

## **MEDIA EXPOSURE AND SPONSOR RECALL: CRICKET WORLD CUP 2003**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper reports on a study into the relationship between media exposure and sponsor recall relating to an international event, namely the Cricket World Cup 2003 (CWC 2003). The application of sponsorship as a communication construct and recall as a media vehicle effect is investigated. Recall has been widely acknowledged as a measure of the effectiveness of a sport sponsorship. A convenience sample of university students was exposed to a self-administered questionnaire that required them to report their exposure to CWC 2003 events. Respondents were also required to list the main (global) sponsors of CWC 2003 through unaided recall. The findings indicate that there was a relationship between media exposure and sponsor recall for one sponsor, namely LG. The main conclusion is that an event sponsor has to leverage its sponsorship expenditure through the integration of other marketing communication elements to increase the recall rate.*

**Key words:** Cricket World Cup 2003; Event sponsorship; Media exposure; Sponsor recall.

### **INTRODUCTION**

While various effects can be achieved through the usage of sponsorship, this paper seeks to examine the relationship between media exposure and recall relating to an international sporting event, namely the Cricket World Cup (CWC 2003). This event was held in Southern Africa (a few games were played in Kenya and Zimbabwe) from 9 February to 23 March 2003 and consisted of 54 matches that were all televised live on local television. A few matches did not take place due to political interventions.

Although there was a large variety of main, regional and smaller sponsors and suppliers, this study only focuses on recall and media exposure variables relating to the four main global sponsors, namely Pepsi, South African Airways (SAA), Hero Honda and LG. SAA ran an extensive advertising campaign on television (“Proud sponsor. Proud supporter.”), while LG used a variety of leverage opportunities to support their sponsorship, including match day competitions, print media advertising and publicity generating events. Pepsi and Hero Honda had a limited focus on the South African market, but used CWC 2003 to generate advertising opportunities in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. A large percentage (estimated to be close to 700 million people) of global cricket followers reside in these four countries.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Sponsorship is mostly discussed as a marketing communication variable in the marketing literature (Van Heerden, 2001). Its application as a communication construct is usually implied, but not specifically stated.

### Applying sponsorship to communication theory

Communication theory generally focuses on three key elements that constitute the transfer of meaning, namely the source, the medium and media vehicle effects (which include feedback). The application of sponsorship to the traditional communication process is therefore as follows: the sponsor is the source, television coverage of an event and/or in-stadia branding is the medium and the ability to recall the sponsors of an event constitutes a media vehicle effect (memorable image).

Javalgi *et al.* (1994) found that companies should attach their names formally to the titles of the events they sponsor. When spectators or the general public are exposed to the brand of a company, it will most likely be retained in their memories, even if they did not pay attention to it when they were first exposed to the brand.

News coverage of a sponsored event such as the CWC 2003 is at the discretion of the media. One of the main reasons why companies sponsor sporting events is because they gain sole rights to place branding material at stadia before, during and even after the event. Sponsors actively seek opportunities to build an awareness of their status as event sponsors through a wide variety of activities. They subsequently aim to leverage the effectiveness of their sponsorships by creating incidental news coverage, branding at events and supporting advertising and marketing promotions at grounds, in the media and at non-sporting venues, such as shopping malls.

Marshall and Cook (as cited by Nicholls *et al.*, 1999) state that sporting events are advertising media. Stotlar and Johnson (1989), in assessing stadium advertising, noted that between 62% and 77% of attendees at sporting events "noted the advertising".

Cuneen and Hannan (1993) found that, of 451 subjects at a Ladies Professional Golf Association tournament, 98% noticed the advertising, 91% of these were not consciously looking, and that the most noticed signs (74%) were in concession areas, followed by leader boards (56%) and playing tees (56%). It was also noted that, "... sponsors who had products/services available on site were recognised in greater frequencies than those who had not". For sponsors to get their company's name in the minds of the consumer at an event, Cuneen and Hannan (1993) stated that event sponsorship is more effective than the exposure achieved through television commercials.

In addition to providing a basis for advertising, sponsorship is undertaken to enhance the image of a company, its products, and its brands through the linkage to the event. In effect, the mass audience exposed to a major sporting event gives advertisers the confidence that they will reach a sufficient number of customers, or potential customers, to achieve a minimum effective exposure frequency (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). This is especially true for a global sponsor of an international sporting event, because such events attract spectators and media viewers with a specifically defined interest.

