



ESPN: NBA Brand Sponsorship Effectiveness



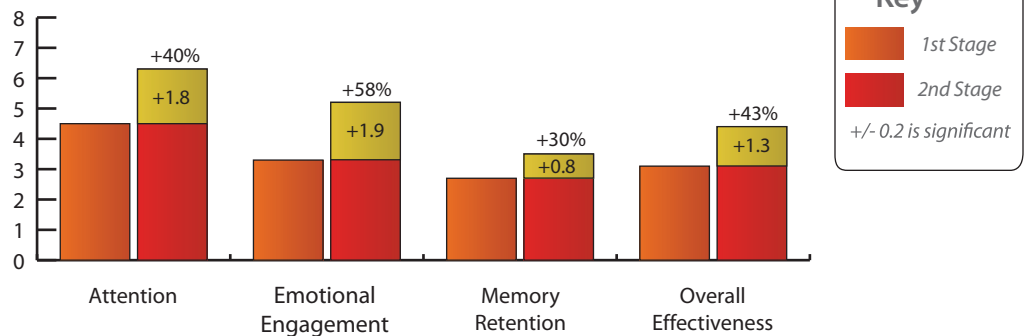
Category
National cable TV sports network with automotive sponsorship

Headquarters
Bristol, Connecticut

Website
www.espn.com

Impact of application of recommendations derived from neurological testing

Comparing the findings recorded during the first stage of the neurological testing with the results from the second stage, after a number of NeuroFocus's recommendations had been applied, significant gains--ranging from a minimum of 30% to a high of 58%--were achieved. Substantially improved scores were found in each of the three key metrics of attention, emotional engagement, and memory retention. In the overall effectiveness category, the improvement reached 43%.



Business Environment/Challenge

Reflecting the ever-growing popularity of televised sports, the sports broadcast/cablecast business is extremely competitive. The pursuit of viewers, the vying for sponsors, and the competition for the most-watched sports events has never been greater.

How sponsors' logos and related corporate identity elements are portrayed on screen and in the audio portion of programming is a major factor in the overall success—or lack thereof—of client companies' sports broadcast sponsorship deals. Not only are millions of viewers' impressions at stake, but multiple millions of sponsorship dollars ride on how well-executed sponsorship programs are on a given broadcast.

Until the advent of neuromarketing research capabilities, which track and analyze viewers' actual brain reactions to commercial messages and other marketing materials, there was no reliable, accurate, objectively-based research methodology that could assess the relative merits of various sponsorship executions on a broadcast. Even more elusive was the knowledge necessary to make specific recommendations on how to improve those executions to achieve maximum degrees of viewer attention, emotional engagement, and memory retention.

This need is more acute than ever, due to the proliferation of images and other visual stimuli routinely used in television programming today. New technologies, coupled with the heightened competition for viewer attention not just among competing programs and channels, but also with the Internet, MP3 players, videogames and mobile phones, have resulted in an increasingly dense and diversified broadcast environment. Getting viewers' attention in this hyper-cluttered television world has never posed more of a challenge.

In that environment, ESPN, the leading national cable sports channel, asked NeuroFocus to evaluate the effectiveness of two major multinational automotive companies' sponsorships during the pre-game and half-time portions of a telecast of a National Basketball Association game. One company sponsored the pre-game, while the other sponsored the half-time segment.

A parallel assignment was to evaluate the effectiveness of an automotive category-related company's and a major telecommunications company's sponsorships of the pre-game and half-time segments on a competitive cable channel's telecast of an NBA game.

It was a task that NeuroFocus's capabilities were ideally and uniquely well suited for.

NeuroFocus Research Goals

The objective of this research was to assess the effectiveness, from a neurological impact perspective, of all of the various on-air portrayals of these four companies' sponsorships.

