

CLASSIFICATION OF AMBUSH MARKETING METHODS IN SPORT – EVIDENCE FROM THE 2012 UEFA EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP*

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Abstract

Background. Ambush marketing in sport events has been widely commented among both scientists and practitioners. Nowadays, companies use more and more sophisticated ambush marketing methods in their promotional campaigns in order to gain recognition.

Research aims. The aim of this paper is to create an innovative classification of ambush marketing methods, based on the case study of the 2012 UEFA European Championship and to evaluate the effectiveness of these methods based on the results of a brand recognition survey carried out on a representative sample of the Polish population.

Methodology. In order to identify and provide an innovative classification of ambush marketing methods, monitoring of media coverage (press, Internet, broadcasts) was carried out between April and August 2012.

Key findings. The authors developed a classification of ambush marketing methods based on associations used in promotional campaigns by companies. These associations were divided into two categories: ones that involve various communication means and others that involve various images. The study may contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon and to design more efficient methods to counter the occurrence of ambush marketing in mega sport events.

Keywords: sport marketing, ambush marketing, methods, classification, Euro 2012.

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INTRODUCTION

Major sport events have been a subject of a growing interest for the past three decades. At the same time, sport sponsorship has become an important and effective marketing tool to reach audiences that are difficult to target with other communication instruments (Wolfsteiner, Grohs & Wagner, 2015; Cornwell & Kwak, 2015). The environment of sport organisations is full of companies which are interested in sponsoring organisation of sport events, thanks to which brands of sponsors gain numerous promotional advantages. There are not rare situations when companies even battle over a partnership at major global sport events, offering monstrous sums to have the right to use the official logo of the event organiser. An average spectator of a sports event regards such situation as abstractive. However, for the researchers studying the area of sport sponsoring the answer is not explicit due to the threat of ambush marketing being on the rise for several decades. This term means an attempt of playing a role of an official sponsor of a sport event by a company that has no financial contribution in its organisation (Sandler & Shani, 1989). T. Meenaghan (1994, p. 79) defined ambush marketing as “the practice whereby another company, often a competitor, intrudes upon public attention surrounding the event, thereby deflecting attention toward themselves and away from the sponsor.” The first conscious activities in the field of ambush marketing took place during the XXIII Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984, as a consequence of the changes introduced by IOC concerning regulations on sponsoring (Shani & Sandler, 1989).

Why are these activities so popular? It may result from the fact that an average fan is not able to distinguish official sponsors from companies passing themselves off as officials. It is worth mentioning that all sponsorship is based on the level of fan involvement and is trying to achieve its own engaged audience to gain sponsoring assumptions, specially brand awareness (Wei & Erickson, 2015; O’Reilly & Huybers, 2015). Numerous authors stress that addressees of sport events confuse sponsors with ambushers, which has negative effects on the factors of recognisability of official sponsors (Piątkowska, Gocłowska & Żyśko, 2015; Pitt *et al.*, 2010; Nufer & Bühler, 2010). What is more, many companies undertake

ambush marketing activities due to economic reasons. Insufficient financial or material resources enabling achieving a status of an official sponsor is a barrier precluding official sponsoring for many organisations (Preuss, Gemeinder & Séguin, 2008). Moreover, an increasing number of entities engage in the practice of ambush marketing because of the inability to secure enormous financial and material outlays which allow them to obtain the title of an official sponsor or, as reported by Schwartz, Hall, and Shibi (2010), they cannot link together their marketing efforts with a sporting event due to long-term exclusive contracts with competitors. Even when organisers try to combat ambush marketing practices, they usually fail. Results of research by Chanavat and Desbordes (2014), based on the London's Olympic Games in 2012, show that London's Organizers were the most restrictive in history. However, even then ambush marketing occurred. It shows that on the one hand it is difficult to combat ambush practices, but on the other hand there are neither specific legal tools nor international agreements to prohibit ambush marketing and protect official sponsorships.

