



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

The effects of a brand logo's
visual characteristics on consumer
attitudes in sports shirt
sponsorship

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore how the visual logo characteristics affect consumer responses in the context of shirt sponsorship in sports. It uses a quantitative experimental approach, manipulating congruence, descriptiveness, and frame of a fictitious brand's logo placed on a shirt of FC Porto. The findings suggest that congruent and descriptive logos tend to generate higher levels of goodwill perceptions about the sponsor and more favourable attitudes towards sponsorship, while framed logos tend to generate lower values of both than open logos. This study also shows that the relationship between goodwill and attitude is moderated by fan identification and that goodwill is also significantly affected by demographics. The limitations of the study include using a fictitious brand and only one real football club, as well as manipulating only three design characteristics. In the future, this study could be replicated with a larger sample and/or larger variability in brands, teams, and design.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, sponsorship, visual brand identity, brand logos.

Resumo

O presente estudo tem como objetivo explorar como as características visuais do logotipo de um patrocinador, estampado na camisola de um clube desportivo, afetam as respostas do consumidor relativamente ao patrocinador e ao patrocínio. Recorre-se, para isso, a uma abordagem experimental quantitativa, manipulando a congruência, a descritividade e a moldura de um logótipo de uma marca fictícia colocado numa camisola do FC Porto. Os resultados sugerem que logotipos congruentes e descritivos tendem a gerar perceções mais elevadas de boa vontade (sinceridade) do patrocinador e melhores atitudes face ao patrocínio, enquanto logotipos emoldurados geram valores mais baixos em ambas as variáveis do que logotipos sem moldura. Este estudo mostra ainda que a relação entre boa vontade e atitude é moderada pela identificação do adepto e que as perceções de boa vontade do patrocinador são ainda significativamente afetadas por variáveis demográficas. As limitações do estudo incluem o uso de uma marca fictícia e apenas um clube de futebol real, bem como a manipulação de apenas três características de design. No futuro, este estudo pode ser replicado com uma amostra maior e/ou maior variabilidade em marcas, equipas e design.

Palavras-chave: comportamento do consumidor, patrocínio, identidade visual da marca, logotipos da marca.

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1. Introduction

One of the marketing strategies widely used by different companies is sports sponsorship, which gives sponsor brands the capability to connect with audiences that are wide and passionate. Brands make these investments because they believe that the positive feelings that fans have towards their favourite team will transfer to the brand, which, in turn, will lead to increased brand equity (Cornwell et al., 2001).

A report from Nielsen (2022) depicts the large potential of this industry. At the beginning of 2021, sponsorship expenditures rose to 107% compared to the same period the year before. Between 2020 and 2021, sponsorships drove an average 10% lift in purchase intent among the exposed fanbase. The consumer's attitudes in the industry seem to be generally positive, with 81% of global respondents expressing trust towards brand sponsorships at sporting events (either completely or somewhat).

Consumer attitudes have been shown to be the major outcomes of sponsorship (Ko & Kim, 2014; Speed & Thompson, 2000) and to influence sponsorship effectiveness (Madrigan, 2001; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006; Stipp, 1998). A factor that has been shown to increase positive attitudes is perceived goodwill, or sincerity of the sponsoring brand (Kim et al., 2011; Olson, 2010). Moreover, fan identification has been an important moderator variable in sponsorship-related studies (Dalakas & Levin, 2005; Eagleman & Krohn, 2012).

As part of another important marketing tool — visual brand identity — a brand’s logo design affects consumer responses as well. Previous research suggests that descriptive (or figurative) logos are preferred by consumers (Machado et al., 2012) and can positively influence purchase intentions (Luffarelli, Mukesh, et al., 2019). Moreover, a complete frame around a logo can lead to higher perceived trustworthiness (Chen & Bei, 2020), which can be linked with goodwill.

However, in the shirt sponsorship context, it is important to note that the sponsor’s communications do not exist in a vacuum. The brand communicates not only with the audience, but also with the sponsored team itself (Sleight, 1989). Its logo is placed on a shirt together with the team’s logo and colours, making visual congruence (or the sponsor-object fit) an especially important thing to consider. In sponsorship overall, it has been shown to influence sponsor’s benefits (Henderson et al., 2019) and consumer responses (Garcia-Sastre et al., 2020).

Still, research on the topic of visual congruence in sponsorship is scarce, and it has not been yet applied to sports shirt sponsorship specifically. Moreover, the effects of other logo design characteristics (such as descriptiveness and frame) on consumers’ responses in this context remain uncertain.

Considering the existing literature, the present study aims to address the stated research gap by exploring how the visual logo characteristics affect consumer responses in the context of shirt sponsorship in sports. The purposes of this study are: a) to extend previous research by estimating the impact of the visual logo characteristics on consumer attitudes in sports sponsorship; and b) to provide guidelines for marketers in the sphere of sports sponsorship on how to maximize the value of their sponsorship deals.

This study will first provide an overview of the existing literature on the topics of sports sponsorship marketing, congruence in sponsorship, and brand logo and

its characteristics. Then, survey methodology will be explained, followed by the results and discussion. Finally, we will provide conclusions, limitations, and directions for the future research.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Model

2.1. Sports sponsorship marketing: main features

In order to define what sponsorship is, it is important to firstly explore the differences it has with advertising. Both are investments that are aimed at reaching an audience and promoting a brand. Still, existing research highlights several distinctions.

