

Cognitive evaluation: prompts used to measure sponsorship awareness

John A. Tripodi

Premiership Strategies International

Martin Hiron

Sweeney Research

David Bednall

Monash University

Max Sutherland

Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship

Marketing managers have the same accountability for their spending on sponsorship as they do for their general advertising spend. Since the direct impact on customer loyalty and profit is so hard to measure, surrogate measures such as recall are often used. Key issues with recall measures are the nature and type of prompting given. This paper reports the results of an experiment on three different ways of measuring sponsorship recall based on brand, category and event prompts. Differences between the prompts are shown with some facilitating and another inhibiting recall. The results are discussed within the framework of spreading activation theory which has the potential to explain and predict recall.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, corporate sponsorship has exhibited sizeable growth as a marketing communication tool. Corporate sponsorship, in particular the sponsorship of sport, has offered marketers a viable means to target consumers, and as a result, the medium has gained a reputation for its ability to influence consumer behaviour. Meenaghan (1991, p. 36) defines sponsorship as

... an investment, in cash or kind, in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that activity.

Tripodi (2001, p. 96), in the context of sport, defines corporate sponsorship as the

...provision of assistance by a commercial organisation (sponsor), in cash or kind, to a sports property (sponsee), in exchange for the rights to be associated with that sports property for the purpose of gaining commercial and economic advantage.

Large corporations such as Coca-Cola and Anheuser-Busch are allocating in excess of US\$100 million of their annual marketing budgets to sponsorship. In addition to the direct costs of securing sports property rights (i.e. 'cost of entry'), corporations must also spend additional monies on leveraging their sponsorship investments. It is generally acknowledged that an amount equal to the direct costs is the minimum needed to exploit and leverage the sponsorship for maximum effect (Meenaghan 1998a).

The worldwide sponsorship market, excluding expenditure on leveraging activities, was valued at US\$25 billion in 2000 (Sponsorship Research International 2001). Given the copious amounts of money filtering through sponsorship transactions, companies have increasingly had to devote time and effort to evaluating the returns on their sports sponsorship investments. Increased accountability is required by senior management as they focus on cost-cutting activities to improve the bottom line. As marketing communication expenditure continues to be heavily scrutinised at the boardroom level, the challenge is to demonstrate that promotional activities are asset-building investments as opposed to costs to the business. Consequently, marketers who use sports sponsorship must demonstrate an appropriate return on investment in terms of positive communication effects, and hence, the generation of sales.

Measuring the effects of sports sponsorship, or any type of sponsorship for that matter, is considered the 'grey' area in the sponsorship literature. Perhaps this is due to many sponsoring companies not articulating sponsorship objectives to justify future measurement and evaluation. To date there has been no consensus on a uniform method of evaluating sponsorships. As a result, a variety of research techniques are adopted by practitioners to evaluate sports sponsorship investments. As identified by Meenaghan (1991), there are three main methods employed by companies:

1. *Sales effectiveness*

Measuring sponsorship success in terms of sales represents a 'bottom-line' approach to evaluating the effects of sponsorship. Surprisingly, many companies do judge the success of their sponsorship investments on the basis of an increase in sales performance. However, an increase in sales at the time of the association with a sports property cannot directly be attributed to the sponsorship (Copeland *et al.* 1996; Wilson 1997) due to

the presence of other communication mix elements working in tandem with the sponsorship in a company-wide effort to attract sales. Like any other promotional tool in the communications mix, it is difficult to isolate the contribution of sponsorship to a company's sales results.

2. *Media coverage/exposure gained*

Media audits can determine the quality and quantity of media exposure gained through the sponsorship involvement. Media exposure (both print and broadcast) is measured by placing an equivalent value on the exposure gained if the sponsoring company had purchased rate-card advertising. While this is a valid indicator of exposure and publicity generated through the sponsorship, it says nothing about the effect of that media exposure on consumers.

3. *Communication effects*

To measure the effectiveness of sponsorship in communications terms, companies measure awareness and image variables among consumers. This approach is designed to allow evaluation of the cognitive effects of the sponsorship and has the advantage that actual consumer perceptions are taken into consideration (Quester & Farrelly 1998). It attempts to reveal the cognitive impact of the sponsorship on consumers, rather than just measuring the extent of publicity generated through media coverage. The two most common techniques identified in the literature (McDonald 1991; Parker 1991), are the *continuous tracking* approach and the *ad hoc dipstick* (or *wave*) approach. Both of these vary not only in the frequency with which measurements are taken but also in the precise nature of the cueing questions used to measure sponsorship awareness.

A definitive model to evaluate sponsorship is yet to be developed.

Many sponsoring companies use only one of the three types of measures, if any, to evaluate the impact of sponsorship investment. We suggest it might be useful for firms to use a sports sponsorship evaluation framework that consists of a combination of the measures outlined above.