The reason why companies display their logos on billboards at sporting events and have visible branding on sport apparel is to make the on-site spectators aware of their products or to improve their image among the spectators. In addition to the on-site audience, companies fulfill their promotional objectives by including advertising in the mass media, especially if the sponsor's brands are repeatedly seen during television broadcasts. Companies also view the event as the basis for possible exposure to regional, national or international television, radio, and print audiences that may number in the millions (Abratt *et al.*, 1987). It is therefore deduced that when members of these audiences encounter the brand name, logo, or products at a later stage, they might remember that the particular company has sponsored a sport or sporting event and their intention to purchase these products might increase.

### **Recall as a media vehicle effect**

It is argued that sponsor recall is one method of gaining feedback on the effectiveness of a sponsorship. Sandler and Shani (1993: 41) noted: "A first step in (measuring) sponsorship effectiveness is the correct identification of a firm as a sponsor".

Banks (1992) suggested that companies need measures of commercial performance, such as awareness, recall and attitude, to use their sponsorship budgets effectively. Bennett (1999) argued that the results of sponsorship are typically appraised in terms of awareness levels achieved; attitudes created or altered; prompted and unprompted brand or company name recall; the extent of television, radio and press coverage; and cost per thousand prospects. Brand recall as a measure of effectiveness has also been reported by Dubow (1994) and Wells *et al.* (1995). Corporate managers often invest in sponsorship as a means of associating a company, its name or its brands, with a particular sport or event (Quester & Farrelly, 1998). The strength of that association can be measured through a recall study, which may serve as one of the measures of sponsorship success. Pope and Voges (1995) argue that recall and recognition are important aspects as sponsors try to increase their brand awareness among spectators through the use of logos, billboards, and clothing items worn by sport stars. Recall requires two steps in memory, namely search and recognition (Singh *et al.*, 1988).

An analysis of 180 responses to a survey of recall and recognition of televised State of Origin Rugby League matches in Australia, led Pope and Voges (1997) to conclude that three or four signage locations are most beneficial for recall and recognition effects at televised stadium sporting events. Shilbury and Berriman (1996), who conducted recall and recognition of sponsors and advertisers at the St. Kilda Australian Football League club in Australia, observed that sponsorship needs time to be recalled and recognised.

Hastings (1984) claims that media exposure and positive image building are both associated with sports sponsorship. Nicholls *et al.* (1999: 368) state that "Event marketing is no different than any other promotional activity: to increase the awareness of a company or product name" and "a measure of the commercial effectiveness (of a sponsorship) is, brand recall (awareness)". The variety of views reported here lead to the formulation of two hypotheses.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Respondents who could recall a global sponsor of the CWC 2003 will report a higher level of media exposure than respondents who could not recall the sponsor.*

This hypothesis will compare the reported media exposure levels of respondents who were able to recall a specific global sponsor brand with those who could not for each of the four main sponsors of CWC 2003 individually.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Respondents with a high recall ability of the global sponsors of the 2003 Cricket World Cup will report a higher level of media exposure than respondents with a low recall ability.*

This hypothesis will compare the reported media exposure levels of respondents with high and low recall abilities across all four the main sponsor brands.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The authors could not find any previous research in which the relationship between media exposure and ability to recall the main sponsors of major sporting events hosted in South Africa were empirically tested. Evidence of research conducted into sponsorship recognition and recall at global sporting events exists, but no reports could be found in scientific journals of studies conducted at events in South Africa.

Although awareness and recall often feature prominently as core objectives of sponsorships, it has not yet been formally established whether the level of media exposure during a major event held in South Africa has a significant relationship with recall levels. It may be assumed that higher levels of media exposure should be associated with higher levels of recall, but this assumption has not yet been tested.

The main research question is therefore the following: Is there a significant relationship between media exposure and the ability of students to recall the main (global) sponsors of CWC 2003? It is stated that if media exposure was high and recall is low, then there was a lack of effectiveness and memorability of the sponsorship campaign, all other influences being equal.

## **THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

From an academic point of view, this study adds to the small body of sponsorship research published in local scientific journals (cf. Van Heerden & Du Plessis, 2003; Van Heerden & Du Plessis, 2004). Although it may seem logical to argue that there is a relationship between the level of media exposure and sponsor recall, the nature and extent of this relationship has not yet been substantiated. The specific objective of this study is therefore to determine whether there is a relationship between reported media exposure relating to Cricket World Cup 2003 and sponsor recall among a sample of university students.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research was conducted six months after the conclusion of the final match of the CWC 2003. It may be argued that sponsor recall decay could have increased after such a time period, but no evidence exists of any studies that have measured the effect of such decay on recall rates.

