

Prioritizing Servicescape Elements in Enhancing the Attendee Experience at Music Events

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Abstract

The evolving landscape of live music events demands more than outstanding performances; it requires immersive, multisensory environments that elevate attendee satisfaction. This study applies servicescape theory to explore how six environmental dimensions—ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, visual and symbolic design, social servicescape, engagement opportunities, and crowd condition and navigation—influence experiential satisfaction among music event attendees. Data were collected from 300 respondents across multiple large-scale events in Thailand and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA). Results reveal that visual and symbolic design, ambient conditions, and engagement opportunities significantly enhance satisfaction, while spatial functionality and social atmosphere exert weaker but still meaningful effects. Crowd condition showed no significant influence. IPMA findings further highlight ambient and engagement features as high-priority improvement areas. The study advances servicescape research within live event contexts and offers actionable guidance for event organizers seeking to optimize attendee experiences.

Keywords: servicescape, experiential satisfaction, music events, live entertainment, PLS-SEM, IPMA, attendee experience, environmental design

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Introduction

The global expansion of live music events has redefined the way people engage with entertainment and cultural experiences, positioning music festivals and concerts as powerful platforms for emotional, social, and sensory enrichment (Redfield & Thouin-Savard, 2017). However, in an increasingly competitive and experience-driven marketplace, event organizers face mounting pressure to deliver not just musical performances but immersive environments that foster attendee satisfaction and loyalty. Beyond the stage, it is the broader event setting—the physical, sensory, and social context—that profoundly shapes the quality of the attendee experience.

In this context, the concept of the servicescape has gained increasing relevance. Originally developed in service marketing (Bitner, 1992), servicescape theory underscores the impact of environmental cues—both tangible and symbolic—on individuals' affective and behavioral responses. While this framework has been extensively applied in hospitality and retail settings, its application to live music events remains underexplored, despite such events' inherently multisensory and social nature. Music events represent a unique form of service encounter, where the design of space, crowd interactions, and atmospheric features play a critical role in shaping attendees' perceptions of value, enjoyment, and satisfaction.

Prior studies have highlighted individual elements such as lighting, crowding, and acoustics as influential in shaping audience experience (Lin, 2016), yet few have systematically assessed the relative importance of these servicescape dimensions or how they interact to predict experiential outcomes. This knowledge gap is significant, as event managers often allocate resources across various servicescape features—such as enhanced sound design or social spaces—without clear empirical evidence of their relative contribution to attendee satisfaction.

This study addresses this gap by examining six key servicescape dimensions at music events: ambient conditions, spatial layout and functionality, visual and symbolic design, social servicescape, engagement opportunities, and crowd condition and navigation. Drawing on servicescape theory and event experience literature, the research investigates the direct effects of these dimensions on attendee experiential satisfaction. Furthermore, using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), the study identifies which elements offer the greatest strategic leverage for enhancing audience experiences. By integrating structural modeling with practical prioritization tools, this research contributes both theoretically and managerially. It extends the servicescape construct into the domain of live event management and provides actionable insights into which environmental components should be emphasized to maximize attendee satisfaction. The findings will help music event organizers make evidence-based design decisions that enhance experiential value, promote positive word-of-mouth, and encourage repeat attendance.

Literature Review

Servicescape Theory in Experiential Environments

The concept of the servicescape, first introduced by Bitner (1992), conceptualizes the physical and ambient setting in which service interactions occur as a critical determinant of customer behavior and perception. It encompasses the physical environment (e.g., layout, décor, ambient conditions) and symbolic cues that influence emotional and cognitive responses. In recent

years, scholars have extended the framework to include social and interactive dimensions, particularly relevant in co-created service settings such as events, festivals, and communal experiences. Music events, with their complex sensory environments and crowd dynamics, provide a fertile ground to examine servicescape effects. Yet, the empirical application of the theory in this domain remains limited. A comprehensive understanding of how servicescape elements shape experiential satisfaction in live music contexts is thus overdue.

