Sponsorship-Linked Marketing: The Role of Articulation in Memory

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Corporate sponsorship of events contributes significantly to marketing aims, including brand awareness as measured by recall and recognition of sponsor-event pairings. Unfortunately, resultant advantages accrue disproportionately to brands having a natural or congruent fit with the available sponsorship properties. In three cued-recall experiments, the effect of articulation of sponsorship fit on memory for sponsor-event pairings is examined. While congruent sponsors have a natural memory advantage, results demonstrate that memory improvements via articulation are possible for incongruent sponsor-event pairings. These improvements are, however, affected by the presence of competitor brands and the way in which memory is accessed.

W hy would brands such as Sue Bee (honey) and Cheerios (cereal) sponsor NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing)? The answers are multifaceted and usually include concepts of brand awareness and image development (Cornwell, Roy, and Steinard 2001). While most people quickly detect the relationship between NASCAR and a sponsor such as Texaco, not all brands "fit" NASCAR in a self-evident way. Sponsor-event pairings with varying degrees of fit abound in practice; however, very little is known about their effectiveness. Moreover, only limited research has attempted to understand the processes underlying memory for sponsorship stimuli that support marketing aims such as brand awareness. Here we examine the role articulation plays in improving memory for sponsorship-linked marketing communications. We define articulation as "the act of explaining the relationship between entities" to support the development of meaning in

the mind of the individual. As expenditure on sponsorship increases, and as sponsorship investments begin to influence the overall promotional campaign (e.g., advertising thematically tied to major sponsorship commitments), the effectiveness of these linked communications becomes increasingly important.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT: ESTABLISHING A LINK IN MEMORY

Sponsorship has been defined as "a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (sports, entertainment, non-profit event or organization) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property" (International Events Group 2000, 1). Cornwell (1995, 15) defines *sponsorship-linked marketing* as "the orchestration and implementation of marketing activities for the purpose of building and communicating an association to a sponsorship." Some sponsorship links capitalize on self-evident image relationships (e.g., sports shoes and sporting events); however, in instances when the relationship between the sponsor and event is not logically sanctioned (e.g., financial services and cancer research), articulating this relationship becomes the responsibility of the marketer. Crimmins and Horn (1996) have argued that strengthening the event-sponsor link is accomplished mainly via packaging, public relations, promotion, advertising, direct marketing, and merchandising, with the purpose of these collateral communications being to explain the link between the sponsor

and event. Issues raised by their work concern the role of message articulation in building a link between sponsor and event and the influence articulation might have on memory for the sponsorship relationship.

Memory for the relationship between a sponsor and event, measured by recall or recognition, has been a dependent variable of interest in various studies (e.g., Johar and Pham 1999; Lardinoit and Derbaix 2001; Pham and Johar 2001). In this article we address the formation and recovery of memory for this relationship because brand awareness is foundational to other, albeit controversial, higher-level processes such as the development of consumer-based brand equity (Keller 1993) and choice behaviors (Nedungadi 1990). We argue that articulation through the provision of relational information (information that links two entities; Hunt and Einstein [1981]) or the activation of associative pathways in memory should support recall. While this general claim stems from research in psychology, there and in the sponsorship literature, many additional factors are also suggested to influence memory. An obvious element that has been found to be deleterious to memory for sponsors is the presence of competitors (Johar and Pham 1999). In communications regarding sponsor-event pairings, mentioning competitors can produce memory interference and thereby reduce recall for the true sponsor (Johar and Pham 1999). Various individual factors such as involvement with the sponsored event can also influence recall (see Cornwell, Weeks, and Roy 2005); however, the variable most frequently researched in conjunction with memory for the sponsorship relationship has been congruency between the sponsor and event. Congruency is thus reviewed briefly.

The Importance of Congruence

One of the central tenets of sponsorship research is that congruency between the sponsor and event improves memory for the sponsor-event relationship and facilitates other aspects of communication (e.g., Cornwell, Pruitt, and Van Ness 2001; Johar and Pham 1999; McDaniel 1999; Rifon et al. 2004). In forging such relationships, Becker-Olsen and Simmons (2002) argue that a lack of congruence reduces the favorability of attitudes toward the sponsorship and reduces the value of the brand as a signal because people become less sure of what the brand represents. The established importance of sponsor-sponsee congruence in supporting memory of brand/company sponsorship activities has led communications managers to seek out events that fit along a number of dimensions. Finding congruent sponsorships is a management goal now supported by promotions firms, professional associations, and online services with sophisticated matching algorithms (e.g., IEG SponsorDirect Online Sponsorship Marketplace). Since, as noted previously, many product categories do not have logical, self-evident links to sports, arts, and causes, many sponsors attempt to find or create a basis for a relationship. For example, a firm might argue that the sponsorship relationship is founded in a shared concept such as fair play or community support.

