

HOT WHEELS ADVANCED PLAY



ACCELERATION

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Overview

Context

Research Design Process

Problem Statement

Key Stakeholders

Acceleration TV Show Plot

Characters

Opportunities

Transmedia

Team



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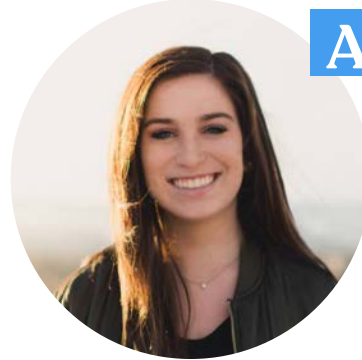
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HOT WHEELS ADVANCED PLAY



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Context

Overview

Mattel's Chief Design Officer expresses, *"So, the idea that we're a challenger brand came naturally. Challenge is a play value that's not defined by gender. Challenge is something that is open to everyone – everybody experiences it. And frankly, the more that we encourage our kids to embrace the growth mindset, embrace challenge, the better off they are in life, not just play."*

Hot Wheels is built on the mission of instilling a challenger spirit and embracing qualities like speed, skills, tactic and teamwork. With technology's prevalence in childhoods nowadays, Hot Wheels is making strides to ensure that they stay on track. Hot Wheel's Advanced Play brings a whole new way to play with Hot Wheels. With recent products such as Augmoto™ - an immersive augmented reality racing track + app and iD™ - a connected mixed play experience with a Smart Track, Hot Wheels is continuing to innovate in the toy space to match kids' heightened expectations of what a toy can be.

Mattel's Hot Wheels Advanced Play group then approached our team to find and design solutions to better attract kids above the age of 8. Hot Wheels have identified this age group as their target audience for this project. Before our research design process began, Mattel relayed their findings that in general, kids over the age of 10 years old aren't engaging with toys as much as they were before this point. It marks a transition period for these kids right before they begin Middle School. Where do we come in? We see this as an opportunity for our client Hot Wheels to reignite engagement for these kids especially when it comes to such an iconic brand.

Research Design Process

Desk Research

We began our research at our desks, absorbing everything we could about children aged 8-10 and the toy landscape. We compiled a thorough history of Hot Wheels, including current perceptions of the brand. We also conducted a competitive analysis, focusing on the toys that children play instead of Hot Wheels. This broad research helped the team get into the right headspace to talk and ask questions to various stakeholders.

Interview

Before preparing to interact with stakeholders, we condensed our desk research and identified core themes. We then came up with list of important questions to ask both the children and the Hot Wheels designers at Mattel.

Stakeholder Interviews

At Mattel HQ, we observed three focus group interviews. The stakeholders were: Boys 8-10, Girls 8-10, and Boys 11-13. While we were not able to ask the children question ourselves, a Mattel representative consolidated our questions and led the discussions.

Stakeholder Interviews

Some of the questions that were asked that led us to recognize trends:

What do you like to do in your free time?

What do you like to do when you hang out with your friends?

Do you like to spend time outdoors? What do you do outside? Who are you with?

Do you like games?

What kind of games do you play?

Which are your favorites? Why?

Do you like toys?

What kind of toys do you play with?

Which are your favorites? Why?

How do/did you find out about new toys?

Have you played with Hot Wheels before?

Do you still play with Hot Wheels now?

How do you play with them?

Do your friends play with them? Do you play with them together?

Do you own them?

Would you rather:

Games on device or physicals toys?

Toys as they are or build/take things apart?

Legos or Nerf Guns?

Post-Interview Research

Our post interview research included research into various areas of developmental psychology and the existing toy landscape.

Part of our process included:

- Analyzing and consolidating research data
- Identifying pain problems for each stakeholder
- Identifying connections between various stakeholders
- Selecting a problem statement
- Utilizing knowledge of desk research and stakeholder pain points

Post-Interview

We also did preliminary research on the cognitive effects of gendered toys because we wanted to qualify our strong reactions to the gendering of child play. Beyond our own experiences with gendered toys, what truths can we draw from science and medicine?

We found surprising macro claims from the Early Childhood Education Center at Eastern Connecticut University. Professors of early child development and psychology, Jeffrey Trawick-Smith and Judith Elaine Blakemore, run TIMPANI (Toys that Inspire Mindful Play and Nurture Imagination) to study children's relationships with their toys, which has been running for 9 years.

