
CREATING AN IMAGE TRANSFER THROUGH EVENT MARKETING: PRINCIPLES, REQUIREMENTS AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

Event marketing is primarily implemented to emotionalize the target group. So, the most important objective of marketing events is to improve the image of a brand or a company. In this paper an image transfer model for event marketing is introduced. As a basis, the principles of event marketing are presented. After that, the state of the art in attitude and image research is discussed. Based on current research, an image transfer model for event marketing is developed and the conditions required for an image transfer to take place from an event to a brand or a company are explained. Depending on which conditions are met, there are different consequences with regard to the image transfer from the event to the brand or company that are structured and characterized in detail.

Key words

Event marketing, marketing communication, branding, image transfer, image research, emotional conditioning

1. Introduction

Event marketing has established itself as an innovative non-classical communications tool, which – provided that the entire spectrum of opportunities that present themselves is utilized – represents more than just a modern-day complement to the existing communications mix. The diverse areas of application and the potential of event marketing allow us to reach relevant target groups in terms of the current zeitgeist, generate brand-relevant realities and create experience worlds, engender popularity values and in this way to establish a bond between a brand or company and consumers.

"Consumers love events, corporations love consumers [...], this is a match made in heaven" (D'Alessandro, 1993, p. 507). Events emotionalize the audience. Thus, changes in attitude or image enhancements represent the key objectives of event marketing. The aim is to achieve a positive image transfer from an event to a brand or company.

2. The principles of event marketing

First of all, the term event marketing has to be characterized and the objectives of event marketing have to be elaborated.

2.1 Definitions of a marketing event and event marketing

Marketing events are characterized by the fact that they generate something special or even unique with an event, enabling participants to experience the brand or the company. The intent of product, corporate or service-related events is to present cognitive, emotional and physical stimuli, trigger activation processes and communicate corporate-driven messaging, information and associations the purpose of which is to make a positive contribution to the establishment of corporate and brand values. Thus, marketing events are purposefully staged events or occurrences whose key goal is to convey experiences to participants or attendees. Events are communications media and can, in principle, can be utilized in the context of other communications tools (Jones, 2014; Kiel and Bäuchl, 2014; Raj, Walters and Rashid, 2013; Bladen, Kennell, Abson and Wilde, 2012; Getz, 2012).

Following up on this, event marketing is to be understood as the targeted creation of such events within the framework of the planning and control process (Nufer, 2012, p. 22): "**Event marketing** is both an interactive and experience-oriented communications tool that serves the purposeful target group or scene-oriented production of specifically initiated events as well as their planning, execution and control within the context of integrated corporate communications." Event marketing entails the systematic planning, organization, execution and control of events as well as their meaningful incorporation in integrated corporate communications. Thus, event marketing is an independent (self-contained) communications tool.

By means of its **constitutive attributes**, event marketing can be clearly differentiated particularly from (event) sponsorship, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: Differentiation of event marketing from (event) sponsorship.

Type of Execution	Type of Communication	unilateral ↔ interactive	
		informative ↔ experience-oriented	
externally organized ↑↓ internally initiated	classified in existing context, independent of the company	(Event) Sponsorship <i>(e.g. a soccer World Cup)</i>	Trade Fairs <i>(e.g. Trade fair participation at the ISPO)</i>
	specifically staged by the company	Sales Promotions <i>(e.g.. distribution of giveaways)</i>	Event Marketing <i>(e.g.. organization of streetball tournaments)</i>

An essential communications feature of event marketing is its **interaction orientation** within the context of an **experience-focused strategy**. On the one hand, its capacity for dialogue enables immediate personal contact with the target group, whereby scattering loss can be kept at relatively low levels. On the other hand, in contrast to sponsorship or sales promotions, those present can be addressed emotionally and actively involved in the event at the behavioral level. The autonomous implementation is an additional characteristic of event marketing. The event is **initiated** by the company itself, and other than in the case, for example, of sponsorship or trade fairs, it does not involve the use of an externally created framework as a presentation platform. The **specifically self-staged** brand world should come alive for the recipient of the messaging and it should lead to the consumer's emotional affinity to the brand.

2.2 Objectives of event marketing

Event marketing is primarily implemented to achieve the **overall objective** of emotionalizing the target group. That is why psychological communications objectives are paramount as detail objectives of event marketing. A priori, we can differentiate between affective-oriented communications objectives and those that are cognitive-oriented. Thereby, the individual emphases are placed depending upon the event and the target group. This double dichotomization allows for categorizing psychological communications objectives inherent in event marketing into four groups, which are summarized and illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: *Catalog of psychological communications objectives (goals) of event marketing*

Affectively-oriented external goals	Cognitively-oriented external goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience companies and products and/or brands emotionally ▪ Development, cultivation or modification of corporate or brand image ▪ Emotional brand positioning ▪ Integration of the brand and its content into the world of experience of consumers ▪ Activation of awareness ▪ Development and maintenance of a relationship between a company and its customers based on a collective experience ▪ Achieving sympathy and authenticity ▪ Change of attitude in the target group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Announcement especially of new products ▪ Conveying key information about products ▪ Participants actively deal with/discuss the subject matter ▪ Cultivation of contacts with select customers, opinion leaders and media representatives
Affectively-oriented internal goals	Cognitively-oriented internal goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Motivation of employees ▪ Identification of employees with their company ▪ Integration of employees ▪ Creation of a sense of affiliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expertise ▪ Continuing training ▪ Personal capabilities ▪ Customer awareness

3. State of the art in attitude and image research

A change in attitude or an image transfer respectively, constitutes a core objective or action quantity, which can be attained with the use of event marketing. This stems in particular from the fact that a high correlation is assumed to exist between the attitude towards or the image of a brand or a company and the actual purchasing behavior of consumers (Hätty, 1989).

