the sample, 49.5% are between 18 and 27 years old (52.6% men), followed by the age interval between 28-34 years, with 27.72%. Although the sample is not homogeneous in terms of age, it is representative of the spectators of the Olympic Games according to the data obtained from the audience of this sporting event (the viewers as well as those who attend the Games physically). In addition, according to the study conducted by Yucatanalinstante (2016), 19.6% of those attending the Olympic Games are between 25 and 29 years old, and 16.7% are between 30 and 34 years old. Similarly, 35% viewers are between 18 and 24 years old and 35% between 25 to 34 years old (they do it mostly through mobile devices).

#### IV. Results Of The Investigation

All statistical analyses have been carried out with the Spss 15.0 programme. To study the reliability of the scales developed for each factor, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the item-total correlations were used. The obtained coefficients present extreme values between 0.893 and 0.964, so they are within the acceptable levels of reliability (Nunnally, 1978, Hair et al., 1999). On the other hand, the item-total correlations were in all cases greater than 0.3 (between, 760 and, 928) (minimum acceptable by Nurosis, 1993). The factorial loads that were obtained were significant in all cases, already exceeding the minimum acceptable of 0.5 (, 873 is the minimum value) (Hair et al., 1999). (Seetable 1).

Table 1: Generation of items and debugging of the scale

Factor	No. of initial items	Number of items after debugging scale	N° final items	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	Correlation Item-total	Factor loads
Sponsor Image	3	3	3	,964	,925 ,918 ,928	,967 ,963 ,968
Prior Knowledge	3	4	4	,893	,804 ,760 ,848 ,788	,908 ,880 ,905 ,873
Sponsorship Exposure	3	3	3	,961	,923 ,936 ,895	,966 ,972 ,952

Source: Ownelaboration

#### Contrastation of hypothesis

Once the reliability and validity of the scales have been verified, the results of the contrast of the various assumptions raised above will then be presented.

First at all the H1 it proposes that those consumers with a higher level of exposure to sponsorship will have a higher level of knowledge than those less exposed consumers. Through an ANOVA analysis the hypothesis has been contrasted, the results shown in Table 34, where the independent variable is the exposure to the event (low-high exposure) and the dependent variable is the level of knowledge. These results show that Levene's statistic is  $\geq 0,05$  with a significance level of ,000 ( $p \leq 0,05$ ), so it can be concluded that the higher the level of exposure generates higher level of knowledge, accepting H1. (Seetable 1).

Table 2: ANOVA Exposure - level of knowledge

Descriptive	Level of previous knowledge			
	N	Media	SD	
Low exposure	185	5,80	1,127	
High exposure	237	6,24	,919	
Homogeneity of variances	Levene S.	gl.1	gl.2	Sig.
	3,814	1	420	,051
ANOVA	Sum of squares	F	Sig.	
Intergroups	20,161	19,561	,000	

Source: Own Elaboration

To test the second hypothesis will perform a t of Student but only with those marks that were chosen by the respondents in the questionnaire, below is shown the table of frequencies of these selected marks. The brands are selected with more prior knowledge, and then perform the analysis t-student to check if the recognition is greater when the previous knowledge about the brand sponsor is greater. Therefore, the brands considered in this analysis are Coca-Cola, Samsung, McDonald's, P&G, Visa, and General Electric. (See Table 3).

Table 3: Frequencies prior knowledge label

Label	N	%
Coca-Cola	191	50,1
Samsung	72	18,9
McDonald's	50	13,1
P&G	26	6,8
Visa	25	6,6
General Electric	10	2,6
Omega	4	1,0
Bridgestone	2	,5
Panasonic	1	,3
Total	388	100

Source: Own elaboración.

It can be observed in Table 4 that all averages are superior for individuals with greater prior knowledge of marks. Show the results of the Student t test that both the number of times the mark is recognized as an official sponsor, like the means are superior for the high prior knowledge of the product in all the cases, being also  $p \leq ,05$ . Hypothesis 1 is therefore accepted. (See table 4).

