

DEAR
STORYTELLER



Recruiting Volunteers

CONTENT TO INSPIRE ACTION

A pathway for purpose

As the landscape for recruitment advertising continues to evolve, so too does the mindset of the people you strive to build connections with. So how can you stand out amongst the noise, mobilising people to ignite true change? This document is a toolkit to support your organisation's content strategy, recruitment campaigns, and brand platforming.

First, we open with a case study on our VWA campaign. We went into this project knowing that the campaign had to tackle things differently; thinking outside the box led us to a collaborative, integrated web of stories that sought to reinvent volunteering for the younger generation. After all, you don't have to be a saint to volunteer; you just need the desire for positive change.

Next up, we share four articles from our senior copywriter, Clare Reid. Designed to help you enrich the value of your written content, these insights cover platforming with purpose, putting your audience first, inspiring brand loyalty, and writing to a brief.

We then introduce a series of challenges to initiate new approaches to your organisation's recruitment advertising. Which tactic will fit your organisation best? Trying a new platform, doing something unexpected, joining in on the cultural conversations your audience cares about; amidst endless possibilities, these challenges encourage your organisation to try something new.

The reality is that your volunteer recruitment advertisements aren't just competing with other organisations; they're competing with every advertisement your audience sees that asks them to give up their time. As such, our sister agency Dear Storyteller has generously provided a copy of their ebook, *The Guide to Branded Entertainment*. It's a definitive exploration into connecting with your audience through content that offers surprise and delight - content they actively seek out.

Lastly; if you find value in this toolkit, we'd like to offer you a free consultation with our lead creative strategist, Mike Drysdale. This one-hour session is an opportunity to talk through your organisation's goals and spark fresh ideas. To arrange your session, we encourage you to reach out to Brendan Lobo at brendanl@lushtca.com or (08) 9228 3380.

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CASE STUDY

VWA Volunteer Society

Volunteering WA needed to define a campaign that could inspire a younger audience to volunteer. The goal was to raise awareness of the value of volunteers to the WA community, re-engaging and re-mobilising people as well as attracting expressions of interest from new volunteers. We sought to speak to the young adult demographic aged 18-27 by reinventing volunteering as a pathway for purpose, progress, wellbeing, good vibes, and social connection.

We knew we had to tell a simple story, one that was relatable and met the audience on their terms. That meant tapping into their pre-existing desire to make positive change and connecting that feeling with volunteering.

We teamed up with two of the most influential and aspirational young brands in Perth and formed a true collaboration that would drive the campaign. Cold Nips, a not-for-profit association and Oli Clothing, a fashion label started in Northbridge, came together to help us put a unique and fresh stamp on volunteering for the new generation. Oli Clothing volunteered their time to

develop merchandise, branding, and a style guide for the newly formed VWA Volunteer Society. We organised and documented a social volunteering day at the beach with Cold Nips and OzFish; attendees received an Oli X VWA shirt and collected seagrass fruit to help restore and regenerate seagrass meadows.

The resulting integrated campaign consisted of two mini-docos, the above social volunteering event, a website portal, loads of photo and video content for Facebook, Youtube, and Tiktok, merchandise including the Oli X VWA shirts, audio ads on Spotify, and the development of three new styles of volunteering (social, expert, and upskill).

The campaign ran across social media, video, and audio platforms. It strove to motivate people to leave their online platform to find out what all the fuss was about. Achieving substantial engagement on Tiktok and Spotify, the campaign strongly resonated with its audience. However, its biggest impact stemmed from Facebook and Youtube. These two platforms led to 1252 clicks on the website's volunteer application buttons over 2 months.

Storydoing and the power of language

We get served between 4,000 - 10,000 brand messages a day. Typical advertising (and ad language) will be telling the story of who you are, what you do, even what you stand for. Your brand/company is the focus. This is storytelling.

Storydoing puts the storytelling into action.

These campaigns are rooted in initiatives that exist as proof of what you stand for. They are inherently active — brand in action. The hard part for some marketers is that your brand needs to take a step back to amplify the cause/voice. But does storydoing perform better than storytelling campaigns?

Peter Field and Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (The Drum, October 2021) report that brand purpose campaigns drive 15% more market share growth than marketing campaigns that don't focus on purpose. 41% of well-executed brand purpose campaigns drove a very large growth in market share v 26% of non-purpose campaigns.

To make a 'well-executed' brand purpose (storydoing) campaign, the commitment you make needs to be real, actionable, transparent, measurable, and long-term. It can't just be a trend (aka woke washing). Your brand (and the language you use) needs to play the support role to the person or subject matter. Don't be afraid to take a back seat.

When all of this is in place, the language you use is infused with power. Rather than attempting to craft the perfect sentence, or select the perfect word that will evoke meaning, your company is living out that meaning; the words you use are then saturated with authenticity.

Three key points on powerful language

- 1 Authenticity comes from a place of acted values. Jargon comes when we have nothing to say.
- 2 Language with purpose comes from a place where you (and your staff/customers) believe what they're saying.
- 3 Match your language (and your storydoing campaign) with what your audience values and how they see the world.



Start writing for your reader, not yourself

Your first job as a brand writer is to engage your reader. The way to do this is to actually speak to them and what they care about. It may seem obvious but there's a strong temptation in this industry to speak incessantly about ourselves.

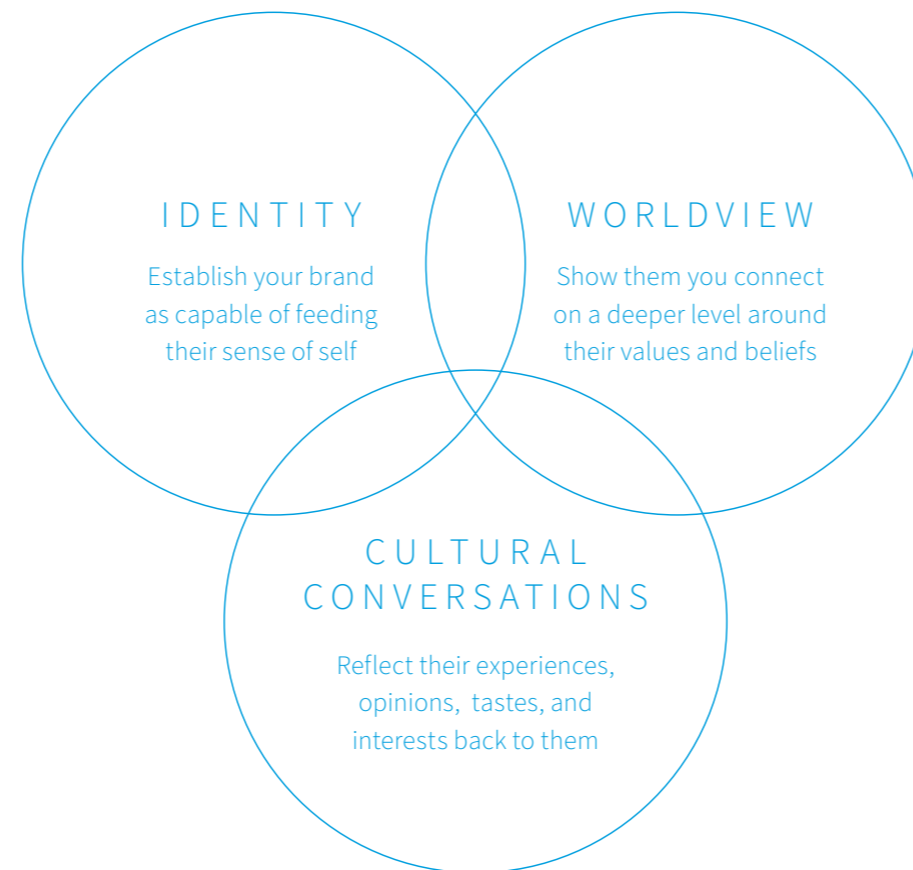
You'll find the biggest culprit of self-centred copy on the about page of a website. And, often the home page. And in ad copy and blogs and brochures ... you get it. Brands will speak about their skills, history, knowledge.

