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An Analysis of Sponsorship Recall During Gay Games IV

Brenda G. Pitts, Florida State University

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if people attending the Gay Games could accurately identify the official sponsors. Sponsorship recall methodology was used, and a survey specific to the Gay Games was developed. Respondents included 182 people who identified themselves as a Gay Games athlete, spectator, or worker. Results were varied but showed an unusually high recall rate of the sponsors. Additionally, in relation to participant attitude toward the sponsors, the results showed a comparatively strong attitude toward new loyalty to a company or product as a result of the company's involvement in the Games: Ninety-two and three-tenths percent said they would be more likely to buy the product of a Gay Games sponsor. This study could have significant implications for companies considering sponsorship involvement in lesbian and gay sports events.

Introduction

Sponsorship has grown significantly as a form of advertising in the sport industry. At the time this study was conducted, corporate expenditure on sponsorship in the sport industry increased from \$900 million in 1990 to an estimated \$3.7 billion in 1994 (Pitts & Stotlar, 1996). Sport marketing executives in the sponsoring companies believe the expenditure is justified because they believe sponsorship increases prod-

uct and brand awareness and loyalty and can affect market share.

Research shows that there is an expansive and growing lesbian and gay sports industry (Pitts, 1988, 1994). Indeed, recent research shows the industry is estimated to be somewhere between \$180 million to \$15 billion dollars industry and involves 11 million lesbian and gay people (Pitts, 1997, in press). The lesbian and gay market is no longer

considered the pariah market it once was in the 1950s and 1960s. It is today recognized as a viable, potentially lucrative, chic, and high brand-loyal market by corporate America (Badgett, 1997; Baker, 1997; Cronin, 1993; Davis, 1994; Elliot, 1994; "Gays Celebrate and Business Tunes In," 1994; Webster, 1994).

cities in the United States (Pitts, 1994, 1997, in press). There are also national and international organizations providing national and international level sports and recreational events and activities. The largest and perhaps the one event indicative of the growth and popularity of sports in the lesbian and gay population is the Gay Games.

The Gay Games is the

Olympic-style event held every 4

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In 1988, Pitts (1988) reported that lesbian and gay people were developing and organizing sports at a very fast pace. In that study, findings showed that lesbian and gay sports organization start-ups grew from 1 per year in 1980 to 4.4 per year in 1986. Recent research shows the growth has continued and that there is a plethora of sports, fitness, recreation, and leisure-related products in most

years primarily, but not exclusively, for lesbian and gay people around the world. The first Gay Games, held in 1982, attracted just over 1,200 participants, and the number has almost doubled for each subsequent Games. In fact, research after Gay Games IV in 1994 showed that it is one of the largest sports events of the 1990s. There were 10,864 participants, 7,000 workers, 31 sports events, 40 countries represented, over a million spectators, and an economic impact of \$112 million (Davis, 1994; Pitts, 1995, 1997). It is important to note that the number of participants for Gay Games IV was nine times the number for Gay Games I.

Gay Games IV carried an unusual set of circumstances making it

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a very attractive marketing and sponsorship opportunity. An additional event held the following week was Stonewall 25 — the 25th anniversary of the year cited as the beginning of the modern lesbian and gay rights movement. The combination of Gay Games IV and Stonewall 25 was being touted as THE event of the decade for lesbian and gay people around the world. Estimates were for a captive audience of over 3 million. In addition, the Closing Ceremonies of Gay Games IV were to be held in Yankee Stadium with an expected sell-out crowd. This combination made this a good marketing opportunity. As a result, sponsorship was a record high for the Games.