An increase of the importance of major sports events as well as an increasing engagement of the commercial sponsoring branch in their organisation resulted in a specific competitive battle between sponsors. It was the incentive, which made ambush marketing arise. Originally, these were quite aggressive activities, often on the edge of law, consisting in attempts of playing a role of an official sponsor by enterprises which did not undertake any activities in organising such event. Most often, first attempts of ambush marketing were practices of connotation marketing or to say – direct ambush marketing (Piatkowska, Gocłowska & Żyśko, 2013). Here, we should relate to one of the classical divisions of ambush marketing proposed by Owen (2003).

The author distinguishes two forms of practice: associational marketing or by association (association ambushing or ambush marketing by association) and invasive marketing (intrusion ambushing or ambush marketing by intrusion). The first type of action includes situations in which a non-sponsor attempts to give the impression that it is an official sponsor of the event by using signs, symbols, mascots, and other intellectual property rights associated with the event. The second category of activities includes situations where a non-sponsor does not infringe the intellectual property rights of the

organiser of the event, but otherwise seeks promotion in connection with the event. The ambusher in this case uses the space in which the sporting event takes place to conduct promotional campaigns (Pinkalski, 2011). However, along with the development of mechanisms counteracting the development of the discussed phenomenon, new more sophisticated and refined methods of ambush marketing and new creative marketing strategies of companies competing over benefits coming from associations with an event have appeared. Due to the above, the presented division seems to be insufficient. This is why it seems legitimate to develop a classification which is able to categorise the newest practices, which companies presented during one of the largest sport events in Central and Eastern Europe – UEFA Euro 2012 in Poland and Ukraine.

Therefore, the objectives of the paper are:

- to create an innovative classification of ambush marketing methods, based on the identified ambush marketing campaigns during the 2012 UEFA European Championship;
- to evaluate the effectiveness of ambush marketing methods based on brand recognition results of the official sponsors and ambush marketers at the UEFA Euro 2012 Championship.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Data collection procedure

The project was realised on the basis of the 2012 UEFA European Championship held from 8th June till 1st July 2012 in Poland and Ukraine.

In order to identify and provide an innovative classification of ambush marketing campaigns monitoring of media coverage (press, Internet, broadcasts) was carried out between April and August 2012.

A survey was conducted from 19th July to 23rd July 2012 (18 days after the final match of UEFA Euro 2012) by means of the Computer Assisted Personal Interview technique. The study was carried out within an omnibus wave by 130 interviewers.

The survey comprised a representative random sample of 1,000 Poles above the age of 15 years. The respondents were contacted personally and selected from a personal identification number frame run by the

Department of the State Central Register and Computer Networks of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration.

Stratification included nine macroregions and seven different classes of town sizes. As a result of crossing the macroregions with the classes of town size, 55 strata were obtained, out of which 170 municipalities were drawn. These formed the basis on which addresses were drawn. Municipalities were drawn with a probability proportional to the number of their residents aged 15 years and older. An independent drawing of addresses was held from among 170 municipalities.

Six face-to-face interviews were conducted in each of the municipalities drawn. The selection of respondents was carried out using the Kish grid, which ensures that every family member in the household drawn had the same chance of being interviewed. After visiting a place of residence, the interviewer noted down the members within the household (aged 15 years and older) starting from the oldest person.

The characteristics of the studied population are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the studied population

Factors	Entire examined population (<i>N</i> = 1,000)	
	n	%
Gender		
Men	477	47.7
Women	523	52.3
Age		
15–29	273	27.3
30–39	171	17.1
40–49	154	15.4
50–59	179	17.9
> 60	223	22.3
Education		
elementary	185	18.5
basic vocational	283	28.3
secondary	368	36.8
higher	165	16.5
Place of residence		
rural area	386	38.6
town or city up to 20,000 residents	131	13.1
city 21,000–50,000 residents	112	11.2

Factors	Entire examined population (N = 1,000)	
city 51,000–99,000 residents	87	8.7
city 101,000–199,000 residents	90	9.0
city 200,000–500,000 residents	81	8.1
city > 500,000 residents	113	11.3
Household net monthly income <i>per capita</i>		
< PLN 1,499.99	135	13.5
PLN 1,500–2,499.99	197	19.7
PLN 2,500–3,499.99	270	27.0
≥ PLN 3,500.00	398	39.8
Intensity of watched matches		
0	165	16.5
1–5	312	31.2
6–10	198	19.8
11–20	145	14.5
> 20	175	17.5

Source: own study.

