

GRADIENT

JUNE 2026
PREPARED BY GRADIENT



— I.M.P.A.C.T. SCORE SERIES

CANNES LIONS 2026

EXPERIENTIAL IMPACT REPORT SERIES

14 activations. 4 clusters. One framework.

76/100

SERIES AVERAGE SCORE

7 Exceptional · 6 Strong · 1 Solid

I.M.P.A.C.T.

01 — THE FRAMEWORK

HOW TO READ AN I.M.P.A.C.T. SCORE

The I.M.P.A.C.T. Methodology, developed by Dr. Sam Sterling (DBA, Masters in Business Research) for Gradient Experience, is a scoring framework for branded experiences and events. It asks six questions about any activation — one for each dimension — and produces a raw score scaled to 100. The methodology identifies where an experience excels and where measurable potential is being left on the table. It does not score production quality, spend, or attendance in isolation: it scores **strategic impact**.

I INTEGRATED

Did this experience create ripples across channels?

Measures how many owned, earned, and partner channels were activated. An experience that stays within its four walls scores low; one that echoes across the festival and beyond scores high.

M MEASURABLE

Did this experience generate impactful, measurable results?

Evaluates the quality and volume of content, media coverage, and data generated — UGC, press impressions, share of voice, and quantified results.

P PARTICIPATORY

Was this passive, or did attendees shape its outcome?

Assesses whether guests observed or actively created. Personalization, hands-on product interaction, co-creation, and tailored take-homes all raise the score.

A AFFECTIVE

Did this experience generate genuine emotion?

Reviews alignment with the target demographic and the nature of the emotional impact — awareness, perception change, reinforcement, or transformation.

C COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Did this experience create connections for attendees?

Examines the direction and depth of communication — one-way brand broadcast, two-way brand-guest dialogue, or three-way community formation.

T TRUE-TO-BRAND

Could a direct competitor have produced this?

The decisive brand coherence question. An experience that only makes sense coming from this brand scores maximum; one that could have come from a competitor scores low.

SCORE TIERS

<p>75-100 EXCEPTIONAL</p> <p>Excels across most dimensions; creates lasting brand impact.</p>	<p>60-74 STRONG</p> <p>Solid performance with identifiable, addressable gaps.</p>	<p>50-59 SOLID</p> <p>Foundational presence with significant untapped potential.</p>	<p>42-49 DEVELOPING</p> <p>Core dimensions need structural investment.</p>	<p><42 NEEDS ATTENTION</p> <p>Not yet generating measurable experiential impact.</p>
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Benchmark reference. Gradient's scored project archive provides tier benchmarks: Exceptional includes Kiehl's Krawl (80). Strong includes The Macallan (74) and Veuve Clicquot EOTS (71). Solid is anchored by Dom Pérignon (58). All Cannes Lions 2026 scores are assessed against the same methodology and scoring architecture.

02 — THE RANKINGS

THE 2026 RANKINGS

14 activations scored using Gradient's I.M.P.A.C.T. Methodology, June 22–26 2026. Every score below was derived from publicly available information: press coverage, brand newsroom announcements, trade publications, social media, and official event programming. No score was provided by the brands themselves. Brands with additional internal data — impressions, visitor counts, UGC volume, platform metrics — may have scores that shift when that data is incorporated.