Sleight (1989, p.4) defined sponsorship as 'a business relationship between a provider of funds, resources or services and an individual, event or organization which offers in return some rights and association that may be used for commercial advantage'. Therefore, as opposed to advertising, where two-way communication takes place between the advertiser and consumer, sponsorship implies a three-way communication process among the sponsor, property (e.g., the sponsored athlete), and consumer. It is also important to note that sponsorship messages are delivered to consumers in a 'passion mode', in contrast to the 'interruption' mode of the advertising ones (Cameron, 2009).

Another thing that distinguishes sponsorship from advertising is the 'goodwill' generation (Meenaghan, 2001), or sincerity. Many companies are using sponsorship activities in conjunction with corporate social responsibility strategies (Uhrich et al., 2014), although it is not always the case. Still, according to Easton & Mackie (1998, p.105), sponsorship is mostly seen as 'more altruistic and more evident of the company's social conscience than an advertising campaign'. Moreover, perceived goodwill has been previously linked to an

increased positive attitude toward the sponsor (Kim et al., 2011; Olson, 2010) and an increased positive response to sponsorship overall (Speed & Thompson, 2000). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1. High goodwill perceptions lead to increased positive attitudes.

Considering all of the above, it is no wonder that a consumers' reaction to sponsorship has been repeatedly reported to be different from advertising (e.g., Carrillat & d'Astous, 2013; Carrillat & d'Astous, 2012; Hoek et al., 1997).

Sponsorship as a tactic has been being used by brands for decades, and sponsorship marketing has become a separate research area. Cornwell et al. (2006) define it as the organization and implementation of activities to build and communicate an association with a sponsored entity. Fans of sports teams take in visual information from sponsors' logos, displayed on signage throughout the stadium, and on uniforms worn by athletes.

Attitudes toward sponsorship, as well as perceptions of sponsorship, play an important role in purchasing decisions. These attitudes and perceptions can lead to a loyal base of consumers for sponsors (Melovic et al., 2019).

One important factor that contributes to consumer attitudes is found to be fan identification. For instance, Dalakas & Levin (2005) surveyed NASCAR fans about how they feel about the sponsors of their most and least favourite drivers. Researchers saw positive attitudes towards sponsors that supported consumers' favourite drivers (and vice versa). Eagleman & Krohn (2012) reported that highly identified fans can identify more sponsors and demonstrate more positive attitudes and higher purchase intention. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H2. Fan identification moderates the relationship between goodwill perceptions and consumer attitudes.

Mazodier et al. (2018, p.30) also explored how sponsorship can be affected by fan isolation, or 'the experience of feeling separated from the team community'. This phenomenon can be seen, for instance, among geographically distant fans

(e.g., European or Asian residents who are fans of NBA). Researchers posited that isolation should make the fans seek more community affiliation, which should then lead them to prefer the team-linked brands. However, the researchers found that the actual effect still depends on how strong the fan identification is. It means that for ‘weak’ fans (the ones that are not that strongly connected to the team), isolation may even cause avoidance of the sponsors’ brands.

Nonetheless, there are also two ways in which sports fans can interpret sponsorship deals: either as a gesture of genuine support from the brand towards the team or as a calculated attempt of self-promotion. Only the first interpretation — genuine support — drives positive attitudes towards the sponsor (Woisetschläger et al., 2017).

One of the ways for a sponsor to be interpreted as a genuine supporter is to be somehow connected with the industry they sponsor (whether it be a particular sport or sports in general). For instance, Tsordia et al. (2018) applied Aaker’s (1991) consumer-based brand equity model to fans of professional sport teams and found that perceived fit between sponsor and sponsee affects the sponsor’s brand equity significantly.

2.2. Congruence in sponsorship

Congruence (or perceived fit, or sponsor-object fit, or similarity) is a construct that has been studied extensively in the sponsorship literature, as it is considered one of the most important requirements for the image transfer process (Gwinner, 1997; Speed & Thompson, 2000). It has been defined as the “perception by spectators or participants determines the degree to which sponsors and the event match, belong to the same world, or seem likely to engage in joint business or communication efforts” (Mazodier & Merunka, 2012). Becker-Olsen & Hill (2006) also described it as a match in mission, target audience, and/or values.

Positive impact of congruence on the attitudes that consumers have toward sponsorships have been outlined by numerous studies. It has also been shown that, as the sponsorship exposure increases, perceptions of high commercialization or low congruence might damage the sponsor's image (Grohs & Reisinger, 2014). Moreover, as seen in Olson (2010), sincerity (or perceived goodwill), discussed in the previous section, mediates the effect of the sponsor-object fit on sponsorship. This can be explained by the minimization of individuals' scepticism in relation to the sponsors' motives, which is facilitated by congruence (Rifon et al., 2004). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H3. High perceived fit between the sponsor's and team's visuals leads to increased goodwill perceptions, and vice versa.

The literature has mostly emphasized the importance of a conceptual or geographic fit between the entities. For instance, Woisetschläger et al. (2017) found that sponsors' regional proximity leads to positive inferences about the overall fit of the sponsorship and the motives behind it, while international sponsorships tend to be perceived negatively. These findings are consistent with Olson & Thjømmøe (2011), who reported that geographic, attitude, and audience similarity, along with product relevance and contract duration, all affect fit perceptions in sponsorship.

