

Press Release

Future Labs by ECE:

Focus on the Customer

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Changing media consumption habits and the increasing importance of e-commerce makes brick and mortar retailers asking for innovative solutions to connect the online world with offline retail. We are probably faced with one of the most impressive changes in retail since decades and in this fast changing environment it is necessary to think outside the box and tread new paths to move a step forward in differentiating and refining our malls.

In order to keep pace with that situation, we have chosen two of our shopping malls (Alstertal Einkaufszentrum Hamburg and Limbecker Platz Essen) to become so called Future Labs.

ECE's Future Lab project is a strategic approach with a broad variety of initiatives to reinvent and enhance customer experience. From a unique smartphone app with Click & Collect to 3D Wayfinding solutions and iBeacon-based navigation or Digital Playgrounds – all services follow the overall vision of the ideal connection between online and offline channels.

In our Future Labs we try out new technologies and innovative services to enhance the shopping experience in our malls. Therefore, we follow an experimental approach based on trial and error. Ideas that are well-received by our customers will be further developed and implemented at other shopping malls. Services which do not appeal to the customers will be replaced by new ones.

The focus is always on customer needs. It is not just about meeting their needs – it is about exceeding them. Following the customer journey, there are different touch points that basically belong to four main areas like mobility, orientation, convenience and entertainment. In all of those four fields we launch innovative initiatives and services.

One of our main services is the unique smartphone app for our shopping malls. To be relevant for the customer the app is providing personalized offers and pushing them just

at the right time by using location based services. Moreover, the Click & Collect feature enables the customer to shop anywhere and anytime. An exclusive selection of offers from certain retailers can directly be paid in the app by using PayPal and picked up at any time in store. This gives the customer the convenience of online shopping while keeping the key benefits of offline shopping like personal service, touch and feel or immediate availability of products.

Furthermore, the latest features of our center app are following the convenience approach by offering the user a highly advanced indoor navigation solution based on iBeacon technology. Other features like the Car Finder and Easy to Park, a RFID based solution, are services that make parking much easier. By using the required parking card with RFID-chip (Radio Frequency Identification) there is no need to wait at the barriers in the car park for a ticket or going to the paying machine after shopping.

To support the use of the smartphone app in the mall we do have free WIFI access in our Future Labs.

The Selfie Photo Box is one of our most popular entertainment services across all our customer groups. A background motive or video clip, such as a dancing robot, can be selected and the customer can transport himself into the scene via a green screen. A selfie photo is then taken which can be sent free of charge via email or be scanned with a QR-code. Other Entertainment services are the Digital Playgrounds where children can influence the game shown on the LED floor by their movements.

A great service to meet the orientation needs of our customers is the 3D Wayfinding System. It is an easy and convenient way to search for stores and products in the mall. Furthermore, it is not just showing the quickest way to the shops the customers asked for, it is even showing it in a real 3D perspective.

Another initiative towards orientation and convenience is our InfoGate where customers can have a live video chat with service staff based in a call center. It is like a skype conversation and customers can get all the information regarding shops or any information required.

Our Same Day Delivery Service makes shopping really convenient. We want people to enjoy the shopping without the "schlepping". They can just leave their shopping bags at the drop off point in the mall and get it delivered on the same day during the evening hours.

About ECE

ECE has been developing, building, leasing, and managing shopping centers since 1965. The company is European market leader in the field of inner-city shopping centers with 196 managed shopping centers, 43 of which are managed by MEC METRO-ECE Centermanagement G.m.b.H. & Co. KG in a joint venture with METRO Properties. At all ECE centers, approximately 20,000 retail businesses generate approximately 23 billion euros in annual sales on an overall sales area of 7 million m². Among these shopping centers are Potsdamer Platz Arkaden in Berlin, Milaneo in Stuttgart, Promenaden at Leipzig Central Station, and Marmara Park in Istanbul. In the business areas, Office, Traffic, and Industries, ECE's record of success includes among others the new ThyssenKrupp quarter in Essen and the German headquarters of the global corporation Philips in Hamburg.

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