

1 Why experiential?

The context: marketing communication

Marketing communication messages, through media or other marketing channels, exist to communicate with different consumers or business sectors. Marketing communication channels traditionally include advertising, direct mail, packaging and sales promotion, along with the relatively more recent prominence of sponsorship, public relations, digital and live brand experiences. The selected channels need to be integrated to maximize the impact of a campaign and more effectively achieve marketing communication objectives.

This book focuses on experiential marketing as a key approach for achieving marketing objectives. 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. Live brand experiences usually manifest in the form of live events that allow the consumer to live, breathe and feel the brand through interactive sensory connections and activities. The activities are usually designed to add value to target audiences in their own environments, during their natural existence. However, live brand experiences are simply live, two-way branded experiences, and can be equally successful across many interactive technologies and platforms that facilitate communication between consumers and brands in real time. For example, consumers can participate in live brand experiences on TV where the shows' content is fluid, and they participate in it and contribute to it in real time. Likewise, a live brand experience can be activated online in a virtual world such as second life. It is the recommendation of this

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book that marketers place live brand experiences at the core of their marketing communications strategies.

But live brand experiences are rarely done alone and the sophisticated marketing executive will integrate them with the rest of their marketing efforts utilizing a broad array of channels. Marketers go to each channel to achieve different goals and objectives. Advertising is usually implemented to achieve brand awareness and to gain recognition of the brand or product within mass markets. Advertising has high 'reach' and is typically effective at raising awareness but is expensive to implement on an effective scale. When used on a large scale, advertising can have a low CPT (cost per thousand), but overall it is an expensive tool and can normally only be used to great effect by market-leading brands that can afford to run large-scale campaigns.

Direct mail, which can involve posting marketing materials directly to people's homes, can be used as part of CRM (customer relationship management) programmes, in order to engage consumers for a direct response or sale at home. Packaging is important to every brand as it communicates a brand identity to the consumer through the colours, shape and overall look and feel of the product.

Sales promotion involves driving sales in the retail environment through special offers, discounts, rewards and vouchers. Field marketing activities (such as in-store promotional staff, field sales, auditing, mystery shopping, merchandising and sampling) are generally classified within the sales promotion channel.

Sponsorship is a great tool for brands that target niche audiences; it can earn credibility and communicate with an audience in their preferred environment. Traditionally, sponsorship is a practice that involves branding at sporting and cultural events, and others at which there is a desired association with the event or people at hand. Sponsorship aligns the brand directly with people's current perceptions of the company or event in question.

Public relations (PR) is the process of managing the flow of information between an organization and its public. Its activities include award ceremonies, celebrity endorsements, press and media relations, and events that aim to project a positive image of an organization to its key stakeholders.

Digital is one of the fastest growing marketing channels in a fluid technological age. Consumers are connecting with brands online more than ever before, and digital can be a cost-effective channel for generating word-of-mouth online (otherwise known as word-of-web). Viral marketing is also an emerging discipline, which is part of the digital spectrum: a successful viral campaign creates word-of-web at exponential rates, allowing a message to travel as fast as a virus, hence the name.

These marketing channels traditionally work together, currently delivering successful campaigns worldwide for global brands and small businesses alike. Although brands and companies benefit from using these channels, marketers worldwide are looking for new ways to utilize these channels to their full potential in order to engage their target audiences on a deeper level, and build relationships that create loyalty and brand advocacy. Experiential marketers are converting their consumers from shoppers (who can be disloyal at times and promiscuous with their choice of brands) into brand evangelists who preach the brand, its personality and core message or features to their friends, families, colleagues and communities.

These brand evangelists are building brands at the speed of light. They are not only communicating messages that traditional marketing could likewise do, but are creating something unique: a personal recommendation. This golden brand bond is priceless. Think back to the last time you went to eat in a restaurant. Did you go there because you heard it was good, or because you saw an advert in a magazine saying it was? Or when a friend rants and raves about a new miracle cleaning product that removed seven stains from her white tablecloths, and you pass that same cleaning product in the aisle on your next supermarket visit – do you think you'll give it a try? The answer is *yes!*

Word-of-mouth is priceless, and leads us to the all-important question: which marketing communication channel or approach drives consumers to spread word-of-mouth? Today's consumers are bored of being inundated with endless invasive adverts and messages urging them to buy products that drown in a sea of noise. They want brands to engage with them, to add value to their lives, to give something back. Consumers aspire to lifestyles that their favourite brands portray; they want to be a part of the brand and what is associated with it, and they want to immerse themselves in the brands they love. Once they become loyal, they start to do your marketing for you. This is why the marketing world of today, and leading brands, are competing in a new era: the era of experiential marketing.

What is experiential marketing?

Experiential marketing is the process of identifying and satisfying customer needs and aspirations profitably, engaging them through two-way communications that bring brand personalities to life and add value to the target audience:

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- Experiential marketing is an integrated methodology, always engaging target audiences at their will through brand-relevant communications that add value.
- The experiential marketing campaign is built around one big idea that should involve two-way communication between the brand and the target audience in real time, therefore featuring a live brand experience at its core.
- The other marketing communications channels that are selected and integrated are the amplification channels, which amplify the impact of the big idea (the live brand experience) – see Figure 1.1.

The purpose of this book is to ensure that the next time you read about which marketing approaches are most effective, there will be no doubt that experiential marketing will be at the top of the list. This is the future strategy behind successful marketing communication. It is experiential marketing, the two-way experience-oriented strategy.

AIDA is an acronym used in marketing. It describes a process that marketers aim to take the consumer through when marketing a product:

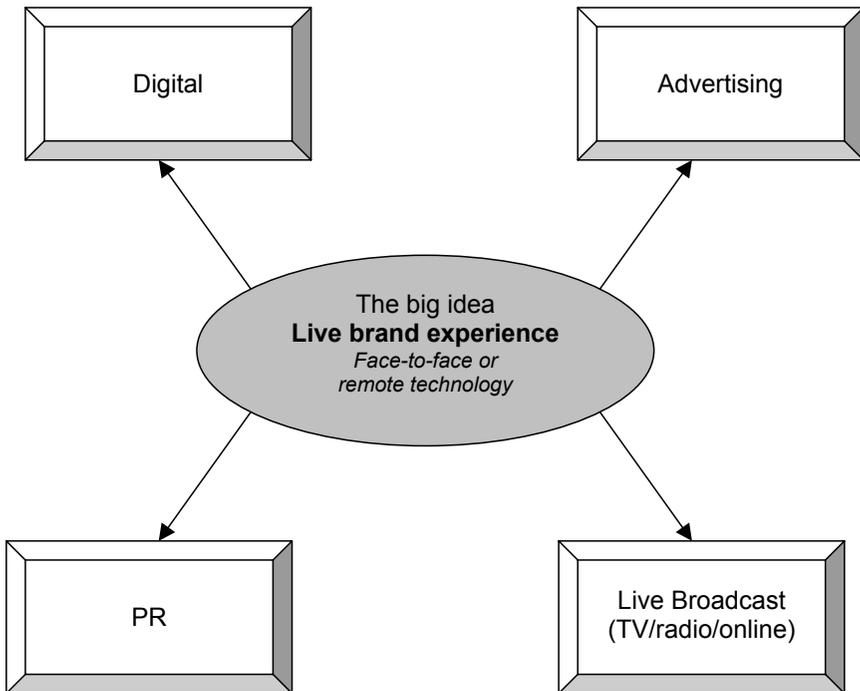


Figure 1.1 Amplification channels

Awareness: the attention or awareness of the customer (advertising would be a favourite for this stage).

Interest: we traditionally raise consumer interest by creating public conversation or demonstrating features and benefits (PR is a favourite for this).

Desire: convince customers that they want the product or service and that it will satisfy their needs.

Action: the all-important stage leading customers towards a purchase (face-to-face sales or sales promotions are mostly used here).