The visual congruence's effects on sponsorship performance were explored by Henderson et al. (2019) through colour matching. In this context, visual congruence refers to a demonstration of unity, which can be achieved, for instance, by matching the colour identity of a sponsor to that of its sponsored entity. An example of this phenomenon is that the red signs of Toyota and Budweiser are a match for the Cincinnati Reds' stadium, but not so with the New York Mets' one, where the colour scheme is orange and blue. Researchers found that adopting the team's colours in visual displays can help brands enhance their benefits from the sponsorship without incurring significant additional costs.

Moreover, Garcia-Sastre et al. (2020) used eye-tracking technology to evaluate the effects of visual congruence between sports events and both real and fictitious brands. Researchers found that there are differences between familiar and unfamiliar brands when it comes to the degree to which congruence affects consumers' responses. For example, attitudes towards real sponsors and purchase intention were affected positively by congruence, but there were no significant differences for fictitious brands. Furthermore, while in both cases brand recognition was affected by congruence, the fictitious brands' recognition was actually stronger in the case of incongruence. Overall, it seems that visual congruence is mostly preferable for brands, except for new brands that aim to boost recognition and recall.

However, there is contradictory evidence to these findings in studies by Breuer & Rumpf (2015) and Boronczyk et al. (2018), where viewers of sporting events were also subject to eye-tracking. Instead of congruence, visual contrast between the sponsor and the surroundings has been shown to capture more attention. Moreover, Krishna et al. (2017) and Milosavljevic et al. (2012) found that visual contrasts tend to stand out in distracting environments, such as retail stores.

2.3. Brand logo and its characteristics

Logo is considered to be an important part of corporate visual identity (CVI), a combination of visual cues that help brands communicate their image and strategy (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). For one, logos draw customer's attention, leading them to remember the brand later on (Henderson & Cote, 1998), which serves to differentiate the brand, distinguishing it from competitors (MacInnis et al., 1999). Moreover, logos have been shown to influence both a businesses' financial results and brand equity (Luffarelli, Stamatogiannakis, et al., 2019; Park et al., 2013).

It is no wonder then, that when a company's strategy changes, logo should be changed accordingly (Machado et al., 2012). In the previous section, we explored the topic of congruence (or perceived fit), which can be applied in this context as a reason to modify a brand's logo — to increase the “match” with its sponsored entity. An example of such modification is the campaign by Bud Light, in which they altered their traditional can designs to visually match different NFL teams in the 2016-2017 season (Henderson et al., 2019). Moreover, several authors have argued that all CVI elements, including the logo, should be used consistently across different channels (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012; Bosch et al., 2004; Omar et al., 2009).

This can be explained by the phenomenon called processing fluency. It arises from repeated exposure of an individual to a stimulus, “saving” it in memory and aiding further processing of the stimulus (Mandler et al., 1987; Zajonc, 1968). Consumers may respond to new or unfamiliar logos negatively because in these cases the processing fluency is decreased (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001; Roy & Sarkar, 2015; van Grinsven & Das, 2015). However, processing fluency can also be affected by the exposure frequency and the design of the logo.

Four types of logos can be distinguished: typographical, abstract, figurative or a combination of them (Buttle & Westoby, 2006). Descriptive logos may include characters, animals, plants, and other commonly experienced objects, while abstract logos lack this connection. According to Buttle & Westoby (2006), the ‘combination’ type of logo (name and symbol) is processed by consumers in the most effective way, regardless of how abstract the logo is.

Still, following this study, several researchers have also compared the use of abstract and figurative (or descriptive) logos. Luffarelli, Mukesh, et al. (2019) found that logo descriptiveness can positively influence brand evaluations, purchase intentions, and brand performance. The authors used a multi-method approach across six studies, four being experimental, one — a large-scale survey,

and one — a secondary data study. According to this research, the aforementioned effects occur because descriptive logos are easier to process and thus elicit stronger impressions of authenticity, which is valued by consumers. The paper suggests that practitioners should consider using more descriptive logos. This is confirmed by the study by Machado et al. (2012), which explored the degree to which name and logo design characteristics influence consumer responses in the context of a merger. Considering all of the above, we hypothesize that:

H4. A descriptive logo leads to increased goodwill perceptions, as opposed to the abstract one.

Another design characteristic of a logo is the frame, which can be placed around it. Chen & Bei (2020) conducted two experimental studies to test how logo frame design (full framed, partial framed, and open logo) affects brand extensions. Most importantly, the results showed that a brand with an open logo was associated with greater product portfolio diversity than one with an incompletely framed logo, which is beneficial for brand extensions. However, a complete frame can lead to higher perceived trustworthiness among prevention-focused people.

Impressions of authenticity and trustworthiness are especially important in the sponsorship context, as they link to goodwill (sincerity) of the sponsor, a factor that influences sponsorship effectiveness, as discussed in the first section. Thus, our hypothesis is that:

H5. A fully-framed logo leads to increased goodwill perceptions, as opposed to the open one.

To sum up, the research model of the study is presented in figure 1.

