



## Experiential marketing and its incidence on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta-2025

### El marketing experiencial y su incidencia en la fidelización de clientes de Smart Fit Manta-2025

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Recepción: 16/11/2025 | Aceptación: 13/02/2026 | Publicación: 28/02/2026

#### Cómo citar (APA, séptima edición):

Bazurto-Giler, K., Loor-Chávez, T., Peña-Vélez, I., & Sabando-Mendoza, E. (2026). Experiential marketing and its incidence on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta-2025. *INNOVA Research Journal*, 11(1.especial), 289-304.

<https://doi.org/10.33890/innova.v11.n1.especial.2026.2872>

## Resumen

La investigación tuvo como objetivo determinar la incidencia del marketing experiencial en la fidelización de los clientes del gimnasio Smart Fit Manta durante el año 2025. El estudio buscó identificar cómo la interacción sensorial, la personalización de la experiencia, la satisfacción y la continuidad del servicio influyen en la retención de los usuarios y en la conexión emocional con la marca. La metodología fue de tipo bibliográfico, descriptivo, correlacional y de campo, con un enfoque mixto (cualitativo–cuantitativo). Los datos se recopilaron a partir de una muestra de 100 usuarios activos mediante un cuestionario estructurado validado por expertos, con un coeficiente alfa de Cronbach de 0.994, lo que confirmó su alta fiabilidad. El análisis estadístico, mediante la prueba de Spearman, evidenció una correlación muy fuerte y significativa entre el marketing experiencial y la fidelización ( $r_s = 0.992$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Los resultados demostraron que la interacción sensorial y la personalización fueron las dimensiones con mayor influencia en la satisfacción y la lealtad del cliente. La incidencia del marketing experiencial se analizó desde la percepción de los usuarios, considerando aspectos actitudinales de la fidelización, debido a la restricción de acceso a información interna de la empresa.

**Palabras claves:** marketing experiencial, fidelización, satisfacción, personalización, interacción sensorial.

**JEL:** M31, M37, L83

## Abstract

The research aimed to determine the incidence of experiential marketing on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta during 2025. The study sought to identify how sensory interaction, experience personalization, satisfaction, and service continuity influence user retention and emotional connection with the brand. The methodology was bibliographic, descriptive, correlational, and field-based, employing a mixed qualitative–quantitative approach. Data was collected from a sample of 100 active users through a structured questionnaire validated by experts, achieving Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.994, confirming its high reliability. Statistical analysis using Spearman’s Rho test revealed a very strong and significant correlation between experiential marketing and customer loyalty ( $r_s = 0.992$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The results demonstrated that sensory interaction and personalization were the dimensions with the greatest influence on satisfaction and loyalty. The incidence of experiential marketing was assessed from the users’ perspective, focusing on attitudinal components of customer loyalty such as satisfaction, intention to continue using the service, recommendation, and perceived continuity, due to the restricted access to internal business performance indicators. The incidence of experiential marketing was analyzed from the users’ perspective, focusing on attitudinal aspects of customer loyalty, due to restricted access to internal business data.

**Keywords:** experiential marketing, customer loyalty, satisfaction, personalization, sensory interaction.

## Introduction

Currently, business environments are transforming due to globalization, digitalization, and evolving consumer expectations. Today's users desire experiences leading to positive emotions and lasting brand connections (Palomino, 2022). This shift pushes organizations to revise their marketing strategies and prioritize approaches that build memorable experiences, foster loyalty and advocacy. Experiential marketing is essential for this, especially in industries where sensory and emotional interaction are key, such as fitness.

In intermediate urban contexts like Manta, gyms are now social spaces for physical health and overall well-being. Users expect proper facilities, stimulating environments, and personalized attention, leading gyms like Smart Fit Manta to enhance their value proposition (Núñez Chifla, 2025). Loyalty depends more on generating strong emotions and sensations than on price or infrastructure alone (Noemi et al., 2023). This marks a major shift in the company–consumer relationship. The fitness sector faces challenges in retaining users due to generic experiences and limited personalization (Moreira et al., 2024). Many companies prioritize acquiring new clients over building lasting relationships. This turnover raises costs and weakens brand positioning. Thus, experience-based strategies are vital for building sustainable bonds.