There have been other additions to the AIDA model, such as S for Satisfaction. Satisfy the customer so he or she becomes a repeat customer and recommends the product. This shift is in line with the emerging focus and emphasis on word-of-mouth and personal recommendation.

Live brand experiences, especially when integrated into a broader experiential marketing campaign, can be effective for achieving each of the AIDA stages. Take the A for Awareness. Live brand experiences are sometimes accused of being ineffective at reaching large numbers of consumers, but this is far from the truth. In some situations, the live brand experience, which is at the core of the experiential campaign (in many cases the live brand experience is delivered face to face), may only have a reach of, say, 500,000 people. This figure should not be taken at face value, because it has been shown that consumers who engage in a live brand experience are likely to tell 17 people.¹ Therefore, that 500,000 quickly grows into millions when factoring in the word-of-mouth reach. Research shows that each of those people who heard about the live brand experience is likely to tell an additional one-and-a-half people, skyrocketing the reach of the campaign even further. Word-of-mouth truly is the most effective marketing tool of all.

Live brand experiences can certainly be used in the I stage of AIDA, to create Interest by engaging consumers, not only demonstrating features, advantages and benefits of a product, but more importantly interacting with the target audience through brand-relevant engagement. In fact, what better way to stimulate interest and convey a brand personality or message than to allow consumers to immerse themselves in the essence of the brand as well as to try the product, play around with it, eat it, drink it, touch it or press it? It does not matter what the product is; if you can get its core brand values into the everyday lives of your target audience through pleasant interaction, and at the same time engage them and let them try it, then you can truly demonstrate your brand positioning, and your USPs, converting a customer into an advocate.

Likewise, you can also use live brand experiences at the D stage in AIDA, to provoke Desire by creating experiences that communicate

the aspirations of the target audience, creating the subconscious sense that using the product or service will bring them the lifestyle that they desire.

Sales promotion is traditionally a tool that is effective at driving people to action and leading the consumer towards taking a final purchase decision (when that decision to purchase is primarily influenced by cost). Statistics prove that live brand experiences (which should be placed at the core of the experiential marketing strategy) are more likely to drive purchase decisions than almost any marketing channel.²

When planning your marketing channels around the AIDA or AIDAS model, it is important to approach every channel with an experiential marketing ethos. If you embrace two-way, experiential marketing communication and place the live brand experience (delivered face-to-face or remotely) at a core part of your broader marketing communications strategy, the results will speak for themselves.

Traditional approaches are losing effectiveness

Marketers are finding through extensive research that traditional media channels and one-way communications are losing their effectiveness. This can be attributed to many different factors, such as Generation X and Y, media fragmentation, noise/clutter and the emergence of interactive technologies. The internet generation (aka Generation Y: those born between 1980 and 1995), are a media-savvy generation adverse to obvious marketing and advertising ploys. This is the iPod generation. While mass media and traditional advertising are being shunned by this demographic, online social networking media such as Facebook and MySpace are growing exponentially and demonstrate the power of word-of-mouth via word-of-web.

Technology is another factor that is leading to the decline in the success of traditional media channels. TV advertising still boasts the biggest budget slices in the marketing cake, but consumers are using technology to actively avoid the very adverts that cost millions to produce and air. TiVo in the United States, Sky Plus in the United Kingdom, plus countless other brands with copycat technology, allow consumers to fast-forward and rewind past adverts.

The fragmentation of TV channels is another familiar challenge for marketing and advertising professionals, with hundreds or even thousands of TV channels allowing consumers endless choice. It is hard to decide how to plan a TV advertising budget effectively without having

to water it down across countless TV channels, or spend a big budget that generates low ROI.

Pop-up blockers allow web surfers to block annoying adverts that invade their screens and spam filters eradicate many of the online e-marketing attempts. Soon, technology will allow consumers to pick and choose which messages they consume across the board, and this creates a further challenge.

As marketers, we must think creatively and engage with consumers in ways that make them want brand communication. We want them to choose not only to receive messages, but to communicate back with the brand and their immediate peers and publics. This raised level of business consciousness we are experiencing around the world is elevating us to a new marketing era: that of experiential marketing. In the experiential marketing era, the consumer and the employees of a company are equally part of its marketing as its ad agencies and marketing department.

Experiential marketing: a differentiator

In the business world, commoditization is a process where unique brands and products compete. As a result, standards are raised and equalized, forcing brands into undifferentiated price competition. In the early days of marketing and advertising, companies used to focus on differentiation based on the product features and benefits. As competition forced rival brands to create competitive products, price wars began lowering the cost of products and driving consumers to make cost-based purchase decisions. Thanks to innovators in the mid-20th century such as Ogilvy, advertising was revolutionized and brands evolved, taking on unique personalities. Through customer-focused marketing communications, they encouraged consumers to aspire to a lifestyle that the brand represented. Thus began the shift from a product-focused era to the customer-focused, brand and lifestyle inspired advertising era. This marked a shift from a rational message to an emotional message, or a combination of both.

As competitive brands were positioned similarly to each other, and differentiation became difficult again, consumers started to demand more. Successful companies realized that high-quality service was an excellent way to add value and differentiate from their competitors; for example, adding free delivery to a video chain or picking up customers from their home to take them to the car rental shop. As time went on, fierce competition snowballed with competitors all offering relatively

similar added-value services with their products, or by adding relatively similar added-value products to their services. Lifestyle branding and differentiation through service became the norm. Again, once there are no clear points of differentiation, price becomes a primary differentiating factor. Clearly, this is not desirable from a marketing perspective.

The growing popularity during the late 20th century of relationship marketing, which focuses on long-term relationships with customers and customer retention, saw a rise in the investment in CRM (customer relationship management) programmes that aim to drive customer loyalty through frequent communication and reward programmes.

The next level of thinking on the subject of maintaining customer loyalty is CEM (customer experience management), defined as ‘the process of strategically managing a customer’s entire experience with a product or a company’.³ CEM is at the frontier of successful loyalty-driven programmes, taking companies into an era where the primary and most valuable way they can differentiate themselves is through a brand immersive experience at every customer touch point. Successful CEM programmes build the consumer’s experience with an organization, ensuring that every step of his or her journey (from the retail environment to the customer services phone attendants) is brand relevant, differentiated and positive.

Experiential marketing allows brands to engage with their target audiences through initiatives and engagements that aim to achieve marketing communication objectives, and add value to consumers’ lives. When CEM is partnered with experiential marketing (the innovative methodology that facilitates positive brand-relevant two-way communications with target audiences); astonishing business results can be achieved. By successfully implementing a CEM orientation throughout every department of an organization, and then reaching out and communicating with target audiences through experiential marketing campaigns, organizations can successfully convert consumers into brand advocates.

Today, products that are trying to differentiate through additional free services, or services that are trying to differentiate by additional free products, along with traditional CRM programmes, are all beginning to look like commodities. This is largely due to the full circle that business and marketing have made on their way back to human interaction and two-way engagement. Experience is the new currency of the modern marketing landscape, because experiences are life, and people talk about experiences every day.

