

EXPERIENCE INTELLIGENCE

BY GPJ

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Brands are increasingly seeking more targeted and unique ways to create sought-after consumer experiences through high-touch tactics, experiential commerce and local collaborations.



US federal policy shifts are impacting hospitality



Consumers seek simplicity in a world overwhelmed by choice



Experiential commerce brings brands to life in everyday spaces



Local sports collabs drive deeper fan engagement



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US federal policy shifts are **impacting hospitality**

The new U.S. administration is shaking up the corporate landscape, creating both opportunities and challenges for event marketers.

The influx of [major sporting events](#), along with promises of [economic relief](#), [infrastructure](#) improvements, and [deregulations](#) under the Trump administration, has U.S. event marketers bracing for growth. However, concerns about travel restrictions, international visitors, a [tight](#) labour market, and reliance on [undocumented workers](#) are creating uncertainty in hospitality and events. Additionally, the rollback of [DEI initiatives](#) and [sustainability commitments](#) at the federal level has prompted mixed corporate responses—with some [mirroring](#) the changes and others [reinforcing](#) their own programs.

What it Means

Unfortunately, new revenue opportunities may mean more operational and compliance challenges for event organisers. Less [socially-conscious shoppers](#), cuts to [DEI movements](#), and the market's [growing distaste](#) of politicised brands may be deterring some brands from social responsibility initiatives. Meanwhile, [others](#) are speaking louder, acting bigger, and building stronger, more authentic customer connections.

Key Takeaway | Event organisers should prepare to adapt quickly to changing policies. Prioritise causes that matter to your business, brand, and attendees, and ensure that you're proactively troubleshooting travel and staffing challenges when architecting your event format and operations plan.





Consumers seek **simplicity** in a world overwhelmed by choice

Embracing high-touch experiences creates desire and makes simplicity the ultimate luxury.

The 'minimalism' trend is gaining momentum, with brands like [Pop-up Bagels](#) and [Ferrari](#) rejecting choice overload and customisation in favor of fixed offerings and consistent, high-quality experiences. Surprise-and-delight subscription boxes like [FabFitFun](#) and SnackCrate offer streamlined experiences that still feel curated by featuring pre-selected items and segmenting audiences by cross-industry preferences, resulting in an unexpected mix of products. Similarly, art collectives like [MSCHF](#) embrace disruption with limited-edition product drops featuring bizarre twists, like "[Jesus Shoes](#)" or "[Ketchup or Makeup](#)".

What it Means

Consumers are rejecting the overwhelming choices modern brands offer, seeking simplicity instead. By introducing intentional moments of friction—like limited selection or the element of surprise—brands tap into the desire for more meaningful, focused experiences. This approach minimises decision fatigue, ultimately creating deeper connections and engagement.

Key Takeaway | Brands should prioritise unique, limited experiences that reduce decision overload. Offering less is more; customers find joy in the elusive nature of the experience. By embracing simplicity and unpredictability, event planners instill a greater sense of wonder, connection and participation between consumer and brand.





Experiential commerce **brings brands to life** in everyday spaces

Retail media and commerce bridge the gap between living the brand and buying or trying its products.



Major brands are creating global, shareable moments that meet consumers at earlier stages of the purchasing journey—from [La Poste's](#) mailroom changing rooms, to [Daiya's](#) new flavor trialing as “rent-able” VHS films, to [Ikea's](#) QR-coded “showrooms” popping up in cafes, gyms and beaches across the Philippines. Similarly, brands are merging with existing fan cultures to create their physical counterparts, like [Aroma360's NBA tour's](#) signature team scents and Michael's “[Friendship Bracelet Bus](#)” appearing alongside Taylor Swift's Eras Tour.

What it Means

Experiential commerce is reshaping the customer journey by embedding brand experiences into everyday life. Retailers are blending engagement with purchase opportunities, enhancing their brand value and affinity. This approach fosters deeper engagement, driving consumers toward trial and purchase while creating lasting impressions beyond traditional retail tactics.

Key Takeaway | Brands should focus on creating moments that blur the lines between discovery, engagement, and purchase. By embedding brand experiences in everyday environments and aligning with relevant communities, brands can unlock emotional connections that drive both immediate action and long-term loyalty.



Local sports collabs drive **deeper fan engagement**

Brands see stronger goodwill and affinity by investing in local, ephemeral, co-created sports experiences.



