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Can sponsors use ad typicality to transfer the image of a sporting event to their brand over time? A longitudinal experiment.

Abstract

This empirical research examines how ad typicality influences the capacity of sponsorship to transfer an image from a sporting event to a brand over time. Two pre-tests and one main experiment, involving more than 2,200 respondents in total, reveal that high ad typicality enhances the effectiveness of sponsorship in event-related advertising more than low ad typicality. This study also introduces a robust and effective method to assess the typicality of various combinations of event-related elements: discrete choice experiments. The paper discusses the implications of these findings for marketing and brand managers.

Management Slant

- Ad typicality is key to the transfer of an image from an event to a brand over time.
- Because of the restricted nature of some event elements, such as its logo or tagline, which improve the perceived typicality of an advertisement, official sponsors may enjoy an edge.
- Discrete Choice Experiments (DCEs) provide a useful and reliable tool to determine the levels of typicality of various combinations of event-related elements.

Introduction

Global sponsorship spending is believed to exceed US$60 billion in 2016 (IEG, 2016). Major sporting events continue to draw unsurpassed media attention (Gijsenberg, 2014); for example, an estimated cumulative television audience of 4.8 billion people watched the 2012 London Olympics (International Olympic Committee, 2012). Thus, many companies now rely on international sporting events to achieve marketing objectives. In particular, many managers pay for the opportunity to associate their brand with an event in order to transfer the event's image to their brand (Gross and Wiedmann, 2015). The sponsorship literature has investigated many drivers of brand image improvement in sports-event sponsorship – for a review see Grohs (2016). Research, however, has never specifically examined communication effects on brand image, such as for instance, how message content affects sponsorship effectiveness (Carrillat et al., 2015). This research focuses on the role of ad typicality in brand image transfer.

Ad typicality— that is, the degree to which an advertisement offers a good example of an ad in a product category— is a well-established driver of advertising effects (Loken and Ward, 1990; Pieters and Wedel, 2012). However, no research has examined ad typicality in the context of sport event. Whilst some advertisers and agencies develop ads that match the memory representation of sport events, others create less typical ads to stand out from the other ads and/or the editorial material that surrounds the ad. Furthermore, the role ad typicality plays in enabling image transfer remains unclear, motivating Cornwell et al.'s 2005 call for research about how thematically consistent advertising might leverage sponsorship effects. This research aims to measure the capacity of sponsorship to transfer event associations by manipulating the degree of typicality of sponsors. Furthermore, this research

demonstrates the reliability of Discrete Choice Experiments (DCE) as a method for assessing the typicality of various combinations of event-related elements.

In the next section, the authors review key concepts pertaining to sponsorship, transfer models, and ad typicality to build the conceptual model. The paper then details the two pre-tests and the main empirical study conducted to investigate the research questions. The empirical results, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research are presented in sequence, along with managerial implications.

Theoretical background

Image transfer model

Sponsorship entails two related activities. First, in an exchange between the sponsor and event property, the property receives compensation from the sponsor, who is then entitled to associate its brand with the event. Second, the sponsor leverages this association by communicating to its consumers about the sponsorship (Carrillat et al. 2015). Sponsorship relies on the principle that leveraging the image associated with an event can improve brand associations (Gross and Wiedmann, 2015), such that events' associations are transferred to the brand in a beneficial manner (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). The image transfer model frequently serves to explain the effects of communication strategies on brand image, and most conceptual frameworks adopt McCracken's (1989) meaning transfer model. In the sponsorship context, meaning might transfer to the sponsor through the association of its brand with the sponsored event via simultaneous exposure.

However, image transfer studies often suffer from methodological limitations that preclude any conclusive findings. For example, comparing image ratings between consumers who can

recall sponsorship or not can be problematic (Woisetschläger and Michaelis, 2012), because consumers familiar with the brand or event are also more likely to notice the brand's sponsorship of the event. Transfer of semantic meaning also can occur unconsciously (Miller and Allen, 2012), such that brand–event pairings might affect brand images, without consumers knowing which brands and events are paired. Experiments that compare different samples of consumers, exposed or not to sponsorships (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999), are also limited in that the observed correlations in their average scores are very different from the within-sample correlations across individual respondents (Bergkvist and Rossiter, 2008). Ideally, then, research should track brand variables with the same individual consumers. Furthermore, Chan (1998) and Steenkamp and Baumgartner (2000) note that intra-individual change cannot be conceptualized or empirically examined appropriately with difference scores, repeated analyses of variance, and regressions, because they assume, rather than test, measurement invariance in intra-individual repeated responses over time. Finally, previous studies examine overall image transfer effects, but do not distinguish between brand associations inherited from one sporting event and those inherited from other sporting entities.

To more reliably validate the image transfer model in a sponsorship context, therefore, this study relies on latent growth modeling (LGM) and uses a construct that reflects the most representative associations of an event. The authors then examine the ability of sponsorship to transfer event associations to the brand (RQ1). Because these effects likely depend on executional factors, this study focuses on the role of ad typicality in determining how well event communication strategies transfer event associations to sponsors.