But, in the words of Steven Pressfield, no one wants to read your sh*t.

Readers want to read about themselves. Yep, we're a narcissistic bunch and we engage with copy that we relate to. This is not groundbreaking stuff but how do you do it? You need to get to know your reader like you know the storyline of Lorelai Gilmore. Their lives, their problems, their needs, and their desires. This is what you need to write about.

Your reader will need a problem solved (relevant to your brand). It may be a gap in their knowledge or the need for a tangible product. Focus on their pain point and then allow your brand benefits to be the problem solver (this is where your creative brief comes in handy).

Your brand can also be a conduit for your reader to live more of their desires. From more confidence, to more safety, advocacy, joy, or self-care. When you speak to the nuances of these desires, you will engage your readers emotionally. From here, they are far more willing to relax into the words, visualise the story, and develop a personal connection with the brand.



Using the VWA Volunteer Society campaign as an example:

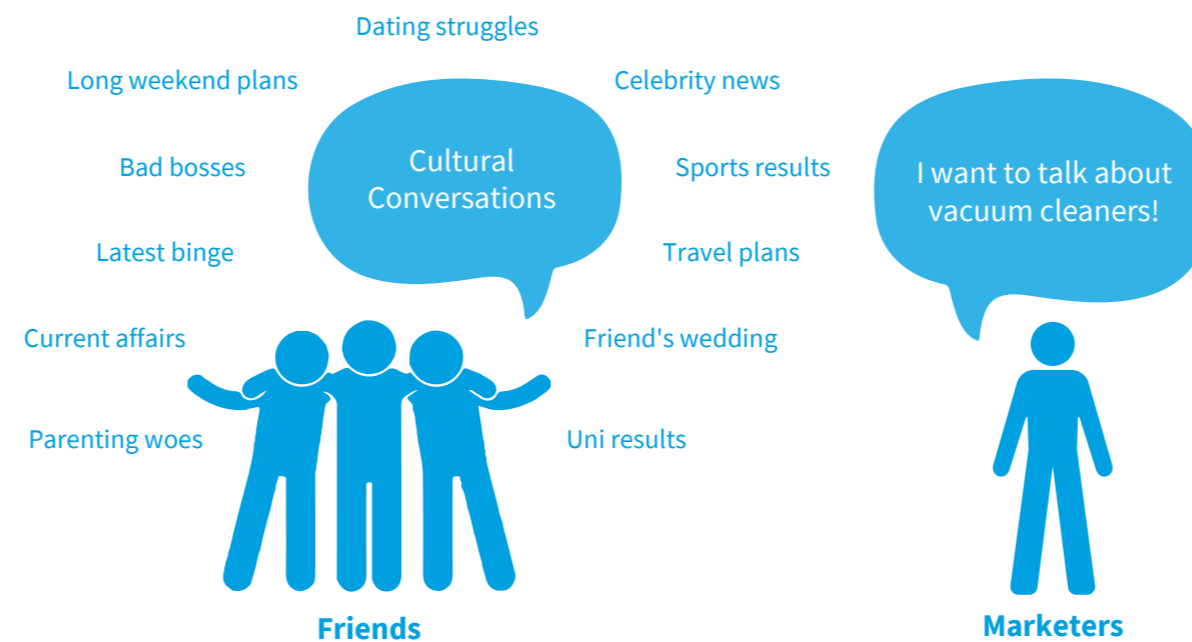
We're trying to market volunteering a younger demographic.

- We want to target this campaign at free spirited, outdoorsy, early morning, go-getters. (Identity)
- We want to leverage their belief that life is about collecting experiences. (Worldview)
- We want to tap into the way they talk about gratitude, giving back, the environment, creating good vibes, making memories and belonging. (Cultural conversations)
- We want to think about the brands they like, the people they model their behaviour after, the kind of clothes they wear, their overall aesthetic, the kind of content they reach for when they're bored and we want to mirror those things.
- When they ask the question, "Do people like me do things like this?" We want them to say, yes!

Instead, too many marketers fall into these traps:

We're trying to market volunteering a younger demographic.

- Either, let's take our pre-existing volunteer ads that talk about what we do and pay to put them in front of younger audience...
- OR
- Let's look at how other volunteer organisations market their roles.
- Let's think about what makes us unique compared to them.
- Let's make ads similar to theirs (so everyone knows it's a volunteering ad) but slightly different based on what makes us unique.
- Let's distribute those ads to M/F aged 16-24, based in Perth, Western Australia and surrounding suburbs.
- Let's blend into the white noise.

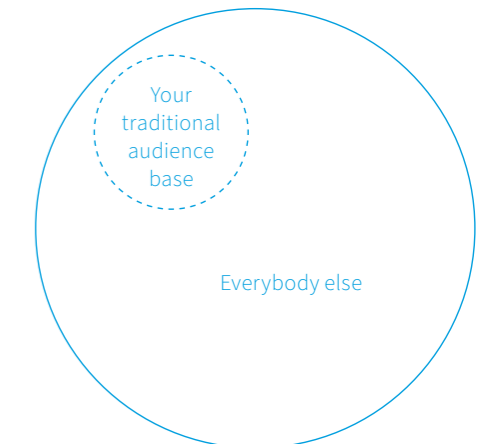


Looking beyond your base:

Marketing to your base is like going back to the well. If you keep going to collect more and more water, it's probably going to dry up.

In order to grow, we have to build another well. In other words we have to market to people outside of our base. We need to think about what people with other identities and other worldviews can get out of what we do.

Not to mention, sometimes conditions change and wells might dry up naturally. Identities become more and less popular over time and they sometimes change what they value.





