

The Impact of Sports Sponsorship on Brand Value in Major Sports Events

– The Case of Qatar World Cup

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Abstract: Sports sponsorship has steadily risen to the top of the list of marketing strategies used by companies, particularly sports and fashion brands. The most recent significant sporting event to draw a record-breaking number of spectators and attention is the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. The main sponsors of the event have also attracted public attention. A study on the sports sponsorship of the Qatar World Cup can, on the one hand, examine more important factors, evaluate its marketing effectiveness, and offer examples for sponsor brands. On the other hand, it can also offer rationalization suggestions for the event organizers and sponsors to improve their sponsorship effectiveness and brand value, further promoting the joint development of both parties as well as the development of the sports industry and sponsor brands. The research perspective and theories around sponsorship marketing are further enhanced by this study. This study has sequentially suggested three elements in sponsorship activities that may affect the value of sponsoring brands, including audience involvement, media publicity, and co-sponsorship, using primarily quantitative analysis. Consumer audience participation, the success of media publicity, and the perception of co-sponsorship are all significant elements that have an impact on the brand value of sponsors in the modern sports sponsorship environment. This paper takes sports event consumers as the investigation target, builds a research model based on theoretical research and literature studies, and proposes research hypotheses in order to clarify the mechanism of audience involvement, media publicity, and co-sponsorship on the brand value of sponsors. In order to carefully study and develop conclusions on the effects of sponsoring significant athletic events on sponsor brand value in several dimensions, data were collected widely through surveys and analyzed using SPSS. Media publicity had a significant positive impact on brand value, and co-sponsorship and audience involvement had an indirect impact on brand value. It was discovered that the better the sponsorship image, the greater the impact on audience involvement and co-sponsorship, and the greater the impact on brand value. Finally, the paper offers pertinent countermeasures for brands to perform sponsorship activities and create brand value, in order to encourage the development of sports event sponsorship, based on the research findings and the present state of sports sponsorship.

Keywords: sports sponsorship, audience involvement, co-sponsorship, media publicity, brand value

1. Introduction

In recent years, as the media continues to develop, more and more people are paying attention to international sporting events, and the major brands that sponsor major events are also widely noticed. Companies are increasingly focusing on this direction of sports sponsorship for brand value and image enhancement, and sponsorship marketing has become a cost-effective communication channel and marketing tool for companies [1]. As one of the most popular sporting events, the World Cup is not only a sporting event that can ignite the passion of the world's people, but also a highly valuable commercial event. For brands, especially sports and fashion brands, the World Cup is undoubtedly an excellent marketing platform.

Starting in the early 1970s in the UK, sponsorship strategies began to be used for sport, but it was in the early 1990s that sponsorship strategies were further developed and experienced a real boom [2]. Branded sports sponsorship is a branding and promotion activity in which a company partners with a sporting event, club or athlete in order to promote its own brand influence and brand recognition, providing support in the form of money, products and services in exchange for the event, club or athlete's name, logo and other brand image [3]. Branded sports sponsorship plays an increasingly important role in modern sport and business, which stems from the following aspects: firstly, sporting events, clubs or athletes have a wide reach and appeal as the focus of public attention. By partnering with these sources, companies can link their brand image to the interests and needs of these audiences, gaining wider brand exposure and recognition [4,5]. Secondly, sporting events, clubs or athletes, as highly visualized activities, have diverse advertising and promotional channels. Branded sports sponsorship can be used to gain higher quality brand exposure through in-stadium peripheral billboards, program embedded advertising, event or post-event advertising packages and shirt sponsorship, which in turn increases brand awareness and market share [6]. Branded sports sponsorship can also inspire emotional resonance with consumers, leading to emotional brand transfer and increased consumer loyalty [7].

The FIFA World Cup, or "World Cup" for short, is the most prestigious and influential football tournament involving national teams from around the world. Over the years since the first World Cup, it has developed into a stable format that is held every four years and is open to any FIFA member country. Over US\$220 billion was invested in this year's World Cup in Qatar and according to FIFA, a total of 5 billion people worldwide attended, watched and followed the tournament, with 3.4 million people watching live and a total of 88,966 spectators watching the final match, which was watched by nearly 1.5 billion people worldwide. In total, there were 93.6 million posts related to the World Cup across all internet platforms, with a cumulative reach of 262 billion and 5.95 billion engagements. That's up quite a bit from the 3.2 billion people who followed the 2018 World Cup in Russia [8]. And this is only the preliminary figures released by FIFA, the final figures are still in flux. There is no denying that this year's Qatar World Cup has been significantly more watched than previous editions.

