



Future Trends in Events

A Digital Perspective



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events



Within the next 10 years we can anticipate that there will be 9 billion people on the internet, and most of these will be operating at 5G+ high speed.

There will be quantum leaps in the development of biotechnology, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, and technologies that we have barely heard of (or haven't been named) will also become popular currency.

The rate of change will continue to accelerate so that politicians and regulators will struggle (even more than hitherto) to keep pace with innovation and respond to the influences and opportunities that technology creates in our societies. In simple terms, we need foresight with a breadth, scale and sophistication that has not yet existed in human history in order to map the ideal course through the 2020s.

Event planners, show organisers and brand managers also need insight into many of these technology and social developments, and specifically how they will impact their audiences and the wider events industry. In this paper, we look at the advances that point the way to the coming trends in digital engagement and face-to-face events. Whilst it's too early to say exactly how these trends will evolve over the next decade, we intend to be among the first to find out.

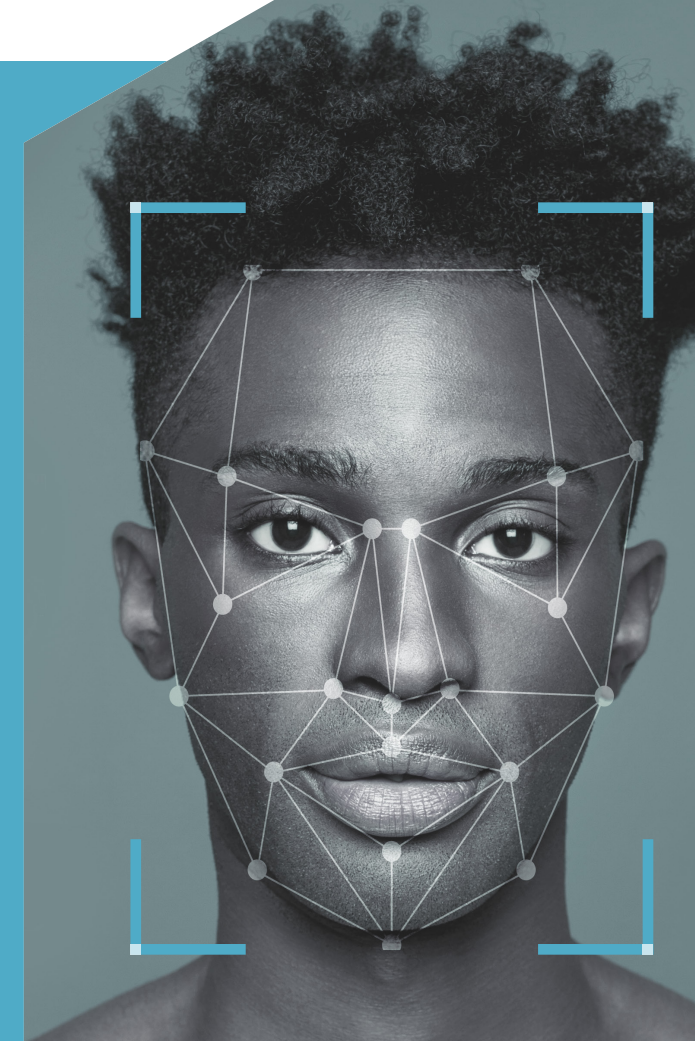
+ Micro-Rewards – Pay me for my data

Consumers are becoming aware of their data rights. Personal data is no longer an unknown entity, but a valuable commodity to be traded and kept safe. The rapid growth of the internet and connected devices has led to an unprecedented amount of data in circulation, and this will only grow as more areas of life develop a data trail: from the smart home to biometric health data.

In this world, consumers are seeking more control over their personal data. New data protection legislation, privacy campaigns and well-publicised data breaches all remind the consumer: your personal data is valuable to others – ***privacy is important, and you have rights.***

We believe organisations that understand the concept of ‘fair exchange’, and reward consumers for using their data, will not only build loyalty through these rewards but also (by being able to use that data) offer better and better experiences. Seamless, micro-rewards would be the way to do this.

