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Tourists' perceptions, emotions, and attitudes during a mega sport event

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions and emotions of the sports-fan tourists experienced during a mega sport event to analyse the influence exerted by a sports event on a sponsoring brand. An empirical study was performed by collecting information from 364 sport-fan tourists during the Formula 1 Grand Prix of Europe. Results show that fans' emotions, event perceived value, fans' attitudes and sponsor perceived value are related terms. Moreover, to explain the success of a sponsoring brand, there are three relevant antecedents (attendees' motivation, exposure to the event, and team identification). In comparison, two antecedents seem to be irrelevant (event involvement and sponsor familiarity). This investigation has made progress in researching the backgrounds that determine the sports-fan tourist behaviour in an integrated way to explain how a sponsoring brand can benefit from it.

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Sports-fan tourists; mega sport event; sponsorship; perceived value; tourist experience

Introduction

The world is beginning to recover from COVID-19, and the tourism sector is ready to welcome tourists again. In this context, the recovery of sports tourism plays an important role (Bazzanella, Schnitzer, Peters, & Bichler, 2023). Therefore, the gradual return of mega sport events is a major driver of the restart of tourism (UNWTO, 2021). Not in vain, the development of mega sports tourism events is a product of additional influences which have played a vital role in the growth of sports tourism in the twentieth century (Weed & Bull, 2012). International competitions (Olympic Games, World Cup, Wimbledon, Grand Prix motor racing) have become major tourist attractions, attracting fans and those searching for a spectacular tourist experience (Weed & Bull, 2012).

Knowledge about sports tourists' experiences and behaviours is critical to understanding the relationship between sport and tourism (Weed, 2014). In this line, Smith and Stewart (2007) have provided a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing consumption among travelling sports fans, focusing particularly on the importance of the relationships that the fans develop with their favourite teams, stars, and events (Weed, 2014).

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Previous studies highlight that more research is needed about the experiences of those tourists who are more passively engaged in sport tourism, such as spectators, and exploring as they experience a particular event (Shipway & Stevenson, 2012). Mega sport events can attract tourists, and many governments are seeking to host them because several cities have found their economies and environments significantly transformed as a result of such events, with sports tourism producing benefits (Bazzanella et al., 2023; Weed & Bull, 2012). In addition to tourism, another significant benefit of the mega-sport event derives from sponsorship (O'Reilly & Madill, 2012).

Companies spend vast amounts of money sponsoring sports events, which has gained enormous importance in comparison to other methods of communication (Meenaghan & O'Sullivan, 2013). Most sponsorship studies are limited to examining event-brand image transfer (Boronczyk & Breuer, 2021). However, in a mega sports event, the sports tourist is an important spectator and his/her behaviours (emotions, perceptions, attitudes) are vital therefore it is also transferred, which still requires more research. As Meenaghan and O'Sullivan (2013) noted, new models to evaluate experiential and engagement programmes' effects continue to emerge in marketing (Bjerke & Naess, 2021).

Considering Cornwell and Kwon (2020) model of tourist-focused sponsorship-linked marketing communications, we propose a further investigation into this area to provide business recommendations. In this sense, this paper proposes two main objectives linked to developing sport mega-event. Firstly, we seek to analyse the relationships among tourists' perceptions, emotions, and attitudes experienced during the event. Secondly, we want to analyse the power of five subjective variables that could act as antecedents of this experience (motivation, domain involvement, exposure, team identification, and familiarity with the sponsoring brand).

With the aim to explain the sports-fan tourist experience, this article suggests a research model that draws on multiple theories and bodies of literature. Empirical research has been done to test the proposed sponsorship model in a mega sport event context. It collects information from fans attendees during the Formula 1 Grand Prix of Europe and uses structural equation modelling (SEM).

This work adds value to previous literature because, as previous studies have highlighted, one particular area demanding further exploration is the relationship between a sponsor firm and a sport or event organisation (Morgan, Taylor, & Adair, 2020). Literature about the transfer of perceived value between a sporting event and a sponsoring brand is scarce, especially if we consider other relevant variables in this transfer process, such as the emotions aroused by the event or the previous familiarity with the brand.

