



— I.M.P.A.C.T. · EXPERIENTIAL IMPACT REPORT

MICROSOFT GARDENS CANNES 2026

Microsoft Advertising's week-long coastal garden at Ondine Vilebrequin La Plage, Cannes — daytime thought-leadership and evening networking framing its agentic-web product story. Scored against Gradient's six-dimension experiential methodology.

58/100

SCALED I.M.P.A.C.T. SCORE

● SOLID

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

01 — THE ASSESSMENT

THE I.M.P.A.C.T. SCORE

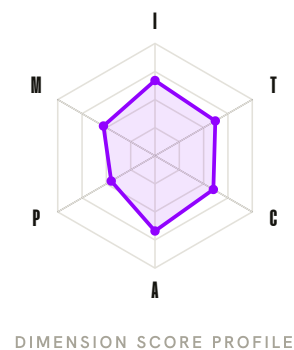
Microsoft Gardens occupied Ondine Vilebrequin La Plage (64 Boulevard de la Croisette) for the full week of Cannes Lions 2026, June 22 to 26, with curated programming from Monday afternoon through Friday morning. Positioned as a calm, coastal space to pause, reset, and connect, the activation ran a hybrid schedule of daytime thought-leadership sessions and evening networking, with Creator pass holder events on Monday night and trade-oriented programming across the week. The garden served as the on-ground centerpiece of Microsoft Advertising's Cannes presence, framed around a unified product narrative: helping marketers get found, seen, and chosen in the agentic web era. Key product announcements at Cannes included

Microsoft Web IQ (an AI-native grounding infrastructure connecting AI systems to live real-world knowledge), AI citations reporting in Microsoft Clarity (revealing how AI discovers and uses brand content), the Microsoft Advertising MCP (Model Context Protocol) server expansion, Brand Agents for website conversion, and new AI Max features in Search campaigns. Ciaran McCarthy, Microsoft's marketing executive, framed Copilot as a daily workflow tool rather than a futuristic AI concept, shifting the Cannes conversation from hype to practical advertiser utility. Microsoft holds official Cannes Lions partner status.

| DIMENSION | PERFORMANCE | RAW |
|----------------------|---|---------------|
| I Integrated | <div style="width: 67%;"><div style="width: 67%;"></div></div> 67% | 12/18 |
| M Measurable | <div style="width: 53%;"><div style="width: 53%;"></div></div> 53% | 10/19 |
| P Participatory | <div style="width: 45%;"><div style="width: 45%;"></div></div> 45% | 9/20 |
| A Affective | <div style="width: 67%;"><div style="width: 67%;"></div></div> 67% | 12/18 |
| C Community-Building | <div style="width: 60%;"><div style="width: 60%;"></div></div> 60% | 9/15 |
| T True-to-Brand | <div style="width: 62%;"><div style="width: 62%;"></div></div> 62% | 8/13 |
| TOTAL SCORE | <div style="width: 58%;"><div style="width: 58%;"></div></div> 58% | 60/103 |

Each bar shows the dimension as a percentage of its maximum.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>SCORE BAND</p> <p>Scores of 50-59 are Solid. The experience has a credible foundation with significant untapped potential.</p> | <p>BENCHMARKS</p> <p>Solid: Dom Pérignon 58. Strong: Macallan 74 · Veuve EOTS 71. Exceptional: Amazon Port 90.</p> |
|--|---|



02 — STRENGTHS & UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

WHERE IT WINS, WHERE IT GROWS

AREAS OF STRENGTH

Integrated *67%, coherent, campaign-integrated*

Microsoft's Cannes presence extends across multiple channels in a coherent, campaign-integrated way. Microsoft Gardens serves as the physical hub, supported by a dedicated landing page (aka.ms/MicrosoftGardens), a pre-Cannes product announcement blog on Microsoft Advertising, and active LinkedIn promotion. Official Cannes Lions partner status places Microsoft in the festival's own communications. The Shopify x Performance Max partnership announcement and the MCP server expansion bring additional partner-channel amplification. The Microsoft Advertising Insider newsletter and email RSVP list complete the owned-media stack.

The activation is better integrated at the product-narrative level than it is at the physical footprint level: the garden venue is rented rather than owned, and no OOH presence along the Croisette was confirmed.

