



# Sponsorship: How to Make it Work

Suzy Aronstam, Director  
SPA Future Thinking



SPA  
Future  
Thinking



As sponsorship becomes more and more prevalent and consumers become more and more savvy to its purposes - getting it right is increasingly important.

Get it wrong and you can expect a torrent of abuse on Twitter and other social media. So can the wrong sponsorship actually do more harm than good?

Online brand monitor and analysis providers Repscan recently published social media analysis of mentions linking sponsors and the 2012 Olympics which highlighted that comments about McDonalds, Cadbury and Coca Cola in relation to their 2012 Olympic sponsorship all started off pretty sceptically; generally because the association with these unhealthy brands and sport didn't ring true.

It may have been that those commentators on Twitter were simply generally quite negative in their attitudes towards sponsorship or the games in general - early birds commentating on twitter can be of a negative nature.

However, the power of association clearly began to kick in as sentiment towards their Olympic sponsorship became more positive over time.

Objectives of sponsorship may also vary.

McDonalds, Cadbury and Coca Cola are looking to raise their brand image via their association with the Olympics and also gain a sales advantage over the competition.

For other Olympic sponsors such as Dow Chemicals it is more about building their company profile and presence amongst a wider corporate audience.

So how do sponsors get it right?





Here at SPA Future Thinking we've been researching broadcast sponsorship since it began. We researched the Dominoes sponsorship of The Simpsons campaign back in 1998 and have done over 550 projects since then, so we have a pretty good idea of how sponsorship works.

Here are some of our key learnings to ensure sponsorship works for you:

## A Little Thought Goes a Long Way

As consumers have become savvier they appreciate it when they feel a brand has put an effort into a campaign to ensure that there is an association between the brand and the programme.

Cheap badging, whilst raising awareness, does little for a brand's image. That's not to say that an association needs to be immediately obvious. Sometimes viewers like to suddenly 'click'. For example the realisation that the characters Keith, Ian and Andy in the Kia sponsorship of football on ITV spelt KIA.

You can also build synergy through a long term association. Cadbury and Coronation Street didn't go together until they had been matched through sponsorship for a number of months, highlighting that sponsorship doesn't always have to be about the obvious choices.

However, when a DIY brand sponsors a home improvement show or a camera sponsors a programme about photography it's likely to do well.

## Clarity of Message is Key

If it's not obvious what a sponsor is trying to say then consumers can get turned off.

We find that the sponsorships that research the best are those with a really clear message, either telling viewers something new or giving viewers a reason to want to find out more. They make it easy for a viewer to act on what they have seen. Break bumpers are short and a clear main message is vital to aid cut through.





## Integrate Your Ad Campaigns

We have found that spot advertising and sponsorship work really well together. If people have been exposed to sponsorship they tend to notice spot ads more - and vice versa, so the two can really complement each other.

We also see viewers are more likely to notice a short-term sponsorship if it's part of a cohesive marketing campaign. Where sponsorship takes a totally new direction from other brand activity people may have seen, a longer term association tends to see better results.

## Multiplatform Sponsorship Works

It's not just spots that enhance sponsorship. It is generally enhanced by additional activation and both awareness and impact of a sponsorship campaign are increased amongst people who have been exposed to different platforms within a campaign. It's been widely cited that online and TV advertising are a great complement; the same is true for sponsorship on TV and online.

## Driving Category Has Benefits

Sponsorship can drive a category rather than an individual brand forward. This isn't necessarily a bad thing as a longer term campaign may, for example, drive interest in category at first and then over the longer term hone in on the benefits of a particular brand. For example, insurance sponsorship can start to get people thinking that they need to take out a new policy, or make them realise that theirs is up for renewal when this wasn't something they had been thinking about before.

That's not to say the category effect will always happen, and if that's not an aim then clearly strong branding and a USP are key. These types of brands can however research very differently to say a more aspirational electronics or luxury brands where it can be easier to differentiate from competitors.





## So what's next for sponsorship?

In the broadcast environment it's rare for a sponsorship campaign to research badly, our norms are generally high, and it's clear that sponsorship can really work for a brand.

Where we tend to see issues is where the target audience for the sponsorship ends up not matching the programme audience, where viewers are confused as to the messaging or where the branding isn't clear.

Our knowledge of media and marcomms extends from brand proposition and development, campaign evaluation, effectiveness of broadcast sponsorship; to researching all forms of today's media.

For more information please contact the author of this piece, Suzy Aronstam - Senior Director at SPA Future Thinking.

[suzy.aronstam@spafuturethinking.com](mailto:suzy.aronstam@spafuturethinking.com)

+44 (0) 20 7843 9777



# About the Company



## Suzy Aronstam, Senior Director at SPA Future Thinking

Suzy has been with SPA FT for 14 years and heads up all of our broadcast sponsorship evaluation research, working closely with Sky, Channel Four and ITV.

She developed our extensive norms database for sponsorship, and has been instrumental in the development of Campaign Optimiser, SPA FTs tool for measuring the relative impact of different platforms within a multimedia campaign. Suzy also has considerable experience of researching Product Placement, Ad funded programming and advertising in general.



[suzy.aronstam@spafuturethinking.com](mailto:suzy.aronstam@spafuturethinking.com)

+44 (0) 20 7843 9777



**SPA Future Thinking** is the result of a merger between a number of specialist agencies in 2010 and 2011, and has developed to become one of the fastest growing and largest independent market research companies in Europe, with more than 200 employees and offices in the UK, Germany, France and Italy and a partner network in 38 countries worldwide. With combined industry experience of over 40 years we offer thought leadership across a wide range of specialisms and we provide genuine expertise and understanding across a wide range of industry sectors.

Our knowledge of media and marcomms extends from brand proposition and development, effectiveness of broadcast sponsorship, to researching all forms of today's media.

For more information about the company please contact John Whittaker on +44 (0) 1865 336 400 or at [john.whittaker@spafuturethinking.com](mailto:john.whittaker@spafuturethinking.com)

[www.spafuturethinking.com](http://www.spafuturethinking.com)

