I SPY A SPONSOR

The Effects of Sponsorship Level, Prominence, Relatedness, and Cueing on Recall Accuracy

Kirk L. Wakefield, Karen Becker-Olsen, and T. Bettina Cornwell

ABSTRACT: This study examines differential effects of sponsorship levels (anchor, mid-tier, low-tier) and individual exposure levels on sponsorship recall accuracy in a field study, providing validity for lab studies indicating that individuals rely on prominence and relatedness heuristics when identifying sponsors of an event. In addition, we examine differences in sponsorship recall accuracy when the response is elicited through free recall versus cued recall. The results indicate that free (or direct) recall is generally more accurate than cued recall that relies on reconstructive processes, but that this effect differs based on the type of sponsor in terms of its prominence and relatedness.

There is no doubt that sponsorship is growing and becoming a stable part of the communications mix for many firms. There is also no doubt that sponsorships can provide value to sponsoring firms (e.g., differentiating the brand and adding financial value to the brand; see Cornwell, Roy, and Steinard 2001); however, that value is contingent on the firm reaching its objectives and its relative commitment to reaching those objectives. Corporate sponsorship executives frequently must choose between multiple levels of sponsorship packages designed to meet varying objectives and budgets. Title- or anchor-level sponsorships tend to come with high price tags commensurate with superior visibility and high levels of integration with the event. Less expensive lower-level sponsorships tend to be associated with less visibility and less integration. Thus, depending on the specific objectives of the sponsorship program, various levels of corporate commitment are required. Intuitively, we would expect that higher levels of sponsorship provide greater firm benefits, yet there is no empirical evidence that such a relationship exists.

Extant research on sponsorship recall has demonstrated a link between relatedness and prominence and the ability to accurately recall sponsors (see Johar and Pham 1999; Speed and Thompson 2000). The work has not accounted for differences in sponsorship levels, however. In addition, this research has typically been constrained to laboratory settings. In the present study, we provide a field test of sponsorship recall for different levels of sponsorship and investigate processing biases that result from cued and direct recall tests. We are able to demonstrate that sponsorship level does matter and that consumers, when cued, tend to use prominence and relatedness heuristics, which, in the case of small unrelated sponsors, significantly inhibits accurate recall.

Kirk L. Wakefield (Ph.D., Saint Louis University) is a professor in and chair of the Department of Marketing at the Hankamer School of Business, Baylor University.

Karen Becker-Olsen (Ph.D., Lehigh University) is an assistant professor of marketing, The College of New Jersey, Ewing.

T. Bettina Cornwell (Ph.D., University of Texas) is a professor of marketing in the UQ Business School at the University of Queensland, Australia.

FIELD RESEARCH

The effectiveness of sponsorship as a brand-building tool has been the subject of substantive debate (Crimmins and Horn 1996; Pokrywczynski 1994). Much of the debate has focused on the firm's ability to accurately measure the sponsorship results. There is anecdotal evidence of sponsorship success. Heinz's Ore-Ida brand, which attributes a 26% increase in Bagel Bites sales to its sponsorship of the Winter X Games, launched a figure-skating sponsorship for its Smart Ones brand (IEG Sponsorship Report 2001). The U.S. Navy signed on as a NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) sponsor and believes the sponsorship offers tremendous recruiting benefits, since the respective target audiences are similar (Ballard 2003). In addition, Volvo reports that for every dollar spent on sponsorship, they reap six dollars in communications value (Irwin and Asimakopoulos 1992). Yet other practitioners and academics argue that we cannot effectively measure sponsorship's ability to influence consumer response because it is so intimately tied to other communication spending (Keller 2001). Although events and organizations may periodically conduct sponsorship awareness studies or exit audits, the results are influenced by prior perceptions of the brand and environmental noise, as well as by advertising and promotion spending that is not directly related to the sponsorship program. One way to control for other communications efforts and environmental noise is to test sponsorship messages within a laboratory setting.

Journal of Advertising, vol. 36, no. 4 (Winter 2007), pp. 61–74.

ISSN 0091-3367 / 2007 $9.50 + 0.00.
DOI 10.2753/JOA0091-3367360405

signage and other media communications in the context of a sporting event or other live entertainment events. Consequently, individuals frequently exposed to sponsor communications in this affectively charged environment can be expected to experience higher recall.

In sum, then, we expect that those who frequently attend events at a given venue will be more likely to recall sponsors for at least two reasons. First, the more times individuals are exposed to the sponsor's message, the greater the likelihood of recall. Second, emotionally arousing information is better remembered than neutral information (Cross 1999). Frequently attending respondents are likely to be highly involved, identified fans who experience greater levels of emotional arousal and, hence, stronger recall. For these reasons, we anticipate:

H4: The greater the individual exposure, the higher the sponsor recall.

Cueing

The cues used to elicit response have been all but ignored in sponsorship research. Using phone survey data collected around the time of the 2000 Olympics, Tripodi et al. offer one of the first studies on cueing. They considered the following four approaches to recall measurement (2003, p. 447): (1) event sponsorship prompt ("When you think of [Event Z], which sponsors come to mind?), (2) brand sponsorship prompt ("When you think of [Brand X], what sponsorships come to mind?), (3) category sponsorship prompt ("When you think of [Category Y, e.g., brands] what sponsorships come to mind?"), and (4) brand recognition recall (I am going to tell you some of Brand X's current or recent sponsorships. For each one, could you tell me whether you were aware, before today, of Brand X sponsoring that event?). These different approaches to measurement yielded decidedly different estimates of recall. Although the findings may be context-specific, they do signal the importance of cueing in sponsorship research.

In the present study, we explore cueing as it is related to the use of heuristics when respondents are cued by the sponsorship level. Prior studies have assumed that individuals employ heuristics related to prominence and relatedness due to the tendency to incorrectly identify prominent and related nonsponsors as sponsors and to more frequently correctly identify prominent and related sponsors as actual sponsors. For instance, when queried about anchor sponsors, we might expect individuals to identify highly related and prominent Nike as one of the "Grand Sponsors" of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games (even though it was not) rather than an actual Grand Sponsor such as Atos Origin (a business and technology integrating company) that is unrelated and less prominent. In this case, not only would participants be attempting to recall the sponsor based on prominence and relatedness heuristics, but also to fit the sponsor with the sponsorship level.

