

Cannes Lions 2025 doubles down on creator economy integration

Article

Last year, the Cannes Lions festival introduced an official [creator economy](#) track, signaling the space's maturation from a siloed channel to a central marketing focus.

- As the industry matures—and marketers no longer need convincing that they should pursue creator partnerships—conversations are shifting to actionable strategies and best practices.

“By expanding and evolving the creator track and award categories this year, Cannes Lions is deepening its ties to the creator economy and has the opportunity to reshape the narrative of creator work among ad industry executives who still dismiss or fear it,” said our analyst Jasmine Enberg.

Here are the top things to watch from Cannes Lions' new creator programming during this year's festival:

Cannes rebrands its creator approach

This year's programming focuses on the individual value that creators contribute to a brand campaign, through both audience engagement and creative skill. And Cannes' Social and Creator Lions awards added five subcategories:

- Creator Collaboration
- Creator-Led Content Strategy
- Community Building
- Cross-Platform Storytelling
- Excellence in Craft

Last year, Enberg said Cannes faced backlash from marketers for giving its top creator award to CeraVe's campaign with Michael Cera, instead of creator-produced work. Cannes appears to be internalizing the demand for recognition beyond traditional celebrity or influencer partnerships, Enberg said, with new awards reflecting "the diversity of creator work."

Marketers want to talk measurement

Cannes is recognizing that in an industry of scrutinized ROI, creating memorable creative work isn't enough. This year, Cannes added a Long-Term Impact sub-category across multiple tracks to recognize how “continuous, effective and consistent investment in creative strategy can help deliver meaningful business results.”

This emphasis on measurement in advertising is clear in the creator space, where “the days of unchecked spending are over,” said Enberg.

“Bigger budgets mean greater demands for accountability, and marketers are under increasing pressure to show measurable business outcomes from their partnerships,” she said.

“That pressure is also trickling down to creators, who may have to rethink their content strategies to satisfy those demands.”

Brands embrace creator production value

This year’s agenda emphasizes the shift from brands using creators solely to reach their target consumers, to working with them as strategic and creative partners. The new Excellence in Craft award category recognizes the individual skillsets or visions creators contribute to a brand partnership.

Last week, Dove launched its first campaign made entirely from creator content, without studios or added production. This reflects a shift in how marketers approach creators, who offer speed, flexibility, and value that production studios don’t, said Enberg.

“Creators can also take more risks with content, creative and messaging,” she said. “That has historically been a roadblock to influencer marketing adoption, as brands are hesitant to give up control. But it’s now a growing driver as our media usage has become more fragmented and personalized, forcing brands to design for adaptability.”

Using Cannes to connect with creators

Since intermediaries like tech platforms or agents often limit direct communication between creators and brands, the biggest benefit of attending Cannes is that access, said Enberg. While this draws both creators and brands into the event, attendees represent a limited portion of the industry.

“Communication is key as creators and brands deepen their relationships and work to optimize their strategies,” she said. “But accessibility remains a big issue. Most creators are part-time and few have the resources to self-fund a trip to the south of France.”