To date, the only study investigating the potential to actively address questions of fit is in the social-sponsorship domain. Becker-Olsen and Simmons (2002) report two experiments examining the influence of fit: one on the effects of "native fit" and the other on the effects of "created fit." Created fit derived from program details (e.g., Alpo [dog food] sponsoring the Special Olympics and also donating a pet to participants while publicizing that caring for pets increases self-esteem) resulted in positive outcomes parallel to those found with native fit. While the current research differs from that of Becker-Olsen and Simmons in that it examines the basis for a relationship in communication (versus adding sponsorship-program elements), both seek to learn if it is possible to improve memory for low-fit (or incongruent) sponsor-event relationships.

In sum, memory for sponsors can be negatively influenced by direct-competitor information but can be positively influenced by perceptions of fit between sponsor and event. Past research has been concerned primarily with the individual's perception of congruence based on prior experience and the communication values and memory quality resulting from this perception. However, past research has not explored whether sponsorship-linked communications might be formulated to improve memory for low-fit or incongruent sponsorship relationships. We therefore hypothesize three general main effects:

H1: Memory for incongruent sponsor-event relationships will be poorer than memory for congruent sponsor-event relationships.

H2: Articulation will support recall for sponsor-event relationships.

H3: Presence of direct competitors will negatively affect recall for the sponsor.

Consideration must also be given to conditions under which these general effects apply. In order to do this, we rely on recent memory research looking at the contribution of members of an associative network in target recall.

Associative Networks

In order to see how memory for sponsorships might be affected—both helped and hindered—by preexisting information in an associative-memory network and by strengthening some items in that network (Nelson and McEvoy 2002), the simulated press-release paradigm introduced by Johar and Pham (1999) is useful. In this paradigm, simulated sponsorship press releases detailing fictitious sponsorship deals are developed as a means of providing people with sponsorship information incorporating specific elements of interest. This paradigm is appealing, given its ecological validity and experimental flexibility (see table 1 for examples). In figure 1 we show hypothetical associative network links among a sponsor, an event, an articulated concept, and a competitor, as might be examined using the

TABLE 1

SAMPLE SIMULATED PRESS RELEASES (TAKEN FROM STIMULI USED IN EXPERIMENT 1)

Congruent/Unarticulated: Sony and Moonlight Music Festival

Today, Sony, one of the most comprehensive entertainment companies in the world, announced the beginning of a three-year sponsorship deal with the new Moonlight Music Festival. The festival will run each year in Summer and will feature a variety of rock bands playing from dusk until dawn. Sony explained that bands to play at the first Moonlight Music Festival had not yet been confirmed, but that there would be a mixture of local and international talent. Sony is excited about the opportunity to sponsor this new event and expects a big turnout on the night.

