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Coachella 2024 Experiential Marketing: Shower Portals, Manifest Stations and 'Surpr-ICES'

Sponsorships, Festivals & Fan Cons, Sampling
Posted on April 18, 2024 by Kait Shea

Festival season has sprung once again and, per usual, the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival is serving as its launchpad. The Indio, CA-based event at the Empire Polo Club, hosted this year April 12-14 and April 19-21, features headlining performances by No Doubt, Lana Del Ray, Tyler, The Creator and Doja Cat; a new blockchain-based scavenger hunt dubbed Coachella Quests; and a new stage that's home to extended sets.

But beyond the music is a swell of brand activity that may serve as a barometer for festival trends to come, so we rounded up some of the top Coachella 2024 experiential marketing ideas. From shower portals to manifest stations to self-care retreats, check out the action in the desert.

More on Festival Sponsorship:

- .ow American Weed Co.'s Presenting Sponsorship Made History at Cali Vibes
- Steal the Show with 27 of the Summer's Best Festival Activation Ideas

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818 TEQUILA'S FULL-SERVICE SALOON

The popular 818 Tequila Outpost from last year's fest returned to the desert this year as an exclusive, one-day pop-up offering food, music and cocktails. The Kendall Jenner-owned brand went all-in on an old timey Western town aesthetic, arriving with a full-service saloon and lots of 818 cocktails to go around. There were also refreshments from partners like **Sprinter Vodka Soda**, **Olipop** and **Chamberlain Coffee**, plus festival essentials from partners including **Zico**, **Lemme**, **Vacation Inc.**, **Liquid I.V.** and more.

Attendees additionally enjoyed activations from 818 partners, like **Bumble's** cowboy hat customization station, **Tezza's** curated photo moment, **Gopuff's** shop full of snacking staples and **Anastasia Beverly Hills'** beauty touch-up station.

ABSOLUT'S HYBRID ADVENTURE

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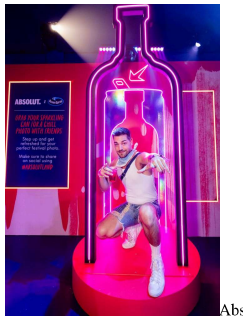

Absolut's trippy, hybrid Absolut.Land activation popped up at Coachella again this year, where attendees were invited to "break the ice" with a cooling photo moment and beverages from Absolut's main bar and the Ocean Spray Bar. The experience was open all three days of the festival's opening weekend, offering continuous dj sets that lasted until the activation closed each night.

Within the footprint, a digital screen playing content from the brand's metaverse world, Absolut.Land, encouraged festivalgoers to interact with the brand on Spatial (the platform that hosts the metaverse experience) by scanning a QR code on their phones. Once inside, participants could play games and partake in interactive mixology sessions. Meanwhile, the same experience was available to fans at home, who could check out the digital replica of Absolut's Coachella footprint, plus listen to dj sets taking place inside the activation. The brand also dropped exclusive content in Absolut.Land with its limited series "Mixing It Up: Cosmos & Culture" featuring actor and comedian Matt Rogers. (**Agency:** 160over90)

Photo credit: Marissa Joy Photo

AMEX'S FESTIVAL FORTUNES

Surprise and delight was the name of the game at American Express's activation, an expansive four-room journey designed to help fans "manifest their own festival memories." A winter wonderland room inspired by Reneé Rapp's breakout album, "Snow Angel," featured a photo op to match, and had attendees taking a festival-themed quiz in order to participate in "Reneé's Readings" to get their "festival fortune" predicted by the singer. Amex cardmembers even received their fortune on a physical card to take home.

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The space also included a retro snack bar curated by The New Bar, which whipped up non-alcoholic drinks, including two original N/A cocktails: the Manifest Marg and the Celestial Cosmo. To boot, jelly company Raindrop Cake created complimentary "Raindrop Potions." Rounding out the activation were a Night Market offering items from small-business partners, and a cave-like space designed to offer a moment of reprieve before attendees returned to the bustling festival.

Of course, there were even more experiences and perks for cardmembers to reap. For the first time, Amex debuted a Merch To-Go Window, where cardmembers received a mystery box of festival-themed artist merchandise from festival performers Rapp and Tyler, the Creator, along with official Coachella items. What's more, the brand produced a "get ready with me" (GRWM) cardmember pop-up in partnership with In Your Dreams that provided complimentary glam services, like hair-bow stacking.