Experiential marketing adds value through sensory, emotional, and relational stimuli, deepening brand connections (Herrada Salazar et al., 2025). Unlike traditional marketing, it emphasizes holistic experiences over transactions (Avellán et al., 2021). For Smart Fit Manta, this means creating pleasant atmospheres, personalized programs, and ongoing satisfaction to encourage repeat business and referrals.

Despite the growing adoption of experiential marketing strategies in the fitness industry, there is limited empirical evidence regarding their incidence on customer loyalty in specific local contexts, particularly in emerging markets. This study examines the incidence of experiential marketing strategies on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta from a perceptual and attitudinal perspective, focusing on four key dimensions: sensory interaction, experience personalization, customer satisfaction, and service continuity. Due to organizational data confidentiality policies, the analysis is based on users' perceptions regarding their experience, satisfaction, intention to remain, and willingness to recommend the service, rather than on internal financial or operational indicators. This approach generates empirical evidence that contributes to understanding experiential marketing practices in the fitness sector and allows for validating the theoretical framework within an organizational context, without establishing direct causal claims.

## Literature review

### Experiential Marketing for Customer Loyalty

Marketing has evolved from transactional models focused on the product to relational and experiential approaches in which the consumer's experience plays a central role (Sabogal Russi & Rojas-Berrio, 2020). This change responds to the transformation of customer behavior, which now prioritizes emotions, sensations, and meaningful interactions with brands. Experiential marketing

is characterized by its ability to create deep emotional bonds, representing a decisive factor in building loyalty and retaining users in highly competitive contexts such as the fitness industry (Alta-Tierra & Rivera-Costales, 2021).

One of the most relevant contributions of this approach lies in its structure based on strategic experiential modules, which include the sensory, affective, cognitive, physical, and relational dimensions. These dimensions seek to generate positive stimuli that connects consumers with the brand and enhance their satisfaction levels (Sabogal Russi & Rojas-Berrio, 2020). In spaces such as Smart Fit Manta, these dimensions have materialized through visual and auditory ambiance, interaction with staff, personalized routine design, and the creation of active communities, all of which strengthen the sense of belonging and commitment.

At the same time, experiential marketing differs from other approaches due to its ability to transform a purchase into a meaningful experience. This strategy allows consumers to perceive value beyond the product itself, recognizing the incidence of the overall experience on their purchasing decisions (Moreira et al., 2024). In the fitness sector, this translates into the creation of memorable experiences within the gym that directly contribute to satisfaction and loyalty. When clients feel part of a welcoming and personalized environment, they are more likely to maintain their membership and recommend the service to others.

The success of these strategies depends on the emotional and multi-sensory interaction between the company and the customer. The greater the intensity of the designed experience, the stronger the relationship and the higher the level of user loyalty (Herrada Salazar et al., 2025). In the case of Smart Fit Manta, this involves incorporating stimuli that activates sight, hearing, and touch, as well as promoting close and personalized human interactions that elevate service perception and reinforce brand identification.

Recent literature highlights that loyalty is achieved when the customer establishes both an emotional and rational bond with the brand, identifying with its values and feeling part of its community (Noemi et al., 2023). This process is not based solely on momentary satisfaction but on the creation of continuous experiences that generate trust, motivation, and belonging. Therefore, applying experiential marketing strategies in gyms such as Smart Fit Manta represents a key opportunity to build lasting relationships, strengthen loyalty, and ensure organizational sustainability in a competitive environment.

Experiential marketing represents a substantial change in the way relationships between brands and consumers are conceived. While traditional marketing prioritizes the promotion of functional attributes of the product or service, the experiential approach focuses on the customer's experiences and how these influence their consumption behavior (Sabogal Russi & Rojas-Berrio, 2020). This transformation has become particularly relevant in industries where experience is a decisive factor, such as the fitness sector, where sensory perception, spatial ambiance, and personalized interaction are essential elements for generating loyalty. Gyms like Smart Fit Manta, which operate in competitive urban environments, must integrate these strategies to stand out in an increasingly saturated and demanding market.

Experiential marketing not only seeks to attract customers but also to keep them engaged through the creation of memorable experiences. These are structured around five main dimensions: sensory, affective, cognitive, physical, and relational, which together strengthen the emotional and rational bond between the user and the brand (Sabogal Russi & Rojas-Berrio, 2020). In the context of Smart Fit Manta, the sensory dimension is reflected in lighting, music, and cleanliness; the affection in the empathy and motivation transmitted by staff; the cognitive in the personalization of routines and counseling; the physical in the active interaction with the training environment; and the relational in the sense of belonging generated among users and the fitness community. The integration of these dimensions contributes to strengthening the overall experience and, consequently, increasing loyalty.