In current practice, awareness of the sponsorship is all too often the only measure gathered of the sponsorship. In our view, this is unfortunate. It is an empirical question as to whether conscious identification of the sponsor is really necessary for achieving image enhancement objectives (Johar & Pham 1999; Pham & Johar 2001). But there is additionally a problem presented when there is reliance on awareness estimate figures alone – especially without regard to false claiming and the fact that the estimates

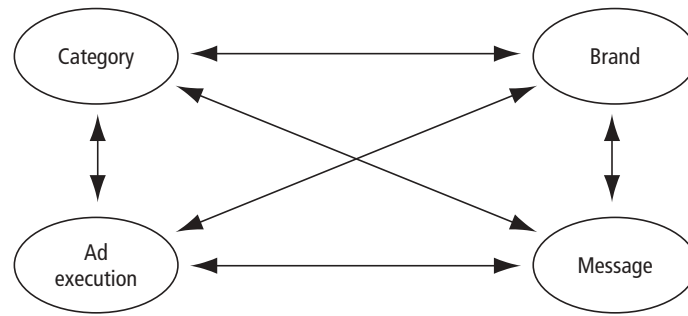
can differ depending upon what cues are incorporated in the awareness question. Indeed Johar and Pham (1999) raise questions as to whether sponsorship awareness or what they call ‘identification accuracy’ is an appropriate measure of the effectiveness of sponsorship communication.

However, the fact is that companies do currently rely heavily on measuring sponsorship awareness (Quester 1997) as a surrogate for sponsorship effectiveness and this underlines the importance of examining more closely in this paper the measurement of this construct. We examine the question cue(s) currently being used and others that have been suggested or might be used to measure sponsorship awareness.

Awareness measurement in sponsorship has a relatively short history compared to measurement of awareness for advertising where similar problematic issues have a somewhat longer, yet still scant, history of investigation. Accordingly, in this paper we draw on the, albeit limited, literature of advertising awareness measurement in an attempt to derive any implications for measuring sponsorship awareness.

There is no universal research methodology used when measuring the awareness construct in advertising. Debate regarding the evaluation of advertising memorability of consumers is perpetuated by various research firms endorsing and employing contrasting prompts when measuring ad campaigns. When cueing subjects at the beginning of a research interview, firms predominantly use a brand prompt or category prompt. The two prompts differ in that the former uses the *brand* as the cue to elicit consumer inferences, while the latter uses the product *category* as the stimulus to consumers. Keller (1993) depicts the differences between the brand prompt and category prompt when detailing the brand awareness construct. Underlying brand awareness is *brand recognition* which tests a consumer’s ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when prompted by the brand name, and *brand recall* which measures a consumer’s ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category as the cue. Furthermore, these two prompts are better understood when using the model demonstrated in Figure 1 that highlights the relationship between four key variables (category, brand, ad execution and message) when measuring ad awareness.

Harvey (2001) provides evidence that sponsorship produces recall and persuasion effects in a similar fashion to advertising. Figure 2 translates the above advertising model so that it is relevant in the context of sponsorship awareness. The *ad execution* variable is replaced with *sponsorship execution* and the important *event* variable is added to the model. Additionally, advertising messages are explicit in content whereas



Source: Staplehurst (1997)

Figure 1 Relationship between brand-cued and category-cued ad awareness

sponsorship messages are usually limited to the brand/company name in content (excluding communication tools used in leveraging the sponsorship investment), thus rendering sponsorship messages *implicit* beyond the brand/company name (Hastings 1984; Otker & Hayes 1987; Hansen & Scotwin 1995; Proctor 1997).

All awareness measurement involves some form of prompting, e.g. ‘What sponsorships can you think of?’, ‘Which companies sponsor the Olympics?’, ‘What sponsorships does Nike have?’ When undertaking sponsorship research both academics and practitioners have predominantly used the elicitation technique of an ‘event prompt’. This typically requires respondents to answer the following question: ‘When you think of [Event Z], what sponsors come to mind?’ In contrast to advertising research, most sponsorship research has, until recently, been confined to assessing sponsorship awareness using this type of event prompt.