Sam is the marketing director at a petrol company that had recently opened a coffee shop in each of its larger outlets but was struggling to differentiate without competing on price. Service was originally its key

differentiator and is what allowed it to charge a higher premium for its services in the past. Its competitors had become wise to this, and improved their service, providing little room for differentiation and lack of justification for the higher price. By adding a positive added value and brand-relevant experience, Sam hoped that he could appeal to the commuter who spends long hours on the road and wants to stop for a refreshing, high-quality cup of coffee on his way home. Sam knew he would have to position the brand as a quality choice for premium coffee and sandwiches, as well as petrol; three things that traditionally do not go hand-in-hand. He knew from the market research that their agency conducted, that when consumers refuelled, they often sought a little caffeine to help them stay awake on the road. Nevertheless, the research also uncovered that consumers wouldn't trust the quality of the coffee and have been less likely to purchase it from a petrol station. Therefore, they visited the petrol station with the cheapest petrol rather than the best coffee. The agency creative team came up with the suggestion of creating a live brand experience that could be rolled out across most of the stations. Sam had overlooked the importance of the fact that the coffee beans they used were purchased from fair-trade sources. The experiential campaign would position the coffee brand as being one that cares for people and the environment, with the credibility stemming from the fact that they only used fair trade organic coffee beans and ground each coffee freshly. As an environmentally friendly brand that gives back to the community, the coffee bar was redesigned to show photos of the rainforest farmers who harvest the coffee beans, and gave consumers the chance to win trips to visit the rainforest coffee plants, by answering questions about fair trade coffee and endangered regions. The consumers were also provided with a free sample of coffee when they purchased their fuel, and were encouraged to sign up to a 'care and share' loyalty card that donated money to relevant charities every time they filled their tanks. The broader media campaign was also designed to reflect this initiative, focusing on the fact that the brand and its customers were working hard to counteract the negative effect that the petroleum industry has on the environment and labour. The petrol stations were also fitted with scent machines that emitted the smell of freshly ground coffee beans, further strengthening the front-of-mind affiliation between fair trade quality coffee and the petrol outlet.

Following this integrated campaign there was a dramatic uplift in the number of customers who bought coffee as well as fuel when visiting this chain of gas stations. At this point, the premium rate they were paying became less significant and the competitive pressure and commoditization eased. The reason that this petrol station company wanted to position itself as a caring, environmentally oriented brand

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was to try to counteract the perceptions that consumers have of the negative effects that petrol and oil cause to the environment and also the affiliation with lack of quality food. By using the experiential marketing concept as part of a creative integrated campaign designed to bring the consumers closer to the brand personality of its coffee shop, it also managed to reposition the brand as a whole. This brought it one step closer to succeeding in its corporate goal of increasing sales and differentiating itself from the competition.

Some companies have implemented experiential marketing strategies for years and confidently differentiated themselves from the competition, forming long-lasting relationships with their target audience and maintaining customer loyalty. They have tantalized the five senses through live brand experience events, and amplified that through their other marketing communication channels. This process adds value to the consumer, and gives something back, paving the way for innovating, market-leading brands. Consumers have gone to amusement parks such as Disneyland, Sea World and Universal Studios for decades, revelling in the universe of their favourite characters and brands. By allowing consumers to touch, smell, taste, see and hear, Disney has created immersive experiential environments that generate an emotive response. For years, this has propelled guests to talk and rave about those memorable events to loved ones and acquaintances alike.

It is no surprise that while the experiential revolution is occurring and marketers are shifting focus from one-way to two-way communication, the same thing is happening in education. World-class educational experts (from kindergarten teachers to quantum physicists) are concluding in unison that when learning, the best way to truly understand and absorb information is through experiencing the problem, the process and the solution. Teachers have always taken kids on field trips to lakes, to help them understand natural biology through engaging with the real thing. They regularly facilitate experiments as a key part of learning. However, it is not only schools and teachers that believe engagement is the key to successfully educating and informing students. London, along with many other cities worldwide, is home to a fascinating science museum, which allows visitors to touch, hear, see and taste, taking them through a journey of staged experiences and interactive tools, all the while communicating key messages. They succeed in educating, informing and achieving their objectives within a creative exploratory environment. Similarly, MOMI (the Museum of the Moving Image) has captured the attention and wonder of film fans for years, allowing them to immerse themselves in a movie-themed environment, which is at once interactive, entertaining, informative and educational. This is how establishments like these spend so little of their budgets on traditional

marketing. They know that the consumers who provide their revenue execute their most effective word-of-mouth marketing. When you apply the same principles to a business and marketing context, not only will you increase consumer loyalty and achieve commercial results, but you will also truly add value to your consumers' everyday lives.

Experiential marketing is the process of identifying and satisfying customer needs and aspirations, profitably, engaging them through two-way communications that bring brand personalities to life and adding value to the target audience. Two-way communication and interactive engagement is the key to creating memorable experiences that drive word-of-mouth, and transform consumers into brand advocates and brand evangelists. The power of a personal recommendation is unbeatable. We can all agree that if a consumer feels strongly about your brand, strongly enough to personally recommend it, you have succeeded. The trust between your brand and your consumer is an indicator that a real relationship has been established.

For example, if you went to a dinner date and were not able to 'get a word in', you would assume the person you were with was not interested in you. Likewise, from a consumer perspective, brands that only talk at people, not with them, are not going to develop long-term relationships with their consumers or drive brand loyalty. There is a sense that the brand doesn't care. Two-way engagement is the key to establishing loyal consumers who trust and recommend brands to their peers.

An international survey of senior marketers, conducted by MICE Group, predicts that experiential marketing is set to be a major growth area in the next few years, as senior marketers shift increasing proportions of their marketing budgets to this emerging form. Even though spending in this area has already grown, it is projected that growth will continue at a much higher rate. Marketing communications budgets traditionally have not allocated specific portions to experiential marketing, though it is often perceived to be an independent channel, rather than a methodology. Experiential marketing spend often comes from other allocated budgets such as the PR or below-the-line budget, or the sales promotion budget. Now, many decision makers are realizing that experiential marketing offers considerable advantages compared to the other approaches. They find experiential marketing to be especially useful in achieving objectives that the others find hard to accomplish, such as building brand loyalty, encouraging word-of-mouth, and bringing the brand personality to life. When MICE conducted the survey internationally, it found a majority of respondents (80 per cent) described experience-based activities as being highly important within their marketing mix, accounting for around a third of their entire marketing budget (a percentage that is set to rise in the future).⁴

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A lack of suitable and consistent methods for evaluating experiential marketing has been a major criticism faced by the industry. This means experiential marketing is often measured using similar metrics to traditional marketing and advertising (such as opportunity to see) – methods that are far from suitable in measuring the success of the campaign.

At first glance, and after failing to impress in this respect, some people perceive experiential marketing as a tactical tool, rather than as a strategic approach that marketers should consider central to their integrated marketing communications plan. In fact, word-of-mouth reach is so valuable and can expand the campaign's reach to such a massive scale that if experiential marketing were to be measured according to its unique benefits, marketers would find that it is hugely successful in impacting large numbers of people. As with all marketing, this is not always the case if only last-minute tactical activities are implemented. To gain maximum benefits, customer experience management and experiential marketing should be central to the long-term marketing strategy of any brand.

Other key findings that emerged from the research were that nearly all respondents viewed experiential marketing as an effective part of their marketing. There was a general feeling among marketers that experiential marketing provides better ROI than other marketing activities in use, and over three-quarters of the respondents would welcome more effective measurement tools.⁵ This book outlines several methods for measurement and evaluation that provide a clear format for analysing results.

Jack Morton Worldwide has found that 75 per cent of marketers surveyed in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, China and Australia planned to spend more on experiential marketing in 2008 than in previous years. Half of the 75 per cent planned to spend between 5 and 10 per cent more than previously, 12 per cent said they would increase their spend by 11–25 per cent and almost one in 10 said they would increase their spend by over 25 per cent. The Jack Morton global survey spoke to almost 300 senior marketers and revealed the level of trust that marketers are placing in experiential marketing: 70 per cent said that experiential marketing is extremely or very important to their organization and 71 per cent reported that experiential marketing will become increasingly important in that years to come. Ninety-three per cent of the respondents agreed that experiential marketing generates advocacy on word-of-mouth recommendations and 92 per cent agreed that experiential marketing builds both brand awareness and brand relationships; 77 per cent also stated that it generates sales.⁶

Traditional channels aim to increase brand awareness, market share and sales. Experiential marketing can achieve these objectives, but the live brand experience must be at the core of the integrated marketing communications strategy in order to gain maximum results. Experiential marketing brings a great deal more than brand awareness to the table. It also brings more than a quick sale from a promiscuous customer. To gain maximum benefits from implementing experiential marketing we should look at the more sophisticated results that it can achieve.

