

The tourist function in a car factory Audi Forum Ingolstadt example

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Abstract. The article presents modern car industry and tourism issues. It is a case study of a multifunctional centre – the Audi Forum Ingolstadt, situated next to a large Audi factory in Ingolstadt, Germany. It was created in order to promote the Audi brand and provide service for the customers picking up their cars in Ingolstadt. It also performs tourist functions as it focuses on providing service for the people who arrive to visit the car factory, the Audi museum mobile and the region. The centre offers specific tourist products based on particular experiences, which may be included in industrial tourism. The facilities in the Audi Forum Ingolstadt are tourist assets in themselves; they may also be seen as tourist infrastructure. It is also a place where numerous events are held, attracting tourists. The Audi Forum Ingolstadt is an example of a multifunctional centre with distinctive tourist functions, situated on the premises of a large modern car factory.

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1. Introduction

The authors present two, seemingly unrelated, yet increasingly converging issues: tourism and modern car industry. Nowadays, tourism plays important social, environmental and economic roles, globally and locally (Hall, 2005; Gaworecki, 2007). Many positive tourism functions, such as promoting products or generating income and jobs, have been noticed by large car manufacturers.

Modern car production has been driven by the global growth of demand for cars. According to OICA, in 2000–2012, it increased by 44% (from 58 million in 2000 to 84 million in 2012) (<http://www.oica.net/>). Nowadays, the principal spatial trend is a relocation of both car assemblies and component manufacturing from the core (western) countries to new territories (see: Nag et al., 2007; Jürgens, Krzywdzinski, 2009), due to the global economic crisis (Pavlínek, Ženka, 2010). Nevertheless, the core countries still control a substantial part of the world car-production and remain the source-countries of the capital and technologies (Lorentzen, Gastrov, 2012). Controlling the global automotive sector, these countries became the leaders in introducing industrial tourism to traditional car-assembly locations as a tool for communicating with stakeholders and the public (Otgaar, 2010) and an important part of their business relations.

This article was written in order to answer the research question whether the customer service centres, located at large car factories, could become tourist attractions and tourist products as a result of the implementation of innovative marketing strategies by automobile companies. To answer this question, the authors described a form of industrial tourism developing on the premises of a modern car factory. The text is a case study of the Audi Forum Ingolstadt – a public and multifunctional world of discovery, located in the German town of Ingolstadt and consisting of different services and facilities for visitors, customers, employees and fans of Audi.

The main aim of the article is to present:

- industrial tourism,
- modern car industry as a tourism development factor,
- the Audi Forum Ingolstadt,

— examples of tourism functions in other modern car factories.

The article was based on the authors' own direct observation of the authors and interviews with the press speaker of the Audi Forum, conducted in summer 2013. The information and promotion materials used by the authors were provided by the company's press office. An important source was an on-line inquiry, which provided information regarding the Audi Forum Ingolstadt and other similar sites. A literature review was also conducted, focusing on industrial tourism.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Tourism and experiences

Industrial facilities, such as former or currently functioning factories, have become tourist destinations. They may also be seen as tourist attractions. "In essence, tourist attractions consist of all those elements of a "non-home" place that draw discretionary travelers away from their homes. They usually include landscapes to observe, activities to participate in, and experiences to remember" (Lew, 1987: 554). According to Lew (1987: 558), there are three basic types of tourist attractions: nature (general environments, specific features), nature-human interface (observational, leisure nature, participatory), and human (settlement infrastructure, tourist infrastructure, leisure superstructure). In terms of tourism geography, the Audi Forum facilities (e.g. the Museum Mobile) are human attractions for tourists who come to visit the factory or the museum, or to attend an event.

An indispensable element of tourism development is the tourist infrastructure. Some authors (see: Lew, 1987) see it as an element of tourist attractions. Tourist infrastructure may also be treated separately from tourist attractions; then it is the material base of tourism and includes accommodation, catering and auxiliary facilities, as well as para-tourist infrastructure (see: Kaczmarek et al., 2010). The Audi Forum consists of buildings that may be treated as tourist infrastructure as well, e.g. catering or auxiliary (tourist information) facilities.

