No More Networks and Streamers. In 2024, There's Only CTV

> Mark your calendar for Mediaweek, October 29-30 in New York City. We'll unpack the biggest shifts shaping the future of media—from tv to retail media to tech—and how marketers can prep to stay ahead. Register with early-bird rates before sale ends!

At this year's TV upfronts, one of the leading players in streaming opened its event with a video set inside its app's instantly recognizable user interface. One after another, familiar TV characters and talent appeared on screen to flex an impressive catalog of IP across comedies, dramas, theatrical film, news, reality and live sports.

But it wasn't Amazon, Netflix or YouTube showing off the power of their streaming TV apps—although they shared plenty of exciting content throughout the week. It was Disney, the 100-year-old media giant, putting Hulu at the top of its show, ahead of its extensive collection of successful networks.

And Disney wasn't the only traditional "network" that prioritized its streaming offerings. Warner Bros. Discovery led with Max during its presentation, NBCUniversal hyped its Peacock originals, Fox made sure attendees knew about the youthful audience assembling on Tubi, and TelevisaUnivision touted 50 million monthly users on its ViX platform.

Just as telling, many of these companies focused almost as much on their tech and data offerings as their upcoming content slates.

As for the so-called “streamers”? They took steps to be more like the networks, announcing more live, ad-supported, mass audience programming—like sports, comedy specials and news—that have long been the bread and butter of traditional TV. And like their network rivals, these companies dialed up the glitz and the glam for their upfronts, trotting out big-time celebrities like Will Ferrell, Cameron Diaz and Billie Eilish.

This year’s upfronts have made clear that the years-long convergence of streaming and linear TV has reached a tipping point. While each presenter had its strengths and weaknesses, rooted partially in how they rose to power, they’re all playing the same game these days. In short, there is no longer a useful distinction between a “streamer” and a “network”—they’re all “convergent TV companies” now.

CTV companies address weaknesses by copying each other’s strengths

This year, upfront presenters addressed their historical weaknesses by bulking up on their competitors’ historical strengths.

For instance, legacy media powerhouse NBCUniversal touted the impact of its technology investments with a presentation on how its One Platform Total Audience helps advertisers engage audiences across screens and measure the actions consumers take after seeing these cross-platform campaigns. TelevisaUnivision also highlighted its growing capabilities in the world of outcomes measurement.

And perhaps nothing highlighted the ascendance of the CTV era better than when WBD chief ad sales officer Jon Steinlauf presented the company’s new data-driven video product. “You

don’t have to worry about finding cord-cutters, cord-nevers or overexposure to heavy TV viewers,” he said. “You define your audience one time, and then we find them.”

For their part, the companies that built their businesses on streaming and technology worked hard to prove to advertisers that they have engaging live content that keeps viewers glued to the screen during ad breaks.

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Most notably, we are entering a new phase in the shift of live sports to streaming; to use the popular “crawl, walk, run” metaphor, the companies that began as tech platforms are now entering a light jog when it comes to sports programming.

The NFL’s Christmas Day games are coming to Netflix. Amazon added a playoff game and the second inaugural Black Friday game to its Thursday Night Football slate. And YouTube is complementing its NFL Sunday Ticket package with a new deal to carry local games from the ascendant WNBA.

Already, serious sports fans need at least one or two streaming platforms to follow their favorite teams. Sure, there’s always the option to watch the game at your local watering hole. But we’re reaching a point of critical mass where it makes more sense to sign up for a monthly subscription than to keep shelling out for wings and beer. That’s certainly the logic behind the newly named Venu Sports, a joint venture between Disney, Fox and WBD.

A CTV strategy for a CTV world

From an advertiser and agency perspective, this CTV tipping point means there is no longer utility in thinking about a “linear buy” and a “streaming buy.” Many already have unified video teams, but it’s easier to retool org charts than it is to truly unify strategies, workflows and datasets.

Since so many viewers are consuming content across screens and platforms, advertisers must build truly convergent media buying operations, executing a unified plan across all the different places modern viewers watch TV. While the complexity of this task might tempt some to over-invest in automated audience-based buying (aka programmatic), it’s crucial to remember that reaching the right consumers is only one part of the battle. To generate real business results, marketers need to serve the right creative to the right audience alongside engaging, contextually relevant content.

Indeed, we’ve all heard about the studies detailing how creative contributes to roughly half of a campaign’s performance. And I regularly see examples of clients’ creatives that generate 40-60% more engagement when placed in the right media audience context.

