



EFFECT OF BRAND ENHANCEMENT ON BUYING BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THE SPORT SPONSORSHIP COMPANIES IN RIYADH, KSA

 **Iyad A. Al-Nsour**

Department of Advertising and Marketing Communication, College of Media and Communication Al- Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, KSA.

Email: iaalnsour@imamu.edu.sa Tel: +966- 50-1629202



ABSTRACT

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The study aims at measuring the effect of the brand enhancement on the buying behavior toward the sponsor companies in Riyadh as well as determining the statistical differences in the brand enhancement and buying the brand according to demographics such as gender, education and age. The research population consists of all Saudi fans of the sport activity in Saudi Arabia. The total research population in Riyadh 2017 reaches 1.92 million. The purposive sampling method is used and the calculated sample size reaches 385 of the sports audience. The study concludes that brand enhancement has a positive significant effect on buying the brand of the sponsor companies. The study finds that there are no statistical differences in brand enhancement and buying the brand according to all demographical variables. Finally, the study suggests a set of recommendations and implications that support the brand enhancement of the sponsor companies in Riyadh city.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of very few studies which investigated the relationship between brand enhancement and purchasing behavior toward the sponsor companies. The online survey by the researcher finds that there is an ambiguity in defining the suggested relationship especially in Saudi market.

1. INTRODUCTION

The sponsorship defines the commercial relationship among a party (a company) that grants money, services, or resources on the one hand, and the person, event or organization on the other (Weeks, Cornwell, & Drennan, 2008) and under this relationship, there are some rights and obligations used to ensure the commercial benefits of the sponsor company (Amorim & Almeida, 2015). Sponsorship is an indirect communication tool (Crimmins & Horn, 1996) with ability to reach multiple segments in the markets (Crowley, 1991) as well as to achieve the institutional goals and strategic benefits (Weeks et al., 2008). The commercial sponsorship becomes one of the key modern marketing communication tools relies on indirect feature to promote the sponsored events and occasions, and to attract the customers toward the sponsor's products (Biscaia, Trail, Ross, & Yoshida, 2017). The sponsorship becomes a unique activity in time and space and it involves many rights, privileges, duties, and obligations (Meenaghan, 2002). The sponsorship makes the relationship between the sponsored event and the consumer more closer with less focus on the original work of the sponsor (Ryan & Fahy, 2012).

The literature assumes that sponsorship is one of the most important tools used in the sports, and it is the pillar of growth and spread the sports worldwide as well, so sponsorship has the largest share of sponsorship expenditure

by businesses (Biscaia et al., 2017). Sponsorship contracts give a lot of money to the sport teams through TV ads and sponsorship rights (Bühler, 2006). The sports sponsorship contracts reaches 52 billion in 2018, or 79.02% of the total sponsorship contracts worldwide (Statistica Research Department, 2018).

The sports teams exploits the strong brands in the market, and make the virtual relationship between the team's fans and such brand more closer (Fortunato, 2017). This contractual relationship assumes a strong and sustained relationship among all parties in the contract, and reaches a high level of effectiveness in the communication and marketing (Cruz, 2018). Studies have shown that sports sponsorship has a significant effect in building, promoting awareness, loyalty and the brand image, as well as the direct selling benefit in the short run (Fineweek, 2007). Finally, The sponsorship includes a massive opportunity to transfer the image of sponsored brand in a way that encourages sympathy, enthusiastic and buy such brand by the fans (Akwensivie, Narteh, & Iden, 2014).

Among these discussions, the current study recognizes the importance of sports sponsorship in pass through the positive image of the sponsor brand among the fans, and it is very clear that sports sponsorship is an effective factor in the buying decision of sports fans (audiences). The sport audience has behaviors differ from other segments consumers. The feelings, sympathies, and emotions of the fans and the psychological connection with the favorite team imposes a lot of positive attitudes and behaviors towards this team. So our study trying to connect between the brand enhancement and purchasing behavior of the Saudi sports audience.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Determining the level of brand enhancement of the brands of sponsors companies in the Saudi market.
2. Determining the level of buying the brands of the sponsor companies by the sports audience in the Saudi market.
3. Measuring the impact of brand enhancement on the purchasing behavior of the sports audience towards the products of sponsors companies in Saudi Arabia.
4. Determining the statistical differences in the level of brand enhancement of the sponsor companies by sports audience in the Saudi Market according to age and education.
5. Determining the statistical differences in the level of buying the brand of the sponsors companies by ports audience in the Saudi Market according to age and education.

