

Experiential marketing



the hottest DJs and good times at the beach.

boundaries of experiential marketing in the purist sense. But the festival wasn't just a one-off event. Virgin wrapped the execution with pre-event activities and post-event content services, ensuring continuity across all its touch-points.

"Sponsoring a festival and then having an above-the-line campaign about

something different doesn't make sense, adds Field. "One of the critical things with experiential is that it's relevant to what the brand is trying to deliver."

With music festivals and outrageous street executions making the headlines, it's easy to get the impression experiential only works when it's hip and outlandish.

Sober brand offerings and companies that target mature consumers tend to be absent from the bright lights of experiential. So does the discipline only work for youth markets, or can it move beyond Generation Y?

Every agency is quick to insist experiential marketing works across all demographics, yet ask them to name a brand which has successfully used it for a 40-plus age group and the silence is telling. The exception is Promotional Sampling, which is working with the Commonwealth Bank, although the financial brand is yet to move forward with a campaign.

And Naked's Du Vernet admits no one has yet harnessed experiential outside of youth markets.

But it's not just among the baby boomer generation that experiential needs to prove its worth and make its definition clear.

As the discipline gains momentum, the biggest challenge is to one day be perceived by the marketing community as a communications channel that instinctively feels on a par with above-the-line consumer touch points.

FIVE THINGS NOT TO DO WITH EXPERIENTIAL

1 Don't view experiential marketing in isolation. Brands that succeed at experiential integrate it with above-the-line and below-the-line executions, viewing it as part of the larger campaign. Similarly, successful experiential agencies work with other agencies to streamline ideas and bring leverage to the experiential execution.

2 Don't build the experiential campaign around a TVC. While an experiential campaign can bring a TVC message to life, there is a danger in simply building the experiential around a TV idea. When this happens, a campaign ends up with what John du Vernet from Naked calls "matching suitcases", where every piece of media looks exactly the same. A better way is to grow an idea that can live across all media channels and layers of communication.

3 Don't start an experiential execution without a strategy. Without a well-thought through concept, the temptation for advertisers is to create a gimmicky stunt or simply link the brand to a celebrity. "You have to stand for something before you launch into experiential marketing," says Alistair Henderson, OMD Fuse director. "It comes down to strategy and execution. An important question for clients to address is: Have they got a strategy that allows them to make decisions about experiential marketing in an informed way?"

4 Don't expect or try to use a standard set of metrics to measure every experiential campaign. The measurement of experiential should always be 'bespoke'. Metrics used by agencies to measure experiential campaign results include the number of interactions, levels of involvement, PR coverage and tracking studies on brand attributes.

5 Don't insult the consumer. Stephen van Elst from ABT believes the same rules apply to experiential marketing as to any other form of communication. "If it's not authentic, if the consumer doesn't believe this is how you are going to treat them on an ongoing basis in terms of personality and promise, then it's a mistake. If you try to give an amazing premium experience for a brand that's not going to deliver that, it will be detrimental to the brand," says van Elst. Marketers should also never try to sell the product to people on-the-spot, as consumers are already making some form of commitment in time, energy and sheer presence.

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