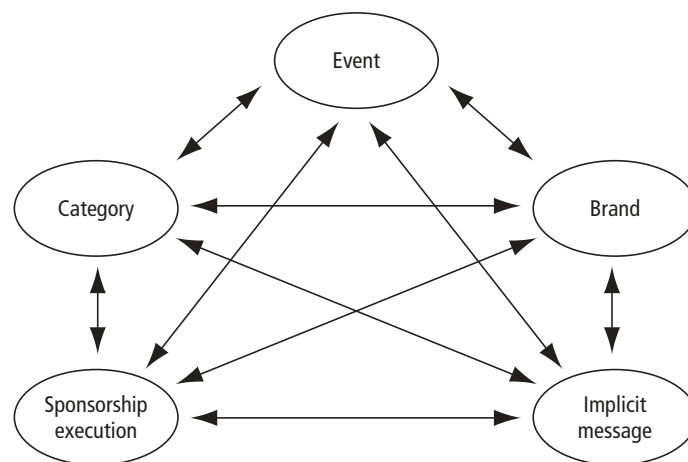


Figure 2 Relationship between event-cued, brand-cued and category-cued sponsorship awareness

Cues and spreading activation

Our memories are triggered by retrieval cues – things that make us remember other things. When we are trying to think of somebody's name, and the name will not come to mind, we may use various retrieval cues. We may deliberately bring to mind the situation in which we last saw the person and that may help us remember the name. Or we may recall that the person has the same first name as a particular friend and access it that way. We recognise that there are multiple ways of accessing a memory. What we are doing is looking for a retrieval cue that will help us activate the name.

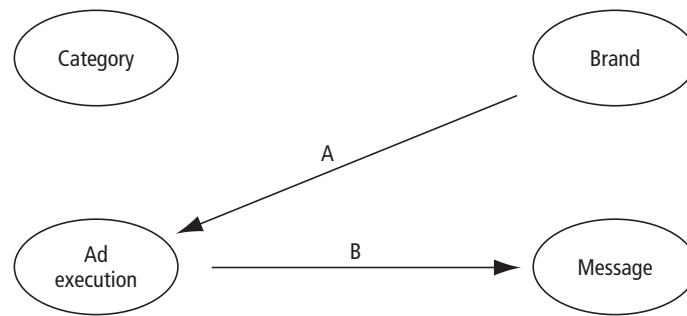
Empirical research conducted by Tulving and Pearlstone (1966) disclosed that information which is not accessed in consumer memory when given a particular cue, may be retrieved if an alternative cue is used. The theory of spreading activation (Anderson 1983; Sutherland 1993; Keller 1998), based on an associative memory model, would predict that sponsorship memories can also be accessed by different triggers. Under this model, a stimulus given to one area of memory will trigger strong retrieval from memories closely related to the original area. Over time, this trigger will spread through the semantic network to other areas of memory. The more indirect the pathway, the less likely a particular memory will be triggered.

Accessibility of information from the consumer memory is aligned to a network of nodes (i.e. stored information) and connecting links (i.e. strength of association between nodes). When a retrieval cue activates a particular node in the consumer memory, a proliferation of activation occurs from the initial activated node to other nodes depending on the strength of association between the nodes. Information is accessed or recalled when a particular node exceeds some threshold level (Keller 1987; Romaniuk & Sharp 1997).

Reviewing both the brand and category prompt again, Staplehurst (1997) maps out the cognitive process respondents undergo when questioned about their awareness levels of particular ads. Figure 3 details the relationship between the theory of spreading activation and brand-cued ad awareness.

The brand prompt represents a direct measure of the ad–brand linkage as respondents are simply asked if they have recently seen advertising for a particular brand (A). Respondents are then asked what messages the brand was attempting to communicate via the ad (B).

Figure 4 depicts the relationship between the theory of spreading activation and category-cued ad recall.

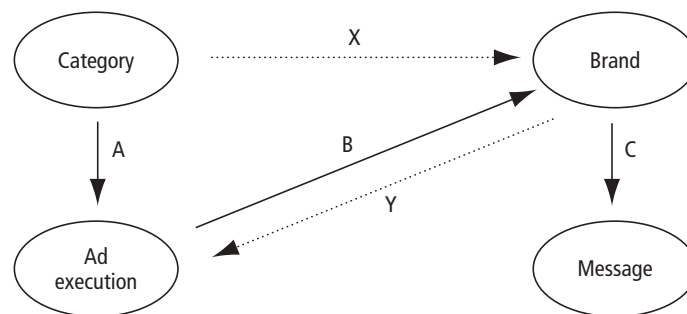


Source: Staplehurst (1997)

Figure 3 Relationship between ‘spreading activation’ theory and brand-cued ad awareness

For category-cued recall, respondents are asked to detail ads they have recently seen for a given product category (A) and subsequently, what brand was being advertised (B) in addition to what the message was in the ad (C). Thus, the category prompt provides an indirect path to measure consumer memorability (i.e. the strength of the ad–brand linkage). Furthermore, there is a distinct possibility that when respondents describe ads for a given category, brands (X) will be thought of prior to the ads (Y). Thus, unless follow-up questions are asked, brand-cued advertising awareness will not permit the quantification of recall for the current ad. However, if the objective is to measure the brand’s perceived ‘advertising presence’, then brand-cued advertising awareness will suffice.

