
Event Branding and Its Impact on Consumer Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Organizations must develop more advanced engagement models because traditional advertising methods have become inefficient in the current market where consumers experience information overload and digital content avoidance. This study analyzes event branding as a marketing tool which lets businesses measure customer emotional responses and behavioral patterns and social interactions. The research shows that purposefully designed branded events create stronger brand recall and brand loyalty and brand advocacy development than regular media methods according to evidence from a systematic academic literature review and global market research and Indian market research and a complete secondary study of Red Bull GmbH's first event strategy. The findings of the research study establish their relevance to both the Indian market and the Gujarat market which together represent two of the fastest growing markets for experiential marketing in the world. The study finds that event branding effectiveness depends on four main factors emotional architecture and authentic brand alignment and digital amplification and personalisation while providing strategic guidance to practitioners who want to maximize their return on investment from live events and hybrid brand experiences.

Keywords: *event branding; consumer engagement; experiential marketing; brand recall; brand loyalty; Red Bull; Indian event industry; hybrid events; social amplification.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional marketing methods no longer work because consumers today face too much information and online services. This research paper investigates event branding as a marketing strategy which helps brands assess consumer emotional and social and behavioral responses. The research shows that specially developed branded events lead to higher brand recall and customer loyalty and customer advocacy than traditional media methods based on the systematic review of academic research and global market data and Indian market data and the detailed analysis of Red Bull's event strategy. The research results show how the Indian event market and the Gujarat event market both develop into major worldwide experiential marketing markets. The study identifies emotional architecture, authentic brand alignment, digital amplification, and personalisation as the primary drivers of event branding effectiveness, and offers strategic recommendations for practitioners seeking to optimise investment in live and hybrid brand experiences. Keywords: event branding; consumer engagement; experiential marketing; brand recall; brand loyalty; Red Bull; Indian event industry; hybrid events; social amplification.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Experiential Marketing: Theoretical Foundations

The academic origins of event branding stem from Schmitt's (1999) research, which establishes a difference between feature-benefit marketing and experiential marketing. The first approach directs its efforts toward consumers who use logical reasoning to assess information while the second approach treats consumers as emotional social beings whose

brand choices depend on their emotional reactions to brands and their assessment of brand-related activities, which shape their social identity. Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy thesis extended this logic economically, arguing that experiences constitute the highest stage of economic value creation. Brands that deliver exceptional customer experiences can maintain high prices and secure customer loyalty, which their competitors who focus only on product functions cannot break. Neuroscientific studies back up these theoretical assertions, which McGaugh (2004) proved when he found that emotional states lead to amygdala-led memory consolidation, which creates memories that people remember better because they contain more information and last longer than memories formed under standard conditions. The design of branded events produces emotional responses that lead to positive feelings, which create brain pathways for brand memory retrieval that actual advertising methods, which depend on consumer experiences, cannot match.

2.2 Consumer Engagement: A Multi-Dimensional Construct

Brodie et al. (2011) defined customer engagement as a psychological state which people show through their interactive co-creative interactions with service providers. The construct is widely analysed across three complementary dimensions. Emotional engagement captures affective attachment — the feelings of warmth, excitement, and personal connection a consumer develops toward a brand. Behavioural engagement includes all the visible interactions which people make through attending events, testing products, joining communities, and buying products. Cognitive engagement measures the total amount of mental focus which a consumer dedicates to understanding a brand. The two dimensions create a loop which increases emotional depth to produce more information processing that leads to additional behavioral engagement. Event branding creates its unique effect because it uses one complete experience to create three different dimensions which separate traditional marketing methods that focus on individual channels.

