

CO-CREATION OF VALUE BY OTHER CUSTOMERS – EVIDENCE IN SPORTS

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Abstract

Aim of abstract – research question

Value of sporting events has traditionally been measured on characteristics like quality of the game, catering, sanitations, infrastructure etc. Based on Service-Dominant Logic (SD-logic) the value of a sporting event does not exist per se and is not determined by event characteristics. In SD-logic only value propositions are offered by the sporting event. As value is fundamentally derived and determined in use, the context influences value experience which is uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (customers in this case). Therefore co-creation of value is always value in context (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Sport services like sporting events are often delivered in settings where many costumers are present at the same time. Thus, other customers can have an essential impact on the event experience (Woratschek et al., 2007). Against this background, our research objectives are threefold:

1. Which customer groups have an effect on the event experience?
2. Which behaviours have an effect on the event experience?
3. Is there any difference in influence direction respectively influence strength of similar behaviours depending on the acting customer group?

Theoretical background

Based on grounded SD-logic our literature review focused on three research streams.

Firstly, we analyzed studies dealing with consumer-to-consumer relationships taking place in different service settings (Thakor et al., 2008). Findings show that other consumers in a specific service setting (restaurant vs. bowling centre) affect the attitudes towards the service satisfaction and patronage intention of those who shared the same environment. Additional insights were gained by the research fields joint consumption (Ramanathan & McGill, 2007) and social-servicescape (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy, 2003).

Secondly, we reviewed the characteristics and influences of reference groups on consumer behaviour. The effects of presence of other customers in consumption settings are widely discussed in the reference group literature. Typically reference group literature distinguishes between three types of reference groups: membership groups, aspirational groups, and dissociative groups (White & Dahl, 2007).

Thirdly, we analyzed attribution theory to explain how customers allocate the reason for being influenced by other customers (Weiner, 1986).

These theoretical findings support our approach to go one step further in structuring the effects on co-creation of value by other customers.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

We applied qualitative repertory grid methodology (Kelly, 1991) with the objective to detect facilitators and barriers in co-creation of value by other customers referring to the above mentioned scientific findings.

The repertory grid was conducted in five stages. At the beginning the test person should shortly describe itself as a spectator.

Second, the test person was asked to mention six to twelve relevant customer groups which affect the personal event experience (determination of the elements in the repertory grid).

In the third stage, the interviewer elicited relevant behaviours from the test person by taking triads of elements (customer groups mentioned in stage one) and asking the test person in which two of the triad's customer groups are similar and thereby different from the third (determination of the constructs in the repertory grid).

In the fourth stage, the test person was asked to rate all the elements according to all constructs (full grid) on a modified 1-5 scale (1 = I like the behaviour very much to 5 = I don't like the behaviour at all; X = cannot rate the behaviour of this element) without using the established contrasting poles to simplify the challenging task of rating the full grid.

In the final stage content analysis was applied by two independent researchers to bundle customer groups and behaviours of the customer groups. Thus reliability tests were used to underline the quality of the content analysis (Mayring, 2003).

Results, discussion and implications

Via the repertory grid 27 customer groups and 38 behaviours were identified which co-create value in sporting events. Several similar behaviours were rated differently by the test persons depending on which customer group acts. Additionally similar behaviours of similar customer groups were rated differently depending on the perspective of the test person. This strengthens SD-Logic in Sport Management.

By combining existing logics and approaches our study gained new insights on the influence of other customers on the event experience. Based on these findings further analyses which refer to individual perspectives are needed to verify the results.

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