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## **Consumer Motivations to Participate in Event-Marketing Strategies**

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*As part of the Adidas goes street-campaign, the Adidas Predator Cup was a fun-soccer tournament designed to "reconnect the youth in Germany with Adidas and the soccer sport by enjoying the pure fun, freedom and personal happiness of playing an informal soccer match with friends". Despite knowing that the Adidas Predator Cup was designed to communicate the same commercial messages they would have actively avoided otherwise, the young target audience participated in large numbers in this event-marketing strategy. The current study investigates why young consumers are motivated in such large numbers to experience the hyperreality of the Adidas soccer brand by feeling for an afternoon like being Ronaldinho, Beckham, Ballack or Keane. Using Wohlfeil and Whelan's conceptual model, four predispositional involvement dimensions are identified as motivational drivers and tested, before interesting results are discussed.*

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### **Introduction**

Due to an increasing saturation and fragmentation of markets, marketers are in recent years confronted with a significantly changing marketing communication landscape. Here, brands can no longer be distinguished on their quality and functional benefits alone (Weinberg 1993; Kroeber-Riel 1984) and the effectiveness of classic marketing communications is decreasing steadily as a result of a stiff competition of communications (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005a,b; Levermann 1998). Indeed, because classic marketing communications are solely based on a push strategy where brand

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messages are forced on consumers through a variety of media, consumers respond to the growing information overflow with low media involvement and engage actively in a variety of avoidance strategies (Rumbo 2002; Tse and Lee 2001; Kroeber-Riel 1987). Thus, new marketing communication strategies are emerging with a communication structure that often differs strongly from those of established strategies such as advertising or sales promotions by their tendency to offer interactive dialogues between marketers and customers instead of the usual monologues (Evans et al. 2003; Sistenich 1999). Subsequently, event-marketing has become a popular alternative for marketers in Continental Europe and already accounted in 2000 for 22% of German companies' total marketing communication budget (Drengner 2003; Lasslop 2003).

Event-marketing is defined as the *interactive communication of brand values by staging marketing-events as 3-dimensional brand-related hyperrealities in which consumers are actively involved on a behavioural level and which would result in their emotional attachment to the brand* (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2006). However, as a pull strategy within marketing communications, the effectiveness of event-marketing strategies is highly dependent on consumers' voluntary participation. In reference to advertising research, media involvement in combination with the motivation and ability to process brand-related information is seen as a crucial prerequisite in determining the effectiveness of any communication media in influencing the perception of brand images (Drengner 2003; Petty et al. 1983). Interestingly, previous research has already proven that consumers tend to be highly involved in event-marketing strategies because of their voluntary participation in them (Drengner 2003; Nufer 2002). Thus, an understanding of consumers' motivations and experiential needs is a key factor in designing effective event-marketing strategies. However, while previous research into event-marketing has focused on determining and controlling the effectiveness of event-marketing, little attention has been paid in the literature to consumers' motivations to participate in marketing-events in the first place.

But what exactly motivates consumers to participate voluntarily in marketing-events that are specifically designed to communicate the same commercial brand messages that they would usually avoid otherwise? In addressing this research question, the current study explores whether and to what extent consumers' motivation to participate in event-marketing strategies is determined by their predispositional involvement in one or more dimensions of marketing-events. After briefly introducing the idea of event-marketing as an experiential marketing communication strategy in general and the *Adidas Goes Street*-campaign in particular, the main contribution of the current research is to the involvement and experiential consumption literature by discussing in particular the role of predispositional involvement

as a significant motivational driver for participation in marketing-events in more detail. Next, this study employs Wohlfeil and Whelan's (2006) conceptual model to examine whether the *ADIDAS Predator Cup* would also motivate young consumers in Ireland to participate as much as it did in Germany. Finally, the findings and their implications for marketing practice and further research are discussed.

### Event-Marketing as Experiential Marketing Communications

Unfortunately, the term *event marketing* has been used in the past to describe a multitude of phenomena in marketing practice (Cornwell 1995). Therefore, the event-marketing concept in the context of this paper needs to be briefly introduced first in order to understand the appeal and popularity of the *ADIDAS goes street-campaign* in particular. Event-marketing as an experiential marketing communication strategy first emerged in Germany in the late 1980s in response to significant changes in both the marketing environment and consumer behaviour (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005a). By communicating brand values as "real-lived" experiences, event-marketing is designed to take advantage of the shift from maintenance to experiential consumption in the societal value system of affluent societies (Weinberg and Gröppel 1989). Experiential consumption refers to obtaining enriching experiences through emotional benefits, by which consumers attempt to improve the quality of their lives right here and now (Opaschowski 1998). This romantic consumption ethic has not only led to an increasing orientation towards and active participation in leisure and recreation, entertainment and cultural neo-tribes (Cova and Cova 2002; Martin 2004; Mitchell 1988), but also outlined the need for experiential marketing communications to gain consumers' attention.

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

- **Experience-orientation:**

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

- **Interactivity:**

In contrast to the monological provision of information in classic marketing communications, event-marketing offers a platform for

interactive and personal dialogues between participants, spectators and brand representatives (Zanger and Sistenich 1996).

- ***Self-initiation:***

Event-marketing is aimed at influencing consumers emotionally by staging self-initiated marketing-events. Thus, the marketer is in full control of the way in which sensual brand experiences are anchored in the world of consumer feelings and experiences (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005a; Nufer 2002; Weinberg and Nickel 1998).

- ***Dramaturgy:***

In order for consumers to experience the brand hyperreality emotionally, it requires a unique and creative dramaturgy that, similar to a theatre play, brings the brand image to life and captures the imagination of the target audience. Therefore, the more the event-marketing strategy differs from consumers' everyday life experiences the higher is the degree of activation among consumers (Sistenich 1999; Zanger and Sistenich 1996).

