

**CONSUMER MOTIVATIONS TO PARTICPATE IN MARKETING-EVENTS:
THE ROLE OF PREDISPOSITIONAL INVOLVEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Confronted with the decreasing effectiveness of classic marketing communications, event-marketing has become an increasingly popular alternative for marketers in dealing with a changing marketing environment. *Event-marketing* is defined as *the creation of 3-dimensional, interactive brand-related hyperrealities for consumers by staging marketing-events, which would result in an emotional attachment to the brand*. However, as a pull strategy within marketing communications, successful event-marketing strategies require a thorough understanding of why consumers are motivated to voluntarily participate in those marketing-events. To narrow this information gap, this research, based on a thorough literature review, has developed a conceptual model suggesting that consumers' motivations to participate in marketing-events are determined by their predispositional involvement either in the event-object, the event-content, event-marketing or the expected social interaction at the event. Thus, the main contribution is to the involvement and experiential consumption literature.

Consumer Motivations to Participate in Marketing-Events:

The Role of Predispositional Involvement

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, marketers are confronted with the decreasing effectiveness of their classic marketing communications due to an increasing saturation and fragmentation of markets and the subsequent competition of communications. Indeed, because classic marketing communications are solely based on a push strategy where brand messages are forced on consumers through a variety of media, consumers respond to the increasing information overflow with low media involvement and actively engage in a variety of avoidance strategies (Rumbo 2002; Tse and Lee 2001). Thus, new marketing communication strategies are emerging with a communication structure that often differs significantly from those of established strategies by their tendency to offer interactive dialogues instead of monologues (Evans et al. 2004; Sistenich 1999). As a consequence, event-marketing is becoming a popular alternative for marketers as a pull strategy within marketing communications (Drengner 2003; Zanger and Sistenich 1996). *Event-marketing* (in the context of this paper) is defined as *the interactive communication of brand values by staging marketing-events as 3-dimensional brand-related hyperrealities in which consumers are actively involved on a behavioural level and which would result in their emotional attachment to the brand.*

Previous research into event-marketing has proven that consumers show a high involvement because of their voluntary participation in marketing-events (Drengner 2003; Nufer 2002). In reference to advertising research, media involvement in combination with the motivation and ability to process brand-related information is seen as a crucial prerequisite in determining the effectiveness of any communication media in influencing brand images (Drengner 2003; Petty et al. 1983). Thus, an understanding of consumers' motivations and experiential needs is a key factor in designing effective event-marketing strategies. However, while previous

research into event-marketing has focused on determining and controlling the effectiveness of event-marketing, little attention has been paid to consumers' motivations to attend marketing-events in the first place.

This now raises the interesting question: Why do consumers participate voluntarily in marketing-events that are specifically designed as communication platforms for the same commercial messages that they usually tend to avoid? In addressing this research question, the objective of this paper is to draw upon a comprehensive review of the literature and to explore whether, and to what degree, the predispositional involvement in one or more specific aspects of marketing-events is motivating consumers to participate voluntarily in marketing-events. As the main contribution is to the involvement and experiential consumption literature, this paper will first introduce briefly the idea of event-marketing and summarize the motivation and involvement constructs, before discussing the role of predispositional involvement in more detail. Based on the findings, a conceptual model has been developed to outline the forces that drive consumer motivations to participate in marketing-events and, subsequently, determine the success of event-marketing strategies.

EVENT-MARKETING

As the term *event marketing* has been used in the past to describe a multitude of phenomena in marketing practice (Cornwell 1995), the event-marketing concept in the context of this paper needs to be briefly introduced first. Event-marketing as an experiential marketing communication strategy first emerged in Germany in the late 1980s in response to significant changes in both the marketing environment and consumer behaviour (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005). By communicating brand values as "real-lived" experiences, event-marketing is designed to take advantage of the shift from maintenance to experiential consumption in the societal value system of affluent societies (Weinberg and Gröppel 1989). Experiential

consumption refers to obtaining enriching experiences through emotional benefits, by which consumers attempt to improve the quality of their lives right here and now (Opaschowski 1998). This romantic consumption ethic has not only led to an increasing orientation towards and active participation in leisure and recreation, entertainment and cultural neo-tribes (Cova and Cova 2002; Martin 2004; Mitchell 1988), but also outlined the need for experiential marketing communications to gain consumers' attention.

