

# The effectiveness code

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BY JAMES HURMAN WITH PETER FIELD

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## THE EFFECTIVENESS CODE

**This whitepaper presents the results of a major new study of effectiveness, carried out in 2020 by marketing effectiveness experts James Hurman and Peter Field on behalf of Cannes Lions and WARC.**

**We have analysed and compared a total of 4,863 effectiveness award entrants and winners from 2011 through 2019, from every major market in the world: 1,031 cases from the Cannes Creative Effectiveness Lions database, 3,616 cases from the WARC database and 216 cases from the IPA databank.**

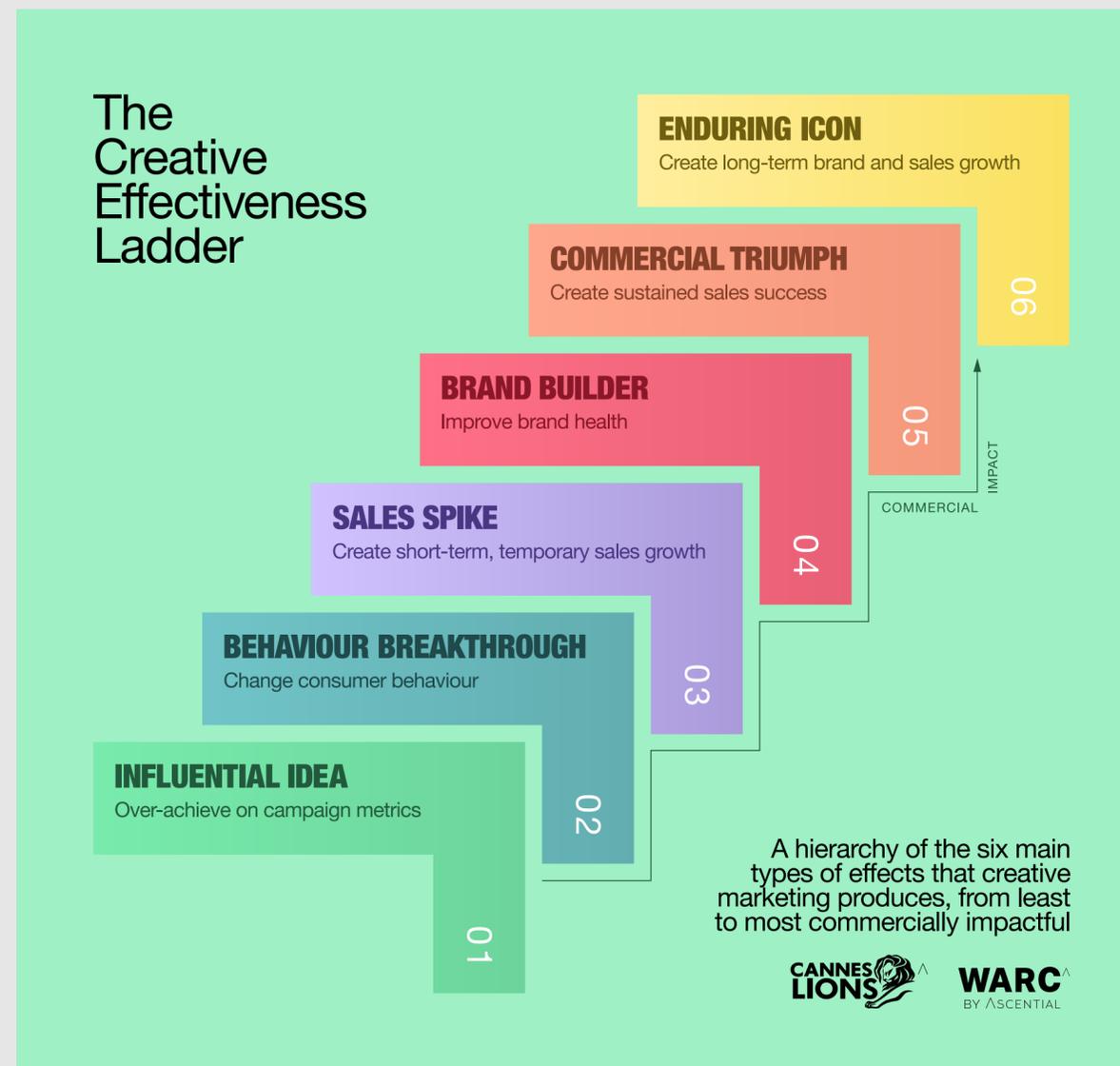
In 2019, we undertook a global study involving marketing and agency leaders, which revealed consensus that the industry lacks a ‘universal definition’ and ‘shared language’ of effectiveness. This has limited our ability to agree what best practice effectiveness looks like, or to learn from our best work to improve the future effectiveness of our marketing.

In response, we have developed a new framework – The Creative Effectiveness Ladder. The Ladder identifies the six main types of effects that creative marketing produces, setting them in a hierarchy of levels from least to most commercially impactful.

The Creative Effectiveness Ladder has been developed to enable the marketing and advertising industry to more easily identify and learn from effectiveness best practice, so that they can more consistently produce highly effective creative campaigns and initiatives.

Through analysis of the Cannes Creative Effectiveness Lions winners from 2011-2019, we have discovered common ‘winning behaviours’ of campaigns at each level of The Creative Effectiveness Ladder. These give us fresh, up-to-date insight into how to use creativity to drive specific types of important marketing outcomes.

The Creative Effectiveness Ladder has been designed to be used as a continuous improvement tool for marketers and agencies, and to be the judging framework for all future Creative Effectiveness Lions.



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**During our analysis, we made a new discovery that marketing effectiveness is heavily influenced by a campaign's degree of what we are calling Creative Commitment.**

**Creative Commitment is a composite measure of the media budget, duration and number of media channels applied to a creative campaign or initiative.**

**Creative Commitment correlates very tightly with effectiveness – as Creative Commitment increases, so does effectiveness.**

To increase Creative Commitment, marketers have three ‘levers’ – spend, duration and number of media channels – and pulling any of these levers will give their work an effectiveness advantage.

Although media spend is one dimension of Creative Commitment, it is not a controlling factor. Even at low budgets, campaigns with longer durations and more media channels are more effective.

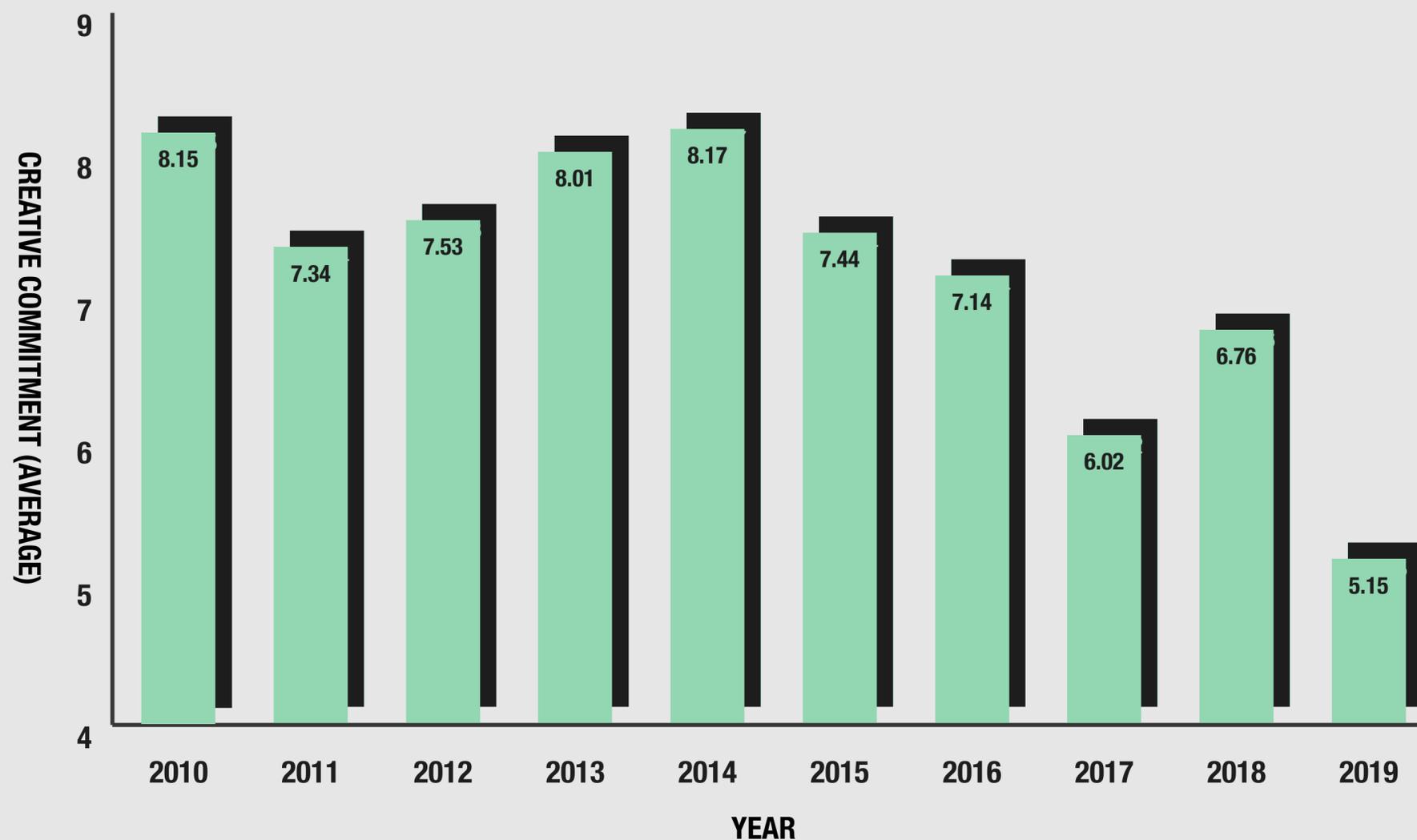
Creativity is a fourth and highly impactful lever – creatively awarded campaigns are much more effective overall, and at every level of Creative Commitment.

Marketers should be working to maximise the Creative Commitment of their campaigns if they wish to maximise their effectiveness.

However, over the past five years, the marketing and advertising industry has increasingly *reduced* the Creative Commitment of its campaigns. This will be significantly mitigating the return on investment of the industry’s work.

We urge that marketers and their agencies work to reverse this trend, in the interests of improving both the effectiveness of their efforts and the overall value and reputation of marketing.

## THE COLLAPSE OF CREATIVE COMMITMENT 2014 – 2019



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## HOW TO CLIMB THE LADDER

Reaching the upper levels of the ladder is all about creating work that delivers brand-building and commercial results over a sustained period. Here are the key principles of climbing the Creative Effectiveness Ladder:

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### 1. SET THE RIGHT OBJECTIVES.

If you're looking for a Sales Spike, set a three-month sales objective, run a fast campaign, and measure it at the end of three months.

But if you're looking for a Commercial Triumph, set a 12-month sales objective, with a campaign duration to match, and measure it at the end of the year. If you want an Enduring Icon, plan a three-year campaign and stick with it.

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### 2. BUDGET REALISTICALLY

If you want your brand to grow, the rule of thumb is that your share of voice needs to be higher than your share of market. If you're at 20% market share and your budget is only 10% of total category spend, it's unrealistic to expect growth.

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### 5. CHOOSE HIGHLY CREATIVE WORK.

Even though it may seem riskier, the data evidence is conclusive that work with creative-award-winning qualities is far more likely to be effective than ordinary work. Robust, insightful strategy is a must – and once this is in place, buy the campaign idea that delivers on the strategy in the most original and engaging way.

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### 6. MAXIMISE CREATIVE OUTPUT.

Use the levers of media budget, campaign duration and number of media channels to drive Creative Commitment up as far as possible for each campaign.

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### 3. RESIST THE PRESSURE TO CARVE YOUR BRAND'S MARKETING BUDGET UP INTO TINY INCREMENTS.

Many short-term, small budget campaigns are not as effective for a brand as a balance of fewer short-term activations and more longer term brand and sales building campaigns.

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### 7. LAND AND EXPAND.

If you're seeing great results from a campaign, view that as a sign to ramp up the work rather than moving on from it. Give the campaign more budget, run it for longer, and spread it across more channels.

If you've got a tiger by the tail, don't let go.

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### 4. PLAN ROBUST, INSIGHTFUL STRATEGY.

Ensure absolute clarity of your objectives, and an insightful understanding of what will make consumers respond in a way that will achieve those objectives. Look to the winning behaviours at each Ladder Level to inspire your thinking.

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**PART 1.**

# **Introducing the Creative Effectiveness Ladder**

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## BACKGROUND

**In 2019, we spoke to dozens of marketing and advertising leaders, from all over the world, canvassing their views about the state of effectiveness. We sought to understand how our global community could better share what they'd learned with each other, for the sake of continuing to improve the effectiveness of creativity.**

**As an industry, we've spent decades writing effectiveness award papers and submitting them to the myriad competitions that recognise the commercial success of marketing's efforts. Together, these many thousands of examples surely allow us an incredible depth of understanding of what drives effectiveness and what doesn't.**

Yet as the evidence piles up, the value of marketing seems to be more in question than ever. The 2010's, a decade characterised by one of the longest and most stable periods of global economic growth in history, was paradoxically also a decade of ever-decreasing budgets being carved up into ever-smaller increments, fought over by struggling agencies playing jump ball for projects with slim-to-none margins.

Despite our considerable efforts as a marketing community, we appear to be no closer to convincing executive leadership to view marketing as a lucrative investment rather than a dubious cost – nor to embedding a formula of how to make creativity consistently effective.

Of course, one of creativity's most abiding allures is that it can't be bottled. Advertising built on award-worthy creative leaps has been shown again and again to be more effective. But the leaps themselves are a product not of formulae or algorithms, but of human imagination.

Even so, it's difficult not to conclude that our collective efforts to understand effectiveness haven't paid the kinds of dividends we'd expect.

The world produces a lot of very effective marketing. But, judging by the amount of campaigns that aren't entered into effectiveness awards, the vast majority still doesn't make that much of a difference. Even the most well-managed brands have occasional examples of brilliance among much larger pools of averagely performing campaigns.

So why have we been so ineffective at becoming more consistently effective?

An interesting insight emerged from our discussions with the industry's leaders. There was near-unanimous agreement that, although we prize effectiveness, we don't have what could be called a 'universal definition' of what it actually is.

When we say something's been 'effective', what do we mean? Do we mean it's driven sales up? Created a behavioural change? Built the brand's health? Had a positive return on investment?

Or do we mean it's been clicked on millions of times? Driven billions of earned media impressions? Been liked and shared by everyone it's come in contact with?

Most of us recoil at the latter. Of course it's not about likes and impressions!

But at the same time, we're suspicious that others think that it is.

We speculate that effectiveness awards are often given to campaigns that were popular, but didn't do much for sales. That it's 'all in how well the paper is written', and that winners are the result of charm or cronyism more than rigour and real results.

This doubt around how effectiveness is defined and measured dampens our willingness to accept effectiveness award winners as inarguable examples of best practice. And so, rather than accepting them and then learning from them, we argue about whether they're worth learning from at all.

Along with this lack of a universal definition of effectiveness is the corresponding lack of a 'shared language' that lets us communicate productively about how creativity works. We have 'words' – a nomenclature of metrics and so forth – but no codification that brings these words into a language that we can use fluently enough to be truly useful.

The participants in our research uniformly agreed with these insights, and the implication that, until we have such a universal definition and shared language, we will continue to struggle to learn from our best work and become more consistently effective.

And so we tasked ourselves with this challenge. How could we create a universal definition and shared language of effectiveness?

## THE CASE FOR A NEW EFFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK

Long ago at Leo Burnett, they'd wrestled with their own lack of definition and shared language – not of effectiveness, but of creativity. Agreeing on what great creativity was had become a difficult task in a sprawling global network with huge diversity in how people thought about and evaluated creativity.

And they'd invented a remarkable solution.

*“We developed a 10-point scale to look at work in a conceptual way,” said Michael Conrad, formerly Leo Burnett’s Chief Creative Officer and now President of the Berlin School of Creative Leadership. “Called ‘7plus’, it eliminated vague judgement and argumentation.”*

The 7plus scale was made up of 10 levels of creativity:

- 10 Most Inspiring in the World
- 9 New Standard in Communication
- 8 New Standard in Category
- 7 Excellence in Craft
- 6 Fresh Idea(s)
- 5 Innovative Strategy
- 4 Cliché
- 3 Non-competitive
- 2 Destructive
- 1 Appalling

*“1 to 4 is what we wanted to avoid,” said Michael. “8 to 10 is where we wanted to be. And 5 to 7 are qualities you need to have in order to avoid inferior work or to lay the tracks to superior work. We used 7plus to evaluate progress every three months by running a meeting looking at 1,000 to 1,200 pieces of work from all over the network. It did not take long until this practice moved from ‘post’ to ‘pre’. You could call it ‘Total Quality Management’ in the ideas business.”*

What this shared language enabled was both a far more productive conversation about creativity, and the ability to learn from the best to lift the average level of creativity in their network.

And it worked beautifully. Within the first five years of 7plus, 27 Leo Burnett agencies were named Agency of the Year in their countries at least once.

The success of Leo Burnett’s framework inspired others. Most notably Heineken, who developed their own version of the framework, which they called their ‘Creative Ladder’. Their language is slightly different – topping out at what they call ‘legendary’ work – but the concept is the same: to give some 1,500 global Heineken marketers a shared language of creativity, a universal definition of what ‘great’ looks like, and a way to manage continuous improvement up the ladder.

They, too, experienced the kind of success that Leo’s had driven with their framework. Heineken’s work became reliably more creative, and the company was crowned Cannes Lions’ Creative Marketer of the Year in 2015. Looking at these successes, the idea of a similar framework for effectiveness felt inevitable.

By codifying different types of effectiveness, then setting them in a hierarchy of least to most commercially impactful, could we replicate the successes of 7plus and the Creative Ladder in creating a universal definition and shared language of effectiveness?

## BREAKING DOWN EFFECTIVENESS

Any recent judge of an effectiveness awards competition will have noticed entries following a trend in how they present their results.

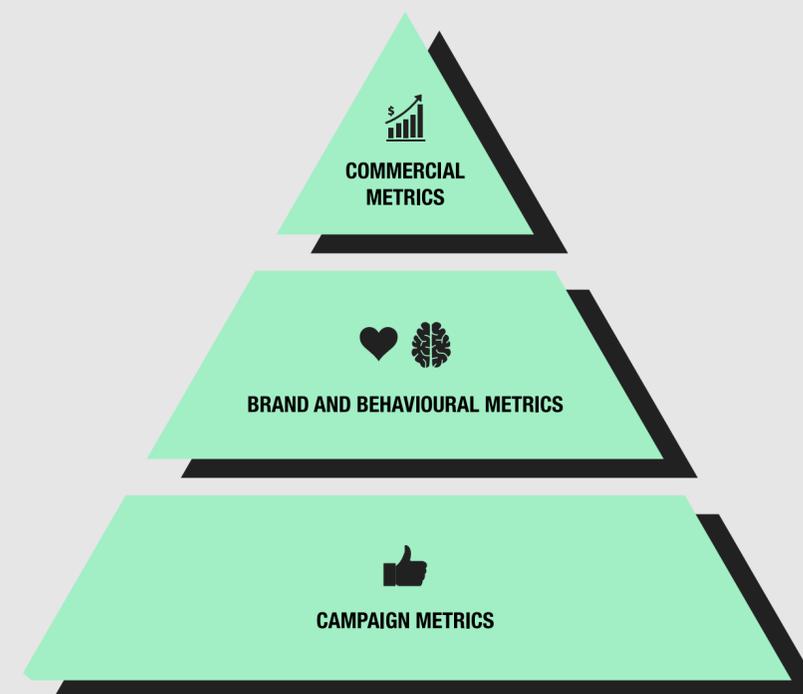
Using campaign tracking and media data, they'll first show that the work has performed well on 'campaign metrics' such as how well the campaign delivered its key messages or was recalled, how well liked and shared it was, and how much earned media attention it received. Essentially these are proof points that the campaign performed well against its media spend, gaining more than its fair share of attention. While these results don't yet point to any real commercial outcome, they're evidence that the brand has used creative excellence to maximise their bang for buck.

Secondly, they'll use brand tracking and behavioural data to show that the campaign has driven what we consider 'interim metrics' – brand health has improved, or consumers' purchase behaviour has changed as a result of the campaign. Again, these aren't direct evidence of a top or bottom line financial result, but they're accepted as important precursors to those commercial gains.

Lastly, they'll use sales and market share data to prove that the outcome of those interim results is a commercial uplift. They'll show that sales or market share has grown. That this has happened profitably for the client's brand. And that the return on the client's investment, in terms of incremental sales or profit, is more than the money spent on the campaign.

This way of presenting results is a neat encapsulation of how creativity works, when it works. First, it grabs attention. Then it changes the way people feel about and behave toward the brand. Finally this adds up to a sales result for the client's business.

This cascade of effects gives us a good place to start in terms of building a framework for effectiveness – campaign effects at the bottom, interim effects in the middle, commercial effects at the top. To add further granularity to that hierarchy, we analysed the winning papers from the Creative Effectiveness Lions and from WARC's considerable database of effectiveness case studies.



We focused specifically on commercial campaigns – the ones for for-profit companies seeking to drive sales of their products and services, rather than for charitable or public service campaigns. We did this because, although much can be learned from non-commercial creativity, the overwhelming majority of marketers work in for-profit companies, and are looking for learnings that will help them meet their commercial KPIs.

Our analysis revealed that it's most common for papers to show strong campaign results. Almost all papers have compelling campaign tracking outcomes.

Second most common was behavioural impact. Driving outcomes like trial or penetration appears to be an outcome closely related to a brand increasing its advertising presence and awareness.

Improving brand health – particularly consideration, preference and specific image attributes, appears more closely related to how good the strategy and creative work were, rather than being an outcome simply of presence. As you would expect, most effectiveness papers show some kind of sales result. But our analysis revealed that those sales results could be segmented into two broad groups.

The first is campaigns that created a temporary spike in sales. The campaign ran, sales went up, then the campaign finished, and sales went back down. The second group showed sustained sales results. Uplifts in sales or market share continued for more than just a quarter, holding up beyond the life of the campaign itself.

Like behavioural outcomes, sales spikes appear to correlate more with advertising presence and awareness. Whereas sustained sales effects are more a result of strategically strong creativity. And while sales spikes provide value to a business, sustained sales are obviously more desirable.

Finally, one thing we'd learned from global marketing leaders is that the work they aspire to most of all is work that builds the brand and sales over the long term. Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty, Snickers' You're Not You When You're Hungry and John Lewis' Christmas campaigns are all examples of iconic, versatile and enduring creative ideas that build on themselves with each new execution, accumulating greater results and ROI as they go. These are the high watermarks of effectiveness achievement, and so sit at the top of the framework that we're calling The Creative Effectiveness Ladder.



**One thing we'd learned from global marketing leaders is that the work they aspire to most of all is work that builds the brand and sales over the long term."**

The Creative Effectiveness Ladder identifies the six main types of effects that creative marketing produces, setting them in a hierarchy of levels from least to most commercially impactful.

**LEVEL 1  
INFLUENTIAL IDEA**

Influential Idea campaigns use creativity to maximise engagement and sharing, resulting in the campaign over-achieving on campaign metrics and media efficiency.

**LEVEL 2  
BEHAVIOUR BREAKTHROUGH**

Behaviour Breakthrough campaigns use creativity to change the purchase behaviour of customers – or to change other forms of behaviour relevant to the success of the brand.

**LEVEL 3  
SALES SPIKE**

Sales Spike campaigns use creativity to create short-term, temporary growth in sales, market share or profitability for a brand.

**LEVEL 4  
BRAND BUILDER**

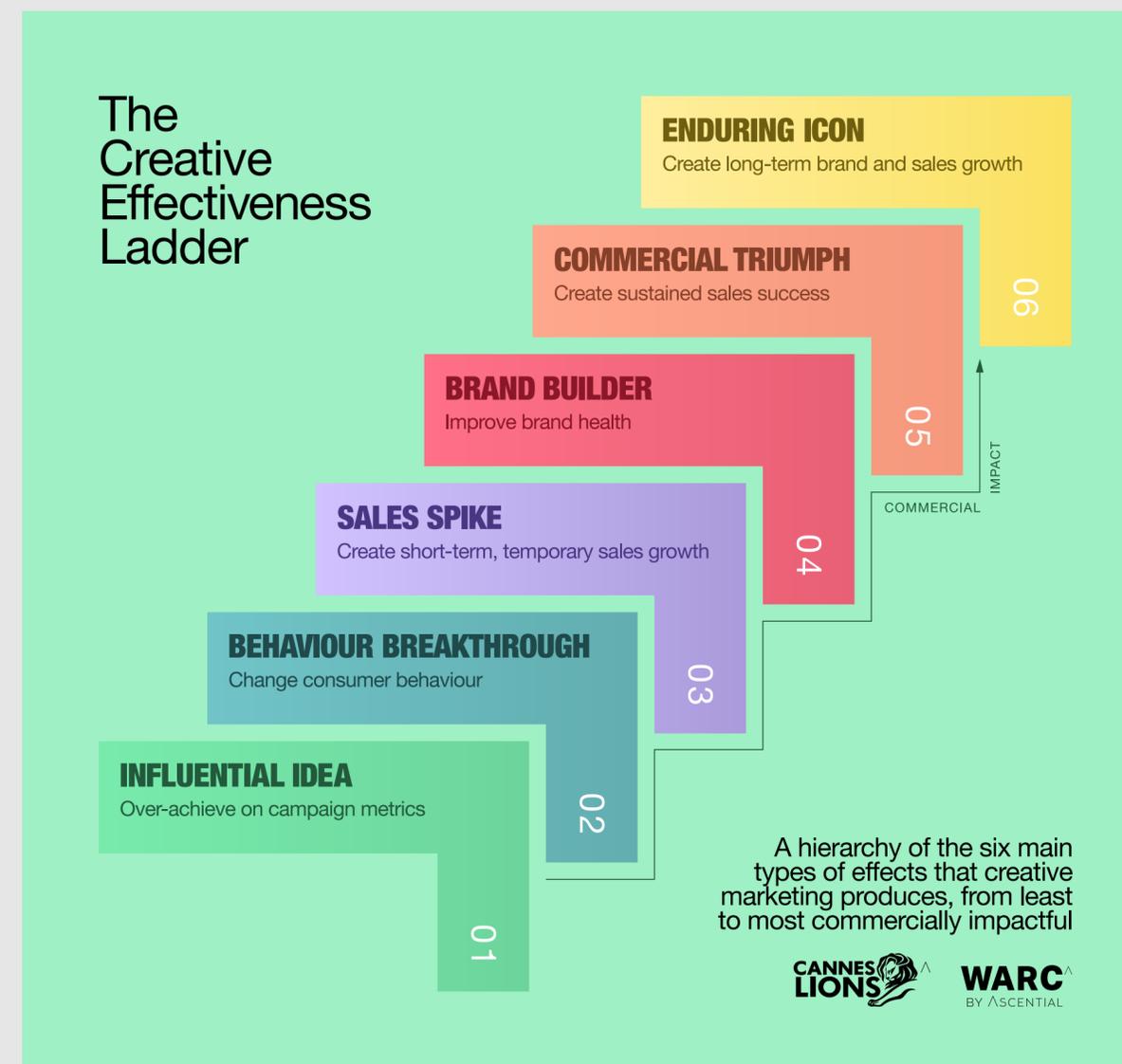
Brand Builder campaigns use creativity to improve the fundamental measures of brand health – including awareness, consideration, preference, purchase intent and image attribute ownership.

**LEVEL 5  
COMMERCIAL TRIUMPH**

Commercial Triumph campaigns use creativity to profitably increase sales and market share beyond a single quarter or beyond the duration of the campaign.

**LEVEL 6  
ENDURING ICON**

Enduring Icon campaigns use creativity to drive brand and sales growth consistently over a long period of three years or more. They stick with the same creative strategy or creative work throughout that period, creating sustained commercial outcomes.



## WHAT LEVEL SHOULD I BE AIMING FOR?

Campaigns at any level of the Ladder are effective in at least one sense – and valuable in some way to the client’s brand. But the commercial value of the effects increases at each level.

Generally speaking, we should be aiming to reach as high a point on the Ladder as possible.

However, in some cases, marketers will be working to achieve a specific outcome that relates to a lower level on the Ladder. For example, short-term sales activations will be explicitly intended to result in a Sales Spike and won’t be expected to build either the brand or long-term sales. Success of some brand-building efforts will not be contingent on an immediate commercial uplift. And in rare cases, marketers may only be looking to achieve a moment of fame for the brand, for which a great Level 1 result could be considered a success.

In a nutshell, you should be aiming for the Ladder level that matches the objective you’ve set for the campaign you’re embarking on.

Also worth noting is that campaigns can, and usually will, be able to show effects at at least two levels of the Ladder. Some will be able to show effects at every level. The levels are not mutually exclusive – rather the overall achievement of a campaign is indicated by the uppermost level that the campaign can prove results at.



**In a nutshell, you should be aiming for the Ladder level that matches the objective you’ve set for the campaign you’re embarking on."**

Why are we proposing  
The Creative Effectiveness  
Ladder and how do we  
envisage it being used?

WE HAVE DEVELOPED THE LADDER FOR A SINGLE PURPOSE:

To enable the marketing and advertising industry to more easily identify and learn from creative effectiveness best practice, so that they can more consistently produce highly effective creative campaigns and initiatives. Specifically, we envisage three key uses of the Ladder:

1. Identification of the very best creative work at each level and discovery of how to drive specific types of important marketing outcomes.

We have analysed the shortlist and winning campaigns from nine years of the Cannes Creative Effectiveness Lions, categorising their results according to the Ladder. This has enabled us to identify the key media and creative strategies that the world's best work uses to achieve results at each level – enabling new 'how to' guides to help agencies and marketers develop work that best meets their objectives. This white paper contains the first of these analyses and guides – and as the Creative Effectiveness Lions database grows, these analyses will become richer and more comprehensive.

2. A continuous improvement tool for agencies and client marketers.

What Leo Burnett and Heineken have shown with their respective creativity frameworks is that they can be highly effective as continuous improvement tools.

By collecting up our work and assessing it using the Ladder as a benchmark, we can understand where we are now, then look to the learnings from the world's most effective work to implement strategies to improve the effectiveness of our work in future. Our vision is for agencies and clients around the world to adopt the Ladder as an internal continuous improvement tool, developing their own proprietary analyses and best practice learnings to take into future marketing efforts.

3. A new way to judge the Creative Effectiveness Lions.

A key complaint about effectiveness awards is that they often use arbitrary judging criteria, rather than establishing a common criteria for effectiveness upfront. This can lead to apples not being compared with apples, and award results can consequently be met with scepticism from the industry. Effectiveness award scoring systems often allocate points to the creativity of the work or the quality of the strategy. Due to this, campaigns with a high degree of creative or strategic flair can win over less compelling papers that in fact have better business results.

