

The Drum

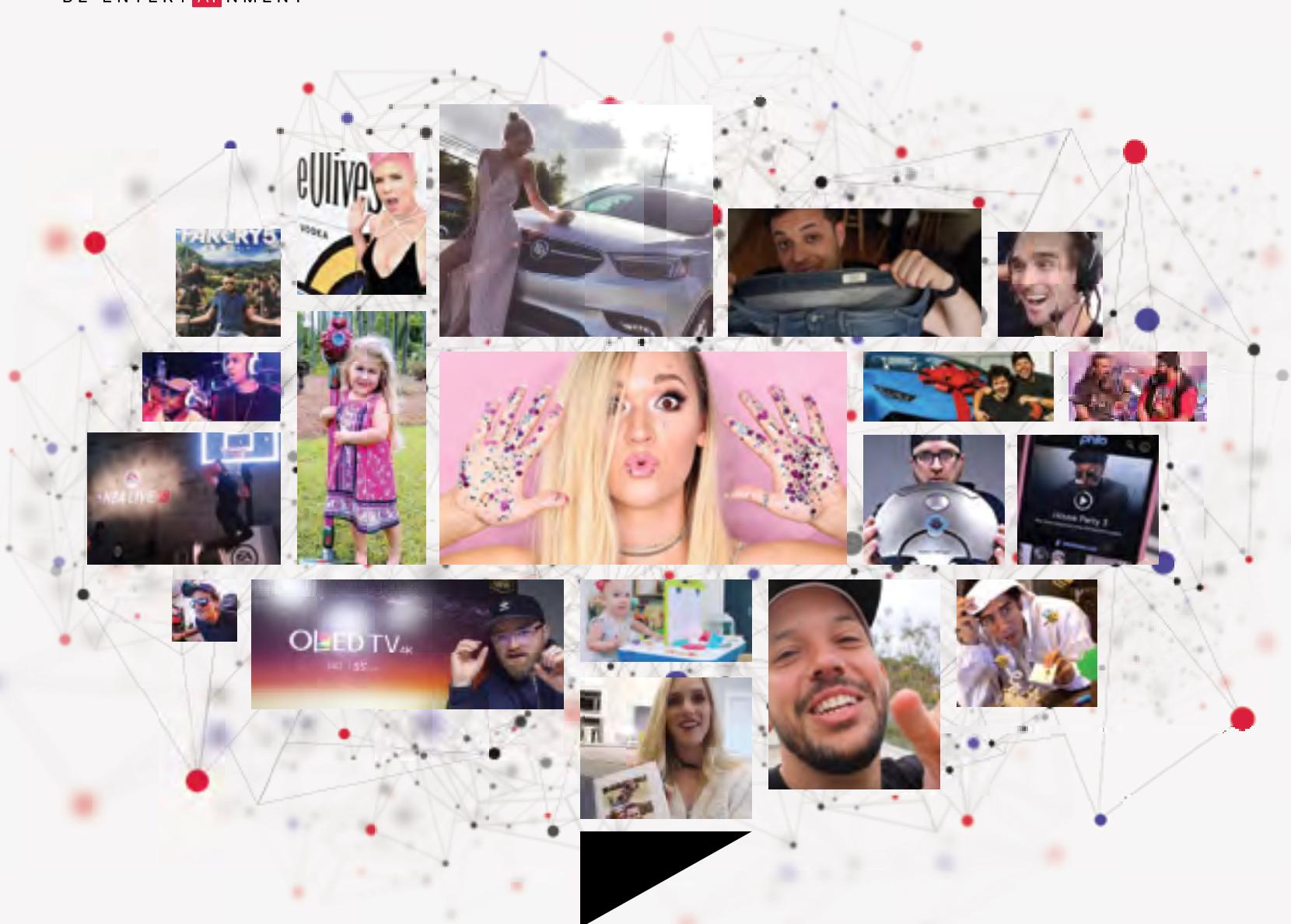
Brand integration

In partnership with

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Solution Agnostic

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CONTENTS



I have a confession. Despite being part of the advertising industry I am no fan of TV commercials.

Yes, I admit, I too take the 'Skip Ad' or 'fast forward' options like the vast majority of my fellow consumers.

And that is why I have really enjoyed working on this special supplement of The Drum. It aligns with one of my passions; that commercial content should not get in the way of the entertainment. Ideally it should add value to the consumer's experience and motivate them to positively engage. The original iteration of this alternative funding model was product placement. We all remember counting the brands in the James Bond franchise, for example.

But, as we demonstrate in this report, product placement has grown in both sophistication and significance. Take a show like Jane the Virgin. On one hand, if you were targeting a certain demographic, running an ad alongside the show when it debuted on linear TV would make sense. But actually, streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu mean this show now has a long tail, and the ultimate audience is far greater than what would have been originally achieved. So, brands that are actually part of the show itself, got more bang for their buck.

But to quote Jane, our story does not end there. As well as integrating into traditional shows, brands are now seeking to work with influencers. However, this market, which grew from around \$6.5bn in 2019 to \$9.7bn in 2020, has its own specific challenges.

How on earth do you assess the hundreds of millions of videos created by hundreds of thousands of influencers? That is where AI comes in. It can scrutinize the data to help marketers identify the best influencers for their campaigns and predict how many conversions each one will generate.

With that in mind, it is time to let brands, assisted by science, entertain you.



Gordon Young
Editor-in-chief

4 | ERA OF THE ARTIST

Ricky Ray Butler discusses brand opportunities created by the decentralization of content.



7 | MAKING MUSIC

We discover how brands can reach discerning audiences by supporting the music industry.

10 | STATE OF STREAMING

Lockdown has made streaming fans of us all. How can brands take advantage?

12 | INFLUENCER EVOLUTION

Influencer marketing is changing, and marketers are well-placed to benefit from new models.

16 | CASE STUDIES

We explore lessons from real world examples of branded integration innovation.

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A composite image featuring a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a golden crown, positioned in front of a dark, abstract background that includes a cityscape at night and a starry space.

by Ricky Ray Butler

THE ERA OF THE ARTIST

With the media more decentralized than ever, audiences and platforms are driving a key change in the way content is consumed. Say goodbye to the gatekeepers.



"Ultimately, AI will determine whether the ocean of content out there is approachable and inviting for creation and investment, or whether it becomes so overwhelming that it instead discourages participation altogether."

