

Small
World

Tracksuit

2.0

PRESENTS

ENTERTAIN

ORANGE

A Guide to Entertainment
First Brand Building

The lines have blurred on what entertainment is today. People 'rawdogg' flights accrue millions of views. An average SNL episode has 4% of the viewers of the 100th most popular MrBeast video.

YouTubers like Troye Sivan and the Philippou Brothers can become pop stars and directors. Toy companies are commissioning blockbuster films. A brand's green owl mascot has more followers than Brie Larson. Joe Rogan helped crown the president. The runner-up was BRAT.

In sum, people no longer see media in silos. Everything is everywhere all at once.

What does that mean for brands?

Well, you're no longer competing with just those in your category.

A tiny fraction of brands can *pay* for mass-reach media moments that secure captive eyeballs; we're talking about media placements like the Super Bowl and World Cup.

But for the large proportion of brands out there, the competition is no longer Coca-Cola, Heinz and Doritos - it's MrBeast, Barbie and TikTok.

In a world where reach is fragmented and never guaranteed, brands are no longer advertisers; they need to be entertainers.

What hope do brands have in this mad media multiverse?

It's often said among good marketers that the customer doesn't give a damn who you are. In fact, Mark Ritson claims people hold no more than 3 brain cells for us at any one time.

Entertainment first brand building is a tool to Trojan Horse your business into as many brain cells as you can - it's brand distinction on steroids riding a rocket ship to space with Vin Diesel at the wheel.

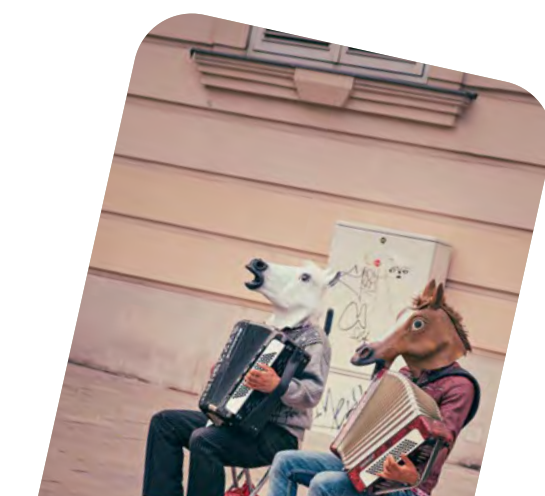
Or is it?

Well, we believe it is, but we felt there was little to no research in the space. With our partner Tracksuit, we wanted to find the most entertaining brands in the world, uncover what made them entertaining and determine if they actually grew quicker than others.

We're going to dive into a lot of concepts today, but before we do that, we want to frame it using a quote from another friend and client of ours. It is of course, entertainment brand builder extraordinaire, Lach Hall, of Vacation Inc.



Dan Salkey
Strategy Partner, Small W•rld



“HOW DO YOU SCALE
SOMETHING [VACATION
INC.] THAT IS SO
CURATED? **IT IS LIKE AN
ARTIST'S VISION.**

WE'RE LOOKING AT
LUXURY BRANDS A LOT
AS A WAY OF SCALING
OUR CREATIVE VISION.
**CREATIVITY BECOMES
PART OF THE C-SUITE.”**

Lach Hall, Vacation Inc., Executive Chair of Marketing.



This quote is the
first non-negotiable
of entertainment-
first brand building.

If you want to succeed, you need to build
creativity into your operating model.

Most importantly, you need to build a
team that works for *your vision*, not for
anyone else's.

At Small W•rld, we've built a business around
that belief, and while we won't spend tons of
time discussing that - it's important to note.

In the spirit of this report, let's get on with the
show - **first, let us elaborate on why the world
is so ready to be entertained.**



BLURRED LINES

In 1985, the 3 major US networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) accounted for nearly 70% of prime-time TV viewership. [Now that's 30%](#). Between 2000 and 2015, print newspaper revenue [fell from \\$60 billion to \\$20 billion](#). Streaming services now have a larger weekly reach than cinema, with [50% of all adults](#) using some kind of video streaming service each week.

What does this mean?

Simply put, media and media consumption is fragmented. People's attention is split into tiny pieces across hundreds of different channels and their concept of what's advertising and what's entertainment is permanently blurred.

The result?

Brand leaders like yourself are no longer up against the likes of Mars and Mondolez in the safety of the 3-minute ad break Olympics; you're in a Royal Rumble with MrBeast, Fortnite and Netflix. A constant battle for people's attention.



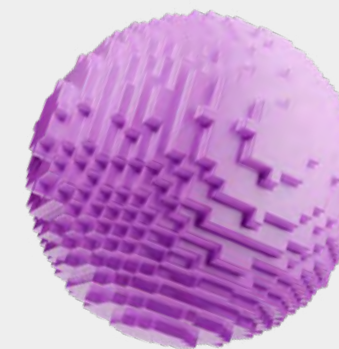
The water cooler moment simply does not exist anymore. In the heyday of TV viewing, people would have weekly appointments to view and guaranteed collective shared experiences were the norm.

Now, as we view our content through smaller screens and in smaller groups, platforms like TikTok have created algorithms that are fantastic at learning what we like and dicing up culture into our own curated slivers.

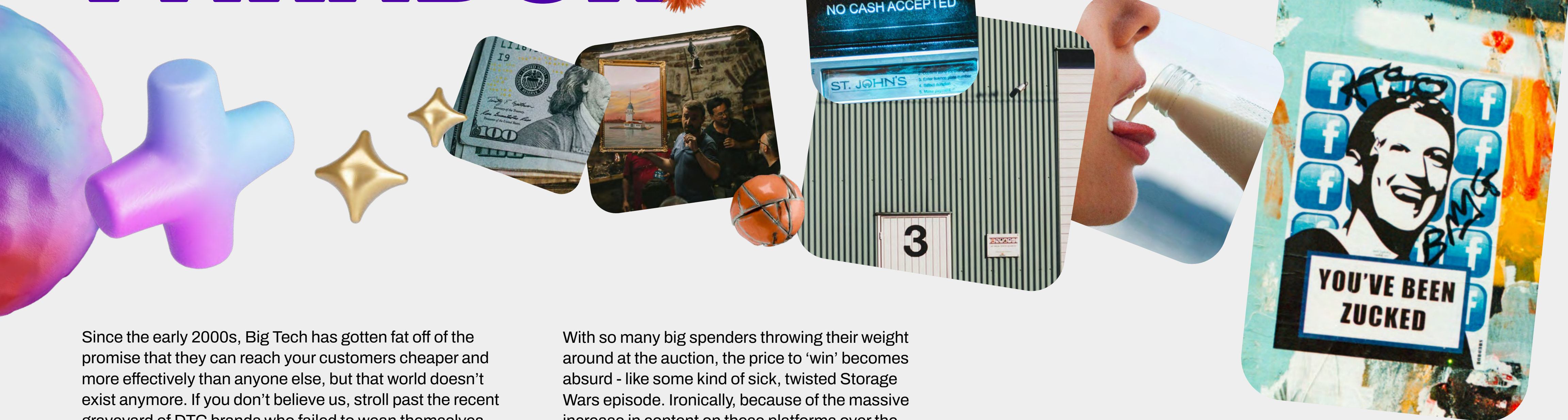
This means niche is the new mainstream, and large communities are built around previously small and scattered interests. You can build success by appealing to these niches, or a combination of these niches, whereas previously the key to success was to appeal to pop culture en masse.

Charli XCX and her Brat album rollout is a testament to this, with the absolute queen claiming, “**Niche is so rewarding, and like, after serving the niche, a monoculture moment happened.**” Yes, culture might be fragmented, but there are still riches in the niches; in fact, they’re now the gateway to the mainstream.

