



HAL
open science

Ski-Clubbing: transforming and upgrading the touristic ski experience ?

Nico Didry, Isabelle Frochot, Dominique Kreziak

► **To cite this version:**

Nico Didry, Isabelle Frochot, Dominique Kreziak. Ski-Clubbing: transforming and upgrading the touristic ski experience ?. 8th Advances in tourism marketing conference "Marketing for more sustainable and collaborative tourism", University of Namur, Sep 2019, Namur, Belgium. halshs-03195764

HAL Id: halshs-03195764

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03195764>

Submitted on 15 Apr 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

**SKI-CLUBBING :
TRANSFORMING AND UPGRADING THE TOURISTIC SKI EXPERIENCE?**

Nico Didry *

Université Grenoble Alpes, France
CERAG laboratory
nico.didry@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

Isabelle Frochot

IAE Savoie Mont Blanc, France
IREGE laboratory
Isabelle.frochot@univ-smb.fr

Dominique Kreziak

IAE Savoie Mont Blanc, France
IREGE laboratory
Dominique.kreziak@univ-smb.fr

A new festive touristic offer has recently been developed in ski resorts: the « ski-clubbing ». In addition to the traditional after-ski, clubbing now takes place directly during the day, on the slopes. This article aims to investigate how combining two experiences adds up to the overall depth of a tourist experience. Based on longitudinal qualitative study and ethnographic immersion, the research looks at how both individual and collective strategies contribute to the experience. Our analysis shows that ski-clubbing may be a relevant and efficient way to transform and upgrade the tourist overall experience, on both individual and collective dimensions,. It allows consumers to manage their time and their energy in a more efficient way. Ski resorts should consider it as it also provides a value of social communion and a collective emotional dimension that is sometimes missing in the ski experience.

Keywords : consumer behavior; tourist experience; ski ; clubbing; emotional interactions;

*: corresponding author

Ski-Clubbing : transforming and upgrading the touristic ski experience ?

- **Introduction:**

The tourist offer in winter sport resorts has long included a combination of sporting and partying periods. Day time would typically be spent skiing, while partying would start later in the day, indoor, in dedicated places such as regular night clubs. However more innovative forms of experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) have emerged, blurring the lines of time and places of the overall ski resort experience. The last ten years have seen the explosion of party experiences' offer in ski resorts. In addition to the traditional after-ski, clubbing now takes place directly during the day, on the slopes. This is what we suggest to call we will call here "ski-clubbing". Many ski resorts offer this clubbing experience either through outdoor club bars like *La Folie Douce* or with concerts on the slopes as part of music festivals (*Rock the Pistes* at *Les Portes du Soleil* since 2010). In 2019 the *Tomorrowland Winter festival* took place for the first time in a ski resort, drawing 23.000 tourists at *Alpe d'Huez* (with a waiting list of 36.000 individuals) for a 4-days immersive experience. How does this change and contribute to tourists' experiences? How can clubbing bring a new dimension to the experience that is compatible with an intense skiing week? How are consumers managing both activities across their holiday?

The purpose of this article is to investigate how combining two experiences adds up to the overall depth of a tourist experience. In this specific case, participants have to manage two activities that are time and energy dependent, and the research looks at how both individual and collective strategies contribute to this experience.

- **Literature review**

Clubbing is a specific dimension of tourist's holidays: festivities, and in particular clubbing, have been studied in consumer behavior as a phenomenon of biosocial consumption (Goulding *et al.*, 2008). It induces the production and consumption of pleasure on both biological and social levels, as regulated by social norms specific to each group or circumstance of practice. Goulding *et al.* (2011) describe clubbing as a ritualized, neo-tribal and co-constructed experience, moving from illegal counterculture to more industrialized forms, and becoming an integral part of the tourism sector experience. Michaud (2012) talks about the industrialization of pleasure by exploring the festive experience production systems set up by certain tourism destinations, namely Ibiza. By mixing clubbing with skiing, tourists

are expected to engage in two activities that are quite demanding in terms of body energy and stamina. To our knowledge, how tourists manage their energy throughout their entire stay has received little attention in academic literature.

Those festive human gatherings generate collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912) during which an emotional communion emerges between the individuals (Maffesoli, 2012). The notion of link (Cova, 1995) is a strong attribute to this experience. Relying on Puhl *et al.* (2005) framework on the dimensions of the experience during festivals, the social dimension of the festival experience has been described as being a group activity, a socializing experience (meeting new people) and a social communion occasion. The festive dimension of the festival setting is synonymous with connections and emotions' sharing (Collin-Lachaud, 2010) which contribute to supporting tourists' immersion (Graillet *et al.*, 2011). The social sharing of emotions (Rimé, 2005) appears systematically after an emotional experience (Rimé, 2007). A second process of emotion transfers occurs when several people are in contact: the phenomenon of emotional contagion that tends to automatically synchronize facial and vocal expressions, postures and movements with those of another person (Hatfield *et al.*, 1994). However, emotional transfers have not been studied in marketing except in the limited buyer-seller dyadic relationship (Didry & Giannelloni, 2019).

