

SANE Agency, a division of SANE Media, LLC

Brands, Meet Entertainment

UNDERSTANDING ENTERTAINMENT MARKETING

Purpose of this whitepaper

This whitepaper was written with the intent to help brand marketing leaders gain a better understanding of entertainment marketing. The field of marketing is an ever-changing world from continuous changes in consumer behavior that are reflected in data, marketing technology, numerous mediums, a wealth of platforms for brands to reach their audience, and most recently the advent of artificial intelligence which for some has thrown a monkey wrench into things to the introduction of techniques that marketing teams can use to drive audience traffic back to the brand. All of these things affect a brand's strategy causing them to continuously adapt and find ways to improve to deliver on ROI.

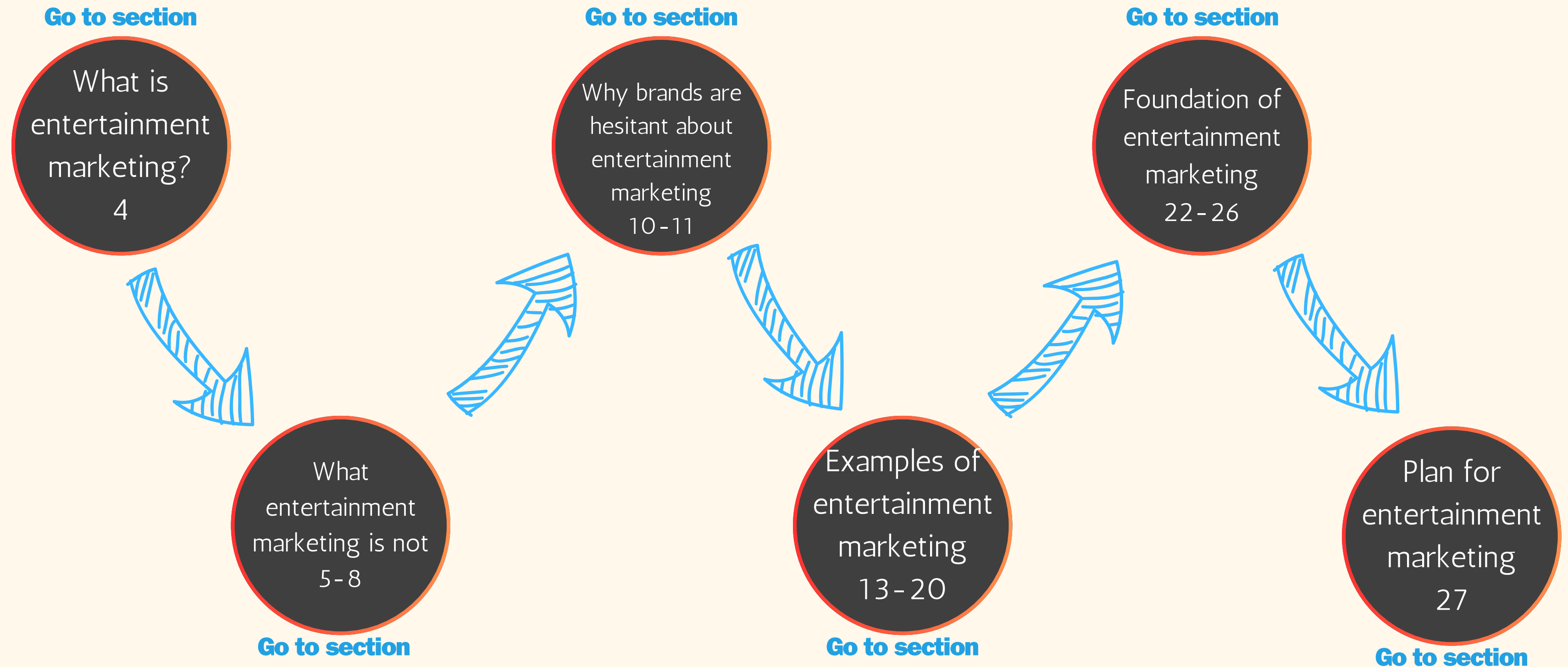
At *SANE Agency*, we live at the intersection of entertainment and brands. Our team understands brands, entertainment companies, creators, and athletes. We appreciate you taking the time to read this and we value our relationship with everyone.