The communicative innovation of event-marketing derives from its four constitutive features:

- *Experience-orientation:*

As personal lived experiences tend to be stronger than "second-hand" media experiences in determining consumers' notion of reality, consumers are encouraged to experience the brand reality as active participants rather than being passive recipients and, subsequently, are offered a contribution to their subjective quality of life (Weinberg and Nickel 1998).

- *Interactivity:*

In difference to the monological provision of information in classic marketing communications, event-marketing offers a platform for interactive and personal dialogues between participants, spectators and brand representatives (Zanger and Sistenich 1996).

- *Self-initiation:*

Event-marketing is aimed at influencing consumers emotionally by staging self-initiated marketing-events. Thus, the marketer is in full control of the way in which sensual brand experiences are anchored in the world of consumer feelings and experiences (Nufer 2002; Weinberg and Nickel 1998; Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004).

- *Dramaturgy:*

In order for consumers to experience the brand hyperreality emotionally, it requires a unique and creative dramaturgy that, similar to a theatre play, brings the brand image to life and captures the imagination of the target audience. Therefore, the more the event-

marketing strategy differs from consumers' everyday life experiences the higher is the degree of activation among consumers (Sistenich 1999; Zanger and Sistenich 1996).

In contrast to sponsorship, event-marketing is aimed at positively influencing customers' familiarity, image, attitude and emotional attachment to the brand by staging self-initiated marketing-events as 3-dimensional brand-related hyperrealities for consumers. The fact that consumers are encouraged to actively experience the brand by becoming part of this hyperreality is the major peculiarity of event-marketing in comparison to classic marketing communications, where consumers generally remain passive and distant recipients of brand messages (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005). And while in advertising a contact remains rather accidental, consumers actively seek to engage with this communication strategy. However, in order to utilise its full potential, any event-marketing strategy must be designed in a way that consumers want to take part in a brand's hyperreality. Thus, marketers must have an understanding of what needs consumers seek to satisfy by participating in marketing-events.

MOTIVATIONS

Motivations are a hypothetical construct to define the driving forces of human behaviour (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003) and explain why people do what they do instead of choosing an alternative option. In general, they result from the interaction of fundamental activation processes and various cognitive processes. Emotions and basic urges activate and direct behaviour, while cognitive processes determine the goal orientation and the intensity of the action by which the individual is willing to achieve this goal under given circumstances (Weinberg 1995). Consequently, causal relationships between activation and cognitive goal-orientation have a crucial effect on an individual's motivation to consume, because the same activation process can lead to different motivations while different activation processes can result in the same motivation (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003).

Consumer behaviour is largely driven by the desire to satisfy specific needs, which in return can be divided into existential and experiential needs (Csikszentmihalyi 2000). According to Maslow (1987), human needs arrange themselves in a definite hierarchy based on the principle of relative potency. *Physiological needs*, i.e. food, water, air and sex, represent the bottom of the hierarchy, as they are crucial for an individual's immediate survival. To ensure survival in the long-term, they are followed by *safety needs*, i.e. protection, certainty and the avoidance of pain or anxiety. After those basic needs follow the psychological needs that cover *social needs*, i.e. belongingness, affiliation and love, and *esteem needs* such as self-esteem, recognition and career (Buck 1988). Maslow (1987) proposed that all those needs are inborn and universal to all human beings. Furthermore, as deficit needs they put consumers under pressure to satisfy them on an ongoing basis. In contrast, *self-actualisation needs* are growth needs by which individuals fulfil their very unique potential (Maslow 1987).

The hierarchy's general idea is that motivations are driven by consumers' desire to consciously satisfy those needs in a similar order. Therefore, individuals experience lower needs always stronger than higher needs (Maslow 1987). Maslow originally even proposed that higher growth needs do not appear to consciousness until the deficit needs are met on a regular basis (Buck 1988). But despite its widespread acceptance in literature, Maslow's hierarchy of needs also has its critics. Buck (1988) argued that most physiological needs are always present and never cease to affect consumer behaviour, while even during times of deprivation, when basic needs dominate, higher needs are still present to influence consumer behaviour. In addition, people tend to differ in judging the value of some needs as more important than others. For example, one individual may satisfy personal growth in a stressful working career at the cost of health and social relationships, while another one prefers love and family instead of a career (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003). In response, Maslow

(1987) acknowledged at a later stage that people only need to be partially satisfied in their basic needs before higher needs emerge.