Table 4: Comparison of means between high previous product knowledge and sponsor recognition

Prior knowledge/ Sponsor Recognition	N	M*	F	P
Low knowledge Coca-Cola	33	3,765(,790)	20,096	,000
High knowledge Coca-Cola	367	6,0906(,507)	191,999	,000
Low knowledge /Samsung	33	3,666(,789)	20,096	,000
High knowledge /Samsung	366	6,081(,513)	189,285	,000
Low knowledge/McDonald's	35	3,692(,822)	19,365	,000
Low knowledge/ P&G	29	3,5776(,850)	16,317	,000
High knowledge/ P&G	345	6,087(,504)	187,194	,000
Low knowledge /Visa	26	3,634(,849)	15,819	,000

High knowledge / Visa	343	6,133(,473)	200,905	,000
Low knowledge / General Electric	9	3,888(,662)	9,363	,000
High knowledge General Electric	40	5,8750(,554)	64,867	,000

\* The standard deviation appears in parentheses.

Source: Own elaboration

The H3 hypothesis that consumers who have more prior knowledge about the sponsor brand will have a more positive image of it, has been contrasted with an ANOVA test, where the independent variable is the prior knowledge (low/high) and the dependent variable is the sponsor image. In view of the results obtained, the Levene test indicates that there is homogeneity of variances since  $\geq .05$ , with a significance of  $p \leq .05$  so can accept the hypothesis H2. (See table 5).

Table 5: ANOVA Previous knowledge sponsor –sponsor image

Descriptive	Sponsor image			
	N	Media	SD	
Low knowledge	28	3,8571	1,31915	
High knowledge	394	4,9721	1,05707	
Homogeneity of variances	Levene S.	gl.1	gl.2	Sig.
	,148	1	420	,700
ANOVA	Sum of squares	F		Sig.
Intergroups	32,497	28,077		,000

Source: Own elaboration

#### IV. Conclusions

First, has been shown the influence of a greater exposure to sponsorship the greater knowledge about the sponsor (H1), when performing the statistical analyses have corroborated this hypothesis. This exhibition generates brand visibility and makes known the association between sponsor and sponsored (Recio, 2013). In addition, as O'Reilly et al. (2007) maintains, the constant and repeated exposure of the brand during the event increases its level of awareness among the audience. It is therefore necessary for the consumer to be exposed to sponsorship in order to come into contact with it, and to have the desired effects, because if that contact does not occur will hardly generate any kind of influence on it.

Also proposed the hypothesis that the previous knowledge of the sponsor at the time of recognition, therefore, as it holds as Hickman (2015) argues, prior knowledge should lead us to become more familiar with the brand and to recognize it more easily, which supports the contrast made in this research. This fact may be interesting for the sponsors, since at a higher level of prior knowledge it will be easier for the consumer to make a positive recognition of the brand as sponsor of the event, further this suggests that organizations would need to make a smaller effort in communication.

In relation to the influence of the previous sponsor knowledge on the sponsor image, thus prior knowledge of the sponsor can be a determining element in relation to the sponsor image, since it is based on previous experience with the sponsor brand, generating in the consumer an attitude that can be positive or negative (Karspińska-Krakowiak, 2013). This prior experience is a fundamental element together with other conditions, such as external communication, for the consumer's training of expectations about the event.

Therefore, in no case should these exceed their perceptions in order not to generate a situation of dissatisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1991) that could affect the image of the same.

## V. Limitations And Future Research

The limitations of this work arise mainly from certain methodological aspects in the development of the same. Thus, different restrictions can be listed which should be considered in this study.

The first limitation refers to the specificity of the study. The results of this work depend on the research context. As Rosnow and Rosenthal (1989) or Cohen (1994) point out, replication would be highly recommended to generalize the results. The extension of the study to other samples and other sectors would serve to draw more robust conclusions.

The second concerns the type of sample used. The use of snowball sampling has certain advantages over traditional procedures as it is faster, cheaper, easier to complete, interactive, and are also automatically accurately recorded (Pan, 2010). But also, they present some drawbacks, as they can be the low response rate or lack of the sample since it does not guarantee representativeness and loss of size control by not setting a priori accurately the sample size that we are going to obtain (Ochoa, 2015).

On future research lines, could propose several future lines of research that deepen understanding of the effectiveness of sponsorship. Although in this study have focused on sport sponsorship, could raise future investigations if the hypotheses raised here would obtain the same results in sponsoring artistic events, musicals, etc. Fans of these types of events are as involved as followers of sports events?

The relationship of the previous knowledge of the sponsor with other variables, such as the level of involvement or influence on the consumer's buying intention, can also be proposed.

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