Important tourism development factors include the desire to escape from the daily routine (push

factor) and search for something new outside our normal environment (pull factor). The motivations behind tourism decisions are explained by the search – escape theory (Iso-Ahola, 1982). The urge to flee from the everyday routine generates the need for unique experiences. Contemporary societies are looking for strong emotions, experienced both during everyday activities (e.g. shopping) and in occasional situations (see: Schulze, 2005). An economic response to these needs is the creation of a market guaranteeing such experiences. They are offered as a component of products or services and are an added value in the experience economy. The experience economy is a sector of global economy which has developed on the basis of experience products. Selling this kind of products (including tourism experience products) is an important part of contemporary economy (Richards, 2001). An experience may be a product itself, e.g. a concert, a theatrical play, or an element attached to a product, e.g. when buying a new car, you can visit the factory which produced it. An experience may be the very atmosphere surrounding the product – its history, design and successfulness (Sundbo, Darmer 2008). For an experience to be meaningful, it should be personally relevant and include elements of novelty, surprise, learning and engagement (Poulsen, Kale, 2004). Pine and Gilmore (2011: 36–37) claim that the experience economy results in the development of new types of tourism and mention the Harley Davidson Museum as an example of an experience-based tourist product. In the light of the above mentioned research, the Audi Forum Ingolstadt could also be treated as an experience product.

The Audi Forum described here is one of a few visitors centres of this kind located in Germany. We can find descriptions of German centres situated at large car factories, providing service for visitors and based on the experience economy principles in the works by Coles (2004, 2008). Hinterhuber et al. (2001) refer to them as *Industrielerlebnisswelten* – Industry-Experience-Worlds (see also: Pechlaner et al., 2008). In such centres, the production process is the basis of the visitors' unusual experience. Due to the higher production costs in Germany, compared to the cost of car production in Asia (e.g. South Korea), German firms try to create their brand image based on reliability, high standard and exceptionality of the product. In this way, they

justify the higher prices. However, the quality of Asian cars has increased considerably, so it is necessary to offer something more. Therefore, the image of many brands today is based not only on the high quality of the product, but also on the latest technological solutions, as well as the long and rich history of German technology. The promotion of this type of image is conducted by customer service centres, located at large factories, representing firms such as Mercedes-Benz, Audi, Volkswagen, Porsche or BMW. Their strategy is based on offering strong emotions connected with a given brand, which is done by building museums, organizing visits to car factories, creating a possibility to pick up a new car straight from the factory. As a result, present and prospective clients become more strongly attached to a given brand, which makes them loyal to it and influences their current and future decisions regarding car purchase (Coles, 2008). The Porsche visitors' centre in Leipzig (Germany) shows that centres of this type focus on providing service to three main groups of visitors: clients buying cars of a given brand (often picking them up directly at the factory), general visitors and guests at meetings and conferences (see: Coles, 2004).

A recent change in tourism has been the growing number of innovations, such as creating particular experiences as a part of tourist products (see: Milne, Ateljevic, 2001; Stamboulis, Skayannis, 2003; Williams, Shaw, 2011; Stasiak, 2013). “The product can be seen as the total experience which comprises a combination of all the service elements, which the tourist consumes from the time they leave home to the time of return” (Encyclopedia of Tourism, Cho, 2002: 145). The authors believe that in this context the Audi Forum is also a good example of an innovative tourist product based on specific experiences.

2.2. Industrial tourism

The phenomenon described in the article – visiting tourist facilities located at large car factories – can be ascribed to several types of tourism, one of which is industrial tourism. It is distinguished on the basis of the main purpose of tourist travel (see: Kowalczyk, 2001). It involves tourists visiting places the basic function of which is not tourism-oriented (Frew, 2008). Encyclopedia of Tourism (Jafari, 2002)

defines industrial tourism as “...visits to contemporary industrial sites to see products made, service delivered and the process and people involved. Using guided tours, viewing galleries and purpose built centres, visitors are provided with insights into the workplace, and companies can reap public relations benefits. The range of industrial attractions is wide and sites include factories, mining operations, power stations, dairies, wineries and theatres” (Robinson, 2002). Derek (2010) claims that industrial tourism includes visiting former industrial areas (old mines, factories), technology and industry-related buildings (hydrotechnological facilities, old machinery, mills) and museums. It also involves visiting modern, functioning production plants. Some authors define visiting the latter as factory tourism and treat it as a form of industrial tourism (see: Swarbrokee, 1995; Frew, 2011). According to Soyez (1986: 106), industrial tourism takes the following forms: job-related trips, e.g. visiting factories by engineers specialized in a given field; training trips, e.g. those made by vocational school students; other trips, e.g. those made for cognitive purposes.

Industrial tourism is also treated as an element of other types of tourism, e.g. cultural tourism (Richards, 1996). In this sense, industry is a part of human culture. Industrial tourism enables people to satisfy their curiosity about the past and present of industry (see: Jędrysiak, 2008, 2011; Mikos Von Rohrscheidt, 2008; Derek, 2010). Cultural tourism is often identified with heritage tourism. In both cases, the motivation to travel is connected with the tourists' interest in historically formed cultural landscape or local customs (Timothy, Boyd, 2003). The last category includes trips whose aim is to visit industrial heritage sites comprising technology- and industry-related elements, created in the past (see: Edwards, 1996; Rudd, 1998; Jansen-Verbeke, 1999; Xie, 2006).

