

EXPERIENCE INTELLIGENCE

BY GPJ

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From networking and wellness to AI companions and malls, consumers are reimagining experiences with an eager, all in attitude.



Forget LinkedIn—find me in the ice bath



Meet your future plus-one



Wellness with a view



The mall gets a reboot



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Forget LinkedIn— find me in the ice bath

This trend was spotted by **Josh Fischer** | Senior Strategist from Chapel Hill, NC

Extreme networking and team-building activities are attracting execs and employees.

Many executives are foregoing happy hours and workshops, and are instead seeking out networking and team-building experiences that encourage participants to step outside of their comfort zones.

The “[Top Gun CEO](#)” is a genre of leadership favouring simulated military training and competition, like F-35 flight simulators and NASCAR pit crew experiences where coworkers change tyres on actual race cars. Others in the tech world are [hosting networking parties](#) with saunas, cryotherapy sessions, cold plunges, mercury-free salmon by a sushi chef, and talks by doctors on longevity. [Companies](#) are even specialising in “immersive training” to satisfy demand for more extreme corporate experiences.

What it Means

For high-intensity people who are getting bored of frictionless online connections, challenging and unique experiences are a welcome alternative. Participants describe these [full-contact experiences](#) as unifying and uninhibited, leading to more open conversations and leaving more lasting impressions.

Key Takeaway

It's difficult to say how much this phenomenon extends beyond startup culture, but it is indicative of the broader trend of people craving deeper, more visceral, and more memorable experiences. As experience designers, we should look for less traditional ways for attendees to connect, feel, and experience more.





Meet your future **plus-one**

This trend was spotted by **Josh Fischer** | Senior Strategist from Chapel Hill, NC

People are increasingly turning to AI companions for companionship.

New AI voice features now allow you to talk (instead of type) with [ChatGPT](#) or your very own [personal assistant](#)! Similarly, Meta has launched [celebrity chatbots](#) that will eventually have voice features and is developing [customisable AI friends](#) for Instagram.

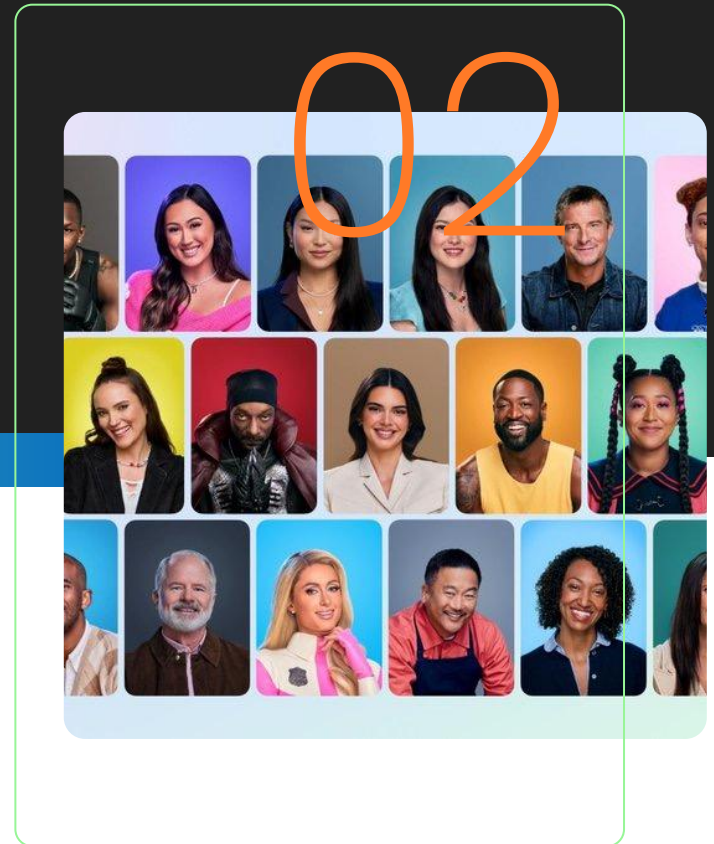
Other platforms offer explicitly romantic services like [erotic](#) roleplaying or [dating practice](#). While some stories report on the broken hearts of users when chatbot companions [change](#) or are [discontinued](#), the optimistic hope is that AI companions can combat loneliness in highly specific ways, such as for the [elderly](#) or [astronauts](#).

