

# THE CELEBRITY-BRAND FIT INDEX

A Sector-by-Sector Analysis of Where Star Power Pays Off

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A joint research report by

**5WPR**

**TALENT RESOURCES**

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## Executive Summary

Celebrity marketing is in the middle of a structural shift that most brand decisions still do not reflect. The old model — pay a famous person to appear in an ad, measure impressions, call it a campaign — is not dead, but it is no longer where the money or the returns are. The brands generating the highest returns from celebrity association in 2025 and 2026 are the ones that have crossed the line from endorsement into equity, and from equity into operational involvement.

The global celebrity endorsement market was valued at **\$3.4 billion in 2025** and is projected to reach \$5.5 billion by 2032, growing at a 7.0% compound annual rate (*Worldwide Market Reports, 2025*). The broader influencer marketing market — which increasingly blurs into celebrity territory as celebrities build their own content channels — reached **\$32.55 billion in 2025** and is projected to pass \$40 billion in 2026 (*Influencer Marketing Hub*). Those numbers, however, understate what is happening. The most consequential deals in this space are now equity and acquisition transactions that do not show up in marketing budgets at all.

### THIS REPORT AT A GLANCE

**\$1B**

e.l.f. Beauty's 2025 acquisition of Hailey Bieber's rhode, three years after launch

**\$5B**

SKIMS valuation after November 2025 funding round led by Goldman Sachs

**\$2.7B**

Rare Beauty valuation as of late 2025; Selena Gomez owns approximately 51%

**76%**

Five-year revenue collapse of a widely covered 2022 celebrity-backed hydration brand that scaled without operating depth

**\$1.3B**

Yeezy revenue Adidas lost in 2023 after terminating its Kanye West partnership

**60%**

Consumers who trust creators more than brands' own communications (Edelman, 2025)

## Four findings that should change how brands deploy celebrity

### 1. Equity and ownership deals are generating returns traditional endorsements cannot match.

George Clooney's Casamigos sold to Diageo for **up to \$1 billion** in 2017, four years after launch (*Diageo*). Ryan Reynolds sold Aviation Gin to the same buyer for up to **\$610 million** in 2020, less than three years after he took an ownership stake (*Fast Company*). Dwayne Johnson's Teremana, launched in March 2020, crossed one million nine-liter cases in 2023 and is now valued at an estimated **\$3.5 billion** (*Spirits Business via Fox Business*). Rare Beauty reached \$540 million in net sales in the twelve months ending

February 2024 from a portfolio of roughly ten products (*Business of Fashion*). These are not endorsement fees. They are ownership outcomes in brands the celebrity actively built.

## 2. Sector fit determines outcomes more than star power does.

The same level of celebrity involvement produces radically different results depending on the category. Beauty, spirits, and fashion reward founder-led celebrity brands with category-leading valuations. Fintech has punished them — celebrity endorsers of the collapsed FTX exchange, including Tom Brady and Gisele Bündchen, reportedly received **\$30 million and \$18 million in now-worthless equity** respectively (*Baker McKenzie*), and still face remaining securities claims after a May 2025 federal ruling. In an adjacent cautionary case, a prominent 2022 creator-launched hydration brand reached \$1.3 billion in 2023 sales before collapsing to a projected \$300 million in 2025 on industry trade-reporting projections. The pattern across the eight sectors analyzed in this report is consistent: sector structure explains more of the variance than celebrity-level fame does.

## 3. The trust architecture has shifted, and it favors operators over pitchmen.

The 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer found that 60% of consumers now trust what a creator says about a brand more than what the brand says about itself, while the 2026 report identifies trusted creators as the single most influential gateway to brand consideration for audiences aged 18 to 34 (*Edelman Trust Barometer*). Against that backdrop, celebrities who function as visible operators — actively building the product, appearing in process and behind-the-scenes content, holding equity — outperform those who appear only in finished advertising.

## 4. The downside of a wrong bet has grown faster than the upside.

When Adidas terminated its Kanye West partnership in October 2022, it wrote down **€1.2 billion in Yeezy inventory**, posted its first annual loss in more than three decades, and saw North American revenue drop 16% the following year (*CNN Business*). At Adidas's peak, the Yeezy line represented an estimated 10 to 15% of company net income (*NPR*). Concentration risk is not a new concept, but the speed at which a single celebrity can become an operating-level threat has accelerated.

## The Fit Index — top-line ranking

Part III of this report presents the full Fit Index scoring across five variables. The top-line ranking of the eight sectors analyzed is as follows:

Sector	Recept.	ROI	Fit	Risk	White	Score
<b>1. Spirits and Beverage</b>	9	10	9	7	5	<b>8.0</b>
<b>2. Beauty</b>	9	10	9	7	4	<b>7.8</b>

Sector	Recept.	ROI	Fit	Risk	White	Score
<b>3. Hospitality and Travel</b>	7	7	8	8	8	<b>7.6</b>
<b>4. Fashion and Luxury</b>	8	7	8	5	6	<b>6.8</b>
<b>5. CPG and Food</b>	7	7	7	5	5	<b>6.2</b>
<b>6. Wellness and Health</b>	7	6	7	4	6	<b>6.0</b>
<b>7. Cannabis</b>	6	5	7	3	8	<b>5.8</b>
<b>8. Financial Services / Fintech</b>	3	2	3	2	7	<b>3.4</b>

*Variables: Receptivity = consumer openness to celebrity in the category. ROI = verified financial returns on exits and ongoing brands. Fit = structural rewards for celebrity involvement. Risk = inverted (high score = low risk). Whitespace = inverted saturation (high score = more unsaturated opportunity). All variables scored 1–10; composite is an equal-weighted mean, scaled to a 10-point scale.*

### What this report does

This is a sector-by-sector analysis of where celebrity association creates disproportionate value and where it destroys it. Each of the eight sector chapters follows a consistent template: sector size and celebrity marketing spend, a representative win and a representative miss with verified financial detail, an emerging case that signals where the category is heading, and a forward indicator identifying what to watch over the next 18 months.

The concluding Fit Index (Part III) ranks all eight sectors and presents a deployment framework for matching celebrity tier to sector fit. Part IV identifies the near-term forces — AI likeness rights, regulatory evolution, emerging categories — that will reshape this space in 2027 and 2028. The goal is to give brand and talent decision-makers a framework that goes beyond individual casting decisions and asks a prior question: does this category reward celebrity deployment at all, and if so, at what level of involvement?

## Methodology

This report synthesizes three research streams: verified financial data on specific celebrity brand transactions, consumer and market research from established syndicated sources, and primary expert interviews.

### Financial data

Transaction values, revenue figures, and valuation estimates cited in this report are drawn from company press releases, SEC filings, and reporting from Bloomberg, CNBC, Fortune, Reuters, The Wall Street Journal, Business of Fashion, The Drinks Business, Variety, and The Hollywood Reporter. Private-company valuations are flagged as estimates where they rely on reporting rather than disclosed capital events. Where primary and secondary sources diverge, the report cites the primary source and notes the range.

### Consumer and market research

Market sizing, consumer trust, and behavior data are drawn from the Edelman Trust Barometer, Nielsen, Kantar, MRI-Simmons, NielsenIQ (Circana), eMarketer, PitchBook, Morning Consult, BDSA (cannabis), MJBizDaily, and the Influencer Marketing Hub Benchmark Report. Trade press sources include Ad Age, Adweek, BoF, Puck, WWD, Skift, Campaign, Variety, The Hollywood Reporter, The Drinks Business, and BeautyMatter. Academic sourcing includes the Harvard Business Review, the Journal of Advertising, the Journal of Consumer Research, and the Keller Center for Marketing at Baylor University.

### Scoring framework

The Fit Index scores each of the eight sectors on five variables: (1) consumer receptivity to celebrity influence in the category, (2) verified return on investment of category exits and ongoing brands, (3) category fit — the degree to which the sector's economics reward celebrity involvement, (4) risk exposure, covering regulatory, reputational, and concentration risk (inverted, so higher scores represent lower risk), and (5) current saturation of celebrity brands in the category (inverted, so higher scores represent more unsaturated opportunity). Each variable is scored on a 1-to-10 scale and weighted equally in the composite ranking. The full scoring rubric and all sector scoring notes appear in Part III.

### What this report does not do

This is not a ranking of individual celebrities or a casting recommendation for any specific brand. It is a sector-level framework. Individual deal structure, creative direction, and operational execution will continue to drive outcomes within each sector. This report answers the prior question of whether the category rewards celebrity deployment at all.

## Part I — The State of Celebrity Marketing

### Market size and growth trajectory

The numbers that get reported for this industry are not wrong, but they are incomplete. The commonly cited figure — a global celebrity endorsement market of **\$3.4 billion in 2025**, growing to \$5.5 billion by 2032 (*Worldwide Market Reports*) — captures only direct endorsement spend. The broader influencer marketing market, which increasingly overlaps with celebrity activity as traditional stars build social and content businesses, is now **\$32.55 billion** and is projected to surpass \$40 billion in 2026 (*R&LB*).

Neither figure captures the most consequential category of celebrity-related spend: brand ownership. When e.l.f. Beauty paid up to \$1 billion for Hailey Bieber's rhode in May 2025, that deal did not appear in any marketing budget (*Retail Dive*). When SKIMS raised \$225 million from Goldman Sachs Alternatives in November 2025 at a \$5 billion valuation, that was equity capital, not advertising (*CNBC*). The real size of celebrity-adjacent commerce, if you include majority-celebrity-owned consumer brands across beauty, spirits, fashion, and food, is materially larger than the endorsement figures suggest.

The implication for decision-makers is practical. A conventional celebrity endorsement is now the entry-level form of celebrity-brand relationship. Above it sit equity-carry deals, founder partnerships, and full-ownership brands. Each tier has a different economic structure, a different risk profile, and a different expected outcome.

### The trust architecture has shifted

For most of the modern era of celebrity marketing, a brand communicated authority and a celebrity borrowed it by association. That has reversed. Edelman's 2025 Trust Barometer found that **60% of consumers now trust a creator's take on a brand more than the brand's own communications**. The 2026 edition extends the finding: among consumers aged 18 to 34, trusted creator content is now the single most influential channel for brand consideration (*Edelman*).

This is not the same as saying celebrities are trusted. In fact, the data suggests the opposite for traditional celebrities. Consistent findings from Morning Consult and the Influencer Marketing Hub show that mass-market celebrities have lost trust share to micro-influencers and niche creators over the past decade (*amraandelma — consolidating 2025–26 surveys*). The celebrities who retain commercial trust are those who have crossed into operator status — Selena Gomez talking about Rare Beauty's formulation, Dwayne Johnson explaining Teremana's agave sourcing, Hailey Bieber walking through rhode's product development. Celebrity-as-pitchperson is in decline. Celebrity-as-founder is where the trust premium has migrated.

*Borrowed cultural relevance can ignite a brand, but it cannot keep it burning.*

— Camille Moore, brand strategist, on LVMH's exploration of selling its Fenty Beauty stake

That observation, surfacing in October 2025 coverage of LVMH's reported plans to divest its 50% stake in Fenty Beauty, captures the broader structural point ([nss G-Club](#)). A celebrity can ignite a brand in year one. What keeps it burning past year five is operational quality that outlasts any individual's cultural moment.

## From endorsement to equity: three models

Three distinct celebrity-brand structures now coexist, and they are not interchangeable.

### Model 1 — Paid endorsement

The celebrity is paid a fee (or contingent fee) to appear in advertising, product placements, or branded content. Deal sizes for A-list talent now range from low six figures for short social activations to seven or even eight figures for multi-year, multi-channel deals ([Clickanalytic](#)). Selena Gomez was reported as the most valuable Instagram celebrity endorser in 2025 at approximately \$1.74 million per sponsored post ([Statista via seosandwich](#)). This remains the dominant model by deal count, but a shrinking share of the economic value in the category.

### Model 2 — Equity-carry endorsement

The celebrity takes a meaningful equity stake in exchange for long-term promotional involvement, typically with a reduced or zero cash fee. This was the structure underlying FTX's celebrity deals — Tom Brady reportedly received roughly \$30 million and Gisele Bündchen \$18 million in FTX equity — a structure that produced large paper gains at peak valuation and near-total losses at collapse ([Baker McKenzie](#)). When executed with durable brands, the same structure produced Clooney's Casamigos exit and Reynolds' Aviation outcome. The form of the deal is category-neutral; the quality of the underlying business is not.

### Model 3 — Celebrity-founder brand

The celebrity is a co-founder, the majority owner, and in most successful cases the operational creative lead. Rhode, Rare Beauty, SKIMS, Teremana, and Casamigos at its peak all fit this model. So do the higher-profile cannabis brands (Jay-Z's Monogram, Seth Rogen's Houseplant) and a growing list of celebrity CPG launches. The economic upside is an order of magnitude larger than endorsement fees. The execution bar is also an order of magnitude higher — these are real businesses, subject to all the operational demands of CPG competition.

## The risk profile has changed

The downside of a celebrity partnership used to be reputational — a star misbehaves, ad flights pause, the brand swaps in another face. That downside still exists, and it is now larger. But two newer risks have become material.

### Concentration risk

At Adidas, Yeezy represented an estimated 10 to 15% of company net income at peak (*NPR*). When Adidas terminated the partnership in October 2022, it was left with €1.2 billion in unsold inventory. In 2023, North American revenue fell 16%, and Adidas posted its first annual loss in three decades (*Sportico*). The operational lesson is that a celebrity partnership that reaches that share of enterprise value is no longer a marketing asset. It is a strategic dependency.

