Amped Music Festival - Senior Project

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Abstract

Music festivals have become an incredibly popular phenomenon across the world that provide guests with a fun experience and serve as money makers for the organizations that plan and produce them. With so many small and large-scale music festivals and events happening today, it becomes increasingly harder for festivals to stick out among the rest in terms of brand identity, values, and purpose. For my senior project, I will create a brand identity, marketing assets, and other relevant materials for a fictional music festival happening in San Luis Obispo to drive sales and immerse attendees in the festival experience. This festival will differ from most – it will be a non-profit music festival in which all profits will be donated to slo-based charities and nonprofits. The assets and materials to be produced include merchandise, signage, social media assets, billboards, wristbands, festival maps, and more. To determine the effectiveness of the branding and deliverables, I will gain feedback from peers and experienced individuals in the live event industry. Using current festivals such as Coachella and Shabang, I can draw inspiration for general content and identify areas of marketing that remain untouched. Through completing this project, I hope to create an innovative and unique brand identity and marketing assets to catch the attention of the festival’s target audience. These unique and innovative assets are tremendously important, as the brandscape of a music festival is built by all the physical and digital material created and shared before, during, and after the festival” (Gilstrap et al., 2021). This festival will have San Luis Obispo serve as its purpose, as local governments and city councils have a much higher chance of supporting festivals that promote and better their region (Lopez & Leenders, 2019). Creating a new festival comes with many great risks – throughout this project, my goal is to use my creativity and knowledge of live events to brand and market a
AMPED MUSIC FESTIVAL

music festival that will be set up to succeed in the current competitive market, and serve as a way to give back to the wonderful charities and nonprofits of San Luis Obispo.
Integrated Marketing Communication is all around us. It’s used in the digital ads you see on Instagram, the Billboards you may pass on your way to work, and the catalogs you receive in the mail. IMC can be viewed as the unification of all cohesive communication elements that work together to strengthen marketing effectiveness for a particular business or product. Some of the many components of IMC include public relations, sales promotions, direct marketing, personal selling, digital advertising, and more. This practice allows brands to use both internal capabilities along with its external resources to widely strengthen their marketing effectiveness (Luxton et al., 2015). The overarching goal of this combination of marketing material is to create an almost seamless experience for the consumer, integrating content across a variety of platforms in order for one to build a relationship and familiarity with a brand. IMC is an essential practice that a large proportion of businesses and brands need to adhere to in order to survive in a world where so many brands are begging consumers for attention. Although this is a widely popular theory, there is no specific blueprint or guideline that all businesses strictly follow to incorporate IMC. Rather, it is a shared agreement of the importance of this cohesive communication across multiple channels. I hope to incorporate IMC into my senior project, as I plan to produce marketing material to use across a variety of mediums to promote a fictional, non-profit music festival taking place in San Luis Obispo. This will consist of digital material, printed material, and other experimental material that will surprise and gain attention from consumers.

When initially thinking of the word “marketing”, one might first think of social media and internet ads. After all, digital marketing is relevant now more than ever and continues to expand through constant innovation and improved technology. However, print marketing and advertising remains more relevant and impactful than most consumers and businesses might realize. Trailing digital marketing, print marketing stands as the second-largest advertising
channel in the United States (Venkatraman et al., 2021). Although the popularity of digital advertising has overtaken print marketing, many scholars emphasize using a mix of both forms of advertising rather than substituting one for another. The tangible and static characteristics of printed material increase both trustworthiness and credibility in the eyes of many consumers (Karels & De la Hera, 2021). This then positively affects the staying power of the brand or business using the effective material, causing the consumer to be more familiar with and accepting of the brand in the future. There’s a level of interaction and impact one receives from looking at, feeling, and experiencing a printed item that digital material is not capable of simply conveying through a screen. So, it’s important to not look at printed advertising and marketing as an irrelevant and dated form of communication, but as another component of Integrated Marketing Communication that can have much more meaningful impacts on consumers while working alongside digital marketing. This printed material can take on an endless variety of forms, with the most common being direct mailers, billboards, brochures, posters, door hangers, and much more. I hope to create a wide variety of these materials for my fictional music festival, with each having its own unique impact on the customer. Learning about the difference in the effectiveness of each of these materials is also important, as its content may need to be presented in a certain way to be more impactful on consumers. Billboards are one of the many channels of printed advertising I hope to implement into this project. Billboard advertising is unique in the way that no technologies or lifestyles exist to block their delivery. One can choose to tune them out, but they will always still exist and be in the field of view. Various studies have found that billboards receive backlash from individuals for various reasons including visual pollution, motorist distraction, and even advertising potentially harmful products within low-income communities which causes negative public-health impacts (Fortenberry & McGoldrick, 2020).
With my billboard design, I’d hope to avoid these negative reactions by implementing various design and distribution techniques. By keeping the design bold, simple, and relatively vague, the billboard should gain the interest and attention of most people without the annoyance of visual pollution coming to mind. If the design was very generic, text-heavy, and specific with a call to action, some may feel like the brand is trying too hard and will ignore it entirely. With this billboard’s simplicity, it will stick out from the rest while building brand familiarity and anticipation for the event without explicitly stating details or encouraging immediate action.