Obtained sponsorship awareness figures may therefore vary depending upon the precise cue and the number of cues used in the question. A respondent may not be able to correctly identify a brand with an event it sponsors when cued with the actual event, but may possibly be able to do so when cued with the sponsoring brand and asked what events are



Source: Staplehurst (1997)

Figure 4 Relationship between ‘spreading activation’ theory and category-cued ad recall

sponsored by it. The realisation that these can produce differing awareness estimates is a problematical issue not just for sponsorship but also for measuring awareness of advertising.

Sponsorship awareness measurement

As indicated earlier, the event prompt is the one that has been predominantly used in sponsorship research. Rossiter and Percy (1997) criticised the use of the event prompt in sponsorship studies because it reverses the causal process with regard to the sequencing of variables within the question. According to Rossiter and Percy's methodological stance, it is inappropriate to use the event as the cue followed by a question asking respondents which companies or brands sponsored the event. This approach, they argue, is not representative of the real world where the choice situation dictates consumer focus upon the brand rather than the event. Instead, they advocate an alternative elicitation technique, which we term the *brand sponsorship prompt* (i.e. 'When you think of [Brand X], what sponsorships come to mind?'). The equivalent in advertising research is to ask what ads come to mind when you think of Brand X. (It is important not to confuse this with the more traditional form of brand prompting for advertising awareness which simply asks: 'Have you seen any advertising for Brand X lately?')

Cornwell and Maignan (1998) and Quester and Farrelly (1998) also question the validity of undertaking sponsorship research from an event prompt. Instead, they propose the use of an elicitation technique which is not sponsorship-based. Subsequently, the use of a classic approach such as a category prompt was recommended for future studies in measuring sponsorship impact. Historically used in advertising research, this approach cues respondents not with the ad or the brand but with the category (e.g. 'Describe for me any advertising you have seen for [Category Y, e.g. banks] on TV recently.').

In a comparative analysis of brand-cued ad awareness and category-cued ad awareness, Staplehurst (1997) listed a variety of problems he saw with using the category prompt to measure advertising memorability. He advocated brand-cued ad awareness over category-cued ad awareness, claiming that it overcomes most of the deficiencies of the latter. However, he did not provide empirical substantiation and Simper (1997) strongly refuted Staplehurst, arguing that the majority of his criticisms were simply incorrect and the remainder were not practically relevant or should only be noted by the researcher when constructing and using a category prompt

methodology. He defended the use of the category prompt while stopping short of advocating the superiority of either one over the other.

A category prompt for measuring sponsorship awareness would involve a question of the form: 'When you think of [Category Y, e.g. banks], what sponsorships come to mind?' We shall term this form of cueing as the *category sponsorship prompt*. A thorough review of the sponsorship literature failed to reveal any studies that attempted to measure the effects of sponsorship by using such a prompt.

Validation

The most common form of brand prompt used in advertising awareness measurement is one that simply requires a yes/no answer to the question: 'Have you seen any advertising for Brand X lately?', which would translate in sponsorship terms to a yes/no answer to the question of the form: 'Are you aware of any events that Brand X has sponsored recently?' Answers to such questions should be treated with caution, as there is no evidence of proven recall that the event is being sponsored by a particular brand. Proven recall would be evident if subjects specified a particular sponsored event when prompted by the brand. It is important to be aware of variations in response requirement to brand-cued questions. Sutherland and Friedman (2000) made the point that when prompting by brand, it is inappropriate to require *only* a yes/no answer to the question ('Have you seen any advertising for Brand X on TV recently?') because it leads to false claiming and generates artificially high figures for the current advertisement. They maintained that for any level of advertising awareness, maybe half or even less of the claimed recalls are likely to be valid as revealed by their follow-up question asking people to 'describe the ad' that they claim to have seen for the brand. Such 'recalls' were found to include past ads that were mistakenly remembered as being on air recently, publicity or promotional activity mistakenly remembered as 'advertising', competitor's ads mistaken for the brand, as well as ads from other product categories mistakenly recalled as being for that brand.

Additionally, Johar and Pham (1999) found that sponsor identification (sponsorship awareness) involves a substantial degree of construction that ranges from pure guessing to more strategic inferencing using relatedness and prominence cues. The implication for measuring sponsorship awareness when it is not cued by the event prompt is that respondents should be required to describe what the sponsored event is, rather than

simply answering yes or no to a question such as ‘Are you aware of any events that Brand X is sponsoring?’

Recognition

It is a well-established principle in psychology that memory is most effectively triggered if the cues at time of retrieval are identical to those at the time of exposure. This is the encoding specificity principle (Tulving & Thomson 1973). Accordingly, in advertising awareness measurement, another measure frequently used is recognition. People may not be able to recall the ad but it is more of a worry to advertisers if people are unable to indicate that they have at least seen the ad by recognising it.

