

# “How events work: understanding consumer responses to event marketing”

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## How events work: understanding consumer responses to event marketing

### Abstract

Event marketing is a fast growing form of marketing communication. Unfortunately, there is limited research available on how consumers are affected by events. In this article, the authors develop a conceptual model for the effect of event marketing. The model links buying intention to brand attitude, event attitude, brand emotions, event emotions, which are in turn linked to brand involvement, event involvement and the fit between the brand and the event. The development of the model is based on research especially within sponsorship, advertising effectiveness, and recent research on emotional responses in consumer behavior and neuropsychological theory. The model provides a comprehensive means of covering important elements as well as a better understanding of creation of the effects of events.

**Keywords:** event marketing, involvement, emotions, attitudes, buying intention.

### Introduction

Marketers face extensive challenges in their marketing communications, for example, increased media and audience fragmentation, greater competition in the media market, and decreased effectiveness of traditional advertising and promotion (Belch and Belch, 2007; Duncan, 2005; Fill, 2006). Therefore, marketers constantly look for new ways to communicate with consumers (Belch and Belch, 2007, p. v).

Hansen (2005, p. 1435) points out that “the advertiser may wish to generate strong concentrated central information processing. However competition from other communication, other advertising, low involvement on behalf of the receivers, etc. set limits to the extent to which this is feasible”. Feelings and emotions are important in most consumer choices, and recently there has been an increasing interest in studying the area and documenting the importance hereof in a marketing context (Hansen, 2005, 2006; Hansen and Christensen, 2007). Focus is on the consumer as an emotionally acting consumer, which has led to a growth in creative and emotional media. Desmet (2005) studies emotions in a product design perspective and states: “Creating differential advantage through emotional benefits is one of the keys to market success”.

The above conditions are some of the reasons why events have become a more widespread tool in marketing communications (Gupta, 2003; *Marketing News*, 2006; Sneath et al., 2005). Events are to a higher extent about creating experiences and hereby activate emotional responses.

When choosing among alternative event activities, the nature and the amount of communication created will always be in focus, and so will considerations such as: Will the event generate favorable shifts in

emotions toward the company or brand, attitudes, purchase intentions and purchase? Does the event match the company and its brand(s)? Thus, marketing decisions about events and choosing among possible alternative events and evaluating their effect are complex problems.

For many companies it is unclear how the effect of an event can be measured (Sneath et al., 2005), and measuring event effectiveness has only been very sporadically studied in the literature. Bearing this in mind there is a need for new knowledge on how an event works, and how the effect can be measured.

The purpose of this research is therefore to develop a model for the effect of event marketing. Many traditional advertising effect models take point of departure in the consumer’s information processing in relation to advertising exposure. We will take our point of departure in the theory on advertising effectiveness and supplement it with the latest research, especially within emotional responses.

The questions are: How is the consumer affected by event marketing? Which elements should be included? How can these elements be put together in a model on the effect of an event? Which theories and frameworks can be used as the point of departure in the model? Which relationships can be argued to exist in the model? This article seeks to provide an answer to these questions.

### 1. What characterizes an event?

An event can be defined as a ‘live’ themed activity (e.g., music festival, sporting event, etc.) in order to achieve marketing objectives. Ørnbo et al. (2004) consider events as a part of the somewhat broader concept of experience marketing where events are a part of this experience communication.

Thus, an event is a marketing communication activity and can be looked at as an activity with a high

level of involvement. Because events involve their target group and involve it in the company and the products as well as they give the target group an experience that appeals to all senses. In other words, events appeal to the feelings and emotions that arise in the individual and the event-based communication becomes differently visible and 'alive'. The message may therefore be able to create a stronger effect than through traditional communication channels. We will elaborate on this in the following sections. The event-based communication also has a tendency to stimulate word of mouth, and in this way influence others than those involved in the event.

## 2. Information processing during an event

Martensen and Hansen (2004) question the fact if sponsoring follows the traditional cognitive information processing, where consumers evaluate the messages or product specific arguments presented in the ad. Martensen and Hansen (2004, p. 1) say that "this information processing requires a certain amount of mental energy generated at the time of processing, and when we look at sponsoring such energy may rarely be present. In general, the audience does not consider the medium through which the sponsorship is conveyed as their primary concern (for instance, stadium banners, equipment or clothes). Rather, their concern is with the event, the soccer game, the car race, the tennis match or with whatever the sponsorship is linked. Therefore, one would expect the information processing of sponsor messages to be much more subtle than the description in the traditional information processing theory".

So even though an event is typically a high involvement activity, it can be questioned if the consumer's mental processing of an event's message will be as conscious and rational as the traditional cognitive effect hierarchy models say, where the ad is seen as having a direct effect on consumer's behavior.

However, it can also be questioned if the brand message of an event is only processed on a more unconscious level, where the consumer does not go through a conscious and rational thought process when exposed to the ad and where the ad does not have a direct persuasive effect on the consumer, but only indirectly through the emotions and associations created in the mind of the consumer. Such low involvement and often emotionally dominated processing of stimuli has been labeled low involvement (Heath, 2001) or peripheral information processing (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Hansen, 1997) and has

been linked to implicit memory processing and emotions (Goode, 2001).