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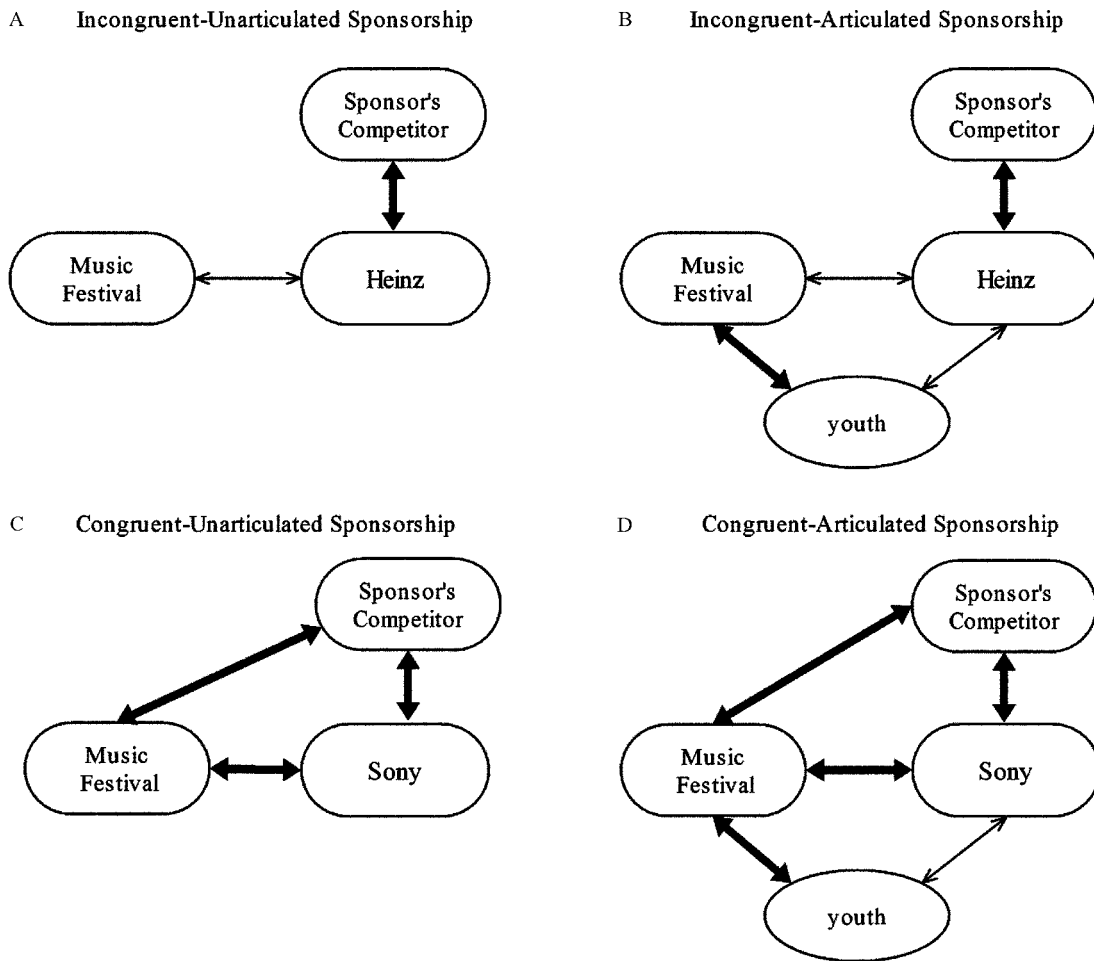
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press-release paradigm (incongruent-unarticulated, incongruent-articulated, congruent-unarticulated, and congruent-articulated situations are illustrated). When there is a strong preexisting semantic relationship between two concepts, the linking arrow is depicted in bold. When the relationship is established only by reading the brief simulated press release (presentation episode), the link is not bold. In all cases we have shown bidirectional links, although it is highly likely that there are some differences in forward and backward associative strengths. Note also that we have shown only some of the links that might be held in memory and that the set of indirect links connecting the sponsor and event in the congruent conditions would actually be much richer than in the incongruent conditions. Describing past findings on congruence in these associative network terms, we show incongruent sponsor-event relationships (fig. 1*A* and *B*) have weaker links than congruent sponsor-event relationships (fig. 1*C* and *D*), and hence memory for congruent relationships tends to be superior. Similarly, it can be seen that when articulation is provided (i.e., the concept of youth in fig. 1*B* and *D*), additional links between the sponsor and event are formed, which may lead to improved memory compared to when there is no articulation (fig. 1*A* and *C*). In all four diagrams a competitor is also depicted, which is connected to the sponsor by a strong preexisting bidirectional link

because two major competitors in an industry category would be strongly linked in memory (e.g., Sony and Panasonic) and belong to one superordinate category. This could contribute to interference any time the competitor is mentioned in a press release, as was the case in the work of Johar and Pham (1999). However, in the congruent conditions (fig. 1*C* and *D*), the competitor is also connected by a strong preexisting bidirectional link to the event, which does not occur in incongruent conditions (fig. 1*A* and *B*).

From memory research we can suggest several potential interactions. First, the strong preexisting bidirectional link between a congruent sponsor and event, together with a potentially large number of indirect links (not shown in the figures), mean articulation may have less of an effect in congruent than in incongruent conditions. Thus, articulation may fail to strengthen an already strong relationship. This prediction may be modified by a higher-order interaction involving the direction of cued recall. The main reason for believing that cueing direction might interact with articulation and congruency is that the strength of the link involving the articulated information may not be perfectly bidirectional. For example, because most people have more knowledge about music festivals than about Sony, *music festival* is likely to have more (and more varied) associations in memory. The result may be more interference when *music*

FIGURE 1

HYPOTHETICAL ASSOCIATIVE NETWORKS SHOWING SPONSOR-EVENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMPETITOR PRESENT

A   Incongruent-Unarticulated Sponsorship   B   Incongruent-Articulated Sponsorship

C   Congruent-Unarticulated Sponsorship   D   Congruent-Articulated Sponsorship

festival is the cue than when *Sony* is the cue (Nelson et al. 1998). This potential interference may make the provision of an extra link via articulation more useful. Alternatively, any lack of sponsor knowledge may mean that individuals might focus on the type of brand involved (e.g., the industry category) when they encounter the name of that brand. Focus on the superordinate (industry) category would make the sponsor name an effective retrieval cue in the congruent conditions but could hurt recall when the event cue is used.

