Measuring the Marketing Communication Activations of a Professional Tennis Tournament

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the marketing communication activations of a professional tennis tournament. Results indicate that respondents were satisfied with the marketing communications activations chosen by managers and marketers of the event. For example, most spectators (77%) learned of the event from television, which was their preferred media for becoming aware of the tournament. In addition, most spectators (94.6%) believed that it was good for companies, and specifically those based in Houston or Texas, to sponsor the tournament. The spectators also indicated that such support for the tournament was important in shaping their attitudes toward the sponsoring organization (61.7%) and their purchase decisions of sponsors' goods and services (54.9%). The post-tournament questionnaire also revealed that sponsorship recognition was high, as the least recognized sponsor was correctly identified by 65.4% of the respondents. Most spectators (78.4%) indicated that they intended to attend the tournament in 2004.

“Advertising Effectiveness

Advertising campaigns provide consumers with important information on an event and sponsorships provide revenue that supports many of the costs of staging the event. The effectiveness of advertising an event is central, not only to the companies producing the event, but to corporations sponsoring the event because of the emphasis on generating revenue.”
scholars have made exhaustive efforts to examine consumers and investigate how advertising affects them and their decision-making.

Research analyzing the effectiveness of advertising has been conducted for quite some time (see Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999). Scholars continue to provide theoretical foundations for understanding advertising effectiveness. One of the original theoretical frameworks posited over a century ago was Attention-Interest-Desire-Action (AIDA), a hierarchical model developed by E. St. Elmo Lewis in 1898. This hierarchical model was used to describe the process consumers employ when making decisions based on an advertising message. AIDA succinctly depicts the order in which the consumer receives the advertising message, incorporates personal feelings and beliefs, decides how he or she will react to the message, and then behaves in a particular manner.

Subsequently, a stream of research has developed on consumer attitudes toward advertising. Attitudes toward advertising represent the feelings, beliefs, and emotions that arise within the consumer when they are exposed to the marketing message. It has long been understood that consumers' attitude toward advertising in general (AG), the "learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner to advertising in general," (Lutz 1985, p. 53), influences the effectiveness of an advertisement (Greyser, 1972). Likewise, considerable literature has looked at attitude toward the advertisement (A\textsubscript{ad}), which has been operationalized as a "predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure situation" (Mackenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986, p. 130). AG and A\textsubscript{ad} can impact the consumer's general idea of advertising, alter his or her viewpoint of a specific ad, and influence others factors such as brand attitude and purchase intentions (Brown & Stayman, 1992; Lutz, 1985; Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989; Mehta, 2000; Shimp, 1981). Further, both AG and A\textsubscript{ad} may influence the advertising preferences of consumers, an important construct not often reported in sport marketing literature.

**Media & Advertising Preferences**

Most of the research efforts on media preferences have focused primarily on contrasting media (King, Reid, Tinkham, & Pokrywcynski, 1987; Larkin, 1979; O'Keefe, Nash, & Liu, 1981; Pasadenaos, 1990). In regard to which media outlet provides more information, newspapers tend to rank higher than most sources for local advertising (King et al., 1987), while television ranks the highest for national advertising (King et al., 1987). Soley and Reid (1983) suggest that consumers prefer magazine advertising to television advertising for obtaining information on products. Pasadenaos, Key, Hall, and Morillo (1987) reported that consumers believe newspaper advertisements to be more informative than television commercials and magazine advertisements. If consumers are presented with choosing a single news and information source, electronic media (i.e., television and radio) wins out (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). Still, according to Gaziano and McGrath (1986), newspapers obtain higher credibility scores than electronic media among consumers. It is important to understand the media preferences of sport consumers as it allows companies to communicate their message more effectively with the targeted market. Therefore, the following research questions regarding media preferences were analyzed:

R1: What was the most effective media activation for making event attendees aware of the tennis tournament?