However, Csikszentmihalyi (2000) criticised in particular Maslow's assumption that human behaviour is always driven by predictable, universal needs that allow for rational decision-making, while most consumer choices are actually made for a variety of other reasons. Indeed, with increasing affluence and being less concerned with existential needs, people often find themselves in an existential vacuum where they are not aware of a specific goal. Thus, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) proposed that people, especially in affluent societies, are not only driven by Maslow's existential needs, but also by experiential needs. His concept is based on the assumption that it is part of human nature to keep consciousness in an organised state by focusing on some activity that requires attention. But once there is nothing to do, consumers' attention turns inward and leads to a decline in self-esteem and the experienced quality of life, which may even result in depression and despair. Therefore, consumers have to engage their attention by activities that suggest specific goals in order to "keep their consciousness tuned" and to obtain pleasurable experiences (Csikszentmihalyi 2000).

Csikszentmihalyi's experiential consumption concept not only provides valuable insights into the growing importance of leisure, entertainment and recreational activities in giving meaning to consumers' lives, but also explains why shopping in affluent societies has become such a popular goal-directed leisure activity for consumers to improve their subjective quality of life. The purchase itself has turned into little more than a by-product, a mere means to an end (Opaschowski 1998). Experiential consumption, therefore, goes well beyond experiencing emotional benefits in the process of ownership transfer or product usage, as proposed by the hedonic consumption concept. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) defined hedonic consumption as *those facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive*

aspects of one's experience with products (p. 92). The idea is that consumers not only buy products for their utilitarian value in solving problems, but also often for their hedonic pleasure value and symbolic meanings that derive from using the product (Martin 2004). Experiential consumption, however, is primarily driven by the intrinsic pursuit of personal happiness where consumers engage in activities to experience excitement, challenges, personal accomplishment or fun for its own merits. Products are merely contributors to the overall emotional experience (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). This intrinsic pursuit of happiness and enjoyment of life right here and now not only has a strong impact on consumer behaviour in affluent societies in general (Opaschowski 1998), but also on consumers' motivations to participate in marketing-events in particular.

THE MODERATING ROLE OF INVOLVEMENT

As consumers' motivations to engage in their favourite leisure activities are determined by their personal interests and desires (Mitchell 1988), consumers' voluntary participation in marketing-events is seriously influenced by their personal involvement as well. Involvement is a hypothetical construct that reflects *consumers' cognitive engagement and the subsequent activation to devote themselves to a specific issue or activity* (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003: 245). The higher consumers are involved in activities or issues the stronger is their tendency and willingness to engage with them and to process relevant information (Zaichkowsky 1985). Although the moderating role of involvement in processing brand messages is well known in marketing, most research focused primarily on the personal relevance that products (Coulter et al. 2003; Laurent and Kapferer 1985) or advertising messages (Petty et al. 1983) have for consumers in forming reasoned buying decisions.

The assumption often was that consumers' involvement with specific products would be determined by the products' physical attributes and characteristics. In other words, TV sets,

cars or other luxury items were regarded as high involvement products due to their high sign value and the high risk of a mispurchase (Laurent and Kapferer 1985). But in reality, a person, who could not care less about cars and might not even hold a driving licence, can be very low involved in this “high involvement product”, while other people, as determined collectors (Bloch and Bruce 1984), spend often more than half an hour picking the *right* Kinder chocolate-egg, a so-called “low involvement product”. Thus, involvement should not be viewed as a feature that is naturally attached to a specific product category, but rather as a personal trait of individual consumers that has a serious influence on their motivation to engage in certain behaviours (Nufer 2002). This means that an individual’s involvement with a product is solely dependent on the personal relevance this product has for the individual. Consequently, personal involvement is also a differentiating factor between people who enjoy a specific activity and those who, despite having identical skills and coming from the same socio-economic backgrounds, are bored by the same (Mitchell 1988). Subsequently, marketing-events must be designed to appeal to target audiences by being related to their personal leisure interests and experiential needs to ensure a high personal involvement.