Theoretical framework

Tourists' perceptions, emotions, and attitudes experienced during a sponsored sport mega event

According to Yoshida (2017), 'a sport consumer experience is defined as sport consumers' cognitive, affective, social, and physical reactions to direct (e.g. purchase and consumption) and indirect (e.g. media and social network) encounters with a sport organisation, its products, and other consumers' (p.429).

Based on the Theory of Transfer (Gwinner, 1997), a transfer degree exists from the event toward the sponsor. In this way, the connection between an event and the sponsor must lead to a positive influence, as regards the brand, on those attending the event (Gwinner, 1997). Consumers' positive mental association with an event generates a positive effect, transferred in the same terms to the brand sponsoring the event (Meenaghan, 2001). This hypothesis is the essence of the mechanism whereby sponsorship becomes an effective communication tool. As Meenaghan (2001) points out, sponsorship is more effective than other communication tools because it is assumed that the message arrives at an involved consumer with the sponsored activity, which is enjoying a show that fits their leisure patterns. This has been observed in various studies (Boronczyk & Breuer, 2021; Grohs, 2016). As Cornwell and Kwon (2020) introduced, their research summarises and extends the theoretical understanding of the topic.

Furthermore, individuals tend to harmonise all their thoughts and conceptions, connecting different objects of thought in their minds (Balance Theory; Heider, 1958). Based on this premise, people perceive a relationship between the sponsored event and the sponsoring brand when sponsorship exists.

Image creation and development through sponsorship have been extensively discussed in the sponsorship literature. Similarly, we propose perceived value transfer for that sports-fan who travels (sacrificing time and money, and in some cases travelling long distances) to experience the event. Perceived value is 'the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given' (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 14). Additionally, Holbrook (1999) defines 'value for the consumer as an interactive, relative and preferential experience' (p. 5). Thus, perceived value can be classified conceptually as evaluative judgment applied to tourist experiences (Holbrook, 1999).

Through sponsorship activities, consumers' pre-existing associations about a sponsored event can become linked to a sponsor's brand associations because consumers form a schematic linkage. As a result of the linkage, the perceived value held in their memory about a sponsored event is transferred from the property to the sponsor (Gwinner, 1997).

Because of the above and taking as a reference Transfer Models (Gwinner, 1997) and Balance Theory (Heider, 1958), it may be put forward that a relation exists between an event and its sponsor in terms of perceived value. The starting idea is that tourists' perceptions will become associated with the sponsoring brand during a sponsored event. So, it could be stated that:

H1: A sponsored event's perceived value will influence the sponsor's perceived value.

Moreover, perceptions, emotions, and attitudes of the sports-fan tourists during the mega sport event are also linked (Haji, Surachman, Ratnawati, & MintartiRahayu, 2021; Wiedmann, Labenz, Haase, & Hennigs, 2018). We based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) which states that three main components constitute attitudes: cognition (perceived value), affection (emotions), and conation (the travelling fan). From this approach, negative and positive emotions during the event will determine tourists' perceptions (event perceived value) and influence their attitude toward the sponsor. This, in turn, will impact sponsor's perceived value.

In this vein, firstly, Martensen and Grønholdt (2008) assume that emotions toward the event may influence the extent and nature of the parallel central brand information processing to the extent that such occur. This means that the emotions created through the event affect the attitude toward the sponsor.

Secondly, there has been no agreement in the literature on the relationship between emotion and perceived value (Yang, Gu, & Cen, 2011). Some studies consider emotional response as a component of perceived value (Song & Qu, 2019).

Nevertheless, other studies view the emotional response as an antecedent of perceived value. This means that emotions significantly influence consumers' evaluations of products or services. Extant research has proved that emotions are closely related to perceived value (He & Hu, 2022; Hightower, Brady, & Baker, 2002).

Finally, attitudes can be formed through direct experiences with an entity or exposure to knowledge and messages (Albarracín, Johnson, & Zanna, 2005). A person's beliefs about an object represent the basis of his/her attitude toward that object. Beliefs link an attitude-object and its attributes, characteristics, outcome, goal, or value (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). So, the attitude toward the sponsor will influence their perceived value.

Based on these, three hypotheses may be put forward, which establish a relationship between emotions, attitudes, and perceptions.