Brands across industries—from [food & beverage](#) to [apparel](#)

—are continuing to prioritise more targeted, community-oriented sports sponsorships and pop-ups to stand out in a saturated market. This shift in spending is evident in various settings, with some brands backing community-led Super Bowl [watch-parties](#) over national ads, while others supported grassroots movements during [NBA All-Star Weekend](#). This strategy highlights a growing focus on connecting with local audiences over larger-scale campaigns.

What it Means

Local, co-created activations build trust and loyalty more quickly, especially amid digital fatigue. In fact, [research](#) shows local partnerships often outperform big-league sponsorships in metrics like goodwill. By leveraging strategies that evoke FOMO and personal relevance, non-endemic brands can strengthen consumer connections, showcase authenticity, and maximise the intangible “halo effect” of their engagements.

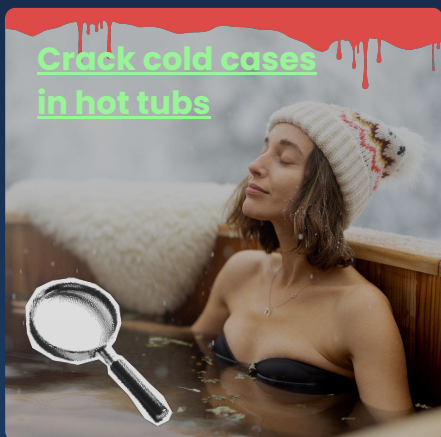
Key Takeaway | While traditional, total-viewership-driven placements help drive maximum brand awareness, consider more intimate, community-focused experiences to encourage higher-quality brand affinity. When executed thoughtfully, these experiences can outperform larger sponsorships, creating lasting connections and measurable long-term ROI.



OUT-THERE EXPERIENCES

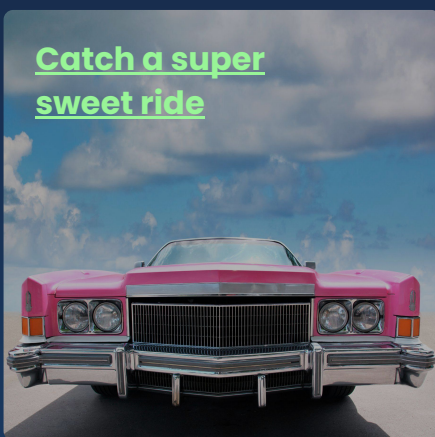
People, brands and marketers continue to push the boundaries of physical and digital experiences, with new and creative executions popping up across the globe.

Crack cold cases in hot tubs



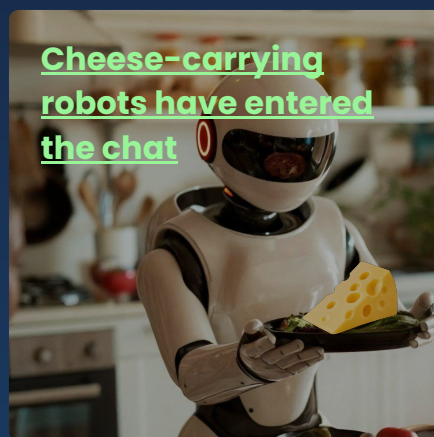
True crime meets chill time at Peacock's 'Crime and Unwind' spa—where relaxation is always the prime suspect.

Catch a super sweet ride



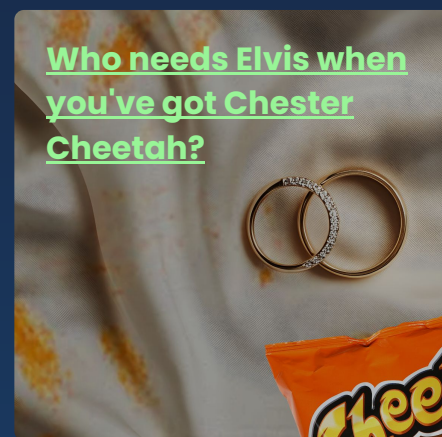
Häagen-Dazs transforms a Cadillac into the ultimate ice cream mobile set to crash Shaq's Super Bowl bash.

Cheese-carrying robots have entered the chat



Cracker Barrel's snack-bot fleet is delivering cheesy goodness straight to Super Bowl fans, no hands required.

Who needs Elvis when you've got Chester Cheetah?



Cheetos amps up the Vegas cheesiness with a branded chapel, hologram Chester officiant, and flaming hot vows.