From Engagement to Advocacy

How brand experience centers create brand ambassadors

by Sophie Brookover

SOME OF THE MOST NOTABLE GROWTH IN THE ATTRACTIONS INDUSTRY comes from brands outside of the traditional attractions space. Under the umbrella of brand experience centers—ranging from museums and factory tours to hands-on installations and theme parks—companies are increasingly using immersive environments to extend reach and deepen consumer engagement.

Bart Dohmen, managing partner at TDAC and IAAPA Education Committee member, describes a successful brand experience center, or brand house, as "a commercial that works to change the visitor into an ambassador of that brand." While a traditional advertisement may offer only seconds to convey a message, a brand house can provide "one or two hours to really get people into the brand." At the same time, Dohmen cautions that experiences that feel overly commercial can alienate visitors. Brands that prioritize authentic storytelling—rooted in history, place, people, and culture—are better positioned to create emotional connections that guests carry forward and share with others.

Common Threads Across Brand Experiences

Representatives of brand experience centers from companies like Volvo, Formula 1, Cimory Dairy, Conservas Pinhais, and Cacao Show shared lessons learned from developing brand-specific attractions. Across sectors and regions, common themes emerged that helped companies in their journeys to connect consumers with brands.

Emotion Through Immersion at Cacau Show

One of the boldest statements of purpose among brands expanding into the attractions sector comes from Alê Costa, CEO and founder of Cacau Show. The Brazil-based chocolate company leader



describes the company as not "merely a chocolate manufacturer, but as a true ecosystem of happiness." Building on the operation of eight indoor shopping center parks and multiple themed hotels, the brand is now focused on developing Cacau Park. The full-scale theme park is set to open in 2027 outside of Sao Paulo and envisioned as the company's "ultimate destination."

This ambitious project blends thrill rides with emotional storytelling, supported by a partnership with Dutch manufacturer Vekoma and storytelling embedded in the design of the park's "authentic, engaging physical spaces." Among the park's signature attractions is Ghost Rider, a launch coaster that attains a top speed of 120 kph. The park's other attractions will include an optical illusion-based mad house ride, a family roller coaster, and a flying theater.

Cacau Park is designed as "a grand sensory journey from the bean to the heart," with five themed areas tracing key moments in chocolate's history, from antiquity to future innovation. Even the queues will be programmed with educational content, allowing visitors to learn about chocolate processing or biscuit manufacturing while they wait. Costa describes the holistic approach—from themed hotels to attractions for all ages—as a strategy to create effective memories that leave visitors feeling "enchanted, welcomed, and inspired."

Accessibility as a Strategic Priority

Accessibility is central to that vision. Costa emphasizes that innovation and safety will not come at the expense of affordability, noting that international theme park travel remains out of reach for many Brazilians. Costa says it's important to bring "that global standard of quality" to Brazilian soil, which is wrapped into Cacau Park's goal of welcoming three million visitors annually.



CIMORY DAIRY

Cimory Dairy

Pricing accessibility is also a priority at Grand Prix Plaza in Las Vegas. Austin Brown, vice president of marketing for Las Vegas Grand Prix, Inc., notes that ticket pricing and free parking are two facets of the 39-acre multiuse complex's focus on attracting casual Formula 1 fans, with an objective of encouraging them to "engage more deeply" with the globally popular sport. Prices for Grand Prix Plaza's suite of attractions—the F1 X immersive design and simulated drive experience and the F1 Drive karting experience—start at $37, and free parking is not easy to find in Las Vegas. Grand Prix Plaza also offers a variety of activity packages for F1 Drive to appeal to a variety of budgets and racers ages 12 and older. The a la carte structure allows visitors to customize their experience



CACAU SHOW



Cacau Park

while supporting the broader goal of growing Formula 2's U.S. fan base, which now includes races in Miami, Las Vegas, and Austin, Texas.

Designing Entry Points for New Fans

Entering its second full year of operations in 2026, Grand Prix Plaza in focused on expanding entry points for new audiences, particularly sports fans introduced to the sport through the Netflix series "Formula 1: Drive to Survive." F1 race watch parties held at Grand Prix Plaza, which are free to attend, have been "a tremendous success," according to Brown.

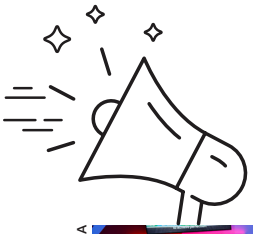
At the same time, Grand Prix Plaza's attractions are designed to meet the expectations of the core Formula 1 fans. Technology investments include widening the F1 Drive kart track to allow for overtaking and incorporating a segment of the same circuit used during the Las Vegas Grand Prix. Within F1 X, visitors can view historic race cars on loan from the Petersen Automotive Museum and design custom cars in a studio developed with Brian Burke Creative.