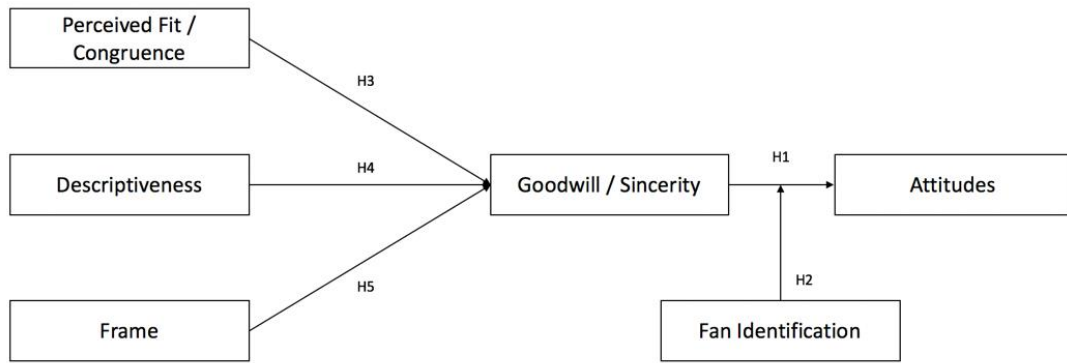


Figure 1: Research model of the study

3. Method

The study uses primary data, following a quantitative experimental approach. This allows for stronger control over variables, which is important in the context of the subjective nature of design.

Fictitious stimuli were designed to control for the familiarity of the existing designs and brand preferences, as seen in Chen & Bei (2020). The shirt chosen for all of the stimuli placements was related to FC Porto. Its colour scheme is blue and white, with yellow, red, and green accents on the team logo. The fictitious brand name Trophy was chosen to be linked with sports, in order to ensure conceptual congruence. The logo of the team's current sports apparel sponsor (New Balance) was also kept on the shirt for the purpose of realism. A 2 (high vs low congruence) × 2 (descriptive vs abstract) × 2 (full frame vs open logo) between-subject design was implemented.

In order to validate the choice of the two colours for the high vs low congruence situations, a pre-test was conducted for four colour variations (see Appendix A): white (a neutral colour), yellow (present in the official FC Porto shirt), orange and purple (both not present in the official FC Porto shirt). For that, we used the Perceived fit scale, adapted from Becker-Olsen & Hill (2006), with 7 items measured in a 7-point semantic differential scale (see Appendix B). Each variation was tested separately in order to avoid any potential biases. The overall sample consisted of 120 respondents from 8 different countries. They were aged

19 to 52, with median age being 26. Moreover, 45% were female and 45% were male. The results of this pre-test are summarized in table 1.

	Mean	F	p
White	5.25	80.9	< .001
Yellow	4.76		
Purple	2.30		
Orange	3.40		

Table 1: ANOVA test of perceived fit of 4 colours

According to these results, white logo (see figure A 1) seems to be perceived as the most congruent for the FC Porto's colour scheme. Since white is a neutral colour, this result was not surprising. Still, regardless of this neutrality, the mean value of white's perceived fit is very close to that of yellow (see figure A 2), which might signal that yellow has a good enough fit as well.

		White	Yellow	Purple	Orange
White	Mean difference	—	0.490	2.95	1.84
	p-value	—	0.074	< .001	< .001
Yellow	Mean difference		—	2.46	1.35
	p-value		—	< .001	< .001
Purple	Mean difference			—	-1.11
	p-value			—	< .001
Orange	Mean difference				—
	p-value				—

Table 2: Differences between perceived fit of 4 colours (Games-Howell Post-Hoc Test)

The post-hoc test summarized in table 2 shows that the difference between the perceived fit of white and yellow is, in fact, not statistically significant, while yellow is not neutral. Thus, for the purposes of the main survey, the colour yellow was chosen as congruent and purple (see figure A 3) as incongruent respectively.

Regarding descriptiveness, it was manipulated by using 2 different pictorial marks in the stimuli. One of those marks represented a trophy, a real-world object that links to the brand name; the stimuli featuring this type of mark were then coded as descriptive. The second mark consisted of two overlaying square shapes, and the stimuli featuring it were consequently coded as abstract.

Finally, frame was manipulated by adding or removing a complete rectangular frame around the full logo, i.e., the combination of the pictorial and typographic elements. Therefore, the stimuli either had a full frame or no frame and were coded accordingly.

The typographic part of the logo remained unchanged in terms of font and style, with the only manipulation being the congruent vs incongruent colour scheme (correspondingly to the pictorial mark).

Next, an online survey was conducted using Google Forms. Each group of participants was randomly presented with one variation of the shirt with a fictitious sponsor brand's logo on the front (see Appendix C). Overall, there were 8 variations in logos – in terms of descriptiveness (descriptive and abstract), frame (full framed and open logo), and congruence (congruent and incongruent).

Questions related to Attitudes were presented in a 7-point semantic differential scale with 4 items adapted from Lee & Cho (2009). Goodwill (or Sincerity) was measured through 3 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale, adapted

from Ko et al. (2017). Measures of Descriptiveness, Frame, and Perceived Fit were dichotomous, based on the stimuli the respondent was exposed to. At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked the general demographic questions, as well as questions related to Fan Identification on a 7-item scale, adapted from Wann & Branscombe (1993) (see Appendix D).

4. Results / Discussion

The following study was conducted with the ultimate goal of answering the research question posed in the beginning of this thesis, namely, how the visual logo characteristics affect consumer responses in the context of shirt sponsorship in sports.

The study had 240 participants from 11 countries, mainly Russia (65%) and Portugal (22.1%). They were aged between 18 and 52 years old, with the median age being 24. Additionally, 52.9% of the respondents were male, 46.7% were female, and 0.4% — non-binary. The majority of the participants have watched football matches on television or in person in the last 12 months: 46.3% admitted to watching them a few times, 17.5% once a month, 15% once a week, and 9.2% twice a week or more.