The use of these *fit* heuristics may stem from past experiences with sponsorships. Individuals tend to view sponsors with high brand equity as more appropriate matches to sponsor events than their low-equity counterparts. As Roy and Cornwell (2004) found in their study, high-equity sponsors were perceived as being more congruent with the events being sponsored than low-equity sponsors in the same product categories. Furthermore, their qualitative findings showed that some event experts appeared to be skeptical that a low-equity sponsor should be linked with major sporting events such as the Olympics.

It is interesting to note that in sponsorship packages, sponsors at a particular level are grouped, presented, and positioned together in communications to event attendees or viewers. That is, primary sponsors of an event are featured together in print and visual communications, and appear together in prominent venue displays. Similarly, lower-tier sponsors are designated as such in print and visual communications, and appear in less prominent venue displays. Thus, this packaging may give rise to the development of consumer knowledge such that cueing with sponsorship level will invoke the use of a "rule of thumb" or heuristic. That is, individuals may categorize and internally reference sponsors according to levels in the order of magnitude presented by properties.

Cueing Versus Free Recall

We expect that individuals prompted to consider the sponsorship level (i.e., anchor versus lower-tier sponsors) will be less accurate in identifying sponsors. In other words, if respondents are presented with a given sponsor's brand, we expect recall to be better when no reference is given to the status or level of the sponsorship. In contrast, if participants are asked to identify the sponsor's brand as an anchor (or lower-tier) sponsor, we expect recall to worsen, as we now explain.

Padilla-Walker and Poole (2002) suggest that cued recall is less accurate than free recall. In particular, this effect may be more pronounced for those sponsors whose identity is less likely to be deeply embedded and easy to access from memory, that is, those sponsors who are not prominent and who are not strongly related to the event. These differences are likely to exist because of different retrieval processes. According to the dual retrieval model (Brainerd and Reyna 1995), in a free recall situation, retrieval is based on either direct access to the target item or reconstructive processing. Direct retrieval is the default process in identifying sponsors (Pham and Johar 2001), and as such, it is likely to provide the quickest, most accurate, and most confident recall. Reconstructive retrieval, however, is based on development of schemas that help to reconstruct traces of meaning for the target. This type of retrieval is less accurate and slower, and often produces false recall of semantically related items. In the case of weakly embedded or nonex-

istent episodic recall (e.g., Atos Origin), cued reconstructive retrieval may be even less accurate than relying on impressions drawn from direct recall, because such sponsors do not make sense to the receiver of the sponsorship communication, thus causing the receiver to discount traces of episodic memory. Put differently, if asked, "Is [this company] a Grand Sponsor of the 2004 Olympics?" the respondent is cued to not only process via prominence and relatedness heuristics for the Olympics, but also on whether the prominence and relatedness of the company is an appropriate fit for the level of sponsorship.

Additional field-specific factors may also contribute to poor recall accuracy when participants are cued to recall sponsors. Individuals viewing or attending an event may devote minimal cognitive effort to encoding and storing sponsor information. At best, attention is divided between the event and other environmental stimuli. Such divided attention becomes even more problematic for small, unrelated sponsors because consumers are unlikely to have strong memories for these sponsors as compared with larger, related sponsors. Thus, additional cognitive effort is required to properly encode messages that are from unrelated, small brand sponsors. Moreover, the issue may be further complicated when respondents are cued with questions such as "Is this an anchor sponsor?" which are inconsistent with what they know to be true—that this is a small, unrelated brand.

Consequently, we expect a main effect of cueing to result in lower recall accuracy for all sponsors when cued, but compared with prominent, related sponsors, *less* prominent, *unrelated* sponsors that have invested in anchor (i.e., higher tier) sponsorship levels are expected to receive significantly lower recall accuracy when cued as to their anchor or higher-tier sponsorship.

Hence:

H5: Cueing sponsorship levels will result in less accurate sponsor recall than will direct (free) recall of sponsors (cueing main effect).

H6: When cued on sponsorship level, participants' recall of small, unrelated sponsors will be relatively less accurate than their recall of prominent sponsors (cueing × sponsorship level interaction).

METHOD

Sample

During the last week of the professional baseball season, participants were recruited prior to admission to a game in a large southern metropolitan area to respond to a survey offered by the home team. Beginning 90 minutes before and until the first pitch, individuals were systematically (every 60 seconds) intercepted at the gates and offered an incentive (team logo baseballs) to complete a survey if they had attended at least one prior game during the season. Individuals were directed to a booth set up near the gate, out of view of sponsor signage. In the case of those who declined (approximately 25%), a member of the next party (every fifth person) following was asked to participate in the survey to obtain a replacement. In this way, the 230 survey respondents evenly represent early- and late-arriving attendees. The respondents were predominantly Caucasian (89%), male (64.1%), 38 years old, married (67.5%), lived within 50 miles of the park (84.1%), had at least two years of college education (61.1%), had household incomes of $50,000–$74,999 (69.4%), and, on average, attended 16 games a season. These demographics[1] generally match the typical demographics of fans attending games at this venue.

Procedure and Stimuli

To test for sponsorship recall accuracy, data for the field experiment were collected in a manner similar to that in the Johar and Pham 1999 study. As the primary task, respondents were shown a list of brands, some of which were actual sponsors and some of which were not (i.e., they were foils), and were asked whether each one was an actual sponsor of the team. Sponsors were defined for the respondents as those brands or companies whose names appear in media and on scorecards and signage around the stadium.

Sponsors at this stadium have the choice of three sponsorship levels with varied size and placement of the sponsorship signage and commensurate mentions in advertising at the event and in the event program. The anchor sponsors all appear on or around the center field and left field scoreboards. Mid-tier sponsors' signage appears on the façade surrounding the upper deck. Lower-tier sponsors' signage appears in the concourse of the stadium behind the seats. Respondents received one of three surveys that consisted of the actual sponsors at a given sponsorship level, along with an equal number of foils that were not actual sponsors. To test the effects of cueing, half of the respondents were given the following information regarding the location and size of the sponsor signage:

Instructions

In addition to other media, sponsors may secure signage around the stadium based upon desired size & location on the:

- ★ Concourse walls behind the field-level seating (3.5' × 5').
- ★ Club-level façade (3' × 12') facing the field.
- ★ Left field scoreboard (8' × 9' and 6' × 6' rotating panels) & main scoreboard (15' × 29' fixed signs; 8' × 15' and 8' × 31' rotating panels).

Some of these organizations below are sponsors, some are not. Please indicate if the organization has signage on the [*location*].

