

Valais excellence: a system to better manage visitor flows during sport events

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Abstract — The tourist areas seek more and more to organize (outdoor) sport events. These events generate many impacts from the point of view of sustainable development. Often proceeding in rural and/or protected landscapes, their environmental impact must be managed in an optimal way by the organizers. In the same time, these events have to maximize their social and economic benefits for the host area. This paper presents the management system “Valais excellence” developed in Switzerland and discusses its contribution to a sustainable management of the various impacts of sport events.

Index Terms — Impact analysis, Management system, Sport events.



1 INTRODUCTION

The tourist areas seek more and more to organize (outdoor) sport events in order to attract people out of the peak season and to profile themselves as dynamic destinations on the tourist market [1]. These events (running races, mountain bike races, ski races, etc.) attract thousands of spectators in addition to the participants. They generate many impacts from the point of view of sustainable development [2]. Often proceeding in rural and/or protected landscapes, their environmental impact must be managed in an optimal way by the organizers. In the same time, these events have to maximize their social and economic benefits for the host area.

In this context, this paper presents the management system “Valais excellence” de-

veloped in Switzerland and discusses its contribution to a sustainable management of the various impacts of sport events. A special attention is dedicated to the environmental impacts and the management of visitor flows.

2 VALAIS EXCELLENCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM®

Valais excellence (www.valais-excellence.ch) is an innovative approach which introduces sustainable management into the heart of SME's (small and middle size enterprises). Starting from the idea that the success of a company depends on the professionalism and the excellence of the offered services, Valais excellence has the objective to support the installation of integrated management systems (environment - quality - safety - finances - human resources) in the companies in order to meet of customers request. This system proposes instruments in order to facilitate the integration of these management systems. Operating partly on Intranet and Internet, it makes it possible to determine the company processes and to link them together. The final objective is the certification of the processes

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according to ISO 9001 & 14001 (International Organization for Standardization) and OH-SAS 18000 (Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series) standards.

By the installation of the integrated management system Valais excellence, a real synergy is created between the participating companies which can have access to examples of good practices (databases of processes, activities, indicators, environmental and safety aspects, charters of companies, etc) thanks to a platform of experience sharing. The tool of benchmark proposed by the system give the companies the possibility to compare their performances with the ones of other companies of the same branch, this in the five fields (environment - quality - safety - finances - human resources).

The project Valais excellence was launched eight years ago in the canton of Valais (Switzerland). In the beginning intended for the tourist sector, it since was extended to all the economic sectors. It gathers today more than 100 companies and institutions which can communicate under the label Valais excellence. This label "was conceived to be a sign of recognition for the companies which are managed according to the principles of sustainable development and continuous improvement. To have the label must allow a differentiation and a better positioning at the competing level. It is also a hyphen between the area and the companies. The image diffused by the label Valais excellence is directly dependent on the quality of the labelled companies. (...) The ambition of the label Valais excellence is to become the symbol of a Valais which evolves, as well as the symbol of a model of sustainable development and quality centered on people. Its mission is to create a new and exemplary dynamics in Valais by taking support on the most innovating and dynamic actors of the area." [3]

Concretely, to obtain the right to use the label Valais excellence, the companies or institutions have to be certified ISO 9001 & 14001, then after one year of exploitation of the certified management system, to successfully pass a specific procedure of audit

for the label Valais excellence. This procedure is done on the basis of a checklist which contains three blocks of indicators (see Fig. 1) noted on a rating scale of 5 levels for the "performance degree" and of 3 levels for the "relevance degree". It is carried out by accredited organizations whose certifiers are especially trained for this purpose. A performance degree of 3 out of 5 for each block of indicators is necessary to obtain the label.

3 THE "EVENT SOLUTION" OF VALAIS EXCELLENCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM®

To optimize the operation of companies, Valais excellence is adapted in the various branches of the tourist and economic sectors (hotels, ski lifts, transports, tourism offices, wine companies, etc). "Event" is one of these branches.

