ABSTRACT
IMMERSE, INTERACT, IMPACT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON SELECTED EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING ACTIVATIONS AT OUTSIDE LANDS MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL 2022
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The commercial marketplace is becoming increasingly experiential. Experiential marketing activations, particularly those done at music festivals, are emerging as a highly valuable marketing tool to impact brand recognition and loyalty through the creation of unique branded experiences. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiential marketing design practices utilized at selected branded activations within Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022. A comparative analysis was conducted on three selected experiential marketing activations at Outside Lands: The House by Heineken, the Music Den by Toyota, and the Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin. The findings concluded that the presence of immersive and interactive elements, as well as relevance to the general festival experience, are crucial to creating an impactful, memorable experience. Recommendations included adding more interactive elements and increasing the presence of brand representatives within activations to escalate impact.

Keywords: brand loyalty, experiential marketing, experiential marketing activations, immersion, interaction, music festivals, music festival marketing activations
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 METHODS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Organization/s</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Instrument</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Procedures</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The House by Heineken</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Toyota Music Den</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIXES</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

After a lengthy hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, events are back and more popular than ever. Individuals have newfound desire and value for in-person events and experiences. Amongst these in-person events and experiences, music events are becoming increasingly popular. Music festivals are one type of music event gaining significant traction. For example, one of the top live event music production companies, Live Nation, saw their revenue dip to $1.47 billion in 2020, down from $9.43 billion in 2019. However, the extraordinary bounce back of the industry is evidenced by a record high year of $13.49 billion in 2022 (Live Nation, 2023), confirming this industry’s power. Many festival-goers attend multiple festivals per year. One of the music festivals that has gained significant popularity in the last couple decades is Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival, which takes place annually in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, California. Outside Lands features a multitude of experiences and pop-up spaces within their festival, as well as many brand activations and sponsorships. The festival brings in an astonishing 200,000 attendees and produces 71 million in revenue (Trujillo & Keppel, 2022). Music festivals have arisen as an extremely popular type of experience and are increasingly gaining awareness.

The strategic experiential design of music festivals goes beyond traditional event design and marketing techniques to create incredibly impactful experiences that facilitate connection and joy. The intentional design of music festivals has greatly contributed to
their popularity. As music festivals have risen in popularity, and attendee numbers continue to grow, they have gained attention from other industries. Businesses have begun to view music festivals as a valuable channel for promoting their brand and marketing to potential consumers. Gabrielle Martinez, Managing Partner and Co-founder of Agency EA, identified that “Brands know their audiences are looking for authenticity and recognize the beneficial impact of human-to-human interaction. As a result, the demand for experiential continues to grow” (Agency EA, 2019). More and more brands are taking advantage of music festivals as an opportunity to interact with potential consumers, face-to-face, at brand activations. Experiential marketing, through brand activations at music festivals, goes far beyond any other previously popular form of traditional marketing.

Experiential marketing is emerging as a highly valuable marketing tool, with its use becoming essential to the success of organizations. The use of experiential marketing strategies at musical festivals can be highly impactful on prospective consumers. Brands that want to compete in the modern-day commercial marketplace must go beyond traditional marketing methods and take advantage of music festivals as an avenue for experiential marketing. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiential marketing design practices utilized at selected branded activations within Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In
addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost, and Google Advanced Search. This review of literature includes the following subsections: experiential marketing, experiential marketing facilitating interaction, immersion, and brand loyalty, and experiential marketing at music festivals.

The role of the consumer has drastically changed as we enter the new era of the experience economy. The commercial marketplace has become overcrowded with increasingly similar products and services, all of which are advertised in homogenous ways. Consumers are no longer satisfied with this lack of variety and have become hardened to traditional advertising and marketing methods. Chen (2022) states, “In the fiercely competitive market, customers do not simply purchase products for the function performance and efficiency use but require the experience, verification, feeling, and enjoyment in the purchase process” (p. 295). Consumers seek added value to their lives when spending their money on products and services, and brands must incorporate this desire within their strategic marketing strategies.

