Evaluating Sponsorship Effects through Neuro Marketing

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Sponsorship is a huge industry, totalling 65.8 billion USD worldwide in 2018. Sponsor companies invest millions of dollars to achieve their commercial goals. Thus, companies and scholars have researched the extent to which such investments accomplish return on sponsorship (ROS). The majority of sponsorship studies perceive sponsorship as a marketing communication tool and measure brand related variables, such as brand awareness, attitude toward the brand, brand loyalty, and purchase intention (e.g., Cronwell, 2014; Westberg & Pope, 2014). These types of research contribute to our understanding of how sponsorship effects are created, but limitations also exist. These studies usually measure sponsorship effects using a self-report survey method. The limitations of the survey method include (1) the time difference: sport fan’s response created in real-time but the survey measure is delayed after the sponsorship activities, and (2) possible bias by the respondent’s perception and intention (Lin, Cross, Jones, & Childers, 2018). To overcome the limitations of the survey method, new research methods have been introduced, and one of them is neuro marketing.

Neuro marketing measures brand waves (i.e., electroencephalogram: EEG) while research subjects are exposed to the stimulus of marketing and sponsorship activities. By examining the braid waves, researchers can analyze the participant’s cognitive and emotional responses. For example, people’s alpha wave decrease when people pay attention and are aroused to a stimuli, a phenomenon called alpha blocking (Rothschild & Hyun, 1990). In sport sponsorship condition, the neuro marketing approach can measure people’s response to sponsorship activities more directly and accurately. Neuro marketing has become common to analyze marketing communication effects but only a few such studies exist in sponsorship and sport marketing areas (Dos Santos & Moreno, 2018). The current study examines sponsorship effects through neuro marketing by measuring the alpha wave. In particular, the study will validate whether a general sponsorship effects model (i.e., sponsorship activities – attention/arousal – memory – attitude) is supported by neuro marketing. By conducting an experiment with edited auto racing video stimulus, the current research will examine if a crash scene causes alpha blocking (i.e., arousal increasing) and, if so, whether alpha blocking influences a sponsor’s brand memory (i.e., brand recall) positively.

Research participants will be randomly divided into two groups: a control group (no crash) and an experimental group (crash). Two types of five-minute video will be made for the experimental stimulus: one without a crash scene and the other with a crash scene. Except a crash scene, two videos will be exactly same. 50 participants will be randomly divided into the control and experiment groups. The participants’ alpha waves will be recoded while they watch the stimulus. After the experiment, the participants’ alpha waves will be compared by the experiment groups if significant alpha blocking is observed in the experiment group with a crash. In addition, the participants’ brand recall will be analyzed and higher brand recall is expected in the experiment group. Based on the results, research conclusions and business implications will be provided.