

# #IMPACTFUL

The monthly newsletter that deciphers opinion.

Edition #28

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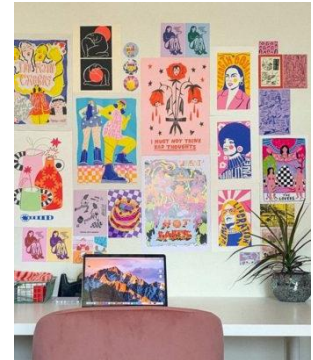
# REPORT OF THE MONTH

## Communication goes XXL

### *Maximalism in the beginning...*

Initially limited to the world of interior design and catwalks, maximalism - a celebration of opulence and profusion - is expanding to new horizons in 2023. With more than 61M views, #cluttercore - literally the aesthetics of mess - and #maximalism, with 1 billion views on TikTok just in 2023, fascination with excess and accumulation is very real.

But in what way is this of interest to us, as communication professionals?



### *Maximalist communication: maximal times call for maximal means*

When applied to communication, maximalism employs a similar approach. With this strategy, brands multiply the stimuli to amplify impact and their possibilities of resonance.

This can result in campaigns which are simultaneously rich in visual elements, immersive experiences and creative content...or, strictly speaking, by the emitter visually exaggerating objects and symbols, as did [Tinder](#), [Jacquemus](#) and [Maybelline](#). The objective? **Never to go unnoticed.**



*Tinder's deliberately overstated aesthetic*



*Or Jacquemus's literal oversizing of its products*

Because that's really the name of the game: to **(re)emerge memorable** in a world where attention is increasingly dispersed. To hell with the rules. Now it's important to pull out all the stops and dispense with the fear of saturating media space. However, if one rule does still exist, it's that the showcase must benefit the intended message which must, in all circumstances, remain intelligible. This is the only way meaning will finally rise above all the noise and the audience will be able to hear it.

# REPORT OF THE MONTH

## Communication goes XXL

*The “wow” effect of maximalism:  
a response to consumers’ demand for fantasy*

— 61 % —

of consumers say that “companies and brands aren’t doing anything original these days”  
(The Age of Re-Enchantment, 2023)



— 50 % —

More creative and personalized brand communication is considered a driver of brand loyalty for more than 50% of consumers  
(Meaningful Brands, 2022)

If maximalist communication fuels us, it’s because it responds to a deep-rooted consumer expectation: after years of restriction, and within the context of information overload, it **reflects their desire to feel more enchantment in their lives**. Therefore, they want brands that offer them experiences which are more imaginative, more spectacular and emotionally rich, to revive their pleasure centers.

*To be seen, heard and talked about everywhere*

2023 saw many brands taking a shot at “communicational maximalism”, to generate spikes in conversation and buzz about them and their current activities. And if there is one textbook case, it’s the inordinate marketing prowess of the Barbie film, which allows us to investigate the concrete advantages of a maximalist communication strategy.

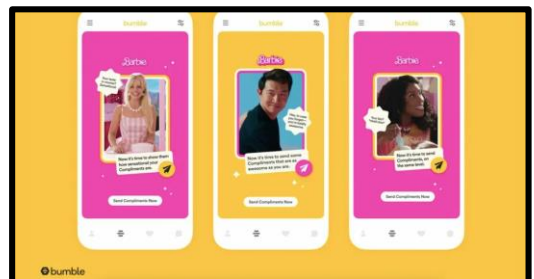
*To become inescapable by saturating – coherently – the media space*

By collaborating with more than 100 partner brands and multiplying the media and below-the-line collaborations, keeping a coherent message for the Barbie film was risky. However, the Barbie marketing team rose to the challenge with gusto. And this is because **the activities converged in every respect to reaffirm the “mythical” character of the Mattel doll**.

Using this strategic and creative approach, partnerships materialized as a series of sketches in her “pink life”: the film was able to use predictable partnerships, like **AirBnB**, Burger King and Google, but was also able to imagine collaborations with worlds further removed. This is the case with the collaboration with **Bumble**, a dating app far from the “family-friendly” perception of Barbie, but which, like the Barbie brand, promotes the importance of being kind and compassionate with people.



