



embracing brand experience in western europe

Leveraging the Medium to Emotively Connect with Audiences

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FreemanXP

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At Freeman, we believe meaningful experiences have the power to evolve brands.

They help build relationships, inspire action, and create bold new economic opportunities for businesses, communities, and individuals.


Brand experience connects people, organisations, and cultures in ways that create positive change on a global and local scale. The medium also teaches us what our audiences value, and increasingly, it's experiences over possessions.

This is why brand experience is now an important part of the marketing mix — more and more corporate marketers and associations are investing their resources into live events, in order to cut through the clutter of modern life and emotively connect with their audiences.

But don't take our word for it. To better understand the power of brand experience, we commissioned SSI to conduct an independent study of a range of B-to-B and B-to-C marketers in a variety of roles across Western Europe, North America and Asia, to uncover how they perceive brand experience, and it's clear that the outlook for our industry is positive.

Over the following pages, we delve into four key themes specific to Western Europe that we've identified from the 2017 Freeman Global Brand Experience Study, backed up by statistics and commentary from industry experts at agency FreemanXP, ExCeL London and London & Partners.



63% of respondents' rate brand experience as effective at marketing product(s). 





The percentage of marketers assigning between **21%** and **50%** of their budget to brand experience is expected to rise by **72%** over the next **3 to 5 years**.



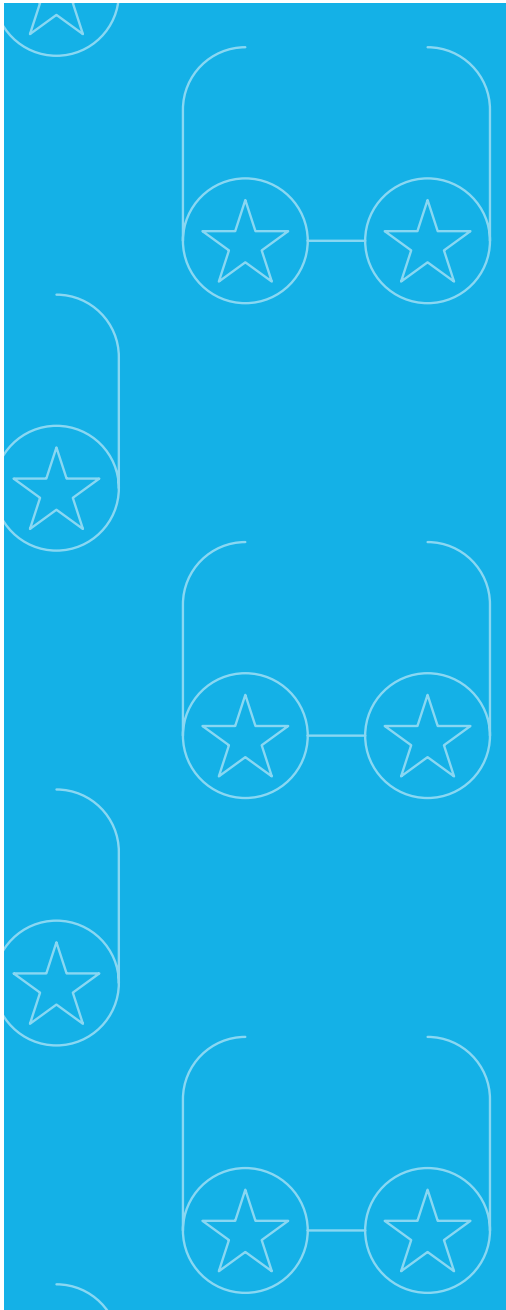
44% of those we surveyed measure the success of a brand experience every time.

93%



of marketers agree that the ability to personalise brand experience helps create a stronger connection to the brand.* 

* 2017 Freeman Global Brand Experience Study



Deborah Kelly
Head of UK Sales

Deborah handles international events and conventions for London & Partners for the UK market. She works with leading event agencies to unlock London for events and experiential brand activations, and also supports our Partners by helping to secure even more award-winning international business events for London. An MPI Board Director, Deborah joined London & Partners in 2014 from Marketing Manchester where she spent six years working within both the marketing and business tourism teams.

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James Rees
Executive Director,
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James is responsible for the sales and marketing strategy for the Conference & Events Division of ExCeL London, which has now become a globally recognised leader in the congress and convention industry. He is also a Board Director of ICCA, the International Congress and Convention Association, the leading trade body in our industry and publisher of the annual ICCA rankings, a benchmark for city and destination performance in attracting international events.