There are many ways to activate this principle. For example, in exchange for delegates at live events giving permission to use their data to improve their on-site experience, event organisers could contribute to a charity chosen by the delegate.

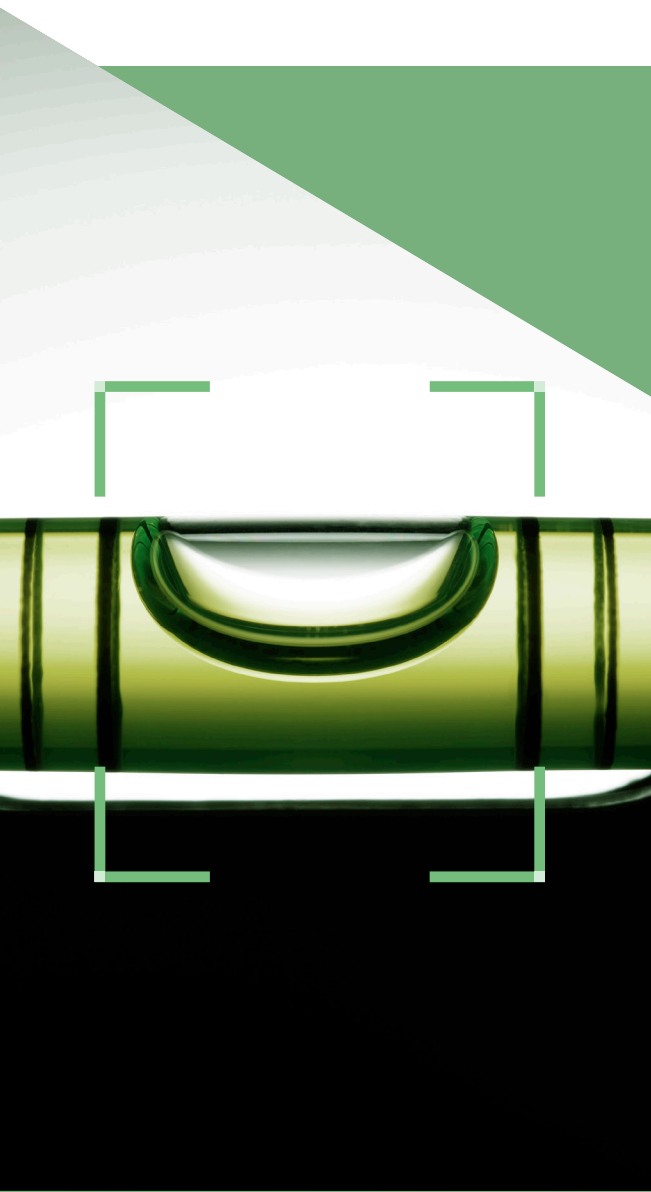


+ Enabled sustainability

Organisations will increasingly be expected to enable sustainability on behalf of their customers and stakeholders. In October 2019, Shell announced that carbon offsetting will now be part of its loyalty programme – at no extra cost. The brand will calculate emissions relating to fuel purchased by customers via the Shell Go+ app or card; these will then be offset for free. To do so, Shell will purchase carbon credits from conservation projects in Peru, Indonesia, the US and the UK.

Qantas took a different approach, incentivising customers to carbon offset by awarding reward points. EasyJet have already trumped that offer; the low-cost airline is offsetting all of its fuel – national and international – with forest regeneration in South America and Africa, solar energy in India and clean water in Uganda and Eritrea.

As part of the movement toward deeper personalisation, consumers will value more *personalised enabling of sustainability* based on their specific sustainability footprint, location and the causes that are personal to them. They will also expect organisations to move beyond offsetting into behaviour change, service re-design and genuine supply chain innovation. Fake sustainability will almost certainly be called out with potentially massive reputational cost.



+ Making the virtual feel real – haptics, audio and visual



The Generation Z cohort have evolving expectations of being able to augment their immediate surroundings and realities with overlays, audio-visual filters and sensory feedback.

