

# **The Impact of Consumers' Attitude toward Ambush Marketing on Effectiveness of Official Sponsorship**

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study is to explore whether the ambush effect of the consumer on unofficial sponsors will affect the sponsorship effect of official sponsors during the international sports events. The results of the study show that ambush marketing has weakened the effectiveness of official sponsored events between official and unofficial sponsors. Event-sponsor congruence has a significant effect on both official cognitive and attitude effectiveness. Suggestions and implications are discussed and would provide insights for event marketers to develop strategies to prevent the impact of ambush marketing.

**JEL classification numbers:** M300, M310

**Keywords:** Ambush marketing, Official sponsor, Congruence, Effectiveness

## **1 Introduction**

Sponsorship has always been a prevailing marketing strategy for major companies, specifically for those that are involved in sports events (Madill & O'Reilly, 2009; Rifon, Choi, & Trimble, 2004). However, over the decades the formation of ambush marketing that rivals the official sponsors has arisen, and has increased rapidly to threaten the potential sponsorship market. Ambush is a marketing tool to utilize an unofficial sponsorship combined sporting events with confusion, in order to promote brand awareness through advertising, and to mislead viewers as official sponsors (Sandler & Shani, 1989). Ambush marketing is mainly an attempt to achieve a certain degree of interest that linked to the official sponsors for purposely subdividing the sponsorship effectiveness of official sponsors. The impact has damaged the benefits of sponsors and event organizers, resulting in a lower willingness to sponsor, misunderstanding the identity of real sponsor, and uncalculated losses to sponsors' investments.

Most of the literature focus on the study of official sponsorship benefits for the assessment of

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ambushes. There are some lacks of investigating whether the ambush will take advantage of the sponsorship effectiveness of official sponsors. Therefore, the purpose of this study is aimed at whether the ambush effect during the competition will affect the sponsorship effectiveness of official sponsors. Past research has focused on sponsorship benefits, and has not yet conducted empirical comparative studies on whether official sponsorship benefits are better than ambush marketing. This study is to explore if there is any difference between the official sponsors during the competition with ambushers, and furthermore, to examine the impact of ambush marketing on the cognitive and attitude benefits toward official sponsorship.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Event Sponsorship and Ambush Marketing**

Sports sponsorship is a business relationship that resources are invested in sports competitions and events to increase the recognition of products, strengthen the image of the corporate or product, increase brand awareness, product trial or sales opportunities, increase media exposure, or to establish good business partnership (Howard & Crompton, 1995). Ambush marketing is to make use of the name of sponsorship, and to snatch the benefits of real sponsors who really support the resources (Fullerton, 2010; Garrigues, 2002). Previous studies have been found that consumers were confused about the sponsorship rights of Olympic sponsors at different levels, the degree of recognition of sponsors, and perceptions of attitude of ambush marketing (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001; Shani & Sandler, 1998; Stotlar & Johnson, 1989). Other research shows consumers lack of information of official sponsorship and indifference to ambush marketing, and thus the rights of sports organizations and sponsors would be greatly affected (Garrigues, 2002; Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001). Ambushers will be a threat to the sustainable development of sports and corporate alliances, and will have impact on weakening the effectiveness of sponsor advertising (Garrigues, 2002; Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001; Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 1999; Meenaghan, 1998; McKelvey, 1994).

### **2.2 Effectiveness of Sponsorship**

Cognition refers to the extent to which consumers believe in the integrity and professionalism of sponsoring companies (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). Empirical studies have found that the vast majority corporate sponsorship campaigns can enhance corporate image (Danylchuk, 2000). Thus, consumers will have better attitude towards the company, the awareness of sponsors should enhance the conviction of sponsorship and will play an important role in evaluating the effectiveness of sponsorship. (Lardinoit & Derbaix, 2001; Tripodi, 2000).

Consumers receive information from sponsoring companies while watching the competition. Consumers' preferences for the sport and events, and the level of preference for the event will also affect the sponsorship benefits of the company (Nicholls, Roslow, & Dubish, 1999 ; Easton & Mackie, 1998). The more consumers like sponsoring companies, the more supportive they will be. The benefits of the sponsorship will be influenced by consumers' attitudes towards the company (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005; Fan & Pfitzenmaier , 2002; Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994).

### 2.3 Attitude Benefit toward Ambush Intervention

Ambush marketing is to enable consumers to easily create a smashing impression, so it can greatly increase the exposure and popularity of sharing the same level of resources as official sponsors, and thus affecting the sponsorship benefits of official sponsors. Shani & Sandler (1998) suggest that there is not enough reason for event organizers to care about the issues related to ambush marketing. Some companies might consider ambush marketing is not an effective strategy. However, still other researchers have concluded that the outcome of ambush marketing might impact consumers' views and behavioral intentions, and even more subsequent behaviors (Tripodi & Sutherland, 2000).