## Sampling

Because of time and budget constraints, the target population for the study was defined as students at the University of Pretoria. A convenience sampling method was used as this method allowed the researcher to approach available subjects or use volunteer subjects (Page & Meyer, 2000).

## Data collection

The questionnaire was pre-tested among 15 adults before it was distributed to respondents on the main campus of the University of Pretoria. Respondents were approached on campus during weekdays and were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire. The interviewer was available to assist the respondents, if necessary. Those subjects who were available and willing to respond were included in the study. A total of 120 questionnaires were handed out and completed by respondents. The age of the respondents ranged between 19 years and 30 years. The sample included students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and from both genders. The measurement approach and scales were adopted from a previous study by Pope and Voges (2000). These authors, *inter alia*, measured respondents' awareness of sponsorships. The first question in the questionnaire required respondents to identify the global sponsors of CWC 2003 through unaided recall. Unaided recall requires of respondents to compile a list of those sponsors who they think had been sponsors of the event without any prompts, hints or clues on the questionnaire or by the researcher. The questionnaire also included an aided recall question. This question required respondents to select the global sponsors of CWC 2003 from a list of 10 options.

## FINDINGS

Table 1 indicates the ability of the respondents to recall the main (global) CWC 2003 sponsors through an unaided recall question.

**TABLE 1. UNAIDED RECALL OF THE MAIN (GLOBAL) SPONSORS OF CWC 2003 (N=120)**

	Able to recall		Unable to recall	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
South African Airways	45	37.5%	75	62.5%
Hero Honda	28	23.3%	92	76.7%
Pepsi	87	72.5%	33	27.5%
LG	90	75.0%	30	25.0%

Note: Many respondents were able to recall some of the minor sponsors, official partners and/or official suppliers, but such recall falls outside of the scope of this paper.

The unaided recall rates of LG and Pepsi were much higher than that of South African Airways and Hero Honda. Although Pepsi did not advertise extensively in South Africa, a high percentage of respondents (72.5%) were able to recall it as a global sponsor. This may be due to media coverage of the fact that Pepsi was the sole cola drink sponsor of the CWC 2003 and that no Coca Cola were available at the matches. LG had the highest level of unaided

recall (75%). This could be due to the fact that LG had the most extensive leverage campaign of the four global sponsors.

Sponsorship provides for the production of sporting events and for promotion to consumers who attend these events as spectators and/or follow them in the broadcast and print media (Nicholls *et al.*, 1999). Based on this view, four variables were arbitrarily compiled that may constitute visual media exposure opportunities during CWC 2003. These opportunities were: Watched the Cricket World Cup 2003 final on television; Followed the Cricket World Cup 2003 on television; Followed the CWC 2003 in the printed media; Attended some of the CWC 2003 games. It is argued that sponsor exposure on television, in print and at sport stadia could create awareness and might have a positive relationship with sponsor recall.

Respondents had to indicate their level of exposure to each of the above-mentioned opportunities on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the scale points labelled as: Not at all (1); A little (2); Moderately (3); A lot (4); Extensively (5). A mean was calculated across all four variables - the higher the mean, the higher the level of media exposure of the respondents.

An option concerning the attendance at matches was included as it was assumed that attending a match would have exposed a respondent to sponsor branding and stadium advertising. It was also assumed that the CWC 2003 final match would have created high interest and that many of the respondents may have watched this match even though South Africa did not participate.

### ***Hypothesis one (H<sub>1</sub>)***

Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>, which focussed on differences in the media exposure levels of respondents who were able to recall a specific sponsor brand compared to those who were not, was tested separately for each of the four global sponsor brands. Since overall media exposure was measured through a Likert-type scale at an interval level of measurement, the appropriate parametric significance test is the independent samples t-test. This test, however, makes a number of assumptions about the population from which the sample was drawn (Green *et al.*, 1999). It, *inter alia*, assumes that the test variable (i.e. overall media exposure) is normally distributed in each of the two sub-groups as defined by the grouping variable (i.e. respondents who could correctly recall a particular global sponsor versus those who could not).

Following the advice of Green *et al.* (1999) and Pallant (2001), this assumption was tested through a series of Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, as well as through the visual inspection of histograms and normal probability plots. These tests indicated that the test variable – overall media exposure – had a slight non-normal distribution in the two sub-groups (“able to recall” and “not able to recall”) for all four the global sponsor brands. Green *et al.* (1999) and Pallant (2001) however point out that the independent samples t-test is robust for mild departures from normality.