Thus, in contrast to event sponsorship, event-marketing is aimed at positively influencing customers' familiarity, image, attitude and emotional attachment to the brand by staging self-initiated marketing-events as a 3-dimensional, interactive brand-related hyperreality for consumers. Because personally "lived" experiences tend to be stronger in determining people's notion of reality than the "second-hand" experiences as traditionally communicated by advertising (Weinberg and Nickel 1998), marketing-events are better equipped to anchor multi-sensual brand experiences in the world of customer feelings and experiences (Weinberg and Gröppel 1989). Furthermore, in comparison to classic marketing communications, where customers generally remain passive and distant recipients of brand messages, the major peculiarity of event-marketing is the fact that target audiences are encouraged to experience the brand values actively by becoming an essential part of its hyperreality (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005a,b). And while in advertising or sales promotions a contact remains rather accidental, consumers actively seek to engage with various event-marketing strategies.

Creative event-marketing strategies have already been designed to communicate a variety of consumer brands from very different product categories, such as energy drinks (Red Bull Flugtag: *Red Bull Gives You Wings*), coffee brands (Cruising Through the World of Jacobs Cafe), beer (Guinness Storehouse), cars (Mercedes A-Motion Tour, Volkswagen Autostadt), computer network software (Novell Experience), computer

games (Microsoft Xbox Championship), traditional games (Ravensburger Spieleland) or toys (Legoland), as unique 3-dimensional, multi-sensual brand experiences for consumers. In addition, event-marketing strategies have also been employed successfully by retailers as well as in non-profit and business-to-business environments or within internal marketing targeted at employees and other corporate stakeholders. Nevertheless, in order to succeed as unique 3-dimensional brand experiences, the design of event-marketing strategies requires creativity, imagination and an understanding of the customer needs (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005a; Sistenich 1999).

### ***Adidas Goes Street or Event-Marketing in Practice***

Adidas-Salomon is often cited as one of the major pioneers in event-marketing. After market research in 1991 revealed that its two core segments (8-15 year old kids, and the 16-29 year old Generation X) regarded the brand image as "too conservative and boring", Adidas successfully rejuvenated its brand to being "hip & trendy" within less than two years by staging the annual *ADIDAS Streetball Challenge* between 1992 and 1998 (Nufer 2002; Runau 1998). Based on the idea *ADIDAS Goes Street*, the event-marketing strategy was built around the Adidas product ranges of basketball and street-fashion apparel, footwear and equipment and met the demands of the modern youth culture by combining fun-sports, music, fashion, youth language codes, thrill and individuality as well as neo-tribe participation (Cova and Cova 2002; Runau 1998). In 1995 alone, over 50,000 players, aged 10-18 years, in 25,000 teams participated across Continental Europe in the series of informal streetball tournaments closely watched by over 1 million spectators (Nufer 2002).

In order to appeal in its brand rejuvenation efforts to a broader range of target segments, the "street culture" concept was expanded to a variety of other sports. The *ADIDAS Predator Cup* was originally designed to introduce the latest Adidas soccer product range in 1994, but has been running since 1995 in a more generalised form as DFB-ADIDAS Cup. The aim is to reflect Adidas' long-term relationship with the soccer sport in Germany and to manifest its position as global market leader in one of its core businesses (Nufer 2002; Runau 1998). In light of the forthcoming Soccer World Cup 2006 in Germany, this marketing-event series was renamed to *DFB-ADIDAS Be a Champ 2006* in 2003. In 2002, Adidas-Salomon launched the annual *ADIDAS City Games* in Berlin as its latest marketing-events series, which is based on the *ADIDAS goes street*-concept. Here, the target audience of 10-25 year olds were invited to suggest their own street sports ideas to a specific Adidas website, of which the most original, but realistic and feasible ones were chosen for a tournament.

Nevertheless, in order to utilise its full potential, any event-marketing strategy as the ones mentioned earlier must be designed in a way that consumers do not want to miss taking part in a brand's experiential hyperreality. Thus, marketers must have a thorough understanding of what needs consumers seek to satisfy by participating in marketing-events.

### Motivations

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

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

The hierarchy's general idea is that motivations are driven by consumers' desire to consciously satisfy those needs in a similar order. Therefore, individuals experience lower needs always stronger than higher needs (Maslow 1987). Maslow originally even proposed that higher growth needs do not appear to consciousness until the deficit needs are met on a regular basis (Buck 1988). But despite its widespread acceptance in literature, Maslow's hierarchy of needs also has its critics. Buck (1988) argued that most

physiological needs are always present and never cease to affect consumer behaviour, while even during times of deprivation, when basic needs dominate, higher needs are still present to influence consumer behaviour. In addition, people tend to differ in judging the value of some needs as more important than others. For example, one individual may satisfy personal growth in a stressful working career at the cost of health and social relationships, while another one prefers love and family instead of a career (Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg 2003). In response, Maslow (1987) acknowledged at a later stage that people only need to be partially satisfied in their basic needs before higher needs emerge.

