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**INVESTIGATING CONSUMERS'
MOTIVATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN
MARKETING-EVENTS**

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Abstract

In recent years, due to an increasing saturation and fragmentation of markets and the subsequent competition of communications, marketers are confronted with the decreasing effectiveness of their classic marketing communications (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004). As a consequence, event-marketing has become a popular alternative for marketers that creates 3-dimensional brand-related realities by staging marketing-events, in which consumers are actively involved on a behavioural level (Zanger and Sistenich 1996). However, as a pull strategy within marketing communications, event-marketing strategies must be designed in a way that consumers are motivated to participate voluntarily. Thus, marketers must have an understanding of the needs consumers seek to satisfy by participating in marketing-events. 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 consumers' everyday lives (Mitchell 1988), event-marketing is setting up the stage for consumers to experience flow (Drengner 2003), to take on roles that differ from their everyday lives (Sistenich and Zanger 1999) and even become part of the social community that they associate with the brand (McAlexander et al. 2002) or the event-content (Bauer et al. 2003). However, while previous research in event-marketing focused in detail on its effectiveness (Drengner 2003; Lasslop 2003; Nufer 2002), consumers' predispositional involvement and their motivations to participate in marketing-events, which is crucial to the subsequent communicative success, has not been addressed in literature so far. To narrow this information gap, this research has developed a conceptual framework of how event-marketing works by proposing that consumers' motivations to participate in marketing-events are determined by at least one of four types of predispositional involvement, which represent the long-lasting personal relevance of either the event-object (brand), the event-content (dramaturgy), event-marketing (communication strategy) or social interaction (brand community) for the consumer.

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Introduction

In recent years, due to an increasing saturation and fragmentation of markets and the subsequent competition of communications, marketers are confronted with the decreasing effectiveness of their classic marketing communications (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004). 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 (Bruhn 2003; Weinberg and Gröppel 1989; Kroeber-Riel 1984) and actively engage in avoidance strategies (Tse and Lee 2001; Kroeber-Riel 1987). Subsequently, 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 (Sistenich and Zanger 1999). In light of these developments, event-marketing is becoming a popular alternative for marketers (Drengner 2003; Lasslop 2003; Nufer 2002; Sistenich 1999; Zanger and Sistenich 1996). As it creates 3-dimensional brand-related realities by staging marketing-events in which consumers are actively involved on a behavioural level, event-marketing can be regarded as a pull strategy within marketing communications (Sistenich 1999; Zanger and Sistenich 1996). Previous research in event-marketing has proven that consumers, because of their voluntary participation in marketing-events, generally show a high event involvement (Drengner 2003; Lasslop 2003; Nufer 2002). In reference to research in the effectiveness of advertising (Vakratsas and Ambler 1999; Petty et al. 1991), 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; Nufer 2002; Gwinner 1997; Petty et al. 1991). Therefore, an understanding of consumers' motivations and experiential needs is a key factor in the design and, subsequently, effectiveness of event-marketing strategies. However, while previous research in event-marketing has focused on determining and controlling the effectiveness of event-marketing from either an effects-analytical or a control-oriented perspective (Zanger 2002), 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, this paper draws upon a comprehensive review of the literature and explores whether the flow-concept (Drengner 2003; Drengner and Zanger 2003; Jackson et al. 1998; Jackson 1996; Csikszentmihalyi 1988) and role theory (Sistenich 1999; Sistenich and Zanger 1999; Zanger and Sistenich 1998, 1996) as concepts from the motivational psychology may offer some insights into consumers' motivations for voluntary participation in marketing-events. Based on the findings, a framework of how event-marketing works has been developed to outline the motivational factors leading to consumers' high event involvement that are crucial to the subsequent success of this experience-oriented marketing communication strategy.

Event-Marketing

Because there is still some confusion in literature of what constitutes event-marketing (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004), the concept needs to be briefly described first. The German concept of event-marketing as an experience-oriented marketing communication strategy emerged in the late 1980s in response to significant changes in both the marketing environment and consumer behaviour (see figure 1). Event-marketing strategies such as the Red Bull Flugtag or the Adidas City Games are primarily designed to take advantage of the shift from maintenance to experiential consumption in the social value system of affluent societies (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004; Weinberg and Nickel 1998; Weinberg and Gröppel 1989). Experiential consumption refers to the obtaining of enriching experiences through emotional benefits, by which consumers attempt to improve the quality of their lives right here and now (Weinberg and Gröppel 1989; Kroeber-Riel 1984). This romantic consumption ethic has not only led to an increasing orientation towards, and active participation in, leisure and recreation, entertainment and cultural scenes (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004; Nufer 2002; Opaschowski 1998), but also made clear the need for experience-oriented marketing communications to gain consumers' attention.