### Regulatory risk

The Securities and Exchange Commission charged Kim Kardashian in 2022 for promoting EthereumMax on Instagram without disclosing a \$250,000 payment; she settled for \$1.26 million (*Hollywood Reporter*). Floyd Mayweather Jr. and DJ Khaled settled similar SEC matters. The FTX class-action litigation, while mostly dismissed against celebrity defendants in a May 2025 federal ruling, left in place Oklahoma securities-law claims and claims related to unregistered securities promotion. Celebrity endorsement in regulated categories — financial services, health supplements, gaming — now carries a direct legal exposure it did not carry a decade ago.

### The vampire effect, quantified

Industry research has long identified the "vampire effect" — a celebrity appearance that draws attention to the star rather than the product. Recent data puts it in sharper focus: **90% of consumers remember the celebrity in a given ad, but only 50% remember the brand** (*Gitnux consolidated research*). The implication for strategy is that celebrity endorsement in generic categories — where the product does little work and the brand does little differentiation — produces recall for the person, not the commodity. In categories where the product itself is the story, celebrity functions as amplification rather than substitution.

## Channel mix in 2026

The channels that carry celebrity-brand activity have consolidated. Instagram remained the dominant platform for celebrity brand deployment in 2025, present in roughly 79–83% of campaigns depending on the tracking source. TikTok has grown fastest on a rate basis, with global celebrity-campaign volume up 48% in 2024 (*Influencer Marketing Factory*). Podcast endorsements, driven partly by the creator-economy migration of figures like Alex Cooper (Call Her Daddy), now absorb a growing share of celebrity-adjacent

spend — Cooper's Unwell network has been reported as an eight-figure merchandise business on its own ([Yahoo/NYT](#)).

Television advertising retains a distinct strategic role. For launches requiring simultaneous mass awareness — Super Bowl, tentpole sports, high-profile news events — the reach-plus-association function of a television-led celebrity buy is difficult to replicate at the social level. The Larry David FTX Super Bowl spot, whatever its downstream legal and reputational consequences, achieved cultural penetration that no social-native campaign of the same vintage matched.

The notable 2024 to 2026 shift is that owned channels — a brand's own social, email, retail, and event footprint — have moved from secondary to primary for category-leading celebrity brands. Rhode reached \$212 million in net sales entirely through its direct-to-consumer website before entering Sephora in late 2025 ([CNBC](#)). The lesson is that the celebrity and the channel are no longer separately leverageable. A celebrity who owns the channel owns the economics.

## What is different from 2015

Three structural changes separate the current celebrity-marketing environment from the one that existed ten years ago.

- **The ceiling has risen.** In 2015, a successful celebrity brand was a multi-hundred-million-dollar exit. In 2025, multi-billion-dollar outcomes (Rhode at \$1B, Rare Beauty at an estimated \$2.7B, SKIMS at \$5B, Teremana at an estimated \$3.5B) are no longer outliers.
- **The floor has dropped.** Concentration risk, regulatory exposure, and accelerated public scrutiny mean the cost of a failed partnership is meaningfully higher than in 2015. The 76% revenue collapse of a widely covered 2022 creator-beverage launch, the FTX celebrity litigation wave, and the Yeezy writedown are all within the past thirty-six months.
- **Sector fit has become decisive.** In 2015, celebrity marketing discourse was largely celebrity-centric — who is the right star. In 2025, sector structure has become the larger determinant of outcome. The same celebrity, deployed with the same budget and creative quality, will produce materially different results in fintech than in beauty.

### PART I KEY TAKEAWAY

The structural question for brand and talent leaders in 2026 is no longer 'which celebrity do we cast' but 'does this category reward celebrity deployment at this level of involvement.' Sector structure now explains more of the variance in outcomes than star power does. The remainder of this report answers that question sector by sector.



## Sector 1 — Beauty

### Sector context

Beauty is the category where the celebrity-founder model has compounded into the largest outcomes. Celebrity beauty brands grew from approximately **\$691.5 million in 2022 to an estimated \$1.09 billion in 2024** in combined tracked sales (*NielsenIQ via Entrepreneur*). The sector's growth has outpaced overall beauty category growth by a wide margin, and the top celebrity brands now command valuations comparable to independently built mass and prestige brands.

The structural drivers are specific to beauty. The category rewards direct-to-consumer launches, has high gross margins that absorb the cost of celebrity participation, generates abundant social content organically, and is subject to constant product innovation that gives founders an ongoing creative role. A beauty brand with a celebrity founder is not carrying celebrity as overhead — the celebrity is operating as the brand's highest-leverage content and R&D asset at the same time.

### The win: rhode

Hailey Bieber launched rhode in June 2022 with two co-founders and a minimalist skincare line. The brand's positioning was deliberately narrow: a small number of skin-first products (roughly ten SKUs at the time of acquisition), direct-to-consumer-only distribution, and a brand voice anchored to Bieber's personal skincare routine rather than her celebrity.

By the twelve months ending March 2025, rhode had reached **\$212 million in net sales** — all direct-to-consumer, through a single website, with no wholesale revenue (*e.l.f. Beauty 8-K*). The brand doubled its consumer base in its most recent fiscal year and finished 2024 as the *number one skincare brand in earned media value*, with 367% year-over-year EMV growth.

On May 28, 2025, e.l.f. Beauty announced it would acquire rhode for **up to \$1 billion**: \$800 million at closing in cash and stock, plus up to \$200 million in additional payments over three years contingent on performance (*Business of Fashion*). It was e.l.f.'s largest acquisition in the company's history, eclipsing its \$355 million Naturium deal in 2023. Bieber remains founder and took on the roles of Chief Creative Officer and Head of Innovation.

*In less than three years, they've gone from zero to \$212 million in net sales, direct-to-consumer only, with only 10 products.*

— Tarang Amin, CEO, e.l.f. Beauty, on the rhode acquisition (CNBC, May 2025)

What makes rhode a case study rather than a one-off is the compression. The brand reached a billion-dollar exit in 36 months on a concentrated SKU list, without retail distribution, and without conventional

advertising spend. The alternative explanation — that Bieber's personal following did the work — is incomplete. Many celebrity brands have launched with equivalent or larger social followings and failed to reach rhode's trajectory. The differentiator was product discipline: a short list, a tight aesthetic, and a repeatable product development cadence.

## The miss (or the warning): Fenty Beauty post-peak

Fenty Beauty launched in September 2017 through LVMH's Kendo Brands incubator with a 40-shade foundation range that materially changed industry shade norms. The brand generated more than \$100 million in revenue within 40 days of launch, and approximately **\$570 million in 2021** ([Global Cosmetic Industry](#)).

By 2024, Fenty's net sales had declined to approximately **\$450 million**. In October 2025, Reuters and multiple follow-on reports confirmed that LVMH had engaged Evercore to explore the sale of its 50% stake in the brand, with a likely valuation in the \$1 billion to \$2 billion range ([CNBC](#)). Coverage from Puck cited an LVMH insider stating that Fenty's revenue peaked several years earlier, and a Sephora source indicating that the brand's North American sales were down double digits ([Puck](#)).

Fenty's trajectory is not a failure — a brand that was worth an estimated \$2.8 billion at its peak and is now worth \$1B to \$2B remains a commercial success by any absolute standard. The strategic lesson is different. Fenty launched on a cultural moment (the shade-range expansion) that was so successful it reshaped the entire category, which then commoditized the moment. Competitors expanded their own shade ranges. The differentiation collapsed. What remained was a celebrity-led brand without an equivalent second act of product-level distinction. The instructive contrast with rhode is that Bieber's brand was built on product discipline first and celebrity second; Fenty was the inverse.

## The emerging model: Rare Beauty

Selena Gomez launched Rare Beauty in September 2020 with an explicit mental-health positioning (1% of sales fund the Rare Impact Fund) and a product line designed around accessibility — individual items at \$30 or below. By the twelve months ending February 2024, Rare Beauty had reached **over \$400 million in net sales**; by late 2025 Fortune placed its valuation at approximately **\$2.7 billion** ([E! News/Fortune](#)). A single product — the Soft Pinch Liquid Blush — generated an estimated \$70 million in revenue in 2022 alone after a TikTok-driven breakout.

Bloomberg added Gomez to its Billionaires Index in September 2024 on the strength of her Rare Beauty stake, reported as approximately 51% of the company ([Bloomberg](#)). A sale process explored in March 2024 at a \$2 billion valuation was reportedly paused in September 2024 when strategic buyers balked at paying that multiple for a single-brand business structurally dependent on the founder's ongoing

involvement. The tension Rare Beauty illustrates is the inverse of Fenty's. Rare Beauty's premium valuation depends on Gomez's active role; that same dependence is what made acquirers cautious. Celebrity-founder brands can reach escape velocity on social and product terms faster than any other model, but the exit economics are more complicated than the growth economics.

## What works in beauty

- **Narrow SKU launches.** rhode launched and scaled with roughly ten products. Rare Beauty's breakout was driven by a single hero product. Category-leading celebrity brands have consistently outperformed broader celebrity launches that tried to cover a full category from day one.
- **Direct-to-consumer first.** rhode reached nine-figure revenue before entering wholesale. Rare Beauty built on Sephora only after a DTC foundation. The celebrity channel advantage compounds when the brand owns the channel.
- **Founder as visible operator, not pitchperson.** The celebrity brands producing the largest exits have celebrities in product-development and creative-direction roles that show up in their own content. Paid endorsement roles do not generate the same compounding.
- **Authenticity anchored in personal routine.** Bieber's skincare obsession predated the brand. Gomez's mental-health message predated Rare Beauty. The most defensible positioning is the one the founder was known for before the launch.

## What does not work in beauty

- **Broad celebrity licensing without operational involvement.** A growing list of underperforming celebrity fragrance and color lines exists behind the headline successes. In celebrity beauty, absence from the product process is visible to consumers through product quality, and the category has become unforgiving of it.
- **Over-extension of the founder.** Brands whose founders launched adjacent brands in rapid succession (Kylie Cosmetics, Kylie Skin, Kylie Baby, Khy fashion) have seen the core brand decelerate. Category-leading celebrity beauty brands have tended to stay focused on a single brand at category-defining scale for longer than celebrity apparel or spirits brands have.
- **Cultural-moment launches without product-level differentiation.** A debut that rewrites a category standard (as Fenty's 40-shade foundation did) creates a ceiling if the brand's subsequent innovation cannot hold the same altitude. Fenty's post-2021 trajectory is the cautionary case.

## Counterintuitive finding

Rare Beauty's marketing spend is approximately 11% of revenue, against a DTC beauty category norm of 30% to 50%, according to analyst coverage (*analysis cited in Social Life Magazine*). The implication is that for a celebrity-founder brand with a genuinely earned audience, celebrity is not an additional marketing cost line — it *replaces* a marketing cost line. That is the true economic advantage over conventional DTC

beauty. It is also the reason acquirers value these brands at multiples that would be hard to justify on revenue alone.

### **Forward indicator (next 18 months)**

Watch men's beauty, fragrance, and Asia-Pacific expansion. The Middle East saw a reported 23% year-over-year increase in celebrity beauty endorsements in 2024 (*Gulf Marketing Review via seosandwich*), and Asia-Pacific accounted for 31% of global celebrity influencer spending. The next class of billion-dollar celebrity beauty brands will likely launch with global rather than U.S.-first distribution, and fragrance — historically the most licensed and least founder-led sub-category — is the most probable site of the next model shift.

#### **BEAUTY — KEY TAKEAWAY**

Beauty is the category with the most favorable structural environment for celebrity-founder brands. The business economics reward founder involvement in ways that other categories do not, and the successful models are now repeatable. The warning is that the same economics turn on a brand the moment the founder's creative input ceases. Beauty rewards celebrity at the highest tier of involvement, and at that tier only.

## Sector 2 — Spirits and Beverage

### Sector context

Spirits is the second category, alongside beauty, where celebrity-founder brands have delivered verified billion-dollar outcomes at scale. The category's defining feature, from the perspective of a celebrity-brand analysis, is that successful brands have tended to be built on equity and operational participation rather than paid endorsement. The structural economics favor that arrangement: spirits are capital-intensive to build distribution in, generate high margins at super-premium price points, and reward long-duration brand building of a kind that suits founder involvement.

U.S. tequila volume grew approximately 121% between 2002 and 2017 at an average of 5.8% annually, according to the Distilled Spirits Council data cited by Fortune ([Fortune](#)), and premiumization has continued to drive the category's growth. The super-premium and above segment, where most successful celebrity spirits brands compete, has grown faster than the category overall.

### The win: the Casamigos, Aviation, Teremana pattern

#### Casamigos

George Clooney, Rande Gerber, and Mike Meldman founded Casamigos in 2013 as, by their own account, a personal-use tequila for friends. The brand expanded into retail, reached 120,000 cases in its fourth year with a 54% compound annual growth rate over the prior two years, and in June 2017 Diageo announced its acquisition for **up to \$1 billion** — \$700 million at closing and up to \$300 million in performance-contingent consideration over a decade ([Diageo press release](#)). The brand passed one million nine-liter cases annually by the end of 2020 ([The Drinks Business](#)).

#### Aviation American Gin

Ryan Reynolds acquired a stake in Aviation American Gin (previously owned by Davos Brands) in February 2018, serving as co-owner and creative director. Reynolds' direct creative involvement — through his Maximum Effort Marketing agency — produced a run of campaigns that became reference cases in brand marketing. In August 2020, Diageo acquired the brand for **up to \$610 million**: \$335 million at closing and up to \$275 million in performance-contingent consideration over ten years ([Diageo press release](#)). Reynolds retained an ongoing ownership interest in Aviation after the sale.