From 2021 onwards, the Creative Effectiveness Lions will use The Creative Effectiveness Ladder as its judging and scoring criteria. Most points will be allocated to the magnitude of the results and the weight of evidence supporting them. This will make our judging even more robust and consistent, and more objectively aligned with sustained commercial outcomes.



# A client's view of how to build effective marketing practice.

by **Andrew Geoghegan**  
Global Consumer Planning Director  
Diageo PLC

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**Diageo has made real strides in building a culture of effectiveness across the 200 or so brands like Johnnie Walker, Smirnoff, Guinness, and Baileys which are enjoyed in over 180 countries worldwide.**

**In a world characterised by much short-termism, being able to demonstrate the impact of marketing investment is critical to secure creative commitment and on-going improvements in brand performance.**

**Transparency translates to investment – between 2016 and 2019 Diageo increased its total investment in marketing spend by over 30% or almost £500m. Importantly, this percentage increase was ahead of sales growth revealing the business's confidence in the short- and long-term effects of marketing on performance.**

**Diageo is becoming known in the industry for its commitment to marketing effectiveness. For example, being awarded the Simon Broadbent Prize for best dedication to effectiveness in the 2018 IPA Effectiveness Awards alongside prizes**

**for Guinness and Baileys. At Cannes Lions that year, our CMO Syl Saller and I spoke on 'Magic and measurement' – our belief that the two things are not in opposition but can be sympathetically integrated in marketing practice. The point of these things is that it forces us to step back, and create conversation on how our marketing is working, and what we want to improve.**

**To achieve a strong baseline, we've made some deliberate choices and learned important lessons on the way...**

## Foster Creativity

One of the most alluring things about creativity is that it can't be bottled and relies on big leaps of faith.

With the right talent, capability, and ways of working you can however give yourself the best chance of making these leaps more often. To do this we build our marketers' capability through coaching and an on-going programme called Creative Sparks.

The content was developed in partnership with our best marketers and agency partners around the five areas in which we saw the biggest opportunity:

- Powering media with creativity
- Powerful insights
- Brilliant briefs and briefings
- Nurturing ideas
- Measurement to unlock magic

Using case studies and best practice tools, we provoke our marketers to think about how to work most effectively with our agencies, to approach creativity with patience and belief, and to celebrate and learn from mistakes.

We combine this with a programme of external inspiration inviting experts and other brands to share their experiences.

## Commit to Measurement

It's clear looking at the Effectiveness Ladder and case studies therein that a business needs to have a mature approach to measurement. The examples at the top of the Ladder show that measurement has played a role not only in quantifying the commercial impact of the work but in providing learning that has enabled brands to build and nurture ideas, improving their impact year on year.

At Diageo, we use the least amount of the most powerful research to seek to improve the impact of creative, rather than purely to evaluate. Using a learning plan to frame the most important questions helps us use consumer input sensitively where it can add most value.

In addition, we have developed a system called Marketing Catalyst which is powered by analytics on over 350 brands at country level across 60 markets covering about 90% of our marketing spend. It enables our marketers to make more profitable future decisions about the full mix of communications on their brand. Marketers are able to understand the short and long-term profit outcomes of different choices – the budget, the number and mix of channels they use, and the weight and duration of each for a specific campaign or initiative. It allows us to build the business's confidence in the incremental profit we get from investment in marketing. In essence, it is a systematic approach to the other elements identified in the paper which make up Creative Commitment.

Though our business is complex enough to merit an approach built on technology, the same can be achieved with the right KPIs, and ensuring the right information is included in key decisions.

## Embrace the Effectiveness Ladder

The Effectiveness Ladder will now enable us to talk holistically and objectively about our marketing campaigns, identify future opportunities, and encourage teams to elevate more of our work to the top rung. It will be especially useful at those important moments when we take a step back to take stock and plan the future.

Guinness is one of our brands that we are proud to consider as having reached the top of the Ladder, built on an enduring insight, with a flexible idea, executed across multiple channels. The key has been the courage to stick with it, never losing sight of the long-term ambition.

When we started to create from our new strategy in 2011, we were largely still focused on TV and our first two films 'Cloud' and 'Clock' showed us the need for more humanity and communion in delivering our idea. We stuck with the strategy and incorporated those learnings into Sapeurs which won over 35 awards and seven Cannes Lions in 2014.

Understanding the DNA of our idea, expressed as celebrating those with the confidence to carve their own path, fuelled future stories of real people (Gareth Hammond 2015, the Compton Cowboys 2017), and enabled us to cross into culture with Gareth Thomas (Cannes Lions Glass Gold 2016), and most recently into Rugby sponsorship and also responsible drinking with Guinness Clear (Cannes Gold 2019). At each point we took stock of our learning, how the opportunities and challenges the brand faced were evolving, and remained open to the kind of fresh creative ideas we often see lower down the Ladder.

Our communications model is now built on a limitless idea fit for multiple media types, building brand purpose, getting pints in hand on key consumption moments, and promoting responsible drinking. We've moved up the Ladder by having patience and humility, a no-fault learning mindset, being bold, and being open – to data, judgement, and creativity.

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**PART 2.**

# **Ladder Level Analysis**

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## INTRODUCTION

To develop our key learnings for how to drive results at each level of The Creative Effectiveness Ladder, we've categorised the results of 120 shortlist and winning Creative Effectiveness Lions campaigns from 2011-2019. This group represents all 120 of the commercial shortlist and winning cases – campaigns for for-profit organisations with an ultimate objective of driving sales, market share or profit growth.

We compared these against the 3,616 general effectiveness award papers\* in the WARC database from 2011-2019 – in order to identify defining characteristics at each Ladder level.

We then carried out two pieces of analysis.

### 1. QUANTITATIVE

We've compared the lead media and creative strategy data to reveal the media and strategy choices that create an effectiveness advantage at each level of the Ladder.

### 2. QUALITATIVE

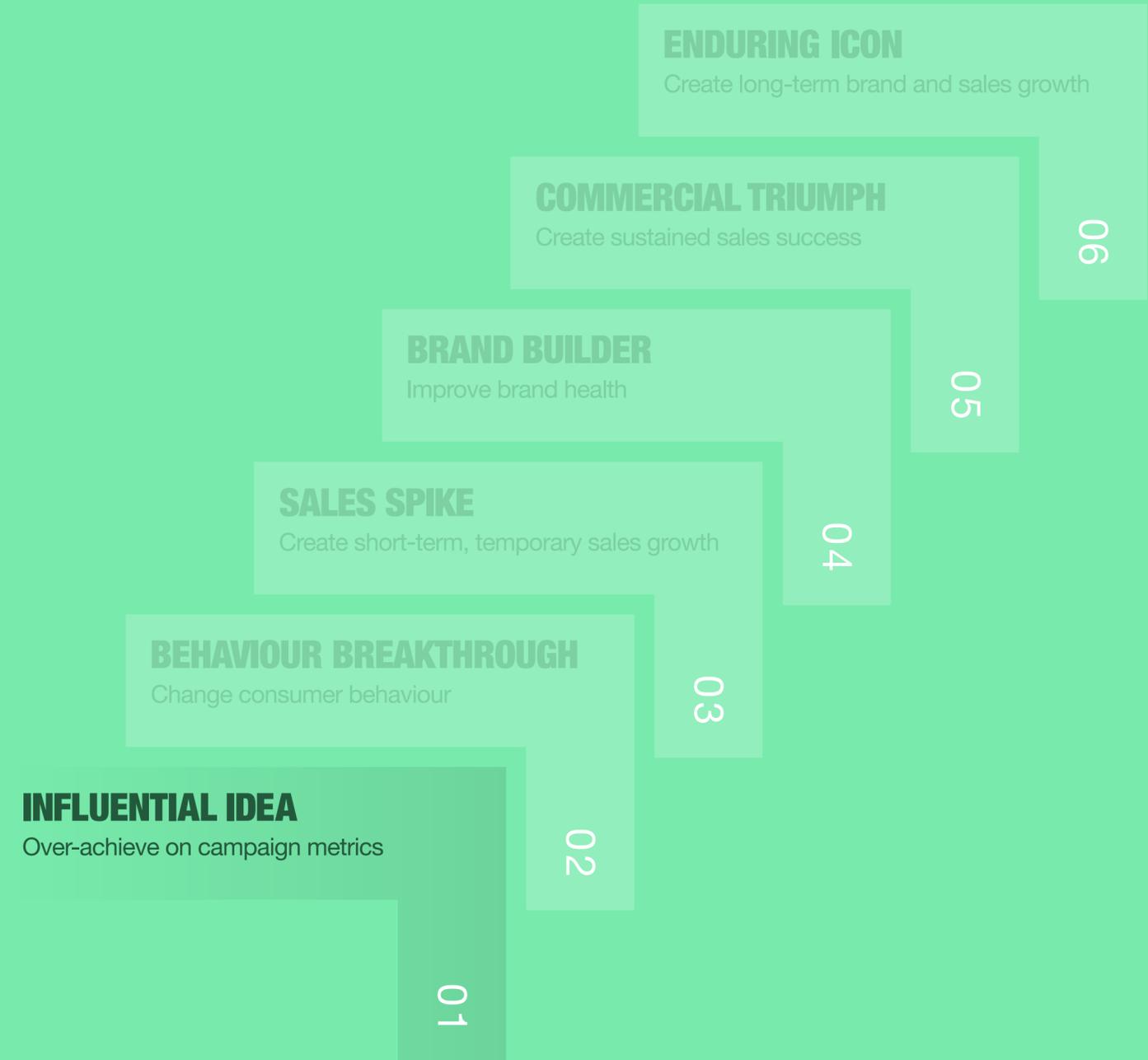
We've analysed the strategy and creative work of the Creative Effectiveness Lions cases to reveal the commonalities among cases that have achieved at each level.

Together these give us an indication of the types of strategic, creative and media choices that are 'winning behaviours' when planning toward achieving the objectives particular to that Ladder level. The winning behaviours identified in this paper are not exhaustive – they're intended as a starting point, which will be built upon in future analyses.

\*To avoid biasing our analyses toward particular media, we've used cases from general effectiveness competitions such as Effies or IPA Effectiveness Awards, as opposed to media-specific effectiveness competitions such as DBA Design Effectiveness Awards or Mobile Marketing Association Smarties Awards.

LEVEL 1.

# Influential Idea



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## INFLUENTIAL IDEAS OVER-ACHIEVE ON CAMPAIGN METRICS

**Influential Idea campaigns use creativity to maximise engagement and sharing, resulting in the campaign over-achieving on campaign metrics and media efficiency.**

**The ‘buzz’ created by Influential Idea campaigns is what defines their success from an effectiveness point of view. In our analysis, we’ve studied winners of the Creative Effectiveness Lions – all of which achieved a shortlist or better at a prior Cannes Lions creative category – and a majority (74%) achieved Influential Idea results.**

**As has been proven in the past, creatively awarded campaigns are much more likely to drive fame effects – the qualities that creative judges look for (highly original and engaging ideas) are the same qualities that tend to make campaigns ‘worth sharing and talking about’.**

**Within this, we can see some clear trends in terms of how Influential Idea campaigns differ from campaigns in general in terms of lead media and creative strategies.**

**To achieve at this level, campaigns need to track and measure campaign-level metrics such as:**

- **Campaign recall – Prompted or unprompted campaign mentions**
- **Social shares – Number of times the campaign was shared online**
- **Earned impressions – Unpaid reach via media stories and online shares**
- **Earned media value – Total media value of unpaid impressions and shares**

**Campaign metrics can normally be assessed after a relatively short period – within three months of the campaign being in market.**

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**WHEN WE SHOULD BE STRIVING FOR INFLUENTIAL IDEA RESULTS AS AN END IN ITSELF:**

**Influential Idea results are normally redundant on their own – that is, most campaigns should be striving for more than simply a lot of buzz. In saying this, marketers can sometimes be shooting to create cultural impact, assuming that this will bolster the success of future efforts for the brand and business. In this case, very good Influential Idea results may suffice. Our guidance however is that marketers should still be measuring the brand and business results of such campaigns.**

**WHEN WE SHOULD BE USING INFLUENTIAL IDEA AS A STEPPING STONE TO HIGHER LEVELS OF THE LADDER:**

**In nearly all cases we should be shooting for and celebrating strong Influential Idea results, but using these as a way to increase the reach and engagement of a campaign that ultimately strives for brand or business outcomes.**

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## WINNING BEHAVIOURS FOR DEVELOPING CAMPAIGNS WITH INFLUENTIAL IDEA RESULTS

**Analysing Influential Idea campaigns to discover principles for developing them is rather like trying to analyse creativity itself – and often comes down to doing things that are highly original, deeply engaging, and executed perfectly.**

**Which are, of course, the things that all creative people set out to do every time they begin work on a brief. Many of the best examples are simply just cracking ideas of genuine creative brilliance. But there are also a few themes that run through many of the most Influential Ideas, suggesting strategies we can employ to create fame and cultural impact.**

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1.

# **Act in a way that's the opposite of how big companies normally act.**

**Breaking the law, suggesting a cease-fire with your biggest competitor, temporarily changing your brand name, or betting the company on whether the national football team makes it to the World Cup final – these are all so surprising and share-worthy because they fly in the face of how we expect large companies to act. They create a sense of risk and jeopardy by sacrificing corporate sacred cows in order to genuinely engage consumers.**



**CARREFOUR:  
THE BLACK  
SUPERMARKET**

Broke the law to change the law; drove 377M earned impressions.



**MCDONALD'S:  
AUSTRALIA DAY**

Changed its name to Macca's for Australia's national day; became the most talked about brand in Australia for the month.



**BURGER KING:  
THE MCWHOPPER  
PROPOSAL**

Challenged McDonald's to a ceasefire for Peace Day; drove 44% awareness and \$108M in earned media value.

**THE ALL-IN PROMO**  
THE BET THAT TURNED THE NOBLEX CEO INTO A NATIONAL MEME.

WITH ONLY 2 PAID TWEETS:

- ONLINE TV STOCK: SOLD OUT \$11M BILLED (B2C)
- MOST MENTIONED BRAND ON TWITTER IN ARGENTINA, 2017
- IMPRESSIONS: 406MM
- \$13.017.126 EARN MEDIA

TOTAL ORGANIC REACH **+57.000.000**

SPONSOR WITH MOST INTERACTIONS IN 2017 (OTHER SPONSORS LIKE NIKE AND COCA COLA)

**NOBLEX**  
Official Supplier of the Argentine National Team

**NOBEX:  
THE ALL-IN PROMO**

Bet \$11M worth of sales on whether the national football team won; reached 57M people organically

---

2.

# **Capitalise on a major media or cultural moment.**

**A brand injecting itself relevantly into a conversation that's already big news is a powerful tactic for gaining media and social attention. Trump's penchants for xenophobia and 'alternative facts' set a brilliant stage for AeroMexico and the New York Times. Steinlager's wily insertion of their product into the Heineken-sponsored Rugby World Cup tapped deep emotion during an important period for New Zealanders. And Oreo gave themselves 100 opportunities to execute this strategy with 'Daily Twist'.**



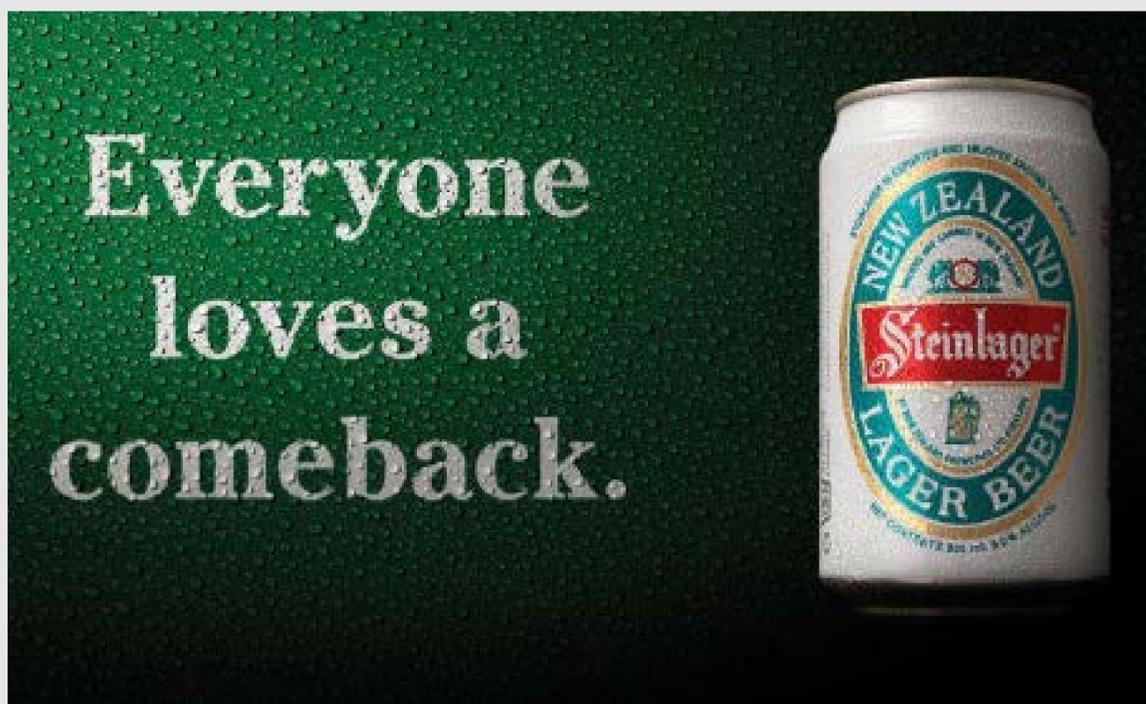
**AEROMEXICO:  
DNA DISCOUNTS**

Shown Americans how Mexican they were; created 1.6B impressions on zero media spend.



**THE NEW YORK  
TIMES: THE TRUTH  
IS HARD**

Championed truth in a post-truth America; generated 5B earned impressions.



**STEINLAGER:  
BELIEVE**

Beer-bombed Heineken's Rugby World Cup; earned media reached more than the entire population of New Zealand.



**OREO:  
DAILY TWIST**

Provided daily social commentary for 100 days; earned 2M impressions per day.

---

3.

# **Take the side of the consumer and fight against injustice.**

**Dove, Ariel and American Greetings have found extraordinary creative means of fighting against the many ways the world is a more challenging place for girls and women. And with Small Business Saturday, American Express created a sensational way to get behind smaller business customers. Although the data shows that angry activism can create an effectiveness disadvantage when used as a strategy, these examples show how creativity can give soft power to cause-related marketing – delighting and inspiring consumers rather than scolding them.**



**ALWAYS: #LIKEAGIRL**  
 Reframed the stereotype; became the most watched online video in P&G's history.



**DOVE: REAL BEAUTY SKETCHES**  
 Breathed fresh life into the Campaign for Real Beauty; became the most watched online ad ever.



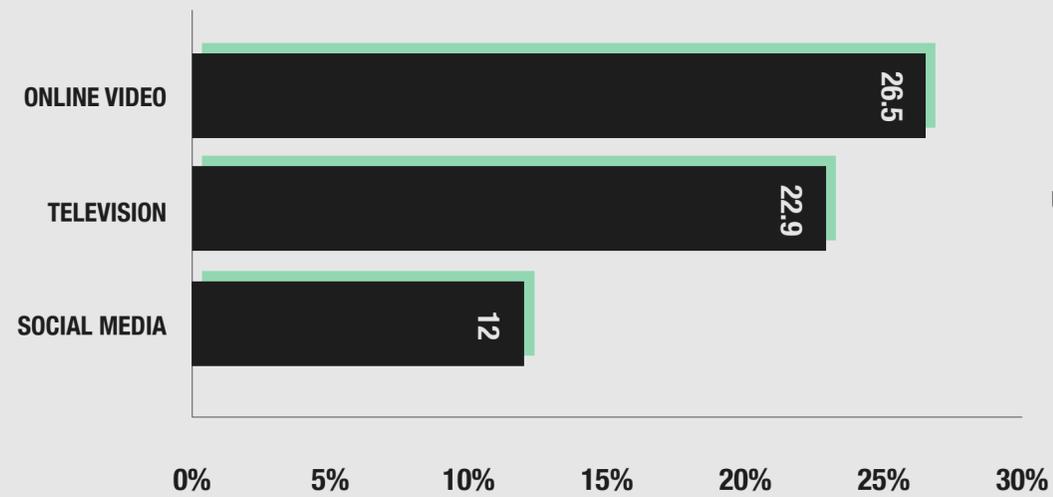
**AMERICAN GREETINGS: WORLD'S TOUGHEST JOB**  
 Showed what it's really like for Mums; drove 21M views with a tiny media spend.



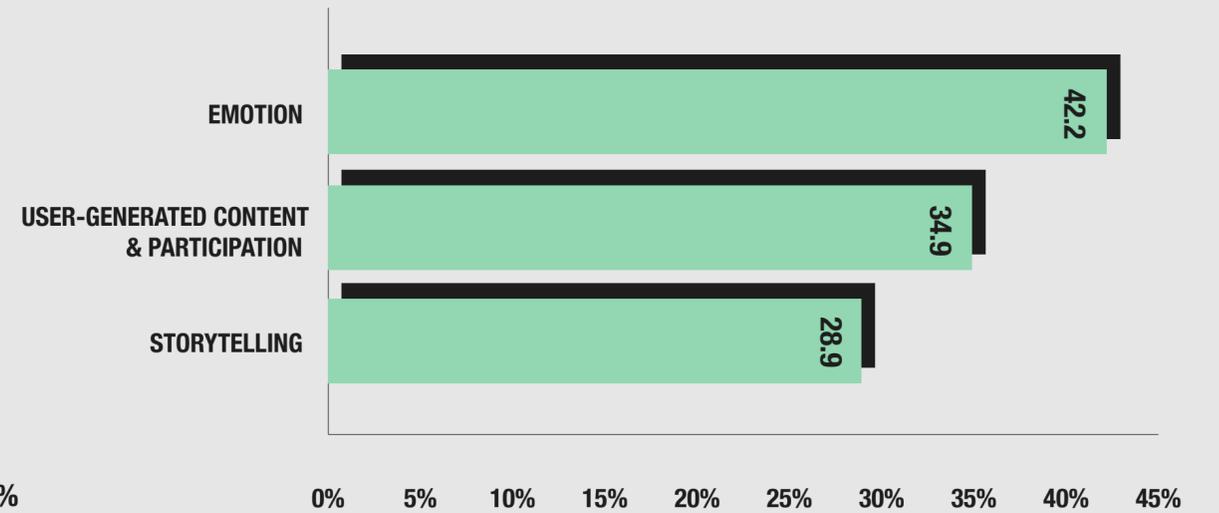
**AMERICAN EXPRESS: SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY**  
 Stood up to Amazon and Walmart; drove awareness among 51% of Americans.

Lead media and creative strategies most effective in creating Influential Idea results:

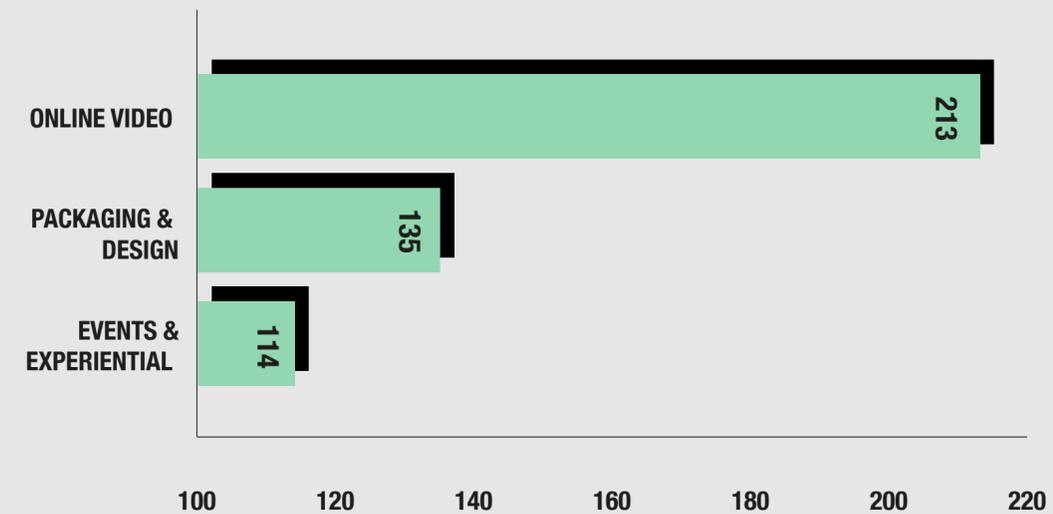
MOST COMMON LEAD MEDIA



MOST COMMON CREATIVE STRATEGIES



LEAD MEDIA THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS

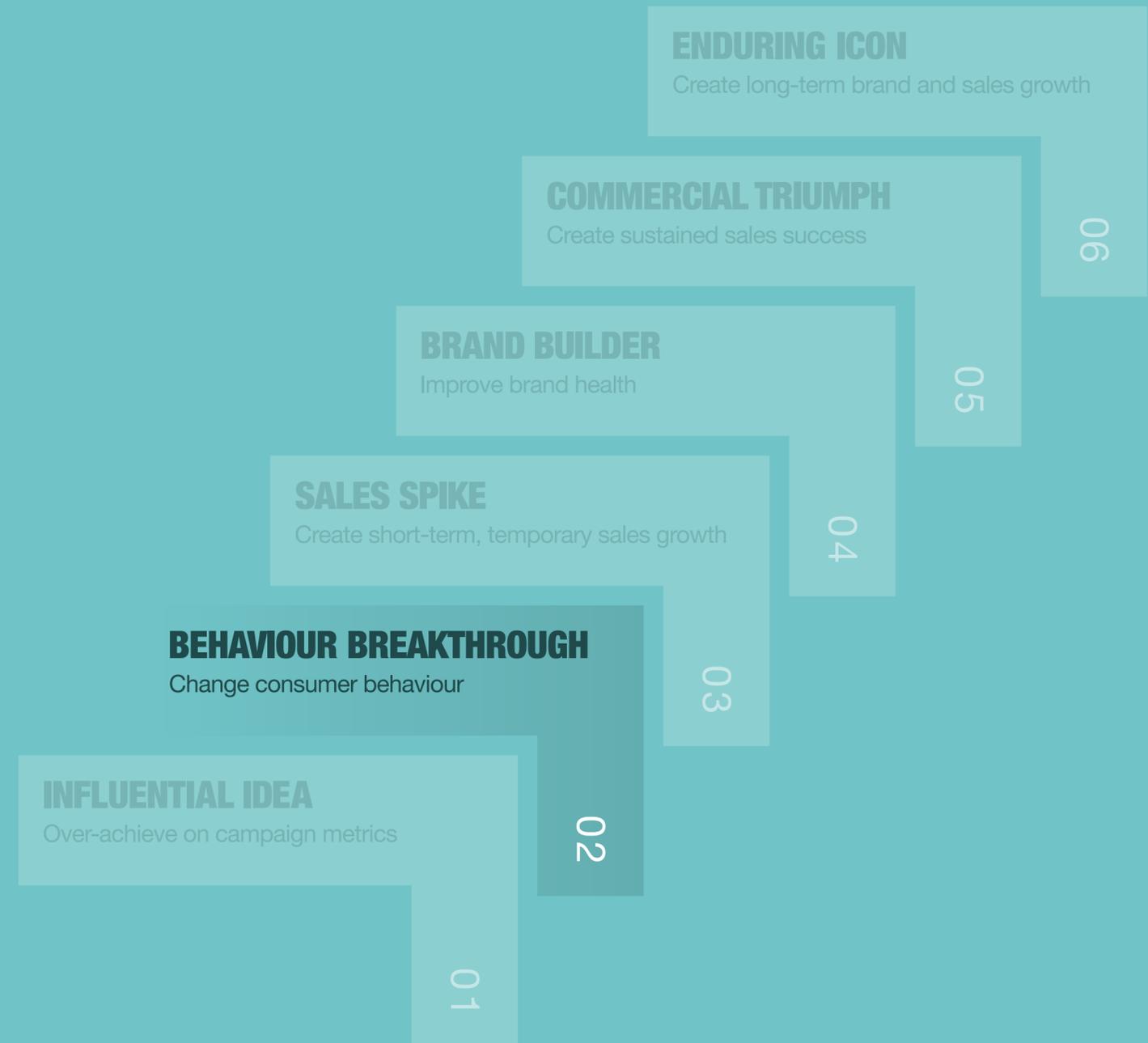


CREATIVE STRATEGIES THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS



LEVEL 2.

# Behaviour Breakthrough



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## BEHAVIOUR BREAKTHROUGHS CHANGE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

**Behaviour Breakthrough campaigns use creativity to change the purchase behaviour of customers – or to change other forms of behaviour relevant to the success of the brand.**

**Getting consumers to behave the right way is a crucial pre-cursor to driving sales up. Behaviour change, and applying the academic learnings of behavioural economics, has consequently become a major focus of marketers. Our analysis reveals a host of interesting ways that marketers can ‘nudge’ consumers in the right direction and reward them for their behaviour with novel emotional and rational incentives.**

**To achieve at this level, campaigns need to track and measure behavioural metrics such as:**

- **Penetration – The percentage of people or households buying the product or service**
- **Frequency / weight of purchase – How often consumers purchase, or how much they purchase each time**
- **Loyalty – How readily consumers favour the brand and repurchase**
- **Trial – The rate at which people try the product for the first time**

**Behavioural metrics can normally be assessed after a relatively short period – within three months of the campaign being in market. However, longer periods of measurement may yield additional learnings.**

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**WHEN WE SHOULD BE STRIVING FOR BEHAVIOUR  
BREAKTHROUGH RESULTS AS AN END IN ITSELF:**

**Behavioural outcomes are often very closely linked to commercial results. As long as we're not cannibalising our own business, increases in purchase behaviours such as penetration or frequency of purchase usually lead directly to sales growth. In some cases however, behaviour change can be an end in itself – particularly for government or not-for-profit marketers. Our guidance is, even in these cases, to do our best to understand and measure the financial implications of behaviour change as a way to validate marketing's contribution.**

**WHEN WE SHOULD BE USING BEHAVIOUR BREAKTHROUGH  
AS A STEPPING STONE TO HIGHER LEVELS OF THE LADDER:**

**In most cases there's a clear line of sight between behaviour change and sales growth. We should be working to isolate the areas of the business that are affected by the behaviour change and measure the impact on sales, market share or profitability of that change.**

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**WINNING BEHAVIOURS FOR DEVELOPING CAMPAIGNS WITH BEHAVIOUR  
BREAKTHROUGH RESULTS:**

**Our analysis suggests that there's a relatively reliable step-by-step process that marketers and agencies can use to set themselves up for behaviour change success. It comes down to being clear and single-minded about the behaviour you're setting out to change, developing creative work that targets that behaviour change very tightly, then incentivising the change with either traditional or novel incentives.**

---

1.