Tech is giving us more control over how we experience reality. Augmented reality (AR) technologies allow users to alter what they see, hear and even feel. Hearables, for example, adjust ambient audio frequency levels and promise real-time translation of spoken dialogue, while AR lenses overlay imagery and information onto the world as you experience it.

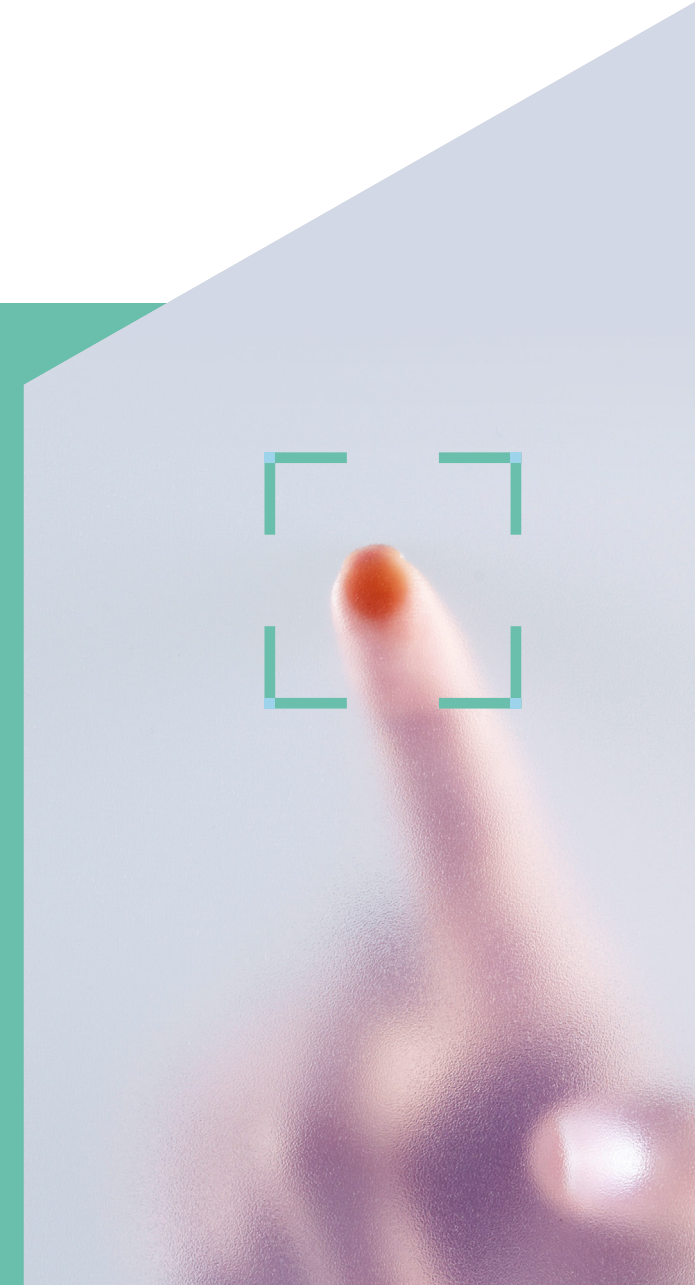
We are moving ever closer to acknowledging that what we accept as reality sits on a spectrum. *These technologies turn reality into a spectrum, where virtual adjustments can be dialled up or down*, or in and out. At one end lies full-blown immersion and at the other lies 'mixed reality' where reality forms the backdrop to a rich and dynamic overlay of digital imagery.

Haptics is the fast-growing field which relates to the application of technology that stimulates touch and motion. In simple terms, it means reproducing remotely (or in computer simulation) the sensations that would be felt by a user interacting directly with physical objects. We already see or feel this in gaming controllers and mobile phones – simple vibrations give sensory ‘touch’ feedback. However, this is becoming more sophisticated with screens that can give touch feedback, simulating the action of pressing a button for example – very useful for people with vision impairment.