R2: What was the preferred media outlet of event attendees for obtaining information about the tennis tournament?

"It is important to understand the media preferences of sport consumers as it allows companies to communicate their message more effectively with the targeted market."

The manner in which consumers become aware of an event is very important to marketing campaigns. Making consumers aware of an event is a critical and primary objective of such campaigns since it can influence attendance and produce revenue. Television advertising can be a powerful medium for creating awareness among and providing information to consumers regarding a sporting event. Tournament organizers of the event under investigation in this study paid for a commercial that aired during the 2003 Super Bowl broadcast in an effort to create awareness, provide information, and drive attendance at the professional tennis tournament. The tournament organizers chose to air the commercial during the Super Bowl because the event attracts an international audience of sport consumers similar to the targeted audience of the professional tennis tournament. Therefore, an international broadcast audience was exposed to the tournament through the commercial. While the Super Bowl attracts much attention, the commercials are costly. Therefore, the tournament organizers were also interested in determining the effect that the advertisement had on the Super Bowl viewers in terms of piquing their interest in the tournament. Based upon the importance of measuring the effectiveness of this
marketing communication strategy, the following research questions were analyzed.

R3: Did the tennis tournament advertisement broadcast during the Super Bowl create awareness of the professional tennis tournament among respondents?
R4: Did the tennis tournament advertisement broadcast during the Super Bowl influence respondents to attend the event?

"Today, sporting event production and execution virtually necessitates the sale of commercial sponsorships. Sponsorships generate much-needed revenue to produce the event, create awareness of the activity, and aid in its promotion."

**Sponsorship Effectiveness**

Commercial sponsorship (CS) is one of the most widely utilized forms of marketing communication because it allows corporations to advertise to a large audience using a more subtle approach than other forms of advertising. CS is defined as "an investment, in cash or in kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity" (Madrigal, 2001, p.147; Meenaghan, 1991, p.36). Meenaghan (2001) suggests sponsorship effectiveness directly affects a consumer’s purchase intentions and behaviors. Variables such as awareness and attitudes toward sponsorship may produce significant affects on the outcome of the marketing message and its effectiveness with regard to the consumer.

CS has become quite important to many corporations who allocate large sums of their advertising budget to attract sports consumers to their respective brands. In the United States alone, CS spending increased from $850 million in 1985 to $8.7 billion in the year 2000 to $10.2 billion in 2003 (Events and Sponsorships, 2004; International Event Group, 2000). According to the 2004 IEG Sponsorship Report, sponsorship spending by companies in North America will increase by 6.2% to $11.14 billion (International Event Group, 2004; see also Events and Sponsorships, 2004; Millward, 2004; Saxton, 2004). These investments have proven extremely profitable and, therefore, CS has become an invaluable strategy for companies seeking to expand in an economic sports market.

One reason for utilizing CS versus traditional advertising is to connect with the target market in a setting that promotes positive feelings and excitement. It is often the expectation of the sponsors that this positive outlook instilled in the consumers, via the event medium, will transfer to their company and brands, resulting in increased purchase intentions and behaviors (Madrigal, 2001). If a sponsor is successful in creating this connection, and the consumer purchases products and services from the company, then the end result is called a Return on Investment (ROI), or the amount of profit as a percentage of the initial investment (Daniels & Radebaugh, 1998). ROI is an essential objective of CS because corporations want to not only facilitate the event and access the target market, but also ultimately generate sales and produce revenue from their original investment.

Today, sporting event production and execution virtually necessitates the sale of commercial sponsorships. Sponsorships generate much-needed revenue to produce the event, create awareness of the activity, and aid in its promotion. Sport sponsorships can also benefit corporations by facilitating brand awareness, brand image, and product sales (Lee, Sandler, & Shani, 1997; Shanklin & Kuzma, 1992). Ideally, sponsors want to support a specific sporting event, while simultaneously promoting and selling their products and services.