Art has always acted as a time capsule for capturing the human experience. It's an incredibly powerful driver of culture, and fleshes out our understanding of history with emotionally driven context. I would argue that today's content ecosystem and the way it operates is reflective of a new era of art – one in which artists and creators are continually finding new ways to express what it means to be human in the digital age.

Perhaps this seems dramatic, but stick with me: how many Michelangelos do you think went undiscovered during the Italian Renaissance? The answer is probably more than you can count. Centralized power has always dictated who was given the opportunity to develop their talents, allowing their art to flourish and go down in history. But today, art is in the hands of the people. Technological advancements in entertainment and media have lowered the barriers to entry and placed the potential for global exposure at everyone's fingertips. As a result, the way in which artists and creators are able to express themselves has increased exponentially.

If you open Netflix, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Spotify or Disney+ today, you're flooded with the discovery of art. Sure, it's not art by traditional definition. It encompasses more than just painting, dance, and music. It also includes generational expressions through memes (yes, memes), influencer content, and short- and long-form video. When we look back on this period of time, these new age art forms will serve as a way to understand how digital culture directly influenced our capacity to learn, create, and interact with one another.

That said, decentralization – or the transfer of power from a few dominant entities, to creators and niche platforms – is just beginning. We've already seen the first wave of decentralization in production and distribution, where TV and film studios and record labels are no longer the sole gatekeepers for entertainment production, and major networks and music stores are no longer the gatekeepers for distribution. The next wave will focus on further breaking down the obstacles between content creation and consumption through AI and machine learning and platforms catered to niche genres. And the success of the art produced in these times will be determined by the technology underpinning discovery.

AI in the age of endless art

As decentralization continues to sweep across streaming, television, film, music, and social media, AI will become the compass that guides audiences, brands and creators through the ecosystem. Traditional methods of navigating content ecosystems simply aren't sustainable or scalable for the rate of content creation; we need technology that can capture and digest the nuance of content in real time. That's where AI comes in – it can mimic a human's ability to understand content that primarily consists of unstructured data like audio, images, and text. That kind of technology is what dictates everything from the level of personalization audiences encounter, to a brand's ability to truly understand and make optimized decisions about what advertising opportunities to invest in. BEN actually started out as an influencer marketing and product placement agency, but we quickly realized there was no way our team could keep up with the growing rate of content creation and distribution – we needed to leverage our deep repository of entertainment data and evolve into an AI company in order remain effective and the industry leader. That realization is continuing to drive the entertainment ecosystem forward. Ultimately, AI will determine whether the ocean of content out there is approachable and inviting for creation and investment, or whether it becomes

"Diversity in exposure is what makes content discovery so exciting and educational. It's critical that we build algorithmic infrastructure that supports a range of viewpoints and content types to ensure that people don't become pigeonholed into a specific set of genres."

so overwhelming that it instead discourages participation altogether.

Another hurdle we must overcome is the emergence of silos and bias. Diversity in exposure is what makes content discovery so exciting and educational. It's critical that we build algorithmic infrastructure that supports a range of viewpoints and content types, to ensure that people don't become pigeonholed into a specific set of genres.

This is where explainable AI becomes extremely important. It can guide decision making while providing rationale for each decision made, so that biases and silos can be tackled right away. When it comes to promoting diversity, there is a balance to be struck – people want to continue to see content that is relevant to their interests. At the same time, we've seen how echo chambers can polarize groups of people and keep them from seeing or understanding other viewpoints.

The same holds true for brands and those looking for investment opportunities in content. Allowing AI to identify new, and perhaps surprising, opportunities for investment can be the difference between a campaign that is good and one that completely exceeds expectations. It's therefore crucial to embed diversity as a core tenet of AI infrastructure, and make sure that what we interact with and support reflects who we are and challenges us to be smarter and think critically.

For brands, decentralization will only make the opportunities for collaboration and investment that much more expansive. AI will undoubtedly be the most important part of navigating that process. Whether you're a brand looking to support influencers, filmmakers, musicians, artists or production studios – AI will enable you to truly understand the millions of content opportunities out there and identify the ones that are most likely to empower creators and engage audiences in a natural, authentic way.

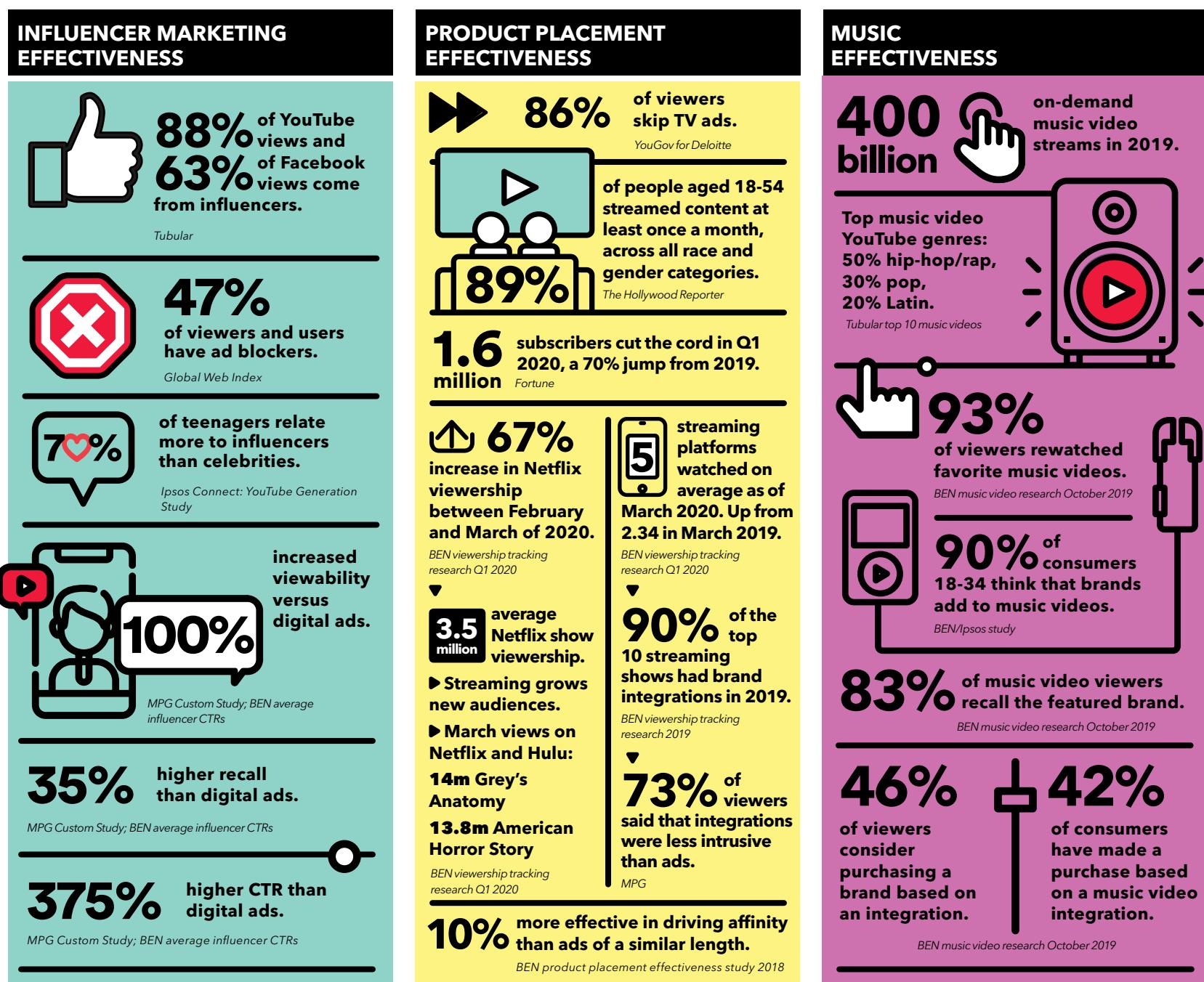
The future of art looks different today than it did 10, or even 100 years ago. There's more room for expression, more opportunities to capitalize on creation, and more ways for people across the globe to interact with one another and evolve the culture together. If we're able to guide that transformation with AI that balances the interests of all stakeholders, we can create an environment that fosters growth and continues to drive society forward.