What it Means

As a loneliness epidemic and [artificial renaissance](#) converge, AI relationships will only increase with companies like [Character AI](#) claiming that users spend two hours daily on the platform on average. As these services mature, companies should explore how they might enhance consumer experiences.

Key Takeaway

As the makers of companions are urged (not forced) to create guardrails around what an AI companion will or won't do, brands must consider their own boundaries—and above all else, should prioritise experience design that helps to facilitate meaningful [social connection](#) among attendees.





Wellness with a view

This trend was spotted by **Elizabeth Bikowski** | Senior Strategist from Charlottesville, VA

Wellness tourism is booming, and it has some big implications for events in 2024.

The [global wellness economy is booming](#), and [wellness tourism](#)—travel that is motivated by the desire to improve personal well-being—is the fastest-growing [facet of the wellness economy](#).

Its growing popularity is largely due to its role as an antidote to

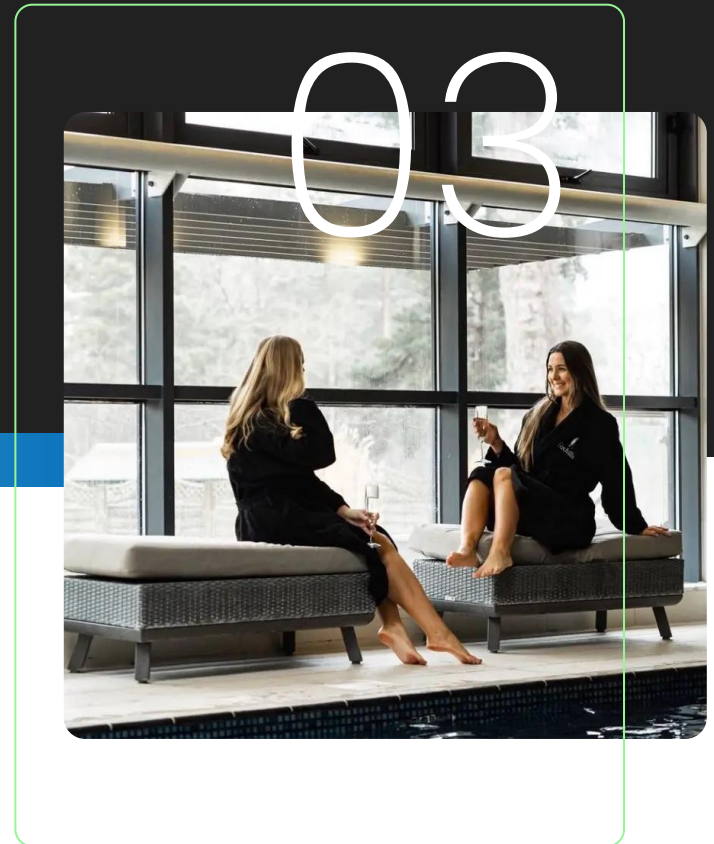
[the rise of burnout](#). These experiences offer opportunities for travelers to reduce stress and re-prioritise their physical, mental, and emotional well-being through spa getaways, yoga or meditation retreats, etc. There are strong [links between wellness, productivity, and inspiration](#), and more and more employees are [citing wellness benefits](#) as critical to work satisfaction.

What it Means

The overwhelming demand for wellness vacations coupled with [business travellers taking a bleisure approach](#) to their travel plans means a big opportunity for the experiential industry. As [more destinations](#) incorporate wellness tourism into their economies, the experiential applications are [exponential](#).

Key Takeaway

Thinking about how to incorporate wellness into events shifts the focus to the humans behind the attendees. Getting ahead of planning cycles to consider purposeful wellness-focused locations, activations, and off-sites will be a huge area for event and experience professionals to lean into in the coming year.





The mall gets a reboot

This trend was spotted by **Elizabeth Bikowski** | Senior Strategist from Charlottesville, VA

Malls are transforming into experiential oases as they're reshaped by a new generation.

