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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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The effectiveness of advertising alcohol products in sports sponsorship

Manuel Alonso Dos Santos[1] | Carlos Pérez Campos[2] | Josep Crespo Hervás[3]

[1]Departamento de Administración, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Administrativas, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Concepción, Chile

[2]Department of Teaching and Learning of Physical, Plastic and Musical Education, Faculty of Psychology, Teaching and Educational Sciences, Campus San Vicente Mártir, Catholic University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain

[3]Department of Physical Education and Sports, University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain

Correspondence
Manuel Alonso Dos Santos, Departamento de Administración, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Administrativas, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Calle Alonso Ribera 2850, Código 4090541, Concepción, Chile.
Email: malonso@ucsc.cl

Abstract

Studies have shown that exposure to sponsorship can influence behavior. However, evidence of the effectiveness of sports advertising and its influence on alcohol consumption is inconclusive. The goal of this research is to examine whether sponsorship by alcohol products receives the same attention as sponsorship by nonalcohol products depending on their congruence and the way they influence the intention to consume. Using sports posters, an experiment was performed to measure attention through eye-tracking. The results show that attention paid to alcohol brands is no greater than the attention paid to incongruent brands and is no different from the attention paid to congruent brands, regardless of gender and sporting discipline. Attention paid to sponsors has no influence on the intention to consume. These results show the need for further research on the effectiveness of sponsorship and its relationship with alcohol consumption.

KEYWORDS

alcohol, attention, congruence, eye-tracking, gender, poster, sponsorship

1 | INTRODUCTION

Companies' global investment in sponsorship increased from 53.1 billion USD in 2013 to 62.8 billion USD in 2017 (IEG, 2017). The same report confirms that for the fourth consecutive year, investment in sponsorship was greater than investment in conventional advertising. The importance of sports sponsorship is considerable given the decreasing effectiveness of conventional media advertising and the increasing internationalization and dissemination of sports and leisure activities through social media (Alonso Dos Santos, Calabuig, Rejón Guardia & Pérez-Campos, 2016; Naidenova, Parshakov, & Chmykhov, 2016). Companies increasingly prefer to communicate via sponsorship as opposed to conventional media such as television. The impact of sports sponsorship is substantial given the public's increased exposure to alcohol products through sponsorship in sports broadcasts and sporting events (Chambers et al., 2017). These communication channels are increasingly being used, which raises the question of how marketing strategies might influence alcohol consumption (Lindsay et al., 2013).

According to the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Chile (Official Gazette, 4181-11 2006), control of alcohol consumption must also consider the role of advertising; however, the current legislation in this regard is weak. In other countries (e.g., New Zealand), industry regulation and self-regulation support the elimination of alcohol advertising at recreational activities and sporting events, restricting content, or imposing full bans (Chambers et al., 2017). The recent academic literature (Brown, 2016; Chambers et al., 2017) and international regulations pay special attention to sports sponsorship. Given the socioeconomic connotations of consuming alcohol, the literature recommends expanding knowledge, methodologies, and valid, reliable measures to assess, analyze, and compare the effectiveness of sponsorship by alcohol brands (Grohs, 2015). The study of sports sponsorship is important because of the high exposure that alcohol brands can achieve by sponsoring broadcasts and sporting events (Chambers et al., 2017). Thus, an important question is: Which marketing strategies (e.g., communication strategies) influence consumption and attitudes toward products,

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and how do they do so (Lindsay et al., 2013)? Surprisingly; however, very little research has examined the impact of sponsorship by unhealthy food products (Kelly, Ireland, Alpert, & Mangan, 2015), although the topic began to receive more interest in 2009 because of increased sponsorship by this type product for commercial purposes (O'Brien et al., 2014; Wilcox, Kang, & Chilek, 2015).

The aim of this study is to measure the attention paid to sponsored advertising by alcohol products and the consumption of these products, examine the influence by gender, and compare the influence with that of sponsorship by nonalcohol products. The goal is to examine whether sponsorship by alcohol products receives the same attention as sponsorship by congruent and incongruent nonalcohol products and how such sponsorship influences the intention to consume. The study was carried out using factorial experimentation, and attention was measured through eye tracking. The results enable an analysis of the attention paid to sports sponsorship communications by alcohol products. The findings by gender are also discussed because previous studies have shown gender differences in alcohol consumption (Davies, 2009; O'Brien et al., 2014) and in response to sponsorship (Alonso Dos Santos & Pérez-Campos, 2015; Kinney, McDaniel, & DeGaris, 2008).