# **Set a clear behavioural goal.**

**Behaviour change begins with identifying a current behaviour that's holding the business back and a corresponding goal to change that behaviour. The trick is being clear and singular. OPSM knew that parents getting their kids' eyes checked led to sales. Gillette knew that as long as stubble was fashionable, sales would be depressed. Aeromexico knew that empty planes flying back from the US to Mexico meant low profitability. A single, lucid behavioural objective makes for a strong brief.**



**OPSM:  
PENNY THE PIRATE**

Mums weren't bringing their kids for eye tests as it was inconvenient; 126,000 parents tested their childrens' eyes with Penny the Pirate.



**GILLETTE: WOMEN  
AGAINST LAZY  
STUBBLE**

Breathed fresh life Guys had stopped shaving as wearing stubble had become fashionable; penetration tripled.



**STATE STREET  
GLOBAL ADVISORS:  
FEARLESS GIRL**

Boards weren't appointing women as they went unchallenged; 152 companies added a female director.



**AEROMEXICO: DNA  
DISCOUNTS**

Planes were full from Mexico to the US, and empty on the way back, as the non-favourable rating for Mexico was so high; 321% increase in searches for vacations to Mexico.

---

2.

# **Orient the creative idea around a clear behavioural outcome.**

**In studying behaviour change campaigns, one thing that stands out is how many of them simply ask for the behaviour change in the campaign tagline. It seems almost too obvious – but Coke were as clear with their drinkers that they wanted them to ‘Share a Coke’ as Ariel were telling Indian Dads to ‘Share the Load’. Expedia told Brits and the French to ‘travel themselves interesting’ and Pedigree issued a clear directive to aging parents: ‘when your kids leave home, replace them.’**

**Share a Coke**  
with  
name here.

**Brief:**  
Coca-Cola wanted to create a campaign that would connect with consumers on a personal level. The goal was to create a campaign that would be as personal as the consumer's name.

**Solution:**  
Coca-Cola created a campaign that would be as personal as the consumer's name. The campaign was designed to be a personal experience for the consumer.

**The results:**  
The campaign was a success. It was the most successful campaign in the history of Coca-Cola.

Tom Harry Dick Ben

**COCA-COLA:  
SHARE A COKE**

...and millions around the world have now done so.



**ARIEL:  
SHARE THE LOAD**

...and more than 1.5M Indian men pledged to do so.

**TRAVEL YOURSELF INTERESTING**

**EXPEDIA:  
TRAVEL YOURSELF INTERESTING**

...and millions more booked their travel through Expedia.

**Pedigree**  
Feed the good™

**PEDIGREE®**  
CHILD REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

**PEDIGREE: WHEN YOUR KIDS LEAVE HOME, REPLACE THEM**

...and dog adoption enquiries grew 824%.

---

3.

# **Make the new behaviour more attractive.**

**While getting people to think or feel differently about a brand can't be incentivised, getting them to behave differently can be. Incentives can be as traditional as a discount, or as progressive as changing the insurance model to pay people to take action that will make future claims less likely. Or enabling people to vote in order to bring them in-store. Or making a washing powder targeted at lazy men.**



**NRMA: SAFETY HUB**

**Paid people to do the things that avoid disaster in the first place; spent \$63K to avert \$870K of claims.**



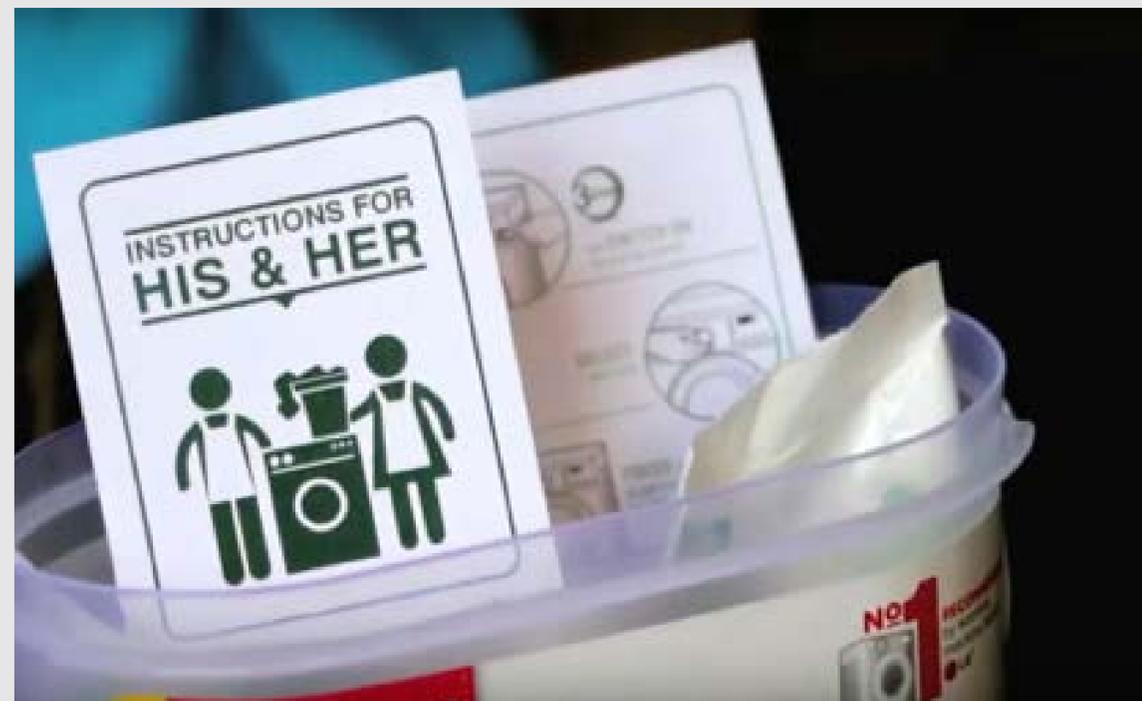
**BOOST: BOOST YOUR VOICE**

**Used their stores as US election voting stations in under-served communities; saw a 29% lift in new and returning customers.**



**TESCO: UNFORGETTABLE BAG**

**Created a re-usable bag that could be scanned at checkout to take 20c off their total bill; grew their bag re-use rate from 5% to 68%.**

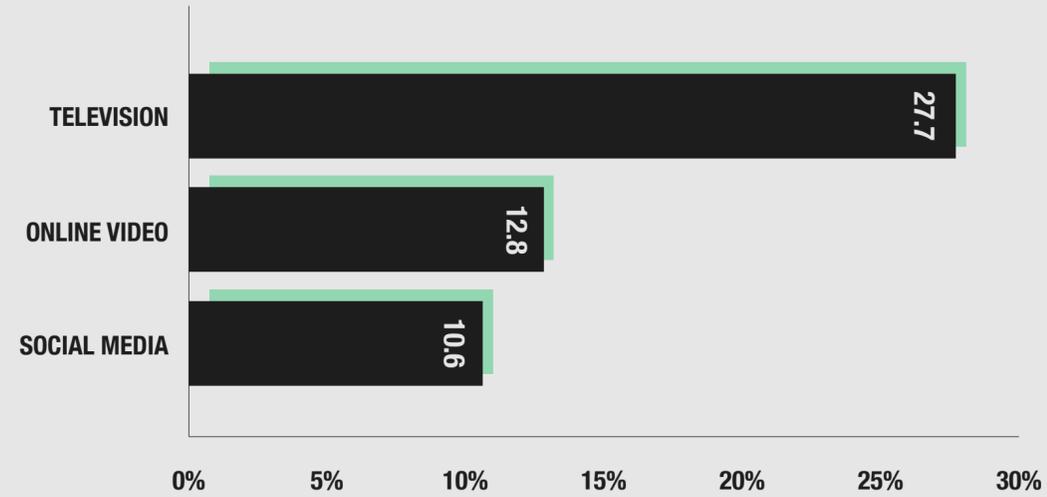


**ARIEL: SHARE THE LOAD**

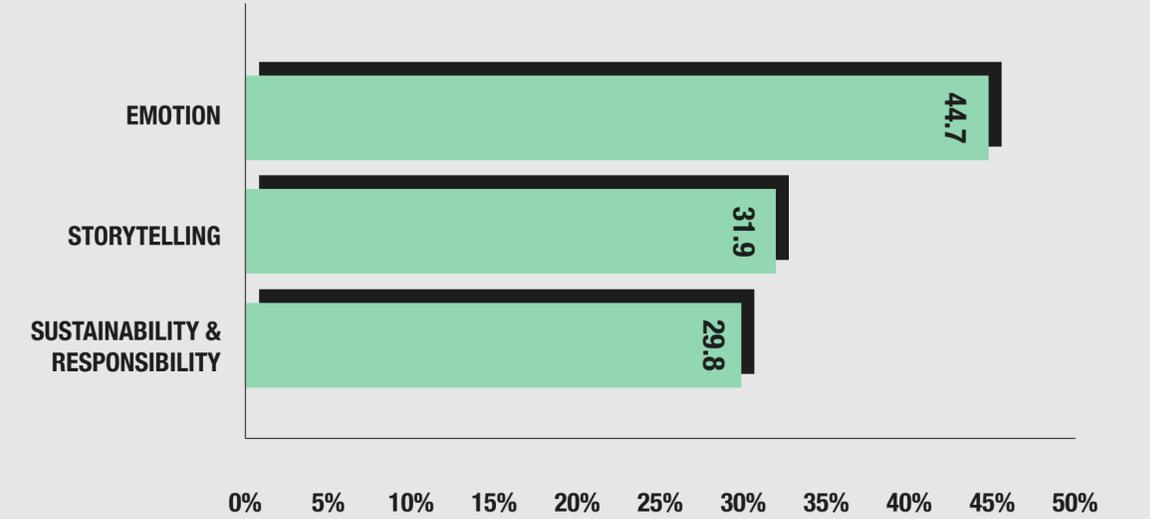
**A pack with a calendar that helped divide the laundry task between Dads and Mums created an in-home experience that incentivised Dads to start sharing the load; a further 2.1M Dads pledged to #sharetheload.**

Lead media and creative strategies most effective in creating Behaviour Breakthrough Idea results:

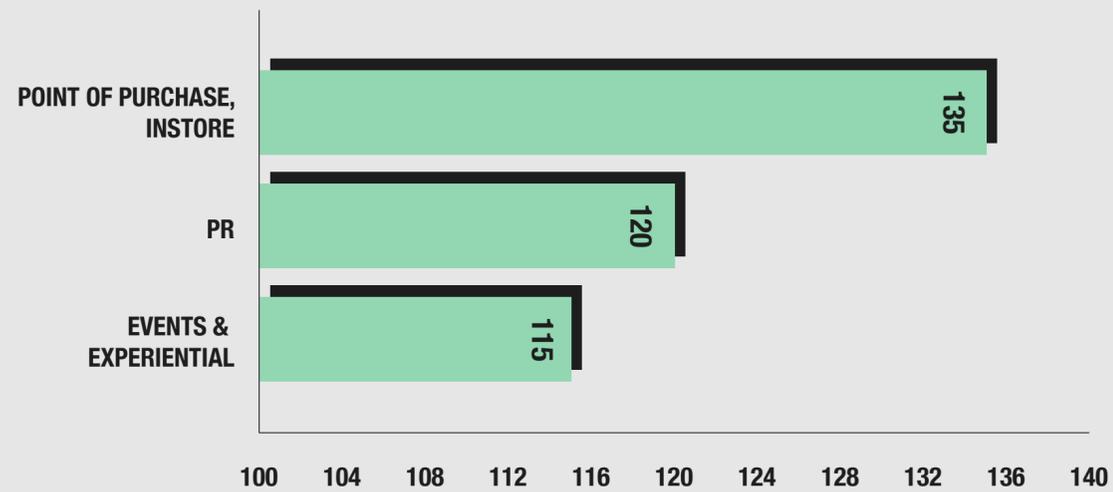
MOST COMMON LEAD MEDIA



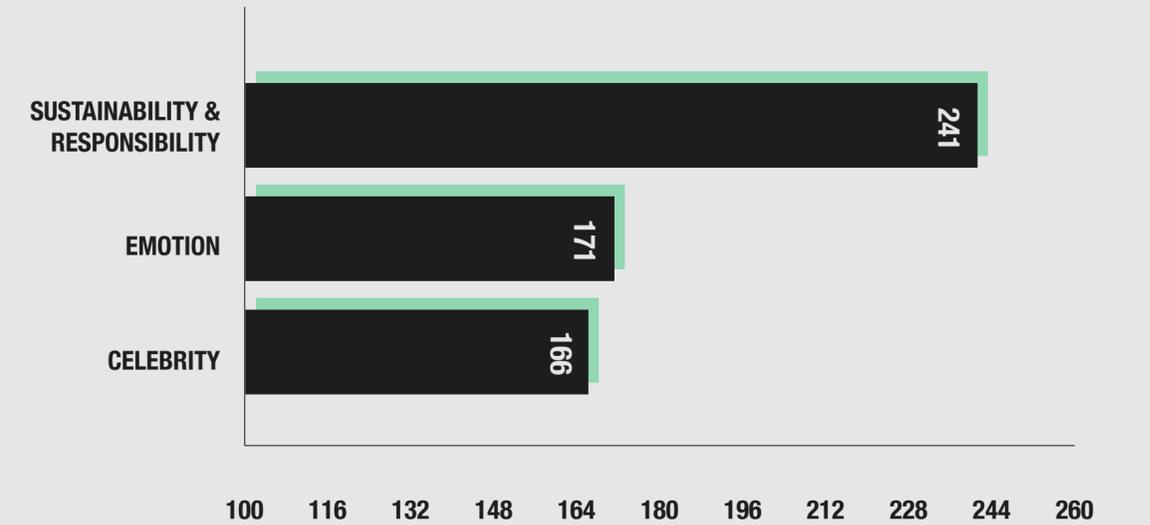
MOST COMMON CREATIVE STRATEGIES



LEAD MEDIA THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS

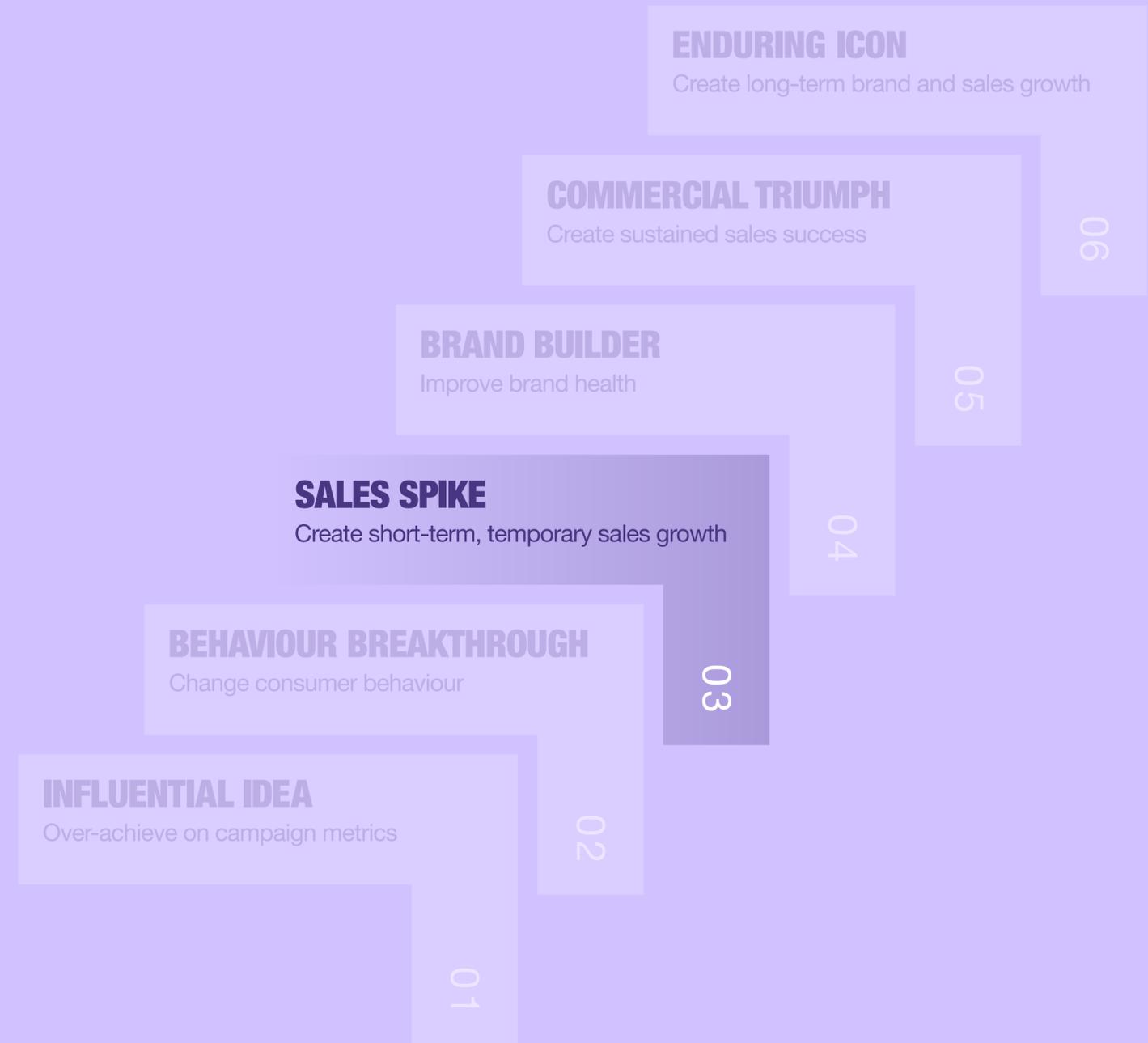


CREATIVE STRATEGIES THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS



LEVEL 3.

# Sales Spike



## SALE SPIKES CREATE SHORT-TERM, TEMPORARY SALES GROWTH

**Sales Spike campaigns use creativity to create short-term, temporary growth in sales, market share or profitability for a brand.**

**Across the last decade, we've seen substantial growth in campaigns seeking to achieve short-term and temporary sales effects. Sometimes this is because the marketing objective is intentionally a short-term one. Sales promotions and direct marketing campaigns remain important parts of the marketing mix for most brands. However, we're also seeing a pernicious trend toward short-termism due to budgets being fragmented or constrained, or to satisfy marketers' need to meet quarterly reporting cycles.**

**We believe the tendency toward these campaigns is an unhealthy one. Although Sales Spike campaigns can often shine brightly and feel as if they're building brands and growing business, the data suggests that this isn't usually the case.**

**Our guidance to marketers is to use short-term campaigns tactically and intelligently, but to ensure your overall mix is weighted toward longer-term brand building and sales-sustaining initiatives.**

**To achieve at this level, campaigns need to track and measure the short-term performance of sales metrics such as:**

- **Sales — Sales value and volume measured over the campaign period**
- **Market Share — Value and volume share measured over the campaign period**
- **ROI — Return on Investment – the value of incremental sales, divided by the total marketing spend.**

**Short-term sales metrics should be assessed after a relatively short period – within three months of the campaign being in market.**

\*From 2010-2014, 25% of effectiveness cases were short-term campaigns running for under three months. From 2015-2019 this percentage grew to 34%.

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**WHEN WE SHOULD BE STRIVING FOR SALES SPIKE RESULTS AS AN END IN ITSELF:**

**When we're setting out explicitly to drive a short-term and temporary commercial result – such as during a discrete promotional period that the brand needs to 'win', or during the support of a short-term partnership such as a sponsorship.**

**WHEN WE SHOULD BE USING SALES SPIKE AS A STEPPING STONE TO HIGHER LEVELS OF THE LADDER:**

**Most of the time. Campaigns don't necessarily need to run for long durations to deliver sustained results. Even in the case of short-term campaigns, we should be working to understand the residual effects of those efforts. Did incremental sales continue to happen after the campaign ended? Is there another way we can show a longer-term benefit to the business that our short-term campaign set a foundation for?**

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**WINNING BEHAVIOURS FOR DEVELOPING CAMPAIGNS WITH SALES SPIKE RESULTS:**

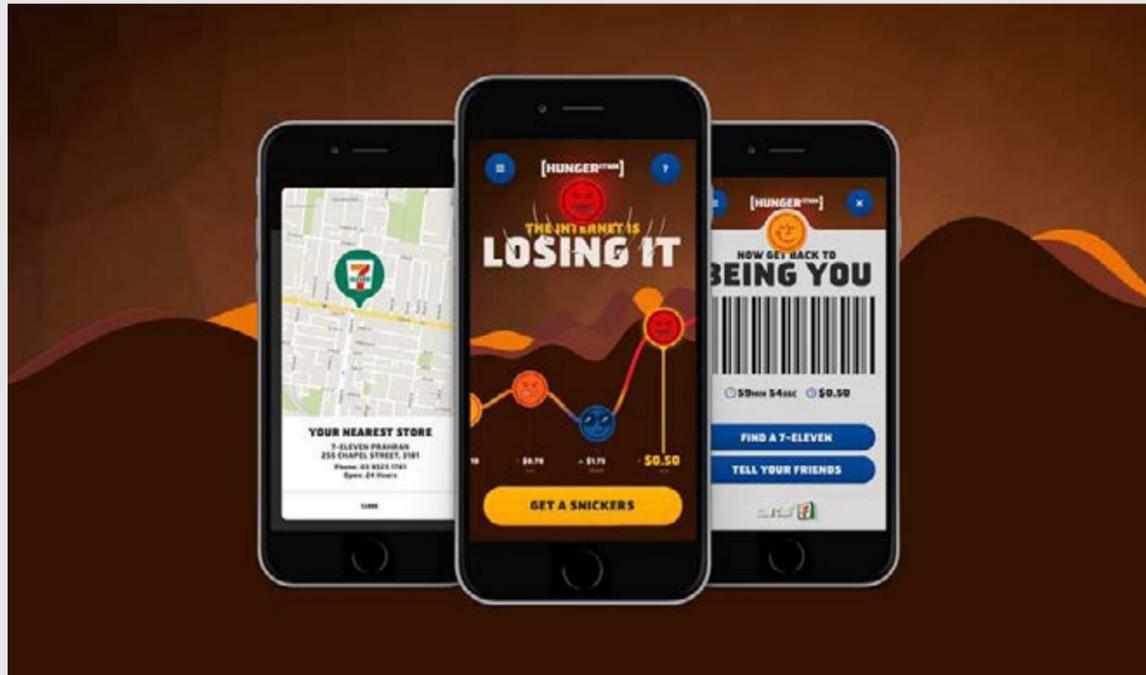
**Overall, tactical campaigns with very short durations and small budgets tend to do poorly when judged on effectiveness. Just 51% of those campaigns converted to effectiveness award wins when entered. By comparison, 85% of the creatively-awarded campaigns of very short duration and small budget converted to wins. This suggests that the highly creative use of sales promotions and other tactical marketing makes for bigger results when we're looking to the short term.**

---

1.

# **Use creativity to make sales promotions mega-engaging.**

**Sales promotions, incentivising customers to ‘buy now’, have long been the go-to vehicle for marketers looking to quickly capture short-term sales bumps. While most of these remain simple price reductions, gifts with purchase, direct marketing offers or win promotions, the Creative Effectiveness Lions history shows how creativity can be used to deliver promotions that engage consumers in much more exciting ways, positioning the brand as innovative, and creating a memorable experience for consumers.**



**SNICKERS:  
HUNGERITHM**

Created a bespoke pricing algorithm that dropped the price of Snickers bars as the internet got hangrier; drove a 67% year-on-year increase during the promotional period.

**NOBLEX:  
ALL-IN PROMO**

Offered those who bought a Noblex TV a full refund if Argentina failed to qualify for the World Cup; sold out of 5,000 TVs.



**TUI:  
CATCH A MILLION**

Offered \$100,000 to any cricket spectator who could catch a clean one-handed six while wearing a Tui t-shirt; best sales and share in two years.



**MEDIA MARKT:  
RABBIT RACE**

Gave customers discounts based on the place their rabbit came in a nationally broadcasted Easter rabbit race; increased value sales by 25% over the Easter period.

---

2.

# **Use stunts, events and experiential marketing in highly creative ways.**

**Stunts, events and experiential marketing are relative newcomers to our arsenal of creative and media strategies. And although they're only averagely effective overall (and rarely set a foundation for ongoing marketing activity), creative award-winning stunts, events and experiences are highly effective at driving sales spikes.**



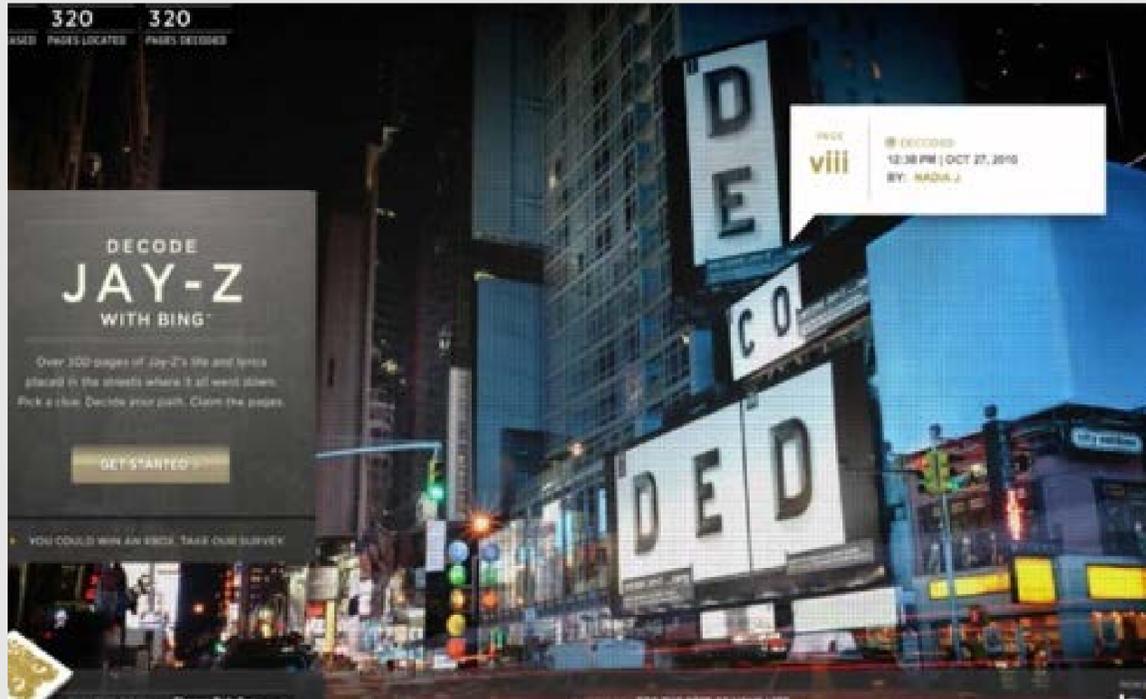
**SNICKERS:  
AUSSIE BUILDERS**

Activated 'you're not you when you're hungry' by having hungry builders shout supportive, feminist-friendly things at women passing by; spiked sales up 36% in the campaign period.



**DB EXPORT:  
BREWTOLEUM**

Turned yeast slurry from the brewing process into biofuel; lifted beer sales by 11%.



**BING:  
DECODE JAY-Z**

Allowed Jay-Z fans to discover and read every page of his autobiography through a digital gaming experience built on Bing Search and Bing Maps; drove a 10% increase in traffic and market share in the month of the book's release.



**PIMA:  
THE GREAT PAPER  
AIRPLANE PROJECT**

Challenged kids to a paper airplane design competition and transformed the winner's design into the world's largest paper airplane. Visitation by young people doubled in the period.

---

3.

# **Use ‘Big Tactics’ to achieve large results with seemingly small ideas.**

**Sales Spike campaigns often take advantage of tactical opportunities that fall within their brands’ larger strategic direction. When we use creativity to blow these opportunities up, they can often become high points in the overall consumer relationship with the brand. Gillette did this brilliantly by confronting the du jour fashionability of stubble, as did Xbox by creating an innovative sub-business model within their overall model.**



**GILLETTE:  
WOMEN AGAINST  
LAZY STUBBLE**

Used women to convince guys that stubble wasn't as sexy as they thought; huge lift in market share during the period.



**MICROSOFT XBOX:  
THE FANCHISE MODEL**

Made consumers shareholders in the success of Xbox's Design Lab products; 350% sales spike in the month of the campaign.



**ALLSTATE  
INSURANCE: SOCIAL  
SAVVY BURGLAR**

Showed how opportunist burglars use your social media posts against you; spiked sales 18% for the month.

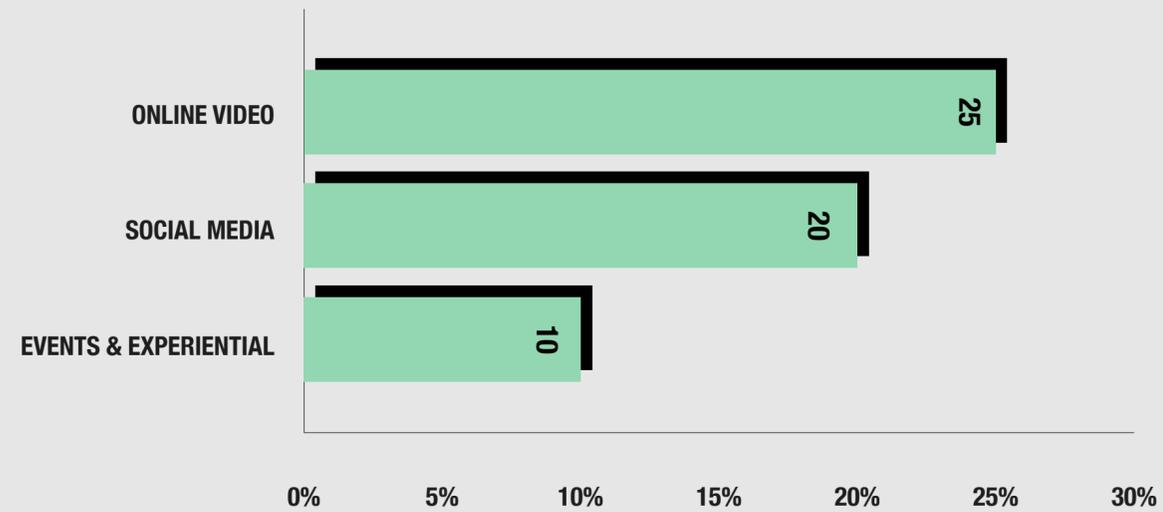


**V-LINE:  
GUILT TRIPS**

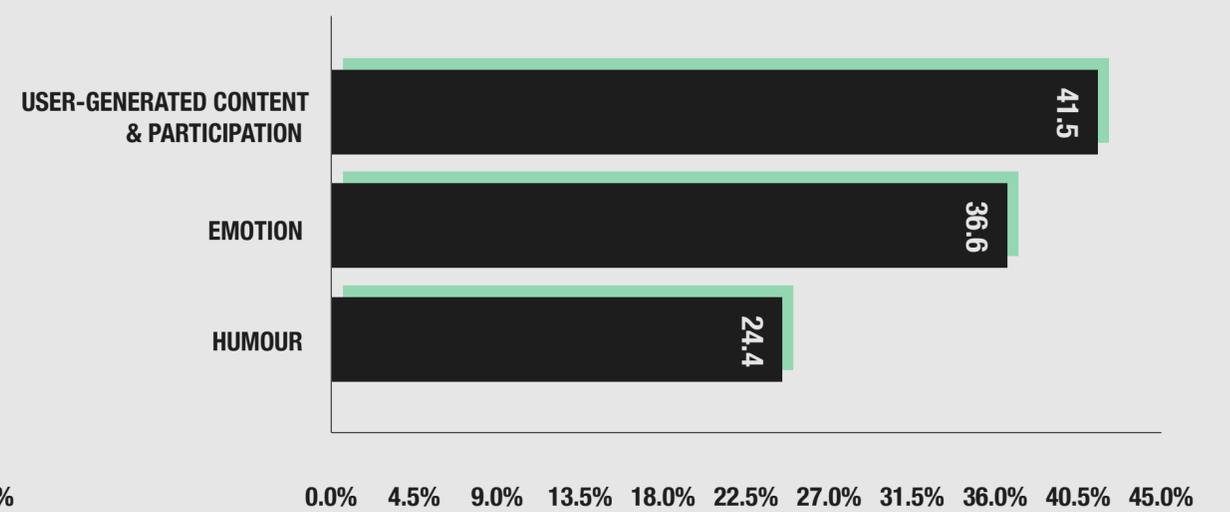
Co-opted parents into guilt-tripping their kids into buying a ticket home; monthly online ticket sales increased 15% during the campaign period.

