

Soul as the Place of Experience. The Case of Enjoy Brand.

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Abstract

The modern world seems to encourage man to be increasingly rational, nearly robotic; just think of the constant scrolling of information in electronic devices or the information overload of human brains. However, humans are emotional creatures by nature; indeed, feelings and emotions need a voice to be expressed, so marketing uses this fragile and beautiful part of the human being to evoke them, to bring them to light, to engage consumers not only by entering their wallets, but also their innermost sphere, the soul.

The aim of this paper is to search for hope and a ray of positivity in a world that is so highly consumption-oriented; therefore, it will not refer to pervasive advertising, subliminal messages, but will try to find a product or service to buy that is exciting, that brings a memory or a stimulus of happiness, that can make the consumer feel conscious and protagonist of the purchase.

In this regard, it concerns experiential marketing.

This article will analyze what experiential marketing is, what are the fundamental tools to create a unique and unforgettable experience, the importance of the choice of environment and finally the case study of the Enjoy project, a pop-up store focused on engaging the emotions and inner world of the consumer in an experiential journey.

Key words: emotions, soul, consciousness, protagonist of the purchase, experiential marketing.

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I. Introduction

An experience is, by definition, something different, new, something that interrupts the daily flow and is therefore different from the routine.

Marketing tends to refer to the hedonic aspects, the consumer's great imagination, emotions and perceptions; thus, there is an intertwining of components that may include several spheres: primarily emotional, but also physical and intellectual.

Hence, companies create circumstances and opportunities to provide a pleasurable experience, but it should be emphasized that the customer experience will be the result of the emotions and reactions evoked in the consumer by subjective perception, and will therefore vary from individual to individual.

So, it can be concluded that the experience a consumer will get is the total of several interactions: contextual factors (and therefore individual perception), characteristics of the subject, elements

of human interaction, and physical components of the experience itself.

Thus, in marketing, the concept of experience focuses on the analysis of consumer behavior.

However, it should be emphasized that people today seek constant novelty, engagement, and pleasure, and a company should be able to evoke them.

So, experience becomes an integral part of the evolution of human emotions and feelings.

In this regard, Pine and Gilmore identified two fundamental concepts that make it possible to define different paths of experience:

- Level of participation (passive or active).
 - Level of connection, favoring absorption (weak) or true immersion in the experience (strong).
- Thus, experience can be considered a mental and emotional event.

What Experiential Marketing is?

In recent years, competition has forced companies to increasingly differentiate their offerings in order to

win over consumers and establish stable relationship with them.

These differentiation efforts aim, among other things, to create a real customer experience. As a matter of fact, full customer engagement occurs by stimulating the customer's emotions, which affects the bond that is established with the company itself, aiming to increase loyalty in the future.

Thus, the customer experience becomes a huge field of competition, so much so that it represents a great new challenge for management, which long ago began to refine the tools of consumer analysis, logical design, offer and communications management.

Hence, experiential marketing suggests viewing the consumer as a whole subject, that uses cognitive as well as emotional and affective processes in the process of purchase, and admits the subjectivity of individual experience, placing the consumer at the center to later be able to understand their experience. This type of marketing focuses on use and consumption rather than on products, on types of experiences rather than just on product properties.

It values processes over goals, feelings over cold reasoning, believing to an extreme degree that positive experiences can unleash tremendous communicative force.

SEM and ExPro: Strategic Experiential Modules and Experience Providers

The levers used to reach the consumer are defined by Schmitt as Strategic Experiential Modules (abbreviated as SEM), which determine the marketing strategies that can be applied.

SEM are divided into five types:

- Sense Marketing: creates a sensory experience by attempting to stimulate all five senses;
- Feel Marketing: evokes affective experiences related to the brand, stimulates the inner feelings; known as emotional marketing.
- Think Marketing: refers the intellect, creates new stimuli and experiences for the mind of the consumer;
- Act Marketing: influences corporeal experience, a lifestyle.
- Relate Marketing: creates a relationship between a person and their perfect self.