3.1 Attitude-oriented image approach

The **attitude-oriented image approach** conforms to the currently applicable perspective with regard to image. While the concept of attitude originates in psychology and can reference a long research tradition, the concept of image is still comparatively new and originates in economics (Hätty, 1989). The concept of image was first introduced into marketing theory as an influencing variable of consumer behavior by Gardner and Levy (1955). Before the attitude-oriented image concept took root in the economic sciences, two other image approaches existed, which succeeded each other over the course of time (Franke, 1997; Hätty 1989; Glogger, 1999):

- The business/economics-oriented image theory (50's and 60's) primarily sought a real-life definition or rather an etymological interpretation of the image concept. In this stage image had the function of a residual explanatory variable for market successes, which could not be explained in terms of the heavily microeconomic theory of goods distribution (marketing) at the time – thus by variables such as the price or level of distribution.
- On the other hand, the gestalt psychology-oriented image theory (60's) interpreted the concept of image phenomenologically, i.e. as imagination (perception)-related and holistic. It was viewed as particularly important that the image serves subjective coping with reality and thus takes on a disburdening function.

Although both approaches provided various suggestions for further image research, they were, however, ultimately unable to prevail since they could provide neither operationalization in terms of behavioral sciences nor specific methods of measurement. Thereby, the image construct is apprehended via theory-driven research, and at the same time, methods for its measurement are developed. Thus, a priori, the attitude-focused concept of image presupposes basic knowledge of the concept of attitude. In accordance with its designation, the attitude-oriented comprehension of image is based on attitude research which featured a long research tradition in other scientific disciplines and was already at an advanced stage before it was applied to the analysis of the image in marketing (Glogger, 1999).

In general, the term **attitude** is initially understood as "the inner willingness of an individual to display a relatively steady positive or negative reaction to certain stimuli" (Berndt, 1996, p. 61 f.). It gets somewhat more complicated if one departs from this relatively broad notion of the term and instead, endeavors to clarify the substantive structure of attitude as ascertainable through empirical methods (Glogger, 1999). A meaningful conceptual differentiation of attitudes and image can and should only be undertaken following a detailed substantive analysis of both constructs.

In the context of the structuring attempts undertaken up to now, the terms **attitude** and **image** were frequently mentioned in one breath. We are now left with the question as to whether this merely concerns two synonymous terms for the same phenomenon or two related hypothetical constructs that must be differentiated from one another. Among the representatives of those authors who assume that both concepts have an **identity**, one should list Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg (1996, p. 197), who propose "replacing the concept of image with the more distinctly operationalized concept of attitude". Of the advocates who see **differences** between attitudes and images, some emphasize the individual character of attitudes as opposed to the group-focused character of images; according to this view, the image results from the aggregation of individual attitudes (Berndt, 1995; 1996). Other authors see the difference explained by the fact that attitude expresses brand evaluation based on product knowledge, while the image tends to be more of an emotional conception (or as the term suggests, an image) of the product (Mazanec, 1978).

3.2 The correlation of attitude and image

The **degree of relationship** of both constructs with one another will be examined below. Thereby, the issue of dimensionality is central to the analysis. The overall attitude to an object can result from the sum total of multiple partial attitudes with reference to various product features. If one were to construe these partial attitudes as independent dimensions, one could attribute a multidimensional character to an attitude. That being said, in the context of this paper, the concept of attitude shall be seen as unidimensional (Trommsdorff, 1976; Fishbein, 1967; Häty, 1989). The reason for this is that ultimately all partial attitudes or impression values add up to an overall or aggregate value, which marks a point on the affective evaluative continuum. In contrast to the concept of attitude, the concept of image is more complex and less distinct, and therefore harder to define.

Whereas there is consensus concerning the fact that an image is to be construed as a multidimensional construct, there are differences with regard to the relationship between the attitude and image constructs, above all concerning the question of whether denotative (objective) product features are also constitutive (fundamental) for the image construct or whether an image can be regarded as a purely connotation-focused system (Häty, 1989). Two opposing definition approaches have emerged in literature on the subject:

- **Mazanec** (1978) views attitudes and images as extreme types on a continuum, whereby attitude represents the denotative pole and image represents the connotative pole. Depending upon the product class, the consumer makes the purchase decision either according to the attitude model or that of the image. The attitude model becomes virulent when the consumer is capable of distinguishing the individual brands in a product class in terms of objective product features. In contrast to this, the purchase decision is made in terms of the image model when consumers are unable to objectively distinguish the individual brands from one another. Here the identification occurs in terms of an overall picture (image) that a consumer has of a brand. The problem in Mazanec's point of view is that he regards attitudes and images as extreme types on the very same continuum. Thus it would probably be difficult to find products that are purchased solely based on their connotative or denotative character.
- **Trommsdorff** (1976), on the other hand, points out explicitly that the image-forming dimensions of his model can have both denotative and connotative character. In his opinion, the proportional contribution of denotative and connotative features to image building depends on the product and can be significantly influenced by the company that provides it (the product). If the communicative address emphasizes thematic information, image building will occur primarily based on denotative product features. Conversely, non-thematic communicative content tends to reinforce the image-building relevance of connotative product features. Thus, as far as he is concerned, attitude is nothing more than a rough summary of the image to a unidimensional value.