According to Hansen (2005, 2006), most consumer choices are characterized by limited cognition, but to a high degree controlled by emotional responses. This is also supported by Heath (2001, p. 76) who points out that many consumers find that the well-known brands practically perform in the same way. Therefore, the consumer is rarely capable of making his/her choice based on rational arguments, but instead he/she makes the choice based on intuition. Recently there has been an interesting discussion in literature on whether emotions disturb rationality or whether they directly control it. This is particularly relevant in relation to an event, which is an experience medium and therefore builds very many on emotional responses.

Depending on how the event is structured, focus may be on the brand or the event. If an event focuses on the brand itself, it may create such a high level of involvement that the processing goes through the traditional, cognitive/central route. If, however, the event is structured with a high level of involvement, the receiver will not to the same degree go through the phases of the central route and therefore not process the information cognitively, but only receive and store the information more or less unprocessed and unconsciously. The advantages and disadvantages will thus not be thought about and decided upon. The receiver will not pay attention to the product specific arguments in the ad, but instead focus on the ad itself and the peripheral cues such as background music, humor, the experience element, etc. Whether the message is constructed with elements of storytelling, information or if it focuses on the more emotional experiences will therefore be of significant importance to how the event is processed and the effect it might have.

Of course, other factors influence the way the event is processed as well: is it a product category characterized by high or low involvement? How loyal are consumers in this product category? Is it a new or a well-established product? How good is the fit between the brand and the event? How credible does the brand come out in the event situation? All these factors may have a crucial influence on how the information is processed.

## 3. A framework for the effect of event marketing

**3.1. Overview of the conceptual model.** Based on the above discussion of the information processing during an event, we have developed the conceptual event effect model shown in Figure 1.

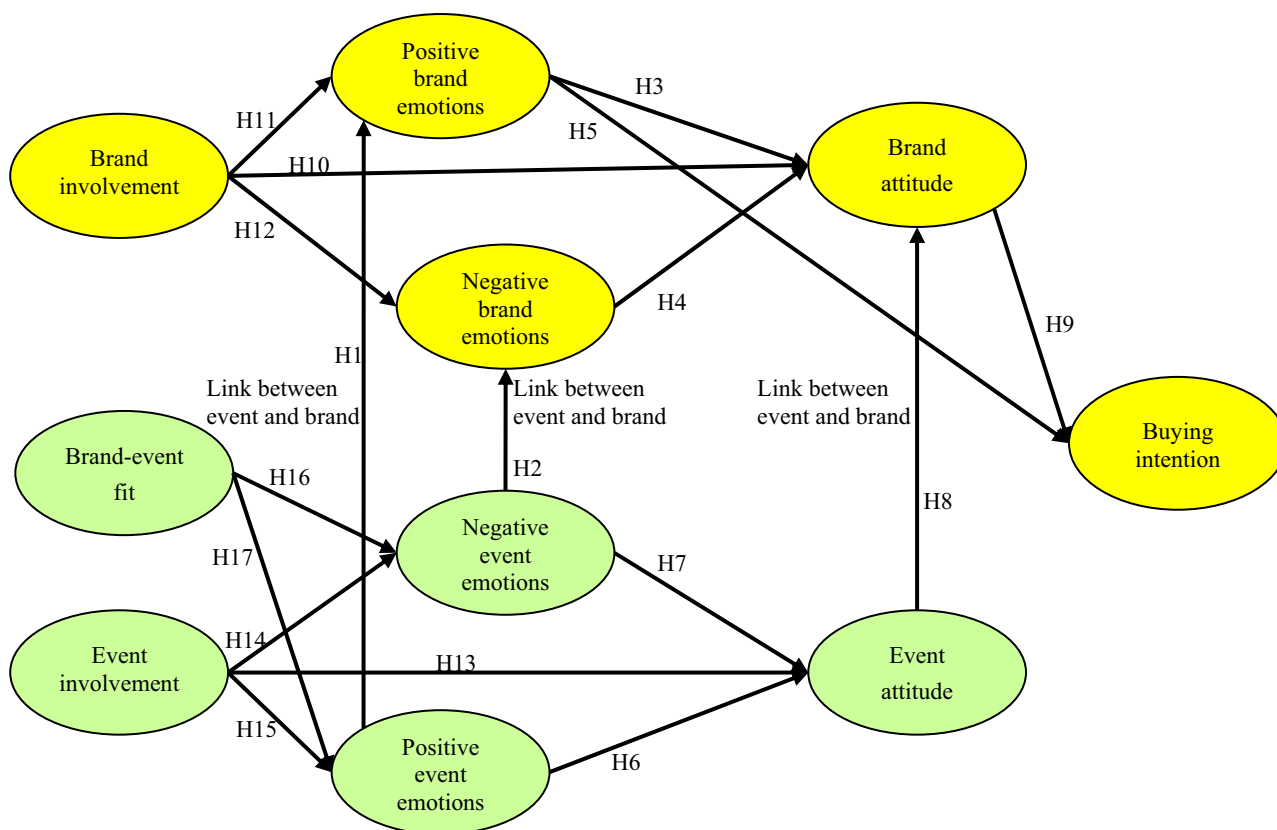


Fig. 1. The conceptual model for the effect of event marketing

The model has ten variables, and links the response variable buying intention to its drivers: brand attitude, event attitude, brand emotions (positive and negative), and event emotions (positive and negative). These are in turn linked to brand involvement, event involvement and the fit between the event and the brand.

The arrows in the model in Figure 1 show the hypothesized relationships between the variables.

