

IMPACT OF CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT, POSITIVE
EMOTION, AND ATTITUDE TOWARD PERSIAN GULF
CUP ON BRANDING EFFECTIVENESS OF EVENT
SPONSORS

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Abstract

Sponsorship has definitely become one of the highest growing worldwide marketing practices. Business companies look sponsorship opportunities to actualize their overall organizational aims, marketing objectives, and promotional strategies, particularly to improve brand equity. The objective of this research was to examine the impact of consumers' involvement, positive emotions, and attitude toward Persian Gulf Cup on the branding effects of the event. The participants were from university students Iran (n= 310) who had watched at least some coverage of Persian Gulf Cup (2013). A questionnaire has used for data collection and respondents were randomly selected to assess perceived branding. An analysis of the structural model, relating to respondent's involvement, positive emotional responses, and attitude toward the event, used to develop a model in Iran. The findings revealed that branding effects were positively associated with consumer's attitude toward the sponsored event.

Keywords: Sponsorship: Branding, Persian Gulf Cup, Involvement, positive Emotion, Attitudes,

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1. Introduction

According to Bal et al., (2010), one of the fastest growing worldwide marketing practices is Sponsorship and its expenditures have increased globally from \$13.4 billion in 1996 to \$46.3 billion in 2010 (IEG, 2011). Whereas port associations and event promoters have more and more relied upon support chances to actualize their overall organizational objectives, marketing aims, and promotional approaches (Yang et al., 2008). According to Henseler et al., (2007), company managers hold a strong belief that sport sponsorships be able to make contribution to brand awareness, brand image, and corporate image. Corporations connect themselves with events that are more special and personally relevant to consumers' lives through sponsorship, thus to deepen their relationship with the target market sectors. As a result, a few companies consisting of characteristics and benefits can be associated to the sponsored brand. Although, numerous market and consumer factors effect on the branding effects of sponsorship (Cornwell et al., 2005). Two interacting routes, namely brand route and event route through sponsorship, can influence consumer's brand attitude and buying intention (Martensen et al., 2007). Event route refers to emotions, attitude toward an event, consumer's involvement, and their transferability to a sponsoring brand. Furthermore, how consumers react to the sponsored event is a major concern for event promoters seeking sponsorship and for sponsorship managers screening sponsorship vehicles. While according to Speed and Thompson (2000), the importance of attitude toward event has been acknowledged by several researchers but the impact of event attitude on branding effects is not conclusive. Event attitude has significant influence on individual's purchase intention of sponsoring brands (Martensen et al., 2007) and similarly attitudinal responses to sponsorship message are predictive of sponsorship values by Hansen et al., (2005). On the other hand early studies (e.g., Speed and Thompson, 2000) did not find significant path coefficients between three sponsorship response variables and event attitude. Furthermore, very few researches have investigated the influence of event attitude on sponsor's brand equity elements (e.g., perceived quality and brand loyalty). Furthermore, the early studies of event attitude and thus their indirect effect on sponsorship effectiveness have rarely been examined. This study was designed to study the relationships among positive emotional experience, consumer involvement, and attitude toward the event and their effects on branding effectiveness in the context of Iranian football's sponsorship market. In this research model, the dependent variables were branding

effects, which were conceptualized as the perceived enhancement of the three elements of brand equity (Yoo and Donthu, 2001).

2. Literature review

2.1. Event involvement

Involvement is a significant variable in study on purchase decision making, advertisement effectiveness, and product-consumer relationship. Generally, the variable involves two related but different meanings that have often been used interchangeably in sponsorship research (Tsiotsou and Alexandris, 2009). According to Greenwald and Leavitt (1984), involvement relates to the allocation of attention capacity to a message source from information processing perspective. In other hand, involvement link to the fact that the point of attention allocation is a function of a person's psychological state of perceived relevance of the stimulus. Furthermore, involvement with a specific sport did not directly affect recall and recognition of sponsors, however it had a positive impact on resulting exposure to sponsor's messages and game attendance (Cornwell et al., 2000). In the present study, the researchers focused on the psychological state of involvement and cognitive involvement with an event was defined as personal relevance of a sport event based on the knowledge of the event and individual's rationality; the affective involvement with an event was defined as personal relevance of a sport event based on emotional or esthetic appeals incurred by the event.