The author of this paper agrees with Trommsdorff's view, whereby an **image** is to be conceived of as a multi-dimensional construct that consists of denotative and connotative product features, but at the same time reflects the structure of the unidimensional phenomenon of attitude (see Figure 1). A particular "**image object**" emerges in the minds of the "**image subjects**" whereby the subjects create an individual image of an object for themselves (Franke, 1997). In contrast to an attitude, an image does not relate to one individual, but rather to a plurality of individuals. According to this, an **image** represents the nuanced structure of the aggregated **attitudes** of multiple persons. The sum total of the attitudes towards a particular object on the **consumer side** produces the image on the **provider side**, hence forming the object-related reverse of the subject-related concept of attitude (Schneider, 1989; Steffenhagen, 1984; Wiswede, 1995).

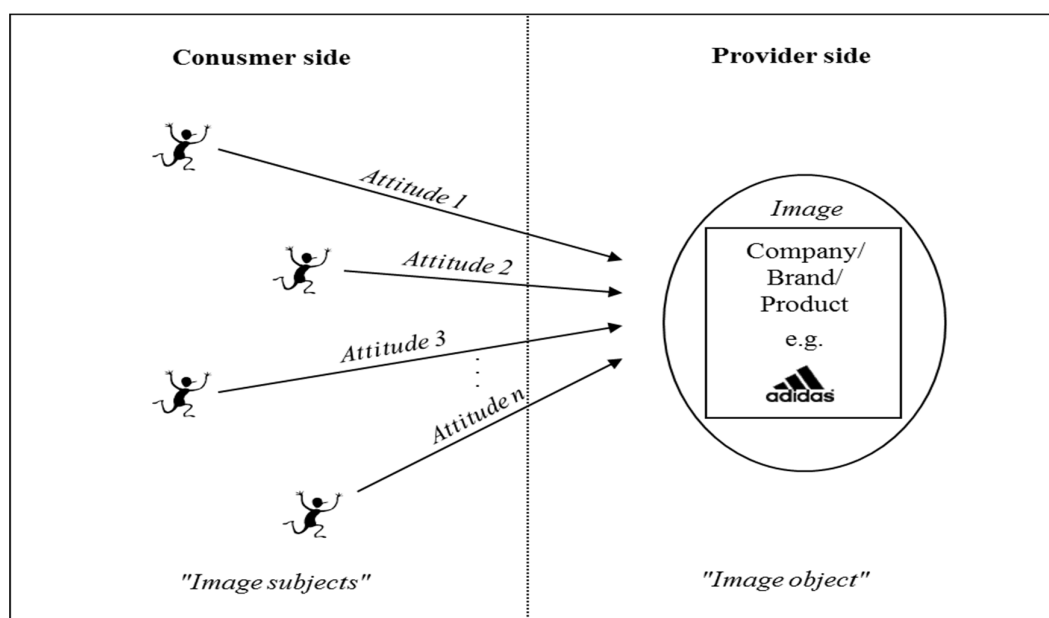


Figure 1: The correlation of attitude and image

4. Literature review on the phenomenon and forms of image transfer

In the following, a specific image transfer model for event marketing shall be developed based on a general consideration of the image transfer phenomenon in marketing in literature.

4.1 Concept of the image transfer

Zentes (1996, p. 157) is one of the few to initially regard the concept of image transfer from a neutral perspective, without immediately concentrating on the specific areas of application of this phenomenon. He defines **image transfer in the broadest sense of the term** as "the transfer and reinforcement of object association between objects of different categories".

Based on this, Glogger (1999) formulates a **marketing-specific conceptualization of the term image transfer**:

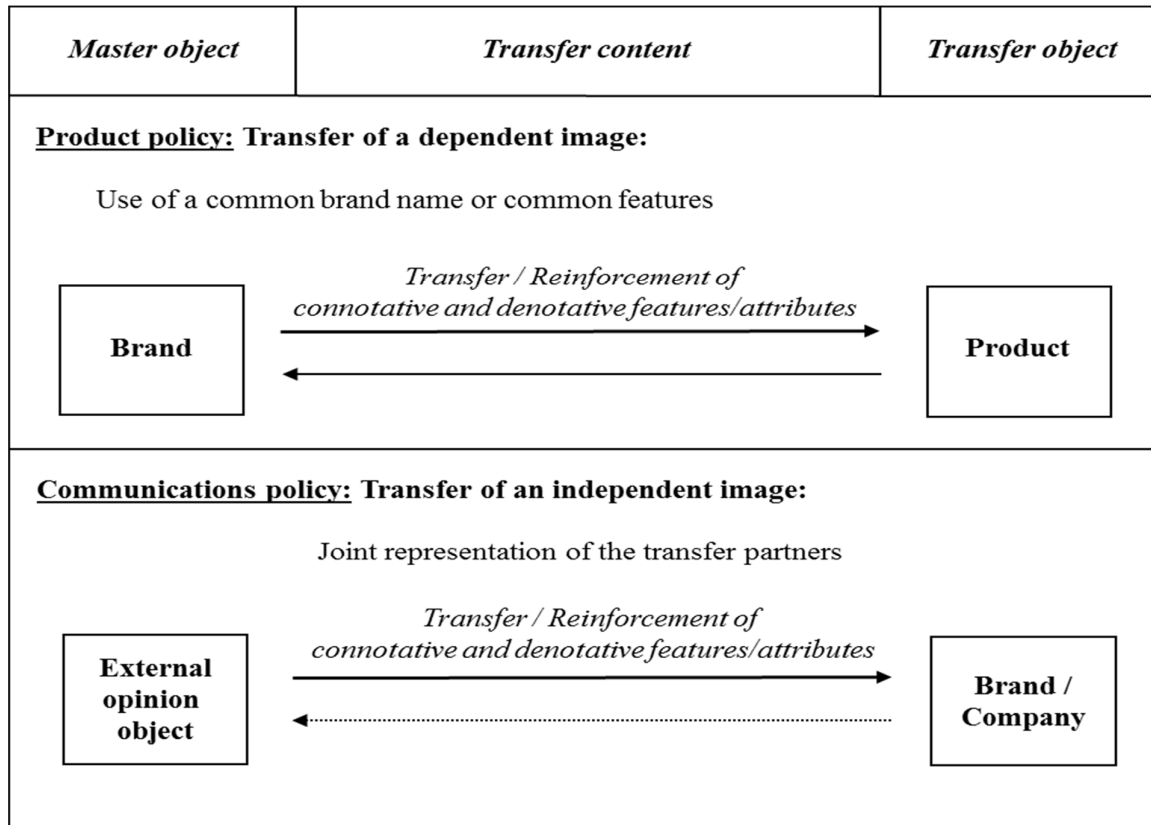
- An image transfer is not a measure or action taken by a company, but rather a reaction in the psyche of persons that occurs in response to a measure or action of the company.
- The image transfer comprises not only the transfer of new associations that had not been linked with the object up to now, but also the reinforcement of already existing associations.
- Both connotative and denotative object associations can be transferred or reinforced.
- An image transfer is characterized by reciprocity, i.e. it can occur for two objects in both directions.

