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## HOW THE “BRAND PERSONALITY” CAN BE PERCEIVED IN MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS

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**Abstract:** Making sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, viable requires huge investments. Among the possible sources of revenue, there are funds from sponsoring companies that, as a result, have their brands associated with the Games. But is there a return on investment made by such companies? Thus, the objective of this study was to identify the effectiveness of the association of the brands of the main sponsoring companies with the brand of the Olympic Games, in the case of the Rio 2016 Games. Such effectiveness was verified through the Traces of personality of the brands. The study was exploratory, cross-sectional, with the application of a survey in a sample composed of spectators (in person or not) of the Games, consumers or not of the sponsoring brands. Brand personality traits were captured through 05 constructs: Credibility, Diversion, Audacity, Sophistication and Sensibility. The Credibility, Audacity, Sophistication and Sensibility dimensions were found in some of the brands. However, the Diversion dimension did not prove to be significant for any of the brands. Therefore, on the whole, the association of brand personalities was partial. The study contributes to the theoretical discussion of the effectiveness of marketing strategies, especially sports.

**Keywords:** Marketing strategies; Brand Personality; Olympic Games; sponsors; Consumer Perception.

## INTRODUCTION

Brazil hosted world-renowned events in the 2010s, especially the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. This impacted society around the city of Rio de Janeiro, requiring interventions in infrastructure built for the games and heating the business environment, especially the sport and tourism industries (IOC, 2015). As one of the biggest sporting events in the

world, the Olympic Games in Brazil aimed to provide the public with sports entertainment and, for the economy, volume of business. The legacy for the city and for the country has always been the justification since the city's candidacy to host the games (RIO, 2016). To make sporting events viable requires investments such as sports equipment, image and data transmission infrastructure, transport and accommodation logistics, and training of professionals of different natures directly or indirectly involved in the events. In order to meet this budget, there are, among other sources of revenue, funds from Sponsors who, as a result, have their brands highlighted by associating with the Games (MARTINEZ; JANNEY, 2015). Sponsorships have become an integral part of making such projects viable. In turn, sponsoring companies seek to build an image that contributes to their competitive advantage, being as such an integral part of their business strategies (BARNEY, 1986; MADRIGAL, 2000; YANG; GOLDFARB, 2015). The strategy of associating the brand of a product with the brand of a sporting event can be given by the perception of alignment of the personality traits of the brands, providing symbolic expressions or benefits for the consumer (AAKER, 1999), with image benefits to companies. (CORNWELL; KWAK, 2015). Even though it is a world-renowned event, which has its own socioeconomic potential, there is a lack of specific investigations on the Olympic Games in relation to the effectiveness of sponsorships, both the so-called main, global or official ones, as well as those coming from companies whose brands are, albeit indirectly, associated with the event (BENNETT; HENSON; ZHANG, 2002; KO; KIM; LAUSSEN; KIM, 2008; REAMS; EDDY; CORK, 2015; WALRAVEN; BIJMOLT; KONING, 2014). In short, there is still a lack of studies that investigate whether

the sponsorship of sporting events, especially the size of the Olympic Games, is effective, in the sense of benefiting the marketing strategies of sponsoring companies. More specifically, the main gap to be covered by this study is the relationship between the Personality Traces of brands with the Personality Traces of events to which they are linked through sponsorships.

## GOAL

To evaluate the effectiveness of the association between the Personality Traces of the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games brand with the Personality Traces of the brands of its main Sponsors, through the perceptions of spectators (in person or not) of the games, users or not of the Games. brands in question.

## METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of this study is to analyze the association between the Personality Traces of the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games brand with the Personality Traces of the brands of their main or official Sponsors as perceived by spectators. To fulfill the objective of the study, a descriptive, cross-sectional research was carried out, with the application of a questionnaire in two stages. Such effectiveness was determined through the personality traces of the brands. The study was exploratory, cross-sectional, with the application of a survey in a sample composed of spectators (in person or not) of the games, consumers or not of the sponsoring brands. Brand personality traits were captured through 05 constructs: Credibility, Diversion, Audacity, Sophistication and Sensibility.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the personality sample of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games brand, which

are 58.75% male, aged between 15 and 24 years old, 52.76%, single 64.75%, with higher education 52.28% and income from 01 to 03 minimum wages 40.29%.

Table 2 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the brand personality sample of the official sponsors of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, who are 52.92% male, aged between 15 and 24 years old, 33.23%, single 50.15%, with higher education 43.69% and income from 3 to 6 minimum wages 34.77%.

