



beyond the ad break: do brands have the talent for showbiz?

brand-e.biz
"the business of branded entertainment"

THINKTANK
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report 2009

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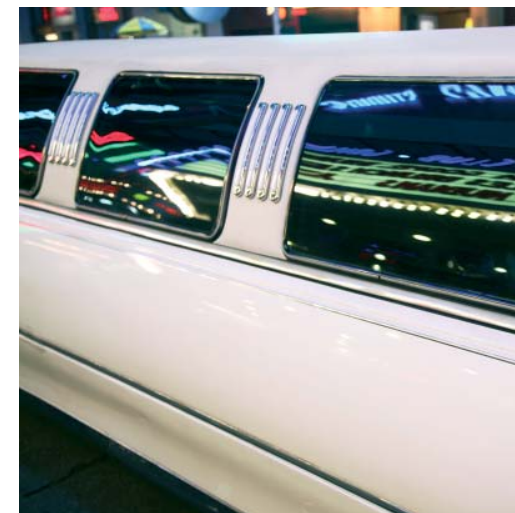
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Branded entertainment's time has come. Honest. This time it's for real. We know so because the media landscape's changed, and changing. We're talking about fragmentation, we're talking about the rise of social media, about lean-forward technology, about collaborative distribution, multi-way communication. This means that the brand's ability to deliver its message has weakened. Consumers aren't mere listening posts, but are there to befriend, to turn into emissaries. Grab their attention, engage them. How? Forget those tired old marketing propositions and calls to action. There's some something else out there. What is it? Well, that's entertainment.

Time for definitions. For many, branded entertainment is hard to pin down because, as a discipline, it's still in the process of being classified. Is it about "integrating the brand into an entertaining experience"? Or "a piece of content you want to watch"? One thing it isn't is branded content (though it is a subset of such a beast) because that particular entity tells you nothing about a specific quality of what's on offer, it's the sine qua non – above everything else, it has to be entertaining. We know branded entertainment when we see it, hear it, play it. Forget about formats, though, because branded entertainment's anything, everything. It's a state of mind, an attitude. That's it.

Who's attitude is it? Well, much – but by no means all – of this is digital, so bring on the digital agencies, who talk Net savvy, possess mobile nous. Game over. Hold on, if branded entertainment's anything it's a 360 strategy, and if anyone understands all the channels it's the media agencies with their full-service offerings. But this stuff is pretty creative, and so it's the remit of the ad agencies, those guardians of the brand. However, that's just half the story because production companies have been making entertaining content forever... And of course, the brands are mixing it too, some of them. A good many are just toe-dipping, need handholding and educating. That's everyone's remit.

But there are problems getting the measure of branded entertainment. "You can't research this stuff," they say. "You can... but it's difficult," they add. And that's doing the work of stopping client buy-in. New models are in the making and they're going to be cleverer than those that measure eyeballs. They're subtle and they need to have clear objectives. Because with branded entertainment you're not necessarily looking for mere sales lift. How about building brand affinity, for one thing?



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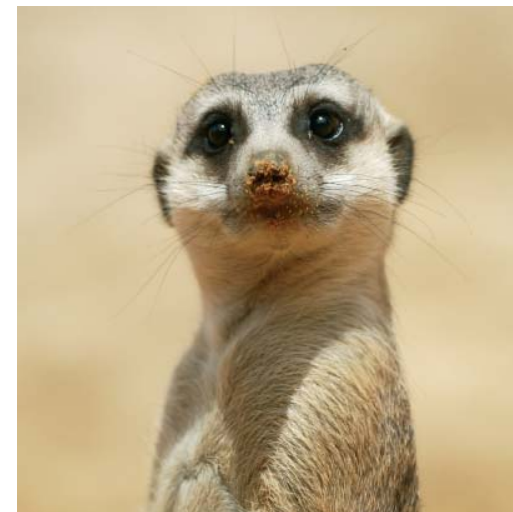
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Branded entertainment's challenging and unpredictable. But it's also now, and it's sexy. And it also covers an array of formats. Viral videos are almost mainstream, though getting a bit me-too, and quality is starting to count. Mobile – excluding Apple apps – waits in the wings. Social media teems with talent and experimentation abounds. Brand channels remain on the vanilla side. Broadcast ad-funded programming is hamstrung by regulation (but some are giving good show), online AFP by a lack of imagination (but there's hope). We're agog at the creativity of games – online and mobile – and they engage like crazy. Alternate reality games can be mindbogglingly complex and utterly immersive – we doff caps in admiration. Brand utilities can be plain useful as well as entertaining. And for all the talk of online and digital, the real thing is on a roll – experiential lives.

Branded entertainment is a broad, rich seam for sure. And everyone's after the pickings. There's a bit of a turf war going on as practitioners fight for their right to join the party. Media agencies expect to rule – many have other ideas - but we do expect them to do very well in this, better still if they acquire brand speak. The creative agencies need to integrate outside talent to build the entertainment muscle. Production companies must get closer to the brands. Clients will become more comfortable with the mainstream elements of the discipline.

As more budget is allocated to entertaining, so more creative talent will apply itself across formats. Quality will out, the man said – and we say it too – but simply throwing money at it won't produce winners. Corporates have taken a beating of late and need to repair their relationships with consumers. One way to do that is to give this audience something. Entertain them.

Expect branded entertainment to gain further momentum. It will be recognized as opening up new and exciting creative avenues. And the really good news is that it can deliver the best of all possible communications aspirations. What we're talking about is real consumer engagement with the brand and its values.

**beyond the ad break: do brands have the talent for showbiz?**

Beyond the ad break is a unique piece of research based on dozens of interviews with branded entertainment movers and shakers. As well as insights into the workings of the sector, the report provides a comprehensive review of international branded entertainment creative, with multiple links to videos, websites and apps. **To purchase Beyond the ad break** [click here](#).

Looking for insight? brand-e.biz delivers bespoke research and consultancy services in and around branded entertainment. You can talk to us at info@brand-e.biz.

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About brand-e.biz

brand-e.biz provides bespoke branded entertainment research and consultancy services. Thanks to its network of marketing- and media-related partnerships, brand-e.biz is able to deliver a comprehensive offering to a broad range of branded entertainment clients.

About Thinktank

Thinktank are qualitative research specialists with a deep understanding of communications research. The agency's seasoned thinkers have tackled a wide range of briefs – from strategic to tactical, both domestic and global, across sectors and audiences – and taken on traditional ad campaigns, as well as branded entertainment formats. Clients such as Nokia, Cadbury, Orange and Visa and their agencies value Thinktank for their sensitivity to creative work, as well as their intelligent analysis and interpretation.