

The Outer Limits: Three Frontiers of Media and Marketing at SXSW

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A frontier is defined as “the outer limits of a field of endeavor, especially one in which the opportunities have not been exploited.” As history has shown, the business of marketing and media are nothing if not one big frontier.

Texas, famously, is another — making it the natural host for that annual shindig known as SXSW Interactive in Austin.

It is impossible here, even with all the noise and crowds and packed sessions and demos competing for our attention, to not gather takeaways about the almighty-yet-still-to-reveal-its-greatest-secrets space of media and marketing, and to learn about new frontiers emerging all the time.

Here, some of the innovations that (along with the ribs) were on the front burner at this

year's event.

The New Frontier of Video: Pocket Blockbusters

Jeffrey Katzenberg and Meg Whitman, Hollywood heavyweights and the founders of [Quibi](#), have good reason to be confident. Their vision for the next evolution of TV just closed a \$1 billion deal with all the major studios as seed investors.

What the hell is Quibi? When you think about video, anything less than 20 minutes is a super-fragmented no man's land. One can find an endless variety of low-fi and user-generated content on YouTube, but where are the Spielberg-quality, five-minute shorts that build over numerous episodes to feed a deep narrative?

No one has done this yet. Not properly, at scale, with the support of every major studio. And that is the Quibi dream.

Mark Twain once said: "I would have written a shorter letter, but I didn't have time." It's been 12 years since the launch of the iPhone. Shouldn't we have figured out how to produce quality, short-form video people can watch on their mobile devices by now?

The New Frontier of Data: Housing

There is an inherent contradiction in the cultural backlash around data privacy and the quiet actions being taken by Amazon. While Facebook just announced its intention to build a new privacy-focused social network (whether you believe that or not is another story), futurist Amy Webb, in her "2019 Emerging Trends" session at SXSW, revealed Amazon's bold plan to not only integrate further into the home but to actually construct "Amazon homes" from the ground up.

[Lennar](#), the largest home builder in the U.S., has inked a deal with Amazon to create these houses, kitted out with a swag bag full of data-driven products like microwaves, fridges, ovens, air conditioners, lighting fixtures, televisions, sound systems and more, enabling

Amazon to draw a more complete picture of consumers by studying what they do inside their homes, continuously learning so it can create shortcuts for us by preempting our actions.

Fascinating possibilities, not dissimilar to the future imagined in *The Veldt* (for you fans of 1950s dystopian fiction). And yet it flies in the face of consumers sharing less of their personal data. But if any company can overcome the skepticism, it's Amazon, which envisions a scenario in which one's home "system" comes to create the same kind of loyalty as we have with our mobile devices.

Welcome to the future, I guess.

The New Frontier of AR: Audio

The term augmented reality has generally been associated with screens — gaming headsets that bring a fantasy world to life, or kids nearly being plowed down by passing cars as they try to catch a Charizard on Pokémon Go. Bose has a different vision for the AR future, one in which a virtual world is augmented by dynamic, interactive audio elements that offer new ways to experience one's surroundings without interacting with a screen.

Here's how it works: A wearable device combines information about your actions — how you move your head, the direction in which you're looking, your geographic location — to trigger all kinds of tailored audio experiences. Experiences unveiled at SXSW were centered on tourism, exercise, golf, audio storytelling and wellness. For example, a virtual caddy gives the golfer updates about how far he or she is from the pin and advises them about which club to use. Can't see the green? Just double tap the side of your device to lock onto the right direction. Wild! It really feels like there's a lot of road with this innovation and Bose is already rolling this feature in its new products, including Bose Frames sunglasses.

The developer potential here is enormous, with an open source backend interface that is crazy intuitive. Most definitely one to watch.

There were, of course, many more frontiers to be explored at SXSW having to do with everything from food and cannabis marketing to cryptocurrencies and scooters. That's right, [scooters](#) — the latest obsession in urban transport and a creative solution for moving half a million conventioners around Austin. It's something my fellow attendees and I really got into. One dude was even overheard telling his buddy the scooters were “dippin’.” And if there's any higher praise than that, I'm unaware of it.

I can hardly wait to see which new horizons await next time around.

SXSW