



Luxury Play: How Hermès Just Raised The Bar In Brand Experience

By Clara Ludmir



Hermès, the world's most valuable luxury brand, is currently hosting *Mystery at the Grooms*, an interactive theatrical experience in New York City from June 19 through 29 that is completely sold-out. Designed to take brand and consumer interaction to new heights, the immersive, gamified space is a true ode to the brand's craftsmanship and heritage, further cementing its reputation as one of the most iconic, legendary luxury brands. Behind this singular, immersive marketing play, here's what this tells us about the future of brand engagement:

Elevating brand ecosystems with immersive interactions: one could not expect Hermès to just create a static brand activation or a flashy setup meant to boost social media impressions. On the contrary, the luxury maison designed an engaging experience where guests are here to participate rather than passively witness. *Mystery at the Grooms* invites visitors to step into a theatrical, escape game-like space designed as an equestrian-type boarding school where horses go missing. Guests follow clues and are guided through six whimsical rooms - all of which showcase Hermès' craftsmanship and métiers (from leather goods to silk and ceramics) - to find the missing horses. Every brand touchpoint is subtle and surprising: from the horse-shaped dryer in the laundry room, to the ability to peek through paintings in the bedroom.

The activation revolves around a carefully thought-out seek-and-find game. Individuals become active participants in a unique experience where brand exploration and gamification intertwine, setting a new standard for brand-consumer interactions. The brand is present throughout, but serves the purpose of play, which is quite unique. Visitors are here to have fun, explore and be surprised, more than anything else.

Establishing emotion as the new currency: Unlike with some brand activations, there is not a single product for sale at this event, demonstrating the intent to truly focus on experience more than anything else. Head of Communications for Hermès U.S. Peter Malachi confirmed: "As usual, the objective is not transactional. There's nothing for sale (in fact visitors walk away with a free notebook), instead we hope that guests appreciate the boundless creativity of the House and our sense of humor and fun", he shared with his LinkedIn audience. The entire space is designed to make visitors feel something. Awe, curiosity, amazement, envy... all of it. Because in a time when engagement and discovery happens mostly online and attention spans are short and brand loyalty fleeting, captivating consumers and attracting them to an ecosystem that speaks entirely to a brand's heritage, skills and showcases its products in the context of a fun activity is the best way to engage and build lasting impressions.