AirBnB X Barbie



Bumble X Barbie

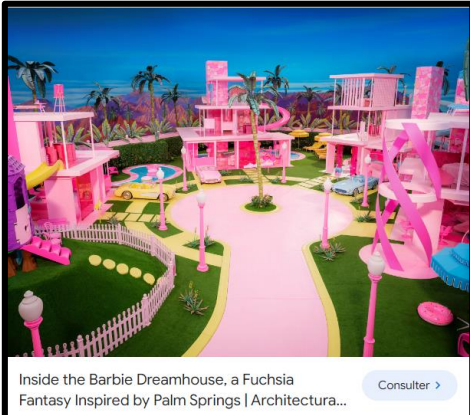


# REPORT OF THE MONTH

## Communication goes XXL

### *Amplifying communication...with rumors*

The second advantage illustrated by the Barbie film is **the capacity to dress maximalist communication with sensationalism**. The film benefitted from strong visibility in the media thanks to the quirky elements of its promotional campaign, expertly orchestrated by the team themselves. The campaign didn't hesitate to give free rein to word-of-mouth, even if that meant spreading over-analyzed information.



CheckNews: Did the Barbie movie really cause a worldwide shortage of pink paint?

For example, an article in the magazine Architectural Digest refers to the director's, Greta Gerwig's desire to *"create an authentic artificiality"* for the film. To do this, they had to use the most fluorescent pink paint from the brand Rosco in huge quantities. The article concludes with THE sentence that started everything off: *"The world, she said with a laugh, ran out of pink"*.

These few words were enough to **fabricate a completely fictitious shortage, picked up by many media outlets**. The rumor's trajectory was deliberately left undetermined, generating public attention, and anticipation and visibility for the franchise... and, even today, this media saga continues to create coverage for the Barbie franchise!

### *The limits of maximalist communication*

Maximalist communication is not, however, a new Eldorado, usable by all brands. It must always revert back to this search for meaning, beyond sensationalism, because there is a fine line between enchantment and irritation.

### *From overexposure to overdose*

The thin line between saturation of the media space and bludgeoning should not be crossed... but it was in the case of Booking.com. This summer, their ad with Melissa McCarthy was on cinema screens, YouTube pre-rolls, on TV... basically, one piece of content that was continuously pushed on consumers until overdose.

At first it was the excessive broadcasting of the ad that caused irritation. Then it went on to **provoke such a high level of rejection that the people exposed to it turned against the brand**: the ad generated more than 1600 negative tweets in France. So, no enchantment for Booking.com.



*"I have PTSD everytime I see that Booking ad, I can't take it anymore"*

# REPORT OF THE MONTH

## Communication goes XXL

*To risk all...to the point you confuse the consumer?*



Hold on, those clever Maybelline ads weren't real?



Fake news: is the Gymbox faux out-of-home controversy really a big deal?

CGI, maximalist by its disproportionately creative approach, gives the illusion of reality. The opportunity for brands to play with the phygital frontier was very popular this year. The use of CGI or FOOH, Fake Out of Home, blurs the perceptions of the consumer by using virtual content, to create a realistic scenario.

But, once the surprise has passed, this **"too good to be true"** representation can provoke fatigue – a 3D Fatigue. Especially if the substance of the campaign is neglected.

The maximalist mode of communication that dominated 2023 might therefore be questionable, if executed without addressing the fundamental codes of communication. But if these codes are assumed and mastered, it can have the power to create even more inspired and exciting brand stories.

**This approach must be used sparingly to maintain the element of surprise** and to engage its consumers, whilst attracting new ones.



----- THE OMNI EYE -----

*"As long as maximalist communication aims to provide enchantment for the consumer, it has a bright future. There is, in fact, a whole economy of joy being built, to which brands are contributing. The tours of icons like Beyoncé and Taylor Swift and the pink Barbie wave are all powerful symbols which, beyond the hype, have phenomenal impact. These XXL experiences are, for the moment, a winning bet because they offer the consumer an inestimable opportunity: that of letting them dream big."*

Marie-Ange Pyrmée – PR & e-PR Creative Strategist, Omnicom PR Group



# MEDIA VERSUS REALITY

## Brands tell a different story of the suburbs

### *The suburbs are under-represented in the media*

Last July, in the midst of the controversies around the “urban” riots, the French Regulatory Authority for Audiovisual and Digital Communication published in its report on “the representation of the diversity of society in the media” that **the suburbs occupied just 3% of media air time in 2022...** a figure that is lower than that of the previous year.



