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Gendered Experiences in Experiential Marketing: Examining the Impact of Event-Based Cues on Service Purchase Intentions

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Abstract: Experiential marketing strategies are now used by service organizations, primarily to differentiate their services; however, how individuals (men and women) react to experiential marketing cues have been relatively unexplored. Research has demonstrated that experiential marketing cues, i.e., product sampling, product demonstrations, etc., can affect customer attitudes toward products/services and purchasing behaviour. However, very little research has examined how gender may moderate the relationship between experiential marketing cues and customer purchasing behaviour. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of five event marketing dimensions i.e. Event Marketing Impact, Brand Attitude and Trust, Consumer Product Knowledge, Brand Differentiation and Event Consumer Brand Relationship on service purchase intentions and to examine if gender would moderate this path. A survey instrument was developed and data collection occurred via an online survey administered to 500 Indian service customers who had attended at least one promotional event. The data were analyzed through multiple regression analysis by gender stratification. Results confirmed that collective event marketing cue effects accounted for a considerable amount of variance in service purchase intentions. The event-consumer brand relationship, brand differentiation and consumer product knowledge were found to be the most important variables influencing service purchase intentions. More importantly, gender played a significant moderator effect on this relationship. That is, the model was able to account for considerably more variance in female respondents than in male respondents. Women relied on a larger set of cues that provided them with more detailed and informative cues regarding service options when making purchasing decisions relative to men. Also, men reported higher overall purchase intentions than did women. In summary, these results expand experiential marketing theories by including gender as an additional variable within the event-cue-purchase-intent pathway and suggest practical directions for service marketers in India and other emerging markets to design experiential marketing strategies that recognize and reflect gender differences.

Keywords: Experiential Marketing, Event Based Cues, Gender Moderation, Service Purchase Intentions, Consumer Behaviour, India

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the Indian Service Sector, we recognize how important the service sector has become in the overall economy as it accounts for more than half of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and has been using more experience based and event driven forms of marketing to meet a major issue related to the service industry: the fact that services are intangible. While tangible products can be evaluated before they are purchased, because services cannot be evaluated until after they have been consumed, there is a much greater level of perceived risk associated with purchasing a service from a new provider. Experience based or event marketing enables consumers to engage in a real time, multi-sensory experience with a company's brand, while also reducing the level of uncertainty associated with making a purchase decision, thus speeding up the purchase process [1].

The effectiveness of these experience-based marketing cues does not occur at the same rate among all consumer segments. The reaction of consumers to marketing stimuli varies systematically according to demographic characteristics. Gender is considered one of the most theoretically robust and practical significant moderators of consumer response to marketing stimuli [2]. However, despite the importance of gender as a moderator of consumer response to marketing stimuli, the vast majority of event marketing studies completed on the Indian service sector have used aggregate analytical methods that mask differences in response to marketing stimuli among consumers who identify themselves as males versus females. Therefore, there is a lack of empirical data available concerning what event-based marketing stimuli are most effective in stimulating

service purchase intentions and whether the impact of these stimuli differs among male versus female service consumers.

To address this void, this study will use a systematic empirical methodology to investigate the responses of 500 Indian service consumers to various forms of event marketing stimuli. This study will examine the influence of event marketing stimuli on the intention of consumers to make a purchase on a service organization. The study will examine the collective influence of five theoretically grounded dimensions of event marketing stimuli as well as their individual influences on purchase intentions. In addition to examining the combined influence of the five dimensions collectively on purchase intentions, the study will also examine each dimension individually across both genders. The study will provide three primary contributions to existing knowledge. First, it will establish empirically that gender is a statistically significant moderator of the relationship between event marketing stimulus and service purchase intent. Second, it will establish that women are influenced by a wider array of information rich dimensions of event marketing stimuli when making a service purchase then men. Third, empirical support will be provided for developing marketing strategies sensitive to gender for service organizations. Throughout this paper event cues and marketing stimuli are used interchangeably to refer to experiential elements that consumers encounter at live marketing events such as professionalism of staff, quality demonstrations, clarity of communication and resonance emotionally; consistent terminology is used to avoid any ambiguity.

Literature Review

This literature review draws entirely from the eleven peer-reviewed, Scopus-indexed studies identified in the authors' prior systematic review. The content below preserves the original scholarly synthesis across four thematic areas.

Experiential Marketing and Its Dimensions

The role of contemporary service marketing is shifting more towards experiential marketing as a strategic model. This paradigm is based on creating rich, sensory, emotional experiences for the consumer. As the majority of services involve intangibles, high perceived risk and credence qualities, there is a growing need for service companies to provide consumers with rich, experiential experiences to help them make purchasing decisions.

In a recent study titled "Effect of Experiential Marketing Dimensions on Consumer-Based Brand Equity" (Journal of Brand Management-Scopus Indexed), authors Pina and Dias [3], explored the influence of experiential marketing dimensions (affective, intellectual, sensory and behavioural) on consumer-based brand equity. The results found that when brands deliver rich, experiential marketing experiences, this can create stronger associations between the brand, perceptions of quality and loyalty to the brand. All these factors serve as indicators of purchase intention.

Based on their findings, it appears that delivering consistent, experiential marketing experiences may be one of the best ways for service organizations to develop long-term relationships with customers. Furthermore, this supports the theory that event-based marketing provides a way to measure the impact of experiential marketing on downstream decisions regarding service adoption.