2.2 Positive emotional experience

According to Cowley (2007), for consumers it is important to remember how much an earlier experience was enjoyed, as they use their feelings draw out throughout former experiences to lead decisions about their future. Many researches (e.g., Christensen, 2006; Martensen et al., 2007; Bal et al., 2009) have been acknowledged about the importance of emotions in determining the value of sponsorship deal. They found that positive emotions, along with positive attitude had direct impact on sponsorship value. Researchers such as; Richins (1997); Bagozzi et al.,(1999) have developed various scales to measure subjectively experienced emotions and identified various factor solutions. According to Hansen et al., (2006), the

positive solution of emotions remains the most economical one; thus, it was adopted in the present research. However scholars suppose that people are always can accurately remember the strength of a earlier felt emotional reactions and people's judgment (Skowronski and Carlston, 1989). In sum people's recalled positive emotional experience plays an important role in display evaluation of an experience and directing future consumption behavior (Cowley, 2008). Involvement with a specific sport had a positive influence on individuals' viewership experience (Cornwell et al., 2000) and event involvement was predictive of positive emotional responses of spectating a sport (Martensen et al., 2007). Therefore, the following hypothesis has formulated:

H1. Affective event involvement has a positive impact on positive emotional experience.

H2. Cognitive event involvement has a positive impact on positive emotional experience.

2.3 Event attitude

The experience of consumers about events is different and can effect on consumers' attitudes toward different events. This would affect the effectiveness of sponsorship in achieving branding objectives. In this study event attitude viewed as a unidimensional psychological variable that was expressed by assessing a specific sporting event with some degree of favor. In sponsorship study, event attitude has always been a basic variable in assessing the effectiveness of sponsorship. Attitudinal responses to sponsorship message, as a central route, can impact clients' reactions to the sponsor (Hansen et al., 2005 and Christensen, 2006). They indicated that event attitude was positively related to willingness to consider sponsor's product, attention to the sponsor, and favorability toward the sponsor. Furthermore, emotional responses were predictive of event attitude (Martensen et al., 2007).

H3. Positive emotional experience has a positive relationship with event attitude.

Generally; according to Albarracin et al., (2005), people can outline attitudes based on their affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to the motivation, and these interact with each other. Furthermore Lee et al.,(1997) indicated that, event attitude could be seen as an increase of an individual's experience over. This feature associates to consumers' pleasure of the event, their support for it:

H4. Affective event involvement would be positively associated with event attitude.

H5. Cognitive event involvement would be positively associated with event attitude.

2.4 The impact of event attitude to branding effects of sponsorship

A previous researches (e.g., Keller, 1993; Mao and Zhang 2013); in this research branding effectiveness is conceptualized as the perceived enhancement of key elements representing brand equity. Furthermore, perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand associations can combine and establish brand equity (Yoo and Donthu, 2001). Brand awareness is associate to the power of a brand in consumer's me (Keller, 1993). Aaker (1991) defined brand associations, as anything connecting memory to a brand, are interconnected. In other hand, brand associations direct to brand image and thus create a solid complex of brand knowledge (Keller, 1993). A few researchers (e.g., Yoo and Donthu, 2001) indicated that brand associations subsumed brand awareness. Perceived quality is consumer's subjective decision regarding a product's on the whole quality. While according to Yoo et al., (2000) perceived quality is mostly determined by personal product experiences and consumption situations; it is also subject to the impact of other features, for instance marketing communication including sponsorship. The final objective of marketing is to raise sales and create brand loyalty and it is extremely held commitment to buying a preferred product or service in the future, which is normally comprised of attitudinal and behavioral loyalty (Kaynak et al., 2008). Based on classical conditioning theory as demonstrated in Speed and Thompson's (2000) study, the liking of an event (unconditioned stimulus) might lead to the liking of a brand (conditioned stimulus). Based on these debates, the hypotheses are presented:

H6. Event attitude has a positive relationship with branding effectiveness

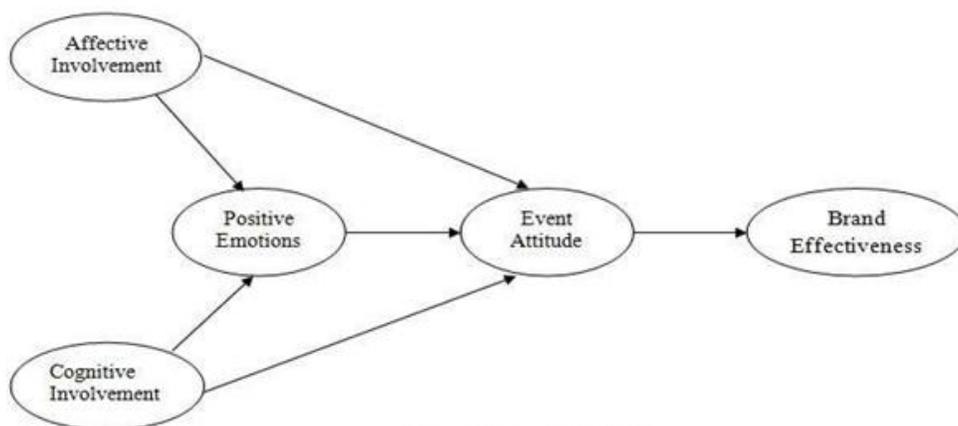


Figure 1 Research Model

3. Method

3.1 Formulation of the instrument

After a comprehensive review of literature, the researchers developed a questionnaire with a total of 47 items under five sections: demographic background information (seven items), perceived change in brand equity assuming a brand was a sponsor of the event (eight items), involvement with the 2013 football match (11 items), attitude toward the event (five items), and emotions triggered during broadcast viewing of the event (16 items). To measure the involvement with Persian Gulf Cup (football) the Zaichkowsky (1994) questions were adopted. All items measured on a seven-point semantic-differential scale. Furthermore to assess personal feeling developed by Hansen et al., (2006) was chosen to assess emotional responses to the broadcast viewing of Persian Gulf Cup. This measure had been tested in several sport event settings (Hansen et al., 2006; Martensen et al., 2007) and items measured with four-point Likert scale (4 very strong feeling to 1 no feeling). Attitude toward the event was measured by items measured on a seven-point semantic-differential scale, which was adopted from Muehling and Laczniak (1988). To measure of branding effectiveness a modified application of the brand equity measure that developed by Yoo and Donthu (2001) was used. This measure includes three dimensions of brand equity: brand quality, brand awareness/associations, and brand loyalty.

3.2 Participants and procedures

The data were collected after the Persian Gulf Cup, during 2013. Research participants (n= 310) were students in Islamic Azad University of Tafresh (Iran). Given that university students form a major section of spectators and TV viewers of sporting events in Iran, and since the aim of this research was to acquire a more common theoretical understanding of sponsorship effectiveness, studying a student sample was deemed significant and appropriate (Calder et al., 1981). Of the respondents (n=310), 56.9 percent were male and 43.1 percent female.

4. Data Analysis

Respondents reported that they had watched at least some coverage of the 2013 Persian Gulf Cup on television, and had heard of the brand names mentioned in the questionnaire.

4.1 Goodness of measures

The researchers have used two criteria for testing goodness of measures (validity and reliability). The convergent and discriminant validity has discussed for validity of questions. The factor loading assessment indicated in Table 1 and a cutoff value for significant is loadings at 0.5 regards to Hair et al. (2010). In addition, Table 1 revealed that all construct are valid (construct validity) and all the items measuring a particular construct. The composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and factor loadings have conducted to investigate about convergent validity. The loadings for all items exceeded the recommended value of 0.5.