This research makes several major contributions. First, experimentation by noninterrogation was performed to test attention paid to alcohol brands. The results advance the study of the influence of sponsorship on attention by highlighting this system as a way of measuring the effectiveness of sponsorship. This study is one of the first to use this type of variable (attention). In addition, the study investigates a hugely popular medium that has surprisingly been overlooked in academic endeavors, namely the sports poster. Finally, this research provides insight into the effect of alcohol brand sponsorship on attention in an attempt to increase awareness of its influence on consumers. This research is relevant because it helps explain how sponsorship by alcohol brands influences drinking behavior, which has regulatory and ethical consequences. The hypotheses are formulated and substantiated in the next section.

2 | THE DILEMMA OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ALCOHOL BRAND SPONSORSHIP

Research on the impact of alcohol sponsorship is limited. However, interest in this area has grown since 2009 (Belt et al., 2014; O'Brien et al., 2014; Wilcox et al., 2015), coinciding with an increase in sponsorship as a marketing tool. Studies have shown a direct relationship between exposure to sponsorship, brand awareness, and attitudes toward consumption (Brown, 2016; Davies, 2007), suggesting that greater exposure involves a greater intention to consume. Others have shown that the effects are nonsignificant (Davies, 2009).

Much of the research on sponsorship and alcohol has focused on children and underage youths (in their countries of residence) and on the relationship between sponsorship (e.g., Houghton, Scott, Houghton, & Lewis, 2014) and the intention to consume (Kelly, Bauman, & Baur, 2014a). The conclusion is that the image is transferred to the brand., but with a very low intention to consume (only 25%). However, the study (Kelly, Ireland, Alpert, & Mangan, 2014b) does not focus on the intention to purchase but rather on brand preference. Recent studies (Belt et al., 2014) have estimated the link between sponsorship and consumer exposure. However, the literature reveals some confusion because the effects on the general public are mixed with those on the athletes who are sponsored by alcohol brands (Brown, 2016).

Three studies are of particular interest. In the first, Belt et al. (2014) found a direct relationship between the intensity of sponsorship activities, attitudes toward consumption, and brand preference. However, they found no direct relationship between sponsorship activity and consumption. Davies (2009) also obtained interesting results that contradicted the previous literature, finding no significant correlation between awareness of the brand sponsoring the event and attitudes toward alcohol consumption; in other words, prohibiting alcohol brands from sponsoring sporting events would not significantly affect consumption behavior. The most recent study (Wilcox et al., 2015) investigated the relationship between sponsorship spending by alcohol brands (wine, beer, and liquor) and consumption from 1971 to 2012. Although spending increased by 400%, consumption has not changed significantly and is better explained by sociodemographic variations and the maturity of the market. This conclusion implies that sponsorship by unhealthy products would have no direct effect on consumption.

Broadening the field of research reveals that some general studies of alcohol and advertising have produced confusing and contradictory conclusions and findings similar to those discussed earlier. While econometric studies suggest a nonsignificant effect, other studies have shown a relationship between advertising and behavior (Hastings, Anderson, Cooke, & Gordon, 2005). This dilemma shows the need for further research in this field. Researchers have therefore highlighted this need (Belt et al., 2014). In particular, Moore, Williams, Moore, and Murphy (2013) called for further research before designing awareness-raising campaigns to investigate exposure, credibility, attention, and perception of messages.

3 | HYPOTHESES

Wilcox et al. (2015) suggest that sponsorship and advertising are unrelated to alcohol consumption, whereas others (e.g., Hastings et al., 2005) have concluded that exposure to sponsorship increases its effectiveness (consumption and brand awareness). Various studies have shown relationships between exposure to alcohol brand sponsorship and alcohol consumption as well as associated attitudes toward this consumption (Kelly et al., 2014b); however, the evidence of significant relationships between exposure and consumption varies among studies (Brown, 2016). The academic literature is therefore contradictory on this point (Brown, 2016; Wilcox et al., 2015). According to Wilcox et al. (2015), from a macroeconomic

perspective, there is seemingly no relationship between alcohol advertising and total consumption (e.g., "Nelson, 2001; Nelson & Young, 2001; Wilcox, 2001" cited by Wilcox et al., 2015). However, according to Brown (2016), seven studies (e.g., Kelly et al., 2014b; O'Brien et al., 2014) have shown positive relationships between exposure to sports sponsorship and alcohol consumption. For example, Hastings et al. (2005) concluded that exposure to sponsorship increases its effectiveness (consumption and brand awareness). This study addresses various research questions whose answers have thus far been inconclusive: Does alcohol sponsorship of sporting events influence consumption, and are alcohol product sponsors more effective than other types of product sponsors?