TABLE 1
Sponsorship Foils

- *Less prominent and unrelated*
  - Putt-Putt Golf
  - University of [local state school]
  - Pro Pest Control
  - Kohler Kitchen & Bath
  - Atlanta Bread Company
  - Automart Kia
  - [Local] Automotive Supply
- *Less prominent and related*
  - Westwood One Sports Radio
  - Central Line Baseball Clothing
  - Schwab Sports Balm
  - Lawn Genies
  - Original Nut House Ballpark Peanuts
  - SuperStripe Athletic Grass Paint
  - Jugs Baseball Radar Guns
- *Prominent and unrelated*
  - Marriott Hotels
  - Wal-Mart Stores
  - Nortel Networks
  - Dow Chemical
  - Visa
- *Prominent and related*
  - ESPN
  - Gatorade
  - Russell Athletic Uniforms
  - Ballpark Franks
  - MBNA (Official MLB Sponsor)
  - Nike

Note: MLB = Major League Baseball.

The remaining half of the participants were not provided any information about sponsorship levels or location. They were told that sponsors appear on the scoreboards, signage, and other media, and were asked to indicate whether the organization was a sponsor of the [home] team or not. Cueing with the location and actual size of the communications was selected over cueing with terms such as "anchor sponsor" and "lower-tier sponsor" because the visual descriptions are more concrete. In addition, instructions that support the recall of visual information by indicating the location of communication would be expected to support recall of actual sponsors. Thus, this approach provides a strong test of any potential cueing effects such as those suggested in H5 and H6.

The stimuli brands consisted of all of the actual sponsors (20–25) of the home team at each sponsorship level and an equal number of foils. Actual sponsors included large national brands (e.g., Coca-Cola, Toyota, and State Farm) and regional brands (e.g., Fred's Department Store), as well as local brands such as local apartment complexes. Overall, this team had 64 sponsors.

Similar to the Pham and Johar 2001 study, a pretest (n = 29) was conducted to measure the relative prominence and relatedness of the sponsoring brands. Prominence was measured by asking participants, "Compared to their competitors, how large and prominent are these companies?" Relatedness was measured by asking participants, "Given what they offer and their image, would it make sense for them to sponsor the [home team]." Each was measured on 10-point scales (i.e., 1–10, small/large; 1–10, makes no sense/makes perfect sense). Based on median splits[2] on the prominence (median = 6.44) and relatedness (median = 5.20) measures, the results of the pretest revealed:

- Eight brands are prominent ($\bar{x}$ = 6.69) and unrelated ($\bar{x}$ = 4.07).
- Twenty-nine brands are prominent ($\bar{x}$ = 8.13) and related ($\bar{x}$ = 6.95).
- Twenty-six brands are less prominent ($\bar{x}$ = 3.80) and unrelated ($\bar{x}$ = 3.30).
- Only one brand is less prominent (4.97) and related (7.24).

The foils were purposely chosen to cover a wide range of relatedness and prominence. A similar pretest (n = 45) revealed that the foils differed with respect to prominence and relatedness as anticipated (see Table 1 for a list of foils and related results in Table 2). While the actual sponsors differed between the three sponsorship levels, the same set of foils was used for each of the three sponsorship levels.

Method of Analysis

A 3 × 2 between-subjects design was employed, where the sponsorship levels (anchor, mid-tier, low-tier) and cueing (cued, not cued) were manipulated to produce six different treatments. Individual exposure to the sponsors was measured by including as a covariate the number of games the respondent had attended. Serving as dependent variables were the recall accuracy for (1) less prominent and unrelated sponsors, (2) prominent and unrelated sponsors, (3) prominent and related sponsors, and (4) all sponsors. Given that only one actual sponsor was less prominent and related, we did not include that category separately in the analysis.

Demographics (household income, gender, distance respondent lives from park, education, and age) were included as control variables to account for possible individual differences that might influence the analysis. Males were found to have significantly (t = 2.14, p < .05) better recall (68.5%) of prominent and unrelated sponsors than did females (55.6%). We also tested for the possibility that these covariates might interact (e.g., gender × age, income × education, etc.), and found no effects or weak effects (i.e., younger males have

TABLE 2
Reported Recall for Actual and Foil Sponsors Compared with Chance (*N* = 209)

Actual or foil	Prominence	Relatedness	Recall	t value	Significance	Mean difference from chance (50%)
Foil	Prominent	Related	42.9%	−3.95	0	−7.1%
Foil	Prominent	Unrelated	54.0%	2.14	.033	4%
Foil	Less Prominent	Related	70.3%	11.12	0	20.3%
Foil	Less Prominent	Unrelated	72.6%	13.56	0	22.6%
Actual	Less Prominent	Unrelated	40.2%	−6.82	0	−9.8%
Actual*	Less Prominent	Related	28.8%	−9.41	0	−28.3%
Actual	Prominent	Unrelated	58.5%	6.58	0	13.5%
Actual	Prominent	Related	69.7%	11.36	0	21.2%
All foils			56.8%	4.88	0	6.8%
All actual sponsors			53.7%	3.11	0	3.7%

* Only one sponsor was less prominent and related.

somewhat lower [$t = -1.79, p < .10$] recall accuracy than older males or females).

Before turning to the results from the sponsorship levels and cueing effects, we first examine the results related to the respondents' reliance on prominence and relatedness heuristics.