Experiences can be a key differentiating factor for businesses, as consumers no longer buy businesses products and services but primarily their brands (Santos do Carmo, 2022). Experiences have emerged as an important part of future economic competition in the commercial marketplace (Chen, 2022). The use of experiences in marketing conveys a level of effort and dedication that surpasses traditional marketing methods. These experiences allow consumers to remove a level of defense and be more open-minded to experiencing and purchasing from new brands (Chen). Individuals’ choices for purchasing are increasingly influenced by emotional factors. Traditional marketing,
which is based in passive methods, is no longer an effective method for marketing to prospective consumers. Consumers need to interact with a brand to establish trust and therefore want to purchase from them.

As a result, experiential marketing has arisen as an increasingly popular approach for brands to achieve marketing goals. This emerging sales tactic does not simply sell products and services but seeks to influence customers’ experiences and feelings. In reflecting on the benefits of experiential marketing compared to traditional marketing, Heinonen (2021) noted, “Besides visible and controlled interactions, service providers should expand their prospective to get to know their customers on a deeper level than before”, (p. 545). A brand must provide more than a service. Traditional marketing methods have been deemed annoying, irrelevant, and overbearing by consumers.

Experiential marketing seeks to actively add value to a consumer’s life. In this approach, a company must take the effort and initiative to meet their consumers face-to-face. Smilansky (2018) states, “The experiential approach is focused on a two-way interaction in real-time, a live brand experience and thereby a significantly deeper consumer bonding process” (p. 3). Experiences are one of the only effective strategies to achieve this intimate two-way interaction. Interactions can take place in many forms, whether the organization is simply providing a branded experience or a more complex branded activation. Either way, if consumers and brands are meetings face to face, there is valuable interaction taking place. Interaction that facilitates contact and connection between the brand and consumer and can be highly influential and impactful. Overall, experiences serve to enhance marketing strategies because they provide an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the consumer and brand.
Experiential marketing has become an extremely popular form of marketing because of its ability to impact the brand image and establish connection with consumers. One of the key requirements for achieving impact and connection is to fully immerse the consumer in the branded experience. Vila-Lopez (2013) states that “the level of immersion in the experiential environment will influence consumer experience, it is only immersion in the event itself that explains the emotions aroused by the event” (p. 724). Immersion is key to brand loyalty because it allows the consumer to be fully engrossed by a branded experience. A high level of immersion facilitates a close interaction with the brand and strong brand-associated memories, whereas a lower level of immersion may lead to a passive and lacking interaction. MGN Events (2022) has discovered, through extensive event production experience, that:

For an experience to be truly immersive in all aspects, it should engage all five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste and smell) in surprising and thoughtful ways, resulting in unforgettable experiences that wow guests and live on through stories that are recounted over and over again. (MGN Events, 2022)

For experiential marketing efforts to truly be immersive and therefore successful, they must incorporate each of the five senses in the attendee experience. If a high level of immersion is achieved, that experience can generate emotions of curiosity, fun, excitement, passion, pleasure and other positive emotions amongst the attendees. These emotions then become associated with the brand providing the experience.

Branded experiences that are intentionally designed to add value can be incredibly beneficial and impactful towards the brand’s perception by consumers. As Koenig (2008) states, “If a consumer actively feels positive emotions in association with a brand, then
they are more likely to develop a deep loyalty to it” (p. 24). By invoking positive emotions, a connection point is established between the consumer and brand, helping to facilitate the consumer bonding process. Both bonding and interacting with consumers are key to establishing brand loyalty and impacting consumers’ purchase decisions. A consumer will feel more inclined to give their money to a brand they feel connection and loyalty towards, as opposed to one they do not. Additionally, consumers will then share this loyalty with other prospective buyers, increasing effectiveness and reach of marketing efforts. Loyalty is essential to the sustainable development of any organization because it is the only way to ensure consumers keep buying your products. It is in this way, through connection, that a brand can differentiate itself from the rest and solidify its presence in the market (Santos do Carmo, 2022). Given its ability to immerse consumers, establish connection, and form loyalty, experiential marketing is now an essential aspect of brand’s marketing strategies to survive competitively.