It is perplexing, however, that even though there appears to be a large and varied lesbian and gay sports industry, there is very little research. Indeed, a review of literature revealed no research involving sponsorship and the Gay Games. Therefore, research is certainly needed and warranted. It would significantly add to the small but growing research on lesbian and gay people in sport. Moreover, the knowledge gained can inform people who work in the sports industries who must acknowledge the existence of lesbian and gay people in their workplace, as clients, athletes, coaches, and managers, as well as recognize the lesbian and gay sports industries. Indeed, seeking to understand lesbian and gay people and their relationships with and involvement in sport is significant to any study of sport. Therefore, it was the purpose of this study to determine if people attending the Gay Games IV could accurately identify the official sponsors of the Games.

Method

According to Sandage (1983) there are two major categories in measuring advertising effectiveness: direct and intermediate. *Direct* research analyzes the consumer's actions before and after possible exposure to advertising. In other words, will the consumer buy a product when ex-

posed to its advertising? *Intermediate* research examines consumer response to the advertising. Simply put, will the consumer remember the advertisement enough to recognize or recall the advertisement, the company, or the brand name?

Intermediate research uses two testing methods: recall and recognition (Holbert, 1975; Sandage, 1983). *Recall* studies require the study participant to name the advertisement strictly from memory with no outside cues. *Recognition* studies allow the study participant to identify an advertiser by selecting from a list. According to Stotlar (1993),

recall testing methodology is considered to be the more powerful methodology because it requires the respondent to retrieve the name from memory. This means that the message is active in the memory of the consumer. As a weakness, the recall method requires time for the respondents to record their responses and does not account for the possibility of memory error. (p. 39)

Using the studies of Cuneen and Hannan (1993), Sandler and Shani (1993), and Stotlar (1993) as models for this study, a questionnaire was designed. A total of 182 people were surveyed during the week of the Gay Games in New York City, June 17–26, 1994. The study

participants were randomly selected using a "mall intercept" approach (Hansen & Gauthier, 1992) at 12 different locations. Identical intercept approach scripts were used. Study participants were asked to respond to a research survey about the Gay Games. The researcher asked the questions to the study participants and recorded the answers. No cues were given. All surveys completed were usable in the study. Three categories of data were collected: study participant demographics, sponsorship recall, and attitudes toward sponsorship of the Gay Games.

The recall method was used to determine if study participants could identify sponsors of the Gay Games. Two questions were asked about each possible sponsor. For example, the study participants were first asked, "Is there an official credit card company of the Gay Games?" If they answered yes, they were then requested to name it. No clues or cues were given, and the study participant's answer was recorded as given. The number of correct and incorrect identifications was calculated, and a simple mean was determined. As the nature of this study was exploratory and descriptive, no other statistical analyses were conducted.

There were eight categories of sponsorships for Gay Games IV (see Table 1). This study focused only on the category of major sponsors.

Table 1
Sponsorship Categories and Sponsors of Gay Games IV

- (1) Major Sponsors: American Preferred Plan, Continental Airlines, Miller Brewing, Naya Spring Water, OUT Magazine
- (2) Cultural Festival Major Sponsor: The Village Voice
- (3) Supporting Sponsors: Hiram Walker, Kimono and Maxx Condoms, Penn Racquet Sports, Pharmicia
- (4) Official Travel Sponsor: Pride Tours
- (5) Official Nightlife Sponsor: HX
- (6) Official Merchandising and Vending Agent: Loring & Matthews Merchandising
- (7) Official Merchandise Licensees: AIA Funwear, Ames & Rollinson, Custom Pin & Design, Gallery Eclectic, IMA Fashions, Tags by Design
- (8) Marketing Partners: Entertainment Weekly, Damron Guides, Detour Guides, Out & About, 2GAYFON

There were five major sponsors. The survey was planned with questions on some types of sponsors that did not exist. This was done to compare these results against the results concerning the actual types of sponsors and to analyze the effects of heavy ambushers at the Games.