It is also likely that there will be an interaction between congruency and competitor presence or absence, with the provision of a direct competitor producing more interference in the congruent conditions. The reason for this prediction is that the competitor, like the sponsor, already has strong preexisting links with a congruent event. This prediction of a two-way interaction could also be modified by a higher-order interaction involving cueing direction. In particular, greater similarity between the sponsor and the competitor than between the event and the competitor may be present in incongruent conditions. This may produce interference when cueing with the event (Humphreys et al. 2000). Again, focus on superordinate information about the sponsor may make the event cue less effective, especially when there is an incongruent relationship with the sponsor.

In summary, the three hypothesized main effects of congruence, articulation, and the presence of competitors are expected to be qualified by possible interaction effects. Variation in the direction of cueing, which has not previously been a focus of memory research in sponsorship, will be used in seeking to understand the role of associative networks in recall.

EXPERIMENTS

Design and Procedure for Experiment 1

Thirty-two participants were assigned to a 2 × 2 × 2 mixed-factorial design manipulating event-sponsor match

(congruence: congruent vs. incongruent), salience of event-sponsor association (articulation: articulated vs. unarticulated), and type of exposure task (task: rate vs. no rate). Task was a between-subjects variable where half the participants rated congruence of the sponsor-event pairings, and the other half made no rating. This served as a manipulation check. Congruence and articulation were within-subjects variables. All participants spoke English as a first language and participated for course credit in a psychology class. Twelve sets of press releases were constructed for the experiment—one set for each of 12 events. All brands used in the study were well-known international or national brand names, and all events were fictitious. Within a given set, two versions of a press release were constructed for each congruent sponsor, and two for each incongruent sponsor—one where the event-sponsor association was articulated, and one where this association was not articulated. Each press release (four sentences in length) announced a sponsorship deal between a brand and an event. The first sentence included the name and a brief description of the brand (to ensure familiarity with the brand's domain) and the event name. The second sentence described the event. In the articulated version of the press release, the third and final sentences described and reinforced the reason for the sponsorship; in the unarticulated version, the third and final sentences acted as fillers, providing extraneous information. The sponsor was mentioned three times across the four sentences and the event name twice. Content of the press releases was matched within a set, and across sets, with the exception of the variation necessary to instantiate the congruence and articulation manipulations.

Participants were instructed that they would be required to read a series of press releases from a computer monitor about upcoming sponsored events, where each event had a unique sponsor. In the rate condition an additional set of instructions provided details of the rating scale that participants would use to indicate their perception of the match between each event and sponsor. Participants were not informed that they would be asked to recall information. Each participant received 12 press releases during exposure: three incongruent unarticulated, three incongruent articulated, three congruent unarticulated, and three congruent articulated. These were presented in a random order, and the version of press release for each event was counterbalanced across participants. The exposure phase was self-paced with participants pressing the space bar to proceed between press releases. Subsequent to reading each press release, participants in the rate condition rated the match between the event and sponsor on a scale that ranged from one (poorly matched) to six (well matched). Following exposure, participants spent 1 min. engaged in a visuospatial puzzle task, which served as a delay to reduce possible rehearsal or additional processing of sponsorship information. Participants were then informed that they would be given the sponsor's name from each event-sponsor pair they had read about and that they should respond verbally with the related event name. An example was provided. The sponsor cues in each

cued-recall test were randomized for each participant. After making a response, participants pressed the space bar to proceed to the next cue.

Results and Discussion for Experiment 1

Manipulation Check and Recall Performance. On the single six-point scale, anchored at one (poorly matched) and six (well matched), incongruent pairings received a mean rating of 3.00 (moderately incongruent), while congruent pairings received a mean rating of 5.16 (congruent). A dependent samples *t*-test showed that the difference in mean ratings was significant, $t(15) = 13.13, p < .001$, indicating that congruence was successfully manipulated.

Responses were considered correct when the event category was accurate and some part of the actual event title was incorporated in the response. Recall data are presented in table 2. A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed-factorial ANOVA was performed to examine the effects of task (rate vs. no rate), congruence (congruent vs. incongruent), and articulation (articulated vs. unarticulated) on the proportion of events correctly recalled. No main effect of task was observed, $F(1, 30) = .45, p = .506$. A marginally significant effect of congruence, $F(1, 30) = 3.13, p = .087$, provided some support for the superior recall expected to be associated with congruent event-sponsor pairings ($M_{con} = .79$ and $M_{inc} = .70$). A significant main effect of articulation, $F(1, 30) = 4.18, p = .049$, supported the value of providing an articulation message in improving recall ($M_{ar} = .80$ and $M_{unar} = .69$). Finally, a significant articulation $\times$ congruence interaction, $F(1, 30) = 6.49, p = .016$, indicated that articulation improved memory for incongruent but not congruent pairings. No other interactions were significant (all F's < 1).

