



AI, Fandom and Representation Rule at Cannes LIONS 2023



After hosting more than 5,000 people at [SPORT BEACH](#), our adrenaline is running high and we're still thinking about the hottest topics at Cannes LIONS 2023.

This year, AI took center stage. You can thank the explosive growth of ChatGPT and other generative AI models for that – but it's no passing fad. The consensus at Cannes LIONS was that AI is truly transformative, and companies ignore it at their own peril.

What were some of the other key emerging themes? How brands can attract devoted fans and how marketing can make the world a better place. Let's dive into all three...



NEW ERA OF AI

The message at Cannes LIONS from OpenAI, Google, and other tech companies was the same: **AI won't replace creatives, it will make them more creative.** Vox talked to everyone from creative directors to copywriters at the festival and [nearly all of them](#) said they had experimented with generative AI.

Meta also positioned AI chatbots as a way for brands to interact with fans. And it stressed that AI could help generate and target hundreds of versions of ads. Expedia, meanwhile, touted its new ChatGPT app integration.

On the sand, Microsoft Beach was full of otherworldly sea creatures, created by artists using AI tools. (Check them out in [this gallery](#), created in partnership with [Instrument](#).)

DON'T SET IT AND FORGET IT:

Generative AI is a useful tool. But Google's Robert Wong stressed at the Palais that humans with taste still need to be in charge, comparing AI to "raw clay" that will take people with "curiosity, creativity and compassion to harness."

Overall, the vibe at Cannes LIONS was that AI will change marketing for the better. [Code and Theory](#)'s co-founder and executive chairman Dan Gardner envisioned the rise of "[true creativity](#)," where innovative people can create whatever they can imagine, regardless of their technical skills.



REPRESENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY MATTER

LOOKING AHEAD:

Brands have a huge opportunity to reach people who don't feel seen in ads.

On the sustainability front at Cannes LIONS, as [Adweek noted](#), GALE stood out for becoming the largest agency to sign the Clean Creatives pledge not to work with fossil fuel companies.

At a SPORT BEACH panel hosted by the [ANA CMO Growth Council](#) and [SeeHer](#), the message was clear: accurately representing people with disabilities isn't just the right thing to do, it's a smart business move.

Robyn Freye, Chief Growth Officer at Stagwell, [shared this stat](#): **only 1% of prime TV ads** include topics, visuals, or themes **related to people with disabilities**. That's despite the fact that more than a quarter of the U.S. population lives with a disability.



BRANDS HAVE FANS, TOO

There were plenty of [Spike Lee](#) fans at SPORT BEACH. But there were also fans of brands.

NRG's Fotoulla Damaskos used Cannes LIONS to reveal the [Fandex](#), based on a study of 12,500 people who were asked about 250 brands. It found that fans are...

- 3.5 times more likely to **advocate for a brand** than the average consumer.
- 3 times more likely to **stick with a brand** even if it does something they don't like.

Elsewhere at SPORT BEACH, everyone from Heisman winner Matt Leinart to the WNBA explored how technology lets them connect with fans on a global scale. The evolution of fandom? It could be personalized experiences fueled by AI, said [GALE's Brad Simms](#).

BIG SURPRISE:

Dawn had the fifth highest brand fandom score in the [Fandex](#), topping buzzy entertainment, tech, and sports brands. The lesson? Any brand can attract fans. "It's a purposeful journey that brands need to take," said Damaskos. "And while there isn't any one formula to create and build fandom, there is a playbook."



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