

**Model: The Experience Realms**

Type of model: Brand model (structure model)  
 Author(s): Pine, J., Gilmore, J.  
 Domain: Internal branding

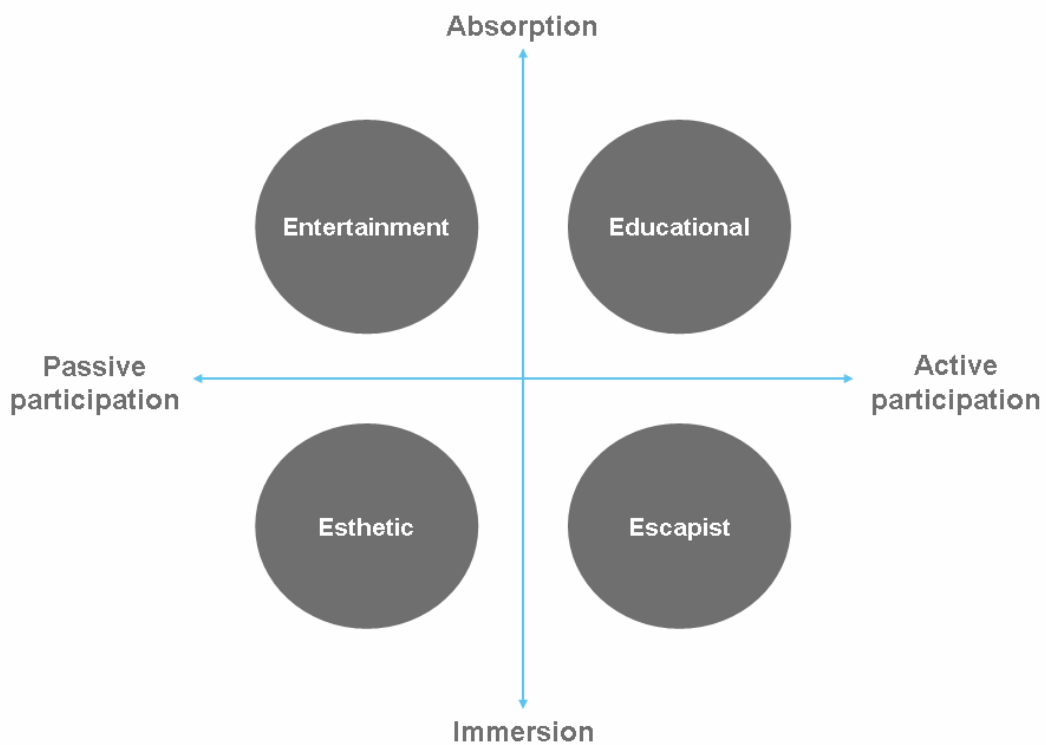


Figure 1: ‘The Experience Realms’ according to Pine and Gilmore.

The so-called brand experience model devised by Pine and Gilmore identifies four realms that can prove helpful when developing (brand) experience. Building a brand experience can, on the one hand, help reinforce the internal brand image employees have (internal branding). On the other hand, it can also boost the brand image in the eyes of consumers (external branding). In their classification of experiences, Pine and Gilmore discern two dimensions that, when combined, engender four realms (see Figure 1). The first dimension relates to the extent to which consumers are willing to engage in an experience (active vs. passive). In the case of active participation, a consumer will personally influence the experience, such as in a debate. When a consumer's participation is passive, he will not be able to exert any direct influence on the experience, such as when watching a movie at the cinema. The second dimension covers the extent to which a consumer feels/is part of the brand

environment (absorption vs. immersion). *Absorption* refers to a situation where the consumer's attention is attracted to such an extent that he absorbs the experience (such as narrowcasting in supermarkets). *Immersion* means that the consumer becomes a physical/virtual part of an experience (such as in the case of a holiday). The four realms into which brand experiences can subsequently be classified, are respectively: entertainment, educational, aesthetics and 'escapist'. It should, however, be noted that the most attractive experiences contain elements from all four realms.