THE MATH TO SUCCESS

For brands that want to make a cultural impact, the data suggests a clear way forward: a triple combination of influencer marketing, product placement in TV and film, and direct partnerships with artists.

Influencer marketing is twice as effective as digital ads, most of which are outright ignored by audiences, according to an MPG study. Meanwhile, streaming is rapidly becoming the main way people devour long-form content – meaning that if brands want to reach the 89% of viewers now regularly eschewing linear television (per The Hollywood Reporter), smart placements within content should be the strategy of choice.

The stats in the infographic below show the lay of the land – and clear solutions for marketers seeking to cut through the noise and achieve brand recognition.



BRAND NEW HARMONY

by Thomas Hobbs



The music industry is in trouble, but listeners want new tunes more than ever. Can marketers support the sector and create brand love?

The word ‘unprecedented’ has been used a lot in 2020, but the pandemic really has forced the music industry into uncharted waters. However, even with important events like festivals and live performances on hold indefinitely, the music industry is still finding innovative ways to connect with audiences.

Whether it's US rapper Travis Scott popping up in Fortnite to perform a special interactive concert for its gamers, Dave Matthews staging live shows from his home and integrating fan choices into his setlist, or pop stars like Taylor Swift and Charli XCX releasing surprise albums under lockdown, there's plenty of examples of artists innovating and finding unique ways to cut through.

Music to marketers' ears

Without live events to tap into and with consumers spending more of their time inside, brands have had a lot of obstacles to face in 2020. But by aligning with pioneering musicians who have found smart ways like online gigs and Q&As to interact with their fans throughout the pandemic, brands can overcome a lot of these challenges, according to Jake Terrell, director of music and brand partnerships at BEN, an LA company using AI to help brands organically tap into the music industry.

"Yes, coronavirus has changed things, but the demand for music experiences is still huge and if a brand sincerely aligns with an artist through technology, sponsoring online shows from artist's homes, or product placement in music videos, then they can truly take a campaign to the next level," he says.

Terrell points out that emerging and existing social platforms have continued to get better at facilitating live digital performances with fan interaction, with paid, premium livestream concerts becoming more widely accepted and attended. By extension, this presents a

big opportunity for brands. However, Terrell warns: "You have to be sincere or otherwise the audience sees through it straight away as an awkward money grab that is inauthentic. Performing live on Instagram is a very personal thing for an artist to do so any brand sponsoring an opportunity like this needs to make sure it is the right fit. It has to be natural."

According to BEN research, 83% of music video viewers are able to recall brands featured within them. Subsequently, 46% go on to consider buying a product from the brand as a result of music integration, while 42% actually go on to make a purchase. "There are studies that show that using pop music increases audience attention, emotion and memory by 20%," adds Terrell. "It's so important. Our feeling is if you want to reach the heart and the soul of your consumers then you have no choice but to have a music strategy."

Universal language

One major brand that's pushing things forward is BMW. The car brand recently launched a 10-part podcast series called Play Next, which focuses on some of the big topics facing the music industry. According to Michelle Roberts, marketing director for the premium car brand's UK operation, the music industry remains unique in its appeal to brands.

"Music is a universal language and connects people from around the globe, creating lifelong memories. These attributes mirror our BMW core value: which is joy. But I also think when a brand steps into cultural areas - be it sport, music or film - there must be clear alignment and a real reason to be involved." Roberts says coronavirus has made people consume entertainment more "avidly", particularly music videos and social media posts from artists, which has in turn given brands "an excellent opportunity to facilitate and augment these experiences."

"You have to be sincere or otherwise the audience sees through it straight away as an awkward money grab that is inauthentic."

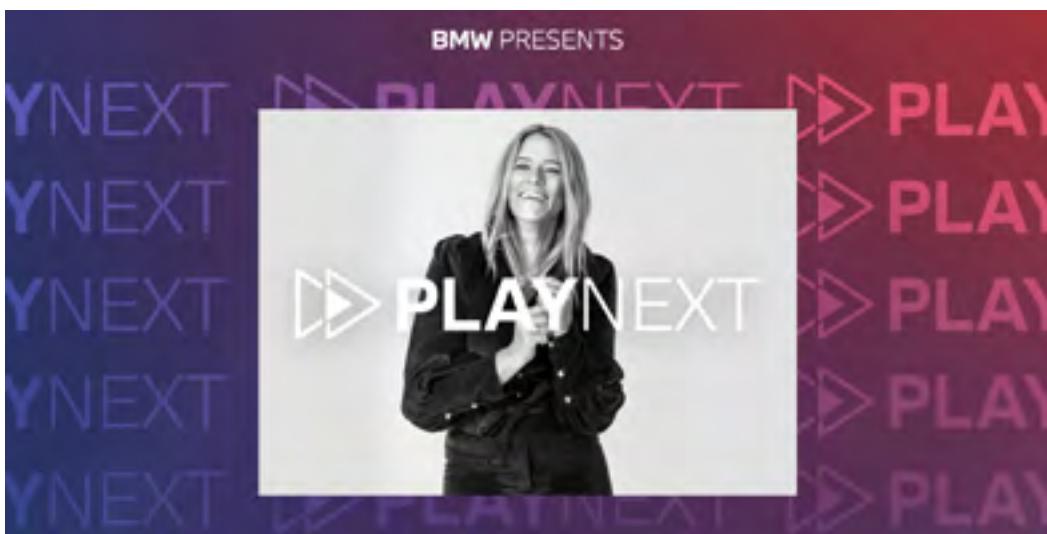
This is something BEN's Terrell very much agrees with. He says the current online environment is ripe for innovative brand collaborations. His team recently brought together Wahl Clippers and alternative rockers Lovelytheband for their single Buzzcut; the video showed one of the bandmates shaving the head of their co-star with Wahl's hair clippers. BEN amplified the moment with activations on Instagram that garnered over 500k impressions.