RESULTS

Prominence/Relatedness Heuristics

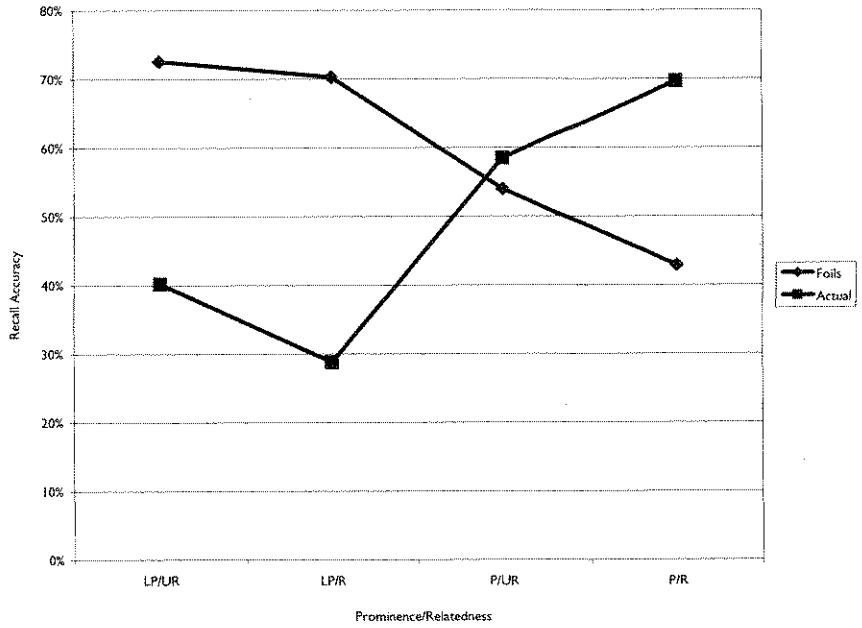
Table 2 contains the reported recall for each of the categories (prominent/unrelated; prominent/related, etc.) for the actual sponsors and the foils. The foils worked as expected. Compared with the mere chance (50/50) of correctly selecting the brand as a sponsor or not, respondents were significantly ($t = -3.95$, $p < .01$) more likely to incorrectly identify prominent and related foils as actual sponsors. Thus, 57.1% of the time, respondents identified prominent and related sponsor foils as actual sponsors. Similarly, prominent and unrelated foils were correctly identified as not being sponsors 54% of the time, which is better than chance (50%), but still significantly ($t = 8.6$, $p < .001$) worse than respondents' accuracy in correctly identifying less prominent and related foils (70.3%) and less prominent and unrelated foils (72.6%) as not being sponsors of the home team. Overall, foils were correctly identified as such 56.8% of the time. In sum, these results support the notion that individuals rely on prominence and relatedness heuristics to deduce whether or not a brand is a sponsor.

In the same way, the recall accuracy for actual sponsors generally reveals the same tendencies. As expected for the 26 actual sponsors' brands that were less prominent and unrelated to the event, respondents correctly identified them as sponsors only 40.2% of the time (significantly below chance; $t = -6.82$, $p < .001$). The recall accuracy for the one less prominent, but related sponsor was 28.8%. This anomaly is likely due to the fact that the brand represents a highly related (relatedness = 7.24) group of radio stations that includes the radio station that broadcasts the home team's games, but the branded name of the radio group (versus the actual radio station) is largely unknown (prominence = 4.96) to the audience. Respondents correctly identified those brands representing the eight more prominent, yet unrelated sponsors 58.5% of the time. Prominent and related brands were correctly identified as sponsors 69.7% of the time within this sample. Hence, compared with chance, the prominence of the brand greatly increased the chances of correct recall when the brand was unrelated ($t = 6.58$, $p < .001$), and even more so when it was related to the event ($t = 11.37$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the recall accuracy for prominent and related brands is significantly higher ($t = 5.71$, $p < .001$) than for the prominent and unrelated brands.

Overall, the results lend support to our hypotheses (H1 and H2) that individuals rely on prominence and relatedness heuristics when recalling sponsors in a field setting.

Figure 1 demonstrates the effects of prominence and relatedness on the recall of foils and actual sponsors. Participants perceive that unrelated and less prominent foils are unlikely to be sponsors and subsequently correctly identify them as nonsponsors. Conversely, when provided with foils that are prominent and related to the event, recall accuracy is reduced, because participants tend to incorrectly guess that such foils are sponsors. The effects are reversed for actual sponsors, as unrelated and less prominent sponsors are not identified as

FIGURE 1
Effects of Prominence and Relatedness on Recall Accuracy of Foils and Actual Sponsors



Notes: LP/UR = Less prominent/Unrelated; LP/R = Less prominent/Related; P/UR = Prominent/Unrelated; P/R = Prominent/Related.

sponsors—despite the fact that they are. Yet prominent and related brands that actually are sponsors are easier for participants to recall, as the high recall scores indicate.

Sponsorship Levels

Table 3 contains the results of the MANCOVA (multivariate analysis of covariance) and Table 4 contains the results of the between-subject effects. The level of sponsorship produces the expected main effect on recall accuracy, Wilks's λ $F(8, 386) = 27.29, p < .01$, for all actual sponsors, $F(2, 196) = 9.40$, $p < .01$, mainly due to the effects on the prominent sponsors, both unrelated, $F(2, 196) = 7.39$, $p < .01$, and related, $F(2, 196) = 3.12, p < .05$. Sponsorship level did not significantly influence recall accuracy for less prominent and unrelated sponsors, as recall accuracy remains relatively low for both anchor sponsors (42%) and mid-tier sponsors (41%), and drops for the low-tier sponsors (37%). Figure 2 illustrates the differences in recall accuracy for each sponsorship level and sponsors. Thus, H3 is supported.

Individual Exposure

The level of individual exposure to sponsors in terms of games attended at the venue significantly influenced recall accuracy, Wilks's λ $F(4, 193) = 7.09, p < .01$, for all actual sponsors, $F(1, 196) = 7.43$, $p < .01$, including heightened recall of prominent and unrelated sponsors, $F(1, 196) = 25.25, p < .01$, and prominent and related sponsors, $F(1, 196) = 7.37, p < .01$, but with no significant influence on recall for all less prominent and unrelated sponsors, $F(1, 196) = 1.70$, *n.s.* [not significant]. Hence, H4 is largely supported.

Cueing

Cueing respondents with sponsorship level generated the expected main effect on recall accuracy, Wilks's λ $F(4, 196) = 6.05, p < .01$, for all sponsors, $F(1, 193) = 8.56, p < .01$, and particularly for the less prominent and unrelated sponsors, $F(1, 196) = 18.81$, $p < .01$. Cueing produced lower recall accuracy for all sponsors (see Table 5), but did not significantly influence recall accuracy for prominent and unrelated sponsors, $F(1, 196) = 1.11$, *n.s.*, or for prominent and related sponsors, $F(1, 196) = 1.92$, *n.s.* The results provide general support for H5.

Cueing × Sponsorship Levels

The interaction between cueing effects and sponsorship levels was obtained, Wilks's λ $F(8, 386) = 3.22, p < .01$, driven by the significant influence on recall accuracy for less prominent and unrelated sponsors, $F(2, 196) = 3.05, p < .05$, as expected (see Figure 3). Unexpectedly, the interaction effect also significantly influenced recall accuracy for prominent and related sponsors, $F(2, 196) = 2.76$, $p < .05$, but with a somewhat different pattern of results, such that recall for low-tier spon-

TABLE 3
Multivariate Results

	Wilks's λ (*F*)	Hyp. *df*	Error *df*	Significance	η^2
Hypothesized effects					
H3: Sponsorship level	27.29	8	386	0	.361
H4: Games attended	7.09	4	193	0	.128
H5: Cueing	6.05	4	193	0	.111
H6: Sponsorship × cueing	3.22	8	386	.001	.063
Individual differences (controls)					
Gender	2.43	4	193	.049	.048
Household income	.90	4	193	*n.s.*	
Distance traveled to park	2.92	4	193	*n.s.*	
Education	.86	4	193	*n.s.*	
Age	1.32	4	193	*n.s.*	
			196		

Note: n.s. = not significant.