In advertising, respondents are shown photo stills of the ad or the ad is verbally described to them and they are asked if they are aware of having seen that ad before. In advertising, recognition is usually asked as an additional question at the end of the questionnaire after other forms of cueing have already been used and generally then produces figures indicating even higher levels of awareness than the other measures.

Rossiter and Percy (1997) detail the distinction between recognition and recall measures in relation to the two main choice situations inherent in consumer behaviour. However, in sponsorship awareness the literature contains a paucity of analytical and empirical research aimed at comparing these two elicitation techniques.

In measuring awareness of sponsorships, recognition would translate into a question describing both the event and the sponsoring brand and asking respondents if they were aware that Brand X sponsored that (described) event. In other words, it is both a brand cue and event cue combined.

A recognition measure can indicate that the event–brand connections in the mind exist, but says nothing about the current strength or the likelihood that such connections will be activated at the point of purchase. Many connections can lie dormant in the mind and never influence us if they are never spontaneously reactivated or cross over into image. So, even though we may recognise that Brand X sponsored Event Y, it reveals nothing about the likelihood that the right connections will be activated in the purchase situation when people are considering Brand X or any effect on image change. Recognition is a diagnostic measure to check if the person has been exposed to the information and can be a very valuable measure for that purpose (Sutherland 1993).

Sponsorship measurement is a much younger field and hopefully has the opportunity to learn from the experiences in advertising awareness measurement and to avoid some of the same pitfalls. Debate regarding the evaluation of advertising awareness has been perpetuated by:

- various advertising research firms endorsing and employing contrasting elicitation technique methodologies in measuring the effects of ad campaigns; and
- basing the adherence to a particular methodology on advocacy more than testing and empirical examination of the results obtained using different cueing methodologies.

A systematic approach to sponsorship recall measurement

A detailed review of the current sponsorship literature surprisingly revealed that no study has attempted to investigate the different methods of measuring sponsorship awareness. Thus, this paper aims to fill a gap in the literature regarding sponsorship awareness measurement, in addition to encouraging further discussion and empirical research on the topic. This paper has identified three alternative cued sponsorship recall techniques that can be subjected to testing:

- *Event sponsorship prompt*: ‘When you think of [Event Z], which sponsors come to mind?’
- *Brand sponsorship prompt*: ‘When you think of [Brand X], what sponsorships come to mind?’
- *Category sponsorship prompt*: ‘When you think of [Category Y, e.g. banks], what sponsorships come to mind?’

In addition, a recognition prompt was also devised, based on asserting a sponsorship and testing whether the respondent could remember it, using a standard prompted recall measure:

- *Brand recognition prompt*: ‘I am going to tell you some of Brand X’s current or recent sponsorships. For each one, could you tell me whether you were aware, before today, of Brand X sponsoring that event? [Describe each sponsorship.]’

Given the relatively new conceptualisation of these sponsorship prompts, empirical research was warranted to compare the results when

using these alternative elicitation techniques to measure sponsorship awareness.

Methodology

In order to test differences between the various recall methods, an experimental design was devised. It aimed to allow a systematic comparison *between* sponsorship prompt types, while at the same time showing *within* each type how recall built at each stage as the recall elicitation process proceeded. The research was based on a telephone survey conducted by the market research company Sweeney Research, using CATI facilities. Sampling was completed using random digit dialling, resulting in 271 interviews with people aged 18 or over.

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions, as shown in Table 1. The focus of the questions was the recall of sporting sponsorships (events, teams or individuals) by Australia's four major banks. The survey was conducted prior to the Sydney 2000 Olympics. The official Olympic bank sponsor was Westpac, the smallest of the four banks. The other banks, the National, Commonwealth and ANZ banks, all had some forms of sport sponsorship during the period, including particular Olympic participants.

Thus the method combined telephone survey techniques, common in market research (ABS 2000), with an experimental approach that allowed the three prompting methods to be compared directly.

Results

Recall of Olympic Games sponsorship by the official bank sponsor

The survey questions produced information about a variety of sponsors and sponsorships. However, the results for the Sydney 2000 Olympics and Westpac (the official bank sponsor) are relevant to the prompt issue, with the main results shown in Table 2. The table is in two parts. The upper half shows the actual percentages of respondents giving each initial (partial-prompt) response. The second part of the table shows the *progressive* recall as the questions moved from partial to full recognition prompts. Thus, a total of 32% of people in the 'event sponsorship prompt' group recalled Westpac as a sponsor in one (or more) of the partial-prompts. The recognition prompt figure only includes those people who recalled the sponsor correctly at this stage (and not to any partial-prompt question).

