



# RAISING YOUR GAME

**REALISING THE FULL POTENTIAL  
OF MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS**

Thought Piece  
2016

**MARKETING PARTNERSHIPS, OR SPONSORSHIPS  
HAVE BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF OUR LIVES OVER  
THE LAST FEW MONTHS WHETHER WE REALISE IT OR NOT.**



**With a seemingly never ending sequence of high profile sporting events over the course of the summer, brands have been seeking to associate and exploit opportunities to infiltrate the lives of their customers and potential customers.**

**FROM ANDY MURRAY AT WIMBLEDON, THE UNEXPECTED SUCCESS OF WALES AT THE EUROS, THE RESURGENCE OF ENGLAND'S CRICKET TEAM, THE OPEN, THE TOUR DE FRANCE, LEWIS HAMILTON'S F1 SUCCESS AND NOW THE RIO OLYMPICS, THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRANDS IN THIS AREA ARE IMMENSE...**

## **...AND EXPENSIVE**

**Brands spent c\$58bn globally\* in 2015 on Marketing Partnerships, a lot of money in anyone's books but did they get value? Do they know if they really wrung every drop out of their associations?**

### **WHAT ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESS?**

Ipsos Connect UK and PAQL (Partnership Audits & Consulting Ltd) have brought together our experience in communications, brand building and Marketing Partnerships in order to help brands evaluate and optimise their partnerships. To do this we are adopting a considered and robust approach accounting for the unique way that this type of activity works as a brand building vehicle. This means that we help brands maximise the performance of these marketing interventions that for too long have underachieved when it comes to delivering successful business outcomes for brands.

When it comes to evaluation we are seeing an over-reliance in measuring the success of Marketing Partnerships through exposure, allied to a lack of understanding of the particular nature of this kind of marketing activity, where emotions run high and the role of the brand is often tenuous. Failing to understand and cater for the dynamics of the

relationships at play, can mean brands don't get to the heart of what their partnerships are achieving. It is only by gaining a clear understanding of how a partnership is working that we can then ensure the right steps are taken to course correct and optimise for future years or for future associations.

There are many great examples of where Marketing Partnerships can deliver real value to brands (and the property), for example Evian's association with Wimbledon, British Gas and their association with swimming or HP and F1. What partnerships require if they are to optimise success are:

1. An appreciation of fan status in relation to the property when setting objectives, planning and executing the partnership
2. A relevant brand connection to the property they are partnering with, or the potential to establish this over time with sustained investment
3. An effective and appropriate approach to amplifying or activating their association that brings the role of the brand to life

\*Ieg Sponsorship Spending Report

**\$58** BN GLOBALLY

## WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

As with any brand communication the intention should be to generate a positive response to the brand, firstly getting attention, then enhancing brand relevance and reinforcing or disrupting behaviours. All this is done through adding to, or enhancing, the mental networks that are conjured up when we think of the brand in those moments that matter.

In the US a great example of a brand that has infused its own mental network with elements of the partnership is Bud Light and their association with the NFL. When you examine the associative networks for Bud Light, along with the conventional associations of beer in general, such as the occasions you drink it in, [American] Football also features prominently, as does sport and the conviviality of the situation.



Bud Light Mental Network  
Strength of association = Thickness of line

Source: Ipsos Beer study, 2016 Base: 900 adults aged 21-55, US, online

Compared to other brands, Bud Light has strong mental cues with football

Bud Light will have more chance of coming to mind as a beer for drinking when watching NFL with your mates as a result of these mental networks.

To build on this, the brand needs to activate at point of sale and the moment of consumption, to effectively turn that association into business results.

## SO WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Realising the full potential of the Marketing Partnership activity requires a marriage of understanding, of both the dynamics of partnerships and their role in building brands. At the heart of this, as with all marketing, is understanding people and how to influence the brand choices they make.

