

How This New App Turns Streaming Data Into Income for Black Consumers

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3 hours ago
Key insights:

- Black audiences have helped make streaming content like Bird Box go viral.
- Streamlytics created a unique algorithm to value consumer data.

In late April, Insecure creator Issa Rae tweeted an ad for something kind of surprising for a young Hollywood star: a new data-monetization app. Rae's tweet got a lot of people asking questions about what data is, who owns it and why a company would want to collect it and pay consumers for it.

Twitter/IssaRae

Angela Benton is the founder and CEO of Streamlytics, the company that launched the Clture app in April. Benton's tech bona fides go back over a decade, including running NewME, the first global accelerator for minority-owned tech businesses in Silicon Valley that raised over \$47 million in funding for entrepreneurs before it was acquired in 2018.

When Soledad O'Brien's CNN docuseries Black in America featured Benton and her accelerator, the exposure sent ripples through the tech industry. It helped usher in a diversity and inclusion movement that's still transforming Silicon Valley today. For someone who started out as a graphic designer working for print—and eventually, web—publications, Benton has uniquely and consistently pushed the boundaries of the tech world to open wider, to operate more fairly and to innovate into untapped markets.

Benton spoke with Adweek about Clture and about why black consumers, in particular, should gain control over the data footprint they leave online.

Angela Benton, founder and ceo of Streamlytics
Streamlytics

Adweek: What is Clture all about?

Angela Benton: The mission behind Clture is really to democratize data access for consumers. We decided to focus on the African American audience first because a lot of money is being made off of African American culture and African American individuals.

Especially when you start to take a look at things like, for

example, Bird Box on Netflix—that was released very quietly, but then it went viral through the memes and other content on black Twitter and Instagram. The community has a very powerful voice in terms of social media, and what Clture is aiming to do is expand that above and beyond social media and really look at that individual's own data footprint. Our latest report that we did was around Covid-19 streaming usage in the African American community. From our results, streaming was up 69% across all platforms.

Part of what makes Streamlytics unique is that we are collecting data ethically, and we're compensating people for it. So that's the first thing. But the second thing is we're really the only source that is collecting data across all of these different platforms: Netflix, Spotify, Amazon, Hulu and Google, which also includes YouTube. It's very important that we help the consumer understand the value of their data. It's what you're doing everywhere—your phone, what you're watching, what you're streaming, what you're buying, what you're listening to, and so on. It's everything. Regular people are still trying to grasp the idea around “what is data?” So we're focusing on forms of data that are the least intrusive to begin [with], which is, your streaming data and other activity associated with it.

Streamlytics

How did Issa Rae become a Clture launch partner?

Issa is actually an investor. She has a minority stake in Streamlytics. Our relationship goes back probably over a decade. When she was doing Awkward Black Girl on YouTube, I had my first business called Black Web 2.0. We were kind of like a TechCrunch, but about what African Americans were doing in the technology industry. Around that time—about 2007—there just weren't a lot of black people creating things online. There was probably a handful of us—and Issa was within that group—and we all kind of knew each other.

Do you feel like there are any issues of trust in the community when it comes to online data being tracked? And is

that something that you're tapping into here in any way?

People know that they're being tracked, for sure. But the sentiment is, "Well, what can I do about it?" It's like your hands are tied. So that's the general sentiment. And so the problem that we're solving is: They're tracking your data anyway, let us help you monetize it. We are empowering the consumer to say, "If I upload my data to a Streamlytics platform like Clture, I have a legal document that says I own my data, and I can get paid for it."

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