NICHE IS THE NEW MAINSTREAM



THE PERFORMANCE PARADOX



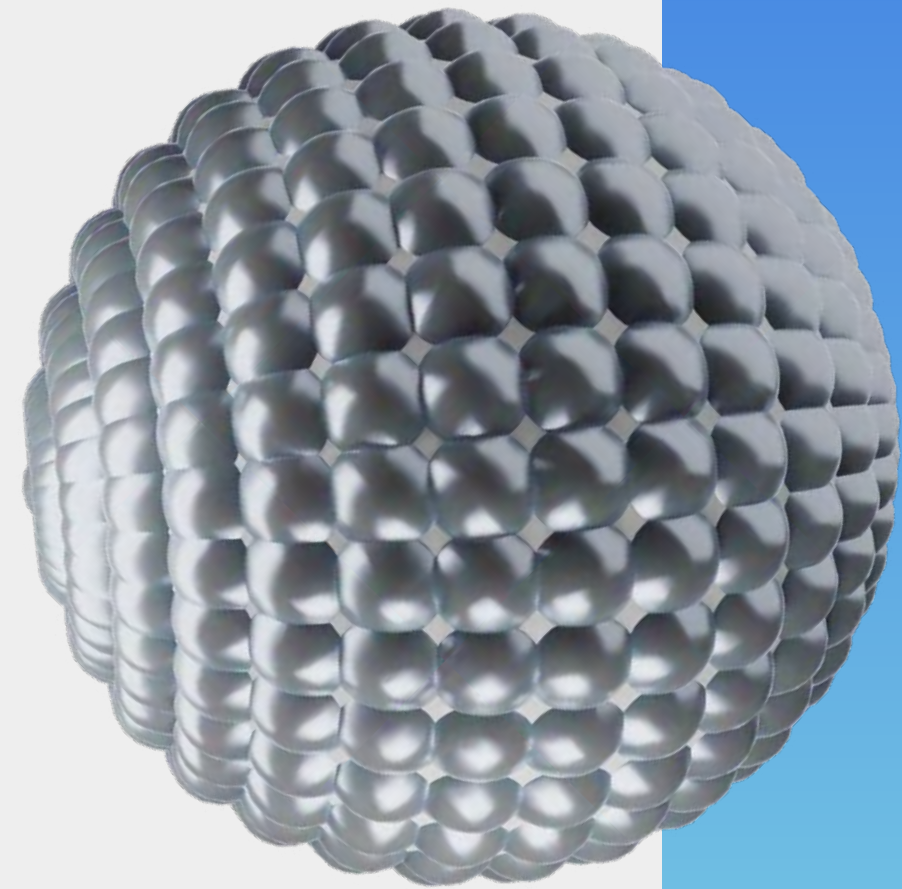
Since the early 2000s, Big Tech has gotten fat off of the promise that they can reach your customers cheaper and more effectively than anyone else, but that world doesn't exist anymore. If you don't believe us, stroll past the recent graveyard of DTC brands who failed to wean themselves off the Zuckerberg teat. The truth of the matter is that the success of these platforms is also the reason advertising has become more expensive and less effective for those same brands. As people have flooded to these platforms, brands have followed, and the overall monopoly on attention these platforms hold has allowed them to push up CPMs.

With so many big spenders throwing their weight around at the auction, the price to 'win' becomes absurd - like some kind of sick, twisted Storage Wars episode. Ironically, because of the massive increase in content on these platforms over the last ten years, the same slice of reach you bought then holds less attention in someone's head, and [now costs you 222% more](#) than a decade ago. With that reality laid bare, it's obvious why buying your way to people's attention is a game for only the richest of the rich.

OK NOW LET'S EXPLAIN HOW THE ENTERTAINMENT INDEX WORKS.

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The Entertainment Index (EI) is a data-driven scoring system, created by Tracksuit, that measures how effectively brands create and sustain entertainment value.

We analysed social content and survey responses to get a set of metrics which we combined to create our rankings. Each brand's score is driven by a set of attributes which we outline in full on page 27.

We analyzed social media conversations at scale and surveyed 20,000 respondents to assess which brands truly entertain, engage, and grow. We analyzed the data using a structured framework examining said key attributes, like how well a brand works on social and how characterful it is. Ultimately, brands were assessed based on their perceived connection with entertainment-related attributes.

Brands to be judged were selected by an expert panel of brand strategists and entertainment experts from around the world. Being on this list does not make you entertaining by default. It is a way of ranking brands which experts consider to be best in class, purely on entertainment value. The lower down the list, the less entertaining a brand is, relatively. For a full breakdown of our methodology head to page 32.

**GET READY FOR THE MAIN EVENT,
WE'RE ABOUT TO MEET THE TOP 30.**

THE ENTERTAINMENT INDEX

MEET THE TOP 30



The brands which people deem to be the most shocking, the most engaging, the most relatable - the most undeniably entertaining.

From Netflix's new take on Disneyland to Duolingo's domination of the internet, these companies redefine entertainment through storytelling and earned relevance. But it's not just household names making waves.

Rising brands like Starface, Liquid Death and Tubi prove that bold, irreverent internet-first marketing can cut through the noise. We'll be mentioning most of them (and more) throughout the report, pulling out some of the key themes that connect them.

If you'd rather skip ahead to see the full 100, head to page 24, but that would be like skipping from one slice of bread to the next when eating a sandwich - not very sensible.

01  TikTok	02  YouTube	03  MARVEL	04  Disney	05  DC	06  NETFLIX
07  Vinted	08  Instagram	09  ROBLOX	10  STARFACE	11  f	12  GoPro
13  Nintendo	14  HOUSEPLANT	15  UFC	16  HARIBO	17  rhode	18  Liquid Death MOUNTAIN WATER
19  tubi	20  amazon	21  duolingo	22  GAMES WORKSHOP	23  NFL	24  ACTIVISION BLIZZARD
25  crocs COME AS YOU ARE™	26  Levi's	27  P	28  VISA	29  NBA	30  D&Z

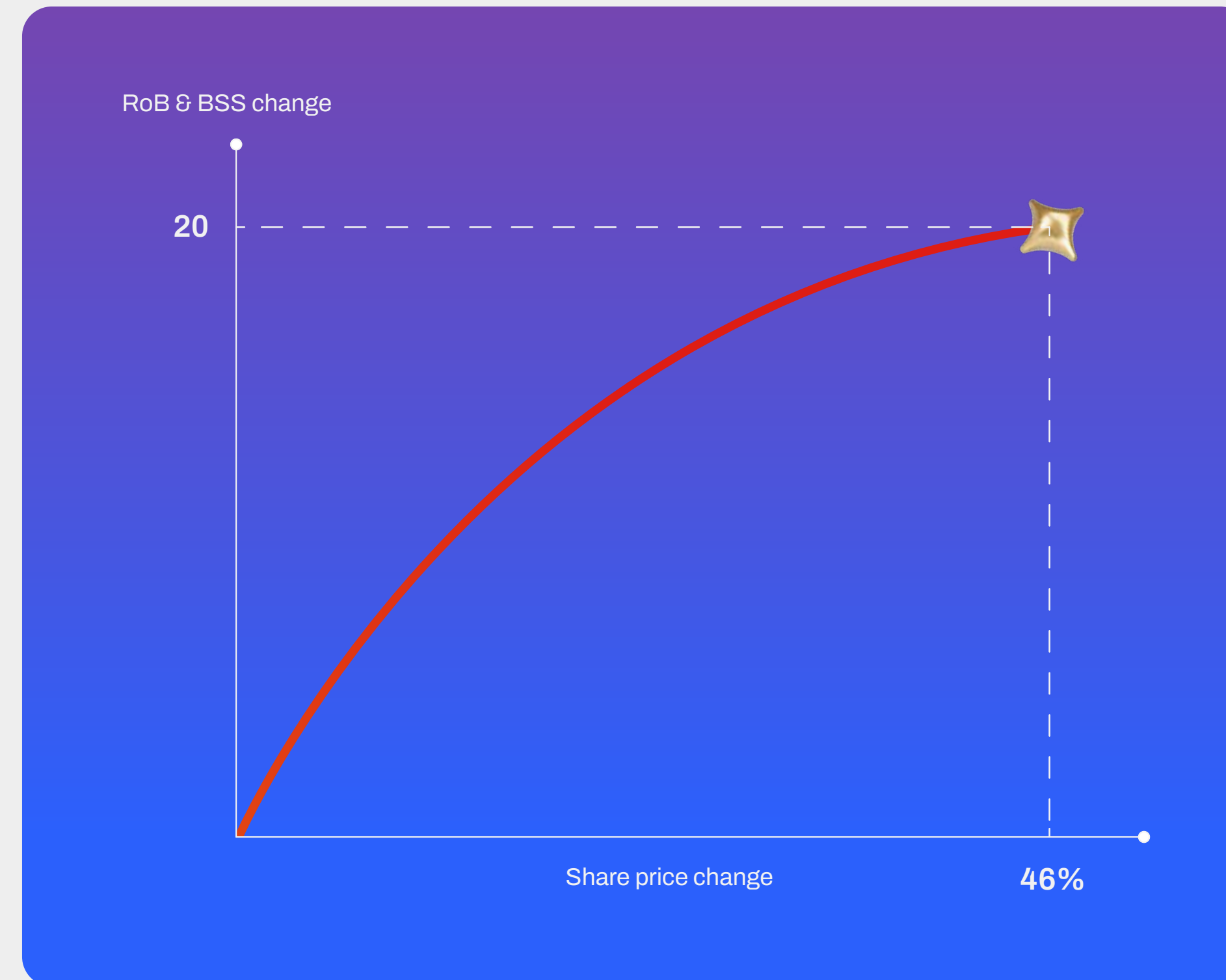
ROLE OF BRAND STRENGTH

We know that changes in brand role and brand strength correlate to changes in share price.