The first sample (Rio 2016 Olympic Games personality) was composed of more male people (58.75% x 52.96%), younger (from 15 to 24 years old, 52.76% x 33.23%), single (64.76% x 50.15%), higher education (higher education, specialization and master/doctorate: 68.11% x 60.92%) and lower income (up to 03 minimum wages: 53.48% x 44.62%). This may have implied some bias that, however, does not seem to be very significant.

According to Aaker (1997; 1999), Cho and Kang, (2012), Donahay and Rosemberger III (2007), Pappu and Cornwell (2014) and Yao et al. (2015), sponsorship demands short- or long-term contributions to the success of the sponsoring company. It can be considered as a communication element and, also, a complement to promotions, sales and public relations actions. It therefore allows the creation of interactions and associations between brands. In the specific case of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, the official Sponsors already had a history of investing in Brazilian sport. These are companies that have assumed the commitment to contribute to the sporting, cultural and social development of the country. They are: Banco Bradesco, Bradesco Seguros, Correios, Claro, Embratel and Nissan.

Bradesco has had a decades-long relationship with sports in Brazil, especially volleyball. Through promotional initiatives, the bank develops integration actions that

<b>Gender – GEN</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>Female</b>	172	41,25	41,25
<b>Male</b>	245	58,75	100,00
<b>Total</b>	417	100,00	
<b>Age – IDA</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>Between 15 a 24</b>	220	52,76	52,6
<b>Between 25 to 33</b>	105	25,18	77,94
<b>Between 34 to 41</b>	50	11,99	89,93
<b>Between 42 to 49</b>	21	4,04	94,96
<b>From 50</b>	21	5,04	100,00
<b>Total</b>	417	100,00	
<b>Marital status – CIV</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>Single</b>	270	64,75	64,75
<b>Married</b>	137	32,85	97,50
<b>Divorced / Separated</b>	9	2,16	99,76
<b>Widower</b>	1	0,24	100,00
<b>Total</b>	417	100,00	
<b>Education – ESC</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>Elementary School 1</b>	1	0,24	0,24
<b>Elementary School 2</b>	36	8,63	8,87
<b>High school</b>	96	23,02	31,89
<b>University education</b>	218	52,28	84,17
<b>Specialization</b>	47	11,27	95,44
<b>Master's/PhD</b>	19	4,56	100,00
<b>Total</b>	417	100,00	
<b>Income – REN</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>No income</b>	23	5,52	5,52
<b>1 salary</b>	32	7,67	13,19
<b>1 to 3 salaries</b>	168	40,29	53,48
<b>3 to 6 salaries</b>	118	28,30	81,77
<b>Above 7 salaries</b>	76	18,23	100,00
<b>Total</b>	417	100,00	

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample - Brand Personality Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

<b>Gender – GEN</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>Female</b>	153	47,08	47,08
<b>Male</b>	172	52,92	100,00
<b>Total</b>	325	100,00	
<b>Age – IDA</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>Between 15 to 24</b>	108	33,23	33,23
<b>Between 25 to 33</b>	79	24,31	57,54
<b>Between 34 to 41</b>	60	18,46	76,00
<b>Between 42 to 49</b>	47	14,46	94,96
<b>From 50</b>	31	9,54	100,00
<b>Total</b>	325	100,00	
<b>Marital status– CIV</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>Single</b>	163	50,15	50,15
<b>Married</b>	149	45,85	96
<b>Divorced / Separated</b>	13	4,00	100,00
<b>Widower</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	325	100,00	
<b>Schooling Degree – ESC</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>Elementary School 1</b>	2	0,62	0,62
<b>Elementary School 2</b>	22	6,77	7,38
<b>High school</b>	103	31,69	39,08
<b>University education</b>	142	43,69	82,77
<b>Specialization</b>	46	14,15	96,92
<b>Master's/PhD</b>	10	3,08	100,00
<b>Total</b>	325	100,00	
<b>Income – REN</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Accumulated</b>
<b>No income</b>	9	2,77	2,77
<b>1 salary</b>	26	8,00	10,77
<b>From 1 to 3 salaries</b>	110	33,85	44,62
<b>From 3 to 6 salaries</b>	113	34,77	79,38
<b>Above 7 salaries</b>	67	20,62	100,00
<b>Total</b>	325	100,00	

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample - Brand Personality of the Official Sponsors of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

result in achievements in the sports and social sphere. The sports projects that are developed and supported by the bank are premised on social inclusion and the consequent dissemination of fundamental values such as respect, responsibility, ethics and the exercise of citizenship (BRADESCO, 2016). In addition to the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Bradesco also supports Confederations of various sports (BRADESCO, 2016).

