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FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE DESIGN: THE CASE OF THE RADFORD HIGHLANDERS FESTIVAL

INTRODUCTION

- Designing successful, engaging and memorable experiences has been a focal topic in our 'experience age'.
- Although, many of the small and medium size players of the event sector have been still just familiarizing with the concept.
- The paper's goal is to discuss the application of the experience design on a festival through a case study.
- The organizers of the Radford Highlanders Festival reached out to the authors to help them enhance the festival experience.
- The authors have cooperated with the organizers to apply the experience design approach in festival planning and organization.



LITERATURE ON EXPERIENCE DESIGN

- Even though few papers touch upon the aspect of event experience design (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Orefice, 2018), there is a lack of more in-depth discussions which would depict the successful application of the experience design technique in festival organization.
- Experience design is a discipline that develops holistic experiences inclusive of all users across all aspects of service, product or event. It provides a way for organizations to design a valuable customer experience.
- The aim of experience design is to design effortless customer journeys. In context of festivals, the attendee experience and the attendees experience journey are in the focus of the design process.

ABOUT FESTIVAL

- Takes place in Radford, Virginia for the past 23 years
- A family friendly event that has something to offer for everyone.
- Several Scottish clans attend the festival to celebrate their heritage
- Provides authentic experiences: e.g. Highlander games
- Other program elements include music and dance events, sheepherding, and authentic food and merchandise vendors.

CONCEPTUAL FINDINGS:

THREE-STEP EXPERIENCE DESIGN APPROACH

- **Q1:** What value offers do we need to provide for an engaging, high-impact festival experience? What type of experiences would we like co-create with the attendees (to address the value offers)?
- **Q2:** What type of event experiences do our attendee segments find attractive and exciting?
- **Q3:** What programs can we offer to deliver the desired experiences?

METHODOLOGY

- Theoretical conceptualization was applied to answer Q1.
- Quantitative and qualitative data was collected via on-site to answer Q2.
- Survey data (n=104) and observations (19 observers) served as market intelligence at developing successful visitor experiences for the upcoming year.
- To answer Q3 brainstorming was conducted to generate creative ideas for the experience design of the 2019 festival.

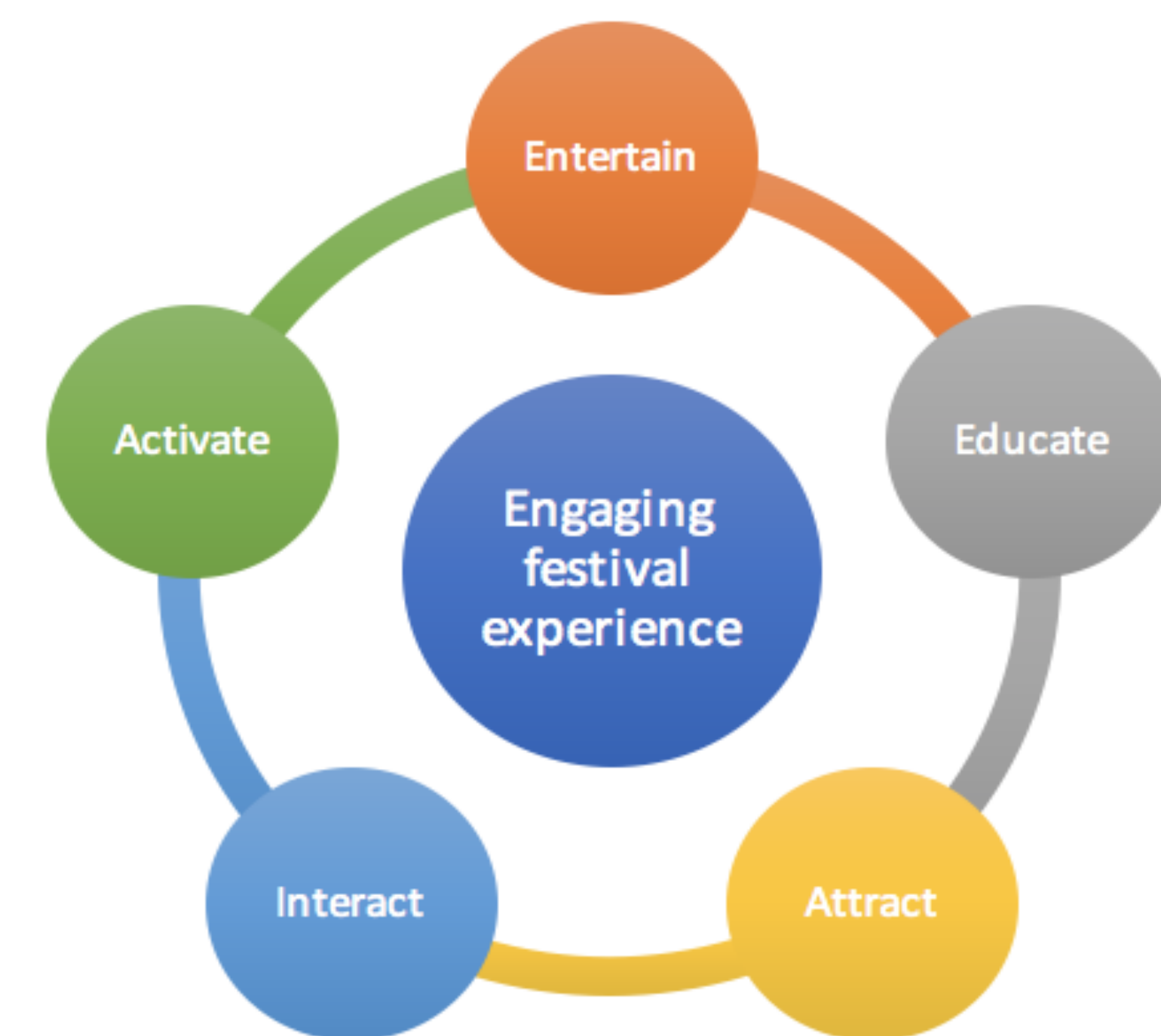


Figure 1:
Festival experiential
value offer dimensions



Q2: WHAT TYPE OF FESTIVAL EXPERIENCES ARE IN DEMAND?