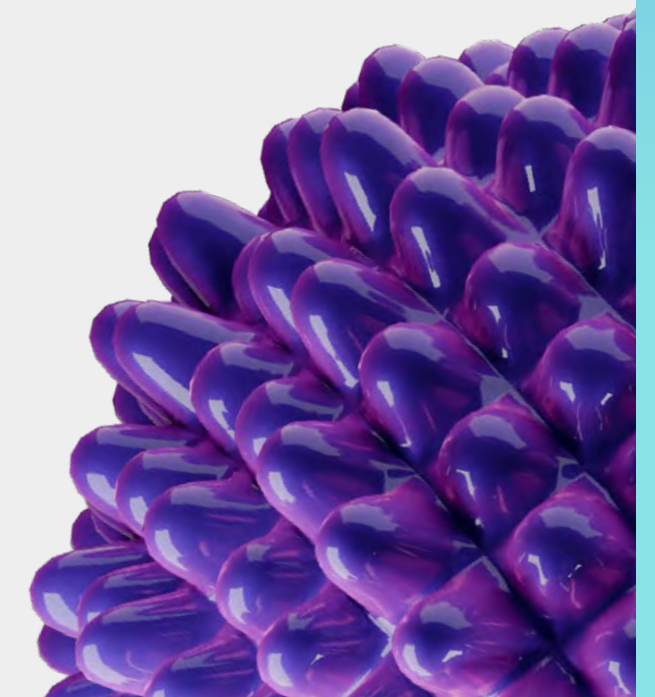
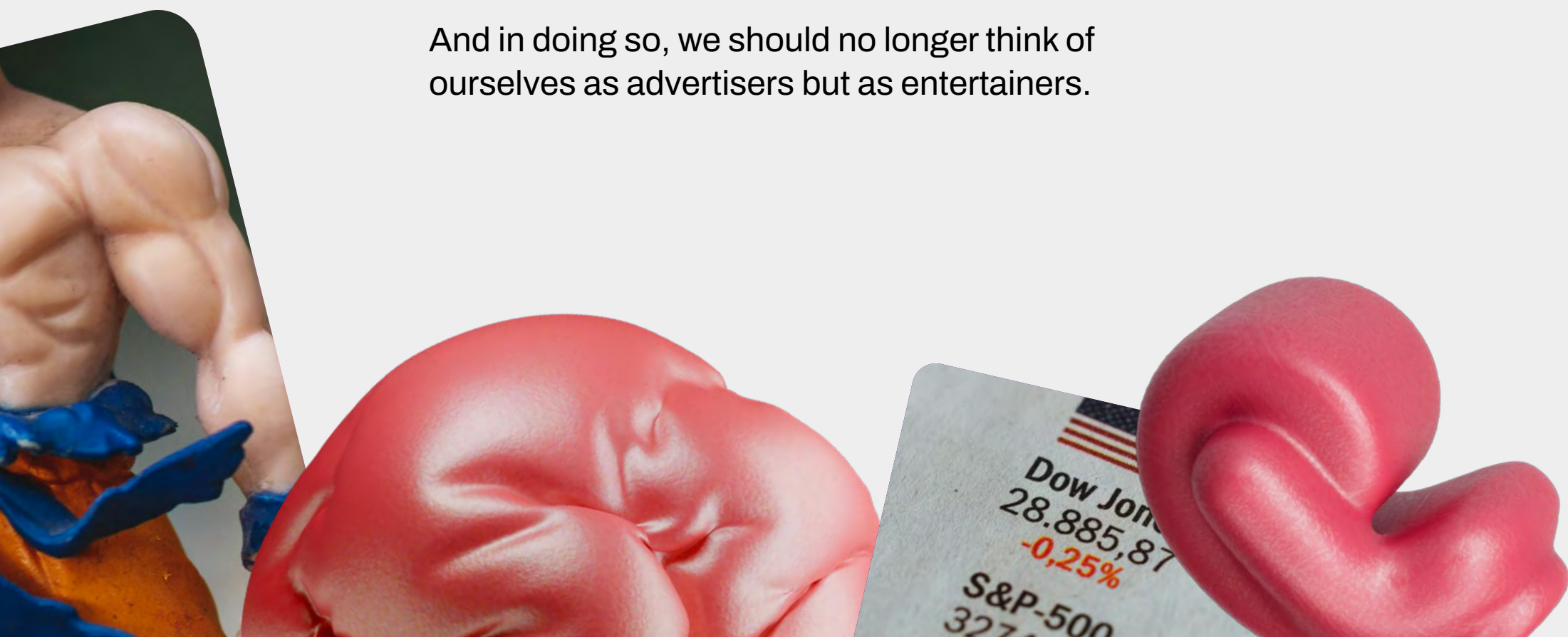
If we agree that the role of brands and what it means to build brand strength today has changed, then we need to lean into this to create new shareholder value.

We need to build entertainment-first brands that understand that culture moves at the speed of the internet.

And in doing so, we should no longer think of ourselves as advertisers but as entertainers.



For every point change across a combined Role of Brand and Brand Strength index, a business can expect to see a 2.3% return on their stock price (source: Interbrand).



BRANDS THAT ENTERTAIN ARE GROWING FAST, THAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE

Businesses adapting to the new role of brands in an entertainment first world are growing commercially. TikTok's revenue for 2024 is estimated at 25% growth. YouTube up by 8%. Netflix by 16%. Marvel is the highest grossing film franchise ever as of this year (a record \$30 billion).

From the top 30* (97%) brands, those deemed most entertaining, only one did not report revenue growth. Two thirds (67%) had double digit growth. Put simply, being entertaining pays.**

By earning attention, brands are building an army of fans willing to share their stories, earning them reach and making their marketing ten times more effective.

Tracksuit and Small W•rld are tracking the top 30 brands to provide further evidence that businesses adapting to the changing role brands play in culture, are those growing quickest.

*We've referenced the top 30 brands we had accurate data for, meaning we've gone down to rank 38
**This data is based on actual and predicted fiscal year results for 2024, as of February 2025

01 TikTok ^25%	02 YouTube ^8%	04 Disney ^3%	06 NETFLIX ^16%	08 Instagram ^16%	09 ROBLOX ^29%
10 STARFACE ^50%	11 Facebook ^22%	12 GoPro v20%	13 Nintendo ^4%	17 rhode ^100%	18 Liquid Death MOUNTAIN WATER ^27%
19 tubi ^567%	20 amazon ^11%	22 GAMES WORKSHOP ^21%	21 duolingo ^42%	24 ACTIVISION BLIZZARD ^44%	23 NFL ^5%
25 crocs COME AS YOU ARE ^4%	26 Levi's ^3%	27 P ^46%	28 VISA ^10%	29 NBA ^7%	30 DAZN ^34%
31 Google ^14%	33 Snapchat ^16%	34 HBO ^4%	35 Spotify ^18%	36 EPIC GAMES ^30%	38 MATTEL ^1%

BRAND LORE

THIS IS HOW TO GO FROM BRAND GUIDELINES TO A BRAND UNIVERSE

Brands appealing to an internet-first audience, desperate for escapism and accustomed to being entertained, are reimagining the concept of a master brand.

