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**The relationships among brand experience, brand  
resonance and brand loyalty in experiential marketing:  
Evidence from smart phone in Taiwan**

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**Abstract**

**Aim/purpose** – The study aims to understand the contribution of the experiential events how to influence the brand loyalty while the consumer synchronized with brand under the brand resonance.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study combines Schmitt's five distinct experience 'modules' with the SEM method to explore the relationship among these five experience dimensions and brand experience, and applies the Keller's CBBE model to explore whether the experiential events that consumer participated could help the company build brand resonance through the brand experience delivering in the event. The study applies convenient sampling method and collects data through online questionnaire platform from April 12 to April 26, 2015. Deleting invalid or incomplete questionnaires, the study gets 204 valid samples from the total 229 respondents.

**Findings** – The findings indicate that these five strategic experiences dimensions are positively related to the brand experience; the positive relationships among brand experience, brand resonance, and brand loyalty also exist.

**Research implications/limitations** – The results of the study have some strategic implications for marketing practice. The findings point out that event marketing could be considered as an effective tool to enlarge customer base and to build brand loyalty. In the real world, the more event marketing adopts; the stronger brand experience is and the higher the effect on brand loyalty will be. Nevertheless, the study cannot provide specific constructive suggestion: how to design events to stimulate and create a strong, memorable brand experience.

**Originality/value/contribution** – Few studies examine the effect of each brand experience dimensions on brand relationship, and this study fills this gap.

**Keywords:** brand experience, brand resonance, brand loyalty, experiential marketing.

**JEL Classification:** M31, O53.

## 1. Introduction

Experiential marketing has become the main stream of marketing strategy in Taiwan during the last decade. Nevertheless, most of Taiwanese companies are used to taking the low-price competition or discounting marketing strategies to attract more consumers. During Taiwan economic development early stage, almost all the marketing strategies only emphasized delivering price information not the shopping experience of the customers. Over the past two decades, a plenty of studies have pointed out that the shopping experience has significant effect on consumer behavior [e.g. Kerin, Jain & Howard 1992; Swinyard 1993; Donovan et al. 1994; Sherman, Mathur & Smith 1997; Turley & Milliman 2000; Mattila & Wirtz 2001; Menon & Kahn 2002; Michon, Chebat & Turley 2005; Carpenter 2008; Jang & Namkung 2009; Darley, Blankson & Luethge 2010].

The study tries to analyze the strategic experiential modules and employs the SEM model to build brand of experiential marketing. We adopt the definition of experiential marketing proposed by Schmitt [1999] to explore the relationship between brand experience and these dimensions in event marketing. Furthermore, we examine how brand experience affects customers to reach brand resonance and brand loyalty.

The study aims to test the relationships among brand experience, brand resonance and brand loyalty in experiential marketing, we choose HTC as the empirical target company. There are two main reasons to explain why we choose HTC. First, undoubtedly HTC is one of the symbolic, representative Taiwanese globalized companies. HTC ranked Interbrand's annual ranking of the World's Most Valuable Brand in 2011, and was first and the only Taiwanese brand that listed *The Ranking of The Brands Top 100*. Besides, as usual, HTC was criticized for its brand marketing strategies. After struggling for years, HTC started to adopt all entirely new marketing strategy. This is another reason for selecting HTC as the targeted brand.

The present study is structured as follows: firstly, we present a literature review; secondly, we describe the methodology used and specify the empirical model; then, we present analysis of the data and variables of the model; subsequently we present the empirical results; and, finally, we discuss the main conclusion and implications, limitation of the study.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Experiential marketing and event marketing**