An avenue for this emerging marketing technique, that is rising in popularity, is experiential activations done at festivals. Individuals attend festivals to escape from everyday life, socialization, and family togetherness (Davies, 2021). People want to break free from average, daily, mundane life and create memories by participating in unique experiences. This is especially the case post-Covid-19, in the wake of a long period of lockdowns and limited social interactions. Some of these experiences, within festivals, can be branded experiences. Music festivals are rising as a popular channel and venue with which to market and target consumers (Koenig, 2008). With anywhere from thousands to hundreds of thousands of attendees, festivals provide a unique opportunity for brands to meet their consumers face to face, on an incredibly massive scale. Much
greater impact can be generated when brands have the opportunity to reach so many people. Therefore, music festivals can provide a favorable climate for which to promote products and services, especially those affiliated with the event (Vila-Lopez, 2013). This favorable climate is one that is unique to the music festivals and the range of experiences that they provide, compared to other event types in the experience industry.

Brands can make their presence known at music festivals in many ways, whether that be through passive sponsorship or a full-fledged branded immersive experience. Either way, as Rowley (2008) explains, “Brand sponsorship of music festivals has an impact on brand recall, awareness and attitude toward the brand” (p. 789). By facilitating in-person, real-time interactions with consumers at a festival, a brand can develop positive associations for itself. These face-to-face interactions are incredibly impactful towards brand loyalty and recall. Small or large, interactions create brand-affiliated memories for consumers to remember when making future purchase decisions. The more effort put into creating a fully integrated interaction, however, the greater the impact on brand recall and loyalty.

When done very intentionally, a brand activation at a music festival can be so seamlessly integrated into an experience that individuals are unaware they are being advertised to. As Mair (2019) states, “Good quality festivals result in attendee satisfaction, which then leads to increased loyalty in the form of future re-purchase intentions” (p. 210). A brand must be able to provide a positive, relevant experience within a festival (Koenig, 2008). Creating a relevant experience will add to the attendee’s overall festival experience, as opposed to distracting from it, impacting attendee satisfaction in a positive way. The key is that the activation is becoming intimately
involved in and adding to the individuals overall festival experience. That brand-affiliated experience memory will then be held in high regard by attendees, similar to the performances viewed throughout the festival duration.

If an individual views that a brand is providing them a valuable experience, their perception of that brand will be positively impacted. This gives the attendee something to think and talk to fellow consumers about. Festivals generate information spillovers and create value that benefits audiences through the spread of information and reduction of uncertainty related to cultural consumption (Montoro-Pons, 2020). Festivals and their high attendance numbers have a unique ability to spread information to an exponential and impactful extent. Activations at festivals can achieve marketing initiatives by positively impacting consumers, who will then generate positive word of mouth and spreading reach for the brand. An immersive activation that facilitates interaction between the consumer and brand and is relevant to the attendee’s festival experience can be incredibly impactful towards marketing efforts of establishing brand loyalty and recognition.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiential marketing design practices utilized at selected branded activations within Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:
1. What are the brand’s practices for establishing immersion through the five senses?

2. What are the interactive elements present within the brand activation?

3. To what extent is the design of the activation relevant to the music festival experience?

4. How effective are the brands’ experiential marketing techniques at establishing immersion?

5. How effective are the interactive elements being used at facilitating interaction between the consumer and brand?

6. How effectively does the design of the activation relate to the music festival experience?
Chapter 2

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiential marketing design practices utilized at selected branded activations within Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022. This chapter includes the following sections: description of organizations, description of instrument, and description of procedures.