Brand universes are being formed; with every touchpoint, a chance to tell a story. Many have constructed their own worlds, infusing them with rich narratives, aesthetics and communities - we call this Brand Lore.

These businesses abandon the idea of their brand as a strict set of design guidelines. Instead, they think of themselves as a character, much like the cast on a sketch show or your favorite content creator, all developed with the input of an active fan community.

At other times, Brand Lore takes inspiration from a nostalgic era or is imbued directly into products, something we call Brand Artifacts. But it's not about deceiving fandoms - people understand these stories, characters and objects are fiction, and frankly, the weirder, the better.

Brand Lore can often mean seeing your brand as a character and giving it meaning through storytelling.

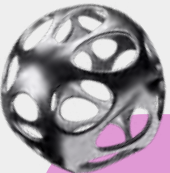
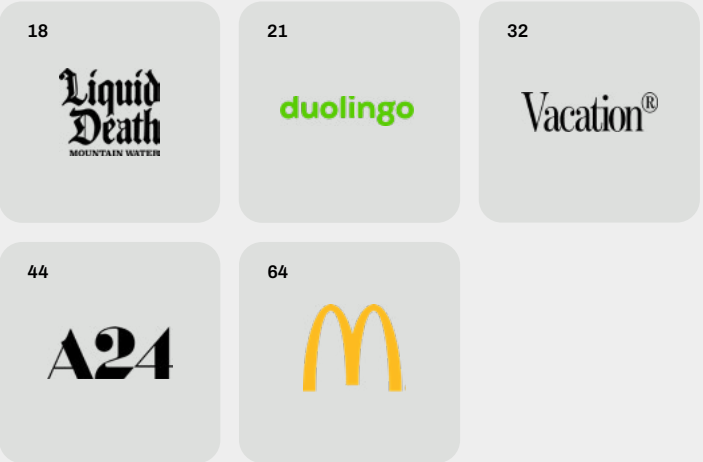
Take Duolingo’s mascot; between hassling app users to learn their chosen language, the notorious owl has fallen [for Dua Lipa](#), [walked the catwalk at fashion week](#), and was finally [killed by a Tesla Cybertruck](#). RIP Duo (his death hijacked [84% of the conversations](#) that all Super Bowl ads were having across every single social platform). Duo’s story is one that James Kuczynski, Global Creative Director, has said is formed as much by the brand team as it is by fans in the comments.

Other times Brand Lore is created by breathing a brand’s point of view into everyday objects to make new cultural Brand Artifacts. [A24](#) do this via their prolific merch machine, MSCHF are masters of satirical cultural commentary through commerce with drops like [OnlyBags](#), and Liquid Death imagine what their fictional evil corporation’s take would be on objects like basketballs (which become [severed heads](#)). VP of Creative Andy Pearson calls this phenomenon “[3D Comedy](#).”

Despite being born in the 2000s, [37% of Gen Z](#) feel nostalgic for the 90s, and 12% are nostalgic for the 70s. With feelings of nostalgia stronger than ever, some brands are looking to the past to build Brand Lore, reviving long-forgotten story arcs, characters and creatures. This is creative rocket fuel for brands like McDonald’s. Not only have they revived [70s-era Grimace](#), but now his long-lost Irish relative [Uncle O’Grimacey](#), complete with lurid shakes and merch.

But there are hacks for brands who don’t have decades of their own archival material to tap into. Miami-based [Vacation® Inc](#) launched in 2021, yet their 360-degree brand world is soaked in the heady scents and vibes of 1980s sunscreen culture, from the turquoise palm-adorned product packaging to the [old-school fax receipts](#).

Every touchpoint of communication with customers is “an opportunity to make them smile, inviting them into our immersive brand world, where the blue banana daiquiris are flowing and the service is something you want to write a postcard home about,” said [Amelia Scoyni](#), Sr. Product & Brand Marketing Specialist.



“[WE INVITE CUSTOMERS] INTO OUR IMMERSIVE BRAND WORLD, WHERE THE BLUE BANANA DAIQUIRIS ARE FLOWING”

Amelia Scoyni, Vacation Inc, Sr. Product & Brand Marketing Specialist



IN HOUSING HOLLYWOOD

THIS IS HOW TO BUILD AN ENTERTAINMENT
FIRST PRODUCTION MODEL

One of the biggest
shifts of the last
five years has been
the rise of in-house
production.

But now, a subset of brands is going a step further and building their own entertainment studios from a roster of talent outside the ad world. Think animation, streaming, film, and comedy. Want creatives who have honed their skills in the Hollywood halls of fame? Just recruit them.

It's a response to the exploding demand for entertaining content at scale, which requires a wider toolkit of skills to create audiovisual work that hits and sticks. Many brands are using their multidisciplinary Ocean's Eleven-style teams to work on marketing that feels like entertainment, initiatives that treat marketing like the product itself.

It's not an 'either or' approach. However, the winning brands blend the best of advertising with the best of entertainment. This creative skill sharing results in radical work, earning them an impressive share of voice.

Liquid Death is pioneering this trend. Shooting for virality, they created an in-house content studio comprising of on and off members like the [lead singer](#) of a punk band, a former Onion writer, co-creator of adult cartoon Mr. Pickles, a former competitive snowboarder and over ten national headliner comics.

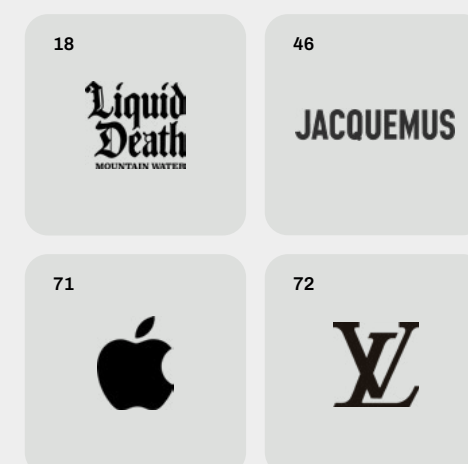
How it operates feels different, too. Imagine an SNL writer's room rather than a traditional ad agency or marketing department.

“[They’re not] filling out timesheets and looking at some kind of jobs board to figure out their next task,” says [Dan Murphy](#), SVP of marketing. “We toss scripts to them for punch-up. We ask them for flavor names when we’re naming a thing.” Murphy’s advice? Go to “real funny people” to get the comedy. In the Super Bowl 2025, Liquid Death’s [It’s Safe for Work](#) was the third Most Effective Ad of all ads, generating [8.0x as much engagement](#) as the median, and beating Jeep, Universal Pictures and Poppi.

By In-Housing Hollywood, businesses can tell the same brand stories, but in ways that are altogether more compelling. Take LVMH, which has set up an entertainment division called [22 Montaigne](#) to collaborate with film-makers, producers and distributors on film, TV and audio projects.

But other brands are proving how you can adopt the same approach with lo-fi production methods. The irony is that they’re luxury brands. JACQUEMUS’ Apple partnership is an inspiration for how hardware is secondary when it comes to production, as long as your creative muscles are flexed. The quirky fashion house shot their latest runway show exclusively on iPhone, as well as offering a behind-the-scenes [sneak peek at the French atelier’s surrealist workshop](#).

Whether in-house or out-of-house, it’s clear that the brands consistently winning the Internet are those revolutionizing their production, recognizing that an advertising-first production model doesn’t work in an entertainment-first world.



“[They’re not] filling out timesheets... We toss scripts to them for punch-up. We ask them for flavor names when we’re naming a thing.”

Dan Murphy, Liquid Death SVP of marketing



IN. REAL. LIFE.

THIS IS HOW YOU ENTERTAIN OUT IN THE
REAL WORLD

Remember when
we all left our
puny human lives
behind and entered
Mark Zuckerberg's
metaverse?
No, me neither.

Remember when we all left our puny human lives behind and entered Mark Zuckerberg's metaverse? No, me neither. It was the tech world's overreaction during a time when physical connection simply wasn't possible. 2024, though, was a year of experiencing, feeling, and touching stuff—most importantly, being entertained away from our screens. The data supports this: According to [market research firm PQ Media](#), global experiential marketing spending grew by 10.5%, making this the first year to exceed pre-pandemic spending.

