“Application of experiential analogy in event exhibition”

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Application of experiential analogy in event exhibition

Abstract

This paper reports on an application of experiential analogy in event exhibition. Experiential learning is not a new concept and, as the name suggests, the concept involves learning from experience, distinguishing it from rote or didactic learning. Due to increased 'marketing clutter' and the overuse of traditional media, marketers have had to find new ways to position their brands in consumers' minds. One way to accomplish this is through the use of experiential analogy where consumers are able to view the target product in terms of the experience it offers, not just as a bundle of functional attributes and benefits. An example of a novel experiential analogy that draws individuals' base experience and has high emotional inferences is provided in the paper.

Keywords: experiential analogy, event exhibition, brand positioning, interactive consumer environment.
JEL Classification: M31.

Background

Recently, there has been a growth of experiential marketing events. This appears to be due to several factors. First, marketers have had to increasingly deal with 'marketing clutter' (Roy and Cornwell, 2004) and the overuse of traditional media. This has resulted in a decrease in the effectiveness of conventional marketing communication strategies. Second, there has been a transition from a service economy to an 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). This is in part due to consumers' desire for novelty, individualism and added value.

As a consequence, marketers have had to find new ways to position their brands in consumers' minds. One way to accomplish this objective is through event marketing, defined as 'live events where audiences interact with a product or brand face to face' (Jack Morton Worldwide, 2006). Marketing events have been characterized as relationship communications (Duncan and Moriarty, 1997; Finne and Gronroos, 2009). One result is that event-marketing, which often uses some form of experiential learning, is becoming an increasingly popular alternative for marketers to communicate with their target audiences.

Experiential learning is not a new concept and, as the name suggests, the concept involves learning from experience, distinguishing it from rote or didactic learning. The theory was proposed by psychologist David Kolb (1984) who was influenced by the work of other theorists including John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget. According to Kolb, this type of learning can be defined as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combinations of grasping and transforming experience" (1984).

Various terms have been used to label the process of experiential learning including 'learning by doing' (Dewey and Dewey, 1915) and 'experienced-based learning' (Wolfe and Byrne, 1975). Rogers (1969, p. 5) defined the essence of experiential learning as: 'it has a quality of personal involvement the whole person in both his feeling and cognitive aspects being in the learning event'. Proponents of experiential learning often use the following quote, attributed to Confucius, to support their position:

TELL ME AND I WILL HEAR

SHOW ME AND I WILL SEE

INVOLVE ME AND I WILL BELIEVE

The consumer's desire for stimulating experiences is not new. According to Kumar (1977) marketing event platforms provide an interactive environment that is highly participative, promoting a collaborative experience through which to engage in ongoing conversations with customers. Schmitt (1999) labels individuals who seek marketing that is personally relevant to them and addresses their need for novelty and excitement as 'prosumers' and he ascertains that experiential marketing has arisen as a response to these individuals with the need to build an emotional attachment to brands that are largely functionally undifferentiated. Vargo and Lusch (2004) use the term 'cocreation' to describe the view of doing things 'with' and 'for' the consumer. In this view, the consumer becomes an active and voluntary participant in the marketing process – which is consistent with event marketing.

According to Holbrook (2000) marketers now recognize that consumers' desire for new and exciting experiences can be successfully exploited through more sophisticated experiential marketing techniques. Recently, and there has been an increase in the use of experiential analogy by marketers. An experiential analogy invites consumers to view the target product in terms of the experience it offers, not just as a bundle of functional attributes and benefits.

A seminal study by Goode, Dahl and Moreau (2010) reports on the effect of experiential analogies on

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consumer perceptions and attitudes. The authors posit that an experimental analogy can consist of both a base experience and a target product experience representation. Goode et al. (2010) noted an example of an Alfa Romeo Spider advertisement using the first kiss as its base experience representation. As presented in Figure 1 A below, there was a pleasant outcome for the first kiss and this led to a preference for the experience (the authors do note that base preferences may vary from individual to individual). Hirschman and Holbrook (1985) propose the TEAV model as a representation of consumption experience. According to the authors, thoughts, emotions, activities, and evaluations occur during an experience and they are interconnected (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1985). According to Comblain, D'Argembeau and Van der Linden (2005), what occurred during one experience may be stored in one's memory as information that may be assessed during a later experience.