The development of the model is based on relevant theories and empirical studies, as well as practical experiences with the measurement of sponsorship value. In the following, we will discuss the concepts of each of the variables except buying intention, as well as which relationships can be expected to exist between them.

**3.2. Two routes: the brand related and event related route.** The event effect model in Figure 1 emphasizes a multi-faceted way of processing the event information; it proposes two routes in creating the brand attitude and buying intention; a central route focusing on the brand and a more peripheral route focusing on the event experience, where the two routes are linked via the positive and negative emotions as well as via the attitudes.

It is among others inspired by Hansen (1997, 2005, 2006), Heath (2001) and Franzen and

Bouwman (2001), who examine alternative ways of looking at the advertising communication process, and suggest that other kinds of information processing among consumers may occur. Here, the emphasis is on attitude toward the ad and emotional responses generated by the exposure to it.

Krugman's (1965) studies opened up for the fact that the information processing does not only consist of conscious cognitive sequential phases and that the individual's involvement is of great importance to the information processing itself. Krugman pointed out the need for a low involvement model, but did never develop one himself. Krugman's studies have, however, inspired others, here among Petty and Cacioppo (1983, 1986), Hansen (1997) and Heath (2001).

Also Mitchell and Olson (1981), Mackenzie and Lutz (1982), and Lutz (1985) have studied attitudes toward the ad.

The event effect model's division into a brand related route and an event related route is especially inspired by Petty and Cacioppo's (1983, 1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as well as Hansen's (1997) further development hereof into the Elaboration Likelihood Advertising Model (ELAM) model.

The ELM model is recognized and often used for studying the consumer's involvement in a product and well as his/her information processing and perception of the communication message. The model explains how advertising can affect the consumer's attitude and thereby affect his/her buying behavior. An assumption of the ELM model is that when the consumer receives a message, he/she starts to process it that is, if the motivation is there and he/she is able to decode the message. The elaboration should be seen as the consumer's degree of activity in relation to adding something to his/her own information resources or to interpreting the received communication message. The processing of the message depends on the level of involvement and the personal relevance that is, the person's motivation, ability and opportunity to process the ad. Here is made a distinction between two routes for processing the message: the central route and the peripheral route. The receiver will follow the peripheral route if he/she is not motivated to think about the message, does not have the possibility to process the message or if the message is weak. If only one of these conditions is present, the peripheral route will be followed. Heath (2001, p. 76) points out that often consumers do not feel that they learn anything important about brands via ads, why they will pay limited or no attention to it. Therefore, the consumer receives the information in a far more passive way instead of seeking it actively him/herself.

If there is a high level of involvement, there is high elaboration likelihood, and the receiver is presumed to be processing the message via the central route, where there is a cognitive response. In the case of low involvement the individual's motivation and interest in the message is limited, why the elaboration likelihood is low and the processing goes via the peripheral route, where the receiver focuses on outer cues instead of the arguments in the ad. In these situations, the information is thus stored more or less without being processed. This information may be tracked in recall and recognition of the ad, not the brand. This means that if the information is made "come to live" in a later purchase situation and linked to the brand in the ad, it may affect the buying behavior.

On the basis of his numerous studies of the ELAM model, Hansen (2005, p. 1435) points out that "a distinction between central/peripheral processing, higher/lower involvement or more or less cognitive information processing seems useful". We agree completely on this point and see this distinction as important in relation to the

event model in Figure 1. The situations in which events occur can be very different. The ELAM model would be a good point of departure for the development of a model for event effectiveness.

## 4. Emotions

**4.1. Brand emotions and event emotions.** Consumer behavior research emphasizes the importance of emotions for consumers' choice (Hansen, 2005, 2006). In addition, neurological and neuropsychological research has strongly emphasized the importance of emotional processes for most kind of human behavior (Damasio, 1994, 2000, 2003; Le Doux, 1998, 2002).

On the basis of the above we find that a model for measuring the effect of the event activity should include emotions and not just attitudes. Moreover, we find that emotions do not only relate to the peripheral route as anticipated by Hansen in the ELAM model, but also to the central route. Compared to the ELM and ELAM model, this is a new point.

Hansen et al. (2004) have conducted a large-scale survey with the purpose of measuring which emotions are associated with a particular brand. The survey revealed several interesting points. Firstly, consumers generate positive as well as negative emotional response tendencies when exposed to alternatives, that being brands, categories or information hereon. This finding is in harmony with Lazarus (1991). Secondly, the feeling words, which identify the positive and negative emotional response tendency in the best way, will vary depending on the product category and the brands. Thirdly, the strength of the emotional response will vary in accordance with the needs and motives of the consumer. If the need is controlled by a positive motive, the emotional response will be higher than if it was controlled by a negative one. The strength of the emotional response will also vary in accordance with the consumer's level of involvement and degree of acceptance as well as his/her use of the brand. The higher involvement and acceptance and the more often use, the higher emotional response occurs. The survey was repeated later with the same conclusions (Hansen, 2006; Hansen and Christensen, 2007).

**4.2. Links between event emotions and brand emotions.** In the event model (Figure 1) we assume that the event experience in itself creates some positive as well as negative emotions toward the event (rather than toward the brand) and that the emotional responses then affect the event attitude. Moreover, we assume that the positive and negative emotions toward the event may influence the extent

and nature of the parallel central brand information processing to the extent that such occur, but only on the emotional level. This means that the positive emotions created through the event affect the positive emotions toward the brands, while the negative event emotions affect the negative brand emotions. This link should be understood as the value transfer or the spill-over effect the event may have on the brand itself, so that the consumer's perception of the event help create or change the preference toward the brand.

