

Experiential Marketing: Effects on Brand, Customer and Market Experience, and Industrial Applications with Perspectives from Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study is to provide comprehensive review of experiential marketing with focus on its effects and industrial applications. We report that experiential marketing has effect on brand, consumers and the market. Experiential marketing provides a lively brand experience that give consumers the chance to engage with the brand. It promotes brand experience effects more in the Generation Y than in Generation X. Experiential marketing focuses on customer experiences. The future would be about customer relationship management (CRM), due to the fact that CRM strategy helps the company to know more about the customers. Markets are changing faster than marketing. Experiential marketing has beneficial impact on the marketing mix. Experiential marketing finds application in different businesses or industries such as hospitality and tourism, retail, health care, airline, automotive, real estate, banking, FMCG and others, in emerging markets, because it motivates customers to make faster and more positive purchasing decisions. In Nigeria, experiential marketing has become so vital to brands to cut through the media clutter.

KEYWORDS:

Experiential Marketing; Brand; Customer; Industry; Experience; Nigeria.

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1. Introduction

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (Keefe, 2008). Three values were suggested to be essential in the conceptual model of experience market: value to customer, value to company and value to society (Same and Larimo, 2012). Marketing is not just a duty of one department, but a discipline of one-and-all in the organization decisions which is grounded on the impact on the customer, brand and market itself.

Experience is an individual incidence with emotional significance created by a contact with product or brand related stimuli (Österle et al., 2018). Experiences offer customers the opportunity to feel, think, act, relate, and promote sustainability (Dettori, 2019). This sustainability is about the social, economic, and environment (S.E.E), engagements of business personalities with the customers.

The concept of experience came from the psychological practice, where it was classified into three components: S.O.P. which mean the experiential *subject* (S), the experiential *object* (O), and the experiential *process* (P) (Russon, 2003). S is the consumer; O is the market offering (product or service) and P is the way or medium through which S is connected or engaged with O. Moreover, P could be achieved through combination of emotion, intellect, imagination, physical, social, sense, or spiritual. These three dimensions of experience could standalone conceptually, but in practice and learning, they are intertwined. Experiential marketing addresses all three dimensions of an experience,

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it does so from a market-based perspective. Thus, the objective of the experiential marketer is to incorporate dramatic actions into the promotion of product or service, and prevent stale atmosphere but a sound scene where potential customer could be engaged.

According to Lanier (2008), *experiential marketing* involves the creation and staging of a market offering by a firm that is meant to engage, but also to be engaged by, consumers in hedonic ways. He further stated that the experiential interface encompasses exploratory behavior that includes play, storytelling, and social engagement. O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998) have grouped all marketing experiences into three dimensions: (i) experiential elements (natural or man-made, real or virtual, individualized or mass produced, people-based or object-based, authentic or created, and routine or novel), (ii) participant interaction (discrete interaction or continuous interaction, self-directed or assisted, and spectator or participant), and (iii) experiential outcome (temporary change or personal transformation, pleasure or preservation, and rush or relaxation).

An integration of marketing experience is an integration of intrinsic factor of the consumer (e.g. subjective inputs and outputs, underlying perceptions and desires, and emotionally and imaginatively based expectations) and business (e.g., integration, updating, and experience providers) and the extrinsic factor in the market environment (e.g., boundaries, themes, atmosphere, events, and security) that may affect the extent of consumer engagement with the offer (Lanier, 2008; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; 2002). Four main characteristics of experiential marketing have been proposed by Lanier (2008): narrativity, connectivity, liminality, and multiplicity. We have defined each these four features respectively as follow:

- i. fundamental brand edifice for communication
- ii. fellowship of brand elements in the concept
- iii. factors for brand esteem among consumers
- iv. firm brand expressions for convention

In a simple term, experiential marketing merge art and science to produce corporate dramatic or storytelling moment that blend a brand message, elements of interactivity, a targeted audience, and deliver it in a live setting to create a defined outcome (Kerry and Dan, 2016). Study has shown that successful experiential marketing campaigns must be remarkable, shareable, memorable, measurable, relatable, personal, targetable, connectable, flexible, engageable, and believable (Kerry and Dan, 2016).