**Lead media and creative strategies most effective in creating Sales Spike results:**

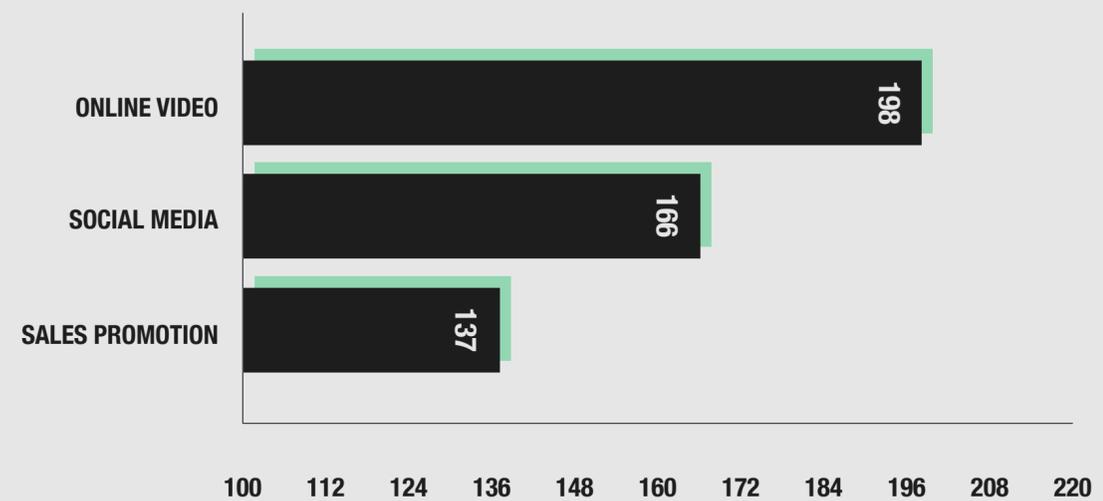
**MOST COMMON LEAD MEDIA**



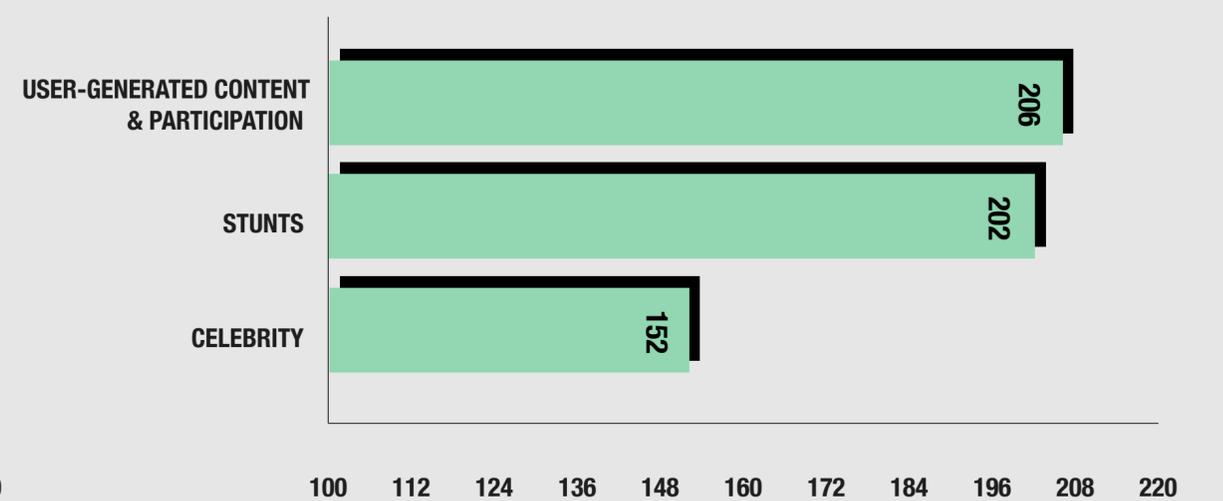
**MOST COMMON CREATIVE STRATEGIES**



**LEAD MEDIA THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS**

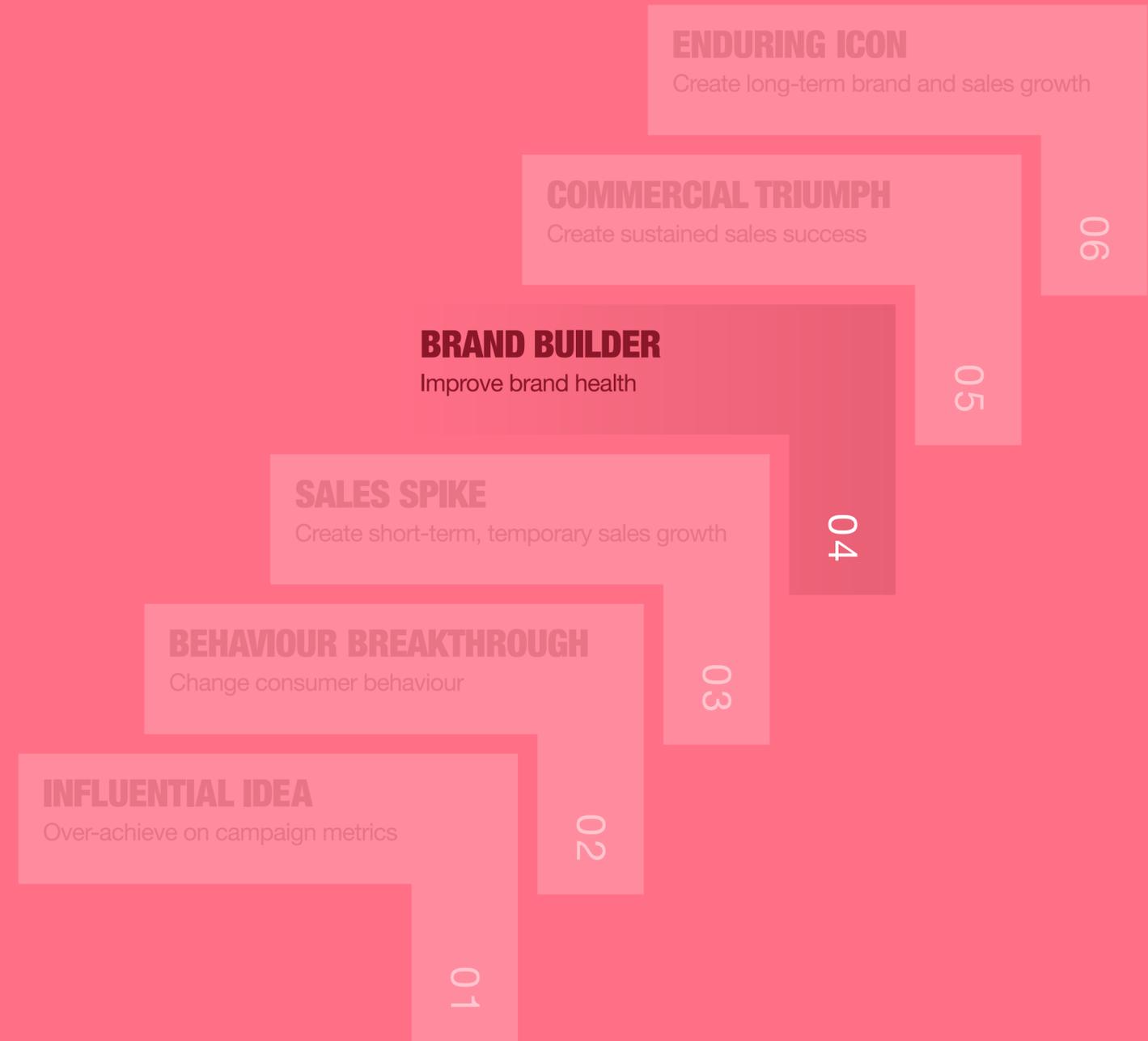


**CREATIVE STRATEGIES THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS**



LEVEL 4.

# Brand Builder



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## BRAND BUILDERS IMPROVE BRAND HEALTH

**Brand Builder campaigns use creativity to improve the fundamental measures of brand health – including awareness, consideration, preference, purchase intent and brand image ownership.**

**The art of building brands extends well beyond creating awareness of a brand's name and an acceptable level of trust and likeability. In an increasingly competitive landscape, businesses excel when they use brand as a competitive advantage. Creativity plays a crucial role in bonding with consumers in a way that drives brand consideration and preference, and earns ownership of important image attributes that consumers gravitate toward when shopping the category.**

**To achieve at this level, campaigns need to track and measure brand health metrics such as:**

- **Brand Awareness – The percentage of people who've heard of the brand**
- **Brand Preference – The percentage of people who say they'd buy the brand over others**
- **Purchase Intent – The percentage of people who say they intend to purchase the brand**
- **Brand Attributes – Important associations that the brand is seeking to own**

**Brand metrics can be measured in the short-term, but should be tracked over a longer period of six+ months to properly assess the growth of the brand's health.**

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**WHEN WE SHOULD BE STRIVING FOR BRAND BUILDER RESULTS AS AN END IN ITSELF:**

**In many cases, marketers are KPI'd with supporting and improving brand health metrics. NPS in particular has become a popular metric for companies who believe that it's a good enough proxy for future performance to be considered an end in itself. In these cases, a strong performance for the brand can be considered effective in its own right.**

**WHEN WE SHOULD BE USING BRAND BUILDER AS A STEPPING STONE TO HIGHER LEVELS OF THE LADDER:**

**Though brand building may be a central KPI, we are of course building the brand to enable the business to deliver sales more efficiently, or to insulate it against market forces. So, wherever possible we should still be working to show how increases in brand health have laddered up to improved sales, market share or profitability.**

---

**WINNING BEHAVIOURS FOR DEVELOPING CAMPAIGNS  
WITH BRAND BUILDER RESULTS:**

**The lead media and creative strategy analysis of Brand Builder campaigns shows that, unlike at lower levels of the Ladder, traditional approaches dominate effectiveness. Using video-led communications that employ emotion, storytelling and great music is still the best way to connect a brand deeply with a consumer. Analysing the behaviours of winning work gives some insight into how creativity can be used to deliver these time-honoured strategies in fresh and surprising ways.**

---

1.

# **Forge a bond with the brand by championing the consumer.**

**Our most basic advertising tendency is to want to talk about the product. Sometimes we elevate the conversation and talk about the brand. But perhaps the most powerful thing a brand can do is take a step further and talk about the consumer. A common characteristic of effective brand building campaigns is their championing not of themselves, but of those they serve. P&G CEO Bob McDonald said it best: “When we connect with people this way, we strengthen their respect for P&G and their loyalty to our brands.”**



**P&G: PROUD SPONSOR OF MUMS**

**'Thank you, Mum' made Mum the hero behind every Olympian; P&G's familiarity, favourability and trust leapt.**



**LURPAK: WEAVE YOUR MAGIC**

**Made consumers Heroed the food lovers who cook; took leadership in quality, taste, passion for food and 'worth paying more for'.**



**VW: KOMBI LAST WISHES**

**Showed how the real focus wasn't the vehicle, but the passionate owners and their stories; top-of-mind awareness, proximity and empathy returned.**



**UNDER ARMOUR: I WILL WHAT I WANT**

**Championed athletic women as powerfully willful; cool factor and purchase consideration shot up.**

---

2.

# Tap into existing brand strengths.

**Creative urges often make us want to throw out the old to shine a brand in a fresh new light. But when a brand has existing strengths and emotional connections with their consumer, it pays dividends to build on these in fresh ways. Some brands, like Dove and John Lewis, do this in a highly consistent way. Others, like Monoprix and DB Export, have recast their brands' distinctive qualities anew. If a brand is already loved in some way, creativity can let the brand double down on those advantages.**



---

3.

# **And where the brand is lacking, get super-specific about the brand attributes you want to shift.**

**When we're working with a brand that's tracking poorly, clearly identifying the attribute that needs work is the first step toward recovery. Trying to increase all brand metrics at once makes for an 'all things to all people' brief, and consequent ineffectiveness. By picking just one, we liberate creative teams to do their best work – and more often than not, the effects halo out powerfully across other key metrics.**



**LIDL: DILL – THE RESTAURANT**

Created a high-end restaurant using only Lidl's inexpensive own-brand products; took quality and reliability scores and brand consideration to record highs.



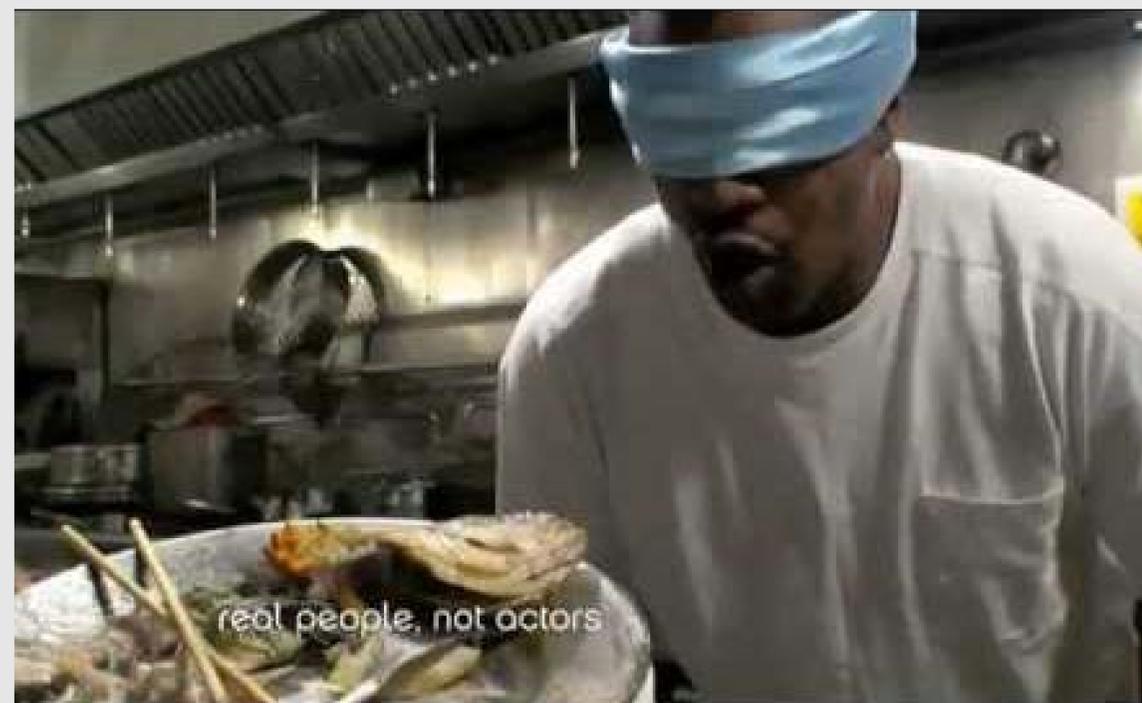
**MCDONALD'S: OUR FOOD. YOUR QUESTIONS.**

Went directly after trust in food quality; massive increases in food quality perceptions and brand trust.



**PRIL: ONE-DROP BOTTLE**

Sought to reclaim ownership of 'only one drop needed'; 350% increase in their 'one drop' brand metric.

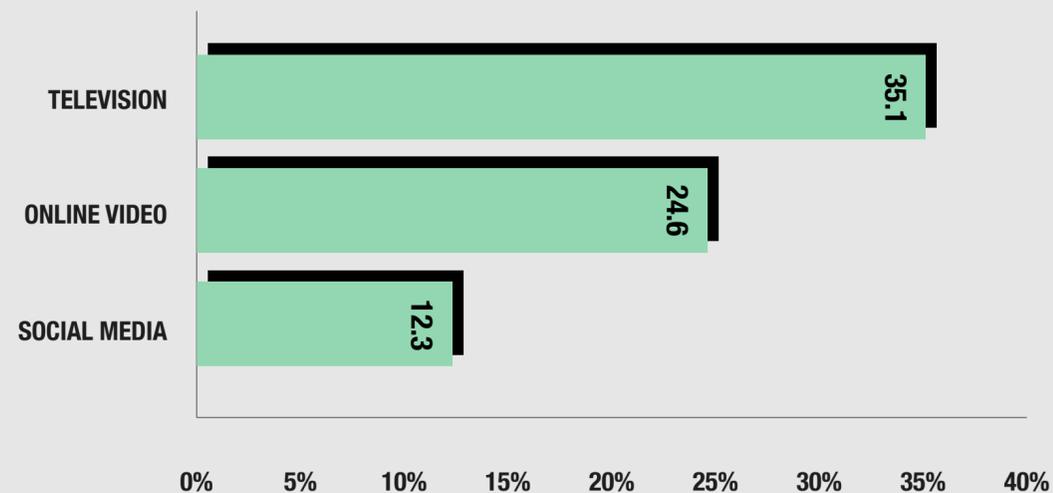


**FEBREZE: BREATHE HAPPY**

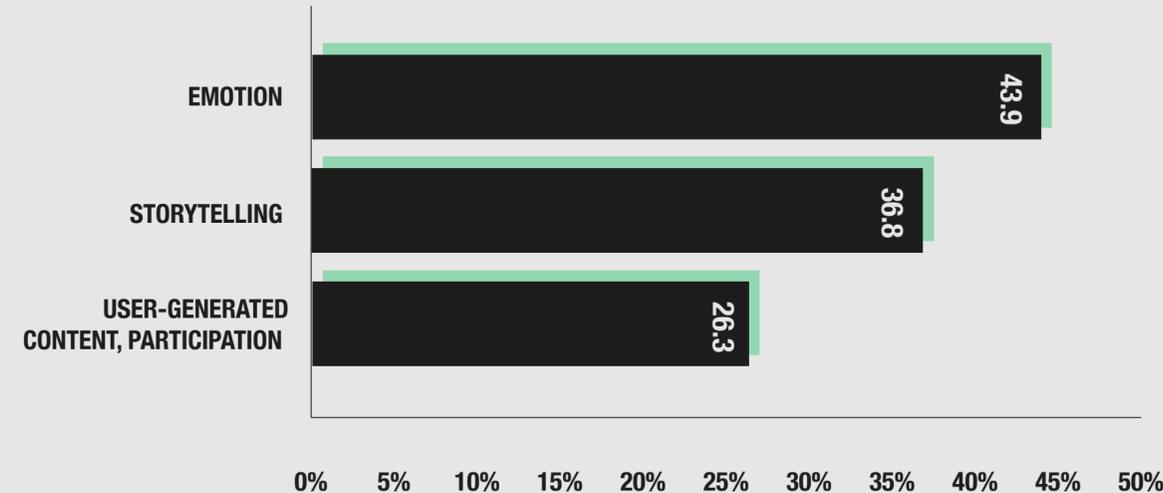
Set out to regain skeptics' faith in the brand's ability to get rid of bad smells; did so, with 82% of consumers now believing Febreze eliminates odours, along with big increases in reliability, value and quality.

Lead media and creative strategies most effective in creating Brand Builder results:

MOST COMMON LEAD MEDIA



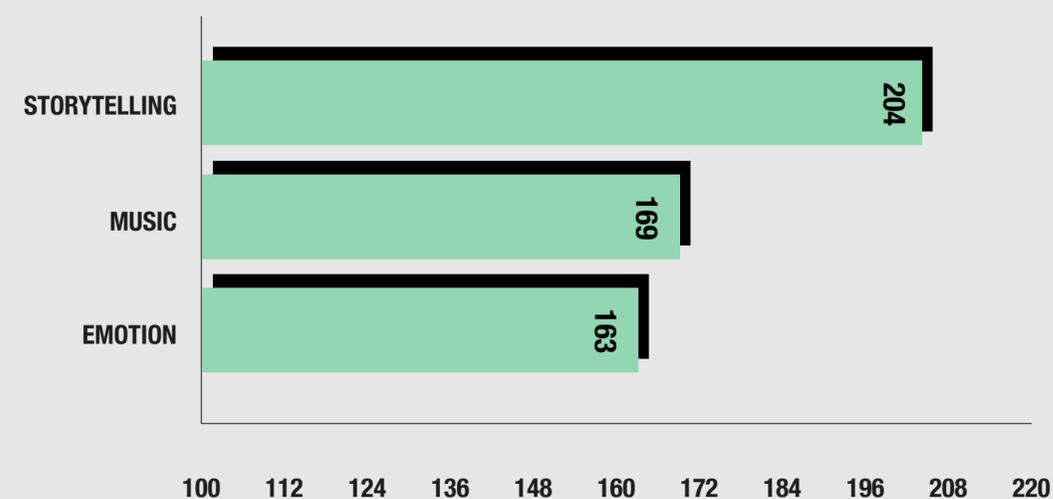
MOST COMMON CREATIVE STRATEGIES



LEAD MEDIA THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS

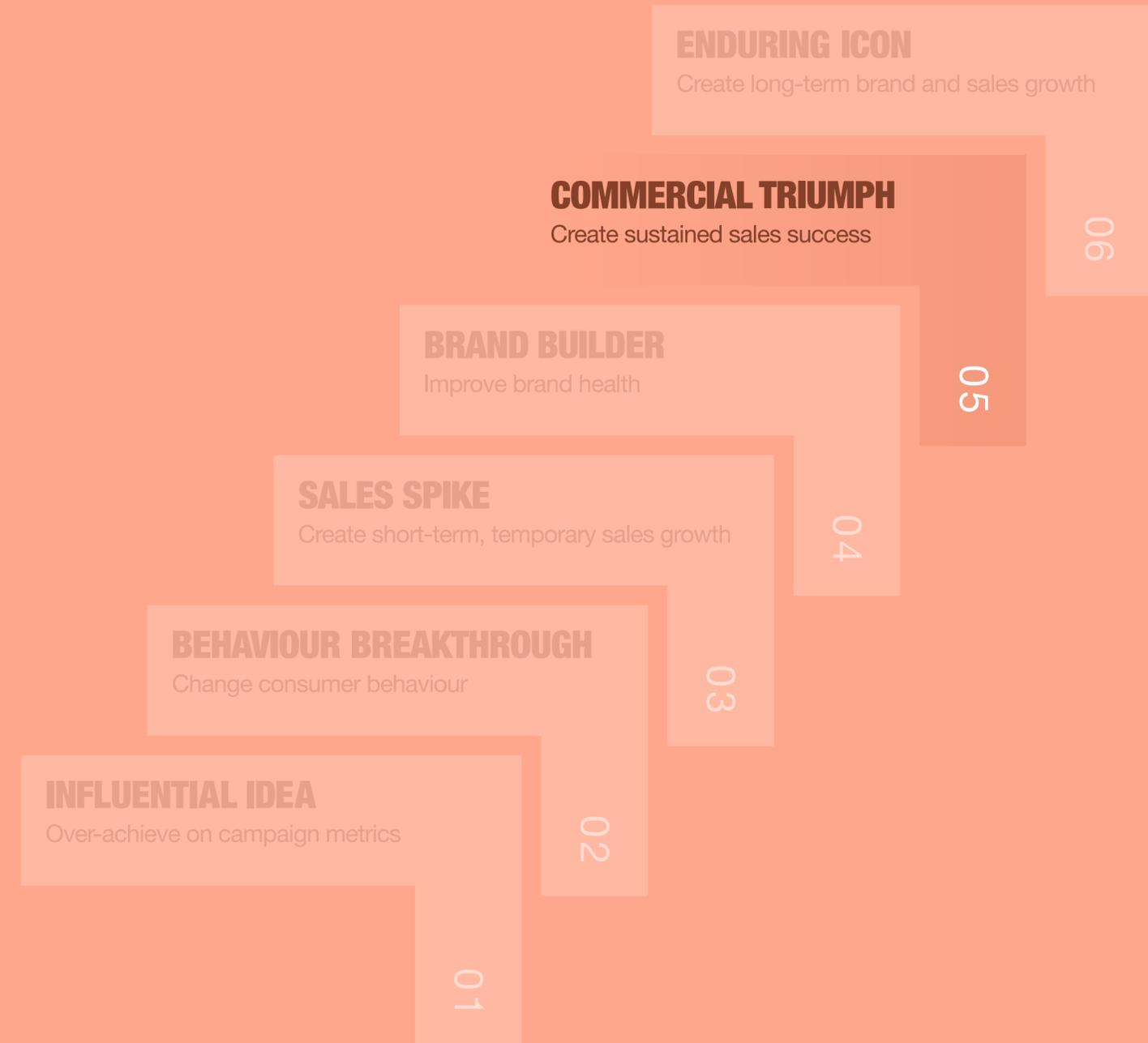


CREATIVE STRATEGIES THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS



LEVEL 5.

# Commercial Triumph



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## COMMERCIAL TRIUMPHS CREATE SUSTAINED SALES SUCCESS

**Commercial Triumph campaigns use creativity to profitably increase sales and market share beyond a single quarter or beyond the duration of the campaign.**

**Creating sustainable commercial growth should by rights be the ultimate objective of most marketing efforts. Where creating sales spikes can be as simple as increasing the brand's share of voice, driving sustained sales growth is a product of insightful strategy, considered media choices and blockbuster creativity.**

**To achieve at this level, campaigns need to spend more than three months tracking and measuring the performance of sales metrics such as:**

- **Sales – Sales value and volume measured over and beyond the campaign period**
- **Market Share – Value and volume share measured over and beyond the campaign period**
- **ROI – Return on Investment – the value of incremental sales, divided by the total marketing spend**

**Sustained sales metrics cannot be assessed within a short-term window. Aim for a window of six to 18 months to prove a sustained commercial performance.**

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**WHEN WE SHOULD BE STRIVING FOR COMMERCIAL TRIUMPH RESULTS AS AN END IN ITSELF:**

**In most cases. The goal of serious marketing efforts should primarily be to deliver sustained commercial growth. We should have mechanisms in place to track and measure this growth, and to attribute the growth to the marketing we've done. Without this, we run the risk of marketing being seen as a spurious cost rather than a lucrative and reliable investment.**

**WHEN WE SHOULD BE USING COMMERCIAL TRIUMPH AS A STEPPING STONE TO HIGHER LEVELS OF THE LADDER:**

**If we are truly ambitious, we will be seeking to develop the kind of work that not only delivers sustained commercial results, but can do so over the long term, qualifying for Enduring Icon status.**

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**WINNING BEHAVIOURS FOR DEVELOPING CAMPAIGNS  
WITH COMMERCIAL TRIUMPH RESULTS:**

**When it comes to Commercial Triumph, brands have spent the past decade using both traditional and progressive approaches. Despite a swing away from investing in high-quality film content, telling stories using video remains highly effective. At the same time, digital media has meant we can involve consumers in our ideas like never before – and this too has become a dependable way to improve effectiveness. And the final trend we see in this analysis reveals what just might be creative effectiveness' best kept secret...**

---

1.

# **Use the timeless power of emotional storytelling.**

**Marketing trends come and go – but the power of storytelling doesn't. Our analysis shows that emotion, music, humour and storytelling are among the most effective creative strategies for Commercial Triumph campaigns, and that online video and TV are among the most effective lead media. Even as viewership of terrestrial television falls, every new effectiveness study just keeps showing us that a fantastic piece of film is as valuable as ever.**



**WRIGLEY'S EXTRA:  
SARAH & JUAN**  
  
Turned 'Give Extra,  
Get Extra' into a  
major tear-jerker;  
sustained 16 months  
of impressive  
incremental sales  
growth.



**CHIPOTLE:  
BACK TO THE START**  
  
Genuine purpose +  
beautiful animated  
storytelling +  
Willy Nelson does  
Coldplay = 23%  
revenue growth.



**CHRYSLER:  
BORN OF FIRE**  
  
Repositioned a down  
and out Detroit as a  
place you wanted a  
luxury car imported  
from; increased  
sales 8-fold.



**JOHN LEWIS:  
CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGNS**  
  
Every year a new  
story; profit ROI grew  
from 8:1 to 11:1 over  
four years.

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2.

