



MINDSHARE

# RECAP + TRENDS FROM SXSW 2021



# **SXSW** ↙ 2021

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EVENT OVERVIEW

SESSION TRACKS

TRENDS & TAKEAWAYS

PICKS FROM A LOCAL



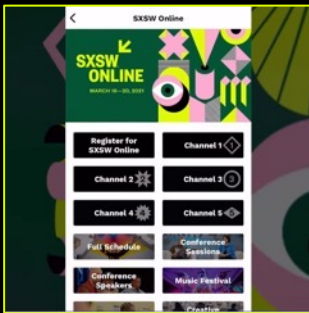
# SXSW 2021

## WHAT IS SXSW?



SXSW Conference & Festivals celebrate the convergence of the interactive, film, and music industries. Fostering creative and professional growth alike, SXSW® is the premier destination for discovery.

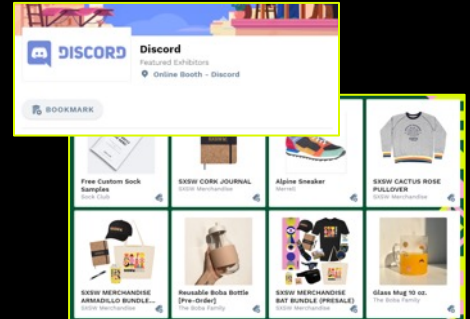
## WHAT DID 2021 LOOK LIKE?



**Online 2021**  
A first-ever fully virtual SXSW housed on a central hub online, lovingly dubbed Couch By Couchwest this year, the show went on.



**SXSW in XR**  
SXSW 2021 included an XR buildout of iconic Congress avenue and Austin venues- airing films in the virtual Paramount Theater and sessions in the Contemporary museum



**Virtual Marketplace**  
The Trade Show and marketplace go virtual this year, encouraging attendees to chat with exhibiting companies, set meetings and purchase product via eComm



# SXSW

## 2021

### 2021 SESSION TRACKS

#### **A NEW URGENCY**

2021 has amplified issues like racial injustice, poverty, nationalism, and the climate crisis amidst a global pandemic. The future depends on the business, non-profit, government, science and tech communities all working together. What advancements are needed to create immediate and lasting progress?

#### **CHALLENGING TECH'S PATH FORWARD**

If we are to achieve real change as a society, then the many ways in which the tech industry impacts our lives must be leveraged as a positive force. To build a better tomorrow, what lessons can an industry integral to our existence learn from its current failings?

#### **CULTURAL RESILIENCE IN THE ARTS**

Great art often thrives in times of turmoil and chaos. How will the eruption of creativity we are currently seeing across music, film, experiential, written and visual arts impact our culture for the next decade and beyond?

#### **THE REBIRTH OF BUSINESS**

From startups to small companies to major corporations, capitalism must be examined as we look to rebuild the global economy. A potential leveling of the playing field awaits if we seize the opportunity for more equitable systems across race, gender and class.

#### **TRANSFORMING THE ENTERTAINMENT LANDSCAPE**

Conventional wisdom from entertainment industries has lost its shine in the face of evolving consumers habits, technological advancements and an increased focus on social issues. These pressures are forcing a much needed metamorphosis. What lessons can music, film, television, sports and gaming learn to keep up with an ever-accelerating pace of change?

#### **CONNECTION IN DISCONNECTION**

We're living lives we never could have imagined as we head into our own brave new world. The consequences of social isolation have been brewing for years. Now online platforms are some of the only outlets available to foster a sense of community. How do we return to a world where individual concerns give way to embracing the value of humanity?

#### **AN UNCHARTED FUTURE**

Biohacking, consumer space travel, quantum physics, radical life extension, drone delivery – these concepts that once belonged in science fiction are now part of our immediate future. What mind-blowing new ideas will inspire the next generation of innovators?





# THE TRENDS

Prioritizing progress was the central thread running through SXSW sessions this year. Purpose and intention define long-term progress, and both have become an integral north star that should influence every corporate outcome, in every industry. In an age with an onslaught of social issues, corporations hold the power to create the change consumers want to see, and form a better, more equitable world.

---

**A CALL FOR BETTER CAPITALISM**

---

**TECH'S INCLUSIVITY PROBLEM**

---

**VOICES OF CHANGE**

---

**THE AGE OF IMMERSION**

---

**SCI-FI BECOMES NON-FI**



# A CALL FOR BETTER CAPITALISM

In the past year, social, climate, and health issues rose to a head, causing a corporate reckoning: that in a capitalistic society, corporations can use their power to influence wide-scale social change and impact the world for good.