Chen *et al*. [4] who were writing for Frontiers in Psychology (Scopus Indexed), investigated the relationship between experiential marketing, emotions during consumption and revisit intentions in a service context. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) they analysed data collected from a culturally embedded sample of tourists. To analyse this relationship, they split experiential marketing into four distinct dimensions (sensory, action, emotional and thinking experience). The findings from this study were that each dimension had a positive relationship to consumption emotions and those consumption emotions were strong predictors of Behavioural intentions. Additionally, Chen *et al*. [4], provided evidence that consumption emotion completely mediated the relationship between experiential marketing and Behavioural intention. Therefore, the researchers concluded that emotional processing - rather than rational thought - was the direct cause of Behaviour related to the use of services.

As outlined earlier, the purpose of this research is to investigate how event-based cues are translated into service purchase intentions through affective processes. While there have been many studies that examine the general relationship between experiential marketing and service Behaviours, few have specifically addressed what types of affective processes underlie this relationship. However, several studies do describe aspects of affective processes as part of their analysis. For example, several studies have shown that certain forms of experiential marketing can lead to enhanced levels of arousal and pleasure among consumers. These studies indicate that when consumers experience such heightened states of arousal or pleasure, they tend to behave differently than when they experience lower states of arousal or pleasure.

In addition to the studies mentioned above, other studies have shown that experiential marketing can enhance feelings of connection among consumers. Such connections can take many forms including but not limited to social connections, cultural connections and/or ideological connections. When consumers perceive themselves as being connected to a particular company or organization, they tend to view that company/organization as being more attractive.

Additionally, several studies have demonstrated that experiential marketing can increase levels of trust among consumers. Trust is often viewed as an important factor in determining whether or not to engage in a new service encounter. Consumers typically will not purchase services

from firms with which they do not trust. Thus, if experiential marketing can increase trust, then it would likely result in an increase in subsequent purchases.

Event Marketing as Engagement-Driven Communication

Setiawan *et al*. [1] in Gadjah Mada International Journal of Business (Scopus Indexed), reviewed forty Scopus-indexed articles and developed a new conceptual model of event marketing that suggests the attendee engagement - defined by the quality of event content, the level of involvement in the event, the degree of event-brand image congruence and the vividness of the experience of the event - serves as a mechanism through which long-lasting Behavioural outcomes are generated. They identified six different types of events and five potential consumer outcomes; among them, they noted purchasing intention and word-of-mouth. One of the most important conclusions from their research indicates that when event organizers emphasize attendee engagement instead of entertainment value, there is a substantial increase in purchase intention - an outcome with significant implications for developing event-based marketing cues in the service industry.

Altschwager *et al*. [5] provided empirical support for the above-described mechanisms using Structural Equation Modelling to investigate customer event engagement and brand engagement/brand loyalty arising from branded marketing events sponsored by six Australian wine companies, encompassing ten different events and 274 respondent surveys. Their results showed that customers' engagement with the event - as a function of the richness of event content, the emotional resonance evoked during participation and the degree of active participant involvement - transferred to their engagement with the sponsoring brand and thereby influenced brand loyalty. As such, they empirically confirmed an event-to-brand engagement transfer mechanism; therefore, the mechanisms demonstrated here regarding how cue quality produced through event cues translates to service purchase intentions via affective paths are directly applicable to understanding how quality of event cues translates to service purchase intentions via affective paths.

In addition, Hsiao *et al*. [6] conducted an experiment using SEM with 238 participants at a sports sponsorship event to determine if experiential marketing activation increases brand equity and sponsorship satisfaction. Experiential marketing activation was found to have a statistically significant impact on both brand equity and sponsorship satisfaction with brand equity being the most significant predictor of future product purchases. Thus, it can be concluded that an event's ability to produce purchase intentions is dependent upon its ability to enhance brand equity as opposed to solely providing satisfaction-thereby establishing the necessity for developing effective event marketing strategies designed to create lasting associations between consumers and brands.

Finally, Armbrecht *et al*. [7] in the Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism (Scopus Indexed) studied how event quality affects perceived value, satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Importantly, gender was incorporated as a demographic moderating variable. Affective aspects of event quality were found to account for a greater portion of behavioural intentions than cognitive aspects. Moreover, it was determined that the affective pathway associated with event quality operated differently across genders; specifically, females exhibited significantly stronger affective-mediated behavioural intention pathways than did males. These results demonstrate that emotional components of events comprise the primary determinants of post-event behavioural outcomes and that this effect may vary as a function of gender-thus providing a clear theoretical precursor to the present study.

Gender as a Moderator in Consumer Marketing Responses

The current research is based on Gender Schema Theory [8] and the Selectivity Hypothesis [9]. These two theories are combined as an explanation for how men and women differ in terms of how they process marketing stimuli. Gender Schema Theory states that people process information using gender-based cognitive frameworks that guide how they make sense of what they perceive. Additionally, the Selectivity Hypothesis suggests that because females use a holistic approach to the processing of information by examining details across a broad range of factors and cues; males focus on heuristics in processing a limited number of very apparent cues. In this context, both of these theories would lead one to conclude that females will take into consideration a greater variety of information and relationship cues when making purchasing decisions at events than males. This is a premise tested empirically in this study.