Another type of printed marketing material I hope to create are direct mailers. Direct mailers give consumers a physical copy to feel and look at, which makes them incredibly important when deciding how you want your brand to feel, both figuratively and literally. Direct mailers may seem like a dated form of marketing, but in reality, they can be very influential within Integrated Marketing Communications. Around 70% of people say that direct mail feels more personal than digital ads, and is more impactful in their purchasing decision (Cross, 2019). Because of this, direct mailers will be a component of this project’s marketing plan. Similarly to the billboard design, I hope to create something relatively ambiguous for the mailer design. Additionally, the quality and feel of the mailer sticks out from normal mailers, making it harder for the consumer to throw away. This can be done using specialty printing techniques such as embossing, foil stamping, spot UV, and more. Rather than explicitly personalizing the direct mailers, they will all be similar, only changing simple characteristics such as color and specialty printing options. The simplicity of this marketing will be a refreshing experience for the mail receivers, as personalized mail is very common. By making it more difficult for the consumer to throw the mailer away immediately, the brand will remain near them, therefore brand awareness and familiarity will be strengthened over time. Print material is often misconceived as a dying
marketing component with the takeover of digital marketing. In reality, the abundance of this
digital material and the numbness consumers develop to it has only increased the effectiveness of
the print material. With these two discussed print materials along with many others, printed
marketing will be a driving factor in the Integrated Marketing Communications of this music
festival, building familiarity, interest, and attention for the event.

Along with print marketing comes the inevitable world of digital marketing and
communication. Digital marketing is any type of marketing conducted through electronic
platforms using any device. As the great majority of people around us use a wide variety of these
digital platforms on a daily basis, it’s obviously important to take advantage of building brand
awareness in this digital world. Recent studies on digital marketing for music festivals have
shown that social media interaction has a direct effect on brand awareness and emotional
attachment to a festival, leading to a direct effect of word-of-mouth (Hudson et al., 2015). This
word-of-mouth effect is incredibly important when it comes to music festivals, as it takes just
one successful digital interaction for one to share the festival with countless friends they could
see themselves attending the festival with. With the efficiency of the digital market, digital
advertising and marketing also serve as the quickest, easiest route to a point of purchase.
Consumers are able to be shown an ad and taken to a purchase point in just a matter of seconds.
This convenience has shaped the forms of marketing material, as much of this material is now
designed to quickly engage users and lead them to purchase before they even have much time to
think. Digital marketing can be preferred by companies for many reasons. First, they allow for a
more personal and communicative relationship to develop between the brand and the customer
because they allow and facilitate interaction (Mehmeti-Bajrami et al, 2022). Users can leave
comments, likes, and even message brands regarding any concerns. Digital material can also be
easily sent to others on these platforms. Users can tag others in posts, send posts to friends, or even repost material to their own feeds. This makes the spread of material much more generic and feels overall less forceful on consumers than methods such as direct mail, posters, or billboards. This also allows others to spread brand awareness to others indirectly. Successful material has the potential to be shared from one user to another, essentially having them market your material to a wider audience for you at zero cost. Another large advantage of digital marketing material is the ability to explicitly view how content is performing. Most platforms that allow for digital marketing also provide useful statistics such as audience demographics, retainability, profile clicks, average watch timer for videos, and much more. This allows businesses to effectively test out different strategies to see what works and what doesn’t. There are ways this type of data can be retrieved from traditional marketing material as well, but this generally requires more time and effort. Performance data from digital material is almost instantaneous. Lollapalooza, one of the world’s most popular music festivals, is very confident that putting a great amount of effort into social media is undoubtedly worth the time and resources. While studying the effects of their digital and social media marketing, Lollapalooza found that their page views significantly improved across the board because of their social media applications, and those who experienced this content spent more money at the festival (Hudson & Hudson, 2013). A type of digital material that will be important for the Amped Music Festival will be social media graphics. Social media graphics for music festivals can highlight a wide variety of specifics such as performing artists, schedules, values, and more. Creating a brand image through social media over time prior to the event is essential. This works to familiarize users and festival guests with the brand’s image and overall feel, which will eventually affect their actual experience once they attend the festival. This is why it’s important to have consistent
material across digital and physical assets. The more immersed guests feel in the festival, the greater their emotional attachment will be. Integrated Marketing Communication is the root of this effect, as it allows consumers to take in the brand from a variety of sources throughout their daily life. For this specific project, I will be focusing on social media graphics such as artist highlights and festival values, along with a few examples of paid advertising that will be used across websites like Instagram, Facebook, and more. In terms of this realm of content, it’s not only important to produce quality material but to produce a quantity that will allow you to post consistently, sharing different material and information with each post to build excitement within the consumer no matter what the post or advertisement may be. In this specific project’s context, this may mean a series of highlighting various San Luis Obispo non-profits and charities that will be receiving funds from the festival or doing individual deep-dives on each artist that will be performing.