### 2.4 Event-sponsor Congruence

The fit of sponsor and sports event refer to the degree of relevance between sponsors and sports events. Scholars have indicated that sponsors are highly consistent with the competition, and there would be a positive correlation between sponsorship benefits (Martensen, Gronholdt, Bendtsen, & Jensen, 2007; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Johar & Pham, 1999). Consumers already have awareness and attitudes about sponsorship, so they use judgment to determine the congruence between sponsors and events. If consumers perceive the greater congruence, the more attributes they can recognize associations, and the more they will transfer associations to sponsors (Crimmis & Horrn, 1996). Sponsors who are functionally consistent with sponsored events can help enhance their image (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999), increase cognitive memory for sponsors (Johar & Pham, 1999), and promote consumer positive attitudes towards sponsors (McDaniel, 1999).

On the other hand, non-consistent sponsorship activities will slow the shift in image (Grohs & Wagner, & Vsetecka, 2004; Meenaghan, 2001). Sponsors and sponsored events have an impact on the effectiveness of sponsorship and indirectly affect the benefits that sponsors can obtain. The sponsorship effect will be more significant when the image or function is consistent. Previous studies indicate that with high congruence, it is easier for consumers to identify, and it will get a fairly positive response (Grohs et al., 2004; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). The easier it is for consumers to influence the attitude towards the company, the easier it is to associate events with sponsoring companies (Grohs & Reisinger, 2005; Gwinner & Swanson, 2003; Lardinoit & Derbaix, 2001).

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Framework of Research

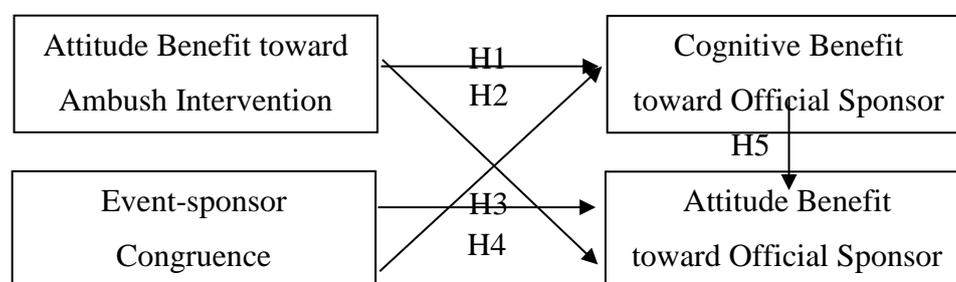


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

According to the theoretical framework (Figure 1), the hypotheses are proposed as following:  
 H1: Attitude benefit toward ambush intervention will significantly have a negative effect on

cognitive benefit toward official sponsor.

H2: Attitude benefit toward ambush intervention will significantly have a negative effect on attitude benefit toward official sponsor.

H3: Event-sponsor congruence will significantly have a positive effect on cognitive benefit toward official sponsor.

H4: Event-sponsor congruence will significantly have a positive effect on attitude benefit toward official sponsor.

H5: Cognitive benefit toward official sponsor will significantly have a positive effect on attitude benefit toward official sponsor.

### 3.2 Instrument

A multi-item scale was developed to obtain the data from the event participants. The questionnaire of perceived attitude toward ambush marketing was mainly based on the scale developed by Shani and Sandler (1998). The questionnaire consisted of four items to measure consumers' perceptions of attitude towards implementation of ambush marketing advertisements, on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 5= strongly agree, 3= neutral, 1= strongly disagree. An average score of four items for 3 points or greater is regarded as "positive perceived attitude", and vice versa is "negative perceived attitude". The scale of attitude benefit toward ambush intervention was modified from Wu's (2010) work, with a total of four items included to measure respondent's degree of agreement based on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 5= strongly agree, 3= neutral, 1= strongly disagree. Event-sponsor congruence refers to the degree of consistence or similarity between sponsored events and sponsors. The scale of event-sponsor congruence was modified from studies of Martensen et al. (2007) and Speed & Thompson (2000). A total of six items was conducted to evaluate respondent's degree of agreement based on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 5= strongly agree, 3= neutral, 1= strongly disagree. The scale of cognitive benefit toward official sponsor and attitude benefit toward official sponsor were modified from Stipp & Schiavone's (1996) work. The scale of the cognitive benefit contains six items, while the attitude benefit includes four items. Respondents were required to evaluate the degree of agreement based on a five-point Likert-type scale, with 5= strongly agree, 3= neutral, 1= strongly disagree.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The valid data was analyzed by using SPSS 22.0 for Windows and AMOS 11.0 for statistical test. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the distribution characteristics of sample background. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the goodness of fit of the measurement model. To ensure the reliability and validity of constructs, Cronbach's alpha estimates and average variance extracted coefficients were calculated. Then, the theoretical model of constructs was tested to examine path analysis and evaluate goodness-of-fit test. To test proposed hypotheses, structural equation model (SEM) was performed to examine the cause and effect relationship among variables.