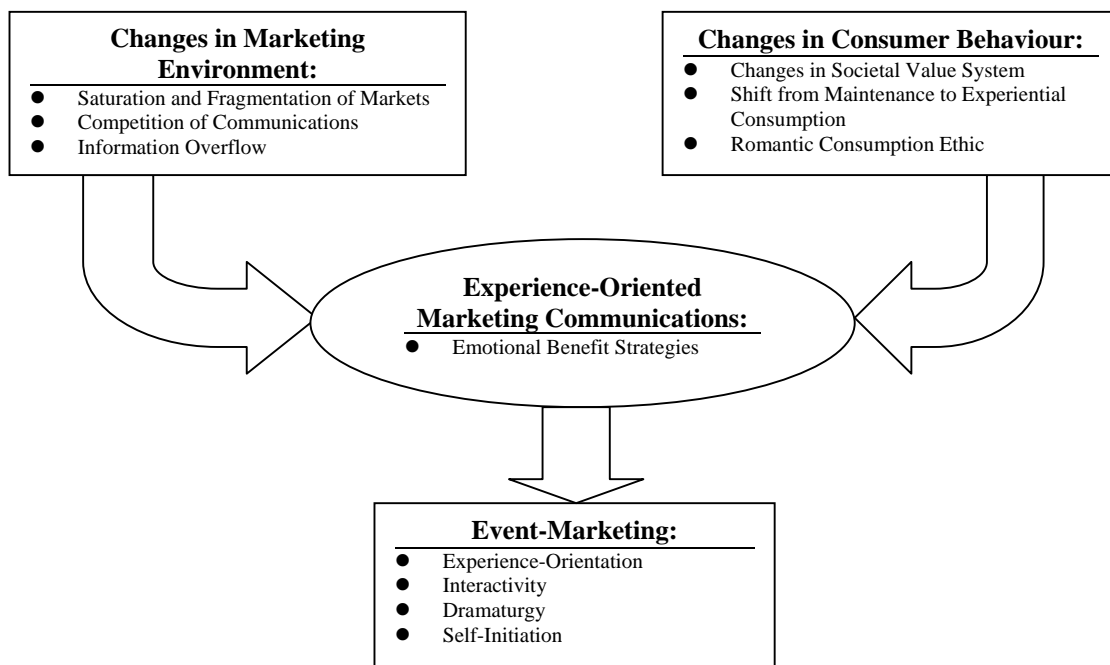


Figure 1. Factors Influencing the Need for Event-Marketing (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004)

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 realities. The fact that consumers are encouraged to actively experience the brand by becoming part of this 3-dimensional brand reality 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 2004; Zanger 2002; Nufer 2002). For instance, at the Red Bull Flugtag consumers are invited to "stimulate their body and mind" and "give themselves wings" by building their own homemade flying machines. Thus, in contrast to advertising, where a contact remains accidentally, consumers actively seek to engage with this communication strategy. To implement this strategy, two types of media are currently available to marketers. Traditionally, marketing-events satisfy the human need of communication by offering the opportunity of special unique live

experiences that allow for authenticity (Bruhn 2003). Furthermore, as they are highly targeted and often offer active participation only to a selected minority, they also deliver the sense of exclusivity, which strengthens the emotionalising effect. Brand lands, on the other hand, are immobile corporate infotainment theme parks, such as the Guinness Storehouse or the Volkswagen Autostadt, which are fixed to specific locations and permanently open to public visits, allowing exposure to much larger target audiences. Their primary objective is to build up and intensify customer-brand relationships by offering a transparent, family friendly platform for interactive dialogues (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004).