3. RESEARCH MODEL

The following figure shows the model used in the study, which aims to determine the shape and direction of the relationship between independent and dependent variables:

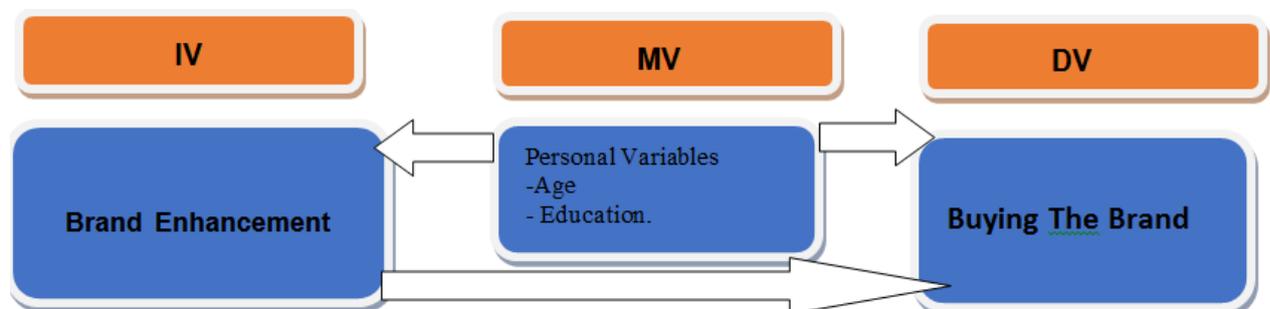


Figure-1. Illustrates the conceptual framework.

Based on the above, it has been possible to formulate the study hypotheses as follows:

1. There is a statistically significant effect of the brand enhancement on the buying the brand of sponsors companies by Saudi Sports audience the level of statistical significance of 5%.

2. There are statistically significant differences in the level of brand enhancement according to the age and education at the level of statistical significance of 5%.
3. There are statistically significant differences in buying the brand according to education and age at the level of the statistical significance of 5%.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1. Brand Enhancement and Buying the Brand

Sponsorship is the commercial relationship between a party (company) grants money, services, or resources on to a person, event, or organization, and such relationship includes a lot of contractual rights, obligations and commercial benefits for all parties (Klidas, Assen, & Oldenhof, 2015). Erdogan and Kitchen (1998) add that sponsorship is a practice promotes the company and its brand interests by connecting with an important event for society. The sponsorship has many types such as cash, physical or logistical payments provided by the company to the sponsored team and in a different way of the original mission of such company in the marketplace (Keshkar et al., 2018) so sports sponsorship is an interdependence relationship involves some commercial benefits for all parties in the contract include commercial benefits to the sponsor and financial benefits to the sponsored team (Cruz, 2018).

The sponsor company look at the sports audience as an existing market and has a characteristics and opportunities differ from other markets segments (Bühler & Nufer, 2010). The psychological bond of the sport audience (consumer) imposes many positive attitudes and behaviors towards his favorite team (Groot & Ferwerda, 2015). The studies mentioned the cognitive reason controls the actions of the sports audience according to the ideas holds towards his team (Shank & Beasley, 1998). While such studies present the emotional reason through feelings and emotions (Tapp & Clowes, 2002) and it considers the most powerful reasons in influencing the sports audience and making him more enthusiastic, impulsive and loyal to the favorite team (Fillis & Mackay, 2014). The other types of consumers are looking for physical elements such as price and quality in the buying decision of the favorite brand (Bühler & Nufer, 2010). These criteria are used by sports clubs in designing their marketing strategies to make ensure the effective communication, and to meet the psychological needs and to enhance the level of loyalty for different segments of fans (Weissman, 2014). It also requires the commitment of fans toward the distinguishing activities and events from other sport tribes, such as wearing team clothes, buying the brand products and logo (Meir & Scott, 2007).

