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Boerman, S.C.

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“THIS PROGRAM CONTAINS PRODUCT PLACEMENT”

EFFECTS OF SPONSORSHIP
DISCLOSURE ON TELEVISION
VIEWERS' RESPONSES

Sophie Boerman



“THIS PROGRAM CONTAINS PRODUCT PLACEMENT”

**EFFECTS OF SPONSORSHIP DISCLOSURE
ON TELEVISION VIEWERS' RESPONSES**

Sophie Carolien Boerman

**“This program contains product placement”
Effects of sponsorship disclosure on television viewers’ responses**

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The Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR)
University of Amsterdam
Kloveniersburgwal 48
1012 CX Amsterdam
The Netherlands
s.c.boerman@uva.nl

“THIS PROGRAM CONTAINS PRODUCT PLACEMENT”

EFFECTS OF SPONSORSHIP DISCLOSURE ON TELEVISION VIEWERS' RESPONSES

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

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Promotor: Prof. dr. P. C. Neijens
Co-promotor: Dr. E. A. van Reijmersdal
Overige leden: Prof. dr. J. W. J. Beentjes
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Prof. dr. C. H. de Vreese

Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragwetenschappen

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Voor mijn vader

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Television viewers are increasingly exposed to texts saying “This program contains product placement” or PP (short for product placement) logos incorporated in television programs. These so-called sponsorship disclosures aim to inform viewers about advertising that is embedded in television programs. This dissertation examines the effects of such sponsorship disclosures on viewers’ processing of and responses to sponsored television content and the embedded brands.

Sponsored television content is defined as the purposeful incorporation of brands or products in editorial content in exchange for compensation from the sponsor (Russell & Belch, 2005; Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2009). This inclusion of commercial content in programs can take many forms and ranges from brand placement, in which a brand or product is shown in a program, to brand integration, whereby a brand plays a key role in the plotline and creative development of a program (Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Smit, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2009). Sponsored content has been used for decades, and its use is still growing (Cain, 2011). This proliferation is not remarkable, as sponsored content has demonstrated to effectively influence viewers’ brand memory, attitudes, and behavior (for reviews see Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2009).

Even though these effects may be beneficial for advertisers, they may not be so positive for television viewers. By blurring the boundaries between editorial and commercial content, viewers may not recognize sponsored program content as persuasive because its source and intent are unclear (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). Consequently, viewers may not use their cognitive defenses against persuasion and carefully scrutinize the message (Bhatnagar, Aksoy, & Malkoc, 2004; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). Therefore, it has been argued that sponsored content violates the right of consumers to know that they are being subjected to advertising, and hence that sponsored content is unethical and deceptive (e.g., Cain, 2011; Commercial Alert, 2008; Kuhn, Hume, & Love, 2010; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). For this reason, the effects of sponsored content without viewers' awareness of its persuasive intent have been a serious cause of concern in both academia and society.

To guarantee fair communication and to avoid any confusion on part of the viewer, regulations obligating broadcasters to disclose sponsored content in television programs have been developed and proposed in several countries. The main goal of these sponsorship disclosures is to help viewers to distinguish between commercial and editorial television content (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010; Cain, 2011). However, the effectiveness of such sponsorship disclosures has hardly been studied. Hence, it is unknown whether sponsorship disclosure has its intended effects, and whether it may also have additional effects. For instance, the disclosure of sponsored content may also change the way viewers process and evaluate the brand and the program. This makes the effects of sponsorship disclosures not only relevant for policy makers, but also for television viewers, advertisers, and broadcasters. This dissertation aims to provide insight into the effects of different ways of disclosing sponsored television content on viewers' responses to the sponsored content and the brand.

Sponsorship disclosure regulations

The rules concerning sponsored television content, and especially the disclosure of this practice, are very different in the EU and the US. In the EU, all countries are required to implement the European Audiovisual Media Directive in their own legislation. This directive uses the term ‘product placement’ to refer to sponsored content, defined as:

“... any form of audiovisual commercial communication consisting of the inclusion of or reference to a product, a service or the trade mark thereof so that it is featured within a programme, in return for payment or for similar consideration.”

(Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010, p. 12)

This definition of product placement includes all commercial content that plays a role within a program, and hence is equivalent to the broader concept of sponsored content (as used in this dissertation), ranging from brand placement to brand integration. The European Audiovisual Media Directive prohibits surreptitious sponsored content, but does allow sponsored television content when it does not influence the responsibility and editorial independence of the makers, when it does not directly encourage the purchase or rental of goods or services, and when it is disclosed. With regard to this disclosure of sponsored content, the directive specifically states:

“Viewers shall be clearly informed of the existence of product placement. Programmes containing product placement shall be appropriately identified at the start and the end of the programme, and when a programme resumes after an advertising break, in order to avoid any confusion on the part of the viewer.”

(Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010, p. 17)

This regulation clearly expresses the obligation to adequately inform the audience by signaling the fact that sponsored content is embedded in a program. However, although the directive states a neutral logo can for example be used as a disclosure (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010, p. 10), it does not provide explicit rules on how to disclose sponsored content. This means that each EU country can decide on the precise rules of sponsorship disclosure, which has resulted in various ways of sponsorship disclosures within and between EU countries. For instance, the guidelines in the UK obligate a specific logo existing of two P’s (an abbreviation of product placement) that needs to be shown in any corner of the screen for at least 3 seconds (Ofcom, 2011). In Belgium and France a similar logo is used. In the Netherlands, the rules are not as specific, which has resulted in the use of various disclosures by different broadcasters, such as logos and texts (e.g., “This program contains product placement”).

In the US, the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) sponsorship identification rules also obligate the disclosure of sponsored content. Section 317 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. § 317, requires broadcasters to disclose



to their listeners or viewers “if matter has been aired in exchange for money, services or other valuable consideration” (Federal Communications Commission, 2012). These rules require one announcement, which needs to be made at the time of the broadcast and has to state that the program is sponsored or paid for and by whom (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, 2013). In addition, a disclosure is not required when the product or brand is “reasonably related” to the program (such as a car provided by the manufacturer, used in a car chase scene), but is required if a character makes a promotional statement (Report to Congressional Requesters, 2013). In practice, this means that identifying the sponsors in the end credits of a program satisfies the sponsorship identification rules, and that the current disclosures are often illegible and incomprehensible (Cain, 2011; Goldman, 2006; Ong, 2011). To make sponsorship disclosures more obvious to consumers, the FCC proposed new revised regulations and asked for comments on these proposed rule changes (Federal Communications Commission, 2008). In their response to this request, the consumer organization Commercial Alert pled for a disclosure with the word ‘advertisement’ appearing on screen during the airing of a product placement (Commercial Alert, 2008). Despite these regulation proposals however, to date, the regulations have not been modified yet.

Effects of warning audiences about persuasive messages

Warning audiences about (hidden) persuasive messages is not a new phenomenon, and the topic has been studied in various contexts. There is a long record of research on forewarning of noncommercial persuasive messages, such as political speeches and opinionated articles. Several studies showed that informing audiences before a persuasive message through a forewarning increases counter arguing (Janssen, Fennis, & Pruyn, 2010; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977), makes the receivers perceive the communicator as more biased (Allyn & Festinger, 1961), leads to less favorable attitudes toward the message (Jacks & Devine, 2000), and results in less opinion change (Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Hass & Grady, 1975; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977). This means that research has provided evidence that forewarnings can decrease persuasion and induce defensive resistance (Quinn & Wood, 2004).

Next to these forewarning studies, there has been some research on disclosing different forms of sponsored content. For instance, studies on sponsored content in radio shows (Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008), movies (Bennett, Pecotich, & Putrevu, 1999), and advergames (An & Stern, 2011) investigated the effect of disclosures on consumers’ brand responses. Although their different methods and contexts resulted in mixed results, these studies demonstrated that disclosures can influence the way consumers respond to the advertised brand. For instance, some studies found a negative effect of disclosing the persuasive intent on brand preference (An & Stern, 2011) and brand evaluations (Wei et al., 2008), whereas others did not find a significant influence on brand liking (Bennett et al., 1999). Additionally, a disclosure at the beginning of a movie resulted in better brand recall (Bennett et al., 1999), whereas an advertising break in an advergame resulted in lower brand memory (An & Stern, 2011). Altogether, these studies demonstrate that the disclosure of

(hidden) persuasive messages can have important effects on the processing and outcome of a message.

FOCUS OF THIS DISSERTATION

Based on the prior insights that (fore)warnings of persuasive messages can change the way receivers process the message (e.g., Janssen et al., 2010; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977; Quinn & Wood, 2004), and influence the outcomes of the message (e.g., Allyn & Festinger, 1961; An & Stern, 2011; Wei et al., 2008), this dissertation aims to investigate whether sponsorship disclosure also influences the processing and persuasive outcome of the sponsored content. In addition, studies about warnings on for instance products argue that people first need to attend to a warning before it can have any effect (Argo & Main, 2004; Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). Whether viewers attend to a message depends on their ability, motivation, and opportunity to process a message (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991), and this is likely to be related to the characteristics of the disclosure such as the duration and moment of display, and its content. Therefore, to examine the effects of disclosing sponsored television content on viewers' responses, this dissertation focuses on four themes: (1) the effects of the characteristics of sponsorship disclosures, (2) the role of viewers' awareness of sponsorship disclosures, (3) the effects of sponsorship disclosures on viewers' processing of the (sponsored) television content (e.g., the activation of persuasion knowledge) and, (4) the effects of sponsorship disclosures on the persuasive outcomes of sponsored content (e.g., viewers' brand responses).

This dissertation expands on prior disclosure and forewarning research by investigating the new phenomenon of disclosing sponsored content in television programs. Given its novelty, at the start of this Ph.D. project (February 2011), the effects of disclosing sponsored television content were not yet known. (In the meanwhile, next to the chapters of this dissertation, several studies have been published about the disclosure of sponsored television content, i.e., Campbell, Mohr, & Verlegh, 2013; Tessitore & Geuens, 2013; Van Reijmersdal, Tutaj, & Boerman, 2013). In addition, despite the various types and uses of sponsorship disclosures within and between countries, it was still unknown how different disclosure characteristics influence its effectiveness. Therefore, this dissertation aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of different disclosure characteristics (i.e., disclosure duration, timing, and type).

Furthermore, although warning research has shown the importance of viewers' awareness of a warning, few studies have investigated the role of viewers' disclosure awareness. This makes this dissertation one of the first to take into account the role of disclosure awareness in disclosure effects. In addition, this dissertation focuses on different levels of disclosure awareness, by addressing both the recall and recognition of a disclosure and viewers' visual attention to the disclosure while watching a television program.



Moreover, prior studies on (product and health) warnings have provided evidence for the effect of warnings for persuasive messages on the processing of the message (e.g., Janssen et al., 2010; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977; Quinn & Wood, 2004). Interestingly, the research that was done on disclosing commercial persuasive messages focused on the persuasive outcomes of the message (e.g., brand memory and brand attitude; An & Stern, 2011; Bennett et al., 1999; Wei et al., 2008), and did not take into account the processing of the content. As the main purpose of sponsorship disclosures is to inform audiences and to enable them to activate their persuasion knowledge (Cain, 2011), this is an important gap in the literature. This dissertation aims to fill this gap by examining how sponsorship disclosures change the processing of the sponsored content. More specifically, processing is investigated by testing the effects of sponsorship disclosures on the activation of different levels of persuasion knowledge and viewers' attention to the sponsored content.

Additionally, prior research has shown that disclosing persuasive messages can effectively alter the effectiveness of the persuasive message. As sponsorship disclosures may work similar to forewarnings of other types of persuasive messages, they may even elicit resistance to the sponsored content, which could have consequences for its persuasive outcomes. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on the effects of sponsorship disclosure on the persuasive outcomes of the sponsored content (i.e., brand memory, brand attitude, and program trustworthiness), and the processes that precede these effects.

The following section will discuss the four research questions of this dissertation, based on the four themes. Table 1 shows how the chapters in this dissertation relate to the four focus points.

Disclosure characteristics

The implementation of sponsorship disclosures differs with regard to their duration, timing, and content. According to processing theories such as the limited capacity model of motivated mediated message processing (LC4MP; Lang, 2006) and the processing of commercial media content model (PCMC; Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010), the amount of time a disclosure is displayed (i.e., duration), the moment in the program it is shown (i.e., timing), and its size and content (i.e., type) may all influence whether viewers notice and process the disclosure. Especially, since people need to have the ability, motivation, and opportunity to process a message (MacInnis et al., 1991), and this may depend on these disclosure characteristics. To examine the influence of the characteristics of a sponsorship disclosure, the first research question of this dissertation is:

RQ1: What are the effects of the characteristics of a sponsorship disclosure (i.e., duration, timing, and type) on viewers' awareness of the disclosure, and subsequently on the processing and persuasive outcomes of the sponsored content?

Disclosure awareness

Prior research on the effectiveness of warning labels (e.g., “use only as directed” on electric appliances, or a warning on medicines informing you about possible side effects) provides an information processing model that represent the sequential stages of information processing that consumers engage in when they are exposed to warnings (Argo & Main, 2004; Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). The first stage in this model is attention: If a warning is not noticed, it cannot produce the effects it seeks (Goldman, 2006; Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). To test whether this is also true for sponsorship disclosures in television programs, the second research question of this dissertation focuses on the role of viewers’ awareness of sponsorship disclosures:

RQ2: To what extent do the effects of a sponsorship disclosure depend on viewers’ awareness of the disclosure in the program?

Processing

After gaining attention, a warning needs to be comprehended and activate existing beliefs and attitudes about the risk it is warning for to have any effect (Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). In the case of sponsorship disclosure, the beliefs and attitudes that can be activated are related to a person’s persuasion knowledge, defined as the general knowledge people develop throughout their life about persuasion and persuasion tactics, which can be used to cope with a persuasion attempt (Friestad & Wright, 1994). John (1999) argues that persuasion knowledge is developed in a developmental sequence from preschool to adolescence, in which the first step is being able to distinguish commercials from programs. Although persuasion knowledge is developmentally contingent, in general all steps of persuasion knowledge are well established at adulthood (Friestad & Wright, 1994; John, 1999). When adults recognize a persuasion attempt, they can activate their persuasion knowledge, and use this to interpret, evaluate and cope with the attempt (Friestad & Wright, 1994). In the case of sponsored content, however, even adults may not always be able to distinguish the commercial content from the program, and hence may not activate their persuasion knowledge. Therefore, the main purpose of sponsorship disclosure is to help viewers to activate this first step of persuasion knowledge, so they can distinguish between commercial and editorial content (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010; Cain, 2011).

However, sponsorship disclosure may also have other effects on the way viewers process the sponsored content. According to the reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) and forewarning research, the recognition of a persuasive attempt, such as advertising, may induce resistance and critical processing (Quinn & Wood, 2004; Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice, & Serna, 2002; Wei et al., 2008). In line with this reasoning, Rozendaal, Lapierre, Van Reijmersdal and Buijzen (2011) argue that persuasion knowledge theories should not only focus on these cognitive aspects, but should also take into account the attitudinal



dimension of persuasion knowledge (e.g., skepticism and critical attitudes).

Furthermore, because a sponsorship disclosure informs the viewer about upcoming brand placements in the program, it may function as a cue or information prime for the brand appearance in the program (Bennett et al., 1999). Hence, a disclosure may raise viewers' awareness of the upcoming brand placement, and makes them pay more attention to the brands placed in the program.

To understand the effects of sponsorship disclosure on the way viewers perceive and process the sponsored content, the third research question is as follows:

RQ3: What is the effect of disclosing sponsored content on viewers' processing of the sponsored content (i.e., the use of persuasion knowledge, critical processing, and visual attention to the sponsored content)?

Effects on viewers' responses to brand and program

As a consequence of its effect on viewers' processing of the program content, for instance by activating persuasion knowledge, a sponsorship disclosure may mitigate the persuasive effect of the sponsored content. Prior research has indeed demonstrated that the activation of persuasion knowledge reduces the effectiveness of sponsored content (Matthes, Schemer, & Wirth, 2007; Wei et al., 2008). For sponsorship disclosure, this may mean that the disclosure not only helps viewers to recognize and evaluate the sponsored content (i.e., activate persuasion knowledge), but also that it may have consequences for viewers' responses to the brand and the program that incorporated this brand (i.e., brand memory, brand attitude, and perceived program trustworthiness). Hence, sponsorship disclosures may have effects on the brand and program that are not necessarily intended by policy makers. The last research question aims to gain insights into these additional effects.

RQ4: What is the effect of disclosing sponsored content on the persuasive outcomes of the sponsored content (i.e., viewers' brand and program responses)?

Overall, the four research questions refer to the four focus points of this dissertation, which are: sponsorship disclosure characteristics (RQ1), disclosure awareness (RQ2), viewers' processing of the sponsored content (RQ3), and the persuasive effects of the sponsored content (RQ4). Table 1 shows how the chapters relate to these themes, and demonstrates that they can be ordered sequentially: The disclosure characteristics are expected to influence viewers' awareness of the disclosure, whereas viewers' awareness of the disclosure influences the effect it consequently has on viewers' processing of the sponsored content, and ultimately the persuasive effects of the sponsored content.

Chapter 1 addresses viewers' awareness of different disclosure characteristics, by testing the effects of the duration and timing of a disclosure on viewers' memory of the sponsorship disclosure (i.e., disclosure awareness). Chapter 2 tests the extent to which disclosure awareness is a precondition for the effect of a disclosure on viewers'

use of persuasion knowledge (i.e., their processing). The study in Chapter 3 focuses on the effects of the duration of a disclosure (i.e., a disclosure characteristic) on the activation of persuasion knowledge (i.e., the process), and on viewers' brand attitude and brand memory (i.e., the persuasive effect). Chapter 4 addresses the same three themes as Chapter 3, but focuses on the influence of the timing of a disclosure (instead of duration) on the use of persuasion knowledge and critical processing, and consequently on brand attitudes. To be able to focus purely on the effects of the disclosure characteristics on processing and the persuasive outcomes, the analyses in Chapter 3 and 4 only include viewers that did recall seeing a disclosure. In this way, disclosure awareness is held constant and its role is not directly tested. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses all four themes by studying the effect of disclosure type on viewers' visual attention to the disclosure (i.e., disclosure awareness), their visual attention to the sponsored content and use of persuasion knowledge (i.e., the process), and their brand memory, brand attitude, and the perceived program trustworthiness (i.e., the persuasive effect).

Table 1 Overview of dissertation

	Disclosure characteristic	→ Disclosure awareness	→ Process	→ Persuasive effect
<i>Chapter 1</i>	Duration Timing	Disclosure memory		
<i>Chapter 2</i>	(no specific characteristic)	Disclosure memory	Conceptual persuasion knowledge Attitudinal persuasion knowledge	
<i>Chapter 3</i>	Duration	(only viewers who recalled seeing disclosure)	Conceptual persuasion knowledge Attitudinal persuasion knowledge	Brand memory Brand attitude
<i>Chapter 4</i>	Timing	(only viewers who recalled seeing disclosure)	Conceptual persuasion knowledge Critical processing	Brand attitude
<i>Chapter 5</i>	Type	Visual attention to disclosure	Conceptual persuasion knowledge Visual attention to sponsored content	Brand memory Brand attitude Program trustworthiness



In this last study, eye tracking is used to estimate viewers' visual attention while watching the program, and hence as a measure of disclosure awareness. The studies in the other chapters used self-reported memory measures to measure viewers' disclosure awareness. These self-reported measures provide important insight into viewers' awareness of the disclosure. However, they have the disadvantage that viewers who process messages with relatively little attention are not likely to remember them in the context of a recall task (Slater, 2004). Because attention is not always active or conscious, physiological measures of attention have been argued to be more reliable (Krugman, 1965; Rosbergen, Pieters, & Wedel, 1997). Especially integrated messages, such as sponsored content and disclosures, can be processed implicitly or heuristically, and thus call for more implicit measures of processing (Auty & Lewis, 2004; Smit & Neijens, 2011). With these two different measures of awareness, this dissertation aims to gain substantial insight into the role of disclosure awareness.

FINDINGS

The five chapters in this dissertation are independent articles and are all either published or submitted for publication, and all have their own abstract, introduction, discussion and reference list. Chapters 1 to 4 are based on one experiment ($N = 209$), whereas Chapter 5 reports an eye tracking experiment ($N = 149$). As Chapter 1 focuses on viewers' memory of the disclosure, it excludes the no disclosure condition, leaving a sample of 179 participants. To be able to test the effects of disclosure duration and timing, the analyses in Chapter 3 and 4 exclude all participants that did not recall the disclosure (hence, $N = 116$). The following section provides a summary of the focus and findings of each chapter.

Chapter 1. Sponsorship disclosure awareness

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses on viewers' awareness of sponsorship disclosures. This study explores how audience and disclosure characteristics influence viewers' memory of sponsorship disclosure. The results from the experiment ($N = 179$) show that a disclosure ("This program contains advertising by Alive Shoes") at the beginning of a program results in less disclosure memory compared to a disclosure in the middle or at the end of a program. The duration of the disclosure does not significantly influence viewers' disclosure memory. With regard to the audience characteristics, the results demonstrate that viewers' familiarity with the program and with sponsorship disclosure increase the chance that a disclosure is remembered, while program involvement decreases disclosure memory.

Chapter 2. The role of disclosure awareness

The second chapter focuses on the effect of a disclosure on viewers' processing of the (sponsored) television content, and the role of viewers' awareness of sponsorship

disclosures. An experiment ($N = 208$) shows that a disclosure leads to increased recognition of sponsored content as advertising (i.e., activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge), which consequently makes the viewer evaluate the sponsored content more critically (i.e., higher attitudinal persuasion knowledge). This effect is only manifest for viewers who recalled the disclosure. These results demonstrate that a sponsorship disclosure can effectively activate different levels of persuasion knowledge, and that viewers' awareness of the disclosure is an important precondition for its effect on the use of persuasion knowledge.

Chapter 3. The role of disclosure duration

The study in Chapter 3 compares the effects of different durations of a disclosure, and examines the impact of a disclosure on viewers' processing of sponsored content and brand responses. An experiment ($N = 116$) compares the effects of no disclosure to a 3-second and a 6-second disclosure. Results show that both the 3-second and 6-second disclosure enhance the recognition of sponsored content as advertising (i.e., activates conceptual persuasion knowledge), and that only the 6-second disclosure consequently induces critical feelings toward the sponsored content (i.e., higher attitudinal persuasion knowledge). Additionally, the 6-second disclosure indirectly results in less favorable brand attitudes through higher rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge. Furthermore, the results indicate that a disclosure directly increases brand memory, regardless of its duration.

Chapter 4. The role of disclosure timing

Chapter 4 focuses on the effects of the timing of sponsorship disclosure on the processing and persuasive effect of sponsored content. A model is proposed in which sponsorship disclosure activates persuasion knowledge, which leads to critical processing of the sponsored content. Ultimately, this is expected to negatively affect the attitude toward the brand in the sponsored content. The results from an experiment ($N = 116$) support this model, but only when the disclosure is displayed prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content. These effects are not found for a sponsorship disclosure shown at the end of the program after the sponsored content.

Chapter 5. The role of disclosure type and awareness

The final chapter combines the effects of the type of disclosure on viewers' awareness of this disclosure, and its influence on viewers' processing and the consequential effects of the sponsored content. More precisely, this eye tracking experiment ($N = 149$) examines the effects of different ways of disclosing sponsored content on viewers' visual attention, use of persuasion knowledge (i.e., recognition of sponsored content as advertising), and brand and program responses. The results show that a combination of a text ("This program contains product placement") and a PP ("product placement") logo is most effective in increasing the recognition of sponsored program content as advertising in the program.



A logo alone is least effective. Importantly, the effect of the disclosure on the recognition of advertising is mediated by viewers' visual attention to the disclosure and the brand placement. Furthermore, the recognition of advertising increases brand memory and leads to less favorable brand attitudes. The results provide no evidence for an effect of a disclosure on program trustworthiness.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation aims to provide insights into the effects of disclosing sponsored television content on viewers' responses. More specifically, it attempts to examine the effects of several disclosure characteristics; to investigate the role of viewers' awareness of sponsorship disclosures; and to study the effects of sponsorship disclosures on viewers' processing of the sponsored television content, and the persuasive outcomes regarding the brand and the program. The studies in this dissertation provide important insights into these four focus points.

First, with regard to the disclosure characteristics, the studies demonstrate that the effects of a disclosure depend on its duration, timing, and type. The duration of the disclosure does not appear to alter viewers' cognitive responses, but does influence their affective responses: Compared to the 3-second disclosure, only the 6-second disclosure affects viewers' attitudinal persuasion knowledge and consequently brand attitude. Furthermore, the timing of the disclosure does influence viewers' awareness of the disclosure, and its effectiveness. A disclosure at the beginning of a program is least remembered. Additionally, only a disclosure shown prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content increases the recognition of sponsored content as advertising, and consequently results in more critical processing and less favorable brand attitudes. With respect to the type of disclosure, the combination of a text and a logo is most effective in attracting (visual) attention and increasing the recognition of advertising.

Second, viewers' awareness of a sponsorship disclosure in a television program appears to be an important precondition for any of its effects. This finding is in line with the statement that a warning cannot produce the effects it seeks if it is not noticed (Goldman, 2006; Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). Whether viewers are aware of the disclosure depends on both the characteristics of the disclosure (as discussed before), and on audience characteristics. Viewers are more likely to remember seeing a disclosure when they are familiar and not involved with the program. In addition, viewers' familiarity with sponsorship disclosures in general increases the chance they will recognize a disclosure in a program.

Third, the dissertation demonstrates that when viewers are aware of a disclosure, it increases viewers' visual attention to the sponsored content and enhances the recognition of the sponsored content as advertising (i.e., activates conceptual persuasion knowledge). Thus, sponsorship disclosure does achieve its goal. As a consequence, it also makes viewers perceive this content more critically (i.e., higher rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge

and self-reported critical processing).

Fourth, the effect of a sponsorship disclosure on the processing of the sponsored content also influences the persuasive outcomes of this sponsored content. As a result of the activation of both cognitive and attitudinal persuasion knowledge, a sponsorship disclosure increases viewers' brand memory and leads to less favorable brand attitudes. The studies provide no evidence for an effect of a sponsorship disclosure on the perceived trustworthiness of the program.

Altogether, the studies in this dissertation demonstrate that depending on its characteristics (RQ₁) and viewers' awareness of the disclosure (RQ₂), a disclosure enhances the recognition of advertising and makes viewers perceive the sponsored content more critically (RQ₃). Consequently, a disclosure increases brand memory, and mitigates the persuasive effect of the sponsored content (RQ₄). This means that a disclosure can have its intended effect of increasing the recognition of advertising in a television program. However, it also has consequences for the way viewers perceive this sponsored content and the advertised brand.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical implications

The findings of this dissertation have important theoretical implications. First, the studies show that the effects of sponsorship disclosures follow three stages: awareness, processing, and persuasive effects. These stages are similar to the stages of information processing that consumers engage in when they are exposed to warnings on products (Argo & Main, 2004; Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). First, a warning needs to attract attention, and has to be comprehended. Subsequently it should fit the person's beliefs and attitudes about the hazard it is informing about, and finally the warning has to motivate the person to comply with its directives. Especially this last stage illustrates the different goals of product warnings and sponsorship disclosures. The goal of product warnings is to change behavior to avoid risks, whereas the purpose of sponsorship disclosures is merely to inform and change the processing of sponsored content. Hence, sponsorship disclosures primarily aim to change cognition and not specific behavior. Despite these differences, the stages of processing product warnings demonstrate to be relevant in explaining the effectiveness of sponsorship disclosures. Thus, building upon product warning research, this dissertation identifies three stages (awareness, processing, and persuasive effects) that can explain the effectiveness of sponsorship disclosures.

Second, the studies in this dissertation show that processing theories such as the LC4MP (Lang, 2006) and the PCMC (Buijzen et al., 2010) also apply to sponsorship disclosures. These theories claim that people have a limited pool of cognitive resources, and therefore are only capable of processing a certain amount of information simultaneously. Because a sponsorship disclosure is displayed during a television program, the disclosure and the program content compete for viewers' resources.



Based on the LC4MP and PCMC, it can be expected that viewers may not always allocate cognitive resources to the sponsorship disclosure, and hence that disclosures may not be noticed and processed. The low rates of disclosure awareness in the studies (i.e., 48% recalled the disclosure in the *MTV Was Here* experiment, and only 8% fixated on the logo in the eye tracking study) emphasize that indeed many viewers may not allocate resources to sponsorship disclosures. Moreover, the findings support the notion of MacInnis, Moorman and Jaworski (1991) that the chance people will process a message depends on their ability, motivation, and opportunity to do so. This dissertation shows that viewers are more likely to remember a disclosure when they are uninvolved with the program (and hence are less motivated to process the program itself), and familiar with the program and sponsorship disclosure (and thus have the ability to process the disclosure). Moreover, a disclosure in the middle or the end of a television program provides viewers better opportunities to allocate resources to the disclosure and remember it, than a disclosure at the beginning of the program. This means that the studies in this dissertation provide new evidence for these mediated message processing theories, and show how valuable these theories are in predicting people's attention and processing of sponsorship disclosures.

Third, this dissertation provides evidence that disclosing sponsored content can induce resistance and mitigates the persuasive effect of the sponsored content. Hence, it provides valuable insights into how sponsorship disclosure influences the persuasion process. A sponsorship disclosure can increase the recognition of advertising in a program, and as a result viewers become more critical toward the sponsored content and have less favorable brand attitudes. This is in accordance with prior forewarning studies that demonstrated that disclosing the persuasive intent of a message can diminish persuasion (e.g., Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Hass & Grady, 1975; Quinn & Wood, 2004). Furthermore, these findings are in accordance with the reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), which claims that people want to maintain their freedom and do not want to be manipulated. Hence, when people realize they are being influenced, they will try to resist this persuasion attempt (Sagarin et al., 2002; Wei et al., 2008). This dissertation provides new evidence for this reactance theory and shows that these resistance mechanisms also apply to sponsorship disclosure: Viewers are able to resist sponsored content when they are made aware of it.

Surprisingly, this reactance mechanism does not hold for viewers' program trustworthiness. According to the change of meaning principle (Friestad and Wright 1994), becoming conscious of a persuasive attempt redefines the nature of the interaction with the sender. Given that people do not want to be manipulated (Brehm 1966), this may lead to a sense of betrayal and deception. Hence, if viewers are aware of the commercial nature of sponsored content, this may influence the degree of trust that is placed in the medium (Bhatnagar et al., 2004). The findings in this dissertation do not provide evidence for such a mechanism influencing the trustworthiness of the program. This may be explained by the genre of the program, since the study examining this effect used an episode of a TV drama series. For this genre, it may be difficult for viewers to indicate to what extent the

program is trustworthy and honest. Moreover, research has shown that, in general, people think familiar brand names can add to the realism in movies (Gupta & Gould, 1997; Karrh, Frith, & Callison, 2001; Sung, de Gregorio, & Jung, 2009). Hence, despite its effects on the brand itself, the appearance of a brand in the TV series might not influence the perceived trustworthiness of the program, because viewers might think using real brands makes the program more realistic and are not offended by it.