Ad typicality

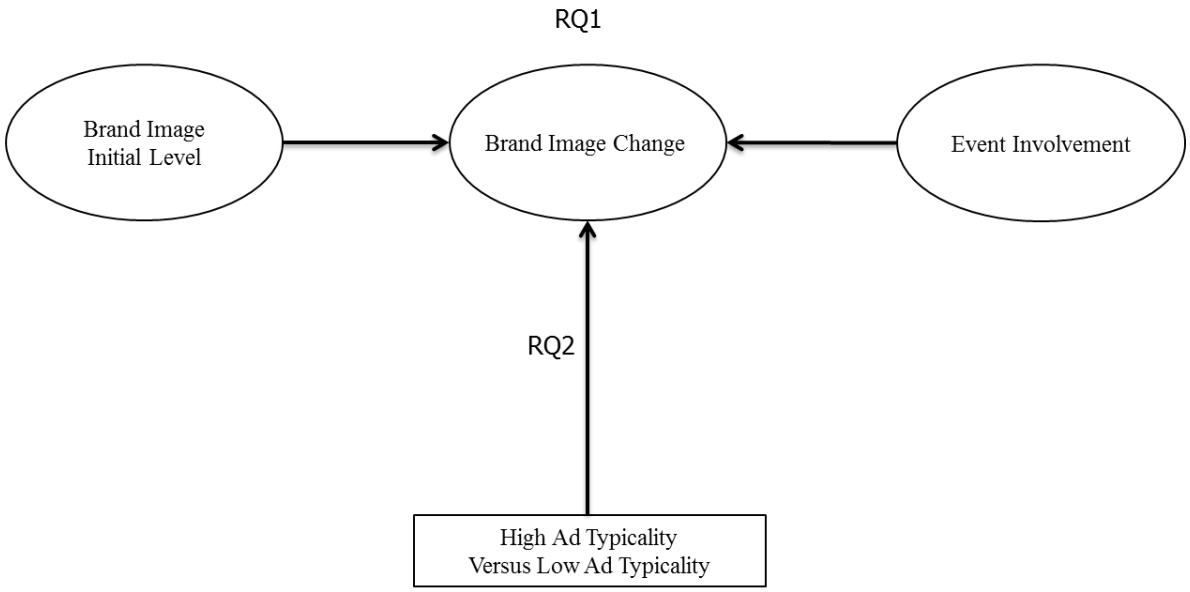
The sponsorship literature examines many drivers of brand image transfer but mostly focuses on the fit between the brand and the event or on individual characteristics like event involvement (Grohs, 2016). As highlighted by Carrillat et al. (2015), the role of the content of activation messages has been neglected in the sponsorship literature. The purpose of this research is, therefore, to fill this research gap by investigating the impact of high versus low ad typicality on brand image transfer. Ad typicality, or the degree to which an ad is representative of its product category, drives advertising effects and can be manipulated by marketing managers (Loken and Ward, 1990). The present research applies the concept of ad typicality to sport events. Sport events represent a significantly different prototype structure than product category because of the unpredictable nature of sport events and the strong emotions attached to them (Wakefield and Bennett 2010). In this context, we define ad typicality as the degree to which an ad exemplifies event-related communications.

Ad typicality may also represent a key competitive advantage of sponsorship since only sponsors can legally use registered visual elements (e.g., event logo, tagline) to enhance the typicality of their ads. High ad typicality should improve image transfer more than low ad typicality, because higher typical clues help consumers make connections between the sporting event and the brand. Pieters and Wedel (2012) show that typical ads convey meaning faster than less typical ones by increasing accurate gist perception and by generating immediate ad interest, which is of critical importance in highly competitive environments, such as those surrounding major sporting events (Sachse and Drengner, 2009). In increasingly cluttered media environments, consumers devote little cognitive effort to encoding and storing sponsor information (Wakefield et al., 2007). Messages with content that is easier to process (e.g., typical ads) also tend to be more persuasive (Carrillat et al., 2015; Reber et al., 2004). For example, because typical attributes are strongly associated with other event attributes, consumers may rely on probabilistic inferences, which would cause

typical ads to transfer event attributes more effectively. Probabilistic inferences occur when consumers use information about one attribute to make inferences about another, strongly correlated attribute (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987). Using a theme linked to the event in ads, thus, should enhance the potential for articulating a brand–event relationship (Cornwell et al., 2006). Although no prior research has specifically examined the effects of ad typicality on sponsorship transfer, it would seem logical to expect that ad typicality facilitates the transfer of event associations to the sponsor's brand. Thus, this research examines empirically whether – and to what relative extent – ad typicality improves the transfer of associations from the event to the sponsors' brand (RQ2).