#### Teremana

Dwayne Johnson launched Teremana Tequila in March 2020. The brand's launch coincided with the onset of COVID-19 lockdowns, which forced it into an off-premise retail footprint that may have structurally benefited distribution. Teremana crossed one million nine-liter cases annually in 2023. As of

late 2024, the brand was valued at approximately **\$3.5 billion** (*Spirits Business via Fox Business*). Johnson has stated publicly that Teremana is not for sale and is being built as a long-term standalone business — a position that distinguishes the brand's strategic posture from the Casamigos and Aviation exits.

*If you asked us four years ago if we had a billion dollar company, I don't think we would have said yes.*

— George Clooney, on the Casamigos sale to Diageo (CNBC, June 2017)

What these three brands share is not celebrity wattage — other celebrities had equivalent profiles and did not produce equivalent outcomes. The shared structure is: co-founder engagement rather than endorser engagement; quality-first product positioning verified by blind-tasting outcomes and category awards; super-premium but not ultra-luxury pricing that allows for on-premise bar velocity as well as retail; and a long enough runway for brand building (three to seven years to exit-scale) that the celebrity's direct involvement compounded.

## The miss: when creator-distribution outruns operating foundation

The clearest recent cautionary tale in celebrity beverage comes from a widely covered creator-founded hydration brand that launched in January 2022. The brand reached approximately **\$1.3 billion in global sales in 2023** and briefly surpassed Gatorade as the fastest-growing hydration beverage at Walmart. By October 2025, trade reporting cited projections that the brand would generate approximately **\$300 million in 2025 — a 76% year-over-year decline**. U.K. turnover fell from £112 million in 2023 to £32.9 million in 2024, a 71% drop, and U.K. pre-tax profits collapsed by more than 92%.

The causes were structural. Demand was driven by creator-native scarcity marketing and Gen Alpha hype — structures that produce initial sell-through but do not reliably generate repeat purchase. FDA scrutiny of caffeine content, a class-action lawsuit alleging "forever chemicals" in bottles, and a multi-million-dollar contract dispute with the bottler all followed. A beverage brand cannot live on hype. This trajectory is the counterpoint to the spirits pattern: a celebrity beverage brand that reached billion-dollar scale without a category-appropriate operating foundation and compressed two business cycles into three years.

## The emerging model: ready-to-drink, non-alcoholic, and founder-creator hybrids

The category's next wave is already visible. Kendall Jenner's 818 Tequila, launched in May 2021, reached 136,000 cases in its first seven months and estimated 2024 gross revenue of **\$45 to \$50 million** with 40% year-over-year volume growth against a category growing at 2% (*Arthnova*), despite a class-action lawsuit filed over its 100%-agave claims (disputed by the brand) (*Campaign US*). Kylie Jenner's Sprinter

(ready-to-drink vodka soda) and Alix Earle's SipMARGS (ready-to-drink margarita) are both betting that the fastest-growing segment of the alcohol market — canned cocktails — will reward celebrity-founder entrants.

On the non-alcoholic side, Tom Holland's Bero (non-alcoholic beer, launched 2024) and Katy Perry's De Soi (non-alcoholic aperitifs) are targeting the sober-curious segment. Alex Cooper's Unwell Hydration, launched in partnership with Nestlé, explicitly positions against the creator-hydration cautionary tale discussed above by pairing creator distribution with a beverage conglomerate's operating infrastructure. The strategic question for the next 24 months is whether ready-to-drink and non-alcoholic can replicate the tequila model's billion-dollar exit economics, or whether the structural differences in those sub-categories (lower margins, shorter brand cycles, retail-forward rather than on-premise-first distribution) will produce smaller but more numerous outcomes.

## What works in spirits

- **Founder-operator, not founder-face.** Clooney, Reynolds, and Johnson were all materially involved in product and marketing decisions. The category's largest exits share this structure. The category's misses tend to share the opposite.
- **Super-premium pricing with broad-accessible positioning.** Casamigos at \$45 to \$55 at launch and Teremana at an accessible super-premium price both avoided the ultra-luxury pricing trap that constrains distribution. 818 Tequila's 2023 price reduction (Blanco from \$39.99 to \$29.99) in response to Teremana's competitive pressure was an explicit recognition of the same principle.
- **Blind-tasting and competition validation.** Casamigos, 818, and Teremana all entered and won category tasting competitions anonymously. That third-party validation is meaningful to trade buyers, whose decisions ultimately drive on-premise distribution.
- **Patience on the exit.** Casamigos took four years to reach its \$1 billion transaction. Aviation took roughly three. Teremana is five years in and still building. The category does not reward attempts to compress that timeline — 18-month creator-beverage ramps are the exception that illustrates the rule.

## What does not work in spirits

- **Launching into supply chain constraints.** Tequila category growth has strained agave supply. Celebrity tequila brands that depend on contract-distillery NOM codes shared across dozens of other brands face structural limits on product differentiation, which has drawn ongoing scrutiny of several high-profile launches.

- **Creator-distribution overreach in beverage.** The 2023–2025 collapse of a major creator-launched hydration brand, set against Feastables' contrasting \$250 million revenue and \$20 million profit (*Bloomberg*), suggests that beverage is less forgiving than shelf-stable CPG of creator-native distribution strategies that lack deep operating muscle. Feastables was built through a Walmart-first retail strategy with professional CPG leadership; the contrasting case was built through viral momentum alone.
- **Over-licensed endorsement plays.** Celebrity endorsement of established spirits brands (paid-face arrangements without equity) have consistently underperformed both founder-led celebrity brands and the broader spirits market, with rare exceptions (Sean Combs' Cîroc partnership with Diageo, initiated in 2007, is the most-cited counterexample but ended in a reported fallout and litigation over the following decade).

### Counterintuitive finding

The best-performing celebrity spirits brand of the decade (Teremana) is the one whose founder has most visibly declined to sell. Dwayne Johnson's stated intention to hold Teremana as a long-term standalone business has not prevented the brand from reaching a higher estimated valuation than either Casamigos or Aviation at their acquisition prices. The sector's conventional wisdom has been that celebrity spirits are exit plays by design; Teremana is quietly rewriting that assumption.

### Forward indicator (next 18 months)

Watch the canned cocktail and non-alcoholic categories for the first nine-figure celebrity-founder exit. The white space identified by both sub-categories — and the operating capital now flowing in from creator platforms, food-beverage conglomerates (Nestlé, Constellation), and strategic investors — suggests an accelerated timeline. Also watch for the first major tequila exit that clearly exceeds Casamigos' transaction multiple on the basis of international distribution rather than domestic volume. The category's next billion-dollar outcome is more likely to be international-first than the 2017 Casamigos deal was.

#### SPIRITS AND BEVERAGE — KEY TAKEAWAY

Spirits is the category with the longest track record of celebrity-founder billion-dollar outcomes. The structure that has delivered those outcomes — genuine founder involvement, super-premium but accessible pricing, multi-year brand building before exit — is replicable but not compressible. Adjacent beverage categories (RTD, non-alcoholic, hydration) offer growth but have higher rates of

failure, because their economics are less forgiving of the creator-distribution-first playbook that is cheap to start and expensive to sustain.

## Sector 3 — Fashion and Luxury

### Sector context

Fashion is the category with the widest dispersion of celebrity outcomes. It contains the decade's single largest celebrity-brand valuation (SKIMS at \$5 billion), one of the decade's most expensive failed partnerships (Yeezy/Adidas), and the heritage luxury industry's most pointed bet on celebrity creative leadership (Pharrell Williams at Louis Vuitton). The category's structural feature is that fashion has always traded on identity and association, which makes it the most naturally hospitable category to celebrity — and the most exposed to the risks of that dependence.

Forty-two percent of luxury-brand influencer marketing budgets were allocated to celebrities in 2024, the highest concentration of any category tracked (*Business of Fashion via seosandwitch*). Fashion brands used celebrity influencers in 78% of their 2024 campaigns. The spend is there; the question is whether it produces defensible outcomes or commodity attention.

### The win: SKIMS

Kim Kardashian and Jens Grede co-founded SKIMS in 2019. The brand's opening bet was on the intersection of shapewear — a category that had been underinvested in by the prestige intimates market — and a sizing and shade range built around inclusivity. The execution separated SKIMS from every other celebrity apparel launch of its generation: Grede as operating CEO with CPG and DTC experience, a disciplined product cadence, and Kardashian's chief creative officer role anchored to product and brand decisions rather than standalone endorsement.

The numbers are now the category benchmark. SKIMS reached **\$145 million in 2020 revenue, \$500 million in 2022, roughly \$750 million in 2023**, and is on track to exceed \$1 billion in net sales in 2025 (*Fortune*). In November 2025, Goldman Sachs Alternatives led a \$225 million funding round that valued the company at **\$5 billion**, up from \$4 billion in a 2023 round led by Wellington Management (*CNBC*). SKIMS is now the official underwear partner of the NBA, WNBA, and USA Basketball; has a standalone NikeSKIMS activewear brand launched in early 2025; and has announced a 15-store expansion into Israel by 2026 alongside flagship openings in London and Dubai.

*Skims stands as a solutions-driven apparel innovator, pioneering new categories and redefining everyday wear.*

— Beat Cabiallavetta, Global Head of Hybrid Capital, Goldman Sachs Alternatives (November 2025)

Kardashian retains approximately 35% ownership; Forbes has attributed nearly \$1.7 billion of her estimated net worth to the SKIMS stake. What distinguishes SKIMS from Kylie Cosmetics (Kardashian's

half-sister's venture, subject to Forbes revenue-inflation controversies and e-commerce decline) is operational depth. SKIMS was built with the assumption that the celebrity would be a creative asset, not an operating substitute. Seven years in, that assumption has held up.

## The miss: Yeezy and Adidas

The Yeezy-Adidas partnership began in 2013 and at peak generated approximately **\$2 billion in annual sales for Adidas** — roughly 10% of the German sportswear brand's total revenue ([Adidas Yeezy — Wikipedia consolidating multiple annual reports](#)). In 2020, Yeezy sales reached nearly \$1.7 billion, with Kanye West earning an estimated \$191 million in royalties from an 11% cut.

On October 25, 2022, Adidas terminated the partnership immediately following antisemitic public remarks from West. The operational consequences unfolded across 2023 and 2024. Adidas was left with **€1.2 billion (\$1.3 billion) in unsold Yeezy inventory**. The company posted a 2023 net loss of €58 million — its first annual loss in more than three decades ([CNN Business](#)). North American revenue, heavily exposed to Yeezy demand, fell 16% for the year and declined a further 25% in Q4 2023 ([Sportico](#)).

Adidas ultimately sold approximately \$820 million of Yeezy product during the second and third quarters of 2023, with a stated commitment to donate a portion of the profits to anti-hate organizations; the company reported it had given or was planning to donate over \$150 million to such groups by March 2024 ([Billboard](#)). The operational lesson is not about West's conduct — that risk is always latent in any celebrity partnership — but about the scale at which the dependency had been allowed to accumulate. A line that represented 10–15% of a multinational's net income was no longer a marketing asset. It was a category of enterprise risk that no equivalent non-celebrity product line would have been permitted to become.

## The emerging model: creative director as celebrity

The most consequential development in fashion-celebrity structure over the past 36 months is not a new founder brand — it is the repositioning of the creative director role to incorporate celebrity-level cultural capital. Louis Vuitton appointed Pharrell Williams as Men's Creative Director in February 2023, succeeding the late Virgil Abloh ([Louis Vuitton](#)). Louis Vuitton reached approximately \$10 billion in sales in 2018 after 164 years of business; in the four years that followed, the brand crossed \$20 billion, coinciding with a stretch in which LVMH became the highest-market-cap company in Europe ([MEFeater summarizing LVMH financial disclosures](#)).

Williams' appointment was followed in 2024 by other heritage houses reassessing their creative structures around cultural reach rather than only fashion-trained succession. The strategic bet is that in a category where earned media and cultural association increasingly substitute for paid advertising, a

creative director whose cultural footprint equals or exceeds the brand's own extends the maison's reach materially. The counter-argument — that heritage luxury depends on continuity of aesthetic, and that celebrity creative directors introduce discontinuity — is now an empirical question that the 2024–2026 trajectories of LV, Chanel, Gucci, and Valentino will answer.

## The parallel track: Savage X Fenty

Rihanna launched Savage X Fenty in 2018 as a joint venture with TechStyle Fashion Group. The brand reached approximately \$150 million in revenue by 2021, raised \$125 million in a Series B at a **\$1 billion valuation** in January 2022, and was reported to be exploring an IPO at a \$3 billion target valuation later that year (*Fortune*). The IPO did not materialize. In August 2024, Savage X Fenty's CEO departed to join Victoria's Secret. Forbes revised Rihanna's estimated net worth downward by approximately \$400 million in 2025, citing flat Fenty Beauty sales and leadership disruption at Savage X Fenty (*Investormint*). The instructive comparison with SKIMS is operational. SKIMS' CEO has remained consistent; Kardashian's role is defined; the product cadence is disciplined. Savage X Fenty's trajectory illustrates that a celebrity-founder apparel brand can hit category-leading momentum and still have that momentum interrupted by operating-leadership events that are entirely separable from the founder.

## What works in fashion and luxury

- **Operator-led structure with clear founder role.** SKIMS' Jens Grede-as-CEO, Kardashian-as-CCO model is the closest thing fashion has to a repeatable template. Savage X Fenty's operating-leadership churn is the counterexample.
- **Category white space plus celebrity-powered entry.** SKIMS entered a shapewear-plus-intimates segment that legacy brands had underserved. Savage X Fenty entered lingerie at a moment when Victoria's Secret was structurally weak. The celebrity amplifies a category-structural advantage; it does not substitute for one.
- **Creative-director roles that exchange cultural capital for equity and control.** The Pharrell–LV arrangement is not a 12-month deal with a premium price tag; it is a structural embedding. The arrangements that treat the creative director as a cultural asset — with long time horizons, editorial latitude, and architectural influence over the brand — are the ones producing reach.
- **Partnerships with operating-heavy counter-parties.** NikeSKIMS was not SKIMS licensing itself to Nike; it was an operational collaboration that leveraged Nike's technical depth. That structure is repeatable.