Fourth, with regard to its effect on viewers' brand responses, this dissertation exposes a positive effect of sponsorship disclosures on viewers' memory of the brand. This is in line with the findings of Van Reijmersdal et al. (2013). However, contrary to this finding, Tessitore and Geuens (2013) found no significant relation between a sponsorship disclosure and brand recall. In their study, brand recall was presented as a proxy for the conscious processing of the sponsored content, and moderates the effect of a disclosure on the activation of persuasion knowledge and viewers' intention to purchase the brand. This means that their study also stresses the importance of viewers' awareness and conscious processing while watching a program containing sponsored content. However, although Tessitore and Geuens (2013) did measure the recall of the disclosure, they did not take the awareness of the disclosure into account when studying the effects of the disclosure. Since this dissertation shows disclosure awareness is a precondition for its effects, this may explain the insignificant relation between the disclosure and brand recall. Furthermore, in their study on sponsorship disclosure, Campbell et al. (2013) asked participants to list the brands that came to mind for a specific category. They found a negative effect of a sponsorship disclosure on this top of mind awareness, and argue that this is caused by viewers correcting their answers for the persuasive impact of the sponsored content. Campbell et al. (2013) state that this correction is a consequence of the activation of persuasion knowledge, however, they do not measure this activation directly. The studies in this dissertation indicate that indeed a sponsorship disclosure can activate persuasion knowledge, but that this leads to more brand memory, and not to a correction of brand recall. The results of the studies by Tessitore and Geuens (2013) and Campbell et al. (2013) provide important insights into the working of disclosures. Combined with our findings, the studies emphasize the importance of all three stages proposed in this dissertation (disclosure awareness, processing, and persuasive effects) in examining the effectiveness of sponsorship disclosures.

Fifth, this dissertation demonstrates that persuasion knowledge and critical processing are important mechanisms that underlie resistance to persuasion. These findings demonstrate the significance of the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) in the context of sponsorship disclosure. Moreover, the findings indicate that the activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge (i.e., the recognition of advertising) leads to high rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge (i.e., feelings of distrust and dishonesty toward the sponsored content). This means that a disclosure can activate both cognitive and affective dimensions of persuasion knowledge. In this way, this dissertation demonstrates the importance of separating persuasion knowledge into a conceptual and



an attitudinal dimension, as proposed by Rozendaal et al. (2011). Based on the findings of this dissertation, the attitudinal dimension appears to be a valuable addition to the Persuasion Knowledge Model. Especially because attitudinal persuasion knowledge plays an important role in the persuasion process, by affecting viewers' brand attitude.

Lastly, this dissertation also has important methodological implications. With its focus on awareness and on the processing of television content, this dissertation is part of a research area in which attention plays an important role. To date, attention to and memory of sponsored content and sponsorship disclosures are usually measured with self-reported memory tasks. The disadvantage of such measures is that viewers who process messages with relatively little attention are not likely to remember them in the context of a recall task (Slater, 2004). As both sponsorship disclosures and brand placement are integrated in television programs, they are part of a cluttered environment, and can be processed implicitly or heuristically. This calls for the use of implicit measures to investigate the processing of integrated persuasive messages (Auty & Lewis, 2004; Smit & Neijens, 2011). Moreover, physiological measures of attention, such as eye tracking, have been argued to be more reliable than self-reported measures (Krugman, 1965; Rosbergen et al., 1997). Therefore, next to memory measures, this dissertation used eye tracking to directly measure the focus of viewers' eyes while watching a television program. Eye tracking is particularly useful in sponsorship disclosure research, as it provides the opportunity to measure viewers' attention to specific visual elements within a program, such as a disclosure or brand placement. Thus, it was possible to examine the extent to which disclosures and sponsored content attract (visual) attention, even at lower levels of attention. The results demonstrated that a disclosure that combines a text and logo attracts most attention. In addition, the eye tracking data showed that a disclosure increases the visual attention to the brand placement, and hence guides viewers' attention to the sponsored content. With these findings, this dissertation provides evidence that eye tracking is an important and useful tool to measure consumers' attention to integrated (persuasive) messages, and future research in this area could benefit from using this technology.

Practical implications

Along with its theoretical contribution, this dissertation also has important practical implications. As the regulations concerning sponsorship disclosure are new and still in development in several countries, the insights from the studies in this dissertation can be useful for policy makers. In addition, because sponsorship disclosures also influence the effectiveness of the sponsored content itself, the findings are also of relevance to advertisers.

This dissertation shows that viewers are often not aware of sponsorship disclosures, although this is a precondition for its effectiveness. The studies in this dissertation can provide some guidelines to increase the noticeability of sponsorship disclosures. For instance, viewers' awareness of the disclosure is highest when a disclosure is shown in

the middle or end of a program, and when it includes a text (i.e., “This program contains product placement”). A logo only was only noticed by 8% of the participants, showing that the PP logos as implemented in various countries would not be advisable.

The main goal of sponsorship disclosure is to inform audiences to avoid any confusion on part of the viewer (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010). This dissertation provides evidence that sponsorship disclosure can indeed increase the recognition of advertising. Moreover, it demonstrates several circumstances under which disclosures are most effective in activating conceptual persuasion knowledge. To increase viewers’ recognition of sponsored program content as advertising, a disclosure can be displayed either 3 or 6 seconds, should be shown prior to or concurrent with the sponsored content, and is most effective when it combines the text “This program contains product placement” and a PP logo. A disclosure is least effective when it is shown after the sponsored content and only consists of a logo.

Furthermore, a disclosure is best recognized when viewers are familiar with sponsorship disclosure in general. Viewers’ awareness of the disclosure may be improved by increasing their familiarity with sponsorship disclosures as a phenomenon, and hence making the knowledge that is required to interpret the disclosure available (MacInnis et al., 1991). Interventions that address audience’s familiarity with disclosures, such as commercials informing the audience about sponsorship disclosure in general, may help making disclosures better known and hence more effective.

For advertisers, sponsorship disclosures have both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, the disclosure serves as a prime for the brand, making viewers pay more visual attention to it and increasing their brand memory. In this way, sponsorship disclosures have a positive effect on viewers’ brand awareness. On the other hand, sponsored content is believed to be successful because of viewers’ lack of awareness of the sponsored content (Bhatnagar et al., 2004). Hence, sponsorship disclosure reduces this advantage of sponsored content. Moreover, sponsorship disclosure also induces resistance. As a consequence of the positive effect of sponsorship disclosure on viewers’ recognition of advertising, viewers report higher rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge and more critical processing of the sponsored content. In other words, they think the sponsored content is less honest en trustworthy, and watch it with more skepticism. This, then, results in less favorable brand attitudes, and thus, mitigates the persuasive effect of the sponsored content.

As this dissertation clearly demonstrates when and which disclosures are effective, and which effects they have, policy makers could use this knowledge to develop sound and effective disclosures. However, they should also be aware of the additional effects of sponsorship disclosure on the brand. This dissertation may function as a starting point for an informed discussion about which effects are desirable and acceptable.

Future research

Given the paucity of previous research on sponsorship disclosure, this dissertation may be



an initial and important step for research into a complex area. An initial step, because the findings of this dissertation also lead to a call for more research. First, this dissertation focused on the processes that a disclosure induces, and hence mainly addresses mediating factors. However, future research should look into important factors that moderate the effects of sponsorship disclosure, to examine for whom a disclosure is necessary and effective. For instance, a person's individual persuasion knowledge may be an important factor. People with highly developed persuasion knowledge may not need a disclosure, because they are already aware of the embedded advertising in a program, whereas people with low levels of persuasion knowledge may not even understand the disclosure when it includes a term like product placement. However, warnings should be understandable to even the least-skilled people to be effective (Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). Therefore, future research may examine people's level of persuasion knowledge about sponsored content, by assessing to what extent people generally are aware of product placement and understand its meaning and persuasive intent, and to what extent this moderates the effectiveness of sponsorship disclosure. Additionally, further research is needed to examine how the effects of sponsorship disclosure are associated with age, education, and other personal characteristics.

Furthermore, the studies conducted in this dissertation include a form of brand integration and of brand placement, and show a stable effect on the recognition of advertising for both forms of sponsored content. However, sponsored content can take many forms, can include many different products and brands, and can be inserted in various programs. Further research is needed to provide more support for robust effects of sponsorship disclosure in other contexts. For instance, the disclosures in the studies were all displayed simultaneous to program content. However, sponsorship disclosure can also be performed by means of billboards before and after the program. Because this type of disclosure is not shown simultaneously with other content, this may positively influence the attention to the disclosure and its effects. Hence, more research is needed to compare the effects of sponsorship disclosure shown during the program or as billboards. Moreover, the way sponsored content can be implemented differs between program genres (i.e., lifestyle programs, drama series, or cooking programs), and viewers' appreciation of sponsored content varies between genres (Neijens & Smit, 2003). Further research could examine whether the effects of sponsorship disclosure vary over different program genres.

Finally, more research on the long-term effects of sponsorship disclosure is necessary. For instance, since viewers' awareness of a sponsorship disclosure is of such importance for its effectiveness, future research may investigate how this awareness changes over time. This dissertation shows that viewers' familiarity with sponsorship disclosures in general increases the chance they recognize a disclosure in a program. However, in the long term this may change, because over time and repeated exposure, a warning may attract less attention due to habituation and a decay of novelty (Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). Hence, it would be interesting to study whether the decay of novelty and a learning effect may change the degree to which viewers notice and respond to disclosures.

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CHAPTER 1

SPONSORSHIP DISCLOSURE AWARENESS

ABSTRACT

The proliferation of sponsored content in television programs has been a cause of concern as it may violate the right of consumers to know that a message is sponsored. Therefore, new regulations obligate broadcasters to disclose sponsored content. To achieve its goal of informing the consumer, a sponsorship disclosure must be effectively communicated. This study explores how audience and disclosure characteristics influence memory of sponsorship disclosure. Results show that disclosure at the beginning of a program results in less disclosure memory compared to disclosure in the middle or at the end of a program. The duration of the disclosure does not appear to influence disclosure memory. Additionally, viewers' program and disclosure familiarity increase the chance that a disclosure is remembered, while program involvement decreases disclosure memory. These results may be useful in the development of effective sponsorship disclosure, as they indicate several conditions under which disclosures are more likely to be remembered.

INTRODUCTION

Television programs are increasingly integrating sponsored content into editorial content (Smit, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2009; Sung, de Gregorio, & Jung, 2009). This use of sponsored content ranges from the simple placement of a brand into a television program (i.e., brand placement) to programs in which the brand plays a key role in plotlines and the creative development (i.e., brand integration; Hudson & Hudson, 2006). The goal of such sponsored content is to give (subtle) exposure to brand names and to persuade in an unobtrusive manner (Avery & Ferraro, 2000). Research has indeed demonstrated that sponsored content can alter viewers' attitudes, even if memory for the placement is low (Matthes, Schemer, & Wirth, 2007). This unobtrusiveness has been a cause of concern for policy makers, consumer organizations and academics. By blurring the boundaries between editorial and commercial content, viewers may not recognize sponsored program content as commercial because its source and intent are unclear (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). Therefore, it has been argued that sponsored content violates the right of consumers to know that a message is sponsored, and hence is unethical and deceptive (e.g., Cain, 2011; Kuhn, Hume, & Love, 2010; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998).

To avoid any confusion on the part of the viewer, the EU decided to make sponsorship disclosure on television obligatory (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010). Similarly, in the US sponsorship regulations are being reconsidered (Cain, 2011; Federal Communications Commission, 2008). Although the application and use of sponsorship disclosure differ between countries, the purpose is always to explicitly inform the audience when commercial content is integrated into editorial content to guarantee fair communication and avoid persuasion without audience awareness (Cain, 2011; Woods, 2008).

Despite the European regulations and American law-proposals, little scholarly research has been conducted on sponsorship disclosures on television. The few studies that did investigate this subject focused on the effects of disclosures on brand responses (i.e., brand memory and brand attitude) and different forms of persuasion knowledge (Boerman, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012a, 2012b; Campbell, Mohr, & Verlegh, 2013; Van Reijmersdal, Tutaj, & Boerman, 2013). Remarkably, two of these studies found that a large number of participants did not recall the sponsorship disclosure (i.e., 52% in Boerman et al. [2012b] and 17% in Campbell et al. [2013]).

Sponsorship disclosure aims to inform audiences so they can guard themselves and use their persuasion knowledge to cope with the persuasive attempt (Cain, 2011; Woods, 2008). Prior research emphasized the importance of sponsorship disclosure memory in achieving its goal of activating persuasion knowledge, as it showed that sponsorship disclosure only had an effect on persuasion knowledge when the viewer recalled seeing a disclosure (Boerman et al., 2012a). Hence, when sponsorship disclosure is not remembered, it most likely does not have its intended effect and may be futile. Despite the importance of disclosure memory, no research has looked into the antecedents of sponsorship disclosure memory. Therefore, this study takes one step back in the hierarchy of effects and aims to explore under which circumstances viewers remember sponsorship disclosure.



By doing so, we hope to contribute to the creation and implementation of more effective and “sound” disclosures (see also Kozup, Taylor, Capella, & Kees, 2012).

Thus, to achieve its goal of informing the consumer a sponsorship disclosure must be effectively communicated. If consumers do not notice sponsorship disclosures, the disclosures cannot produce the positive benefits that it seeks (Goldman, 2006). This study explores the antecedents of memory of sponsorship disclosure by focusing on both the viewers (i.e., audience characteristics) and on the characteristics of the disclosure (i.e., disclosure characteristics). With an experiment ($N = 179$), we specifically investigate the effects of audience’s disclosure familiarity, program familiarity and program involvement, and disclosure timing (beginning, middle, or end of program) and duration (3 or 6 seconds).

ATTENTION TO AND PROCESSING OF DISCLOSURES

Disclosures and warnings directed at consumers are not new phenomena. Although most research focused on disclosures on products and in advertising, as opposed to disclosures of advertising, they do provide some valuable insights into audience attention to disclosures. Interestingly, various studies have demonstrated that different types of disclosures (i.e., fine-print disclosures in TV commercials, and risk and health disclosures) appear to go largely unnoticed (e.g., Morgan & Stoltman, 2002; Popper & Murray, 1989; Stewart & Martin, 1994). Likewise, the few studies that did focus on disclosures of advertising, such as labels of advertorials in magazines, also demonstrate low levels of disclosure memory (Cameron & Curtin, 1995; Kim, Pasadeos, & Barban, 2001).

The extent to which viewers process and hence remember a message can be explained by audiences’ ability, motivation, and opportunity to process that message (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991). *Ability* refers to viewers’ skills and proficiencies that are necessary to process a message (MacInnis et al., 1991). Viewers may require prior knowledge about the information given in the message to be able to process and comprehend the message (Petty, Cacioppo, Strathman, & Priester, 2005). *Motivation* is defined as the desire or readiness to process a message (MacInnis et al., 1991). Motivation is related to involvement with the message and is usually high when a message is of personal relevance (Andrews, 1988; Petty et al., 2005). *Opportunity* reflects the extent to which the message itself and the circumstances during message exposure affect viewers’ attention to the message. A lack of opportunity may be caused by distractions by for instance other messages or limited exposure time (MacInnis et al., 1991).

People have to be both able and motivated to process a message (Petty et al., 2005). The levels of ability and motivation differ between individuals (Petty et al., 2005), and, hence, largely depend on the viewer. The opportunity to process a message is not in the respondent’s control and relies on the message itself and the exposure circumstances (Batra & Ray, 1986). This means that the level of processing, and consequently the memory of sponsorship disclosure, depends on both the audience and the disclosure.

Therefore, we focus on the effects of both audience and disclosure characteristics on disclosure memory.

Andrews (1988) provides a list of factors that influence the motivation, ability, and opportunity to process information. Based on Andrews' (1988) list and Petty et al. (2005), we test the effects of five audience and disclosure characteristics, which are depicted in Table 1. In our study, ability is operationalized through audience's familiarity with sponsorship disclosure in general, and the program that incorporates the disclosure. Motivation is operationalized through viewers' involvement with the program. Viewers' opportunity to process sponsorship disclosure is studied by testing the effects of the timing and duration of the disclosure.

Table 1 *Audience and disclosure characteristics influencing the ability, motivation, and opportunity to process sponsorship disclosure*

Audience characteristics		Disclosure characteristics
Ability	Motivation	Opportunity
Program familiarity	Program involvement	Disclosure timing
Disclosure familiarity		Disclosure duration

Note Based on Andrews (1988) and Petty et al. (2005)

AUDIENCE CHARACTERISTICS

Whether viewers are *able* to process information can be explained by information processing theories such as the limited capacity model of motivated mediated message processing (LC4MP; Lang, 2006) and the processing of commercial media content (PCMC) model (Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010). These models claim that the human ability to process mediated messages is limited. Because people's cognitive resources to process a mediated message are limited, people are not capable of processing all available information at once (Buijzen et al., 2010; Lang, 2000). For instance, when people watch a television program, they can allocate cognitive resources from a fixed pool of limited resources. When a viewer allocates a large amount of resources to the program, there will be few resources left to process other information, such as a disclosure. Consequently, viewers may not process a sponsorship disclosure, or process it with low levels of elaboration and effort, decreasing the chance a disclosure is stored and remembered.

In addition, the ability to process a message relies on knowledge of and familiarity with the information in the message (Andrews, 1988). Novel stimuli in an environment can elicit an orienting response, also called the 'what is it?' response, which is an automatic attention response (Lang, 2006). Therefore, new information gains attention and requires more cognitive resources than familiar information (Johnston, Hawley, Plewe, Elliot, & DeWitt, 1990; Lang, Potter, & Bolls, 1999; Lang, 2000). The ability to process a disclosure



and the television program it is displayed in, and consequently disclosure remembrance, may thus be affected by viewers' familiarity with both the program and disclosure.

Program familiarity

For viewers who are familiar with a television program not everything shown in the program is new. Although the content of an episode can be new to viewers who are familiar with the program, program characteristics such as the presenters or characters, the format, story, and content are not all new information. As new and unexpected information requires more cognitive resources (Johnston et al., 1990; Lang et al., 1999; Lang, 2000), a familiar program requires fewer resources to process compared to a program viewers are unfamiliar with. Viewers that are familiar with the program may thus have more resources available to process the disclosure, making it more likely they are able to notice and store the disclosure, leading to better disclosure memory. Therefore, based on the effect of new and unexpected information, we hypothesize:

H1: Program familiarity has a positive effect on sponsorship disclosure memory.

Disclosure familiarity

Since sponsorship disclosure is a fairly new development, chances are high that not all television viewers are familiar with it. Viewers' familiarity with sponsorship disclosure in general may also influence the ability to process and remember a specific disclosure. The effect of disclosure familiarity on disclosure memory can be explained by the novelty of disclosures, but also by associations in memory. Therefore, we propose two competing hypotheses: The novelty hypothesis and the association hypothesis.

The novelty hypothesis proposes a negative effect of disclosure familiarity on sponsorship disclosure memory and attributes this influence to the extent to which sponsorship disclosure is new to the viewer. When viewers are not familiar with sponsorship disclosures, a disclosure stands out and is unexpected. As new and unexpected information gains attention (Johnston et al., 1990; Lang et al., 1999; Lang, 2000), a sponsorship disclosure may attract attention due to its novelty, which is likely to increase processing and enhance memory. Additionally, when viewers are familiar with sponsorship disclosure, they may not expend the effort required to attend to the disclosure, because its content is already known (Stewart & Martin, 1994). As a result, viewers who are familiar with sponsorship disclosure may not be triggered to pay attention to the disclosure, leading to less disclosure memory.

On the contrary, the association hypothesis proposes a positive effect of disclosure familiarity on disclosure memory because of associative memory networks (Anderson & Bower, 1973). When people already have memory networks associated with a topic, few resources are required to activate this network and to add new information, making it easier to retrieve this information (Lang, 2000). Hence, the ability to process information largely depends on the knowledge that is already acquired about that topic (Celsi & Olson, 1988; MacInnis et al., 1991). With regard to sponsorship disclosure, this means

that for viewers who are familiar with disclosures, it is easier to process and remember a disclosure. Hence, viewers who are not familiar with disclosures do not have associations with sponsorship disclosure in memory, making it harder to process, store and remember the disclosure. As a result, disclosure familiarity would have a positive influence on disclosure memory.

To investigate the two competing hypotheses, we formulate the following research question:

RQ1: What is the effect of disclosure familiarity on sponsorship disclosure memory?

Program involvement

While watching television, the television program and sponsorship disclosure both compete for viewers' attention. Because sponsorship disclosure is displayed during a television program, the chance is high that viewers do not notice the disclosure because they are focusing on the program content (Buijzen et al., 2010). Therefore, sponsorship disclosure memory also depends on viewers' *motivation* to process it, which could be due to their involvement with the program. Involvement is defined as the perceived personal relevance of information (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Zaichkowsky, 1994). When the message is perceived as personally relevant and hence involvement is high, a person is more motivated to process the information. Hence, viewers who are highly involved with the program pay more attention to the program, and put more effort into processing it, than viewers who are not involved with the program (Moorman, Neijens, & Smit, 2007; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010; Slater & Rouner, 2002). This elaborate processing requires more cognitive resources (Buijzen et al., 2010), leaving few available resources to process the sponsorship disclosure. Thus, high program involvement results in more elaborate processing of the program, which may lead to less attention to and processing of the disclosure. Therefore, we hypothesize that program involvement decreases the chance that the disclosure is remembered:

H2: Program involvement has a negative effect on sponsorship disclosure memory.

DISCLOSURE CHARACTERISTICS

The circumstances in which a sponsorship disclosure is presented and the characteristics of the disclosure influence the *opportunity* to process the disclosure and consequently remember it. Whether viewers are distracted or whether the exposure time is too limited may depend on the moment in the program that the disclosure is shown (i.e., timing) and the time it is displayed (i.e., duration). Earlier disclosure research has shown that both the timing (Campbell et al., 2013; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2013) and duration (Boerman et al., 2012b) of sponsorship disclosures influence its effectiveness. This may be due to differences in whether people actually noticed the disclosure.



Disclosure timing

Sponsorship disclosures can be displayed at various moments in the program. The new EU regulations require broadcasters to display a disclosure at the beginning and end of the program, and after each commercial break (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010). In the US broadcasters often disclose sponsored content in the end-of-show credits, which are according to Goldman (2006) effectively invisible to most consumers, or not looked at all (Neijens & Smit, 2003). Therefore, law proposals are made to show disclosures at the beginning and during the program (Cain, 2011; Federal Communications Commission, 2008).

Although no research has examined the effect of disclosure timing on disclosure memory yet, Campbell et al. (2013) did find that a disclosure after the sponsored content had a negative effect on brand attitude and top-of-mind awareness of the brand, while a disclosure before the sponsored content decreased top-of-mind awareness. Additionally, Van Reijmersdal et al. (2013) found that brand memory was highest when a sponsorship disclosure was presented during the sponsored content, compared to disclosures at the beginning or at the end of the program. The different effects of disclosure timing, and more specifically, the effect of timing on disclosure memory, can be explained by two mechanisms both related to attention: conventional practices and information density.

First, the timing of a disclosure may determine whether the disclosure stands out and hence attracts attention. At the beginning of a program it is common practice to display (additional) textual information, such as program titles, names, and television content ratings. Hence, viewers are used to texts at the beginning of a program. Therefore, sponsorship disclosure at the beginning of a program may not stand out as much as disclosures at less conventional timings, such as in the middle or toward the end of a program (before the end credits). Consequently, a disclosure at the beginning of a program is possibly less remembered than a disclosure in the middle or at the end of the program.

Second, one important explanation of inattention to disclosures is distraction (Hoy & Lwin, 2007; Stewart & Martin, 1994). At the beginning of the program viewers are exposed to a lot of new information. Viewers need to process various types of information, such as the title of the program, the persons that are introduced, and what the program is about. In other words, there is high information density at the beginning of a program, which may distract the viewers from the disclosure. Therefore, we propose that because of high information density, disclosure memory will be lower when the disclosure is displayed at the beginning of the program, compared to in the middle or toward the end.

Thus, based on conventional practices and information density, we expect that disclosure timing could affect the memory of the disclosure:

H3: The timing of sponsorship disclosure affects sponsorship disclosure memory: Disclosure at the beginning of the program leads to less disclosure memory, than disclosure in the middle or toward the end of the program.

Disclosure duration

When viewers attend to a television program, they are likely to be distracted by the program and do not have the opportunity to process a sponsorship disclosure. In addition, there is less opportunity to process a message when the exposure time of the message is limited (MacInnis et al., 1991). Hence, the exposure time of sponsorship disclosure may influence the remembrance of the disclosure. Previous research has shown that extending the message duration provides more opportunities to attend to a message (Janiszewski, 1993) and to cognitively process it (Buijzen et al., 2010; Mackworth, 1963). Consequently, when information stays on screen longer, this increases message recognition (provided there is not too much information; Gao & Lang, 2009). In line with this reasoning, prior research on sponsorship disclosure demonstrated that the effects of disclosure increased when its duration was extended (Boerman et al., 2012b). Additionally, a study comparing a slow disclaimer in a radio commercial (read in six seconds) and a fast disclaimer (read in three seconds), showed that the effectiveness of a disclaimer depended on its speed (Herbst & Allan, 2006). Moreover, advertisement studies demonstrate that longer commercials facilitate the learning of the message content and consequently increase recall (Singh & Cole, 1993), and that the exposure time of brand placement boosts its recognition (Brennan, Dubas, & Babin, 1999). Therefore, we propose that extending the exposure duration of the disclosure increases disclosure memory:

H4: Disclosure duration has a positive effect on sponsorship disclosure memory.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

To examine our hypotheses and research question we conducted an experiment with a 2 (duration: 3 or 6 seconds) \times 3 (timing: beginning, middle or end of program) between-subjects design. The audience characteristics were measured through a questionnaire. As the program used in the experiment is targeted at students, our sample included 179 students ($M_{\text{age}} = 22.23$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.49$; 78% female) of a large European university that were recruited through posters and flyers throughout the university building. They were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions, resulting in approximately 30 participants per condition (Min = 29, Max = 31).

At arrival, participants were asked to take a seat in an isolated cubicle and watch a television program on a computer. The instruction implied that the study was about watching television online. After watching the program, participants filled out an online questionnaire, which first measured program familiarity, followed by program involvement, then disclosure memory, and disclosure familiarity. Participation took about half an hour and participants received eight euros for their participation.



Materials

The television program used in this experiment was *MTV Was Here*, a program about music, fashion, and lifestyle. The episode was approximately 14 minutes long and was edited for this study. The episode consisted of three items, stemming from three different original episodes. The first and last items were fillers and included a report of a dance improvisation festival and an interview with a DJ. The middle item contained sponsored content about a new brand of shoes (Alive Shoes) which links sneakers to social networking. In the item, the presenter visits the Alive Shoes store, talks to the maker about the concept of the shoes, buys the shoes, and links them to social network sites. The sponsored item lasted about four minutes, of which the shoes and/or the brand were visible (either in the background of very prominently) for a total of one and a half minutes. The brand was mentioned seven times.

The sponsorship disclosure inserted in the program stated “This program contains advertising by Alive Shoes” and was displayed at the upper right corner of the screen. The disclosure was clearly readable and its size comparable with the size of common subtitles. In accordance with new regulation proposals in the US (Cain, 2011), the disclosure mentioned both the brand and the fact this brand is advertised in the program. With respect to the disclosure characteristics, we included 2 (*duration*) x 3 (*timing*) variations of the disclosure. In the EU, disclosures are to be shown for three seconds at the beginning of the program, during the program after each commercial break, and toward the end of the program just before the credits (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010). In accordance with these regulations, the disclosure was displayed either three or six seconds and was shown either at the beginning of the program just after the introduction (“Today in *MTV Was Here*...”) and leader, in the middle of the program concurrent the sponsored item, or 30 seconds before the end of the program.

Measures

Program and disclosure familiarity

To measure program familiarity, participants were asked whether they were familiar with the television program *MTV Was Here* (0 = no, 1 = yes). Most participants (68%) did not know the program.

To measure disclosure familiarity, participants were introduced to the use of sponsorship disclosure on television in general by stating: “Since recently sponsorship disclosures are shown on television. For instance, in [PROGRAM] they show a PP logo and in [PROGRAM] they state “This program contains product placement.” We then asked whether they had ever noticed such disclosures (0 = no, 1 = yes). Although sponsorship disclosures are fairly new, 43% of the respondents were familiar with sponsorship disclosures. Program and disclosure familiarity were both measured with one item as a single item indicator is sufficient to measure a concrete, singular object (Rossiter, 2011).

Program involvement

Program involvement was measured using Zaichkowsky's (1994) personal involvement inventory. The mean score of the ten 7-point semantic differential scales is used as a measure of program involvement (Eigenvalue = 5.14; explained variance = 51.39%; Cronbach's alpha = .89, $M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.85$).

Disclosure memory

The dependent variable disclosure memory was measured by both disclosure recall and recognition. *Disclosure recall* was measured by directly asking the participants whether they recalled a disclosure for advertising in the episode of *MTV Was Here* (0 = no, 1 = yes). Almost half of the respondents (48%) did recall the disclosure.

To indicate whether participants recognized the disclosure (*disclosure recognition*), we presented the participants four disclosures and asked them which of the four disclosures they had seen. The answers also included a fifth option stating "none of the above." Recognition was then recoded into 0 (*checked wrong disclosure or "none of the above"*) and 1 (*checked the correct disclosure*). Almost half of the respondents (48%) recognized the disclosure correctly. The two memory measures are strongly related, $\chi^2(1) = 134.51$, $p = .000$, $\phi = .886$.

RESULTS

Randomization

Logistic regression analyses and a MANOVA with disclosure timing and duration as predictors demonstrate that the experimental groups did not differ with respect to sex, $\chi^2(5) = 6.72$, $p = .243$, age, $F(5, 173) = .948$, $p = .452$, program familiarity, $\chi^2(5) = 3.77$, $p = .582$, disclosure familiarity, $\chi^2(5) = 4.90$, $p = .428$, and program involvement, $F(5, 173) = .648$, $p = .664$.

Effects of audience characteristics

To test our hypotheses and research question, we conducted two logistic regression analyses. Table 2 presents the results for both disclosure recall (-2LL = 215.06, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .22$, $\chi^2(6) = 32.82$, $p < .001$) and recognition (-2LL = 216.56, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .21$, $\chi^2(6) = 31.31$, $p < .001$).

In agreement with H1, the results show that program familiarity has a significant positive effect on disclosure recall and recognition. Participants who were familiar with the program are almost three times more likely to recall ($b = 1.07$, $OR = 2.90$, $p = .003$) and recognize ($b = 0.98$, $OR = 2.66$, $p = .007$) the disclosure, than participants who were not familiar with the program.



Table 2 Summary of logistic regression analyses for audience and disclosure characteristics predicting disclosure memory

Predictor	Disclosure recall			Disclosure recognition		
	B	SE B	OR	B	SE B	OR
Program familiarity	1.07**	.36	2.90	0.98**	.36	2.66
Disclosure familiarity	0.55	.34	1.73	0.67*	.34	1.96
Program involvement	-0.68***	.21	0.51	-0.67**	.21	0.51
Timing						
Beginning vs. middle	1.02*	.41	2.76	0.84*	.41	2.31
Beginning vs. end	1.00*	.40	2.73	1.16**	.40	3.17
Duration (3 sec vs. 6 sec)	-0.37	.33	0.69	-0.15	.33	0.86
Constant	0.24	1.10	1.27	0.02	1.09	1.02

Note Program involvement ranges from 1 (low involvement) to 7 (high involvement), program familiarity and disclosure familiarity are dichotomous variables with 0 (no) and 1 (yes). Timing is recoded into two dummy variables, duration is a dichotomous variable with 0 (3 seconds) and 1 (6 seconds).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

The results regarding disclosure familiarity demonstrate a positive effect on both disclosure recall and recognition. Being familiar with the use of sponsorship disclosures on television significantly increases the odds that the disclosure is recognized ($b = 0.67$, $OR = 1.96$, $p = .048$). As the effect of disclosure familiarity on disclosure recall is not significant ($b = 0.55$, $OR = 1.73$, $p = .107$), results do not indicate that disclosure familiarity also increases the chance people recall seeing a disclosure. Given the significant effect on recognition, our results partly support the association hypothesis, and do not support the novelty hypothesis.