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

Csikszentmihalyi's experiential consumption concept not only provides valuable insights into the growing importance of leisure, entertainment and recreational activities in giving meaning to consumers' lives, but also explains why shopping in affluent societies has become such a popular goal-directed leisure activity for consumers to improve their subjective quality of life. The purchase itself has turned into little more than a by-product, a mere means to an end (Opaschowski 1998). Experiential consumption, therefore, goes well beyond experiencing emotional benefits in the process of ownership transfer or product usage, as proposed by the hedonic consumption concept. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) defined hedonic consumption as *those facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products* (p. 92). The idea is that consumers not only buy products for their utilitarian value in solving problems, but also often for their hedonic pleasure value and symbolic meanings that derive from using the product (Martin 2004). Experiential consumption, however, is primarily driven by the intrinsic pursuit of

personal happiness where consumers engage in activities to experience excitement, challenges, personal accomplishment or fun for its own merits. Products are merely contributors to the overall emotional experience (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). This intrinsic pursuit of happiness and enjoyment of life right here and now not only has a strong impact on consumer behaviour in affluent societies in general (Opaschowski 1998), but also on consumers' motivations to participate in marketing-events in particular.

### **The Moderating Role of Involvement**

As consumers' motivations to engage in leisure activities are determined by their personal interests and desires in them, it must be assumed that the voluntary participation in event-marketing strategies is also motivated by their personal involvement (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2006). Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg (2003) defined involvement as a hypothetical construct that reflects *consumers' cognitive engagement and the subsequent activation to devote oneself to a specific issue or activity at hand*. Although its moderating role in processing brand messages is well documented in marketing literature, most of the previous research focused primarily on the personal relevance that either products (Coulter, Price and Feick 2003; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Zaichkowsky 1986, 1985) or advertising messages (Geuens and de Pelsmacker 1998; Park and McClung 1986; Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann 1983) have for consumers in forming reasoned buying decisions.

Unfortunately, involvement was hereby often treated as a feature that is naturally attached to a specific product category rather than an individual consumer's personal trait that has a significant influence on the motivation to engage in certain behaviours (Park and McClung 1986). The idea was that consumers are always highly involved in luxury products like cars, jewels or TVs due to a perceived high risk of negative consequences resulting from a mispurchase (Kapferer and Laurent 1986; Laurent and Kapferer 1985), while consumers are only low involved in inexpensive daily products such as groceries, pencils or the bus service to work as a mispurchase is of little consequence. In reality, however, a person may not hold a driving licence and has no interest in cars at all, while the determined collector often spends half an hour to select the right KINDER chocolate egg. Thus, an individual's involvement with a product is solely dependent on the personal relevance that this product has for the individual (Coulter et al. 2003). Consequently, personal involvement is also a differentiating factor between people who enjoy a specific activity and those who, despite having identical skills and the same socio-economic background, are bored by the same (Mitchell 1988).

Furthermore, previous involvement research was often restricted to consumers' involvement with a product during a purchase situation rather



than focused on their enduring involvement. As leisure activities and event-marketing strategies are more complex involvement objects, it is crucial to differentiate between situational and predispositional involvement (Harvitz and Mannell 2005; Drengner 2003). *Situational involvement* occurs when a specific object catches an individual's interest for a limited period of time. This can either happen when a specific need presents itself to consciousness or the individual gets in contact with the object by chance, i.e. while browsing in a store or during purchase situations (Bloch and Bruce 1984). Once the need is fulfilled, the contact has ended or the purchase been made, the situational involvement declines again and finally fades away (Richins and Bloch 1986).

*Predispositional involvement*, on the other hand, refers to consumers' long-lasting interest in engaging with an object or an activity based on their personal values and desires, even if there is no immediate need or a direct contact with the object present at that time (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2006; Richins and Bloch 1986). As personal interests and desires are determined by one's previous experience, expertise and in particular attitude (Harvitz and Mannell 2005), predispositional involvement is subsequently an individual's enduring involvement in an object or activity based on his or her inherent predisposition and usually expressed in form of commitment or even fan-behaviour (Drengner 2003; Bloch and Bruce 1984). But despite being relatively consistent, predispositional involvement can still change over time as a result of altering personal preferences and values (Richins and Bloch 1986).

### Consumers' Predispositional Involvement in Marketing-Events

As a pull strategy within marketing communications, the effectiveness of event-marketing is highly dependent on consumers' motivation to participate in it voluntarily. This intrinsic motivation, in return, is determined by the degree to which at least one aspect or dimension of the event-marketing strategy meets consumers' individual predispositional involvement. Drengner (2003) previously argued that there are three distinct predispositional involvement dimensions that play a major role in the attractiveness of marketing-events for individuals, but has not investigated them any further. Wohlfeil and Whelan (2006) developed this idea further by identifying a fourth predispositional involvement dimension and proposing the conceptual model, which will now be discussed in greater detail.

According to their model, the intrinsic motivation to participate in a particular marketing-event is determined by consumers' situational involvement in it. This involvement in the particular marketing-event in turn is determined by consumers' predispositional involvement in at least one of

its four distinct dimensions event-marketing, event-object, event-content and social event interaction, by which the marketing-event shares direct or indirect linkages with their personal leisure interests. In other words, the closer the event-marketing strategy is related to consumers' personal leisure interests, the stronger is their situational involvement in this specific event-marketing strategy, which subsequently strengthened their motivation to participate in it. Each of these four predispositional involvement dimensions is now briefly discussed by taking the *ADIDAS Predator Cup* as an example.

