# 5 Event communication design

This chapter is devoted to packaging communication content that helps make the event more attractive to participants and reinforces bonds and the effectiveness of event perception. The theoretical foundations consider the event a meta-genre from a communicative point of view, capable of combining many different formats and styles to make everyone feel included and participate. The chapter explores how to apply this approach to improve offline and online communication and highlights the role of digital communication. It also considers the effects and consequences of reporting events, and how to manage them.

At the end of the chapter readers should be able to understand:

- How to build content and meta-narratives of event communication that respond to the needs of the interlocutors.
- How to build an effective account of the event, in the development from story-telling to meta-narrative.
- How to make the most of co-creation to have maximum user collaboration in the construction of content and meta-narratives.
- How to deal with the effects and consequences of communication strategies.

## The executive project of content creation: processes and strategies

In the previous chapter, the issue of content creation was discussed as part of the communication design process in event management. This chapter aims to delve deeper into the content creation process to understand how it happens and why it is crucial for the successful management of participant relationships. This aspect must be investigated from a strategic point of view to understand what effects and consequences it has and how it affects the behavior of different targets. This can ultimately help increase participation and enhance the value of the event. Here, the word 'content' is used in an all-encompassing way because it includes texts, hypertexts, and multimedia products made up of images, sounds, words, expressions, gestures, etc.

To begin the argument, it is useful to consider a fundamental fact, namely, that in the current era of digital communication, the approach to communication has profoundly changed, both from a management point of view and with regard to participant needs. The previous era of mass communication involved the delivery of communication flows that were produced by organizations and intended for participants, who reacted by submitting their feedback. Today, this is no longer the case, or at least, the linear flow is a minor element of all communication actions. Even more traditional media, such as free-to-air TV, currently organize programs that exploit an omnichannel approach to interacting with viewers

during live broadcasts. In this way, they go beyond the concept of offering only a previously packaged, fixed, and rigid proposal in which participants cannot intervene. On the contrary, this interaction implies that, even during a live broadcast, changes can be expected that respond to viewers' reactions. Furthermore, most communication activities today take place digitally because it is more congenial to use an interactive and dialogic scheme in real time.

These transformations are principally a consequence of technological innovation. Such innovation not only modifies our tools and the opportunities they offer but creates a productive logic, relational processes, and mental schemes that are no longer satisfied by the old logic. Buschow and Suhr (2022) identified three factors that underlie this change: projectification, peer production, and content creation in platform environments.

*Projectification* has changed our understanding of how communications managers work and produce content. Content creation is considered a project that requires the commitment of a network of actors who collaborate to produce content until the whole process is concluded. Communications managers work with professionals, who have different yet complementary skills, such as graphic designers and computer scientists; with stakeholders, who express their communication needs directly; and with partakers, who are often content co-producers. This exchange of ideas and communicative products allows for a greater wealth of materials but requires more careful coordination of styles, language, and content packaging. This way of working also requires that the content is no longer created beforehand to be disseminated later, as in the past, but is chosen and designed beforehand to ensure logical coherence with the organization's objectives, the expectations of all the players, and the various communication channels. First, the argumentative scheme, tone of voice, and structure of the packaging are defined and articulated, as in the case of Expo 2025 (discussed in Chapters 1 and 4). Based on this scheme, the content is then continuously updated and reworked throughout the entire development of the event in accordance with the needs that emerge and the concrete occurrences, which may vary over time.

*Peer production* emerges in digital media as a process of creating shared knowledge. It extends the potential of planning, including more and more participants. They collaborate with each other and with communication managers. Everyone contributes to creating value for the event and making the content more targeted and therefore effective. In this way, the content is more responsive to the communicative needs of the participants (Kostakis & Bauwens, 2020; Foote et al., 2023).

*Platformization* concerns the decisive role of digital platforms in this content creation process. The platforms influence styles and ways of producing content, both for organizations and individuals, and affect distribution because they define spaces, methods, and rules (Poell et al., 2021). Studies (O'Neil et al., 2020; Pazaitis & Drechsler, 2020; Nieborg et al., 2022) have also shown that the presence of participant and organizational content on platforms increases the value of the content in the eyes of participants, including those who are less active. Passive people are the largest part of the public, while potential participants are the ones to whom communication managers and influencers pay the most attention when attempting to stimulate interest and participation. The influence of platforms is evident because they require continuous assessment and verification of the effectiveness