On the other hand, sponsorship companies exploit the feelings and sympathy of fans toward their favorite teams to achieve their short-term sales goals, in spite of Chadwick and Thwaites (2005) outline the benefits can be achieved in the strategic content as well. Many studies connect the sports sponsorship activities with enhancing the brand image, buying intentions, and brand publicity (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003) and increasing brand value as well (Ngan, Prendergast, & Tsang, 2011). The studies conclude that sports sponsorship has an effective impact in promoting awareness, deepening loyalty, as well as the short-term selling goals (Pickton & Broderick, 2005).

The studies distinguish between brand enhancement and brand promotion. A change or the process of change, brought about, to improve a product or service and to increase its value, is known as enhancement. A variety of enhancements can be used in business to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of different processes and functionalities. With time the brands needs to be associated to new attributes or sometimes to differentiate among the competitors or sometimes to revamp the brand image. Thus associating new attributes to the brand is termed as brand enhancement. Brand Enhancement can also be used to expand the customer segment and to cater to newer markets (Bardia, 2018). While brand promotion is creating awareness about the brand, giving the product or service the right positioning in the consumers mind and increase it's recall value (Limba & Jurkutė, 2013).

Finally, The Studies recognize the role of sponsorship in enhancing the brand and the ability to pass through the positive image of the brand and company strongly, so it can be considered an important reason for buying its products (Coelho, Amorim, & Almeida, 2019). This means that sponsorship improves the buying power of the

sponsor company (Biscaia et al., 2017) through the positive financial indicators such as stock prices, property rights, and the brand value (Kim, Trail, Woo, & Zhang, 2011). In details, the sports sponsorship has a positive role in enhancing, promoting, and improving the brand loyalty (Donlan, 2014). It is clearly shown that sports sponsorship has a positive impact on the awareness, impression, and loyalty of the sponsor company and its brands (Biscaia et al., 2017) as well as the brand enhancement (Limba & Jurkutė, 2013) and this will improve the buying behavior toward their products (Pijkeren, 2010). The study emphasizes that brand promotion increases the brand enhancement, and the stored information about the brand is a key reason for the later buying (Dalakas & Levin, 2005).

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1. The Pilot Study

In order to determine the number of fans of the Saudi professional league, the pilot study is conducted. This study consists of one question and distributed to a sample of 60 persons or 15% of the sample size. The social networking sites "Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat" are used to distribute the question to people who have accounts on such sites. The question is "are you a follower of the Saudi league?" The results show that 73% of the respondents are followers and watchers of the Saudi professional league.

5.2. Research Population

It consists of all Saudi audience of the sport activity in Riyadh. According to the information issued by the general authority of statistics, the total population in Riyadh reaches 4.66 million in 2017. The percentage of Saudis over 19 years reaches 39%. Basing on the results of the pilot study above, the research population is 1.326 million of Saudis (men and woman). $((0.73 * 4.66) * 0.39) = 1.326$ million).

5.3. Research Sample

The purposive sampling method is used. This sampling method is the most suitable to meet the research goals. It is found that the sample size is 385 (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). An electronic copy of the questionnaire is designed using Google Drive. The questionnaire is randomly distributed to the sports audience face to face in the selected areas (universities, malls, markets and coffee shops). All distributed questionnaires are returned and used to a final analysis. The unit of analysis is the Saudi citizen (male or female) whom have an interest in attending and watching the sport activity in Saudi Arabia and over 19 years old.

5.4. Measurement

The measurement tool is the questionnaire and it is designed to collect the primary data necessary for research goals. The questionnaire is developed by reviewing previous studies and literature. The five points Likert scale is used for the two variables brand enhancement and buying the brand. This measure expresses the degree of consistency among the statements and the responses. The value (5) is given for very high response, (4) is high response, (3) is given for neutral response, a low response is given for the value (2), and the value (1) is given for a very low response.