The link between event and brand emotions is actually supported by Hansen (1997), if the link is perceived as corresponding to ad liking in the ELAM model. In our model the event both functions as medium and message at the same time. The link in the ELAM model is not seen in Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) ELM model – thus, Hansen (1997) has made a central and significant development of the ELM model in his ELAM model.

According to Du Plessis (2005, p. 199), brand knowledge and ad knowledge are linked together and therefore ad liking will have a spill-over effect on brand liking and reverse.

In the low involvement processing theory (Heath, 2001), the learning that takes place implicit or passively (unconscious or semi-conscious) enables the receiver to create brand associations, as the perceptual and conceptual concepts (the visual impressions and the participant's existing understanding of these impressions) he/she is exposed to via the ad are stored in the implicit memory and create memory structures connected to the brand in question. Really good ads can, according to Heath (2001), do more than just deliver a rational message and are much more than just entertaining. By repeatedly processing elements and concepts at a low attention level, the creation of meaningful associations that influence the intuitive brand choice takes place. The meaningful brand associations can be activated when the consumer faces a brand choice. Heath (2001) defines the use of such associations as a kind of 'hidden power', as the meaning is often attached to brands without the individual being aware of it.

Du Plessis (2005) also touches upon the hidden power of emotions. In relation to the consumer's emotional relationship to a brand and its influence on the buying intention, Du Plessis assumes that the consumer in his/her repeat purchases of a product builds up a feeling related to the purchase, and that it is this feeling toward the brand which the consumer uses at every purchase, instead of a completely rational decision. His point of departure is thus that the interpretation process

of stimuli starts in the limbic system in the brain (the centre which according to neurology controls our feelings toward positive and negative impressions) (Du Plessis, 2005, p. 35) and then via emotions to what we sense. As the consumer knows the brand and relates it to positive feelings, he/she will not, according to Plessis (2005, p. 196), use their knowledge of why he/she likes the brand, but only note that he/she likes it and then buy the product. Consumers are not aware of the fact that they use these emotional rules and through repeat identical experiences these action rules will be established and may be beyond the will of the consumer. According to Damasio (2003), this may be due to the fact that the individual has not paid attention to the images, which the emotional response has transmitted to his/her consciousness. This point is however most relevant for purchases of low involvement products where the purchase constitutes a low risk. Therefore the consumer may experience having preferences toward low involvement products without being able to rationally explain the reason for these preferences.

Damasios' (2003) and Du Plessis' (2005) arguments are in contrast to the basic idea behind the traditional effect hierarchies, which presume that the purchasing process comes from a cognitive and more rational approach to the product. However, both perspectives recognize that it is not always a question of either/or. Factors such as product price, relevance, perceived risk and quality will very often be rational conditions that affect the purchase decision and at the same time moods, signal value, and symbolic meaning are often emotional conditions that affect the perception of the brand. We believe that the above results also apply for the event emotions. Alternatively, these can lead to implicitly stored memories that may eventually be generated as recognition and possible purchase influence in purchase situations.

The brain directs its attention to inputs that might have a negative or positive impact on the individual's behavior (avoiding or approaching behavior). One assumption is that this process happens at all sense inputs and thereby also at event exposure. Through a reward centre in the brain, the consumer focuses on paying attention to experiences that give rise to pleasure. The brain does this based on the emotional rules that already exist in the memory from previous experiences – which also applies for previous brand experiences. In this way the feeling of pleasure and well-being may direct the attention of the brain toward an input.

This information is relevant when using events, as one of the strengths of this media is to create posi-

tive emotions in the mind of the consumer and thereby increase or change the participant's emotional rules about the brand. In practice this means an increased responsiveness to the message when the receiver feels pleasure and well-being, and it is therefore essential that the event creates this state of mind in the brain of the participant, as his/her attention toward marketing activities is increased and the brand message is more likely to be perceived.

The prior discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

*H1: Positive event emotions have a positive effect on positive brand emotions.*

*H2: Negative event emotions have a positive effect on negative brand emotions.*

## 5. Emotions and attitudes

**5.1. Relationships between brand emotions and brand attitude.** In the central brand-related processing as well as in the peripheral event-related processing positive and negative emotions as well as attitudes occur. Both routes are identical in their structure, since they both assume that emotions affect attitudes and not the other way around. This assumption is based on the latest research within emotional response in a marketing context.

The discussion in literature focuses on two aspects. Firstly, it is eagerly discussed whether emotional responses are a function of the cognition or whether emotional responses affect the cognition (Damasio, 2000, 2003; Du Plessis, 2005). Secondly, it is discussed whether an emotional reaction occurs on the conscious or unconscious level (Izard, 1977; Zajonc, 1968; Oatley and Jenkins, 1995; Percy et al., 2004).

According to Oatley and Jenkins (1995) the purpose of emotions is consciously or unconsciously to decide whether we should act on a certain stimulus. Thereby it is the consumer's positive or negative emotion to a stimulus that decides whether the person would direct his/her attention further to a certain stimulus. Thus, emotions are involuntary as we use them consciously or unconsciously to evaluate our current situation (Du Plessis, 2005, p. 84).