## THE PURPOSE-WASHING PROBLEM

Consumers demand change from companies, but what happens when they don't fully commit?

### STATEMENTS OF ACTION ARE NOT ACTION

Increasingly, consumers want to purchase products from brands that commit to change (via racial justice, gender equality, sustainability, etc.).

To meet demand, many brands find themselves grasping at straws to make up for lost time, now making blanket statements of support for communities in need, without putting action plans behind them.

Or worse, announcing a plan without following through.

We at [Brand] are committed to fighting injustice by posting images to Twitter that express our commitment to fighting injustice.

To that end, we offer this solemn white-on-black .jpeg that expresses vague solidarity with the Black community, but will quietly elide the specifics of what is wrong, what needs to change, or in what ways we will do anything about it. This is doubly true if [Brand] is particularly guilty of exacerbating these issues.

We hope this action encourages you to view [Brand] positively without, you know, expecting anything from us.

**[BRAND]**  
You know the ones.™

This tweet released in May of 2020, draws attention to the empty promises many brands made after the killing of George Floyd

## GETTING INTENTIONAL WITH PURPOSE

So, how do companies convey that they are committed to business practices for social change?



Greyston brownies have committed to serving their community in Yonkers and now nationally with Open Hiring, accepting individuals based on current actions and future potential, without judging their past.

### PURPOSE ON PURPOSE

Ben and Jerry's founder recounts his belief that commerce is one of the most powerful forces today, that businesses should be built for doing good.

When it comes to building a purpose-led businesses, it is important to identify your intention: what is the problem you want to solve? Then, identify the root of the problem, what causes it, and how your business can solve it.

Once that decision has been made, companies should be transparent about their progress and report what ongoing changes are being made.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR BRANDS

### INTENTION

Are you practicing intentionality relative to your purpose? How have you made progress and what is your end goal?

### INVESTMENT

Does the way that your company invest dollars in advertising and elsewhere serve your core purpose?

### SOCIAL PROFIT

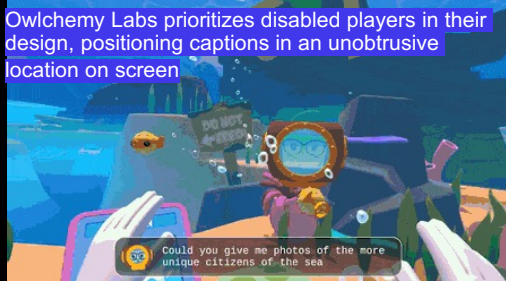
If you're asking what the ROI is on purpose work then you're asking the wrong question!

# TECH'S INCLUSIVITY PROBLEM

As advanced as technology is, it's not nearly as inclusive as it could be. We've seen too many instances of technology failing at including critical communities either by leaving them out entirely or escalating the biases against them.

## DESIGNING FOR THE DISABLED COMMUNITY

Ignoring the needs of the disability community restricts critical access to goods and services



## VIRTUAL REALITY'S REALITY PROBLEM

Virtual Reality experiences (games, movies, etc.) are not often created with the many different groups of the disabled community in mind.

For example, deaf and hard of hearing people rely on visual cues. When VR headsets covers half of the user's face, they are left unable to communicate. For folks with cochlear implants, wearing the headset and the implant is highly uncomfortable if not impossible, leaving many to sacrifice the hearing for the VR experience.

To avoid and address problems like these, product designers should include people with disabilities in the design framework from the very beginning.

## BIASES EMBEDDED IN THE ALGORITHM

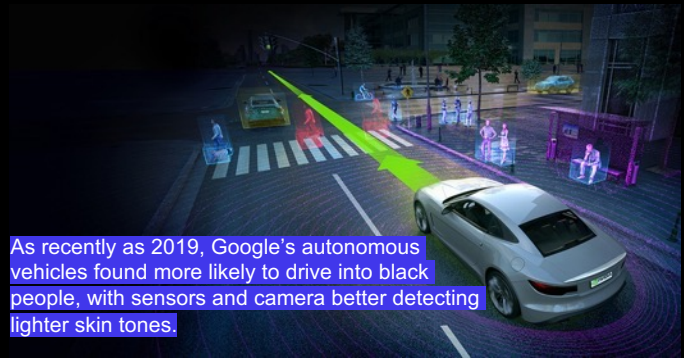
Humanity's worst biases find their way into the technology we use every day

### ALGORITHMS GONE AWRY

The tech industry has a diversity problem, which has, in turn, created a bias problem.

We all hold unconscious biases- but when developers and coders are predominantly white and male, these biases are embedded into the algorithms they create. Which, then dictates the content we see on social media and the actions that machine learning-based products take.