Stay on track: write to a brief

In the words of Lush’s senior copywriter, Clare Reid: “Brief before all else. ‘Where’s the brief?’ is a daily hymn that I hum (sometimes, belt out) every time new words are required. When you have a brief, you have a map, bible, hymn sheet ... you get the point. Without a brief, you will produce editorial work that is directionless and off brand.”

A creative brief is a way to guide your thinking and produce a piece that is purpose-written for the reader. The first part defines the deliverables—what medium are you writing for, word count, deadline, budget etc. Then you need to outline your objectives—these should be a mix of measurable/tactical outcomes and branding goals (i.e. how you want your reader to connect with the brand).

The next three sections of the brief are designed to understand your target audience (aka your reader). When you describe them, don’t get stuck in the barren land of demographics (gender, age, location), explore their values, fears, desires, and motivations. Mining this territory will offer an emotional edge to your writing; mirroring their humanness is essential.

Now that you know who you’re writing for (your reader, not the brand!) you can outline the desired response. What do you want them to think, feel, or

do after reading your piece? Then, what benefits does the brand/company have that matches their worldview? Tip: it’s not every thing your company does, it’s the things that your reader cares about.

Next, your proposition. It all comes down to this ONE line. The caps is necessary because so often there are two, three, thirteen propositions in a single piece of copy. You want to drill down to the one benefit that will inspire your reader to act. When you have a single-minded proposition, your writing will have a focus, a central thesis that your reader can follow and absorb into themselves.

When you write in the world of brands, your voice needs to become the brand voice. This usually takes a far longer strategy process with lots of juicy insights from tonnes of research. But, that’s often a luxury. So, in the absence of a defined brand persona, think of your brand as a person. How do they move through a room, how do they speak? What do they care about, what motivates them to make change? If you can emulate that persona, you will produce a piece that connects with your reader.

Sure, it’s extra work before you write anything that’s fit for publication. But, that’s the thing, if you skip the brief stage, your words may get published, but it doesn’t mean they should be. There’s a lot of bad copy out there and writing a brief (alongside a brand strategist if you have that luxury) is the only way I have discovered to craft the words that readers choose to read.

INSPIRING BRAND LOYALTY

Don’t just be noticed; be remembered

We tend to spend time with the brands we care about. We want them to tell the story of ‘me’. And it’s very effective. The brands we support show the world our alliances — what we value, what subcultures we belong to, even our political leaning.

Very few of us have figured out how to transcend our identity with form. We are beings who crave being seen (and seen in a way that we approve of). For some, that means clothing brands, others do it via their home, their make-up, their car, shoes, tech, Instagram ...

And then, there are those who build their identity as a cleanskin. No branding. To be seen as someone who transcends the whole game. There are brands for them too. The famous Patagonia political labels speak to that strategy flawlessly.

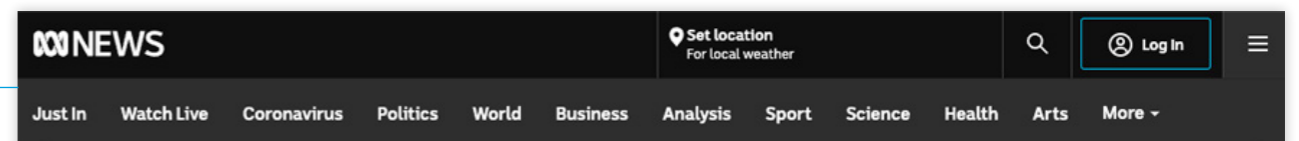
So, how do you do it? It all comes back to your brand strategy. Defining your purpose, value, identity, personality, and your brand promise! Then executing on that every time. The key is that all of your strategy work needs to be guided by your customer. It’s about finding what they care about and infusing that into the DNA of your brand.



Anti-branding: a micro-case study

Let’s stick with Patagonia. They are the environmental activism brand; one Google search will tell you that and every click confirms it. So, the labels aren’t a diversion from that brand promise, they are “...meant to challenge the anti-environmental actions that are currently being taken in office.”

Patagonia’s brand promise is so ingrained that everyone in the company can speak to it, every article and campaign confirms it, and the people who wear the brand own this promise as their identity. The key to fostering loyalty is a dedication to your brand promise and telling the story of that promise again and again. This doesn’t mean labouring the same point, it means finding new ways of reinforcing who you are.



Volunteer groups tap into 'elixir of youth' in WA after rebranding on social media

ABC Radio Perth / By Kate Leaver

Posted Wed 16 Feb 2022 at 9:37am





Challenges for volunteer organisations

AIM FOR SURPRISE AND DELIGHT

Today's audiences are hyper-sensitive; make content that bores them, and you'll be lucky to get a few seconds of their time. Sharing a meaningful message in an unexpected way can help your brand cut through the noise.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

This is about relevance; keeping pace with what your audience cares about when they care about it. Connecting your brand values to cultural conversations is one way you can show your audience you're 'one of them'.

COLLABORATE WITH CREATORS

These are the people your audience aspires to; people whose mindset matches your organisation's values, and whose loyal following could make up your next wave of volunteer recruits.

MEET THE AUDIENCE WHERE THEY ARE

If you're not already in the spaces where your audience spends time, what's holding you back? Try finding them on a new platform like TikTok or Spotify, or connect with your crowd's favourite offline communities.

SHOW THE LASTING IMPACTS

It's easy to get caught up in showing the immediate payoff, but it's worth highlighting the long-term benefits of volunteering too. Not just for others and for the world, but for the volunteers themselves.

SEEK OUT VARIED SKILLS

If you can diversify your recruitment campaigns to seek out specific skill sets, you're more likely to connect with those who feel 'seen' by your message. You might even find volunteers you would've otherwise missed.

MAKE VOLUNTEERING SOCIAL

Life is busier than ever - it's something we see across almost every audience group. Finding a way to make volunteering a social activity means your sign-ups can bring a friend and spend time together while they work.

SHARE THE VOICES OF YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Many consumers spend all day filtering out messages from brands talking about how great their service, product, or activity is. Using the authentic voices of your volunteers helps share your message in a more emotive way.

BONUS MATERIAL

Creating content your audience will seek out

Lush's sister agency, Dear Storyteller, has made a generous addition to this toolkit; a copy of their ebook, the definitive exploration of entertainment-based marketing.

How do brands effectively communicate their value to customers in a post-advertising world? With customers ignoring, skipping, and blocking ads at unprecedented rates, why does branded entertainment stand alone in its ability to earn trust and attention?

This in-depth guide into values-based, story-driven marketing explores the factors that make up the most effective marketing content and then shows you how to do it (or at least, think it).

Branded entertainment campaigns create an intangible bias that causes the customer to think, "I don't know why I like this brand, I just do. They think like me, they believe what I believe, and people like me support them because they support us."

