



Building brand equity through experiential marketing

Case study: Brand X

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Degree Thesis
International Business
2018

DEGREE THESIS	
Arcada	
Degree Programme:	International Business
Identification number:	
Author:	Milla Vaajoensuu
Title:	Building brand equity through experiential marketing
Supervisor (Arcada):	Christel Willför
Commissioned by:	None
<p>Abstract: The aim of this thesis was to examine how brand equity can be built through experiential marketing efforts. The focus was on various brand equity dimensions and how experiences, as means of marketing, influence them. The brand equity dimensions were first defined; along with ways brand's value can be strengthened and maintained. After that, experiential marketing as a method of modern marketing was introduced together with the ways it can efficiently affect brand's equity. The possibilities and requirements of experiential campaigns were also presented and examined. The study used a combination of secondary and primary data. For secondary data, literature, articles and journals from the field of marketing and brand management were collected and critically analyzed. The secondary research was done in order to gain a comprehensive understanding on the prevailing theories and concepts of the studied topic. Primary data was gathered using qualitative research method of case study. The descriptive case study studied an experiential campaign, constituting of two events, conducted by the case brand during the summer of 2018. Additionally, the case study used observations, to gain insight from the event executions. Case brand's usage of experiential marketing as a form of building the brand's value was examined and evaluated in the light of secondary research findings. The results show that brand X's experiential execution included many brand equity building activities. The brand targeted audiences with brand-related, engaging activations, sampling as well as visually appealing content. Additionally, brand X involved social media in the campaign to integrate the message also through other channels and to reach even higher amount of consumers. The experiential campaign was to create a positive engram that will last long and guide consumers towards purchasing in later circumstances. The campaign conducted by brand X, and the observations and analyses grounded on it, are to motivate brands to adopt experiences as major part of their brand building activities. To deepen the results even further, the changes in brand X's value prior and after the event execution could be evaluated.</p>	
Keywords:	Experiential marketing, event marketing, brand equity, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand management, observation, case study
Number of pages:	48
Language:	English
Date of acceptance:	

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FOREWORD

Due to my current work placement, I have begun to understand the great amount of opportunities provided by marketing. I have learned how different marketing communicational element can be used, in different stages of brand lifecycle, and what sort of an impact they have on consumers. The broad and continuously changing field had shown me how through creative, yet rational decisions, brand and its value can be raised to another level.

The reason experiential marketing is close to my heart, has a lot to do with its nature. There are no rules in experiential marketing; creativity is what makes each experience so unique and capturing for its audience. Additionally, the feelings, perceptions, opinions and experiences created by engaging events are all real, truthfully representing the market's response to the brand's communication.

As I have gained experience in the production side of marketing, I am increasingly interesting in the creative side as well. Only by examining occurring marketing campaigns is it possible to keep up with the latest experiential trends and how they are integrated into other marketing channels.

My simultaneous work as a production coordinator has helped me a lot with the writing process, and it has been both educative and interesting to learn how theory goes well hand in hand with what I have repeatedly learned on the field. Additionally, this thesis has deepened my academic knowledge, thus providing me with a better strategic proficiency that will be extremely beneficial later on in my career.

1 INTRODUCTION

The constant marketing clutter and an abundance of brands available has created a situation where consumers' attention is scarce. (Smilansky, 2009; Smith & Hannover, 2016) It is increasingly difficult to capture consumers' attention, not to mention awareness and

loyalty towards a certain brand. Companies aim at seeking for connection to customers with real customer-centric marketing activities. (Newman, 2015)

Experiential marketing is to create a tighter bond between the consumer and the brand by engaging them into a memorable experience (Smilansky, 2009). It is used as a part of marketing campaign, in the form of live, interactive brand experiences (Schmitt, 1999). In the world where everything can be blocked out, experiential marketing represents the ultimate marketing effort customer don't have a direct control over (Smith & Hannover, 2016).

The positive emotions and reaction created by a brand experience, are later associated with that particular brand. Furthermore, this often leads to brand loyalty, increased brand equity and stronger possibility for future sales (Wood, 2009). It has been argued that experiential marketing is much more powerful and effective than any other kind of marketing (The Huffington Post, 2017).

The new, experiential era, places emphasis on giving back to consumers by engaging them into memorable brand-relevant experiences that add value to their lives. Consumers will remember the brand and ultimately choose it over another. "Not because it shouted the loudest, but because it gave them an unforgettable experience", concludes Smilansky (2009).

Its successfulness is, however, harder to measure as the conversions may occur much further in the future. In addition to the short-term objectives such as increased sales, word-of-mouth and brand awareness, experiential marketing events generate value also in longer term. (Gupta, 2003) These benefits include changes in one's beliefs and attitudes, which contribute on the brand equity, and finally on increased revenue. (Sneath *et al.*, 2005)

Even if event marketing is viewed as a valuable method in gaining awareness for the brand and its corporate image, fewer studies have been conducted on its capability to transfer specific and complex messages across audiences and support the dimensions of brand equity. (Gupta, 2003)

The thesis topic is relevant as the various means of conducting an experiential marketing campaign, along with its effects are still somewhat unknown. Often companies overlook the power of experiential marketing, as they might not be aware of the ways it can create value, and how is this value determined and assessed. (Wood, 2009). Experiential marketing agencies task is therefore to prove and justify the appropriate usage of experiences as a major part of brand's marketing activities.

1.1 Thesis Background

I chose to research experiential marketing, as prior knowledge and experience in the field has been gained through work placement in an agency designing and creating live brand experiences. I have been employed in experiential marketing agency, at first as a promoter for several years, and later as a production coordinator. Therefore, useful information on the practical event productions has been gained and the power of properly conducted experiential event has been acknowledged. Furthermore, the vast potential of event marketing and the great amount of possibilities it can provide, not only for the executing agency, but also for all stakeholders, has been apprehended in a practical way.

To demonstrate the practical usage of experiential marketing, a case study is presented in the discussion part of the thesis. Brand's experiential efforts are examined and evaluated in the light of secondary data theories and findings from previous chapters. Observations on two events are also collected, in order to gain insights on how the case brand uses experiences to increase its equity.

1.2 Research Aim and Questions

The thesis looks into the major theories of brand equity and experiential marketing as well as live experiences as a part of brand's marketing mix. It addresses the problem of how experiential marketing can be used in order to effectively contribute to brand's value and thus its equity. The ways experiential campaigns affect the main dimensions of brand equity are being examined and compared with theoretical findings. The clearly structured and well-motivated benefits are to encourage brands and companies to adopt live experiences as a starting point for their marketing and brand-building planning.

The thesis is to answer several questions concerning the usage of experiential marketing as a part of a brand's marketing plan. The main research questions are the following:

- How can experiential marketing bring value to a brand?
- How can experiential marketing affect the different dimensions of brand equity?

The thesis will also answer the following sub questions:

- What are the key elements of brand equity?
- How can brand equity be built and maintained?
- How has brand X used experiential marketing?
- What are the possible objectives and outcomes of brand X's experiential campaign?

1.3 Limitation

The thesis studies experiential marketing and how it creates value to brands, in the form of brand equity. As the scope of the research, solely B2C-markets are being examined, even though the B2B-market in experiential marketing is currently at its peak.

The research includes already existing literature on brand equity, its various definitions along with ways of building and sustaining it. This literature also shows the benefits of great brand equity for the overall financial profitability of a company.

The thesis will only briefly look into the definition of experiential marketing and to the various ways it can be used to create engaging experiences. Major theories of experiential marketing are also briefly discussed; together with the most common objectives brands have towards conducting experiential campaigns.

The thesis covers only brand equity definitions that are commonly used in the literature reviewed. The definitions covered are solely based on psychology-based definition, as they can be perceived as more relevant determinants when considering the usage of ex-

periential marketing. In addition, the economy-based models and theories are not covered in the thesis, but do appear in many important literatures studying brand equity and its measuring methods. The thesis research is limited to metrics that are commonly used to evaluate the performance of a brand.

Ultimately, the main driving factor behind all marketing actions, as well as behind building and sustaining brand equity, is universally the same: to generate financial benefits for the company. Through sales, monetary resources are gained and shareholders are kept content. The thesis looks beyond these monetary factors, and the economic value they provide, focusing on intangible benefits experiential marketing has on brand's value instead. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that behind majority of psychology-based brand management strategies lays the same monetary objective of increased future revenue.

Aaker's (1991) and Keller's (1998) brand equity models are introduced in the first chapter and later used as a framework in the following chapters. Regardless of the models' old age, they are the most cited in brand management literature and still work as a functioning base for today's researches on the topic of brand equity. It is acknowledged that despite the popularity of these two models, they may contain errors. They may not be applicable across all markets, cultures or segments, as the definition of brand has become increasingly broad. However, critique on the validity and extent to which the model can be utilized, is not included in the thesis.

