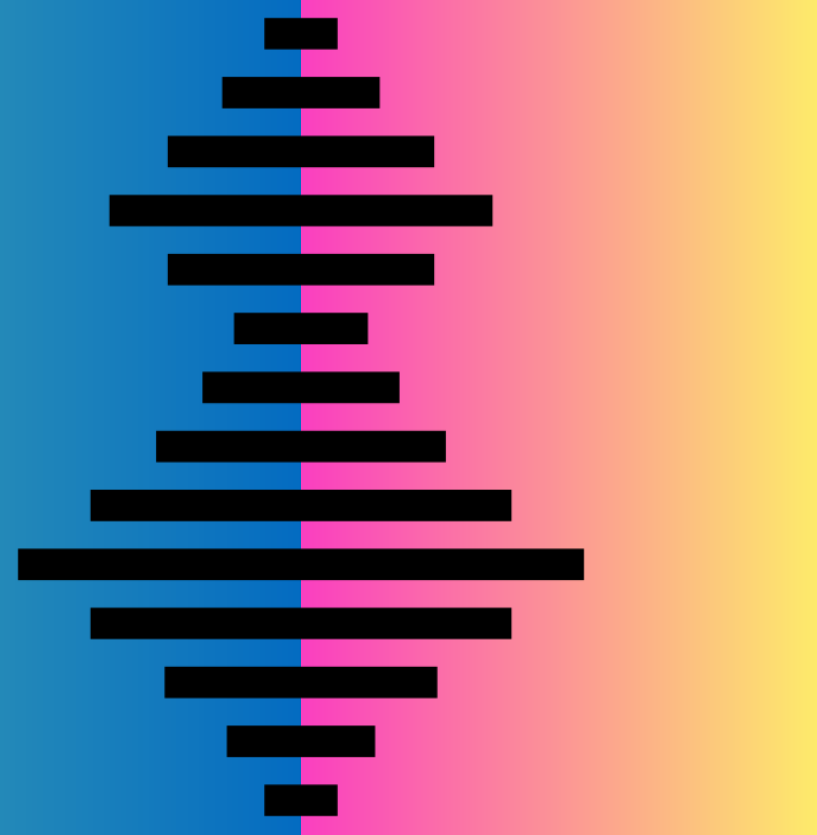


# Experience Insights and Trends

April 2022

As large scale in-person experiences reemerge in a changed world, brands, organisers and attendees are navigating new realities, needs and expectations.