Table 1 Assignment to treatment condition

Treatment condition	Question asked
Event sponsorship prompt	<p>'When you think of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, which sponsors come to mind? [PROBE.] Any others? [DO NOT PROMPT.]' First and other mentions were recorded. Two measures were recorded here, the <i>event partial-prompt (first mention)</i> and <i>event partial-prompt (other mention)</i> measures.</p> <p>Respondents were then asked, 'As far as you know, is any bank a sponsor of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games? [DO NOT PROMPT.]' This was the <i>category partial-prompt</i>.</p> <p>They were then asked, 'Many organisations are involved in the sponsorship of sport, whether that is sport generally, particular events, teams, individuals or competitions. Which sponsorships are you aware of that [READ OUT AND ROTATE NAMES OF TOP FOUR BANKS] supports? [PROBE.] Any others?' This was the <i>partial-prompt single measure</i>. These three part-prompt measures were totalled to find the <i>partial-prompt total measure</i>.</p>
Brand sponsorship prompt	<p>They were asked, 'Many organisations are involved in the sponsorship of sport, whether that is sport generally, particular events, teams, individuals or competitions. Which sponsorships are you aware of that [READ OUT AND ROTATE NAMES OF TOP FOUR BANKS] supports? [PROBE.] Any others?' This was the <i>partial-prompt brand total measure</i>.</p>
Category sponsorship prompt	<p>They were asked, 'Many organisations are involved in the sponsorship of sport, whether that is sport generally, particular events, teams, individuals or competitions. Which sponsorships are you aware of that any of the banks support? For each sponsorship you are aware of for the banks, please tell me the name of the bank and what it sponsors. [PROBE.] Any others?' The first bank mentioned was the <i>first mention partial-prompt</i>, subsequent mentions were recorded as <i>other mention partial-prompts</i>.</p> <p>They were then asked, 'Many organisations are involved in the sponsorship of sport, whether that is sport generally, particular events, teams, individuals or competitions. Which sponsorships are you aware of that [READ OUT AND ROTATE NAMES OF TOP FOUR BANKS] supports? [PROBE.] Any others?' This was the <i>partial-prompt single measure</i>. The three part-prompt measures were totalled to provide the <i>partial-prompt total measure</i>.</p>
Recognition prompt	<p>Then each respondent was asked, 'I am now going to tell you some of the banks' current or recent major sponsorships, each of which is an actual sponsorship. For each one, could you tell me whether you were aware of the sponsorship before today? [READ OUT – RANDOM ORDER.]' This was the <i>full-prompt measure</i>.</p>

Table 2 Recall of Sydney 2000 Olympic sponsorship

	Event sponsorship prompt (who sponsors the 2000 Olympics?)	Brand sponsorship prompt (Westpac – name any events they sponsor)	Category sponsorship prompt (banks – name any events that any banks sponsor)	Total
Partial-prompts:				
First mention (%)	14.4	*	7.7	
Other mention (%)	5.6	*	3.3	
Category/brand partial-prompt (%)	30.0	15.6	*	
Partial-prompt single measure (%)	25.6	*	14.3	
Partial-prompt total (%)	32.2	15.6	17.6	21.8
Recognition prompt (%)	17.8	48.9	40.7	35.8
Total aware (%)	50.0	64.4	59.3	57.6
Unaware (%)	50.0	35.6	41.8	42.4
<i>n</i> =	90	90	91	271

* Not applicable to this prompt

Thus the partial-prompt total and full-prompt scores added to form the total aware group and by deduction, the total unaware group could be calculated.

In terms of total awareness, an overall 58% claimed that the Westpac bank was a sponsor of the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Our main interest was in whether there was any effect of preceding the recognition question with an event or brand or category prompt. The results show that the sequence of prompting produced very different overall outcomes ($\chi^2 = 22.15$, 4df, $p < 0.05$).

A further analysis of this result suggested that the effect was largely because the 'event sponsorship prompt' group behaved differently to the other groups. In particular, this group had the highest recall after the partial-prompt questions but the lowest overall recall. The difference between the total awareness for the 'event sponsorship prompt' (50%) was significantly lower than for the 'brand sponsorship prompt' (64%) ($z = -1.97$, $p < 0.05$). On these results, it would seem that using an event + brand sequence before the recognition question is likely to produce significantly lower overall estimates of recognition of the sponsorship than if the brand + event before recognition sequence is used.

What of estimates of 'spontaneous' awareness based on the event cue alone or the brand cue alone or the category cue alone? Prompting by the event alone (prior to any recognition question) did not produce a figure significantly different to the brand or category prompts (26% vs. 16% vs.