Journeys to visitors centres like the Audi Forum may also be included in the category of shopping tourism. However, in this case, it is quite particular, as it is connected with retailing rather than simply shopping. As Coles (2004: 379) argues, using the example of the Porsche visitors' centre in Leipzig, “*Tourism can be used to the retailer's as much as to the consumer's advantage, for instance to drive improvements in turnover, to stimulate long-term relationships with brands and products and to enhance*

levels of customer satisfaction with the transactional experience. Conceptually, retailers are not merely the passive satisfiers of tourist shoppers' demand”.

3. Modern car industry as a tourist attraction

Many authors (Radosević, Rozeik, 2005; Sturgeon et al., 2008; Pavlínek, Ženka, 2011) agree that contemporary car manufacturers are trying to become more effective and competitive. Due to the rising competition and globalization of the automotive sector, the producers are forced to lower the expenses and maximize the productivity and flexibility. Several powerful companies in developed countries (such as Germany, Japan, the U.S.A., South Korea) control most of the global car markets, though the position of some developing countries has been increasing (Lorentzen, Gastrov, 2012). This flexibility, however, is controlled by the R&D capacities in the core countries. The concentration of R&D and capital, and the attempts to improve relationships with stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels, are the main reasons why most car companies' exhibitions are presented in the core countries (see: Otgaar, 2010).

Europe is where various domestic and global car producers are in strong competition. Germany itself is a home to several autochthonous global car brands, such as Volkswagen, Audi, Opel, Mercedes-Benz, BMW or Porsche. Besides, Germany and the whole central Europe have attracted some American (Ford) and Asian (Hyundai) car manufacturers. In this “narrow” space, facing a rivalry of car brands increasingly imported from outside Germany or even Europe, it is vital to support domestic manufacturers, and car-brand industrial museums might be an effective marketing tool (Otgaar, 2010; Coles, 2004). Due to growing international competition, German car producers develop different innovative marketing strategies in order to strengthen the brand image and increase relations with clients. One of such strategies is the creation of large visitors centres connected with car factories. The Audi Forum Ingolstadt described in the article is one of such facilities.

However, many other tourist sites are based on the presentation of modern car industry as well.

They feature automotive industry museums, tourist trails in car factories, centres combining the production function (the factory), car testing facilities (e.g. test tracks) and the tourist function (a museum and tourist trails). Several examples of this type of centres are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of automotive industry museums, tourist trails in car factories.

Museum	Location	Concern	Characteristics
Museo Ferrari Maranello	Maranello (Italy)	Fiat	Museum, test track and Ferrari factory tours.
The Lamborghini Museum	Sant'Agata Bolognese (Italy)	Volkswagen	Museum and factory tours.
The Musée de l'Aventure Peugeot	Sochaux (France)	PSA	Museum and Peugeot factory tour.
Honda Collection Hall	Motegi (Japan)	Honda	Museum and Twin Ring Motegi test track.
Toyota Automobile Museum	Nagakute-city (Japan)	Toyota Motor Corporation	Museum.
Mercedes-Benz Museum	Stuttgart (Germany)	Daimler AG	Museum and factory tours.
BMW Museum in Munich	Munich (Germany)	BMW	Visitor centre, museum and factory tours.
The Autostadt	Wolfsburg (Germany)	Volkswagen	Visitor centre, museum and factory tours.
Audi Forum	Ingolstadt (Germany)	Volkswagen	Visitor centre museum and factory tours.
Audi Forum	Neckarsulm (Germany)	Volkswagen	Visitor centre and factory tours.
Porsche Museum	Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen (Germany)	Volkswagen	Museum and factory tours.

Source: Author's elaboration on the basis of: <http://www.autostadt.de/>; <http://www.bmw-welt.com/de/index.html>; <http://world.honda.com/collection-hall/info/index.html>; <http://www.lamborghini.com/en/home/>; http://www.mercedes-benz-classic.com/content/classic/mpc/mpc_classic_website/en/mpc_home/mbc/home/museum/home.flash.html; <http://www.musee-peugeot.com/en/>; http://www.audi.com/com/brand/en/experience/audi_forums0/audi_forum_neckarsulm.html; <http://www.porsche.com/museum/en/>; http://www.toyota.co.jp/Museum/english/c01_01.html; <http://museo.ferrari.com/>

Based on the product structure presented by Kotler (1994), Frew (2008: 34) presented the structure of a tourist product as a part of industrial tourism. It consists of the satisfaction with the fact that it is possible to see the production process as the core element of the product attracting the tourists. The remaining elements include a visit to the production line (the tangible product) and an opportunity to purchase the industrial product (the augmented product).