Furthermore, since the word "experience" holds within a number of definitions in the fields of business, philosophy and psychology (Schmitt, 2011), this paper focuses on its definitions and usage in the field of marketing management. Thus, the consumer behavioural and mental side of experiential marketing is not covered in this thesis.

1.4 Approach and Material

The thesis focuses on the most prominent and used theories and concepts in the field of study. The main study areas for this thesis are brand equity, brand equity building, experiential marketing and brand building through experiential marketing.

The research questions are answered by combining existing information and theories, and justifying it with primary information discovered from the case study. The theoretical framework is being compared to the practical methods used by the case brand, and suggestions for brand equity building through experiential marketing are being made on that basis.

For secondary data the research uses articles, journals, books and Internet sources released in the topic of brand equity and experiential marketing. The thesis presents an overview of major schools of thought and main findings in the area of brand equity building and the outcomes of experiential marketing.

The brand equity section covers the most common concepts in brand equity and brand equity building. Various models are being examined along with the versatile definitions of brand equity. The sources of brand equity are listed and described, together with the common methods of sustaining and building it.

The experiential marketing section studies the usage of experiential marketing, in addition to the most common objectives and types of experiences. The chapter also covers the ways experiential marketing provides value to the different dimension of a brand and its overall equity.

As a source of primary data, a qualitative research of case study is being conducted. The case study is descriptive, as it aims at describing phenomena that occur in real-life situations. The case study is to specify the phenomena and to give a more familiar view on the topic. In addition, the case study research is to explain the causal link between brand equity management and the usage of experiential efforts in brand's marketing plan. The case study research is to determine whether the provided theories and findings are applicable and used in the real world.

The case study looks into the experiential activities brand X has conducted in the course of summer 2018. The strategies the brands used in order to strengthen its brand equity are also a topic of discussion. The thesis examines the ways said brand has exploited experiential marketing as a means of communicating with audiences and affecting the brand's equity. Author's observations in these events are being collected and analysed,

in the light of primary research findings. The case study is used to explain the process of brand equity building in a practical way and how experiences are utilized in the process. Additionally, the case research defines and analyses the possible outcomes of the experiential campaign.

1.5 Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis is based on analysing the different theories and insights provided by the existing literature. The primary data is analysed and compared with secondary data collected in prior circumstances, in order to answer the research questions. The aim is to understand the complexity of brand equity, and how it can be affected by experiential efforts. In addition, aim for primary data collection is to discover motivations and objectives that are already used in the field, by the biggest brands, but do not yet appear in written sources.

Most of the theoretical material has been collected and analysed prior to conducting the primary research. Firstly, the major findings of secondary data are being analysed. Secondly, primary data is being described and interpreted, while taking into consideration the found theories. Lastly, the finding of primary data are analysed and compared to theories and concepts of secondary data.

As the secondary research comprises of two, rather broad topics with several and scattered definitions, there are no complete pieces of literature that would deeply address their interrelationship. For this reason, both of the key concepts are studied in their own chapters, but later brought together by the case study research.

Due to the limitations specified earlier, the collected data does not aim at defining the issue comprehensively, but rather interpreting the similarities and shared opportunities. The discussion part and analysis of case study brand is not limited to chosen theories. Hence, the last chapter also covers issues that have arisen during the research process and while investigating the actions of the case study brand.

1.6 Expected Results

At first, the expected results will be to construct a foundation on why brand equity management is important and why is experiential marketing useful in generating it. Secondly, the research is expected to discover the significant reasons for exploiting experiential marketing as a major part of brand's marketing program. Ways of determining its possible effects on the case brand's brand equity dimensions is additionally among the objectives of the research.

The expected results are to benefit both, brands and experiential agencies. By pointing out the positive impact experiential marketing has on brands and its profitability, it will contribute on the rising interest and trend of using experiences and events as a means of marketing. The listing of underlying benefits will address the existing concern of the notability of experiential marketing. Thus, agencies are better able to justify the investment and generate more sales. For consumers, the expected results of the research, and its value for stakeholders, will consequence on more versatile, engaging and entertaining brand experiences.

2 BRAND EQUITY

Brands are more than names or symbols. They represent all the elements that constitute company's relationship with consumers. Brands reflect consumers' perception and emotions towards a product and its performance. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012)

Brands are therefore extremely effective in impacting the way people perceive products as brands hold within an enormous amount of valuable aspects that are to influence the consumer behaviour, in both, positive and negative manner. (Keller, 2013) Brands contain the future revenue of the company, whereby measuring, understanding and managing the different aspect of the brand is critical in sustaining optimal brand growth. (Kaur, 2016)

This chapter is based on the literature review. Firstly, the various definitions on brand equity are presented. Secondly, two of the most popular brand equity theories are pre-

sented and illustrated with figures. According to said models, the dimensions of brand equity are specified. Lastly, the most prominent sources of brand equity are listed and defined, along with ways they add value to brand equity. In addition, the ways brand equity is managed, sustained and build are described.

2.1 Definitions

The marketing concept of brand equity emerged in the 1980s (Keller, 2003, p.42), as a response to the attempt to signify the relationship between brands and customers. Since its creation, brand equity has proliferated into multiple definitions that are being used depending on what aspects of the relationship are being observed (Wood, 2000). The emergence has had controversial effects on the tasks of marketers: the focus has been placed on brands' strategic planning, which in turn has resulted in scattered definition of brand equity (Keller, 2003).

Professors Srivastava & Schocker (1991), define brand equity as an incorporation of brand strength and brand value. Equity is the sum of associations and behaviours its consumers have, which account for competitive advantages towards competitors as well as superior current and future profits. While Srivastava and Schocker highlight the economic value of brand equity, other approaches interpret it as a more comprehensive manner. According to Mohsin (2009) brand equity can be classified as the total sum of the alternating values consumers link to the brand, or the holistic value the brand serves as a corporate asset to its owners. Furthermore, American Marketing Association (AMA) defines brand equity as "The value of a brand. From a consumer perspective, brand equity is based on consumer attitudes about positive brand attributes and favourable consequences of brand use."

Kapferer's (2008) explanation is additionally more focused on the intangible value, rather than economic assets provided by high equity. He determines brand equity as the key vision of the brand, comprising of its central values and beliefs. His view is focusing more on the practicalities of brand management. Brand identity's main function is to specify the uniqueness of the brand in comparison to those of competitors. The identity

is an important nominator in the brand's activities: what types of campaigns are suitable for the brand?

Generally, there are two different approaches to brand equity: financial-based (Farquhar, *et al*, 1991; Ailawadi, *et al*, 2003) and customer-based (Aaker, 1991; Keller 2003; Yoo, *et al*, 2001). The financial approach to conceptualize brand equity concerns the price premium a brand is able to set, in comparison to another, more generic brand. Marketing and other operational costs are also taken into consideration when measuring the equity (Farquhar, 1989). By quantifying the financial value of a brand, the firm is able to use the brand as a financial asset in financial statement and in sales and acquisitions (Anderson, 2011). Additionally, the financial approach provides the firm with an overview on the brand's value over time, easing the evaluation of changes and competitive factors in the market (Ailawadi, *et al*, 2003). Even if the concept of financial based brand equity is beneficial for the firm, it does not assist the process of building the equity. (Farjam, *et al*, 2015)

Two of the most well established brand equity models; Aaker (1991) and Keller (1998) rely on consumer psychology. Keller's model sees brand equity from a highly consumer behaviouristic perspective. Aaker's approach on the other hand, is mainly from corporate strategic viewpoint, but does still place emphasis on psychological aspects of consumer behaviour (Ming, 2011).

2.2 Brand Equity Model by David Aaker

David Aaker, a former marketing professor at Berkley, University of California and a respected author of multiple books in the area on branding, has created one of the most cited models, the Brand Equity Model, in his first book, "Managing Brand Equity", in 1991. The model, which has been a pioneer in the study of brand equity concepts, defines brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities. These factors add or subtract from the overall value provided by the product. His model identifies four major asset categories: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations. In addition to the main categories, a fifth one is added to represent all other proprietary as-

sets a brand may have (Aaker, 2010, p.8). Each brand equity asset brings value in different ways and thus, it is vital to manage each of them accordingly.

Aaker emphasizes that brand equity consists of intangible brand assets that if used and managed properly, add value to the product, providing profitable business for the company (Aaker, 1991, p.15-16). Aaker's model is summarized in Figure 1, which illustrates the dimensions of equity and the value they generate both for the company and for the customers.