Finally, previous research indicates that event involvement positively influences the impact of a sponsorship on brand attitudes (Meenaghan, 2001), so this potential predictor of brand image change is also included in the conceptual model as a control variable, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Pre-tests

This research consists of two pre-tests and one main experiment. The pre-tests served to develop the stimuli and measurement variables used in the main experiment, which tests the role ad typicality plays in transferring events' associations to the brand

Pre-test 1: Creative determinants of typicality in sport event advertising

To examine the effects of ad typicality on the transfer model, it is important to understand which components of an advertising message consumers deem more and less typical. For this purpose, a discrete choice experiment (DCE) was undertaken to generate high and low typicality ads. This methodology makes it possible to measure trade-offs across bundles of competing options. In particular, a DCE overcomes the limitations of conjoint analyses that rely on rating, ranking, or constant sum tasks and assume that respondents always evaluate one option at a time, which is not true and thus creates bias in the valence (Hofmans et al., 2007). The analyses of responses collected through a DCE rely on the well-established random utility theory of decision-making behavior (McFadden, 1974).

Respondents selected the *most* typical print advertisement in each set of print advertisements to which they were exposed. The print ads all pertained to the 2012 London Summer Olympics, a highly visible event with heterogeneous audiences (Stipp, 1998). The print ads in each choice set and the content of each print ad were both generated through a combinatory design of four advertisement characteristics (i.e., background, type of athlete, athlete behavior, and presence of logo or tagline), each containing one level of each of the four advertisement characteristics. Thus, the experiment relied on a 4×4 orthogonal main effects plan (OMEP) and yielded 16 choice sets, mixed with other 16 randomly generated sets. Table 1 contains the attributes and levels of the DCE treatment stimuli.

The selection of the attributes and levels for the DCE stimuli is based on prior research and managerial practices (Kelly et al., 2012; Mazodier, 2012). The first attribute is related to *event elements* because this research examines the effects of restricted event elements on ad typicality. The most comment Olympics' registered elements are the event logo and the event tagline, including the event name. Therefore, the authors introduced these two elements as two levels, their combination as a third level, and the absence of both as the fourth level. The second attribute relates to the *event venue*. It is a common message strategy for both sponsors and ambushers to include images of venues related to the sport event. It could be the event venue by itself (in this case the "Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park"), a generic sport venue, or a venue linked to the location of the event, such as a famous monument. For instance, Bank of China used "Big Ben" in their communication campaign during the 2012 London Summer Olympics. *Athletes with different levels of fame* were included as a third attribute. Celebrity endorsement is a common communication strategy to implicitly link an ad with a sport event. The authors compared four celebrity endorsement strategies. One strategy is to associate one brand with one of the most famous athletes of the event, such as Usain Bolt or Michael Phelps for the London Summer Olympics. Another cheaper and less risky strategy (because it does not depend on the results of the athlete) is to associate one brand with a retired star, who is strongly associated with the sport event. A brand can also associate itself with one athlete participating to the event, who stands for the country organizing the event. Lastly, a brand can associate itself with one local athlete participating to the event, in this case a French athlete. The authors selected four athletes from the same sport to avoid a potential confounding effect in the main experiment. Indeed, involvement in one sport could influence the effects of the ads if the ads show athletes from different disciplines. Therefore, the authors selected four sprinters because sprint was one sport where both French and English

athletes participated in the 2012 Olympics. The authors selected a current star athlete, Usain Bolt, a retired star athlete, Carl Lewis, a British sprinter, Dwain Chambers, and a French sprinter, Ronald Pognon. Finally, the authors manipulated the *behavior of the athlete*. Four behaviours – standing still, resting, training, and competing – were selected to represent four clearly different actions athletes can engage in. The combination of levels of each of these attributes, according to the experimental designed described above, led to the creation of the ads in pre-test 1 (see Table 1).

The data were collected in France in October 2012 by a professional panel provider, and included 1,053 respondents. The sample consisted of 49% men and 51% women, and their average age was 45 years (*SD* = 14 years).

Table 1: Attributes and levels for pre-test 1

Attribute	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Logo	IOC logo	IOC tagline	IOC logo + tagline	None
Venue	2012 Olympic stadium	Generic sports stadium	Locally famous building (Big Ben)	None
Type of athlete	Star athlete participating in the 2012 Olympics	British athlete participating in the 2012 Olympics	Retired star athlete who did not participate in the 2012 Olympics	French athlete participating in the 2012 Olympics
Athlete behavior	Competition	Training	Resting	Standing still

A multinomial logit (MNL) model analysis of the data showed that the most important attribute for determining event typicality was athlete's behavior (47%), followed by background (37%). The presence of a logo (11%) and the actual athlete featured in the commercial (6%) exhibited much less importance. Considering the partworth utilities for the different attribute levels, the authors also found that the most typical behavior was performing in competition (.82), followed by training (.22), resting (-.33), and standing still

(-.71). For the background, the most typical element was a picture of a famous monument symbolizing the location of the event, Big Ben (.77); followed by the stadium where the Olympic Games were held, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (0.10); a generic sports stadium (-.20); and then no background (-.67). Despite their relatively low importance, the joint presence of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) tagline and logo was evaluated as most typical (.44) by respondents, followed by the IOC logo (-.04), tagline (-.10), and neither logo nor tagline (-.30). Finally, the presence of an athlete contributed only marginally to typicality: The presence of a British athlete appeared most typical (.28), followed by a star of the Olympic Games (.11), a French athlete (-.18), and a retired athlete (-.20).