The structure of the tourist product offered in the Audi Forum Ingolstadt corresponds to the structure of the augmented product presented by Frew (2008). Tourists travel there because they want to see the factory (the core product) and the production

process. Many of them pick up the cars they have bought in Ingolstadt, where they also make other purchases (clothes, gadgets). They may take advantage of other attractions, e.g. attend an event, rent an Audi car, visit the nearby destinations and stay at a hotel (a tangible and an augmented product).

4. The Audi Forum Ingolstadt

Audi AG (Audi Aktien Gesellschaft) is a leading car manufacturer, which controls its worldwide production (in 12 countries) from its headquarters in Ingolstadt, Germany. The company is owned by

Volkswagen AG, Wolfsburg, which controls 99.55% of Audi AG (Audi 2013 Annual Report). In 2013, the global production of Audi reached almost 1.6 million cars, with its Germany-based production (two Audi car-assemblies) of about 815,000 cars (<http://www.oica.net/>). Out of the total Volkswagen Group output (approximately 9 million passenger cars of different brands), 18% is the Audi production (as of 2013).

Germany is one of the key European car producers, with over 5.9 million passenger cars produced in 2013. The Audi production made nearly 16% of the total passenger car production based in Germany (<http://www.oica.net/>). In 2013, over 69,000 employees worked for Audi worldwide, most of them (51,000) in Germany. Audi R&D laboratories employed over 7,000 people, almost all of whom worked in Germany (Audi 2013 Annual Report). In 2013, the Audi Company used 10 car assemblies all over the world (in some cases the facilities were shared with other car-makers). Two of them are located in Germany (Ingolstadt and Neckarsulm – see Fig. 1), and the other ones in Hungary, Spain, Belgium, Slovakia, Russia, India, China and Indonesia.

In 2013, Audi owned seven centres called the Audi Forum. Apart from Germany, they were located in Spain (Madrid), Sweden (Stockholm), the United States (New York), and Japan (Tokyo). In Germany, there were three such facilities – in Ingolstadt, Neckarsulm and Munich. However, only the Audi Forums in Neckarsulm and Ingolstadt are situated next to Audi factories. The remaining ones are rather large car showrooms.

The subject of this article is the Audi Forum based in Ettinger Strasse, Ingolstadt, a town in Germany, Bavaria (Bayern) (Fig.1). Situated several dozen kilometers north of Munich, on the Danube River, the town is currently inhabited by over 120,000 people and is a major economic centre. It is also an interesting tourist centre, with medieval architecture and a university. The most important enterprises based in this town include the Audi AG factory and Media-Saturn Group (Europe's largest retail electronics chain). The town is an important rail junction and lies by the main German north-south motorway – A9. One of the largest international airports in the world is situated nearby, in Munich.



Fig. 1. The location of the Audi Forum Ingolstadt against similar facilities in Germany

Source: Own elaboration

The Audi Forum Ingolstadt operates at the largest Audi factory in the world. The company's head offices and technical development section are also based there. The factory was founded in 1949 and currently covers the area of 2,737,500 m². In 2013, it employed 35,097 workers and produced 576,680 cars in a wide range of models (Audi 2013 Annual Report, 2013). The facility was built mainly in order to promote Audi, which is widely presented as a modern company (High Tech industry), whose products are based on advanced technology, which is stressed in the Audi advertising slogan: *Vorsprung durch Technik* (*Advancement through technology*). Moreover, the Audi Forum offers unusual experiences, such as visiting one of the most modern car factories in the world, the Museum Mobile devoted to the history of and the technol-

ogy used by the company, or attending various events. All this, combined with professional service and well-developed tourist service infrastructure, makes visiting the Forum an interesting and unique experience.

The Audi Forum Ingolstadt, opened in December 2000, covers the area of 77,000 m². Audi has invested over 105,000,000 Euros in the Forum's architecture and a wide range of attractions and facilities for customers, visitors and employees. It is a multifunctional centre, which includes the information pavilion, a car park, a market and a customer centre, a customer centre and a new car pick up area, central reception and a gastronomy building, the Museum Mobile and the central Place – *Piazza* (Fig. 2). The Forum is visited by over 400,000 people annually, many of whom are tourists.