Table 1 Cross loadings

Items	Affective Involvement	Positive Emotion	Cognitive Involvement	Event Attitude	Brand Effectiveness
AI1	0.793	0.489	0.272	0.337	0.237
AI2	0.792	0.529	0.342	0.335	0.375
AI3	0.619	0.333	0.199	0.319	0.319
AI4	0.742	0.345	0.187	0.345	0.243
AI5	0.827	0.236	0.178	0.287	0.347
PE1	0.496	0.918	0.436	0.279	0.359
PE2	0.427	0.886	0.450	0.389	0.469
PE3	0.178	0.6930	0.430	0.412	0.314
CI1	0.257	0.500	0.879	0.327	0.326
CI2	0.178	0.480	0.911	0.412	0.452
CI3	0.367	0.510	0.641	0.466	0.476
EA1	0.302	0.445	0.472	0.820	0.420
EA2	0.309	0.379	0.424	0.855	0.375
EA3	0.328	0.364	0.311	0.833	0.423

EA4	0.289	0.234	0.316	0.694	0.344
BE1	0.489	0.272	0.337	0.237	0.619
BE2	0.529	0.342	0.335	0.375	0.861
BE3	0.333	0.199	0.319	0.319	0.806

The results of the measurement model have summarized in Table 2 and indicated that the AVEs were in the range of 0.575 and 0.702. It measures the variance captured by the indicators relative to measurement error. Composite reliability values ranged from 0.810 to 0.875 which exceeded the recommended value of 0.7. This coefficient depicts the degree to which the construct indicators indicate the latent. In this study the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to assess the inter item consistency of measurement items has used. The loadings and alpha values have summarized in Table 2 and as seen from there, all alpha values are above 0.6. As such, we can conclude that the measurements are reliable.

Table 2 Results of measurement model

	AVE	Composite Reliability	R- Square	Cronbach Alpha
Affective Involvement	0.575	0.870	0.000	0.821
Positive Emotion	0.592	0.810	0.546	0.668
Cognitive Involvement	0.671	0.857	0.000	0.748
Event Attitude	0.645	0.878	0.505	0.814
Brand Effectiveness	0.702	0.874	0.143	0.786

Table 3 Results of the construct model

Constructs	Items (measurement)	B	T- Statistics
Affective Involvement	AI1	0.793	19.65
	AI2	0.793	17.68
	AI3	0.619	8.32
	AI4	0.742	18.96
	AI5	0.827	46.98
Positive Emotion	PE1	0.619	4.65
	PE2	0.861	15.14
	PE3	0.806	8.80
Cognitive Involvement	CI1	0.879	27.77
	CI2	0.911	45.79
	CI3	0.641	7.50

Event Attitude	EA1	0.820	26.49
	EA2	0.856	38.86
	EA3	0.833	34.11
	EA4	0.694	15.28
Brand Effectiveness	BE1	0.918	26.03
	BE2	0.885	20.10
	BE3	0.693	7.99

The other criterion for assessment of measurement model is discriminant validity. Table 4 describe that diagonal elements are larger than off-diagonal elements in the same row and column. The result describes that the questionnaire had discriminant validity.

Table 4 Discriminant validity

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
1. Affective Involvement	0.575				
2. Positive Emotion	0.299	0.592			
3. Cognitive Involvement	0.109	0.583	0.6		
4. Event Attitude	0.154	0.216	0.24	0.645	
5. Brand Effectiveness	0.234	0.341	0.23	0.431	0.702

Diagonals (in bold) represent the average variance extracted while the other entries represent the squared correlations

5. Assessment of Structural Model

Non-parametric tests like R² for dependent variables, the Q² cross-validation test explaining the strength of effects is used. These values were well above the threshold level of zero. However, regarding CV-redundancy index (Q²) Branding effectiveness had high than zero (0.50).

6. Hypotheses testing and discussion

In this part, the researchers proceeded with the path analysis to test the six hypotheses generated. Figure 2 and Table 5 present the results.