Aside from the common print and digital marketing material, there is also the type of marketing we come by less often that is created by businesses that truly think outside the box. This technique that's commonly used by smaller companies to market their business or products using unusual methods at unusual times to gain the attention of consumers is commonly referred to as “Guerilla Marketing” (Onurluba, 2017). Guerilla marketing is often conducted with minimal investments and serves as a way for businesses to stick out amongst their competitors. This material can be digital or printed material, but can also be so much more. Some examples of Guerilla marketing that has been conducted in the past are Domino’s Pizza’s reverse graffiti (cleaning specific areas of a floor or wall to show their logo), Childish Gambino hiring out an Ice Cream truck to support his “Feels Like Summer” EP release, or Red Bull having one of its athletes skydive from space. It is truly up to the company and its budget to decide how much this
marketing will cost. Something similar to Domino’s campaign may cost a few thousand dollars, while Red Bull’s stunt cost them millions. This is the beauty of guerilla marketing. It has the potential to be successful with any budget – all that matters is that it’s unconventional and unique. Recent studies have shown that these techniques can be the missing marketing puzzle piece that many businesses need, as they often outperform traditional marketing and improve customers’ cognitive responses (Rauwers et al., 2018). One of its most important benefits is that its creative, surprising, and untraditional aspects allow smaller businesses to successfully compete with larger ones. This will especially be important when it comes to creating material for this small-scale, brand-new music festival. Using guerilla marketing techniques, the festival will stick out to consumers and can easily gain attention by using cost-effective methods. By adding this additional element on top of the planned digital and printed marketing material for this event, this festival will effectively use these forms of Integrated Marketing Communications to increase brand awareness and allow customers to build an emotional attachment to the brand before the music festival event takes place.

As discussed, the cohesive use of print, digital, and other creative marketing material as integrated marketing communications can be incredibly effective for businesses and brands. Using these methods together can seamlessly build a consumer’s brand awareness and emotional attachment to a brand without forcefully showing them branded material. This combination allows for a more subtle but effective awareness to be constructed, where consumers will become more familiar with a brand than they may realize. Due to the importance of this material when it comes to familiarizing consumers with a brand, I will be creating examples of each type within IMC to use for the Amped Music Festival. These pieces of IMC will all be cohesive, working together to construct the emotional feeling surrounding the event before it occurs, which will
drive ticket sales that will then contribute to a fun experience for guests and benefit the overall good of San Luis Obispo.
Reflection

Looking back on this project, I was able to learn a great amount about music festival branding and marketing without even knowing it. This is learning that occurs in a way that doesn’t feel like traditional learning of reading a textbook or taking notes off lecture slides. This type of learning came naturally through focusing on the quality production of my own project, and my desire to use inspiration and information from outside sources to create something I was truly proud of. This type of learning was much more raw and enjoyable, and it took place without me being aware of it. This is the beauty of a senior project. In a way, you become your own teacher.

After gaining feedback from the initial phases of my senior project, I was confident in the direction the festival branding was headed. The feedback was mostly positive, and most comments and criticism were towards the overall logistical details of the festival and not its look, feel, or aesthetic. I remained on the path of creating material out of a simple, bold color palette which the initial feedback proved was effective. After completing most of the finalized material over the weeks that followed this feedback, I was ready to share it with my peers and industry experts once again. Below are some of the materials shared for feedback. Visit https://owenchristensen88.wixsite.com/ampedslo to see all project deliverables.
Feedback was again overwhelmingly positive. The peers and experts I shared the branding and material with enjoyed what they saw and thought most of the material would be effective in building an emotional attachment to a music festival. One of my peers said they appreciate the simple colors because “It makes you recognize the brand easily if you were to see it in different environments.” 100% of peers and industry experts I spoke with believed the branding was successful in being both unique and intriguing. Additionally, the average rating of the festival branding by these viewers was an 8.7/10. Many of the interviewees and showcase attendants that got to see some of my material in-person were intrigued by the lenticular advertising mailer that I created, showing that just one simple unique aspect of printed material can make a piece of marketing material so much more engaging. This demonstrates that using
the additional time and resources to add that “wow factor” into any print material can definitely be worth it, as it can be the reason a consumer is driven to a point of purchase.