A fundamental characteristic of this approach is its ability to generate added value that goes beyond simple service delivery. By activating the senses and emotions, a deeper and more meaningful connection is stimulated, transforming clients into loyal users (Alta-Tierra & Rivera-Costales, 2021). In this sense, the experience is not perceived as a complement but as an essential component of organizational strategy. In the case of a gym, this experience is built from the user's arrival, their journey through the facilities, interaction with staff, and enjoyment of their routine, to the sense of well-being they retain upon leaving. This continuous cycle strengthens commitment and motivates members to maintain their active membership.

Multisensory experiences are particularly effective in influencing customer perception and generating positive associations with the brand. The more senses are involved, the more intense and lasting the emotional impression left in the consumer's memory (Herrada Salazar et al., 2025). Therefore, in gyms such as Smart Fit Manta, it is essential to pay attention to acoustic ambiance, visual aesthetics, appropriate temperature, pleasant aroma, and constant cleanliness, as all these factors create an environment that directly incidences the perceived experience. This results in more satisfied users and a greater willingness to continue using the services.

Personalization is another strategic pillar of experiential marketing. By adapting services to the individual needs and expectations of each user, a stronger and longer-lasting bond with the brand is created (Avellán et al., 2021). In the fitness field, this means offering routines tailored to specific goals, professional guidance, flexible schedules, and close attention that makes clients feel valued. This strategy not only increases satisfaction but also enhances the likelihood of repurchase and recommendation—two key indicators of loyalty.

From a psycho-affective perspective, experiential marketing strengthens the sense of belonging and builds communities around the brand (Moreira et al., 2024). In a gym, this is achieved by promoting group activities, sports events, and support programs that reinforce social and emotional interaction among users. When people feel part of a group and experience positive emotions in a shared environment, the relationship with the brand becomes stronger, leading to sustained long-term retention.

Likewise, loyalty does not depend exclusively on momentary satisfaction but on the company's ability to maintain coherent and positive experiences over time (Noemi et al., 2023). Consistency in service quality, proper maintenance of facilities, personalized attention, and continuous innovation in the value proposition are aspects that determine customer continuity. At

Smart Fit Manta, this is reflected in maintaining high operational standards and an organizational culture oriented toward user well-being.

Recent literature emphasizes that loyalty arises when the customer develops an emotional bond with the brand and perceives it as part of their lifestyle (Palomino, 2022). This type of loyalty is more stable and resistant to competitive offers because it is based on emotional and experiential attachment rather than economic factors. For the fitness sector, this means creating experiences that not only motivate gym attendance but also build a shared habit and identity between users and the brand.

Along these lines, research from Universidad Técnica de Ambato highlights that loyalty in gyms is achieved when service quality is combined with a personalized and close experience (Núñez Chifla, 2025). By creating an environment where the client feels accompanied, recognized, and valued, the emotional relationship is strengthened, increasing their level of loyalty. This approach represents a strategic opportunity for Smart Fit Manta to consolidate a stable and sustainable user base. The emotional and multisensory interaction proposed by experiential marketing has become a determining factor in achieving sustainable competitive advantages (Alta-Tierra & Rivera-Costales, 2021). Companies that manage to differentiate themselves through unique experiences not only attract customers but also transform them into brand ambassadors. For Smart Fit Manta, this means adopting strategies that combine innovation, emotion, and personalization, thus ensuring its position in the local fitness market.

### **Sensory Interaction**

Sensory interaction represents one of the most relevant dimensions of experiential marketing, as it allows the client to connect with the brand through the five senses. In the case of gyms, this interaction occurs constantly while the user is training, since they simultaneously perceive sounds, scents, colors, textures, and physical sensations that influence their emotional state and their evaluation of the service. González (2024) points out that integrating multisensory experiences into marketing strategies enables the establishment of a deep connection with the consumer by evoking emotions and memories that transcend rational thought. In this sense, the sensory environment of the gym—music, aromas, lighting, and temperature—acts as a set of stimuli that reinforce motivation, focus, and enjoyment during the training experience.