Vodafone recently used haptics to demonstrate their 5G network’s *“high speed and super low latency”* with what it called *“the world’s first demonstration of the power of 5G to transmit touch using haptic technology”*. Thanks to a specially designed haptic Teslasuit and 5G connectivity, ***two players from Wasps rugby club were able to feel the force of a physical tackle, in real time, despite being more than 100 miles apart.***

There are also interesting developments in augmented and 3D audio. These emerging technologies manipulate sound to create immersive, spatial audio experiences which allow listeners to hear sound coming from behind, on either side, or far away. Flexsound Augmented Audio allow users to ‘feel’ sound and music. For example, the HUMU Augmented Audio Cushion creates sound effects that the user can feel in his or her body while watching TV, listening to music or playing computer games.

Venues like Otherworld in London provide full-sensory VR-driven experiences in real-world leisure-spaces fuelling consumer acceptance and adoption. They are also heightening the expectations of the coming generations in terms of the kinds of experiences they can expect events to provide in their professional and work life.



+ Machine generated content – it's already here

Machine-learning is enabling what are known as **Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs)** to dynamically produce images, video, scripts and synthesised voices in real-time.

For dynamic, personalised audio ads, ad-platform 'A Million Ads' has tech that allows multiple variations of a streaming radio ad to be broadcast depending on variables like the weather, location, name and gender of the listener. In this way, **hundreds of thousands of personalised versions of a radio ad can be broadcast** based on one 'master' ad, often using sophisticated and convincing voice synthesis to deliver each unique version.

A business called 'Generated Photos' offers completely machine-generated photos of people for download and use in advertising and creative design rather than using photographically-shot stock photography. Many aspects of the image can be selected and then generated to precisely fit the designer's need.

In the same vein, Google's Deep Stereo AI system has the facility to create

impressive video from still images; it takes individual frames and works out what the intervening frames would look like. Developed primarily to make navigating Google Maps 'StreetView' smoother, it massively reduces video file sizes and transfer times – a fraction of the frames is sent from place to place to be interpreted and reconstructed at the other end by AI. This technology could be used to construct **free-roaming 360° walkthroughs of venues from a relatively small number of still images**, making major savings on the cost of recces. It also has applications in the live environment.

Video content and virtual avatars will be completely tailored, dynamically with no production effort, to look, act and talk in a way that is unique to every individual delegate at your event.



+ Invisible interfaces – voice, audio and gesture

We are moving toward a world where screens, as we know them, will gradually disappear as we change the way we interact with information and data. Smart lenses, wearables, hearables, voice and gesture commands will come together to enable seamless, screenless interactions.

The rise of voice activated devices such as Amazon Echo, voice search via OK Google and a whole host of voice assistants such as Alexa and Siri, are clear signs that voice interfaces are becoming mainstream and coming to a home, phone or car near you.

Google announced last year that voice accounts for 20% of all Google searches – that's 20 billion voice searches per day! If that number is

astonishing, consider that it is expected to rise to 50% as soon as this year – a phenomenal rate of change!

At the 2018 SXSW Festival, Bose unveiled its AR sound platform built into a pair of sunglasses. Embedded motion sensors and a Bluetooth connection to the wearer's smartphone GPS feed them contextually relevant audio segments. For example, outside a restaurant they can tap on the right-hand arm of the glasses to initiate an audio description of the venue, and hear reviews, wait times and menu snapshots.

We are already familiar with swipe-left and pinch gestures from our mobile devices, whilst gaming platforms like Nintendo Wii have taught us how to physically interact with screen content.

Connected Wearables will allow us to use voice and gesture to interact with digital information, data and devices.

We see this as a key opportunity for event planners to move towards frictionless experiences around registration, as well as access to information and content.