Data analysis procedure

The research was based on a questionnaire with open and closed-ended questions. In testing the brand recognition of official sponsors and ambush marketers during the UEFA Euro 2012, we adopted basic marketing communication criteria measuring the extent to which a brand is recalled by consumers, i.e. measuring brand awareness in the researched population: Top of Mind (TOMA), Unaided (UBA), and Aided Brand Awareness (ABA).

In this paper we present Top of Mind Awareness (TOMA) which presents the percentage of consumers who spontaneously name a specific brand first. The respondents were asked: *Do you know what brand /company was the official sponsor of UEFA Euro 2012?*

The statistical analysis was calculated using the IBM® SPSS® Statistics version 21 program. The chi-square test of independence was performed for consumers to verify statistically significant differences between the measures of brand awareness of official sponsors and ambushers. The P-value for statistical significance is .05.

RESULTS

Classification of ambush marketing methods based on the identified ambush marketing campaigns during the 2012 UEFA European Championship

In the course of research, the authors identified numerous instances of ambush marketing. On the basis of an analysis of activities of the ambushers, it was stated that all companies used a series of associations with UEFA Euro 2012. As a result, the authors developed a classification of ambush marketing methods based on associations used in promotional campaigns (Figure 1). These associations were divided into two categories: associations that involved various communication means and associations that involved various images. Thereafter, for all cases other subcategories were created.

1. The usage of the communication means: this category includes examples of using associations:

- verbal: using words related to Euro 2012 and football, the national team, and the championship in advertising;
- audio: this category includes brands using in their promotional campaigns the national anthem or companies which composed their own anthem promoted during the European Championship;
- visual: this method was used by brands, an idea of which was to promote themselves during the championship using shapes of balls, national white and red patterns, illustrations of stadiums on packaging of products offered on the market.

2. The usage of the image: this category includes examples of using associations:

- the usage of athletes and teams: brands of this category used images of particular football players and teams in their promotional campaigns;
- the usage of coaches: brands of this category used images of famous football coaches in their promotional campaigns;
- the usage of buildings and other constructions: inclusion in this category means that the background for TV and outdoor advertising was a football stadium, both the pitch and the stands.

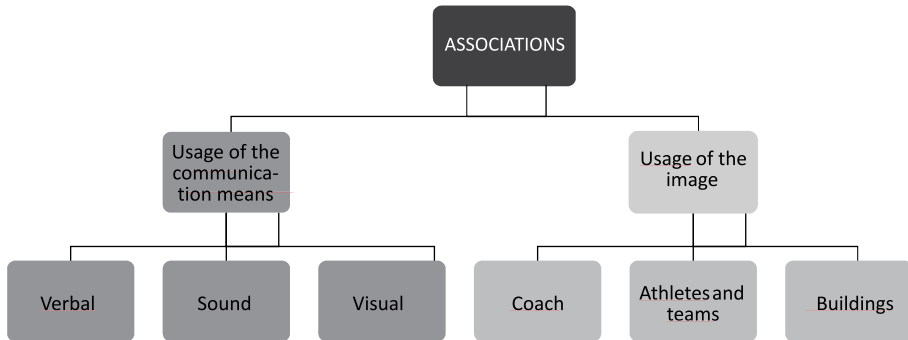


Figure 1. Classification of ambush marketing methods from the 2012 UEFA European Championship

Source: own study.