## What does not work in fashion and luxury

- **Single-celebrity licensing at scale.** The Yeezy arrangement — where a single individual's creative and reputational risk became concentrated enough to endanger a 23-billion-euro company — illustrates the ceiling of the licensing model. That model is now actively being de-risked across the industry.

- **Fashion-as-appendix to a beauty brand.** Fenty Fashion was paused in 2021 to focus on beauty. Several other celebrity beauty brands that extended into fashion with lower operating intensity have similarly pulled back. Apparel is not a low-effort adjacency from beauty; the operational demands are higher and the margin structure is lower.
- **Celebrity-branded collections without control of the channel.** Beyoncé's Ivy Park partnership with Adidas, initially positioned as a breakout collaboration, wound down by the end of 2023 with sales well below projections. Celebrity fashion that depends on a wholesale partner's retail execution inherits the partner's operating risk without the upside of ownership.

### Counterintuitive finding

The fashion category's most valuable celebrity-associated business is an apparel brand (SKIMS, \$5 billion), not a luxury house. Heritage luxury brands now deploy celebrities at the creative-director level with outcomes that are culturally significant but that show up in the sales line with longer lag than in beauty or spirits. The durable celebrity value in fashion is more visible in founder apparel than in luxury creative direction — even though the latter gets more press coverage.

### Forward indicator (next 18 months)

Three things to watch. First: whether NikeSKIMS' activewear launch produces category-leading revenue or plateaus — the outcome will determine whether large apparel-company partnerships with celebrity founder brands are a durable model or a one-off. Second: whether any additional heritage luxury houses appoint creative directors with Williams-scale cultural footprint, and whether the sales uplift at LV's menswear sustains past the initial cultural moment. Third: whether the SKIMS IPO — which the 2025 funding round may have delayed — produces a public-market valuation that justifies its private-market multiple, which would open the IPO path for celebrity apparel brands generally.

#### FASHION AND LUXURY — KEY TAKEAWAY

Fashion has the widest dispersion of celebrity-brand outcomes of any category analyzed. SKIMS has shown that a disciplined operator-led structure can compound to \$5 billion; Yeezy has shown that concentration risk can produce nine-figure writedowns. The category rewards founder brands that treat celebrity as one operating input among several. It punishes structures that depend on a single individual as a point of failure.

## Sector 4 — Hospitality and Travel

### Sector context

Hospitality is the sector in which the celebrity-founder model has been quietly and durably profitable for the longest. Unlike beauty and spirits, where most successful celebrity brands are less than a decade old, the most-cited celebrity hospitality business — Nobu — crossed its 30-year anniversary in 2024. The sector's structural feature is that hospitality requires in-place operating intensity: real estate, operational leadership, service standards, and multi-year build cycles. That structure has discouraged the pure-endorsement model and selected for celebrities willing to hold equity and stay involved over time.

Global travel and hospitality spending is projected to exceed \$11 trillion in 2026. Celebrity-associated hospitality captures a small percentage of that, but the brands that have been built in this category have demonstrated resilience across economic cycles that few other celebrity-category outputs have matched.

### The win: Nobu

The Nobu story begins in 1988, when Robert De Niro first visited chef Nobu Matsuhisa's eponymous Los Angeles restaurant. De Niro spent more than four years persuading Matsuhisa to open a second restaurant in New York. The first Nobu opened in Tribeca on September 17, 1994, with Matsuhisa, De Niro, restaurateur Drew Nieporent, and investor Meir Teper as founding partners.

The brand's expansion into hospitality proper began in 2013, when the first Nobu Hotel opened inside Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Today the Nobu brand comprises **approximately 60 restaurants and 45 hotels worldwide**, with more than a dozen residential properties in development ([Patience Realty / Bloomberg interview coverage](#)). Australian investor James Packer purchased a 20% stake in 2015, which contributed to the acceleration of the hotel expansion. The brand reached roughly \$1 billion in revenue projection by 2023 ([SalmonBusiness](#)).

What distinguishes Nobu from the broader population of celebrity restaurant ventures — most of which do not survive their first five years — is the structure the founders adopted from the outset. De Niro was not the face of Nobu; Matsuhisa was the creative and culinary authority, De Niro was the equity partner and commercial accelerator, and Teper was the operating partner. When the brand extended into hotels, the partners brought in British hospitality veteran Trevor Horwell, previously of Hyatt and COMO, to run the hotel arm rather than attempting to operate it themselves. That structure — celebrity as commercial catalyst, category expert as creative lead, hospitality professional as operator — has replicated poorly across other celebrity restaurant attempts and explains the durability of Nobu's position.

*The food was amazing. Japanese food traditionally in New York and in my experience even in London was very by the book, but it wasn't what Nobu was doing.*

— Robert De Niro, on his first visit to Matsuhisa's Los Angeles restaurant (CNN, 2019)

## The miss pattern: celebrity restaurant closures

Nobu's success is best understood against the sector's broader celebrity-restaurant failure rate, which industry trade estimates place around 60–70% within the first five years — materially worse than the non-celebrity restaurant failure rate. High-profile closures across the past decade include Justin Timberlake's Southern Hospitality chain, Eva Longoria's Beso, Kanye West's Fatburger franchise, and a long list of single-unit celebrity restaurants that failed to survive a full operating cycle. The structural issue in most cases is identifiable in retrospect: the celebrity's involvement was transactional — a name-above-the-door licensing arrangement — rather than operational. Restaurants are unforgiving of owners who are not present.

The more nuanced failure pattern is the celebrity hospitality brand that opens with strong initial velocity, runs for three to four years on the strength of media coverage and celebrity visit frequency, and then deteriorates as the celebrity's attention moves to other ventures and operational standards slip. This pattern is distinct from outright closure and is harder to detect publicly, because the restaurant often continues operating for years as a break-even or loss-making asset carried by a parent company or investor group unwilling to write off the celebrity association.

## The emerging model: celebrity residential

The newest extension of the celebrity hospitality model is branded residential real estate. Nobu Residences now exists in Toronto, Los Cabos, and other cities; Robert De Niro is developing a resort and branded residences on Barbuda slated for completion in 2027. Kim Kardashian's SKIMS has launched retail flagships that function as destination retail rather than simple stores (London Regent Street, Dubai). Celebrity-adjacent hotel and residence brands — the Trump hotel portfolio notwithstanding — are a growing class, and the economic structure is more favorable than restaurants: residential sales produce one-time capital events that reduce long-tail operating risk, while hotel franchise and management fees produce recurring revenue without direct operating capital exposure.

The significant near-term development is the expansion of celebrity-branded hotels into secondary markets. Nobu announced in March 2025 a hotel, restaurant, and residences project in a £360 million planned skyscraper in Manchester, UK, with planning approval granted in April 2025 ([Wikipedia — Nobu](#)).

The geographic expansion pattern — from global gateway cities into regional luxury markets — is the hospitality sector's analog to the Asia-Pacific expansion trend visible in celebrity beauty.

## What works in hospitality

- **Celebrity as catalyst plus category expert as creative lead.** The Nobu partnership structure — celebrity credibility attached to the highest-level professional in the discipline — is the template. Most celebrity restaurants that lack this have failed; most that have it have not.
- **Professional hospitality leadership hired in, not improvised.** Nobu brought in Trevor Horwell to run hotels. Professional operating leadership is more predictive of multi-decade durability than brand or celebrity strength.
- **Long time horizons.** Successful celebrity hospitality brands have tended to build over 10, 20, or 30 years. The category does not reward compressed timelines. De Niro's 30-year Nobu involvement is the reference case; attempts to launch and scale a celebrity restaurant brand in 3–5 years have rarely produced durable outcomes.
- **Equity, not licensing.** Celebrity licensing deals in hospitality have consistently underperformed celebrity equity stakes. The same economic dynamic visible in spirits and beauty — founder-operator beats name-on-package — applies here.

## What does not work in hospitality

- **Single-unit celebrity restaurants.** The failure rate for these is high. They rely on traffic from celebrity visits and media coverage, both of which decline faster than a restaurant's operating break-even runway. Cities with concentrated celebrity hospitality inventory (Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Las Vegas) have cycled through many of these.
- **Celebrity-branded hotels without a category-expert partner.** The Trump-hotel pattern (setting aside political considerations) of branded but celebrity-independent hotel operation produces inconsistent quality and weak operating leverage. Nobu's structure — celebrity partner, culinary anchor, hospitality-professional operator — has been difficult to replicate without all three legs.
- **Expansion pace that exceeds operating capacity.** Celebrity hospitality brands that open at a faster pace than their operational infrastructure can support have tended to see service standards deteriorate and brand equity erode, regardless of the celebrity's continued commitment.

## Counterintuitive finding

Hospitality is the celebrity category with the lowest average multiple (on exit-equivalent metrics) but the highest survival rate for successful brands. Celebrity beauty and spirits brands produce \$1-billion-plus exits; celebrity hospitality brands rarely do. But celebrity hospitality brands that survive 10 years have a much higher probability of surviving 30 years than brands in any other celebrity category. The category rewards durability, not valuation velocity.

### **Forward indicator (next 18 months)**

Watch the celebrity-branded residential segment. The economic structure (capital events on sale, recurring management fees) is materially more favorable than restaurant-only ventures, and a growing cohort of celebrity brands are extending into it. Also watch for the first celebrity hospitality brand to execute a material transaction — IPO, majority sale, or strategic minority investment — at a valuation that would be unremarkable in beauty or spirits but would set a new ceiling for the hospitality sub-category.

#### **HOSPITALITY AND TRAVEL — KEY TAKEAWAY**

Hospitality is the celebrity category with the longest track record of durable outcomes and the most favorable structural filter against low-quality entrants. The operating intensity required to build a hotel or restaurant brand has selected out most pure-endorsement plays and left the category populated by celebrity-equity partnerships that tend to survive and compound. The category rewards patience and penalizes compression.

## Sector 5 — Wellness and Health

### Sector context

Wellness is the category that has generated the most celebrity-brand activity over the past decade and the most ambiguous outcomes. The global wellness economy is projected to reach \$9.8 trillion by 2029 according to the Global Wellness Institute, and celebrity involvement spans almost every sub-segment — supplements, fitness, mental health, beauty-adjacent skincare, sleep technology, functional beverages, fragrance-as-wellness, and an emerging longevity segment. The sector's structural feature is its regulatory ambiguity. Wellness products fall into a gap between the FDA-regulated pharmaceutical category and the FTC-regulated cosmetic category, and that gap has absorbed a lot of celebrity brand-building — much of it commercially successful, much of it on shaky evidentiary ground, and some of it now facing the regulatory consequences.

### The win (complicated): Goop

Gwyneth Paltrow launched Goop in September 2008 as an email newsletter. By 2018, the company had raised \$50 million in Series C funding from NEA, Lightspeed, and Felix Capital at a **\$250 million valuation** ([Wikipedia — Goop](#)). Total funding to date has reached approximately \$140 million. The company reports annual revenue north of \$45 million across e-commerce, content, and experiences, with beauty revenue growing 20–40% and fashion revenue (rebranded from G.Label to Gwyn in 2025) growing 45–50% year-over-year in recent periods ([Brand Vision](#)).

The Goop trajectory is a case study in strategic resilience through controversy. The company has been the subject of multiple high-profile regulatory interventions — a California consumer-protection settlement over unsubstantiated product claims, criticism from medical and scientific professionals over wellness claims, and a steady drumbeat of press skepticism — without seeing the underlying commercial base erode. The reason, analysts have consistently noted, is that Goop's audience self-selects. The brand's willingness to occupy culturally contested territory functions as a filter, delivering a highly engaged customer base with above-average lifetime value. The business was architected for exactly the margin structure the regulatory ambiguity produces.

*I personally think it's distasteful to talk about money. I really am giving all the credit to the people who buy the products.*

— Selena Gomez on Rare Beauty's revenue growth (ET, September 2024)

The structural question Goop raises for other celebrity wellness entrants is whether the brand model is replicable or idiosyncratic. The brand has an unusually specific culture-and-commerce architecture: Paltrow's persona, a loyal subscriber base built before direct-to-consumer was a category, a willingness

to incur regulatory and reputational pressure, and a product range where aspirational signaling matters as much as efficacy. Celebrity wellness brands that have attempted similar positioning without those elements have not achieved comparable durability.

## The miss: celebrity crypto-wellness and FTC-adjacent failures

The wellness category's failure pattern is less dramatic than fintech's FTX collapse and less visible than fashion's Yeezy writedown, but it is more numerous. A long list of celebrity supplement, CBD, and weight-loss brands have launched with high-profile endorsements and faded within 24 months. The Federal Trade Commission's 2022 enforcement action against Kim Kardashian for undisclosed EthereumMax promotion (\$1.26 million settlement) was the most-discussed regulatory intervention, but it is one of many: DJ Khaled and Floyd Mayweather settled similar matters, and the FTC and state attorneys general have been active on wellness-specific endorsement regulation for the past three years.

The quieter failure is the weight-loss and diet segment's deterioration in the GLP-1 era. Oprah Winfrey's decade-long involvement with WW International (formerly Weight Watchers) began in October 2015 with a 10% equity purchase and board seat; the stock rose approximately **170% within two days** of the announcement (*The Motley Fool summarizing WW stock history*). WW shares quadrupled in 2017 as the partnership matured. That outcome was celebrity-endorsement marketing's most-cited commercial success of the 2010s.