The difference between a company and an event is important. A sport event is more interested in athletic performance than in profitability and he employs many volunteers. Another specificity of a sport event refers to its "stakeholders", which includes participants, spectators, journalists, sponsors and communities, all with different needs. The activities of an event, who takes place once a year, are also different. But an event also involves environmental impacts and takes into account the security aspect. The logic of excellence is similar and the events must go through a professionalization of their organization. The principles of Total Quality Management (management of financial resources, human resources management, environmental management, quality management and security management) on which the system Valais Excellence is based have been adapted for sports events [4]. It means processes and activities defined specifically for the events, considering the various stakeholders and the phases of an event (before the event, during the event, after the event). It also means security and environmental tools adapted to measure the impact of events.

	Blocks of indicators and questions	Performance degree	Relevance degree
1	Social indicators		
1.1	Origin of the collaborators		
1.2	Qualification of the collaborators		
1.3	Training of the collaborators		
1.4	Satisfaction of the collaborators		
1.5	Work conditions		
1.6	Health and safety at work		
1.7	Implication of the company / of the collaborators in Valais		
2	Economic indicators		
2.1	Added value in Valais		
2.2	Link with the Valais identity		
2.3	Relations with the companies		
2.4	Satisfaction of the customers		
2.5	Viability and economic perennality of the company		
2.6	Implication of the company in Valais		
3	Environmental indicators		
3.1	Respect of the standards		
3.2	Implication of the company on the exploitation level		
3.3	Implication of the company on the collaborators level		
3.4	Implication of the company on the customers level		
3.5	Implication of the company in Valais		
	Mean performance degree		

Fig. 1. Indicators of Valais excellence Management System®.

As an example, Fig. 2 shows the environmental analysis a mountain bike event using Valais excellence Management Sys-

tem has to carry out. It is not possible to explain here all the elements of this environmental analysis. One can nevertheless stress that the question of the displacement of participants and spectators is taken into account. Noting that the majority of participants and spectators go on the competition sites being often alone in their vehicle, which brings air pollution and, to a lesser extent, problems of noise, the direction of the race decided to support co-conveyance for the next editions.



Processus / Aspect [°]	Situation Normale [°]	Situation Non-Maîtrisée [°]	Maîtrise Opérationnelle [°]	Suivi Performance [°]	Priorités d'améliorations [°]	Date
Marketing - Communication - Information [°]						
Gestion des papiers [°]	1 ✓	1 ✓	✓	✓	11 ✓	19/04/2007 15:07
Gestion cantine [°]						
Approvisionnement [°]	1 ✓	1 ✓	✓	✓	12 ✓	19/04/2007 15:54
Préparation et vente de repas [°]	6 ⚠	1 ✓	✓	✓	12 ✓	19/04/2007 16:00
Vente de boissons [°]	6 ⚠	2 ✓	✓	✓	10 ✓	19/04/2007 16:01
Gestion compétition [°]						
Elaboration d'un parcours VTT [°]	2 ✓	1 ✓	✓	✓	12 ✓	02/08/2007 09:41
Déplacement des participants [°]	7 ⚠	1 ✓	✓	✓	10 ✓	19/04/2007 16:12
Revêtement participants [°]	2 ✓	2 ✓	✓	✓	12 ✓	02/08/2007 09:37
Gestion animations [°]						
Déplacement public [°]	7 ⚠	2 ✓	✓	✓	12 ✓	19/04/2007 16:19

Fig. 2. Environmental analysis for Solid'air (mountain bike race in favour of the fight against the cystic fibrosis).

To date, only one sport event finished the certification process (Solid'air) whereas three horse shows organized by the same professional structure will soon obtain the certification Valais excellence. However, three sport events (an alpine marathon, a long distance mountain bike race and a multi-sport race) began the certification process but gave up. Mainly two reasons explain this abandonment: strategy changes within the organizing committees and a too heavy workload for organizers who are in general volunteers. The success met by the solution “Event” near the organizers of sport events is thus rather mitigated up to now.