The main reason I believe this festival branding stood out is because of its simplicity in terms of its purpose and visual appearance. After researching many of today’s popular music festivals, I noticed that although most had consistent branding, there was never much of a consistent “look” that these festivals took advantage of. That was one of my main goals going into this project: to create a look and feel that would stick with people very easily. This was shown to be successful in my feedback, as the colors and simplicity are what first came to mind to those who gave feedback. This isn’t to say not using an overly simple color palette and look will make a festival perform better, but it does imply that I was able to find a gap in the music festival branding market that is being underutilized. One expert in the music industry I spoke to enjoyed this simple look, saying “you don’t typically see this type of style for large-scale events.” In terms of the specific marketing and festival material I created, the positive feedback from the branding translated to these items as well. All of the physical and digital pieces were created with the main mission being that all materials were cohesive. This makes a brand image stick with consumers quicker and easier. Most viewers said they strongly feel that all materials are cohesive and recognizable, even without the festival logo. This is a great goal to set as an event or organization trying to build brand awareness: creating a signature look that causes consumers to know it’s you without having to explicitly state what you are. This is what many popular businesses such as McDonald’s or Nike have been able to take advantage of due to their worldwide popularity.

The festival's purpose also remained simple but important, as San Luis Obispo always remained at the sole of the event. With material that makes it apparent that all profits will be
donated towards the greater good of San Luis Obispo, consumers will be much more open and accepting of the festival. This is beneficial as even those who don’t attend will likely be in support of the event, as it may positively impact an organization they are close to or are involved in. Choosing to make this a non-profit music festival avoided many of the ethical dilemmas potential ticket buyers may have because they know their money won’t be going to a money-hungry corporate business, but to the wonderful city they live in.

These findings can certainly be used in the event and festival world moving forward. When creating or refining a look as well as marketing material for a music festival, it’s important to first analyze similar events and address why they succeeded or why they didn’t, what specific aspects made them unique, and what aspects they may not have taken full advantage of. Once these details and gaps are addressed, it's easier to shape a new festival around what does and does not exist in the event world. When choosing the marketing material for an event like this, I’d be wise to follow this same outline. Continue to implement what is working, phase out what doesn’t, and attempt new methods that have not yet been attempted. Circling back to the main thesis of this paper, the degree of brand familiarity is strongly determined by the cohesive material that is distributed before, during, and after an event. Not only is the type of material important, but also the distinct branding of the event and the emotional relationship this creates between a consumer and an event. In the specific case of the fictional Amped Music festival, this would lead to an overall positive change in the community, as not only will ticket buyers enjoy their experience, but the money from their purchase will also be distributed back into their local organizations. Shown from my research and project feedback, it will greatly benefit a festival to not only use a cohesive combination of digital and physical materials but also to develop unique
branding that consumers can easily build an emotional relationship with throughout the customer journey funnel for the event.

One of the main difficulties of this project was simplifying the vast amount of material I wanted to make. The possibilities of deliverables for a music festival seemed endless, and I had to consolidate my vision into just a few of these many options. This realization didn’t come around until a couple of weeks into the project, where I then had to outline the necessary materials I needed to create and see how much room I had to create less important materials. I decided the necessary materials were the festival lineup poster, digital marketing examples, printed marketing examples, and festival map. Once I was finished and satisfied with these, I then moved on to other projects such as wristbands, passes, billboard designs, and more. Another difficulty was trusting myself in the initial branding guidelines for the event. Although I gathered feedback from multiple people, it was hard not to second-guess my design decisions. After some days of uncertainty, I finally learned to trust my gut and keep going with confidence.

This project feels complete to me, which I’m very happy about. Future development would likely require more time, research, and data collection. If this time was given, I would likely try to gather much more feedback than I had, and conduct even more research on live events and what draws individuals to them in terms of branding and marketing material. Future development of a project like this could also incorporate real advertising and landing pages, which will show conversion rates of advertisement and interest in the event. This would have been simply too much for me to take on within the span of one quarter, but I would be excited to take on a project like this in the future.

This project allowed me to learn so much about an industry that I’m very interested in pursuing post-graduation, which I’m incredibly thankful for. I’m so proud of what I created and
the research and feedback I conducted to give me the inspiration for this project. I became my own teacher throughout this project, and now have a cohesive project that demonstrates my Graphic Communication skills as well as my interest and desire to continue working within music and live entertainment. As a result of this project, I feel more confident in my ability to set and complete goals that are under my full control, use outside sources and individuals to refine my work, and most importantly bring my creative visions to life.
References