Questions concerned the study participant's notice of sponsor advertising, sponsorship solicitation, and probable purchase of sponsor's products. These questions were asked to determine if the participant recognized the use of the words "proud sponsor" in a company's advertising and if the participant thought there should be more sponsorship. In addition, the participant was asked the question every sponsor or potential sponsor wants to know: Are you more likely to buy the sponsor's products? These questions shed light on the study participant's attitudes and perceptions concerning sponsorship and a sponsor's products.

Results and Discussion

Participant demographics. Demographic information collected from the survey are shown in Table 2 and are given in descending order of most to least frequent answers. On the average, the study participants were 92% lesbian or gay, aged 25 to 44 (83%), and citizens of the United States (81%). They had a higher education level with 82% having a college degree and 34% with a graduate or terminal degree and a comfortable income with 51% in the \$21,000 to \$45,000 range and 21% in the \$46,000-plus range. Based on the reported information, it appears that the average person attending Gay Games IV was young to middle-aged, well educated, and making a middle to high income.

Sponsorship recall. Addition of "dummy" companies to sponsorship questionnaires is common methodology in sponsorship research. This is done to study the effects of ambush marketing and confusing advertising. That is, if a high number of study participants believe Company A is an official sponsor

Table 2
Study Participant Demographics Data
(each set listed in descending order)

Gender:	Female	104	57.1%
	Male	77	42.3%
	Transgender	1	.5%
Age:	25-34	96	52.7%
	35-44	55	30.2%
	45-54	19	10.4%
	55-plus	3	1.6%
	18-24	8	4.4%
	under 18	1	.5%
Sexual Orientation:	lesbian/gay	167	91.8%
	heterosexual	11	6.0%
	bisexual	4	2.2%
Citizenship:	United States	148	81.3%
	other	34	18.7%
Income Level:	\$31,000-\$45,000	50	27.5%
	\$21,000-\$30,000	43	23.6%
	under \$20,000	40	22.0%
	\$46,000-\$60,000	21	11.5%
	\$61,000-\$75,000	11	6.0%
	\$100,000 plus	11	6.0%
	\$76,000-100,000	6	3.3%
Education Level:	undergraduate degree	87	47.8%
	graduate degree	44	24.2%
	high school diploma	33	18.1%
	terminal degree	18	9.9%
Gay Games Involvement:	athlete	87	47.8%
	spectator	81	44.5%
	worker	9	5.0%
	other	5	2.7%

when Company A is actually not an official sponsor, then other factors might be responsible for the participants' recognition of company A. Many times, this is due to very heavy advertising with specific messages to purposefully create confusion, but also to keep the ambusher's company name or product in the consumer's mind. Therefore, questions concerning sponsor recall contained both official major sponsors and "dummy" sponsors to compare the results in relation to the company's advertising methods surrounding the event. This can help determine which advertising tactics might have been more effective in gaining the attention of the consumer at the event. Four of the five official major sponsors and five

dummy sponsors were included in this study. Tables 3 and 4 present the results of the sponsorship recall questions.

Over half of the 182 study participants correctly provided the name of the company/product on two of the official major sponsors used in this study (see Table 3). Also, over half of those who responded yes could then name correctly the major official sponsor of the four asked about on the survey. Likewise, over half of the 182 study participants were certain that four of the five "dummy" sponsors on the survey were not official sponsors of the Games (see Table 4). This seems to suggest that most study participants were well aware of the Gay Games official sponsors

Table 3
Survey Results on Official Major Sponsors

Is there an official airlines sponsor?	Yes — 71 (39%)	No — 111 (61%)
Name it:	Continental	41 (57.8%)
	American	10 (14%)
	Don't know	9 (12.7%)
	United	6 (8.5%)
	Delta	2 (2.8%)
	USAir	2 (2.8%)
	Qantas	1 (1.4%)
Is there an official nonalcoholic beverage?	Yes — 84 (46.2%)	No — 98 (53.8%)
Name it:	Naya	64 (76.2%)
	Don't know	7 (8.3%)
	Pepsi	4 (4.8%)
	Coca-Cola	4 (4.8%)
	Gatorade	3 (3.5%)
	Sprite	2 (2.4%)
Is there an official magazine?	Yes — 120 (65.9%)	No — 62 (34.1%)
Name it:	OUT	100 (83.3%)
	Advocate	8 (6.6%)
	Other	8 (6.6%)
	Don't know	4 (3.3%)
Is there an official beer?	Yes — 125 (68.7%)	No — 57 (31.3%)
Name it:	Miller	97 (77.6%)
	Don't know	14 (11.2%)
	Budweiser	11 (8.8%)
	Coors	3 (2.4%)

