Freestyle Days is an urban sports event held over the course of a single weekend in Summer in the city centre of Innsbruck. The event is focused specifically on the urban youth population of the City and includes competitions, sport showcases, music, educational sit-ins and a host of other activities all designed with a focus on youth and the urban environment.

Sports that are included in the itinerary for the event include Slackline, BMX, Skateboarding and many other trend sports. These are all complimented by a host of breakout sessions and events targeting urban culture covering activities such as eye-hand coordination and parkour.

The event is run by innsbruck-tirol sports (ITS), a specialist organisation that was formed from the organising committee of the first Youth Winter Olympic Games held in Innsbruck in 2012. ITS is responsible for creating opportunities for young people to get involved in sport.

The not-for profit organisation utilises its unique experience and appreciation of youth sport developed during the delivery of the 2012 YOG to improve sports practice and install the values of Olympism across the City. This experience is taken forward when building and hosting events such as Freestyle Days. ITS is supported by numerous local sports federations involved in urban sport in organising the event.

Freestyle Days is designed to increase the level of sports participation amongst young people in the City. To achieve this, attendance is completely free and there is a host of workshop sessions and demonstrations to introduce youth to new sports and give them the basic skills needed to take part themselves.

About 4,000 people attended the first Freestyle Days and have been introduced to new sports and encouraged to become more physically active and involved in urban sport.
OBJECTIVES

Promote a healthy and active lifestyle

Freestyle Days directly address two of the predominant trends in youth sport participation currently. The first of these is that less and less young people are actively participating in sport. The second is that there is increased movement towards non-traditional urban sport within this youth segment. The event helps to shine a light on urban sport as a potential avenue for more youth to become more active, providing the resources, partnerships and promotional platform in a central physical location that was previously not available to these sports.

Promote social and constructive behaviour

The event brings together youth from different social and economic backgrounds across the City. Individuals are encouraged to share their expertise and knowledge in the field of their own with each of those from other sports. This helps to break down barriers between these groups, promoting friendship and respect among the practitioners of the various sports involved. The educational and cultural activities that are run alongside the sporting activities also heavily focused on content related to Olympism and the Olympic Values.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Internal & External Stakeholders

- Innsbruck-tirol sports
- City of Innsbruck
- Government of the Tyrol
- National Sports Federations
- Local Universities
- Local sports clubs
- Schools

Finance and Cost

The total cost of the programme is approximately € 60,000.
Use of the Olympic Brand

ITS is very much focusing on communicating the Olympic values friendship and respect among all external stakeholders. Especially local sports clubs were asked to represent those values before and during the event.

The event aimed at motivating children and families to take part in various workshop activities while interacting with other children.

Human Resources and Time

For the overall organisation of the Freestyle Days a designated project manager worked for about five months. For the last two months the project manager was supported by a student from the local university who completed his internship within the framework of his studies.

Ahead of the event 10 volunteers were recruited via the volunteer network founded by ITS. During the event they helped to ensure a smooth event rundown by taking over various tasks. The network is called “volunteer team tirol” and supports ITS as well as external organising committees if requested.

EVALUATION

The success of programme activities regarding the target group engagement was evaluated. All involved local sports clubs were gathered after the event to collect immediate on-site experiences and feedback on workshop popularity and challenges. This information was collected in order to improve and adapt the programme for the following years. To be able to grow the event continuously the suggestions of external partners were of great importance. In addition, referring to the stakeholder structure of ITS, the feedback of the sports authorities of the City of Innsbruck and the government of the Tyrol was consulted.

KEY CHALLENGES

Adapting to urban culture

Urban sports and urban sub-culture generally have a long tradition of anti-establishment and this is still very much part of the culture today. Many individuals from within this group do not warm easily to the idea of organised events and structured programmes with their rules and regulations and see it as contrary to the core values of urban sub-culture. This sometimes presented differences in ideology and approach between the organisers and the various groups and sub-groups involved in the event.

To combat this, ITS paid a lot attention to the various self-organised communities at the heart of each sport and each movement. They learned about the differences between each group, what made them tick and adapted their approach accordingly when designing how the various activities were to be staged during Freestyle Days.
Creating unity within sports

Bringing together a host of different sports under the one event is not always easy. This task is made more difficult in the case of urban sports that do not receive a lot of mainstream attention and are frequently competing in the same market space – often literally! As a result, the sports involved in Freestyle Days can try to work against each other for the time in the spotlight.

Luckily, ITS had anticipated this type of challenge from the beginning and had put in place a clear strategy to help overcome these difficulties. This strategy focused on targeting the leadership of the various sports and communities and educating them alongside one another, focusing on the win-win benefits of a collaborative and unified approach.

KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Engage the local community

Generating support for an event is always easier when you involve the local community. Not everyone is interested in youth urban sports and often urban culture attracts a certain degree of scepticism from certain quarters within communities. A focus was placed on involving local talents and suppliers where possible. The local engineering university designed and built all the ramps and other temporary installations used for the street BMX events. A focus was also placed on making the event green and sustainable and this was communicated clearly to community stakeholders. This helped to generate community wide buy-in and eliminate any potential opposition for the event.

Understand your target audience

The urban youth sports market represents a very specific and defined target audience. While the ITS was established in order to carry forward the expertise developed in youth sports during the Winter Youth Olympic Games, it was necessary to recognise that this market would be characterised by different tastes and behaviours. The organisers spent a considerable amount of time understanding the market, getting to know the key influencers among the target groups and crucially, involving credible partners active in the urban sports scene in order to tailor the event offering to the target market.

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