2.3 Social Media as an Event Amplifier

The presence of social media has created a complete transformation in how events use branding for their promotional activities. User-generated content (UGC) which includes attendee photographs and short-form videos and live reactions and written reviews enables an event to reach more people than its actual attendees. The content delivers a trustworthiness advantage which brands cannot achieve through their marketing materials because existing research shows that 92 percent of consumers trust friend recommendations more than brand communications (Nielsen 2021). Events which designers create with shareability in mind generate media coverage which holds high value for business purposes because the events contain emotional content and visually unique spaces and engaging features which people want to share. Through their social interactions customers create brand communities which start to build themselves because they participate in online brand events and develop connections with others who share similar brand ties which results in increased customer interaction that grows over time.

2.4 Co-Creation and Consumer Agency

Vargo and Lusch's (2004) service-dominant logic changes the role of consumers by transforming them from their previous function as brand message listeners into their new role as brand value creators. Event branding is uniquely suitable for this purpose because consumers who take part in creating their event experience, building branded displays, and developing the event story through their digital activities, become active brand story collaborators instead of simple spectators. The sense of ownership which people develop through their association with a brand leads to stronger brand connections, which result in brand loyalty and advocacy behavior, which companies consider to be their most valuable marketing results when they build their brand through multiple events.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Objectives

1. To analyse the strategic architecture of event branding and its theoretical relationship to consumer engagement.

2. To evaluate the impact of event branding across emotional, behavioural, and social engagement dimensions.
3. To examine Red Bull GmbH as a paradigmatic case of event-driven brand strategy.
4. To contextualise global findings within the Indian and Gujarat event markets.
5. To derive actionable strategic recommendations for brand managers and event professionals.

3.2 Hypotheses

H₁: Event branding generates significantly higher consumer engagement than equivalent investment in traditional advertising formats.

H₂: Strategically executed event branding produces superior brand recall and long-term brand awareness.

H₃: Positive emotional engagement during branded events is a significant predictor of long-term consumer loyalty.

H₄: Social media integration amplifies event branding's engagement outcomes beyond the physically attending audience.

H₅: Personalisation of event experiences increases consumer satisfaction and participation depth.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Philosophy and Approach

The research uses an interpretivist philosophical approach because it seeks to discover how event branding success works through its various elements and their contextual factors. The study shows that brand perception and emotional response together with consumer engagement need to be studied through methods which maintain the complete context of these subjective phenomena. The research employs a qualitative exploratory research design which uses systematic secondary research together with detailed case study examination as its main research methods. The existing body of research about experiential marketing has reached advanced development while Red Bull's strategic activities have produced extensive publicly accessible materials which make this design suitable (Yin 2018).

4.2 Data Sources and Analytical Framework

The study used four types of secondary sources to establish three different types of validation through which it achieved its research objectives: peer-reviewed academic journals in marketing, consumer behaviour, and brand management (2000–2024); global market intelligence from Statista, Grand View Research, Allied Market Research, and Marketline; Indian industry reports from FICCI, Ernst & Young, and Event Marketer India; and Red Bull corporate publications, Red Bull Media House content, and credible journalistic coverage. The data analysis process required three steps which included thematic analysis of academic literature, quantitative assessment of market intelligence data, and multiple framework case assessment that integrated brand equity theory (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2008) with the VRIO resource-based framework (Barney, 1991) and Porter's Five Forces competitive model (Porter, 1985).

5. INDIAN AND GUJARAT MARKET CONTEXT

5.1 Scale and Growth of the Indian Event Industry

India's event management industry has developed from its earlier state of uncoordinated operations into a formalized system that generates considerable economic value. The total industry revenues for the period 2025 to 2026 will reach between INR 95000 crore and 105000 crore which equals approximately USD 115 billion to 127 billion. Corporate events make up about 35 percent of this market while weddings account for 45 to 50 percent and the remaining portion consists of live entertainment sports and trade exhibitions. The market expansion occurs because companies increase their spending on corporate events while digital infrastructure in India experiences rapid development and young consumers who prefer experiences over products become more prevalent.