5.5. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the research results, the descriptive statistical analysis (arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and relative frequency) is calculated. The response degree of the variables is measured according to the relative mean as follows: more than 4.2 is very high, (2) 4.2 – more than 3.4 is high, (3) 3.4– more than 2.6 is average (moderate), (4) 2.6 – 1.8 is weak and less than 1.8 is very weak. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It considers a measure of scale reliability. Cronbach's alpha is not a statistical test, so it is a coefficient of reliability (or internal

consistency). The Cronbach alpha coefficients of the two research variables are between 0.946 and 0.931. This means that the two variables have relatively accepted. Internal consistency of the two variables are statistically accepted since it is more than the statically permitted rate of 60%. The total value of Cronbach alpha is 0.954. So it is also statistically accepted.

Table-1. The internal consistency of the research variables.

N	Research Variables	Reliability*	Number of Sentences
1	Independent Variable: The Brand Enhancement.	0.946	1 – 8
2	Dependent Variable: Buying The Brand	0.931	9 – 16
Total Reliability		0.954	0.957

5.6. Research Limitations (Boundaries)

- The study has the Saudi males' citizens who are over 19 years and living in Riyadh.
- The Saudi citizens should be from the followers and watchers of the Saudi professional league.

6. THE DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS AND TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS

6.1. There is a Statistically Significant Effect of the Brand Enhancement on Buying the Brand of Sponsor Companies by Saudi Sports Audience the Level of Statistical Significance of 5%

Table 2 illustrates that the independent variable "sports sponsorship" consists of 8 statements. The responses vary among such statements between the medium and high levels and none of such statements have very high, low or very low responses. There are three statements have a high level of response, "The sport sponsorship improve my brand or company's image", "The sport sponsorship promotes the brand penetration in the market." and "The sport sponsorship activities are proper to my interests and expectations". The overall mean of the variable is (3.312) with the standard deviation (1.04). This means that the level of brand enhancement is moderate, and this result is approving by 48.2% of the sport audiences in the research sample.

Table-2. Frequencies, means and standard deviations of the independent variable (brand enhancement).

N	The Statement	Response Degree%					S.D	Mean	Degree
		SA	A	M	DA	SDA			
1	The sport sponsorship improve my brand or company image	9.1	31.8	39.4	7.6	9.1	1.04134	3.4848	High
2	The sport sponsorship has a positive change in the impression of the company brand and products	10.6	33.3	42.4	9.1	9.1	1.12774	3.3333	Moderate
3	The sport sponsorship promotes the brand penetration in the market.	13.6	37.9	34.8	4.5	10.6	1.11024	3.4242	High
4	The sport sponsorship activities are appropriate to my interests and expectations	10.6	24.2	45.5	10.6	12.1	1.17838	3.5606	High
5	The sport sponsorship increases the ability of the brand to attract sport audience.	13.6	30.3	45.5	6.1	12.1	1.12038	3.2273	Moderate
6	The sport sponsorship eases the communication with the sport audience.	13.6	34.8	36.4	7.6	12.1	1.05876	2.9545	Moderate
7	The sport sponsorship increases the trust in the sponsor companies.	12.1	36.4	37.9	7.6	12.1	1.12162	3.1364	Moderate
8	The sport sponsorship make the sponsor companies a platform to sell the brand.	7.6	31.8	39.4	9.1	12.1	1.08744	2.9545	Moderate
Overall Brand Enhancement		9.85	38.263	31.05	9.65	11.35	1.041794	3.312488	Moderate

The Table 3 illustrates that the independent variable "buying behavior" consists of 8 statements. The responses among statements are concentrating in the medium and level, and none of such statements have very high, high, low and very low responses. The overall mean of the independent variable is (3.204) with the standard deviation (1.02). This means that the level of buying the brand is moderate, and this result is approving by 41.3% of the sport audiences in the research sample.

Table-3. Frequencies, means and standard deviations of the dependent variable (buying behavior).