Egido Piqueras (2025) explains that the senses are the channel through which consumers process environmental information; therefore, the appropriate selection of stimuli can modify their perception and behavior. In a gym, a pleasant scent of cleanliness or freshness can generate a feeling of well-being and energy; rhythmic and energetic music stimulates motivation and physical performance; balanced lighting improves visual comfort and the aesthetic perception of the space; and tactile contact with ergonomic machines or soft materials enhances comfort. When combined, all these factors create a coherent atmosphere that encourages permanence and builds positive associations with the brand.

According to *Envolver los Sentidos* (2025), engaging in multiple senses simultaneously enhances customer satisfaction and strengthens loyalty, as intense sensory experiences remain in memory and generate lasting emotional bonds. Therefore, sensory interaction should not be understood merely as a decorative element but as a strategic tool that transforms physical training into a complete emotional experience. Moreover, as stated by Rea Hidalgo, García Mendoza, and Vázquez Guevara (2025), the use of sensory stimuli in commercial spaces is not intended to manipulate customers but to create motivating environments that promote authentic and memorable experiences.

Consequently, gyms must carefully design every detail of their environment to ensure a sensory experience that is both positive and consistent with their brand identity. The sound of music, the visual harmony of colors, the layout of furniture, the characteristic aroma of the space, and the tactile sensation of the equipment together form an integral experience that directly incidences customer well-being and loyalty. Thus, sensory interaction becomes the starting point of the emotional experience that drives satisfaction and service continuity over time.

### **Experience Personalization**

Personalization is one of the strongest pillars of modern experiential marketing, as it allows companies to adapt their offerings to the unique needs and expectations of each customer. In the context of gyms, personalization involves designing individualized routines, providing specialized guidance, and maintaining continuous communication that makes users feel recognized and valued. According to Pazmiño Arellano and Pazmiño Rodríguez (2024), brands that implement personalization achieve longer-lasting relationships because consumers perceive differentiated treatment that reinforces their commitment to the brand.

Experience personalization, supported by technology or human-centered strategies, generates sensations of exclusivity that motivate repurchase and recommendation. Núñez (2025) argues that companies offering experiences tailored to individual interests improve conversion and loyalty rates, as consumers perceive relevance and emotional connection with the service. In the fitness sector, this implies providing flexible training options, progress tracking, and plans based on personal goals, all of which contribute to a higher perception of value.

Furthermore, personalization creates a symbiotic relationship between customer and brand. By understanding user preferences, the gym can anticipate their needs, strengthening satisfaction and sense of belonging. As Hernández Ventura (2022) mentions, personalization and service identity are indispensable elements for generating a sustainable competitive advantage, as today's clients are more demanding and value experiences that adapt to their lifestyles.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is the direct result of the perceived quality of the experience and constitutes the prelude to loyalty. In the fitness sector, satisfaction depends not only on achieving physical goals but also on the emotional and relational environment that surrounds the user. According to *Estrategias de calidad de servicio* (2020), organizations seek to meet their clients' needs by addressing their preferences, tastes, and complaints with the purpose of ensuring their

return and long-term engagement. In gyms, this translates into providing a comprehensive service where attention, empathy, and consistency between what is promised and delivered remain constant.

Silva-Treviño et al. (2021) state that service quality is linked to customer satisfaction and loyalty, as a positive experience reinforces trust and motivates continued use of the service. This relationship is evident in gyms, where users evaluate not only infrastructure or pricing but also staff attitude, motivation provided, and diligence. Likewise, Cruz Paredes (2024) emphasizes that improving customer service and experience increases satisfaction and loyalty levels, as users feel valued and perceive that their feedback contributes to the continuous improvement of the service. Therefore, satisfaction is not limited to assessing routines or physical results; it encompasses the entirety of the emotional and social experience lived in the gym. When this experience is positive, it transforms into an emotional bond that drives spontaneous recommendation and long-term loyalty toward the brand.

### **Service Continuity**

Service continuity is the most tangible expression of loyalty, reflected in the customer's long-term engagement and decision to maintain their relationship with the brand. In gyms, this continuity is built through consistent experiences, ongoing attention, and the ability of the service to renew itself and sustain user interest. According to Gutierrez Espinoza, Macuyama Hilario, and Sánchez Gonza (2025), gym users value not only the technical quality of their workouts but also the overall experiences that motivate them to keep attending, such as the environment, customer service, and the feeling of overall well-being.