4 A NEW TOOL : THE “EVENT PROFILE”

The relative “heaviness” of the management system Valais excellence for sport event organizers who have not a professional structure was one of the reasons which convinces the director of Valais excellence to take part in a research project whose objective is to develop a more “simple” tool. Financed mainly by the Swiss Commission on technology and innovation (CTI) and carried out jointly by the Institute of Business information systems of the University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland and the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration, this project entitled “Knowledge management tools for sport events” started in spring 2007 and finish currently. It in particular led to the creation of an electronic file called “Event Profile”. This file can be used by organizers to make an assessment of their sport event according to six fields (self-evaluation): economy, environment, society, safety, quality and management. Graphically the results are presented in the form of “radars” for each field. Fig. 3 presents as example the radar obtained by Solid’air for the field “environment” (energy, waste, noise, CO₂, land and landscape, water). One can notice that this event must in particular improve its waste management and minimize the impacts related to the displacement of participants and spectators (CO₂ emissions).

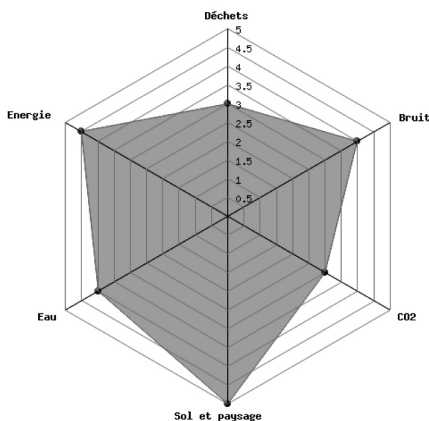


Fig. 3. Environmental radar of the Event Profile for Solid'air.

In Switzerland, the Sportevent-scorecard project (www.sportevent-scorecard.ch) had already led to a list of economic, ecological and social indicators for sport events [5], but the measurement of these indicators implies the engagement of important financial resources which limits the use of these indicators to the biggest sport events. The Event Profile can on the contrary be used by small events working with an exclusively voluntary structure.

Simpler to put into practice than the Event solution of Valais excellence, the Event Profile tool does not have however the same finality: the aim is not to improve the operational management of sport events by the means of internationally recognized quality management systems (ISO, OHSAS), but simply to make an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the event. Moreover, the Event Profile tool was set up with the idea to answer not only the needs of event organizers but also the ones of local communities which support sport events financially. It must indeed help them to select the events whose radars correspond the most to their waitings. We will see in the coming years if this tool will or will not be used by the event organizers and the local communities.

5 CONCLUSION

The management system Valais excellence applied to sport events integrates all dimensions of sustainable development and it is what makes its strength. Too often, still today, it is before all the socio-economic impacts which interest the event organizers or the communities which support them. By using the Event solution of Valais excellence, an organizer has an integrated management system allowing him to improve the operational functioning of its event. The process is however relatively heavy and requires a strong engagement on behalf of the organizer. For the organizer which cannot begin such a process but nevertheless want to make an assessment

from the point of view of sustainable development, the Event Profile tool is more adapted. This tool should also be useful for the local communities which must select the events they want to support.

The Event solution of Valais excellence and the Event Profile tool have a particular advantage from the point of view of sustainable development: they oblige the organizers to review all the impacts of the event. At the environmental level for instance, it is in Switzerland increasingly frequent that the organizers take into account the impact of their event regarding waste production or energy consumption. On the other hand, they often don't take into account how participants and spectators go on the competition sites whereas these flows of people often constitute the principal environmental impact.

The Event solution of Valais excellence and the Event Profile tool require to carry out an impact analysis on the various dimensions of sustainable development (in the first case with a control by a certifier, in the second case only by self-evaluation). It is the strength but also the limit of these instruments: they highlight which are the strong and weak points of a sport event, but don't specify which kind of measures have to be taken to consolidate the strong points and to improve the weak points. The Event solution of Valais excellence requires nevertheless that the organizers take measures according to the results of the impact analysis, even if it doesn't specify which kind of measures must be taken. The philosophy of the Event solution of Valais excellence as well as the one of the Event Profile tool is to sensitize the organizers with

the impacts of their event, in other words to modify the company culture rather than to impose ready-made solutions.

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