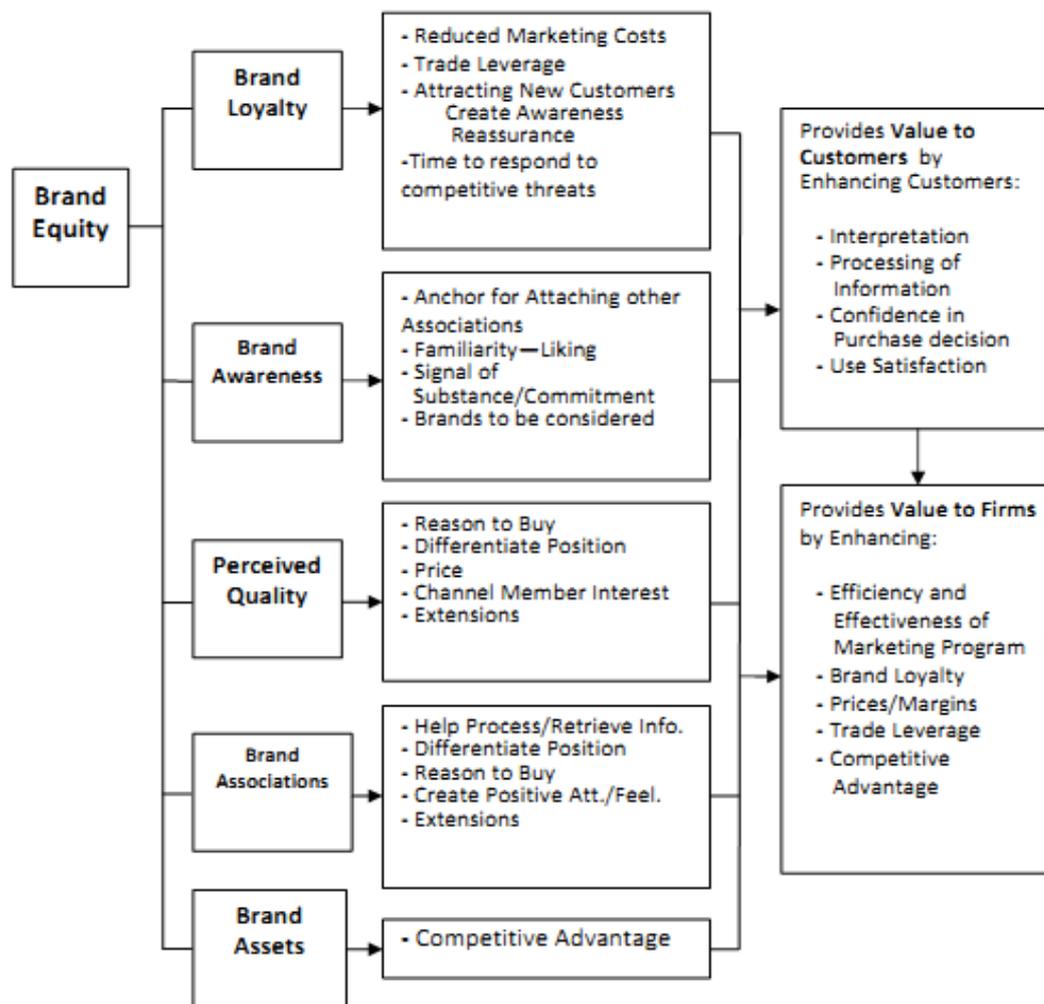


Figure 1: Aaker's Brand Equity Model (2010, p.9)

As stated in the model, brand loyalty is at the core of brand's equity. It is the measure of attachment the customer has to a brand; high loyalty signifies low probability of customer switching to a competing brand. It is a prominent dimension of brand equity, as high loyalty is often demonstrably linked to future profits and sales. (Aaker, 1991, p.39)

Brand loyalty differs from the other dimension of Aaker's model, as it is closely tied to usage experience. Furthermore, this dimension cannot exist without consumers' prior purchase and use experience. Loyalty generates value by enabling lower marketing costs and leveraging trade. Loyal customers will also ensure stable revenue, releasing time and effort to respond arising competitive situations in the market as well as raising awareness among possible future customers. (Aaker, 1991, p.42)

Brand awareness, on the other hand, stands for the consumer's ability to recall the brand and to place it under a certain product category. According to Aaker (1991; 2010), awareness comes in layers: brand recognition being the lowest, in which the brand is solely recalled by name or other attribute, and "top of mind" the highest level achievable, in which the particular brand is the only one considered.

The role of awareness in brand equity will be dependent on the level of awareness the brand achieves. Even at the recognition level, brand awareness can provide the brand with linked associations, which strengthen awareness. Another value created is increased familiarity, which can, in absence of other motivation, be enough to drive the purchase decision. (Aaker, 1991, p. 61-65)

As stated in Figure 1, perceived quality is the overall quality associated with the brand, whereby high quality attracts consumers to purchase. Companies should therefore understand the perception of quality in different customer segments and evaluate quality in comparison to competitors. High perceived quality enables the brand to differentiate from competitors and to charge premium prices that generate resources for future brand reinvestments (Aaker, 2010, p. 324). However, perceived quality and satisfaction should not be assimilated. Even if perceived quality is low, can satisfaction in some case be high. This is mostly due to low expectations in the level of product performance. (Aaker, 1991, p. 85-88)

Brand associations refer to any memory or cue that is linked to a brand. These memories can be anything, from feelings to physical characteristics or objects to lifestyles and activities. The strength of the association is based on the amount of experiences between the two parties. Aaker (1991, p.111), stresses the fact that favourable associations will

assists the differentiation and set the brand to a beneficial position in contrast to competing brands. Along with positive attitudes and feelings, associations can influence the recall of brand information and ease the purchasing process. (Aaker, 1991)

In line with the Figure 1, other brand assets indicate all valuables that bring additional economic power to the brand, affecting the overall brand equity. These assets can be trademarks, patents or market relationships that provide a competitive advantage while decreasing or preventing direct competition. (Aaker, 1991, p. 21)

In the light of Aaker's model, effectual interrelationships occur between the dimensions on brand equity. The last four dimensions are the most powerful in enhancing brand loyalty; they provide a reason to buy. Brand loyalty can therefore be seen as one of the dimensions of brand equity, as well as an outcome of other dimensions (Aaker, 2010, p. 319).

Similarly, perceived quality is influenced by loyalty (a loyal consumer would not buy a poor product), by brand association (a well-known celebrity would not endorse low-quality product) and by awareness (a popular product must be well made) (Moisescu, 2005, p. 215). Thus, it can be concluded that in Aaker's model, the dimensions of brand equity can be seen as both outputs of brand equity as well as inputs that are to form brand's strong value.

Moreover, on the basis of Aaker's model, brand equity creates value for customers in three ways. At first, brand equity can help customers to process and interpret quantities of information on different products and brands. Secondly, it has an essential impact on affecting the purchase decisions; familiar brands with high perceived quality are often chosen. Lastly, pleasant brand associations are the key to satisfaction and loyalty.

Corresponding to the model, brand equity provides valuables also for the company. Firstly, highly valued brand has a direct relation to the intensity of marketing programs and additionally, to the extent of which they are needed. Marketing events and promotional activities are more effective and cost-efficient when the main objective is not to win sceptical consumers over. For the second, all the dimensions add to loyalty, providing customers with appreciated reasons to buy. Thirdly, high equity indicates the market

is perceptive, whereby prices can be set higher. Above all, a brand that is largely recognized, preferred and valued, will obtain customers who are unwilling to change to competitors.

2.3 Customer Based Brand Equity by Kevin Lane Keller

Kevin Lane Keller, a marketing professor at Dartmouth College and a notable author of widely used literature of brand management, has developed one of the most cited brand equity models, in his textbook “Strategic Brand Management”, in 1998. The model underlines the power of consumers’ minds in the creation of a strong brand (Keller, 2003). The model has been commonly acknowledged and has provided a valuable framework for a number of brand management plans. Keller’s model is known as Customer-Based Brand Equity model (CBBE). The pyramid-shaped model defines four main levels that are to be considered in order to create a successful and well-recognized brand. The levels are:

1. Brand identity
2. Brand meaning
3. Brand response
4. Brand relationship

In relation to these four levels, additional six building blocks have been created to further accommodate the brand development. These blocks are salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings and resonance (Keller, 2001, p. 7-11).

