

EXPERIENCE INTELLIGENCE

BY GPJ

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In a world of shrinking attention and rising costs, brands are doubling down on experiences that are data-rich, emotionally resonant, socially provocative, and community-built.



IRL experiences are becoming easier to measure



Brands are creating experiences worth paying (more) for



Brands embracing disruption are shaping cultural dialogue



The new influence: creators as experience designers



GEORGE P. JOHNSON
experience marketing

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IRL experiences are becoming **easier to measure**

Emerging event measurement tech is bringing ad-level analytics to experiential spend.

Digital advertising has long held the edge in performance tracking—offering precise, real-time data on reach, clicks, engagement and surrounding content—standing in stark contrast to events that typically only quantify check-ins, dwell time, and social listening. Today, [neuro-focused tools](#) are changing the game to measure real-time emotional impact, using EEG headbands, eye-tracking devices, and [biometric sensors](#). Even Meta is leaning into this shift, launching AI-driven tools that [automate ad creation](#) and targeting—doing the work of [entire ad agencies](#) and freeing up marketing dollars for higher-impact channels.

What it Means

With this shift comes a set expectation: brands want event data that's just as actionable as their media dashboards. These technologies not only optimise experiences in real-time, but also provide richer data to demonstrate ROI. Emotional resonance alone isn't enough—experiences need to deliver measurable analytics to justify growing investments.

Key Takeaway | As automation drives down media costs, experiential rises in value. To compete for larger budgets, marketers must deliver real-time, attribution-ready data. The more we can quantify impact and package results in a language CMOs understand, the more confidently brands will invest in the moments that matter.





Brands are creating **experiences worth paying (more) for**

Economic pressure is compressing brand perks—access comes at a premium, and tiers are multiplying.

The era of “value-added” is being redefined. [Southwest](#), long known for free bags, has introduced fees. Once tied to loyalty, airport lounges are purging both [airline](#) and [credit card](#) rewards members. Even [Starbucks](#) and [Dunkin’](#) are shifting rewards thresholds, making it harder to earn that occasional free drink, and [ad-free streaming](#) is increasingly paywalled. While consumers notice what’s being taken away, brands frame it differently: perks haven’t vanished—they’ve been recategorised as premium offerings. This shift signals a broader recalibration of value, where exclusivity is no longer earned, but purchased.

What it Means

The tiered experience is transitioning from a luxury to the default. Though perks are not disappearing, they’re being restructured into gated offerings. From [Capital One Lounge](#) annual fees to events like SXSW introducing a [five-tier badge system](#), brands are monetising access at all angles—and experience marketers are designing layered engagements to both justify and entice any price point.

Key Takeaway | Offering clear, compelling tiers with exclusive benefits at each level creates strong brand differentiation. Visible cues and distinct experiences build a sense of urgency and support premium pricing. Showing attendees what they’re missing—and what’s gained—encourages upgrades and maximises revenue gains across every access point.





Brands embracing disruption are shaping cultural dialogue

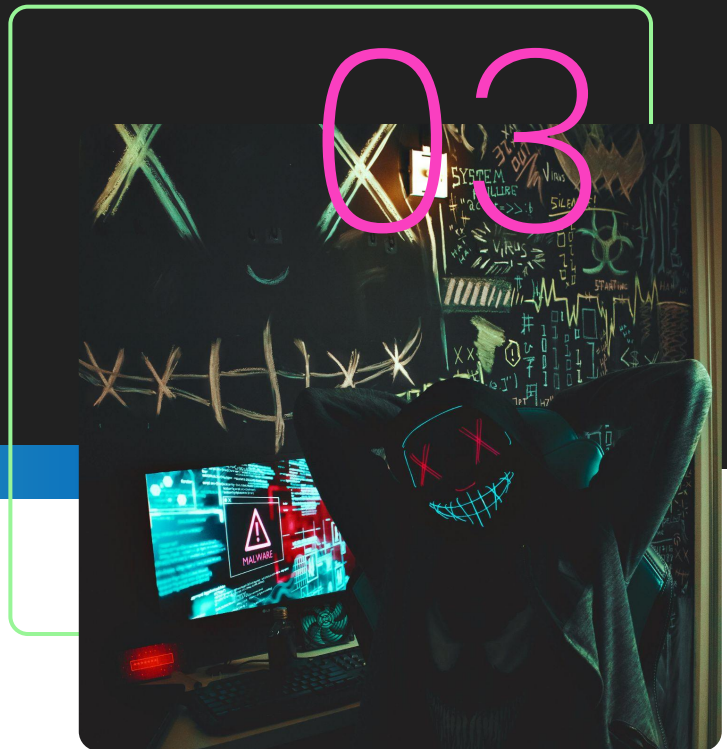
Culturally charged messaging is reshaping how brands show up—in campaigns, stunts, and moments that provoke.

A more provocative wave of storytelling is emerging—trading polished, feel-good messaging for raw truth-telling. The term “[dark woke](#)” has been making headlines recently, but the political stance is just one example of a much larger trend towards more overt [shock marketing](#). This broader cultural shift is changing how brands show up across advertising, pop culture, and experiential spaces. This trend now includes [culture-jamming stunts](#), satirical storytelling, and [confrontational brand moments](#) that challenge norms and demand attention. Especially resonant with Gen Alpha, as evidenced by [Nutterbutter’s controversial Tik Tok](#), these campaigns ditch feel-good narratives for urgency, edge, and emotional friction — often polarising, but deeply memorable.

What it Means

Audiences are increasingly savvy and skeptical of performative marketing. “Dark woke” strategies reflect a shift toward urgency, candor, and moral clarity in brand and cultural narratives—but they come with risk. Misreading the line between provocative and performative can lead to [backlash or brand erosion](#).

Key Takeaway | Brands can harness the power of provocation—not just to grab attention, but to spark deeper reflection and shared cultural dialogue. In today’s climate, the boldest moves resonate when they’re rooted in purpose, not just noise.





The new influence: **creators as experience designers**

Creators are trading viral reach for intimate access and real-world community experiences

The creator economy is shifting. For years, influence was about virality and visibility—but now, it's about intimacy, access, and real-world impact. Creators like [Brandon Edelman](#) are reimagining the “brand trip” by centering their communities instead of sponsors. Others, like Justine Doiron, are curating [sold-out international tours](#) for superfans. Platforms like [TripPromoter](#) are empowering influencers to become experience designers, and brands like [Refy](#) are swapping influencer trips for fan-centric activations. Influence is no longer defined by audience size—but by who's willing to show up in real life.

What it Means

The era of mass clout is fading. Creators are leaning into depth over breadth, building real loyalty by turning spectators into participants. Successful creators today aren't just influencers—they're curators of shared experience, designing IRL moments that foster intimacy, trust, and long-term engagement.

Key Takeaway | For experience marketers, this shift opens a new lane: partnering with creators to design immersive, fan-first activations that go beyond traditional influence and build real-world communities. The future isn't just branded content—it's branded connection.





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.

Spin cycles meet
social circles



This all-in-one laundromat concept turns mundane chores into memorable moments—with coffee, cocktails, and community conversation starters.

Santa Monica pier
gets Furby-fied



Hasbro's iconic toy takes over the pier with a disco dance floor, Galantis DJ set, and sensory-rich play zones to entertain fans of all ages.

It's I.V. O'CLOCK in
NYC



Liquid I.V. hijacks Times Square with billboards, robots, and samples—a reminder to hydrate during afternoon slump hours.

Tequila tasting that
touches all five
senses



From agave fields to infinity mirrors, Don Julio's immersive experience merged brand history with high-tech touch points.