

3 Experiential Trends to Watch in 2020—and 2 to Leave in the 2010s

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Key Insights

Brand activations have come a long way in achieving consumer engagement.

The last few years, in particular, saw experiential marketing steadily mature, from a quirky niche tactic to a full-on, multiplatform strategy. And in this new decade marketers will only see more pressure to drive creativity to achieve a successful ROI and social media traction.

Here, experiential pros from across the U.S. share their insights on what's in store.

Brands going DTC with ticketed events

Brands like Bravo, Eater, The New York Times and Revolt have recently launched multiday, ticketed consumer events and festivals, which will continue into 2020, according to Rich Goodstone, co-founder of live entertainment and experience agency Superfly.

"Experiential will continue to go beyond a one-time brand activation to a monetized offering that will open up new revenue streams and evolve their relationship with fans," Goodstone said.

Land Rover will host its first 4xFar festival in mid-January. The event aims to draw fans with music and activities curated by Outside Magazine and will also let attendees test drive the new 2020 Land Rover Defender on off-road courses.

In a statement, Kim McCullough, vp of marketing for Jaguar Land Rover North America, said the brand created 4xFar “to introduce the Defender back to the U.S. in a fresh and exciting way.”

Cara Kleinhaut, CEO and founder of Agenc, also stressed that brands will continue to ramp up DTC efforts with conferences and curated events that “personify their brand beyond a single product.”

Agenc produces In Goop Health, Gwyneth Paltrow’s lifestyle brand’s traveling wellness summit. The annual summits in Los Angeles and New York each hit around 1 billion earned media impressions, according to a Goop spokesperson. Since the first summit in 2017, Goop has seen a 447% increase in revenue from ticket sales.

Rebecca Batterman, a consumer marketing and IP expert who has worked for agencies including Mirrorball and TBA Global, said, “[Brands] have full control over the event messaging and

experience versus being a sponsor, where they have a sanctioned-off footprint.”

Emerging tech that boosts interactive environments

Brett Hyman, founder and president of NVE Experience Agency, said more brands will begin to use interactive tech, such as advanced sensors, holographic tech and computer vision, to elevate their activations by bridging the physical and digital worlds.

“Sensor technology can now detect color, biorhythms, capacitive touch, motion, humidity,” Hyman said, “which means that experiential environments can react and engage with attendees in any way that humans can.”

To celebrate its redesign in December, Yahoo Mail tapped NVE to produce an interactive arcade in L.A., which included a Whac-A-Mole-style wall that replaced the moles with pixels to simulate how chaotic an inbox can become.

Yahoo declined to provide additional information on the ROI of the activation.

While 2020 is still in the proposal phase for NVE, Hyman noted the agency is working on a potential multimedia art installation for a beauty brand. He couldn’t specify at the time of publication which brand the agency is working with.

Themed hotels and overnight experiences

Taco Bell and Oscar Mayer kick-started the trend of unexpected branded hotels and stayable experiences with the Taco Bell Hotel and Wienermobile Airbnb. In recent months, Club Wyndham opened a suite themed around the holiday film Elf, Booking.com recreated the Addams Family mansion and Hotels.com opened a rentable Lisa Frank-themed suite.

Patrick Jong, executive director of experiential at Giant

Spoon, said more brands will continue to partner with hotels or travel companies for these experiences.

“I think the opportunity to engage with a consumer overnight is really different,” Jong said, “and brands will need to be clever about how they interact with consumers in this setting.”

Nutella launched an online contest to give fans a chance to stay in Hotella Nutella in January. Along with Nutella-inspired hotel decor and bedding, the pop-up will have curated breakfast events.

“Hotella Nutella reimagines the joy of the hotel stay with a special breakfast experience that allows fans to enjoy Nutella in new and different ways,” said Todd Midura, vp of marketing at Nutella North America, in a statement.

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