Clifford Waddell, III

Managing Partner, *SANE Agency*
CEO, *SANE Media, LLC*

Explore Each Section

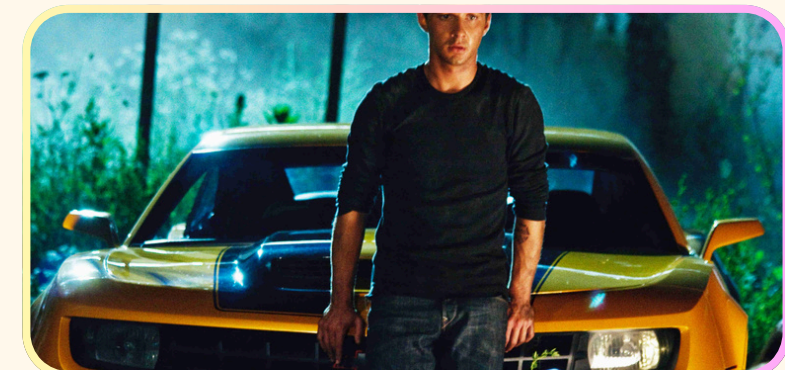


What is Entertainment Marketing?

Entertainment marketing is a form (or subcategory) of content marketing. It involves leveraging new or existing entertainment productions across one or multiple mediums to promote a brand's product or service with subtle (or subliminal) messaging. Brand messaging can look many different ways such as product placements, mention of a brand's product or service, product or service activations, and/or audience engagement. The various mediums include television, film, radio, music, video games, YouTube, and in some cases social media content.

Advantages of Entertainment Marketing:

One of the biggest advantages of entertainment marketing is audience reach through an entertainment production that's bound to reach (depending on the medium and market) tens of thousands, if not, millions of people. It's a bonus if it's a production with a notable influencer or celebrity attached where the brand can tap into both the production and celebrity/influencer's audience simultaneously.



What Entertainment Marketing is NOT & Why

Celebrity Endorsement:

Contrary to popular belief, a celebrity endorsement is not considered entertainment marketing. The reason why is that an endorsement deal is paying someone to promote and recommend the brand's product, which is advertising on the brand's behalf. Brands often use celebrities in ad campaigns to endorse their product. It is not entertainment marketing. This whitepaper will touch more on that later.



Social Media Content (i.e. Instagram, Facebook, TikTok):

While it's previously mentioned that social media can be a medium for entertainment marketing, the line can easily get blurred because social media influencers and content creators live on social media platforms. The reason that all social media content is not considered entertainment marketing is because a lot of social media content falls under the category of product/brand endorsements.



What Entertainment Marketing is NOT & Why

Commercials:

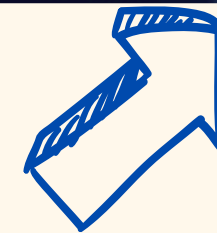
Simply put, commercials are advertisements and should be considered as such. It's easy to assume that commercials are a form of entertainment marketing because brands have traditionally run ads on television networks, radio stations, movie theaters, social media platforms, and streaming platforms. The objective of commercials is obvious, their original and intended purpose is for brands to make consumers aware of their product or services, highlight features, and encourage consumers to purchase its product or services. Some exceptions can be made to a small percentage of commercials because they were produced to be more entertaining with a subtle message as opposed to the brand outright telling viewers about its products and asking them to make a purchase. The best example of these types of commercials can usually be found during the Super Bowl since that's when most brands like to get creative with their advertising.



What Entertainment Marketing is NOT & Why

Sponsorship Marketing:

Much like social media marketing, the line between sponsorship marketing and entertainment marketing can easily get blurred. Brands for decades have marketed their products or services through sponsorship marketing, especially through the sponsoring of television productions. While brands have traditionally sponsored television productions, in most cases, it's not entertainment marketing. Traditionally when brands sponsor productions, it's just a product placement with a mention or two (i.e. presented by, brought to you in part by, etc.). In the case of televised sporting events such as the NFL, NBA, MLB, NCAA, etc., brand sponsorships are very much prevalent and viewers will see product placements and a lot of signage with brand logos as if they're in a shopping mall. While brand sponsors are always mentioned, and have product placement, and logo placement on a televised production, it's not entertainment marketing. This is because the sponsoring brand(s) usually aren't fully activated, which is due to them not being fully baked into the production, sometimes limiting the consumers' desire to engage with sponsors. Sponsoring brands that consumers are usually least likely to engage with are the brands that purchase lower-tier sponsorship packages.



