

First customer satisfaction survey in Second Life - insufficient customer care and opportunities for interaction between Second Life users and companies identified as the main weakness

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Hamburg – Second Life, the 3D online world, is currently the talk of the town and increasing numbers of brand manufacturers are planning and opening their own sites, branches and showrooms in the Second Life community. In a survey of 200 participants conducted by the agency Komjuniti, Second Life users (“avatars”) were questioned about their perceptions, their satisfaction with the products on offer and the brand content in the online community.

The first thing to stand out is that 72% of respondents expressed themselves as being disappointed with the activities of the companies in Second Life. Over a third of them were unaware of the branded presence and 42% said they thought it constituted nothing more than a short-term trend, lacking durable commitment from the companies. Just 7% consider that it has a positive influence on brand image and their future buying behaviour.

“Disappointing, but not entirely surprising,” comments Dr. Nils Andres, managing director of Komjuniti. “All the hype about Second Life in the traditional media has served to raise people’s expectations to a level that the technology and the companies taking part simply are not yet in a position to fulfil”.

Indeed, serious deficiencies were uncovered in the way Second Life users are dealt with. Participants told how they would like to be able to interact more with the brands represented on the site. The very fact that their anonymity is guaranteed led the avatars to exhibit a previously unseen openness and to demand a more intensive exchange and involvement. In addition, some of the brand sites on Second Life appear at times to have “died out”, leaving users with the impression that other avatars are not particularly interested in what the company has to contribute. Even high accumulated visitor numbers to these sites could not lessen this impression among participants in the survey.

“We were able to detect that companies are transferring their challenges like-for-like from the real world, without creating sustainable solutions for the virtual one,” says Dr. Nils Andres. “The brand sites on Second Life currently look like they’re being treated in pretty much the same way as advertising campaigns, placed with the hope of getting high visitor frequency and good PR scores”. The success of brands in Second Life, on the other hand, will depend on lasting engagement and well-thought out content management in order to generate sustainable interest among avatars. Only then will it be possible to create a positive brand experience. “Experiences and learning effects from real-world leisure and pleasure parks could serve as a very useful basis for planning for manufacturers,” says Andres.

The most positively judged were brands from industries such as hotels and retail. “These companies already have significant experience of location and experience marketing gained in the real world,” he continues. “This is the approach to marketing that is called for in Second Life activities, meaning that it makes sense to bring employees from traditional sales and event management departments into the planning process”.

The aim has to be to build communities around Second Life sites and look to serve them over the long term. Manufacturers

of brands therefore need to develop holistic concepts that take in the active involvement and management of Second Life users, guarantee long-term content management and therefore allow communities of Second Life inhabitants to grow organically. One-off promotional initiatives are punished over the long term with a lack of attention by Second Life users and can provoke a negative consumer backlash effect on the brands in real life.

About Komjuniti:

Komjuniti is a spin-off agency of the Brand Science Institute (BSI), specialising in the construction, strategic development and ongoing management of brand communities for its customers. Komjuniti combines on- and offline elements and uses special tools to measure the success of brand communities.

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