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+ Robotic furniture

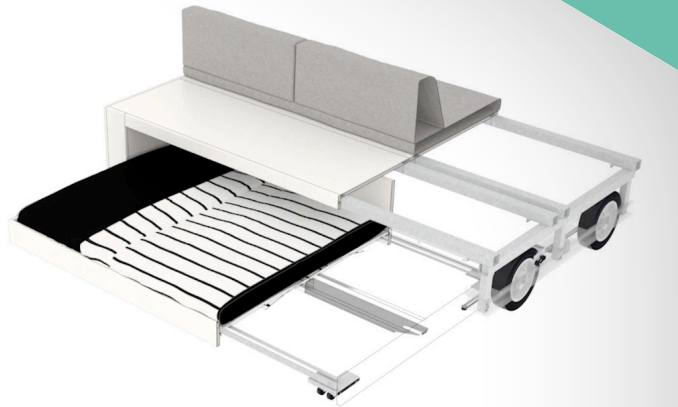


Photo credit: Ikea

In June 2019, Swedish furniture giant IKEA announced it had collaborated with American start-up Ori to create a suite of shape-shifting robotic furniture. Called Rognan, it incorporates both software and hardware to create a movable bank of furniture.

Its components – a double bed, workstation, wardrobe, media unit, sofa and bookshelf – can be reorganised to fulfil different uses. For instance, the pieces can transform a space from a living room into a bedroom via the touch of a button.

“Instead of making the furniture smaller, we transform the furniture to the function that you need at that time,” Ikea product developer Seana Strawn said. *“When you sleep, you do not need your sofa. When you use your wardrobe, you do not need your bed.”* For exhibitors at trade shows, this could be the start of **multi-functional stand design that re-configures itself based on need, time of day** or to reflect multiple activities on the stand.



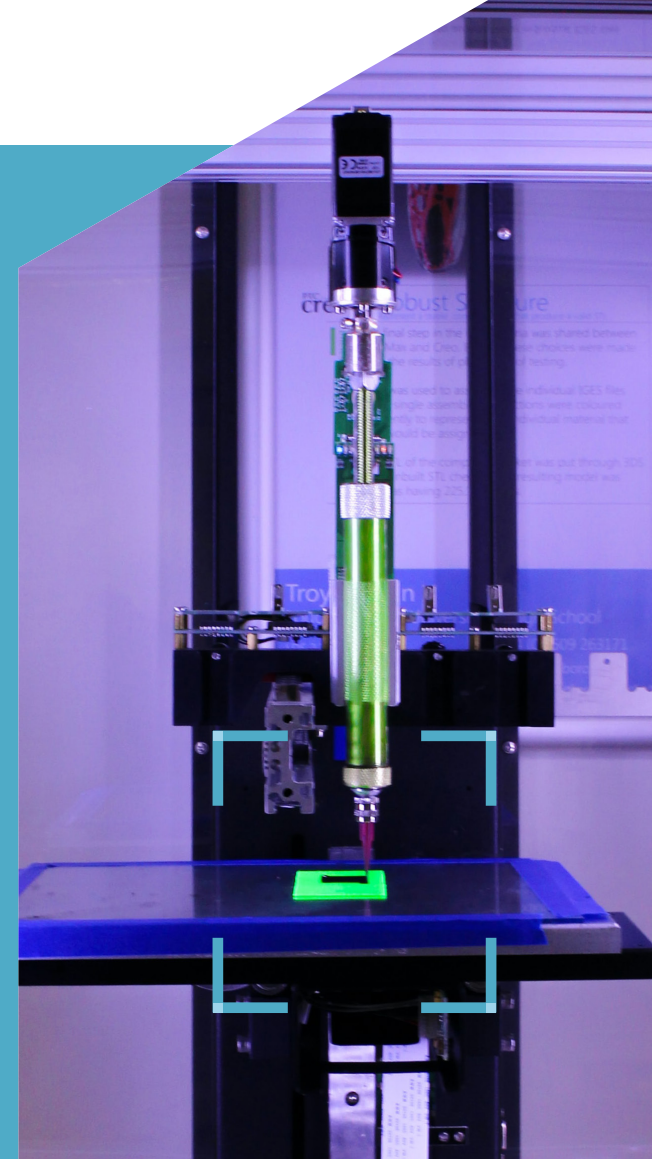
+ 3D Printing, logistics and the supply chain

As 3D printing technology matures and becomes more available and affordable, it will have a profound effect on how events are fitted out and supplied with fixtures and fittings.

