How Wondery Is Evolving Its Video Podcast Strategy FAST

More and more people are watching video podcasts, and Wondery is evolving the way that they watch.

In the wake of outlets like YouTube announcing massive podcast viewership to the tune of 1 billion monthly viewers for its content globally, Amazon-owned podcast and publisher network Wondery is revealing its strategy for moving the medium forward—as well as its ad opportunities.

Among its recent updates, Wondery has been building out free ad-supported streaming TV (FAST) channels on Amazon's Prime Video Live TV, formerly Freevee, as well as on YouTube. The company announced the channels on Prime Video in October 2023, which were created out of some of their popular podcasts from the Exhibit C lineup, which includes Dr. Death and Morbid.

In addition, following a beta-testing period, Wondery has launched eight of its most popular podcasts—including Baby, This is Keke Palmer and New Heights with Jason and Travis Kelce—as video programs for Wondery+ subscribers on the Wondery app.

Neel Ketkar, Wondery's head of product, said, despite being in the early stages, he's happy with the progress the network has made with the app.

"We're at a half dozen shows you can either watch in video format or switch to audio format and switch seamlessly between the two," Ketkar told ADWEEK. "The mission of our app is to be the best place to discover and enjoy Wondery content. We're not expecting everybody to flock to it. People are going to watch and listen on their preferred services. But if you're a super fan of Wondery—or of our content—we want to make sure to

offer that as well.”

And all that content is resulting in new opportunities for both Wondery and advertisers.

Wondering about ad opportunities

According to Wondery, the company has been able to sell advertising on its FAST channels to offer targeted opportunities to marketers beyond the usual programmatic ads, and it has aspirations of interactive shoppable ads ahead.

Meanwhile, YouTube is presenting a whole slew of possibilities.

Ketkar said Wondery has about 20 million followers across its network on YouTube, and the company has been able to pull its partner shows and original shows together to distribute and monetize the content. It is also looking at a subscription model with YouTube that enables viewers to watch bonus content from their favorite podcasts.

Angie More, Wondery’s head of advertising, said the opportunity of video podcasts has redefined not only podcasts but the way advertisers can reach customers through takeovers and full 360 campaigns.

“You can even do things like product placement. Integrating a product experience—whether or not a host is drinking a soda on camera or you have some signage or buttons that showcase the ability to see the brand recognition or the logo somewhere—there are a lot of different bumpers and things that we can add in as part of YouTube,” More said.

Ketkar noted that Wondery also has the ability to sell dynamic

inventory, which differentiates it from other podcast publishers on YouTube.

“All of the traditional dynamic spots and inventory that you see from YouTube—whether it’s six-second bumpers, 30-second skippable ads, or the display companion banners—those are now inventory that we can also offer our clients,” Ketkar said.

Wondery is even starting to do more with upfront commitments, allowing clients to place yearly buys ahead of time, according to More. The offering highlights the demand for the medium.

“Our future is really bright, and there’s so much more we can do, but we’re already starting off in a place where we’re hanging the experience for advertisers, being able to bring that talent and the video experience together,” More said.

What’s next

As the company continues to change its strategy, it is evolving its storytelling, too.

For instance, one of the biggest challenges for the company is how to take narrative audio podcasts and convert them to video in an engaging way. And Wondery is already experimenting with new ways to showcase its content.

Ketkar pointed out how Wondery experimented with the recent launch of Redacted: Declassified Mysteries with Luke Lamana. The show is a narrative true crime history podcast that looks at what happened behind closed doors of government offices and military compounds, in partnership with Ballen Studios, and Wondery has given it new visuals to accompany the stories.

“It’s very immersive from an audio standpoint, and we’ve now added these immersive animated visuals to go along with it,” Ketkar said. “We launched the channel at the end of January, and we’re seeing really high engagement results from that—so we’re really excited about the future—not only of the

traditional chat shows but with how narratives can adapt.”

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/convergent-tv/wondery-evolving-video-podcast-strategy-fast/