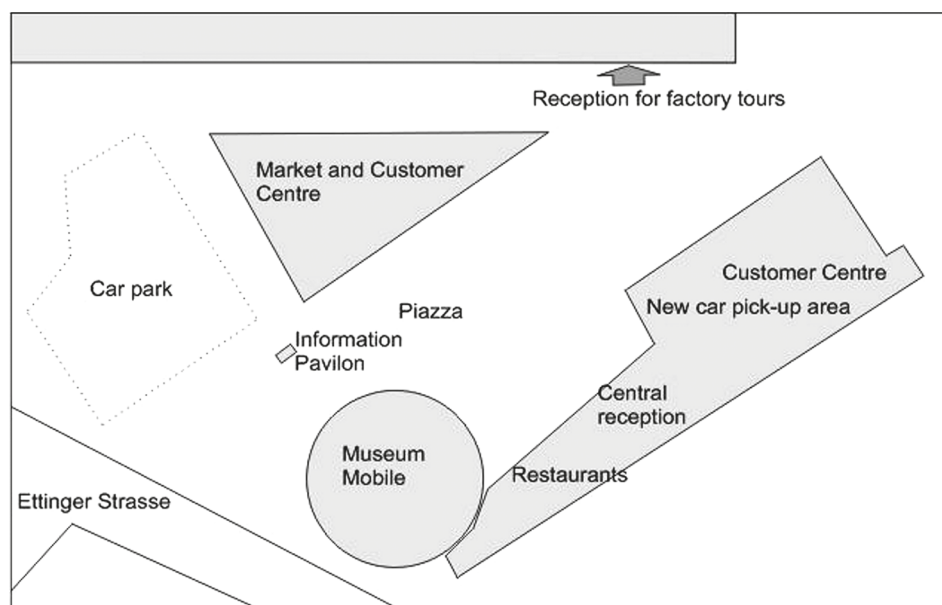


Fig. 2. Facilities in the Audi Forum

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of materials from the Audi Forum Ingolstadt

Without a doubt, the centres of this type arise for marketing reasons. *“Marketing is managing profitable customer relationships. The twofold goal of marketing is to attract new customers by promising superior value and to keep and grow current customers by delivering satisfaction”* (Kotler, Armstrong, 2010: 28). One of important elements of marketing process is promotion. *“Promotion means activities that communicate the merits of the product and persuade target custom-*

ers to buy it” (Kotler, Armstrong 2010: 76). According to the authors cited, promotion includes the following tools: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations. Certainly such centres like the Audi Forums are communication and promotion platforms of car companies (see: Coles, 2004, 2008). By investing in this kind of facilities, companies create strong emotional relations with their clients. Through such centres, car producers present themselves as trust-

worthy enterprises with a long tradition. Companies may present their highest technical and sports achievements. Establishing visitors centres is a part of the so called relationship and experiential marketing. The first is a kind of marketing procedure where firms involve their clients in strong relations. They offer high standard products, supplemented by individualized services. They try to stay in contact with existing customers as well as to get in touch with prospective ones. Very important issues are the customer satisfaction and personalized approach, as well as close relations with the customer (see: Grönroos, 1994). Experiential marketing is a kind of development of the idea of relationship marketing. Here the relations with customers are created and strengthened through pleasure and intensive experiences associated with the products sold by the company (Coles, 2008). These marketing ideas are represented by the case-study of the Audi Forum Ingolstadt described in that article.

The visitors start their visit in the Audi Forum Ingolstadt by visiting the information pavilion, lo-

cated near the main entrance. It is a place where the visitors may obtain basic information about the complex. Close to the pavilion, there is a surface and an underground parking lot for the visitors. This is the first tourist facility which might be assigned to the category of tourist facilities on the premises of the Audi Forum (see: Kaczmarek et al., 2010). One of the main tourist attractions of the Forum is the Audi Museum Mobile (Fig. 2). It presents the history of the Audi brand from 1899 till the present day. Next to the museum, there is a shop selling books, gadgets and souvenirs (Museum Shop). The museum itself is an oval building, 22.5m tall, built of glass and steel (Fig. 3), the admission is paid. The museum is visited starting from the last, third floor, going downstairs. In 2011, it was visited by 122,570 people, in 2013 – by about 130,000 and from 2000 to 2011 the total number of visitors reached over 1.6 million (Table 2). The Museum Mobile is an element of the Audi Forum Ingolstadt, guaranteeing the visitors an exceptional experience of the world of AUDI.