FREE CONSULTATION

From all of us at Lush and Dear Storyteller, we hope you've found value in this toolkit, and that it helps you mobilise new volunteers in the future.

We'd like to offer you a free consulting session with Dear Storyteller GM and lead creative strategist at Lush, Mike Drysdale. This one-hour session is an opportunity to talk through your organisation's goals and spark fresh ideas.

DEAR
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THE GUIDE TO BRANDED ENTERTAINMENT

**'Turning brands into their customers'
favourite storytellers.'**

WRITTEN BY
MIKE DRYSDALE
& CLARE REID

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Here's the thing,

**Your customers
have good taste.**

**They know how they
like to spend their time.**

Chances are, they don't like watching ads.
Almost nobody does!

Ads are the obstacles that stand between us and the stories we love; the entertainment we seek out. But it doesn't have to be that way.

We can embrace a better brand of advertising, one that's not an interruption, but the destination itself. It's a form of advertising where the brand becomes the storyteller.

It's called branded entertainment. And, like the name suggests, it's all about entertaining our audiences; and, with this thinking as our compass, we begin to prioritise them and their worldview, rather than pushing our own.

The outcome? A level of brand loyalty that drives an unconscious bias.

It begins here, with this guide, where our goal is to bring you the philosophy behind branded entertainment. But, it's not all theory, we also dive into a pragmatic discussion on the many practical forms branded entertainment can take and has taken with industry leading brands. From consumer avatars through to industry categories and the hall of fame,

**welcome to The Guide to
Branded Entertainment.**

The Mirror Test

Branded entertainment represents a way for brands to be more and do more than annoy their potential customers with advertising. It represents an opportunity to become a part of the cultural zeitgeist, to become a meaningful aspect of your customers' identity and, in doing so, be handsomely rewarded.

An easy way to think of it is with the mirror test. Basically, holding a mirror up to yourself as a consumer ... a content consumer, an entertainment-seeker, an ad-avoider. Okay, a lot of assumptions are being made there; however, when you consider yourself as a consumer first - before you're a client, a creative, or a marketer - you can uncover some pretty interesting insights. Ask yourself, "Would I watch the content my brand is creating?" You may discover that what you're drawn to most are stories that speak to you and your worldview; watching/reading/listening to the things you actually care about. If an ad dares interrupt that pursuit, the impulse to [skip ad] is almost instantaneous. This nutritionless rhetoric is no substitute for the nourishing content that enriches our lives.

So, why can't brands exist in that nourishing space? Add value to the meaningful conversations we're already having?

Well, they can and they do.

But, like with all good things, embracing branded entertainment requires sacrifice. In order for your brand to become part of a bigger conversation, infused with the ability to shape culture, and influence customer sentiment; egos must be left at the door. The urge to sell, self-congratulate, and speak about product features ad nauseum undermine the potential success of brands in this arena.

Like so many aspects of running a good business, in order for branded entertainment to succeed, the customer must come first.



Defining Your Customers by the Content they Consume

The best brands in the world build products that improve their customers' lives. Branded entertainment takes the same view on marketing.

Instead of reducing marketing down to a disposable process of promoting and selling a business's products, branded entertainment treats marketing as a product in and of itself. It becomes another way to advance a brand's mission and improve the lives of their customers.

In this, there's an inherent need to know your brand's mission first; because, going to market, especially with a branded entertainment strategy, requires you to know who you are. The way your brand speaks, the media it engages with, its position in the market, and the people it seeks to engage. You may be more used to thinking of your customer (or target audience) as a list of demographics - age, gender, geography, yearly earning, level of education, etc. And yes, that all speaks to the bones of a good creative brief or brand strategy; however, branded entertainment demands more.

Where in the past we may have treated the consumer as a collection of needs and desires seeking consumption as an aid for social approval, here we go deeper. We look to gather insights into our customers as content consumers; what they watch, listen to, read, and generally use to entertain themselves on a daily basis. And, at a deeper level, how they view the world.

When we know what kinds of content they already seek out, we can orient our marketing around mastering the use of those formats as a vessel for implicit brand messaging. This allows brands to connect with existing and potential clients in a meaningful way - without setting off their advertising spidey senses!



So what questions can we ask to uncover these insights?

Audience Avatar Questions:

- 1 What is my ideal customers' worldview? (their values, attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives on the world relevant to our business)
- 2 Where do they like to spend their time online? (FB, IG, TikTok, Spotify, Netflix, Youtube, Twitter, Medium, LinkedIn, Reddit, Giphy, news sites etc).
- 3 Are they drawn to long form content or short form? Written or visual?
- 4 What category of content do they seek out? (reaction videos, tutorials, dances, vlogs, memes, prank videos, expert analysis, sports highlights, blogs, art).
- 5 How does the way they share content help them express their identity?
- 6 What makes them laugh? (dad jokes, wholesome memes, dark comedy, puns, observational humour, slapstick, clever humour, British style or American).
- 7 If they were to choose a show to watch on Netflix, what genre would they be most likely to pick? (reality, sport, comedy, rom-com, action, thriller, horror, fantasy, sci-fi).

Why Traditional Ads Don't Work

Human beings are pattern recognising machines. We train our brains everyday to use cues to predict the outcomes of common events. And, the thing is, it works to keep us and our world largely unchanged. Even if the patterns aren't that great, they're safe and predictable.

Take watching a video for example.

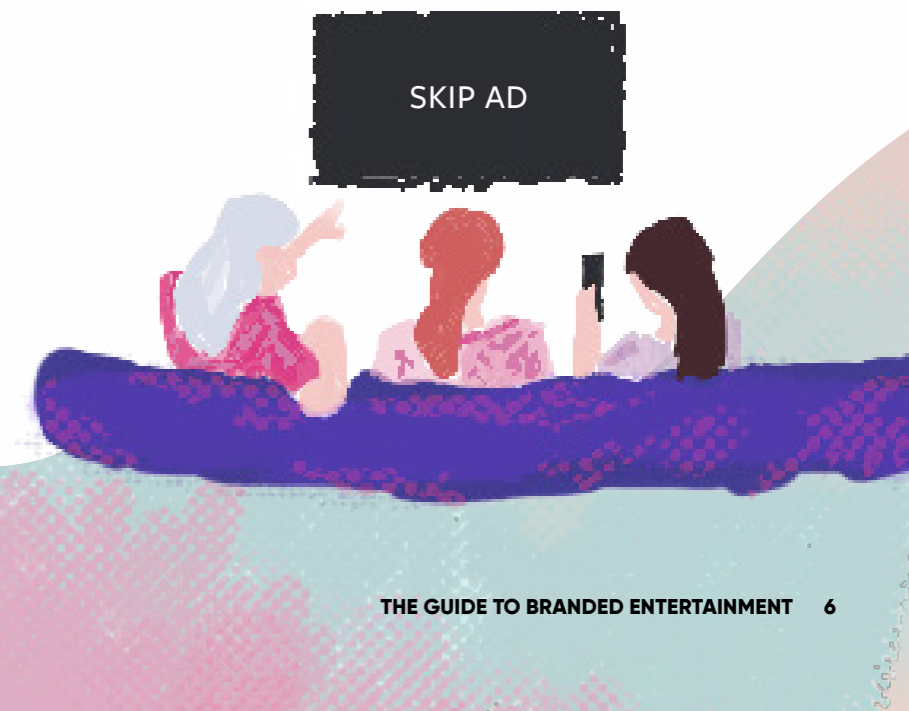
How many videos do you think your customers have watched since they first started using the internet? Almost certainly too many to count. That means a lot of patterns have been formed along the way. Thanks to those patterns, it doesn't take long to decide whether a video is worth watching or not. We know what's good, what's bad, what's worthy of our attention, what's not; and we know it almost instantly.

