

Enduring Brand Experience Worlds as a Trend in Event Marketing

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Abstract

In contrast to classical advertising, event marketing is a dynamic communication instrument that is constantly bringing trends and innovations. The diverse application possibilities and potentials of event marketing make it possible to reach relevant target groups according to the current zeitgeist, to generate brand-relevant realities and worlds of experience, to generate emotions and sympathy values and in this way to create a bond between brand or company and recipients. Enduring brand experience worlds can be seen as a consistent further development of event marketing. Unlike typical branding events, which are limited in time, enduring brand experience worlds create theme worlds that can be experienced, usually for an unlimited period of time. The research paper reflects the development and current state of brand experience worlds. On this basis a systematisation of enduring brand experience worlds is presented and discussed. Similarities and differences of the various types of enduring brand experience worlds are elaborated and critically appraised.

1. Introduction

In social context people strive to make meaningful use of their increasing leisure time. Meaningful, attractive leisure locations must therefore combine educational, learning, experience and entertainment components at the same time. The concept of experience worlds has therefore been increasingly used in recent years for the experience-oriented staging of brands within the framework of brand positioning. It is based on the philosophy of event marketing and at the same time draws on current findings of leisure and social research as well as the experiential knowledge of the entertainment industry [1].

Based on the definition and the constitutive characteristics of event marketing, this article systematises the various forms of enduring brand experience worlds and presents international best practice examples. From this, similarities and differences of the various forms of enduring brand experience worlds are elaborated. Finally, enduring brand experience worlds are critically evaluated.

2. Emergence and Development of Brand Experience Worlds

Brand experience worlds have their origins in the USA. The first brand land ever was the "Hersheypark" of the chocolate producer Hershey in Pennsylvania, which opened in 1907. In 1955, the first "Disneyland" opened in Los Angeles, followed by "Disney World" in Florida in 1971. At the beginning of the 1990s, other well-known brand experience worlds were opened in the USA. In 1990, for example, "Niketowns" was opened as a brand and consumer experience world for the sporting goods manufacturer Nike. Also in 1990, the "World of Coca-Cola" opened in Atlanta and in 1998 the "Kellogg's Cereal City" in Michigan. Other elaborate brand experience worlds are known in particular from the American film and media industry [2].

The first brand experience world in Europe was "Legoland" in Billund, Denmark, which opened in 1968. The first European Disney theme park, the Disneyland Resort near Paris, was built in 1992. An artistically ambitious project is the Swarovski World of Experience in Wattens, Austria, which opened in 1995.

Since the mid-1990s, there has also been a significant increase in enduring brand experience worlds in Germany. Table 1 gives an exemplary overview of brand experience worlds in Germany.

Table 1. Overview of selected Brand Experience Worlds in Germany

| Company/Brand | Brand Experience World | Location |
|------------------|--|----------------|
| adidas | Adi Dassler Brand Centre | Herzogenaurach |
| Ritter Sport | Museum Ritter | Waldenbuch |
| Audi | Audi Forum | Ingolstadt |
| BASF | BASF Visitor Centre | Ludwigshafen |
| Beiersdorf | Nivea House | Hamburg |
| BMW | BMW World | Munich |
| Deutsche Bank | Q110 – The Deutsche Bank of the Future | Berlin |
| Dr. Oetker | Dr. Oetker World | Bielefeld |
| Margarete Steiff | Margarete Steiff Museum | Giengen a.d.B. |
| Daimler | Mercedes-Benz Museum | Stuttgart |

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Märklin | Märklin Museum and Experience World | Göppingen |
| Lego | Legoland Park | Günzburg |
| Nike | Niketown | Berlin |
| Porsche | Porsche Leipzig Customer Centre | Leipzig |
| Ravensburger | Ravensburger Playland | Meckenbeuren |
| Staatliche Porzellan-Manufaktur Meißen | Meissen Porcelain Manufactory | Meissen |
| Lindt | Chocolate Museum | Cologne |
| TUI | TUI Travel Experience Centre | Berlin |
| VW | VW Autostadt | Wolfsburg |
| VW | Transparent Factory | Dresden |

It is evident that brand experience worlds are used in a wide variety of industries to make one's own product or company a sensual experience.

3. Definition of Brand Experience Worlds

The development of experience-oriented brand platforms is not a new phenomenon, but their strategic use as an instrument of brand policy is still a recent phenomenon [3]. Experience-oriented brand platforms can basically extend to the realm of personal, multi-sensual target group contact as well as be developed in virtual space [4]. Table 2 differentiates various forms of experience-oriented brand platforms from each other.

Table 2. Characteristics of Experience-oriented Brand Platforms [2]

| | temporary | permanent |
|---------|--|--|
| real | marketing events, trade fair appearances of brands | brand experience worlds |
| virtual | virtual marketing events, virtual trade fair appearances of brands | brand platforms on the internet, virtual brand communities |

A generally valid classification and scientifically based definition of brand experience worlds is still lacking [5]. In the literature, terms such as "brand land", "corporate land", "visitor centre", "edutainment centre", "theme park" or "brand park" are placed alongside such as "brand world", "brand experience world", "corporate world" or "brand experience park" and are often used synonymously [6].

Kirchgeorg et al. [4] delineate brand experience worlds on the basis of the following constitutive characteristics:

- permanence,
- location-independence,
- experientiality,
- emotional staging.

A brand experience world can therefore be defined as a permanent, stationary, three-dimensional, real place that is built by companies under brand design guidelines and operated predominantly at the production or main location in order to make it possible for the relevant internal and external target groups to experience the essential, characterising and characteristic benefit bundles of the brand in a multi-sensual way in accordance with specific objectives.

Brand experience worlds have the basic characteristics of event marketing in common. Unlike typical marketing events, which are limited in time, experiential worlds create brand worlds that can be experienced for an unlimited period of time. Brand experience worlds thus represent a consistent further development of event marketing, serving as settings for three-dimensional brand stagings [7].

4. Systematisation and Characterisation of Enduring Brand Experience Worlds

Zanger [2] draws on four dimensions to systematise the diversity of manifestations of brand experience worlds:

- company and product orientation,
- image orientation,
- consumption orientation,
- leisure orientation.

These dimensions are present in all brand experience worlds. However, the following characterisation shows different emphases in relation to the four dimensions. Figure 1 contains a systematisation that includes four types of enduring brand experience worlds.

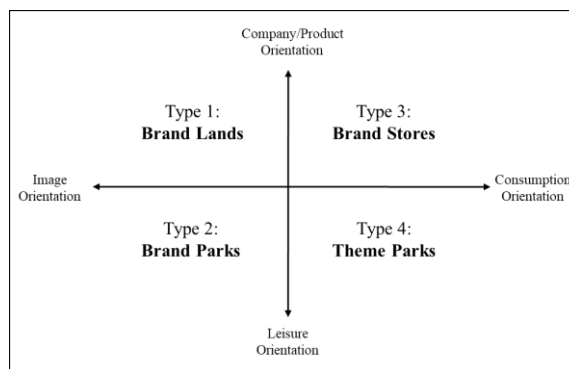


Figure 1. Systematisation of Enduring Brand Experience Worlds

In the following, the four types of brand experience worlds are characterised and illustrated with practical case studies. The analysis particularly addresses the different focal points in relation to the four dimensions [6].

4.1. Brand Lands

The central components of brand lands are the history of the brand in connection with the company's development as well as the demonstration of product manufacturing and the entire product range. The visitor can literally dive into the world of the brand. The symbolic world of the brand, familiar from the company's media communication policy, can be directly experienced by the visitor with all his senses. In this way, a positive image perception of the brand is to develop or solidify in the mind of the consumer.

The Swarovski Crystal Worlds in Wattens, Austria are a brand land designed by André Heller on behalf of the crystal glass manufacturer Swarovski, consisting of a park, art museum and factory outlet. The Swarovski Crystal Worlds were opened in 1995 on the occasion of the company's centenary. In 14 underground rooms, artistic interpretations of the matter of crystal are shown, including works by Brian Eno, Tord Boontje, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jim Whiting, Keith Haring, Andy Warhol or Salvador Dalí. To date, this popular attraction has provided moments of wonder to more than twelve million visitors from all over the world and is thus in the top ten most visited sights in Austria [8].

4.2. Brand Parks

The transition from brand lands to brand parks is often fluid in practice. Brand parks represent an extension of the concept of the brand experience into the leisure sector. In addition to the brand experience, side events and brand-related leisure activities play a significant role. The focus is on fun, activity and entertainment for the visitors.

The 28-hectare VW Autostadt in Wolfsburg, Germany is not only the largest delivery centre in the world, but also a brand park that presents the various brand worlds of the VW Group. The VW Autostadt is divided into three special locations, which are typical for brand parks and build on each other [9]:

- At the "place of comprehension", the brand is to be made explainable and comprehensible – often with the help of interactive features. Here, the focus is primarily on the rational aspects, which are to be explained to the customer in the sense of modern infotainment (i.e. information in an entertaining way). According to the motto "seeing is believing", the persuasive power of the eye plays a major role. In VW's Autostadt, too, the brand image is made comprehensible by making production processes tangible and explaining "technical wonders".
- At the "place of adoration", the brand image is to be made to glow. This is mainly about the emotional aspects of a brand. In the Autostadt, the brand is charged through specially designed brand

pavilions of the individual brands. Here you will not find verbose explanations, but exclusively emotional presentations of the brands. According to VW, this is how they want to draw visitors into the staged world of the brand. Each brand is presented in a different way, for example, a Lamborghini behind bars is made to roar like a wild animal and optimally staged with light and smoke effects.

- The "place of desire" in most brand parks is the delivery centre, where the longing for the product is intensified through suspense staging. In the VW Autostadt delivery centre, too, the delivery of the ordered car is staged and dramatised, and the customer's tension and longing are pushed to the centre. Two large towers contain the cars that are ready for delivery; the car in question is then transported down from the tower parking space by a fully automated crane lift and handed over to the customer.

4.3. Brand Stores

Brand stores serve to stage the brand with a view to developing buying interest in the brand products. The focus is on the presentation of the company's product range, which is as complete as possible, and which the customer should experience, test and desire emotionally. Although the customer can also buy the products directly on site, the main objective of brand stores is to convey the brand identity and to create long-term consumer interest in the brand. Brand stores are to be distinguished from flagship stores and factory outlets, which are directly sales-oriented.

A well-known brand store is the World of Coca-Cola in Atlanta, Georgia. In the hometown of the Coca-Cola Company, visitors can immerse themselves in the world of the iconic brand. Information and emotions about Coke are conveyed on a total of three floors [1]:

- The "self-guided tour" begins with a colourfully illustrated walk through the history of the company. The entire evolution of the brand over the course of time is illustrated.
- The showrooms "Tastes of the States" and "Tastes of the World" allow visitors to taste all the company's available brand products for themselves.
- Finally, of course, the World of Coca-Cola also offers the opportunity to purchase almost all imaginable brand memorabilia in the "Everything Coca-Cola Store".

4.4. Theme Parks

Theme parks tie in with the brand's range of services and develop leisure activities with a thematic connection to the product. These are

interactive experiences for the whole family. In this way brands are made tangible and at the same time an interesting leisure offer is offered with broad possibilities for consumption and purchase of different brand products.

A pioneer in the development of theme parks is the Epcot Center (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) of the Disney Corporation in Orlando, Florida. Under the motto "Future World", several brand worlds are being integrated into one large theme park [7]:

- Hewlett-Packard sponsors the high-tech attraction "Mission: Space", where visitors slip into the role of an astronaut on his journey to Mars.
- In "The Land", presented by Nestlé, visitors travel by boat on rivers through greenhouses with innovative forms of plant cultivation and animal husbandry, thus gaining in-depth impressions of what is behind the production of food.
- Kodak is the initiator of "Imagination!". On an interactive playground, visitors can photograph themselves or record themselves on video and post-process each, create sounds by moving their arms, play a melody by hopping, and so on.
- Perhaps the closest connection between the world of experience and the corporate competence behind it is achieved by General Motors with its "Test Track": the participant is given an insight into the world of car test driving and can gather his or her own test experiences within the framework of a 1.6 km route – at the end, he or she is automatically led into a GM merchandising shop.

5. Similarities and Differences

Table 3 summarises the central similarities and differences of the described types of enduring brand experience worlds.

Table 3. Similarities and Differences of Enduring Brand Experience Worlds

| Type | Similarities | Differences |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Brand Land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reality, 3-dimensionality, walkability ▪ durability, location-bound ▪ experience orientation ▪ interactivity ▪ emotional staging ▪ self-initiated ▪ live communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ experience-oriented communication of information about companies/products/brands ▪ bringing the world of the brand to life ▪ info- and edutainment |
| Brand Park | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ experientiality, active experience ▪ multisensuality ▪ distinctiveness, uniqueness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ expansion into the leisure area ▪ target group is mostly adults (and their families) |

| | | |
|--------------------|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ contrast to everyday life, deprivation of boredom, relaxation and distraction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ side events and a wide range of additional offers |
| Brand Store | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ presentation of the product range ▪ developing buying interest ▪ experience, test, desire, experience consumption |
| Theme Park | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ linking the range of services with leisure activities ▪ fun and games, entertainment ▪ target group are mostly children (and their families) |

6. Critical Appraisal

Enduring brand experience worlds have the following advantages and disadvantages:

Brand experience worlds are a sophisticated concept of modern brand communication. They are another building block within brand management to stage corporate competencies as three-dimensional attractions and to communicate messages to the target groups in an exciting, fascinating and partly also playful way. They are being used more and more frequently by companies and are increasingly expected by consumers. Brand experience worlds represent a further development of the event marketing philosophy and expand the communication aspect to include commercial considerations where appropriate, i.e. they represent a lucrative source of secondary income for the companies concerned [10]. The prospects for success of the currently existing brand experience worlds as well as those in the planning stage are not unfavourable. Some forecasts even go so far as to claim that in a few years every significant brand will have such a place [11].

On the other hand, brand experience worlds are usually associated with high investments. They require a lot of capital, i.e. not every brand can afford its own brand experience world. Brand experience worlds are location-bound. Unlike events in an event marketing series, enduring brand experience worlds cannot simply be taken down and rebuilt somewhere else. The tendency towards ever larger stagings can be seen in particular in the increasing investment sums for brand experience worlds in the German automobile industry. The media echo this development, sometimes very critically: in addition to admiration, the Handelsblatt, for example,

suspects that the brand parks of the automotive industry are above all the companies' drive to create a monument to themselves in the form of "marketing palaces" [12]. The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung agrees and calls brand parks the "cathedrals of the car world", picking up on a comment by BMW sales director Michael Ganal: "If the dealer is the city church, then the BMW World is St. Peter's Basilica" [13].

7. Conclusion and Outlook

Since the developments that have contributed significantly to the emergence of event marketing (such as the decreasing efficiency of classic communication instruments or the consumers' need for an experience) are far from over, the importance of event marketing within corporate communication will continue to increase. However, the increased use of event marketing, especially with regard to frequently used types of events, can also lead to a decrease in the effectiveness of this communication instrument, since saturation effects (wear-out effects) can occur with the target groups. This leads to the fact that the content of the event has to be more and more demanding and elaborate in order to arouse the need for participation and to achieve the intended marketing goals [14].

The forms of enduring brand experience worlds presented in this article therefore mean both opportunities and risks for the event industry. Agencies, organisers and companies have to deal with this new topic, build up know-how and find solutions to implement it in practice. This takes time and requires financial investment. In return, enduring brand experience worlds enable the use of the advantages of event marketing in the communicative address of target groups (e.g. interactivity, multisensuality) and offer companies the opportunity to distinguish themselves from competitors and to gain a comparative competitive advantage.

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