CBBE is based on the knowledge that the power of brand is correlated on what consumers have sensed: heard, felt, and seen of the brand, as an outcome of experiences. Thus, Keller’s model emphasizes consumers’ role in the brand equity creation process. The customer-based brand equity is positive, if the reactions toward the brand are positive. This way customers are more accepting towards brand extensions and generally less sensitive to price increases. As consumers are already familiar with the brand and have rather positive feelings towards it, less can be spent on marketing communication, increasing its effectiveness. Similarly, negative reactions result in negative brand equity,

in which consumers are less accepting towards marketing efforts and more volatile in switching to competitors. (Keller, 2013; Ghodeswar, 2008)

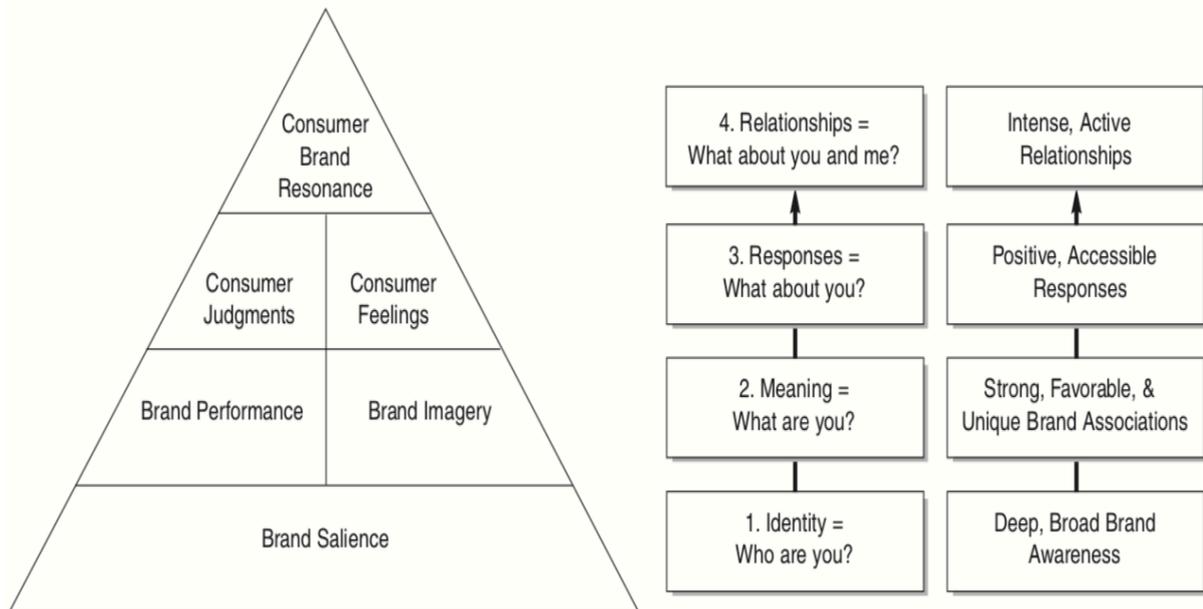


Figure 2. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model (2001, p.7)

The CBBE-pyramid's first level is salience, which refers to customers' ability and awareness to recall the brand and have knowledge of it. However, salience is more than brand recognition, it requires associations to exist: names, words, symbols or characteristics to identify the brand with. (Keller, 2003, p.76.) Deep salience influences the likelihood that the brand is considered in the purchasing situation (Keller, 2008, p.57). According to Millward Brown (2013) the reason for salience providing such advantage, is due to the habitual nature of human behaviour. Mental shortcuts are often relied on, and hence salient is of great importance. (Keller, 2001, p. 8)

As the awareness for a brand has already been established, the next level is to give the brand a meaning. Keller (2013) introduces two blocks in which meaning is generated: performance and imagery. Brand performance represents the way the product or service meets customer's functional needs, in terms of satisfaction. Imagery, on the other hand, is the extent to which the brand meets customer's need on a social level. Therefore, meaning refers to both, intangible and tangible aspects of the brand.

Keller's third level, brand response, including judgments and feelings, is based on what customers feel and think about the brand. According to Keller (2003, p. 88), these emotional responses and reactions arise as a response to brand's marketing activities. Positive feelings are effective in building the brand. Keller identifies six feelings that are the most powerful in contributing to brand building: warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval, and self-respect.

In contrast to feelings, judgment is based on customer's individual opinions. Judgment over the brand is created on the grounds of brand performance and imagery. Keller specifies 4 distinctive types of brand judgment: brand quality, brand credibility, brand consideration and brand superiority. All of the four are crucial in effecting the overall brand response that has an impact on the formed brand equity.

The top layer of the CBBE-pyramid refers to customer-brand relationship and resonance customer senses with the brand. Brand resonance is the extent to which customer feels "in sync" with the brand and its values (Keller, 2001, p. 15).

Customers with a true brand resonance are often loyal towards the brand. They are actively interacting with the brand and choosing it over any other brand. Brand resonance is among the most desired stages as it is tied to a psychological bond and generally drives interactive behaviours such as repeated purchases, events participations and word of mouth. (Alhaddad, 2015)

As building a strong customer based brand equity is a continuous process, Keller's model distinctly shows brand equity building as a process with many layers and aspects. Forming the ultimate loyalty starts form small deeds, gradually getting to upper layers and ultimately forming a strong and successful brand.

2.4 Sources of Brand Equity

Managing brand equity has become one of the top priorities in many companies (Keller, Aperia & Georgson, 2008; Aaker, 2010). As it serves as a significant asset, research has focused on how to manage and built it. Therefore, it is essential to identify and examine the sources of customer-based brand equity even further. This provides managers with

valuable insights on the drivers that contribute on strengthening brand equity. (Buil, *et al.*, 2013)

Generally, there are two main sources of brand equity. It can either arise from whether customers are knowledgeable of the brand and whether the association they have are positive and encouraging towards continuing relationships. (Campbell, 2002)

On the basis of the models by Keller (2001, 2003, 2013) and Aaker (1991, 2010), two, perhaps the most prominent brand equity dimensions are chosen for further investigation: brand awareness and brand loyalty.

2.4.1 Brand Awareness

As stated in both of the models, brand awareness: knowledge, image, recognition and recall are in prominent roles when building brand equity (Keller, 2003; Aaker, 2010). Humans do not always make rational choices, and therefore existing information and mental shortcuts are trusted upon (Keller, 2001).

In Keller's model (2001), brand awareness is the consumers' ability to recognize the brand and identify it with some mental cues and associations. Aaker's model (2010), places emphasis on the alternating power of awareness, whereby its role in building brand equity can be to create familiarity or to actually drive the purchase decision. Additionally, Aaker (1991) and Buil, *et al.*, (2010) state that awareness is the beginning of loyalty. It is thus marketers' duty to create positive feelings as a stimulus for awareness, as positive brand image will significantly increase the likelihood of repeated purchases and brand loyalty. (Keller, 1993)

Brand awareness precedes brand associations, as consumers can be well aware of a brand without having any association of it. (Romaniuk, *et al.*, 2017) Due to the primality of awareness in comparison to rest of the brand equity dimensions, awareness is considered to be vital for new brands. Although, according to some (Romaniuk, *et al.*, 2017; Keller, 2003) awareness is relevant for all brands, regardless of age or familiarity. Even the most famous brands face new category buyers, whereby awareness needs to be established.

Awareness and the right brand identity are achieved by involving memorable brand elements, such as name, slogan and symbols. Elements are to enhance awareness, facilitate the formation of unique associations and evoke favourable brand judgements and emotions. (Keller, 2001; 2003) Marketing efforts can increase the scope and frequency the consumer is exposed to the brand, and consequently increasing the level of awareness (Buil, *et al.*, 2013). Awareness and associations arise from consumer-brand contacts. On that account, intelligent marketing communication has the ability to develop, modify and strengthen the contact. With innovative marketing strategies, companies can capture consumers' awareness, which lead to favorable and unique associations (Aaker, 1991, Yoo, *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, repetition is in a key role when creating awareness; brand must be present and earn exposure to gain familiarity (Moisescu, 2005).

When building strong brand equity, it is not enough to be remembered, but to be remembered for the right reasons. In current days, among the greatest ways of creating awareness is to operate beyond the most occupied channels. This means communicating with consumers through new marketing methods: events, sampling and sponsorship, rather than pushing more and more messages on the conventional channels that are automatically blocked by savvy consumers. (Aaker, 2010; Gupta, 2003; Buil, *et al.*, 2010)

2.4.2 Brand Loyalty

According to Keller's model, brand resonance, a meaningful relationship with the brand, is the most desired stage brand managers might want to achieve. Resonance is often linked to high loyalty and active interactions with the brand. Loyalty can be classified as the most important dimension of brand equity (Keller, 2010; Moisescu, 2010). Furthermore, in Aaker's model (2003), brand loyalty is seen as the output of all the other dimensions of brand equity, as it cannot exist without prior experience with the brands.