5.2 Gujarat: A Strategic Event Hub

The state of Gujarat in India holds strategic importance because it generates 8 percent of India's total GDP and 33 percent of the country's export trade. The cities of Ahmedabad Vadodara Surat and Gandhinagar host a large number of manufacturing businesses together with MSME clusters and professional organizations which create strong demand for corporate events and exhibitions and brand activations. The Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit which occurs every two years together with the International Kite Festival and mass Navratri celebrations and various food and trade festivals creates a profitable event system for commercial activities. The event branding process in Gujarat develops through two opposing forces which include strong local cultural traditions and modern digital and experiential design methods: brands that authentically integrate Gujarati cultural traditions into their event narratives achieve demonstrably stronger consumer resonance than those applying generic national templates without local adaptation.

5.3 Consumer Trends Reshaping Event Branding in India

Event branding priorities undergo transformation because of multiple structural trends that currently affect the sector. The transition from product-centric to experience-centred consumption is most pronounced among millennials and Generation Z who allocate rising proportions of discretionary income to events festivals and brand activations. Digital amplification at events should be treated as a primary element because of India's exceptional digital penetration which includes over 900 million internet users and increasing smartphone usage in semi-urban areas. The demand for personalized experiences has increased so brands must develop their data skills and design abilities to create authentic custom-made services. Urban consumers who want sustainable products make brands feel obligated to follow environmentally friendly practices during their event production activities.

6. KEY FINDINGS

Engagement Dimension	Evidence	Strategic Implication
Emotional	55% of consumers report stronger brand connection post-event; emotion enhances memory consolidation (McGaugh, 2004)	Prioritise emotional architecture over production scale
Behavioural	Event attendees show higher purchase intent and repeat-purchase rates vs. advertising-exposed groups (Event Marketer, 2024)	Embed product trial and community formation mechanics
Social	92% of consumers trust peer UGC more than brand content (Nielsen, 2021); events generate 5–20x multiplier on reach	Engineer shareable moments; plan social amplification from day one
Brand Recall	65% of consumers understand products better through live experience than digital ads (Grand View Research, 2024)	Use events as primary product education, not merely awareness
Personalisation	44% of attendees expect customised event experiences (Statista, 2024)	Deploy data analytics for tailored content and pathways

Engagement Dimension	Evidence	Strategic Implication
Hybrid Format	37% of global events are hybrid; 67.7% of marketers struggle to sustain virtual engagement (Allied MR, 2024)	Design differentiated virtual tracks, not broadcast streams
ROI Measurement	Direct financial ROI is difficult to isolate; brand equity effects are well-documented but long-term	Adopt multi-metric frameworks: NPS + social share + sales lift + brand equity

The study results show four main results which bring immediate operational effects.

Finding 1: Event branding generates superior engagement. Across all evidence streams, event branding consistently outperforms equivalent investment in traditional advertising on composite engagement metrics. The superiority of participatory multi-sensory events shows itself most clearly through their ability to create psychological and social effects which broadcasting media cannot reproduce. Multi-sensory experiences produce brand memories up to four times more durable than those formed through television or digital exposure because emotional memory consolidation enhances memory retention (McGaugh, 2004).

Finding 2: Emotional architecture is the primary design variable. Among all event design dimensions — production scale, technological novelty, logistical precision, thematic creativity — emotional architecture emerges most consistently as the strongest predictor of downstream engagement outcomes. Highly positive emotional experiences at events create better brand recall and stronger post-event affinity and higher social sharing rates and more faithful customer relationships than events which only show technical expertise without strong emotional content.

Finding 3: Authenticity is non-negotiable. Contemporary consumers, particularly those under 35, demonstrate measurably heightened sensitivity to the authenticity of brand experiences and respond acutely negatively to events perceived as opportunistic or misaligned with a brand's genuine identity. Brands that invest in the underlying culture — funding athletes, supporting grassroots communities, contributing to the disciplines they claim to represent — before investing in branded event production achieve significantly.