The authors' previous work in this area of interest includes, but are limited to, a systematic review of 61 peer reviewed articles, which included data from multiple sources including Emerald's Journal of Consumer Marketing. Kanwal *et al*. [2] identified that there exists a difference in Behaviour based on gender for both purchasing and repurchase intentions across various types of products and services. However, they also found that women are much more likely to be affected by the social influences related to the purchases such as word-of-mouth, peer recommendations and the brand's ability to build a personal relationship with them. Conversely, men tend to evaluate services in terms of functionality and/or tasks at hand. In addition to identifying these differences, the authors of this article demonstrated that gender can moderate the effectiveness of different marketing strategies. As a result, the authors of this article concluded that the development of gender-neutral marketing strategies may lead to suboptimal results when

compared to developing marketing strategies specifically targeted towards one gender or the other. Therefore, it would appear that marketing strategists should consider designing their marketing strategies to incorporate gender sensitive cues.

In an additional study investigating gender as a moderator of the relationship between website quality dimensions and online purchase intentions, Saleem *et al*. [10] used SEM to investigate this relationship with 789 participants. According to the authors of this study, female shoppers exhibit a greater degree of responsiveness to service quality dimension and translate quality perception into higher purchase intention relative to male shoppers. Additionally, the authors found that females' online purchase intentions are mediated by emotional satisfaction response to service quality dimensions and males' purchase decision is directly determined by functional and informational aspect of service quality evaluation. These findings provide evidence that support the use of gender as a moderator in understanding how quality is processed by each gender differently. The current study will utilize this knowledge as part of its theoretical scaffolding.

Finally, Gao and Shen [11] analysed how sensory brand experiences influence brand loyalty and tested gender as a moderator across all paths in their Smart PLS 4-based structural equation model. They found that gender was a significant moderator in all relationships. Specifically, the authors found that female consumers had stronger, emotionally mediated pathways through brand affect and self-brand connection than male consumers. The authors note that discovering gender as a significant moderator across all model path is extremely rare and theoretically valuable.

Service Quality, Customer Experience and Purchase Intentions

The Yang *et al*. [12] article, "Corporate Image as a Mediator Linking Customer Experience and Service Quality to Commitment in Logistics Services" was published in Frontiers in Psychology (Scopus Indexed). The authors identified that there are previously unknown mediating factors in the relationship between service quality and customer commitment. Specifically, the authors used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to identify that both service quality and customer experience will individually and positively affect customer commitment including loyalty intention and repeat purchase Behaviour - via corporate image. According to the authors' model, event marketing will contribute to purchase intent through image formation processes in addition to direct persuasion.

As per Pina and Dias [3], examining the concept of brand experience from an organizational brand management standpoint, these researchers indicated that it is primarily through service organizations providing consistent and broad-based experiences at all points of contact-particularly experiential and sensory-that organizations are able to create brand equity and encourage consumers to make purchases. The authors also concluded that when consumers encounter experientially-rich encounters with service providers, their likelihood to consume services increases over those with fewer richly-experienced interactions; similarly, while consumers may be influenced by all dimensions of their brand experiences, the emotional dimension of brand experience has the greatest influence on a consumer's willingness to make a purchase. As such, these results provide empirical support for the design of event-related cues in service marketing contexts.

The mechanisms established by Feng *et al*. [13]; Armbrecht *et al*. [7] and Altschwager *et al*. [5] collectively represent a theoretical model of how events work: Event Marketing Cue → Emotional Activation → Enhanced Brand Experience → Increased Service Purchase Intention. However, this study builds upon prior research by introducing gender as a moderator that influences each element within the proposed model. Prior studies have shown that gender impacts experiential, emotional and service quality reactions to marketing stimuli [2,10,11,14], ultimately affecting Behaviours related to purchasing.

Research Gaps and Positioning of the Present Study

The primary purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between an individual's gender and their response to Event Marketing Stimuli. Event Marketing Stimuli are defined as the experience that individuals receive from attending a live event. These stimuli can be broken down into several categories, including staff professionalism, demonstration quality, communication clarity and emotional resonance.

Previous studies have demonstrated that individuals respond differently to various types of marketing based upon their gender. However, little research exists which examines gender differences in consumer Behaviour with regard to Event Marketing Stimuli.

This study will examine the effects of five event marketing constructs on service purchase intentions across 500 Indian respondents who completed a 39-item survey instrument. The results of this study may provide insight into how marketing professionals can create targeted marketing campaigns which appeal to both males and females through use of event marketing stimuli.

The findings of this study could assist organizations in better understanding what influences purchasing decisions related to events in the service industry. This would allow them to tailor their strategies accordingly.

There are three distinct areas of gaps based upon the literature surveyed above. First, most current event marketing research conducted in India (as mentioned previously) relies heavily on aggregate-level analysis that masks gender-based variations in responses. Second, no Pan-Indian study has investigated gender as a moderating factor in the relationship between event

cue and purchase intention in services. Third, previous research did not identify which event marketing constructs account for purchase intentions among men versus women. The present study fills this gap; whereas other research studied either event cues alone, gender alone, the study here develops and tests an integrated framework for understanding how different gender groups respond differently to various combinations of event marketing cues; and does so using a large national sample of service-consumers from across India.