Loyalty can generally be based on attitudinal or behavioural perspectives (Chen, 2010; Rai & Srivastava, 2012; Moisescu & Allen, 2010). Attitudinal loyalty is often tied to an emotional relationship, with positive attitudes and preferences towards the brand. Be-

havioural perspective is linked to customer's purchasing and usage behaviour, in comparison to those of competing brands. On top of these approaches, loyalty can also be situational, which refers it being highly depended on the prevailing purchasing situation (Chen. 2010).

Loyal customer base offers an amount of benefits for the company (Aaker, 2010; Keller, 2008; Moiescu & Allen, 2010). Less is spent on customer acquisitions, prices can be adjusted and loyal customers are not as accepting towards competitors' marketing efforts. Further, positive word-of-mouth is shared about the brand. "...the only path to profitable growth may lay in a company's ability to get its loyal customers to become, in effect, its marketing department." (Reichheld. 2003).

Loyal customer base enables possibilities for premium price and for combatting direct competition in the market. Due to its effectiveness in affecting the brand's value, thus its equity, loyalty can work as a framework for evaluating other brand dimensions. Loyalty works as a reflection of brand strength, being the output of brand awareness and image. (Keller, 2002; Moiescu & Allen, 2010)

Only the amount of repeated purchases is not sufficient indicator of brand loyalty (Reichheld, 2003; Moiescu & Allen, 2010). In some cases, an unsatisfied customer will keep on buying the brand, even if the feelings towards it are indifferent. Similarly, some extremely loyal customer may not make frequent purchases, due to the nature of the brand, e.g. a new car is needed less often than toothpaste. (Reichheld, 2003)

2.5 Building Brand Equity

"...strong brands do not just happen." (Aaker, 2010, p. 358)

According to Keller (2003; 2013) in order to build brand equity, company has to shape the way consumers think and feel about the brand. Equity is defined as the power that is associated with what customers have learned, felt, seen and heard about the brand in their own experiences. The problem for marketers is, undeniably, to ensure that consumers have the right type of experiences, accompanying proper perceptions and opin-

ions to be associated with the brand. Brand equity is created, managed and built by strengthening all the dimensions on brand equity (Yoo, *et al.*, 2000).

When a brand is built on a strong enough foundation, different marketing activities can play a vital role in building brand equity (Keller, 2000). To build a strong brand that will win over loyal customers, an effective, yet clear specification on the brand image and position need to be made. Brand’s marketing program must not only focus on brand attributes, but to include all symbols of the identity, along with the best creative strategies and excellent execution from marketing partners (Aaker, 2010). An intensive brand execution requires the right marketing tools, which are more than traditional advertising. The strong brands of tomorrow must use interactive means to create relationship-building experiences. (Aaker, *et al.* 2000)

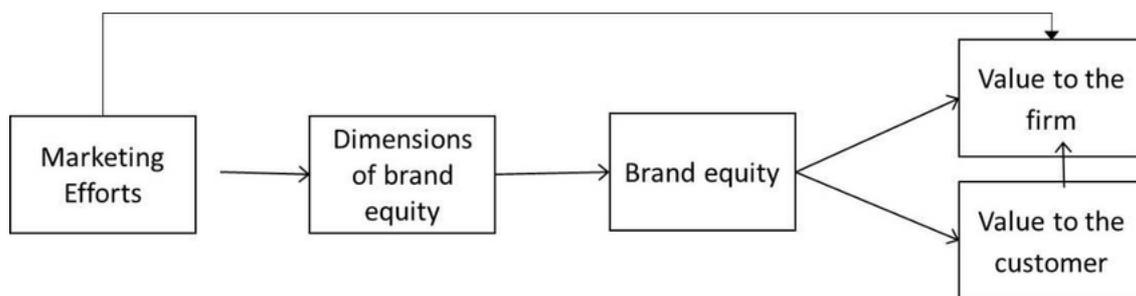


Figure 3: Brand equity framework. (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000, p. 196)

Figure 3 illustrates the causal connection marketing efforts have on brand equity values. All marketing efforts are positively related to brand equity when the result of it is a favourable response that out wins that of an unbranded product. As proposed in the framework, all efforts have a contribution on brand equity through different dimensions. Therefore, to gain brand equity, the relationships of marketing efforts and brand equity dimensions need to be defined. (Yoo, *et al.*, 2000; Buil, *et al.*, 2010)

Brand equity building should incorporate the same aspects as the definition itself (Moisescu, 2005). To sustain and enhance loyalty, the brand must directly interact with customers and achieve awareness by adding symbols to be placed in customer’s mind for further purposes. On top of managing awareness the associations need to be carefully selected and managed. Creating associations using different marketing activities e.g.

events and public relations, the feelings are updated and consistently managed over time and over elements of the marketing program (Kotler, 2003; Moisescu, 2005)

As the above mentioned brand equity models demonstrate, brand building includes a set of rather logical steps: establishing a solid brand identity, creating and signifying a brand meaning, evoking the right type of responses and proceeding towards an appropriate relationship with customers. The core of brand building is thus to ensure an adequate amount of exposure along with memorable aspects. Only through consumers' experiences and learnings with the brand is it possible to obtain the benefits of brand equity.

3 EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING

“As services and good are commoditized, experience will emerge as the next step in progression of economic value, from now onwards, leading edge companies will find that their battlefield lies in staging experience” (Pine & Gilmore, 1999)

Generally, there are two types of marketing: traditional and modern. Traditional means include methods such as advertising through newspapers, television and radio (Lavin-sky, 2003; Smilansky, 2009). Modern methods focus on digital marketing, public relations and creating meaningful content for audiences to interact with (Steinias, 2017).

Modern marketing has become increasingly popular, as it places importance on customer experiences and the usage of experiences in marketing efforts (Kotler, 2003, cited in Datta 2017). Traditional marketing relies on customer's impression as a response of being exposed to the brand, whereas modern enables them to feel the brand through engagement. (Lawler, 2013)

The rise of experiential marketing can be explained by traditional marketing means losing their effectiveness (Smilansky, 2009). Additionally, the new approach to marketing has arisen from the constant presence of information technology, making it possible to connect and exchange experiences with one another, anywhere, anytime (Schmitt, 1999). Brands have become more than just names or symbols; they are increasingly of-

ten linked to certain lifestyles and values, in order to become more meaningful (Schmitt, 1999; Wolburg, 2014).

Along with the changes in technology and in the ways brands are perceived, overcapacity and vicious competition between brands is forcing companies to focus on experiences, rather than functional characteristics (Schmitt, 1999; Whelan & Wohlfeil, 2006). As quality and well-thought brand images are taken for granted, customers "...want products and experiences that will dazzle their sense, touch their hearts and stimulate their minds" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 22). Consumers have become increasingly demanding in terms of what brands they support.

Moreover, traditional marketing means are not designed to be customer-centric; they rarely involve any two-way, interactive communication (Schmitt, 2003 p. 217). In contrast to the traditional view, experiential marketers regard consumers as both, rational and emotional-driven decision makers (Datta, 2017). Brand managers should therefore develop a comprehensive brand equity-building plan, to generate positive experiences, as every touch point with the consumers. (Kotler, 2003; Lawler, 2013)

3.1 Definition

Experiential marketing is most simply explained as the process of identifying and fulfilling customer needs and desires, by engaging them into a two-way communications. This communication is to bring the brand personality to life and provide value not only for the targeted audiences but also for the brand itself (Smilansky, 2009).

Wohlfeil & Whelan (2005) define experiential marketing as an interactive method of communicating brand values by creating marketing event in which consumers are actively engaged in a behavioral level. This active involvement is to lead to positive attachments to the brand. Hauser (2007, cited in Same & Larimo, 2012) describes experiential marketing as a holistic approach to the customer/brand relationship.

The ultimate goal of experiential is to create holistic experiences (Kotler, 2003; Schmitt, 2011). Hence, Schmitt (1999; 2011) defines experiential marketing as a process or

method of promoting a brand and strengthening its value by offering consumers a possibility to observe and take part in an event or activity where they may be motivated to acknowledge and accept the ideas behind the brand.

Experiential marketing can take various forms: product launches, street events, product sampling events, road shows, exhibitions and pop-up stores to mention few of them (Wood, 2009). Generally, experiential marketing can cover anything that takes the form of an event and which has an objective of engaging consumers into an entertaining action.

3.2 Creating Value for a Brand

Smilansky (2009) and Schmitt (1999) state that experiential campaigns should be constructed around a major, brand-related idea, which engages the target audience into a real time, two-way communication with the brand.

