The WOW-effect

A qualitative content analysis of communication strategies used by the Swedish music festival Way out West

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Bachelor's thesis

A big thank you,

*To our supervisor Malin Andersson for your expertise and guidance in sorting out our hundreds of different ideas.Your feedback has been invaluable.
We would also like to thank Henrik Jutbring for your work within the theorisation of sustainability in event marketing which inspired us to conduct this study. Even more, we are thankful for taking your time to provide us with many helpful pieces of advice and ideas.*

Thank you also to the professors and employees at Campus Helsingborg and Lund University for these three years at the bachelor programme in Strategic Communication. Lastly, we would like to thank each other for a dear friendship and an appreciated teamwork.

With this text we would also like to emphasize that our contribution to this thesis has been equal.

Elin Fredlund & Savannah Gillblad
Lund, May 22nd, 2023

Abstract

In today's society, brands face pressure to stand out and to communicate about sustainability and CSR efforts. This makes branding strategies necessary, yet it is a rather unexplored area within marketing of events. Previous research of events shows studies from the consumer's perspective based on when the event takes place. However, less focus is put on how event brands engage the audience before and after the event. This qualitative content analysis examines the award-winning music festival Way out West, with the aim to analyze how different marketing strategies are applied to gain brand equity. The theoretical framework consists of the three perspectives of symbolic-, social- and experiential marketing and the case is analyzed by examining Instagram posts from the Way out West's official account. The results indicate the usage of all three strategies, often in combination to enhance each other. Way out West communicates to make the brand relevant in between the actual event with a special focus on community building. However, it was also found that the posts regarding sustainability were often connected to what is going to happen in the physical event, without exclusive content for social media. The findings suggest that strategic communication is highly relevant for building brand equity over time, and thus an event brand has the potential to communicate beyond what the event offers itself. Thereby the event brand can become relevant even when the physical experience is not offered. It also enhances the importance of research within event marketing with focus on how strategic communication can be implemented in all channels in such a unique context.

Keywords: strategic communication, event marketing, sustainability communication, CSR, brand community, symbolic branding strategies

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Sammanfattning

I dagens samhälle finns en allt större press på varumärken att stå ut ur mediebruset samt att kommunicera kring hållbarhet och CSR. Detta gör brandingstrategier högst nödvändiga, trots detta är det ännu ett relativt outforskat område inom marknadsföring av evenemang. Tidigare forskning visar på studier baserade på konsumentens perspektiv samt under tiden av det faktiska evenemanget. Däremot är forskningen begränsad när det kommer till vilka strategier som används av varumärket för att engagera publiken före och efter det faktiska evenemanget. Kopplat till detta har en kvalitativ innehållsanalys genomförts på den prisvinnande musikfestivalen Way out West. Detta med syftet att undersöka hur olika marknadsföringsstrategier appliceras för att skapa varumärkeskapital. Det teoretiska ramverket består av de tre perspektiven symbolisk-, social- och experiential marketing. Fallet Way out West analyseras genom att undersöka Instagraminlägg från varumärkets officiella konto. Resultaten indikerar att alla tre strategier användes frekvent och då ofta i kombination för att förstärka varandra. Way out West använde flertalet strategier för att göra varumärket relevant mellan de faktiska evenemangen med ett särskilt fokus på community-byggande. Emellertid kunde det också fastslås att inläggen kring hållbarhet ofta var i direkt anknytning till vad som skulle ske på det fysiska eventet, detta utan informativt eller exklusivt innehåll för just sociala medier. Resultaten indikerar på en hög relevans för strategisk kommunikation gällande att bygga brand equity över tid och att ett evenemangs-varumärke därigenom har potential att kommunicera utöver vad evenemanget erbjuder i sig. Därigenom kan det göra sig relevant även när den fysiska upplevelsen inte kan erbjudas. Det stärker dessutom vikten av forskning inom eventmarknadsföring med fokus på hur strategisk kommunikation kan implementeras i alla kanaler i en så pass unik kontext.

Nyckelord: strategisk kommunikation, eventmarknadsföring, hållbarhetskommunikation, CSR, brand community, symboliska varumärkesstrategier

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1. Introduction

With the climate crisis being one of the biggest threats of the generation, the role of organizations in society has changed. Today they are expected to behave as societal actors that make decisions that not only benefit their own business but also society as a whole (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006). These requirements originate from multiple directions. Partly, governmental regulations put higher legal expectations on organizations and also, with the increasing consumer demands for sustainable products and marketing (Kärnä et al., 2006). Previous research has suggested potential reasons as to why organizations choose to engage in CSR and sustainability communication (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006; Weder et al., 2021). Morsing & Beckmann (2006) emphasize how the usage of terms connected to CSR and sustainability within organizations has potential to strengthen the brand image since it reduces skepticism against the organization and reinforces positive attitudes towards it. Weder et al. (2021) suggest that this interrelates to why organizations choose to take greater sustainable, social and environmental responsibility and succeed in communicating them externally.

Simultaneously with the higher sustainability-awareness, digitalization has contributed to a high-paced environment, where information-overload towards the consumer makes it essential for organizations to stand out from the noise in order to be noticed (Strömbäck, 2014). One way of doing this is to integrate CSR efforts and sustainability communication within the overall marketing of the brand (Lee & Kotler, 2016). In addition, the rough communication climate has contributed to a transfer of marketing into new arenas – it is no longer just material objects that require a clear brand identity. Today, emerging fields such as the branding of public organizations and place branding have gained popularity (Eshuis & Klijn, 2012). One way to measure the value of a brand is through brand equity, which refers to both the financial value of the brand but also the symbolic value that the brand has in the eyes of the consumer (Dahlen et al., 2010).

A field that is rather unexplored from the perspective of branding and strategic communication is that of event marketing. Gamble and Guilmore (2013) highlights that event marketing has relied heavily on traditional marketing strategies. This is further underlined by Lanier and Hampton (2009) who argue that a more specialized marketing

logic, what the authors call Experiential Marketing, should be applied to understand the symbolic and strategic communication work that is required to brand events. This since events in several ways are special in its kind. Jutbring (2017) states that firstly, events have the special trait of providing a limited-time experience that is something other than the visitors' everyday life and secondly they lie upon the crucial matter of creating relationships to their consumers, due to assuring the visitors even with a longer time-span between the offered experience.

An example of an event brand that has been successful in applying the need for CSR and Sustainability communication in an event context is the Gothenburg music festival Way out West. Since its start in 2007 it has won several awards in the international scene for their groundbreaking sustainability standpoints (Svensson Glaser, 2014; TT, 2011) such as a completely meat- and dairy free festival (Hartelius, 2018; Ljung, 2015) as well as a promise of a 50/50 gender divided line-up (Way out West, 2023). These facts among others makes it an interesting case of study when examining the use of these different aspects of strategic communication in event marketing.

1.1 Problematization

Though there is a great area of knowledge regarding brand value in events in other related fields such as tourism studies (Brown et al., 2020) as well as hospitality management (Wang & Liang, 2014) it is noteworthy that most of these studies conducted are from a consumer or service meeting perspective (Werner et al., 2019; Hoksbergen & Insch, 2016). Thereby it could be argued that the brand's perspective is missing and especially around the strategic marketing before and after the event, which is, as stated above by Jutbring, one of the unique requirements for a successful event due to the limited time of the actual experience. At the forefront of relationship-building communication outside of the actual physical meeting is social media (Mahoney & Tang, 2017). Social media allows the brand to be present in the everyday life of the consumer and have a close communication and contact to the audience due to for instance the unlimited frequency of publishing content as well as participating hashtags and different types of texts (Mahoney & Tang, 2017; Quesenberry, 2018). With this in mind, social media communication is of great interest researching event marketing.

Regarding sustainability communication, it was found in a bibliographic study that almost half of the studies conducted around sustainability marketing measured messages in sustainability marketing efforts mostly addressed to corporate brands or specific products (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2018). Sustainability communication is stated as a very important marketing phenomenon in the new landscape of marketing and in addition symbolic branding strategies and sustainability marketing in combination positively enhance consumers' view of a brand (Guerillo et al., 2023). Although this can be argued, the findings of Leonidou and Leonidou indicate that not many studies have been conducted to combine the three important perspectives of sustainability communication, strategic communication and event marketing.

In this way the field of strategic communication offers a unique and interdisciplinary perspective of this matter that involves the sustainability communication and the social marketing concepts as well as the experiential marketing logic and the symbolic marketing strategies. This perspective will thereby enable an understanding of the potential of how these can interrelate in event marketing to increase brand strength and build strong relationships to consumers beyond the physical meeting during the event itself.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to create knowledge about the importance of a strategic communication perspective in the marketing of events. In this thesis, this will be examined on the relation-building channel of social media. The area of knowledge within marketing of events has been widely researched from other disciplinary perspectives, often with a focus on visitor's experience. Our contribution is to take on a strategic communication perspective, where the overall and long term external communication is in focus. This together with strategies to build a strong relationship with the consumer both during but also in the timespan between the actual event takes place. Connecting these findings to previous research, this study will give a contribution in terms of an interdisciplinary understanding of the fields of marketing, sustainability communication and strategic communication in the marketing of events to build brand equity. To explore this phenomenon, this study aims to answer the following research question;

RQ: How does the festival Way Out West use sustainability marketing in combination with symbolic branding strategies on social media in order to create brand equity?

2. Previous Research

This section presents foundational knowledge on how sustainability communication as well as strategic communication can be applied in an event context. The research presented will highlight the research fields as well as key concepts that are of importance for this research. Further, this section will explain the interdisciplinary relationship between marketing, sustainability and events and in what way these concepts can work together.

2.1 Strategic Communication in Event Marketing

Traditionally, event marketing has fallen into research categories such as hospitality and service or Tourism management (Mossberg, 2007). For instance, Gröönros and Ravald (2011) stresses that it is the consumer that creates the value of a product or a service rather than the marketer. Thus, the work of marketing is rather to support the value-creating process in the usage of the product in the physical meeting with the consumer. Additionally, Mossberg (2007) argues for the uniqueness of events themselves and describes the value creation for consumers in the experiencescape. Mossberg defines experiencescape as "a space of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment as well as the meeting ground in which diverse groups move about and come in contact with each other" (Mossberg, 2007, p. 62). However, the research field of interest in this study, which is strategic communication, rather takes a different approach on consumer value. Strategic communication involves how all communication of an organization is used in a strategic manner in order to fulfill its mission and long-term goals (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018). Strategic communication is thus an umbrella term that includes marketing communication, public relations and organizational communication (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018). Thus, strategic communication is more concerned with the overall communication of the organization and in an event context, this might include how the brand is perceived over time and in different channels.

Research suggests that there is a need for an updated marketing strategy in the event context (Hede & Kellett, 2011; Kuijken, 2016; Gamble & Gilmore, 2013). Hede and Kellett (2011) examines the marketing communications strategies employed by event managers, and the impact of these strategies on consumer perceptions and preferences. The research shows that event managers rely heavily on traditional marketing channels, such as advertising and public relations, to promote their events. However, the authors emphasize that consumers are more

likely to attend events that are marketed through social media and word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family. Further, Hede and Kellett highlight that event managers should focus on creating and promoting these unique experiences, rather than simply relying on traditional marketing channels. The research states the importance of understanding consumer preferences and behavior when developing marketing strategies for special events.

Additionally, Kuijken et al. (2016) suggest that it is important for festival marketers to align the consumer perception of their festival brand in order to match it with their overall brand identity. A lack of alignment is the difference between the perceived classification of a music festival by its producers and consumers. The research found that producers and consumers may perceive the classification of music festivals differently, which can affect their success. The study suggests that music festival producers should pay close attention to the perceptions of their target consumers when selecting and communicating festival classifications, in order to ensure that their festival image is aligned with their festival identity. Moreover, Gamble and Gilmore (2013) argues for the potential that the music industry in particular has adapted a more co-creational perspective on marketing. The article explores marketing that involves collaborating with customers to create value and enhance the customer experience. The research found that co-creational marketing can be particularly effective in the music industry, as it allows consumers to engage with the music and the artist on a deeper level, creating a sense of ownership and loyalty. The authors emphasize the importance of leveraging technology and social media to facilitate co-creational marketing efforts in the music industry (Gamble & Gilmore, 2013). Thus, the rise of social media further stresses the importance of customized marketing. Quesenberry (2018) argues that social media has changed the landscape of marketing, making traditional marketing strategies very limited. Thus, a new set of rules based on interactivity, connection and community-building must be applied. The author states the following: ''What makes social media different are the software applications that have built communities and networks so that social interactions can now virtually occur in real time'' (Quesenberry, 2018, p.9).

