

New Drinking Experiences: A Deterrent for Binge Drinking

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Abstract

Transformative bar experiences can reduce binge drinking by providing the same social and emotional enhancements as alcohol. Just like recovering opioid addicts counterbalance painkillers with methadone maintenance, binge drinkers can counterbalance the stimulation they get from drinking with stimulation from transformative bar experiences.

Keywords: Alcohol, Binge Drinking, Addiction, Impulse Control

INTRODUCTION

Knowing that boredom, anxiety, and impulsiveness (1) are major contributors to youth binge drinking, drinking environments can help by transforming into spaces that make it hard for these problems to exist (2).

As the saying goes... "An idle mind is the devil's playground." Anyone with too much time on their hands may find themselves in troubled waters. Whether being bored with themselves, their jobs, or life in general, stimulation from alcohol is a quick fix (3). It is no coincidence that the most boring states in the US are also home to the most binge drinking (4). One might think filling a boring state with fun-filled events would solve the problem, but beer fuelled football games and summer concerts prove that is not the case. Yes, events are fun, but an experience needs to be made that feeds an impulsive individuals attraction to immediate small rewards over delayed larger rewards with something other than alcohol (5).

Knowing that immediate small rewards go hand in hand with gamified experiences, it makes sense that games are a big part of drinking culture. While games like beer pong and kings cup fuel binge drinking, new gamified drinking formats are becoming so elaborate and stimulating that they are actually distracting people away from impulsive drinking. Adrenaline pumping axe throwing bars and escape rooms have become a new trend in nightlife. Clubhouse, for example, a sports bar in Philadelphia, offers

two escape room activities to its customers. One is Titanic-themed, while the other one is a Casino Heist experience. The only requirement for participating in the physical adventure games is to make a booking and drink, afterwards (6). These experiences do a great job occupying people in the moment, but in order for long term, sustainable change to occur, a truly transformative experience needs to take place.

Joe Pine, who co-authored the Experience Economy over 20 years ago, discusses how transformation is the outcome we should strive for in experiences that make an impact. In essence, if there is no change in those attending, you are failing. If your experiences foster change in those participating, you are winning. This is a tough predicament for events because they are limited in time by nature. Event professionals have a tough challenge, but one with the largest potential for disruption in the current economy. The key to success is aligning events with transformative experiences (7).

The best way to change someone is to immerse them in an alternate reality that fosters the desired change (8). Events become transformative experiences by delivering a coherent story at every stage (9). This means that websites need to deliver the same experience as actual events. It means that the venue has to be the perfect container for your plan and the city where you host has to be the perfect scenario to make your message resonate. A great example of this is the

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Color Factor, a pop-up immersive and interactive walk-through art experience themed around the concept of color. Everything from the initial website visit, to coat check, to picking a free souvenir as you walk out, transports visitors into an alternate reality where they come out having made music, danced sober, and formed connections with complete strangers. More than exploring color, the deeper purpose of Color Factor is to move uptight grown-ups into an innocent child-like state of play and remind them how to find joy in life's simple things. Events without purpose end up with 'been there, done that' feedback. They don't fail, however, because attendees want something new, they fail because what attendees actually want is change: powerful, high involvement experiences that deliver change (10).

CONCLUSION

Nobody wants to have to rely on binge drinking as a necessity to enjoying themselves, and nobody wants to be hungover. If a transformative bar experience can replace the need to, that will be the most effective initiative against binge drinking in history.

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Citation: Scott Sidhu. *New Drinking Experiences: A Deterrent for Binge Drinking*. *Archives of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences*. 2019; 2(1): 29-30.

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