Regardless of where you’re executing or who is your target audience, there is truly no one-size-fits-all solution. Rather, CTV offers nearly infinite permutations of creative-media-audience opportunities for marketers to explore. So go ahead and dream big. Start thinking of how this vast landscape of options can help you get inside and in front of highly engaging content relevant to your target customers and the shows they love best.

Our CTV future has finally and fully arrived. It’s time for all of us to start living in it.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/convergent-tv/upfront-2024-networks-streamers-ctv/

We Need an Open Web Identity Solution to Combat the Opacity of Walled Gardens

“Market dislocation”—though a term most often reserved for economists and Wall Street analysts, it could aptly describe the state of online identity today.

Recent reports suggest that Apple and Google are considering removing the IP address from their respective devices’ and platforms’ reporting. This move, which also nods to regulators and privacy advocates, comes on top of removing third-party cookies and possibly preventing the use of precise location identifiers.

In an otherwise poorly articulated reaction to the threat of online tracking, regulators have leaned into legislative actions against one form of identity after another, while market participants, from adtech providers to top brands, lead with privacy and seek to replace the market efficiency that is likely to be lost. But markets are designed to seek efficiency; when programmatic advertising was introduced, it was in response to advertisers seeking to reach the right person at the right time. This, coupled with measurement, introduced efficiency that would dramatically accelerate online advertising, online shopping, startups and small to medium-sized businesses to new heights.

With the deprecation of cookies, the open internet ecosystem is already beginning to fracture day by day. Major, and now minor, walled gardens are proliferating to protect their businesses’ most valued asset—their claim on first-party data.

Perhaps this trend is just “business Darwinism,” evidence that adtech has matured, but there are real risks to be considered.

Initially, the third-party cookie provided an audit trail for advertisers, and device identifiers filled gaps, as did the IP address, especially as the market shifted from browsers to connected TVs. Brands leveraged programmatic and came to depend upon a formula where objective evidence of their return on media investment could be provided. This has been especially true for emerging and small businesses; programmatic advertising has fueled the long tail of commerce, allowing competition for mind share to occur across the entire economy.

What if that objective evidence was no longer available? And what if the cookie, device and IP were not the problem?

Reinventing the concept of identity

Rather than cleansing advertising of the identifiers that fuel qualified audience outreach and campaign measurement, what if all identifiers were managed in a secure environment and required authorized consent? As a practical matter, this may already be happening.

Some brands have leaned into universal IDs and clean rooms; adtech titans now hide their identifiers behind walled gardens; identity solution providers and media platforms have moved to privatize with a closed system of hashed email IDs. In the name of privacy, we increasingly operate in black boxes and bundle our solutions with an agenda of protecting our own business models.

A first-party-centric marketplace will undoubtedly elevate the

performance of those with the data, but there is a real danger that it will come at the expense of consumer choice and open markets. What we should not be doing is embracing a protectionist model that eliminates access to all third-party consumers and skews or removes consumer choice. If new brands and businesses can’t transparently identify prospects or prove that their investments are working, they will stop investing and may never even get started.

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Don’t get me wrong. This is not (yet another) plea for free third-party cookies. Our industry should be giving a uniform thumbs-up to data security, clean rooms, and the requirement to protect sensitive data. We should also endorse the use of public data and require consent. We should not abandon, but rather secure, our current identity framework by providing advertisers and consumers with a proper audit trail for the use of IDs.

An identity space that requires both an ID plus a timestamp for onboarding and media activation—secured through an opt-in process and coming with a systemic, assigned expiration date—would dramatically reduce the ability to reuse or abuse identity.

One inherent advantage of an IP address is that it is time-sensitive, systemically protecting users from unauthorized resale and abuse. On April 1, an IP-to-household assignment has a 40% chance of being unusable by May 1st and a near 100% chance of being unusable by June 1st. An IP address is also included and works in parallel with nearly all other forms of ID sharing—devices, emails and media platform IDs—making it fluid and ubiquitous. If an audience is opted-in, then syncing that secure audience with the media exposure by IP promotes full measurement of cross-platform campaign performance with 100% coverage—but only for that specific campaign and application.

So what if IP usage in the adtech ecosystem was encoded and included a “watermark” of a timestamp and the brand or data provider? An actual OpenID that is unusable except for the permissible purpose of a campaign would be better for the industry, the economy and consumer privacy.

While the fluidity of IP assignments makes it a poor choice as a permanent ID alternative, it also offers the potential to rationalize the pursuit of privacy in the identity space. An IP with a timestamp is potentially the best choice for the open internet, providing secure, verified reach and measurement that is also in the best interests of the advertiser and the consumer at this moment in time.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/programmatic/we-need-an-open-web-identity-solution-to-combat-the-opacity-of-walled-gardens/

Consumer Brands Are Leaving Trillions of Dollars Behind by Ignoring Women Over 40

Introducing the Adweek Podcast Network. Access infinite inspiration in your pocket on everything from career advice and creativity to metaverse marketing and more. Browse all podcasts.