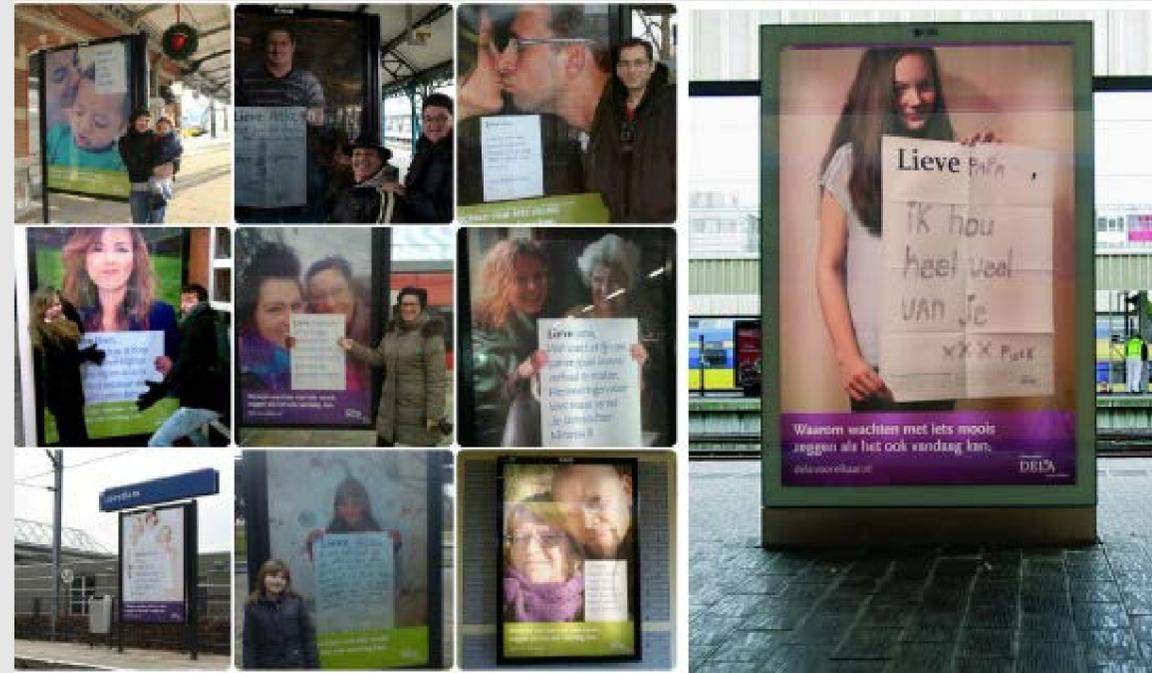
# **Involve the consumer in your idea.**

**Alongside storytelling, the other most common creative strategy in Commercial Triumph campaigns is participation and user-generated content. Letting consumers take part in the story appears to be the most powerful way to use digital media to extend the effectiveness of an idea. Cause-related campaigns provide the easiest ‘ins’ to engage consumers in a movement, but as DELA and Burger King show, you don’t need to be changing the world to do so.**



**TIMES OF INDIA: NO CONDITIONS APPLY**

'Became the news' by opening up an Indian tradition to all women, encouraging them to wear a 'double dot'; scaled readership to that of long-time market leader The Telegraph.



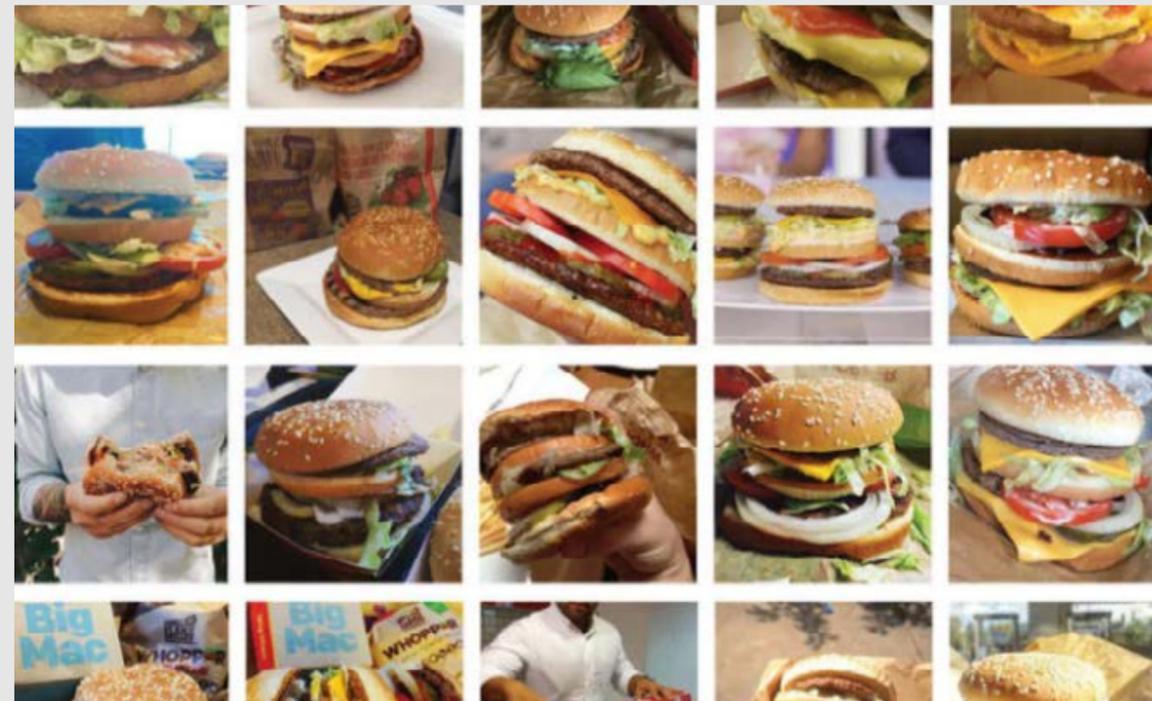
**DELA INSURANCE: WHY WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE?**

Had people tell a loved one how they felt about them while they were still alive, rather than waiting until their funeral; customer base grew 20%.



**SKII: MARRIAGE MARKET TAKEOVER**

Engaged women to confront the stigma of being unmarried in China; sales increased 79% and the brand achieved record profitability.



**BURGER KING: THE MCWHOPPER PROPOSAL**

McDonald's might have rejected the proposal, but consumers took the idea and made it their own – literally; sustained Whopper sales growth of 15%+

---

3.

# **Use packaging as lead media – creative effectiveness' best kept secret.**

**A brand's packaging is almost never used as a core media channel in a creative campaign. This is understandable given the operational challenges it presents – but our analysis shows that when brands can overcome these challenges, and do so with genuine creative excellence, the commercial effects of doing so can be huge.**



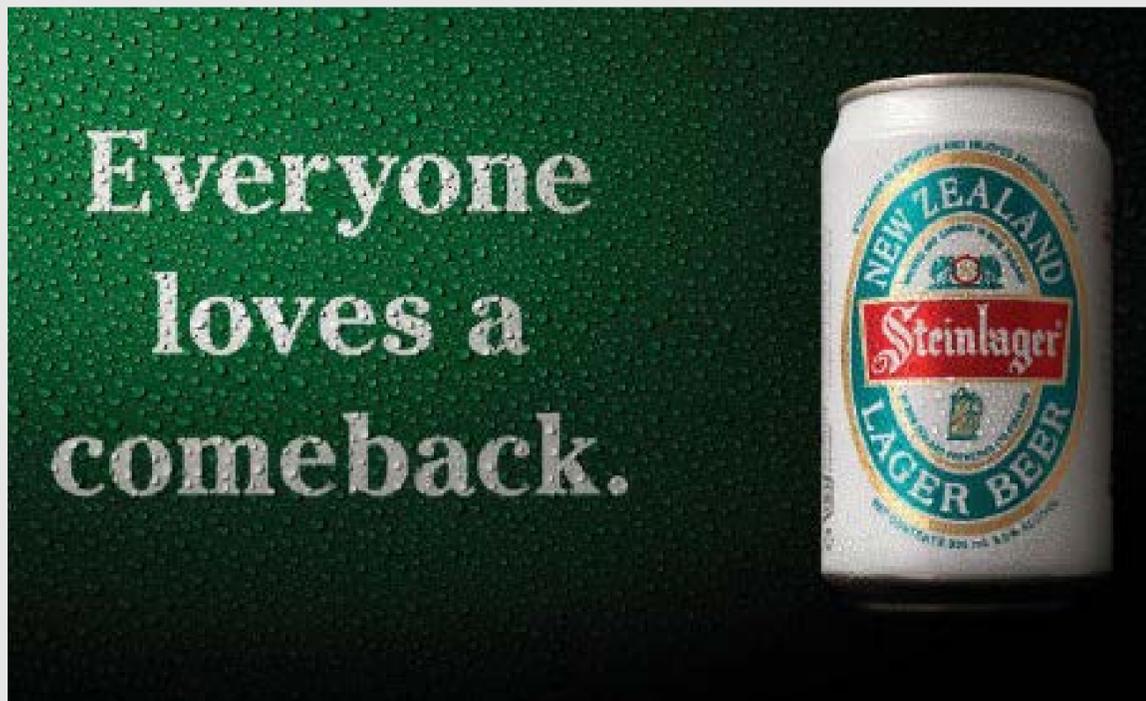
SPC ARDMONA:  
MY FAMILY CAN

Promoted the brand's localness by putting Australia's farming families on the cans that held the produce they'd grown; drove 17% sales growth with no discounting, and a 15:1 ROI.



ARIEL:  
SHARE THE LOAD HIS & HERS PACK

Created a pack that helped divide laundry tasks between Dads and Mums; achieved 111% value sales growth.



STEINLAGER:  
BELIEVE

Brought back the packaging from 1987, when the All Blacks last won the World Cup; sold 4.4M cans – the equivalent of New Zealand's entire population.

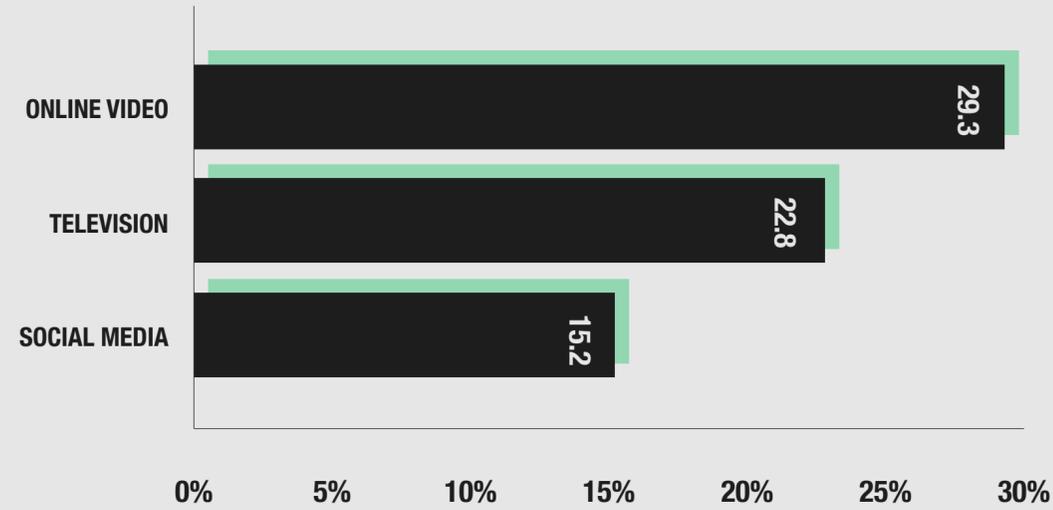


COCA-COLA:  
SHARE A COKE

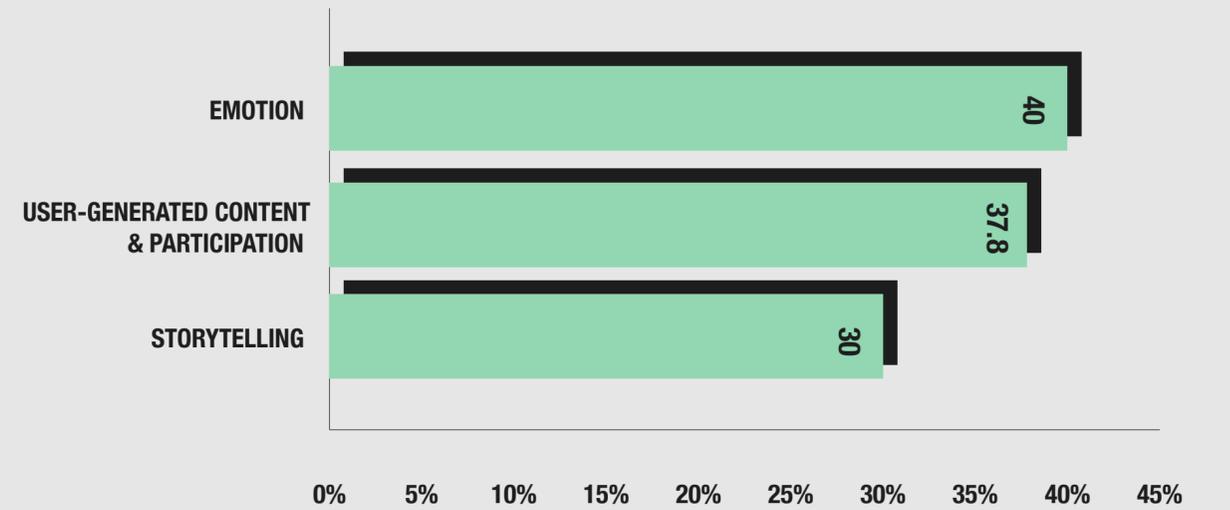
The most effective and iconic packaging-led campaign of all time; drove huge results in Australia before being exported to the world.

Lead media and creative strategies most effective in creating Commercial Triumph results:

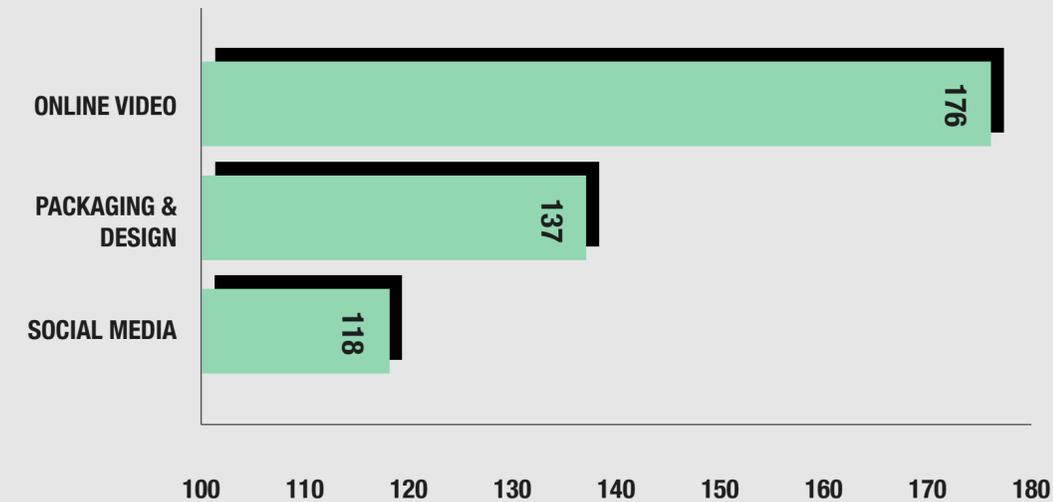
MOST COMMON LEAD MEDIA



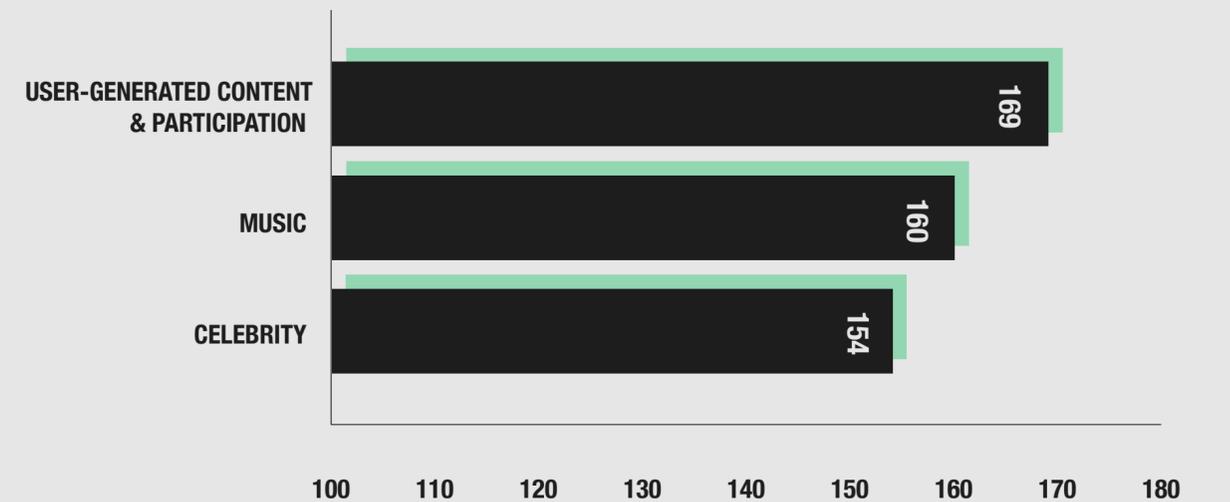
MOST COMMON CREATIVE STRATEGIES



LEAD MEDIA THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS

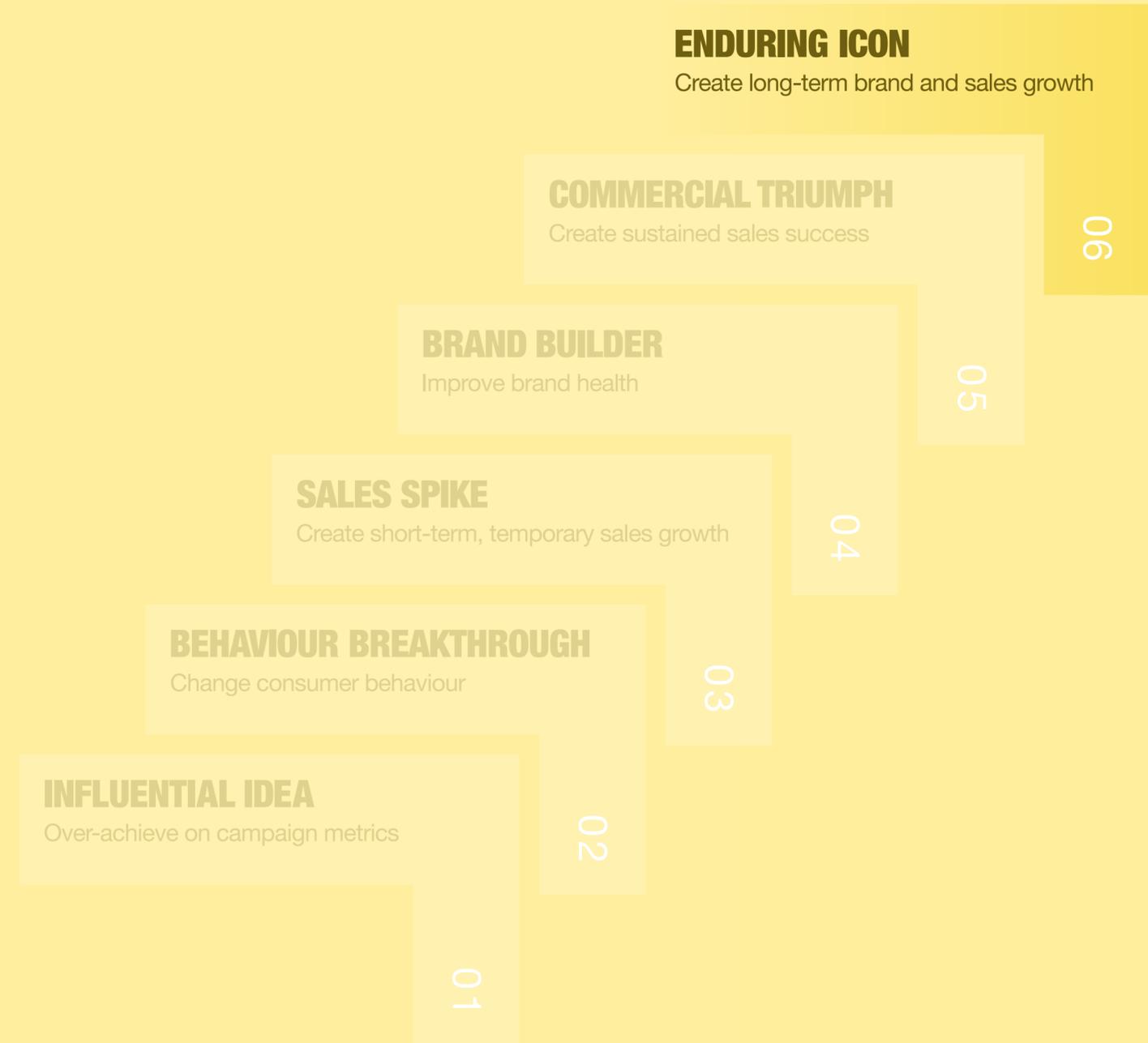


CREATIVE STRATEGIES THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS



LEVEL 6.

# Enduring Icon



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## ENDURING ICONS CREATE LONG-TERM BRAND AND SALES GROWTH

**Enduring Icon campaigns use creativity to drive brand and sales growth consistently over a long period of three years or more.**

**They stick with the same creative strategy or creative work throughout that period, creating sustained commercial outcomes.**

**The high watermark of achievement in marketing communications is creating work that truly stands the test of time. With average marketing tenures ranging in the order of 12-24 months, this normally means creating work that will outlive your time with a brand. Or arriving in a new job and resisting the temptation to chuck it all and start again on fresh work of your making. The Enduring Icon campaigns in our study have made it through both gauntlets – and give some insight into how to create work that becomes defining, not only for its brand, but for marketing itself.**

**To achieve at this level, campaigns need to spend three+ years tracking and measuring the performance of sales and brand metrics such as:**

- **Sales – Sales value and volume measured over and beyond the campaign period**
- **Market Share – Value and volume share measured over and beyond the campaign period**
- **ROI – Return on Investment – the value of incremental sales, divided by the total marketing spend**
- **Brand Health – Metrics pertaining to the consideration, preference and image attributes of the brand**

**Long-term brand and sales growth can only be measured across a long term of three years or more.**

---

**WHEN WE SHOULD BE STRIVING FOR ENDURING ICON RESULTS AS AN END IN ITSELF:**

**In any case where we've set out to drive long-term, sustained brand and sales growth.**

**WHEN WE SHOULD BE USING ENDURING ICON AS A STEPPING STONE TO HIGHER LEVELS OF THE LADDER:**

**When it comes to creative marketing, there is no greater achievement than reaching this status.**

---

**WINNING BEHAVIOURS FOR DEVELOPING CAMPAIGNS WITH ENDURING ICON RESULTS:**

**Like Brand Builder campaigns, Enduring Icons favour more traditional lead media and creative strategies. Telling stories with humour and emotion and using memorable brand characters or the power of celebrities never seems to get old with consumers of any lifestage. The trick is finding a truly enduring insight and platform idea to wrap these media and strategies around – and then doing what almost everyone seems to find intractably difficult – resisting the urge to change the campaign before it has a chance to reach its full potential.**

---

1.

# **Find a genuinely enduring insight.**

**For a brand platform to work over the long term, the insight it's built on needs to be eternally true. People will always underperform when they're hungry. They'll always find joy in the simple things. Guys will always want women to find them interesting. And those women will never stop wanting to feel beautiful.**



**SNICKERS:**  
YOU'RE NOT YOU WHEN  
YOU'RE HUNGRY

Enduring-insight-as-tagline; many years of sustained global growth.



**IKEA:**  
THE WONDERFUL  
EVERYDAY

Humanity always returns to the small, simple joys; three years' sustained growth in penetration, transaction value and overall sales.



**DOS EQUIS:**  
THE MOST  
INTERESTING MAN  
IN THE WORLD

Guys would rather be dead than dull; five years of double-digit volume growth in a declining category.



**DOVE:**  
CAMPAIGN FOR  
REAL BEAUTY

Womens' view of their own beauty is shaped by how beauty is portrayed; 15 years as one of the world's most meaningful brands.

---

2.

# Find a limitless idea.

**IKEA's 'The Wonderful Everyday' case study put it beautifully: 'Seek the dexterity of a platform, not the consistency of a campaign'.  
Enduring Icons are platform ideas that can be executed again and again, in diverse and engaging ways, anywhere they show up.  
Platform ideas this good don't come easy, but no one said creating an Enduring Icon was a doddle.**



**APPLE:  
MAC VS PC**

Endlessly versatile;  
Apple's market cap  
quadrupled in the  
campaign period  
2006-2010.



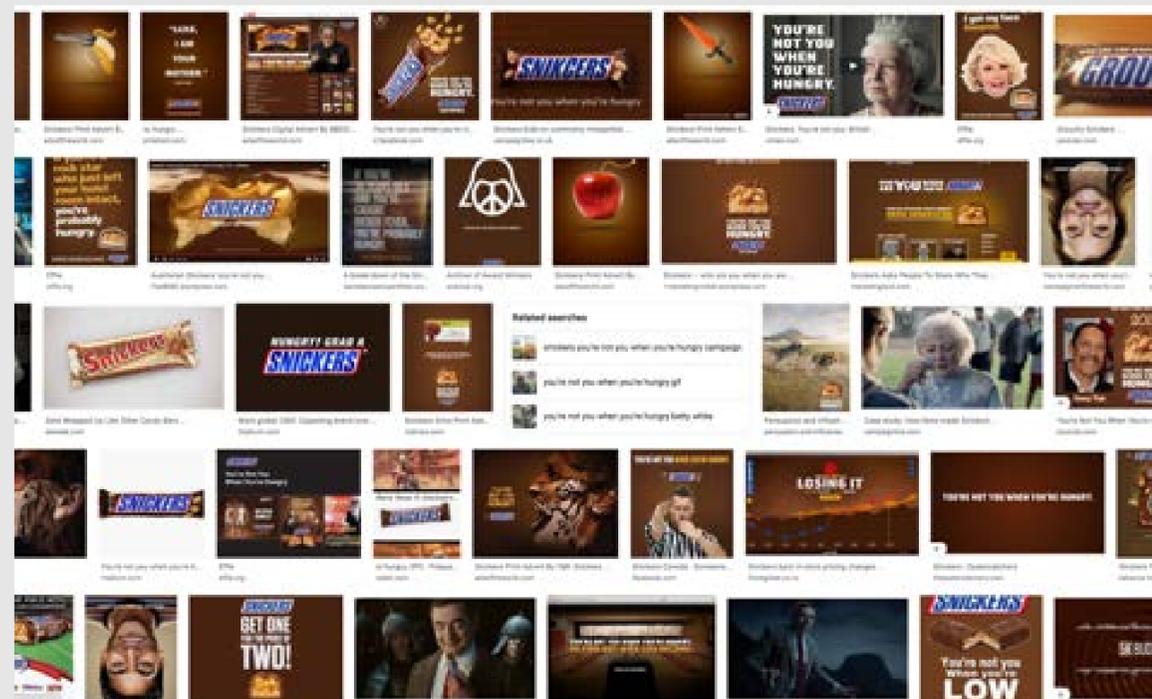
**COCA-COLA:  
SHARE A COKE**

There's one for every  
single person on  
earth; reconnected  
the brand with  
billions globally.



**BEATS BY DRE:  
THE GAME BEFORE  
THE GAME**

Positioning  
headphones around  
'pre-game focus' was  
a novel strategy with  
an endless supply of  
sports champions; it  
drove Beats to 70%  
market share.



**SNICKERS:  
YOU'RE NOT YOU  
WHEN YOU'RE HUNGRY**

What hasn't been  
done with this  
campaign? Flat  
campaign spend  
2006-2011 saw share  
growth in every key  
market.

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3.

# **Commit to the long term, up front, and stick to it.**

**When it comes to Enduring Icon campaigns, the greatest onus is on the client to ensure they endure, rather than being pulled or pivoted. The woeful lack of truly long-term campaigns suggests that this is far from easy – but setting out to create a three+ year campaign, as IKEA did, is a good start. Or doubling down on winning ideas, as Coke did following Share a Coke’s early success in Australia. Failing that, pinning the strategy to something perennial, as in the cases of American Express and John Lewis, is a clever way of baking in long-termism.**



**IKEA:  
THE WONDERFUL  
EVERYDAY**

The brief called for three years of 8% year-on-year growth, and they got it.



**AMERICAN EXPRESS:  
SMALL BUSINESS  
SATURDAY**

Making the campaign a national day means it's on forever.



**COCA-COLA:  
SHARE A COKE**

It's tricky to take core packaging off the air because the new guy doesn't like it.

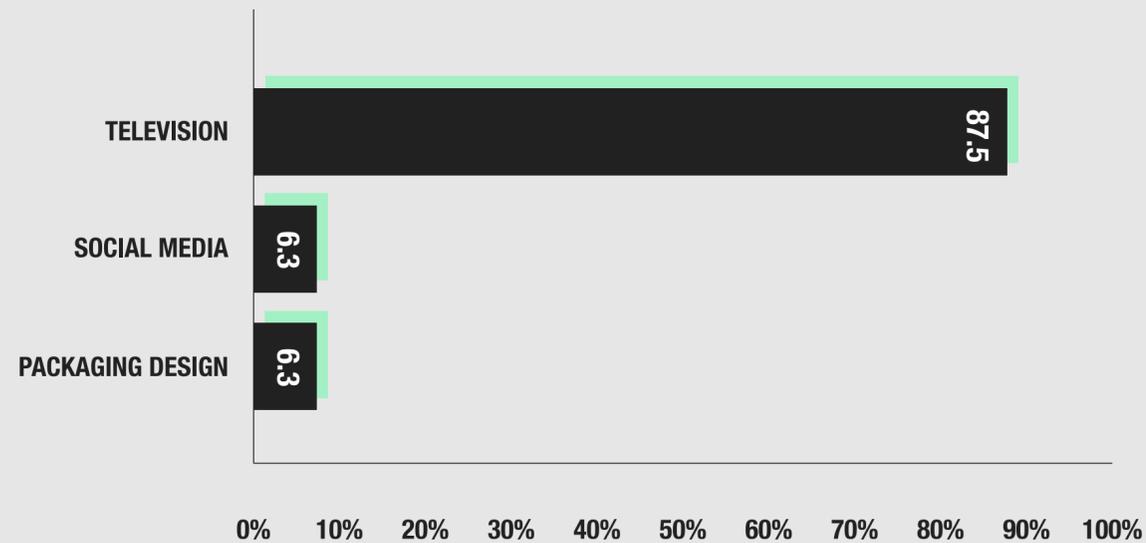


**JOHN LEWIS:  
CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGNS**

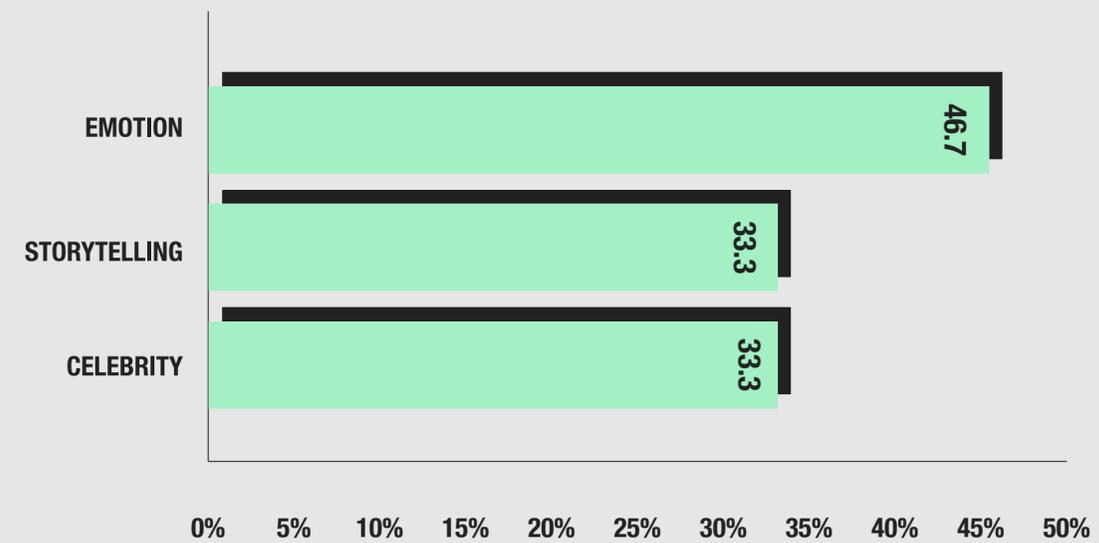
The world's been a little topsy-turvy lately, but we're pretty sure Christmas isn't going anywhere.