So, how do ads stack up? For the most part, they rarely make it past the four second mark. The classic advertising formula of product, price, promotion, and place is thrust into the customer's face as quickly as possible, before the [skip ad] button appears. In this way, ad creators are limiting themselves to the confines of a system that doesn't work, one that resigns itself to the idea that, "Your content will be skipped as soon as possible."

The blaring voice over, the stock music, the anonymous on-screen talent, the use of second person messaging, the mention of a problem or opportunity, the visible product, logo or packaging. Inevitably, the fifth second arrives with its [skip ad] button and we seize our opportunity to escape. That's because most ads are easy to identify. They follow a set of conventions so distinct, that they become like a sea of red flags for the brain to recognise almost immediately as a pattern that says, "This is a waste of my time."

Branded entertainment is the antidote to advertising. Because, chances are, if you've liked ads in the past, they probably didn't feel like ads at all. They navigated your brain's filtering process by using the conventions of entertainment.

As a brand, it's not so much what you say, as how you say it - and, how you show it. It's still possible to deliver implicit brand messaging via an entertaining format, as long as the entertainment comes first. As long as the customer comes first.



The Process of Integration

Once the format has been settled on - based on your audience's entertainment proclivity - the process of integrating the brand begins. This involves the brand echoing the customers' worldview and establishing your brand as part of the customers' tribe. In order to do this, the brand must focus on conveying what it stands for as opposed to talking about what it sells.

This approach works because it creates a connection between the customer and the brand.

An intangible bias that causes the customer to think, "I don't know why I like this brand, I just do. They think like me, they believe what I believe, and people like me support them because they support us."

Yes, this is in the realm of brand values, but it takes values and makes them active and actionable. When you stand for something, it means that you need to stand up for it. And, not just in your marketing. If you actively stand for environmental conservation for example, you can't then proceed to host a festival that generates toxic amounts of unnecessary waste. In standing for something, you're also actively standing against anything that draws you away from your vision for a better world. Idealistic? Perhaps. Possible? Definitely. So, how do you find a set of actionable values you can orient your brand around?



What Can Your Brand Stand for?

There are so many ways in which we can make the world a better place.

Being in business gives us a unique and privileged position that we can leverage in order to make our vision of a better world a reality. Of course not everyone's view of better is the same, but that's what makes your business and your audience unique.

What you stand for is a story you tell about how you're making the world a better place.

This can range from internal policies to community initiatives on any number of social issues. Brands have created platforms to take a stand on gender equality, accessibility, anti racism, sustainability, diversity, representation, mental health, employee support, prejudice, poverty, wealth disparity, environmentalism, hate speech, and more. The key: make sure you can follow through, long term. Because, when you jump onto a cause trend, you'll quickly be called out for virtue signaling. Sure, it might provide a short burst of positive sentiment, but if a brand's message isn't backed by actions, the blow back can be swift and extreme. The alternative? A commitment that is real, actionable, transparent, measurable, and long-term. Then it's possible to create a brand that customers believe in and feel pride in being affiliated with. And pride is a powerful emotion, generated because they know when your brand wins, what you stand for wins as well.

Therefore, building purpose into the DNA of a company should be a priority, with the attractive bi-product of generating brand loyalty. By taking this approach, building a business becomes a process of you and your customers working together toward achieving something bigger than your products or services. Enter ... the loyalty exchange.

Loyalty is defined as a strong feeling of support or allegiance. With that definition, it's easy to understand why it would be hard to feel loyal towards a company you simply had a material exchange of goods and services with. Purchasing something doesn't really inspire support or allegiance, but stories do.

As a next-chapter taster, one method of telling stories around what your company stands for is through the form of ambassadors.

The North Face, Nike, and Red Bull have been masters of brand ambassadorship for years. Red Bull brought legitimacy to a number of extreme sports that had no history of corporate sponsorship. Nike has constantly backed its athletes to make bold political and cultural statements, and The North Face has championed conservation and equality through company initiatives and the stories they've empowered their ambassadors to tell.

Conceiving A Branded Entertainment Campaign

Great branded entertainment campaigns are born from the cultural landscape. They often join conversations already taking place and give a voice to a brand's customers in a way that strengthens their affinity with the brand.

When conceiving a branded entertainment campaign, knowing your audience and knowing what you're prepared to stand for are the starting point.