#### Realm 1: Entertainment

These are the brand experiences that most consumers consider entertainment. These experiences are largely consumed passively. The degree of attention a consumer will have for these experiences is medium to low. The consumer, in any case, never becomes an integrated part of the experience. It is more a spectacle unfolding before the consumer's eyes, as happens in a circus, cinema or exhibition. Companies/brands that have built a brand environment that is (mainly) located in this realm include: Heineken (brand experience at former brewery), Amstel (with its chummy/sociable concept, their ads featuring the ball pit for men to hang out in whilst their wives do women stuff like picking out curtains, and the 'Heeren van Aemstel Live' music events). And brands such as Disney (with its theme parks), the Keukenhof (the world's largest flower garden) or the Efteling theme park are also examples of brands offering this kind of passive experience.

#### Realm 2: Educational

This realm houses brand experiences that place learning (or the transfer of information) centre stage. The person concerned/consumer takes in experiences that unfold before him (absorption), and also assumes an active role (active participation). These brand experiences are all geared towards active learning, self-development and acquiring knowledge. In principle, educational institutions and centres of excellence are a good match with this realm. Examples of brands/brand experiences (other than education providers) that have mainly based their brand experiences on this realm include: OMO detergent with its so-called 'playground society'. OMO claims that playing outside in the playground is good for children ('dirt is good'). They use this platform to present all sorts of activities, games, information for children and parents etc. All with an eye to stimulating children to play outside, and informing parents of the benefits of that. Providers of complex products, which traditionally involve a lot of explanation about financial risks, and naturally lead to consumers assuming an active attitude (Rabobank, Interpolis Insurances).

And then there is the Ikea brand, which has built a brand world based on this realm. The 'Ikea experience' is a learning experience, because the consumer is taught to use the Ikea concept and choose, retrieve and build furniture independently. In short: explanation of the logistics is key in this brand experience.

### Realm 3: Escapist

In this realm the consumer undergoes an experience of escaping from reality. The brand experience here leads to the consumer becoming fully engrossed in his/her experience. The consumer becomes an active part of his environment (both physically and virtually) and assumes an active attitude (meaning he can directly influence proceedings). This realm is roughly marked by action, thrills and adrenaline. Traditionally, games (virtual reality) and extreme sports (base jumping, mountain climbing, parachuting) fall into this category. But gambling and betting also fit in here. It is therefore no surprise that brands such as Microsoft (Xbox), Sony (Playstation) and Nintendo (Wii) have based their brand worlds on this realm. Apart from that, there is the 'Holland Casino experience', which offers consumers a temporary foray into the world of glamour and glitter (allowing the consumer to forget about reality for a few hours). And finally, the brands Nike World (Panna Street Football Tournament) and 'Adidas World of Football' (at the World Cup 2006) also come under this realm.

### Realm 4: Aesthetics

Aesthetic experiences (immersion quadrant / passive participation) see consumers immersed into a certain event, happening or environment. But the consumer's role in the experience will largely be a passive one. The consumer will hardly be able to exert any influence on the event, if at all. This mainly leads to experiences targeting feelings. Key concepts in this context are: style, taste, beauty, design, art, etc. An example of an experience that fits in this realm is a visit to a museum, or going to see an exhibition/exposition. Brands that have mainly based their brand worlds on this realm include H&M (with its special collection and collaborations with top designers/models). And Apple (store experience), Volkswagen ('Autostadt' in Wolfsburg), Red Bull (with its Air Race), Philips (Sense & Simplicity events) and Bavaria Lager (F1 City Racing) also dovetail with this realm.

*Reference(s)*

Pine, J., Gilmore, J. (1999), The experience economy (work is theatre & every business a stage). Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Massachusetts.\*

Winter, E., Weijden, W. van der (2008), Authentieke organisaties, echte merken (hoe internal branding wél werkt).[Authentic organisations, real brands (how internal branding really works)]. Van Duuren Management, Culemborg.\*

\*: available in the EURIB library.