

MARKETING

Mercedes-Benz, John Hardy among luxury brands making waves at SXSW

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Mercedes-Benz is leading the charge of luxury activations at SXSW. Image credit: Mercedes-Benz

By DANNY PARISI

The annual South by Southwest festival in Austin, TX routinely draws some of the biggest names in technology, marketing, art, fashion and more, and this year is no different.

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Luxury labels are also present, with Mercedes-Benz as one of the main sponsors of the event, activations from brands such as John Hardy and panel discussions from L'Oreal and other names. For luxury brands, the eclectic audience drawn in by SXSW makes it the perfect location for unique experiential offerings.

South by Southwest

At this year's SXSW, Mercedes-Benz is one of the major partners, sponsoring much of the proceedings and hosting the me Convention.

The me Convention is a series that Mercedes-Benz is presenting that will see a number of mystery speakers confront colorful and diverse topics.

Speakers have not been announced and will only be revealed just before they are scheduled to speak at Palm Park where the event is being held.



Poster for Mercedes' me Convention at the 2018 SXSW Festival March 9-15. Image credit: Mercedes

Mercedes-Benz is also hosting an event where customers can explore a smart home and discover innovative new urban planning techniques.

In a similar activation, luxury jewelry company John Hardy will be hosting a pop-up shop at SXSW where customers can take photos with a large painted dragon for a campaign called #DragonWomen that celebrates International Women's Day.

Finally, SXSW sees some prominent luxury brands speaking at panels along with luxury-specific events. For example, Guive Balooch, global vice president of technology incubation for L'Oreal, will speak on a panel titled "AI: Transforming Luxury, Fashion and Beauty."

Mystery talks

The me Convention was originated by Mercedes-Benz late last year. Launched by Mercedes and SXSW in Frankfurt in September 2017, the me Convention was held over three days and included 150 speakers and 2,700 participants from more than 35 countries.

Following the success of the Frankfurt me Convention, Mercedes brought its talk and events program to Austin with an agenda that extended its relationship with the SXSW organization ([see story](#)).

This year's SXSW festival has already seen some major announcements from luxury companies.

For example, YouCam Makeup, the mobile application that lets users virtually "try on" different cosmetic products through the use of their mobile devices' camera, is expanding its experiences with live consultations.



YouCam introduced the app's new feature at SXSW in Austin, Texas. Image credit: YouCam Makeup

A new feature being previewed at SXSW in Austin, Texas will allow consumers to video chat one-on-one with beauty experts through the app. The feature is meant to further enhance the app's utility and make it an essential companion for beauty lovers and the brands that YouCam is hoping to court ([see story](#)).

Last year, the luxury sector expanded its presence further into SXSW as young affluent consumers flocked to the festival, with brands such as Armani and Neiman Marcus implementing their own unique activations.

As the SXSW festivals continue to grow in size and popularity, luxury brands hope to connect with the affluent customers who are willing to pay the high price to participate. A spinoff festival, an on-site fashion show and film screenings were just a few of the tools brands wielded to participate in last year's SXSW ([see story](#)).

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