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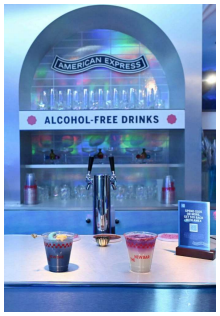

Photo credit: Dan Steinberg for American Express/AP Images

HBO'S REMIX CHALLENGE

HBO leaned on its popular "House of the Dragon" series for a one-day event on April 13 activated at the OCA Estate. With the iconic Iron Throne in tow, the brand teamed up with music house label Ed Banger to produce a House of the Dragon Remix Challenge. Hosted on electronic music hub Beatport, the experience had attendees remixing the iconic "House of the Dragon"/"Game of Thrones" theme song, with Ed Banger Records, Beatport and HBO serving as challenge judges. Additional event **sponsors** included ROVE, FAQ Health, Red Bull, Liquid Death, Bold Vodka, Gem and Bolt, Super Bird, NON, Peroni and Vacation.

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Photo credit: Kyle Goldberg / BFA.com

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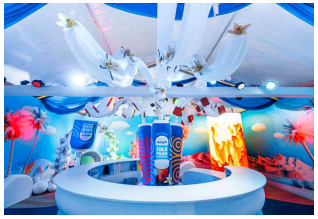
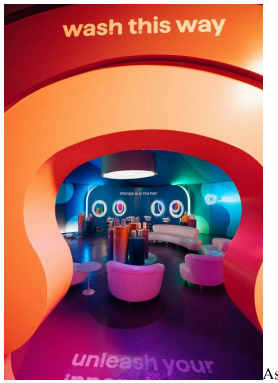
INTERNATIONAL DELIGHT'S COLD FOAM HOUSE

Coffee orders got kicked up a notch at Coachella with the International Delight Cold Foam House, a multisensory activation designed to get revelers sampling the brand's three new creamer flavors. Inside, consumers could swing on an oversized cold foam coffee cup, create a cold-foam inspired "beat" from a dashboard featuring International Delight dispensers and caps as buttons, engage with a 10-foot touchscreen glass filled with cascading digital foam, and snap photos with whimsical scenery (like 3D cold-foam swirl installations hanging overhead). Coachella influencer and guest barista Victoria Justice, a "coffee fanatic" and actress, songwriter and singer, helped drive the (caffeine) buzz. (**Agencies:** Inspira Marketing, strategy and activation; Hunter, p.r.) *–R.B.*



METHOD'S SHOWER PORTAL



As the official body and hair care sponsor of Coachella, Method Products showered the festival grounds in restorative experiences and opportunities for self-expression. The multipronged experiential program was inspired by the brand's Unleash Your Inner Shower campaign, which encourages consumers to bring the "confident, Zen or inspired energy" they feel in the shower into their daily lives.

On the main festival grounds, Method activated an Inner Shower Lounge where attendees could relax and partake in interactive product experiences, as well as the Inner Shower Portal, a multisensory journey through the worlds of Method's most popular scents. There was also a Hair G' `eauty Station where festivalgoers could select from nine unique hairstyles inspired by Method scents, and an AI Aura photo op that, based on answers to a few short questions, transformed attendees' auras into colorful digital prints, also inspired by the brand's most popular pı aromas.

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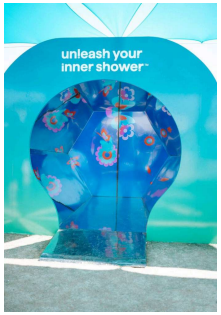
But wait, there's much more. Over at the Coachella campgrounds, more sudsy fun awaited. There, Method's Field of Showers began as a blank canvas that encompassed plain sculptures of butterflies, flowers and waves. Attendees were invited to unleash their creativity and paint the items, all of which represented designs of the Method scents that festivalgoers encountered across the brand's festival presence.

Other campground touchpoints included a kaleidoscope selfie booth, a customization station where festivalgoers could express themselves with iron-on patches, a salon in lot 8 that offered beauty and wellness services like hair washing and styling, and a Shower Power Golf Cart that roamed the grounds dishing out free body wash, shampoo and conditioner. (**Agency:** Revolution Marketing)



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NYLON'S COCOON

NYLON House, which made its way to Coachella and Art Basel in 2023, is a go-to activation platform for the BDG-owned publication, and it returned to this year's festival with a bang. On April 12, invited guests celebrated the brand's 25th anniversary at a private estate, where the NYLON House, Presented by Smirnoff ICE took on a "metamorphosis" theme and offered music (including a headlining performance by Grammy-nominated dj duo Sofi Tukker), f&b, photo moments and beyond. What's more, after seven years as an online-only publication, *NYLON* relaunched a print issue with Gwen Stefani, who headlined Coachella this year with No Doubt, on the cover.

Naturally, a range of sponsors that tapped into beauty, fashion and pop culture were also on hand to keep festivalgoers engaged and immersed in the metamorphosis theme. Here's a quick rundown.

