

Understanding collective emotions in the context of sporting marketing events

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Aim of paper and research questions

During the past few years, companies of different branches employed event marketing as a communication tool with the aim of spreading their marketing message by involving the target group (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2005). These so-called sporting marketing events are organized by the companies themselves in unusual urban locations (e.g. pedestrian city zones, old industrial plants). In the context of event marketing, collective emotions play an important role to present event objects, such as brands, product lines or the company itself to prospective customers in an eventful way (Weinberg & Nickel, 1998). As a result of the central meaning of emotions for event marketing, the companies are challenged by raising a successful emotionalisation of the event participants. As collective emotions do not arise automatically, but are closely linked to certain basic conditions, the organizers need specific knowledge on the building up of collective emotions. This article focuses on the following vital questions: *How do collective emotions arise in the context of sport marketing events? How can collective emotions at sporting marketing events be controlled by the event management?*

Literature review

Several studies assessed the role of emotions for understanding advertisement effects (e.g. Bagozzi et al., 1999). Numerous studies of event marketing research have shown how important emotions are for the event participants' collective experience (Drengner, 2003; Nufer, 2007), the discussion of the construction of emotions shows a range of inconsistencies and lacks investigation on the following topics: (1) Up to now there is no sustainable theoretical concept within the research of event marketing which explains the building up of emotions in the context of marketing events. Furthermore the present effect-analytical analyses focus on standardized designs of surveys and neglect the reality of the events in order to analyse the emotional processes in detail inside out. (2) Given that the scientific discussion of emotions has been analysed from a behavioural scientific point of view, the manifold inter-individual influences, in other words the ones linked to the social context, have not been considered. Last but not least these emotions are determined through these social processes during the event situation, which should be considered in order to correctly understand emotional processes (Hochschild, 1990). (3) Up to now emotions have been exclusively considered as processes of the level of the individual. In contrast there has been no investigation on collective emotions, that is to say emotions shared by groups, which aggregate in a kind of collective experience (Ciompi, 1997).

Research design and data analysis

The case study „Red Bull District Ride“, a marketing event of the brand Red Bull for the mountain bike free ride-scene, analyses the described mechanisms of the emotional model with qualitative and quantitative operations on three different points of time during the event process (before, during and after). Regarding methodological problems for analysing emotional processes the research methods used are standardised questioning (n=342) with participants and guided interviews (n=20) which are imbedded in participant observation. The participant

observation examines the emotional action and the interaction between different participants (e.g. spectators - spectators) in the process of the event based on specified categories. The standardised questioning and interviews analyse participants' subjective experience of these emotional processes.

Results

The results initially show the development of the phase of emotional action during the processing event. Findings reveal that during the event the emotional behaviour and the expression of emotion always change with effect toward patterns of the event situation. There, every phase describes a special degree of emotional characteristic. In the next step the influencing social mechanisms and construction rules to generate collective emotions were analysed. Therefore, four different types of event participants ("insider of the free ride-scene", "free ride fans", "interests of sport" and the "onlooker") were identified by a cluster analysis (ward-method). When analysing e.g. the interactive relations between spectators and spectators, findings reveal, that the members of the mountain bike free ride-scene with the self-creation, symbolic representations, collective expressions and sport specific knowledge advanced to valuable resources of emotion work in the event process. Other event participants with lower relations toward mountain bike free ride adhere to that.

Discussion and conclusion

Research findings with a link back to the theoretical considerations allow the deduction of practical implications for event management. This includes e.g.: (1) The reinforcement of the participant's commitment toward the marketing event, (2) The encouragement of the interactive cooperation between the participants, and (3) (Pre-)Structuring of event specific conditions of context by sense of proportion.

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