What Entertainment Marketing is NOT & Why

Infomercial:

While an infomercial can appear to fall under the category of entertainment marketing, the truth is they're not considered entertainment. Infomercials are long-form versions of a regular commercial. While some infomercials may sometimes include a host, spokesperson, or a few personalities, they're only there to educate the viewers about the featured product and demonstrate its use, followed by a call-to-action for the viewer to place an order for the product. Most infomercials are not entertaining and are produced for the sole purpose of promoting the brand's product(s).



Why are brands hesitant to invest in entertainment marketing or develop an entertainment marketing strategy for product placement and activation?





Brands like The Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo, Nike, Apple (before Apple Music, Podcast, & TV+), General Motors, Stellantis' Chrysler Group, and a few others have gone all the way in with entertainment marketing. These brands make a considerable effort to have their products featured in entertainment productions across multiple mediums. These companies even have entertainment marketing teams within their organizations that work alongside external agencies and entertainment industry partners.



There's still plenty of room for national and global brands to bake more entertainment marketing into their marketing strategy. While most brands aren't incorporating entertainment marketing like the aforementioned brands, many more brands have begun taking steps to incrementally increase their entertainment marketing efforts.



Brands are hesitant largely due to the lack of understanding of how entertainment marketing really works and how it can benefit their brand. Some view entertainment marketing as just another media buy, like buying a commercial slot or paying for a product endorsement.



Some brands aren't sure how their product can fit into a production, especially the brands that only provide a service and no physical products.



Brand reputation and representation are of the utmost importance for every brand, especially brands that are household names and whose brand name can sell its product(s) alone. Some brands are weary about lending their name and reputation to a project that they didn't produce, don't have 100% control over, and have to rely on external partners to execute the shared vision in hopes that their brand is being properly represented, their products are being properly placed, and that their product/services are being properly activated.

Some brands are hesitant about entertainment marketing because they're unsure how their products can be placed and activated organically and authentically. This especially goes for brands who may be approached about having their products placed in a production that (on the surface) may not make much sense for their brand. Brands understand that it can do more harm than good if they place their product in a production and it looks forced. It can be a major turn-off to the viewers.

Some brands pour lots of marketing dollars into various product placement and activation opportunities outside of their bread-and-butter advertising strategy. Some brands may not fully understand how entertainment marketing can benefit their existing properties that they already have marketing dollars invested in.



Shining Examples of Entertainment Marketing

Nike's *Dear Kobe* Commercial

This commercial which aired in 2021 served mainly as a tribute to NBA legend, Kobe Bryant who passed away in 2020. The commercial featured a Kobe fan playing a game of one-on-one basketball with a friend at the park. The commercial also features a voiceover of the fan reading what appears to be a letter that he wrote to Kobe thanking him for all that he's taught him. Throughout the commercial, while watching the guy play basketball, there are shots of various Nike products. The commercial was loaded with product placement such as Nike's Kobe shoes, a Nike basketball, Nike t-shirts, Nike shorts, and a Nike bookbag. While there was no mention of the Nike products featured in the commercial, you can see them being used. This commercial mainly appeals to fans of Kobe Bryant and basketball players, which most share an appreciation for Kobe Bryant and may want to buy his latest shoes as a way to pay homage.



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Volkswagen & Despicable Me 4

While it is obvious that this is a commercial, this commercial on the surface is more entertaining than salesy. Those of us familiar with the Despicable Me characters know that it's also a promotion for the film. What makes this commercial entertaining and funny is the family loading up in the vehicle, then the daughter mentioning that there's room for one more before the vehicle is surrounded by minions. This commercial does a great job of blending in what Volkswagen wanted to highlight about the Atlas. The Volkswagen Atlas can comfortably seat seven people as we saw the camera pan from the front to the back of the cabin. All of this was followed by a voiceover quickly highlighting that the Volkswagen Atlas has three-row seating for seven, and promoting the July release of Despicable Me 4.