and unofficial sponsors.

The results show that the study participant recall rate was very high when compared to those of other similar studies (Sandler & Shani, 1993; Stotlar, 1993). For example, the Stotlar (1993) study on recognition of sponsors of the 1992 Winter Olympic Games showed that study participants' correct recognition rates ranged from less than 20% to 61.66%. The results of the current study are much higher and ranged from 57.8% to 83.3% correct recall.

Three of the four sponsors used in the study supported their sponsorship with significant levels of additional advertising, such as signage, products on site, print ads designed specifically for and to coincide with the event, and distribution of promotional merchandise. These three — Naya, OUT, and Miller — were more highly identified by the study participant at 76.2%, 77.6%, and 83.3% whereas the company that did no advertising

— Continental — received the lowest recall rate (57.8%). It appears, then, that leveraging sponsorship with additional advertising increases market awareness and recognition. In fact, two companies — AT&T and New York City Subways — that were not sponsors received much higher identification by the study participants than did Continental (see Table 4). AT&T used heavy ambush marketing tactics: There were company salespeople in many venue locations trying to get people attending the Games to sign for AT&T long-distance service, and AT&T used heavy advertising surrounding the Gay Games week noting their support for the gay community. It appears that study participants were confused by these tactics and believed that AT&T was an official sponsor. The New York City Subways system provided free transportation in the subways. However, it was for registered Gay Games athletes only. Gay

Games athletes were given a subway pass for the week and had to present it along with their official identification card in order to be admitted into the subway. The New York Gay Games Organizing Committee (NYGGOC), however, did not list NYC Subways as an official sponsor (see Table 1) even though sponsorship can include services-in-kind. Additionally, NYC Subways did not advertise as a sponsor. Many study participants obviously confused this service for official sponsorship.

Attitudes toward sponsors. Some of the reasons a company purchases sponsorship opportunities with sports events are to create product or brand awareness and

to influence purchase behavior. That is, the company aims to make its product or brand known to potential consumers and, ultimately, to create product or brand loyalty that is determined in sales. Therefore, four questions were asked concerning the participant's attitude toward sponsorship and their likelihood of purchasing the sponsor's products. The results are presented in Table 5.

Although 60.4% of the study participants noticed the words "proud sponsor" or the Gay Games logo in company advertisements, 39.6% did not. This low percentage may be partially explained by the fact that there was no television advertising; rather, there was only print advertising. Moreover, most print ads appeared primarily in local (New York) periodicals and, when published in periodicals beyond locally, advertising was done very close to event time. That is, most advertising by the sponsors

relative to the Games was run in only a few magazines and newspapers and within a few months of the dates of the Games. This limited amount of advertising, limited number of media outlets, and limited duration of advertising run most likely reached a limited number of target markets. However, although there were limits, well over half of these study participants noticed the "proud sponsor" advertising.

An overwhelming majority, 99.5%, of the study participants want to see more companies get involved as sponsors and believe that the Federation of Gay Games, the governing body, should actively solicit sponsorship.

Many study participants commented with their answer to the question of whether more companies should get involved as sponsors. For example, some of the comments recorded by investigators on the surveys included

"Oh, yes, definitely. I don't care how much money they give us, but I want to know that they support *us* (meaning, lesbian and gay people). And if I

knew they would support us, I would support them."