*Event-marketing involvement* refers to a consumer's enduring interest in event-marketing and marketing communications in general (Drengner 2003). Practitioners or academics may participate out of professional interest as spectators in the *ADIDAS Predator Cup* to get some inspiration for their own marketing campaign or research. For instance, anecdotes have it that an executive at Lego GmbH came up with the idea for the Legoland after visiting Disneyland in Florida (Nufer 2002). This leads to the following hypothesis:

- H1:** *The higher the predispositional event-marketing involvement, the higher is the consumer involvement in a specific marketing-event.*

*Event-object involvement* refers to an individual's enduring interest in the brand or at least in the product category<sup>3</sup>. It therefore reflects the enduring product involvement defined by Richins and Bloch (1986). Some participants were motivated to participate in the *ADIDAS Predator Cup* to gather information about *ADIDAS* soccer products, to test the *ADIDAS Predator* soccer boot and to experience the *ADIDAS* brand values in an exciting, interactive atmosphere. Furthermore, committed collectors of *Adidas* memorabilia might also be encouraged to participate as spectators. But despite marketers' wishful thinking that their particular brands play an important role in people's lives, the predispositional event-object

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<sup>3</sup> One reviewer rightfully remarked that predispositional involvement in the product category (i.e. football boots) and a particular brand (i.e. *Adidas*) may differ significantly. However, these authors would argue that in order to be highly predispositional involved in *Adidas* soccer boots one must be at first highly predispositional involved in soccer boots in general. Hence, someone who is interested in soccer boots is much more likely to be interested in *Adidas* soccer boots than someone who does not care about soccer boots at all. The strength of this argument, of course, would depend on the individual context of the particular brand and its product category in question. Either way, the predispositional event-object involvement would be a useful determinant for cases of unknown or lesser-known brands, where consumer would be primarily involved in the product category instead.

involvement is usually limited to those very few brands or product categories, which are linked to specific leisure activities (Bloch and Bruce 1984) or associated with hedonic consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). This leads to the following hypothesis:

**H2:** *The higher the predispositional event-object involvement, the higher is the consumer involvement in a specific marketing-event.*

*Event-content involvement* refers to an individual's enduring interest in the activity that is at the heart of the event's dramaturgy (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2006) and is strongly related to enduring "leisure" or "ego" involvement described by Havitz and Mannell (2005). Due to the nature of the ADIDAS Predator Cup, it is fair to assume that most participants had a high predispositional involvement in the soccer sport (Nufer 2002). As predispositional event-content involvement is seen as the most important motivators for voluntary participation, the majority of event-marketing strategies attempted to connect the brand with the popular leisure interests of their target audiences either directly or indirectly (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005a). The activation potential of marketing-events stems from the opportunity for consumers to be actively involved in areas of personal interest and in interaction processes that cannot be realised in everyday life (Sistenich 1999) by presenting them with a platform where they can experience fun, excitement, challenges and self-fulfilment. Indeed, by providing a 3-dimensional brand-related hyperreality as a stage for personal experiences, consumers are offered the opportunity "to be someone else" at least for a moment of time and to experience social roles that differ from their daily lives, i.e. they can feel like being David Beckham, Michael Ballack, Ronaldinho or Zinedine Zidane. The more the event-marketing content and dramaturgy meets consumers' role expectations the better will be the subsequent image transfer from this unique emotional experience to the brand (Zanger and Sistenich 1996). This leads to the following hypothesis:

**H3:** *The higher the predispositional event-content involvement, the higher is the consumer involvement in a specific marketing-event.*

*Social event involvement* refers to an individual's desire to belong to a particular social community or neo-tribe that is associated either with the brand (McAlexander et al. 2002) or the event-content (Cova and Cova 2002). As marketing-events are designed to appeal to specific target audiences, consumers expect to find members of a certain social group or subculture to be present to whom they want to belong (Allen 2003). In case of the ADIDAS Predator Cup, many kids might be motivated to participate by the

expectation to meet and interact with other like-minded young people who share their interest in soccer and street sports. This bond of social solidarity may result in the development of loyal brand communities (McAlexander et al. 2002), where the brand becomes an essential element of a neo-tribe's subculture (Cova and Cova 2002). This leads to the following hypothesis:

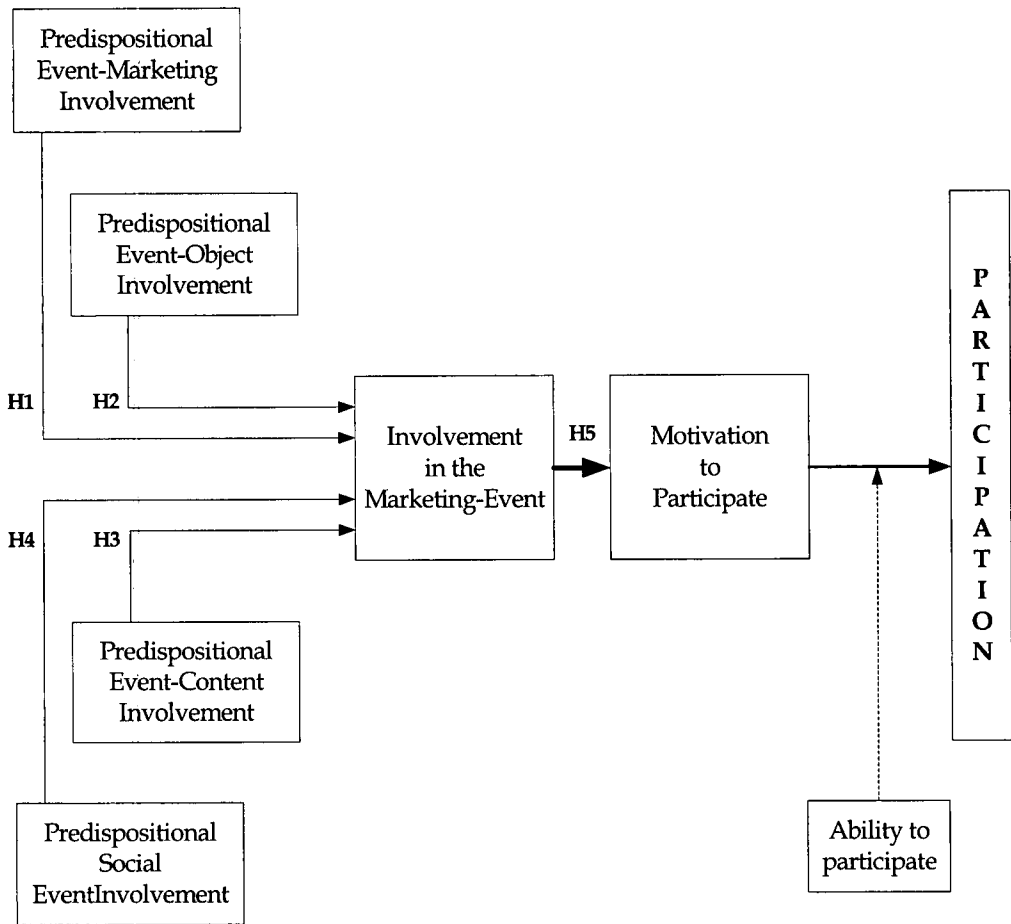
**H4:** *The higher the predispositional social event involvement, the higher is the consumer involvement in a specific marketing-event.*