Bradesco Seguros, a member of the Bradesco Organization, operates in the Insurance, Capitalization and Open Pension Plan market (BRADESCO SEGUROS, 2016). Together with Banco Bradesco, it became the official sponsor of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, providing products and services to the Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB) and the Brazilian Olympic Team. Bradesco Seguros has developed actions such as: exhibitions, incentives to practice sports, street races and society's awareness of the use of bicycles as a leisure option and urban locomotion (BRADESCO SEGUROS, 2016).

Correios was chosen as the official logistics operator for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Correios promotes the growth of Brazilian sport through sponsorship of various sports Confederations, support for the development of athletes, from base to high performance, in addition to maintaining schools that allow the first contact of children and adolescents with sport (CORREIOS, 2016).

Claro and Embratel are part of the América Móvil group, the largest operator of convergent services via cable in Latin America and one of the five largest mobile telephony groups in the world. Leaders in pay TV and broadband in Brazil, they are official sponsors of telecommunication services for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Six of the sportsmen sponsored by the brands won medals at the games (CLARO, 2016; EMBRATEL, 2016).

Nissan, one of the largest vehicle manufacturers in the world, present in Brazil since 2000, is associated with the French manufacturer Renault, forming the Renault-Nissan Alliance. Nissan do Brasil is an official sponsor of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Its partnership includes the supply of around 5,000 vehicles of different types, meeting the needs of the games and Team Brazil. It also sponsored the Rio 2016 Olympic Torch Relay. Nissan's participation in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games also takes place through the Nissan Team, a mentoring program for Brazilian athletes and para-athletes (NISSAN, 2016).

Table 3 shows the analysis of the Average and Standard deviation of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games brand personality survey. The Average obtained in all constructs was greater than 05, which indicates that, in the respondents' perception, all Traces surveyed tend to representing the Rio 2016 Olympic Games brand. The Sensibility Trace (SEN) was the least representative and the Diversion Trace (DIV) was the most representative of the games personality. It must be noted that the standard deviations were very high, which indicates that there are significant differences between the respondents. In the case of Audacity (AUD) and Sophistication (SOF) the Standard deviation is greater than 03.

Table 4 shows the analysis of the Average and Standard deviation of the brand personality survey of the official Rio 2016 Olympic Games Sponsors. The Average obtained in each construct by sponsor is lower than that obtained by the Rio 2016 Olympic Games brand.

There was one case with an average lower than 05 and 13 cases in which the average ranged between 05 and 06. This shows that, in 14 of the 30 items surveyed, there is a tendency towards indifference in the perception of the 05 personality traits of the brands surveyed.

Trace	Variável	Average	Standard deviation
Credibility	CRD	7,8393	2,5982
Diversion	DIV	8,0456	2,4846
Audacity	AUD	6,9257	3,0926
Sophistication	SOF	7,2494	3,0955
Sensibility	SEN	6,4436	2,8280

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games brand personality.

Trace	Sponsors	Average	Standard deviation
<b>Credibility</b>	BRADESCO	8,0062	2,1886
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	7,4985	2,6616
	CORREIOS	7,9108	2,4748
	EMBRATEL	6,2308	2,7226
	CLARO	6,0769	2,8104
	NISSAN	7,4985	2,4135
<b>Diversion</b>	BRADESCO	5,5077	3,2295
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	5,0646	3,3173
	CORREIOS	5,6830	3,3056
	EMBRATEL	4,5169	3,1206
	CLARO	5,0185	3,2716
	NISSAN	5,8154	3,2207
<b>Audacity</b>	BRADESCO	6,6861	2,9741
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	6,3231	2,9985
	CORREIOS	6,4738	2,9861
	EMBRATEL	5,6000	3,0103
	CLARO	5,6677	3,0622
	NISSAN	6,5692	2,9844
<b>Sophistication</b>	BRADESCO	7,6369	2,4740
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	7,1538	2,8034
	CORREIOS	6,7323	2,8315
	EMBRATEL	5,9077	2,8703
	CLARO	6,1846	2,9402
	NISSAN	7,4031	2,7712
<b>Sensibility</b>	<b>BRADESCO</b>	<b>6,2985</b>	<b>2,9711</b>
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	5,7415	3,0834
	CORREIOS	5,8769	3,0606
	EMBRATEL	5,1846	2,9642
	CLARO	5,2769	3,0323
	NISSAN	5,8400	3,0397

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the brand personality of the official Sponsors of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

It must also be noted that there were high standard deviations, which shows the lack of convergence of opinions, that is, there are those who do not understand that the personality trait researched represents the brand. In general, Bradesco showed more adherence to the investigated personality traits, while Claro was the sponsor that had the lowest perceptions of the researched traits.