- **Methods & materials:**

Three qualitative studies were conducted directly in ski resorts while the respondents were on holidays, as close as possible to the experience itself. Study 1 took place in French alpine resorts. 18 tourists were interviewed for one hour every day of their holiday week, in order to see how their experience evolved over time; direct observation also took place in ski-clubbing places (e.g. *La Folie Douce*, *Piano Bar*). Study 2 took place in Austrian alpine resorts with a strong positioning on after-ski. Ten tourists were interviewed once during or right before ski-clubbing parties to see how both activities contributed to the overall experience. The interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes. Study 3 was conducted during festivals taking place in ski resorts during the winter season (*Tomorrowland Winter*, *Rock The Pistes*, *Snowfest*) using multi-site ethnographic observations. The objective was to explore if and how the festival atmosphere influences the ski holiday experience. During the three studies, informal interviews with tourists were also conducted, videos and pictures were taken, field notes and introspection were conducted during ski-clubbing parties and festivals through researcher immersion in the field. Whenever possible, depending on the surrounding sound

level, interviews were recorded, and then transcribed. After an open coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), a thematic analysis was conducted by the researchers for textual data, and then cross referenced to the semiotic analysis of visual data in an interpretative perspective (Bergadaà, 1990).

- **Results & Discussion:**

Managing one's time and energy

Our respondents have different expectations in terms of balancing skiing and partying and different practices. Some customers will dedicate all or most of their energy to partying, while others will only ski, and some try to combine both activities. Our results show that combining skiing and partying at a ski resort may take several forms: partying on the slopes from 3 to 5pm, après-ski in the resort from 5 to 9 or partying starting at 11pm (a more classical form). Some respondent will specifically choose a destination or a specific week with a festival in order to make sure they will get this opportunity to combine both activities efficiently.

In most cases these activities are combined in order to stay in immersion as much as possible and optimize one's experience. However for most of our respondents it involves a careful and efficient planning or management of body energy, time and schedule, in order to make it compatible.

Some plan to ski during the day and party at night. However, as the week progresses the body gives in, and they decide to take what they call "*a day off*", giving up skiing or partying for a day, typically on Wednesdays, or adjust their planning without any noticeable effect on their overall satisfaction. Other clients decide to go out a little in the evening but voluntarily restrict the amount of alcohol consumed compared to what they would do in their regular life, so as not to encroach on the energy they want to devote to skiing. They know they are unable to run both activities at high levels over a week. Sometimes they go to the *Folie Douce* because "*you have to go there at least once during the stay*" but it encroaches too much on their skiing day. To optimize their experience, some customers ski most of the day and directly carry on with partying on the slopes or immediately after the slopes close, without going home or changing. Any drop in tension could lead to a collapse and prevent them from enjoying the party. By partying directly after skiing without changing rhythm, consumers use intense body activities (skiing and then energetic dancing) to stay in the state of flow and repel the feeling of tiredness. So Ralph says: "*If you go home and change, after a day of intense skiing, you're dead!*". These results suggest a productivity orientation in their leisure experience (Keinan &

Kivetz, 2010), while they combine their own physical and energy resources with the resources provided by the producer (Vargo & Lusch 2004), in order to maximize their experience.

Developing emotional interactions by adding a festive dimension to the skiing experience

Our analyses show that the integration of the festive dimension into the skiing experience makes it possible to develop collective emotional dynamics (Didry & Giannelloni, 2019) in this sport and leisure activity. Indeed, the practice of skiing, by its structural characteristics¹ is a practice where social interactions are restricted into the intimate sphere of the groups of friends or the family. But celebrating during the ski activity provides the value of social communion that is present in festivals (Puhl *et al.*, 2005) in that touristic experience.

Two dimensions have been identified in this regard. First, by adding a clubbing experience to the ski experience, the holidaymakers develop their social and emotional interactions. Indeed our observations show a modification in consumer behavior as soon as they move from the ski activity to the clubbing activity, with a greater openness to others. The removal of equipment (*i.e.* ski goggles, neckwarmer) limiting emotional exchanges through facial expression of emotions (Tcherkassof & Frijda, 2014) is systematic on the dancefloor of festive bars or during concerts on ski slopes. Thus, holidaymakers no longer limit their social and emotional interactions to their friends, but seek to create new contacts, which they do not do during the skiing activity, even if they sit next to a person for 10 minutes on a chairlift. The festive dimension of the experience leads to a transformation of behaviors with an increase in social interactions during the festive periods.

Secondly, we find a more global phenomenon: the modification of the ski experience by the clubbing context. As part of a festival in the ski resort, festival-goers display signs of belonging to the festival community (buff, stickers, leach) or even disguise themselves for skiing. It creates an emotional climate favorable to interact with their peers.

On the same way, at the end of the concerts or when the festive bars close on the slopes, the emotional atmosphere (De Rivera, 1992) of the festive site is transferred to the slopes. This strongly modifies the classic skiing experience, which is more individual and without social interactions. The social interactions usually observed on ski slopes are predominantly negative interactions related to priority deficiencies, dangerous behaviors or incivilities in the waiting lines. The festive dimension linked to concerts or electro bars/clubbing makes it possible to establish positive social interactions and sometimes even kindness between skiers

¹ equipment (goggles, neckwarmer) who limit social interactions, extended space resulting in a low social density, individual mobile activity allowing exchanges only when the participant is at rest.

not only during the party experience but also on the slopes or in the lifts after the celebration time.

