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Marketing support of the Ethnosport Challenge World Series of tournaments

Annotation: *The article presents the development of marketing support for Ethnosport Challenge tournaments. It revealed that in relation to the project, most of the channels of the direct marketing strategy are not cost effective. ATL strategy creates many challenges, which inevitably leads to a reasonable restriction of its use, especially given that the empirically established optimal number of spectators of ethnosport events. The most successful projects collected by 10 thousand spectators, exceeding these figures leads to a sharp increase in the costs of the event. Nevertheless, to gather 10 thousand spectators is possible only with the use of ATL strategy, because this is the number of viewers that makes the event cost effective for the implementation of BTL strategy — the main resource of profit extraction (compensation of costs) for the organizers.*

Keywords: *cost efficiency, ethnosport, marketing communications, promotion, traditional games.*

The Ethnosport Challenge tournaments of the World Ethnosport Society is a new format of the event aimed at valorization of traditional games and developing of the UNESCO's programs on traditional sports and games, promoting cultural diversity, dialogue of cultures and safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage. The program of tournaments consists of individual competitions of Ethnosport Strongmen and one or two other competitions — Ethnosport Wrestling, Ethnosport Racing (boats, horses, camels, running, etc.). Competitions held according to the rules and with the inventory of local traditional games. The innovative solution «Ethnosport Challenge» allows attracting famous athletes to local traditional games and making them part of the communicative environment of sports, preserving the ethnocultural flavor and identity.

As part of the development of this project, studies conducted to identify channels of marketing strategy that contribute to the achievement of communicative goals with minimal financial costs.

Research Methodology

In developing the approach to determining the key factors for the success of marketing support for ethnosport activities, the results of studies on the methodology for determining «willingness to pay» were taken into account, according to the All-Russian survey on the topic «Citizens' readiness to increase the cost of people holidays» (Alexey Kylasov and Oxana Kuchmaeva, 2016).

Determination of the ratio of the use of channels ATL (Above The Line – a set of measures to promote goods or services using advertising) and BTL (Below The Line – a set of measures to promote goods or services using interactive contact with the consumer) strategies for marketing support for ethnosport tournaments was conducted using SWOT analysis.

The method of latent-semantic indexing used to establish the interconnection and interaction in the use of a single communication channel in which traditional games representing folklore, as well as ethnosport, representing a modern version of the same folklore, presented as cultural texts (Alexey Kylasov and Valery Rastorguev, 2017).

As a hypothesis, it is assumed that ATL advertising, in particular television and radio advertising, outdoor advertising, including advertising on the boards of transport, in store advertising (posters and announcements), is not cost effective for ethnosport events. This events represent an emerging trend in which knows only the core of the target audience, so the bulk of communications account for the BTL strategy and in fact is a TTL promotion strategy.

ATL strategy

The ATL strategy includes such channels of communication as television, radio, advertising in print and electronic media, advertising on the Internet, outdoor advertising, advertising in the premises (in store), as well as advertising in transport.

Based on the format of the Ethnosport Challenge, the most rational option, in terms of ATL promotion, is advertising in electronic and print media, as well as some types of outdoor advertising.

Advertising in the media focuses on life-style resources, as well as special sections of sports resources on the «related» sports of the tournament competitions (depending on the tournament – wrestling, kayaking and canoeing, combats, powerlifting, weightlifting, etc.), and also resources devoted to active lifestyles and traditional culture. Among the print media will be effective advertising in the airline's on-board magazines and travel agency directories, since ethnosport events are subjects of event tourism.

In outdoor advertising, you should use shields and signboards at the entrance to the venue of the event; they both promote branding and serve as informational pointers. Posters on self-adhesive film used in public transport on the routes to the venue of the event, as well as in places where the target audience of the tournaments is concentrated: sports clubs, folklore studios, universities. Possible co-branding with producers of local products.

ATL strategy has aim at expanding the audience of ethnosport activities, but creates serious risks, because there are no equipped facilities for a large number of spectators, like football stadiums. The usual practice of carrying out ethnosport activities is open spaces, where the slopes of nearby hills used to improve the viewing of the competitions. However, the convenience of viewing is not the only risk in organizing the event. A large population of people requires a clear zoning in order to avoid crowding and quick access in case of injury to participants or viewers, as well as easy access to the toilets (Alexey Kylasov, 2015).