The results can be disastrous when communities of color, gender, etc. are not considered in the algorithmic design process.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR BRANDS

### CONCEPTING

When creating a new campaign or product, ensure that its message and usage address communities across race, disability and gender.

### DATA

Be critical about the data you're using, how are you evaluating what is important in product or campaign creation?

### AUDIT TECH

Reevaluate your keyword blocklists – are you excluding communities or exacerbating biases?

# VOICES OF CHANGE

Across mediums, the stories we tell, the voices we uplift and the communities we represent have the power to influence society and drive subsequent action.

## REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA ACROSS DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

The way stories are told about diverse communities need to reflect real experiences

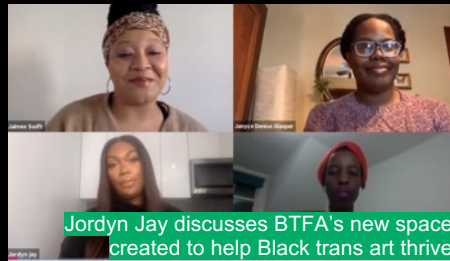
### POWER OF THE NARRATIVE

Our society is molded by the media we consume and we're living in "a very heteronormative world". So, specifically for the LGBTQIA+ community, it's "very important to be represented in a queer storyline on screen" – Zelda Barnes, *HBO Series Creator*

Series creators emphasize the importance of refraining from making a character's queerness their sole storyline, but instead showing the dimensions of the character outside of their gender or sexual identity.



In HBO series *Generation*, high school students explore modern sexuality in a less than accepting community



Jordyn Jay discusses BTFA's new space created to help Black trans art thrive

### BLACK CREATORS TO THE FRONT

From film to fine arts to writing and anywhere in between, black creators, and specifically, black womxn creators have shaped the arts society, but without proper recognition. In fact, many arts institutions, be it museums or academic programs, leave black womxn artists out of the historical and contemporary arts narratives.

Several organizations like MuseumViews and Black Trans Femmes in the Arts (BTFA) are working to make past, future and current black womxn in the arts more visible.

## MUSICIANS INFLUENCE AND DOCUMENT A MOVEMENT

Artists have the influence and power via fans to start and keep the momentum of a movement



After the killing of George Floyd, Lil Baby released "The Bigger Picture", addressing police brutality, now played over 100M times on Spotify.

### SOUNDTRACKING THE MOVEMENT

Musicians have always acted as social justice influencers, especially related to the Black Lives Matter movement, and in 2020 they have continued to use their voices create emotionally-driven protest music. In turn, they drive fandom to follow and spread awareness of the movement.

Because music can amplify voices of a community, legendary American rapper Daddy-O prompts artists to ask themselves "What [they are] going to do in our state and time to stand against what [they] see is wrong?"

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR BRANDS

### CREATIVE

Audit representation of diverse communities in your creative

### COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

Support underrepresented communities outside of tentpoles like Pride and Black History Month with an always-on strategy

### SUPPORT ARTISTS

Support and tap into musicians and other influencers who are using their voices to benefit a movement



# THE AGE OF IMMERSION

In the era of peak separation, the human need to connect with others and continue traditionally in-person experiences has emerged. Immersive experiences are answering that need in an engaging, human-first way.

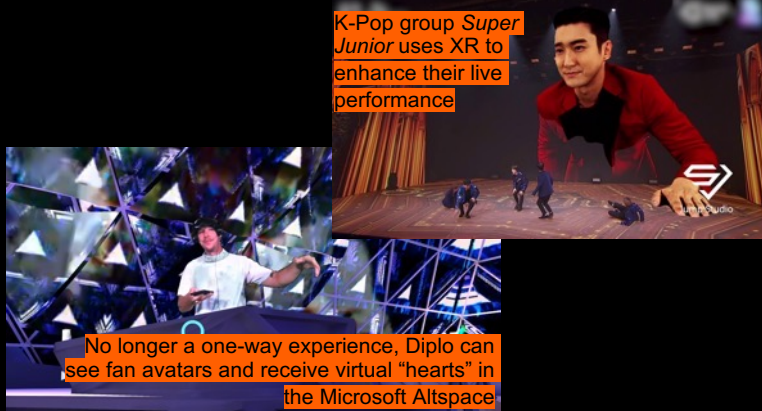
## THE RISE OF XR

XR experiences create new forms of reality by bringing digital objects into the physical world and vice versa

### HE[XR] TO STAY

For musicians, combining live performance with computer-generated virtual imagery via XR has enhanced the experience for both fans and artists, and now, fans are even able to interact with artists virtually via audience avatars.