The benefits

Experiential marketing is a fabulous approach for bringing a brand personality to life. For example, if you have an energy drink that targets sporty, energetic people and the brand personality is active and bubbly, then the interactive experience will be focused on a similarly energetic, active and bubbly interactive activity, such as a game that involves jumping on a branded trampoline whilst surrounded by blown bubbles. The product would be featured as part of the experience through product trial and the brand imagery would be represented through the colour scheme, look and feel of the experiential set. However, the actual interaction is inspired by the brand personality. Therefore, once a consumer has engaged with the brand, he or she is left with a memorable understanding of complex brand values and will automatically affiliate the product with that personality. If this experience were targeted effectively and reached its target audience, it would connect with the aspirational and lifestyle aims of the consumer (to be energetic and active) and result in a genuine connection, strengthening the relationship between the brand and the purchaser. This live brand experience, which is focused on an interactive game, can also be amplified through all the marketing communications channels, for example digital gaming and ads.

Experiential marketing also creates brand advocacy. It drives word-of-mouth through personal recommendations that are the result of consumers feeling that the brand experience added value and connected with them through relevant interaction. The obvious results are strengthened brand relationships, an increase in customer loyalty, and therefore a more long-term strategic approach to gaining and maintaining market share. Sometimes the product itself is truly superior to its competitors, with innovative features and benefits that can only be communicated through experience, which is why experiential marketing campaigns often have the objective of driving product trial.

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When you choose a restaurant, it is often a direct result of a personal recommendation or word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth increases sales more effectively than advertising, and experiential marketing drives word-of-mouth better than a traditional approach to marketing can hope to.

When coming up with the big idea for an experiential campaign, to get maximum value the brand personality and brand values should be at the core of the concept, along with the inspiration from the aspirations and lifestyle of the target audience. This is not to say that the product's features and benefits are not important. In fact, live brand experiences, when executed face to face, can provide an ideal platform for demonstrating a product's features and benefits – because the product is trialled by the consumer in real life.

By bringing a brand personality to life, an experiential marketing campaign conveys sophisticated messages that traditional approaches cannot easily achieve, and it is especially effective at communicating complex brand personalities and values. This can connect with the aspirational lifestyle of the customer.

Picture a financial services brand with a funky, jazzy brand personality. Its ads show its workers dancing and singing its virtues. In this case, when creating experiential ideas, experiential thinking would bring to life the fun, dancing, singing brand personality rather than the boring, sober elements traditionally associated with a financial services product. On the other hand, a popular pure fruit drink with a healthy and organic brand personality would need an experience that brings to life healthy and organic values through engaging two-way communication, such as a live health-themed experience, tying the product back into the experience through taste, smell and branding. Experiences bring to life brand personalities by creating situations in which the consumer participates in interactive experiences, automatically affiliating those emotional values with the product and its brand. By doing this, serious benefits are gained, one of which is clear differentiation.

There are some products that have to compete in a saturated sector, where differentiating through product features is difficult. By creating a brand experience, which makes an emotional connection with its target consumers, those consumers are more likely to develop brand loyalty to that product, allowing the company to stabilize market share and avoid relying on sales promotions.

For example, in the beauty sector there are many products that focus a brand personality on values such as attractiveness, freshness or glamour. There are some beauty products that have a more complex brand personality. There is one in this sector whose brand values are inspired by the concept of beauty secrets being passed from generation

to generation. It may be hard to convey this personality through, for example, traditional billboard or print advertising. Experiential marketing provides the perfect platform for bringing it to life in an integrated experiential campaign, including a live brand experience. Consumers who participate in the live brand experience write down their beauty secrets – secrets that have been passed on from previous generations, then place them into a competition box to win a beauty secrets makeover by a world expert.

Regardless of what the activity is, the important fact is that beauty secrets are at the core of the experience, and it is nearly impossible for the consumer to interact with this brand through an added-value, brand-relevant experience without learning on an intrinsic level that beauty secrets are a key part of what the product represents. Even if consumers do not think about it in terms of a brand personality, they will understand the concept subliminally or subconsciously. Either way, the next time they come across that product, they will automatically associate it with the brand personality: beauty secrets that can be learnt from wise forebears.

Brand personality and target audience are the inspirations, not the sector

Experiential marketing in the same sector could lead to very different ideas if the creative process is executed correctly. This may seem obvious in the drinks sector, for example, but not so much in areas that are more formal. Experiential marketing can be implemented across all sectors, from financial services to FMCG, from drinks to music, from technology to leisure. No one sector (whether product or service) is more or less appropriate for experiential marketing, because the inspiration for experiential marketing ideas comes from the brand personalities and the target audiences. The emotional connection that can be reached through brand-relevant experiences transcends the selling points of the product, its features and benefits. This is not to suggest that the product and its features and benefits do not play a role in the experience; they do, as the consumer usually has the opportunity to trial the product, especially in the live brand experience when executed face to face. It really does not matter which sector or industry the product belongs to; as long as you understand the brand values and the target audience, you have what is needed to generate spectacular concepts for brand experiences.

For example, there is a brand of cream liquor, which originated in South Africa and which uses traditional African symbols in its packaging.

It has an African, indulgent and traditional brand personality, inspired by its roots and heritage. The brand gained market share quickly after its launch by building an emotional connection with the target audience and engaging them through live brand experiences and interactive PR competitions. The African themed branded set featuring a life-size model of an elephant and traditional indulgent African hut has visited luxury events for several years. The experience features costumed, dancing Brand ambassadors and traditional African craft-making sessions. Consumers find out about the upcoming live brand experience tour dates through articles in the press, which invite consumers to send photos of themselves 'being indulgent', for a chance to win a premium safari trip. While brainstorming the creative, the marketing agency behind this campaign remembered to take the target audience and their lifestyle into consideration and create an interactive two-way experience, which adds value to them, and reflects African indulgence and traditional themes at the same time.

A completely different cream liquor brand with a young, urban brand personality used an integrated experiential marketing approach. Their above-the-line advertising campaign showed city people holding house parties in loft-style apartments, and gave cocktail tips, provided by viewers. The advert invited the target audience to text back with cocktail ideas in order to receive a free 'cocktail party experience' in their own homes, complete with a bartender and drinks. Hence, the experiential idea was brand personality-specific and different every time, even though both products are very similar.

There is a power tools brand, whose brand personality and values reflect powerful, intelligent men; its target audience is affluent men who fancy themselves capable of a bit of DIY at the weekends. To bring the brand personality to life, the agency designed an experiential marketing campaign with a live brand experience that is two-way and interactive, engaging the consumer through sensory activities that represent power and intelligence, allowing the values to be communicated through relationship-building activities that generate word-of-mouth and achieve objectives. In this case, the experiential marketing campaign involved a series of face-to-face live brand experiences with online amplification. The live brand experience was held at a series of car shows (frequented by the target demographic), where the target audience had the opportunity to participate in a drilling challenge that acts as an IQ test. Every participant had the opportunity to win prizes such as super-powerful and intelligent state-of-the-art computers, and free Mensa membership, thus engaging the target audience and bringing to life the intelligent and capable brand personality of the power tools.

A different brand of tools has a reliable, trustworthy, ‘family values’ brand personality, and a key communication message that focuses on the fact that you can always rely on its tools to last for years. Experiential marketing is the approach behind this brand’s marketing communications strategy, and the big idea, forming the live brand experience, is amplified throughout all its marketing channels. This brand targets workmen who use tools for a living. When the brand wanted to bring its trade adverts to life, it held an experiential roadshow, which involved visiting building sites and allowing workmen to have a quick break inside a branded air-conditioned trailer. While they were relaxing in the seating zone, they had a free refreshing drink and watched the plasma screens which aired the TV adverts. While they waited, the Brand ambassadors ran a family-tree search for them at the computer bar. They received a print out of their family-tree, which also featured a sales discount code for use when purchasing tools, and came with a five-year warranty. The TV adverts showed the tools being passed from father to son; the adverts showed real consumers that actually used the tools and submitted photos of themselves using the tools, in response to a press initiative. The TV ads, which were aired on local interest stations, also featured a list of upcoming dates when the family search experience would be visiting the respective building sites.