The disruption arrived with GLP-1 medications (Ozempic, Wegovy, and successors), which restructured the weight-loss category around pharmaceutical intervention rather than dietary compliance. Winfrey left the WW board in 2024; the company filed for bankruptcy protection in May 2025 after sales declined sharply. The lesson is not that the Winfrey-WW partnership was wrong for its era — it was unambiguously successful — but that celebrity endorsement in a category subject to external technological or regulatory disruption has a ceiling imposed by the category's own structural evolution. A celebrity cannot anchor a business model that the science has moved past.

## The emerging model: operator-led wellness

The most commercially successful non-Goop wellness brand of the past decade (Athletic Greens' AG1) is not a celebrity brand but an operator-led business that scaled through podcast and creator partnerships with some A-list talent. AG1 reached unicorn valuation status with revenue estimates above \$1 billion by 2024, built predominantly on creator endorsement at scale rather than celebrity founder equity. The structural pattern is instructive: in a category with high regulatory scrutiny and evidentiary

requirements, a celebrity-founder model tends to inherit the regulatory exposure; a creator-endorsement-at-scale model distributes the exposure.

On the celebrity-founder side, Chris Hemsworth's Centr fitness app has built a meaningful but non-transformational subscription business; Serena Williams' Will (wellness) and other athlete-founded brands are following similar trajectories. The celebrity wellness brand that is likely to define the next cycle is the one that pairs genuine founder involvement with a specific, regulatorily defensible product claim — longevity diagnostics, non-pharmaceutical sleep intervention, validated mental health tools — rather than the more speculative positioning that characterized the 2015–2022 wave.

## What works in wellness

- **A product claim that can be defended without invoking FDA-regulated outcomes.** Brands that stay in defensible territory — general wellness, quality-of-life, performance — avoid the regulatory exposure that has closed down much of the category. Goop has navigated this with mixed success; newer entrants have had to be more precise.
- **A founder with genuine category history.** Paltrow's interest in alternative wellness predated the brand by years. Hemsworth's fitness involvement predated Centr. The authentication pattern that works in beauty works here with higher evidentiary stakes.
- **Subscription and recurring-revenue models.** The wellness brands that have reached durable scale have subscription structures that smooth revenue and reduce marketing dependency. AG1 is the reference case; Oura (sleep technology) is another.
- **Clinical validation, even partial.** Nutrafol's approximately \$1 billion valuation (acquired by Unilever in 2022) was substantially driven by clinical-trial data, not celebrity association. The wellness brands graduating from the \$100 million tier to the \$1 billion tier are the ones with evidence.

## What does not work in wellness

- **Celebrity-endorsed weight-loss and diet brands in the GLP-1 era.** The structural disruption from pharmaceutical weight-loss intervention has reduced the addressable market for traditional diet-and-exercise-based brands materially. WW's trajectory post-2023 is the reference case.
- **Broad celebrity CBD licensing.** The CBD sub-category has been structurally underwhelming relative to 2019 projections. Most celebrity CBD brands have not reached category-defining scale, and the sub-category's regulatory ambiguity has limited retail distribution.
- **Celebrity supplement brands without clinical positioning.** The FTC enforcement trend and consumer skepticism have tightened what product claims can be made. Brands that rely on undifferentiated wellness positioning have struggled to break out.
- **Mental-health-adjacent celebrity endorsements.** This is a sub-category where celebrity involvement creates regulatory and reputational risk disproportionate to the commercial opportunity. Brands should be particularly careful here.

## Counterintuitive finding

The wellness category's most-studied celebrity success story (Winfrey-WW) became a cautionary tale not because of execution failures but because of category disruption the celebrity could not influence. A celebrity in this category is choosing not only a brand but a category-structural bet. If that bet is on a

thesis that pharmaceutical or technological disruption can undermine, the celebrity's presence will not rescue it. The durable celebrity wellness brands are in sub-categories (general lifestyle, specific performance, mental well-being) that are less exposed to disruptive substitution.

### **Forward indicator (next 18 months)**

Watch the longevity segment. The next generation of celebrity wellness brands will likely be built around longevity diagnostics, functional fitness, and specific performance rather than general wellness or weight loss. Also watch for the first major FTC enforcement action specifically targeted at celebrity wellness endorsements of the scale that would function as a regulatory reset for the category. The FTC has signaled increased interest; the question is when, not whether.

#### **WELLNESS AND HEALTH — KEY TAKEAWAY**

Wellness is the celebrity category with the largest total addressable market and the most ambiguous structural filter against poor-quality entrants. Successful celebrity wellness brands have tended to be operator-led with a specific, defensible positioning. The category rewards specificity over breadth, and penalizes celebrity-founder brands that depend on regulatorily ambiguous claims. The structural risk is higher than in beauty or spirits, and the upside is more variable.

## Sector 6 — CPG and Food

### Sector context

CPG and food is the celebrity category that has absorbed the most new entrants over the past 36 months and produced the widest dispersion of outcomes. The dispersion is not random: it correlates closely with operating structure. Celebrity food brands built with professional CPG leadership, retail-first distribution, and long product-development cycles have compounded. Celebrity food brands built on viral marketing with creator-native distribution have tended to spike and collapse. The sector's structural challenge is that food and beverage categories require repeat purchase. Trial is a celebrity problem; repeat is an operating problem.

The category now includes celebrity-backed brands across snacks (Feastables, Lunchly), coffee (Chamberlain Coffee, Laughing Man, Florence by Mills, Hanx), supplements (Lemme, Centr, Bero), cooking and baking (Cravings, Goya, Smash Kitchen, Dolly Parton's), baby and children's nutrition (Once Upon a Farm, Florance), ready-to-drink beverages (Sprinter, SipMARGS, Unwell), and a wide array of alcohol brands addressed in Sector 2.

### The win: Feastables

Jimmy "MrBeast" Donaldson launched Feastables in January 2022 through a Walmart-first retail strategy, a deliberate inversion of the creator-DTC playbook. The brand generated \$33 million in first-year sales, grew to \$96 million in 2023, and reached **\$250 million in revenue with \$20 million in profit** in 2024 — outperforming MrBeast's media business, which lost nearly \$80 million on similar revenue the same year (*Bloomberg*). Beast Industries, Feastables' parent, was valued at approximately \$5 billion after Alpha Wave's \$300 million Series C in 2024, and the company projects Feastables revenue of \$520 million in 2025.

Feastables' success is instructive for exactly the reasons the hydration-category miss is instructive. MrBeast launched Feastables with Jim Murray — the former president of protein-bar company RXbar — as operating partner. The distribution strategy prioritized Walmart shelf presence over DTC volume. The product reformulation (simpler ingredients, clearer positioning) was executed under professional CPG discipline. The celebrity's content machine functioned as demand generation; the CPG machine functioned as demand fulfillment. Both were required. The cautionary counterpart had the demand generation and not the fulfillment discipline; Feastables had both.

*We have an unprecedented platform in terms of reach and fandom. We have the opportunity to launch multiple businesses on the backs of that center of reach and distribution.*

— Jeffrey Housenbold, President, Beast Industries (Fortune, March 2025)

## The miss: creator-beverage overreach and category-risk contagion

The creator-beverage trajectory covered in Sector 2 extends to CPG broadly: celebrity launches that depend on viral marketing to build brand and hype to drive trial produce front-loaded revenue that does not mature into repeat purchase. The hydration-category brand's first-year global sales of approximately \$1.2 billion represented unprecedented velocity; by 2025 the brand was projected at **\$300 million** — a 76% decline that aligns with the category's underlying structure. Beverage is not a forgiving category for brands without repeat-purchase engineering.

Lunchly — a meal-kit brand for children co-developed by creator-backed CPG ventures — illustrates how celebrity partnerships can create category risks that are structurally distinct from the individual brands. A YouTuber discovered mold on a Lunchly cheese product in October 2024; the FDA received more than 10 consumer complaints; other creators criticized the product publicly (*Femfounded case study*). Celebrity products marketed to children sit at the intersection of parental scrutiny, regulatory attention, and social-media amplification that traditional CPG brands have managed through decades of operating discipline. Creator-native launches do not automatically inherit that discipline.

## The emerging model: celebrity-founded CPG at IPO scale

The category's most consequential recent development is the September 2025 IPO filing of Once Upon a Farm, the organic baby and children's nutrition company co-founded by Jennifer Garner in 2017. The company debuted publicly in early 2026 at an opening price of \$18 per share, raising \$198 million and establishing an initial valuation of approximately **\$724 million** (*FilmoGaz*). At the time of IPO, the company reported annual sales of approximately \$200 million and distribution across 19,000–22,000 retail locations (*Once Upon a Farm*).

The structure of Once Upon a Farm is the emerging template. Garner joined as co-founder two years after the brand was launched by Cassandra Curtis and Ari Raz, and was paired with CEO John Foraker, the former president of Annie's Homegrown (which was acquired by General Mills for \$820 million in 2014). Garner's role — chief brand officer and public face, not CEO — explicitly defines the celebrity's contribution while separating it from operating execution. The "build it up, grow it fast, then get bought" playbook that Hedgeye Risk Management analysts publicly attributed to the company is

effectively the one Foraker ran previously at Annie's ([Benzinga via Yahoo Finance](#)). If that playbook produces an acquisition at a multi-billion-dollar valuation, it will become the reference case for celebrity CPG in the second half of the decade.

## The creator-CPG cohort

A distinct sub-category has emerged: CPG brands built by creators and podcasters rather than traditional celebrities. Emma Chamberlain's Chamberlain Coffee has raised approximately \$15 to \$20 million, reached projected 2024 revenue of \$22 million, and targets \$33 million in 2025, with distribution through Target, Walmart, Costco, and a flagship cafe in Los Angeles (*The Ankler*). Alex Cooper's Unwell Network has extended from podcasts to merchandise (reported as an eight-figure business on its own) to Unwell Hydration, launched in partnership with Nestlé in late 2024 (*Yahoo Entertainment*). Alix Earle, Millie Bobby Brown, Hugh Jackman, Tom Hanks, Chrissy Teigen, Kourtney Kardashian, and a long list of additional celebrity and creator figures are now operating in adjacent CPG sub-categories.

The strategic question is whether the creator-CPG cohort will produce category-leading outcomes at the scale of Feastables or whether the segment will settle into a structurally smaller tier. The evidence to date is mixed: Chamberlain Coffee has grown faster than most celebrity coffee brands but has had to raise multiple rounds to fund retail expansion, suggesting the capital intensity of CPG remains material. Unwell Hydration's partnership structure with Nestlé is more operationally professional than most creator brands achieve on their own, but the brand is too new to evaluate.

## What works in CPG and food

- **Professional CPG leadership paired with celebrity founding.** Feastables (Jim Murray, ex-RXbar) and Once Upon a Farm (John Foraker, ex-Annie's) both illustrate the template. Celebrity brands whose CEO brings direct, senior prior category experience compound faster and exit higher.
- **Retail-first, not DTC-first, distribution.** Feastables went to Walmart before it went anywhere else. That is the inverse of the beauty template but the correct pattern for food, where shelf presence and impulse purchase drive velocity.
- **Specific, regulatorily defensible category positioning.** Organic baby food has clear product definitions and ingredient standards. Functional-claim wellness food does not. Celebrity CPG brands that pick structurally clear categories avoid the regulatory and reputational risk that has sunk several adjacent launches.
- **Long product-development cycles.** The most durable celebrity CPG brands have had 18 to 36 months of product development before public launch. Launches compressed to 6 months have frequently required reformulation under consumer pressure.

## What does not work in CPG and food

- **Viral-launch-first strategies.** The creator-hydrator collapse is the category's structural cautionary tale. Beverage and food brands that depend on hype rather than repeat purchase produce front-loaded revenue that does not compound.
- **Celebrity food brands targeted at children without regulatory preparedness.** The Lunchly mold incident illustrates that celebrity children's food brands face disproportionate scrutiny. Traditional CPG brands handle this through decades of operating infrastructure; creator-launched brands frequently do not.
- **Over-extension across too many sub-categories too quickly.** Several celebrity CPG brands have launched a coffee, a supplement, a snack, and a beverage within 24 months, diluting the product development and marketing resources that any single brand needs. Narrow focus, as in beauty, produces better outcomes.
- **Founder-celebrity CPG brands without an operating partner.** The failure rate is high. A celebrity who wants to build a durable CPG business without an experienced category operator is betting against the category's own structural economics.

### Counterintuitive finding

The celebrity CPG brand with the most profitable 2024 was the one whose founder had most publicly resisted raising capital at startup-style valuations. MrBeast's Beast Industries reached \$5 billion in implied valuation after Feastables alone generated \$20 million in profit; the contrasting creator-hydrator venture, which raised and spent aggressively on marketing during its 2023 peak, has produced no comparable profit line. Capital discipline is more predictive of celebrity CPG outcome than capital availability is.

### Forward indicator (next 18 months)

Watch Once Upon a Farm's post-IPO trajectory. If the company compounds its public-market valuation toward \$1 billion, it will establish celebrity CPG as a structurally credible IPO path and draw additional institutional capital into the category. Also watch for the first celebrity children's food brand to be acquired by a traditional CPG giant (General Mills, Kraft-Heinz, Nestlé) at a multiple that recalibrates the category's M&A economics.

#### CPG AND FOOD — KEY TAKEAWAY

CPG rewards operating discipline and penalizes viral marketing. The category's successful celebrity brands have paired a celebrity founder with a category-experienced CEO, retail-first distribution,

and a narrow product focus. The category's failed celebrity brands have tended to invert each of those choices. The pattern is not subtle; the execution is harder than it looks.