Description of Organizations

A comparative analysis was conducted on three selected experiential marketing activations at Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022: The House by Heineken, Music Den by Toyota, and the Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin. Heineken (2022), a beer brand, was founded in 1873 by Gerard Heineken. Since then, the company has grown exponentially, selling 25 million Heinekens a day across 192 countries, yet they still maintain their small brewery values. Heineken is in an active era of sponsorship and always creating innovative ways to engage with their audience. They seek to be a part of their customer’s lifestyles and to advance sustainability initiatives. The Heineken voice is positive, intelligent, and witty with a refreshing tone. Heineken maintains this tone throughout all their campaigns (Heineken).

Toyota (2022), a car manufacturing brand, has been running for 75 years. To this day, they have built 29.9 million vehicles in the United States. Toyota prioritizes creating advanced, reliable, and safe vehicles, while getting feedback from and responding to customer needs. Their vehicles are made for the way customers live life today, with
advancements in sustainable mobility and safety technologies. In recent years, they have expanded their electric vehicle offerings. Toyota’s philosophy is actively incorporated into its everyday operations through initiatives centered around the customer, the community, and the planet (Toyota).

Gray Whale Gin (2022) is a product made by the Golden State Distillery, which was founded in 2016. This distillery celebrates and supports the Golden State of California through nature and wildlife conservation efforts. Gray Whale Gin was inspired by the migration of the Gray Whale. This brand celebrates this 12,000-mile journey by incorporating botanicals foraged along the migratory path into the production of its gin. Every bottle of Gray Whale Gin sold supports their partner organization, Oceana, which helps to protect and restore the world’s oceans. All spirits made by Golden State Distillery are crafted locally in Sebastopol, California, using sustainably sourced local or wild foraged ingredients. One percent of all Gray Whale Gin’s sales go to environmental causes (Gray Whale Gin).

Description of Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study was a best practices guide developed by the researcher (see Appendix A). It was designed to analyze and compare selected brand’s experiential marketing activations at Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022. The activations being examined in this study are the: The House by Heineken, Music Den by Toyota, and the Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin. The instrument created tests for the full immersion of attendees via the presence of the five senses: taste, touch, smell,
sight, and sound. The instrument also tests for the presence of interactive elements and relevance to the general experience of attending Outside Lands.

A pilot study was conducted on a similar activation, *Lays Stay Golden*, that took place at Coachella 2022, to determine the effectiveness of the instrument. After conducting the pilot, the instrument was altered to remove quantitative data collection of post-activation elements, as the researcher’s priority was assessing elements within the in-person activation. Followers gained was also tested but taken away for a lack of being able to obtain said data and relevance to the study. Additionally, the data collection item regarding brand values was removed for lack of presence and relevance to the overall study. Conducting this pilot allowed the researcher to better understand the elements that are involved in, and should be considered while analyzing, the design of an experiential marketing activation.

**Description of Procedures**

A comparative analysis was conducted on three experiential marketing activations that took place at Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022: The House by Heineken, the Music Den by Toyota, and the Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin. The instrument utilized in this study was a best practices guide developed by the researcher. The experiential marketing practices of the selected activation’s were analyzed by accessing the social media platforms and websites for each of the three selected brands. Additional information was sourced through the event application and website of the hosting organization, Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival, as well as credible articles written in relation to each of the selected activations.
The procedure began with an analysis and examination of social media content posted in relation to the activations for each distinct brand. In this examination, the researcher looked for the inclusion of the five senses, interactive elements, and relevance to the festival in posted picture and video content. The primary sources for doing so were the brand’s website platforms and Instagram pages. Next, the researcher further examined activation elements by gaining additional information from outside credible sources, both articles and images. In addition to the Instagram pages and website platforms of each brand, articles were also used from the following: Outside Lands Experience Pages, The Fox Magazine, SFIst, UPRoxx, The Bold Italic and EDM Identity. Finally, the researcher examined the content present on the hosting organization’s event application.
Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiential marketing design practices utilized at selected branded activations within Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022. A comparative analysis was used to examine the activations and to organize the following sections of this chapter: The House by Heineken, The Toyota Music Den, and The Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin.