ANOVA test was performed with goodwill and attitude as dependent variables and “Group” (i.e., one of the 8 stimuli that was presented to the respondents) as the grouping variable. The results summarized in table 3 show that there were overall significant differences between the stimuli ($p < .001$).

	F	df1	df2	p
Goodwill	3.85	7	99.4	< .001
Attitude	5.00	7	99.1	< .001

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA (Welch's) test of the relationship between Goodwill, Attitude, and Group

The differences in mean values between groups are shown in figures 2 and 3. The highest mean values for both goodwill perceptions and attitudes were observed for the first stimulus, featuring a congruent, descriptive, and unframed logo (see figure C 1). The stimulus with the lowest mean values was incongruent, abstract, and fully framed (see figure C 5). These results already indicate that the logos which are polar opposites — in terms of the design characteristics under consideration — attract the most varied consumer responses. The distinction between stimuli with fewer differences is less apparent, which could be explained by the complex nature of design, with numerous features at play. This highlights the importance of considering all features of the logo for sponsorship placements: one characteristic (whether it is descriptiveness, congruence, or frame) does not seem to be decisive.

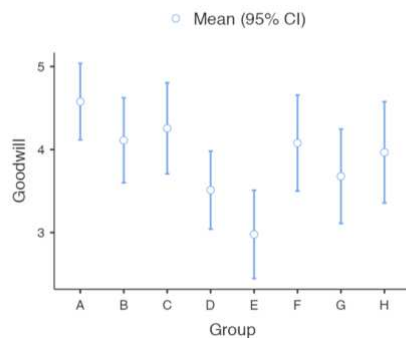


Figure 2: Group mean values (Goodwill)

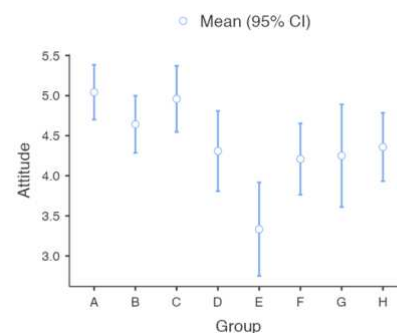


Figure 3: Group mean values (Attitude)

Still, we also found differences between the means of goodwill perceptions, depending on each manipulated variable (see table 4). For example, the mean for incongruent logos is at 3.68, while for congruent ones it is at 4.11. For abstract vs descriptive logos, this difference is similar — between 3.71 and 4.08. On the other hand, open vs fully-framed logos have a difference of 4.22 vs 3.57. Therefore, although an interplay of characteristics is much more effective in influencing

consumer responses, each separate characteristic under consideration has an influence of its own.

		Mean	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Congruence	0	3.68	0.131	3.42	3.93
	1	4.11	0.131	3.86	4.37
Descriptiveness	0	3.71	0.131	3.45	3.96
	1	4.08	0.131	3.82	4.34
Frame	0	4.22	0.131	3.96	4.48
	1	3.57	0.131	3.31	3.83

Table 4: Estimated Marginal Means of Goodwill - Congruence, Descriptiveness, Frame

We then tested if the logo's congruence with the team's colours, descriptiveness, and frame significantly predicted goodwill perceptions. The coefficient of determination in this model was very weak ($R^2 = .09$), as seen in the table 5, meaning that other factors need to be taken into consideration. Adding age as a covariate and country of origin, football viewership, and gender as factors, results in a stronger model ($R^2 = .5$, $F = 11.6$, $p < .001$).

Model	R	R ²	Overall Model Test			
			F	df1	df2	p
1	0.292	0.0855	7.36	3	236	< .001
2	0.717	0.514	11.6	20	219	< .001

Model	R	R ²	Overall Model Test			
			F	df1	df2	p

Table 5: Model Fit Measures of two linear regression models (between Goodwill and Congruence, Descriptiveness, and Frame), without and with control factors

Using the second model, we found that goodwill perceptions are significantly affected by the logo design characteristics – congruence ($B = .5, p < .001$), descriptiveness ($B = .4, p < .001$), and frame ($B = -.5, p = .001$). The results of the analysis are summarized in table 6.

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept ^a	2.4871	0.28929	8.597	<.001
Congruence:				
1 – 0	0.5388	0.14420	3.736	<.001
Descriptiveness:				
1 – 0	0.3748	0.14511	2.583	0.010
Frame:				
1 – 0	-0.4834	0.14563	- 3.319	0.001
Age	0.0227	0.00774	2.928	0.004
Gender:				
Female – Male	0.4697	0.16725	2.809	0.005
Non-binary – Male	2.0596	1.10484	1.864	0.064
Country of Origin:				
Portugal – Russia	0.5671	0.21243	2.669	0.008
Ukraine – Russia	-0.4393	1.11598	-0.394	0.694
Turkmenistan – Russia	0.4328	0.33300	1.300	0.195
Tunisia – Russia	-1.5750	0.50314	-3.130	0.002

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Italy – Russia	-0.1728	0.57857	-0.299	0.766
Azerbaijan – Russia	1.5247	1.10625	1.378	0.170
Brazil – Russia	1.5377	0.85115	1.807	0.072
Uruguay – Russia	-1.3952	1.12555	-1.240	0.216
Montenegro – Russia	-0.4014	1.11783	-0.359	0.720
Belarus – Russia	1.0662	0.79215	1.346	0.180
Football viewership:				
Once a week – A few times	1.5775	0.22876	6.896	< .001
I did not watch football matches – A few times	0.7822	0.24233	3.228	0.001
Twice a week or more – A few times	-2.2542	0.32653	-6.903	< .001
Once a month – A few times	0.3169	0.23203	1.366	0.173