And some artists are even incorporating XR elements into their IRL performances, making the technology a mainstay in the music industry.



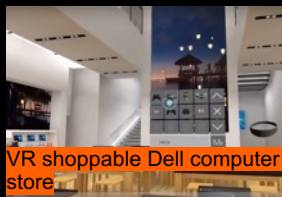
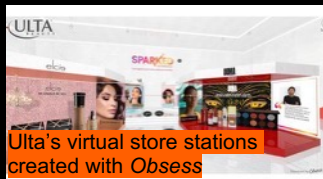
## ALL THE WORLD'S A STORE

Immersive experiences merge with digital and social retail spaces

### BUYING PHYSICAL THINGS DIGITALLY

#### READY TO RENDER?

Virtual shopping has become a consumer expectation during the pandemic... "[There's been a] shift from a luxury of having any product rendered in a virtual environment, that was a nice-to-have, and now it is almost essential to businesses" – Silke Meixner, IBM



### BUYING DIGITAL THINGS DIGITALLY

#### FASHION FORWARD

The future of fashion looks toward digital garment production, augmented onto consumers photos and ready to be posted on social or elsewhere online. Its virtual nature mitigates textile waste and is a highly sustainable alternative to the fast fashion of today.



We're also seeing a rise in digital clothing for gaming avatars, with limited edition virtual skin collabs across platforms like Fortnite and Roblox.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR BRANDS

### MUSIC EXPERIENCES

Lean into opportunities for your brand to create or support XR experiences between musicians and fans

### RETAIL

Consider creating a virtual pop-up or integrating your product into an existing virtual retail experience.

### DIGITAL CLOTHING

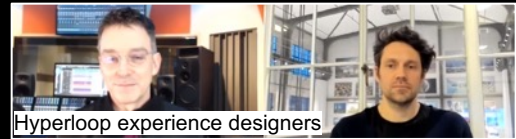
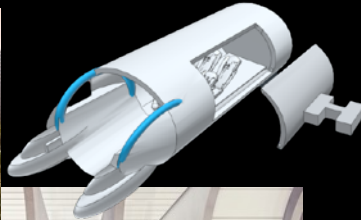
Drive your brand's sustainable purpose by dropping limited edition products/clothing on social or in an immersive gaming environment

# SCI-FI BECOMES NON-FI

The future is closer than we think: from revolutionary health tech to transportation to holograms, the products that once seemed improbable have dedicated teams working to make them a reality.

## THE NEXT FRONTIER FOR TRANSPORTATION

Sustainable travel evolving at the speed and demand of culture



### SIGHT, MOTION AND...SOUND

On designing the sonic experience for the Virgin Hyperloop: "moments of music and sound guide our experiences, trigger emotions and help us understand the framing of a story" –Joel Beckerman, Man Made Music

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE DELIVERY OF GOODS

Enabling a more accessible, dependable future of drone delivery

### WING IT

Wing delivers goods with drones, moving goods in a very reliable way. Download the app, select the items you want, the airplane goes to pick them up, and then flies it to the consumer's backyard.

### Tiny Airplanes Can Solve Big Problems

Adam Woodworth, Wing CTO



The service saw a 500% increase in orders last year



## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR BRANDS

### OVERALL

Future-proof your business by looking to be a first mover for new launches, even in a test and learn capacity

### TRANSPORTATION

Explore opportunities to embed brand experiences (video, audio, etc.) and/or opportunities to surround the path

### DELIVERY

Evaluate your product delivery method – is there opportunity and consumer need for even more innovative and frictionless delivery experiences?



# SXSW

## 2021

PICKS FROM A TEXAS LOCAL

### C R A V I N G   A T X   F A R E ?

#### NEW YORK

- King David Taco
- Yellow Rose
- Skinny Dennis
- Hometown BBQ

#### CHICAGO

- Lonesome Rose
- Chuy's
- Tejanos TexMex

#### LA

- HomeState
- Maple Block Meat Co.
- amá•cita

### M I S S I N G   L I V E   M U S I C ?

#### BEST OF SXSW MUSIC 2021

- [Official SXSW Online 2021 Playlist](#)
  - Check out:
    - Babeheaven
    - Chief Cleopatra
    - Hazy Sour Cherry
    - The Lazy Eyes
    - Nané
    - PR Newman
    - Walt Disco
    - Ximena Sariñana

# THANK YOU

Questions? Contact  
[kate.Rominger@mindshareworld.com](mailto:kate.Rominger@mindshareworld.com)