When comparing the two campaigns, it is clear to see how the two power tool brands use different experiential concepts in their campaigns, even though there is little variation in the actual product itself. One is targeted at a more affluent DIY man, concentrating on intelligence and challenge, while the other targets a niche demographic and focuses on the longevity, trust and family values.

This same approach to formulating experiential marketing concepts can be applied across every sector and target audience, from FMCG to luxury, to B2B, to highflying executives, to housewives, to niche individuals and opinion formers. The principle here is that no matter what the industry is, be sure that you are clear on what your brand represents, how your target audience lives their lives and what is important to them. Then you can begin brainstorming about how you or your agency can bring these values to life through sensory and interactive activities. The brand personality, and this emotional connection that will be created with your target audience, will be the core inspiration behind your experiential idea.

Brand personalities do not have to be exciting and over-the-top for them to become the inspiration for experiential ideas. You can have a serious and intelligent brand personality, an intellectual brand personality, a regal and luxurious brand personality; in fact, the brand personality can be anything, just like a human being. Some people are

fun, some are serious, some are active, some are relaxed, and some are loud and extravagant, while others are subtle and sophisticated. No matter which sector you are in, and no matter what your brand personality is, you can bring it to life through experiential marketing.

A mobile phone that targets the business traveller has an intuitive and intelligent brand personality. Marcia, a creative planner at an experiential marketing agency, was responsible for launching the phone and bringing to life these brand values, as well as demonstrating the phone's unique features. After careful research into the target audience and the length of interaction that would be required to demonstrate the phone's features, she concluded that airport lounges would be ideal. The target audience frequently visited these areas while making business trips and it would be easy to engage them there because they had spare time on their hands. She devised a plan to give away a free phone every 15 minutes and had the business travellers play a news quiz where Brand ambassadors wearing 'Adscreens' (17-inch plasma backpacks) on their backs would show half the morning's headlines, and the travellers would be required to guess the story. This required them to use their intelligence and intuition. The incentive of a free phone and the intellectual cachet of guessing correctly was enough to entice them into participation. They enjoyed playing the game, and in between each quiz question they would participate in demo tutorials on the Adscreen. In the demo, the Brand ambassadors would show off the phone's features, tailoring the demonstration to the lifestyle of the business traveller. Because the phones were secured to the Adscreens, the target audience had the opportunity to hold the phones, play around with them and use their special computer-like intuitive features while watching what they were doing on the Adscreen. This live brand experience was also successfully integrated with in-flight advertising and a press competition that promoted the live brand experience.

Whenever creating an experiential marketing concept, it is important to tie the product itself into the live brand experience, allowing consumers to engage with it and discover its features and benefits. But the core concept and inspiration for the experiential idea should be sourced from the brand personality.

In summary, it doesn't make a difference to your idea if your sector or industry is perceived to be exciting, dull or sophisticated; what really counts are the brand personality and the target audience. No matter what values that brand personality consists of, if you follow the planning guidelines in this book, then experiential marketing will be a methodology that will work for you. When the big idea (brand-relevant two-way communication) is integrated into your existing marketing communications, with a live brand experience at the core, it will offer

results and benefits that will revolutionize your business and marketing strategies.

Experiential marketing, appropriate for B2B

Experiential marketing can be effective for products and services in the B2B sector, not only those in the B2C sector. For example, when Blazinstar Experiential, an experiential marketing agency, wanted to bring its unique approach to life, it sponsored a branding conference in the UK. At the conference, delegates would visit the break room in between lectures for light refreshments. Blazinstar Experiential created an experience that reflected its brand personality, which is focused on 'creative and fresh ideas'. The objective was to bring to life the brand personality of the agency and communicate the key message – that experiential marketing can be implemented successfully with fresh ideas and fruity concepts. The agency decided to create a fruity, fresh experience that encouraged the target audience (the marketing industry and, in this case, the delegates of the conference) to engage with them by coming up with fresh, fruity ideas themselves. First, they built an interactive set, which was a light-up smoothie bar. The smoothie bar was built from clear acrylic boxes to form a wall filled with real fresh fruit. The bar itself was branded grey and pink to reflect the brand identity and was lit up with flowing liquid. The raised platform that the delegates stepped onto to pick their fruit was also lit up. In fact, the whole front of the set shone with light through the different tropical fruit: mangoes, strawberries, oranges, papayas, bananas and grapes. This highly attractive set represented the bright side of the ideas and communicated that the agency's creative strategies are fresh and fruity.

As the delegates entered the raised platform area in front of the bar, they were greeted by three Brand ambassadors (carefully trained about the agency), one of whom invited them to take a basket and pick the real fruit from the open part of the low wall themselves. By choosing their own fruit, they were invited to create their own smoothie recipe. Once they selected a choice of three fruits, delegates were instructed to bring their selection basket to the bar and name their smoothie. They were then escorted to the branded Hummer golf buggy and chill-out area, where they would be given a brochure to read. Here, they could watch Blazinstar's agency show reel on a plasma screen and wait no longer than two minutes to receive an agency goody bag including their own smoothie in a branded bottle. The smoothie brand inventions were entered into a competition for the best brand concept. To enter, delegates had to supply their business card. The Brand ambassadors

wrote the delegates' smoothie brand name on the back of their card, with all the cards going into a box, ready to be judged by the conference organizers (publishers of leading trade magazines). The prizes (which brought to life the aspirations of the target audience) of a ride home in a Hummer limo and an article about their smoothie creation in the next issue of a *Brand X* magazine, as well as the delicious fruit smoothies and exciting, fresh-looking set, were the talk of the conference.

The agency also had cards made with their 'fresh and fruity experiential concepts' motto emblazoned on the front. This reinforced the message and the positive experience that the marketing professionals found when they created their own smoothies and brands. In this case, the objectives were to bring to life the agency's brand personality while adding value to the delegates' experience of the conference, as well as capturing valuable data that would allow them to continue in strengthening their relationship with the target audience. By allowing them to engage creatively with fruity elements on the bright and engaging set, as well as giving them an experiential incentive, the agency succeeded in achieving its experiential objectives.

Two other experiential agencies sponsored this conference, and both provided interesting alternatives to the first approach. One agency had its logo on the conference website and a banner stand in the hallway, while the other had a table with a white tablecloth and two Brand ambassadors wearing branded T-shirts, giving away chocolate. This chocolate had little resemblance to that experiential agency (the chocolates were not branded), and in retrospect, the smoothie experience was significantly more impressive without a massive increase in cost. When you combine the cost of building the set, providing the fruit and implementing the experience as a whole (the Hummers and press prizes were free, because of a partnership agreement), there is not much difference from the cost of the banner stand, sponsorship package and Brand ambassadors that the second agency had in place. In fact, it remains an issue of genuine surprise to many experiential marketers that when so many agencies choose traditional marketing tactics to promote their own company, such as advertising and direct mail, they leave out experiential marketing because its effectiveness in B2B is apparently not clear to them.

When B2B businesses use traditional approaches to marketing and advertising, they often find low returns on investment. In a market where it is unlikely that B2B competitors are going to be using experiential marketing, it can be an ideal way to differentiate and create a memorable experience in the eyes of your target audience, even if they are hard-to-reach decision makers or senior people within an organization. It is always possible to find your target audience and relate to them

appropriately as long as the proper research is conducted. If you want to be an innovative marketer, and you work in a B2B business, consider using experiential marketing as a differentiator that will add value for your audience and build a strong relationship. Even in industries where the target audience is small, and you're reaching senior people who are busy decision makers, you can still create experiential marketing campaigns that will grab their attention, entice them to try your product or service and make them remember your organization.