TABLE 4
Between-Subject Effects

	Sponsor characteristics			
	Prominent and related (30)	**Less prominent and unrelated (26)**	**Prominent and unrelated (8)**	**All sponsors (64)**
Source				
Sponsorship level	3.12**	*n.s.*	7.39*	9.40*
Games attended	7.37*	*n.s.*	25.25*	7.43*
Cueing	*n.s.*	18.81*	*n.s.*	8.56*
Cueing × sponsorship level	3.86**	3.05**	*n.s.*	*n.s.*
Individual differences				
Gender	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	9.44*	*n.s.*
Household income	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	*n.s.*
Distance traveled to park	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	*n.s.*
Education	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	*n.s.*
Age	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	*n.s.*	*n.s.*
R^2	13.70%	13.10%	23.80%	19.90%

Note: n.s. = not significant.

* $p < .01$.

** $p < .05$.

sors was higher (74%) when cued than when not (67%).[3] The interaction effect was not significant for all sponsors in general, $F(2, 196) = 2.10$, $p > .05$, or for prominent and unrelated sponsors, $F(2, 196) = 10$, *n.s.*, in particular. Thus, H6 is supported: In the case of less prominent and unrelated sponsors, participants who were cued as to the anchor sponsorship level produced markedly lower recall accuracy (26%) than when not cued regarding the anchor sponsorship (57%). Conversely, cueing produced substantially lower recall discrepancies for mid-tier (−14%) and low-tier (−6%) sponsors in the less prominent/unrelated sponsor category.

DISCUSSION

The findings presented here extend current research in sponsorship and offer several unique contributions and direction for future research, as we now discuss.

Prominence and Relatedness

The current study offers support to laboratory findings regarding prominence and relatedness (Johar and Pham 1999) by examining the use of these heuristics in a field setting. While

FIGURE 2
Effects of Sponsorship Level on Recall Accuracy

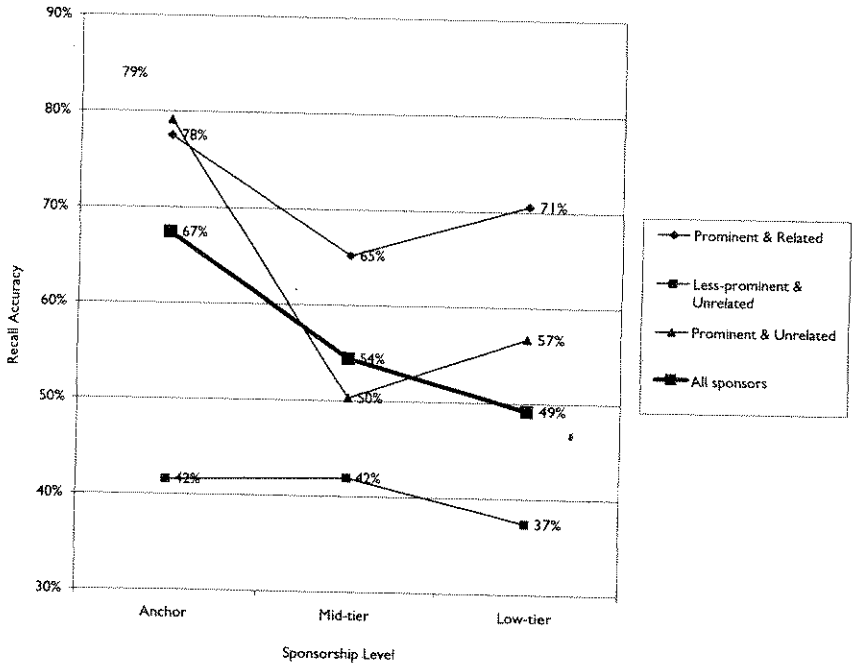


TABLE 5
Cueing Effects on Sponsorship Recall Accuracy

	Prominent/ Related	Less prominent/ Unrelated	Prominent/ Unrelated	All sponsors
Free recall	73.80%	49.00%	64.90%	61.60%
Cued	68.40%	31.70%	59.20%	52.40%

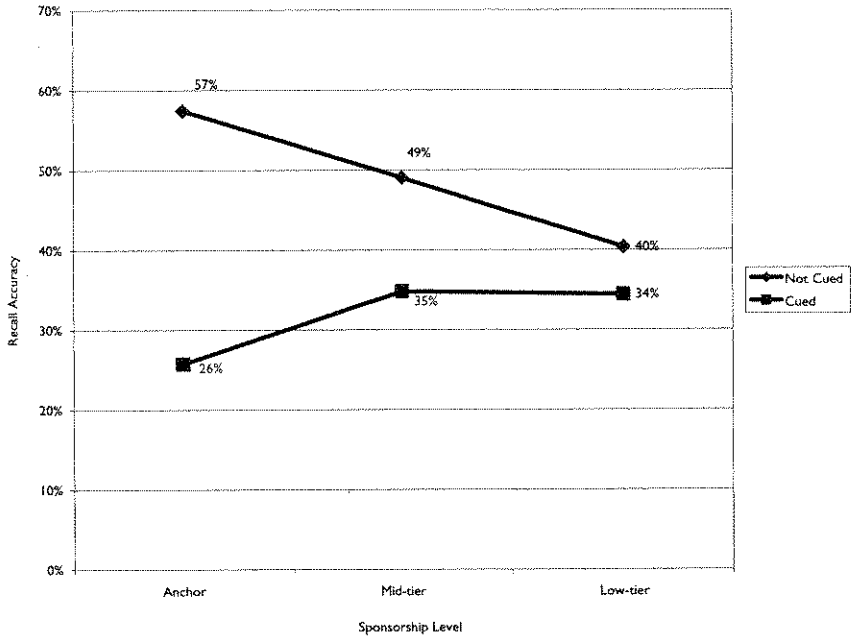
the current results cannot supply specific information regarding processing mechanics, they do provide clear evidence of these heuristics in force. Marketers seeking to use sponsorship-linked programs must be aware of the role these heuristics will play in recollection of their brand and adjust their sponsorship leveraging accordingly. If improved recall for the sponsor–event relationship is a primary goal for sponsors with less prominent or unrelated products and services, then the sponsorship may need to be articulated (Cornwell et al. 2006), or explained to the audience to better support memory for the pairing.

