Abstract

The Event Experience: Validating the Experience-Involvement Scale in Context of Events

**Keywords:** experience-involvement; event experience; scale validation; consumer experience

# Background of the study

Special events, particularly events with high experiential value, are capable of creating intense experiences which feed into lasting event memories. Their role as an experience industry field is outstanding.

This study is an extension of an original research on the development of a scale measuring the consumer experience dimensions and its quality: the experience-involvement scale (XI-scale) (Zatori, Smith, and Puczko, 2018). The XI-scale consists of four dimensions: emotional, mental, flow-like and social experience-involvement, whereas experience-involvement is defined as a level of engagement in the on-site experience (Zatori et al., 2018). Their findings show that a higher level of experience-involvement leads to personal interpretation, i.e. the event attendee is enriched by mental and emotional pictures and meanings, and hence, her experience becomes more intense, authentic and memorable.

In the current study, the XI-scale is adopted in context of events and tested for validity and reliability to extend its managerial applications to additional experience industry fields. The importance of the study is highlighted by fact that there is a shortage of on-site measurement tools of attendee experience.

# Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to adopt and test the XI-scale in context of events. The scale was previously developed and validated in context of sightseeing tours. The study attempts to adopt XI-scale to measure event attendees’ on-site event experience. The recent study aims to examine the validity, reliability and generalizability of the scale in a different context and research setting; and validate a new scale for event studies and event management.

# Methodology

Based on the methodology of Schrauf and Navarro (2005) the study considered the following steps when adopting the XI-scale to a new context: (1) evaluating the psycho-metric properties of the existing scale, (2) comparing the new sample with the test sample, (3) analyzing item performance in the sample, and (4) adjusting the scoring and interpretation. Following minor changes the scale was adopted to measure the on-site event experience. The data collection took place at five events in Radford, Virginia, USA during fall 2018. The data was collected towards the end of the events via paper surveys. Every attendee was offered the opportunity to respond. In total, 141 responds were collected from which 124 were considered for data analysis. Hence the rather small sample size, SmartPLS3.0 was used to test the validity and reliability of the XI-scale.

# Results

The experience-involvement scale (XI-scale) as second order factor model - with four dimensions: emotional, mental, flow-like and social experience-involvement – was successfully adopted. The results confirmed the construct reliability and validity of the scale (Cronbach’s α=0.930; rho\_A=0.941; AVE=0.521).

Emotional experience-involvement is an emotionally perceived type of experience which is measured through indicators of: excitement, enjoyment, inspiration, fascination, and surprise. (Cronbach’s α=0.747; R2=0.683).

Cognitive experience-involvement results in a cognitively perceived experience of: learning, activation of the desire to learn, encountering something thought-provoking, and the interesting nature of the event. (Cronbach’s α=0.873; R2=0.852).

Flow-like experience involvement results in an emotional, yet cognitively perceived experience which is cognitive and/or creative in nature, and constitutes a higher level of involvement. Its indicators are: perception of uniqueness, meaningfulness, escapism, getting lost in the story created during the tour. (Cronbach’s α=0.867; R2=0.888).

The list of indicators of three dimensions remained unchanged after adoption, except of the social experience-involvement dimension.

Social experience-involvement refers to the social experience surfacing during the event, and it is determined by the interactions of the participants. It is viewed as an essential dimension of each and every experience that is created with the participation of a group of individuals. Its indicators in context of events are: group atmosphere, and enjoying the company of fellow group members. (Cronbach’s α=0.767; R2=0.549) Indicators such as the degree of interaction within the group, and the nature of interaction with the frontline employee were removed from the scale, as they were not found to be fitting the context of events.

# Conclusions

The adopted scale expands the literature on event experience management. The findings contribute to the literature by introducing a new scale to measure event experience quality and consistency, meanwhile they are in line with the findings of some previous studies (see Geus, Richards, and Toepoel, (2016); Ballantyne, Ballantyne, and Packer (2014)).

Another main value proposition of the study was to extend the application of the XI-scale from sightseeing tours to events, hence it strengthens its validity and generalizability. Regarding future research, the findings call for scale adoption and testing in further settings, such as in context of visitor centers, art museums, hotels or theme parks.

# Research implications and limitations

The findings propose that the XI-scale is a useful measurement tool for event planners aiming to capture the on-site experience quality of attendees, and compare the attendee experience quality of multiple events. The rather small sample size can be viewed as a limitation. However, the current study has value as an exploratory study, further data collection is planned to test and potentially establish stronger validity.

**References**

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