2. The effects of experiential marketing

2.1 Effects on Brand Experience

According to Davis (2000), brand is an intangible but critical component an organization “owns” that represents a contract with the customer, relative to the level of quality and value delivered tied to a product or service. It is a set of consistent promises which implies trust, reliability, and a defined set of expectations. A brand helps customers feel more confident about their purchase decision, and it is an asset and, next to your people, no asset is more important.

In marketing, proper branding can result in higher sales of not only one product, but on other products associated with that brand. The feelings, images, perceptions, thoughts, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and others could be associated to the brand from the experiential aspect. This experiential aspect consists of the sum of all points of contact with the brand and is known as the brand experience - a brand's action perceived by a person (Ha and Perks, 2005).

Experiential marketing provides a lively brand experience that gives consumers the chance to engage with the brand. Alsem and Kosteljik (2008) described the concept of brand identity and defined it as a unique set of brand associations that a firm can create or maintain, which may involve a value-proposition with functional, and expressive benefits. Moreover, the brand-related stimuli appear as part of a brand's design and identity (e.g., graphics, name, logo, motto, etc.), packaging, and marketing communications (offline and online) and in environments in which the brand is marketed or sold (e.g., in-stores, event center). These brand-related stimuli constitute the major source of subjective, internal consumer responses, and it is termed as “brand experience.”

Experiential marketing promotes brand experience effects more in the Generation Y (persons born between 1977 and 2000) than in Generation X (persons born between 1946 and 1964), due to the

boom developments in information and communication technology. Generation Y has numerous communication channels - platforms and devices (Qader and Omar, 2013). The Generation Y customers are characterized by high motivation, open-minded, optimistic, goal oriented and curiosity, and these traits are based on eight key values choice, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, speed, entertainment, and innovation (Qader and Omar, 2013). Therefore, an ideal experiential marketer will need to strive strategically to generate holistically integrated experiences that get customers to sense, feel, think, act and relate to the company and brands (Schmitt, 1999a).

Strong brand is required in order to generate sustainable brand experience. According to Kotler (2003), two essential steps are required to build strong brand: (i) develop a value position or differentiation, (ii) choose a brand name, developing rich associations with that brand name, and managing all customer contacts with the brand so that they are consistent with the brand image and meet or exceed the customers' expectations. Moreover, Trout and Rivkin (2000) have suggested eight ideas for value positioning: (i) Be the first. (ii) Be a specialist. (iii) Own an attribute. (iv) Be preferred. (v) Be number one. (vi) Own a unique capability. (vii) Have a heritage. (viii) Be the latest. A strong brand can help you attract, retain, manage, and motivate the best employees (d' Alessandro and Michele, 2001).

Great brands are the only route to sustained, above-average profitability, and present emotional benefits, not just rational benefits. And in the future, great brands will show social responsibility, that is, a caring concern for people and the state of the world (Kotler, 2003). Kerry and Dan (2016) wrote that the brand experience must live up to the brand promise. They advised that you don't need to advertise the brand, just live it, in that it is easy to build a brand by delivering positive experience to the customers through the employees. They wrote that brands can either be a push action (trying to keep up with where customers are going and adapting messaging to the medium) or a pull action (taps into the core of our human DNA and virtually forces target audiences to stop, take notice, and participate). A brand with pull action is the central tenet of experiential marketing, a powerful strategy used more and more by leading brands to create true customer engagement that delivers measurable results. Multinational companies such as Unilever, Anheuser - Busch, Procter & Gamble, Roche, etc. have used and still using experiential marketing to deliver their brand promise and gain customers loyalty, through various experiential programs (Kerry and Dan, 2016).

2.2 Effects on Customer Experience

Experiential marketing focuses on customer experiences. Experiences occur as a result of access, handling, utilizing, and remembering the outcome of experiential object. Experiences provide behavioral, cognitive, emotional, relational, and sensory values that replace functional values. (Schmitt, 1999b). It has been emphasized that company should be customer-oriented (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Shaw and Ivens (2002) have described a customer experience as an interaction between an organization and a customer, that blend an organization's physical performance, the senses stimulated and emotions evoked, which are insightfully measured against customer experience across all moments of contacts. The contact point has been the basic idea of customer experience concept (Gentile et al., 2007).