Specifically, TIMPANI "identifies toys that best engage children in intellectual, creative, social, and verbal interactions in preschool classrooms," and scores them accordingly.

This paragraph spoke to us the loudest:

"What set the highest-scoring toys apart was that they prompted problem solving, social interaction, and creative expression in both boys and girls. Interestingly, toys that have traditionally been viewed as male oriented—construction toys and toy vehicles, for example—elicited the highest quality play among girls. So, try to set aside previous conceptions about what inspires male and female play and objectively observe toy effects to be sure boys and girls equally benefit from play materials."

This charge was especially important to us as we confirmed our problem statement:

"If you want to develop children's physical, cognitive, academic, musical, and artistic skills, toys that are not strongly gender-typed are more likely to do this"
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/play/gender-typed-toys>

Problem Statement

Our initial problem statement went through a transition. We will guide you through the process from our initial problem statement, based on the research we just summarized, to our final problem statement that developed from feedback and further research and insight.

Kids 8-11 want to handle grown up things confidently. They look to older role models to learn how.

Initial Problem Statement

Kids who feel excited about self-expression and world-building need community-centric activities but most toys prevent gender-equitable environments.

World-building →

The process of constructing an imaginary world that can at times be associated with an entire fictional universe

Community-centric activities →

Activities that promote collaboration, sharing and coordination

Gender-equitable environment →

A place where boys and girls are able to come together as a community to play and create

Take Aways

Don't hold onto a concept if it doesn't have a solid foundation across all four points – Desirability, Feasibility, Viability and Mission Alignment.

New play experiences/systems. Sports/video games/radio control are touched upon but not in a new way. Would encourage all students to think outside of traditional play because the 8+ kids are not looking back at their old toys.

Target the needs of the 8+. Kids that have grown out of Hot Wheels – To which Hot Wheels are no longer cool. It wouldn't be enough to add a feature to a familiar track play pattern for example.

Have more FUN! Play more and get out and experience the life of an 8+ year old!

Brainstorming

Reminiscing on childhood as a 20 year-old – getting nostalgic

Considering the bigger picture beyond just children

Not shying away from the the “what if” and “that seems crazy”

Mattel Television is led by Adam Bonnett, a 21-year Disney Channel veteran behind Hannah Montana, Descendants, Kim Possible and other Emmy® Award-winning children's shows, who recently joined Mattel as Executive Producer.

“Choose you own adventure”

World Building & Real World Understanding

Nostalgia

Research

According to the CDC

Children 6-11 are brought into regular contact with the larger world. They show more independence, think about the future, understand their place in the world and care more about their reputation and perception by others.

This time is extremely crucial for their beginning to understand some of the mature themes in life. However, these topics can be difficult to share with children.

Television

In television, Mr. Rogers saw an impactful instrument. It was a form of mass communication with particular potency with young, impressionable viewers.

Mr. Rogers explained topics like bullying, reputation divorce and even war in a way that children could easily swallow and become interested in.

DEATH	REPUTATION	GENOCIDE	DENIAL
POLITICS	SACRIFICE	ABANDONMENT	VULNERABILITY
DIVORCE	AMBITION	ETHNICITY	LOSS
VIOLENCE	BETRAYAL	ANXIETY	DUTY
DISHONOR	WAR	DOUBT	REVENGE

Current toy-related shows entertain young kids by overlooking mature themes.

Key Stakeholders

Mattel Focus Groups

We're focused on children who enjoy activities that promote self-expression and world-building. By observing three focus groups at Mattel, we were able to identify some needs of girls 8-10 and boys 8-13. Across all groups was a desire to play with their friends and also interact with toys that sparked their imagination.

Girls 8-10

Girls 8-10 enjoyed "hanging out and talking" with friends, "board games," "racing Hot Wheels," mixing toy brands, "playing with lizards" and "drawing". All of these activities revealed young girls desires and needs. There was a mutual agreement by these girls that they enjoyed playing alone and with other people, competition because "when you win, you are happy and when you lose, you learn," toys that are seen by their friends as "boy-ish," but they would enjoy even more if they were colored "pink, purple and cotton candy" and also scented.

Boys 8-10

Boys 8-10 enjoy "sports," video games, "coding in Unity," "creating videos with their toys", playing with "legos alone" and "nerf guns" with friends. Thus, boys 8-10 desire and need physical activity, building and adventuring with friends, creating and imagining, learning through technology, and participating in community based activity.