The sports and fashion brands involved in sponsoring this year's World Cup in Qatar are: Nike for 13 World Cup teams; Adidas for 7 World Cup teams; Puma for 6 World Cup teams; Hummel for Denmark; Le Cop Sportif for Coomarron; Marathon Sports for Ecuador, Peru Peru; Majid for Iran; Kappa for Tunisia; NewBalance for Costa Rica; and Joma for Ukraine [9]. In addition to this,

a review of the sports brand sponsors of previous World Cups shows that other brands such as Errea, Umbro and Uhlsport, among others, show the importance and active participation of major sports brands in the sponsorship of World Cup events [10].

2. Literature Review

Sports sponsorship, like advertising, is a means of commercial marketing, the main purpose of which is to obtain direct or indirect economic benefits [11]. When sponsoring sports, companies need to assess their resources, choose the right sponsorship target and develop a reasonable sponsorship plan. The impact of sports sponsorship on a sponsor's brand includes brand image [12], brand awareness [13] and brand loyalty [14].

The current authoritative research mainly examines the impact of sports sponsorship on sponsor brand value from four perspectives: (1) sponsorship matching. In sponsorship branding, there is a positive influence of sponsorship match, when the event it sponsors matches its own brand, the more obvious its influence and effect is, and the opposite is less [15]; (2) brand association and brand image transfer. In this regard, sponsorship enriches brand associations at two levels: firstly, brand associations with similar product functions, which are related to the functions and quality of the sponsored product; secondly, brand image is established by transferring consumers' fondness for the sponsored event, the personality traits of the project, its spirituality and the sponsorship target [16]; (3) sponsorship motivation. The sincerity of the sponsoring brand has special significance in the field of corporate social responsibility, which suggests that sincerity affects sponsorship, and that sponsorship motivated by self-interest has a significant negative impact on brand loyalty [17]; (4) consumer awareness. Sponsorship marketing can increase consumer awareness and further enhance the depth of consumer recall of the brand [18]. Taken together, sports sponsorship and brand value are very closely linked. The Qatar World Cup, the main subject of this paper, is the latest major international sporting event, and its audience, popularity and international attention are significantly different from those of ordinary sporting events, with different mechanisms influencing the value of sponsorship brands. At the same time, as the World Cup continues to evolve, existing research is lagging behind and lacks the latest analysis of the current situation of the World Cup.

In addition to the above influence mechanisms, this study finds that audience involvement, co-sponsorship and media publicity also have an impact on brand value, but there is relatively little research on these three aspects. Among them, involvement is the relationship between subject and object, and involvement exists in any matter that concerns individual self-attitude set and reproduction of values, and is a manifestation of individual belief concentration [19]. Involvement belongs to the theoretical category of social judgement and has been continuously introduced in recent years to related fields such as marketing media. Co-sponsorship is an event where multiple sponsors come together to provide sponsorship [20]. Large sporting events are usually not conducted by a single sponsor, but by multiple co-sponsors, which can lead to the sponsor's publicity being distracted by other sponsor brands, thus affecting the effectiveness of the sponsorship. Propaganda is a social communication activity that uses various symbols to communicate certain ideas in order to influence and guide people's attitudes and control their behaviors [21]. Media publicity is the use of various media by sponsors to communicate.

Based on the characteristics of the Qatar World Cup, this study differs from the previous explanations of how sports sponsorship affects brand value in terms of sponsorship fit, brand association, sponsorship motivation and consumer awareness. Instead, it uses audience involvement, co-sponsorship and media publicity as mediating variables to explore the mechanisms of their influence and constructs the following theoretical model:

