



“This room is so right for us because it has inspiration at its core. It’s a crazy, fun space.”

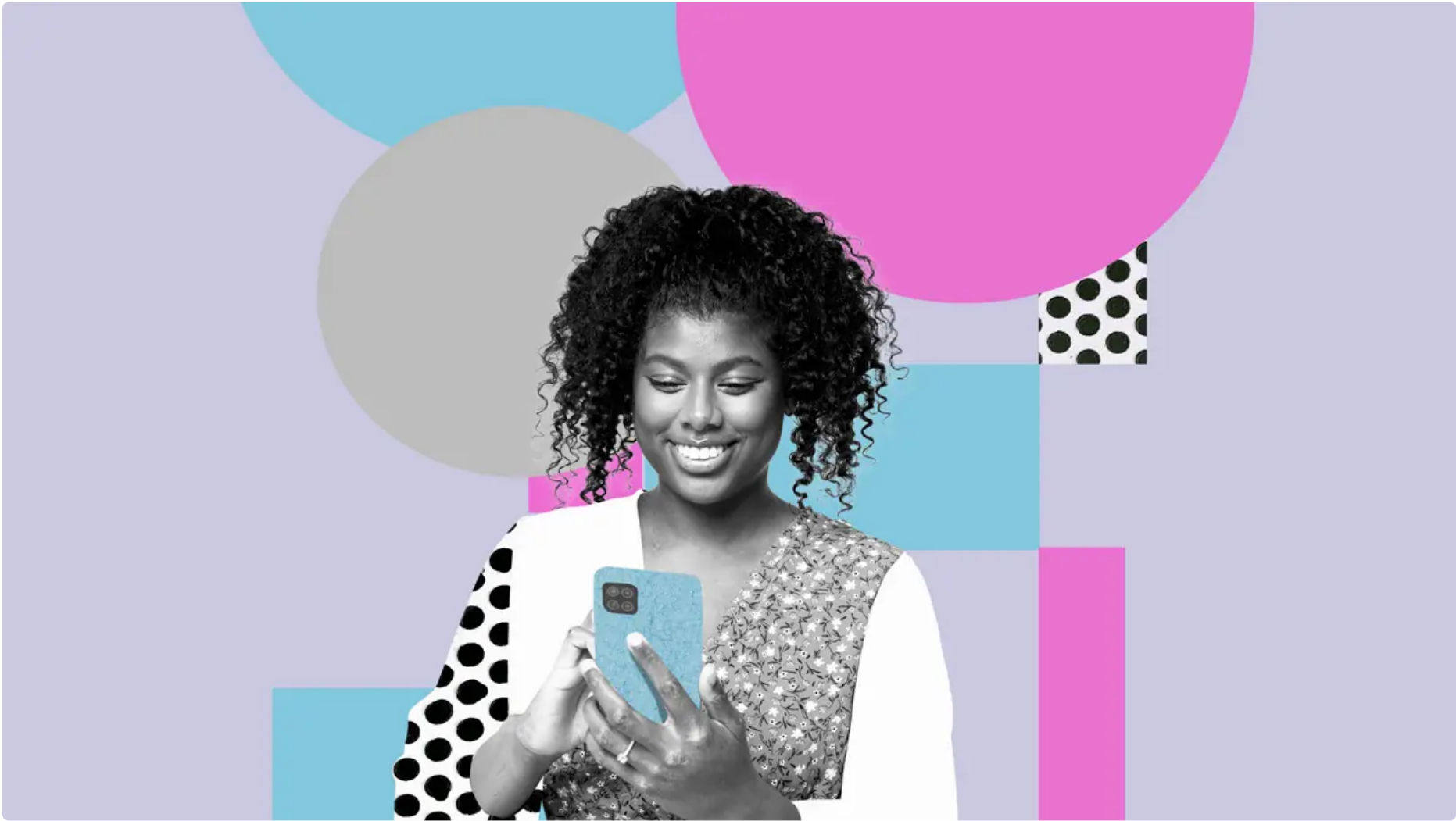
Shayne Millington
McCann New York, Co-CCO

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THE CREATORVERSE

7 Myths About Creator Marketing

Why we believe them and why we’re wrong



Creator marketing can reach people of all ages. Tara Moore/Getty Images



By **Paul Barbagallo & Ann Marinovich**

MAY 8, 2023



Don't miss **Brandweek**, Adweek's ultimate experience for marketers, September 11-14 in Miami. Connect with peers and gain insights and inspiration from top brand marketers and industry icons at **Glossier, Coca-Cola, Taco Bell** and more. [Register](#).