H2: Sports tourists' emotions during a sponsored event will influence the attitude toward the sponsor.

H3: Sports tourists' emotions during a sponsored event will influence the event's perceived value.

H4: Sports tourists' attitudes towards a sponsor will influence the sponsor's perceived value.

Subjective variables that precede the sports tourist experience

The previously described sports tourist experience in a sponsored mega sport event has five principal antecedent variables: (i) motivation, (ii) domain involvement, (iii) exposure, (iv) team identification, and (v) sponsor familiarity.

Firstly, the literature shows that motivation influences team identification (Delia & James, 2018; Jang, Wann, & Ko, 2018; Sung, Koo, Dittmore, & Eddy, 2016; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003; Wann, Grieve, Peetz, & Zapalac, 2021). In effect, motivation nearly always correlates significantly with identification. Trail et al. (2003), starting from the research carried out by Sloan (1989), demonstrated that motives are a predictor and antecedent variable of team identification. These results indicate that different motives affect the degree of team identification, so the most motivated sports-fan tourists will feel more identified than those who are not motivated. Additionally, the most motivated sports-fan tourists are in turn those who perceive the most value in an event (Alegre & Cladera, 2009).

Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

H5: Motivation of the sports tourists will influence:

H5.1: Team identification.

H5.2: Event value.

Secondly, concerning the domain involvement of the sports-fan tourists with the sponsored event, it is observed that one of the principal effects of domain involvement with the event is increased event exposure (Meenaghan, 2001).

Another effect of domain involvement with a sporting event is increased team identification. Fisher and Wakefield (1998) find empirical support for their argument that the personal relevance of a determined object, situation, or action is an essential dimension in developing identification with a particular group. In this way, it is established that, for those individuals with a high ratio of involvement, the level of engagement with the sport they follow increases (and are more identified with the team) in contrast to those with a low ratio of involvement (Sung et al., 2016).

Similarly, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that individuals establish definitions by way of their affiliation to certain social groups to which they belong (identification with the team, the players, etc.) as a premise, a positive relationship exists between involvement with an event and, on the one hand, exposure to said event and, on the other hand, identification with the team competing at the event. Specifically, the current study proposed the following hypothesis:

H6: Sports tourists' involvement will influence:

H6.1: Event exposure.

H6.2: Team identification.

Thirdly, regarding exposure to the event, following the argument of Mere Exposure Theory (Zajonc, 1968), two associated effects are identified, improvement of: (i) event value and (ii) emotions.

In effect, on the one hand, mere exposure to an object can improve its perceived value principally when exposure is produced in low-attention scenarios (Bornstein, 1989). One possible explanation of this effect may be found in the closeness with certain objects: people tend to value an object more positively if they have been more exposed to it (Zajonc, 1968).

On the other hand, if the sponsored event is well designed, it is attractive, and enjoyably competitive, you would expect the sports-fan tourists to experience positive emotions and, in short, have an enjoyable experience with the event. The *sine qua non* condition is, obviously, that exposure to the event occurs (Grohs, 2016).

According to Zajonc's (1968) Mere Exposure Theory, the simple fact of exposing someone to the same stimulus/event several times can be sufficient to create a preference for this stimulus. It enhances its value and emotions during the experience provided. Consequently, sports-fan tourists exposed many times to basic stimuli, may feel more familiar with it and, ultimately, develop a positive relationship between the exposure and perceived value and emotions.

Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

H7: Sports tourists' event exposure will influence:

H7.1: Event perceived value.

H7.2: Emotions.

Fourthly, as regards identification, special reference should be made to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory proposes that individuals classify themselves into various social categories in order to facilitate self-definition within their own social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

This social identification, when referring to sports-fan tourists who seek to identify themselves with a particular team, gives rise to two positive consequences: (i) enhanced emotions as regards the event in which the team participates, and (ii) enhanced attitude towards the brand which sponsors the event.

In effect, various studies have shown that as identification increases, individuals seek out more events in which they can experience emotions that facilitate this team identification (Sloan, 1989; Wann et al., 2021). These and other studies (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998; Jang et al., 2018) have focussed their research almost exclusively on team identification or association.