Although prominence and relatedness do explain tendencies in recall accuracy in lab studies and in this field study, other heuristics may facilitate encoding sponsorship information into memory. In these data, companies that are locally owned and operated, but would be considered less prominent brands based on national share of voice or share of market, appear to benefit from a consumer heuristic we might call "local prominence." For instance, the highest recall accuracy in these data is for a local Chevrolet dealership (95.5%) as an anchor sponsor. A local newspaper (77.3%), restaurant (68.2%), ice cream dairy (80.8%), and food and food service supplier (81.8%) also enjoy high recall accuracy. Our pretests for these indicated that each was considered to be related to the event, likely due to their locality. Some were also suppliers to the event. Hence, future research that examines the joint effects of locality and experiential factors (viz., pouring rights and food supply that enable individuals to consume the sponsor's goods on site) might also provide insights into elements that increase the value of the sponsorship.

Sponsorship Commitment Levels

The overall findings for sponsorship level exhibit a pattern one would expect, with higher-level sponsorship investments outperforming lower-level commitments. This is the first study to offer some confirmation of the widely held view that the level of sponsorship spending is correlated with the resulting level of recall for sponsor stimuli. Based on the data for all sponsors (see Figure 2), recall accuracy for anchor sponsors was 67%, compared with 54% of mid-tier sponsors and 49% for

Figure 3
Recall for Less Prominent and Unrelated Sponsors: Cued Versus Direct Recall



low-tier sponsors. Prominent (related and unrelated) anchor sponsors enjoyed recall rates approaching 80%.

It is interesting to note that only those sponsors that are prominent and related receive relatively high recall rates across all levels of sponsorship (65% to 78%; see Figure 2). These data suggest that brands exhibiting high levels of *both* prominence and relatedness can gain nearly the impact of an anchor sponsorship without spending at that higher level. In other words, highly related prominent brands such as Coca-Cola or Nike are likely to find that they can achieve relatively high levels of association with the event at a low level of commitment, as compared with less prominent or unrelated brands, which must spend at the highest sponsorship levels to achieve a similar association with the event.

Exposure Level

Likewise the findings regarding a person's individual exposure level to a sponsorship venue are as expected, with those attending more games exhibiting better sponsor recall. The caveat is that even with additional exposure at the venue, less prominent and unrelated sponsors are still unlikely to be remembered. Additional analysis shows that recall of less prominent and unrelated anchor sponsors (43.4%) by fans who attended games frequently (i.e., attended more than the average of 17 games) is not significantly different from the recall by those who attended fewer games (45.5%). Conversely, frequently attending fans accurately recalled prominent and related sponsors at a rate of 90.4%, compared with 71.6% for those attending less often. Although not hypothesized, this suggests an interaction effect regarding sponsorship level and exposure level for less prominent and unrelated sponsors, which turns out to be significant, Wilks's λ $F(8, 386) = 3.10$, $p = .002$, as it specifically relates to the less prominent and unrelated brands, $F(2, 196) = 3.66$, $p = .027$, but not for any other sponsors.

These findings indicate that research regarding sponsorship identification must take into account rather dramatic learning effects for prominent sponsors that are effectively encoded and stored in the memories of the event audience over time, but that such learning does not appear to occur for less prominent and unrelated brands. Future research is needed to confirm this finding and, if confirmed, to determine the precise reasons that increased exposure does not benefit such brands. Possible explanations would seem to focus on: (1) the more unrelated and less prominent the brand, the more difficult the encoding; (2) the nature of how individuals attend to information in the physical environment of the venue (what they watch, how long, etc.); and (3) the combined effects of other promotional cues, including the possibility that less prominent and unrelated firms are less successful in achieving sponsorship goals because they are less successful in putting together cohesive, integrated communication plans.

While these findings may seem to condemn the usefulness of lower-tier sponsorships, that may not be the case. A cost–benefit analysis is needed to see whether sponsors did indeed get "what they paid for" in terms of exposure. For instance, 40% of the event audience may recall that a small, unrelated brand is a sponsor. Whereas this does not compare

favorably with some of the anchor sponsors (e.g., 70%), the prior benchmark for the low-tier sponsor may have been something closer to zero brand recognition among the event audience before initiating the sponsorship.

Cueing

The findings on the influence of cueing offer a unique and important contribution to the study of sponsorship. These findings show, in the main, poorer recall accuracy with specific level cueing.[4] This difference might be accounted for by the influence of invoked prominence and relatedness heuristics, but it could also be accounted for by some expectations of appropriateness built up over time in the mind of the respondent. Most important, these findings clearly indicate that additional research is needed to understand the influence of cueing. From a practitioner perspective, these results emphasize that consistent measurement, not only in terms of memory task (e.g., identifying sponsors from a list), but also with regard to the cues available in the instructions provided, is required for comparability across studies.

The higher recall accuracy for all sponsors via free recall (61.6%) versus cued recall (52.4%) indicates that individuals' direct retrieval of sponsorship information is more accurate than when they are aided with additional sponsorship information. In the present study, this additional information apparently requires reconstructive processes employing heuristics that may discount information stored in memory. This may imply that such information is stored as imagery in the right hemisphere of the brain (see Mittal 1987; Putrevu and Lord 1994) and that cueing summons the left brain to (dis)confirm the stored memory, at times producing false negatives. Putrevu's (2001) recognition of differences in the development of brain lateralization among males and females may also account for the observed (albeit weak) pattern that younger males exhibited lower recall accuracy (than females or older males) for less prominent and unrelated sponsors in this study. This conjecture, of course, calls for more clinical or laboratory research.

That cueing reduces recall accuracy also speaks to the critical problem that sponsoring brands have with making strong, lasting connections between the brand and the sponsored event. Beneficial future research might determine the strength of the relationship between the sponsoring brand and the event based on a baseline or benchmark before considering a cueing effect. Such strong relationships, for instance, might be due to the length of time the brand had been a sponsor, as well as the sponsorship level.