N	The Statement	Response Degree%					S.D	Mean	Degree
		SA	A	M	DA	SDA			
1	I have an actual desire to buy the products of the sponsor company	7.6	28.8	36.4	16.7	10.6	1.09374	3.0606	High
2	I have a positive intent to search for sponsor's products.	9.1	36.4	34.8	13.6	6.1	1.01928	3.2879	Moderate
3	I am looking for make a good transaction with the sponsor company	7.6	33.3	40.9	10.6	7.6	1.00454	3.2273	High
4	I am looking for my needs in the different branches of the sponsor company.	9.1	30.3	40.9	13.6	6.1	1.00454	3.2273	High
5	The brand enhancement increases the brand ability to attract sport audience	7.6	42.4	34.8	10.6	4.5	.94079	3.3788	Moderate
6	I have an ability to buy the sponsor products even if their prices are higher.	7.6	22.7	34.8	18.2	16.7	1.17521	2.8636	Moderate
7	I will tell others about my buying experience of the sponsor company.	9.1	31.8	34.8	19.7	4.5	1.01550	3.2121	Moderate
8	I am Spreading the positive impression of the sponsor company and its products.	7.6	39.4	40.9	7.6	4.5	.90749	3.3788	Moderate
Overall Brand Enhancement		8.1625	33.138	37.288	13.825	7.575	1.020136	3.20455	Moderate

To test the first sub-hypothesis, the dependent and independent variables are the sports sponsorship and brand knowledge. The linear equation is used ($Y = A + \beta_1 X_1$). Y refers to the dependent variable refers to the buying behavior, while X_1 indicates the independent variable the brand enhancement. A and B are the models estimators and the Table 4 show the results of analysis using the enter method.

The statistical analysis in the table 4 shows that brand enhancement has statistical significant effect on the buying the brand of the sport sponsor companies according to compression between the tabulated and calculated levels of statistical significance (0.00 and 0.05). The estimator B shows that brand enhancement has a positive statistical effect on buying the sponsor products reaches 0.758 units, and it is found that there is a positive correlation between the brand enhancements and buying the sponsor's brand reaches 74.6%. Therefore, 54.9% of the variations in the buying the brand refers to brand enhancement. To test the first hypothesis, the ANOVA (F) results show that the calculated value of the significance level is 0.00 which is less than the test level of 5%, and the first hypothesis is accepted. So there is a statistically significant effect of brand enhancement on buying the brand of the sponsor

Table-4. First hypothesis using enter method.

Variable	B	t	Sig.	Statistical Indicators	
Intercept	0.694	2.399	0.019	F= 80.28 r=0.746	Sig. = 0.00 R ² = 0.549
Brand Enhancement	0.758	8.96	0.000		

6.2. There are Statistically Significant Differences in the Brand Enhancement According to the Gender, Education and Age at the Level of Statistical Significance of 5%

To test the second hypothesis of statistical differences and analysis of variance ANOVA (F) is used. The statistical rule says that if the significance level of the variable less than the overall significance level of the test 5 %, we accept the effect of the demographical variable on brand enhancement. The Table 5 shows that there are no statistical differences in brand enhancement according to the gender, education and age of sports audience. Therefore, there are no differences in the level of brand enhancement according to the demographical variables under this hypotheses, and the level of brand enhancement of the sponsor company is the similar for all the Saudi sports audience.

6.3. There are Statistically Significant Differences in Buying the Brand According to Gender, Education and Age at the Level of the Statistical Significance of 5%

To test the third hypothesis of statistical differences and analysis of variance ANOVA (F) is used. The statistical rule says that if the significance level of the variable less than 5%, we accept the effect of the demographical variable on buying the brand of Sponsor Company. The Table 5 shows that there are no statistical differences in buying the brand according to the gender , education and age of sports audience. Therefore, there are no differences in the level of brand enhancement according to the demographical variables under this hypotheses, and the level of buying of the sponsor brands is similar for all the Saudi sports audience.

Table-5. The third and fourth hypotheses.

Independent Variable	Demographic Variable	F	Sig.	The Statistical Decision
Brand Enhancement	Gender	0.511	0.432	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Education	0.426	0.516	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Age	1.13	0.292	There are no statistically significant differences.
Independent Variable	Demographic Variable	F	Sig.	The Statistical Decision
Buying The Brand	Gender	1.212	0.119	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Education	0.631	0.43	There are no statistically significant differences.
	Age	0.027	0.869	There are no statistically significant differences.

7. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The brand enhancement has new features, functions, uses, and benefits, which differentiate them from competitors in the market. Such features enable the company to expand the current and potential customer markets and to fulfill the needs of new segments. This expression differs from the brand promotion which aims to create brand awareness and positioning among customers. The results show that the brand enhancement level of sponsor companies in the Saudi market is moderated, and the sports sponsorship enables the brand diffusion by 51.5% in the market. The role of Sports sponsorship in attracting new sports consumers by 43.9%. Sports sponsorship increases the trust level of the brand among fans by 48.5%. On the other hand, 50% of the Saudi sports fans have a buying intent. These products of sponsor company from the preferences of sports fans. The buying behavior of 41.3% of the fans is moderated and this result consistent with the level of brand enhancement above.

The results show that the brand enhancement of the Saudi sports audience has a statistical effect on buying the brand of the sponsor company and there is a high degree of correlation between the two variables, and this relationship increases buying the products of sponsor companies in the Saudi market. This partially successes of

sports sponsorship programs in enhancing the brand is heavily depending on the mentality and psychology of the Saudi sports fans which impose some positive behaviors towards the products of the sponsor companies (Walraven, Koning, & van Bottenburg, 2012). Despite the importance of price and quality information of the sponsor company products in the buying decision; however, the feelings and emotions are the most effective reason in buying the brand for when of sports markets. This behavior is a part of loyalty to the favorite team (Fillis & Mackay, 2014) and is a distinctive action from other fans (Meir & Scott, 2007). The studies of Gwinner and Swanson (2003) and Pijkeren (2010) have confirmed that sports sponsorship has a positive impact on buying intentions and it is an important reason for buying decisions of the sponsor products (Coelho et al., 2019).

The current study confirms the positive statistical effect of the brand enhancement on buying the sponsor products in Riyadh, and sponsorship benefits in the short-term are confirmed. This result is consistent with other literatures that correlate between sports sponsorship and the buying advantages (Tomalieh, 2016). The sponsorship enhance the brand image of the sponsor company and eases the buy later (Akwensivie et al., 2014). We note that there are no statistically significant differences in the brand enhancement and buying the brand of the sponsor companies, and in conclusion the brand enhancement and buying of products sponsor companies are similar among all sports fans and there is no distinctive segments in this market.

Finally, current study says that the brand of sponsor companies is one of the most important intangible assets for continuous improvement by building a brand enhancement program for the sports audience and working with Sponsor Company to build the brand value. There is an importance of market segmentation of the sports audience market according to the age, gender, educational level, etc., so there is urgent need to offer fit new products to the different segments of fans. The current study concludes that the mass production policy is responsible for decreasing in the brand enhancement level. Developing brand strategies with visual logo and communications are massive need in the different segments of the market audience.

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the current study, the positive effect of the brand enhancement on buying of sponsor products of sponsor companies in the Saudi market is approved, and this show that improving brand enhancement will increase the demand on sponsor products in the sport market. Perhaps the main reason for the moderated relationship between the two variables refers to the undifferentiated marketing policy by sponsor companies. This Policy ignores the variation in the market segments of the sports audience in Riyadh as well there are a little number of brands that fulfill the buyer needs in the market rather than take the differences in the market. This policy is also based on a mass marketing program focus on the mass distribution and mass advertising. The sponsor companies with narrow line of production will not be able to penetrate the market segments of sport audience (fans) and improve brand enhancement. The Sponsor companies neglect the needs of sports audience as an existing market has distinctive characteristics and segments. These characteristics should impose different positive behavioral patterns depending on the market segment and the ideas about the favorite team. This requires strategies that enhance the brand such as the communication tools that can reach the different market segments, and the right messages to each segment. Social media, the internet, outdoor ads, and mobile applications become a profitable tools for the sponsor companies. It may use to define the characteristics of the sports audience accurately and precisely, and use of communication tools at the right time and place, thereby the brand enhancement will increase and the short-term selling benefits as well.

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