Several months ago, Bryan Reisberg, an online content creator and founder of the popular dog backpack company Little Chonk, met Jonathan Bensamoun, the founder of smart dog collar startup Fi, at a work dinner. The two clicked immediately, owing it to their shared love of four-legged friends and a burning desire to create—be it a business, product or brand.

"I didn't really have a need for a GPS-tracking collar since my dog Maxine is always with me," Reisberg told Adweek. "But [Bensamoun] showed me the Fi app and all the biodata it collects, which is something that's useful for me since I have a corgi and they tend to gain weight fast. We agreed to work together, and I was given the flexibility to essentially create what I wanted."

The result was a 60-second [video](#) of Reisberg explaining the benefits of Fi's products to dog owners, which now has more than 3.5 million views on YouTube.

Every day we hear stories like these (though perhaps not as positive) about the creator economy, which continues to **grow at staggering rates** and radically affect the way goods and services are designed, marketed and consumed. Yet there are also a lot of myths about creator marketing. And some brands may be regularly making decisions that undermine their stated values and goals—along with their bottom lines.

Interviews with marketers, creators, agency executives, matchmakers and researchers highlighted seven myths worth dispelling.

Myth No. 1: Creators are the new brand ambassadors. Creator marketing produces immense value for brands and social media platforms, but that success often skews the real role of creators themselves. To Reisberg, creators are not de facto "ambassadors" of the brand; they are "representations" of the brand, which is an important distinction.

"Your brand should filter through them and their identity," Reisberg said. "Creators do not exist to repeat your mission, vision and values."

Among other things, assuming a creator will be a devoted spokesperson and "brand bible" steward can lead to misunderstandings and frayed relations between the two sides. "If a brand and agency has done their homework on the creator and the kind of value they bring to their audience, there should be a clear and oftentimes novel path to success with their audience," Reisberg said.

Myth No. 2: Creators can help a brand achieve more than one performance goal simultaneously. As brands devote larger portions of their marketing budgets to creator campaigns, their expectations for performance and ROI have grown exponentially. According to Justin Moore, founder of Creator Wizard, a company that teaches creators how to find and negotiate brand deals, many companies want to accomplish more than one performance goal at the same time (e.g., conversions—clicks, app downloads, software trials—and brand awareness).

"What I say to creators is this: It can't be both," Moore told Adweek.

"If the goal is brand awareness, marketers might be better served to partner with one or two macro creators (those with more than 500,000 followers) using a 'top-of-the-funnel' creative strategy, since the idea is to reach as many people as possible," said Moore. If the objective is user-generated content (UGC) to give the brand more credibility in the market, a roster of 20 to 30 nano (fewer than 10,000 followers) and micro creators (10,000 to 50,000 followers) would be the most sensible and efficient option, as nano and micro influencers tend to be both cheaper to partner with and motivated to create brand content.

"The way in which you create and produce the content is going to be totally different depending on what the brand's goal is," Moore said.

Myth No. 3: Creators want complete creative control. There is a common perception that creators want to dictate the terms of a brand's messaging and creative. This myth has led some brands to preempt creative-control issues through aggressive micromanagement. But what creators really want is direction, inspiration and support.

"The smartest brands seed the creative community without being overly proscriptive," Chris Ross, a Gartner vp and analyst advising CMOs on strategy, brand and innovation, told Adweek. "They're saying, 'Here's an idea. Here's an important feature. Here's a theme we want to talk about during a particular period of time.' And then they let them riff on it."

That way, creators are not working in a "vacuum," and the brand still maintains some creative control, Ross said.



“We value the input and creativity of our creators, while also ensuring that our brand messaging is effectively conveyed,” Chimal told Adweek. “It’s a collaborative process that allows both parties to contribute their strengths, resulting in compelling and authentic content.”

