

The Effect of Bi-dimensionality of the Congruity on Consumer Responses

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Abstract-*This study attempts to provide a better understanding of the functioning of television sponsorship and to determine the effect of the bi-dimensionality of congruity between a sponsor brand and a television program on consumer responses. We used structural equation modeling to validate the theoretical model. The final survey show that the relevant side of the association of a pair (TV program/brand) has a positive effect on brand equity, brand image and attitude towards the brand but the expected side of the association between a program and a sponsor does not influence consumers' responses in terms of brand equity, brand image and attitude towards the brand. Our research equally showed that relevance is necessary for the consumer to make sense of the association between the brand and the TV program. The contribution of this research at the managerial level consists in providing supporting arguments for television sponsorship.*

Keywords- TV sponsorship; Congruence; Relevant; Expected.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the practice of television sponsoring is widely applied on the market, few academic studies have addressed the subject. The study of the evolution and the state of the art of Walliser's research (2003) shows that the researchers' interest is particularly focused on the study of sports sponsorship and to a lesser extent on the Arts, the two fields that are definitely most investigated by the literature. Nevertheless, TV sponsorship is getting more and more attention on the part of advertisers. Moreover, the emergence of new general-interest and thematic channels in digital broadcasting has encouraged the practice. The main motivations of advertisers are both strategic and operational. Indeed, TV sponsorship has several advantages. Thus, from a strategic point of view, TV sponsorship faces saturation due to ever growing advertising screens, and to rising numbers of sporting and cultural events that have become overwhelmed by scores of sponsors. TV sponsorship also allows the sponsor's brand to differentiate itself from its competitors. From an operational point of view, TV sponsorship allows advertisers to access the medium TV at a lower cost than event sponsorship and traditional advertising do (Courbet, 1997). Indeed, the opportunity for a company or brand to be on television outside an advertising screen is an original means of communication. It helps to cope with the saturation of advertising screens and to face zapping. Moreover, we suggest introducing a variable which seems crucial to the effectiveness of television sponsorship, namely congruity between a sponsor and a TV program. To this end, the question that arises is how could image transfer in the field of audiovisual sponsorship be influenced by congruity? In addition, the choice of the

program is essential, where a degree of congruity should be perceived for the consumer to make sense of the association and subsequently improve brand image, promote favorable attitudes, and strengthen brand equity. This paper attempts to provide a better understanding of the functioning of television sponsorship and to determine the effect of the bi-dimensionality of congruity between a sponsor brand and a television program on consumer responses.

2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Television sponsorship is similar to both sports sponsorship, since it relies on the combination of a sponsor brand with a well-defined program, and advertising because the message is embodied in an advertisement and broadcast on media supports. The definition of Derbaix et al. (1994) seems to be the one that is most approved by most researchers. It states that "for any organization, sponsorship is a technique that consists in creating or directly supporting a socio-cultural event that is independent from it, and in associating to it on the media in order to achieve the objectives of the marketing communication".

2.1 Information processing as applied to TV sponsorship

The literature review, offers many theories to explain the effectiveness of sponsorship, the main treatments are proposed image transfer(Gwinner et Etan, 1999; Didellon,1997,Ganassali et Didellon,1996), affective theories of persuasion(Baux, 1991; Laborde, 2000), and more recently cognitive processes, the theory of schema (Waston et Weston, 2001; Rodgers, 2003; Flecks, 2006). In the case of television sponsorship, the individual's attention is focused on the sponsored entity and not on the

sponsor. Indeed, according to the ELM model by Petty and Cacioppo (1981), the sponsor brand is treated in a peripheral way, while the programme is dealt with in a central way. Thus, the more the sponsor's message is associated to the television programme, the more the consumer is encouraged to process information. Speed & Thompson (2000) define the perception of congruence as the attitude of the individual towards the association of the event to the sponsor, and the degree to which the pair is seen as fitting well together. Despite theoretical differences, a common theme in the research conducted on sponsorship is oriented to understanding congruity between a sponsor and a sponsored entity. However, the theoretical current that seems most relevant in the context of the study of the role of congruity in the effectiveness of television sponsorship is the processing of information by endorsement or by image transfer (Zdravkovic and Till, 2012; Gwinner and Etan, 1999). Image transfer is conceptualized by McCracken (1989), who assumes that there is a transfer of image between a celebrity endorser and the brand. The transfer is seen as a transfer of meaning. The image transfer is also confirmed in the evaluation of brand extensions where the nuclei of brand associations are transferred to the new brand (Aaker and Keller, 1990). Thus, image transfer has been validated in brand extensions, celebrity endorsements and co-branding.