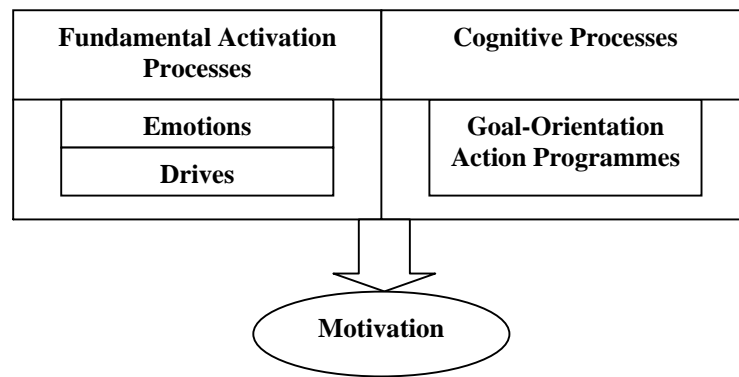
The communicative innovation of event-marketing derives from its four constitutive features

- *Experience-orientation:*
As personal lived experiences tend to be stronger than “second-hand” media experiences in determining consumers’ notion of reality, they 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 (Bauer et al. 2003; 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 (Drengner and Zanger 2003; Zanger and Sistenich 1998, 1996).
- *Self-initiation:*
Because event-marketing is aimed at influencing consumers emotionally by staging self-initiated marketing-events, the marketer is in full control of the way in which sensual brand experiences are anchored in the world of consumer feelings and experiences (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2004; Nufer 2002; Weinberg and Nickel 1998).
- *Dramaturgy:*
In order for consumers to emotionally experience the lived brand-reality, 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 (Bauer et al. 2003; Sistenich 1999; Zanger and Sistenich 1998, 1996).

However, in order to develop their full potential, event-marketing strategies must be designed in a fashion that target audiences do not want to miss being part of these experiential brand-related realities. Thus, marketers must have an understanding of what needs consumers seek to satisfy by participating in marketing-events or visiting brand lands.

Motivations

According to Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg (2003), motivations are a hypothetical construct to define the driving forces of human behaviour. In other words, motivations explain why people do what they do instead of choosing an alternative option. They result from the interaction of fundamental activation processes and various cognitive processes (see figure 2). While emotions and basic drives, such as hunger, thirst, sexuality and avoidance of pain, activate behaviour and lead it in a certain direction, 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. Consequently, causal relationships between activation and cognitive goal-orientation have a crucial effect on an individual’s motivation to consume. The same activation process can lead to different motivations, while different activation processes can lead to the same motivation (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003).



**Figure 2. Interaction Variables to Define Motivations
(Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003)**

Consumer behaviour, now, 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. At the bottom of the hierarchy are *physiological needs* that are crucial for immediate survival, i.e. food, air, water and sex. Next are *safety needs*, such as protection, order and avoidance of pain or anxiety, to ensure survival in the long-term. After these 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 acceptance (Buck 1988). Maslow (1987) suggested that these needs are inborn and universal to all human beings. Furthermore, as deficit needs they put consumers under pressure to satisfy them on a regular and ongoing basis. In contrast, as the highest needs, *self-actualisation needs* are growth needs to fulfil one's unique individual potential (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003; Buck 1988; Maslow 1987). The general idea of this hierarchy is that motivations are driven by consumers' desire to consciously satisfy those needs in a similar order. Individuals, therefore, experience lower needs always stronger than higher needs (Maslow 1987). Maslow originally even suggested that higher growth needs do not appear to consciousness until the deficit needs are met on a regular basis (Buck 1988). However, some aspects of Maslow's theory have been questioned since. For once, 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. Also, 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.

Nevertheless, Csikszentmihalyi (2000, 1988) criticised that, according to Maslow's theory, consumer behaviour is always driven by predictable, universal needs that allow for rational decision-making, while most consumer choices are, in fact, made for a variety of other reasons. In fact, 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. Therefore, Csikszentmihalyi (2000) 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. However, 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. To “keep their consciousness tuned”, consumers have to engage their attention by needs that suggest specific goals (Csikszentmihalyi 2000) to obtain positive emotional experiences. Consequently, this concept helps to understand the growing importance of hobbies, entertainment and recreational activities for consumers in giving a meaning to their free time. Even shopping has become a goal-directed activity to improve the perceived quality of life. The purchase, on the other hand, is turned into little more than a by-product, a means to an end (Opaschowski 1998). Experiential consumption, therefore, goes well beyond experiencing emotional benefits in the process of ownership transfer. It is primarily motivated by the intrinsic pursuit of happiness rather than extrinsic rewards (Csikszentmihalyi 2000). 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.