In a chronically online world with fewer ways of discerning what's real or fake, getting outside is often the most entertaining and rewarding thing we can do. The brands channeling this are creating stop-what-you're-doing, press-your-nose-against-the-glass, video-call-your-mom-level activations.

That doesn't mean they're massive productions; they're just unexpected. Phone cameras cover these IRL surprises, broadcasting them to the world, experienced by few but seen by many.

Kellanova killed it in 2025 with their [Pop-Tart Bowl](#), the inaugural IRL football game featuring edible mascot antics and OTT celebrations.

This fan-first experience saw Kellanova secure [eight times](#) more social conversation than all non-Kellanova brands combined and had their largest single-day increase in TikTok followers.

Some brands have gone big in real life, like Airbnb's range of bookable themed stays, including [a 90s-era Polly Pocket house](#). But others are savvier, creating moments meant to be experienced by few, seen by many. Atlantic Records and Charli XCX erected the [Brat Wall](#), a messy mercurial canvas for everyone's favorite IT girl to update fans on new releases and vibes.

Attendance at the wall probably peaked at a few hundred for the biggest live performance, but [over half a million](#) watched the live stream, and it got 14.7M views on TikTok. Similarly, the cast of AppleTV's Severance [set up Lumon's offices in Grand Central Station](#) for an hour over lunch, seen by a smattering of people, but upvoted over 300,000 times collectively on Reddit.

Netflix is the best example of a brand doing it big when it comes to physical experiences. Peggy Gou headlined a sold-out rave to promote [Squid Game 2](#), and *Stranger Things: The First Shadow* is a permanent fixture on Broadway and London's West End. But [Netflix Houses](#) are their biggest bet, signifying that in-person entertainment is back in force. These hubs, spanning over 100,000 square feet, are Netflix's answer to Disneyland. City center shopping malls, all themed around Netflix IP like *Bridgerton* and *Stranger Things*.

Finally, a mass decline in third spaces from [bars](#) to [youth centres](#) has led to an uptick in brands making meaningful real-life contributions to social infrastructure (AKA getting us out of the house). Building on its 2022 #MerkyFC Careers programme, [Adidas and Stormzy](#) unveiled #MerkyFC HQ in Croydon, London. A multi-purpose center offering facilities for football, music, and gaming to support local youth, which Small W•rld helped launch.





To play in the new world, you need to find creatives that live in it.

That means shelving outdated recruitment strategies and plucking talent from adjacent and even entirely opposing industries. The search for the next hire is not limited to job boards any more. Forget CVs - brands are putting skill sets and lived experience first. And their work is all the richer for it.

Some brands started by bringing [creators on board](#) as creative directors and community managers. Now the aperture for talent has widened even further. Forward-thinking brands are recruiting brains from unorthodox backgrounds: think design, gaming and entertainment at large. Some are even entering the business at the C-suite level.

Whether you plan to fill a role permanently or collaborate on a singular brief, recruiting un-standard talent into standardized marketing setups requires a willingness to find new ways of working together.

The key, though, is a shared commitment to making the most entertaining work possible, with creative minds best suited to the task.

UN-STANDARD TALENT

THIS IS HOW TO RECRUIT TALENT THAT ENTERTAINS



Bringing in craft-driven creators from other fields to work on singular briefs is one approach brands are adopting.

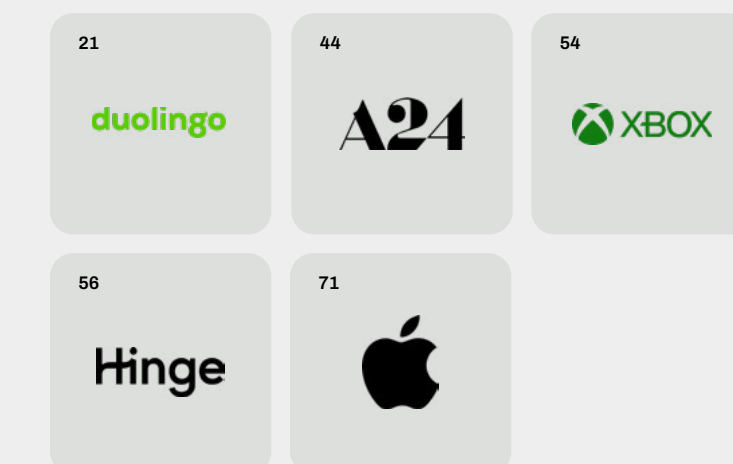
Based on the insight that many fans feel they can outperform the professionals, through Football Manager 2024, [Xbox](#) recruited a gamer as a tactician for Bromley FC, while [Hinge](#) enlisted literary figures like Roxanne Gay and Oisín McKenna to write 'No Ordinary Love,' a six-part anthology of real user stories.

There's no magical formula for finding un-standard talent, though. It's happening by chance and by design. Ben Stiller, director of AppleTV's Severance, discovered Oliver Latta, the VFX artist who created the show's Emmy award-winning opening titles while scrolling on Instagram.

On the other hand, Brothers Danny and Michael Philippou made a splash with their YouTube channel RackaRacka, which led to a [seven-figure deal from A24](#) to make their feature debut Talk to Me. A clearly intentional strategy by A24 to back unexpected auteurs.

Doritos most recently reignited their 'Crash the Super Bowl' challenge. The idea? Invite anyone and everyone to submit their TV spots for a chance to be aired at Super Bowl LIX, plus a \$1M cash prize. The winner? Content creators Dylan Bradshaw and Nate Norell, who had little to no experience of what makes advertising effective, but knew everything about creating entertaining content. [Their spot was even in the top 15% of chip ads over the last 7 years.](#)

With this emerging new creative class comes different paths to progression and fresh titles, even in the C-suite. The CPG giant [Kimberley-Clarke](#) scrapped the CMO role and hired its first chief creative and design officer. New starter [Zaria Parvez](#) was given the reins of Duolingo's dormant TikTok account early in her tenure and, in just a few short years, had [completely recast the company's social media approach](#). She's now managing its global strategy.



MEDIA MOGULS

THIS IS HOW YOU GO FROM A
MEDIA BUYER TO A MEDIA OWNER

Under pressure to compete with real entertainers in a crowded marketplace, brands are subtly shape-shifting.

With it no longer being good enough just to buy media, they're owning media. Instead of being the perpetual salesman, they're repositioning themselves as media moguls and publishers, the Logan Roys of the brand world, both in their categories - and beyond.

It's a clever turn which sees brands reclaim total freedom over their creative output, crafting memorable entertainment first work. Instead of skippable pre-rolls and carousel ads, they're making studio albums to listen to on repeat, covetable books that aesthetes would gladly have on their coffee table, and theater shows that thespians queue in the freezing cold to see.

This content is devoid of salesmanship and instead leans hard into showmanship. It's stealthy, slick and seriously high-quality branding.

This approach takes the investment previously reserved for media and instead pours it into creative, hiring talent who come from a multitude of worlds (hello In-Housing Hollywood!), going deep into researching the texture of fandom and finding out how best to entertain them.

With rising ad costs and shifting consumer expectations, owning media isn't just an option—it's becoming a necessity. To cut through app fatigue, digital dating brands are increasingly active in the arts and publishing.

[Feeld](#) launched the print magazine *AFM*—short for 'A Feeld Magazine' or 'A F*cking Magazine'. Half of its contributors are Feeld members. The magazine explores topics like desire and changing masculinity. It's part of a broader user connection strategy, including in-person socials and an [Off-Broadway show](#) on polyamory.

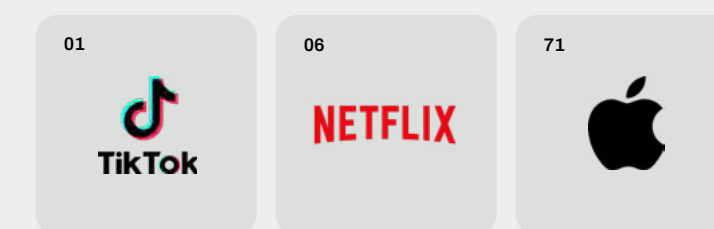
E.l.f. Cosmetics' entertainment arm, [Made](#), is building on past efforts to create original music, releasing an album meant to be the [soundtrack for Get Ready With Me videos](#), featuring up-and-coming artists. Bringing *Severance*'s surrealist storytelling into the real world, Apple Books published [The You You Are](#), the revolutionary self-help book inspiring innies to break free from Lumon.

