THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND

Advertising That Pays Back

BY ANDREW TINDALL

System1 | effie

"In a world of fragmented media, short-term metrics, and cautious decision-making, this book brings much-needed clarity. It reconnects creativity, scale, and consistency into a single, coherent view of how advertising actually works and is a playbook for how to make it work more reliably. Few books manage to be this clear, this credible, and this important. It should be mandatory reading for both clients and agencies."

SYL SALLER CBE, EXECUTIVE COACH AND FORMER GLOBAL CMO DIAGEO

"Effie Worldwide represents the highest standard of marketing effectiveness in the world. The Creative Dividend offers a clear framework for building brands with consistency and effectiveness while using creativity to drive growth at scale."

MARCEL MARCONDES, GLOBAL CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, AB INBEV

"The Creative Dividend research from Effie and System1 is a game-changer. Its unprecedented scale and rigorous analysis finally give marketers the integrated view on the impact of creativity and media together. For every marketer today, its relevance is paramount: the research doesn't just show how advertising works, it proves creativity can reliably drive meaningful business growth. The impact? It's undeniable. When great creative is paired with smart media investment, we see not just returns, but compounding returns. That's the power marketers need to unlock."

ANDREA BRIMMER, CHIEF MARKETING & PR OFFICER, ALLY

When we're building future demand for our brands, we're talking to people who are not yet in the category, and who naturally filter out our advertising. Unless, that is, it's creative enough to earn their attention. This abiding power of creativity to impact future market share and profit growth is explored and validated powerfully in The Creative Dividend, providing marketers with the evidence and playbook to lead their brands toward better, more effective work."

JAMES HURMAN, FOUNDER & CHAIR OF PREVIOUSLY UNAVAILABLE, PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE MASTER OF ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS

"So much marketing thought is recycled. But this research stands out with genuinely original thinking and big ideas. And the best bit is that these ideas are brilliantly explained and immediately applicable. A book that cannot and should not be ignored."

PROFESSOR MARK RITSON, FOUNDER OF THE MINIMBA

"Effie ultimately exists to help marketers create business value, and The Creative Dividend is yet another way of supporting that ambition. This is the first analysis of its kind - bringing together creative quality, media investment, and commercial outcomes, delivering evidence the industry has not seen before. By showing exactly how to make creativity more effective, this research reinforces advertising as an established engine of business growth, and arms marketers with clear, actionable evidence and practical guidance to invest with confidence."

TRACI ALFORD, GLOBAL CEO, EFFIE WORLDWIDE

"We know that nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come. Yet knowing the true power of an idea has become increasingly difficult given the complexity and pressures of modern marketing.

The Creative Dividend is a timely and much-needed response to this challenge. It offers a rigorous reframing of effectiveness, underpinned by an unmatched depth of data that proves the power of creativity and media working together as two sides of the same coin.

Learnings every business should be paying close attention to."

KARINA WILSHER, PARTNER AND GLOBAL CEO, ANOMALY

"The Creative Dividend articulates what we've experienced first-hand at Grind. Distinctive creative ideas are a competitive advantage for challenger brands when you have the confidence to scale them. By committing to creative consistency and doubling down on the work that earns attention, we've outpaced the category and become the UK's fastest-growing coffee brand."

TEDDY ROBINSON, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, GRIND

Marketing is one of the few commercial investments that compounds when it works. When businesses invest in advertising that genuinely changes behavior, they create advantages that build over time. Commodities become brands that are easier to choose, categories expand, pricing power strengthens, and future growth becomes less costly to achieve.

Yet much of modern marketing is structured in ways that prevent this compounding from happening. The payback from advertising campaigns only grows under specific conditions. Creative quality must be strong enough to capture branded attention, change memory, and shape perception. And that creative quality must be supported with sufficient media to reach enough customers for those effects to take hold. When either side is missing, advertising underperforms. When both are present, advertising becomes a reliable commercial investment that scales.

This research aims to provide a practical guide to recombining creative and media, drawing on previously unpublished data. It builds on decades of effectiveness research and adds new evidence by linking Effie Insights' database with System1's creative measurement data. The result is a single view of how creative quality and media support work together to drive the Brand Effects and Business Results that matter most. Throughout the book, you will find frameworks you can use to diagnose why campaigns underperform, improve creative quality, and plan investment in a way that makes advertising more predictable and more valuable over time. At the very least, it shows why all businesses should invest in advertising.

"This book brings together years of collaboration between Effie and System1, uniting two of the industry's most significant data sets for the first time. Built on decades of marketing evidence and shaped by many contributors, it aims to add to what has come before and deepen our shared understanding of the role of creativity and media in advertising effectiveness."

ANDREW TINDALL, AUTHOR AND SVP GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS, SYSTEM1

Why Creativity and Media Must Be Considered Together

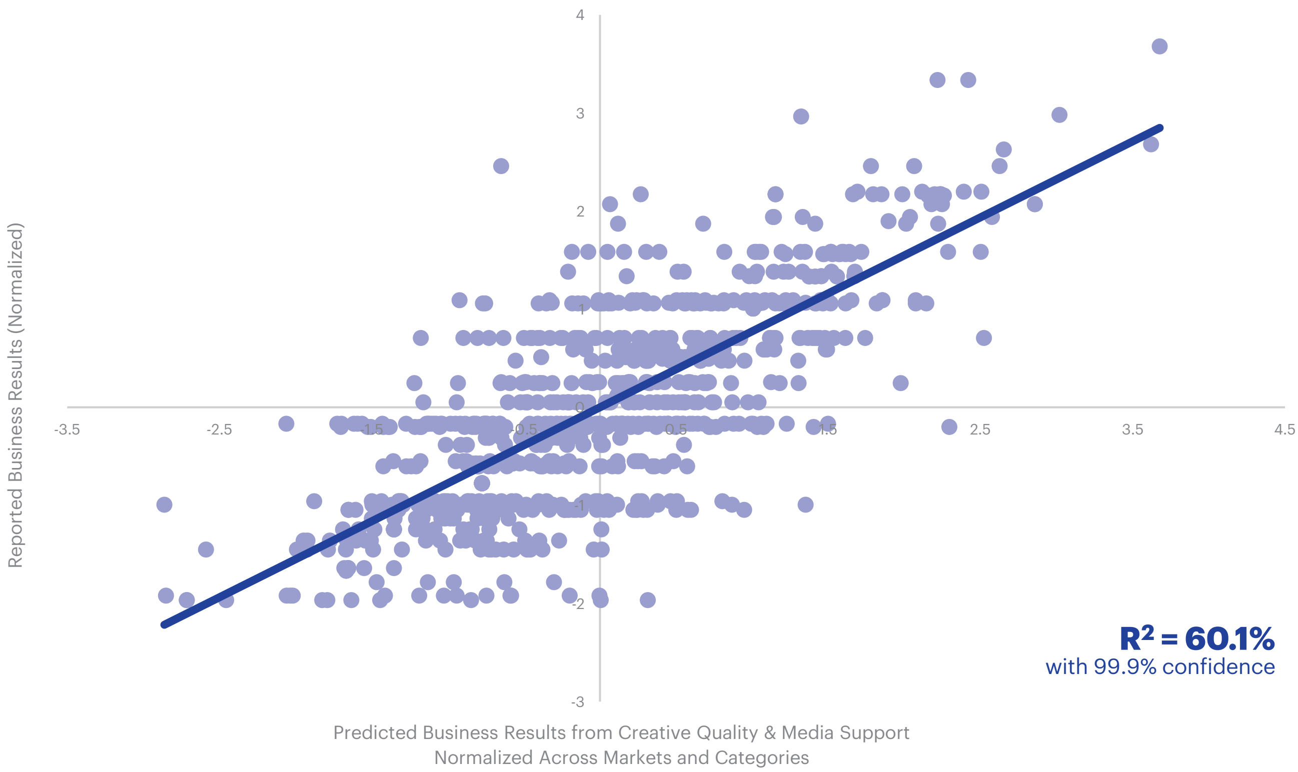
This research builds on decades of effectiveness thinking, showing how media choices determine the scale and type of outcomes advertising can deliver, and how higher creative quality increases the likelihood that those outcomes endure. What has been missing is a single, unified view of creativity and media together. That is what this work provides.

By linking creative quality and media support across 1,265 campaigns, we show that the majority (60.1%) of reported Business Results from advertising can be explained *(Fig 91 from Chapter 7)*. If marketers can recognize when a campaign is more creative than others in its category and increase its reach with more media investment, advertising becomes reliable, predictable, and repeatable.

This finding reframes modern effectiveness. Creative quality alone matters, but its impact accelerates when it is backed with sufficient media. The relationship is not linear. It is exponential. As marketers invest more confidently behind stronger creative ideas, returns compound. This is the foundation of *The Creative Dividend*.

This is not a debate about whether creativity or media matters more. It shows that their effects in market are inseparable. The decisions that drive growth are therefore not "creative decisions" and "media decisions," but one combined practice. It is the difference between ad spend you defend and investment you can repeat.

Figure 91
Creative quality and media support explain 60.1% of campaign Business Results.
How Creative Quality and Media Support Explain Business Results, normalized to compare across categories.



1,200 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database . Creative quality measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 180,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, & showmanship. Media attributes reported in Effie Insights' database . Model built per category using reported control variables, normalized to compare categories.

The Structural Challenge Facing Modern Marketing

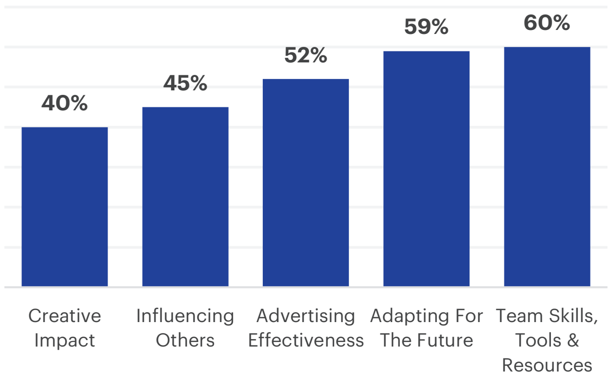
Despite long-standing evidence that advertising works, modern marketing operates under increasing pressure. Media has fragmented. Attention is harder to earn. Short-term metrics are easier to track than long-term outcomes. Budgets are scrutinized more closely than ever.

In this environment, marketers face difficult trade-offs. Should they invest in creative ideas that take time to pay back, or prioritize short-term efficiency and an immediately measurable response? These are not failures of intent or understanding. They are structural pressures built into the modern marketing system.

To understand how these pressures manifest within organizations, Effie and System1 surveyed marketers across the US, Europe, and APAC. Around half report low confidence in advertising's ability to deliver effectiveness, and four in ten are uncertain about their team's ability to use creativity to achieve it. This is not a knowledge gap. It is a confidence gap *(Fig 1)*.

Figure 1
Marketers lack confidence in key areas.

% Lacking Confidence In (Bottom 2 Box)



Global Marketer Survey, Effie and System1 2025, N: 386 US, Europe, APAC.

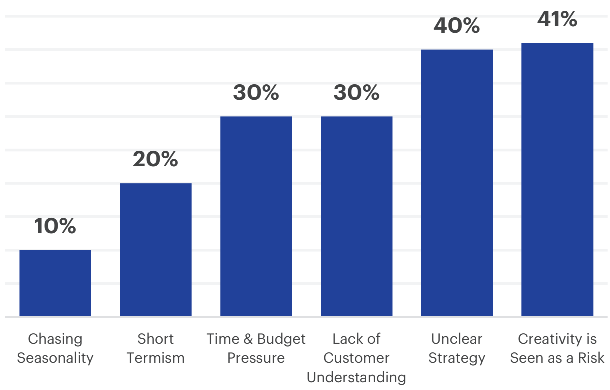
Marketers feel more confident in the mechanics of marketing than in the commercial impact of creativity. That leaves teams more exposed at the point where judgment is hardest: deciding whether the work is strong enough to back with real weight. The chapters that follow focus on making that decision less subjective by connecting creative quality and media support to the outcomes campaigns report.

Why Creative Confidence Is Eroding

Many marketers cite creativity being seen as risky, alongside unclear strategy and a lack of customer understanding, as barriers to effectiveness *(Fig 2)*. These conditions make it harder to commit to creative ideas early and harder to support them with conviction later. As a result, advertising is often denied the investment it needs to work.

Figure 2
Creativity is seen as a risk.

% Claimed Barrier For Creative Effectiveness

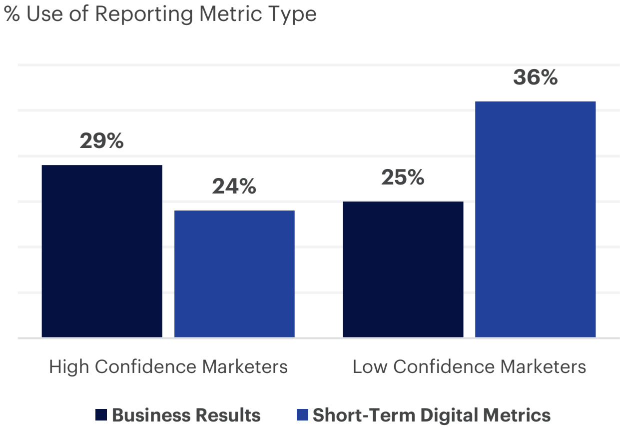


Global Marketer Survey, Effie and System1 2025, N: 386 US, Europe, APAC.

Short-termism compounds the problem. Teams with lower confidence in advertising effectiveness rely significantly more (+49%) on metrics such as impressions, clicks, and conversions, and less on Business Results like profit, penetration, price, and share growth *(Fig 3)*. Over time, this shifts attention away from the outcomes advertising is best placed to deliver.

When campaigns are optimized for short-term signals, they are less likely to generate lasting Brand Effects. When Brand Effects decline, advertising appears less reliable. And when advertising appears unreliable, confidence erodes further. This is a reinforcing cycle.

Figure 3
Low confidence marketers rely more on reporting short-term digital metrics.



Global Marketer Survey, Effie and System1 2025, N: 386 US, Europe, APAC.
Top 25% confidence marketers vs bottom across all confidence types.

The Cost of Undervaluing Creativity

This hesitation stands in contrast to what we know about creativity's commercial impact. Paul Dyson's modeling shows that creative quality is the largest single profit multiplier marketers can influence, increasing profitability by up to twelve times *(Table 1)*. However, in our survey, 68% of American marketers and 62% of European marketers rank creativity's impact on profit below the level Dyson found. And 61% of American marketers and 45% of European marketers rank campaign targeting above it *(Table 1)*. As an industry, we are undervaluing creativity not because we doubt it matters, but because we lack the confidence to back it.

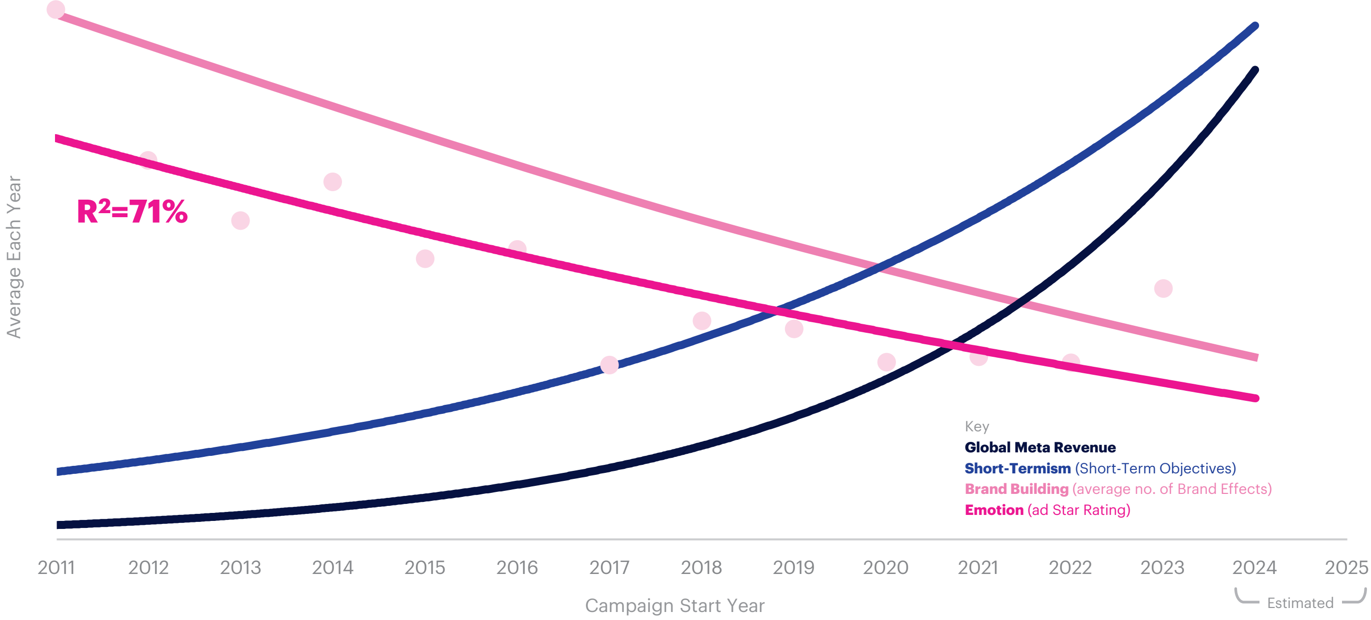
Table 1
Creativity is the largest single profit multiplier that marketers control.

Rank	Campaign Driver	Profit Multiplier
1	Brand Size	x20
2	**Creative Quality**	**x12**
3	Budget Setting Across Markets	x5.0
4	Budget Setting Across Portfolios	x3.0
5	Multimedia	x2.5
6	Brand/Performance Balance	x2.0
7	Budget Setting Across Variants	x1.7
8	Cost/Product Seasonality	x1.6
9	Media Phasing	x1.2
10	Target Audience	x1.1

The Drivers of Profitability, 2023, Paul Dyson – accelero.

The consequences are visible in the work itself. Over the past decade, advertising has become less emotional and less able to build brand, as more money has flowed into digital channels and short-term objectives have been pursued (*Fig 32 from Chapter 3*).

Figure 32
The emotional response to advertising is decreasing, closely following the decrease in Brand Effects
Meta's Global Revenue, short-term campaign objectives, and reported Brand Effects



Average Short-Term Objectives and reported Brand Effects per campaign: 1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Meta's Global Ad revenue: WARC media 2024, note 2024 were forecasts. Emotion: System1's Star Rating metric with c. 200,000 respondents. All series are indexed to compare trends.

What this trend exposes is a limitation in how advertising effectiveness is currently understood and evaluated. Existing frameworks can explain why media weight matters and why creativity influences response, but they struggle to account for how these forces interact in practice. As a result, creative quality and media support are often planned and judged separately, even though their effects in market are inseparable. Without a way to assess creative advantage in relation to the support behind it, marketers are left with partial signals and incomplete explanations for performance. This gap makes it harder to distinguish between ideas that failed because they were weak and ideas that failed because they were never given the chance to work.

What This Research Does Differently

The Creative Dividend addresses this opportunity directly. Through a partnership between Effie and System1, this research links creative and media choices to campaign outcomes at a scale previously unattainable. Full details of the breadth and depth of the Effie Insights' database and System1's Test Your Ad Competitive Edge database are provided in the glossary.

A team of researchers analyzed 1,265 campaigns from Effie Insights' database across the US and Europe (823 and 442 campaigns, respectively), spanning both B2C and B2B brands and representing nearly $140B in category revenue. As described in Chapters 1 and 2, we carefully categorized the type and volume of Brand Effects and Business Results reported in each case study, using this to build a new multi-market, cross-category effectiveness databank. 49% of campaigns used TV as their primary touchpoint, with the remainder led by a wide range of other media channels.

Each campaign was then linked to System1's creative measurement data from the Test Your Ad Competitive Edge database. The long-form assets that received the greatest media support were tested with nearly 200,000 respondents to assess creative quality. As detailed in Chapters 3 and 4, we define creative quality using the *Creativity Stack*: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and consistency, and show how these creative outputs drive Brand Effects and Business Results.

We also categorized campaign media spend levels relative to competitors, alongside targeting approaches and customer touchpoints used. This allowed us to examine how media choices work with creativity to turn investment into revenue and profit, as explored in Chapter 5.

Finally, the databank includes measures of brand size and category dynamics. This enables us to examine how growth patterns differ for challenger brands in Chapter 6, before bringing all of these elements together in Chapter 7. There, we move beyond description to explanation, presenting a model that shows how campaigns' commercial outcomes can be reliably explained across brands, categories, and markets.

1,265

CAMPAIGNS

ANALYZED ACROSS THE US AND EUROPE, LINKING CREATIVE QUALITY, MEDIA SUPPORT, BRAND EFFECTS, AND BUSINESS RESULTS

SOURCE: EFFIE AND SYSTEM1

Introducing the Creative Dividend and ESOC

To do this, we introduce the *Creative Dividend*, a measure of how creatively advantaged a campaign is relative to its competitors. And we extend it further to *Excess Share of Creativity (ESOC)*, which captures how much creative advantage actually enters the market once media support is taken into account
(Fig 72 from Chapter 5).

Figure 72
Measuring a campaign's Excess Share of Creativity

ESOC = Creative Dividend x Media Spend

ESOC reveals the missing link in modern effectiveness. Being more creative than competitors matters, but only when that advantage is supported with sufficient media. When it is, the likelihood of market share and profit growth increases sharply. When it is not, creative potential is wasted.

This explains why great creative can fail in market, and why average creative can create significant effects. Creative confidence is what connects these two decisions. Confidence in creative quality gives marketers the conviction to back ideas properly. And backing ideas properly is what allows advertising to work.

What This Book Delivers

This publication builds on the knowledge and evidence shared in research, including *The Long and the Short of It*, Binet and Field (IPA), and Lemon, Orlando Wood (IPA & System1), to provide:

- a clear explanation of how advertising works today
- a practical framework for guiding and improving creative quality
- evidence for why media support must follow creative strength
- a way to diagnose why campaigns underperform
- and a shared commercial language to justify investment

It shows that advertising effectiveness is not mysterious. It is the outcome of disciplined creative practice, supported by confident media investment, applied consistently over time.

Advertising is not a cost to be minimized. It is an investment that, when treated properly, reliably grows businesses who are willing to invest with ambition and belief.

That is *The Creative Dividend*.

CHAPTER 1

MODERN MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS

[What's Changed, and What Still Works]

Most marketers agree that effectiveness matters. Far fewer agree on what effectiveness actually is. Revenue is easy to report and almost always moves when a campaign runs. But revenue alone does not show whether a campaign created incremental, lasting value. It does not show whether the brand became easier to buy, whether it gained pricing power, or whether growth next year will be easier or harder.

This chapter introduces a useful definition of effectiveness for modern marketing. It draws on over a thousand marketing campaigns in Effie Insights' database and System1's Test Your Ad creative data to show which business outcomes matter most, which are hardest to achieve, and which strategic levers reliably increase the chance of lasting commercial success. These are the outcomes global marketers should plan for, measure against, and judge their work by. They form the common language the rest of this publication builds on.

The Business Results That Matter

Drawing from the seminal research presented in *The Long and the Short of It* by Peter Field and Les Binet, published by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, a team of researchers analyzed this large selection of campaigns in Effie Insights' database for reported commercial outcomes. Despite the range of terminology used across markets and categories, all objectives laddered into six consistent Business Results similar to those presented by Field and Binet. This shows how broadly applicable these results are to real marketing practice *(Table 2)*.

Table 2
Business Result Definition.

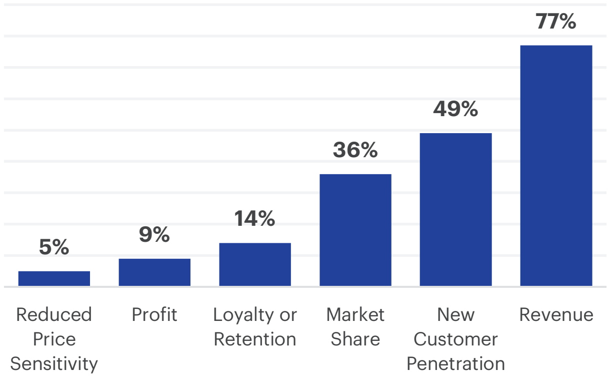
Business Result	Definition
Incremental Revenue	A measurable increase in sales volume for a product or service during the campaign period, above the expected baseline.
Incremental Profit	A clear increase in bottom-line profit generated during the campaign period, directly linked to the campaign's impact on volume, price, and margin vs cost.
Market Share Growth	A gain in the brand's share of category revenue during the campaign period, indicating growth vs the competition.
New Customer Penetration	An increase in the number of new brand buyers choosing the brand during the campaign period.
Customer Loyalty (Retention)	A measurable increase in purchase frequency or a reduction in customer churn during the campaign period.
Reduced Price Sensitivity	A campaign-driven increase in pricing power, demonstrated through higher average selling prices, reduced reliance on discounting, or improved elasticity.

Definition of Business Results used in this research.

Not all Business Results are equal. Most campaigns report revenue gains. Far fewer report profit or market share growth. Revenue is common and shallow. Profit and market share are rare and meaningful *(Fig 4)*.

Figure 4
Reporting revenue is common, incremental profit, and market share growth are meaningful.

% reporting growth in each Business Result



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

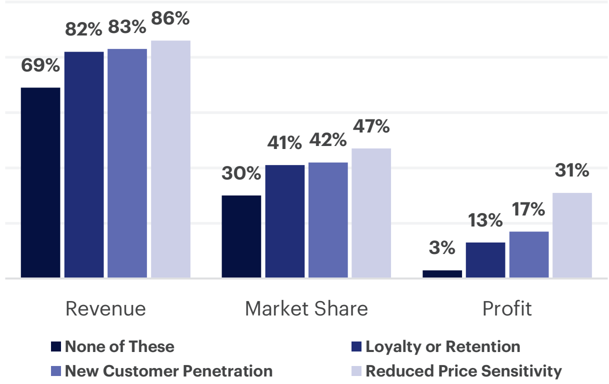
Price, Penetration, and Loyalty

The Double Jeopardy Law of marketing, made famous by the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, shows that brands compete for the same customers and grow in predictable ways. Larger brands do not grow because they have unusually loyal customers. They grow because they have more customers, and those customers are slightly more loyal. Smaller brands face a double disadvantage. They have fewer buyers, and those buyers buy less often. This is not a failure of marketing. It is a structural pattern in how categories work, loyalty levels across brands do not differ dramatically. They rise and fall modestly based on brand size.

Price, penetration, and loyalty all have similar links to revenue, but new customer penetration drives notably stronger profit outcomes than loyalty. Price effects are even more powerful, having a substantial impact on both profit and market share gain *(Fig 5)*.

Figure 5
Being able to charge more and recruit new customers has a substantial impact on profitability.

% reporting each Business Result while reporting growth in:

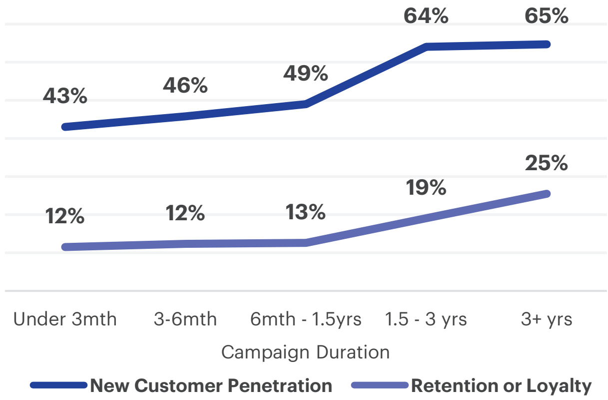


1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

Both take time to happen, but incremental penetration is more common than gains in loyalty or retention *(Fig 6)*. Combined with the profit advantage of penetration, new customer acquisition remains one of the core tenets of modern effectiveness, versus simply trying to retain customers and getting them to buy more volume. Brands grow more effectively when they recruit new customers and when they can charge more.

Figure 6
Gains in penetration and loyalty both take time, but penetration is far more common.

% reporting growth in each Business Result



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

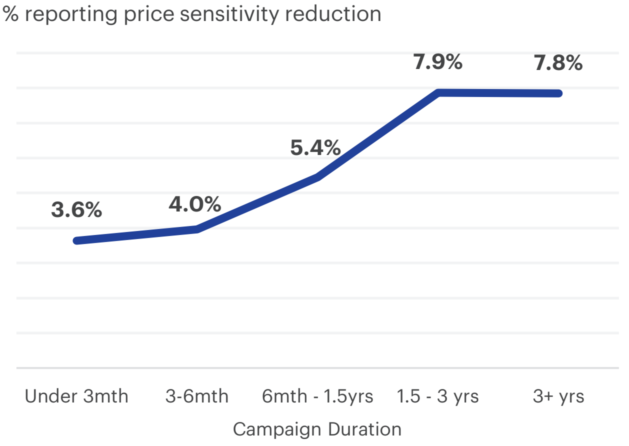
The Rare Power of Price

E. Jerome McCarthy's 4 Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) have shaped marketing since 1960. This research does not explore Product or Place, as neither can be derived from Effie Insights' database. But price stands out as the most underutilized lever in modern marketing.

Marketers are often excluded from pricing decisions, despite the clear impact pricing changes have on profit. Reduced price sensitivity is the rarest Business Result, but when it is achieved, profit likelihood rises sharply.

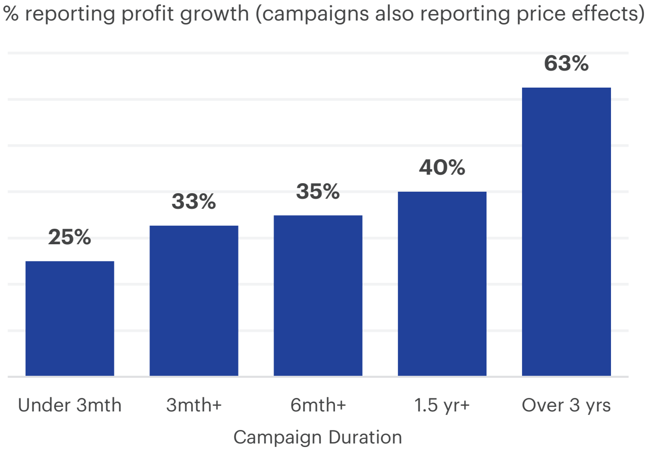
Price effects strengthen over time. The longer a campaign runs, the more likely it is that pricing power will improve *(Fig 7)* and the less reliant a business can become on discounting, leading to greater profit likelihood *(Fig 8)*. Marketers should treat pricing as a strategic input, not a financial afterthought.

Figure 7
Pricing effects are difficult to achieve but become more common with time.



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

Figure 8
Increasing price has a lasting effect, paying back more profit over time.



107 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) reporting reduced price sensitivity.

77% vs 9%

77% OF CAMPAIGNS REPORT REVENUE GROWTH, BUT ONLY 9% REPORT PROFIT GROWTH. PRICE EFFECTS HELP EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE.

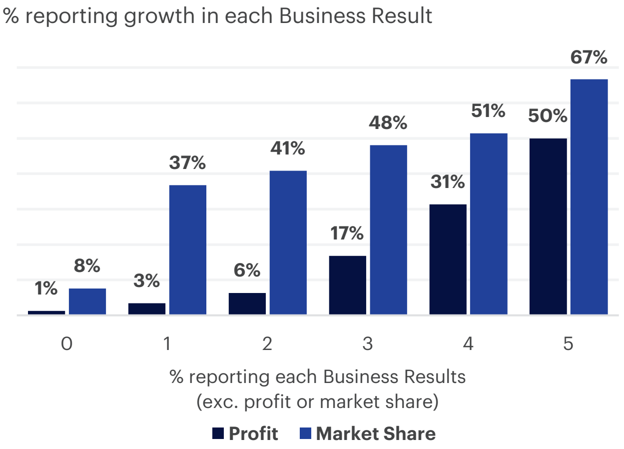
Why Stacking Business Results Matters

Revenue growth is relatively easy to generate. Any campaign that reaches enough people is likely to drive short-term sales. Profitable share growth is different. It requires advertising to change outcomes in ways that persist beyond immediate response.

This distinction matters because many campaigns that appear successful fail to improve the business's underlying performance. Profit is harder to achieve, harder to measure, and far less common. Especially while also claiming a larger share of the category's value. As a result, profit and share growth are the clearest signals of whether advertising has delivered meaningful effectiveness.

The strongest advertising campaigns do not achieve this growth with just one business outcome. Each of these identified results contributes to market share growth and profit. When excluding reporting market share growth, as more Business Results are reported, more campaigns achieve share growth. Similarly, excluding profit reporting, as more Business Results are reported, campaigns become more profitable *(Fig 9)*. It's rare to report profit or market share growth without reporting at least one Business Result.

Figure 9
Different Business Results compound to increase the likelihood of profit and market share gain.



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

Although marketers are often encouraged to focus on one objective, this is neither practical nor accurate. Advertising creates broad commercial impact. Effective campaigns influence revenue, loyalty, price, penetration, market share, and profit. Marketers should define the specific behavior change they are trying to create, but understand that effective advertising typically produces more than one Business Result. The results reinforce one another and drive compounding growth.

Why Effectiveness Needs Better Outputs

Many campaigns are judged on metrics that do not reflect long-term business health. Effectiveness requires structure. These six Business Results provide that structure. They offer a consistent language for the C-suite and allow marketers to judge success against outcomes that directly contribute to long-term advantage. They distinguish between temporary wins and meaningful commercial change. This is what the marketing-planning process must deliver.

We explore how creative and media combine to create these results throughout this research.

THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND

CHAPTER 2

CREATING LASTING EFFECTS WITH ADVERTISING

[Why Building Brand Effects Makes Growth Easier Over Time]

In *How Brands Grow*, Byron Sharp makes the role of advertising clear: to refresh and build memory structures. Advertising works by creating memories that shape what people notice and recognize, and ultimately what they choose. These memories do not appear instantly. They form gradually, strengthen with repetition, and compound over time. They are measured through lasting Brand Effects, the crucial layer between creative quality and Business Results. When Brand Effects build, they make commercial growth easier, cheaper, faster, and more predictable.

This chapter explains how lasting Brand Effects lead to sustained commercial outcomes, why they are becoming increasingly important in modern marketing, and why the brand-building power of advertising has weakened.

Brand Effects and Why They Matter

Brand Effects capture the ways advertising changes memory and perception. They are not soft or superficial; instead, they are in-market assets as tangible and strategically valuable as the factories and offices that a company owns. When nurtured and expanded, they shape future behavior, increase demand and make the following year's marketing more efficient and effective.

From Effie Insights' database, we identified eight Brand Effects consistently used across campaigns *(Table 3)*.

Table 3
Brand Effect Definition.

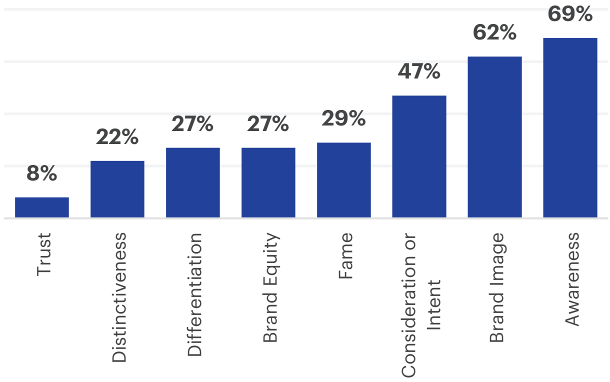
Brand Effect	Definition
Awareness	An increase in the percentage of people who recall the brand. Usually measured through prompted or unprompted surveys.
Brand Image	A change in the perceptions and associations that people hold about what the brand stands for. Measured through surveys.
Brand Equity	A broad composite measure of brand strength, often combining salience, differentiation, meaning and relevance. Sometimes called "brand power" or "brand strength" metric. Provided by different market research businesses.
Consideration or Intent	A self-reported increase in the number of people claiming they would consider or intend to buy the brand. Measured through surveys.
Trust	Typically a reported increase in the belief that the brand will fulfill its promises and stay dependable, or is simply "trusted." Measured in various ways, usually through surveys.
Fame	Evidence that the brand is being talked about or shared more. Measured in various ways, including surveys, but also social listening.
Differentiation	A change in how a brand is perceived as different from competitor brands, or sometimes even measured as a brand simply being "different". Measured through surveys.
Distinctiveness	A reported increase in the brand's ability to be identified quickly and easily through visual, audio or structural brand cues. Or sometimes even measured as a brand simply being "distinct". Measured through surveys.

Definition of Brand Effects used in this research.

Some Brand Effects appear frequently in this large multi-market collection of campaigns in Effie Insights' database. Awareness (69%) and brand image (62%) are commonly reported. Trust, at just 8%, is a far rarer outcome *(Fig 10)*.

Figure 10
Reporting awareness and brand image growth is common. Trust, distinctiveness, and differentiation growth are rarer.

% reporting growth in each Brand Effect



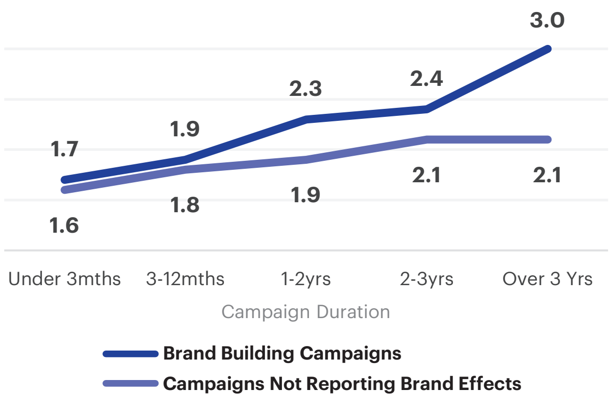
1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

Brand Building Compounds Business Results

Brand Effects deliver value the moment they are created. However, successful brand-building campaigns report more Business Results over time, unlike campaigns that failed to create Brand Effects. This helps explain why brand building is linked to stronger commercial outcomes over time *(Fig 11)*.

Figure 11
Lasting Brand Effects compound Business Results.

Avg. No. of reported Business Results



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). The top quartile of campaigns for Brand Effects vs the bottom quartile.

The Changing World of Effectiveness

The rise of digital media has fundamentally reshaped the marketing context. Over the past decade, most media spend has shifted into digital channels, and much of that spend flows into environments that eye-tracking studies show receive only a few seconds of attention. This shift has changed both how advertising works and how marketers judge and report success.

Digital platforms also introduced a new generation of metrics. Instead of relying on monthly or quarterly brand tracking, marketers can now monitor daily performance indicators. Metrics built to measure short-term behavior, not lasting brand impact. These are often treated as campaign objectives in their own right. But unlike Brand Effects, they rarely reflect durable shifts in memory or behavior.

From Effie Insights' database, we identified and defined the short-term objectives most frequently used by marketers today.

The Changing World of Effectiveness

Table 4
Short-Term Objective Definition.

Short-Term Objective	Definition
Social Media Engagement	Clicks, shares, likes, and saves reported by the campaign as evidence of audience interaction on social platforms.
Impressions	The number of times an asset is served to consumers through digital platforms.
Costs (CPA, etc.)	Cost-based efficiency metrics such as cost per acquisition, cost per action, or cost per click. These measures reflect short-term efficiency in digital environments.
Traffic	Visits driven to a digital property, such as a website or landing page.
Conversion	A digital behavior tracked through platforms or brand-lift tools, such as purchases, sign-ups, or email submissions.
Purchase Frequency	The speed or rate at which existing customers convert during the campaign.

