

SXSW with isobar

SXSW

TECHNOLOGY

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TECH & INNOVATION



TOP TRENDS

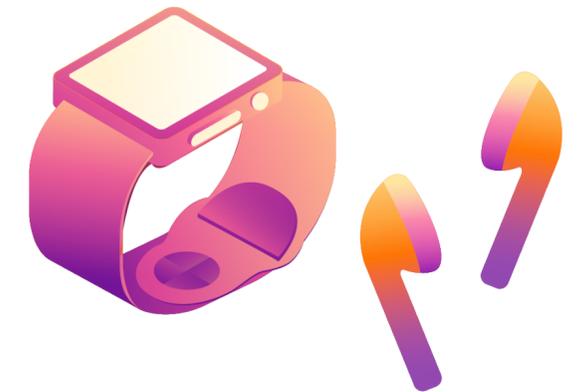


01 Scooters

They. Were. Everywhere. It felt like an invasion. SXSW became the dystopian future no one asked for, but grudgingly came to love. However frustrating these scooters might have been, attendees finally could cover one mile at a pace that was roughly five times as fast as walking or taking an Uber.

02 Wearables

Wearables were everywhere, too. But unlike scooters, wearables were brought in – more or less – by the early-adopting festival-goers themselves. Attendees were sporting wireless earbuds, smart watches and **Oura smart rings**. Blink and you'll miss it though – these smart devices look remarkably similar to traditional fashion accessories.

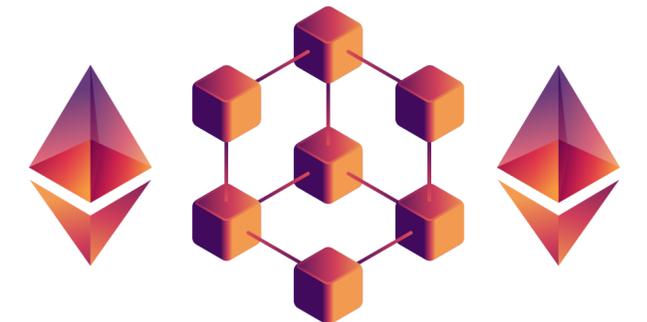


03 VR/AR/MR

Immersive media is still a thing. **The Immersion at Scale: AR/MR Will Change Everything** panel was so popular, a second session was added. It seems mobile, tetherless and worldscale XR will continue to drive the industry forward as people have lost interest in 360 video and 3DOF VR.

04 Blockchain

While cryptocurrencies have fallen on hard times, blockchain for brands remain buzzworthy. However, few are able to clearly justify blockchain over centralized servers. Still, when the general public does not trust the brand to control the information, it's best to use a decentralized and immutable ledger, aka blockchain.



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any people don't realize that SXSW started in 1987 as an indie music festival. In 2019, music is still a major component, but in terms of money, the funding is almost entirely coming from tech companies. I can only imagine what the original 1987 attendees would think if they were magically transported to SXSW 2019. They'd see silent and powerful mechanized scooters being rammed into one another, floating in the river or lying broken on their sides; be taken aback

by everyone flapping their thumbs on thin, black, shiny, rectangular boxes while wearing wireless earbuds; and be concerned by people talking madly to themselves not knowing they're really talking to their own personal AI assistants. Maybe the time travelers would even wander into the VR Cinema at the JW Marriott and be bewildered by bizarre scenes of people dancing with giant, opaque masks on their heads and remote controls in their hands. A few might look around for the jetpacks they were promised back in the '80s, and come away disappointed by the one they saw on the floor, a **hover backpack** that allows users to jump higher, but not soar. 2019 is not exactly the future they envisioned back in their past.

Client Implications

Brands who use SXSW as either a canary in the coalmine or a crystal ball for future trends should stop listening to the hype and pay attention to what attendees were actually adopting as consumers. The trajectory is obvious once you start to pay close attention. Everyone wants new immersive experiences, but are frustrated by long lines and aren't willing to buy their own high-end VR rigs. It's also clear that there is still a level of embarrassment happening. Consumers are afraid they will look silly in giant head-mounted-displays when everyone is looking at them. Fashion and simplicity matter more than ever. Consumers wear Apple's **Airpods** because they look subtle and are easiest to connect to their iPhones. People jump on Bird or Lime scooters because they are so convenient and cheap. It's the same reason consumers seem much more interested in **Bose AR Sunglasses** than **Snap Spectacles** – Bose figured out that most people don't want to project the "tech fashion" image.

Wrapping Up

Everyone loves to hate. They hate scooters until they ride one and realize it's the fastest and easiest way to get around. They hate wearables until it's pointed out that their Airpods are considered a wearable. They hate VR until the real volumetric **6DOF VR featuring Reggie Watts** experience makes them cry with joy. They make fun of cryptocurrencies until they discover it's helping brands' supply chains become more ethical. Consumers and tech-pundits alike don't want to embrace a risky new trend only to feel like they fell victim to a fad. Let's face it, most people just want to live in the future without having to advertise it.



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