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Marketing: It's all about the experience

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Citation

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Experiential marketing delivers high recall. You can now even do it with blockchain

Ahead of the 2017 release of the Rings horror flick, Paramount Pictures released a trailer that went viral. Even though eventual box office takings were disappointing, the trailer was memorable and generated plenty of publicity for the movie.

The company behind that prank also thought up the telekinetic coffee shop girl idea for the 2013 movie adaptation of Carrie, Stephen King's 1974 novel, and also the Beauty Shop Scare which promoted another horror movie that year, The Last Exorcism Part II.

While these videos have been watched millions of times, the number of people who see them – "reach" in marketing parlance – is dwarfed by outdoors advertising such as billboards or rolling posters at bus stops. But the goal of a PR campaign is about recall, not reach.

"Your big out-of-home advertisements have huge reach because thousands or millions of people see them every day, but how many times have you seen a billboard and wanted to go up and take a photo of it or engage with it? Not very often," explains **Craig Stewart**, Account Director at Because Experiential Marketing, which counts amongst its clients global brands such as Coca-Cola, Nike, and Amazon. "Although it may have high reach in terms of awareness, it has low recall and low conversion and amplification.

"The opposite is true of experiential. Looking at the Rings example, we might engage with 100 people that day. But from the content that was generated, there was much higher recall and the opportunity for amplification on social channels.

"That's ultimately how, sometimes, experiential can outperform broadcast but it's all about working the two together."

SCALING THE EXPERIENCE

Experiential marketing can be infused in various strategies, which Stewart lists with the brands that ran such campaigns:

> - *Taste it* (Heineken): "This is an example of their revenue-driving strategy where it's all about getting liquid to lips, getting consumers to trial the product."
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> - *Touch & feel* (DFS): "It's about…figuring out the sensory experience that can be built for the customer to experience the whiskey, which is made up of a few senses: smell, taste, sound."
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> - *Educate & inform* (L'Oreal): "L'Oreal did this with the Vichy and La Roche-Posay lines. Their products are incredibly technology-focused with a lot science behind the moisturiser and the anti-ageing cream. We brought in specific field staff and brand ambassadors who were able to take the consumer on that journey about what was in the product, how it helped, and the science behind it. If the consumer is actually informed of what's inside the product, they are more likely to end up purchasing it and then go on to be a repeat purchaser.
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> - *Quid pro quo* (Hermes): "Hermes did this in the U.S. in a laundromat. You could bring your own scarves, have it personalised and dip-dyed and have it returned to you in 48 hours. You could also purchase a new scarf and get it dip-dyed there as well. It creates that unique experience for people to come along and be a little surprised at what the brand is putting on."

Stewart gave those examples at a recent SMU Centre for Marketing Excellence Luxury Seminar Series lecture titled "Live, digital, and virtual experiences for luxury brands Masterclass" where he also highlighted Because's creation of the Macallan Residence as an example of the Full brand immersion strategy. For luxury brands with substantial budget, Stewart says this might be a strategy worth exploring because of the brand equity it generates. However, questions of scalability and returns on investment must be answered before taking this option.

"The Macallan thing is a one-off," explains Stewart. "We always speak to our clients about making things as scalable as possible. With scalability you're able to allow things to continue over a longer period of time different locations.

"With Macallan, obviously we couldn't do the same Macallan experience across five different cities. But what we did with Macallan was we took out certain parts of what the full brand immersion was made up of. Tailoring was one component of it. The mixologist was another component. We can drop those into the things we were doing for the brand.

"Macallan wanted to be top of mind in certain bars and restaurants so we took the idea of bringing in a mixologist and the food pairing to specific venues. But of course not everyone can do these big all-guns-blazing style activations."

UN-VATOM-ABLE POTENTIAL

In his presentation, Stewart also demonstrated how brands are using blockchain in their marketing efforts with a live demonstration of how Coca-Cola uses Vatoms. That technology, which is created by startup BLOCKv, features blockchain-supported virtual tokens that have most recently been deployed in Vodafone's Pokemon-style 'win an iPhone' game in central London.

On the website, BLOCKv describes Vatoms as digital objects "which can be grabbed from billboards, in social media, or picked up within augmented & virtual reality, with at-scale retailer redemption from major brands, for real-world goods, offers incredible new capabilities for customer engagement".

"These Vatoms are finite so we can dictate how many of them we actually want to be included in a campaign," Stewart explains. "We could release 100,000 across any given location, or just 500 depending on what the objectives are whether it's a mass outreach programme or a targeted campaign.

"I could use my phone to collect it in AR. Similar to how people play Pokemon Go, I could create a Louis Vuitton shoe as a digital object that appears right in front of me that I can see on my phone. I could then be able to collect that Louis Vuitton Vatom on my phone and keep it in my inventory. From there, I can programme whatever communication or promotion through that Vatom to get the consumer to come to our store or buy something."