Lead media and creative strategies most effective in creating Enduring Icon results:

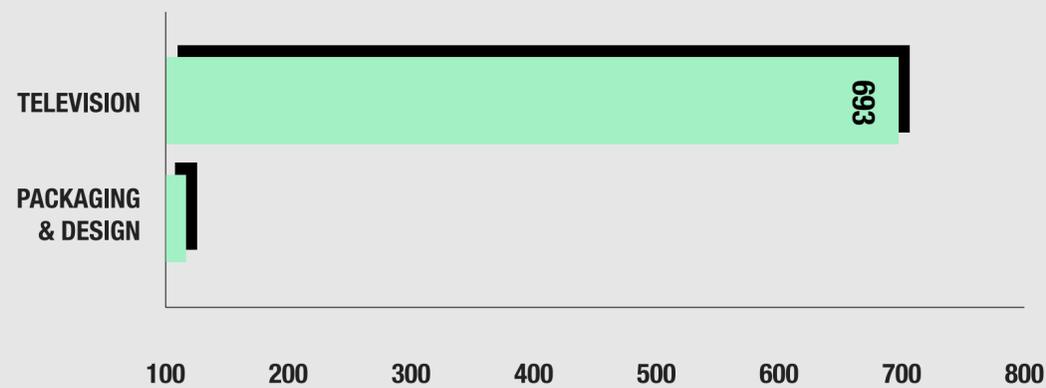
MOST COMMON LEAD MEDIA



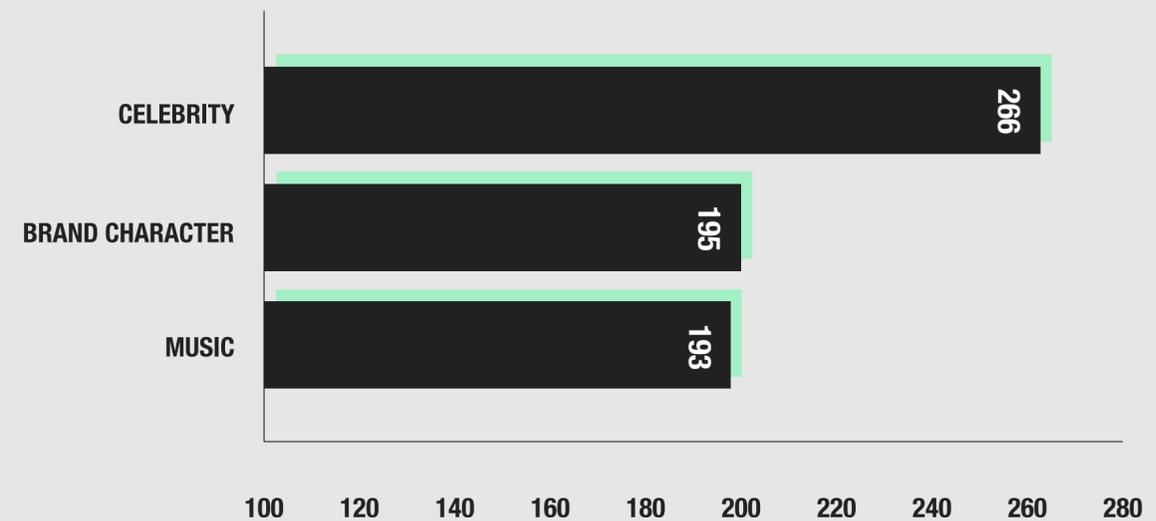
MOST COMMON CREATIVE STRATEGIES



LEAD MEDIA THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS



CREATIVE STRATEGIES THAT OVER-INDEX FOR THESE METRICS





# How does the Creative Effectiveness Ladder apply in fast-growth markets?

by **Sabrina Peng**  
Chief Marketing Officer  
Ant Group

**Sabrina Peng** is Chief Marketing Officer at Ant Group, a major fintech company in China. She discusses her company's approach to marketing effectiveness, and which levels of the Effectiveness Ladder they prioritise.

HOW DOES ANT FINANCIAL SERVICES GROUP APPROACH EFFECTIVENESS?

At Alibaba and Ant Group, our marketing department plays two roles: one is a 'brand shaper', and the other is a 'traffic generator'. The marketing department of an internet company must be close to both the brand and the business.

Whether it is financial or digital lifestyle services we are offering, we believe that the marketing department's contribution to brand-building is ultimately to win mind share. We see to it that the Ant brand is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, that the brand is influential in the eyes of the consumer, and that we make an impact on user behaviour.

The second role of the marketing department is like an 'engine' to generate traffic. Because, for an internet business, 'traffic' is critical, but traffic at Ant does not simply mean the number of views or net exposure; traffic can cover user growth, user interaction, service usage, etc. Traffic must bring a 'flow' of business and add value to actual commercial results.



Whether it is financial or digital lifestyle services we are offering, we believe that the marketing department's contribution to brand-building is ultimately to win mind share.

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**At the same time, Alibaba’s marketing department has a unique culture, which is about “producing something out of nothing” [as well as its own spend, the company encourages merchants and business partners in the whole payments ecosystem to leverage Alipay IP to create marketing value].**

**We have a lot of marketing campaigns in a year, both big and small, and we set up different KPIs for different campaigns, targets or budgets, and continue to accumulate data and optimize our measurements. Through tracking, we can judge whether our marketing has been effective or not, so we can continuously improve and innovate.**

**Marketing an internet product is an iterative process, especially when there are rapid changes in the external environment.**

**Leveraging the advantages of our platform approach, data-driven insights and innovation model, marketing becomes both an art and a science, and becomes more integrated with business effectiveness.**



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**There are four core rules: remain close to business objectives, understand user and market insights, be data-driven and have a “something out of nothing” framework.**

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**WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON HOW TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN A FAST-GROWTH ENVIRONMENT LIKE CHINA? HOW CAN MARKETING-EFFECTIVENESS LESSONS FROM CHINA BE APPLIED IN OTHER FAST-GROWTH MARKETS?**

**In China, the business environment and media landscape are fluctuating all the time. For example, the media channels get rapidly fragmented, and user behaviour on mobile internet is also swiftly changing.**

**To ride on the tide, there are four core rules: remain close to business objectives, understand user and market insights, be data-driven and have a “something out of nothing” framework.**

**Compared with Western markets, China has a more complex media environment, but regardless of region, these four core rules of improving marketing efficiency will not change.**

**CANNES LIONS AND WARC HAVE CO-INTRODUCED A CREATIVE EFFECTIVENESS LADDER. WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON THE LADDER – AND WHICH LEVELS DO YOU PRIORITISE?**

**This model is a good interpretation of the theory of “integration of branding and performance marketing” that is popular in China. This means marketing activities have a short-term impact on the business, and the combined effect of marketing activities and brand-building makes the business sustainable. This coincides with our own marketing department’s dual role of being a brand shaper and a traffic generator.**

**Regarding the hierarchy of the Ladder, it’s in the order of smallest to biggest impact (from the short to the long term). For us at Ant Group, ‘Behaviour Breakthrough’ is not necessarily lower in the hierarchy.**

**We believe that the final result will be a change in user behaviour, which is also a more direct result for internet companies like us.**

**To us, ‘Influential Idea’ and ‘Brand Building’ are stepping stones that bring about ‘Behaviour Breakthrough’.**

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**PART 3.**

# **Creative Commitment**

## THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN DRIVING EFFECTIVENESS

If we're striving for effectiveness, one of the most judicious things we can do is lean in to work with creative-award winning qualities.

Over the past decade, studies by the authors of this paper\* and many others have shown that creatively awarded campaigns are demonstrably and significantly more likely to be effective than their non-creative-awarded counterparts.

Our analysis of the WARC database supports these earlier findings. From 2011 through 2019, creatively awarded campaigns substantially outperformed non-awarded campaigns in terms of effectiveness recognition.

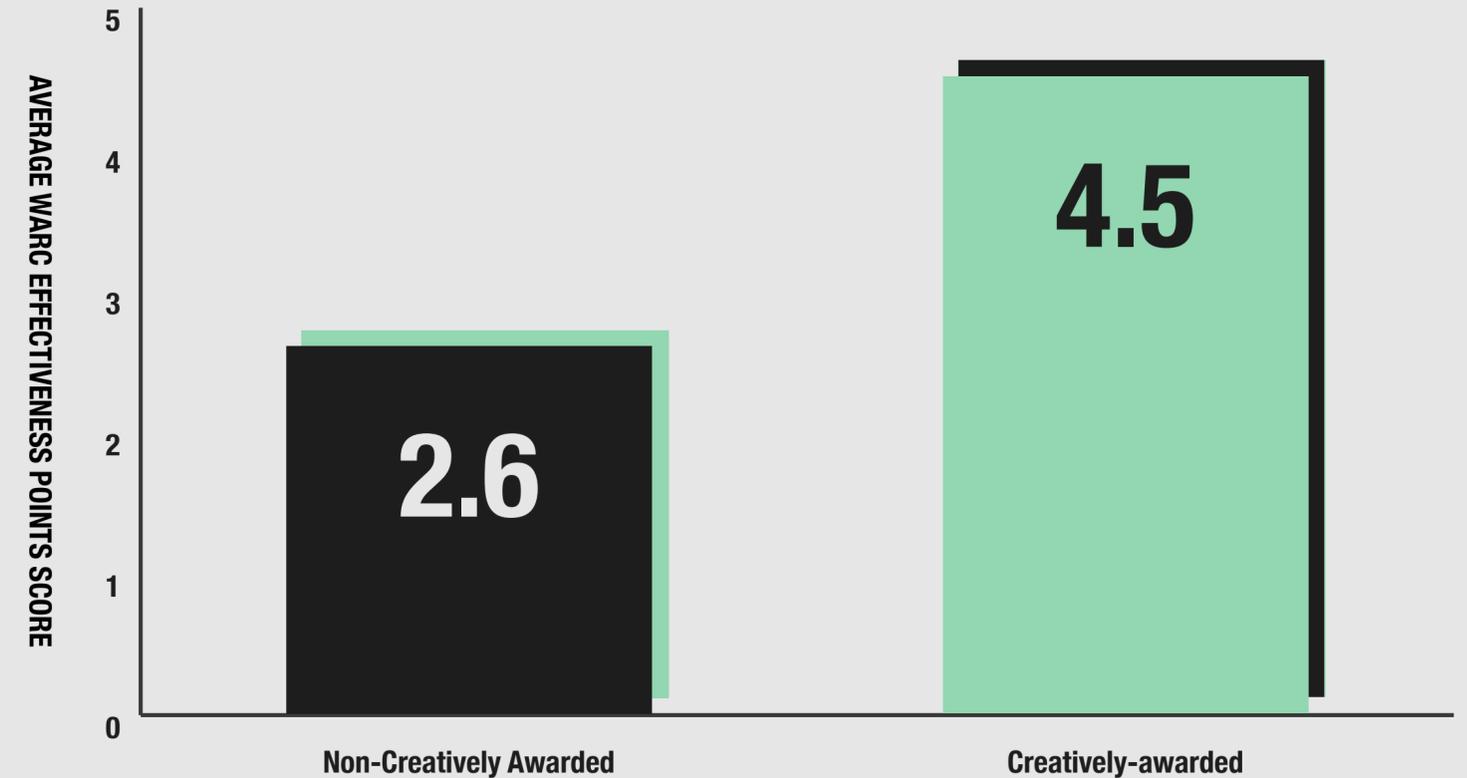
The message here is not that creative-award-worthy work is automatically effective. Rather that, if we have a well-planned and insightful strategy, we can magnify and supercharge the effectiveness of that strategic thinking with work that has creative-award-winning qualities.

In short, creativity creates an effectiveness advantage.

Our analysis of campaigns at each level of The Creative Effectiveness Ladder sought to understand other ways to create similar effectiveness advantages. And in carrying out that analysis, we came across an intriguing pattern.

One that we believe has significant implications for how marketers and agencies manage and optimise the effectiveness of their work.

And which suggests that trends in the industry are leading us to do quite the opposite.



Data: WARC Global Effectiveness Award Cases 2011-2019; Non-creatively awarded n=3,616; Creatively awarded n=170

\**The Link Between Creativity & Effectiveness*, Peter Field, published 2010 by IPA/Gunn Report/Thinkbox; *The Case for Creativity*, 2011, James Hurman, published 2011 by AUT Media and updated 2015 by Cannes Lions

## THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN DRIVING EFFECTIVENESS

In the past, other studies have indicated that sales effects and ROI increase the more is spent on a campaign, the longer it runs, and the more media channels it uses.

In short, bigger campaigns produce bigger results – a logical finding that doesn’t argue much with common sense. But hold that thought...

Looking at our database of Creative Effectiveness Lions winners, we can see that these previous findings largely hold true.

We’ve allocated a score to each campaign, using The Creative Effectiveness Ladder as a framework. 1 point for papers that show Famous Creative results, 2 points for Behaviour Breakthrough results, 3 points for Sales Spike results, 4 points for Brand Builder results, 5 points for Commercial Triumph results and 6 points for Enduring Icon results. This gives each campaign a total score out of a possible 21. Allocating this score gives us a simple way of comparing the overall effectiveness of each campaign in our database.

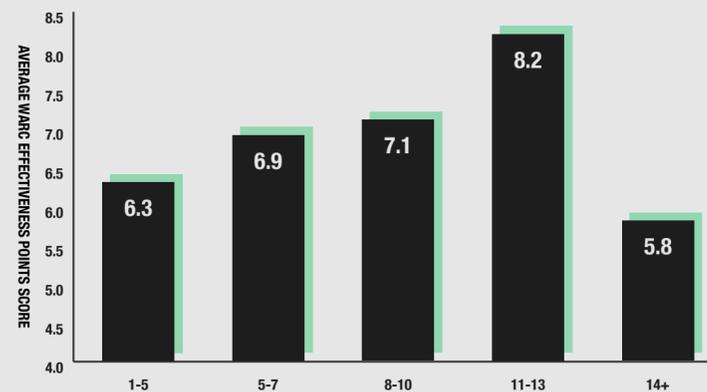
We can see that, with a couple of small anomalies, as campaigns increase their spend, duration and number of media channels used, they become more effective:

## EFFECTIVENESS SCORING METHODOLOGY

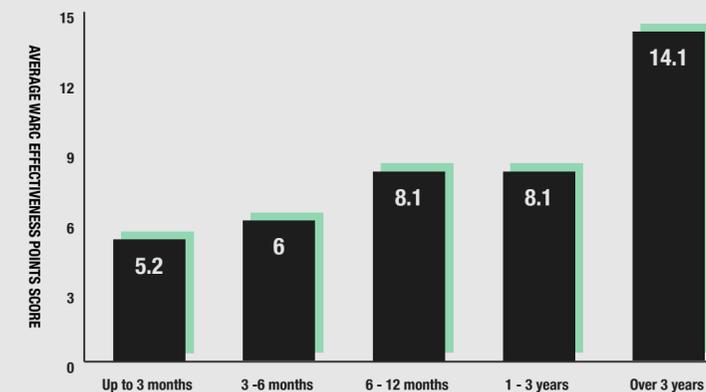
All Cannes Creative Effectiveness Lions winning campaigns have been scored according to the types of results reported:

CAMPAIGN EFFECTS	POINTS	EXAMPLE CAMPAIGNS			
		1	2	3	4
Enduring Icon	6				X
Commercial Triumph	5			X	X
Brand Builder	4			X	X
Sales Spike	3		X		
Behavioural Breakthrough	2		X	X	X
Famous Creative	1	X	X		X
<b>EFFECTIVENESS SCORE</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>

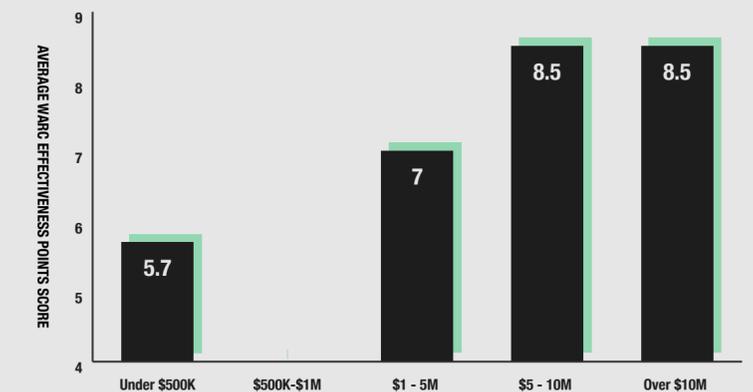
### NUMBER OF CHANNELS USED



### CAMPAIGN DURATION



### MEDIA SPEND



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## A THEORY OF CREATIVE COMMITMENT

**These three variables – the amount of money, time, and media channels that have been committed to a creative idea – are all forms of something we’re calling ‘Creative Commitment’. All campaigns have a profile across the three dimensions of Creative Commitment.**

### FOR EXAMPLE:

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**The John Lewis Christmas campaigns have had high duration, high number of media and high spend.**

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**Snickers’ ‘Aussie Builders’ had low duration, low number of media and low spend.**

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**It’s a Tide Ad had low duration, medium number of media and high spend.**

---

**Carrefour’s Black Supermarket had medium duration, medium number of media and low spend.**

**We can use these dimensions to give any campaign an overall ‘Creative Commitment score’ of between 3 and 15.**

CREATIVE COMMITMENT SCORING METHODOLOGY

Any campaign can be given a Creative Commitment score of between 3 and 15, according to its media spend, duration and number of media channels used:

Media Spend	Score (1)	Duration	Score (2)	# Channels	Score (3)
Under \$500K	1	Under 3 months	1	1 - 4	1
\$500k - 1M	2	3 - 6 months	2	5 - 7	2
\$1 - 5M	3	6 - 12 months	3	8 - 10	3
\$5 - 10M	4	1 - 3 years	4	11 - 13	4
Over \$10M	5	Over 3 years	5	14+	5

CREATIVE COMMITMENT  
SCORE = SCORE (1) + SCORE (2) + SCORE (3)

For example, Snickers 'Aussie Builders' scores a total of 3: 1 for low duration, 1 for low number of media, 1 for low spend.

John Lewis' long-term Christmas campaign scores a total of 15: 5 for high duration, 5 for high number of media, 5 for high spend. A campaign with a \$2M media spend (medium), that ran for 3-6 months (low) and used 11 media channels (high) would have a total Creative Commitment score of 9.

We can then look at how those Creative Commitment scores correlate with effectiveness.

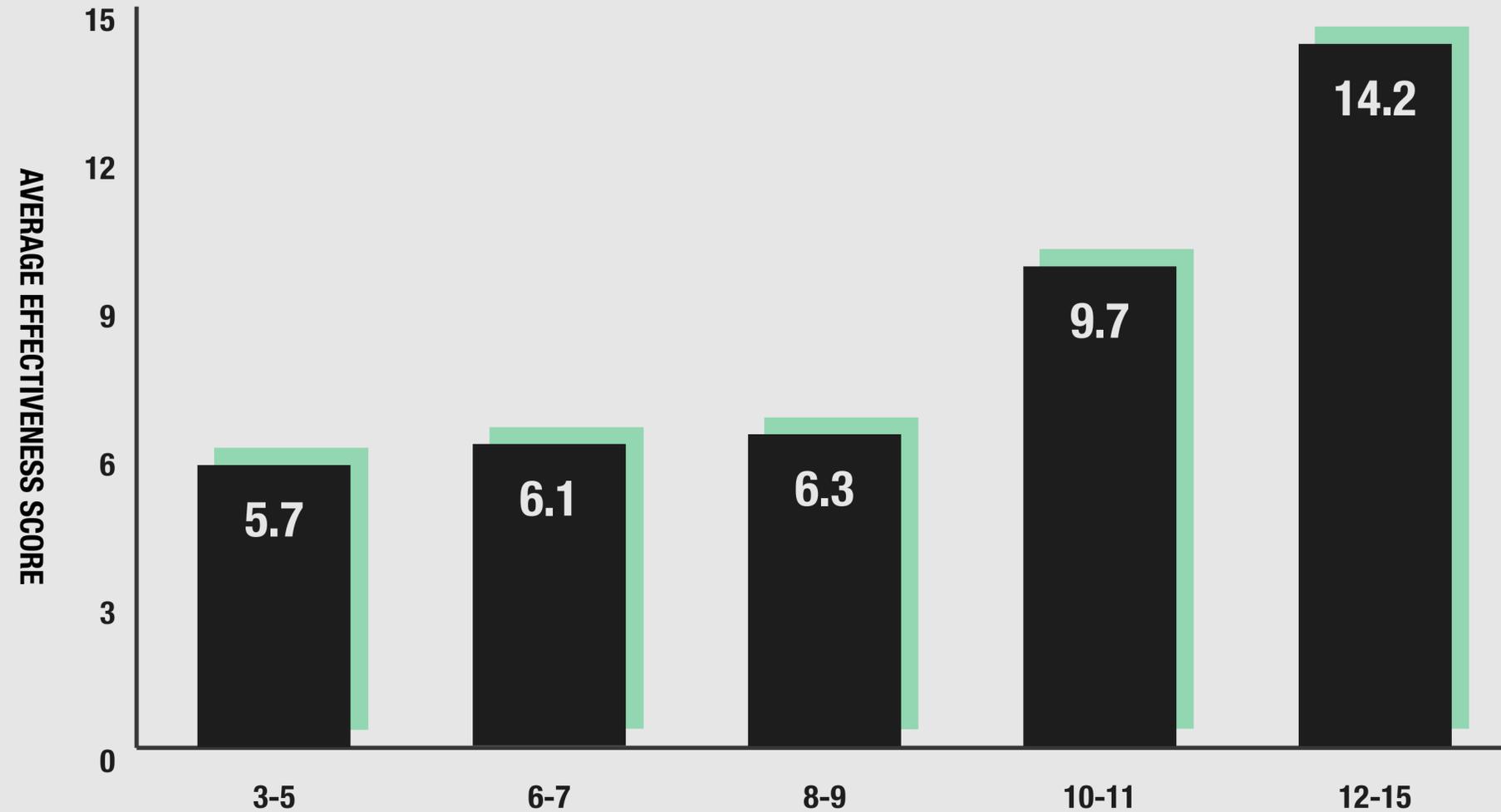
Does effectiveness increase as Creative Commitment increases? And could this give us a new way, additional to the brute force of campaign spend, to predict and maximise effectiveness in advance of running a campaign?

What we found when we ran the analysis was a surprisingly strong correlation between Creative Commitment and effectiveness.

The implication of this is that a key way to improve marketing's effectiveness is to apply a greater level of Creative Commitment to a campaign. If we spend more on it, run it for a longer time period, and execute it across more media channels, then it's likely to produce better sales and brand-building results.

**In short, more Creative Commitment = more effectiveness.**

## EFFECTIVENESS AND CREATIVE COMMITMENT SCORE



Data: Creative Effectiveness Lions Winners 2011-2019

Go Deeper —

Read more in WARC's  
['The Anatomy of Effectiveness'](#)

---

## WHY BUDGET IS IMPORTANT

**It is generally true in marketing that the louder you shout, the more likely you are to be heard. And there's data to back this up. A longstanding rule-of-thumb in marketing is that a brand's share of voice must exceed its share of market if it is to grow.**

**Analysis by Les Binet and Peter Field of entries to the IPA Effectiveness Awards (the findings of several empirical studies) has confirmed this relationship. Brands that invest in excess share of voice (ESOV), defined as SOV above the business's market share, are likely to see long-term base sales growth.**

**This does not mean that small brands need to outspend large brands. But it does mean that brands will struggle to grow without allocating proper resources (relative to their size) behind their campaigns.**

Go Deeper —

Read more in WARC's  
['The Anatomy of Effectiveness'](#)

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## WHY DURATION IS IMPORTANT

**For creativity to deliver significant business impact, it needs to stay in market. Some of the most influential marketing thinking of the past decade has come from Les Binet and Peter Field, on behalf of UK trade body Institute for Practitioners in Advertising (IPA). Their argument is that marketing investment needs to achieve two things: generate sales in the short term (weeks or months), and build brands that can command price premiums. The latter typically requires more than six months of effort.**

**Their studies suggest that an optimum split of marketing investment is 60% for long-term brand building and 40% for short-term activation. The ratio can vary by sector and by context, but significant brand investment is required in all situations to deliver the benefits of a strong brand over the long term. In fact, in sectors where activation is the norm (such as travel), strong brands are even more important.**

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## SUBSTANTIATING CREATIVE COMMITMENT FURTHER USING THE WARC DATABASE

**Since the Creative Effectiveness Lions began in 2011, there have been 120 shortlists and winners for for-profit clients and products. Meaning we are working with relatively small numbers from a statistical perspective.**

**And so we looked to the full WARC database of more than 3,600 case studies from the same time period, from effectiveness award shows all over the world.**

### **WE WANTED TO ASCERTAIN TWO THINGS:**

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**1. Does the WARC database support the principle that effectiveness increases as Creative Commitment increases?**

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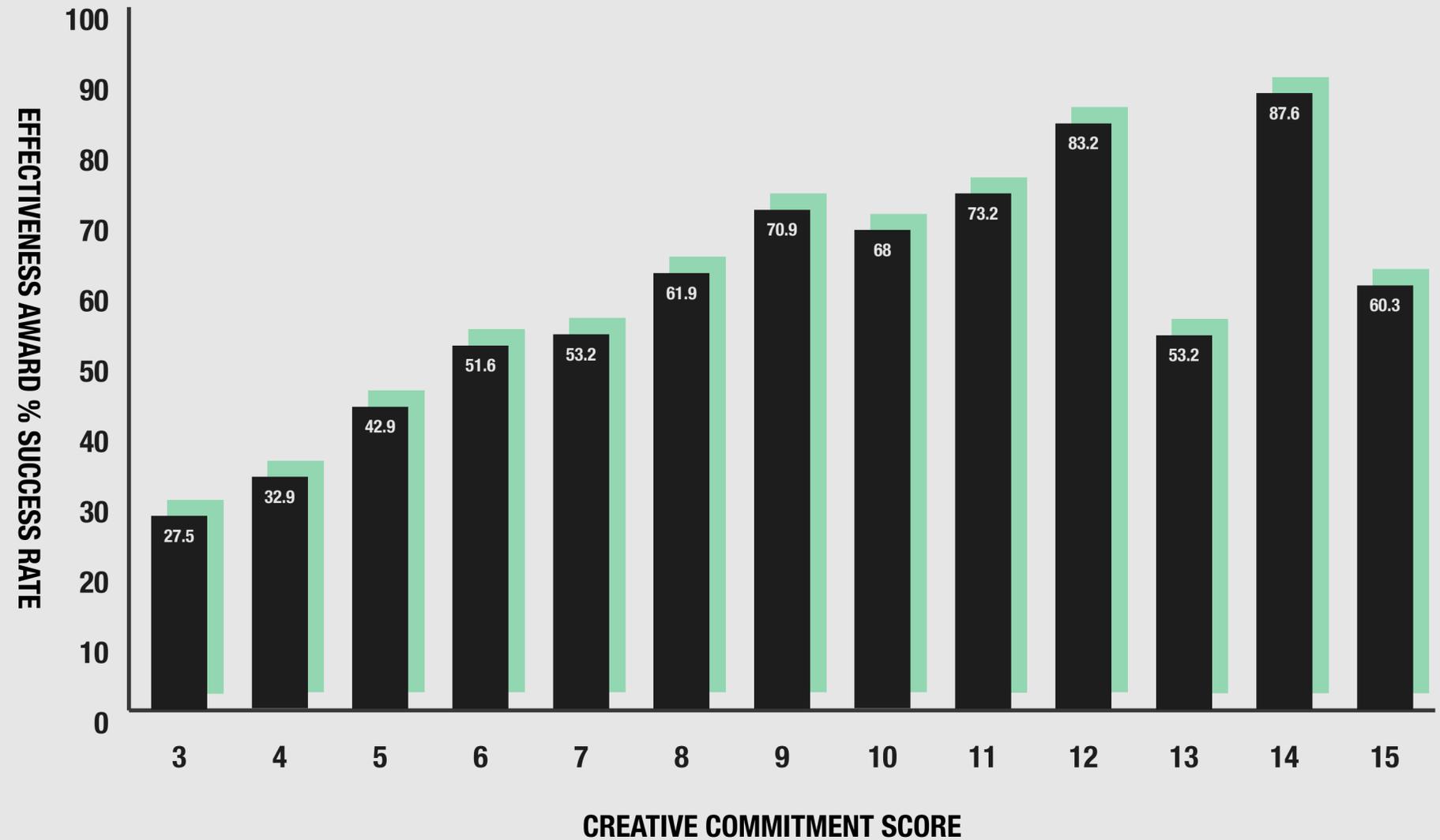
**2. Is this more than simply a factor of spend? Can we decouple spend from the other dimensions of Creative Commitment? Do increases in Creative Commitment improve effectiveness even when spend is low?**

**Again, we calculated all 3,616 cases' Creative Commitment score of between 3 and 15. And to rate their effectiveness, we've used the measure of 'effectiveness award success rate' – the percentage of all entries at each Creative Commitment score that converted into effectiveness award wins.**

This analysis shows that indeed the principle of Creative Commitment holds true, and is in fact even more reliable, across the WARC database.

The relationship appears to break down at the highest levels of Creative Commitment – although at these levels, the number of campaigns is very low and therefore less statistically reliable.

### EFFECTIVENESS AWARD SUCCESS RATE AT INCREASING CREATIVE COMMITMENT SCORE



Data: WARC Global Effectiveness Award Entries & Winners 2011-2019

Go Deeper —

Read more in WARC's  
['The Anatomy of Effectiveness'](#)

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## WHY CHANNEL SPREAD IS IMPORTANT

The work of Professor Byron Sharp and the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute put the focus of media strategy squarely on reach. Mass-reach campaigns are more likely to get to the 'light buyers' that drive growth.

Multi-channel integrated campaigns are more effective than single-channel campaigns, particularly when they work together to increase reach. A 2016 study conducted for the Advertising Research Foundation found that investing in cross-platform campaigns delivers a significantly higher ROI. Specifically, going from one platform to two increases marketing ROI by 19%.

A 2018 study from Kantar Millward Brown showed integrated campaigns are 31% more effective at building brands. As well as incremental reach, integration delivers what Kantar calls a "synergy effect". For example, digital video and TV "working together actually creates an additional 25% of ROI."