The first hypothesis proposes that sponsorship of sporting events by alcohol brands receives more attention than sponsorship by other brands because of the incongruity of the message. As explained earlier, Davies (2009) and Wilcox et al. (2015) argued that the effects of sponsorship and advertising are unrelated to the consumption of alcohol. However, other scholars (Hastings et al., 2005) have found that exposure to sponsorship increases its effectiveness. For instance, Kelly et al. (2014a) found that exposure to sponsorship increased the intention to consume and brand preference, which, according to hierarchical models, must be preceded by greater attention.

3.1 | Congruence

Congruence is the concept that measures the fit of the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored party based on consumer perception (Cornwell, Weeks, & Roy, 2005). Congruent sponsorship leads to greater differentiation and can improve the effectiveness of the sales promotion and positive reactions toward the sponsor. Incongruence results in an insufficient transfer of the images of the event's values to the sponsor. Low congruence can confuse consumers, which results in their needing more time to rationalize the relationship between the sponsor and the event (Meenaghan, 2001). Crucially, the fit must be considered a fundamental component of consumers' assessments of the sponsorship (Pappu & Cornwell, 2014). In general, the literature states that the sponsor is more likely to be recalled when a logical relationship between sponsor and event is perceived (Woisetschläger & Michaelis, 2012). However, more recent studies have shown that incongruent sponsorship requires more processing time to rationalize the consistency of the message, which suggests higher rates of recall (Alonso Dos Santos & Calabuig, 2017). According to Tribou (2011), in situations of incongruent but limited sponsorship, individuals must resolve this incongruence by performing a major cognitive effort. Alcohol sponsorship of sporting events can be described as incongruent because such sponsorship requires greater processing efforts (i.e., more time) to resolve the conflict.

H1: *Sports sponsorship by alcohol products and incongruent sponsorship receive more attention than congruent sponsorship.*

H2: *Individuals' attention paid to sports sponsorship by alcohol products has a positive, significant influence on these individuals' intention to consume alcohol.*

The influence of sports sponsorship by alcohol brands depending on the viewer's gender has been studied in various research projects specializing in alcohol sponsorship (Davies, 2009; O'Brien et al., 2014). Participation in Muñiz, Rodríguez, and Suárez (2014) and attendance at sporting events is significantly higher among men (Hallmann & Breuer, 2010), so their rate of exposure is also higher. In addition, differences in processing stimuli (advertising) cause differences in levels of attention and processing of the message (e.g., Goodrich, 2014), which influences the effectiveness of sponsorship (Alonso Dos Santos & Pérez-Campos, 2015). In particular, Meyers-Levy and Sternthal (1991) argued that women use a more comprehensive information process than men and show a greater propensity to process relevant information. As proposed by Goodrich (2014), men tend not to process the problem and their environment comprehensively, thereby paying greater attention to print ads (the stimuli studied in the present research) because of their higher content of heuristic stimuli. These circumstances (i.e., greater exposure and attention) suggest that men pay more attention to the sponsor in the context of the media studied in this research.

H3: *Men pay more attention than women to the sponsorship of sporting events by alcohol products.*

4 | METHOD

4.1 | Image validation

The images (posters) used in this experiment were previously validated using the procedure described below. The images were initially validated using a survey of open-ended questions. This initial survey was completed by 100 university students, who were asked to indicate which sponsors they perceived as most congruent and incongruent for each sport. The images were validated using a sample of students, but the experiment was performed on nonstudents. The sporting disciplines used in this study were tennis, sailing, and Formula 1. These sporting disciplines were selected on a convenience basis. They have been used in previous research, thereby enabling comparisons (Alonso Dos Santos & Calabuig, 2017). After the results of the first survey had been codified and processed, the sponsors that appeared most often were used to develop a new survey based on a 5-point Likert scale to select the most congruent sponsorship (100 students). The third (qualitative) stage of validation was conducted using three focus groups made up of five participants each. The participants were asked about all stimuli to identify possible editing errors and confirm that the stimuli were suitable. Finally, sports posters were taken from real events. No poster contained images of famous athletes that could influence attention and involvement with the message.