The House by Heineken

The House by Heineken was located in a foot-traffic-heavy section of Outside Lands, near the food and beverage vendors and the West Coast Craft x Outside Lands marketplace. For two decades, Heineken has partnered with Outside Lands, creating its own curated lineup of both local and more well-known D.J.s for attendees to enjoy every year. The activation took place within a large, tall white tent, with the Heineken logo plastered around the outside of the walls. Passing-by attendees could not see or hear what was going on within the tent, yet this large structure caught their attention. Long lines of 21 and over attendees stood outside waiting to get into the exclusive D.J. tent throughout the duration of the festival. The long line and lack of visibility served to establish a level of exclusivity within this activation.

Attendees who chose to attend the activation would show ID and then wait in line for as long as thirty minutes before entering The House by Heineken. Upon going inside, individuals entered a crowded area that transported them to a club-like atmosphere,
making for the *ultimate backyard party*. The tent looked largely similar inside as it did outside. Large white walls stood tall with the Heineken logo displayed around the perimeter. The inside of The House had the addition of a wall of mirrors, which visually expanded the space. A prominent DJ booth sat front and center, playing lively music and projecting bright and colorful light displays. The Heineken House hosted over fifteen different DJ sets throughout the duration of the festival for attendees to dance and party to. Once inside, the experience was largely up to the participants to interact with friends they had gone inside with or fellow attendees. Attendees could dance, party, and socialize, while enjoying exclusive DJ sets, for as long as they pleased. The researcher did not find any evidence of brand representatives or the integration of senses, other than sight and sound, to be present within The House by Heineken activation.

**The Toyota Music Den**

The Toyota Music Den activation occurred in an open, wooded area along McLaren Pass, a large pathway for festival attendees to migrate from one stage to another. The space created its own little world, providing a break from the busy, large music festival. Attendees that passed by were immediately drawn in and immersed into the activation space. Iridescent, colorful spheres were hung from large cedar trees that towered above luscious green grass below. Central to the space, in an open tent, sat a brightly painted Toyota Corolla, displayed in an elevated way, similar to a car show display. The bright colors served to attract the attention of a passerby’s eyes, seamlessly bringing them into the activation experience. In addition to the interactive elements present within the tent, the activation expanded to the rest of the space as well. A small
stage was present at the front of the space and was branded as the Toyota Music Stage for the duration of this festival, featuring its own daily lineup of artists. This stage gave performers who played earlier in the festival an opportunity to appear again in a more intimate, amphitheater-like setting. Attendees had the ability to simply sit in the beautiful location, listen to intimate sets, and enjoy the food and drinks available within the space.

Alternatively, attendees had the ability to get more involved in the activation if they chose to do so. Surrounding the Toyota Corolla were multiple activities that facilitated interaction with the brand and its activation representatives. One of these activities allowed attendees to take an Aura Portrait to capture your luminous energy. This was a compelling and unique activity, and served to peak interest, especially amongst attendees who may have not initially known what an Aura Portrait entails. Attendees could also wait in line to get a custom tote bag to bring home. They had the opportunity to hand-select a design to be printed and watch their tote be silkscreen printed in real time. Another activity being offered allowed attendees to personalize an arm candy bracelet, which they were also allowed to take with them. There was another activity, the Corolla Cross Challenge, which gave individuals the ability to play, test their memory and receive a prize. These activities would invoke curiosity, contentment, and happiness. Through this activation, attendees were given multiple opportunities to interact with the brand, at a more active or passive level, as per their level of comfort and interest. There were many activities that attendees could choose to participate in, all of which would positively contribute to their festival experience. Their participation was able to provide attendees with a physical item to take home that would remind them of the experience long after the festival concluded.
The Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin

The Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin activation took place on the Polo Field, a large, extremely busy area within Outside Lands. A strikingly bright, sky blue, wavy, box-like-structure stood tall above the crowds and immediately caught the eye of any viewer looking its way. “GRAY WHALE” was displayed in large letters on the tops and sides of the ocean-like structure, in addition to large whale tails. In front of this structure was Gray Whale Gin’s sky-blue VW van bar. Smiling bartenders greeted attendees, serving up cocktails with Gray Whale’s premium small-batch gin. They served multiple memorable and tasty cocktails; including a frozen slushie and The Beachside, a tropical drink made by mixing gin with coconut cream, lemon, mint, and pineapple. Displayed in front of the bar were jars filled with the California botanicals Gray Whale Gin is distilled with. This gave attendees an opportunity to look, smell and interact with the foraged botanicals used, furthering an in-depth understanding of the product. This set the stage for an educational, yet positive and exciting experience.

