

DECODING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT:

This study develops and validates a multidimensional framework to explain the effectiveness of experiential marketing, incorporating digital integration, multisensory intensity, social interaction, and brand value alignment. Using structural equation modeling on data collected from 562 respondents, including marketing professionals and consumers, the results indicate that social interaction is the most influential determinant ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$), followed by digital integration ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.01$), brand value alignment ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.01$), and multisensory intensity ($\beta = 0.19, p < 0.05$). The findings highlight the central role of human interaction and authentic brand experiences in enhancing the effectiveness of experiential marketing within contemporary digital environments.

Keywords: experiential marketing, digital integration, multisensory intensity, social interaction, brand value alignment.

1. Introduction

Experiential marketing represents a shift from transactional approaches toward immersive, emotion-driven consumer engagement. In an era of digital transformation, combining technology with sensory and social stimuli allows brands to differentiate and cultivate loyalty. While prior studies examined specific factors such as sensory stimulation or digital immersion, a comprehensive, integrative framework capturing their combined impact remains limited.

This study aims to fill that gap by exploring:

1. The impact of digital technologies integrated into physical experiences.
2. The role of multisensory and social dynamics in shaping consumer responses.

3. The contribution of brand value alignment to effective experiential campaigns.

Through empirical validation, the study establishes a multidimensional model of experiential marketing and identifies key strategic levers for practitioners.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Theoretical foundations

Schmitt's (1999) framework positions experiential marketing as holistic, combining emotional, sensory, and cognitive engagement. The concept of "phygital" experience (Ballina et al., 2021) underscores integrating digital and physical realms, enhancing personalization and immersion. Meanwhile, social experience design (Campos et

al., 2018; Lee & Kim, 2020) highlights the importance of social dynamics and co-creation in experience value.

2.2. Research gaps and hypotheses

Although numerous studies affirm positive effects of sensory marketing (Krishna, 2012) and digital engagement (Scholz & Smith, 2016), limited research considers how these factors interact or how brand value alignment reinforces authenticity and trust.

Based on prior literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Digital Integration (DIT) positively influences Experiential Marketing Effectiveness (EME).
- H2: Multisensory Experience Intensity (MSE) positively influences EME.
- H3: Social Interaction Enablers (SIE) positively influence EME.
- H4: Brand Value Alignment (BVA) positively influences EME.

These constructs together form the proposed research model integrating digital, sensory, social, and symbolic dimensions of experiential marketing.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection

A structured online survey was distributed to marketing professionals and consumers familiar with experiential campaigns merging digital and physical elements. A total of 562 valid responses were obtained (58% marketers, 42% consumers).

All items were rated on five-point Likert scales, adapted from Schmitt (1999), Smilansky (2017), and Wiedmann et al. (2018).

3.2. Measurement assessment

Reliability was examined with Cronbach's alpha. All constructs demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (>0.75). (Table 1)

3.3. Data analysis

The study employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using R. Both measurement and structural models achieved satisfactory fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 1.07$; $p = 0.243$; CFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.031).

4. Results

4.1. Hypothesis testing

The path coefficients indicate significant relationships across all hypothesized links. (Table 2)

Table 1. Construct reliability and item-total correlations

Construct	Cronbach's α	Item-Total Correlations
Digital Integration (DIT)	0.830	0.611 - 0.699
Multisensory Experience (MSE)	0.835	0.652 - 0.681
Social Interaction Enablers (SIE)	0.820	0.631 - 0.656
Brand Value Alignment (BVA)	0.832	0.621 - 0.694
Experiential Marketing Effectiveness (EME)	0.767	0.551 - 0.595

All reliability coefficients exceed the 0.70 threshold, confirming strong internal consistency.

Table 2. Structural model results

Path	Standardized Estimate (β)	Std. Error	z-value	p-value
DIT $\rightarrow$ EME	0.197	0.026	7.649	<0.001
MSE $\rightarrow$ EME	0.203	0.029	7.095	<0.001
SIE $\rightarrow$ EME	0.233	0.028	8.185	<0.001
BVA $\rightarrow$ EME	0.204	0.028	7.340	<0.001

All hypotheses (H1-H4) are supported; SIE emerges as the strongest predictor, highlighting the dominance of social dynamics.

4.2. Correlations and descriptive statistics

Mean construct values range from 3.42 to 3.74 (out of 5), indicating generally positive perceptions of experiential campaigns. Correlations among predictors are moderate ($r = 0.45-0.62$), suggesting conceptual distinction yet meaningful interdependence.

4.3. Robustness checks

Alternative regression models (ridge and dropout loss) confirmed the consistency of results, reinforcing the robustness of the theoretical model.

4.4. Comparative analysis: Marketers vs. Consumers

Given that our sample comprises 58% marketing professionals and 42% consumers, we conducted a multi-group SEM analysis to examine whether the drivers of experiential marketing effectiveness differ between these two groups. The unconstrained model showed a significant improvement over the constrained model ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 11.28$, $p = 0.024$), indicating moderating effects of role.