4.2 | Scales

The scale used by Davies (2009) to measure the intention to consume alcohol was translated into Spanish. According to Shim and Maggs (2005), intention to consume is a valid predictor of actual behavior. Three manipulation checks scales were used: congruence, adapted from Alonso-Dos-Santos, Rejón Guardia, Pérez Campos, Calabuig-Moreno, and Ko (2018) and previously validated by Speed and Thompson (2000); attitude toward alcohol consumption (Davies, 2009); and attitude toward alcohol sponsorship (Kropp, Lavack, Holden, & Dalakas, 1999). Unless stated otherwise, the measurement scales were based on 5-point Likert scales. Other sociodemographic and lifestyle variables were also included in the questionnaire.

4.3 | Eye-tracking hardware

Eye-tracking studies are designed to identify preferences for different messages over a given period (Thomsen & Fulton, 2007). Eye-tracking detects exactly where users or consumers fix their attention, the duration of the fixation, and the order of their visual navigation. It measures visual fixations, eye movements, and dilation. The number of fixations (NF) and their duration can also be used as an indicator of the amount of attention paid to a stimulus (Kessels & Ruiter, 2012) and, therefore, its impact and recall. Moreover, eye movements can be useful in assessing the effectiveness of brand preferences. This study measured the following variables: NF; complete fixation time (CFT); and time elapsed until the first fixation (TFF). Areas of interest were created to obtain this information.

The EyeTribe eye-tracking methodology was used to measure attention (Popelka, Stachoň, Šašinka, & Doležalová, 2016). This system features a 60 Hz sampling rate and a latency of 20 ms. It has an average accuracy of 0.5 degrees of visual angle and a spatial resolution of 0.1 degrees. It has 16 points of calibration. The system allows subjects' movements of up to 75 cm at vertical and horizontal angles. The subject stands in front of a monitor in a room equipped for neurophysiological experimentation, as suggested by the International Telecommunication Union (2002). The software program that recorded and processed the information in this study was OGAMA, which is open source freeware. The equipment and software have been used in earlier scientific research, and their accuracy and validity have been certified (Voßkühler, Nordmeier, Kuchinke, & Jacobs, 2008). According to Google Scholar, there are 227 publications that refer to EyeTribe (Imotions, 2018).

Using neurophysiological methods of capture can isolate social and cultural influences on individual attention processes, providing new evidence of the effectiveness of alcohol sponsorship of sporting events. The application of these methods has the following advantages (Solnais, Andreu-Perez, Sánchez-Fernández, & Andréu-Abela, 2013). First, they enable identification of the underlying processes responsible for the studied behaviors because similar behaviors can result from different psychological processes. Second, they provide objective physiological data because the subjects have very little or no influence on the results. Third, they eliminate bias derived from the tendency to provide socially acceptable responses.

4.4 | Experimental design

The experimental design was based on previous experiments conducted in online environments (Hernández-Méndez & Muñoz-Leiva, 2015) and eye-tracking used in prior studies on sports marketing (Alonso Dos Santos & Calabuig, 2017). The design combined an inter-subject design for comparison between groups (congruency) with an intra-subject design (sporting discipline). There were nine stimuli and nine groups, with a 3 × 3 factorial design: three levels of congruence (incongruent, alcohol, and congruent) and three types of sports. Each group had 10 participants selected using convenience sampling ($N = 90$).

Table 1 shows the experimental design and composition of the groups. The following notation was used: sponsorship type (h = alcohol, c = congruent, i = incongruent) and sporting discipline (T = tennis, S = sailing, F1 = Formula 1). The first subject in Group 1 was exposed to a tennis poster, a sailing poster, and an F1 poster, all with an alcohol sponsor. The subjects of Group 2 were exposed to the same posters as those in Group 1 but in a different order. Each

TABLE 1 Experimental design

Group	Order	Type	Group name	Link
G1	T-S-F1	Alcohol	D	https://goo.gl/peQPXX
G2	F1-T-S			https://goo.gl/TgmWVf
G3	S-F1-T			https://goo.gl/NBkyqi
G4	T-S-F1	Congruent	E	https://goo.gl/99deJp
G5	F1-T-S			https://goo.gl/SBgyYQ
G6	S-F1-T			https://goo.gl/gZRFr7
G7	T-S-F1	Incongruent	F	https://goo.gl/JWMtBf
G8	F1-T-S			https://goo.gl/AdiWN7
G9	S-F1-T			https://goo.gl/yZJKVS

Note: T = tennis, S = sailing, F1 = Formula 1.

experimental group consisted of 30 subjects, which were randomized and balanced according to age and gender. The random allocation of testing units to the groups and the groups to the overall experiment was maintained.