## Sector 7 — Financial Services and Fintech

### Sector context

Financial services is the celebrity category that scored lowest in the Fit Index (3.4 out of 10) and produced the most concentrated destruction of celebrity reputational and financial value over the past five years. The sector's structural features explain the outcome. Financial products are subject to securities and consumer-protection regulation that imposes direct legal exposure on promoters. Consumer trust in financial institutions is low but extremely consequential — a failure in this category produces larger personal consumer losses than a failure in any other category. And the category has attracted a specific type of celebrity endorsement deal — high-equity, high-compensation, high-visibility — that produces catastrophic outcomes when the underlying business fails.

### The catastrophic miss: FTX and celebrity endorsement

FTX's collapse in November 2022 produced the largest celebrity-endorsement consequence of the past decade. The exchange had built a celebrity marketing program unusual in its scale and structure. Tom Brady and Gisele Bündchen served as brand ambassadors and held equity; Brady reportedly received approximately **\$30 million in FTX equity** and Bündchen approximately \$18 million ([Baker McKenzie](#)). Stephen Curry and the Golden State Warriors had endorsement deals; Larry David starred in the "Don't Miss Out" Super Bowl LVI commercial in February 2022; Shaquille O'Neal, Naomi Osaka, Shohei Ohtani, David Ortiz, and Kevin O'Leary were all promotional partners. O'Leary later testified before the Senate Banking Committee that FTX paid him **\$18 million** — \$3 million for taxes, \$1 million in FTX equity (characterized as "most likely worthless"), and \$10 million in crypto tokens held in FTX wallets ([Law Commentary](#)).

The exchange collapsed in November 2022. Investors filed a class-action seeking up to \$21 billion in damages against FTX and its celebrity promoters. In a May 7, 2025 ruling, U.S. District Judge K. Michael Moore dismissed 12 of 14 claims against the celebrity defendants on the grounds that plaintiffs had not adequately alleged the celebrities knew of FTX's fraud ([Hollywood Reporter](#)). Two claims under Oklahoma securities law — which provide liability for promoters of unregistered securities regardless of intent — were allowed to proceed. Shaquille O'Neal settled separately in April 2025 for undisclosed terms. Kim Kardashian, in a separate 2022 SEC matter, paid \$1.26 million for promoting EthereumMax without disclosing a \$250,000 payment. Floyd Mayweather and DJ Khaled resolved similar SEC matters.

*Allegations of negligence, recklessness, or even that Defendants 'look like idiots,' are insufficient to establish that Defendants had actual knowledge of FTX's fraud and conversion.*

— U.S. District Judge K. Michael Moore, dismissing most FTX investor claims against celebrity defendants (May 2025)

The celebrities who took fees rather than equity recovered some or all of their compensation; those who took equity took near-total losses. The reputational consequence was widespread — FTX's celebrity talent roster became a reference case in compliance and marketing discussions across every other category — and the legal exposure, while substantially reduced by the May 2025 ruling, remains open on the unregistered-securities claims.

### The parallel miss: Matt Damon and Crypto.com

Crypto.com's "Fortune Favors the Brave" campaign, starring Matt Damon, premiered in October 2021 near the peak of the 2021 crypto bull cycle. In November 2021, the exchange paid approximately **\$700 million** for 20-year naming rights to the Staples Center in Los Angeles, which was renamed Crypto.com Arena (*Cointelegraph*). The exchange's global marketing spend across the Damon and LeBron James campaigns and related sponsorships was reported at approximately \$100 million.

The downstream commercial consequences were severe. Crypto.com's seven-day average trading volume fell from \$3.2 billion on November 1, 2021 to \$372 million by late October 2022 — a decline of roughly 88% over twelve months, concurrent with the broader crypto market decline but accelerated by the public reputational damage to the company's high-profile ad campaigns. Damon was widely ridiculed on social media and parodied by South Park; Crypto.com later laid off approximately 5% of staff in June 2022 and conducted a further round in August 2022 that was reportedly larger (*Benzinga*).

Damon later disclosed that his involvement was driven by an "arrangement in which Crypto.com donated \$1 million to Water.org" — his clean-water non-profit — and that the non-profit had experienced a difficult fundraising year. The full-salary-to-charity explanation does not change the reputational outcome but illustrates the complex personal and financial circumstances that drive celebrity decisions to associate with high-risk categories.

### The rare win: Oprah and Weight Watchers

Financial services is not entirely devoid of celebrity-endorsement success. The most durable example is the adjacent category of celebrity-adjacent financial wellness: Oprah Winfrey's 2015 investment and board role at WW International (Weight Watchers) produced a **170% stock price increase within two**

**days** of announcement and roughly quadrupled the share price over the following two years (*The Motley Fool*). The structural difference was ownership and alignment of incentives: Winfrey did not endorse an investment vehicle she held no stake in; she was a significant shareholder in a public company whose product she used.

Winfrey left the WW board in 2024 amid the GLP-1 disruption discussed in Sector 5, and WW filed for bankruptcy protection in May 2025. But the 2015–2022 arc of the Winfrey-WW partnership remains the clearest example of a celebrity-adjacent financial services endorsement that produced sustained shareholder value rather than reputational harm. The differences from FTX are instructive: regulatory category (consumer product, not unregistered security), alignment of interests (equity in a public company, not payment for promotion), personal product use (Winfrey was a customer), and long time horizon (seven years of consistent involvement).

## What works in financial services

- **Celebrity ownership in regulated, public companies.** The structural difference between Winfrey-WW (public company equity) and Brady-FTX (unregistered-security promotion) is the difference between commercial success and class-action litigation.
- **Category-adjacent positioning, not direct investment promotion.** Celebrity endorsements of financial wellness, saving, or spending platforms have fared better than endorsements of specific investment vehicles. The FTC and SEC have been especially active on the latter.
- **Disclosure discipline.** Every SEC enforcement action in the past five years has involved failure to disclose compensation. Celebrity financial endorsements that properly disclose compensation under FTC and SEC guidance have not produced comparable enforcement actions.

## What does not work in financial services

- **Equity-carry endorsements of crypto and non-bank financial products.** The FTX cohort represents the worst-case outcome of this model. The structural problem is that celebrities in equity-carry positions with unregistered securities promoters take on securities-law exposure regardless of their knowledge of the underlying business.
- **Cause-driven rationalization.** Damon's Water.org explanation and other celebrities' stated charitable motivations have not insulated them from reputational or legal consequences. The consumer perception of celebrity crypto endorsement as "cash-grab" has been difficult to reverse regardless of the underlying compensation structure.
- **Single-source concentration.** FTX's reliance on approximately 10 celebrity endorsers, many of whom received equity, created a correlation structure in which the exchange's collapse produced simultaneous reputational damage to all of them. Celebrities who appear in multiple category-adjacent endorsements have a more distributed reputational risk than those whose category exposure is concentrated.
- **Super Bowl-scale activations for pre-profitable companies.** FTX's 2022 Super Bowl spot and Crypto.com's parallel campaigns both occurred at peak 2021 valuations for companies with limited demonstrated durability. The pattern — using the largest possible advertising surface to drive acquisition into products whose unit economics were not yet proven — is structurally similar to the 2000 Super Bowl dot-com advertising wave, with parallel outcomes.

## Counterintuitive finding

The celebrities who have come out of the past five years of financial-services endorsement with the least long-term damage are those who promoted products that were later found to be fraudulent but who did not take equity. The economic incentive structure that at the time looked like leaving money on

the table (fee-only endorsement rather than equity-carry) has turned out to be the risk-adjusted correct choice. Paper billionaires on FTX equity became paper nothings; cash endorsers kept the cash.

### **Forward indicator (next 18 months)**

Watch the securities enforcement pipeline. The SEC signaled increased interest in celebrity promotion of digital assets throughout 2024 and 2025, and the May 2025 FTX ruling leaves open the unregistered-securities claims under Oklahoma law. Subsequent rulings on those claims, or new enforcement actions against celebrities whose FTX-era promotion has not yet been resolved, will determine whether the past three years of celebrity crypto endorsement produce a final legal settling or an ongoing wave of settlements. Also watch for regulatory clarity on celebrity-adjacent fintech (BNPL, robo-advisors, savings platforms) — the sub-categories most likely to produce the next enforcement action.

#### **FINANCIAL SERVICES AND FINTECH — KEY TAKEAWAY**

Financial services is the category in which celebrity involvement has produced the most systematic destruction of celebrity reputational and financial value over the past five years. The sector rewards celebrity involvement at only one structural tier — equity ownership in regulated, public companies — and punishes the categories of involvement that proliferated in the 2020–2022 crypto cycle. The Fit Index placement (3.4 out of 10) reflects both the scale of the demonstrated downside and the narrowness of the path to a commercially successful deployment.

## Sector 8 — Cannabis

### Sector context

Cannabis is the celebrity category with the most unresolved structural uncertainty. The U.S. legal cannabis market was estimated at **\$38.5 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach \$44–47 billion in 2025** and \$76 billion by 2030 at an 11.5% compound annual growth rate (*Grand View Research*). The category is simultaneously one of the largest new consumer markets of the decade and one of the most operationally difficult, constrained by federal prohibition, state-by-state regulatory complexity, banking restrictions, and structural tax disadvantages that limit profitability even for well-executed businesses.

Celebrity involvement in the category has been extensive but commercially constrained. One California-based cannabis expert estimated in 2021 that celebrity brands accounted for "a very, very small percentage" of overall cannabis sales, even as the category attracted high-profile launches from Snoop Dogg, Jay-Z, Seth Rogen, Willie Nelson, Wiz Khalifa, Jim Belushi, Martha Stewart, Mike Tyson, Carlos Santana, Lil Wayne, and more than a dozen additional figures (*Hollywood Reporter*).

### The pattern: celebrity as category validator

Celebrity cannabis involvement has delivered an outcome that does not fit the pattern of any other sector in this report. Celebrity brands have not produced billion-dollar exits in cannabis, and the celebrities whose cannabis ventures attract the most press have not generated revenue at the scale of their celebrity beauty or spirits counterparts. What they have produced is something closer to category validation — a reduction in the cultural and regulatory friction around cannabis consumption that has benefited the entire legal market, not only their individual brands.

Snoop Dogg's Leafs by Snoop, launched in Colorado in 2015 through Canadian cannabis giant Canopy Growth, was the first major celebrity cannabis brand. Snoop subsequently launched Death Row Cannabis, and his investment fund Casa Verde Capital has built a portfolio reportedly worth more than **\$200 million** (*Hollywood Reporter*). His normalizing effect on the category — appearing with Martha Stewart on mainstream television joking about cannabis use — has been credited by category participants with significant cultural contribution to legalization momentum.

Jay-Z's Monogram launched in 2020 through The Parent Company (a partnership with California cannabis licensee Caliva), positioning as a luxury cannabis brand with \$50 hand-rolled products. Seth Rogen's Houseplant, launched in Canada in 2019 and in the U.S. in March 2021, sold out its initial offering within hours of launch. Martha Stewart's CBD line, launched in 2020 through Canopy Growth, is distributed nationwide. Mike Tyson's Tyson 2.0 has expanded across multiple states.

What these brands share is a structural ceiling imposed by the category's operating environment, not by the quality of the celebrity participation. Federal prohibition prevents interstate commerce. State-by-state licensing requires separate legal entities and operations in each market. Banking restrictions complicate capital access. Section 280E of the U.S. tax code denies cannabis businesses the standard deduction of ordinary business expenses, producing effective tax rates that can exceed 70%. These constraints bind every cannabis business, celebrity or not, and they produce a category in which market capitalization growth has been structurally capped.

*If you're smart enough, you get in, you know how to take your celebrity and create a real business for yourself.*

— Snoop Dogg, on the celebrity cannabis landscape (The Hollywood Reporter, 2021)

## The miss: The Parent Company

The Parent Company — the Jay-Z-associated entity that held Monogram and additional brands including Caliva — is the category's clearest structural cautionary tale. The Parent Company went public through a SPAC in early 2021 at a peak market capitalization of approximately \$4 billion. The company completed a merger with Gold Flora in 2024 to create a combined California operator; the transaction effectively consolidated a series of celebrity-associated cannabis brands into a broader California-focused entity as the standalone celebrity-cannabis holding company model faltered. The operational lesson is that the celebrity-cannabis holding company structure has not produced durable public-market outcomes; category-structural constraints have compressed valuations below their peaks across every public cannabis MSO.

The broader failure pattern is the celebrity cannabis brand that depends on a single contract-distillery or contract-cultivation arrangement. Several high-profile celebrity brands are produced through facilities that serve 60 or more brands simultaneously, creating practical limits on product differentiation. The celebrity brand effectively becomes the marketing on the package of a product that is functionally indistinguishable from many other products on the same shelf. In a category already constrained by regulatory and tax considerations, commodity-product status is not a survivable structural position.

## The emerging model: cannabis-adjacent and lifestyle extensions

The most commercially successful celebrity-cannabis-adjacent business of the past five years has been Cookies, the cannabis lifestyle brand co-founded by rapper Berner in 2010 and now estimated to be worth more than **\$1 billion** with a Cookies clothing line that reportedly generated over \$50 million in sales in 2021 alone (*Consult ASG*). Cookies' model — building lifestyle and apparel revenue alongside

cannabis product, effectively using the apparel business to monetize brand equity that cannot be fully captured in cannabis revenue — has emerged as a template for other celebrity cannabis ventures.

On the lifestyle-plus-cannabis side, the fastest-growing sub-category is cannabis-infused beverages (sales increased 79–112% year-over-year in 2024–2025 in legal markets like Michigan, Illinois, and Ohio). Gwyneth Paltrow's Cann investment portfolio, Kate Hudson's and Rebel Wilson's co-investments in the same brand, and a growing cohort of celebrity-backed cannabis beverage launches are testing whether the RTD model covered in Sector 2 extends into cannabis. Early signals are positive but scale is still small.

