

BRANDmania: Europe's largest B2B networking festival for licensing and collaborations

- An innovative event concept with fresh and powerful new ideas/offerings
- Inspiration, networking and insights into the latest trends across two days

On 24 and 25 June, BRANDmania will once again bring together key players from the licensing and brand worlds in Essen. Against the extraordinary industrial backdrop of the UNESCO World Heritage site Zeche Zollverein, the largest B2B networking festival for licences and collaborations builds on its proven concept, now for the first time under the new name BRANDmania. Brand owners, licensors and agencies will come together to spark collaborations, further develop creative ideas and generate cross-sector synergies. Exchange, know-how and experience are at the core of the event's versatile format, and are complemented by an inspiring programme.

Top-tier participants and strong brand worlds

"BRANDmania serves as the central platform for peer-level exchange, new partnerships and genuine business potential. We bring the right players together, from which the most exciting collaborations emerge," explains Managing Director Christian Ulrich. Participating leading international companies include Hasbro, Mattel, Paramount Global, RTL Consumer Products, Seven.One Licensing, Universal Products & Experiences, Warner Bros. Discovery and WildBrain CPLG. The Pokémon Company International, Studio 100 and Sesame Workshop also open up numerous possibilities for collaborations. The line-up is rounded out by exciting newcomers: F.C. Industries from Pakistan, JETRO Japan External Trade Organization, Kinder GPT, Living Puppets and TÜV Rheinland. Across the entertainment, fashion, food, media, publishing, toys, toy safety and sport sectors, networking takes centre stage.

Two days of inspiration, networking and experience

Attendees can expect a new multifaceted event concept; the tool bringing participants with shared interests and networking preferences together will be activated in mid-May. Both tickets and the programme are available via the official website: www.brandmania.events/en. A reduced-rate retail ticket is available for the trade. Katrin Störr, Head of BRANDmania, highlights the event's new features: "on-site there will be

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more networking lounges, varied experience areas and a few surprises to offer fresh perspectives. Exclusive screenings, including from Warner Bros. Discovery, will be showcased, along with a walking-act parade and activities around various brand anniversaries. BRANDmania will also make its mark gastronomically: both event-style street food and a variety of drinks are included with the ticket. The perfect finale to the first day is the BRANDmania Party, delivering a unique festival atmosphere that combines industrial heritage and innovation.

On stage: trends, insights and best practice

A central element is the newly conceived stage programme “The Stage” – presented and curated by Licensing International Germany. It comprises of talks, panels and best-practice examples across three thematic areas: “Licensing & Collabs”, “Brands, Fans & Audiences” and “Brands @ Retail”. Petra Strobl (Licensing International Germany) will kick things off with first insights into the figures and trends from the current “Global Licensing Industry Study 2026”. Ines Imdahl (founder of rheingold salon, market researcher & psychologist) will dispel prejudices under the headline “GenZ endlich verstehen” (Finally understanding Gen Z). Renowned retail expert Silvia Talmon will demonstrate how megatrends can be translated into genuine shopping experiences. Isabelle Tambue and Bülent Özdemir from the successful brand Essence will share best-practice insights into their “Social First” strategy under the motto “Fearless & Fun”. Further inspiration will come from the talk “Collabs that kick ass and blow your mind!” by Eva Stemmer and Jörg Meister (Collab Culture). The popular “blindmate” format is also back on the programme – presented by die Markenkuppler. This time Duolingo is searching for the perfect match.

Successful collaborations and new impulses

BRANDmania demonstrates how successful partnerships work through its BRANDbabys. Collaborations such as Rewe x Bavaria Media Licensing (“Frida Kahlo”), Undercover x WildBrain CPLG (“Wednesday – Black is my happy colour”), Schmidt Spiele x Gomazing (“Ludo” corporate games) or Haba x Studio 100 (“Maya the Bee”) illustrate the potential of cross-sector cooperation. A particular focus is the BRANDbaby Award, which was presented for the first time last year by Licensing International and BRANDmania. The

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Condor x Mattel collaboration (“Barbie”) received the title “BRANDbaby of the Year 2025” and is regarded as an outstanding example of a successful brand alliance.

“With its unique mix of networking, content and experience, BRANDmania is the central meeting place for the licensing and brand industry, and will once again be a catalyst for the future of licensing,” concludes Christian Ulrich.

Images are available at www.spielwarenmesse-group.com/media.

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About BRANDmania

BRANDmania is a B2B networking event in the field of brand collaborations, partnerships and licensing, which aims to bring together companies, brands and potential collaborative partners from different sectors. BRANDmania will take place on 24 and 25 June 2026 at the Grand Hall at the disused coal mine Zeche Zollverein in Essen.

Spielwarenmesse eG

The multifaceted positioning and international orientation of Spielwarenmesse eG is representative of the toy sector and other consumer goods markets. With its legal structure as a cooperative, the business is unique among trade fair companies and is highly successful. Its 60-member team operates from the ‘ToyCity’ of Nuremberg and is supported by representatives in over 100 countries. Its portfolio includes two major global fairs: the **Spielwarenmesse** in Nuremberg is the lead international event for the B2B sector, as is **SPIEL** in Essen for the B2C field. To these can be added **Kids India** in Mumbai and the **World of Toys by Spielwarenmesse** trade fair programme, which opens up new markets for manufacturers through joint activities in **Hong Kong, Tokyo** and **New York**. The Company’s own subsidiaries in the key locations of **China** and **India** ensure that appropriate expertise is available locally. With its accumulated knowledge and global network, the trade fair producer is becoming an ever stronger initiator and groundbreaker in the industry’s issues and trends. The most recent example of this is **BRANDmania** in Essen, which casts an unconventional and future-directed spotlight on the topic of licensing and partnerships. With its combination of events and online activities, Spielwarenmesse eG (www.spielwarenmesse-group.com) is active all year round.