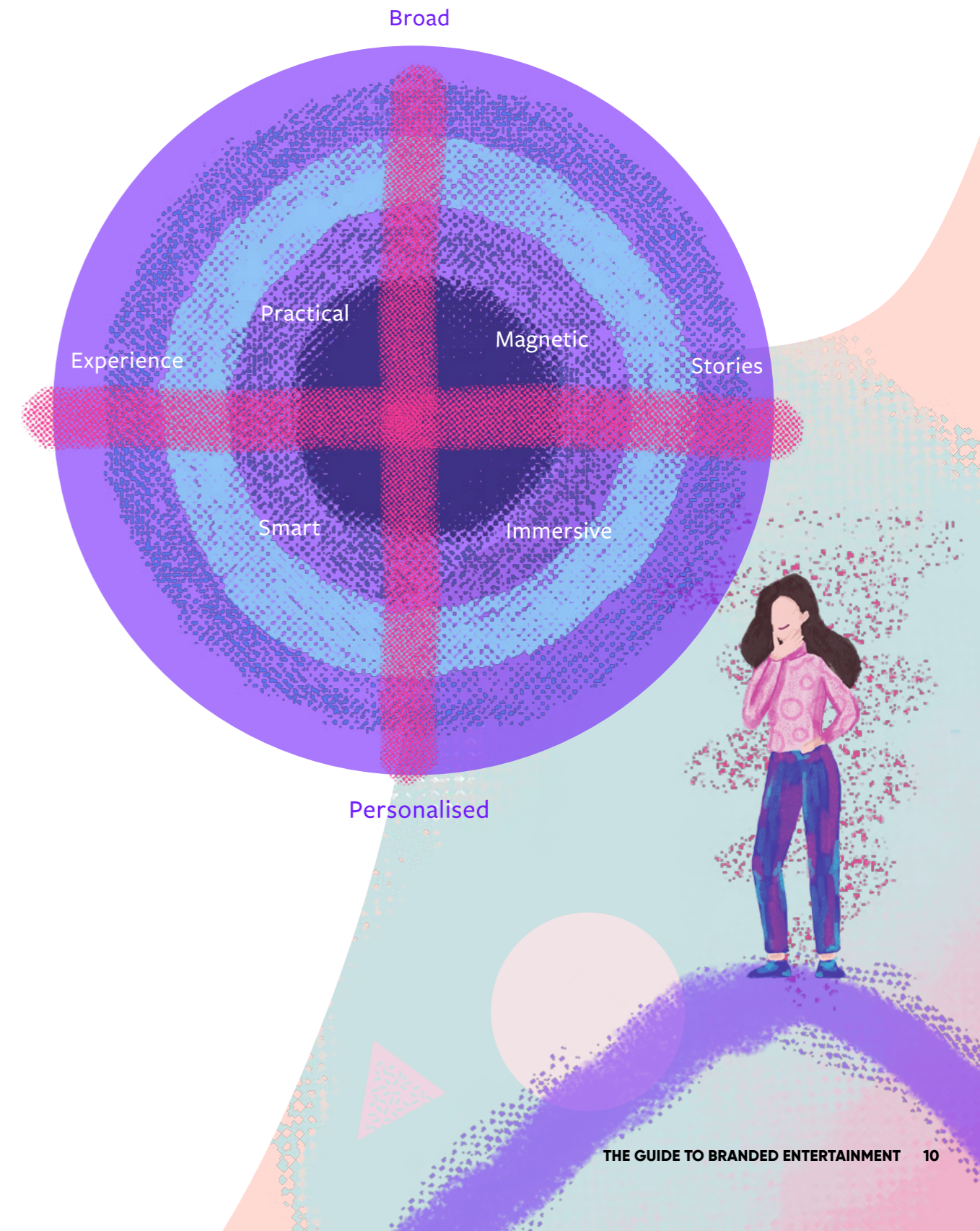
Once that foundation has been established, the focus changes to seeing what role the brand can play in the cultural narratives of the time. How can you join conversations your customers are having as a supportive, dissenting, inspiring, insightful, or facilitating voice that adds to the conversation in a unique way.

This is easier said than done in certain industries. The specific conversations your customers are having might feel like a mystery to you. Ogilvy and Mather have an interesting take on this that they represent through their content matrix.

Stories that cover a broad spectrum of the human experience are more magnetic, with a greater chance of "going viral". While stories that are more personalised become immersive, resulting in a more meaningful viewing experience for a smaller number of people.

That's why branded entertainment is often mastered by FMCG brands who speak to broader audiences and can focus their content on a widely shared aspect of the human experience. However, that doesn't exclude brands with more niche audiences having great success with branded entertainment too. The reason for this is simple; for someone who doesn't typically see themselves represented through mainstream media, representation can be all the more satisfying. This leads to that loyalty-inducing, immersive-viewing experience.

Either way, if your content doesn't allow your customer to express something about their identity by sharing it, it probably won't.



Branded Entertainment

Campaigns in Practise



When Nadaam started their cashmere clothing brand in 2017, they kicked things off with a bang. Determined to engage a younger demographic with luxury clothing, they needed to tell a story that showcased Nadaam's spirit of adventure and sustainability. They also wanted to highlight the affordability of the product. To do this, they took the branded entertainment approach.

The brand created a four minute video called, "The True Story of Nadaam." The story follows two goofballs, (later revealed to be the founders) on a wild adventure into the middle of the Gobi desert. The kicker? They're carrying over \$2,000,000 in cash! Sounds entertaining right? A story that wanderlust-inspired millennials certainly got behind.

What's even better is that this video feels like a documentary trailer.

By the time it's over, we know who Nadaam is, what they do, what they stand for, and why we should care. The trick is, they address those things in reverse order.

- 1 Why we should care - the entertainment factor
- 2 What they stand for - the proposition
- 3 What they do - the brand

By using the conventions of a documentary trailer, Nadaam hooks the viewer and gets them invested.

That is how you get remembered.

Non-For-Profits



Uniting Care West came to us in the lead up to Homelessness Week. Their brief was centered on dollars through the door; they needed donations to keep Tranby House open seven days a week and provide night stay spaces for people sleeping rough on the streets. But, before we could go for the 'ask', we knew that people needed to care – to feel something – before they would act.

This is where the pitch for a branded entertainment film came into play. The aim being to make homelessness more visible by encouraging audiences to see past a person's situation and through to their humanity.

We were inspired by three entertainment trends happening at the time of production that helped cement our creative direction for the film. Firstly, we identified that the videos on homelessness that generated the most engagement and emotion, also regularly centered on themes of transformation. At a macro level, entertainment juggernauts like Marvel and Netflix had established a consistent trend towards supernaturalism in entertainment. And, finally, brands like Dove and Nike had set powerful precedence by showcasing young female protagonists in change-making positions of agency. These three elements essentially became the framework through which our story was built.

By focusing on story and the conventions of entertainment, we were able to spark curiosity and interest in our audience. Rather than immediately suspecting advertising, viewers engaged with the story and desired to see it resolve.

This emotional investment became the trigger for action.

The power of branded entertainment also meant that the value was seen beyond the campaign. Yagan Square screened the film 10 times a day for the entirety of homelessness week at no media cost. The social media engagement generated significant organic reach with viewers sharing the film 162 times within the first week alone, and discussing the impact of the narrative on a personal level. Without any budget for content amplification, the success of the campaign was testament to the content and its shareable nature.

Recruitment



You can't get a much more specific target audience for a branded entertainment piece than mining engineers. That was exactly the case when Perth mining company, Mineral Resources Limited engaged Dear Storyteller to find them the best mining engineers in WA.

Mineral Resources Limited (MinRes) had a recruitment problem. Sure, they could find people who ticked all the right boxes but these same people weren't thriving in the unique culture of MinRes. So, we created a piece of branded entertainment that follows Mark as he lands his first opportunity to lead a commodity mining project. It's a 4-minute showcase of life at MinRes that sets clear expectations and illuminates them with honesty, candour, and humour. "We're Different" drove an influx of top-tier applicants who truly understood the cultural nuances of the company and solved a long-standing recruitment problem.

The Branded Entertainment **HALL of FAME**



NIKE

Dream Crazy & Dream Crazier

If Nike was to open a hotel in the city tomorrow, we could probably imagine what that hotel might look like. That's because Nike's brand has always been clear. Alternatively, if Hyatt released a pair of sneakers, they're more than a little hard to imagine and, in some ways, you just wouldn't want to. That's because Hyatt is part of a largely commodotised hotel industry where one brand is almost indistinguishable from another.