^a Represents reference level

Table 6: Linear Regression Model Coefficients - Goodwill

According to our results, congruence affects goodwill perceptions positively. We therefore accept H3, which stated that high perceived fit between the sponsor's and team's visuals leads to increased goodwill perceptions, and vice versa. This builds on existing evidence of the positive effects of perceived fit in sponsorship, including findings of Olson (2010) that perceived fit is a significant predictor of sincerity, as well as findings of Grohs & Reisinger (2014) that low congruence might be damaging for the image of sponsors. When tested for mediation (see table 7), congruence has a positive partially mediated effect on

consumer attitudes via goodwill perceptions (indirect $B = .2$, $p = .03$), which also aligns with Olson (2010).

Effect	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Indirect	0.199	0.0887	2.24	0.025
Direct	0.501	0.1451	3.46	< .001
Total	0.700	0.1673	4.18	< .001

Table 7: Mediation Estimates of the relationship between Congruence, Goodwill, and Attitudes

The results, however, do not fit with the theory that visual contrasts are preferential due to being more attention-grabbing (Breuer & Rumpf, 2015; Boronczyk et al., 2018; Krishna et al., 2017; Milosavljevic et al., 2012). It seems that, in the long term, having a congruent logo placement is more beneficial for the sponsor’s image and consumer attitudes. The reason for this might lie in the emotionally engaging atmosphere of sports that gets transferred to the sponsor’s presence as well, intensifying the emotional connection between the audience, the team, and the sponsor. Consequently, if the sponsor gives the audience a reason to doubt their motives within this connection (e.g., by being extremely visually prominent and out-of-place), a negative reaction might arise. This calls for brands to consider adapting their logo colours to those of their sponsored team in case of incongruence.

Moreover, goodwill is positively affected by descriptiveness of the logo, which leads to a confirmation of H4 that a descriptive logo leads to increased goodwill perceptions, as opposed to the abstract one. These results are similar to those of the study by Luffarelli, Mukesh, et al. (2019) that stated that descriptive logos elicit stronger impressions of authenticity and positively influence brand evaluations. It fits with the theory of processing fluency, specifically, the

evidence that new or unfamiliar logos attract more negative responses due to decreased processing fluency (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001; Roy & Sarkar, 2015; van Grinsven & Das, 2015). Abstract forms are less familiar to humans than real-life objects, and therefore, processing of a descriptive logo tends to happen faster, especially when exposed to unfamiliar logos, leading to more positive evaluations. This means that, for brands with abstract pictorial marks, it is even more important to consider adapting their logos for sponsorship (e.g., in terms of colour congruence or frame), in order to neutralize this effect.

The mediation effect of goodwill in the relationship between descriptiveness and attitudes seems to be full (indirect $B = .2$, $p = .05$), since the direct effect of descriptiveness on attitude is not statistically significant (see table 8). Compared to congruence and frame, descriptiveness of the logo seems to influence attitudes to a much lesser degree. This could be explained by the presence of a descriptive brand name in the logo, which might facilitate the processing fluency even when the pictorial mark is abstract, thus weakening the effect of manipulating the mark. This calls for further research with more variability in terms of brand names.

Effect	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Indirect	0.177	0.0914	1.94	0.052
Direct	0.194	0.1477	1.31	0.190
Total	0.371	0.1716	2.16	0.031

Table 8: Mediation Estimates of the relationship between Descriptiveness, Goodwill, and Attitudes

Frame, on the other hand, seems to have a negative effect on goodwill. It leads to a rejection of H5 that a fully-framed logo leads to increased goodwill perceptions, as opposed to the open one. Moreover, we found that frame has a

negative effect on consumer attitudes as well, fully mediated via goodwill (indirect B = -.3, p = .001), as shown in table 9.

Effect	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Indirect	-0.301	0.0927	-3.24	0.001
Direct	-0.208	0.1500	-1.38	0.166
Total	-0.508	0.1702	-2.99	0.003

Table 9: Mediation Estimates of the relationship between Frame, Goodwill, and Attitudes

This is contradictory to the findings of Chen & Bei (2020) on the perceived trustworthiness of a complete frame. However, as researchers also stated that in their study, the effects of framing depended on consumers' regulatory focus (prevention vs promotion). Among the promotion-focused consumers, open logo was preferential due to associating a brand with a broader product portfolio, while prevention-focused people preferred the full frame's "trustworthy signification" (Chen & Bei, 2020, p. 109). Thus, our results could be limited by not considering associations with a broader portfolio, or perceived brand breadth, as a factor influencing attitudes toward a sponsor. Moreover, they could be limited by the promotion focus of the respondents. Further research is needed to establish how logo framing, consumers' regulatory focus, and perceived brand breadth interact in the context of sports shirt sponsorship. However, it can still be drawn from our results that it is beneficial for brands to avoid frames around their logos for sponsorship placements.

As per demographic characteristics such as age, gender, country of origin, and football viewership, they were found to significantly affect goodwill perceptions. Interestingly, female participants were likely to have higher goodwill perceptions than male (B = .5, p = .005), as well as respondents from Portugal

compared to respondents from Russia ($B = .6, p = .008$). Participants who watched football once a week in the last 12 months were also likely to rate the sponsor's goodwill higher than people who only watched it a few times ($B = 1.6, p < .001$), while respondents who watched football the most often (twice a week or more) tended toward lower values ($B = -2.3, p < .001$). These results mean that brands should carefully consider the demographics behind their sponsored teams' fanbases, since they could influence the effectiveness of sponsorship campaigns in terms of improving brand image.

