

Man-made surf parks and brand identity

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Abstract

There are four facilities in the world in operation utilizing Wavegarden technology of the Cove: Wave Park (South Korea), Urbnsurf (Australia), The Wave (United Kingdom), and Alaïa Bay in (Switzerland). They are spread all over different continents from Asia to Europe. Although they are using the same wave generating machine and technology originating from Spain, their brand identity has developed in their own independent ways. This article will analyze these four brand's identities of man-made surf park and its relation with Wavegarden.

Keywords: *Brand identity, brand equity, brand management, surf pools*

1. Introduction

The English word, “brand,” originally comes from the German word for burning. The verb used to mean “to mark with a hot iron” in late Middle English, then it finally gave rise to the noun meaning, “a mark of ownership made by branding.” Hence, a term for burning became “brand.” Today, the burning or the branding is so essential in every sector of industry including theme parks, clothing, technological devices, stationeries, vehicles—essentially everywhere in life. Therefore,

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branding becomes the part of marketing strategy which directly correlates to the customer preferences and brand loyalty.

However, unlike physical and tangible products such as vehicles, clothing and electronic devices, theme park brands for products and services are rather intangible. Therefore, to compare the brand identity of man-made surf parks, this paper focuses on the physical and visible components of their brands.

Currently, there are four facilities in the world in operation utilizing Wavegarden technology of the Cove: Wave Park (South Korea), Urbnsurf (Australia), The Wave (United Kingdom), and Alaïa Bay in (Switzerland). They are spread all over different continents from Asia to Europe. Although they are using the same wave generating machine and technology originating from Spain, their brand identity has developed in their own independent ways. This article will analyze these four brand's identities of man-made surf park and its relation with Wavegarden.

To look at their relationships with Wavegarden, the research will focus on the brand promise delivered by the Wavegarden company to the four surf parks, that is to say, Wavegarden's clients. By so doing, we will identify what makes the brand unique and which message the park wants to convey to its customers, and explore the impact of the brand identity in the industry.

2. Brand identity of Wavegrden

First of all, to analyze the brand development journey of each of the four surf parks, Wavegarden's brand identity will be discussed; what exactly is the brand promise that Wavegarden delivers to its worldwide customers.

Wavegaden is a cutting-edge engineering company headquartered in the Basque Country in San Sebastian, of northern Spain. Despite competing surfing technologies developed around the world, Wavegarden is acknowledged as one of the industry leaders due to its innovative technology and its commercial deployment. Their wave-generating system

was developed utilizing computational fluid dynamics to simulate wave behavior, with scientifically designed lagoons to deliver the optimal conditions for its clients (source: Wavegarden.com). With its technology and dedication to R&D, their mission is to develop the best wave creation system to enable the construction of high-quality surfing parks regardless of their proximity to the ocean, and ultimately, to share the surfing experience with everyone and everywhere.

Wavegarden's two surf park prototypes are the Lagoon and the Cove, with both being patented. The Wavegarden Lagoon was deployed at their first surf park in Bristol, Surf Snowdonia, featuring a general rectangular swimming pool surrounded on all four sides with wavefoil technology. Then, with their second park, they developed Wavegarden Cove which featured increased number of waves per hour as well as larger wave height, shape, and length. The Cove features their specially designed triangle shapes, the design of which is a trademark feature of Wavegarden technology. The four surf parks to be analyzed deploy this Cove technology.

3. Brand identity elements and comparison of four Wavegarden's facilities

3.1 Brand identity and awareness

Name, sign, symbol, design or a combination of these allow consumers to identify the goods or services and to differentiate them from their competitors (Sabin Mindrut et al, 2015). Shiva N. (2005) states that the brand is not a tangible asset with physical characteristics and thus, the value of such cannot be ascertained due to the lack of physical components. This may seem to contradict the analysis of our work paper, but the brand identity is to be transformed in one of more of the following components: logo, apparel, signage, marketing collateral, message and product (Sabin Mindrut et al, 2015), and their components could be diagrammed in a model featured in Figure 1.

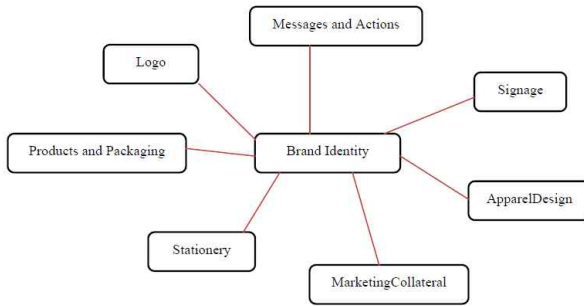


Figure 1. Brand identity elements(Sabin Mindrut et al. 2015)

To apply this model to the analysis of man-made surf parks, we are going to adopt the three elements of logos, products, and messages selectively.

3.2 Wavegardens' four surf parks brand identity analysis

3.2.1 Logo

With surfing, the one thing that pops up in one's mind is, of course, waves. Waves are the most essential and important component of surfing and surf parks as well. In the ocean, waves determine whether a beach could turn into a surfing destination or not. The beach should have a breaking point, but surf parks create its own breaking waves through technology. In this regard, surf parks should consider incorporating the image of waves in their logo.

Both The Wave and Wave Park incorporate waves in their logos, just as the originating technology company Wavegarden does. The next obvious image is, of course, surf. The park in Melbourne incorporates surf in their logo and combines it with urban to create the name "Urbnsurf." The fourth park in Switzerland, uses a bay to emphasize the artificial beach vibe of surf parks. The name Alaïa is inspired by the first

surfboards used by Hawaiians, and is based on the fact that surfing is related to other sports which incorporating boards including skateboarding(source: alaiabay.ch). In this regard, Alaïa Bay offers the “Alaïa Camp” program with five types including the skateboard, scooter, trampoline, mountain sports and surfing.