The results from experiment 1 support the predictions that both congruency and articulation can improve recall. The significant articulation $\times$ congruence interaction, however, also indicates that there is a limit to the generality of these two effects. In experiment 2 we seek to test the additional prediction that the presence of a competitor in the press release would reduce performance and further test the generality of the congruency and articulation effects. The earlier analysis of the preexisting links between sponsors and events (see fig. 1) suggests it is possible that the direction of cueing could enter into two-way or even three-way interactions with articulation, congruency, and competitor presence, and thus cueing direction is reversed in experiment 2. In experiment 2 we also increase the difficulty of the recall task by increasing the length of puzzle activity from 1 to 10 min., to minimize possible ceiling effects.

Design and Procedure for Experiment 2

Forty-eight participants similar to those in experiment 1 were assigned to a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed-factorial design manipulating exposure to competitor (interference: competitor present vs. competitor absent), event-sponsor match (congruence: congruent vs. incongruent), and salience of

TABLE 2

PROPORTION CORRECTLY RECALLED IN EXPERIMENTS 1–3

Condition	N	Incongruent/ unarticulated	Incongruent/articulated	Congruent/ unarticulated	Congruent/articulated
Experiment 1:					
Sponsor cue:					
No rate	16	.58	.81	.77	.73
Rate	16	.60	.79	.79	.85
Both groups	32	.59	.80	.78	.79
Experiment 2:					
Event cue:					
Competitor absent	24	.60	.65	.68	.79
Competitor present	24	.49	.53	.58	.68
Both groups	48	.54	.59	.63	.74
Experiment 3:					
Sponsor cue:					
Competitor absent	16	.52	.69	.69	.69
Competitor present	16	.52	.71	.48	.60
Both groups	32	.52	.70	.58	.65
Event cue:					
Competitor absent	16	.60	.71	.54	.79
Competitor present	16	.46	.44	.48	.75
Both groups	32	.53	.57	.51	.77

event-sponsor association (articulation: articulated vs. un-articulated). Interference was a between-subjects variable; congruence and articulation were within-subjects variables. Twenty-four sets of press releases were constructed for experiment 2: one set for each of the 12 fictitious events where a competitor was not mentioned (competitor-absent condition; similar to the no-rate condition of experiment 1) and one set for each of the 12 fictitious events where a competitor was mentioned (competitor-present condition). The competitor-present condition differed in that the first sentence of each press release also named a dominant competitor brand, said to have failed in securing sponsorship of the event. All press releases were structured similarly to those in experiment 1 and were supported by the manipulation check previously described. The procedure and test instruction for experiment 2 were similar to the no-rate condition of experiment 1, with instructions being identical for the competitor-present and competitor-absent conditions. The cued-recall procedure differed in that participants were provided with the event name from each event-sponsor pair they had read about and were required to respond verbally with the relevant sponsor's name. An example was provided.

