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The Impact of Consumer Knowledge on Brand Image Transfer in Cultural Event Sponsorship

Abstract: The paper presents some preliminary findings on the role of consumer knowledge in cultural event sponsorships. Using a field design, the impact of consumer knowledge on the brand image transfer was measured. Two international cultural events were examined and a total of 853 respondents participated in this study. The Kruskall-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were performed to determine whether there were any differences in brand image transfer between experts ('high-knowledge' spectators) and novices ('low-knowledge' spectators). The results reveal that image-building effects in cultural event sponsorship are considerably less pronounced if event spectators are highly knowledgeable about an event and its sponsoring brand. The findings indicate to what extent a brand may thrive on event sponsorship and how important it is to track current market segmentation and brand positioning.

Keywords: consumer knowledge, brand, image transfer, event sponsorship.

Introduction

Sponsorship is largely recognized as a communicational phenomenon that has enormous influence on driving brand imagery and attitude formation (Gwinner 1997; Joachimsthaler & Aaker 1997; Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy 2005). All brands involved in sponsorship may capitalise on using this emotional bond between consumer and sports teams, players, festivals, tournaments, and build up associations of their own that accrue as a result of linking their logo to a sponsored object. Kevin Gwinner stated that 'when a brand becomes associated with an event, some of the associations linked with the event (e.g., youthful, relaxing, enjoyable, disappointing, sophisticated, élite, etc.) may become linked in memory with the brand' (Gwinner 1997, p. 146). If an event fosters visitors' imagery and conjures up associations in visitors' memories, it may also function as an endorser to the sponsoring brand. The meaning attributed to the event is likely to be transferred to the brand when the two are paired in an event sponsorship situation. A part of the event's image becomes associated with the sponsoring brand's image (Gwinner 1997).

There have been several attempts to establish a conceptual framework for brand image transfer in event sponsorship (e.g., Ferrand & Pagès 1996; Gwinner 1997; Meenaghan & Shipley 1999; Smith 2004; Gwinner 2006) and a number of research projects were conducted to identify variables that moderate this process (e.g., Gwinner & Eaton 1999; Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka 2004; Chien, Cornwell, & Stokes 2005;

Gwinner, Larson, & Swanson 2009). However, little consideration has been given to the relation between knowledge of spectators and the sponsor-event image transfer, even though the impact of consumer knowledge has been widely recognized in marketing literature (e.g., Alba & Hutchinson 1987; Celsi & Olson 1988; Rao & Monroe 1988; Alba & Hutchninson 2000; Roy & Cornwell 2004). Building on these findings, this paper evaluates the impact of certain consumer knowledge components on brand image transfer in event sponsorship. The term consumer knowledge in cultural event sponsorships is here generally attributed to a cumulative effect of prior experience of an individual with an event and its sponsors, and thus further subcategorised into 'event knowledge' and 'sponsor product category knowledge.' High-and low-knowledge consumers are hypothesized to react differently when evaluating brand-event links.

The following sections describe two studies employing quantitative methodology to discover the relationship between consumer knowledge and brand-event image transfer in cultural event sponsorship.

Theoretical Approaches and Hypothesis Development

Brand Image Transfer

In conceptualising what impacts brand image transfer in event sponsorship several theoretical frameworks are adopted and a number of moderating variables are examined. Most studies refer to the moderating effect of brand/event characteristics i.e.: product/ event involvement (e.g., Gwinner 1997; Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka 2004), event frequency (e.g., Gwinner 1997), and brand-event fit (e.g., Gwinner & Eaton 1999; Chien, Cornwell, & Stokes 2005). Some of the recent empirical work focuses on fan/team identification as an important predictor for building brand-event linkages in consumers' minds (e.g., Gwinner, Larson, & Swanson 2009). This section of the paper is dedicated to briefly reviewing the existing literature in order to help develop an understanding of whether some of these moderators (despite influencing image transfer) may have any effect on consumer knowledge. The objective is not to aggregate all these variables into a single concept, but rather to consider those elements that might become relevant in leveraging consumer knowledge in cultural event sponsorship.

The mostly unexplored image transfer moderator relates to individual exposure to the event, often operationalized by sponsorship scholars as f r e q u e n c y of attendance or event f r e q u e n c y. It may be regarded as an objective measure of consumer involvement with an event, which contributes to the individual's knowledge about the event and its sponsoring brands. Regular spectators are highly motivated to attend the event and have recurring occasions to register many sets of brand-event information. In most empirical investigations attendance frequency was measured by the number of events attended by respondents (e.g., Bennett 1999; Pitts & Slattery 2004; Johar, Pham, & Wakefield 2006; Wakefield, Becker-Olsen, & Cornwell 2007).

Theoretical debates on event frequency (e.g., Gwinner 1997) often substitute a more important discussion about the effects of time on brand image transfer in event

sponsorship. To the best of the author's knowledge, no studies have examined whether image transfer levels and dynamics change over an extended period of time. Most researchers focus on measuring image transfer immediately after the exposure to the sponsorship stimuli (e.g. Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka 2004; Gwinner, Larson, & Swanson 2009), and little consideration is given to the longitudinal issues and questions e.g.: how durable are the transferred images; what circumstances determine reduction or enhancement of the links between transferred associations in a consumer's memory; is repeated exposure detrimental to maintaining the strength of the newly assigned meanings? One may only speculate that image transfer effects are likely to deteriorate over time, due to the high perishability of this phenomenon. This assertion, while partly incorporated into the present study, should be further investigated.

Fan/team identification is another potential image transfer moderator that received some empirical support in the sponsorship literature. The term stems from sociological conceptualizations and describes how individuals relate to others (Turner, 1984; Tajfel & Turner 1985). As it is discussed, highly identified individuals acquire their inner strength and a sense of identity from their affiliation with a target object, e.g. a team, or an event (Wann & Branscombe 1993). They may be characterized by high levels of passion, commitment, loyalty, motivation and interest toward their point of identification (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). In general, extensive identification results in many affective expressions and meaningful emotions, which—according to Gwinner (2006) are likely to be attributed to the sponsoring brand. Using a social identity framework, Gwinner, Larson, & Swanson (2009) propose that brand image transfer is positively related to fan identification and they find empirical support for this statement. The implication is that highly identified individuals are relatively more knowledgeable about sports, which creates stronger memory structures about particular teams and events. As these researchers suggest, a strong event image is more likely to be transferred. However, apart from the empirical work of Gwinner, Larson, & Swanson (2009), little, if any, research additionally supports this notion. An explanation to this may rest in the consumer behaviour conceptualizations about human knowledge. Undoubtedly, consumers with varying levels of knowledge will respond differently to sponsorship and highly knowledgeable consumers may have stronger associations between concepts in their memories (Anderson, 1982). Nevertheless, experts may be less motivated than novices to devote their cognitive resources and adjust existing memory structures to the incoming information (Brucks 1985; Simonson, Huber, & Payne 1988; Chuang, Tsai, Cheng & Sun 2009). This statement challenges Keller's (1993) and Gwinner's (2006) assumption about a higher probability of transferring a stronger image rather than a weaker image. The following section, therefore, explores the role of consumer knowledge in predicting the effectiveness of brand image transfer.