#	Brand	Score	Category	Description
1	Amazon	90	EXCEPTIONAL	Multi-venue port district; product ecosystem made physical for 25,000+ visitors.
2	Adobe	88	EXCEPTIONAL	Festival-wide creative studio; Firefly AI tools in every visitor's hands.
3	Pinterest	87	EXCEPTIONAL	Full-festival takeover; the app's features became physical, edible, and wearable.
4	Spotify	83	EXCEPTIONAL	11th-year owned beach; headline concerts paired with Spotify profile personalization.
5	Snapchat	80	EXCEPTIONAL	Distributed AR presence; Jonathan Yeo museum exhibition experienced via Spectacles.
6	Meta	78	EXCEPTIONAL	Sports and gaming hub at Sport Beach powered by Meta's technology suite.
7	Plage 3CV	77	EXCEPTIONAL	Flagship branded beach celebrating French Riviera culture and hospitality.
8	Canva	74	STRONG	Creative workspace and B2B hub built around Canva's design tools and creator community.
9	Salesforce	73	STRONG	High-production conference format with fireside sessions and Agentforce demonstrations.
10	TikTok	72	STRONG	Carlton Hotel garden bringing 16 creators together with brands and partners.
11	Adweek	70	STRONG	Media-industry hub hosting editorial, panel, and networking programming all week.
12	Nikka Whisky	66	STRONG	Intimate Japanese whisky ceremony transporting guests to Tokyo through Dentsu's craft.
13	LinkedIn	65	STRONG	Professional community rooftop focused on workforce futures and the creator economy.
14	Microsoft	58	SOLID	Curated garden hosting AI-themed sessions with restrained physical brand expression.
14 SCORED		76	SERIES AVG 75.4 · 7 EXCEPTIONAL · 6 STRONG · 1 SOLID	

Scores are based on publicly available information only. Brands with access to internal metrics may request a finalized report that incorporates measured data. All individual Cannes Lions 2026 I.M.P.A.C.T. Reports are available separately from Gradient Experience.

03 — THE CLUSTERS

FOUR ACTIVATION PROFILES

What activations have in common — and where each profile peaks and plateaus. Ranking by score tells part of the story. Clustering by profile tells the rest. The four groups below are organized by structural similarity in what each activation does well, where it falls short, and what single design decision would move it up a tier.

A The Experience Engineers

Amazon Port (90) · Adobe Cannes Takeover (88) · Pinterest Manifestival (87) · Snapchat SPECTACULAR (80)

The brand's own technology is the material of the experience, not merely its sponsor. Amazon's Port lets visitors move through its advertising ecosystem as physical space. Adobe's Studio puts Firefly in every guest's hands. Pinterest's Manifestival turns its visual search algorithm into wearable and edible stations. Snapchat's SPECTACULAR places its own hardware on visitors' faces. These four score highest because every I.M.P.A.C.T. dimension reinforces every other: when guests use the product, they are simultaneously participating, feeling, sharing, and trusting the brand.

PEAKS Participatory · True-to-Brand

GAP Measurability (no published post-event reach data)

C The Platform Presenters

Canva Creative Cabana (74) · Salesforce Beach (73) · TikTok Garden (72) · Adweek House (70) · LinkedIn Rooftop (65)

The dominant format at Cannes: branded venue, B2B meetings, panel sessions, networking. All five activations are well-integrated across channels, earn solid media coverage, and convene the right audiences. All five plateau at Strong rather than Exceptional. The shared cause is Participatory: the panel format positions the audience as observers. One embedded product moment, where a guest uses the tool, creates something, and takes it home, would break the Exceptional ceiling for any of these brands at Cannes 2027.

PEAKS Integrated · Measurable (channel presence, trade coverage)

GAP Participatory (structural panel-and-meeting format)

Note: cluster assignment reflects activation profile, not score rank. A Cluster D activation that adds channel breadth moves to a higher cluster, not merely a higher score.

B The Culture Curators

Spotify Beach (83) · Meta Beach (78) · Plage 3CV (77)

Live entertainment, cultural ritual, and shared fandom replace the product demo as the core mechanism. Spotify Beach anchors its week with headline concerts. Meta wraps its technology suite in sport and gaming spectacle. Plage 3CV channels the Riviera itself as brand identity. These activations generate the highest Affective and Community-Building scores in the series. The ceiling is True-to-Brand: entertainment is a powerful wrapper, but must be inseparable from the product to reach the Experience Engineers' tier.

