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Image Effect of Ambush Marketing: The Case of FIFA Soccer World Cup 2010

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Keywords: Ambush marketing • Image • PLS • Sport event.

Abstract

Ambush marketing is becoming a more and more relevant topic. However, most research has remained descriptive. No study has yet considered the image effects of ambush marketing using a causal model. Thus, the present paper provides a causal model of ambush marketing focusing on cognitive and affective image and their effects on downstream variables such as attitudes and purchase intention. The results of an online-survey with 278 respondents show that for typical sports brands affective image has a stronger impact on attitude towards the ambusher brand. In contrast, for atypical sport brands cognitive image has a stronger impact on the evaluation of the ambusher. Further, a strong impact of attitude towards the ambusher brand on purchase intention has been identified.

Introduction

Numerous companies use mega sport events like FIFA Soccer World Cup to reach their communication goals such as improving their image and creating positive attitudes and purchase intention. Due to restricted sponsoring rules, only a few exclusive firms are allowed to benefit from mega events. Thus, companies created innovative ways to benefit from events in a low-cost way, which can be summed up under ambush marketing activities (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2011).

Ambush marketing first gained major media attention after the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, when *Kodak* successfully ambushed official Olympic sponsor *Fuji* (Crompton, 2004). Meenaghan (1994, 79) defines ambush marketing as “the practice whereby another company, often a competitor, intrudes upon public attention surrounding the event, thereby deflecting attention towards themselves and away from the sponsor”. Ambushers typically seek to create confusion by making the consumer believe he is the real sponsor (Mazodier and Quester, 2010). Thus, in contrast to sponsoring, an ambusher aims at benefitting from an event without having permission (Payne, 1998; Townley, Harrington, and Couchmann, 1998) and without having the duties of an official sponsor (Farrelly, Quester, and Greyser, 2005; Séguin & O'Reilly, 2008; Shani & Sandler, 1998; Tripodi & Sutherland, 2000).

Ambush marketing is becoming a widespread issue in sports marketing also visible in marketing research (Groeppel-Klein, Koenigstorfer, and Strauß, 2010). Given that some consumer studies related to ambush marketing have been published in recent years, most research has remained descriptive in nature and has primarily examined first level effects on consumers in terms of recall and recognition (e.g., Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001; Sandler & Shani, 1989; Shani & Sandler, 1998). McDaniel and Kinney (1998) and Mazodier and Quester (2010) called for future research to increase our understanding of consumer attitudes towards an ambusher brand. However, image effects on attitude towards ambusher brands and purchase intention has not been analyzed deeply. Given that causal models have become important in marketing literature last decades, this method is worth to be used also in the context of ambush marketing (e.g., Sachse, Drengner, and Jahn, 2009). To fill this void, we introduce an

ambush model that aims to explain how cognitive and affective image components influence consumers' attitude towards the ambusher brand as well as their purchase intentions.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Boosting company image is one of the dominant reasons for firms to get involved in ambush marketing activities (Grohs, Wagner, and Vsetecka, 2004). By reaching their target groups in an attractive sportive setting, ambusher use the image transfer process (McCracken, 1989). Consumers associate the positive event setting with the brand and subsequently transfer the positive image of the event to the brand. Research on brand image is abundant (Grohs, Wagner, and Vsetecka, 2004). For our purpose, we define brand image in accordance with Keller (1993) as brand perception represented by brand associations held in consumer memory.

Brand associations can be distinguished in two dimensions; cognitive and affective. While the cognitive component refers to the beliefs and knowledge a person has of the brand attributes, the affective dimension is represented by the individual's feelings towards the brand (Martín & del Bosque, 2008). Most literature suggests that both image dimensions are important for the brand evaluation (Argawal & Malhotra, 2005; Keller, 2003; Malhotra, 2005). In our model we propose that this is also true for ambusher brands. Both, the cognitive and the affective image influence a persons' attitude towards the ambusher brand.

H1_{a/b}. Cognitive image (a) and affective image (b) has a positive influence on attitude towards the ambusher brand.

However, recently Grimm (2005) found that cognitive brand attributes turning out to have the most significant impact on brand preferences. According to Russell (1980), first information about the environment is interpreted and then it is used to categorize the emotional state of an individual. Several studies (e.g., Baloglu, 1999; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) found a significant influence of the cognitive image on the affective image. Thus, we propose a positive influence of cognitive image dimension on affective image dimension.

H2. The cognitive image dimension has a positive influence on the affective image dimension.