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Apple Music Super Bowl Halftime Show

While Apple Music is a streaming platform, buying the naming rights to the Super Bowl halftime show was one of the best marketing decisions the company made. Oftentimes when people see their favorite singers performing during the Super Bowl halftime show and performing songs both old and new, it creates the feeling of nostalgia. After watching the live performance, fans are going to look up some of the songs on music streaming platforms which is usually Apple Music or Spotify. Part of what makes this such a great move by Apple Music is their name now being associated with the Super Bowl halftime show, that alone will make fans want to go back to their app to listen to the music later. In addition, Apple Music works with artists on a *Road to Halftime* campaign to build up the hype and awareness around the halftime performance. Apple creates a playlist featuring the songs in the same order they were performed during the halftime performance. This is important because it will immediately be made available following the halftime performance. Fans will go searching for that playlist which will be exclusively available on Apple Music's platform.



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Audi's e-tron GT & Marvel's Avenger's Endgame

Audi's placement of their e-tron GT EV model which had recently been shown to the public made its Hollywood debut in this film. There wasn't anything said about the car, but everything was said through its performance. For those who are familiar with the character of Tony Stark (Robert Downy Jr.) in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, he drove an Audi sports car. During one scene in Avengers Endgame, Captain America (Chris Evans) is seen standing outside, and then in the distance, you see a car driving fast towards where he's standing. The car drives through a curb and the audience can see the car "hugging" the curb, while at the same time hearing the tires screeching all the way through. The car then speeds near where Captain America is standing and comes to a quick stop, slightly passing him before reversing, then gets out Tony Stark. That scene had everyone talking from Motor Trend, Car and Driver, and all of the car bloggers. For those that didn't see Audi's debut of the concept model, this scene caught their attention generating a lot of buzz around the future of the Audi sport lineup. Where Audi succeeded with this product activation is showcasing the car's capabilities which spoke for itself. It was a major win at the time because people still questioned the ability of EVs to have the same performance capabilities as gasoline engine vehicles.



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Ray-Ban & Top Gun

While it doesn't appear that Ray Ban paid for product placement in the original Top Gun (1986) starring Tom Cruise, they certainly benefitted over the years. The reason why is because of the aviator sunglasses worn by Cruise's character, Pete Mitchell. Tom Cruise is a movie star and him wearing those sunglasses looked nothing short of cool. Ray-Ban took advantage of the opportunity when Top Gun Maverick was announced, paying to have their iconic aviator sunglasses worn by Tom Cruise in the movie. Not only did the brand benefit from the film, but they also benefitted from Cruise's star power as a movie star. This product placement opportunity allowed Ray Ban to appeal to both fans of Top Gun Maverick and Tom Cruise.



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T-Mobile Home Internet 2024 Super Bowl Ad

T-Mobile's minute-long Super Bowl ad starring Zach Braff, Donald Faison, and Jason Momoa was nothing short of entertaining. Viewed over 56 million times on YouTube and regarded as one of the best commercials of 2024, this commercial did not disappoint. The commercial is basically a short musical with the three singing about having reliable home internet by T-Mobile so that they can watch the big game (Super Bowl). Of the 60 seconds, they only spent six to seven seconds quickly discussing how easy it is to set up T-Mobile's home internet and the network's 5G connection. This commercial is lively, and fun to watch, it has a catchy tune that makes it fun to sing and dance along with and a repeatable watch.



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Chevrolet's Camaro & Transformers (2007)

Not only the film, but the entire Transformers franchise was a perfect opportunity for product placement for General Motors and its family of brands. Chevrolet discontinued production of the Camaro in 2002. Chevrolet released the concept model in 2006 and the yellow concept model with black racing stripes going down the middle was featured in the 2007 Transformers film. Bumblebee, the Transformer robot, initially started as a 1976 yellow Camaro with black racing stripes and later upgraded to the 2006 model with the same colorway. During the film, audiences got to not only see the reintroduction of Chevrolet's classic Camaro but also got to watch it perform onscreen throughout the film. In a movie about robots that come to earth and take on the appearance of various vehicles it allowed General Motors an opportunity to show off their cars without having to worry too much about overdoing product placement and activations. It was obvious that they were promoting their vehicles, but it didn't bother the audience since it was a natural and organic fit into the production.