As festival-goers enjoyed their hand-crafted, refreshing beverage, they then had the opportunity to participate in one of the interactive experiences the activation established. Attendants could do a photo session in front of the Gray Whale Gin Photo Wall, a photo background created with fake foliage and florals, displaying “Gray Whale Gin” at the top. Activation participants were encouraged to take a photo and post it online to social media, using the hashtag: “#oceanlove2022”. This was a fun way to interact with the brand at a more passive level. A simple cocktail-tasting and photo-taking experience quickly transformed into a deeper interaction with the brand when attendees
chose to enter the Blue Mind Tunnel, which is the large sky-blue structure that was previously described. The Blue Mind Tunnel offered a sensorial and photo-worthy presentation of the journey of the Gray Whale and the waters they live in. Guests would enter and be surprised to find themselves surrounded by images and videos of Gray Whales and the Central Coast Ocean, displayed in high definition on floor-to-ceiling screens. Viewers were completely immersed in the images, as well as the sounds of on-theme music and whale noises. This experience served to encourage attendees to live in a way that is mindful of the importance of ocean conservation, the primary mission and value of Gray Whale Gin. This display, and the values behind it, would have been impactful, memorable, and meaningful to attendees.
Chapter 4
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Experiential marketing activations, particularly those done at music festivals, have arisen as a new form of marketing that can strongly impact brand awareness, loyalty, and recall by connecting with consumers face-to-face. In order to successfully do so, an experience must be immersive, contain interactive elements, and be relevant to the larger music festival experience. This concluding chapter includes the following: a discussion of the findings, limitations of the research, conclusion based on research questions, and recommendations for the future.

Discussion

Immersive elements are essential to the creation of an impactful experience. While immersive elements were present in each of the activations, the degree to which immersion was achieved varied in each. MGN Events (2022) states that all five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) must be intentionally engaged to create an unforgettable experience that will be immersive in all aspects. The House by Heineken was limited when it came to the inclusion of the five senses, due to very minimal design elements throughout the activation. While sight and sound were engaged through the presence of the D.J. light and sound booth, this was a passive interaction, and therefore not truly immersive. Additionally, these elements were only accessible if an individual chose to wait in line to get into the activation. None of the other senses were engaged to
any degree. By limiting the inclusion of the five senses, the Heineken House did not achieve a strong level of immersion.

The Toyota Music Den was able to very successfully incorporate each of the five senses, achieving impactful immersion. Design elements incorporating the five senses were present in multiple forms throughout the entire activation space. Individuals had ample opportunity to become engaged and immersed in the activation; whether they simply walked by the activation and viewed the branded, decorated space or made the choice to become more involved. Intentional design created a beautiful space that was truly impactful and memorable. The Ocean Love Tour also did an excellent job incorporating the five senses throughout the various elements of their activation, achieving a strong level of immersion. They incorporated their branding into an aesthetic activation that was able achieve immersion amongst those simply passing by, given the prominence of their branding elements and unique structure created. This very intentional design, that was able to seamlessly incorporate the five senses, was immersive and impactful. An activation that can facilitate a high level of immersion will positively influence brand loyalty and recall, impacting the individual’s future purchasing decisions.

