The Antecedents of Image Transfer --- an Empirical Study of Event Sponsorship

Lee Zhang, Peking University, China.
Song Lin, Peking University, China
Tingting Fan, Peking University, China

One fundamental goal of event sponsorship is to transfer the image of sponsored event to the sponsor brand and consequently to strengthen the brand image. This study investigates the antecedents of image transfer based on an empirical study of a popular event named Super Girl in China (similar to American Idol). Image transfer is found to be influenced by audience perceived quality of the event and the fit between the event and the sponsor brand. Audience’s involvement and event exposure have impacts on attitude toward the event rather than image transfer. Theoretical contributions and practical implications are discussed.

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average ‘fair’ price are significantly higher than $15. Thus, KKT’s conception of fairness may not fully incorporate consumer price expectations or willingness to pay.

Fourth, given a wholesale price increase, subjects find it to be fairer for a monopolist retailer to increase the price of a product than for a retailer in a competitive market. However, we do not find a significant difference between a monopolist and a competing retailer in what people expect to pay. Given a cost increase, the price deemed to be “fair” is higher for a monopolist retailer than for a retailer with many competitors.

Lastly, we find that when the amount of a price change is made explicit (i.e. subjects are explicitly told that the price increases by $15 from, say, $130), the resulting price is considered more unfair than when subjects simply see the final price which includes the change (i.e. subjects are told that the final price after the change is $145). The latter is the scenario that one would expect to see more often in “real” stores, as the amount of the price change is rarely advertised to customers. This result indicates that some of KKT’s prior results may be partially attributable to demand effects.

References

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A literature review reveals that the factors influencing sponsorship effectiveness can be partitioned into three categories. The first is associated with a sponsored event per se such as event image, audience’s interest and involvement in the event, event exposure and quality of the event. The second is the fit between the event and the sponsor brand. The third includes sponsor brand associated factors such as consumer’s attitude toward brand, brand image and brand prominence. This study focuses on a sponsor brand having no awareness before the event and investigates the factors that may influence the effects of the sponsorship. Therefore, only the first two categories of factors are taken into consideration.

Similar to the American Idol in the U.S., Super Girl is a popular Chinese TV event that had drawn nationwide attention recently. This event was sponsored by a Chinese dairy brand called the Mongolian Cow Sour Yogurt. The target market of the brand and the major audience of the event is young people. The antecedents investigated in this empirical study include audience’s attitudes toward the event, audience perceived event-sponsor brand fit, event exposure, perceived event quality and audience’s involvement in the event. The extent that event image transfers to brand image is taken as the measure of the sponsorship effect. Hypotheses are developed based on a comprehensive review of the literature.

Audience’s attitudes toward event/Perceived event-sponsor brand fit/Event exposure/Perceived event quality/Audience’s involvement in the event significantly influences image transfer.

Considering the moderating effects of the involvement reported in previous literature, another hypothesis, The higher level of event involvement, the stronger influences of attitude, fit, exposure and quality on image transfer, is put forward.

Method
A sample of enrolled students was drawn from two high schools and three universities located in Beijing, China. One thousand and five hundred questionnaires were distributed and 1,277 useable ones were returned. Measures of the independent and dependent variables were developed based upon a literature review, and were revised after pilot in-depth interviews. Reliabilities and validities of the measures were checked before statistical analyses were conducted.

Results
First, a factor analysis on audience’s attitudes toward the event was conducted. The result reveals two components of the attitude, personal liking of the event and perceived status of the event (whether the event is perceived to be socially valuable).
Then a multiple linear regression was conducted and the results indicate that perceived event-sponsor brand fit and event quality significantly influence image transfer. Inconsistent with the previous findings, personal liking and perceived status of the event, exposure and involvement are found insignificant. Finally, hypothesized moderating effects of involvement are not supported.

In order to fully explore the roles played by perceived event quality, event exposure and involvement, another two regressions were conducted to investigate these factors’ impacts on personal liking and perceived status of the event respectively. Results show that perceived event quality, event exposure and involvement all significantly influence both personal liking and perceived status of the event.

In summary, the study identifies two influential factors of image transfer, perceived event quality and event-sponsor brand fit. Besides, though exposure and involvement are found to have no significant effects on image transfer, they both significantly affect personal liking and perceived status of the event, the two components of the attitude toward the event. Finally, it is found that perceived event quality significantly affects both image transfer and personal liking and perceived status of the event.

Discussion

First, findings presented in this study indicate that event quality and event-sponsor brand fit are two critical factors in sponsorship because they influence image transfer, one of the most valuable goals for sponsors in pursuit of long-term brand image development. Second, based on our findings, we suggest that event relevant factors could be partitioned into two groups in terms of their roles: one group of factors affects brand image transfer, such as event quality and event-sponsor brand fit; the other group of factors influences audience’s attitude toward event, such as exposure, involvement and event quality. Finally, event quality is a factor deserving special attention because it affects both image transfer and audience’s attitude toward event.

Our study provides meaningful implications for practitioners. On one hand, before marketers contemplate what events to sponsor for, they should be aware of the effect of sponsorship on image transfer and the factors influencing such effect. To maximize image transfer and thus establish or strengthen brand image, sponsors may need to pay enough attention to event-brand fit and event quality. They shall be aware that high event exposure and involvement do not necessarily result in effective image transfer from the events to the sponsor brands. On the other hand, event organizers should realize that event exposure, audience’s involvement and event quality are important in that they influence audience’s attitude toward event. Besides, to meet the sponsors’ demands for strengthening brand image, event organizers shall communicate with sponsors on how to create event-sponsor brand fit.

References