The sponsorship process, in its entirety, presents many unique opportunities for needed research, especially within specific event contexts. Sponsors of the event are interested in consumers’ level of brand awareness, attitude toward the sponsorship, purchase intentions, and the overall effectiveness of the activation.

**Sponsorship Awareness**

Awareness of an ad or sponsorship communication requires consumers to recall (unaided) or recognize (aided recall) the sponsors of the event by providing the names of the companies from memory or identifying them from a list. A consumer’s recall level is a strong indicator as to whether or not the message created substantial meaningfulness or brand awareness (Wells, 2000). Recall analyzes the ability of a research subject to remember sponsors of events through pure recollection, a construct that is often termed “top of mind” by practitioners (Bennett, Henson, & Zhang, 2002; Johar & Pham, 1999).

Unlike recall, which is unaided, recognition provides the consumer with cues before asking them to identify the event’s sponsors. Recognition, also termed “aided recall,” provides the respondents with a list of commercial sponsors from the event, some correct and incorrect, and asks them to select the actual sponsors (Bennett, et al. 2002). According to Lardinoit and Derbaix (2001), consumers access information from memory to differentiate the various sponsors. If the person is able to correctly identify the sponsors, this indicates they have a considerable interest in the message or event (Wells, 2000). Given the importance companies place on the ability of consumers to remember their sponsorship of an event and the continued use of this type of measure by scholars, the following research question regarding the ability of
consumers to recognize sponsors of the tennis tournament was examined.

R5: Will attendees at a professional tennis tournament be able to correctly identify tournament sponsors a majority of the time from a listing (recognition/aided recall) of correct and incorrect sponsors?

“... efforts should be made to encourage group activity at the event, such as special group rates, seating for groups, and the like.”

**Attitude toward Sponsorship (A**<sub>s</sub>**)**

Individual consumer attitudes toward sponsorship are a very important facet of marketing communication. Consumer attitudes toward advertising have been operationalized by several scholars, yet it seems that few have succinctly defined attitude toward sponsorship. This may be due to the fact that sponsorship is widely accepted as being a form of advertising, or that sponsorship research is relatively underdeveloped (Crompton, 2004). Since it has been suggested that consumers can form positive or negative opinions regarding sponsorship (Reid & Soley, 1982), it is imperative that companies not only focus on brand awareness, but also continually determine if their marketing message is creating a favorable disposition among consumers. An oft-cited objective of the sponsorship experience for firms is to produce positive feelings among consumers of the sponsoring brands and facilitate the intention to purchase sponsored products. It appears that there is a justification to theoretically operationalize and empirically investigate consumer attitude toward sponsorship.

While limited research has been conducted on attitudinal constructs in sponsorship, Lee et al. (1997) have identified three constructs central to understanding the relationship between consumer attitudes and sponsorship. Lee et al. (1997) suggested that the three constructs of attitude towards the event, attitude towards commercialization, and attitude towards behavioral intent are critical to understanding the consumer perspective on sponsorship. Consumer attitude toward the event “reflects consistently favourable or unfavourable response to an event,” and consumer attitude toward commercialization indicates the reaction of consumers to increased sponsor-related activity surrounding an event which “may be affecting consumer attitude towards events and their sponsors” (Lee et al., 1997, p. 167). Based upon the importance of consumer attitudes toward event sponsorships the following research question regarding the attitudes of event attendees at a professional tennis tournament was analyzed.

R6: What were the reported attitudes of attendees at a professional tennis tournament toward sponsors of the event?