Table 2: Importance of attributes and levels

Attribute	Relative Importance (%)	Utility	*z*-Value	*p*-Value
Athlete behavior	47			
Competition		0.82	54.45	0.000
Training		0.22	14.23	
Resting		-0.33	-17.77	
Standing still		-0.71	-35.45	
Background	37			
Locally famous building, Big Ben		0.77	50.03	0.000
2012 Olympic stadium, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park		0.10	6.25	
Generic sports stadium		-0.20	-11.80	
None		-0.67	-31.56	
Logo	11			
IOC tagline + IOC logo		0.44	26.82	0.000
IOC logo		-0.04	-2.16	
IOC tagline		-0.10	-6.13	
None		-0.30	-17.74	
Type of athlete	6			
British athlete participating in Olympics		0.28	18.17	0.000
Star athlete participating in Olympics		0.11	7.06	
French athlete participating in Olympics		-0.18	-10.38	
Retired star athlete not participating in Olympics		-0.20	-11.64	

Notes. R^2 = .1456; LL^2 = 26470; LL = -19793; BIC(LL) = 39670; n = 1053; df = 1041.

The results of pre-test 1 led to the selection of two print ads, one highly typical and one lowly typical, for subsequent use in the main experiment. The utilities of different attributes' levels can, in fact, be linearly summed up, thus obtaining a holistic evaluation of a print advertisement (Keller and Staelin, 1987). The figure below depicts the two treatment advertisements for the main study (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Print advertisements selected for the main experiment



High typicality
British athlete competing in the Olympic Games, Big Ben, and IOC logo
(Typicality score = 4.07)



Low typicality
British athlete competing in the Olympic Games, generic sports stadium, and IOC tagline
(Typicality score = 1.44)

Pre-test 2: Developing a measure of representative associations of the Olympics

Assessing the magnitude of image transfer required a specific image scale for the attributes that should transfer to the brand (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014; Miller and Allen, 2012). To create a set of representative event attributes and collect appropriate associations related to the Olympics, adjectives representative of, and specific to, the event must be included (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). Speed and Thompson (2000) suggest starting with prior scales, so 20 relevant event items were listed from prior research (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014; Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). The list was validated by four experts: two academics and two sporting marketing professionals. The same professional panel provider who recruited respondents for pre-test 1 was contacted to recruit respondents for pre-test 2. None of pre-test 1 respondents took part to pre-test 2. A total of 367 respondents, representative of the French population in terms of gender and age (i.e., 48% men and 52% women, the average age was 40 years (*SD* = 13 years)), assessed these associations with the Olympics. However, instead of asking them simply to rate the items in relation to the Olympics, other international sporting events—the FIFA World Cup, the Rugby World Cup, the Wimbledon Championships tennis tournament, and the Masters Golf Tournament— were also included in

order to measure positive and/or negative associations with the Olympics in a competitive setting. A *pick-any* method was used to measure the associations between the items and the five sporting events, as widely applied in branding (Bogomolova and Romaniuk, 2010). As shown in Table 3, five adjectives were more positively associated with the Olympics: *colorful*, *innovative*, *youthful*, *brings people together*, and *global*. These associations were therefore selected as components of the sporting image construct.

Table 3: Percentage deviation of associations of different items with sporting events

	Olympics	Soccer	Rugby	Tennis	Golf
Colorful	20	12	-1	-18	-13
Innovative	14	-3	-5	-3	-3
Youthful	12	9	-9	1	-13
Brings people together	9	13	2	-14	-11
Global	7	18	2	-20	-8
Socially responsible	4	-11	-6	4	9
Shows respect for others	4	-23	-4	2	22
Up-to-date	3	4	-4	-3	0
Excellent in performance	0	-9	-6	5	9
Trendy	0	10	-10	4	-4
Cool	-1	9	-3	-2	-4
Fast	-3	11	5	8	-21
Highly motivated	-4	-4	1	2	5
Energetic	-5	8	14	8	-24
Healthy	-6	-7	-1	9	5
Sociable	-7	2	5	-5	5
Active	-10	6	11	3	-10
Sportive	-11	1	6	-1	5
Plays fair	-11	-30	2	13	27
Genuine	-14	-16	1	6	23

Main experiment: The role of ad typicality in brand image transfer

Having identified the content of the print advertisements, and devised an appropriate measure of image transfer, it is now possible to investigate the effects of sponsorship and ad typicality

have on brand image, using a repeated measures experiment. As noted by several authors (Pham, 1991; Woisetschläger and Michaelis, 2012), investigating event communication effects requires longitudinal methodologies to assess changes in consumers' brand images over time as it may take time to transfer associations from the event to the brand (Quester and Farrelly, 1998), and one must account for the cumulative nature of communication effectiveness (Pham, 1991). Moreover, sponsorship research suggests that pre-event communication associations can greatly influence post-event communication associations (Speed and Thompson, 2000). Therefore, it is important that the first measurement of brand image happens *prior* to any exposure to the event communication message when investigating the role of ad typicality in a transfer model.

