

Sundance event spotlights the creator economy's entertainment edge

Article

This year's Sundance Film Festival featured Creator Day, a full day of programming dedicated to the [creator economy](#) and innovations in branded content. The unique event, crafted by

Sundance's BrandStorytelling and sponsored by YouTube, aimed to highlight the creator industry's development beyond sales-driven [social](#) posts into long-term brand partnerships.

“At YouTube, we are always looking for ways to support and grow our creator community, and see an increasing appetite from both brands and the production community to collaborate on a wide range of projects,” said Derek Scobie, director of global content solutions at YouTube.

The Creator Day lineup featured speakers from Ray-Ban [Meta](#), SiriusXM, and Whalar, as well as creators including Colin Rosenblum of YouTube channel “Colin and Samir.” The event “embraced creator representation in a way that is long overdue,” said Gabe Gordon, CEO of Reach Agency, who co-hosted the event.

Making the case for creators

A theme of Creator Day was to convince platforms that have long invested in traditional entertainment to embrace the value of creators.

- YouTube has more [connected TV \(CTV\)](#) viewers than the total viewers of any other platform except [Netflix](#), according to our October 2024 forecast.
- Excluding YouTube, EMARKETER forecasts US social video ad spending will surpass linear TV ad spending for the first time.

“People like Colin and Samir are getting better viewership on CTV for longer than most network sitcoms,” said Gordon. “Putting them on stage and having them say that directly to these brands will help people look at creators in a new spotlight, and change their role in the marketing mix.”

YouTube used the event to showcase how short videos often serve as a gateway to longer formats, said Tamara Kruger, head of content at [Google](#) Creative Works.

“When distribution came up as a question, the answer, repeatedly, was YouTube is the ideal place for brands and creators alike to find their audiences and experiment with storytelling, not just in content but also with format,” she said.

Expanding revenue streams

Speakers at Creator Day emphasized entrepreneurship, and the need for both creativity and business skills among creators to stand out in the market.

“We’ve been saying for a long time that creators are their own brands, savvy creatives and entrepreneurs, and this was highlighted at the event as creators took the stage to discuss their process or share their products,” said Kruger.

Creators are expanding their influence and building careers that span beyond social media, which includes scaling into [podcasts](#), [retail](#), and CTV. US creator revenues from podcasts are expected to rise by 23.1% YoY in 2025, approaching \$1 billion, per EMARKETER forecasts.

“There’s now this entirely new asset where [brands] can build a relationship with a creator and tap into not only their creativity, but their community that’s already built and established,” said Pilaar Terry, managing partner of POV Agency, who co-hosted the event.

Finding creators a film festival home

BrandStorytelling was founded in 2015 to link branding and entertainment by bringing marketing conversations to Sundance. By slating Creator Day into its programming this year, the organization emphasized the value of creators as both brand advocates and storytellers.

For an audience of producers and brands, the organization’s angle was that memorable entertainment doesn’t always stem from Hollywood talent. It also comes from finding the creators that have built communities on social platforms, and expanding that impact to new formats and audiences.

“We wanted to make sure we weren’t just getting people with the biggest platforms or that you always see in headlines,” said Terry, who championed Creator Day for showing that brands have an opportunity to differentiate through more engaged and intentional partnerships. “We wanted to get folks who represented lots of different communities and lived experiences.”

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