Hernández Ventura (2022) asserts that customer retention should be effective and based on real benefits, where the perceived experience aligns with initial expectations. This view is complemented by González (2024), who notes that the emotional connection generated by sensory stimuli strengthens the long-term relationship between customer and brand, resulting in stable loyalty. Consequently, gyms must design strategies that maintain coherence between what is promised and what is experienced, fostering satisfaction and loyalty.

Service continuity relies on constant innovation. When a gym manages to renew its offerings and sustain stimulating experiences, it reinforces customer habits and consolidates an active community. This aligns with the perspective of Cruz Paredes (2024), who argues that continuous interaction and improvement of the post-service experience are key to customer retention. In summary, loyalty is achieved when the customer not only feels satisfied but also is emotionally connected to the brand and willing to maintain a long-term relationship.

### **The Sensory Environment as the Core of the Experience**

The physical environment is one of the fundamental pillars of experiential marketing, as it directly influences customers' perception, satisfaction, and behavior. The way a business's facilities are designed can generate sensations that strengthen the consumer's emotional

connection with the brand (Quintero et al., 2020). Elements such as lighting, spatial layout, cleanliness, and sound ambiance are decisive in creating an immersive experience. In gyms like Smart Fit Manta, the environment contributes to users perceiving the space as comfortable, safe, and stimulating, which in turn favors their continued attendance and willingness to recommend it.

Similarly, sensory marketing complements this strategy by directly stimulating the senses to create positive emotional memories. Recent studies indicate that the integration of visual, auditory, tactile, and even olfactory stimuli intensifies the consumer experience and reinforces brand loyalty (Higueras Medina et al., 2021). In this sense, a gym that carefully manages background music, appropriate temperature, pleasant aromas, and an attractive visual design succeeds in establishing a multisensory environment that enhances user satisfaction and commitment.

Sensory stimulation is particularly effective because it generates holistic experiences that go beyond the rational logic of purchase. For instance, energetic music, the color of the spaces, and tactile interaction with the equipment can trigger positive emotions that are directly associated with the brand (Baque Véliz & Jácome Santos, 2025). This approach not only attracts new clients but also keeps regular users motivated, which is essential to achieving high levels of loyalty in the fitness sector.

### **Relational Marketing and Customer Loyalty in the Fitness Sector**

Experiential marketing is linked to relational marketing, as both aim to build long-term relationships between companies and their clients. Relational marketing is based on creating trust, generating shared value, and encouraging active consumer participation (Sánchez Álvarez et al., 2024). This strategy not only focuses on meeting immediate needs but also on consolidating stable relationships that lead to repeat purchases and spontaneous recommendations. In the case of Smart Fit Manta, this involves establishing close communication, offering personalized attention, and maintaining constant interactions that reinforce users' sense of belonging.

When customers feel recognized and valued, an emotional bond is generated that transcends rational variables such as price or convenience. This type of relationship encourages customers to become brand advocates, willing to recommend it to others and remain loyal even in the face of competition (Sánchez Álvarez et al., 2024). For the fitness sector, this connection is especially important, as the success of a gym depends not only on attracting new users but also on retaining those who are already part of its community.

### **Application of Experiential Marketing in Non-Traditional Sectors**

Although experiential marketing has been more prominently developed in industries such as tourism, events, or gastronomy, its application has extended to various sectors seeking to innovate in their positioning strategies (Lemoine-Quintero et al., 2021). Companies that adopt this approach not only communicate functional benefits but also seek to enrich customers' lives through unique experiences. In gyms like Smart Fit Manta, this logic transforms everyday workouts into motivating experiences that strengthen user loyalty.

Experiential innovation thus becomes a differentiating factor that allows organizations to stand out from the competition. This innovation is not limited to the design of the physical space but also includes the implementation of emotional and relational tactics that enhance the customer experience (Hernández Mogollón et al., 2020). For instance, personalized activities, immersive campaigns, loyalty programs, and community events are actions that strengthen emotional bonds and consolidate long-term relationships. For Smart Fit Manta, these strategies represent an opportunity to position itself as a brand that offers more than a service; it offers a lifestyle.

In the fitness sector, customer loyalty is linked to the relational management that companies establish with their users, as maintaining long-term relationships is less costly than attracting new ones. Therefore, implementing loyalty-oriented marketing strategies becomes essential for ensuring business permanence and transforming emerging fitness brands into consolidated enterprises (Carrera Jiménez & Chávez Anchundia, 2023).