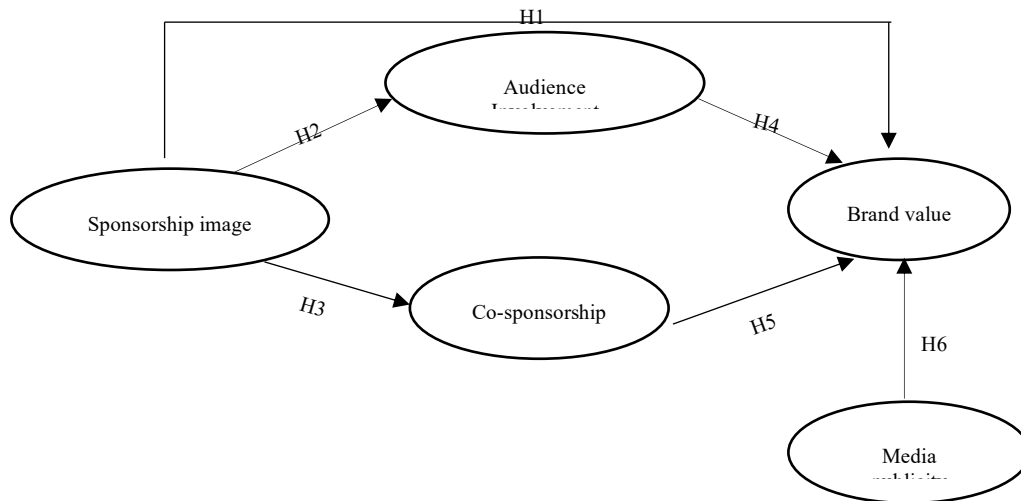


Figure 1: Sponsorship image to brand value research model.

Based on this model, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

- H1: Sports sponsorship image has a positive impact on brand value
- H2: Sponsorship image has a positive impact on audience involvement
- H3: Sponsorship image has a positive impact on co-sponsorship
- H4: The relationship between audience involvement and brand value is positively related
- H5: There is a positive relationship between co-sponsorship and brand value
- H6: There is a positive relationship between media publicity and brand value

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey Design

For the purpose of the study a quantitative approach was adopted and data was collected through a questionnaire distributed online. This questionnaire referred to the Sponsorship Experience Scale, Brand Perception Scale, Brand Satisfaction Scale and Purchase Intention Scale, which helped to ensure the validity of the data. Based on the literature review, specific aspects of sponsorship image, audience involvement, co-sponsorship and media publicity that affect brand value were collated from relevant domestic and international studies, and this was used to develop the questionnaire "How do consumers perceive the impact of sports event sponsorship on brand value" for the project. Respondents could assess items on a five-point Likert-type scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (absolutely agree), on the questionnaire. Along with other questions specifically related to the usage of sports sponsorship in the Qatar World Cup, the questionnaire also contained a number of generic categorical factors (gender and age). A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed through various online platforms to Chinese viewers who had watched the Qatar World Cup. The raw data collected was statistically processed and analyzed to empirically investigate the relationship between the variables of audience involvement, co-sponsorship and media promotion, and to formulate relevant research hypotheses. A total of 80 valid questionnaires were collected, and the data were analyzed by SPSS22.0, based on descriptive statistical analysis and linear regression to analyze the independent, mediating and dependent variables, in order to determine the degree of influence of sports event sponsorship on brand value.

3.2. Sample Size and Composition

80 persons made up the entire sample, which was representative of the fans that watched the World Cup in Qatar in China. 52.5% of the sample's participants were men and 47.5% were women. 47.5% of people were between the ages of 18 and 29; 26.3% were between the ages of 30 and 40; 15% were between the ages of 41 and 55; 8.8% were under the age of 18; and the lowest percentage, 2.5%, were above the age of 56. This demonstrates that young people and more men in China watched the World Cup in Qatar. The percentage of the sample who attended a Qatar World Cup game four or more times was 33.6%, 18.8% for five to six times, 8.8% for seven or more times, and 38.8% for every time. When asked if they were aware of the sports brands that sponsored events in Qatar, 67.5% of respondents replied yes, while 32.5% said no. 32.5% of the sample reported spending between \$400 and \$800, 32.8% between \$800 and \$1,200, and 33.7% over \$1,200 on items associated with the brands sponsoring the Qatar tournament in the previous year. These studies' analysis reveals that there are significant gender and age differences in the awareness of and interest in the sponsor brands among those watching the Qatar World Cup. The data might be analyzed using SPSS due to the large number of variables in the model and the anticipated outcomes.

4. Results

4.1. Hypothesis Analysis

Table 1: Regression analysis.

			coeff	se	t	p	R-sq	F
Model 1	Audience Involvement	constant	0.837	0.300	2.791	0.007	0.553	96.389
		Sponsorship image	0.764	0.078	9.818	0.000		
Model 2	Co-sponsorship	constant	0.974	0.324	3.001	0.004	0.483	72.991
		Sponsorship image	0.719	0.084	8.544	0.000		
Model 3	Brand value	constant	0.255	0.300	0.849	0.399	0.672	51.801
		Sponsorship image	-0.061	0.115	-0.531	0.597		
		Audience Involvement	0.652	0.117	5.572	0.000		
		Co-sponsorship	0.336	0.108	3.105	0.003		
Model 4	Brand value	constant	1.127	0.380	2.964	0.004	0.377	47.223
		Sponsorship image	0.678	0.099	6.872	0.000		

From the table it can be seen that:

(1) Model 1 demonstrates that the independent variables that correspond to the variables have an explanatory power of 55.3%, which leaves some of the variance unaccounted for, with an R-sq of 0.553. The F-value is 96.389, which indicates that the model is suitable and at least one of the independent variables is significant at the level of 0.001.