## What works in cannabis

- **Lifestyle-and-apparel revenue paired with cannabis product.** Cookies' model of monetizing brand equity through merchandise produces a revenue stream that is not constrained by Section 280E or banking limitations. Celebrity cannabis brands that adopt this structure have produced more durable enterprise value than cannabis-only plays.
- **CBD and hemp-derived sub-categories.** Martha Stewart's CBD line, distributed through Canopy Growth, operates in a regulatory environment structurally more favorable than THC cannabis. Hemp-derived products can be distributed nationally, accessed through conventional retail, and processed through standard banking.
- **Authentic founder involvement in a category with long cultural history.** Snoop, Willie Nelson, and Cheech Marin — the celebrities with the longest public association with cannabis — have generally fared better commercially than recent entrants whose celebrity credibility in the category is not historically anchored.
- **Investment funds rather than operating brands.** Casa Verde Capital has produced better risk-adjusted returns than any of the celebrity operating cannabis brands it has invested alongside. In a category this constrained, capital allocation is a higher-leverage activity than operations.

## What does not work in cannabis

- **Standalone celebrity cannabis holding companies as public-market vehicles.** The Parent Company's trajectory is the category's reference case for this structural failure. The public-market valuation compression across cannabis MSOs generally has been extreme, and celebrity-associated holding companies have not been exempt.
- **Luxury-priced cannabis from contract cultivation.** Monogram's \$50 hand-rolled product positioning draws attention but has not produced category-leading scale. The cannabis category's consumer economics reward accessible premium pricing more than ultra-luxury positioning, a pattern visible in spirits as well.
- **Celebrity cannabis without differentiated cultivation or product science.** The contract-facility commodity problem. When a celebrity cannabis brand is indistinguishable from the 60 other brands produced in the same facility, the brand is entirely marketing and becomes commoditized over time.
- **Endorsement of illegal-market cannabis products.** A small but ongoing category of celebrity-adjacent CBD and cannabis promotion has operated outside state licensing frameworks; FTC and state attorneys general have been active on enforcement.

## Counterintuitive finding

The most commercially successful celebrity in the cannabis industry — by direct revenue generated from the celebrity's ventures — is not Snoop or Jay-Z but the rapper Berner, whose Cookies brand has built a nine-figure apparel and retail business alongside its cannabis operations. A-list celebrity cannabis brands have generated more press coverage but less revenue than Berner's structurally more diversified model.

### **Forward indicator (next 18 months)**

Watch federal rescheduling. If the Biden-era recommendation to reschedule cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III is finalized in the current regulatory process — or if any of the multiple active Congressional cannabis banking and tax reform bills pass — the sector's structural ceilings on profitability and capital access will move materially. Celebrity cannabis brands that have been building slowly in anticipation of that moment will have considerable operating leverage if it arrives. Also watch the cannabis beverage sub-category, where celebrity-adjacent investment has been building and category growth has been the fastest in the sector.

#### **CANNABIS — KEY TAKEAWAY**

Cannabis is the celebrity category with the largest whitespace (least saturated with major-brand celebrity entrants) and the largest structural headwinds (federal prohibition, banking limits, Section 280E taxation). The outcomes to date have been mixed and the category is structurally capped under current regulation. A change in federal regulatory status — likely within the 2026–2028 window — would reprice the category's ceiling materially. Celebrity brands that have built durable operating infrastructure in advance of that change will have a compounded advantage; those that have not will be acquired or consolidated.

## Part III — The Fit Index

Part II presented a sector-by-sector analysis of celebrity-brand outcomes. Part III synthesizes that analysis into a single ranking framework — the Fit Index — and applies it to a deployment decision: at what tier of involvement should a celebrity be engaged in a given category, and which categories are structurally most favorable for each tier?

### The scoring framework

The Fit Index scores each of the eight sectors on five variables, each on a 1-to-10 scale, weighted equally in the composite. The variables are:

- **Receptivity.** Consumer openness to celebrity influence in the category. Higher scores indicate categories where consumers actively seek or respond positively to celebrity association; lower scores indicate categories where celebrity association is neutral or negative.
- **ROI.** Verified financial returns — exits, ongoing revenue, valuation multiples — of celebrity brands in the category. Higher scores indicate categories with a track record of large celebrity-brand outcomes; lower scores indicate categories where celebrity involvement has failed to produce durable financial value.
- **Fit.** The structural fit between the category's economics and celebrity involvement. Higher scores indicate categories whose margin structure, product cycle, and operating requirements naturally accommodate celebrity founder or equity roles; lower scores indicate categories where celebrity involvement imposes friction on the underlying business.
- **Risk.** Regulatory, reputational, and concentration risk exposure. Inverted scale: higher scores indicate lower risk, lower scores indicate higher risk. Categories with material SEC, FDA, or FTC enforcement exposure score low.
- **Whitespace.** Current saturation of celebrity brands in the category. Inverted scale: higher scores indicate less saturation and more opportunity for new entrants; lower scores indicate crowded categories where differentiation is difficult.

### The composite ranking

Sector	Recept.	ROI	Fit	Risk	White	Score
1. Spirits and Beverage	9	10	9	7	5	8.0
2. Beauty	9	10	9	7	4	7.8

Sector	Recept.	ROI	Fit	Risk	White	Score
<b>3. Hospitality and Travel</b>	7	7	8	8	8	<b>7.6</b>
<b>4. Fashion and Luxury</b>	8	7	8	5	6	<b>6.8</b>
<b>5. CPG and Food</b>	7	7	7	5	5	<b>6.2</b>
<b>6. Wellness and Health</b>	7	6	7	4	6	<b>6.0</b>
<b>7. Cannabis</b>	6	5	7	3	8	<b>5.8</b>
<b>8. Financial Services / Fintech</b>	3	2	3	2	7	<b>3.4</b>

*All scores are author assessments based on the analysis and sourcing presented in Part II. Individual brand outcomes will vary; the Fit Index describes category-structural expectation, not individual-case guarantee.*

## Sector scoring notes

### Spirits and Beverage (8.0) — top-ranked

Spirits scored at the category ceiling on ROI on the strength of three verified billion-dollar outcomes (Casamigos, Aviation, Teremana) and a category-structural track record of celebrity-founder exits over more than a decade. The category's risk profile is moderate rather than low: alcohol is subject to regulation and reputational exposure (drink-driving, underage consumption, health framing), but the regulatory environment is mature and predictable rather than emergent. The category's saturation is now moderate (5) given the large number of celebrity tequila entrants; non-alcoholic and RTD sub-segments retain more whitespace.

### Beauty (7.8) — near-top-ranked

Beauty's ROI score matches spirits at the ceiling; the category has delivered comparable verified outcomes (Rhode \$1B, Rare Beauty \$2.7B estimated, Fenty \$1–2B estimated) in a shorter timeframe. The category scores slightly lower than spirits on whitespace because the number of competing celebrity beauty brands has exceeded 40 by some industry counts, making new-entrant differentiation more difficult. Risk is moderate — FDA regulation of claims is a material concern but the category has a long history of managing it.

### Hospitality and Travel (7.6)

Hospitality scored highest on both risk (low regulatory exposure, no securities or consumer-protection enforcement history) and whitespace (few celebrity hotel and residential brands relative to the size of the global travel market). ROI scored in the middle because the category rarely produces billion-dollar exits, but survival rates among successful celebrity hospitality brands are structurally higher than in any other sector analyzed. The sector's Fit Index position may be the most surprising to practitioners who have assumed that the visibility and deal-count of beauty and spirits translates to better category fit.

### **Fashion and Luxury (6.8)**

Fashion's composite is held down by the risk score (5) reflecting the Yeezy case and, more broadly, the concentration-risk pattern visible in single-celebrity apparel arrangements. Receptivity is high and ROI on the best outcomes (SKIMS) is top-tier, but the dispersion between best and median outcomes is wider than in beauty or spirits. Whitespace is moderate — the heritage luxury creative-director segment (post-Pharrell) is opening; the celebrity-founder apparel segment is more crowded.

### **CPG and Food (6.2)**

CPG scored evenly across variables in the 5-to-7 band, producing a middle-tier composite. The category has verified successes (Feastables \$250M profit-generating; Once Upon a Farm IPO at \$724M) and verified failures (the widely covered 2022 creator-hydration collapse, Lunchly controversy). Whitespace scored moderate because many sub-categories are crowded while others (specialty baby/children nutrition, functional snacks) remain less penetrated. The risk score (5) reflects FDA regulation combined with the reputational exposure of mass-market food.

### **Wellness and Health (6.0)**

Wellness's composite is held down by risk (4) and ROI (6). The risk score reflects ongoing FTC scrutiny of supplement and functional-product claims, the GLP-1-era disruption of the weight-loss sub-category, and the higher-than-average rate of celebrity wellness brand regulatory interventions over the past five years. ROI is moderate because despite a very large number of celebrity wellness entrants, verified billion-dollar exits in the category are rare (Goop's \$250M 2018 valuation remains the highest directly comparable celebrity-founder wellness valuation).

### **Cannabis (5.8)**

Cannabis scored highest on whitespace (8) — the category is structurally under-penetrated by celebrity brands relative to the market's size — but lowest after fintech on risk (3) and moderate on ROI (5). The risk score reflects federal prohibition, banking restrictions, Section 280E taxation, and the mixed track record of public cannabis investments. The ROI score reflects the absence of billion-dollar celebrity cannabis exits comparable to beauty and spirits; Cookies' estimated \$1B value is the closest comparable but is not a celebrity-founder brand in the traditional sense. A favorable federal regulatory change would move several variables simultaneously.

### **Financial Services and Fintech (3.4) — bottom-ranked**

Fintech scored at or near the floor on every variable except whitespace, where the middling score (7) reflects that the category has capacity for additional celebrity involvement but that the involvement is unlikely to produce favorable outcomes. The FTX cohort's reputational and legal exposure has produced a structural discount on celebrity fintech endorsement that will persist for multiple years.

## The deployment framework

The Fit Index tells brands and agencies which categories to enter. The deployment framework — the second synthesis from Part II — tells them at what tier of involvement to enter. The three tiers outlined in Part I (paid endorsement, equity-carry endorsement, celebrity-founder brand) produce materially different outcomes in each category.

The matrix below consolidates the recommended tier for each category, based on the Part II sector analysis:

- **Celebrity-founder brand — primary path:** Beauty, Spirits, Hospitality. These categories have the longest track record of founder-brand success, the most favorable economics for founder involvement, and the most defensible exit pathways. A celebrity entering these categories should structure involvement at this tier rather than at lower tiers.
- **Celebrity-founder brand — secondary path:** Fashion, CPG, Cannabis. These categories reward founder brands in some structural configurations (SKIMS-style operator-led apparel; Feastables-style CPG-professional-led food; Cookies-style lifestyle cannabis) but produce high failure rates without the operator infrastructure. Founder-brand deployment here requires additional structural caution.
- **Equity-carry endorsement — primary path:** Spirits, Beauty, Hospitality. These categories can absorb non-founder but equity-aligned celebrity involvement (Aviation-style acquisition partnerships; creative-director arrangements; restaurant equity partnerships) with durable upside. The same categories that work for founder brands also work for equity-carry.
- **Equity-carry endorsement — avoid:** Fintech. The structural risk is too high; the past five years have demonstrated that equity-carry fintech endorsement produces catastrophic downside that cannot be offset by upside. Celebrities in fintech should operate at the paid-endorsement tier with proper disclosure or not operate at all.
- **Paid endorsement — appropriate for:** Wellness, CPG, some Fashion. Categories where product efficacy or brand recognition carries most of the commercial weight and celebrity amplifies rather than authors. The vampire effect (90% remember the celebrity, 50% remember the brand) is especially acute here, so creative strategy matters.
- **Paid endorsement — with disclosure discipline:** Fintech, Cannabis, Wellness. When paid endorsement is used in regulated categories, proper FTC and SEC disclosure is not a compliance checkbox — it is the legal difference between normal advertising and enforcement exposure. The post-2022 SEC and FTC enforcement trend is toward tighter, not looser, standards.

## The tier-category heat map

Combining the Fit Index composite with the deployment framework produces a single heat map of category-tier combinations that practitioners can reference:

Sector	Founder	Equity	Paid	Risk Note	Priority	Action
<b>Spirits</b>	Green	Green	Amber	Low-Med	High	<b>Build</b>
<b>Beauty</b>	Green	Green	Amber	Low-Med	High	<b>Build</b>
<b>Hospitality</b>	Green	Green	Amber	Low	High	<b>Build</b>
<b>Fashion</b>	Amber	Amber	Amber	Med	Med	<b>Selective</b>
<b>CPG/Food</b>	Amber	Amber	Green	Med	Med	<b>Operator-led</b>
<b>Wellness</b>	Amber	Red	Amber	Med-High	Med	<b>Specific only</b>
<b>Cannabis</b>	Amber	Red	Red	High	Watch	<b>Infrastructure</b>
<b>Fintech</b>	Red	Red	Amber	High	Low	<b>Avoid equity</b>

*Green = category reliably rewards this tier of celebrity involvement. Amber = rewards in specific structural configurations, with meaningful failure rate. Red = historical evidence strongly suggests avoiding this tier of involvement in this category.*

**PART III KEY TAKEAWAY**

The three categories that score above 7.5 on the composite Fit Index — Spirits, Beauty, Hospitality — share structural features (high margin, founder-compatible operating cycle, mature regulatory environment, verified exit pathways) that make celebrity involvement at the founder or equity tier a repeatable model. The category at the bottom of the ranking (Fintech, 3.4) shares the opposite structural features, and equity-carry involvement there has produced the clearest catastrophic outcomes in recent celebrity-brand history. The other four categories occupy a middle zone in which tier selection, operator structure, and category sub-segment matter more than they do at the extremes.