Criticisms: fact and fiction

Some people confuse experiential marketing with field marketing. Field marketing involves traditional face-to-face promotional and sales promotion tactics. Field marketing activities usually involve the use of promotional staff on a tactical basis. The promotional staff are deployed to distribute leaflets, samples, merchandise displays and in-store promotions, audit compliance of promotions (as communicated by regular store staff), mystery shop and capture data. Large portions of these services are part of sales promotion, which is why, typically, field marketing budgets are taken from the sales budgets and not from the marketing budget. The distribution of samples or leaflets is not two-way and interactive. It does not create a brand-relevant interactive and engaging experience; therefore, it is not in its own right experiential marketing.

There is also the mistaken belief that experiential marketing is interchangeable with event marketing. The simplest way to see it is that field marketing is normally the application of field staff to support sales promotions, market research or advertising. Events are face-to-face meetings that can be, but are not exclusively experiential in nature, while experiential marketing is a methodology that utilizes a live brand experience (involving either face-to-face or remote two-way communication) at its core, and then amplifies that 'big idea' with a selection of communications that are integrated to promote the two-way communication concept. It brings brand personalities to life, creating sensory experiences that engage consumers through two-way communications that involve input from the consumer. The benefits that can be gained from the effective execution of experiential marketing campaigns are different to the benefits of a field marketing activity.

Field marketing is appropriate and effective in supporting existing promotions or activities. For example, if you had a two-for-one offer on a drink and you felt that the offer needed additional reinforcement, then

maybe it would be valuable to position promotional staff near the point of sale, encouraging consumers to purchase the product or giving out samples. Or, if you had recently established a new distribution channel in a major supermarket and part of this contract gives your products a top-shelf position and a poster displayed in the window, you might find it useful to have field marketing staff visiting these supermarkets and auditing, to check that the supermarkets comply with the agreement. The potential benefits of experiential marketing are broader than the traditional objectives that are affiliated with most marketing communication approaches.

Some people have negative perceptions about experiential marketing. Some say that live brand experiences can be expensive when compared to advertising campaigns, using the same metrics that are used to compare the success of an ad campaign between one media channel and another; for example, the cost per thousand (CPT) in terms of how many people from the target audience will have the opportunity to see (OTS) an advert or brand message. Obviously, the CPT people who see or hear an advert may be less than the CPT people who see or hear a live brand experience.

The important words in this phrase are 'see and hear'. Seeing and hearing are only two of the five senses, and without a level of two-way interaction, the value of those thousand exposures to a media message is different from the value of an experience that is immersive, multi-sensory and involves brand-relevant two-way interaction.

To understand the value of experiential marketing, it is important to look at exactly what it can achieve in terms of experiential objectives, such as word-of-mouth generated because of brand advocacy and brand evangelism, or the strengthening of deeper relationships with the target audience resulting in brand loyalty. Experiential marketing is key when your brand aims to have its target audience on the same side as the brand, working with you to increase your sales and spread your key messages. Traditional marketing approaches and their one-way exposure of messages to consumers have their purpose, but cannot achieve these benefits on their own. When an experiential marketing strategy is integrated into existing marketing channels as part of the overall marketing communications strategy, rather than simply implementing live experiential events as a tactical afterthought, it can make an excellent impact on sales, and also begin to create a dynamic where your customers do the most successful part of the marketing of your organization.

Experiential marketing is in fact a very cost-effective approach. If you compare the cost of achieving the aforementioned objectives through a traditional approach, to the cost of achieving those objectives through

an experiential strategy, then you will find that the LROI (long-term return on investment) is likely to be greater when live brand experiences are at the core of the campaign.

In addition, the success of traditional channels when they are designed to amplify that live (two-way) brand experience is also likely to be much greater. It does not matter which country you look at, the billings of the big media agencies worldwide are huge. Consider how positive the ROI could be, when you take into account what consumers really think about the interruptions (adverts) in their lives that cost so much to roll out on a scale that will make any impact. Consumers rarely choose to watch traditional adverts and, as we have seen, technology is rapidly empowering consumers and giving them choices about which (if any) adverts they watch.

As well as the cost criticism, some people think that experiential marketing, specifically live brand experiences, do not reach a high enough volume of people in comparison to traditional marketing. When you take on board the impact that quality brand-relevant interaction or engagement can make on your target audience, and when you factor in the word-of-mouth reach (each person who interacts with a live brand experience is likely to tell 17 people), then you realize why experiential marketing is successful at building long-term brand equity and reaching large volumes of people. The cost of generating positive word-of-mouth amongst your target audience, if measured as a cost per thousand brand advocates (CPTBA) is low if compared to the extremely high CPTBA generated from a media campaign or a direct mail campaign. Therefore, the quality of the initial (seeding) reach of the live brand experience part of the experiential marketing campaign, compared with the quality of the reach of a traditional media campaign, is very high.

Another common myth is that experiential marketing is hard to measure. Again, this claim is erroneous. Experiential marketing is measurable, but to measure the success of a campaign effectively, there need to be systems and mechanisms for measurement that are tailored to the experiential objectives during the planning of an experiential campaign. The difference between measuring live brand experiences and measuring traditional advertising media is that traditional media has existing metrics, such as OTS or CPT. While there are some methods of evaluation that can be applied across all live brand experiences (such as number of interactions), overall, it requires a more tailored approach. It is true that if a marketer is used to measuring the success of a campaign by benchmarking based on advertising metrics, and tries to measure the live brand experience part of the experiential marketing campaign using the same metrics, he or she may be misled into thinking that the brand experience is lacking. To measure experiential market-

ing successfully, one needs to shift the approach to evaluation and understand how to tailor systems and mechanisms for measurement into the plan, correlating the mechanisms with the experiential objectives of each campaign. Such an approach, as well as other ways to evaluate experiential marketing and live brand experiences, will be detailed in several chapters later in this book.

Experiential marketing can be implemented on a small or a large scale to target many different types of people. It has been proven that experiential marketing is effective at targeting all demographics and target audiences. Both niche groups and mass-market audiences respond well because it can add value to all types of consumers. Experiential marketing campaigns should always have the live brand experience at their core (whether delivered in person or remotely).

Some examples of a small-scale approach include targeting students at a university, business people in their offices, or health-conscious women at gyms. It can equally be implemented to target larger audiences, such as commuters at rail stations, mass audiences at large-scale sporting or racing events, millions of spectators at the Olympics, or hundreds of thousands of young people at music festivals. The most important thing to remember in this respect is to plan the right experience for the right people, not prioritizing the initial reach of the live brand experience over the suitability of the location. In fact, regardless of how many people you reach, whether you have 15 experiences running simultaneously in different towns and areas around the country, or whether you have one experience per month or year, experiential marketing and live brand experiences can be adapted and tailored to suit your brand, target audience, objectives, timescale and budget.

What level of resources?

Look at the level of resources that you invest in your traditional marketing. The scale on which you implement traditional marketing should be similar to the scale on which you begin to implement experiential marketing. This is because the channels that worked for you in the past can still be used as part of your experiential marketing strategy. In reading this book and shifting your perception of experiential marketing, hopefully you will begin or continue to integrate live brand experiences into your overall marketing communications mix, and eventually to place them at the core of your marketing communications strategy. You will begin to see your other existing marketing communications channels as opportunities to amplify the core two-way interaction; the

live brand experience. Customer experience management is becoming one of the highest priorities in customer-focused organizations, where an experiential strategy is leading the way. Therefore, when you think about the amount of resources that you will want to invest in CEM and in experiential marketing, you should think of allocating on the same scale that your organization is running as a whole.

There is a global organization whose ad agency has won several industry awards for the advertising campaigns that it created for the brand, ads that used to be generically broadcast on a mass scale across more than 10 countries. Since appointing a new CEO and shifting the marketing communications strategy to an experiential one, this organization's live brand experience programme is implemented worldwide across 10 countries, and its adverts now feature footage of the local live brand experiences. Since changing the approach, the brand has benefited from a significant increase in market share.