Table 2. Visitors and participants to The Audi Forum Ingolstadt by tourist attractions

Facility	No of visitors in 2000–2011	No of visitors in 2011
Museum Mobile	1,627,854	122,570
Gastronomy centre	1,603,809	438,005
Factory guided tours	1,281,658	115,854
Customer center and new car pick up area	car buyers:	686,000
	buyers with accompanying persons:	980,000
Visitors of events – total	445,727	69,769
Jazz events	After Work Jazz Lounge:	25,253
	Jazz concerts:	24,589

Source: Author's compilation, based on the Audi Forum Ingolstadt materials from 2012



Fig. 3. The Museum Mobile building

Source: Author's photo

The museum exposition consists of over 50 cars and 30 motorcycles and bicycles. The museum showcases the breadth and diversity of the historic brands that played their part in the story of AUDI AG as it is today – Audi, Horch, DKW, Wanderer, Auto Union and NSU. The museum contains permanent exhibitions on levels 3 and 2, while level 1 is occupied by temporal exhibitions. At level 0 there is a cinema hall with a semi-cir-

cular screen. The name “Museum Mobile” derives from the word “mobility” – the concept presented by the museum. It includes movable exhibits, e.g. models of sub-assemblies in cars propelled electrically or manually (by the visitors), special screens and a cinema where films about Audi vehicles are shown. The museum also includes a paternoster lift, presenting 14 cars in continuous movement (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Paternoster lift

Source: Author's photo

The Museum Mobile should be treated as a tourist attraction (see: Lew, 1987). Museums are important factors generating tourist movement. Visiting such institutions might be seen as part of cultural, heritage or (in terms of car museums) industrial tourism (see: Soyez, 1986; Richards, 1996; Gawordecki, 2007). However, the latest research describes the idea of corporate museum. This kind of museum is organized and run by a corporation in order to present its history and achievement and create value added elements to the company's brand. The exposition in such a museum is mainly devoted to the company's brand or brands (Piątkowska, 2014). The Museum Mobile could be classified as this kind of museum, however, it could also be included in the group of science and technology (see: Kirchberg, 1996) or automotive museums (see: Volti, 1995).

Another attraction of the Audi Forum is the market and customer center (Fig. 2). The building hosts an exposition of new Audi models, in the form of a five-storey glass gallery. There is also an information point, Audi Bank, insurance service, confer-

ence facilities and a café. The facility is often used by actual or potential Audi customers. Here the customers of Audi could acquire information about the offer of the company and the financial and insurance possibilities. Other facilities belonging to the Audi Forum Ingolstadt include the central reception and a gastronomy building, as well as a customer center and a new car pick up area (Fig. 2). The central reception is where visitors may obtain materials and information regarding the whole centre, pick up reservations, call a customer's advisor, buy tickets to visit the factory or attend events organized in the Audi Forum. In the central reception building, one can find a gastronomic centre, with a self-service Market Restaurant for 300 customers. Its terrace is opened when the weather is good (Fig. 5). There is also the fine dining restaurant AVUS and the Bar & Lounge with the Wine Gallery. The gastronomic facilities are very willingly visited by the Audi Forum guests – often by tourists visiting the centre, who want to have a meal there after a long tour of the Audi Forum (Table 2).



Fig. 5. Central reception and the gastronomy building

Source: Author's photo

The differentiated and complementary offer of the Audi Forum is constructed in this way in order to offer the visitors pleasure and intensive experiences associated with the products sold by the

company. This is a part of experiential marketing strategies used by different car producers in Germany. We can give here examples of similar, but bigger, visitors centres like BMW Welt in Munich or

Autostadt in Wolfsburg (Coles, 2008). In those centres we find a similar offer to the one which is available in the Audi Forum. A very good example is the Autostadt, which is a large visitor centre run by Volkswagen close to the biggest factory of this brand in Wolfsburg. The Autostadt covers an area of 28 ha, and is visited by over 2,000,000 visitors a year. According to Volkswagen, this location is a communication platform of the Volkswagen Group. In the Autostadt the visitors can find eight brand pavilions, presenting the main brands of Volkswagen Group. One can also visit the ZeitHaus, which is the largest car museum in the world, with ca. 200 automotive milestones from 50 manufacturers. A feature of the Autostadt (similar to the Audi Forum) is that it has a multifunctional offer. Besides car pavilions and a car museum, we find there a five-star hotel, thirteen restaurants, driving experiences and different cultural and entertainment events (1).

The offer of the Autostadt is also supplemented by different tours, including factory tours. Another element of the offer in the centre is a possibility to pick up a car “straight from the factory”. Customers can order a Volkswagen car by a local car seller and pick it up from the factory in Wolfsburg. According to Volkswagen, ca. 500 new vehicles are delivered daily to the customers in the Autostadt. This makes the centre the largest new car delivery centre in the world. Quite similar to the Autostadt is the BMW Welt located in Munich (see: Piątkowska, 2014). The offer of the Autostadt is a good example of complex tourism product, typical of industrial tourism (see: Frew, 2008) but based on experiences and elements of experience economy (see: Stasiak, 2013).