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Dodge's Charger & Fast Five

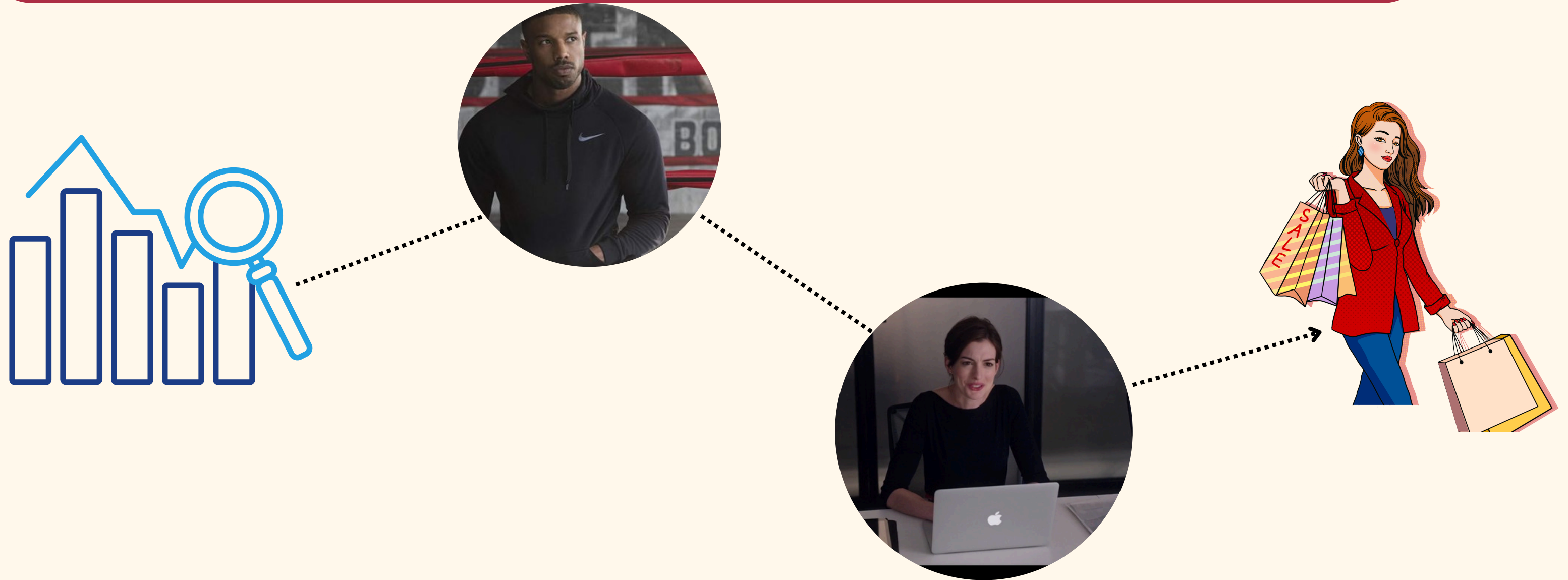
Anyone familiar with the Fast & Furious franchise knows that you're going to see a lot of cars and eventually, you'll see a few of your favorites too. Dominic "Dom" Toretto (Vin Diesel), one of the main protagonists in the franchise is known to drive an old-school Dodge Charger. Dodge saw an opportunity for both product placement and activation. In Fast Five, there's a scene where Dom and the gang steal a few police cars from the local law enforcement to use to steal a bank vault. During the chase scene, Dom and Brian O'Connor (Paul Walker) are seen hauling a bank vault with two Dodge Chargers while being chased by the local police who are also driving Chargers. The Dodge Charger is popular amongst everyday drivers and law enforcement, so it made sense for the producers to craft up that scene. The Dodge Charger is known for being America's muscle car. The chase scene while not all that realistic was an opportunity for Dodge to demonstrate the Charger's prowess as an American muscle car, in addition to showcasing why it's the preferred car for law enforcement across the United States.