**1** Brands see a shift as in-person makes a big comeback



**2** Hybrid experience design takes the next step



**3** Experiences as manifestations of brand values



**4** Getting 'meta' with the Metaverse

## APRIL



## Events Radar

**05-07/04**

World Retail Congress

**20-21/04**

AWS Summit San Francisco

**27-28/04**

SAAS Connect

**07/04**

Salesforce World Tour Sydney

**21/04**

SalesForce 10th annual education summit 2022

**08-10/04**

Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix

**21-22/04**

RE•WORK New York Summit

# Brands see a shift as in-person events **make a big comeback**

## The onus of risk is shifting from brands to attendees.

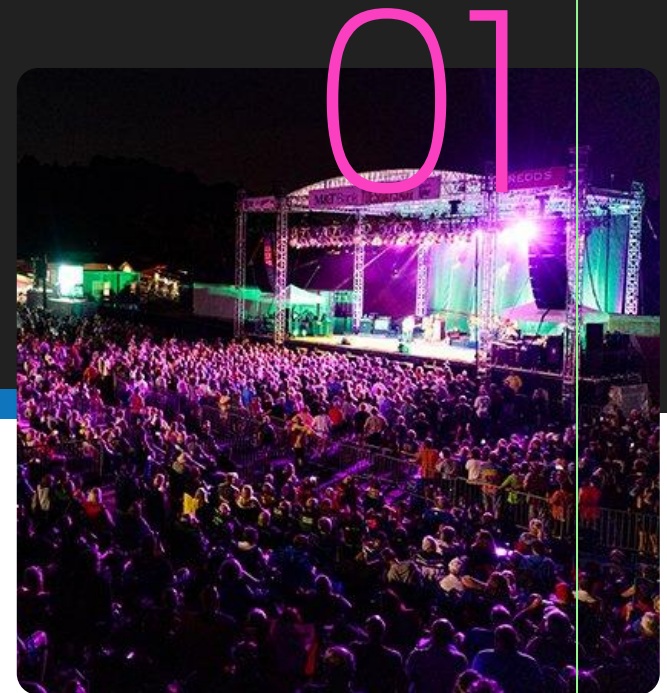
The decline of Omicron and subsequent [reduction](#) of [COVID restrictions](#) has sparked a deluge of big global events going back to in-person for the first time in years. [Mobile World Congress](#), [SxSW](#), [GDC](#) and [HIMSS](#) all welcomed tens-of-thousands of attendees this past month, while big events like Coachella and Stagecoach have announced their triumphant returns—with a notable [absence of any COVID-related restrictions](#).

## What it Means

It's clear that a shift has taken place—**the acceptability of organising big events now largely outweighs the potential risk of having them**. With that comes a transition, with the assumption of risk largely transferring from brands and event organisers to attendees.

## Key Takeaway

Despite this shift, it's still imperative for brands to solve for safe and flexible experience design to compensate for more assumed risk on behalf of the attendee. Integrating thoughtful health and safety strategies into experiences will not only further mitigate risk for brands, but will help reassure attendees that are gathering for the first time in years.



# Hybrid experience design takes the next step

## Brands and organisers are beginning to craft more intentional hybrid experiences.

Though organisers have been experimenting with hybrid formats for the past half year, nearly [two-thirds have struggled](#) to find the right approach. But lately, as in-person returns more earnestly, brands are delivering hybrid events with more focus and intent by leaning into the unique advantages of virtual and in-person. Events like [SXSW](#) and [HIMSS](#) enabled attendees to customise their in-person and digital experiences as they saw fit—and in each instance, virtual was geared towards content consumption and learning while in-person focused on immersion, serendipitous connection and celebration.

### What it Means

The return of in-person events, combined with the continued desire for valuable remote experiences, is creating a **need for more intentional and strategic hybrid experience** design than ever before.

### Key Takeaway

Solving for the unique requirements of both at-home and in-person attendees starts with identifying and leaning into the advantages of each format. From there, it's about finding key moments to connect attendees across formats in shared experiences.



# Experiences as manifestations of **brand values**

## **Brands are responding to Russia's invasion of Ukraine through their events and experiences.**

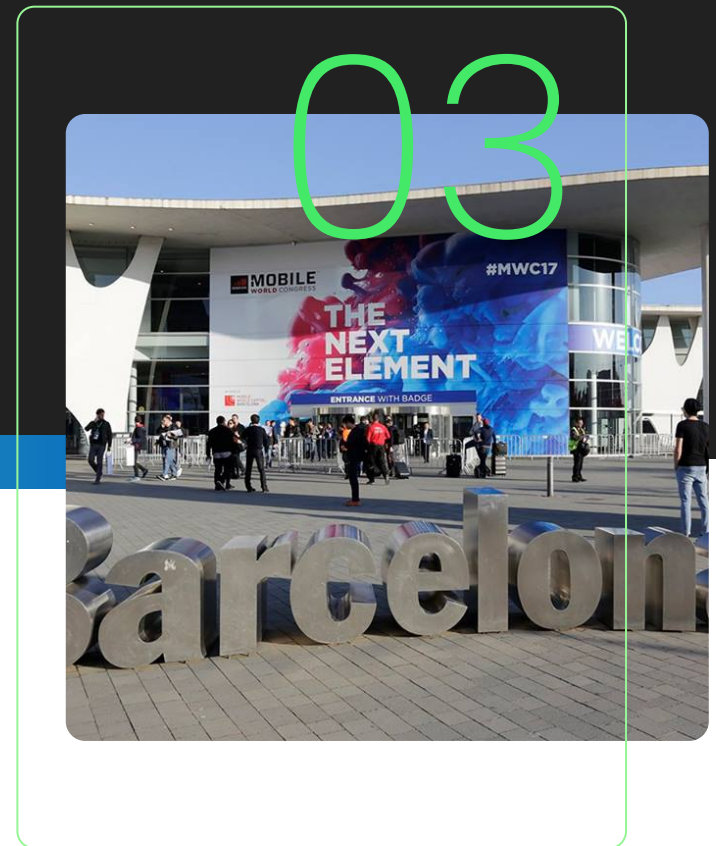
Numerous events set to be hosted in Russia were canceled, including the [F1 Racing Russian Grand Prix](#) and [UEFA Champions League Final](#). Warner Bros, Disney and Sony [have suspended the release of films](#) in Russian cinemas, while bands and musicians have [canceled performances](#) that were scheduled in the country. At MWC Barcelona, event organisers went so far as to [ban Russian sponsors](#) from participation and [removed the Russian pavilion](#) from the event.