The results of the four independent samples t-tests conducted to test hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> are shown in Table 2:

**TABLE 2. RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TESTS ACROSS RECALL GROUPS**

	<b>Test statistic</b>	<b>P-value (one-tailed)</b>
SAA	t = -1.033	0.152
Pepsi	t = -1.362	0.088
LG	t = -2.489	0.007
Hero Honda	t = -1.346	0.091

The results indicate that the overall level of media exposure of the “able to recall” and “unable to recall” groups differ significantly in the case of LG. Hypothesis  $H_1$  can therefore only be accepted in the case of LG.

### **Hypothesis two ( $H_2$ )**

The second hypothesis ( $H_2$ ) focussed on differences in the level of media exposure between low and high recall respondents across all four global sponsors of CWC 2003 combined.

Recall ability was measured as the total number of global sponsor brands that a respondent could correctly recall through unaided recall. Respondents who correctly recalled one or two of the four global sponsor brands were classified as having a “low recall ability” (41 respondents; 34.2% of the sample), while respondents who correctly recalled three or four brands were classified as having a “high recall ability” (79 respondents; 65.8% of the sample). Overall media exposure was measured as the average of each respondent’s scores across a 5-item, 5-point Likert-type scale.

Descriptive statistics indicate a small difference in the mean media exposure scores of the low and high recall ability groups (see Table 3).

**TABLE 3. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE LOW AND HIGH RECALL ABILITY GROUPS ON TOTAL MEDIA EXPOSURE**

<b>Recall groups</b>	<b>Mean on total media exposure</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Low recall ability	2.58	1.06
High recall ability	2.74	1.18

Since the measure of overall media exposure provides data at an interval level of measurement, the appropriate parametric significance test is the independent samples t-test. The normality assumption of the independent samples t-test was again assessed through a series of Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, as well as through the visual inspection of histograms and normal probability plots. These tests indicated that the test variable – overall media exposure – had a slight non-normal distribution in the two recall ability sub-groups. Since the independent samples t-test is robust for mild departures from normality (Green *et al.*, 1999: 150); Pallant, 2001: 172), hypothesis  $H_2$  was also tested through an independent samples t-test.

The results indicate that respondents with high recall ability do not have a higher level of total media exposure when compared to respondents with low recall ability ( $t = -0.799$ , one-tailed  $p$ -value = 0.426). Hypothesis  $H_2$  is therefore rejected.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicated that respondents who were able to recall SAA, Hero Honda, and Pepsi as global sponsors of CWC 2003 do not have a higher level of media exposure than respondents who were not able to recall these companies as sponsors. Respondents who were able to recall that LG was a global sponsor of the CWC 2003 had a higher level of media exposure than those who could not recall LG as a sponsor. This may be ascribed to LG's extensive leverage campaign, including sales promotions (competitions) and publicity generating events.

These findings should be of importance to managers when analysing their sponsorship of an event. LG seemed to have had the most intense media campaign leading up to, during and after the CWC 2003. This could be the reason for the acceptance of hypothesis  $H_1$  for LG, but not for the other three sponsors. It must be noted that sponsors are not willing to divulge the exact amounts invested into a sponsorship, nor are they willing to disclose the expenditure in terms of leverage support.

The amount of effort by the sponsor will determine the success of the sponsorship activity. Sponsorship will have an effect on the ability to recall the sponsor or sponsored activity when the level of media exposure to the general public is high and the sponsor has an extensive leverage campaign. Such campaigns are generally much more expensive than the initial sponsorship fee. Managers must determine what exactly they want to achieve through a sponsorship. This will determine the amount of money and effort that is allocated to the sponsorship activity. More effort will increase a sponsor's ability to measure the effectiveness of a sponsorship long after the sponsorship has run its course.

This study focused on a major international sporting event. Future research may focus on smaller domestic/national sporting events. The spotlight could also be placed on companies that sponsor multiple events, a particular event over a number of seasons, or events particular to a specific region, which is closer to specific sub-segments of the general population. Such smaller segments could enable researchers to survey representative samples. Such studies will also assist smaller or regional sponsors in measuring the recall effect of their sponsorships. Future studies should also be broadened to measure effects other than recall or awareness.

## LIMITATIONS

This study has a number of limitations. Firstly, because of the convenience sampling approach used, generalisation is inappropriate. The sample size (120 respondents) was also very small. Secondly, the respondents were university students from the University of Pretoria. This does not allow for generalisation to other sub-segments of the South African population. The study focused on sponsorship of an international event that was held six months prior to data collection. This long time lag may be questioned, but it also helped to determine the recall abilities of the respondents over a long period of time.



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