14%) – at least on these sample sizes. However, when additional partial cues were introduced, as is sometimes the practice in advertising research, the exact sequence did seem to make a difference.

Following up the event cue with another question (brand cue), asking what events each of the various brands sponsored, produced a significantly higher estimate. Here, 30% ($z = 2.34, p < 0.05$) ‘spontaneously’ claimed awareness of Westpac sponsoring the Sydney Olympics. This contrasts with only 16% when respondents were prompted only by the brand (Westpac) and asked to recall what events it sponsored.

On the basis of this research, estimates of ‘spontaneous’ awareness are likely to be sensitive to the number of question prompts/probes, with more probes producing higher ‘spontaneous’ claimed awareness results.

Price and Tewksbury (1996) showed question order interacted with topic experience in producing recall. This would imply that people familiar with or interested in an event such as the Olympics would need less prompting to recall sponsorship than those less involved. To investigate this, each person was assigned to a total part-prompt recall, full prompt recall or no recall category. No relationship was shown between expressed interest in the Olympics and recall category. A multinomial logit model, with recall category as the dependent variable, showed that a model that had interactions between prompt type and being a current Westpac customer fitted the data. Table 3 shows the results.

The results indicated a more than good fit of the model to the data. The model separates out the effects of the various combinations of prompt type

Table 3 Recall type, prompt type and Westpac customer status

	Recall type	Not current customer	Current customer	Total
Event sponsorship prompt	Partial-prompt (%)	23	65	32
	Recognition prompt (%)	21	5	18
	Unaware (%)	56	30	50
	<i>n</i> =	70	20	90
Brand sponsorship prompt	Partial-prompt (%)	11	24	16
	Recognition prompt (%)	50	47	49
	Unaware (%)	39	29	36
	<i>n</i> =	56	34	90
Category sponsorship prompt	Partial-prompt (%)	13	29	18
	Recognition prompt (%)	43	33	41
	Unaware (%)	43	38	42
	<i>n</i> =	67	24	91

Likelihood ratio: $\chi^2 = 3.54, 4df, p = 0.63$

Entropy = 0.07, Concentration = 0.07

and being a current account holder on which recall group the respondent was in. In looking at the odds ratios of interest, a person in the 'event sponsorship' group was five times as likely to be in the partly-prompted recall group as in the full-recognition prompt group, while for the 'brand sponsorship' treatment the corresponding ratio is 0.6. People without a Westpac account were 3.6 times as likely to be in the full-recognition prompt group than in the partly-prompted group. These results match significant individual contingency tables showing that prompt type and ownership of a current Westpac account were both related to recall type. Thus, as expected, being a current account customer made people more likely to recall the sponsorship, even when only partly prompted.

Slippage analysis – results for the other major banks

Sponsors of highly visible events, and of the Olympics in particular, aim to get clear recall of their sponsorship. If competitors are also thought to be sponsors, then the value of the sponsorship is diminished. Such confusion may occur if competitors attempt to ambush the real advertiser (Meenaghan 1998b) or because consumers assume a natural connection or fit between the event and the sponsor (Harvey 2001). Spreading activation theory would suggest that links between a bank and sport and between a bank and individual Olympians or a bank and an Olympic team would also have a pathway to memories of the Olympics as a whole. Thus, some confusion would be expected when a range of sponsorships within a category coexist.

To examine this issue, identical recall approaches were used with Australia's other three major national banks, namely the ANZ, Commonwealth and National banks. In the lead-up to the Olympics, the National had advertising which featured individual sports people who were aspiring Olympians. The Commonwealth, a former state-owned but now privatised bank, sponsored the Australian cycling team, as well as cricket and netball. The ANZ was a sponsor of the earlier World Swimming Championships and golf. Thus all three banks had some association with groups of people who were likely to be Olympic competitors, as well as with sport more generally.

The recall data for the three banks are shown in Table 4. It should be noted that only a partial recognition prompt was recorded. Prompted recall could have only been measured by falsely asserting the sponsorship and seeing whether the consumer agreed. This was not done. The results suggest, once more, that the event sponsorship prompt achieves the highest

Table 4 Slippage analysis – erroneous recall of Sydney 2000 Olympic bank sponsorship