We expects consumers being able to connect a brand typically used in sports advertising (e.g., beer) more easily to a sport event. As consumer interpreted those brands in their typical environment, less cognitive capacity is necessary to evaluate the brand. Thus, affective image components might play a more important role than cognitive image components for typical sport brands. In contrast, atypical sport brands (e.g., automobiles) need to be connected to the events in a cognitive process. Therefore, cognitive image components might be considered more important than affective image components for atypical brands. In other words, for typical sport brands the influence of the affective image component is more important than for atypical sports brands. In contrast, for atypical sport brands the influence of the cognitive image component is more important than for typical sport brands.

H3_{a/b}. a) Affective image has a stronger positive influence on attitude towards the ambusher brand for typical sports brands than for atypical sports brands.
b) Cognitive image has a stronger positive influence on attitude towards the ambusher brand for atypical sports brands than for typical sports brands.

Studies have shown that attitudes towards an ad carry a positive purchase intention (MacKenzie, Lutz, and Belch, 1986). Brown and Stayman (1992) confirmed in a meta-analysis the results of other studies on the direct impact of brand attitudes on purchase intentions. Trans-

ferred to the context of ambushing, we assume that attitudes towards the ambusher brand have a positive impact on purchase intention.

H4. Attitudes towards the ambusher brand have a positive influence on purchase intention.

Methodology

Data Collection and Sample

To analyze the influence of cognitive and affective image on attitude towards the ambusher brand, we conducted an online-survey among visitors of the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2010. To identify typical and atypical sport brands we conducted a qualitative pretest with 20 participants. The results of both on aided and on unaided recall, identified beer as products typically connected with sports events. Automobiles and mobile phones have been evaluated as less typical for sports.

Two brands were selected for this study. The brewery *Bitburger* was selected to represent the typical product category for ambushing. The automobile producer *Mercedes Benz* was selected to represent a less typical product category for ambushing. Both brands did not have official sponsor licenses. Both brands used public attention surrounding the event and made consumers believe to be a real sponsor (e.g., *Bitburger*: sponsoring of games broadcasted on television; *Mercedes*: establishing promotions and advertising activities connected to the event). Thus, both brands benefited from the FIFA soccer World Cup 2010 by using ambush marketing.

In sum, 278 randomly recruited consumers participated in this online-survey. We only recruited respondents who knew the brands and who were able to connect it to the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2010. As the knowledge that a brand is an ambusher might have a negative impact (Mazodier & Quester (2010), we additionally made sure that all respondents conducted the brand to the events as a sponsor (“This brand is a sponsor of the FIFA”). On average, the participants were 25.5 years old (SD = 8.0). The proportion of female participants was 54.3 %.

Measures

The dependent variables were operationalized on multiple items with seven-point rating scales (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree). The image was measured with items adapted from Martín & del Bosque (2008). A group of five marketing experts identified the following items to measure the cognitive image: “This brand is interesting/ authentic/ trustworthy” and to measure the affective image: “This brand is unique/ modern/ attractive”. In order to measure attitude towards the brand three items of Gwinner and Bennett (2008) were adapted: “I have a favorable disposition towards the brand.”, “This is a good brand.”, “I like this brand.” Two items of Gwinner and Bennett (2008) were adapted to measure purchase intention: “I would buy the brands products.”, “The next time I need to buy a product of this type, I would consider buying this brand.”

Results

We analyzed the data applying partial least squares (PLS) path modeling (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2011; Wold, 1982) with the software SmartPLS 2.0 (Ringle, Wende, and Will, 2005). The PLS analysis shows that the empirical data fits the model. Factor loadings exceed the .7 threshold. Cronbach’s Alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR) exceed the required levels of $\alpha \geq .7$ and $CR \geq .6$ (table 2). The average variance extracted (AVE) exceeds .5 for all constructs (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Moreover, the Q^2 values associated with the Stone-Geisser-Criterion are consistently higher than zero (*Bitburger*: affective image = .45 attitude

towards the ambusher brand = .33, purchase intention = .33; *Mercedes Benz*: affective image = .39, attitude towards the ambusher brand = .38, purchase intention = .28), indicating that the model has predictive relevance (Chin, 1998).