Likewise, an experiential marketing campaign for a local restaurant chain, which is a family-owned business, whose brand values are inspired by the fact that the restaurant only uses natural, locally sourced ingredients, can effectively bring the company's brand personality to life through a long-running series of locally targeted live experiential events. These events can engage the target audience and differentiate this restaurant chain from others in the area. The chain in question started off as a local Italian restaurant that prided itself on its food, and began to implement an experiential campaign that featured a mobile Italian roadshow. Its branded bus visited town centres near each of its restaurants and had a team of Italian Brand ambassadors giving out free samples of the pasta to passers-by, while engaging them with a 'make your own calzone' themed experience, allowing consumers to choose their own flavours and ingredients. Consumers were also entered into a competition with the chance to win a three-course meal for their family. The restaurant chain provided a sales promotion voucher for use on specials, enticing consumers to visit the restaurant and increase sales. The owner of the business invited the local press to a photocall at one of the experiential events, and convinced them to run a story following the locals who participated in the 'make your own calzone' experience. This small-scale integrated experiential marketing campaign succeeded in bringing the restaurant chain's brand to life and achieve its objectives of driving product trial (allowing the strength of a product to speak for itself), and increasing sales.

The moral of these stories is that the scale of the experiential marketing initiatives should be equal to the scale of all the marketing initiatives of the organization, because where possible a live brand experience should be used to generate the big idea for the overall marketing

communications strategy. Therefore, the resources that already go into the traditional marketing channels can remain the same. The shift is in the approach to them, carefully building them around the live brand experience, as amplification of the big idea.

A shift in awareness

Historically, a lot of experiential marketing, specifically live brand experiences, have been implemented on a tactical basis, when marketing and brand managers had left-over budgets and wanted to reinforce an above-the-line campaign with some face-to-face events. In recent years, there has been a shift away from the perception of experiential marketing as a tactical, field marketing-style afterthought, with an increasing number of marketers understanding the benefits and seeing the evidence themselves. As the live brand experience sector starts to take a large part of the marketing budget cake and the spend is increasing, we can see that experiential marketing is moving away from its image as a tactical short-term solution, and brands are realizing that long-term investment is needed in order to achieve long-term experiential objectives. Shifting customer perceptions of a brand, developing consumer loyalty and driving word-of-mouth on a large scale are important to many organizations, and all are being achieved with experiential marketing.

When live brand experience budgets are planned at an early stage, at the same time as the other communication channels' budgets, the long-term benefits increase dramatically, because you can utilize the other tools to amplify the effect. Then, not only will you gain amazing benefits from engaging with your consumers through exciting and dazzling sensory experiences, but you can also broadcast the experiences, and therefore dramatically increase the reach of the live brand experiences at the same time. This provides the benefits of the traditional channels, enjoying vast numbers and volumes, along with the in-depth quality engagement that comes with strategically planned live brand experiences. Word-of-mouth as a result of brand advocacy is the outcome, which in turn increases sales.

Live brand experiences allow you to convey complex messages as well as reposition brands, gain credibility with hard-to-reach audiences, and save money by avoiding the wastage of traditional mass media. Live brand experiences allow brands to handpick the consumers that interact with the marketing communication through 'on brand' activity.

A perfect example of an organization that is properly utilizing customer experience management and experiential marketing is Apple, which creates a truly added-value experience for its customers. The

experience starts from the very beginning of their relationship with the brand, to every touch point along the way, from in-store, to online, to its customer service. It ensures a positive added-value experience in the form of brand immersive stores, free in-store workshops that bring to life all the available software and staff who are themselves brand advocates. All of its efforts are designed to create lifelong advocacy inspired by its interaction with customers.

In this case, the consumers are not just shoppers who purchase the products: they are the people who sing the brand's praises, converting endless computer users by preaching the benefits of an alternative. When you go into a branch of Apple stores worldwide, you feel as though you are going back to school, only 10 times better. The cinema-style screens and beautiful set is like a technology and music-gadget candy store. It is a playground for the modern adult and teenager alike. By educating and informing consumers through brand-relevant, engaging experiences, they create brand evangelists. The word-of-mouth, inspired through personal recommendations and lifestyle aspirations, is priceless.

Apple has managed to hit the nail on the head, not only because it uses an experiential philosophy at its core, but also because it uses it as part of its retail environment. With cutting-edge design, education, added service and sensory elements, its stores are the platforms for inspiring customer experiences and the store staff are like the Brand ambassadors. But this is not the only brand to take experiential marketing to the next level and keep the experiential strategy at the core of its overall strategy. Countless global brands such as Nike, Singapore Airlines, Sony, Bombay Sapphire and Smirnoff position brand-relevant experience at the core of their entire communications.

It is not uncommon for marketers to approach experiential agencies with briefs that describe in detail the above-the-line campaign that they are about to run. This is because there is a tendency to ask the agency to implement experiential marketing activities that reinforce the above-the-line message and bring it to life. Often, they want to do this through a live brand experience that either replicates a TV advert creative or amplifies a similar theme that is a common thread throughout a planned campaign. This campaign is likely to be based on concepts and ideas that work best with broadcast media, so in this instance the creative team at the ad agency has been working within a very specific framework (broadcast media) that can limit the opportunities of creativity.

The live brand experience campaign's ultimate purpose in these scenarios is to create an experience that is similar to the type of creative message in the above-the-line campaign. But live brand experiences can provide deeper levels of engagement and a higher quality of interaction than any other marketing channel. Later in this book, when we discuss

experiential strategies, the different approaches to the relationship between the live brand experience channel and other channels will be explained in detail.

Many campaigns can bring good results, even if they were executed following a brief to bring above-the-line messages to life (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9). Likewise, there are larger and very significant benefits to be gained when the initial concepts and ideas for an integrated campaign are geared around a big idea inspired by the live brand experience. This is especially true where the live environment is utilized as a platform and the other channels, such as broadcast media, work hand-in-hand with the experience to expand its reach to a wider audience. The overall exposure is higher than if the live brand experience were implemented independently, and the effect on consumers is more engaging and adds more value than if the media campaign were implemented alone. The real gain from such an approach is that it also tackles one of the major barriers and misconceptions that many experiential marketers face when implementing live brand experiences: the criticism regarding numbers and the volumes of reach that can be achieved.

The amplification process has traditionally involved the live brand experience bolstering the other channels, and more specifically, the above-the-line creative. Though this can be effective, it is important to remember that significant benefits can be gained when the above-the-line creative takes the live brand experience channel to heart, and uses the live brand experience channel as inspiration for the creative in the other channels. The other media channels can also add live brand experience elements by working interactively with consumers through two-way interaction with the media and through the broadcasting of experiences.

Recently, a strategic media agency ran a campaign promoting an experiential TV show hosted by a celebrity UK chef. The Michelin-starred chef was participating in a highly publicized TV series involving three of Britain's best, exposing the perils of the chicken farming industry, amongst other creative and/or controversial topics. The TV show being promoted was the finale in this series, and was broadcast on primetime British TV in 2008. It was the first of its kind. The concept behind the show was that the chef cooked a three-course meal live on TV in an hour-long broadcast, inviting the public to join in, to actually cook alongside him in real time. It was a big challenge to pull off a show with such an innovative format, so to increase the interest and make it even more exciting, a famous London radio DJ cooked alongside him.