With respect to program involvement, the results demonstrate significant, negative effects on disclosure recall ($b = -0.68$, $OR = 0.51$, $p = .001$) and recognition ($b = -0.67$, $OR = 0.51$, $p = .002$). H₂ is thus supported: As program involvement increases, participants are less likely to recall and recognize the disclosure.

Effects of disclosure characteristics

Regarding disclosure timing, the results in Table 2 demonstrate significant differences for both disclosure recall and recognition. Since we expected a difference between disclosure at the beginning of the program compared to disclosure in the middle of the program and toward the end, we created two dummy variables comparing the beginning condition to the middle and end conditions. Both comparisons are significant and demonstrate an increase of the odds the disclosure is recalled and recognized. This means that when

a disclosure is displayed in the middle ($b = 1.02$, $OR = 2.76$, $p = .014$) or at the end of the program ($b = 1.00$, $OR = 2.73$, $p = .013$), participants are more likely to recall the disclosure, compared to when the disclosure is shown at the beginning of the program. In addition, when a disclosure is displayed in the middle ($b = 0.84$, $OR = 2.31$, $p = .040$) or at the end of the program ($b = 1.16$, $OR = 3.17$, $p = .004$), participants are at least two times more likely to recognize the disclosure, compared to a disclosure shown at the beginning of the program. H₃ is therefore confirmed.

To check for differences in disclosure memory between the disclosure at the end of the program and the disclosure in the middle of the program, we conducted additional logistic regression analyses with two dummy variables comparing the end condition to the other timing conditions. Results demonstrated there is no significant difference between the middle and end condition for both disclosure recall ($b = .01$, $SE b = .40$, $OR = 1.01$, $p = .978$) and recognition ($b = -.32$, $SE b = .40$, $OR = 0.73$, $p = .431$). This provides extra support for H₃, there is only a difference between the beginning condition and the two other timing conditions.

The results show no significant effect of the duration of the disclosure on disclosure recall ($b = -0.37$, $OR = 0.69$, $p = .268$) and recognition ($b = -0.15$, $OR = 0.86$, $p = .657$). Displaying the disclosure for six seconds instead of three seconds does not increase the chance people recall or recognize the disclosure. Hence, H₄ is not supported.

DISCUSSION

To protect the consumer from being persuaded without being aware, broadcasters are now obligated to disclose sponsored program content. In order to achieve its goal of informing the viewer, a sponsorship disclosure must be effectively communicated. The first step of effective communication is to be noticed and remembered. The present study explores the antecedents of viewers' memory of sponsorship disclosure. Our results show that both audience and disclosure characteristics influence disclosure memory (i.e., recall and recognition). Based on our results, we can draw five important conclusions.

First, regarding the audience characteristics, the extent to which viewers are familiar with the program increases disclosure recall and recognition. This means that viewers are more likely to remember the disclosure when they are familiar with the program. This could be because a familiar program requires fewer resources to process, compared to a program viewers are unfamiliar with, or because the disclosure attracted attention because it was new and unexpected for viewers who are familiar with the program.

Second, with respect to the positive effect of disclosure familiarity, our results support the association hypothesis: Viewers who are familiar with sponsorship disclosure have acquired associations with sponsorship disclosure, leading to greater disclosure recognition. This is in agreement with studies arguing that familiar information requires less cognitive resources than new information (Gao & Lang, 2009; Johnston et al., 1990; Lang, 2000). The results do not support the alternative novelty hypothesis that predicts that disclosure memory is higher if the disclosure is new to viewers.



Third, our study shows that program involvement has a negative effect on disclosure memory. This finding confirms the notion that viewers who are involved with the program most likely attend to the program and consequently are not motivated to process the disclosure. Consequently, as program involvement increases, participants are less likely to recall and recognize the disclosure.

Fourth, with regard to the disclosure characteristics, the results demonstrate that a disclosure displayed at the beginning of a program results in lower disclosure recall and recognition, compared to a disclosure displayed in the middle or at the end of a program. This confirms the idea that a disclosure at the beginning does not stand out, as it is common practice to provide additional textual information at the beginning of a program. At the beginning of the program, viewers are probably distracted by other information. This distraction does not take place for disclosures in the middle or at the end of the program, making it more likely that the disclosure is remembered.

Fifth, although the limited cognitive capacity theory and earlier research suggest a positive effect of disclosure duration, results demonstrate no significant influence of duration on disclosure memory. This means that the opportunity to remember sponsorship disclosure depends on the moment the disclosure is displayed within the program and not on the exposure duration. This finding indicates that an exposure time of six seconds – compared to three seconds – is too limited to increase disclosure memory. Further research should investigate whether extending the duration more would increase disclosure memory.

This study also showed the importance of the measurement of sponsorship disclosure memory through two measures (recall and recognition). The positive effect of disclosure familiarity on disclosure memory was only significant for disclosure recognition and merely approaching marginal significance for disclosure recall. This shows the value of the two different memory measures. Although the recall and recognition scores were correlated, they are formed through different processes (Bradley, 2007; Smit & Neijens, 2011). Recognition indicates whether information is encoded, while recall scores indicate whether the message is processed at a high level and information was stored thoroughly (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Lang, 2000). Hence, our results imply that disclosure familiarity makes it easier to encode the disclosure, but that it does not necessarily mean that the disclosure is deeply processed and stored.

The effects of disclosure timing are ascribed to conventional practices and high information density. However, there are other mechanisms that could also explain the different effects on disclosure memory. For instance, due to the manipulation of disclosure timing, the time between the disclosure and the memory measures (taken after the program) differ between conditions. The time lag increases as the disclosure is placed closer to the beginning of the program, which may lead to a recency effect: Disclosures at the end or in the middle program are better remembered than disclosures at the beginning of the program. In addition, the amount of information viewers are exposed to after the disclosure increases as more time between disclosure and the measurement of disclosure

memory elapses. Since mental storage capacity is limited (Cowan, 2000), this increase in time and the amount of information between disclosure and memory measurement could lead to a decay of disclosure memory. This could explain the lower scores of disclosure recall and recognition for the viewers exposed to a disclosure at the beginning of the program, compared to disclosures in the middle or at the end of the program. Further research may explore the different levels of processing during the disclosure timings and investigate a possible recency effect.

Our findings have important theoretical implications. This study is the first to provide insight into the antecedents of disclosure memory. Our results are in line with the LC4MP (Lang, 2006) and the PCMC model (Buijzen et al., 2010), and show that information processing theories also apply to the phenomenon of sponsorship disclosure. Cognitive resources are limited and as sponsorship disclosure is additional, textual information displayed during a television program, both the disclosure and the television program compete for viewers' resources. Based on Andrews (1988), we tested five audience and message characteristics that influence disclosure memory. Our results support the notion of MacInnis et al. (1991) that viewers must have the ability, motivation, and opportunity to process and consequently remember a message. Viewers are more likely to allocate resources to the disclosure when they are uninvolved with the program (motivation variable), and familiar with the program and sponsorship disclosure (ability variable). Moreover, a disclosure in the middle or the end of a television program enables viewers to allocate resources to the disclosure and remember it (i.e., due to opportunity), than a disclosure at the beginning of the program.

Furthermore, this study has important practical implications. Sponsorship disclosure legislation is fairly new and still in development in both the US and the EU. Prior research highlighted the importance of disclosure memory, as it demonstrated that disclosure only activated persuasion knowledge when it is recalled (Boerman et al., 2012a). To achieve its goal of informing the consumers about sponsored content, it is vital to communicate the disclosure successfully. Our results may therefore be useful in the development of effective and sound sponsorship disclosure, as they indicate several conditions under which disclosures are more likely to be remembered. Drawing on the ability, motivation, and opportunity framework, we can identify some concrete guidelines.

Our results indicate that to increase the ability to process and recognize sponsorship disclosure, viewers should be familiar with sponsorship disclosure. That implies that the ability to process sponsorship disclosure may be increased by making the knowledge that is required to interpret the disclosure available (MacInnis et al., 1991). Hence, interventions that address audience's familiarity with disclosures, such as commercials informing the audience about sponsorship disclosure, may help making disclosures better known and hence more effective. Additionally, to enhance sponsorship disclosure memory, the disclosure should be displayed in the middle or at the end of the program. Furthermore, although the effects of program familiarity and involvement are interesting, they are less manageable in practice. Also, the exposure duration of a disclosure does not appear to



alter disclosure memory.

Although these findings are valuable for theory and practice, we note that only one type of disclosure was investigated in the study. Therefore, we have to be careful generalizing the results. Especially since prior disclosure research demonstrated that the type of disclosure affects the recall of the disclosure (Stewart & Martin, 1994), more research is needed to explore the antecedents of memory of other types of disclosures, such as product placement (PP) logos.

In sum, this study explored how audience and disclosure characteristics influence sponsorship disclosure memory. Sponsorship disclosure aims to inform audiences about sponsored content so they can guard themselves and use their persuasion knowledge to cope with the persuasive attempt. Although disclosure may have implicit effects when viewers do not recall or recognize it, it is unlikely it has its intended effect (Boerman et al., 2012a). Consequently, sponsorship disclosure may be futile when viewers do not remember it. As this study provides insight into when and why viewers remember sponsorship disclosure, it can be seen as a valuable contribution to sponsorship disclosure research and to memorable and possibly more effective sponsorship disclosure.

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CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF DISCLOSURE AWARENESS

ABSTRACT

Due to concerns about the possible deceptiveness of sponsored content in television programs, the EU decided to make sponsorship disclosure obligatory. The goal of sponsorship disclosure is to raise awareness of sponsored content so that viewers can guard themselves against persuasion. This study explores how sponsorship disclosure influences the use of persuasion knowledge, and to what extent recall of a disclosure influences its effect. An experiment ($N = 208$) shows that a disclosure leads to greater recognition of sponsored content as advertising (i.e., activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge), which consequently makes the viewer evaluate the sponsored content more critically (i.e., higher attitudinal persuasion knowledge). This effect is only manifest for viewers who recalled the disclosure. Theoretically, this shows the importance of sponsorship disclosure and the recall of disclosure for effects on consumers' use of persuasion knowledge. As regulations are still in development in several countries, the findings are important for the implementation of sponsorship disclosure.

INTRODUCTION

Brand, products, and persuasive messages are increasingly integrated in editorial television content (Cain, 2011; Van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit, 2007). This so-called sponsored content can be implemented in various ways, such as brand placement, in which a brand or product is placed in a program, or brand integration, in which a brand plays a key role in the story line and production of the program (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). The implementation of sponsored content is growing fast, and especially brand integration is seen as “the future of advertising” (Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Smit, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2009).

Because sponsored content is intertwined with noncommercial television content, it is often difficult for viewers to distinguish the commercial from the editorial content. A possible consequence is that viewers process the persuasive message less critically as they would have if they had known it was commercial (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). A survey amongst Dutch television viewers showed that viewers indeed share this fear, since 69% of the viewers thought it was possible that they were unconsciously influenced by sponsored content (Neijens & Smit, 2002). Therefore, sponsored content is often considered as deceptive (Cain, 2011; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998), and has been a cause of serious concern for policymakers and consumer organizations. As a result, the EU has decided that television viewers need to be informed about sponsored content by means of sponsorship disclosures (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010).

Until now, only two studies have investigated the effects of sponsorship disclosure. Campbell, Mohr, and Verlegh (2007) found that a sponsorship disclosure influences brand attitude, depending on the moment the disclosure is displayed in the program. A sponsorship disclosure at the beginning of a program, and during the sponsored content, resulted in more positive brand attitudes, whereas a disclosure at the end of the program led to more negative brand attitudes. Moreover, they showed that a disclosure decreased the top of mind awareness of the brand, regardless of its timing. Dekker and Van Reijmersdal (2010) compared two sponsorship disclosures, one revealing the sponsor, and one also mentioning the persuasive intent of the sponsored content. They found no effect of both types of sponsorship disclosures on brand attitude and the acceptance of product claims.

Interestingly, these prior studies only focused on how sponsorship disclosures influence the effects of the sponsored content. However, the main purpose of disclosures is to avoid deception by activating persuasion knowledge (Cain, 2011). Persuasion knowledge is defined as people’s general understanding of persuasion, and knowledge of how to cope with persuasion attempts (Friestad & Wright, 1994). To date, no research has yet focused on the effects of sponsorship disclosure on viewers’ use of persuasion knowledge. Yet, to understand whether sponsorship disclosures achieve their goal, it is important to know whether disclosures in television programs can activate viewers’ persuasion knowledge. Therefore, this study aims to examine to what extent sponsorship disclosures can make television viewers recognize sponsored program content as advertising, and to what extent



disclosures stimulate a more critical attitude toward the sponsored content.

Furthermore, various studies on different types of disclosures and warnings, such as health warnings and texts showing extra information during a TV commercial (i.e., “batteries not included”), demonstrated that disclosures often go unnoticed (e.g., Morgan & Stoltman, 2002; Popper & Murray, 1989; Stewart & Martin, 1994). Likewise, in the study by Campbell et al. (2007), a quarter of the respondents did not recall seeing a sponsorship disclosure. Therefore, the present study also investigates whether sponsorship disclosures are recalled, and to what extent this influences its effect on the use of persuasion knowledge.

CONCEPTUAL AND ATTITUDINAL PERSUASION KNOWLEDGE

People develop knowledge about persuasion and persuasion tactics throughout their lives, and use this knowledge to respond to persuasion attempts (Friestad & Wright, 1994). The Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) describes the development and usage of persuasion knowledge, and stresses that people only use their persuasion knowledge when they are aware of a persuasion attempt. This means that viewers only retrieve and apply their persuasion knowledge to cope with a persuasive message, when they are aware of its persuasive intent (d’Astous & Chartier, 2000; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998).

In the development of persuasion knowledge, the first step is being able to distinguish commercials from programs, which is followed by more extensive knowledge about the source, persuasive intent, and tactics (John, 1999). In other words, the first step of persuasion knowledge is the recognition of the persuasive intent of a message. This recognition of the persuasive intent is part of conceptual persuasion knowledge, which is the cognitive dimension of persuasion knowledge. The cognitive dimension of persuasion knowledge includes the recognition of a message as advertising, the recognition of the source of the message, and the understanding of the persuasive intent and tactics of the advertiser (Rozendaal, Lapierre, Van Reijmersdal & Buijzen, 2011). By obligating broadcasters to disclose sponsored content, policymakers try to make viewers aware of the sponsored content, so they can distinguish between editorial and commercial content. Given this goal of sponsorship disclosure, and because it is the first step of persuasion knowledge, this study focuses with regard to conceptual persuasion knowledge on the recognition of sponsored television content as advertising.

Conceptual persuasion knowledge is usually only activated and applied when viewers attentively process the message (Campbell, 1995; Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal & Owen, 2010; Rozendaal et al., 2011). Since a disclosure emphasizes the sponsored content, this will probably makes viewers process the sponsored content more carefully, which increases the chance they recognize it as advertising. In this way, the disclosure may activate viewers’ conceptual advertising. Therefore, we pose the following hypothesis:

H1: A sponsorship disclosure has a positive effect on viewers’ use of conceptual persuasion knowledge.

Next to the cognitive aspect of persuasion knowledge, Rozendaal et al. (2011) argue that research on persuasion knowledge and advertising literacy theories should also take into account the affective aspect of persuasion knowledge. When attitudinal persuasion knowledge is activated, critical attitudes such as skepticism and disliking are applied to a specific persuasive message (Rozendaal et al., 2011). For instance, viewers can evaluate the sponsored content in terms of honesty, trustworthiness, and credibility.

A sponsorship disclosure may directly lead to more critical attitudes toward the sponsored content. As a sponsorship disclosure mentions words like advertising or product placement, these words may work as heuristics or cues that activate schemata in the brain that are related to advertising. Although consumers may like specific advertisements (Smit & Neijens, 2000), the majority of the consumers is skeptical toward advertising (Calfee & Ringold, 1994; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 2000). Hence, the schemata in the brain about advertising will generally be negative. Prior research showed that consumers' critical attitudes toward advertising in general can lead to negative evaluations of a specific advertisement (Lutz, 1985; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Moreover, forewarnings of (noncommercial) persuasive message demonstrated to lead to less favorable attitudes toward the message (Jacks & Devine, 2000; Wood & Quinn, 2003), and the sender (Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000).

Hence, a sponsorship disclosure may work as a cue that activates the concept of advertising and the related (negative) associations. Consequently, these associations with advertising can be applied to the sponsored content. This would mean that, besides its direct effect on conceptual (cognitive) persuasion knowledge, a sponsorship disclosure may also have a direct effect on attitudinal persuasion knowledge. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: A sponsorship disclosure directly increases viewers' attitudinal persuasion knowledge.

It is also possible that the effect of a sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge is mediated by the activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge. The recognition of advertising is considered to be the first step of persuasion knowledge, which can lead to more elaborate ideas and beliefs about the persuasion attempt (John, 1999). Hence, the recognition of sponsored content as advertising may activate other dimensions of persuasion knowledge, such as attitudinal persuasion knowledge. When viewers recognize the television content as advertising, they realize the television program is not neutral and is trying to persuade them. This can stimulate viewers to actively resist this persuasion attempt. This effect can be explained by the reactance theory (Brehm, 1996), which poses that people want to maintain their freedom and do not want to be manipulated. Hence, people will try to resist persuasion attempts when they recognize them as such (Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice & Serna, 2002; Wei, Fischer & Main, 2008).

This means that the awareness that program content is actually advertising can result in negative evaluations of the persuasive message, such as a feeling of distrust or irritation.



Hence, although there is reason to believe the sponsorship disclosure can directly lead to a more critical evaluation of the sponsored content (i.e., higher scores of attitudinal persuasion knowledge; H2), this effect may also be mediated by conceptual persuasion knowledge. Therefore, we propose the following research question:

RQ1: Is the effect of a sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge mediated by conceptual persuasion knowledge?

The above hypotheses assume that viewers actually notice the sponsorship disclosure. As mentioned before, studies show that disclosures on television, including sponsorship disclosures, often go unnoticed (e.g., Campbell et al., 2007; Morgan & Stoltman, 2002, Stewart & Martin, 1994). When a disclosure is not remembered, this does not necessarily mean that the disclosure has no effect (Stewart & Martin, 1994). However, the memory of a message does indicate that the message has been processed (Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984). Hence, when a sponsored disclosure is remembered, it is more likely to be processed and to have an effect on viewers' use of persuasion knowledge. Therefore, we propose a second research question:

RQ2: To what extent does the recall of the sponsorship disclosure influence the effect of the disclosure on the use of persuasion knowledge?

METHOD

Stimulus materials

To test our hypotheses and research question, we conducted an experiment in which participants were asked to watch an adapted episode of *MTV Was Here*. This television program is aired weekly and consists of various items about lifestyle, fashion, music, and gadgets. The episode used in this experiment included three items stemming from three original episodes, and lasted in total about 14 minutes. The first item in the episode was an item about a dance improvisation festival, and the third was an interview with DJ Tiësto. The second item included the sponsored content and was about a new brand of sneakers called Alive Shoes. This brand connects sport shoes to social networking sites. In the item, the presenter visits the Alive Shoes shop, talks to the creator of the concept, and receives a pair of shoes which she links to her Facebook profile. This item lasted four minutes and 20 seconds, in which the shoes were visible for one and a half minutes (in the background but also very prominently).

The sponsorship disclosure was shown during the program (at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the program) for 3 or 6 seconds, and said: "This program contains advertising by Alive Shoes." Because this study only focuses on the extent to which a sponsorship disclosure can influence viewers' use of persuasion knowledge, the timing or duration of the disclosure are not taken into account. The disclosure was displayed in the

left upper corner and covered about 2.5% of the screen (which is comparable to the size of standard subtitles) and was clearly readable.

Respondents and procedure

In total, 208 students participated in the experiment. Their average age was 22.22 ($SD = 3.36$) and 77% was female. The participants were recruited through flyers and posters throughout the university building. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the disclosure conditions ($n = 178$), or to the program with no sponsorship disclosure ($n = 30$).

Participants were asked to take a seat behind a computer in an individual cubicle. The instructions claimed the study was about watching television online. After watching the program, participants were directed to an online questionnaire. This questionnaire started with questions about participants' familiarity with the program, followed by their persuasion knowledge (conceptual and attitudinal), and ended with the recall of the sponsorship disclosure, product interest, and demographic variables. The experiment took about half an hour and participants received €8 for their participation.

Measures

Persuasion knowledge

To measure conceptual persuasion knowledge, participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to what extent the item about Alive Shoes was advertising ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.41$).

Attitudinal persuasion knowledge was measured by asking participants to what extent they thought the item about Alive Shoes in MTV Was Here was honest, trustworthy, convincing, biased, and not credible (Ohanian, 1990). Factor analysis revealed that the five items load on one factor and form a reliable scale (Eigenvalue = 2.66; explained variance 53.15%; Cronbach's alpha = .77). The items were (re)coded so that a higher score of attitudinal persuasion knowledge corresponds to a more critical evaluation of the sponsored content. The mean score of the five items is used as a measurement of attitudinal persuasion knowledge ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.98$).

Recall of sponsorship disclosure

Recall of the sponsorship disclosure was measured by asking participants whether they could recall seeing a disclosure for advertising in the episode of MTV Was Here (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). Of all 178 participants that were exposed to a sponsorship disclosure, 52% indicated not to recall any sponsorship disclosure.

Control variables

A number of control variables were measured to make sure that the effects of the sponsorship disclosure were not caused by other differences between the experimental groups. First, participants were asked whether they knew the program MTV Was Here before participating in the experiment (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*), and how often they watched the



program (1 = *never*, 2 = [*less than*] *once a month*, 3 = *twice or three times a month*, 4 = *weekly*, 5 = *daily*). Most participants (67%) did not know the program and 76% never watched the program. Furthermore, participants were asked whether they were familiar with the brand before their participation in the experiment (98% said no), and whether they owned Alive Shoes (100% said no). Based on a scale by Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, and Smit (2007), we measured product interest by asking participants to what extent (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) they agreed with the items: “I like buying shoes,” “I like to watch programs about shoes on television,” and “I am interested in shoes” (Eigenvalue = 2.33, explained variance = 77.92%, Cronbach’s alpha = .86, $M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.52$). Finally, we asked participants about their sex and age.

Analysis

To be able to answer our research question, we compare three groups in the analyses:

- (1) the group that was not exposed to a sponsorship disclosure (the control group, $n = 30$),
- (2) the group that was exposed to a sponsorship disclosure but did not recall seeing it ($n = 93$),
- (3) the group that was exposed to a sponsorship disclosure and recalled seeing it ($n = 85$).

RESULTS

Randomization

The three groups did not differ with respect to participants’ sex, $\chi^2(2) = 2.71$, $p = .258$, age, $F(2, 205) = 1.72$, $p = .181$, and product interest, $F(2, 205) = 1.39$, $p = .251$. The groups did differ in participants’ familiarity with the program, $\chi^2(2) = 8.57$, $p = .014$, and marginally significant in their program viewing frequency, $\chi^2(4) = 8.36$, $p = .079$. To make sure that program familiarity and program viewing frequency do not confound the effects, we included these variables as covariates in the analyses.

Effects on persuasion knowledge

To test H1 and H2, we conducted a MANCOVA with the three groups (no disclosure, disclosure not recalled, disclosure recalled) as independent variable, conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge as dependent variables, and program familiarity and program viewing frequency as covariates. The multivariate analysis revealed a significant effect of the three groups, Pillai’s Trace = .08, $F(4, 206) = 4.23$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Separate ANCOVA’s (see Table 1) showed significant main effects of the three groups on conceptual persuasion knowledge, $F(2, 203) = 26.81$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$, and attitudinal persuasion knowledge, $F(2, 203) = 5.63$, $p = .050$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Pairwise comparisons (LSD, controlling for the covariates) demonstrated that viewers who did recall the sponsorship disclosure scored significantly higher on conceptual persuasion knowledge compared to the control group ($p = .012$), and the viewers who did not recall the disclosure ($p = .001$). There was no significant difference in conceptual persuasion knowledge between the control group and the group that did not recall the sponsorship disclosure ($p = .986$).

Attitudinal persuasion knowledge was significantly higher for the group that did recall seeing the disclosure compared to the group that did not recall it ($p = .015$). There was no significant difference between the group with no disclosure compared to both disclosure groups (disclosure not recalled $p = .570$, disclosure recalled $p = .235$)

Table 1 *Effect of sponsorship disclosure on conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge*

	No disclosure	Disclosure not recalled	Disclosure recalled
Conceptual persuasion knowledge	5.07 (1.66) ^a	5.03 (1.36) ^a	5.81 (1.26) ^b
Attitudinal persuasion knowledge	3.58 (1.21) ^{ab}	3.53 (0.81) ^a	3.83 (1.05) ^b

Note Mean scores with standard deviations between parentheses; Effects controlled for program familiarity and program viewing frequency.

^{a b} Means with a different superscript in the same row differ significantly at $p < .05$.

To answer the first research question and to test for possible mediation, we used Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method of calculating mediation and indirect effects. We used the SPSS macro INDIRECT, which calculates the unstandardized coefficients for all paths in the mediation model and uses 5,000 bootstrap samples to generate the bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (BCACI). In addition, it estimates the total and indirect effects of the sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge via conceptual persuasion knowledge. To be able to compare the differences between the three groups, we created dummy variables for each group. All possible comparisons were made by running the mediation analyses three times in which one group functioned as independent variable, one group as covariate, and one group as reference category by excluding it from the analysis.

Just like the MANCOVA, the results of the mediation analyses (see Figure 1 and Table 2) showed that, controlling for program familiarity and program viewing frequency, a recalled sponsorship disclosure had a significant effect on conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge. Conceptual persuasion knowledge was higher for the group that did recall seeing the sponsorship disclosure compared to the group with no disclosure ($b_a = .73, p = .012$), and to the group that did not recall seeing the disclosure ($b_a = .74, p < .001$). There was no significant difference between the control group and the group that did not recall the disclosure ($b_a = -.00, p = .986$).

The total effect of the recall of the sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge was not significant compared to the control group ($b_c = .24, p = .235$), but was significant compared to the group that did not recall the disclosure ($b_c = .36, p = .015$). Again, there was no significant difference between the control group and the group that did not recall seeing the disclosure ($b_c = -.12, p = .570$).



The mediator conceptual persuasion knowledge appeared to be a significant predictor for attitudinal persuasion knowledge ($b_b = .13, p = .009$). The total effect of the recall of the sponsorship disclosure, compared to the group that did not recall the disclosure, on attitudinal persuasion knowledge disappears with the addition of conceptual persuasion knowledge as mediator ($b_c = .27, p = .078$). Bootstrapping confirms a significant mediation (Indirect effect = $.09, 95\% \text{ BCACI } [.02, .21]$). Compared to the control group, there is no significant direct effect of the recall of the sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge. We did, however, find a significant indirect effect via conceptual persuasion knowledge (Indirect effect = $.09, 95\% \text{ BCACI } [.01, .27]$). In other words, viewers who are exposed to a sponsorship disclosure, and recall seeing this disclosure, are better at recognizing the sponsored content as advertising, and consequently are more critical toward this sponsored content. There is no significant mediation when comparing the control group to the group that did not recall seeing the disclosure (Indirect effect = $-.00, 95\% \text{ BCACI } [-.08, .11]$).

Figure 1 Mediation model: Effect of sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge via conceptual persuasion knowledge

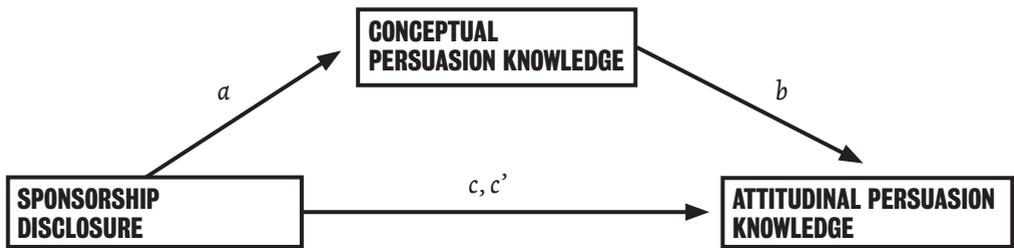


Table 2 Results of mediation model: Effect of sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge via conceptual persuasion knowledge

Condition (reference)	a	b	c (total)	c' (direct)	Indirect effect [95% BCACI]
Disclosure not recalled (No disclosure)	-.00 (.29)	.13 (.05)**	-.12 (.20)	-.12 (.20)	-.00 (.05) [-.08, .11]
Disclosure recalled (No disclosure)	.73 (.29)*	.13 (.05)**	.24 (.20)	.15 (.20)	.09 (.06) [.01, .27]
Disclosure recalled (Disclosure not recalled)	.74 (.21)***	.13 (.05)**	.36 (.15)*	.27 (.15)	.09 (.05) [.02, .21]

Note a, b, c and c' are unstandardized b-coefficients (with boot SE between parentheses); Effects controlled for program familiarity and program viewing frequency; BCACI = Bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval using 5,000 bootstrap samples.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Altogether, the results confirm H1: Conceptual persuasion knowledge is higher after a sponsorship disclosure, provided that is recalled. There is only a direct difference in attitudinal persuasion knowledge between the two groups that were exposed to a sponsorship disclosure. Hence, H2 is partly supported. RQ₁ can be answered affirmatively: The effect of a sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge is indeed mediated by conceptual persuasion knowledge. These results give a clear answer to RQ₂: The recall of the sponsorship disclosure has an important influence on the effect of the disclosure, as the sponsorship disclosure only has an effect on persuasion knowledge when it is recalled.

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study show that a sponsorship disclosure in a television program can activate viewers' conceptual persuasion knowledge (i.e., the recognition of program content as advertising). However, this effect is only manifest for viewers who recalled the disclosure. The effect of a recalled sponsorship disclosure on attitudinal persuasion knowledge (i.e., the critical evaluation of the sponsored content) is mediated by conceptual persuasion knowledge. In other words, after seeing a sponsorship disclosure, viewers are better able to recognize the sponsored program content as advertising. Subsequently, this awareness makes viewers perceive the sponsored content as more biased, and less honest, credible, trustworthy, and convincing. When a sponsorship disclosure is not recalled, it has no effect, neither on conceptual, nor on attitudinal persuasion knowledge.

These findings demonstrate that a sponsorship disclosure has to be recalled to be able to help television viewers recognize sponsored content as advertising. This is consistent with previous findings in the literature that showed that a message needs to be processed systematically and attentively to activate conceptual persuasion knowledge (Campbell, 1995; Buijzen et al., 2010; Rozendaal et al., 2011). The results also demonstrate that viewers will only perceive the sponsored content more critically when they are aware that some parts of a program are actually advertising. This mediation model is in line with the reactance theory by Brehm (1996): Because viewers do not want to be manipulated, they are more critical as soon as they realize someone is attempting to persuade them.

