

# The Influence of Car Crashes on Sponsorship Effects in NASCAR Racing

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## Background

Sport sponsorship expenditures have risen greatly over the past couple decades. In North America alone in 2010, sponsorship spending was expected to have grown to \$17.1 billion ("Sponsorship spending," 2010). Because of the massive spending on sponsorship, many scholars have tried to evaluate sport sponsorship effects and their associated mechanisms (e.g., Gwinner & Eaton, 1999; Madrigal, 2001; Meenaghan, 2001; Lee & Pedersen, 2010).

To archive the sponsors' goals, companies try to associate their brands with various sports. For example, Samsung became the official HDTV of the NFL (Lefton, 2009) and Nike and adidas battled to be an official sponsor for NCAA Division I athletic teams. Many companies also sponsored in the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR). The title sponsor of the NASCAR, Sprint, contracted 10-year deal for \$750 million since 2004 (Smith, 2007) and NASCAR teams' main sponsors invest \$3-to-20 million each year (Miller & Milton, 2004). NASCAR has become an attractive sponsee because of extensive television broadcasting and many loyal fans (Broughton, 2008).

## Literature Review

Because of the importance of NASCAR sponsorship, there were many studies that have examined the effects of NASCAR sponsorship activities. For example, Lee and Pedersen (2010) evaluated sponsorship effects based on a sponsor's logo exposure frequency and the researchers concluded that exposure frequency had a positive relationship with both brand recall and attitude toward the sponsoring brand. Dees, Bennett, and Ferreira (2010) proposed that a personality fit between NASCAR drivers and sponsors had a positive relationship with sponsorship effects while fan identification and product involvement worked as moderators.

Although there were many sponsorship studies in NASCAR, no study has examined the impact of race crashes on sponsorship effects. In general, a reduced sponsorship effect outcome is expected if a sponsor's car is involved in an accident and out of a race. However, there is another possibility. Lee (2010) found that NASCAR fans easily recall sponsoring brand when the car crashed during the NASCAR broadcast. This scholar suspected that the subjects would more pay attention to the crash scenes because the scenes were sensational. Some studies have suggested that people respond differently based on personal traits (e.g., sensation seeking) in violent/sensational situations. Leone and Arienzo (2000) concluded that sensation seeking subjects showed more favorable responses on a high arousal commercial. McDaniel, Lim, and Mahan (2007) found that different gender and personality traits influenced responses to violent advertisements for some sports.

## Purpose

This study investigates how race car crashes affect sponsorship effects in NASCAR racing. In addition, different sponsorship effects based on NASCAR fans' gender and personality traits will be examined as moderators.

## Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review and the purpose of study, four research hypotheses are suggested. First, a car crash will influence NASCAR fans' sponsoring brand recall. Second, a car crash will influence NASCAR fans' attitudes toward the sponsoring brand. Third, level of NASCAR fans' sensation seeking will affect their recall of and attitude to the sponsoring brand. Last, NASCAR fans' gender will affect brand recall and brand attitude. The research framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

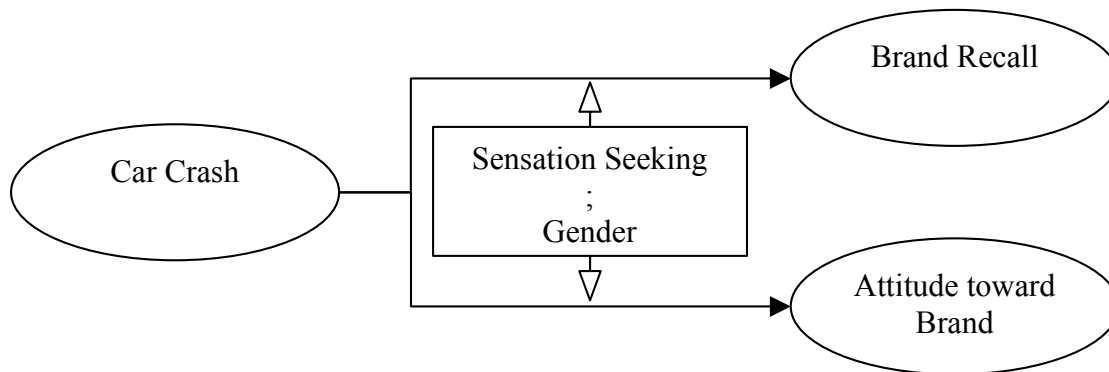


Figure 1. Research framework for measuring the effect of NASCAR car crashes.

## Methods

An experiment will be administrated to collect data. First, the researcher will recruit more than 200 university students ( $N > 200$ ) as the study subjects. The subjects will be randomly assigned into either (1) a control group or (2) an experiment group. In the control group, the subjects will watch 10 minutes of NASCAR racing in a classroom condition. The edited NASCAR video will not contain any crashes or accidents. In the experiment group, the subjects will watch the same 10 minutes of NASCAR racing in the same classroom condition. However, the edited NASCAR video for the experiment group will include two crashes. Both videos will be edited exactly the same (e.g., length, racing scenes, sponsoring logo exposure frequency) except for the crash scenes. After watching the videos, the subjects in both groups will receive questionnaires. The questionnaires will measure the research constructs: brand recall, attitude toward sponsoring brand, and sensation seeking. In addition, basic demographic questions (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity) will be asked in the questionnaires. Multiple regression and other statistical methods will analyze the data and test the research hypotheses.

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