This research relies on a latent growth modeling (LGM) approach to assess individual-level longitudinal changes in brand image. Increasingly accepted in many disciplines for its capacity to describe, measure, and analyze longitudinal change (Ployhart and Vandeberg, 2010), LGM offers many advantages over previous attempts to operationalize intra-personal change (Chan, 1998; Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 2000). In particular, it can model both mean-level change and individual change differences, while controlling for measurement error (Chan, 1998). Moreover, LGM can disentangle the static (initial level) and dynamic (change) components of the variable of interest, in this case, brand image. The estimated latent growth factors (i.e., intercept and slope) that determine the outcome growth trajectory may vary by group (Wang and Wang, 2012).

Sample and data collection procedures

A web panel was used to recruit 837 participants and, through quota sampling, achieved sample representativeness in terms of age and gender. The respondents were randomized

across the experimental conditions, and to disguise the purpose of the study, the focal questions were mixed with others unrelated to the study, such as questions related to branding variables, the Olympics, socio-psychological variables, individual characteristics, and demographics. Because this study involved three successive contacts with respondents, an online approach was deemed suitable as several studies have affirmed the reliability of online surveys (Knapp and Kirk, 2003).

Lexus was chosen as the brand to manipulate in the main experiment because French consumers are moderately familiar with this brand. Very familiar brands (e.g., Renault for French respondents) are not plausible sponsors, because French consumers are already knowledgeable about their marketing activities. In addition, although car brands are plausible event sponsors (Kelly et al., 2012), consumers did not know the official car sponsor of the 2012 Olympics very well, with only 1.6% of the English population spontaneously associating BMW with the 2012 Olympic Games (Marketing Magazine, 2012). Similar or worst recognition could be expected among French people. Third, the official car brand of the Olympics changes every four years (e.g., Hyundai in 2004, Volkswagen in 2008, BMW in 2012, Nissan in 2016), which could potentially further confuse consumers. Furthermore, car brands are frequently studied in sponsorship research (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014; Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). Finally, Lexus has never sponsored the Olympics or a major sporting event, limiting the potential for respondents' confusion.

To mask the manipulated brand (Lexus), the questionnaire also measured branding variables for four other car manufacturers, with varying levels of familiarity and liking: Mercedes, BMW, Qoros, and Hyundai. The survey took between 15 to 20 minutes to complete and took place in January 2013, five months after the 2012 London Olympics, in three consecutive

waves, each separated by one week. The online questionnaires were similar for all three waves. Of the 837 respondents recruited at T1, 624 completed the questionnaire at T2 (74.5%) and 527 (62.9%) responded to the T3 survey. The final sample (T3) contained 50.1% female and 49.9% male respondents; 37.6% were under 35 years old, and 46.9% were between 35 and 54 years of age.

In T1, respondents answered questions related to the brands and event involvement, then watched a slideshow, and finally provided their individual characteristics and demographics. The slideshow included eight photographs from the 2012 London Olympic Games (e.g., athletes performing, pictures from the opening ceremony, pictures of supporters in London streets) to prime their consideration of the event, make the experiment more realistic, and stimulate participation. None of these pictures featured sponsor logos. The photographs were mixed with print advertisements for three brands (Lexus, Mercedes, and Qoros). The Lexus advertisement was the experimental treatment stimulus and was designed in accordance with the results of pre-test 1. The advertisements were similar to the pictures in Figure 2, with the addition of a Lexus logo in the top-left corner. The advertisements of other brands (Mercedes and Qoros) were included to avoid demand effects. To ensure that the advertisements resembled real-world advertisements related to the Olympics, several magazine advertisements used during the 2012 Olympics were collected, examined, and confirmed that the stimulus advertisements matched their general setup. However, respondents were also told that the advertisements were rough draft advertisements made before the London Olympics to allay any quality issues.

The sequence of pictures (advertisements and photographs) was the same for the various groups, and all pictures appeared for 4 seconds, in line with prior research that indicates

limited processing of relatively sparse print advertisements containing pictorial components (Sengupta and Gorn, 2002). This brief exposure time denies participants any opportunity to engage in much elaboration, because consumers typically study advertisements for very short durations in real-life situations (Sengupta and Gorn 2002). One week later (T2), participants saw a similar slideshow but the photographs were substituted with others from the 2012 Olympics, to avoid redundancy. The advertisements remained the same. The branding variables were measured again after participants' exposure to the advertisements. At T3, respondents saw a similar slideshow and completed the survey, including all branding variables, as well as sponsorship recognition and ad recall measures. Moreover, at the end of this final wave, the focal advertisement to which respondents had been exposed to was shown again and respondents assessed the ad typicality.

