

Sponsorship awareness of judo athletes

Alfredo SILVA*

Sports Sciences School of Rio Maior – Research Unit of Polytechnic Institute of Santarém (Portugal)

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1. Introduction

Worldwide, in 2000, companies invested in sponsoring sum of 25.0 billion dollars (Tripodi, et al., 2003). In 2015 the value of these investments was 55.7 billion dollars (IEG, 2015). Sport collects the largest share. About 68% of investments in sponsorships are held in the sports sector (IEG, 2015). The Portuguese Judo Federation recognized in 2015 the value of 21.583 euros in sponsorships and collaborations (FPJ, 2015). Grassroots and niche sports can best be classified as sports that are not mainstream and do not appeal to a mass audience (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006). However, the emerging growth sponsorship expresses the capabilities that have to get results in certain key marketing tasks. Sponsorship is used to meet the main marketing communication objectives of companies, the majority of authors (Cornwell, 1995; Gardner & Shuman, 1988; Meenaghan, 1998) recognize two goals usually associated with the sponsorship: improving the image of the brand, product or company; and increased brand awareness level, product or company.

The awareness of a sponsor is a widely accepted mechanism used for accessing the effectiveness of a sponsorship program (Biscaia, et al., 2013; Walsh, et al., 2008). A solid awareness of a sponsor is crucial to increase brand equity (Keller, 1993). The concept of brand awareness refers to a consumer's ability to identify the brand under different conditions, and consists of brand recall and brand recognition performance (Keller, 1993). What makes the study peculiar is the application in a different perspective of the spectators: the participants or athletes.

The study aimed to evaluate the effects of sponsorship communications to the base level of cognitive responses of consumers - the awareness - in the expression of name recognition the sponsors. Specifically, it analyzes the recognition rates of judo athletes in relation to judo sponsors in Portugal. The interest of the research is support business and sport decisions to improve effectiveness of sponsorship and sports revenues.

2. Methodology

Questionnaires were collected from 120 athletes with 15 or more years old of judo affiliated in Portuguese Judo Federation. Using a convenience sampling technique, subjects were recruited through an email containing a link to an online web survey in April of 2016. A total of 103 usable cases, male 66% and female 34% and was included in the data analysis. The participants had a mean age of 30.6 years ($SD = 13.6$), and practice judo on average to 16 years ($SD = 11.2$). 26.2% of the athletes usually participate in national and international judo competitions over 4 to 6 times a year. 52.5% of athletes practicing on average from 4 to 9 hours per week training and judo competitions. Recognition measures were used to assess sponsorship awarenesses in previous studies (Biscaia, et al., 2013; Walsh, et al., 2008). Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 19. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze demographic characteristics, and correct sponsor recognition rates. Was also utilized ANOVA one-way and correlation coefficient

* Email: alfredosilva@esdrm.ipsantarem.pt

r of Pearson to determine whether differences existed between the level of practice and the recognition rate of sponsors. A level of significance of $p < 0.05$ was settled.

3. Results

The average rate of recognition of 3 sponsor's brands of judo in Portugal was 51.7%. Sponsors A and C were the most recognized (62.7%), by judo athletes while sponsor B got a recognition level of 31.1%. 27.2% of athletes correctly recognized the three sponsoring brands while 25.2% of athletes did not recognize any brand as a sponsor. As expected the real sponsors obtained higher recognition results relating to false sponsors. Except, the brand sponsor D (false sponsor) of the same product category brand B (true sponsor) who obtained a higher level and recognition (41.7%). Have not been observed significant differences between the level of practice of judo and the level of recognition of sponsors ($F(4) = 3.484, p = 0.644$). It was also not verified the existence a significant positive correlation between the variables level of practice and level of recognition of the sponsors ($r = 0.077, n = 103, p = 0.437$).

4. Discussion and conclusion

Sponsor recognition values (62.1%) are in line with those obtained by Bennett et al. (2006) in a tennis tournament there found 65.4% recognition level of Pepsi. However, overall, the values (51.7%) found for the recognition of sponsors are considered low, Biscaia et al. (2013) found for the sponsors: 85.1% and 75.5%, Zaharia et al. (2016) found 94.0%, and Eagleman and Krohn (2012), 80.7%. Of all the athletes, 74.8% recognized at least one sponsor, while Eagleman and Krohn, 2012, found the value of 86%.

Curious is the fact that a non-sponsor (D) has achieved higher levels of recognition to the true sponsor of the same product category. This may be due to communication held by the competitor that leads to high levels of notoriety. However, it is normal to find value for not sponsoring companies 25.7%, Bennett et al. (2002), in the case Coca-cola vs. Pepsi. Despite the limitations associated with the size of the sample, the recommendation to carry out, applies to grassroots and niche sport event organizers should develop sponsorship packages that will enhance opportunities for sponsors to activate or leverage the sponsorship in order to make it more recognition and more effective. This study also makes academic contribution to the field of sport marketing and event management by providing additional information and knowledge of combat sports participants, in this case, the sponsor's awareness of judo athletes.

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