

ENTERTAIN OR DIE



•Small World

► How brands win in the entertainment era

Analogue

In a world where established businesses hold all the power due to bottomless pits of paid media spend and the unfair advantage of big brand effects, there's a class of brands that have developed a playbook to compete based around creativity, innovation and entertainment.

These Entertainment Brands blur the lines between business and culture – planting themselves in people's hearts and minds.

For these brands, entertainment is a way of earning share of voice and the right to grow.

But just what makes these Entertainment Brands so endlessly entertaining? And how can you replicate their attention stealing success for your brand?

To answer these questions, we analysed the brand landscape and along the way, we uncovered eight archetypes: the '8 Entertainers'.

We then crunched the numbers in research and proved how their mastery of mixed earned media – what we call Entertainment Media – is the major factor in helping them compete for share of voice with their goliath competitors.

Each Entertainer has a different strategy and set of tactics, but they all understand one thing.



In a world of big brands, it's either entertain or die.



Why the stage is set for Entertainment Brands.

Before we explore the 8 Entertainers, let's look at why the state of the world has offered them this ultimatum and opportunity:



TV Tyranny

Historically, the law of excess share of voice (ESOV) allowed big brands with bigger budgets to spend their way to a greater share of the market. Challenger brands were eternally trying to play catchup. The effect has been amplified by TV costs more than doubling over the last 10 years.

The rise in costs has caused a move away from traditional brand-building channels like TV. A strong understanding of the new media landscape has helped challengers build strong brands fast. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok are more democratic compared to TV. That's because there is really only one rule online: creativity wins.

Purpose Fatigue

Over the last decade, 'Purpose Preachers' have bored us to death claiming brands will save the world. We've finally reached peak purpose fatigue.

[A GfK study](#) on purpose-driven advertising revealed purpose ads were falling short. The data showed 74% of mainstream ads retained audience attention vs. 65% of purposeful ads. These ineffective ads were the very same ones that gained industry plaudits at Cannes. Turns out Chipotle's ads (and Burritos') can change the world but they can't make me buy a Burrito. GfK concluded that brands need to focus on 'me', the consumer, first and 'we', the planet, second.

Purpose alone is not enough. It never was.



Awarding Authenticity

In the 2000s, we had Reality TV. In the 2010s, the rise of the 'influencer'. Could the 2020s be the age of real authenticity? BeReal and TikTok are signs of our yearning for authenticity with platforms that prioritise unpolished content.

Normal people are the celebrities of today. Take Khaby Lame – a factory worker turned internet sensation. He has amassed the largest TikTok following in the world with 155.8M followers and 2.3B likes. There isn't anything special about his content – it may well be the lack of veneer that makes it feel special. He's relatable, charming and doesn't take life seriously. It's a far cry from the manufactured drama we called reality in the 2000s. We're finally awarding authenticity.

Democratising Blockbuster Content

Where we watch, how we watch and what we think about media have changed over the last decade. The relationship has never been more blurred. In 2020, [more than 100 million people in the US](#) were watching YouTube on their TV screens. During the Oscars in 2021, streaming platforms went toe-to-toe with movie studios, securing 9 Oscar wins. In 2022, Gen Z was spending [57 minutes a day on TikTok](#), capturing 4 minutes more of their attention a day than TV screens.

So anyone can now produce blockbuster entertainment and people are lapping it up anywhere they can. It's an exciting time for brands that recognise the trend. Brands from Nike, to Airbnb and Sephora have all invested in documentary filmmaking. They even have their very own category at the Sundance Film Festival.

All this change creates an exciting setting for brands who want to bend the rules of traditional advertising and media.



With this landscape in mind, let's introduce you to The Entertainers...

Introducing The Entertainers



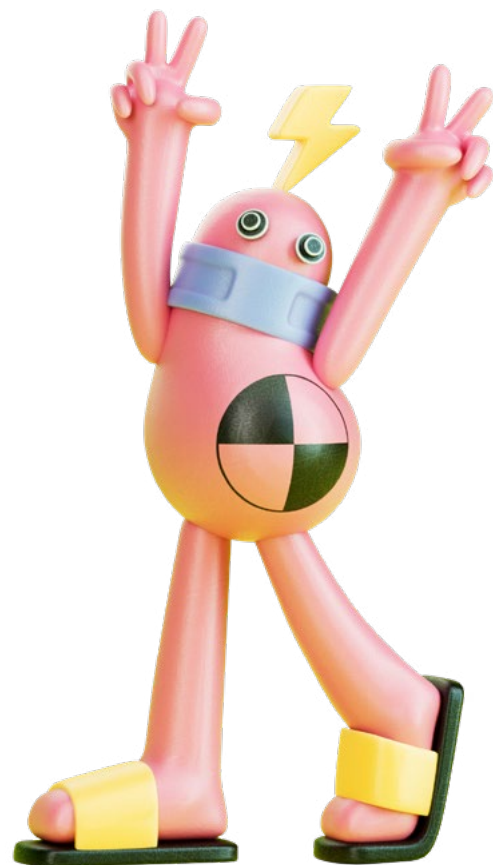
Script
Writer



Celebrity
CEO



Collaborative
Chameleon



Whiplasher



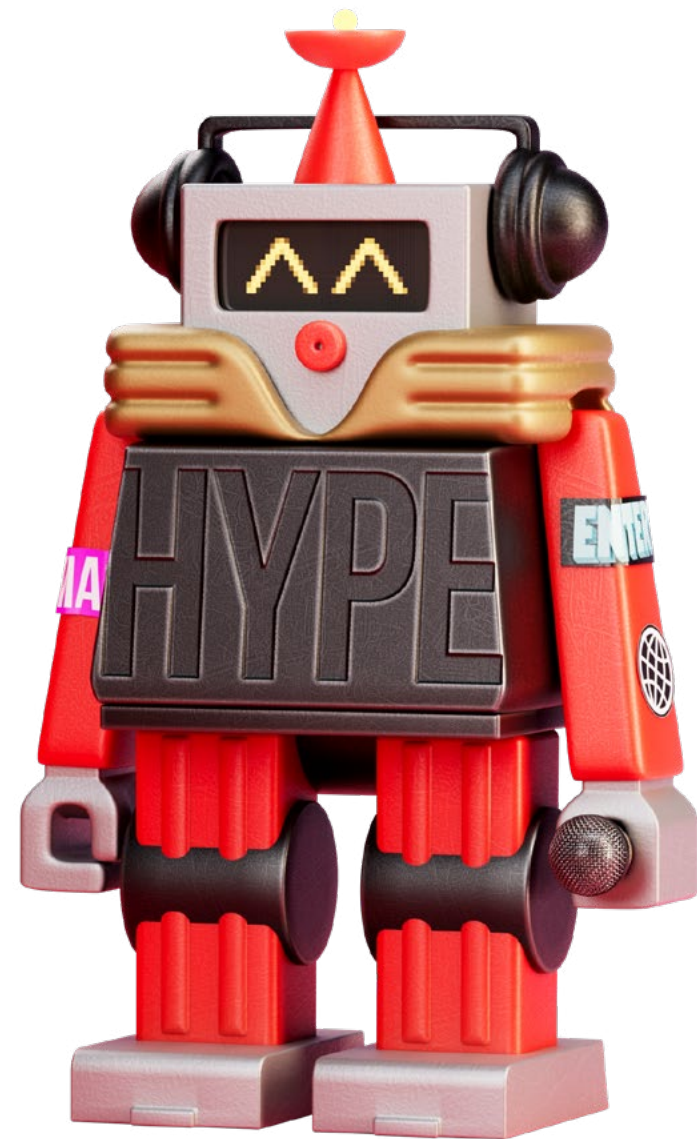
Purpose
Punk



People's
Play-Doh



Newsjacker



Hype
Machine





Entertainer N° 01

SCRIPT WRITER

The Scriptwriter knows their product is not the most entertaining thing about their brand. The number of truly innovative products released in the last two decades can be counted on two hands. For consumer packaged goods, make that one hand. To shift their products, Scriptwriters build a brand world that people identify with. People then buy into the product as a way of owning that identity.

SNL for brands

The name here refers to the creative approach to brand building. Treating the marketing war room much like the writer's room on a long-running sketch show.

Liquid Death are the masters of this strategy. [Andy Pearson, their VP of Marketing, wants people to](#) "think of Liquid Death as a character in a TV show. He views their creative process as "more like a TV writer's room, where we talk about what would Liquid Death do?" the whole team "living the storyline and living the characters."

Founder [Mike Cessario takes the idea further, asking](#): "Even though this might be a commercial, could it legitimately find its way onto "Saturday Night Live?"

Liquid Death understands the opportunities for marketing to connect with culture. Then they bring in the right partners to help tell their brand story.

Mascot mania

Some brands choose to not only imagine their brand as a character but embody it in a brand mascot. Now, mascots are by no means new. Marketers have been using them to drive brand awareness for decades. In fact, they're [18% more likely](#) than celebrities or sports stars to do so.

Brands like Duolingo and Top of the Mornin' (a °Small World client) have given newfound agency to brand mascots. No longer are they brand assets forced to smile and wave from the front of packaging. They are living, breathing characters that people engage with.

Duolingo, with their bright green owl Duo, had a similar success story to Liquid Death, only with their virality supercharged by TikTok. Zaria Parvez, Global Social Media Manager for the brand, recalled staring at the garish mascot suit next to her desk. She was thinking: "How could we make it relatable to ordinary people but also make it super funny?"

Duo was known in pop culture for being pushy, pressing people to keep up their language streaks. Her team decided to take that to the next level. The owl started popping up around the office and across the internet in increasingly absurd ways.

Much like with Liquid Death's SNL analogy, Duo's success is down to the speed of cultural commentary. Using TikTok as his stage, Duo has sung Adele, confessed love for Dua Lipa and popped up to commiserate over Taylor Swift's latest breakup. Seeing a brand comment on things happening in real-time feels entertaining. And the numbers speak for themselves. A simple search on TikTok for #DuolingoBird brings up videos with more than 9.8 million views.

Brand vibes

Finally, we've seen a small subset of Scriptwriter brands that take the idea one step further. Rather than writing to a single character or set of characters they adopt a 'vibe' (language, visual identity, themes) of a particular genre or era.

Vacation, a sunscreen brand, does this – immersing people in their brand. They started as a vibey 80s nostalgia project called Poolside FM. [Marty Bell, co-founder of Vacation, describes their brand world as](#) "like the TV show 'The Office', crossed with Jimmy Buffet".

Vacation try everything, from vintage Club Med style advertising to a campaign giving people fake 80s corporate job roles. Again, the Scriptwriter entertains by building a clear brand world and identity, imbuing it in every part of their business, even product. Vacation's mission to make sunscreen nostalgically fun has led to Willy Wonka esque product innovations like their famous whipped cream sunscreen mousse.

'The name here refers to the creative approach to brand building. Treating the marketing war room much like the writer's room on a long-running sketch show.'

CONCLUSION

The Scriptwriter is one of our favourite strategies because there are so many creative routes in it and it has such depth. That depth makes it harder to codify and imitate. All these brands admit they've built marketing teams that are hard to scale with outside support. But in terms of pure entertainment value, these are the brands that are winning week by week. So how can you write your way into the winner's circle?

The tactic in a sentence:

Build a brand universe people want to follow, regardless of the product.

How does it entertain?

Makes people feel as though they relate to the brand as they would a character in a sketch show, cartoon or TV series.

Why is it entertaining?

These brands have placed serious focus on creativity. The results rival HBO for entertainment value.

sources

[IHALC - Liquid Death ↗](#)
[Marketplace - Liquid Death ↗](#)
[Business Insider - Mascots ↗](#)
[Glossy - Vacation ↗](#)



SCRIPTWRITER CASE STUDY: VACATION

Brand Explainer

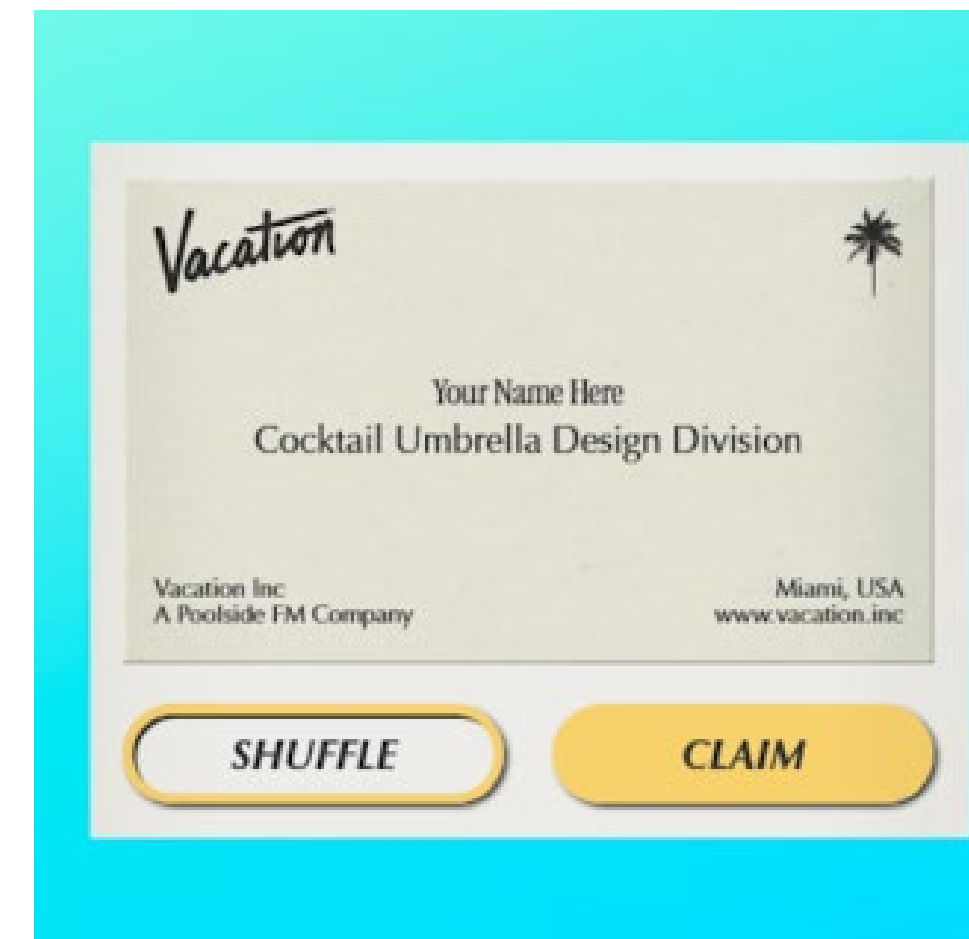
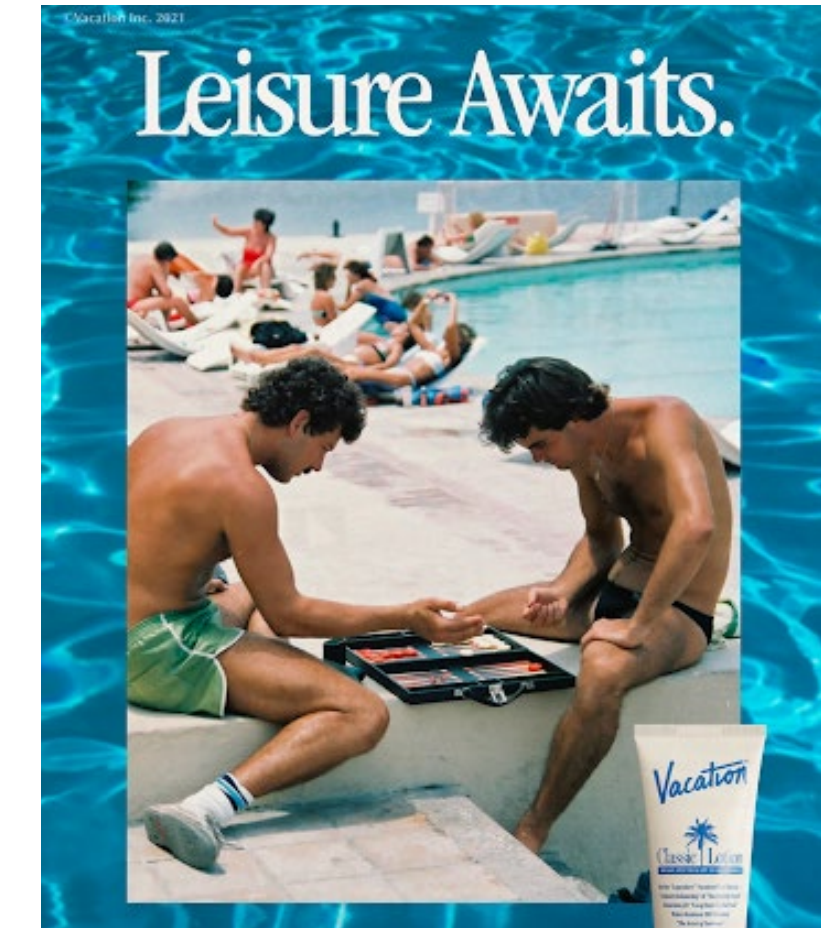
Vacation is the sunscreen that takes leisure as seriously as it takes protection. The best in modern skincare science meet a sensorial 80s experience scientifically designed to take people to paradise. Excessively good leisure-enhancing sunscreen for those who take their leisure seriously.