2.2 Sustainability Communication in Event Marketing

Sustainability could be defined as a concept without limitations which in extension results in several different definitions (Weder et al., 2021). What could be established is the fact that,

from an organizational theoretical perspective, it is an emerging field which serves both organizations' overall narrative as well as the moral compass in decision making. As the field of research has transformed in the last several decades, the topic has become increasingly advanced (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2018) . When discussing sustainability, three interrelated concepts which are recurring in the research will be investigated further: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) , Sustainability communication and Social Marketing. Though these concepts are interrelated, they have distinctions which separates them.

CSR could be described as the status of an organization related to its social and environmental responsibility through their activities and communication. Additionally, to what extent they are willing to improve the communicated obligations that CSR and sustainability efforts require (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006). In contrast, sustainability communication rather focuses on communicating those sustainable actions and efforts to stakeholders (Weder et al., 2021). Thereby, sustainability communication is more concerned with the communication of what is being done, whilst CSR rather refers to the action of doing those things. Social marketing is a concept of marketing that, unlike traditional marketing disciplines which aims at selling goods and services, rather aims at contributing to the general good of society (Lee & Kotler, 2016). This area of marketing, which has traditionally been used by non-governmental organizations, uses traditional marketing disciplines such as audience segmentation to promote its cause (Lee & Kotler, 2016). With the rise of social media and the increased pressures that has been put on organizations to engage in CSR, social marketing is a tool that is valuable for all types of businesses (Mahoney & Tang, 2017).

In continuation, Kim & Rader, (2010) argue that effective communication of CSR efforts is crucial for building trust and loyalty among consumers, investors and sponsors. The authors suggest that companies tend to use vague and general language when communicating their CSR efforts, which can lead to skepticism among consumers. The authors suggest that companies should focus on communicating their CSR efforts in a more personal and authentic way as well as to use specific and measurable goals to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental responsibility. The previously mentioned authors problematize organizations using vague language or having hidden motives when communicating about CSR. In contrast, Morsing et al. (2013) criticizes that most CSR literature is focused on the inconsistency between talk and action for organizations as a big problem. Rather, the authors argue that talking about sustainability in an aspirational way is a

positive thing that stimulates CSR improvement, as it has set a promise both to themselves and to their stakeholders to act in a more sustainable way. As the authors view language as performative, meaning that it creates the reality rather than communicates it, speaking of CSR will lead to more CSR efforts in the future regardless if what the organization is currently doing is living up to their CSR goals or not (Morsing et al. , 2013) .

To explore this area of research further, attention could be drawn to a bibliographic analysis of studies on environmental communication conducted between 1969 and 2008 (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2018). In the analysis, eight thematic categories were observed, the three most significant being : (1) Marketing management aspects, (2) Environmental aspects and (3) Environmental corporate strategy, where marketing management aspects represented nearly 40 percent of these themes. Marketing management includes eco-branding, consumer willingness to pay a premium price for ecological products and environmental marketing strategies to attract consumers (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2018). The theme of marketing management was particularly common in the early decades of environmental marketing research. The second biggest category, environmental aspects, addresses the increasing societal demand to implement specific environmental strategies in the core of the organization to promote a different behavior. This includes planning and control of the stakeholder management and leadership strategies, a topic that has specifically increased in the last two decades (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2018). This demonstrates a point that is particularly relevant for this study: that sustainability communication as a field has moved from a perspective that is mainly concerned with the promotion of products, to that of an organizational core regardless of which sector this organization is placed in. Moreover, promotion of behavior change is particularly addressed.

In a study conducted by Scheinbaum & Lacey (2019), CSR was looked at from a sponsor perspective in an event context, which the author refers to as *Event Social Responsibility (ESR)* (Scheinbaum & Lacey, 2019, p.1982). The findings suggest that a better fit between the social responsibility values of an event and its sponsors led to more positive brand perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors among consumers. The authors suggest that event managers should carefully select sponsors whose social responsibility values align with the values of their event, and sponsors should seek out events that align with their own social responsibility values. The study also highlights the importance of communication about social responsibility efforts in building consumer trust and loyalty (Scheinbaum & Lacey

2019). Another researcher that has explored the potential of sustainability efforts in event management is Jutbring (2017). Rather than only focusing on sponsor-event matching, the author argues that events should be seen as a competent actor with a responsibility to our society, much like other types of organizations. As an event interacts with numerous societal institutions, it can function to not only affect the visitors of the event in a downstream direction, but also upstream in setting the media narrative as well as other organizations' daily operations (Jutbring, 2017).

3. Theoretical Framework

This section will explain the theories that lay the foundation for what is to be researched in this thesis. First, the concept of symbolic brands will be introduced as well as a few relevant symbolic branding strategies. Moreover, the theoretical approach of social marketing will be presented and connected to CSR and sustainability communication. Lastly, experiential marketing in the event context will be explained.

3.1 Overview of framework and theoretical approach

There are numerous strategies that can be used as means to achieve brand equity, which Dahlen et al. (2010) argues as a measure of the value of the brand from a consumer's point of view. In the following sections three main strategic theories to build brand equity will be presented. The theoretical framework was chosen connected to the research gap that includes sustainability communication connected with strategic communication strategies in events. Falkheimer & Heide (2018) argues that strategic communication is an umbrella term that involves marketing communication, public relations and organizational communication. However, in the theoretical framework as well as in the overall theme of the thesis, the marketing communication approach will be used. This implies that the focus of this study is on the intentional messaging communicated by Way out West to enhance brand equity. Though all of the strategies presented take on a marketing perspective, they do so in different ways. For instance, symbolic branding strategies are based on social and personal value of the consumer, whilst social marketing addresses the general good of society in relation to CSR as the overall goal of marketing. Lastly, experiential marketing addresses events in particular and the specific characteristics of the event context. However, it is the combination of the three differentiated strategies that can provide an insightful overview of the marketing presented by Way out West in social media to build strong relations and brand equity.

3.2 The value of brands and symbolic branding strategies

This section will put its focus on the view of brands that will be applied in this study together with central concepts for building brand equity. To begin, brands can be seen as a powerful cultural symbol in modern society (Hatch & Schultz, 2008). Brands exist in people's minds and therefore brand management is the management of perceptions. When building brand equity, the role of branding is to educate consumers on how to feel about products and

services by "emotionalizing" them (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015). Hatch and Schultz (2008) states that positioning is when marketers try to be perceived by consumers as truly differentiated or distinguished from its competitors. Further, brand positioning might communicate what the brand is, who it is for and what it offers. There are two types of positioning: central positioning and differentiated positioning. In central positioning, the brand must provide all benefits in the product category and be ''the best in category''. However brands that are not placed in this category, which is the majority of brands, must rather provide a differentiated positioning, where the brand communicates one or two aspects where they in particular do a better job than other brands in the same category (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015).

Moreover, as mentioned in 3.1, a brand's value can be defined by the term brand equity. Dahlen et al. (2010) refers to brand equity as both the financial aspects of a brand but also the perceived value in the eyes of consumers. In this study it is the value communicated to the consumers that is of importance. Further, when a brand has high brand equity, it is often perceived as trustworthy, reliable, and credible by consumers (Dahlen et al., 2010). Symbolic branding strategies to gain brand value are usually divided into three categories: strategies based on personal meanings, social differentiation and/or social integration (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015). In the next section, one strategy from each category will be presented.

3.2.1 Brand-as-a-friend

The first strategy, brand as-a-friend, is based on personal meanings that help consumers determine or reinforce important values and purposes in life (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015, p. 198). The core idea of the brand-as-a-friend strategy is to create an emotional attachment to the brand which will generate a degree of security and comfort similar to what one can find in human relationships (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015 ; Ohlwein & Bruno, 2022). Ohlwein & Bruno (2022) argue that brand-as-a-friend is connected to brand likeability, and similar to the premises in a friendship, a consumer can oversee flaws in a brand such as in price and quality if there is a strong emotional connection towards it. In turn, this positively affects customer satisfaction and loyalty. Likewise, Rosenbaum & Elliott (2015) argue that brand-as-a-friend involves applying human-like characteristics to a brand to view it as relatable, approachable and trustworthy to consumers. This strategy is often used to create a sense of familiarity and trust between consumers and the brand (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015) . Finally, brand-as-a-friend can be created in numerous ways: through name, advertising style and

distribution channel (Ohlwein & Bruno, 2022). The strategy of brand-as-a-friend is particularly relevant when addressing the relationship-building activities between a brand and its consumer, which is examined in this thesis.

3.2.2 Brand community

Secondly, the marketing strategy brand community revolves around social integration. A brand community could be seen as a non-geographical community based on a set of structured relations between admirers of the brand (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2011). Members of a brand community may engage in various forms of interaction with the brand and each other. This is often facilitated through social media, events or other channels. The authors describe the triangular relationship between a consumer, another consumer and a brand as central in order to create the brand community. It is characterized by a sense of belonging, emotional attachment and loyalty among its members and towards the brand. According to Bengtsson & Östberg (2011), successful brand communities commonly share three main characteristics: (1) A common understanding of the world, (2) shared rituals and traditions and (3) a moral obligation towards other members of the group. Further, Mahoney & Tang (2017) agree that a community is based on a few principles that can be linked to both feelings and actions towards the brand. The authors build their statement around social media in particular and rather suggest four criteria of the brand community: (1) membership, (2) shared emotional connection, (3) influence and (4) fulfillment of needs. Moreover, they argue that social media has the potential to build such communities, as it is a communication channel that is built on principles of interactivity and exchange. Thus, the authors argue that it is important to meet all of these criteria as a brand in social media marketing, which makes this aspect of symbolic branding highly relevant in this study of Way out West's communication on Instagram.

3.2.3 Cool and cultural capital

Lastly, in contrast to brand community, cool and cultural capital is more about social differentiation than integration. Social differentiation could be attained through leveraging cultural trends, references and associations to position a brand as fashionable, cutting-edge and socially relevant (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015). This with the aim of appealing to target consumers who value cultural authenticity. This strategy is often used by brands seeking to appeal to trendsetters who are influential in shaping consumer preferences. What brands that have cool and cultural capital all seem to have in common is a ''mix of aesthetics and attitude that capture the spirit of the moment ahead of the mass brands.'' (Rosenbaum & Elliott 2015,

p. 205) . The authors argue that in order to be perceived as authentically cool by one group of people, a brand has to be rejected or not liked by the majority, that is they have a sacrifice group. Moreover, Beverland (2009) states that an important aspect of brand coolness is the perceived authenticity of the brand. According to the author, these strategies to improve brand authenticity might include drawing references to historical associations, non-commercial values and to challenge conventions. Cool and cultural capital provides an interesting contrast to the theories of brand community and brand-as-a-friend, which draws attention to more soft values that includes listening to the consumer's needs and emotions . In contrast, cool and cultural capital rather leverages the directness and carelessness of a brand in relation to the general social cue (Beverland, 2009). Thus, it is of great importance to the general framework of this thesis.