Experience, as defined within the realms of management, involves a personal occurrence with emotional significance created by an interaction with product or brand related stimuli [Holbrook & Hirschman 1982]. Holbrook and Hirschman [1982] pointed out that the consumer value is an experience that does not exist in the products purchased, on chosen brands nor on the ownership of the product, but in the process of consuming experience. Pine & Gilmore [1998] stated their view of experiential marketing in the manner: “when a person buy a service, he purchase a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf. But when he buys an experience, he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages to engage him in a personal way”. Experiential marketing is about taking the essence of a product and amplifying it into a set of tangible, physical, interactive experiences that reinforce it. Schmitt [1999] introduced a strategic framework for managing experiences called strategic experiences module including sensory experience (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical experiences, behaviors and lifestyles (ACT), and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (RELATE). In a new era, it’s critical to shift from the features and benefits approach advocated by traditional marketing to customer experience. Schmitt [1999] also suggested marketers or called experience providers employ experiential hybrids that combine two or more strategic experiences modules in or to broaden the experiential appeal.

Comparing to the traditional marketing, experiential marketing means that, besides visible and controlled interactions, service providers should expand their perspectives in order to get to know the customers on a deeper level [Heinonen et al. 2010]. That an experience is more than a service means that the ultimate result of marketing should not be the service, but the customer experience and the resulting value in use for customers in their particular context. Thus, the vital issue is how the companies can support customers’ ongoing activity and experience structure.

Event marketing is a choice of experiential marketing and uses to build memorable relations with the targeted. Duncan & Moriarty [1998] pointed out that event marketing has emerged as a new communication strategy making the target customers as active participants as behavioral level. It provides a valuable way of constructing and strengthening relationships between brand and consumers, especially for service brands that do not provide a tangible output for the consumer. Events can take various forms, including incentive/reward programs,

open days, conference, products launches, press conference, exhibitions, corporate entertainment, charity fundraisers, trade shows and product visitor attractions, etc. [Wood 2009]. Using experiential marketing events could create consumers' extraordinary experiences and build relationships with customers through these particular experiences. Associating with the qualities of the event and linking the brand to good causes, managers can enhance brand loyalty. The successful marketing events should identify seven events attributes (the 7 'I's) which enhance the events experience [Wood & Masterman 2007, 2008; Wood 2009]: involvement, interaction, immersion, intensity, individuality, innovation, integrity.

## 2.2. Brand experience

Brand experience has attracted a lot of attention in marketing practice. Marketing practitioners have come to realize that understanding how consumers experience brands is critical for developing marketing strategies for goods and services. With regard to brand experience, Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello [2009] indicated that brand experience are "[...] subjective, internal consumer response (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's identity, packaging, design, environments and communications". Besides, brand experience differs from brand evaluations, involvement, attachment, and personality. Brand experiences do not involve a motivational state; they can happen when consumers show no interest or have no personal connections with the brand. Brands with high consumer involvement are not necessarily that evoke the strongest brand experiences. Connecting both two terms, event marketing leads to emotional linking with the brand [Whelan & Wohlfeil, 2006].

The study concludes several factors affecting the brand experiences and proposes some hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1: The sensory experiences (SENCE) of events will contribute positively to the creation of brand experience.*

*Hypothesis 2: The affective experiences (FEEL) of event will contribute positively to the creation of brand experience.*

*Hypothesis 3: Creative cognitive experiences (THINKK) of event will contribute positively to the creation of brand experience.*

*Hypothesis 4: Physical experiences (ACT) of event will contribute positively to the creation of brand experience.*

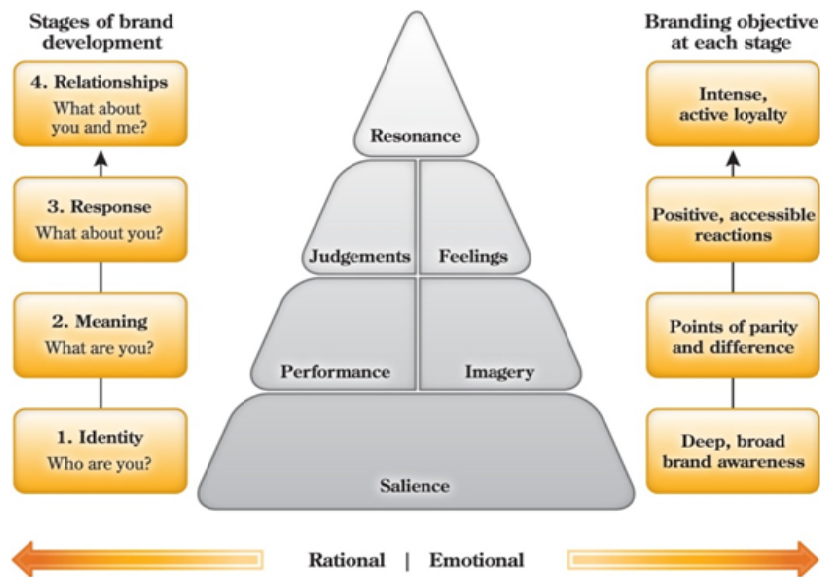
*Hypothesis 5: Social-identity experiences (RELATE) of event will contribute positively to the creation of brand experience.*