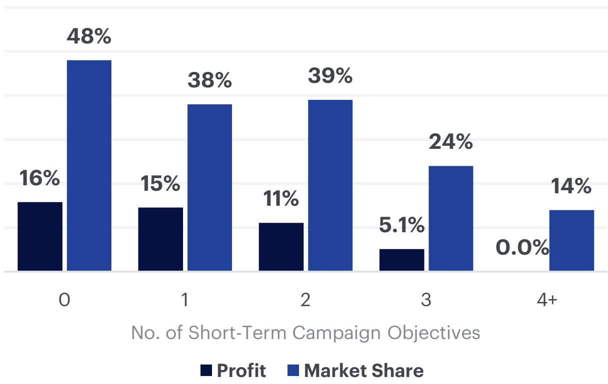
Definition of short-term objectives used in this research.

These objectives come with a clear risk: the more that marketers pursue them, the more they distance themselves from Brand Effects and Business Results. As the number of short-term objectives increases, the likelihood that a campaign reports market share gain or incremental profit decreases *(Fig 12)*.

This creates a strategic challenge for the modern marketer. Short-term objectives are easy to track and easy to justify, but they can fracture focus. Marketers must understand which of these objectives matter and avoid chasing those that dilute attention from the outcomes that create lasting commercial growth.

Figure 12
More short-term campaign objectives distract from achieving profit and share growth.

% reporting growth in each Business Results



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

The Growing Importance of Brand Building

The rise of digital platforms has created a clear and troubling pattern. Meta's global revenue strongly correlates (91%) with the number of short-term objectives reported in Effie Insights' database each year. As digital spend increases, campaigns pursue more short-term goals. Digital platforms make measuring short-term metrics easier *(Fig 13)*.

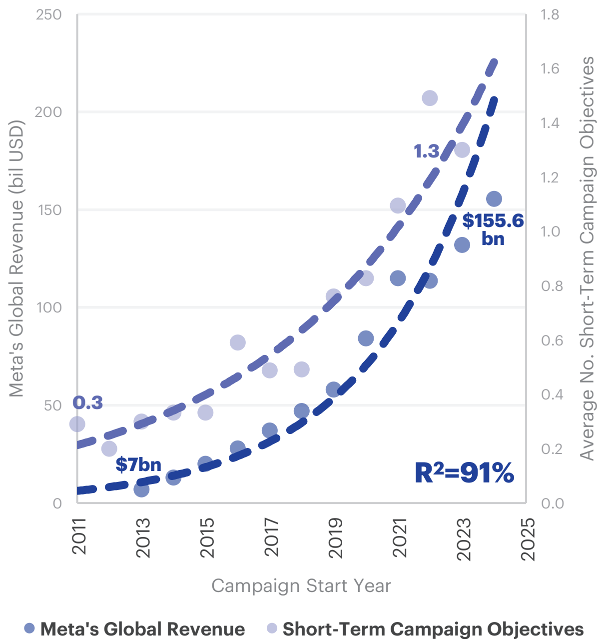
This shift has not only changed how marketers operate but also how customers consume advertising and make decisions. People now see at least twice as many ads per day as they did 15 years ago. More media is consumed alone, in skippable formats, in low-attention environments. Also, physical shelves or in-store cues no longer shape as many choices. Decisions often begin in search engines and Large Language Models (LLMs) where the brand must be recalled from the minds of customers.

This has made brand building more important. Advertising must work harder to not only create brands that more easily come to mind, but it must also achieve this in a more cluttered media landscape. This is evident in our data. In 2010 campaigns that reported more Brand Effects often reported slightly fewer Business Results. By 2023, the relationship between Brand Effects and business outcomes has sharply risen *(Fig 14)*.

Put simply, the same commercial outcomes now depend more heavily on what a brand has already built in memory. As attention becomes scarcer and campaigns chase more short-term objectives, Brand Effects do more of the long-term work. This is why brand building is not a luxury in modern marketing. It is increasingly the price of entry.

Figure 13
The spend on digital media channels is closely related to campaigns having more short-term campaign objectives.

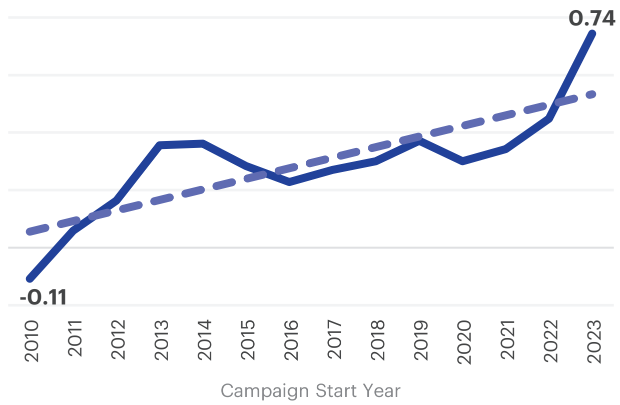
Meta's Global Revenue and short-term campaign objectives



Average Short-Term Objectives per campaign: 1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Meta's Global Ad revenue: WARC media 2024, note 2024 were forecasts.

Figure 14
The growing importance of brand building on commercial outcomes.

Relationship between Brand Effects and Business Results (r)



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Correlation between reported Brand Effects and Business Results per campaign start year.

How Brand Effects Lead to Business Results

The different Brand Effects measure different types of memory, and each type translates into business impact in different ways. This section explains those differences. As always, we must note an important limitation: Brand Effects in Effie Insights' database are self-reported by marketers and measured by a range of research providers, so the dataset reflects patterns rather than absolutes.

Differentiation and Distinctiveness

A global debate has emerged in recent years about the relative role of differentiation and distinctiveness. Some industry thinking argues that differentiation matters far less than distinctiveness; others argue the opposite. This dataset shows the reality is more nuanced and more useful.

Distinctiveness, what brings the brand to mind, accelerates recognition in advertising and when making decisions and purchases. Differentiation, what associations the brand brings to mind, matters because it shapes the perceived relative differences between brands, which can influence decisions. Both clearly play a role in market share growth *(Fig 15)*.

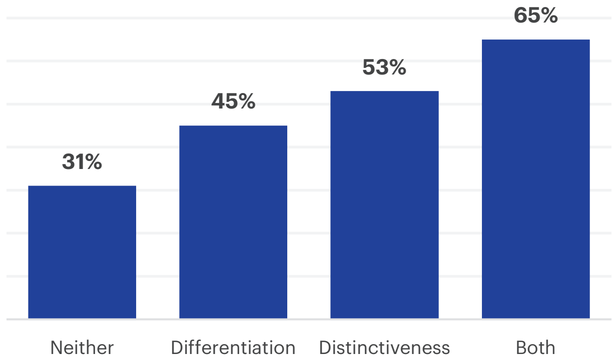
1. Campaigns reporting growth in distinctiveness see a greater chance of market share

2. Campaigns reporting gains in differentiation also show a higher likelihood of market share gain.

3. Campaigns reporting both distinctiveness and differentiation deliver the strongest chance of expanding share versus campaigns reporting neither.

Figure 15
Distinctiveness and differentiation are both important, but they are even more powerful together.

% reporting market share growth if also reporting each Brand Effect

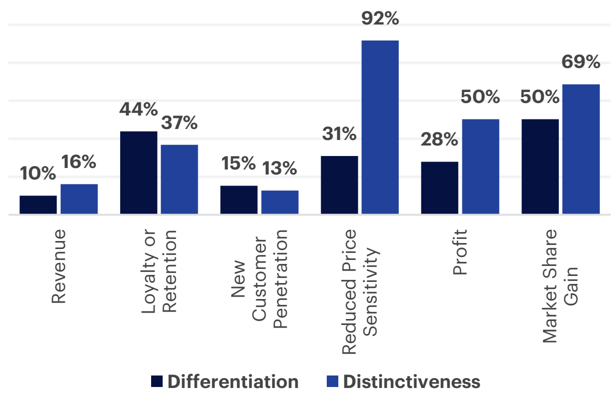


1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). % of campaigns reporting market share growth per campaign reporting each Brand Effect.

Advertising campaigns that report incremental gains in brand distinctiveness are more likely to report each Business Result compared to those that report differentiation *(Fig 16)*. However, as we'll explore in Chapter 6, this pattern reverses for challenger brands, where differentiation becomes unusually powerful.

Figure 16
Differentiation supports all Business Results, but distinctiveness usually has an outsized effect.

% lift in reported Business Result when Brand Effect also reported (Campaigns Over 3 Months)



932 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) that ran for over 3 months. % change in reporting Business Result between campaigns reporting vs not reporting each Brand Effect.

Brand Image and Trust

Brand image captures what a brand stands for, its associations, and meaning. It attempts to influence behavior primarily after the brand has come to mind. The question is whether the associations being built are meaningful enough to create an advantage. Trust is a specific outcome of brand image: the belief that a brand will deliver on its promises.

Both brand image and trust influence loyalty and price effects. Trust helps retain existing customers and increases their willingness to pay. But there is a trade-off. Campaigns heavily focused on trust and brand image change underperform on new customer acquisition, revenue growth, and market share gain *(Fig 17)*. Trust-building appears to work harder on current customers while weakening recruitment. Marketers must ensure that building trust does not come at the cost of attracting new buyers.

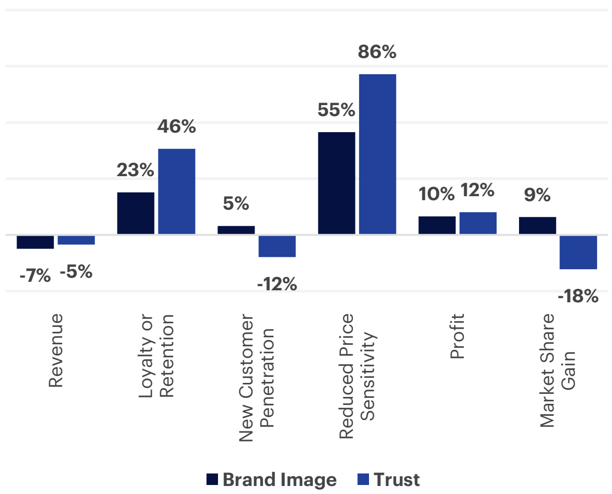
Awareness and Brand Equity

Measuring salience, a brand coming to mind within category context via a Category Entry Point (CEP), is widely considered superior to brand awareness. However, it has not been adopted widely enough to support analysis beyond reported awareness in Effie Insights' database. Many campaigns did report a brand equity metric, often called brand strength or power. Brand equity is a composite measure that typically includes salience, differentiation, and meaningfulness (often reflected through emotion in modern research).

Because awareness gains are reported by most campaigns, we find that awareness has a limited ability to drive large changes in Business Results. By contrast, growing an all-encompassing brand strength metric has a strong positive impact on Business Results *(Fig 18)*. If marketers can find a trusted brand equity measurement provider, using it to judge brand growth over longer periods appears to be a valuable exercise.

Figure 17
Trust gains have a significant impact on loyalty and reducing price sensitivity, but a focus on trust can lead to less new customer penetration.

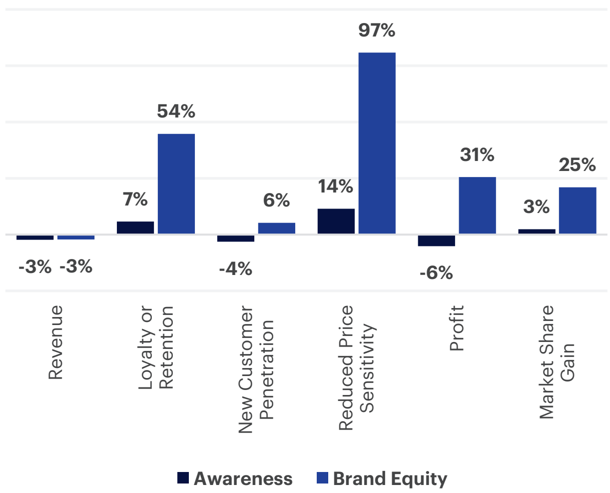
% lift in reported Business Result when Brand Effect also reported (Campaigns Over 3 Months)



932 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) that ran for over 3 months. % change in reporting Business Result between campaigns reporting vs not reporting each Brand Effect.

Figure 18
Pursuing an all-encompassing brand equity metric instead of awareness alone is more worthwhile.

% lift in reported Business Result when Brand Effect also reported (Campaigns Over 3 Months)



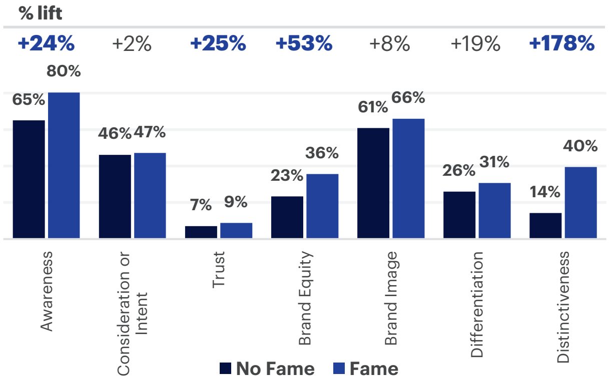
932 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) that ran for over 3 months. % change in reporting Business Result between campaigns reporting vs not reporting each Brand Effect.

Fame

Fame, originating from the Latin word for rumor (fama), simply refers to your brand being talked about. A campaign reports fame growth when customers share more about a brand. Fame sits on a different level from simply awareness. Fame pushes brands into culture and makes media spend work harder, while benefiting from the social proof heuristic (we want to do more of what we perceive others are doing). Fame aids other Brand Effects. Campaigns that report incremental fame effects are more likely to report all other Brand Effects *(Fig 19)*.

Figure 19
Campaigns reporting fame report awareness, brand equity, trust, and distinctiveness growth more often.

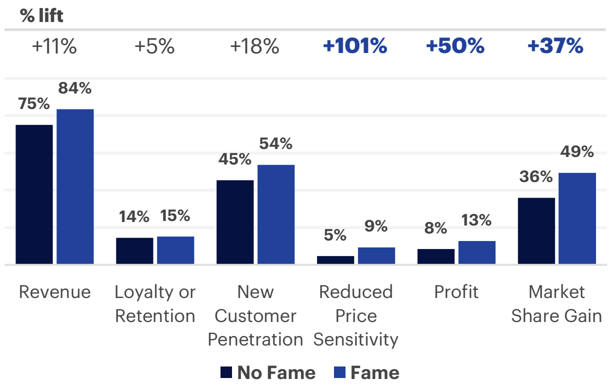
% reporting Brand Effect when brand fame is also reported (Campaigns Over 3 Months)



Because of the multiplicative power of fame, and how it aids social proofing, campaigns that report fame increases have a broad consistent impact on reported Business Results including key outcomes like reduced price sensitivity, new customer penetration, market share gain, and profit *(Fig 20)*.

Figure 20
Brand fame has a broad impact on all Business Results.

% reporting Business Result when brand fame is also reported (Campaigns Over 3 Months)



Consideration and Intent

Brand consideration or intent is a very system 2-based brand measure where current or potential customers report if they think they will purchase or consider purchasing a brand. There's a lot of academic research that shows this metric is rarely linked to actual behavior change. Campaigns that achieve consideration or intent change see fewer Business Results on average *(Fig 21)*, showing that tracking claimed consideration or intent for your brand is rarely a beneficial endeavor.

Figure 21
Consideration and intent rarely prove a helpful metric to report.

% reporting Business Result when consideration or intent is also reported (Campaigns Over 3 Months)

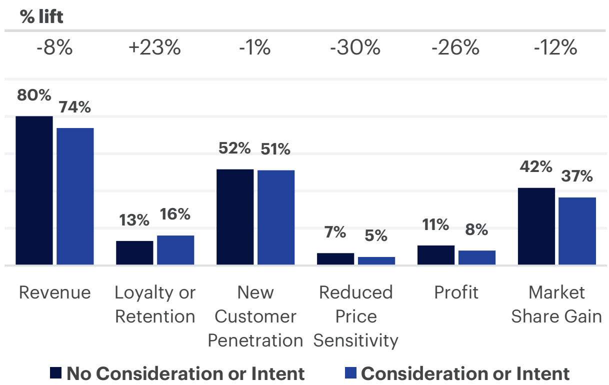


Fig 19, 20, & 21: 932 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) that ran for over 3 months. % reporting each effect split by the reported Brand Effect.

How We Must Build Brands Has Changed

The change in the media landscape, how media is consumed, and how customers make purchase decisions has also affected which Brand Effects matter most in three ways *(Fig 22)*.

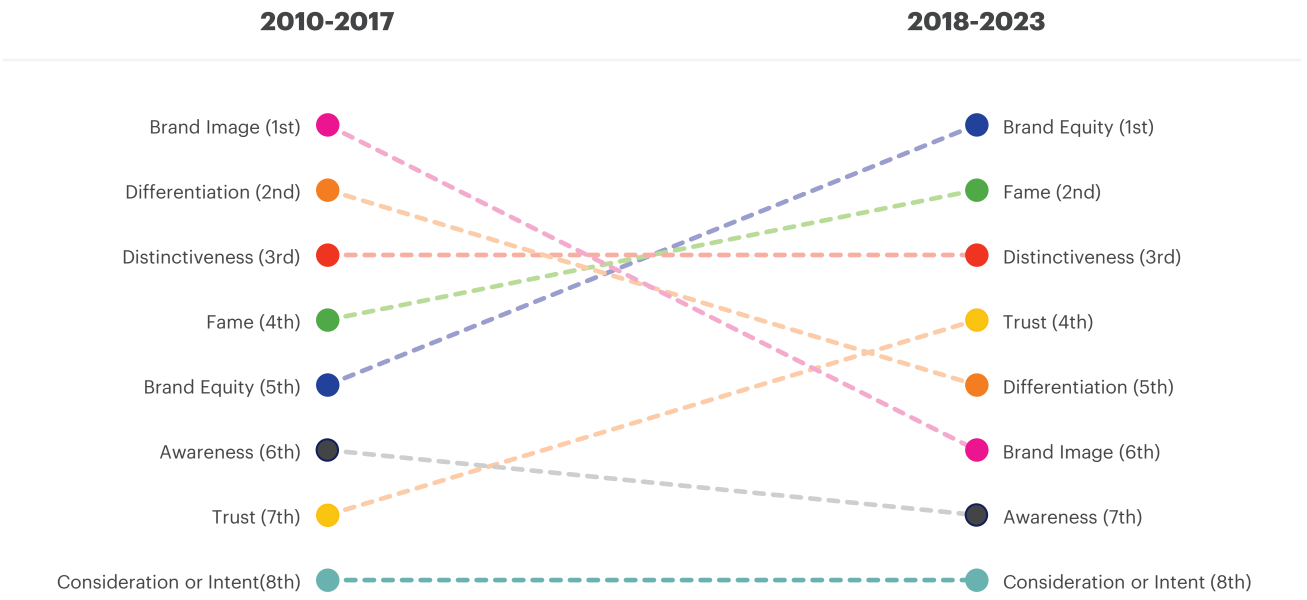
1. A Brand Easily Coming to Mind Has Become More Important
General brand equity has become the most important brand outcome, as decisions are increasingly driven by how strong a brand is. This may also reflect improvements in how brand equity is tracked and the greater inclusion of salience (and its growing importance). Additionally, distinctiveness remains an important factor. As marketers invest in lower-attention, often skippable media channels, having a brand that easily comes to mind becomes crucial.

2. The Unfair Advantage of Fame and Trust
Fame and trust are now among the most crucial Brand Effects for business success. It's no surprise that fame has gained importance, as modern campaign strategies increasingly depend on network effects and expanding reach through virality. Trust is often a difficult metric to move; we'll show later that choosing broad public media and creative consistency can help. This contrasts with targetable digital channels, which are often consumed alone and are becoming increasingly popular.

3. The Decline in the Importance of What a Brand Brings to Mind
Brand image and differentiation are now less closely linked to Business Results, while distinctiveness has remained as important. Again, this is perhaps reflecting the change in how consumers make decisions and how important it is to be recognized easily and quickly in lower attention media.

Figure 22
Brand equity, fame, distinctiveness, trust are now the most important Brand Effects for achieving Business Results.

Rank of link (r) between Brand Effect and Business Results, over time

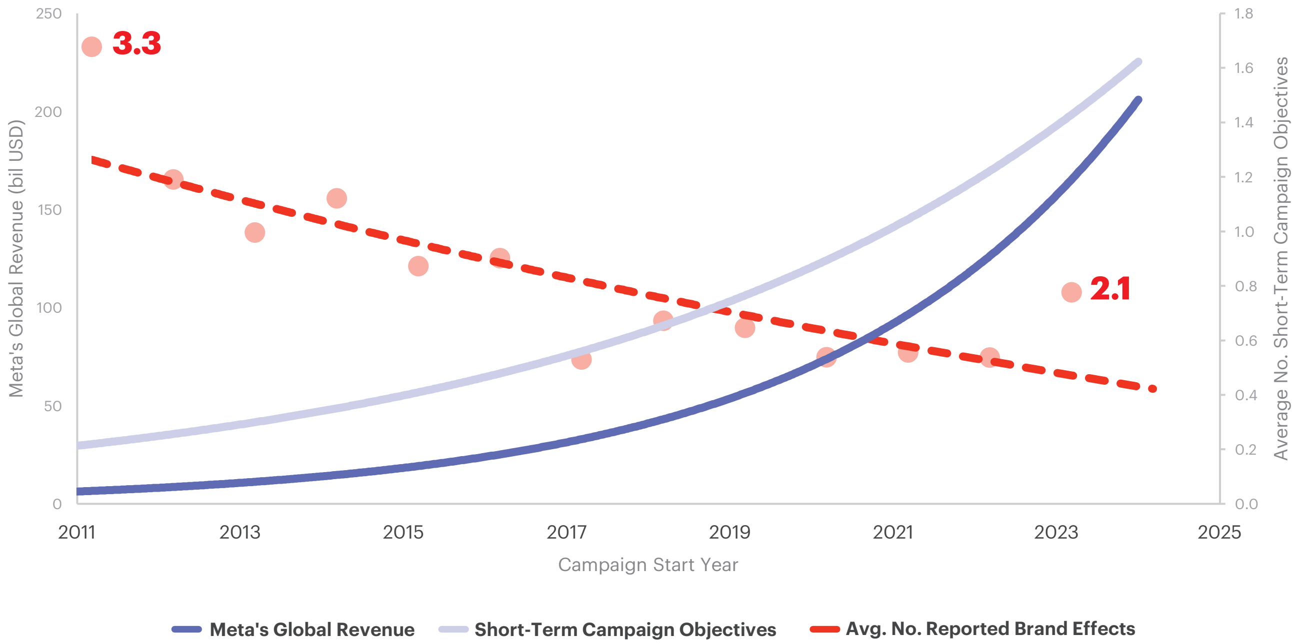


1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).
Correlation between each Brand Effect and Business Results, ranked by importance, split by campaign start year.

The Crisis in Advertising Effectiveness

Despite the growing need for lasting brand building, the industry is moving in the opposite direction. Campaigns are reporting fewer Brand Effects than they used to *(Fig 23)*. Short-term objectives are taking a larger share of attention and budget, and digital spend keeps pulling activity toward immediate response. There has never been a more important time for creativity that supports sustainable, profitable growth.

Figure 23
Campaigns now report fewer Brand Effects.
Meta's Global Revenue, short-term campaign objectives, and reported Brand Effects



Average Short-Term Objectives and reported Brand Effects per campaign: 1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Meta's Global Ad revenue: WARC media 2024, note 2024 were forecasts.

This decline matters because Brand Effects are the bridge between creative quality and commercial outcomes. When campaigns generate fewer Brand Effects, there are fewer in-market memories that compound, and every future campaign dollar must work harder to achieve the same outcome. The rest of this research shows how creativity and media choices can be used to restore advertising's ability to build lasting effects.

37%

DROP IN THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF BRAND EFFECTS REPORTED OVER THE PAST DECADE.

An Effie Stands for Effectiveness

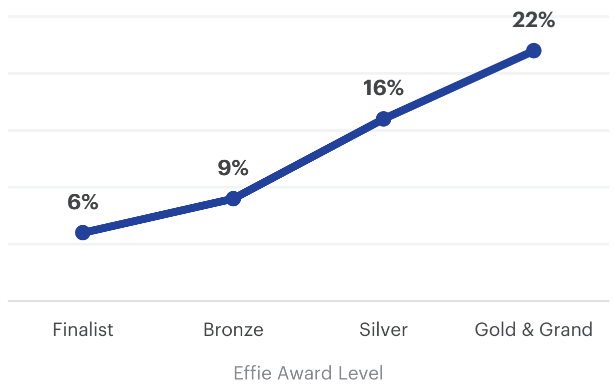
There has also never been a more important time for organizations like Effie. There are plenty of marketing and creative awards, but few have the global scale, breadth, and data needed to say something meaningful about effectiveness. Effie has been doing this since 1968. Their judging process is rigorous, their criteria are consistent, and their database and content hub is one of the most complete records of commercial outcomes in the industry. The detail within this research is only possible because of this rigor.

When we link Effie award levels to campaign results, we see that as you move from Finalist to Grand Effie, effectiveness improves. Higher-level winners report greater profit gains, higher revenue growth *(Fig 24)*, and stronger Brand Effects and Business Results *(Fig 25)*. Even in the limited ROI data available *(Fig 26)*, the trend holds. The better the work performs in Effie judging, the stronger the commercial outcomes.

An Effie signals effectiveness in a way few awards can. And at a time when marketers need to justify investment, defend creative quality, and prove impact, that signal carries real weight.

Figure 24
The higher the Effie award level, the more incremental profit reported.

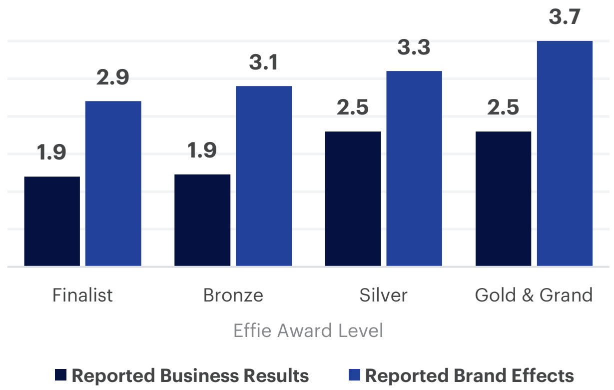
% reporting incremental profit



563 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) awarded finalist or higher.

Figure 25
The higher the Effie award level, the more reported Brand Effects and Business Results.

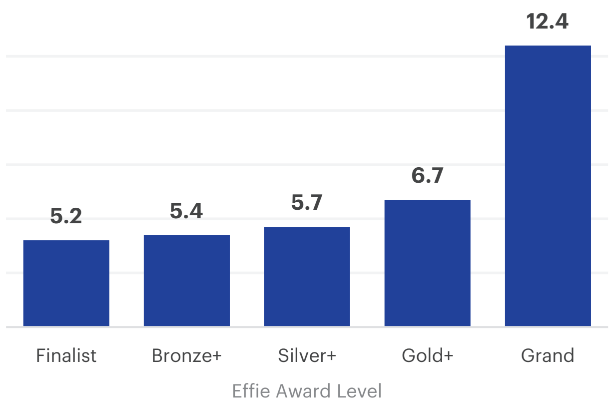
Avg. No. of Brand Effect and Business Result per Effie award level.



563 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) awarded finalist or higher.

Figure 26
The higher the Effie award level, the greater the average reported ROI.

Average Matched Return on Investment (ROI)



73 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) awarded finalist or higher with reported matched ROI data.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

1. **Different brand outcomes work in different ways.**
Brand building works by forming different memories and associations. Distinctiveness is more important for share growth, but differentiation is still important, and the combined effect is strongest. Trust and fame effects are becoming more important.

2. **Brand building has become more important.**
Decisions are made online, and ads are now often in lower-attention environments. Brand strength and distinctiveness are crucial. Yet marketers are distracted by short-term metrics.

3. **Advertising is now less able to build brand when it is most needed.**
Brand building's importance has never been greater, but campaigns have never created fewer Brand Effects.

4. **Effectiveness requires clear Business Results.**
Revenue is common but insufficient. Stacking revenue with pricing power, penetration, and loyalty leads to sustained profitable growth. Penetration has an outsized effect relative to loyalty.

5. **Brand Effects are in-market assets.**
They capture how advertising changes memory and behaves like compounding investments; we must invest as if they were in-market assets that require constant maintenance.

THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND

CHAPTER 3

THE CREATIVITY STACK

[How Creative Quality Drives Brand Effects and Business Results]

Creativity is a key factor in achieving brand and commercial success. It is the primary strategy for winning in modern marketing by transforming memories, creating distinct brands, capturing attention, and influencing customer behavior. This chapter introduces the *Creativity Stack*, a framework built from four creative layers that consistently boost effectiveness: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and consistency. We explain how these layers generate value and offer practical advice for marketers. We also reveal that all four types of creativity are declining, contributing to the decline in brand-building power of advertising campaigns.

12x

CREATIVITY'S IMPACT ON PROFIT

CREATIVE QUALITY CAN INCREASE PROFITABILITY BY UP TO TWELVE TIMES.

PAUL DYSON, THE DRIVERS OF PROFITABILITY (2023)

Why Creativity Matters

Creativity has long been the strongest driver of advertising profitability that a marketer controls. The challenge has been how to achieve and measure creativity.

The advertising industry partly relies on creative awards as a proxy for effectiveness. Peter Field's work in Crisis in Creativity showed that creatively awarded campaigns turn media spend into share growth more efficiently, but this relationship has slightly weakened over time. Creative awards play a vital role by celebrating strong ideas and demonstrating the commercial value of creativity.

The *Creativity Stack* provides more detail on what commercial creativity is and how it pays back. It sits after strategy. Every campaign has different memories to build, different category entry points to land, and different commercial needs. The *Creativity Stack* does not replace that thinking. It shows the creative levers that, when applied well, multiply the impact of strategic choices.

The next sections explore each lever and explain why emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and consistency pay back.

Emotion

The More We Feel, The More We Buy

Emotion is the starting point of effective advertising. In *The Long and the Short of It*, Field and Binet showed that emotional campaigns outperform rational ones, especially when marketers aim for long-term growth. This aligns with modern creative measurement, including System1's work, and with Orlando Wood's evidence that advertising works best when it earns attention and feeling.

Emotional work delivers broader effects, lasts longer in memory, and generates stronger commercial returns. Emotion can be achieved through emotional messaging and positioning, or through what some call emotional wrappers, where emotional delivery carries more rational messages.

When people feel something, they form more memories. Decades of psychology and neuroscience show that heightened emotional states strengthen memory encoding and retrieval. Emotion makes advertising easier to process, easier to store, and easier to recall when decisions are made.

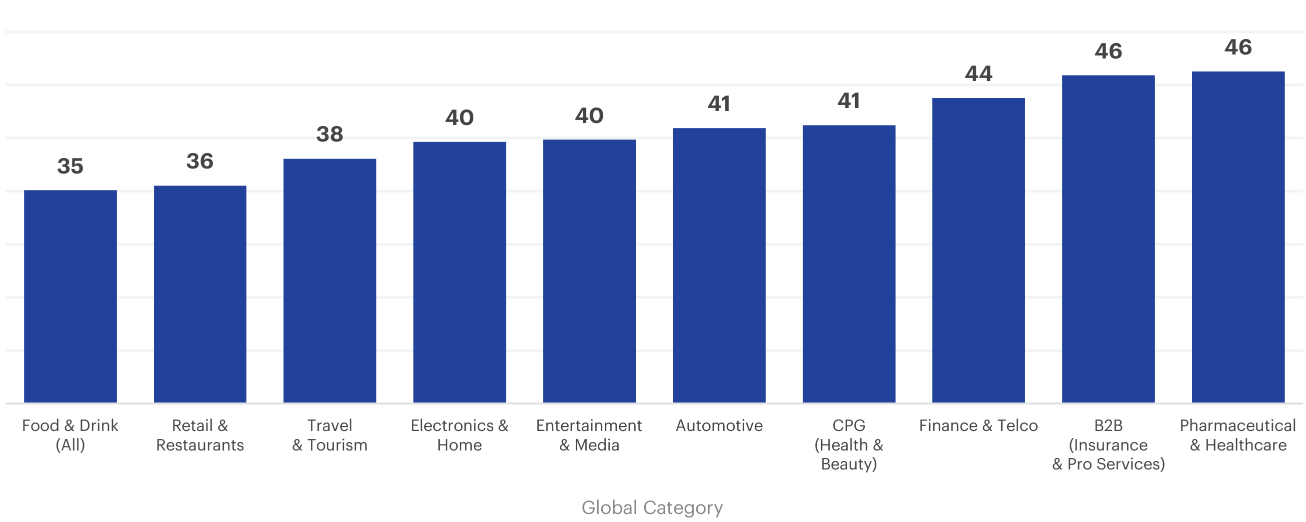
The Cost of Dull

System1's Test Your Ad platform measures the emotional response to an ad from a group of real people. Viewers report positive or negative emotions, the intensity of each emotion, or whether they feel nothing at all (Neutrality).

Neutrality is the clearest signal of dullness. Neutral ads elicit a weaker emotional response and support memory formation less strongly. *The Extraordinary Cost of Dull*, System1, The IPA and EatBigFish, found that high-neutrality ads cost marketers more, requiring greater spend to achieve the same market share gains as ads that make people feel something. Neutrality forces marketers to buy what emotional creative earns.

Advertising in some categories elicits more neutrality, such as pharmaceutical, Business-to-Business (B2B), and finance. Campaigns for food and drink, retail and restaurants, and travel brands elicit a lower neutral response. This is partly due to the category, but mainly due to creative equilibrium, as any category can be made interesting with creativity *(Fig 27)*.

Figure 27
Some categories have more dull advertising.

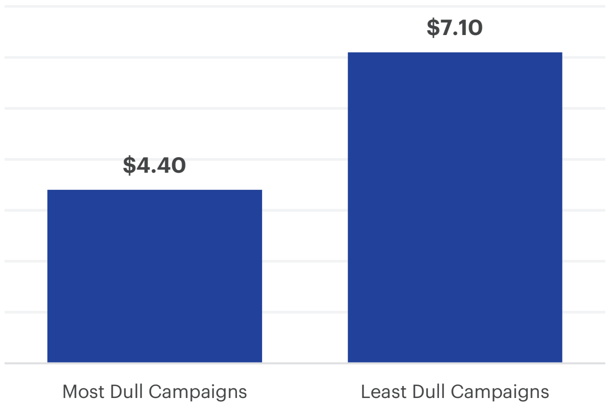


1,201 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years) aggregated into categories.

Campaigns that generate more neutrality and less emotional intensity than others in their category see campaign-spend returns that are 40% lower *(Fig 28)*. This is the cost of dull.

Figure 28
The most dull campaigns see 40% lower average ROI.

Average Return On Investment



147 campaigns matched with ROI data across all markets.
Top vs Bottom % neutrality felt to advertising.

Neutrality is not inevitable. The standout cases in Effie Insights' database show that even functional categories can earn feeling when brands choose entertainment over instruction. Many of the campaigns featured in the Case Studies section at the end of this book share one trait: they were clearly not dull. They made people feel something, and the work performed accordingly.

You can make "boring" products interesting. Often, that is the advantage.

> ***"We proved boring products don't need boring advertising; they need creative audacious enough to turn creators into co-conspirators and functional categories into cultural phenomena."***

ANSLEY WILLIAMS, HEAD OF INFLUENCE, NORTH AMERICA, OGILVY.
SEE CERAVE CASE STUDY

As Field and Binet show in *The Long and the Short of It*, the same effectiveness principles apply across categories. What makes this new research unique is that it includes 75 B2B case studies from Effie Insights' database, allowing us to test these principles at scale. B2B does not get a free pass for dullness.

> ***"High-quality creative that treated B2B like a cultural moment, not a category footnote, triggered significant pipeline growth."***

MADELINE GORE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, STRATEGY, OGILVY.
SEE WORKDAY CASE STUDY

Even in entrenched categories, the fastest route to effectiveness is often to resist the category tropes.

> ***"No Brit wants to hear a lecture about how their tea is made."***

LUCKY GENERAL
SEE YORKSHIRE TEA CASE STUDY

Adam Morgan has made this point for years. Categories are not dull. Only marketing is.

> ***"Dullness is a choice, more of us are making it than we'd like to admit."***

ADAM MORGAN, FOUNDER OF EATBIGFISH, AUTHOR OF EATING THE BIG FISH.

The Affect Heuristic

Positive emotions drive more lasting behavior change. The Affect Heuristic describes how people use immediate feelings as shortcuts in decision-making. When something triggers a positive emotional response, the brain treats it as safer, more appealing, and more trustworthy. It reduces the effort required to choose it.

System1's Star Rating measures the overall emotional response to advertising. It reflects what people feel across the emotional spectrum, weighing surprise and different types of happiness positively, and neutrality or negative emotions negatively. There's a broad spectrum of positivity that we measure, including humor, pride, excitement, awe-inspired, schadenfreude, ecstatic, and many others. The final score aligns with evidence on emotion, memory formation, and the Affect Heuristic. It predicts how advertising is likely to influence consumer behavior in the long term.

Campaigns with high emotional intensity report more Brand Effects than those with low intensity. High emotional positivity has an even stronger impact. Of those, campaigns that run for more than two years see the largest long-term gains *(Fig 29)*.

Because Brand Effects shape long-term behavior, the impact of positive emotion is even stronger for Business Results *(Fig 30)*. Campaigns that surprise and delight people do not just build more memory, they create the conditions for profit across markets *(Fig 31)*.

Figure 29
The brand benefits of advertising that elicits positive emotion are clearer over time.

Avg. No of Reported Brand Effects

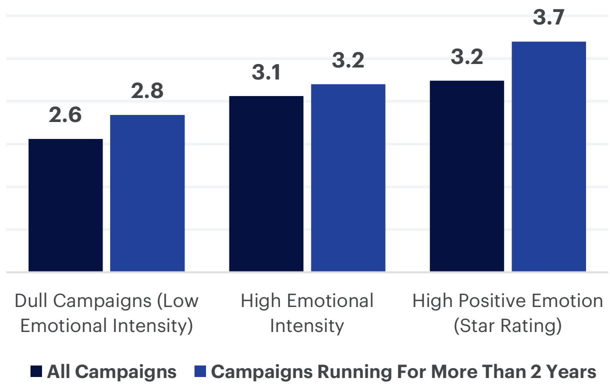


Figure 30
The commercial benefits of advertising that elicits positive emotion are clear over time.

Avg. No of Business Results

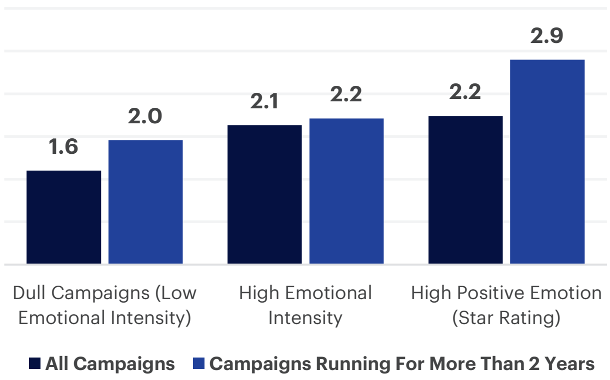


Figure 31
Advertising that elicits more intense positive emotions support commercial outcomes across markets.