3.2.4 *Brand endorser*

A forth symbolic branding strategy that companies can use is that of brand endorsers. A brand endorser is a marketing strategy when an individual or entity promotes or endorses a product, service, or brand. These endorsers are typically well-known personalities, such as celebrities, influencers, or experts in a particular field, who have an influence over their audience. Thus, the endorser acts as an overall guarantor of the quality of the product, service or brand by publicly recommending it (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015, p. 279). The purpose of using a brand endorser is for an organization to leverage their public image to increase awareness and improve brand perception (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015). Pöyry et al. (2019) argues that with the rise of social media, endorsers have become an effective strategy to stand out from competitors and to reach the audience's attention as well as to boost message effectiveness. However, the authors argue that when using celebrity endorsements it is crucial that the authenticity of the celebrity is ensured, as the collaboration leverages two distinct relationships – that between the consumer and the endorser as well as that between the consumer and the brand. Endorsers are a well-established phenomenon in an event context that highly affect the overall perception of the brand value, as suggested in previous research by Sheinbaum & Lacey (2019). Therefore, endorser strategy is a valuable contribution to the theoretical framework in this thesis in particular.

3.3 Social marketing as a theorization of CSR

To address the research question and thereby the aim of this study, the CSR and sustainability aspect of the communication needs to be added as a part in creating brand equity in a contemporary context. Connected to the pressure of CSR and sustainability communication among organizations, Lee and Kotler (2016) explains social marketing as a strategic process that aims to influence behaviors for the benefit of both individuals and society as a whole. Unlike commercial marketing, which aims to sell goods and services, social marketing seeks to influence behaviors that will promote positive social change. This might include adopting new behaviors, modifying existing ones or abandoning harmful ones. Furthermore, social marketing shares some similarities with commercial marketing, such as customer orientation, audience segmentation, and the usage of persuading messages and marketing research (Lee & Kotler, 2016).

Moreover, what makes social marketing unique is the focus on long-term behavior change and the promotion of social improvements (Lee & Kotler, 2016; Mahoney & Tang, 2017). Mahoney and Tang's (2017) suggest that media messages can strongly influence human behavior if these messages align with the goals and experiences of the target audience. The more individuals can relate to the media messages in accordance with their own lifestyle and experiences, the more persuasive the messages become. The concept of shaping is used to describe the long-term effects of media messages on consumer behavior, which can lead to the development of patterns that persist over time. Marketers have realized that it is more effective to promote an idea or lifestyle rather than a product, as suggested by the authors. The authors highlight that effective communication involves not only the message, but also the audience's understanding and interpretation of that message. In this manner, social marketing shares similarities with symbolic marketing which also focuses on the consumer lifestyle and identity to enhance marketing messages.

Lee and Kotler (2016) addresses three types of objectives associated with social marketing : (1) behavior objectives, which includes what you want your audience to do, (2) knowledge objectives, which includes what you want your audience to know and (3) belief objectives, which is what you want your audience to believe and feel. To achieve these objectives, social marketers must gain insights into what factor might influence their target audience's behavior. For instance the factors could include perceived barriers as to reasons why your target

audience doesn't want to commit the behavior, or desired benefits such as what your target audience believes they could gain by committing the behavior. Another important aspect is competing views or behaviors that might stop the audience from adopting the desired behavior. These competing views might come from other influential sources such as organizations or people that your target audience looks up to (Lee & Kotler, 2016). Based on these factors, there are four positioning strategies that can be used in social marketing campaigns.

It is essential to remember that social marketing must be grounded in a commitment to both social and marketing goals and must prioritize social issues as the core of the issue and improvements over profit, which is why social marketing has traditionally been used in non-profit organizations and governmental organizations rather than for-profit organizations (Lee & Kotler 2016). We have argued that with the rise of CSR, more pressure has been put on all types of organizations to engage in socially responsible work we find it highly valuable to examine a for-profit organization using social marketing as an approach.

3.4 Experiential Marketing in the special context of events

The theoretical framework of this essay has now introduced the foundation of how to build brand equity through symbolic branding strategies as well as strategies within social marketing around the theme of CSR. However, to attain the aim of the thesis, this section will present more tangible strategies that are applied to the event context in particular. These strategies will furthermore be applied to the data that has been collected for this study.

Experiential marketing is a marketing logic which refers to the strategy of creating memorable experiences in and around the event offered (Lanier & Hampton, 2009). This strategic marketing logic of events relies on the concepts of communicating symbolic resources, engaging transactions and internalized value. Experiential marketing differs from experiential consumption in the way that it does not exclusively focus on consumers' intentions but above all involve the intentions or actual result of the producers. Furthermore, Lanier and Hampton (2009) argue that this marketing logic also is separated from the goods- and service-dominated logics. The experiential logic is based on the integration and communication of symbols in ways that stimulates the receiver in a creative way to generate positive and lasting memories. These symbolic practices are used to meet the desires of the

customers or guests while also giving lasting impressions, perspectives and meanings that go beyond the purchase or, in the case of this thesis, the experience of listening to a music act at a festival.

Lanier and Hampton (2009) enhance how the goods and service marketing logics are not made for the unique characteristics of experiences. However, Hede & Kellett (2011) conclude that marketers, communicating professionals and event managers primarily turn to the traditional strategies and channels when promoting and communicating their events. In relation to this Lanier and Hampton (2009) states that the strategic marketing logic needs to address the communication and creation of a symbolic experiential offering. The authors argue that the experiential marketing strategy is first and foremost driven by the creation of a dramatic effect. Above this the interpretation of what is communicated is essential to participate in the intended effect of the experience. In the case of festivals this would suggest that what is communicated helps the guests to incorporate the concept and happenings into personal meanings. Moreover, this process is crucial for the experiential offering to become an experience for the guest.

The findings of Lanier and Hampton (2009) implicate how the symbolic characteristics, that is the meaning and perspectives, of the experience can increase the material appreciation. However, the authors enhance how there is a difficulty in the experiential offering since the producers only have the power to provide the symbols, the actual interpretation of meaning lies with the consumer. Moreover, there are certain aspects that strengthen the symbolic message and by extension the creation of memorable experiences. Above all, it is of importance to establish a general theme as well as the set of symbols, in the communication in order to integrate this in the conceptual context. These symbols can both be more abstract themes or concrete visual symbols. Moreover, these can range from social to political or cultural and behavioral expectations which develop around the event in question.

To continue, it is of importance that this theme and the symbolic communication applies with the experiential offering to assure that they are not only perceived as business motives (Lanier & Hampton, 2009). For this reason, the authors argue that the commercial should be minimized for the symbolic win. In addition, the key to creating and maintaining engagement is the sense of a holistic offering, this by using the earlier mentioned stories and themes as well as making these parts flow together in a holistic process (Lanier & Hampton, 2009).

This, the authors suggest, will likely keep the customers engaged during their entire experience including before and after the actual event. Lastly, the concept of internalized value is primarily about subjective experience and thereby hard to measure in this study. However, both Lanier and Hampton (2009) and Hede and Kellett (2011) conclude that this concept is strongly correlated with the degree of unusuality in the experience. When the customers are exposed to something communicated as different or in an unique way, it stimulates them to a higher level (Hede and Kellett, 2011). In continuation, it is not exclusively an experience that generates a "real world"-escape that allows for this effect. Even more, the offering of discovery and sense of exploration could generate an excitement that results in a larger value for the consumer. Also, the experiential offering is consumed with others and several studies implies that internalized value is dependent on the social community-building in creating the experience (Lanier & Hampton, 2009; Hede & Kellett, 2011).

The findings of Lanier and Hampton suggests that the concept of customers talking about the happenings, both before, during and after, could be even more important in creating value than the actual event. In addition, Hede & Kellett (2011) argue that for instance word-of-mouth and social channels have a positive impact on consumers' likelihood to attend an event. In conclusion, even though marketers can not control the desires of customers, they can offer the right offering to increase the possibility of the event being a memorable experience instead of using the standard practices that are not suitable for the event concept.

4. Method & Material

In this section the overall scientific approach of critical realism and abduction will be discussed as well as the qualitative study approach. Furthermore, the method of content analysis will be motivated in relation to the aim and research questions. In addition, the coding frame and categories used in the analysis will be presented along with the criterias when selecting the empirical material. Lastly, a methodological reflection will be conducted.

4.1 Scientific approach

When giving account of the methodological foundation of this study, it is of importance to start off with the scientific framework that is the very basis of both how the empirical material is analyzed and further processed in the discussion (Travers, 2001). In this study, both the ontological assumptions as well as the epistemological view are based on critical realism. The approach of critical realism states that there is an actual reality and that it is possible to obtain knowledge from this reality (Danermark et al., 2019). However, this knowledge obtained will be socially affected since there is no confirmation of our ability to decide which representations of reality are objective versus subjective. The research process in this study has therefore been conducted with the assumption that there may exist an objective world outside of our consciousness. However, these assumptions also include the need to be open to accept that different representations of this objective world could exist (Travers, 2001).

The perspective of critical realism with its complex view of reality is particularly suitable for this research problem. Given (2008) argues that that behavior is created with influence of both subjective action and structural factors. In addition the author concludes that critical realism has an explanatory focus as well as a focus on social meaning to humans, which could be connected to the community-building and symbolic communication as well as the social marketing aspect researched in this thesis.

4.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

The scientific approach of critical realism can be used with qualitative as well as quantitative research approaches (Allen, 2017). However, because the aim of this thesis is to attain deeper knowledge of the research problem, a qualitative method was selected. A qualitative

approach seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of what is studied by proposing *what* and *how* questions whilst a quantitative approach rather aims to collect numerical data to reveal overall trends (Silverman, 2017). Moreover, a qualitative method is suitable due to its focus on detail, where Silverman states that the methods are applicable in different contexts, especially the social context and with a focus on interpretation. This is highly relevant to the study based on both the event, which is the context and social media, which is the channel. Above this, it is in line with the scientific approach discussed previously. Thus, a quantitative approach could have resulted in a more voluminous description of the brand identity of Way out West. However, it would not give the same in-depth insight in the nuances of the strategies used, which is a complex matter.

Furthermore, the analysis method chosen in this thesis is content analysis. According to Boyle and Schmierbach (2020) a qualitative content analysis is the preferable way of handling a large media material while looking for patterns or common themes. The authors state that this method of analysis allows for a systematic organization of the material whilst still giving opportunity for in-depth analysis of both textual and visual parts. This is suitable for a full medium like Instagram which is chosen for this study.

4.3 The case of Way out West

In this thesis the Swedish, Gothenburg-based music festival Way out West, which Nordevik (2019) describes as one of the most popular events in Sweden since its start in 2007, has been chosen as the specific case. It is arguable that Way out West is a unique example of how sustainability communication and CSR has been applied to the event context. Since 2012 the festival is only serving vegetarian food within the festival area and since 2015 this also includes dairy-free products, both for environmental reasons (Price, 2022; Ljung, 2015). In addition, the festival has won several awards, among these "Gyllene Hjulet" which is the most important award for practitioners within event-based communication in Sweden (Sponsrings & Eventföreningen, 2012). Above this, the festival has won the European "The Green Operations Award" for their sustainability work as well as MTV:s O music awards for their innovation, against competitors like the American festivals Coachella and Lollapalooza (Svensson Glaser, 2014;TT, 2011). This shows how the festival is an example of how strategic communication could be integrated in event brands to create brand equity.

4.4 Coding framework

To make the analysis process more clear and concrete, a coding framework was created. This framework, as well as the research as a whole, was conducted according to the abductive approach. Ekström and Larsson (2020) states that abduction is the process of going back and forth between the material and the framework. In this process, theories were used to create frames for interpretations which provide new ideas and dimensions in the reality studied. Further, in this thesis a rather unexplored area was found by examining previous research which was based on the interplay between different scientific fields in a new context. This generated a starting point in preliminary theories based on the information obtained. After this, the chosen case of Way out West was analyzed in this light. This led to a new view of the research problem and even more research in other potential connected areas which could be applied to the case. After an interplay with the empirical material in this abductive manner theories were adjusted for the study. Lastly, sub-categories and codes were created from the theories chosen, according to the process Eksell and Thelander (2014) argues for when conducting abductive research.