Moreover, experiential marketing has become a dominant approach in recent years, as companies have shifted from emphasizing functional product attributes to focusing on the design of emotional and immersive experiences that strengthen customer engagement. Gago (2023) explains that this transformation responds to the growing need of organizations to connect more deeply with their consumers, moving beyond transactions to build meaningful and lasting relationships. In this sense, fitness centers like Smart Fit Manta can employ experiential strategies that stimulate the senses and emotions, thereby reinforcing user satisfaction and loyalty over time.

Specialized literature agrees that the creation of meaningful experiences is a key factor in building sustainable competitive advantages. By integrating multisensory, relational, and emotional strategies, organizations are able to differentiate themselves and consolidate communities of loyal users (Lemoine-Quintero et al., 2021; Hernández Mogollón et al., 2020). For a gym, this translates into users who not only come to train but also find in the space a social, motivational, and emotional environment that encourages them to stay.

## **Methodology**

The research was bibliographic, descriptive, correlational, and field-based, employing a mixed (qualitative–quantitative) approach. It combined a theoretical review of previous studies on experiential marketing and customer loyalty with data obtained from surveys administered to active users of the Smart Fit Manta gym. The objective was to analyze how the brand’s designed experiences influence customer retention and loyalty in 2025.

Inductive and deductive methods were employed: the former facilitated an understanding of users’ reality through their sensory and emotional experiences in the gym, while the latter allowed for a comparison of empirical results with theoretical foundations in experiential marketing, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Additionally, analytical and synthetic methods were applied to break down the study variables—sensory interaction, experience personalization,

satisfaction, and service continuity—and subsequently integrate the findings into a coherent explanatory framework.

The research design was non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational, as the variables were not manipulated and the information was collected at a single point during the academic period. The population consisted of active users of the Smart Fit Manta gym, from which a non-probabilistic convenience sample of 100 participants was selected based on their regular attendance and willingness to participate in the study.

Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire of 19 items distributed across four dimensions: sensory interaction, experience personalization, customer satisfaction, and service continuity. The instrument employed a five-point Likert scale, was validated by methodology experts, and subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which reached a value of 0.994, considered excellent.

Customer loyalty was operationalized through perceptual and attitudinal measures collected from gym users, including satisfaction, intention to continue using the service, recommendation, and perceived service continuity. Internal business indicators were not included due to data confidentiality policies.

## **Results and Discussion**

Descriptive results obtained from the 19-item questionnaire applied to a sample of 100 gym users show favorable perceptions across the four experiential marketing dimensions analyzed. Regarding the sensory and interactive experience, approximately 62% of respondents reported agreement or strong agreement with statements related to the quality of facilities, equipment, and the overall training environment, suggesting that these elements positively contribute to the user experience. Concerning emotional and relational aspects, around 65% of participants indicated positive perceptions of staff attention, communication, and interpersonal interaction, highlighting their role in generating comfort, motivation, and trust during service consumption.

In the digital and personalization dimension, 68% of respondents expressed favorable evaluations of technological tools, digital communication channels, and personalized training routines, perceiving them as supportive of individual fitness goals. Finally, results related to service continuity and attitudinal loyalty reveal that approximately 70% of users reported intention to continue using the service, renew their membership, and recommend the gym to others. Overall, these descriptive tendencies provide empirical evidence that supports correlational findings and confirms the positive incidence of experiential marketing on customer loyalty perceptions.

**Table 1**

*Correlations of the Proposed Hypotheses (Spearman's Rho Test, N = 100)*

|                           |  |         |       |             |          |
|---------------------------|--|---------|-------|-------------|----------|
| <b>General Hypothesis</b> | Experiential marketing and its incidence on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta  | 0,992** | 0,000 | Very strong | Accepted |
| <b>H1</b>                 | Sensory interaction and its incidence on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta     | 0,956** | 0,000 | Very strong | Accepted |
| <b>H2</b>                 | Service personalization and its incidence on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta | 0,910** | 0,000 | Very strong | Accepted |
| <b>H3</b>                 | Customer satisfaction and its incidence on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta   | 0,870** | 0,000 | Strong      | Accepted |
| <b>H4</b>                 | Service continuity and its incidence on customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta      | 0,882** | 0,000 | Strong      | Accepted |

*Note:* The correlation coefficient was calculated using Spearman's Rho test.