While a consumer's predispositional involvement in the brand, the dramaturgy, (event-) marketing or social interaction at events is enduring and, thus, present all the time, the involvement in a particular event-marketing strategy like the ADIDAS Predator Cup itself is rather situational. It is aroused by an encounter with an associated information package (i.e. flyer, TV or print ad), which captures one's interest by catering directly or indirectly for one predispositional involvement dimension at least. Although it is predictable that a consumer's situational involvement in an event-marketing strategy may be dominated by the individual's predispositional involvement in one specific dimension, all four dimensions are not mutually exclusive but rather complement each other in strengthening the level of one's situational involvement as shown Figure 1. From there follows the subsequent logic that the higher consumers are involved in the particular even-marketing strategy the stronger is their motivation and desire to visit it. Thus, the final hypothesis is as follows:

**H5:** *The higher consumers' situational involvement in a specific marketing-event, the stronger is their motivation to participate in it.*

## Research Method

The ADIDAS Predator Cup was chosen as a suitable marketing-event for the current research to investigate whether and to what extent consumers' motivations to participate in a specific event-marketing strategy is driven by their situational involvement in the marketing-event and their predispositional involvement in its four identified dimensions by testing the hypotheses H1-5. Adidas-Salomon launched the ADIDAS Predator Cup in Germany back in 1994 as part of their Adidas goes street-campaign to rejuvenate their perceived brand image towards being "hip & trendy". In essence, it was a 5-a-side fun-soccer tournament (4 field players, 1 substitute, no goalkeeper) for male and female juveniles aged between 6 and 18 years, which was built around the brand theme of the Adidas Predator soccer range and played on specifically designed mini-pitches. As the aim was to "reconnect the kids with the soccer sport by enjoying the pure fun, freedom



**Figure 1: Model of the Predispositional Determinants for Consumers' Motivations to Participate in Marketing-Events (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2006)**

and personal happiness of playing an informal soccer match with friends" (Runau 1998), the ADIDAS Predator Cup was played by simplified rules without a referee. In addition to showing off their soccer skills, participants were also able to engage in a broad programme of side-activities, which included soccer workshops with DFB national youth team coaches, taking penalties against a Bundesliga goalkeeper, getting signed autographs from famous soccer players or testing the new Adidas Predator soccer shoes in a *Predator-Traxion-Parcours*.

While the ADIDAS Predator Cup was very successful in Germany back in 1994, the event-marketing strategy was never launched in Ireland or the UK and there is no intention by Adidas-Salomon to do so in the foreseeable future. However, as the current research does not require a real-existing

marketing-event to measure actual participation, the authors obtained the written consent from Adidas-Salomon's senior management to use the ADIDAS Predator Cup concept as a fictional marketing-event for this study. The design of the ADIDAS Predator Cup was then slightly altered for the purpose of this research. First of all, as 10 years have passed since the launch of the original ADIDAS Predator soccer boot, the objective of this fictional ADIDAS Predator Cup was now to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Predator technology. Next, an 18-22 age group was added to allow for the inclusion of undergraduate students, who represent a primary market for soccer equipment in Ireland, into the research sample. An original German flyer was replicated as a fake information flyer with application form to create the illusion of authenticity.

**Table 1: Measurement Instruments**

Construct	Item Description	Cronbach's Alpha Std. Items	Lowest Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Factor Analysis	% of Total Variance Explained
Event-Marketing Involvement	important - unimportant interesting - boring relevant - irrelevant exciting - unexciting means a lot to me - means nothing to me appealing - unappealing fascinating - dull valuable - worthless desirable - undesirable vital - unnecessary	0.950	06.54	1	68.954
Event-Object Involvement	see above	0.934	0.630	1	62.924
Event-Content Involvement	see above	0.982	0.838	1	86.236
Social Event Interaction Involvement	see above	0.943	0.648	1	66.390
Situational Involvement ADIDAS Predator Cup	see above	0.975	0.813	1	81.471
Motivation to Participate	1. I would like to participate because I'm interested in sports brands 2. I want to participate because it's organised by Adidas	0.946	0.618	3	79.755

Cont'd

Construct	Item Description	Cronbach's Alpha Std. Items	Lowest Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Factor Analysis % of Total Variance Explained
	3. I'm interested in the Predator Cup because Adidas is promoted as a brand for young people like me.			
	4. I want to experience Adidas in a different and exciting way.			
	5. I like to participate because I love to play soccer			
	6. I like to test the soccer skills of my team in the Predator Cup			
	7. I'll go if there are some good activities for the spectators as well.			
	8. It's an exciting way to learn about new Adidas products			
	9. I'd like to see how the Adidas Predator Cup works in practice.			
	10. It's an exciting way to get in contact with people from Adidas.			
	11. By going to the Predator Cup I can meet many interesting people.			
	12. I would go to the Predator Cup if my friends are coming with me.			
	13. I want to experience the exciting atmosphere at the Predator Cup.			

