# Formula 1 embraces social-first marketing strategy to attract younger fans



Last year, Formula 1 (F1) experienced transformative growth, largely attributed to the impact of Netflix's documentary series, ‘Drive to Survive’. By showcasing the behind-the-scenes dynamics of the racing world, the series attracted a new generation of fans, many of whom were engaging with F1 for the first time. According to reports, this surge in viewership contributed to record attendances, with 6.5 million people attending events throughout the season, and a notable increase in corporate sponsorships from major brands, including McDonald’s, Nestlé, Lego, and Mattel’s Hot Wheels. Additionally, luxury conglomerate LVMH entered into a significant 10-year partnership with F1, reportedly investing $1 billion.

Sky Sports, as the official broadcast partner for F1, also reported substantial benefits from the increase in popularity. Dave Stratton, Sky’s director of marketing, told The Drum that viewership for the F1 season broke records on their platform. He noted, "The sport is in great health, with a really great narrative. It’s growing its appeal with a younger demographic." Stratton highlighted that the audience under 35 had increased, largely influenced by the Netflix series, and noted significant engagement on Sky Sports’ social media channels.

In response to this shift in audience engagement, Sky Sports is adapting its marketing strategy for the upcoming F1 season. The broadcaster aims to convert social media fans into paying TV subscribers by emphasising the live action and excitement of the races. Stratton elaborated on this approach, stating, “There’s a real opportunity there for us now to say, ‘hey, you might be looking in through social media, but what you’re missing out on is the live action of where these drivers really alive. There’s no better experience than watching it the moment.”

The marketing campaign for this season adopts a new focus, showcasing some of the most recognisable drivers like Max Verstappen, Lando Norris, Charles Leclerc, George Russell, and Yuki Tsunoda. Under the slogan ‘Welcome to the Show’, the campaign features seven driver-led advertisements highlighting the personalities of these racers both on and off the track. Robin Garton, executive creative director at Sky Creative, pointed out the need for relevance to various consumer groups, stating the intention is to convey that sport is entertainment, not exclusively for traditional die-hard fans.

Sky Creative has developed tailored assets for each driver, which will be leveraged across the broadcaster's major platforms. A pivotal aspect of the media plan involves the F1 stars sharing this content on their personal social channels, particularly platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where a significant portion of their fans engage.

Given that subscription sign-ups often peak on race days, Sky Sports plans to concentrate promotional efforts around these critical moments. Stratton explained, “We’ll be making sure that not only is our media plan weighted around the race events themselves, but also our messaging will tweak to be more of a trading focus at that moment in time." The collaboration extends to working with F1 teams, enhancing promotion through their channels and Sky Sports’ social media outlets, especially on race days.

This season's marketing work will remain active for a longer duration than in previous years, reflecting the global nature of F1 racing. Stratton noted that traditionally there was a significant marketing spike at the season's beginning, followed by a lull, but this year will see a more continuous campaign due to early races taking place in different time zones, such as the season opener in Australia.

Sky underwent a robust internal process to secure endorsement from senior stakeholders for this innovative social-first marketing direction. Stratton expressed his confidence in the new approach, remarking on successful test results indicating strong engagement, particularly within younger demographics in the United States. He concluded, “We’ve got a real confidence that it really resonates strongly.”

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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* <https://www.autoracing1.com/pl/433026/tv-news-espn-formula-1-viewership-pacing-ahead-of-2023/> - This article provides additional insights into the viewership growth of Formula 1, emphasizing its strong performance in the U.S. market.