2.2 Definitions of congruity

The notion of congruence is used according to various interchangeable terminologies (adequacy, similarity, coherence, fit, match-up, congruence) that can affect the understanding of the concept. The literature review conducted by Maille and Fleck (2011) reflects the plethora of works dealing with the concept of congruence, and the wide variety of application areas. The result is a disparate literature which is difficult to organize into a coherent whole. We will only deal with the works on sponsorship to define congruity. However, the definition of congruity in marketing, on which there is most consensus, is consistent with the schema theory proposed by Mandler (1985), and that of Heckler and Childers (1992). It postulates that congruity is a concept that has two dimensions: relevance and expectancy. Relevance refers to the extent to which the information contained in the stimulus contributes to a clear identification of the theme or the primary message delivered. Expectation, or the expected side, refers to the degree to which an item or a piece of information is part of the structures or predetermined patterns evoked by the communication theme. The concept of congruence applied to TV sponsorship could, therefore, be defined as a certain match-up or adequacy between a brand and a sponsored entity, as perceived by the consumer.

2.3 The effect of congruity on consumer responses

The influence of congruity between the sponsor and the sponsored entity on consumer responses has been addressed by many researchers in the field of sports sponsorship. Yet, very little research is subject to sound empirical and theoretical studies (Maille and Fleck, 2011;

Cornwell et al., 2006) and the results yielded by researchers are little consistent. Besides, different previous research works show that the more the pair sponsor / sponsored entity is perceived as appropriate, relevant or congruent, the more positive the impact is on sponsorship, in terms of brand image (Cherif and Kammoun, 2013; Rodgers, 2007; Simons and Becker-Olsen, 2006; Fleck-Dousteyssier et al., 2005; Rodgers, 2003; Speed and Thompson, 2000) and reputation (Johar and Pham, 1999; Quester and Farrelly, 1998; Dilellon, 1997). The literature suggests that a poor fit leads to a less favorable attitude than a high or moderate fit (Jare, Waston and Waston, 2001). Also, the study of Becker-Olsen and Simmons (2002) shows that a poor fit reduces the firm's equity with respect to the lack of sponsorship. In the same context, Han et al. (2013), indicate the higher level of image congruence between the world Cup and its corporate sponsors lead to more favorable responses to sponsorship. Moreover, emotional reactions are positive when the individual finds meaning to the association and to the relevance of the association (Mc Innis and Park, 1991; Speed and Thompson, 2000; Moorman, Neijens and Smit, 2002). The experimental study conducted by Charfi and Kammoun (2013) shows that sponsor brands having strong congruence lead to more favorable attitudes and better memorization than those having low and moderate congruence. Peter and Leshner (2013) showed that congruity has an effect on explicit and implicit memorization in relation to a situation of incongruence between the brand and the video game.

Subsequently, we postulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: higher the perception of congruence between a TV program and a sponsor, the higher the brand's equity.

H1a: More pair (program-sponsor) is relevant more brand equity is high.

H1b: More pair (program-sponsor) is expected more brand equity is high.

Hypothesis 2: the higher the perception of congruence between a TV program and a sponsor, the better the brand's image.

H2a: More the couple(program-sponsor) is relevant more the brand's image is improved.

H2b: More the couple(program-sponsor) is expected more the brand's image is improved.

Hypothesis 3: the higher the perception of congruence between a TV program and a sponsor, the more favorable the attitudes towards the brand.

H3a: More the couple (program-sponsor) is relevant more attitudes toward the brand are favorable.

H 3b: More the couple (program sponsor) is expected more attitudes toward the brand are favorable.

The theoretical model is shown schematically in figure1 in Annexure.

3. EMPIRICAL VALIDATION

3.1 The choice of brands:

We conducted pre-tests on a sample of 70 individuals. For this, we selected the following four brands: *Nescafé*, *Dixan* (laundry), *Nokia*, and *Toshiba*.

3.2 The selection of TV programs:

We chose programs that have really been broadcast on our national television channels. An authentic program is more representative of reality. The programs selected are *Choufli – hal* (a series) and *Star Academy* (a show).

