

INTRO - SPECTION



STATE

OF

THE

YAYA

2

0

2

4

WHO IS MOJO AD?

MOJO Ad is a full-service agency at the University of Missouri that not only specializes in all things young, but is also staffed entirely by young adults. Specializing in the 18- to 24-year-old market, also known as the youth and young adult (YAYA) market, we are certified experts because we are them. Our unique position in this sought-after demographic grants us the ability to act as a liaison between the YAYA and the professionals seeking to reach them.

WHAT IS A YAYA?

Originally coined by MOJO Ad, "YAYA" refers to 18- to 24- year-olds. These consumers are at a pivotal life stage in which they are developing their identities and embracing their reality. At 31 million strong in the United States and earning an aggregate income of \$463 billion, these consumers are choosing whether to stick with the brands they know or try new ones. If marketers fail to reach them, they might never catch up.

WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE YAYA?

The State of the YAYA is an annual report that provides marketers with an in-depth look at the trends and activities of the 18- to 24-year-old market. Created by MOJO Ad staff, the report presents exclusive data on the YAYA demographic to help marketers connect with them on a deeper level. This year's report not only highlights who they are as consumers, but individuals as well, by providing an extensive look at attitudes and behaviors toward entertainment, including music, streaming content and video games.

OUR METHODOLOGY

To best understand the YAYA market, we crafted a 60-question survey that was distributed nationwide through Qualtrics. This resulted in 850 completed responses from YAYA consumers. The sample was representative of the U.S. Census Bureau data for 18- to 24-year-olds related to race, ethnicity and gender. Our qualitative research consisted of 14 focus groups and 11 in-depth interviews with 82 total participants across the United States.



INTRO - SPECTION

IMAGINE A GENERATION NAVIGATING A WORLD INUNDATED WITH INFORMATION, CONSTANTLY BOMBARDED BY THE NOISE OF SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS, TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS AND CULTURAL SHIFTS. THIS IS THE WORLD FACING TODAY'S YAYAS.

Introspection is the reflective inward examination of one's own conscious thoughts and feelings. This word perfectly encapsulates the way we found YAYAs interacting with entertainment.

Amidst the complexities of the modern era, YAYAs turn to entertainment as a sanctuary, a place where they find solace, comfort and connection. YAYAs don't shy away from their emotions, instead embracing them to tackle uncomfortable truths and process the world around them. Using entertainment as a mirror, they look within themselves to discover who they are.

Journeying deep into the YAYA psyche, traveling along a wide-ranging emotional spectrum, learning how YAYAs expertly use entertainment as a tool for self-reflection and discovery is essential for brands and marketers to grasp. Throughout the research process, four core emotions emerged from the data – curious, melancholy, overwhelmed and enlightened. These emotions tell the story of how YAYAs interact with entertainment.

CURIOUS

6 - 11

MELAN-
CHOLY

12 - 15

OVER -
WHELMED

16 - 19

ENLIG -
HTENED

20 - 24



CURIOS

cu·ri·ous

synonyms: inquisitive, eager

THE INCLINATION TO BE ON EVERY NEW FRONTIER, ADAPTING TO CUTTING-EDGE DISCOVERIES AND PRIORITIZING ONE'S UNIQUE PREFERENCES WHEN ENGAGING WITH INFORMATION. FOR EXAMPLE, HAVING A DESIRE TO BE THE FIRST TO FIND RISING FORMS OF ENTERTAINMENT AND ALWAYS HUNTING FOR THE NEXT BIG THING.



51%

stop following influencers when they become too mainstream



DESIRING

YAYAs are innately curious, leading them to have a deep desire to discover, meaning they love to find entertainment niches that perfectly match their personalities and feelings. The same applies for their social media preferences, where 51% stop following influencers when they become too mainstream. YAYAs like engaging with lesser-known entertainment as they enjoy feeling like they are the first to discover something that they can then share with their friends. For example, 70% of YAYAs like knowing about music artists that are less well-known. Once they find these rising stars, YAYAs enjoy keeping up with them and being a part of their devoted fanbase. Sixty percent of YAYAs consider themselves the first to know about new music from their favorite artists.