Results and Discussion for Experiment 2

Recall data are presented in table 2. Overall there was a reduction in recall in experiment 2, relative to experiment 1, as would be expected with the increased puzzle activity time. A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed-factorial ANOVA was performed to examine the effects of interference (competitor present vs. competitor absent), congruence (congruent vs. incongruent), and articulation (articulated vs. unarticulated) on the proportion of sponsors correctly recalled. A marginally significant effect of interference, $F(1, 46) = 3.12$, $p = .084$,
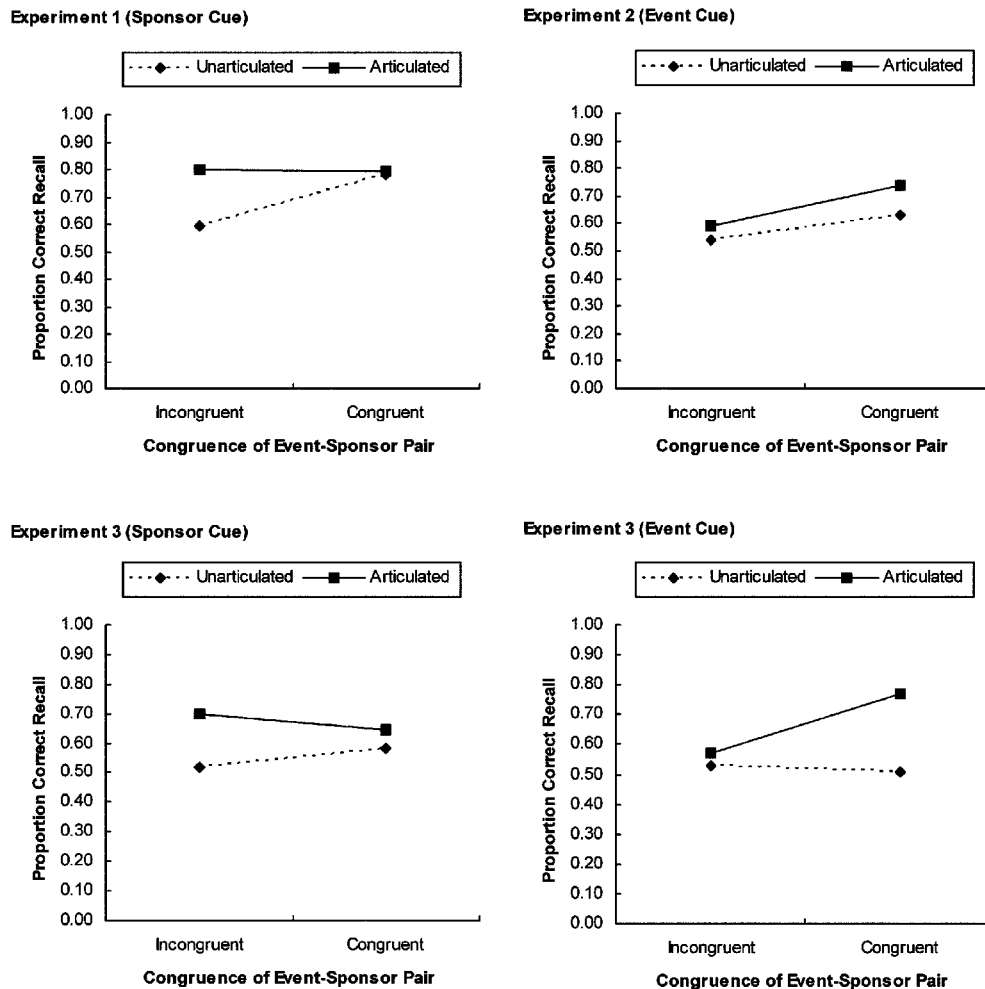
was observed ($M_{\text{compr}} = .57$ and $M_{\text{comab}} = .68$). A significant main effect of congruence, $F(1, 46) = 8.66$, $p = .005$, and a significant main effect of articulation, $F(1, 46) = 4.07$, $p = .049$, were also found. That is, the proportion of correct recall for congruent sponsor-event pairings ($M_{\text{con}} = .69$) was higher than for incongruent pairings ($M_{\text{inc}} = .56$), and the proportion of correct recall was higher in the articulated conditions ($M_{\text{ar}} = .67$) than in the unarticulated conditions ($M_{\text{unar}} = .59$). Unlike in experiment 1, there was no significant interaction between congruence and articulation, and all other interactions were again nonsignificant (all F's < 1).

In a secondary analysis, a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed-factorial ANOVA examined how interference, congruence, and articulation affected intrusion errors (where a sponsor from a different event in the study was named). The effect of competitor presence was not significant, $F(1, 46) = 2.82$, $p = .100$ ($M_{\text{compr}} = .10$ and $M_{\text{comab}} = .06$). A marginally significant effect of articulation, $F(1, 46) = 3.46$, $p = .069$, was, however, observed. That is, the proportion of intrusion errors was lower in the articulated conditions ($M_{\text{ar}} = .06$) than in the unarticulated conditions ($M_{\text{unar}} = .11$). This suggests articulation may guard somewhat against intrusion from other sponsors mentioned during exposure. All other effects in this analysis were nonsignificant (all F's < 1).

Experiment 2 provided further support for the importance of both articulation and congruence as well as new evidence for the influence of competitor presence. It may have also identified a higher-order interaction with direction of cueing. That is, in experiment 1, the interaction between congruence and articulation was significant, with articulation having a greater effect in the incongruent conditions than in the congruent conditions. In experiment 2, this interaction was not only nonsignificant but the trend was in the opposite direction. It seems likely that the change in cueing direction from

FIGURE 2

PROPORTION OF CORRECT RECALL FOR UNARTICULATED AND ARTICULATED EVENT-SPONSOR PAIRINGS IN
EXPERIMENTS 1–3

NOTE.—Graphs show the proportion of correct recall as a function of congruence for the unarticulated and articulated event-sponsor pairings, collapsed across the rate and no-rate conditions (experiment 1) and collapsed across the competitor-absent and competitor-present conditions (experiments 2 and 3). The left panels show results when participants were cued with the event sponsor, and the right panels show results when participants were cued with the event.

experiment 1 (sponsor cue) to experiment 2 (event cue) was responsible for this difference. Experiment 3 was designed to replicate the findings of experiments 1 and 2 and to verify that cueing direction produced this difference.

