



**KANTAR**

**BRAND STRATEGY**  
**UNPACKED**

Build brand value through consistent,  
meaningful difference



Lindsay Gorton-Lee

Brand Strategy  
Consultant



Tom Lees

Brand Strategy  
Consultant



Hari BlanchBennett

Creative Strategy  
Director



Dom Boyd

Managing Director  
UK Insights  
and Marketing  
Effectiveness Practice



Winnie Cheng

Senior Commercial  
Strategy Director



Paul Cowper

Senior Partner



Anusha Harri

Client Director  
Media Insights



Alex Dewdney

Director



Myles George

Director, Global  
Brand Strategy



Carol Horsley

Senior Director,  
Global Brand  
Strategy



Rhys James

Senior Client Director



Adele Jolliffe

Head of Brand  
Equity Excellence



Mary Kyriakidi

Global Thought  
Leader



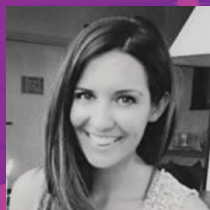
Peter Aitken

Head of Customer  
Strategy



Lauren McDermott

Principal Consultant



Jade McMillan-Hainey

Director of  
Commercial Strategy



Dr Nicki Morley

Head of Behavioural  
Science and  
Innovation Expertise



Jane Ostler

EVP, Global Thought  
Leadership



Graham Staplehurst

Director, Kantar  
BrandZ Global



Ellie Thorpe

Director, Kantar  
BrandZ



Lynne Deason

Head of Creative  
Excellence



# INTRODUCTION

**Over the past decade, the power of marketing has grown.**

There is now undeniable evidence that great strategies have the potential to influence not just sales, but business value and resilience. This has transformed the definition of brand strategy, moving it from a nebulous, misunderstood concept into a core element of business success.

Those that can effectively harness their brand strategy now have the ability to influence where they previously didn't have authority. Gaining the attention of all elements of the business by blending a powerful mix of data and language that gets the board's attention, breaks

down internal silos and unites the business under common goals.

**The following pages have been designed as a celebration of brand strategy.**

We've leveraged Kantar's unique position across all elements of the strategic process to bring you a breadth of data-backed viewpoints from a selection of our global experts. Unpacking our clear perspective on the importance and beauty within brand strategy, showcasing the strategic successes of some brands we've worked with as well as those we've observed grow through Kantar's BrandZ database.

Each viewpoint has been organised to reflect our structured approach to brand strategy. Starting first with the importance of data-backed diagnosis and market understanding to uncover present and future opportunities, before stepping into how brands can prioritise and build meaningful difference with a consistency that embraces change to deliver long term brand value growth.

Whether you're reading this from front to back or dipping into a few areas of interest we hope it leaves you inspired and equipped to face your next challenge.

Thanks,  
**Tom Lees**  
Brand Strategy Consultant

*“Brands take time and effort to build. So, much like an explorer setting off on an expedition, the best brand custodians go fully equipped for the journey. Using market and deep human understanding to create a map of the landscape, plotting a desired destination through careful choices on who to target and where to position your brand and finally, the skilled use of a reliable compass to guide and course correct along the way. The data, the insights and the choices that are made on a brand journey will shape the future of your brand.”*

CAROL HORSLEY, SENIOR DIRECTOR  
GLOBAL BRAND STRATEGY, KANTAR





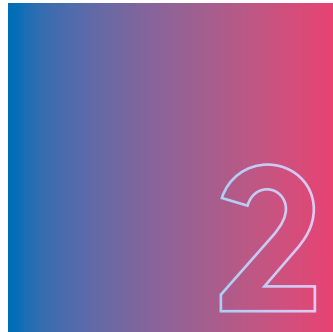
# CONTENTS



## Uncover

**Uncover your start point and opportunities to drive relevance.**

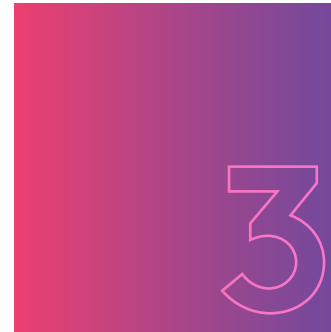
Insight is critical to any brand strategy. Learn why the initial stages should include both market understanding and data-backed diagnosis of your brand's current equity and pricing power.