Regarding some definitions of experience, Kim et al. (2011) described consumer experience with the company to be natural and multi-dimensional, which involves a real person in a varying physical and psychological levels, and relate to a brand by individual decision. According to Peppers and Rogers (1993), the future of marketing would be in customer relationships, and the future role of marketers would be to manage those relationships. The future would be about customer relationship management (CRM), due to the fact that CRM strategy helps the company to know more about the customers. In today's economy, your customer capital and the sum of the value of all of your customer relationships, will determine the value of your company. Retaining the loyalty of the right customers is the key to long-term profits in just about any company (Boyett and Boyett, 2003). Peppers and Rogers (1993), have described are four essential steps of CRM to be (i) identify your customers; (ii) differentiate your customers according to their value to your firm; (iii) interact with your customers to learn their needs, interests, and expectations; and (iv) customize some aspect of your products or services.

2.3 Effects of Market Experience

Markets are changing faster than marketing, in that the customers change in their numbers, wants, and purchasing power in response to changes in the economy, technology, and culture (Boyett and Boyett, 2003). Hisrich (2000) has described marketing as the process the process of planning and executing the conception of ideas, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods and services to create interactions or transactions or exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals. Boyett and Boyett, (2003), have reviewed the essential marketing mix in every company and they found sixteen (16) P's of marketing mix, which are: product, place, promotion, and price (Kotler, 1999; Hisrich, 2000); politics and public opinion (Kotler, 1999); policy (Popcorn and Marigold, 2000), pace (Tvede and Ohnemus, 2001); permission, paradigm, passalong (the Ideavirus) and practice (Godin, 2001); pact (or addressability), professing (or accountability), profitability (or affordability) and perviousness (or accessibility) (Rapp and Martin, 2001).

Experiential marketing has beneficial impact on the marketing mix (Kerry and Dan, 2016). Experiential marketing helps in building strong brand that ensure positive market mix. Brand is the pathway to stability, and the way to triumph over all of the problems associated with marketing mix (Boyett and Boyett, 2003). Marketing research is the first step and the foundation for effective marketing decision making, and it must be done to understand customers and not aimed at finding how to increase sales (Kotler, 2003). Experiential marketing makes it possible for the companies to rely on information from customers and not just about customers. Successful marketing should produce positive customer experience, and such relationships which be managed and not marketed (Newell, 2003; 2000).

3. Experiential marketing: industrial perspectives

Experiential marketing has been forecasted to become a core concept, strategy, and tool in the marketing field in the future as the generations evolve into a more experiential economy (Yuan and Wu, 2008). Experiential marketing finds application in different businesses or industries with market offering (product or service), because it motivates customers to make faster and more positive purchasing decisions (Hill, 2001; Williams, 2006).

3.1 Hospitality and Tourism Industry

The products of hospitality and tourism industry are always experiential (Williams, 2006) and can be classified as a total experience (Lewis and Chambers, 2000). Experiential marketing is critical for businesses, especially in the hospitality and tourism industry (Yuan and Wu, 2008). Driver and Toucher (1970), had classified the experience into five different phases:(i) planning, (ii) leaving for the destination, (iii) experiencing the destination, (iv) returning, and (v) remembering. Customers' experiences in these phases are subject to change, especially in the third phase because customers' experiences are complex and affected by many factors (Ittelson, 1978), including controllable and noncontrollable factors by businesses. Therefore, creating unforgettable experiences is critical to the success of businesses in the hospitality industry (Yuan and Wu, 2008).

Wibisono and Yahya (2019), explore the relationships between experiential marketing, tourist satisfaction and tourist intention to revisit, and based on Schmitt (1999a) elements they found that Act dimension has a dominant role, followed by the dimension of Think and Relate, while the role of Sense and Feel dimensions are minor, and that all dimensions of experiential marketing have impact to satisfaction and influence on re-visit intention. Danurdara (2016), reported that the potential application of experiential marketing in creating customer value at 3, 4, and 5-stars hotels in the West Java Province of Indonesia to be quite good and significantly affected customer value.

3.2 Retail Industry

Experiential marketing improves touchpoints to connect staff to consumers (Srinivasan and Srivastava, 2010). A touchpoint is the point of contact when products or services encounter a

customer. According to Kohan (2016) a successful, consistent experience, exceeding customer expectations, can be pursued through interaction between shopper and retailer across touchpoints. Nyberg and Soini, (2017) explored in-store touchpoints that help creating a positive customer experience in apparel stores, and provided further insight that may be used for implementation of experiential marketing in stores. They concluded that “employee and customer interaction” is the most prominent touchpoint connected with in-store environment.