### **What it Means**

In recent years, the expectation for brands to use their influence to take a stand on topical issues has dramatically increased. And as highly-visible and valuable marketing tools, **experiences have become important vehicles for organisations to promote, perpetuate and amplify their beliefs.**

### **Key Takeaway**

As it becomes more expected for brands to have topical POVs actionable CSR policies, marketers must consider how to more deeply integrate and amplify their initiatives, values and beliefs into experiences in meaningful ways.



# Getting 'meta' with the **Metaverse**

**Brands' eagerness to capitalise on the buzz of the metaverse is threatening to oversaturate the market.**

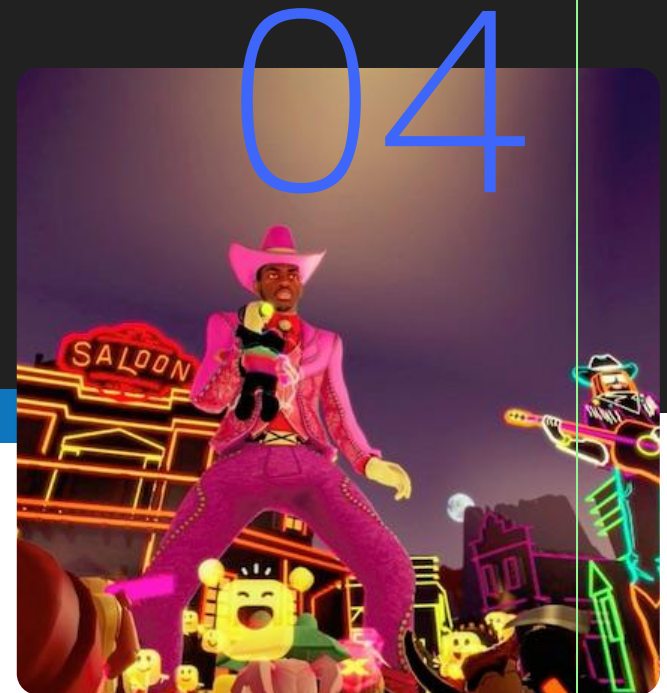
At recent events like [CES](#) and [SXSW](#), the presence of the metaverse was inescapable. Entire booths were themed around it, brands showed off new tech meant to assist in accessing it, and basic XR experiences erroneously labeled as "metaverse" were prevalent. [Fashion is also getting in on the fun](#), hoping to capitalise on the potential of integration between NFT's, commerce and the metaverse. This boom has led to a spectrum of meta-experiences— immersive and effective on one end, but shallow and uninspired on the other.

## What It Means

As the metaverse charges towards the peak of the hype cycle, brands are eager to capitalise on it while attendees are eager to learn more and engage. The metaverse is certainly here to stay, but **their utility at events is still being explored and tested** to varying degrees.