## Prioritise

**Prioritise where to focus and how to achieve meaningful difference.**

Brand Strategy is about making choices. Learn how to pull apart choices on where to focus vs. how to drive your difference forward to win your way.



## Build

**Build meaningful difference through every brand touchpoint.**

Building strong difference requires consistency. Learn how to master the art of evolving yet remaining the same, delivering your difference, meaningfully, across all touchpoints and innovations.

*"It's the right insights that give your strategy wings and fuel growth. Tactics come last, after strategy."*

**MARY KYRIAKIDI,**  
GLOBAL THOUGHT LEADER

**Click here** for Mary's article.

# 1

## Uncover your start point and opportunities to drive relevance

Brand Strategy is about working out how to get from A to B. At the start of any journey, you need a map. Great maps help you understand the terrain, uncover new opportunities, find the best routes, and avoid the traffic jams. And if that journey is a competitive one, as brand journeys tend to be, you also need to make sure you're clear on the relative strengths of your vehicle. Diagnosis of your brand's current equity and pricing power should be a corner stone of this groundwork.

# Uncover

Key takeaways:

**1** Always start your brand strategy with diagnosis of your equity and pricing power



**2** Build your strategy on human truths, leveraging real data at scale or in depth



**3** Hardwire your brand's connection to culture in order to lead and define future trends



# BRAND STRATEGY SHOULD START WITH BRAND DIAGNOSIS

Brand Strategy is about working out how to get from A to B. To do this, you need to be clear on both your start point and your destination.

The challenge is brand start points aren't always immediately evident! Brands exist intangibly in people's heads and hearts, a compilation of a lifetime of encounters that live in our memories.

To measure your start point you need to determine people's predisposition toward your brand. How do people feel about your brand? What is your equity in the market? What is the equity of the other players? Understanding this type of status quo requires astute diagnosis.

Kantar has found that brands that predispose people to buy more and pay more tend to have three qualities:

**1** They are relevant and resonate positively with people. More people have affinity towards them and say that they meet their needs.

**They are meaningful.**

**2** They stand apart from other brands. They have a competitive edge that makes them more unique or more dynamic.

**They are different.**

**3** They come to mind more quickly and easily than the competition, across a broad range of category applications.


**They are salient.**

These three concepts – meaningful, different, and salient – are validated through Kantar BrandZ and externally authenticated by the Marketing Accountability Standards Board (MASB).

Evidence from the Kantar BrandZ database, that covers almost 20,000 brands in over 500 categories across more than 50 markets, shows that meaningful difference is the key to value creation. By modelling BrandZ brand valuations alongside brand equity data, we know that brands that are strongly meaningful, different, and salient achieve five times the commercial brand value growth vs. brands who aren't.

It is imperative to uncover the start point for your brand, ideally using these metrics, before you strategise to achieve your goal. Mapping brands relative to one another illuminates competitive perspective and provides clear guidance on where to focus to drive brand value growth. Our fashion case study illustrates this in action.

**Lindsay Gorton-Lee,**  
Brand Strategy Consultant



*"Marketers who skip brand research are doomed to fail"*

**MARK RITSON, MARKETING WEEK**

[Click here](#) for Mark's article.

# PRICING POWER

Understanding your start point also provides insight into your pricing power

Last year, we found something significant, that is especially important for brands in price sensitive markets. We found that what matters if you're trying to get people to pay more is quite different to what matters if you're trying to get people to buy more.

How meaningful and salient a brand is, explains 80% of

what makes someone want to buy it. This is because, being meaningful and salient helps a brand come to mind more easily; become more mentally available.

**However, how meaningful, and different a brand is, explains 94% of how much someone is willing to pay for it.**

Difference here is defined as standing out as unique and leading the way. Meaningful difference is what drives perceptions of being worth paying more for. It is integral to pricing power because it helps make brands less substitutable and suggests there's something to lose by choosing an alternative.