### 2.3. Brand resonance

Brand resonance is a concept proposed to characterize brand relationships and refers to the nature of the consumer-brand relationship and, more specifically, the extent to which a person feels that he or she resonates or connects with a brand or feels in sync with it [Keller 2001]. The marketing communication environment has altered extremely since the Technology and Internet changed the way people interacts and communicates. Event and experience is seen as more mass media types of communications. Keller [2009] proposes the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model illustrated in Figure 1 and views brand building as an ascending series of steps. The CBBE model emphasizes the duality of brands: the rational route to brand building is the left-hand side of the pyramid, whereas the emotional route is the right-hand side. The creation of significant brand equity requires reaching the top or pinnacle of the brand resonance pyramid, which occurs only if the right building blocks are put into place.

All the steps involve accomplishing certain objectives with customers- both existing and potential. In short, brand resonance stresses the importance of understanding the cognitive and affective consequence of brand relationships-how consumers think, feel, and act-to guide research and planning for marketers. It also emphasizes a hierarchy in brand development and the importance of sequence steps in brand building.

Figure 1. Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model pyramid



The past studies pointed out that brand experience plays an importance role of brand equity. Furthermore, brand experiences are also actual sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses [e.g. Farquhar 1989; Aaker 1996; Erdem & Swait 1998; Berry 2000; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000; Yoo & Donthu 2001; Aaker 2009; Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello 2009; Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob 2011]. Following the above statement, the study proposes a hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 6: Brand experience will have a positive impact on brand resonance.*

## **2.4. Brand loyalty**

The key to brand management and development is to understand what benefits customers are looking for. What customers are looking for is a set of attributes, which go beyond the physical and tangible aspects of a product. The added value or the incremental utility of the product that comes with the brand name is termed brand equity [Aziz & Yasin 2010]. Brand equity appears where customers willingly pay more for the same level of quality due to the attractiveness of the name attached to the product [Bello & Holbrook 1995]. Brand loyalty is the core of brand equity. However, all the benefits of brand equity are not meaningful if the service has no meaning to the customer [Aziz & Yasin 2010]. Oliver [1999] presented an evolutionary model in which satisfaction make important contributions to repurchase early in the ownership cycle. It is vital to understand how the brand value is created in the mind of the customer and how this value is translated into customer behavior and brand loyalty. Some papers have discussed the importance of brand equity and how to build and manage brand equity [e.g. Aaker 1991: 206; Kamakura & Russell 1991; Keller 1993; Simon & Sullivan 1993; Kapferer 1995; Aaker 1996]. The brand can be described as a mechanism to engage the buyer and the seller in a long-term relationship and play a key role in building this relationship based on the customers' experience [Erdem & Swait 1998; Davis, Buchanan-Oliver & Brodie 2000; Brodie, Glynn & van Durme 2002].

In this model, a customer gaining experience, from convergence of product, personal and social forces, can lead to the emergence of ultimate loyalty. There are two main perspectives of brand equity. Firm-based brand equity (FEBE) addresses the financial value of brands; the other is customer-based brand equity (CBBE) that focuses on consumers' response to brands, and the study adopts this viewpoint. Aaker [1991] regards brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities linking to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and /or to that firm's customer.