**Purchase Intent Based Upon Sponsorship**

There are myriad studies in the literature analyzing consumers' awareness of sponsors using recall and recognition measures (Bennett et al. 2002; Crimmins & Horn, 1996; Easton & Mackie, 1998; Hitchen, 1998; Kraak & Oliver, 1997; Meenaghan, 1996; Nicholls, Roslow, & Dubish, 1999; Otker & Hayes, 1987; Parker, 1991; Quester, 1997; Stotlar, 1993). However, there is a relative paucity with regard to sponsorship effectiveness and its relationship to purchasing behaviors (Lee et al., 1997; Meenaghan, 2001). While aided and unaided recall measures provide some indication of consumers' involvement with and memory of sporting event sponsors, they often fail to provide significant evidence regarding consumers' satisfaction with the event and their intent to purchase products or services from commercial sponsors. Some scholars contest that recall rates reveal merely the consumers' relatedness to the event, as opposed to their attitudes and behaviors regarding the commercial sponsors and advertising (Johar & Pham, 1999).

Highly involved consumers, however, relate to teams and sporting events on a much deeper level, and their attitudes and behaviors toward commercial sponsorships are often indicative of this commitment. A highly involved consumer may prefer a certain brand due to its association with their favored activity (Bennett, 1999; Eilander, 1992; Kohl & Otker, 1985; Meenaghan, 2001). Lee et al. (1997, p. 164) labeled this construct as attitude towards behavioral intent, and consumer attitude toward behavioral intent translates “to consumer willingness to purchase sponsored products and/or pay more attention to sponsors promotional activities.” Certainly, corporate sponsors are interested in influencing consumers via sponsorships to purchase the products activated through the sponsorship. Since the creation of new and continued consumers is an objective of CS, the following research question regarding the purchase intentions of event attendees was tested.

R7: Were the future purchase intentions of attendees at a professional tennis tournament influenced by event sponsorships?

**Method**

**Setting**

Data were collected from spectators of a professional men’s tennis tournament. The tournament was held in Houston, TX, from November 8 – 16, 2003, and the top eight players from that particular year were invited...
to compete. Houston is located in Harris County, TX. The tournament included the top seven men's Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) finishers for the 2003 season, with the eighth place secured by the highest-placed Grand Slam winner who finished outside of the top seven but within the top 20. The format of the tournament included a round robin of two flights with four players in each group. This culminating event served as the climactic finish to the ATP season and influenced the final rankings for the 2003 ATP season. The tournament had previously been held in Shanghai, China, Sydney, Australia, and Lisbon, Portugal. The Shanghai event was the largest international sporting event ever held in China and was broadcast to over 145 countries. Over $4 million was awarded in prize money for the 2003 tournament, and the stadium court capacity was 8,500 seats.

Tournament managers and directors employed a traditional marketing communications campaign. The campaign included billboards and promotional flyers strategically placed at selected tennis and country clubs throughout greater Houston, newspaper advertisements, and a national television broadcast campaign, which included a Super Bowl commercial.

Measures

A couple of questionnaires were constructed to assess the marketing communications campaign employed by managers of a professional tennis tournament. Data were collected during two time frames, with on-site distribution (Questionnaire I) and again after the tournament (Questionnaire II) via a mailed questionnaire. This process was aimed at assessing spectator media and advertising preferences, attitudes toward sponsorships, and demographics.

Questionnaire I

Questionnaire I included nine items measuring research questions one through four and demographics. Research question one was assessed by a single-item measure which asked, "where did you listen to or see advertisements (i.e., Radio, Television, Newspaper, other media) about the [professional tennis tournament]?" Respondents were also asked to provide the source of the advertisement. Research question two was assessed by a single-item measure, which asked respondents to indicate their preferred media outlet for obtaining information about the tournament. Respondents were provided the following choices: newspaper, magazine, radio, flyers, television, Internet, posters, and other. Research question three was assessed by asking respondents if they saw the commercial for the tournament during the Super Bowl broadcast. Research question four was measured by analyzing the responses of those who remembered seeing the Super Bowl broadcast. These respondents were asked, "Were you influenced to attend the tennis tournament by the Super Bowl commercial?" The final section asked respondents to provide demographic information including gender, age, ethnicity, education, and household income.

