

Moving beyond the long and the short

Recently, a new brand I'm associated with conducted an attribution study that returned a puzzling result. It had asked its customers where they had heard of the brand (which was relatively new), and a good-sized chunk of the respondents said they saw it on YouTube. However, the brand had never advertised on YouTube, nor had its products been reviewed in any substantial numbers on the platform.

Temps de lecture : minute

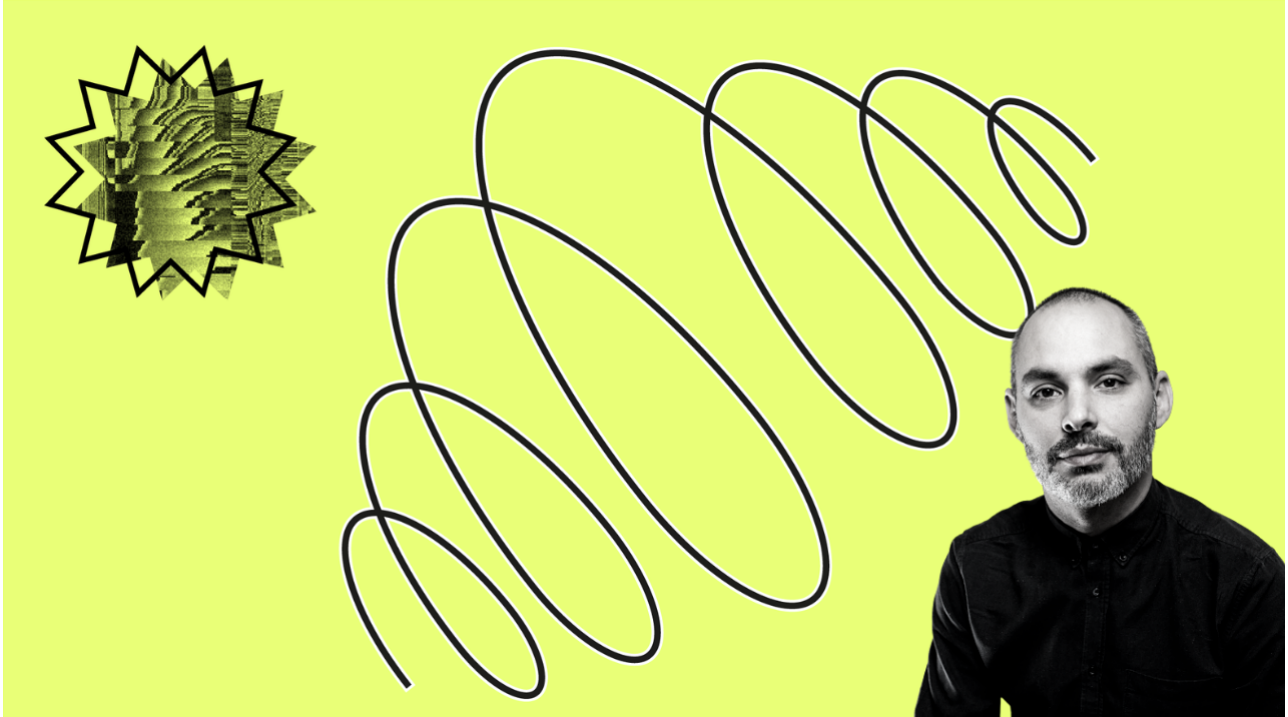
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As we know, self-reporting surveys are mostly inaccurate, but they can still provide value and insight. In this case, what the respondents were really saying is that they consume branded content on YouTube. It is a place where they often discover new brands and connect with existing ones, even if they hadn't done so in this case.

Marketers have an established dogma about performance and brand marketing. The idea is that these are two separate and unequal types. Since the work of Binet and Field a decade ago, brand building has primarily been associated with things like TV: traditional media whose effect is much easier to see over time. Short-term marketing, also known as performance or activation, occurs primarily in digital channels and is seen as a last-mile effort that closes the deal and provides a 'conversion'.

The problem with this neat dichotomy (and I'm certainly not the first one to point this out) is that it gets confused in the real world. We can certainly identify things that are clearly short-term (promotions, coupons, and point-of-sale), and we can find ones that are long-term, automobile

ads at the Super Bowl, for example. But most ads are not easy to classify. What's more, the terms themselves are probably not correct. Long-term efforts *have been seen to have short-term effects*, and even now, some activation efforts *have been shown to have long-term effects*.



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With all this in mind, the only sane course is to realise that everything on a screen can build and reflect your brand. Even a last-mile experience, if it is seamless and convenient, can make you feel better about a purchase. So, what are we to do in this environment?

Think brand from before day one. If you are a startup, you need to start branding from the minute you start your company. A well-designed and distinct visual identity along with a clear set of values and brand story are essential. If you invest in this, no matter where your brand appears, your core elements will carry you through and provide a mental shortcut for consumers.

Find little ways to be original. In a world where people are going to increasingly use machine learning tools to generate imagery and copy, it's important to remain unique. Whether that is colours, icons, or even the type of language you choose to use, brands should be distinct and consistent. Some, like Tito's Handmade Vodka, use deliberately de-designed layouts to put some distance between themselves and their competitors, even though they're doing so in an unconventional way. Those seemingly small differences add up to an estimated \$2.8 billion in brand value.

Ignore marketing orthodoxy. While marketers often think digital and traditional media lie on opposite sides of a divide, this is a structural and historical feature of our industry — not a concept that the public acknowledges. They are looking for and responding to your brand and whatever medium they find it. TikTok, in particular, is an excellent brand-building platform, as are YouTube and Instagram. These are places where you can touch people, make them laugh, and provide the emotional content that makes a connection that endures over time. They are also less expensive, highly trackable, and enable you to sell directly from the ad. Merely because marketers have not been using them for brand-building doesn't mean you shouldn't.

Attribute what you can, but never expect perfection. Think about it, around 80% of all ads are served on one of four wall garden platforms: Google, Meta, TikTok, and Amazon. Each, of course, has its own dashboards, it's own data, and you will get a single, comparable view across all four. Nobody has ever found a perfect way to do attribution or effectiveness. This doesn't mean you shouldn't try, but these endless efforts to prove the ROI on brand value continue to prove that brand has a value you can't directly measure, but that you know is invaluable.

The final point is that while marketing theory is great in the aggregate, it's not always great for your brand. The real world is not found in

academia. You have budgets, stakeholders, and probably limited means of tracking and attribution. It's best to simply set your brand as your guiding light and stay true to it while looking for the approaches, platforms, and tactics that work best for you.

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