Two further boundary conditions of the present design are worth flagging up front. This research defines gender as a male-female binary based on the responses of participants and it does not consider other demographic moderating variables, i.e. age, income and whether an individual lives in an urban area versus rural area, that literature indicates [2] may be significant for how a person responds to marketing stimuli. The population sampled includes only those attending service sector events and therefore the potential for making comparisons among the various sectors of services was not within the bounds of this research.

Both boundary conditions are revisited in Section 5.1 alongside the study's other limitations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Problem

In today's competitive market place, Indian Service Sectors have adopted an increasing number of Event Marketing Strategies to attract, interact and retain customers. Event marketing is one of the most effective ways to enhance a customer's overall experience and create Brand Loyalty; however, it has been found that how effectively this will be done is somewhat unknown due to different Social Economic and Demographic factors which can greatly affect how each customer values and interacts with service-related events. There are also some questions regarding the relative importance of specific factors (Entertainment, Personalization, Interactivity, Promotional Offers and Brand Engagement) associated with service-related events for consumers. No prior research on a Pan-India basis has investigated if there are significant differences between men and women in terms of their responses to Event Marketing constructs.

Objectives

- To examine the socio-demographic background of service consumers in relation to event marketing participation
- To identify the event-based marketing constructs that significantly impact service purchase intentions
- To determine whether gender significantly moderates the event-cue-to-purchase-intention pathway
- To analyse gender-stratified predictor profiles through multiple regression analysis

Hypotheses:

- **H_{01}:** There is no significant gender difference in Service Purchase Intentions (CIS) among service sector consumers
- **H_{02}:** There is no significant gender difference in Event Marketing Impact (EMI)
- **H_{03}:** There is no significant gender difference in Brand Attitude & Trust (BAT)
- **H_{04}:** There is no significant gender difference in Consumer Product Knowledge (CPK)
- **H_{05}:** There is no significant gender difference in Brand Differentiation (BDF)
- **H_{06}:** There is no significant gender difference in Event-Consumer Brand Relationship (ECBR)
- **H_{07}:** Event-based marketing cues do not significantly predict service purchase intentions
- **H_{08}:** Gender does not moderate the event-cue-to-service-purchase-intention pathway

Sample and Data Collection

The researcher used a quantitative, cross-sectional study method for this research. The tool used for the data collection was a self-structured Questionnaire of 39 Likert type scale item in the form of six construct. The sample size of the research is 500 Indian consumers which are selected from all over India using purposeful and snow ball sampling. Only those respondents are included in this study that have already participated or attending least once in the promotional events organized by the Service Sector. Since the data collection has been done on Pan India basis. All the questions of scales are measured with help of five-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree (Scored as 5), Agree (Scored as 4), Neutral (Scored as 3), Disagree (Scored as 2), Strongly Disagree (Scored as 1). A priori power analysis is conducted to confirm that the number of participants in our study are adequate; In a multi-regression model with five independent variables, we can detect a small to moderate-sized effect ($f^2 = 0.15$), with an alpha level set at 0.05 and achieve a 95% level of statistical power using 139 participants. Therefore, the 500 participants included in this study far exceed the minimum required to satisfy the requirements established by the researchers; Additionally, the 10:1 respondent-to-item ratio used in this research meets or exceeds the recommended ratio when comparing the 39 items included on the instrument.

Consistent with the boundary conditions noted in Section 2.5, the sampling frame draws respondents who had attended at least one promotional event across the service sector broadly, without stratifying by sub-sector (e.g., banking, retail, hospitality); sub-sector comparisons are therefore left to future research.

Constructs and Measurement

The five predictor variables (each with seven items) and one outcome measure (four items) were defined as

follows; Event Marketing Impact (EMI), Brand Attitude and Trust (BAT), Consumer Product Knowledge (CPK), Brand Differentiation (BDF), Event-Consumer Brand Relationship (ECBR) and Consumer Intentions Scale (the CIS was a dependent variable). Scores for composite measures were calculated by averaging all item values that comprised them.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed by using IBM SPSS. The analytical sequence included: (I) Frequency Distributions to provide a Demographic Profile of Respondents; (II) Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis to assess internal consistency among items in the scale; (III) Descriptive Statistics with Gender-Stratified Means to describe respondent characteristics; (IV) Independent Samples T-Tests to determine if there are significant differences between male and female respondents on measures of each variable; (V) Pearson Correlation Matrix to assess relationships among variables; (VI) Multiple Linear Regression Using the Enter Method (All Five Predictors Simultaneously, N = 500) to predict outcome from all five predictors; and (VII) Gender Stratified Multiple Regression (Male n = 308; Female n = 192) to Test Moderation by Determining Differential R^2 Values and Predictor Significance Profiles. To minimize the likelihood that a single source, self-report method will create common method bias, procedural solutions to the problem were implemented at the time of data collection. The procedures included providing respondents with an assurance of their anonymity, using neutral and clear language for all survey items and separating the predictor items from the criterion items within the same questionnaire. Further, as the correlation values among constructs were very low (all r <0.75), it does not appear that there was an issue of significant concern with respect to either common method bias or multicollinearity.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The complete frequency table for this information can be found in Table 1. The majority of respondents fit into the "Male" category with a total of 61.6% of the total survey population. Respondents also fit within a specific age range of 31 to 40 years; 77.2% of all the respondents are from this age group. In addition, a large number of respondents have an intermediate or 12th qualification level as seen with 77.2%. A total of 63.4% of all respondents identify themselves as self-employed. Additionally, 49.8% of all the respondents fall within the income categories of ₹20001-₹40000 per month. With respect to marital status, 90.4% of all the respondents stated they were married. Lastly, when asked about the ownership of their residences, 62.6% reported that they own their home(s). As for where the respondents live, approximately 62.0% reside in urban areas. Also, based on the number of people residing in each respondent's households, 70.5% report living with 3 to 6 other individuals. In terms of how many events related to the product/service these respondents attended prior to participating in this study, 73.8% of the respondents stated they had attended at least one.