On the other hand, with respect to the brand, and taking Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as a basis, Gwinner and Swanson (2003) expand their proposal by noting that fans, with strong team identification, will tend to have a more positive attitudinal experience as regards the sponsoring brand than less identified fans. That is to say, the higher the level of identification, the better the attitude towards the brand sponsoring the event in which the team participates. Along the same lines, Hoek, Gendall, and Stockdale (1993) note that managers of sponsoring firms assumed that sponsorship improved the attitude towards the sponsoring brand on the part of the sports-fan tourists, presumably those who are most identified with the team.

In this way, and with relation to the results of previous studies, the following hypothesis may be put forward. Therefore:

H8: Sport tourists' team identification will influence:

H8.1: Emotions.

H8.2: Attitude towards sponsor.

Sponsor familiarity is the last proposed antecedent of the sports-fan tourist experience. Many previous studies have examined the impact of brand familiarity on customers' perceptions and intentions (Nguyen, Choudhury, & Melewar, 2015; Park & Stoel, 2005). Brand equity and its core components, including brand familiarity, have been theorised as value-creating asset(s) that offer value to the customer and the company (Aaker, 1992). A better-known brand generates more powerful cues to customers than a lesser-known brand (Maheswaran, Mackie, & Chaiken, 1992). A study by Priilaid, Human, Pitcher, Smith, and Varkel (2017) suggests that increasing familiarity raises a brand's value. Other studies (Hati et al., 2021; Hati, Wibowo, & Safira, 2020). Found that customers' knowledge about the brand significantly influences perceived value. As the concept of knowledge is related to the concept of familiarity (Campbell & Keller, 2003), the following hypothesis is formulated:

H9: Sports tourists' familiarity with the sponsoring brand will influence the perceived value of the brand.

The sum of the objectives and hypotheses expressed above gives us the proposed research model shown in [Figure 1](#).

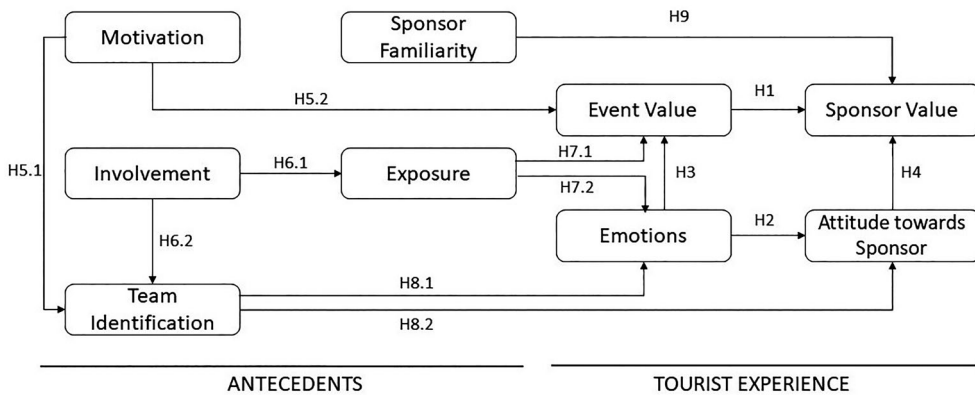


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

Materials and methods

Design and participants

The study focuses on the city of Valencia (Spain), which has been firmly committed to the organisation of major sporting events. Formula 1 Grand Prix of Europe was chosen for the purpose of this study. The main reason for its selection was that it is one of the most prestigious sporting events in the world. The choice of Telefónica, as the brand used to apply the analysis of the sports sponsorship, was because it was the main sponsor of the event.

The fieldwork was carried out during the last event. Within the authorisation of the event organisation, the interviewers were placed at different event exits. A non-probabilistic sample method was used (Kothari, 2004), and 364 sports-fan tourists (F1 is the main reason for coming to Valencia) were surveyed onsite after experiencing the mega sport event. 105 were foreign nationals (for them, the questionnaire was conducted in English). The questionnaire translation procedure has been carried out with the support of a native English researcher.

The great majority of respondents were male (73%), middle-class workers (72.7%), and more than half of the participants with bachelor educational level (52.8%). Related to their incomes, 15.7% of the respondents have less than 1,000 euros monthly income, 31.4% have a monthly income of 1,000–2,000 euros, 24.5% have a monthly income of 2,000–4,000 euros, and 28.3% have a monthly income of more than 4,000 euros.