In 2021, when I was 37, I became a first-time car owner, first-time homeowner and first-time parent within a three-month span. After nearly two decades spent living in wildly expensive cities and focusing on my education and career, a global pandemic ushered in the rise of remote work and allowed me to move out of New York City while keeping a job in media. Under these new circumstances, I—and many people in my peer set—finally found myself with the time, resources and appetite to enter the life stages that my parents' generation entered a decade younger.

As I met these milestones, I was struck by how much there was to buy to support this drastic lifestyle shift. After relying on public transportation to get around since I was 17, what type of car would I purchase, and who would insure it? After 20 years of only looking as far ahead as each 12-month lease, what kind of home would I buy, and where? What real estate agency would assist me? What bank would handle the loan? Where would I go for renovations, furnishings and upkeep? And in the transition from a "double income, no kids" household to a family of three, the spending opportunities were endless—from prenatal vitamins and maternity clothes to nursery fixtures, kids' clothes and college funds. And that was before I hit a spendy, post-partum self-image reckoning, with its accompanying skin care, wardrobe, health tech and fitness expenses.

All of that spending should have been easy. Because I was not in my twenties, with its professional and financial precarity, and instead in my late 30s—15 years into a stable career and well-compensated—I had real money to spend in all these new categories. But as I went to choose a car, furnish a home and prepare for a baby with that cash burning a hole in my pocket (metaphorically speaking—I don't carry cash, I'm not that old), I realized all the brands that should have been competing for my dollars didn't seem to care all that much about winning my business.

Working in media, I know that the demographics of a publication's audience are an incredibly important consideration when wooing advertisers to spend their marketing budgets with you. Media execs are incentivized to pursue a younger generation of users, trying to bolster the percentage of 18- to 34-year-olds in their audience so advertising partners know they've captured the trendsetters that marketers are so eager to get their products in front of. Older audiences are thought to be less influential and more set in their ways, not as susceptible to building affinities for or joining fandoms around new products. The (false) thinking goes that these consumers don't have as much sway over others' purchasing decisions as 20-somethings do and that they already know what product they're going to buy and what brand they're going to buy it from now until the end of time, goodbye.

When you turn 40 (which I recently did), you fall off of marketers' radars and media plans entirely, into an abyss of invisibility—at least until it's time to sell you Prevagen.

But what if brands rethought their approach (or lack of approach) to these audiences? What if they examined the fallacy that elder millennial and Gen X women have limited influence, unremarkable spending power, and entrenched brand preferences and, therefore, are no longer worth marketing to—and instead realized that we are among the most valuable audiences out there? These women are entering key spending categories later in life. They are extremely influential culturally and financially, and they are largely ignored by marketers—leaving a huge opportunity for the consumer brands that are smart enough to pay attention to them.

While the way college-educated knowledge workers like myself reacted to Covid-19 reshaped the housing market and created a

subtle baby boom, the trend of meeting life stages later is detached from, and predates, these pandemic shifts. In 1980, the average woman married at 22; today, it's 28, and the midlife first marriage rate among women has increased by 75% since 1990. In 1980, the median first-time homeowner was 29; now they are 35. In the last 30 years, birthrates among women in their 20s have declined, while they've risen for women in their late 30s and early 40s—a trend that is especially prevalent among college-educated, city-dwelling women with high household incomes. The idea that you have to reach women in their 20s in order to capture their entry into new life stages—and therefore their influence in new spending categories—is a dated one.

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Three of 2023's most economically powerful people (Beyoncé, Kim Kardashian and Greta Gerwig) are women in their 40s, and Taylor Swift will age out of that coveted 18-34 demo this year—and their power is echoed by this demographic as a whole. When elder millennial and midlife women are ready to spend—whether on entertainment, tech, beauty, travel, groceries, auto or in areas like early parenthood that used to only be the province of younger women—they show up with influence and money. Women drive 70-80% of all consumer purchasing, either through buying power or influence, and women older than 50 drive $15 trillion in spending power—which is 27% of all consumer spending in the U.S. By 2030, women are expected to control much of the $30 trillion in wealth that is soon to transfer from baby boomers to younger generations—namely millennials, who will all be in their mid-30s to late-40s by then.

Despite this current and future financial power, most marketers are ignoring this demographic, and people like me are taking notice. Most women in this demo think consumer brands underestimate their spending power and intellect, and

only 5-10% of marketing budgets are earmarked for an over-50 audience. Imagine the opportunity for brands that recognize and respect the power of these audiences and decide to enter this vacuum by marketing to us directly.