NeuroFocus Testing Methodologies

We screened, selected, and tested 20 subjects for the ESPN program; and an equal 20 for the other cable channel's program

75% of both groups were male, and 25% were female

NeuroFocus Research Metrics

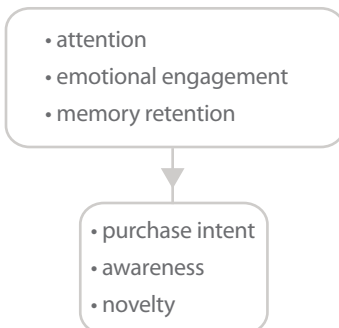
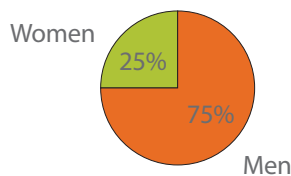
We evaluated the program sponsorships according to six measures. Our three primary metrics are:

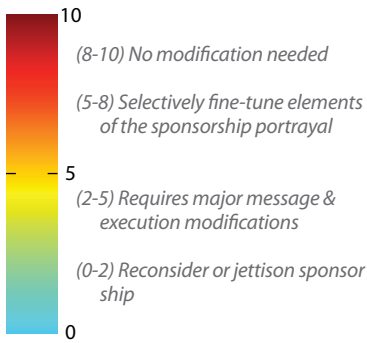
- attention
- emotional engagement
- memory retention

From these three primary metrics we derive three additional measurements:

- purchase intent
- awareness
- novelty

75% of both groups were male,
and 25% were female





Our test results are translated into individual scales, with scores rating from 0 to 10, with +/- 0.2 being significant.

For this study, the following specific criteria were established:

Rating 0-2: Reconsider or jettison sponsorship

Rating 2-5: Requires major message & execution modifications

Rating 5-8: Selectively fine-tune elements of the sponsorship portrayal

Rating 8-10: No modification needed

Pre-Game Segment

During the pre-game segment, measurements were made of nine specific on-screen executions on ESPN where the sponsor's name and/or logo were presented during the program. A total of seven separate executions were measured on the competing cablecaster's program:

ESPN

- Sponsor introduction during program's intro
- Show name and sponsor name on desk as camera panned in
- Sponsor name and logo on the desk and back of screen
- Combination of sponsor name and logo on the desk, back of the screen and name in the ticker title
- Sponsor name in the ticker title
- Sponsor name in the fading ticker text
- Sponsor name and logo in the back monitor
- Combination of sponsor name in the back monitor and in the fading ticker text
- Sponsor shoot around with a flaming background at the end of the show

Competitive Cable Channel

- Sponsor introduction at the beginning of the show
- An intro of the sponsor name in a sharp animation
- Sponsor name on the desk front (top of desk)
- Sponsor name/logo on monitor to the back and periphery of screen
- Multiple sponsor names moving up on a monitor on back and side of screen
- Intro of the sponsor on a monitor hanging from the ceiling
- Sponsor name at the top of the "Questions of The Night" segment

We further refined these ratings and compared the average effectiveness and length of portrayal for each of these individual elements, on both ESPN and the competitor's broadcast.

Application of NeuroFocus-Recommended Improvements to Sponsorship Portrayals resulted in higher effectiveness

NeuroFocus' recommendations were applied to another NBA broadcast on ESPN: a pre-game show featuring an auto-maker's sponsorship.

Following that application, scores rose in each of the measurements across the primary categories of attention, emotional engagement and memory retention; plus the metric of overall effectiveness.

The test results for each of the individual program sponsorship elements which were measured in the initial research were compared with the results learned from the second set of tests. An overall assessment of the successes and 'missed opportunities' for each of these program sponsorship elements was compiled. A final summary of evaluations and recommendations for both the pre-game and half-time programs was provided, to recap the effectiveness levels of each of the program sponsorship elements after the second round of testing was completed.

ESPN Half-Time Program Sponsorship

The network's half-time show, which was sponsored by another major car company, was measured and evaluated according to NeuroFocus' three primary criteria—attention, emotional engagement and memory retention—plus a metric gauging its overall effectiveness.

The benchmark results from the first round of testing were compared to the results from the second round, to determine gains or losses in the effectiveness of the ways in which the company's sponsorship was portrayed. Again using the three primary metrics, plus 'effectiveness' as the fourth, the results showed that gains were accomplished in attention and memory retention, while declines were shown in emotional engagement and effectiveness.

Ratings were distilled for each of the 12 specific on-screen executions of the company's program sponsorship, for both round one and round two of the testing. In addition, evaluation was made of the average effectiveness and length of portrayal of each of these executions, plus an added category for "show prep", with targeted comments made on three of them, noting "room for improvement"; "missed opportunity"; and "optimal use".

A final summary of evaluations and recommendations for the half-time program was provided, to recap the effectiveness levels of each of the program sponsorship elements after the second round of testing was completed.



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