Regarding the origin of the national tourists (51.1% of the sample with habitual residence in Spain), the majority were from Valencian Community, Madrid, and the Balearic Islands. Regarding foreign sports-fan tourists, it may be noted that the United Kingdom was the leading origin country (21%), followed by other countries, such as Germany (6.3%) and Italy (4.5%).

Respondents were asked to report how many days they planned to stay in Valencia, 19.9% stayed one or two days, 23.5% stayed three days, 22.9% stayed four days, 13.3% stayed five days, and 20.4% more than five days.

Measures

The different concepts of the model were measured scales that have been validated in previous studies, as shown in Table 1.

Results

Before attempting to corroborate the hypotheses proposed by the model, the measurement model was validated.

In order to do this, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out which allowed for an examination of the scale purification process and a posterior evaluation of its dimensionality (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Afterward, following the recommendations made by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and Fornell and Larcker (1981), the requirements that guarantee the reliability of the scales were fulfilled. Analysis of the reliability of the scales showed satisfactory Cronbach's coefficients that ranged from 0.81–0.99.

As far as the indexes that measure the goodness of fit of the model (Table 2) are concerned, all produced optimum values.

It should be noted that, in the scale items purification process, after the first estimate of the confirmatory factor analysis, both the significance of standardised coefficients (the t value superior to 1.96), and the variance percentage which is explained by the latent variable (it is recommended that it should be greater than 0.5) were taken into account. As a consequence of the study, for the motivations scale, three items were eliminated: 'I like to attend F1 races with my partner' and 'I like to attend F1 races with my children' corresponding to factor 6 'Family'. 'I appreciate the physical ability of the drivers' relating to factor 8 'Physical abilities'.

Table 1. The study scales.

Construct	Source
Tourists experience	
Event perceived value	Smith and Colgate (2007)
Sponsor perceived value	Smith and Colgate (2007)
Emotions	Gwinner and Swanson (2003)
Attitude towards sponsor	Gwinner and Swanson (2003)
Antecedents	
Motivation	Trail and James (2001)
Domain involvement	Gwinner and Swanson (2003)
Exposure	Grohs, Wagner, and Vsetecka (2004)
Team identification	Wakefield (1995)
Sponsor familiarity	Grohs et al. (2004)

Table 2. The goodness of fit of the model.

The perceived value of the event
S-B χ^2 (2) = 1.2412 p = 0.53763; α Cronbach = 0.882;
NFI = 0.997; NNFI = 1.008; CFI = 1.000; RMSEA = 0.000
The perceived value of the sponsor
S-B χ^2 (8) = 12.9596 p = 0.11325; α Cronbach = 0.917;
NFI = 0.990; NNFI = 0.990; CFI = 0.996; RMSEA = 0.041
Sport tourist motivation
S-B χ^2 (216) = 328.1002 p = 0.0000; α Cronbach = 0.919;
NFI = 0.931; NNFI = 0.968; CFI = 0.975

Table 3. Analysis of the reliability of the model.

Factor	Factor loading	T value (boots-trap)	CR	Alfa Cronbach	AVE
F1 Motivation	0.66	0	0.80	0.84	0.45
	0.77	15.50			
	0.78	14.75			
	0.62	8.94			
	0.48	10.51			
F2 Involvement	1	0	1	1	1
F3 Sponsor familiarity	0.99	0	0.87	0.72	0.78
	0.56	1.97			
F4 Emotions	0.93	0	0.77	0.93	0.64
	0.93	25.38			
	0.83	27.93			
F5 Exposure	0.85	0	0.83	0.83	0.71
	0.84	13.55			
F6 Identification	0.88	0	0.85	0.84	0.65
	0.73	13.53			
	0.79	14.95			
	0.84	0			
F7 Event value	0.84	0	0.81	0.82	0.58
	0.78	14.48			
	0.66	12.22			
F8 Sponsor value	0.89	0	0.89	0.90	0.68
	0.86	20.81			
	0.80	23.21			
	0.73	17.10			
	0.93	27.58			
F9 attitude toward sponsor	0.93	27.58	0.93	0.93	0.87
	0.93	28.05			

CR = composite reliability.
 AVE = average variance extracted.