4.5 | Procedure

A room was prepared for scientific experimentation according to the requirements of the International Telecommunication Union (2002). The room was located in the center of a Chilean city of more than one million inhabitants. The research assistants offered incentives to passersby to encourage participation in the experiment. The experimental sequence began with an explanation of the experiment to the subjects and a request for their consent. Next, the subjects were seated in front of the monitors. After the systems had been calibrated, the subjects viewed the stimuli at 10-s intervals, with black images shown in between the stimuli images at 2-s intervals. The duration of the intervals and the images shown were selected based on the indications given in a prior study (Gülçay & Cangöz, 2016). The results were later contrasted with those for several preexperimental qualitative groups. After the experiment, all subjects affirmed that they had seen the entire poster and had understood its contents in the given time interval. After viewing the stimuli, the subjects were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire associated with their fixation data.

5 | RESULTS

5.1 | Manipulation check

Regarding the scale for attitudes toward alcohol consumption ($M = 3.37$; standard deviation [SD] = 1.56); $F(2, 177) = 0.316$; $p > .05$ ($\eta = 0.004$), and toward alcohol sponsorship ($M = 1.97$; $SD = 1.22$), $F(2, 176) = 0.047$, $p > .05$ ($\eta = 0.001$), no significant differences were found between the groups (alcohol, congruent, and incongruent). Therefore, it may be affirmed that the experimental groups were adequately formed.

5.2 | Attention paid to sponsors

Variance analysis was used to compare whether the alcohol brand sponsor received more attention than a congruent sponsor and an incongruent sponsor. With respect to the CFT indicator, the results indicate significant differences between the three types of sponsors, $F(2.97) = 4.66$, $p < .05$. The pairwise comparison using the Tukey-Kramer test indicates that the incongruent sponsor differs from the others. The congruent sponsor and the alcohol brand received the same level of attention. Figure 1 shows that the incongruent sponsor received more attention than the congruent sponsor or the alcohol brand.

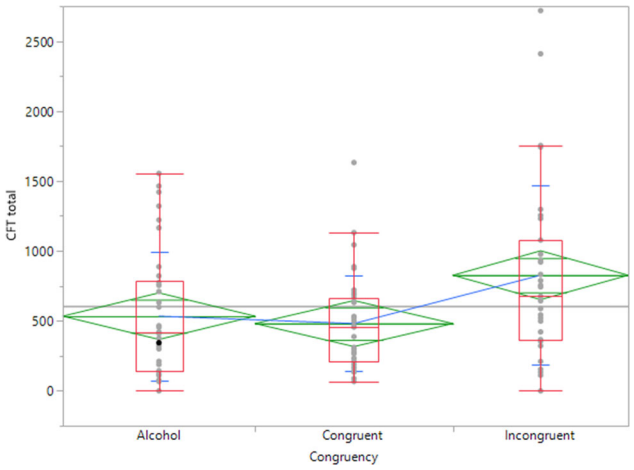

FIGURE 1 Attention differences between sponsorship types (CFT, complete fixation time). The red lines mark the box plot, the diagonal blue line connects the averages, the horizontal blue lines correspond to the standard deviation, and the green rhombuses represent the averages and confidence intervals [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Analysis of variance for the NF, $F(2.97) = 1.47$, $p > .05$, and time elapsed until TFF, $F(2.97) = 0.25$, $p > .05$, reveals no significant differences between the three types of sponsors. Differences are shown only for the CFT. This result indicates that the brands do not differ from one another with respect to the first time the subject looked at each of them or the number of times the subject looked at them. However, subjects looked longer at the incongruent sponsor for each fixation. This result indicates that incongruent brands are most effective at attracting attention, which does not indicate that they have a positive influence on recall, attitude, or consumer intention.

5.3 | Sporting discipline

The following analysis of repeated measurements validates the results for the three sporting disciplines by considering the inter-subject effect as well as the intra-subject effect because all subjects observed stimuli for the same three sporting disciplines (Figure 2).