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Claudia Stephenson
Vice President,
Business Development

Claudia joined Freeman in 2005 and made the move to the UK in 2011, where she heads up the FreemanXP EMEA business development team. The secret to Claudia's success lies in her ability to integrate varied resources and talents to produce highly impactful events that drive business results. Furthermore, having grown up in both Europe and the U.S., she is uniquely equipped to support clients looking to present themselves as leaders on an international scale.

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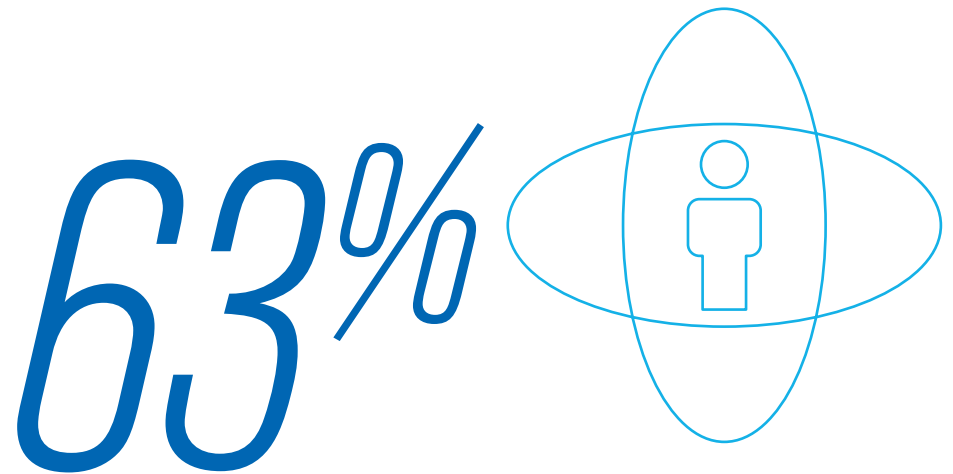
Trend 1: Marketers find brand experience effective

The study found that 63 per cent of respondents rate brand experience as effective at marketing product(s), engaging their target audiences, building brand strength and accomplishing overall marketing goals.

“One common trend across the board is the industry’s commitment, in terms of time and budget, to creating strong and coherent brand experiences that utilise traditional communications and new digital tools.”

James Rees, ExCeL London

At ExCeL London, we are fortunate to welcome many events throughout the year, from association meetings to corporate events and exhibitions. One common trend across the board is the industry’s commitment, in terms of time and budget, to creating strong and coherent brand experiences that utilise traditional communications and new digital tools. A recent example is the Sage Summit Tour, where the brand was considered at every touch point, from the marketing campaign, which resulted in 98 million social media impressions, to the uniforms, staff training, and design of the event spaces. From an association’s perspective, brand experience activations create important awareness about key issues; for example, the London Heart Trail for the European Society of Cardiology promoted the importance of heart health and well-being to visitors and Londoners alike.



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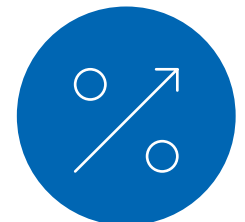


Claudia Stephenson, FreemanXP

Brand experience is incredibly powerful, because in a world where our attention spans are shorter than ever before, it is able to grab and maintain our attention through compelling storytelling. Brand experience has the unique ability to immerse people in an organisation's world, which in turn facilitates meaningful connections between a brand and its target audiences. These live interactions give people the opportunity to truly get beneath the skin of a company and its product and service offering. This allows audiences to understand a company's values and ethos in a highly sensory way, which transforms them into loyal customers and brand fans.

Deborah Kelly, London & Partners

We see brand strategy, data, and customer experience as having gained more importance to brands over traditional marketing methods such as advertising. Few places on earth can lay claim to such a diverse range of settings and creative minds as London. As a leading global city for so many industries, and with unparalleled footfall and media recognition, London is the destination of choice for experiential campaigns and innovative activations that brands are bringing to the capital.





Trend 2: Personalisation is key but under utilised

Our research uncovered that 93 per cent of marketers agree that the ability to personalise brand experience helps create a stronger connection to the brand; meanwhile, 91 per cent agree the approach can drive increased sales.