The three areas of symbolic, social and experiential marketing form the main categories of the coding framework, with additional sub-categories. Additionally, statements were formulated based on the theories to make it more comprehensible in relation to the research question. These were continuously re-evaluated during the coding process connected to the material. Further, focus was also put on theoretical knowledge outside of the coding framework but the selected sub-categories were found the most important to begin the analysis process. A further elaboration of how the coding framework was used in the analysis process is found under headline 4.5.

Appendix 1: The coding categories and sub-categories

Category	Post 1 – Greentopia	Post 2 – Welcome to veggie heaven	Post 3 – #klimatmaxa
1. Symbolic branding			
Differentiated strategy • Promotion of one or two aspects within whom the arrangers consider themselves experts			
Brand-as-a-friend • Uses phrases that expresses a care for the consumers • Language is informal • Encourages symmetrical communication			
Brand community • Refers to visitors and arrangers as "we" and "us" • Initiate a conversation between consumers outside the festival area			
Cool-and-cultural capital • Uses unconventional activities • Has indications of a sacrifice group			
Brand endorser • Usage of celebrity endorsers • Usage of partner organizations in their communication			
2. Social marketing			
• Speaks of social, economic or environmental issues			
Social marketing messages • Usage of messages based on behavior of the visitors • Usage of informational messages around CSR • Usage of messages based on beliefs and values for a social cause			
Behavioral aspects of consumers • Addresses behavioral aspects such as perceived barriers, desired benefits, the competition and/or influential others			
3. Experiential marketing			
• The communication has an overall theme and symbols connected to this theme • The communication gives the consumers an ability to connect before and after festival • The arrangers promote discovery rather than a real-world escape			

4.5 Selection & Analysis of Data

To collect data for the study, an examination was conducted on all Instagram posts from Way Out Wests' official account (@wayoutwestfestival). This entailed a brief analysis of all Instagram posts published on the account until the 30th of March 2023 when the analysis process of this thesis started. Subsequently, posts that were deemed relevant to the study's purpose were selectively chosen using relevance sampling. In relevance sampling, rather than aiming for an empirical material that is fully representative, the data that contribute to answering the research question are intentionally selected (Krippendorff 2019). Firstly, a key aspect of this study is to examine how event brands apply strategies to build relationships to their customers both during and outside the actual event. Due to this, the data was chosen with a spread of posts that was posted both during the festival and outside the days for the event. The year of the post was not taken into consideration in the first stage since the research question is not specified to the early or late years of the festival. However, in the second stage of selection, if several posts were similar in their usage of communication strategies, the more recent post was chosen. This is because it would make the study more current.

Secondly, the data sampling procedure prioritized the research gap connected to sustainability communication and strategies to build relations, looking for instance at brand community efforts and endorsers. This also laid the foundations of the theoretical framework. Despite these efforts, the large volume of data required the application of saturation in the data selection process. Thus, the empirical material was continuously analyzed according to the recommendations of Boyle and Schmierbach (2020) until enough material was obtained to fully address the research question and no added post was assessed to contribute with relevant new dimensions. Ultimately, a total of 27 social media posts were included in the final sample.

The analysis process has, as mentioned, been informed by the characteristics of a content analysis. The process started with finding patterns within the material. These patterns were guided by the theoretical framework and the sub-categories in the coding frame. However, during the process we were also open for findings outside the already created framework, connected to our abductive approach. Further, the analysis was based on studying fewer units in-depth connected to their context. This was done in different steps to assure a contextual knowledge about the phenomenon. The process started with looking at all chosen social

media-posts to detect similarities and differences in the material, both connected to textual and visual aspects. After this, every unit was coded in coding tables that were later used as a foundation for the qualitative analysis (see appendix 2). This was helpful to once again look at the material in a holistic way. The content of the posts were interpreted in relation to the chosen theories but the theories were also chosen due to the very first look of the material in an abductive way. Ödman (2016) stresses the importance of analyzing the single units in relation to both each other and their context. The author names this process of interpretation to the hermeneutic circle. To fully understand what a certain text or picture actually means, it was necessary to understand the context of Way out West, their brand identity and mission. Beside this, both the situation and time of the post was important to take into account. For instance, a certain post could be differently controversial depending on if it was published in 2010 or in 2020. Once again the pre-existing knowledge is of importance here, since it affects the interpretation of the material.

4.6 Methodological reflections

In this section a further reflection will be made over the presented methodological choices, including what has been done to assure the quality of the research. In this study, neither the result of Way out West's communication strategies nor the attitudes around it was measured or analyzed. Therefore, the consumers' perspective is only touched upon to allow for the fuller picture but not investigated further. Moreover, when analyzing the communication strategies used the focus was put on the intention of Way out West. Thus, interviews might be a relevant method for this study. Relevant people were contacted for interviews without success with the aim of a triangulation, what Yin (2015) states as combining different methods – in this case content analysis along with complementary interviews, to grasp the overall picture. Without the interviews the intention can not be analyzed further than the information that is provided by Way out West themselves. However, as stated in chapter 2 of this study, previous research has focused only to a limited extent on a strategic communication approach to branding in an event context and this research gap was what needed to be addressed. Therefore, social media was chosen as the channel of data selection. This choice was informed by the unique nature of social media, which allows a greater opportunity for relationship-building through continuous posts and close contact with followers (Quesenberry 2018).

It is important to note that the study did not include communication from other media channels, such as the company's website or interviews and press documents. Although such additional sources could have provided a broader knowledge of Way Out West's overall communication, the decision was purposefully made to solely examine Instagram posts. This partly because the qualitative method allows for material to be narrow but with a gain of deeper understanding (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2020).

Further, Way out West is a festival that the authors of this study have both preconceived knowledge and opinions of which also was the primary reason that this particular case was found interesting. Ekström and Larsson (2011) concludes that the scientific field of communication in general is affected by interpretative theories and methodologies, for instance like the hermeneutic circle used in this analysis process. One of the criterias to understand the meaning in certain communication is understanding the codes of the society, culture or context it is communicated in. Furthermore, Ekström and Larsson argue that this understanding can not be made without pre-existing knowledge affecting it. This is especially true in the case of this study's critical realism approach. This illustrates the importance of reflexivity in the research thereby understanding why certain interpretations are made the way they are or what might not be seen by the researcher. As the authors of this study are educated within the scientific field of strategic communication, this will likely generate a background of knowledge within the field which will allow an understanding of the codes in the communication analyzed. Moreover, the contextual aspects such as the familiarity with the case might also contribute to a more attentive analysis and an understanding of the societal and cultural codes presented. However, commenting on the authors' pre-existing knowledge is important for transparency in the study.

Moreover, qualitative research does not primarily strive for objectivity, but trustworthiness and transferability (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). Both these aspects are achieved in this study through the documentation and motivation of data selection and coding categories as well as all the posts in the appendices (see appendix 3 and onwards). Heide and Simonsson argue that this increases the opportunity to examine the results as well as conduct a similar study. In addition, the trustworthiness is also increased by the fact that the posts were coded separately in an attempt to not impact the other author which could also be seen as an attempt for previously mentioned triangulation.

5. Results and Analysis

The section will present our results and analysis. Firstly, the three perspectives of symbolic, social and experiential marketing will be analyzed with the coded data. Lastly, an overall analysis will be presented which combines the sections previously presented in a holistic manner.

5.1 Symbolic branding strategies

As suggested in the theoretical framework, brands are not merely an indicator of what a certain product or service is but also what it stands for (Hatch & Schultz, 2008; Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015). When examining the data collected from the official social media channels of Way out West, it is clear that numerous strategies to emotionalize and differentiate the brand Way out West are used.
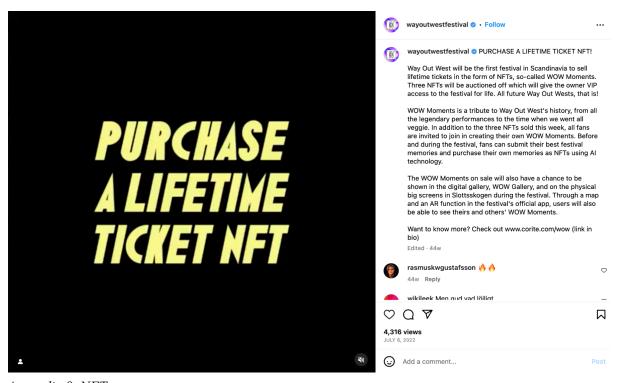
In terms of brand-as-a-friend, the strategy was reappearing numerous times. The brand-as-a-friend strategy involves the customer creating an emotional attachment to a brand, similar to that of a friend where feelings of security, comfort and loyalty are evoked (Ohlwein & Bruno, 2022). For instance, the strategy is used in the caption on *appendix 3*: ''We're humbled, moved and amazed. Once a year we get to create something very very special with all of you (...) The shows, the food, the friends, films, talks, artists, partners and beautiful surroundings ''. In this statement, the arrangers speak to the audience as though they were speaking to a friend, expressing gratitude and humbleness. Moreover, in this statement Way out West put themselves to the side and rather chooses to list all the different stakeholders, including partners, artists and the audience, as co-creational beings that contribute to the overall feeling of the festival. Referring to the audience as ''friends'' might include both the relationship between the consumer and the brand as well as the relationship between the people in the audience. This is in line with what Bengtsson & Östberg (2015) refers to as the triangular relationship between a consumer, another consumer and the organization. Similar language is reappearing in *appendix 4*, which was posted some days after the festival in 2019. The caption states the following: ''Friends, how are you today? How was your weekend? What was the best?'' (Translated from: "Vänner, hur mår ni idag? Hur var helgen? Vad var bäst?"). This type of text is personalized to the level that it could have been a text message from a friend. The text in this post indicates a genuine interest and concern for the consumers

which promotes a dialogue that directly addresses the visitors as individuals. Another example of the usage of brand-as-a-friend could be seen in *appendix 5* which shows an infographic collaboration with sexual education organisation RFSU to prevent sexual harassment at the festival with the name ''Dare to Care – 10 ways to prevent sexual assault''. This once again points to a caring of the consumer and a sense of community, belonging and a safe space in the festival area.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that even if brand-as-a-friend is a strategy based on personal meaning it shares similarities with brand community that is based on social integration (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015). For instance, the usage of a language that is similar to that of a friend, the usage of ''we'' , ''us'' and ''together'' might not only trigger emotions that have a personal value for the consumer towards the brand, but also a collective and ultimately altruistic value towards the Way Out West-community as a whole. What distinguishes the strategy of brand community is that both the consumer-consumer relationship and the organizer-consumer relationship is important (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2011; Mahoney & Tang, 2017). In the data collected from Way out West social media, the latter is presented more frequently though both are evident.

An example of where the consumer-consumer relationship is encouraged in *appendix 6*. In the post, which is a campaign in collaboration with West Pride, Way out West jokes about offering ''homophobia-therapy'' to whoever needs it. In the text homophobia is compared to other phobias such as a phobia for spiders, heights or small spaces which people often go to therapy for. Here, Way out West makes certain assumptions about the values of their audience. Using this humoristic approach to a rather serious matter requires a basic understanding between the participants and the organizers about values and preconceived knowledge on certain issues. Moreover, it creates a feeling of ''us vs them'' where the arrangers make fun of people who are not pro-LGBTQ+ rights. This might not only encourage the relationship between the arrangers and the consumers to grow stronger, but it might also evoke a feeling of familiarity towards other members of the group.

Moreover, Way out West show indications of brand community through *appendix 7*, which shows a picture with the text ''Become a Way out West ambassador!'' . Here, the consumer is once again addressed as an important co-creating actor in making the festival successful. This can be connected to Mahoney and Tang's (2017) four aspects of community which are:

membership, shared emotional connection, influence and need of fulfillment. Membership is not fully addressed in the social media posts, though one could argue that a ticket to the festival could be seen as an "entry" for the brand community. As seen in *appendix 8*, the usage of non-fundable tokens (NFT:s) as lifetime tickets for the festival, which the arranges name WOW-moments, is an example of a way for a consumer to get a long-term membership in the community. The NFT:s are described in the caption: ''WOW moments is a tribute to Way out West's history, from all the legendary performances to the time we went all veggie''. However, Bengtsson and Östberg (2011) rather argue that one could be part of a brand community simply by admiring a brand. Thus, a feeling of belonging to the community might be achieved without actually attending the event.