The Moderating Role of Involvement

As, in pursuit of happiness, consumers' motivation to engage in their favourite leisure activities is determined by their personal interests and desires (Mitchell 1988), consumers' personal involvement has a serious influence on their voluntary participation in marketing-events as well. Involvement is a hypothetical construct that reflects the relevance a specific object or activity has for an individual (Coulter et al. 2003; Petty et al. 1991) and has been defined by Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg (2003: 245) as *consumers' cognitive engagement and the subsequent activation to devote themselves to a specific issue or activity*. 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 (Drengner 2003). However, although the moderating role of involvement in processing brand messages is well known in marketing communications, most research focused primarily on the personal relevance products have for consumers to form reasoned purchase decisions (Coulter et al. 2003; Petty et al. 1991). However, personal involvement also differentiates 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 it (Mitchell 1988). Therefore, marketing-events have to be designed to appeal to target audiences by being related to consumers' personal leisure interests and experiential needs to ensure a high personal involvement.

Based on the timeframe of the cognitive engagement, the involvement construct can be further differentiated (Drengner 2003; Nufer 2002):

- *Situational involvement* occurs when a specific object catches an individual's interest for a limited period of time (Nufer 2002). This can either be when a specific need presents itself to consciousness or the individual gets in contact with the object. Situational involvement, however, declines again after the need is fulfilled or the contact has ended.
- *Predispositional involvement* refers to individuals' long-lasting interest in engaging with an object based on their personal values and desires (Nufer 2002). 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 changes in personal values and desires (Drengner 2003).

While the situational involvement is relevant to the processing of brand messages (Drengner 2003; Nufer 2002; Petty et al. 1991), consumers' predispositional involvement determines their motivation to engage with the object, the content and the media in the first place (Coulter et al. 2003). In contrast to classic marketing communications, which is highly dependent on consumers' situational involvement in either the object or the media content,

event-marketing is able to appeal to a variety of situational and predispositional involvement that affect consumers' motivations to participate in marketing-events.

“Flow” as Consumers’ Motivation to Participate in Marketing-Events

While its application in business studies has been limited, the flow-concept is already well established in the field of leisure and recreational research (Jackson et al. 1998; Jackson 1996; Mitchell 1988; Csikszentmihalyi 1988). Nevertheless, the flow-theory may be of particular relevance in explaining the growing popularity of event-marketing strategies. First, Drengner (2003) has shown in a recent study that the flow experienced by consumers during marketing-events not only results in high situational event involvement, but also supports the effect of classic conditioning and, thus, strengthens the image transfer from the event experience to the brand. Second, and of similar significance, consumers' drive to experience flow can be a motivating factor for the participation in marketing-events in their intrinsic pursuit of happiness. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988), people experience the highest level of happiness in the moment when their mind is stretched to the limit in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and motivating. Thus, 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). Because of this harmony between the self and its goal-directed structure during episodes of flow, consumers' choices among alternatives are shaped and motivated by the self's central goal to keep on obtaining optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi 1988). As the objective is primarily the experience itself rather than any future reward, flow is the prototype of intrinsic motivation.

To experience flow, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) outlined eight dimensions that must be present (Jackson 1996). According to their characteristics, Drengner separated these dimensions into four features, which describe the flow experience, and four conditions, which must be fulfilled by an activity or marketing-event to experience flow (Drengner 2003; Drengner and Zanger 2003). The features of flow experiences are:

- *Merging of action and awareness.* The individual is completely absorbed in the activity that nothing else enters awareness and the activity is perceived as “happening automatically” (Jackson 1996).
- *Loss of self-consciousness.* Self-consciousness is often a painful experience for consumers that in their daily lives intrudes in consciousness and diverts attention from what needs to be done (Csikszentmihalyi 1988). The result is an increase in insecurity and a growing obstacle to develop one's potential. In a state of flow, people often experience a transcendence of the self, which is caused by the unusually high involvement with an activity that is much more complex than what one usually encounters in everyday life (Csikszentmihalyi 1988).
- *Paradox of control.* The individual enjoys the subjective feeling of being in full control of one's own actions during the activity (Drengner 2003; Drengner and Zanger 2003).
- *Transformation of time.* In a state of flow, a distorted sense of time occurs (Jackson 1996). “When consciousness is fully active and ordered, hours seem to pass by in minutes, and occasionally a few seconds stretch out into what seems to be an infinity” (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 33).