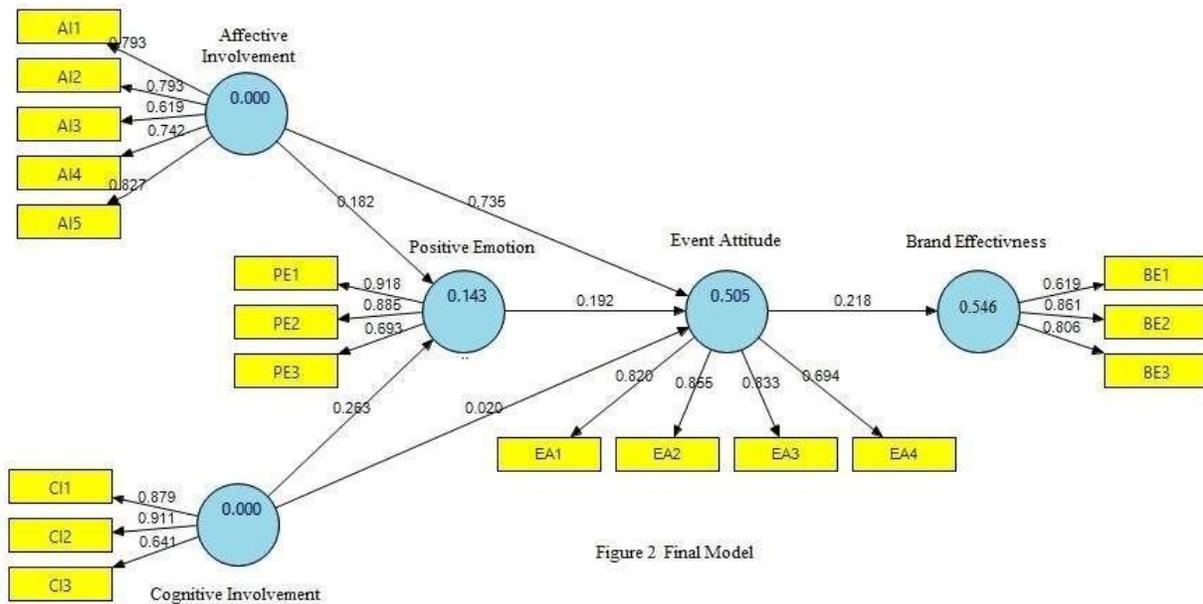


Figure 2 Final Model

Table 5 Path coefficients and hypothesis testing

Relationship	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value
Affective Involvement -----> Event Attitude	0.74	19.51	0.00
Affective Involvement -----> Positive Emotion	0.18	2.21	0.01
Cognitive Involvement -----> Event Attitude	0.23	2.50	0.01
Cognitive Involvement -----> Positive Emotion	0.26	2.41	0.01
Positive Emotion -----> Event Attitude	0.19	2.92	0.00
Event Attitude -----> Brand Effectiveness	0.22	3.35	0.00

The finding revealed that, a positive significant relationship between the affective involvement and positive emotion has established and this relationship with 95% confidence is significant at the 0.05 level ($\beta=0.18$, t-statistics= 2.21, P-value < 0.05). Furthermore, not only the positive relationship between affective involvement and event attitude also has established ($\beta= 0.74$, t- statistics = 19.51, P-value < 0.05), but also the positive relation between cognitive involvement and event attitude and positive emotion. These relationships with 95% confidence is significant at the 0.05 level ($\beta=0.259$, t statistics=2.50, P-value < 0.05; $\beta=0.26$, t statistics=2.41, P-value < 0.05 respectively).

As expected, based on finding, the positive and direct relationship between the positive emotion and event attitude has confirmed and this relationship with 95% confidence is significant at the 0.05 level ($\beta = 0.19$, t- statistics=2.92, P-value < 0.05. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between event attitude and brand effectiveness ($\beta = 0.22$, t- statistic =3.35, P- value < 0.05). Findings of this study fully supported all hypotheses. Regarding the relationships among involvement, emotions, and attitude, the hypothesized relationships were supported. The level of consumer's affective involvement ($\beta = 0.74$), cognitive involvement ($\beta = 0.23$), and positive emotions ($\beta = 0.19$) significantly ($p < 0.05$) predicted event attitude, thus the related hypotheses were supported. H1 was also supported as the level of consumer's affective involvement ($\beta = 0.74$) was found significantly ($p < 0.05$) predictive of positive emotions.