Thus, by creating interactive events that resonate the brands personality, the brand is turned into real-life. Experiential marketing lessens the distance between the consumers and the brand. It does that with relevant, memorable experiences often done at a grass-roots level, in places that are out of traditional marketing's reach. (Lawler, 2013).

Moreover, experiential marketing can create lifetime value. Positive and surprising experiences are hard to forget; through experiences an immediate relationship is formed. Relationships encourage customer to share their feelings, increasing word-of-mouth and establishing affection towards the brand. (Smith & Hannover, 2016, p. 16-18)

Social media has bought additional power to experiential marketing (Whelan & Wohlfeil, 2006; Smilansky, 2017) Even if only 1000 people experience the event, the actual exposure can be far greater through shares in channels of social media. Social media adds a whole new dimension to experiential events, as it captures the particular moment, with all of its feelings (Lawler, 2013). Regardless of the best engagement happening in live circumstances, the digital era offers a great way of reaching those who are not. Live event should therefore be integrated with digital elements, to broaden the cre-

ated relationship with customers while increase the reach cost-effectively. (Smilansky, 2009; Lawler, 2013)

Interestingly enough, even if customers are increasingly often trying to block out the brand-related information in the form of advertising, it is same message that reach them through experiences (Smilansky, 2009). According to Whelan & Wohlfeil (2016), “consumers are often highly motivated to participate voluntarily in marketing events, despite knowing that those events are specifically designed to communicate the same brand messages they usually tend to avoid”.

As stated by Smith & Hannover (2016), one of the major reasons experiential marketing is so powerful in engaging consumers is its effect on the rest of the marketing elements. By creating integrated campaigns, that appeals to consumers across different mediums; ad recall, increased website traffic, increased social media traffic and overall brand exposure can be strengthened. Live events can create the content for the rest of the marketing activities. (Gupta, 2003; Smilansky, 2009; Smith & Hannover, 2016)

Schmitt (2003) suggests that through valid use of live experiences, customer’s entire brand experience can be managed. The experience can be divided into five types: sense, feel, think, act and relate. Sense experiences are to satisfy customers aesthetically. Feel experiences enable feelings of fun, excitement and pleasure. Think experiences, on the other hand, provide customers with opportunities to broaden their current state of knowledge and learn something new. Act experiences reflect to the relationships customers have with brands that are to encourage certain lifestyles and actions. Lastly, relate experiences hold within the social networks between customers with similar interests. (Schmitt, 1999; 2003)

Experiential marketing thus combines the best practises of other, more traditional elements of marketing; the benefits of promotional activities without intense discounts, the advantages of advertising without wasted reach, the effects of direct marketing without the pushy junk-mail-effect and the real connectivity of social media, with actual real-life engagement. (Smilansky, 2009; Smith & Hannover, 2016)

4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter gives an overview of the methods used to conduct the case study on brand X, and the ways the brand has applied experiential as a major part of its brand building efforts during the summer of 2018. This chapter will study the case brand's experiential marketing campaign and how with different experiential elements it aims at reaching its targeted audiences and building brand equity.

This chapter will also look into the motivation behind selecting such brand and these particular events. Furthermore, information on the sources and data used to execute the case study will be specified. The findings of the case study are analyzed and compared with the secondary research findings in later chapters.

4.1 Method and Motivation

The method of case study is used, as the research is to answer questions starting with "How?" and "Why?" (Yin, 2014). Additionally, when the researched phenomenon comprises of several aspects and objectives that might be complex to present without a more comprehensive approach, is case study the most appropriate method (Yin, 2014). Further, as a qualitative data collection method this thesis uses observation. Observation is a systematic description of events or phenomena that occur in social setting (Marshall, *et al.*, 1989). Observation is gathering information on an activity of what is occurring. Therefore observation is highly visual, and as a form of descriptive observation the activity or results are not modified in any way. Results are presented as objectively as they occur in the observed situation.

The observation conducted is a systematic observation, as the goal is to obtain records only from the studied actions and variables that are to answer the pre-set research questions (Rautio, 2007). Thus, the observation is set on a pre-determined time and location for when the desired actions are to take place. The observation below does not specify which information was gathered during which event. The event executions were similar, using the same experiential activities as well as targeting the same audiences with same methods.

As this thesis is not commissioned, and the case brand wishes to stay anonymous, the case study brand is hereafter referred as brand X. The case study brand was chosen as the author is currently working as production coordinator for an agency in charge of designing and conducting experiential marketing projects for the brand X. The author has a wide knowledge on the brand personality as well as the ways the brand maintains and enhances its brand equity with various experiential efforts. The case study is to concretely demonstrate the usage of experiential marketing in building brand equity. The prior knowledge on brand X's usage of experiential is however not presented or taken into account in this thesis.

4.2 Introduction of brand X

Brand X is a well-known, international brand, operating in the food and beverage industry. The brand personality is described trustworthy, original, young, cool and trendy. The brand's logo and slogan are also famous internationally, including brand's own colour schemes and visual face.

The brand operates in highly saturated market, full of competition and vastly changing market shares. Hence, effective marketing actions, high recognition and low wasted reach are of great importance for the case brand X. Internationally, the brand is known for its large expenditures on experiences, providing customers with more engaging activities than just advertising or social media campaigns.

In the recent years the brand has diversified its marketing messages and has started communicating with customers also through unconventional channels: more social media, influencers and events. This year, the brand decided to place emphasis on experiences by conducting two events in Finland's biggest music festivals during the summer of 2018. The objectives behind the executions are to generate earned exposure as well as strengthen and create new associations.

The experiential marketing concept behind these events was to leave a positive engram, by creating an exceptionally different and unique set up, that appeals to all senses.

4.3 Observation

Both of the events were carried out during the summer months of 2018, the first one in early July and the latter in early August. The events were set outdoors, on the festival premises, where visitor could stop by and engage with the brand. The music festivals gathered together large crowds, with the expected visitor count of over 25 000 visitors per day. In both of the festivals, the event set up was built in the close vicinity of the main stage, welcoming many world-renowned artists thorough the weekend.

The brand had build a two storey “brand X Summer House” to resemble typical Finnish summerhouse by the lake, with wooden floors and walls. The decoration consisted of variety of plants, palm trees, sundeck chairs, rag rugs and comfortable pillows. The whole event area strictly obeyed the brands colour scheme: black, bright red and white. Additionally, the event area had many colourful details, including the brand’s logo visible in variety of spots. On one of the sidewalls the brand’s logo, along with the festival logo was placed on a bright red wall. During both of the festival weekends visitors were actively taking pictures on the photo wall. The over 50m² event area was well designed to make every detail fit together and sense the right kind of relaxed ambience.

The event execution consisted of two different lounge areas: one on the lower deck, where visitors could enjoy the sunny weather and great music, and another on the upper terrace, from which the main stage was fully visible even behind the big crowd. The lower terrace was filled with branded sundeck chairs for visitors to sit down and enjoy the sampled product. The upper terrace was reserved for influencers, bloggers and other notable people the brand wants to be connected with. Some lucky visitors were also randomly chosen to watch shows from the upper terrace. As the views were amazing, it was said to be the highlight of the festival weekend.

Smooth running of the event weekends was monitored by a team of 8 energetic promoters, who served as the face of the brand. The promoters were all dressed in branded clothes, representing the brand’s colour scheme. In their happy, cheerful and polite manners they also represented the traits of the brand’s personality.

The upper terrace had a host of its own, making sure people were enjoying the special treatment of the terrace. Visitors were served ice-cold drinks and they had an opportunity to relax on sofas while enjoying the music. In addition, the host was also in charge of updating the brand's viral social media account. During the festivals the host posted multiple pictures and short videos of the execution, showing the great atmosphere of the terrace and the whole event area.

On the outlines of the event area, three sampling units were filled with brand's products. Promoters, who were also inviting visitors to enter the event area and chill on the sunny terrace, sampled products, free of charge, for bypassing visitors. Promoters greeted all visitors happily, wishing them a great festival weekend. The product was always given directly to the consumer, with a friendly eye contact, smile and a polite "you're welcome".

Furthermore, brand X's festival event execution included a small activation to attract more visitors. Under the Summer House's roof, a large roulette was placed, where visitors could return used containers of the sampled products and engage into a fun activity at the same time. The activation allowed visitors to recycle used containers, let them spin the roulette and see if it falls onto an empty pocket or onto one where a price is won. The prices varied from branded satchels to flip-flops and sunglasses.

Overall, the event execution was rather straightforward with a great amount of touch points with visitors and possibilities to engage with the brand. The event area was busy with visitors thorough both of the festivals, as the location was central allowing people to enter when they wish. The brand's logo was visible even from far away, enabling everyone to notice its presence.