Table 2. Goodness of fit statistics

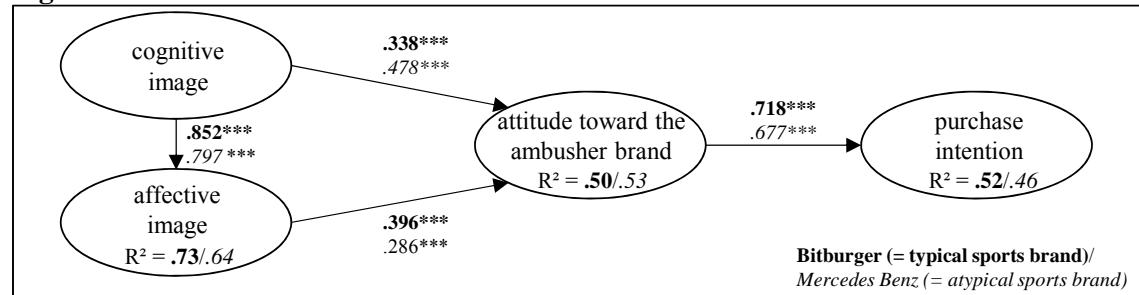
	Bitburger sample				Mercedes Benz sample			
	α	CR	AVE	FL	α	CR	AVE	FL
Cognitive image	.70	.81	.60	$\geq .7$	.71	.84	.63	$\geq .7$
Affective image	.70	.83	.62	$\geq .7$	.71	.83	.63	$\geq .7$
Attitude towards the brand	.77	.87	.68	$\geq .8$	.82	.89	.73	$\geq .8$
Purchase intention	.72	.88	.78	$\geq .8$	.77	.89	.81	$\geq .8$

Notes. α =Cronbach's alpha, CR=Composite reliability, AVE=Average variance explained, FL=Factor loading

The bootstrapping procedure indicates that all path coefficients of the structural model are highly significant. All R squares of attitude towards the ambusher brand and purchase intention are above $R^2 = .46$, with a maximum of $R^2 = .73$ for the affective image in the *Bitburger* sample. The lowest value ($R^2 = .46$) is found for purchase intention in the *Mercedes Benz* sample.

As figure 1 shows, there is a significant influence of both, cognitive and affective image, on attitude towards the ambusher brand supporting H1_a and H1_b. Supporting H2 there is a highly significant influence of the cognitive image on the affective image in both samples (*Bitburger*: $\beta = .852$, $p \leq .001$; *Mercedes Benz*: $\beta = .797$, $p \leq .001$). In the *Bitburger* sample, affective image ($\beta = .396$, $p \leq .001$) has a stronger influence on attitude towards the brand than in the *Mercedes Benz* sample ($\beta = .286$, $p \leq .001$). These findings support H3_a suggesting a stronger influence of the affective image on brand attitudes for an ambusher considered as a typical sport brand. In contrast, in the *Mercedes Benz* sample the cognitive image ($\beta = .478$, $p \leq .001$) has a stronger impact on attitudes than in the *Bitburger* sample ($\beta = .338$, $p \leq .001$). This supports H3_b suggesting a stronger influence of the cognitive image on brand attitudes for an ambusher considered as an atypical sport brand. Supporting H4, there is a highly significant influence of attitude towards the ambusher brand on purchase intention in both samples (*Bitburger*: $\beta = .718$, $p \leq .001$; *Mercedes Benz*: $\beta = .677$, $p \leq .001$).

Figure 1: Structural model



Note. * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ (bootstrapping).

Summary and Implications

The present paper shows that both, cognitive and affective image, have an impact on consumers attitude towards the ambusher brand. However, the affective image component has a stronger impact for ambusher typical brands in sports business and the cognitive image component has a stronger impact for ambusher atypical sport brands. Further, the results confirm a highly statistically significant influence of the cognitive image on the affective image for both, typical and atypical brands. Moreover, a statistically significant influence of attitude towards the ambusher brand on purchase intention has been found for both brands.

The results of the present study give useful hints to marketing managers. Given that ambush marketing is used more and more often in practice, this study provides evidence that ambusher may reach indeed positive effects on purchase intention. When launching ambush marketing activities, both, cognitive and affective image components, should be considered. In fact, affective characteristics such as uniqueness and attractiveness play a more important role for ambusher brands already established in sports business. Thus, for those brands it is important to focus on activities rather oriented in events and on interactive characteristics (e.g., amateur soccer events that are parallel initiated to the FIFA Soccer World Cup). Cognitive characteristics of a brand such as authenticity and credibility play a more important role for atypical sport brands. Thus, marketing manager ne concentrate on cognitive image variables (e.g., by focusing on the brand-event-fit) for effective ambush marketing.

Our study starts to fill the research gap on how ambushers' image influences downstream variables. In this way, we used a causal model as a starting point for further research. Follow-up studies should aim at overcoming some methodological shortcomings of our study and at widening the scope of the findings. First, further research needs to test the generalization of the findings. As only two brands were considered, the research model should be analyzed for other product types and companies (e.g., small and medium enterprises). Second, additional image items (e.g., sportiness) should be considered. Third, more research is needed regarding the question which moderating variables influence the provided model (e.g., gender, age, event involvement).

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