Lach Hall, Founding Partner & Executive Chair Marketing;

“Our personalities were the Buena Vida (good life). We’ve always lived in this bizarre Reagan-istic 80s world. We had the idea for the brand world before we even knew what product would fit.”

“[On nostalgia] It wasn’t about hopping on a trend. I was about making sunscreen more fun. Sunscreen marketing used to be a lot more fun when it was all about tanning, then when we learnt about the dangers it shifted. Now everyone is overly educated about protection we can bring that fun back.”

“Tone wise the whole character is based on the spirit of the 80s corporate salesman. Visually it’s about transporting people to a vacation state of mind.”



OTHER
SCRIPTWRITER
BRANDS:



Entertainer N° 02

CELEBRITY CEO

The Celebrity CEO is one of the most entertaining strategies a 21st century brand can adopt. These brands are either founded by celebrities or turn their founders into celebrities. They build high levels of trust with their audience through radical candour. The concept isn't new but the way brands are executing on it feels fresh.



Unfair creative

When it comes to brand building, quality creative and category-wide reach is the winning formula. That's why the Celebrity CEO has an unfair advantage. Their followings allow them to achieve large viral reach with little to no paid media, instead investing budget in stand-out creative with the CEO at the heart of it.

Feastables – Mr Beast's chocolate brand – launched purely through organic and earned channels. That saved media spend let him pour cash into replicating Willy Wonka, giving away a chocolate factory and \$1M in prizes.

The same was true of his Beast Burger launch. He launched a video which paid fans to eat his burgers, a cash giveaway drive-through. [The video has 154M views](#). Remember Saturday Night Live (SNL) which we mentioned earlier? It only averages 1.9M viewers per episode. By building a digital media empire of 100M+ subscribers, Mr Beast has shown a new blueprint for brand building.

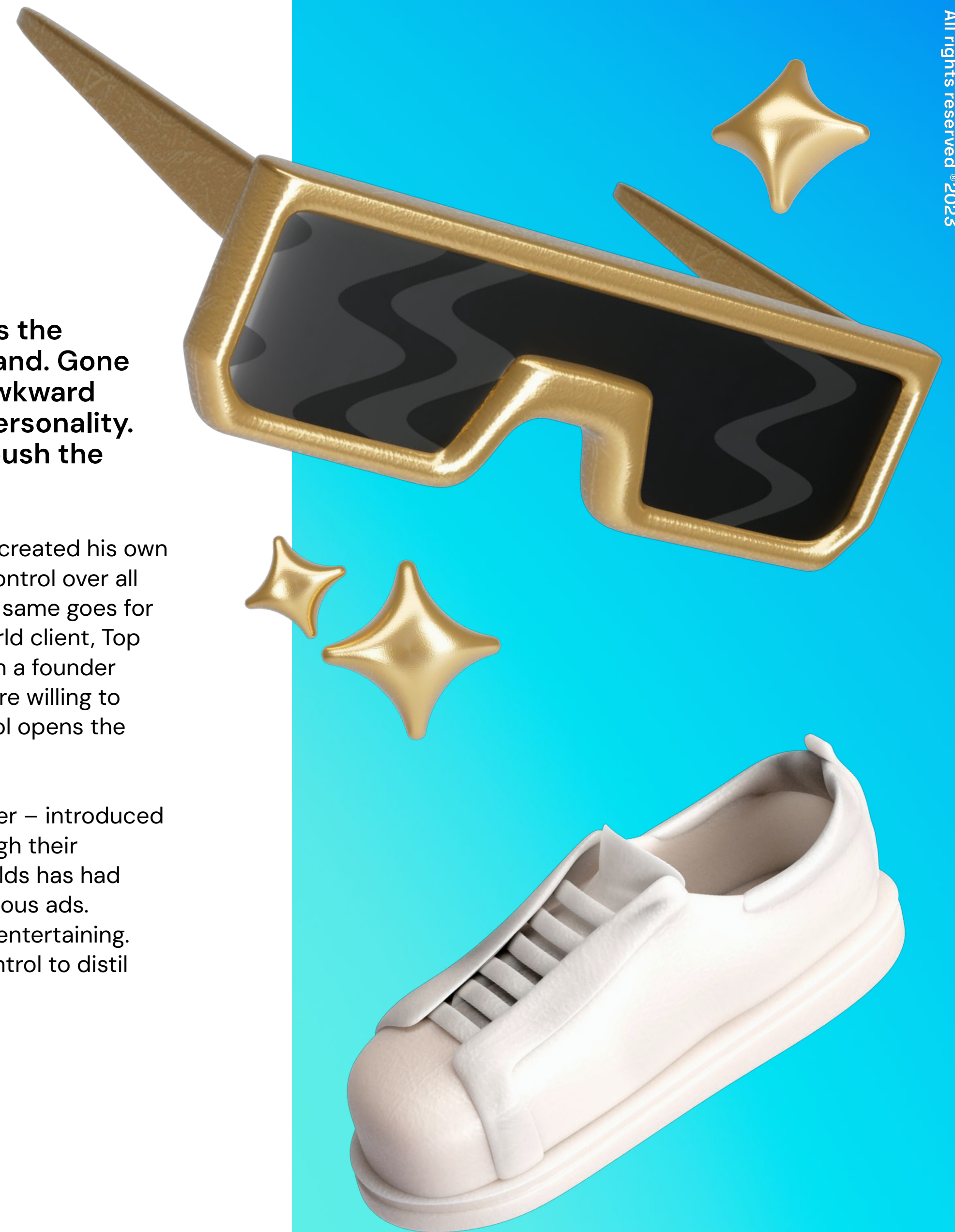


Creative control

Another benefit of the Celebrity CEO is the creative control they have over the brand. Gone are the days of talent forced into an awkward script by brands that don't get their personality. Now the talent is the brand and they push the boat out beyond belief.

Ryan Reynolds epitomises this trend. He literally created his own ad agency, Maximum Effort, to ensure creative control over all his brands, from Aviation Gin to Mint Mobile. The same goes for JackSepticEye the founder of another °Small World client, Top of the Mornin' Coffee. Never have we worked with a founder more entrenched in the creative process... or more willing to bathe in beans to sell coffee. This creative control opens the door to other big-reach, high-profile celebrities.

The Nelk Boys – owners of Happy Dad hard seltzer – introduced the product to Elon Musk and Post Malone through their branded Full Send Podcast. Similarly, Ryan Reynolds has had Hugh Jackman and Nick Cannon play ball in hilarious ads. Celebrity CEOs' audiences find them personally entertaining. The CEOs therefore demand greater creative control to distil themselves into their brands.



Selling themselves

Celebrity CEO brands and products become extensions of their lifestyle. Just as someone might buy a Louis Vuitton bag to feel part of that world, people buy into a Celebrity CEO brand to feel closer to them. The difference is the impact is much stronger than with traditional consumer brands. People have followed the trials, tribulations and jubilations of a real person.

Happy Dad is a great example. John Shahidi, the brand's President [sums it up well](#): "Nelk has Happy Dad because it's on brand for them. If they came up with a chocolate chip cookie, it would do all right but it wouldn't crush it because it wouldn't be on brand."

Mr Beast has a clever way of harnessing this new form of social status in his marketing. When launching Feastables, you needed to find a golden ticket in his chocolate for the chance to win his chocolate factory. The real prize though? A chance to be in one of his videos, the ultimate bragging right and the best way to live the Mr Beast lifestyle. Celebrity CEOs create brands that bring fans closer to their lifestyle in a way that builds deeper brand loyalty.



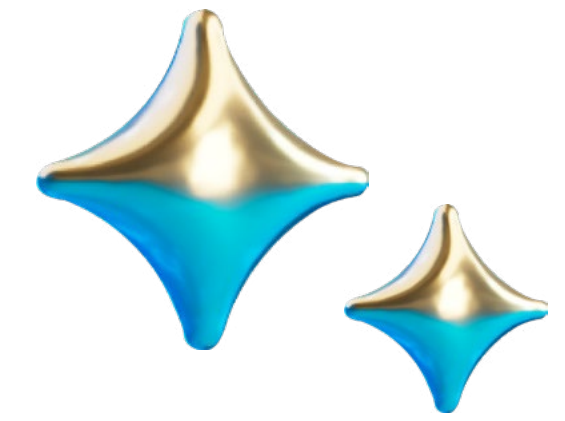
Brutally authentic

What makes many Celebrity CEOs so entertaining and endearing is their brutal authenticity. They allow the world to see the good, the bad and the ugly. This radical candour stands in stark contrast to the corporate veneer of many brands.

A lot of the brands mentioned so far are led by big-reach creators. People who built a name for themselves, then launched a brand. But the Celebrity CEO is also a tactic you can use from scratch to grow the popularity of the brand faster.

Mid-Day Squares are essentially a functional chocolate business. Their marketing transports the brand far from 'functional'. As Co-Founder and company rainmaker [Jake Karls puts it](#) "our strategy was to share the good, the bad and the ugly. From day one, we started documenting the whole journey. The fights, the therapy sessions, the crazy successes. Consumers become empathetic. You start building a fan base rather than a customer base."

This radical candour helped sell 1 million bars in the last 20 months. But the effect is broader. Raising their profile by building in public helped them raise cash. The brand founded in 2018 has generated \$21M of funding to date. Many investors came about from 'fan' introductions. So, authenticity not only entertains, it builds empathy with people. And those people may become fans first and customers second.



'Celebrity CEO brands and products become extensions of their lifestyle. Just as someone might buy a Louis Vuitton bag to feel part of that world, people buy into a celebrity CEO brand to feel closer to them.'

CONCLUSION

The Celebrity CEO's tactics require the right personality and heavy time investment. But leaders don't always have to be total naturals. Sometimes, growing into the role – as two-thirds of the Mid-Day Squares team have – is even more powerful. And any sacrifice will likely be paid back tenfold through the deep connection with audiences.

The tactic in a sentence:

Get people to connect with our brand by using our founder(s) as a conduit for our personality.

How does it entertain?

People feel as though they have a relationship with the CEO, and by extension, the brand.

Why is it entertaining?

Traditional organisations feel inauthentic, people enjoy honesty and transparency.

sources

[Mr Beast – Cash Drive-through ↗](#)
[Forbes – Nelk Boys ↗](#)
[SKU – Mid-Day Squares ↗](#)



CELEBRITY CEO CASE STUDY: MID-DAY SQUARES

Brand Explainer

Mid-Day Squares is the protein packed functional chocolate bar putting the sword to Hershey's with a brand that's anything but functional. Their marketing mixes reality TV with entrepreneurship, which makes following the founders an underdog story for the ages.

Jake Karls, Rainmaker & CEO;

"We borrow the best of reality TV and apply it to building a brand. Basically showing everything; good, bad and ugly. If we do this people will be entertained, feel connected and purchase the product. They'll go to war for us."

"Our editing team will look at our schedules and isolate big moments like a legal battle and they'll build a narrative around that. Just like a documentary team they're rolling 24/7, capturing A and B roll."

"The thesis is to show how we went from 0 to 100M and from 100M to 1BN. As we scale as a business so does the reach of the content. We go from social to broadcast. We build a global presence. We 'celebrate' the brand."



OTHER CELEB
CEO BRANDS:

mintmobile

HARD
Happy Dad
SELTZER

feastables™

Entertainer N° 03

COLLABORATIVE CHAMELEON

Collaborative Chameleons recognise they are stronger with others by their side. They form unexpected partnerships to create maximum buzz. Partnerships with brands, cultural institutions, influential people – even their own fans. They ask: “If we lent our brand to this partner, what’s the most exciting thing they’d make?”

Most brands approach partnerships predictably due to fears of brand safety. Collaborative Chameleons throw caution to the wind in order to create something totally new.



'Collaborative Chameleons are cooperative but always set the right foundation for partnership. They root the partnership in their brand, usually by starting with one of their key brand assets.'



Rooted in the brand

This could be a silhouette, a logo or another piece of iconic intellectual property.

Crocs are the masters of this approach. They see their clog silhouette as the perfect blank canvas and the key starting point for any collaboration. Thanks to Crocs the clog went from ugly boat shoes to a known commodity in luxury fashion. It was part of a strategy to turn the clog from a functional shoe that you need to a fashionable shoe that you want.



Sometimes the choice to lend their key brand assets isn't their own but it's the way in which they react that captures attention.

In 2015, Canadian snowboarder Trevor Andrew, (Gucci Ghost) was using Gucci's double G monogram in his graffiti-style art. Gucci recognised that the work was rooted in their brand. Rather than sue, they launched an exclusive clothing collection with the artist. By borrowing from culture to excite fans, Gucci was a big winner.