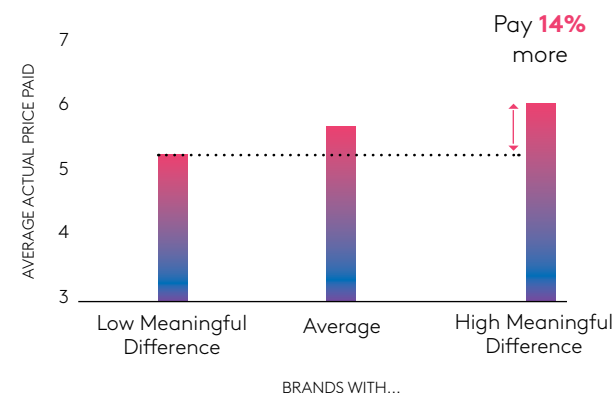
It's Difference that makes the difference.

**Adele Jolliffe**, Head of Brand Equity Excellence

*"There are no examples whatsoever, in our nearly 2000 case studies, of people who have managed to persuade the public to pay more for things by rational argument... The key to pricing power is to get people to feel something about your brand. To disengage the rational brain. To make people just want the thing, at any price."*

LES BINET, AT KANTAR IGNITE, MARCH 2023

## IS YOUR BRAND WORTH IT? MEANINGFULLY DIFFERENT ?



Source: Kantar New Zealand R&D study, merged equity and Flybuys behavioral data for 810 consumers



## Understand the implications of your start point

### Market leaders need evolution not revolution

The market leading brands in the top-right box of our chart are strong performers. Their aim will be to keep on winning, to find more room for growth, to guard against competitive pressure, to protect margins. In a rapidly evolving market context, this means there is a constant need to adjust to stay in the lead. The challenge for these brands is resolving how to evolve, while protecting and retaining that meaningful difference that has driven their success in the first place.

### Driving relevance requires human centric understanding

Brands in the top-left quadrant have strong difference, but they are lagging on meaning. They are not meeting needs or driving affinity as strongly as others. They lack brand relevance. Resolving this might require some human centric understanding to unlock what people want, need, and expect so they can adapt empathetically to

culture and evolve in a way that drives relevance and aligns with the difference these brands already have.

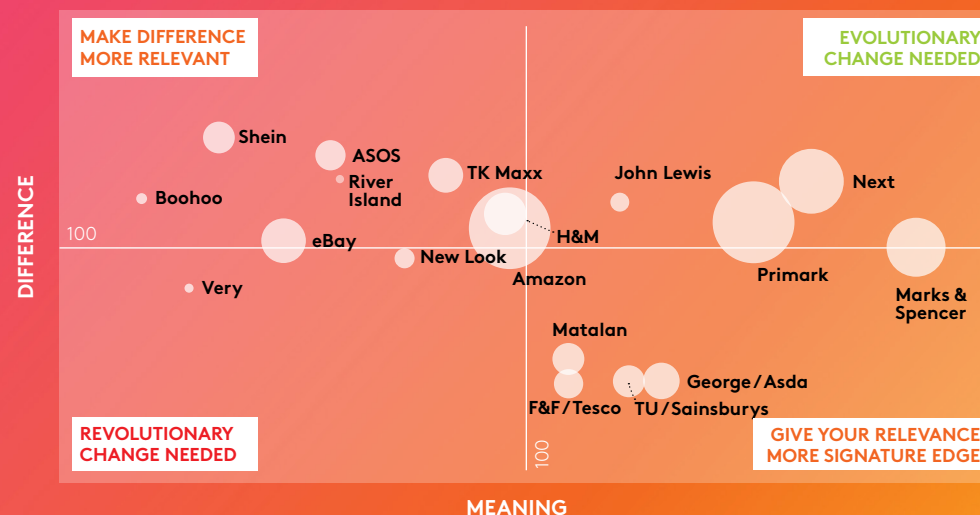
### Meaning without brand centric difference risks being generic

Bottom-right brands are meaningful but have low difference. They don't stand apart from other brands; or have a signature edge that makes them more unique or more dynamic. How can they plot a pathway to a stronger point of difference? Innovation is one way to build difference creating functional superiority or leading the way. Another is building strong brand clarity through brand centric consistency and distinctiveness.

