

## **From trends to tattoos: Licensing festival BRANDmania kicks off with plenty of highlights**

- The hub for networking, brand partnerships and licensing in Essen
- Key international players provide insights into future thematic areas
- Interactive experiences, live music and all-inclusive street food

When street performers wander through the halls, brands come together and the most exciting licensing themes for the coming years take centre stage, it's time for BRANDmania! On 24 and 25 June, Europe's largest B2B networking festival for licensing and partnerships will bring together the industry's key players at the Zeche Zollverein site in Essen. With an expanded programme, new interactive zones and a growing number of participants from a wide range of sectors, the Spielwarenmesse Group, the organiser, is continuing its success story.

### **A promising start**

BRANDmania kicks off the licensing festival with a grand mascot parade. Katrin Störr, Head of BRANDmania, will then welcome the participants and share a few opening reflections. An increasing number of international licensors and brand companies, such as Hasbro, NBC Universal and Mattel, are using the platform to host their own exclusive screenings. "The day before the event, they will preview the themes, characters and franchises that will shape the markets over the next two years to their partners. As a result, BRANDmania is increasingly establishing itself as the hub for early trends and future analysis," says Katrin Störr. At the same time, the event is expanding beyond its traditional industry boundaries and attracting an increasing number of participants from the fashion, textile, food and pet supplies sectors. The renewed commitment from all key retailers underscores BRANDmania's importance as a key hub for networking, collaboration and new business opportunities.

### **All the big names**

From global entertainment brands to innovative newcomers – BRANDmania is once again bringing together a diverse industry crowd this year. Key players such as Hasbro, Mattel, Paramount Global, RTL Consumer Products, Seven.One Commerce, Universal Products & Experiences and Warner Bros. Discovery will be in attendance, alongside The Pokémon

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Company International, Studio 100 and Sesame Workshop. The first highlight awaits even before you step inside the event venue: with Kinder GPT, HillcrownAI presents an extraordinary experience with a surprise twist. This creates valuable links between entertainment, fashion, food, media, publishing, toys, toy safety and sport. The large “BRANDbaby Lounge” demonstrates how such successful partnerships are implemented in the market, showcasing selected product examples. Also featured is the latest collaboration between Universal Music and Mattel, who recently launched “Barbie loves Helene Fischer” at Tchibo.

### **Inspiration on the big stage**

“The Stage” is the go-to venue for the latest industry insights, fresh ideas and strategic takeaways. Presented and curated by Licensing International Germany, the programme brings together talks, panel discussions and best-practice examples focusing on three key themes: “Licensing & Collabs”, “Brands, Fans & Audiences” and “Brands @ Retail”. Petra Strobl, Managing Director of Licensing International Germany, will kick things off with exclusive insights into the “Global Licensing Industry Study 2026”. The MarkenKuppler’s popular “blindmate®” format will add to the excitement. This year, the spotlight is on the language-learning app Duolingo, which is setting out to find the perfect brand match. The “Collab Culture Lounge” hosted by Eva Stemmer and Jörg Meister also provides an opportunity for in-depth discussion, offering fresh perspectives on community building, brand management and partnerships. Another programme highlight is the “Metal Business Club”, a relaxed networking event for all fans of the music genre.

### **Brands right at the heart of it**

BRANDmania is all about experiences – and there are plenty of them this year. A host of branded activities based on various franchises, such as “The Hobbit”, “Let’s Dance”, “SpongeBob SquarePants” and “The Care Bears”, invite visitors to get involved and explore. The Kosmos Exit Truck will also be there. A new addition is the BRANDmania Ink Lab, where creativity literally gets under your skin; participants have the chance to get a tattoo of their favourite licensed design free of charge. Rock Antenne will be providing the perfect musical entertainment throughout the day. BRANDmania also has plenty to offer on the culinary front: from street food and a candy bar to a coffee bike

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and the popular bar on the first floor, everything is included in the ticket. Visitors can relax and get ready for the evening in the new "Glow Up Area" before the Urban Club Band provides live music to round off the first day of the event in style. The legendary BRANDmania Party combines industrial heritage, innovation and a festival atmosphere.

"BRANDmania's offering is a prime example of the courage to bring brands to life in surprising ways. The event combines top-quality content, valuable business contacts and extraordinary experiences to create an industry format that is unique in Europe," sums up Christian Ulrich, Member of the Executive Board at Spielwarenmesse eG (Spokesperson).

Tickets and the programme are available on the website: [www.brandmania.events](http://www.brandmania.events).

Images are available at [www.spielwarenmesse-group.com/media](http://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](http://www.spielwarenmesse-group.com)) is active all year round.