

GRADIENT

ニッカウキスキー

JUNE 2026



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

# NIKKA WHISKY TOKYO 2026

An officially endorsed Nikka Whisky pop-up bar with Dentsu, transporting the Tokyo flagship to Cannes for nightly cocktails and live DJ sets near the Palais. Scored against Gradient's six-dimension experiential methodology.

**66**/100

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

● STRONG

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

01 — THE ASSESSMENT

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

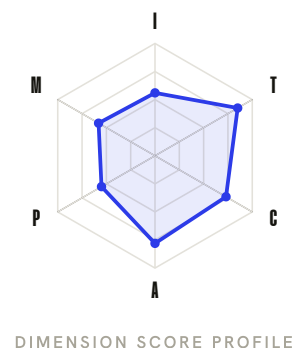
The Nikka Whisky Distilling Co., Ltd. (founded 1934, a subsidiary of Asahi Breweries), in partnership with Dentsu Inc., brought The Nikka Whisky Tokyo to Cannes Lions 2026 as an officially endorsed pop-up bar. Running Tuesday June 23 through Friday June 26 from 6:00 PM to 2:00 AM at 6 rue des Freres Pradignac, a six-minute walk from the Palais, the activation transported Nikka's acclaimed Tokyo flagship bar to the south of France for a limited engagement. Admission was free, with Cannes Lions pass holders receiving their first cocktail complimentary. The bar served exclusive cocktails previously only

available in Japan, from playful twists on classics to boundary-pushing originals, all crafted across Nikka's whisky range. DJ SARASA served as Music Director, setting the atmosphere each evening until 9:00 PM, when live DJ sets raised the energy through closing. The pop-up is the second consecutive appearance of this format at Cannes Lions, having drawn approximately 1,100 visitors during the 2025 edition. Nikka Whisky holds official Cannes Lions partner status, and received a Gold Lion in the Industry Craft category at the 2026 festival for its 'Dear Difference' campaign, created by Dentsu Inc.

| DIMENSION            | PERFORMANCE   | RAW           |
|----------------------|---|---------------|
| I Integrated         | <div style="width: 56%;"><div style="width: 56%;"></div></div> 56%        | 10/18         |
| M Measurable         | <div style="width: 58%;"><div style="width: 58%;"></div></div> 58%        | 11/19         |
| P Participatory      | <div style="width: 55%;"><div style="width: 55%;"></div></div> 55%        | 11/20         |
| A Affective          | <div style="width: 78%;"><div style="width: 78%;"></div></div> 78%        | 14/18         |
| C Community-Building | <div style="width: 73%;"><div style="width: 73%;"></div></div> 73%        | 11/15         |
| T True-to-Brand      | <div style="width: 85%;"><div style="width: 85%;"></div></div> 85%        | 11/13         |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>   | <div style="width: 66%;"><div style="width: 66%;"></div></div> <b>66%</b> | <b>68/103</b> |

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

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>SCORE BAND</b></p> <p>Scores of <b>60-74 are Strong</b>. The experience excels in several dimensions with clear, addressable upside.</p> | <p><b>BENCHMARKS</b></p> <p>Strong: Macallan 74 · Veuve EOTS 71. Exceptional: Amazon Port 90. Solid: Dom Pérignon 58.</p> |
|--|---|



**02 — STRENGTHS & UNTAPPED POTENTIAL**

# WHERE IT WINS, WHERE IT GROWS

**AREAS OF STRENGTH****True-to-Brand** *85%, deeply brand-true*

The Nikka Whisky Tokyo scores highest on True-to-Brand in the entire Cannes 2026 report set alongside Meta's 92%. The concept could only come from this brand: transporting the physical flagship bar from Tokyo to Cannes, serving cocktails previously only available in Japan, is a direct expression of Nikka's founding identity, Japanese craft meeting an international stage. The 'Dear Difference' creative platform, which celebrates each person's individual way of enjoying whisky, is lived out in the bar format: every guest chooses their own path through the Nikka range. Nikka's Gold Lion win at the same festival where the bar is hosted creates an authenticity loop that no competitor could replicate.