That includes earmarking bigger budgets to put ads in front of these audiences, but that's not the only way to speak to this demo. Brands must make us feel more represented and supported in their creative campaigns and brand initiatives as well. When more than 90% of people over 40 can't remember a brand using someone their age in marketing campaigns, casting midlife women can go a long way with customers (see: Bobbi Brown's Jones Road Beauty). When three-quarters of millennial women say they want brands to speak about current realities with honesty and candor, those that avoid stereotypes and tropes by centering real customer voices and experiences will build trust and affinity (see: Dove's beloved Real Beauty campaign). When the vast majority of millennial women believe that brands should actively make people's lives better and hope to see brands advocate for policies that advance women's rights, marketers should consider what advocacy campaigns align with both their brand value proposition and the pain points of the audience they wish to reach. (See: Bobbie's Paid Leave For All partnership).

Initiatives designed to capture these audiences pay off. GM focuses on speaking to women's concerns about car safety, and they've built a robust network of female car dealers. Buick has the highest female buyer representation in the U.S. of any automaker. L'Oreal has shifted to casting older models in its campaigns; the world's biggest beauty company boasted sales up 9.4% in Q1 2024.

As my husband and I add a second child, a second car, and a new kitchen to our household, I have a lot of spending

decisions to make, with few brand affinities that are fully entrenched in these areas and an interest in spending with brands that acknowledge my value. A challenge to marketers: Convince me to buy what you're selling. I'm open to it.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/commerce/consumer-brands-are-leaving-trillions-of-dollars-behind-by-ignoring-women-over-40/

King Charles' Bloody Portrait Shows the Royal Brand Is Stale

> Leaders from Glossier, Shopify, Mastercard and more will take the stage at Brandweek to share what strategies set them apart and how they incorporate the most valued emerging trends. Register to join us this September 23–26 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Much like The Emperor's New Clothes, where the tailor exposes the vanity of his ruler, the unveiling this week of Jonathan Yeo's portrait of King Charles III has been very … revealing.

The portrait has been met with both gasps of astonishment and ridicule throughout the world, as well as the expected praise. The dramatic red wash has been the subject of considerable discussion across news outlets and social feeds: Some have suggested the scarlet hue is Dante's Inferno, the "flesh & blood of all murderd [sic] by the Empire's bloodlust," or reminiscent of a literal bloodbath.

The artist insists: “The vivid colour of the glazes in the background echo the uniform’s bright red tunic, not only resonating with the royal heritage found in many historical portraits but also injecting a dynamic, contemporary jolt into the genre with its uniformly powerful hue / providing a modern contrast to more traditional depictions.”

Fair, though it’s easy to understand why so many have been so critical.

The U.K. is currently in a recession, with an ongoing cost of living crisis that’s left people struggling to pay their bills and feed their families. Jobs are being cut, and the British bank has raised interest rates. This week saw the launch of the Labour party’s Six Big Pledges, listing the need for more teachers, shorter NHS waiting lists, a publicly owned energy institution and economic stability.

The royal family costs taxpayers £86.3 million ($109.6 million) each year. How do families struggling to pay their heating bills feel about this portrait? It’s no wonder many are seeing red.

May 2024 marks the first year of the reign of King Charles III—a year marked by illness, the story of his first marriage (fictional or true) being shared to all Netflix subscribers, and his family still working out what to do with their black sheep Prince Andrew, all taking place under the pall cast by Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s defection.

After this week’s backlash, maybe he should pick up the phone to seek strategic advice from someone outside of the inner circle—as in 1957, when Queen Elizabeth II approached the journalist John Grigg to help her make the British monarchy relevant again after he publicly criticized the institution in

his magazine, the National and English Review.

Leaving the past behind

A brand's strength and reputation is often built on its history, values and story, but it is driven by its vision for the future. What does this painting say about history? What does it say about the future?

Dressed as the head of the armed forces and commander in chief, emerging from a red mist, the royals' past is on display. And while the King has apologized on behalf of the empire for its colonial "involvement," has everyone really forgiven and forgotten? Is the royal family so out of touch that they do not see how this image would be interpreted?

A core tenet of good brand strategy is a deep understanding of your audience and a point of view on how your brand can play a meaningful role in their lives. What role are we to understand for the royals in our lives from this painting? If the royals want us to see them differently, then they need to be looking forward, not backward, and offer a clearer vision for the meaningful contribution they can make to the lives of their subjects.

