AN ANALYSIS OF BRAND CREATION OF SPORT ORGANISATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, the idea of branding products or services of every kind be-came an integral part of the management repertoire. Meanwhile, a further devel-opment towards so called luxury brands or even premium brands can be observed in this field. In addition to this, more and more brand managers place emphasis on sectors like culture, social services or even sports. With regard to this, Gladden et al. state in an exploration about the future of North American major professional team sports that "2000 to 2010 will be the decade in which team management activities evolve from a focus on winning as a means of realizing short-term profits to a focus on strategic management of the team brand as a means of realizing long-term appreciation in franchise value" (Gladden/Irwin/Sutton, 2001).

Apart from this, how can managers of sport organisations actually make it to transform a club, a federation or even a league into a well established brand? Which parameters arising from the peculiarities of the sport business must managers pay attention to? Which criteria do have to be fulfilled in order to characterise a sports brand creation successful?

METHODS AND RESULTS

This research project aims at a deeper insight into the circumstances of creating sport brands from a managerial perspective. Therefore, we focus on qualitative analysis to derive motivations, thoughts and beliefs from responsible sport man-agers. In order to get some "insider facts" we interview several sport managers across Germany that can be characterised as experts during the upcoming months. The selected sport managers are considered as experts in the sense that they are aware of all peculiarities concerning their sport organisation. We expect that they show us either their ideas of achieving a brand creation in sports or re-port about past and future measures in establishing their sport organisation as a veritable sport brand. With regard to the methodical approach, we conduct one-on-one interviews supported by a short guideline. This method is characterised by semi-structured processes, minimal standardisation and open questions, so that the interviewees have the possibility to reflect their knowledge to the full extent. Referring to the analysis of the conducted interviews, techniques like content analysis (Kassarjian, 1977 and Kolbe/Burnett, 1991) and reliability tests (Perreault/Leigh, 1989 and Keaveney, 1995) will be used. The according questions are based on literature about brand creation respectively brand build-ing (Kapferer, 1994 and Aaker, 1996 and De Chernatony, 2001).

Concerning these questions, we evaluate first the meaning of brand manage-ment strategies to the involved sport managers. Subsequent questions in this context deal with the necessary activities these managers must undertake concerning the brand creation process. Besides the detection of diverse relevant activities, we will take a look on the challenges that arise for managers of sport organisations in the context of brand creation, too.

DISCUSSION

Consumers get overwhelmed with a huge variety of brands in their everyday life. Due to the fact, that every human being is limited in gathering and handling information, brand managers are faced with eminent challenges in order to differentiate their products or services from competing offers. Managers of sport organisations have to be aware of further circumstances, for example tradition, local rooting or emotional bonds of fans with a

team or single athletes. This special commitment of fans makes it hard for sport managers to keep full control about the branding process. Especially, when a club gathers many fanatics (Tapp, 2004) the management has to act quite sensitive. Otherwise, these fanatics could provoke to opposition against the management. In addition, sport managers have to deal with complex network structures, which complicate coordination between different network participants. These circumstances lead to co- respectively multiple-branding processes.

Based on these thoughts, it becomes evident that the creation of sport brands, in the meaning of transforming an ordinary non-profit-sport organisation into a well-known and established brand, represents a major task for sport managers. There-fore, we are looking forward to present some empirical data of interviews with sport managers. The empirical findings of our research could show several starting points for successful brand creation in sports derived from the experiences of a number of sport managers.

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