In marketing, atmosphere denote the purposeful design of a shopping environment that produces a desired effect (functional and emotional) on consumers in order to increase their purchasing potential (de Farias et al., 2014; Kotler, 1973). The store atmosphere is the stimulus that causes the consumer evaluation in relation to the environment, and some behavioral responses (Turley and Milliman, 2000). According to de Farias et al. (2014), the store atmosphere affects the behavior of the customers by inviting attention to distinctiveness, transmitting characteristic messages, and establishing affective scene.

Retailers and mall developers have been advised to work on the environmental elements to increase satisfaction and encourage the return of shoppers, and that they should provide consumers with more favourable offers and a positive shopping experience based on ‘visual’ merchandising (e.g. sound, sight, smell and touch) and basic facilities within the mall (e.g. restroom, parking slot, etc), through consumer shopping habits and market trends, to creates an engaging, enjoyable atmosphere in order to increases the turnover potential (Adeosun and Ganiyu, 2012; Srinivasan and Srivastava, 2010; Soars, 2009). Richardson (2010) suggested that to retain a successful business, the digital experience, retail customer experience and the service process should be incorporated to create engagement and interaction between customers and brand, to build customer experience.

3.3 Event Management Industry

Event engagement is driven by a unique combination of emotional and brand elements that can create significant positive outcomes, such as likelihood to recommend and purchase intent, which is highly predictive of sales (Pettit et al., 2008). Events and sponsorships are tools for experiential marketing that focus on customer/consumer experiences, and treat people as emotionally and rationally driven within a holistic framework of experience. Event include trade show, exhibitions, conferences, conventions, company annual meetings, religious crusades, etc. Trade shows have a unique viral effect and they influence the attendees, large numbers of whom also influence their peers, something that most advertising does not do (Pettit et al., 2008).

Event marketing offers an additional advantage, in that it actively engages the consumer with the brand and its personality. Brand awareness, sales, and image enhancement are the common reasons for participating in event marketing (Pettit et al., 2008). Drengner et al., (2008) evaluated the effects of event marketing on consumer attitudes towards the brand, and they found that flow has a meaningful indirect effect on the event image via positive emotions. Flow is described as the enjoyable psychological state we feel when totally immersed in an activity, and achieving strong flow should be central to any brand manager’s plans. According to Robertson and Wilson, (2008), for an experiential campaign such as festive event to deliver much and produce long-term value to the customer, the brand must know exactly how impact will be measured and the objectives of the event.

3.4 Airline Industry

In airline industry, brand image is the second important factor after safety (Alagöz and Ekici, 2014). Safety first! In their study of the effect of experiential marketing on the vacation experience of customers of Turkish Airlines, Alagöz and Ekici, (2014) found a linear relationship between vacation experience and experiential brand perception, and that the change of vacation class also causes a change in quality and quantity of experience. Virgin Airlines had made an interesting effort to make flights more entertaining by serving music, food, fun and vacation together (Alagöz and Ekici, 2014). Saviolo and Marazza (2013) have asserted that lifestyle brands aimed to sell something more than the core product, as they incorporate a certain way of life into the brand, in ways that describe the people who are using them - their group, status and aspirations. Experience marketing helps consumers to feel the connection of generic functional benefits to the emotional lifestyle benefits (Akanmu, 2013).

3.5 Health Care and Pharma Industry

Health care is service industry, which on normal condition of the consumer it is undesirable, but in an abnormal condition, it is inevitable (Berry and Beudapudi, 2007). The consumers of health care product (such as medical devices and pharmaceuticals) could be divided into two: (i) professionals (doctors, pharmaceutics, nurse etc), and (ii) patients. Aside from over-the-counter drugs, the professionals are involved in acquisition, prescription and administration of recommended drugs to the patients. Majority of the consumers (patients) of health care service lack the technical knowledge. According to Berry and Beudapudi, (2007), health care final consumers are often the sick, reluctant, relinquish privacy, and at risk of diagnosis error while the health care providers are often stressed.

Gheorghe et al. (2017), have studied the elements which make up the experiential marketing in health care services with focus on Y-generation demographics, and proposed a model to evaluate the outcome effect. They identified interpersonal communication and loyalty as the vital effect, while the elements consist of sensorial, affective, cognitive, physical and relationship experience

The mature markets have been evolving economically, demographically and structurally, but pharma has not kept abreast of the changes (PwC, 2020). Patients want medicines for conditions Generations X simply endured and they make use of internet learn about it from afar, and share their opinion mostly about the treatment satisfaction and side-effects (PwC, 2012). Experiential marketing could be used to promote the brand of healthcare products that provide effective therapeutic outcome – the customer value.