On-Site Data Collection (Questionnaire I)

On-site data were collected through questionnaire packets (N = 3,000) distributed to tournament spectators on Thursday, November 13, and Friday, November 14, 2003. The on-site questionnaire assessed the first four research questions, which analyzed media and advertising preferences. The packets contained a questionnaire, pencil, and postcard, and were distributed with the day's draw sheets. The cover of the packet contained a label that informed spectators that completion of the enclosed questionnaire would enter them in a drawing for a Palm Zire pocket PC.

Spectators were requested to complete the questionnaire and provide their correspondence on the postcard. Both were returned to a table set up near the entrance of the tennis club. A winner of the Palm Zire was randomly selected after all data were collected and subsequently mailed the prize. In all, 638 completed questionnaires were returned, for a 21.3% response rate. As the questionnaires were distributed randomly, the sample size was large enough to make generalizations as to the overall population of spectators (N = 12,000) at the event (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Descriptive Statistics (Questionnaire I)

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all 638 respondents. Most people reported attending the event with two people (57.1%), and the mean number of people in the group was 3.41 persons (SD = 1.29). Only 1.1% reported attending the event alone. The spectator base was mostly women (58.3%), white (85.1%), and well educated (44.1% with a college education; 36.8% with a graduate degree). Results also demonstrated a relatively even distribution in age: age 18-30 years (7.8%), 31-40 years (14.0%), 41-50 years (27.2%), 51-60 years (25.0%), and over 61 years (26.0%). Finally, 83.8% of all respondents had a household income in excess of $50,000.

Questionnaire II

Questionnaire II included five items measuring research questions five through seven each assessing sponsorship effectiveness and demographics. Specifically, awareness of sponsorships, attitude toward sponsorships, and purchase intentions based upon sponsorship were assessed via the post-tournament
### Table 1
Descriptive Statistics (Questionnaire II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60 years</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 or more years</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000-$50,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,001-$75,000</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,001-$100,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001-$150,000</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,001 or more</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regard to research question five, respondents were asked to select the company that served as a sponsor of the tennis tournament from a listing of possible sponsors according to category (i.e. car, clothing, beverage, furniture). For each category, respondents could select from a list of four possible sponsors, one correct and three foils. Attitudes toward sponsorship, research question six, were measured by 3 items on a 7-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). The single item read, “I am more likely to purchase products of companies that sponsor this tennis tournament.” The final section asked respondents to provide demographic information including gender, age, ethnicity, education, and household income.

Post-Tournament Data Collection (Questionnaire II)

The second data collection process took place after the tournament had ended. Names and addresses of all tournament spectators were provided by the tournament host tennis club personnel in order to generate the mailing list. Names and addresses (N = 1,950) were then randomly selected from the database by way of...
random number generation, and questionnaires were mailed to the selected spectators. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a post-card reminder was mailed to all persons on the mailing list to thank those who chose to participate and encourage participation among those who had not returned the questionnaire. In all 460 persons returned the mailed questionnaire, for a response rate of 24%. Further, the total sample was large enough to make generalizations for the finite population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

"... electronic media is preferred when consumers are asked to choose a single source for news and information. The fact that almost 40% of these respondents prefer the Internet to obtain information is likely an indication of the shifting preferences of sport consumers in an information age ..."

Descriptive Statistics (Questionnaire II)

Frequency distributions were calculated for the entire sample, as well as separately for men and women. Table 1 provides a summary of the results from the post-tournament questionnaire. There are several points worth noting. First, most (77.5%) of the spectators at the event were at least 40 years of age. Further, 1 in 5 spectators were over the age of 60. Second, and not surprisingly, most of the spectators at the event were Caucasian (86.4%). Third, event attendees were highly educated, as 85% possessed either an undergraduate or graduate degree. Fourth, in general, the spectators had high household incomes, as 62% reported earning in excess of $100,000 annually. Finally, there were few differences between men and women with respect to basic demographics. Specifically, a greater proportion of men in the sample were over age 50 (52.4%) than were women (41.6%). Further, men were more likely to have obtained a college or graduate degree (92.6%) than were women (78.7%). Finally, relative to women, a slightly larger proportion of men in the sample reported a household income of $50,000 or less (32.0% and 26.4%, respectively).