Myth No. 4: The rules of scaling apply. When a creator’s post goes viral, how do you repeat that success? What learnings can be applied to other creator campaigns to deliver maximum value at scale?

Most marketing leaders have found themselves asking questions like this. But instead of trying to “scale” in the conventional business sense, marketers should aim to work more deeply and consistently with the right creators and treat them more like athlete endorsements, said Brendan Gahan, partner and chief social officer at the independent creative agency Mekanism.

“When marketers think of scaling a successful campaign, often to them, that means efficiencies,” Gahan said. “But that thinking doesn’t lend itself well to building trusted, fruitful relationships with creators for the long term, which is really the goal.”

When marketers are patient and get to know creators and their audiences, the benefits of economies of scale, such as cost and process efficiencies, will naturally accrue, he said.

The goal should be to shift from “campaign-by-campaign” thinking to a “long-term, always-on strategy,” according to Crystal Malachias, senior vice president for global growth and innovation at R&CPMK. “You’re much more able to react to immediate trends because you’ve already got those relationships and contracts in place,” “Plus, it’s more cost-efficient.”

Myth No. 5: A creator post is ideal for promoting a new product. This seems counterintuitive, but recent research has found that the ROI for influencer posts announcing new products was 30.5% lower than for equivalent posts not pushing new products. Jonathan Zhang, a marketing professor at Colorado State University who was involved in conducting the research, said the lower ROI can be attributed to two main factors: consumer resistance and lack of authenticity.

“Consumers are already constantly getting sold to other marketing channels, and many don’t want this to also be the experience when they follow their influencers,” Zhang told Adweek. “And when an influencer is promoting a new product, it might be perceived as less authentic, since the influencer has not yet had a chance to use the product extensively and form a genuine opinion about it.”

Myth No. 6: Creator marketing is best for reaching (only) young people. There is a common belief that creator marketing is best for connecting with Generation Z and millennial consumers. While apps like TikTok are undeniably popular with younger users, user bases are aging up in a big way. Older audiences are increasingly present on social media platforms, with 61% of Instagram and TikTok users being over age 25, according to Statista.

“There’s a tendency for some brands to be too narrow-minded when it comes to audiences and platforms,” R&CPMK’s Malachias said.

Myth No. 7: True measurement of a campaign’s success is elusive. In a recent eMarketer study, 79% of marketers ranked measurement as the leading challenge facing creator marketing programs, followed by ROI (76%). Though it’s undoubtedly tricky to pull off, consistent, rigorous, industrywide measurement is possible.

At the end of the day, a creator campaign is just another form of marketing, Zhang said. The more marketers track everything they do for other media—engagement, conversion, sales and the potential long-term impact of associating with a particular creator—the more clarity they will have about the impact on performance and business outcomes.

Gonca Bubani, global thought leader, media at Kantar, added, “a lack of systematic measurement has been holding influencer marketing back from going full throttle.”

Leveling up

When it comes to optimizing creator marketing, our conversations with experts yield several imperatives for marketers, the most vital of which is to level up their management of creator campaigns. Marketing teams must develop their teams’ skill sets to better identify and work with creators, develop systems of real-time evaluation and measurement and engage in long-term strategic planning and relationship-building. Based on what we’ve seen already across the creator economy, the most successful marketers and agencies of the next 10 years will be those who prioritize getting it right over getting it fast.



The votes are in...

Where do you stand compared to the rest of the Adweek community?

Increase brand awareness	75%
Conversions (purchases, app downloads, subscriptions, etc.)	25%
Test new creative or messaging	0%
Stimulate user-generated content	0%
Generate more engagement	0%
Reach new audiences	0%
Other, please specify	0%

More on *The Creatorverse*.

For big-picture thinking and actionable advice, visit Adweek's [Practical Insights](#) category page.

This story is part of Adweek's *The Creatorverse* digital features package, which spotlights the creator economy: the people who make up the industry's new content royalty, and the marketers and agencies that collaborate with them to drive next-level engagement for their brands.