Servicescape Dimensions at Music Events

Recent developments in event studies have highlighted the importance of multiple servicescape elements that collectively shape the overall experience. Six dimensions are particularly salient in live music event settings. First, ambient conditions refer to background elements such as sound quality, lighting, temperature, and air quality, which subtly affect mood and comfort. In music events, well-calibrated acoustics and atmospheric lighting are central to immersion. Second, Spatial Layout and Functionality involves the logical arrangement of spaces, such as stage visibility, ease of movement, and seating or standing comfort. Poor spatial design can result in crowd congestion and reduce the quality of the event experience. Third, Visual and Symbolic Design includes stage aesthetics, branding cues, and thematic decor that reinforce the event's identity. These symbolic elements act as environmental signifiers and enhance engagement through visual storytelling. Fourth, Social Servicescape emphasizes human factors, such as staff behavior, peer interaction, and crowd vibe. Positive social atmospheres can strengthen affective responses and sense of belonging, while aggressive or indifferent staff can detract from perceived service quality. Fifth, Engagement Opportunities refer to interactive elements that allow attendees to co-create meaning and participation, including activity zones, merchandise booths, food and beverage sampling, or augmented reality features. These activities offer supplementary layers of value beyond musical performance (Bracalente et al., 2011). Finally, Crowd Condition and Navigation deals with density, mobility, and ease of entry/exit. Research has shown that overcrowding, bottlenecks, or unclear signage significantly reduce event satisfaction and perceived safety. Yet, positive crowd energy can enhance collective emotional experiences.

Experiential Satisfaction in Live Events

Experiential satisfaction reflects attendees' holistic evaluation of the event, encompassing affective, sensory, and cognitive components (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). In live music settings, satisfaction extends beyond functional service quality to include emotional engagement, environmental immersion, and social connection. The degree to which servicescape elements align with attendees' expectations and psychological needs determines the level of satisfaction. While prior research has shown that aspects like sound clarity, artist performance, and convenience impact evaluations, there is a lack of integrative models that empirically prioritize the relative contribution of environmental elements.

To address this, the present study adopts a multidimensional view of servicescape to model its effect on experiential satisfaction in live music events. Furthermore, to translate findings into practical decision-making tools, the study incorporates Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) to identify the most strategically significant yet underperforming elements from the audience's perspective.

Hypotheses Development

Building on Bitner's (1992) servicescape theory and its extensions in experiential event contexts, this study posits that environmental elements significantly influence how attendees evaluate their overall event experience. Specifically, each of the six identified servicescape dimensions is hypothesized to positively contribute to experiential satisfaction, which reflects a holistic, affect-driven judgment formed during and after the event.

H 1: Ambient Conditions (AMB) are positively associated with experiential satisfaction.

H 2: Spatial Layout and Functionality (SLF) are positively associated with experiential satisfaction.

H 3: Visual and Symbolic Design (VSD) is positively associated with experiential satisfaction.

H 4: Social Servicescape (SSC) is positively associated with experiential satisfaction.

H 5: Engagement Opportunities (EO) are positively associated with experiential satisfaction.

H 6: Crowd Condition and Navigation (CCN) is positively associated with experiential satisfaction.

Methods

Measurement Development

To assess the influence of servicescape elements on attendee experiential satisfaction at music events, this study operationalized six key constructs: Ambient Conditions (AMB), Spatial Layout and Functionality (SLF), Visual and Symbolic Design (VSD), Social Servicescape (SSC), Engagement Opportunities (EO), and Crowd Condition and Navigation (CCN). The outcome variable was Experiential Satisfaction (SAT).

Each construct was measured using three reflective indicators, adapted from validated instruments in servicescape, event experience, and environmental psychology research (Bitner, 1992). All items employed a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Constructs were carefully reviewed by three academic experts in event management and consumer behavior for content validity. A pilot test was conducted with 30 music event attendees, leading to minor wording adjustments to enhance clarity and contextual relevance.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a four-week period in May 2025 through structured online self-administered surveys distributed at five major music events across urban centers in Thailand. Participants were eligible if they were over 18 and had attended a live music event (concert or festival) that featured at least four hours of programming and multiple servicescape features.

A total of 325 surveys were collected, of which 300 valid responses were retained after screening for completeness and attention-check compliance. The sample was demographically diverse, with a majority aged between 20 and 39, gender-balanced (54% female, 46% male), and with varied levels of event attendance frequency (from occasional concert-goers to regular festival participants).

Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4, a method appropriate for complex models with reflective constructs and small-to-moderate sample sizes. The two-step approach outlined by Sarstedt et al. (2021) was followed. First, the measurement model was evaluated for: (1) Indicator reliability: Standardized loadings should exceed 0.70, (2) Internal consistency: Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values must exceed 0.70., (3) Convergent validity: Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must exceed 0.50, (4) Discriminant validity: The Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio must be below 0.85, and (5) Multicollinearity was assessed through Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with a conservative cutoff of 3.3 to ensure indicator independence. Next, the structural model was tested to evaluate the significance and strength of hypothesized paths using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples). R^2 values were examined to assess the model's explanatory power for experiential satisfaction.

To supplement these results with actionable managerial insights, the study employed Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA). IPMA plots each construct's importance (total effect on SAT) against its performance (mean latent variable score), allowing for strategic prioritization of servicescape investments. Constructs falling into the “high importance–low performance” quadrant are highlighted as high-leverage areas for resource allocation and design enhancement.

Findings

Measurement Model

All constructs in the current study were specified as reflective and subjected to a comprehensive validation process to ensure their psychometric robustness. The standardized factor loadings for all indicators exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 and were statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, thus affirming the reliability of each measurement item (see Table 1). In line with the guidelines by Sarstedt et al. (2021), these outcomes validate the contribution of each indicator to its respective latent construct.

Convergent validity was confirmed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs demonstrating AVE values above the 0.60 benchmark. This indicates that each construct accounts for a substantial proportion of variance in its associated items. Reliability was further substantiated through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), both of which exceeded the 0.70 criterion, demonstrating strong internal consistency among indicators within each construct.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. All HTMT values fell below the conservative threshold of 0.85, providing evidence that each construct is empirically distinct. Additionally, inter-construct correlations were in line with theoretical expectations and prior empirical findings in servicescape and experiential satisfaction literature. Taken together, these results confirm the adequacy and rigor of the measurement model and justify progression to structural model evaluation.

Table 1
Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Indicator	AVE	rho_a	$\hat{w}_i$	$\hat{\lambda}_i$
Ambient Conditions (AMB)	AMB1: The lighting and visual effects enhanced the overall atmosphere of the event.	0.783	0.695	0.377	0.816
	AMB2: The sound quality was clear and contributed positively to my experience.			0.405	0.835
	AMB3: The temperature and air circulation were comfortable throughout the event			0.416	0.851
Spatial Layout and Functionality (SLF)	SLF1: The layout of the event space was easy to navigate.	0.77	0.649	0.483	0.864
	SLF2: Signage and directions within the venue were clear and helpful.			0.29	0.723
	SLF3: Facilities such as restrooms and food stalls were easily accessible.			0.452	0.824
Visual and Symbolic Design (VSD)	VSD1: The stage design and decorations reflected the event's theme or identity.	0.756	0.668	0.385	0.806
	VSD2: The branding and visuals contributed to the immersive feel of the event.			0.397	0.802
	VSD3: Symbolic elements (e.g., logos, artwork) made the event feel unique and memorable.			0.44	0.844
Social Servicescape (SSC)	SSC1: Event staff were friendly and helpful.	0.868	0.708	0.495	0.875
	SSC2: I felt comfortable interacting with other attendees.			0.173	0.769
	SSC3: The overall social atmosphere was supportive and enjoyable.			0.495	0.876
Engagement Opportunities (EO)	EO1: The event offered engaging activities beyond the music performances.	0.791	0.699	0.422	0.855
	EO2: I enjoyed exploring booths or installations that added to the experience.			0.357	0.81
	EO3: I had opportunities to interact with the event through social media, games, or giveaways.			0.416	0.842
Crowd Climate and Norms (CCN)	CCN1: The energy of the crowd enhanced my enjoyment of the music.	0.618	0.619	0.667	0.897
	CCN2: Most people around me followed unspoken norms of respectful behavior.			0.029	0.622
	CCN3: The collective enthusiasm of the crowd made the experience more memorable.			0.514	0.815
Experiential Satisfaction (SAT)	SAT1: I was fully satisfied with my overall experience at the music event.	0.901	0.834	0.373	0.918
	SAT2: The event met or exceeded my expectations.			0.365	0.913
	SAT3: I would recommend this event to others seeking a memorable music experience.			0.358	0.908

Note. $\hat{w}_i$ = estimated weights, $\hat{\lambda}_i$ = estimated loadings, VIF = Variance Inflation Factor, and AVE = Average Variance Explained

Structural Model

The results of the structural model assessment, as summarized in Table 2, provide empirical support for the hypothesized relationships between servicescape dimensions and experiential satisfaction in the context of music events. Out of the six proposed paths, five show statistically significant positive effects ($p < 0.01$), underscoring the critical role of environmental design features in shaping attendee satisfaction.