PEAKS Affective · Community-Building

GAP True-to-Brand ceiling when entertainment is wrapper, not product

D The Sensory Specialists

The Nikka Whisky Tokyo (66) · Microsoft Gardens (58)

Beautifully crafted activations that prioritize depth of individual experience over breadth of reach. Nikka's whisky ceremony delivers the most culturally precise individual moment in the series. Microsoft's curated garden is serene and genuinely brand-true. But narrow integration means these activations earn the memories of those present without generating ripples beyond the room. The formula that would move both up a tier is simple: intimate experience plus amplified story. An exceptional experience that no one knows about is not exceptional in impact.

PEAKS Affective · True-to-Brand (within a narrow frame)

GAP Integrated (few channels), Measurable (limited reach data)

04 — THE PATTERNS

WHAT THE DATA TELLS US

Five learnings from 14 activations, drawn directly from the I.M.P.A.C.T. scores. The framework does not rank activations on ambition or spend. It ranks them on strategic impact: did the experience reach people, move people, involve people, and say something only this brand could say? Five patterns emerge across the series that hold regardless of budget, brand size, or industry category.

01

When the product IS the experience, every dimension rises simultaneously.

The four highest-scoring activations — Amazon (90), Adobe (88), Pinterest (87), Snapchat (80) — all built the activation from their own technology. There is no separation between brand and experience because the product creates the experience. When a guest is using the tool to enjoy the event, Participatory, Affective, and True-to-Brand all peak at once. This is the highest-leverage design principle available to any brand at Cannes.

02

Live culture is the fastest route to Affective and Community-Building, with one condition.

Spotify Beach, Meta Beach, and Plage 3CV prove that curated live entertainment generates the strongest emotional and community scores in the series. A crowd that shared a RAYE set is a community. Spotify leads this cluster because its entertainment IS its product: it curates artists, delivers listening experiences, generates the playlists people carry home. Brands whose entertainment is a wrapper rather than the product cap their True-to-Brand score, and with it, their tier.

03

The Cannes B2B hub format has a structural Participatory ceiling, and one fix.

Five activations — Canva, Salesforce, TikTok, Adweek House, and LinkedIn — share a format and a gap. All five score Strong; none reach Exceptional. The panel format makes observers of the audience. The fix is not a larger venue or a bigger name: it is one embedded hands-on moment where the visitor uses the brand's tool, creates something, and leaves with it. That single design decision is the difference between a Cannes presence that is attended and one that is remembered.

04

Personalization is the most underused mechanic in the series.

Spotify's Froyo Bar updated your profile as you built your yogurt. Pinterest's stations printed a visual search result personal to your taste. Snapchat generated a unique artwork for each visitor. All three scored above their cluster average on Participatory and Affective. Personalization satisfies both dimensions at once: it requires action and delivers something that feels made for you. Ten of 14 activations in this series left it entirely untapped.

05

Integration breadth determines whether a great experience becomes a great story.

Nikka Whisky and Microsoft Gardens are among the most craft-thoughtful activations in the series and among the lowest scorers overall. The gap is not in experience quality: it is in channel architecture. A whisky ceremony experienced by a few hundred guests generates no industry-wide impact without a PR strategy, social amplification, and partner channels to carry the story beyond the room. The I.M.P.A.C.T. methodology measures ripple, not room.



PAULINE OUDIN

CEO · GRADIENT EXPERIENCE

— THE CONVERSATION

WANT YOUR ACTIVATION FINALIZED?

Every score here was built from publicly available information only. Brands with access to internal metrics — impressions, visitor counts, UGC volume, platform data — may request a finalized report that incorporates measured data to produce a definitive, co-authored score. All individual Cannes Lions 2026 I.M.P.A.C.T. Reports are available separately on request.

[FINALIZE YOUR REPORT →](#)

pauline@gradientexperience.com

ABOUT GRADIENT EXPERIENCE

Gradient Experience is a boutique experiential strategy and production studio. The I.M.P.A.C.T. Methodology, developed by Dr. Sam Sterling (DBA, Masters in Business Research), is a proprietary framework for scoring branded experiences across six dimensions of experiential marketing effectiveness. Individual I.M.P.A.C.T. Reports for each of the 14 activations in this series are available on request, and can be finalized with client-supplied metrics data to produce a definitive, co-authored score.

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