Thus, the ATL strategy creates many challenges, which inevitably leads to a reasonable restriction of its use, especially given the fact that the optimal number of viewers of ethnosport activities is empirically established. The most successful projects collected by 10 thousand spectators, exceeding this amount leads to a sharp increase in the costs of the event. For example, the budget of the Yordyn Games in 2011 was approximately 5 million rubles (\$ 150 thousand USD) with the 5 thousand spectators. The projected increase of over 10 thousand spectators in 2013 led to an increase in the cost of holding up to 12 million rubles (\$ 400 thousand USD)¹. It is important to note that the expectations were met and this event visited by over 12 thousand spectators.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to gather 10 thousand viewers, which encourages nevertheless resorting to ATL strategy, because this is the number of viewers that makes the event cost effective for implementing the BTL strategy – the main resource of profit extraction (compensation of costs) for the organizers

BTL strategy

The following channels are most effective for organizing an effective BTL strategy for ethnosport events: sponsorship, interactive projects (exhibitions, show projects, fairs, competitions), PR communication, printed and souvenir products, visualization and branding.

¹The author gives the data available to him, since he was a member of the organizing committee of this event.

Sponsorship plays a key role among all channels of the BTL strategy of ethnosport tournaments. To attract sponsors, the level of the event taken into account if local tournaments have enough interaction with local sponsors, and then for world tournaments it is necessary to have sponsors from among multinational companies or national companies with ambitions to enter the world market, which will ensure a decent level of the event. Correspondence of the level of sponsors directly influences the creation of an authentic image of the event; such conformity forms a credit of trust to a potential audience and leads to its increase.

When choosing a sponsor, it is important to understand that the core of the target audience of ethnosport activities are young men who adhere to the traditional-sports-healthy lifestyle, while having an active life position (Alexey Kylasov, 2014). This image of consumers corresponds to the products of companies producing the following groups of goods:

- **Food products:** mineral water, teas, kvass, coffee, wine, meat products;
- **Cosmetics:** shampoos, shower gels, deodorants, shaving aids;
- **Goods for outdoor activities:** sporting goods, action cameras, professional photo and video equipment;
- **Pharmacology:** painkillers, cuts and bruises, contraceptives for men.

The format of the event implies its organization in places with a pronounced traditional culture, which helps attract foreign audiences, so companies that provide the following groups of services must necessarily be connected to sponsorship: tourism, local and national airlines, hotel chains, tour operators, mobile operators, credit cards, money transfer systems.

The uniqueness of traditional culture allows increasing the demand of consumers for products of local producers, for example, it can be local food products bearing the ethnocultural flavor: Georgian wine, Chinese tea, Argentine meat products, Italian cheeses, Russian kvass (bread drink), etc.

Interactive projects are an integral part of the BTL strategy. Taking into account the peculiarities of the format of ethnosport activities, the target audience is in constant interactive contact with the organizers, which positively influences the growth of loyalty and the increase of the level of interest on the part of the visitors of the Ethnosport Challenge (Alexey Kylasov, Elena Gureeva, 2017). For an effective BTL strategy, the following solutions recommended for implementation:

- Contests among registered on the sites;
- Growth dolls made in the style of visualization of the event;

- Sampling and tasting;
- Fairs and exhibitions of local brands;
- Performance of local celebrities;
- Master classes of local crafts.

As was mentioned earlier, Ethnosport Challenge tournaments aimed at preserving traditions, playing legacy, maintaining the interest of the population towards history and attracting new participants in traditional games. According to the results of our studies evaluating the effectiveness of traditional games of Atmanov's Kulachki, among the visitors of this format there are a significant number of people for whom the competitions represented in the program are the preferred type of leisure and the possibility of sharing freetime with their family and friends. It is not the spectacle or the result of the competition that is of paramount importance, but the opportunity to imbue with the spirit of traditional culture and the area where the events take place (Alexey Kylasov, Elena Gureeva, Eugeny Redkin, 2016). Visiting ethnosport events is a way of self-development, which is why it is so important carefully work out an interactive program outside the main competitions (Alexey Kylasov, 2016).

The core of the target audience are men and it is they who decide to attend the event, but they visit it with their wives and children, so in the entertainment program it is necessary to take into account such an expansion of the audience. It is important to take into account that the presence of wives and children is not necessary, therefore, their number poorly predicted, and many factors influence its increase / decrease: weather, transport accessibility, duration of the trip to the venue, etc. As an example of a site for children is possible offer master classes on modeling, making souvenirs or preparing national dishes, etc.