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Foundation of Entertainment Marketing

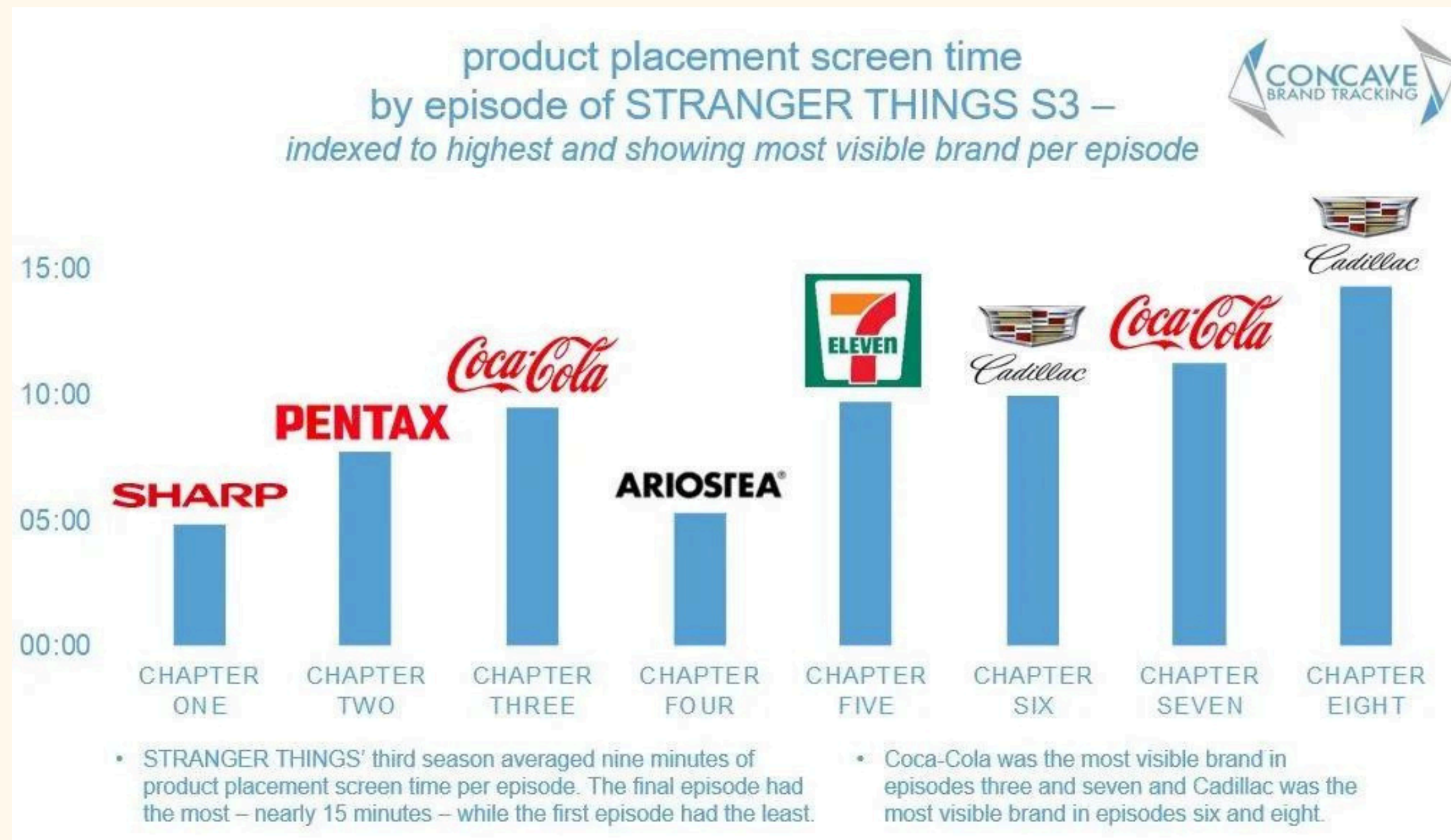
It goes without saying, but before seriously considering any product placement or activation opportunities, brands should first consider the data. If brands are going after consumers that fit their existing customer demographics, then they should work off of that data. If brands are looking to attract a new demographic of customers, then they should find the data to help them effectively go after those consumers. Regardless, effective placement and activations follow the data so that products are placed in the right places and are activated the right way.



Foundation of Entertainment Marketing

Product Placement:

Product placement in the case of entertainment marketing is when a brand places its product in a given production where it can be noticed by the viewer, but doesn't stand out too much where it takes away from the story. This is effective especially if there's a frequency of the product being seen, causing the viewer to recognize it later outside of the production.