Du Plessis (2005) points out that: "We like to think of ourselves as rational human beings, but there is no escaping that the way we think and act is triggered and shaped by our initial response to events, and that includes advertising". According to Du Plessis (2005, p. 90), emotions are thus the first part of a rational decision. That rational decisions are activated by emotions is by Du Plessis (2005) thought to be supported by the fact that more neuron connections flow from the emotional part of the brain to the rational part of the brain than the other way around. This proves that there is a higher in-

formation flow from the emotional part of the brain to the rational part (Du Plessis, 2005, p. 90). Thus, it is the limbic system in the brain that based on previous experiences tries to evaluate how we would feel if a given action was taken (Du Plessis, 2005, p. 89). The point of departure is therefore emotional and the rational part is used for making arguments that support and justify the emotional point of departure.

Damasio (2003) has found in his studies that a reduction of the emotionality leads to irrational behavior, which is in sharp contrast to the idea that emotions are rational. Thus, several of Damasio's studies find that patients with a reduced emotionality have difficulties in functioning socially and making the right decisions. Therefore emotions are a very crucial part of the cognition and in no way a dispensable mental skill.

Hansen and Christensen (2007) point out that consumers are not capable of ignoring their emotions and feelings in decision making, but that they are an integrated part of their sense mechanism. Damasio (2000, p. 12) shares the same view saying that feelings and sense are tangled up in each other's network and that certain parts of the emotion and feeling process are a prerequisite for rationality. These results are directly contrary to the traditional cognitive effect hierarchy way of thinking. However, Damasio (2001, p. 257) points out that cognition is still important and that sense is not less important than feeling or has a less important role than feelings do. On the other hand, in their studies of sponsorships, Martensen and Hansen (2004) find that sponsors are perceived differently, both in terms of emotional and attitudinal responses, and that the emotional responses aroused by the sponsorships are almost as important as attitudinal responses. Whether emotions are more or less important than cognitive attitudes can thus be questioned.

It is necessary to distinguish between feelings and emotions as they have different ways of influencing the consumer's choices. Emotions are perceived as being "...unconscious underlying elementary processes" and feelings are perceived as being "conscious or unconscious counterparts of emotions" (Percy et al., 2004, p. 2). This is elaborated in Damasio's (2004) definitions, saying: "...emotions are things that happen to us rather than things we will to occur... And while consciousness' control over emotions is weak, emotions can flood consciousness" and "the term feeling should be reserved for the private mental experience of an emotion, while the term emotion should be used to designate the collection of responses, many of which are publicly observable" (Damasio, 2003).

In the following we use Damasio's (2003) definitions in the effect measurement of the consumer's emotional response, as we agree that emotions should be perceived as controlling unconscious rules, which to a certain extent can be expressed through feelings. The definitions should be understood in the way that feelings are the conscious experience with an emotion and they constitute the top of the emotional iceberg. Thus, feelings are closer to the cognitive activity, which leads to logical thinking.

As Hansen (2005, p. 1426) says: "Feelings are those sometimes conscious, cognitive perceptions of how we describe our less cognitive perceptions of our emotions. We may talk about feelings of sadness, jealousy, love, pleasure, etc. Such feelings are of a much more detailed nature than emotions, and generally the individual experiencing the feelings can describe them more or less precisely".

Emotions, on the other hand, are general for all individuals, and according to Damasio (2003) they are independent of the individual's context as they are basic emotions, which all individuals are born with and which function unconsciously.

Hansen (2005, p. 1426) looks at emotions as "very primitive and extremely fast, unconscious mechanisms controlling the individual responses to a variety of situations ranging from serious threats (for instance from an approaching car) to trivial decision-making tasks (for instance choosing among different coffee brands in the supermarket)".

The feelings are acknowledged through the consciousness and hereby they influence the thought process.

On the basis of the preceding discussion we propose the following hypotheses:

*H3: Positive brand emotions have a positive effect on brand attitude.*

*H4: Negative brand emotions have a negative effect on brand attitude.*

**5.2. Profound study of the relationships between brand emotions and brand attitude.** The relationship between the emotional response to the brand and the attitude toward the brand is central in our model. In a corresponding study on the influence of the two variables on the value of sponsorship, Martensen and Hansen (2004, p. 2) explain that "the two classes of variables describe different aspects of the perception of sponsorships, and that they both contribute significantly to the overall value of sponsoring for a particular company". Thus, both variables influence the total value of a sponsorship and the same study proves (via factor analyses) that the

applied emotion and attitude scales throws light on different aspects of the participant's perception of the sponsorship. We believe the conclusion that attitude and emotions constitute two different perspectives on sponsorship value can be applied directly to the perception of event and brand value, and the concepts are therefore used in the model based on the same rationale.

Through emotional response on external stimuli, the consumer may be unconsciously influenced in relation to the brand, which at a later point might put the brand among the consumer's buying alternatives (consideration set). Between these two parts the consumer makes a rational evaluation of the brand and creates his/her attitude toward it.

Damasio (1994) supports this using the concept of the somatic marker. As the feeling concerns the body, Damasio (1994) has labeled it with the technical designation somatic state (soma is a Greek word for body) and because it indicates a mental picture, he has named it marker. The concept of the somatic marker describes the process where the individual reacts through a feeling of comfort or discomfort in relation to stimuli. The feeling is not rationally thought-out but arises in spite of the fact that the individual only cursorily (low level of consciousness) deals with a possible reaction. Somatic markers are thus acquired through the experiences life brings us and used for making quick and effective decisions. If you are in a situation, which reminds you a situation you have been in before, the brain uses the somatic markers and thereby reduces the number of possible choices and reactions. The decision making process is thus made faster and more effectively. According to Damasio (1994), the somatic markers back up the individual's considerations by underlining some options and eliminating others. Thus, they can be perceived as effective choice mechanisms.