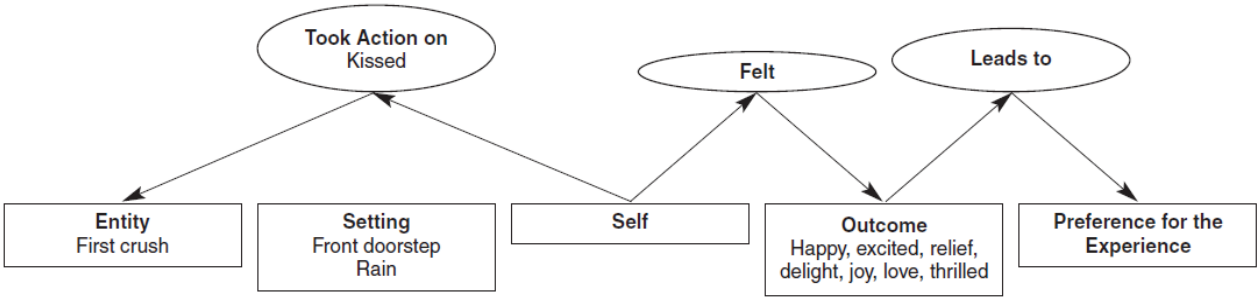
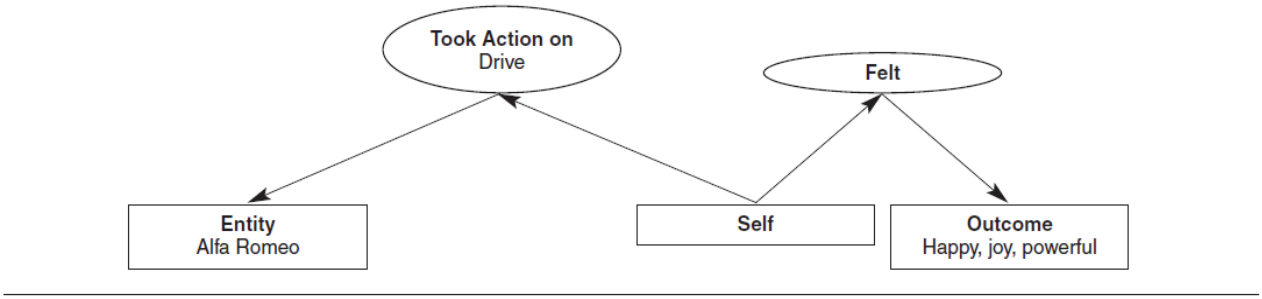


Fig. 1 A. Base experience representation: your first kiss



Source: Goode et al., 2010.

Fig. 1 B. Target product experience representation: Alfa Romeo Spider

Figure 1 B indicates the Alfa Romeo Spider as the target product experience representation. In this scenario an individual drove an Alfa Romeo Spider and the outcome correlates the base experience of happiness, joy and power.

Citing research by Havlena and Holbrook (1986) and Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), Goode et al. (2010) then hypothesize that when an individual processes an experiential analogy, they will map the structural similarities between the base and target experiences and this will facilitate the transfer of emotional knowledge. Thus, to ensure a successful emotional knowledge transfer, majority of the target audience has to possess positive emotions towards the base experience, and the emotional inferences need to be strong.

1. Application of experiental analogy in event exhibition: mobile phone example

This paper reports on an application of experiential analogy in event exhibition. According to Goode, Dahl and Moreau (2010), there are three types of analogy: novel experiential, novel function and conventional simile/metaphor. This paper reports on a novel experiential analogy that draws individuals' base experience in which most people can relate to and has high emotional inferences to ensure a successful emotional knowledge transfer.

Product briefing

A mobile phone was used since advances in mobile phone features allow users to personalize ring tones, phone interface and style, screen savers, information, SMS alerts, address books, pictures albums and MMS services. In the past, function reigned over style in mobile markets. Now style reigns over function. The industry has seen three subsequent forms of device segmentation (technology, lifestyle, functional) with mobile devices. A fourth one-experience is emerging (Steinbock, 2005); today's customized mobile phone services solutions are primarily due to social, emotional and epistemic values rather than functional values. System-tailored personalization and user-tailored customization (Shyam Sundar & Marathe,

2010) have gained their importance over the years as a "new competitive strategy to challenge" the old mass production method (Pine & Boynton, 1993).

In Q4 of 2012, Microsoft Corporation launched its Windows Phone 8 product line. It introduced a tile-based user interface and used "Reinvented around You" as a slogan to feature its highly customizable functions to provide a personalized user interface (Microsoft Corporation, 2013). Within the Windows Phone 8 user interface, "a tile is an image that represents [an] app on the Start screen." All mobile applications have tiles "which display on the Start screen when a customer pins (an) app from the App list (Microsoft Corporation, 2014)." As shown in Figure 2 below, the phone becomes customizable since it allows end-users to pin a contact, an application, a website, or a radio station/podcast on their Start screen (2014); the most important things one cares about can be pinned onto the individual's Start screen and become a collage and a form of self-expression. The end-users can also give gesture commands to rearrange or resize the pinned tiles.