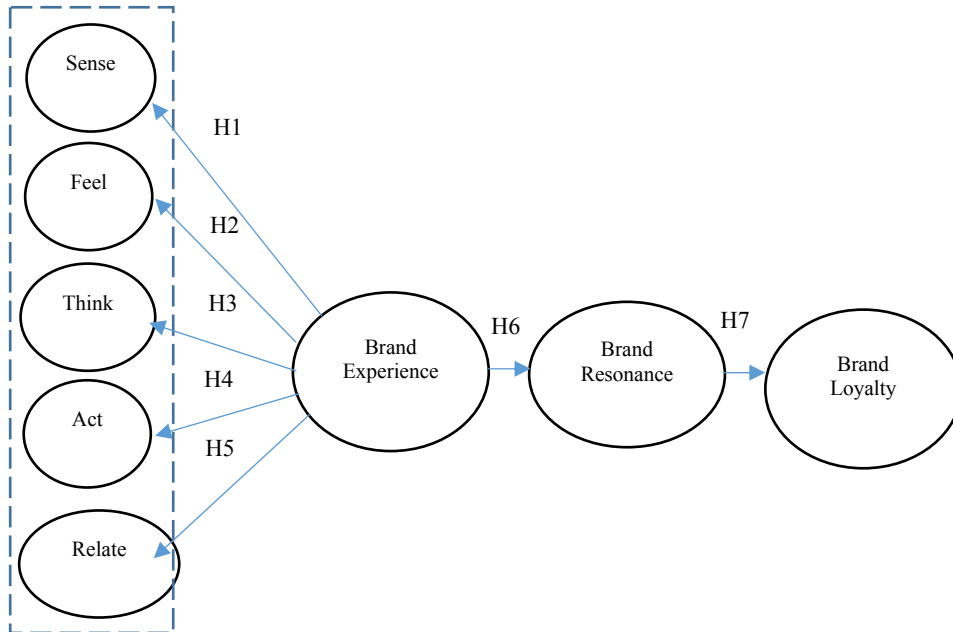
He identifies the following five components of brand equity: (1) brand awareness; (2) brand association; (3) perceived quality; (4) brand loyalty; (5) other proprietary assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships. Keller [2003] defines brand equity as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand, and further articulates the concept of brand equity and identified several components that are composed of customer based brand equity. Brand resonance could predict repurchase intention, future earnings and firm value in various markets [Aaker & Jacobson 2001]. Wang et al. [2008] stated that a strong customer brand relationship can make customers more receptive to new products or extensions under the same brand. Marketing communications can tell or show consumers how and why a product is used, by what kind of person and where and when. Consumers can learn about who makes the product and what the company and brand stand for; and get an incentive or reward for trial or usage. Moreover, marketing communications allow companies to link their brands to other people, places, events, brands, experience, feelings and things. They can contribute to brand equity – by establishing the brand in memory and creating a brand image – as well as drive sales and even affect shareholder value [Luo & Donthu 2006]. Based on the above statement, the study proposes a hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 7: Brand resonance will have a positive impact on brand loyalty.*

### **3. Research methods**

#### **3.1. Research structure**

The study explores the relationships among brand experience, brand resonance, brand equity in event marketing and the internal factors of strategic experiences modules proposed by Schmitt [1999]; then, we develop the research framework (Figure 2). According to Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello [2009], definition, brand experiences are actual sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses. Then the study applies the Keller's CBBE model to explore whether the experiential events that consumer participated could help the company build brand resonance through the brand experience delivering in the event. The study aims to understand the contribution of the experiential events how to influence the brand loyalty while the consumer synchronized with brand under the brand resonance.