If this figure simply reflects a minimal coverage of subjects linked to subject about the suburbs, for certain experts, it is also due to an insufficiently nuanced image, what Manon Vella, journalist at Franceinfo, refers to as “the media suburbs”.

If the representation in the media of the suburbs is called into question, it's interesting to see other players emerge revealing another image...

### *Enter the brands!*



The VTC app Heetch has recently shown that bias around the suburbs was replicated in generative AI models... to better rectify them. Looking to **enhance the image of the suburbs by highlighting their positive aspects**, aspects often more widely neglected, the brand aimed to populate Midjourney's databases with real photos of the French suburbs in their “Greetings from La Banlieue” campaign.

In ‘The National Story of Brands’, Raphaël Llorca refers to the role assumed by Heetch as a “lamp lighter”. i.e. a brand that wants to **shed light on a subject by adopting a different point of view than the dominant perspective**. Another brand to feed the collective imagination is Lacoste, who was for a long time opposed to embracing its iconic image with rappers from the suburbs, but **today broadens its position**, by establishing and acknowledging them as its ambassadors.



The subject of the suburbs allows us to illustrate the fact that the media AND brands are jointly architects of the collective imagination. But eroded trust towards the media and its capacity to represent the plurality of perspectives offers brands a privileged opportunity to be better heard as narrators of the collective imagination. Nevertheless, it is often **when these polarized images meet that a nuanced vision can be found...** hence the importance for the media and brands to work together.



THE OMNI EYE

*“Consumers expect brands to make their voice heard on issues in society. However, the complexity of subjects like the suburbs requires a nuanced approach to avoid contributing to simplistic imagery that contradicts opposing stereotypes... This is why luxury brands have long been accused of “fetishizing the suburbs”. A balancing act is therefore required, that asks brands to create desirable images without falling into utopia”.*

Gaëtan Peret – Strategic Planner, Omnicom PR Group

# EMERGING SIGNALS, STRONG SIGNALS

## When the “personal” is put to service of the brand

Whilst personal branding is nothing new, personal branding applied to managers continues to be learned about in the media and professional circles. In certain articles, the guideline given to managers is clear: **“Personal branding is not about talking about oneself!”**... But what if it could be? And even better, what if it could be whilst remaining a beneficial practice for their company?

### Real “personal” branding of managers

The first case study where “talking about oneself” seems to be effective: Julia Faure, co-founder of the sustainable brand Loom, and identified as one of the “young positive leaders” of the year.

Committed to a less polluting textile industry and a more responsible society, she talked in a post, for example, about her personal commitment to the Station F project and called on start-up campuses to abandon the incubation of a Total Energies project. Loom’s militant brand values were further enhanced by the use of Julia Faure’s personal anecdote, even if the brand had the legitimacy to carry this statement as an incubated and committed company.

Mon entreprise a été incubée à STATION F pendant presque 2 ans : j’y ai beaucoup appris, je m’y suis fait de très bons amis, bref je suis très reconnaissante de ce que “le plus grand incubateur de startups au monde” m’a apporté. Mais je suis super déçue de ce qui s’y passe aujourd’hui.

Total y ouvre un programme pour les startups des énergies renouvelables. A priori, c’est une bonne nouvelle : il faut financer au plus vite les solutions qui déploient les énergies renouvelables...

Mais il y a plus important encore : empêcher le projet #EACOP, une gigantesque pipeline que Total veut construire en Ouganda. Ce projet EACOP est si destructeur qu’aucune solution d’énergie renouvelable, aussi inventive et bénéfique soit-elle, n’arrivera à compenser le désastre climatique, écologique et humain qu’il va générer.

*Julia Faure’s post, mentioning her personal story with STATION F and stating her disappointment with the fact that the startup campus would welcome a project from Total Energies*



*A post from Tonton Freddy mentioning his knowledge about the “world’s best pepper” in Cameroon, with a humoristic tone making jokes about his mother also being the world’s best*

In quite a different register, Tonton Freddy, recognized as one of the most influential content creators on LinkedIn in the “Food” category, and co-founder of the restaurant, Les Tontons Afro, demonstrates that **“talking about oneself” can be a veritable amplifier of brand identity**. He uses his **humorous** content to reveal the light-hearted spirit of the Tontons Afro and, at the same time, the many personal anecdotes illustrating his knowledge of the African continent contribute to the legitimacy of his brand in becoming “the greatest Afro restaurant in France”.