The food lover | The music mentor | The traveler | The gamer

Fig. 2. Target product featuring customizable start screen

However, the mobile phone functions mentioned above are merely means to an end, in which is to provide a user interface that is highly customizable to *satisfy individuals' needs*. An experiential analogy is therefore preferred since it "invites consumers to view the target product in terms of the experience it offers, not just as a bundle of functional attributes and benefits (Goode et al., 2010)."

2. The use of experiential analogy in event exhibition

Goode, Dahl and Moreau (2010) introduced the experiential analogy model with base experience representation and target product experience representation. In experiential event marketing, however, a demonstrated experience representation emerges. A marketer may not showcase the target product during an event exhibition, but provides participants an experience that reflects the product. As shown in Figure 3 below, the demonstrated experience draws emotional inferences from base experience and forwards them to the target product experience. In order to ensure a successful emotional knowledge transfer, "a high number of (positive) emotional inferences must be generated (2010)."

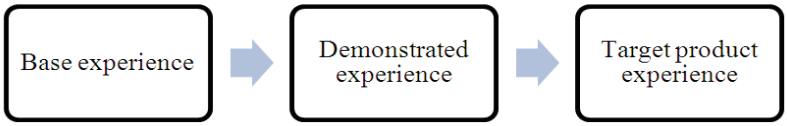


Fig. 3. Flow of emotional knowledge transfer in experiential analogy used in event exhibition

Demonstrated and base experience representations in the mobile phone promotion. The mobile phone promotion event exhibition examined in this paper took place on a medium-size college campus in the Midwest in 2013. To promote the Windows Phone 8 product, an experiential analogy was exercised to better convey the central idea that the product was "not designed for all of us," but "designed for each of us (Microsoft Corporation, 2013)." As shown in Figure 4, a 3-feet tall prop board was replicated along with app tiles to engage participants in selecting and arranging app tiles on their own "Start screen." Participants assembled interchangeable tiles on the board as an analogy of selecting application tiles within a phone and pin them onto the Start screen of the target product.

Fig. 4. A set of prop mobile phone and tiles as an experiential analogy

The central message of the "Reinvented around You" campaign and the features of Windows Phone 8 strongly appeal to the Millennials generation. According to Williams and Page, the key values of the Millennials are "choice, customization… entertainment, and innovation (2010)." Even though the product might have targeted a wide range of markets with various age groups, the scope of the event exhibition examined occurred on a college campus. The target market for the activity was Millennials born in between 1991 and 1995, who were students attending college (age 18-22). However, the experiential analogy demonstrated during the event exhibition had a secondary target market that broadens the age group to Millennials born before 2000. This age group shares the same base experience in which the demonstrated experience sought to draw upon. The base experience will be further discussed. The activity excluded Millennials born after 2000 as its target audience because they would have less emotional inferences from base experience of the activity.

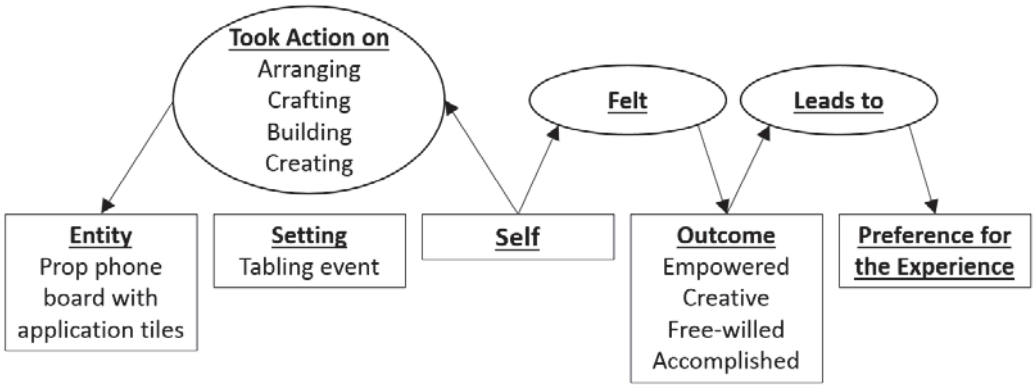


Fig. 5. Demonstrated experience representation – mobile phone promotion in event exhibition

Figure 5 above shows the demonstrated experience representation. The event exhibition experience seeks to extract emotional inferences from the base experience representation and project onto the target product experience representation.