The importance of the sponsorship image on audience engagement (p 0.05) and the regression coefficient of 0.764 both demonstrate a higher relationship between a better sponsorship image and audience involvement;

(2) Model 2, with an R-sq of 0.483, shows that the independent variables that correspond to the variables have an explanatory power of 48.3%, but that there is still some variance that cannot be explained; the F-value is 72.991, significant at the 0.001 level, showing that at least one of the independent variables is significant and the model can be accepted.

A regression value of 0.719 suggesting that a better sponsorship image has a stronger impact on co-sponsorship, and the significance of sponsorship image on co-sponsorship (p 0.05);

(3) Model 3 has an R-square of 0.672, which means that the independent variables in the model have an explanatory power of 67.2%, and the F-value is 51.801, which indicates that the model is significant at the 0.001 level and at least one of the independent variables is significant.

With regression coefficients of 0.652 and 0.336, respectively, the importance of co-sponsorship and audience involvement on brand value (p0.05) demonstrates that these factors have an impact on brand value; sponsorship image has no effect (p>0.05);

(4) Model 4 has an R-sq of 0.377, which denotes that the independent variables' explanatory power for the variables is 37.7%, and the F-value is 47.233, indicating that at least one of the independent variables is significant and the model is acceptable.

The regression coefficient (0.678) and association between sponsorship image and brand value (p0.05) demonstrate that a stronger sponsorship image has a greater effect on brand value.

Table 2: The bootstrap mediator effect.

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total effect	0.678	0.099	0.482	0.874
Direct effect	-0.061	0.115	-0.291	0.169
Total Indirect Effect	0.739	0.115	0.508	0.965
Sponsorship image - audience involvement - brand value	0.498	0.116	0.264	0.720
Sponsorship image - co-sponsorship - brand value	0.241	0.110	0.047	0.476
Comparison of indirect effects	0.257	0.194	-0.160	0.612

From the table it can be seen that:

(1) an overall effect of 0.678 with a 95% confidence interval of (0.482, 0.874), excluding 0, indicating the presence of an overall effect;

(2) a direct effect of -0.061 with a 95% confidence interval of (-0.291, 0.169), including 0, indicating the absence of a direct effect;

(3) a total indirect effect of 0.739, with a 95% confidence interval of (0.508, 0.965), excluding 0, indicating the presence of a total indirect effect;

(4) a path sponsorship image-audience involvement-brand value effect of 0.498, with a 95% confidence interval of (0.264, 0.720), excluding 0, indicating the presence of a path sponsorship image-audience involvement-brand value indirect effect;

(5) a path sponsorship image-co-sponsorship-brand value effect of 0.241 with a 95% confidence interval of (0.047, 0.476), excluding 0, indicating the existence of an indirect effect of sponsorship image-co-sponsorship-brand value;

(6) an indirect effect contrast effect of 0.257 with a 95% confidence interval of (-0.160, 0.612), including 0, indicating that there is no difference between the indirect effects of the two paths;

The direct effect is absent and the indirect effect is present, indicating that the mediation is fully mediated.

4.2. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is mostly utilized in the statistical field to define and reflect this effect relationship by creating a regression equation, which can assist us in visualizing and precisely grasping the degree and direction of influence between various variables or between various items.

The regression model summary table appears in the first section. The summary table's adjusted R-squared primarily indicates how well the model fits the data, or how well the independent variables explain the dependent variables. The regression model's significance level must be less than 0.05 in order for the regression model's surface to be considered scientifically reasonable and acceptable. The regression model's ANOVA table, which makes up the second part, is primarily used to demonstrate the regression model's acceptability to scientists. The regression model's regression coefficient table, which makes up the third part, displays the regression coefficient and significance level of the independent variables.

Table 3: Model summaryb.

Model	R	R 2	Adjusted R 2	Errors in standard estimates	Durbin Watson
1	.697a	.486	.479	.77028	1.906

a. Predictor variables: (constant), media campaign

b. Dependent variable: brand value

As can be seen in the table, the model's modified R-squared value is 0.479, indicating a generally good match. In other words, the independent variables that are related to the variables account for 47.9% of the variance.

Table 4: ANOVAa.