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Presenting sponsor **Smirnoff ICE** invited attendees into its ice chalet to snap photos and grab a drink at two main bars offering Smirnoff ICE beverages, and four grab-and-go fridges stocked with the beverage. Throughout the evening, the brand also delivered a few "Surpr-ICES" inspired by its new campaign. Surpr-ICES are "always positive, celebrate spontaneity and boldness, and typically have a comedic twist," according to the brand.

E.l.f. Cosmetics' Dew Dome provided a sensorial journey through a dewy, sticky world that touted its viral Power Grip Primer and newest drip to help festivalgoers beat the desert dryness. Meanwhile, **göt2b's** Remix Styling Hub invited attendees to transform their hair into bold, festival-ready styles. After their makeover, participants headed to the dj booth for a photo op. Plus, **Sally Hansen** offered butterfly-inspired nail art in a nod to the metamorphosis theme, **Banter by Piercing Pagoda** provided free ear piercings and Keys Soulcare presented aura reading, skincare sampling and empowering affirmations.

Hilton was on hand promoting its Curio Collection with a lounge built for refueling where attendees could snag complimentary surprises from brand ambassadors, munch on snacks and snap photos. And in **Rémy Martin's** XO Night Lounge, the concept of a traditional nightcap was transformed into "XO Night Uncapped," a celebration of luxury, innovation and nightlife where the XO Night & Neat and the XO Night Spritz cocktails flowed.

Kate Spade's technicolor infinity room was a spring-themed space where festivalgoers could partake in a "perception-altering" experience by stepping inside a floral installation set against a spring landscape, prompting plenty of selfies. Attendees also scored commemorative branded hats, while supplies lasted. And in **Nautica's** underwater-themed activation, attendees embarked on a multisensory adventure that enveloped them in the brand's aquatic fragrances, and had the option to get colorful with under-the-sea-themed body art.

"It's that experimental quality and giving people sort of a buffet of things to choose from and to curate," says Lindsay Leaf, evp-brand marketing and experiential at BDG. "We have this journey for them, but everybody's journey, depending on their likes and their preferences, is a little bit different. And I think there's a lot of beauty to that because how they experience it may be a little bit different than how their friend experienced it."

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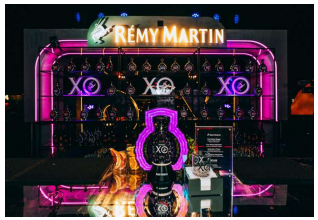

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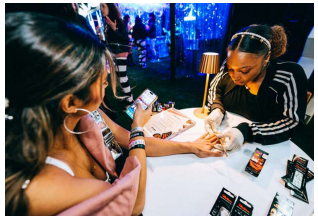
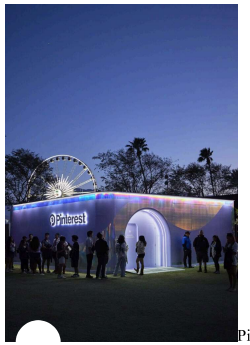


Photo credit: Kit Karzen for NYLON House

PINTEREST'S MANIFEST STATION



Pinterest is laser-focused on making inroads with Gen Z, a demo that has a strong affinity for music festivals. So the brand made its grand debut at Coachella this year with a Manifest Station (get it?) experience themed around fashion and beauty tr[illegible]hat was designed to engage Gen Zers via real-life versions of its digital Boards and Collages.

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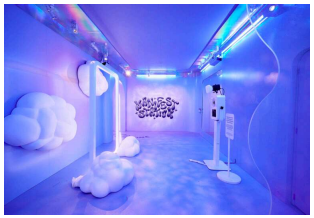
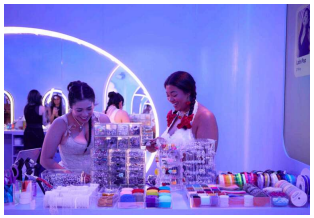
During both weekends of the festival, fans could have their outfits embellished with accessories selected by celebrity stylists and inspired by Pinterest's Coachella trends, like "2014 core" and "Lana Del Rey core" (think: lace, leather, bows, pins, ribbon, charms, oversized hair clips and gems). Attendees could also get "glowy" beauty looks by celebrity makeup artists based on trend-inspired collaborative Boards on Pinterest. Trends like Hot Metals and Dark Feminine core were brought to life through colorful graphic liner, gemstones, pearls and metallic stickers.