As a result, individuals in flow are highly activated and more likely to cognitively engage with brand messages that are part of this conscious harmony (Drengner 2003). Also, consumers are less likely to fall back on avoidance strategies they usually employ in relation to classic marketing communications. However, the following conditions must be fulfilled within the dramaturgy of the respective activity in order to experience flow:

- *Clear goals.* The activity must be clearly structured, so that active individuals know exactly what to do in any given situation of the activity (Drengner 2003; Jackson 1996).

- *Focused concentration.* To allow for the loss of self-consciousness and the merging of action and awareness, the individual's self must be in harmony. Thus, the usual preoccupations of everyday life that cause worries and distress must be blocked from intruding consciousness (Drengner 2003; Drengner and Zanger 2003).
- *Quick and unambiguous feedback.* In order to keep the subjective feeling of being in control, the activity must provide rather quick and unambiguous feedback about the outcome of one's action taken (Drengner 2003; Csikszentmihalyi 1988).
- *Challenge-skill balance.* Flow can be engendered by every form of activity, but cannot be sustained for long unless both challenges and skills become more complex. To remain in flow, the individual must increase the complexity of the activity by developing new skills and taking on new challenges. This inner dynamic of optimal experience drives the self to higher and higher levels of complexity (Csikszentmihalyi 1988).

Both Csikszentmihalyi (1988) and Jackson (1996) added *autotelic or enjoyable experience* as a ninth dimension that results from the outcome of the other eight dimensions. Because consciousness is in harmony when all features and conditions are present, the self emerges to a higher level of confidence. Doing the activity is its own (intrinsic) reward (Jackson 1996) and the goal only an excuse to make the experience possible (Csikszentmihalyi 1988). Thus, the participation in marketing-events can be a means to experience episodes of flow.

Although flow can, theoretically, be experienced in any kind of activity, most people do not find deep involvement and enjoyment in their productive work, and, therefore, seek it in leisure activities instead (Mitchell 1988). Many people find themselves in jobs, such as assembly lines and office work, that offer little room for personal creativity and only provide for routinised and repetitive tasks on a daily basis, while others, such as stockbrokers and sales representatives, are permanently overstressed in attempts to cope in risky, rapidly changing environments (Mitchell 1988). In order to balance their perceived skills with adequate challenges, consumers tend to search in their leisure time for activities that compensate for the deficits of their everyday work experience. Thus, people who professionally experience high stress levels search in their leisure time for activities that offer a sense of stability, certainty and relaxation, while people who perceive their skills in workplaces as underused rather seek activities that offer excitement, adventure and responsibilities (Mitchell 1988). German junior civil servants and clerks, for instance, can often be found to take on (unpaid) voluntary administrative and managerial positions in cultural societies, sports clubs and associations, which bring with them a certain degree of responsibilities and public status. Despite being unable to produce flow among consumers automatically, because this always requires an individual's own personal involvement, marketing-events can set up the stage for flow-experiences by implementing the outlined four conditions into the dramaturgy (Drengner 2003; Drengner and Zanger 2003). As a highly targeted marketing communication strategy that encourages active participation, event-marketing's dramaturgy can be initiated in a way that connects the brand image with the particular experiential needs of the target audience. Thus, meeting the leisure interests of the clearly defined target audience results in consumers' predispositional involvement in the event-content (Drengner 2003), which, in return, increases consumers' motivation to participate in order to obtain optimal experiences in harmony with their selves.

