

Abstract

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Title: The role of sensory design in creating memorable events	

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Event organizers are seeking to create experiences that will leave long-lasting impressions on visitors. The perception of an experience is largely dependent on sensory stimuli. By understanding how visitors react to certain stimuli, event planners can design better experiences. This master's thesis explores the impact of sensory design elements on visitors' perceptions of events. The five human senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch) are investigated, as well as their role in shaping memories and their connection to the event environment. To gain deeper insights into visitors' perceptions, the study employs a qualitative approach using semi-structured photo elicitation interviews. The introduction of pictures into the research process stimulates memory recall and allows participants to describe their sensory experiences in more detail. The results demonstrate the effectiveness of photo elicitation in capturing the multidimensional and subjective nature of sensory experiences at events. In total, 24 interviews were conducted across four different events, including two concerts, a sports competition, and a travel fair.

During the research process, a conceptual framework was created that visualizes the influence factors of event experiences. These include the physical environment as well as a temporal perspective, containing sensory stimuli and the social dimension. The social dimension includes the influence of the individual in co-creating the experience and the influence of others. The findings of this research reveal that all five senses contribute to shaping visitors' perceptions. The research confirms the dominance of sight and sound. Sound, particularly in concerts, can significantly impact mood. Scents, though often subconscious, can trigger powerful emotions and memories. Similarly, taste plays a significant role, especially at food-centric events where variety can heighten emotional associations. Finally, touch is the most interactive sense. Notably, temperature, often grouped with touch, significantly affected comfort. One overall key finding is the importance of sensory congruence. When sensory elements align with the overall event theme and situation, visitors perceive the experience as more authentic and impactful. This thesis offers valuable insights for event planners. By understanding the influence of sensory design on visitor perceptions, event organizers can create memorable experiences.

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