Based on the timeframe of this personal cognitive engagement, the involvement construct can be further differentiated into situational and predispositional involvement (Drengner 2003; Richins and Bloch 1986). *Situational involvement* occurs when a specific object catches an individual’s interest for a limited period of time (Nufer 2002). This can either happen when a specific need presents itself to consciousness or the individual gets in contact with the object by chance, i.e. while browsing in a store. However, once the need has been fulfilled or the contact has ended, the situational involvement declines again and even disappears (Richins and Bloch 1986). For instance, a person who intends to move to a new accommodation would show a high situational involvement in the property market and actively seek information in the property supplements of newspapers and advice from estate agents. But once an

appropriate accommodation has been found, the same person might no longer have any interest in the property market at all.

Predispositional involvement, on the other hand, refers to consumers' long-lasting interest in engaging with an object based on their personal values and desires (Nufer 2002) and is often associated with enduring product involvement (Richins and Bloch 1986). An individual's predispositional involvement activates interest and motivation to achieve a specific goal even without immediate need or direct contact with the object. Nevertheless, despite being relatively consistent, predispositional involvement can change over time as a result of altered personal values and desires (Drengner 2003). For instance, an individual has developed a romantic interest in ideal homes and properties. Subsequently, this person may continuously read the property supplements in the newspapers, subscribe to "better homes" magazines, visit homebuilder trade shows or watch TV programmes on celebrity homes even without the need or intention to buy a property for himself or herself.

While the situational involvement is relevant for processing brand messages presented by the media or sales representatives (Drengner 2003; Petty et al. 1983), consumers' motivation to engage with the object, the content or the media in the first place is determined by their predispositional involvement (Bloch and Bruce 1984; Coulter et al. 2003). This means that the effectiveness of classic marketing communication strategies such as advertising, sales promotions or public relations is highly dependent on consumers' situational involvement in either the brand or the media content, as a contact generally occurs rather accidentally than being actively sought. Event-marketing, on the other hand, is a pull strategy within marketing communications where consumers seek to participate in marketing-events depending on their predispositional and situational involvement.

CONSUMERS' PREDISPOSITIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN MARKETING-EVENTS

The motivation of consumers to participate in marketing-events is determined by their predispositional involvement in at least one aspect of the event-marketing strategy. Drengner (2003) suggested that there are three distinct predispositional involvement dimensions that play a major role in the attractiveness of marketing-events for individuals, but has not investigated them any further. Thus, this paper is developing this idea in greater conceptual detail while simultaneously contributing further by proposing an additional construct.

Event-marketing involvement refers to the professional or academic interest in this particular marketing communication strategy or marketing communications in general. For instance, a marketer attends the *Red Bull Flugtag* to get some inspiration for his/her own forthcoming marketing campaign. Although this area of predispositional involvement is not very common, individuals who have a personal interest in event-marketing are likely to participate in a marketing-event. Thus, the following research proposition is suggested:

P1: The higher the predispositional event-marketing involvement the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in the marketing-event.

Event-object involvement refers to an individual's long-lasting interest in the brand or product category (Richins and Bloch 1986). For instance, some kids were motivated to participate in the *Adidas Streetball Challenge* to gather information about Adidas sports products and experience Adidas brand values interactively in an exciting atmosphere. But despite marketers' wishful thinking that their particular brands play an important role in people's lives, the predispositional event-object involvement is usually limited to those very few brands or product categories, which are linked to specific leisure activities (Bloch and Bruce 1984) or associated with hedonic consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Nevertheless, the following research proposition is suggested:

P2: The higher the predispositional event-object involvement the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in the marketing-event.

Event-content involvement refers to an individual's personal interest in the activity that is the central part of the event's dramaturgy (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004). For instance, many kids, who participated in the *Adidas Streetball Challenge*, had a keen interest in basketball and the associated hip-hop culture. Because predispositional event-content involvement is one of the most important motivators for voluntary participation, successful event-marketing strategies usually connected the brand with the leisure interests of their target audiences either directly or indirectly. For example, while there is a direct link between the Adidas brand and streetball, the building of your own homemade flying machine to be launched at the *Red Bull Flugtag* and the Red Bull energy drink are indirectly linked to its advertising slogan "Red Bull gives you wings!"

Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) flow-theory, which is already well established in the field of leisure research (Drengner 2003), offers some explanations for consumers' predispositional involvement in the event-content. He argued that people experience the highest level of happiness in the moment when their mind is stretched to the limit in a voluntary effort to accomplish challenging tasks. As the prototype of intrinsic motivation, optimal experience or "flow" occurs when all the contents of an individual's consciousness are in harmony with each other and with the goals that define the consumer's self (Csikszentmihalyi 1988). Although flow can be experienced in any kind of activity, most people find in their productive work neither enjoyment nor an adequate balance between their perceived skills and faced challenges (Mitchell 1988). Therefore, consumers tend to search in their leisure time for activities that compensate for the deficits of their everyday work experience.

Consequently, consumers' drive to experience flow in their intrinsic pursuit of happiness can be a motivating factor for the participation in marketing-events as well.

Further insights are offered by the role theory, which defines social roles as the society's expectations on the occupier of a specific position (Sistenich 1999). In everyday life, every individual occupies several different positions and, therefore, has to play a set of different roles with varying degrees of demands and freedoms that are attached to each respective role (Zanger and Sistenich 1996). These demands and freedoms outline the limitations and opportunities of consumers to express their selves within their role play (Sistenich 1999). However, work-related roles are usually very strict and narrowly defined, leaving little room for personal creativity and self-identification. Thus, most people perceive work as a necessary evil rather than a pleasurable experience (Mitchell 1988). In contrast, the demands and creative freedoms of leisure roles in form of both hobbies and entertainment are less rigid and more suited to personal skills and interests and have become a widespread means for consumers to break away from daily routine (Sistenich 1999).

Event-marketing provides consumers with a 3-dimensional brand-related hyperreality that allows them for a moment in time "to be someone else" and experience roles that differ from their daily lives. The activation potential of marketing-events stems from the opportunity for consumers to be actively involved in areas of personal interest and in interaction processes that cannot be realised in everyday life (Sistenich 1999). Marketing-events present consumers with a platform for experiencing fun, excitement, challenges and self-fulfilment. The more the event-marketing content and dramaturgy meets consumers' role expectations the better will be the subsequent image transfer from this unique emotional experience to the brand (Zanger and Sistenich 1996). Therefore, the following research proposition is suggested:

P3: The higher the predispositional event-content involvement the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in the marketing-event.

Furthermore, both participants and spectators are provided with a feeling of *communitas*, an emotionally rewarding closeness comparatively free from the constraints of social roles and responsibilities (Csikszentmihalyi 1988). Indeed, many people tend to attend cultural and sports events in order either to be among other people with similar interests or to be part of a particular aspirational reference group. For instance, joining a sports club and being involved in sports is often motivated by the desire for social interaction, recognition and acceptance as a member of a team or social group (Allen 2003). Thus, a fourth predispositional involvement dimension needs to be added to the previous three suggested by Drengner (2003):

Social event involvement refers to an individual's desire in belonging to a particular social community or neo-tribe that is associated with either the brand (McAlexander et al. 2002) or the event-content (Cova and Cova 2002). Because marketing-events are designed to appeal to specified target audiences, consumers expect to find members of a particular social group or subculture and, subsequently, a certain atmosphere to be present, to which they want to belong (Allen 2003). For example, because the *Adidas Streetball Challenge* was designed to target the youth market by replicating the US streetball and street-culture with its "Adidas goes street"-concept, many kids participated with the view of interacting with like-minded members of the hip-hop and skaters neo-tribes. This bond of social solidarity may result in the development of loyal brand communities (McAlexander et al. 2002), where the brand becomes an essential element of a neo-tribe's subculture (Cova and Cova 2002). Therefore, the following research proposition is suggested:

P4: The higher the predispositional social event involvement the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in the marketing-event.

All four dimensions of consumers' predispositional involvement in marketing-events should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. In fact, consumers may have a high predispositional involvement in more than one dimension (Drengner 2003). Both participants and spectators at the Adidas Streetball Challenge had not only a personal interest in streetball and the hip-hop culture, but also took part in order to interact with other like-minded participants. As Adidas apparel became over time an integral element of sign within neo-tribes of the hip-hop culture, participants shared a predispositional involvement in the Adidas brand as well. Subsequently, the following research propositions are suggested:

P5: The more individual dimensions of the marketing-event consumers are predispositionally involved in the higher is their involvement in the marketing-event itself.

P6: The higher the involvement in the marketing-event itself the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in marketing-events.