Boys 11-13

Boys 11-13 like "creating stop motion animations," video games, watching and playing sports, science and computer classes, activities that help them unwind but

Mattel Focus Groups

Boys 11-13 (Continued)

also be active and playing legos alone. Thus, similarly to the other two groups, the boys enjoy community based activities, competition, utilizing their imagination with toys like Legos as a form of self-expression. However, with older boys it became clear that their larger needs were more in the realm of relaxation, independence and fitting in/being seen as cool.

From these insights we realized that kids have a common need for activities where they can express themselves, imagine, compete but do this in a collaborative community where they feel they fit in.

Peripheral Stateholders

Mattel & Hot Wheels

The more peripheral stakeholder are Mattel and Hot Wheels and these kids parents. Mattel and Hot Wheels gave us a presentation where they explained their needs and desires alongside those for ages 8-10. It became clear that the companies most prominent needs were increasing sales of Hot Wheels to kids "above the age of 10 who aren't engaging with toys as much," creating toys that serve the duality of this age group — "boundary & experimentation", "fun without technology & enhanced by technology", "individualism & community," "reinvigorating older kids interest in toys," making sure to maintain Mattel's social goal and Hot Wheels' mission.

Parents

Meanwhile, parents' needs develop from their concern about their children's needs. That is, that kids are still kids — imagination and escaping the stresses of the world, kids are participating in activities that promote good morals and practices, girls are not becoming catty, boys are balancing technology with physical toys, kids are feeling independent and secure, kids enjoy spending time with friends and most importantly, that their kids are happy.

Other Solutions to the Problem

In our, we identified a means of communicating to older children that was both intriguing and insightful. We spent a lot of time looking beyond television and into digital content like Alternate Reality Games. However, as I research continued to unfold, we believe that television is the best medium.

Kids spend 3.4 hours a day watching videos.

Engaging with television shows, especially online is a low-barrier act of commitment.

TV is a family activity

Including parents into the growing worlds of thier children is crucial for turning viewers into toy consumers

The continued success of drama commissioning lies in long-term accessibility

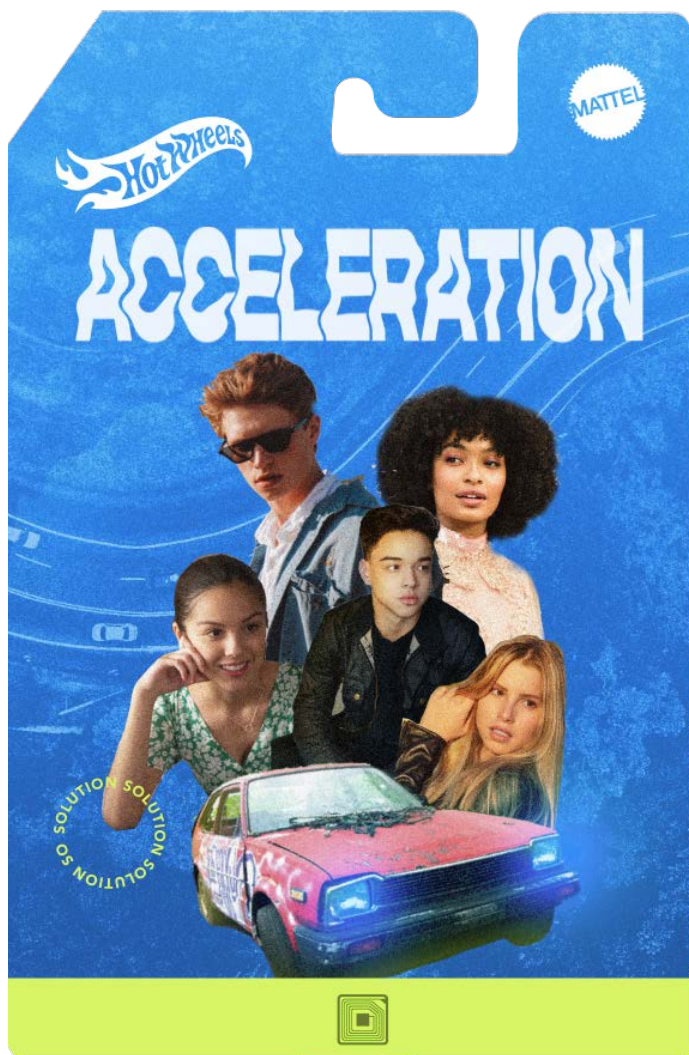
If our goal is teaching heavier lessons through narrative, we need to give viewers the opprotunity and time to connect with the story

TV shows create devoted communities

Entering the micro-culture era of television means an increase in media-centered communities and fandoms

Our Solution

A TV series that allows kids 8+ to connect with cars in a more imaginative, nostalgic, and aspirational way with Hot Wheels toys and special digital content.