Avg. No of Business Results

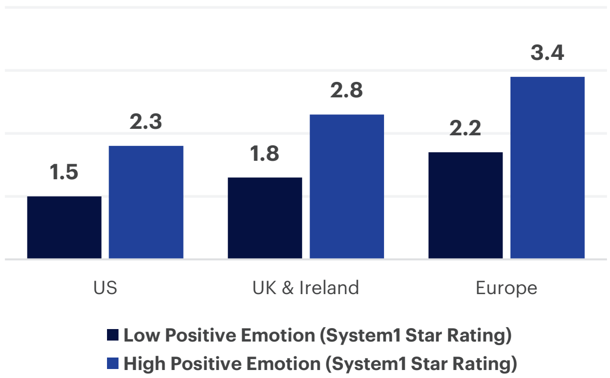


Fig 29, 30, 31 - 1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' Database (2017-2023 program years). Split by the bottom and top quartiles of System1's Emotional Intensity and/or Star Rating metric from c. 200,000 respondents.

Winning in your Category

In *The Creative Dividend*, emotion is always benchmarked within category using full database of more than 150,000 ads. This approach is more sensitive and accurate. Categories have different natural emotional baselines. Dog food is more emotional than banking. Many categories also settle into creative equilibrium over time. Insurance is an interesting example. For years it was dominated by rational messaging until Geico's Gecko campaign shifted expectations and lifted the emotional standard of the category.

Creating Emotional Advertising

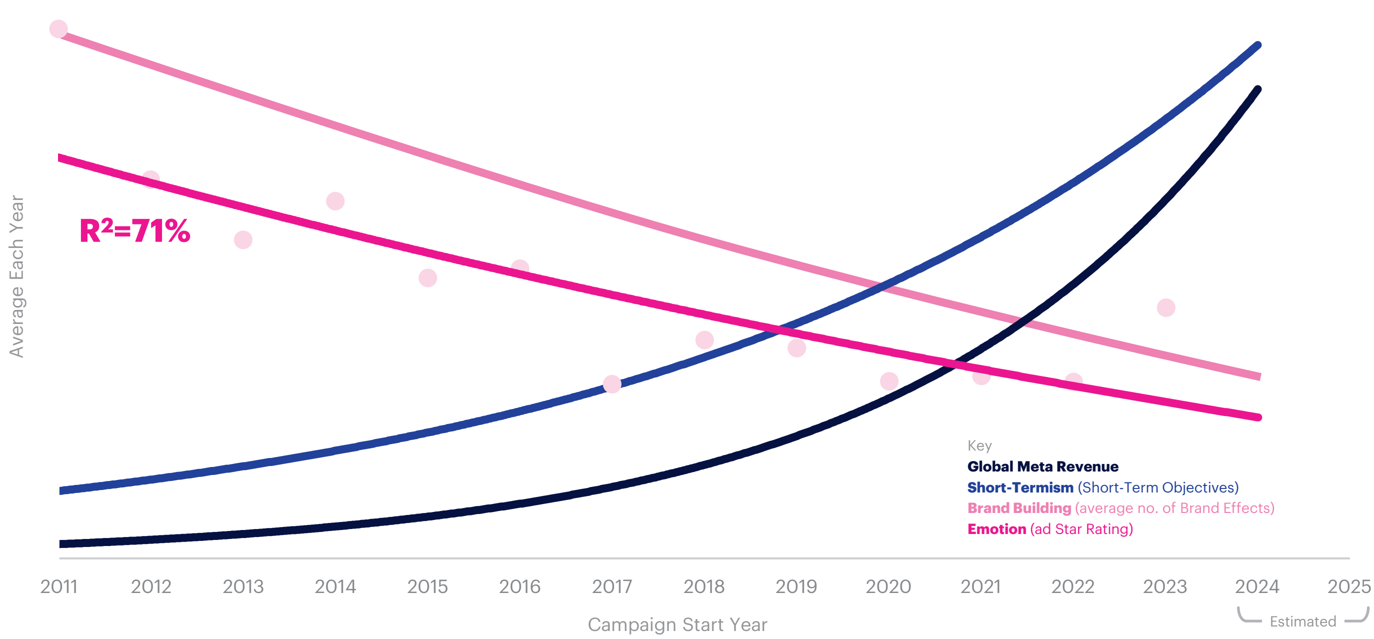
This guidance clarifies the role of emotion in effective advertising, but it is not a creative formula. How a brand's positioning, assets, product, and ideas make people feel is the result of the entire marketing process and the skill of the creative teams involved.

One clear creative question helps guide decisions. When guiding ideas and execution, marketers should ask: How will this make people feel? When positive emotion is prioritized, better outcomes follow.
Emotion also interacts with media, which we explore in Chapter 5. Its role in driving each Brand Effect and Business Result appears in Chapter 4. Chapter 7 shows how emotion, benchmarked within category, explains the commercial outcomes of campaigns across markets and categories.

Advertising is Losing Emotion

Despite emotion's clear benefit to advertising, the average emotional response to advertising is decreasing *(Fig 32)*. This decline is highly correlated with the loss of campaigns capable of generating more Brand Effects (71%). Marketers should push businesses to invest in bold ideas and teams that champion emotion.

Figure 32
The emotional response to advertising is decreasing, closely following the decrease in Brand Effects
Meta's Global Revenue, short-term campaign objectives, and reported Brand Effects



Average Short-Term Objectives and reported Brand Effects per campaign: 1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Meta's Global Ad revenue: WARC media 2024, note 2024 were forecasts. Emotion: System1's Star Rating metric with c. 200,000 respondents. All series are indexed to compare trends.

Distinctiveness

How Brands Become Easier to Recognize

Emotion helps build memories, and those memories drive long-term Brand Effects and Business Results. It is one of the strongest solo predictors of long-term effectiveness, but emotion is only one part of the *Creativity Stack*. A memory only becomes commercially valuable when customers associate it with the correct brand.

That is the role of distinctiveness. A distinctive brand comes to mind quickly and with little effort. Distinctive advertising makes the brand come to mind easily when seen or heard, so memories are stored with a clear label.

System1 measures this through the percentage of viewers who can correctly identify the brand after watching an ad. We call this creative metric Fluency Rating, because it captures how effortlessly the branding is processed and recognized. The higher the score, the more reliably the advertising is building branded memory.

Across all ads linked to Effie Insights' database, the average Fluency Rating is 81%. This gives a useful benchmark for what strong distinctiveness looks like in campaigns.

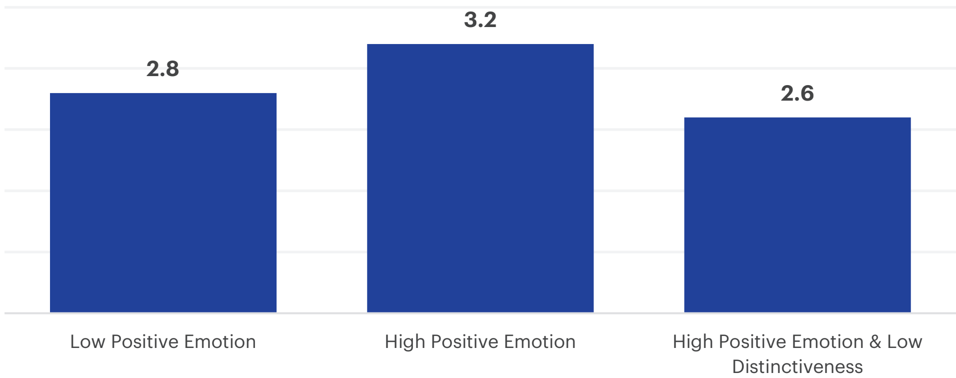
Emotion and distinctiveness must work together. When an ad is low in distinctiveness, the brand-building power of emotion is largely lost *(Fig 33)*. Even highly emotional advertising delivers fewer Brand Effects when the branding is not recognized easily.

81%

AVERAGE FLUENCY RATING OF ALL ADS LINKED TO EFFIE INSIGHTS' DATABASE.

Figure 33
The benefits of emotion are lost when ads have low distinctiveness.

Avg. No. Reported Brand Effects



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Bottom quartile of System1's Star Rating metric vs Top Quartile, with Bottom Quartile Fluency Rating c. 200,000 respondents in each market.

Distinctive Brand Assets

As Jenni Romaniuk explains in *Better Brand Health*, brands grow when they employ clear and consistent cues known as Distinctive Brand Assets (DBAs). These cues bring a brand to mind when used in advertising.

DBAs come in many forms. We focus on nine core asset types that frequently appear across the campaigns in Effie Insights' database and in System1's Test Your Ad Competitive Edge database. Most are visual but some DBAs trigger recognition solely through audio. These include logos, symbols, celebrities used consistently, colors, slogans, typefaces, product shapes, jingles, sonic cues, and the Fluent Device.

The Fluent Device is a special type of DBA that not only triggers recognition but can also create drama and emotion in advertising. A Fluent Character is a repeated character that brings the brand's personality to life. A Fluent Scenario is a repeated narrative structure, such as Snickers' "You're not you when you're hungry." Orlando Wood has defined and extensively studied this type of asset.

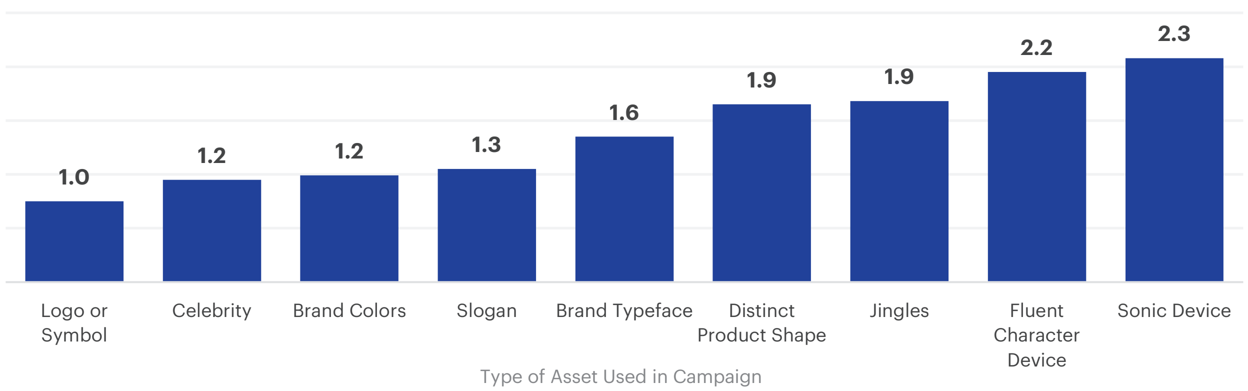
Creating More Distinctive Advertising

Analyzing long-form assets from System1's Test Your Ad Competitive Edge database, we see that the likelihood an ad achieves strong distinctiveness varies depending on the DBAs used *(Fig 34)*. For example, the use of audio DBAs (jingles and sonic devices) substantially increases the chance that an ad achieves high distinctiveness.

The more consistently an asset shows up across campaigns, the more quickly people connect it to the brand. That is why DBAs are so valuable in practice. They reduce the effort required to recognize the advertiser, and they free the creative to do more emotionally and narratively, because the branding work is being done by familiar cues. Figure 34 shows the pattern clearly: the presence of these assets is associated with a higher likelihood of achieving high distinctiveness.

Figure 34
Using different DBAs increases the likelihood of high distinctiveness.

Chance a long-form ad gets high distinctiveness vs low



1,005 long-form assets from the US and UK Effie Insights' database coded for assets use with System1's Fluency metric (% correct brand recognition). Chance of achieving the top quartile in distinctiveness vs the bottom quartile.

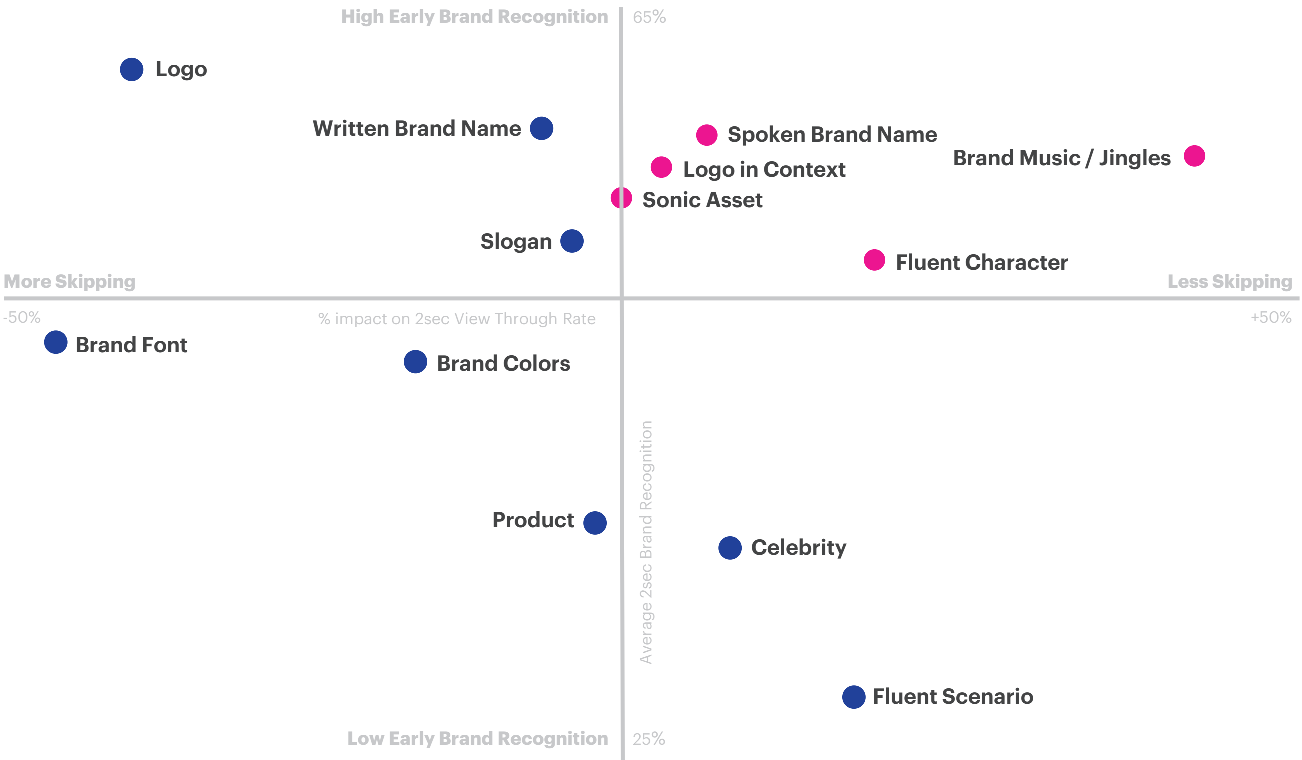
The Unique Application in Short-Form

A study of nearly 1,000 paid TikTok ads reveals unique guidance for achieving distinctiveness in short-form, skippable formats. Editing a logo into the first seconds of an ad triggers early brand recognition but also increases skipping *(Fig 35)*. A logo that appears in context within the creative idea does not show this negative effect. Fluent Characters again show strong distinctiveness in this channel. Understanding a media channel like this can help marketers achieve creative effectiveness.

"Short-form advertising's meteoric rise quickly flipped the tired rule book. Editing a logo onto an ad breaks the number one rule of social: entertaining for commercial gain. Brands that understand this and adapt their DBA playbook will be the real modern marketing winners."

CALLUM SMITH, HEAD OF PRODUCT MARKETING STRATEGY AND COMMS, TIKTOK

Figure 35
The use of some DBAs causes skipping in short-form ads.
Average 2-sec distinctiveness and attention effect when DBA used in first 2-sec



The Long and the Short (Form) of It, System1 and TikTok. Comparison of Attention and Early Brand Recognition (Fast Fluency) for ads with and without distinctive brand assets in the first 2 seconds. Attention measured via change in 2-second view-through rate (VTR); Fast Fluency via change in 2-second brand recognition.
84,788 respondents across US, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Brazil, and Mexico.

The Power of the Fluent Device

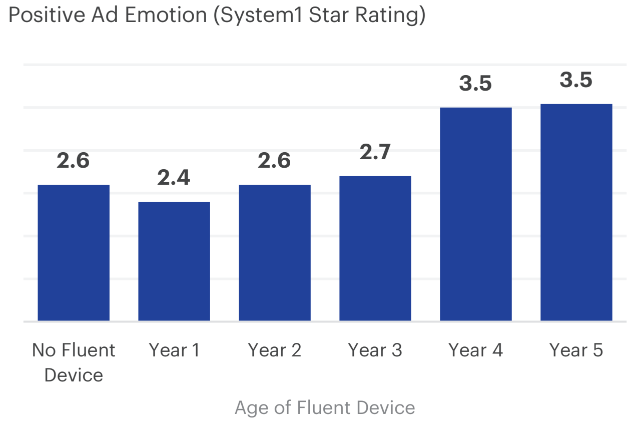
Orlando Wood's work shows that Fluent Devices increase distinctiveness, attention, and emotion by building more memory structures due to their ability to attract branded attention and elicit a stronger emotional response. And, in fact, introduce more showmanship and consistency, which we explore later in this chapter.

This is why the effective use of a Fluent Device must be a commitment. Advertising that includes one after years of use sees a stronger emotional response than the average ad, but this effect doesn't occur straight away.

Fluent Devices behave differently from celebrities. Celebrities are often a substitute for a creative idea and can pull attention away from the brand. Fluent Devices strengthen recognition and emotional response. System1's Fast Fluency measure shows that Fluent Devices often accelerate the speed of branding in an ad, while celebrities rarely do *(Table 5)*.

Campaigns featuring Fluent Devices report key Brand Effects more often *(Fig 37)*. They triple the chance of reporting gains in brand distinctiveness and double the chance of increasing fame.

Figure 36
The emotional benefits of a Fluent Device appear only after commitment.



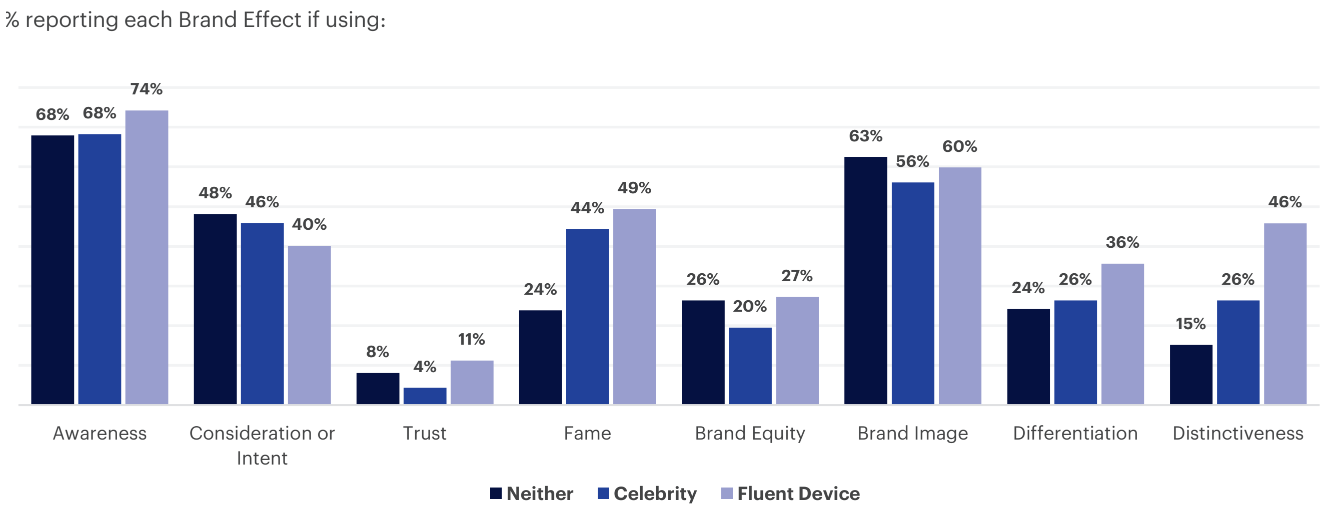
56 UK brands advertising on TV with 4,164 assets. System1's Star Rating average split by Fluent Device tenure, tested with 624,600 respondents.

Table 5
The use of Fluent Devices makes advertising more emotional and distinct.

	Positive Emotion	Distinctiveness	Fast Distinctiveness
	System1 Star Rating	System1 Fluency Rating %	System1 Fast Fluency %
Neither	2.7	79	55
Fluent Device	3.4	86	63
Celebrity	3.2	81	54

1,005 long-form assets from the US and UK Effie Insights' database coded for assets use with System1's Fluency metric (% correct brand recognition) and Star Rating.

Figure 37
The use of Fluent Devices in campaigns improves the chance of campaigns reporting key Brand Effects.



US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Split by DBA use. N: 838, 132, 205 - Neither, Fluent Device, Celebrity.

Alongside these creative and brand-building advantages, Fluent Devices are usually born from a clear strategic need. Kevin the Carrot, created for Aldi UK's Grand Effie Winning Christmas campaigns, began as a way to showcase the brand's wider product range. A decade later, he remains central to Aldi's holiday advertising, delighting audiences while giving the brand a flexible, familiar storytelling vehicle.

This all leads to increasing the likelihood of reporting key Business Results *(Fig 38)*. Campaigns using celebrities rarely report stronger pricing power and show minimal improvements in revenue, loyalty, or penetration. They show a slight decrease in profit likelihood, likely due to higher associated fees and limited contribution to ad distinctiveness.

This does not mean marketers should avoid celebrities. They need to be used with discipline, supporting a creative idea, and ideally used consistently across campaigns. Celebrities cannot replace a creative idea, and they rarely play the long-term role that Fluent Devices do.

"A 'Fluent device' like Kevin the Carrot instantly captures attention, stops people from looking away, skipping on, or changing channels. Kevin the Carrot has become Britain's best-loved retail brand mascot, while at the same time delivering more than half of the brand's penetration growth and over 600% ROMI, bearing testament to the commercial potency of humor and storytelling to build long-term brand growth."

DARREN HAWKINS, HEAD OF EFFECTIVENESS, EUROPE & UK, MCCANN WORLDGROUP. ALDI CASE STUDY

SEE THE ALDI CASE STUDY FOR A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE OF THE BENEFITS OF A FLUENT DEVICE.

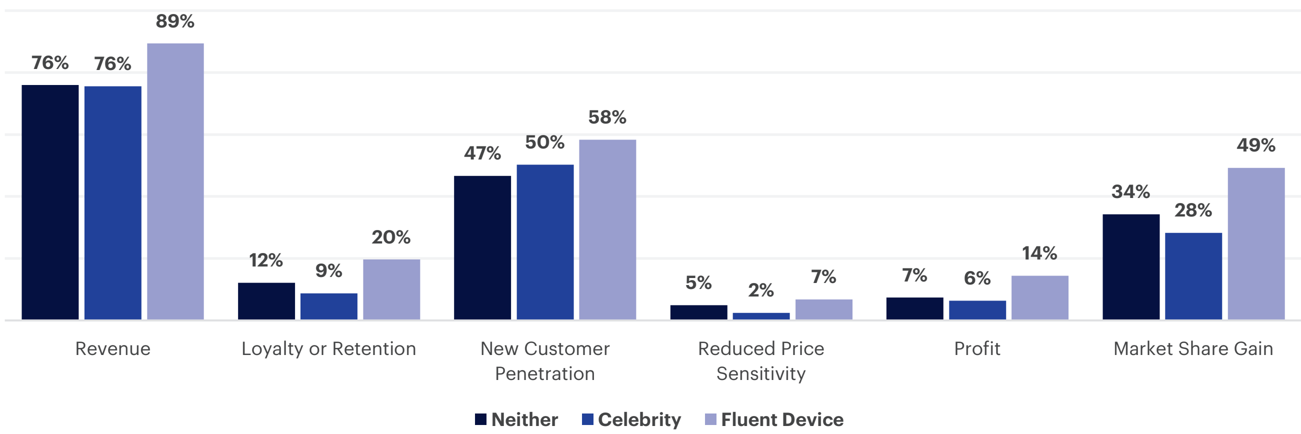
2x

HIGHER PROFIT LIKELIHOOD WITH FLUENT DEVICES

CAMPAIGNS FEATURING A FLUENT DEVICES ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO REPORT PROFIT GROWTH COMPARED TO CAMPAIGNS FEATURING A CELEBRITY OR NEITHER

Figure 38
The use of Fluent Devices in campaigns improves the chance of campaigns reporting all Business Results.

% reporting each Business Result if using:



US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).
Split by DBA use. N: 838, 132, 205 - Neither, Fluent Device, Celebrity.

Bring Back the Jingle

Audio DBAs grow in importance as people view more advertising in distracted environments, often while using second or third screens. You can look away from an ad, but you cannot close your ears.

A jingle is branded music with a clear melody. It is designed to be repeatable and easy to remember, so the brand can own a tune in memory. A well-known song used consistently over time can also function like a brand jingle, because repetition can turn borrowed music into a recognizable brand cue. A sonic device is a shorter audio signature that does not depend on a melody, such as a mnemonic sound, a distinctive audio cue, or a branded sound effect.

The use of jingles in advertising increases both the average emotional response and the accuracy and speed of brand recognition *(Table 6)*. Sonic devices also support brand recognition, though they have a lower average impact on emotion. Sonic cues are often used only at the end of long-form assets, which limits their potential. They work harder when used throughout an ad.

Jingles, likely because of their melodic structure and emotional pull, enhance most Brand Effects *(Fig 39)*. Their impact on fame and distinctiveness is particularly strong. They make ads more shareable, more recognizable, and more memorable.

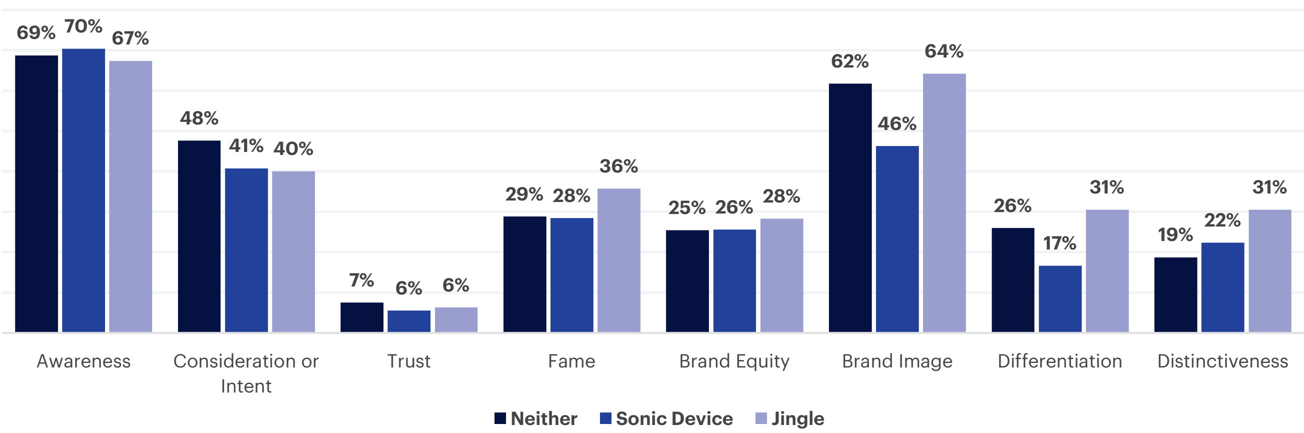
Table 6
The use of jingles and sonic devices makes advertising more emotional and distinctive.

	Positive Emotion	Distinctiveness	Fast Distinctiveness
	System1 Star Rating	System1 Fluency Rating %	System1 Fast Fluency %
Neither	2.8	80	56
Sonic Device	2.9	84	62
Jingle	3.1	87	65

1,005 long-form assets from the US and UK Effie Insights' database coded for assets use with System1's Fluency metric (% correct brand recognition) and Star Rating.

Figure 39
Advertising that uses a jingle usually reports more key Brand Effects.

% reporting each Brand Effect if using:



US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Split by DBA use.
N: 1,016, 54, 95 - Neither, Sonic Device, Jingle.

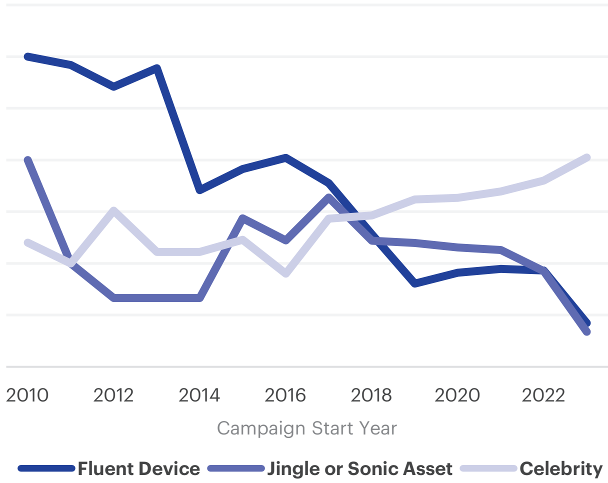
Despite the strength of Fluent Devices and audio assets, their use in advertising is declining, while celebrity use has increased *(Fig 40)*. This works against effectiveness. Brands are using fewer assets that build memory, recognition, and emotion, and more assets that rarely strengthen long-term commercial outcomes.

Emotion, Distinctiveness, and Time

Advertising must be emotional and distinctive, but its combined power does not reach its potential in short-term campaigns. Their effects build as memory structures form and strengthen. Even emotional and distinctive campaigns struggle to convert spend into profit if they run for less than six months. When the same campaign runs for years, the probability of generating incremental profit rises sharply *(Fig 41)*.

Figure 40
Jingles, sonic devices, and the Fluent Device are becoming rarer in advertising. Celebrities are featuring more.

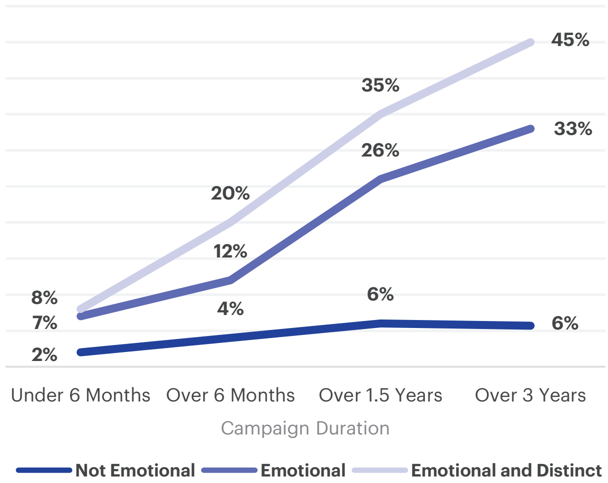
% use of each DBA type



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Rolling 3-month average, use of each DBA per year.

Figure 41
Emotional and distinctive campaigns achieve more profit, but profit takes time.

% reporting profit growth



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Bottom quartile of System1's Star Rating metric vs Top Quartile, with Bottom Quartile Fluency Metric c. 200,000 respondents in each market.

> ***"You're taking your cakes out of the oven too early. Leave them in. Let the emotion work, let the codes work."***
>
> **MARK RITSON, MARKETING PROFESSOR**

Showmanship

Earning Attention and Interest

Showmanship returned to the center of advertising through the work of Paul Feldwick, who argued that effective advertising has always owed more to entertainment than to rational persuasion. In *The Anatomy of Humbug* and *Why Does the Pedlar Sing?*, Feldwick showed that early advertisers behaved like performers. They used charm, spectacle, and emotion to win broad public attention. That challenges the belief that advertising should behave like a rational argument built on salesmanship.

Orlando Wood extended this argument in *Lemon* and *Look Out*, grounding it in psychology. Drawing from psychiatrist and philosopher Iain McGilchrist, Wood describes two modes of attention: a narrow, detail-seeking mode and a broad, contextual mode. The broad mode is tuned to social understanding, novelty, humor, and human connection, which helps explain why some advertising earns attention while other advertising is ignored.

In practice, showmanship is the craft of making an idea worth watching. It is often the "how" behind emotion: the narrative choices, human detail, and sense of life that make feeling more likely, more intense, and more memorable. Salesmanship tends to assume attention and focus on literal messaging and product-centric persuasion.

Showmanship has many facets in Wood's work. In this book, we focus on one measurable dimension: showmanship as a creative style. To do that at scale, we use Wood's salesmanship and showmanship creative features as observable signals in the work *(Fig 42)*. They give us a practical way to quantify showmanship consistently across thousands of campaigns, but they are not the full showmanship framework. For the broader approach and deeper guidance, explore his work, starting with *Lemon* and *Look Out*.

Figure 42
Orlando Wood's 15 salesmanship and showmanship creative features.

Salesmanship "Left Brain" Creative Features	**Showmanship** "Right Brain" Creative Features
Flatness	A clear sense of place
Abstracted product, feature, ingredient	One scene unfolding with progression
Abstracted body part (e.g. hands, mouth)	Characters with agency (voice, movement, expression)
Words obtrude during the ad	Implicit, unspoken communication (knowing glances)
Voiceover	Dialogue
Monologue (e.g. testimonial)	Distinctive accents
Adjectives used as nouns	Play on words or subversion of language
Freeze-frame effect	Set in the past (costumes & sets)
Audio repetition (metered prose, sound effects)	Reference to other cultural works (pastiche / parody)
Highly rhythmic soundtrack	Music with melody
Facial frontality (the stare, looking into the camera)	Spontaneous change in facial expression
Self-consciousness (e.g. looking into mirror)	Something out of the ordinary (emerging from scene)
Empty smile (socially willed / out of context)	Animals (the living)
Product-centricity (focus on things)	Animated characters (suggesting the living)
Split-screen effect (abstraction)	People touching (intimacy)

See Lemon: How the Advertising Brain Turned Sour. Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA), 2019 and Look Out: Creativity in a Time of Crisis. Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA), 2021 from Orlando Wood.

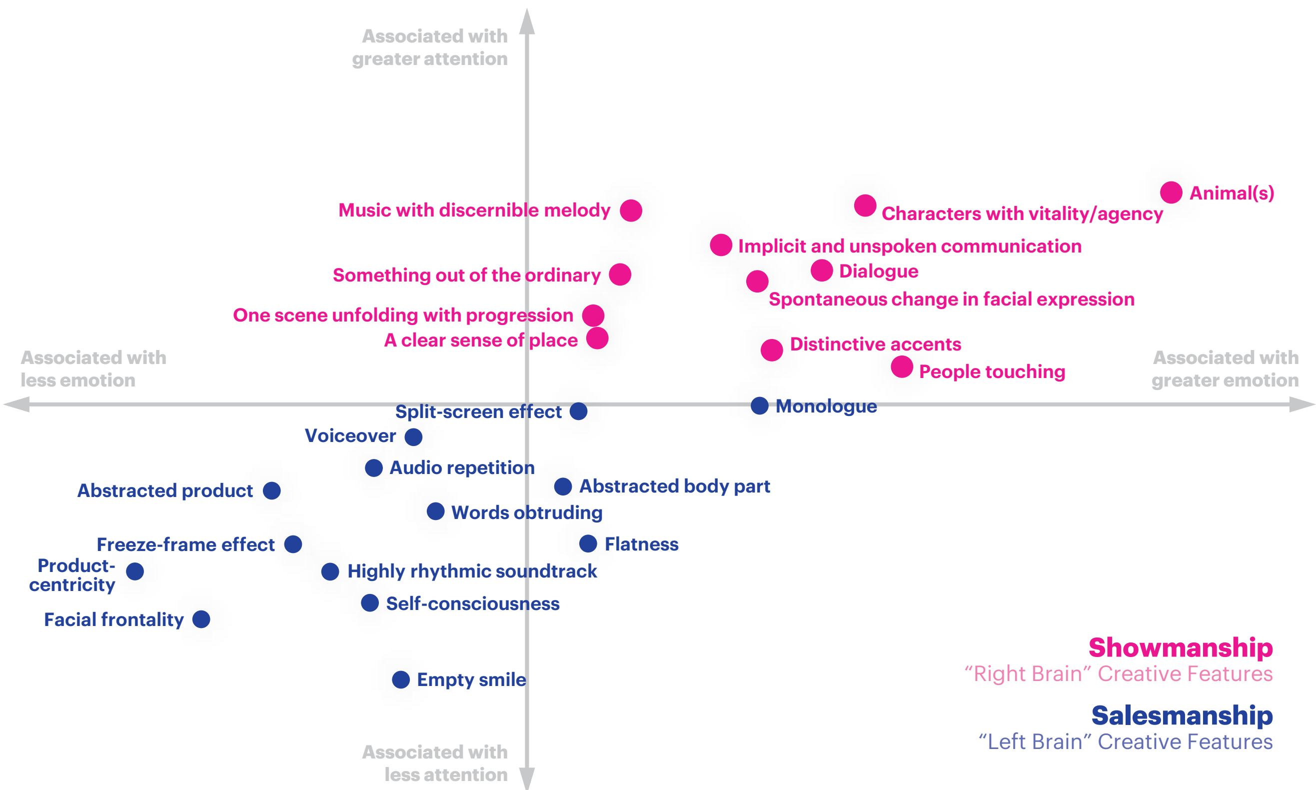
How Showmanship Works

Wood's research shows that ads rich in showmanship consistently outperform work built on narrow persuasion of salesmanship. Showmanship is a rich, creative approach to executing an idea, standing out within a category, and respecting the viewer of an ad while giving a brand a personality. It is also a primary way advertising earns attention and creates emotion, because it changes how people notice, process, and remember what they see.

Showmanship creative features make ads more likely to generate a positive emotional response and more likely to capture broad-beam attention. This is why showmanship sits as its own layer in the *Creativity Stack*. It can support emotion, but it reshapes how future customers notice, process, and remember advertising.

> ***"Distinctiveness and consistency are vital, but alone they are not enough. It is Showmanship that gets you noticed, gets you remembered and gets you talked about. Showmanship is how advertising earns fame, builds trust and drives growth.***
>
> ***For advertisers, that means creating advertising with narrative, theatre and personality. So be interesting. Be provocative. Entertain. If you want to find the magic in your product, think not just about what you say, but how you say it."***
>
> **ORLANDO WOOD**, CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER, SYSTEM1, FOUNDER OF ADVERTISING PRINCIPLES EXPLAINED, AUTHOR OF *LEMON* AND *LOOK OUT*.

Figure 43
How salesmanship and showmanship impact attention and emotion.
Association (r) with emotion (Star Rating), attention (eye tracking), and the use of each feature.



Correlation between presence of feature and emotional response (System1 Star rating), horizontal axis, and between presence of feature and Creative Attention Score (TVision), vertical axis. See Look Out: Creativity in a Time of Crisis. Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA), 2021, Orlando Wood.

Showmanship Makes Advertising Spend Work Harder

Showmanship makes media spend work harder at any budget level *(Fig 44)*. It turns the creative idea into a media multiplier. Entertaining ideas increase reach, hold attention for longer, and generate more of an emotional response. When a campaign entertains people, every dollar spent on media becomes more efficient.

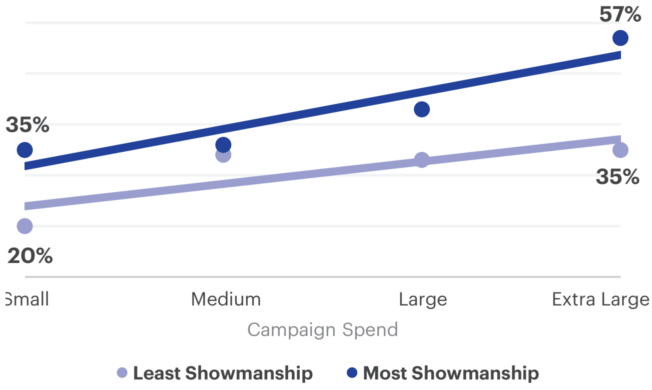
Showmanship Matters Even More in Skippable Media

Showmanship becomes more important as media budgets shift toward skippable formats. Potential customers decide whether an ad is worth watching second by second. Most content is scrolled past. Work that understands the value exchange within these media channels and entertains with showmanship to earn attention has the greatest chance of lasting impact. Marketers who understand this get more from the affordable mass reach that short-form platforms offer.