They are enabled by tools called ExPro, i.e. Experience Providers, real points of contact between consumer and brand, categorized into communications, identity, products, co-branding, exhibition spaces, websites, and people.

CEM: Customer Experience Management

Theorized by Bernd Schmitt, CEM is the process of strategic management of the entire experience that a

customer gets when interacting with a product or the company itself.

The SEM and ExPro mentioned above are both managed through CEM.

Customer Experience Management is based on a thorough analysis and evaluation of the experience of the company's customers.

Its activity is mostly focused on various tools able to monitor the customer experience via all available channels and thus manage it, being able to act directly on the previously mentioned experiential modules (sense, feel, think, act and relate).

All this is designed to improve the customer experience and the customer's perception of the company.

It is divided into a number of stages.

Firstly, the experiential world of the customer should be analyzed; usually, the starting point is customer input: based on this, the company should integrate customer suggestions into its own strategies, so as to create the brand experience and the subsequent forms of relationship.

At the core is the ability to see the world as the customer sees it, i.e. from the customer's point of view.

In order to study the experiential world of the customer, an attempt to carry out research in a natural environment must be made, as marketing research conducted in purely artificial environment is subject to a number of distortions.

Thus, an endeavor to help customers engage their imagination should be undertaken, creating with it a different reality based on expectations of a future experience.

In this context, the company should remember the purpose of the experiential strategy, i.e. the type of experience it wants to provide.

Secondly, an experiential grid is built, which comprises a two-dimensional grid by means of which relationships between the SEMs and the ExPros are created in order to implement a holistic, hybrid experience.

Each type of experience can be enabled from any point of contact in the grid, given its own goals.

Thirdly, a brand is designed.

This process takes place through product availability, sensory and affective appeal and experiential communication in general.

The last stage is the structuring of the relationship with the customer to launch the experiential platform.

The customer's suggestions are of utmost importance here to make sure that the CEM process starts properly.

To ensure the validity and effectiveness of this approach, CEM should be a seamlessly executed project that starts with the customer's suggestions,

proceeds with the creation of an experiential platform that considers customer feedback, and ends with an implementation driven by the customer's experience.¹

The Importance of the Environment

The environment plays a crucial role, as it is the main space where the brand experience can be represented through its theatricalization.

The environment is no longer something exclusive, it becomes a stage on which the imaginary world associated with the brand is portrayed, offering the consumer an exciting experience, including an emotional one.

It is important to wisely combine atmosphere and space, following a vision and systemic model that defines them as an important part of the experience, but at the same time does not fully coincide with it.

Indeed, by adopting an experiential approach to space, it is possible to take the risk of attributing to it the ability to create experiences with a high level of memorability, often by the means of architectonic structures lacking individuality and not predisposed to the experience.

The so-called stage is the set of physical equipment required to set up the stage.

The choice of furnishing, equipment, technology, and engineered systems is fundamental for creating an unforgettable experience, as they are the things that make the theme explicit.

In this way, the space is transformed from a simple container into a multifunctional place where the consumer is immersed in a second reality.

There are several basic types of environments:

- **Concept store:** the point of sale not only showcases the goods, but also creates real worlds that express the values, mission and history of the brand.
- **Coach store:** the point of sale, where the customer experience is focused on learning how to best use the products.
- **Headquarters:** the company may offer tours for its fans or interested people to get them acquainted with the culture and production processes, creating an unfiltered experience.
- **Corporate museums:** these environments become the narrative stage where the company's history, mission and products are told.

There is also a subcategory called pop-up stores, i.e. temporary stores.

The Case of Enjoy Brand: Pop-Up Store

The brand in question is Enjoy, which specializes in custom gold-plated 4-charm earrings.

Customization is a widespread approach in marketing as it gives the consumer the opportunity to be fully engaged not only in the purchasing process, but also in the design and creation of the product or service that will later become their property.

The brand logo refers to the sun, interpreted as a symbol of life and creation. It is extremely relevant for this project, as it refers to the concept of returning to the beginning of all things, to the self-knowledge. After all, only by understanding what man was created for can one nourish one's soul with the right values.