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Television

Topics to address

BODY IMAGE & BEAUTY

PERSONAL GROWTH

THOUGHTFULNESS

“RIGHTS & DUTIES”

ANXIETY & MENTAL HEALTH

URBAN INEQUALITY

CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

BULLYING

TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL MEDIA

PERSONAL GROWTH

CIVIL ENGAGEMENT

RIGHTS & LIBERTIES

FAMILY

VULNERABILITY

HONESTY

SUICIDE & SELF-HARM

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

PROTESTS & ACTIVISM

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

AUTISM, ASPERBERGERS &

NEURODIVERSITY

TESTING & DYSLEXIA

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

HOMELESSNESS

FOOD INSECURITY

FRIENDSHIP

GENDER EQUALITY

COURAGE

CURIOSITY

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Purpose

Why long form entertainment?

People age out of movies and switch between social media platforms.

“The continued success of drama commissioning lies in long-term accessibility.”

Engaging with television shows, no matter the platform, is a low-barrier act of commitment.

Alternative media forms provide less value to viewers of this age group.

TV lets the whole family engage with Hot Wheels together.

Movies are inflexible and lack room to evolve or actively maintain their importance over time.

TV shows incorporate the indulgence of binge, can evolve with cultural issues that come up over time, grow with their viewers, and establish an important role in a viewer's life through repetition, or continued episodic viewing.

Social media: YouTube, Instagram and TikTok are fragile channels of engagement. They're most useful for drawing people to more substantial content.

Parents have more control over and can participate in TV with their kids, understand what they're exposing their children to and this raises the likelihood of them subscribing or buying the toys

Entering the micro-culture era of television means increased devotion to media-centered communities

Viewers enter feverish fandoms where they share hypotheses of plot lines, tweet at the show writers asking for certain things, create fandom wikis, and buy all the merch.

Acceleration Plot

Acceleration tells the story of five very different high schoolers that end up together in the same shop class for the semester. As they solve different “car prompts” every week, they eventually find out that the car they are working on is special. One week the team heads to Lucas Miller’s dad’s antique car shop in search of a radio to fulfill their next assignment. Upon installation, Josephine tests the radio by turning the channel to 19.20. Before they know it, all five students are transported to Chicago in the 1920s. Josephine meets a flapper who shares her empowering story of breaking out of “corsets” to get a job and going against what society deems “fit”. As the season progresses, these five very different students tune to their channel to embark on different journeys. These time travels allow them to visit different moments in history that are key to helping them understand their real-life problems, as well as understand each other.

Acceleration is a modern bildungsroman, or “coming of age” tale, that walks young viewers through complex 21st century topics in a digestible, entertaining manner. The common link between the students and the car embodies independence and the challenger spirit as these young teens “take the wheel” on their lives and learn how to navigate through the issues that adult life brings.

When creating our show, we were inspired by shows and movies of different eras. Shows like Umbrella Academy, Friends, Stranger Things, and Young Justice gave us the insight to portray challenges through different characters in a “crew.” We got aesthetic reference from Umbrella Academy and Stranger Things as modern shows that resonate well with our demographic. For our general vibe and car narrative, we were inspired by movies such as Herbie Fully Loaded. Avatar and Mister Rogers were good references of shows that addressed hard topics to young audiences.



Characters



Ivy B.

Ivy B. is a 17-year-old girl who grew up in the foster system. Although she officially has a foster family, she has essentially lived in her car for almost a year, and constantly struggles with food insecurity and the future. She joins the shop class because she believes that if she is going to live in her car, she might as well know how to fix it herself.

Foster family
Food insecurity

Time period event:
1930: The Great Depression with Community
1975: Steve Jobs starts Apple in his adopted parents garage

Characters



Josephine Wallace

Josephine Wallace is a 17-year-old overachiever, straight A student, and ballerina. Raised in a very strict family, she deals with stress as she approaches her Senior year of high school and essentially has to decide if she will become a full-time dancer or pursue her dream of going to college and becoming a lawyer. She joins the shop class as a suggestion from her mom so that she stands out in college applications.

