

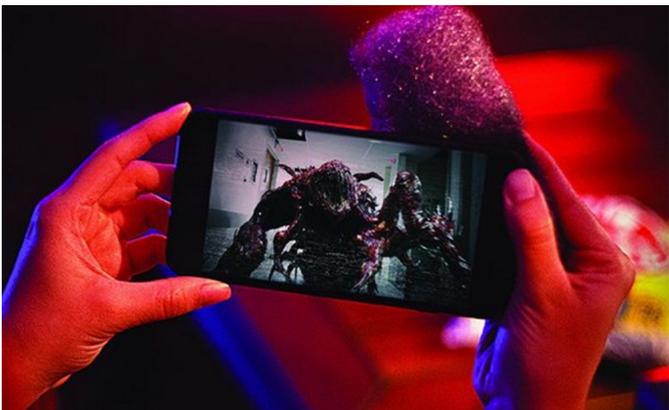


EDITOR'S PICKS 16 JULY 2021

# Stranger Antenna /

Netflix

Streaming platform reframes 1980s TV-watching habit for digital age to fuel anticipation for new *Stranger Things* series in Brazil



In the 1980s, in Brazil, people had a particular hack to improve shoddy TV reception – using steel wool on their TV antennas.

Tapping into this nostalgic cultural insight, **Netflix** and São Paulo-based agency **AKQA** drove excitement for the season three launch of 1980s-set *Stranger Things* with an app that featured exclusive sneak peeks of the show – content that, as if by magic, was only viewable with steel wool held to the back of the phone.

► <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWYXCeo75hE>

As the case study film puts it: 'No beacon, no image recognition, no NFC, no GPS... Just a spongy thing that every Brazilian has under their sink (present in 99% of Brazilian households, according to Kantar Ibope).'

Launched four days before the season premiere in July 2019, the platform contained exclusive video content that played homage to iconic retro Brazilian TV shows alongside unseen snippets of the forthcoming *Stranger Things* series, with Carlos Moreno (pictured below), the long-running face of steel wool brand Bombril, promoting the app and hosting new film content each day.

Luiza Baffa, AKQA's strategy leader at the time, now managing director, told Contagious: 'Our goal was to engage the *Stranger Things* fans. We wanted to make sure that their excitement started days before the series launch. Our main goal was to connect with the fans and increase their love and engagement about *Stranger Things*. So everything we did was thinking about this huge community – using Easter eggs and internal jokes that were already used by the fans – strengthening Netflix's bond with them.'



Popular YouTube channel hosts Manual do Mundo (12.8 million subscribers at the time of the campaign) eventually revealed the science behind the app's trick, which was made possible by magnetometer sensors used in smartphones. The app was free to

download on iOS and Android devices.

**Results /** According to the agency, *Stranger Things* was the best Twitter Brazil fan engagement campaign of the year, spending **two days** as a trending topic on the social media platform, for app downloads it was **number one** on Google Play and **number two** on the App Store, with people spending a daily average of **5m 20s** watching content... plus, wouldn't you know it, steel wool sales rose 17%. The campaign also won a Gold in Mobile category at this year's Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.

## Contagious Insight /

**Think local /** With the rise of streaming competitors such as Amazon Prime Video, Hulu and Disney+, HBO Now and Apple TV+, Netflix has looked to the international market as its most logical and lucrative target for growth, and is now available in over 190 countries (compared to **41** in 2014). Brazil is no exception to its plans, with 2.2 million subscribers in 2014, [according to Statista](#), rising to more than 17 million as of June 2020, [according to Business Insider](#). It's achieved this growth partly by winning over regional audiences with original content attuned to specific markets and by localising hit shows such as *Stranger Things* with culturally relevant dubbing and subtitles. Netflix puts the same localised effort into promotion, as evidenced by its [Ninong](#) trailers in the Philippines and its [Narcos Mexico](#) promotions in Thailand.

Stranger Antenna continues the platform's run of embracing a cultural touchpoint and having fun with it. Bringing back fond memories of TV watching in the 1980s is the perfect fit for the retro fun of *Stranger Things* and adds a fun analogue twist to the digital age of streaming. As AKQA managing director Luiza Baffa told Contagious: 'We believe that one of Netflix biggest strengths is the fact that they produce local content in local markets. Because of Netflix people can watch and relate with different stories, from different countries and that represent different cultures. Every time we create a local campaign we aim on getting real insights from real people that are present in the country's pop culture and represent a real tension!'

**Just like old times /** There is emotional power in the past, as Gus Machado, creative at AKQA, told Contagious. 'Nostalgia is a powerful motor. We all know that this mighty feeling is one of the reasons behind *Stranger Things*' success, so it felt obvious to channel it in our ideas. It was, then, a matter of finding the token – an object that is mundane, but at the same time is able to trigger nostalgia into the crowd. When it comes to Brazilians, back in the 1980s, our token was Bombril. We had this strange habit of putting steel wool pads on our TV antennas to improve our shitty reception. Everyone remembers that, but nobody thought they would ever do that again to tune in content.'

**Apt apps /** Don't fall for the trap of tech for tech's sake, as Paul Kemp-Robertson and Chris Barth write in *The Contagious Commandments*: 'Novelty can attract attention. But attention is a cheap currency if it is not underpinned by meaningful utility or an obvious bridge between the tech and the brand.' At first glance, the Stranger Antenna looks a bit of a gimmick, but the insight and the execution are perfectly aligned, with the initial 'magic' of the app driving interaction and engagement with exclusive teasers for the new series and ultimately getting people talking about the *Stranger Things* series launch.

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