From our analysis of paid TikTok ads, short-form skippable ads with more showmanship deliver significantly more brand and conversion lift *(Fig 45)*. They generate a 40% lift in emotional response and a 54% lift in attention. This demonstrates the increased importance of showmanship in skippable media and how it works to increase emotion and attention.

Figure 44
Showmanship supports media spend to create share growth.

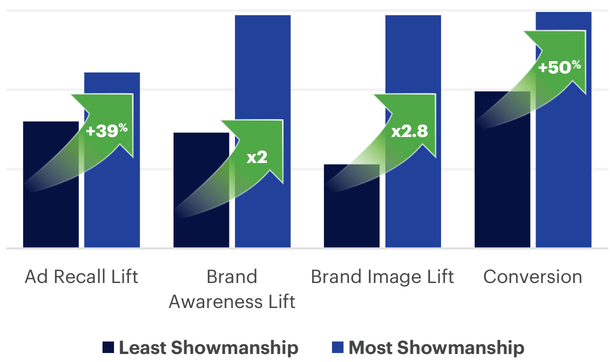
% reporting market share growth



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Top quartile of No. of Showmanship Creative Features vs bottom.

Figure 45
Showmanship supports brand growth and conversion in short-form.

Brand and Conversion Lift, split by no. of showmanship features



The Long and the Short (Form) of It, System1 and TikTok. Top quartile of No. of Showmanship Creative Features vs bottom, with average brand and conversion lift outcome. 847 TikTok short-form ads.

Advertising is Losing Showmanship

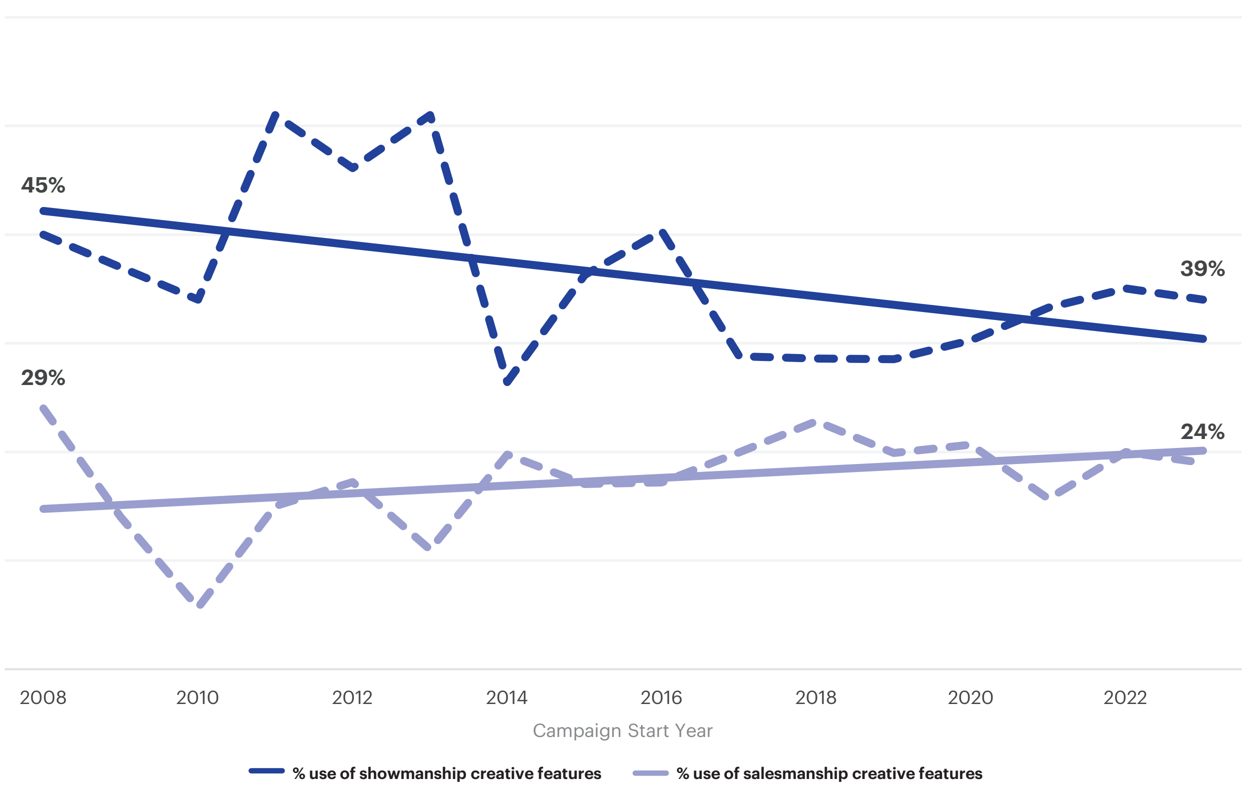
Even as the need for showmanship has increased, advertising is moving away from showmanship. The entertaining craft that makes work watchable, and makes feeling more likely, is being used less often. Orlando Wood showed this in his analysis of a nationally representative sample of UK advertising in his book *Lemon*. In that dataset, salesmanship features are more common than showmanship features overall, which is what you would expect from everyday advertising. It skews toward explanation, claims, and sales. What matters is the shift he discovered over time. The use of showmanship creative features has been falling, while the use of salesmanship features has risen.

We also see the same pattern in the global Effie Insights and System1 dataset. These are campaigns submitted for effectiveness awards, so the baseline quality is higher than a nationally representative sample. That is why the overall balance looks different here, with showmanship creative features appearing more prevalent than salesmanship creative features.

Despite the different baselines, the drift is consistent *(Fig 46)*. In Wood's UK dataset and in Effie Insights' database, showmanship features are trending down, and salesmanship features are trending up. Two very different sources point to the same problem. Advertising is becoming less skilled at the "how" of making people feel and attracting attention, right when we need this craft to do more of the heavy lifting.

Figure 46
The use of showmanship in advertising is falling across all markets.

% use of showmanship and salesmanship



1,251 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2008-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). % use of each creative style.
See Lemon and Look out by Orlando Wood for more.

Consistency

Consistency Compounds Creativity

Marketers have long understood that consistency grows brands, but guidance usually stops at suggestions such as “use the same ad for longer” or “keep Distinctive Brand Assets the same”.

The *Compound Creativity* framework measures consistency holistically by assessing how creatively consistent a brand is over multiple years. It captures strategy, execution across channels, and what a brand chooses to keep the same or change. This fuller view helps marketing teams create more consistent, effective advertising.

The Compound Creativity Framework

This framework helps marketers move away from new execution as the default and instead give creativity the time to become a commercial advantage *(Fig 47)*.

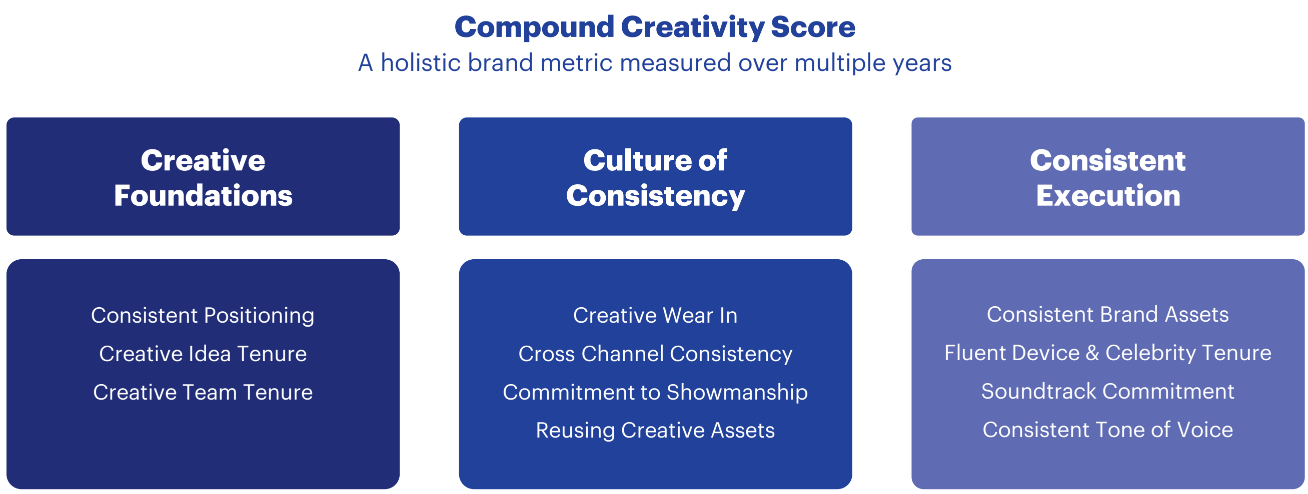
There are three types of consistency, each compounding Brand Effects and Business Results in slightly different ways:

1. **Consistent Creative Foundations:** a brand holding the same positioning, creative idea, and creative teams
2. **A Culture of Consistency:** a team stretching campaigns across time and touchpoints
3. **Consistent Creative Execution:** a brand maintaining the same look and feel

Building a *Compound Creativity Score* requires tracking brands over time, not judging single ads in isolation. For each brand, we reviewed five years of advertising in System1’s Test Your Ad Competitive Edge database across TV and digital. We coded how often the brand changed its positioning, core creative idea, and creative partners. We also assessed how long ads stayed in market (wear-in), how consistently the brand showed up across channels, whether it stuck to a consistent showmanship style, and whether it reused or refreshed existing assets. Finally, we tracked the tenure of key branded elements, including Fluent Devices, soundtrack choices, and tone of voice. We created scores for 139 US and UK brands and matched them to campaigns in Effie Insights’ database. The largest cross-market holistic study of consistency to date.

Consistency is not repetition for its own sake. It is the disciplined practice of refreshing and strengthening the same memory structures repeatedly.

Figure 47
The Compound Creativity framework to measure brand creative consistency.



How Compound Creativity is measured, original framework developed by System1 and the IPA in The Power of Compound Creativity.

Consistent Foundations

The first pillar is Creative Foundations: holding the same positioning, creative idea, and creative partners over time.

Strategic associations only become powerful when they are expressed, repeated, and reinforced over years. It is easier to refresh an existing memory structure than to build a new one. Consistent Creative Foundations give memory structures the time to form, strengthen, and link clearly to the brand *(Fig 48)*. They help a brand become more talked about, more trusted, more differentiated, and more distinctive.

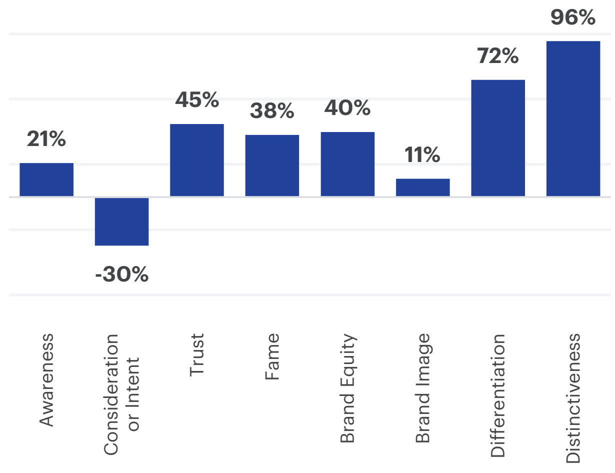
Creative teams play a central role. When brands stay with the same agency or partners, they build cumulative expertise. They understand assets, codes, positioning, and strategy. Stability allows teams to plan beyond a single quarter. Brands that make fewer creative team changes produce advertising that is more emotional and more distinctive year-on-year *(Fig 49)*. This matters because it is not explained by "good brands keep agencies." We see evidence of improvement over time, suggesting learning and cumulative knowledge, not just campaign selection bias.

Consistent Creative Foundations have to come first. In this dataset, they show the broadest impact across Brand Effects, not a specific spike in one outcome. Although the largest gains cluster around outcomes you would expect from repeated associations and recognition building over time.

If the positioning and core idea keep shifting, there is nothing stable for marketing to build on. This is a fundamental update to Michael Porter's description of strategy. Strategy is choosing what not to do, and what to do again.

Figure 48
Consistent Creative Foundations have a broad positive impact on Brand Effects.

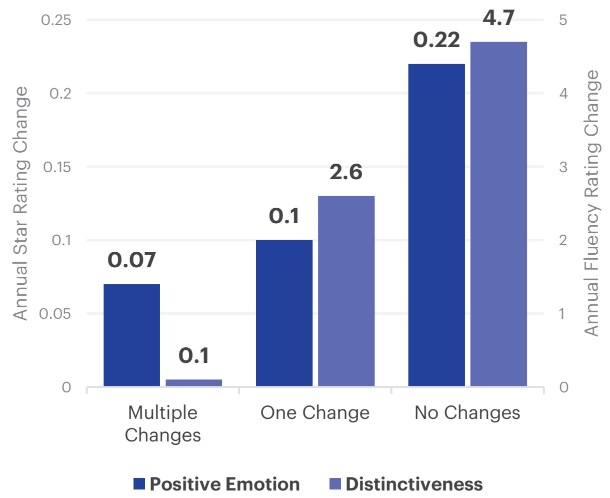
% lift in reported Brand Effect from Consistent Foundations



139 US and UK brands measured over 5 years for their Compound Creativity Score matched to campaigns in Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Comparing the top quartiles of Consistent Foundations and the bottom.

Figure 49
The fewer creative team changes a brand makes, the more emotional and distinctive its advertising.

Annual change in creative output over 5 years



139 US and UK brands measured over 5 years for their Compound Creativity Score matched to campaigns in Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Positive emotion, System1's Star Rating. Distinctiveness, System1's Fluency Rating.

Culture of Consistency

The second pillar is a Culture of Consistency: marketers using ads for longer, ensuring consistency across channels, committing to showmanship, and reusing creative assets.

Advertising must be deployed consistently across time and space (years and touchpoints). Ads do not work in isolation. Ideas must travel, stretch, and repeat.

Wear-in is vital. Advertising does not wear out in the way marketers assume. Customers rarely care enough or notice an ad enough times for it to become boring or irritating. Only marketers get bored of ads. The longer an ad runs, the more distinctive it becomes. Repetition strengthens recognition.

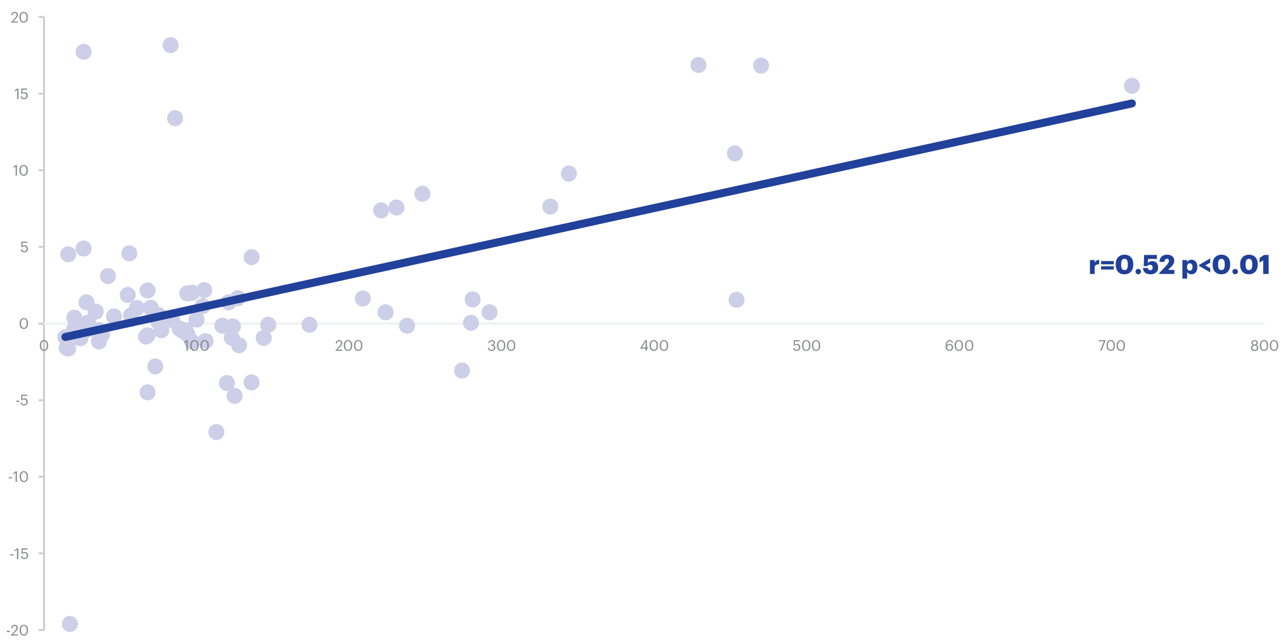
Using 4,000+ ads from the top 80 UK TV spending brands, we compared each brand's average ad life with the year-on-year change in ad distinctiveness (Fluency Rating). Brands that keep ads in market for longer see larger annual gains in distinctiveness *(Fig 50)*, because the audience learns the cues faster and recognizes the brand more easily over time. This finding isn't simply the most distinct brands keeping their ads on air for longer. Brands with greater wear-in on average see their ads get more distinctive year-on-year as more memories form and DBAs strengthen.

+15%

ANNUAL INCREASE IN AD DISTINCTIVENESS
FOR YORKSHIRE TEA WHICH KEEPS ITS TV ADS LIVE FOR OVER 700 DAYS EACH ON AVERAGE. SEE YORKSHIRE TEA CASE STUDY FOR MORE.

Figure 50
The longer a brand uses its advertising, the more distinctive its advertising gets.

Annual Change in Ad Distinctiveness (Fluency Rating)



80 UK brands matched to 4,000+ UK TV ads in System1's Test Your Ad Competitive Edge Database. System1's Fluency Rating = % correct brand recall after viewing an ad, average change per year.

A team with a high Culture of Consistency works ads harder. Showing up consistently across channels, reusing assets, committing to showmanship, and allowing ads to wear in means your brand keeps turning up with the same associations, in the same familiar way. That is why, in this dataset, brands with a high Culture of Consistency are more likely to report gains in distinctiveness and differentiation *(Fig 51)*. But the biggest shift is in trust: no campaigns from low-consistency brands report trust gains, compared with 11.2% from high-consistency brands.

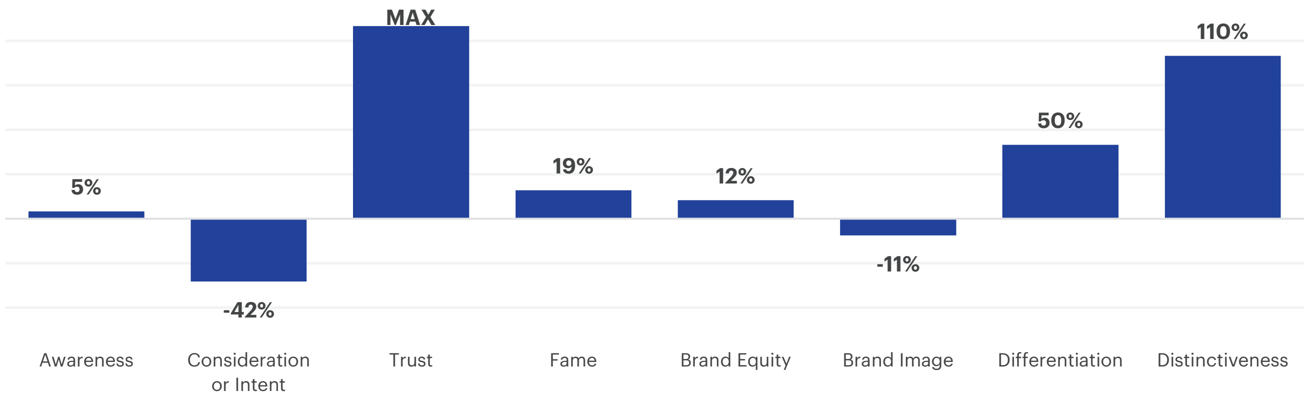
This is not about doing more work. It is about letting the work do more for you. Consistency gives customers the repetition they need to recognize the brand faster, learn what it stands for, and feel confident that it will behave the same way next time. That is the path from familiarity to stronger branded memory.

The trust effect matters because trust has become more important for business success. In Effie Insights' database, as shared in Chapter 2, trust was the 7th most associated Brand Effect with Business Results (2010-2017), but it's now the 4th most important (2018-2023). The link between trust and commercial outcomes keeps growing as customers have become more skeptical in a digital world, and while brands spread across touchpoints inconsistently.

Most marketers treat trust as messaging. They try to claim their way into belief. This research points to a different route: trust is earned through consistency that makes a brand feel recognizable and reliable over time. Creative consistency is one route. Media is another. In Chapter 5, we show that certain customer touchpoints are more likely to deliver trust effects, because where you show up shapes how credible you feel.

Figure 51
A Culture of Consistency dramatically impacts brand trust, differentiation, and distinctiveness.

% lift in reported Brand Effect from Culture of Consistency



139 US and UK brands measured over 5 years for their Compound Creativity Score matched to campaigns in Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Comparing the top quartile of Culture of Consistency and the bottom.

Consistent Creative Execution

The final pillar is Consistent Creative Execution: repeated use of DBAs, music, celebrities, and tone of voice to create a brand world that people instantly recognize.

The Familiarity Heuristic

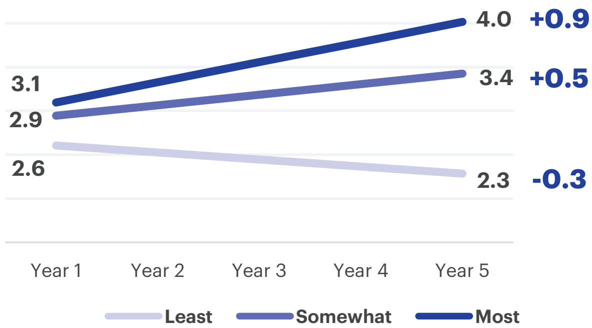
The Familiarity Heuristic is a cognitive shortcut that makes people more likely to choose what they recognize quickly. Familiar ads are processed faster, liked more, and remembered more easily. Familiarity only develops when brands commit to the same look and feel over years and campaigns. Marketers tire of assets long before customers do.

When a brand is consistent across its foundations and execution, its advertising becomes more emotional (*Fig 52)* and more distinctive *(Fig 53)*. Gains accumulate over time as each exposure strengthens memory structures.

This compounding effect is why we call this framework for measuring and guiding consistency *Compound Creativity*. The gap between consistent brands and inconsistent competitors grows wider every year.

Figure 52
The emotional response to advertising from consistent brands increases over years.

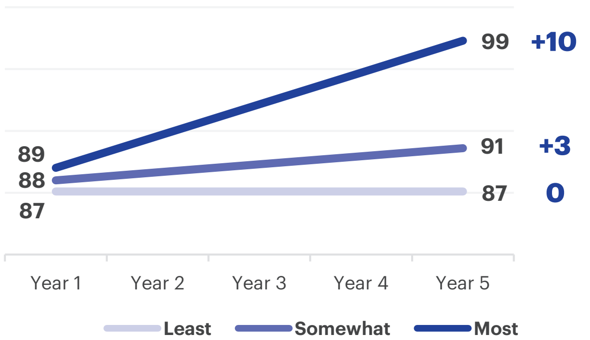
Average Positive Emotion Per Year (Star Rating)



80 UK brands ranked by consistency "Culture of Consistency" and " Consistent Execution" (thirds) matched all TV ads tested with System1's Test Your Ad over a 5-year period c. 4,000 ads tested with 600,000+ people. Star Rating.

Figure 53
Advertising from consistent brands improves in distinctiveness over the years.

Average Distinctiveness Per Year (Fluency Rating)



80 UK brands ranked by consistency "Culture of Consistency" and " Consistent Execution" (thirds) matched all TV ads tested with System1's Test Your Ad over a 5-year period c. 4,000 ads tested with 600,000+ people. Fluency Rating.

This commitment significantly increases the likelihood of reporting incremental differentiation and distinctiveness *(Fig 54)*. It is a key principle of marketing. Brand managers should protect and nurture DBAs and pass the brand on in better shape than they found it.

Consistency is another clear theme in the case studies we have included at the end of this book from Effie-winning campaigns. Yorkshire Tea's 2023 Grand Effie-winning campaign stands out in a category that kept changing.

"Right at the outset, we defined our creative formula… and we've stuck to that formula ever since." And "Proper brand-building takes time… putting the same message out there again and again, in the same way."

LUCKY GENERALS. YORKSHIRE TEA CASE STUDY.

It's important to find a human insight and emotion-first creative idea before leaning into consistency.

"Built upon an emotive and universal human insight… delivered with discipline via unwavering consistency over time."

JAMES PARNUM, MANAGING PARTNER AND HEAD OF PLANNING, ESSENCEMEDIACOM. TESCO CASE STUDY.

Apartments.com is one of the most impressive case studies for the power of consistency, growing from $85M to $1.1B in revenue in 10 years by consistently refreshing the same creative idea and using the same celebrity Fluent Device (a rare example of using a celebrity so consistently that they turn into a brand character themselves).

"That consistency built familiarity and trust, so renters turned to us first when they were ready for a fresh start."

NARGIS PIRANI, SVP, GROUP DIRECTOR, BRAND STRATEGY, RPA. APARTMENTS.COM CASE STUDY.

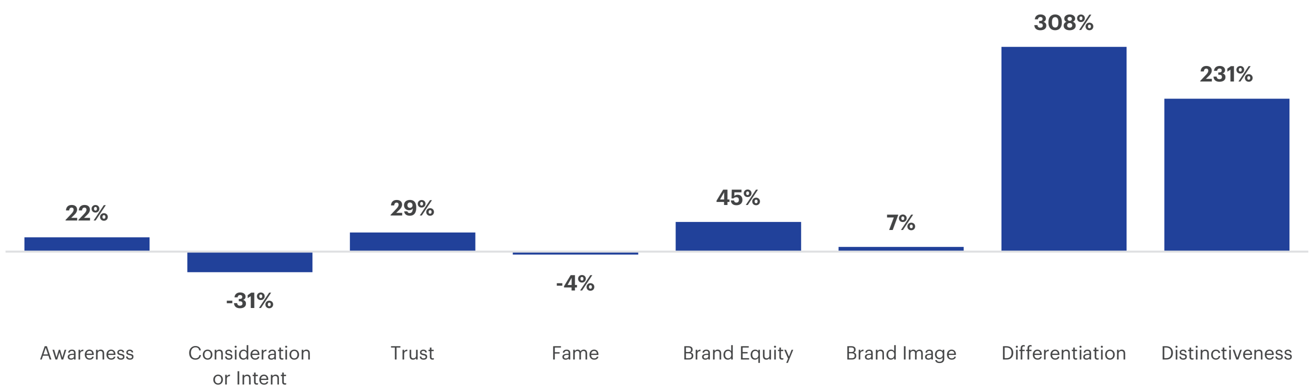
Consistency is important, but as Sarah Carter, adam&eve DDB Global Planning Partner, often shares: "Disguised repetition is the highest order of creativity".

"Consistently refreshed creativity beats change for its own sake."

DARREN HAWKINS, HEAD OF EFFECTIVENESS, EUROPE AND UK, MCCANN WORLDGROUP. ALDI UK CASE STUDY.

Figure 54
Consistent execution dramatically improves the chance of brand differentiation and distinctiveness.

% lift in reported Brand Effect from Consistent Execution



139 US and UK brands measured over 5 years for their Compound Creativity Score matched to campaigns in Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Comparing the top quartiles of Consistent Execution and the bottom.

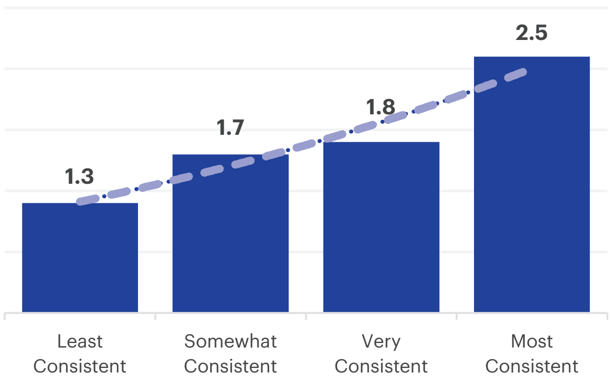
The Cost of Change

Across all three types of consistency, one result shows up again and again: a higher likelihood of building differentiation and distinctiveness. The mechanism is simple. Repeating the same strategic associations and recognizable cues strengthens memory structures and tightens the link between those cues and the brand. Change interrupts that learning and does the opposite, forcing brands to rebuild recognition and meaning from scratch.

Inconsistent brands, judged by the Compound Creativity Score, are one-third less likely to report gains in differentiation. No inconsistent brands reported gains in distinctiveness *(Fig 55)*.
Because consistency compounds, the commercial impact is even sharper. Inconsistent brands generate 48% fewer Business Results on average *(Fig 56)*, are three times less likely to report incremental profit, and report four times lower ROI *(Table 7)*.

Figure 56
Consistency has an exponential impact on Business Results.

Avg. No. Reported Business Results



139 US and UK brands measured over 5 years for their Compound Creativity Score matched to campaigns in Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Split into consistency quartiles.

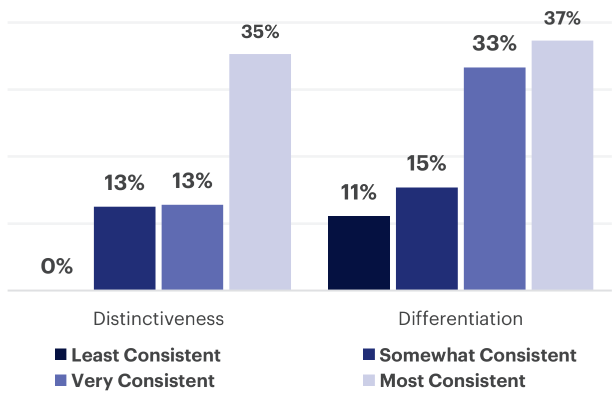
Table 7
Consistent campaigns report 4x higher ROI and are three times more likely to report profit growth.

	Least Consistent	Somewhat Consistent	Very Consistent	Most Consistent
Average ROI	2.1	2.2	3.7	8.8
% reporting profit growth	6.1%	12.4%	16.7%	17.6%

139 US and UK brands measured over 5 years for their Compound Creativity Score matched to campaigns in Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Split into consistency quartiles.

Figure 55
There's a large cost of change for differentiation and distinctiveness growth.

% lift in reported Brand Effect per Compound Consistency



139 US and UK brands measured over 5 years for their Compound Creativity Score matched to campaigns in Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Split into consistency quartiles.

Change Has Become the Default

Consistency should not be confused with creative restraint or dullness. It should enable creativity. Brands such as Geico, KitKat, Specsavers, and Coca-Cola use consistency as a creative springboard. They stretch their brand worlds across media, play with the same DBAs in interesting ways, and keep ideas fresh without resetting the brand. John Bartle called this imaginative repetition: repeating ideas imaginatively so the brand stays familiar and the executions stay exciting. Imaginative repetition should be considered one of the highest forms of creativity, not a set of rules to restrict it.

However, the industry is increasingly obsessed with new ideas, new tools, and new channels. This trend is leading to less consistency *(Fig 57)*. We must return to consistent campaigns that create lasting, strong brands and advertising that customers love and recognize.

Others have reached a similar conclusion from a different angle. In their Cannes Lions and WARC work, James Hurman and Peter Field describe "Creative Commitment," backing strong creative with longer duration, broader channel use, and bigger budgets. Their findings mirror ours: consistency and commitment make campaigns more effective.

"Creative Commitment correlates very tightly with effectiveness. As Creative Commitment increases, so does effectiveness."

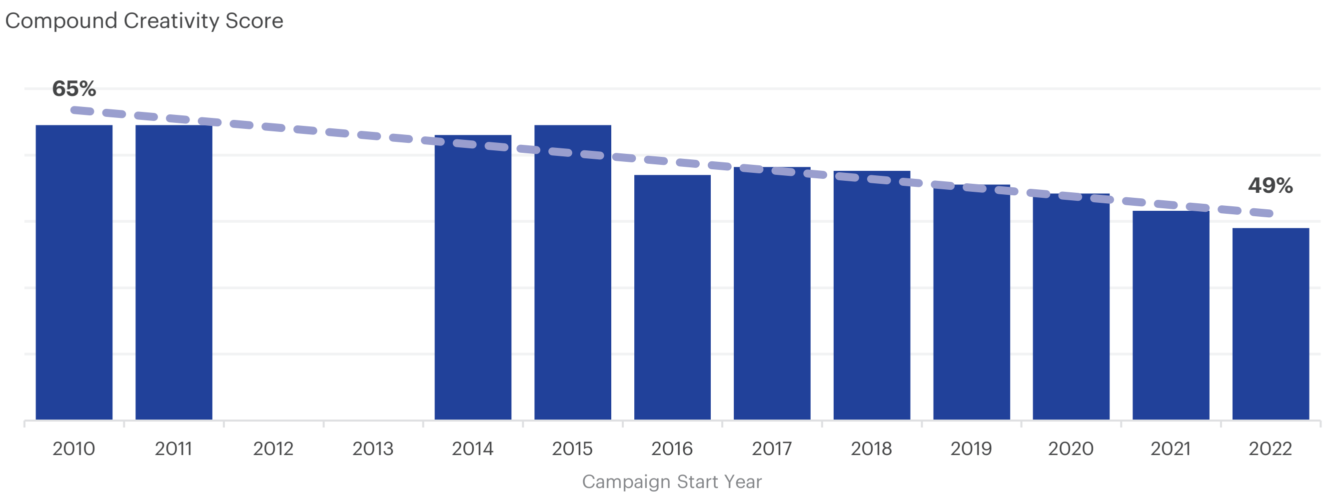
JAMES HURMAN AND PETER FIELD, *THE EFFECTIVENESS CODE*, CANNES LIONS AND WARC, 2020

All four layers within the *Creativity Stack* are key to multiplying effectiveness, but are becoming rarer, contributing to the decline in the brand building power of campaigns when we need it most. Correcting this will play a key role in raising marketing's role in a business as a reliable commercial growth engine.

25%

BRANDS HAVE BECOME 25% LESS CONSISTENT OVER THE PAST DECADE.

Figure 57
Brands are becoming less consistent.



139 US and UK brands measured over 5 years for their Compound Creativity Score matched to campaigns in Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTER 3

1. **The Creativity Stack.**
Emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and consistency all have unique and important roles in building memories, distinctive brands, attracting attention, and compounding advertising's effectiveness.

2. **The more we feel, the more we buy.**
It costs more for dull advertising to create the same effects as advertising that creates an intense emotional response. Better still, ads that elicit a positive emotional response have a lasting impact. However, the emotional response to advertising is declining.

3. **Distinctiveness works with emotion to create more and more profit over time.**
The use of some Distinctive Brand Assets leads to more distinct advertising, including Fluent Devices and audio assets, both of which are declining in use.

4. **Showmanship creates more emotion and attracts more broad attention.**
It is crucial for attracting new customers and is becoming even more important as advertising attracts less attention and becomes more skippable. The use of showmanship is declining in advertising.

5. **Consistency compounds creativity.**
Customers like consistency because of the familiarity heuristic. Only marketers get bored of ads. It is easier to refresh memories than to build new ones, which creates exponential growth in Business Results. Advertising campaigns are becoming less consistent globally.

THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND

CHAPTER 4

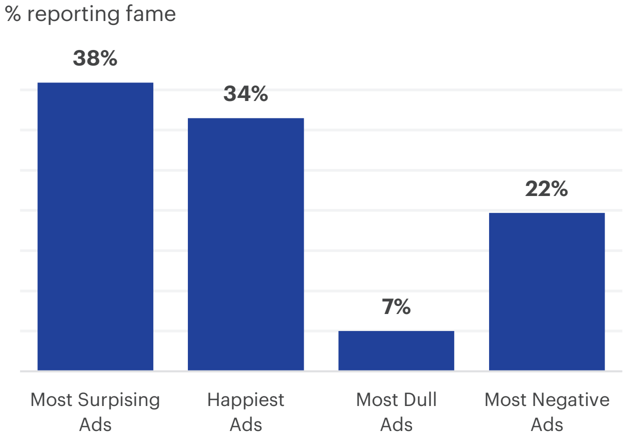
CREATIVITY BUILDS SUSTAINED GROWTH

[How Creativity Multiplies The Chance of Brand and Business Outcomes]

Brand Effects create the behavior change needed for sustained commercial outcomes. Creativity works in different ways to help achieve brand building, ultimately stacking to multiply lasting effectiveness.

This chapter shows creativity's impact on Brand Effects and Business Results, and the different roles played by each layer of the *Creativity Stack*. Emotion builds broad brand strength, distinctiveness makes sure the brand gets the credit, showmanship earns attention and fame, and consistency compounds trust, differentiation, and distinctive memory. It also shares how advertising research has advanced to help marketers achieve higher creative quality.

Figure 58
Surprising advertising supports greater fame effects.



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents in each market.

Sustained Commercial Growth

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, Brand Effects are the bridge to sustained commercial outcomes. They are how advertising changes future behavior: by building and strengthening branded memory over time. When those effects compound, Business Results follow, brands become easier to choose, easier to charge more for, and easier to grow.

Emotion's Vital Role in Brand Building

Emotion is the foundation layer. As Chapter 3 showed, it shapes memory formation and retrieval, and it is one of the fastest ways to build positive associations at scale. In this dataset, the most positively emotional campaigns (measured through System1's Star Rating) are linked to broad lifts across Brand Effects, specifically large increases in the chance of reporting brand Equity (+61%), distinctiveness (+95%), trust (+66%), and brand image gains (+28%) *(Fig 59)*.

Fame is also associated with emotion in a nuanced way. People talk about advertising that makes them feel something, especially when it surprises them. The most surprising ads are far more likely to report fame effects than the dullest (38% vs 7%), and the advantage of very surprising campaigns even edges happiness (34%) *(Fig 58)*.

Negative emotion can also generate fame (22%), but it is less dependable than surprise and positive feeling, and it comes with more risk. If you want fame that supports long-term brand building, emotionally positive and surprising strategies tend to be the more repeatable route.

Distinctiveness's Supporting Role

Distinctiveness is the attribution layer. It does not replace emotion, it makes it more useful. If people cannot quickly recognize which brand the advertising is for, the memory still forms, but the brand does not reliably receive the benefit from exposure. That is why campaigns in the top quarter for Fluency Rating in System1's measurement show a modest but widespread impact across Brand Effects, including distinctiveness (+34%), brand equity (+22%), and fame (+20%) (*Fig 59*).

The Unique Power of Showmanship

Showmanship, as Orlando Wood defines it, has many facets. Here we focus on one measurable dimension: showmanship as a creative style, captured through the showmanship creative features. Campaigns high in showmanship generate stronger positive emotion and earn broader attention, but they also respect the viewers' time and intelligence, entertaining them instead of selling at them. Which is why they are 50% more likely to report trust gains. The standout advantage is fame. High-showmanship campaigns are 51% more likely to report fame growth, compared with 20% for simply highly distinctive campaigns
(Fig 59). Distinctiveness helps people recognize you. Fame comes when you give people something worth watching and sharing. You have to put on a show.