---

## IS IT ALL ABOUT BUDGET?

The analysis also allowed us to assess Creative Commitment's relationship with effectiveness at different budget levels.

What we found is that increasing duration or number of media channels increases effectiveness at any level of budget.

**In fact, campaigns with high Creative Commitment at lower levels of media spend actually outperform those at higher media spend.**

A multiple linear regression analysis proved the strong linear relationship between the sum of the dimensions of Creative Commitment and effectiveness, and also proved that three dimensions are independent, and play a roughly equal role in driving effectiveness. That is, budget is no more important to effectiveness than duration or number of media channels used.

This challenges the theory that small budgets are less effective when 'spread thinly' across time or media channels\*. In fact, the effectiveness of smaller budgets increases at greater levels of Creative Commitment – suggesting that, in the case of low budgets, marketers have two levers (in duration and number of media channels) that they can pull to increase their results.



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**In fact, the effectiveness of smaller budgets increases at greater levels of Creative Commitment"**

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## IS IT ALL ABOUT BUDGET?

The analysis also allowed us to assess Creative Commitment's relationship with effectiveness at different budget levels.

What we found is that increasing duration or number of media channels increases effectiveness at any level of budget.

**In fact, campaigns with high Creative Commitment at lower levels of media spend actually outperform those at higher media spend.**

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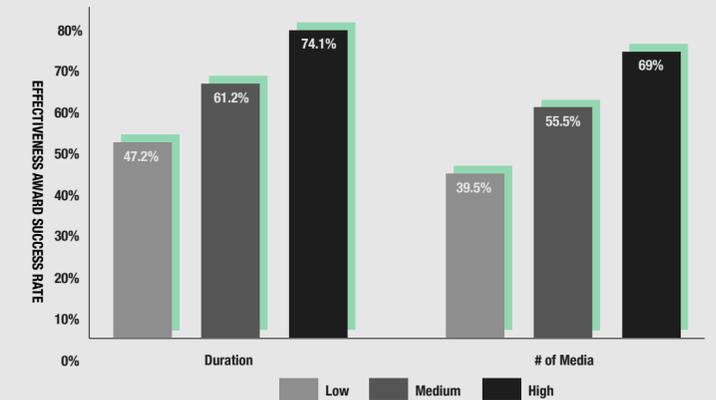
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\*While we don't have the granularity of data to prove or disprove this, we can assume that this relationship must break down at extremely low levels of media spend – that at some level there must be a disadvantage in 'spreading too thinly'. But at the broad budget group of 'Under \$500K', effectiveness increases as duration and number of channels increase.

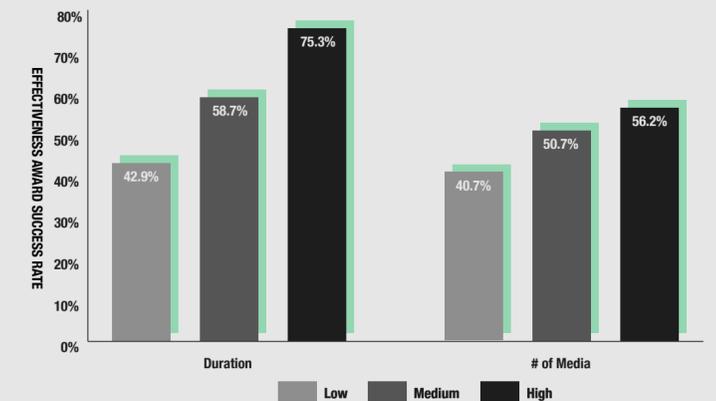


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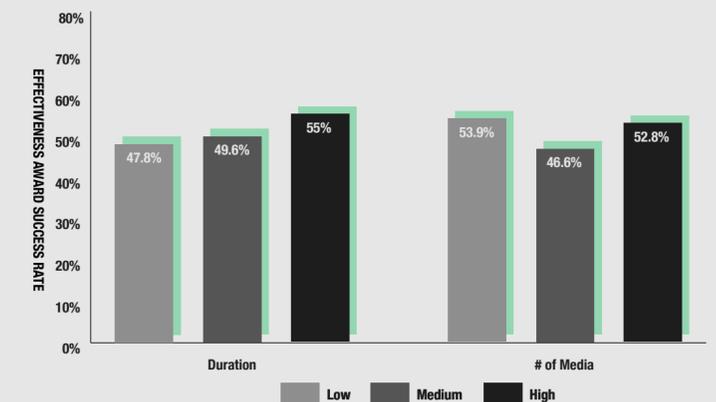
## EFFECTIVENESS SUCCESS RATE AT LOW BUDGET



## EFFECTIVENESS SUCCESS RATE AT MEDIUM BUDGET



## EFFECTIVENESS SUCCESS RATE AT HIGH BUDGET



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# Creative Commitment in the IPA Effectiveness Databank

by **Peter Field**

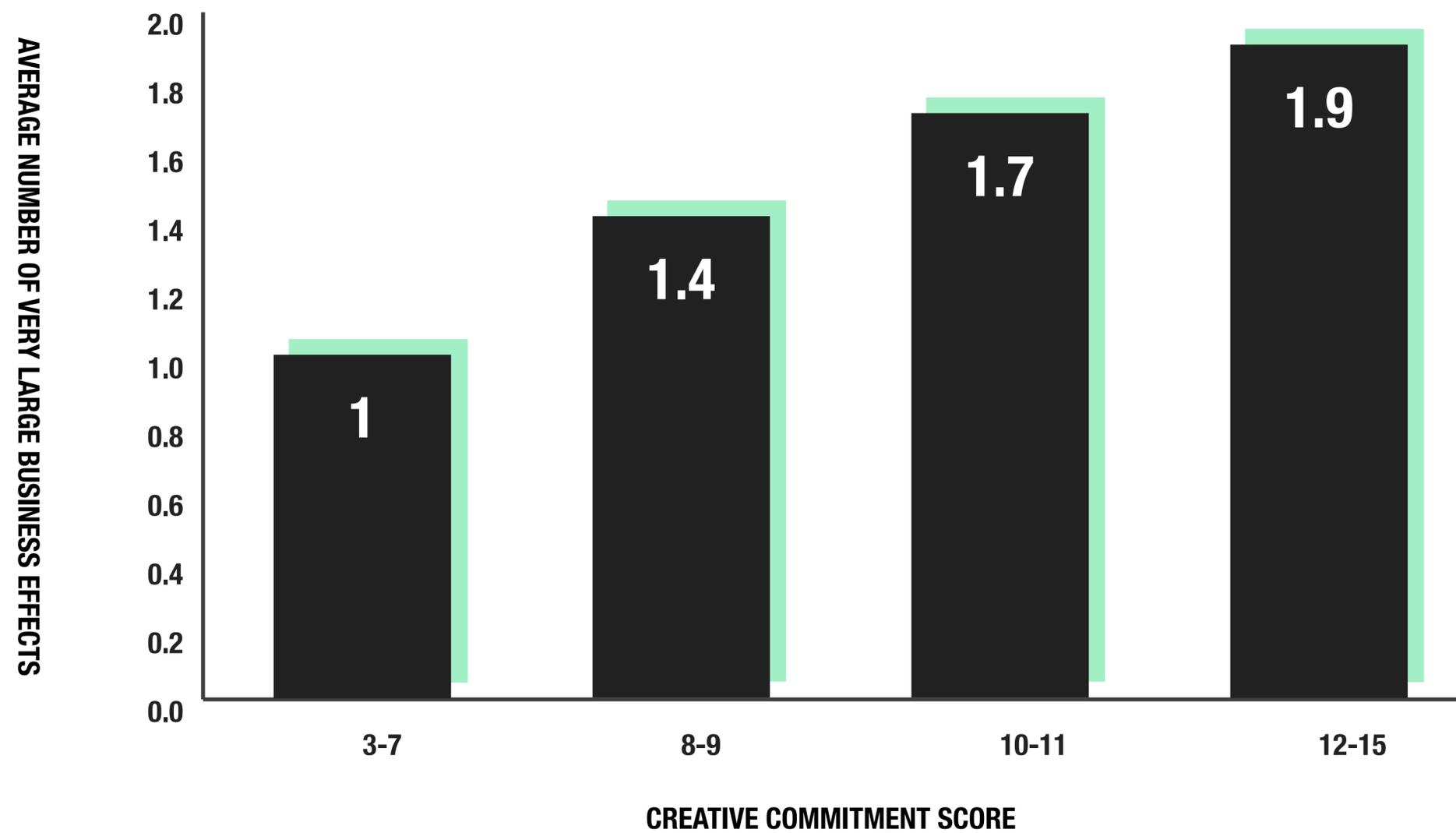
What can the IPA Effectiveness Databank add to the Creative Commitment analysis that we have already seen? Just like the WARC data, it includes creatively-awarded and non-awarded campaigns, though not in the same numbers as WARC, but the IPA data has more detailed effectiveness metrics that allow us to verify and explore the benefits of Creative Commitment and the pressures upon it.

With the IPA data we can replicate the Creative Commitment scoring back to the 2012 Effectiveness Awards year, covering campaigns that ran from 2011-2018, more-or-less the same period examined by the WARC analysis. The IPA sample sizes over the period are somewhat smaller than WARC at 217 cases, so we have to group the Creative Commitment scores into four bands so that we have enough cases in each – around 50. But with the IPA data we can examine the effectiveness levels of each of these bands in terms of hard business effectiveness.

The IPA data includes six key business effects: sales growth, market share growth, price sensitivity improvement, penetration growth, loyalty improvement and profit growth. Each is assessed on a 4-point scale. A portmanteau metric – the number of very large improvements across this basket of measures – was developed a number of years ago and has been extensively used and validated as a broad measure of business success that covers a wide range of strategic objectives. Its strength is that it is an objective performance metric and therefore arguably more reliable than judging success by award wins.

**In practice, the IPA effectiveness metric shows exactly the same pattern we saw with the WARC data; effectiveness grows as Creative Commitment increases.**

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVE COMMITMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS



Although not revealed by these aggregated score bands, the IPA data even suggests the same tailing off of effectiveness that we saw in the WARC data at the very highest levels of Creative Commitment, over 13. The most likely cause of this is the spreading of budgets too thinly across many channels in ways that do not maximise the reach and impact of the campaign.

So the relationship between Creative Commitment and effectiveness in the IPA data is uncannily similar to the WARC data, but this is not entirely surprising. Increasing budget, duration and number of media channels have all been shown to be drivers of effectiveness in previous IPA data analyses. They are all associated with the ability of a campaign to generate reach and to reinforce the salience and memory structures associated with brands.

These are essential requirements to strengthen a brand's mental availability (the extent to which the brand comes easily to mind in buying situations): the extensive work of the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute has shown this to be a fundamental driver of effectiveness. So, in fact, we ought to be surprised if creative commitment didn't relate strongly to effectiveness.

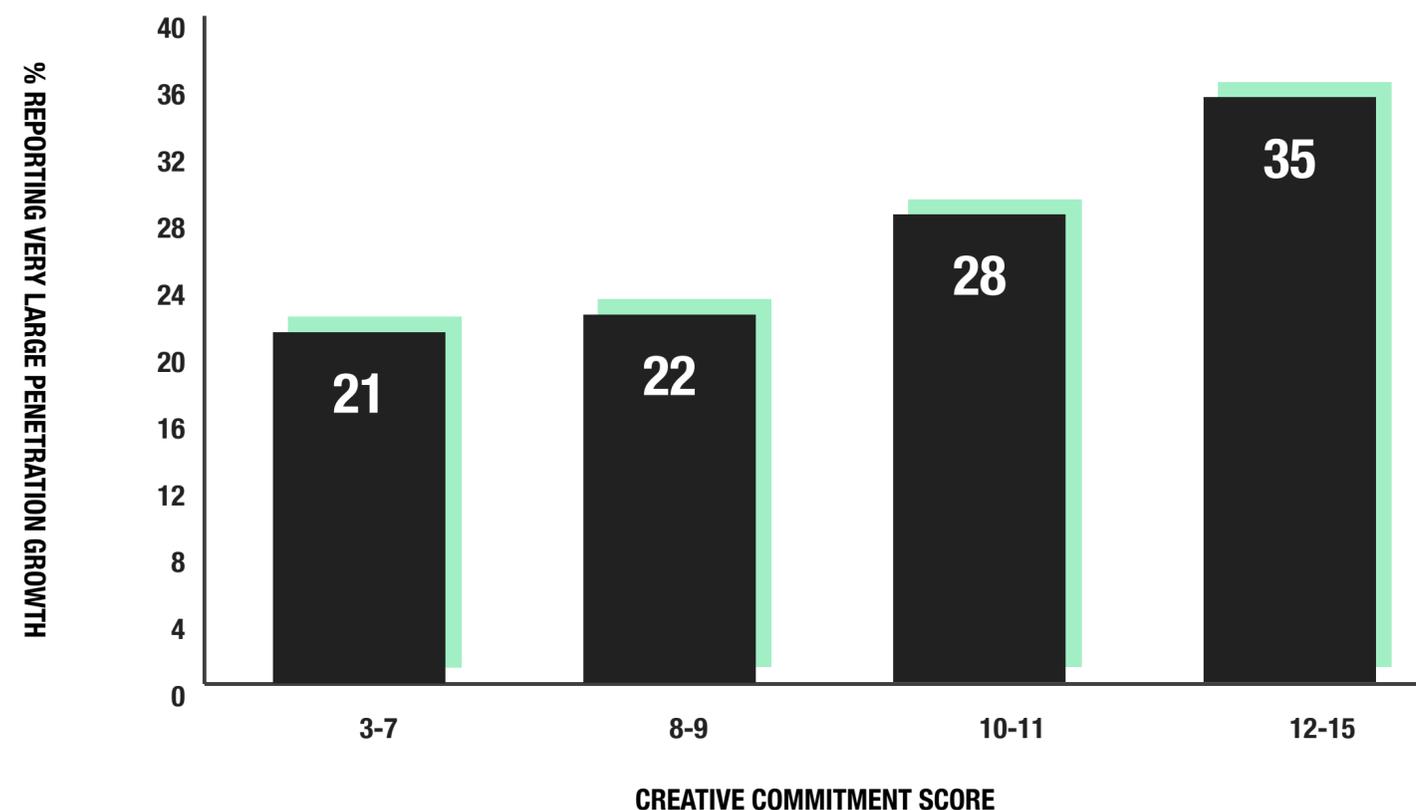
The IPA data also reveals the ways in which Creative Commitment delivers enormous commercial value to wise advertisers. The core strength is an enhanced ability to drive penetration through attracting new customers to the brand, something that appears to grow exponentially with growing Creative Commitment.

In turn, growing customer acquisition has an inevitable effect on market share growth, which also accelerates rapidly as Creative Commitment is increased.

But the impact on the metric that ought to matter most to us all – profit growth – is slightly more nuanced. **There comes a point when striving for greater growth requires levels of investment high enough to eat into profitability (at least for the duration of the campaign investment).** Profit impacts show a distinct tailing off at the highest levels of Creative Commitment, when budget and media channels are at their greatest.

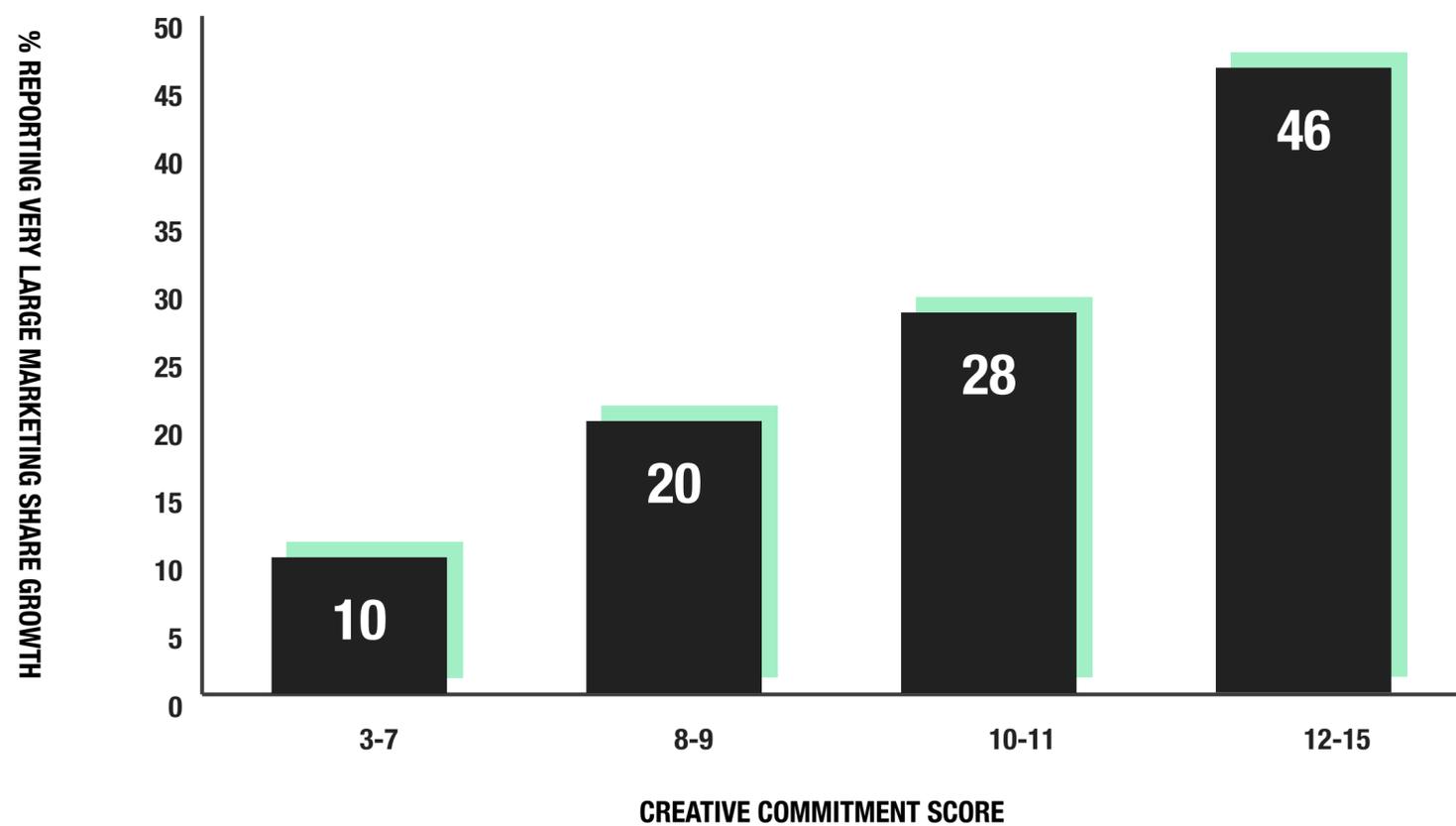
We should note that it is extremely unlikely that this tailing off has anything to do with campaign duration: the relationship between duration and profit growth generally doesn't peak (unless campaigns are allowed to wear out).

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVE COMMITMENT AND PENETRATION GROWTH



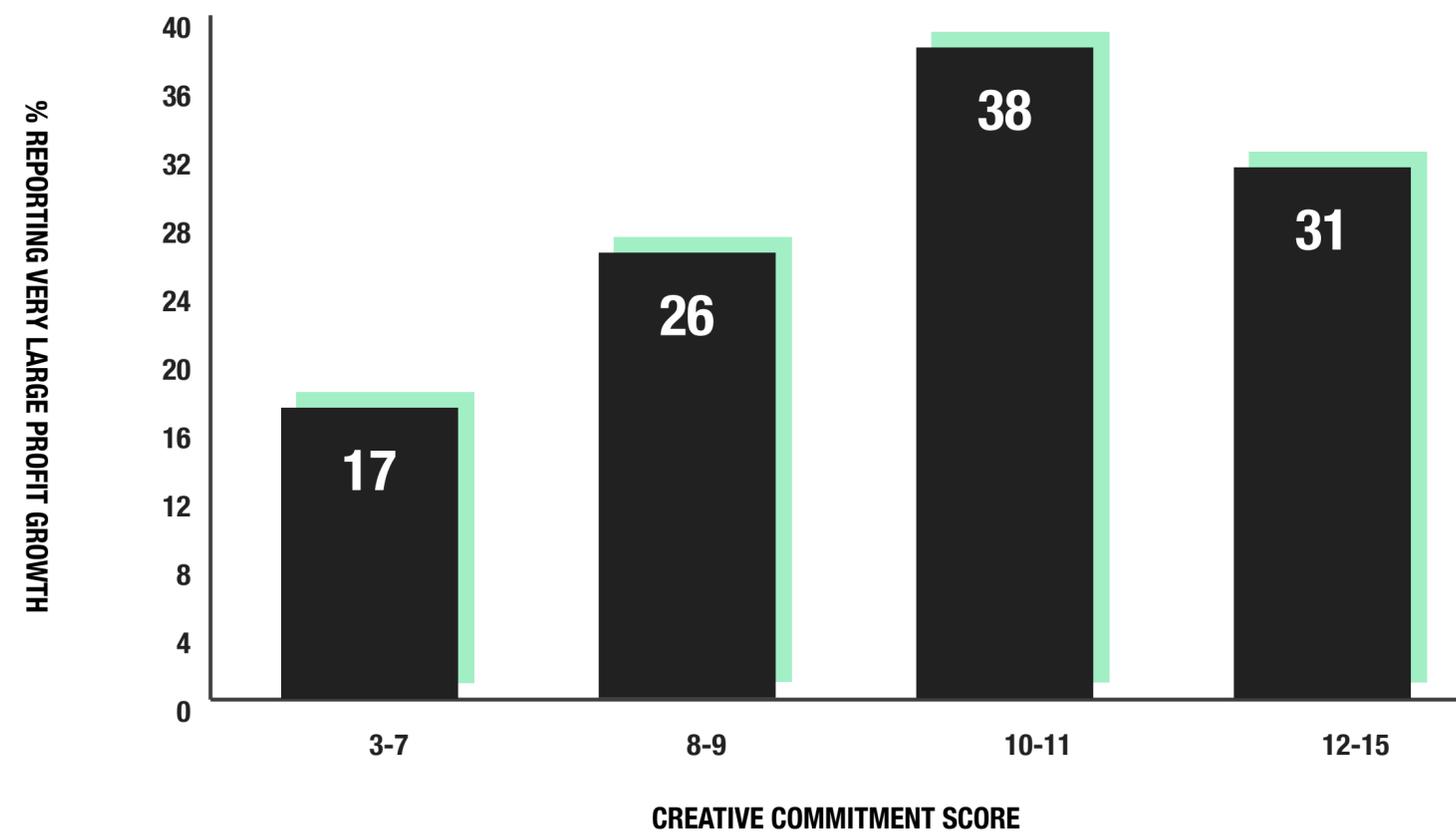
Base: IPA Effectiveness Awards entries 2012-2018

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVE COMMITMENT AND MARKET SHARE GROWTH



Base: IPA Effectiveness Awards entries 2012-2018

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVE COMMITMENT AND PROFIT GROWTH



Base: IPA Effectiveness Awards entries 2012-2018

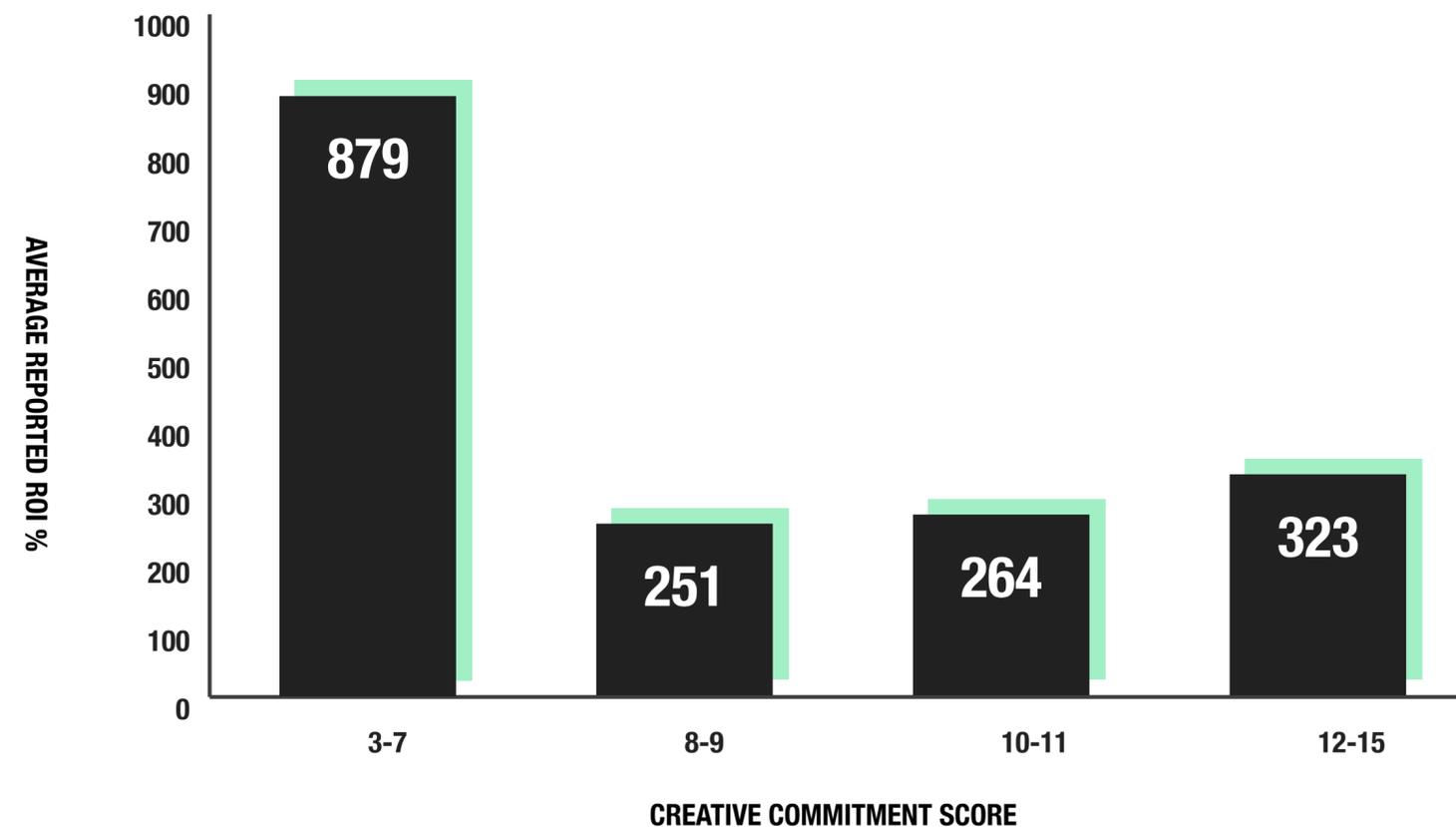
This tailing off effect is usually observed by sophisticated media modelling that teaches us when diminishing profit returns set in, even though growth still rises. These models can be very helpful in identifying 'optimum' investment patterns when they look at long-term impacts.

However, most marketing mix modelling these days looks only at short-term impacts, especially ROI. The effect of this modelling on marketing practice has been both damaging and sinister. Businesses, and therefore marketers and their agencies, have become over-focused on ROI in recent years, especially the very short-term measures of ROI that are derived from Big Data. ROI is an efficiency metric, measuring the ratio of profit growth to the cost incurred in generating it. So, if we want to maximise ROI, we have two choices: maximise profit growth (difficult) or minimise investment (much easier). Endless pressure to maximise ROI has beaten marketers into an advertising model that many know to be unwise, of low Creative Commitment: spend little on a brief 'spike' generating activity (we cannot really regard these as campaigns) and the short-term ROI will be impressive. So what if the sales impact evaporates within days, or if long-term growth will be anaemic at best? The ROI numbers will keep the CFO off our backs. Mediocre growth at minute cost equals magnificent ROI.

The impact on Creative Commitment of an obsession with ROI is very clearly shown in the IPA data. The campaigns that deliver the highest ROIs (by a long way) are low Creative Commitment ones – the very ones that underperform on almost every other business measure.

So it is hardly surprising that a new generation of marketers and agency people have emerged that reject the old high Creative Commitment model – it doesn't put bread on the table if you are rewarded for ROI.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVE COMMITMENT AND ROI



Base: IPA Effectiveness Awards entries 2012-2018

But can we really be sure that the pursuit of short-term sales spikes leads us to low Creative Commitment? The IPA data includes a portmanteau metric of short-term ‘activation’ effects (such as direct sales and click-through behaviours). This metric responds most strongly to low Creative Commitment activity – ads that are designed to work at level 1 on the Effectiveness spectrum, getting us to act strongly now rather than creating any lasting brand impact.

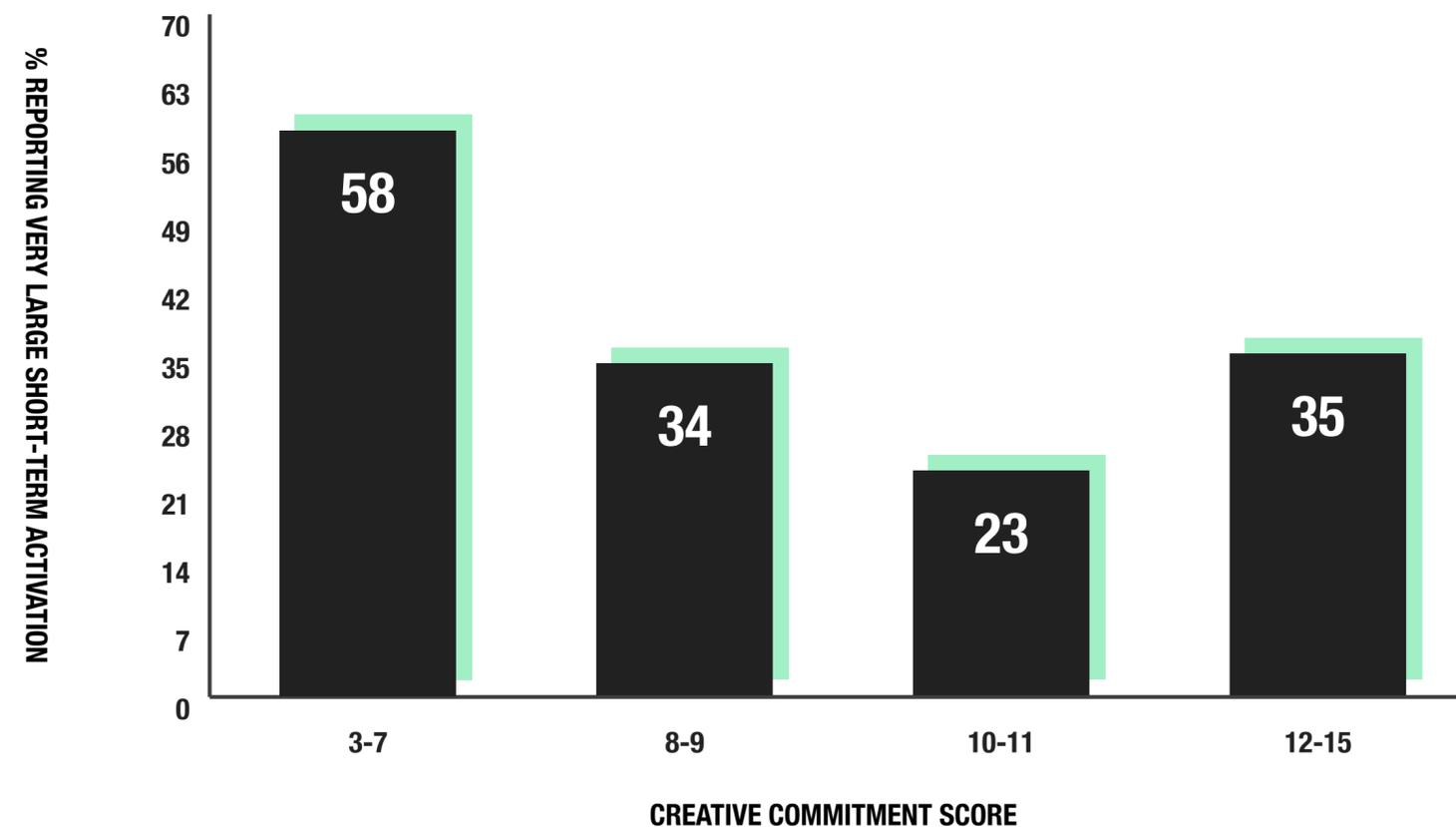
It is worth noting that the highest Creative Commitment campaigns achieve slightly stronger short-term effects than campaigns immediately lower down the spectrum – this is because of the turbo-charging effect of a strong brand on short-term response. But despite their much greater long-term effectiveness, they cannot match the short-term effects of ultra-low Creative Commitment ads, whose sole strength this is.