“Brand experience enables marketers to engage with attendees in personalised ways through everything from the content programme they deliver to the technology that delegates engage with.”

Claudia Stephenson, FreemanXP

Brand experiences enable marketers to engage with attendees in personalised ways through everything from the content programme they deliver to the technology that delegates engage with — an important consideration given that more than ever, consumers expect to receive information and content that is tailored to them.

Our teams are all too aware of this, and conduct extensive research into the different personas attending an event, to ensure that the wants and needs of each and every individual are catered for across the pre-, during- and post-event stages. There is, however, a delicate balance of providing personalised content without being too intrusive.

93%

of marketers agree a personalised brand experience can create stronger connections.* 



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* 2017 Freeman Global Brand Experience Study



Deborah Kelly, London & Partners

As consumers, millennials are generally more willing to share their personal data, if the content is relevant. If brands are sensible and transparent with what is done with personal information, and there is a clear benefit, both parties can be satisfied. Building a personalised customer engagement strategy is no small undertaking. While it might not be relevant to some brands today, in the future it certainly will be, and we need to ensure that events and experiential activations remain at the heart of brands' strategies.

James Rees, ExCeL London

In our experience, the most prominent sector to use personalisation is definitely corporate, particularly in the technology industry. This could be due to a corporation's ability to tap into the latest technologies but also its need to stand out in a very competitive marketplace.



Trend 3: Budget allocation for brand experience is increasing

56 per cent of marketers state that they dedicate up to 20 per cent of their overall marketing budget to brand experience. The percentage of marketers assigning between 21 per cent and 50 per cent of their budget to the medium is expected to rise by 72 per cent over the next three to five years.

“In London alone, the spend on brand experience activities in the capital in the year from 1 June 2015 to the end of May 2016 was £81.4 million.”*

Deborah Kelly, London & Partners


In London alone, the spend on brand experience activities in the capital in the year from 1 June 2015 to the end of May 2016 was £81.4 million*. With an increase in event and experiential enquiries between June and September 2016, London's CVB received a 41 per cent jump in enquiries compared to the same period in 2015. This combined with data from the latest [Bellwether report](#), which shows event marketing budgets increased by +4.9 per cent in the first quarter of 2017, indicate the spend by brands on experiential is set to increase.

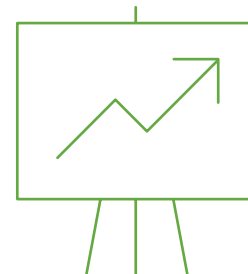
☆ Credit Source:


London's Experiential Playground Report

Published by Event and London & Partners, June 2016



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* 2017 Freeman Global Brand Experience Study



Claudia Stephenson, FreemanXP

These figures come as no surprise, as despite somewhat challenging external political and economic conditions of late, we continue to see a rise in demand for brand experiences. We regularly receive enquiries from existing clients who are looking to increase the number of events they execute annually, as well as new clients who have seen, read, or heard about the effectiveness of the medium first-hand and are eager to enter the space. It's also great news that many marketers plan to increase their current spend in the future, as they look to engage people in new ways.

James Rees, ExCeL London

As a venue, we are responding to the demand from our clients to provide more branding opportunities, both externally and internally, so that organisations can immerse their delegates in their event experience from the moment they arrive until the time that they leave. Interestingly, this now also applies to the style and service of the food and beverage offering. Venue catering is no longer about feeding the masses. Meeting planners want to be able to offer a unique experience on a large scale, which fits with their brand. Across the board, clients are demanding different ideas, from using nutritious, locally sourced produce, to street food and immersive catering concepts, delving into the minute detail of the catering experience for their attendees.

