

## Sport leagues as an enabler of co-creation – what is the perceived value of offering a platform for co-creation?

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sport marketing, co-creation, league management

### Aim of the paper

Since the emergence of the service dominant logic (Vargo/Lusch 2004), co-creation is discussed in academia. Accordingly, a sport league cannot organise the value creation of a sport event solely. The contribution of other parties such as local organisers, athletes/teams, and spectators is necessary to co-create value. The league itself offers a platform that enables divers parties to co-create value. An obstacle of co-creation is the distribution of the proceeds. Managers often doubt that their organisation will participate appropriately. Here, the research question is: How is the value creation of a sports league perceived? The research is done at the example of the German Football league.

### Literature Review

The idea of co-creation in this paper is based on two fields of literature. The first is the discussion of co-creation as introduced by the work of Vargo and Lusch (2004). The second field of literature is the discourse on value creation as initiated by Stabel and Fjeldstad (1998). This discourse represents the traditional idea of an organisation that creates value for third parties. In the case of the value network (Stabel/Fjeldstad 1998, p. 427-433), value creation takes place if an organisation creates a platform for others to interact. The concept of co-creation substitutes the idea that an organisation creates value by offering such a platform. Instead, divers parties use the platform to create value. In this sense, sport spectators use a football match to interact and identify with other fans and/or the team. It may not be the match itself that they are looking for. However, the literature review leaves a white spot. If the value creation takes place as co-creation, what is the perceived added value of the platform organisers for third parties?

The literature review (Grönroos 2008, Vargo/Lusch 2004, Stabel/Fjeldstad 1998) and theoretical considerations allow the development of a long list of different kinds of possible perceived added values. This list answers the question of perceived added value from a theoretical perspective. Clusters of such a list are for

example: offering a physical platform for interaction (e.g. stadium), offering content for interaction (e.g. contest, regulations), identification of capable third parties (e.g. athletes/teams, international integration into other series such as the UEFA Champions League, relegation), sales (e.g. sales process, negotiations). The list is the starting point for the following study.

### Methodology, research design, data analysis

The literature review and expert discussions enabled the development of a quantitative questionnaire. The purpose of the research was to confirm or reject the above-mentioned clusters of possible perceived added value. The sample was drawn by an online survey from the population of sport spectators in general with a focus on German football. The data analysis applies descriptive statistics as well as multivariate analytics.

### Results

The study was run in January 2012 and the results are based on 455 completed questionnaires with an equal gender distribution. 66% are generally interested in sports. 65% are interested in the German Bundesliga football. 35% visit the stadium more than once every year. 46% watch Bundesliga football every week on TV. The above-mentioned clusters of added value are well perceived. The stated appreciation of the distinct added value clusters differs between 77% and 83%. 80% agree, that the success of the German Bundesliga is based on the collaboration / interaction of league, clubs, spectators, sponsors, media, and others. The German Bundesliga is seen as a brand (82%) but only 44% attest a positive brand image. The positive brand image correlates with the high level football (beta coefficient 0.292, p 0.002), the engagement in collective sale of broadcasting rights (beta coefficient 0.205, p. 0.040) and the competitive balance (beta coefficient 0.185, p 0.054). The German Bundesliga is seen as a brand (recall) in correlation with the participating clubs (beta coefficient 0.321, p 0.000) and the collective sales of broadcasting rights (beta coefficient 0.207, p 0.022).

### Discussion

The study demonstrates that the input of the German Bundesliga on the value creation is perceived. However, only parts of the input are appreciated in a way that the input is honoured with positive feedback (e.g. positive image, brand recall). First of all, the collective sale of broadcasting rights has a positive correlation with both image and recall. People seem to understand the value of the platform organiser because the organiser is responsible for the sales. Furthermore, the league should communicate the attractiveness of the participating clubs (increases brand recall for the league) as well as the high level of football and the competitive balance (both increases the positive brand image).

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