### 3.4 Reliability and Validity

The results in Table 1 show that the standardized factor loadings of attitude benefit toward ambush intervention are above .7 (.707~.778), the *t* values are significant, the average variance extracted (AVE) is above .5 (.550), the composite reliability (CR) is .885. The results show that the standardized factor loadings of event-sponsor congruence are above .6 (.652~.664), the *t* values are significant, the average variance extracted (AVE) is above .5 (.514), and the composite reliability (CR) is .787. The results show that the standardized factor loadings of cognitive benefit toward official sponsor are above .6 (.664~.769), the *t* values are significant, the average variance extracted (AVE) is above .5 (.522), the composite

reliability (CR) is .813. The results show that the standardized factor loadings of attitude benefit toward official sponsor are above .6 (.611~.691), the *t* values are significant, the average variance extracted (AVE) is above .5 (.516), the composite reliability (CR) is .791. Overall, the scales of each dimension have well convergence validity (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1: Results of Convergence Validity

| Variable   | Loadings          | <i>t</i>  | AVE  | CR   |           |
|--|-------------------|-----------|------|------|-----------|
| Attitude Benefit toward Ambush Intervention  | .778              | 12.482*** | .550 | .885 |           |
|  | .738              | 11.828*** |      |      |           |
|  | .707              | 11.289*** |      |      |           |
| Event-sponsor Congruence   | .664              | 8.880***  | .514 | .787 |           |
|  | .652              | 9.187***  |      |      |           |
|  | .661              | 9.196***  |      |      |           |
| Official Sponsor   | .767              | 12.585*** | .522 | .813 |           |
|  | Cognitive Benefit | .664      |      |      | 10.709*** |
|  |                   | .683      |      |      | 11.036*** |
|  | Attitude Benefit  | .769      |      |      | 12.585*** |
|  |                   | .631      |      |      | 7.843***  |
|  |                   | .691      |      |      | 8.313***  |
| .611   |                   | 8.089***  |      |      |           |
| $(\chi^2/df)=1.44$ <i>GFI</i> =.92 <i>AGFI</i> =.90 <i>NFI</i> =.82 <i>RMSEA</i> =.042 <i>CFI</i> =.93 |                   |           |      |      |           |

Discriminant validity refers to the identification of a latent variable that is indeed different from other latent variables. If the value of a latent variable is greater than the square of the correlation coefficient, it indicates that the latent variable has a good discriminant validity. Finally, as results shown in Table 2, all latent variables have well discriminant validity. This study adopts Cronbach's  $\alpha$  internal consistency assessment as the reliability test method. The overall scale reliability is  $\alpha$  =.835. The reliability of each dimension is: event-sponsor congruence,  $\alpha$  =.821; official cognitive benefit,  $\alpha$  =.867; official attitude benefit,  $\alpha$  =.746; attitude benefit with ambush intervention,  $\alpha$  =.836. The scale is considered as well internal consistency (>.70).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

|                               | M    | SD   | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4    |
|-------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|------|
| 1. Ambush Attitude Benefit    | 3.67 | .782 | .742    |         |         |      |
| 2. Event-sponsor Congruence   | 3.78 | .702 | .412*** | .717    |         |      |
| 3. Official Cognitive Benefit | 3.74 | .819 | .518*** | .420*** | .722    |      |
| 4. Official Attitude Benefit  | 3.85 | .747 | .492*** | .454*** | .378*** | .719 |

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Sample

The study selected the OEC Men's ATP Challenger Tour to conduct a survey. Subjects were randomly chosen from those who participate in or view the on-site sports event. A total of 357 questionnaires were distributed and 266 questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 74%. In terms of the gender of respondents, males accounted for 58.3% of total sample, while females accounted for 41.7%. For watching frequency of the game, most of the

respondents have experiences less than 2 times, accounting for 77.1%; 3 to 5 times accounted for 15.4%; the third was 6 to 10 times, accounting for 5.6%. The average hours of watching sports channels per week of respondents are less than 3 hours, accounting for 61.7%, 4 to 6 hours, accounting for 31.2%, and 7 to 10 hours, accounted for 4.9%, respectively. With regard to the average hours of taking exercise per week of respondents, most of them have spent less than 3 hours, accounting for 56.0%, while others were 4 to 6 hours, accounted for 31.2%, and 7 to 10 hours, accounted for 9.0. %, respectively.