However, looking at their logo visualization, Wave Park and The Wave simply used characters, while Alaïa Bay and Urbnsurf feature a seal for their logo. Urbnsurf depicts the Wavegarden’s triangle Cove with waves generating to the left and right and featuring a Poseidon-like face with long curly hair and beard, complete with a crown and glasses (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Brand logo of four surf parks

The word “Urbnsurf” may or may not be featured around the circle. While this may depict the surf Cove, from the customers’ perspective, this design may not clearly convey that the facility is for surfing. In contrast, Alaïa Bay features a simple illustration of a surf board with their iconic location in the Alps. At Wave Park, their logo and name were rather selected by a simple vote among staff; the name, “Wave Park” being easy to read and remember to anyone who may not be so familiar with surfing culture. The logo features a stylized “W” which both evokes waves, and the shaka sign. The W shape is formed by four surfboards, with a surfer inscribed on

the first board. By adding 'park', the logo is very lengthy and the W is not very recognizable.

3.2.2 Messages and actions

Aside from their logo, a couple of these surf parks created their own unique messages, which appear to target digital media consumers. Urbnsurf uses '#SURFMORE' and Alaïa Bay uses '#SURFTHEALPS'. 'Surfmore' is readily understood in a country such as Australia where surfing is already an iconic Australian sport and pastime. And 'surfthealps' picks up the specific location of the Alaïa Bay which could be very visible and iconic in their surf park pictures. It becomes their must tags on Instagram, which uses the hashtag for identifying their posts. The Wave and Wave Park, on the other hand, have not developed their own unique messages.

3.2.3 Products

A strong brand leads to customer awareness of the brand, and can determine the level of loyalty to the brand. Brand awareness refers to the customers' capability to know the brand and purchase the products or services. In particular, brand awareness involves ensuring that customers understand the product or service categories (Keller, 2001).

To develop and marketing the products and packages of surf parks, the classification of levels of surfers and their development of products are shown in Table 1.

Surfers are categorized by their level of surfing as beginner, intermediate, advanced, and experts. Beginner lessons should be performed on white waves and the area is limited to the bay of the Cove.

Table 1. Products of surf parks

	Alaia Bay	The Wave	Wave Park	Urbnsurf
Bay		Beginner lesson	Beginner lesson	Beginner 1 session
		Beginner surf	Bay free surfing	Play in the bays
				Swim in the bays
Reef	Beginner lesson	Waikiki Lesson	Intermediate lesson	Beginner 2 session
	Waikiki session	Intermediate lesson	Level-up lesson	Cruiser lesson
	Malibu session	Intermediate surfing	Reef reef surfing	Intermediate lesson
	Advanced	Advanced surfing		Advanced session
	Expert session	Advanced plus and expert surfing		Expert session
	Pro session			
Miscellaneous		English Adaptive surfing	Diving pool, recreational water park	breath work technique

Wave Park comparably shows the less diversified program in the Cove while having other water recreational facilities beside the Cove such as diving pool and recreational water pools. The variety of water activities are wide at Wave Park, but consumer's brand awareness could be weaker because the brand "Wave" should target both consumers of surfing and other water activities as well. Among competitive brands in water park sectors, Caribbean Bay located in the Korea's first theme park Everland, and Ocean World water park in Vivaldi Park are the most recognizable and have already achieved a high level of brand awareness. However, from actual customers' reports of Wave Park, sales were prominent in surfing lessons

and surfs compared to other activities, which signifies that their brand awareness is currently very narrowed down to surfing while the company's target was to broaden the customers' categories. In addition, the surfing population in Korea is growing and reached 400,000 in 2019, and is anticipated to hit one million in 2021, when including recreational surfers. This means that Wave Park should be targeting recreational surfers and aim to increase their numbers; however their products are not diversified well enough, and recreational surfers are mis-categorized as either intermediate or advanced.

According to trusted sources like the ISA, the study revealed the distribution of worldwide participants by national figures: (source: SurferToday.com)

- US: 2.8 million surfers
- Australia: 1.7 million surfers
- United Kingdom: 500,000 surfers
- France: 450,000 surfers
- Spain: 300,000 surfers

Australia, where Urbnsurf is located, enjoys the highest population of surfers after the US. However, compared to Wave Park, it has developed a much more diversified program in surfing and in particular, the swimming in the Bay is very unique. Also, beginner lesson is classified into two sessions and intermediate sessions, as well as cruiser and intermediate. The Wave in England also shows similar classification of lessons. And, the Wave had an English adaptive surfing competition on July 8, 2021, proving man-made surf parks' potential for surf therapy, and bringing physical and mental health benefits of surfing. In this regard, the Wave Park program should be more open to considering the user's population rather than focusing on the current surfing population.

4. Brand identity elements impact

The four surf parks are the clients of Wavegarden and are found in different continents; therefore, they are not competitors to one another but rather can coexist and cooperate with one another. However, their brand development is going in totally different directions, with different product development because of their different and unique culture and surfing population. Strong surf culture and surfing population seem to develop strong brand identity but a weaker surfing culture and population seem to broaden the users profile but in different water activity sectors.

5. Conclusion

When one thinks of Disney, the first image that comes to mind is Mickey Mouse, whether it is at a theme park or at the movies. With the characteristics of theme parks, these images evoke joy and magic in visitors. Man-made surf parks rather overlaps with theme parks and sports venues, yet the magic comes from actual fitness results or physical improvement. Since surf parks are a new trend in the industry, each player should thoroughly analyze their potential user profiles and develop the brand identity. This will help them to identify the competitors and develop the marketing collaterals along with the brand identity.

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