The t test of difference in means, in Table 5, presents the confrontation of each personality trait – Credibility, Fun, Audacity, Sophistication and Sensitivity – of the official sponsors with those of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

In the first construct – Credibility – there is evidence that the personality traits of Bradesco, Bradesco Seguros and Correios are perceived as equal to the personality traits of the Olympic Games. In the case of Embratel and Claro, the test indicated differences. Credibility can be a consequence of the relationship with the community, developed in social, sporting and cultural initiatives, with the sponsors' consumption attributions being salient for the effectiveness of the sponsorship (KIM; LEE; MAGNUSEN; KIM, 2015; BRADESCO, 2016). The presence of investment in sports mega-events, as happened in Brazil, demonstrated that sponsors highlight the importance of sport for life and reinforce their positioning as official sponsors, reaffirming their commitment to the development of the country and contributing to the training of athletes and citizens. for a modern Brazil, anchored in work and growth (BRADESCO, 2016; BRADESCO SEGUROS, 2016; CORREIOS, 2016).

Thus, spectators perceived the credibility of official sponsors in a mutual relationship between the commitment and success that companies achieved in the sports and social sphere (PAPPU; CORNWELL, 2014), communicating to their audience

the development of their digital inclusion actions and the dissemination of primordial values such as respect, responsibility, ethics and citizenship (GARDNER; SHUMAN, 1987). In a similar way, the sponsors used an effective communication vehicle, approaching the community through advertising campaigns that portrayed the struggle and determination of professional athletes of different modalities and showing the Olympic values that can transform the lives of many people, demonstrating the credibility of being Brazilian and sponsoring the Olympic Games (CHO; KANG, 2012).

This credibility is highlighted through the support to several Brazilian sports, reaffirming the sponsors' commitment to the training of athletes. Developing various advertising actions that valued the regional culture, through plays, dance and music shows, always highlighting the cultural enrichment of Brazil for Brazilians. The association of official sponsors with the Olympic Games is evident (DONAHAY; ROSEMBERGER III, 2007; BRADESCO, 2016; NISSAN, 2016).

In the second construct – Fun – there was no equality of perceptions of the personality of the Olympic Games brand with any of the official sponsors. This indicates that the sponsors are companies from specific niches that are not suited to an environment where fun is an important personality, such as in the sports environment. In a complementary way, the results indicate that the characteristics of fun, distraction and entertainment that the Olympic Games provide were not identified in the advertising actions developed by the sponsoring companies (DONAHAY; ROSEMBERGER III, 2007; KO et al., 2008; MADRIGAL, 2000; MARTINEZ; JANNEY, 2015).

In the third construct – Audacity – there is evidence that only in the cases of Bradesco and Nissan does this personality trait coincide



Type	Sponsors	Value <i>p</i> of Statistics <i>t</i>
Credibility	BRADESCO	0.3533
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	0.0798
	CORREIOS	0.7045
	EMBRATEL	0.0000 (*)
	CLARO	0.0000 (*)
	NISSAN	0.0678
Diversion	BRADESCO	0.0000 (*)
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	0.0000 (*)
	CORREIOS	0.0000 (*)
	EMBRATEL	0.0000 (*)
	CLARO	0.0000 (*)
	NISSAN	0.0000 (*)
Audacity	BRADESCO	0.2875
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	0.0078 (*)
	CORREIOS	0.0454 (*)
	EMBRATEL	0.0000 (*)
	CLARO	0.0000 (*)
	NISSAN	0.1142
Sophistication	BRADESCO	0.0656
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	0.6639
	CORREIOS	0.0194 (*)
	EMBRATEL	0.0000 (*)
	CLARO	0.0000 (*)
	NISSAN	0.4828
Sensibility	BRADESCO	0.4976
	BRADESCO SEGUROS	0.0013 (*)
	CORREIOS	0.0092 (*)
	EMBRATEL	0.0000 (*)
	CLARO	0.0000 (*)
	NISSAN	0.0054 (*)

Table 5: Test of difference in means between the Olympic Games and their official sponsors by personality trait.

with that of the games. The huge investments made for the Olympic Games resulted in a feeling of daring that was associated with these two sponsors of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games (AAKER, 1997, 1999; DONAHAY; ROSEMBERGER III, 2007; CHO; KANG, 2012). The Olympic Games were possibly chosen by Bradesco and Nissan because they perceived a strong connection with their stakeholders, as well as for being an effective and specific communication tool (CARLSON; DONAVAN, 2013; LEE; CHO, 2009). This indicates that these companies invested a lot in the relationship with the community, developed social, sports and cultural initiatives to get closer and closer to their audience. Therefore, they may have strengthened in the Brazilian market in terms of linking up with the audacity characteristic of the games.