Branded entertainment can go a long way to separate a brand from the pack and give it an identity. And, for Nike, they've used branded entertainment to show us that it's never been about the technical aspects of the shoe, it's about what they stand for - Just Do It and, more recently, Dream Crazy and Dream Crazier.

In Nike's Dream Crazy campaign, the brand joined a conversation sports fans were already having at the time. The conversation revolved around whether athletes could have a say on topics other than sports. Dream Crazy became the platform for Nike to share its stance on the debate by showcasing its continued sponsorship of NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick. A now former NFL player who famously took a knee during the US national anthem as part of a Black Lives Matter protest.

The ad weaves Kaepernick's story into a larger narrative that includes Nike athletes like LeBron James who was famously told to, "Shut up and dribble" by a Fox news anchor.

Serena Williams helmed a follow up piece called Dream Crazier that expanded the narrative into a conversation around equal opportunity for women in sports. The script doesn't stop at sports though; this spot calls into question the language used to minimise and dismiss women's dreams. Here, Nike firmly positions themselves as advocates in an arena of equality and makes you, as a viewer, feel something powerful.

In Nike's words, Dream Crazy "Shines a spotlight on female athletes who have broken barriers, brought people together through their performance and inspired generations of athletes to chase after their dreams."



These campaigns are completely indicative of a company that has always been brand focused. Using athlete stories and then standing by to showcase who and what they stand for.

BUDWEISER

This Bud's for 3

"This Bud's For 3" is a piece of branded entertainment made for fans of the NBA and, in particular, Dwayne Wade. What Budweiser manages to do so brilliantly in this video, is play the role of "facilitator" in a meaningful conversation.

This video was made after Dwayne Wade announced his retirement from the NBA. Rather than pay Wade to stand in front of the camera and say, "Budweiser tastes great", the brand decided to honour Wade instead. Not as a basketball player but as someone who has always fought to elevate those less fortunate than himself and be bigger than basketball.

They then cap off the video by adding a simple and elegant piece of branding, "This Bud's for 3".

In other words, people like us toast champions like Dwayne Wade ... with a Budweiser of course!



Budweiser makes the assumption that a good proportion of Dwayne Wade fans drink beer. To bring themselves closer to this market, they establish themselves as part of that tribe (via the tribute) and add to the conversation around Wade's legacy with these remarkable stories. His hero status is effortlessly transferred onto the brand simply via championing the conversation.



The Lego Movie



What if we told you that by creating branded entertainment, you could get millions of people to line up and pay between \$10-\$20 to watch over 120 minutes of micro ads promoting your brand? Because that's what someone told Lego, which led to one of the most impactful pieces of branded entertainment of all time.

Mission.org reported that, "In 2015, the year after the release of The LEGO Movie, LEGO reported sales jumped 25%. In 2014, sales jumped 14% after the release of the movie."

That was more than the release of any LEGO video game or release of any other co-branded LEGO set. It also translated into a record setting \$4.4 billion in sales.

Now, few brands have the financial power or leverage to create the LEGO movie, but understanding the philosophy behind it is also powerful. LEGO knows that it sells to a two-sided marketplace: parents and children. So it was sure to design the LEGO movie to be entertaining for both parents and children. But on top of that, LEGO understood that it doesn't sell small plastic blocks that can be assembled and reassembled in countless different ways.

LEGO sells fun, creativity, adventure, and imagination. All of which are front and center in this first ballot Branded Entertainment Hall of Famer.



Our Blades Are F***ing Great



The title of an article written by advertising creative Mike Johnston in 2016, simply referred to this video as:

“The Video That Turned Dollar Shave Club into a \$1B Company”

That’s right, in its first four years, this video was watched on Youtube over 23 million times. The success it brought to the brand eventually led to the sale of the company to Unilever for just under a billion dollars. Four years later again, and views on the video have tipped over 63 million. And this is why it belongs in the branded entertainment hall of fame.

As Johnston mentions in the article, “What looks like a schlocky, homemade video was actually a highly planned production by people who really understood what they were doing.”

In order to disrupt the over priced razor market, Dollar Shave Club had to position themselves as the opposite of their competitors. If Gillette was fancy, sleek, and backed by Roger Federer; Dollar Shave Club was committed to being amateur, practical, and backed by a man in a bear suit. This underdog story was a master stroke designed by improvised comedy duo Paulilu Productions to speak to a

specific section of the male market. But, why does this piece of content achieve the status of branded entertainment, especially when it follows an almost stereotypical ad formula? It’s all in the genre. What Dollar Shave Club did was take the conventions of advertising and TVCs to the extreme - product, price, place, promotion - resulting in an iconic piece of satirical comedy.

The proposition is present in every fiber of the video. From Dollar Shave Club Founder Michael Dublin’s loose tie and unbuttoned collar, to his ludicrously messy office wall. The brand uses these semiotics to appeal to a market who would rather watch sports on the couch than go to the supermarket to buy a new razor. Perhaps the ultimate differentiator is the willingness of the brand to do something Gillette would never do, by using the line “our blades are fucking great”.

Dollar Shave Club used values-based, story-driven marketing, alongside a meta commentary on advertising at its most obvious - to connect with their target market and were heavily rewarded in return

Many other brands like Manscaped, William Painter and James Allen Rings have had success using this formula of satirising advertising into comedy. Aviation Gin’s iconic ad “The Process” is another fantastic example of this. Ryan Reynolds mocks the conventions of an origin story advertisement, while overtly selling his gin based on humorously false claims. It works because the audience wants to connect with the philosophy behind the brand, not the features and benefits of the product.



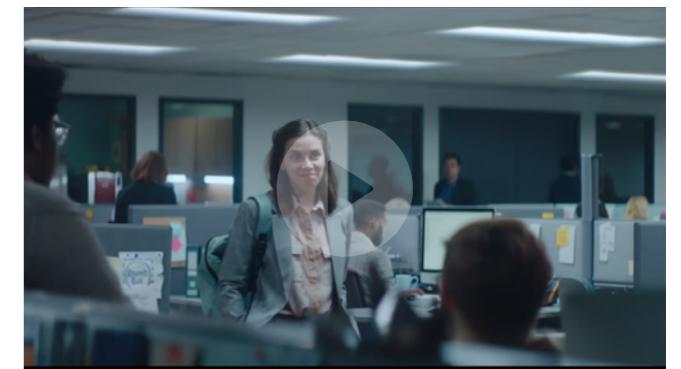
The Underdogs, Apple at Work

Apple has long had a reputation of creating brand defining content marketing. Starting with their iconic “1984” commercial, Apple has developed concept after concept that borrows from the world of entertainment to deliver iconic pieces of branded entertainment.

