

Creators are coming to Cannes Lions, marking an inflection point for the creator economy

Article

The news: Cannes Lions will host its first-ever “LIONS Creators” program, a three-day experience dedicated to the creator economy, in partnership with Viral Nation.

- The program includes mainstage sessions and closed-door Exchange Roundtables filmed in front of a live audience of attending creators. EMARKETER principal analyst **Jasmine Enberg** will moderate a roundtable on June 19 with creators **Avani Gregg, Kahlil Greene, Madi Monroe, McKenzi Brooke, and MrBallen**.
- Other speakers include high-profile creators and business leaders like life coach and entrepreneur **Jay Shetty**, “Pretty Lonesome” podcast host **Madeline Argy**, and **MrBeast** president **Marc Hustvedt**.

Why it matters: An official creator program by Cannes Lions solidifies creators as both a new class of creatives and an integral part of the advertising landscape.

- Cannes Lions is the premier event for advertisers, bringing together top CMOs, CEOs, and creatives from around the world. The festival is best-known for its advertising awards, but it’s also a hub for dealmaking among brands, agencies, media companies, and tech platforms.
- Almost all (90%) advertisers now consider creator content to be a high-quality ad channel, per the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB). Creators have also become a major source of ad creative, with 60% of brand marketers worldwide placing sponsored digital ads featuring creators, per October 2023 CreatorIQ data.

What Cannes Lions is saying: “The creator economy doesn’t currently have a meeting place to come together to address business challenges,” said **Thea Skelton**, vice president of Events at Lions. “Cannes Lions will play a role in providing that space, bringing together the platforms, brands, creators, and agencies for the most pressing conversations around how we co-create, collaborate, and unlock greater value and progress for the wider industry.”

Yes, but: The creator economy has unofficially been a big part of Cannes Lions for several years.

- This year, influencer marketing firms like **Whalar** and **Influential** will return to coveted spots along the Croisette. Companies from **TikTok** to **Spotify** have again invited creators to participate in their programming.

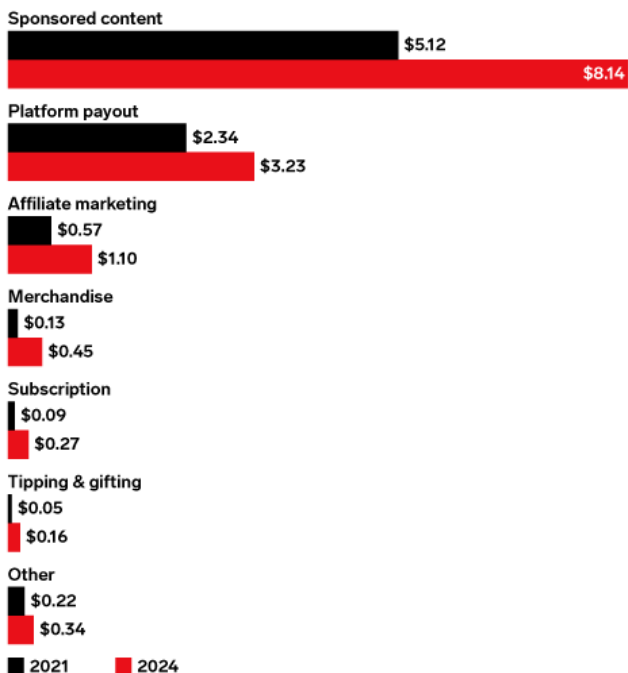
The big picture: The creator economy is at an inflection point. As the ad industry finally embraces creators as content producers and marketing partners, top stars are turning their online success into globally recognizable brands of their own. Traditional brands now find themselves competing with creators for consumer attention and spending.

- In June, MrBeast became the most-subscribed **YouTube** channel, with over 270 million followers. Born **Jimmy Donaldson**, MrBeast also runs multiple businesses, including chocolate brand Feastables, and said last year that his combined annual revenues are over **\$600 million**.

Brand deals remain the No. 1 way that creators earn income, but revenue streams like merchandising and subscriptions are rising fast. Some 39.4% of US social media users had made a purchase from an influencer or creator-founded brand in the 12 months preceding our March 2024 survey, for example.

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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