DISCOVERY

When it comes to entertainment-related technology, YAYAs still find themselves on the cutting edge. Fifty-eight percent of YAYAs think VR is the next big thing. While only 22% currently own a VR headset, 47% of YAYAs who do not have a VR headset plan to purchase one in the near future.

Another technological breakthrough that's been captivating YAYAs and the rest of the world is artificial intelligence (AI), which can already be seen as a threat to take over the entertainment industry. Although, YAYAs are feeling pretty conflicted about AI in entertainment, 45% agree that entertainment made by AI is just as good as human-made entertainment. However, 30% strongly disagree with this idea.

DESIRING

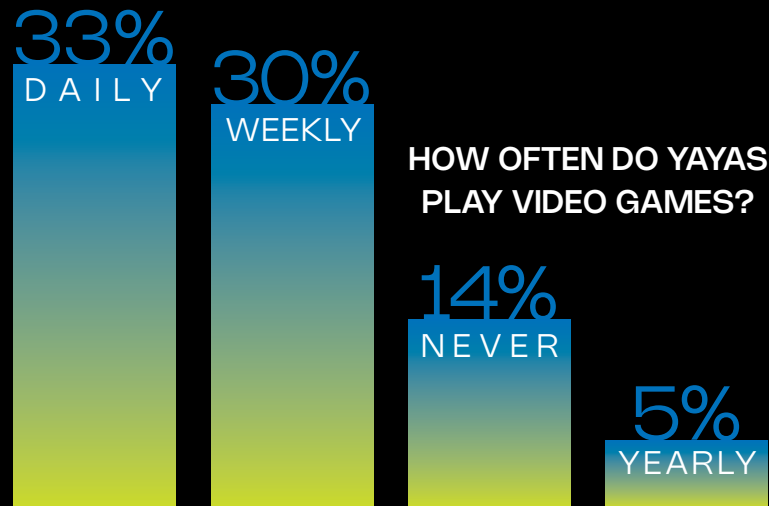
YAYAs don't just enjoy finding artists and entertainment before they're cool, but instead they want to make these things cool themselves. Fifty-three percent aspire to be tastemakers and influence what is culturally relevant for their friends, and 75% of YAYAs like introducing their friends to new music. When it comes to in-person entertainment, 63% like to be the one to show their friends new places to go around town. YAYAs find it important to be able to show their close friends their niche interests, hoping to create a community of like-minded people.

INFLUENCE

YAYAs enjoy feeling that sense of community in the places they visit to eat, as 62% go to bars and restaurants they already know they enjoy instead of exploring new places and 47% consider themselves a "regular" at at least one bar or restaurant in town.



"You just feel like you're on the inside whenever you can put other people onto something ... you feel like you can connect with other people by sharing something you really like with them. It also just makes you feel closer to that thing if you've been there from the start ... it broadens the number of people that you can talk to about it and expands the community."



DESIRING

YAYAs are also expressing a desire to immerse themselves in entertainment. They enjoy being able to fully lose themselves in the content they're consuming and are always looking to deepen their engagement with it. One of their favorite ways to do this is playing video games. Gaming is not only extremely popular with YAYAs, it's something they devote quite a bit of their time to. Sixty percent say video games are an important part of their lives, 64% play video games at least weekly and 33% play daily.