Podcasts offer brands the ear of fan communities, quite literally. Edison estimates that [135 million Americans](#) listen to podcasts monthly, and [84% of Gen Z podcast listeners](#) choose video first formats. So it's no surprise that [Netflix](#) is eyeing investment in video podcast production. In a gaming-audio crossover, [Clash of Clans](#) launched a true crime podcast to solve an in-game mystery. Recognizing the value of owning audiences rather than renting attention via third-party platforms, brands will continue blurring the line between media companies and product sellers.

Being a media owner doesn't always mean dedicating a ton of resources to traditional premium production-cost media formats like TV or cinema. Look at the social-first short-form drama trend in China. These bite-sized 60 to 90 second soap operas cater to an audience accustomed to instant, engaging storytelling. They are monetized through ads and premium subscriptions and have grown [35% YoY](#), outpacing the national cinema industry.

UK broadcaster Channel 4 is dominating with their social-first, creator-led strategy, with repeatable formats and satellite channels that keep content niche and optimized for different social feeds.

Gymnasium agency is another player redefining TV for the vertical era. Adam Faze's show [Boy Room](#), a TikTok-native drama, blurred the lines between film and social, proving that scripted storytelling can thrive in the vertical, short-form space. Similarly, Small W•rld's very own [Rescuerama](#) series for wellness brand Rescue Remedy has hit 55M views and counting on the platform.



CULTURE GOES NICHE

THIS IS HOW YOU GO NICHE
TO GO MAINSTREAM

Algorithmic platforms like TikTok and YouTube are making water cooler moments a thing of the past.

Instead, they've been steadily serving us our own little slivers of culture. It's catapulted niche into the mainstream, cleaving open weird pockets of culture and the weird people who represent them, all for our entertainment.

At the same time, the era of the macro celebrity is fading. Viewership for glitzy awards shows has tanked. Polished, scripted endorsements from A-list stars have lost their shine. In contrast comes Standom, an obsessive fandom for loveably weird, niche creators and pockets of culture that fill our feeds.

As parasocial relationships and communities form with this emerging creative class, and around their cultural niches, it's a smart move for brands to collaborate with them.

The brands doing so have seen unexpected and surreal concepts come to life with earned eyeballs (the best kind) fully locked in. The shift here? The combined force of several If-you-know-you-know (IYKYK) creators and access to a patchwork of their fandoms often beats one celebrity tie-up.

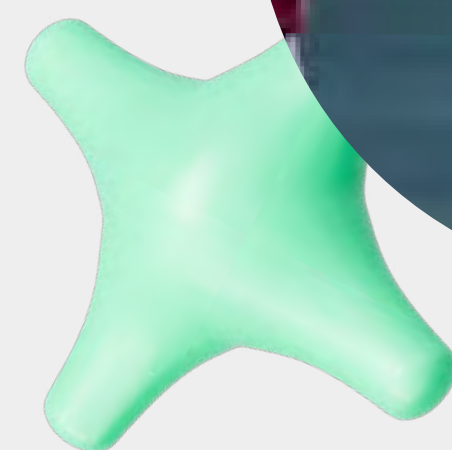
With culture now moving to the niches, savvy brands are combining a patchwork of micro-celebrities, often with larger social followings than ‘real’ celebrities, to unlock mass reach.

Take Marc Jacobs, the fashion house leading the charge by working with unhinged internet celebrities like [Sylvanian Family Dramas](#), [RAYMONTE](#) and even the infamous [TikTok Rizz Party](#). Their TikTok account has accumulated 24M views, with content including these creators far outstripping views of their more traditional fashion comms.

Another large part of Duolingo’s success lies in their ability to chameleon into niche subcultures and fandoms, like morphing into a [Squid Game pink guard](#) to inspire Korean learners and taking over a [Charli XCX concert in Detroit](#), blending in with the neon green color palette, yet still managing to generate more buzz than the gig itself. Duolingo’s embrace of niche fandoms began long ago, though; the language-learning app delighted [GoT heads with its High Valyrian course](#) back in 2019.


























Similarly, McDonald’s has built their entertainment strategy around ‘fan truths’ and **fandoms**; their [WcDonald’s](#) ‘rebrand,’ enthralled anime fans, spanning a [sellout immersive dining experience](#), menu items like the [Jujutsu Kaisen-inspired garlic sauce](#) and now even [a series of episodic shorts](#), made in partnership with legendary animation house Studio Pierrot.


























Niche is the new mainstream, and brands are using that knowledge as a hack for reach.









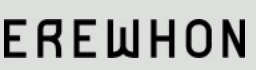




















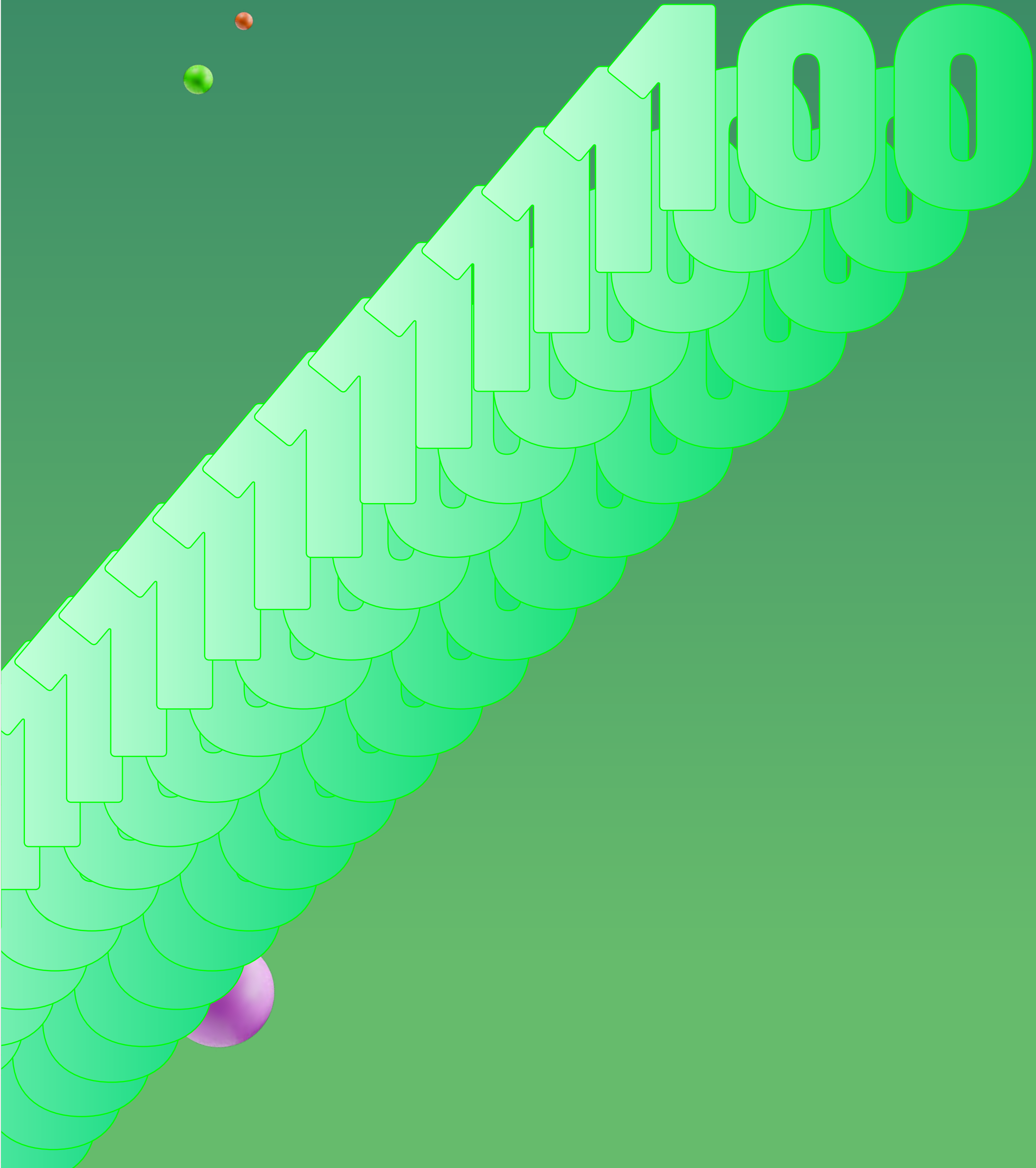
THE ENTERTAINMENT INDEX

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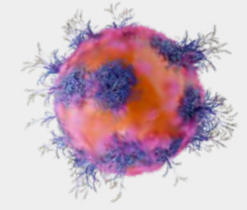
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91		92	 Mercedes-Benz	93		94		95	PRADA
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SO WHAT MAKES A BRAND ENTERTAINING?

