

Article Group Newsletter Issue 4 - Superyacht Summer, Liquid Death Marketing, and Authenticity in Brand Strategy (September 2023)

ISSUE 4 — September 2023

Exploring the messy, contradictory, and sun-kissed side of creativity

A row of nine green dots with a hand entering the frame and removing one of them.

Yacht Party Fever: Marketing Agency Writes

About Lavish Seaside Extravanzas!

Recently in new nomenclature no one was asking for, Forbes declared this past summer,

“Superyacht Summer .” For the uninitiated, yacht season typically runs from June – late

August, with the world’s elite living on boats that can run the length of a football field.

And yeah, Forbes, this summer was good for stirring up content. 2023’s season brought an influx of tech titans, oil magnates, industrialists, and glitterati at their most primordial, captured by paparazzi at strange angles, yet still managing to convey that stars aren’t just like us. Jeff Bezos was almost exclusively photographed shirtless and looking into the distance of the Mediterranean from Koru, the largest superyacht ever conceived (so big, it requires a secondary service yacht to trail it at all times).

We also got some of our favorite braindead headlines of the year out of the summer of the yacht: Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Brady and More Rich Celebrity Men on Yachts: Photos ;
TRIPPIE REDD \$150K JEWELRY DELIVERY BY JET SKI For Yacht Birthday Bash !!!;
Diane von Furstenberg, Candice Bergen, Emma Thompson, and More Get Their Final Yachts In .

It’s as captivating as it is absurd. The very essence of a yacht — its original fundamental appeal — is that it affords people on board the luxury of not being seen. And yet.

From where we sit, Superyacht Summer is the perfect microcosm (macrocosm?) of this thing we wake up and wrestle with daily as an agency: We (you, us, consumers) love a parade of allure and spectacle. More, it seems, is eternally more. And our scrolling habits reflect this: Luxury and Lifestyle content hit an all-time high earlier this year. Escapism now looks like a mix of hate-watching and guilty pleasure and, perhaps, some self-aware internal monologue on the grotesqueness of extravagance. Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav’s tone-deaf statement on his desire for more superyachts after a lavish party

on the French Riviera, mere weeks after the commencement of a writer's strike, epitomizes the audacity of this subculture.

So how to properly market to consumers who relish scenes of people they never want to be with lives they never want to live? It's a delicate balance between aspiration and irony, between selling a dream and acknowledging its idiocy.

It's really hard to do.

Liquid Death wrapped water in a metal can with metal-inspired branding, inviting you to "murder your thirst." At first glance, it's the soul of flip branding — they're selling water, the most necessary and least-marketable product in the world — but with a twist.

But here's the kicker: it's working. In 2022, the company reported \$45 million in sales, up from \$10 million in 2020. They've collaborated with everyone from Steve-O to Martha Stewart. They sold out a "limited edition collectible adult art piece" enema kit in less than 2 hours. The brand that started as a tongue-in-cheek mockery of the bottled water industry has, over time, evolved into something genuine: a legitimate challenger in the very industry it was mocking. Consumers aren't just buying into the gimmick; they're embracing it as a real part of their lives.

In an age of exhibition, when we have an almost endless amount of choice in what we consume, the greatest luxury we can lean into as marketers is authenticity. Those Rich Men parading on sun-drenched decks are, in their own Rich Men way, being the most authentic they can be.

Marketers can no longer be afraid to expose their vulnerabilities, even if it means being the butt of the joke, even if it means saying, Marketing water is stupid! or We're an agency built for innovative product companies, which really could be any company, and we hope you hire us. Embracing the Superyacht of your industry means keeping your shirt off and admitting that you already can't wait for next year's sail.