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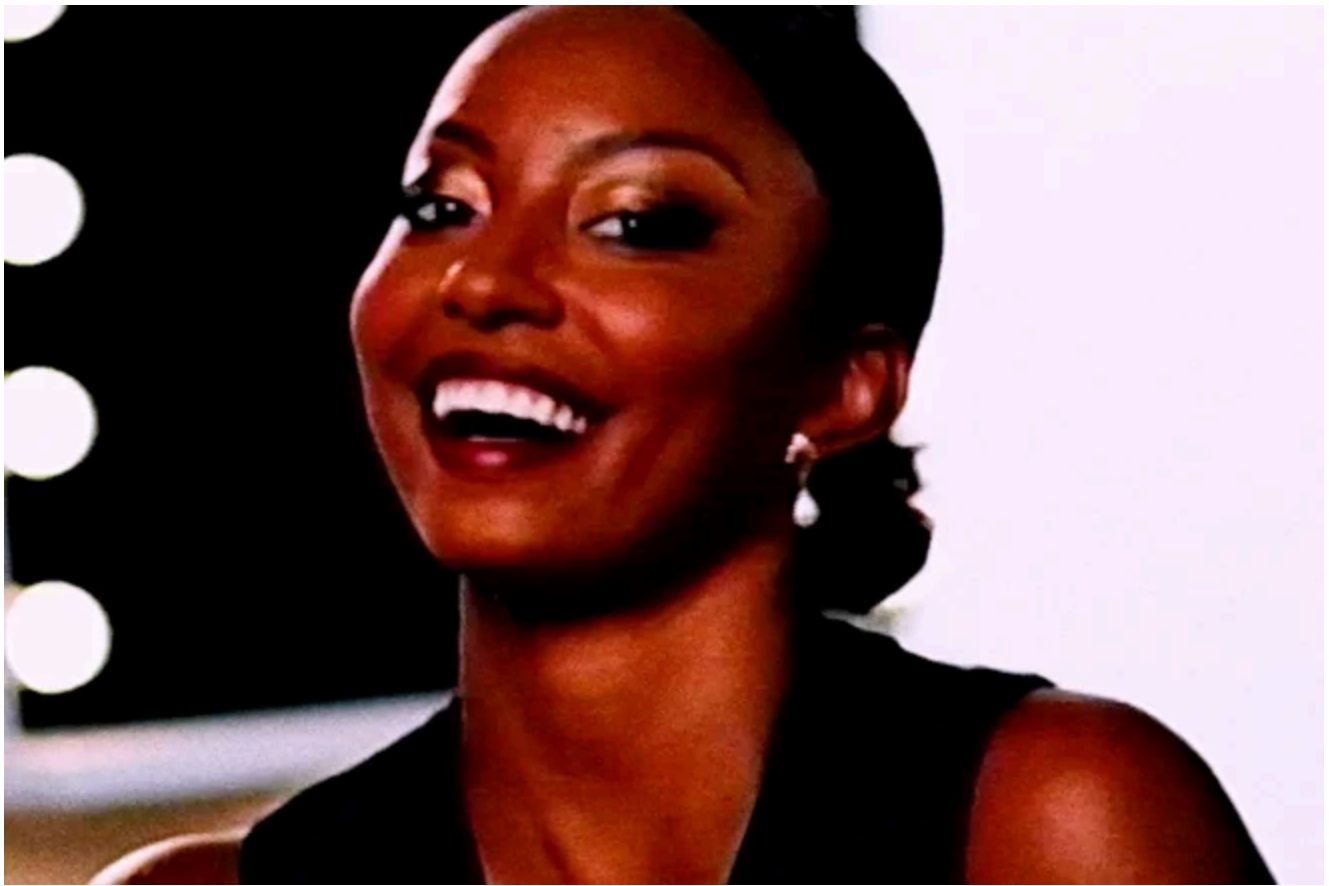
CREATIVITY

VACATION SUNSCREEN CHANNELS '80S ADS IN LIP-BALM COLLAB WITH ARIZONA ICED TEA

DTC brand partnered with Wieden+Kennedy on new spot, its first time working with the agency

By Phoebe Bain Published On Nov 02, 2023





Editor's Pick

Airbrushed models, camera flashes, scripted “experts” in director’s chairs talking about their aims for “perfection”—these aren’t exactly hallmarks of an ad made for 2023. Today’s TikTok generation is known for [responding better to authentic content](#)—the more unpolished, the better.

But at least one brand is rejecting that modern focus in a bid for nostalgia.

In its first campaign for direct-to-consumer sunscreen brand Vacation, Wieden+Kennedy Portland created the kind of spot that wouldn’t seem out of place among 1980s infomercials. The campaign, which promotes Vacation’s new co-branded lip balm collaboration with Arizona Beverage Company, isn’t airing on TV, however—it’s rolling out on organic social media channels.

The campaign’s hero asset is a 35-second video that starts off with an airbrushed-looking model in front of a white backdrop being photographed, complete with camera flashes galore as she poses. Don Vultaggio, Arizona’s founder, introduces himself and talks about bringing the worlds of Vacation and Arizona together.

The video continues to show behind-the-scenes looks at a photoshoot as it rolls on—“with some quick '90s cuts and things to make it feel like it’s of the time,” Julia Merten, art director at W+K, said in an interview, describing the spot.

A lot of the ads from the late 1980s and early 1990s “were truly focused on just glamorous, beautiful application shots, and very fashion-forward, fun, slow-motion shots,” Merten said. “So that kind of plays through while we explain some of the characteristics of the product. We tried to focus on things that were shared both by the lip balm, and by Vacation and Arizona—hydration, refreshment, things that kind of are an overlap for both brands.”

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The entire Vacation brand is built around that era in time, Lach Hall, Vacation founding partner and executive chair of marketing, said in a recent interview. Before the 21st century, sunscreen marketing “used to be a lot more fun than it is now,” he said, adding that back then, it was all about tanning. Once the industry realized the dangers of tanning, its sunscreen marketing adopted a more serious tone. Vacation, Hall said, is about making sunscreen fun again, which is why a lot of its marketing is nostalgic.

For inspiration in the creative process, Merten said the W+K team looked at vintage beauty ads from brands such as Revlon. She hopes the nostalgic ads will stand out among more modern brand posts on social media.

“Very few brands are leaning into retro advertising—everyone’s rushing to get to the future. ... We thought it would be more of a fun blast from the past to attract people in a different way,” she said.

The campaign is a form of “escapism from what we’re currently seeing in the beauty world,” Merten continued. “We really wanted to lean into how, in the '90s, [ads had] this perfect supermodel airbrush kind of feel.” She added: “Speaking as a Gen Z myself,” the idea of authenticity can feel like it’s being shoved “down our throats a lot.”

“Sometimes we’re losing some of that ‘play’ in our advertising because we’re trying to be so, ‘Be yourself,’” she said. “It’s great and wonderful, but it’s kind of fun to lean back into what we loved about those old ads.”

The campaign is Vacation’s first time using an external creative agency. The brand is currently working with W+K on a project basis.

Credits

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Nov 02, 2023

Client :

Vacation

Client :

Arizona Beverage Co.

Agency :

Wieden & Kennedy-
Portland

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