**Figure 2.** Structural model and hypotheses

### 3.2. Operational definition

The strategic experiential modules proposed by Schmitt [1999] include five dimensions of the event marketing included the sense, feel, think, act and relate (Table 1). The sense module appeals to the sense with objective of creating sensory experience, through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell; the feel module appeals to customers' inner feelings and emotions, with the objective of creating affective experience that range from mildly positive moods linked to a brand to strong emotions of joy and pride. The think module defines as the intellect with objective creating cognitive, problem-solving experiences that engage customer creatively and act appeals to enrich customers' lives by targeting their physical experience, showing them alternative ways of doing things, alternative lifestyles and interactions. Relate marketing contains aspects of the four modules above mentioned, expanding the individual's personal, private feelings, thus relating the individual to something outside his/her private states.



**Table 1.** Scale used for the study

Concept measured	Scale items	Authors
Sense	1. This brand makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses. 2. I find this brand interesting in a sensory way. 3. This brand does not appeal to my senses	Schmitt [1999]; Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello [2009]
Feel	1. This brand induces feelings and sentiments. 2. I do not have strong emotions for this brand. 3. This brand is an emotional brands	Schmitt [1999]; Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello [2009]
Think	1. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter this brand. 2. This brand does not make me think. 3. This brand stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	Schmitt [1999]; Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello [2009]
Act	1. I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use the brand. 2. This brand results in bodily experience. 3. This brand is not action oriented	Schmitt [1999]; Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello [2009]
Relate	1. I care the brand's event connection with the external environment. 2. This brand event's issue connection affects my judgment on the brand. 3. The experiential event increase the external environment connection with me	Schmitt [1999]
Brand resonance	1. I actively share information about the brand with others. 2. I would actively search for information about the brand. 3. The experiential event has a positive impact on me. 4. I am willing to spend more time and money on the brand. 5. The event delivers a positive image on me	Huang et al. [2014]
Brand loyalty	1. In the future, I will be loyal to the brand. 2. This brand will be my first choice in the future. 3. I will not buy other brands if this brand is available at the store. 4. I will recommend this brand to others	Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello [2009]

### 3.3. Sampling

The study applies convenient sampling method and collects data through online questionnaire platform from April 12 to April 26, 2015. Deleting invalid or incomplete questionnaires, the study gets 204 valid samples from the total 229 respondents. A demographic profile of questionnaire consists of gender, age, education, occupation, and monthly income (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Profile of the sample

<b>Gender</b>	Percentage
Man	59.3%
Woman	40.7%
<b>Age</b>	
25 and below	78.9%
26-30	12.3%
31-35	7.4%
36-40	1.0%
51 and over	0.5%
<b>Education</b>	
Junior school	0.5%
Senior school	11.8%
University	72.5%
Graduate	15.2%
<b>Income (NTD)</b>	
10,000 and below	62.7%
10,001-25,000	16.7%
25,001-40,000	13.2%
40,001-55,000	4.9%
55,001-70,000	2.0%
70,001 and over	0.5%
<b>Career</b>	
Electronic information	6.4%
Finance	1.1%
Military, Civil and Teaching Staff	3.4%
Manufacture	4.4%
Service	7.4%
Freelancer	2.0%
Student	71.1%
Others	4.4%

## 4. Research findings and discussion

### 4.1. Reliability and validity analysis

The study uses confirmatory factor analysis to determine scale validity and reliability of the eight constructs. Some items show poor factor loading value in  $R^2$ , and are discarded while factor loading do not be greater than 0.5. After purging, the factors and scales contained the items shown in the Table 3. Other indicators are shown the as follows: RMSEA, 0.078; CFI, 0.852; and the values for Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ( $> 0.5$ ) were satisfied with the standard proposed by Nunnally [1978]. Then the study used Harmon's one factor test to examine the common method bias [Podsakoff & Organ 1986]. The unrotated principal components factor analysis indicted that a single factor did not account for the majority of covariance among variables ( $< 50\%$ ).

We use variance extracted test to assess the discriminant validity of two or more factors [Fornell & Larcker 1981]. The AVE (average variance extracted) of each construct with the shared variance between constructs. If the AVE for each construct is greater than its shared variance with any other construct, discriminant validity is supported. Table 4 shows that discriminant validity is fulfilled for all factors.