The increase in the social sharing of emotions and emotional contagion between holidaymakers is not only present during the celebrating period but can also be observed outside the party time. In this way, the values and social codes of the festival spread outside the dancefloor and can transform the experience on the ski slopes by providing a new (emotional) dimension to the experience.

- **Conclusion**

This paper aimed to investigate how consumers combine two different activities into an experience. The study details different strategies developed by consumers in order to efficiently combine clubbing and skiing into a valuable experience. The results indicate that tourists use efficient strategies to develop a schedule, rhythm and jungle between activities so that consumers make an optimal use of their available time and levels of energy so that the overall experience achieves its best value. In addition, our study indicates that the collective emotional dimension of the clubbing experience transforms the ski experience, by implementing new social codes and rules that redesigns the usual ski behaviors. Associating partying with skiing also allows consumers to enhance their experience by adding a value of social communion and common rituals that allow for better immersion (Graillot *et al.* 2011). Thanks to this collective emotional perspective, other skiers then become a support to optimize this tourist experience, instead of being considered as obstacles to its quality.

Thus, our analysis show that ski-clubbing may be a relevant and efficient way to transform and upgrade the tourist overall experience, on both individual and collective dimensions. Ski resorts should consider and support the tourist efforts to combine both activities, by adapting its festive offer and creating a simultaneous skiing and partying experience.

The data was collected in Austria and France and there is a possible interference from consumers' cultural backgrounds which would need to be challenged with further studies involving other nationalities. For instance, it would be interested to confront those results with studies in North America where social interactions are more common during the skiing practice.

- **References**

- Bergadaà M. (1990), The role of time in the action of the consumer, *Journal of consumer research*, 17(3), 289-302.
- Carù A. & Cova B. (2003), Approche empirique de l'immersion dans l'expérience de consommation : les opérations d'appropriation. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing* 18(2) : 47-65.
- Collin-Lachaud I. (2010), Eurockéennes, Francofolies, Vieilles Charrues ou Main Square Festival: le rituel communautaire comme source de fidélisation. *Décisions Marketing* 60 : 43-53.
- Corbin J. & Strauss A. (1990), Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria, *Qualitative sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Cova B. (1995), *Au-delà du marché : quand le lien importe plus que le bien*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Didry N. & Giannelloni J-L. (2019) Les dynamiques émotionnelles collectives. Synthèse de littérature et voies de recherche en marketing. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, (34-4) to be published, DOI: 10.1177/0767370119828649
- Durkheim E. (1912/1984), *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. Paris, Presses Universitaires.
- De Rivera J.H. (1992), Emotional climate: Social structure and emotional dynamics. In K.T. Strongman (Ed.), *International review of studies on emotion* 2, 197–218, New York: JohnWiley&Sons.
- Frochot I. & Batat W. (2013) *Marketing and Designing the Tourist Experience*, Goodfellow Publishers, London.
- Frochot I., Kreziak D. and Elliott S. (2019) Home away from home: a longitudinal study of the holiday appropriation process, *Tourism Management*, 71 : 327-336
- Goulding, C., & Shankar, A. (2011). Club culture, neotribalism and ritualised behaviour. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4), 1435-1453.
- Goulding, C., Shankar, A., Elliott, R., & Canniford, R. (2008). The marketplace management of illicit pleasure. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(5), 759-771.
- Graillot, L., Mencarelli R. & Anteblian B. (2011), Comment gérer des expériences touristiques extraordinaires ? Analyse et recommandations à partir d'une immersion dans les parcs à thème, *Décisions Marketing* 6411-21.
- Hatfield E., Cacioppo J.T. et Rapson R.L. (1994), *Emotional Contagion*. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Holbrook, M. B. & Hirschman E. (1982), "Experiential Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 132-140.
- Keinan, A., & Kivetz, R. (2010). Productivity orientation and the consumption of collectable experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(6), 935-950.
- Maffesoli M. (2012), *Homo eroticus. Des communions émotionnelles*, Paris, CNRS Éditions
- Michaud Y. (2012), *Ibiza mon amour : enquête sur l'industrialisation du plaisir*, NIL eds.
- Pulh M., Bourgeon-Renault D. & Bouchet P. (2005), Spectacles vivants, logiques de consommation et construction d'expériences: le paradoxe d'une offre à la fois unique et plurielle. *Décisions marketing*, (37), 57.
- Rimé B. (2005), *Le partage social des émotions*, Paris, PUF.
- Rimé B. (2007), The social sharing of emotion as an interface between individual and collective processes in the construction of emotional climates, *Journal of Social Issues*, 63, 2, 307-322.

- Tcherkassof A. & Frijda N. (2014), Les émotions, une conception relationnelle, *L'année psychologique*, 114,03, 501-535
- Vargo S. & Lusch, R (2004), 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing', *Journal of Marketing* 68(1): 1-17.