Somatic markers can be seen as a form of intuition as they operate via or outside the consciousness. The somatic markers try to control the decisions toward comfortable and good conditions and try to avoid uncomfortable and bad conditions which previous experiences warn us against. Therefore Damasio (1994) sees the somatic markers as an atomized alarm system, which the consumer uses for earning a reward or avoiding loss, and reducing the number of alternatives in a purchase decision.

The emotional appeal of the event makes the medium suitable for building up somatic markers in the mind of the consumer, because the event activates positive emotions.

During the purchase situation the consumer will experience a soma (a rationally thought-through emotion, meaning that it can be categorized as a certain type of emotion; cf. Du Plessis, 2005, p. 205), which is based on previous brand experience and ads for the brand. According to Damasio the consumer will choose between the brands that create the most positive somas (Du Plessis, 2005, p. 198). Therefore, emotions play two important parts in relation to brand attitude:

- ◆ Emotions influence the consumer in relation to the brand, as they can arise unconsciously and without any rational processing, which later can make the consumer direct his/her attention to the brand and create an attitude.
- ◆ Emotions are used for choosing between brands in the case where a soma exists based on previous brand experience.

This discussion leads also to the hypotheses 3 and 4, developed in the previous section.

## 6. Emotions, attitudes and buying intention

**6.1. Relationship between positive brand emotions and buying intention.** In their sponsorship value model, Martensen and Hansen (2004) confirm their a priori assumptions that positive emotions have a direct and positive effect on the buying intention (which is a part of the sponsorship value variable), while the negative emotions have a direct effect on the buying intention. Moreover, the authors find that the positive dimensions have a greater numerical impact than the negative. This provides us with useful knowledge of how the determinants influence the sponsor, which can be used in the planning of marketing communications. Thus, the authors conclude that the sponsor, Danske Bank would benefit much more from designing their communication to create positive emotional reactions than by designing advertising messages that reduce the negative emotions.

The authors also categorize the attitudes into a positive and negative dimension and discuss whether efforts should be concentrated on influencing the positive attitudes or the positive emotions. However, they present no clear conclusions to the discussion, only that it depends on the individual company.

Hansen et al. (2004) have developed a hypothesis, which is verified on emotions' influence on preferences: The more positive or the lower negative emotional response tendency, the higher level of preference. They also show how increasing positive or decreasing negative emotional response potential tends to associate with brand loyalty and brand connectedness. Therefore, we find that the results can

be transferred to buying intentions which is the effect variable in Figure 1.

Heath (2001, p. 79) presumes in his Low Involvement Processing Model, that the way in which the consumer processes information is connected with the final brand choice. Heath (2001, p. 79) believes that low attention situations may lead to either automatic processing or shallow processing, and that these in time may create strong brand associations and meanings. The emotional or somatic markers will then decide if a brand choice is made. Heath also discusses the high attention situation but points out that most brand choices are made based on intuition rather than rationality, among other things because most brands are very identical and therefore not many considerations are made before the purchase – the emotions control the choice.

Finally, the preceding discussion of emotions, somatic markers and the creation of associations through learning and memory confirm that these factors will consciously or unconsciously influence the purchase.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

*H5: Positive brand emotions have a positive effect on buying intention.*

**6.2. Relationships between event emotions, event attitude, brand attitude and buying intention.** As it appears in Figure 1, there are two links between the peripheral event route and the central brand route. The link between emotions has been discussed previously, why we will now only discuss the link between attitudes. This link reflects the degree to which the consumer associates the experienced event and its content with his/her attitude toward the brand, which the event is about.

According to Lutz (1985), attitude toward the ad can be defined as: "A predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion".

The attempt to integrate the traditional attitudes toward brands with the role played by less immediate perceptions in the exposure situation has been made by Petty and Caccioppo (1986) in their ELM model and in Hansen's (1997) ELAM model. In relation to our event model, the ad liking in the ELAM model can be seen as event liking; the event functions as medium and communication message at the same time.

In the ELAM model, Hansen (1997) perceives linking as the value transfer or the impact the ad may have on the brand itself, so that the con-

sumer's perception of the ad helps create or change preferences toward the brand. According to Hansen (1997), liking is thus the consumer's associations toward a certain brand.

On the relationship between ad attitude and brand attitude, Mehta (2000) says: "The influence of attitudes-toward-the-ad on brand attitude has been found to be even more significant under low involvement conditions and for emotionally based advertising".

According to Du Plessis (2005, p. 199), brand memory and ad memory are linked together, and therefore ad liking will have a spill-over effect on brand liking and the other way around, meaning that the consumer's soma in connection to a brand and an ad will influence each other positively. Brown and Stayman (1992) find that a positive attitude toward an ad is the first step toward goals like buying intention and loyalty.

The American Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) was among the first to point at the importance of ad liking in advertising effectiveness, and a conclusion was that "all major copy testing measures are, at least to some degree, predictive of an advertisement's success, but that ad liking is the most predictive" (Du Plessis, 2005). Also the Dutch SPOT study showed that ads with high ad liking had great influence on the buying intention and those ads with low ad liking had less influence (Du Plessis, 2005).