- The three visitor segments: students, locals, and tourists
- The observations aimed to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the festival both from organizational and experiential perspectives. The survey findings together with the observations were utilized in the experience design.

Attendee Segments

- Students
- Locals
- Tourists

Attendee Motivation

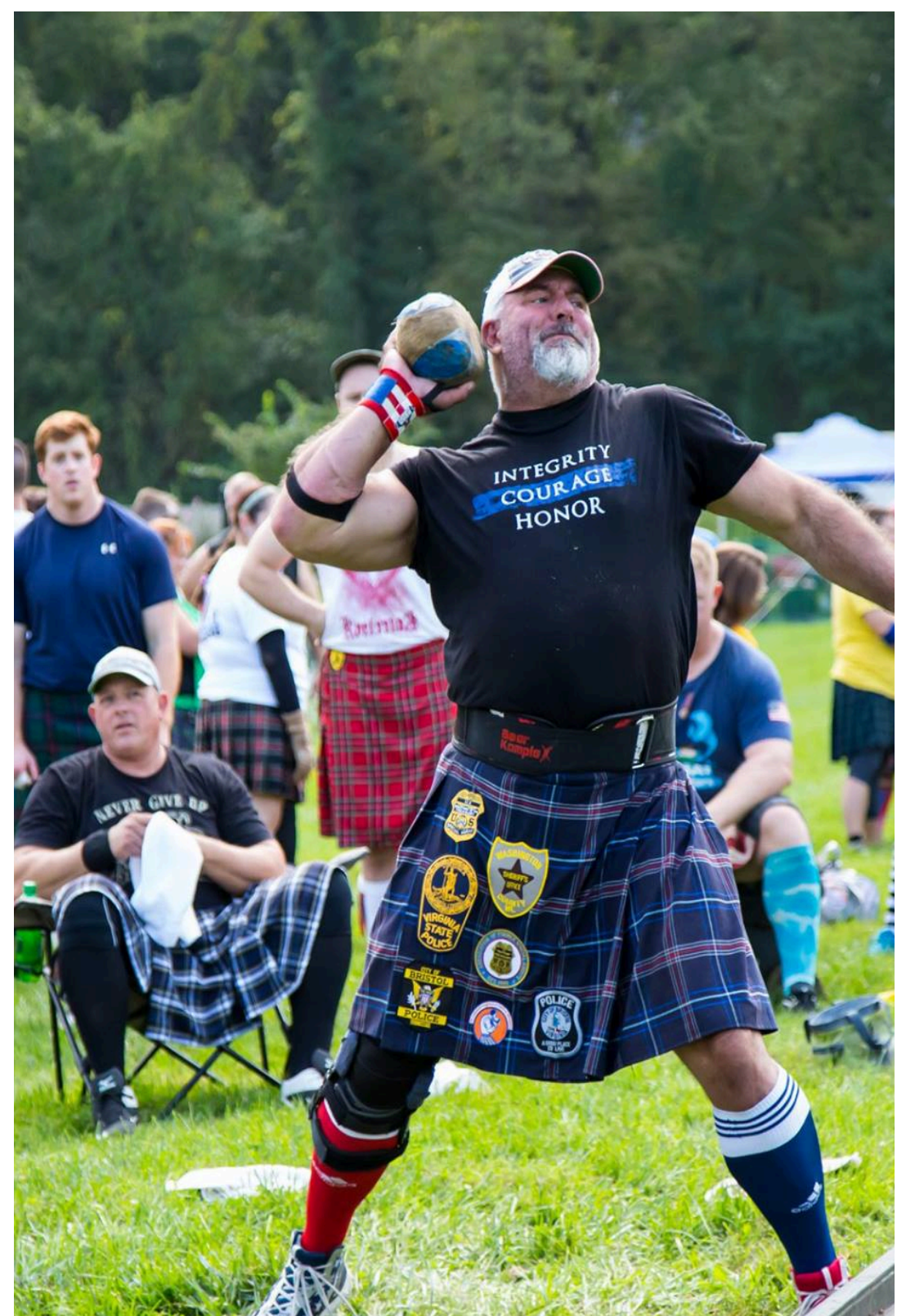
- Have fun (36%)
- Scot-Irish culture (32%)
- Time with family & friends (29%)

Most Popular Programs

- Highland Games (38%)
- Vendors (33%)
- Food (30%)

CONCLUSION

- The novelty of the paper is given by the detailed discussion of the practical application of experience design approach in case of a festival.
- The authors conceptualize the experience design approach in context of festivals and propose a three-step process tool for festival experience design.
- A limitation of the study is that it does not examine the customer journey from the beginning until the end, but it focuses on investigating the on-site experience and on designing the program and experience offers as a next step.



REFERENCES

- Ballantyne, J., Ballantyne, R., & Packer, J. (2014). Designing and managing music festival experiences to enhance attendees' psychological and social benefits. *Musicae Scientiae*, 65-83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864913511845>
- Orefice, C. (2018). Designing for events – a new perspective on event design, *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 20-33. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-09-2017-0051>