As shown in Figure 6 below, the action of arranging the tiles on the Start screen is not different from the collective childhood memories of the Millennials of assembling wooden building blocks, doing puzzles, LEGO®, or arranging alphabet magnets on the fridge; the same actions have been translated into gesture commands on a virtual platform. The demonstrated experience during the event exhibition provided end-users a sense of entertainment, empowerment, accomplishment, creativeness, and free will. These positive emotional inferences were accessed from participants' base experience, identified for the similarities between the two experience representations, and then transferred to complete an analogy-based knowledge transfer (Gentner and Markman, 1997; Gregan-Paxton and John, 1997).

To ensure a successful emotional knowledge transfer, it is crucial to (1) make sure that most people within the target market possess positive emotions towards the base experience of crafting, and (2) draw sufficient and strong emotional inferences. Both the base experience and demonstrated experience is fairly similar, therefore, the feelings of accomplishment, creativeness, and a sense of free-will would be transferred. Preference for the base experience would be then transferred onto the demonstration/event exhibition level.

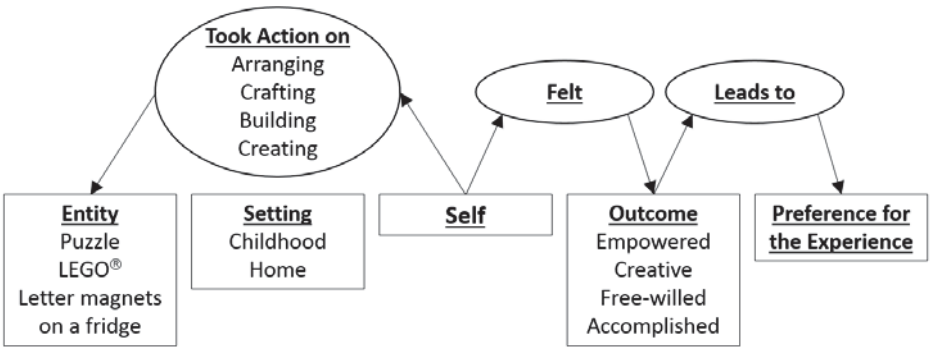


Fig. 6. Base experience representation – mobile phone promotion in event exhibition

3. Target product experience representation in mobile phone promotion

The hands-on event exhibition activity recreated the virtual user interface experience of Windows Phone 8. The activity of arranging physical tiles on the prop phone board during the exhibition event is designed to simulate the user interface and gestures of arranging and sizing tiles on the phone home screen, as shown in Figure 7 below (Thurrott, 2012). Since the demonstrated prop implied that consumers would be able to use similar gestures to arrange an actual home screen on Windows Phone 8, both the demonstration and target product experience representations were perceived and processed simultaneously.

Fig. 7. Resizing and arranging tiles on the start screen of a mobile phone (Thurrott, 2012)

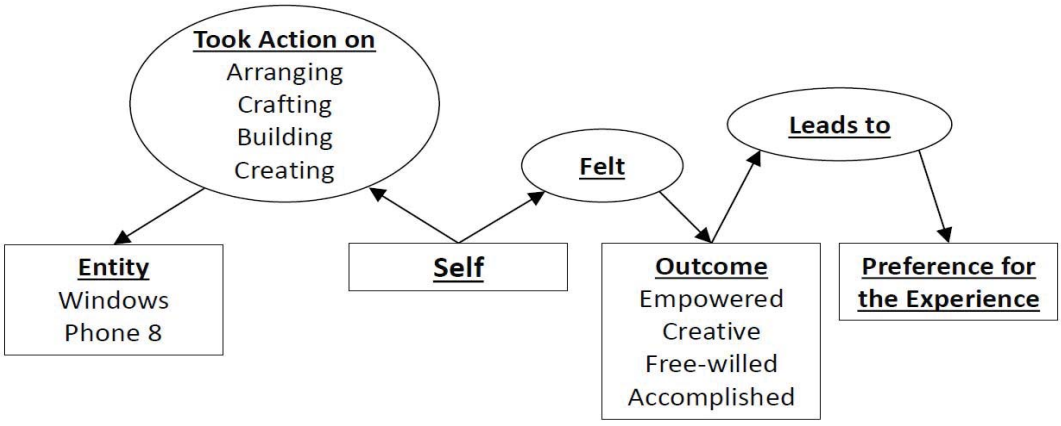


Fig. 8. Target product experience representation – mobile phone promotion in event exhibition

As shown in Figure 8 above, the emotional outcomes drawn from the base experience through the demonstrated experience have been transferred to the target product experience. The analogy-based knowledge transfer is beneficial for a new product launch such as Windows Phone 8 since it enhances product knowledge, which is crucial in the introduction stage within the product life cycle. Furthermore, the use of experiential analogy in event exhibition may induce participants to go through the five stages of the adoptions process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Rogers, 1982). On an aggregate level, the use of experiential analogy increases rate of adoption and enhances diffusion of innovation.