### Building predisposition is key to volume, value, and margin creation

Bottom-left brands currently have both low difference and meaning. Revolution may be required to create meaningful difference to unlock growth and drive resilience.

Category Diagnosis – UK Fashion 2023



Bubbles sized by Salience value

Source: Kantar BrandDynamics, daily data, 27th July 2023

# BUILD YOUR STRATEGY ON HUMAN TRUTH RATHER THAN ASSUMPTION

Finding meaning and staying meaningful means walking a constant treadmill in today's fast-paced environment. Whether you are already perceived as meaningful or whether this is something you are working towards, periodically taking time to stop and assess what people want, is an important discipline to ensuring that your strategy is built on truth not assumptions.

Uncovering people's needs and finding the gaps in market delivery is critical for growth planning. What people want and aspire to is ever evolving, strongly influenced by trends and culture, so it's important to keep a finger on the pulse and an eye on the future. Context also plays a big role in shaping these needs. What I want this morning may be different to what I need this afternoon, influenced by when, where, why

and who I am with – as such, context is a critical lens when collecting these human truths.

The mechanics of marketing – buying media, developing communication etc. – often mean that it is helpful to segment markets into discrete, identifiable audiences with homogeneous characteristics to target. Another benefit of understanding different groups of people is that their holistic attitudes and behaviours are often more enduring than their many and varied category needs.

Complementing contextualised needs understanding with audience understanding work can be a useful way to uncover tensions and the opportunities within a market.

**Lindsay Gorton-Lee**  
Brand Strategy Consultant

***"These are volatile times, and volatility makes marketing more important than ever, because the necessity to understand what the customer really wants becomes even more pronounced."***

**MARK EVANS, DIRECT LINE.**  
IGNITE GROWTH REPORT FROM THE MARKETING SOCIETY

**Click here** to read the report.



# THE ART OF CONNECTING TO CULTURE

Consumers don't exist in isolation, they are shaped by the world around them. Culture informs what people value and how they express themselves, it shapes the decisions people make, without them necessarily being aware of it. As phrased by Dr. Marcus Collins in his new book *For The Culture*, 'culture is a cheat code, the most powerful vehicle for influencing consumer behaviour.'

Successfully connecting to culture can propel a brand from one of the herd, to leader of the pack. But culture is vast and complex, and navigating what is most relevant and meaningful to consumers is a challenge for brands, especially in an era of accelerated trend cycles. Sometimes, in pursuit of capturing the zeitgeist, brands make choices that aren't aligned with their own values or heritage, which can erode

their brand equity and be perceived as inauthentic.

**One brand doing it beautifully, is luxury fashion house Burberry. Following the appointment of Chief Creative Officer Daniel Lee, Burberry is re-establishing itself as an iconic brand, by rooting itself in its British heritage. From updating the typography and logo to draw on the house's archival designs, to opening 'greasy spoon' pop-up Normans, the brand is honouring its history while also playing with the notion of Britishness.**

The result is a celebration of the diversity of modern British culture, enabling Burberry to seamlessly feature both Mary Berry and the cast of *Top Boy* as faces of the brand.

Cultural Intelligence helps us make sense of the shifting cultural Landscape. Semiotic analysis can be used to identify emergent expressions of needs and values that your brand can learn from and employ, to better communicate to your audiences. Strategic thinking helps us shape the 'so what' for your brand, ensuring authenticity and relevance that can drive differentiation that is also meaningful.

**Hari BlanchBennett,**  
Creative Strategy Director



# BIG DATA UNCOVERS HUMAN TRUTHS WITH BOTH BOUNDLESS SCALE X GRANULAR DETAIL

Every day, all over the world, people generate a tremendous amount of digital data – when they’re googling to find a product to purchase or an answer to a question, when they post on social media, or when they leave a review of a product they’ve bought.

This data is incredibly valuable – it’s real-time, it’s unprompted – and importantly, it’s consumer-generated. We can get both boundless scale, as well as granular detail, with near population level numbers of consumers creating billions of data points over the years. Analysing this data over time allows us to discover trends and understand the changing needs, interests, concerns, and sentiment of people across the world. In this way, digital analytics enables us to help brands uncover human truths rather than make assumptions.