Visual and Symbolic Design (VSD) emerged as the strongest predictor of experiential satisfaction ($\beta = 0.568$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that visual aesthetics, thematic decor, and symbolic elements (e.g., branding, stage visuals) play a central role in enhancing the emotional and cognitive impact of the event. This finding highlights the importance of environmental storytelling and visual coherence in elevating the perceived quality of live music experiences. Ambient Conditions (AMB) also showed a substantial effect ($\beta = 0.486$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that sensory cues such as lighting, acoustics, and air quality significantly contribute to the overall comfort and mood regulation of attendees. This aligns with prior research in event settings that emphasizes the role of atmospheric elements in shaping affective responses.

Engagement Opportunities (EO) displayed a moderate yet meaningful influence ($\beta = 0.331$, $p < 0.001$), affirming that interactive components—such as activity zones, merchandise booths, and experiential installations—positively shape attendees' satisfaction by fostering immersion and co-creation of meaning. Spatial Layout and Functionality (SLF) ($\beta = 0.115$, $p = 0.002$) and Social Servicescape (SSC) ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = 0.004$) had relatively weaker but still significant effects. These findings suggest that while wayfinding, ease of movement, and social dynamics (e.g., staff interaction, guest behavior) contribute to satisfaction, they may play a secondary role compared to symbolic and sensory features. Crowd Condition and Navigation (CCN), however, was not a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.001$, $p = 0.981$), indicating that, in this study, crowd density and mobility issues did not meaningfully influence overall satisfaction. This could reflect either adequate crowd management across events or attendees' higher tolerance for density in the context of music experiences.

In sum, these results confirm the multidimensional nature of the servicescape in live event contexts and emphasize the importance of visual, sensory, and participatory features in shaping satisfaction. They also offer critical guidance for event managers to prioritize investments in high-impact dimensions while re-evaluating the strategic importance of less influential elements.

Table 2

Structural Model Assessment (n = 300)

Relationship	Estimate	p-value
AMB -> SAT	0.486	0.001**
SLF -> SAT	0.115	0.002**
VSD -> SAT	0.568	0.001**
SSC -> SAT	0.112	0.004**
EO -> SAT	0.331	0.001**
CCN -> SAT	0.001	0.981**

Note. Ambient Conditions (AMB), Spatial Layout and Functionality (SLF), Visual and Symbolic Design (VSD), Social Servicescape (SSC), Engagement Opportunities (EO), Crowd Climate and Norms (CCN), Experiential Satisfaction (SAT), ** = significant