Appendix 8, NFT

Moreover, shared emotional connection which is the second category presented by Mahoney & Tang (2017) can also be seen in this post: ''Before and during the festival, fans can submit their best festival memories and purchase their own memories as NFTs using AI technology (...) The WOW-moments on sale will also have a chance to be shown in the digital gallery, WOW gallery, and on physical big screens in Slottsskogen during the festival '' *(appendix 8)*. Additionally, shared emotional connection is already addressed with numerous examples in the brand-as-a-friend category. In terms of influence and need of fulfillment, Way out West does promote several behavioral changes which can be connected to the intention of

influence. One of them could be seen in *(appendix 9)*, where the hashtag #klimatmaxa (Translated to ''maximize the climate'') is evident. The caption in this post includes the following sentence: ''A campaign where we want to show that we are ready for BIG political decisions. Do you want to join?'' (Translated from: ''En kampanj där vi vill visa att vi är redo för STORA politiska beslut. Vill du vara med?''). Here, Way Out West encourages a dialogue with the consumers by using a hashtag while influencing them in participating in a campaign.

There are several examples of the usage of cool-and-cultural capital from different approaches. To begin, Way out West can be connected to cool-and-cultural capital in how they try to be innovative, attempting to find new ways to define what a music festival is. This could be seen in the posts promoting external events Way Out Västtrafik (*appendix 10; 11*), which is a small live music performance on the trams that go around the Gothenburg city area. The following statement is retrieved from the caption: ''Way out West collaborates with Gothenburg public transport agency Västtrafik in new project Way out Västtrafik – a music festival aboard a tram. (...) Tickets will be sold per concert for 34 SEK– the same price a single ticket would cost on a daily commute.''. One could argue that this is a quite unique initiative to take for a music festival, considering the location of the public trams that are also a landmark for Gothenburg, the fact that the event is placed outside of the original festival dates and the remarkably low price of the tickets.

Beverland (2009) argues that an important aspect of being perceived as an authentic and cool brand is to draw upon historical associations, non-commercial values and to challenge conventions. In *appendix 12* Way out West announces that one of the films that will be shown at the festival is named ''Queercore: How to punk a revolution''. The choice to show a movie on-screen that concerns the punk movement, one of the most evident subcultures in society, could be a strategic choice for Way out West. Though it does not indicate that Way out West are involved in any radical activities themselves, which would challenge conventions, it still speaks to this societal group that Way out West sympathizes with them. This is a clear reference to both an important historical event and a display of associations to non-commercial values through the usage of the punk revolution. This further indicates that the brand prefers to affiliate with free-thinkers, creatives and revolutionaries. This draws attention to another important aspect of the cool-and-cultural strategy is that the brand has a sacrifice group, meaning that it strives to appeal to a selected group of people rather than being liked by a majority (Rosenbaum & Elliott 2015).

Additionally, Way out West themselves are quick to point out that they are revolutionary or that their behaviors have been met with criticism. This can for instance be seen in *appendix 13,* where Way out West addresses the initiative of the festival to go completely vegetarian in 2012: ''The first few years the decision to go completely vegetarian/vegan was met with a lot of criticism – these days most visitors agree that there is no alternative'' . It is also evident in *appendix 14* which highlights the usage of strictly organic beer within the festival area: ''When Way Out West in 2014 requested an organic beer, an odd item at the time, they responded by producing the Norrlands Ljus Beer especially for the festival''. In these statements, Way out West wants to appear socially relevant and challenging the conventions.

In terms of brand endorsers, several celebrities and other organizations including both for-profit and NGOs are apparent in Way out West's communication. When looking at the material from the perspective of brand endorsers, we excluded the usage of artist's names or organization logos in the posts and rather focused on the active usage of that endorser as a prominent role. Even then, more than half of the posts analyzed had one or more brand endorsements. Pöyry et. al (2019) argue that brand endorsers are an effective tool to enhance the image of a brand but it is important that these choices are made with precaution. As several of the posts that were using brand endorsers were connected to CSR efforts or sustainability communication *(appendix 9; 6 ;15; 14)* one could argue that the sustainability efforts appear less authentic when there is a for-profit brand connected to the post, which could contribute to greenwashing. However, Morsing et al. (2013) argue that it is impossible for brands to be completely black or white in terms of sustainability communication. Rather, it is better that companies set the standard to be more sustainable even if they are not completely there yet rather than not trying at all. Thus, by starting the conversation about sustainability using brand endorsers, it could be either more effective as it draws more attention to the subject by using a symbol or a a name that is recognizable, or less effective since the consumers might consider it a hidden motive or an attempt of greenwashing themselves as well as the endorser that is portrayed.

5.2 Social marketing

When analyzing the empirical material it was noticeable that Way out West are not afraid of speaking of societal subjects which can be shown in numerous parts of the data. Overall, social marketing was evident in about half of the material that was analyzed in this thesis. Here, both social sustainability as well as environmental sustainability is addressed in the

communication on Way out West's social channels. The festival portrays themselves as an actor with the opportunity to change society for the better in numerous ways, both through information, restrictions and different kinds of audience engagement.

In the communication, all three messaging strategies that are presented by Lee and Kotler (2016) are used. The authors describe the different objectives as: (1) knowledge objectives, which includes what you want your audience to know (2) behavior objectives, which includes what you want your audience to do, and (3) belief objectives, which is what you want your audience to believe and feel. The different strategies were frequently used in combination with each other, and the messages varied between being informative, behavior-based and value-based.

First, informational messages are found in several examples in the data collected. In *appendix 16*, one of the yearly WOW-talks, which is the live podcast format at the festival, is presented. According to the caption, the talk is going to highlight: ''fashion, veganism, sexism in the music industry and a sad-fun pep-talk about lesbian culture'' (*appendix 16*). Here, the platform is utilized to discuss societal problems both concerning social issues such as feminism and the LGBQ+- community as well as environmental issues regarding the food industry. Another example of an informational message is in *appendix 5*, showing an infographic named ''Dare to Care'' which aims at informating the visitors on ways to prevent sexual assault on the festival area.

Moreover, in *appendix 17* the non-profit organization Greentopia is introduced in the festival area which provides information about sustainability efforts in the event industry. Here, Way Out West encourages co-creational activities between the arrangers and the visitors as a complement to the information talk. This is addressed by Way out West in the caption: ''As a visitor you'll be able to discuss with actual climate change researchers from Researchers desk, talk to a climate change psychologist and take part in a textile workshop hosted by F/ACT Movement and much more.'' *(appendix 17)*. In *appendix 15*, two celebrity podcasters are invited to have a live-talk on the dairy industry during the festival with a sponsorship of oat drink company Oatly. A similar approach is detected in *appendix 18* , where the headlining artists from the music festival are talking about subjects related to violence in connection to their performance. Though both of these posts are examples of what Lee and Kotler (2016) define as informational messages, they are done with a twist by using some of

their central acts in combination with important messages. Therefore, if a consumer is interested in seeing their favorite podcaster or artist they will directly be influenced by the subject that is discussed.

Second, examples of behavioral messages were also found in the data. For instance, a direct action-taking could be found where the festival raises money for charities, such as against deforestation in ''get mama a tree'' in *appendix 19* as well as for children in developing countries as seen in ''Re:act'' in *appendix 20*. In *appendix 20*, Way out West states: "The festival is over for this time but the work for change continues" (Translated from: ''Festivalen är över för den här gången men vårt arbete att förändra fortsätter''). Even if this points towards a long-term behavior from the arrangers one could argue that the direct encouragement to the visitors does not promote long-term behavior change. However, the long-term behavior change is addressed with several initiatives during the festival.

Way out West addresses numerous other behavioral aspects that are apparent in our everyday lives such as the usage of public transportation as well as second hand-shopping. For instance, in *appendix 10 and appendix 11*, Way Out West collaborates with Gothenburg public transportation service Västtrafik and creates a festival onboard Gothenburg public trams. Similarly, as seen in *appendix 21* Way out West collaborates with public train service SJ to create a special festival train: ''Goodiebags for the Way out West-train in the making. Book a ticket for the most exciting train journey of the year at wayoutwest.se'' (Translated from: ''Goodiebags för Way out West-tåget in the making. Boka biljett till årets mest peppade tågresa på wayoutwest.se''). Additionally, in *appendix 22*, Way out West raises money for charity by collaborating with a few artists from their lineup to make personalized prints on second hand clothing. The caption states: ''Besides the fact that they are awesome musicians, they have also put time, heart, soul and passion into designing and making remakes of handpicked garments from Humana Second Hand which we now have the honor of auctioning out'' (Translated from: ''Utöver det faktum att de är grymma musiker har de också lagt ned tid, hjärta, själ och passion på att designa och göra remakes på handplockade plagg från Humana Second Hand som vi nu har äran att auktionera ut''). This can be seen as a double behavioral message, where Way out West not only raises money for charity but also actively chooses to make a collaboration using second hand garments. Here, the arrangers address the love and care that has been put into the garments as well as the approval of the celebrities in using upcycled items. Thus, it can also be seen as a peak to the visitors to shift

their behavior into shopping more second hand and less mass-produced garments. Similar to the instances of informational messages, the behavioral messages are repeatedly communicated with a twist, making the effort seem more attractive and fun in the eyes of the consumer.

This is in line with behavioral aspects presented by Lee and Kotler (2019) such as perceived barriers and potential benefits. These were addressed by Way Out West on a few occasions when speaking of sustainability. For example, it can be seen in *appendix 13* which addresses the festival's decision to go completely meat-free. The caption states ''Welcome to veggie heaven!''. Here, Way out West addresses potential benefits by putting vegetarian food in a positive light, highlighting the rewards of adopting the behavior such as eating delicious food. Likewise, Way out West once again touches upon the subject of veganism in a*ppendix 23* and *appendix 24* where vegan ''sunday recipes'' are presented which, when analyzing the whole Instagram-feed of Way out West, can be seen as a recurring type of post. By doing this, Way out West not only highlights the benefits but also addresses potential barriers concerning that many people might want to eat vegetarian food but find it hard to do so.

Third, messages based on beliefs and values were recurring. For example, this can be seen in *appendix 9* below, where the campaign #klimatmaxa is evident. "Tag your photos with #klimatmaxa, and we'll show how many of us want to change climate politics." (Translated from: ''Tagga dina bilder med #klimatmaxa så visar vi hur många vi är som vill förändra klimatpolitiken!''). Though this is not only a behavioral message, it is also dependent on a pre-set of values that the audience cares about environmental issues.

Appendix 9, #klimatmaxa

As discussed in chapter 5.1 where symbolic brand strategies are analyzed, it is clear that Way out West uses a rather informal language when speaking of societal issues, as well as making certain assumptions of what the audience already knows. Another example of this is in *appendix 19* ''get mama a tree''. Here, rather than having a big informational text about what damage deforestation has on the environment, Way out West assumes that the audience is already aware of this knowledge and instead tries to put a fun twist on the campaign.

Moreover, in a few instances beliefs and values are presented more discreetly in the data collected. This can for example be seen in *appendix 25*: ''Ladies first is a hip hop-concert with focus on a new wave of female rappers'' (Translated from: ''Ladies First är en hiphopkonsert med fokus på en ny våg av kvinnliga rappare''). This is thereby a strategy by Way out West to include social marketing efforts without actually mentioning facts about social or environmental sustainability or actively saying that they try to change behavior. A similar pattern can be detected in *appendix 12*, where Way out West announces the screening of the film ''Queercore: How to punk a revolution'' in the festival area, as well as the live podcast *appendix 16* that highlights: ''fashion, veganism, sexism in the music industry and a sad-fun pep-talk about lesbian culture'' (*appendix 16*). Here, Way out West does not directly address that these choices have any particular meaning behind it, however for the consumer, they are constantly reminded of societal issues while interacting with the festival's social channels. Instead, these posts pop up in their Instagram feed to remind them of these

important matters, even if they are no longer in the festival area and it is month to the next festival.