Anxiety
Body Image
Identity and passion

Time period event:
Flapper girls in 1920, breaking free of a mold
1983: Sally Ride becomes the first American Women in space



Lucas Miller

Lucas is a 16-year-old white middle-class boy just generally struggling to find himself due to social pressures to be popular and comparison in social media. He has a hard time connecting genuinely with people through his attachment with media and desire to only spend time with people who will help with public image. He has a false sense of self-confidence that allows him to appear differently to others than he is. He was raised by a single dad, Ted, who is his best friend. Ted owns an antique car shop, and passed on his passion to his son. Lucas is the only one that genuinely wanted to be in the class in the first place.

Imposter Syndrome
Peer pressure
Identity

Time period event:
2001: 9/11

Characters



Eric Martinez

Eric Martinez is a 16-year old cisgender boy with a great sense of style and streetwear. He was raised by a single Latina mom who works as a dressmaker, from whom he inherited his passion for sewing and fashion. Still, he struggles with the stigma associated with callings, as well as finding his creative identity. When he joins the shop class, he is trying to create a line of car accessories.

Toxic masculinity
Finding your creative voice

Time period event:
1943: Zoot Suit Riots
1969: Calvin Klein designed a dress that appeared on the cover of Vogue magazine.



Aysha Bahar

Aysha Bahar is a 15 year-old American-Lebanese exchange that just moved to the US for High School. Even though she has always been educated in English, she still has a noticeable accent. She struggles navigating America as a US resident with a visa, as well as her sense of identity sharing residence in two very different areas of the world. She ends up joining the shop class because she struggled understanding her new high school system, and it was the only elective that was still available when she enrolled.

Immigration
Citizenship
Independence


Time period event:
1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act
1981: Sandra Day O'Connor is the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court

Season 1

Episodes






Our first episodes establish the series context and character dynamic. As soon as they tune the radio — every character goes through a transformative experience, with each episode spotlighting one of the main characters.

- Meet the crew as they begin accepting each other's differences when installing a radio in their shop project
- The crew turns on their radio, traveling to the 1920s
- The crew starts becoming friends as they journey to the 1940s and tackle toxic masculinity
- The crew dives discusses the difficulties of immigration
- The crew takes a break from traveling back in time during spring recess and get to know each other better
- The crew learns a secret about Ivy B when they travel back to the Great Depression
- The crew explores their identities as well as tackle imposter syndrome and peer pressure with Lucas



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SEASON ONE: IGNITION

- **Episode 1. Ford High School**
Viewers are introduced to the crew as they meet and travel back to the 1920s
- **Episode 2. Turn on the Radio**
The crew learns to accept each other's differences as they work on the car
- **Episode 3. Back to the Future**
The crew starts becoming friends as they tackle toxic masculinity in the 1940s
- **4. Immigration Incident**
The crew dives into Aysha's story and discuss the difficulties of immigration
- **5. Back to Back**

Hot Wheels Brand

The challenger spirit

Characters will exhibit the challenger spirit by overcoming life's challenges

Pushing limits of possibility

The car that unites the characters can travel through time.

Embracing challenges through play

A physical toy car for each episodes that scans players into a multimedia universe

Add-on Experiences

Transmedia

In addition to the show, we want to create an integrative transmedia experience for viewers. We suggest that the show be placed on Amazon Prime, so that Hot Wheels can take advantage of features such as the "X-Ray". When viewers paused the show, not only would they be able to see the actors per usual, but they would also have an integrative link directing them to purchasing that week's car on Amazon. A possibility for the integration of these cars into the storytelling of the show would be for them to feature QR codes, which would give access to premium content involving the characters. Examples of content could be AR projections of the show's cars, behind the scenes, extra scenes, chats with the characters, amongst others. Viewers should be able to interact with the show in different ways so that the "challenges" we embrace live on as conversations outside of only the streaming platform.

Transmedia is a great direction for Hot Wheels and Acceleration because it also gives the Hot Wheels brand an opportunity to become alive in moments of the customer's day they originally were not present in.

Hot Wheels Cars

Product Overview

As a television show that will be distributed on Amazon Prime Video, there is an opportunity to add an additional revenue stream through the direct selling of physical Hot Wheels products to accompany the show. These products would be released pre-show launch in order to build up excitement for the show and characters. Amazon is an effective retailer for these purposes, and the product would be marketed on social media channels.