First, the sphericity assumption was checked using the Mauchly W (5) test = 0.857, $p > .05$. The hypothesis of sphericity may not be rejected. The F Pillai trace test (2.96) = 11.61, $p < .001$ for the multivariate test confirms significant differences between sporting disciplines in terms of CFT. The sailing poster attracted more attention to the sponsor, followed by the tennis poster. However, there are no significant differences in the congruence effect between sporting disciplines. For each sporting discipline (Tukey HSD test), the previous results are corroborated, with differences between the incongruent sponsor and the rest. The results indicate that the sponsor of the sailing poster received more attention than the others, perhaps due to the simplicity of the poster. The results also indicate that the incongruent sponsor received more attention by being significantly different from the alcohol brand.

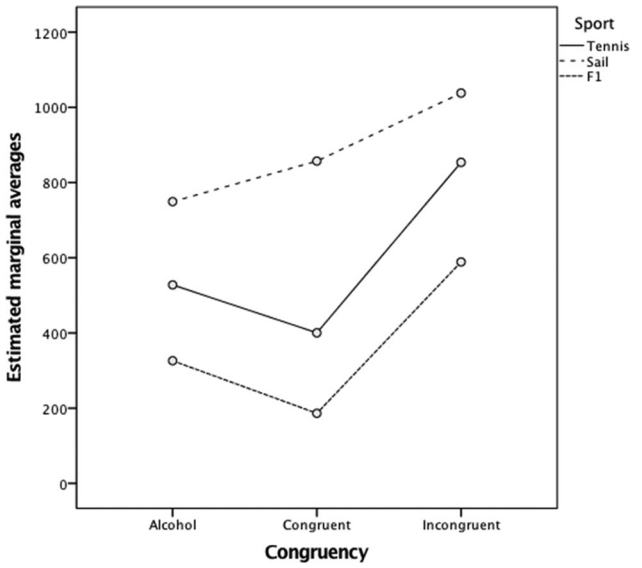

FIGURE 2 Estimated marginal average attention according to the congruence of each sporting discipline

5.4 | Influence of attention on intention to consume

The SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 1) developed by Hayes (2013) was used to test whether the sponsor type moderates the influence of CFT on the probability of drinking alcohol over the weekend.

Regression analysis (Table 2) shows that the total fixation time on the sponsor does not influence the likelihood of drinking alcohol (β = .000; p > .05). The effect of fixation time on the likelihood of consumption does not depend on the type of sponsorship. No significant effect was observed for the alcohol sponsor (β = .000; p > .05), the congruent sponsor (β = .000; p > .05), or the incongruent sponsor (β = .000; p > .05). These results confirm that fixation time has no influence on the likelihood of drinking alcohol. Thus, the likelihood of drinking alcohol does not depend on whether the sponsor is congruent, incongruent, or an alcohol brand. All subjects showed the same intention to consume alcohol, regardless of whether they were exposed to alcohol sponsorship. Moreover, all subjects had the same intention to consume alcohol, regardless of the amount of attention given to the alcohol brand sponsor.

5.5 | Attention paid to the sponsor by gender

In the analysis of fixation by gender, the results indicate no relationship or association between CFT (attention average of the three type of sponsors), F(1.28) = 1.87, p > .05, NF, F(1.28) = 2.56; p > .05, or time elapsed until TFF, F(1.28) = 1.64, p > .05, and gender. These results are similar when only the alcohol brand is considered CFT: F(1, 58) = 1.26, p > .05; NF: F(1, 58) = 0.01, p > .05; and TFF: F(1, 58) = 0.51, p > .05. These results do not differ from those reported by other researchers in studies of web advertising, where no gender differences in attention paid to advertising were found (Barreto, 2013; Drèze & Hussherr, 2003; Hernández-Méndez & Muñoz-Leiva, 2015).

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Advertising alcohol products through sports sponsorship is a controversial issue, both socially and academically. Alcohol's impact on society and the health care system is considerable, as is the financial investment of alcohol brands in sports sponsorship. The academic literature shows that the effects of alcohol sponsorship on consumers are unclear. Studies have shown that exposure to sponsorship can influence behavior through relationships that are not always significant (Davies, 2009). Macroeconomic studies (Wilcox et al., 2015) have also shown a significant increase in sponsorship investment by alcohol brands in recent years, without any variation in consumption during this period. Thus, there is controversy over the degree of influence that sponsorship has on consumption and consumer behavior (Gordon, Hastings, & Moodie, 2010).