Creative freedom

What makes Collaborative Chameleons so exciting? The ability to transform by shrouding itself in its environment. Brands are exactly the same. For instance, Crocs' mantra is 'Come As You Are'. This platform gives collaborators creative freedom to reimagine their brand. From Balenciaga creating pink sky-high platforms to KFC creating the first [chicken-scented clogs](#).

Liquid Death does something similar when choosing what creators to work with. They hand over the Liquid Death can to an eclectic cast of creators – skydivers, adult entertainers, VR artists, and necromancers, the list goes on. These creators do as they please with the aim of authentically going viral on social media.

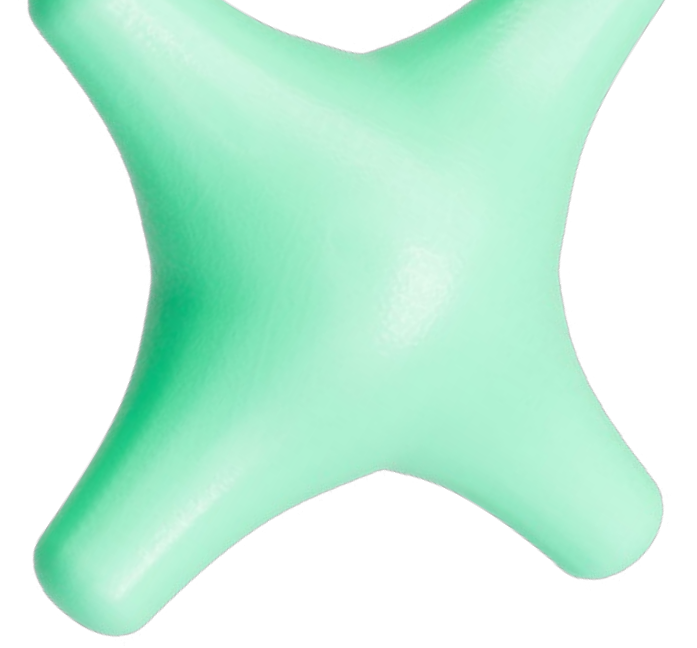
Look far and wide

Collaborative Chameleons look way beyond their category to create unexpected partnerships. This maximises entertainment value. Liquid Death's influencer strategy is a good example. Health, wellness or sport would have been the logical starting point. Instead, they did the opposite.

Oatly, in similar fashion, works with oat milk sceptics like wrestlers and dairy country farmers for their [Will It Swap](#) series. And who could forget PrimarkXGreggs taking the high street by storm? The lesson is clear – always look beyond the obvious.

Innovation as a marketing tactic

A Collaborative Chameleon's last tactic is to wrap innovation into their marketing campaigns. This can add an even bigger dose of surprise. Collaborations can be exciting because the product is innovative – e.g. Crocs' fried chicken-smelling clogs and Liquid Death's absurd merch drops. But they can also be exciting because of the way it's delivered, e.g. Crocs' claw machine giveaway for their Justin Bieber collab. They don't just give fans what they want, they deliver it in unexpected ways.



'What makes Collaborative Chameleons so exciting?

The ability to transform by shrouding itself in its environment.

For instance, Crocs' mantra is 'Come As You Are'. This platform gives collaborators creative freedom to reimagine their brand.'



CONCLUSION

The Collaborative Chameleon is often a brand that has high awareness but lacks relevance on its own. They understand that to entertain people they must take what makes them or their product distinct and recognisable, merging it with culture to build relevance.

The tactic in a sentence:

Surprise people by lending key brand assets to unexpected allies within adjacent cultures.

How does it entertain?

They always keep people on their toes, wondering what might come next.

Why is it entertaining?

Our lives are saturated with brands but genuinely creative partnerships are rare. So when we see them, it's exciting.

sources

[Highsnobiety – Gucci Ghost ↗](#)

[Crocs – KFC Clogs ↗](#)

[Oatly – Will It Swap ↗](#)

[Notion – Crocs Claw Machine ↗](#)



Entertainer N° 04

WHIP- LASHER

Whiplasher's entertain by making us double-take. They are visual attention seekers. They use their packaging to stand out on social media and on shelves. Instead of focusing on what they say or even how they say it, this brand is all about looks. They trade in awe and amazement, often turning entire categories on their heads.





Provocative packaging equals provocative marketing

Engine is an Italian gin brand inviting people to rethink everything they know about gin; gin should be sipped not slurped, poured from a bottle not a can, drunk in a glass not a cup, all ingredients, no personality. 'No thanks' says Paolo Dalla Mora, ex-CMO of Moschino and founder of Engine – a gin brand making waves.

Mora wanted to create something unexpected. Something capable of distorting the typecast concept of gin. He decided to sell Engine Gin in motor oil tins. It radically contrasts a gin aesthetic, which is becoming increasingly limpid. Engine's disruptive aesthetic celebrates motorsport and the cult myths of the 1980s. Shifting the occasion associated with gin to fashion parties or nights out clubbing. The tin also gives Engine a licence to collaborate closely with motorsports – another Italian passion.

Rebels with a cause

Engine didn't create provocative packaging for the sake of it. The brand strategy is considered and intentional. This approach invites people to reappraise outdated, underloved or underserved categories. Through design, consumers may see the category in a whole new light.

Starface is an acne patch brand that also does this well. They challenge the joylessness of spots or acne with fun star-shaped stickers. Somehow, they've transformed breakouts into an opportunity for self-expression. Partnering with fashion-forward influencers has helped turn the stickers into badges of honour. As a result, the brand now feels more like a movement than a product.



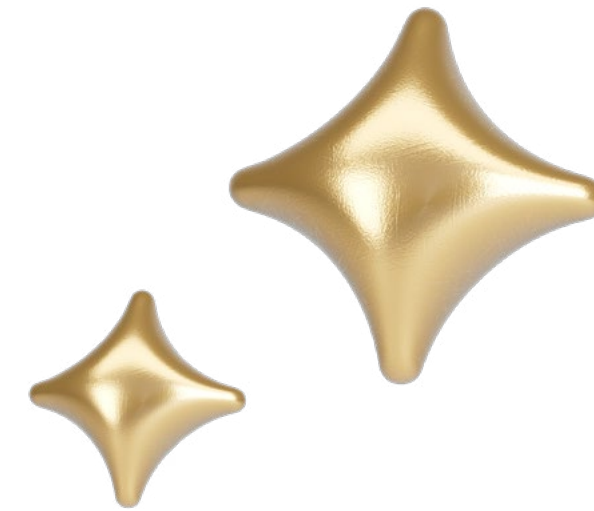
Press over paid

In the early stages of brand building, you don't have the luxury of time or money. You have to tactically choose where to place your chips. Whiplashers choose to invest in design – from packaging to retail environments. Their attention to detail and love of creativity earn them valuable kudos from the cultural intelligentsia, the press being eager to be the first to experience the brand (and tell the world about it afterwards).

Take Superette for example, the Canadian Cannabis dispensary that delivers a retail experience like no other with stores modelled to look like neighbourhood bodegas and Italian delis. "It's impossible to over emphasise the amount of attention to detail that goes into each space. From the grout to the corner of a visual merchandising display every element was painstakingly looked after to make sure people get an experience that is playful, interactive and shareable." says Mimi Lam, Superette's Founder, told °Small World.

The benefit of investing in brand and design is the earned PR and social you receive back. Commentators, fans and followers have taken on the role of marketers.

'In the early stages of brand building, you don't have the luxury of time or money. You have to tactically choose where to place your chips'



CONCLUSION

The art of the Whiplasher is taking one category and presenting it as something else. The result: creating a hunger in the curious amongst us to be the first to try it out. The beauty is not in the product, but in the statement you make on behalf of the brand. By wearing, drinking or using Whiplash products you become a Whiplasher yourself. Someone who enjoys turning heads as you walk down the high street. That's the power of positioning....

The tactic in a sentence:

Get people to look twice by using your packaging and brand to change the way people think about your product, service and category.

How does it entertain?

By jolting your neurological pathways and inviting innovators and early adopters along for the ride.

Why is it entertaining?

Mature categories often feel stale, Whiplashers bring creative excellence to the table.



WHIPLASHER CASE STUDY: SUPERETTE

Brand Explainer

Superette is the Canadian cannabis retailer that takes its name from the French word for mini supermarket. All of the brand's supermarket themed stores turn heads by subverting the traditionally clinical experience of buying cannabis from a dispensary.

Mimi Lam, Founder;

"We leveraged the credibility of institutions like delis and bodegas to remove the stigma from cannabis. We leaned into a nostalgic retail environment and it's given us a ton of creative freedom versus copy-and-paste competitors like MedMen."

"A lot of the stores you wouldn't know are cannabis dispensaries. People will walk in wondering what they are. It brings discoverability to cannabis and brings people into the conversation."

"People in retail talk about the 'Instagrammable' moment but why limit ourselves to just one? We believe our entire stores should be 'Instagrammable'. We wanted every corner of the store to be beautiful enough to be shared."



OTHER
WHIPLASHER
BRANDS:



STARFACE hismile



Entertainer N° 05

PURPOSE PUNK

The Purpose Punk is primed to punch purpose fatigue square in the jaw. These brands recognise, perhaps sadly, that purpose alone won't punctuate the sheer mass of brand communications out in the world. However, their purpose matched with personality is a lethal combination which can inspire rather than enforce activism.



This was the moment in time at which we hit peak purpose mania. Every business from dishwashing tablets to insect repellent needed to have a 'purpose' or risk floundering in the new world of the conscious consumer. The reality for everyday people on the street was starkly different. Yes, when asked in focus groups [82%](#) of us say "of course, I make purchase decisions with purpose in mind – how dare you suggest otherwise". But out in the wild, particularly in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, the reality is very different.

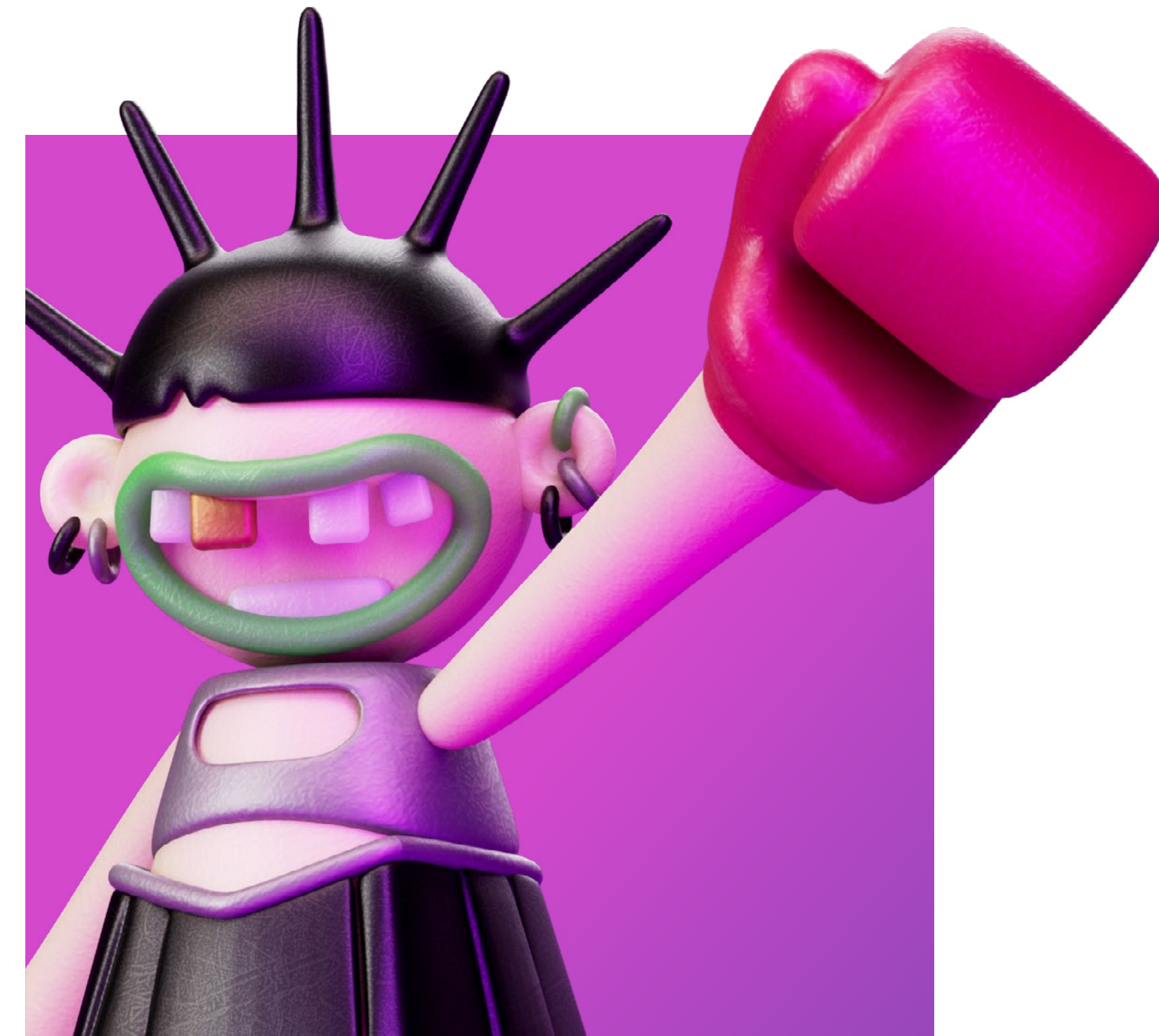
In fact, thanks to gaffes from brands like Gillette with their #metoo razor ad and Pepsi's Kendall Jenner-led debacle we've now entered purpose fatigue. We're far wariar of empty promises of purpose and utterly tired of earnest communications that brands will save the world.

In 2019 Unilever CEO Allan Jope proudly declared that "Brands with purpose grow." and that "every Unilever brand will be a brand with purpose."

Enter – the Purpose Punks – brands that entertain first in order to earn the right to communicate their purpose.

Capitalist activists

These brands combine the best of marketing with grassroots activism. Tactics like hijacking events, cities and company headquarters are those we've grown to associate with the likes of Extinction Rebellion over the years. So it's no wonder that their capitalist cousins, the Purpose Punks, would borrow some of these high-risk, high-engagement tactics to promote their businesses. Look at Back Market who took over Apple stores on Earth Day with messages about Apple's unsustainable practices. By airdropping [4000 video messages](#) onto Apple store iPhones they cleverly hacked Apple's product itself into a free media channel with a captive audience ready for their message. The difference between these brands and the activists they borrow from is that they offer direct consumer-centric solutions when they cause commotion, putting tangible power into the hands of the people.