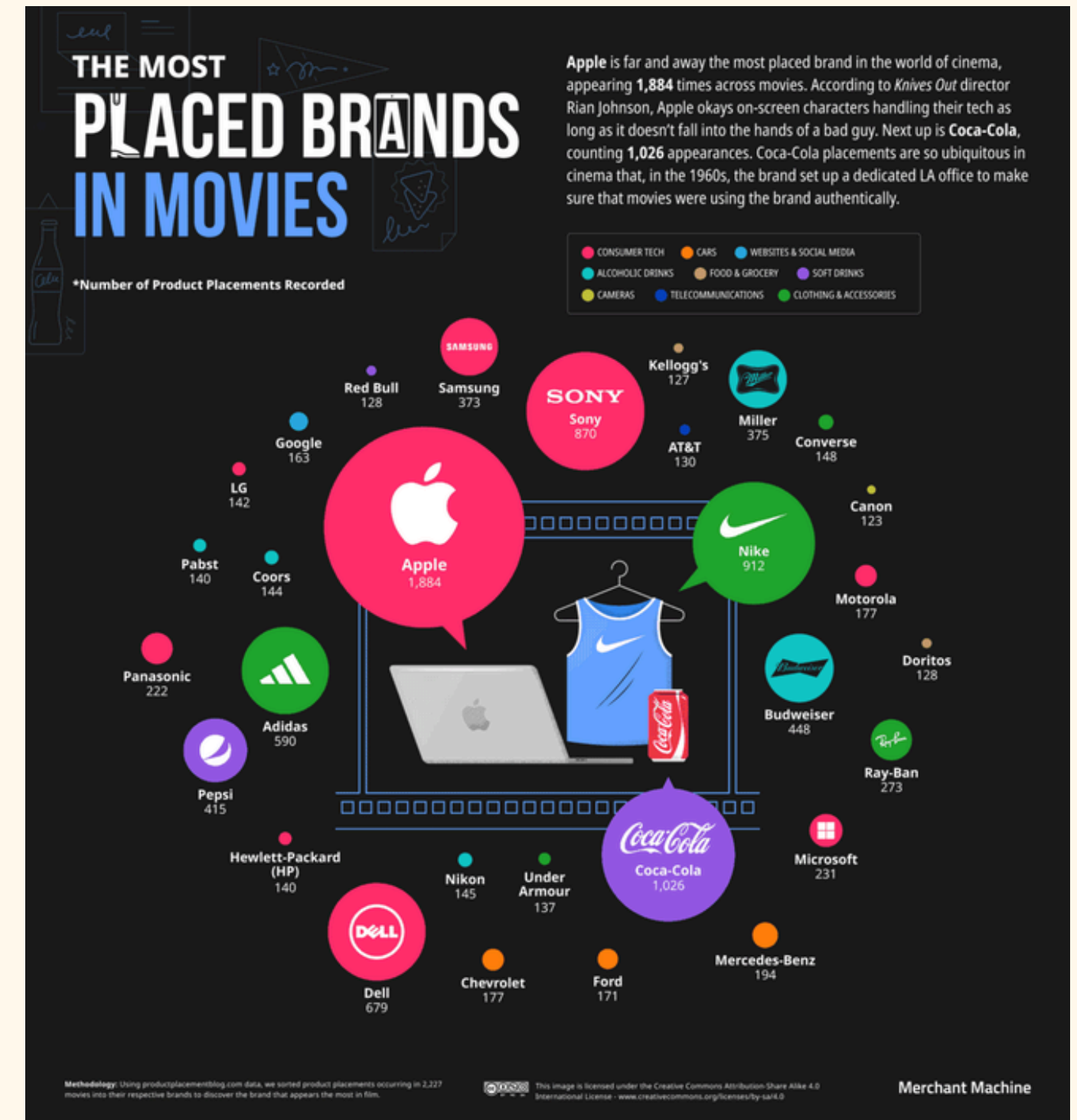


Source: American Marketing Association

Foundation of Entertainment Marketing

Brand Activation:

This can be seen as a step up from product placement. In entertainment marketing this is where a brand's product or service is being used in a production, demonstrating its use to the consumer. Not only does the viewer see the product or service like with product placement, but they get to see it being used, which helps them see how they could use it themselves. Usually when executed properly a successful product activation will have people talking about the product.