Billboard/Nielsen's latest coronavirus-era report found that consumers want to see brands support artists and virtual performances during this time – 66% said they'd view a brand more favorably if they found ways to support artists; 61% would if the brand offered free virtual concerts through brand sponsorships or integrations in the show; and 59% if they sponsored virtual concerts.

"With the right artist and creative, there's almost nothing that can't be authentically integrated. In addition to the kinds of placements you might expect – such as snacks, spirits and vehicles – we've done it for hair clippers, cereal and interior paint. There's so much content available that we can find authentic alignments for just about any kind of brand," he explains.

"Things that might once have been seen as dead – like merchandise bundles or physical products – can thrive if you bring them into the right online environment with the right musician, and right now there are lots of examples of brands doing this successfully. I think it's all about meeting the audience where they are and doing so with artists who align with your brand's mission."

Frito-Lay North America is at the forefront of this trend, building upon its rich history of partnership and activation in the music space across brands including Doritos, Cheetos, Smartfood and Lay's. According to James Clarke, senior director of media, analytics and CRM: "Frito-Lay as a company is committed to delivering joyful moments for consumers not only through our products, but also through the delivery of unique brand experiences. Music has always played a central role in this strategy with a proven ability to help build emotional



BMW's Play Next series connects the premium marque to music lovers.



Bacardi Rum's Live Nation partnership recently produced a series of festival and artist link-ups.

Meanwhile, Frito-Lay enlisted celebrities such as Hailee Steinfeld for their own collaborations.



connection. Extending our presence through product integration into some of the biggest music videos of the year, including tracks by Lil Nas X and Lizzo among others, has helped further elevate our brands' visibility in culture while authentically tapping into artists' genuine love for our products." This effort has translated into significant success for the company and its brands, attracting notice among its sizeable cult following. Doritos, for example, recently measured a 78% recall score across its integrations, with 74% of viewers reporting an increased likelihood to purchase based on exposure to the product placements.

Cover stories

Bacardi Rum also has strong links to the music industry, with its partnership with Live Nation resulting in sponsorship of various major music festivals and ties with artists such as Major Lazer and Anitta. "Since the quarantine began back in March, we've experienced first-hand the consumer desire for virtual music events to fill the void that came about when live events across the globe were largely put on hold or cancelled," admits Andrew Roden, brand director for Bacardi. "People are craving connection and interaction now more than ever - and there's an opportunity for brands to tap into the virtual space in the short-term and adapt to the new normal."

But even though there's plenty of evidence of brands intelligently tapping into the music

industry, one of the core dilemmas around picking the right song for a campaign remains. BMW's Roberts advises: "I think using the right track is crucial. It's not just about finding an obvious big-name artist or current hit; it's about finding the right music that will help move people, support the brand message and engage our audience."

BEN's Terrell echoes this sentiment, suggesting there are a number of ways brands can amplify their messaging through thoughtful song choices.

"Sometimes a huge hit may be exactly right, but other times an undiscovered indie track may better serve the piece and compel audiences to reach for Shazam to identify the song, which also drives deeper engagement with the brand. Another good approach is using a cover of a familiar classic which employs a tonal shift to make the consumer take notice - it's recognizable but also fresh. Whichever approach, that music-to-message alchemy is really important."

Live again

Looking ahead to the future, Bacardi's Roden says we should prepare for live shows to return - but that when they do, we should expect a bigger role for digital technology than in the past. "The big question for brands will be, how do we organically put ourselves back into these live music experiences that people have been missing so much, and for music festivals, how

do they creatively get the word out that they're back?" he ponders.

Brands also need to aim for longevity, according to Roden: "It's important to identify music partnerships that don't just live in the moment but also have longevity. The most successful partnerships are the ones that have potential to grow, evolve and span months, if not years. These types of partnerships build equity and can be experienced over an extended period of time versus a fleeting one-off event that consumers will quickly forget. If you approach the music industry with the right mentality then the opportunities for success are plentiful."

Terrell says: "Audiences are looking more favorably on brands who activate in the music space and empower musicians, so why wait? It isn't a surprise to see music industry alignments serving as a cornerstone of so many marketers' advertising strategies."

He concludes that while the opportunity for brands to gain by supporting artists already exists, it will grow further in the future. "There are more eyes and ears on audiovisual music content than ever before," Terrell says.

"As artists continue to innovate, people yearn for musical connection, and we use both humans and AI to connect marketers with artists who reach a common audience, the opportunities for brands to tap into the music industry is only going to get more compelling."

THE STATE OF STREAMING

by Ian Darby



Streaming is fast becoming the method of choice for audiences to consume and engage with content. How can brands make sure they're not shut out?

The rise of streaming looks unstoppable. With 74% of US consumers subscribing to a streaming service, according to findings from The Leichtman Research Group, the landscape has become intensely competitive. There are over 200 platforms now available to viewers globally, and more than 20 in the US alone.

While the focus is often on established streaming platforms such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, the shift to streaming has taken hold for traditional broadcast powerhouses such as NBC (Peacock), ABC (Hulu and Disney+) and CBS (CBS All Access and Paramount+). In today's television landscape, every show - regardless of where it originally airs - is now a streaming show.

Networks are now making decisions about which shows to greenlight or renew based on a program's streaming audience, more than its live audience. This represents a fundamental shift in how content is distributed and consumed. And it demands a shift in how advertisers think about reaching audiences.