AI and Machine Learning provide us with the ability to do this at scale,

complemented by human intelligence to hypothesise, to apply context of the brand or category we’re dealing with, to prioritise the business opportunities, and to incorporate this into data-driven strategies.

When done successfully, this provides brands with robust, data-driven decision making. Combining digital insights with other primary research methods, like qualitative insights, can provide an even more holistic view, bringing things to life and truly helping brands understand ‘why’ consumers are acting and doing the things they do.

**Winnie Cheng,**  
Senior Commercial Strategy Director,  
Digital Analytics

**Lauren McDermott,**  
Principal Consultant,  
Digital Analytics

# ‘WHOLE PERSON THINKING’ IS COMPLEMENTARY TO BIG DATA

If the world of consumer digital data offers a wealth of insight at scale, then qualitative insight is the tool which brings meaning and understanding of people’s experience through a holistic and more culturally relevant lens to marketers and their brands.

The role qualitative research plays is invaluable. It is perhaps the only data source that allows a true 360-degree view of people’s real life. It allows marketers to immerse themselves more deeply in their customers’ worlds unpacking the meaning of culture, social life, and context. At Kantar we think of this as of ‘whole person’ thinking which complements insights from ‘big data’.

At the Cannes Lions 2023, an example shared was when **Google** found itself struggling to communicate what its browser did and why consumers should use it over rivals (at the time Internet Explorer and Netscape).

The ‘Ah ha’ moment came from a piece of qualitative research that revealed the consumer reaction, “Oh my god, it’s just so fast!”. This went on to inform Google’s key brand messaging. There is more to this story than meets the eye. The functionality of Google’s speed can, of course, be attributed to its uncluttered page and its algorithm delivering more relevant search results. However, the fact that qualitative research revealed not only that ‘fast’ was salient in the minds of users, but also why ‘fast’ was salient, enabled Google to shape the way they developed and communicated this meaningful difference.

Coming from Google, synonymous with big data and the second most valuable brand in world ([Kantar BrandZ Most Valuable Global Brands 2023](#)), should make us all pause for thought as to the opportunities that exist with great application of qualitative insight.

**Rhys James,**  
Senior Client Director, Qualitative

*“Qual is maybe even more important today than it was before.”*

**YONCA DERVISOGLU, GOOGLE VICE-PRESIDENT OF MARKETING FOR EMEA AT THE CANNES LIONS 2023**

**Click here** to read the full article.



## From digital analytics to consumer connection: making organic search work harder for Philips

**In 2017, Philips spotted an opportunity to explore whether they could make organic search work harder for their growing DTC business.**

They partnered with Kantar's Digital Content team to explore how to connect with consumers through increased visibility in organic search. By utilising search engine data and understanding key target audiences, Philips successfully implemented a content strategy that would have cost 37 times more through paid media.

Consumers are constantly looking for inspiration and help online, leaving a trail of digital data behind them as they do so. Analysing digital search data to tap into the needs and interests that consumers express online, helps create content that puts consumers' needs first. It can also enhance your understanding of consumers' online purchase journeys, helping to inform your communication strategy for each stage – upper, mid and low funnel.

This can enable you to reach online consumers before others do – before they even consider buying a product.

Search data provides valuable insights into users' authentic and immediate needs, addressing personal insecurities, health concerns, and other topics people may be uncomfortable discussing openly.

This data is unbiased compared to traditional survey methods and helps identify popular topics, sentiment, and user concerns at scale and across markets. This data was used to uncover Philip's audiences, their needs and concerns, and then to prioritise the different business opportunities.



*"We saw big opportunities to interrupt journeys much earlier on, in the upper funnel, engaging with our potential customers before they'd even considered the need for a product."*

SERGEY LESNIKOV, PHILIPS

**To engage and meet the needs of their audience,** Philips and Kantar built a content strategy based on these insights. We conducted a successful pilot on the Philips US website, resulting in a 900% increase in traffic from organic search. This strategy was then expanded to 31 countries, with the production of over 1,400 articles covering various topics such as moustaches and

bottle feeding. As a result, Philips' websites have attracted over 13 million users seeking inspiration and advice since the programme's inception.