Results

Media Advertising Preferences

The first set of research questions were related to the advertising and media preferences of the sample. Specifically, spectators were asked where they learned about the tournament, their preferred media for gathering information about the tournament, and the impact of the Super Bowl commercial on their attendance at the tournament. Results discussed below were from the on-site data collection process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Preferred Media Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Not Preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyers</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>604</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first research question asked participants to indicate the media from which they learned about the tennis tournament. Participants were asked to mark all forms of media that applied. Television served as the most effective medium through which to advertise for the tournament, as 77% of the participants indicated that they learned of the tournament through this medium. An equal proportion (35.7%) indicated they learned of the tournament through newspapers and "other" forms. In the latter group, friends, billboards, the Internet, and flyers at their country clubs were the most cited media. Radio was listed last, with only 22.7% choosing this form of advertisement.

The second research question asked the spectators to indicate their preferred media outlet for obtaining information about the tennis tournament. Again, participants were instructed to list all forms that applied. Table 2 provides the results for that question. Results indicate that television was the clearly preferred media source, with 59.7% of all respondents choosing this option. Newspaper and the Internet represented the only other options to receive more than 30% of the responses (31.3% and 39.9%, respectively).

The third research question asked participants if they had seen the commercial for the tournament aired during the Super Bowl. A total of 37.5% of the participants indicated that they had seen the aforementioned commercial. Residents of the county in which Houston is located, Harris County, were significantly more likely to indicate that they had viewed the commercial than were persons from outside the county (53.5% to 33.3%). Research question four assessed the effects of the Super Bowl commercial on the intentions of respondents to attend the professional tennis tournament. Of those who had seen the commercial, most (51.7%) indicated that it did not influence their decision to attend the event. It is worth noting, however, that several participants wrote on the questionnaire that they had already made up their mind to attend prior to the airing of the commercial.
Table 3
Sponsor Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Correctly Identified</th>
<th>Incorrectly Identified</th>
<th>Most Common Mistake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FedEx</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacoste</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepsi</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery Furniture</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford Crystal</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starbucks</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEROMEXICO</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Attitudes Toward Sponsors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good to sponsor</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence attitudes toward sponsor</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence purchase intentions</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston- and Texas-based companies</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

commercial. When not counting these participants, the proportion of persons who were positively influenced by the commercial was 45.0%.

Sponsorship Awareness

The post-tournament questionnaire obtained data from the respondents regarding their ability to recognize (aided recall) sponsors of the tennis tournament. Research question five assessed the ability of respondents to identify the sponsor of the tournament from the respective lists which included four possible sponsors per category, one of which sponsored the tournament and three that did not. The actual sponsors from each category were: Mercedes, FedEx, Lacoste, Pepsi, Gallery Furniture, Waterford Crystal, Starbucks, and AEROMEXICO. Results are presented in Table 3. The sums of the persons who responded to the questions differ by sponsor because incomplete responses were not included in the analyses.

Overall, the results suggest that tournament spectators were able to identify the tournament sponsors a majority of the time. Gallery Furniture had the most successful sponsorship in this regard, as all spectators identified the company as a sponsor. Pepsi had the least successful sponsorship (in terms of sponsor identification) with 65.4% of the respondents identifying the beverage company as a sponsor of the event. It should be noted, however, that even in the case of Pepsi, a very high proportion of all spectators (nearly two-thirds) identified the company as a sponsor of the tournament. It is also interesting to note the companies that did not sponsor the tournament still received recognition as a sponsor, a typical finding in sponsorship categories where there is sharp competition between two major brands. Coca-Cola (25.7%) was by far the most-cited non-sponsoring company, followed by Airborne Express (10.9%), and Continental Airlines (9.9%). It is worth noting again, however, that most spectators were able to correctly identify the sponsoring organization—a fact that bodes well for the tournament and the sponsoring organizations. The fact that each sponsoring organization was much more likely to be identified than its competition is a significant finding and relevant to tournament marketers.