Source: Own elaboration based on data processed with IBM SPSS v27.

The study results reveal a very strong positive correlation between experiential marketing and customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta ( $r_s = 0.992$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This finding demonstrates that sensory, personalized, and satisfactory experiences directly influence users' retention and loyalty. The analyzed dimensions —sensory interaction, service personalization, satisfaction, and continuity—showed significant associations, confirming that emotional stimuli and individualized attention are key factors for strengthening loyalty. Overall, the data indicates that experiential marketing constitutes an effective strategy to reinforce the emotional and rational bond between the customer and the brand within the fitness sector.

## Discussion

The study results confirm a very strong relationship between experiential marketing and customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta, showing that sensory, personalized, and satisfactory experiences directly influence user loyalty. In the sensory dimension, the high correlation obtained demonstrates that visual, auditory, and environmental stimuli generate positive emotions that strengthen the connection with the brand. This aligns with Fernández (2022), who highlights the power of visual experiences to differentiate and foster loyalty in sports brands. Similarly, Gago (2025) found that sensory experiences in recreational activities increase participants' willingness to maintain their connection with the organization.

Service personalization also showed a significant relationship, supporting the idea that individualized attention and constant support enhance customer commitment. These findings are consistent with those of Benavides et al. (2025), who demonstrated that emotional and relational experiences reinforce loyalty among Movistar customers, and with Mendoza and Mori (2022), who argue that close communication and personalized service are key factors in gym user retention.

Regarding customer satisfaction, the findings indicate that positive experiences foster favorable attitudes toward the brand and a greater willingness to continue using the service. This finding aligns with Coayla Bautista (2023), who identified a significant relationship between marketing management and customer loyalty in a gym, highlighting satisfaction as a key mediator of loyalty. Finally, service continuity reflects the importance of maintaining quality and consistency in the experience over time, in line with Gago (2025), who states that the repetition of satisfactory experiences strengthens user retention. The results demonstrate that experiential marketing, by integrating sensory, personalized, and emotional components, is an effective strategy for consolidating customer loyalty in the fitness sector. As pointed out by Benavides et al. (2025) and Fernández (2022), experience ceases to be a complement and becomes the main driver of emotional connection and brand preference.

Beyond statistical associations, the findings highlight how experiential components are perceived by users as determinants of their loyalty intentions. This reinforces the idea that customer loyalty in the fitness sector is not solely driven by functional attributes, but by the emotional and sensory experiences constructed within the service environment.

## Conclusions

The research confirmed a very strong and significant relationship between experiential marketing and customer loyalty at Smart Fit Manta. The results demonstrated that emotional, sensory, and personalized experiences are decisive factors in user satisfaction and continuity. The dimensions with the greatest influence were sensory interaction and personalization, which foster strong emotional connections and positive perceptions of the brand. Likewise, maintaining service quality and consistent attention contributes to long-term retention and word-of-mouth promotion. These findings highlight that experiential marketing goes beyond a promotional Strategy; it becomes a management model that enhances brand identity, customer engagement, and competitive sustainability in the fitness sector.

Although the study did not rely on internal organizational indicators, the results provide empirical evidence that supports the experiential marketing framework from the customer's perspective. The positive perceptions identified across sensory interaction, personalization, satisfaction, and service continuity confirm the incidence of experiential marketing on attitudinal customer loyalty. These findings offer a valuable contribution for organizations facing data access restrictions, while also enabling the replication of the model in similar contexts.

Despite the contributions of this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The analysis was based on perceptual data collected from users and did not include internal operational

or financial indicators due to data confidentiality. Additionally, the non-experimental design limits causal interpretations, suggesting that future research could incorporate longitudinal or mixed-method approaches.

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the users of Smart Fit Gym in Manta for providing information through the surveys conducted for the development of this research.

### Funding

This research was exclusively funded by the authors.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal conflicts of interest.

### Author Contributions (CRediT)

Kaina Steffy Bazurto Giler: Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, and Validation.  
Temístocles Deodato Loor Chávez: Conceptualization, Methodology, and Supervision.  
Isaura Vanessa Peña Vélez: Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, and Validation.  
Estela Rossana Sabando Mendoza: Investigation, Conceptualization, and Writing – review & editing.

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