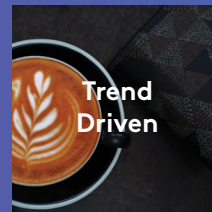
Digital data can provide a stable foundation for your creative strategy, ensuring the creative can be efficient and relevant, and ultimately deliver conversion and ROI.

## Uncovering human truths in the meat free category

### Unpacking Meat Free Audiences

We segmented the meat free shoppers to understand WHO brands can target in this category and how they might be able to resonate with different audience groups. Many of these groups were expected e.g, those driven by their progressive

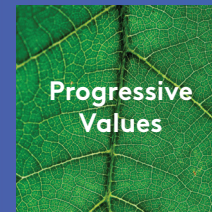
values or good intentions. However, one shopper group might not have been expected – the Meat Mainstay group. These people crave ‘real meat’ experiences yet they were the 2nd biggest shopper group we identified. They are important and might have been assumed not to exist!



Trend Driven

26%

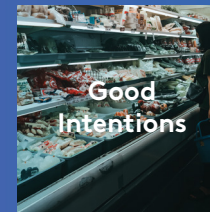
Brands and keeping up with the latest trends are important to these typically younger consumers



Progressive Values

17%

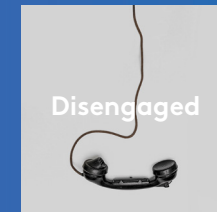
Making choices based on their moral compasses, supporting brands doing good in the world



Good Intentions

16%

These busy consumers are torn between their own values and supporting those around them



Disengaged

19%

Lack knowledge and confidence in purchasing and cooking meat free products



Meat Mainstay

21%

Sceptical as to whether meat free products can deliver on their expectations for both enjoyment and health



21%

### Healthy

Reassurance on ingredients and health benefits but still convenient and appealing



16%

### Convenient

Easy to store, easy to eat and easy to clean up afterwards



14%

### Satisfying

Fills me up, enjoyable to eat, suitable for a range of occasions



14%

### Meat-like

Authentic meat experience. Like meat in every possible way, premium quality and versatile



13%

### Sustainable

Socially responsible. Sustainably sourced, with full disclosure on the packaging yet still an appealing meal alternative



12%

### Pragmatic

A good solution: nutritious, practical and enjoyable



9%

### Familiar

Tried and trusted favourites reliable and beneficial

### Unpacking consumer needs

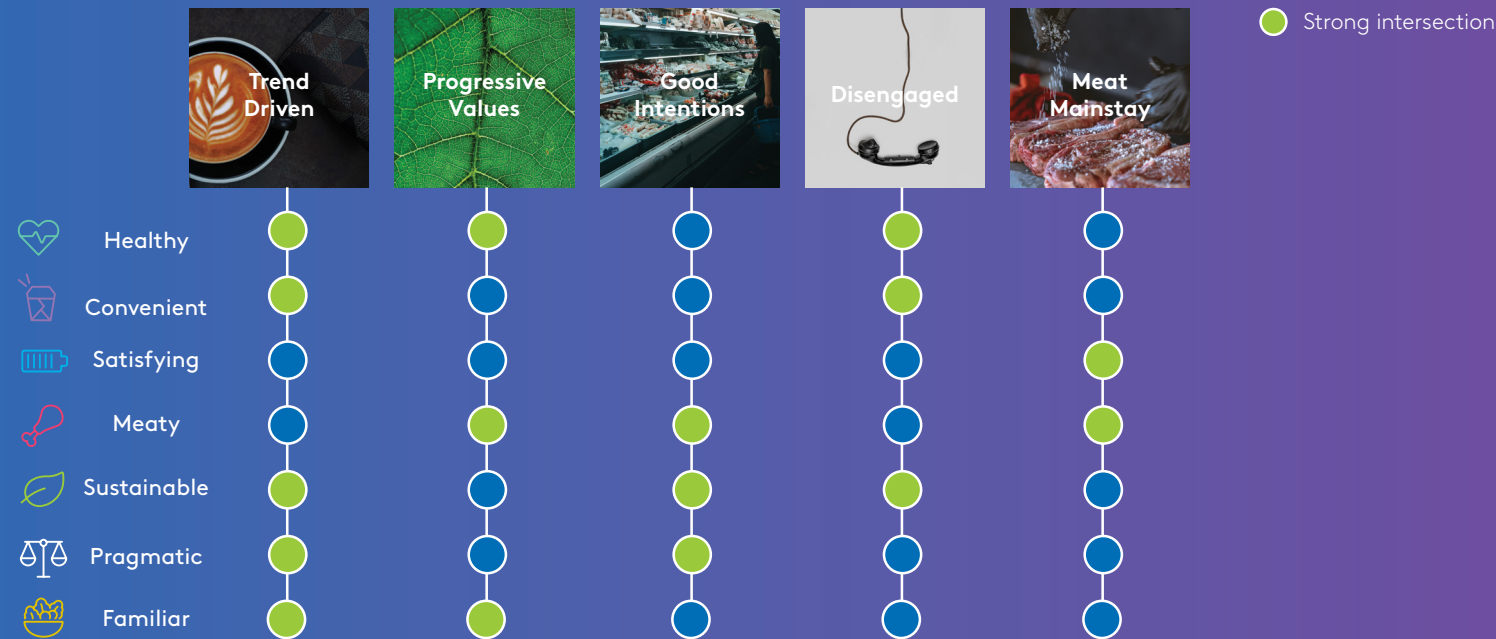
We also segmented consumer needs to determine WHAT people want on the occasions in which they eat meat free. Over and above the core needs for taste and value that are always present, we found seven needs benefit bundles that illustrate what people want from the meat free category.