Table 3: Perceived Attitude toward Ambush Marketing

| Group                       | N                    | %   |      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----|------|
| Positive Perceived Attitude | 236                  | 89  |      |
| Negative Perceived Attitude | 30                   | 11  |      |
| Total                       | 266                  | 100 |      |
|                             | value                | df  | p    |
| Pearson Chi-square          | 266.000 <sup>a</sup> | 12  | .000 |

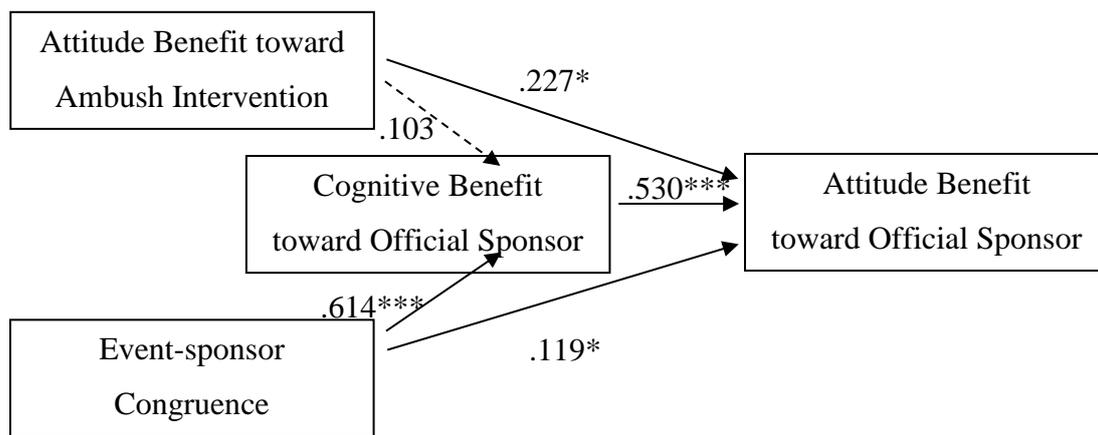
The results of chi-square test show that there were 236 positive perceived attitudes, accounting for 89%; 30 people with negative perceived attitudes, accounting for 11% (shown in Table 3). It can be found that there is a significant difference between the positive and negative perceived attitudes of the subjects.

Table 4: Evaluations of Goodness of fit

| Index    | Value | Standard | Literature                  |
|----------|-------|----------|-----------------------------|
| $X^2/df$ | 1.44  | 1~5      | Bagozzi and Yi ( 1988 )     |
| GFI      | .920  | >.8      | Sharma ( 1996 )             |
| AGFI     | .901  | >.7      | Scott ( 1994 )              |
| RMSEA    | .042  | <.05     | Hair et al. ( 1998 )        |
| NFI      | .822  | >.9      | Bentler and Bonett ( 1980 ) |
| CFI      | .933  | >.9      | Bentler and Bonett ( 1980 ) |

#### 4.2 Structural Equation Model

To ensure the proposed model was suitable for examination. Chi-square can be used to determine the extent to which the overall pattern can predict covariates or correlation matrices. The chi-square value of this study is 1.44, indicating that the model goodness of fit is quite good (Chin & Todd, 1995). In terms of GFI and CFI, are .92 and .93, respectively, in line with the standard value (above .9), indicating that the overall goodness of fit is acceptable (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1984). The AGFI of this study is .90, which met the criteria (above .9), and it indicates that the model goodness of fit is acceptable. The NFI should be above .9, but according to Marsh, Balla & McDonald (1988), the NFI value must be at least .8 or higher, and the NFI for this study is .82, indicating that the overall model is acceptable. The RMSEA calculates difference between observation and estimation. In general, RMSEA less than .08 indicates that the model fit is acceptable; if the value is less than .05, indicating that the data is with very goodness of fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Therefore, the RMSEA of current study is .042, with very good index. The overall evaluations of were within acceptable range.