Consumer Knowledge

As discussed in the marketing literature, consumers with extensive knowledge (hereafter referred to as 'professionals' or 'experts') have a greater capacity for processing

promotional messages (Sujan, 1985; Brucks, 1986; Celsi & Olson, 1988; Ma & Glynn, 2005). The research findings reveal that professionals and non-professionals (hereafter referred to as 'non-professionals' or 'novices') differently evaluate products and services, even though they may sometimes use the same sets of information (Rao & Monroe, 1988; Raju, Lonial, & Mangold 1995). In general, experts would rather refer to a product's detailed aspects, and may include very specific criteria in this analysis. Non-professionals rely on some general perceptual impressions in making their judgements. When forming their opinions about products, professionals tend to use context-sensitive data e.g. performance metrics, usability, functionality, and manufacturing components. Novices, however, build their product attitudes under the guidance of peripheral cues, such as packaging, colour, size or shape (Keller, 1993). Inferring from the advertising literature, in a sponsorship context, high-knowledge spectators might have a special aptitude to interpret the sponsor-event links, for example, they should faster identify brand-event incongruities than non-professionals and make more elaborate judgments about the sponsoring brands (Sujan, 1985; Spence & Brucks 1997).

Little research has been done to analyse consumer knowledge in event sponsorships. Among the relatively few studies, Roy and Cornwell (2004) analysed this phenomenon. They suggested that the level of knowledge changes the way individuals process information about the event and the sponsor. Their results revealed that professionals were involved in the deep processing of sponsorship messages to a greater extent than non-professionals (Roy and Cornwell 2004). These research findings allow one to make a following generalization: involvement and knowledge may become important factors of sponsorship effectiveness, as highly involved individuals develop higher levels of event/product knowledge, which in turn determines their more elaborate affective and cognitive responses to the sponsoring brand. Is this, however, an appropriate inference?

Undoubtedly, highly knowledgeable event spectators have stronger associations about an event and its sponsor. The strength of an association determines its accessibility in the retrieval process, i.e. it influences better recall (Keller 1993). Based on these conceptualizations, some scholars (e.g. Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner, Larson, & Swanson 2009) formulated an assumption about a higher probability of transferring a stronger image, rather than a weaker image in event sponsorship. However, the literature suggests a competing hypothesis. Some cognitive psychologists point to the durability of human memory (Loftus & Loftus 1980). According to the theoretical concepts about schema formation, a fixed set of associations in consumer memory is not straightforwardly subject to sudden changes or transformations (Misra & Beaty 1990; Fiske & Taylor 1991). Moreover, individuals avoid accepting new information, especially when it is inconsistent with existing memory structures. One can, therefore, assume that a high level of expertise reduces the individual's susceptibility to persuasive messages in sponsorship. If professionals have relatively permanent mental representations relating to the event, they also have permanent associations with its sponsors. Audiences with extensive knowledge should associate an event and its sponsoring brand with rather consistent, strong and durable images, which may not

be rapidly changed. This discussion leads to the following research proposition: the greater the knowledge of an event spectator, the less effective the brand-event image transfer.

There are many approaches to conceptualize and measure consumer knowledge (Anderson & Bower 1973; Anderson 1983; Sujan 1985; Brucks 1986). Some academics point to the multidimensionality of this phenomenon and indicate that its effect on consumer behaviour largely depends on how it is operationalized (Brucks, 1986; Alba & Marmorstein 1986). Nevertheless, there is little agreement between consumer researchers on the specific measurement issues e.g. what variables best reflect consumer knowledge (Brucks 1986; McEachern & Warnaby 2008). In this study, the term 'consumer knowledge' has been differently approached than it has been suggested in the sponsorship literature (mainly by Roy & Cornwell, 2004). None of the available measurement patterns seemed perfect: objectively dividing a very diverse population (event audience) into two opposing groups may provide a limited research perspective, and relying on self-reported indicators might also be misleading (Alba & Hutchinson 2000).

This study defines 'consumer knowledge' after Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy (2005) in terms of the product category of the sponsoring brand (sponsor product category knowledge) and the event being sponsored (event knowledge). Event knowledge develops from prior exposures and regular visits to the event; it accrues as a result of an individual's motivation to pursue information related to the event and is a consequence of regarding the event as personally relevant (involvement). The second component of consumer knowledge stems from the individual's experiences with the sponsor product category (e.g., prior usage, purchase, exposure to advertising stimuli etc.). As the idea was to find the most objective and quantitative indicators of such consumer knowledge subcategories, it was decided to select only those which best reflect recent image transfer conceptualisations, facilitate categorisation (not just bipolar distinction) of experts and novices, and are frequently explored in the consumer behaviour literature. A set of four distinctive measures was therefore chosen:

a) attendance frequency (as an indicator of event knowledge)—the most objective measure of prior exposure to the event which may quantitatively represent personal experience with the event;
b) prior brand usage (as an indicator of sponsor product category knowledge)—refers to prior experience with the sponsoring brand;
c) individual's education and d) occupation (as indicators of event knowledge)—simple demographics often used as a proxy for consumer knowledge (Goldman, 1977); may serve as a quantitative reflection of individual's motivation to engage in information search about the event.

Education and Vocational Profile

The type and level of our education affects our skills, attitudes, interests and establishes extensive memory resources. Career development is crucial in shaping our competence and expertise in specific fields. Our educational and vocational profiles determine the way we discern stimuli and respond to different persuasive messages

(Berger & Luckmann 1966). Hence they may be considered as very important knowledge indicators (Goldman 1977; Sääksjärvi, Holmlund, & Tanskanen 2009).