IPMA Results

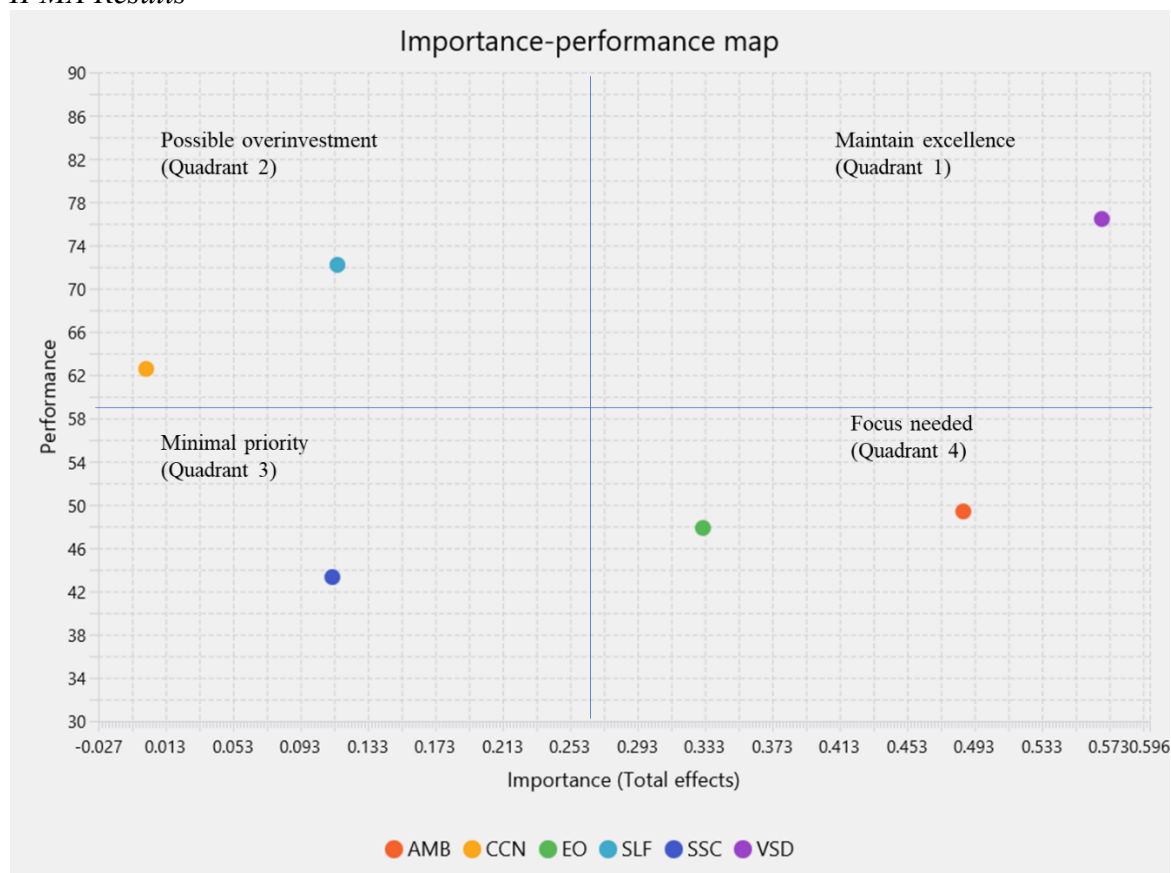
To complement the structural model findings, this study employed Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) as a strategic tool to identify which servicescape elements offer the most leverage for enhancing attendee satisfaction at music events. IPMA, as proposed by Sarstedt et al. (2016), allows researchers and practitioners to assess not only the relative influence (importance) of each construct on an outcome variable—here, experiential satisfaction—but also how well each construct performs in practice (mean latent score).

Unlike traditional path modeling, which focuses solely on the strength and significance of relationships, IPMA integrates these relationships with performance data to highlight dimensions that may be underperforming despite their strong impact. As noted by Henseler (2021), this dual-layer approach supports nuanced managerial decision-making by revealing where improvements are likely to yield the highest returns in satisfaction.

In this study, the IPMA mapped six key servicescape dimensions—Ambient Conditions (AMB), Spatial Layout and Functionality (SLF), Visual and Symbolic Design (VSD), Social Servicescape (SSC), Engagement Opportunities (EO), and Crowd Condition and Navigation (CCN)—against experiential satisfaction. The constructs' importance (total effects on satisfaction) was plotted along the x-axis, while their performance (average latent scores based on attendee ratings) was plotted along the y-axis. A grand mean was calculated for both importance and performance to generate a two-dimensional matrix divided into four strategic quadrants:

- ***Quadrant 1 – Maintain Excellence (High Importance, High Performance).*** Visual and Symbolic Design (VSD) emerged as a highly influential and well-executed element, indicating that stage aesthetics, thematic visuals, branding elements, and symbolic cues significantly enhance attendees' experiential satisfaction. This dimension contributes meaningfully to the overall ambiance and emotional engagement of the event. Organizers should continue to prioritize creative stagecraft, immersive visuals, and coherent design language, as these features are effectively reinforcing the identity and emotional tone of music events.
- ***Quadrant 2 – Possible Overinvestment (Low Importance, High Performance).*** Spatial Layout and Functionality (SLF) and Crowd Condition and Navigation (CCN) both scored high on performance but showed relatively lower importance in predicting satisfaction. This suggests that although attendees generally appreciated the ease of movement, stage visibility, and crowd flow, these factors are less central to their holistic evaluation of the event experience. Event planners might reconsider the extent of investment in logistical elements, focusing instead on maintaining baseline functionality while reallocating excess resources to more impactful dimensions.
- ***Quadrant 3 – Minimal Priority (Low Importance, Low Performance).*** Social Servicescape (SSC), which includes staff behavior, peer interactions, and social atmosphere, was both underperforming and less influential on satisfaction. This finding implies that the current level of social interaction may be insufficiently integrated or valued by attendees. Unless reimaged to provide greater social facilitation or community engagement, this aspect currently warrants limited strategic focus.
- ***Quadrant 4 – Strategic Focus Needed (High Importance, Low Performance).*** Engagement Opportunities (EO) and Ambient Conditions (AMB) represent key leverage points for improving attendee satisfaction. Although attendees perceive these elements as crucial to their event experience, their current implementation is falling short. For EO, this may involve enhancing interactive zones, participatory activities, or experiential installations that extend beyond passive consumption of music. For AMB, attention should be directed toward optimizing sensory elements such as lighting quality, air circulation, sound calibration, and temperature control. Targeted improvements in these areas are likely to yield substantial increases in satisfaction and immersive experience quality.