Laugh not cry

In the words of Oscar Wilde – “if you want to tell people the truth, make them laugh, otherwise they’ll kill you.” People are sick of fear porn when it comes to purpose. Humour is a surefire way to connect with an already fatigued audience by catching them refreshingly off guard. Who Gives A Crap implored people to invest in their business not with a painfully slow guilt-tripping montage of developing countries, but by declaring that their founder would not take his ass off the toilet until they’d reached their mark. [He sat there](#) for 50 hours, we could feel the haemorrhoids.

Ocean Bottle, a °Small World client, punched through Christmas white noise by galvanising holiday shoppers with a hilariously [fed-up version of Saint Nick](#). Our Santa pulled off high-profile hilarious stunts, most notably punking Jeff Bezos at one of his Amazon warehouses. All earning the right to tell people why Ocean Bottle is the world’s most needed gift. These brands all show us that humouring not harrowing people is the way to win the day.

Deal with the devil

Just as Purpose Punks borrow from their activist cousins they also learn to deal with the devil, borrowing the best tactics of the very misbehaving market leaders they seek to challenge. That might come in the form of borrowing brand codes, distribution channels or advertising practices.

The best example of that is Tony’s Chocolonley, the chocolatier founded by a group of journalists aiming to eradicate slavery in the chocolate supply chain. From their vibrant colour palette and design cues to their Willy Wonka esque flavour combinations they don’t feel out of place next to brands like Hershey’s and Cadbury. Market leaders are just that for a reason, they’ve accumulated their wealth by building compelling brands so it makes sense to borrow what works and condemn what doesn’t.





CONCLUSION

The core tactics of the Purpose Punk are channel agnostic. Instead, they're brands that elegantly position themselves on the same side as the people, rather than patronising them with purpose-led messaging from an ivory tower, see Gillette and Chipotle. They focus on what their brand can offer the individual (me), before their own or even the planet's self-interest (we). Their personality earns them the right to communicate their purpose. Remember, however, purpose isn't for everyone, even Unilever the 'purpose pioneers' has come under fire for trying to make mayonnaise save the planet. But if your brand is purposeful make sure to give it some punch, personality and punk.

The tactic in a sentence:

Get purpose-fatigued people to buy into our cause by offering entertainment value first.

How does it entertain?

Leads with personality, making it easy and fun to do good.

Why is it entertaining?

In a world filled with fear mongering, brands that lead with levity feel refreshing.

sources

[Unilever - Purpose](#) ↗
[Razorfish x VICE Media](#) ↗
[Contagious - Back Market](#) ↗
[Who Glves A Crap - We Do!](#) ↗
[Ocean Bottle - Santa Quits](#) ↗

PURPOSE PUNK CASE STUDY: OCEAN BOTTLE



Brand Explainer

Ocean Bottle is the purpose packed reusable water bottle brand that takes 1000 plastic bottles out of the ocean for every one of theirs purchased. A proud °Small World client they communicate purpose with authenticity, personality and punch.

Vicky James, Head of Marketing

"In our comms we talk about the impact our community has funded, rather than us as a brand. We can only do our job because people have chosen to invest in our product. We're the sum of our supporters, they're not customers. We see them all as investors."

"We say 'Do Good, Look Good, Feel Good' – There's a section of people who want to be seen to be doing good as well as just doing so. By using Ocean Bottle we give them that 'me' before 'we' effect."

"Millions of people doing things imperfectly is better than a handful of people doing things perfectly. So we need to find the most impactful way to democratise sustainability, our brand is a big part of that."



OTHER PURPOSE
PUNK BRANDS:

who
gives a
crap

Back
Market

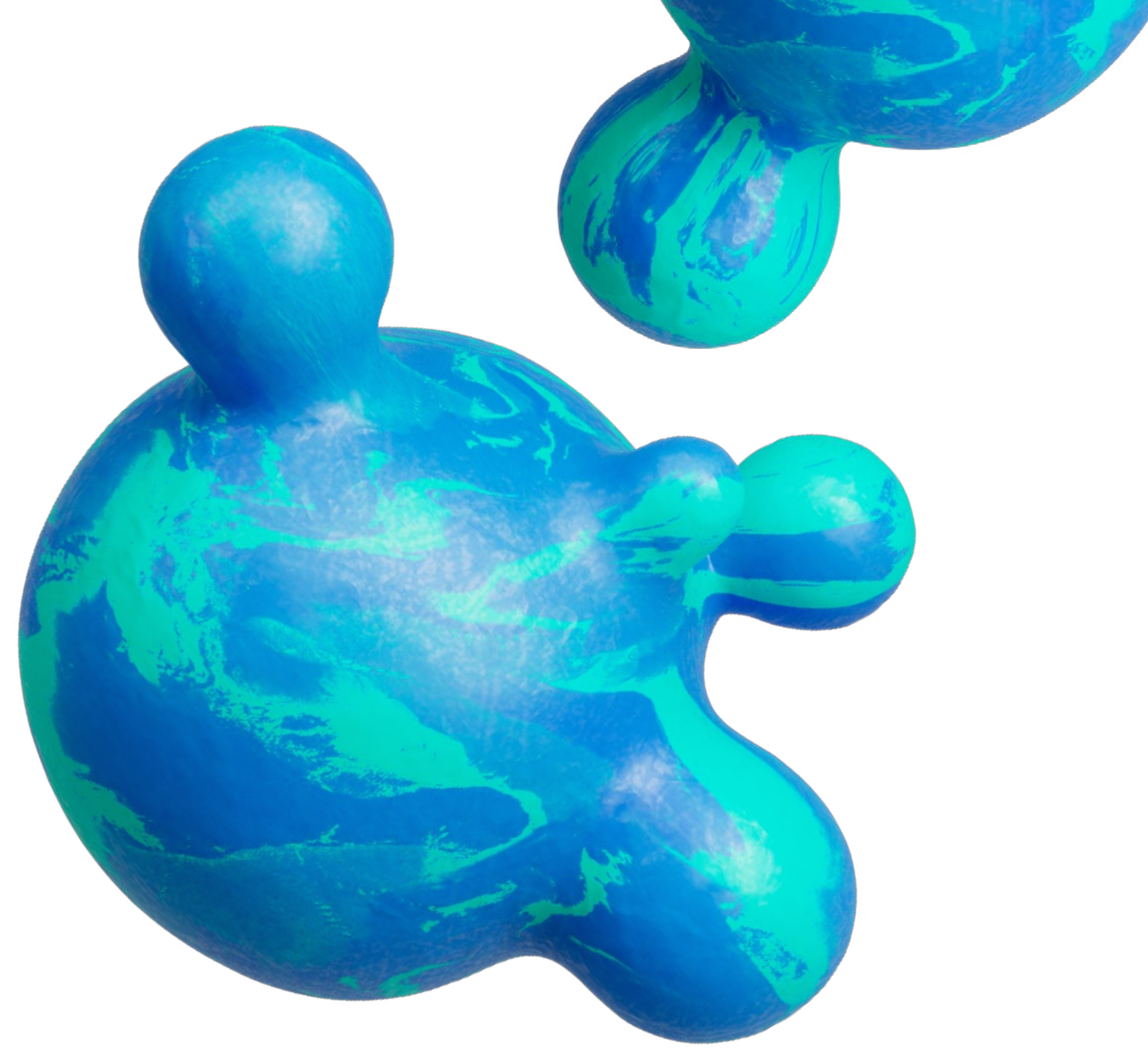


Entertainer N° 06

PEOPLE'S PLAY-DOH

People's Play-Doh brands are as malleable as they are durable. These brands live through and with their community. Instead of paying lip service, they take the concept and meaning of the community to new dimensions. Members input into everything. From product iteration to equity and strategic decision-making.





A philosophy, not a tactic

People's Play-Doh brands are more influenced by Gen-Z sensibilities than millennials. They value freedom of expression, decentralised decision making and inscrutability.

Take RTFKT for example. The [group describes themselves](#) 'as a creator-led organisation using the latest game engines, NFT, blockchain authentication and augmented reality, to create one-of-a-kind sneakers and digital artefacts'. They work with the likes of Nike, Rimowa & Atari, through community-operated 'forging events'. Within these gated communities, participation, connection and constant progress is entertaining for members. For non-members, their work feels unusual and abstract.

'People's Play-Doh brands are more influenced by Gen-Z sensibilities than millennials. They value freedom of expression, decentralised decision making and inscrutability.'

World building

Inside or outside of the metaverse, People's Play-Doh brands create niche, immersive brand worlds. These stretch across their websites, social channels, and packaging. Their work is about more than just selling a product. Individuals are part of a rich story – creating a community that feels playful, imaginative, and authentic.

Let's look at Starface again because they take this strategy to a new level. The Starface website doesn't feel like a shop. It's essentially a playground for their mascot, Big Yellow. It's entertainingly different – like going to a digital theme park for the very first time.



'Participation is a core tenet of People's Play-Doh brands. They make decisions collectively, always consulting their core users and fans first.'

Participation as mandatory

Participation is a core tenet of People's Play-Doh brands. They make decisions collectively, always consulting their core users and fans first. It isn't a thin veil of consumer consultation. They make big decisions by putting faith in the community.

Take Polkadot for example. They are a blockchain platform and cryptocurrency with their native token DOT. Blockchain DOT allows members to exchange messages and transactions without a third party.

They take the idea of participation to the stratosphere, feeling more like a newly formed nation-state than a payment platform. This is built on a decentralised, unstoppable, open governance platform, Polkadot OpenGov. Here, the Polkadot community has

full control of the network. Members use Slack or Discord to vote on everything. Last year, they asked fans to vote on key rebranding decisions, from the core creative concept to logo design. The result: people feel they own the brand, not the other way around.

How could we end this section without mentioning Epic Games? They're the People's Play-Doh brand with a roster of games from Fall Guys to Rocket League which all plead for participation. Chief of these is Fortnite, the closest thing we have to a modern-day metaverse and the sub-brand which started a new generation of participatory gaming. From letting fans vote on map changes, hosting [12M strong](#) in-game music concerts and even allowing fans to rebuild the game itself with their monetised creator mode, they've redefined what it means to 'participate' in a game.



CONCLUSION

In the past, many brands have experimented with the Play-Doh approach. Like Glossier having 1,000 die-hard testers before launching. Or Brewdog with their equity for punks. But the new players are different. Their commitment to their audience and use of communication channels sets them apart. Think Slack, Discord, and BeReal. Or gaming platforms like Fortnite. They engage people by giving them the chance to build the brand they want to see in the world.

The tactic in a sentence:

Build in public with community at your core. Create immersive brand worlds people can't help but play in.

How does it entertain?

By ripping up the previously held hierarchy between brand and consumer. Instead, these brands allow people to create the brands they want to see in the world.

Why is it entertaining?

In a world where brands can easily become indistinguishable, the People's Play-Doh, moulds itself around their super fans. Always at the edge, always pushing limits.

sources

[RTFKT - Manifesto](#) ↗
[The Guardian - Fortnite](#) ↗
[Wired - Glossier](#) ↗





Entainer N° 07

NEWS JACKER

These headline thieves treat tabloids the same way robbers treat banks...with utmost respect. They understand the value of the press, building systems within their business akin to a newsroom. Newsjackers are masters of attaching their brand to cultural moments. They move quickly and decisively. They don't plan their year around quarterly campaigns, they adopt an always-on approach.

'Newsjackers embrace short news cycles. They look to jump on stories, trends or memes to stay top of mind. They entertain by staying current and reinterpreting news with a comedic spirit.'



All news is good news

THIS! are the superlative Newsjacker. They are a meat-alternative brand, selling a range of bacon, mince, chicken bites and sausages. And they are never far from controversy. In fact, they lean into it with wit and self-deprecation.

One example came in response to National Farmers Union lobbying. They wanted the Government to ban plant-based brands using words like bacon. In response, **THIS!** earned column inches by interviewing English Linguist Professors as a rebuttal.

Then [Piers Morgan called](#) vegan sausage rolls 'gastronomic appropriation' on Good Morning Britain. **THIS!** launched their frozen sausage range with an [ice sculpture](#) of Piers Morgan, naked in Leicester Square. The end line ran 'not everything frozen is great. But this new frozen range is.'

What they are doing is clearly working. According to The Grocer, they are the fastest growing food brand with a CAGR across two years of [246%](#). **THIS!** entered a category dominated by perceived leaders with big budgets. By adopting an entertaining strategy, they're now top of mind for many customers.

Newsjackers embrace short news cycles. They look to jump on stories, trends or memes to stay top of mind. They entertain by staying current and reinterpreting news with a comedic spirit.

Seriously playful

You might think Newsjackers don't take themselves seriously. But they do. Like the court jester, their art comes from turning any story to their advantage. While self-deprecating on the

surface, they are highly perceptive and ambitious characters. They simply piggyback off social and cultural currents to entertain. And by entertaining, they earn the right to promote their brand.

This approach is best used when entering a maturing category with established leaders. Take the dating app Thursday for example. It launched in 2021 in a crowded market. They switched up the well-trodden dating app rulebook set by Hinge and Tinder which had led to dating app apathy. A dating app that fuels immediacy by only working on Thursday. And who'd be embarrassed to say they met on 'Thursday'? They are the original cardboard placard campaigner. Their first cardboard sign read 'I cheated on my girlfriend on Thursday and this is my punishment'. The post went viral, racking up millions of views online. They've since rented a camel for National Hump Day and given away dates (the fruit) on Liverpool Street. All on a Thursday.

CONCLUSION

The art of the Newsjacker is in blending viral social content with piggyback PR and provocative OOH. So far for brands like Thursday and THIS! It's paying off. The former has over a million downloads and **\$3.5m** in investment raised. This is a tactic for businesses with a good 'high-risk, high-reward' threshold.

The tactic in a sentence:

Amplify your reach by jumping on news stories that people can't help but share.

How does it entertain?

By joining in on the social commentary and making you snort-laugh.

Why is it entertaining?

Big brands have grown reliant on paying for eyeballs, these brands use creativity to get people talking.

sources

[The Independent - Piers Morgan](#) ↗
[Euro Weekly News - Ice Sculpture](#) ↗
[Grocer - THIS!](#) ↗
[TechCrunch - Thursday](#) ↗



NEWSJACKER CASE STUDY: THIS!