Undoubtedly, one's education and occupation influence knowledge levels and they seem to be very significant differentiators when it comes to segmenting spectators of cultural events. Cultural event audiences are very diverse and they comprise individuals who differ in the degree of professionalization to a large extent. Table 1 presents different groups of event spectators classified on the basis of education and vocational profile (they were subsequently used as classification codes to categorise respondents participating in this study). For example, when considering any film festival, there are many people who study art and attempt to develop their professional careers in film-making. In this study, they fall into the category coded as 'high-educational/high-vocational profile', as their expertise is directly related to the event content. Many film festival spectators, however, are less professionalised. These are those people who hold jobs unrelated to film-making (e.g. doctors, managers, software engineers) but simply enjoy watching films and consider film festivals as a hobby, a way of spending their time with friends or relatives. They constitute a category coded as 'low-educational/low-vocational profile'. Each category is characterised by different ranges of orientation in culture, motivation to participate in culture, and perception of brands sponsoring cultural events. One may further assume that each category will differ in information processing of sponsorships and in developing brand imagery. Individuals with extensive knowledge about an event, its content and contexts, should hold durable event images and thus should resist changing their views about an event and its sponsors. This leads to two research hypotheses:

H1: Image transfer in cultural event sponsorship will be significantly lower for individuals with high educational profile than for individuals with low educational profile participating in the same event (Educational Profile).

H2: Image transfer in cultural event sponsorship will be significantly lower for individuals with high vocational profile than for individuals with low vocational profile participating in the same event (Vocational Profile).

Attendance Frequency

Consumer knowledge in event sponsorship may also stem from an individual's event attendance. Regular spectators have more occasions to develop consistent, clarified, and strong images of the event and its sponsors due to repeated exposures. As discussed above, frequent attendance improves familiarity with the event, builds brand awareness, and increases sponsor identification (Bennett 1999; Wakefield, Becker-Olsen, & Cornwell 2007). One may, therefore, assume that the level of consumer knowledge increases with the number of visits to the event. As a consequence, high levels of event knowledge are encountered among regular spectators who are thus expected to experience less image transfer and perceive the event and its sponsoring brand as different entities. This inference leads to the following research hypothesis:

H3: Image transfer in cultural event sponsorship will be significantly lower for regular spectators than for individuals attending the same event for the first time (Attendance Frequency).

Table 1

Event Spectators Categories Based on their Education and Vocational Profiles

Knowledge antecedents	Category	Description	Example
EDUCATION	High-educational profile	education directly related to the event content	*A film school student attends International Film Festival*
	Medium-educational profile	education remotely related to the event content	*An art school student attends International Film Festival*
	Low-educational profile	education with no apparent connection to the event content	*A student from medical school attends International Film Festival*
VOCATIONAL PROFILE	High-vocational profile	professions highly related to the event content	*Professional photographer attends International Photography Festival*
	Medium-vocational profile	professions remotely related to the event content	*A manager, who works as an accountant in a financial corporation and additionally (e.g. weekends) as a photographer, attends International Photography Festival*
	Pleasure-source profile	event content relates to individuals' hobbies, not their professions	*Marketing manager, who takes photos as a hobby, attends International Photography Festival*
	Low-vocational profile	professions and hobbies unrelated to the event content	*Marketing manager attends International Photography Festival for no professional reasons e.g. because 'my friend made me come' or 'heard it might be fun'*

Prior Brand Usage

Familiarity with a product category is often regarded as a proxy for product knowledge, which in turn impacts subsequent reactions to promotional stimuli (McEachern & Warnaby 2008; Chuang, Tsai, Cheng, & Sun 2009). Based on the findings from consumer behaviour research (e.g. Bettman 1979; Lynch & Srull 1982; Frankenberger & Liu 1994; Park, Mothersbaugh, & Feick 1994), one may assume that prior experience with brands may have an important influence on cognitive processes, driving imagery and the development of attitudes in event sponsorship. Regular brand users and spectators, for example, will hold strong and extensive brand associations, and they should faster and more efficiently retrieve memories from past interactions with this brand (Biehal & Chakravarti 1982; Alba & Hutchinson 1987; Bone & Ellen 1992; Pope & Voges 1999; Pope & Voges 2000). No such relationship will occur in a group of brand non-users. Heavy brand users are presumed to respond differently in a sponsorship environment due to pre-existing brand associations and usage experiences. Satisfactory brand consumption, for instance, may increasingly affect individual responses to sponsorship and lead to positive attitude formation (Pope & Voges 1999; Pope & Voges 2000; Sneath, Finney, & Close 2005). Current and regular users of sponsoring

brands should experience less brand-event image transfer because of consistent and strong images which have accrued from past exposures to this brand. Based on this discussion, the last hypothesis is suggested:

H4: Brand users will experience less brand-event image transfer in cultural event sponsorship than brand non-users (Prior Brand Usage).

In order to maintain standardization and avoid ambiguity of analysis, only three groups of consumers were taken into consideration in this research: brand users, competitive brand users, non-users. Table 2 describes each of them.

Table 2

Event Spectators Classified on their Prior Brand Usage

Knowledge antecedents	Category	Description	Example
PRIOR BRAND USAGE	Brand users	individuals who purchase sponsor products occasionally or on regular basis	*Nikon users attend International Photo-Festival sponsored by Nikon*
	Competitive brand users	individuals who do not use sponsoring brands but purchase products provided by their competitors	*Canon users attend International Photo-Festival sponsored by Nikon*
	Non-users	individuals who do not use any brand from a product category represented by the sponsor	*People who do not own a camera attend International Photo-Festival sponsored by Nikon*

According to the above discussion, brand-event image transfer will be less experienced by more professional individuals, i.e. people who frequently visit the event, work and/or study in the field thematically covered by the event, and consume brands provided by sponsors. High consumer knowledge in cultural event sponsorships is hypothesised to cease the flow of meanings between an event and its sponsors. Exploring this phenomenon became a major objective of the following empirical study.