3.3 The nature of the sample:

Fifty questionnaires have been given for each program/sponsor pair. Each individual interviewed responded to only one questionnaire about only one association program/brand. In sum, we have a convenience sample of 411 individuals.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Amos 16, was used for simultaneous estimation of the measurement and structural models. We used the scale of Fleck (2006) to measure the perception of bi-dimensionality congruence with the consumer. To measure the attitude toward the sponsor, we used the scale of Didellon-Carsana (1997), retaining only the emotional part of it. To evaluate brand equity, we used the measures developed by Yoo et al. (2001), Yoo et al. (2000) which consist in a global measurement scale for brand capital from the point of view of the consumer. The scale comprises four items and is known to be reliable and parsimonious. We selected the scale of Villarjio and Sanchez (2005) to measure brand image. This scale is inspired from the scales of Aaker and Alvarez del Blanco (1995), in Villarjio and Sanchez (2005); Lassar and al. (1995). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the construct validity of scales used in this study. Table 1 in Annexure shows the results of confirmatory factor analysis. The confirmatory factorial analysis of the measurement model showed that results were significantly stable. Loadings exceeded 0.6 ; This reflected the stability of our sample. We also check the quality of the measurement scales by checking the reliability of the measures then the convergent validity and the discriminating validity, in agreement with the test (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). We will later test the hypothetical relationships postulated at the end of the conceptual part.

5. SYNTHESIS OF THE RESULTS

The conceptual model is tested using structural equations. In this section, we will analyze the direct effects of the whole model of linear causality. The structural adjustment model indices are satisfactory and attest to the good fitting of the model. This leads us to check the significance of the relationship between the exogenous variables and the endogenous variables of the model. The table in Appendix presents the results of different relationships between the variables of the structural model, and states our different assumptions (*see in table2 in Annexure*).

Hypothesis H1a is validated, the perceived relevancy of the pair (program - sponsor) has a significant influence on

brand equity (structural link = 0.269, student $t = 4.371$, 1% threshold). These results are in line with the findings of Fleck (2006) who shows that the relevance of the sponsor / sponsored entity pair generates a higher brand capital. In contrast, a low relevance of the sponsor / sponsored entity pair weakens brand capital. Yoo et al. (2000) suggest that the more positive the perception of marketing actions is, the higher the brand capital, and *vice versa*.

Hypothesis 1b: This hypothesis 1b is not validated ($p=0.069$), although the Student t is less than 1.96 ($t=1.819$).

Hypothesis H2a is validated. The structural relationship between the two variables is significant = 0.198 ($t = 3.62$, $p=0.000$). Thus, the higher the perception of the association of the pair (program sponsor) is more relevant brand is better.

Hypothesis 2b : This hypothesis has not been validated. These results are not in line with the findings of Fleck (2006) who shows that the of the sponsor / sponsored entity pair generates a higher brand capital

Hypothesis 3a: the structural relationship between relevance and attitudes towards brands sponsor is significant ($t = 2.934$ with $p = 0.03$) with a structural link equal to 0.138. This hypothesis is validated.

Hypothesis 3b: This hypothesis has not been validated.

6. DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Findings show that the relevant side of the association of a pair (TV program / brand) has a positive effect on brand equity, brand image and attitude towards the brand. Thus, relevance allows consumers to understand the link and give meaning to the association between a TV program and a sponsor. These findings agree with the results of Speed and Thompson (2000), those of Moorman, Neijens and Smit (2002), and more particularly those of Fleck (2006) in the context of the sponsorship of sports events. The author checks the assumption that the relevance of the pair sponsor / sponsored entity has a significant effect on the increase in the number and the strength of the sponsoring associations, on improving attitude, trust, commitment to the brand and brand capital. Therefore, the relevant side of sponsorship plays a crucial role in the evaluation of the brand. Results show that the expected side of the association between a program and a sponsor does not influence consumers' responses in terms of brand equity, brand image and attitude towards the brand. There is no significant link apart from the effect on the expected side on brand capital which is significant at 10%. These findings were not expected and are not in keeping with the work of Heckler and Childers (1992) and Fleck (2006). This can be explained by the fact that the consumer, being subject to a great deal of advertising and a great number of TV advertising actions, is no longer surprised by any association, even if it seems to be unexpected. The contribution of this research at the managerial level consists in providing supporting arguments for television

sponsorship. The results of our study are encouraging, since all the assumptions about the effect of relevance on consumer responses are validated. The perception of congruence between a TV program and a sponsor has a positive effect on the brand, on brand equity and on the attitude towards the brand. Thus, our research helps to provide some understanding of consumer behavior when faced with an action of television sponsorship. For professionals, it would be edifying to consider that a certain degree of congruence between a program and a sponsor is required when designing an operation of television sponsorship. Our research equally showed that relevance is necessary for the consumer to make sense of the association between the brand and the TV program. Furthermore, the analysis of the conceptual model through structural equations is an important theoretical contribution because, as far as we know, it has never been done in the field of television sponsorship.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH PROSPECTS

Our experiment was conducted on a printed support. The program and the sponsor are presented on the first page of the questionnaire, through photos, and introduced in a paragraph that defines the TV program and cites the sponsoring brand. The experiment could be done by means of a video projector. This will lead us to put the respondents in more authentic conditions. However, this device is costly and difficult to implement. It might be interesting to introduce other variables in the model that could have an impact on the effectiveness of television sponsorship. The appreciation of the program and involvement it are relevant variables to evaluate.