Design and Procedure for Experiment 3

Sixty-four participants were assigned to a 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 mixed-factorial design manipulating direction of cueing (cue: sponsor vs. event), exposure to competitor (interference: competitor present vs. competitor absent), event-sponsor match (congruence: congruent vs. incongruent), and salience of event-sponsor association (articulation: articulated vs. unarticulated). Cue and interference were between-subjects variables, whereas congruence and articulation were

within-subjects variables. All participants spoke English as a first language and were paid $10 for their participation. All materials and procedures from experiment 2 were replicated in experiment 3, except that half the participants were cued with the sponsor's name, and half with the event name.

Results and Discussion for Experiment 3

Recall data are again presented in table 2. The four panels of figure 2 offer a visual comparison of the findings from all three experiments. A 2 × 2 × 2 × 2 mixed-factorial ANOVA examined the effects of cue (sponsor vs. event), interference (competitor present vs. competitor absent), congruence (congruent vs. incongruent), and articulation (articulated vs. unarticulated) on the proportion of sponsors/

events correctly recalled. A significant effect of interference, $F(1, 60) = 4.25, p = .044$, was observed ($M_{compr} = .55$ and $M_{comab} = .65$), as was an effect for articulation, $F(1, 60) = 14.17, p < .001$ ($M_{unar} = .54$ and $M_{ar} = .67$). While the main effects of cue and congruence were not significant, this was due in part to higher-order interactions.

Only two of the tested interactions reached significance. First, there was a significant interaction between congruence, articulation, and cue, $F(1, 60) = 6.00, p = .017$. This indicated that when a sponsor cue was used (as in experiment 1), there was a moderate improvement due to articulation in the proportion recalled for the congruent condition ($M_{con\,unar} = .58$ and $M_{con\,ar} = .65$) and a greater improvement due to articulation in the incongruent condition ($M_{inc\,unar} = .52$ and $M_{inc\,ar} = .70$). In contrast, when an event cue was used (as in experiment 2), these trends were reversed. In the congruent condition, articulation resulted in a more dramatic improvement in the proportion recalled ($M_{con\,unar} = .51$ and $M_{con\,ar} = .77$), whereas in the incongruent condition the improvement due to articulation was less pronounced ($M_{inc\,unar} = .53$ and $M_{inc\,ar} = .57$).

Second, an interaction between cue, competitor, and congruence, $F(1, 60) = 5.52, p = .022$, was also found. This revealed that when a sponsor cue was used, there was a more detrimental influence of competitor in the congruent condition on recall ($M_{con\,comab} = .69$ and $M_{con\,compr} = .54$) than in the incongruent condition where recall did not differ ($M_{inc\,comab} = .60$ and $M_{inc\,compr} = .62$). In contrast, when an event cue was used, there was a moderate influence of competitor on recall in the congruent condition ($M_{con\,comab} = .67$ and $M_{con\,compr} = .62$) and a more dramatic influence in the incongruent condition ($M_{inc\,comab} = .66$ and $M_{inc\,compr} = .45$). Figure 3 shows this interaction.