Opportunity

Appeal to the consumer's nostalgia through selling toy cars that correspond with each time period that the characters travel to. These cars can characterize the time period through fun color schemes.

Create a Shop Class Car kit that allows kids and show fans to have a build-it-yourself experience. These Class Car kit would contain multiple elements to customize, similar to Hot Wheel's previous Ready-To-Race Car Builder.



Hot Wheels Cars

Time Period Cars

1920's

Chicago in the 1920's - Josephine Miller



Stutz Bear Cat

1940's

The Zoot Suit Riots - Eric Martinez



Oldsmobile

1960's

1965 Immigraton & Naturalization Act - Aysha Bahar



Pontiac GTO

1930's

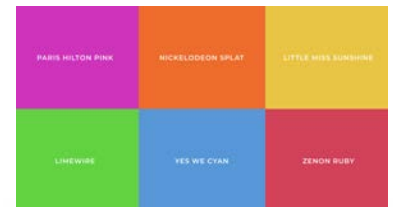
The Great Depression - Ivy B



Lincoln Phaeton

2001

Post 9/11 - Lucas Miller



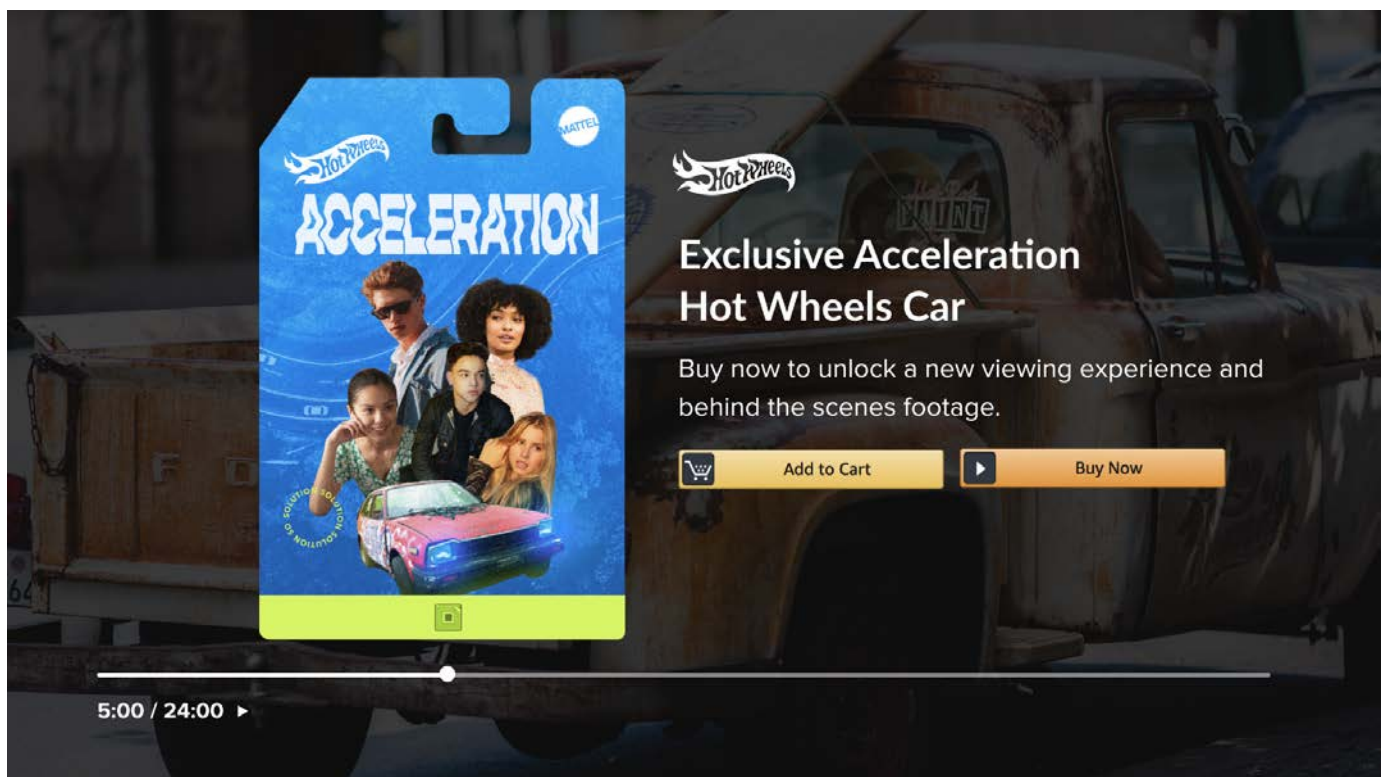
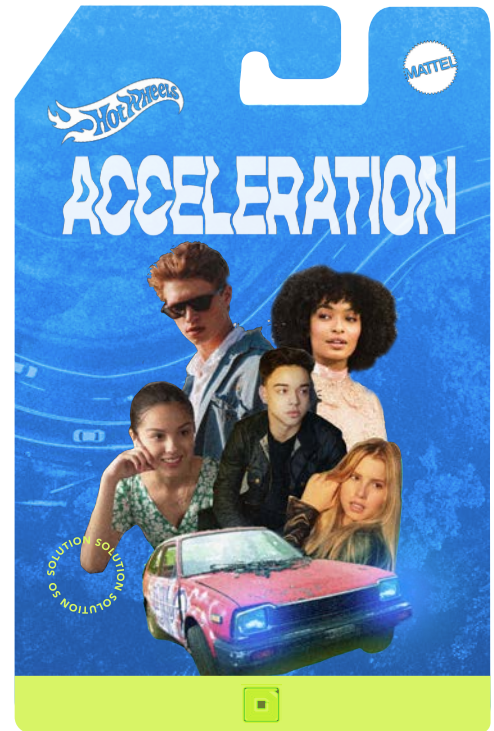
Dodge Neon