Research Method

Study Design

This study was designed with some reference to the methodological guidance offered in the sport sponsorship literature (e.g. Ferrand & Pagès 1996; Ferrand & Pagès 1999; Gwinner & Eaton 1999). The method choice was determined by the recent academic discussions circled around the over-extensive use of student samples in marketing research (Winer, 1999; Walliser 2003) and around the advantages and disadvantages of field and experimental designs in event sponsorship research. The decision was made to conduct a study that consisted of two comparative parts, both taking into account the requirements to measure sponsorship effects in a field setting

(most appropriate to assess actual consumer responses to event sponsorship with the required noise and clutter levels, high involvement on the respondents' part and their emotional arousal). It would have been difficult to manipulate fluctuating levels of knowledge and familiarity with certain events and brands in a laboratory setting. To avoid potential criticism, there were two types of sample drawn from actual attendees of actual cultural events:

a) 'On-site' sample—this sample consisted of ticket holders for two large annual cultural events in Poland (Camerimage, the International Film Festival of the Art of Cinematography and Photo-Festival, the International Festival of Photography). Respondents completed the survey as they attended the festivals.
b) 'Off-site' sample—predominantly comprised subjects who had participated in the on-site study. However, due to the lower response rates, this sample had to be completed with respondents drawn from the general populations of festival audiences (Camerimage, the International Film Festival of the Art of Cinematography and Photo-Festival, the International Festival of Photography). This survey was finalised six months after the events.

Individuals constituting 'on-site' samples were subject to the direct influence of event and sponsorship stimuli. Respondents recruited to 'off-site' samples had specific knowledge about the event and its sponsors, but their memories, feelings and emotions might have faded away due to a certain time period (six months after the events). The reason for scheduling a second measurement six months after the events was to appoint the same respondents half-time before another exposure to the sponsorship stimuli. Most efforts of the research team were concentrated on recruiting almost identical 'off-site' samples to their 'on-site' counterparts. Such a juxtaposition of research samples should allow for a better assessment of any shifts in brand-event imagery and facilitate some preliminary comparisons in terms of time effects on brand image transfer in event sponsorship.

The reason for selecting Camerimage and Photo-Festival for this study was to evaluate cultural festivals of high importance to Polish publics and with comparable branding potentials. At the time of this study, Nikon was the general sponsor of Photo-Festival, and Plus (Polish mobile network provider) supported Camerimage.

Sampling Procedure

A total of four samples were built: (1) A1 'on-site' sample for Photo-Festival ($n_{A1} = 258$); (2) B1 'on-site' sample for Camerimage ($n_{B1} = 176$); (3) A2 'off-site' sample for Photo-Festival ($n_{A2} = 239$); (4) B2 'off-site' sample for Camerimage ($n_{B2} = 180$). In the case of on-site data collection, members of the research team were positioned throughout the festival venues. They approached every third visitor and invited them to participate in the academic research project. A total of 258 and 176 usable surveys were completed at Photo-Festival and Camerimage respectively. As for 'off-site' samples, a convenience sampling procedure was used to recruit Photo-Festival and Camerimage festival spectators through e-mail and personal invitations sent to over 600 potential respondents. The sampling frame comprised e-mail and

post addresses collected from ticket holders who participated in on-site surveys. As mentioned above, the objective was to contact the same respondents who returned the surveys in the on-site measurement. Unfortunately, certain respondents (approx. 30–35%) refused to continue the research process, thus it was necessary to complete the sampling frame with addresses drawn from the event holders' databases.

As for the recruitment of 'off-site' samples, quotas were set in the following categories (see table 3): attendance frequency, education, occupation, prior brand usage. The objective was to achieve roughly comparable 'on-site' and 'off-site' samples. The selection process included a set of open and closed questions aimed at verifying respondents' knowledge about the event and its sponsoring brand. The answers to these questions were analysed, aggregated and served as anchors in a coding process, which aimed at grouping all respondents according to their educational and vocational profile (as in table 1), attendance frequency and prior brand usage (as in table 2). This approach was partly adopted from Mita Sujan (1985), whose preliminary assessment of respondents' expertise was based on their education type (photography students were regarded as experts and compared with non-photography students). Finally, as for 'off-site' samples, a total of 239 and 180 usable surveys were completed and returned from Photo-Festival and Camerimage spectators respectively. Table 3 illustrates each sample structure.

To properly examine the relationships suggested in the research framework, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) should be adopted. Many scholars, however, indicate the importance of asserting sufficient sample sizes (i.e. at least 200–500 subjects) in order to avoid imprecision of statistical estimations (Boomsma, 1982; Marsh, Hau, Balla, & Grayson, 1998; Marsh & Hau, 1999). In this study, all four samples were rather independent and not large enough, which only allowed for conducting simple subgroup analysis. Future research should therefore consider providing appropriate data for modelling purposes.

Pre-tests and Data Collection Procedure

Gwinner and Eaton (1999), Ferrand and Pagès (1996; 1999) suggest that image transfer in event sponsorship results simply in a higher number of brand associations, so the analysis should include finding differences in consumer memory structures about the sponsor and the event. This approach has been recently employed by other scholars, e.g. Olson and Thjomoe (2011). In this study the following procedure was adopted:

a) Identifying actual images of Camerimage and Photo-Festival (a pre-test). The objective was to find a group of meanings that might be subject to potential transfer in consumers' minds. The author generated 35 adjectives and nouns that potentially could have been used to describe individuals' perceptions about Camerimage and Photo-Festival personalities. 60 people, recruited from event spectators, were presented with those two lists. They were asked to assess the usefulness of each item to define and portray the festivals as persons. Seven-point scales were used (7 = very useful; 1 = not useful at all). The final lists of meanings rated as most useful included "magic," "reliable," "professional," "mature," "prestigious" for Camerimage

Table 3

Structures of the Research Samples

A[1]: 'on-site' sample for Photo-Festival

Attendance frequency	1 ×	2 ×	3 ×	4 ×	5 × or more
educational profile					
High-educational profile	75	51	25	11	7
Medium-educational profile	39	14	14	5	10
Low-educational profile	3	4	0	0	0
Total	**117**	**69**	**39**	**16**	**17**
vocational profile					
High-vocational profile	9	5	2	2	2
Medium-vocational profile	9	5	3	3	3
Pleasure-source profile	69	39	23	9	8
Low-vocational profile	30	20	11	2	4
Total	**117**	**69**	**39**	**16**	**17**
prior brand usage					
Brand users	39	30	12	6	8
Competitive brand users	60	33	23	10	9
Non-users	18	6	4	0	0
Total	**117**	**69**	**39**	**16**	**17**