Lastly, construct validity was verified (convergent and discriminant). We were able to verify the psychometric characteristics of the scales.

Having carried out the above analysis, the proposed hypotheses' corroboration was undertaken through structural equation modelling (SEM).

Table 3 shows that the values obtained in this research are of high internal consistency.

Table 4 shows the structural model estimate (inner) with its corresponding t values.

Discussion

The results reveal a negative but not significant impact of the **perceived value** of the sponsored event on the perceived value of the sponsoring brand (H1), because of

Table 4. Hypotheses contrast.

Hypotheses	Relation	Std β	T value
H1	Event value → Sponsor value	-0.02	0.90
H2	Emotions → Attitude towards Sponsor	0.09	1.58
H3	Emotions → Event value	0.20**	3.37
H4	Attitude towards Sponsor → Sponsor value	0.98**	23.25
H5.1	Motivation → Identification	0.43**	8.16
H5.2	Motivation → Event value	0.62**	9.30
H6.1	Involvement → Exposure	0.66	0.31
H6.2	Involvement → Identification	0.02	0.23
H7.1	Exposure → Event value	0.17**	2.96
H7.2	Exposure → Emotions	-0.06	-1.38
H8.1	Identification → Emotions	-0.08	-1.43
H8.2	Identification → Attitude towards Sponsor	0.22**	3.90
H9	Sponsor familiarity → Sponsor value	0.07	1.62

R (F4) = 0.01; R (F5) = 0.44; R (F6) = 0.32; R (F7) = 0.53; R (F8) = 0.96; R (F9) = 0.05.

**p < 0.01.

which the first hypothesis is not validated (H1: $\beta = -0.02$, ns). Consequently, it is not possible to confirm that there exists a transfer of value from an event to the sponsoring brand, contrary to the arguments expressed by Gwinner (1997). No event-brand value transfer exists.

As far as H2 is concerned, it is not accepted that the **emotions** a sport fan tourist has during a sponsored event will affect his/her attitudes towards the sponsor (H2: $\beta = 0.09$; ns), unlike what was proposed by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Nevertheless, feeling emotions during a sponsored event will increase the perceived value of this event (H3: $\beta = 0.20$; $p < 0.01$), in line with what was reported by previous studies (He & Hu, 2022; Hightower et al., 2002).

Similarly, the study confirms what is indicated by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the **attitudes** of sports tourists towards an sponsor increase the perceived value of this sponsor (H4: $\beta = 0.98$; $p < 0.01$).

As far as the five subjective antecedent variables of the model are concerned, the results are as follows.

Firstly, according to different studies (Alegre & Cladera, 2009; Wann et al., 2021), the **sports tourist's motivation** impacts positively different concepts (H5). Specifically, it has a significant influence on: (i) team identification (H5.1: $\beta = 0.43$; $p < 0.01$) and (ii) the perceived value of the event (H5.2 $\beta = 0.62$; $p < 0.01$). Considering the above, it is possible to conclude that the sports-fan tourist's motivation is an explicit antecedent variable that precedes the sports tourist experience. That is, the greater the sports-fan tourist's motivation, the closer team identification and the greater the perceived value of the event.

Secondly, regarding a **sports-tourists involvement** with the event, it was not confirmed that it is significantly and positively associated with: (i) more significant exposure to the event (H6.1 $\beta = 0.66$; ns), (ii) and the sports-fan tourist's team identification (H6.2 $\beta = 0.02$; ns), differing what happened in the study of Fisher and Wakefield (1998). Therefore, involvement is not a significant antecedent in our model because most involved fans are not necessarily those who are most exposed to an event, or those who identify more with a team.

Thirdly, with respect to H7, it was confirmed that **exposure to the sponsored event** is positively associated with the perceived value of the event (H7.1), as Zajonc (1968) noted. However, the influence of exposure to the sponsored event on tourists' emotions living with the event was not confirmed (H7.2). As shown by Mere Exposure Theory (Zajonc, 1968), the mere exposure effect increased object preference and, in turn, the perceived value (Tom, Nelson, Srzentic, & King, 2007). However, is not possible to confirm to improve emotions. So, mere exposure generates perceived value but not emotions. The latter requires something more than a simple exposure to an event.