Most of the analysed instances of ambush marketing at UEFA Euro 2012 concerned using one of the classified methods. However, three brands performed large-scale ambush marketing actions, using the majority of discussed association with the event. A perfect example of using numerous association methods of ambush marketing was the activity of Jeronimo Martins and its brand – a chain of discount stores named Biedronka, which was an official sponsor of the Polish national team during the championship. According to the classification of the authors, Biedronka used all methods of associating their own brand with the tournament. It based the communication on TV spots, in which it directly referred to the tournament. The first commercial presented people supporting and celebrating the championship held in Poland and Biedronka used a slogan “we are all the national team” – and it was a verbal association with the event. Another one looked like a professional match in which unofficial Polish team players took part – according to the classification it is an example of the usage of buildings and other constructions. What is more, the Polish national team coach of that time Franciszek Smuda and a player Jakub Błaszczykowski took part in the project, thanks to which the campaign had an effect of credibility. Additionally, the company composed an anthem which was used in TV commercials and used the national colours on advertisements. The brand published their advertisements also in the press and on outdoor media.

It is also worth mentioning the Warka brand due to the use of classified methods. During Euro 2012, the company realised an ambush campaign,

in which it falsely informed that it was the event's sponsor. The aim of the whole project was to create an image of the Warka brand as a sponsor of the tournament through sponsorship of the Polish national team. The campaign of Warka was realised in the largest cities in Poland. In its campaign, the company used such communication means as TV spots, outdoor campaign, and event marketing activities. Their advertisements showed a pitch, a football ball, the Polish flag, and the Polish national colours. They used words such as stadium, national team, sponsor, and anthem. Moreover, Warka performed ambush marketing actions aimed at possibly large engagement of fans. The company prepared a special bus, the aim of which was to go around Poland and to encourage fans to prepare an individual version of a football anthem which was to support the national team. Competition winners were given tickets to Euro 2012 matches. In relation to the classification, Warka used as much as 6 association methods. They only did not decide to use the image of the football coach.

Kompania Piwowarska, a direct competitor of Warka and the leader of the beer industry in Poland of that time, perfectly used legal loopholes during Euro 2012 and the possibilities of product placement in TV productions. In order to attract attention, the brand used four methods classified by the authors: verbal and visual associations, as well as the usage of the athletes and buildings images. Starting in April 2012 (i.e. two months before the event), Tyskie realised the campaign called "5th Stadium", which included the following activities:

- TV commercials engaging well-known people associated with sport – Zbigniew Boniek (*nota bene* – an ambassador of Euro 2012), Luis Figo, and Marco van Basten, who encouraged supporting the national team;
- sponsoring the "Fifth Stadium" TV series, broadcasted before matches in the prime time, containing product and brand placement. The company used number 5 (number 5 meant another stadium apart from four facilities in the host cities (Warsaw, Gdańsk, Wrocław, and Poznań). At the same time, they based on a metaphor using the semantics of sport signs relating to the event and intellectual property, both during the screening of the series as well as the use of images: stadium, Polish Football Association, beer, goal, matches, championship, and sponsor. The project engaged a galaxy of Polish actors and well-known Polish footballers.

- adding to products branded fan flags in national colours and encouraging fans to show flags during Euro 2012 games;
- organisation of the best “5th Stadium” competition at selected bars and pubs.

The effectiveness of ambush marketing methods based on brand recognition results of the official sponsors and ambush marketers at the UEFA Euro 2012 Championship

The analysis of data provides Top of Mind Awareness metric of companies performing promotional campaigns during UEFA Euro 2012. The results show that the brand recognition rate of official sponsors (37.9%) is statistically higher than the brand recognition rate of ambush marketers (27.4%); ($\chi^2 = 24.79$; $p < 0.01$). It needs to be emphasised, however, that such a high TOMA rate in the case of sponsors is caused by a high percentage of consumers who named a brand included in the Eurotopcategory (30.6%). The brand recognition rate was much lower for Euro sponsors (5.8%) and national sponsors (1.5%). A high percentage of consumers could not state any sponsoring brand. Almost one third of the consumers (32.9 %) did not know or did not remember who an official sponsor of the event was.