Brand integration strategy for streaming

Erin Schmidt, chief of product placement at BEN, recommends that brands take a sophisticated, cross-platform marketing approach and embrace the idea that all content is now streaming content. The viewership numbers for a show like Jane the Virgin support this recommendation. On CW's linear network, Jane the Virgin will typically garner about 1.25 million impressions, but then achieve an additional 5 million through its digital release on CWTV.com and Hulu and a total of 9.25 million through further distribution across Netflix and Apple. Put differently, 92% of Jane the Virgin's audience watches the show on platforms other than linear TV. Schmidt says: "If you're only buying a television spot around that show then you're not only limited to those 1.25 million impressions on linear TV, but you're also missing out on the opportunity to reach 92% of Jane the Virgin's passionate audience. But if you integrate your brand into that show, you have the potential to reach every viewer while delivering a far more efficient CPM, because you have an exponential viewership over a 30 to 90-day period."

As consumer behavior continues to evolve and further embraces streaming, advertisers that rely solely on traditional TV spots risk seeing efficiency levels decline while those that integrate into the content will likely achieve better results. That's evidenced in falling overall CPMs for brand integrations due to the long tail efficiencies that they deliver.

There is an urgency for brands to act now, Schmidt believes. The momentum behind the mass adoption of streaming has only intensified as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Streaming viewership was up 67% from February to March 2020. The average number of streaming platforms consumers are subscribed to increased to five in March of 2020, up from 2.34 in 2019. Schmidt says: "Content is our connector right now. If you think about everyone being home and trying to connect with everyone outside the home, every conversation starts with 'what are you watching right now?' and it's a unifying factor among all of us."

Older shows are also seeing new life in streaming. The two most popular streaming shows in Q1 2020 were originally broadcast - Grey's Anatomy (14m views during March across Netflix and Hulu) and American Horror Story (13.8m views during March across Netflix and Hulu). The acceleration of streaming viewership and the fluid nature of modern content means brands have even more incentive to integrate their products and services into the entertainment themselves.

predict which new shows are likely to be hits and which will flop.

Additionally, BEN's AI takes the human subjectivity and guesswork out of the process of integrating brands across content - something that's vital now that BEN works with brands on more than 3,500 films, TV and streaming opportunities each year.

"How do you scale human subjectivity out of looking at content?" she asks. "Our AI looks at the cast, producers, genre and synopsis to predict the performance of unproven properties."

The 2019 Upfronts highlighted the power of AI in predicting show performance. BEN's tools analyzed all the shows across the May Upfronts and predicted 10 out of 10 of the top broadcasts in the new September season: "It's human gut versus technology, that's how we're helping brands," Schmidt says.

"Our AI looks at the cast, producers, genre and synopsis to predict the performance of unproven properties."

Building brand authenticity

Schmidt warns, however, that not every product placement is successful. Selecting the right opportunity to create an authentic integration is essential. If the product placement feels like the commercials that audiences are trying to avoid, it won't work.

What that means is that a product placement strategy needs to go beyond simple time on camera and connect to the reality we live in, across channels and tactics, in ways that are subtle enough not to distract, but impactful enough that they get noticed. When done right, it seems natural that the family in The Marvelous Mrs Maisel would eat Cheerios, that partygoers would eat Lays in a China & Nacho music video or that Ray Donovan would drive a Cadillac.

How brand integration works in 2020: AI and deep learning

As the content landscape expands, so too does the challenge of determining which shows are the right fit. With new streaming platforms emerging every month, technology has become a necessity for marketers looking to understand where they can best invest their budgets.

Schmidt says brand integrations are getting even more efficient for brands by applying AI to measure and predict show success. BEN has invested in algorithms specifically designed to

The future for streaming

This need for powerful technology will only grow as we work through the implications of the pandemic.

Schmidt predicts that the rise of streaming will continue, leading to a significant cultural and societal impact on content by making larger spaces for diverse storytelling and providing platforms for stories with more breadth in which brands will be able to integrate. She's also seeing a big increase in unscripted reality shows because they're easier to film and produce while maintaining safe conditions, also helping audiences disconnect from the pressures of their own lives. Just consider this: CBS topped the network ratings with the Big Brother premiere, Freeform commissioned Love in the Time of Corona, while the Kardashians are shooting their own footage.

Looking more broadly, advertisers are now part of a world in which everything is streaming. This provides an opportunity to go beyond simply applying old tactics to new media, but to think more broadly about reaching audiences by creating partnerships with content creators across platforms. Brands that understand this, and appreciate that product placement is a powerful and efficient way to connect with audiences, will thrive.

INFLUENCER MARKETING EVOLVES



by Ian Darby

Influencers have emerged as some of the greatest content engines of the social media age. How can brands take advantage of their connection to audiences?



The influencer marketing business was worth \$9.7bn in 2020 and is expected to grow to \$15bn by 2022, with almost half of marketers saying they're spending more than 20% of their budget on influencer content. Some have gone much further. Beauty brand Estée Lauder announced in August 2019 that it was allocating 75% of its marketing spend to social media influencers, and finding the investment "highly productive."

Meanwhile, the grand shift from single-screen to multiple-screen (and multiple platform) access has transformed the way audiences consume entertainment. And as audiences have flocked to new platforms, they've embraced new creators as trusted voices in their lives, blurring the definition of stardom.

"The gap between social media influencer and traditional celebrity has narrowed," says Megan Savitt, vice-president of strategy at BEN. "It's no longer relevant to distinguish between digital and traditional marketing - just how to market in the best way to reach your audience."

This process has accelerated further following the outbreak of Covid-19, as we've seen Hollywood stars such as Jessica Alba and Will Smith take to TikTok, becoming "creator celebrities" and learning from experienced influencers. The merging demonstrates that influencer-dominated streaming platforms are no longer secondary media for content consumption, but have become an integral part of the media ecosystem as much as linear broadcast entertainment and streaming TV.

Montse Passolas, the chief marketing officer at premium hair styling brand GHD, says: "Influencers are one of the touchpoints in a campaign and as a consequence need to be planned and integrated to ensure maximization of the launch, and consistency of the message."

In the face of the pandemic, there's no doubt that influencer marketing has evolved into a mature marketing channel delivering against the rigors of advertisers' demands. Technology has helped, bringing greater accountability as influence spreads across the streams.

Performance influencer marketing, in which the brand pays for conversions and sales, is one of the newest models made possible by predictive AI and is becoming one of the hottest new offerings available to marketers. "We're able to offer metrics and analytics that are very granular and speak to specific brand needs," Savitt says. "If you're looking to get the best return on your investment, influencer marketing is really powerful because you can track it."