This seems especially noteworthy since the difference between the most-cited non-sponsoring company, Coca-Cola, and its competitor Pepsi was almost 40% among these consumers. This indicates that these consumers were much more aware that Pepsi was a sponsor of the tournament, a finding that seemingly indicates a positive activation for Pepsi and therefore tournament organizers.
Table 5
Spectator Household Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>MLB</th>
<th>NBA</th>
<th>NFL</th>
<th>NHL</th>
<th>Tennis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $100,000</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater than $100,000</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitude Toward Sponsorships ($A_{sp}^p$)

Research questions six and seven assessed the attitudes of participants toward sponsors of the tournament. Participants were asked the extent to which they agree, disagreed, or were not sure about four topics: (a) whether they thought it was good for companies to sponsor the tournament; (b) whether their attitudes toward a company would be influenced by that company's sponsorship of the tournament; (c) whether they were more likely to purchase a company's products or services if it sponsored the tournament; and (d) whether they thought Houston- and Texas-based companies should sponsor the tournament. Results are presented in Table 4. The results presented next are from the data collection at the tournament.

Results indicate that event attendees do have strong feelings about who sponsors the tournament. Specifically, over 94% of all spectators believed that (a) it was good for a company to sponsor the tournament and (b) that Houston- and Texas-based companies should sponsor the tournament. In addition, a majority of the spectators agreed that their attitudes towards a company (61.7%) and purchase decisions of a company's goods or services (54.9%) are influenced by whether the respective company is a sponsor of the tournament. In addition, 87.8% of the participants, when asked to list two sponsors of the tournament, correctly listed two such companies. Together, these results indicate that spectators are very much aware of who sponsors the tournament and their attitudes and behaviors toward companies are positively influenced when the company is a sponsor.

Discussion and Marketing Implications

Based on the results of both stages of measurement, several conclusions and implications can be drawn. Each of these is discussed below. First, results indicate that spectators largely attend the tournament in groups (98.9%), either with friends, family, or both. These results are consistent with previous research documenting the importance of groups to sport event spectators (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). These findings suggest that efforts should be made to encourage group activity at the event, such as special group rates, seating for groups, and the like.

Second, results indicate that the demographic makeup of tennis fans at this respective event is remarkably similar to fans of other sports, such as the National Hockey League (NHL), National Basketball Association (NBA), Major League Baseball (MLB), and National Football League (NFL), with respect to ethnicity and sex (Genzale, 2003). However, the spectators at this event were much more likely than fans of the other sports to have a household income greater than $100,000. Table 5 reports household income data using the data from the post-tournament questionnaire and that from the *Sports Business Journal* (Genzale, 2003). Results indicate that tournament spectators are five to six times more likely to have a household income of greater than $100,000 than are fans of the four major professional sports leagues. These data are certainly important for potential sponsors, who would view such a large demographic as enticing.

