

From bunnies to bears: Playboy and Care Bears enter the metaverse

Article

The news: Despite economic uncertainty, a number of nostalgia-driven brands, including **Playboy** and the **Care Bears**, are **pushing ahead with metaverse and Web3 initiatives**.

A metaverse mansion: **Playboy** is getting ready to unveil a virtual replica of the iconic residence on metaverse platform **The Sandbox** as it attempts to recreate and reimagine what aspiration and exclusivity looks like within a virtual experience.

- The initiative comes as the media brand stands in need of reinvention, since Playboy stopped printing issues of its storied publication in March 2020. A&E's documentary series, *Secrets of Playboy*, has further scrutinized late brand founder **Hugh Hefner**.
- Playboy made its **first push into Web3 with a spring 2021 NFT collection**; it later released a number of bunny NFTs dubbed Rabbitaras, which can be used to unlock exclusive activities in the virtual mansion.

Furr-ever: Care Bears Forever, an NFT collection and metaverse experience that reflects the well-known bears and their characteristics, will debut in August to honor the brand's 40th anniversary. It's the result of a partnership between Care Bears' parent **Cloudco Entertainment** and **Recur**, which creates and develops NFT experiences.

- To access the Care Bears Forever gameplay, which includes challenges and NFT rewards that can only be unlocked by working with other players, Recur and Cloudco will release 10,000 profile photographs (PFPs) of the 10 original Care Bears; as part of the gameplay experience, new bears make their debuts.
- The campaign appears **designed to connect with younger audiences** who gravitate toward Web3 experiences—while simultaneously honoring the 1980s tone and feel of the Care Bears.

Other nostalgia-driven brands have employed similar practices. Last month, **Mattel** announced a collaboration with **Cryptoys** to release **Barbie** and **Hot Wheels**-themed NFT collections. At the same time, Barbie and **Forever 21** teamed up to release a limited-edition Barbie summer 2022 collection of clothing and dolls, which was made available for purchase on Roblox.

Will they work? Are these initiatives wise, given the current economic uncertainty? After all, powerful firms like [Spotify](#), [Meta](#), and [Warner Bros. Discovery](#) are curtailing expansion plans, cutting headcount, or both. And with many doubling down on dependable old channels [like email marketing](#), why are some brands still investing in Web3 experimentation?

Obviously, some of these initiatives were in the planning stages *before* more recent economic concerns reared their head. But with younger consumers watching less television, investing in the metaverse is seen by brands as an opportunity to maintain awareness and relevancy.

- 26% of 18- to 34-year-olds in the US are [very familiar with the concept of the metaverse](#), compared with 14% of the population at large.

- In the US, 26% of 13- to 24-year-olds (and 23% of those ages 25 to 34) have a very/somewhat positive attitude to the metaverse, compared with 12% of the general population.
- 46% of US Gen Z gamers said they want brands to offer free products and content within metaverse worlds, with 36% saying they'd like brands to provide experiences.

The big takeaway: Nostalgia is in—and turbulence and uncertainty could fuel a desire for more of it. But nostalgic brands need to find new ways of connecting with consumers. While the metaverse isn't a cure for all of a brand's ills, it does provide an opportunity to connect with a new consumer base in a meaningful way at a time when legacy communication channels such as print and television are on the decline.

Interest in Using the Metaverse Among US Adults, by Demographic, March 2022

% of respondents in each group

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not that interested	Not at all interested
Gender				
Female	7%	21%	21%	50%
Male	18%	28%	19%	35%
Age				
18-34	23%	33%	17%	27%
35-44	20%	28%	20%	32%
45-64	6%	22%	23%	49%
65+	2%	12%	20%	66%
Race/ethnicity				
Black	17%	35%	19%	29%
Hispanic	20%	32%	21%	27%
White	12%	22%	20%	46%
Other	11%	28%	24%	37%
Income level				
<\$50K	10%	25%	20%	45%
\$50K-\$100K	12%	24%	21%	44%
\$100K+	20%	23%	20%	37%
Total	12%	24%	20%	43%

Note: respondents were given a brief description of the metaverse; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Source: Morning Consult, "National Tracking Poll #2203015," April 11, 2022

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