Scale Reliability

Table 2 lists Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Cronbach's Alphas for individual constructs are as follows; CIS is 0.567, ECBR is 0.701, CPK is 0.684, BDF is 0.675 and ECBR is 0.701. These alphas represent an acceptable range for CPK (0.684), BDF (0.675) and ECBR (701), a questionable range for EMI (0.572), BAT (585) and CIS (0.567); however, this is still acceptable for exploratory multi-item attitude scales. Overall, there was high internal consistency for the entire 39 item instrument as shown by the combined alpha of the entire scale being excellent (alpha = 0.912).

Descriptive Statistics - Gender-Stratified Means

Beginning with table three we see that for all of the measures in Table 3 (the same as those in Table 2) we have composite mean values, where there are gender differences. For every measure in Table 3, the mean scores from males were just above 4.2 while females scored slightly below 4.1. Thus, all of the measures were in an "agree" category. As a result, it can be said that males had a slightly better overall positive orientation toward event-based marketing then did females.

Gender Difference Testing - Independent Samples t-Test

Table 4 summarizes the outcomes from an independent samples t-test conducted on each of the six constructs. All but one of the six constructs showed a lack of significant gender mean differences in terms of t-tests as well as Cohen's d values (i.e., <0.18). In other words, when analysing how male and female consumers assess the dimensionality of an event marketing construct, we found that there were no statistically significant differences in their valuations. We did find a statistically significant difference between male and female scores for CIS (t = 2.520; df = 498; p = 0.012; Cohen's d = 0.230-small effect size). Specifically, males scored significantly higher than females. While it appears that both genders perceived the event marketing cues, the degree to which those perceptions resulted in an intent to purchase services differed by sex.

Decision: H_{01} is rejected. H_{02} through H_{06} are not rejected.

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Table 5 shows the Pearson correlations among the constructs in the study. The significance level for all of the relationships is p<0.01. The largest positive relationship exists between the ECBR and BAT (r = 0.71).

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Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 500)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid %	Cum. %
Gender	Male	308	61.6%	61.6%
	Female	192	38.4%	100.0%
	Total	500	100.0%	
Age Group	Below 20 Years	35	7.0%	7.0%
	20-30 Years	23	4.6%	11.6%
	31-40 Years	386	77.2%	88.8%
	Above 40 Years	56	11.2%	100.0%
	Total	500	100.0%	
Educational Qualification	Intermediate/12th	386	77.2%	87.2%
	Graduate	58	11.6%	98.8%
	Below Matric	29	5.8%	5.8%
	Matric/10th	21	4.2%	10.0%
	Post Graduate	4	0.8%	99.6%
	Doctorate	2	0.4%	100.0%
	Total	500	100.0%	
Employment Status	Self Employed	317	63.4%	63.4%
	Homemaker	107	21.4%	94.6%
	Student	48	9.6%	73.2%
	Others	27	5.4%	100.0%
	Salaried	1	0.2%	63.6%
	Total	500	100.0%	
Monthly Income	₹20,001-₹40,000	249	49.8%	56.0%
	₹40,001-₹60,000	215	43.0%	99.0%
	Below ₹20,000	31	6.2%	6.2%
	Above ₹60,000	5	1.0%	100.0%
	Total	500	100.0%	
Marital Status	Married	452	90.4%	100.0%
	Unmarried	48	9.6%	9.6%
	Total	500	100.0%	
Type of Residence	Owned	313	62.6%	62.6%
	Rented	187	37.4%	100.0%
	Total	500	100.0%	
Area of Residence	Urban	310	62.0%	62.0%
	Rural	190	38.0%	100.0%
	Total	500	100.0%	
No. of Family Members	3-4 Members	171	34.2%	65.2%
	5-6 Members	171	34.2%	99.4%
	1-2 Members	155	31.0%	31.0%
	More than 6	3	0.6%	100.0%
	Total	500	100.0%	
Promotional Events Attended	1 Event	369	73.8%	73.8%
	2 Events	76	15.2%	89.0%
	4 or More Events	31	6.2%	100.0%
	3 Events	24	4.8%	93.8%
	Total	500	100.0%	

Table 2: Reliability Analysis- Cronbach's Alpha by Construct

Code	Construct Name	N Items	α	Interpretation
EMI	Event Marketing Impact	7	0.572	Questionable
BAT	Brand Attitude & Trust	7	0.585	Questionable
CPK	Consumer Product Knowledge	7	0.684	Acceptable
BDF	Brand Differentiation	7	0.675	Acceptable
ECBR	Event-Consumer Brand Relationship	7	0.701	Acceptable
CIS	Consumer Intention Scale (DV)	4	0.567	Questionable
ALL	All 39 Items Combined	39	0.912	Excellent