In the following we will revert to Glogger's definition. To further analyze an image transfer, it may be possible to undertake a nominally distinct separation of the involved objects from one another: While the **master object** represents the object of opinion that possesses the features to be transferred, one must understand the **transfer object** as the object of opinion to which these features are to be transferred or whose features are to be reinforced; the object associations that are transferred or reinforced ultimately represent the **transfer content**.

4.2 Forms of image transfer in marketing

Basically, an image transfer in marketing can manifest itself in two different forms: One must differentiate between an image transfer in product policy and an image transfer in communications policy. Although the actual transfer process is identical in both areas of the marketing mix, a differentiated consideration appears reasonable, not in the least due to their different underlying objectives. Whereas in **product policy**, there is a direct company-internal relationship between the master object and the transfer object and to some extent both are "dependent" upon one another, in the context of **communications policy**, the choice of an appropriate master object calls for resorting to an external object of opinion, i.e. one that is not part of the company, thus deemed "independent" (Mayer and Mayer, 1987; Glogger, 1999), Figure 2 provides an overview of this.

Figure 2: Image transfer in product policy and in communications policy
 Based on: Glogger (1999), p. 71 and 73



The considerations in terms of communications policy with regard to the image transfer are largely based on the product policy-related problems. Therefore, in a next step both forms of the image transfer will be successively addressed in detail.

4.2.1 Image transfer in product policy

In dealing with the **objectives** of product policy using an image transfer, one must differentiate between the launch of new products and the maintenance and cultivation of products already on the market. The overarching objective of an image transfer in the introduction of new products is that of a less risky and more cost-effective market launch. One must assume that resorting to already existing positive associations will have a beneficial effect on the behavior of retail and consumers, thus reducing the risk of a flop. Moreover, the intent is to achieve cost savings by siphoning off the already existing market potential of a master object and thus saving resources. In the case of products already present on the market, in addition to the transfer product (the object of the transfer), the master or original product should stand to benefit from the image transfer. The object is to have the image transfer secure or even expand the market position of the master product. In addition, the choice of appropriate transfer products can stabilize and modify the image of the master product (Lippegaus, 1984; Glogger, 1999; Mayer and Mayer, 1987).

Within the scope of product policy, the concept of the image transfer is of particular importance in the sub-area of brand policy. Let us first consider the **transfer between the company and the brand image** as a possible form of an image transfer (Schweiger, 1995; Mayer and Mayer, 1987; Hättü, 1989; Reiter, 1991): In the context of an umbrella brand strategy, the company image is used as an overall unifying feature. It

promotes the image transfer by having producers appear as the guarantors of quality or as the base of trust for their products or sub-brands. The goal is the integration of the brand and company image. For example, about 600 items are sold on the food market under the umbrella brand Dr. Oetker, in the product segments baking, desserts, preserving, ice cream, cereals and frozen food. With this approach, the company in question hopes to obtain an advance on consumers' confidence (Koschnick, 1997; Simon, 1985). However, based on its intrinsic particularities, as described, it would be more appropriate to characterize this phenomenon as a goodwill transfer than an image transfer. Goodwill denotes intangible assets of a company, an additional benefit. A **goodwill transfer** is seen as a transfer of purchase-related information undertaken by consumers over time (e.g. positive experiences) and/or in terms of the product line (e.g. preference for a brand family) (Simon, 1984).

Furthermore, an image transfer is often sought in conjunction with a **particular labeling strategy** for the launch of new products. This occurs by transferring image components from an existing product to a new product with the help of a common brand name. Whereas, at this point a majority of publications refer to an image transfer (e.g. Meffert and Heinemann, 1990; Schweiger, 1982; Lippegaus, 1984; Mayerhofer, 1995), Hättü (1989) has coined the term "brand transfer" for the facts on which this case is based. Thus, image transfer and brand transfer are not to be considered identical in terms of content, but rather they describe the same facts and circumstances from different perspectives: A brand transfer denotes the brand policy-related measure of transferring an already existing brand name and possibly the features or characteristics of a product (e.g. color, product and packaging forms) to a new product (Hättü, 1994; Mayerhofer, 1995). On the other hand, an image transfer is to be understood as the reaction triggered in the consumer's mind by a brand transfer. Consequently, Hättü (1989, p. 49) defines a **brand transfer** as "a targeted labeling strategy that seeks to transfer the established brand (or trademark) and features of specific products from these various products to other products in such a manner that the consumer perceives all products bearing that brand or trademark as one coherent entity." Examples of a brand transfer or the image transfer that is thus intended include the transfer of the brand name Camel from cigarettes to shoes and leisure wear or the Hugo Boss brand from apparel to perfume, eyeglasses, leather accessories, etc.