A[2]: 1off-site' sample for Photo-Festival

Attendance frequency	1 ×	2 ×	3 ×	4 ×	5 × or more
educational profile					
High-educational profile	29	18	21	12	18
Medium-educational profile	43	21	12	0	0
Low-educational profile	50	15	0	0	0
Total	**122**	**54**	**33**	**12**	**18**
vocational profile					
High-vocational profile	8	6	6	3	18
Medium-vocational profile	8	9	6	9	0
Pleasure-source profile	46	27	21	0	0
Low-vocational profile	60	12	0	0	0
Total	**122**	**54**	**33**	**12**	**18**
prior brand usage					
Brand users	44	36	15	12	12
Competitive brand users	67	18	18	0	6
Non-users	11	0	0	0	0
Total	**122**	**54**	**33**	**12**	**18**

B[1]: 'on-site' sample for Camerimage

Attendance frequency	1 ×	2 ×	3 ×	4 ×	5 × or more
educational profile					
High-educational profile	3	16	13	26	32
Medium-educational profile	22	16	16	2	0
Low-educational profile	11	15	3	0	1
Total	**36**	**47**	**32**	**28**	**33**
vocational profile					
High-vocational profile	3	4	4	16	16
Medium-vocational profile	0	9	0	7	16
Pleasure-source profile	12	17	15	3	1
Low-vocational profile	21	17	13	2	0
Total	**36**	**47**	**32**	**28**	**33**
prior brand usage					
Brand users	10	12	6	8	0
Competitive brand users	26	35	26	20	33
Non-users	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**36**	**47**	**32**	**28**	**33**

B[2]: 'off-site' sample for Camerimage

Attendance frequency	1 ×	2 ×	3 ×	4 ×	5 × or more
educational profile					
High-educational profile	16	16	15	28	20
Medium-educational profile	17	12	12	8	4
Low-educational profile	5	14	9	0	4
Total	**38**	**42**	**36**	**36**	**28**
vocational profile					
High-vocational profile	8	4	6	16	12
Medium-vocational profile	4	10	0	8	8
Pleasure-source profile	20	14	18	4	4
Low-vocational profile	6	14	12	8	4
Total	**38**	**42**	**36**	**36**	**28**
prior brand usage					
Brand users	12	14	6	12	0
Competitive brand users	26	28	30	24	28
Non-users	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**38**	**42**	**36**	**36**	**28**

Note: in case of samples A1 and B1 '1 ×' means that at the time of measurement that was the first edition of either Photo-Festival or Camerimage attended by the respondent.

and "young," "modern," "dynamic," "innovative" for Photo-Festival (see appendix for details).

This study uses event personality characteristics for several reasons. Firstly, event sponsorship is expected to leverage more abstract associations than functional attributes (Keller 1993; Brown, Pope, & Voges 2003; Lee & Cho 2008). Secondly, brand personality is often regarded as an important aspect of brand image and serves as a source of brand differentiation from its competitors (Gwinner & Eaton 1999).

Although this study did not directly assess the images of sponsors prior to the event, it consulted the literature and earlier empirical investigations which had provided information about existing brand representations in consumers' memories. While this might be regarded as a surrogate procedure, it allowed for some basic control of pre event sponsor image. At that time Plus was predominantly considered as "optimistic," "amusing," "witty," "a little bit nonchalant," "auto-ironic," and "joyful" (Superbrands Polska 2006), while perceptions of Nikon were circled around such personality traits as: "highly professional," "old," "mature," "traditional," "exploratory," "thrill-seeking" (Karpińska-Krakowiak 2010). These sets of associations built considerably separate brands and events personalities (e.g., "young" and "innovative" Photo-Festival vs. "mature" and "traditional" Nikon; "professional" and "prestigious" Camerimage vs. "auto-ironic" and "witty" Plus).

b) Examining to what extent the event image was transferred to the brand image. The questionnaire design was adapted from Gwinner and Eaton (1999) and their adjective based image transfer measure was applied. Firstly, respondents were asked to assess on a seven-point scale how well each of 8 meanings described the specific festival, i.e. Camerimage and Photo-Festival (7 = very well; 1 = not at all). Secondly, they were asked to do the same for the sponsoring brands, i.e. Plus and Nikon. The degree of image transfer would be determined by the absolute difference between the event and the sponsoring brand, i.e. if the event score was 7 on 'development' and brand score was 4, the transfer score on that meaning would be 3. As suggested by Gwinner and Eaton (1999), the author summed all the scores for each meaning to build an image transfer index. The lower the transfer index, the lower discrepancy between brand and event images (i.e. the greater degree of image transfer between the event and its sponsoring brand). The same procedure was applied to each sample: A1, A2, B1, B2.

Results

Table 4 presents mean values of image transfer in four separate samples (A1, A2, B1, B2). Regardless of the research setting, the index was generally lower for Photo-Festival ($M_{A1} = 5.66$; $M_{A2} = 7.38$) than for Camerimage ($M_{B1} = 13.54$; $M_{B2} = 11.58$). This implies greater allocation of meanings in the case of Nikon and Photo-Festival than Plus and Camerimage.

The above discussion states that the image transfer will be stronger for low-professional event spectators i.e. with neither educational nor vocational fit to the

Table 4

Mean Scores of Image Transfer for Camerimage and Photo-Festival

	n	Mean scores of image transfer index M	Standard deviation SD
'on-site' sample A1 (Photo-Festival)	258	5.66	2.61
'off-site' sample A2 (Photo-Festival)	239	7.38	3.76
'on-site' sample B1 (Camerimage)	176	13.54	3.48
'off-site' sample B2 (Camerimage)	180	11.58	4.07

event content (see hypotheses H1 and H2); with no prior experience to the event (hypothesis H3); nor to the brand (hypothesis H4). Hypotheses H1–H4 were analysed using the Kruskal-Wallis test (nonparametric ANOVA), as the data did not come from normally distributed population (Shapiro-Wilk test, $p = 0.05$). In the case of samples A2, B1, and B2 the test revealed significant differences in image transfer between respondents with different knowledge levels ($p < 0.01$), which allowed for the acceptance of hypotheses H1–H4. As for the 'on-site' sample A1, however, all hypotheses were rejected (see Table 5).