In short, by taking two different approaches, these examples prove that there is an effective way to combine “talking about oneself” and “talking about one’s company”: **personal branding that uses the qualities or values of a personality to embody a brand beyond simply using an institutional posture**. If this way of doing things today is ultimately apparent to young entrepreneurs, it could make sense for companies that want to set themselves apart in the digital environments. Something that is increasingly sought after by managers.



THE OMNI EYE

*“A lack of sincerity is often singled out to explain the crisis in trust that certain company managers are subject to. The challenge is to find a good balance between what they say and where their companies stand, with a golden rule: remain authentic.”*

Emmanuel Bercault – Account Director, Omnicom PR Group

# LAST BUT NOT LEAST

## TikTok bets on long-form videos

Last month we mentioned at the end of our “Emerging signals, strong signals” section, that the standardization of features on social media platforms is on-going... And TikTok confirms this as the platform is today testing new 15 minute long-form formats, proof of its more direct attack in the face of the competition, YouTube.

### *TikTok set to lure content creators away from YouTube*

With this initiative, TikTok wants to become even more attractive to content creators. In a statistic revealed last October on the platform, over the six months preceding October:

— **5x** —

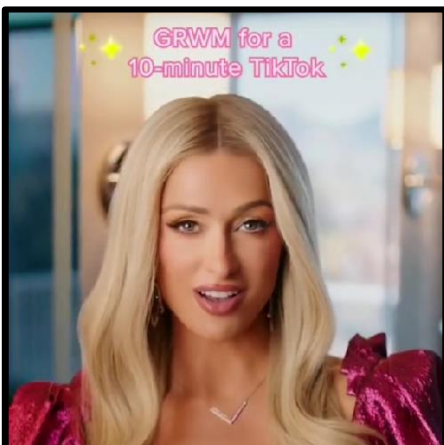
The growth rate of creators having published videos of more than a minute long was **five times more** than those posting only short content

If TikTok revealed this figure during an event to which they had invited influencers, it is not insignificant...

Favoring long videos is directly beneficial for creators, as its first advantage is to multiply advertising placements – like on YouTube, with what we now know as pre-rolls – and this, therefore, means creators can be better paid. Ultimately, this will be most persuasive, encouraging TikTok creators to become more invested than ever on the platform.

### *Should brands let themselves be drawn in?*

Even though they have already been confronted with this question with the progressive arrival of longer formats on TikTok, should brands position themselves on this new format once its implementation has become generalized?



*The Hilton hotel chain experimented with humor the 10-minute format, positioned around the notion of “make the most of your stay”, which makes sense for this brand*

Firstly, and as always, this format must have meaning in terms of the brand message: if the platform is used to provide the brand with more entertaining assets, in line with the initial image of TikTok – fun and snackable – it seems that it will be complicated to be able to engage the audience using a long format.

Also, the use of the long video needs to be properly implemented on the platform: to date, previous adds to the 3-, 5- and 10-minute formats required the addition of a fast forward feature, solving the problem of “snackability” of the content... but can brands risk investing in a format which will be consumed in a distorted form? To answer this question, we will have to wait to review the first examples of brands who’ve taken the plunge.



# WANT TO TALK?

For any advice or guidance, please contact the  
**Omnicom PR Group.**

**Sandrine Cormary** - Managing Director

[sandrine.cormary@omnicomprgroup.com](mailto:sandrine.cormary@omnicomprgroup.com) | +33 6 21 54 38 70

**Guillaume Talon** - SVP, Head of Strategy and New Business

[guillaume.talon@omnicomprgroup.com](mailto:guillaume.talon@omnicomprgroup.com) | +33 6 14 16 35 81

**Sophie Michelin** - Vice President, Strategic Planning and New Business

[sophie.michelin@omnicomprgroup.com](mailto:sophie.michelin@omnicomprgroup.com) | +33 6 01 18 46 28

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