IMMERSION

THE

IMPLICATION

Though YAYAs may be rejecting traditional forms of advertising, video games are a medium where they actually enjoy interacting with it. Fifty-seven percent of YAYAs like it when video games partner with brands. For example, Fortnite partnered with Travis Scott to hold a live concert to premiere one of his new songs to the world. Prior to the concert, players could unlock Travis Scott-themed in-game content, such as emotes (little dances) and outfits. With the ability to log in with other live characters, the branded content ended up generating more revenue for Travis Scott than any in-person event had before. According to Forbes, the nine-minute digital concert generated roughly \$20 million including merchandise sales. During Scott's most recent four-month-long tour, each show generated about \$1 million.¹

According to a report from Variety,² gaming ad spend is expected to increase by 40% in 2024 alone, hitting \$8.5 billion dollars. Given that gaming is such an important part of YAYAs' daily lives, seamlessly integrating advertising and branding with this medium is a surefire way to reach and build loyalty with this audience.



MELANCHOLY

mel·an·chol·y

synonyms: gloomy, dejected

THE DEEP, PENSIVE AND PERVASIVE SADNESS EXPERIENCED IN EVERYDAY LIFE. TYPICALLY, THERE IS NO OBVIOUS CAUSE, BUT PEOPLE FIND SOLACE AND BEAUTY WITHIN THEIR SADNESS.

EMBRACING

In the melancholic state, YAYAs seek out entertainment as a remedy for their everyday sadness. Some YAYAs use entertainment as a conduit to channel this emotion and often allow themselves to sink deeper into the feeling.

Sometimes, YAYAs seek to control these emotions, and at other times they seek to amplify them. Some YAYAs enjoy the feeling of sadness and choose to hone in on this, with 74% enjoying listening to sad music, even when they're not sad.

EMOTION

In fact, the No. 1 search term on Spotify last year for YAYAs was "sad,"³ which fits with our data showing that 74% of YAYAs report feeling sad, while 71% report feeling disconnected and excluded and 66% feeling regretful. Yet, amidst this emotional chaos, YAYAs are adapting.

Seventy-one percent believe that their generation is the most in touch with their emotions yet, which leaves them searching for more emotional outlets than ever before.



"[Whether] we want to admit it or not, I think some of us like to be sad. I think if you ask people, 'If you could never be sad again in your life. Would you do it?' I think people would say no because being sad is just a part of being a human, you know?"

PRICED

With rising costs of living, YAYAs are beginning to feel like they're missing out on entertainment for more vital purchases. Fifty-eight percent say they feel priced out of the industry and 68% say they can't afford to attend concerts.

Also, 58% feel pressure to spend more than they should on experiences. This pressure, along with their dependence on entertainment as an emotional outlet, leads YAYAs to say that they devote 46% of their weekly spend to entertainment and experiences.

Other studies support the idea that YAYAs spend a good portion of their budget on entertainment. A Self magazine survey showed that Gen Z

OUT

identified entertainment as the thing they spend the most money on with 37% selecting that option.⁴

For many YAYAs, a portion of their spend is devoted to streaming. Forty-eight percent are paying for their own video streaming services, while only 28% of YAYAs' parents are funding their video streaming and 11% don't use a streaming service at all.

One way YAYAs attempt to cut back on entertainment spending is through illegal streaming websites, with 55% saying they will illegally stream new movies to avoid paying for them.