Third, respondents indicated that television was the most effective marketing communications medium for learning about the tournament through advertising. This finding is in agreement with previous researchers who have found television to be an effective means for reaching consumers on a national level (King et al., 1987). However, King et al. (1987) indicated that newspapers tend to rank higher in providing more information to local audiences. This is an interesting finding based upon the demographics of the reported sample. Television and the Internet were likewise overwhelmingly preferred as primary media sources by these respondents, a finding in agreement with Gaziano and McGrath's (1987) indication that electronic media is preferred when consumers are asked to choose a single source for news and information. The fact that almost 40% of these respondents prefer the Internet to obtain information is likely an indication of the shifting preferences of sport consumers in an information age (Brown, 2003). In regard to the Super Bowl commercial, slightly over half of the respondents suggested that they were not influenced by the commercial to attend the event. However, a substantial number of respondents did indicate that the spot influenced them, many of which were Harris County residents. This finding would likewise be in agreement with the King et al. (1987) suggestion that local audiences can be influenced by media to react to communication messages.
Fourth, data from both the on-site questionnaire and post-tournament questionnaire yielded promising results for the sponsors and organizers of the tournament. Most spectators correctly identified who sponsored the event. In fact, there was not a single sponsor who was recognized less than 60% of the time by the respondents. These findings are in agreement with several studies that have found significant recognition rates among sports consumers (Bennett et al., 2002; Cuneen & Hannan, 1993; Pitts, 1998; Sandler & Shani, 1993; Stotlar, 1993; Stotlar & Johnson, 1989). Given that the ability to recognize sponsors is an important facet of sponsorship activation these findings are especially noteworthy. Since the events assessed by the aforementioned scholars are successful in terms of revenue generated and attendance, it seems appropriate to suggest that the ability of a consumer to recognize event sponsors may translate positively to additional sponsorship effects espoused by Meenaghan (2001) like favorable disposition, image transfer, fan involvement, goodwill, and purchase intentions. Further research should be conducted to obtain a clearer understanding of the relationship between awareness and other sponsorship effects on the consumer.

Fifth, respondents indicated a positive response to the fact that companies sponsored the event. Most spectators indicated that (1) they thought it was important for companies to sponsor the event, and (2) their attitudes about the company were positively influenced by the company’s willingness to sponsor the tournament. These results are in agreement with the Lee et al. (1997) findings on the attitude towards commercialization construct. The positive feedback regarding the connection between the event and CS from these consumers is a positive finding for these event managers. It may be that these findings are in line with other events with similar demographics like golf and other tennis-related events. Certainly, events with similar demographics may wish to explore selling additional and greater revenue producing sponsorships if their consumers are similar to the tennis tournament respondents. It would be appropriate to pursue additional research streams that analyze this particular construct and findings.

Finally, relative to companies who did not sponsor the tournament, spectators were more likely to purchase goods or services from sponsoring organizations. These findings are in agreement with several scholars who suggest that sport event sponsorship can influence purchase intentions of consumers (Bennett et al., 2002; Lee et al. 2002; Meenaghan, 2001). These data are important to sponsors because it empirically supports the effectiveness of their sponsorship in reaching an affluent audience and influencing their attitudes and purchase decisions. These results are also important for tournament organizers, who can now approach prospective sponsors with quantitative data demonstrating the efficacy of such an investment.

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, the results provide promising figures for the tennis tournament organizers. Findings indicate that advertising efforts were effective in creating awareness of the event with event attendees. Results were also positive in relation to sponsorships, as spectators were successfully able to recall companies who sponsored the event and expressed positive attitudes toward such companies. Since sponsorship has become an important marketing communications tool it is vital to continually assess its effectiveness through empirical analysis. Finally, largely because of their positive experiences at the tournament and positive attitudes toward the venue, a large proportion of the 2003 spectators indicated that they intended to attend the 2004 tournament. As a whole, the results indicate that the tournament was largely successful.

References


Footnotes

1 This research was made possible by a contracted grant from the Westside Tennis Club.

2 Though research methods experts largely support the use of incentives (see Dillman, 2000), it is possible that the offer of an incentive influenced the spectator attitudes by increasing their positive mood state. However, being that the data were collected anonymously, it is highly unlikely that socially desirable responses were given in hopes of being awarded the incentive.

3 It is important to note that since questionnaire II was collected via mail, those respondents were not privy to visual cues they would have encountered if the questionnaire were collected on-site. Therefore, the awareness of respondents was not influenced by visual cues at the event during data collection for questionnaire II.