**Table 3.** Measurement instrument for the structural model-reliability and convergent validity

Factor	Indicator	Load	t-value	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Composed Reliability	AVE
Sense	SSE1	0.73***	6.047***	0.635	0.869	0.834
	SSE2	0.65***	5.795***			
	SSE3	0.49***	6.047***			
Feel	FEL1	0.71***	8.081***	0.723	0.885	0.720
	FEL2	0.66***	7.686***			
	FEL3	0.68***	8.081***			
Think	TIK1	0.71***	8.250***	0.721	0.889	0.728
	TIK2	0.65***	7.734***			
	TIK3	0.69***	8.250***			
Act	ACT1	0.49***	5.193***	0.508	0.777	0.539
	ACT2	0.49***	5.263***			
	ACT3	0.54***	5.193***			
Relate	RLE1	0.80***	9.256***	0.783	0.933	0.824
	RLE2	0.68***	8.468***			
	RLE3	0.75***	9.256***			
Brand experience	Sense	0.89***	6.259***	0.871	0.985	0.930
	Feel	0.87***	5.395***			
	Think	0.90***	5.468***			
	Act	0.95***	4.975***			
	Relate	0.61***	4.891***			
Brand resonance	BRE1	0.74***	9.046***	0.812	0.923	0.707
	BRE2	0.73***	9.891***			
	BRE3	0.60***	8.088***			
	BRE4	0.64***	8.694***			
	BRE5	0.67***	9.046***			
Brand loyalty	BRL1	0.84***	11.450***	0.851	0.877	0.653
	BRL2	0.88***	14.493***			
	BRL3	0.64***	9.772***			
	BRL4	0.73***	11.450***			

Note: Significant at: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 4.** Measurement instrument: discriminant validity

Factor	Brand experience	Brand resonance	Brand loyalty	Sense	Feel	Think	Act	Relate
Brand experience	<b>0.964</b>							
Brand resonance	0.859	<b>0.841</b>						
Brand loyalty	0.638	0.742	<b>0.808</b>					
Sense	0.933	0.801	0.595	<b>0.834</b>				
Feel	0.862	0.741	0.550	0.804	<b>0.848</b>			
Think	0.840	0.722	0.536	0.783	0.724	<b>0.853</b>		
Act	0.362	0.311	0.231	0.338	0.312	0.304	<b>0.734</b>	
Relate	0.655	0.563	0.418	0.611	0.565	0.550	0.237	<b>0.908</b>

## 4.2. SEM analysis

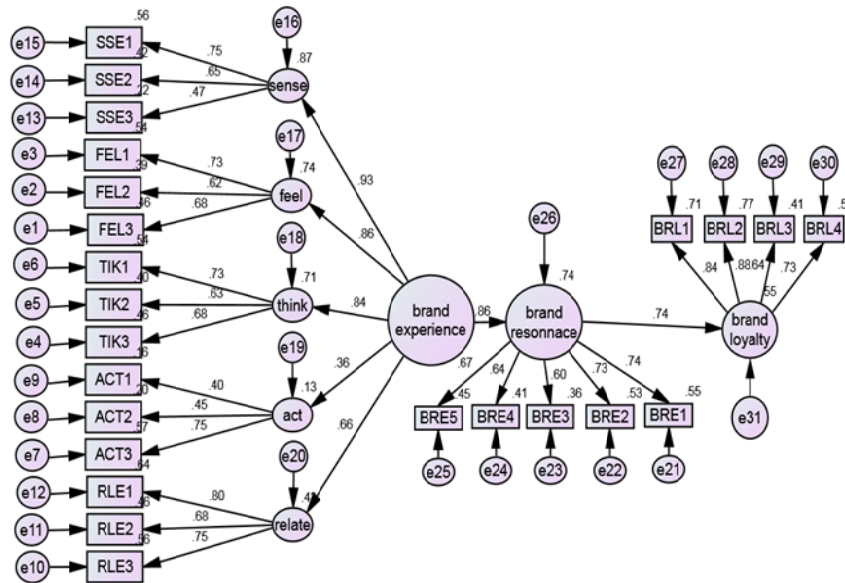
The study uses the robust maximum likelihood method to test SEM. The results confirm that the model shows an acceptable fit with the data structure (Figure 3). All hypotheses cannot be rejected (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Hypotheses testing