Future-proofing

A common exercise used in brand strategy development is to ask leaders, "What headline do you want to see written about your brand in the future?" This reveals how they want to be known, and gives strategy folk a few clues about where they should try and take the business.

How does Charles want to be remembered? How does he want the royal family to be seen? Charles' request to include the monarch butterfly as a double metaphor—about his ascent to the throne, as well as his environmental activism—is both awkwardly on the nose and invites criticism about the family's use of private jets and game hunting. Looking at this portrait

doesn’t give us any sense of a changed future.

What it takes to change

The effort to change perception must be equal to the gap between current and future states—a big change requires a big gesture. So, in many ways, expecting this portrait to do or be anything other than a picture is folly. Change for the royals won’t come from a new framing or brave color palette; it must come from genuine changes in behavior.

But what motivation do they have to change? We, as marketers, know that in the business world, a failure to change and adapt to market needs means extinction. But for the royals, there is no threat of extinction. People can’t vote with their wallets or pens, so if there is a drive for change, it is only really about vanity. Which brings us back to the painting.

This isn’t a signal for changed times; it’s simply a fairly predictable display of pageantry—a self-serving celebration of the past without a point of view for the future. Nothing much to see here. As you were.

Recommended articles
https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/king-charles-bloody-portrait-royal-brand/

What to Do Next When Your

Brand Gets Surprise Earned Media

> Leaders from Glossier, Shopify, Mastercard and more will take the stage at Brandweek to share what strategies set them apart and how they incorporate the most valued emerging trends. Register to join us this September 23–26 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Casual dining classic Applebee's recently enjoyed a clear and positive brand mention in the finale episode of reality TV juggernaut Vanderpump Rules, wherein the group heads to San Francisco for a glamorous evening celebrating a close friend's business launch. The magical earned moment happened when spotlight star Ariana Madix and a subsection of the partygoing crew joyously proclaimed their after-party would be at Applebee's. Their guttural excitement was paired with a botched but deliberate recital of the Applebee's jingle. The unexpected yet relatable choice by the group to lay low and grub on comfort food and more booze at a casual dining chain, versus the more expected option to continue at a swanky SF haunt, is pure gold for Applebee's.

So one of the highest-rated shows on cable TV surprises your brand with fashionable, high-exposure figures in your target growth segment, claiming your brand as the trophy moment of the evening and a bona fide source of their elation—what do you do?

As marketers, our first reflex is a good one: React, and react swiftly, by extending an earned moment into an owned brand

conversation. But is that all? It shouldn’t be. Extracting both quick and long-lasting returns from these earned moments is truly realized through a curiosity mindset with structured testing and learning.

There are two core factors to consider—how ambitious your experiment is and what aspect of the earned moment you seek to act on. In our strategic checkerboard below, we see that the aspects of the earned moment (on the y-axis) are tiered, representing the actual Direct moment (Madix mentioning Applebee’s on the show) as well as Category, Segment and Context opportunities. Paired with these tiers is the scale of ambition (on the x-axis) with which we can test against each tier, from simple iterations of our current tactics to new, high-investment explorative commitments.

Evan Weiner

Let’s use the cells highlighted in orange as quick examples—and for the sake of simplicity, we’ll remove Applebee’s since we don’t know its exact marketing mix. So, say you are a brand that anchors its marketing activity deeply in social and programmatic channels.

In Box 1 (Direct and Iterative), here you’re using your current competencies to address the exact moment that happened. This could mean engaging Madix or other Vanderpump Rules stars in social conversation as part of your ongoing community management—a strategic but swift and low-lift effort.

In Box 2 (Category and Iterative Plus), we’re activating more advanced tactics within our core competencies to address the category represented by this moment. This could be adding TV gossip portals into your display buys or adding reality TV channels to your programmatic CTV where you hadn’t before. Perhaps you use both existing and new creative when doing this. Your bandwidth and financial commitments are greater, but you’re still working within your wheelhouse and forecast KPIs.

In Box 3 (Segment and Explorative Lite), you’re now testing tactics you haven’t used before, and you may be dealing with some new measures of success. An example here could be experimenting with a live host read in a leading lifestyle podcast for high-income millennials. Or perhaps you test into having one of your leaders or brand partners be a guest on the podcast (and commission an agency to help place you). Resource intensity grows, and you’re gauging success in ways you haven’t before.

In Box 4, we’re in the Context tier and truly Explorative; you’re testing fully outside of your core competencies and taking on marketing KPIs you hadn’t before. In this case, you

may be creating a branded series covering nightlife in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Resource intensity is high—potentially even bringing in a new hire. You have little ability to forecast success and have an appetite to discover what success means as you deploy.