Furthermore, a moderation test, whose results are summarized in table 10, revealed that attitudes toward the sponsor are directly positively influenced by both goodwill perceptions ($B = .4, p < .001$) and fan identification ($B = .3, p < .001$). This aligns with the findings of Kim et al. (2011) and Olson (2010) that perceived goodwill is connected to an increased positive attitude toward the sponsor, as well as research of Eagleman & Krohn (2012) that showed more positive attitudes among highly identified fans. Thus, we found support for H1 that stated that high goodwill perceptions lead to increased positive attitudes.

		Estimate	SE	Z	p
Goodwill		0.4235	0.0447	9.48	< .001
Fan Identification		0.3219	0.0380	8.47	< .001
Goodwill	* Fan	-0.0733	0.0228	-3.21	0.001
Identification					

Table 10: Moderation Estimates of the relationship between Goodwill, Fan Identification, and Attitudes

Moreover, the interaction effect of goodwill and fan identification on attitudes is statistically significant as well ($B = -.07, p = .001$). According to the results of the simple slope analysis summarized in table 11, higher levels of fan identification

decrease the effect of goodwill perceptions on attitudes, and vice versa. The H2, stating that fan identification moderates the relationship between goodwill perceptions and consumer attitudes, is therefore confirmed.

	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Average	0.424	0.0454	9.33	< .001
Low (-1SD)	0.549	0.0658	8.35	< .001
High (+1SD)	0.298	0.0540	5.51	< .001

Table 11: Simple Slope Estimates of the effect of Goodwill on Attitude at different levels of Fan Identification

This finding confirms once again that audience research is important for sponsorship success. While there are many factors that can improve goodwill perceptions, including logo design, at high levels of fan identification these efforts may not be particularly worthwhile. The reason might lie in the transfer of the loyal fans' support for the team to the sponsor, which makes their positive attitudes less dependent on the perceived motives behind the sponsorship.

Overall, we found that the visual logo characteristics do, in fact, affect consumer attitudes in the context of shirt sponsorship in sports, mediated by goodwill (or trustworthiness) perceptions. Congruent and descriptive logos tend to attract higher levels of goodwill perceptions and attitudes, while framed logos generate lower values on both variables than open logos.

However, it is worth noting that goodwill was also found to be affected by such demographic characteristics as age, gender, country of origin, and football viewership. Moreover, the relationship between goodwill perceptions and attitudes is moderated by fan identification, which weakens the goodwill's influence.

The relationships based on these results can be summarized in figure 4.

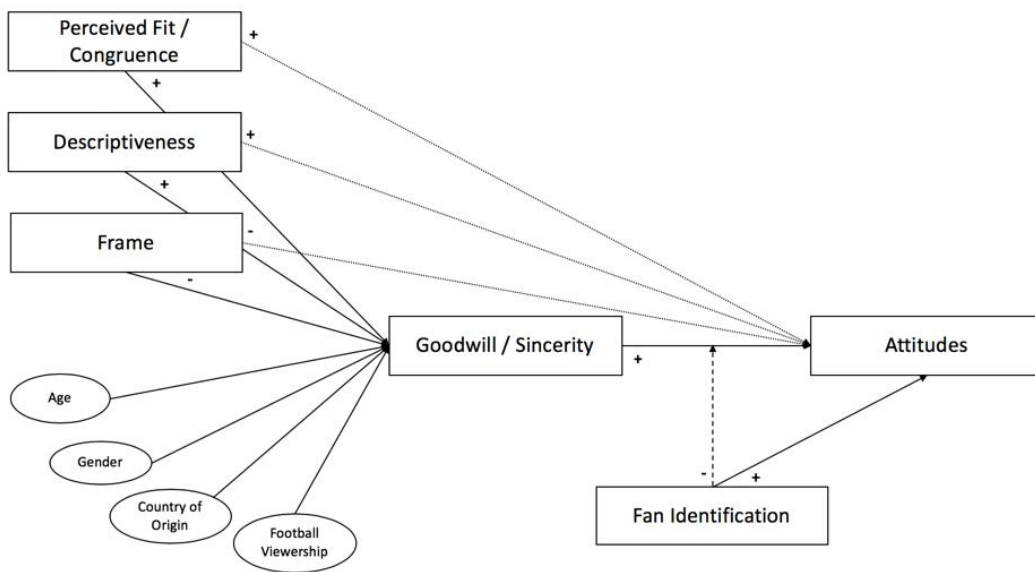


Figure 4: Relationships based on main survey results

5. Conclusions

The present study aimed to explore how the visual logo characteristics affect consumer responses in the context of shirt sponsorship in sports. Based on quantitative analysis of survey data, we tested the relationships between logo design characteristics, goodwill perceptions, fan identification, and consumer attitudes.

The results suggest that, in order to improve consumers' goodwill perceptions and, consequently, attitudes, sponsoring brands should use congruent colours and avoid frames on their shirt placements. Moreover, brands with descriptive logos might benefit more from their shirt sponsorship, compared to those with abstract logos, due to easier processing. This also means that brands with abstract logos might need to put more effort into improving their goodwill perceptions through other factors, including colour congruence and avoidance of complete frames.