A limitation of this study is that it focused on one type of sponsorship disclosure, although several forms are used in different countries. For instance, in England and Belgium a PP (product placement) logo is used, whereas in other countries textual disclosures that are similar to the one in this study are used. Because prior research on sponsorship disclosures (Dekker & Van Reijmersdal, 2010), and health and commercial disclaimers has demonstrated that the characteristics of a disclosure can influence its effects (e.g., Liebert, Sprafkin, Liebert, & Rubinstein, 1977; Mason, Scammon, & Fang, 2007), more research is needed to test the effects of different types of sponsorship disclosures.



Furthermore, although this study shows the importance of viewers' recall of a disclosure, further research is needed to show which factors make television viewers notice and process sponsorship disclosures. Moreover, future research could examine whether the processing and memory of a sponsorship disclosure change over time, when they are shown more frequently and are better known.

Notwithstanding the limitations, our results show that sponsorship disclosures can lead to the recognition of sponsored program content as advertising, and consequently to more critical evaluations of this sponsored content, provided that the disclosure is recalled. These are valuable findings given the lack of prior empirical research on the effects of sponsorship disclosures on the use of persuasion knowledge. Theoretically, the results provide new insights into how a sponsorship disclosure can activate both conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge. Both forms of persuasion knowledge can be activated by the sponsorship disclosure, whereby the effect on attitudinal persuasion knowledge is mediated by conceptual persuasion knowledge. This emphasizes the importance of distinguishing a cognitive and affective dimension of persuasion knowledge, in theory and in further research (Rozenaal et al., 2011). Furthermore, this study is the first to show the importance of the recall of the sponsorship disclosure in this process.

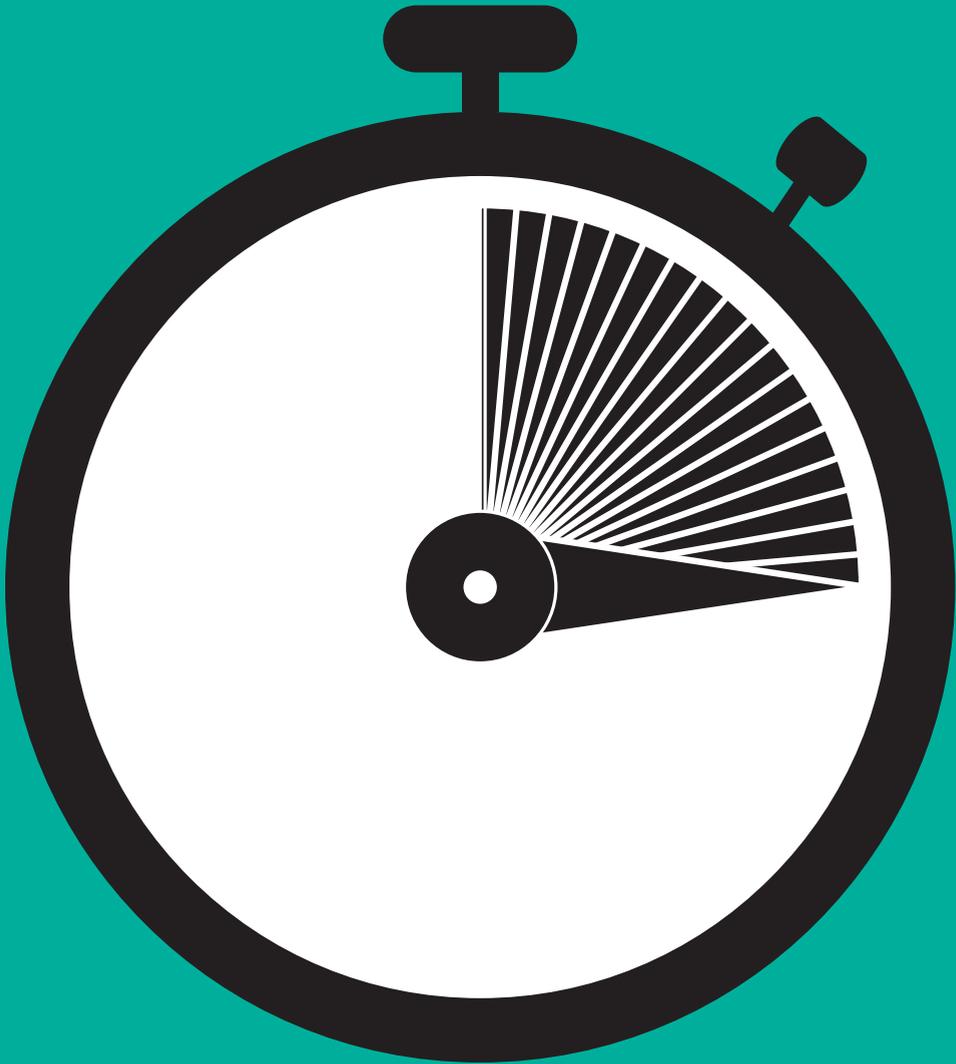
As the regulations regarding sponsorship disclosure are still in development in many countries, this study also has important practical implications. To effectively implement sponsorship disclosures, it is important to know how television viewers respond to them. Prior research demonstrated that sponsorship disclosures can influence brand responses (Campbell et al., 2007). However, the main goal of sponsorship disclosures is not to influence the persuasive effect of the sponsored content, but to make viewers aware of the commercial purpose of the sponsored content, and to avoid deception. This study provides evidence that a sponsorship disclosure can be an effective way of raising viewers' awareness of advertising embedded in television programs. Moreover, the awareness of program content being advertising stimulates viewers to perceive this content more critically, so they can guard themselves against persuasion. In other words, this study is the first to demonstrate that sponsorship disclosures can achieve their goal of activating persuasion knowledge, provided that viewers recall seeing the disclosure.

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CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF DISCLOSURE DURATION

ABSTRACT

This study examined how sponsorship disclosure on television influences persuasion knowledge and brand responses (i.e., brand memory and brand attitude). Moreover, we tested whether extending disclosure duration increases its effect. By conducting an experiment ($N=116$) we compared the effects of no disclosure to a 3-second and a 6-second disclosure. Results showed that especially a 6-second disclosure activates conceptual and consequently attitudinal persuasion knowledge. Regarding brand responses, we found that disclosure directly increased brand memory, regardless of duration. In addition, a 6-second disclosure indirectly resulted in less favorable brand attitudes through higher rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge. Theoretically, this study provides insights into how sponsorship disclosure influences the persuasion process and the role of persuasion knowledge within this process.

INTRODUCTION

To reach the consumer, advertisers are increasingly integrating brands, products, or persuasive messages into traditionally noncommercial contexts, such as television programs, magazines, and computer games (Cain, 2011; Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2007). This phenomenon is called sponsored content. Sponsored content can take various forms and encompasses the simple placement of a product or brand into a television program, but also brand integration whereby brands play a key role in plotlines and the creative development of programs (Hudson & Hudson, 2006). Both forms of sponsored content are common and especially the use of brand integration is growing. Brand integration is even seen as “the future of advertising” (Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Smit, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2009). Examples of sponsored content are the insertion of Nike shoes in the *NBA 2K* basketball games and the show *America’s Next Top Model* in which the winner wins a \$100,000 Cover Girl Cosmetics contract and various episodes feature competitions using Cover Girl products.

Since sponsored content is embedded in noncommercial media content, the source and persuasive intent of the message is not obvious. This makes it harder for viewers to distinguish between editorial and commercial content. Consequently, viewers may process the persuasive message less critically than traditional advertising (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998), which could lead to unaware persuasion. Therefore, sponsored content is often referred to as deceptive and misleading (Cain, 2011; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998), and is a serious cause of concern for policy makers and consumer organizations. As a result, sponsorship disclosure on television is now obligatory in the European Union, while such regulations are being developed in the United States (Cain, 2011). Although the application and use differ between countries, the principle is the same: Sponsorship disclosure should explicitly inform the audience when commercial content is integrated into editorial content to guarantee fair communication and avoid persuasion without audience awareness (Cain, 2011; Woods, 2008).

Only two studies have investigated the effects of sponsorship disclosures on television. Campbell, Mohr, and Verlegh (2007) found that disclosure can decrease top-of-mind awareness of the brand and alters brand attitude depending on its timing in the television program. Dekker and Van Reijmersdal (2010) focused on different disclosure types but found no significant effects of disclosures on brand attitude and product claim acceptance. Other studies showed a positive effect on brand recall of a disclosure that lists all products appearing in a movie (Bennett, Pecotich, & Putrevu, 1999), and a negative influence on brand attitude of disclosures in radio shows (Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008).

Interestingly, these studies tested how disclosures alter the effect of sponsored content on brand memory and persuasion. However, the primary goal of disclosures is to discourage deception by activating persuasion knowledge (Cain, 2011). Persuasion knowledge comprises a general understanding of persuasion and knowing how to cope with persuasive attempts (Friestad & Wright, 1994). There is a lack of research investigating the effect of sponsorship disclosures on persuasion knowledge. It is unclear whether



sponsorship disclosures are able to inform the audience about content's commercial intent. In addition, activating persuasion knowledge could play a role in the effects of disclosure on brand responses such as brand memory and persuasion. No research has yet examined this mediating role of persuasion knowledge in the persuasion process. Moreover, most persuasion knowledge research has only directed the cognitive aspect of persuasion knowledge and does not consider its attitudinal dimension. Therefore, this study focuses on both conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge and how these influence the effect of sponsored content on brand responses.

Current regulations obligate broadcasters to display a disclosure for at least 3 seconds (e.g., Ofcom, 2011). However, we do not know whether 3 seconds is enough to inform viewers about sponsored content and its persuasive intent. People may require more time to notice and process a disclosure displayed during a television program. Therefore, in this study we test the effects of the usual 3-second disclosure and examine the effect of doubling the display time. The aim of this study is to examine how sponsorship disclosure influences persuasion knowledge (conceptual and attitudinal) and brand responses (i.e., brand memory and brand attitude). In addition, we test whether extending the duration of the disclosure could influence its impact. Theoretically, we aim to obtain insight into how sponsorship disclosure influences the persuasion process and the role of persuasion knowledge within this process. To examine this, we conducted an experiment in which we compared the effects of no disclosure to a 3-second and a 6-second disclosure.

EFFECTS OF SPONSORSHIP DISCLOSURE ON PERSUASION KNOWLEDGE

The Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) describes how people develop general knowledge about persuasion and how people use this knowledge to interpret, evaluate, and respond to persuasion attempts. The model emphasizes that people need to be aware of a persuasion attempt before they can activate persuasion knowledge. When a persuasion attempt is recognized, people can retrieve and apply their general persuasion knowledge to cope with the attempt. This is a cognitive process. However, Rozendaal, Lapierre, Van Reijmersdal, and Buijzen (2011) argue that persuasion knowledge (referred to as advertising literacy) research and advertising theories should not only focus on the cognitive aspects of persuasion knowledge but should also take into account its attitudinal aspect. Hence, they divide persuasion knowledge into a conceptual and an attitudinal dimension.

Conceptual persuasion knowledge is the cognitive dimension that embraces the recognition of advertising, its source and audience, and the understanding of the advertising's persuasive intent, selling intent, and tactics (Rozendaal et al., 2011). With the inclusion of a sponsorship disclosure, legislators intend to increase consumers' awareness of the commercial nature of sponsored content so that they can distinguish between editorial and commercial content. Consequently, viewers will be able to understand the persuasive intent of the message and activate cognitive defenses (d'Astous & Chartier,

2000; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). Hence, as the main goal of disclosure is to raise awareness of the commercial nature of content, this study focuses on one aspect of conceptual persuasion knowledge, that is, the recognition of advertising. Supposing disclosure has its intended effect, we expect a sponsorship disclosure to enable viewers to recognize content as advertising and to activate conceptual persuasion knowledge.

Viewers may also use attitudinal persuasion knowledge to process a message (Rozendaal et al., 2011). Attitudinal persuasion knowledge includes attitudinal mechanisms that can be effective in coping with advertising. The attitudinal dimension comprises critical attitudes, such as skepticism and disliking, applied to a specific persuasion attempt. In other words, it involves critical feelings about honesty, trustworthiness, and credibility. Sponsorship disclosure may affect attitudinal persuasion knowledge as a result of the activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge. When viewers recognize the persuasion attempt, they may realize that the program and the brand are not neutral and are trying to persuade. This awareness can make the viewer more critical toward the sponsored content. This effect can be explained by the reactance theory (Brehm, 1966). According to this theory, people desire to maintain their freedom, and do not want to be manipulated. In a situation where people feel they are being influenced, they will oppose the persuasive appeal. Therefore, people tend to resist persuasion attempts when they recognize them as such (Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice, & Serna, 2002; Wei et al., 2008). Hence, we propose that the activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge will consequently result in higher attitudinal persuasion knowledge:

H1a: Sponsorship disclosure activates conceptual persuasion knowledge, which consequently leads to higher scores of attitudinal persuasion knowledge.

In addition, we propose that the effect on persuasion knowledge increases as the duration of the disclosure increases. No research has yet investigated the effect of disclosure durations. However, research has shown that longer message duration provides more opportunities for viewers to attend to a message (Janiszewski, 1993) and to cognitively process it (Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010; Mackworth, 1963). The limited capacity model (Lang, 2000) can explain why the effects of a disclosure can change with its duration. People need cognitive resources to process messages and these resources are limited. Consequently, we cannot process all information at once (Buijzen et al., 2010; Lang, 2000). During a television program, viewers are exposed to the disclosure and program content simultaneously. Hence, when a viewer watches a television program, he or she allocates the resources that are required to process it. When an additional message is integrated (e.g., a sponsorship disclosure), the viewer may not have the necessary cognitive resources available to process both the disclosure and the content of the program. Extending the duration of the disclosure provides viewers more opportunities and time to allocate resources to the disclosure and to process it, making it more likely that the disclosure will have an effect. This leads to the following hypothesis:



H1b: The effect of sponsorship disclosure on persuasion knowledge increases with disclosure duration.

EFFECTS OF SPONSORSHIP DISCLOSURE ON BRAND RESPONSES

Next to activating persuasion knowledge, a sponsorship disclosure could also alter the effect of the sponsored content and hence elicit consequences that are not its primary goal. In the following section, we will discuss the possible effects of a disclosure and its duration on brand memory and brand attitude.

Brand memory

A brand only has a chance of entering short- or long-term memory when viewers pay attention to it (Anderson, 1995). Hence, only when viewers attend to the sponsored content and process the brand information, the brand can enter viewers' memory (Robinson, 1995). Moreover, the greater the activation of a brand in the brain, the greater the likelihood that it is explicitly remembered (Yang & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007). Since a disclosure informs viewers about the presence of sponsored content, it puts more emphasis on the sponsored content and the brand that is making the persuasive attempt. Hence, the disclosure functions as an additional prime for the brand. The disclosure may activate associations in memory that are connected to the brand. Consequently when viewers are asked whether they recall any brands, it is easier to retrieve the brand from memory because there are more associations with the brand. In other words, the disclosure increases the chance that viewers attend to the sponsored content and the brand, and makes it easier to retrieve it from their memory. Therefore, we propose that sponsorship disclosure leads to greater brand memory. In accordance with this proposition, Bennett et al. (1999) found that sponsorship disclosures in movies had a positive effect on brand recall.

Moreover, previous research has shown that extending the message duration provides more opportunities to attend to a message (Janiszewski, 1993) and to cognitively process it (Buijzen et al., 2010; Mackworth, 1963). Consequently, when information stays on screen longer, this increases message recognition (Gao & Lang, 2009). As the brand is mentioned in the disclosure, we expect that a 6-second disclosure will enhance brand memory more than a 3-second disclosure:

H2a: Sponsorship disclosure increases brand memory; this effect increases with disclosure duration.

Furthermore, disclosures could elicit better brand memory indirectly through conceptual persuasion knowledge. When the disclosure activates conceptual persuasion knowledge, this means sponsored content is recognized as advertising. To be able to retrieve and apply persuasion knowledge, viewers must process the message elaborately (Buijzen et al., 2010). Such levels of processing require high attention to the message, in this case the sponsored content (Petty, Cacioppo, Strathman, & Priester, 2005).

This means that the activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge requires attention to and awareness of the sponsored content and brand. Hence, when the disclosure activates conceptual persuasion knowledge, this increases attention to the brand even more, leading to greater brand memory:

H2b: The effect of the disclosure and its duration on brand memory is mediated by conceptual persuasion knowledge.

Brand attitude

Although consumers do enjoy and like specific advertisements (Smit & Neijens, 2000), the majority of consumers are quite skeptical toward advertising (Calfée & Ringold, 1994; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 2000). Reminding them that the program they are watching contains sponsored content could therefore negatively influence what people think of the brand. As discussed above, a disclosure may serve as an extra cue for viewers to attend to the sponsored content and brand. Higher levels of attention to advertising have shown to enable people to activate persuasion knowledge (Campbell, 1995) and use their cognitive defenses, leading to diminished persuasion (Buijzen et al., 2010; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Petty, Ostrom, & Brock, 1981). As people usually do not want to be persuaded (Brehm, 1966), people tend to resist persuasion attempts when they recognize them as such (Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice, & Serna, 2002; Wei et al., 2008). In other words, when sponsorship disclosure activates persuasion knowledge and generates more critical attitudes, this may lead to resistance of the persuasive message.

Research on forewarnings of noncommercial persuasive messages, such as political statements, confirms that revealing the persuasive intent leads to resistance. Forewarnings have proven to result in less opinion change (Allyn & Festinger, 1961), less favorable perceptions of the communicator (Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000), increased counter arguing (Petty & Cacioppo, 1977; Petty et al., 1981), and less favorable attitudes toward the message (Jacks & Devine, 2000; Wood & Quinn, 2003). When resistance of a persuasive message occurs, it is unlikely that attitudes become more favorable (Tormala & Petty, 2002). In line with this assumption, several studies have shown that the activation of persuasion knowledge leads to a less favorable brand attitude (Campbell, 1995; Lee, 2010; Wei et al., 2008).

Next to the forewarning studies, a few studies investigated the relation between sponsorship disclosures and brand evaluations, however, each leading to different results. Wei et al. (2008) showed a significant negative influence of sponsorship disclosures in radio shows, while Campbell et al. (2007) found that depending on their appearance, disclosures on television can have a positive or a negative effect on brand attitude. Other studies found no significant effect of disclosure on brand liking (Bennett et al., 1999) and brand attitude (Dekker & Van Reijmersdal, 2010). The results of these studies are inconclusive and do not include the influence of persuasion knowledge. Therefore, we also test the effect of a disclosure and its duration on brand attitude through persuasion knowledge.



As attitudinal persuasion knowledge may be a result of conceptual persuasion knowledge, we will test the effects of both conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge. On the basis of the reactance theory and forewarning literature we propose:

H3a: Sponsorship disclosure has a negative effect on brand attitude; this effect increases with disclosure duration.

In addition, we hypothesize:

H3b: The effect of the disclosure and its duration on brand attitude is mediated by persuasion knowledge.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

In total, 209 Dutch college students participated in our experiment. The average age was 22.21 ($SD = 3.36$), 77% were female. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions.

Participants were exposed to either a 3-second disclosure, a 6-second disclosure, or no disclosure (the control condition). Participants were asked to sit down in isolated cubicles behind a computer and to read the instruction before watching a television program. Once participants had watched the whole program, they could directly proceed to the questionnaire. The questionnaire started with control variables regarding the television program (i.e., program familiarity and program involvement), then asked about the brand (i.e., brand recall, brand attitude, and brand familiarity) and participants' persuasion knowledge (i.e., conceptual and attitudinal), and ended with other control variables (recall of disclosure, product interest, and demographics). By measuring the brand responses before persuasion knowledge, we made sure that the brand responses were the result of the stimulus and not a result of the questions about advertising and critical attitudes toward advertising as these reveal the commercial nature of the television program. The experiment took about half an hour and the participants received €8 for their participation.

Materials

The stimulus materials consisted of an edited episode of the television program *MTV Was Here*. The program is aired weekly and each episode includes three or four items on lifestyle, fashion, parties, music, and gadgets. The program used in this study lasted about 14 minutes and was a compilation of three items from three original episodes. The editing was done by a professional and the structure of the edited episode was the same as the original program. The first item was a report of a dance improvisation event and the third item was an interview with DJ Tiësto. The second item incorporated the

sponsored content as it discussed a new brand of sneakers, Alive Shoes, which links shoes with social networking sites. In the item, the presenter visits the Alive Shoes store and talks to the creator of the shoes who explains the philosophy of the shoes and the Website that is linked to them. In addition, they take a picture of the presenter while wearing the shoes and link her to the Alive Shoes social network on the Website. The item was four minutes and 20 seconds long. The shoes were visible both in the background and very prominently for a total of one and a half minutes and the brand name was mentioned seven times. The disclosure that was inserted in the program in the experimental conditions stated: "This program contains advertising by Alive Shoes." The disclosure was displayed at the upper right corner of the screen for 3 or 6 seconds and covered 2.5% of the screen (which is comparable to the size of common subtitles) and was clearly readable. It mentioned both the brand and the fact that the brand is advertising in the program. This is in accordance with new regulation proposals in the United States (Cain, 2011).

Measures

Persuasion knowledge

To measure persuasion knowledge we developed two measures corresponding to the conceptual and attitudinal dimensions of persuasion knowledge. *Conceptual persuasion knowledge* (conceptual PK) was measured by asking participants to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to what extent the item about Alive Shoes was advertising ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.41$). According to Rossiter (2011) a single-item indicator is sufficient to measure a concrete, singular object.

We measured participants' critical feelings toward the sponsored content by creating an *attitudinal persuasion knowledge* scale (attitudinal PK). Attitudinal PK was measured by asking participants whether participants agreed (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) with the statement, "I think the item about Alive Shoes in *MTV Was Here* is ..." followed by five attributes based on a scale measuring source trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990): "honest" (reversed), "trustworthy" (reversed), "convincing" (reversed), "biased," and "not credible." Factor analysis revealed the items load on one factor (Eigenvalue = 2.78; explained variance = 55.64%; Cronbach's alpha = .79). High scores of attitudinal PK correspond to more distrust, whereas low scores correspond to less critical feelings ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.09$).

Brand memory

Brand memory was measured by asking participants whether they recalled seeing any brands in the episode of *MTV Was Here*. If they answered yes, they could fill out which brands. Brand recall is coded 1 (*mentioned Alive Shoes*) and 0 (*did not mention Alive Shoes*) and 51% of the participants mentioned Alive Shoes.

Brand attitude

Brand attitude was measured using six 7-point semantic differential scales: bad/good, unpleasant/pleasant, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, dislike/like, and



poor quality/high quality (e.g., Bruner, 2009; Campbell, 1995). Factor analysis revealed the items load on one factor (Eigenvalue = 4.10; explained variance = 68.27%; Cronbach's alpha = .90). The mean score of the six items is used as a measurement of brand attitude ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.11$).

Control variables

A number of control variables were measured to make sure that the effects of disclosure duration were not caused by other differences between the experimental groups. To measure *program familiarity* and *program viewing frequency*, we asked participants whether they knew the television program *MTV Was Here* (0 = no, 1 = yes) and how often they watched the program (1 = never, 2 = once or less a month, 3 = twice or three times a month, 4 = weekly, 5 = daily). Most participants (58%) did not know the program and 68% ($SD = 0.64$) never watched the program. We measured *program involvement* using ten 7-point semantic differential scales from Zaichkowsky's (1994) personal involvement inventory. The mean score of the 10 items is used as a measure of program involvement (Eigenvalue = 5.16; explained variance = 51.56%; Cronbach's alpha = .89, $M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.87$). Furthermore, we asked participants whether they were *familiar* with the brand before participating in the study (96% said no) and whether they *owned* the shoes (100% said no). Based on a scale by Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, and Smit (2007), *product interest* was measured by asking participants to indicate to what extent they agreed with the items (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree): "I like buying shoes," "I like to watch programs about shoes on television," and "I am interested in shoes" (Eigenvalue = 2.33; explained variance = 77.65%; Cronbach's alpha = .86, $M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.53$). *Recall of disclosure* was measured by directly asking the participants whether they recalled a disclosure for advertising in the episode of *MTV Was Here* (0 = no, 1 = yes). Finally, *sex* and *age* were measured.

RESULTS

Fifty-two percent of the participants ($n = 93$) that were exposed to a disclosure indicated they did not recall the disclosure. Because we focus on the effects of disclosure duration, only participants that recalled the disclosure were included in the analyses, leaving a sample of 116 participants (control $n = 30$, 3-second disclosure $n = 46$, 6-second disclosure $n = 40$). There was no significant difference in recall of disclosure between the 3- and 6-second conditions, $\chi^2(1) = 0.68$, $p = .409$.

Randomization

The experimental groups did not differ with respect to sex, $\chi^2(2) = 4.45$, $p = .108$, age, $F(2, 113) = 0.65$, $p = .522$, program familiarity, $\chi^2(2) = 1.58$, $p = .455$, program viewing frequency, $\chi^2(4) = 0.11$, $p = .998$, product interest, $F(2, 113) = 0.14$, $p = .872$, and program involvement, $F(2, 113) = 0.32$, $p = .728$. In addition, since 96% of the participants were not familiar with Alive Shoes before participating in the study, $\chi^2(2) = 2.34$, $p = .311$, and no

participant owned the shoes, the program and/or the disclosure are most likely the main antecedents of brand attitude. We included program involvement and product interest as control variables in all analyses, to make sure that they do not confound the effects.

Persuasion knowledge

To test H1a and H1b, we used Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method that estimates the path coefficients in a mediator model and generates 95% bootstrap confidence intervals for total and specific indirect effects of disclosure duration on attitudinal PK through conceptual PK. This method uses 5,000 bootstrapped samples to estimate the bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (BCACI). To test the effect of any disclosure compared to no disclosure, and the effect of disclosure duration, we used orthogonal contrast coding. We constructed two contrast variables, the first corresponding to a contrast of no disclosure versus the 3- and 6-second disclosures, and the second corresponding to a contrast between the 3- and 6-second disclosures.

The results showed that, controlling for program involvement and product interest, sponsorship disclosure had a positive effect on conceptual PK ($b = .71, p = .016$). Participants who were exposed to a 3- or a 6-second disclosure had significant higher conceptual PK than participants that were not exposed to a disclosure. A disclosure did not directly influence attitudinal PK ($b = .24, p = .222$). However, conceptual PK has a significant positive effect on attitudinal PK ($b = .13, p = .042$) and results showed a significant indirect effect (Indirect effect = .09, SE = 0.07, 95% BCACI [.01, .29]).¹ This means that a sponsorship disclosure increases conceptual PK, which consequently leads to higher scores in attitudinal PK, supporting H1a.

With regard to disclosure duration (H1b), results showed that, controlling for program involvement and product interest, there was no difference in conceptual PK between the 3- and the 6-second disclosure ($b = .19, p = .516$). This means there was no significant effect of the independent variable (disclosure duration) on the mediator (conceptual PK), and hence there was no mediation or indirect effect (Indirect effect = .02, SE = 0.04, 95% BCACI [-.03, .14]). However, results did show a significant direct effect of a 6-second disclosure on attitudinal PK, compared to a 3-second disclosure ($b = .42, p = .042$). This means that, although there was no difference in conceptual PK between the 3-second and 6-second disclosure, attitudinal PK was significantly higher for the participants who were exposed to a 6-second disclosure. H1b is thus supported for attitudinal PK.

¹ See Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, and Petty (2011) for discussion and approval of indirect effects without a significant total effect.



Brand responses

Brand memory

To test the direct effect of disclosure duration on brand memory, we conducted a logistic regression analysis with disclosure duration as categorical predictor and program involvement and product interest as control variables. Again, we used orthogonal contrasts to compare the effect of any disclosure compared to no disclosure, and the effect of a 6-second disclosure compared to a 3-second disclosure. The results in Table 1 show that exposure to any disclosure significantly increase the odds of recalling the brand compared to no disclosure. After being exposed to a disclosure participants are more likely to recall the brand ($-2LL = 144.24$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .18$, $\chi^2(4) = 16.54$, $p = .002$). The results show no significant difference in brand recall between the 3- and 6-second disclosure. This means that, controlling for program involvement and product interest, disclosure leads to greater brand memory, regardless of its duration. Hence, H2a is partly supported.

Mediation analyses with the orthogonal contrasts as independent variables and program involvement and product interest as covariates revealed that the confidence intervals for conceptual PK did contain zero (see Table 2). Hence, there is no significant mediation or indirect effect of disclosure duration on brand memory through conceptual persuasion knowledge, and H2b is not supported.

Table 1 Summary of logistic regression for disclosure duration predicting brand memory, controlled for program involvement and product interest

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	Odds Ratio
Disclosure duration			
No disclosure versus 3- and 6- second disclosure	1.74	.50	5.67***
3- versus 6-second disclosure	0.21	.45	1.24
Program involvement	0.48	.26	1.62†
Product interest	-0.06	.14	.95
Constant	-1.90	1.10	.15†

Note. † $p < .10$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 2 *Indirect effect of disclosure duration on brand memory and brand attitude through persuasion knowledge, controlled for program involvement and product interest*

Variable	Indirect effect	SE	95% BCACI	
			LL	UL
<i>Disclosure duration: No versus 3- and 6-second disclosure</i>				
Brand recall				
Conceptual PK	-.03	.13	-.36	.19
Brand attitude				
Conceptual PK	.02	.05	-.07	.14
Attitudinal PK	-.09	.08	-.28	.06
<i>Disclosure duration: 3- versus 6-second disclosure</i>				
Brand recall				
Conceptual PK	-.02	.06	-.21	.06
Brand attitude				
Conceptual PK	.00	.02	-.02	.09
Attitudinal PK	-.15	.08	-.36	-.02

Note BCACI = bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval; LL = lower limit, PK = persuasion knowledge; UL = upper limit.

Brand attitude

An analysis of covariance was conducted to test the effects of disclosure duration on brand attitude, with program involvement and product interest as covariates. The results showed no statistically significant main effect of disclosure duration on brand attitude, $F(2, 111) = 0.39, p = .675, \eta^2 = .01$. Brand attitudes did not differ after no disclosure ($M = 4.91, SD = 1.19$), the 3-second disclosure ($M = 4.74, SD = 1.05$) or the 6-second disclosure ($M = 4.82, SD = 1.15$). This means that H3a is not supported.

To test for a possible indirect effect we again used Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method with the two orthogonal contrast variables as independent variables. The results in Table 2 show that, although there is no significant total effect of disclosure duration on brand attitude, we did find a significant indirect effect. The confidence intervals for conceptual PK did contain zero, meaning that there is no significant mediation or indirect effect of disclosure duration on brand attitude through conceptual PK. Regarding attitudinal PK, Table 2 shows that there is no significant indirect effect of any disclosure (vs. no disclosure) via attitudinal PK on brand attitude, as the confidence interval includes zero. In other words, a disclosure does not result in less favorable brand attitudes as a result of higher attitudinal PK (i.e., more distrust). However, there is a significant indirect effect when



comparing the 6-second disclosure to the 3-second disclosure (Indirect effect = $-.15$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% BCACI $[-.36, -.02]$). The 6-second disclosure results in significant less favorable brand attitudes ($b = -.36$, $p < .001$) as a result of higher attitudinal PK ($b = .40$, $p = .046$) compared to the 3-second disclosure. An additional analysis with indicator dummy variables comparing the 6-second disclosure to the control condition, controlling for the 3-second disclosure, program involvement and product interest, showed the same significant indirect effect of the 6-second disclosure compared to no disclosure (Indirect effect = $-.16$, $SE = 0.10$, 95% BCACI $[-.40, -.01]$). A 6-second disclosure increases the critical feelings toward the sponsored program item, leading to a less favorable brand attitude. Hence, the results offer support for H3b, but only via attitudinal PK and only for a 6-second disclosure.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the influence of sponsorship disclosure and its duration on persuasion knowledge (conceptual and attitudinal) and brand responses (i.e., brand memory and brand attitude). Our outcomes emphasize that disclosures affect both conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge and the effects of sponsored content on brand memory and brand attitude. In addition, the effect of sponsorship disclosure depends on its duration. This means that a disclosure can elicit its intended effect (i.e., increase persuasion knowledge) but also influences brand responses.