A total of 120 undergraduate and transition year students took part in this quasi-experimental study. However, it must be noted that the current research was part of a larger quasi-experimental study that contained a total of 215 subjects to test the hypotheses H1-5 in relation to two very different event-marketing strategies. Without being informed of the actual purpose of the study, the subjects were told that Adidas would launch the ADIDAS Predator Cup in Ireland to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Adidas Predator soccer range and then informed in detail about the Adidas Predator Cup supported by flyers and application forms before a structured questionnaire was administered. The predispositional involvement in event-marketing, the event-object (Adidas), the event-content (soccer) and the social event interaction as well as the situational involvement in the Adidas Predator Cup were measured by using Zaichkowsky's (1994) revised Personal Involvement Inventory scale (PII). Three items, however, needed to be reworded slightly after Irish students revealed in the pilot study difficulties in understanding their respective meanings. Thus, mundane became dull while needed-not needed and involving-uninvolving were replaced with vital-unnecessary and desirable-undesirable respectively (see

Table 1). The reliability of all five involvement constructs was confirmed by exceptionally good Cronbach's alphas ranging from .934 (event-object) to .982 (event-content). A factor analysis showed that all PIIs were one-factor constructs.

The motivation to participate in the ADIDAS Predator Cup was measured with a specifically designed 13-items Likert scale that addressed all four predispositional dimensions as shown in Table 1. The respondents were asked to give ratings ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) to all 13 items. The seven items related to the event-object and the event-content were taken from Nufer (2002), who measured the effectiveness of event-marketing in relation to the DFB-Adidas Cup by asking participants among others whether they would be motivated to participate for another time, and reworded to suit the ADIDAS Predator Cup context. The authors then added another six similar worded items - three of them related to event-marketing and three to social interaction. The construct was then pre-tested in a pilot study and found to be reliable. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha of the motivation scale (.946) confirmed a very high reliability. Furthermore, the lowest corrected item-total correlation for the motivation construct was highly acceptable (.618). However, a factor analysis revealed surprisingly only three factors rather than four as expected. The results for the individual measurement constructs are shown in Table 1.

Before conducting the multivariate regression analysis, the data for each measurement construct was transformed into a summated rating, which represented the new variable for each construct. The hypotheses H1-4 were tested by using a backward stepwise regression analysis. The advantage of a stepwise backward regression is that although all independent variables are included at the beginning, only those significant and uncorrelated variables that predict the dependent variable, in this case the situational involvement in the ADIDAS Predator Cup, best will be retained while all others will be discarded. Hypothesis H5, on the other hand, investigates a straightforward relationship between two variables. Hence, an ordinary bivariate regression analysis was deemed suitable for this purpose.

## Major Results

Although several results are not reported in the present study due to the length of the paper, the results largely supported the outlined hypotheses. The backward stepwise regression indicated a high statistically significant relationship ( $p < 0.001$ ) between the predispositional involvement dimensions and the situational involvement in the ADIDAS Predator Cup, which was also practically significant ( $R = 0.731$ ). The adjusted R square value of 0.522 showed that 52.2 % of the variability in the dependent variable was



explained by the four independent variables. However, a closer look showed that the practical significance of each predispositional involvement dimension differed significantly. First of all, the backward stepwise regression excluded the predispositional event-marketing involvement dimension as insignificant ( $p > 0.05$ ,  $B = -0.030$ ). Subsequently, H1 was not supported by the data.

As expected, the predispositional event-object involvement, which reflects the personal interest in the Adidas brand, proved to be a strong predictor ( $B = 0.356$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) for the situational involvement in the ADIDAS Predator Cup. Thus, H2 was strongly supported by the data. Not surprisingly, the predispositional event-content involvement, which reflects the personal interest in soccer, turned out to be even the strongest predictor ( $B = 0.428$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which strongly supported H3. More interesting was the fact that the predispositional social event involvement only seemed to play a minor, rather complimentary role. Despite being statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), the Beta value of 0.248 indicates that the predispositional social event involvement was a supplementary predictor. Nevertheless, H4 was supported by the data as well. The multi-collinearity test showed good tolerances between 0.766 and 0.925, while the Variance Inflation Factors had values between 1.081 and 1.306. This indicated that the remaining three independent variables were not closely correlated.

Finally, the bivariate regression analysis suggested a very strong and statistically significant relationship ( $p < 0.001$ ) between the situational involvement in the Adidas Predator Cup and the motivation to participate ( $R = 0.827$ ). The R square value of 0.684 indicates that 68.4% of the variability in the motivation to participate is explained by the situational involvement in the Adidas Predator Cup. Consequently, H5 was strongly supported by the results.

## Discussion

The findings of the current research strongly supported the assumption that the motivation to participate in the Adidas Predator Cup is determined by consumers' situational involvement in it. Furthermore, the backward stepwise regression analysis also confirmed that consumers' situational involvement in the Adidas Predator Cup, in return, is strongly driven by their predispositional involvement in the Adidas brand, in soccer and to a lesser extent in the social event interaction. However, one of the most significant findings from this study is that some predispositional involvement dimensions appear to be more dominant predictors than others, which primarily seem to act as a complimentary support or supplementary predictors. Surely not surprising was the fact that the predispositional event-

content involvement, which reflects the inherent predisposition towards soccer, is the strongest predictor for consumers' situational involvement in the ADIDAS Predator Cup. As soccer was the central theme of this event-marketing strategy, which was designed to promote a particular Adidas soccer equipment range, it is obvious that soccer enthusiasts are more likely to be interested in the ADIDAS Predator Cup than consumers who could not care less or even hate soccer.