Still, there is also dependency on the audience's demographic characteristics, as well as on the level of their fan identification. When brands sponsor teams with highly identified fans, they should note that the positive effects of goodwill are weaker than they would be with a less engaged audience, thus possibly making their efforts to improve goodwill perceptions not worthwhile for overall sponsorship results.

However, this study had several limitations. First, the stimuli featured a fictitious brand, and it has been shown in previous research that results can differ between real and fictitious brands (e.g., Garcia-Sastre et al., 2020). For instance, easier processing of descriptive logos might not apply to well-known brands,

since the effect of familiarity might arise from repeated exposure, even if the logo is abstract.

The shirt used for the stimuli, on the other hand, was that of a real football club — FC Porto — and no other options were tested. In the future, this study could be replicated with a larger sample and/or larger variability in brands and teams.

Moreover, for purposes of future research, additional design characteristics might be included in the model. For example, in this study, no manipulations were applied to the typographical part of the logo, thus the effects of different font choices and presence or absence of text could be further explored.

Finally, the results revealed the need for further research on the effects of logo frames on sponsorship. The hypothesis of higher perceived goodwill of a complete frame was rejected. As previous research shows that this relationship is associated with factors such as consumers' regulatory focus and perceived brand breadth, in the future, those factors should be considered in this context.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Pre-test stimuli



Figure A 1: Pre-test stimulus 1, white



Figure A 3: Pre-test stimulus 3, purple



Figure A 2: Pre-test stimulus 2, yellow



Figure A 4: Pre-test stimulus 4, orange

Appendix B. Pre-test questionnaire

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. It was designed as part of a thesis research project at Católica Porto Business School. All responses will be anonymous, and will only be used for academic purposes.

This survey will take about 5 minutes of your time to complete. Thank you again for your participation.

1. Visual Fit

The following statements refer to your perception of the visual fit of a sponsor brand Trophy and FC Porto. For each of the statements, please indicate the number that represents your perceptions, on a scale from 1 to 7.

1.1. Visually, Trophy's logo in relation to FC Porto's is:

1 – Dissimilar

7 – Similar

1.2. Visually, Trophy's logo in relation to FC Porto's is:

1 – Inconsistent

7 – Consistent

1.3. Visually, Trophy's logo in relation to FC Porto's is:

1 – Atypical (for a football team sponsorship)

7 – Typical (for a football team sponsorship)

1.4. Visually, Trophy's logo in relation to FC Porto's is:

1 – Unrepresentative

7 – Representative

1.5. Visually, Trophy's logo in relation to FC Porto's is:

1 – Not complementary

7 – Complementary

1.6. Visually, Trophy's logo in relation to FC Porto's has:

1 – Low fit

7 – High fit

1.7. Visually, Trophy's logo in relation to FC Porto's:

1 – Does not make sense

7 – Makes sense

2. General Questions

2.1. What is your age?

2.2. What is your gender?

2.3. What is your country of origin?

Appendix C. Main survey stimuli



Figure C 1: Survey stimulus 1, Group A



Figure C 3: Survey stimulus 3, Group C



Figure C 2: Survey stimulus 2, Group B



Figure C 4: Survey stimulus 4, Group D



Figure C 5: Survey stimulus 5, Group E



Figure C 7: Survey stimulus 7, Group G



Figure C 6: Survey stimulus 6, Group F



Figure C 8: Survey stimulus 8, Group H

Appendix D. Main survey questionnaire

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. It was designed as part of a thesis research project at Católica Porto Business School. All responses will be anonymous, and will only be used for academic purposes.

This survey will take less than 10 minutes of your time to complete. Thank you again for your participation.

1. Sincerity

The following statements refer to your perception of sincerity of a sponsor brand Trophy. For each of the statements, please indicate the number that represents your level of agreement, on a scale from 1 to 7.

1.1. The main reason the firm would sponsor FC Porto is likely because the firm believes this team deserves support.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

1.2. This sponsor would be likely to have the best interest of FC Porto at heart.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

1.3. This firm would probably support FC Porto even if it had much lower profile.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

2. Attitudes

The following statements refer to your attitudes toward a sponsor brand Trophy. For each of the statements, please indicate the number that represents your level of agreement, on a scale from 1 to 7.

Overall, my attitude toward the firm sponsoring FC Porto is:

2.1. 1 – Negative

7 – Positive

2.2. 1 – Unfavorable

7 – Favorable

2.3. 1 – Bad

7 – Good

2.4. 1 – Dislikable

7 – Likable

3. Fan Identification

The following statements refer to your perception of your fan identification with the FC Porto team. For each of the statements, please indicate the number that represents your level of agreement, on a scale from 1 to 7.

3.1. It is very important to me that FC Porto wins.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

3.2. I am very much a fan of FC Porto.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

3.3. My friends see me as very much a fan of FC Porto.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

3.4. During the season, I follow FC Porto almost every day (in person, television, radio, television news, newspaper).

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

3.5. It is very important to me to be a fan of FC Porto.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

3.6. I always display FC Porto's name or insignia at my place of work, where I live, or on my clothing.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

3.7. I dislike very much FC Porto's greatest rivals.

1 – Completely disagree

7 – Completely agree

4. General questions

4.1. What is your age?

4.2. What is your gender?

4.3. What is your country of origin?

4.4. In the past 12 months, how often did you watch football matches on television or in person?

Twice a week or more

Once a week

Once a month

A few times

I did not watch football matches