



lielens®

White paper #3

***If you're
still selling
you've
already lost.***

*Learnings from influencer-
led brands, how to remain
visible in this new era*

Intro

The old brand playbook is collapsing. Heritage, logos, and media spend don't guarantee relevance anymore. Consumers have moved on, and they're not looking back. Today, culture decides what wins.

**Community builds what lasts.
Storytelling fuels what sells.**



**Today,
culture
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what wins.**

4

The brands breaking through aren't the ones shouting the loudest. They're the ones building belonging, turning drops into events, and products into movements.

If you're still selling like it's 2005, you're invisible.



This white paper isn't about nostalgia.

It's about survival.

The rules have changed.

The question is: **will you?**

The playbook

6

has changed.

The new players operate with speed, personality, and a clear visual identity. They don't just run ads, they craft ongoing narratives that invite their communities into the story.

Every post, every drop, every campaign is another chapter in a bigger brand universe.

Traditional brands, meanwhile, often lean on the same playbook that worked for decades:

drive awareness, highlight product quality, push distribution, repeat.

But in today's environment consumers rarely buy just because something is considered "the best" in terms of quality. They buy because they feel connected to the person, the movement, or the story behind it.

8



***They
make their
audiences feel
like insiders.***

***Influencer-led brands
have turned marketing
into a lifestyle.***

They are not just selling cosmetics, snacks, or energy drinks. They are selling belonging, a sense of being part of something bigger. They make their audiences feel like insiders, like being part of a culture.

Be the story people
want to be part of. 10



*they are
buying
what it
represents.*

Today, consumers are not simply buying what a product does or what it has to offer, they are buying what it represents. That's why stories of struggle, risk, or transformation hit harder than polished perfection.

Nobody cares about a superhero who never bled.

Tom Holland's journey to sobriety began in January 2022 as a short-term challenge, but it quickly evolved into a long-term commitment when he recognized how heavily he had relied on alcohol for social and emotional support. **This personal transformation became the foundation for his non-alcoholic beer brand,** Bero, which he launched in October 2024.

The trials, the flaws, the personal stakes, all create a story that people want to follow, share, and even participate in. It is the human element, the struggle, the creativity, the authenticity that transforms a product into something people feel part of.



Tom Holland

BERO's
Tom
Holland



*a narrative
people want
to join.*

People don't buy Bero just because it tastes good.

They buy because it carries meaning: you can be social without compromise. Holland didn't launch a drink, he launched a narrative people want to join.

Products sell. Stories spread.

Community as the true measure of brand success. 16

Success is no longer measured solely by sales or shelf space.

The brands that endure are the ones that build communities, groups of people who feel connected, inspired, and invested in the brand's story.



Redbull x Felix Burgatner

Red Bull nailed this before most. Today, the brand is as much about daring stunts and extreme events as it is about energy drinks. Opening a can isn't just a drink, it's a ritual. It's joining a world of doers and risk-takers.

Influencer-led brands have taken the traditional approach, flipped it upside-down and turned it into a core strategy. Average Rob for example, doesn't sell beer. He sells optimism, challenges and shared adventure.

The result is a community that isn't just watching Rob, they're inspired to join him, spread positivity, appreciate the little things and become better versions of themselves. His brand, Tout Bien, is just a physical symbol of that community.

When you create belonging, your product stops being the point. It becomes the proof.



Average Rob



A bop or a flop 20

Partnerships can be gold or poison. **The difference? Skin in the game.**

Ryan Reynolds has redefined what celebrity partnerships can look like for brands. He doesn't just lend his face. He takes equity. That way, Aviation Gin or Mint Mobile aren't side hustles, they're his. He has reason to care and audiences feel it.



Ryan Reynolds



Learnings from influencer-led brands, how to remain visible in this new era

22 People take interest by taking part of something



Ye

**Adidas bet
billions
on Yeezy.**

The last five years have also shown how risky co-branding can be, with several major partnerships collapsing publicly. Adidas bet billions on Yeezy. It worked... until it didn't. **When Ye imploded, so did the collab. Billions lost overnight.**

The lesson is clear: don't chase reach at all costs. Co-branding works only when both sides share values, skin in the game and long-term alignment. Otherwise, what feels like rocket fuel can quickly become a fire.

Take aim... and shoot.

Influencer brands don't try to win everyone. They win their people. They build their communities by being unapologetically themselves, attracting people who share their values, humor, or lifestyle.

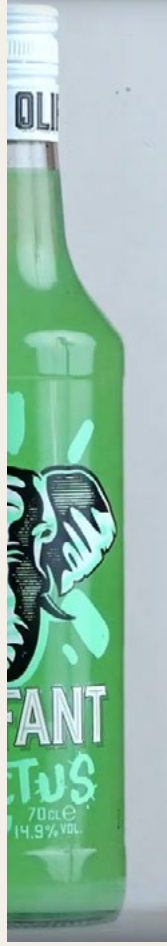


MrBeast



Feastables didn't try to replace every chocolate bar. It went after MrBeast's digital-native fans, building hype through challenges, drops, and viral content. Over time Feastables has grown to compete with legacy chocolate brands, not because of heritage or superior taste, but because of their focus on a niche audience and reaching them via the correct channel.

26 Focusing on everyone means focusing on no one



Olifant

Or look at Olifant gin. Supermarkets weren't its battleground. Nightclubs were. Glow-in-the-dark bottles turned every pour into a spotlight moment. Suddenly, Olifant wasn't just visible, it was seen.

You don't need to dominate every shelf. You need to own your arena.

Safe doesn't sell. Bold does. The brands that truly break through are the ones willing to take risks, set trends and challenge the norm.

Nike is one of the best examples of boldness done right. When Colin Kaepernick, an American football player, knelt during the national anthem before a game to protest police violence, it sparked nationwide controversy. **Nike took a stand and doubled down on their values.**



in something. Even if it
sacrificing everything.

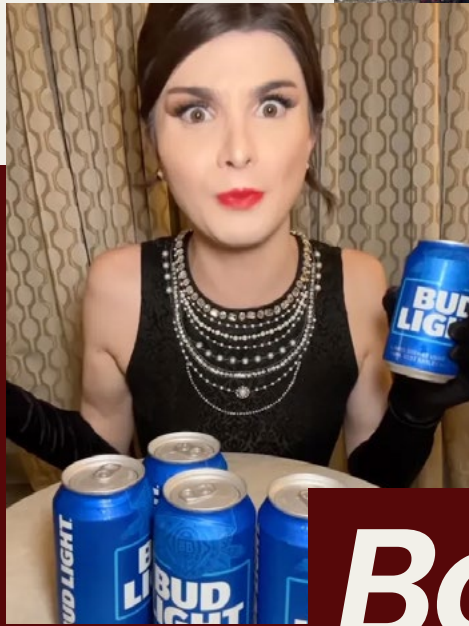
Just do it.

Colin Kaepernick x Nike

Result: Cultural relevance, loyalty and sales.

30

Boldness is encouraged, but there lies a strategy behind it. Bud Light tried boldness too, but misaligned with its core, resulting in boycotts and a collapse in sales that is still felt today.



Bud light



The difference? Alignment. Nike's stance matched its long-standing values and the expectations of its core audience. Bud Light's move, on the other hand, felt disconnected from its brand identity. Boldness works when it's true to your DNA. When it isn't, it feels like pandering.

Want to lead? Don't just join the conversation. Create the next one and become memorable.

Boldness is encouraged.

*If you have any questions
or would like to discuss
potential collaborations,
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