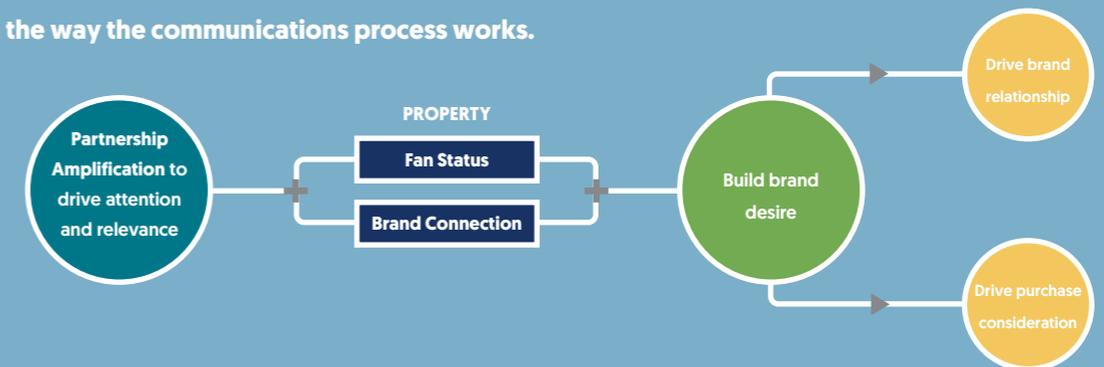
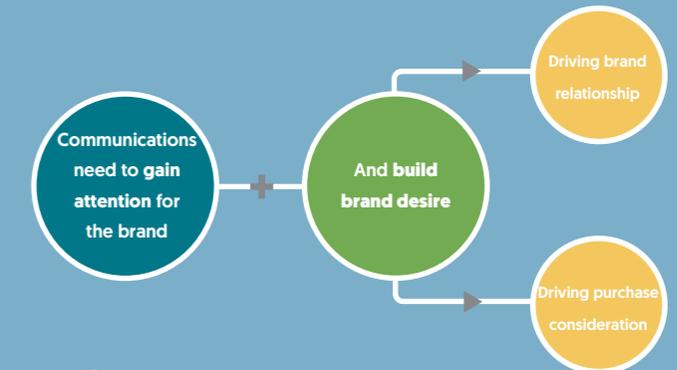
Of course for Marketing Partnerships, this might not just be the punters on the street but also trade partners, business customers and the brand's own employees.

Marketing Partnerships are a great way to capture people's attention in a world where it is getting harder and harder to be noticed –

But with Marketing Partnerships there are other aspects that we must consider, Fan Status and Brand Connection, that reflect the differences in the way the communications process works.

because you are associating yourself with something that people care about (usually more than your brand for the true fans!).

In the framework depicted below (as with all communications) it's not just about capturing attention, but making sure that it's focused attention for your brand so that they consider you now and in the long term too.



## HOW IMPORTANT IS FAN STATUS?

We pay attention to what is relevant to us. When you hear your name mentioned at a party your ears prick up. Similarly, when we hear a reference to our favourite sport, team or personality we will divert our attention and tune in to what is being said. That is the brand's opportunity to open a dialogue with the individual. However, fan status is unique to an individual and brands have to recognise that capturing attention requires more than a 'one size fits all' approach.

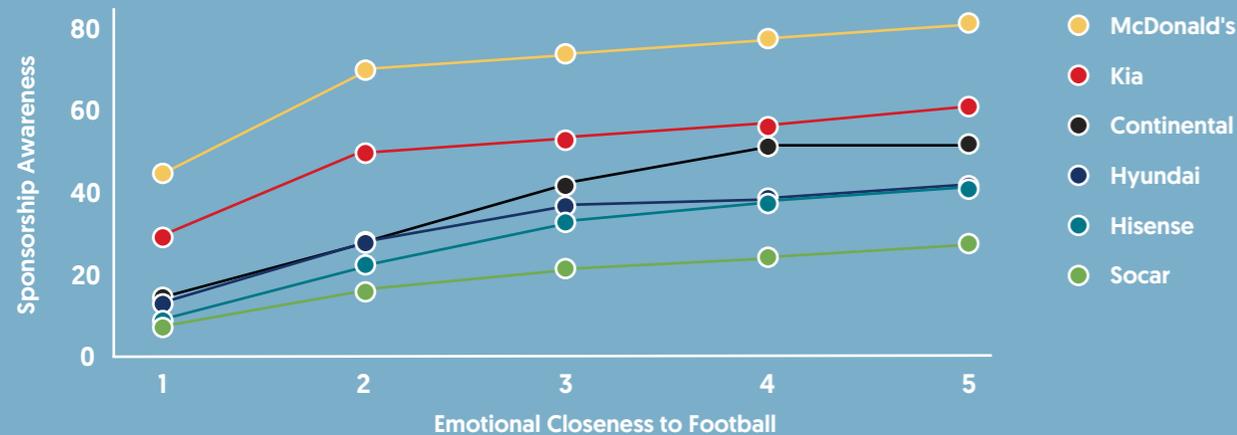
Once attention is captured the intended message has to have relevance to the fan, given their relationship to the property, and be credible in relation to what they already believe about the brand.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR EVALUATION?

It is not a new thing to measure the impact of a partnership among fans but what needs to change is how we segment fan groups. With the proliferation in ways of engaging with a sport or property, from attending to tweeting and everything in between, a straightforward behavioural segmentation is not enough. Fans who have a mere passing interest in a property can be exposed to or engage with it through multiple channels during their everyday lives.

What is important is how passionate they are about the property, - what role does it play in their life and even their emotional state? Does their team's loss ruin their weekend or are they ambivalent about it, after all it's only a game!