"Yes, definitely. I wish they would be standing in line to sponsor us like they stand in line to sponsor the other Olympics. Wouldn't that be great? To see companies fighting over us?"

"Yes. I wish they weren't so afraid to come on out of the

closet and put their money on us. You know they know how loyal we can be of someone who supports us."

"Yes! Look, all I'm ever going to drink again is Miller beer and Naya Spring Water! And if other companies weren't afraid to support us, I would be buying their stuff, too."

The comments seem to reflect a de-

Table 4
Survey Results on Questions Asked About Dummy Sponsors

Is there a credit card company?	Yes — 42 (23.1%)	No — 140 (76.9%)
Name it:	Visa	18 (42.9%)
	Don't know	13 (31%)
	Mastercard	9 (21.4%)
	American Express	2 (4.7%)
Is there a long-distance phone service?	Yes — 132 (72.5%)	No — 50 (27.5%)
Name it:	AT&T	109 (82.6%)
	Don't know	11 (8.3%)
	MCI	5 (3.7%)
	other	4 (3%)
	Sprint	3 (2.3%)
Is there an official car?	Yes — 3 (1.6%)	No — 179 (98.4%)
Name it:	Cadillac	1 (33.3%)
	Saab	1 (33.3%)
	Don't know	1 (33.3%)
Is there an official restaurant?	Yes — 8 (4.4%)	No — 174 (95.6%)
Name it:	Don't know	7 (87.5%)
	Colonial Inn	1 (12.5%)
Is there an official transportation service?	Yes — 37 (20.3%)	No — 145 (79.7%)
Name it:	NYC Subways	28 (75.7%)
	Don't know	6 (16.2%)
	Kennedy Travel	1 (2.7%)
	Sport Line	1 (2.7%)
	Carey	1 (2.7%)

Table 5
Survey Responses to Questions on Sponsor Advertising, Sponsorship Solicitation, and Probable Purchase of Sponsor's Products

Have you noticed advertisements with the words "proud sponsor" or the Gay Games logo in the ad?	Yes — 110 (60.4%)	No — 72 (39.6%)
Would you like to see more companies get involved as sponsors of the Gay Games?	Yes — 181 (99.5%)	No — 1 (.5%)
Do you think the Federation of Gay Games should actively solicit sponsors?	Yes — 177 (97.3%)	No — 5 (2.7%)
Are you more likely to buy the product of a Gay Games sponsor?	Yes — 168 (92.3%)	No — 14 (7.7%)

Table 6
Information for Sport Management Educators and Students

1. The Gay Games are held every 4 years. There are thousands of opportunities for internships and research projects. Sport management educators could make this information available to students and even use the Gay Games as an assignment. Additionally, information can be found easily on the Internet.
2. The lesbian and gay sports industry is a large and growing industry and part of the larger sport industry. Teams, leagues, and organizations most likely exist in your city. Educators and students could establish contact with them just like any other local sports organization and work together on internships, jobs, speaking engagements, and research projects.
3. There is a small but growing body of literature — nonfiction, fiction, research-based, film, directories, courses, and web-sites, for example — on lesbian and gay people in sport. The author is encouraging the identification of it as "Lesbian and Gay Sport Studies." If you are interested and would like a list of these resources, please contact the author. Educators and students could use this information in any number of ways, such as to identify local organizations, to seek internship opportunities, to learn more about the industry, and to consider research possibilities.

sire for support, regardless of the level or type of sponsorship support. Indeed, they seemed to suggest that the participants would like to have more support from companies because it suggests a stated support for a people, not just a sports event.