The primary goal of disclosures is to inform audiences about sponsored content and consequently raise awareness of advertising and its persuasive intent. We found that disclosures can activate both conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge. First, sponsorship disclosure activates conceptual persuasion knowledge. This means that after exposure to a sponsorship disclosure, viewers are better able to distinguish commercial from editorial content compared to viewers who are not exposed to a disclosure. Second, as a result of the activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge, viewers show higher rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge (i.e., more distrust of the sponsored content). These results emphasize the necessity to take both the cognitive and attitudinal dimension of persuasion knowledge into account, in theory and in future research. Disclosures can directly lead to recognition of advertising and consequently influence critical feelings toward the advertising.

In addition, in accordance with our expectations based on the limited capacity theory (Lang, 2000), our results show that especially a longer disclosure duration leads to these effects. This study shows that the duration of the disclosure influences its effect on attitudinal persuasion knowledge. Although there is no difference in conceptual persuasion knowledge after exposure to a 3- or 6-second disclosure, attitudinal persuasion knowledge is significantly higher for the participants who were exposed to a 6-second disclosure. This means that, when conceptual persuasion knowledge is activated, a 6-second disclosure leads to even more critical attitudes toward the sponsored content

(i.e., higher attitudinal persuasion knowledge) than a 3-second disclosure. As message processing theories claim that high levels of attention and processing are needed to activate persuasion knowledge (Buijzen et al., 2010; Campbell, 1995; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Petty et al., 1981), our results show that especially after a 6-second disclosure viewers process the content elaborately enough to generate critical attitudes.

With regard to brand responses, we found that sponsorship disclosure elicits two processes. The first process is a direct effect of sponsorship disclosure on brand memory. Results show that disclosures, regardless of their duration, lead to greater brand memory. The disclosure repeats the brand name and exposes the viewer to the brand name in a different manner, namely in an additional text which is not directly embedded in the program. Hence, in accordance with learning theories and associative memory theory (Anderson, 1995; Robinson, 1995), the disclosure functions as an additional prime and enhances viewer's recall of the brand by increasing the attention to and the processing of the brand. The effect of a disclosure on brand memory is not mediated by persuasion knowledge. Participants' conceptual persuasion knowledge did not influence brand recall.

The second process that emerges from our results is an indirect effect of the disclosure on brand attitude through attitudinal persuasion knowledge. Sponsorship disclosure does not directly alter consumers' perception of the brand. However, a 6-second disclosure leads to less favorable brand attitudes as a result of higher rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge. When viewers are informed for 6 seconds about the appearance of sponsored content, they report higher rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge (i.e., more distrust of the sponsored content), which consequently results in resistance to persuasion, as showed by more negative brand attitudes. This is in accordance with forewarning literature that showed that revealing the persuasive intent of a message results in skepticism (Jacks & Devine, 2000; Wood & Quinn, 2003) and resistance (Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Lee, 2010; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977; Petty et al., 1981; Quinn & Wood, 2004). Conceptual persuasion knowledge does not have the same effect. Contrary to earlier findings (Sagarin et al., 2002; Wei et al., 2008) and the reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), people do not resist the persuasive appeal of the sponsored content as soon as they recognize the persuasive attempt. This means that the recognition of sponsored content is not enough to alter its persuasive effect. People need to generate a certain degree of distrust and skepticism toward the advertising before a disclosure actually alters their brand attitude.

A total of 52% of our participants did not recall seeing a disclosure. Since this did not appear to relate to disclosure duration, displaying a disclosure longer does not seem to influence the chance people recall the disclosure. This leaves us wondering why television viewers do or do not recall a disclosure. Since disclosures have only just been introduced, we would expect viewers to notice them in television programs due to their novelty. We therefore suggest that further research should investigate what makes people notice and pay attention to a disclosure and consequently what makes them recall the disclosure. In addition, participants may indicate that they did not remember the disclosure, because they misunderstood the disclosure as part of the advertising message and not as a message



in its own right. More research is needed to investigate whether viewers understand the disclosure and whether this is related to their recall of the disclosure. In addition, it would be interesting to study whether in the future the decay of novelty and a learning effect would cause more routine for viewers. This may change the degree to which viewers notice and respond to disclosures.

This study shows the importance of a disclosure and of its duration, and given the paucity of previous research on this topic, we think this study is an initial and important step into a complex area. This study shows the theoretical importance of both conceptual and attitudinal persuasion knowledge within the persuasion process, and that the effects of sponsorship disclosure depend on display duration. However, we need to use caution in generalizing the results because of several limitations. First, we need to take into account the context in which we tested the effects. Our results show that a 6-second disclosure has an effect on both persuasion knowledge and brand responses in this particular program, with this sponsored content, this brand, for this audience, and this disclosure. More research is needed to test the effects of different types of disclosures, with different durations, in other television programs with other sponsored content. This could also show whether 6 seconds is also necessary in other contexts. Nonetheless, we can conclude that longer disclosure duration increases the effect of the disclosure on persuasion knowledge and brand responses.

Second, we focused on one specific disclosure, while the characteristics of disclosures are different between and within countries. Some broadcasters only display a PP (product placement) logo, while others use disclosures similar to the one used in this study. Since health and commercial disclaimer research has shown that disclosure characteristics affect their consequences (Liebert, Sprafkin, Liebert, & Rubinstein, 1977; Mason, Scammon, & Fang, 2007), future research is needed to understand the effects of different types and contents of disclosures.

Third, we only considered sponsored content in which the brand played a very central role in the item. The program item was an example of brand integration in which the product played a key role both visually and verbally. Further research is needed to investigate the effects of disclosures for other types of sponsored content, such as traditional brand placements.

As a sponsorship disclosure attempts to raise awareness of the brand's presence to avoid unaware persuasion, it might prevent or reduce a mere exposure effect. The mere exposure effect is the emerging preference for an object due to repeated exposures to this object (Zajonc, 2001). Mere exposure effects appear to be clearer and stronger when subjects are unaware of the repeated exposure (Zajonc, 2001). Hence, when a disclosure makes the viewer more aware of the exposure to the brand, this awareness could reduce or even prevent the mere exposure effect of sponsored content. Although our results do not provide evidence for differences in brand attitude between groups, further research might explore this process.

Notwithstanding the limitations, our results show that sponsorship disclosure is an effective tool to inform audiences about embedded advertising such as sponsored content, and to elicit more distrust toward the advertising. Theoretically, our findings provide new insights into how sponsorship disclosure influences the persuasion process and the role of persuasion knowledge within this process. Our results also emphasize the importance of separating persuasion knowledge into a conceptual and an attitudinal dimension. Furthermore, this study has important practical implications for the current legislation. Our findings show that the current obligated 3-second disclosure (Ofcom, 2011) does achieve its goal, as it activates conceptual and consequently attitudinal persuasion knowledge. However, when conceptual persuasion knowledge is activated, a longer disclosure duration is even more effective in generating critical attitudes toward the sponsored content. Therefore, based on our outcomes, extending the obligated duration of disclosures is recommended.



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CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF DISCLOSURE TIMING

ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether the timing of sponsorship disclosure affects viewers' processing of sponsored content, and whether a disclosure influences the persuasive effect of the sponsored content. A model is proposed in which sponsorship disclosure enhances the recognition of sponsored television content as advertising, which leads to critical processing of the sponsored content. Ultimately, this negatively affects the attitude toward the brand in the sponsored content. This model was supported, but only when the disclosure was displayed prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content. These effects were not found for a sponsorship disclosure shown at the end of the program after the sponsored content. Theoretically, the findings emphasize the importance of disclosure timing. A disclosure displayed prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content, primes the sponsored content and provides sufficient processing time, so viewers recognize the content as advertising and can process it critically. In addition, the findings show that persuasion knowledge and critical processing are important underlying mechanisms for the effect of sponsorship disclosure on brand attitude. Regarding the practical implications for legislators and advertisers, this research demonstrates that sponsorship disclosure can make viewers aware of the sponsored content in television programs. Furthermore, this changes the processing of sponsored content and can also ultimately lead to resistance against persuasion.

INTRODUCTION

To inform audiences and guarantee fair communication, recent regulations in the EU require broadcasters to disclose sponsored content in television programs (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010). Because sponsorship disclosure in television programs is a recent and ongoing development, very little research has investigated its effects until now (Boerman, Van Reijmersdal & Neijens, 2012). To understand the impact of disclosing the persuasive intent of a message on persuasion, it is vital to know how disclosures influence information processing (Jacks & Devine, 2000; McCarthy, 2004). Therefore, this study aims to understand how sponsorship disclosure changes the processing of the sponsored program content. With this focus on processing, it is important to consider the timing of the disclosure. The moment at which a disclosure is shown in a program determines whether it primes the sponsored content, as well as the amount of time and opportunity a viewer has to (critically) process the content. Therefore, this research compares the effects of three different disclosure timings: disclosure prior to, concurrent with, and after the sponsored content.

Furthermore, to elaborately and critically process sponsored content, people need to be aware of the persuasion attempt (Boush, Friestad, & Rose, 1994; Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010). Therefore, an important underlying mechanism might be the activation of persuasion knowledge. Persuasion knowledge is the set of theories and beliefs about persuasion and its tactics that people develop throughout their lives (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Friestad & Wright, 1999). Prior research has shown that sponsorship disclosure can activate different dimensions of persuasion knowledge, among others the recognition of advertising (Boerman et al., 2012). However, no study has tested a model that incorporates the effects of both the recognition of advertising and critical processing on persuasion.

Altogether, the present study investigates whether the timing of sponsorship disclosure affects the processing of sponsored content, and whether this influences the persuasive effect of the sponsored content. In addition, this research looks into the role of the recognition of advertising (which is a dimension of persuasion knowledge) in this process.

BACKGROUND

Sponsored content is the intentional incorporation of brands, products or persuasive messages into traditionally non-commercial, editorial content (Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2007). The concept ranges from traditional brand placement—that is, the appearance of a brand or product in a television program—to more extensive brand integration, where a brand or product is more ‘part of the show’ and plays a key role in plotlines and the creative development of programs (Cain, 2011; Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Wenner, 2004). Examples of sponsored content are the red Coca Cola cups placed on the table in front of the *Idol* judges (i.e., brand placement), or the TV series *Chuck* in which a



character's love for Subway sandwiches returns in the storyline of multiple episodes (i.e., brand integration).

Advertisers continue to recognize the benefits of sponsored content in television programs, and its use is still increasing (Law & Braun, 2000; Ong, 2011). However, as this form of advertising is embedded into program content, the commercial intent is kept hidden (Bhatnagar, Aksoy, & Malkoc, 2004). Consequently, viewers are not always aware of the persuasive intent of sponsored program content. Hence, they do not activate their cognitive defenses and can be influenced without being aware (Kuhn, Hume, & Love, 2010; Lee, 2008). This is assumed to be a violation of consumers' right to know when they are being subjected to an advertisement (Lee, 2008; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). Therefore, the use of sponsored content has attracted criticism from consumer advocacy groups, public policy officials, the media and consumers, claiming it is unethical and deceptive (Cain, 2011; Kuhn et al., 2010). To guarantee fair communication, the EU decided in 2010 to make sponsorship disclosure obligatory. In the US, it is sufficient to identify the use of sponsored content in the end credits of the program. However, due to the ambiguous nature of disclosure rules, disclosures are often unreadable and incomprehensible (Ong, 2011). Therefore, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) proposed new revised regulations to make sponsorship identification disclosures more obvious to consumers (Federal Communications Commission, 2008), and consumer organizations suggested various sponsorship disclosure guidelines in the US (Cain, 2011). Since the EU already has specific guidelines with regard to sponsorship disclosure, this study will focus on the disclosures used in the EU in particular. However, as similar regulations are being proposed in the US, the findings of this study are not only relevant to the EU market, but may also be of interest to the US.

EFFECTS OF DISCLOSURE TIMING ON THE RECOGNITION OF ADVERTISING

To be able to interpret, evaluate, and respond to persuasive messages, people develop general knowledge about how, why, and when a message is intended to influence them. This persuasion knowledge is formed by experience and continues to develop over time. Its development starts during childhood and adolescence, when fundamental insights about mental events and social encounters emerge and information-processing capabilities increase (Friestad & Wright, 1994). John (1999) argues that there are five steps of persuasion knowledge that emerge in a developmental sequence from preschool to adolescence: (1) distinguishing commercials from programs, (2) understanding advertising intent, (3) recognizing bias and deception in advertising (skepticism), (4) using cognitive defenses against advertising, and (5) comprehending advertising tactics and appeals. Although persuasion knowledge is developmentally contingent, research on the development of persuasion knowledge shows that all steps are well established at adulthood (Friestad & Wright, 1994; John, 1999). Adults can access their persuasion knowledge whenever they want to understand what is going on as they observe a persuasive message (Friestad &

Wright, 1994). When a persuasion attempt is recognized, people can retrieve and apply their persuasion knowledge to cope with the attempt.

However, because sponsored content blurs the boundaries between editorial and commercial content, the persuasion attempt may not be obvious, and even adults may not access their persuasion knowledge. In this situation, viewers are not able to identify the commercial content and to distinguish it from editorial content. Sponsorship disclosure is introduced to inform television viewers and make them aware of sponsored content. In other words, the goal of sponsorship disclosure is to help viewers access their persuasion knowledge by making it easier to distinguish commercial from editorial content. Because the recognition of advertising is the first step of persuasion knowledge, eventually, this may lead to the activation of other steps of persuasion knowledge. Therefore, this study focuses only on the effect of sponsorship disclosure on the recognition of advertising. Forewarning and sponsorship disclosure research has shown that message cues that increase the salience of the manipulative intent are likely to activate different levels of persuasion knowledge, such as the recognition of advertising (e.g., Boerman et al., 2012; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Kirmani & Zhu, 2007). Hence, by making the persuasion attempt salient, a sponsorship disclosure most likely increase the chance viewers recognize that program content is sponsored. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1a: Sponsorship disclosure increases the recognition of advertising.

The degree to which people access their persuasion knowledge, and hence recognize advertising, may shift over the course of a particular persuasion episode (Friestad & Wright, 1994). This means that the moment in the program a disclosure is displayed may influence whether and when viewers recognize sponsored program content as advertising. The current legislation in the EU is clear about the timing of sponsorship disclosure:

“Programmes containing product placement¹ shall be appropriately identified at the start and the end of the programme, and when a programme resumes after an advertising break, in order to avoid any confusion on the part of the viewer.”

(Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010, p. 17)

Different from these specific European regulations, broadcasters in the US are obliged to disclose sponsorship at least once -at any time- during the program (Ong, 2011). Because US regulations do not mention its timing, sponsored content is usually disclosed in the end credits. To test which disclosure timing is most effective, this study compares the effect

¹Note that the term product placement used in the EU Directive is not the same concept as product placement in advertising research. Product placement in the EU Directive refers to the same broader concept as sponsored content, ranging from brand placement to brand integration.



of a sponsorship disclosure displayed prior to, concurrent with, and after the sponsored program content.

The effect of disclosure timing can be explained by priming theories and delay mechanisms. When a sponsorship disclosure is shown before the sponsored content, it could function as a prime (Bennett, Pectotich, & Putrevu, 1999). According to priming theory, the priming or activation of a concept can affect information processing and judgments (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier, 2009). When working as a prime, a sponsorship disclosure prior to the sponsored content could enhance attention to the sponsored content. This enhanced attention could then lead to the recognition of the program content as being advertising (i.e., activate persuasion knowledge), and change the way viewers process the content. However, the effect of priming is time dependent and fades quickly (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2009). This means that the priming effect of a sponsorship disclosure displayed prior to the sponsored content could fade. Therefore, a disclosure displayed concurrently with the sponsored content may have a larger effect on the recognition of advertising because it not only primes the sponsored content, but this priming effect will also not have faded. In this case, the disclosure may even directly attract attention to the sponsored content, enhancing its effect on the recognition of advertising. A disclosure at the end of the program is shown after the sponsored content and hence does not work as a prime. Based on priming theory, this means that disclosure concurrent with the sponsored content would have the best chance of affecting the recognition of advertising followed by a disclosure prior to the sponsored content. A disclosure after the sponsored content at the end of the program is less likely to be effective.

However, due to delay mechanisms, it may also be that a disclosure prior to the sponsored content is most effective. The advantage of a disclosure displayed prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content, is emphasized by earlier research concerning forewarning of noncommercial persuasive messages, such as political statements. Forewarning research revealed that the temporal delay between a disclosure and persuasive message enables individuals to generate cognitive defenses and reduces the amount of persuasion produced by the communication (Freedman & Sears, 1965; Hass & Grady, 1975). In line with these results, a disclosure displayed after the sponsored content does not facilitate viewers sufficient time to create awareness of the advertising and process the program content critically. Hence, the further the disclosure is displayed to the beginning of the sponsored content, the more time a viewer has to recognize the content as advertising.

Thus, based on priming theories, a disclosure concurrent the sponsored content would be most effective in enhancing the recognition of advertising, because its message does not fade. However, based on the time between the disclosure and sponsored content, one could also assume that a disclosure prior to the sponsored content may be most effective. Since it is unknown which of these mechanisms will prevail, no prediction can be made about whether the disclosure prior to or concurrent with the sponsored content will be most effective. However, it is expected that these disclosure timings will be more

effective than a disclosure after the sponsored content. Therefore, this study tests a hypothesis that does not propose a difference in effectiveness between the prior to and concurrent with, but does assume both disclosure timings will be more effective than a disclosure displayed after the sponsored content:

H1b: A sponsorship disclosure prior to or concurrent with the sponsored content has a larger effect on the recognition of advertising than a disclosure after the sponsored content.

CRITICAL PROCESSING

Knowing the intent of a persuasive message can influence individuals' processing of information (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1962; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977; Wentzel, Tomczak, & Herrmann, 2010). When viewers are aware of a persuasion attempt and persuasion knowledge is activated, they may use this knowledge to process the message. In the Persuasion Knowledge Model, this is called the 'if-then' procedure, that is, if people are made aware of a persuasion attempt, they then have to figure out how to effectively manage their response to this attempt (Friestad & Wright, 1994). As a result, the awareness of the persuasion attempt encourages more systematical and biased processing (Janssen, Fennis & Pruyn, 2010). In line with this reasoning, Wentzel et al. (2010) found that when the manipulative intent of an advertisement was salient, consumers were more suspicious and adopted an analytical, critical processing style to evaluate the ad. Hence, the recognition of content as advertising may induce a more critical processing style of that content. Viewers who process content critically are prone to adopt an evaluative style of processing, in which they criticize the content.

With regard to sponsorship disclosure, the recognition of sponsored program content as advertising may also elicit a more critical form of processing of the sponsored content. According to reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), people want to maintain their freedom and do not want to be manipulated. Hence, when people realize they are being influenced, they tend to resist the persuasion attempt (Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice, & Serna, 2002; Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008). Although people may not always try to resist every persuasion attempt, it is very likely this process does occur for sponsored program content. When a sponsorship disclosure enhances the recognition of the sponsored content as advertising, viewers may realize that the program is not neutral and has a commercial purpose. Given the hidden, embedded nature of sponsored content, people may feel deceived. Because of this awareness and feeling of deception, viewers are more likely to cope with this advertising by criticizing the content and watch it with more skepticism.

This mechanism of the recognition of advertising (i.e., activated persuasion knowledge) leading to critical processing has been demonstrated in various earlier studies. Research has shown that a sponsorship disclosure can enhance the recognition of program content as sponsored (i.e., activation of conceptual persuasion knowledge), and that this leads to more critical feelings toward the sponsored content (i.e., higher attitudinal



persuasion knowledge; Boerman et al., 2012). Furthermore, studies on disclosure (or forewarning) of persuasive messages revealed that awareness of the persuasive intent of a message leads to different types of resistance, such as counter arguing (Quinn & Wood, 2004; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977), suspicion (Kirmani & Zhu, 2007), less favorable perceptions of the communicator (Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Wei et al., 2008), and less favorable attitudes toward the message (Jacks & Devine, 2000; Wood & Quinn, 2003).

Therefore, this research proposes that the recognition of advertising, due to a sponsorship disclosure, elicits critical processing of the sponsored content. In addition, because the timing of the disclosure may influence the recognition of advertising, it may also affect the subsequent effect on critical processing. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H2a: As a result of the recognition of advertising, due to sponsorship disclosure, viewers process the sponsored content more critically.

H2b: A sponsorship disclosure prior to or concurrent with the sponsored content has a larger effect on the recognition of advertising and subsequently on critical processing than a disclosure after the sponsored content.

PERSUASION

Although not its primary intent, sponsorship disclosure may mitigate the persuasive effects of the sponsored content. There has been a lot of research on the effects of forewarnings of non-commercial persuasive messages on persuasion. These studies showed that disclosure of the persuasive intent of a message leads to resistance and reduced persuasion (e.g., Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Chen, Reardon, Rea, & Moore, 1992; Freedman & Sears, 1965; Hass & Grady, 1975; Quinn & Wood, 2004). In addition, disclosures of sponsored content in radio shows (Wei et al., 2008), forewarnings of the persuasive intent of a print ad (Lee, 2010), and online ad breaks (An & Stern, 2011) all demonstrated to negatively affect brand evaluations.

This effect of disclosure on persuasion may be due to the recognition of advertising and critical processing of the program content. When viewers recognize the advertising in a program and process this sponsored content critically, they are aware of the (hidden) advertising in the TV program and hence criticize this content. They are most likely critical because they do not want to be manipulated (Brehm, 1966). Therefore, viewers may feel threatened and try to resist persuasion. Because the sponsored content is trying to persuade them of the brand, viewers may counteract this and adapt their attitude toward the brand. This way, the critical processing of the sponsored content may lead to resistance to the brand that it is promoting.

Jacks and Devine (2000) emphasize the important, mediating role of biased-message processing in the effect of message content disclosure on resistance. Their research

showed that viewers felt more irritated while the persuasive message was played, when they were made aware of the manipulative intent of the communicator, which resulted in less favorable final attitudes.

In addition, other studies have demonstrated that persuasion knowledge mediates the effect of the disclosure of the persuasive intent of a message on brand attitude (Kirmani & Zhu, 2007; Boerman et al., 2012). Hence, there is evidence that the recognition of advertising and critical processing may function as mediators and can elicit resistance and reduce persuasion. Therefore, this study tests the model represented in Figure 1. This model proposes that sponsorship disclosure enhances the recognition of advertising, which leads to more critical processing, ultimately diminishing persuasion. This way, sponsorship disclosure leads to resistance of the sponsored content. In addition, because the timing of disclosure may influence the first step in this model—that is, the recognition of advertising—timing may also ultimately influence the effect of the disclosure on brand attitude. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3a: Sponsorship disclosure leads to a less favorable brand attitude through the recognition of advertising, which consequently leads to more critical processing.

H3b: A sponsorship disclosure prior to or concurrent with the sponsored content has a larger effect on the recognition of advertising, critical processing and consequently brand attitude than a disclosure after the sponsored content.

Figure 1 Proposed serial multiple mediation model: Effect of sponsorship disclosure timing on brand attitude via the recognition of sponsored content as advertising and critical processing



METHOD

Procedure

To test the proposed model, an experiment was conducted with a one factor (disclosure timing) between-subjects design. Four different levels of disclosure timing were investigated: no disclosure, disclosure prior to the sponsored content, disclosure concurrent with the sponsored content, or disclosure after the sponsored content. For this experiment, 209 college students (77% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 22.21$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.36$) were recruited using flyers and posters in the university building. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions. Participation in the experiment took about half an hour, and participants received eight euros in cash when leaving.

On arrival, participants sat down behind a computer in an individual cubicle. First, they were asked to read the instructions, which stated that the study was about watching



TV online. Then, participants were asked to watch an online TV program as they would do at home. After participants watched the entire program, they could click through to the questionnaire. The questionnaire started with questions about the program (program familiarity, program viewing frequency, and program involvement). Subsequently, brand attitude, familiarity and use were measured. Then, the questionnaire measured different dimensions of persuasion knowledge, such as the recognition of advertising, followed by self-reported critical processing. Next, questions about sponsorship disclosure were posed (familiarity and recall of the disclosure in the program). The questionnaire ended with demographic variables, such as age and sex.

Stimuli

Participants were asked to watch an edited episode of the television program *MTV Was Here*. This program usually consists of three or four items on gadgets, lifestyle, music, or festivals and is aired weekly. This program was chosen because its target audience corresponded to the study's sample, but also because it was quite unfamiliar. This way, chances were low that participants would have already seen the program content, and that they would know that it can include sponsored content. Additionally, the original program does not show a sponsorship disclosure. When participants were (very) familiar with the program, they may notice the disclosure only because they know it is usually not in there.

The episode used in this study consisted of original material stemming from three different episodes. The three original items were edited by a professional to create one short episode, with a total length of approximately 14 minutes, which is a little shorter than an original episode. The structure of the edited episode was similar to the original episodes. The middle item included the sponsored content. In this item, the presenter visits the store of a new brand of sneakers, Alive Shoes. The concept of the shoes is to mix social networking, art, gaming, and eco-friendly sneakers. In the item, the presenter talks to the creator of the brand who explains the concept. In addition, the presenter gets a pair of the shoes and links her shoes to her social networking sites. The item lasted four minutes and 20 seconds. The brand was mentioned seven times and the shoes were visible, either in the background or very prominently, for a total of one and a half minutes. The other two items consisted of an item about a dance improvisation festival and an interview with an international DJ.

The experiment included four conditions: a sponsorship disclosure was displayed at three different times, or the program did not contain any sponsorship disclosure (control group). In accordance with EU regulations (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010), the disclosure was displayed either at the beginning of the program, just after the introduction ("Today in *MTV Was Here*...") and opening leader, in the middle of the program concurrent with the sponsored item, or after the sponsored content 30 seconds before the end of the program. The disclosure stated: "This program contains advertising by Alive Shoes." In this way, it mentioned both the brand and the fact that the brand is advertising. This is in accordance with new regulation proposals in the United States

(Cain, 2011; Ong, 2011). The disclosure was displayed for three or six seconds (these conditions were taken together in the current analyses) in the upper right corner of the screen and was clearly readable. Its size was comparable to the size of common subtitles (covering approximately 2.5% of the screen).

Measures

Brand attitude

Participants' attitude toward the brand was measured, to indicate a degree of the persuasive effect of the sponsored content. The dependent variable was measured using six 7-point semantic-differential scales: bad/good, unpleasant/pleasant, unfavorable/favorable, negative/positive, dislike/like, and poor quality/high quality (Bruner, 2009). Factor analysis revealed the items loaded on one factor (Eigenvalue = 4.10; explained variance = 68.27%; Cronbach's alpha = .90). The mean score of the six items is used as a measurement of brand attitude ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.11$).

Recognition of advertising

To identify to what extent participants recognized the sponsored content embedded in the program as advertising, and hence to assess the activation of the first level of persuasion knowledge, participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to what extent they agreed with the statement: "The item about Alive Shoes was advertising" ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.41$). Similar one item measures have been used in earlier studies to estimate consumers' ability to recognize advertising (e.g., Boerman et al., 2012; Rozendaal, Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2010; Van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit, 2005).

Critical processing

The extent to which viewers critically processed the sponsored content was measured by asking them to indicate to what extent (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) they agreed with the two statements: "While watching *MTV Was Here*, I criticized the message of the item about Alive Shoes" and "While watching *MTV Was Here*, I was skeptical toward the item about Alive Shoes." These items were derived from a scale measuring counter arguing while watching a program (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010). The mean score of the two items is used as a measurement of self-reported critical processing ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.62$, $r = .60$).

Control variables

A number of control variables were measured to make sure that any effects found could not be caused by possible differences between the experimental groups. Regarding the program, participants were asked whether they were familiar with the television program *MTV Was Here* (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) and how often they watched the program (1 = *never*, 2 = *once or less a month*, 3 = *twice or three times a month*, 4 = *weekly*, 5 = *daily*). Most participants (58%) did not know the program and 68% ($SD = 0.64$) never watched the program. As was expected, these figures show that participants were quite unfamiliar with the program. Program involvement was measured using Zaichkowsky's (1994) personal involvement



inventory (Eigenvalue = 5.16; explained variance = 51.56%; Cronbach's alpha = .89, $M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.89$). Hence, although most participants did not know the program, the average mean of involvement with the program was quite positive. With respect to the brand, participants were asked whether they were familiar with the brand before participating in the study (96% said no) and whether they owned the shoes (100% said no). Participants' interest in shoes was measured by asking to what extent they agreed (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) with the statements: "I am interested in shoes," "I like to watch programs about shoes on television," and "I like buying shoes" (Eigenvalue = 2.33; explained variance = 77.65%; Cronbach's alpha = .86, $M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.53$; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2007). To check whether participants actually noticed the sponsorship disclosure, they were asked whether they recalled a disclosure for advertising in the episode of *MTV Was Here* (0 = no, 1 = yes).

RESULTS

Randomization

Because the focus of this study is on the effect of the timing of the disclosure, it is necessary that participants recalled seeing the disclosure in the television program. Therefore, all participants who were exposed to a disclosure but did not recall this ($n = 93$) were left out of the analyses, leaving a sample of 116 participants (no disclosure $n = 30$, prior to sponsored content $n = 18$, concurrent $n = 35$, and after $n = 33$).

ANOVA and Chi-square analyses showed there were no differences between the experimental groups with respect to program familiarity, $\chi^2(3) = 4.91$, $p = .179$, program viewing frequency, $\chi^2(6) = 3.88$, $p = .693$, program involvement, $F(3, 112) = 0.27$, $p = .851$, brand familiarity, $\chi^2(3) = 3.43$, $p = .330$, product interest, $F(3, 112) = 0.08$, $p = .972$, sex, $\chi^2(3) = 1.07$, $p = .784$, and age, $F(3, 112) = 1.86$, $p = .140$.

Serial multiple mediation analyses

The model with two serial mediators was tested using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012). PROCESS is a computational tool for SPSS that can be used for mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis. It utilizes an ordinary least squares or logistic regression-based path analytical framework to estimate direct and indirect effects in mediator models. Additionally, the macro implements bootstrap methods for inference about indirect effects in mediation models. As the macro provides a formal test of indirect effects, it is particularly suited for the serial multiple mediation model in this study, since the model only assumes an indirect effect of sponsorship disclosure on brand attitudes and no direct effect². In the analyses for this study, 10,000 bootstrap samples were used to estimate the bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (BCBCI).

² An alternative tool of analysis is structural equation modeling using AMOS. The results were checked using this method, which resulted in path coefficients that are almost identical to those in the PROCESS model, and a good model fit. Given the sample size and the focus on indirect effects, PROCESS is considered more appropriate in this study.