5 RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Festival executions are often the model examples of experiential marketing. As suggested by Smilansky (2009), experiential marketing campaigns are often built around a creative concept, are visually appealing and include many engaging elements: in this case sampling, activations, and promoters. Brand X executed a campaign to affect all senses. The execution constituted of many aspects, as not all consumers seize them all.

By attaching many experiential elements, the brand X made sure all visitors were reached at some level and that there was something for everyone.

As suggested by Smilansky (2009) and Schmitt (1999), execution must be set upon a major brand-related idea. Brand X was turned into real-life, by giving it a physical face and an appearance in the form of a relaxed and trendy summerhouse. Even if the case brand is among the most renowned brands in the world, their experiential actions are exceptional and unique. The experiential campaign, implemented during the summer 2018, included elements that serve as a platform for encounters with consumers, letting them experience the brand, amplifying their associations and feelings with it, and gradually forming a lasting relationship.

Due to the popularity of the brand, the awareness stage is already mostly established within the targeted audiences. Hence, the primary event objective of this experiential campaign was to create updated and strengthened associations as well as to gain exposure, both in present time and in social media platforms. The brand created a unique ambience, a Nordic summerhouse, in which visitors could relax and really sense the brand's personality: cool, chilled and trendy. As stated by Keller (2003), Smilansky (2009) and Aaker (2010), when the brand is encountered in unconventional circumstances, outside the store shelves, unique associations are formed and the brand may more likely be recalled in purchasing decisions.

As the primary idea of festivals is to enjoy music performances, brand must find the optimal ways of communication with visitors, whether it is through excessive sampling, great promotions or visually appealing content. Brand X captured customers' attention with all of the above, placing emphasis on visual elements and engagement through activities as well as handing out free samples.

Furthermore, small recycling roulette activation was used to engage the visitors and allow them to spend more time on the event area. Additionally, the activation was a great way of sensing responsibility and perhaps of taking a stand on one of today's biggest questions: preserving the environment. As specified by Aaker (1991), favourable associations that go along with consumers' own values, will assist differentiation and set the

brand into a beneficial position. An important brand value was turned into a fun activity, both to make the message more appealing to consumers but also to allow them to feel the message through interesting experience.

As specified earlier (Whelan & Wohlfeil, 2006; Lawler, 2013; Smilansky, 2017), by including social media, experiential marketing is brought into a new level. Taking videos and pictures of great experiences, the exact moment is captured, with all of its positive feelings. Through the extensive use of social media, brand X also reached those not present in the festival. The event area had many colourful details, including the festival logos to encourage visitors to take pictures on the area and share them on social media, delivering the brand's message to their own contacts, hence reaching even more consumers. Capturing the moment and sharing it on social media has also other benefits; the pictures and videos taken are a permanent trace of memory reminding of the great times with the brand. Perhaps the moments are relived in further circumstances by buying the product.

Furthermore, handing out free samples created the effect of positive surprise. Visitors were content to receive a free sample that tasted delicious and was suitable for the exact festival moment. As positive experiences are harder to forget (Reichheld, 2003, Smith & Hannover, 2016), they may lead to establishing affection towards the brand. Additionally, positive experiences increase the possibility to word-of-mouth.

As active involvement and communication lead to positive attachments (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2005) the presence of promoters was crucial. They enabled interactivity and two-way communication. Visitors were able to talk and communicate with the event staff, whose main task was first and foremost to exude the brand's personality but also to make sure all visitors are in a great mood and leave the area with an unforgettable experience.

Schmitt (2003) proposed that with an effective use of experiential the whole brand experience, comprising of five elements: sense, feel, think, act and relate, can be managed. Brand X affected the "sense" experiences by designing visually appealing content with beautiful decorations and details to satisfy consumer aesthetically. "Feel" experiences

were ascertained by enabling feelings of fun and pleasure. Brand X's execution involved refreshing free samples, comfortable chairs and convenient lounges to please visitors and to offer them what might be needed for an enjoyable festival. Furthermore, "think" experiences were ensured by involving well-trained staff members. Brand X's promoters were to communicate with visitors, inform them about the brand and its values, as well as about the activation available on the event area. "Act" experiences were created with engaging activities: recycling roulette and the upper terrace, through which consumer could interact with the brand and sense the personality in a practical manner. These activations, and more specifically consumers' participation in them, reflected the prospective relationship, which can further lead to a lasting loyalty. Lastly, "relate" experiences hold within communication with social networks and people with similar lifestyles. In brand X's case, the communication was reached both on brand level as well as on consumer level, through social media publications.

According to Smith & Hannover (2016), the power of experiential marketing is due to its effect on the rest of the marketing elements. With integrated campaigns, touching consumers across different mediums, the overall brand exposure can be strengthened. Gupta (2003) and Smilansky (2009) expressed that experiential campaigns and events can also be used to create the content for other marketing activities. In brand X's case, in order to benefit from the experiential campaign even more, it was intergraded with other marketing elements. Brand X utilized advertisements to inform consumers about the upcoming events, posted on social media before, during and after the events and used influencers to pass the message along. All this was designed around the experiential concept, to boost the reach and scope of the event.

Moreover, music festivals are happy and casual of nature, as they often represent summer holidays, enjoyment and quality time. Therefore, these values and perceptions are additionally images that are to be placed into consumers' minds and recalled when the brand is encountered later.

5.1 Value on Brand Equity Dimensions

As specified in earlier chapters (Campbell, 2002), there are two main sources of brand equity: brand awareness, being the knowledge and familiarity, and brand loyalty, which reflect to positive association that are to form a continuing relationship. On the basis of brand X's activities during the summer 2018, it can be concluded that the objective of the campaign was mostly to increment and intensify associations and brand salience, which will later contribute also on other brand equity dimensions.

5.1.1 Brand Associations and Salience

The main objective of the experiential campaign was not only to establish awareness for new category buyers, but also to enhance the brand's salience and strengthen the brand related association, both among existing buyers and also among those often choosing competitors' products. In brand X's festival execution brand identity and associations were build in various ways.

Firstly, brand X's execution involved many memorable brand elements: logos, symbols, colours, which are to create unique associations and evoke favourable emotions (Keller, 2001; 2003). The brand X Summer House created associations of summer holiday, fun and enjoyable time, leisure and relaxation. These positive feelings work as a stimulus for awareness and positive brand image (Keller, 1993; Buil, *et al.*, 2013). By adding elements: summerhouse, sundeck chairs, palm trees and wooden floors that sense these emotions, brand awareness is awakened. According to Keller (2001), upon that awareness, mental shortcuts are created and the brand is recognised in further circumstances.

Secondly, when building brand equity, knowledge, image and meaning are in prominent roles (Keller, 2003; Aaker, 2010). Having a large event area, with big logos and brand colours, enables people to recognize the brand and acknowledge its present, even without actually interacting with the brand. In some cases, this might be just enough to create new associations and strengthen awareness. Naturally, the quality or orientation of the associations is impossible control, if the consumer is not taking part in the experiential event. Therefore, it was vital for brand X to include elements that motivate visitors

to be receptive to the brand-consumer communication and interaction. Brand X attracted customer to interaction by handing out free samples, engaging them into activities as well as offering areas and chair for relaxing.

Thirdly, the brand X was present in two of the summer's biggest music festivals, gaining exposure and earned attention. Experiential marketing and being present at large happenings where people are gathered, increases the scope of which consumer is exposed to the brand and its identity. Consequently consumers' awareness and salience are boosted (Moisescu, 2005; Buil, *et al.*, 2013). As a result of active usage of social media, both by the host and visitors, the exposed image and feeling were distributed also to those not physically present at the festival. By integrating the experiential campaign with other sources of marketing, the reach and the effect were multiplied.

Lastly, as stated in earlier chapters, the key to strong brand equity is to be remembered for the right reasons (Gupta, 2003; Aaker, 2010; Buil, *et al.*, 2010); whether the brand was the one only distributing samples, or the one that actually wanted people to enjoy the great atmosphere without pushing their message too aggressively.

6 DISCUSSION

According to Keller's CBBE-model, building a powerful customer based brand equity is a continuous process. The actions case brand X has taken during summer 2018 to communicate with consumers and to lead the way towards a lasting relationship, clearly evidence this, permanent process. Not all dimensions of brand equity can be managed at the same time or with the same marketing activities. Thus, brand must be rational and consistent on what it wishes to achieve and which audiences it aims at contacting with its campaigns. As brand X's awareness was already largely established, the campaign focused on enhancing pleasing and positive brand associations as well as regaining salience.

According to Keller (2000), when a brand is built on a strong foundation, different and surprising marketing activities can play a vital role in building brand equity. Brand X's experiential campaign did not solely focus on brand attributes or products, but included

also other symbols of the identity: personality, along with a creative execution to clearly expose it.