The Inner Path: Who We Are?

Enjoy offers an experiential journey inside a concept store in the form of a pop-up store, aimed at identifying the protagonist with the most marvelous and complex creature that exists: themselves.

The journey aims to awaken the inner self, through the selection of themes and values that one would like to make one's own; at the end of the journey, the selected values can be re-created in the pendants of custom earrings to match the chosen room. The rooms actually have colors; the customer chooses which value from the three rooms seems closest to them, and can pick earrings in the color of the room reflecting that value.

Target audience

Identifying the target audience is crucial for the proper direction of marketing and communication strategies.

The target audience for this experience is in the age group of 15 to 30 years old; this age group can be considered a period of deeper introspection and self-knowledge in the stage of personal development.

The final product (4-charm earrings) is aimed purely at a female audience.

However, since it is a pop-up store that anyone can visit, the target audience can be expanded to anyone who wishes to discover themselves.

Pop-up store: The Inner Path and the Emotional Memory

Pop-up store should be located on the main streets of city centers.

The choice of such a location has its own reasons. First of all, a pop-up store is a spatio-temporal

¹ Ferraresi M. e Schmitt B. H., *Marketing esperienziale: come sviluppare l'esperienza di consumo*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2006. (Ferraresi

M. and Schmitt B. H., *Experiential Marketing: How to Develop the Consumer Experience*, FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2006.)

tunnel, where value for the customer is created through customer engagement, allowing the latter to become the protagonist of the purchase experience. It also represents a marketing approach, and is therefore a customer acquisition channel and an effective sales incentive helping to bond with the consumer, and hence to build brand loyalty.

The main feature of pop-up stores is their temporary nature, which means that they represent an opportunity that cannot be missed.

The project is a horizontally developed pop-up store that symbolically depicts a path of growth within oneself, an introspective and progressive work of self-knowledge until reaching the last room (like the ultimate stage), where one can compose one's own 4-charm earring embodying the values most felt during the experience.

The earrings represent an emotional memory that symbolically encapsulates the values perceived by the subject as most important.

Thus, The Inner Path is meant to encourage individuals to take a journey inside themselves, and if they wish, by purchasing the object, they can keep climbing towards their inner peace, always carrying something to remind them of the concepts they need to work on the most to free their souls.

Ultimately, this is the great message of hope: know yourself and you will find that you can reach and know your peace, your own truth.

The Rooms

In The Inner Way there are three rooms that represent real, emotional and sensorial experiences, where the protagonist of the experience will perform symbolic gestures that will encourage one to begin the journey inside oneself.

These rooms are the room of fear, the room of forgiveness and the room of trust.

These rooms were chosen because these three values, if they can be so perceived, are the most significant values in a life of a human being.

Fear is a force that can hold back the achievement of any goal, but when used properly it can be the drive to achieve it.

Trust is the glue in relationships with other people, but not only: also, with the individuals themselves in their inner world, closely related to the concept of self-esteem and, therefore, belief in themselves.

Forgiveness is one of the most important values in life, especially the ability to forgive, if not others, then ourselves, since only forgiveness leads to the liberation of the soul.

II. Conclusion

Based on what has been mentioned, it is safe to say that the winning companies have always been and will be those who understand what modern consumers require: not just products and services, but unique and memorable experiences that can evoke positive feelings, engage senses and give them the strongest emotions.

In conclusion, experiences allow to satisfy, through brand identity, needs that are no longer related to the mere provision of products or services, but are more and more focused on the life of individuals, and even the case of Enjoy brand attempts to trigger a path of introspection that can improve the state of soul of the protagonist of the experience.

Thus, experiential marketing makes it possible to give human existence an exceptional value by engaging the senses, going beyond everyday life and evoking real symbolic universes full of new meanings, contents, emotions, and values.

Experiences are capable of evoking not only emotions, but also reflections that remain in the mind of the individual who has experienced them, being formed precisely as an emotional memory.

In fact, if it is properly formed, experience remains in memory, acquiring the connotation of memorability.²

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