Table 5

Kruskal-Wallis Test Results

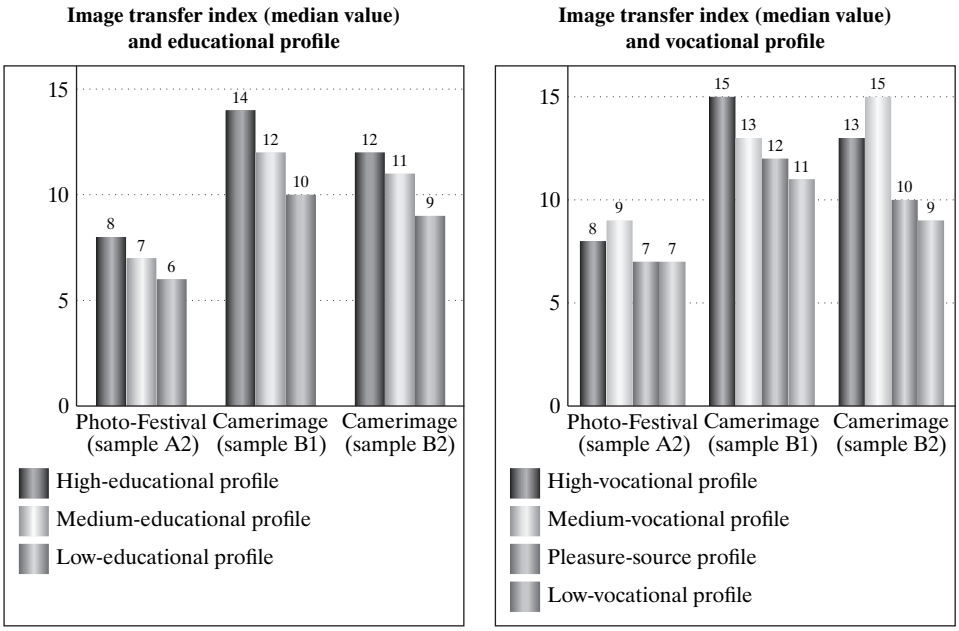
		Educational profile (H1)	Vocational profile (H2)	Attendance frequency (H3)	Prior brand usage (H4)
'on-site' sample A1 (Photo-Festival)	χ^2	*0.58*	*4.85*	*1.78*	*0.41*
	P	*0.75*	*0.18*	*0.78*	*0.81*
'off-site' sample A2 (Photo-Festival)	χ^2	21.07	16.33	16.09	9.90
	P	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
'on-site' sample B1 (Camerimage)	χ^2	65.80	59.00	35.10	6.80
	P	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
'off-site' sample B2 (Camerimage)	χ^2	36.80	20.70	9.70	7.20
	P	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.01

Image Transfer and Education & Vocational Profile

In the on-site environment (sample A1) experts and novices did not differ significantly in their perceptions about event sponsorship. These results show that brand image transfer occurs regardless of consumer knowledge levels. However, a study conducted in a non-field setting (respondents completed a survey six months after attending Photo-Festival) revealed that consumer knowledge may become an important factor for brand image transfer in event sponsorship. The image transfer index remained higher for those respondents who had had greater expertise in terms of education and occupation, i.e. their professional profiles were either highly or remotely related

Chart 1

Image Transfer and Education & Vocational Profile



to the festival content. The same relationship was evident for Camerimage spectators (see chart 1).

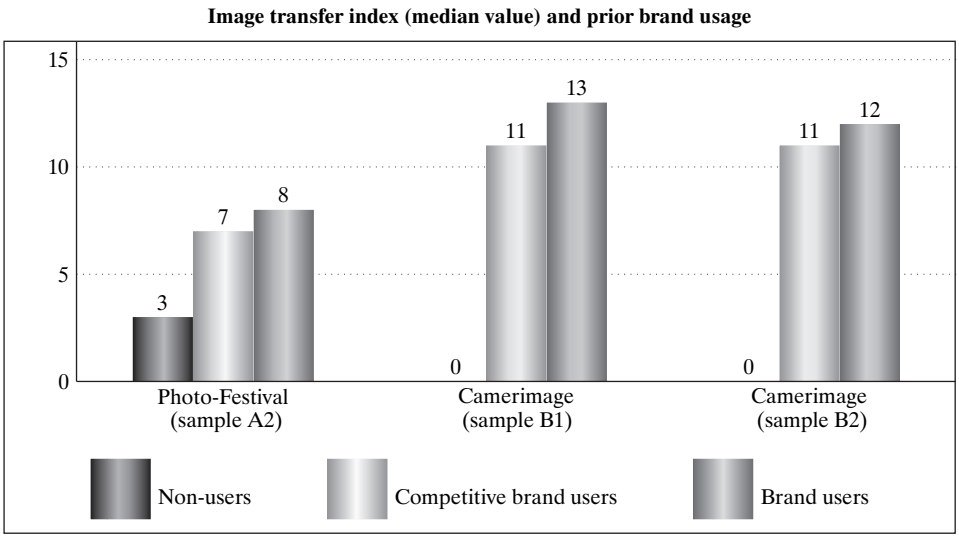
The discrepancy between results obtained in Photo-Festival 'on-site' measurement (A1) and the rest of samples (A2, B1, B2) required some further analysis. The Mann-Whitney test was used to examine intergroup similarities in samples A2, B1, and B2. Tables in the appendix indicate which groups of spectators tend to experience more image transfer in event sponsorship than the other. In the case of samples A2, B1, and B2 it was confirmed ($p < 0.05$) that image transfer index is significantly higher for high-profile spectators. These results support hypotheses H1 and H2 which proposed that experts and novices would experience different levels of brand-event image transfer. Evidently, extensive experience and knowledge might change consumer reactions to event sponsorship and inhibit the meaning transfer process.

Image Transfer and Prior Brand Usage

The interaction between brand image transfer and prior brand usage was examined in hypothesis H4. It was proposed that heavy brand users should be less susceptible to sponsorship stimuli and thus experience less meaning transfer than individuals using competitive brands or not using a particular product category at all. The Mann-Whitney test was performed to determine whether differences exist between brand users, competitive brand users and non-users (compare tables in the appendix). The results support hypothesis H4.