The results speak for themselves for photobook brand Chatbooks. About 15% of their total media spend now goes exclusively to



Beauty brands such as Estée Lauder now spend the majority of their ad budget on influencers.

influencer marketing.

"For us, it's not intuition. It's literally cold hard data. And then being able to evolve our partnership in order to take advantage of that data in order to scale," says Rachel Hofstetter, chief marketing officer of Chatbooks.

The massive amount of influencer content out

"Human creativity and affinity are the best marketing tools. Influencers bring them both alongside reach and engagement."

there offers brands enormous potential to reach audiences. But while a human can't analyze the hundreds of millions of videos produced by the hundreds of thousands of influencers out there, AI can. The solution is deep learning, which scrutinizes "structured and unstructured data", Savitt says, to help marketers identify the best influencers for their campaigns and accurately predict how many conversions each influencer can generate, reducing wasted budget and ensuring a higher ROI.

Tyler Folkman, head of AI at BEN, says: "We can pick up on what kind of influencer voice is likely to convert the best, channel health, and can even analyze the unstructured images and text. Things you wouldn't necessarily think about." AI is also at the frontline of brand safety in influencer marketing, helping BEN to identify fake accounts or false engagement rates to enable advertisers to gauge whether an influencer partner is really going to be an asset.

The evolution of influencer marketing and the ability to track real impact allows brands to create campaigns that drive full funnel results

and unlock campaigns tied back to performance guarantees.

"Having the ability to get both the flash and the power - working with A-List celebrities and influencers, but also knowing that what you're working on is based on science, that you're going to see this amount of return - is unprecedented, uncharted territory," Savitt says.

Passolas argues that alliances with influencers can help brands to establish a sense of purpose: "I believe currently we have a great force with influencers lobbying for female empowerment, charity work, diversity and inclusion, mental health and climate change among many others."

She notes that influencers have changed the marketing dynamic in the fashion, beauty and fitness sectors. They're now the primary source of innovative trends.

"Just when I think I have seen it all, the influencers and stylists come up with the most incredible waves, curls or techniques; their creativity always surprises me. Human creativity and affinity are the best marketing tools, and influencers bring them both, alongside relevant targeted reach and engagement, which are critical measurements in this new media model."

The decentralization of trend-setting from brands to influencer icons has been mirrored by audience behavior. As users consume content across platforms and devices, the savviest influencers have managed to port their audiences across the web, building personal brands impervious to the rise and fall of specific social networks. That so many have been able to remain successful amid platform agnosticism shows the depth of their connection to audiences.

Savitt concludes: "That's refreshing and provides inspiration in the marketplace that we've never seen before, because influencer marketing breeds such strong connectivity."

LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU

by Ian Darby



Coronavirus lockdowns have hugely impacted the entertainment business. But there are opportunities amid crisis, and a new landscape of branded entertainment is emerging.

It's been a tough time for many in the entertainment industry. But the continued presence of Covid-19 has at least driven a new creativity and fostered a willingness to embrace evolving channels.

Just listen to actor Tom Hanks. Having been one of the first, and best-known, Hollywood stars to contract Covid-19, he vividly described his experience of being an early sufferer of coronavirus – nursing bones that “felt like they were made of soda crackers.” However, Hanks also saw an upside in adversity, detailing how his new movie Greyhound would launch as an Apple+ TV exclusive rather than in theaters. He said that this alternative was a “savior” that “offers us the opportunity to have the movie out.”

We've witnessed a similar adaptability in the new avenues explored by brands. Marketers have looked to integrate their brands into entertainment online, across social media and streaming services, to reach their customers and offer moments of relief during challenging times.

Examples include Public Records, the Brooklyn music venue and cafe which assembled, at some speed, a merchandise store and 24-hour TV channel, Public Access, to stay connected with the community during the time of closure. Meanwhile, British beer brand BrewDog created its online bar, the BrewDog Open Arms, encouraging people to get together over a beer with digital quizzes, giveaways and live music.

Established global brands innovated too. Adidas launched its '#hometeam' campaign to inspire consumers, athletes, and artists to share ways they were staying active and creative at home. Nike, Adidas' great rival, is renowned for its experimentation with brand entertainment, and the past few months were no exception. In the immediate wake of coronavirus, the brand launched its 'Play Inside, Play for the World' campaign, encouraging people to socially distance, and built on this with entertainment-focused activity including 'Made to Play', which motivated children around the world to get active. Nike's 'Living Room Cup' then offered a variety of mini-workout challenges, measured against the personal bests of Nike pro athletes including Cristiano Ronaldo and Giannis Antetokounmpo. And the brand's reputation of being at the forefront of product

placement was further enhanced by its integration into Netflix's lauded Michael Jordan documentary series The Last Dance.

Meanwhile, BEN's work for Old Navy focused on the brand's continued commitment to inclusivity and diversity. BEN worked with showrunners and creators to craft in-store and online shopping moments aligned to the brand tenet of inclusivity, with diverse characters and storylines within authentic and inclusive storylines. This resulted in 12 premium placements across six top-tier broadcast, streaming and feature film properties that featured diverse casts and delivered authentic experiences to deliver real moments for the popular retailer. For instance, in Mindy Kaling's hit series, Never Have I Ever, Old Navy aligned with Rebecca, an aspiring fashion designer with Down syndrome, establishing her character as an Old Navy employee. In Queer Eye, BEN integrated Old Navy in an extensive in-store shopping scene featuring inclusive sizing for a woman who had previously struggled to find clothing that fitted her shape.

where it shared classic recipes for food and prompted influencers across TikTok and Instagram to post their videos. The online Family Hub offered AR play experiences for children at home, and enabled people to stage their own McDonald's parties in a domestic setting.

Michelle Graham-Clare, vice-president of food and marketing at McDonald's UK and Ireland, says: "With our restaurants closed, it was important to continue to communicate with, and engage, our brand fans and followers. A drumbeat of consumer content across owned and earned media allowed us to embrace the outpouring of brand love that we felt during closure, with customers from all walks of life telling us how much they missed us and enabled us to communicate our reopening plans clearly and consistently. That one source of truth meant our customers could easily find out the latest news, as we worked hard to reopen our restaurants slowly and safely."

Graham-Clare also describes how a test-and-learn approach to brand integration

"With restaurants closed, we had to engage our fans. A drumbeat of content across owned and earned media allowed us to embrace the love that we felt during closure."