They told us to ‘think different’ in the 1997 spot, The Crazy Ones. They showed us how everything is not always as it seems in their 2013 spot, Misunderstood. Most recently, in 2019, Apple created an “Ad About a Scrappy Group of Coworkers (that) Is Honestly Better Than Most Sitcoms”. That headline comes straight from the title of an adnews.com article that says very little, because very little needs to be said.

The key to Apple’s branded entertainment is that it speaks to their customers’ world view. It tugs on the heart strings of the creative, free thinking, juggernauts that Apple’s fan base hope and wish to be. None of these commercials mention speed or performance, because that’s not why people buy Apple products. Apple customers buy Apple by and large, because they want to be the kind of person who owns a macbook or the latest iPhone and Apple has been painting and repainting the portrait of who that person is for nearly 40 years.

With over 5 million views on Apple’s YouTube channel and close to 100k likes, The Underdogs is just one more example of Apple appealing to identity over selling features and price.



Worlds Apart, Open Your World

In 2017, in the midst of one of the most divisive times in recent US history, Heineken found a way to showcase the values and positive emotional potential of its brand via branded entertainment. The social experiment they conducted sought to bring people together with strongly opposing views. Heineken prerecorded interviews with both parties, went on to facilitate a shared experience, and then showed clips of the prerecorded interviews. The test of the experiment would be whether those individuals chose to discuss their differences over a beer. Which they all did.

The concept was fresh and clearly tied to the brand without ever explicitly mentioning features like “great taste” or being “ice cold”. It also came on the heels of a disastrous Kendall Jenner Pepsi commercial that poorly handled a similar subject matter.

The results of the campaign for Heineken were undeniable. An excerpt from Oystercatchers captures the campaign’s results:

“Whilst the campaign was only supported in the UK, the provocative subject matter meant it transcended borders and boundaries and was viewed more than 50 million times in over 150 countries. It has generated a huge volume of organic conversation – 625+ articles published, had 324,000 engagements and 138,000 shares, and made international TV news coverage (USA Today, CNN, MSNBC). It became a top trending topic on Twitter, made it to the front page of Reddit, was the No.1 ad on YouTube for April, created reaction videos online, and it has even spawned a couple of parodies too.

Most importantly, Heineken UK has reported it as their most effective campaign, ever.”



These results speak to the newsworthiness of branded entertainment. Heineken’s views aren’t reliant on media spend - like they often are when it comes to ad format (there’s a reason it’s called Cost Per Click) - the impact of the campaign came from the ‘talkaboutable’ nature of the content. News platforms chose to tell the story because it was relevant, it spoke to a cultural narrative, it contributed to the conversations already being had, and added value to these spaces. We’d be so bold as to say that virality hangs off the format you choose - again, ask yourself, are you creating meaningful entertaining content that people naturally seek out? Because the alternative is the [skip ad] button.



PLAY NZ

100% Pure New Zealand

According to research from IDG Consulting chief Yoshio Osaki, by the end of 2020 Video Games looked to set to surpass television as the most lucrative form of entertainment. The industry pulls in an annual revenue of around 195 billion dollars.

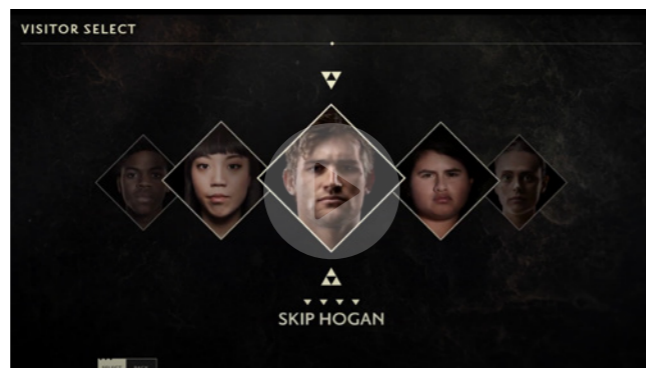
Video games, like television, have their own genres and conventions for storytellers to call on in order to elevate their campaigns. That's exactly what 100% Pure New Zealand did when they made the viral marketing campaign Play NZ, positioning New Zealand as the best open world RPG in... the world.

The campaign borrowed visual language from open world, role playing games, video game trailers, and even Twitch streams.

The result was a tourism ad that connected with gamers by speaking directly to what they love the most - games.

As the video unfolds we see a popular video game streamer, Loserfruit, experience Play NZ. There's an opening title montage, a character select menu, and even fake gameplay complete with heads-up displays. It's a masterful imitation of a real video game. But that's the thing, this isn't a video game at all. It's an ad, filled with implicit messaging about the wonders of visiting New Zealand.

By the time an audience member realises a campaign like Play NZ is an ad, they don't care. The story has intrigued and entertained them enough to earn their time and attention. The same can be achieved with any brand by drawing inspiration from entertaining formats.



GUINNESS

The Guinness Book of World Records

Guinness is a special entrant into the Branded Entertainment Hall of Fame because, not only is Guinness the only brand whose entertainment didn't come in video form, it was also one of the first.

60 years ago Guinness had a problem, its sales in pubs were going down for the first time ever. So they went out and did some old school market research. They found out that the top two things that people in pubs talked about were football and trivia, so they made the Guinness Book of World Records. A piece of branded entertainment that they could litter with baked in advertisements to increase sales ... and it worked.

The best part of that story, other than blowing your mind that the Guinness Book of World Records was started by Guinness (yes it's true, look it up) is that they found out the two things their customers talked about the most. Not the two biggest things their customers looked for in a beer. They once again focused on identity, values, and stories that their customers tell their friends.

From this example alone, we can draw a few concrete conclusions. Firstly, the success of a branded entertainment piece comes from the information you gather. There is less intel derived from standard audience demographics and more onus put on knowing your audience's world-view and entertainment preferences. This takes us back to page 4. Next, Guinness has taught us to go where the people are.



They didn't do their market research in people's homes or at their workplaces (60 years ago they certainly couldn't rely on the marketing wizardry - or cryptonite - that is Survey Monkey), they went into the environment where their customers are most likely to engage with their product. Insights gathered from the place of origin are less manufactured and, in that, richer. We're not relying on memory or fabricated experiences in the realm of, "remember that time you did X or tried Y? Tell us about that." We've become so reliant on the online survey; but, with this, we have no control over the environment in which we are gathering information. If you can't go to where the people are (your brand's people), then set the scene for them in your next online survey or make the ask as close to the experience as possible. And remember, you're never asking them how they liked that last pint.



Conclusion

The current entertainment landscape means that attention is harder to come by than ever before.

Smart marketers and brands must embrace branded entertainment as a way of connecting and communicating with their audience. Not through interruption, but by making their marketing part of their contribution to their target audience.

Telling the stories they love with implicit brand messaging worked in.

Branded entertainment starts with finding the conversations and genres that your customers are interested in and exploring how your brand can make a meaningful contribution to those spaces.

The key is in recontextualising the genre's conventions in surprising, funny and clever ways.

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