Overall, the Toyota Music Den and Ocean Love Tour activations both successfully established a high level of immersion within their activations that is model for the industry. Vila-Lopez (2013) states that the level of immersion achieved will influence the consumer experience and emotions. A high level of immersion creates a much more memorable and impactful experience and facilitates a closer connection with the brand. Individuals designing experiential marketing activations must be intentional in incorporating each of the five senses to immerse attendee’s and obtain full impact. The
researcher recommends that The House by Heineken works to incorporate elements of touch, smell, and taste within future activations to facilitate a higher, more impactful level of immersion amongst attendees. The researcher recommends that the Toyota Music Den and Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin continue with their current experiential marketing strategies, as they have set the industry standard to achieve high levels of immersion.

An activation can further its impact by incorporating interactive elements. Each of the selected activations had a varying quantity of interactive elements found by the researcher to be present. Smilansky (2018) noted that the experiential approach must include and focus on a two-way interaction within a live brand experience, thereby creating a deeper consumer bonding process. An in-person interaction will facilitate contact and connection between the brand and consumer, impacting brand loyalty and recall. The House by Heineken fell short when it came to including interactive elements, if not failed completely. The researcher found no evidence of interaction between the brand and consumer, other than the attendee simply being involved in a branded experience by Heineken. Simply branding an experience would be more accurately considered sponsorship, not the impactful form of experiential marketing the researcher is discussing. When attendees entered the party space, there was no further interaction or facilitation of an experience. The lack of interactive elements inhibited any opportunity for bonding between the brand and consumer.

The other two activations, on the other hand, were both highly successful in creating interactive elements. The inclusion of multiple forms of interactive elements, at varying levels of participation, contributed to the success of these activations. By
providing a variety of activities, Toyota and Gray Whale Gin created ample opportunities for connection and engagement between the brand and consumer. Providing a range of active and passive activities improves impact, by allowing individuals with a range of comfort zones to become involved. Each of these moments of interaction creates a powerful brand-affiliated memory. While the Ocean Love Tour was successful in creating interactive elements, the Toyota Music Den activation went a step further. They provided a large array of activities for attendees to choose to participate in. These activities also facilitated interaction between the attendees and activation staff.

Additionally, each of Toyota’s activities provided the participant a physical item to takeaway with them. This goes beyond the in-person interaction and provides the participant with a permanent, physical reminder of their experience, serving to further impact brand loyalty and recall post-activation.

The Toyota Music Den activation serves as a model for the industry when it comes to facilitating interaction with consumer at activations. Interactions, both small and large, have the power to create brand-affiliated memories for consumers to remember, impacting future purchase decisions. The researcher suggests that Heineken, which had no interaction between the brand and consumer, add a few brand-affiliated, interactive elements. Activities as simple as a raffle or photo wall will take its activation to the next level and impact brand loyalty and recall. The researcher suggests that the Ocean Love Tour primarily remains with its practices. Gray Whale Gin could establish further interaction between activation workers and attendees, for additional impact, through the presence of brand representatives. The researcher recommends Toyota make no changes to their Toyota Music Den activation, which was able to achieve interaction...
in many instances and set an industry standard. Toyota could further its impact and reach, however, by sharing its experiential marketing activations online through their social media platforms and website.

The impact of immersive and interactive elements within experiential marketing activations will be obsolete if they are not carefully designed in conjunction with the attendee’s entire music festival experience. The experiential marketing activations are occurring within the attendee’s general experience at Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival 2022 and must not disrupt or take away from that experience. Each of the selected activations took place within a similar proximity on or by the Polo Field, which is central to Outside Lands. In this way, they were easily accessible and locationally relevant; attending these activations did not require attendees to physically go out of their way to reach them. Being in this foot-traffic-heavy location served these activations positively through increased awareness and attendance. It is more crucial to examine whether the general design of each selected activation was relevant to the general music festival experience.