Note: α≥0.90 = Excellent; 0.70-0.89 = Acceptable; 0.60-0.69 = Questionable; <0.60 = Poor. One data entry correction applied: BAT_4 value recoded from 14 to 4

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics by Gender-Composite Construct Scores (N = 500)

Code	Construct	N	Overall Mean	Overall SD	Male Mean	Female Mean	Mean Diff.
EMI	Event Marketing Impact	500	4.261	0.390	4.273	4.241	0.032
BAT	Brand Attitude & Trust	500	4.226	0.408	4.230	4.220	0.010
CPK	Consumer Product Knowledge	500	4.197	0.457	4.226	4.149	0.077
BDF	Brand Differentiation	500	4.211	0.440	4.240	4.164	0.076
ECBR	Event-Consumer Brand Rel.	500	4.188	0.477	4.199	4.170	0.029
CIS	Consumer Intention (DV)	500	4.191	0.516	4.236	4.117	0.119*

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. CIS difference significant at p<0.05

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Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test-Gender Differences on All Construct Scores

Construct	Male Mean	Female Mean	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d	Decision
Event Marketing Impact (EMI)	4.273	4.241	0.896	0.371	0.082	Not Rejected
Brand Attitude & Trust (BAT)	4.230	4.220	0.261	0.794	0.024	Not Rejected
Consumer Product Knowledge (CPK)	4.226	4.149	1.849	0.065	0.170	Not Rejected
Brand Differentiation (BDF)	4.240	4.164	1.885	0.060	0.173	Not Rejected
Event-Consumer Brand Rel. (ECBR)	4.199	4.170	0.641	0.522	0.059	Not Rejected
Consumer Intention Scale (CIS - DV)	4.236	4.117	2.520	0.012*	0.230	REJECTED (H_{01})

*p<0.05; ns = not significant. df = 498 for all tests

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix-All Constructs (N = 500)

Construct	EMI	BAT	CPK	BDF	ECBR
Event Marketing Impact (EMI)	1.000	0.611**	0.672**	0.617**	0.613**
Brand Attitude & Trust (BAT)	0.611**	1.000	0.602**	0.686**	0.710**
Consumer Product Knowledge (CPK)	0.672**	0.602**	1.000	0.696**	0.703**
Brand Differentiation (BDF)	0.617**	0.686**	0.696**	1.000	0.686**
Event-Consumer Brand Rel. (ECBR)	0.613**	0.710**	0.703**	0.686**	1.000
Consumer Intention Scale (CIS - DV)	0.504**	0.532**	0.574**	0.585**	0.608**

**All correlations significant at p<0.001 (2-tailed). Bottom row shows CIS correlations with each predictor

Table 6: Multiple Linear Regression-Predictors of Service Purchase Intentions (N = 500)

Predictor	B	Std. Err	β (Std.)	t-value	p-value	VIF
(Constant)	0.485	0.209	—	2.325	0.021*	—
EMI-Event Marketing Impact	0.089	0.065	0.091	1.369	0.172 ns	1.740
BAT-Brand Attitude & Trust	0.081	0.067	0.082	1.206	0.228 ns	1.957
CPK-Consumer Product Knowledge	0.177	0.062	0.157	2.848	0.005**	2.114
BDF-Brand Differentiation	0.241	0.064	0.205	3.778	<0.001***	2.179
ECBR-Event-Consumer Brand Rel.	0.293	0.061	0.270	4.832	<0.001***	2.319

Model: R = 0.665; R^2 = 0.443; Adj. R^2 = 0.437; F(5, 494) = 78.57, p<0.001. ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05; ns = not significant. DV = CIS_SCORE

Table 7A: Regression-Male Respondents (n = 308)

Predictor	B	β (Std.)	t-value	p-value	Sig.
(Constant)	0.605	—	2.182	0.030*	—
EMI-Event Marketing Impact	0.152	0.149	1.774	0.077	ns
BAT-Brand Attitude and Trust	0.076	0.073	0.852	0.395	ns
CPK- Consumer Product Knowledge	0.130	0.115	1.564	0.119	ns
BDF-Brand Differentiation	0.202	0.166	2.478	0.014*	YES
ECBR-Event-Consumer Brand Rel.	0.299	0.264	3.633	<0.001***	YES

R^2 = 0.394; Adj. R^2 = 0.384; F(5, 302) = 39.15, p<0.001. Shaded rows = significant predictors

Table 7B: Regression-Female Respondents (n = 192)

Predictor	B	β (Std.)	t-value	p-value	Sig.
(Constant)	0.340	—	1.073	0.285	—
EMI — Event Marketing Impact	−0.008	−0.008	−0.083	0.934	ns
BAT — Brand Attitude & Trust	0.130	0.104	1.291	0.198	ns
CPK — Consumer Product Knowledge	0.235	0.209	2.504	0.013*	YES
BDF — Brand Differentiation	0.281	0.237	2.715	0.007**	YES
ECBR — Event-Consumer Brand Rel.	0.268	0.269	2.984	0.003**	YES

R^2 = 0.525; Adj. R^2 = 0.512; F(5, 186) = 41.26, p<0.001. Shaded rows = significant predictors. ΔR^2 Vs male model = 0.131

The values of the correlations involving CIS as a criterion measure ranged from r = 0.50 (EMI) to r = 0.61 (ECBR). None of the positive predictive relationships was larger than r = 0.75 indicating that no problems with multicollinearity existed when we estimated regression equations.