When creating the Entertainment Index, using data from social and surveys, we broke our scores down into 7 different attributes. What these attributes mean is explained below, but we'll reference them by their shorthand from now on.



Interestingly, top performing brands under-indexed in **Love** and **Memory**, based on relative strengths. Clearly being distinctive alone isn't enough and brand love is an illusion in the era of entertainment. It's a good thing entertainers don't need your love, they just need your attention.

But the top-performing brands *did* excel in at least 2 of the following 4 attributes:

Humour, Social, Character and Attention.

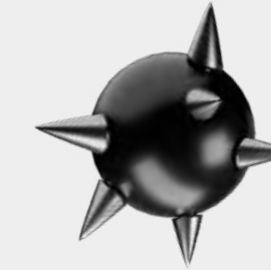
Reading between the lines, and analyzing these attributes alongside our themes, it's clear that entertainment first brands excel because they both understand the *theory* and *practice* of being entertainment first.

They understand the theory of how to position their brand in an entertainment first world (Humour, Character, Brand Lore, Niches).

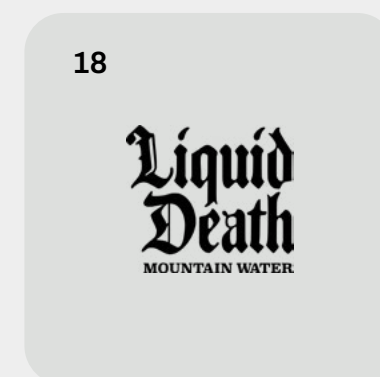
But more importantly, they've mastered the practice of consistently being entertaining in a fast-paced internet first culture (Social, Attention, In-housing Hollywood, In Real Life, Un-standard Talent, Media Moguls).

None of this flies in the face of traditional brand science (this bit's for you Byron Sharp), it's just coded for the modern day. These brands are still well positioned, still customer centric and most importantly they're still creatively consistent, despite their output moving at the speed of the internet.

OVERPERFORMERS



These are some of the smaller brands that have outperformed larger competitors and the attributes that they over-indexed in



18

- HUMOUR
- ATTENTION
- SOCIAL



10

- HUMOUR
- ATTENTION
- SOCIAL



32

- HUMOUR
- CHARACTER
- SOCIAL



21

- HUMOUR
- ATTENTION



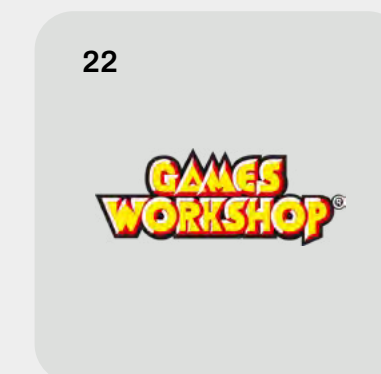
14

- HUMOUR
- CHARACTER



37

- HUMOUR
- CHARACTER



22

- HUMOUR
- CHARACTER



15

- ATTENTION
- SOCIAL



CATCHING FIRE

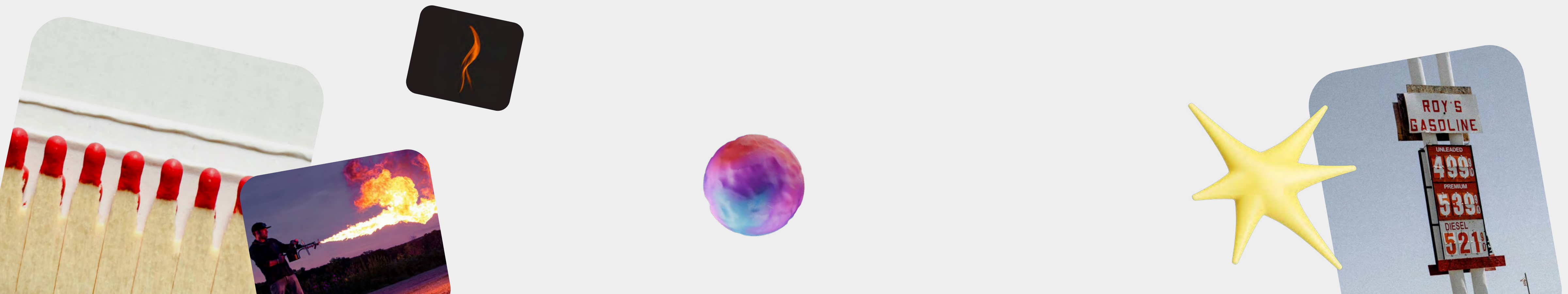
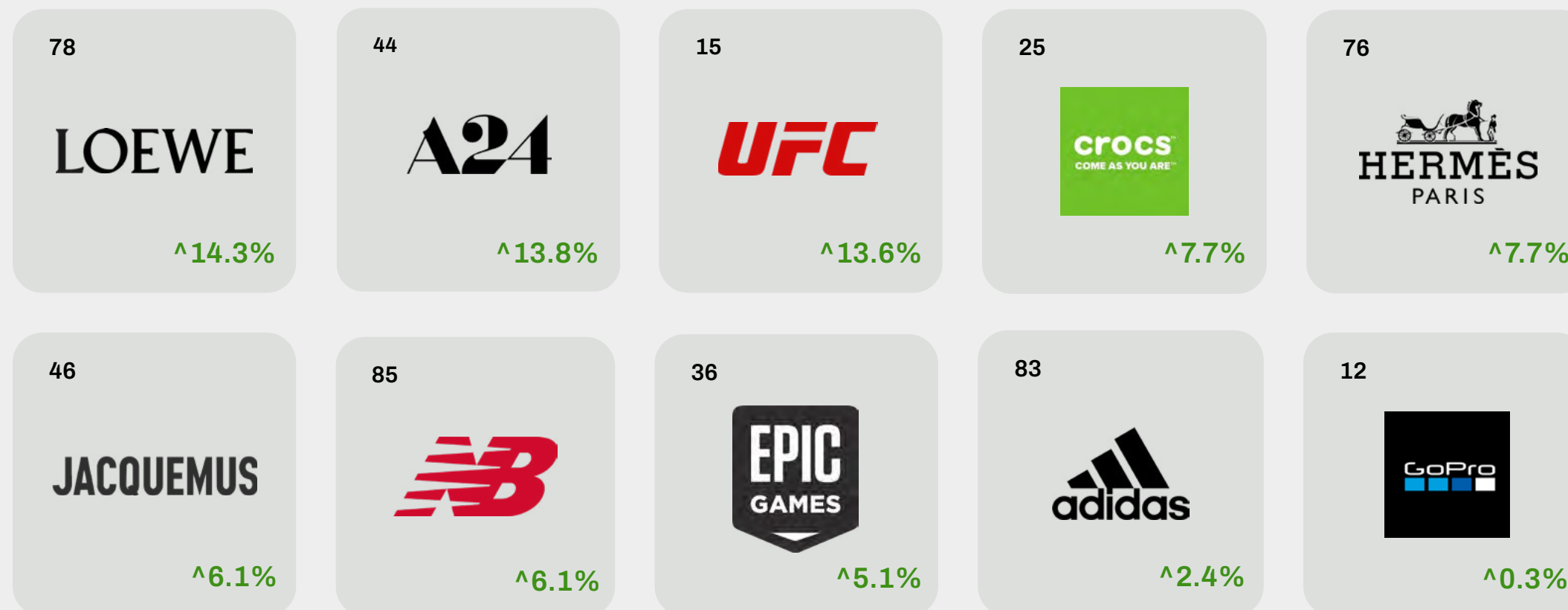
Our Analysis

Small
World

Tracksuit

Some brands in our list are on the come up. They're sleeping giants, growing fast, with cult-like followings on social and beyond.