Affective *67%, a deliberate calm counterpoint*

Microsoft Gardens executes a deliberate emotional counterpoint to the intensity of the Cannes festival week: a calm, coastal space designed to let attendees reset and find their flow. This is a specific and intentional affective position, and it is well-aligned with the 75 to 100 percent alignment target audience of senior marketers and brand leaders who arrive at Cannes feeling overwhelmed by a saturated agenda. The Copilot repositioning from futuristic AI hype to practical workflow partner is affectively calibrated for the same audience: decision-makers who are tired of being promised tomorrow and want tools that work today.

The emotional register is lower than a physical stunt or immersive installation, but it is a real and intentional choice, not a gap.

AREAS OF WEAKNESS

Participatory *45%, conversation over participation*

Microsoft Gardens is the most conversation-led format in this Cannes report set. The 'calm, coastal space for conversations that matter' positioning explicitly deprioritizes spectacle in favor of dialogue. This is a coherent strategic choice and an authentic brand expression, but it is structurally incompatible with high Participatory scores. No interactive installations, product creation tools, or hands-on creative experiences are confirmed. No pre-event personalization, no personalized take-home, and no confirmed post-event engagement mechanic are documented. The limited daily hours, particularly Monday's 1:30 PM start and Friday's half-day, also constrain the participatory surface area.

A live Copilot or Clarity demo station where attendees could run their own brand's AI visibility audit in real time would close this gap with high relevance to the target audience.

Measurable *53%, brand-initiated content only*

Content generation at Microsoft Gardens is primarily brand-initiated: the Microsoft Advertising blog post, LinkedIn posts, and trade coverage in Ad Age and specialist press. There is no confirmed UGC mechanism: the 'calm conversations' format does not naturally generate shareable content moments in the way that Meta's Reels Skate Park or Amazon's Rue Visionnaire do. Partner content from Shopify, Stagwell, and pilot MCP customers (Realtor.com, Conversios) provides some partner-generated amplification. The absence of a creatively memorable or visual activation element limits the organic content echo. A publicly visible Clarity AI visibility dashboard or live Web IQ demonstration with shareable outputs would significantly lift the content-generation dimension.

PRIORITY MOVE

RUN A LIVE AI VISIBILITY AUDIT STATION.

A live AI Visibility Audit station, where each attendee inputs their own brand URL and receives a real-time Clarity citations report showing how AI currently surfaces their content, would turn the calm-garden format into a hands-on product moment and lift both the Participatory and Measurable scores with high relevance to the target audience.

03 — THE CONVERSATION

LET'S FINALIZE THIS REPORT

The score is a starting point, not a verdict. This assessment draws on public information, your insider knowledge could move these results. Each question below, answered, scores the experience up.

M MEASURABLE

- Total registered attendance across the five-day footprint
- UGC and social content volume generated by attendees at or from Microsoft Gardens
- Earned media reach and AVE from trade press coverage (Ad Age, specialist press)
- Engagement metrics from LinkedIn posts and Microsoft Advertising blog announcement
- Confirmed partner-generated content volume from Shopify, Stagwell, MCP pilot brands

C COMMUNITY-BUILDING

- Structured networking format or community mechanism beyond ambient evening events
- Follow-up communication to attendees via Microsoft-owned channels post-festival
- Confirmed three-way communication format enabling attendee-to-attendee interaction
- Any cohort or group formed at the Gardens that continued beyond the activation

P PARTICIPATORY

- Confirmed hands-on product demo format (Copilot, Web IQ, Clarity) at the Gardens
- Any personalized output generated for individual attendees during the activation
- Pre-event personalization mechanism beyond general RSVP
- Post-event engagement mechanic (follow-up with individualized insights, etc.)
- Full scope and format of Creator pass holder evening events on Monday

T TRUE-TO-BRAND

- Degree to which Microsoft's specific brand codes (Copilot iconography, Azure palette) were embedded in the physical garden environment
- Live product integration: were Web IQ or Clarity demonstrably running in the space?
- Differentiation from generic 'calm garden conversation' B2B formats at the festival

This score does not define overall event success. It identifies where an experience excels, and where untapped potential still exists.

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 scoring framework that reflects a weighted composite across six dimensions of experiential marketing effectiveness: Integrated, Measurable, Participatory, Affective, Community-Building, and True-to-Brand.



PAULINE OUDIN

CEO · GRADIENT EXPERIENCE

— THE CONVERSATION

OPEN TO A 15-MINUTE CONVERSATION?

This assessment draws on publicly available information. Your insider knowledge of this project could meaningfully change these results, let's finalize the report together.

[BOOK THE CONVERSATION →](#)

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