All activations were able to achieve a degree of relevance to the Outside Lands experience. As Koenig (2008) noted, it is crucial that a brand provide a positive and relevant experience within a festival. All the activations were able to achieve a satisfactory degree of relevance. The House by Heineken was one of the many stages present throughout Outside Lands; in this way, it was very relevant. However, it was not unique in that sense and did not serve to add much to the attendee’s general festival experience. The design of the Toyota Music Den activation was very relevant. The location it took place in established a mini sub-sector within the general festival. The
location had its own food and beverage vendors, which was beneficial in aligning with
the general music festival experience. The Toyota Music Den also had a music stage with
performers, but with the unique feature of allowing previous acts perform again. This was
extremely relevant and contributed positively to the attendee’s experience. The Ocean
Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin had a bar, which was very relevant to the music festival;
many alcohol brands had a presence by vending, sponsoring, or conducting their own
activation. The brand went beyond this relevant element to incorporate an impactful,
moving experience. The incorporation of this additional emotional element elevated the
attendee’s general festival experience. Each activation had a range of immersive and
interactive elements, all of which were relevant to the festival in their own unique way.

Throughout the research process, several limitations were present that may have
impacted the outcome of this study. The researcher has a previous relationship with the
host organization, Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival, having attended multiple
times. Additionally, the researcher attended Outside Lands 2022, but only viewed one of
the three activations in person. This could have contributed to a biased analysis of the
activations, due to the experiences had by the researcher and varying level of
understanding of each activation. The researcher mitigated the impact of this bias by
obtaining a substantial quantity of data on each of the activations and removing opinion
from analysis. All data was obtained from credible sources, these were online sources
primarily from outside of the organizations. The researcher struggled initially to find
substantial activation details from the hosting organizations’ websites and social media
platforms, particularly Toyota. However, by gathering data from outside sources, this
ensured the data was objective and unbiased; although, it may not have been all
encompassing. The researcher solved this limitation by gathering data from multiple sources to fully analyze each activation. Despite these limitations, the mitigation of bias and thorough data collection by the researcher ensured a clear, objective understanding of the effectiveness of each experiential marketing activation.

Experiential marketing activations, when done strategically, can be highly effective at impacting brand loyalty and recall, by facilitating in-person connection between the brand and consumer. Incorporating immersive elements, through the inclusion of each of the five senses, is greatly impactful when it comes to creating strong brand-affiliated memories. The presence of interactive elements will create moments that allow the brand to initiate contact and connection with the consumer. These strong memories and moments of connection will impact brand perception and influence consumer’s future purchase decisions. Experiential marketing activations that take place within another experience, such as a music festival, must be relevant and add to the general experience for the impact of immersive and interactive elements to be fully realized. Brands should take advantage of experiential marketing activations to advance their standing in the commercial marketplace, which is becoming increasingly experiential.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Each of the three selected activations had various practices regarding immersion through the integration of the five senses.
2. Each of the three selected activations had varying forms of interaction elements present.

3. All three activations were able to achieve a high level of relevance to the music festival experience.

4. While immersion strategies differed, The House by Heineken fell short, whereas the Toyota Music Den and Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale Gin were most effective and excelled in immersing attendees, setting an industry standard.

5. While effectiveness of interactive elements varied, the Toyota Music Den rose above the others and excelled at initiating interaction between the brand and consumer.

6. While each activation was effective at achieving relevance to the music festival experience, the Toyota Music Den excelled and established industry best practices.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Experiential marketing activations, that incorporate relevant immersive and interactive elements, should be used within music festivals to establish brand awareness and loyalty.

2. The House by Heineken should incorporate brand representatives, immersive elements, and interactive activities to be more impactful and memorable.
3. The Toyota Music Den should primarily remain with their current experiential marketing methods but attempt to share more activation content on their social media platforms and organization’s website.

4. The Ocean Love Tour by Gray Whale should primarily remain with their current experiential marketing methods but could be benefitted by incorporating more brand representatives within their activation.

5. Future research should further study the impact of experiential marketing activations by examining consumer actions post-event, both on social media and in purchasing decisions.

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Appendix A

Instrument
Experiential Marketing Activations Conducted at Outside Lands Music and Arts Festival

2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements within the Activation:</th>
<th>Activations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taste</td>
<td>The House by Heineken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Elements</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevance to Festival Experience</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>