In a similar way, the predispositional event-object involvement, which reflects the inherent predisposition towards the Adidas brand, turns out to be the second strongest predictor for the situational involvement in the ADIDAS Predator Cup. As this event-marketing strategy is aimed at promoting an Adidas product range, its design was created with the intention to appeal to current as well as potential users of Adidas soccer equipment - in other words soccer players - and to strengthen the mental association between Adidas and soccer. It seems therefore obvious that the inherent predisposition towards the Adidas brand (or at least in soccer equipment in general for that matter) determines the situational involvement in the ADIDAS Predator Cup. These two findings mirror the results of Nufer's (2002) study, where participants at the DFB-Adidas Cup (the successor of the ADIDAS Predator Cup) expressed their strong interest and motivation to participate as soon as possible in it for another time. All of the respondents stated that they played soccer regularly in sports clubs as well as on the street, while most of them preferred Adidas equipment like their idols (Adidas is the sponsor and supplier of the German national team as well as 10 of the 18 Bundesliga teams).

The findings for the other two predispositional involvement dimensions, however, are the more interesting and warrant some investigation. The literature suggested that the need for community and social interaction is responsible for an increased tendency to participate in various leisure activities (Allen 2003; Cova and Cova 2002). However, the results from the current study revealed that the predispositional social event interaction involvement is only a weaker predictor for the situational involvement, which only adds strength to the other two predispositional involvement dimensions. This would technically make sense, because as a team sport social interaction between players and supporters seems to be part of the package. Thus, while playing soccer at the Adidas Predator Cup is interesting, it is much more interesting if one can enjoy it in the company of friends. In a similar way, the Adidas sport brand has become a fashionable expression of social identity within parts of the young community. While one's interest in Adidas would result in an interest in the Adidas Predator Cup, it is enhanced when there is a possibility that others share one's enthusiasm. However, if one is only interested in meeting other people

without an accompanying interest in Adidas or soccer, then this individual might feel that there are more suitable opportunities elsewhere.

Although the predispositional event-marketing involvement was always seen as a weak predictor, which would only be of relevance for a minor audience, it came as a surprise that it was completely excluded as insignificant for two reasons. First of all, some of the respondents were marketing students and it could have been assumed that a few of them might be interested in getting some ideas for the future career. More importantly, however, is the fact that the ADIDAS Predator Cup was purposefully designed as a marketing tool for the Adidas soccer product range. Some respondents could have had inherent predispositional apathy towards marketing and subsequently responded with a disinterest towards the Adidas Predator Cup. Still, there was neither a positive nor a negative relationship between the predispositional event-marketing involvement and the situational involvement in the Adidas Predator Cup. An explanation, therefore, might be that for some reason the predispositional event-marketing involvement "merged" with at least one other dimension.

The factor analysis seems to confirm this suspicion, as only three rather than four factors could have been extracted. The three extracted factors *brand*, *dramaturgy* and *interactivity* reflected the predispositional involvement in the event-object (Adidas), event-content (soccer) and social event interaction. But instead of forming another factor, two of the three items representing the predispositional event-marketing involvement loaded highly on the *brand* factor, while the third item, which reflected the experiential aspect of event-marketing loaded high on the *interactivity* factor. Consequently, it must be assumed that the respondents did not distinguish between the brand and the marketing effort, because the presence of a sports brand at a soccer event even at grassroots level is regarded as quite common due to the widely established practice of sponsorships. As some forms of marketing communications are already accepted and even expected by consumers as a common occurrence at sports events, it has subsequently become an indecisive driver or inhibitor for participation in these kinds of marketing-events. It might even be so common that the respondents simply did not perceive the Adidas Predator Cup as a marketing strategy anymore.

The remaining question is whether and how the dramaturgical design of an event-marketing strategy impacts the arousal of consumers' predispositional involvement in its dimensions. The Adidas Predator Cup could be classified as infotainment-oriented event-marketing strategy that offers a strong soccer theme as its experiential framework to the external target audience (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2005a; Nufer 2002). Thus, the design of this event-marketing dramaturgy clearly determined from the start that the predispositional involvement in soccer and Adidas were not only activated

but actually dominated consumers' situational involvement in the Adidas Predator Cup and subsequently their motivation to participate in it. On a more general level, it must be concluded that a sports- or activity-based dramaturgy would always appeal to the predispositional event-content involvement as dominating dimension, based on one's positive or negative interest in the particular sport/activity.

Like any research of the type described here, the present study is subject to certain restrictions and limitations. As a quasi-experimental study, which involves placing subjects into a controlled fictional context without them noticing it, is bound to be subject to the selection of only a restricted respondent sample. A larger scale survey might have found a slightly different result, but it would have been difficult to create and control the illusionary study context of the non-existent Adidas Predator Cup. Similarly, as primarily undergraduate and transition year students participated, the sample only contained members of a certain age-group (17-22 years). The inclusion of younger respondents, however, would have raised some ethical concerns. In regard to the socio-economic background, it could be assumed that most respondents came from a well-educated socio-economic background. Fortunately for this study, education in Ireland (incl. third level) is non-fee based and students subsequently are drawn from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds in Irish society. However, if the same design would have been applied in countries with a fee-based education system as in the UK or the US, the sample would have consisted of respondents from much more well-off socio-background.