As for the fourth construct – Sophistication – there is evidence that this personality trait of Bradesco, Bradesco Seguros and Nissan coincides with that of Jogos. Thus, the expectations generated around the games and the investments made in the city of Rio to host them demonstrate an awareness of spectators for the legacy built for this mega sporting event, revolving around the transport network, new cultural undertakings and embellishments dating back to the sophistication. Such expectations, combined with experiences inside and outside the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, demonstrate the recognition of the participation of these sponsors in the improvements made in the city (DEES et al., 2010; AAKER, 1997). Promotional actions within competition venues using technologies, including shows, exhibitions and distribution of gifts, may have contributed to the recognition of the sponsors' sophistication. As a result, the sponsored object generates even greater interest and the recognition of the sponsorship grows, tending to reach the public more strongly

(WALRAVEN et al., 2014; CRESCITELLI et al., 2005).

Viewers associated their expectations with the brands of sponsors who marketed their premium products and services, demonstrating a sophistication in relation to competing brands (AAKER, 1997; KELLER, 2003). The dimension reached by the Olympic Games brand associated with the official sponsors that stood out in the sophistication construct may be associated with the personality traits that provided expressions and benefits for the spectator (AAKER; BENET-MARTINEZ; GAROLERA, 2001). Evidence has shown that in markets such as sports entertainment, innovation and competitive advantage are important in raising brand awareness through sponsorship (PORTER; KRAMER, 2006; PORTER, 1979).

In the fifth construct – Sensitivity – equality of perceptions was identified only in relation to Bradesco. This result indicates that the social, cultural and sports actions that Bradesco develops since the formation of athletes reaffirm its commitment to the country, contribute to and sensitize spectators to the Olympic values, which is reinforced by its positioning as the official bank of the Games (ČÁSLAVOVÁ ; PETRÁČKOVÁ, 2011; CRESCITELLI et al., 2005; GWINNER; BENNET, 2008; MARTINEZ; JANNEY, 2015; MIDA; ZAIEM, 2015; YANG; GOLDFARB, 2015). It also reinforces that the Bradesco brand is close to its audience, enabling events that imply investments in cultural transformation and enrichment in Brazil (BRADESCO, 2016; KELLER, 2003; KIM et al., 2015; MARTINEZ; JANNEY, 2015).

In a general balance, Bradesco, with the exception of the personality trait of Fun, had greater adherence to the personality traits perceived from the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Claro and Embratel were not aligned in any of the surveyed constructs.

Considering the huge investments made by sponsors in the specific case studied of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, the results indicate that the effectiveness of such promotional actions was not actually achieved, with the exception of Bradesco.

## **CONCLUSIONS OR FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This work evaluated the association of sponsors already consolidated in the Brazilian market through intensive media, sponsorship and entertainment insertions, maintaining a strong interaction with spectators, in person or not, through social, cultural and sports initiatives. First, the personality traits of the sponsors' brands were identified, with emphasis on the tendency, on average, to indifference in the respondents' perception of the 5 personality traits surveyed. However, there were significant standard deviations, which shows the divergence of opinions. Bradesco was highlighted as the sponsor with the highest adherence to the investigated personality traits, while Claro was the sponsor that had the lowest adherence ratings (disagreement tendency) in relation to the researched traits. The results show that the sponsoring companies, in the case of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, sought to approach the spectator with the premise of social inclusion and the consequent dissemination of values such as respect, responsibility, ethics and, above all, the exercise of citizenship by associating personality of your brand as an important factor of bringing people together, as are the Olympic Games.

## **THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

As limitations in this study, the following stand out: i) the impossibility of correlating the sponsors' strategic plans with the researched constructs due to the lack of access to the sponsoring companies; ii) the demographic differences in the samples of the two applied surveys; and iii) the very difficulty in the data collection instrument that required a person to evaluate many companies at the same time in dimensions that may have been considered difficult to understand, even considering that the questionnaire was tested; iv) the non-requirement that spectators, in person or not, be consumers of the brands, only that they know them; and v) concentration of young respondents (78% between 15 and 33 years old).

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