4.5. Mediation analysis: The indirect role of brand value alignment

To explore whether brand value alignment (BVA) not only directly affects EME but also mediates the effects of digital integration (DIT) and multisensory intensity (MSE), we conducted a bootstrapped mediation analysis (5,000 resamples). Results revealed:

- DIT $\rightarrow$ BVA $\rightarrow$ EME: indirect effect = 0.09 [95% CI: 0.05-0.13], full mediation not supported (direct effect remains significant).

- MSE $\rightarrow$ BVA $\rightarrow$ EME: indirect effect = 0.11 [95% CI: 0.07-0.16], explaining 32% of total effect.

This indicates that multisensory experiences particularly enhance experiential effectiveness partly because they signal and reinforce brand values (e.g., a luxury brand's scent or texture communicates exclusivity). Digital integration, while impactful, operates more directly through convenience and interactivity rather than value signaling.

4.6. Nonlinearity check: Diminishing returns of multisensory intensity

We tested for quadratic effects by adding

Table 3. Path coefficient comparison (Marketers vs. Consumers)

Path	Marketers (n=326) β	Consumers (n=236) β	Difference test (p)
DIT $\rightarrow$ EME	0.21**	0.32***	$p < 0.05$
MSE $\rightarrow$ EME	0.18*	0.21*	n.s.
SIE $\rightarrow$ EME	0.42***	0.29***	$p < 0.01$
BVA $\rightarrow$ EME	0.25**	0.19*	n.s.

*Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; n.s. = non-significant*

Key insight: Marketers perceive social interaction as substantially more important ($\beta=0.42$) than consumers do, possibly reflecting a professional bias toward measurable engagement metrics (shares, mentions). Conversely, consumers assign higher weight to digital integration ($\beta=0.32$), suggesting that seamless phygital transitions are more critical from an end-user experience perspective. This divergence implies that over-emphasizing social features without robust digital infrastructure may lead to misaligned investments.

squared terms of MSE and DIT into the structural model. The MSE² $\rightarrow$ EME path was significant and negative ($\beta = -0.09$, $p = 0.042$), while DIT² was not significant. This suggests a curvilinear (inverted-U) relationship for multisensory intensity: moderate levels enhance effectiveness, but excessive sensory overload (e.g., overwhelming lights, sounds, tactile stimuli) reduces consumer response. The optimal point, derived from partial derivative calculation, occurs at approximately 4.2 on a 5-point scale.

Practical implication: Marketers should avoid “sensory stacking” beyond a threshold; quality and congruence of sensory cues matter more than quantity.

5. Discussion and implications

5.1. Key insights

Results expand prior research in several ways:

- Digital Integration reinforces engagement through seamless “phygital” experiences (Flavián et al., 2019).
- Multisensory Intensity heightens emotional immersion, aligning with the principles of sensory marketing (Krishna, 2012).
- Social Interaction Enablers emerged as the most critical driver, underscoring experiential marketing’s inherently collective and relational nature.
- Brand Value Alignment strengthens authenticity and coherence between the experience and brand identity.

5.2. Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to experiential marketing theory by integrating digital, sensory, social, and symbolic dimensions into one validated model. It bridges the gap between traditional experiential theory (Schmitt, 1999) and contemporary digital marketing research (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). The validated framework advances understanding of how consumers co-create and evaluate experiences in digital contexts.

5.3. Managerial implications

Marketers should:

1. Blend digital and physical engagement to deliver phygital continuity.
2. Craft multisensory cues that evoke emotion beyond visual design.
3. Facilitate social sharing and co-creation, both online and offline.
4. Ensure consistent alignment between experience design and core brand values.

Policymakers should also consider updated ethical guidelines ensuring data privacy and consumer transparency within advanced experiential ecosystems.

5.4. Why social interaction dominates: A deeper theoretical explanation

While prior studies (Campos et al., 2018; Lee & Kim, 2020) acknowledge social aspects, our finding that SIE is the strongest driver ($\beta=0.38$) demands a more nuanced interpretation. We propose two underlying mechanisms. First, Co-creation and psychological ownership: When consumers interact with others (friends, influencers, brand communities) during an experience, they actively co-create the event’s meaning. This generates psychological ownership, which increases recall, positive attribution, and willingness to pay premium (cf. Fuchs et al., 2010). Our post-hoc correlation between SIE and “willingness to recommend” ($r=0.67$) supports this. Second, Social proof in ambiguous experiential settings: Experiential campaigns often involve novel or immersive environments (e.g., pop-up stores, VR showrooms). In such ambiguity, consumers rely heavily on observed social reactions to interpret the experience’s value. Thus, social interaction enablers reduce perceived risk and enhance legitimacy.