Role Theory and Consumers' Motivations to Participate in Marketing-Events

Another concept to offer further insights in consumers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is the role theory. This analytical approach to understand human interaction processes in social environments has already been applied by Sistenich to explain the effectiveness of event-marketing (Sistenich 1999; Sistenich and Zanger 1999; Zanger and Sistenich 1998, 1996). According to this theory, social roles are defined as the society's expectations on the occupier

of a specific position (Sistenich 1999; Sistenich and Zanger 1999). The fulfilment of role expectations requires a plethora of learning processes that involve some form of operant conditioning where the role player's actions are either rewarded or punished by society. In everyday life, every individual occupies several different positions and, therefore, also has to play a set of different roles (Sistenich and Zanger 1999). As any of these roles is determined by a combination of factors such as situation, location, point of time and other role players, consumers are confronted with varying degrees of demands and freedoms that are attached to each respective role. These demands and freedoms not only outline the limitations and opportunities of consumers to express their selves within their role play (Sistenich 1999; Zanger and Sistenich 1998), but also determine the required level of self-identification and creative initiative that each role allows for (Sistenich and Zanger 1999). In general, people can experience the more self-fulfilment the more freedom they possess to shape their roles without negative sanctions and the more they identify themselves with them. 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. In contrast to work-related roles, 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 (Sistenich 1999). Especially, hobbies are determined by a long-term and more active engagement with an activity that can range from doing sports over gardening to collecting stamps, leading to a predispositional involvement in its content and associated objects. Furthermore, individual happiness in work-related roles is very often subject to pressure from society's expectations in the role ideal itself. For instance, the higher educated a person is the higher is the role expectation in terms of creativity and responsibility by themselves and others. However, in majority they are confronted with an uninspiring, limiting work environment, while being called upon by society to demonstrate enthusiasm for those (non-existing) ideals (Mitchell 1988). As educational standards in affluent societies generally tend to be higher, leisure and recreational activities have become a widespread means for consumers to break away from daily routine (Opaschowski 1998) by seeking fulfilment in the different roles that are offered from extreme sports to the secure environment of hyperrealities (Bauer et al. 2003; Mitchell 1988; Csikszentmihalyi 1988).

By taking part in marketing-events, consumers can experience roles that are different from their everyday lives (Zanger and Sistenich 1996). The 3-dimensional brand-related reality of event-marketing strategies provides consumers with a hyperreality that allows them for a moment in time "to be someone else". For instance, participants in the Red Bull Flugtag are not only trying to get across a river with home-made flying machines, they can also "live" the spirit of the early aviation pioneers and be a "hero for a day". Therefore, the activation potential of marketing-events stems from the opportunity to be actively involved in areas of personal interest and in interaction processes that cannot be realised in consumers' everyday lives (Sistenich and Zanger 1999). The more the event-marketing content and dramaturgy meets consumers' role expectations the better will be the image transfer from this unique emotional experience to the brand (Zanger and Sistenich 1998). Furthermore, while attending marketing-events, both participants and spectators are provided with a feeling of *communitas*, an emotionally rewarding closeness comparatively free from constraints of social roles and responsibilities. This feeling of participation in turn helps to "cement the bonds of social solidarity" (Csikszentmihalyi 1988) and may result in the long-term development of brand communities (McAlexander et al. 2002). Consequently, consumers' motivation to participate in marketing-events is not only driven by predispositional involvement in the event-content or the event-object, but also by the desire to become part of a social community that they associate with the brand and/or the event (Bauer et al. 2003; McAlexander et al 2002).

A Theoretical Framework of How Event-Marketing Works

The following proposed conceptual framework of how event-marketing works as a pull strategy (see figure 3) is a neo-behavioural S-O-R model based on Vakratsas and Ambler's (1999) original advertising framework. The S-O-R paradigm is a further development of the traditional black-box model to take the internal psychological processes, which include among others motivations, as intervening variables between stimuli and response into account (Drengner 2003; Nufer 2002). Because it became apparent that a total model of advertising, which incorporated all possible routes of persuasion (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003; Petty et al. 1991), is impossible to draw, Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) developed a general framework for advertising (Drengner 2003). The idea is that advertisements provide a set of stimuli (S) to the organism (O). To be processed, the brand message must pass the internal filters. In other words, individuals must be involved in the brand, the brand message or the ad in order to be motivated to process the brand message. In addition, the individual must be physically and mentally able to process the brand message. Only then, the intervening variables cognition, affect and previous experience will determine the appropriate route of persuasion (Petty et al. 1991). The resulting response (R) finally is the visible consumer behaviour (Drengner 2003; Vakratsas and Ambler 1999).