The fast food giants have invested in branded entertainment too. Burger King integrated its brand into a comedic country music video directed by Michel Gondry, and McDonald's worked with Travis Scott, through a deal with his record label Cactus Jack. The rapper designed a range of McDonald's merchandise (from t-shirts and lunchboxes right through to a 'Chicken McNugget body pillow'), to connect with millennial and Gen Z customers.

McDonald's has invested in entertainment in other markets too – including the UK,

worked for them: "We couldn't leave the fans and followers behind on social media, so we've continued to pivot into engagement-led content, taking the lessons learnt in lockdown with us as we overhaul our social channels and increase activity to digitally drive sales and brand engagement."

Few brands enjoyed 2020. Yet the Covid-19 pandemic, and the associated changes in people's behaviors, undoubtedly inspired the creation of a new landscape in brand entertainment that will benefit forward-thinking marketers for years to come.



BEN secured prime placement spots for Old Navy on Queer Eye.

DIVERSE CONTENT FITS OLD NAVY

RESULTS

Old Navy set out to align with entertainment content that told authentic and inclusive stories to match their new brand messaging.

By investing in a product placement strategy, Old Navy secured partnerships with showrunners and creators that empowered diverse voices in culturally relevant content across multiple platforms.

The program began with BEN educating productions on Old Navy's brand values while crafting in-store and online shopping moments, as well as verbal mentions in reference to denim, Old Navy's priority product line, within storylines.

These efforts resulted in 12 premium placements across six top-tier properties with diverse casts. In Mindy Kaling's hit series Never Have I Ever, Old Navy aligned with Rebecca, an aspiring fashion designer with Down syndrome, establishing her character as an Old Navy employee.

In the GLAAD-award winning series Queer Eye, BEN integrated Old Navy in an extensive in-store shopping scene in which Tan France styled

episode hero Rahanna. The integration included key brand messaging around Old Navy's product assortment and inclusive sizing as Rahanna is a 6ft tall woman who had previously struggled to find clothing that fit her shape.

The campaign delivered over 36 million impressions in multiple story lines across every major streaming platform, establishing Old Navy as the go to fashion brand for diverse young consumers.

"Partnering with a diverse group of creators enables us to represent the breadth of our inclusive community."

Liat Weingarten, vice-president brand communications, Old Navy

8 diverse character alignments in 6 inclusive storylines

36m+ impressions

Multiple platforms
2 Netflix series
1 Disney+ series
2 CW series
1 feature film

UBISOFT GETS USERS DANCING TO ITS TUNE

Ubisoft, the developers behind long-running video game franchise Just Dance, wanted to bring the latest edition of the series to its young target audience. So, where better to go than where they live online, on TikTok and Instagram?

With the aim of showcasing the gameplay experience, maximizing engagement on the app itself and drive overall sales of Just Dance 2020, BEN's AI selected an ideal list

of influencers and the team moved to secure a range of huge TikTok names with cross-platform followings - including social star Loren Gray.

She starred in a TV spot and helped create a mix of Just Dance-themed photo and video content that lived on Ubisoft's owned digital channels.

Making use of TikTok's native functionality and penchant for dance crazes, BEN worked with each of the creators to produce videos for

their Instagram Stories and TikTok Duets which incorporated gameplay footage and dances from the game, inviting fans to respond with their own attempts. Followers recorded themselves matching the stars' routines move-for-move, meaning users engaged more deeply with the content than they might with an ad spot. The '#JustDanceMoves' campaign drove almost 2 billion views in its first week.

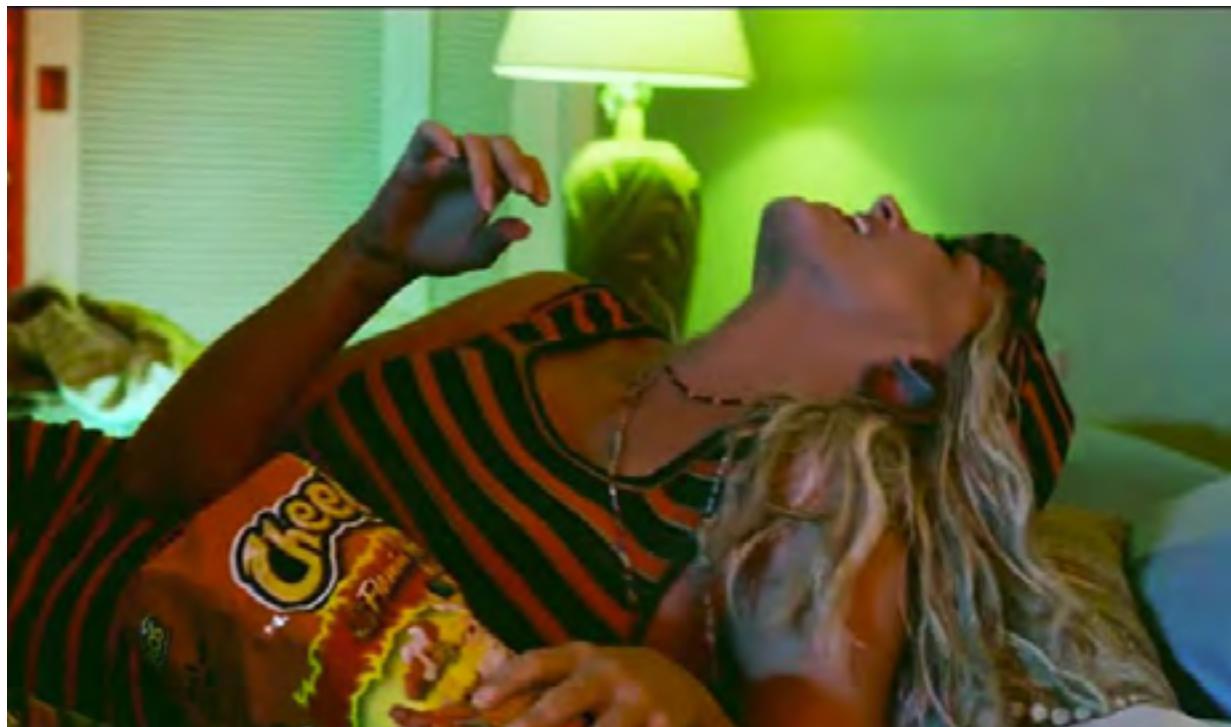


RESULTS

10m+
views across six TikToks

1.1m+
IG impressions

3bn+
views on the TikTok challenge



BEN secured innovative placements for Frito-Lay products across the pop music world.