To be able to test the effect of each disclosure timing, dummy variables were created for each disclosure timing condition. Separate serial multiple mediation analyses were run for each timing condition with the control group as the reference category. In these analyses, one of the timings functioned as the independent variable, recognition of advertising as the first mediator, self-reported critical processing as the second mediator, and brand attitude as dependent variable. The other two disclosure timing dummy variables were included as covariates. Additionally, to test the differences between disclosure timings, the same analyses were performed with one of the timings as an independent variable. One of the timings and the control condition were included as covariates, making the excluded timing condition the reference category.

Recognition of advertising, critical processing and brand attitude

Figure 2 represents the tested serial multiple medial model with disclosure timing as the independent variable, recognition of advertising as the first mediator, self-reported critical processing as the second mediator, and brand attitude as the dependent variable. The paths in this figure correspond to the results in Table 1. The c-path in the model includes the direct effect of disclosure timing on brand attitude, independent of the effect of the mediators (c'), and the total effect of disclosure timing on brand attitude (c), which is the sum of the direct effect and the indirect effect via the mediators (Hayes, 2012).

The results in Table 1 show a significant effect of the disclosure, compared to no disclosure, on the recognition of advertising, but only when it is displayed prior to ($b_{a1} = 1.16, p = .003$) or concurrent with ($b_{a1} = 0.85, p = .022$) the sponsored content. The disclosure at the end did not appear to enhance viewers' recognition of advertising ($b_{a1} = 0.40, p = .325$). Hence, H1a is supported, a sponsorship disclosure can enhance the recognition of advertising. Furthermore, in accordance with H2a, the extent to which viewers recognized the sponsored content as advertising did significantly elicit critical processing of the sponsored content ($b_{a3} = .24, p = .039$). In addition, critical processing did have a significant negative effect on brand attitude ($b_{b2} = -.41, p = .000$), in support of H3a.

Moreover, the results demonstrate that both the total (c) and the direct effect (c') were not significant for each disclosure timing. This means that there was no direct effect of a sponsorship disclosure for any timing on brand attitude. However, bootstrapping showed significant indirect effects via the two mediators for both the prior (Indirect effect = $-.11$, SE = $.07$, 95% BCBCI [$-.302, -.016$]) and concurrent condition (Indirect effect = $-.08$, SE = $.06$, 95% BCBCI [$-.257, -.006$]) compared to the no disclosure condition. This means that when a disclosure was displayed prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content, it increased the recognition of advertising. Consequently, viewers reported that they were more critical toward the sponsored content while watching it, which led to less favorable brand attitudes.

There was no evidence of an effect of a disclosure shown after the sponsored content (compared to no disclosure) on brand attitude through the recognition of advertising and critical processing (Indirect effect = $-.04$, SE = $.05$, 95% BCBCI [$-.184, .024$]). In other words, the model was not supported for the disclosure shown at the end of the program.



Figure 2 Tested serial multiple mediation model: Effect of sponsorship disclosure timing on brand attitude via the recognition of sponsored content as advertising and critical processing

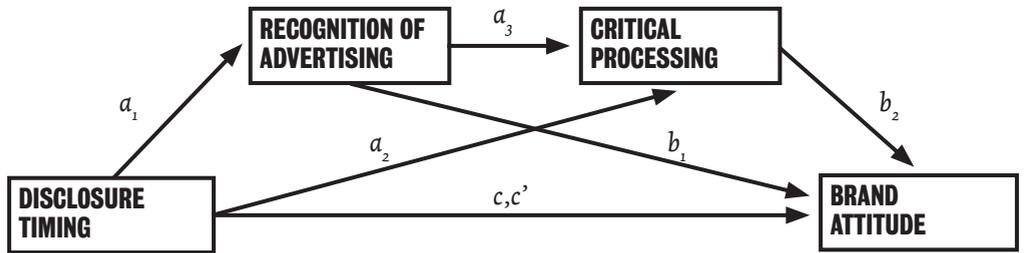


Table 1 Effect of disclosure timing on brand attitude via recognition of advertising and self-reported critical processing

Timing (Reference)	Indirect effect [95% BCBCI]	a ₁	a ₂	a ₃	b ₁	b ₂	c (total)	c' (direct)
Prior (No disclosure)	-0.11 (.07) [-.302, -.016]	1.16 (.37)**	.08 (.51)	.24 (.12)*	.10 (.06) †	-.41 (.06)***	-.04 (.41)	-.01 (.35)
Concurrent (No disclosure)	-0.08 (.06) [-.257, -.006]	.85 (.37)*	.25 (.44)	...	...	...	-.18 (.29)	-.09 (.25)
After (No disclosure)	-.04 (.05) [-.184, .024]	.40 (.41)	.35 (.41)	...	...	...	-.16 (.28)	-.02 (.23)
Prior (After)	-0.07 (.05) [-.225, -.007]	.75 (.34)*	-.27 (.48)	...	...	...	.12 (.38)	.01 (.33)
Concurrent (After)	-.04 (.04) [-.170, .007]	.45 (.33)	-.10 (.40)	...	...	...	-.02 (.25)	-.07 (.20)
Prior (Concurrent)	-.03 (.03) [-.131, .014]	.31 (.29)	-.17 (.49)	...	...	...	.14 (.39)	.07 (.34)

Note Unstandardized b-coefficients (with boot SE between parentheses); BCBCI = Bias corrected bootstrap confidence interval using 10,000 bootstrap samples; significant indirect effects are bold; ... = the scores are the same as the scores above; N = 115.
 † p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Analyses comparing the differences between disclosure timings only showed a significant indirect effect of a disclosure prior to the sponsored content compared to a disclosure shown after the sponsored content (Indirect effect = $-.07$, $SE = .05$, 95% BCBCI [$-.225$, $-.007$]). The model was not significantly different for the comparison of the disclosure concurrent with the sponsored content to the other timing conditions.

To make sure the order of mediators in the serial multiple mediation models could not be switched, all models were tested with the mediators (recognition of advertising and self-reported critical processing) reversed. This did not lead to any significant models, providing evidence that the data are in line with the order specified in the hypotheses.

To summarize, the results support H1a, H2a, and H3a: Compared to no sponsorship disclosure, a disclosure can enhance the recognition of advertising, which elicits critical processing of the sponsored content, and ultimately leads to a negative indirect effect on brand attitude. With regard to the different effects of the various timings of the disclosure, the results show partial support for H1b, H2b, and H3b. Compared to no sponsorship disclosure, the effects on the recognition of advertising (H1b), critical processing (H2b), and brand attitudes (H3b), only occurs when the disclosure was displayed prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content. Comparing the disclosure timings to each other, only the disclosure prior to the sponsored content has a significant indirect effect compared to the disclosure after the sponsored content. Hence, only the disclosure prior to the sponsored content is significantly more effective than the disclosure after the sponsored content.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to understand the way sponsorship disclosure changes the processing of sponsored content and consequently its persuasive effects. Moreover, the effects of different timings of disclosure were compared. A model was proposed in which sponsorship disclosure enhances the recognition of advertising, which leads to critical processing of the sponsored content, ultimately reducing the persuasive effect of the sponsored content. This model was supported, but only for a sponsorship disclosure that is displayed prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content, compared to no disclosure. These findings indicate that a sponsorship disclosure displayed prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content primes the sponsored content so that viewers recognize the content as advertising. Although priming theory suggests that a prime fades quickly (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2009), the priming effect of a sponsorship disclosure at the beginning of a program does not appear to fade during the program. In fact, a disclosure prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content provides sufficient time for viewers to guard themselves against persuasion and process the sponsored content more critically. This ultimately leads to less favorable brand attitudes. These effects were not found for a sponsorship disclosure shown at the end of the program as compared to no disclosure. This means that viewers do not recognize the content as advertising, and hence do not



change the way they process the sponsored content due to a disclosure at the end. As a result, viewers' evaluation of the brand does not change, compared to no disclosure.

Furthermore, when comparing disclosure timings to each other, the effects on the recognition of advertising, critical processing, and brand attitude are only significantly different for the disclosure prior to the sponsored content compared to the disclosure after the sponsored content. The effects of a disclosure concurrent with the sponsored content do not significantly differ from a disclosure prior to or after the sponsored content. This means that only a disclosure prior to the sponsored content is significantly more effective than the other two timings. These findings show the importance of the timing of a sponsorship disclosure. The moment at which a disclosure is shown in the program, relative to the sponsored content it is informing viewers about, influences its effect. The disclosure has to be shown at least concurrent with, and preferably prior to, the sponsored content to increase the recognition of advertising and make viewers watch the content more critically.

Given these findings, this study has important theoretical implications. First, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of the timing of sponsorship disclosure. Although forewarning studies had demonstrated that disclosing the persuasive intent of a message can diminish persuasion (e.g., Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Chen et al., 1992; Freedman & Sears, 1965; Hass & Grady, 1975; Quinn & Wood, 2004), no study had included the moment at which this disclosure should be given. This study shows that disclosure prior to exposure to the persuasive message, in this case sponsored content, is most effective in increasing the recognition of advertising. In addition, compared to no disclosure, a disclosure concurrent with the sponsored content also enhances the recognition of advertising. As suggested by earlier forewarning research (Freedman & Sears, 1965; Hass & Grady, 1975), viewers need time to start thinking about the sponsored content to recognize the commercial purpose of the program content. Because there is no significant difference between the disclosure prior to, and the disclosure concurrent with the sponsored content, viewers appear to have this time after both these disclosure timings. Hence, the results show no evidence of an effect of the temporal delay between the disclosure and the persuasive message. This is in accordance with the results of Wood and Quinn's (2003) meta-analysis of the effects of forewarnings on attitudes. They also found that a time delay between the warning and persuasive message was not associated with increased resistance.

Second, along with the importance of timing, this study gives insight into the mechanisms that underlie the effect of sponsorship disclosure on the persuasive effect of the sponsored content. When a disclosure is shown at the right moment in the program, the awareness of the persuasive intent of the sponsored content consequently causes more skepticism and makes viewers criticize the sponsored content more. This critical processing ultimately causes resistance, making viewers' attitude toward the brand less favorable. Therefore, the recognition of advertising (i.e., the activation of the first level of persuasion knowledge) and critical processing are vital underlying mechanisms that can cause resistance to persuasion and are all elicited by the disclosure.

Because this study is the first to emphasize the importance of disclosure timing, it also calls for future research. This study focused on the three timings that are specifically stated in EU regulations. These disclosures are displayed simultaneous to program content. However, sponsorship disclosure can also be performed by means of billboards before and after the program. Because this type of disclosure is not shown simultaneously with other content, this may influence the attention to the disclosure and its effects. Further research should compare the effects of sponsorship disclosure shown during the program or as billboards. In addition, research could test the effect of displaying the disclosure at all three timings. Furthermore, of all participants that were exposed to a disclosure in this study, only half of them recalled seeing the disclosure. This is an important insight that calls for more research into viewers' attention to sponsorship disclosure, and how this is related to its characteristics and its effectiveness.

Further research is also needed to look into the possible moderating effect of viewers' attitude importance. Jacks and Devine (2000) found that attitude importance was an important moderator for the effect of a forewarning on participants' attitudes. In their study, the forewarning warned participants against an impending attack on their attitudes toward allowing gays to serve openly in the military. In the case of sponsorship disclosure, the disclosure warns the viewer about the impending attempt to persuade you of a product or brand. Although one may expect that prior attitudes about fundamental issues such as gay rights will be more important than brand attitudes, the perceived importance of brand attitudes may also moderate the effect of sponsorship disclosure. Given that the brand used in this study was (relatively) unfamiliar, prior attitudes may not have been vital here, but can be for well-known brands that consumers have strong attitudes towards.

Along with its important contribution to prior disclosure research and information processing theory, this study has important practical implications—especially because sponsorship disclosure is a new development in the EU and the US is still deciding on regulations concerning sponsored content. This study shows that sponsorship disclosure can achieve its goal of making viewers aware of the sponsored content in television programs. Furthermore, sponsorship disclosure changes the processing of the content and can also ultimately lead to resistance against the sponsored content. This means that sponsorship disclosure makes viewers less susceptible to persuasion and hence can be detrimental to advertisers. In addition, the results of this study demonstrate to legislators that the timing of disclosure influences its effects. Disclosure prior to, or concurrent with the sponsored content enhances the recognition of advertising and induces critical processing. However, disclosure after the sponsored content does not elicit these effects and thus, may be worthless. Therefore, in line with the current EU regulations, it is advised to display the disclosure at least at the beginning of the program and in the middle, preferably concurrent with the sponsored content. This provides the viewer the opportunity and time to recognize content as sponsored and to process it critically.



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CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF DISCLOSURE TYPE AND AWARENESS

ABSTRACT

This eye tracking experiment ($N = 149$) investigates the influence of different ways of disclosing brand placement on viewers' visual attention, the use of persuasion knowledge, and brand and program responses. The results show that (1) a combination of text ("This program contains product placement") and a PP ("product placement") logo is most effective in enhancing the recognition of advertising, and a logo alone is least effective; (2) this effect is mediated by viewers' visual attention to the disclosure and the brand placement; and (3) the recognition of advertising consequently increases brand memory and decreases brand attitudes but does not influence program trustworthiness.

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of brand placement in television programs has been a cause of concern for policy makers, consumer organizations, and academics because it may violate the right of consumers to know when they are being subjected to an advertisement (e.g., Cain, 2011; Lee, 2008; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). To guarantee fair communication and to protect the consumer from unaware persuasion, the EU developed regulations that obligate broadcasters to disclose brand placement in TV programs. The implementation of these brand placement disclosures (also referred to as sponsorship disclosures) differs between countries, although they all have the same goal: To help consumers distinguish commercial content from editorial content and recognize embedded advertising in TV programs (Cain, 2011). In other words, brand placement disclosures aim to activate consumers' persuasion knowledge. Earlier research has shown that brand placement disclosure can indeed enhance the recognition of sponsored program content as advertising (Boerman, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012b). However, no study to date has compared the effects of the different types of disclosure on the recognition of advertising. The first aim of this study is therefore to test which type of disclosure currently used in the EU (i.e., a PP [product placement] logo, text stating "This program contains product placement," and a combination of the logo and text) most effectively enhances the recognition of advertising.

Furthermore, to better understand why disclosures are effective, it is important to investigate the processes underlying disclosure effects. A prior study on brand placement disclosures demonstrated that disclosures only influence the use of persuasion knowledge when viewers recall seeing the disclosure (Boerman, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2012a). This was tested by comparing the level of activation of persuasion knowledge of viewers who recalled the disclosure to that of viewers who did not. Although this study shows disclosure effects depend on viewers' memory of the disclosure, it does not show the processes that occur while viewers watch the program. Hence, it is not known whether viewers' attention to different disclosure types may mediate their effects on the use of persuasion knowledge and how viewers' attention to the disclosure may affect viewers' attention to brand placement.

Moreover, prior studies used self-reported measures of memory to indicate viewers' attention to brand placements and disclosures (e.g., Boerman et al., 2012a, 2012b; Campbell, Mohr, & Verlegh, 2013; Tessitore & Geuens, 2013; Van Reijmersdal, Tutaj, & Boerman, 2013). These self-reported measures have the disadvantage that viewers who process messages with relatively little attention are not likely to remember them in the context of a recall task (Slater, 2004). Because attention is not always active or "conscious," physiological measures of attention have been argued to be more reliable (Krugman, 1965; Rosbergen, Pieters, & Wedel, 1997). In particular, integrated persuasive messages, such as brand placement and disclosures, can be processed implicitly or heuristically and thus call for implicit measures of processing (Auty & Lewis, 2004; Smit & Neijens, 2011). Therefore, in this study, we use eye tracking to estimate viewers' visual attention while



watching the program. Eye tracking is particularly useful because it enables us to unobtrusively and directly measure viewers' attention not only to a program but also to specific visual elements within a program, such as a disclosure or brand placement. In this way, we can measure which disclosure type is best at attracting attention and how long viewers attend to the disclosure and the brand placement.

Although eye tracking has been used in previous research to indicate consumers' attention to other types of warnings, such as product warnings in print advertisements (Fox, Krugman, Fletcher, & Fischer, 1998; Krugman, Fox, Fletcher, Fischer, & Rojas, 1994), no study has used this technology to examine the role of attention in the effectiveness of a disclosure in a television program. This focus on attention is of particular interest because prior research claimed that it is more likely that people activate and use their persuasion knowledge when they process the message elaborately (Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010), and elaborate processing requires high levels of attention to the message (Petty, Cacioppo, Strathman, & Priester, 2005). By examining the mediating role of attention for the activation of persuasion knowledge, this study thus provides an important theoretical contribution to the Persuasion Knowledge Model. The second aim of this study is to test the processes that precede the recognition of advertising by investigating what viewers visually attend to while watching a TV program containing a disclosure and brand placement.

Additionally, the recognition of advertising induced by a brand placement disclosure may have consequences for viewers' responses to the brand and program. When the manipulative intent of a message is inferred, a change of meaning can occur, and the viewer may adopt a more critical processing style, which may influence the evaluation of the sender (Campbell, 1995; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Wentzel, Tomczak, & Herrmann, 2010), in this case, the brand and program. Prior studies have indeed demonstrated that brand placement disclosures affect brand responses, such as brand memory and brand attitude (e.g., Boerman et al., 2012b; Campbell et al., 2013; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2013). This effect is likely to be mediated by the activation of levels of persuasion knowledge such as the recognition of advertising (Boerman et al., 2012b). Moreover, because disclosures inform the audience about advertising that is integrated in a traditionally noncommercial TV program, the realization that the program also has commercial purposes may cause viewers to feel betrayed or deceived by the program. Therefore, the recognition of the advertising embedded in the program may backfire on the program by affecting its perceived trustworthiness. In addition, as different disclosure types may be more or less effective at enhancing the recognition of advertising, the consequential effects of different disclosures on brand and program responses may vary. Therefore, our third aim is to investigate how brand placement disclosure types affect viewers' brand and program responses. By doing so, we attempt to replicate earlier findings that brand placement disclosures affect viewers' brand responses, and to extend our knowledge by comparing the effects of different disclosure types, by testing their effects on program trustworthiness, and by assessing the mediating role of viewers' visual attention and the recognition of advertising.

Altogether, we examine the effects of different disclosure types by testing viewers' visual attention to the disclosure and the brand placement and, subsequently, their recognition of the brand placement as advertising (i.e., the activation of persuasion knowledge). Additionally, we explore the consequential effects of the recognition of advertising on brand memory, brand attitude, and program trustworthiness.

BRAND PLACEMENT DISCLOSURE REGULATIONS

The European Audiovisual Media Services Directive obligates broadcasters to disclose brand placement in TV programs, and specifically states:

“Viewers shall be clearly informed of the existence of product placement. Programmes containing product placement shall be appropriately identified at the start and the end of the programme, and when a programme resumes after an advertising break, in order to avoid any confusion on the part of the viewer”

(Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010, p. 17).

Although this regulation clearly expresses the intent of brand placement disclosure, it does not mention *how* brand placement should be disclosed. As a result, the way disclosures are implemented in TV programs differs between countries. For instance, the UK, France, and Belgium use PP logos, whereas Poland and the Netherlands use text (e.g., “This program contains product placement”).

The current sponsorship identification rules in the US also obligate the announcement of brand placement. Section 317 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. § 317, requires broadcasters to disclose to their listeners or viewers “if matter has been aired in exchange for money, services or other valuable consideration” (Federal Communications Commission [FCC], 2013). These rules require one announcement, which has to be made either at the beginning or end of a broadcast. In practice, identifying the sponsors within a show's end credits satisfies the current disclosure rules, and these disclosures are often unreadable and incomprehensible (Ong, 2011). Therefore, the FCC proposed new revised regulations to make sponsorship identification more obvious to consumers (FCC, 2008), and consumer organizations suggested various ways in which to disclose brand placement (Cain, 2011). Hence, although this study focuses on the specific disclosures used in the EU, the findings of this study can be useful for the development of effective brand placement disclosures in the US.

VISUAL ATTENTION TO DISCLOSURE TYPES AND BRAND PLACEMENT

Research on warning labels (e.g., on products) provides an information-processing model that represents the sequential stages of information processing that consumers engage in when they are exposed to warnings (e.g., Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). The first stage in



this model is attention: if a warning is not noticed, it cannot produce the intended effects (Goldman, 2006; Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). Similarly, prior research has demonstrated that the viewers' recall of a brand placement disclosure is crucial for its effectiveness (Boerman et al., 2012b).

Whether viewers pay attention to a disclosure may depend on its characteristics. Haramundanis (1996) argues that icons can be useful as reminders, but only after people have learned their meaning. Therefore, she argues that icons cannot stand alone and need descriptive, supporting text in order to be understood (Haramundanis, 1996). Studies on the use of icons to inform people online emphasize that an icon only is less effective in communicating information compared to text or a combination of an icon and text (Leon et al., 2012; Wiedenbeck, 1999). With respect to brand placement disclosure, a PP logo is similar to an icon. Thus, a PP logo is most likely less clear to viewers than a textual disclosure. Prior research has indicated that the comprehensibility of a PP logo can be enhanced by providing a verbal label that mentions "product placement" (Tessitore & Geuens, 2013). Hence, a PP logo may be less effective and attract less attention than a textual disclosure or a combination of the logo and text.

In addition, there is the obvious difference in size: A PP logo is usually smaller than text, and a combination of the two is evidently the largest. The size of elements has been repeatedly shown to be positively related to attention (e.g., Rosbergen et al., 1997). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1: The type of disclosure influences viewers' attention to the disclosure, with a PP logo attracting the least attention, followed by text ("This program contains product placement"), and a combination of the two attracting the most attention.

RECOGNITION OF ADVERTISING

The Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) provides a conceptual basis for understanding how consumers respond to persuasive messages such as advertising. Persuasion knowledge is defined as consumers' theories about persuasion, including beliefs about the effectiveness and appropriateness of marketers' motives, strategies, and tactics as well as the ways of coping with persuasion attempts (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). When consumers recognize the persuasive intent of a message, they can cope with this attempt by drawing on relevant persuasion knowledge to select and execute coping tactics believed to be effective and appropriate (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Because this coping behavior only occurs when consumers realize that a message has a persuasive intent, the ability to differentiate the persuasive message (such as advertising) from other content is considered the first level of persuasion knowledge (John, 1999; Rozendaal, Lapierre, Van Reijmersdal, & Buijzen, 2011). As brand placement disclosures aim to help viewers distinguish commercial content from editorial content, the recognition of advertising is an important factor when evaluating the effectiveness of disclosures.

Prior persuasion knowledge research has demonstrated that whether consumers use persuasion knowledge in response to a persuasive message depends on their personal focus (Kirmani & Zhu, 2007), the accessibility of ulterior persuasion motives, and their cognitive capacity (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). In addition, the salience of the manipulative intent of the message itself also determines consumers' use of persuasion knowledge (Kirmani & Zhu, 2007; Main, Dahl, & Darke, 2007). When the persuasive intent of a message is not salient, the disclosure of this intent can enhance the activation and use of persuasion knowledge. For instance, research on consumers' use of persuasion knowledge during interpersonal communication with a salesperson has revealed that priming the ulterior persuasion motives prior to a sales interaction increases the use of persuasion knowledge (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). Additionally, prior research on brand placement disclosures demonstrated that disclosures might indeed activate different dimensions of persuasion knowledge, such as the recognition of advertising (Boerman et al., 2012b; Campbell et al., 2013).

However, a disclosure only affects the use of persuasion knowledge of viewers who recall seeing the disclosure (Boerman et al., 2012a). Thus, viewers' attention while watching the program may play an important mediating role in the effectiveness of brand placement disclosures. The importance of attention is also stressed in persuasion knowledge and persuasion processing theories. Viewers are most likely to apply their persuasion knowledge when they process the message elaborately (Buijzen et al., 2010; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). Elaborate processing requires high levels of attention to the message (Petty et al., 2005), which in this case is the brand placement the disclosure is informing viewers about. This would mean that the amount of attention viewers pay to the brand placement will most likely increase the likelihood that they will recognize it as advertising.

Viewers' attention to the brand placement, in turn, is most likely influenced by the brand placement disclosure. As the attention to the disclosure increases, so does its opportunity to effectively communicate its message. Because a disclosure informs the viewer about upcoming brand placements in the program, it may function as a cue or information prime for the brand's appearance in the program (Bennett, Pecotich, & Putrevu, 1999). In this way, the disclosure makes viewers aware of the upcoming brand placement in a program, which makes them pay greater attention to it. Subsequently, this greater attention results in a higher likelihood that they recognize it as advertising. Therefore, we propose that the attention that viewers pay to the disclosure and subsequently to the brand placement increases the likelihood that they recognize it as advertising:

H2: A brand placement disclosure increases viewers' recognition of advertising; this effect is mediated by their visual attention to the disclosure and the brand placement.



EFFECTS ON BRAND AND PROGRAM RESPONSES

Brand memory

Because a brand placement disclosure can influence viewers' attention while watching a program and enhance the recognition of advertising, it may have important consequential effects on viewers' brand responses. A relevant brand response for both advertisers and legislators is viewers' memory of the brand. Prior research has, on the one hand, demonstrated that the disclosure of brands in movies and TV programs directly increases viewers' brand recall (Bennett et al., 1999; Boerman et al., 2012b; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2013). On the other hand, Campbell et al. (2013) found that the top-of-mind awareness of the brand was lower after a brand placement disclosure when compared to no disclosure. They argued that viewers correct their brand recall (by intentionally not mentioning the brand) to avoid the influence of the brand placement. In addition, they showed that the extent to which participants infer persuasive influence of the placement mediated the effect of disclosure on brand recall. Thus, viewers' persuasion knowledge, such as the recognition of advertising, could be an important mediator of the effect of a disclosure on brand memory.

This notion is consistent with the Limited Capacity Model of Motivated Mediated Message Processing (LC4MP), which argues that the memory of a message is a composite of the outcome of three sub-processes of information processing: encoding (i.e., constructing a mental representation of the message in working memory), storage (i.e., linking the message to information in the working memory) and retrieval (i.e., reactivating specific piece of information in working memory; Lang, 2006). Because the application of persuasion knowledge requires elaborate processing of the message (Buijzen et al., 2010), the recognition of advertising may increase the encoding, storing, and retrieval of the brand in the program. Thus, a brand placement disclosure increases the likelihood that viewers attend to the brand placement and elaborate upon it to recognize it as advertising. Because of this elaborate processing of the brand placement, chances are high that viewers allocate processing resources to encode, store, and retrieve the brand placement. These processes make the brand placement and the information closely related to it more active in working memory. Because the brand is part of the brand placement and hence closely related, elaborate processing of the brand placement may thus lead to better brand memory.

Brand attitude

The activation of persuasion knowledge may also change viewers' evaluation of the brand. When persuasion knowledge is activated, people may adopt a more critical processing style and evaluate the persuasive message suspiciously (Campbell, 1995; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Wentzel et al., 2010). As a result, the activation of persuasion knowledge can lead to diminished persuasion (Buijzen et al., 2010; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Petty, Ostrom, & Brock, 1981). This process is related to the reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), which argues that people want to maintain their freedom and do not want to be manipulated.

Hence, people tend to resist persuasion attempts when they recognize them as such (Main et al., 2007; Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice, & Serna, 2002; Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008).

Research has shown that the activation of persuasion knowledge has a negative effect on consumers' attitudes toward the advertisement and brand (Campbell, 1995) and leads to decreased interest in the featured items (Brown & Krishna, 2004). Furthermore, various studies have demonstrated that disclosures of persuasive intent can induce these negative results. For example, forewarning research showed that disclosing the persuasive intent of a (noncommercial) message leads to resistance and diminished persuasion (e.g., Chen, Reardon, Rea, & Moore, 1992; Quinn & Wood, 2004). Additionally, earlier studies on the disclosure of brands embedded in radio shows (Wei et al., 2008), forewarning of the persuasive intent of a print ad (Lee, 2010), and online ad breaks (An & Stern, 2011) all demonstrated negative disclosure effects on brand evaluations. Moreover, the disclosure of brand placements was also shown to negatively affect brand attitudes (Boerman et al., 2012b; Campbell et al., 2013), product claim acceptance (Dekker & van Reijmersdal, 2013), and purchase intention (Tessitore & Geuens, 2013).

Hence, as a result of the recognition of advertising, a disclosure may also affect viewers' evaluation of the brand that was integrated into the program: when viewers are aware of the brand placement attempting to persuade them, they may counteract this and adapt their attitudes toward the brand, meaning that the disclosure could mitigate the persuasive effect of the brand placement. Thus, based on persuasion knowledge and reactance theories and prior research, we expect that the recognition of program content as advertising induced by the disclosure negatively affects viewers' brand attitude.

Program trustworthiness

The recognition of advertising in a program stimulated by a brand placement disclosure may also lead to less favorable attitudes toward the vehicle that incorporated the embedded advertising. According to the change of meaning principle (Friestad & Wright, 1994), becoming conscious of a persuasive attempt redefines the nature of the interaction with the sender. When the manipulative intent of a message is inferred, people evaluate the attempt suspiciously and adopt a more critical processing style, which influences the evaluation of the sender (Campbell, 1995; Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Wentzel et al., 2010). In line with this reasoning, prior studies showed that the activation of persuasion knowledge leads to lower perceptions of the salesperson's sincerity (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000) and trustworthiness (Main et al., 2007). Because brand placement is incorporated in a program, the program can be seen as the sender of the persuasive message. When viewers recognize program content as advertising, they realize that the intent of the program is not only to entertain or inform but also to persuade. Given that people do not want to be manipulated (Brehm, 1966), the realization that the program also has commercial purposes may lead to a sense of betrayal and deception. The recognition of the advertising embedded in the program may then backfire on the program, and viewers may perceive the program as less honest and trustworthy. A study on embedded advertising in a radio show revealed



that the activation of persuasion knowledge (by telling participants that a brand paid for the show) led to less favorable evaluations of the radio show, the host of the show, and the radio station (Wei et al., 2008).

Altogether, when a brand placement disclosure increases the recognition of advertising, this activation of persuasion knowledge may subsequently affect viewers' responses to the brand and program. Because the effect of a disclosure on the recognition of advertising is likely to be mediated by viewers' visual attention to the disclosure and the brand placement, we propose an indirect effect:

H3: A brand placement disclosure has an indirect effect on viewers' (a) brand memory, (b) brand attitude, and (c) the perceived program trustworthiness; this effect is mediated by viewers' visual attention to the disclosure and brand placement and the recognition of advertising.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

To test these hypotheses, we conducted an experiment ($N = 180$ students from a Dutch university, $M_{\text{age}} = 21.78$; 73% female) using an eye tracker to measure participants' visual attention while watching a TV program. The between-subjects experimental design included four conditions: a program without a brand placement disclosure, and three disclosure conditions, namely, a PP logo, a text reading "This program contains product placement" and a combination of the two conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to one of conditions. Regardless of its type, the brand placement disclosure was shown for six seconds at the right upper corner. This was chosen because earlier research showed that a disclosure that is displayed for six seconds is more effective compared to a disclosure that is displayed for three seconds (Boerman et al., 2012b). All types of disclosures were displayed at the beginning of the program after 24 seconds, just after the opening leader.

Two participants were excluded from the analyses due to technical problems, leaving a sample of 178 participants (no disclosure $n = 29$, logo $n = 50$, text $n = 50$, text+logo $n = 49$). Additionally, because there were no data for the attention to the disclosure (the first mediator) for the no-disclosure condition, this group was not taken into account in the serial multiple mediation models.