To examine the potential for mere measurement effects, the authors used a control group (n = 221) who viewed the same slideshows but without the treatment advertisements. Chi-square tests and analysis of variance were conducted with the socio-demographic variables (gender and age) and event involvement to compare treatment and control groups. None of the test results showed any significant differences (all $p > .05$). Moreover, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests indicated no significant differences in initial brand image (at T1) between groups ($F(5,521)$ = .1.728, p = .13). Repeated measures analysis of variance (RANOVA) tests also showed that brand image did not change significantly over the three waves in the control group ($F(2,219)$ = .458, p = .63). That is, measuring brand image toward Lexus three times over a three-week period (mixed with many other questions) did not produce mere measurement biases in consumers' perceptions of Lexus, supporting the external validity of this study.

A manipulation check assessed respondents' general perceptions of the typicality of the ads, using a single-item, seven-point scale developed by Hampton and Gardiner (1983) and adapted to the French context by Ladwein (1994). The perceived typicality of the advertisements matched the results of pre-test 1: The high typicality treatment was perceived as significantly as more typical (M = 3.69, SD = 1.92) than the low typicality treatment (M = 3.11, SD = 1.64) ($F(1,525)$ = 13.928, p > .001).

To measure the event image construct that should transfer to the brand, respondents were asked to rate each of the five items selected in pre-test 2 on seven-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree–strongly agree").

To measure involvement in the event, a version of the three-item scale developed by Strazzieri (1994) was used: "I'm very interested in the, 2012 Summer Olympics," "I give a particular importance to the 2012 Summer Olympics," and "The 2012 Summer Olympics are a domain that interests me."

LGM results

Prior to fitting the data using LGM, attrition analysis, various psychometric tests, and invariance measurement were performed. All these tests involved structural equation modeling, including LGM, using Mplus (v7.11) software, and no evidence of bias due to attrition between waves was found. These analyses also confirmed convergent and discriminant validity and verified that the assumptions of configural and metric invariances were met for brand image. These results are presented in Appendix A of this paper.

A multi-group multivariate second-order latent factor LGM model was estimated in order to test the conceptual model, in which I and S represented the latent intercept and slope growth factors, respectively. The factor loadings for the latent intercept growth factors were set to 1.0 for each time point, by default. Time scores were set to 0 and 2.0 for the first and third time points, respectively, for the model identification, and were freed for the second time point. The shape of the growth trajectory thus depended on data, of which the model is an optimal representation, so the slope factor is more accurately interpreted as a general shape factor instead of a predefined function such as an assumed linear function (Wang and Wang 2012). A Wald test was then used to examine the invariance of the latent slope factor means between the two experimental groups. The Wald test tests whether the average rate of outcome change (i.e., the mean value of the latent slope growth factor S) is invariant across two groups.

The model exhibited reasonable fit with the data ($\chi^2_{(274)} = 702.373$, $p < .001$; confirmatory fit index [CFI] = .952; standardized root mean residual [SRMR] = .067; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = [.070; .084]). The model results are interesting for a number of reasons (see Table 4). First, the mean of the latent slope factor was significant *only* for the high typicality group. Brand image for the target brand increased by .15 for the group exposed to the high typicality ad, but did not improve substantially for the low typicality group. The estimated outcome growth trajectories are plotted in Figure 3. Furthermore, the Wald test ($\chi^2 = 4.963$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$, r=.10) indicates that the rate of outcome change over time was also significantly different, on average, between the two groups. Thus, high ad typicality facilitates the transfer of associations from the event to the brand more than low ad typicality. Second, the covariance between the initial level and the rate of brand image change was insignificant in both groups. Hence, the rate of increase in brand image over the study period appears independent of respondents' initial brand image level. Third, the

