

How Sport Events Create Value

Grohs, Reinhard¹; Pristach, Matthias² and Wieser, Verena²

Organisation(s): 1: Seeburg Castle University, Austria; 2: University of Innsbruck, Austria
reinhard.grohs@uni-seeburg.at

Aim

At sport events value is cocreated by different stakeholder groups (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014). Drawing on Vargo and Lusch (2004) who introduced service-dominant logic, and Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) who examined practices of collective value creation, the present study investigates value cocreation at sport events. Using the Big Mountain Hochfügen as the context for the empirical study, the findings show how event organizers, sponsors, athletes and spectators follow their own and collective interests and interact in multiple ways during the sport event, and how specific categories of value creating practices emerge from these interactions.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Vargo and Lusch's (2004) seminal article on the service-dominant logic (SDL) emphasizes the importance of value creation, or more specifically, value cocreation. In contrast to classical value creation processes, SDL involves customers that engage in dialog with suppliers as active cocreators of value, resulting in customized, cocreated offerings. Recent studies advised that SDL may be well suited for sport management research (Woratschek et al., 2014) and employed SDL logic in actual sport event contexts (Horbel, Popp, Woratschek, & Wilson, 2016). Traditional models of sport event creation (e.g., Li, Hofacre, & Mahony, 2001) also acknowledged that value is (co)created by several firms or organizations (e.g. sport teams, league, event organizer, and media). Therefore, the present study takes a meso-level perspective of value cocreation at sport events to fully grasp the interplay of the network of actors in sport events (Woratschek et al., 2014).

We conceptualize value drawing on Schau et al.'s article (2009) on the process of value (co)creation within brand communities. Schau et al. (2009) used social practice theory to identify four key categories of practices within brand communities that create value: social networking, impression management, community management, and product use. In the empirical study we aim to illuminate this typology of value-generating practices for key actors in the context of an international sport event.

Methodology

Big Mountain Hochfügen, a 4**** event of the Freeride World Qualifier Tour, serves as the context for the empirical study, because it is a typical multi-day sport event that involves different value cocreators (organizers, consumers, spectators etc.) and multiple possibilities for observing value cocreation practices. The set-up of the event with a visitor area, sponsor stalls, riders' dinner etc. provides multiple opportunities for researching those collective practices that provide value for the different actors through emergent participatory actions of multiple kinds (Schau et al., 2009).

The second author collected data by participating in a multi-year ethnographic study. Through his role as a known member of the freeride community he had privileged access to the event organizers, sponsors, athletes and spectators. Semi-structured interviews with representatives of these four groups served to gather in-depth qualitative data, and three years of participant observation complemented the interviews. Following classical ethnographic consumer

research (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994), for the analysis of both sets of data an interpretive analytic stance focused on themes that relate to 1) what practices generate value, and 2) how and why these practices generate value. All the themes were reviewed by the three authors of this paper through iterations of comparison and re-reading as to explore patterns and emerging issues.

Results, Discussion, and Implications

In terms of social networking practices, emerging themes revealed welcoming, empathizing, and governing practices. Welcoming practices, for example, describe the greeting and assisting of new members in their community socialization and involved interactions between athletes and sponsors at the pre-event riders' dinner, community events like avalanche courses with sponsors, riders and visitors, and other activities at the expo area aiming at creating, enhancing and sustaining ties among all actor groups. Impression management took place through evangelizing and justifying. Community management manifested itself in practices of staking, milestoneing, badging, and documenting. Finally, brand use, a subcategory of product use focusing on individual brands in the relevant product categories, was characterized by practices of grooming, customizing, and (de-)commoditizing. Because of space restrictions, the oral presentation provides examples for all practices.

Managers of sport event brands must be aware that they have limited control over their organizations' value creation, as they rely on other actors, like sponsors or participating athletes. Consequently, they must develop strategies for value cocreation and collaborative brand building with other actors in the network. From a theoretical perspective, the present research fulfils demands for rigorous work on understanding customer value phenomena in the context of sport event brands by addressing the interactive practices of actors (event organizers, sponsors, participants, and spectators) in the entire network that facilitate value creation. By integrating the identified practices and their specific configurations, the service providers involved in value cocreation in sport events can learn from the present study how, why and to what extent they are able to actually influence and cocreate the spectators' experience of the event.

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