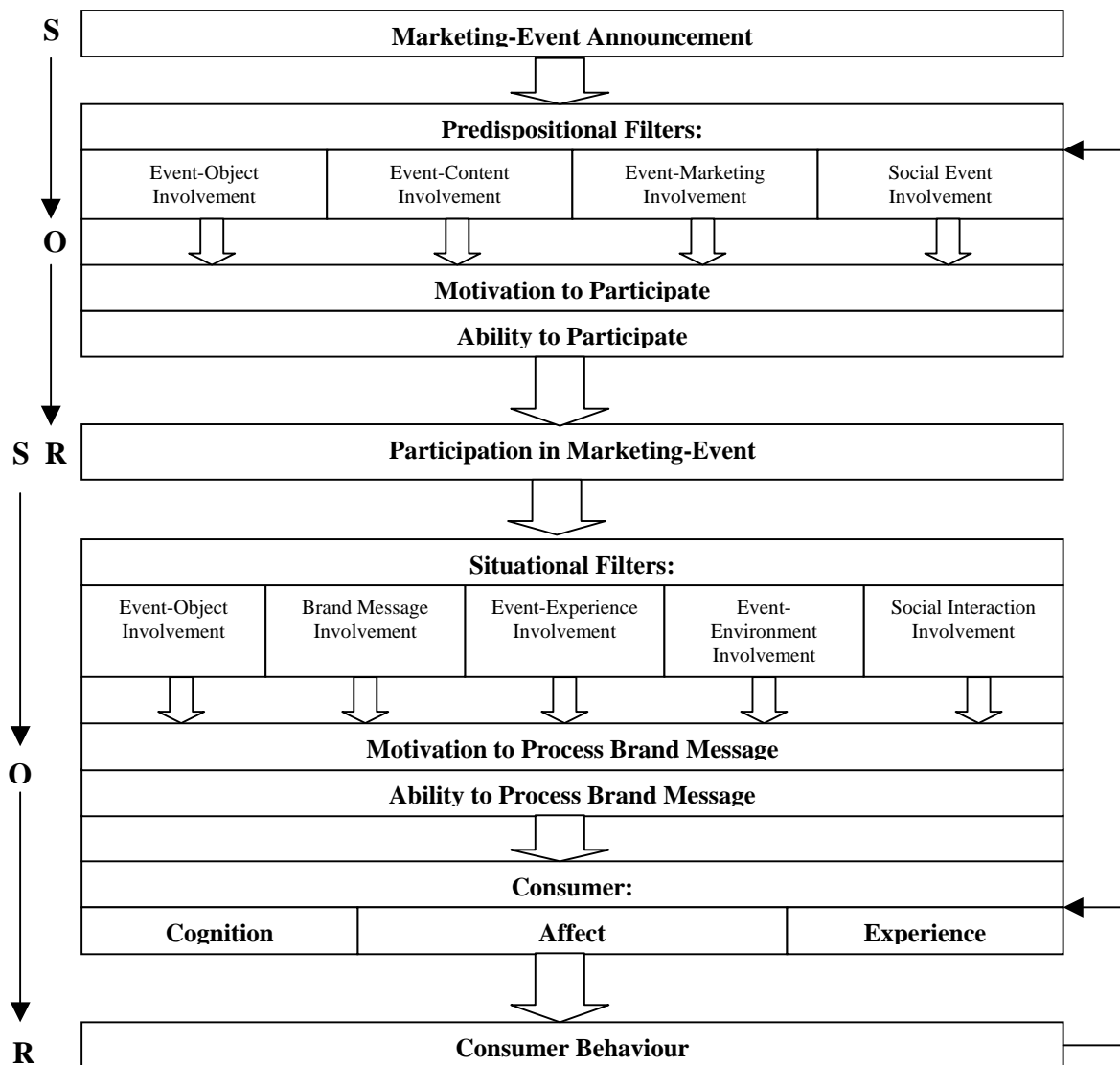


Figure 3. A Conceptual Framework of How Event-Marketing Works (Based on Vakratsas and Ambler 1999)

As consumers' involvement with event-marketing, in difference to advertising, starts already long before the actual contact with the media (marketing-event), the following conceptual framework, proposed by this research, is split into a predispositional element prior to the marketing-event and a situational element similar to the original advertising framework. However, it is the predispositional element that is of particular interest in order to investigate consumers' motivations to participate in marketing-events. The original stimuli are announcements of marketing-events, usually via classic marketing communications, that often involve some form of competitive application for potential participants. The motivation to participate in the marketing-event is determined on whether individuals have a high predispositional involvement in at least one aspect. Drengner (2003) outlined three types of predispositional involvement that are relevant for event-marketing:

- *Event-object involvement* refers to an individual's long-lasting interest (even loyalty) in the brand or product category, i.e. Adidas or sports equipment.
- *Event-content involvement* refers to an individual's personal interest in the activity that is central part of the event's dramaturgy, i.e. basketball (Adidas Streetball Challenge).
- *Event-marketing involvement* refers to the professional or academic interest in this particular marketing communications strategy or marketing communications in general.

In reference to the findings of the presented theories in consumers' motivations, a fourth type of predispositional involvement is proposed by this study to be added:

- *Social event involvement* refers to an individual's desire in belonging to a particular social community that is associated with the brand (McAlexander et al. 2002) or the event-content (Bauer et al. 2003) and, therefore, expected by the individual to be found there, i.e. youths from the hip-hop scene and skaters at the Adidas Streetball Challenge.

Once individuals, due to their predispositional involvement, are motivated to participate, they must also be able to do so. This is the more important as marketing-events are usually limited to specific times and occasions. In the moment, the consumer response is the participation in the marketing-event, this communication media sends out a set of stimuli that have to pass the situational filters of individuals, which determine whether an individual is motivated to process the brand message similar to Vakratsas and Ambler's advertising framework (1999).

The situational element and its importance for the communicative effectiveness of event-marketing has already been examined in more detail by Nufer (2002) and Drengner (2003) in regard to image transfer and by Lasslop (2003) in regard to cognitive learning. However, there has been very little research into the predispositional element until now, despite of being a crucial factor for the communicative success of event-marketing strategies. In order to narrow this information gap, the following hypotheses derive from the proposed conceptual framework and need to be examined further as part of this on-going research:

- H1: The higher the predispositional event-object involvement the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in the marketing-event.
- H2: The higher the predispositional event-content involvement the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in the marketing-event.
- H3: The higher the predispositional event-marketing involvement the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in the marketing-event.
- H4: The higher the predispositional social event involvement the stronger are consumers' motivations to participate in the marketing-event.
- H5: The more aspects of the marketing-event consumers are predispositional involved in the stronger is their motivation to participate.
- H6: The stronger consumers are motivated to participate in marketing-events the stronger is their situational involvement.
- H7: The stronger consumers are motivated to participate in marketing-events the more likely are they to process the brand message.

Conclusion

In recent years, event-marketing has become a popular alternative for marketers that creates 3-dimensional brand-related realities by staging marketing-events, in which consumers are actively involved on a behavioural level (Zanger and Sistenich 1996). As a pull strategy within marketing communications, event-marketing strategies must be designed in a way that consumers are motivated to participate voluntarily. Thus, marketers must have an understanding of the needs consumers seek to satisfy by participating in marketing-events. 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 consumers' everyday lives (Mitchell 1988), event-marketing is setting up the stage for consumers to experience flow (Drengner 2003), to take on roles that differ from their everyday lives (Sistenich and Zanger 1999) and even become part of the social community that they associate with the brand (McAlexander et al. 2002) or the event-content (Bauer et al. 2003). The more the event-marketing content meets consumers' personal interests the higher is their predispositional involvement and motivation to participate in this interactive medium. However, while previous research in event-marketing focused in detail on its effectiveness (Drengner 2003; Lasslop 2003; Nufer 2002), consumers' predispositional involvement and their motivations to participate in marketing-events, which are crucial to the subsequent communicative success, have not been addressed in event-marketing literature so far. To narrow this information gap, this research has developed a conceptual framework of how event-marketing works by proposing that consumers' motivation to participate in marketing-events is determined by at least one of four types of predispositional involvement, which represent the long-lasting personal relevance of either the event-object (brand), the event-content (dramaturgy), event-marketing (communication strategy) or social interaction (brand community) for the consumer. The higher the predispositional involvement in the marketing-event the stronger are consumers motivated to participate as a means of satisfying their experiential needs. Thus, marketing strategies must be aimed at consumers' subjective motivations in order to succeed in affluent societies.

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