Chart 2

Image Transfer and Prior Brand Usage



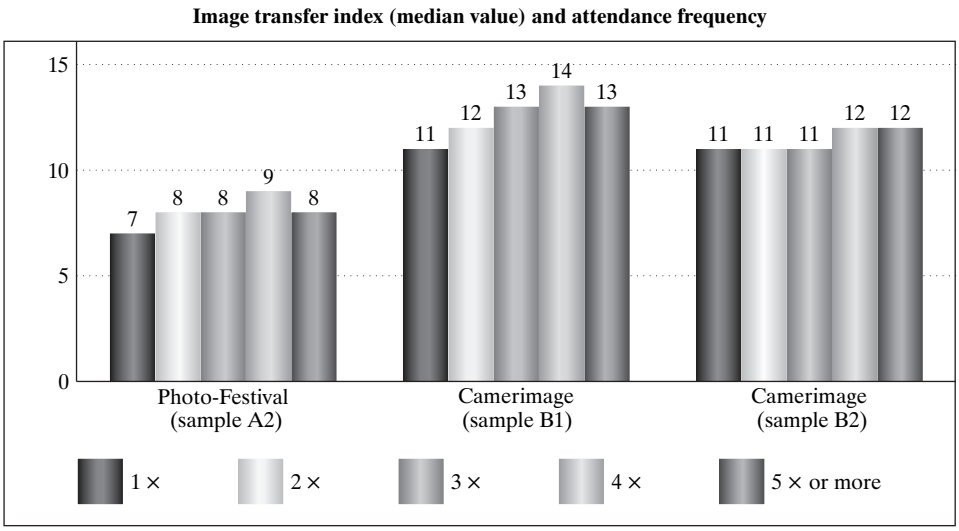
The findings reveal an interesting link: the largest intergroup differences arose between two opposing groups of spectators i.e. product category users (both brand users and competitive brand users) and non-users (individuals who do not benefit from a given product category at all). In the case of Photo-Festival the image transfer index median value for brand users was 8 points (Nikon) and 7 points for competitive brand users (Canon, Lumix, Sony or others), while for non-users it accounted for only 3 points (see chart 2). These findings might lead to certain adjustments in the conceptual model presented in the first part of this article. Consumer knowledge in event sponsorship results from an individual's interaction with a sponsoring product category (not with a sponsoring brand alone). Both brand users and competitive brand users should be regarded as professionals and thus have lower susceptibility to sponsorship persuasion. Conversely, spectators' lack of experience with the sponsoring product category does not inhibit sponsorship persuasive processes and it increases brand image transfer. This final conclusion, however, requires some further research.

Image Transfer and Attendance Frequency

Several statistically significant differences were found when attendance frequency served as an independent variable as presented in table 5 (the Kruskal-Wallis test, $p \leq 0.05$). However, as revealed in tables in the appendix, a limited number of statistical differences were reported when the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to further examine intergroup relationships (especially in case of samples A2 and B2). In general, regular spectators (who participated in the events 5 times or more) had more divergent images about the event and their sponsors, which gives support for hypothesis H3. Surprisingly, the further analysis did not shed much light

Chart 3

Image Transfer and Attendance Frequency



on the attendance frequency and its influence on the image transfer process, as the median values were confusingly similar (chart 3).

Although the predicted direction of influence between attendance frequency and brand image transfer was statistically confirmed, this interaction could not have been thoroughly described (compare tables in the appendix). Future research should therefore further investigate the concept of time and image transfer effectiveness.

Conclusions

General discussion

This paper contributes to the literature by showing the importance of consumer knowledge in brand image transfer process, which so far has been largely understudied. The present study provides some preliminary findings on how prior experience with brands and events negatively affects the transfer of meanings in cultural sponsorships. It involved two sequences of measurements and a total of four samples were constructed: two 'on-site' samples (A1 and B1) and two 'off-site' ones (A2 and B2). The analysis across this study provides some support for the research proposition. Generally, the results from samples A2, B1, and B2 are in the hypothesised direction, suggesting that image transfer is significantly lower for spectators with high educational (H1) and vocational profile (H2), for regular spectators (H3), and for actual brand users (H4).

Consumer knowledge was not confirmed as a significant factor that influences brand image transfer in one 'on-site' sample A1 (Photo-Festival), but nor does it imply no interaction between those variables at all. Another 'on-site' measurement (sample

B1—Camerimage) revealed full support for all hypotheses, suggesting that these conflicting results might have stemmed from some methodological limitations (e.g. imperfect sampling procedure, which did not assert intergroup dependency between samples A1 and A2), rather than mistakes in the conceptual framework.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The use of real brands and real events strengthens the external validity of this study and provides some methodological insights about field research in cultural event sponsorships. Firstly, it is difficult to assert fully representative and comparable samples as event holders do not own complete sampling frames. As stated above, the sampling procedure chosen for this research did not assert maximum intergroup dependency within sample pairings i.e. A1/A2, and B1/B2 (e.g. certain groups of respondents were underrepresented due to great difficulties in accessing them by the research team). For these reasons, this study does not allow for more general estimations. Secondly, brands often change their sponsorship agreements and drift between different events, which complicates measurements on longitudinal issues e.g. regarding variables related to consumer attendance frequency or consumer reactions to long-term sponsorship management.

This study focused partly on categorisation of brand users and non-users (hypothesis H4). Such a distinction may be regarded as too simplistic, as it does not involve brand loyalty measures, nor include categories relating to brand purchase intentions. Extending this concept and thoroughly examining the interaction between prior brand consumption and image transfer should be addressed in future research.

A considerable constraint to this study is that the author assumed—rather than tested—acceptable consistency levels in brand-event pairings (i.e. Nikon-Photo-Festival and Plus-Camerimage). This might be improved in further empirical work with more control given to this variable. Additionally, as the prevalent literature discusses the negative consequences of inconsistent sponsorship (e.g. unfavourable responses on consumers' part), future research should investigate the impact of individual factors in three different congruence conditions: high, moderate and no brand-event fit.

Another optional area for future empirical endeavours is the revision of image transfer research method itself. The methodology applied to this study was largely adopted from Gwinner & Eaton (1999) and inspired by Keller's conceptualisations (Keller, 1993), yet it might be regarded as somehow limited due to not assessing the origins of consumer knowledge, especially among highly-professionalised audiences. One may argue that experts' insusceptibility to image transfer is attributable to the prior image transfer which had occurred before they developed higher levels of their event and sponsor product category knowledge. Even if this assertion is correct, the research findings, however, still yield valuable information for brand managers, who—knowing that experts would not accumulate any more meanings in their mental representations about the sponsoring brand—can address their sponsorship communication programmes to more responsive segments of visitors (i.e. less knowledgeable event participants).