It is entirely understandable, and in no way a criticism, that marketers and agencies have been driven to abandon Creative Commitment. CFOs are largely only interested in ROI and a massive, well-funded Big Data industry has exploited this obsession. This has inevitably been reflected in the kinds of campaigns that we have been taught to respect and therefore reward at creative shows around the world. As Theodore Roosevelt is reputed to have said: “If you've got them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.”

This is a global issue, not restricted to any one awards show or set of judges – it has happened everywhere. If an ever-growing proportion of agency output is level-1 advertising, and our experience teaches us that CFOs like this output, then creative

awards judges must respond in kind by rewarding it more frequently. This is exactly what has happened, at least amongst the campaigns in the IPA Effectiveness Databank. If we compare the first half of our analysis period with the second, we can see a marked growth in the proportion of creatively-awarded campaigns that were low Creative Commitment ones, and a corresponding decline in the proportion that were high Creative Commitment ones.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVE COMMITMENT AND SHORT-TERM EFFECTS



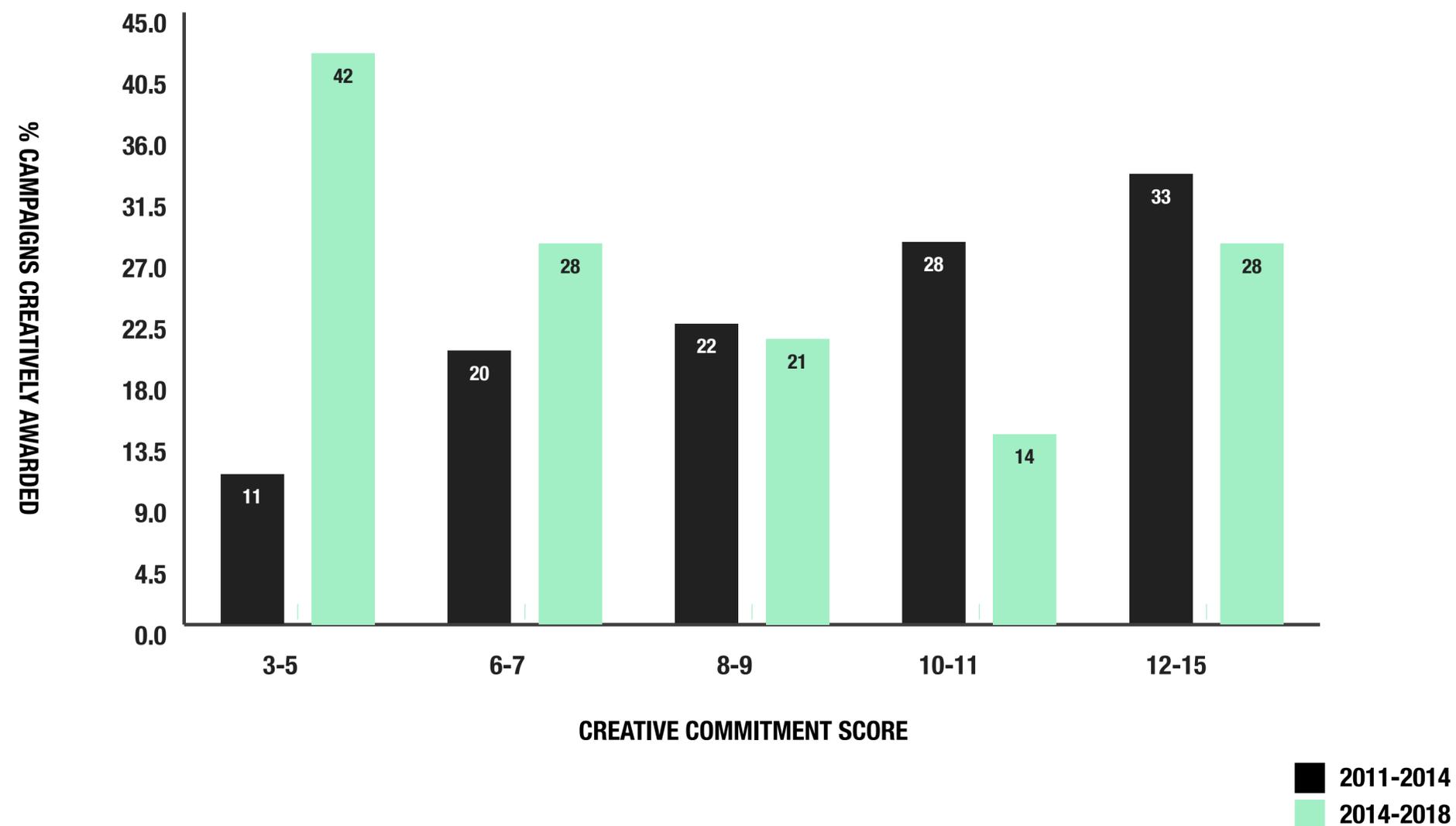
Base: IPA Effectiveness Awards entries 2012-2018

Great creativity brings an astonishing potential improvement to effectiveness – by an order of magnitude when executed with high Creative Commitment but considerably less when executed with low commitment. The current trend, from high to low Creative Commitment, is making it increasingly difficult to evidence the value of creativity.

And yet...creativity remains the single most important tool we have to drive effectiveness, so we need to wrest back control of its execution from the strictures of ROI-led thinking if we want it to flourish. A counter-revolution is urgently needed and leadership should perhaps come from those with the widest influence over the marketing world: creative awards judges. They have not caused this problem, but they can certainly be an important part of the solution.

Long live the counter-revolution.

## THE IMPACT OF GROWING SHORT-TERM PRESSURES ON CREATIVE AWARDS



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**CREATIVE COMMITMENT IS NOT A PANACEA.**

**A quick note of caution – as we’ve studied Creative Commitment, we’ve analysed campaigns with a strong strategic basis. The Creative Effectiveness Lions, WARC and IPA databases don’t tend to include campaigns that are poorly planned from a strategy or media perspective. If we were to study such campaigns, our expectation is that they would prove to be ineffective no matter how high their Creative Commitment scores were.**

**Our advice is that Creative Commitment is an amplifier of robust strategy and media planning – not a replacement for them.**

## The ultimate combination of Creative Excellence and Creative Commitment.

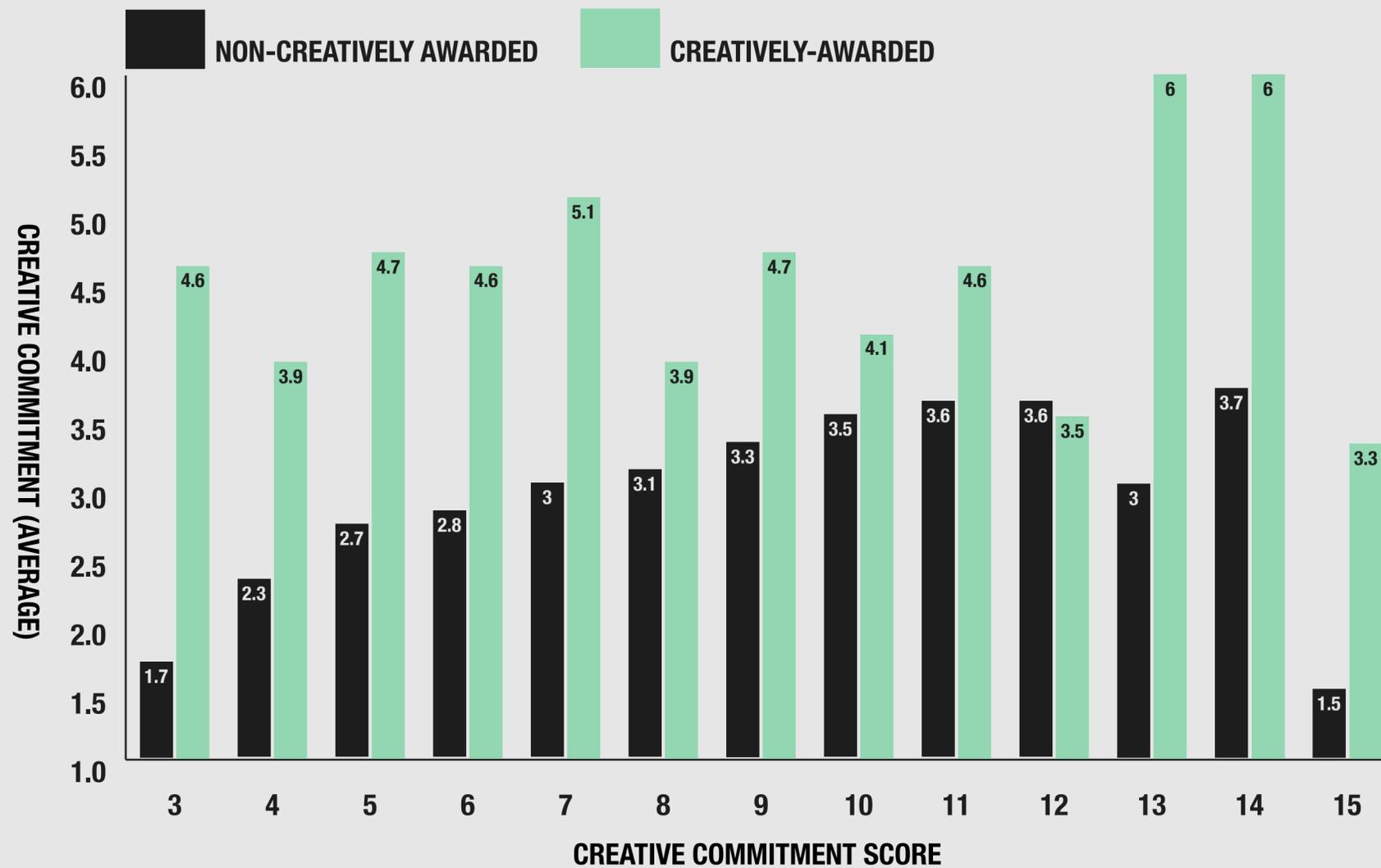
To really maximise the effectiveness potential of our work, the data shows that we should be maximising the Creative Commitment of campaigns with creative-award-winning qualities.

Creatively-awarded campaigns outperform less creative campaigns at almost all levels of Creative Commitment – particularly lower levels.

The back bars in this chart show effectiveness increasing as Creative Commitment increases. The green bars show how much more effective creatively-awarded campaigns are at each Creative Commitment score. Although those green bars are a little erratic (due to the low numbers of creatively-awarded campaigns at each level in our data set), the story they tell is that, especially at low levels of Creative Commitment, the quality of the creative idea itself makes an enormous difference to the effectiveness of the campaign, often doubling its effectiveness score.

What this tells us is that our very best chance of being highly effective comes from choosing a highly creative idea, then giving it as much media spend, duration in market and different media channels as we possibly can.

## AVERAGE WARC EFFECTIVENESS POINTS SCORE – CREATIVELY-AWARDED VS NON-CREATIVELY AWARDED CAMPAIGNS AT CREATIVE COMMITMENT LEVELS



Go Deeper —

Read more in WARC's  
[‘The Anatomy of Effectiveness’](#)



**At low levels of Creative Commitment, the quality of the creative idea itself makes an enormous difference to the effectiveness of the campaign."**

## WHY CREATIVITY IS IMPORTANT

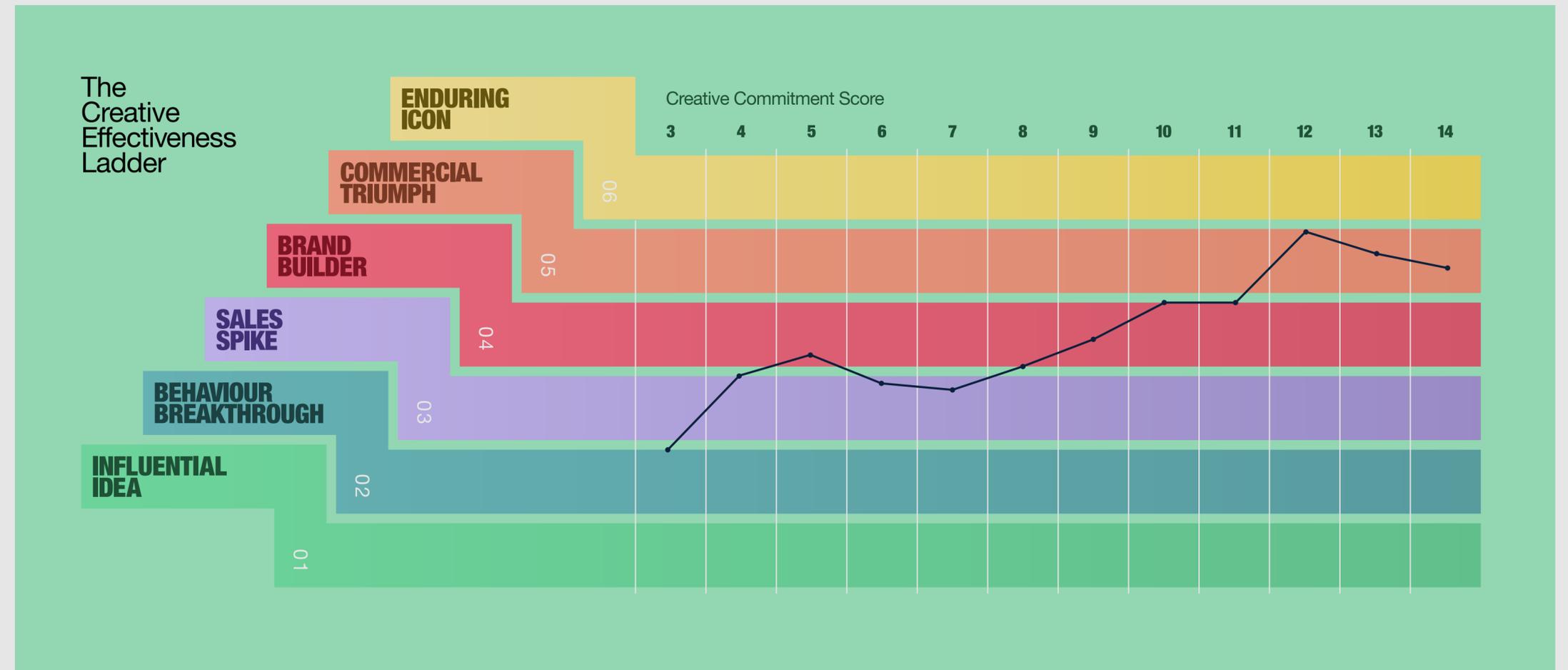
**There is now widespread evidence that creativity delivers increased effectiveness when it produces communication that is distinctive, engaging and emotional. In a landmark 2014 study, Data2Decisions found that, after brand and market size, creativity was the single biggest determinant of advertising profitability, and several times more powerful than the other levers marketers can control. Ad researcher System1 reports that the emotional strength of advertising relates to share growth. Kantar Millward Brown agrees that “Emotion is crucial in brand and advertising success.”**

**There is evidence that a shift towards short-termism in marketing is undermining this link between creativity and effectiveness. This trend was identified by Peter Field, who found that short-term campaigns are only one-third as efficient as longer-term campaigns. The ‘crisis’ in creative effectiveness has been echoed by Orlando Wood at System1, who argues that the current application of creativity has moved away from tried-and-tested effective techniques like characters and humour.**

As the chart on the right shows, campaigns with higher Creative Commitment are more likely to reach higher levels of The Creative Effectiveness Ladder.

Campaigns at the lowest Creative Commitment score barely average above Behaviour Breakthrough. And at the highest scores, campaigns safely average out at Commercial Triumph.

## CREATIVE COMMITMENT AND THE CREATIVE EFFECTIVENESS LADDER



Data: WARC Global Effectiveness Award Entries & Winners 2011-2019

**USING CREATIVE COMMITMENT AS A PLANNING TOOL**

In the planning stages of a campaign, we can set media spend, duration and number of media channels in a way that helps us easily understand how our campaign compares to norms in Creative Commitment, and how that relates to its likely effectiveness.

Use the following system to score your campaign on each dimension, then add the three scores together to arrive at a total Creative Commitment score.

Media Spend	Score (1)	Duration	Score (2)	# Channels	Score (3)
Under \$500K	1	Under 3 months	1	1 - 4	1
\$500k - 1M	2	3 - 6 months	2	5 - 7	2
\$1 - 5M	3	6 - 12 months	3	8 - 10	3
\$5 - 10M	4	1 - 3 years	4	11 - 13	4
Over \$10M	5	Over 3 years	5	14+	5

**CREATIVE COMMITMENT SCORE = SCORE (1) + SCORE (2) + SCORE (3)**

**WHAT YOUR CREATIVE COMMITMENT SCORE MEANS:**

**3 - 5**  
 Danger of poor performance or temporary, short-term results – Bottom 37% of campaigns – look to increase spend, duration or number of media channels to lift Creative Commitment score

**6 - 8**  
 Likely to achieve good results – Middle 35% of campaigns – look to maximise effectiveness with a campaign idea with creative-award winning qualities

**9 - 12**  
 Optimal Effectiveness – Top 25% of campaigns

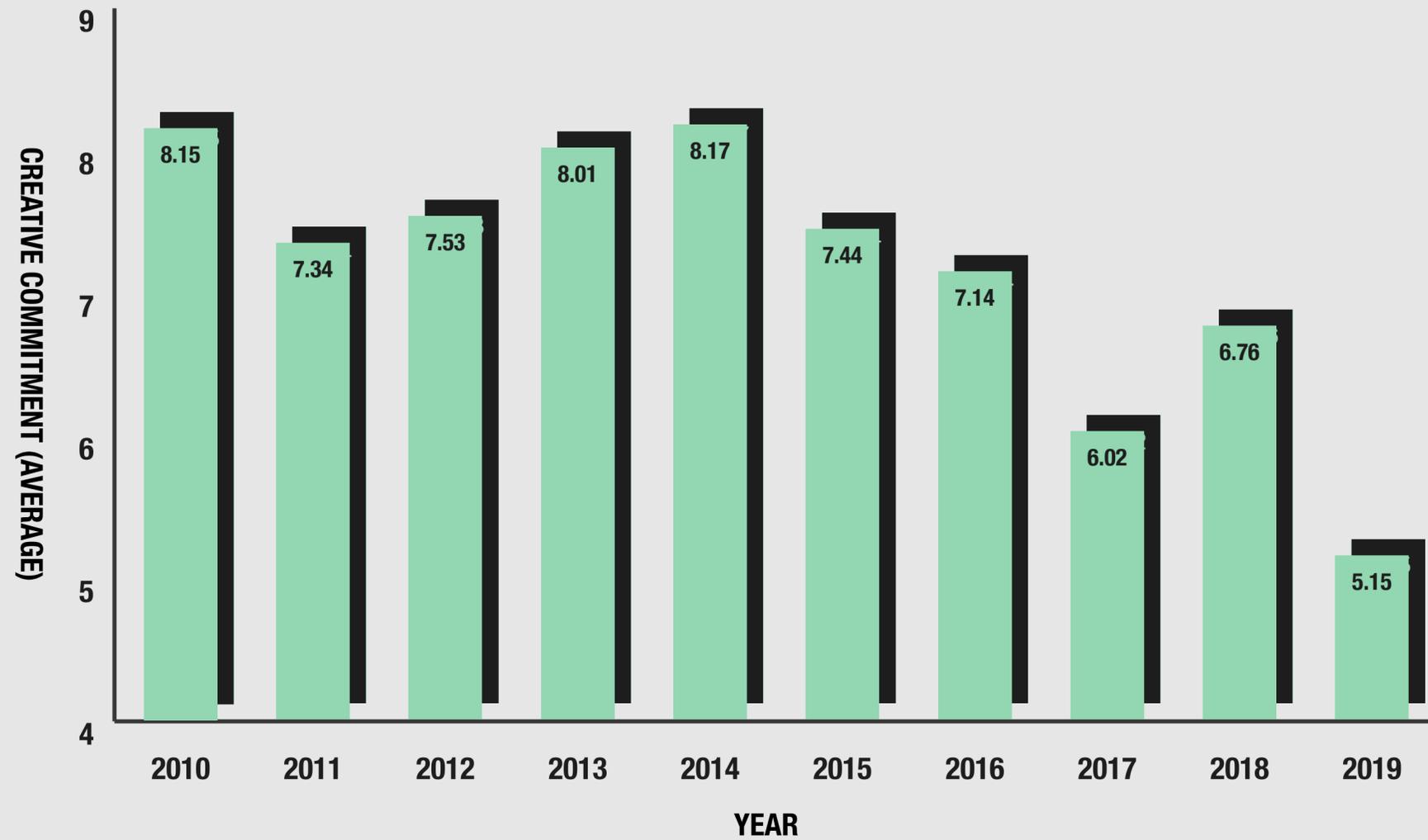
**13+**  
 Highest 3% of Creative Commitment scores – monitor for diminishing returns

*Note: depending on the size of your brand and market, you may want to adjust your definition of high, medium and low spend and adjust media spend scores accordingly.*

## The decline in Creative Commitment.

The data revealed one more important – but worrying – finding. Across the second half of the last decade, Creative Commitment has declined significantly as marketers have embraced smaller budgets, smaller durations and fewer, more online and social media.

## THE COLLAPSE OF CREATIVE COMMITMENT 2014-2019

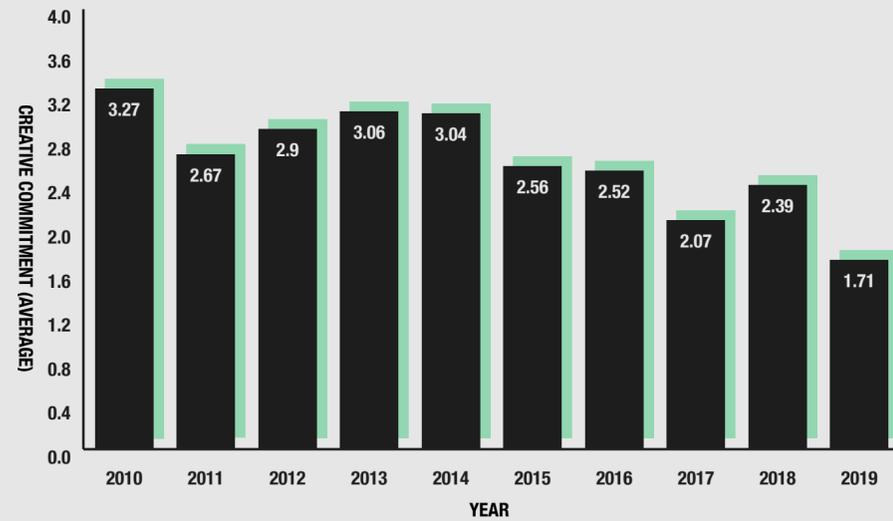


Data: WARC Global Effectiveness Award Entries & Winners 2011-2019

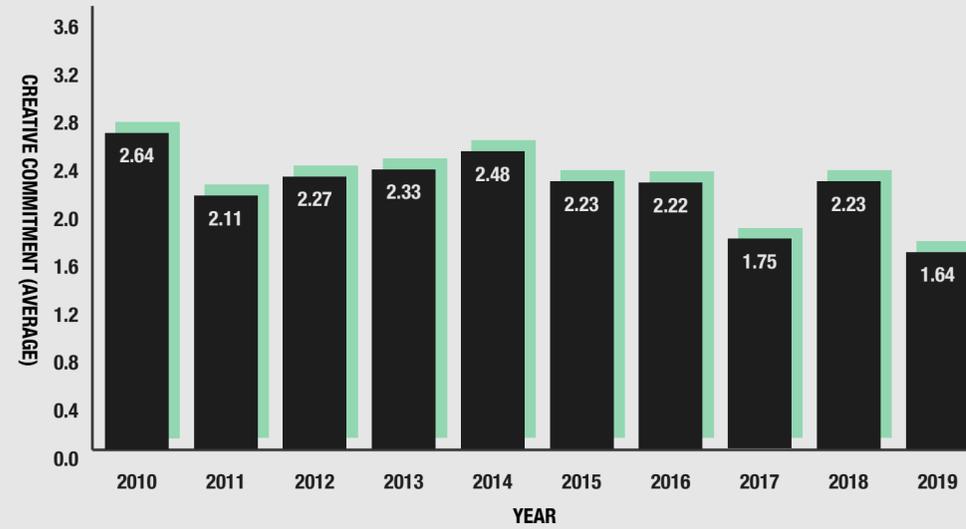
## This decline is true across all three dimensions of Creative Commitment.

This finding should be a clear message to the marketing industry that our budgeting and campaign planning choices are moving us, very rapidly, in the opposite direction of effectiveness.

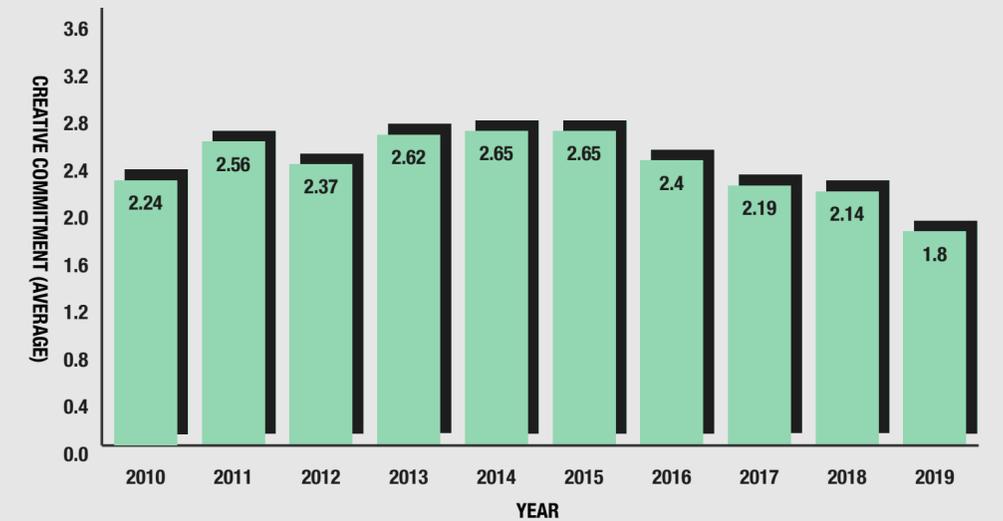
CAMPAIGN MEDIA SPEND 2010-2019



CAMPAIGN DURATION 2010-2019



NUMBER OF MEDIA CHANNELS USED 2010-2019



Data: WARC Global Effectiveness Award Cases 2011-2019

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**CREATIVE COMMITMENT IN SUMMARY**

**Creative Commitment correlates very tightly with effectiveness – campaigns get more effective in terms of sales, brand building, market share and profit effects the longer their duration, the more numerous their media channels, and the higher their overall spend.**

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**It's not all about budget – even at lower budgets, campaign effectiveness can be increased by running for longer and spreading across more media channels.**

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**Marketers should be working to maximise the Creative Commitment of their campaigns.**

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**Marketers have three levers (spend, duration and number of media channels) and pulling any of these levers will give their work an effectiveness advantage.**

**Within fixed budgets, marketers can drive greater overall brand building and commercial growth by doing fewer campaigns, each with a higher level of Creative Commitment.**

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**Creativity is a fourth and highly impactful lever – creatively-awarded campaigns are much more effective overall, and at every level of Creative Commitment.**

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**The marketing and advertising industry is currently reducing the Creative Commitment of its campaigns, and has been doing so for a number of years. This will be significantly reducing the return on investment of the industry's work.**

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**Our guidance to marketers is to work to reverse this decline – and, where competitors are slow to do so, gain an advantage by increasing Creative Commitment as quickly as possible.**

# James Hurman

James is a marketing effectiveness expert from New Zealand. Formerly a strategic planner in the advertising industry, James' work has won more than 50 marketing effectiveness awards, including Grands Prix at the Effies and Asian Marketing Effectiveness Awards, multiple Effie Agency of the Year awards, and a Cannes Creative Effectiveness Lion. In 2013, James was named the world's number one planning director by The Big Won Report. His 2011 book *The Case for Creativity* explored his and others' research proving that more creative companies, agencies and campaigns achieve significantly better commercial results. The book was republished in 2015 by Cannes Lions. James has served as a member of the inaugural Cannes Creative Effectiveness Lions jury, Chair of the Spikes Creative Effectiveness Jury, and Chair of the New Zealand Effie Awards.



# Peter Field

A graduate of Cambridge, Peter spent 15 years as a strategic planner in advertising, working at BMP (now adam&eveDDB) and Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO before going on to manage the planning departments of Bates and Grey. For the last 15 years he has pursued a consultancy role, as well as providing training for the marketing and communications disciplines. Over the last 30 years he has worked in most categories and on over 100 brands. In the mid-1990s, as a practitioner member of the IPA's Value of Creativity Group, Peter advised on the development of the IPA Databank of effectiveness case study data and has been involved in its evolution and analysis ever since. He has written regularly for WARC on effectiveness-related topics. He regularly speaks about marketing effectiveness at conferences and educational events, including those of the IPA and The Effies. In 2006 he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the IPA.



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