In conclusion, it can be stated that within the scope of product policy the purely image-oriented objectives take a back seat to the economically oriented objectives (Glogger, 1999; Hättü, 1989).

4.2.2 Image transfer in communications policy

On the other hand, an image transfer in communications policy is primarily concerned with conferring a unique image that distinguishes itself from the competition on a company or (existing) brand. Depending on the baseline situation of the communications object, one can differentiate amongst three **objectives** in this respect: Image building, image modification and image stabilization (Rieger, 1994; Glogger, 1999). The transfer of associations from a foreign master object to the transfer object that is to be distinguished should be generated by using appropriate communications measures to present the consumer with both partners in the transfer at the same time.

Image transfer in advertising:

There are various conceivable options for the implementation of an image transfer in the context of advertising:

- In (classical) advertising in particular, the image transfer strategy to achieve **emotional product differentiation** has long been used by deliberately depicting a company or a product in conjunction with

appropriate external objects of opinion. Classic examples of this would be Fa shower cream in conjunction with erotic stimuli (first nude woman on German commercial television) or Marlboro cigarettes with various cowboy motifs derived from the wild west genre.

- Additionally, the use of **testimonials** represents another opportunity for implementing an image transfer within the scope of advertising. A testimonial involves a user who expresses a commitment to an advertised product (professing he/she also uses it). Above all, by making use of prominent persons (celebrities), one can aim at a transfer of the image of a well-known personality to a brand. In this context, identification (acquiring the motives, values and attitudes of a model) and imitation (the actual imitation of the behaviors of a role model) constitute the core objectives. In this regard, credibility represents the most important prerequisite for the effectiveness of testimonial advertising (Pepels, 1997; Berndt, 1995; Deimel 1992; Erdtmann, 1989). Prime examples in Germany of the successful practice of testimonial advertising are Verona Pooth for the textile discount retailer kik and Dieter Bohlen for Camp David. Both stars have a large crowd of fans who identify with them and see them as role models whom they imitate.
- Furthermore, an image transfer can be implemented through the joint presentation of complementary products of different providers within the scope of **cooperative advertising**. Coop advertising involves the cooperation of different companies in their advertising. In cooperative advertising, a "foreign" brand name product is presented in addition to a company's own product while emphasizing the complementary usage (usage connection) aspect, so that one's own product benefits from the image of the other (Berndt, 1985; Koppelman, 1982). The collaborative TV commercial of Amazon.de and the German Post Office provides an excellent example of this.

Image transfer in sponsorship:

In sponsorship, an image transfer is also frequently indicated as an objective, although specific cases of operationalization or even empirical studies in this area tend to be rather scarce commodities. The image transfer is established by the joint presentation of both sponsorship partners. The sponsored party presents the master object and/or the external opinion object, the image of which the sponsor, i.e. the transfer object (a company or a brand) seeks to derive benefit from. The transfer content in sponsorship consists primarily of connotative, and to a lesser extent of denotative attributes or features (Angenendt, 1993; Schwen, 1993; Gwinner and Eaton, 1999). An image transfer in sponsorship offers the opportunity that apart from the concrete image of the sponsored party, the image of an underlying organizational entity as well as its entire scope of performance can be transferred. If, for example, an FC Bayern Munich player is sponsored, besides transferring the specific image of the player (with individual transfer contents such as dynamism, elegance), at the same time it can also be used to transfer the image of the associated soccer team and/or the entire club (image dimensions such as success). If, in addition, this involves a national (internationally acclaimed) player, this effect even has a repeat impact, in conjunction with the national team (image dimensions such as internationality). In so doing, there is also an inherent risk of a negative image transfer, which is given when due to certain incidents the master object becomes the subject of adverse headlines, thus incurring a serious deterioration of its image in the perception of the public.

Image transfer in product placement:

In a similar manner to sponsorship or as in testimonial advertising, an image transfer is also conceivable for targeted use of product placement (Berndt, 1995). However, to accomplish this, several conditions must be met: The image transfer of the entire film/television program/video clip or specifically of individual actors

(or their role) to the product placed can only turn out successfully (possibly through influence on the screenplay) if the overall positive presentation of the brand can be ensured. One should consider, for example, a product placement in a James Bond film: A positive image transfer (e.g. to the Z3 by BMW) can only be achieved if the product placed is displayed or presented along with the hero himself – and not with his adversary. It is equally important to ensure that the product placed serves its purpose in the context of the ongoing action in the storyline – and does not incur any damages thereby.

The forms of image transfer within the scope of product and communications policy as portrayed in the last sections can also be placed in a **global context**: Thus there is a possibility of initially endowing a brand with a specific image by applying appropriate communications measures, and then, in a second step, transferring this image to a new product. An image transfer is brought to bear in both cases; both versions are in chronological sequence with one another (upstream or downstream). In the first phase (transfer of an independent image in communications policy) the brand is to be conceived of as the transfer object, on the other hand, in the second phase (transfer of a dependent image in product policy) it is conceived of as the master object (Glogger, 1999).