Participants were recruited through posters and flyers posted throughout the university building and were told that they were participating in an eye tracking study on how people watch TV. Participants were first asked to read an introduction text and to sign an informed consent. They were then asked to sit behind the screen with the eye tracker and to make themselves comfortable. Eye tracking was conducted using the SMI RED eye tracker with a gaze sample rate of 120 Hz per second. This eye tracker was attached to a 22-inch screen, which was placed 23-32 inches from the participant. For calibration, participants had to follow a moving black dot with their eyes. After calibration, participants watched an episode of a TV program. Afterwards, participants filled out

the questionnaire on a computer in a cubicle. This questionnaire started with questions related to the program (in order: program familiarity, program viewing frequency, episode familiarity, attention to the program, program involvement, and program trustworthiness) followed by, among others, advertising recognition and the brand-related questions (i.e., brand recall, brand familiarity, and brand attitude). Finally, participants were asked about their gender and age. After the questionnaire, participants were debriefed, thanked and given either five euros or a research credit for their participation.

Stimulus materials

All participants watched a shortened episode of *Grijpstra & De Gier*, a Dutch police series about two officers, which lasted seven minutes and 38 seconds and was about one of the officer's new girlfriend. With regard to the brand placement, there were two moments in which the coffee brand Nescafé was visible in the episode. During the first placement, the two officers stood in front of a coffee machine while getting coffee and having a conversation. The brand name Nescafé was clearly readable on the coffee machine for a total of 11 seconds. The second placement occurred during a conversation between the officers and their assistant. The assistant held a cardboard coffee cup with the brand Nescafé on it close to his face and sipped from the cup. The cup with the brand was visible for a total of 14 seconds.

Measures

The eye tracking data were prepared and exported using the SMI BeGaze software. To determine the time viewers' eyes were directed at the disclosure and the brand placements, we created three Areas of Interest (AOIs): one for each disclosure, one for the first brand placement and one for the second brand placement. Because of possible noise in the eye tracking data and possible peripheral attention (see, e.g., Purucker, Landwehr, Sprott, & Herrmann, 2013), the surface size of the AOIs were 300% of the actual disclosure or brand name. Visual attention to the AOIs was estimated by the fixation time (the sum of all fixation durations) in seconds inside the AOI; a fixation was measured when the eyes stayed at a particular point for a minimum of 80 milliseconds. Research has demonstrated the validity of fixation time as an indicator of attention (e.g., Christianson, Loftus, Hoffman, & Loftus, 1991).

Visual attention to the disclosure and the brand placement

Participants' *visual attention to the disclosure* was measured by the fixation time in seconds inside the disclosure AOI ($M = 0.70$, $SD = 0.82$). In addition, we created a dummy variable in which participants scored 0 if they did not fixate on the disclosure AOI and 1 if they fixated at least once on the AOI (in total, 63% fixated on one of the disclosures). *Visual attention to the brand placement* was reported by the total fixation time in seconds inside the AOIs of the first and second brand placement ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 1.13$).



Recognition of advertising

Viewers' recognition of the advertising in the program (i.e., the activation of the first level of persuasion knowledge) was measured by asking the participants to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) to what extent they agreed with the statement: "The episode of *Grijpstra & De Gier I* just watched contained advertising" ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 2.21$). The same measure was used by Boerman et al. (2012b) and is based on measures used to estimate consumers' ability to recognize content as advertising (e.g., Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2010; Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2005).

Brand and program responses

Brand memory was measured by asking participants whether they recalled seeing any brands in the episode of *Grijpstra & De Gier*. If they answered "yes," they were given the option to indicate which brands. Brand recall was coded 1 (*recalled Nescafé*) or 0 (*did not recall any brands or recalled an incorrect brand*). Approximately half of the participants (48%) correctly recalled seeing Nescafé. *Brand attitude* was measured using three 7-point semantic differential scales: bad/good, dislike/like and negative/positive (e.g., Bruner, 2009; Campbell, 1995). The mean score of the three items was used as a measurement of brand attitude (Eigenvalue = 2.66; explained variance = 88.49%; Cronbach's alpha = .93; $M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.05$). To measure the perceived *program trustworthiness*, participants were asked to what extent they found the episode of *Grijpstra & De Gier* honest, trustworthy, and convincing. These items were based on a scale measuring source trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990). The mean score for the three items was used to represent perceived program trustworthiness (Eigenvalue = 2.00; explained variance = 66.57%; Cronbach's alpha = .73, $M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.92$).

Control variables

The questionnaire included several control variables to ensure that the effects of disclosure type were not caused by other differences between the experimental groups. To measure participants' *program familiarity* and *program viewing frequency*, we asked them whether they were familiar with the television program *Grijpstra & De Gier* (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) and how many episodes (of a total of 46 episodes divided over 5 seasons aired between 2004 and 2007) they had watched entirely or partially. Approximately half of the participants (51%) did know the program, and on average, they had seen five episodes ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 6.67$). The participants who indicated that they were familiar with the program were also asked whether they had ever seen the episode shown in the experiment before. Approximately 2% were familiar with the episode. Furthermore, all participants were asked to rate how attentively they had just watched the episode on a scale from 1 (*absolutely not attentive*) to 7 (*very attentive*; self-reported attention to the program; $M = 5.79$, $SD = 0.94$). We measured *program involvement* using the mean of the ten 7-point semantic differential scales from Zaichkowsky's (1994) personal involvement inventory (Eigenvalue = 5.50; explained variance = 54.99%; Cronbach's alpha = .91, $M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.86$). Furthermore, we measured

participants' *brand familiarity* ("Do you know the brand Nescafé?" 0 = no, 1 = yes) and *brand use* ("How often do you drink Nescafé coffee?" 1 = never, 2 = monthly, 3 = weekly, 4 = daily one cup, 5 = daily more than one cup). Most participants (98%) were familiar with the brand Nescafé, but 69% said that they never drink Nescafé coffee, whereas 10% said that they drink Nescafé weekly or more often. Hence, brand use was dichotomized (0 = never, 1 = drinks Nescafé). Additionally, we asked participants to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) to what extent they were interested in coffee (*product interest*; $M = 4.13$, $SD = 2.10$).

RESULTS

Randomization

The experimental groups did not differ with respect to gender, $\chi^2(2) = 0.16$, $p = .924$, age, $F(2, 146) = 1.21$, $p = .301$, brand familiarity, $\chi^2(2) = 0.50$, $p = .779$, brand use, $\chi^2(2) = 1.39$, $p = .498$, and product interest, $F(2, 146) = 2.50$, $p = .085$. With regard to the program, there were no differences between the experimental groups in participants' program familiarity, $\chi^2(2) = 0.28$, $p = .868$, program viewing frequency, $F(2, 146) = 0.89$, $p = .417$, episode familiarity, $\chi^2(2) = 2.03$, $p = .362$, attention to the program, $F(2, 146) = 1.29$, $p = .233$, and program involvement, $F(2, 146) = 1.23$, $p = .296$. Gender, brand use, product interest, and attention to the program were included as covariates in all analyses to control for any confounding effects.

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for all variables for the experimental groups. There are no direct significant differences between the groups except with regard to visual attention to the disclosure type (see next section) and the recognition of advertising, $F(3, 170) = 17.98$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = .06$. The lack of significant differences is likely because the effects of the disclosure are mediated by viewers' visual attention to the disclosure.

Visual attention to disclosure types

To test the amount of attention participants paid to the different disclosure types, we ran an ANCOVA with the disclosure type as the independent variable, visual attention to the disclosure as the dependent variable, and gender, brand use, product interest, and attention to the program as covariates. The results (see Table 1) show a significant difference in the attention to the types of disclosure, $F(2, 142) = 18.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$. Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using the Bonferroni correction demonstrate significant differences between the logo ($M_{\text{logo}} = 0.04$, $SD_{\text{logo}} = 0.18$) and the text ($M_{\text{text}} = 0.90$, $SD_{\text{text}} = 0.69$; $p < .001$) and between the logo and the combination of the text and the logo ($M_{\text{text+logo}} = 1.19$, $SD_{\text{text+logo}} = 0.91$; $p < .001$). Additionally, the text+logo combination attracted more visual attention than the text ($p = .032$).



Table 1 Descriptive statistics for the experimental conditions

	No disclosure	Logo	Text	Text+Logo
Visual attention to disclosure	n.a.	0.04 (0.18) ^a	0.90 (0.69) ^b	1.19 (0.91) ^c
Visual attention to brand placement	1.26 (1.17) ^a	1.17 (0.94) ^a	1.62 (1.22) ^a	1.42 (1.19) ^a
Recognition of advertising	4.17 (2.33) ^{ab}	4.20 (2.40) ^a	5.48 (1.88) ^b	5.04 (2.17) ^{ab}
Brand memory	37.9% ^a	40.0% ^a	60.0% ^a	42.9% ^a
Brand attitude	4.74 (1.12) ^a	4.27 (0.94) ^a	4.57 (1.01) ^a	4.69 (1.16) ^a
Program trustworthiness	4.56 (0.85) ^a	4.40 (0.87) ^a	4.42 (0.89) ^a	4.22 (1.01) ^a

Note Visual attention is fixation time in seconds; brand memory represents the percentage of participants who did recall the brand; all other variables are scaled 1 - 7. $N = 178$: no disclosure $n = 29$, logo $n = 50$, text $n = 50$, text+logo $n = 49$.

^{a b c} Means with a different superscript in the same row differ significantly at $p < .05$.

In addition to the amount of attention, we tested which disclosure type was most likely to be fixated on. The results from a Chi-square analysis are comparable to the ANCOVA, $\chi^2(2) = 98.43, p = .000$. Only 8% of the participants fixated on the logo, 88% fixated on the text, and 94% fixated on the combination of the text and logo. These results support hypothesis 1: the PP logo attracted the least visual attention, followed by the text, and a combination of the two attracted the most attention.

Recognition of advertising

To test the effects of the brand placement disclosures on the recognition of advertising mediated by viewers' visual attention to the disclosure and to the brand placement (hypothesis 2), we used Hayes' PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012). This macro uses an ordinary least squares or logistic regression-based path analytical framework to estimate the direct and indirect effects in mediator models. In addition, the macro implements bootstrap methods for inference about indirect effects in mediation models. Thus, other than Baron and Kenny's method (1986), this macro provides a formal test of indirect effects when there is no direct effect of the independent variable and the dependent variable (Hayes, 2009). This makes PROCESS particularly suited for the serial multiple mediation model in this study because the model only assumes an indirect effect of the brand placement disclosure on the recognition of advertising, on brand and program responses and no direct effect. All analyses used 10,000 bootstrap samples to estimate the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (BCBCI).

To test the differences between the three disclosure types, we created dummy variables for each. We ran three separate serial multiple mediation analyses with one of the disclosure types as independent variable and another as a covariate, making the excluded

type the reference category. In the analyses, the attention to the disclosure functioned as the first mediator, the attention to the brand placement as the second mediator, and the recognition of advertising as the dependent variable. Gender, brand use, product interest, and attention to the program were included as covariates. The results are shown in Table 2, which corresponds to the model in Figure 1.

These results demonstrate significant indirect effects of the brand placement disclosure on advertising recognition for all comparisons. Compared to the logo, both the text (Indirect effect = 0.26, boot SE = 0.14, 95% BCBCI [.03, .60]) and text+logo (Indirect effect = 0.37, boot SE = 0.18, 95% BCBCI [.07, .77]) resulted in better recognition of advertising. In addition, the text+logo resulted in a higher recognition of advertising compared to the text (Indirect effect = 0.11, boot SE = 0.06, 95% BCBCI [.03, .30]). This indirect effect of the disclosure types on the recognition of advertising is mediated by the effect of viewers' visual attention to the disclosure on their visual attention to the brand placement ($b = 0.40$, $p = .076$), which consequently increased the recognition of advertising ($b = 0.79$, $p < .001$). These significant indirect effects provide evidence to support hypothesis 2.

Table 2 Indirect effects of brand placement disclosure type on the recognition of advertising

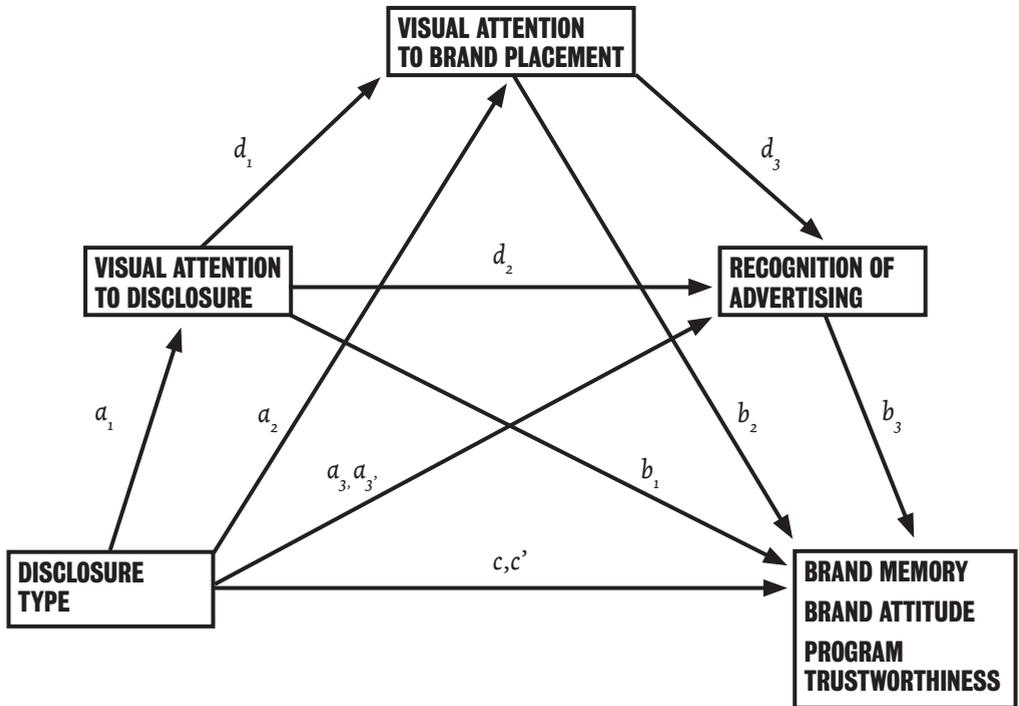
Disclosure (Reference)	<i>Indirect Effect</i> [95% BCBCI]	a_1	a_2	a_3 (total)	a_3 (direct)	d_1	d_2	d_3
Text (Logo)	.26 (.14) [.033, .597]	.83 (.10)***	.06 (.24)	1.19 (.46)*	.97 (.47)*	.40 (.22)†	-.10 (.29)	.79 (.15)***
Text+Logo (Logo)	.37 (.18) [.065, .766]	1.19 (.15)***	-.23 (.32)	.83 (.48)†	.76 (.60)	...	...	...
Text+Logo (Text)	.11 (.06) [.025, .304]	.36 (.17)*	-.29 (.26)	-.36 (.44)	-.20 (.45)	...	...	...

Note Unstandardized b-coefficients (with boot SE between parentheses) corresponding to the paths in Figure 1; controlled for sex, brand use, product interest, and attention paid to program; ... = the scores are the same as the scores above; BCBCI = Bias corrected 10,000 bootstrap confidence interval; $N = 149$.

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.



Figure 1 Indirect effect of brand placement disclosure type on brand memory, brand attitude, and program trustworthiness, via visual attention to the disclosure, visual attention to the brand placement, and the recognition of advertising



Brand and program responses

To test the effects of the disclosures on brand memory, brand attitude, and program trustworthiness (hypothesis 3), we ran three separate serial multiple mediation analyses comparing the three disclosure types for each dependent variable. In these analyses, the attention to the disclosure functioned as the first mediator, the attention to the brand placement as the second mediator, and the recognition of advertising as the third mediator. Again, gender, brand use, product interest, and attention to the program were included as covariates. The results from these analyses are shown in Table 3, also corresponding to the model in Figure 1.

Brand memory

Regarding brand memory, the results demonstrate no significant direct effect (c'), but significant indirect effects for all comparisons. Compared to the logo, the text gained more attention, which led to greater attention to the brand placement and consequently to better recognition of advertising, which subsequently resulted in greater brand memory (Indirect effect = 0.24, boot SE = 0.16, 95% BCBCI [.00, .60]). The same indirect effect appeared for the

text+logo condition compared to the logo only (Indirect effect = 0.34, boot SE = 0.21, 95% BCBCI [.01, .81]). Compared to the text, the text+logo indirectly resulted in better brand memory (Indirect effect = 0.10, boot SE = 0.07, 95% BCBCI [.01, .32]). This means that the combination of text and logo had the strongest positive effect on brand memory, followed by the text only. Hence, viewers' advertising recognition increased brand memory, which supports hypothesis 3a.

Table 3 *Indirect effects of brand placement disclosure type on brand memory, brand attitude, and program trustworthiness*

Disclosure (Reference)	<i>Indirect Effect</i> [95% BCBCI]	b_1	b_2	b_3	<i>c</i> (total)	<i>c'</i> (direct)
<i>Brand Memory</i>						
Text (Logo)	.24 (.16) [.004, .595]	-.60 (.38)	.43 (.26)†	.91 (.17)***	.77 (.42)†	.66 (.68)
Text+Logo (Logo)	.34 (.21) [.009, .806]	...	...	...	.20 (.42)	.32 (.76)
Text+Logo (Text)	.10 (.07) [.009, .324]	...	...	...	-.57 (.42)	-.35 (.58)
<i>Brand Attitude</i>						
Text (Logo)	-.03 (.02) [-.080, -.003]	-.11 (.13)	.15 (.09)†	-.10 (.04)*	.28 (.19)	.44 (.22)*
Text+Logo (Logo)	-.04 (.02) [-.106, -.006]	...	...	...	.46 (.22)*	.64 (.26)*
Text+Logo (Text)	-.01 (.01) [-.042, -.002]	...	...	...	.17 (.22)	.20 (.22)
<i>Program Trustworthiness</i>						
Text (Logo)	-.01 (.01) [-.054, .004]	.08 (.12)	-.09 (.08)	-.04 (.04)	-.03 (.17)	-.01 (.20)
Text+Logo (Logo)	-.02 (.02) [-.072, .006]	...	...	...	-.27 (.19)	-.31 (.22)
Text+Logo (Text)	-.00 (.01) [-.027, .001]	...	...	...	-.24 (.19)	-.30 (.19)

Note Unstandardized b-coefficients (with boot SE between parentheses) corresponding to the paths in Figure 1; controlled for sex, brand use, product interest, and attention paid to program; coefficients for a^1 , a^2 , a^3 , d^1 , d^2 , and d^3 are presented in Table 1; ... = the scores are the same as the scores above; BCBCI = Bias corrected 10,000 bootstrap confidence interval; $N = 149$.

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.



Brand attitude

The analyses with brand attitude as the dependent variable revealed significant negative, though small, indirect effects for all comparisons. The text (Indirect effect = -0.03 , boot SE = 0.02 , 95% BCBCI [-0.08 , -0.00]) and text+logo (Indirect effect = -0.04 , boot SE = 0.02 , 95% BCBCI [-0.11 , -0.01]) both indirectly resulted in slightly less favorable brand attitudes compared to a logo only. The text+logo appears to have a small significant indirect effect on brand attitude compared to the text (Indirect effect = -0.01 , boot SE = 0.01 , 95% BCBCI [-0.04 , -0.00]), indicating that a disclosure indirectly influences brand attitude when viewers recognize the advertising. Hence, the results support hypothesis 3b.

Program trustworthiness

With regard to program trustworthiness, the results show no direct or indirect effects of disclosure types. Compared to the logo, neither the text (Indirect effect = -0.01 , boot SE = 0.01 , 95% BCBCI [-0.05 , $.00$]) nor the text+logo (Indirect effect = -0.02 , boot SE = 0.02 , 95% BCBCI [-0.07 , $.01$]) resulted in lower program trustworthiness. The text+logo did not change program trustworthiness compared to the text (Indirect effect = -0.00 , boot SE = 0.01 , 95% BCBCI [-0.03 , $.00$]). Therefore, hypothesis 3c is not supported.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effects of brand placement disclosure types on viewers' visual attention while watching a program containing brand placement, their use of persuasion knowledge (i.e., the recognition of brand placement as advertising), and brand and program responses. Our first aim was to test which type of disclosure is most effective in enhancing the recognition of advertising in a program. The results demonstrated that a combination of text and a PP logo is most effective in increasing the recognition of advertising, followed by text only. The logo alone is least effective.

The second aim of this study was to test the processes that precede the recognition of advertising by investigating what viewers attend to while watching a TV program containing a disclosure and brand placement. By using eye tracking, we were able to directly measure the focus of viewers' eyes while watching the program. These data demonstrated large differences in visual attention to the various disclosure types. Only 8% of the participants fixated on the logo compared to 88% on the text and 94% on a combination of a text and a logo. Thus, the combination of text and logo attracts the most attention. Additionally, our findings demonstrate that the effects of a disclosure on the recognition of advertising are mediated by viewers' attention to the disclosure and the brand placement. Because we found no direct effect of the disclosure types, a disclosure only influences the recognition of advertising when viewers attend to it and consequently pay greater attention to the brand placement. These findings explain the difference in the effectiveness of the three types of disclosure: The combination of text and logo has the greatest effect on the recognition of advertising because it attracts the most visual

attention, whereas a logo alone is least effective because it attracts very little attention.

The current study is one of the first to provide evidence for this mediating role of attention in the activation of persuasion knowledge. Our findings support processing and persuasion knowledge theories that state that the retrieval and application of persuasion knowledge requires elaborate processing (Buijzen et al., 2010) and that people should have the cognitive capacity to do so (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). This eye tracking study demonstrates that visual attention to the disclosure and the brand placement are important underlying mechanisms of the effect of a disclosure on the recognition of advertising, which need to be taken into account when studying the effects of disclosures. In this way, this study provides an important contribution to the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad & Wright, 1994) by providing evidence that attention to the persuasive message is an important precondition for the activation of persuasion knowledge.

The importance of attention indicates why certain disclosure types are more effective than others: The effects of a disclosure on viewers' use of persuasion knowledge depend on the amount of attention paid to the disclosure. However, future research is needed to investigate the mechanisms that might explain why a combination of text and a PP logo attracts more attention than either text or a PP logo alone. Although we used a PP logo that is very similar to the logos that are actually used, the reduced attention may have been due to the logo's lack of appeal. Further research may explain whether viewers' attention to a disclosure is driven by its size, font or color, the amount of information provided, or a combination of textual and visual information. Research may also identify whether viewers' attention to disclosures could be attributed to the ease of comprehension or processing fluency (Schwarz, 2004).

Our third aim was to investigate how brand placement disclosure types affect viewers' brand and program responses. Replicating the findings of prior research (e.g., Bennett et al., 1999; Boerman et al., 2012b; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2013), the current study shows that a brand placement disclosure increases the recognition of advertising and consequently indirectly affects both brand memory and brand attitudes. Again, a combination of text and a logo is most effective in altering viewers' brand responses. These findings show that the effects of brand placement disclosures follow three stages: a disclosure first needs to attract (visual) attention; subsequently, it activates the viewers' persuasion knowledge, and as a result, it influences the persuasive effects of the brand placement. Because these stages are similar to the stages of information processing consumers engage in when exposed to warnings on products (e.g., Wogalter & Laughery, 1996), our findings indicate that this model of processing also applies to brand placement disclosures.

The positive effect on brand memory is mediated by viewers' visual attention to the disclosure, visual attention to the brand placement and recognition of advertising. This means that to increase brand memory, attention to the brand placement is not enough; viewers also need to recognize it as advertising. These findings agree with processing and persuasion knowledge theories that argue that the activation of persuasion knowledge requires elaborate processing of the content (Buijzen et al., 2010). Hence, as viewers'



recognition of advertising in the program enhances, so does their memory of the brand incorporated in the program. Prior studies have found direct effects of disclosure on brand memory. However, an important difference within these studies is that the brand placement disclosures mentioned the brands (e.g., Bennett et al., 1999; Boerman et al., 2012b), which was not the case of the disclosures tested in this study, indicating that the disclosure in these studies also functioned as an additional brand exposure. Moreover, these studies used different types of sponsored content, such as more prominent brand placements or forms of brand integration (Boerman et al., 2012b; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2013). Our findings are contrary to those of Campbell et al. (2013), who found a negative effect of sponsorship disclosure on the top-of-mind awareness of the brand and argue that this effect is caused by viewers correcting their answers for the persuasive impact of the brand placement. Campbell et al. (2013) state that this correction is a consequence of the activation of persuasion knowledge. However, they did not measure this activation directly. This study indicates that a disclosure can activate persuasion knowledge but that this leads to greater brand memory and not necessarily to a correction of brand recall. Future research is needed to compare the effects of different disclosure content for different types of sponsored content and should examine this possible correction of brand memory in more detail.

The current study demonstrated a small negative effect on brand attitude. The recognition of advertising stimulated by a brand placement disclosure makes viewers evaluate the brand less positively. Thus, with regard to the brand, the change of meaning described in the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Friestad & Wright, 1994) can be induced by a brand placement disclosure. These findings are in line with prior forewarning (e.g., Chen et al., 1992; Quinn & Wood, 2004) and advertising disclosure research (e.g., Boerman et al. 2012b; Wei et al. 2008) that demonstrated that disclosing the persuasive intent of a message can diminish persuasion. In accordance with the reactance theory (Brehm, 1966), this study shows that viewers will try to resist persuasion when they recognize the advertising in a program (Sagarin et al., 2002; Wei et al., 2008). This means that brand placement disclosure indirectly reduces viewers' susceptibility to advertising (Buijzen et al., 2010; Greenwald & Leavitt, 1984; Petty et al., 1981) and mitigates the persuasive effects of the brand placement. Hence, our findings provide valuable insights into how brand placement disclosure influences the persuasion process.

Differently than expected, this reactance mechanism does not apply to for the perceived program trustworthiness. The results provide no evidence of an effect of brand placement disclosure and viewers' recognition of advertising on program trustworthiness. In other words, the change of meaning principle (Friestad & Wright, 1994) does not apply to the program, and a disclosure does not appear to lead to a sense of betrayal. This is a positive outcome for advertisers and broadcasters, demonstrating that brand placement disclosure does not harm viewers' trust in the program. This finding may be explained by the genre of the program, as we used a drama series. Research has shown that viewers think

that familiar brand names can add to the realism of movies (Gupta & Gould, 1997; Sung, de Gregorio, & Jung, 2009). Hence, despite its effects on the brand itself, the appearance of a brand in a TV series might not influence the perceived trustworthiness of the program because viewers might think that using real brands makes the program more realistic. More research is needed to better understand how viewers' evaluation of brand placement in general relates to their responses to different programs, program genres, and brand placements.

Moreover, further research is needed to examine alternative explanations for our findings, by looking into factors that may moderate the effects of brand placement disclosures. Although participants' gender, self-reported attention to the program, brand use, and product interest did not appear to confound any of the effects found in this study, they may be important moderators. For instance, prior research has shown that brand placement had a negative effect on brand attitude when persuasion knowledge was high and involvement was low (Matthes, Schemer, & Wirth, 2007). However, one might also argue that viewers who are highly involved with the program are more likely to react against persuasion attempts. Future research could examine how involvement may moderate disclosure effects. Moreover, research on advertising embedded in a radio show demonstrated that the activation of persuasion knowledge had little effect on brand evaluations when brand familiarity was high (Wei et al., 2008). Hence, a disclosure may have less impact on people who are very familiar with the brand. Because 98% of the participants in the current study were familiar with the brand, brand familiarity did not influence our findings. However, further research is needed to clarify whether brand familiarity moderates the effects of brand placement disclosures.

Because brand placement disclosure regulations are still being developed and modified (for instance, in the US), this study has some important practical implications and could contribute to the development of effective disclosures. Our study compared the different types of disclosures used in the EU and demonstrated that the use of text stating "This program contains product placement" combined with a PP logo is most effective at enhancing the recognition of advertising. Regulators could use this knowledge to create useful guidelines for more effective brand placement disclosures. For advertisers, there are two sides to brand placement disclosure. On the one hand, disclosures increase the attention to the brand placement and enhance viewers' brand memory and thus can be beneficial for creating brand awareness. On the other hand, disclosures indirectly result in less favorable brand attitudes, which is a negative outcome for advertisers. One of the advantages of brand placement is that viewers are not always aware of it, and therefore, it has the potential to overcome consumers' skepticism (Bhatnagar, Aksoy, & Malkoc, 2004). Brand placement disclosures take away this advantage by making viewers more aware of the persuasive intent of the brand placement. Thus, brand placement disclosures are able to achieve their goal and may result in more fair communication because consumers know when they are being subjected to advertising. However, advertisers should be aware that an informed audience may become more skeptical toward the brands placed in television programs.



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NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

INTRODUCTIE

In televisieprogramma's worden steeds vaker teksten zoals "Dit programma bevat product placement" of PP (product placement) logo's getoond. Deze sponsorvermeldingen hebben als doel de televisiekijker te informeren over merken of producten die doelbewust worden geïntegreerd in televisieprogramma's. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de effecten van sponsorvermeldingen op hoe kijkers de gesponsorde televisieprogramma's en de geïntegreerde merken verwerken en hoe kijkers daarop reageren.

Gesponsorde televisie-inhoud wordt gedefinieerd als de doelbewuste integratie van merken of producten in redactionele inhoud, in ruil voor compensatie van de sponsor (Russell & Belch, 2005; Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, & Smit, 2009). De aanwezigheid van commerciële inhoud in programma's kan verschillende vormen hebben en varieert van *brand placement* -waarbij een merk of product geplaatst wordt in het programma - tot merkintegratie, waarbij merken een belangrijke rol spelen in verhaallijnen en de productie van het programma (Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Smit, Van Reijmersdal, & Neijens, 2009). Gesponsorde inhoud wordt al decennialang gebruikt en het gebruik ervan neemt nog steeds toe (Cain, 2011). Deze groei is niet opmerkelijk aangezien is aangetoond dat gesponsorde inhoud effectief de merkherinnering, attitudes en gedrag van kijkers

kan beïnvloeden (zie voor reviews Balasubramanian, Karrh, & Patwardhan, 2006; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2009).

Hoewel deze effecten gunstig zijn voor adverteerders, zijn deze niet altijd positief voor televisiekijkers. Doordat de grenzen tussen redactionele en commerciële inhoud vervagen, herkennen kijkers gesponsorde programma-inhoud mogelijk niet als persuasief omdat de bron en intentie onduidelijk zijn (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). Een mogelijk gevolg hiervan is dat kijkers zich niet verweren tegen de persuasieve boodschap en deze niet kritisch verwerken (Bhatnagar, Aksoy, & Malkoc, 2004; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). Er wordt daarom gesteld dat gesponsorde inhoud het recht van de consument schendt om te weten wanneer deze wordt blootgesteld aan reclame en dat gesponsorde inhoud daarom onethisch en misleidend is (e.g., Cain, 2011; Commercial Alert, 2008; Kuhn, Hume, & Love, 2010; Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). De effecten van gesponsorde inhoud zonder dat de kijker zich hiervan bewust is, baart daarom niet alleen de wetenschap zorgen, maar ook de maatschappij.