This study aimed to resolve the academic debate surrounding the influence of exposure to alcohol brand sponsorship on consumer behavior. To achieve this objective, the study measured attention

TABLE 2 Model summary for the probability to consume alcohol

	Effect	*SE*	*t*	*p*	95% CI		R^2
Total effect of attention on probability to consume							
CFT	0.001	0.001	.533	>.05	−0.001	0.003	.007
	Coeff	**Boot *SE***	***t***	***p***	**95% CI**		**ΔR^2**
Moderator effects of type of sponsorship							
Interaction effect	−15.69	0.000	−0.551	>.05	−0.448	1.01	.004
Alcohol	0.000	0.000	0.465	>.05	−0.001	0.001	
Congruent	0.000	0.000	0.218	>.05	−0.001	0.001	
Incongruent	−0.000	0.000	−0.253	>.05	−0.001	0.001	

Abbreviations: CI, confidence interval; CFT, complete fixation time; *SE*, standard error.

paid to sports sponsorship communications, namely posters. This medium enabled effective experiment-based analysis, providing relevant insights into the effectiveness of sports sponsorship by alcohol brands, which has never been tested in this context.

The results show that sponsorship by alcohol brands receives no more attention than sponsorship by congruent sponsors or incongruent sponsors. Regardless of the sporting discipline, the alcohol brand received no more attention than the other sponsors. This finding responds to the first hypothesis: Sponsorship by alcohol brands does not receive greater attention. The attention process is necessary for brands to gain recognition or alter consumers' attitudes toward the brand. Hastings et al. (2005) and Kelly et al. (2014b) found that exposure to sponsorship increases the effectiveness of this sponsorship, resulting in greater intention to consume and greater brand preference. The results of the present study show that the alcohol brand received no more attention than the other brands. The results show that subjects paid no more attention to sponsorship by an alcohol brand than by an incongruent brand. Attention indicators do not vary between congruent brands and alcohol brands, even though alcohol brands are not perceived as suitable sponsors of sporting events (Danylchuk & MacIntosh, 2009).

The second hypothesis was rejected: Consumers do not develop a greater intention to consume because of exposure to sponsorship. These results contrast with those reported by Hastings et al. (2005) and those reported in a more recent review of the literature (Brown, 2016), which cites studies that have shown positive associations between exposure to sponsorship and alcohol consumption, although these associations are not always significant.

Finally, there are no gender differences regarding attention. O'Brien et al. (2014) and Shim and Maggs (2005), for example, found differences between men and women in relation to the influence of sponsorship and alcohol consumption, respectively. However, the results of the present study show that attention does not differ by gender. These findings might explain why differences in consumption are due not to the influence of sports sponsorship but to cultural factors (Davies, 2007; Foxcroft & Lowe, 1995).

The implications of this study are legal, ethical, and economic. First, the regulation and prohibition of sporting event sponsorship by alcohol brands seem unjustified by the results because individuals do not intend to consume more after exposure to this type of sponsorship. Therefore, if the intention is to reduce alcohol consumption, banning advertising by alcohol brands does not seem to be the most effective solution. Second, clubs and organizers of sporting events could earn substantial income from such sponsorship because some events receive significant income from alcohol sponsorship (e.g., the UEFA Champions League). Third, this study also has ethical implications for clubs and sporting events. Sports entities do not contribute to the increase in alcohol consumption among fans, especially underage fans.

In conclusion, this research shows that eye tracking can be used to measure the effectiveness of sports sponsorship. Brand awareness indicators quantitatively show the number of milliseconds that subjects look at brands. Progress in this field should be made by incorporating emotional measures that expand the information that consumers perceive and the way they perceive it. This study focused on sports posters as the form of advertising for sponsorship, thereby enriching the scant research on this topic. It would also be of interest to explore the topic in other, less-studied media such as radio. However, in general, sports advertising results in better attitudes toward products (Pyun & James, 2011). This study is the first to use a Latin American sample, but the effect of culture is undoubtedly a key factor in understanding consumer behavior. Therefore, measurements of cultural factors should be considered in future studies.

ORCID

Manuel Alonso Dos Santos http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9681-7231
Josep Crespo Hervás http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8509-0353

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