Brand Explainer

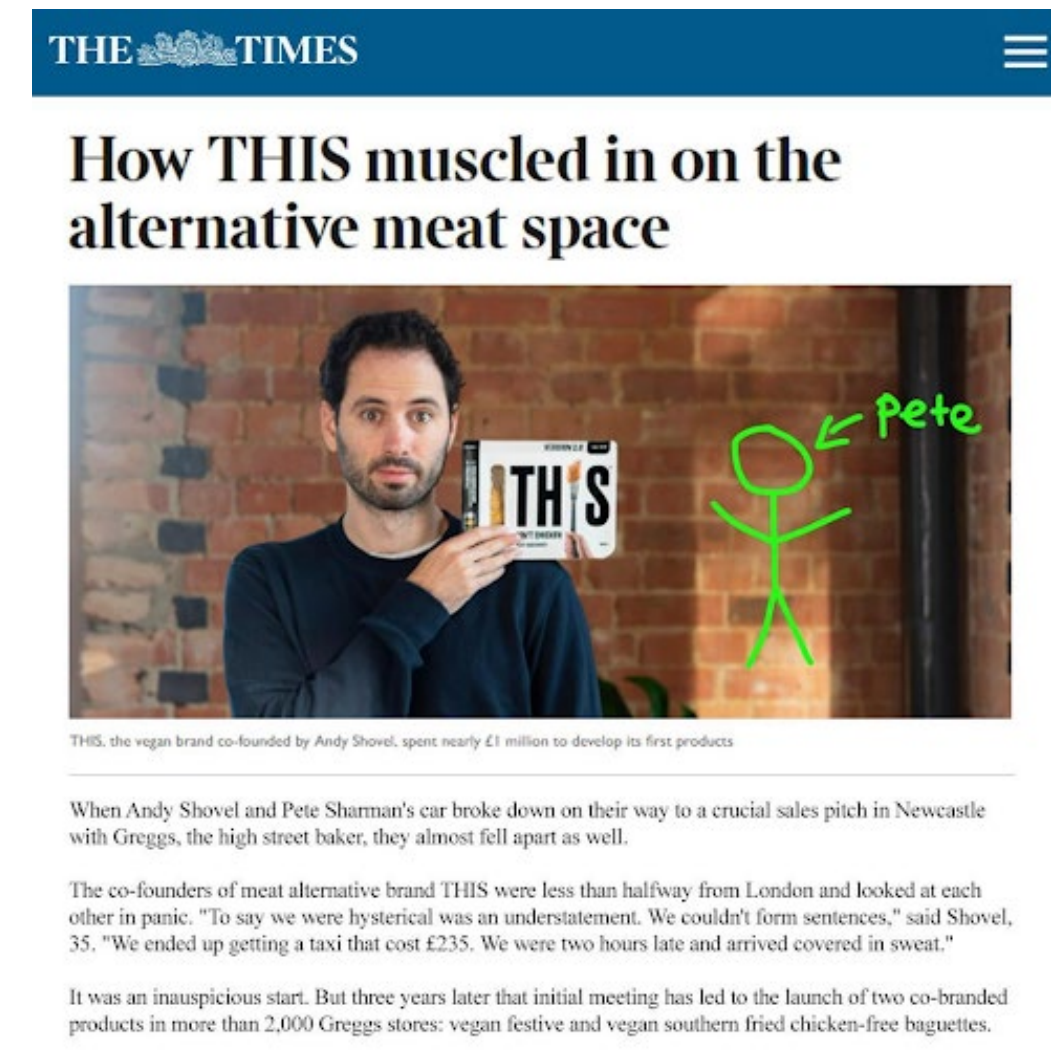
THIS! is the plant based meat company which has built a buzz for their bacon and other meat alternatives by borrowing news headlines for themselves. They're constantly in the news thanks to quick thinking creativity and a no-nonsense approach to PR outreach.

Andy Shovel, Founder & CEO;

"The plant based meat space can be off-putting for non-vegans. We needed to find a way to disarm people in order to change perceptions. For us, humour filled provocative PR is a way of driving trial and the savviest way of growing awareness."

"Not everything lands. But you need to be resilient. When we come up with ideas we try and put ourselves in the shoes of an editor at a news office."

"Brands approach press outreach in a weird way. Journalists don't care about being spammed. Treat it like sales, PR is just as serious an operation. Don't reach out to just 20 outlets, go after 250."



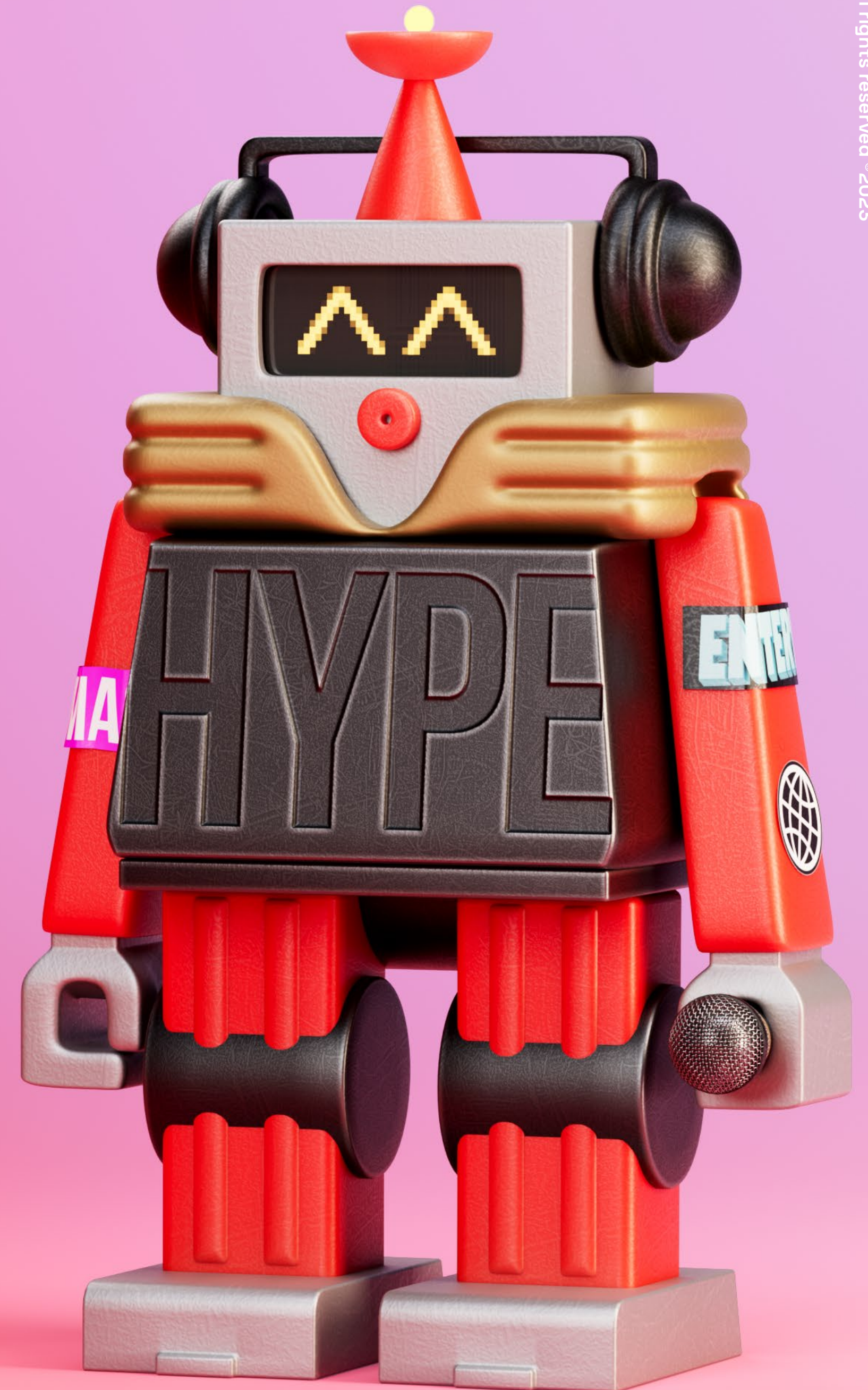
OTHER
NEWSJACKER
BRANDS:



Entertainer N° 08

HYPE MACHINE

Enter the Hype Machine. Not to be mistaken for the Newsjacker. Hype Machines don't jump on other news stories, they live at the centre of their own media frenzies. They generate hype with manufactured scarcity, eye-catching stunts and tight-knit cultivated communities. These brands spread through word of mouth.





'Hype Machines relentlessly cultivate communities of brand fanatics. PRIME has fans organising bottle swaps and filling empties with water as a status symbol.'



Self-imposed scarcity

Scarcity marketing isn't a new phenomenon. It's a tactic loved by streetwear brands like SUPREME. Hype Machines adopt scarcity and either apply it to unexpected categories or in unexpected ways.

Last Crumb is a premium cookie brand that releases products in drops every week via a pass-coded site. People with the code are called VICs – Very Important Cookies.

Corteiz takes password-protection to the next level. The streetwear brand releases access codes on private Instagram pages just minutes before drops.

PRIME, the energy drink started by KSI and Logan Paul, is the best example of scarcity marketing applied to a new category. The drink often sells out in seconds and supermarket scrambles are commonplace. Bottles end up on the black market for over [\\$120 \(about 60 times the retail price\)](#).

Pokémon like products

Of the 4 Ps of marketing, Hype Machines heavily lean into 'product'. Their marketing prioritises regular drops of limited-run products over their staples. Last Crumb have effortlessly entertaining flavour names, like 'Better than Sex' and 'The Floor is Lava'. They offer a core collection of 12 cookies but have 72 flavours in their release pipeline for future drops. Similarly, PRIME adds limited edition flavours (like KSI Orange Mango) to their regular run. This approach to the product creates a 'Pokémon Card' effect. Fans want to collect them all, so they trade with other fans. This only stokes word of mouth further.

Cultivated communities

Hype Machines relentlessly cultivate communities of brand fanatics. PRIME has fans organising bottle swaps and filling empties with water as a status symbol. Corteiz community members have created social pages with thousands of followers to share info on drops. The brand feverishly engages with these fans in the comments. Last Crumb's community of cookie connoisseurs host their own tasting events. They also highlight unlucky customers on social in the hope the brand helps them next time. By facilitating places on- and offline for fans to interact with the brand they create a groundswell of earned media mentions. Added to their other stunt tactics, Hype Machine brands achieve incredible reach.

Stuntin'

All of the brands in Entertain or Die run partial to high-profile stunts to promote their brand. None do it better than the Hype Machine. Stunts are either a creative way of seeding products to generate hype or a way of getting eyeballs on the brand at the biggest events. PRIME opts for the latter. KSI, Logan Paul and affiliates 'crash' boxing matches and WWE main events.

But it's Corteiz who epitomises the Hype Machine's penchant for stunts. They sparked a 50-person foot race through Soho for their first giveaway. Since then, they've swapped travel cards for t-shirts, sold cargo pants for 99p and given away their Nike collaboration Air Max trainers via a crossbar challenge. The stunt that sums up their ability to combine product seeding with performance art is the BOLO Exchange. [They gave away 50 limited edition Corteiz puffer jackets](#) in exchange for highly coveted pieces from competitor brands. Jackets with a total resale value of £16,000 were then collected and donated to the homeless. The packed-out street scenes cause disbelief online. This earns media on traditional channels like BBC News. Hype Machines know how to use stunts to simultaneously reward fans and make a statement.

'Stunts are either a creative way of seeding products to generate hype or a way of getting eyeballs on the brand at the biggest events.'



CONCLUSION

The Hype Machine is a master of generating intrigue around their brand both via mainstream media and at a grassroots level. They start by entertaining their community and building fans' anticipation. They use the frenzy to publicly put the brand on a bigger stage.

The tactic in a sentence:

Whip up a hype frenzy around the brand to create a cult-like community of brand fans.

How does it entertain?

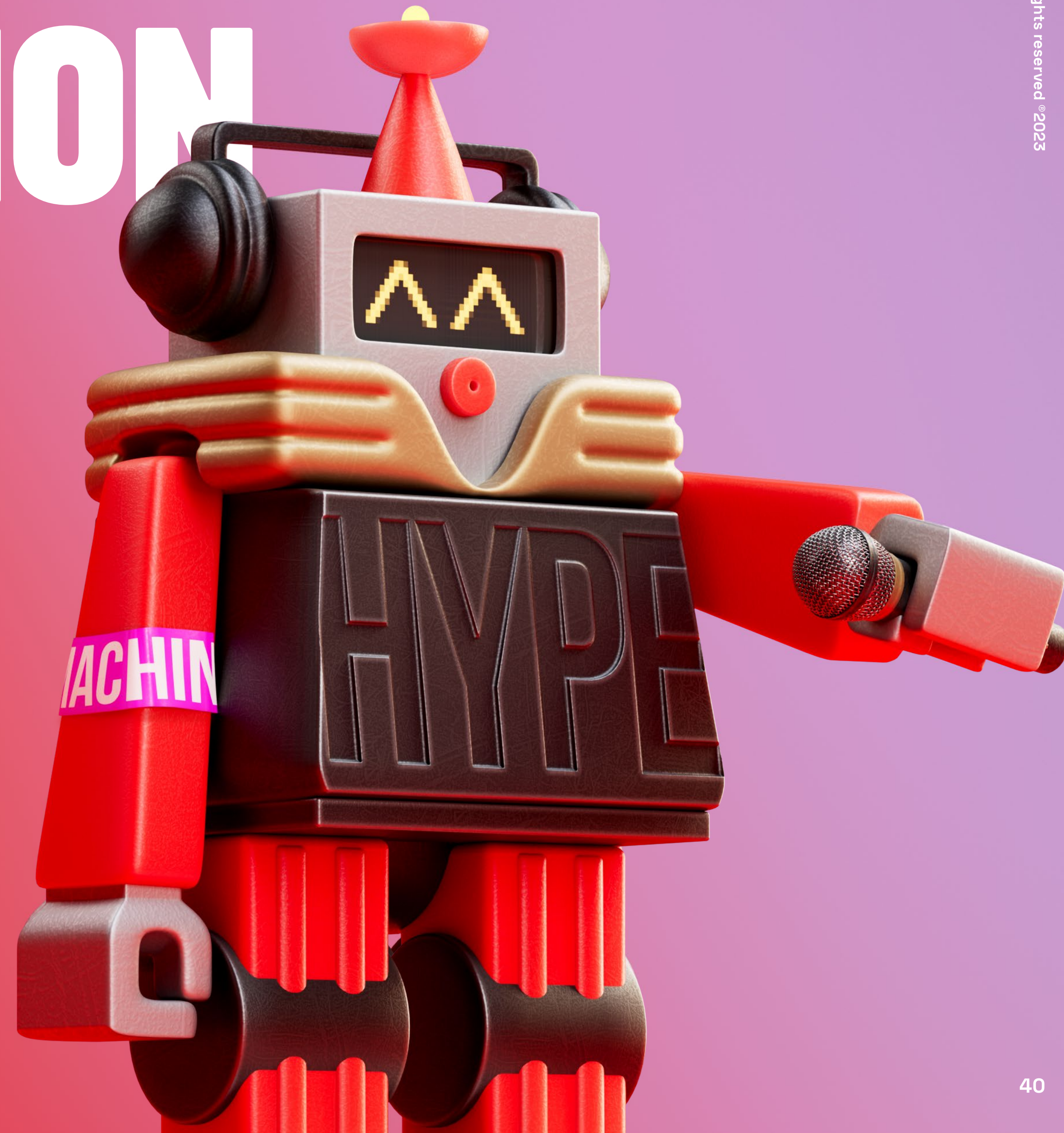
By continuing the hype cycle with new product drops.

Why is it entertaining?

