

About : Experience Design

By Ralph Ardill

Ralph Ardill is an internationally recognised pioneer of brand experience who has consulted, written and lectured extensively on the subject for over a decade.

In brief

Also known as experiential marketing, customer experience design, experiential design, brand experience.

Today, successful companies are adopting a more holistic and customer-centric relationship model built upon dialogue and interaction between brands and consumers. In doing so, they are considering and designing the 'total' experience of their brands.

For customers, all these moments of corporate experience combine to shape perceptions, motivate their brand commitment and influence the likelihood of repurchase in the future.

Experience design is therefore driven by consideration of the 'moments' of engagement between people and brands, and the memories these moments create.

Experience design is not driven by a single design discipline but instead requires a truly cross-discipline perspective that considers all aspects of the brand/business - from product, packaging and retail environment to the clothing and attitude of employees.

Brands that deliver great customer experiences also reward the customer for the time, money, energy and emotions they invest in transacting with them above and beyond the delivery of their products and services.

This experiential value can be delivered in many different forms - entertainment, education, enlightenment or even escapism - but all will be underpinned by a deep insight

into our fundamental human needs, hopes, fears and aspirations.

For instance, consider the task of redesigning a Sunday newspaper. A conventional approach might be to employ graphic designers who would change the page layout and typeface and make recommendations on how photos should be shot.

However, if the redesign were to use an experiential approach, the experience designer would first consider the 'moments' of engagement of buying the paper and reading it. How is it bought or delivered? How is it read and disposed of? What does the reader like and dislike about 'using' the newspaper? Such an approach is more likely to lead to a radical and market-beating innovation.

For example, the experience designer might discover that on opening the paper the person throws away the sections that are not relevant to them, keeping only the three or four sections that are relevant. So how about designing a personalised Sunday newspaper that gives the reader only the sections, supplements and advertising they want to read, and which is available in different sizes and materials?

An experiential design approach therefore considers the moments of interaction between people and brands, and seeks to generate as much value as possible from these interactions for both parties - with the aim of creating positive memories.

In short, brand experience is concerned with the development of brand moments that we want and value as opposed to intrusive brand media that we will reject.

The true value of the brand experience approach therefore lies in its ability to engage consumers deeply with the brand in such a way that encourages the development of mutually valuable relationships.



It is an approach that is driven less by the desire to 'broadcast' messages, whether they are wanted or not, and more by the desire to create moments that have true meaning and value for the consumer.

Why it matters to business

By effecting a fundamental shift in the focus of our thinking, from products to people, brand experience has the power to drive a greater degree of empathy, trust and loyalty towards a brand among both customers and employees.

Taking an experience design approach will force businesses to see the world through the experiences of their customers and deliver new insights into how their brand and services are perceived. This greater understanding should enable businesses to create more relevant and compelling propositions for their customers.

An experiential approach can therefore help businesses to 'value engineer' their offer - to better understand the aspects of their business that convey the greatest value to their customers, and eliminate the elements that don't work or aren't valued.

The total experiential agenda for a brand can span an enormous spectrum, from enhancement of existing communication channels, products and services to the development of permanent brand places and new business ventures - such as the LEGOLAND theme parks, Guinness Storehouse, and NikeTown stores.

It can provide a 'wow' factor that attracts the attention of both consumers and the media - such as the launch of London's Tate Modern gallery, or Selfridges' annual themed festivals.

And it can further enhance the service element of a product to create a stronger - and often more premium-priced - economic offering. For instance department stores that offer personal shopping and lifestyle consultants.

The employee experience In order to credibly deliver

on the total consumer brand promise, it is also becoming increasingly important that the internal employee brand experience must be coherent, compelling and aligned with that made to consumers.

In doing so companies are recognising the need for all of their people to 'live the brand' by developing internal programmes and culture change initiatives designed to turn strategic brand values into front line behaviours.

The design of such internal experience programmes and initiatives is also likely to become a major growth area for experiential design.

Why it matters to public services

As companies tap into the emerging experiential economy, our expectation of branded experiences will become more sophisticated and demanding.

Public services no longer have a guaranteed monopoly on the market as they go head to head with their commercial counterparts, which often offer consumers more compelling reasons to remain loyal.

Most people would consider that the user experience of many public services in the UK is not what it should be.

As with business, by effecting a fundamental shift in the focus of our thinking from products to people, brand experience has the power to drive a greater degree of empathy, trust and loyalty towards public services among both users and employees.

A central implication for public services is therefore the need for long-term strategic planning to keep in touch with our increasing expectations of what constitutes valued and acceptable customer experiences in terms of design, communication, operations, staffing, behaviour and delivery.

Examples

**Project: Autostadt, Wolfsburg Client: Volkswagen
Designer: In house team and architect Gunter Henn
Year: 2000**

Autostadt is Volkswagen Group's answer to corporate branding, marketing, public relations and family entertainment.

This giant 'brandland' integrates state-of-the-art media technology and computer-generated imagery with imaginative museum displays to entertain guests physically, emotionally and intellectually.

The unique 250,000 square metre complex features pavilions, waterways, bridges, lakes, parks, marketplaces, a train station, streets and lanes, entertainment, world restaurants and an events centre.

The experience takes guests on a journey of discovery in a world forum dedicated to the automobile and more than eight million people have visited the £300 million attraction since its June 2000 opening.

**Project: Guinness Storehouse, Dublin Client: Diageo
Designer: Imagination Year: 2001**

In 1998, Imagination was invited to create a new visitor attraction to replace the Guinness Hopstore, the brewers' popular tourist attraction in Dublin.

Containing a paid-for visitor experience as well as conference and learning facilities, the company archive, public bars, restaurants and exhibition space, the Guinness Storehouse truly brings to life 'the ultimate experience of the character of Guinness'.

In 2003, Guinness launched the Choice exhibition within Storehouse, dedicated to the thought-provoking subject of responsible drinking. Various multi-media interactive exhibits give visitors an opportunity to test their

knowledge on how alcohol affects them mentally and physically.

Choice was recently honoured with winning best Live Event at the prestigious IVCA Clarion Corporate Social Responsibility Awards and today the multi award-winning Storehouse is Ireland's number one tourist attraction, attracting one million visitors in its first two years.

Project: Walt Disney World, Florida Client: Disney Designer: Walt Disney Imagineering Year: 1971 onwards

Walt Disney World represented Disney's vision of an immersing entertainment experience capable of going beyond motion pictures. An experience that would build upon Walt Disney's belief that: 'There is a little adult in every child, but... a lot of child in every adult.'

Walt Disney World is now more than 30 years old. But through constant innovation, redevelopment and expansion has maintained its status as one of the world's leading brand experiences and continues to welcome more than 30 million visitors a year.

Project: The Apple Centre, New York Client: Apple Designer: In house team and architects Ronnette Riley and Bohlin Cywinski Jackson Year: 2001 onwards

Since May 2001, Apple has dedicated more than \$200 million to revamping its US stores - a bold gamble, considering that the Mac user base hasn't grown in ten years and that for the last five, Apple's market share has become stagnant at about 3%.

The sleek bi-level space in New York's Soho is essentially a hands-on experience. Customers are encouraged to try before they buy, with all major Apple hardware, applications and accessories on show.

A multi-lingual customer service team is on hand for

assistance and shoppers can receive advice or product maintenance at the 'Genius Bar', a help desk populated by Apple experts. The space also houses a lecture theatre where visitors can attend free daily workshops and instructional lectures about Apple products.

According to industry sources, the stores are performing impressively, generating approximately 10% of the company's revenue.

Project: Prada Epicentre, New York Client Name: Prada Designer: Rem Koolhaas Year: 2002

In the late 1990s, Prada began to rethink its retail strategy, breaking away from the traditional model to build Prada 'epicentres' to reflect the house's cutting-edge products.

The mission was to reinvent the retail experience by introducing all that recent technical innovations had to offer, housed in breathtaking design. Prada commissioned Dutch design guru Rem Koolhaas to build its New York store in 2002.

The defining feature of the store is the 'wave', a huge curving floor that swoops from street level to basement. Shoppers are also struck by the wallpaper, featuring blown-up floral silhouettes and a pixellated colour scheme that changes every eight months.

The innovative architectural elements are accompanied by high-tech wizardry, which includes glass fitting room doors that transform from transparent to opaque at the flick of a switch. Visitors come to the store to admire both elements, making the epicentre the meeting place that Prada strove for, a place that surpasses the mere commercial to become a public space and a destination in itself.

Project: Ian Schrager Hotels, Worldwide Client: Ian Schrager Designer: In house team and collaborators

such as Philippe Starck Year: 1984 onwards

Ian Schrager, originally famous for starting the legendary 1970s New York nightclub Studio 54, has succeeded in creating a new genre in hotel experience.

He says: 'My philosophy of what a hotel should be is based on a series of simple concepts. They have been regarded in the industry as groundbreaking but for me they are timeless.'

'I had the luxury of coming into this business as an outsider with no preconceived notions. This allowed me to rethink and reinvent things every step of the way. I got to be a bit subversive and create hotels the way I wanted, without being constrained by convention. I'm still passionate about what I do. I still want my hotels to provoke and entertain.'

'I want the experience of visiting one of my hotels to be more like seeing a great movie, reading a wonderful book, or watching a memorable play not just as a place to sleep. But a place where you feel an honest, emotional connection. Where you feel like you are an integral part of the magical story that is unfolding around you - because you are.'

Project: Third Space, London Client: Nick Jones Designer: Collen H and Hamp Year: 2001

The Third Space in London's Soho opened in June 2001 to deliver an alternative space dedicated to healthy hedonism.

It is a deluxe, state-of-the-art club for physical and mental well-being, spanning more than 40,000 square feet over four floors and with facilities ranging from an indoor climbing wall to a holistic medicine consultation centre, dance classes, a boxing ring and an in-house DJ.

It's a place to: 'Work out and unwind before facing the challenges of metropolitan life or heading off for a night

out. A unique one-stop-shop for health and fitness which balances energy and action with tranquillity and wellbeing.'

The luxurious offering of Third Space raises the bar for traditional health clubs, presenting a unique bespoke experience that combines the facilities of a fitness centre and relaxation spa with calm, spacious design and the comfort of a boutique hotel.

Project: friendsreunited.com Client: Friends Reunited Designer: In house team of Steve and Julie Pankhurst and Jason Porter Year: 2000

Friends Reunited represents a highly successful virtual brand experience as the essential communication tool for anyone looking to reconnect with the experiences of their schooldays.

Joint creator Steve Pankhurst points out: 'While the British are generally reserved, we are also very nosy. Everyone wants to know what old classmates are doing.'

By directly tapping into people's curiosity about their old friends (and enemies), the Friends Reunited experience also provides an opportunity to explore our own 'personal brand'.

Creating something of a revolution online, Friends Reunited rocketed from zero to 8.6 million registered users in a period of just over three years, and continues to grow with hundreds of thousands of new members joining every year.

website:

www.friendsreunited.com

Project: Topshop flagship store, London Client: Arcadia Group Designer: In house Year: Rebranded 1998

Topshop owns the world's largest fashion store at London's Oxford Circus. Selling affordable and trend-led British high street fashion, Topshop was recently named Fashion Retailer of the Year for two years running.

One of the key ingredients in Topshop's success is its vision of shopping as entertainment and the unique Topshop experience includes a café, radio station, nail bar, a vintage range, Topshop TV channel, VIP changing rooms and personal style advisors.

As brand director Jane Shepherdson comments: 'Topshop works because it is totally accessible and unpretentious, and we aren't scared of reinventing ourselves. We know that our customers want to see something new every time they visit, so we plan to have hundreds of new styles hitting the stores every week.'

In keeping with this, the flagship Oxford Circus store introduces, on average, 300 new lines and attracts 180,000 visitors each week.

Project: Selfridges, London Client: Selfridges & Co Designer: In house plus collaborators Year: Rebranded 1994

Selfridges is one of the most famous names on the British high street, its Oxford Street branch welcomes around 15.2 million shoppers a year.

Selfridges is fundamentally a 'house of brands' - more than 3,000 are currently on offer - and also has in-store restaurants, bars and cafés as well as acting as a host to cutting-edge promotions such as 2003's 'Body Craze' promotion.

The last few years have seen Selfridges transform itself through a series of planned experiential programmes. In the summer of 2001 they adopted the theme of 'Tokyo Life', and in summer 2002 they embraced the films, colours and music of Bollywood.

By staging exciting experiences to refresh and invigorate the customer experience, they attracted new customers and encouraged repeat visits.

**Project: The Microsoft Home Client: Microsoft
Designer: In house team Year: 1994**

Situated on the company's Redmond campus, Microsoft's high-tech 'house of the future' is a showcase of future technologies set to transform our everyday lives. The six rooms of the home contain 'scenarios' that could become commonplace in the next five to ten years, with technicians on hand to demonstrate their use.

Visitors are treated to demonstrations of everything from the latest in interactive entertainment systems to a wardrobe that keeps you updated on which of your outfits are clean and a fridge that orders your milk for you.

Woven into the displays are subtle messages about business models that are possible if consumers embrace Microsoft technology, with the latest remodelling of the home, completed in 2004, emphasising Microsoft's vision of 'seamless computing.'

The home is not open to the public, but more than 10,000 Microsoft customers, business partners and journalists, as well as government officials from nearly every country, have visited since its opening.

**Project: The Samsung Experience - New York Client:
Samsung Designer: Imagination (US) Inc Year:
2004**

The Samsung Experience is a sleek 10,000-square-foot permanent venue, situated on the third floor of the stunning Time Warner Center, in the heart of Manhattan, New York.

The Samsung Experience offers a unique, interactive and creative environment that allows consumers to experience Samsung technology and demonstrates how technology

can enhance their lives, work and home environment.

Visitors are encouraged to use state-of-the-art interactive kiosks, to create their own film media and play with any of the consumer electronics in a low-pressure environment. Unlike other technology retail outlets, the Samsung Experience is an 'UnStore', which means there are no cash registers, no payment plans and nothing is for sale.

The ground-breaking interactive brand experience has already won rave reviews from young New Yorkers and press. This is the first major space that the leading Korean Technology Company has built in the US and it is already considering opening similar showcase stores in other cities.

**Project: The Weather Project Client: Tate
Modern/Sponsored by Unilever Designer: Olafur
Eliasson Year: 2004**

The Weather Project was the fourth in a series of Unilever-sponsored exhibitions for the impressive Turbine Hall area of the Tate Modern art gallery. Created by artist Olafur Eliasson, the hall was transformed from a huge exhibition space into an interactive experience.

At one end of the hall, a vast, glowing orange semi-circle seemed to hover in a hazy mist. The half-circle form was reflected in mirrors, which were suspended across the entire ceiling and which transformed the semi-circle into a huge sun-like sphere.

As well as reflecting the glowing sphere the mirrors also gave the optical illusion of a never-ending space. For this popular exhibition, the boundary of the normal exhibition space had been transformed. Visitors weren't just viewing the installation but actually living and interacting within it.

Facts and quotes

Quotes

'A brand is what a brand does. We have to win by providing a great customer experience. That's how you build a great brand.' Arun Sarin, CEO, Vodafone

'Information's pretty thin stuff unless mixed with experience.' Clarence Day, Author and playwright, *The Crow's Nest*, 1921

'We view the experience of a Krispy Kreme store (where customers watch their donuts being baked behind glass) as the defining element of the brand.' Scott Livengood, CEO, Krispy Kreme

'Economics is (now) about emotion and psychology.' Robert Shiller, Professor of Economics, Yale University

'A great brand taps into emotions. Emotions drive most, if not all, of our decisions. A brand reaches out with a powerful connecting experience. It's an emotional connecting point that transcends the product.' Scott Bedbury, Brandstream (Formerly of Nike and Starbucks)

'Experience is not what happens to you but what you make of what happens to you.' Aldous Huxley, *Texts and Pretexts*, Harper & Brothers, 1933, ISBN 0006547397

'The history of economic progress consists of charging a fee for what once was free. In the full-fledged experience economy, instead of relying purely on our own wherewithal to experience the new and wondrous, we will increasingly pay companies to stage experiences for us, just as we now pay companies for services we once delivered ourselves, goods we once made ourselves and commodities we once extracted for ourselves.' Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, Harvard Business School Press, 1999, ISBN 0875848192

'The value in a value proposition is the value in the

customer experience not the value in the product. It is the experience of the customer that must be differentiated.'

Michael Lanning, *Delivering Profitable Value: A revolutionary framework to accelerate growth, generate wealth and rediscover the heart of business*, Perseus Publishing, 1999, ISBN 0738201626

'The future will fascinate. A place where experience becomes more important than information, truth more important than technology and ideas the only global currency.' Ralph Ardill of Imagination, *Insights*, Vol 1, Design Council, 1997

'One eye sees, the other feels.' Paul Klee, artist, 1879-1940

'Experience is never limited and is never complete. It is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every airborne particle in its tissue.' Henry James, novelist, *The Art of Fiction*, 1884

'Companies that speak in the language of the pitch, the dog-and-pony show, are no longer speaking to anyone... we are immune to advertising. If you want us to talk to you, tell us something. Make it interesting for a change.'

Christopher Locke et al, *The Cluetrain Manifesto: The end of business as usual*, Perseus Publishing, 2001, ISBN 0738204315

'The crucial dimensions of scarcity in human life are not economic but existential. They are related to our needs for leisure and contemplation, peace of mind, love, community and self-realization.' Fritjof Capra, cultural theorist, see

www.fritjofcapra.net

for more information regarding his work.

'Everybody experiences far more than he understands. Yet

it is experience, rather than understanding, that influences behaviour.' Marshall McLuhan, cultural theorist, cited in Stewart Brand, *The Media Lab: Inventing the future at M.I.T.*, 1989

Facts

A study of 1,097 consumers on experiential marketing methods was carried out online by independent research company My Voice in July 2004.

- 1 More than 80 per cent of consumers say experiential marketing is more personal than other advertising media.
- 2 A high proportion of shoppers (85 per cent) say they want the chance to touch, smell, taste or hear a product.
- 3 Some 64 per cent of those who have experienced the medium have gone on to tell someone else about the promotion or product.

Source:

www.myvoice.co.uk

An Experiential Marketing Survey, conducted by Sponsorship Research International (SRI) in 2003 found that:

- 1 Forty-three per cent of women said experiential marketing was most likely to cause them to purchase a product or service quickly, compared to traditional advertising channels (20 per cent) and direct mail (37 per cent).
- 2 After participating in a live event marketing experience for a product or brand, almost nine out of ten consumers agreed they would be more receptive to future advertising for that product.
- 3 Even Generation Y respondents, age 18-23, rated experiential marketing as their medium of choice for

influencing purchases

Source:

www.smallbusinessnow.com/how-to82.htm

US magazine *Event Marketer* published a survey conducted in 2004 by Auburn Hills, The George P. Johnson Co. and MPI on the level of confidence in the power and value of event marketing. These were their findings:

- 1 More companies are using events. Eighty-two per cent of US corporations are now implementing experiential marketing, up from the 76 per cent reported in 2003.
- 2 Event marketing represents (on average) 22 per cent of the overall marketing budget, up a heartbeat from the 21 per cent reported a year ago. Thirty-one per cent of companies expect their event budget allocations to increase, while 55 per cent expect live spend to remain static. Approximately 24 per cent of companies spend up to five per cent of their total marketing mix budget on event marketing programmes; 46 per cent spend between six per cent and 25 per cent.
- 3 The industry looks to be poised for continued growth, with a combined 90 per cent of marketers preparing for greater or the same amount of use of events in the future. (Forty-two per cent of marketing executives indicate the future importance of event marketing is increasing. Forty-eight per cent say the importance remains unchanged.)

Source:

www.eventmarketer.com

Challenges

The following provides a summary of some of the key issues to be considered as part of developing a more effective and experiential approach.

From content to consequences True engagement with a brand is not just about the experience that is created but, crucially, about what we each make of the experience we have.

In this respect, the experiential designer must not only be concerned with the 'creation' and 'content' of a particular experience. But also with the 'context' within which it is to be staged, and the planned 'consequences' - in terms of how it seeks to encourage people to think, feel and behave after the event.

From messages to memories The initial considerations for experiential engagement are not what messages to communicate or what media should carry them. Instead, think about what could make a great brand/consumer 'moment'. Where would it be? What would it involve? How would it be staged? How would it be remembered? How would it be retold?

From selling to storytelling Experiential design requires us to think beyond the 'show, tell and sell' monologue of conventional marketing and consider how we might engage consumers with powerful stories that involve and intrigue them. Stories that enable us to feel greater affinity with the brand and - like all great stories - ones that we can make our own, adapt and pass on to others.

From premises to promises Location-based experiential design needs to be less rooted in a 'build it and they'll come' mentality and more about bringing to life the relevant and compelling propositions, promises and principles that such places stand for.

There must be a mind-set that appreciates the difference between building a shopping space and creating a vibrant consumer place.

From broadcaster to promoter Experiential design encourages brands to see themselves less as the editors, producers and broadcasters of pre-determined, one-way communication and more as the promoters of an evolving portfolio of shared experiences.

The aim is to create experiences that challenge and provoke, to provide buzz, drama, spectacle, inspiration and surprise. Experiences that get us communicating with and about the brand.

From departments to democracies As mentioned earlier, the experiential design 'agenda' for any business could cover an enormous variety of experiences, from the enhancement of existing communications, products and services at one end to the development of permanent brand places and completely new business ventures at the other.

Given this, one of the greatest challenges for any business will be to develop a culture that enables it to assess and realise its experiential potential.

This means adopting a more holistic, cross-functional and democratic way of team-working that is often more associated with entrepreneurial and fast-moving start-up ventures than it is with 'big' business.

Future trends

As the 'experience economy' develops, it will continue to present significant opportunities and challenges for those seeking to derive a sustainable competitive advantage through experiential design.

Organisational challenges Despite a genuine desire to tap into the full experiential potential of their brands, many businesses still operate within a compartmentalised manufacturing culture which restricts the potential for the kind of cross-functional teamwork that is essential for effective experiential design.

Over the next three to five years we can expect to see many more businesses embarking upon specific culture-change initiatives designed to create a climate within which brand experience and experiential design can flourish.

Commercial challenges If businesses are to fully exploit the potential of experiential design, they will need to rethink their approach to the segmentation and allocation of their total marketing and communication spend.

Traditionally, this has been done on the basis of spend in consumer-facing media (eg TV, print, direct marketing) as opposed to a more media-neutral, ideas-led approach to creating consumer spaces, places, moments and experiences.

The multi-disciplinary, multimedia nature of such experiences - along with the fact that many can produce revenue in their own right - will therefore require the development of more sophisticated commercial and financial models to identify how best to invest in their ongoing experiential strategies and programmes.

Skills and training Over the next three to five years, we can expect those wishing to profit from experiential design

to make a significant investment in the training of those they employ with this responsibility.

Areas of interest will include emotional-led research, ideas-led business planning and operational expertise and cross-functional team building.

Research and evaluation We can also expect to see a proliferation of new research models, techniques and specialist consultants in this field as corporations look for advice on how best to unlock their experiential potential. Key questions will include:

- What experiences should we be staging?
- How should these be staged?
- How should these be resourced and managed?
- What investment will they require?
- What is the brand and business return on this investment?

Co-creation and participation As the relationship between brands and consumers evolves, we can expect to see new genres of experiential offerings emerge. These will not only be 'staged' by the brand for the benefit of the consumer, but in some instances might be co-created, operated or even owned by the consumer on behalf of the brand.

In such instances, the brand may use its knowledge, skills and resources to network together its consumer base, enabling them to become 'actors' in experiences they have co-created for themselves, as opposed to merely being the 'audience' for a pre-staged experience.

Glossary

Brand - A unique and identifiable symbol, association, name or trademark which seeks to differentiate competing products or services. The brand gives rise to expectations in the consumer of the experience they will have of the product or service.

Brand architecture - The overall relationship between corporate brands, product brands, sub-brands or complementary brands.

Brand associations - The feelings, beliefs and knowledge that customers have about brands. These associations are derived as a result of experiences and must be consistent with the brand essence, values and positioning.

Brand attributes - Functional or emotional associations that are assigned to a brand by its customers and prospective customers. Brand attributes can be either negative or positive and have varying degrees of relevance and importance to different customer segments.

Brand awareness - A common measure of marketing communications' effectiveness. Unaided awareness is spontaneous; aided or prompted awareness is when a name is recognised among others that are listed or identified.

Brand character - The character of a brand is the answer to the question: 'What would your brand behave like if it were a person?' Character definitions usually revolve around personality traits - for example, outgoing or shy, curious or complacent, easy-going or irritable.

Brand commitment - The degree to which a customer is committed to a given brand in that they are likely to repurchase or reuse in the future.

Brand DNA - A term often used to refer to the collective

and fundamental components of a brand - such as attributes, character, benefits, differentiation and credibility.

Brand essence - The core characteristic that defines a brand. The brand's promise expressed in the simplest, most single-minded terms. The most powerful brand essences are rooted in fundamental customer needs. Brand essence is really about the primary customer experience and should be a resonant organising principle for a brand, not just a set of buzzwords or slogans.

Brand experience - The means by which a brand is created in the mind of a stakeholder. Some experiences such as retail environments, advertising, products/services, websites, etc are easily controlled by the business. Some like journalistic comment and word of mouth are less easily controlled.

Brand identity - A brand's unique system of iconography, images, messages or symbols that convey its essence. Not to be confused with the brand itself. Identity is to a brand like clothes are to the man - you can change your suit, but it's a lot harder to change your personality.

Brand image - A unique set of impressions that represent what the brand stands for. For brand 'users' this is based on personal experience of the product or service concerned (informed impressions) and how well this meets expectations; for 'non-users' it is based almost entirely upon uninformed impressions, attitudes and beliefs.

Brand personality - Brand image or identity expressed in terms of human characteristics. The attribution of human personality traits (seriousness, warmth, humour, imagination, etc) to a brand as a way to achieve differentiation.

Brand pollution - A term often applied to the general

'noise' and 'clutter' created by intrusive, uninvited and unappreciated marketing communication activity.

Brand positioning - The 'space' a brand is perceived to occupy in the hearts and minds of consumers. The distinctive position that a brand adopts in its competitive environment so that its target market can tell it apart from others. Positioning involves the careful manipulation of every element of the marketing mix.

Brand relevance - Degree to which a brand has meaning to its customers.

Brand resonance - The quality of a brand that makes it more relevant to customers. The ability of the brand to connect with our deeply held, fundamental human beliefs and our search for meaningful experiences.

Brandscape - The total experiential reach and engagement of a brand. A term that encompasses all those who touch and interact with the brand including customers, suppliers, employees, competitors, re-sellers, distributors, partners, etc.

Brand strategy - The plan to build a brand that delivers against a clear set of business objectives which can be evaluated by clearly defined results and metrics.

Experience economy - The creation of brand experience strategies that engage customers in an inherently personal way - using goods as props, and services as the stage.

Experience design - An holistic, multi-disciplinary and multi-sensory way of bringing to life the essence of a brand, product or service.

Internal branding - The role of employees in brand definition and promotion. The practice of linking corporate brand to culture and values, thereby creating a platform from which to communicate to employees the brand vision and mission. Internal branding helps improve credibility

and strengthens the bonds of trust between leaders and employees.

Personal branding - A personal identity which stimulates precise, meaningful perceptions in its audience about the values and qualities which that person stands for.

What do I do next : Experience Design

By Ralph Ardill

Ralph Ardill is an internationally recognised pioneer of brand experience who has consulted, written and lectured extensively on the subject for over a decade.

FAQs

1 Where should I start when it comes to experiential design? Start by learning how to get customers to want to spend more time with you. Providing quality, convenience, usability and customer service are still important, but it's your brand's personality, attitude and sensory dimensions that are most likely to evoke a positive emotional response.

Deliver these functional and emotional benefits in ways that the customer regards as time well spent.

2 How can I identify what my 'experiential' brand propositions should be? Be absolutely clear about your fundamental brand truth and the causes and issues that you can uniquely and credibly champion with and on behalf of your consumers.

Brands have been making false promises to consumers through advertising for decades. Now they must experientially stand up for what they believe in if they are to evolve and grow.

3 How can I best involve my customers in the new experiences I create? Look at how you can match your experiential activities to the specific and localised needs of the communities in which you operate.

Also create initiatives that encourage your customers to take up the challenge with you - and once again, make

sure they regard this as time well spent.

4 How can I ensure that all my staff buy in to this new experiential approach? Conventional wisdom tells us to first define the brand, second to mass-communicate this to the market and third, deliver it to customers.

More recently, companies have realised the need for all their people to 'live the brand' by developing internal programmes and culture-change initiatives designed to turn strategic brand values into front-line behaviours.

The key challenge is to provide people with a brand framework within which they can improvise and be themselves, as opposed to turning them into overly scripted brand automatons.

5 How can I best motivate my people to continually develop and deliver a more rewarding experience for the customer? If your core experiential offer to the consumer provides a personal, tailored service (eg telephone banking), then you should also ensure that you 'walk the talk' when it comes to the experience your own people have of working for you.

In the above case, this might involve HR policies that tailor benefits and remuneration packages to individual employee life stages.

Furthermore, the ability to create positive re-enforcement and alignment between the employee and consumer experiences is likely to become a critical success factor for the consistent and sustainable delivery of valued brand experiences.

6 How will I know when it's working? While measuring customer satisfaction is a given for most businesses, the development of rigorous methodologies to measure customer experience is not.

By its very nature, such measures will need to look beyond quantitative sales measures and include much

more emotional and ethnographic criteria.

These might include sophisticated 'mystery shopping', random inspections and the detailed profiling of individual customer preferences and choices, such as not calling a particular customer at the office on a Friday afternoon.

This could enable each customer to set the 'ground rules' for if, how and when they would like the brand to engage with them as part of a new approach to Customer Experience Management (CEM).

7 What are the things that will set my experiences apart from others? Be willing to imagine and create new and original brand offerings. Hire employees for attitude and people skills before qualifications. Put passion before profits. Shake up and redefine what your industry is and can be (before someone else does).

Create experiences that provide deeper and more sustained transactions with people and that have an inherent value to us above and beyond closing the sale.

Above all, know that creating successful brand experiences - ones that really drive loyalty and profits - requires considerable dedication, effort and resources.

It will require new kinds of collaboration between marketing, human resources, finance and operations departments.

It will require the seamless integration of 'high-technology' with 'high-touch' human behaviour.

And it will require the courage to lead from the front, in order to deliver the real-time, real-life moments of every experience your customers and your people have of your business.

Top tips

The following tips have been drawn from more than ten years of theoretical and practical involvement in the emerging field of brand experience and experiential design and should provide a useful starting point for any business or designer looking to develop a more experiential attitude towards their work.

1 Be personal The central premise of all experiential design is to develop a more personal and unique one-on-one connection with consumers. Look for ways that you can help the customer enjoy creating a unique and bespoke experience for themselves.

A great example is the 'Build A Bear' children's toy store in the US, where the child is able to specify and customise their bear (eg specify eye colour, what kind of fur or what shape ears) in a highly creative and memorable way.

2 Be passionate We're only ever going to love those brands that really love what they do - whether it be Nike's passion for sport, Pret a Manger's passion for food or Agent Provocateur's passion for lingerie.

Look to create experiences that have a real passion and point of view about what they are, why they are and what they do.

3 Be imaginative As we become more immune to conventional marketing, we'll seek out those brands that are more imaginative in the way they engage with us - not only in terms of marketing, but also in terms of inventing new genres of products, services and 'occasions' for us to enjoy.

Sony's AIBO electronic pet dog, Nike's creation of the new 'sport' of Scorpion football or the Oki Ni fashion store which is for display/trial only - with all transactions made off-site and on-line - are all good examples of a more

imaginative and experiential approach.

4 Be relevant Experiential design is not just about standing out from the crowd and attracting attention. It is also about making a brand as deeply relevant to the customer at that moment as possible.

To sustain this heightened degree of relevance, brands will have to learn more about what we want, how we feel, our hopes, our dreams and our deepest aspirations and fantasies.

For instance, pop star Kylie stays relevant by working with the hottest image-makers in the music business.

Amazon stays relevant by learning more and more about us during each transaction as a basis for proactively suggesting ideas for future purchases.

5 Be genuine In an age of 'spin' and 'hype', we will increasingly be looking for brands to be more authentic and genuine in the way they conduct their affairs.

This may be rooted in the authenticity of the product (eg Guinness), the ability of a business to stick to its principles (eg Body Shop) or simply the sense of the spontaneity, 'realness' and 'buzz' that we get from the retail environment or transaction itself.

6 Be involved Experience is a two-way street and we will favour brands that give us greater and newer opportunities to become immersed in their worlds, as they also become more involved in ours.

A good example is Sony Playstation's positioning of itself not just as a high-tech games console but as a portal to enter a 'Third Place'.

While motorbike manufacturers Harley Davidson networks and nurtures its customer base by creating events, festivals and happenings.

Prada's Epicentre store in New York has positioned itself

not only as a cutting-edge store, but also as a cultural centre in its own right, providing an inspirational focus for localised events, lectures and shows.

7 Be memorable In an ever more complex, cluttered and competitive world, brands that provide us with valued moments and memories - which in turn become the stories we want to pass on to others - are most likely to flourish.

Standing in the Gravity Bar, for example, on the top of the Guinness Storehouse with a breathtaking 360-degree view of Dublin while enjoying a perfect pint of Guinness is a brand moment visitors will remember, treasure and tell their friends about for years to come.

8 Be famous Our culture's obsession with celebrity and 'reality' culture seems set to continue and accordingly, we'll look for an element of 'fame' - or indeed 'infamy' - within the brands we favour.

In the past this has taken on a quite literal interpretation through concepts such as Planet Hollywood or celebrity figureheads such as Richard Branson.

This trend is set to continue as brands develop and exploit new experiential concepts, ideas and properties that will not only help make them famous, but also provide valuable new commercial and communication opportunities.

9 Be responsible Our general ambivalence towards conventional marketing, coupled with our increasing distrust of 'spin' and the moral collapse of corporate giants (eg ENRON, WorldCom etc.) is fuelling our insistence that brands operate within a much higher and more transparent set of moral, social and environmental ethics.

Furthermore, we will expect companies to do this because they truly want to - not simply for fear of being 'found

out'.

The new BP 'Sunflower' identity and its environmentally led pledges, the recent riots outside NikeTown in the US and the Budweiser campaign raising a glass to the non-drinking designated driver are all symptomatic of how organisations will increasingly need to walk the fine line between what is good business and what is being a good business.

10 Be simple Last, but certainly not least, put simplicity at the heart of your endeavours to create more meaningful customer experiences. Make your experiences simple to communicate, simple to understand, simple to use, simple to enjoy and simple to tell to others.

This could be through simplifying a whole business (eg EasyJet), or simplicity in the aesthetics of product and store design (eg Muji), or just the belief in a simple consumer proposition and promise (eg the Japanese store called 'No Concept but Good Sense').

The ability of brands to make our lives simpler while tapping into our simple and enduring human needs will be another highly sought after and rewarded quality.

Reading list

Berndt Schmitt, David Rogers, Karen Vrotsos, *There's No Business That's Not Show Business: Marketing in an experience culture*, Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2003, ISBN 0130471194

Christian Mikunda, *Brand Lands, Hot Spots and Cool Spaces: Welcome to the third place and the total marketing experience*, Kogan Page, 2004, ISBN 0749442565

Martin Lindstrom, *Brand Sense: Build powerful brands through touch, taste, smell, sight, and sound*, Free Press, 2005, ISBN 0743267842

Nigel Morgan, *Destination Branding - Creating the Unique Destination Proposition*, Butterworth Heinemann, 2001, ISBN 0750649941

Bernd H Schmitt, *Customer Experience Management: A revolutionary approach to connecting with your customers*, Wiley, 2003, ISBN 0471237744

Scott Bedbury with Stephen Fenichell, *A New Brand World: Eight principles for achieving brand leadership in the 21st century*, Viking Press, 2002, ISBN 067003076

Thomas Gad, *4-D Branding: Cracking the corporate code of the networked economy*, Financial Times Management, 2000, ISBN 0273653687

Marc Gobe, *Emotional Branding: The new paradigm for connecting brands to people*, Allworth Press, 2001, ISBN 1581150784

Levine, Locke, Searls and Weinberger, *The Cluetrain Manifesto: The end of business as usual*, Perseus Publishing, 2001, ISBN 0738202444

Gian Luigi Longinotti-Buitoni, *Selling Dreams: How to make any product irresistible*, Simon & Schuster, 1999,

ISBN 0684850192

Joy Monice Malnar, Frank Vodvarka, *Sensory Design*,
University of Minnesota Press, 2004, ISBN 0816639604

Alan Mitchell, *Right Side Up: Building brands in the age of
the organized consumer*, Harper Collins Business, 2002,
ISBN 0002571528

Paul Nero, Neeta Patel, *Creative Business: The making of
addictive stories*, Financial Times Management, 2003,
ISBN 0273656716

Sean Perkins, Ralph Ardill, Adrian Caddy, *Experience:
Challenging visual indifference through new sensory
experience*, Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1997, ISBN
1861540000

B Joseph Pine III and James H Gilmore, *The Experience
Economy: Work is theatre and every business a stage*,
Harvard Business Press, 1999, ISBN 0875848192

Hamish Pringle, William Gordon, *Brand Manners: How to
create the self-confident organisation to live the brand*,
John Wiley & Sons, 2001, ISBN 0471496065

Otto Riewoldt (ed), *Brandscaping: Worlds of experience in
retail design*, Birkhauser Verlag AG, 2002, ISBN
3764366745

Bernd H Schmitt, *Experiential Marketing: How to get
customers to sense, feel, think, act, relate to your
company and brands*, Free Press, 2001, ISBN
0684854236

Bernd H Schmitt, Alex Simonson, *Marketing Aesthetics:
The strategic management of branding, identity, and
image*, Simon & Schuster, 1997, ISBN 0684826550

Nathan Shedroff, *Experience Design*, New Riders, 2001,
ISBN 0735710783

Shaun Smith, Andy Milligan, *Uncommon Practice: People
who deliver a great brand experience*, Financial Times

Prentice Hall, 2002, ISBN 0273659367

Shaun Smith, Joe Wheeler, *Managing the Customer Experience*, Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2002, ISBN 0273661957

Kevin Thompson, *Emotional Capital: Maximising the intangible assets at the heart of brand and business success*, Capstone, 2000, ISBN 1841120987

Daryl Travis, *Emotional Branding: How successful brands gain the irrational edge*, Prima Venture, 2000, ISBN 076152911

Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy: The science of shopping*, Simon & Schuster, 2000, ISBN 0684849143

Michael J Wolf, *The Entertainment Economy: The mega-media forces that are re-shaping our lives*, Random House, 2004, ISBN 0812932986

Further information

Companies *(This list is intended only to provide examples of companies operating in this sector, and should not be taken as a recommendation of their services.)*

The Imagination Group Leading brand experience pioneers and specialists, established in 1978, known for groundbreaking projects such as Guinness Storehouse.

25 Store Street, South Crescent, London WC1E 7BL tel: 020 7323 3300 website:

www.imagination.co.uk

Interbrand WPP-owned branding consultancy, established in 1974, specialising in a unique range of brand-related services and activities.

85 Strand, London WC2R 0DW tel: 020 7554 1000 website:

www.interbrand.com

The Edinburgh Consultancy Independent consultancy established in 1991. Known for brand experience projects including work for Coca-Cola and Bacardi.

91 East London Street, Edinburgh EH7 4BQ tel: 0131 556 9979 website:

www.edinburghconsultancy.com

Yamamoto Moss Established in 1979, this American-based company offers expertise to communicate brand messages across a variety of media.

252 First Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55401, USA tel: +1 612 375 0180 website:

www.yamamoto-moss.com

Organisations

The Brand Experience Lab The Brand Experience Lab is an agent of innovation that helps leading companies build and manage the most powerful, integrated brand experiences possible. It was created as a resource for clients and businesses to see and use a showcase of the latest and most groundbreaking technology.

website: www.brandexperiencelab.org

Entertainment Technology Center at Carnegie Mellon University

The University works closely with businesses and agencies to develop the latest artefacts that are intended to entertain, inform, inspire, or otherwise affect an audience/guest/player/participant.

website: www.etc.cmu.edu

Live Brand Experience Association The Live Brand Experience Association has been formed to maximise the impact of live brand experience as part of the marketing mix. It defines live brand experience as 'a live interaction created to communicate a brand's personality and values'.

website: www.lbea.org.uk

Centre for Creative Business A joint venture between London Business School and University of the Arts London, this centre was set up to inspire, educate and equip creative industry entrepreneurs, to help 'the best of the best' in building more scalable, profitable and sustainable businesses.

website: www.ccbusiness.org/home.htm

Centre for Research in Brand Marketing This centre based at Birmingham University Business School is well known for its studies on brands and brand experiences.

website:

www.business.bham.ac.uk

European Centre for the Experience Economy

Founded in September 2001 as part of the Prima Vera Research Program of the University of Amsterdam. The centre created a location and network for fundamental academic research on experiences and transformations in their broadest sense, as distinct economic offerings.

website:

www.experience-economy.nl

Fast Company Magazine Regular features and articles concerning cutting-edge marketing, branding, design and communication.

website:

www.fastcompany.com

Global Brands A global partnership of business schools who deal with brand and brand experience research.

website:

www.globalbrands.org

Harvard Business School An excellent archive of brand and business thinking.

website:

www.hbs.edu

Institute for Brand Leadership The Institute for Brand Leadership is an independent centre for brand education. It was established in 1997 by Alan Bergstrom to promote brand excellence.

website:

www.instituteforbrandleadership.org



Willott Kingston Smith Regularly produces surveys on media neutral planning and brand experiences.

website:

www.kingstonsmith.co.uk

Annual events

Getting Real in the Experience Economy - March 2006, US The national conference and exhibition for trade show and event marketing professionals. Register online via the website.

The Exhibitor Show, Hall-Erickson Inc, 98 E. Naperville Rd., Westmont, IL 60559 USA tel: +1 800 752 6312 fax: +1 630 434 1216 website: www.ExhibitorShow.com

Designing Experiences, 2005 ADPF Exchange - May, US Covering high-level business issues and building the skills needed to compete, this conference is designed for owners of design firms and the next generation of leaders.

Association of Professional Design Firms, 601 108th Avenue North East 19th Floor, Bellevue, WA 98004 USA tel: +1 425 943 3825 fax: +1 425 943 3878 email: danae@apdf.org website: www.apdf.org

thinkAbout 2005 - September, US Over the course of two days, executives gather to learn, share, and interact with other front-runners in the experience economy.

Strategic Horizons LLP, 105 Woodland Trace, Aurora, OH 44202-8076 USA tel: +1 330 405 2886 fax: +1 330 963 4991 email: thinkAbout@StrategicHorizons.com website: www.strategichorizons.com/SHthinkAbout.html

The Experiential Marketing Summit - April, US Top-level event marketers share their best practices, insights and experiences across all channels of face-to-face marketing.

Event Marketer Magazine, 33 South Main Street, Norwalk, CT 06854 USA tel: 203 854 6730 fax: 203 854 6735 email: webreg@customreg.com website: www.eventmarketermag.com/events.html

100% Design - September, London Exhibition promoting and supporting a London-wide celebration of



contemporary design. Also runs a programme of stimulating seminars.

Reed Exhibitions, Oriel House, 26 The Quadrant,
Richmond, Surrey TW9 1DL tel: 020 8910 7910 fax: 020
8910 7823 email:

100info@reedexpo.co.uk

website:

www.100percentdesign.co.uk

Brand Summit - January, London A strategic forum bringing top-level players together, integrating brand strategy and business strategy to leverage brand power.

Centaur Conferences, 50 Poland Street, London W1F 7AX
tel: 020 7970 4770 fax: 020 7970 4799 email:

conferences@centaur.co.uk

website:

www.centaur-conferences.co.uk

European Marketing Directors' Summit - March, London Conference where top executives from some of Europe's best-known brands discuss challenges and strategies central to their organisation's achievements.

Economist Conferences, 15 Regent Street, London SW1Y
4LR tel: 020 7830 1020 fax: 020 7931 0228 email:

weurope_customerservice@economist.com

website:

www.economistconferences.com

Marketing Forum - September, Oriana ship Event where the UK's top marketing professionals come together to learn, network and identify new marketing service

companies.

Richmond Events Ltd, St Leonards House, St Leonards Road, London SW14 7LY tel: 0208 487 2200 fax: 0208 487 2300 email:

marketingforum@richmondevents.com

website:

www.marketingforum.co.uk

Marketing Society Annual Conference - November, London A day of ideas and inspiration from top industry speakers.

The Marketing Society Limited, 1 Park Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0AR tel: 0208 973 1700 fax: 0208 973 1701 email:

info@marketing-society.org.uk

website:

www.marketing-society.org.uk

Retail Brand Experience Summit - June, London

Conference that looks at issues of making brand experiences achievable in practice.

Centaur Conferences, 50 Poland Street, London W1F 7AX tel: 020 7970 4770 fax: 020 7970 4799 email:

conferences@centaur.co.uk

website:

www.centaur-conferences.co.uk

TILE: Trends in Leisure and Entertainment

Conference & Exhibition - June, Europe Conference and exhibition focusing on issues and future developments of the leisure and entertainment industry.



Andrich International, 51 Market Place, Warminster,
Wiltshire BA12 9AZ, UK tel: 01985 846181 fax: 01985
846163 email:

tile@andrich.com

website:

www.andrich.com/tile

World Creative Forum - September, London Part of
the London Design Festival, set to become an annual focal
point for the development of new ideas about design and
creativity.

World Creative Forum, The Gymnasium, 56 Kingsway
Place, London EC1R 0LU tel: 020 7014 5313 fax: 020
7014 5301 email:

worldcreativeforum@delegate.com

website:

www.worldcreativeforum.com

Competitions

IVCA Awards, UK IVCA Awards are recognised internationally as marks of excellence for effective business communication in corporate video, live events, multimedia projects, business television and websites.

website: www.ivca.org

Design Week Awards, UK Brand experience category now included in these annual awards.

website:

www.designweek.co.uk

Event Awards, Events Magazine and Haymarket Publishing, UK Leading industry magazine's annual awards - brand experience features highly in several award categories.

website:

www.eventmagazine.co.uk

website:

www.haymarketgroup.com

EX Awards, US/UK US/UK awards featuring many examples of brand experiences.

website:

www.eventmarketermag.com

FX Awards, UK Magazine with particular retail and interiors focus which regularly covers issues and topics relevant to experiential design and the experience economy.

website:

www.fx.co.uk

Marketing Brand Design Awards, UK UK-based marketing awards, sponsored by Haymarket Publishing's Marketing Magazine. Special category for brand experience.

website:

www.brandrepublic.com

website:

www.haymarketgroup.com

THEA Awards, US/UK Leading Themed Entertainment Association awards.

website:

www.themeit.com