4.2.3 Special case of an image transfer

The use of the country or place of origin for the positioning and promotion of products/brands/companies constitutes a **blended**, or **hybrid** form consisting of both dependent and independent transfers (Schweiger and Schrattenecker, 1995; Mayerhofer, 1995). Concrete examples as to how the strong points of the image of a country can be referred to are provided by the brands Tissot, Toblerone or Ricola (visual integration of the Matterhorn). The **Country of Origin effect** ("made in...") refers to the transfer of the world of experience ascribed to a country, region or city to products and brands. In conjunction with the country of origin effect, one can differentiate among two functional chains, with their effectiveness depending upon the respective experience of consumers with the product (Han, 1989):

- Halo model (country image => beliefs => brand attitude):
If the consumers are not familiar with the product, they will attribute certain features to the product, such as quality, based on a few common and familiar traits of the country of origin, which indirectly produces what constitutes the attitude towards the product.
- Summary model (beliefs => country image => brand attitude):
On the other hand, in the case of a product already familiar to consumers, sufficient information concerning product features/characteristics is already available, simplifying the processing of information in larger information units, i.e. chunks (here: the country's image), which are grouped or (as the model name suggests) summarized; thus the country of origin effect has a direct impact on attitude formation.

5. Development of an image transfer model for event marketing

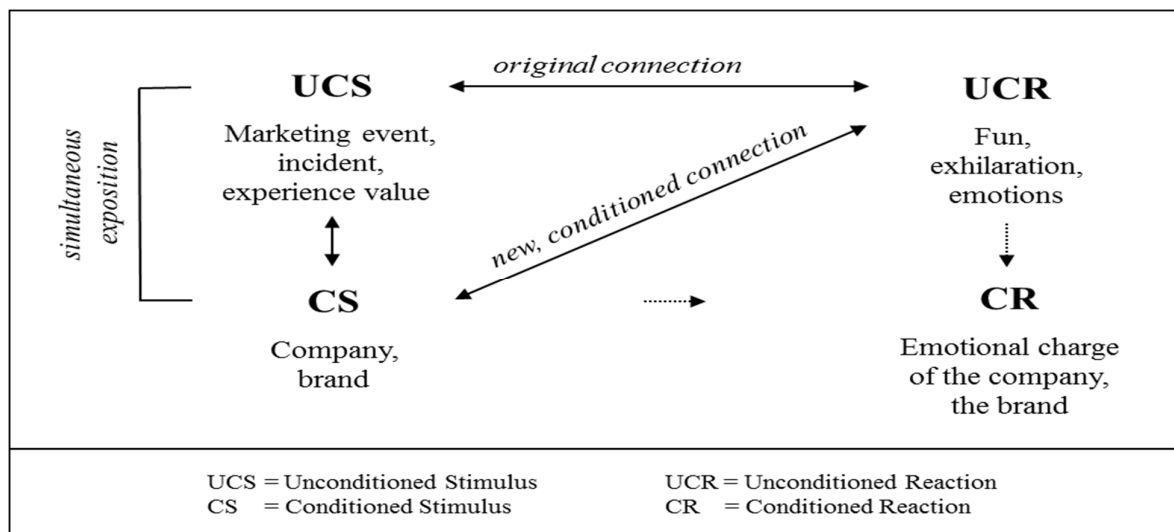
Building on the current state of research, a systematization of the steps involved in the evolution of an image transfer and the resulting consequences will be developed.

5.1 Emotional conditioning

Emotional conditioning constitutes a **special case of classical conditioning** (Behrens, 1991). Advertising impact is frequently explained in terms of emotional conditioning processes: If a brand (conditioned stimulus) is repeatedly represented in conjunction with emotional stimuli (unconditioned stimuli), the original neutral brand takes on a similar emotionally positive significance (conditioned reaction) (Kroeber-Riel, 1993; Ghazizadeh, 1987; Meffert, 1992; Trommsdorff, 1998).

With regard to event marketing this means: The Unconditioned Stimulus (UCS), the marketing event, has the impact of a live experience, which is very intense due to its extended exposure time, generating fun and exhilaration as an Unconditioned Reaction (UCR) on the part of the participant. In this almost "euphoric mood", simultaneously with these emotions, the participant absorbs information about the company initiating the event or the brand (Conditioned Stimulus, CS). CS and UCR combine to form a new, conditioned reaction (Conditioned Reaction, CR) to the emotional charge of the company or the brand. Thus the company or brand acquires the features of the experience value of the event (see Figure 3).