Looking at the results of TOMA for official sponsors and ambush marketers during UEFA Euro 2012, we can observe statistically significant differences in brand awareness ($\chi^2 = 79.39$, $p < .05$). Table 2 presents TOMA rate (%) ranking of top 10 brands considered by the respondents as UEFA Euro 2012 official sponsors. The authors included also a typology of ambush marketing methods used during the tournament. Biedronka, an ambusher that was just a sponsor of the Polish national football team, was the most often recalled brand. Tyskie and Warka, that were ambush marketers and direct competitors of Carlsberg in the field of brewing were classified high in the ranking. What is interesting, consumers were not familiar with some of UEFA Euro 2012 official sponsor brands. Apart from Coca-Cola, the brand recognition rate of official sponsors was relatively low. The TOMA measure of national sponsors was approximately 0–1%: Bank Pekao SA (0%), MasterCard (0.51%), and E. Wedel (1%).

Table 2. TOMA rate (%) ranking of top 10 brands considered as the UEFA Euro 2012 official sponsors

Ranking place	Brand	TOMA rate (%)
1	Biedronka	13.4
2	Coca-cola	12.3
3	Tyskie	7.0
4	Kia	6.1
5	Mcdonald's	5.1
6	Warka	4.8
7	Carlsberg	4.3
8	Sharp	3.3
9	Hyundai	1.9
10	Adidas	1.5
10	Orange	1.5

Brands marked in grey performed as ambush marketers during Euro 2012.
Source: own study.

The recognisability results indicate that brands that used numerous associations with the championship achieved a better recognisability than the official sponsors. Biedronka, which according to the developed classification, used all the specified methods (Table 3), was the winner of the TOMA rank, at the same time being better than the official sponsors. Tyskie and Warka brands, which, according to the classification, used numerous association methods, were ranked higher in the recognisability rank than the official sponsor of this branch, i.e. Carlsberg.

Table 3. Typology of applied ambush marketing methods of top 3 brands considered as the UEFA Euro 2012 official sponsors

Ranking place	Brand	TOMA rate (%)	Usage of communication means			Usage of the image		
			Verbal	Sound	Visual	Athletes and teams	Coach	Buildings
1	Biedronka	13.4	+	+	+	+	+	+
3	Tyskie	7.0	+	-	+	+	-	+
6	Warka	4.8	+	+	+	+	-	+

Source: own study.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

The last subject literature in the field of classifying ambush marketing is very rich. Doubtlessly, we can distinguish works of authors who identified instances of ambush marketing during numerous sport events and undertook an attempt of performing a typology of these practices on that basis. The earliest classification of ambush marketing practices was formulated by Meenaghan in 1994. This author named four basic methods of distracting customers' attention from competitive brands: 1) Sponsoring the broadcast of the event; 2) Sponsor subcategories within the event and exploiting this investment aggressively; 3) Purchasing advertising time around relays of the competitor's event; and 4) Engaging in major non-sponsorship promotion to coincide with the event.

The strategies of ambush marketing, developed and classified by the author, are regarded as the archetype and have served as the basis for studies over the discussed phenomenon. Another classification was created by Owen (2003) and consisted in a division of ambush marketing methods in terms of the used associations. It is discussed in details in the introduction as it was the basis of developing of an authorship classification of instances identified during UEFA Euro 2012.

Owen's classification (2003) was also used by Chadwick and Burton (2011), who divided activities of ambush marketers into direct, associative, and incidental. Basing on studies of several hundred cases within the scope of each category, they distinguished the tactics used by ambushers: 1) Direct ambush marketing consists in that an ambusher intentionally and surprisingly tries to use an event or intellectual property rights, having no costs in contrast to the official event sponsors. The marketing strategy of such companies consists in attacking competitors during major sport events; 2) Associative ambush marketing takes place when the ambusher's brand tries to use an event or intellectual property rights by suggestions or indirect activity and the difference is that the company distributes and sells their own goods without any intended activities against the competition; and 3) Incidental ambush marketing, which consists in that customers think that a brand is related with a sponsor or an event, despite the fact that the company does not act against the official sponsors. Even when the activities are not intentional, they are regarded as ambush

marketing as they are a threat to the sponsor and event owner as well as to other sponsors as it introduces disarray in the marketing environment.