Hot Wheels Cars

Time Period Cars

Our integration with Amazon Prime will allow viewers to purchase the character cars directly from the interface. This would appear on the pause state of the video player, so it does not interrupt the viewing experience.

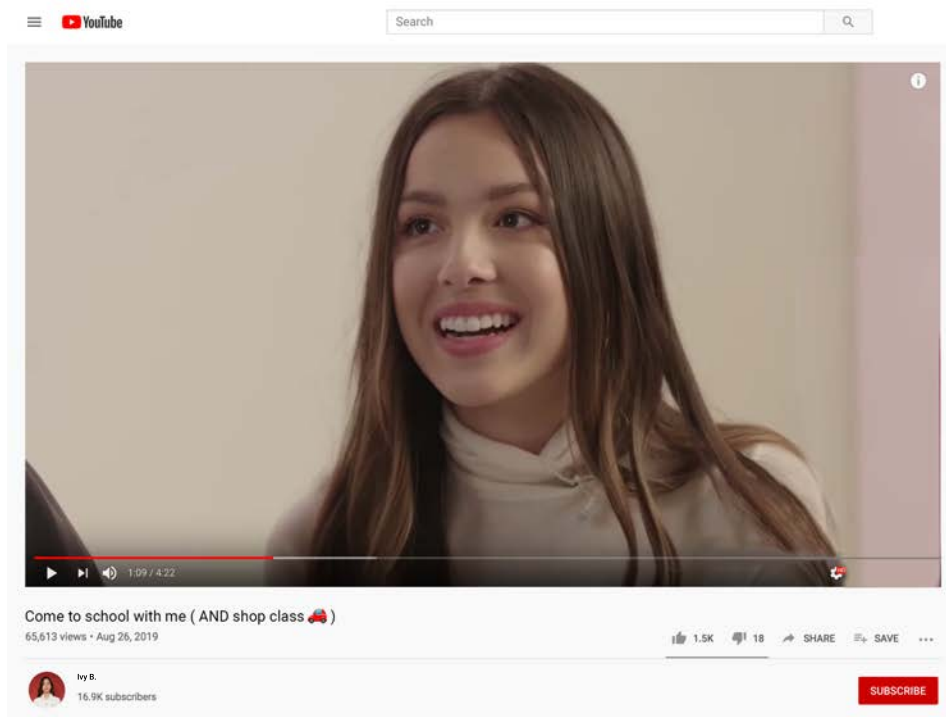
The car product itself would contain a RFID chip that unlocks a new viewing experience and behind the scenes footage when scanned.