PROPOSITION OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the theoretical findings on these four predispositional involvement dimensions that derived from literature, this research proposes the following conceptual model of consumers' motivations to participate voluntarily in marketing-events. This conceptual model is basically a neo-behavioural S-O-R model. The S-O-R paradigm is a further development of the traditional behavioural "black-box" model, which takes the various internal, non-visible psychological processes as intervening variables between stimuli and responses into account (Drengner 2003; Nufer 2002). Those psychological processes that are of particular interest to this research are motivations and predispositional involvement.

The communication process in event-marketing, as proposed by this study, starts in the pre-event stage with the initial announcements of the marketing-event, delivered via classic

marketing communications, as the first stimuli consumers are getting in contact with. Those announcements usually take the form of personal invitations or involve some form of competitive application procedures for potential participants. An individual's motivation to participate is now highly dependent on his/her involvement in this particular marketing-event that has been aroused by the invitation or application process. Given their general disinterest in promotional messages, it is unlikely that consumers would attend a marketing-event if it does not have any utilitarian, hedonic or experiential relevance to them.

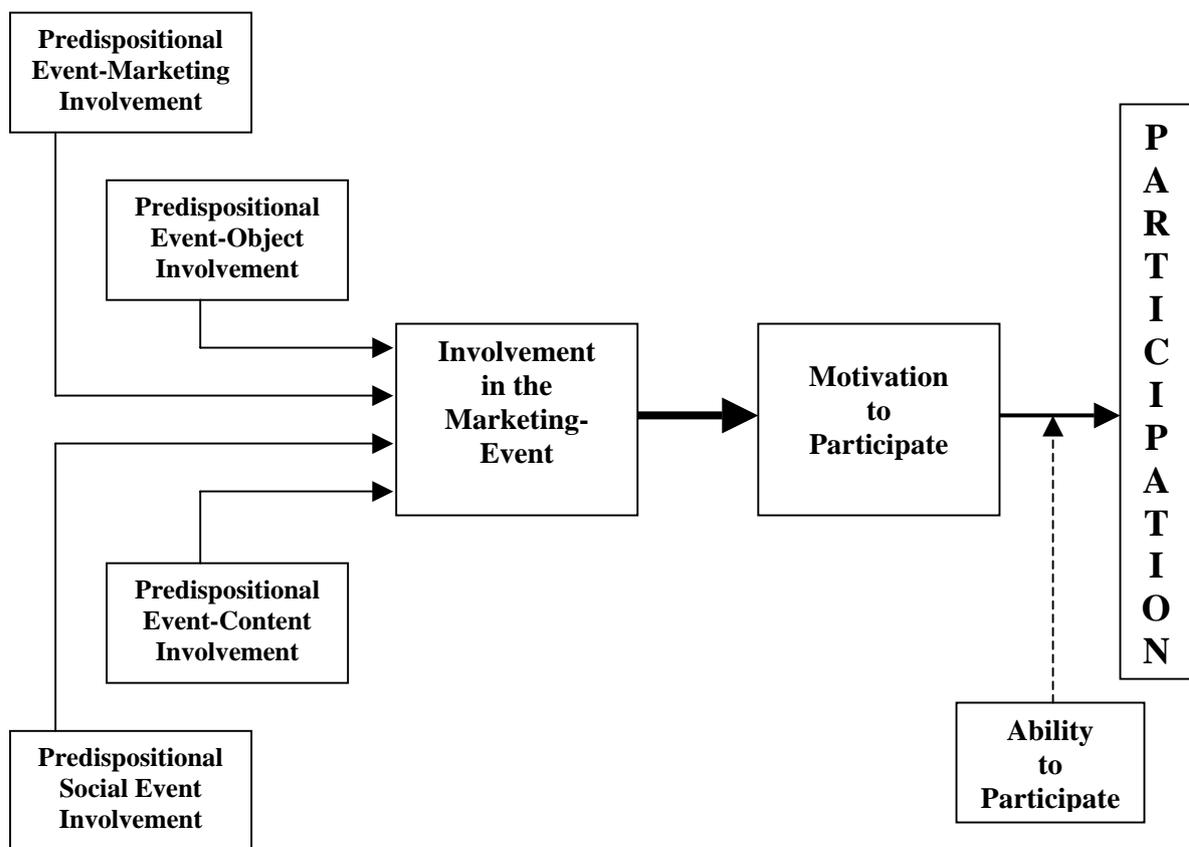


Figure 1: Model of the Predispositional Determinants for Consumers'