Structural relation	Standardized coefficient	t-value	Accepted/ /Rejected
<b>Antecedents of brand experience</b>			
H1: sense → brand experience	0.907	5.104***	H1:accepted
H2: feel → brand experience	0.859	6.321***	H2:accepted
H3: think → brand experience	0.862	6.325***	H3:accepted
H4: act → brand experience	0.941	5.700***	H4:accepted
H5: relate → brand experience	0.669	5.104***	H5:accepted
<b>Effects of brand experience</b>			
H6: brand experience → brand resonance	0.858	6.392***	H6:accepted
H7: brand resonance → brand loyalty	0.736	7.450***	H7:accepted

Brand experience has a positive influence of strategic experiences modules on brand experience of the event (H1-H5). In other words, when customers reach a higher degree of impression on the five aspects, their brand experience is greater. It is consistent with Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello [2009] results. Brand experience is a subjective, internal consumer response (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli. The result confirms that event marketing leads to emotional links with the brand [Whelan & Wohlfeil 2006].

Figure 3. Estimated results of SEM model



Note: significant at \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\chi^2 = 548.816$ ; GFI = 0.821; NFI = 0.746; CFI = 0.852; IFI = 0.854; RMS.

The acceptance of H6 implies that the effect of brand experience has a positive and significant impact on brand resonance. The event image associations are transferred to the sponsoring brand through event sponsorship activities [Gwinner 1997]. This result also supports that the event brand association is reflected in the brand experience in consumers mind [Keller 1993]. Furthermore, Keller [1993] pointed out that brand resonance could help predict repurchase intention, future earnings and firm value in various markets. These findings indicate that brand resonance could activate and affect consumer’s behavior and attitude toward the brand. While consumer interacting with the brand, brand association is a symbol in consumer’s mind and includes opinions, inference, beliefs and information.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. Research contribution

Facing the severe market competition and the difficulty of the developing new customers, managers have to adopt a lot of innovative marketing strategies and try to attract more customers, to catch their eyes and to arouse their purchasing intention. The one of most popular strategies is to enhance purchasing inten-

tions of existing customers through building brand relationships. The past studies examined brand experience dimensions and investigated the relation between brand resonance and brand loyalty. Brand experience is composed of sensory, affective, behavioral and intellectual dimensions [Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello 2009]. Therefore, many papers employed a model to explore the effect of each dimensions of brand experience, and the relationship between brand resonance and brand loyalty. However, most studies focused on brand experience affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty, and few to examine the effect of each brand experience dimensions on brand relationship. The study fills this gap and has two main contributions: one is how event marketing works from a branding perspective, the other is how it benefits the development of brand loyalty.

## **5.2. Research implication**

The results of the study have some strategic implications for marketing practice. The findings point out that event marketing could be considered as an effective tool to enlarge customer base and to build brand loyalty.

In the study HTC tried to deliver a new product message through event marketing and the brand endorser – Mayday, a famous Taiwanese rock band, instead of a great deal of traditional advertising. The findings showed a significantly positive performance. In the real world, the more event marketing adopts; the stronger brand experience is and the higher the effect on brand loyalty will be.

## **5.3. Research limitation and future works**

This study has clarified relationships among brand experience, brand resonance and brand loyalty in event marketing. Besides, it also underlined the importance of five dimensions of brand experience. Nevertheless, it cannot provide specific constructive suggestion: how to design events to stimulate and create a strong, memorable brand experience.

The studies that examine the impact of event characteristics on consumers are few. Future study could adopt a narrow viewpoint and focus on some type of event to explore the further relationships among the variables the study used. Besides, researcher also could take into account other promotional tools to investigate the relationship from a broader perspective.

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