Trend 4: Measurement is important, but marketers struggle to effectively measure

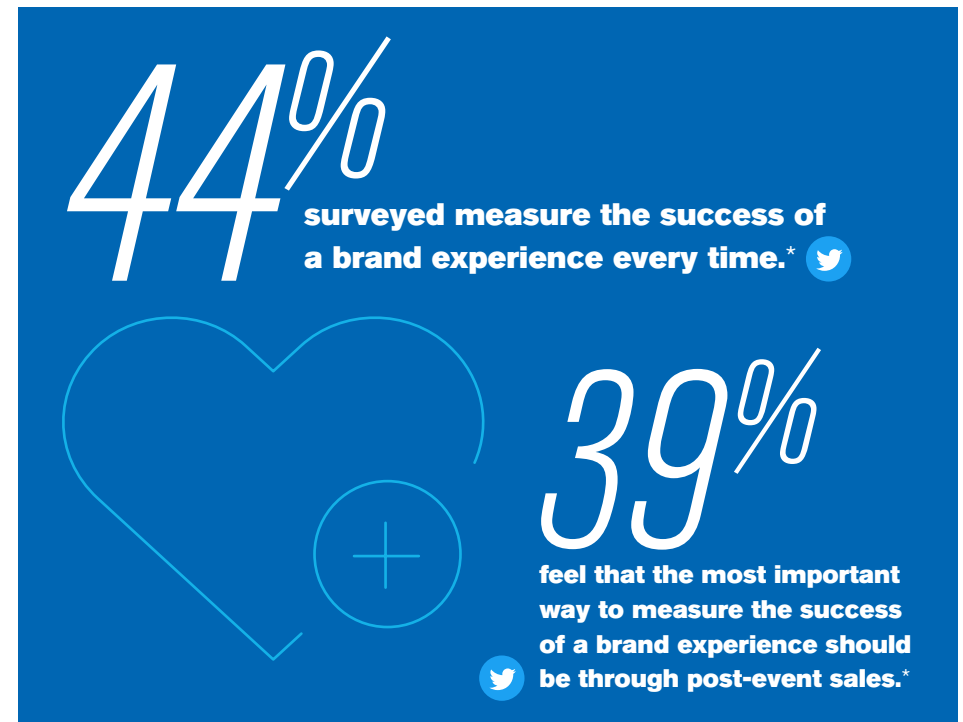
Only 44 per cent of those we surveyed measure the success of a brand experience every time, and those that do measure focus on methods such as purchase intent (30 per cent) and lead generation (30 per cent). Thirty-nine per cent of the interviewees feel that the most important way to measure the success of a brand experience should be through post-event sales.

“While success can mean different things to different people and organisations, the importance of a robust event measurement strategy cannot be underestimated.”

Claudia Stephenson, FreemanXP

While success can mean different things to different people and organisations, the importance of a robust event measurement strategy cannot be underestimated. It allows us to both demonstrate a return on investment (ROI) for our clients and determine the overall success of an event, ensuring we build on the experience year in, year out.

While in the past, event measurement may have been overlooked or a bit of an afterthought, it's now top of mind for our clients. Post-event sales are indeed a good indicator of event success; however, they also look to figures such as number of visitors, leads generated and meetings booked.



* 2017 Freeman Global Brand Experience Study

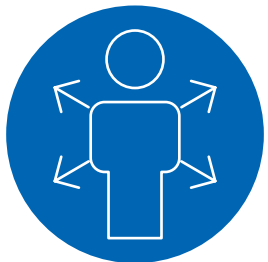
Deborah Kelly, London & Partners

Brand sentiment, social media reach and engagement, engagement by target audiences, PR value, public reaction, and positive engagement by passers-by and commuters also rank highly as measurable outcomes of brand activations.

James Rees, ExCeL London

We believe measurement is extremely important and have seen both positive and negative outcomes. For example, if events are not properly measured and are unable to demonstrate tangible value, we have seen them cancelled completely.

On the flip side, good measurement can demonstrate credible results ranging from conversion of leads and an increase in sales, to record figures for registrations and, in the case of medical associations, increased research submissions. Good measurement has seen events repeating and growing year-on-year, fully justifying the importance of live events in the marketing spend.



“



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— CLAUDIA STEPHENSON

want more?

DOWNLOAD THE GLOBAL STUDY HERE

About FreemanXP

FreemanXP uses the power of intersectional design thinking to create and deliver innovative, personalised brand experiences that drive results. Whether online or live, we connect individuals and brands in ways that accelerate engagement and create transformational change on a global scale. FreemanXP is backed by the reputation, stability and superior service of Freeman. We leverage Freeman's experience, relationships and unmatched global resources to bring a whole new level of flexibility and scale to our clients' programs. For more information visit: www.freemanxp.com/london

About Freeman

Freeman is the world's leading brand experience company. We help our clients design, plan, and deliver immersive experiences for their most important audiences. Through comprehensive solutions including strategy, creative, production and operations, and digital and event technology, Freeman helps increase engagement and drive business results. For more information visit: www.freeman.com