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ANNEXURE

Figure 1: Conceptual model

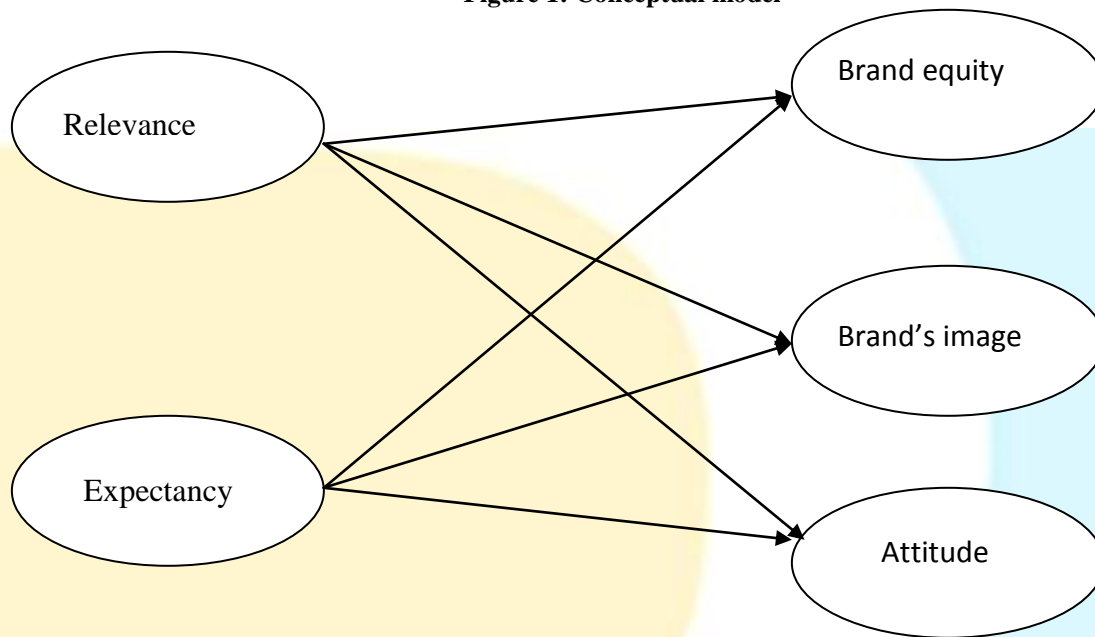


Table 1 : Confirmatory factorial analysis of global model.

Item	Expect1	Expect2	Expect3	Expect4	relevant1	relevant2	relevant4	Equity1	Equity2	Equity3	Equity4
λ	0.863	0.933	0.871	0.842	0.662	0.889	0.705	0.854	0.939	0.789	0.823
Item	Atti1	Atti2	Atti3	Atti4	Imag1	Imag2	Imag3	Imag5	Imag6		
λ	0.778	0.893	0.94	0.918	0.786	0.653	0.860	0.832	0.671		
					values						
CMIN					333.464						
Df					157						
P					.000						
CMIN / Df					2.124						
GFI					.924						
AGFI					.898						
RMR					.1						
RMSEA					.052						
TLI					.965						
CFI					.971						
BIC default model/ saturated model					652.450 /1263.905						

The measurement model fit indices collectively indicate adequate fit (CMIN=333.464; df=157; p=.000; GFI=.924;RMSEA=.052)

Table 2: The results of the analysis on the structural model of bi-dimensionality of congruity.

			Link structural	CR	P
Attitude		relevant	.138	2.934	.03
Brand's image	←	relevant	0,198	3,627	0,000
Brand equity		relevant	0,269	4,371	0,000
Attitude		expected	0,036	1,148	0,251
Brand's image		expected	0,042	1,161	0,246
Brand equity	←	expected	0,074	1,819	0,069
CMIN			1048,548		

DF	530
P	0,000
CMIN/ DF	1,978
GFI	0,872
AGFI	0,848
RMSEA	0,049
PNFI	0,812
TLI	0,948
CFI	0,954
BIC / saturated model	1267,800/1381,283