Mahoney & Tang (2017) argue that social marketing messages are particularly effective when the messages are close to the experiences, lifestyles and goals of the target audience. Here, Way out West has great potential to influence the audience due to the setting the festival is placed in. In collaboration with influential music artists, food services and brands that consumers see and use in their everyday life, one could argue that the foundations for an effective messaging strategy is placed. Important to note is that in several of the cases which present sustainability content, initiatives are placed in combination with endorsers such as sponsors and/or celebrities. This might question the authenticity of the communication on these matters. In social marketing, traditional marketing strategies are used to sustain a goal that creates the general good of society (Mahoney & Tang, 2017 ; Lee & Kotler, 2016). However, it is not very clear what the specific goal for Way out West is by implementing these initiatives. The combination with endorsers as previously described might confuse the consumers as to what the reason behind the communication is.

In the data collected, there was no addressing of the competition and/or behavioral others, which is also an important behavioral aspect presented by Lee and Kotler (2016). Rather, Way out West focuses on creating a universe where sustainability efforts are constantly brought up to light. As mentioned in 5.1, Way out West at times creates an ''us vs them'' where the ''them'' are portrayed in a negative light. It could be beneficial for the arrangers to bring up an alternative point of view where also the perceived benefits of other perspectives are addressed to further enhance their own argument. If an attendee does not agree with their statements, there is a risk that the social marketing efforts fall short.

5.3 Experiential Marketing

When analyzing the usage of the experiential marketing logic in the social media posts of Way out West, mainly three aspects were focused on; if the communication has an overall theme and symbols connected to this theme, if the communication allows the consumers to connect before and after the festival and lastly if the arrangers promote discovery rather than a real-world escape. These aspects are what Lanier and Hampton (2009) highlights as what should be the main themes in the communication when creating memorable experiences and strong relationships to customers in an event-context. However, in this chapter the holistic

view and adaptation on the different aspects of the experiential marketing theory will be analyzed.

To begin, the empirical material selected from Way out West's communication on their social channels is, as mentioned in previous chapters, in general tinged by an overall theme of CSR efforts connected to both endorsers and unconventional activities. Lanier and Hampton (2009) argues that establishing a general theme is of importance to facilitate the impact of the symbolic message which in extension will create a more memorable experience. In relation to the general theme of CSR or sustainability it was found that it was often connected to concrete symbols and graphics with the same message, for instance in *appendix 16* where a "WoW Talk " is communicated. This talk is communicated as revolving around veganism, sexism and the LBTQ-fight among other themes. Together with this information, the visual aspects in this post include butterfly wings which are put as a frame around the picture of the two hosts of the talk. In general, butterfly wings are connected to the term "Butterfly effect" which refers to how a small change can result in large differences in a later state. The connection between the textual message and the visual symbols, in this case the butterfly wings, is even more evident in *appendix 19*. Here, the campaign "Get mama a tree" is marketed to make people get the post one like in order for the company GodEl to plant a tree. The butterfly wings in this post amplifies the feeling of how a small act such as liking an Instagram-post could contribute to something great. This is clearly connected to the overall theme of both Way out West and the theme of the specific post. Further, this is an example of how Way out West integrates their sustainability positioning with sets of symbols. According to Lanier and Hampton (2009) this gives a creative appeal to the message which will lead to positive and lasting memories.

Appendix 19, Get mama a tree

Additionally, different sets of symbols could be found when analyzing the material. Further, most of them were symbols connected to nature. To exemplify, these included several posts with flowers (*appendix 25*; *appendix26*), jellyfishes (*appendix 4*; *appendix 20*) and to some extent trees, in the logo or distinct in the picture in another way (for example *appendix 17*; *appendix 27*). However, it became evident that posts from the same year included similar symbols. In some cases, the symbols were included in the visual part of the post even though it was not connected to any explicit sustainability communication in the textual part, for instance in *appendix 4*. Where the jellyfishes are accompanying a text that is thanking the visitors for the festival without mentioning any CSR efforts. Yet, the symbols are there. This illustrates how Way out West establishes symbols with connotations to sustainability in their communication to the extent that it is applied even though the connection to the main message is not necessarily clear. Through this creative stimulus that Lanier and Hampton (2009) encourages, this can give the impression of a sustainable message without actually having to communicate around CSR.
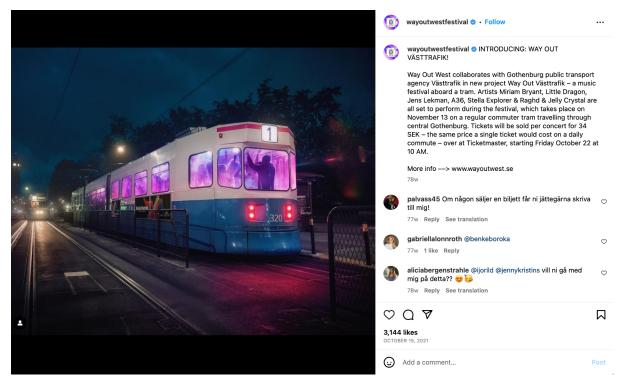
To continue to the aspect of whether the communication allows the consumers to connect before and after the festival, efforts could be seen in this direction in several different ways. This partly through just being active on social media, since this is a channel that, as stated previously, is particularly effective in building engagement and relations (Quesenberry, 2018). Another aspect of how Way out West uses strategies to allow the consumer to connect

with them beyond the time-span of the festival is their continuous communication about having spotify-playlists for every occasion of your life. For example when they say "every occasion demands its playlist" (Translated from: "Var tillfälle kräver sin spellista") and further describes that they therefore have made playlists for different activities "for example when you are running, sitting still, pre-party or hang out in the sun" (Translated from: "t.ex. När du springer, sitter still, förfestar eller hänger i solen") *(appendix 28)*. Additionally, *appendix 26* is also connected to this integration in the consumers' life when Way out West says "Midsummer-love in the shape of a playlist that is perfect for herring, the "little frog"-dance, the hope of sun and the snaps!" (Translated from: "Midsommarkärlek i form av en spellista som gifter sig med sillen, små grodorna, hoppet om solen och nubben!"). This is a strategy where Way out West tries to make sure they are with the consumer not only in the festival area, but in every part of their lives.

Further, one way to make the visitors or potential visitors talk about the festival before and after the timespan is exemplified in the campaign *Dare to Care (appendix 5)*. In this post the consumers are encouraged to "spread the word" around six ways to prevent sexual harassment. This post is published around two months before the actual festival but the appeal to "spread the word" around a relevant topic like this one lays a foundation for discussions around Way out West between consumers long before the festival takes place. Lanier and Hampton (2009) argues that this aspect could be more value-creating than the actual event, especially when the message of the post is a part of the previously discussed overall theme of the event, which is the case with this post's CSR-efforts, as mentioned in 5.2. In addition, this campaign is accompanied with the hashtag "#daretocare" *(appendix 5)* which Hede and Kellett (2011) argue is a special feature to encourage people to spread something and give it a personal relevance. Another example of this in the empirical material of this study is *appendix 9* that was handled in 5.1 in relation to brand community with the hashtag "#klimatmaxa" (translated to "maximize the climate") and in *appendix 19* where they use "#thegoodforce" to increase the CSR-sense of the post in collaboration with GodEl mentioned above in relation to symbols. However, even though Hede and Kellett conclude that social channels have a positive impact on the likelihood to attend an event, the aspect of hashtags are not frequently used in the empirical material. Often the hashtag "#wowgbg" is the only one used.

Further, communicating in a way that might be controversial or extreme is another way of creating conversation around the festival outside the dates for the actual event since Hede and Kellett (2011) argues that this will stimulate the consumers to a higher level. For instance, in the previously mentioned *appendix 6* the arrangers talk about "homophobia-therapy" (translated from "Homofobiterapi") where they "proudly present the world's first therapy for homo- bi- and transfobians". This could be argued to be a post that will not pass without notice and in extension probably evoke emotions and conversation.

Moreover, small efforts are continuously made in the communication to start or continue a conversation, for example appeals to "tell that person it's time to get involved" before the festival in connection to having a friend that has never visited Way out West (*appendix 29*) and in *appendix 20* where they communicate that "the festival is over for this time but the work for change continues" (translated from: "Festivalen är över för den här gången men vårt arbete att förändra fortsätter") to encourage to a continued dialogue about the CSR-themes brought up by Way out West. These are combined with more distinct and creative efforts such as the campaign "Way out Västtrafik" *(appendix 10; 11)*, previously mentioned connected to cool-and-cultural capital where they write "Here are the artists that will perform on a moving tram during Way out Västtrafik on November 13th". This campaign and the communication around it played out many months before/after the festival to shed light on the importance of community traveling. Above all it makes Way out West a relevant topic of conversation even though the actual festival is far away in time. Initiatives like these ones are also perfect examples of the third factor analyzed within the experiential marketing logic in the Instagram feed of Way out West, which Hede and Kellett (2011) relates to the degree of unusuality in the experience.

Appendix 11, Way out Västtrafik 2

On the same note, the unusuality in the experience is, as stated before, not only or even particularly in the case of a grand epic event or real-life escape. Hede and Kellett (2011) as well as Lanier and Hampton (2009) both state that experiences based on real-life escape themes are seen as superior in general. However, both pairs of authors agree on the fact that the opposite is even more efficient in creating value for the consumer. Due to these statements, the posts have been analyzed in relation to whether the communication is connected to a reality-check or discovery.

To begin with, since the posts overall are highly connected to CSR and social marketing this also generates the result that they are grounded in real social or environmental issues. This indicates that Way out West's message on social media often is about discovery or learning rather than the previously mentioned escape from reality. For instance this could be seen in a post about "Greentopia" *(appendix 17)* where they communicate about the initiative and that it includes the opportunity for visitors to discuss climate change with researchers or psychologists as well as participating in workshops. This could be claimed to partly be an unusual event in a music festival context and more surely to be a feature that is about discovery and encouraging a reality-check. In addition, the previously mentioned *appendix 16* where the "WoW Talk" about veganism and sexism among other themes, is also an example of how Way out West are continuously working with interrupting the real-life escape

of epic music experiences and famous artist with informational concepts about themes that will lead to discovery. To continue, in *appendix 18*, Way out West shows how they are able to include the music and festival-feeling in an unusual event that is also about a reality check. In this post they say "Right now free breakfast is served at Hagabion in relation to the viewing of the film Concerning Violence" (translated from: "Just nu serveras gratis frukost på Hagabion i samband med visningen av filmen OM VÅLD (Concerning violence)". In addition this film had an introduction of an impassioned speech as well as a concert by two famous original text artists, Adam Tensta and Silvana Imam. Above being a post connected to discovery, this event can also be related to the previously discussed aspect of unusuality connected to a music festival. This is based on the fact that it involves both film and breakfast outside the festival area.

Another aspect of creating something unusual outside the festival area is communicated in *appendix 21* where Way out West promotes the "Goodiebags for the Way out West-train in the making" for the consumer to book tickets to "the most exciting train-trip of the year" (translated from: "Årets mest peppade tågresa"). This post checks several of the criterias Lanier and Hampton (2009) argues for in order to create memorable experiences. Besides being unusual for a music festival, this also allows for the consumers to connect before and after the festival. Partly by taking them to the festival and thereby let the experience begin before reaching the festival area and also because they get something to keep (the goodiebag) as a memory afterwards. In addition to this the offered experience is connected to the overall CSR-theme of Way out West by promoting the sustainable option of collective traveling by train, which can be connected to the first criteria in this theory about an overall theme in the communication. Another example that is handling memories is in *appendix 13* where they, as mentioned in 5.1, paint a picture of what the festival is all about. By doing this they are in one way "creating" memories among the visitors and thereby potentially shaping their opinions of their experience. This is one way to address the importance of communicating in a way that helps the consumers to incorporate the happenings into personal meanings, enhanced by Hede and Kellett (2011). Both these things are aspects that will increase the conversation around the festival before and after the festival and thereby the value.