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Appendix A
Adjectives and Nouns Descriptive of Camerimage and Photo-Festival

CAMERIMAGE	PHOTO-FESTIVAL
Magic	Competent
Reliable	Reliable
Inspiration	Successful
Friendly	Innovation
Professional	Professional
Prestigious	Young
Mature	Modern
Development	Dynamic

Appendix B
Mann-Whitney Test Results for 'Off-Site' Sample A2 (Photo-Festival)

Mann-Whitney results for 'off-site' sample A2 (Photo-Festival)

		EDUCATIONAL PROFILE		
		High-educational profile	Medium-educational profile	Low-educational profile
EDUCATIONAL PROFILE	High-educational profile			
	Medium-educational profile	**z = 4.418** **p > |z| = 0.0000**		
	Low-educational profile	**z = 3.114** **p > |z| = 0.0018**	z = −0.915 p > |z| = 0.3603	

		VOCATIONAL PROFILE			
		High-vocational profile	Medium-vocational profile	Pleasure-source profile	Low-vocational profile
VOCATIONAL PROFILE	High-vocational profile				
	Medium-vocational profile	z = −1.035 p > |z| = 0.3006			
	Pleasure-source profile	**z = 2.873** **p > |z| = 0.0041**	**z = 3.166** **p > |z| = 0.0015**		
	Low-vocational profile	**z = 2.419** **p > |z| = 0.0156**	z = 2.859 p > |z| = 0.0042	z = 0.097 p > |z| = 0.9230	

		PRIOR BRAND USAGE		
		Competitive brand users	Brand users	Non-users
PRIOR BRAND USAGE	Competitive brand users			
	Brand users	**z = 1.907** **p > |z| = 0.0566**		
	Non-users	**z = 2.188** **p > |z| = 0.0287**	**z = 2.796** **p > |z| = 0.0052**	

		ATTENDANCE FREQUENCY				
		1 ×	2 ×	3 ×	4 ×	5 × or more
ATTENDANCE FREQUENCY	1 ×					
	2 ×	z = −1.396 p > |z| = 0.1628				
	3 ×	z = −1.866 p > |z| = 0.0621	z = −0.317 p > |z| = 0.7510			
	4 ×	z = −1.842 p > |z| = 0.0654	z = −1.129 p > |z| = 0.2590	z = −1.776 p > |z| = 0.0757		
	5 × or more	**z = −3.434** **p > |z| = 0.0006**	**z = −2.369** **p > |z| = 0.0179**	**z = −2.784** **p > |z| = 0.0054**	z = 0.795 p > |z| = 0.4267	

Appendix C
Mann-Whitney Test Results for 'Off-Site' Sample B2 (Camerimage)

Mann-Whitney results for 'off-site' sample B2 (Camerimage)

		EDUCATIONAL PROFILE		
		High-educational profile	Medium-educational profile	Low-educational profile
EDUCATIONAL PROFILE	High-educational profile			
	Medium-educational profile	**z = 4.533** **p > |z| = 0.0000**		
	Low-educational profile	**z = 5.466** **p > |z| = 0.0000**	z = 0.091 p > |z| = 0.9272	

		VOCATIONAL PROFILE			
		High-vocational profile	Medium-vocational profile	Pleasure-source profile	Low-vocational profile
VOCATIONAL PROFILE	High-vocational profile				
	Medium-vocational profile	z = −0.331 p > |z| = 0.7407			
	Pleasure-source profile	**z = 3.131** **p > |z| = 0.0017**	**z = 3.216** **p > |z| = 0.0013**		
	Low-vocational profile	**z = 3.089** **p > |z| = 0.0020**	z = 3.703 p > |z| = 0.0002	z = −0.146 p > |z| = 0.8843	

		PRIOR BRAND USAGE	
		Competitive brand users	Brand users
PRIOR BRAND USAGE	Competitive brand users		
	Brand users	**z = 2.702** **p > |z| = 0.0069**	

		ATTENDANCE FREQUENCY				
		1 ×	2 ×	3 ×	4 ×	5 × or more
ATTENDANCE FREQUENCY	1 ×					
	2 ×	z = 0.010 p > |z| = 0.9923				
	3 ×	z = 0.256 p > |z| = 0.7982	z = 0.562 p > |z| = 0.5744			
	4 ×	z = −1.220 p > |z| = 0.2225	**z = −2.540** **p > |z| = 0.0111**	**z = −3.170** **p > |z| = 0.0015**		
	5 × or more	z = −0.478 p > |z| = 0.6325	z = −1.399 p > |z| = 0.1617	**z = −1.975** **p > |z| = 0.0483**	z = 1.501 p > |z| = 0.1335	

Appendix D

Mann-Whitney Test Results for 'On-Site' sample B1 (Camerimage)

Mann-Whitney results for 'on-site' sample B1 (Camerimage)

		EDUCATIONAL PROFILE		
		High-educational profile	Medium-educational profile	Low-educational profile
EDUCATIONAL PROFILE	High-educational profile			
	Medium-educational profile	**z = 6.454** **p > |z| = 0.0000**		
	Low-educational profile	**z = 6.469** **p > |z| = 0.0000**	z = 3.402 p > |z| = 0.0007	

		VOCATIONAL PROFILE			
		High-vocational profile	Medium-vocational profile	Pleasure-source profile	Low-vocational profile
VOCATIONAL PROFILE	High-vocational profile				
	Medium-vocational profile	**z = 4.930** **p > |z| = 0.0000**			
	Pleasure-source profile	**z = 4.142** **p > |z| = 0.0000**	z = 0.222 p > |z| = 0.8244		
	Low-vocational profile	**z = 6.691** **p > |z| = 0.0000**	**z = 4.809** **p > |z| = 0.0000**	**z = 3.717** **p > |z| = 0.0002**	

		PRIOR BRAND USAGE	
		Competitive brand users	Brand users
PRIOR BRAND USAGE	Competitive brand users		
	Brand users	**z = −2.650** **p > |z| = 0.0080**	

		ATTENDANCE FREQUENCY				
		1 ×	2 ×	3 ×	4 ×	5 × or more
ATTENDANCE FREQUENCY	1 ×					
	2 ×	z = −1.015 p > |z| = 0.3102				
	3 ×	**z = −2.489** **p > |z| = 0.0128**	**z = −2.035** **p > |z| = 0.0418**			
	4 ×	**z = −3.827** **p > |z| = 0.0001**	**z = −3.929** **p > |z| = 0.0001**	z = −1.082 p > |z| = 0.2794		
	5 × or more	**z = −4.727** **p > |z| = 0.0000**	**z = −4.666** **p > |z| = 0.0000**	z = −1.662 p > |z| = 0.0965	z = −0.105 p > |z| = 0.9167	