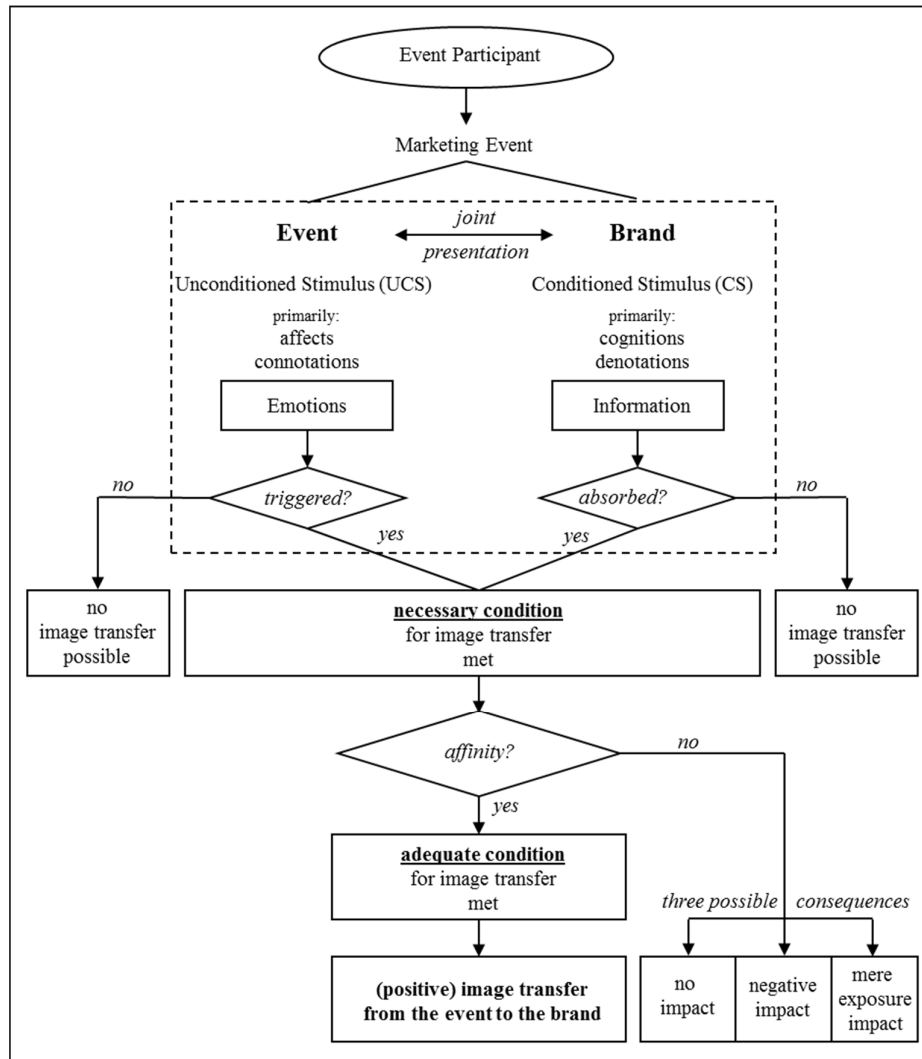
Figure 3: Emotional conditioning in event marketing
 Based on: Deimel (1992), p. 132; Erdtmann (1989), p. 143



5.2 Depiction of the image transfer model

A marketing event is distinguished by the fact that the consumer is simultaneously presented with emotionally affective and informational cognitive stimuli, or that both connotative and denotative product and company features are conveyed. Both the event and the brand exude emotional and informative effects. However, the central function of the event is also to trigger emotions, whereas beyond that, the initiating company seeks primarily to convey information on the brand. The two transfer partners involved, the **event (master object)** and **brand (transfer object)** are presented together in the context of the event. The additional coherences depicted in Figure 4 will be addressed in detail below.

Figure 4: Image transfer model for event marketing



5.2.1 Requirements for the occurrence of an image transfer

The prerequisite (**necessary condition**) for the occurrence of an image transfer in event marketing is as follows: Experience values from the event and information about the brand must be simultaneously absorbed by the consumer/recipient. The requirement for uniform perception coherence, for instance, presents an obstacle that is not to be underestimated in sponsorship. If, for example, a spectator who is totally focused on an exciting soccer game takes no notice at all of the information positioned on the perimeters, the result is loss of coverage as a consequence of the unfulfilled necessary condition; in this case, the occurrence of an image transfer is impossible. However, since sponsorship involves the communicative usage of an externally, i.e. by the sponsoring company, initiated independent platform, the risk in this context is far greater than it is for event marketing. In terms of the definition used, marketing events are internally initiated and staged and it is precisely for this reason that they provide the organizing company with very many more opportunities for action, to present itself in such a way that in addition to the emotions triggered by the event, the (voluntary) event participant absorbs information concerning the company or the brand.

In conjunction with testimonial advertising, the literature on the subject often stipulates that the relationship between the master object and transfer object should be "credible" (Hermanns, 1997; Bruhn, 1997;

Erdtmann, 1989; Rieger, 1994). Psychologists have also acknowledged the necessity of an association between an unconditioned and a conditioned stimulus. Thus, for instance, Rosenstiel (1979, p. 152 f.) remarks that "a totally arbitrary coherence of stimuli – in our case of products and specific emotions – would hardly be possible". However, this affinity between the event and the brand cannot be a mandatory requirement for every event marketing commitment. Furthermore, an optimal (not maximum) measure of affinity should be aspired to. Therefore, in Figure 4 this condition for the occurrence of an image transfer is not classified as necessary in every case, but only as an additional requirement (**adequate condition**).

5.2.2 Possible consequences

The unfavorable constellation exists, when an event is incapable of triggering emotions with the participant and/or the consumer on site at the event does not acquire any information on the brand or the initiating company. The occurrence of an **image transfer** in such a case is **out of the question**.

If the consumer does absorb emotions and information together, but there is insufficient affinity between the event and the brand or the consumer does not accept the (artificially) constructed connections between the event and the brand, basically **three different consequences are possible**:

- There is no resulting image effect whatsoever (i.e. neither positive nor negative).
- A negative effect arises.
- Under certain conditions a conditioning achievement is nevertheless conceivable (that must be differentiated from an image transfer effect).

In a case where sufficient affinity does not exist from the point of view of the consumer, the event-initiating company incurs a decisive disadvantage: It cannot rely on already existing associative connections but rather must establish these itself quasi-artificially. Under these circumstances learning processes proceed in a more cumbersome and inefficient manner than if one can fall back on already existing associations (Erdtmann, 1989). In extreme cases, it must be feared that **no image effect at all** will result.