PR communication is a key tool of marketing strategy, since the main task in applying to ethnosport events is not so much to inform the audience as to maintain the necessary image before, after and during the event. When developing a PR campaign within the framework of the Ethnosport Challenge tournaments, it is recommended to conduct a preliminary study of the media metrics of local, national and international communication and press networks in order to identify profile publications, bloggers and places of communication for the target audience offline and online.

PR-communications in the pre-event stage aimed at providing information on this event to as many people as possible who are potential viewers/visitors/participants. PR-communications at this stage should help in-

crease interest and even create hype about the upcoming event. The main tools will be publications in the press and SMM-content (publications with information on the preparatory stages of the project, holding drawings, competitions, attracting popular bloggers, etc.).

PR-communications at the event stage focused on the operational creation of the image, including anti-crisis management of the information flow in the event of unforeseen circumstances. The key element of PR communication during the event is a questionnaire, and separate – participants and visitors. The number of questionnaires determined by the necessary representativeness of the sample. An additional poll conducted among those visitors who have accounts in social networks and registered on the event page or posted posts with hashtags of the event.

PR-communications at the post-event stage aimed at summarizing: presentations in the form of photo reports and video highlights, organization of interviews with individuals from the organizing committee, sponsors and celebrity guests, preparing materials for the media with results and analysis of the event and, of course, regular monitoring of the media.

Printed and souvenir products of ethnosport activities can consist of a standard set:

- Printed press-wall with branding of the event;
- Memorable souvenir products (mugs, caps, t-shirts, mini-toys, trinkets, etc.).

To date, no large-scale event takes place without a branded press-wall. Firstly, because today the population conducts an active life on the Internet, almost of visitors prefer to share photos in social networks with photos from events, in particular against the background of press-wall, adding hashtags to publications and specifying their own geolocation. Secondly, there are many interesting and creative ideas for the production of press-wall, for example, the visitor of the event can write his wish to relatives and friends at the press-wall by hand or simply represent what he currently likes at the event.

Souvenir products given to all visitors of the event for their participation and victory in various contests within the framework of the event. This is a great way of emotionally fixing visitors. For participation in competitions and other interactive entertainments, participants can receive small incentive prizes – branded souvenirs. In the framework of souvenirs for children, it recommended to make mini-toys (soft key rings) with the image of a local strongman, where the competition held. As practice shows, the guests of the

event are very fond of such products; they contribute to increasing their loyalty level and create the incentive to re-visit the event.

Visualization and branding are one of the main components of a quality event. The corporate style and attributes must appear during the event, with any communication with the audience within the integrated campaign, this creates a certain image, and branding and visualization are event identifier among other similar events.

Andrei Lublinsky, the author of Red Men in Perm, a huge yellow duckling in Moscow's Gorky Park, a crocodile at the Flakon Design Plant and a large-scale installation of Friendship of Peoples at the Exhibition of Economic Achievements, visualized the Ethnosport Challenge World Series of tournaments. In the framework of the Ethnosport Challenge project, ethnic images of the strongmen presented, executed in the style typical for the author. Now the first 10 images created and the collection replenished as the geography of the project expands. It planned to use the images of strong people in the game form of participants and judges, volunteers, souvenirs, photo-zones, posters and admission tickets. The perfect solution is to create a growth doll, which will be identical to the visualized image of the strongman.

The *branding* of the Ethnosport Challenge tournaments includes all the described positions, but the key element is the design of the competition venue, including the form of participants, referees, volunteers, staff and stewards.

The basic condition of the Ethnosport Challenge tournaments is the promotion of always-local traditional games, according to the rules of which tournaments held with the participation of famous athletes, therefore in the design of the competition zone there is an ambivalence factor – different banners with the name of traditional games and the ethnosport tournament itself.

According to the results of the study, it was found that the combination of traditional and new forms of ethnosport tournaments is uncritical in the perception of spectators by the example of the first Ethnosport Challenge tournaments:

- Kulachki Ethnosport Challenge, Russia, August 2018.
- Badang Ethnosport Challenge, Malaysia, September 2018.
- Ilhabela Ethnosport Challenge, Brazil, September 2018.
- Vilnius Ethnosport Challenge, Lithuania, December 2018.

Using a common channel of communication allows creating a single image (product), the consumption of which is immanent in touch with a living or reviving tradition.

Conclusion

As a result of our research, we came to the conclusion that the marketing support for ethnosport events and ad hoc of the Ethnosport Challenge World Series of tournaments should be designed using an integrated TTL strategy approach that includes some ATL channel opportunities (to attract the audience) and a high percentage of BTL use (communications with the target audience).

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