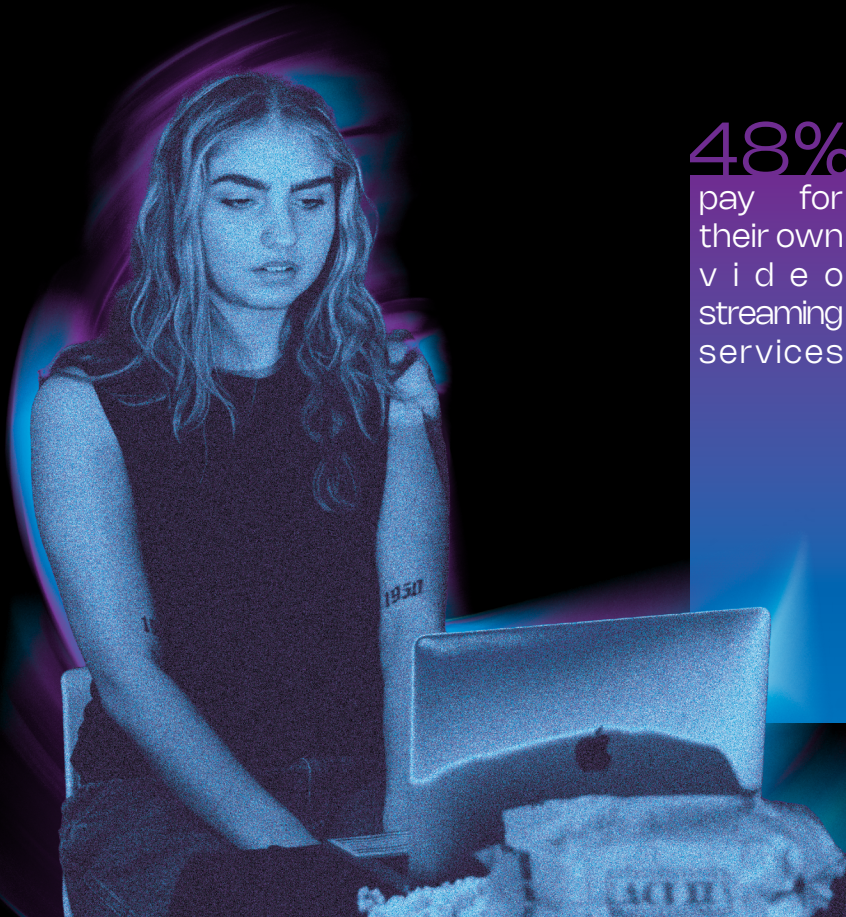


THE

IMPLICATION

Brands can utilize influencers to create content that resonates with specific emotions so that YAYAs can fully immerse themselves in their feelings.

For example, the trend of "Get ready with me to get broken up with" on TikTok and how Scrub Daddy uses their social media to relate to their customers' feelings provides opportunities to lean into these emotional moments through sponsored posts and influencer content.



48%
pay for their own video streaming services

HOW DO YAYAS PAY FOR VIDEO STREAMING?

28%
parents are funding their video streaming

11%
don't use streaming services

46%
of weekly spend on entertainment and experiences

OVER - WHELMED

o·ver·whelmed

synonyms: distressed, overcome

AN EMOTIONAL STATE CHARACTERIZED BY FEELING A SENSE OF BEING OVERCOME BY RESPONSIBILITIES, CIRCUMSTANCES OR STIMULI. OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY HEIGHTENED STRESS AND ANXIETY, AND GENERALLY FEELING UNABLE TO COPE WITH THE DEMANDS PLACED ON SOMEONE.



76%

of YAYAs report feeling overwhelmed some, most or all of the time

CONTENT

In this stage of their lives, YAYAs are worried about the future and dealing with the massive weight of the present. Seventy-six percent report feeling overwhelmed some, most or all of the time. When feeling this way, they flock to entertainment for a measure of control amid the chaos of their lives, with 78% of YAYAs seeing entertainment as an escape from reality.

When seeking comfort, YAYAs look to the past. Nostalgia continues to be a massive driver in content choice for YAYAs, with 71% choosing movies they remember from childhood and 65% playing video games from their youth. Men are only about 15% more likely to turn to video games than women. YAYAs don't see their interest in video games going away any time soon, as 72% say they'll never be too old to play video games.

When choosing activities to soothe their anxious minds, music is the first place they turn to with 81% of YAYAs relying on music to help them feel good. Additionally, 78% of stressed-out YAYAs agree that music is an essential coping mechanism and 71% say they use music to control their emotions.

Music is so important for YAYAs in dealing with stress that it's a must-have just to get through their daily activities. Seventy-two percent say they need to listen to music while working or studying and 81% need to listen to music while they exercise. In fact, 78% of YAYAs would rather give up video streaming than music. There is a slight gender disparity, with women being 11% more likely to give up video streaming than men.