Model	Quadratic sum	DOF	Mean square	F	Significance	
1	Regression	43.724	1	43.724	73.693	.000b
	Irregular	46.280	78	.593		
	Aggregate	90.004	79			

a. Dependent variable: brand value

b. Predictor variables: (constant), media publicity

As can be seen from the table: the F-value of the regression model is 73.693, with a significance of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating that at least one of the independent variables in the regression model is significant, indicating that the regression model is scientifically sound and acceptable.

Table 5: Coefficienta.

Model		Unstandardised coefficient		Standardisation factor	t	Significance	Covariance statistics	
		B	Standard error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constants)	.434	.385		1.126	.264		
	Media publicity	.872	.102	.697	8.584	.000	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent variable: brand value

The table shows that: media publicity has a significant positive effect on brand value ($p < 0.05$), with a regression coefficient of 0.872, indicating that more media publicity has a greater effect on brand value.

5. Discussion

The following conclusions were drawn from the above research: in this online audience survey, there were more male than female viewers, and the audience was younger and more educated. The vast majority of viewers have purchased products from the sponsoring brands, with purchases ranging from \$400 to \$800. The majority of viewers enjoy watching the Qatar World Cup, watching it twice or more in a week. In addition, the majority of viewers were aware of the sponsorship brands, with the highest levels of awareness of the shoes worn by the players and the shirts worn by the players.

The regression analysis showed a positive relationship between sponsorship image on co-sponsorship and audience involvement. The relationship between audience involvement and co-sponsorship has an indirect effect on brand value, with more audience involvement and better co-sponsorship having a greater impact on brand value. Media publicity had a significant positive impact on brand value. Unlike the research hypothesis, the impact of sponsorship image on brand value is two-sided and depends on the specific situation, with the better the sponsorship image the greater the impact on brand value.

Based on the above research, it is recommended that tournament organizers increase their efforts to promote their events and raise awareness of them. From the results of the survey, the proportion of female and elderly spectators is relatively low, so event organizers should achieve precision marketing, increase the promotion of female and elderly spectators, improve the visibility of the event and make the brand audience more extensive. Secondly, organizers should plan the sponsorship cycle rationally, establish a protected sponsorship system and increase the share of sports brand sponsors in the resources of the best athletes of the sporting events. But these resources have not been well developed and utilized to date. It is recommended that strategy and product development should be carried out in the event organizers' future branding activities to strengthen the diversity of sponsorship subjects and increase the overall exposure and visibility of the event, thus promoting further utilization of superior resources.

For sports sponsors, it is recommended to explore the point of integration between the event and the brand. In the direction of branding activities, sponsors should be as close to the event as possible and use the event as a basis for branding activities. In this way, they can transfer the audience's emotions to their own brand, increase audience involvement and gradually achieve brand recognition and resonance. Secondly, it is recommended that sponsors establish the tone of the brand itself. Brands should have a clear positioning of themselves, maintain continuity in their marketing activities, increase product development and innovation, create a healthier brand image and strive to create long-term brand characteristics. From the perspective of long-term development,

companies can screen sports events, select quality projects that fit their development philosophy and brand values, and extend the sponsorship cycle to achieve the conversion of potential customers over a long period of time. At the same time, sponsoring brands should continue to develop new products, try to avoid negative press and improve the quality of their media campaigns.

6. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to provide a conceptual framework for improving the effectiveness of sports sponsorship on brand value in the context of sporting events. The innovation of this study is that it contributes to the existing literature, enriches the theory related to sports sponsorship and brand marketing, and develops an empirical model. And it is diverse in terms of research perspectives, referencing the use of international authoritative scales, providing a reference for other scholars on sponsorship image and brand value questionnaires, and drawing conclusions that are different from the research hypothesis. The study concludes that the mechanism of the impact of sports sponsorship activities on brand value. Excellent sporting event sponsorship and good cooperation between event organizers can promote both economic and social benefits. Brands that sponsor major sporting events such as Puma have also experienced unsatisfactory economic returns. This study therefore analyses the effectiveness of sponsorship marketing in comparison to the Qatar World Cup, and explores the factors that brands need to pay attention to when choosing the appropriate sports sponsorship for their marketing activities, in order to provide some reference and suggestions for brands' sports sponsorship marketing activities, and hopefully promote the development of sports sponsorship. The limitations of this study are that due to the constraints of material resources, manpower and time, the depth of the survey on the online audience of the Qatar World Cup is not enough, mainly because the sample size and scope can be further improved. The use of the Qatar World Cup as a case study is not generalizable. Based on the model of this study, future generations can find more mediating variables, analyses the impact of sports sponsorship on brand value, and explore new influencing factors and research directions.

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