Finding 4: Digital integration increases investment returns by multiple times. The events which use systematic social amplification mechanics to design their audience engagement methods achieve total audience engagement that exceeds the number of people who attend. The analysis of major branded events which use strong digital integration shows that audience engagement increases by 5 to 20 times actual attendance. Social media impressions and content shares and brand search volume spikes serve as measurement metrics for the analysis.

7. CASE STUDY: RED BULL GMBH

7.1 Brand Architecture and Strategic Context

The Red Bull GmbH company which Dietrich Mateschitz established with Chaleo Yoovidhya in 1985 at their base in Fuschl am See Austria now sells more than 12 billion cans in 175 countries while achieving revenues that exceed 10 billion euros. Red Bull achieved substantial commercial success but the company serves as a valuable case study because it built one of the world's top brand franchises through its exceptional branding initiatives which required no traditional marketing efforts. The brand identity establishes a fundamental system of associations which include energy, adventure, human performance and the commitment to surpass established boundaries which the company executes through its slogan "Red Bull Gives You Wings" that functions as its complete organizational philosophy instead of an advertising slogan.

7.2 Event Portfolio and Strategic Logic

Red Bull's event strategy consists of two distinct elements which create a different approach than traditional sponsorship methods. First, the company creates and owns its signature events rather than purchasing associative rights to events created by others, enabling total control over brand expression, experience design, and content production. The selection process for each event occurs at the highest level which shows the brand's fundamental values because it delivers maximum emotional effects to the audience.

The Red Bull Air Race event showcased top aerial performers who demonstrated their flying capabilities through precise flight tests which created live shows that demonstrated both speed and technical abilities to the audience while showing the fundamental brand values. Red Bull Cliff Diving showcased its athletes in actual locations which represented both natural beauty and architectural excellence, thereby enhancing the brand's cultural heritage while creating a visually appealing experience. The Red Bull Stratos project of October 2012 represents the strategic apex: Felix Baumgartner ascended to the stratosphere and performed a supersonic free-fall parachute jump, simultaneously breaking multiple world records and attracting approximately 8 million simultaneous live viewers on YouTube — then the largest live streaming audience ever recorded. The media coverage produced returns that exceeded three times the project's production costs while the event established a worldwide emotional connection between Red Bull and human potential which reached its maximum limit; this connection served as a complete and genuine demonstration of the brand's commitments.

7.3 Red Bull Media House: Closing the Value Loop

Red Bull Media House was created by Red Bull to operate as a dedicated media production company because the company recognized that exceptional events gain greater value when exceptional content is created and distributed to international audiences. The brand developed a complete content creation system which allowed them to control all content they produced from its initial development stage to its final distribution across different platforms because of this structural change. The commercial logic operates as a self-sustaining loop which begins with extraordinary events that create exceptional content and leads to extraordinary audience engagement which results in premium brand perception that enables creation of more extraordinary events.

7.4 VRIO Analysis of Red Bull's Event Branding Capabilities

Capability	Valuable	Rare	Inimitable	Organised	Competitive Outcome
Proprietary event creation	Yes	Yes	High	Yes	Sustained advantage
Elite athlete network	Yes	Yes	High	Yes	Sustained advantage
Content production & distribution	Yes	Yes	High	Yes	Sustained advantage
Global digital community	Yes	Moderate	Moderate	Yes	Temporary advantage
Brand-culture alignment depth	Yes	Yes	Very High	Yes	Sustained advantage

8. DISCUSSION

8.1 Hypothesis Assessment

The gathered evidence establishes a strong foundation that proves all five research hypotheses. H₁ is supported by both the academic literature and Red Bull's documented outcomes: world-class brand equity built with minimal conventional advertising expenditure is near-impossible to explain except through superior engagement returns on experiential investment. H₂ is proven through neuroscientific research which shows that emotions improve memory consolidation and through industry survey results which reveal that 65 percent of consumers understand products better from attending live events than from experiencing digital advertising. H₃ is validated through consumer psychology research and Red Bull's ability to maintain customer loyalty and advocacy which has lasted for four decades. H₄ is proven through Red Bull's social media performance of its major events and through existing research about UGC credibility premiums. H₅ is proven through industry data which shows that 44 percent of attendees desire customized experiences while personalized events lead to higher satisfaction rates.