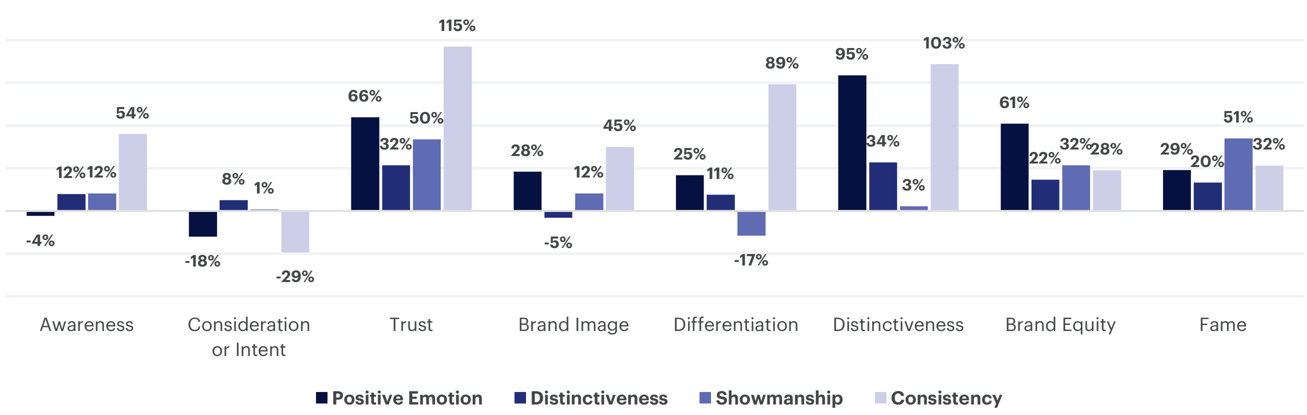
Consistency Is How Brands Grow

Consistency is the compounding layer. When brands reuse assets, maintain the same associations, and show up with familiar cues across channels, they become easier to learn and faster to recognize. In this dataset, consistency is associated with the strongest lifts in trust (+115%), distinctiveness (+103%), differentiation (+89%), and awareness (+54%) *(Fig 59)*. It is also a reminder that short-term claimed consideration is not always aligned with long-term brand building, with consistency showing a negative relationship with consideration or intent.

Together, these results explain why the *Creativity Stack* matters. Emotion builds broad brand strength. Distinctiveness ensures the brand receives credit. Showmanship earns attention and conversation while projecting a unique personality for the brand. Consistency compounds trust, distinctiveness, and differentiation over time. The campaigns that sustain growth tend to stack these effects rather than rely on one in isolation.

Figure 59
All four layers of the Creativity Stack have a broad impact on Brand Effects.

% lift in reported Brand Effects per creativity output:



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents in each market. Top quartiles of each vs bottom quartile, quartiles are non-exclusive.

Creativity's Impact on Commercial Growth

Advertising that executes the layers of the *Creativity Stack* is more likely to deliver stronger Business Results *(Fig 60)*. The logic is straightforward. Emotion makes brands feel worth paying for. Distinctiveness makes sure the brand gets the credit. Showmanship earns attention and interest. Consistency compounds what people learn over time.

That is exactly what we see in this dataset. Positive emotion stands out because it is most strongly associated with commercial outcomes that matter for sustained growth, especially reduced price sensitivity and profit. Distinctiveness also shows broad impact, with particular strength on loyalty or retention and market share gain.

Showmanship and consistency play different roles. They contribute more to recruiting new customers and boosting profits than to loyalty or retention, where their impact appears minimal. That is not a weakness. It is a reminder that different layers do different work.

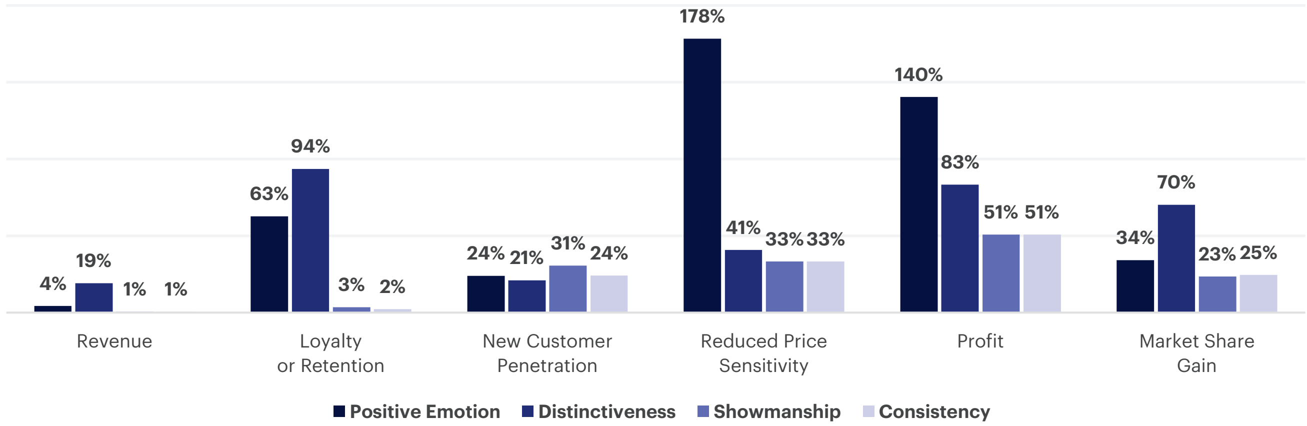
Brand Effects are the bridge that leads creativity to Business Results, but creativity needs reach to work. Creativity does not work in a vacuum, and the next chapter combines creative quality with media support to show how these effects scale into predictable commercial growth.

140%

MORE EMOTIONALLY POSITIVE CAMPAIGNS ARE 140% MORE LIKELY TO REPORT PROFIT GROWTH.

Figure 60
All types of creativity have a positive impact across all Business Results.

% lift in reported Business Result per creativity output:



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents in each market. Top quartiles of each vs bottom quartile, quartiles are non-exclusive.

Achieving Creative Quality with Measurement

If the *Creativity Stack* can shift profit, pricing power, and penetration, the practical question becomes how teams build these outcomes on purpose. That is where research helps, when it is used to guide creativity early rather than judge it late. However, market research and quantitative creative measurement would need to be used without disrupting the creative process, and to provide data that steers campaigns towards creative and commercial outcomes. Guidance on this topic has been shared before which we can explore and update with this new data.

In 1974, Alan Hedges and the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising published *Testing to Destruction*, which argued that creative research should not be used to pick winners. Instead, research should improve judgment. Hedges offered four observations:

1. The greatest value of research is bringing customers into the creative process before development begins.
This was an early articulation of what later became popular: market orientation.

2. Creativity is fragile, and research must protect it.
When misapplied, research restrains ideas before they have a chance to form.

3. Creative measurement should provide feedback, not verdicts.
Rigid scores risk making work more average.

4. Research cannot reliably predict real-world effectiveness.
It should guide thinking, not claim certainty.

Modern research has advanced dramatically, but most of Hedge's principles still hold. Because every Effie submission records which research methods were used during development, we can examine whether the use of modern market research impacts the creative quality of campaigns, and the Business Results they report.

Market Orientation

Market orientation, first articulated by Peter Drucker in 1954 and later popularized by Professor Mark Ritson, is the practice of seeing the category through the eyes of the customer rather than through the marketer's perspective. It brings customer thoughts, feelings, and behaviors into planning. Sarah Carter, Global Planning Director at adam&eveDDB, captures this neatly: "You are not the customer."

Market research tools such as brand positioning testing, segmentation or targeting data, brand tracking, quantitative creative measurement, focus groups, and neuroscience help marketers move toward market orientation.

Modern marketing teams rely heavily on research. Only 12% of campaigns in the US and Europe used no research at all. Brand tracking is the most commonly used method, followed by segmentation or targeting data and focus groups *(Table 8)*.

Table 8
The use of each market research type.

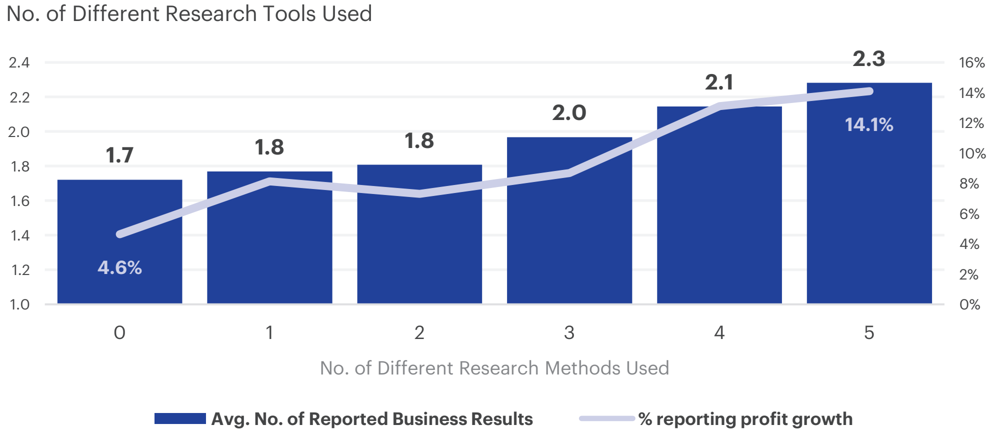
Brand Positioning Testing	Segmentation or Targeting Data	Brand Tracking	Quantitative Creative Measurement	Focus Groups	Neuroscience
32%	49%	54%	29%	45%	4%

1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Reported research use.

As Hedges suggested, the value of research lies in getting marketers closer to customers. Modern evidence confirms this. The more research methods a campaign uses, and the closer it gets to true market orientation, the higher the likelihood of reporting incremental profit and the greater the average number of Business Results reported *(Fig 61)*.

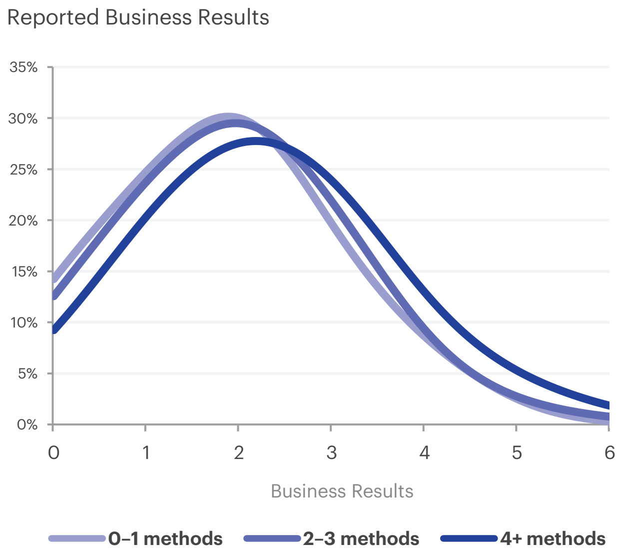
Campaigns using more research methods produce fewer low-performing outcomes and more campaigns reporting a larger number of Business Results *(Fig 62)*. Suggesting market research aids in the effectiveness of campaigns, instead of hindering it.

Figure 61
Achieving market orientation through research increases reported Business Results and the likelihood of reporting profit growth.



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).
Reported research use.

Figure 62
The more research methods used, the more Business Results reported.



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).
Reported research methods used.

3x PROFIT

CAMPAIGNS USING 5 RESEARCH METHODS WERE 3 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO REPORT PROFIT GROWTH THAN CAMPAIGNS THAT DIDN'T USE ANY.

Creative Measurement Supporting Creativity

Hedges argued that creative measurement should feed creativity early in the process, enabling teams to refine ideas while they are flexible. Not to deliver rigid scores or eliminate ideas late in development.

The earlier creative measurement is used, the more useful it becomes. Analyzing many facets of creativity, benchmarked against other brands in a category, provides nuanced data for decision-making, especially when combined with future media choices and market context.

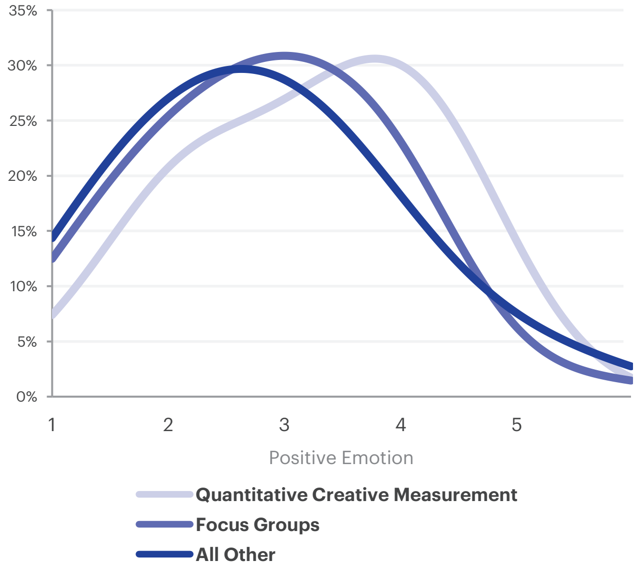
The two research methods in Effie Insights' database with the most direct impact on creative quality are focus groups and quantitative creative measurement. Neuroscience was used too rarely to analyze further.

Across the past decade, use of these methods is associated with more emotionally positive advertising, and fewer eliciting lower responses *(Fig 63)*. This helps explain why modern quantitative measurement can be a practical input, not a creative constraint. Campaigns that rely on focus groups tend to be less distinctive *(Fig 64)*, however, likely because customers are asked to share their opinions on work, which can pull teams toward safer, more consensus-driven choices, including around the use of DBAs.

Used well, creative measurement helps teams protect the *Creativity Stack*. It keeps emotion in the work, ensures the brand is getting credit, and flags when distinctiveness is diluted. As with a lot of the results shared in this research, measurement doesn't provide certainty, but it can help deliver fewer avoidable misses.

Figure 63
The use of quantitative creative measurement and focus groups is associated with more positive emotional advertising.

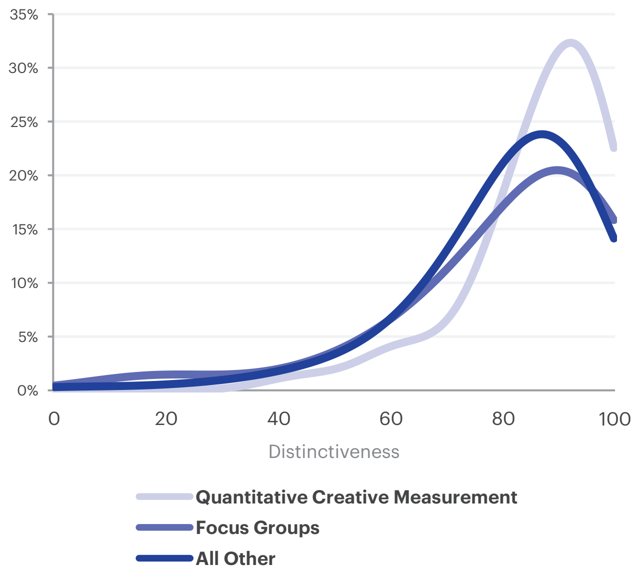
Campaigns achieving positive emotion per research use:



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Reported exclusive research methods used. Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents in each market, Star Rating.

Figure 64
Quantitative creative measurement is associated with higher distinctiveness; focus groups are associated with lower distinctiveness.

Campaigns achieving ad distinctiveness per research use:



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Reported exclusive research methods used. Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents in each market, Fluency Rating.

The impact of emotion and distinctiveness on Business Results shows that campaigns using only focus groups see slightly more campaigns with fewer Business Results and fewer campaigns with many *(Fig 65)*. This does not prove focus groups are unhelpful. Their value depends on process quality, the moderator's skill, and pairing focus groups with other research methods, especially those that guide distinctiveness. They can be particularly useful for diagnosing comprehension, friction, and category barriers, but they are less reliable as a primary tool for building and protecting distinctiveness.

Creative Measurement's Impact on Creative Quality

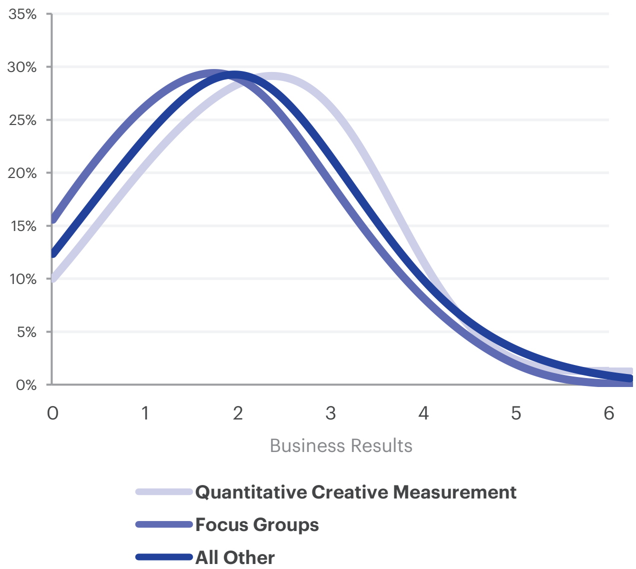
The use of creative measurement does not appear to steer campaigns away from creative quality or commercial outcomes. In fact, we see that the use of modern market research is associated with more emotional and distinctive campaigns, and more reported Business Results.

However, there are many varied uses of market research, and Hedges' advice still stands. Research should support market orientation and guide creativity early in the process. With modern advancements, creative research has become useful and predictive. This careful use of market research can be used to help create campaigns more likely to achieve Business Results.

We shared this chapter with John Kearon, who founded System1 over 25 years ago, to request a quote on how he helped move the measurement industry away from rational creative testing toward a more emotional approach. He sent us back a poem, perfectly fitting before our next chapter.

Figure 65
Quantitative creative measurement is associated with stronger Business Results; focus groups alone are associated with weaker outcomes.

Campaigns reporting Business Results per research use:



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Reported exclusive research method used.

Behavioral science reveals,
What standard research conceals.
At reasoning, we humans stink,
We make decisions in a blink.
Persuasion & action? There is no link,
We think much less than we think we think.
If an ad's of a rational proclivity,
Say 'bye-bye' to profitability.
Speak to the heart, don't bother the brain,
Creating feelings gives five times the gain.
A 5-Star ad is hard to create,
So, keep it running for pity's sake.
Go for fame, feeling & fluency, say no to waste
And enjoy the smiles on the C-suite's face

FAME, FEELING & FLUENCY
JOHN KEARON, SYSTEM1 FOUNDER

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTER 4

1. **Creativity helps to deliver sustained commercial growth.**
Brand Effects create lasting behavior change that compounds Business Results. Each layer within the Creativity Stack has a distinct and unique role in aiding these behavior changes.

2. **Each type of creative outcome contributes to Business Results.**
These behavior changes individually impact various Business Results.

3. **Stacking creativity will ensure a greater likelihood of success.**
Stacking all four layers of the *Creativity Stack* will multiply effectiveness outcomes, increasing the chance of profit and market share growth.

4. **Market research helps brands achieve market orientation.**
The more research tools a campaign uses, the more likely it is to achieve Business Results.

5. **Creative measurement improves creative quality and commercial outcomes.**
Focus groups and modern quantitative creative measurement improve creative quality on average, with quantitative measurement leading to campaigns reporting more Business Results.

THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND

CHAPTER 5

MEDIA'S LEADING ROLE IN EFFECTIVENESS

[How Media Gives Creativity the Chance to Win]

Advertising drives growth in two ways. It can capture immediate revenue, and it can build memories that make future sales and growth easier, cheaper, and more predictable. Media choices work with creativity to change how campaigns can do both.

This chapter shows how distinctive advertising ensures media works, and how emotion helps ensure this turns into profit. We also introduce three new concepts.

1) **The Creative Dividend** captures how creatively advantaged a campaign is compared to its competitors, a measure of relative creative efficiency across emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and consistency.

2) **Excess Share of Creativity (ESOC)** extends this by scaling creative advantage into the market: it is the *Creative Dividend* multiplied by media spend, representing how much more creative impact a campaign actually has in the category.

3) **Super Touchpoints** support more lasting Brand Effects while also generating immediate revenue. This is crucial given the context that not all media spend is equal and balancing customer touchpoints is needed for sustained growth.

Creativity and Media Spend

First, we'll show why distinctiveness makes spend more likely to translate into revenue. Then we'll show why emotion is what turns that revenue into profit.

Decades of research has shown that media spend drives sales volume. Larger budgets reach more of the category, generating more opportunities to buy and incremental revenue. Media reach is one of the most fundamental practices of advertising effectiveness, we must reach enough customers for a campaign to work.

However, media spend alone cannot explain profitability. Some campaigns with large budgets fail to deliver strong outcomes, while others with modest budgets generate disproportionate results. Creative quality helps explain the difference.

So far in this publication, we have analyzed the general relationship between creativity, Brand Effects, and Business Results with all 1,265 campaigns, generalizing media choices. Now we explore how the size of the campaign spend shapes outcomes. To do this, Effie Insights' database includes each campaign's spend bucket. To compare across markets, we split campaigns into small, medium, large, or extra-large media spend *(Table 9)*.

Table 9
Definition of Campaign Spend Buckets.

Small	Medium	Large	Extra Large
Europe €million			
0-1m	1-5m	5m+	NA
US $million			
0-1m	5-20m	20-60m	60m+

Reported campaign spend levels.

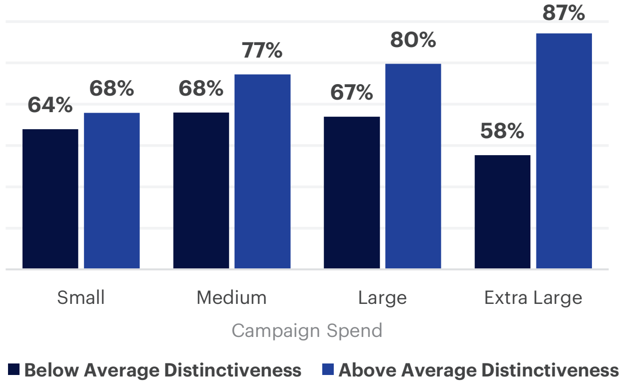
Distinctiveness Turns Spend into Revenue

When people recognize a brand easily and quickly in an ad it becomes more efficient, allowing media spend to work. As such, ad's with higher distinctiveness will work budgets harder. In this dataset, across spend levels, the more distinctive the work is, the more often campaigns report revenue growth *(Fig 66)*. When distinctiveness is weak, even large budgets struggle. Ad distinctiveness makes the revenue impact of media spend more reliable.

However, distinctiveness alone is a weak driver of profit. Campaigns with high distinctiveness are more likely to report incremental revenue, but this does not reliably translate into large incremental profit at all media spend levels *(Fig 67)*.

Figure 66
Distinctive advertising allows spend to turn into revenue.

% reporting revenue growth



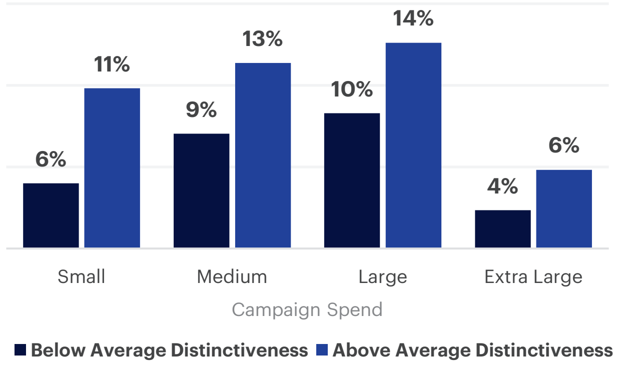
1,251 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents in each market, Fluency Rating.
With reported media spend. US: S: $0-$5M, M: $5M - 20M, L: $20-60M, XL: $60M. Europe: S: €0-1M M: €1-5M, L: €5M+.

87% vs 58%

CAMPAIGNS WITH EXTRA LARGE BUDGET ARE +29 PERCENTAGE POINTS MORE LIKELY TO REPORT REVENUE GROWTH IF THEY ARE HIGHLY DISTINCTIVE.

Figure 67
Distinctiveness supports profit growth at all spend levels in a small but meaningful way.

% reporting profit growth



1,251 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents in each market, Fluency Rating.
With reported media spend. US: S: $0-$5M, M: $5M - 20M, L: $20-60M, XL: $60M. Europe: S: €0-1M M: €1-5M, L: €5M+.

DISTINCTIVENESS MAKES REVENUE OUTCOMES MORE DEPENDABLE AT EVERY SPEND LEVEL.

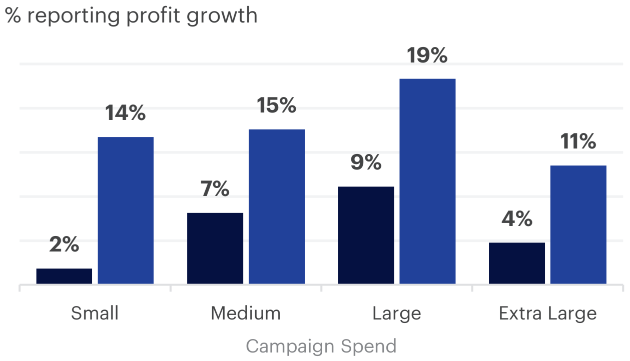
Emotion Turns Revenue into Profit

Revenue is necessary but insufficient alone. Incremental profit is the outcome that matters most for sustained business growth. Distinctive ads help customers link an ad to a brand, which improves efficiency, but distinctiveness does not support the formation of stronger memory structures. Emotion does.

Emotion turns revenue into profit. Distinctive advertising, properly supported by positive emotion, provides the opportunity. The emotional response to that ad helps convert it into lasting commercial value. When emotion and distinctiveness combine, a higher proportion of media spend creates profitable behavior change *(Fig 68)*.

That's the practical aim. The growth in reported profit is for campaigns with creative quality above the category average. Creating advertising that sits in the top half of campaigns for positive emotion and ad distinctiveness has a powerful impact on profit.

Figure 68
Advertising that is more positively emotional and distinct supports campaigns at all spend levels, leading to greater profit growth.



1,251 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents in each market, Star Rating & Fluency Rating.
With reported media spend. US: S: \$0-\$5M, M: \$5M - 20M, L: \$20-60M, XL: \$60M. Europe: S: €0-1M M: €1-5M, L: €5M+.

"We infused rock culture into everything... creating instant recognition and emotional resonance. That combination of distinctiveness and emotional connection made it a smash hit."

MADELINE GORE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, STRATEGY, OGILVY.
WORKDAY CASE STUDY.

7x

PROFIT MULTIPLIER

AT SMALL SPEND LEVELS, DISTINCTIVE AND EMOTIONALLY POSITIVE CAMPAIGNS ARE 7X MORE LIKELY TO REPORT INCREMENTAL PROFIT.

Excess Share of Voice (ESOV)

John Philip Jones in 1990 was one of the first to research the relationship between the proportion of a brand's category media spend, its Share of Voice (SOV), and its Share of Market (SOM). Jones demonstrated that SOV and SOM tended to be in equilibrium. Although larger brands could generally enjoy a slightly smaller SOV while maintaining the same SOM.

Field and Binet extended this concept to define *Excess Share of Voice (ESOV)*, the difference between a brand's SOV and its SOM (ESOV = SOV − SOM). They showed that ESOV is predictive of growth. Brands with +10% ESOV typically achieve around +0.5% annual growth in market share. Subsequent research has reinforced ESOV as one of marketing's few law-like patterns. It importantly understands how much more a brand spends on media relative to its size.

Binet and Field also demonstrated how creatively awarded campaigns generated more market share growth per point of ESOV than non-awarded work, revealing how more creative advertising was more efficient. However, awards can't give us a consistent scale of how much more creative a campaign is than its category. And *Crisis in Creativity*, Field demonstrated how the growth efficiency of creatively awarded campaigns was weakening.

A campaign with a greater volume of creative advertising in the category, viewed through the lens of media spend and creative quality, supports greater commercial outcomes. The definition of creativity in this research should help provide a more holistic scale for measuring it.

The Creative Dividend

To measure how much more creative a campaign is compared to others in the category, we use the four layers of the *Creativity Stack* to define the *Creative Dividend* (CD) *(Fig 69)*. This is a measure of how much more emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and consistency a campaign has versus competitor campaigns to measure its relative creative efficiency. The *Creative Dividend* is how well we'd expect the campaign to convert media spend into commercial outcomes, the dividend that creativity provides campaigns.

What makes this view of creativity particularly useful and, as we'll show, able to predict and explain campaign outcomes, is its focus on the multiplicative power of creativity. A campaign can be three times as emotional as others in its category, but if it falls behind in distinctiveness, small gains in brand recognition yield dramatic results. CD is also flexible, if you don't have data for one part of the *Creativity Stack*, you can omit it. In our research, we found that emotion and distinctiveness had sufficient explanatory power, but including data on showmanship and consistency further enhances accuracy and usefulness.

Figure 69
How a campaign's Creative Dividend is measured.

$$\textbf{Creative Dividend} = \frac{\text{Positive Emotion}}{\text{Positive Emotion Category Average}} \times \frac{\text{Distinctiveness}}{\text{Distinctiveness Category Average}} \times \frac{\text{Showmanship}}{\text{Showmanship Category Average}} \times \frac{\text{Consistency}}{\text{Consistency Category Average}}$$

Relative Creative Efficiency Alone

A campaign's *Creative Dividend* alone is just one part of the effectiveness puzzle. When we analyze campaigns for their likelihood of share and profit growth without media spend, this becomes clear. Splitting campaigns into 10 buckets by CD (deciles), relative creative efficiency is a strong predictor of market share growth with a meaningful linear relationship *(Fig 70)*, but it struggles to explain whether a campaign will report profit, except at the extremes *(Fig 71)*.

Creative quality alone cannot explain all commercial outcomes. We've shown previously that the four layers of the *Creativity Stack*, when executed correctly, increase the chances of commercial outcomes, but creativity must reach customers for it to work. Spending enough on a campaign is vital for Business Results.

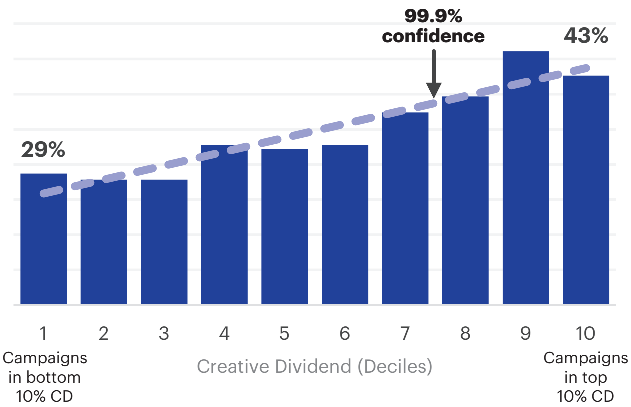
Excess Share of Creativity

To understand how much more creative impact a campaign actually exerted in its category, we need to look at its *Creative Dividend* and its media support together *(Fig 72)*. We define this experimental metric, *Excess Share of Creativity (ESOC)*, as the level of creative advantage a campaign brings to market, accounting for its relative creative efficiency and the strength of its media support.

ESOC combines two levers that always travel together in practice: creative advantage and media support. We use the spend information available in this dataset to bring them into one view, and we'll continue refining the approach as richer media inputs become available. The author would like to thank Les Binet for his valuable advice on advancing how we have measured ESOC in this research.

Figure 70
Creative quality helps explain reported market share growth.

% reporting market share growth



Linear line of best fit: y = 1.98%x + 24.1%, R2:88%. P<0.001.

Figure 71
Creative quality alone doesn't show a clear relationship with profit, but it matters at the extremes.

% reporting profit growth

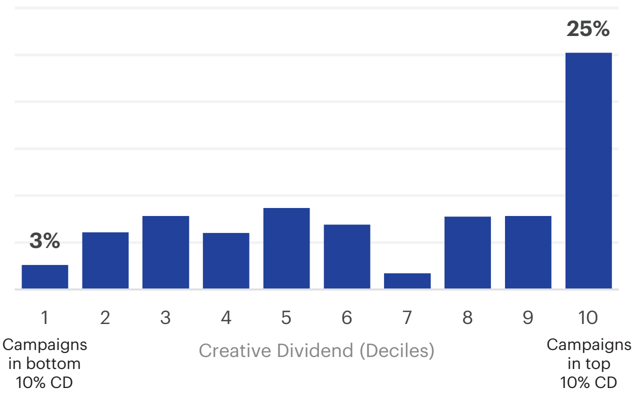


Fig 70 & 71: 1,153 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database with enough spend data. Creative Dividend measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 170,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship & consistency. Split into deciles.

Figure 72
Measuring a campaign's Excess Share of Creativity

ESOC = Creative Dividend x Media Spend

ESOC has a significant, meaningful relationship with the likelihood of reporting share growth *(Fig 73)*. Also, the relationship is linear. A campaign with an ESOC larger than 10% of campaigns (through improved relative creative efficiency or greater media spend), is 2.1% more likely to report share growth. An *Excess Share of Creativity* can double the chance of share growth.

ESOC also has a significant, meaningful relationship with the chance of reporting profit growth *(Fig 74)*. However, this relationship isn't linear, it's exponential. As ESOC grows, the likelihood of profit growth increases more and more. An *Excess Share of Creativity* can increase the likelihood of reporting profit by 7x.

By combining the *Creative Dividend* with media spend to create ESOC, campaigns can more reliably compound advertising returns. Achieving ESOC isn't the sole role of creatives to deliver high creative quality, media planning plays as much of a role. ESOC can't be achieved by simply making a great ad. It is achieved by recognizing that a better ad exists and allocating it more spend to reach more people.

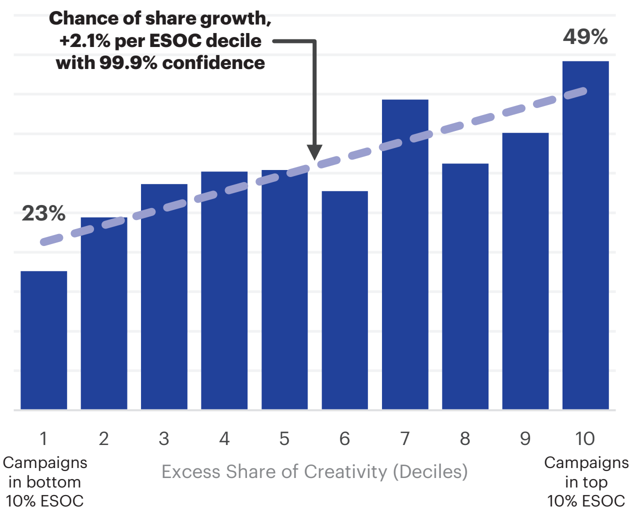
In the conclusion of this book, we share practical advice to achieve this with your campaigns include the *Advertising Planning Matrix*, which shares how marketers can use their creative confidence to plan creativity and media together and strategically increase ESOC.

7x PROFIT

ESOC CAN 7X THE CHANCE CAMPAIGNS REPORT PROFIT.

Figure 73
Campaigns with a larger Excess Share of Creativity are more likely to report market share growth.

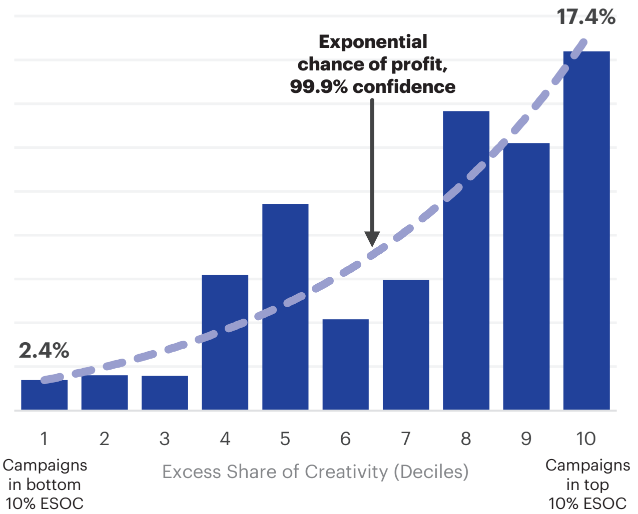
% reporting market share growth



Linear line of best fit: y = 2.13%x + 24.1%, R2:75%. P=0.001.

Figure 74
Campaigns with a larger Excess Share of Creativity are exponentially more likely to report profit growth.

% reporting profit growth



Exponential line of best fit: y = 1.91%$e^{0.23x}$, R2:82%. P<0.001.
Fig 73 & 74: 1,153 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative Dividend measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 170,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship & consistency, with reported media spend levels. Split into deciles.

Price Sensitivity, New Customer Penetration, and Loyalty

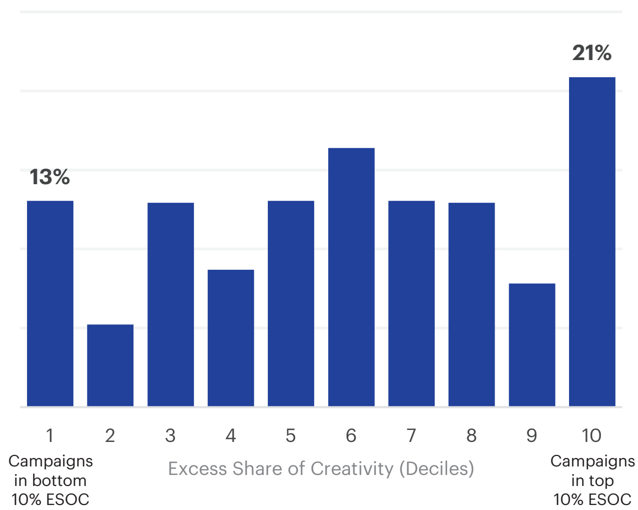
In previous chapters, we showed that campaigns reporting new customer penetration growth were more likely to also report profit than those reporting loyalty growth. We concluded that, because loyalty was reported three times less often than penetration, a strategy focused on gaining new customers rather than building loyalty would more easily lead to reliable profit growth. ESOC reveals why.

Although we shared in Chapter 4 that advertising that is more positively emotional and distinctive increases the likelihood of reporting an increase in customer loyalty, there is no meaningful relationship between ESOC and reporting an increase in customer loyalty *(Fig 75)*. This suggests loyalty outcomes are shaped by more than the campaign itself, including brand size, product experience, and service quality.

However, ESOC has a meaningful, significant relationship with the chance of reporting new customer penetration *(Fig 76)*. Producing advertising with a higher *Creative Dividend* and supporting this higher relative creative quality with larger media budgets will increase the likelihood that a brand gains new customers.

Figure 75
There is no meaningful relationship between Excess Share of Creativity and reporting growth in loyalty.

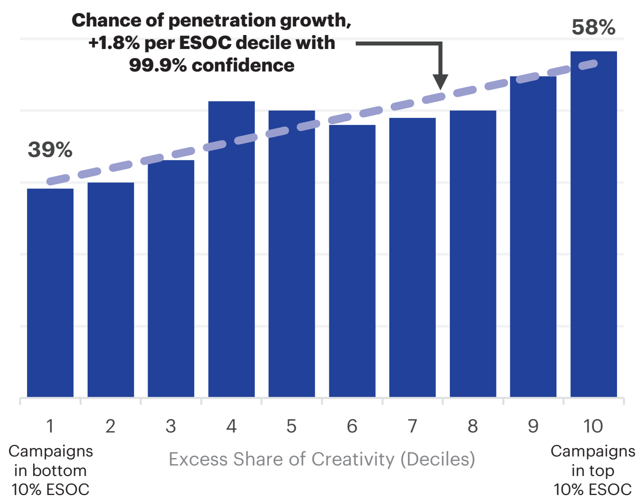
% reporting customer retention or loyalty growth



1,153 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative Dividend measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 170,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship & consistency, with reported media spend levels. Split into deciles. No meaningful relationship.

