

2016: The year of brand experience

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Date : January 21, 2016



It's no surprise when a consumer survey demonstrates the positive effect of live events on sales.

Experience drives purchase. What does retain the power to astonish, is the fact that this effect continues to increase, year on year.

In a 2015 [survey by Event Track](#), 87% of respondents agreed that live experiences were more effective than traditional TV **advertising** in influencing their decisions.

A startling 98% of respondents said that participating in an event or experience made them more inclined to purchase a product or service they were interested in – a significant 4% increase on the same figure in 2014.

A compelling body of evidence indicates that roughly 90% of our decisions as consumers are made on the basis of intuition. Call it neuromarketing or plain common sense. It's time to stop reasoning with consumers, and start tuning in to what makes them tick.

Step up, all things experiential. To meaningfully affect consumer behaviour, **brand** agenda for the New Year must return focus to the way people feel, triggering emotional engagement and generating lasting loyalty.

Experiential **marketing** offers a direct line to intuitive processing, demonstrably more powerful than traditional **advertising** channels.

Furthermore, exciting new technologies allow effective measurement of the impact and positive return generated by each live experience.

Techniques we'll enjoy seeing more of in 2016:

Virtual and augmented reality

A recent report by [Happy Finish](#) dubbed 2016 'the year of virtual reality'.

It's been a long time in coming – we've dreamed of high quality virtual reality for decades, but not surprisingly the technology has lagged a little behind the imagination. This year, significant breakthroughs look set to shift VR / AR into a higher gear, transforming the arena in which we create experience.

Virtual reality has potential in countless promotional environments, with many retail **brands** already adopting related techniques to enhance experience in-store. Products like **Oculus** Rift and **Google** Cardboard offer to transport consumers to another world, without moving an inch.

Across the pond, **Hyundai's** [augmented reality app](#) 'The Virtual Guide' lets consumers use their phones to navigate the components of their car; while Audi recently launched the first [virtual reality test drive](#).

Social media and content-led experiences

From **Twitter**-powered vending machines, to photobooths, gifs, and online video, we've witnessed the way humans love to share. Content equals **social** currency, and **brands** can capitalise on this enduring trend for as long as they can help customers build high-quality, shareable content. It's no longer enough to create an event hashtag and expect people to run with it. Think interactive: envision the way that your event can enhance your consumer's **social** landscape and they'll do your leg-work in return.

Brands who got it right in 2015:

Topshop's [Twitter-powered crane](#) formed part of an arcade-inspired installation; transforming the notoriously addictive 'claw' game into a unique tweet-to win campaign.

Moon pig's [photobooth confession shed](#) and interactive garden combined a showcase of their new bouquet range with emphasis on the personalised aspect of their core product. Consumers were more than happy to share their experience for the chance of a free floral delivery. And while we're on the subject...

Personalised experiences

75% of consumers report a positive response to personalised messaging. Some dismiss this technique as a gimmick. Long live this (easily executed, yet highly effective) gimmick, say we.

Personalised **brand** experiences are among the most memorable – translating directly into long-term loyalty. And though we hate to say it, the most effective campaigns needn't involve a great deal of imagination.

In the wake of **Coca Cola's** devilishly simple **share with** campaign, a number of the world's biggest **brands** simply followed suit, with the likes of **Nutella** and **Marmite** offering personalised jars as the centrepiece of their 2015 Christmas campaigns.

Three mobile's festive campaign injected a knowing hint of schadenfreude, targeting

consumers unlucky enough to be born on Christmas day. The brilliant **social** campaign '[Merry Birthday](#)' both teases and celebrates these forgotten souls, allowing friends to nominate them for a 'best birthday ever' surprise.

Multi-sensory story telling

Our senses are a direct line to the experiential holy grail: that all-important emotional response. The cleverest campaigns weave sensory activation into their existing **brand** narrative; putting the consumer at the heart of an interactive story they can't wait to share.

In 2015 **brands** wowed consumers with some truly original sensory activations, generating invaluable PR material. From Comfort's beautifully crafted [secret garden](#) (launched in the heart of London), to the [Pepsi Cherry Rooms](#), this was the year of the multi-sensory experience for FMCG **brands**.

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