Fourthly, in relation to **team identification**, as stated by H8, and in line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it was observed that team identification would improve the attitude towards the sponsor (H8.2 $\beta = 0.22$; $p < 0.01$). Thus, we can say that sports-fan tourists who show greater identification with the team that are followers will develop a positive attitude towards the sponsoring brand. However, it was not observed that identification with a team improves the emotions encountered at an event (H8.1). That is, sports-fan tourist who is highly identified with a team might not have a positive emotion toward the event.

Finally, we were unable to confirm the validity of H9, given that **sponsor familiarity** does not appear to improve the perceived value of the said sponsoring brand ($H9 \beta = 0.07$; ns). That is to say, even though the sports-fan tourist is familiar with the sponsoring brand, it does not follow that they will perceive a high value as regards that brand, on contrary to what one might expect if we adhere to the premise put forward by the Signaling Theory and Balance Theory.

Conclusions and managerial implications

Our results have led to the following conclusions and managerial implications for the sponsoring brand interested in a sports event and the event organisers.

For the sponsoring brand

First, a significant **event brand transfer does not exist**. The sports event and the sponsoring brand are not so connected. So, a sponsoring brand will not easily inherit the benefits of a successful sporting mega-event. Based on these results, we recommend that sponsoring brands be cautious regarding the chosen events for positioning purposes.

Second, and based on results, **sponsor familiarity does not seem to be relevant**. If sponsor familiarity augments, the perceived value of the sponsoring brand remains stable. So, we recommend undertaking brand positioning actions that do not necessarily consider how familiar you are with the brand beforehand.

Third, given that event **emotions and attitudes towards the sponsors are not related**, the focus on emotional events should not be so high on the agenda of the sponsoring brands. Our results have demonstrated that if fans experienced amazing experiences, this would not lead to better attitudes towards the sponsoring brand.

Fourth, it seems to be **essential to augment team identification** if we want to improve the attitude towards the sponsoring brand. Then, as our results have shown, team identification is an interesting point to reach in terms of brand positioning improvement. Therefore, rather than focusing on brand familiarity by targeting fans who already know and/or use the brand, communication actions should promote the brand through identification with the team.

Fifth, and given that better **attitudes toward a sponsoring brand** will improve the perceived value of this sponsoring brand, it is necessary to act on attitudes toward the brand.

For the event organisers

First, sports tourists' **involvement is not so relevant**. So, event organisers should focus their marketing campaigns on involved and less involved potential attendees. As our results conclude, involvement is not pertinent to gain: (i) team identification and (ii) exposure to the event. So, more involved tourists are not required to improve the success of a sports-mega event.

Second, **sports tourists' motivation is very relevant**, as this concept positively impacts various concepts: (i) team identification; (ii) event perceived value. So, more

motivated spectators will be more identified with the team and perceive a higher value for the event. Then, sponsored mega-event success partially depends on attendees' motivation. This kind of public should be attracted to the event.

Third, **exposure is essential** because it helps improve the event's perceived value. Therefore, the event organisers have to succeed in increasing the exposure of the event, for example, by taking advantage of all the possibilities offered by new technologies.

Fourth, **emotions are complicated to be improved**. Neither greater identification with the team nor greater exposure to the event can enhance the emotions of the event attendee. It is a challenge for organisers to achieve emotional events because emotions augment the perceived value of the event. However, as mentioned above, in order to get brands to sponsor the event, it is not necessary to stress that the event must be emotional. What is relevant is to highlight that the event involves teams with which the public identifies and motivates the audience.

Limitations and futures research

Research limitations exist as a result of the research design trade-offs. From an empirical standpoint, this paper investigated a mega sport event, F1. This means that its generalisation potential to other sports events is limited. Another future line of research could include a replica of the study in other type and scale of sport event.

From a methodological standpoint, while the unit of analysis in this study was sports-fan tourists, future research can conduct a comparative analysis between tourists and local fans.

Another significant limitation is that being such a comprehensive relational model, it was necessary to reduce the dimensions of the multidimensional constructs and compound indicators.

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