Turning Heritage Into Experience at Conservas Pinhais

High-tech solutions, however, are not prerequisites for a successful brand experience center. Conservas Pinhais in Matosinhos, Portugal, has leaned into the heritage of the 100 year-old sardine company at its combined canning factory and brand house. In 2010, owner Jakob Glatz realized they "have something truly unique that needs to be shown to the world." Small-group tours allow visitors to observe the brand's fully artisanal sardine-packing process, guided by staff working within the original 1920s factory.

Glatz and his team worked with architects to ensure the experience remained rooted in local identity. This choice ensured that Conservas Pinhais could rely on telling the brand's story "without too much technology that could hide the authenticity of our brand and our identity." The brand's commitment to an artisanal approach also played a role in keeping the experience low-tech and infused with a human touch. After watching an award-winning introductory film about the brand's history, visitors are primed to connect with factory staff, especially women on the production floor who take pride in demonstrating their craft. The tour's script, developed with filmmaker and creative advisor Thomas Dirnhofer, guides visitors through the brand's history with a clear storytelling arc.

The experience concludes with guests hand-wrapping their own cans of sardines using packaging that's



GRAND PRIX PLAZA



Grand Prix Plaza



CONSERVAS PINHAIS

Conservas Pinhais

remained unchanged since 1935. This tactile, behind-the-scenes interaction reinforces tradition and creates what Glatz describes as "deep impressions and lasting memories."

Evolving a Legacy Brand at World of Volvo

Volvo, another historic brand, has a long history and "a great heritage story to tell," says World of Volvo Chief Experience and Operating Officer Viktoria Wallner. The former Volvo museum focused primarily on history, while the new World of Volvo experience that replaced it is designed to "nurture the brand, its legacy, and its future."

The building housing World of Volvo in Gothenburg, Sweden, was designed by Denmark's Henning Larsen firm to honor "Scandinavian design values," including Allemansrätten, "the Swedish concept of freedom to roam in nature." World of Volvo also maintains a commitment to Gothenburg as a whole. World of Volvo offers free concerts in partnership with the Gothenburg Opera and City Symphonics in addition to programs for students through area universities. Wallner says that although World of Volvo's originally expected audience was adults—especially Volvo employees—World of Volvo now regularly welcomes families, tourists, senior groups, and corporate visitors.

Cimory

Cimory Group's entrée into the attractions sector went hand in hand with the company's inception in 2006. CEO Wenzel Sutantio described the "a small restaurant directly above our first milk processing facility" as a small-scale vertical integration enabling customers to enjoy "fresh milk straight from the factory below as part of the dining experience." The restaurant gained quick popularity and taught the company that "direct, memorable consumer experiences are far more impactful than conventional advertising alone."

Over Cimory Group's first 20 years, their brand experience portfolio has grown to 10 attractions across Indonesia, including restaurants, a tourable factory, theme parks, and gardens featuring miniatures of world landmarks appealing to casual visitors as well as social media content creators. Cimory Group's core business is now in dairy and meat products, brand DNA reflected in the farming themes of all of their attractions. Sutantio couldn't provide specifics about attractions in progress, but confirmed that their current "focus remains on strengthening and scaling our presence within Indonesia". In the long term, Cimory Group continues to maximize the broad appeal of their attractions while offering visitors factory pricing on their products within their theme parks, an "integrated model [that] shows how attractions can be built as an extension of a larger brand platform, rather than as isolated entertainment assets."

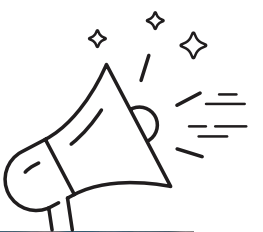


CIMORY DAIRY

Cimory Dairy

Turning Visitors into Advocates

Brand engagement centers are less about spectacle alone and more about sustained relationship-building. Whether through high-tech immersion, hands-on craftsmanship, or community-focused programming, successful brand houses translate values into experiences that resonate emotionally and socially. For attractions operators and brand leaders alike, the takeaway is clear: When storytelling, accessibility, and authenticity are aligned with business objectives, brand experience centers can transform visitors into long-term advocates. FW




WORLD OF VOLVO

World of Volvo