

# For Four Too

Sponsorship Perspectives

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## **Jamie Robertson, sponsorship expert at Ipsos MORI, on the fight for the top 4 Premier Football League places and the ramifications for their sponsors.**

During this closed season most of the discussion in pubs and the back pages of the newspapers, The Ashes aside, has been about who can break into the top four of the Premier League.

The obvious contenders are Spurs, Aston Villa, Everton and of course everyone's favourite to do so, Manchester City, buoyant after their relatively recent takeover. After a first season under new ownership that delivered some notable signings and a mid-table finish, this summer they have really pushed the boat out. Following on from the "Kaka saga" in January, some stellar names have joined the likes of Robinho at Eastlands. Santa Cruz, Barry, Tevez, Toure, Adebayor and I'm sure there will be more to follow, many of these players poached from near rivals for the Champions League places.

City fans won't be the only people willing their side to break the stranglehold of Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool and Arsenal. Etihad, their principle sponsor, will also be hoping that the column inches and coverage generated by the takeover and transfer dealings will be replaced by free flowing football which not only makes them good to watch for the neutral but propels them up the league.

The data on the next page shows the association achieved by the big four and their respective sponsors. There is a clear difference between what Emirates and AIG have achieved and the achievements of Samsung and Carlsberg. It shows that there is more to building association than simply having success on the pitch.

Take Emirates, a similar type of sponsor to Etihad and a brand that has achieved around 25% association at its peak. They started slowly but once they took over the shirt sponsorship and paid for the naming rights to the shiny new stadium at Ashburton Grove, they built their association very quickly. No doubt this association was also helped by the fact that Arsenal as a team were renowned for playing attractive football, great for the neutral to watch.

Then there is AIG and Manchester United, who also built rapid association, and currently hold the no. 1 spot of the top 4 in both sponsorship and footballing terms. AIG, for obvious reasons, has declined to renew their deal, but as I mentioned in this article a couple of months ago, they have set a very high benchmark for Aon to follow.

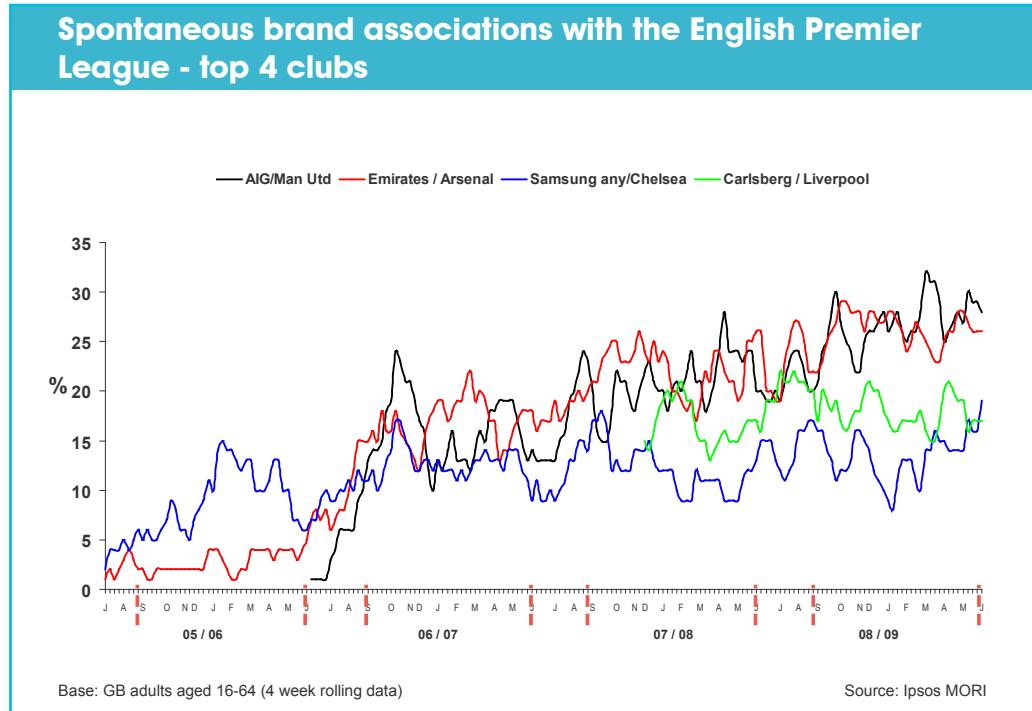


For Samsung and Carlsberg their growth has stagnated somewhat in recent seasons, despite increasing success on the pitch. Does this mean that they need to invest more in driving awareness or should they spend their money in bringing the association to life for those already aware; in the UK my money would go on the latter.

So what lies ahead for both City and Etihad? How quickly will their association build and more importantly what will it do for the Etihad brand in

the UK and also globally. Lest we forget that the Barclays Premier League (and its clubs) is a global product, the objectives of sponsors of the big clubs will extend beyond the UK's shores. If City start winning, playing the sort of football that people love to watch, it can only help build both City and Etihad's profile. Hopefully this will guarantee that both brands receive the sort of media coverage that up until now has been the preserve of the elite clubs of world football. For the blue half of Manchester let's hope it is a marriage made in heaven.

Emirates achieved around  
**25%**  
association at its peak





## About Ipsos MORI

Ipsos MORI is one of the largest and best known research companies in the UK and a key part of the Ipsos Group, a leading global research company. With a direct presence in 60 countries, our clients benefit from specialist knowledge drawn from our five global practices: public affairs research, advertising testing and tracking, media evaluation, marketing research and consultancy, customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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