

Vidcon more subdued amid sparser brand presence

Article

The news: Creators, executives, and fans took over the Anaheim Convention Center last week for Vidcon, which looked and felt different from past years.

- The mood was positive but more subdued than before. Most of the action was on the community floor, where young consumer mobs formed around booths giving away plush toys

and makeovers instead of around creators, who were mostly at the Hyatt hotel nearby. The industry floor felt sparse.

- Longtime attendees noted that there were **far fewer brand and social platform activations** both inside and outside the convention center. **Fanta**, which recently enlisted **TikTok** creators to help reprise its “Wanta Fanta” campaign, was one of the few big brand exhibitors.

Between the lines: Many companies that previously bought booths or hosted parties, such as **Instagram** and **Amazon**, had just gone big at Cannes Lions, which held its first-ever dedicated [creator economy program](#) this year.

Why it matters: Vidcon may be getting quieter and smaller, but the creator economy is getting bigger and louder.

- The big theme of this year’s conference on the industry track was the maturation of the creator economy and how creators can scale their operations. “It’s the end of the beginning,” said **Joshua Cohen**, founder and COO of **Tubefilter**, who has attended Vidcon since 2011.
- Words like “adulting,” “investment,” and “retirement” were common in conversations and on stage, where three creators who run seven-figure businesses referred to themselves as “CEOs” when asked by **Jim Louderback** what they considered to be their titles.
- Creators and executives stressed the importance of [revenue and platform diversification](#) to mitigate risk amid the possibility of a US TikTok ban and to protect against changes in platform algorithms and brand budgets.

Yes, but: The absence of brands was a red flag for the future of the conference and a missed opportunity for creators.

- Brand deals remain the No. 1 income source for creators. Without them, the conference was missing a key component of the creator ecosystem. We expect sponsored content to account for [59.4% of the revenues](#) creators generate from social media this year.
- Many creators expressed frustration about the scarcity of “ad dollars” when talking about both paid ads and brand sponsorships, demonstrating a lack of understanding of how brands operate. Advertising and influencer marketing are increasingly merging through tactics like content boosting but generally remain separate line items.

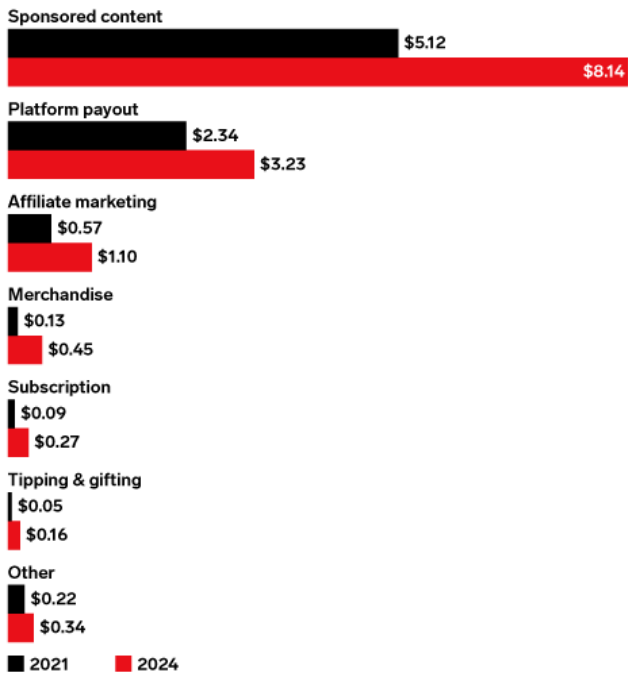
By the numbers: It's true that high-paying brand deals and ad dollars are now harder for creators to come by. But both are flowing nicely into the creator economy.

- We expect US social video ad spending to overtake linear TV ad spending in 2025. Big brands, including those who have been hesitant to invest in creator content, are now shifting more of their budget into creator-led social. Almost all (90%) advertisers now consider creator content to be a high-quality ad channel, per the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB).
- Creators are at the mercy of platform payout policies for those ad dollars. Most platforms don't have a robust ad revenue sharing program for short-form content, which is where most brands are increasing investments. We expect long-form YouTube content to account for the vast majority of the \$3.23 billion US creators will generate in platform payout revenues in 2024.
- Some of the ad and brand deal drought is because of the sheer number of creators in the market. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Gen Zers now identify as creators, per YouTube's latest Culture and Trends report, which means that competition for those dollars is fierce. We expect influencer marketing spending to rise by 16.0% to \$8.14 billion in 2024.

The big picture: The creator economy has gotten so big and diverse that it's hard to talk about it as a whole. Top creators now command communities and businesses that rival or surpass traditional brands, but the longtail of creators lives in a very different reality. Many are struggling to monetize effectively due to a lack of business acumen and a roadmap for success.

Creators Make the Most Money From Brand Deals, but Their Earnings Breakdown Is Changing

billions in US social media creator revenues, by stream, 2021 & 2024



Note: revenues generated by US-based creators via each stream on social media; excludes revenues generated on traditional media properties; includes video platforms with primarily user-generated content (e.g., Twitch, YouTube)
Source: EMARKETER Forecast, March 2024

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