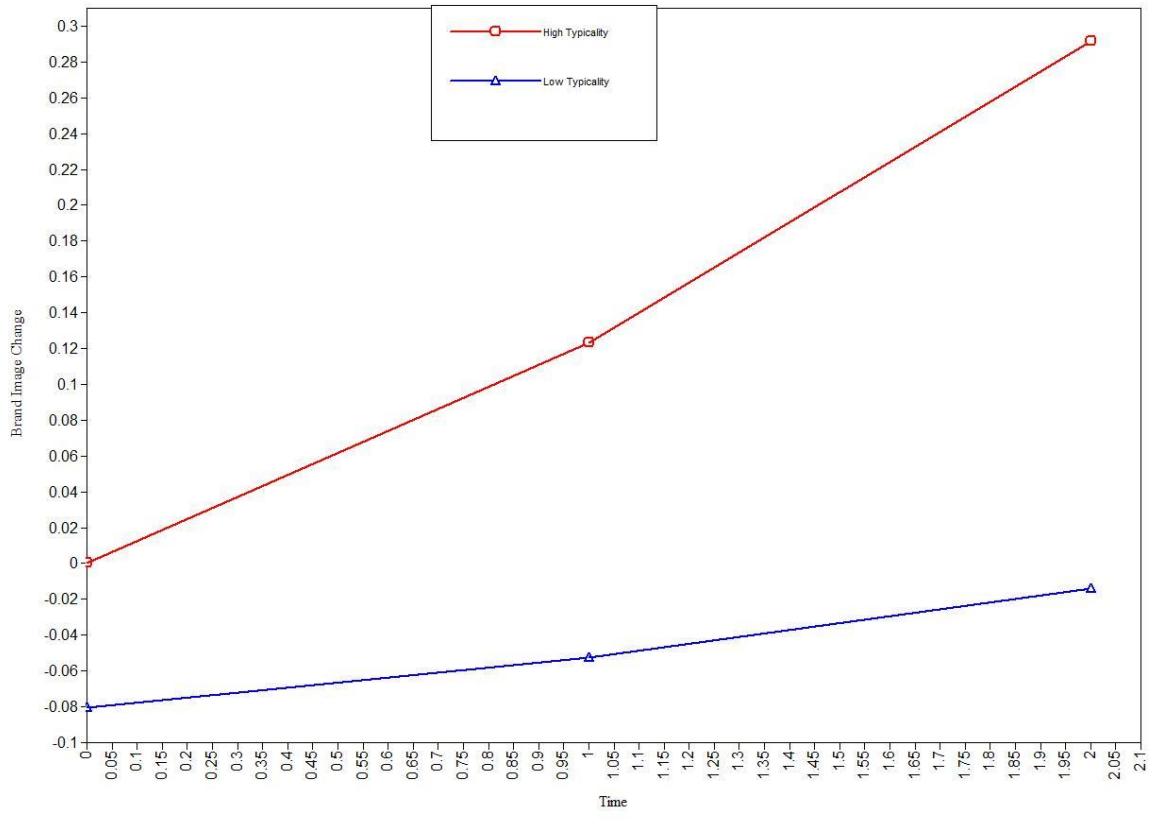
variances of the latent slope factor were not statistically significant across samples, revealing no systematic individual differences in brand image change. Instead, respondents experienced brand image change at a similar rate over the study period within each experimental condition. Moreover, event involvement did not relate to the rate of improved brand image in the high typicality group (β = .04, *p* = .10). This appears counter intuitive and will be discussed in more details in the next section.

Table 4: Multi-group latent growth model: unstandardized growth parameter estimates

Group	Latent slope factor (S)		Covariance I – S
	M (μ_S)	Variance (σ^2_S)	($\sigma^2_{I\text{-}S}$)
Low typicality	.04	.08	-.02
High typicality	.15**	.11	-.16

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Figure 3: Role of advertisement typicality for ability to transfer event associations



Discussion

This study shows that sponsorship can transfer event associations to brands and that the level of ad typicality is a key driver of event image transfer. This result is in contrast with previous research, which seemed to indicate that it may be best for products and communication messages to be less typical (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989), because unexpected elements can lead to more overall processing of the advertising content as viewers attempt to make sense of the entirety of the information (Houston et al., 1987). Furthermore, less typical ads are more likely to instigate high-arousal emotions (Berger and Milkman 2012) and may therefore be more socially shared, attract more comments, and be more persuasive (Tucker, 2015), which would increase their reach and the attention to them (Elsen et al., 2016).

Specifically, the results show that event associations are transferred only when the event-related advertising messages, which communicate the association between the event and the brand either explicitly or implicitly, are highly typical of the event. Because restricted event elements, such as its logo or tagline, intrinsically improve the perceived typicality of an advertisement, official sponsors may indeed enjoy an edge.

This research offers a conservative test of the theory, because the advertisements in the experiment were not as cluttered as would be seen in practice, and ad typicality is particularly critical in a cluttered environment. Further research could investigate the value of sponsorship messages in more cluttered environments. Recently, Gijsenberg (2014) found considerable advertising elasticity heterogeneity across advertisements. The results might partially explain this heterogeneity, by establishing typicality as a driver of event advertising

effectiveness. The effects of typicality have important implications for the design of television, magazine, newspaper, billboard, and online advertising.

Finally, event involvement did not influence the impact of event communication strategies on brand image in this study. This is at odds with Grohs and Reisinger (2014) and Woisetschläger (2007), who studied the effects of sponsorship on brand image through real-time sporting event surveys. Instead, this experiment involved respondents who had to watch a slideshow with sponsors' advertisements. Hence, this research may underestimate the role of event involvement since event involvement increases consumers' attention to event-related communication messages and encourages elaboration on the content of the event and subsequent processing of related activities, such as sponsorship (Grohs and Reisinger, 2014).