7. Discussion

This research investigated the impact of consumer involvement, emotions, and attitude toward the Persian Gulf Cup on the brand equity of event sponsors. The main focus of this approach complements previous company/manager and market focused approaches, which eventually impacts the brand effectiveness of the event sponsor(s). Results of this research conformed to those of early studies, which reported that individual attitude toward a certain event has a important effect on the branding function of the event. Early studies typically used sponsor/brand image, sponsor/brand attitude (Martensen et al., 2007), word of mouth, and purchase intention (Tsiotsou and Alexandris, 2009) as outcome variables. This research same as Mao and Zhang (2013) studies has also found evidence for the hierarchical relationships among involvement, emotions. Practically, the level of consumer's cognitive involvement, affective involvement, and positive emotions were significantly related to event attitude; and the level of consumer's affective involvement was significantly associated with positive emotions. The impact of cognitive involvement on positive emotions was ($\beta = 0.26$). The measure adopted may have not been responsive sufficient to imprison the valence in respondents' emotional responses. When the consumers perceive viewing a sporting event meaningful, valuable, and related to them, they are more motivated to understand the history of the event, players, and competition rules, and more willing to follow the events. Consequently, they likely possess more knowledge about the event and are able to assess relevant information, and as a result arrive at a more reasoned attitude. Conversely, it is likely that high cognitive involvement could have generated counter arguments that may inhibit the valence of positive emotional responses (Petty et al., 1983; Mao and Zhang ,2013). In terms of the Persian Gulf Cup, high cognitive involvement might have activated such counter arguments as environmental issues, unbalanced social economic development, or other related negative issues. Therefore, event organizers should strategically channel the cognitive involvement level of spectators and viewers to enhance their positive emotional experience and attain their attitudinal and behavioral support and commitment to hosting the event. Sport, as a brand, can

also be used to create brand throughout such brand association strategies as sponsorship. The theoretical framework and the developed model in this research can be viewed as a progression of early researches and the past studies are certainly relevant in that they provide insights into the basic mechanisms of sponsorship asset development.

8. Managerial implications

During this research, the researchers have seen how involvement, positive emotional experience, and attitudes toward the Persian Gulf Cup may be used as indicators of the branding impacts of sponsorship. The interrelationships recognized in this research can be used to create brand equity of the event and its brand extension, namely sponsorship, thus have marketing and managerial implications for both event organizers and sponsors. For event organizers, efforts should be made to foster consumer participation and positive emotional experience, and strengthen their positive attitude toward the event, in an effort to improve the value of the event to sponsors. The study results recommend that affective involvement is fundamental in establishing positive emotional experience and event attitude. Programs and actions that objective to add to fan affective involvement with the event should be initiated and firmly implemented. This can be done by improving the performance and service quality of the event, enhancing fans involvement with social events and activities, and increasing volunteer opportunities. Sponsorship offers exclusive opportunities for implementing brand strategy. This research offered some support to the popular knowledge that sponsoring a sport event with which the target population is extremely involved and toward which the target population holds positive attitude will be more likely to increase consumer-based brand equity in the target market. For sponsors, it would be very useful to take into consideration the attitudinal responses generated by the sponsored party when screening sponsorship opportunities, or evaluating branding effects of different sponsoring arrangements and developing sponsorship-linked marketing strategy. Earlier than entering into a sponsorship agreement, corporations may analyze fan involvement, emotional experience, and attitude toward the event under consideration in order to measure its potentiality in branding effects.

More and more, consumer experience is playing a superior role in molding brand perceptions. Sponsorship offers an opportunity for marketers to make and deliver value added customer experiences. Considering that affective involvement and emotional experience are significant antecedents of event attitude and thus the branding effects, sponsors should dynamically join in the process of creating affective involvement and emotional experience for the event.

9. Limitation

One of the constraints is the time and age; it can only be conducted on a limited number of students in Iran. If the research can be extended to cover all the age and states in Iran, it would give a better picture and increase the research finding generalizability. Also due to limited time, only two kinds of situational factors were being studied, however, there are many other factors that could be added to it to make it more meaningful for the body of knowledge. Furthermore its better investigate on brand effectiveness studies on more field of sport such as volleyball, swimming etc., but in this study the researchers just used data extract from participants who has recently watched Persian Gulf Cup (football).

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