Transmedia

Marketing

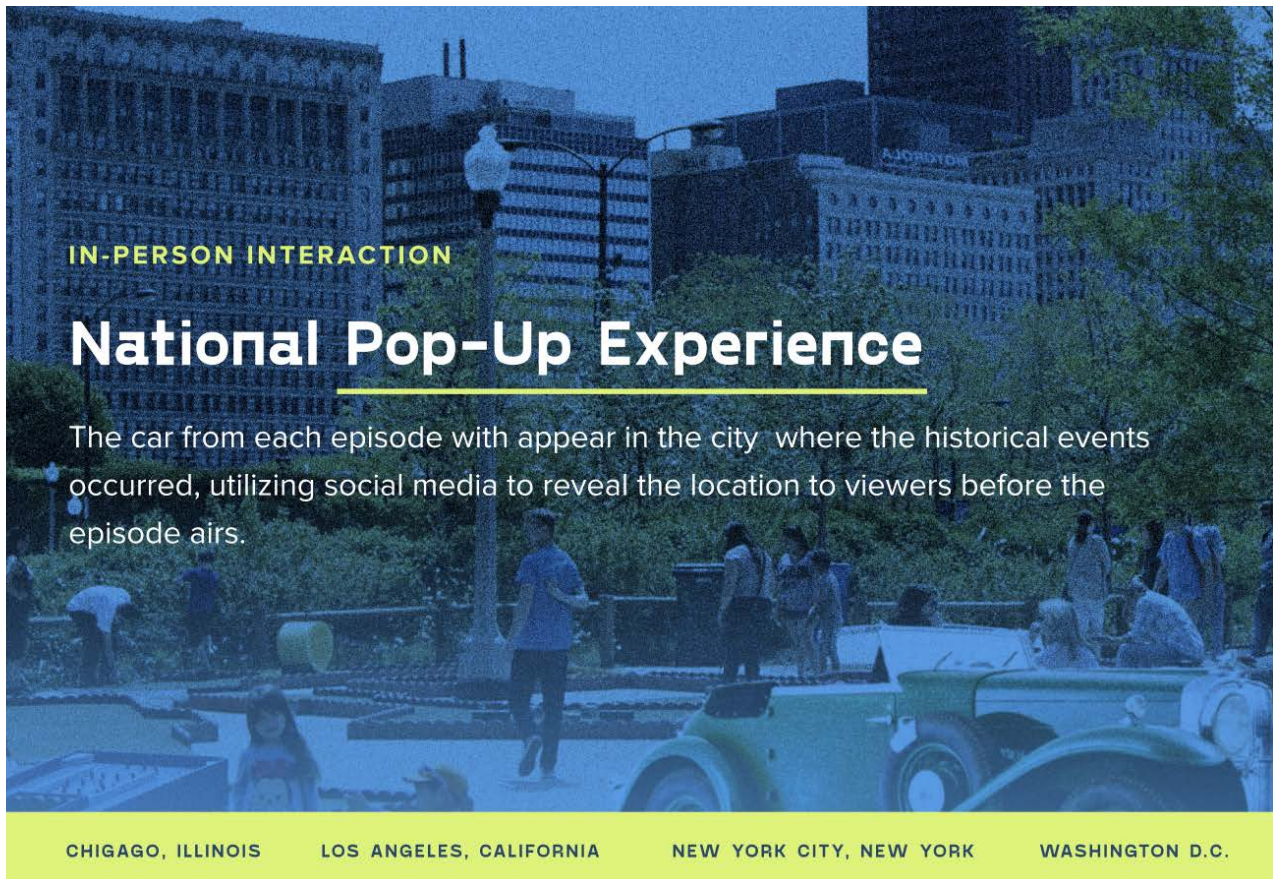
Transmedia and physical installations bring the Hot Wheels brand to untapped markets. Each character will engage on social media as if they were real people.



Transmedia

In-Person Interaction

The car from each episode will appear in the city where the historical events occurred, utilizing social media to reveal the location to viewers before the episode airs.



IN-PERSON INTERACTION

National Pop-Up Experience

The car from each episode will appear in the city where the historical events occurred, utilizing social media to reveal the location to viewers before the episode airs.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK WASHINGTON D.C.

Viewer Experience

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Social Media
Campaign

Launch Shop
Class Car Kit

Watch
Episode One

Multimedia Engagement

Transmedia + physical
installations make the Hot
Wheels brand visible to
formally untapped markets

Buy Hot Wheels

Unlock additional content
(AR, BTS footage, etc)

References

Interviewees

Thank you to Mattel!

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