Customer-to-Customer Value Co-Creation at Recurring Sport Events: Relationship Life-Cycle Perspective

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Customer-to-customer (C2C) value co-creation stems from customer-dominant logic and recognizes value co-creation in the life of customer-to-customer routines, activities, and practices from customers' own social contexts (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). In a sport event context, it is worth investigating C2C value co-creation given that it is formed by interacting and connecting with other spectators, and thus significantly influences event attendance (Urich, 2014). In addition, as recurring sport events are hosted in the same destination annually, changes among variables occur as relationships evolve in the long term (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010). For example, the spectators of Chinese Grand Prix decreased from 250,000 in 2004 to 145,000 in 2018 (Jiefang Daily, 2018). This is in line with the theory of relationship dynamics, which states that customer value perceptions are shaped throughout the relationship life-cycle (i.e., exploration, expansion, maturity, and decline; Palmatier, Houston, Dant, & Grewal, 2013). Given that value co-creation takes into account the dynamic nature of customer-firm relationships (Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014), the purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual model examining the antecedents and consequences associated with event spectators' formation of C2C value co-creation at recurring sport events and further explain the customer-event relationship life-cycle influences the strength with which C2C value co-creation promotes spectator's behavior intentions.

Conceptual Model

Building on the value-in-use from service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), we expanded customer-dominant logic in the notion of “value-in-experience” (Helkkula, Kelleher, & Pihlström, 2012), which appears as shared experiences between spectators within hosting destinations and sport services and influences sport fans’ behavior intentions. Therefore, we propose that C2C value co-creation positively influences event spectators’ behavior intentions (Proposition 1). Furthermore, based on the theory of relationship dynamics (Palmatier et al., 2013), it is assumed that event spectator are more likely to achieve the highest “value-in-experience” levels during the maturity and expansion stages because their experience is continuous and accumulates. However, they may feel isolated from the event and process negative emotions during the exploration and decline stages. Therefore, we postulate that a) the relationship between C2C value co-creation and behavior intentions is stronger in the expansion and maturity stages (Proposition 2a) and that b) the relationship between C2C value co-creation and behavior intentions is weaker in the exploration and decline stages (Proposition 2b).

Contribution

We believe this study adds to recurring event research by proposing a conceptual model explicating “value-in-experience” of value co-creation. Moreover, based on the theory of relationship dynamics, the current study categorizes C2C value co-creation into four stages across the relationship life-cycle and posits that the dynamic elements of value co-creation are critical for predicting event spectators’ behavior intentions that are expected to fluctuate according to the various stages of spectator’s relationship life-cycle processes. Practically, the proposed model is expected to provide insights into the event management’s strategies to employ a detailed rule structure that facilitates shared experience between event spectators. Additionally, as C2C value co-creation effectiveness depends on life-cycle stages, we suggest that event managers should assess the stage of spectator-event relationships to develop stage-based strategies to keep and attract event spectators.