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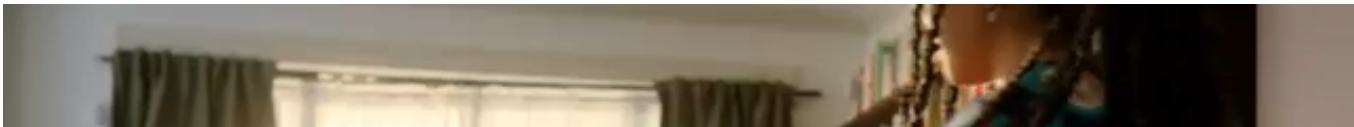
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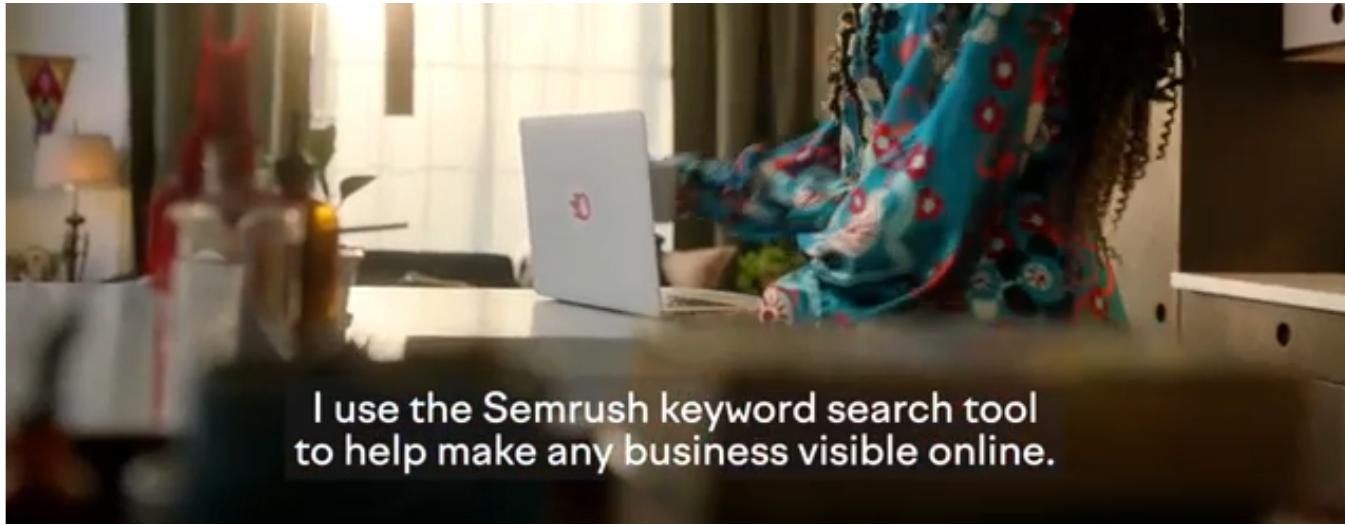
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Ann Marinovich is Adweek's chief content officer, where she leads the company’s content strategy and capabilities across all content formats including editorial, events, branded content, social, podcasts, video and community engagement.