5.4 Overall Analysis

So far in this chapter, light has been put on whether and how the three overall communication strategies chosen as the theoretical framework in this thesis is used by Way out West on Instagram. In this section the analysis will be taken one step further through a holistic view of the theories and empirical material presented.

Conducting this analysis it is apparent that both symbolic strategies as well as social marketing and experiential marketing were used and often in combination with each other. Thereby it is also evident that the posts have reappearing themes, which is an important aspect in creating memorable experiences according to Lanier and Hampton (2009). These revolve around environmental impact, social sustainability and community engagement. As this selection has been made by the arrangers, one could argue that Way out West use what Rosenbaum and Elliott (2015) would call a differentiated strategy rather than a central positioning strategy, where they try to find one or two aspects within the category of music festivals where they are particularly at the fore-front.

Furthermore, it is clear in the material analyzed that the three perspectives, although taking a quite different approach to marketing, work to enhance each other. Regarding the aspect of symbolic communication strategies, it appears that the posts that involved the aspect of social integration, through brand community and brand-as-a-friend strategies were used in almost all of the posts in the empirical material. In some cases, this was made in connection with social marketing around sustainability, but with exceptions. On the other hand, when sustainability communication was addressed this also almost always included the usage of social integration strategies. Even though the CSR-efforts around sustainability also were apparent in many posts, this indicates that the aspect of community is more foundational in the communication than the sustainability communication.

Although the usage of altruistic values, such as sustainability, might enhance the sense of belonging and thus a sense of community, it is rather the opposite that is more evident in the material. This means that it is the community that lays the foundation for the sustainability communication rather than the other way around. Dahlen et al. (2010) states that the usage of symbolic branding strategies lays the foundation for brand equity and that brand equity in turn lays the foundation for an image of the brand as trustworthy and reliable. In relation to this statement, it could be argued that symbolic strategies that build a sense of community can

be beneficial to enhance the effectiveness of social aims. This is also in line with what Mahoney & Tang (2017) argues in social marketing, which is that social aims are more easily achievable if the messages align with the values and experiences of the audience. In connection to the analysis of the empirical material it is clear that Way out West acknowledges the importance of the community and thereby the importance of not only understanding how the consumer thinks and acts, but above this to build a trust with the consumer in order for them to take in the information and potentially engage.

Moving forward to the usage of social marketing strategies, these messages were often accompanied by one more element, such as interactive elements (for example hashtags and other appeals to spread the message) and/or endorsers. Both of these Pöyry et al. (2019) states as effective strategies to stand out on social media which indicates that this could be an effort from Way out West's side to adjust their messages to social media. Other examples of posts that are clearly specially created for social media while revolving around CSR are *appendix 23* and *appendix 27* where the posts themselves are informational without having to take part in the physical experience. This Lanier and Hampton (2009) argue, also increases the likelihood for consumers to talk about the event before and after it happens. This, in turn, increases the value of the event-brand.

Noteworthy is that much of what is communicated in the Instagram posts regarding sustainability are more about what is going to happen on the actual festival, rather than providing exclusive material specifically for social media. For example, this is shown in the post about different "WOW talks" (appendix 6; appendix 26) or films (appendix 11) where the posts are solely in short describing what the talk or film is going to be about without elaborating further around the topic for the followers who will not see it at the festival. Thereby, the knowledge objectives described by Lee and Kotler (2016) are not met entirely. According to Lanier and Hampton (2009), what is communicated is essential for the guest at an event in order to incorporate the happening into personal meanings. Although it could be argued that they are positioning themselves just by mentioning the controversial topics of these talks or films they are not fully using the potential of social media which could affect the memorability of the experience. In addition, many posts evolve around initiatives that take place outside the timespan of the actual event, which is important to create value in the event context (Lanier & Hampton, 2009). However, using social media to a higher extent to

communicate exclusive material around these events would also increase the value of the brand.

Further, Way out West are in general using more indirect forms of communication when addressing social and environmental sustainability. For example, they are posting vegetarian recipes without commenting on the importance of vegetarian food or environmental challenges (appendix 17; appendix 18), information about events on trams just by mentioning the endorser without bringing up the importance of collective traveling (appendix 23) and mention homophobia in a more humoristic way without any information or context (appendix 9). With these examples it is shown that they are addressing behavioral aspects but the barriers are not directly addressed. This could imply that Way out West are assuming the attitudes among their consumers. Further it could be an indication of a larger focus on for example cool and cultural capital since it applies with Rosenbaum and Elliott's (2015) criteria with posts that are communicated in an unique, edgy way. In connection, according to the experiential marketing logic, Hede and Kellett (2011) argues that communication made in a unique way stimulates the consumers to a higher extent, which can also be applicable to this. However, both these aspects also contribute to a larger sacrifice group (Rosenbaum & Elliott, 2015).

Further, this more indirect way of handling the CSR-efforts are also in line with the brand-as-a-friend strategy where they rather aim for being the chill friend talking to you about a concept, than an organization giving the consumer a lecture. One one hand, Lanier and Hampton (2009) suggest that a sense of exploration should be strived for when communicating around events to generate a larger value. Connected to this, it could be argued that Way out West's strategy is not preferable, since less informational posts could imply less discovery. On the other hand, this dramatic effect is rather achieved through the high usage of the symbolic branding strategies to create a strong community and the behavioral- and belief objects in the communication. In addition, the holistic sense of the posts as well as the high unusuality in both the campaigns, posts and events offered in the timespan between the physical event as well as in the way they communicate, contributes in creating high brand equity.

7. Discussion & Conclusions

This study aimed at attaining knowledge around the importance of strategic communication in an event marketing context while specifically looking at the relationship-building channel of social media as means to achieve brand equity. The analysis concluded that it was not the usage of sustainability communication itself that was unique in the case of Way out West but rather how it was presented. Way out West communicates on serious matters such as climate change and identity politics in a rather informal and personal way with the consumers. Often combining these messages with interactivity such as engagement with music artists and celebrities, volunteering and/or festive activities connected to the event. As mentioned in previous research, Kim & Rader (2010) argue that effective CSR efforts are crucial to build loyalty among consumers, however these efforts must be personal and authentic to be seen as trustworthy. The uniqueness in the sustainability communication of Way out West all contribute to the building of a brand community and a relationship with the consumer. Thereby this study has provided an example of a brand that leverages the uniqueness of the event from a branding perspective.

One of the foundations within strategic communication is the strategic consistency over time in the communication in order to reach the overall goals of an organization (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018). As the analysis of Way out West's posts on Instagram shows, the festival applies several holistic themes that goes beyond the music acts for the current year's edition of the festival. These revolved around a larger message of CSR which in turn informed the symbols, choice of endorsers, campaigns and additional events which itself point towards a strategic approach to branding. However, the main strategies used were those of social integration in order to create a strong community. Thereby, it could be concluded that the community laid the foundation for the social marketing efforts to have impact rather than the opposite.

However, regarding the actual content of the posts, this was often found to be closely tied to solely what will happen during the festival rather than providing informative or exclusive content for social media. This was especially true when posts were connected to sustainability communication. This indicates that the efforts made to engage consumers outside the

timespan of the event, however not regarding the providence of discovery that Lanier and Hampton (2009) suggests. Gamble and Gilmore (2013) states that event marketing is still coined by traditional marketing channels and that there is a need to promote unique experiences such as events. Tailored marketing becomes relevant in this case where even an award-winning and successful event brand is found to not use the full potential of social media that Hede and Kellett (2011) argues is essential in order to facilitate the consumer's incorporation in the meaning of the event. This indicates that the traditional marketing logic is still present which further enhances the importance of the interdisciplinary perspective of strategic communication within event marketing to understand the symbolic and strategic communication work that is required in the branding of events.

This further points to both the opportunities as well as the challenges of marketing within the special context of events as a whole. On one hand, events have the opportunity to engage consumers in communities as they often meet in the festival area and share a common passion or interest. Therefore it is essential to maintain this relationship even when the physical experience is not offered. Music festivals in particular evokes emotions, and is close to both the identity of the consumer as well as the culture. This is an asset that, for instance, marketing of material objects does not have. On the other hand, the event experience might be considered too subjective or multifaceted which might be a contributing reason to why previous studies have focused on the visitors perspective. The special aspects of events, often involving sponsors and engagement of different parts of society, might make it harder for the communication to be consistent. In addition, the norms for traditional branding do not necessarily apply in the event context. For example, in the case of CSR, events could be argued to have a more delicate balance since providing a reality-check could be to the cost of the unique experience an event provides. Although, if the perspective of strategic communication would be applied to a higher extent adjusted to the event context this might be the solution in incorporating all aspects to meet the same overall goals .

This suggests that event marketing has the potential to expand the scope of what marketing communication strategies are appropriate for events. Central for building this brand is the interactivity and relationship with the consumer. Moreover, the case of Way out West illustrates how the strategic usage of branding for an event can look like, as well as the complexity that revolves around an event. Central to the finding of this thesis is the understanding of the consumer's needs both in terms of social integration and identity. Thus,

there is no ''one strategy fits all'' in the marketing of events. Our contribution with the case analyzed is based on sustainability, which is highly relevant in today's world. However, in other events there may be other overall themes that are more relevant to different brands. It is the awareness of the vision, the channel and the message that is the connection to strategic communication.

In conclusion, it is important to enhance that marketers can not control the desires of customers. What they can do, however, is to provide the right offering to increase the possibility of the event being a memorable experience. Instead of using the standardized practices that are not suitable for the experience concept, rather focusing on building a relationship with the consumer to build long-term brand equity through different channels over time. If these channels are used to its full potential with the integrated strategic communication perspective and the strategies that come with this, it can be used to position an event as a holistic experience with a clear theme and message and thereby communicating something that goes beyond the event itself.

1.1 Suggestions for further research

This study argues that additional research is needed regarding how strategic communication can be applied in the marketing of events that goes beyond the timespan for the physical event. Since the studies of events within the field of strategic communication has been rather limited in general, further research is still needed on what happens during the actual event. Therefore, it would be relevant to conduct an in-depth ethnographic analysis while still keeping the perspective of the strategic communication of the brand rather than the visitor's approach. Moreover, the focus of this study has been specifically on events in the music industry and the usage of social media. Further research could be done by conducting similar research on other types of event brands to gain a broader understanding of the phenomena. Additionally, further research could also be done through a study similar to this one, but where the intention of the case organization is taken into consideration through for example interviews or focus groups with communication professionals at the studied organizations. Lastly, a cross-case study would be relevant to get a broader understanding of variations of marketing within the industry of events.