These brands have shown the strongest Entertainment Growth, a metric that tracks significant increases in audience size and engagement. Additionally, these same brands tend to show engagement efficiencies, basically where brands have large engagement rates relative to their audience size, a metric that trumps reach in an entertainment first world.





THE FUTURE

There were plenty of things we wanted to include in this report that felt edgy. By that we mean they were on the edge of being relevant right now, but felt more like things to file away for the future.

Here are some things we'll keep our eye on, as it pertains to brands' ability to entertain out in the world. First, the continuing death spiral of social media platforms at the hands of our new tech oligarchs, as well as the rise of Dark Social and Cosy Social through platforms like Discord, WhatsApp, Bluesky and Substack.

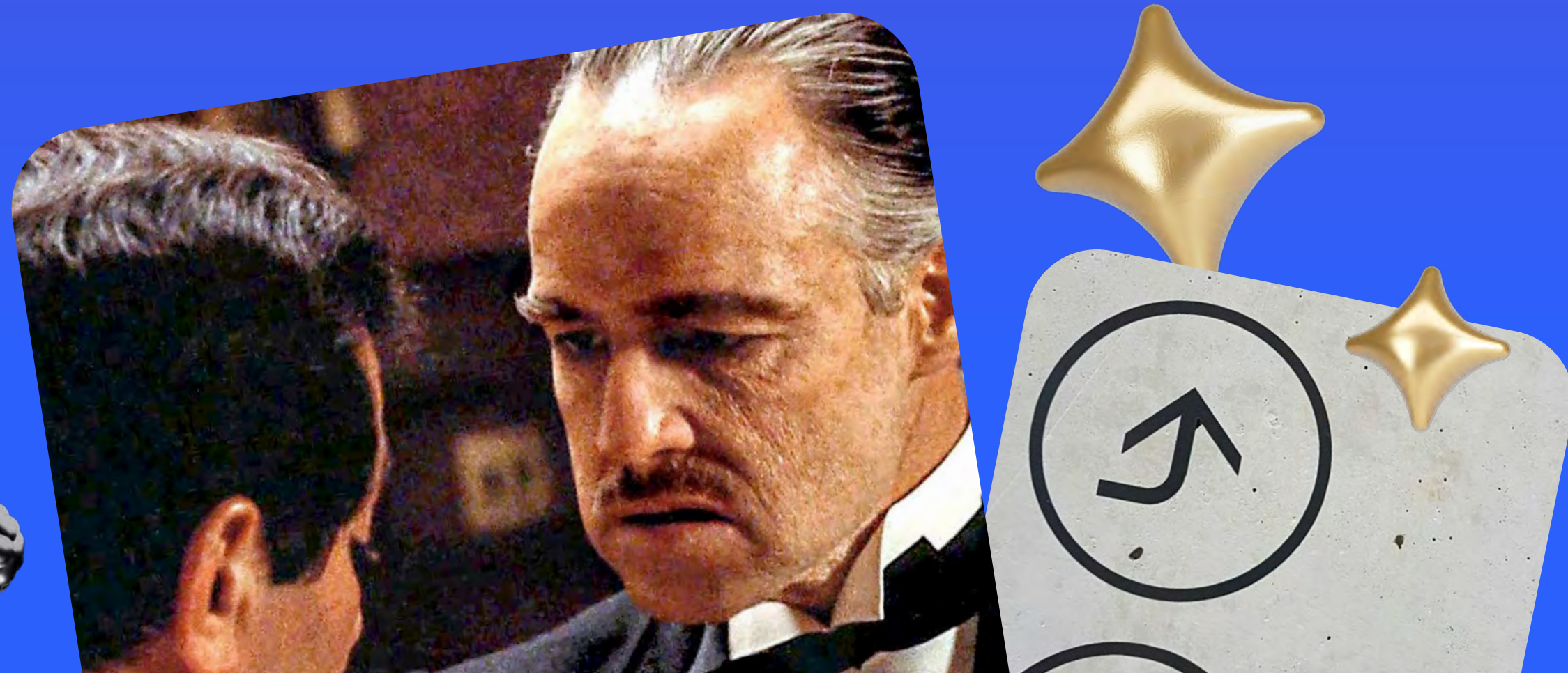
Second, we'll be looking at how combining influence across channels becomes more important than paid mass reach on one channel, something [Felip Thomaz of the Oxford Saïd Business School](#) and Grace Kite, with her [Lots of Littles](#) theory, talk about eloquently. Lastly, we'll chart how brand lore, storytelling and content will change post 'Mr Beastification', something even [Sir Beast himself recognises](#).

Overall, we'll be tracking how all of our brands get on as well as adding new brands to the entertainment pantheon. Whatever the future holds, we'll be watching through our crystal ball.

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

If you got this far, it means you either skipped straight to the end (in which case 🙌) or you were thoroughly intrigued, engaged and ultimately, entertained.

So let us tell you who we are and what's next. 📌



our offer



We're Small W•rld; we build entertainment-first brands by working with teams of industry un-standard talent curated bespoke for every brief, sometimes that's in-house, most of the time, they're run by us. But you probably guessed that already. We work with brands like **Duolingo**, **adidas**, **Oatly** and **Dr Squatch**.

Tracksuit

We're Tracksuit; we deliver beautiful, radically affordable, always-on brand tracking. We've democratized brand health measurement with enterprise-level robustness at a fraction of the cost, and we make it easy to measure and communicate the value of brand.

Together, we care about inspiring the next wave of entertainment first brand builders and, either directly through projects or indirectly through our research, helping brands like yours grow.

If you're a person working at a brand that felt entertained by this but unsure how to take the next step to become the newest member of the 100, we have an offer you can't refuse **spoken in mob boss**.

For a select 10 brands, we're offering a chance to be ranked on the index and audit your current marketing approach. We'll give your team a deck of 5 action points to make your brand more entertaining today. Adidas, Innocent and Canva have already obliged.

Just send an email with the subject **ENTERTAIN ME** to hello@meetsmallworld.com to start the application.



UNDERSTANDING THE METHODOLOGIES



Entertainment Index (EI)

The EI provides a comprehensive framework for measuring a brand's entertainment value through two main components:

Primary Factors (75%):

- Creativity (35%): Measures originality in content creation and innovation
- Emotional Impact (20%): Evaluates depth of audience connection
- Distinctive Quality (20%): Assesses unique brand presence in entertainment

Secondary Factors (25%):

- Relatable Content (15%): Measures audience connection and accessibility
- Positive Sentiment (5%): Evaluates audience perception
- Engagement (5%): Measures active participation

We analyzed social media conversations at scale and surveyed 20,000 respondents to create an aggregate entertainment score.

Our analysis includes sentiment analysis, engagement rates, audience growth, and thematic keyword analysis, which directly link to entertainment effectiveness.

We also examined brand health metrics and the strength of the association of entertainment-related attributes, assessing which brands truly entertain, engage, and grow.

Entertainment Growth Rate

To determine the set of 'brands to watch' within our index, we evaluated each brand based on its ability to drive significant increases in total followers or engagement.

Legacy Weight Factor (LWF)

To provide additional context and normalize for the inherent advantages that established brands possess, we've developed the Legacy Weight Factor methodology. The LWF recognizes that legacy brands benefit from decades of sustained marketing investment, cultural embedding, and distribution advantages that can artificially inflate their entertainment impact scores.

The LWF is calculated through 3 components:

1. **Brand Age and Establishment:** Core tier assignment based on years in operation
2. **Category Saturation:** Adjustment for competitive dynamics in mature versus emerging sectors
3. **Cultural Significance:** Special consideration for brands with unique cultural impact

By applying this calibrated weighting system ($LWF = \text{Base LWF} + \text{Category Saturation Adjustment}$), we create a more balanced assessment that acknowledges both established players' achievements and emerging disruptors' innovations. The adjusted EI ($\text{Original EI} \div LWF$) enables more meaningful comparison across brands of varying ages and market positions.