	Event sponsorship prompt	Brand sponsorship prompt	Category sponsorship prompt	Total
ANZ Bank				
Partial-prompts:				
First mention (%)	0.0	*	2.2	
Other mention (%)	0.0	*	0.0	
Category/brand partial-prompt (%)	0.0	5.6	*	
Partial-prompt single measure (%)	1.1	*	2.2	
Partial-prompt total (%)	1.1	5.6	4.4	3.7
Commonwealth Bank				
Partial-prompts:				
First mention (%)	3.3	*	6.6	
Other mention (%)	3.3	*	2.2	
Category/brand partial-prompt (%)	17.8	10.0	*	
Partial-prompt single measure (%)	0.0	*	7.7	
Partial-prompt total (%)	24.4	10.0	16.5	17.0
National Bank				
Partial-prompts:				
First mention (%)	0.0	*	2.2	
Other mention (%)	0.0	*	2.2	
Category/brand partial-prompt (%)	6.7	8.9	*	
Partial-prompt single measure (%)	1.1	*	2.2	
Partial-prompt total (%)	7.8	8.9	6.6	7.7
All three banks				
Partial-prompts:				
First mention (%)	3.3	*	11.0	
Other mention (%)	3.3	*	4.4	
Category/brand partial-prompt (%)	24.4	24.4	*	
Partial-prompt single measure (%)	2.2	*	12.1	
Partial-prompt total (%)	32.2	21.1	24.2	25.8
<i>n</i> =	90	90	91	271

* Not applicable to this prompt

part-prompt recall (false in this case). However, the results are not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 3.10$, 2df, ns). A comparison between the results for Westpac in Table 2 and Table 4 shows that the true sponsor, Westpac, had the highest part-prompt recall. However, when the results for the three other banks were aggregated, there was no overall difference between the others as a group and Westpac ($\chi^2 = 0.77$, 2df, ns). It should be noted that some consumers named more than one bank as a sponsor.

Conclusion

The key outcome of this research was the variation in sponsorship recall for different prompt sequences. It is common practice in market research to measure 'spontaneous' (event- or brand-cued) recall first and then recognition. The results show varying responses. In part, this may reflect the amount of *time* given to respondents, as well as the amount of prompting. Both factors could apply in helping respondents retrieve memories from indirect pathways, as predicted by spreading activation theory.

With the full prompts, it was clear that simply adding more prompting information would not necessarily result in better recall. In the case of the 'event sponsorship prompt' group, respondents were evidently forced to change their frame of reference, going from the Olympics to its sponsors then going from sponsorship to banks. Other groups were first part-prompted about banks and sponsorship. It may be that this frame change resulted in the worst overall performance for this group, despite the fact that it had the best partly-prompted recall performance. Thus spreading activation theory needs to take into account that further prompting may *facilitate* recall as well as *interfere* with it. Some people in the 'event sponsorship prompt' group did recall correctly once given full prompting. For some others, the additional prompt was not as effective as other prompt methods. This was despite the fact that the full prompt was similar among all groups.

The results show the potential for a spreading activation model to capture the effects of varying prompts – recall and recognition approaches to measuring the success of sponsorship. Further research will be needed to systematically test for the possible effects of framing, time given and amount of prompting. Experimental methods like those used in this study are necessary for this purpose, as simple survey and qualitative methods are inadequate; that is, they are unable to deal with memory processes in as much as it is beyond the ability of respondents to describe what they can recall and how they came to recall it. Activation theory needs also to do more than provide a theoretical account of how memories are retrieved; it needs to be developed to specify the conditions under which activation and inhibition will occur.

It is important for practitioners to understand that evaluating the awareness of an ad or sponsorship is a *diagnostic* measure, used to make decisions about advertising and sponsorship. It is therefore problematic if different methods of testing recall produce different diagnoses. Although standardised advertising recall research products may result in consistent

measures, they may lack validity if these potential effects have not been well handled. Ad hoc studies are likely to be even more prone to question order effects, as less time will be spent on validation of the measures. Of course high recall does not mean that communication tools such as advertising and sponsorship will ultimately be successful in influencing behaviour. But communication recall measures are nevertheless important as supplementary, diagnostic measures for decision makers. This research would suggest the utility of part- and full-prompt measures framed in a consistent manner.

This paper deals only with the Olympic Games. This event was useful for recall research because of the strong control the organisation has over alternate sponsors, signage and other promotion. In addition, the level of advertising by the main sponsors is likely to be high and persistent. Thus the environment for testing recall methods was favourable. Despite this apparently clean environment for testing, the slippage analysis illustrated the point that obtaining recall measures for the main advertiser is not sufficient. Results need to be set in the context of recall of competitors. From the survey results it was clear that the main sponsor, Westpac, did not do any better than its collective competitors. While the focus of this paper is on recall methods rather than the design of sponsorships, it looks like any sponsor should seek to dominate the association between the sponsorship vehicle and their brand. Thus, in the case of Westpac, it should have sought to sponsor Olympic teams and individuals as well as the Olympic Games overall. Without this exclusivity, it is likely that a sponsor will have lower levels of recall, irrespective of spend or fit. It is impossible to tell from the current study whether the other banks' sporting associations actively *interfered* with Westpac's memory associations with the Olympics, dampening recall. However, this is highly plausible and clearly needs further research.

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