The media agency asked an experiential agency to bring the show to life, reinforcing the experiential message by encouraging consumers

to purchase the ingredients needed for the three-course meal in their local supermarkets. The experiential agency recruited 200 lookalike chefs from their database of promotional staff – Brand ambassadors who were kitted out in chef's whites, black trousers and latex masks, as well as a wicker basket for their ingredients. They hired space at three of the bigger supermarkets in the UK, across 50 stores nationwide, positioning four lookalikes at each, purchasing the ingredients for the following night's programme and showing them to consumers in the stores. The Brand ambassadors also brought to life the chef's personality through a bit of friendly banter. The Brand ambassadors spoke in first person, as if they themselves were celebrities, inviting shoppers to cook along live with them, and greeting consumers as they entered the shopping centre with messages such as 'Are you going to cook along with me tomorrow night?' They were also giving out shopping lists of the exact ingredients and had an invitation printed on the reverse. The teams of four chefs per supermarket generated hundreds of smiles from surprised shoppers. One lookalike was the team leader and was responsible for the ingredients basket, while others were giving out the ingredients lists/invitations to cook live.

Over 200,000 invitations/lists were given out on the day before the show, supported by above-the-line print and TV adverts as well as radio mentions broadcasting constantly in the week before. The live show was a major success, with a record-smashing 4.4 million viewers on the night. As well as turning the campaign around with excellent viewing results for the show, the experiential agency also had the 50 team leaders participate at home the following night. By recording the whole experience both in writing (filling in the qualitative and quantitative data report forms) and through visual evidence (photos), they succeeded in adding a research element to the campaign. By providing the client with data that served as a valuable insight into how much the audiences that participated in this TV experience enjoyed the new innovative format, they added value to the campaign. Customer research is something that can be gained from running experiential campaigns without incurring any significant extra costs (for details of this case study, see Chapter 16).

This TV show and campaign is a great example of how, when the live brand experience (in this case remotely) formulates the big idea, and that big idea is placed at the core of an overall strategy, fantastic results can be achieved. The public feels they receive a beneficial, engaging and exciting experience that brings them closer to a brand they already appreciate and aspire to. In fact, not only was the show a success, with the chef's brand increasing in popularity, but millions of consumers nationwide learnt to cook a fabulous three-course meal of scallops, steak and chocolate mousse, all in one hour, cooking with a celebrity they

would never have ‘met’ otherwise. All of this is more than the average Friday night of TV can achieve, and more than a printed sheet of paper ever could on its own.

Summary

This chapter has examined how and why people have been daunted by the differences between the obvious tools and live brand experiences. It has also demonstrated how the experiential marketing campaign should feature a live brand experience at the core of the overall strategy and then use the other selected channels to amplify the big idea. When planning experiential marketing, it is of vital importance to remember that the live brand experience should be considered at the beginning of the strategic planning process.

We have looked at how to use live brand experiences in processes such as AIDA, and we have seen how experiential ideas can increase their effectiveness. We’ve also had a look at traditional tools and why some are losing effectiveness, because of several factors such as Generation X and Y becoming more media savvy, and having higher demands from brand communication. Technology is rapidly snowballing in growth and innovation, constantly providing customers and the general public with even more choice about which messages they consume and when.

We have seen how fragmentation of media channels has led to too many options for marketers to choose from when it comes to their advertising schedules, increasing the cost of reaching a wide audience. We have examined how commoditization has led to a lack of differentiation between organizations that previously succeeded in using service to add value. This led us to note the change in the business era we have entered, from one where added service meant added value, to an era where the traditional product and service concept has gone through its own commoditization, and that this has resulted in the dawn of the new business era.

Experience-driven organizations are rising to the top. They not only offer their consumers great products and services (or vice versa) but are also providing a superior customer experience at every touch point. They have seen how brand-relevant experience acts as a unique differentiator, and how this enables a competitive market to maintain standout players that can get away with premium prices, and maintain a loyal customer base and stable market share. Additionally, we have addressed a few common misconceptions about live brand experiences, and some of the myths about its limitations, specifically the supposed lack of ability to reach volumes, and a false problem with measurement.

It has been clarified that field marketing is a sales-driven activity that has a commonality with live brand experiences only in that it can involve people (promotional staff or Brand ambassadors) working on behalf of a brand or agency in the field. Experiential marketing is the process of identifying and satisfying customer needs and aspirations, profitably, engaging them through two-way communications that bring brand personalities to life and add value to the target audience.

With that said, we have found that field marketing can be appropriate in certain situations, and has benefits of its own. It is a different discipline and should be viewed as such: field marketing activities should come from a sales budget, while live brand experience budgets should be allocated as significant portions of the marketing communications budgets. We've summarized the benefits of experiential marketing, such as bringing to life a brand personality, conveying complex messages, creating interactive memorable brand moments, driving word-of-mouth, creating brand advocacy and brand evangelists, increasing sales, driving traffic to websites, shifting people's perceptions of a brand, positioning or repositioning a brand, creating customer loyalty and more. To sum up the difference between live brand experiences and field marketing: as long as the campaign has two-way interaction between the brand and the consumers through brand-relevant experience that adds value, it is a live brand experience.

This chapter has shown how two-way interactions with consumers are fantastic and genuine ways of building consumer relationships. They are central to the concept of designing experiential marketing plans that integrate experience at their core, creating long-lasting brand advocacy that drives positive word-of-mouth amongst the target audience.

We have examined data that prove marketers are spending more on experiential marketing than ever before, and that the effectiveness of the live brand experience channel, when measured against any of the other media, is rating sky-high. We have seen how experiential marketing can be used creatively across all sectors, from financial to retail, from cosmetics to entertainment. With a creative ideas process that involves bringing to life a brand personality, experiential marketing is not just for FMCG brands, as some have previously supposed.

We tackled some of the negative perceptions that some people have about experiential marketing, such as criticizing it for a perceived high cost, lack of volume reach, or ability to effectively measure ROI or the achievement of specific objectives. While we can agree that the marketing industry doesn't have common metrics upon which it benchmarks the live brand experience part of its experiential campaigns, the effects of each interaction, and the practice of tailoring systems and mechanisms for measurement, is an approach that lends itself very nicely to detailed and in-depth evaluation of this relatively new discipline.

Experiential marketing can be implemented successfully, with great benefits, no matter what the size of the organization. The key point is that live brand experiences need to be integrated as the core of the overall marketing communications and organizational strategies across brands and global high-performing organizations. The size of the budgets allocated to live brand experiences has risen in reflection of this awareness. There has been change in recent years regarding the integration of live brand experiences earlier in the planning stages, usually when a brand is planning for the year. This is clearly the key time to allocate a reasonable portion of the marketing budget to live brand experiences, allowing the other channels enough time to design their creative in a way that amplifies the big idea. Most beneficially, many marketers are keeping experiential marketing at the centre of their thinking.

Though previously wrongly positioned as a tactical field sales support activity, which was very much a more junior decision made by middle management, experiential marketing is moving to front-of-mind with senior members of an organization. This is even true of marketing directors and other high-level executives. Therefore, the budgets allocated to live brand experiences, compared to other communications channels, are growing rapidly.

Finally, we saw how integrated experiential marketing involves the amplification of live brand experiences through effective and innovative use of other channels, and how this can be extremely effective. Even though amplifying the other channels with live brand experiences can bring good results, we must not lose sight of the difference between the two amplification processes.

The following chapters will describe a very useful model for brainstorming creative ideas that will help to tie all these broader concepts together when coming up with ideas for experiential marketing that tick the important boxes. BETTER is the acronym: it stands for Brand personality, Emotional connection, Target audience, Two-way interaction, Exponential element, and Reach.

Notes

1. Jack Morton Worldwide studies show that each person who interacts in an experiential campaign tells an average of 17 people (source: Kevin Jackson, at Jack Morton). An executive summary of this survey is available online at www.JackMorton.com
2. Jack Morton Worldwide. An executive summary of this survey is available online at www.JackMorton.com

3. Schmitt, B H (2003) *Customer Experience Management: A revolutionary approach to connecting with your customers*, p 17, Wiley, Chichester
4. MICE survey, as cited on <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=178594> (accessed 18/05/08)
5. MICE survey, as cited on <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=178594> (accessed 18/05/08)
6. Jack Morton Worldwide. An executive summary of this survey is available online at www.JackMorton.com