As brand equity is the power that is associated with what customers have learned, felt, seen and heard about the brand in their own experiences (Keller, 2003: 2013), it was essential for brand X to design enough touch points with consumers. In order to positively contribute on brand equity dimension, the initiated communication had to be built upon a content that appeals to chosen consumers (Yoo, *et al*, 2000). The concept of a laid-back summerhouse, an environmental friendly game and a trendy relaxing area were specifically designed for the festival visitors and to fulfil their needs. Thus, brand X's task was to guarantee consumers have the right type of experiences, accompanying proper associations with the brand, as only through them is it possible to manage the brand equity dimensions (Yoo, *et al.*, 2000).

As argued by Aaker, *et al.* (2000) the strong brands of tomorrow must use interactive means to create relationship-building experiences. Brand X interpreted active interactions with consumers, affecting the way they perceive the brand. The whole concept was build around brand/consumer communications, as in busy circumstances like music festival it is more demanding to get consumers to communicate, as there are external stimuli all over. Therefore, brand X included elements to encourage visitors to stay in the area, to safely enable interaction.

Corresponding to Aaker's Brand Equity model, brand equity provides valuables also for the brand. For well-known brands, marketing events and promotional activities are more effective and cost-efficient when the main objective is not to win sceptical consumers over. As all the dimensions ultimately add to loyalty, providing the customers with positive experiences, will give them an appreciated reason to buy (Aaker, 2003). In line with Aaker's model (2003), brand X distinctively considered brand loyalty as the output of all the other dimensions of brand equity, as it cannot exist without prior, positive and encouraging experience with the brand

Moreover, pleasing encounters and amicable associations lead to positive word-of-mouth. In brand X's case, pictures were taken with brand's content and the brand image

is transferred also to other people not present in the event. This provides profitable growth for the brand, as loyal customers have become, in way a vital part of brand's entire marketing campaign (Reichheld, 2003). Therefore, thoroughly designed content, visual element and unique details have more than the visual appeal: they are the brand.

As favourable associations will assist the differentiation and set the brand on a beneficial position (Aaker, 1991), the atmosphere of the experiential event is vital. Cheerful and happy ambience, chatty and smiley promoters and free samples are crucial pieces of the brand's personality that are to directly impact the formed associations. These associations can influence the recall of brand information and ease the purchasing process (Aaker, 1991, Yoo, *et al*, 2000; Moisescu, 2005).

Due to the nature of experiential marketing, each event, and each experience is unique (Smilansky, 2009). Consumers sense different elements in their own way, mirroring them to their personal opinions, values and lives. The unpredictability of event outcomes could be said to be both, the best and worst, of experiential marketing. Some events might not win over huge crowds; they are always affected by external factors such as the weather or poor festival line-up. On the other hand, external factors can also boost the affectivity and make the event more successful than expected. Sunny weather attracts people outside, to take part in experiences and generally be in a better mood. In brand X's case, external factors were in favour, providing both of the weekends with great weather and busy, sold-out festivals.

Keller's CBBE-pyramid's first level is salience: consumers' ability and awareness to recall the brand and have knowledge on it (Keller, 2001). In order to exist, salience requires strong associations: names, words, symbols or characteristics to identify the brand with. As brand X has mostly gained its deep salience among consumers, it is beneficial to update these feelings and create new, refreshed memories. Fresh memories are yet again linked to brand-related mental shortcuts and recalled in "top of mind"-situation, where the brand is the only one even considered (Keller, 2008, Millward Brown, 2013).

With its creative summerhouse execution, brand X aimed at reaching consumers and evoking different feelings as a response to the event execution. According to Keller

(2003) these emotional reactions, arise as a response to brand's marketing activities and whether they are perceived to be meaningful or not. Naturally, positive feelings are effective in building the brand equity dimensions. Keller identifies six feelings that are powerful in contributing to brand building: warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval, and self-respect. Brand X's campaign was above all designed to create feelings of fun. Brand X summerhouse had entertaining activities, product samples, sunny terrace and great music to ensure people are enjoying themselves and spending quality time with the brand. However, as the event also included surprising elements: free product samples and possibility to watch shows for the upper VIP-terrace, feelings of excitement may have occurred as well. Similarly, as brand X is world-renowned, social approval may also have been a feeling some participating consumer have longed for while interacting with the brand.

As the previously mentioned brand equity models explain, brand building is, above all, a set of rather logical steps: establishing a solid brand identity, creating and signifying a brand meaning, evoking the right type of responses and proceeding towards an appropriate relationship with customers. The core of brand X's actions was therefore to ensure an adequate amount of exposure along with memorable associations, to lead consumers towards the ultimate brand equity dimension: loyalty.

7 CONCLUSION

The actions taken by internationally famous brand case brand X indicate that through experiential marketing it is possible to affect and contribute on brand equity. Experiential marketing has an impact on the main dimensions of brand equity by creating favourable associations; strengthening awareness and recall as well as creating positive feelings that are to later form loyalty. Through interactive engagement consumers are often willing to hear, sense and feel the message the brand wants to communicate. As the case brand aimed at engaging its audience in a two-way communication, the needs and desired needed to be identified. The brand had to shape the way it is seen, with appropriate elements that appeal to the targeted audience.

In order to bring the brand personality to life and to lead favourable associations, interactive communication is essential. Experiential marketing events bring value to the brand by actively showing the ideas behind the brand, and by letting consumers acknowledge and sense these values. Well designed experiential campaigns provide value not only for the consumers but also for the brand itself, by strengthening the image consumer have on the brand, and perhaps leading them towards lasting brand/consumer relationship. It is thus brand managers task to make sure the brand gets enough exposure along with the right kind of stimuli to awaken positive brand image.

As entertaining, creative and fun experiences are more difficult to forget, the feelings and affections transpired by the event are remembered as well as shared with other. Therefore, the scope of experiential marketing is greater than the actual attendee count. There is no wasted reach, and the emotions awakened by the experience may last for a long time. Those feelings and associations are shared and remembered, which increases the likelihood of brand loyalty and repeated purchases.

The correct brand identity and favourable associations are ultimately achieved by involving brand elements that evoke emotions and increase awareness. Creative and innovative concepts naturally facilitate and ease the emergence of these advantageous responses. The more the brand is present, the more it is noticed and thought of. Thus, repetition in the form of continuing campaign is essential.

Moreover, among the most powerful ways of generating awareness is to operate beyond the most occupied channels. To affect the brand equity as effectively as possible, brand must communicate with consumers through channels that are not automatically blocked. This is where experiential marketing comes in, as the entertaining events motivate to participate and to acknowledge the brand messages.

As every experiential campaign is different, so are the objectives. It is therefore important for brand managers to decide the targeted campaign outcomes, in order to create the right types of experiences, connect with the desired audiences, evoke the appropriate feelings and contribute on the selected dimensions of brand equity.

The concrete campaign conducted by brand X, and the observations and analyses grounded on it, are to motivate brands and companies to adopt experiences as major part of their brand building activities. This research also clearly presented the ways the case brand used experiences to meet their brand equity building objectives. The results are therefore to demonstrate one example on how to exploit experiential actions and to use events as a platform for reaching consumers.

7.1 Shortcomings and Ideas for Future Research

As the research was solely based on a singular brand's activities over one summer, the results cannot be fully generalised. In order to get a more comprehensive look on the actual brand equity building, the value of brand X should have been evaluated prior and after the event executions. This way the changes in brand X's brand equity could have been detected, as the increased – or decreased brand value would have been distinctly visible. Thus, the results would have indicated whether the campaign was successful or not, in relation to campaign expenses.

As experiential marketing works best when integrated with other marketing elements, the research could have taken into considerations other marketing and advertising campaigns the case brand has conducted during the year.

A possibility for future research lays therefore in evaluating the brand and how its value has changed as a response to experiential marketing. The research could also examine the profitability of experiential campaigns, in comparison to the created brand value, which would naturally require more time and an elaborate observance of sales demand. Another idea for future research is to include the opinions of event participants in the form of interviews. This would enable insight on consumers' perceptions and attitudes, again prior and after participating in the event. Another interesting research would be to examine experiential marketing campaigns from the perspective of the production team of the experiential marketing agency. Hence, the whole creative process, all the way from planning to the actual execution, could be monitored in line with the pre-determined campaign objectives. This would provide valuable knowledge to brand

managers on external marketing partner's competencies and possibilities in enhancing brand's value through new, unconventional marketing activities.

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APPENDICES

Observation Template

1. Execution setup and background:

2. Visual elements:

3. Activation & engagement:

4. Brand/consumer encounter:

5. Social media: