
RED BULL BRANDED SPORT ENTERTAINMENT: A NEW CONCEPT IN SPORT MARKETING

Submitting author: Prof Reinhard Kunz
University of Bayreuth, Department of Law, Business and Economics
(Media Management, Sport Media)
Bayreuth, 95440
Germany

All authors: Reinhard Kunz, Franziska Elsässer, James Santomier

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Abstract

1. AIM OF ABSTRACT/PAPER

Driven by digitization the sport media landscape has been changing radically. Formerly passive consumers are now prosumers able to actively access time-shifted and geo-shifted sport content online using new devices such as Internet-enabled HDTV's, smartphones and tablets. Digital applications (apps), websites and social media provide various options to receive as well as create content. In contrast to the past, when most consumers could be reached by print and TV advertising, the current situation is characterized by 'media overflow' and 'information overload'. Thus, marketers are challenged to think beyond traditional advertising strategies in favor of new ways of communicating with prosumers.

'Branded entertainment' (Duttenhöfer 2006) is a new marketing concept that has limited focus in sport marketing literature. It can be defined as a smart integration of advertising into entertainment content. In most cases, because the promotional integration is not too obvious, the consumer does not perceive that the content is branded. Although sport content in particular is predestined for branded entertainment, there are only few practical examples from the sport media nexus where the involved actors consistently follow a branded entertainment strategy.

This conceptual paper will introduce branded entertainment to a sport media/marketing context. Its aim is to define and characterize 'branded sport entertainment' as a new approach in marketing. The advantages and disadvantages of branded entertainment compared to other marketing concepts will be discussed. Therefore, a model will be drawn identifying and discussing the process of successful branded entertainment campaigns. A best practice case study will highlight Red

Bull's extreme sport branded entertainment.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The term 'branded entertainment' first appeared in academic literature in the mid 2000s and can be found in a variety of research fields. While Johnston (2008) described product placement, sponsorships and brand integration as three types of branded entertainment, he gave an historical overview of hybrid forms. Hudson & Hudson (2006) were among the first to discuss whether branded entertainment was a new technique or just a new term for product placement. By tracking the evolution of product placement they decided to classify 'branded entertainment' as a new term. It was Duttenhöfer (2006) who classified branded entertainment as an independent promotional tool in the marketing mix. Tsvetkova (2007) also emphasized the distinctiveness of the concept from a communication studies' point of view. She developed the first conceptual model showing how branded entertainment content is generated from producers and delivered to consumers.

In addition to product placement branded entertainment can be compared to other tools in marketing such as sponsorships, brand integration, and advertainment. Through these comparisons distinctive features of branded entertainment emerge. One major characteristic of branded entertainment is the (co-) production and distribution of content by advertisers in order to entertain their target groups. Another core characteristic is the consumers' voluntary demand for branded content. It shows that branded entertainment is a distinct new promotional tool.

3. CASE STUDY

A model was developed in which the relationships between the different parties involved in branded sport entertainment (sport organizations, sponsors and advertising agencies, traditional and digital media, prosumers) as well as the possible communication tools (such as word of mouth, user created content, indirect communication) that emerge in branded entertainment campaigns were analyzed.

Red Bull is an excellent example of how brands can use sports-related brand communication. The effectiveness of Red Bull sponsorships was already addressed in previous studies (Gorse, Chadwick & Burton 2010). In our case study Red Bull's content-portfolio is analyzed to show how branded entertainment works within sport content. Branded sport entertainment refers to embedding the sponsors' brands, products and services in sport events, documentaries, interviews or portraits. Red Bull combines push- and pull-strategies to deliver its brand to consumers. Red Bull produces media formats related to sport (apps, print, video,

films) in order to distribute it across its own media platforms (Red Bull Media House, homepage, social media sites) to reach consumers. Specific factors and conceptual frameworks related to sport consumption such as fan identification or building emotional relationships through storytelling are used to explain why sport is a perfect match for branded entertainment strategies.

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The Red Bull case study addresses the specific category and success of branded sport entertainment concluding that sport is an ideal base for producing and distributing a brand's content. If applied consistently branded sport entertainment can benefit both parties involved (advertising companies and sport enterprises). The findings imply a paradigm shift in sport marketing and suggest that sport enterprises should focus more pointedly on their sponsors and tighten their relationships in order to co-create value. Producing branded entertainment and delivering free non-exclusive content can increase their media value and total viewership, thus, revenues and economic success.

References

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