Figure 76
Campaigns with a larger Excess Share of Creativity report more customer penetration growth.

% reporting new customer penetration growth



1,153 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative Dividend measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 170,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship & consistency, with reported media spend levels. Split into deciles.
Linear line of best fit: y = 1.8%x + 38.3%, R2:82%. P<0.001.

1.5x

Customer Penetration Growth

CAMPAIGNS IN THE TOP 10% OF ESOC ARE 1.5X MORE LIKELY TO REPORT NEW CUSTOMER PENETRATION GROWTH, COMPARED TO CAMPAIGNS IN THE BOTTOM 10% OF ESOC.

ESOC also has a meaningful, significant relationship with the chance of reporting a reduction in price sensitivity *(Fig 77)*. Carefully executed advertising can help brands charge more. An *Excess Share of Creativity* can increase the likelihood of reporting a reduction in price sensitivity by 3x.

Across this dataset, campaigns with a greater ESOC are more likely to report the majority of key Business Results, reconfirming the power of effective advertising to reliably transform businesses. That advantage sits alongside other growth drivers, like distribution, innovation, and product quality.

However, these relationships are not perfect, as other factors also influence commercial outcomes:

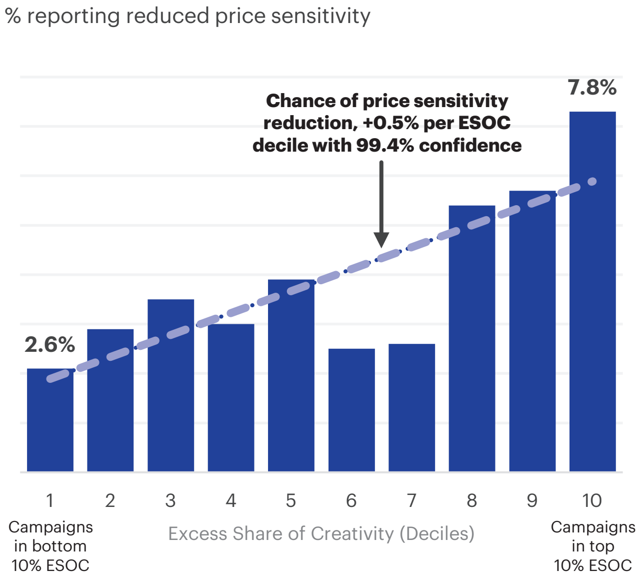
1. Physical distribution, innovation, and product quality. These sit outside the available campaign inputs, but they still shape commercial outcomes.

2. The targeting of the media spend. Tight vs broad targeting of campaigns will also influence how much reach advertising enjoys, we demonstrate this next.

3. The customer touchpoints used. Different touchpoint choices influence how a campaign works for short and long-term impact. We also share guidance on this next.

4. Brand size, spend vs competitors, and category dynamics. How large a brand is, whether it's been able to spend more than other brands, and whether the category is shrinking or declining all influence how brands grow. We share details on this and how challenger brands can adapt their strategy in Chapter 6.

Figure 77
Campaigns with a larger Excess Share of Creativity report a reduction in price sensitivity more often.



1,153 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative Dividend measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 170,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship & consistency, with reported media spend levels. Split into deciles.
Linear line of best fit: y = 0.5%x + 1.9%, R2:63%. P=0.006.

"Crucially, brand building not only generates volume but it also supports price, by reducing price elasticity. Long-term brand building is the key to firmer pricing."

LES BINET, FOUNDER OF BINET CONSULTING AND AUTHOR OF *THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT*.

Broad Targeting and Time Increase Profitability

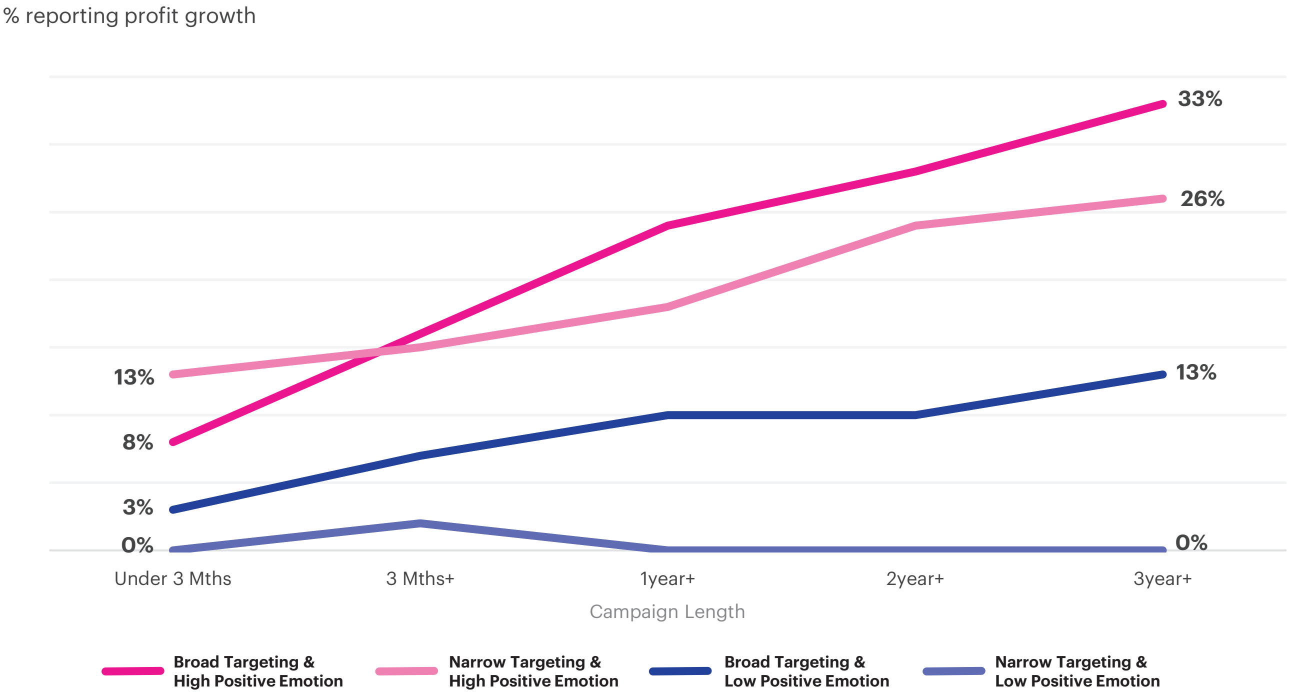
Campaigns that reach as much of the category as possible, and that run for long enough to build memory, are significantly more likely to report incremental profit *(Fig 78)*. Broad targeting ensures the campaign reaches future buyers to aid penetration, not just current customers or those in-market, ready to decide. Time allows the creative idea to wear in, become familiar, and build the memory structures needed for behavior change.

Positive emotion strengthens this effect. The broad targeting of ads that elicit a strong positive emotional response markedly increases the likelihood of incremental profit. Short, narrowly targeted campaigns may capture in-market demand but rarely create the behavior change needed for commercial success.

0%

OF CAMPAIGNS RUNNING OVER A YEAR WITH NARROW TARGETING AND LOW POSITIVE EMOTION REPORT INCREMENTAL PROFIT.

Figure 78
Broad targeting supports profit growth, even more so for emotional campaigns.



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Reported customer target, narrow targeting is a defined customer group, <20% of the market. Broad targeting above this. Emotion defined by System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents, Star Rating.
Top vs bottom quartile.

Customer Touchpoints Shape Outcomes

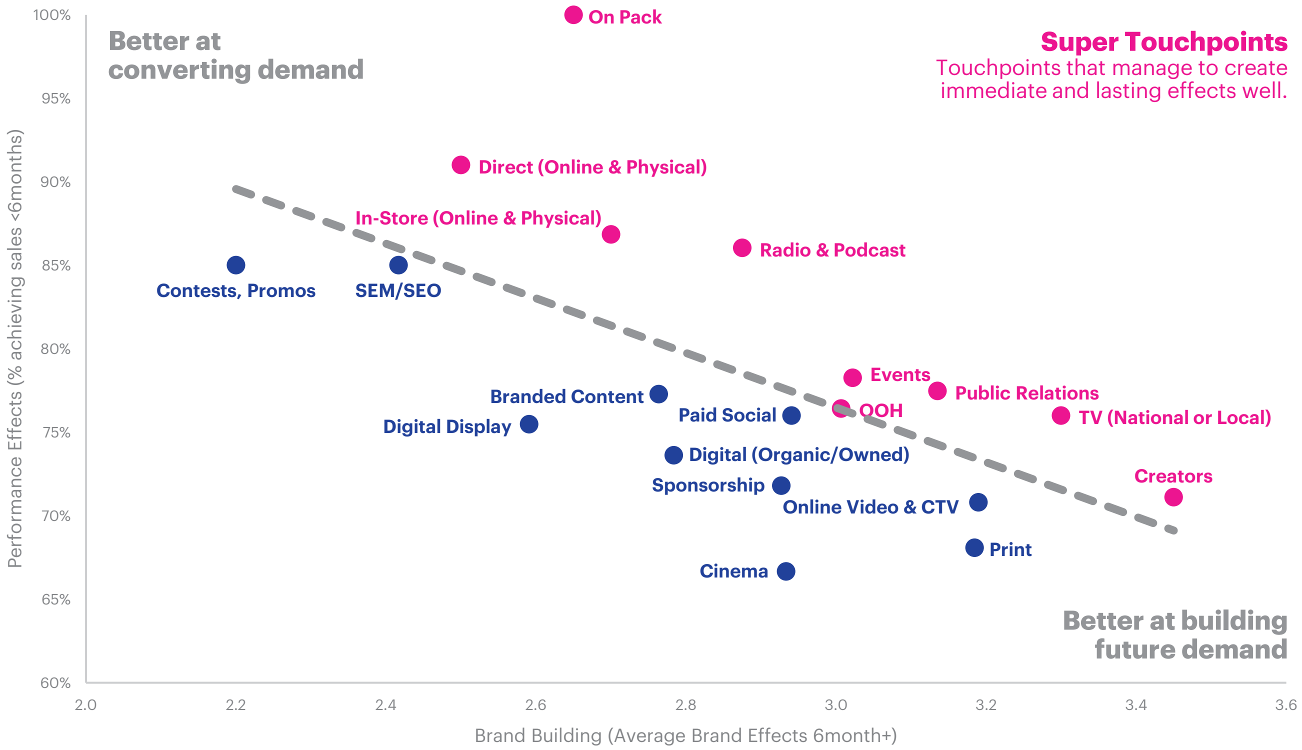
Touchpoints are how customers meet campaigns. Modern marketers now have many channels to choose from, each with distinct strengths.

Touchpoints that excel at capturing in-market demand (more short-term revenue gains) share traits such as being closer to the point of purchase, generating lower attention, relying on rational or informational advertising, or removing friction rather than building memory.

Touchpoints that create future demand (more Brand Effects) share opposite traits. They reach broadly, enable storytelling, receive higher paid attention, spark fame or cultural impact, and are often consumed not alone but with other people. These differences matter because brands need both types of effects, campaigns continue to work when they are not simply targeting and converting current in-market sales. Touchpoint planning can ensure future growth is prioritized for sustained success.

Across the US and Europe, we found clear general patterns for each touchpoint, but marketers need to experiment with media choices to understand what each can deliver for their brand *(Fig 79)*.

Figure 79
Some customer touchpoints are more suited to creating lasting Brand Effects, while others are better at capturing short-term revenue.



1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).
Average reporting includes touchpoints in the top 3 touchpoints for campaigns.

Super Touchpoints

As the qualities that make a touchpoint effective at creating future Brand Effects are at odds with those that drive short-term revenue, there is a clear relationship between how strong a channel is at delivering future demand and at capturing in-market demand.

Touchpoints that consistently deliver more Brand Effects than expected relative to their short-term revenue contribution can be considered *Super Touchpoints*. The term was introduced by JICMAIL and the Data and Marketing Association in the UK. *Super Touchpoints* help campaigns achieve both immediate sales and future brand growth.

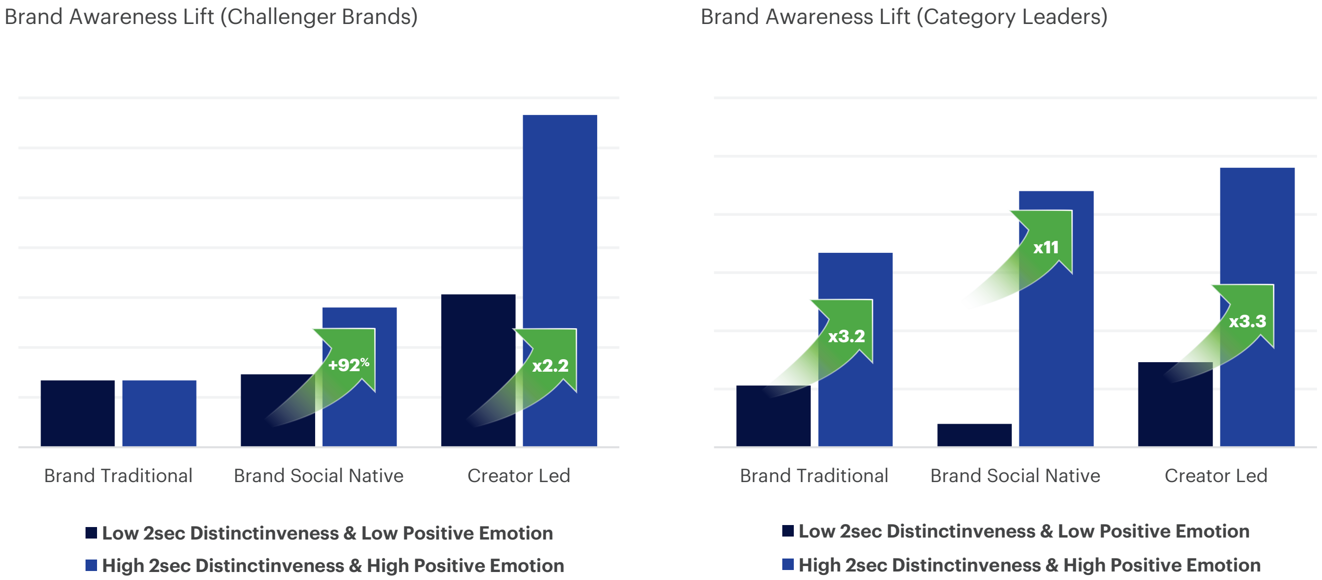
Including more *Super Touchpoints* in a campaign increases the likelihood of lasting effects. They offer a practical way to combine short-term commercial performance with the Brand Effects that support long-term growth.

Short-Form and Creators

Many *Super Touchpoints* are traditional channels. One major exception is creators. In this research, creators include both organic creator work and paid creator partnerships. Including creators in a campaign shows the strongest ability to build Brand Effects from any other customer touchpoint on average, aligning with industry research showing that long-term ROI from creators is larger than short-term ROI.

Our joint analysis with TikTok of nearly 1,000 short-form ads found that any type of short-form advertising can create brand growth when it is highly emotional and distinctive in the first seconds. Creator-led advertising that leverages positive emotion and fast distinctiveness delivers the strongest outcomes *(Fig 80)*. Even in short-form, skippable environments, the *Creativity Stack* applies. Creator advertising offers a distinct opportunity for brand growth.

Figure 80
Short-form ads that are highly distinctive in the first 2 seconds, and elicit a strong positive emotional response, increase the chance of brand awareness for brands of all sizes, but creators offer a unique opportunity, especially for challenger brands.



The Long and the Short (Form) of It, System1 and TikTok. Top quartile Star Rating and Fast Fluency vs bottom, with average brand and conversion lift outcome (indexed). 847 TikTok short-form ads tested with System1's Test Your Ad Social.

Trust and Fame Effects

One of the key differences the choice of customer touchpoints impacts is the chance that a campaign reports trust and fame Brand Effects. Whether a touchpoint supports customers talking or trusting a brand is due to its inherent qualities, including how the content or experience within that touchpoint is perceived, the need state by which people interact with it, or what they use it for, who you are with when exposed to it, and how much active attention the touchpoint commands.

Campaigns using *Super Touchpoints* are more likely to report more brand trust *(Fig 81)* and brand fame *(Fig 82)*. A few results are notable. The use of creators clearly supports fame and trust growth, unlike paid social. Direct communications, like direct mail, have a significant impact on reporting trust. Sponsorship, branded content, and public relations use support fame unsurprisingly. More surprisingly, the use of contests and promos appears to help get customers talking about a brand. TV and radio, with their mass-affordable public reach, also perform well.

The size of media spend, and the touchpoints used in a campaign, all work together to support creativity and deliver reliable, lasting commercial impact. In the final two chapters, we examine how brand size and category dynamics shape effectiveness, and then bring everything together to show how creative quality and media support explain the majority of Business Results across markets and categories.

Figure 81 & 82
The use of different campaign touchpoints changes the chance of reporting fame and trust growth.

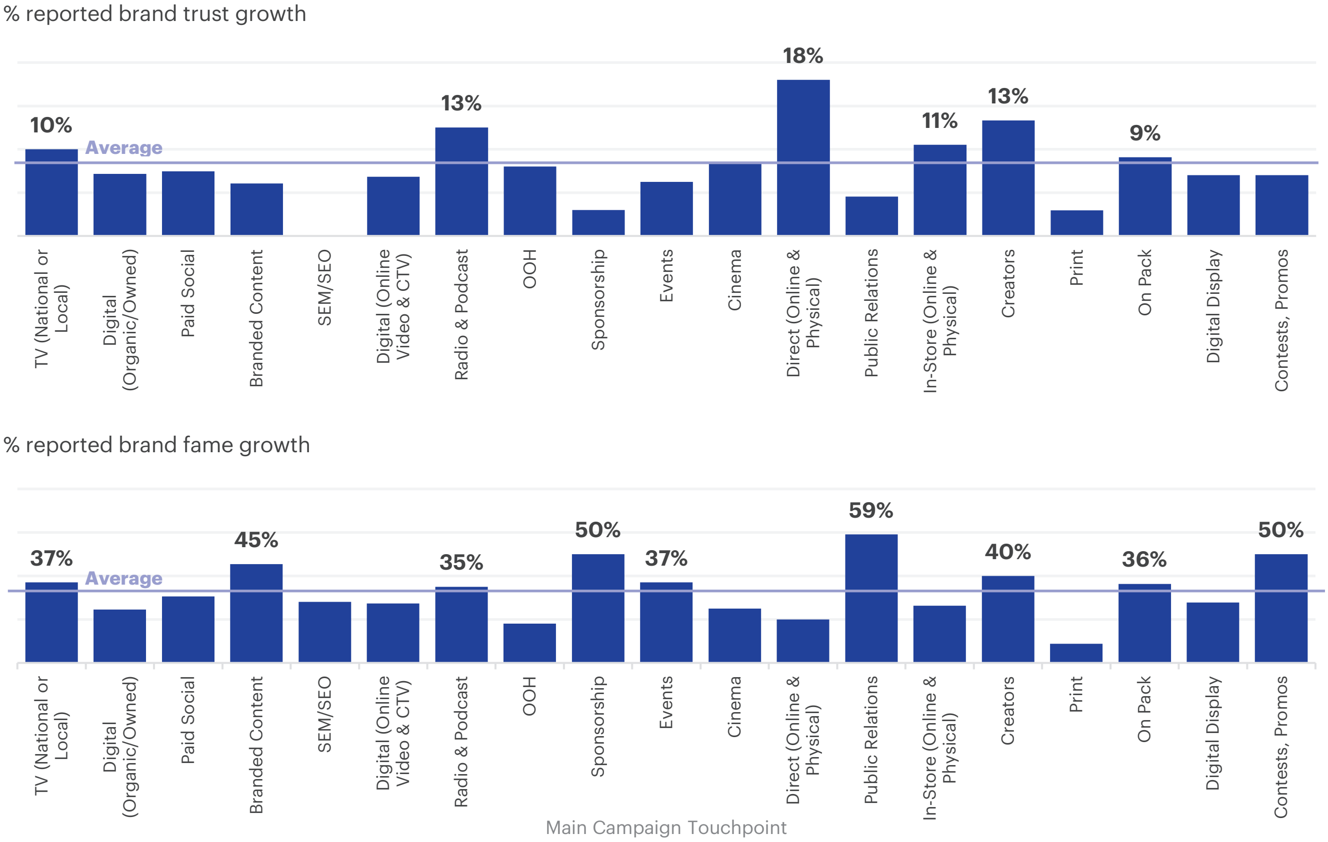


Fig 81 & 82: 1,265 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years). Average reported effect for campaigns with each reported touchpoint as their main channel.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTER 5

1. **Greater campaign spend and spending more than competitors creates the opportunity for effectiveness.**
Media and creativity cannot sit in isolation when planning for effectiveness.

2. **Distinctiveness turns spend into revenue. Emotion turns revenue into profit.**
Distinctive advertising increases the efficiency of campaign spend at all spend levels but has a weak impact on profit. Emotion creates the behavior change needed for profit. Stacking all types of creativity multiplies this further.

3. **Excess Share of Creativity works to increase the chance of share and profit growth.**
A campaign's creative quality, relative to competitors, and how much media support it receives, determine how likely a campaign is to report market share and profit. Campaigns need enough spend for creativity to convert into outcomes.

4. **Balancing touchpoints is crucial for sustained growth.**
Some touchpoints are better at capturing in-market demand, while others create future demand. As they get better at one, they often get worse at the other.

5. **Super Touchpoints are better at both.**
They create more lasting Brand Effects than expected given their ability to create short-term revenue. Including more of them improves effectiveness.

THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND

CHAPTER 6

GROWING CHALLENGER BRANDS

[How Category Context Impacts Advertising]

Whether a category is growing, flat, or shrinking creates dynamics that change the likelihood of growth depending on brand size and whether the brand is spending more or less than competitors. These dynamics are especially important for challenger brands that can double their chance of profit in certain conditions. Understanding this allows marketers to refine strategies for planning campaigns and investments.

This chapter explores how challenger brands grow in different market dynamics and how campaign spend relative to competitors influences outcomes. It shares the key parameters of category context that we use in Chapter 7 to show that effective advertising reliably grows businesses.

Category Dynamics and When to Invest

Whether a category is growing or shrinking, and whether a brand is a challenger or a category leader, shapes how advertising works. Effie Insights' database provides a useful view to examine this, as half of the challenger-brand campaigns in the dataset operate in growing categories and half in flat or shrinking categories *(Table 10)*.

In general, it is more difficult for large brands to take market share when the category is growing than it is for challengers. Effie Insights' database represents successful case studies, not a census of all market activity, so it would be an oversimplification to conclude that challengers always take more share than leaders in growing categories. Instead, comparing how category leaders grow relative to challengers across different dynamics reveals that leaders are more likely to grow in flat or shrinking categories, while challengers are more likely to grow in growing categories *(Table 11)*.

Table 10
Number of campaigns with data.

Category Dynamics	Challenger Brand	Category Leader
Growing	148	429
Flat or Shrinking	149	470

297 challenger brands: smaller brands competing for growth against more established category players. 899 category leaders: the largest, most established brands in a category, typically responsible for the majority of category spend and penetration. Defined using data provided in each campaign case study.

Table 11
% reporting share growth, per category dynamic.

Category Dynamics	Challenger Brand	Category Leader
Growing	35%	31%
Flat or Shrinking	33%	41%

Reporting market share growth by brand size and category dynamics, all campaigns.

297

CHALLENGER CAMPAIGNS ANALYZED

Whether a campaign spends more or less than its category peers impacts the chance of growth. This reveals the unfair advantage of category leaders. Leaders can spend less than competitors in flat or shrinking categories and see minimal impact on their chances of share growth, whereas challenger brands are more heavily penalized. Small brands are at a disadvantage *(Table 12)*. They must invest to compete.

It is also rarer for challenger brands to report incremental profit in flat or declining categories. Their odds rise substantially when the category is growing *(Table 13)*.

When brands of any size invest more or the same as competitors in growing categories, the likelihood of generating profit rises significantly, especially for challenger brands *(Table 14)*. Sufficient investment amplifies challenger profit.

The pattern suggests a few practical implications:

• Small brands in growing categories benefit most when they can match or exceed competitor spend.

• Small brands in flat or shrinking categories face a harder path to profitable share growth.

• Large brands in growing categories often need to invest to grow the category, not just defend share.

• Large brands in shrinking categories appear less penalized when they spend less than competitors.

Table 12
% reporting share growth, campaigns spending less than competitors.

Category Dynamics	Challenger Brand	Category Leader
Growing	30%	29%
Flat or Shrinking	27%	**40%**

Reported market share growth by brand size and category dynamics, campaigns reporting spending less than competitors.

Table 13
% reporting profit growth.

Category Dynamics	Challenger Brand	Category Leader
Growing	11%	8%
Flat or Shrinking	5%	9%

Reported market share growth by brand size and category dynamics, all campaigns.

Table 14
% reporting profit growth, campaigns spending more than competitors.

Category Dynamics	Challenger Brand	Category Leader
Growing	**16%**	11%
Flat or Shrinking	8%	9%

Reported market share growth by brand size and category dynamics, campaigns reporting spending more than competitors.

Growing Challenger Brands

Earlier we showed that brands achieving incremental distinctiveness are more likely to drive revenue, pricing power, and profit. Distinctiveness is generally more powerful than differentiation. We also showed that increasing penetration has stronger links to profit than loyalty or retention.

However, for challenger brands specifically, several differences should influence strategy.

Differentiation for Challenger Brands

Perceived differentiation results from strategically relevant brand image change. Emotional, distinctive, and consistent advertising strengthens memory and helps small brands build these associations.

Distinctiveness remains important, but its relative contribution is smaller for challengers *(Fig 83)*. Challenger brands are more than twice as likely to report share gain when they also report gains in perceived differentiation compared with campaigns reporting growth in distinctiveness.

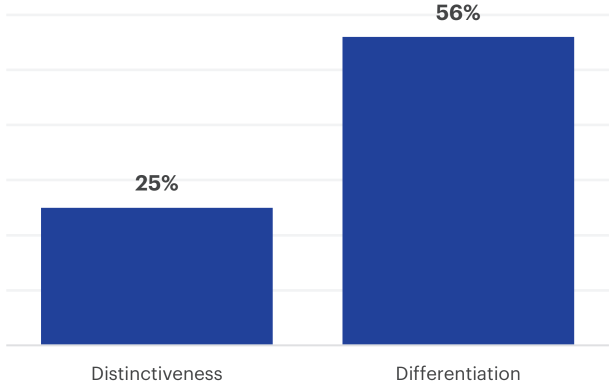
Challenger brands often win when they first establish sharp positioning, then commit to emotional, distinctive, and consistent advertising to reinforce it. Challenger brands that create more positively emotional advertising than others in their category report more Brand Effects than category leaders' campaigns with similar emotional strength *(Fig 84)*. This shows how creativity can help challengers catch up to leaders.

Emotional strength alone is insufficient, however. When challengers also produce advertising that is low in distinctiveness, they lose the advantage. Challenger brands must establish a tight, early set of Distinctive Brand Assets and use them deliberately and repeatedly.

This creative demand is significant. As Adam Morgan, author of *Eating the Big Fish*, argues, challengers often need an emotional mission that drives their communications. Examples include Tony's Chocolonely, Poppi, and Innocent Drinks.

Figure 83
Challenger brand campaigns that report differentiation are twice as likely to also report share growth, compared to those that report distinctiveness growth.

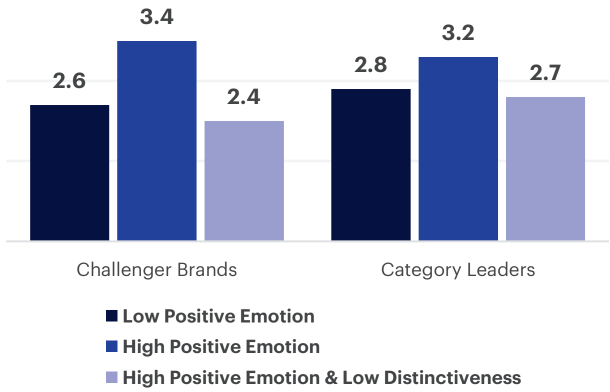
% challenger brand campaigns reporting share growth, if they also reported:



297 US, Europe, UK & Ireland challenger brand campaigns ran between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

Figure 84
Challenger brands can use positively emotional and distinctive advertising to outgrow category leaders.

Avg. No. Reported Brand Effects



US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns ran between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database . 297 challenger brands, 899 category leaders. Measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 200,000 respondents. Top vs bottom quartile Star Rating, and bottom quartile Fluency Rating.

Loyalty for Challenger Brands

Across the full dataset, new customer penetration increases the likelihood of profit more than increases in customer loyalty or retention. For challenger brands, growth does not always look like it does for category leaders. In this subset, challenger campaigns that report loyalty gains are more likely to also report profit growth than those reporting new customer penetration *(Fig 85)*.

That makes intuitive sense. Challengers often win by becoming a chosen brand for a smaller group before they become a familiar brand for everyone. Loyalty gains can signal stronger preference, repeat behavior, and reduced reliance on deal-driven switching.

Challenger brands are almost twice as likely to report profit when they achieve loyalty gains compared with when they achieve penetration gains. New customer penetration still clearly has an impact on profitability for brands of all sizes, though.

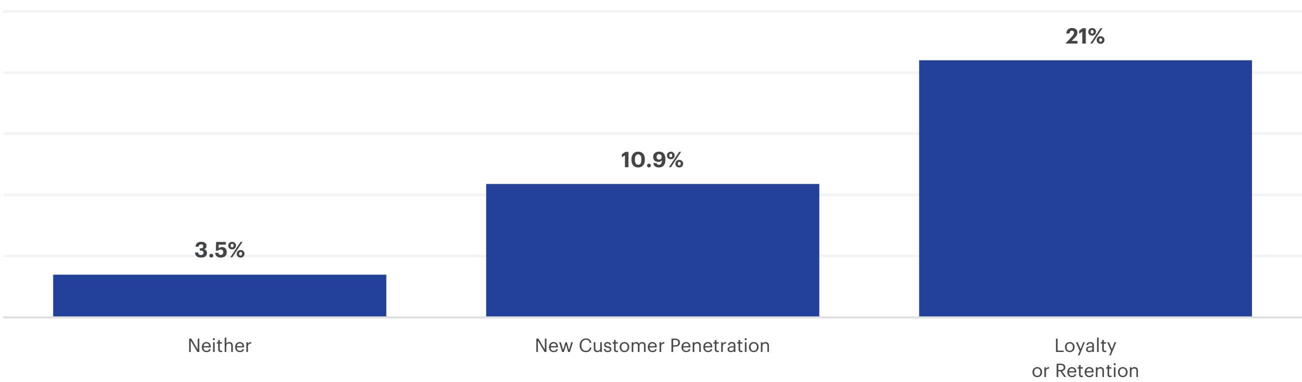
6x

PROFIT MULTIPLIER

CHALLENGER BRANDS ARE 6 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO REPORT PROFIT GROWTH IF THEY ALSO REPORT GROWTH IN CUSTOMER LOYALTY OR RETENTION.

Figure 85
Challenger brand campaigns are twice as likely to report profit if they report loyalty instead of penetration, but penetration is clearly still useful.

% challenger brand campaigns reporting profit growth, if also reporting:



297 US, Europe, UK & Ireland challenger brand campaigns ran between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database (2017-2023 program years).

Loyalty growth for challengers is more sensitive to the creation of perceived differentiation *(Table 15)*. Challenger brands that report growth in perceived differentiation are almost twice as likely to generate loyalty effects, while large brands do so to a lesser degree. This may reflect how challengers are chosen: through perceived differentiation and attracting customers who value it.

Table 15
% reporting loyalty growth, if also reporting differentiation growth or not.

	Challenger Brand	Category Leader
Differentiation Growth	21%	17%
No Differentiation Growth	11%	12%

US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns ran between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database . 297 challenger brands, 899 category leaders.

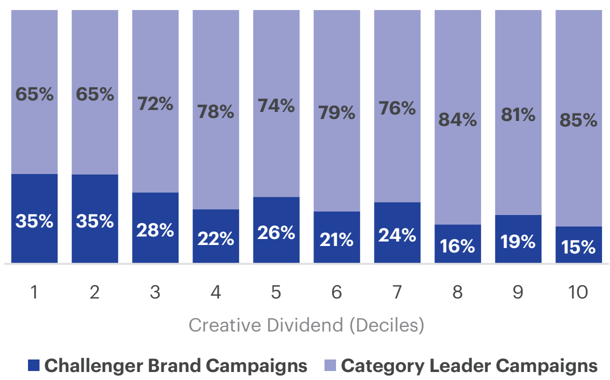
Challenger Brand Campaigns Also Need ESOC

Challenger brands have less revenue to invest in media, but they also often start with a creative disadvantage. Their lower brand equity means it is more difficult for advertising to elicit a strong positive emotional response (we like brands we know) and a distinctiveness response (they have fewer famous and unique distinctive brand assets). Some challenger brands will be newer and won't be able to leverage the compounding power of consistency. They also have fewer resources to invest in the creative process. As a result, there are more challenger brand campaigns with a smaller *Creative Dividend* *(Fig 86)*.

This, coupled with their media spend disadvantage, leads to fewer challenger brand campaigns having a greater *Excess Share of Creativity* *(Fig 87)*. Challenger brands usually have a weaker share of advertising creative effort in the category. This can make it difficult to run successful campaigns for challenger brands, not due to a lack of talented marketers working on these brands, but because the starting conditions are often stacked against them: fewer memory structures, fewer established DBAs, and less budget to compound them.

Figure 86
Challenger brands are more likely to have a weaker relative creative quality.

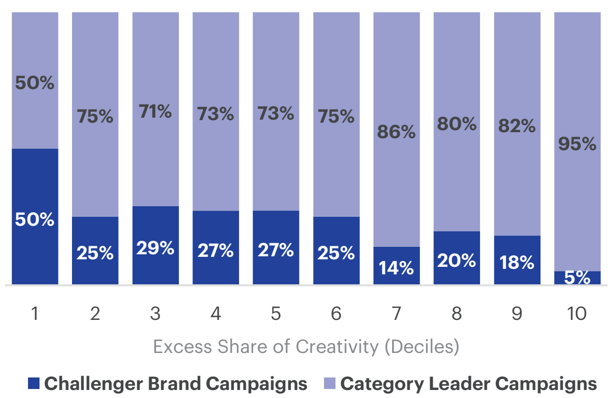
Creative Dividend Distribution By Brand Size



266 challenger brands campaigns with enough data, 852 category leader campaigns.

Figure 87
Challenger brands are more likely to have a lower Excess Share of Creativity.

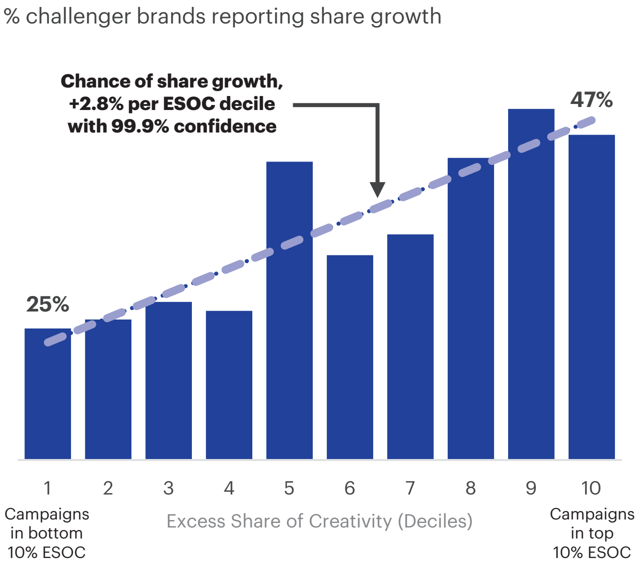
ESOC Distribution By Brand Size



266 challenger brands campaigns with enough data, 852 category leader campaigns.

However, the pattern is consistent for brands of all sizes. Challenger campaigns are more likely to report share growth when they achieve a greater creative advantage in market. As ESOC grows, there is the same meaningful and significant relationship with reported challenger brand market share growth *(Fig 88)*. A challenger brand campaign with an ESOC greater than 10% of campaigns is 2.8% more likely to report share growth.

Figure 88
Challenger brand campaigns with a larger ESOC are more likely to report market share growth.



266 US, Europe, UK & Ireland challenger brand campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database . Creative Dividend measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 40,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship & consistency, with reported media spend levels. Split into deciles.
Linear line of best fit: y= 2.8%x + 20.5%, R^2:79%. P=0.001

This provides a practical solution to the resource constraints for challenger brands, which often can't simply spend more on media. They can leverage emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and consistency to achieve a larger ESOC through a greater *Creative Dividend*, reliably increasing the chance of share growth.

Finally, some challenger brands are new to market and don't yet have years of brand equity or consistency to draw on. Others are long-established brands that have stayed small. We didn't split the sample by brand age in this analysis, but it's a valuable next step, especially to understand what holds some older, low-share brands back even in very large categories.

2x PROFIT

ACHIEVING A GREATER ESOC DOUBLES THE CHANCE A CHALLENGER BRAND CAMPAIGN REPORTS PROFIT GROWTH.

For two practical case studies of brands that grew from a small base size by increasing their creative dividend, see the Apartments.com and eos case studies at the end of the book.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTER 6

1. Category dynamics shape advertising effectiveness.
Brand size, relative spend vs competitors, and whether the category is growing or shrinking all affect how advertising works.

2. Challenger-brand growth differs from category-leader growth.
Challengers are more likely to grow when the category is growing and when they spend more than competitors. Leaders can invest less in shrinking categories with minimal impact on profit likelihood.

3. Challengers benefit more from differentiation than distinctiveness.
Challenger campaigns are twice as likely to drive share growth when they achieve differentiation compared with distinctiveness gains. Distinctiveness still matters but plays a smaller role.

4. Challengers benefit more from loyalty gains than penetration.
Challenger campaigns are twice as likely to report profit when they achieve loyalty gains compared with penetration gains. In this challenger subset, loyalty gains are more strongly associated with profit growth than penetration gains.

5. An Excess *Share of Creativity* helps grow challenger brands.
Challenger brands rarely achieve a larger ESOC because they operate with fewer resources. Yet when they do, they are more likely to report market share growth. Challenger brands can look to increase their *Creative Dividend* when they simply can't spend more on media.

THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND

CHAPTER 7

ADVERTISING IS A BUSINESS GROWTH ENGINE

[How Creative Quality and Media Support Turn Advertising into Growth]

How Creative Quality and Media Support Turn Advertising into Growth

Advertising has changed significantly over the past decade as ads have become less emotional, jingles and Fluent Devices have declined, showmanship has decreased, and brands have become less consistent. But creative quality and media support go a long way in explaining when advertising works.

This final chapter pulls the threads together. Creative quality explains a meaningful share of commercial performance. Add media support, and the model explains most of what campaigns report. Together, they demonstrate that the careful, disciplined practice of advertising is a reliable growth engine for brands of any size, in any category, including B2B.