Health and convenience emerged as much more important than the need for sustainable options. It is so important to unpack consumer needs like this to avoid assumptions driving strategy.

# Uncovering human truths in the meat free category

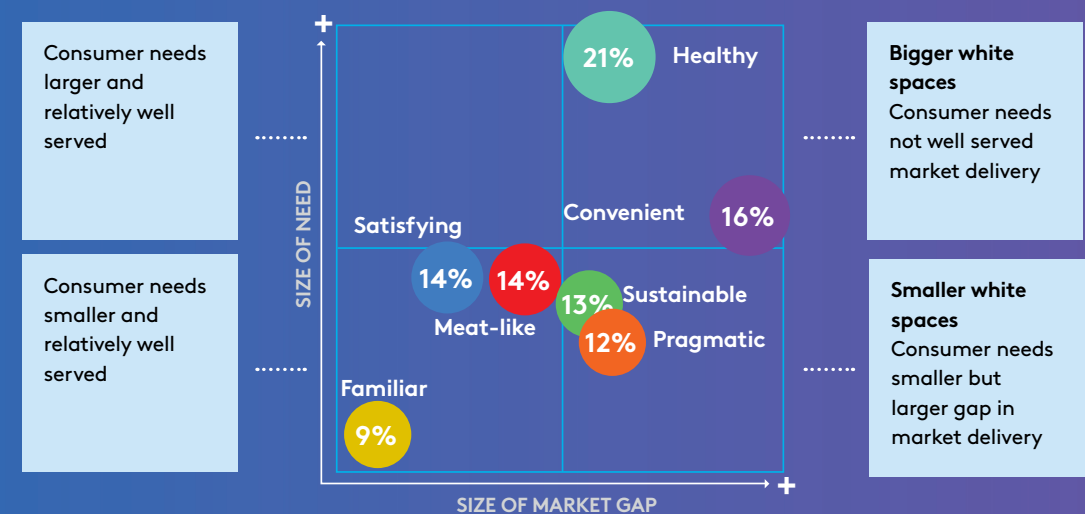
## Different audiences had different priority choice driver / needs

Looking at the different priorities of the different audience groups provides further insight into these groups helping brands determine where to focus.



## Unpacking the priority opportunities

Mapping how well brands and products are delivering to these consumer needs vs. their incidence enables prioritisation.





# 2

## Prioritise where to focus and how to achieve meaningful difference

Brand Strategy is about making choices. Deciding which route to take to achieve competitive advantage is key. There is no need to get tangled up in these choices. We explore routes to finding growth and creating difference. We discuss how to pull choices apart, separating the art of targeting and deciding where to focus from decisions on how to win through brand positioning and purpose.