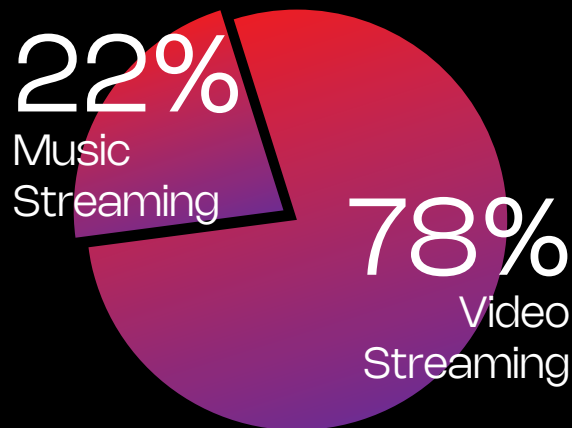
CATHARSIS

After music, the most common ways of dealing with stress and being overwhelmed are watching YouTube videos, and of course, scrolling through TikTok. Women are 13% more likely to turn to TikTok when feeling overwhelmed than men.

Amidst the chaos, 65% of YAYAs claim they have no trouble managing the amount of time they spend on TikTok, however 60% also report that they always spend more time on the app than they had planned. Fifty-three percent say they want to spend less time on TikTok, but can't help themselves.

Some YAYAs don't mind the addictiveness of TikTok, as 56% think doom scrolling is a form of entertainment and 61% like the wide range of emotions they experience when scrolling through TikTok. YAYAs are not always trying to avoid being overstimulated, sometimes they embrace it.

WHEN ASKED WHICH YAYAS WOULD RATHER GIVE UP...



THE

Brands can create content that can be used as an escape. When YAYAs are overwhelmed, they gravitate toward content that makes them feel comfortable and can allow them to "escape" from their current reality for a time. Video game makers have seen success with this idea by releasing remasters of older games such as Final Fantasy and Pokemon Diamond of Pearl, allowing YAYAs to experience their favorite childhood games all over again.

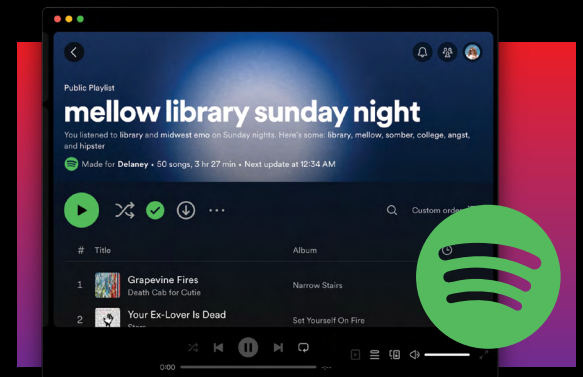
For marketers, recognizing the emotional connection YAYAs have with entertainment and authentically integrating brands into their daily media consumption is highly important.

For example, Spotify's "daylist" has been hugely successful in leveraging this idea. This is a mood-based playlist that changes periodically throughout the day based on each unique user's listening

IMPLICATION

habits. With the title "mellow library sunday night," this dynamic playlist allows the brand to connect with its users at key emotional moments in their day.

Other streaming platforms, both video and music, could adopt similar strategies by recommending content based on how users are likely feeling throughout the day.



ENLIGHTENED

en·light·ened

synonyms: open-minded, cultivated

AN EMOTIONAL STATE OF SELF-DISCOVERY AND SENSE OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS. HELPS PEOPLE TO BE MORE MINDFUL AND AWARE OF THEIR OWN EMOTIONS AND GIVES THEM WAYS TO ANCHOR THEIR IDENTITIES.

PREFERENCES

Entertainment is a crucial space for YAYAs to explore themselves and form their own unique preferences and perspectives. Seventy-one percent of YAYAs believe the music they listen to is a large part of their identity, and 63% of YAYAs believe the same about films they watch.