How Creative and Media Decisions Shape Growth

Throughout this research, we've shown that creative quality, media support, and category dynamics each influence Business Results. To bring these together, we built a model using the matched Effie Insights' database and System1's Test Your Ad Competitive Edge database to estimate how much creativity and media explain commercial outcomes across markets and categories, for both B2C and B2B campaigns *(Table 16)*.

Including category dynamics lets us see the relative contribution of creativity and media to commercial growth. One note on scope: in this model, we focus on the three *Creativity Stack* elements we can measure consistently across cases: emotion, distinctiveness, and showmanship. And like any advertising model, this captures what campaigns can move: not product innovation, distribution, or product or service quality.

Table 16
A model using the data available across the two datasets to explain reported Business Results.

Explaining Business Results from Advertising Campaigns A linear Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model		
Control Variables: Region (UK, Ireland, US, Europe), Campaign Start Year, Category Dynamics (Growing, Flat, In Decline), Brand Size		
Creative Quality	**Media Support**	**Business Results**
Input 1	**Input 2**	**Output**
The Creative Dividend, measured with System1's emotion and distinctiveness metrics per ad, and how many showmanship creative features the ad includes	Campaign spend size, including vs competitors, and customer touchpoints used	The number of incremental business outcomes reported
Positive Emotion (Star Rating) Distinctiveness (Fluency Rating) No. of Showmanship Creative Features	Media Spend Size Spend vs Competitors Customer Touchpoints Used	Revenue Profit Market Share New Customer Penetration Loyalty or Retention Reduced Price Sensitivity

Creative Quality and Media Support Explain Business Outcomes

Across categories, including B2C and B2B, creative quality and media support explain between 40.5% and 98.3% of the Business Results reported from advertising *(Table 17)*.

This confirms three things:

• Creative quality is commercially meaningful.

• Advertising must receive sufficient media support to work.

• Creative and media decisions work best when they're made together, with media support playing an outsized role.

It also shows how much of campaign performance sits inside choices marketers can actually control. Creative quality and media choices are not peripheral. They explain most of the commercial outcomes a campaign generates.

98.3%

CREATIVE QUALITY AND MEDIA SUPPORT EXPLAIN UP TO 98.3% OF BUSINESS RESULTS, DEPENDING ON THE CATEGORY THE BRAND OPERATES IN.

Creative quality and media support explain the majority of campaign Business Results.

How Creative Quality and Media Support Explain Business Results (US & Europe)
A linear Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model

Effie Insights' database + System1 Test Your Ad Competitive Edge Database

Category	No. of Campaigns	Creative Quality Alone % (R^2)	Creative Quality & Media Support % (R^2)
Food & Drink (All)	313	24.2%	40.5%
CPG (Health & Beauty)	177	19.4%	52.4%
Retail & Restaurants	151	33.2%	53.7%
Finance & Telco	160	19.3%	56.6%
Automotive	103	28.8%	71.6%
B2B (Insurance & Professional Services)	75	24.6%	84.5%
Travel & Tourism	49	25.3%	89.9%
Pharmaceutical & Healthcare	69	40.6%	94.7%
Electronics & Home	43	68.0%	98.2%
Entertainment & Media	60	20.1%	98.3%

1,200 with complete linked creative & media data. US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative quality measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 180,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness & showmanship. Media attributes reported in Effie Insights' database.
Model built per category using reported control variables.

Creative Quality Sets the Potential. Media Sets the Scale.

Even without media variables, creative quality explains a meaningful share of Business Results. This means marketers can use creative measurement to guide effectiveness early in the process and predict commercial impact before allocating media. Emotion, distinctiveness, and showmanship each increase the likelihood that campaigns report Business Results, and together their effects multiply.

Generally, we found that all three layers of the *Creativity Stack* are valuable. Emotion (System1's Star Rating), ad distinctiveness (System1's Fluency Rating), and showmanship (the number of showmanship creative features in an ad) explain **42%**, **32%**, and **25%** of creativity's impact on average, respectively.

But creativity is not the whole story. When we add media support, we can explain far more of the outcome. Media support explains more of the variance than creative quality across most categories. Investing enough, outspending competitors, and choosing touchpoints that build future demand all have a large impact and give creativity the chance to work.

This reinforces a core principle of the research. High-spend campaigns with weak creative quality underperform. Creative excellence without broad reach also underdelivers. The two must be used together to make the greatest commercial impact. Marketers need the confidence to back creative quality with media spend to achieve ESOC.

Achieving the Creative Dividend

Pharmaceutical and healthcare campaigns highlight one of the most striking findings. These categories are not known for emotional or entertaining work, yet creativity alone explains more of their Business Results than in many high-profile consumer sectors. Creative quality accounts for 40.6% of outcome variation *(Fig 89)*. When media support is added, that rises to 94.7% *(Fig 90)*.

Categories that struggle to create emotional, distinctive work stand to gain the most when they do. When creativity is scarce, the dividend is amplified. A distinctive, entertaining, and emotional idea, with enough media support, becomes a competitive advantage. This is the *Creative Dividend*.

Figure 89
Creative quality alone explains 40.6% of reported Business Results for Pharmaceutical and Healthcare campaigns.

Creative quality alone explaining Business Results for Pharmaceutical & Healthcare campaigns

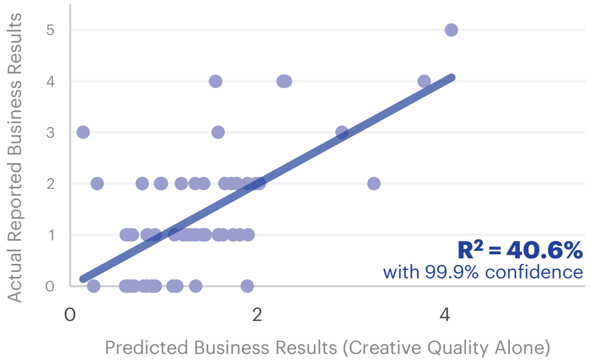


Figure 90
Creative quality and media support explain the majority of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare campaign Business Results.

Creative quality & media support explaining Business Results for Pharmaceutical & Healthcare campaigns

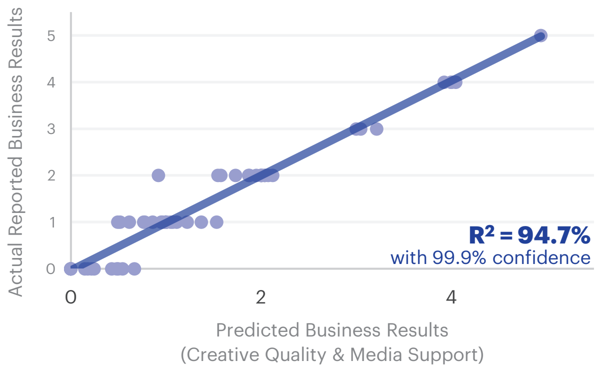


Fig 89 & 90
69 US, Europe, UK & Ireland Pharmaceutical and Healthcare campaigns between 2007-2023 from the Effie Insights' database. Creative quality measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 10,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness & showmanship & consistency. Media attributes reported in the Effie Insights' database. Model built per category using reported control variables.

Categories Perform Differently

One clear pattern is how much creative and media explain campaign outcomes across categories. The variation depends on how much influence advertising can realistically have, the variance in media and creative, and how reliant the category is on physical availability. Categories where availability is less of a differentiator between brands, and where advertising can more directly shape choice, tend to show a larger explained impact.

41%–99%

ACROSS US CATEGORIES, CREATIVE AND MEDIA EXPLAIN 41%–99% OF REPORTED BUSINESS RESULTS.

Table 18
Creative quality and media support explain the majority of campaign Business Results in the US.

How Creativity and Media Explain Business Results (US)
A linear Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model

Effie Insights' database + System1 Test Your Ad Competitive Edge Database

Category	No. of Campaigns	Creative Quality Alone % (R^2)	Creative Quality & Media Support % (R^2)
Food & Beverages (Non-Alcoholic)	141	27.8%	41.3%
Automotive	63	27.5%	79.6%
Alcoholic Beverages	52	22.2%	89.5%
Financial Services & Banking	58	25.1%	90.1%
Pharmaceutical & Healthcare	62	21.7%	92.4%
CPG Health	42	18.5%	98.1%
Restaurants & Foodservice	57	21.0%	99.2%

475 US campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative quality measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 70,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, & showmanship. Media attributes reported in Effie Insights' database. Model built per category using reported control variables.

Advertising Effectiveness Across Markets

These effectiveness principles hold wherever we have enough data. Across the US and Europe, emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and media support consistently explain a majority of Business Results. The same levers work across markets, which is useful for global brands. The principles hold up across markets, even though the executions differ.

Taken together, this is good news for global brands. It suggests you do not need a different theory of effectiveness by market. The same creative levers from the *Creativity Stack* show up again and again: emotion, distinctiveness, and showmanship. Then media support determines how far that advantage travels.

But it does not mean one ad will work everywhere. Creative development is shaped by the market it is built for. That is why the goal is consistency of principles, not "global matching luggage."

73%–100%

ACROSS EUROPEAN CATEGORIES, CREATIVE AND MEDIA EXPLAIN 73%–100% OF REPORTED BUSINESS RESULTS.

Table 19
Creative quality and media support explain the majority of campaign Business Results in Europe.

How Creativity and Media Explain Business Results (Europe)
A linear Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model

Effie Insights' database + System1 Test Your Ad Competitive Edge Database

Category	No. of Campaigns	Creative Quality Alone % (R^2)	Creative Quality & Media Support % (R^2)
Finance & Insurance	43	27.6%	Insufficient media data.
Retail & Restaurants	68	29.8%	72.7%
Food & Drink (All)	120	26.1%	86.8%
Automotive	40	59.5%	98.2%
CPG (Health & Beauty)	51	34.6%	99.9%

322 Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative quality measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 48,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, & showmanship. Media attributes reported in Effie Insights' database. Model built per category using reported control variables.

Across all categories and markets, creativity alone explains 24.2% of Business Results. When paired with media support, that rises to 60.1% *(Fig 91)*. This aligns closely with Orlando Wood's findings in *Look out*, where emotional response (System1's Star Rating) and *Excess Share of Voice* explain 48% of global market share changes.

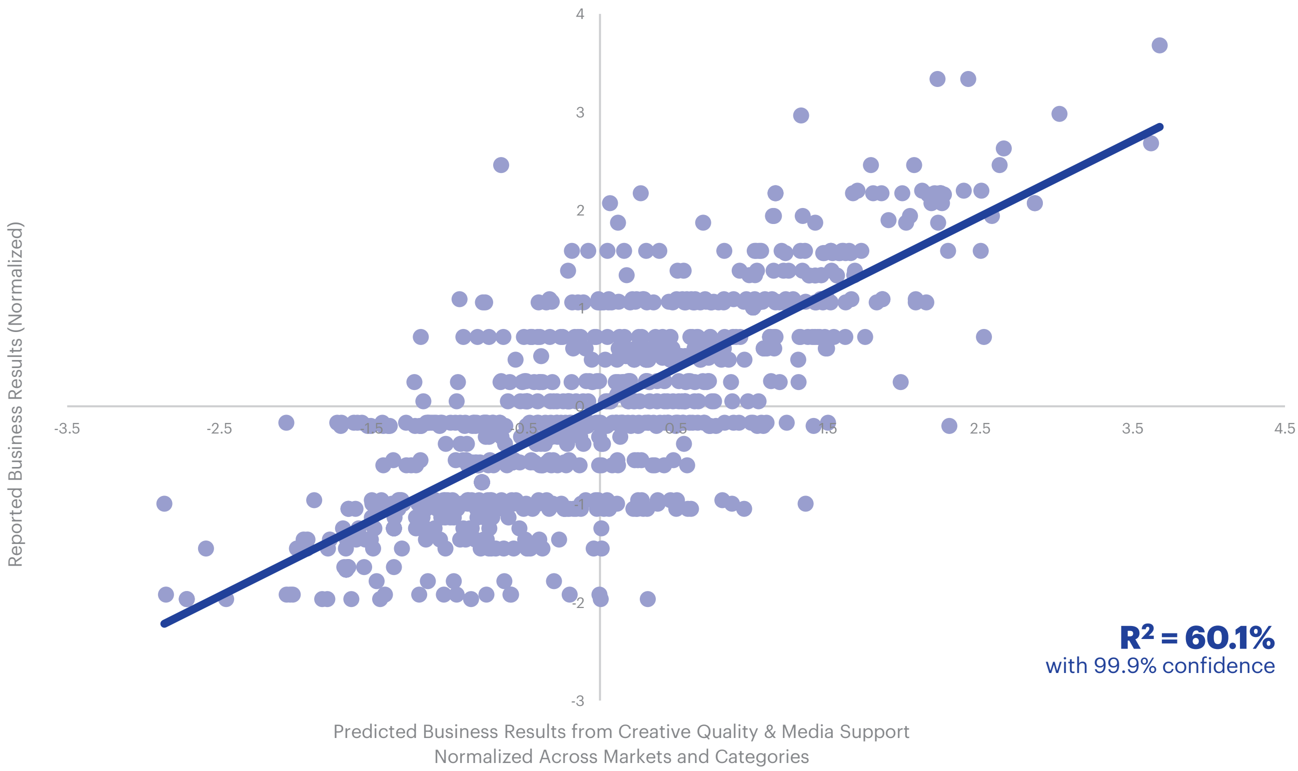
A simple clarification matters here. This doesn't mean that an ad that surprises and delights in the UK will create the same response in the US. Creative ideas do not travel on autopilot. Creative development is shaped by the market it is built for, and our measurement reflects that. Marketers, strategists, planners, and creatives design work to evoke the right emotional response, leverage distinctive brand cues, build strategic associations, and apply showmanship in ways that earn attention in their own media environment.

The outputs help explain effectiveness. The inputs vary, as they should. That is the creative and media planning process.

When laid out like this, the task of advertising seems simple. It is not. It requires time, investment, focus, skill, judgment, craft, and strong creative relationships. It may look like a cost, especially in tough conditions, but this process determines whether advertising drives growth or fails to. Businesses that champion creativity internally, secure enough media support for campaigns to work, and make clear how much commercial performance depends on getting this right will see advertising turn into an investment that pays back, not a cost.

Figure 91
Creative quality and media support explain 60.1% of campaign Business Results.

How Creative Quality and Media Support Explain Business Results, normalized to compare across categories.



1,200 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database . Creative quality measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 180,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, & showmanship. Media attributes reported in Effie Insights' database . Model built per category using reported control variables, normalized to compare categories.

Advertising Works

This research leads to three useful conclusions. Advertising is measurable and predictable. If creative quality and media support explain up to 98% of outcomes, and 60.1% on average across markets and categories, then advertising is not guesswork. Creativity is commercially undervalued. Up to 68% of global marketers undervalue creativity's commercial impact, yet creative quality alone explains a quarter of Business Results. Campaigns need enough media support to work. To change behavior, creative quality has to reach enough customers, often for long enough, to create impact.

This final chapter has shown that creative quality and media support can reliably explain the number of Business Results from a campaign, which we previously showed to compound to achieve profit and market share. But it's valuable to summarize how a campaign's ESOC increases the likelihood of reporting each type of Business Result, reinforcing the usefulness of effective advertising for businesses and informing strategy*(Fig 92)*.

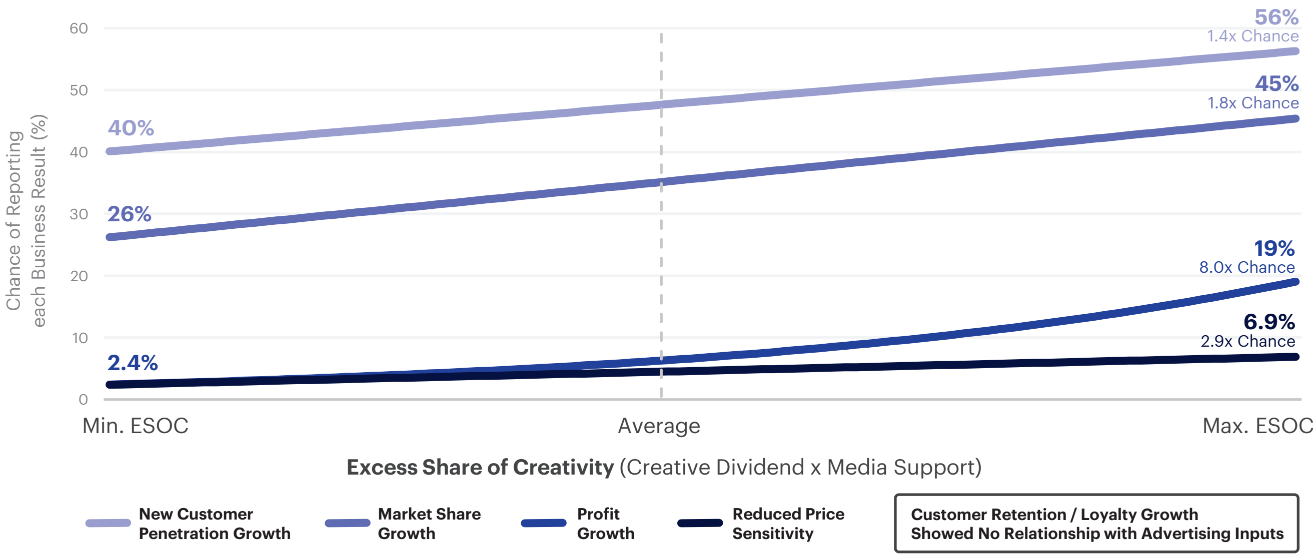
ESOC shows no relationship with customer retention or loyalty growth. Advertising can strengthen the brand people choose and the price they are willing to pay, but keeping customers is more likely to be driven by product or service experience, distribution, and brand size, as highlighted by other research.

However, advertising campaigns with a greater ESOC clearly drive share growth, penetration, pricing power, and profit. Market share and new customer penetration lift in parallel as a campaign's ESOC rises, which is further evidence that these two outcomes are closely linked. Reduced price sensitivity climbs too, almost tripling at the extremes. But it's profit outcomes that show why businesses should regularly invest in effective advertising: executing high-quality creative, supported by sufficient media, increases the chance of profit growth eightfold.

Businesses should invest in advertising to recruit customers, defend price, and deliver profitable growth. Creative quality and media support should be planned together to increase the chance of a successful outcome.

Figure 92
Effective advertising makes most Business Results more likely, but to different degrees.

Chance of Business Result per campaign ESOC (Category-Benchmarked Creative Quality and Media Support).



1,153 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative Dividend measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 170,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship & consistency, with reported media spend levels. Line of best fit all significant +99.9%.

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTER 7

1. Creative quality alone explains 24.2% of reported Business Results.
Higher emotion, distinctiveness, and showmanship are linked to stronger Business Results, and they can be assessed before major media is committed.

2. Creative quality and media support together explain 60.1% of commercial impact.
Creativity and media do not work in isolation. When strong creative is backed with enough weight, above-category spend, and the right touchpoints, results become far more likely.

3. Advertising works predictably across markets and categories.
In the US and Europe, across B2C and B2B campaigns, creativity and media support explain 40.5%–98.3% of reported Business Results, depending on category.

4. Where creativity is rarer, the *Creative Dividend* pays back more.
In categories where great creativity is rarer, the payoff is larger.

5. Advertising becomes a growth engine when creative quality and media support align.
When creative quality is achieved and supported by media, campaigns are much more likely to create Business Results.

A VERY PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

Often, conclusions are elaborate summaries. This one is designed to help close the creative confidence gap by offering a practical way to plan, diagnose, and improve advertising using the logic in this book.

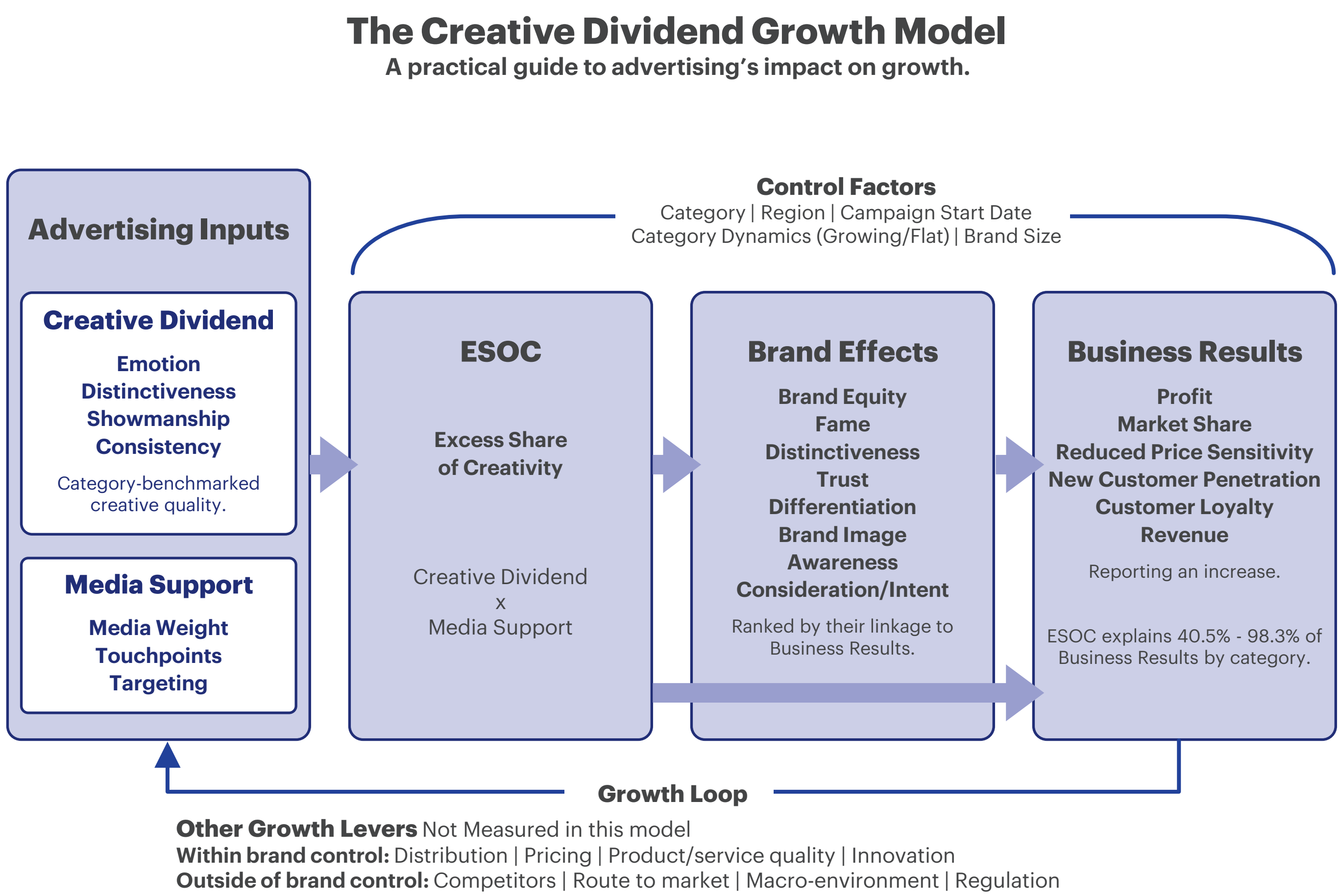
Diagnosis

The Creative Dividend Growth Model is a view of the findings of this research *(Fig 93)*. Use it for diagnosis. What Business Results does marketing need to deliver, and what is changing in customer behavior, tracked through Brand Effects. Getting to the "why" behind those changes, then setting clear, measurable objectives, is how you build a strategy the whole business can agree is working.

Diagnosis also means context. Category dynamics, brand size, competitors, distribution, pricing, product, service, and innovation still shape outcomes. Advertising is not the only growth lever. What this model does is clarify what advertising can realistically influence, and which inputs increase the odds of getting there.

Once objectives are clear, strategy comes next, which is largely outside the scope of this book. You still need to decide how broad-reaching communications must be, which associations the brand must build memories for to change behavior, and which insight to focus on. That is the bedrock everything else rests on. What this research confirms is that brands that then build that positioning as broadly and consistently as possible, using emotional, distinctive advertising with showmanship, grow more often.

Figure 93
An overview of the concepts shared in this research.

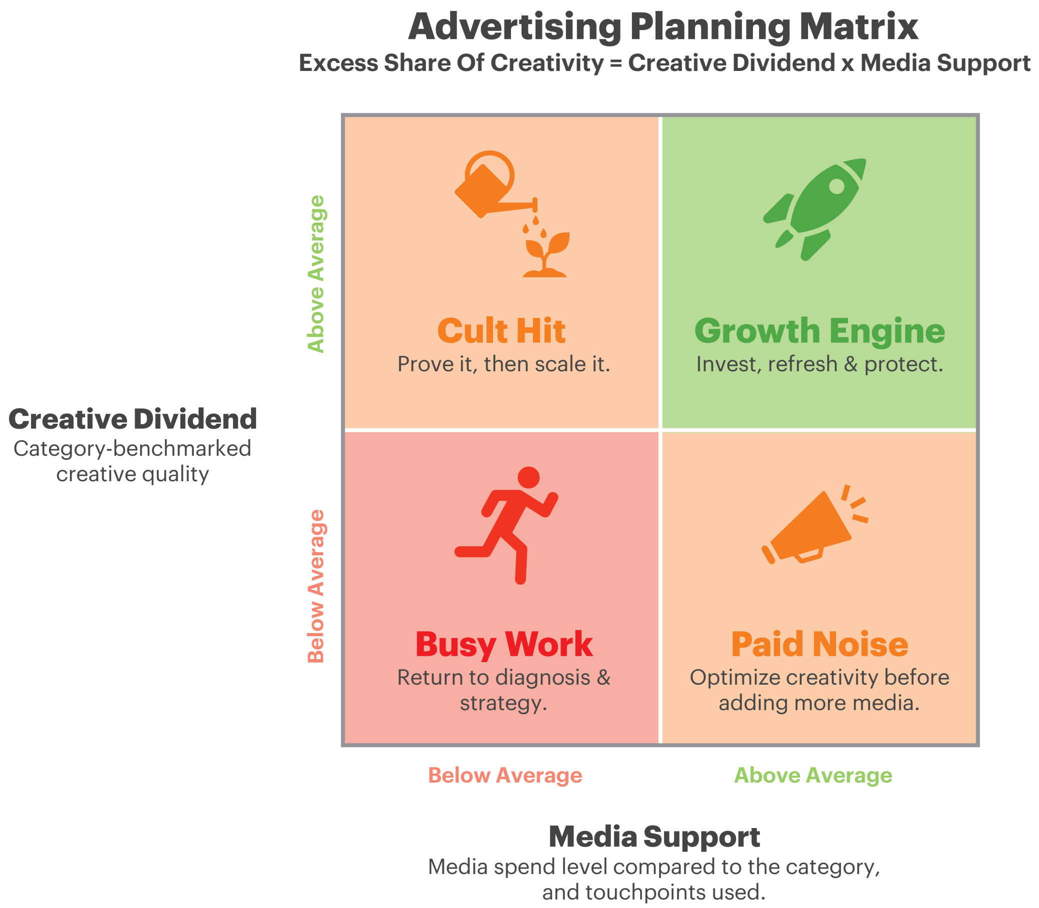


Planning

Even without structurally accounting for insight and positioning, these choices show up in the execution. In this research, the execution of a campaign, the creative quality of the ad, and the media support it receives can explain most of its reported results.

JWT's Stephen King, the planner behind the 1974 Planning Guide, drew a distinction between "grand strategy" and "ad tweaking." One starts with diagnosis, the hunt for insight, and a behavior-changing strategy. The other is refining the ads themselves. Both are hard to separate today, but execution is the only part the customer experiences. Given how much commercial growth is explained by creative outputs, planning through the eyes of the customer is not a compromise. It can be the most practical route to effectiveness. That is why we developed the *Advertising Planning Matrix* to support campaign planning using the ESOC framework *(Fig 94)*. It is a fast way to diagnose whether the next move is to scale, improve, or reset. In this research, creative quality is assessed against the *Creativity Stack* using quantitative creative measurement, which we have shown predicts and explains outcomes. If that data is not available, teams can still use controlled experimentation and sequential creative reviews, ideally with the criteria for judging work that stay stable over time and are benchmarked to other campaigns in the category.

Figure 94
Plan media and creative together to deliver consistent profit and share growth.



Crucially, we found that emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship, and consistency are four creative outputs that deserve deliberate attention. When you combine creativity and media into one view, the chance of commercial success changes meaningfully *(Table 20)*. Growth Engines have the smallest share of campaigns, but they report Business Results, including share and profit growth, more often, and they are more likely to be awarded Silver Effies or higher. Busy Work is the most common landing spot, with creative quality and media support below average, and it is also the least effective.

Cult Hits often outperform their weight, especially on share, but lack the media support to turn strength into consistent profit outcomes. Paid Noise is where improving the work can unlock the most value of the support already behind it. These campaigns are only below average in distinctiveness 30% of the time, but fall below average in positive emotion and showmanship over 70% of the time, a clear signal of what is usually missing. The most supported campaigns could do with more emotion and showmanship.

One last pattern in the table is worth calling out. Quantitative creative measurement shows up far more often in Growth Engine than Busy Work (46% vs 18%). That does not prove measurement causes better outcomes, but it fits the logic of this research: teams who can identify creative advantage earlier are better able to protect it, back it, and improve it before they spend again. Creative measurement is one way to do this.

The point of the matrix is not to label campaigns. It is to prioritize the next move. Improve the work, increase the support, protect and invest, or reset. On the next page, we show three anonymized examples of brands doing exactly that.

Table 20
The different campaign outcomes for campaigns in each advertising planning quadrant.

ESOC Group	% of campaigns	Avg. no. reported Business Results	% reporting share gain	% reporting profit	% using creative measurement	% awarded a Silver Effie or higher
Growth Engine	17%	2.3	43%	14%	46%	18%
Cult Hit	24%	1.9	41%	9%	28%	15%
Paid Noise	21%	1.7	33%	9%	33%	13%
Busy Work	38%	1.6	32%	5%	18%	12%

1,153 US, Europe, UK & Ireland campaigns between 2007-2023 from Effie Insights' database. Creative Dividend measured with System1's Test Your Ad with 170,000 respondents: emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship & consistency, with reported media spend levels.

Improve

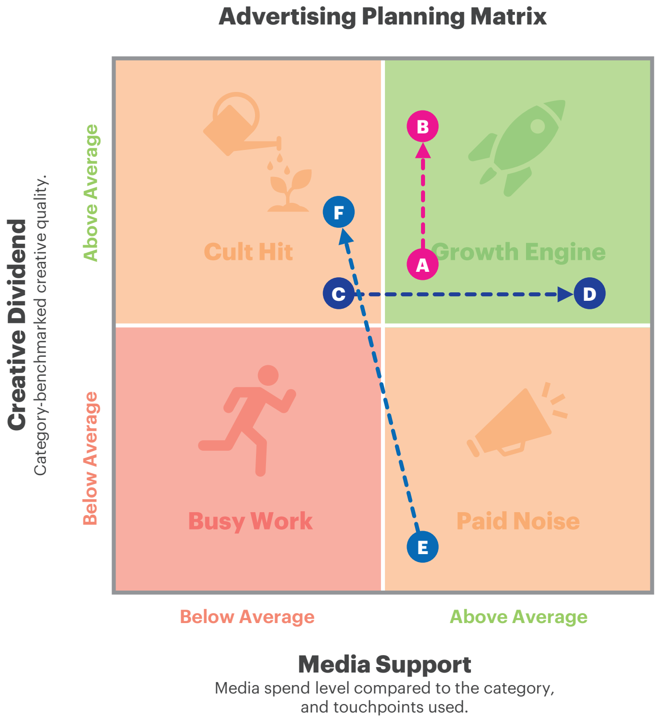
Finally, to show how practical this view of planning can be, we found three examples of brands with two campaigns each in Effie Insights' database *(Fig 95)* to analyze how they improved effectiveness.

A large quick-service restaurant brand (A to B). The media plan stayed broadly steady, but creative quality improved meaningfully by increasing the number of DBAs used across the campaign and introducing more showmanship. The work became more positively emotional and distinctive, and the campaign moved further into Growth Engine territory. The result was a doubling of reported Total Effects (Brand Effects and Business Results), including a flip into positive profit reporting. When support is already there, improving creative advantage can be the most efficient path to better outcomes.

A major lager brand (C to D). Creative quality was already above average, but the campaign was under-supported. The move was scale, not reinvention. The brand built on its existing creative advantage with greater media support, shifting from Cult Hit to Growth Engine. The result was a doubling of reported Total Effects and a shift to positive share-gain reporting. A brilliant example of being able to build mechanisms to spot strong creativity, then the discipline to back it properly with media.

A household home-fragrance brand (E to F). Media support had to be tightened, but the marketing team and their agency dramatically improved creative quality, with the campaign's *Creative Dividend* growing from 0.37 to 1.8, a five-fold increase relative to the category benchmark. The brand moved from Paid Noise into Cult Hit. Despite lower media support, the campaign reported triple the Total Effects, including a flip into positive share-gain reporting. The first campaign did not win an Effie, but the second did, earning Silver. When media support has to be reduced, creative advantage can be the lever that keeps growth alive.

Figure 95
Three examples of two campaigns from the same brand with different levels of ESOC.



6 cases from the Effie Insights' database, ESOC measured using System1's creative measurement and media support reported in each case study.

In Closing

To demonstrate the advantage that effective advertising provides to all businesses and to close the creative confidence gap, we've brought creative and media into one view. Sharing evidence, frameworks, planning tools, and case studies. But, of course, we now pass the baton to you. As brand building becomes increasingly important and advertising becomes more fragmented, marketing leaders will bridge the gap between evidence and practice. They will share the *Creative Dividend* available to every business with those beyond just marketing. Championing creativity in the service of customers and ensuring it gets the media support it deserves. After making it through 97 pages of marketing effectiveness, we think you're up for the challenge.

THE DATA

Effie is the global authority on marketing effectiveness, bringing the industry together across every sector, geography, and company to empower marketers to achieve measurable success. With nearly six decades of expertise and a wealth of data, Effie's mission is to make effectiveness happen for marketers and their brands, no matter what their business challenge.

This report has been two years in the making and is the most comprehensive piece of analysis we have undertaken with a partner in over 5 years. At its heart, it explores the relationship between creativity, media and effectiveness across categories and markets. We have focused on unpacking the data to offer practical guidance to help you succeed in the here and now.

While perhaps best known for our prestigious awards, today we are an effectiveness platform, offering the tools, training, and insights marketers need at every stage of their career. We operate 60 programs worldwide and are backed by a community of 25,000 marketing effectiveness advocates and practitioners, who mentor, judge and make up our advisory and board committees.

This report springs from Effie Insights, our global database and content hub, featuring an unparalleled collection of effectiveness cases from brands of all shapes and sizes, across 130 markets and 90 categories. The unique nature of our data allows marketers to examine the how of effective marketing and gather the real-world evidence, inspiration, and practical examples they need at every step of the process.

You will see our cases featured within the pages of this report to bring the theory to life. Each one is structured around our four pillar Effie framework, to enable you to follow the effectiveness story from the objectives, through to the strategy, the creative and media execution and finally, the results. If there is one thing all our cases have in common, it is a demonstration that effectiveness is not the bit you measure at the end. You start with effectiveness, live it, breathe it and the results will follow.

If there is one takeaway from this report, it is that effectiveness is not an outcome, it is a day-today orientation.

With thanks to System1 for working with us to make this report happen.

Methodology

Drawing on the Effie Insights database, researchers analyzed 1,265 campaigns from the 2017 – 2023 Effie Awards United States, Effie Awards United Kingdom, and Effie Awards Ireland programs (823 for the US cases, and 442 for the European cases) for key business results and brand effects.

To understand how creativity drives effectiveness, this research needed a consistent way to measure what people actually feel when they see an ad. System1's Test Your Ad Competitive Edge database provides that backbone.

Since 2000, System1 has tested over 150,000 ads with more than 20 million people, using a single, scalable methodology that captures emotional response, brand recognition, and key creative features for each execution. For this project, we matched that database to 1,265 campaigns in the Effie Insights' database across 15 years, representing $140B in market share, creating a unique link between creative outputs, Brand Effects, Business Results, media choices, and category dynamics.

At the heart of Test Your Ad is a simple idea: emotion leads to action. Each ad is shown to a sample of real consumers who report what they feel, how strongly they feel it, and how quickly they recognize the brand. These responses are converted into three headline measures that predict commercial impact and that underpin the *Creativity Stack* used throughout this publication:

5.0

Star Rating

Star Rating captures the overall emotional response to an ad and predicts its potential to contribute to long-term brand growth. Scores range from 1.0 to 5.9 Stars. Higher Star Ratings indicate campaigns that are more likely to build Brand Effects and support future Business Results. Around half the ads in the database score only 1 Star, and roughly one in one hundred achieves 5 Stars.

1.44

Spike Rating

Spike Rating reflects the intensity and speed of response. It predicts short-term activity such as sales, donations, or sign-ups by capturing how strongly people react and how quickly they connect that reaction to the brand. Scores below 1 suggest limited short-term impact, while scores of 1.3 and above signal strong or exceptional short-term potential.

96

Fluency Rating

Fluency Rating measures how quickly and easily people recognize the brand in the ad, on a 1–100 scale. High Fluency indicates strong use of Distinctive Brand Assets and clear brand linkage. It is the core measure of ad distinctiveness in this research and a key input to understanding how creativity turns media spend into revenue.

Alongside these headline metrics, Test Your Ad collects diagnostics that deepen the picture of how creativity works. People report the **intensity** of their emotion, the **reasons** they feel that way, and the **key associations** they take from the ad. System1 also codes the presence of Distinctive Brand Assets and creative features linked to showmanship and consistency, building on the work of Orlando Wood and Iain McGilchrist on broad-beam, right-brain attention. These codes allow us to quantify elements such as story, character, music, and recurring brand devices, which feed into the *Creativity Stack* and the Compound Creativity framework later in this publication.

By combining these creative measures with Effie's detailed case data, we can see not only whether a campaign reported stronger Brand Effects and Business Results, but also which aspects of creativity made that outcome more likely. All creative metrics and creative-feature analyses in this publication are drawn from System1's Test Your Ad Competitive Edge database matched to the Effie Insights' database.