3.6 Other Industry

Kustini (2011) has evaluated the impacts of experiential marketing, emotional branding and brand trust towards loyalty on Honda motorcycle products. The result showed that brand trust and experiential marketing could have positive and significant influence towards loyalty. In real estate, experiential marketing is an integrated marketing and managing system, including every segment of the process from product design to marketing, in a thematic strategy (Zhao and Zhang, 2009). Experiential marketing can be a strategy that leads to greater loyalty in the banking in terms of engagement with the customer through the technology, the bank's agency internal environment, and product and service experimentation for a certain time at no charge (Oliveira et al., 2020). Lovelock (1997) has proposed that the degree of trust and loyalty towards products or services depends on several factors including the cost of shifting to other brand, quality and quantity of substitute goods or service quality of substitute services, the risk of using substitute, and the shifts in level of satisfaction of substitutes. Experiential marketing has found application in automotive, real estate, banking, FMCG and other industries in emerging markets (Youssef and Abdallah, 2016), in different countries including Nigeria.

4. Experiential marketing: perspectives from Nigeria

Akanmu (2013), defined experiential marketing as “getting the customer to experience in all her senses as much as possible the product proposition to create a positive experience that stays with them such that they become advocates or missionaries for the brand”. In Nigeria, experience marketing has become so critical to brands to cut through the media clutter, and it should be part of an integrated marketing communications program with advertising, public relation, on-line (digital) and sponsorship (Akanmu, 2013). The Experiential Marketers Association of Nigeria (EXMAN) is the sectoral trade body for forward-looking experiential marketing communications agencies in Nigeria, with a vision to be the respected force for the growth of Nigeria’s brands through meaningful experiences. EXMAN found an annual experiential summit and industry awards, and maintains strategic relationships with internationally recognized experiential marketing institutions.

Experiential marketing platform connects brand and their consumers through shared passions. The essence of branding is to stand out from the crowd. A holistic approach to brand building and consumer engagement, is required for a business to become and remain market leader. It is believed that brands need extraordinary ideas which can create emotional connections, fuel conversations and

deliver business results, and that storytelling is greater uniter than the media touchpoints. Understanding of the market dynamics, consumers' lifestyles or psychography, and a thorough involvement in brand equities are instrumental in the delivery of a unique brand experience that guarantees return on investment. To get profitable results and positive reactions from the markets, the must be mixture of creativity with sound strategy, consumer's insight, market intelligence, and full drops of commitment.

Wei and Tootle (2002) have described reality television as a program that simulate real-world, real-life psychologically, mentally or emotionally challenging situations, involving reward-motivated, and the contestants act spontaneously, improvise, and showcase their real emotions in meeting the challenges they encounter in real settings. In Nigeria, experiential marketing has been incorporated to recent reality programmes such as Big Brother Naija (2020 Edition), where the housemates were involved in live dramatic and storytelling of the products and position the brand for consumers or viewers engagement. A study has shown that "Big Brother Naija" reality TV program effectively positioned the brand behind its sponsorship among university students (Ogunade, 2018).

5. The future of experiential marketing

With the pace of increase in knowledge of computer applications in all areas of modern world, Generation X has given birth to Generation Y. In 2020, the S.E.E. of Generation Y is changing to a new normal called "virtual engagement", as a result of lockdown and social distancing measures to curtail the coronavirus pandemic globally. Businesses are going virtual to engage with their existing and new consumers, so that they can continue to exist in the market place. Many organizations are downsizing their employees as a result of virtual engagement that has altered the physical touchpoints, flow and atmosphere of marketing. Futuristically, the Generation Z consumers will be characterized by high prestige, virtual-minded, ego, gamification, achievement-oriented and heroic, and these traits will be based on key values such as desire, self-identity, flexibility, collaboration, speed, integrity, entertainment, and innovation. Gamified businesses can positively drive engagement, interaction, collaboration, awareness and learning by combining fun and happiness (Dettori, 2019; Suh and Wagner, 2017; Lucassen and Jansen, 2014).

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