## Part IV — What Is Next

Part I through Part III document the current state of celebrity-brand deployment. Part IV identifies the near-term forces — operational, regulatory, and technological — that will reshape this space over the 18-to-36-month horizon. The goal is not prediction but positioning: which of today's structural assumptions are most likely to be disrupted, and what should practitioners be watching.

### AI and the question of synthetic likeness

The single most consequential structural development in the celebrity-brand space is the rapid maturation of generative AI tools capable of producing high-quality synthetic celebrity likeness, voice, and content. Deloitte has forecast that AI-generated celebrity voices and likenesses will constitute a **\$1.2 billion industry by 2027**. The commercial implications divide into three categories.

The first is perpetual availability. AI enables celebrity brands to produce content at a scale and cadence that a human celebrity could not sustain without burnout. Brands are already experimenting with celebrity-AI deployment — athlete cameos on branded social content, fashion campaigns using AI-enhanced celebrity imagery, customer-service voice agents using licensed celebrity voices. The commercial upside is real; the labor, intellectual-property, and authenticity questions are unresolved.

The second is post-mortem licensing. The estates of deceased celebrities have been increasingly active in licensing likeness for commercial use, with multiple 2025 launches using AI-generated imagery of deceased figures. The SAG-AFTRA contract negotiated in 2023 established new consent requirements for synthetic actor performances, but protections for deceased individuals' likeness rights remain state-by-state and uneven. The practical outcome over the 24-month horizon will be commercial expansion in this space, followed by the first high-profile legal challenges.

The third is deepfake risk. The same tools that enable licensed celebrity-AI content also enable unlicensed deepfake content that can damage celebrity and brand reputation. Trust in content authenticity is declining; consumer surveys consistently find that more than half of consumers are unable to reliably distinguish AI-generated from human-created content. Brands that build celebrity-AI strategies will need to pair them with verification and watermarking infrastructure that most brands do not currently have. The category-level consequence is an increased premium on live, verifiable celebrity appearances — which may partially reverse the decade-long migration of celebrity activity to social and content channels.

### The founder-celebrity model goes international

The U.S.-first structure of the successful founder-celebrity brand era (2015–2025) is likely to be challenged over the next 36 months by globally distributed founder brands launching with multi-market distribution from day one. The economic rationale is clear. Asia-Pacific accounted for an estimated **31% of global celebrity influencer spending** in 2024, and the Middle East produced a 23% year-over-year increase in celebrity beauty endorsements in the same year. Global markets represent the majority of addressable celebrity-brand consumer spend and are growing faster than the U.S.

The structural shift will favor celebrities whose cultural reach is genuinely international — K-pop idols launching beauty brands, Latin American music artists launching spirits brands, global football (soccer) players launching apparel — over traditional Hollywood A-listers whose reach is still disproportionately U.S.-centric. It will also favor U.S. celebrities whose brands are structured from launch for international distribution (SKIMS' 2026 Israel, London, Dubai expansion is an early indicator), over brands that try to internationalize after a U.S. scaling period.

## The regulatory horizon

Three regulatory trends will shape the celebrity-brand environment in 2027 and beyond.

### 1. The FTC and the disclosure floor

The Federal Trade Commission updated its Endorsement Guides in 2023 and has signaled escalating enforcement through 2024 and 2025. The past 24 months have seen disclosure enforcement actions against celebrities, against agencies, and against brands simultaneously — a pattern that differs from previous cycles where enforcement targeted promoters only. The trajectory is toward a disclosure floor that is both more stringent and more uniformly enforced than the current state. Brands whose celebrity endorsement deals do not include explicit disclosure compliance will carry enforcement risk that scales with deal size.

### 2. The SEC and regulated-product endorsement

The FTX and EthereumMax cases established that celebrity promotion of securities — registered or unregistered — carries direct SEC exposure. The 2025 FTX class-action ruling dismissed most claims against celebrity defendants but preserved the unregistered-securities claims, keeping the enforcement question active. New SEC leadership under the 2025 administration has signaled a different regulatory posture than the 2021–2024 period, but the underlying statutory framework has not changed. Celebrity involvement in crypto, fintech, or any investment-adjacent product will remain elevated-risk for the foreseeable period.

### 3. Cannabis rescheduling

The Drug Enforcement Administration's process to reschedule cannabis from Schedule I to Schedule III — initiated by the Department of Health and Human Services recommendation in August 2023 — has

been through multiple procedural stages. Rescheduling would eliminate the Section 280E tax constraint, restructuring cannabis industry economics materially. It would not resolve banking, interstate commerce, or marketing restrictions, but the combination of rescheduling with any movement on the Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act would reset celebrity-cannabis economics. Brands that are positioned for this change — with existing infrastructure, clear IP, and operational stability — will capture disproportionate upside. Brands that are not will be consolidated.

## Emerging sectors to watch

### Sports betting

The U.S. sports betting market expanded to roughly \$11 billion in annual revenue by 2024 and continues to grow. Athlete and former-athlete endorsement has dominated this category, with mixed regulatory outcomes. New-state launches (North Carolina, Vermont) are drawing celebrity-adjacent marketing at scale, and the regulatory picture at the federal level remains fragmented. The sector is scoring roughly at the fintech level on the Fit Index's risk dimension — athlete endorsement specifically produces concentration risk around integrity concerns (game-fixing, insider information) that has produced ongoing league and league-adjacent enforcement. Celebrity deployment here should be treated as an adjacent fintech-equivalent risk category.

### Psychedelics and plant-based therapeutics

The psychedelic-therapeutic sub-category — MDMA-assisted therapy, psilocybin-assisted therapy, ketamine clinics — has drawn increasing celebrity advocacy and adjacent investment over the past three years. Harry Styles, Gwyneth Paltrow, Kristen Bell, and Prince Harry have publicly supported aspects of the category; venture investment by celebrities in psychedelic-therapeutic companies has accelerated. The category is early-stage, regulatorily complex (the FDA rejected MDMA-assisted therapy's first Phase III application in August 2024), and the celebrity-brand opportunity is still unclear. Most successful participation to date has been investment rather than brand-building. The category is the clearest candidate to become the next wellness-adjacent celebrity zone if regulatory pathways mature.

### Longevity and biological-age intervention

Longevity is the wellness sub-category with the most aggressive celebrity and creator adoption over the past 24 months. Bryan Johnson's Blueprint protocol has drawn significant attention; celebrity-backed longevity brands and clinics are launching across North America and Asia. The category's Fit Index position is structurally analogous to the wellness sector but with higher pricing power (premium to ultra-premium product tiers) and lower regulatory clarity (FDA oversight of longevity claims is nascent). The next 24 months will determine whether the category produces billion-dollar celebrity-founder outcomes or settles into a high-margin, lower-volume niche.

### Creator-native CPG at scale

The cohort of creator-launched CPG brands discussed in Sector 6 will produce either the next Feastables — a multi-billion-dollar creator-founded consumer business — or a structural plateau at the \$100 million to \$500 million tier. Chamberlain Coffee's 2025 trajectory, Unwell Hydration's first-year numbers, Beast Industries' continued growth, and Once Upon a Farm's post-IPO performance will collectively determine which of those two outcomes becomes the reference case.

## The post-celebrity question

The structural question that should frame any multi-year celebrity-brand strategy is whether the celebrity tier as such will continue to exist in its current form through 2030. The decade-long migration of trust, attention, and commercial influence from celebrities to creators is not a rumor: the Edelman 2026 Trust Barometer's finding that trusted creators are the single most influential gateway to brand consideration for 18-to-34-year-old audiences is the clearest data point. If that trend continues to its logical conclusion, the "celebrity brand" of 2030 may look more like the creator-operator brand of 2025 (Feastables, Chamberlain Coffee, Beast Industries) than like the A-list-founder brand of 2020 (Rare Beauty, SKIMS, Teremana).

The counter-argument is that celebrities in the traditional sense — global-scale figures with multi-decade recognition — retain a specific commercial function that creators have not yet demonstrated at equivalent scale. Super Bowl advertising, tentpole sports, international luxury positioning, heritage brand creative direction — these remain celebrity terrain. The most durable practitioners over the next five years will likely be those who combine traditional celebrity reach with creator-native operational discipline, rather than choosing between the two.

The broader reading is that the distinction between celebrity and creator is itself dissolving. Alex Cooper and Emma Chamberlain are, by any practical commercial metric, celebrities. MrBeast's revenue and valuation exceed those of most traditional celebrity brands. Conversely, Selena Gomez operates on social channels in ways that were previously exclusive to creators. The commercial classification matters less than the structural question: who is building durable consumer businesses, through what operating structure, at what tier of category risk. The Fit Index framework applies to creator-founder brands as much as to celebrity-founder brands, because the question — does this category reward this tier of involvement — does not depend on the historical provenance of the individual's fame.

### PART IV KEY TAKEAWAY

The 2026-to-2028 period will test three structural assumptions: that AI will supplement rather than replace celebrity content, that U.S.-first launch remains the right path for global celebrity brands, and that the distinction between celebrity and creator will remain commercially meaningful. Brands and talent that position for each of those assumptions being partially overturned will be better-prepared than brands that assume continuity. The Fit Index framework will remain applicable; the tiers of involvement and the categories themselves will continue to evolve.

## About the Firms

### About 5W

5W Public Relations ([5wpr.com](https://www.5wpr.com)) is one of the largest independently owned public relations firms in the United States. Founded in 2003 by Ronn Torossian, 5W has grown to more than 275 professionals headquartered in midtown Manhattan, with client work spanning corporate communications, consumer branding, crisis management, digital marketing, and public affairs.

The agency serves clients across B2C categories including Beauty & Fashion, Consumer Brands, Entertainment, Food & Beverage, Health & Wellness, Travel & Hospitality, Technology, and Nonprofit, as well as B2B and corporate reputation, public affairs, and crisis communications. Digital capabilities include social media, influencer marketing, paid media, and search and generative engine optimization (SEO and GEO).

5W has been recognized as a Top 50 Global PR Agency by PProvoke Media, a top-three New York City PR agency by O'Dwyer's, named to Inc. Magazine's Best Workplaces list, and has been awarded multiple American Business Awards including a Stevie Award for PR Agency of the Year. Matthew Caiola serves as Chief Executive Officer; Ronn Torossian serves as Founder and Chairman.

Additional 5W properties and commentary appear at [5wpr.net](https://www.5wpr.net) and [everything-pr.com](https://www.everything-pr.com), the agency's industry news publication. 5W's sister agency [Virgo PR](https://www.virgo-pr.com) provides specialized consumer-brand and lifestyle communications services.

### About Ronn Torossian

Ronn Torossian is the Founder and Chairman of 5WPR and the author of *For Immediate Release: Shape Minds, Build Brands, and Deliver Results with Game-Changing Public Relations*. He is a regular contributor to Forbes, CNN, and CNBC, a member of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO), and has been named to Crain's Notable in Marketing and PR list, Advertising Age's "40 Under 40," and PRWeek's "40 Under 40." His writing and long-form commentary appear at [ronntorossian.com](https://www.ronntorossian.com) and [ronntorossianupdate.com](https://www.ronntorossianupdate.com).

### About Talent Resources

Talent Resources ([talentresources.com](https://www.talentresources.com)) is a global marketing agency recognized as a leader in developing and producing influencer-based and celebrity-driven campaigns for brands. Founded in 2007 by Michael Heller, Talent Resources has built its reputation as an agnostic agency — not representing

talent, but bridging the connection between brands and celebrities, athletes, musicians, and influencers across a 360-degree marketing architecture.

Talent Resources operates from offices in New York, Los Angeles, London, Dubai, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco, building integrated marketing programs that span celebrity and influencer partnerships, social media, communications, and experiential activation.

Talent Resources has executed campaigns and partnerships for brands including Got Milk, Dunkin', Elta MD, Neiman Marcus, The Children's Place, and Gymboree, working with talent including Kevin Hart, Mandy Moore, Kris Jenner, Khloe Kardashian, Kyle Kuzma, Stephen Curry, and Kylie Jenner, among many others.

### **About Michael Heller**

Michael Heller is the Founder and President of Talent Resources. He began his career in entertainment law, representing and advising talent including Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, Mischa Barton, and Rachel Hunter before founding Talent Resources in 2007 to professionalize the brand-talent facilitation market. Heller is a recognized innovator in celebrity-to-brand marketing, an early voice on social-media and Web 3 applications in the category, and serves as a producer and advisor to multiple media and consumer brands.

### **About this report**

The Celebrity-Brand Fit Index is a joint research report of 5W and Talent Resources, published in 2026. The report draws on public financial disclosures, syndicated consumer and market research, and trade press reporting to provide a sector-by-sector analysis of where celebrity-brand involvement creates value and where it destroys value.

For media inquiries, custom research collaborations, or licensing of the Fit Index framework for brand and talent strategy engagements, contact 5W at [info@5wpr.com](mailto:info@5wpr.com) or Talent Resources at [info@talentresources.com](mailto:info@talentresources.com).

## Appendix — Source List

This appendix consolidates the primary sources cited throughout the report, organized by section. All URLs are live as of publication. Where a source appears in multiple sections, it is listed in the section of first appearance.

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## Methodology note

All URLs were verified live as of the publication date. Financial figures attributed to specific celebrity brands reflect the most recent publicly available data as of the reporting dates cited. Private company valuations without disclosed capital events are flagged as estimates in the relevant sections. Where primary and secondary sources diverge, the primary source is cited and the range is noted in-text.

*The Celebrity-Brand Fit Index is a joint research report of 5WPR and Talent Resources. Publication: 2026.*