If there is no connection to the company or the brand, i.e. an event marketing commitment is perceived as not credible or inappropriate, there is a real risk of adverse reactions on the part of consumers. In this regard Erdtmann (1989) discusses a fictitious "spectrum of individual misfit acceptance", which implies that conditioning processes that take place when there is no affinity, as of a certain level they turn into "misfit" and may produce the opposite effect with consumers. Thus, what we have here is reactance phenomenon. **Reactance** designates a motivational state of stress which appears when a person perceives a threat to his or her scope of free choice (Mayer, Däumer and Rühle, 1982). Such cases may result in the rejection of a change in attitude or even to a backlash. If a company orchestrates an event at which its target group address is designed to be so heavily influential that even an existing level of tolerance among participants is exceeded and, in addition, any natural relationship between the event and the brand are missing, theoretically, the consequence may be that reactance also develops for event marketing, culminating in the risk of a negative transfer. Sports sponsorship has already provided numerous examples of thus related risks extending to negative image transfer: Several years ago, main and jersey sponsor TV Spielfilm terminated its sponsorship contract with its sponsorship partner Hamburger SV in the middle of the season due to a series of losses, fearing a negative association. Another example was the scandal involving the designated coach of the national team and Christoph Daum. Accused of cocaine use, he not only lost his position as coach at Bayer Leverkusen after a hair analysis proved positive and the prospective job at the DFB (slogan: "no power to drugs"), but also was terminated for the advertising contract with the RWE Group (Avanza brand), which felt unable to continue with an image campaign with Daum as its focal point.

Even if the consumer does not perceive a corresponding affinity between the event and the brand, the coincidence of stimuli at the same time can already suffice to produce a conditioning achievement, i.e. for the establishment of a conditional reaction. The **mere exposure** to the advertising stimuli already creates the basis for a positive change in attitude. A high number of contacts with a stimulus could possibly result in a familiarization or acceptance effect with the consumer. It can be assumed that some companies are aware of this (one-dimensional) benefit and are content with it. This is the only way that the objective of increased awareness, which in event marketing is basically rather minor in theory yet prevails in practice can be reproduced (Erdtmann, 1989). That being said, the benefits of mere exposure effects must be differentiated from an image transfer effect as described above, since in this case no cognitive examination (or analysis) of the engineered connection between the master object and the transfer object takes place, but merely familiarization with connections constructed between the event and the brand. For instance, in the event series "Street Soccer Cup" initiated by the supermarket chain real, the fit between brand/company and event tends to be too insignificant to achieve an image transfer effect.

The ideal case of a **positive image transfer of an event to a brand** or company comes about when emotions are triggered by an event, information about the brand/company is absorbed AND the consumer (recipient) accepts the link connecting the event and the brand/company, i.e. optimal affinity exists. In terms of the psychology of memory, such links are based on associations: A declining stratification of associative structures (reticular links, semantic networks) implies a reduction in the distance between two points of association, which in principle entails an increase in the potential for association(s) (Hätty, 1989).

5.3 Limitations and critical assessment of the image transfer model

This model provides a discussion and analysis of the impact category of the image transfer in event marketing. The study makes it clear that in principle the possibility of an image transfer is given within the context of event marketing. However, its implementation requires taking various conditions into consideration. The transfer model that is developed serves to **structure** the image transfer in event marketing. In particular, it is intended to illustrate the steps that are involved in the emergence of an image transfer as well as the resulting alternative consequences.

Due to the diverse forms of event marketing, there can be no universally valid image transfer model. The model was developed against the backdrop of selected event types often used in actual practice. The focus of its application lies mainly in brand-oriented leisure and infotainment events directed towards external target groups. To date, not all links have been empirically reviewed. Nevertheless, the model does go beyond the practice-oriented statements specifically related to individual cases that have frequently been found in the literature on event marketing and can be viewed as a **typological approach**.

The assumptions or hypotheses expressed can be designated as plausible, to some extent as proven: The hypotheses are **plausible** inasmuch as they are substantiated based on their reference to secured knowledge. On the other hand, the considerations that have already been empirically confirmed in various studies are said to be **proven**.

6. Conclusion and outlook

"By now, events have evolved from a toy to a tool of brand management" (Nickel, 2002, p. 79). By means of event marketing, in the communicative approach to the target groups one can succeed in substituting authentic live experiences for the artificial world conveyed by classical advertising by involving the consumers (recipients of the messaging). An image transfer from an emotionally charged event to a brand or

company represents one of the most important objectives of event marketing. The thoughts presented above have shown that achieving an image transfer with event marketing is basically possible. The use of event marketing seeks to shorten the distance between the actual and target image of a brand or company by effecting a transfer of the emotions conveyed by the event to the brand. The better the fit of the event with the brand, the more likely the success of conferring a distinctive (unmistakable) image on a brand or company by transferring its emotional associations.

In comparing event marketing with classic communications tools such as advertising, it is clear that effectiveness research on the subject is still in its early stages. Therefore, this paper can only represent a first step towards the analysis of the effectiveness of event marketing. Effectiveness research, especially with regard to the effect that marketing events have on image is far from being completed. Overall, there is still an enormous need for research on event marketing (Drengner, 2008; Lasslop, 2003; Zanger, 2002; Hermanns, 1997; Hermanns and Glogger, 1995):

- By far not all impact patterns and theses on the effects of event marketing that have been designated as theoretically plausible up to now have been subjected to an empirical study. Empirical studies on event marketing continue to remain in short supply overall.
- Even if the provisional confirmation of hypotheses by means of empirical studies of individual cases does succeed, in a subsequent step the question arises regarding the universal validity of the insights gained.
- The long-term effects of event marketing must be examined. To accomplish this, appropriate long-term studies must be conducted.
- The examination of the impact of event marketing in terms of the aspect of integrated communications should be intensified.
- Image effects on internal target groups have so far been largely ignored by all such analyses.
- Event marketing effectiveness research should more intensively take into account the generally increasing internationalization and virtualization of marketing.
- The effectiveness models developed to date serve primarily to explain event-induced attitude modifications. What are the resulting implications for event marketing if the target dimension is not that of the image transfer but, for example, image stabilization?
- Finally, intensive cooperation of science and practice is required in the interests of applied research, for only in this way can one arrive at solid results on the effects of event marketing.

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