Most often, first attempts of ambush marketing in sport were practices of association marketing. A characteristic battle between the organisers and companies that wanted to utilise an organisation of sport events resulted in a situation that there appeared new, more sophisticated and refined methods of ambush marketing and new more creative marketing strategies of companies competing over benefits coming from associating them with a particular sport event, taking the form of invasive marketing.

Due to the above, the classification of ambush marketing methods proposed by the authors seems to be justified as it is based on the newest practices used by companies during one of the largest sport events in Europe – UEFA Euro 2012 in Poland and Ukraine. What is more, the authors undertook an attempt of an innovative representation of the means used by leading brands passing themselves off as the official sponsors of an event, classifying them in two groups: usage of communication means and usage of the image. An advantage of such classification is the fact that none of the former works identified by the authors did not link the typology of practices with their efficiency expressed in the results of brand recognisability.

As ambush marketing is a phenomenon present for over the last thirty years, it has undermined and distracted attention from the official sponsors, their brands, and their products. Undoubtedly, ambushing poses an ongoing challenge for events and sponsors which, with the onset of the social media period, is likely to intensify. The presented results acknowledge it and demonstrate how ambush marketers gained consumer's awareness, at the same decreasing the time of official sponsors' brand recognition.

Communication concerning official sponsorship can sometimes lack creativity and the process of generating communication can often be slow. This can make official sponsors vulnerable to attacks by ambushers, who can move more quickly, flexibly and without the need to refer to the types of branding guidelines that official sponsors find themselves subjected to. Therefore, sponsors should "take lessons" from ambushers and take advantage of the most effective communication methods regarding building and boosting their brand recognition.

The aim of researchers should be using their research results as the basis for identifying more effective means of addressing the ambushing threats. We already observe evidence suggesting that on the one side, effective strategic positioning of official sponsor brands, allied with better targeting of and engagement with the consumers, may provide competitive protection against ambushing. On the other side, further research is indispensable in this field; moreover, given the rise of social media, new and various ambushing challenges are emerging.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The possible limitations of the study are that the suggested classification does not represent the exclusivity and the categories are not separated from one another. The brand can both use the communication tools and the usage of the athlete for example. Another limitation might be that the authors did not consider the intensity and frequency of promotional campaigns of both sponsors and ambushers which may strongly enhance or decrease brand awareness among consumers.

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METODY AMBUSH MARKETING W SPORCIE NA PRZYKŁADZIE MISTRZOSTW EUROPY W PIŁCE NOŻNEJ 2012*

Abstrakt

Tło badań. *Ambush marketing* podczas dużych imprez sportowych od wielu lat jest szeroko komentowanym zjawiskiem w środowisku zarówno naukowców, jak i praktyków. Obecnie marki w swoich kampaniach reklamowych promują się w coraz bardziej wyszukany sposób w celu osiągnięcia rozpoznawalności.

Cel badań. Celem pracy było stworzenie klasyfikacji metod *ambush marketing* na podstawie zidentyfikowanych przypadków marketingu podstępного. Projekt zrealizowano na przykładzie Mistrzostw Europy w Piłce Nożnej UEFA Euro 2012. Ponadto istotną była także ocena skuteczności metod *ambush marketing* opartej na wynikach badań rozpoznawalności marki przeprowadzonych na reprezentatywnej próbie Polaków.

Metodologia. W celu zidentyfikowania przykładów metod *ambush marketing* przeprowadzono monitoring przekazów medialnych (prasa, internet, reklamy, reklamy) w okresie kwiecień–sierpień w 2012 roku.

Kluczowe wnioski. Autorzy stworzyli klasyfikację metod *ambush marketing* opartą na skojarzeniach użytych w przekazach reklamowych firm ambusherów. Wydzielono dwie kategorie skojarzeń, wykorzystujących środki komunikacji i wizerunek. Wyniki badań mogą się przyczynić do lepszego zrozumienia zjawiska *ambush marketing* oraz przygotowania skuteczniejszych metod zwalczania działań ambusherów podczas dużych imprez sportowych.

Słowa kluczowe: marketing sportowy, *ambush marketing*, metody, klasyfikacja, Euro 2012.

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