Implications for Managers

The results contribute usefully to the image transfer literature and offer several useful directions for marketing and brand managers considering sponsorship as part of their communication strategy. In particular, this research provides practical guidance for marketers seeking to achieve image transfers from an event to their brand: to enhance image transfer, they should increase the typicality of their advertisements by including representative elements of the event, such as an athlete competing or a symbol of the city hosting the event. For instance, managers should create very typical ads for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia showing football players (not necessarily the most famous) during a game and some most representative symbols of Russia. To do so, managers should identify the most typical symbols of Russia that are not restricted. Since some of these symbols will not match a football game, managers should run a DCE to define the most typical

combination of attributes of the FIFA world cup in Russia. Managers of FIFA sponsors will be able to add the FIFA logo and tagline to maximize the typicality of the ad.

For some brands, the cost of becoming an official sponsor can now be seen as a direct investment in ad typicality, as the status of official sponsors captures the benefits of typicality-inducing advertising elements which are key to the delivery of the image transfer they seek. Similarly, the leveraging of ad typicality may also represent the best preemptive defense against attempts by ambush marketers to appropriate the benefits of event image transfer at the expense of the rightful sponsors. Furthermore, event managers should identify and register the most typical elements of the event to allow sponsors to maximize their ad typicality. However, it is impossible to register all ad typicality elements (such as location or athletes). Therefore, for brand managers of non sponsors, the results point to a direct opportunity to ambush sponsors, by adopting advertisements that are as typical of event sponsors as possible, leading to the transfer of the event image to their brand instead.

On a more practical level, this study demonstrated how several relatively straightforward methodological tools could be adapted to enable a greater scrutiny of sponsors' marketing communication strategies. At a time where increased budgets are often now tied to demonstrated performance of the proposed activities, such evidence-based evaluation may become critical in enabling future brand building strategies.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

From a methodological perspective, this research demonstrates that DCE can be an effective, easy-to-implement approach to identify the most typical elements and their combinations. However, the results of the DCE, particularly in relation to athletes' behaviors, also depend

on the visual elements chosen for the print ads. The pictorial elements used in pre-test 1 came from a careful selection of images publicly available on the Internet and were subject to further analysis, but a test of the typicality of various pictorial elements might help increase the generalizability of the results. The aggregate MNL model explained 15% of the variance in the model, so other attributes and levels should be included in further research to increase the realism of the experimental approach and the model variance. However, they are useful for this research, and the authors believe that DCE approaches could effectively support advances in theories about the determinants of ad typicality, following an inductive approach (Pham, 2013).

Although the focus of this research was the link between sporting events and advertising, the findings may also be relevant for other types of event-linked advertising. The global significance and the size of sporting sponsorship relative to other sponsorships and events, along with repeated calls for investigation into advertising as a means to leverage sporting sponsorship (Cornwell, 2008), justified the focus on sporting entertainment but additional research should confirm the role of ad typicality in other contexts.

Beyond these limitations and questions, the results contribute usefully to the image transfer literature. This study demonstrated how several methodological tools could be adapted to enable a much-needed scrutiny of marketing communication strategies.

Appendix A: Verification of the assumption of configural and metric invariance for the brand image scale

Several psychometric tests have been conducted to verify the assumptions of configural and metric invariance for the brand image scale.

All the variables exhibit acceptable reliability, ranging from .88 to .96 (see Table 5). In support of convergent validity, the path loading from each item to its latent construct is significant, and the average number of items loading is higher than .70 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The statistics confirm discriminant validity; the average variance extracted exceeds the square of the correlations between constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Rho	AVE	1	2	3	4
1. Brand image/T1	20.71	5.43	.88	.61	1.00			
2. Brand image/T2	21.22	5.27	.89	.61	.64**	1.00		
3. Brand image/T3	21.79	5.81	.92	.70	.51**	.65**	1.00	
4. Event involvement	13.34	5.25	.97	.91	.07	.10*	.08	1.00

**$p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

Second, consistent with Chan (1998), the authors undertook measurement invariance tests, prior to subjecting the data to the latent growth modeling (LGM) analysis. The authors allowed the same-item residuals to co-vary across measurement occasions (Chan, 1998). The results indicate that the assumptions of configural invariance and metric invariance were met for brand image (see Table 6). This allows the authors to incorporate the invariance constraints into the subsequent LGM analysis.

Table 6: Results of measurement invariance test

Variable	Model	χ^2	*df*	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA 90% Confidence Interval
Brand image	Configural invariance	376.246***	71	.954	.048	[.081; .099]
	Metric invariance	379.884***	79	.955	.055	[.077; .094]

*** $p < .001$.

Lastly, the authors ran the same optimal LGM model on the four other brands (like for Lexus) but with only one group since the authors did not manipulate ad typicality for these four brands. None of the latent slope factors were significant. In other words, brand image did not change for these brands (see Table 7).

Table 7: Latent slope factor for the decoy brands

Group	Latent slope factor (S) *Mean* (μ_S)
Mercedes	.02
BMW	.03
Qoros	.02
Hyundai	.03

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