Multiple Linear Regression - Overall Model (N = 500)

Table 6 contains a summary of the overall regression model. The model was found to be statistically significant: F(5, 494) = 78.57, p<0.01, R = 0.665, R^2 = 0.4438, adjusted R^2 = 0.4371, Standard Error of Estimate = 0.388. Thus event-based marketing cues (collectively) explained 44.28% of the total variation in service purchase intention for consumers. Therefore, H_{07} is rejected.

Of the five predictor variables used within the study three were found to have been significant: ECBR (beta = 0.270; t = 4.832; p<0.0001); BDF (beta = 0.205; t = 3.778; p<0.0001); CPK (beta = 0.157; t = 2.848; p = 0.005). However, EMI (beta = 0.091; p = 0.172) and BAT (beta = 0.082; p = 0.228) were nonsignificant when analysed in combination. No evidence of multicollinearity was detected through either low VIF or high tolerance values.

Gender-Stratified Regression - Testing Moderation (H_{08})

Tables 7A and 7B present a comparison of the male and female models in terms of the gender stratification of the regression results. The most notable aspect of these comparisons is that there was a great difference in the predictor profile between genders.

Male Model (n = 308): R = 0.627; R^2 = 0.3936; Adj-R^2 = 0.3835; F (5, 302) = 39.15; p<0.001. There were only two significant predictors for males. These predictors included ECBR (beta = 0.264, t = 3.633, p<0.001) and BDF (beta = 0.166, t = 2.478, p = 0.014). Both EMI, BAT and CPK were insignificant for males as predictors.

Female Model (n = 192): R = 0.724; R^2 = 0.5247; Adj-R^2 = 0.5120; F (5, 186) = 41.26; p<0.001. For females three of the five predictors were significant. Those predictors included ECBR (beta = 0.269, t = 2.984, p = 0.003); BDF (beta = 0.237, t = 2.715, p = 0.007); and CPK (beta = 0.209, t = 2.504, p = 0.013). EMI was non-significant (beta = -0.008, p = 0.934).

There is an approximate 13.1% greater explanation of variance for the female model compared to the male model (delta R^2 = 0.131). This differential model fit combined with differences in significant predictor sets provide empirical support for gender moderation of the models used herein. Therefore, H_{08} is rejected.

DISCUSSION

The results provide an explanation for how gender influences the interpretation of event-based marketing cues into service purchase intentions in India.

First, the overall regression model shows that all event-based marketing aspects are good predictors of service purchase intentions. More specifically, the regression model (R^2 = 0.443, p<0.001) indicates that ECBR, BDF and CPK have the most influence on service purchase intentions. This is supported by Setiawan *et al*. [1], who stated that event marketing produces long-term Behavioural changes through engagement and brand-event image congruency. The result that ECBR (β = 0.270) was the highest value of the three factors, at both the aggregated level and gender-stratified levels also supports Altschwager *et al*.'s [5] conceptualization of event-to-brand engagement transfer mechanisms, whereby quality of event interaction can sustain commitment to a brand after the event.

Second, the fact that there is a larger number of variables predicting female's purchase intentions (CPK, BDF and ECBR; R^2 = 0.525) compared to male's (only BDF and ECBR; R^2 = 0.394) provides evidence supporting gender moderation. Additionally, CPK was found to be significantly important for females (β = 0.209, p = 0.013), but not for males (β = 0.115, p = 0.119). The different patterns in response to these two consumer groups support Kanwal *et al*.'s [2] meta-analysis findings that female consumers' responses to relational and informational brand cues are greater than those of male consumers'. Female consumers may view demonstrations, expert talks, informational content - all methods of building product knowledge-as mechanisms to more effectively elicit female consumers' assessment processes regarding service evaluations [10].

Third, the gender stratification model R^2 values were asymmetrical with ΔR^2 = 0.131 indicating that event marketing is a more effective way to predict female service purchase intentions. This is consistent with the findings of Armbrecht *et al*. [7], who found that affective pathways from quality to Behavioural intentions were stronger for female attendees. Furthermore, this is consistent with Gao and Shen's [11] findings that gender moderated all paths within sensory brand experience models. Therefore, it appears that female consumers use cognitive cues (product knowledge), relational cues (brand relationship) and other cues equally well when evaluating services in events in the Indian service environment.

Fourth, the lack of significance of EMI and BAT in both gender stratifications models-although EMI and BAT had strong positive bivariate relationships with CIS-indicates that the direct causal relationships between 'event excitement', 'trust' and purchase intention are fully mediated or suppressed by the relational constructs (ECBR, BDF, CPK) when all five predictors are entered together. These findings are consistent with Chen *et al*.'s [4] mediation study demonstrating that emotional processing fully mediates experiential marketing effects on Behavioural intentions and with Hsiao *et al*.'s [6] study showing that brand equity-and not immediate satisfaction-is the proximal cause of post-attendance purchase intent.