## Key Takeaway

Successful metaverse experiences are ones that enable real-time engagement between people in unique environments. For experience designers, the metaverse can offer new and exciting opportunities to bring people together across disparate spaces and places.

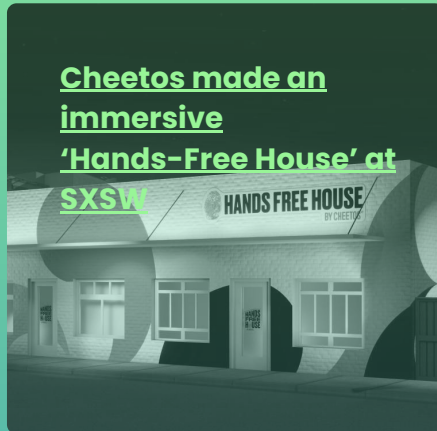




# Out-There Experiences

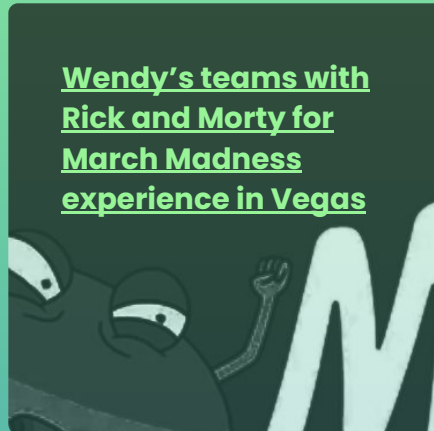
Brands and marketers continue to push the boundaries of physical and digital experiences, with new and creative executions popping up across the globe.

## Cheetos made an immersive 'Hands-Free House' at SXSW



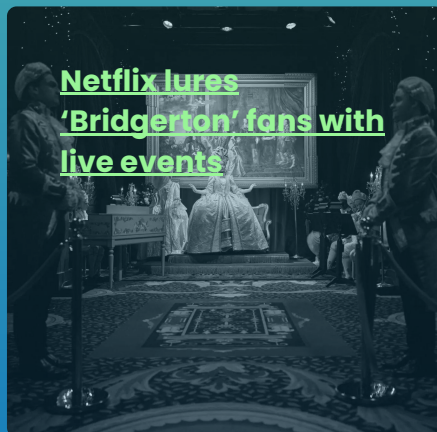
Cheetos launched a hands-free experience that encouraged guests to embrace 'Cheeto fingers' by immersing them into a physical space powered by tech like facial recognition, robotics and voice-activation.

## Wendy's teams with Rick and Morty for March Madness experience in Vegas



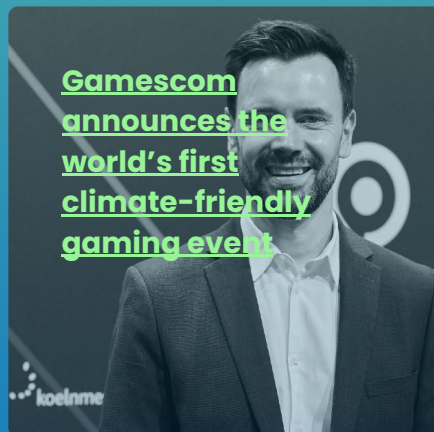
Wendy's collaborated with *Rick and Morty* to create "Morty's Mayhem"—a physical installation on the Las Vegas Strip that included a navigable LED experience, March Madness watch parties and exclusive Wendy's food.

## Netflix lures 'Bridgerton' fans with live events



For the release of the new *Bridgerton* season, Netflix created an immersive, Instagram-ready activation in LA titled "The Queen's Ball: A Bridgerton Experience."

## Gamescom announces the world's first climate-friendly gaming event



Gamescom 2022 has announced plans to return to in-person this August in Germany, with ambitious plans to offset all emissions created by the show itself.