Being enlightened isn't just about YAYAs discovering themselves, it's about discovering ways to connect with others as well. While YAYAs use entertainment as a powerful tool to form their own identities, they also greatly enjoy experiencing it with other people.

For instance, 44% of YAYAs identify with an online fandom, and 49% of YAYAs agree that taking part in cultural trends makes them feel like a part of something.

Video games are another major way YAYAs are connecting with each other. While a total of 76% of YAYAs play video games in some capacity, 64% play as a way to keep up with friends and 58% play to feel a sense of community with other players. This bleeds into their social media use as well, with 58% following video game influencers and content creators.

71%

believe the music they listen to is a large part of their identity

AND

PERSPECTIVES

Sports betting also fosters community for YAYAs as 45% sports bet in some capacity and 49% think sports betting is a fun way to engage with their friends. Forty-five percent of YAYAs watch live sports solely to keep track of their bets, so it is a form of entertainment that encourages even more entertainment consumption.



SEEKING

When it comes to live entertainment, YAYAs aren't just there for the main event, but to enjoy the ambience, live in the moment and to share the experience with other fans. Sixty-four percent think sports events are best experienced in person, 56% agree that big blockbuster movies have to be seen in a movie theater and 67% think concerts are more about the live experience than the music that's playing.

YAYAs want to relate to other sports fans and remember their experience forever, so they post to remember the feeling of being in the moment. This is why 53% always post when they attend live sports events. Joe Matsushima, co-founder of Denizen Company said, "Typically what leads

CONNECTION

a person to share something on social media is when it has a connection to them as an individual, be it political, emotional, cute or funny. People want to share with others how they perceive the world and reflect their tastes and how they define themselves."⁵ This pairs with a research study performed by PennToday, stating that "viral-based virality" can occur simply because people find the post "inherently valuable, either to themselves or to society."⁶ Posting to social media creates both a memory book of experiences for YAYAs and helps entertain or inform other YAYAs who also find the post valuable.

45%

sports bet in
some capacity



30%

would delete social media for a month to receive VIP tickets to see their favorite band perform live

29%

would work on a major holiday to have the opportunity to meet their favorite celebrity

15%

would give up their phone for a month to see their favorite sports team play in a championship game

THE

Brands should remember that YAYAs seek community through entertainment and attach their identities to the content they enjoy. Providing a space that encourages interaction and collaboration through shared interests poses an exceptional opportunity for brands to build loyalty, whether it's an online experience or an in-person event.

For example, Fun on Weekdays, a podcast and online community started by Jenna Palek, was created to encourage young women to do fun things on weeknights after work instead of waiting for the weekend. There are now Fun on Weekdays Facebook groups in cities across the country to bring people together for events such as pickleball tournaments, cocktail making classes and group walks through their cities. Last summer, FOW held a 5K sponsored by Garmin in Los Angeles with teams sponsored by Isle of Paradise, Halo Top and Bumble.

Overall, brands should market for memories and know that YAYAs are sentimental about their experiences and don't want to miss out on cultural moments or live experiences due to their lower budgets. Brands can promote watch parties as a way to create an "event" out of movie, TV, music or game releases. For live entertainment, it's all about making each specific event one-of-a-kind.

For example, movie makers have made a one-of-a-kind experience for viewers by creating limited-edition experiences. The 2024 film *Dune: Part Two* created a popcorn bucket only for

IMPLICATION

movie watchers who attended in-person to buy. Now, they are selling for nearly \$300 for collectors to get their hands on the limited item. Another example would be how in 2023, *Barbie* encouraged viewers to wear pink and bring someone who is important to them to watch the film. This created a community of movie watchers who made the event special and one of a kind.

Since entertainment is such an integral part of how YAYAs process their own thoughts, along with the world around them, it's a non-negotiable investment. YAYAs view entertainment as a need, not a want.