## EURO 2016 SPONSORSHIP AWARENESS BY FAN TYPES



Source: Ipsos MORI Euros sponsorship study, 2016 Base: 2000 adults aged 16-65, Europe, online

The fact that an individual's inclination to pay attention to and subsequently engage with a partnership activity and associated communications is primarily driven by their emotional connection to the third party is well demonstrated by our findings from the Ipsos Euro 2016 evaluation.

For the smaller brands trying to associate themselves with the tournament, e.g. Hisense, the more passionate the fan is, the more likely they are to be aware of and thus potentially engage with the sponsorship.

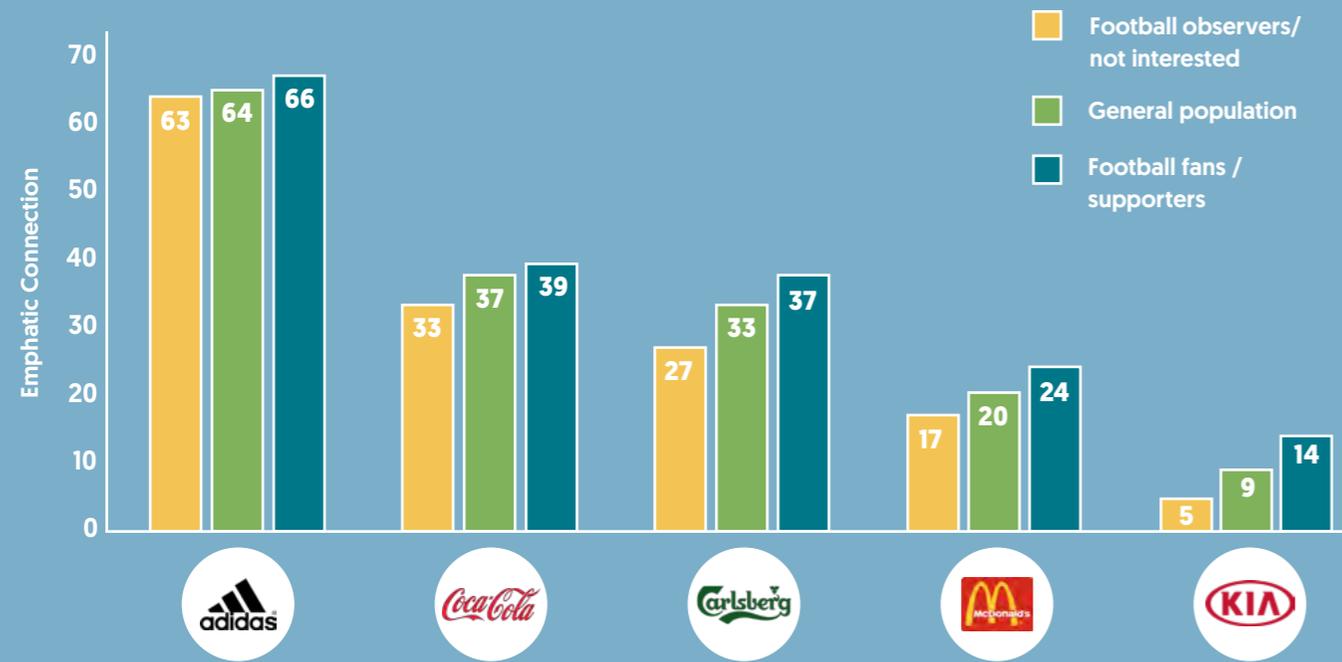
Thus in evaluating the performance of a Marketing Partnership we have to understand the response across the different fan types in the target audience and the degree to which each is noticing the partnership and responding to it, in order to optimise the execution going forward.

## DEMONSTRATING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE BRAND AND THE PROPERTY IS CRITICAL

Understanding the relationship the brand has with the property plays a crucial role in whether the fans accept the partnership and how they respond to it. A strong rational connection is easier to accept and therefore more likely to create a response among the audience, for example the link between Shell and Ferrari F1 Team is immediately obvious. Therefore any messages Shell want to deliver using this partnership are easier to process and are more likely to embed themselves in the brand's associative network. But not all partnerships have such an obvious connection.

Often we can rationalise a connection if we put our minds to it, no matter how tenuous, but in the real world people don't do this. In order to understand how a brand is performing in terms of their connection we need to understand whether people are perceiving one, whether it is obvious and what the nature is. Using neuroscience, specifically Implicit Reaction Time (IRT) in this area can help us understand subconscious perceptions of a partnership and help differentiate between the intuitive and appropriate, and those which require too much post rationalisation, which will not happen in the real world.