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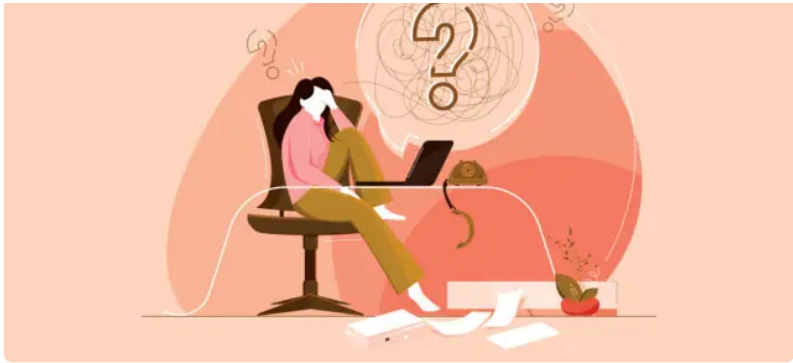
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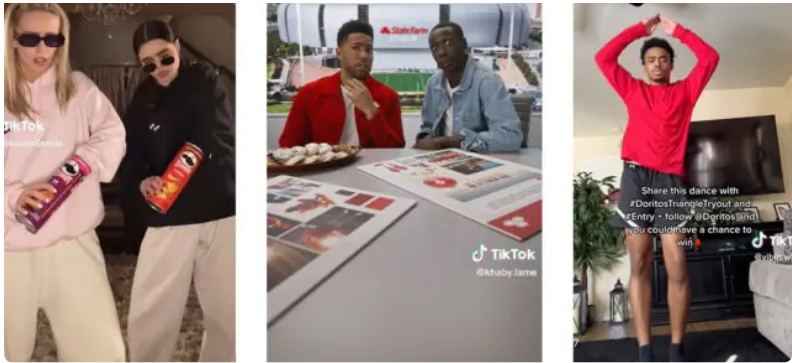
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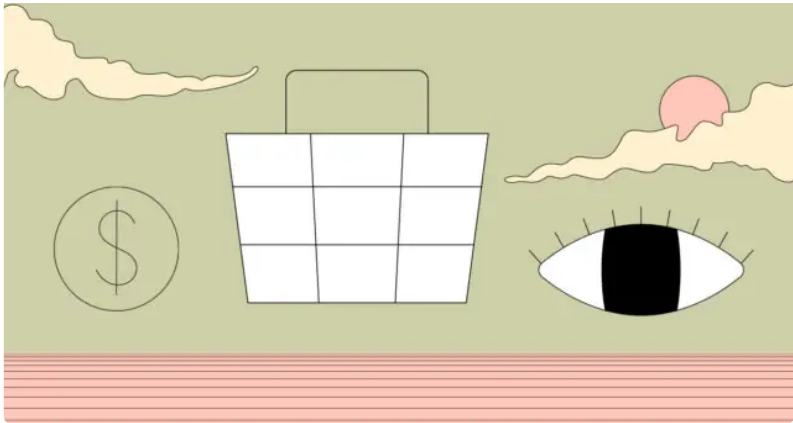
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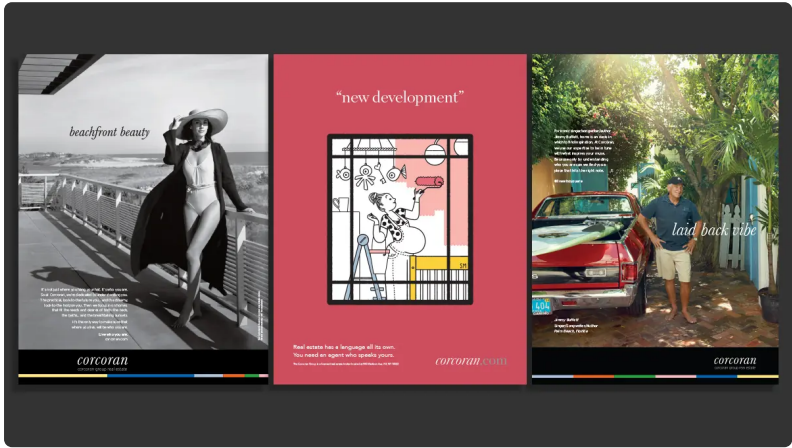
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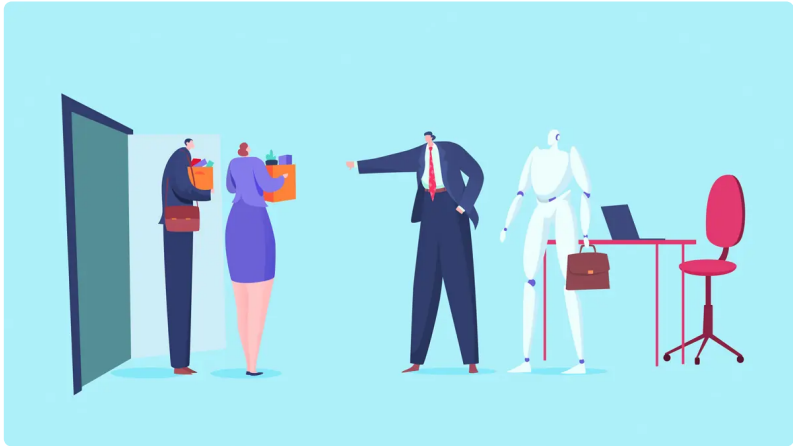
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