In the venue where data were collected, differences in recall were frequently insignificant for an individual sponsor (cued versus not cued). Consequently, one should use caution when analyzing such effects with a limited number of focal sponsors and instead consider the benefits of examining such questions for effects across a wide scope of firms. Considering effects across a wide span of sponsors as in this study (64 sponsors) accounts for the reality of clutter in the marketplace and renders suspect experimental approaches employing only one or a handful of brands that may take undue advantage of chance effects that are peculiar to the brands chosen.

While a brand, such as our illustration brand, Atos Origin, may have many objectives besides awareness for their sponsorship, the accuracy of the free recall findings here for less prominent and unrelated sponsors (57%, as opposed to 26% when cued as to the anchor sponsorship level) suggests that research using a cue may actually underrepresent the awareness achieved. This brings up an interesting research question not yet investigated: How does an increased brand association with a given event contribute to brand equity for (less) prominent and (un)related brands? From the current study, we expect that less prominent and unrelated brands *might* be able to achieve high recognition or association with an event through high sponsorship levels, but that they would not gain the associated increase in brand equity due to the possibility that consumers see the sponsor–event relationship as not making sense or not being appropriate.

LIMITATIONS

Compared with a laboratory setting, in a field study of this sort, reduced control over exposure conditions is a given. For example, particular additional marketing communications of each of the 64 team sponsors prior to and concurrent with data collection are not considered. Also, the in-stadium signage, which is the focus of this study—and the basis of the cueing—was part of a sponsorship package. Although the contributions of other elements in the sponsorship communications package were commensurate with the level of the sponsorship, we cannot identify their particular contribution to the overall communication effects found. Due to the nature of the sponsors for this event, the examination of less prominent yet related sponsors is limited by the inclusion of only one example in this category. Finally, this study did not account for any "forgetting" effects that are likely to occur for those infrequent attendees who went to a game early in the season and return for a game late in the season.

Despite these limitations, the research presented here supports long-held beliefs regarding the differing values of different sponsorship levels. In combining information on levels of sponsorship with the concepts of brand prominence and relatedness, we offer a more detailed picture, a picture that suggests different strategies and outcomes depending on the brand's characteristics. Finally, this paper opens the door to a discussion of cueing in sponsorship by clearly identifying a significant influence of cueing on memory outcomes.

NOTES

1. Income was measured in five intervals ranging from less than $25,000 to over $100,000. Education was measured with seven categories: some high school, high school, some college, two-year degree, four-year degree, master's, Ph.D./M.D. Age was measured by asking for the respondent's year of birth. Distance from the venue was measured in terms of miles the respondent lives from the venue. Respondents were asked how many games they had attended in the current season prior to the date of the game surveyed. Not all respondents completed the demographic section, leaving 209 usable surveys for analysis.

2. Employing a scale split rather than a median split from the data produces a similar pattern of results in subsequent analysis.

3. The increase in recall accuracy for the prominent and related *low-tier* sponsors when respondents were cued (74%) compared with when they were not cued (67%) may be due to the fact that this set of sponsors more closely fits the low-tier sponsorship level in terms of average prominence (7.38/10) and relatedness (6.0/10). In contrast, the prominent and related *anchor* sponsors are significantly ($p < .05$) more prominent (8.30/10) and related (7.44/10) than the low-tier prominent and related sponsors. Hence, the fit is somewhat better than would be expected, as the low-tier prominent and related sponsors aren't as prominent and related as the anchor sponsors in the same category.

4. In these data, the effect of cueing does not interact with exposure level. Hence, cueing effects persist across all levels of exposure, meaning that even as individuals attend more games and gain greater exposure and familiarity with the sponsors, cueing still reduces recall accuracy.

REFERENCES

Ballard, Steve (2003), "NASCAR Race Sponsorships Boost Military's Name, Profile," *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News* (September 5).

Bennett, Roger (1999), "Sports Sponsorship, Spectator Recall and False Consensus," *European Journal of Marketing,* 33 (3/4), 291–313.

Bornstein, Robert F. (1989), "Exposure and Affect: Overview and Meta-analysis of Research, 1968–1987," *Psychological Bulletin,* 106 (2), 265–289.

———, Amy R. Kale, and Karen R. Cornell (1990), "Boredom as a Limiting Condition on the Mere Exposure Effect," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 58 (5), 791–800.

———, Dean R. Leone, and Donna J. Galley (1987), "The Generalizability of Subliminal Mere Exposure Effects: Influence of Stimuli Perceived Without Awareness on Social Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 53 (6), 1070–1079.

Brainerd, Charles J., and Valerie F. Reyna (1995), "Autosuggestibility in Memory Development," *Cognitive Psychology,* 28 (1), 65–101.

Celuch, Kevin G., and Mark Slama (1998), "The Effects of Cognitive and Affective Program Involvement on Cognitive and Affective Ad Involvement," *Journal of Business and Psychology,* 13 (1), 115–126.

Cornwell, T. Bettina, Donald P. Roy, and Edward A. Steinard (2001), "Exploring Managers' Perceptions of the Impact of Sponsorship on Brand Equity," *Journal of Advertising,* 30 (2), 41–51.

———, George E. Relyea, Richard L. Irwin, and Isabelle Maignan (2000), "Understanding Long-Term Effects of Sports Sponsorship: Role of Experience, Involvement, Enthusiasm and Clutter," *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship,* 2 (2), 127–143.

———, Michael S. Humphreys, Angela M. Maguire, Clinton S. Weeks, and Cassandra L. Tellegen (2006), "Sponsorship-Linked Marketing: The Role of Articulation in Memory," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 33 (3), 312–321.

Crimmins, James, and Martin Horn (1996), "Sponsorship: From Management Ego Trip to Marketing Success," *Journal of Advertising Research,* 36 (4), 11–20.

Cross, Victoria Louise (1999), "Effects of Semantic Arousal on Memory: Encoding, Retrieval and Errors (Emotionally Intense Words)," *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering,* 60 (4-B), 1879.

Dalakas, Vassilis, and Frederic Kropp (2002), "Attitudes of Youth Toward Purchasing from Sponsors: A Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Journal of Euromarketing,* 12 (1), 19–40.

Fisher, Robert J., and Kirk L. Wakefield (1998), "Factors Leading to Group Identification: A Field Study of Winners and Losers," *Psychology and Marketing,* 15 (January), 23–40.

Gwinner, Kevin, and Scott R. Swanson (2003), "A Model of Fan Identification: Antecedents and Sponsorship Outcomes," *Journal of Services Marketing,* 17 (3), 275–294.