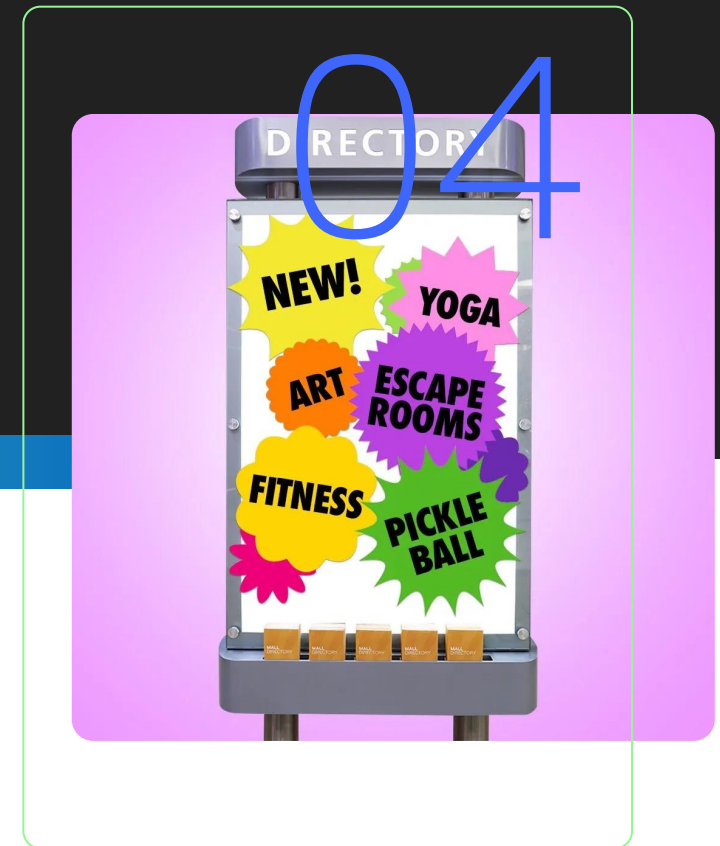
Is there anything like going to the mall? Maybe not, at least according to Gen Z who is spurring a rejuvenation of a third place long since abandoned by other generations. Recent studies cite [60% of Gen Z socialising at malls](#), and [66% wanting malls to make a complete comeback](#). For this generation, malls offer a [full omnichannel experience](#). Now, as [malls are undergoing an evolution](#) that prioritises experiences, they're retrofitting for a digitally native audience and reimagining with [green spaces, XR activations, pet playgrounds, immersive brand pop-ups, and more](#).

What it Means

Malls sit at the crossroads of nostalgia and functionality, answering a growing [demand for third places](#) and underscoring a renewed emphasis on an [experience economy](#). As new generations place a premium on connection, immersion, and seamless omnichannel integrations, the mall is delivering.

Key Takeaway

Experience designers can take note from the mall's renaissance as a destination. No matter the type of experience, spaces for building connections and community can be made more effective when they're enhanced by moments of immersion, experimentation and interaction.

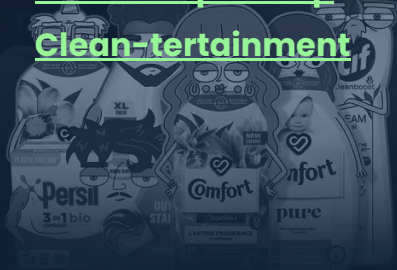




OUT-THERE EXPERIENCES

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

Unilever spices up Clean-ertainment



Unilever's #CleanTok on TikTok unveils Dirty Deeds: A Kitchen Crime, a quirky 'soap opera' turning cleaning into entertainment.

Lush unveils intergalactic universe



Lush brings Outer Space to London with an immersive digital exhibition in celebration of its 2023 festive campaign.

Mos Burger blends breakfast with AR experience



Japanese fast food chain, Mos Burger's AR breakfast experience lets customers dine with their pop idols.

Coke boosts holiday campaign with AI rephrase



Coca-Cola infuses generative AI-powered holiday magic into 'The World Needs More Santas' Holiday Campaign"