FRITO-LAY'S UNSKIPPABLE MOMENTS

Frito-Lay sought to bolster top-of-mind awareness for its brands and overcome challenges presented by increasing ad avoidance behaviors among its target consumers.

Faced with growing adoption of ad avoidance technology and with consumers spending increasing amounts of time in ad-free/ad-light environments, Frito-Lay partnered with BEN to embed its brands directly in-content and create a new form of "unskippable" advertising.

James Clarke, senior director of media, analytics and CRM at Frito-Lay, says that: "Strategic product placement in content distributed across popular streaming services has helped further align our brands with culturally relevant talent and key moments of situational salience.

This approach complements our more traditional advertising, and shores up our branded presence in ad-free/ad-light environments while also ensuring we are being additive to consumer experience in these channels, versus seeking solely to disrupt it."

As part of this effort BEN developed a product placement program to reach consumers in the non-ad supported media. BEN targeted productions that mirrored the portfolio's participating brand target demographics and worked closely with key industry contacts, effectively securing a variety of premium integrations within music videos, streaming, premium cable and film. BEN integrated the Frito-Lay portfolio of brands including Doritos,

Cheetos, Lay's, Tostitos, Ruffles and Smartfood throughout videos from top artists, including Lizzo, Katy Perry, Khalid and Lil Nas X. In addition, BEN secured placements across multiple top tier streaming platforms including Netflix's top performing shows, Apple TV+'s Mythic Quest and Little Voice, and premium cable integrations in the reboot of The L Word and highly acclaimed Work in Progress.

The campaign also saw success in film, with integrations in the highly anticipated sequel Bill and Ted Face the Music. The campaign delivered explosive viewership, racking up over 100 million views. More importantly, the campaign delivered impact on key brand KPIs, including brand recall, purchase consideration, and favorability scores.

RESULTS

77%

lift in ad recall

46%

lift in favorability

80%

lift in purchase consideration

CADILLAC DRIVES AWARENESS WITH INFLUENCER MARKETING

Cadillac's brand new XT6 nameplate needed to break through the clutter in the ultra-competitive luxury crossover segment.

As it launched its new crossover model, the brand needed to reach discerning, sophisticated buyers who want their vehicle to make a bold statement while providing that audience with an in-depth look at the XT6 and its advanced features. BEN used its proprietary AI technology to filter and identify prominent

influencers with verified and engaged audiences that matched the target Cadillac XT6 buyer. BEN's algorithm provided an optimized list of creators based on predicted viewership performance and content that fit the brand's image.

With their own unique perspective, these select influencers then brought the vehicle to life, creating custom content showcasing how the Cadillac XT6 fit seamlessly into every moment of their day. Creators from luxury

real estate agent Ryan Serhant, who admired the XT6's style while exploring the streets of Manhattan, to the Johnson family, who relished the vehicle's thoughtful features as well as the fact that it could accommodate their growing family, each embodied Cadillac's brand positioning from a different angle.

The result was a tailored campaign that successfully launched this new model and differentiated the XT6 from its fierce competition.



RESULTS

AI

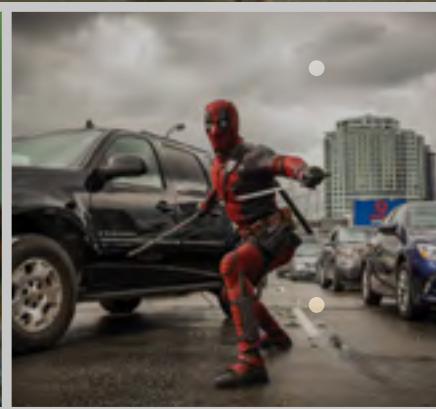
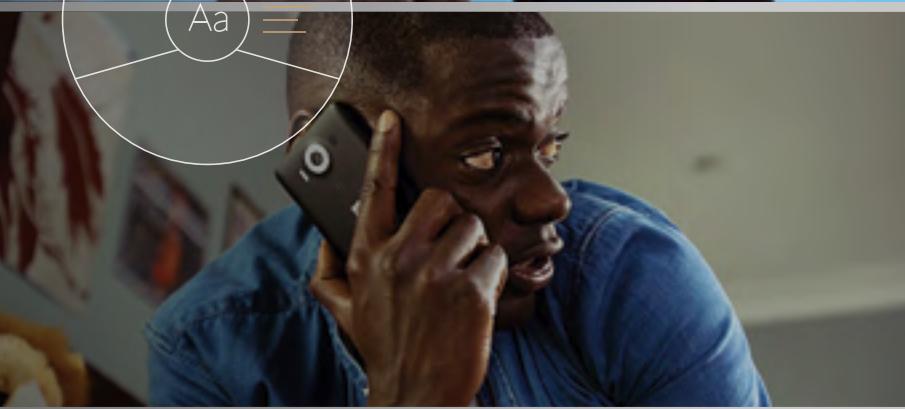
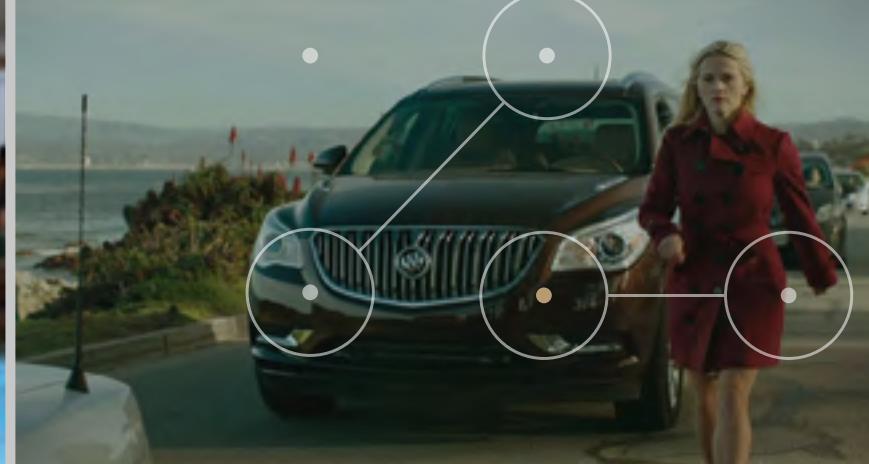
powered influencer matching based on brand safety and fit

Exceeded campaign view goal by
227%

90.41%

Positive engagement sentiment

BEN's AI selected a list of creators that would not only perform, but whose audience and personality were the right fit for the Cadillac XT6 brand.



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