CASE STUDIES

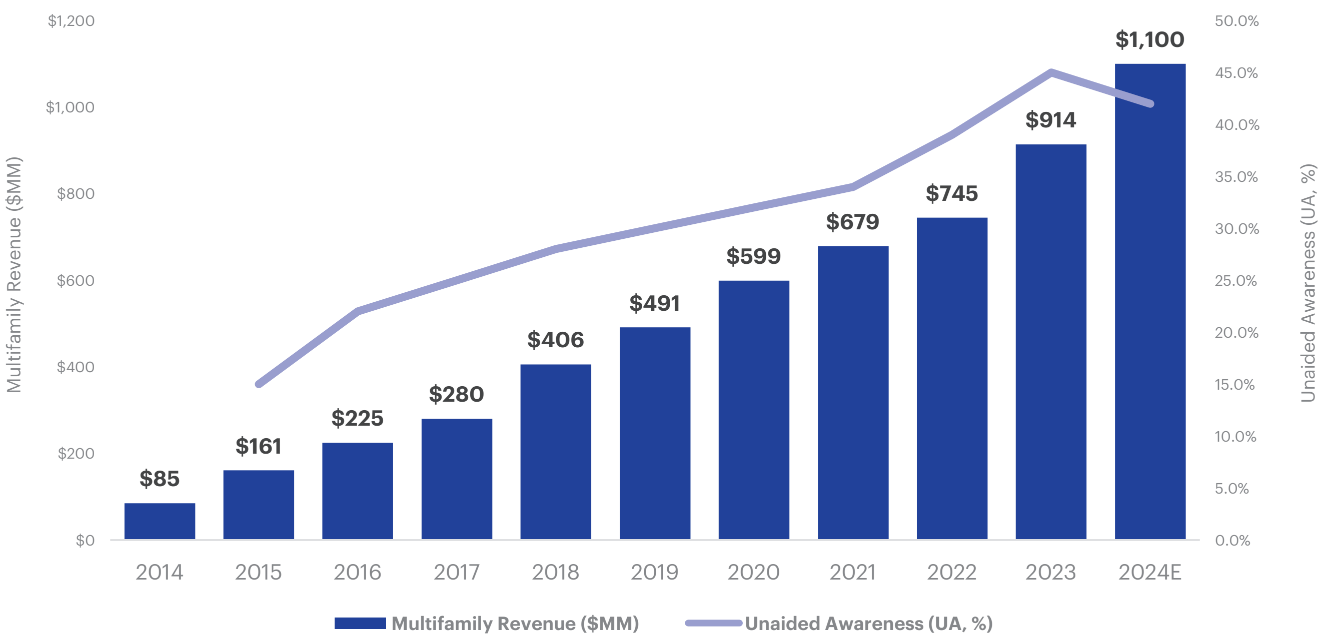
In 2014, the US apartment listings market lacked meaningful brands. Renters defaulted to search engines, Craigslist, or whichever site appeared first, resulting in fragmented awareness, weak loyalty, and minimal switching costs. For Apartments.com, growth depended on paid media traffic rather than brand memory, making the business expensive to scale and exposed to larger competitors.

Apartments.com shifted focus from winning search to building brand memory at scale. The objective was to become the first brand renters thought of, so demand could be generated by preference as well as search.

The creative approach was built for long-term use. Apartments.com created a distinctive brand world built around Brad Bellflower, a fictional founder figure played by Jeff Goldblum. The character format allowed the brand to dramatize functional advantages through humor and performance while keeping the advertising clearly attributable to Apartments.com.

The key decision was not to reset the idea. While competitors changed tone and messaging, Apartments.com returned to the same character, voice, and visual world year after year. This repetition strengthened recognition and attribution, reduced the amount of explanation required in each execution, and allowed effectiveness to build rather than restart.

Apartments.com | Revenue & Awareness



Co$tar Group 10<Financial Reports, Data in Calendar Year End, 2014-2023.

It was the most consistent brand in our Compound Creativity coding, staying stable across all three buckets: **foundations** (one enduring emotional positioning and organizing idea), **culture** (the platform was extended rather than replaced), and **execution** (the same fluent device, tone of voice and brand world returning repeatedly). That consistency meant each new execution carried the memory of the last.

The media strategy matched the creative strategy. Apartments.com supported the platform with broad reach over a sustained period, using national television, tentpole moments such as the Super Bowl, and later large-scale streaming video. Distribution evolved as viewing habits changed, but the creative cues remained stable, allowing familiarity to travel with the audience. The business effects accumulated. Unaided awareness increased by more than 50 points and the brand moved to category leadership in first-mention awareness. Direct traffic and qualified leads grew year after year, reducing reliance on search-led acquisition. Over the decade, revenue increased from **$85m** to **$1.1bn**, despite intensifying competition and more challenging market conditions. The sustained approach was recognized with a **Gold Effie** for **Sustained Success**.

What made this commercially powerful was not just the character world, but the gap it created versus the rest of the category. That gap is the point of ESOC: being more emotionally effective than competitors is only valuable if you also show up enough for the market to learn it. Apartments.com did both. The work built advantage through consistency, then converted that advantage into preference because the media plan kept putting the same cues in front of broad audiences year after year.

"We went from unknown to category leader by creating distinctive brand cues —our colors, the Apartments.com HQ, Brad Bellflower's eccentric character—and sticking with them for a decade. That consistency built familiarity and trust, so renters turned to us first when they were ready for a fresh start."

NARGIS PIRANI, SVP, GROUP DIRECTOR, BRAND STRATEGY, RPA

A **Growth Engine** case, built by building a high creative quality early and sustaining broad media support long enough for effects to compound.

BUILD ONE REPEATABLE BRAND WORLD, THEN KEEP THE CHARACTER, TONE, AND CUES CONSTANT WHILE YOU SWAP FORMATS AND CHANNELS AROUND IT.

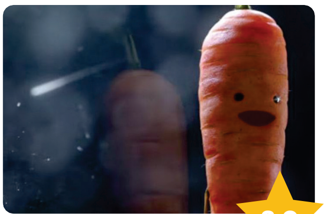
Aldi's challenge was seasonal rather than structural. Despite strong performance across the year, Christmas exposed a recurring weakness. Shoppers who relied on Aldi for everyday value often shifted their main festive shop to competitors. The trade-out was driven less by price than by perceptions of quality, range and "Christmas-ness". In 2015, that seasonal dip in fair share was worth more than £26m in lost sales in a single month. In a season crowded with high-profile, emotionally led retail advertising, Aldi repeatedly lost share when it mattered most.

Aldi's response was to earn attention at Christmas with a repeatable advertising property rather than leaning harder on promotion. The aim was to reduce trade-out, retain shoppers and grow penetration during the key trading window, while also carrying momentum into the New Year.
Execution centered on Kevin the Carrot, a recurring brand character designed for long-term use. The work used entertaining storytelling and humor to build an imaginative Christmas world that remained unmistakably Aldi. Importantly, Kevin's effectiveness strengthened with repetition. When Kevin first appeared on screens, he delivered a strong yet comparatively modest 3 Star Rating. Ten years later, Aldi consistently tops the Christmas charts with 5.9 Star Ratings for long-term impact, outstanding short-term spike results and exceptional fluency. This is what long-term investment looks like in practice.

Kevin also became a powerful distinctive asset. With System1 **Fluency scores in the high 90s**, the character enabled near-instant recognition and attribution, keeping Aldi mentally available during Christmas, a period when shoppers are most likely to trade up and out.

ALDI | Six Years of Kevin

2016 | The Night Before Christmas



Finished Film **60s** 3.0

2017 | Midnight Express

Finished Film **60s** 3.0

2018 | Kevin & The Wicked Parsnip

Finished Film **60s** 3.0

2019 | The Greatest Show On Earth

Finished Film **70s** 4.7

2020 | Out In The Cold

Finished Film **90s** 5.8

2021 | A Christmas Carrot

Finished Film **90s** 5.4

Ad Spend	**£42.52m**
Net Profit per £1 Spent	**£2.63**
ROMI	**263%**

System1 Test Your Ad Star Rating.

Gain Theory data, 2016-2022.

The commercial payoff followed. Over six years the platform delivered **£618m** in incremental revenue and **54%** value share growth, with the work awarded the **Global Grand Effie** in 2023.

Kevin is a clean illustration of how the dividend actually gets paid. Emotional response grew over time because the character became fluent, but that only mattered because Aldi kept giving the work enough reach, every Christmas, to keep widening the gap versus rivals. That is ESOC in practice: not "best ad wins," but "best ad, properly backed, wins." Creative quality made Aldi easier to choose; sustained weight made that easier choice happen at scale.

A **Growth Engine** case, built by fixing Kevin as a fluent device early and sustaining broad Christmas reach long enough for effects to build year on year.

SEE CREATIVE EXAMPLES AND SYSTEM1'S TEST YOUR AD RESULTS HERE

CHOOSE ONE FLUENT CHARACTER AND TREAT THE ANNUAL RETURN AS THE STRATEGY, NOT THE SEQUEL, WITH THE SAME CUES AND A PREDICTABLE SEASONAL CADENCE.

"A 'fluent device' like Kevin the Carrot instantly captures attention, stops people looking away, skipping on, or changing channels. While investing in refreshing a good story rewards consumers attention across channels and over time. Being entertaining and likeable is more important in creating mental availability than explicit, rational 'messaging', while consistently refreshed creativity beats change for its own sake. That Kevin the Carrot has become Britain's best loved retail brand mascot (ref) while at the same time delivering more than half of the brands' penetration growth and over 600% ROMI* bears testament to the commercial potency of humour and storytelling to build long-term brand growth."

DARREN HAWKINS, HEAD OF EFFECTIVENESS, EUROPE & UK, MCCANN WORLDGROUP

*This comment refers to the cumulative long-term return of the Kevin the Carrot platform over a longer period than the six years assessed in the Effie Europe award-winning case (263% ROMI).

Chili's had been losing relevance and traffic for more than a decade. The brand still offered strong value and a differentiated dine-in experience, but it was being overlooked in a category dominated by faster-growing QSR competitors with louder voices and bigger budgets. The issue was not availability or pricing. It was weaker recall and reduced emotional connection, especially among younger audiences.

Chili's set out to make the brand easier to notice and easier to remember again. Rather than leaning on promotions or product news, the work reclaimed Chili's voice through humor, nostalgia, and confidence, signaling that the brand was back.

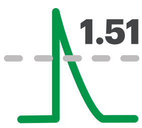
In System1 testing, the creative delivered a **5.2 Star Rating**, supported by happiness levels above the US TV norm, indicating strong brand-building potential. Brand linkage was strengthened by bringing back Chili's iconic jingle as a central cue. The jingle did the practical job of speeding recognition and attribution, allowing the work to draw on existing memory rather than requiring new learning.

Despite having less than a quarter of the budgets of the top three US fast-food brands, Chili's converted creative strength into outsized impact. The campaign delivered a **Spike Rating of 1.51**, with same-store sales rising within weeks and continuing to grow through the quarter while the category remained flat.

The effects extended beyond existing customers. Chili's delivered a **10% increase in household penetration**, its first positive penetration growth since before the pandemic, while the wider category declined. The work also generated **5 billion PR impressions** and a **60% increase in organic social engagement**. The campaign won a **Gold Effie**.

System1 Metrics

Star Rating:
Exceptional
Predicts **long-term** market share growth



Spike Rating:
Exceptional
Predicts **short-term** sales potential

Fluency Rating:
Exceptional
Indicates **strength** of brand recognition

This is the fast version of the same story. Distinctive assets (especially sonic ones) can do heavy lifting because they already live in memory, but they still need enough exposure to re-enter the market and start working again. Chili's got a high return on relatively low spend by pairing a strong emotional execution with cues that sped recognition and attribution. That combination is why ESOC matters: you don't need to outspend leaders if your advertising works harder every time it's seen.

A Cult Hit case, built by fixing distinctive assets (especially the jingle) and scaling visibility through a concentrated burst of reach and earned attention.

SEE CREATIVE EXAMPLES AND SYSTEM1'S TEST YOUR AD RESULTS HERE

BRING BACK THE ASSET PEOPLE ALREADY KNOW (ESPECIALLY SONIC), AND LET IT DO THE RECOGNITION WORK WHILE THE NEW EXECUTION DOES THE ENTERTAINMENT WORK.

"Chili's is awesome at two things (which end up being many, many things). First, they demonstrate exceptional value in ways that are emotionally powerful (not just rational). Instead of screaming price-points at you, Chili's used the anger around how expensive fast food had become as the perfect foil to showcase how great Chili's value is. Second, the way they participate in culture and invite people to play with the brand is a masterclass in how to leverage partnerships and social to drive constant interest and brand affinity."

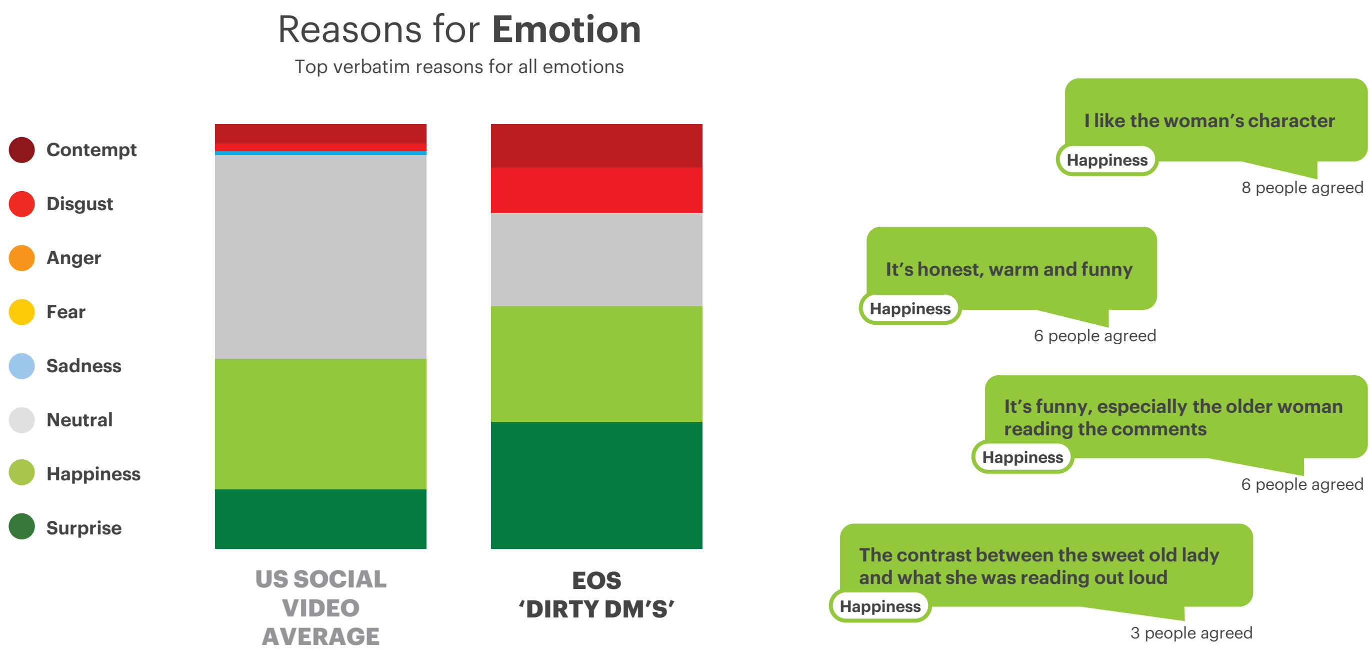
JEFF MCCRORY, CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, MISCHIEF @ NO FIXED ADDRESS

eos entered a mature, highly commoditized shaving category dominated by functional claims and sanitized language that did not reflect how people actually experienced shaving. As a challenger brand with lower media budgets than category leaders, eos faced limits on scale and visibility. The practical problem was relevance in a category with limited emotional connection.

Research pointed to a clear gap between category communication and real consumer experience, especially among Gen Z women who were still forming shaving habits and actively researching products. eos responded by rejecting category conventions and adopting a more direct, culturally resonant approach that addressed shaving openly, without euphemism. The idea was applied consistently over time. By returning to the same tone and point of view, eos became more recognizable and emotionally distinctive within the category. System1 Test Your Ad Social results show higher positive emotional response and lower neutrality than the US social media average, indicating the work was more likely to be noticed, felt, and remembered.

As a challenger brand, eos could not rely on existing salience or loyalty to drive growth. Instead, penetration depended on being meaningfully different in a category where most brands sounded the same. By establishing clear emotional differentiation early, eos created a route to growth that did not depend on excess media spend, allowing creativity to play a greater role in driving adoption.

System1 Metrics



That creative advantage translated into adoption. System1 testing revealed that the work landed particularly well with Gen Z women, leaving them feeling 35% more positive emotion (Happiness and Surprise) than the US average for social media, supporting longer-term brand effects for the target demographic rather than short-lived engagement. The campaign delivered sustained penetration growth and expanded eos's customer base. The effectiveness was recognized with an Iridium Effie.

Challengers rarely win by matching weight, so the only viable route is to create a bigger creative gap and spend what you have in a way that makes the gap felt. eos did that by breaking category codes and earning attention early, then repeating the idea in the channels where new habits were forming. ESOC is the reason that matters: when a smaller brand creates disproportionate creative impact and gets it seen enough, penetration can move without promotions doing the job.

A **Cult Hit** case, built by fixing an emotionally distinctive point of view early and scaling repeatable exposure in the channels where new habits were being formed.

"Hot take; voice is more important than brand platform in modern marketing. eos presents a powerful case for this as they've dominated growth in their category by executing many (many) different campaigns that all still scream eos in powerful ways. eos absolutely knows what they stand for, and everything consistently FEELS like eos, but comes to life in slightly different ways. This ability to deliver consistency of brand within the flexibility of individual campaigns and programs is a blueprint for unlocking modern effectiveness."

JEFF MCCRORY, CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, MISCHIEF @ NO FIXED ADDRESS

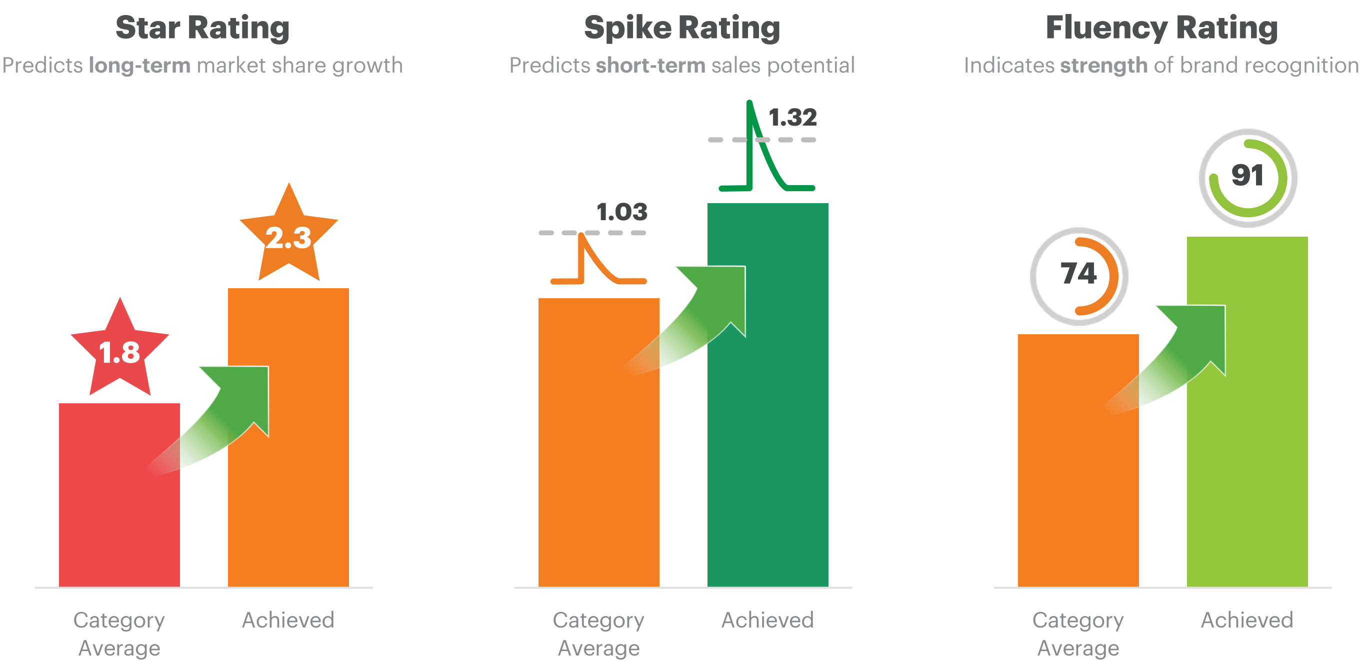
ENTER WITH A POINT OF VIEW THE CATEGORY WON'T SAY, THEN REPEAT IT QUICKLY IN THE CHANNELS WHERE HABITS ARE BEING FORMED AND RESEARCHED.

CeraVe faced increasing pressure in a rapidly commoditizing skincare category. The brand had built credibility through its dermatologist-developed positioning, but the market became crowded with celebrity-led brands and copycat claims that blurred differentiation. At the same time, skincare culture shifted toward social media and pop culture, where CeraVe's clinical tone risked being overlooked. The challenge was to stay distinctive and relevant without weakening scientific credibility.

CeraVe responded by using showmanship to make its existing truth harder to ignore. The campaign playfully subverted the category's obsession with celebrity founders while reinforcing a simple point: it is developed with dermatologists, not celebrities. The Super Bowl was used as a high reach launch moment to introduce the idea at scale.

Rather than explaining credentials directly, the work used entertainment to dramatize the message, increasing attention while keeping attribution clear. In System1 testing, the campaign outperformed skincare norms: **2.3 Star Rating vs 1.8**, **Spike 1.32 vs 1.03**, and **Fluency 91 vs 74**.

Visibility extended far beyond paid media. The idea traveled through earned channels, generating **32 billion impressions** in four weeks, including **10.9 billion earned social** and **20.8 billion global PR impressions**. The campaign delivered CeraVe's highest sales week on record, accelerated household penetration, and drove **2.4×** higher category engagement during the Super Bowl period. It was recognized with an **Effie** in Marketing Disruptors.



System1 Test Your Ad Star Rating.

CeraVe shows how ESOC can be built through a mix of paid ignition and earned spread. The Super Bowl delivered concentrated reach, but the real advantage came from the work traveling far beyond what the media budget alone would buy. That is the dividend mechanism: high creative quality creates attention and sharing; that extra distribution increases effective weight; and the combination protects distinctiveness in a crowded market without changing what the brand stands for.

A **Cult Hit** case, built by fixing a disruptive, on-brand creative device and scaling visibility through a reach moment and earned spread.

KEEP THE BRAND TRUTH UNCHANGED, THEN DRAMATIZE IT THROUGH A SINGLE CULTURALLY LEGIBLE STUNT THAT CAN TRAVEL BEYOND PAID.

"We looked at the tired celebrity skincare playbook and weaponized it against itself. By casting an actor with zero skincare credibility in the world's most preposterous brand conspiracy, we created a creator magnet that was impossible to ignore and irresistible to share. Every ridiculous Michael Cera moment became an invitation for creators to react, parody, and elaborate, making the truth about dermatological credibility even more powerful. We turned showmanship into strategy, and the internet transformed our brand message into the most viral marketing story of the year."

ANSLEY WILLIAMS, HEAD OF INFLUENCE, NORTH AMERICA AT OGILVY

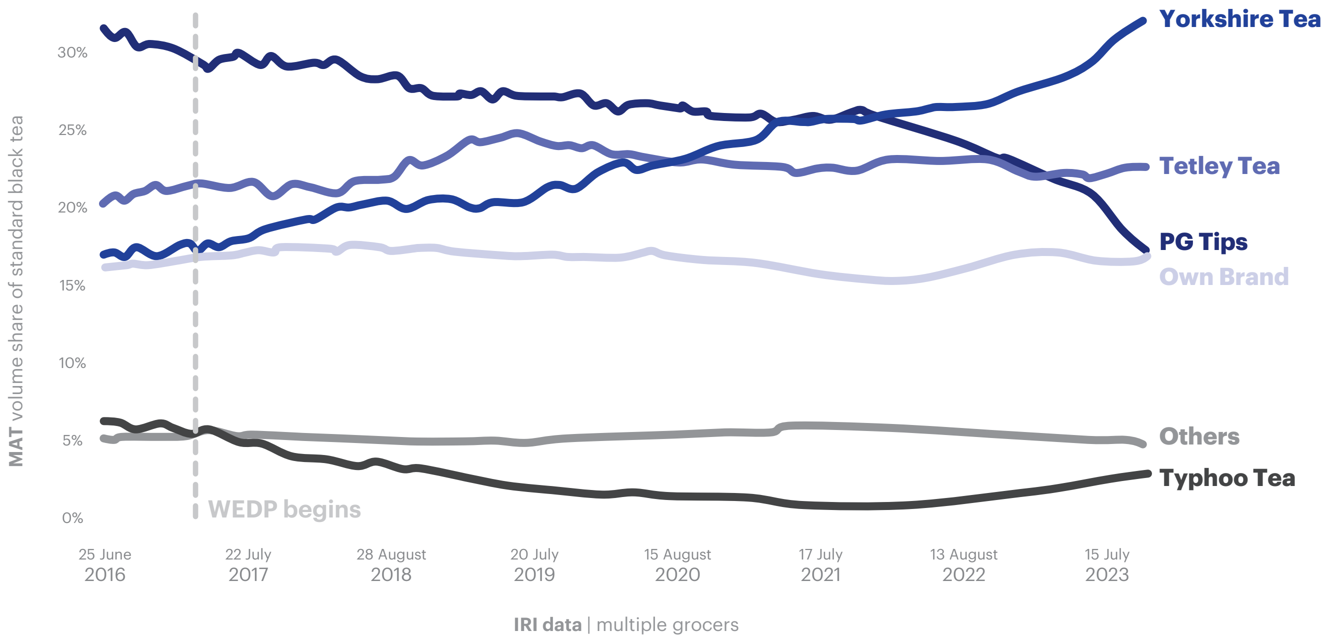
Yorkshire Tea operated in a declining category shaped by habit and inherited loyalty. As the third-largest player, growth required persuading entrenched buyers to switch, without relying on price promotions and while holding a premium position. In a market like this, short-term tactics have limited upside because the default choice is already set.

Yorkshire Tea chose consistency as the route to growth. Rather than rotating messages, it invested in a single enduring platform, **"Where everything's done proper,"** designed to signal quality through humor and recognizable brand behavior. The work returned to the same tone and worldview year after year, supported by sustained mass reach.

That repetition did practical work. It strengthened recognition and attribution and made Yorkshire Tea easier to identify in a category where many brands compete with similar codes. Over time, the platform became more distinctive, not because it changed, but because it became more familiar.

By treating creativity as a long-term asset rather than a series of campaigns, Yorkshire Tea built a sustained creative advantage in one of the most promotion-driven FMCG categories. This enabled the brand to remain mentally available and preferred without relying on discounts, even as competitors competed tactically.

Yorkshire Tea | Growth 2016 - 2023



Kantar IRI data - Multiple Grocers.

The commercial outcomes followed the brand-building pattern. Sustained advertising built penetration and share, ultimately making Yorkshire Tea the UK's number one tea brand by value while maintaining a price premium. The durability of the effects was recognized with a **Grand Effie**. System1 evidence supports the story, with Yorkshire Tea's advertising consistently scoring in the **4 to 5 Star** range, indicating strong long-term brand growth potential.

In a habit-led category, the dividend doesn't arrive through persuasion. It arrives through memory. Yorkshire Tea's consistency created a distinctive, easy-to-recall platform, and sustained reach ensured those cues became familiar enough to interrupt default choices. That's the ESOC link: long-term share gain comes when emotionally distinctive advertising is repeated and supported at sufficient scale, so the brand becomes the one people think of first, even in a category where "first" is usually inherited.

A **Growth Engine** case, built by fixing a distinctive long-running platform and scaling sustained broad reach long enough to drive switching over time.

"Right at the outset, we defined our creative formula. To show that Yorkshire Tea do literally everything proper we would hire famously talented, Yorkshire-born, nationally loved celebs to do mundane tasks around the factory. And we've stuck to that formula ever since. We've also stuck to the same media strategy, investing consistently every year, going on-air as often as possible, and putting the bulk of our budget in TV in order to reach the broadest audience. Along the way we've added more BVOD, YouTube and Social Video to keep up with changing media habits."

LUCKY GENERALS

COMMIT TO ONE PLATFORM LONG ENOUGH FOR THE TONE TO BECOME A CUE, THEN LET CONSISTENCY DO THE DIFFERENTIATION INSTEAD OF NEW MESSAGES.

SEE CREATIVE EXAMPLES AND SYSTEM1'S TEST YOUR AD RESULTS HERE

TESCO HOW FOOD LOVE STORIES TURNED EMOTIVE STORYTELLING INTO BRAND EQUITY

Tesco entered a period of recovery after losing food authority and trust following a prolonged crisis. Years of underinvestment and short-term marketing had weakened perceptions of food quality, leaving the brand squeezed between discounters and premium grocers. The task was not more visibility or sharper promotions. It was to change how people felt about Tesco food.

Tesco responded with long-term brand building centered on the emotional role of food in everyday life. Food Love Stories used human stories about cooking and care to rebuild trust and improve food quality perceptions, with the idea applied consistently over time.

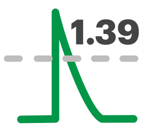
Creative execution prioritized emotional reconnection over product claims. System1 results show the work repeatedly elicited feelings such as family, comfort, and warmth, indicating engagement rather than indifference. Those associations supported the commercial objective: restoring confidence in Tesco food and strengthening brand equity.

Effectiveness came from pairing emotional strength with scale. Tesco sustained broad-reach investment so the work was widely experienced and allowed effects to build over time. As perceptions shifted, behavior followed.

The results reflected that approach. **Food Love Stories delivered £980m in revenue**, alongside gains in awareness, trust, distinctiveness, and differentiation. Food quality perceptions exceeded initial targets and continued to strengthen, while Tesco recorded its highest-ever levels of positive brand sentiment. The durability of the impact was recognized with a **Grand Effie**.

System1 Metrics

Star Rating:
Exceptional
Predicts **long-term** market share growth



Spike Rating:
Exceptional
Predicts **short-term** sales potential

Fluency Rating:
Strong
Indicates **strength** of brand recognition

Perception change at this scale requires more than a good film. It requires repeated emotional delivery, broad enough reach to reset memory structures, and enough time in market for those shifts to show up in behavior. That's the Creative Dividend logic and the ESOC logic in one: emotionally strong creative is the quality input, but sustained weight is what turns it into commercial recovery. Tesco didn't just say "we care about food," it made the feeling familiar.

A **Growth Engine** case, built by fixing a single emotional platform and scaling sustained broad reach long enough for trust and preference to compound into lasting commercial recovery.

"Food Love Stories is a modern blueprint for effective marketing. The best work is built upon an emotive and universal human insight, brought to life creatively across the whole paid, owned & earned media system, and then delivered with discipline via unwavering consistency over time and with the full backing from the business. Food Love Stories was much more than an advertising campaign, but an idea that permeated the whole of Tesco from product to point of sale to even colleague initiatives. Marketing at its very best and a journey that we are all incredibly proud to have played a part in."

JAMES PARNUM, MANAGING PARTNER & HEAD OF PLANNING, ESSENCEMEDIACOM

PICK ONE EMOTIONAL TERRITORY YOU CAN OWN, THEN KEEP RETURNING TO IT WITH MANY SMALL STORIES RATHER THAN REINVENTING THE IDEA.

SEE CREATIVE EXAMPLES AND SYSTEM1'S TEST YOUR AD RESULTS HERE

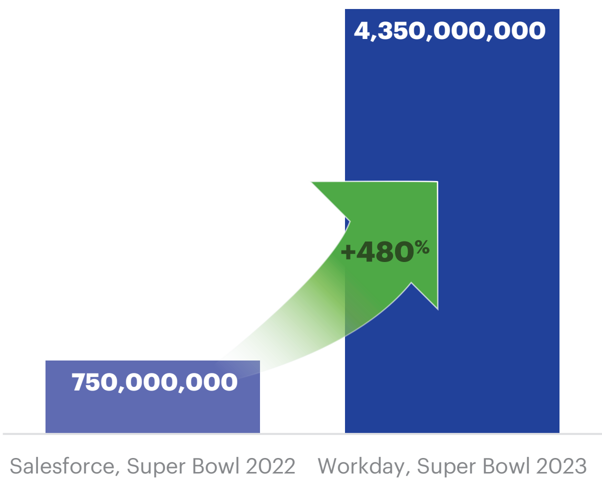
After years of success as an HR specialist, Workday's growth plateaued. The brand was well known, but narrowly perceived as an HR tool rather than a broader enterprise platform for finance and HR leaders. In a risk-averse B2B category, that limited consideration and contributed to five consecutive years of declining pipeline growth. Workday needed to move from niche credibility to broader fame.

Workday shifted from rational, product-led communication to fame-driven brand building. The strategy was to broaden relevance by introducing emotional storytelling into B2B and repositioning finance and HR leaders as the "rock stars of business." By celebrating an under-recognized audience and giving them cultural visibility, Workday aimed to build emotional salience at scale without trying to outspend category leaders.

The creative execution made that shift tangible. In System1 testing, the work achieved a **3.3 Star Rating** versus a B2B category average of **1.8**, signaling stronger long-term brand-building potential than typical B2B advertising. A Super Bowl launch provided immediate reach, putting the idea in front of a mass audience fast and creating rapid fame.

Workday then extended the idea beyond paid media. Broad-reach TV established the platform, while PR and creators amplified it. PR generated **4.35 billion earned impressions**, and Workday mobilized its **17,000 employees** with branded assets to spread the idea through professional networks.

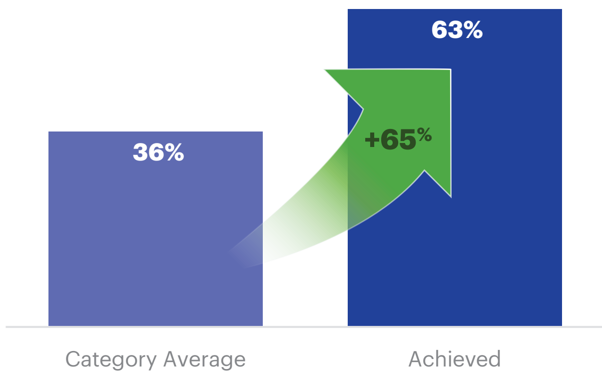
Rock Star Earned Media Impressions



Muckrack, 2023.

Consideration Among Finance / HR software decision-makers

Q1 2023



Workday Ad Exposure Test, March 2023.

Business impact followed. Workday reversed five years of declining pipeline growth, delivering **50% year-on-year growth** in Q1 and adding **more than $100m** in pipeline value in a single quarter. The work was recognized with a **Silver Effie**.

B2B is where ESOC is often the only way to grow, because most brands over-invest in explanation and under-invest in fame. Workday created a rare creative gap in a dull category, then used high-reach touchpoints plus earned and employee-led distribution to multiply exposure. That is exactly the dividend mechanism: when creative quality is high, it doesn't just improve response, it increases the effective weight of the plan, making a "smaller" budget behave like a bigger one.

A **Cult Hit** case, built by fixing a fame-driving platform and scaling reach through a Super Bowl launch plus earned and employee-led distribution.

"We had a sobering brand reality and a simple audience truth: Workday wasn't famous, and neither were its customers. High-quality creative that treated B2B like a cultural moment – not a category footnote – didn't just close a double-digit unaided awareness gap; it triggered significant pipeline growth against legacy giants SAP and Oracle, our two biggest competitors. Investing in fame moved Workday from side stage to center stage, proving that creative ambition directly compounds into business impact."

MADELINE GORE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, STRATEGY AT OGILVY

FIND ONE FAME-DRIVING METAPHOR THAT BROADENS WHAT YOU'RE FOR, THEN LAUNCH IT IN A HIGH-REACH MOMENT AND DESIGN IT TO BE AMPLIFIED THROUGH EARNED AND INTERNAL CHANNELS.

Nurofen was losing ground in a category it once led. Years of competing on speed and efficacy left the brand exposed as private label closed the functional gap at lower prices. What used to differentiate Nurofen had become table stakes. Sales declined, trust weakened, and value perceptions eroded, especially among women, its core audience. With price increases unavoidable during a cost-of-living crisis, Nurofen needed to defend its premium and rebuild leadership in an increasingly commoditized market.

The opportunity lay beyond functionality. Pain relief brands tend to focus on what the product does, not what pain feels like. Research showed a clear gap in the category: pain is personal, and for many women it is routinely dismissed. In a market optimized around "fast," empathy had become the missing variable. That insight led to **See My Pain**, a platform that repositioned Nurofen from a brand that treats pain quickly to one that understands it. The work brought the Gender Pain Gap into the open and made overlooked experiences visible, without abandoning scientific credibility. Importantly, it was built as a sustained platform rather than a one-off campaign, returning to the same emotional territory and message year after year.

Consistency and scale did the rest. The platform was supported through broad-reach media, PR, and experiential activity, giving the idea enough weight for trust and meaning to rebuild over time rather than resetting with each execution.

Nurofen | See My Pain

The commercial impact followed. After five years of decline, Nurofen returned to growth, delivering **£14m** in value sales growth and increasing sales by 15%, despite price rises and pressure from private label. Brand trust, relevance, and perceived value strengthened, particularly among women, while loyalty increased. Econometric analysis showed the work delivered a significantly higher return than Nurofen's previous speed-led communications. The campaign won a **Grand Effie**.

"In a category obsessed with speed we redefined leadership in pain relief, shifting from fast fixes to fighting bias. 'See My Pain' started with a simple truth: women's pain is dismissed. By mobilising everyone from healthcare professionals and researchers to retailers, Nurofen became a true ally to women, delivering cultural impact and commercial growth."

JOSS MAJOR, STRATEGY PARTNER, MCCANN LONDON

A **Growth Engine** case, built by fixing an empathy-led platform and scaling it consistently across years and channels to rebuild trust, protect the premium, and return the brand to growth.

CHOOSE ONE HUMAN TRUTH YOUR CATEGORY IGNORES, THEN KEEP RETURNING TO IT WITH ENOUGH REACH AND CONTINUITY FOR TRUST TO ACCUMULATE RATHER THAN RESET.

THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND

SOURCES AND THANKS

SOURCES & THANKS

Rather than a full bibliography, this page summarizes the core datasets and tools used, the major effectiveness publications this report builds on, and the people whose thinking is referenced or built on in these pages.

What we measured (the evidence in this report)

- Effie Insights' database: 1,265 award-winning campaign cases (US, Europe, UK & Ireland), spanning 2007–2023 (2017–2023 program years), used for reported business results, brand effects, and campaign context (incl. category and media information).
- System1 Test Your Ad Competitive Edge Database: large-scale consumer creative testing used to quantify creative response (emotion, distinctiveness, showmanship and branding/fluency measures) and to benchmark creative performance against category norms.

Key effectiveness work this report builds on / references

- Marketing in the Era of Accountability — Les Binet & Peter Field (IPA / WARC dataMINE series).
- The Long and the Short of It — Les Binet & Peter Field (IPA).
- Media in Focus / Marketing Effectiveness in the Digital Era — Les Binet & Peter Field (IPA).
- How Brands Grow — Byron Sharp and the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science.
- The Crisis in Creative Effectiveness — Peter Field (IPA).
- Lemon. — Orlando Wood (System1), published by the IPA.
- Look Out — Orlando Wood (System1), published by the IPA.
- The Extraordinary Cost of Dull — Peter Field, Adam Morgan (eatbigfish) and Jon Evans (System1), with the IPA/System1/eatbigfish.
- The Long and the Short (form) of It — System1 & TikTok (Andrew Tindall, Josh Fruttiger; TikTok team incl. Esteban Ribero).
- JWT Planning Guide (1974) — Stephen King (JWT), which inspired parts of the practical planning guidance in the conclusion.

With thanks to the people named in the book, who were an inspiration to us, or whose previous research was considered as part of our process.
Les Binet; Peter Field; Jon Evans; Byron Sharp; Jenni Romaniuk; John Philip Jones; Orlando Wood; Alan Hedges; Mark Ritson; Laurence Green; Paul Dyson; Paul Feldwick; Iain McGilchrist; Adam Morgan; John Kearon; Nick Williamson; Sarah Carter; Callum Smith; and James Hurman. And colleagues at Effie, System1, and partner agencies whose work and thinking helped shape this report.

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This research and book are the output of a partnership between Effie and System1. Combining their datasets across markets and categories, and sharing the findings, to help lead, inspire, and champion the practice and practitioners of marketing effectiveness globally.

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