Nevertheless, the most serious limitation of this study lies in its generalisability. In other words, would the same also apply to an event-marketing strategy, whose dramaturgy is based on the brand's heritage as common with brand lands or on a community aspect? As it is only based on one specific type of event-marketing strategy, namely one that is based on strong sports-centred public marketing-events, the findings can only be generalised for event-marketing strategies with a similar dramaturgical design. In fact, it must be assumed that the constellation in terms of which individual predispositional involvement dimension dominates and which one just acts supplementary is flexible and would directly result from the nature of the brand and the nature of the chosen dramaturgy. If this is the case, a comparison between different event-marketing dramaturgies could provide evidence.

Adidas is also an extremely well known brand, whose hedonic value properties are strongly recognised within the young community and which enjoys a strong brand loyalty. Thus, any marketing effort of Adidas would arouse one's predispositional event-object involvement in some form. A study using the same concept in relation to a less known and less

emotionally charged brand like Erima (another sports brand owned by Adidas-Salomon) might provide some more clarifications. This might also be helpful in the context of me-too or standardised marketing-events, which primarily use sports-activities in their dramaturgy without any direct or indirect linkages to the brand values or heritage, in order to determine their predispositional appeal. Finally, the presence of marketing efforts at sports events is obviously seen as an accepted common feature, so that the predispositional event-marketing involvement has no influence on the situational involvement in an Adidas event. But would this also be the case in a different context, i.e. in case of a non-sports brand or a non-sports dramaturgy? The current research was restricted in its ability to address the question, but suggest further research in this direction.

### Implications

Several implications for marketing practice and further research can be drawn from this study. Recent research in marketing has placed an increasing emphasis on satisfying the experiential dimension of consumer behaviour with a view to improving consumer-brand relationships (de Chernatony 2001; Fournier 1998). Event-marketing as an experiential marketing communication strategy offers marketers the opportunity to provide their target audiences with an interactive stage for personally experiencing the brand's hyperreality on a behavioural level, sharing those experiences with others, meeting the previously faceless brand managers and learning about brand values and heritage in an informal, exciting atmosphere (Whelan and Wohlfeil 2005; McAlexander et al. 2002). And the irony is that consumers participate voluntarily in such brand hyperrealities despite knowing that they are specifically designed to communicate the same commercial messages they usually tend to avoid by zapping (Wohlfeil and Whelan 2006; Drengner 2003). However, as a prelude to successful event-marketing strategies, marketers need to have a thorough understanding of what exactly would motivate consumers to participate voluntarily in them.

The most important implication from this work would be for marketers and researchers to consider more success factors when employing event-marketing strategies than just simply picking a popular theme, which is based on the usual "once-successful-always-successful" formula, as a dramaturgy and then hoping for the best (Whelan and Wohlfeil 2005a; Sistenich 1999). In the past, event-marketing has already taken many forms ranging from sports-/ activity-based marketing-events, such as the Adidas goes Street-campaign or the Red Bull Flugtag, to brand lands with a strong emphasis on brand heritage to imaginative motivation/ celebration events, i.e. a simulated "cruise" through coffee brands. However, in contrast to Pine

and Gilmore (1998), marketers need to be aware that they cannot mass-produce consumers' brand experiences like product features, as each individual experiences an event-marketing strategy according to one's very own experiential needs. Instead, the success of all these event-marketing strategies stemmed from the pull effect that attracted the voluntary participation of their target audiences. In order to achieve this essential pull effect, the aim must be to achieve a perceived fit between the brand, the marketing-event and the target audience by appealing to consumers' predispositional involvement in the event-object, the event-content, event-marketing and the social interaction as motivational pull factors.

The empirical findings from Adidas Predator Cup quasi-experiment suggest that marketers should never focus on only one specific predispositional involvement dimension when designing their marketing-events, but should create a whole web of areas consumers might be predispositionally involved in. In this context, Wohlfeil and Whelan's (2005b) model of the predispositional determinants provides a helpful tool to understand consumers' motivation to participate in marketing-events and to design them accordingly. However, the current research has also shown that event-marketing strategies appeal each of those predispositional involvement dimensions with varying intensity. Indeed, the results clearly indicated that consumers' motivation to participate is determined by the interdependencies of the four predispositional involvement dimensions of which two tend to be the dominant motivational drivers while the remaining ones still contribute as supporting motivators. The findings also suggest that the motivation to participate in a dramaturgy, which requires consumers' personal (and often physical) participation in an entertaining activity like soccer at the Adidas Predator Cup, is strongly determined by an individual's predispositional event-content involvement. Nevertheless, further research is needed in relation to an information-oriented dramaturgy based on the brand heritage as in the case of brand lands, which might appeal less to consumers' inherent predispositions.

As the dramaturgy is obviously presented in close relationship with the brand, a predispositional event-object involvement is an equally dominant driver if the brand is well known (i.e. Adidas). However, if the brand is less known, strong connections between the brand and the product category need to be ensured, as the predispositional event-object involvement also relates to some extent to the brand's product category. Furthermore, as the predispositional social interaction involvement acts as a supporting driver, it is of advantage to create and enhance the brand's "community spirit" or its "linking value" (Cova and Cova 2002) through the dramaturgy of the event-marketing strategy. Although the predispositional event-marketing involvement did not appear to play a role in case of the Adidas Predator Cup

or other sports-based marketing-events, it might play a more important role in other types of event-marketing strategies. Therefore, the constellation between dominant and supporting dimensions might be quite flexible and depending on the design of the specific dramaturgical design. As a consequence, marketers must be fully aware of how their event-marketing designs effects consumers' motivation to participate in them in the first place. Therefore, further research would be beneficial to investigate whether and to what extent the findings of the current research apply to other types of event-marketing strategies.

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