Lastly, although t-tests revealed no statistical differences between male/female means of any of the five predictor construct scores, statistically significant differences existed in CIS score means (t = 2.520, p = 0.012, d = 0.230). Although male and female respondents perceive event quality similarly based upon CIS data collected from them during the surveys, CIS data indicate clearly that male and female respondents do not interpret event quality similarly. The CIS mean for male respondents (M = 4.236) is higher than for female respondents (M = 4.117). It is possible that male respondents take a more transactional approach to service purchases once a purchase decision is made, whereas female respondents require a wider array of event cues to activate their purchase intentions. This is consistent with Saleem *et al*.'s [10] finding that female consumers need higher quality thresholds for service quality perceptions to translate into purchase intentions.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the results show that the current model has a good fit with the data (see Table 1), it is important to acknowledge some limitations. The first limitation concerns the nature of the data collected which are cross-sectional. This type of data does not allow us to infer causality and therefore, we cannot say whether the relationship found among the variables studied exists because of an effect from one variable on another. A way to establish this would be to collect longitudinal data or experimental data.

The second limitation refers to the fact that our sample was obtained using purposive and snowball sampling methods. These two methods provide limited generalizability. In addition, the sample is skewed toward married individuals who work for themselves and who are between 31-40 years old. Therefore, it is possible that they do not represent all segments of consumers of services in India.

A third limitation concerns the reliabilities of the EMI, BAT and CIS constructs. Reliability coefficients were calculated at 0.71, 0.76 and 0.69 respectively. Although there is no rule as to what level of reliability is sufficient, most researchers consider anything above 0.70 as being satisfactory. However, based on these values, these reliabilities can also be classified as "questionable." To address this problem, researchers could either develop new versions of the scale or validate existing ones using confirmatory factor analysis and tests of convergent validity (such as average variance extracted).

A fourth limitation involves testing the moderating effects of gender. The authors used stratified regressions to compare explained variance and the profiles of predictors across men and women. Future studies could use other statistical techniques (for example, interaction-term regression or multi-group structural equation modeling) to formally test whether the paths of influence among the variables studied differ across genders.

This study's sixth limitation is related to the sampling strategy. The sampling frame for this study consisted of service sector events in general, but no attempt was made to either stratify, or compare across the various sub-sectors of services (i.e. Banking, Retailing, Hospitality), because both event marketing strategies and customer expectations vary significantly across different sectors. Therefore, it is best to view the results of this study as an overall average picture of how men and women responded to marketing cues at service sector events as opposed to viewing them as representing a pattern consistent with all service sectors. To investigate whether the relationship found between event cue and purchase intention and whether it is moderated by gender varies by service sub-sector, future studies will need to gather large enough samples for each specific sub-sector to enable comparisons.

The seventh and final limitation relates to the fact that the gender variable was conceptualized and measured in terms of only two categories; i.e., female and male. As described in Chapter 2.5, this is an oversimplification of gender as a moderating factor since there are many other ways that people may identify themselves [2]. For example, previous studies have shown that older adults respond differently to marketing messages than younger adults [2]; similarly, lower-income individuals may respond differently to marketing messages than higher-income consumers. Likewise, rural residents' responses to marketing messages may be different than those who reside in cities. Therefore, while the current study provides insight into the way in which men and women respond to marketing stimuli generated at service sector events, further research would be needed to determine if the patterns observed here hold when other demographic variables are included in the analysis.

Finally, while the study measures purchase intentions, it does not measure actual purchase behaviour. Intentions do not always lead to actions.

CONCLUSION

Gender Moderates Event-Based Marketing Cues for Service Purchase Intention among Indian Consumers - Empirical Evidence from a Study with 500 Respondents

The event marketing dimension examined across the service sector explained 44.3% of variation in service purchase intent; however, it was the ECBR and BDF that were the strongest predictors of purchase intent overall. In terms of gender-specific models using stratification by gender indicated that females reported purchase intent as a result of an even broader and more informational based predictor set than did males. The predictor sets for males and females included all of the same predictors with the exception that the predictor set for females included additional variables beyond those used to build the predictor sets for males. The female model accounted for substantially greater amounts of variance in purchase intent compared to the male model; approximately 52.5% Vs 39.4%, respectively which is an approximate 13.1 percentage point difference.

Based on these results, there is evidence from this study that supports a gender-based approach to designing events to promote services. In general, events designed to target female service customers should be highly informational and include opportunities for customers to learn about the product or service via demonstrations, knowledge building activities and other means (i.e., CPK); however, these aspects of events do not appear to influence the purchase intentions of males. Similarly, events designed to attract male customers should have a primary focus on establishing a clear distinction between the event's brand(s) and those brands associated with competitors (i.e., BDF) and provide male customers with relational brand experiences (e.g., ECBR).

Finally, regardless of which gender a customer represents, providing personalized and exclusive relational experiences at events appears to generate the greatest increase in purchase intent.

In theory, this study enhances the experiential marketing literature through the incorporation of gender into the event cue to purchase intention relationship and empirically supports both the selectivity hypothesis and Gender Schema Theory in a developing market service environment. In practice, these results provide marketers of services with a tangible framework that will enable

them to design gender sensitive event cues. Specifically, event cues for females can include a deep level of information and/or opportunities to build knowledge about the service while event cues for males can be differentiated based on relational aspects of their experience at the service. These gendered information processing mechanisms that have been identified in this study were demonstrated to exist on a single national marketplace with the use of an operationalization of gender as male/female and therefore represent only a beginning point for this research framework and should be extended across other types of demographic moderating variables (e.g., age), service industry sub-sector and cultural context.

Cross cultural validation is also suggested as it will help to increase the applicability of this research beyond the Indian service sector studied here.

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