**No other whisky brand could plausibly execute this specific premise.**

**Affective** *78%, a distinctive sensory register*

The affective register of this activation is distinctive and deliberate. The 6:00 PM to 2:00 AM format positions the bar as a refuge from the Cannes daytime circuit: a place where the creative industry exhales. The geo-exclusivity of the cocktails, only available in Japan until now, gives each guest a genuine sense of privileged access. The cultural transport, bringing a Tokyo bar to the French Riviera, creates an atmosphere of sensory novelty that no panel or product demo can replicate. DJ SARASA's curated progression from atmosphere to energy across the evening is a deliberate emotional arc.

**For a Cannes Lions audience of creative professionals, a Gold Lion winning brand choosing to show up as a bar rather than a stage is itself an emotionally resonant statement about what creativity is for.**

## AREAS OF WEAKNESS

**Integrated** 56%, *a standalone footprint*

The Nikka Whisky Tokyo is a notably standalone activation. There is no confirmed pre-event digital campaign, no email outreach to a registered audience, no OOH presence on the Croisette, and no partner brand involvement beyond Dentsu as the production agency. The activation lives on nikka.com and the Cannes Lions partner page, with social amplification from @nikkawhisky-global and @nikka\_jp. The absence of daytime programming means the bar does not appear in festival schedules or agenda apps, which reduces discoverability for delegates who are not already aware of the activation.

*A pre-festival reach campaign targeting Cannes delegates through LinkedIn or industry email, or a Croisette presence during the day to drive evening awareness, would close this gap significantly.*

**Participatory** 55%, *participation via service only*

Participation in the Nikka Whisky Tokyo is mediated entirely through the cocktail service: guests discover the brand through conversation with bartenders, through the menu, and through the sensory experience of the drink itself. This is a legitimate and authentic participation model for a craft spirits brand, and the bartender consultation process does personalize the experience to each guest's palate and preferences. However, no pre-event personalization is confirmed. No structured take-home beyond the experience exists. No digital or physical mechanism allows guests to record, share, or extend their personal journey with Nikka beyond the bar visit itself. A curated cocktail recommendation card, a QR code linking the guest's chosen drink to a Nikka product page, or a photo-led souvenir mechanic would meaningfully close this gap.

## PRIORITY MOVE

**DRIVE DAYTIME AWARENESS TO THE EVENING BAR.**

A pre-festival awareness campaign targeting Cannes delegates via trade channels (industry email, LinkedIn, festival partner communications), combined with a daytime Croisette presence, would widen the Integrated footprint and bring more of the right audience to an evening experience that already excels on craft and brand truth.

## 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.

## I INTEGRATED

- Pre-festival awareness campaign reaching Cannes delegates before arrival
- OOH or daytime presence on the Croisette to drive evening footfall
- Partner brand involvement beyond Dentsu as production agency
- Email or CRM campaign targeting confirmed festival attendees
- Confirmed in-app or festival-guide listing to maximize discoverability

## P PARTICIPATORY

- Confirmed cocktail consultation format: guided or self-directed?
- Any structured take-home mechanic (cocktail card, recipe, passport, etc.)
- Post-visit engagement nudge linking the bar experience to the Tokyo flagship
- UGC activation or photo mechanic embedded in the bar design
- Pre-event personalization for returning visitors from 2025

## M MEASURABLE

- Confirmed 2026 visitor count (2025 benchmark: approximately 1,100 visitors)
- Social reach and engagement from @nikkawhiskyglobal during the festival week
- UGC volume: posts, tags, stories generated by guests during evening visits
- Earned media coverage specific to the 2026 Cannes pop-up beyond the partner page
- Impact of the Gold Lion win on bar traffic and media coverage

## C COMMUNITY-BUILDING

- Any structured networking format or curated guest list for specific evenings
- Confirmed continuation mechanic: do attendees visit The Nikka Whisky Tokyo in Japan?
- Collaboration with other Cannes activations or after-event partner programming

*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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