8.2 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study makes three theoretical contributions. First, it provides an integrated multi-dimensional framework for analysing event branding effectiveness that bridges experiential marketing theory, multi-dimensional engagement theory, and social media amplification dynamics. Second, it demonstrates that the authenticity premium in event branding is not merely a qualitative intuition but a strategically critical design principle with measurable commercial consequences. Third, it contributes original analysis of the Indian and Gujarat contexts to a literature historically dominated by North American and European evidence.

For practitioners, the study's most important implication is that event branding investment should be approached as the construction of a strategic capability rather than the commissioning of individual tactical activations. Organisations that achieve the strongest and most sustainable outcomes — of which Red Bull is the preeminent example — are those that commit consistently over multi-year timeframes to building distinctive event competencies, authentic cultural partnerships, and sophisticated content and distribution capabilities. Episodic event investment without sustained strategic commitment is a reliable predictor of sub-optimal returns.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Conclusions

The research study proved that event branding functions as a highly effective marketing method which provides companies with their most distinctive marketing approach. The event branding method creates deep brand connections through which consumers participate in brand experiences that create emotional ties with them because more people understand their brand better. The Red Bull case demonstrates that a brand which depends on event marketing for its entire identity can reach worldwide business success through five strategic principles that form the basic structure of Red Bull's achievement which includes legitimate brand connection and emotional brand connection and owned event management and combined content distribution and extended brand partnership. Gujarat in India provides perfect conditions for event branding because it has a young population that wants experiences and digital technology use is increasing and the event industry is becoming more professional and the region has a strong tradition of community celebrations which create chances for brand experiences. The brands which invest their resources wisely into creating event branding capabilities that connect with local cultures and online platforms in these markets will achieve lasting competitive advantages as the experiential economy develops.

9.2 Strategic Recommendations

R₁ — Design for emotion first: Treat emotional architecture as the primary design constraint. Evaluate every event decision against its expected contribution to the affective journey of participants; emotional intensity is the most reliable predictor of brand recall, advocacy, and loyalty.

R₂ — Embed social amplification from inception: Social sharing mechanics — branded environments, shareable moments, influencer access, hashtag campaigns, and post-event content plans — must be integrated at the concept stage, not added as a production afterthought.

R₃ — Commit to authentic brand-culture alignment: Invest in genuine organisational alignment with the cultural and community territories your brand claims to represent. Consumer sensitivity to inauthenticity is acute and commercially punishing; superficial association without substantive commitment erodes rather than builds brand equity.

R₄ — Build personalisation capability: Invest in the data infrastructure, analytical systems, and design processes required to deliver genuinely customised event experiences. As expectations rise continuously, returns to personalisation are growing.

R₅ — Adopt hybrid formats strategically: Design genuinely differentiated virtual participation tracks that create independent value for remote audiences, not merely broadcast streams of physical events. Well-executed hybrid events multiply reach without diluting depth.

R₆ — Measure comprehensively: Move beyond single-metric ROI assessments to multi-dimensional frameworks capturing emotional response, behavioural change, social sharing performance, and long-term brand equity impact across event cycles.

9.3 Limitations and Future Research

The study depends on secondary data as its main limitation because this data prevents researchers from measuring consumer engagement outcomes through direct primary measurements and it stops them from studying how particular event design elements affect engagement measurements. Future research should use mixed-method designs which include experimental consumer surveys and ethnographic event observation and post-event tracking over time. The study of event branding effectiveness through comparative research between Indian and Gujarati and international contexts will create a valuable contribution to the current non-Western experiential marketing research field which remains underserved.

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