With the answers to the last question — would you be more likely to buy a sponsor's products? — it appears that the study participants would be extremely loyal to a company's support. To this question, 92.3% answered yes, they

would be more likely to buy a sponsor's product. This is significantly high compared to results of other sponsorship studies (Sandler & Shani, 1993; Stotlar, 1993). Such a high number certainly deserves further study. However, one of the reasons for it can be found in the participant's comments after answering the question and in what I have found to be the attitude of many lesbian and gay people toward support. That is, as an oppressed population slowly gaining recognition and acceptance, lesbian

and gay people seem to be much more appreciative of support and will reward it with loyalty. Therefore, perhaps companies looking for a loyal consumer should give serious consideration to sponsorship of lesbian and gay events.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the study participants had a relatively high recall rate of sponsors. In addition, it appears that they were affected by those sponsors who supported their

Table 7
Conclusions and Recommendations for Sport Marketers

1. It appears that sponsors who support their sponsorship with other forms of advertising can increase their name recognition. Sport marketers should always consider using a mix of advertising tools in conjunction with sponsorship.
2. Ambush marketing can be beneficial in confusing people into thinking that heavy advertisers are sponsors. However, there can be legal consequences. Sport marketers should always consult their attorneys before planning such tactics.
3. The Gay Games is an enormous event. Gay Games IV is second only to the 1996 Summer Olympics in relation to the number of participants. Although the Gay Games is the premier lesbian and gay sports event, the lesbian and gay sports industry is a vast and growing industry and is increasingly recognized by both mainstream corporate America and lesbian and gay corporate America. In fact, since this study was conducted, recent research has shown that an estimated size of the lesbian and gay sports market is somewhere between \$180 million to \$15.2 billion (see Pitts, 1997, and Pitts, in press). Sport marketers should get to know this market and consider the potential opportunities available.
4. This study shows that the study participants are highly likely (92.3%) to purchase the Gay Games sponsors' products. If these results were to be the same for the current general lesbian and gay population in the United States, the market is a sizable 25 million (using the generally accepted 10% rule; that is, 10% of any population are lesbian, gay and bisexual). Sport marketers of any company should give serious consideration to the Gay Games as a potentially lucrative sponsorship opportunity.

sponsorship with other forms of advertising to increase visibility: heavy print advertising, signage on site, merchandising, and company products available on site. Naya advertised heavily and provided free bottles of Naya Spring Water in large barrel-style containers that looked like a large bottle of Naya Spring Water at every sports venue, exhibition site, and gathering places throughout the week. OUT magazine used its magazine for heavy advertising as an official sponsor and provided one of the major printed programs for the Games. Miller advertised heavily in many lesbian and gay media and provided thousands of free promotional merchandise items, including T-shirts, caps, pins, key chains, and drink cups, to every athlete registered for the Games.

Study participants were affected

The study participants supported the idea to get more companies involved in sponsorship of the Games. In addition, a significantly high percentage of the participants indicated that they would be more likely to buy sponsor's products. Therefore, those companies considering the Gay Games or other lesbian and gay sports event as a future sponsorship possibility should consider the results of this study: What company wouldn't want to be involved in sponsoring an event for which over 92% of those involved state that they would buy their products?

by the heavy ambush marketing of one company, AT&T, and incorrectly identified it as an official sponsor. They also incorrectly identified the subway system for its free services to the registered athletes. Free services are a form of sponsorship. However, the organizing committee did not list the subway system as an official sponsor.

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Therefore, those companies considering the Gay Games or other lesbian and gay sports event as a future sponsorship possibility should consider the results of this study: What company wouldn't want to be involved in sponsoring an event for which over 92% of those involved state that they would buy their products?

Further research is recommended. The author believes that research involving different research methods at future Gay Games events as well as other lesbian and gay sports events could be used and compared to the findings of this study. Other research possibilities involve studies on signage, advertising, ambushers, and merchandising and licensing to determine if participants are affected by different types of advertising. Additionally, it is suggested that this study and

well as the lesbian and gay sports industries. Students and faculty could benefit through research, internships, jobs, and understanding (see Table 6). Practitioners could benefit through market and industry recognition, market development, market penetration, and business-venture collaboration (see Table 7).

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