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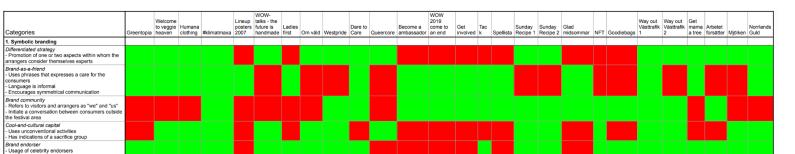
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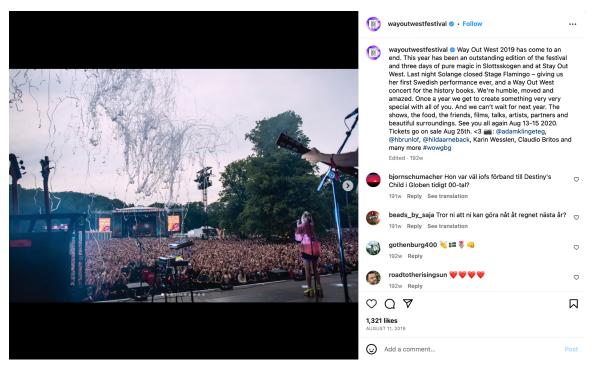
Appendices

Appendix 1, Coding frame

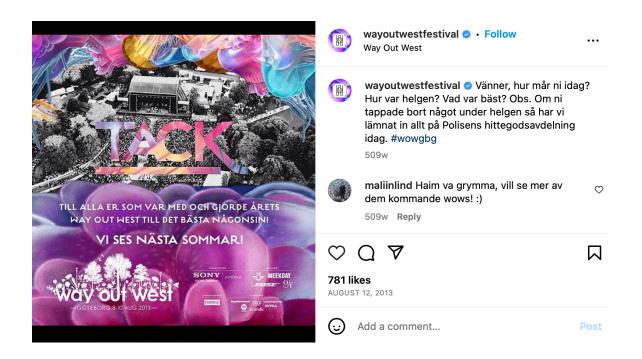| Category	Post 1 – Greentopia	Post 2 – Welcome to veggie heaven	Post 3 – #klimatmaxa
1. Symbolic branding			
Differentiated strategy • Promotion of one or two aspects within whom the arrangers consider themselves experts			
Brand-as-a-friend • Uses phrases that expresses a care for the consumers • Language is informal • Encourages symmetrical communication			
Brand community • Refers to visitors and arrangers as "we" and "us" • Initiate a conversation between consumers outside the festival area			
Cool-and-cultural capital • Uses unconventional activities • Has indications of a sacrifice group			
Brand endorser • Usage of celebrity endorsers • Usage of partner organizations in their communication			
2. Social marketing • Speaks of social, economic or environmental issues			
Social marketing messages • Usage of messages based on behavior of the visitors • Usage of informational messages around CSR • Usage of messages based on beliefs and values for a social cause			
Behavioral aspects of consumers • Addresses behavioral aspects such as perceived barriers, desired benefits, the competition and/or influential others			
3. Experiential marketing			
• The communication has an overall theme and symbols connected to this theme • The communication gives the consumers an ability to connect before and after festival • The arrangers promote discovery rather than a real-world escape			

Appendix 2, Coding frame with analyzed material
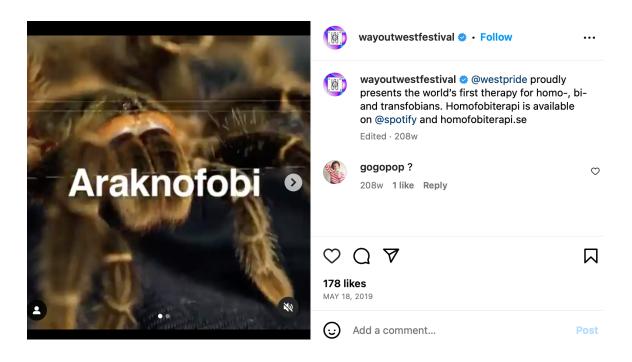
Appendix 3, WOW 2019 come to an end

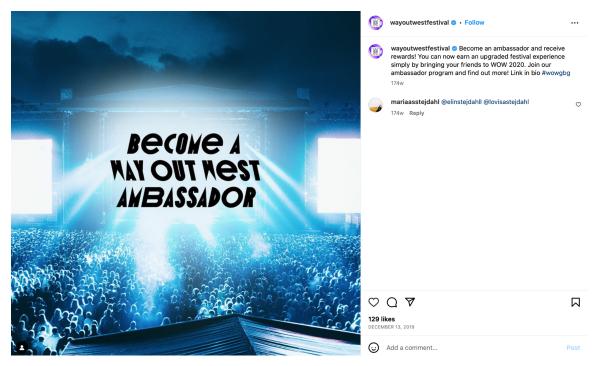Appendix 4, Tack

Appendix 5, Dare to Care
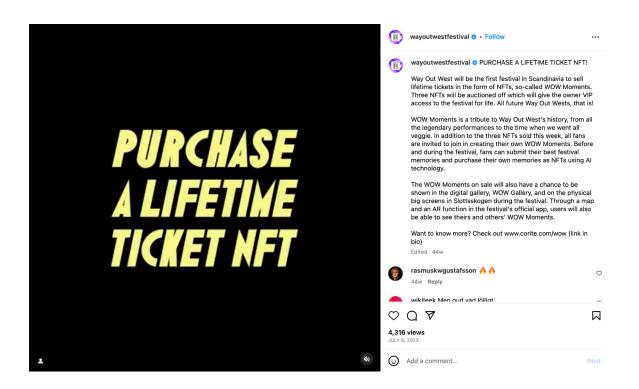

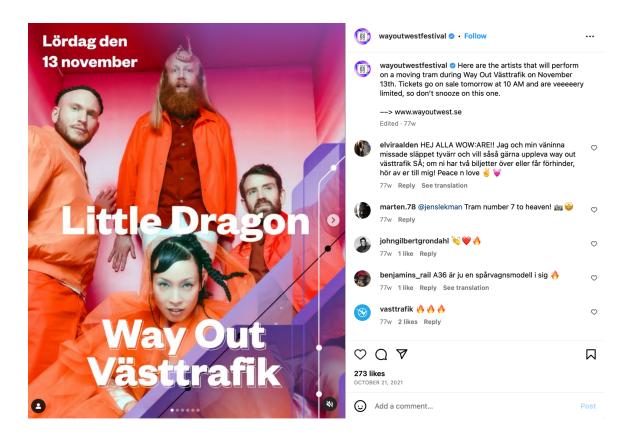Appendix 6, Westpride

Appendix 7, Become a Way Out West ambassador

Appendix 8, NFT

Appendix 9, #klimatmaxa
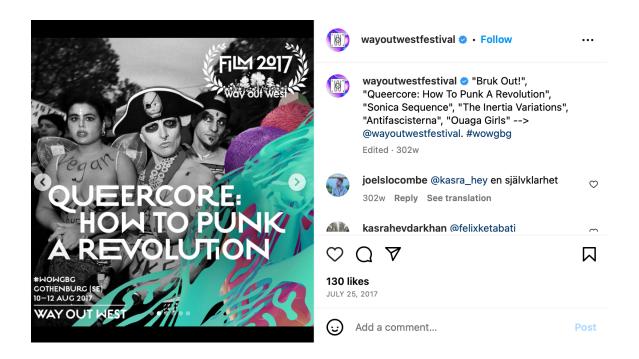

Appendix 10, Way out Västtrafik 1

Appendix 11, Way out Västtrafik 2

Appendix 12, Queercore

The first Instagram post:

wayoutwestfestival ✓ · Follow ···

wayoutwestfestival ✓ "Bruk Out!", "Queercore: How To Punk A Revolution", "Sonica Sequence", "The Inertia Variations", "Antifascisterna", "Ouaga Girls" --> @wayoutwestfestival. #wowgbg

Edited · 302w

joelslocombe @kasra_hey en självklarhet
302w Reply See translation

kasrahevdarkhan @felixketabati

130 likes
JULY 25, 2017

Add a comment... Post

Appendix 13, Veggie heaven

wayoutwestfestival ✓ · Follow ···

wayoutwestfestival ✓ Welcome to veggie heaven. Since 2012 Way Out West is a completely meat free festival. Or as jamieoliver.com put it: "A meatless miracle!". The first few years the decision to go all vegetarian/vegan drew criticism – these days most visitors agree that there's no alternative. Make sure to come hungry when you arrive!

Tix/Info ––> www.wayoutwest.se
55w

gottigheter 😍😍😍
51w Reply

130 likes
MARCH 24, 2022

Add a comment... Post

Appendix 14, Norrlands Guld

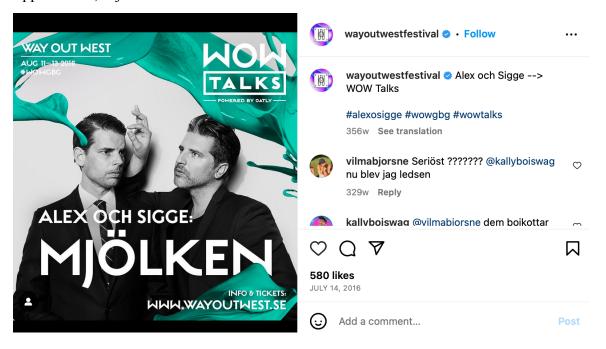Appendix 15, Mjölken

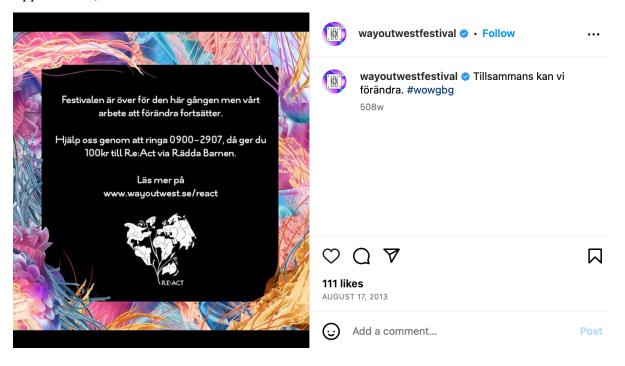Appendix 16, WOW-talks, the future is handmade

Appendix 17, Greentopia

Appendix 18, Om våld

wayoutwestfestival ✓ • Follow
Way Out West

wayoutwestfestival ✓ Just nu serveras gratis frukost på Hagabion i samband med visningen av filmen OM VÅLD (Concerning Violence) som kl 12:00 inleds med brandtal och spelning av Silvana Imam och Adam Tensta. Skynda er dit! #wowgbg

457w

k.widerstrom @hawaiipersson jag är helt med dig på detta! Det var sjukt sexistiskt.

457w · Reply

329 likes
AUGUST 9, 2014

Add a comment...   Post

Appendix 19, Get mama a tree

wayoutwestfestival ✓ • Follow

wayoutwestfestival ✓ GodEl, is back with last year´s favourite campaign, now with a twist. Help them plant a tree on Mother earth just by double tapping @godelisverige's tree post. More likes equals more trees and less carbon dioxide molecules in the atmosphere. This is how it works:
1. Go to @godelisverige.
2. Like the tree picture.
3. GodEl will plant a tree via @viskogen.
Tap away!

#wowgbg #thegoodforce #godelisverige
193w

emiliostrukelj 🌴
192w 1 like Reply

viskogen 🌳💚🌍
193w 1 like Reply

godelisverige 🌍🌱🌲🌴🌴 + + +
193w 1 like Reply

247 likes
AUGUST 5, 2019

Add a comment...   Post

Appendix 20, Arbetet fortsätter
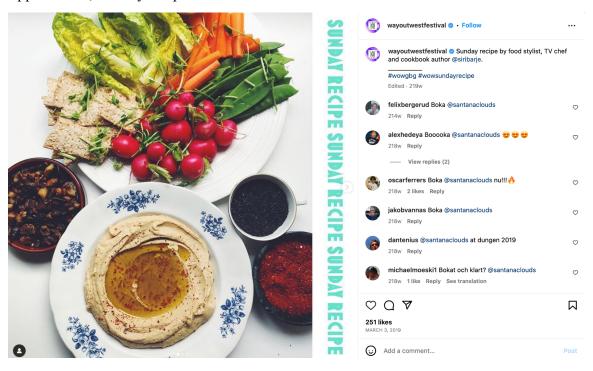

Appendix 21, Goodiebags

Appendix 22, Humana Clothing

Appendix 23, Sunday recipe 1

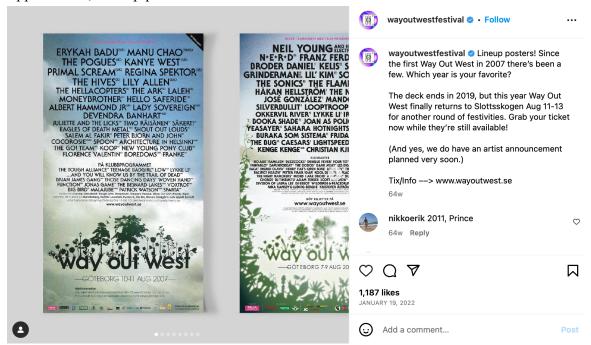## Appendix 24, Sunday recipe 2

Appendix 25, Ladies first

Appendix 26, Glad midsommar

Appendix 27, Lineup posters 2007

Appendix 28, Spellista

Appendix 29, Get involved