Foundation of Entertainment Marketing

Brand Engagement:

The connection between the brand and the audience. Now that the audience has seen the brand's product or service and how it can be used, the goal is to get the audience to engage with the brand. Brand engagement can look several different ways. The goal is to get consumers to form a connection with the brand. A good example of this is when Audi was preparing to produce its last R8 model for 2024 before discontinuing the model. Audi made plans to produce one last R8 video paying homage to the car. Audi launched an Instagram campaign allowing R8 fans to have input on every aspect of the video, from the music, time of day, and the look and feel of the video. Audi allowed fans to vote through a series of Instagram stories that were posted one day at a time. Following the conclusion of the video, Audi took the results which were used to guide the creative direction of the video. This made their fans feel like they had a voice by helping guide the creative process which was reflected in the video as they showed the final results during the video too.

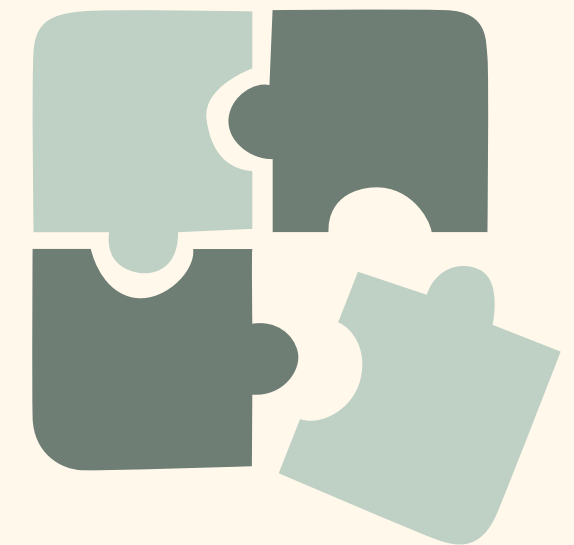
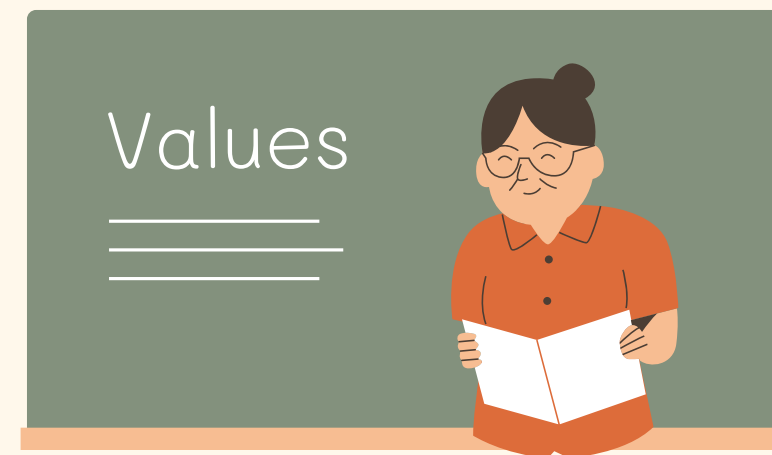
Audi Waves Goodbye To The R8 With An Emotional 'The Last Lap' Video

Fans were asked to vote for the location, storyline, and music.



In any successful entertainment marketing campaign, the brand's product or service is successfully woven into the fabric of the story that's being told.

It is extremely important that whatever entertainment marketing opportunities that brands decide to create or engage with remain a natural fit to the brand. It's also important to remember that product placements and activations should not be forced as they can do more harm than good, be a turn-off to the audience, and divert attention away from the story in a negative way.



Foundation of Entertainment Marketing

How to properly go about entertainment marketing:

1. Brands need to first identify their target audience whether it's a current or new demographic
2. Set clear [SMART] goals and objectives
3. Identify potential media or talent agency partners to help carefully craft an entertainment marketing campaign or strategy
 - a. It's important to be able to trust external collaborators with the brand's reputation
4. Identify entertainment productions that check the following boxes
 - a. Aligns with brand values
 - b. Is a natural fit for product placement
 - c. Is a natural fit for brand product or service activation
 - d. Allows for the brand to create engagement opportunities around the production
5. Determine a reasonable and realistic budget for entertainment marketing
 - a. Some opportunities are more expensive than others, however, they may be worth the investment