FINAL THOUGHTS

For brands to reach YAYAs in this pivotal life stage, it's important to acknowledge and empower them to use entertainment as a conduit for self-expression and emotional discovery.

In their favorite movies or TV shows, YAYAs find pieces of themselves reflected in characters. Their lovingly curated playlists are in perfect harmony with what they feel at any given moment. In immersive video game worlds, they choose their own adventures and become heroes, creating their own stories and identities.

Even when they're mindlessly scrolling through TikTok or putting on a background show while they work, entertainment allows them to take control of their own narrative. In the quiet moments of introspection, YAYAs find not only solace and comfort but also the courage to confront their own truths and emerge stronger, wiser and more self-aware.



MEET THE TEAM



BEN HENSCHEL
Account Manager



DELANEY PIERCE
Art Director



ANNA TURNBULL
PR Account Manager - Content



LIBBY GREGURICH
Copywriter



FRANK ROACH
Digital Strategist



TREVOR LERIT
Graphic Designer



McKENZI SALYERS
Media Planner



GRACE HATTRICH
PR Account Manager - Strategy



AMANDA NOTHSTINE
Qualitative Strategist



MAGGIE COURTNEY
Quantitative Strategist



BRIANNA ROGERS-STEMMLE
Video Producer

TEAM

We chose our team name because we believe that our protagonist, the YAYA audience, deserves another go. Across many industries and in homes everywhere, YAYAs are being written off as lazy, uninspired and pessimistic. We're here to give them their encore and the full attention they deserve as we learn about their everyday lives and behaviors.

For the members of Team Encore, this is also our encore, a nod to the final semester of our time at Mizzou. We feel we have created an ending to our time here that's anything but stale.

ENCORE

SPECIAL THANKS

Team Encore wants to express our deepest appreciation to MOJO Ad's exceptional management staff: Jon Stemmler, Jamie Flink, Frank Corridori and Brad Best. Thank you for believing in us and making this endeavor a resounding success. Additionally, we want to thank Kathy Sharp and Vera Elwood. Your guidance and support have been invaluable throughout this journey. We also extend our gratitude to our phenomenal models. Your dedication and talent brought our vision to life in ways we couldn't have imagined.

WORKS

¹Brown, A. (2020, December 1). How hip-hop superstar Travis Scott has become corporate America's Brand Whisperer. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/abrambrown/2020/11/30/how-hip-hop-superstar-travis-scott-has-become-corporate-americas-brand-whisperer/?sh=2809325974e7>

²Maas, J. (2024, March 28). In-video-game ad spend projected to reach \$11.5 billion by 2027. Variety. <https://variety.com/2024/gaming/news/vide-game-ad-spend-11-billion-advertising-1235951448/>

³Nudd, T. (2023, August 21). Spotify leans into gen Z's sadness with 'bummer summer' campaign | ad age. Spotify Leans Into Gen Z's Sadness With "Bummer Summer" Campaign. <https://adage.com/article/marketing-newsstrategy/spotify-leans-gen-zs-sadness-bummer-summer-campaign/2511796>

⁴Self Financial. (2022, July 22). Gen Z Financial Habits: Spending & Saving Stats 2022: Self financial. Gen Z Financial Habits: Spending & Saving Stats 2022 | Self Financial. <https://www.self.inc/info/gen-z-financial-habits/>

⁵Annberg School for Communications. (2022, August 26). What makes us share posts on social media?. Penn Today. <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/annenber-communication-what-makes-us-share-posts-social-media>

⁶Moss, L. (2024, February 26). The psychology of how and why we share on social media. EveryoneSocial. <https://everyonesocial.com/blog/the-psychology-of-how-and-why-we-share/#:~:text=%E2%80%9Ctypically%20what%20leads%20a%20person,and%20how%20they%20define%20themselves.%E2%80%9D>



ENCORE



Missouri School of Journalism
University of Missouri