The Audi Forum in Ingolstadt is also a large delivery centre of the Audi brand. Close to the central reception there is a customer center and a new car pick-up area (Fig.2), an Audi shop, an independent cinema and an espresso bar. This zone is often used by the visitors, who have arrived in Ingolstadt to pick up their new cars directly at the factory. They ask for assistance with the formalities (documents, registration, etc.). During their stay, they may go to the bar and the restaurants, watch a film at the cinema or buy a gadget at the Audi Shop (brand car accessories, clothes, key-rings, books etc.). In total, in 2000 – 2011, customers picked up 686,000 Audi cars in Ingolstadt (in 2011 – 63,000 in 2013 – 64,500). 46% of the customers arrived from des-

tinations situated over 200 km away. The number of customers and persons accompanying them over that time exceeded 980,000 (Table 2).

A particular tourist attraction are guided tours (paid), which are also a part of the Audi Forum Ingolstadt. They are provided in several languages and conducted by specially trained employees. One of the tours is the “Produktion kompakt”, which includes visiting the production line of the Ingolstadt factory. The visit includes most of the technological cycle, from the moulding process through the car body assembly to the final assembly. The tours are extremely popular among the visitors; the total number of persons choosing them in 2000–2011 exceeded 1.2 million (Table 2). There are special offers available to families with children aged 6–10, featuring interactive games which involve designing their own cars, educational games, or simulator rides (*Audi Young and Fun* program). The factory tours are typical elements of the industrial tourism product. The possibility to see how the products are made is a unique experience attracting tourist to such destinations as factories (Frew, 2008).

Another part of the Audi Forum offer are cultural and entertainment events, like the jazz concerts held in the Museum Mobile from September to May, or the After Work Jazz Lounges at the gastronomic centre, which attract a considerable number of visitors (see: Table 2). Additionally, the Audi Forum is the venue of Christmas concerts and other special events held at the Audi Programmokino (in 2013 it received about 20,000 visitors). Here we can make another comparison with the Autostadt mentioned before, where several large events are organized during the year. One of most important is the Movimentos, a large cultural festival with dance, concerts and workshops. This event was attended by ca. 30,000 visitors in 2014. The reasons why companies such as Audi or Volkswagen supplement their visitor centres with cultural and entertainment functions might be explained with reference to the idea of the cultural turn and cultural industries. Last decades brought the so called cultural turn in developed societies. In economy, the cultural turn brought about, among other things, the shift from material to symbolic consumption (see: Ray, Sayer, 1999). Cultural goods became important products which could be sold on market, or could be used as a value added to other products. This led

to the creation of cultural economy and cultural industries (see: Power, Scott, 2004). The cultural function in the Audi Forum Ingolstadt is used in order to diversify the offer and adjust it to the needs of contemporary consumers. The culture is also a marketing tool; thus, its use strengthens the image of the Audi brand. Through developing the cultural function, different companies create the image of themselves as patrons of culture, which is positively perceived by the customers (Piskunova, Starostova, 2015).

The events held in the Audi Forum include meetings with renowned specialists in the field of sport, politics and economy (*Audi.torium*). Moreover, once a year, car models auctions and old cars conventions (*Donau Classic*) are organized. The lat-

ter are meetings of automotive industry fans, driving in a 500 km long race of vintage cars across southern Germany. In the summer (in 2013 the convention was held on 20–22nd June), the participants of the race meet on the Audi Forum *Piazza*, where it is possible to admire old cars from all over the world (Fig. 6). The total number of visitors attending the events in 2000–2011 exceeded 445,000 (Table 2).

Another tourist attraction is the Audi driving experience. These are specially prepared trips in rented cars, which always begin and finish in the Audi Forum. The offer includes one-day tours of the factory and the town of Ingolstadt, as well as longer trips including a range of attractions and accommodation at hotels in the whole region.