$\chi^2/df=1.44$   $GFI=0.92$   $AGFI=0.90$   $NFI=0.82$   $RMSEA=0.042$   $CFI=0.93$

Figure 2: Regression Path Analysis Model

### 4.3 Test of Hypotheses

The estimated path value of attitude benefit toward ambush intervention is .103 for cognitive benefit toward official sponsor. The testing results show that attitude benefit toward ambush intervention has a non-negative impact on cognitive benefit toward official sponsor, and its t value = .773 is not significant, H1 is not accepted. The estimated path value of attitude benefit toward ambush intervention is .227 for attitude benefit toward official sponsor. The testing results show that attitude benefit toward ambush intervention has a negative impact on attitude benefit toward official sponsor, and its t value = 1.997 is significant, H2 is accepted. The estimated path value of event-sponsor congruence is .614 for cognitive benefit toward official sponsor. The testing results show that event-sponsor congruence has a positive impact on cognitive benefit toward official sponsor, and its t value = 6.978 is significant, H3 is accepted. The estimated path value of event-sponsor congruence is .119 for attitude benefit toward official sponsor. The testing results show that event-sponsor congruence has a positive impact on attitude benefit toward official sponsor, and its t value = 4.758 is significant, H4 is accepted. The estimated path value of cognitive benefit toward official sponsor is .530 for attitude benefit toward official sponsor. The testing results show that cognitive benefit toward official sponsor has a positive impact on attitude benefit toward official sponsor, and its t value = 5.984 is significant, H5 is accepted.

## 5 Conclusion and Suggestion

### 5.1 Discussion

The results show 89% of subjects perceive positive perception of attitude, while 11% of subjects with negative perception of attitude. In terms of subjects' responses on ambush marketing intervention, those feel inappropriate accounted for 58%, unfair accounted for 50%, unethical accounted for 52.4%, annoyed accounted for 40.8%. Most consumers agree that ambush marketing is an unfair, unethical, and inappropriate. The results are consistent with efforts by Shani & Sandler (1998). In addition, the findings indicate that the intervention of ambush marketing will have an impact on the effectiveness of official sponsorship. The ambush marketing is mainly to weaken the exposure of official sponsors, greatly affecting the potential benefits of official sponsors. Compared to the official sponsoring companies that have not carried out the ambush strategy, those who use ambush marketing seem to have

reached the huge sponsorship benefits they desire.

The reason for not significant is that probably the consumers mostly pay attention to the event itself when watching the game, so they did not notice the sponsors; thus distracting the attention of the consumer towards the sponsors. It is also possible that consumers had a considerable degree of understanding and awareness of the sponsors before the company sponsored the event, or a considerable degree of preference for the attitude toward the sponsoring company. As a result, the consumer's influence on the cognitive benefit toward the sponsorship after intervention of ambush marketing has little effect on the perceived benefits of official sponsors. (Garrigues, 2002; Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001; Meenaghan, 1998; McKelvey, 1994; Shani & Sandler, 1989)。

The results of current study found that ambush marketing has the effect on weakening the sponsorship effectiveness of official sponsors. Therefore, it has been pointed out that ambush marketing mainly uses the advertising strategy to weaken, such as sharing the exposure of competitors, greatly affecting the sponsor's original compensation and benefits. As the efforts put forward by scholars, ambush marketing advertising has indeed weakened the sponsorship benefits toward official sponsors. This study provides a more complete empirical evidence for the previous conclusion on effectiveness of ambush marketing to weaken official sponsorship.

## **5.2 Managerial Implication**

The ambush marketing has long been ethically and legally debated. The current ambush marketing strategy is more and more concealed and pervasive, but the sponsors would be invincible and must actively carry out the anti-ambush marketing. Considerations may be taken for prevention of ambush marketing. First, scholars argue that ambush marketing has caused consumers' confusion about cognition of sponsorship. It should be advocated to educate consumers to reduce confusion of identification to resist ambush marketing, and to protect the rights and benefits of official sponsors, rather than resort to the law. Consequently, more efforts should be made to work with official sponsors to clarify the role of sponsors, such as using the media to clearly inform the audience who is the sponsor. Second, it is necessary for sponsors to sign a complete sponsorship agreement with the event organizer, for consideration of various situations may arise. On the other hand, the event organizer is responsible for ensuring that there are no competitive marketing activities at and near the event venue. Therefore, sponsors should prepare for ambush marketing in advance, and respond flexibly to various situations immediately. In the future, sponsors should face up to issues related to pirate of marketing trademark theft and the law. This may only be used to eliminate or reduce the current ambush marketing chaos.

## **5.3 Future Direction**

For future direction of studies, ambush marketing research might conduct a comparison of different types of ambush marketing strategies, including any advertisement over the field advertisements and throughout the competition. In response to the audience, the study could be conducted on diverse consumers and on-site fans of sports events. Furthermore, through in-depth interviews and expert opinions, it could be used to understand the potential issues of ambush marketing in the case of sports events, so that provide a more comprehensive evidence for the knowledge basis.

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