Motivation to Participate in Marketing-Events

As previously discussed, a consumer's involvement in the marketing-event is determined by the predispositional involvement either in the event-object, the event-content, event-marketing or the expected social interaction with relevant neo-tribes. Figure 1 shows in detail the interactive relationships between the involvement in the marketing-event and its four

predispositional involvement dimensions in moderating an individual's motivation to participate according to the research propositions. If a consumer's involvement in the marketing-event is only caused by one specific predispositional involvement dimension, then this particular dimension equals the involvement in the marketing-event and determines the motivation to participate directly. However, if consumers are predispositionally involved in at least two predispositional involvement dimensions, then the involvement in the marketing-event that activates the motivation to participate reflects the accumulation and interaction of all relevant predispositional involvement dimensions.

However, a strong intrinsic or extrinsic motivation of consumers to participate need not necessarily translate into the actual participation. Indeed, even an individual who is highly motivated to participate for example in the Red Bull Flugtag must also be able to attend. The ability to participate can be influenced by several factors. Because marketing-events tend to be limited to specific locations, occasions or conditions, they are not always geographically or temporarily accessible. For instance, it is of little value for an interested individual living in Waterford or Göteborg if the Red Bull Flugtag takes place in Miami. Furthermore, for organisational reasons most marketing-events are only open for a certain maximum number of participants and spectators. In addition, other personal commitments of individuals might prevent their motivational intention from translating into actual participation. Nevertheless, a consumer's visible response at the end of the predispositional phase can be observed as either the participation or non-participation in the marketing-event.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Several implications for marketing practice can be drawn from the proposed framework. First, when employing an event-marketing strategy, marketers should consider more than just simply picking a popular theme based on a standardised "once-successful-always-successful"

formula. Being a pull strategy within marketing communications, the success of event-marketing is highly dependent on consumers' voluntary participation. Thus, marketers must have an understanding of consumers' experiential needs and motivations before designing their marketing-events accordingly. The aim is to achieve a perceived fit between their brands, marketing-events and target audiences by appealing to consumers' predispositional interests in the event-object, the event-content, event-marketing or the social interaction. As consumer behaviour in affluent societies is largely driven by the intrinsic pursuit of happiness and enjoyment of life right here and now (Opaschowski 1998) to compensate for the deficits in their everyday lives (Mitchell 1988), marketers should set up their marketing-events as stages for extraordinary brand experiences. The more consumers are able to experience flow, to play a set of roles, which differ from their everyday lives, and to interact with members of a social community associated with the brand or event-content, the stronger is their motivation to participate in the brand's hyperreality and to process brand messages.

Second, the proposed model suggests that marketers should also consider not only to focus on one dimension when designing their marketing-events, but also to create a whole web of experiences meeting consumers' predispositional involvement. As the personal interests of consumers are diverse, marketing-events that meet more than one dimension of consumers' personal interests not only appeal to a broader target audience, but might also have a stronger pull effect. Finally, as the success of event-marketing depends on consumers' participation, marketers need to regularly control the attractiveness of their marketing-events in relation to the experiential needs of their target audiences. The proposed model provides marketers with a helpful tool for benchmarking the appeal of their marketing-events in relation to the outlined four dimensions of consumers' predispositional involvement and controlling their effectiveness in motivating consumers' participation.

This paper has also set forward a number of research propositions that are suggested by the proposed model. However, the model and propositions are still in need of empirical validation. The biggest challenge in the empirical testing of these propositions will be in the measurement development of the predispositional involvement construct and the outlined four relevant areas in particular. Indeed, because involvement research often allows only for a “snapshot” of a particular moment in time, the predispositional and situational involvement constructs are often difficult to separate from each other (Richins and Bloch 1986). Thus, Zaichkowsky’s (1994) revised Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) offers a valid and reliable scale for measuring predispositional involvement. But the scale must be supported by additional control measures to reduce the impact of situational involvement factors.

As a consequence of its growing popularity in marketing practice, more research in the area of event-marketing is needed. While previous research in event-marketing tended to focus in detail on its communicative effectiveness (Drengner 2003; Nufer 2002), consumers’ predispositional involvement and their motivations to participate in marketing-events in the first place have been little addressed in marketing literature so far. In order to progress in this field of research, the model proposed by this paper represents a first step in the discussion of how event-marketing as a marketing communication strategy works from which to build on.

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