Om eerlijke communicatie te garanderen en om verwarring bij de kijker te voorkomen, is er nieuwe wetgeving ontwikkeld en voorgesteld die zenders verplicht om gesponsorde inhoud in televisieprogramma's te vermelden. Het hoofddoel van deze sponsorvermelding is om de kijker te helpen bij het onderscheiden van commerciële en redactionele inhoud van televisieprogramma's (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010; Cain, 2011). De effectiviteit van dergelijke sponsorvermeldingen is echter nog nauwelijks onderzocht. Het is daarom onbekend of sponsorvermeldingen hun doel bereiken en of zij wellicht ook andere effecten veroorzaken. Het vermelden van gesponsorde inhoud zou bijvoorbeeld ook kunnen beïnvloeden hoe kijkers het merk en het programma verwerken en evalueren. Dit maakt de effecten van sponsorvermelding niet alleen relevant voor beleidsmakers, maar ook voor televisiekijkers, adverteerders en zenders. Dit proefschrift heeft tot doel inzicht te verschaffen in het effect van sponsorvermeldingen op de reacties van kijkers op de gesponsorde inhoud en het merk.

FOCUS VAN DIT PROEFSCHRIFT

Om de effecten van sponsorvermeldingen op kijkersreacties te onderzoeken, richt dit proefschrift zich op vier thema's: (1) de effecten van de kenmerken van sponsorvermeldingen, (2) de rol van het opmerken van een sponsorvermelding, (3) de effecten van sponsorvermeldingen op hoe de kijker de (gesponsorde) televisie-inhoud verwerkt (e.g., de activatie van overredingskennis) en (4) de effecten van sponsorvermeldingen op de persuasieve uitkomsten van de gesponsorde inhoud (e.g., merkreacties).

Kenmerken van de vermelding

Aangezien de Europese regelgeving niet expliciet noemt hoe een sponsorvermelding eruit moet zien en hoe deze ingezet moet worden, worden er verschillende vermeldingen gebruikt. Op basis van verwerkingstheorieën zoals het *limited capacity model of motivated mediated message processing* (LC4MP; Lang, 2006) en het *processing of commercial media content model* (PCMC; Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010) kan worden verwacht dat het aantal seconden dat sponsorvermelding wordt getoond (i.e., duur), het moment in het programma waarop deze wordt getoond (i.e., timing) en de grootte en inhoud ervan (i.e., type) allemaal beïnvloeden of kijkers de vermelding waarnemen en verwerken. Mensen moeten namelijk het vermogen, de motivatie en de mogelijkheid hebben om een boodschap te verwerken (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991). De kenmerken van een sponsorvermelding beïnvloeden daarom wellicht in hoeverre kijkers vermelding waarnemen en of deze uiteindelijk effect heeft. Om die reden luidt de eerste onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift:

Onderzoeksvraag 1: Wat zijn de effecten van de kenmerken van de sponsorvermelding (i.e., duur, timing en type) op het opmerken van de vermelding en vervolgens op de verwerking en persuasieve uitkomsten van de gesponsorde inhoud?

Opmerken van sponsorvermeldingen

Eerder onderzoek naar waarschuwingen op bijvoorbeeld producten heeft aangetoond dat mensen eerst aandacht moeten hebben voor een waarschuwing, voordat deze enig effect kan hebben (Argo & Main, 2004; Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). Om te testen of dit ook geldt voor sponsorvermeldingen, luidt de tweede onderzoeksvraag:

Onderzoeksvraag 2: In hoeverre zijn de effecten van een sponsorvermelding afhankelijk van of deze wordt opgemerkt door de kijker?

Verwerking

Met betrekking tot de verwerking van de gesponsorde inhoud richt dit proefschrift zich voornamelijk op de activatie van overredingskennis. Overredingskennis (*persuasion knowledge*) is de algemene kennis die mensen tijdens hun leven ontwikkelen over overreding, de tactieken die hiervoor worden gebruikt en hoe je hiermee om moet gaan



(Friestad & Wright, 1994). Deze overredingskennis kan worden geactiveerd en gebruikt wanneer een poging wordt gedaan om iemand te overtuigen. Er zijn verschillende niveaus van overredingskennis. Het eerste niveau is de herkenning van een persuasieve boodschap. In het geval van gesponsorde inhoud is dat dus het herkennen van programma-inhoud als reclame. Het voornaamste doel van sponsorvermeldingen is om kijkers te helpen met het onderscheiden van commerciële inhoud van redactionele inhoud. Met andere woorden, sponsorvermeldingen beogen de overredingskennis van de kijkers te activeren.

Sponsorvermeldingen kunnen echter ook andere effecten hebben op de manier waarop kijkers de gesponsorde inhoud verwerken. Volgens de *reactance* theorie (Brehm, 1966) en volgens eerder onderzoek naar het waarschuwen van mensen voor niet-commerciële persuasieve boodschappen, zoals politieke toespraken of opiniestukken, kan de herkenning van een persuasieve boodschap leiden tot weerstand en kritische verwerking (Quinn & Wood, 2004; Sagarin, Cialdini, Rice, & Serna, 2002; Wei, Fischer, & Main, 2008). Daarnaast legt een sponsorvermelding de nadruk op de gesponsorde inhoud en zou dit voor meer aandacht voor deze reclame kunnen zorgen. De derde onderzoeksvraag luidt daarom:

Onderzoeksvraag 3: Wat is het effect van het vermelden van gesponsorde inhoud op kijkers' verwerking van deze gesponsorde inhoud (i.e., het gebruik van overredingskennis, kritische verwerking en visuele aandacht voor de gesponsorde inhoud)?

Persuasieve uitkomsten

Het effect van sponsorvermeldingen op de verwerking van de gesponsorde inhoud zou uiteindelijk ook het persuasieve effect van deze inhoud kunnen beïnvloeden. Zo heeft eerder onderzoek aangetoond dat zodra de overredingskennis van de kijker is geactiveerd, de effectiviteit van gesponsorde inhoud wordt gereduceerd (Matthes, Schemer, & Wirth, 2007; Wei et al., 2008). Zo kunnen sponsorvermeldingen effecten hebben op het merk en het programma die in eerste instantie niet de bedoeling zijn. Om deze effecten te testen, luidt de vierde onderzoeksvraag:

Onderzoeksvraag 4: Wat is het effect van het vermelden van gesponsorde inhoud op de persuasieve uitkomsten van deze gesponsorde inhoud (i.e., de reacties van de kijker op het merk en het programma)?

BEVINDINGEN

De vijf hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift geven allen antwoord op meerdere onderzoeksvragen. De hoofdstukken zijn onafhankelijke artikelen die zijn gepubliceerd of ingediend voor publicatie en hebben allemaal een eigen samenvatting, introductie, discussie en literatuurlijst. De eerste vier hoofdstukken zijn gebaseerd op één experiment

($N = 209$) met een 2 (duur: 3 of 6 seconden) x 3 (timing: begin, midden of einde van het programma) design. Dit betekent dat er 6 variaties van de sponsorvermelding (“Dit programma bevat reclame door Alive Shoes”) waren op basis van de duur en timing. De deelnemers van het experiment werden gevraagd een bewerkte aflevering van *MTV Was Here* te bekijken waarin één reportage over een nieuw merk sneakers, Alive Shoes, ging. Dit programma bevatte of geen sponsorvermelding, of één van de zes varianten van de sponsorvermelding. Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft een *eye tracking* experiment ($N = 149$) waarbij de deelnemers een korte aflevering van *Grijpstra & De Gier* bekeken. Hierin stond of geen sponsorvermelding in, of een text (“Dit programma bevat product placement”), een PP (product placement) logo of een combinatie van de text en het logo.

Hoofdstuk 1 beschrijft de invloed van de kenmerken van de kijker en die van de sponsorvermelding (i.e., de duur en het moment waarop de vermelding wordt getoond) op de herinnering van de vermelding. Hiermee richt dit hoofdstuk zich op de kenmerken van de sponsorvermelding (Onderzoeksvraag 1) en het opmerken van de sponsorvermelding (Onderzoeksvraag 2). Omdat in dit hoofdstuk de herinnering van de sponsorvermelding wordt onderzocht, werd in het onderzoek de groep die geen vermelding kreeg te zien in het experiment buiten beschouwing gelaten ($N = 179$). De resultaten van het experiment laten zien dat een sponsorvermelding (“Dit programma bevat reclame door Alive Shoes”) aan het begin van het programma resulteert in minder herinnering van de vermelding, vergeleken met een vermelding in het midden of aan het einde van het programma. Hoe lang de vermelding werd getoond bleek geen significante invloed te hebben op de herinnering van de vermelding. De resultaten tonen aan dat kijkers die bekend zijn met het programma en sponsorvermeldingen in het algemeen vaker de sponsorvermeldingen herinneren, terwijl de betrokkenheid met het programma de herinnering verlaagt.

Het tweede hoofdstuk richt zich op het effect van een sponsorvermelding op hoe kijkers de (gesponsorde) televisie-inhoud verwerken (Onderzoeksvraag 3) en in hoeverre de herinnering van de sponsorvermelding dit effect beïnvloedt (Onderzoeksvraag 4). Een experiment ($N = 208$) toont aan dat een sponsorvermelding leidt tot betere herkenning van gesponsorde inhoud als reclame (i.e., activatie van conceptuele overredingskennis) en daardoor tot een kritischere evaluatie van de gesponsorde inhoud (i.e., hogere evaluatieve overredingskennis), mits de kijker de sponsorvermelding zich herinnert. Deze resultaten laten zien dat een sponsorvermelding verschillende niveaus van overredingskennis kan activeren. Een belangrijke voorwaarde voor dit effect is dat de kijker zich wel bewust moet zijn van de sponsorvermelding.

Het onderzoek in Hoofdstuk 3 vergelijkt een sponsorvermelding van drie seconden met een vermelding van zes seconden (Onderzoeksvraag 1) en onderzoekt het effect van een vermelding op de verwerking van de gesponsorde inhoud (Onderzoeksvraag 3) en merkreacties (Onderzoeksvraag 4). Om het effect van de duur van de vermelding goed te kunnen testen, werden in dit experiment alle deelnemers die zich de vermelding niet herinnerden buiten beschouwing gelaten ($N = 116$). De resultaten tonen aan dat zowel de vermelding van drie seconden als die van zes seconden de herkenning van reclame



vergroot (i.e., activatie van conceptuele overredingskennis) en dat enkel de vermelding van zes seconden vervolgens kritische reacties ten opzichte van de gesponsorde inhoud veroorzaakt (i.e., hogere evaluatieve overredingskennis). Bovendien leidt de vermelding van zes seconden tot minder gunstige merkattitudes door de hogere scores op evaluatieve overredingskennis. Verder duiden de resultaten aan dat een sponsorvermelding direct merkherinnering vergroot, ongeacht de duur.

Hoofdstuk 4 richt zich op het effect van de timing van een sponsorvermelding (Onderzoeksvraag 1) op de verwerking (Onderzoeksvraag 3) en persuasieve effecten van de gesponsorde inhoud (Onderzoeksvraag 4). Er wordt een model aangedragen waarbij een sponsorvermelding overredingskennis activeert, wat leidt tot kritische verwerking van de gesponsorde inhoud. Dit heeft uiteindelijk een negatieve invloed op de attitude ten opzichte van het merk in de gesponsorde inhoud. De resultaten van het experiment ($N = 116$) bevestigen dit model, maar alleen wanneer de vermelding voor of tijdens de gesponsorde inhoud wordt getoond. Er zijn geen effecten van een sponsorvermelding die na de gesponsorde inhoud, aan het einde van het programma, werd getoond.

Hoofdstuk 5 combineert de effecten van het type vermelding met het opmerken van deze vermelding, en de invloed ervan op de verwerking en daaruit voortvloeiende effecten van de gesponsorde inhoud. Hiermee toetst dit hoofdstuk dus alle onderzoeksvragen. Door middel van een eye tracking experiment ($N = 149$) wordt het effect van verschillende sponsorvermeldingen op de visuele aandacht van de kijker, het gebruik van overredingskennis (i.e., de herkenning van de gesponsorde inhoud als reclame) en de reacties ten opzichte van merk en programma onderzocht. De resultaten tonen aan dat een combinatie van tekst (“Dit programma bevat product placement”) en een PP (product placement) logo het meest effectief is in het vergroten van de herkenning van de gesponsorde programma-inhoud als reclame. Een logo alleen is het minst effectief. Het effect van de sponsorvermelding op de herkenning van reclame wordt gemedieerd door de visuele aandacht van de kijker voor de vermelding en de brand placement. Bovendien vergroot de herkenning van reclame de merkherinnering en leidt dit tot minder gunstige merkattitudes. De resultaten leveren geen bewijs voor een effect van de vermelding op de geloofwaardigheid van het programma.

CONCLUSIES

De studies in dit proefschrift verschaffen belangrijke inzichten in de effecten van sponsorvermeldingen. Ten eerste tonen de studies aan dat het effect van een sponsorvermelding afhankelijk is van de duur, de timing en de inhoud ervan. Ten tweede blijkt het opmerken van de sponsorvermelding een belangrijke voorwaarde te zijn voor het effect ervan. Ten derde toont dit proefschrift aan dat wanneer kijkers zich bewust zijn van een sponsorvermelding, dit de visuele aandacht voor de gesponsorde inhoud kan vergroten en de herkenning van reclame verbetert. Daarnaast zorgt de herkenning van reclame er voor dat kijkers de gesponsorde inhoud kritischer waarnemen. Ten vierde heeft

het effect van sponsorvermeldingen op de verwerking van de gesponsorde inhoud óók invloed op de persuasieve uitkomst ervan. Door de activatie van conceptuele en evaluatieve overredingskennis leidt een sponsorvermelding tot een betere merkherinnering en tot minder gunstige merkattitudes. Hiermee bewijst dit proefschrift dat sponsorvermeldingen hun doel kunnen bereiken, maar dat zij ook consequenties hebben voor de manier waarop televisiekijkers de gesponsorde inhoud en het merk waarnemen.

DISCUSSIE

Theoretische implicaties

De bevindingen van dit proefschrift hebben belangrijke theoretische implicaties. Ten eerste bouwt dit proefschrift voort op eerdere onderzoeken naar waarschuwingen en identificeert drie fases die de effectiviteit van sponsorvermeldingen kunnen verklaren: opmerken, verwerking en persuasieve effecten. Deze stadia komen overeen met de stadia van informatieverwerking die consumenten doorlopen wanneer zij worden blootgesteld aan waarschuwingen op producten (Argo & Main, 2004; Wogalter & Laughery, 1996).

Ten tweede tonen de studies in dit proefschrift aan dat verwerkingstheorieën als de LC4MP (Lang, 2006) en PCMC (Buijzen et al., 2010) ook toepasbaar zijn op sponsorvermeldingen en zeer waardevol zijn in het voorspellen van het opmerken en de verwerking van sponsorvermeldingen. Deze theorieën stellen dat mensen een beperkte set van cognitieve middelen (“*a limited pool of cognitive resources*”) hebben en daarom een beperkte hoeveelheid informatie tegelijkertijd kunnen verwerken. Omdat een sponsorvermelding tijdens een televisieprogramma wordt getoond, concurreren het programma en de vermelding om het cognitieve vermogen van de kijker. Omdat dit vermogen beperkt is, werd verwacht dat mensen niet altijd de sponsorvermelding waarnemen en verwerken. Dit blijkt het geval te zijn, aangezien de sponsorvermeldingen in de studies vrij weinig werden opgemerkt (48% van de deelnemers herinnerde zich de vermelding in het *MTV Was Here* experiment en maar 8% van de deelnemers fixeerde op het PP logo in de eye tracking studie).

Ten derde bewijst dit proefschrift dat het vermelden van gesponsorde inhoud weerstand kan veroorzaken en de persuasieve uitkomsten van de gesponsorde inhoud vermindert. Hiermee verschaft het belangrijke inzichten in hoe sponsorvermeldingen het overtuigingsproces beïnvloedt. Een sponsorvermelding kan de herkenning van reclame in een programma vergroten. Als gevolg worden kijkers kritischer ten opzichte van de gesponsorde inhoud en hebben zij minder gunstige merkattitudes. Dit is in overeenstemming met eerdere onderzoeken die lieten zien dat het vermelden van het persuasieve doel van een boodschap overreding vermindert (e.g., Allyn & Festinger, 1961; Hass & Grady, 1975; Quinn & Wood, 2004). Bovendien komen deze bevindingen overeen met de *reactance* theorie (Brehm, 1966), die stelt dat mensen hun vrijheid willen bewaren en niet gemanipuleerd willen worden. Daarom zullen mensen zich verzetten tegen een overtuigingspoging, wanneer zij zich realiseren dat ze worden beïnvloed (Sagarin et al.,



2002; Wei et al., 2008). Dit proefschrift verschaft nieuw bewijs voor de *reactance* theorie en toont aan dat weerstandsmechanismen ook toepasbaar zijn op sponsorvermeldingen: kijkers kunnen zich verzetten tegen gesponsorde inhoud wanneer zij hiervan op de hoogte worden gesteld.

Verrassend genoeg gaat dit weerstandsmechanisme niet op voor de waargenomen geloofwaardigheid van het programma. Volgens het *change of meaning* principe (Friestad & Wright, 1994) verandert de bewustwording dat een boodschap een persuasief doel heeft het karakter van de interactie met de zender. Aangezien mensen niet gemanipuleerd willen worden (Brehm, 1966), zou dit kunnen leiden tot een gevoel van verraad en misleiding. Wanneer kijkers zich bewust zijn van het commerciële karakter van een programma, kan dit daarom de geloofwaardigheid van het programma beïnvloeden (Bhatnagar et al., 2004). Dit effect werd echter niet gevonden in dit proefschrift. Dit komt wellicht doordat mensen geen aanstoot nemen aan merken in bepaalde televisieprogramma's. Eerder onderzoek heeft namelijk aangetoond dat mensen vaak vinden dat merknamen een film realistischer kunnen maken (Gupta & Gould, 1997; Karrh, Frith, & Callison, 2001; Sung, de Gregorio, & Jung, 2009).

Ten vierde toont dit proefschrift aan dat sponsorvermeldingen een belangrijk effect hebben op de merkreacties van kijkers. De studies laten zien dat een sponsorvermelding leidt tot een betere merkherinnering. Dit is in overeenstemming met de bevindingen van Van Reijmersdal, Tutaj en Boerman (2013). In tegenstelling tot deze bevinding vonden Tessitore en Geuens (2013) geen significante relatie tussen een sponsorvermelding en merkherinnering. Hoewel deze studie ook het belang van de bewuste verwerking van een programma met gesponsorde inhoud benadrukt, hielden zij geen rekening met het opmerken van de sponsorvermelding tijdens het bestuderen van de effecten ervan. Aangezien dit proefschrift aantoont dat het opmerken van de sponsorvermelding een belangrijke voorwaarde is voor de effecten ervan, verklaart dit wellicht de niet-significante relatie tussen de vermelding en merkherinnering. Daarnaast vroegen Campbell, Mohr en Verlegh (2013) de deelnemers in hun studie naar sponsorvermeldingen om een lijstje te maken van alle merken die in hun opkwamen in een specifieke categorie. Zij vonden een negatief effect van een sponsorvermelding op deze *top-of-mind awareness* en stellen dat dit komt doordat kijkers hun antwoord corrigeren voor het persuasieve effect van de gesponsorde inhoud. Hoewel Campbell et al. (2013) betogen dat deze correctie een consequentie is van de activatie van overredingskennis, hebben zij dit niet direct gemeten. De studies in dit proefschrift duiden aan dat sponsorvermeldingen inderdaad overredingskennis kunnen activeren, maar dat dit leidt tot een betere merkherinnering en niet een correctie hiervan. De resultaten van de studies van Tessitore en Geuens (2013) en Campbell et al. (2013) verschaffen belangrijke inzichten in de werking van sponsorvermeldingen. In combinatie met onze bevindingen bewijzen de studies het belang van de drie stadia, zoals voorgesteld in dit proefschrift (opmerken, verwerking en persuasieve uitkomsten), in het bestuderen van de effectiviteit van sponsorvermeldingen.

Ten vijfde demonstreert dit proefschrift dat overredingskennis en kritische verwerking belangrijke mechanismen zijn die ten grondslag liggen aan weerstand tegen overreding. Deze bevindingen laten zien hoe belangrijk het *Persuasion Knowledge Model* (Friestad & Wright, 1994) is in de context van sponsorvermeldingen. Bovendien tonen de bevindingen aan dat conceptuele overredingskennis (i.e., de herkenning van reclame) leidt tot hogere scores van evaluatieve overredingskennis (i.e., gevoelens van wantrouwen en oneerlijkheid ten opzichte van de gesponsorde inhoud). Dit betekent dat een sponsorvermelding zowel cognitieve als affectieve dimensies van overredingskennis kan activeren. Hiermee toont dit proefschrift het belang om onderscheid te maken tussen de cognitieve en evaluatieve dimensies van overredingskennis, zoals werd voorgesteld door Rozendaal, Lapierre, Van Reijmersdal en Buijzen (2011). Gebaseerd op de bevindingen in dit proefschrift blijkt de evaluatieve dimensie een waardevolle toevoeging aan het *Persuasion Knowledge Model*. Voornamelijk omdat evaluatieve overredingskennis een belangrijke speelt in het overtuigingsproces, doordat het merkattitudes beïnvloedt.

Ten slotte heeft dit proefschrift belangrijke methodologische implicaties. Met de nadruk op het opmerken van de vermelding en de verwerking van televisie-inhoud, maakt dit proefschrift deel uit van een onderzoeksgebied waarin aandacht een belangrijke rol speelt. Tot op heden worden aandacht en geheugen van gesponsorde inhoud en sponsorvermeldingen gemeten met zelf-gerapporteerde geheugentaken. Het nadeel van zulke meetinstrumenten is dat kijkers die boodschappen met relatief weinig aandacht verwerken en deze hoogstwaarschijnlijk niet herinneren in de context van een geheugentaak (Slater, 2004). Aangezien sponsorvermeldingen en gesponsorde inhoud allebei geïntegreerd zijn in televisieprogramma's maken zij deel uit van een drukke omgeving en kunnen ze heuristisch en impliciet verwerkt worden. Dit vraagt naar het gebruik van impliciete meetinstrumenten om de verwerking van geïntegreerde persuasieve boodschappen te bestuderen (Auty & Lewis, 2004; Smit & Neijens, 2011). Bovendien wordt beweerd dat fysiologische metingen van aandacht, zoals eye tracking, betrouwbaarder zijn dan zelf-gerapporteerde meetinstrumenten (Krugman, 1965; Rosbergen, Pieters, & Wedel, 1997). Daarom wordt in dit proefschrift gebruik gemaakt van geheugentaken en eye tracking. Eye tracking is voornamelijk bruikbaar in onderzoek naar sponsorvermeldingen omdat het direct de aandacht van kijkers voor specifieke visuele elementen in een programma meet (zoals een sponsorvermelding of brand placement). Zo was het mogelijk om te meten in hoeverre kijkers (visuele) aandacht hebben voor de sponsorvermelding en gesponsorde inhoud, ook als deze aandacht op een laag niveau is. De resultaten tonen aan dat een vermelding bestaande uit een tekst en logo de meeste aandacht trekt en dat de aandacht voor de vermelding uiteindelijk leidt naar aandacht voor de gesponsorde inhoud. Met deze bevindingen bewijst dit proefschrift dat eye tracking een belangrijke en nuttige tool is om de aandacht van consumenten voor geïntegreerde (persuasieve) boodschappen te meten. Toekomstig onderzoek in dit gebied kan profiteren van deze technologie.



Praktische implicaties

Naast de theoretische bijdrage heeft dit proefschrift ook belangrijke praktische implicaties. De regelgeving omtrent sponsorvermeldingen is nieuw en in verschillende landen in ontwikkeling. De inzichten uit de studies in dit proefschrift kunnen daarom nuttig zijn voor beleidsmakers. De bevindingen zijn ook relevant voor adverteerders omdat sponsorvermelding de effectiviteit van de gesponsorde inhoud beïnvloedt.

Dit proefschrift toont aan dat kijkers zich vaak niet bewust zijn van sponsorvermeldingen, hoewel dit wel een voorwaarde is voor de effectiviteit ervan. De studies in dit proefschrift verstrekken een aantal richtlijnen die de waarneembaarheid van sponsorvermeldingen kunnen vergroten. Kijkers zijn zich bijvoorbeeld vaker bewust van een sponsorvermelding wanneer deze wordt getoond in het midden of aan het einde van het programma en wanneer het een tekst (i.e., “Dit programma bevat product placement”) bevat. Aangezien een logo alleen maar door 8% van de deelnemers werd opgemerkt, is het niet aan te raden om het PP logo te tonen dat in verschillende landen op dit moment wordt gebruikt.

Het voornaamste doel van sponsorvermeldingen is om het publiek te informeren en zo verwarring bij de kijker te voorkomen (Audiovisual Media Services Directive, 2010). Dit proefschrift levert het bewijs dat sponsorvermeldingen inderdaad de herkenning van reclame in een programma kunnen vergroten en dus hun doel bereiken. Bovendien toont het verschillende omstandigheden waaronder vermeldingen het meest effectief zijn in het activeren van overredingskennis. Om de herkenning van gesponsorde programma-inhoud als reclame te vergroten, kan een vermelding 3 of 6 seconden getoond worden, moet het voor of tijdens de gesponsorde inhoud zichtbaar zijn en is deze het meest effectief wanneer het de tekst “Dit programma bevat product placement” en een PP logo combineert. Een sponsorvermelding is het minst effectief wanneer deze wordt getoond na de gesponsorde inhoud en alleen bestaat uit een logo.

Verder wordt een vermelding het best herkend wanneer kijkers bekend zijn met sponsorvermeldingen in het algemeen. Het opmerken van een sponsorvermelding kan worden verbeterd door de bekendheid met het fenomeen sponsorvermelding te vergroten en dus door de kennis die nodig is om de vermelding te begrijpen beschikbaar te maken (MacInnis et al., 1991). Interventies die de bekendheid met sponsorvermeldingen aanspreken, zoals commercials die het publiek informeren over sponsorvermeldingen in het algemeen, zouden wellicht helpen om vermeldingen beter bekend en dus effectiever te maken.

Voor adverteerders hebben sponsorvermeldingen zowel positieve als negatieve consequenties. Aan de ene kant werkt een sponsorvermelding als *prime* voor het merk, waardoor kijkers meer visuele aandacht aan het merk schenken en zich het merk beter herinneren. Op deze manier hebben sponsorvermeldingen dus een positief effect op het merkbewustzijn van kijkers. Aan de andere kant wordt gesteld dat gesponsorde inhoud succesvol is omdat kijkers zich er niet bewust van zijn (Bhatnagar et al., 2004). Sponsorvermeldingen verkleinen dit voordeel van gesponsorde inhoud.

Bovendien veroorzaken sponsorvermeldingen weerstand. Het positieve effect van sponsorvermeldingen op de herkenning van reclame zorgt ervoor dat kijkers de gesponsorde inhoud minder eerlijk en betrouwbaar vinden, en bekijken het met meer argwaan. Dit leidt uiteindelijk tot minder gunstige merkattitudes, en vermindert dus de persuasieve effecten van de gesponsorde inhoud.

Omdat dit proefschrift duidelijk aangeeft wanneer en welke sponsorvermeldingen effectief zijn, en welke effecten zij hebben, kunnen beleidsmakers deze kennis gebruiken om effectieve vermeldingen te ontwikkelen. Zij zouden zich echter ook bewust moeten zijn van de neveneffecten van sponsorvermeldingen op het merk. Dit proefschrift kan functioneren als startpunt voor een gefundeerde discussie over welke effecten gewenst en acceptabel zijn.

Verder onderzoek

Gezien de schaarste aan eerder onderzoek over sponsorvermeldingen, is dit proefschrift een eerste en belangrijke stap voor onderzoek in dit complexe gebied. Een eerste stap, omdat de bevindingen van dit proefschrift ook oproepen tot meer onderzoek. Dit proefschrift richt zich op de processen die een sponsorvermelding veroorzaakt, en dus voornamelijk op de mediërende factoren. Vervolgonderzoek kan zich richten op belangrijke factoren die de effecten van sponsorvermeldingen modereren, om zo te bestuderen voor wie vermeldingen nodig en effectief zijn. Zo zou individuele overredingskennis een belangrijke modererende factor kunnen zijn. Mensen met een ontwikkelde overredingskennis hebben wellicht een sponsorvermelding helemaal niet nodig, omdat zij zich al bewust zijn van ingebedde reclame in programma's, terwijl mensen met een laag ontwikkelde overredingskennis wellicht niet begrijpen wat een sponsorvermelding en de term *product placement* betekenen.

Bovendien kan gesponsorde inhoud vele vormen hebben en kan het voor verschillende merken en producten worden gebruikt. De onderzoeken in dit proefschrift bevatten zowel merkintegratie als brand placement en tonen aan stabiel effect aan op overredingskennis voor beide vormen. Er is echter meer onderzoek nodig naar de effecten van sponsorvermeldingen in andere contexten. De sponsorvermeldingen in dit proefschrift werden bijvoorbeeld tijdens het programma getoond, terwijl deze ook als billboard voor of na een programma getoond kunnen worden. Daarnaast kan vervolgonderzoek ingaan op mogelijke verschillen tussen diverse programmagenres, aangezien de beoordeling van gesponsorde inhoud varieert tussen genres (Neijens & Smit, 2003).

Ten slotte is er meer onderzoek nodig naar de lange termijn effecten van sponsorvermeldingen. Aangezien het opmerken van een sponsorvermelding van belang is voor de effectiviteit ervan, zou verder onderzoek kunnen bestuderen hoe dit bewustzijn met de tijd verandert. Dit proefschrift toont ook aan dat de algemene bekendheid met sponsorvermeldingen de kans vergroot dat de kijker een sponsorvermelding ook opmerkt. Echter, waarschuwingen trekken minder aandacht naarmate deze vaker en langer worden getoond doordat de vermelding niet meer nieuw is of omdat mensen eraan gewend



zijn (Wogalter & Laughery, 1996). Het zou dus interessant zijn om te bekijken of een leereffect en de vermindering van nieuwheid invloed hebben op de reacties van mensen op sponsorvermeldingen.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Sophie Boerman was born on the 15th of October in 1986, in Willemstad, Curaçao. Despite this tropical birth place she grew up in Dieren, The Netherlands. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in Communication and Information Science in 2008 at the Utrecht University. During this bachelor program, she spent one semester at the Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. In 2010, she finished the Research Master in Communication Science (cum laude) at the University of Amsterdam. For her Master's thesis, that used eye tracking data to study people's attention to magazine advertisements, she received the SWOCC thesis price in 2011.

Between February 2010 and February 2014, she worked on her dissertation on the effects of disclosing sponsored television content on viewers' responses. This work has been recognized with awards from the International Communication Association (ICA) and the European Advertising Academy (EAA)

At present, Sophie is an Assistant Professor at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR) in the department of Persuasive Communication at the University of Amsterdam.

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Television viewers are increasingly exposed to texts saying “This program contains product placement” and PP logos incorporated in television programs. These sponsorship disclosures aim to inform viewers about advertising that is embedded in television programs. This dissertation provides insight into (1) the effects of the characteristics of sponsorship disclosures, (2) the role of viewers’ awareness of sponsorship disclosures, (3) the effects of sponsorship disclosures on viewers’ processing of the television content (e.g., the activation of persuasion knowledge) and (4) the effects of sponsorship disclosures on the persuasive outcomes of sponsored content (e.g., viewers’ brand responses).