Today's brands can grow stale quickly, Hype Machines make fans part of the next chapter.

sources

Forbes – PRIME ↗
NEW WAVE MAG – Da Great BOLO Exchange ↗



RESEARCH & FINDINGS

Research

Introduction

The Entertainment Index is a ranking of the brands around the world that are outcompeting market-leading competitors by growing share of voice through pure entertainment. The formula behind The Entertainment Index takes into account worldwide revenue performance, share of search, social performance, media performance and share of voice. When balancing these brands against competitors it also takes into account years since founded to create parity.



Methodology

°Small World's strategy and data experts decided on a list of relevant entertainment brands. Data was then collected under the following 5 categories: revenue performance, share of search, social performance, media performance and share of voice.

Each data category had several metrics within them (see the methodology table for a full breakdown). These metrics were then ranked from 0-100. The better the performance the higher the score.

An average score for each area as well as a final index score was decided allowing each brand to be compared equally.

A market-leading competitor was also identified for each Entertainment Brand and the same metrics were collected, except excess share of voice.

That decision was made so that we could compare Entertainment Brands' performance on pure entertainment media.

Share of voice was too heavily biased by paid media, of which competitors can afford tenfold, and so created an unfair comparison between the forms of media we deemed Entertainment Brands to be making the difference in.

A total index table was then created in order to compare brands and their competitors, identifying which brands outperformed others and in which areas. For a full list of data sources and time periods of data collection see our site.



Findings



Entertainment Brands come in all shapes and sizes.

Entertainment Brands aren't just the plucky challengers of their category. Duolingo is a market leader that topped the overall rankings (see graph 5). They also smashed their nearest competitor Babel in terms of entertainment metrics. It's a shining example of the advantage being an entertainment brand can offer bigger brands as well as smaller brands. For an app that pretty much created its own category and holds 60% share of the market simply keeping up their traditional media spend would likely be enough, but instead, they're known for dominating TikTok with a larger-than-life green owl.

Being in the lead doesn't mean you need to follow the big brand manual. In fact, with bigger budgets to invest in creative and the multiplier effect of paid media, it can cut cost long term and give them yet another unfair advantage.

Certain categories are entertainment first by default, and therefore harder to win.

Certain categories are saturated with Entertainment Brands and the bar for success has never been higher. Categories like dating and fashion (in particular streetwear) are extremely high interest, meaning every brand leans into entertainment making it harder to win. It's why we see PR darling Thursday lose out to Bumble by a drastic 26 index points despite seemingly being

the more talked about brand (see graph 4). RTFKT was the second-highest gap with a 14-point difference between them and Supreme.

Certain categories always have and always will be built for entertainment. The greatest opportunities for new brand growth, using entertainment as an unfair advantage, is in categories with low interest with brands too reliant on following the old playbook. Just look at Duolingo, Liquid Death and Starface's success as a signal of this.

New media, especially social media, is the democratic 'cheat code' for Entertainment Brands

Out of 20 Entertainment Brands in the index, 14 of them beat their competitors in the index. When you look at the breakdown of the biggest winners in Crocs, Liquid Death and Starface it's clear where they excelled most (see graph 6 and 7) - Social Performance. We theorised that entertainment media (earned PR and social media) were the real levellers for Entertainment Brands. We were proven right. That's the case because platforms like YouTube and TikTok are infinitely more democratic than TV. You don't need to spend your way to the top to succeed, the algorithm favours creativity over pure media spend.

For young brands who want to make the best brand-building investment YouTube and TikTok are the most democratic channels to do so. Don't treat them as 'always-on' or 'hygiene'. YouTube in particular should be considered New TV and measured on the same impact.



3 Golden Rules

We want you to leave you with some clear takeaways for following in the footsteps of the 8 Entertainer archetypes. Here are our 3 Golden Rules to success:



Master new media

The traditional path to brand growth – through big media spends on TV, OOH and digital channels – is now only accessible to the biggest brands. Instead, aspiring Entertainers need to master new media. The two broad categories being social media and public relations.

Focus on building viewership to rival primetime TV on YouTube like Mr Beast and Feastables, or taking over TikTok with your brand codes, like Duolingo is doing. Social is a formidable brand-building channel when properly considered.

PR, on the other hand, is an art long forgotten by many brands. It requires creative ideas that go beyond 30' TV spots and a newsroom style mentality. So focus on ideas worth spreading. PR is truly the original earned media.

Don't neglect strategy

Whilst Entertainers feel fun, none of them neglect strategy. They have a clearly defined audience, position themselves to resonate with that niche, and they make sure their brand codes are baked into their communications.

JackSepticEye got to know his audience for years before launching a coffee brand built for them in Top of the Mornin' and Crocs is constantly giving people the means to play with their most important brand code, their primary product's silhouette. It's part of what made their rubber clog so famous.

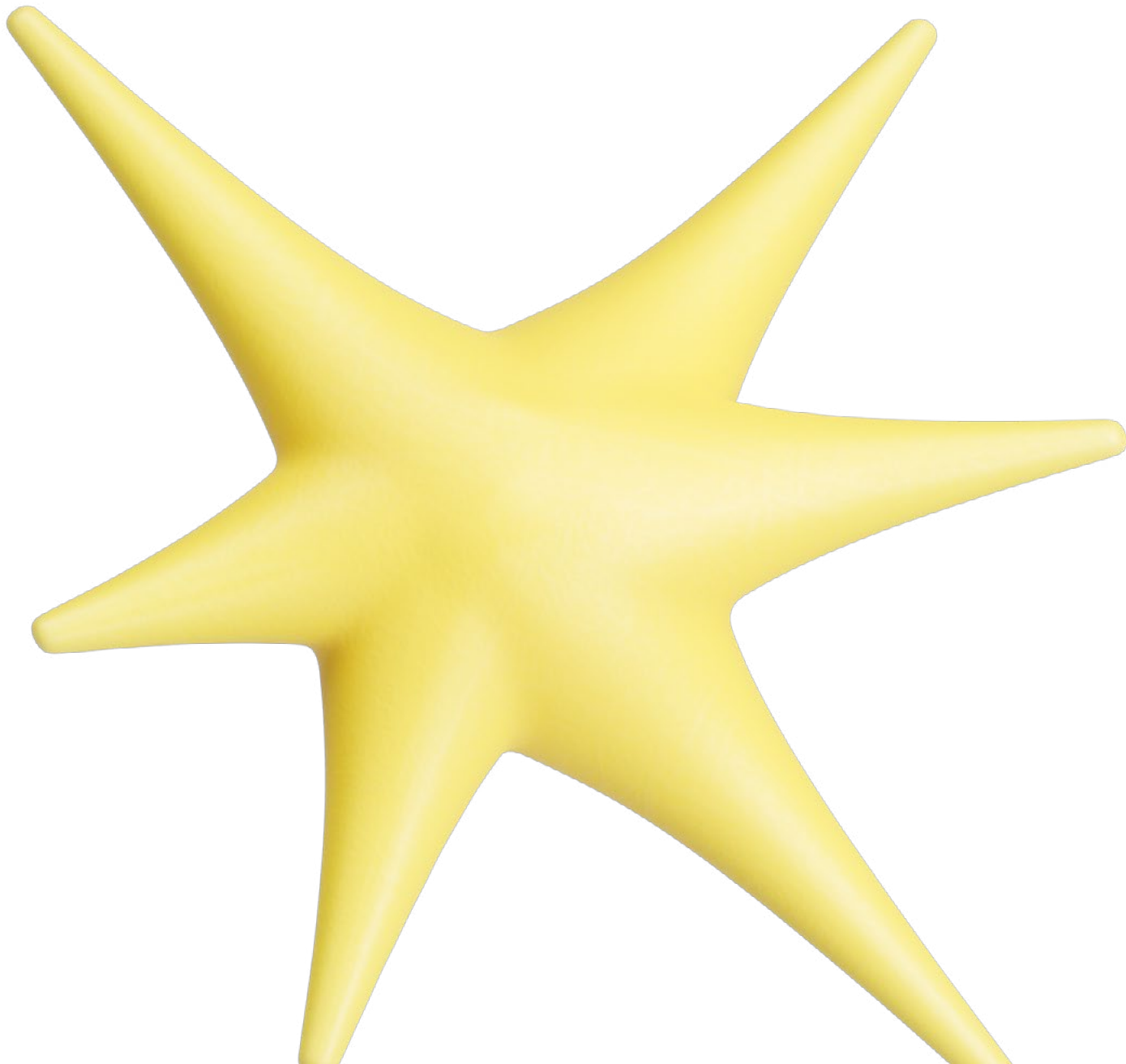
Triple-down on creativity

What you lack in media spend, you must make up for in creative investment. Mr. Beast spent \$1 million on his Willy Wonka chocolate factory, Superette has a dedicated visual merchandising team in a category that totally neglects it. Mid-Day Squares built a reality-TV-style operation of videographers and editors to create their content.

The one commonality is understanding the need to invest in creativity. Creativity is a ticket to more eyeballs and stickier branding precisely because it's earned, not paid for.

Table 01

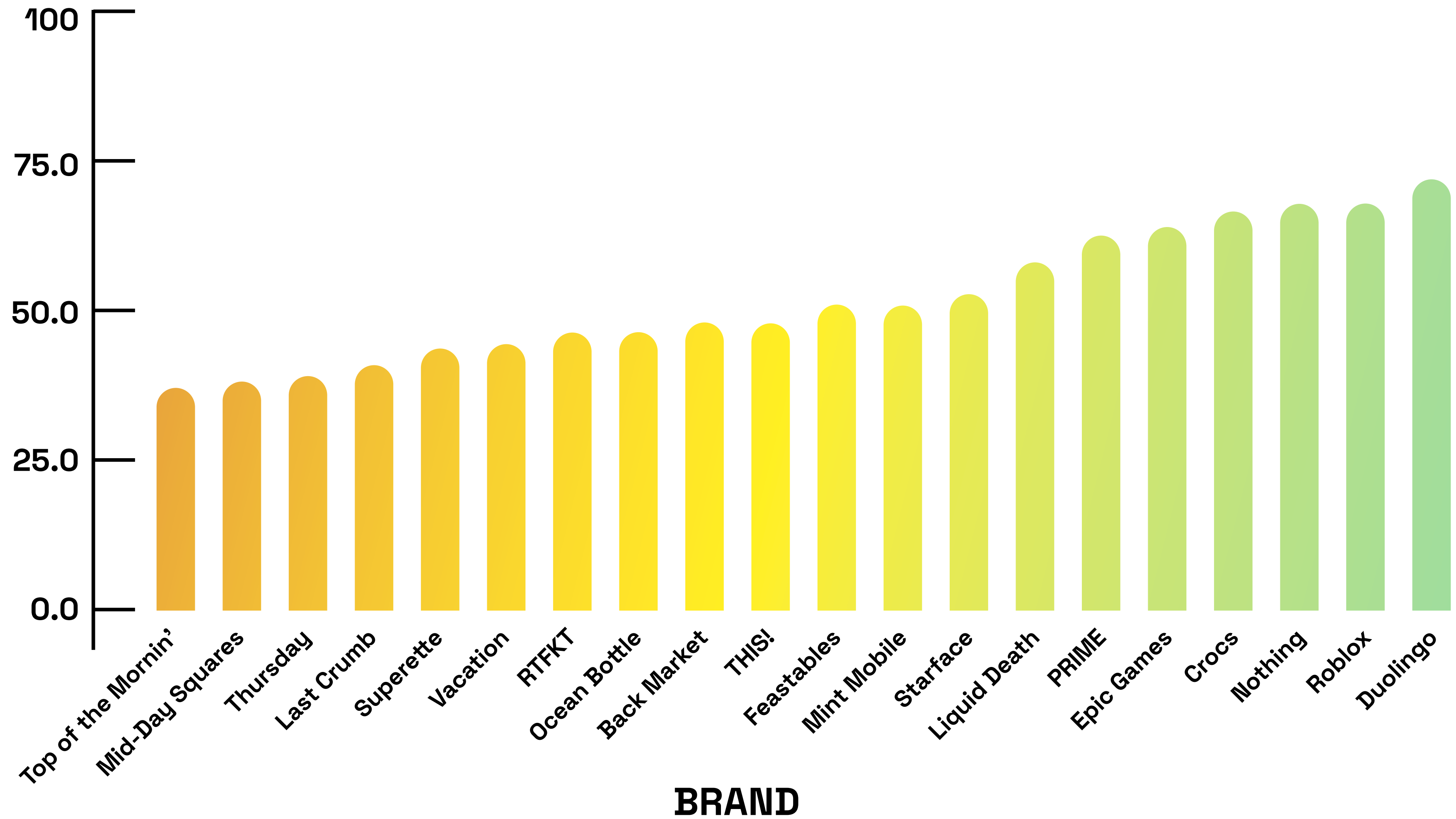
The average index scores of brands and their competitors



BRAND	BRAND	COMPETITOR	COMPETITOR	DIFFERENCE
Back Market	48	CEX	53	-5
Liquid Death	58	Aquafina	37	21
Crocs	66	Skechers	47	19
Feastables	52	Hershey's	40	11
THIS!	48	Quorn	42	5
Starface	53	Nexcare	31	21
PRIME	60	Gatorade	47	13
Superette	44	Trulieve	40	4
Mint Mobile	52	AT&T	58	-6
Mid-Day Squares	39	Hershey's	40	-1
Last Crumb	41	Oreo	51	-10
Thursday	40	Bumble	66	-26
Nothing	66	Samsung	61	5
Duolingo	72	Babbel	55	17
Vacation	45	Neutrogena	43	2
Roblox	67	EA	60	7
Epic Games	62	Rockstar Games	59	3
RTFKT	47	Supreme	61	-14
Ocean Bottle	47	Chilly's	38	9
Top of the Mornin'	37	Folgers	24	13