"About one in four [Pinterest] users plan to attend a festival this year, so we have a strong Gen Z demographic. Gen Zers love music festivals, and pinners overall show a lot of intent around festivals," says Sara Pollack, vp, global lead of consumer marketing at Pinterest. "And then within that, we took a look at which festivals would make the most sense for us, and we saw the most massive search volume around Coachella… That quickly became our focus-festival for this year." (**Agency:** MKG)





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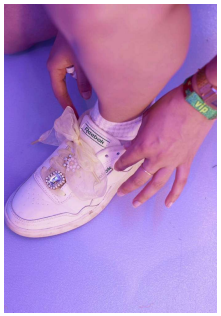

Photo credit: Kelly Puleio

SMIRNOFF'S ICE-Y PLAYGROUND

On top of its sponsor activations at other brands' events, Smirnoff ICE popped up with its own frosty-white event space featuring an ice-themed pop-a-shot game and ball pit, a freezer photo op, gem-encrusted bottles of Smirnoff ICE and live performances, including a set by Jaden Smith. Once again, the brand offered ice-themed "Surpr-ICES"—both the kind that "bling" (like bejweled bucket hats) and the kind that melt. Attendees also had a chance to win festival merchandise, including exclusive fest-inspired collectibles by designer Sue Tsai. (**Agency:** Taylor Strategy)

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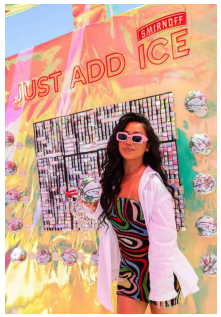

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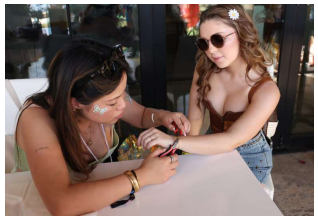
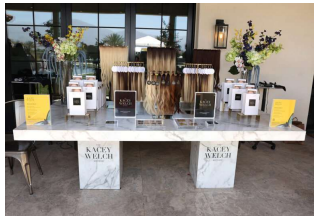
Photo credit: BFA

THE ZOE REPORT'S SELF-CARE OASIS



Another BDG-owned publication, *The Zoe Report*, and its long-standing ZOEasis activation returned to the desert for the eighth year on April 13 to offer attendees a midday self-care retreat, and an escape from the chaos of the festival grounds. Sets by DJ Miss Maddi Jean, beauty and wellness experiences, refreshments and photo-worthy touchpoints were all in the mix. In addition, presenting sponsors **Lumify** and **Smirnoff ICE** created their own brand experiences within the event.

At the Lumify Eyes Bejeweled Bar, attendees could get a metamorphosis-inspired festival look with vibrant jewels and makeup, and snag Lumify Eyes products to take home. And in Smirnoff ICE's backyard footprint, festivalgoers could play lawn games while sipping on the brand's signature beverage.



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TAO'S DESERT NIGHTS

TAO Group Hospitality arrived at weekend one of Coachella with an invite-only "Desert Nights" festival afterparty located at an estate less than two miles from the grounds. The event, presented by Patrón El Alto, included a range of live performances, craft Patrón cocktails, drinks from vodka partner Grey Goose and a dipping station featuring finger foods from Kraft Heinz, among touchpoints. Two other brand partners added to the atmosphere: Pizza Hut and prebiotic soda brand poppi. (**Agency:** Corso Marketing Group)

Pizza Hut was on the scene with a one-of-a-kind sampling shop serving up cheese, pepperoni, veggie, and signature "supreme" pizza flavors. Custom slice boxes and caricatures by the "cartoon assassin," Napkinkilla, were also in the mix.

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Poppi "brought soda back" with a bespoke, hologram-inspired sampling bar where attendees could try the brand's new Lemon Lime flavor, take photos and grab custom merch. The brand additionally offered signature poppi citrus spritz cocktails, product integration at VIP tables and a lively poppi parade. The company's newest brand ambassador, Alix Earle, also stopped by to check out the experience.

Photo credit: Tao Group Hospitality; Corso Marketing Group

WHITE CLAW'S COUNTDOWN

White Claw returned to the grounds with its Shore Club platform and a pop-up space designed to bring its new Grab Life By The Claw campaign, which centers on making meaningful connections, to life with the "CLAW O'Clock." The airport-style clock was located on the exterior of the space and served as the centerpiece of the activation strategy. Attendees gathered around as the installation counted down to giveaways, talent meet-and-greets and surprise performances by Charli XCX, Bebe Rhexa and SG Lewis. (**Agencies:** VCCP; G7 Entertainment M[illegible]ng)

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Tags:Coachella, Gen Z, music festival, festival sponsorship

Posted by Kait Shea

Kait joined EM in 2015 and today enjoys her role as senior editor, digital content. When she's not in reporter mode, rocking mermaid pants at Comic-Con or running laps at MWC Barcelona, you can find her at home listening to music. →
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