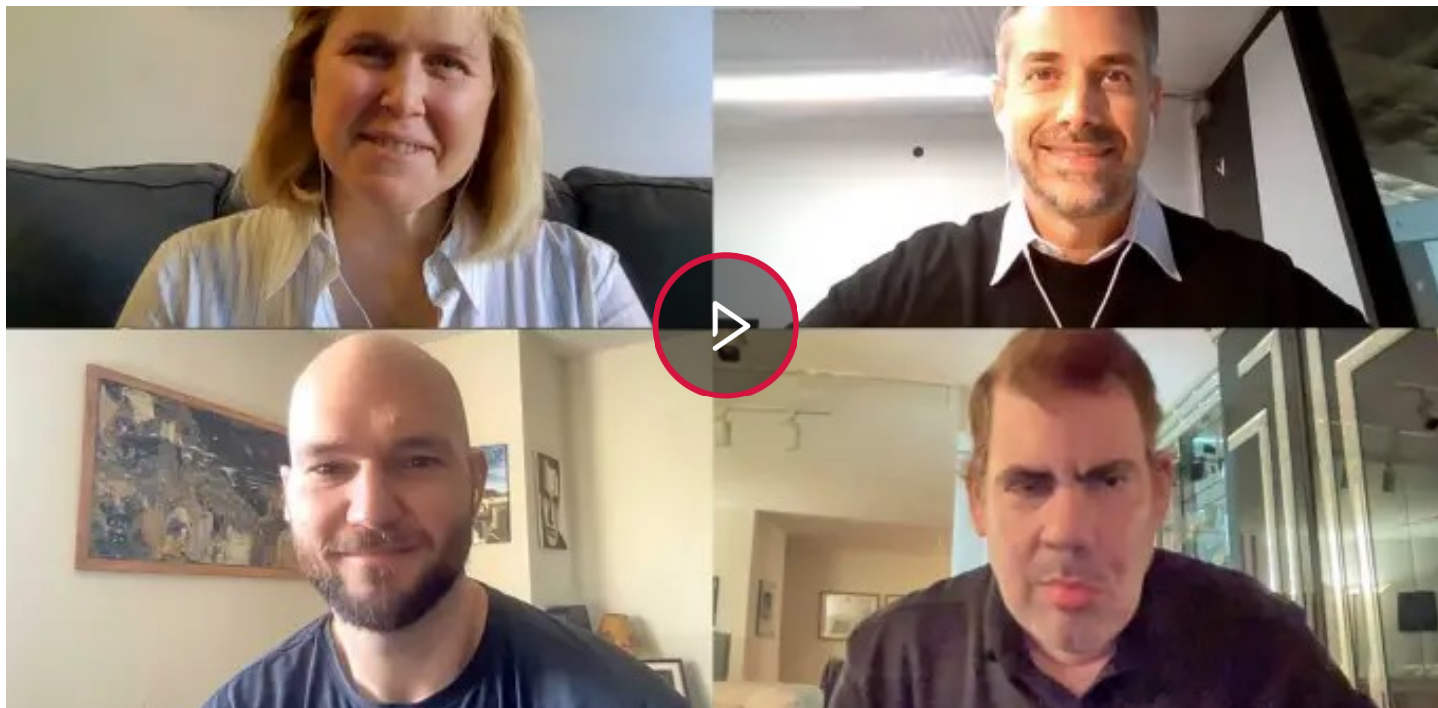


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# VIP+ WEBINAR: FANS & FRANCHISES

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In an entertainment landscape dominated more and more by franchises and IP, fans and fan culture have perhaps never been more important to the media business. Fans have long been creators in their own right, but the digital economy provided by platforms like YouTube have made their work more accessible and popular than ever, while also bringing them together in a global community of like-minded media consumers.

These are some of the topics explored in Variety Intelligence Platform's special report "Fandomination," presented by content analytics and tech firm Vobile, as well as this companion webinar, which dives deep into how fandom manifests on YouTube, and how the studios behind top franchises can engage with fans and the content they generate.

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While there are numerous platforms for fans to engage with their favorite franchises and with each other in the digital age, the vast and diverse content universe offered on YouTube still makes the 17-year-old video-sharing site stand out, as Goldenberg emphasized.

YouTube “allows fans to go so deep and broad, and surround themselves 360 degrees with any franchise they want,” Goldenberg said. “There’s so many endless directions in which a fan can immerse themselves with content of whatever franchise they love. That’s what’s fascinating about YouTube as a platform and this moment in time for fandom in general, is that connection of [user-generated content] and professionally made content.”

Indeed, while studios and media companies have long since adopted YouTube to release their own official content, user-generated content (UGC) still reigns supreme on the platform, as franchises spur fans to create their own videos based on, inspired by or analyzing the properties they love.

“When you look at some of these franchises ... 95 percent-plus of the content that’s actually getting views across digital video is not being uploaded by the [franchise] creator,” noted Naylor. “These are fans producing content just to express their interest in something, and oftentimes the videos they create will get more views than something professionally created.”

That’s not to say studios have no place on the platform, nor that they hold no influence over fans. As Gomez pointed out, media companies would do well to pay attention to what fans respond to in their franchises, while also influencing the way fans engage with properties, creating a feedback loop of sorts.

“I think franchise creators can nudge things in certain directions,” said Gomez, noting Starlight Runner worked with Microsoft on developing brand strategy around “Halo.”

“We knew that the key to trans-media extension of ‘Halo’ wouldn’t just be the combat, it would need to be the characters and the lore of this story world,” Gomez explained. “That, in turn, generated fan interest, because they wanted to deep-dive down those rabbit holes and start to create their own content around the characters and situations.”

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aggravated by fan films, said Gomez. “They actually were pursuing those fans legally to shut them down or even punish them for creating ‘Star Trek’ content on their own....I believe that ‘Star Trek’ started this franchise race in the 21st century with a leg tied behind its back, and fell behind ‘Star Wars’ and the other franchises because of this antagonistic relationship that [Paramount] had with the fanbase.”

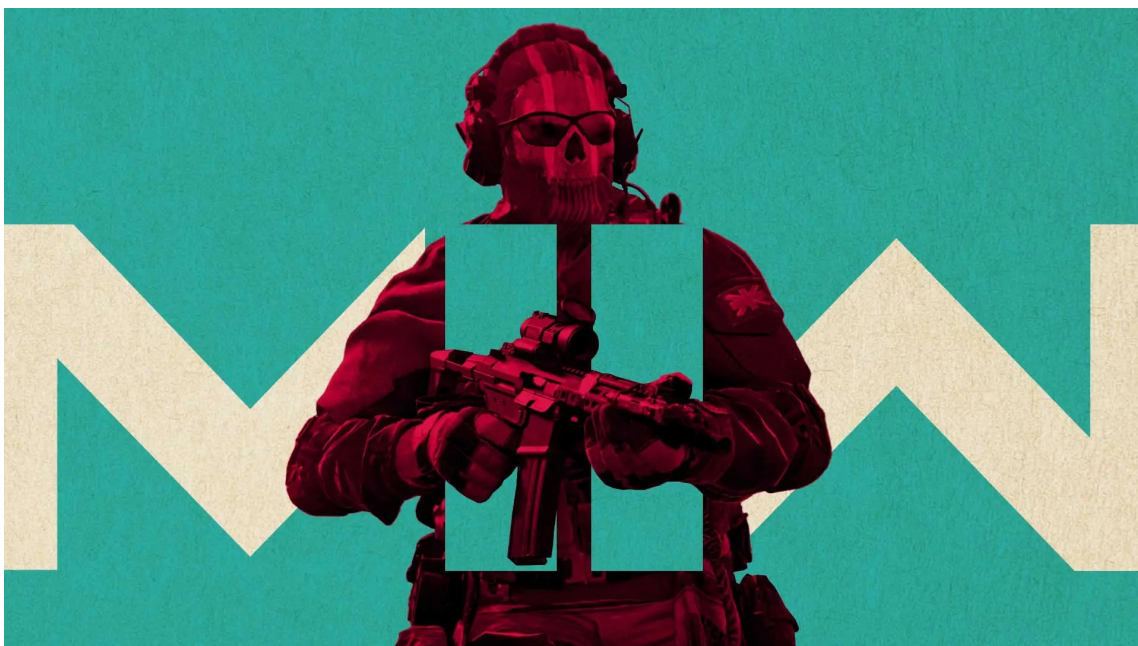
Looking ahead, it seems all but certain that the interplay between fans and franchises will endure, and likely become more complex as the proliferation of user-generated content continues.

“It’s never been easier for content consumers to become creators, so I think the line between those things will be increasingly blurred,” Naylor said. “And when it comes to a platform, the one that can get the biggest audience with the best features and the most revenue capabilities is going to win.”

In other words, it will only become more essential to understand fans and fan-generated content, so be sure to check out the full webinar and VIP+’s special report for more insights.

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