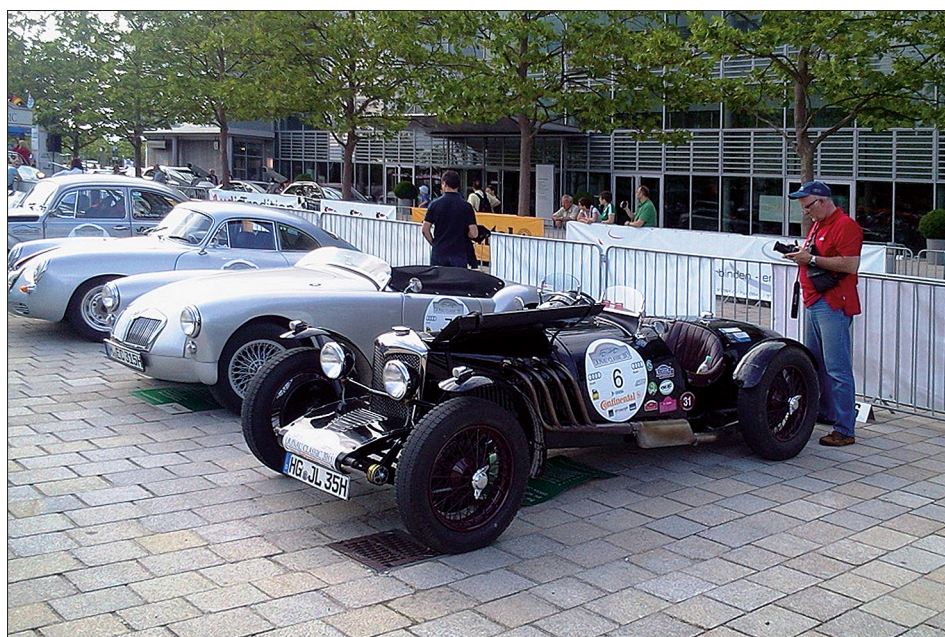


Fig. 6. Donau Classic 2013 in the Audi Forum *Piazza*

Source: Author's photo

5. Conclusions

Nowadays, tourism is important for the society and economy on the local, national and global scale (Gaworecki, 2007). This significance lies in its multi-dimensionality, which shows in the large variety of tourism types, depending on the tourists' motivations (Gaworecki, 2007). One of these types is

industrial tourism, sometimes treated as a part of other types, but more and more often considered to be a separate type (Soyez, 1986; Frew, 2008). An increasingly important element of tourism is the unique experience, which is a part of many tourist products offered as a part of experience economy (Richards, 2001; Pine, Gilmore, 2011).

On the basis of the analysis presented in this article, the research question presented in the in-

roduction should be answered positively. The customer service centres, located at large car factories certainly are tourist attractions and a tourist products as a result of the implementation of innovative marketing strategies by automobile companies. Tourist products have been appreciated in the car industry, which despite many problems is still one of the most important and most modern industries, influencing global technological progress (Sturgeon et al., 2009). Large car companies have noticed that the tourist function can be used to promote their products and build a positive company image (Otgaar, 2010). This strategy is based, among other things, on the idea of relationship (see: Grönroos, 1994) and experiential marketing (see: Coles, 2008). Examples of combining the industrial and the tourist functions are found in many car factories all over the world. Recent years have brought a dynamic development of such activity in Germany (see: Coles, 2008, 2008; Williams, 2009). A major facility combining the two functions is the Audi Forum Ingolstadt. This multi-functional centre attracts tourists; it also includes elements of tourist infrastructure. The Forum is a place where new cars are picked up (see: Table 2). The market and customer center, as well as the customer center and a new car pick up area, first of all serve the visitors arriving in order to become acquainted with the AUDI offer, possibly buy a car, or pick up the vehicle they ordered earlier. One of the most important parts of the Forum is the Museum Mobile, visited by over 120,000 tourists annually. This multimedia museum presents modern technologies, which promote the Audi brand. Other important elements are factory tours (over 115,000 participants a year) and events (over 69,000 participants a year). All these tourist assets are supported by gastronomic infrastructure and additional facilities. The tourist offer of the Audi Forum creates a specific tourist product, whose structure corresponds to a typical industrial tourism product (see: Frew, 2008), offering trips to the town and region, using local assets and tourist infrastructure. The main aim of building the Audi Forum was to create a facility which would promote the Audi brand by giving an opportunity to discover the history of the company and its technological achievements. As a result, the brand brings positive associations with tradition, but also with modernity, high technology and quality of products, as well

as safety, which has a strong impact on the visitors. They become strongly attached to the brand, which determines their current and future consumer behaviour. This marketing strategy resembles the one described by Coles (2004, 2008) with reference to the Porsche brand.

An important element of the Audi Forum tourist product is experience. Seeing a modern car factory, discovering the history of the company and its technological development, participating in events such as car conventions, concerts or *Audi.torium* meetings guarantee unusual experiences. From this point of view, the tourist product of the Audi Forum is an element of experience economy (see: Pine, Gilmore, 2011; Stasiak, 2013). The centre is an example of Industry-Experience-Worlds, described by Hinterhuber et al. (2001) and Pechlaner et al. (2008). Those experiences are a part of the brand promotion strategy mentioned before, offering interesting and unique sensations to its fans and customers. As shown in the analysis above, the Audi Forum Ingolstadt is an example of multifunctional tourism product, representing industrial tourism.

Note

- (1) Information acquired during the author's interview with Tobias Riepe Press Speaker of the Autostadt GmbH.

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