Based on several studies of information processing during ad exposure, Holbrook and Batra (1987) proposed an advertising effectiveness model which has served as inspiration to the event effectiveness model in Figure 1: Ad content -> emotional responses -> attitude toward the ad -> attitude toward the brand. The model confirms that emotions are an intermediate variable between ad exposure and attitude toward the ad, thus also to the succeeding attitude toward the brand. The ad evokes some emotional responses in the mind of the receiver and this forms an attitude toward the ad, which again affects the brand attitude.

Moreover, Walliser (2005) points out that an event's capability of changing brand attitude is dependent on the existing level of attitude, as the effect ability depends on prior attitude strength toward the sponsored brand. Many consumers have through their existing brand knowledge established an attitude in their memory structure, and therefore this attitude cannot be expected to change radically from exposure to exposure. The changes will probably be more for new products than for well-established products.

On the basis of the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H6: Positive event emotions have a positive effect on event attitude.*

*H7: Negative event emotions have a negative effect on event attitude.*

*H8: Event attitude has a positive effect on brand attitude.*

*H9: Brand attitude has a positive effect on buying intention.*

## 7. Involvement

**7.1. Involvement starts the process.** Another new element in relation to Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and Hansen (1997) is the inclusion of the involvement concept. Due to the challenges in marketing communication mentioned in the introductory section, involvement has become a central factor. Involvement can be defined as "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests" (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342) and "the concept of felt involvement refers to a consumer's overall subjective feeling of personal relevance" (Celsi and Olson, 1988).

The consumer's level of involvement may result in very different cognitive or affective processes when a message is received.

It is important to create a high level of involvement toward the brand within the target group, so that it to a higher extent will create preferences toward the brand as well as obtain a more conscious and developed brand attitude (Zaichkowsky, 1986, p. 6). Moreover, a high level of involvement means that the consumer generally pays more attention to ads for the brand, as the responsiveness to messages is increased concurrently with involvement. As it appears from our model, involvement helps to follow the consumer through the brand route in a way that high involvement in a brand set out the conditions for a more positive brand emotion and a correspondingly lower negative brand emotion together with a more positive brand attitude.

As Figure 1 shows it is assumed that the information processing depends on the consumer's involvement in the brand as well as in the event. A fact that builds on among others Damasio (2000), Heath (2001) and Zaichkowsky (1985), who differ from the traditional cognitive paradigm by arguing that involvement should be measured in relation to the brand, but also in relation to the ad; because involvement in the ad will influence the value transfer to the brand as well as the degree to which the messages is perceived. Involvement in the ad and in our case, in the event, reflects a form of exposure quality.

As mentioned before, the event will typically be a high involvement medium that can assign involvement to the brand via positive feelings.

The consumer who participates in an event can therefore have both a high and a low level of involvement in the event, but also a high or low level of involvement in the brand itself. Therefore, involvement affects both the event route and the brand route.

**7.2. Brand involvement influences brand emotions and brand attitude.** In Figure 1 we assume that involvement in the brand affects both brand emotions and brand attitude. The same applies for the involvement in the event; it affects both the event emotions and the event attitude.

Throughout the years, several researchers have found that involvement affects attitudes, among others Zaichkowsky (1986). That Zaichkowsky does not link involvement to emotions may be due to the fact that emotions and emotional response were not discussed in marketing literature at that time. Emotions are as mentioned a newer concept, which only has gained ground in a marketing context during the past few years. But the link between involvement and emotions has been discussed by Damasio (2003), Percy et al. (2004), Hansen (2005) and Du Plessis (2005), who have also shown that emotions often precede the more traditional attitude. Therefore we find it plausible to state that the involvement concept functions as a driver for the emotions, which then lead to attitude.

According to Desmet (2005), the emotional response depends on the consumer's degree of interest in the brand. Therefore, it can be argued that those consumers who already use the brand to a higher extent will be emotionally affected and find it more relevant to make an emotional evaluation of the brand. Percy et al.'s (2004) study of the emotional response of respectively low and high involvement products supports this argument, as it concludes that a high level of involvement in the product gives rise to a higher Net Emotional Response Strength (NERS) score than a low level of involvement does. In our conceptual event effect model this is reflected by the fact that brand involvement affects the emotional response toward the brand. On this basis, it appears reasonable to hypothesize that:

*H10: Brand involvement has a positive effect on brand attitude.*

*H11: Brand involvement has a positive effect on positive brand emotions.*

*H12: Brand involvement has a negative effect on negative brand emotions.*

**7.3. Event involvement influences event emotions and event attitude.** Involvement in the event is decisive for the response of the participants. Our assumption is that high-involved participants will react in a more positive or negative way in relation to the brand than low-involved participants would seen in relation to the content of the event, and whether the event is perceived as good or bad.

The reason for this is that high-involved participants are more receptive, sensitive and attentive to the stimuli of the event and the experience in itself (Percy et al., 2004, p. 14). According to Meenaghan (2001, p. 106) the goodwill that the event is to generate is controlled by the level of involvement among the participants and the more personally relevant the event is perceived to be, the more is gratitude toward the sponsor company, which, may affect the participants' involvement in the brand. The exposure during the event and the increased positive involvement, which the event generates, makes the participants perceive the brand as more personally relevant whereby the event creates a foundation for a relational development.

Immediately, we would expect that the more the participant engages in the event, the more resources he/she would use on evaluating the experience and the more positive or the less negative the emotional response would be.