In early 2019, IKEA partnered with non-profit organisations Milbat and Access Israel to create product add-ons that make its furniture more disability-friendly. These add-ons include a bumper that prevents wheelchairs from colliding with glass doors; a larger switch that makes it easier to operate lamps; and a snap cup that can be clipped to bedframes. The attachments can be 3D-printed in IKEA stores worldwide; alternatively, consumers can download files from the ThisAbles website and 3D-print the products on their own.

How might this work for event planners? In the future, this technology will enable ***just-in-time, onsite manufacturing.*** ***Need a part? Print it!*** Need 30 chairs with client branding on them? Print and pick-up on-site. Why ship when you can print?

As the materials for 3D printing become more diverse and sophisticated, they will also become more environmentally friendly. We will reach a point where the logistics cost (both actual and environmental) starts to exceed the localised 3D fabrication and recycle cost. A whole new industry will likely be created around this concept, impacting live events as well as other sectors.



+ In summary

Fast forward to 2030 and we will see today's 10-year-olds starting to attend live events and exhibitions. This is the 'Fortnite Generation'; it thrives in online, virtual environments and has none of its predecessor's engagement concerns or knowledge barriers.

Time and distance no longer limit connectivity, and a world full of on-demand, everyday tech utilising voice, fingerprint and facial recognition will hold no fears for this cohort. They will, however, be highly aware of and sensitive to what and who is using their intellectual property.

In the coming decade we will integrate deeper personalisation into every part of an event, giving delegates end-to-end customised itineraries. Personality profiles and moods will shape individual event experiences. Artificial intelligence is already becoming the game-changer driving personalisation; it will be leveraged on all levels to build unique

individualised participation from the first engagement and extending this well past departure for an enduring event connection.

Today's world is increasingly overloaded with information, newsfeeds and pop-ups, pulling attention in multiple directions all the time; we can anticipate that by 2030 we will not readily tolerate such high levels of intrusion. 'One size fits all' will be long gone; even tailored products will be barely adequate. 2030 customers will expect personalised solutions that create and curate emotions.

In live events, this will be expressed through smart journey mapping and natural language processing. Facial recognition will deliver no-click registration and selective, secure environments; wayfinding will (apparently) be personal and intuitive thanks to integrated AR and GPS. There will be less live staff; fast,

bespoke responses to voice-recognised requests will be delivered 24/7 by chatbots in the guise of holographic virtual concierges. Holograms will almost certainly be used for knowledge experts making live presentations in absentia. Blended reality will help create unique, seamlessly immersive, sharable attendee experiences... at scale.

We can be sure that by 2030 live events will look and feel completely different – they will certainly have become more sophisticated as technology evolves at pace. The key challenge for event planners will be to keep up with a continuous current of innovation – to stay ahead of the curve so as to deliver the event experiences that delegates demand. **It is a hugely exciting time for the industry; we look forward to staying at the forefront of new developments, and sharing these with our clients.**

+ About the author

Patrick Furse, Digital Director at Bray Leino

Patrick has been a creative leader in digital agencies for over 20 years. As a 'ZX-81 geek' who studied design at the Royal College of Art - he is a mix of left and right-brain thinking for whom the digital world is the perfect home.

Patrick likes to get his hands dirty, making digital things and solving problems, whilst being aware of, and sometimes setting, the broader strategic context for our clients as well as consumers.

Patrick is an expert in planning and executing effective, creative and innovative digital experiences for global brands - from websites and apps to marketing campaigns, elearning and interactive content. Patrick has spent his professional life working with brands like British Airways, Castrol, News International, Sky, Intel, Orange, Vodafone, BT, Post Office & the BBC.





+ About Bray Leino Events

For over 30 years Bray Leino Events has been creating and delivering engaging and memorable live event experiences for our clients. With creative storytelling at the heart of everything we do, our team of event professionals, creatives and developers are passionate about helping brands connect with their audiences – to tell their stories in exciting and engaging ways.

Bray Leino Events' distinct areas of expertise are events, exhibitions and digital engagement. We typically deliver over 300 event and brand activation projects each year in locations all around the world.

For more information and examples of recent work, please visit brayleinoevents.com