

14.2: Paid, Owned, and Earned Media

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We differentiate between three types of media online: paid, owned, and earned.

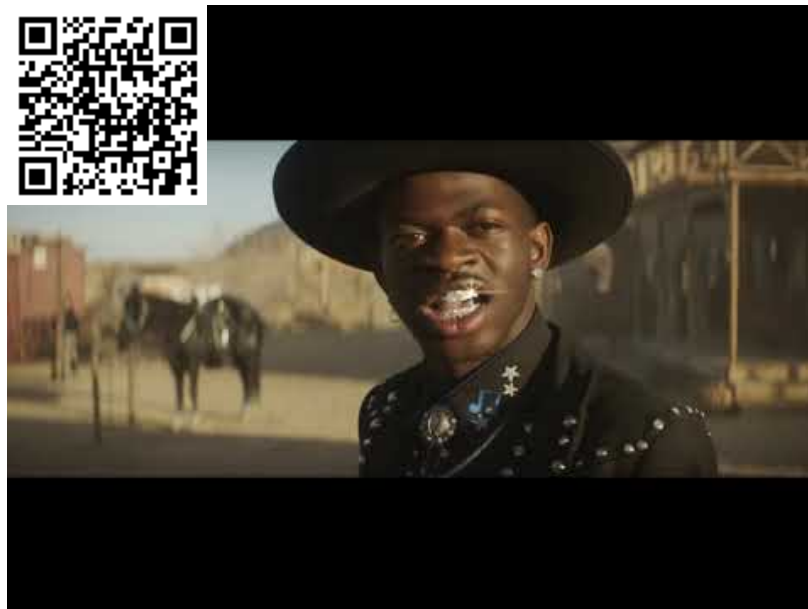
Paid media are media activities you pay for. These media activities are typically performed on a third-party channel (i.e., not your own website) paid by your company to conduct the activity. Your company controls the content, but the third party controls where this content is shown. Examples include search ads, display ads, paid influencers, paid content promotion, social media ads, product placements, and the like.

Owned media activities are media activities that are hosted on channels that you own (i.e., on your own platforms). They include your web properties (e.g., blog posts on your website) and social media channels.

Earned media activities are media impressions that you earn because your content is shared. Here, consumers (and sometimes professionals) become the channel. Shared posts on social media, reviews, and other consumer-generated content, such as content created on wikis, ratings, social recommendations, or forum discussions, are examples of earned media activities. The coverage of your company by journalists is also earned media activities.

Very importantly, albeit these are conceptually distinct types of media activities, ideally, you want to create campaigns that will integrate them. For example, you can create content on your website and social media channels that you will also push by advertising on social media websites and other websites using banner ads. You are making these efforts in the hopes that others will share your content widely. This is the typical strategy underlying viral marketing campaigns.

Consider, for example, the widely successful ad for Doritos during the 2020 Superbowl. Doritos created this ad that the company hosted on its website and social media channels (e.g., YouTube) (Marketing the Rainbow, 2020).



The ad was pushed as a paid media activity during the Superbowl to the tune of several million. It was also associated with a TikTok hashtag campaign, #coolranchdance, fueling earned media impressions (Sway, 2020; Williams, 2020). It is this intersection of paid, owned, and earned media activities that leads to the creation of successful online marketing campaigns!

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