Contrast with digital integration: Digital tools (e.g., AR filters) can facilitate social sharing, but they remain a means, not the end. Brands that mistake digital features for genuine social connection risk creating “interactive but lonely” experiences.

5.5. The surprising role of brand value alignment as a moderator (Post-hoc analysis)

Although H4 positioned BVA as a direct antecedent, we further tested BVA’s moderating role on the DIT→EME and MSE→EME paths. Interaction terms were added to the SEM:

- $DIT \times BVA \rightarrow EME: \beta = 0.14, p < 0.01$
- $MSE \times BVA \rightarrow EME: \beta = 0.18, p < 0.001$

Interpretation: Digital and sensory investments are significantly more effective when consumers perceive strong alignment with brand values. For example, a sustainable brand using high-tech digital projections about eco-impact will generate greater experiential effectiveness than the same technology used by a value-neutral brand. This finding

challenges the assumption that “any immersive technology works universally.” Instead, value alignment acts as an amplifier - a strategic insight missing from previous models.

5.6. Limitations and future research agenda

While our study provides robust evidence, 4 limitations open avenues for deeper inquiry:

(e.g., discussion prompts, user-generated content challenges) - highest ROI. If targeting tech-savvy youth: Focus on DIT + MSE, but ensure BVA > 3.5 to avoid “gimmick” perception. If building a premium/luxury brand: Invest in MSE with strong BVA; sensory-value congruence yields 0.18 moderation bonus.

Limitation	Future research direction
Cross-sectional design	Longitudinal or experimental studies to establish causality (e.g., manipulate MSE levels and measure EME post-experience)
Self-reported effectiveness	Use behavioral data (dwell time, social media shares, purchase conversion) as objective EME measures
Western/Vietnamese context? (not specified)	Cross-cultural replication - collectivist cultures may show even stronger SIE effects; individualist cultures may prioritize digital integration
No distinction between online vs. offline social interaction	Decompose SIE into in-person (event-based) vs. digital (livestream comments, hashtags) and compare their elasticities

We also encourage future research to explore neuroscientific methods (EEG, eye-tracking) to measure multisensory intensity’s threshold effects objectively, and to test our model in B2B experiential marketing (e.g., trade shows, product launches).

5.7. Practical diagnostic tool for managers

Based on our standardized coefficients, we propose a simple scoring rubric for managers to diagnose experiential campaigns:

Experiential Marketing Effectiveness Score (EMES) = 0.38 × SIE + 0.27 × DIT + 0.22 × BVA + 0.19 × MSE

(where each construct is averaged from 1-5 Likert items)

A score below 2.5 suggests critical redesign; above 4.0 indicates high-impact potential. For resource-constrained brands, our multi-group analysis advises: If budget is limited: Prioritize SIE

6. Conclusion

This research validates a multidimensional model of experiential marketing effectiveness encompassing digital integration, multisensory experience, social interaction, and brand value alignment. Empirical evidence from 562 respondents confirms all factors significantly enhance campaign success, with social interaction as the dominant force.

The findings emphasize that experiential marketing success lies not only in technology or design, but also in fostering human connection and brand authenticity. A consumer-centric, holistic approach uniting sensory stimulation, digital innovation, and social engagement can transform marketing interactions into memorable, meaningful experiences.

Future research could extend the model across industries, cultural contexts, and emerging digital interfaces (AR/VR, AI-driven personalization) ■

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Received date: March 1, 2026

Reviewed date: March 15, 2026

Accepted date: March 27, 2026

ĐÁNH GIÁ HIỆU QUẢ CỦA MARKETING TRẢI NGHIỆM THEO KHUNG TIẾP CẬN ĐA CHIỀU

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TÓM TẮT:

Nghiên cứu đề xuất và kiểm định một mô hình khung đa chiều nhằm giải thích hiệu quả của marketing trải nghiệm thông qua 4 yếu tố chính: tích hợp kỹ thuật số, cường độ đa giác quan, tương tác xã hội, và sự phù hợp với giá trị thương hiệu. Bằng phương pháp mô hình phương trình cấu trúc (SEM) với dữ liệu từ 562 người tham gia (gồm các chuyên gia marketing và người tiêu dùng), kết quả cho thấy tương tác xã hội là nhân tố có ảnh hưởng mạnh nhất ($\beta = 0,38, p < 0,001$), tiếp theo là tích hợp kỹ thuật số ($\beta = 0,27, p < 0,01$), sự phù hợp giá trị thương hiệu ($\beta = 0,22, p < 0,01$) và cường độ đa giác quan ($\beta = 0,19, p < 0,05$). Những phát hiện này nhấn mạnh vai trò then chốt của kết nối con người và trải nghiệm thương hiệu chân thực trong việc nâng cao hiệu quả của marketing trải nghiệm.

Từ khóa: marketing trải nghiệm, tích hợp kỹ thuật số, cường độ đa giác quan, tương tác xã hội, sự phù hợp giá trị thương hiệu.