A secondary $2 \times 2 \times 2$ mixed-factorial ANOVA was performed to examine the effects of interference, congruence, and articulation on the proportion of intrusion errors for participants in the event-cue condition in experiment 3. Like in experiment 2, the effect of articulation was marginally significant, $F(1, 30) = 3.38, p = .076$ ($M_{ar} = .05$ and $M_{unar} = .09$). This again suggests that articulation can guard against intrusion errors from other sponsors mentioned during exposure. Intrusion errors did not differ between the competitor-present ($M_{compr} = .07$) and absent ($M_{comab} = .07$) conditions, $F < 1$, and similar to experiment 2, all other effects also failed to reach significance.
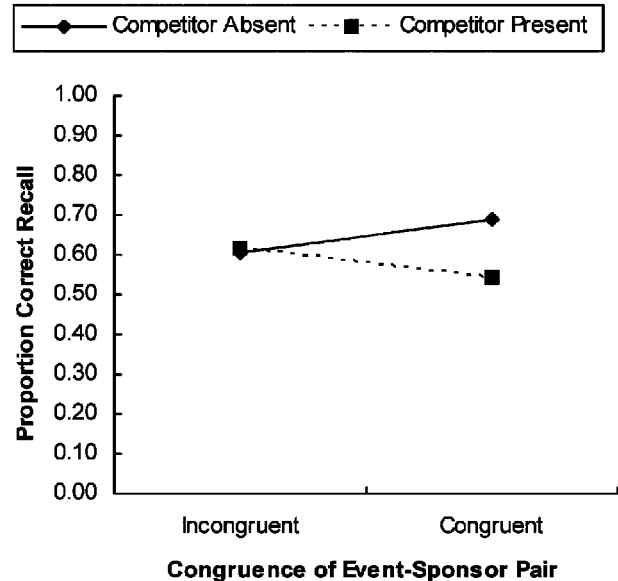
GENERAL DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The results from all three experiments strongly support the value of congruency and of articulating a relationship between a sponsor and an event. They also support the prediction that congruency would interact with articulation. However, this prediction was qualified by a significant three-way interaction in experiment 3 between articulation, congruence, and direction of cueing (see fig. 2). That is, articulation increased recall for incongruent sponsor-event pairings
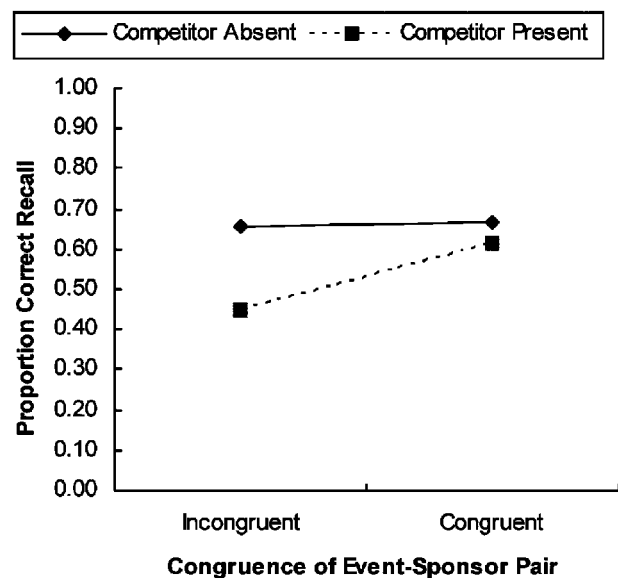
PROPORTION OF CORRECT RECALL FOR COMPETITOR-ABSENT AND COMPETITOR-PRESENT EVENT-SPONSOR PAIRINGS IN EXPERIMENT 3

Experiment 3 - (Sponsor Cue)

Experiment 3 - (Event Cue)

NOTE.—Graphs show the proportion of correct recall as a function of congruence for the competitor-absent and competitor-present event-sponsor pairings collapsed across articulated and unarticulated conditions. The top panel shows results when participants were cued with the event sponsor, and the bottom panel shows results when participants were cued with the event.

when recall was cued with the sponsor and for congruent sponsor-event pairings when recall was cued with the event. The most likely explanation for the three-way interaction is an asymmetry in the strength of the relationship with the articulated mediator.

The predicted interaction between congruence and competitor presence or absence was also confirmed. Again, this prediction was qualified by a three-way interaction involving the direction of cueing. The explanation here may lie in the greater similarity between the sponsor and the competitor than between the event and the competitor in the incongruent condition, which makes retrieval of the correct sponsor more difficult when cued with the event. More precise interpretation of these three-way interactions will require more knowledge about the participants' preexisting memory structures. This knowledge along with experiments that manipulate competitor similarity (Humphreys et al. 2000) and competitor availability (Humphreys, Maguire, and Nelson 2005) will lead to an understanding of how the preexisting and supplied information in an associative network interact in order to both facilitate and hinder memory performance.

CONCLUSION

The central contribution of this research is to establish the value of articulation in sponsorship-linked marketing communications. Articulation of the nature of the event-sponsor relationship was shown to be effective in supporting memory in all three experiments, but this was a qualified finding. Articulation appears to provide the most support to an incongruent sponsor-event pairing, in general, and to a congruent relationship when cued with the event. Although not damaging, articulation may be superfluous when there is already a strong link in memory for the pair when cued with the sponsor. These findings underscore the importance of articulation as a concept of interest, and the role of associate strength as a theoretical area of interest in the study of sponsorship, and more broadly, for other communication approaches using weak associative links. We also find qualified support for the importance of congruence in memory for sponsor-event links. In selecting a congruent event, a sponsor gains associations and preexisting links in memory; however, some of the preexisting links may be with competitors and may result in some degree of interference. Additional research is required to examine the role of these contextual associations and preexisting links.

The articulation manipulation used in this research is rather subtle and consists of only a few words in a sentence, yet it is able to improve memory for the sponsor-event pair. This sensitive nature of press-release announcements has implications for practitioners. It seems that small adjustments to the nature of sponsorship communications can result in improvements in memory for the sponsor-event relationship. Thus, a minimal investment in carefully constructed press releases is warranted. This finding also suggests that firms employing clipping services that only calculate the mention of a sponsor-event pairing may not be as useful as a clipping service that considers the articulated relationship. Managers concerned with the effects of articulation would require a quantitative measure of press-release announcements and a qualitative measure of the successful presentation of the articulation message in the press release.

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