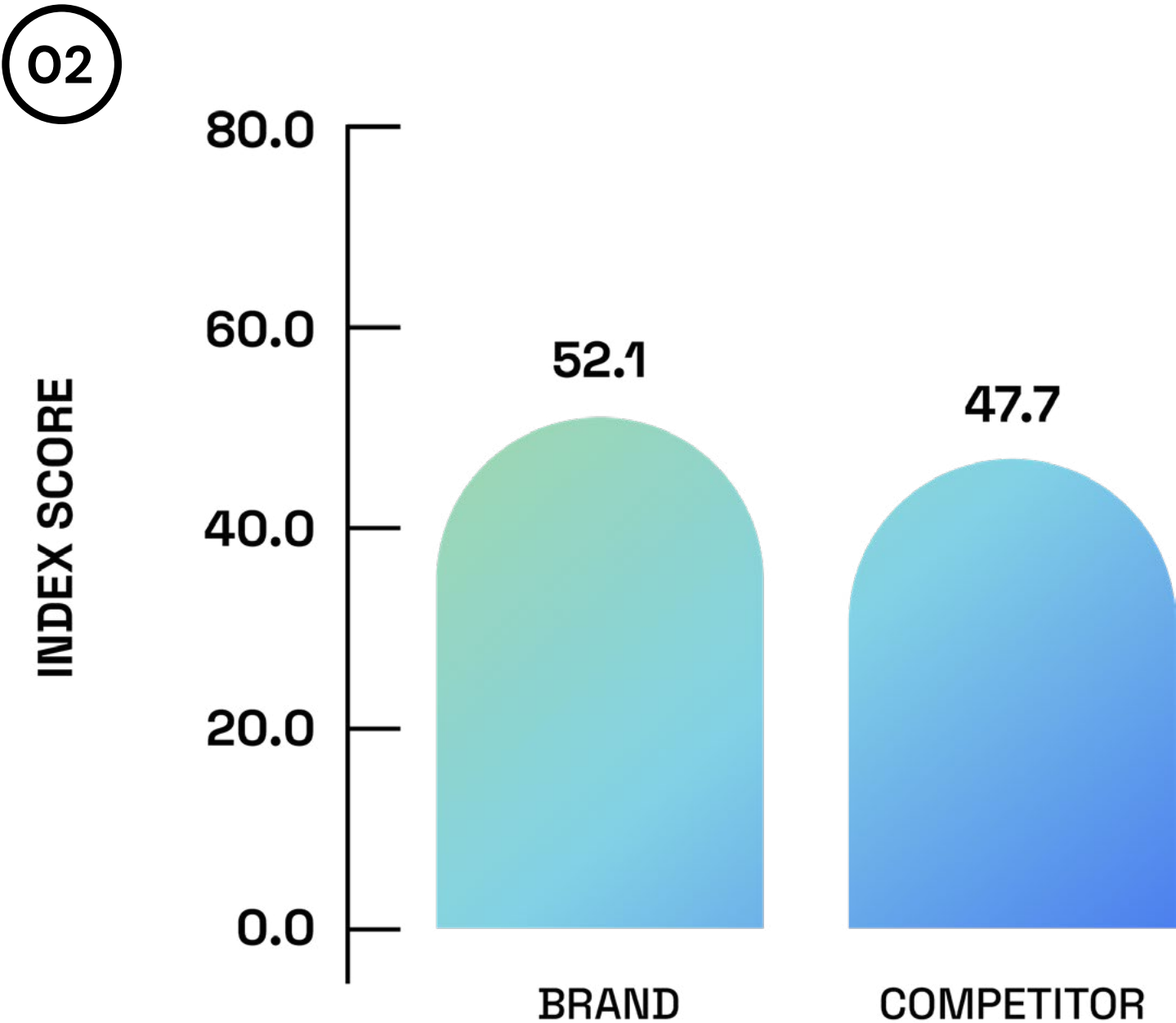
Graph 01

Shows the average index scores across all brands and competitors.



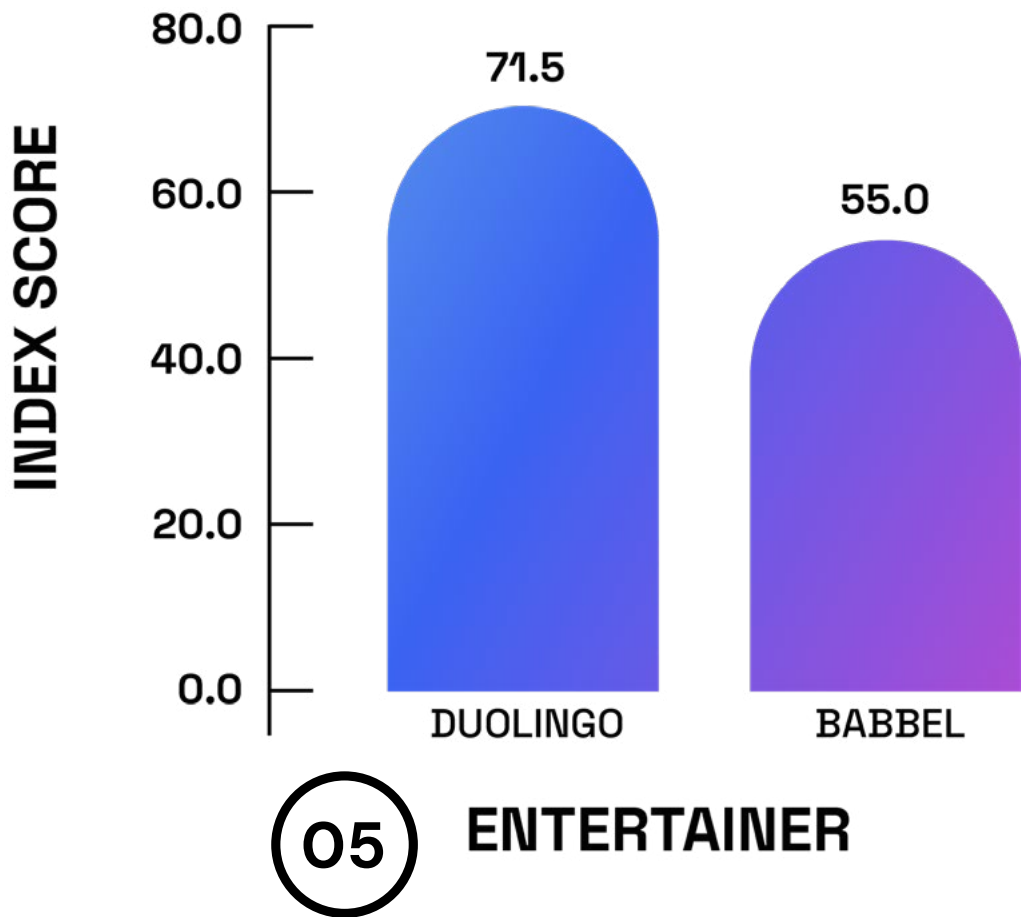
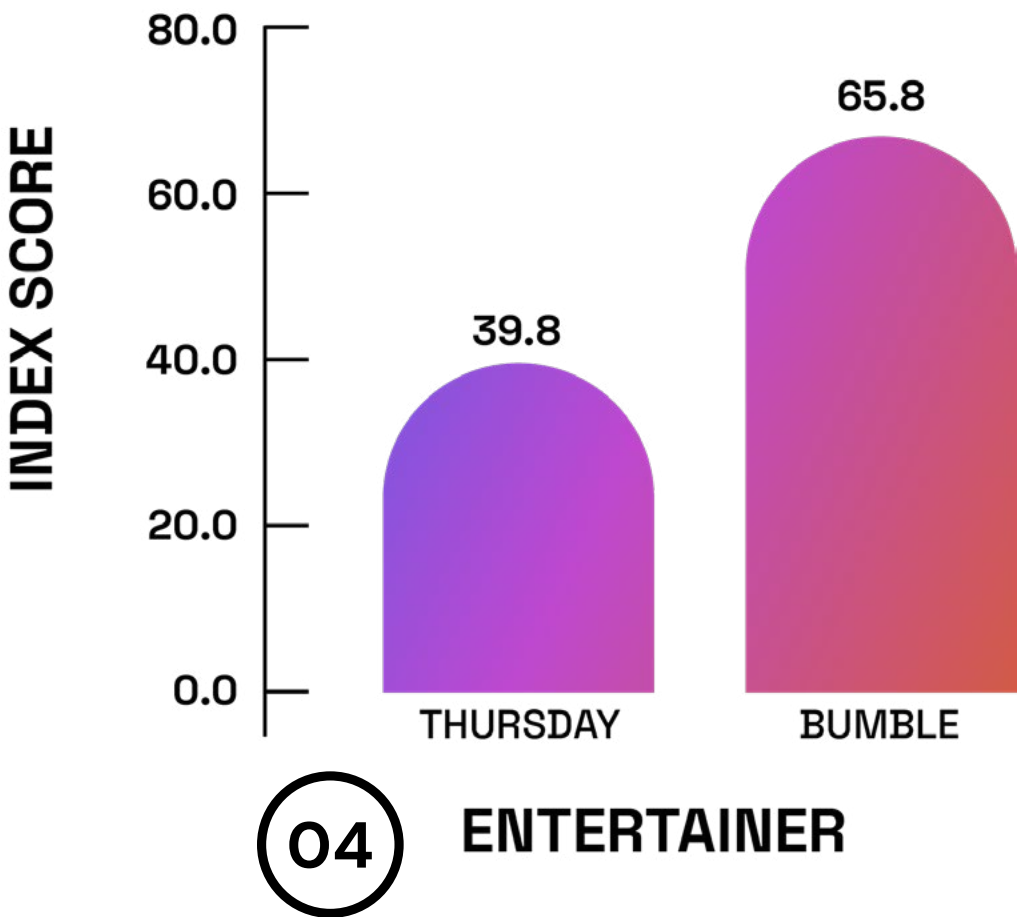
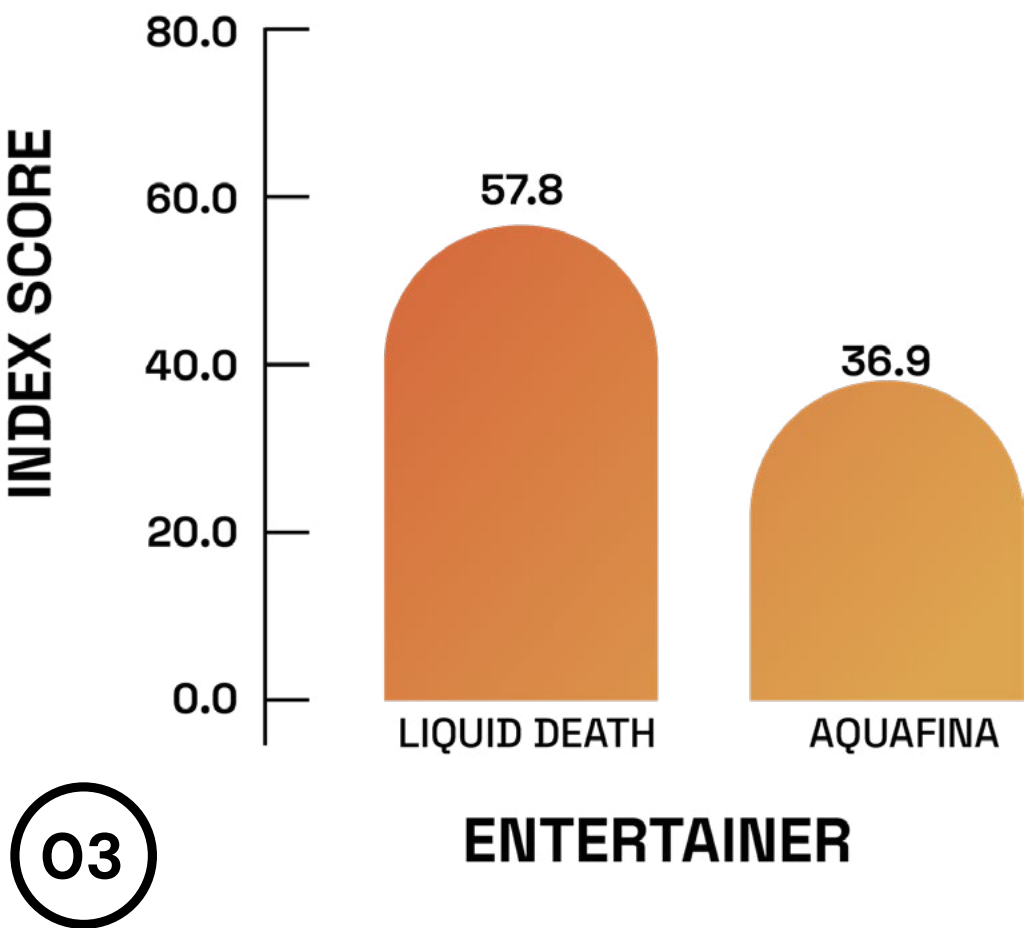
Graph 02

Shows the average index scores across all brands and competitors.



Graph 03/04/05

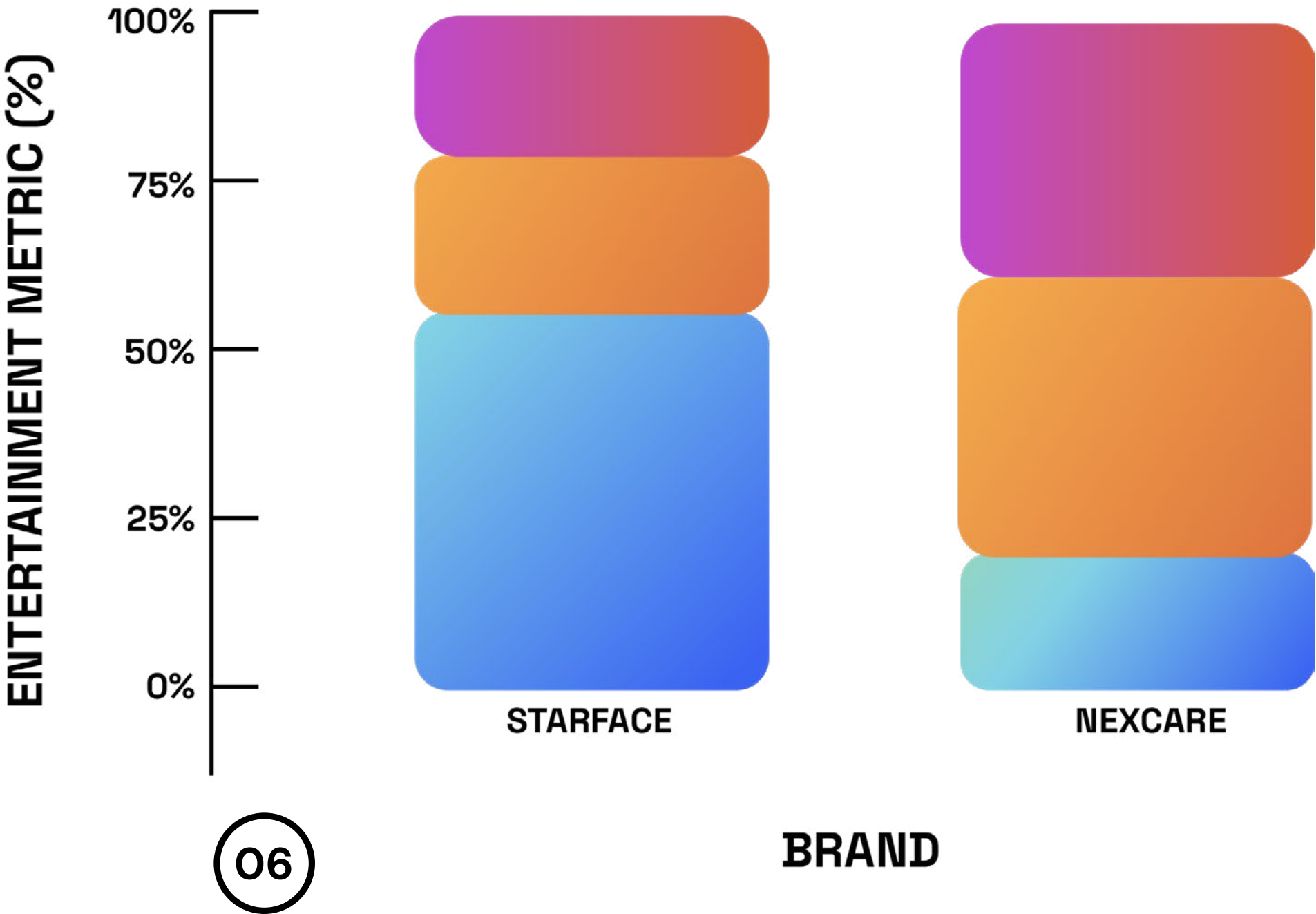
Shows the average index scores across the chosen brand and its competitor.