There are several patents filed by Microsoft Corporation or Nokia Mobile Phones Ltd. related to pinning items on the start screen of a mobile phone, Figure 9 shows a patented process that enables the action of pinning an item on the Start screen of Windows Phone 8 (U.S. Patent No. 0260,218, 2010).

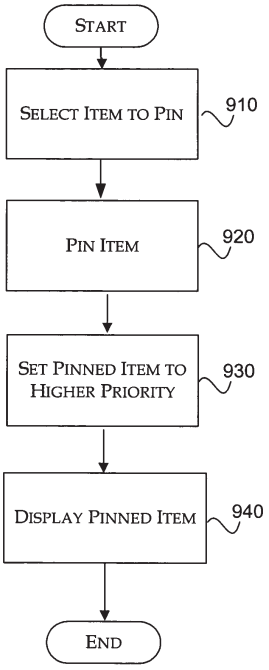


Fig. 9. Patented process of pinning a tile on a mobile phone

4. Mobile phone promotion results

The Windows Phone 8 promotion in which lasted approximately two weeks was a part of the 14-week nationwide college sampling/trial recruitment program. The event exhibition applied with the mobile phone experiential analogy and examined in this paper was carried out on one college campus for one month. Participants filled out a survey after the sampling/trial experience. However, the survey result was not exclusive to the experiential analogy experience studied in this paper. The aggregate result across 500 universities nationwide "showed that student preference for Apple dropped from 34% before the trials to 20% after, while preference for Windows climbed from 43% to 59%, with half of the students likely to recommend Windows 8, compared with just 16%" prior to the nationwide promotion (Chief Marketer). The result of the event exhibition with an applied experiential analogy, however, *highly* correlates the aggregate result.

Conclusion

Goode, Dahl and Moreau (2010) hypothesized an experiential analogy model consisting of base experience representation and target product experience representation. In event exhibition, a third "demonstrated experience representation" may be added onto the analogy model. A successful experiential analogy needs strong and positive emotional inferences (2010). Within the three-tiered analogy model, emotional knowledge is transferred from base experience to demonstrated experience at an event exhibition. It is then transferred from demonstrated experience to target product experience.

This paper examines an application of experiential analogy used in a Windows Phone 8 exhibition. Microsoft Corporation's "Reinvented Around You" marketing campaign for the product featured its highly customizable functions to provide a personalized user interface. The product has the capability for an end-user to pin a contact, an app, a website, or a podcast, then size and arrange them to the individual's preference.

An event exhibition applied with an experiential analogy occurred on a medium-size college campus in the Midwest in 2013. Therefore, the primary target market for the activity was Millennials born in between 1991 and 1995, who were students attending college (age 18-22). The characteristics of the target product correlated with the key values of the Millennials which are "choice, customization… entertainment, and innovation (Williams & Page, 2010)." A prop board was replicated along with app tiles to engage participants during event exhibitions in selecting and arranging app tiles on their own "Start screen." Participants assembled interchangeable tiles on the board as an analogy of selecting elements within a phone and pin them onto the Start screen of the target product. The demonstrated activity drew emotional inferences from the base experience which was the collective childhood memories of the Millennials of assembling wooden building blocks, doing puzzles, LEGO®, or arranging alphabet magnets on the fridge. The emotional outcomes of empowerment, creativeness, free will, and accomplishment were accessed within the base experience. The similarities among the base and demonstrated experiences were then mapped; finally, these emotional outcomes were transferred (Gentner and Markman 1997; Gregan-Paxton and John, 1997) and projected onto the target product experience. Participant survey results show that the event exhibition with the use of experiential analogy resulted in lower preference for Apple and higher preference for Windows, and higher likelihood to recommend Windows (Chief Marketer).

Future research

First, a quantitative research with the use of experiential analogy in event marketing can be further developed to examine the effectiveness among emotional knowledge transfer from the base experience to the demonstrated experience or from the demonstrated experience to the target product experience. Second, the use of analogy-based knowledge transfer aids consumers to acquire product knowledge, and is therefore highly beneficial to implement in the introduction stage of the product life cycle. Furthermore, it may speed up the adoptions process of an innovation. Further research may focus on experiential analogy and its effect on

changing the rate of adoption and enhancing diffusion of innovation. Third, the demonstrated experience representation may be in other forms than event exhibition. Research in the different media forms and its effectiveness of emotional knowledge transfer can be pursued.

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