## BRAND CONNECTION WITH FOOTBALL



Using Implicit Reaction Time to determine system 1 response

Source: Ipsos MORI Euros sponsorship study, 2016 Base: 2000 adults aged 16-65, Europe, online

Data from Ipsos' research, that used IRT into Euro 2016 sponsors, shows how Adidas has the most natural and obvious connection with football, whereas Kia, and indeed McDonald's, do not have a naturally intuitive association. As a result, both of these brands need to work harder at creating a narrative that lessens work for people in post rationalising their role.

When we look at the same data amongst passionate football fans, the strength of connection increases, most significantly for those brands without a strong established connection. This suggests that these brands' partnership amplification activity has helped the passionate fans make sense of the initially more tenuous connection.

## EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP AMPLIFICATION IS KEY TO REALISING A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

Both fan status and brand connection must be uppermost in one's mind when planning partnership amplification and execution ideas. It is rarely enough to badge a property and leave the magic to just happen and without partnership amplification there is no control of the overall brand narrative.

Beyond the property's passionate fans, partnership amplification has to work hard to generate a response amongst all fans, but particularly amongst those who invest less emotional collateral in the property. Partnership amplification must deliver attention with a relevant message, which brings the connection to life and increases the relevance of the brand.

Brand's should therefore consider the size and nature of the fan base when planning their activation and assigning their budgets. It may be that a multi-pronged approach is required, to engage passionate fans and those with less emotional connection. An example of this would be British Gas' partnership with British swimming which gained significant awareness and appreciation from passionate fans that the company were investing in their sport.

British Gas also rewarded the less passionate fans via content and reward based activities (free swims, health-club memberships etc...).

Deep understanding of the fan base is also critical for evaluation – what is the size and nature of different fan groups and how did the different groups respond to the activation elements and the messaging associated with the partnership? As well as assessing the performance of the partnership and communications activity generally, there is a need to explore the contribution of all channels in delivering the brand story.



## IN CONCLUSION...

Successful Marketing Partnerships are about achieving balance. Balance between the fan and the property, the property and the brand and then ultimately, between the fan and then the brand. Any evaluation needs to measure this balance and make recommendations designed to improve it moving forward, ensuring brands are getting real value from the association.

With Great Britain's recent sporting successes at the Olympics, Wimbledon and on the F1 circuit to name a few, more and more brands are considering the potentially lucrative opportunities that marketing partnerships present. Making sure any partnership is working as hard as it can be requires a shift in mindset away from over-simplistic exposure based strategies and evaluative measures, to a true understanding of how they work, and what they can achieve, with measurement of the three key facets that are integral to success;

- **Fan status**
- **Connection**
- **Partnership amplification**

Only through understanding each of these, can we truly identify if the Marketing Partnership has, or has the potential to, deliver real value for the brand.

To this end Ipsos Connect UK and PACL have brought together their respective expertise in brand building, communications and Marketing Partnerships to develop an approach for understanding actual and potential performance.

By challenging the uncertainty surrounding Marketing Partnerships and understanding what makes them unique, we can answer that all important question – is your Marketing Partnership working to its full potential?



## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

### PLEASE CONTACT:

#### SENIOR DIRECTOR – IPSOS CONNECT



Jamie is a Senior brand and communications Director with specific experience, both client and agency side, in understanding the role of Marketing Partnerships in changing peoples' attitudes and behaviour and their subsequent impact on brand performance.

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### ABOUT PACL (PARTNERSHIP AUDITS & CONSULTING LTD)

PACL is a marketing consultancy that specialises in helping brands optimise the performance of Marketing Partnership (MP) activities via products and services based on validated data and insight.

Products and services include:

- **Margins Diagnostics:** an innovative process that identifies opportunities to improve the planning, execution and management of current or future MP activities
- **Performance planning:** application of validated insight to help brands create relevant strategies for using MP activities
- **Performance evaluation:** review and analysis of existing and the development of bespoke evaluation programmes

PACL believes that MP activities can provide significant benefits to brands when the communications process is properly understood and 'New World' thinking, which is rooted in psychological theory, neuroscience and the latest brand communications theory, is applied.

### ABOUT IPSOS CONNECT

Ipsos Connect are experts in brand, media, content and communications research. We help brands and media owners to reach and engage audiences in today's hyper-competitive media environment.

Our services include:

- **Brand & Campaign Performance:** Evaluation and optimisation of in-market activities to drive communications effectiveness and brand growth.
- **Content and Communications Development:** Communications, content and creative development from early stage idea development through to quantitative pre-testing alongside media & touchpoint planning.
- **Media Measurement:** Audience measurement and understanding.

Ipsos Connect are specialists in people-based insight, employing qualitative and quantitative techniques including surveys, neuro, passive, observation, social media and other data sources. Our philosophy and framework centre on building successful businesses through understanding brands, media, content and communications at the point of impact with people.