Figure 1
IPMA Results



Discussion and Implications

This study contributes to the growing body of research on experiential event design by applying servicescape theory to the context of live music events and prioritizing environmental dimensions based on their empirical effects on attendee satisfaction. By integrating PLS-SEM with Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), the study provides both explanatory insights and actionable recommendations for practitioners. The findings underscore the importance of taking a multidimensional approach to event environment design, considering not only what influences satisfaction but also how well each dimension is currently performing from the attendee's perspective.

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, the study confirms and extends servicescape theory into the domain of live music events—a context that, despite its inherent multisensory and social nature, has received limited empirical attention in servicescape research. The results highlight that environmental cues are not monolithic in their effects; rather, their contribution to satisfaction varies considerably depending on their symbolic, functional, and affective qualities.

Visual and Symbolic Design (VSD) emerged as the most influential predictor of experiential satisfaction, reaffirming the role of thematic coherence, symbolic cues, and visual storytelling in shaping memorable experiences. This aligns with Pine and Gilmore's (1998) assertion that experiences are staged and that symbolic elements are critical in creating emotional resonance.

Ambient Conditions (AMB) and Engagement Opportunities (EO) also demonstrated strong effects, suggesting that satisfaction arises not only from what attendees see and hear but also from how they interact with the environment.

Interestingly, Social Servicescape (SSC) and Spatial Layout and Functionality (SLF), while statistically significant, had comparatively weaker effects on satisfaction. This nuance supports the argument that while these elements are necessary for operational efficiency, they may not drive emotional or experiential value to the same extent as sensory and symbolic features. Crowd Condition and Navigation (CCN), despite being a common operational concern, did not influence satisfaction significantly in this context—an outcome that may reflect attendees' tolerance of crowd density as part of the "festival experience" or successful baseline crowd management practices.

Managerial Implications

For event organizers and experience designers, the IPMA findings offer a strategic blueprint for enhancing satisfaction. Elements in Quadrant 1, particularly VSD, are performing well and should be maintained through continued investment in creative visual production, thematic branding, and immersive design. These are core strengths that reinforce the identity and perceived quality of the event.

Quadrant 4 elements—ENG and AMB—represent high-priority areas for improvement. These are dimensions that attendees value highly but currently underperform. For AMB, improvements could include enhancing sound quality consistency, refining lighting transitions, and improving air flow in enclosed or crowded areas. For EO, event managers should explore more dynamic and personalized opportunities for engagement, such as interactive installations, artist meet-and-greets, co-creation spaces, or digital activations that extend beyond the core music performance.

In contrast, Quadrant 2 features such as SLF and CCN may be areas of overinvestment. While functional layout and crowd movement are critical for safety and comfort, they may not require continued enhancement beyond an adequate baseline. This insight allows managers to reallocate resources toward more emotionally resonant features.

Lastly, SSC in Quadrant 3, while not a major contributor to satisfaction in this study, still warrants attention if the goal is to cultivate a more communal or participatory atmosphere. Improvements in staff training, facilitation of social zones, or curated interaction spaces may help reposition SSC into a more impactful domain.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study presents several limitations. First, the sample was geographically limited to music events in Thailand, which may constrain the generalizability of findings to other cultural or regional settings. Second, all constructs were modeled reflectively; future research could consider formative modeling for complex dimensions such as crowd navigation. Third, experiential satisfaction was treated as a unidimensional outcome. Exploring related constructs such as emotional arousal, loyalty intentions, or immersive engagement could provide a more nuanced understanding. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not capture changes in perceptions over time or across different event types.

Longitudinal or event-segmented studies could further enrich the theoretical and practical implications.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that no AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate, refine, or correct the content in the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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