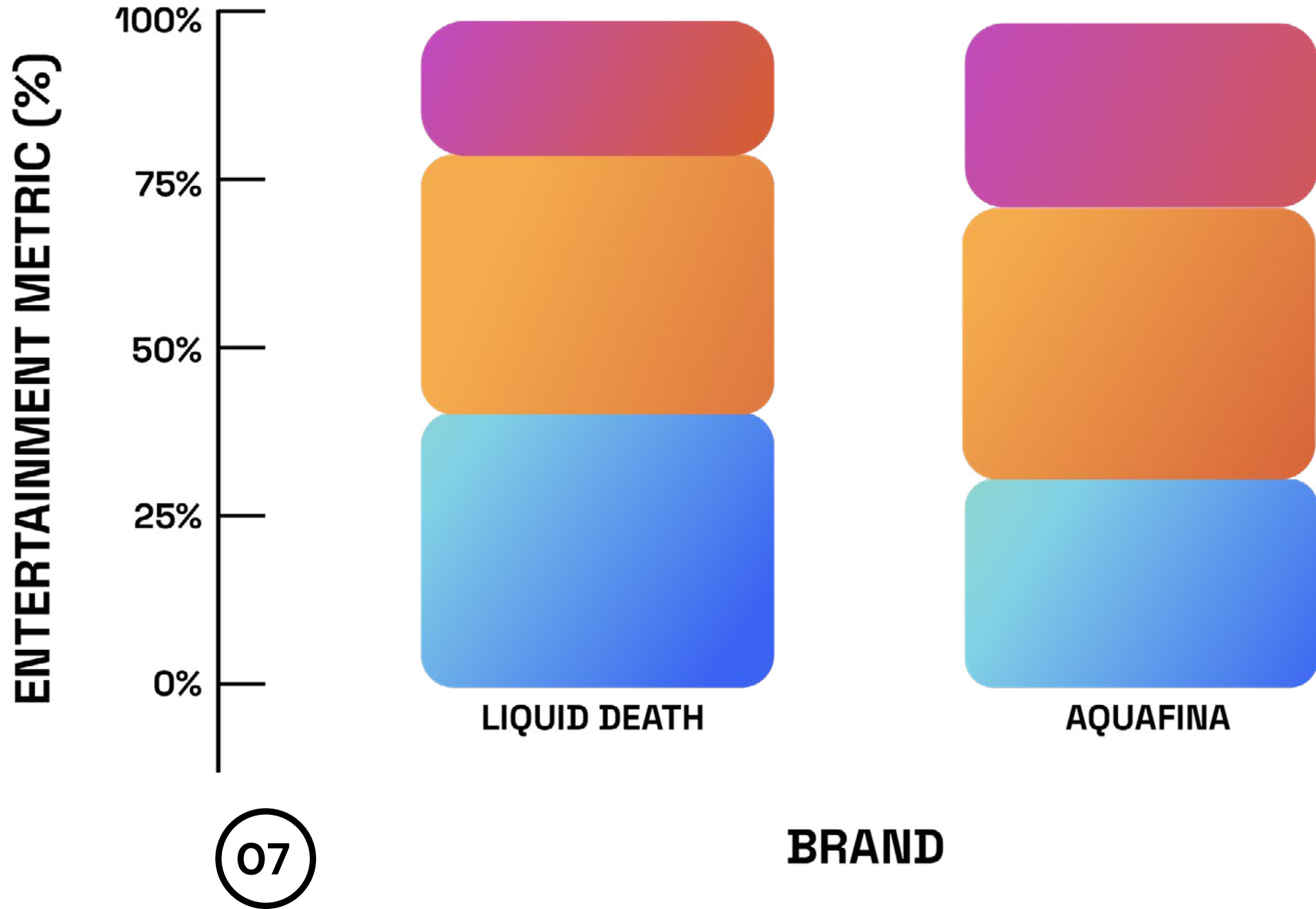
Graph 06/07

Shows the breakdown of the overall scores for the chosen brand and its competitor.

	STARFACE	NEXCARE
SOCIAL MEDIA	71	18
MEDIA	30	37
SHARE OF SEARCH	25	33



	LIQUID DEATH	AQUAFINA
SOCIAL MEDIA	68	36
MEDIA	61	45
SHARE OF SEARCH	34	30

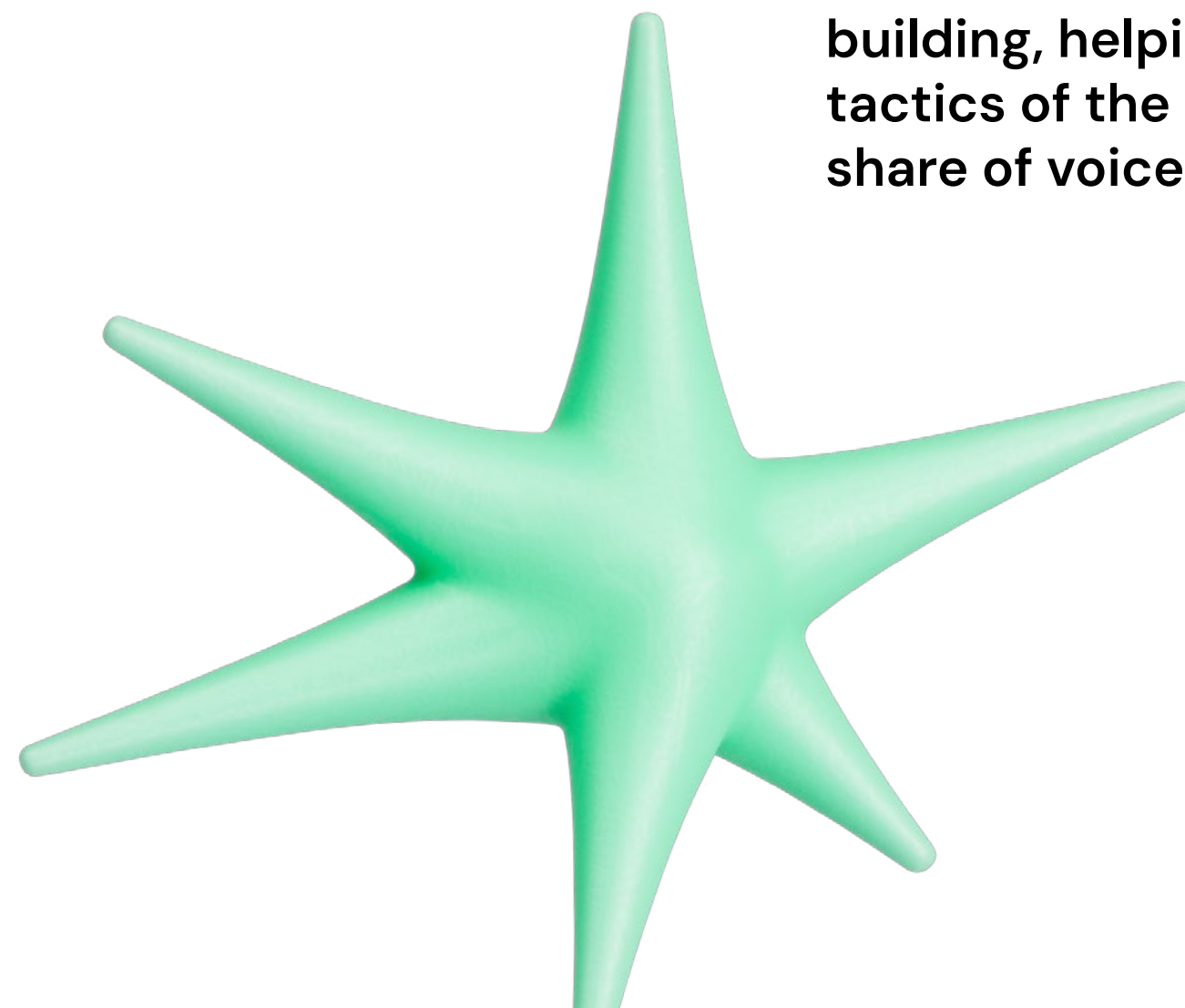


It's either Entertain or Die. So which will you choose?



So now you've met all 8 Entertainers, you might have one question: why are we giving away our insights for free?

Well, think of us as the Robin-Hoods of brand building, helping to codify the strategies and tactics of the brands earning the right to steal share of voice from market leaders.

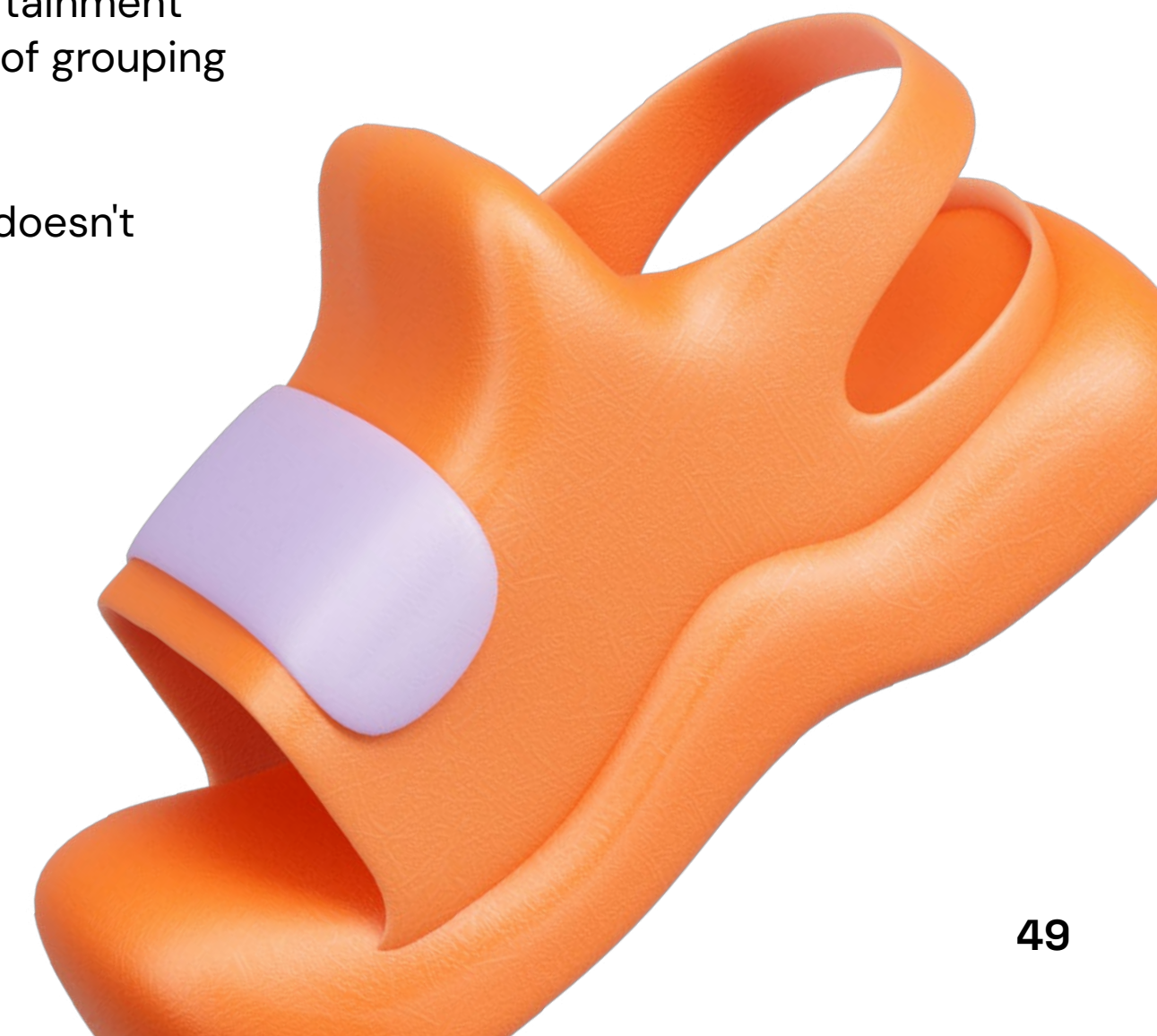


The landscape is changing fast and life as a Founder, CMO or Head of Brand is tough right now. Much as we'd like to, our agency can't support every future-facing brand. But whether you work with us or not, we want to help you have a fighting chance at building brand equity.

Brand building is an essential part of the two-speed dance of marketing. You must invest both long and short. If you're priced out of traditional methods of long term brand building we hope this report helps you fight the case for brand entertainment as an alternative. In our experience, the simple act of grouping concepts clearly can be truly powerful.

Remember, there's no time to waste. If your brand doesn't make a choice, the choice will be made for you.

It's either entertain or die.



°Small World

°Small World is a creative consultancy that uniquely curates creative talent to drive commercial results for brands. We believe that working with freedom unlocks the best talent, necessary for building Entertainment Brands.

Contributors

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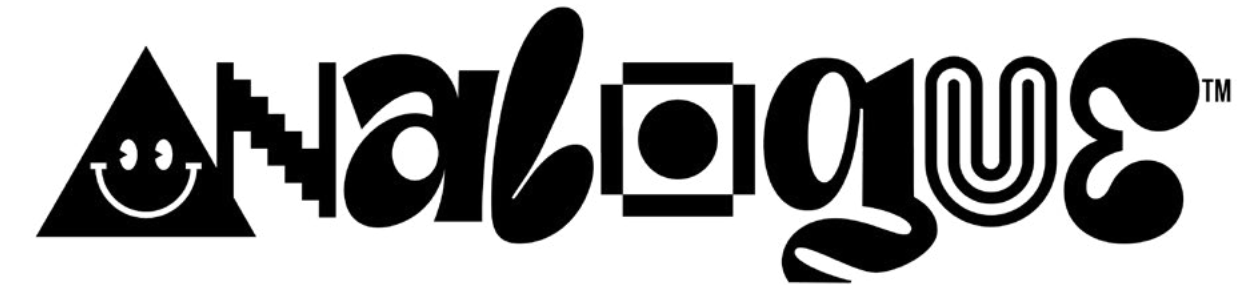
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Analogue is a Seriously-Playful™ visual design studio. We combine fresh thinking & beautiful creative to drive fandom for some of the most loved entertainment brands in the world.

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