Therefore, we hypothesize that:

*H13: Event involvement has a positive effect on event attitude.*

*H14: Event involvement has a negative effect on negative event emotions.*

*H15: Event involvement has a positive effect on positive event emotions.*

## 8. The fit between brand and event

Working with events is about expressing a number of positive values in relation to the experience, which the participants then hopefully relate to the advertised or sponsored brand. In order for this link to appear in the mind of the participant, he/she must see a credible consistency between the advertiser, the event activity and the brand itself. The fit between brand and event is therefore here perceived as the consumer's experienced relevance and consistency between the universe of the event and the brand's image.

A credible emotional differentiation makes demands on the sponsor's communication activity, thus also the way in which the experience is structured. The values/stories, which the event builds upon, must not appear too artificial and made-up, but have to signal that the individual consumer is valued. Therefore it is

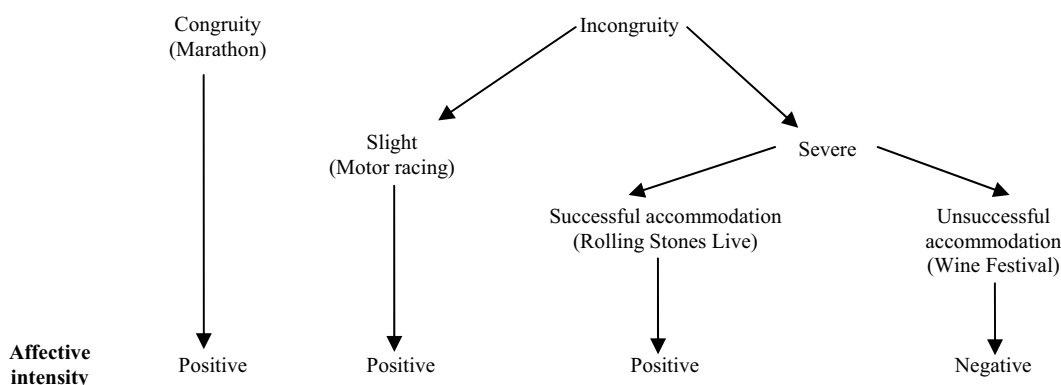
important that the values and stories communicated also reflect the company's image, so that the event will be perceived as being real.

But it is also important that the consumer likes the sender of the message (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), meaning that the consumer should be attracted to the sender, share some common values and perceive the sender as credible and attractive.

Moreover, it is crucial that the sponsor secures target group consistency meaning the advertiser targets the target group in the best possible way by selecting a sponsor object or activity that appeals to the same target group. Thereby, the brand appears more convincing and confidence-inspiring.

In relation to event the typical procedure is to express positive values related to the experience, which the participant then hopefully relates to the product/brand advertised for. In order for this link to appear in the mind of the participant, he/she must see a credible consistency between the sponsor, the brand and the event activity.

Walliser (2005) develops this point further on the basis of the three concepts: strongly linked products, linked products and non-linked products, and estimates the hereto related effect on the participant's affective intensity toward the brand based on the model shown in Figure 2, exemplified by Nike's sponsorship of four different events.



Source: Walliser (2005).

Fig. 2. Fit between event and brand (Nike) in terms of affective intensity

When evaluating an event activity the sponsor should consider how much consistency the consumer experiences between the universe of the event, the communication message and the brand's image in order to estimate the affective effect. If the participants experience a low level of consistency the message will appear unreliable and the event will probably not be effective as the lack of trustworthiness affects the participants' perception of the brand.

It is therefore interesting to examine if the relation between the brand and the event has a direct effect on the positive and negative emotions toward the event and if these have a spill-over effect on the participant's emotions toward the brand.

This discussion leads to the final set of hypotheses:

H16: Brand-event fit has a negative effect on negative event emotions.

H17: Brand-event fit has a positive effect on positive event emotions.

### Conclusion and issues for further research

Since effectiveness of event marketing has only been sporadically discussed in literature, it has

been necessary to find inspiration in other literature and then relate it to event marketing. The basis for the development of the model for event effect has among other things been literature within sponsorship, advertising effectiveness, consumer behavior and recent neurological research on emotional responses.

The cause-and-effect model provides a comprehensive means of covering important elements as well as a better understanding of creation of effects of events.

The developed model is of a very general character and can be applied to high and low involvement products, various product categories and various types of event activities.

The model development is characterized by originality as:

- ◆ literature on the area is limited;
- ◆ to our knowledge it is the first comprehensive model on the effect of event marketing;
- ◆ emotions are included, both in relation to brand and event;
- ◆ involvement is explicitly included, both in relation to brand and event.

The model has been validated and applied based on a golf tournament as the event activity for the Danish corporate brand B&O (Martensen et al., 2007). The model is specified as a structural equation model with latent variables, each measured by a set of indicators, observed by survey questions to event participants. The empirical estimation and validation gives strong support for the model and the 17 hypotheses developed in this article.

It would be desirable to validate the model with more events. Particularly it could be interesting to examine

various types of events and different product areas according to the Rossiter & Percy (1987) grid, where a distinction is made between more and less involving products on the one hand and informational versus transformational products on the other hand. It is possible that the relationships between the model's variables will be different, according to the position of the brand in the Rossiter & Percy (1987) grid. This may be of importance for recommendations to marketers and event organisers and could therefore be very valuable.

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