Haugtvedt, Curtis P., and Duane T. Wegener (1994), "Message Order Effects in Persuasion: An Attitude Strength Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 21 (1), 205–218.

———, Curtis P., Richard E. Petty, and John T. Cacioppo (1992), "Need for Cognition and Advertising: Understanding the Role of Personality Variables in Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Psychology,* 13 (3), 239–260.

IEG Sponsorship Report (2001), "Heinz Frozen Foods Brands Warm Up to Sponsorship" (October 15).

Irwin, Richard L., and M. K. Asimakopoulos (1992), "An Approach to the Evaluation and Selection of Sport Sponsorship Proposals," *Sport Marketing Quarterly,* 1 (2), 43–51.

Janiszewski, Chris (1993), "Preattentive Mere Exposure Effects," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 20 (3), 376–392.

Johar, Gita Venkataramani, and Michel Tuan Pham (1999), "Relatedness, Prominence and Constructive Sponsor Identification," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 36 (3), 299–312.

Keller, Kevin Lane (2001), "Mastering the Marketing Communications Mix: Micro and Macro Perspectives on Integrated Marketing Communication Programs," *Journal of Marketing Management,* 17 (7–8), 819–847.

Krishnan, H. Shanker, and Robert E. Smith (1998), "The Relative Endurance of Attitudes, Confidence and Attitude-Behavior Consistency: The Role of Information Source and Delay," *Journal of Consumer Psychology,* 7 (3), 273–298.

Kunst-Wilson, William R., and Robert B. Zajonc (1980), "Affective Discrimination of Stimuli That Cannot Be Recognized," *Science,* 207 (4430), 557–558.

Madrigal, Robert (2000), "The Influence of Social Alliances with Sports Teams on Intentions to Purchase Corporate Sponsors' Products," *Journal of Advertising,* 29 (4), 13–24.

McDaniel, Stephen R., and Lance Kinney (1998), "The Implications of Recency and Gender Effects in Consumer Response to Ambush Marketing," *Psychology and Marketing,* 15 (4), 385–403.

Meenaghan, Tony (2002), "From Sponsorship to Marketing Partnership: The Guinness Sponsorship of the GAA All-Ireland Hurling Championship," *Irish Marketing Review,* 15 (1), 3.

Mittal, Banwari (1987), "A Framework for Relating Consumer Involvement to Lateral Brain Functioning," in *Advances in Consumer Research,* vol. 14, Melanie Wallendorf and Paul Anderson, eds., Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 41–45.

Nicholls, J.A.E, Sydney Roslow, and Sandipa Dublish (1999), "Brand Recall and Brand Preference at Sponsored Golf and Tennis Tournaments," *European Journal of Marketing,* 33 (3/4), 365–386.

Padilla-Walker, Laura Maria, and Debra Ann Poole (2002), "Memory for Previous Recall: A Comparison of Free and Cued Recall," *Applied Cognitive Psychology,* 16 (5), 515–524.

Park, C. Whan, and Gordon W. McClung (1985), "The Effect of TV Program Involvement on Involvement with Commercials," in *Advances in Consumer Research,* vol. 12, R. Lutz, ed., Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 544–547.

Pham, Michel Tuan, and Gita Venkataramani Johar (2001), "Market Prominence Biases in Sponsor Identification: Processes and Consequentiality," *Psychology and Marketing,* 18 (2), 123–143.

Pokrywczynski, James (1994), "The Differential Impact of Televised Exposure to Sports Arena Displays Versus Commercials," in *American Academy of Advertising Proceedings,* Karen Whitehill King, ed., Tucson, AZ: American Academy of Advertising, 147.

Pope, Nigel, and Kevin E. Voges (1999), "Sponsorship and Image: A Replication and Extension," *Journal of Marketing Communications,* 5 (1), 17–28.

Putrevu, Sanjay (2001), "Exploring the Origins and Information Processing Differences Between Men and Women: Implications for Advertisers," *Academy of Marketing Science Review,* 5 (10), 1–14.

———, and Kenneth Lord (1994), "Comparative and Noncomparative Advertising: Attitudinal Effects Under Cognitive and Affective Involvement Conditions," *Journal of Advertising,* 23 (2), 77–90.

Rifon, Nora, Sejung Marina Choi, Carrie Trimble, and Hairong Li (2004), "Congruence Effects in Sponsorship: The Mediating Role of Sponsor Credibility and Consumer Attributions of Sponsor Motive," *Journal of Advertising,* 33 (1), 29–43.

Roy, Donald, and T. Bettina Cornwell (2004), "The Effects of Consumer Knowledge on Responses to Event Sponsorships," *Psychology and Marketing,* 21 (3), 185–207.

Saegert, S. C., W. C. Swap, and R. B. Zajonc (1973), "Exposure, Context and Interpersonal Attraction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 25, 234–242.

Seamon, J. G., P. McKenna, and N. Binder (1998), "The Mere Exposure Effect Is Differentially Sensitive to Different Judgement Tasks," *Consciousness and Cognition,* 7 (1), 85–102.

Shani, David, and Dennis Sandler (1998), "Ambush Marketing: Is Confusion to Blame for the Flickering of the Flame?" *Psychology and Marketing,* 15 (July), 367–384.

Speed, Richard, and Peter Thompson (2000), "Determinants of Sports Sponsorship Response," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 28 (2), 226–238.

Stipp, Horst, and Nicholas Schiavone (1996), "Modeling the Impact of Olympic Sponsorship on Corporate Image," *Journal of Advertising Research,* 36 (July/August), 22–27.

Tripodi, John A., Martin Hirons, David Bednall, and Max Sutherland (2003), "Cognitive Evaluation: Prompts Used to Measure Sponsorship Awareness," *International Journal of Market Research,* 45 (4), 435–455.

Turley, Lou W., and J. Richard Shannon (2000), "The Impact and Effectiveness of Advertisements in a Sports Arena," *Journal of Services Marketing,* 14 (4), 323.

Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman (1973), "Availability: A Heuristic for Judging Frequency and Probability," *Cognitive Psychology,* 5 (2), 207–232.

Wakefield, Kirk L., and Victoria Bush (1998), "Promoting Leisure Services: Economic and Emotional Aspects of Consumer Response," *Journal of Services Marketing,* 12 (3), 209–222.

Zajonc, Robert B. (1968), "Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology Monograph Supplement,* 9 (pt. 2), 1–27.