# Prioritise

Key takeaways:

**1** Separate decisions on targeting from decisions on positioning



**2** Ensure you know how to maximise your portfolio reach and synergy



**3** Design for difference, through leadership, functional difference, distinctive assets and by unlocking the of power emotive clarity

# BRAND STRATEGY IS ABOUT MAKING CHOICES

There is always a need to be choiceful about which opportunities to go after. This is about deciding where to focus. Choosing the opportunities that represent the greatest potential for your brand. Choosing what to do; and what not to do.

Mark Ritson talks about the 'Holy Grail of marketing: segmentation, targeting and positioning'.

Segmentation is an obvious way, but not the only way, to uncover the opportunities in a market. Whatever your route to market understanding and brand diagnosis, the next steps should be about making choices about priorities. Targeting is about deciding

on your focus. There may be decisions about who to target or where to play – which needs or pockets of demand is your brand fulfilling. Whatever your school of thought, no brand will have unlimited resources, so it is helpful and efficient to be clear on where to focus to create advantage. These decisions about where to focus effort and investment will need to be revisited every few years to ensure your brand stays relevant and leads the way.

Choosing where to focus should be distinct from your decisions on how your brand is positioned or what your brand stands for. Your positioning should be unique, consistent, and recognisable

no matter who you are targeting or where you are currently focusing to drive demand. Your positioning is what you want to happen in people's minds when they think about your brand.

**Positioning decisions should be for the long term, directed by a dynamic approach to targeting that is revisited every few years to ensure your brand remains aligned to your customer.**

**Lindsay Gorton-Lee,**  
Brand Strategy Consultant

*"The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do."*

**MICHAEL E. PORTER,**  
COMPETITIVE STRATEGY



# LEVERAGE YOUR FULL PORTFOLIO TO MEANINGFULLY EXTEND CATEGORY CONFINES

All brands want to grow, but lots of them don't. We regularly come across brands that are inhibiting their own performance. These brands tend to have three factors working against them:

**1 They make it hard work** for people by not being mentally or physically available.

**2 They apply assumptions to their strategies** that fail to consider or fulfil people's needs

**3 They are easily replaceable**, failing to have an edge that cuts through in the moment of choice and makes them easy to be swapped.

To protect against this, brands need to be human-centric. This means keeping a finger on the pulse of changing demand and culture. Failure to put people at the centre of brand evolution and revolution means a misrepresented view of what demand really exists. A balance of human-centricity with business and commercial reality is required.

Growth can be thought of at a brand level, but there is often also a business or portfolio level to consider. For a business' total portfolio to grow, each brand must have a clear focused role within that portfolio to ensure they capitalise on the moments that matter. We have distilled a few rules of thumb to do this successfully:

**Uncover the total demand landscape.** Extend beyond the confines of your category to reflect your full competitive context. Don't kid yourself people want what the category offers. Often the category is an enabler for something else. Perfume isn't so you smell nice, it's so you feel good. Airlines aren't luxury experiences, they're a means to an end (although experience obviously matters.)

**Uncover the volume and value opportunities** that different areas of the landscape represent. Some brands are great volume drivers, others are strong profit contributors. A healthy portfolio should consider the right balance of volume and value.

**Design brand strategy to fit portfolio roles.** If a brand's job is to drive penetration-led growth, then it needs to maximise its footprint and tap into more than one area of demand. If a brand's role is to drive margin with a focus on value, then its job is to single-mindedly drive associations and appeal to a specific demand opportunity.



**Extend portfolio reach.** To reduce risk of cannibalisation, make sure you don't compete with yourself in an unhelpful way. Define clear roles for your brands, both commercially and in terms of their unique points of difference. Make them hard to substitute. Unavailability should trigger a tiny wave of distress for people. This is not just about being good at what you do, it's about having that little magic or edge – or meaningful difference – that lifts you above other brands and vitally your category.

**You won't have infinite resources.** Prioritise opportunities based on commercial attractiveness and future growth.

Brand growth isn't a task to be taken in isolation. It requires collaboration, prioritisation, and commitment. Ensure that your brands fit people's needs, are easy to choose and hard to substitute. Take an extended view of the opportunities and balance commercial portfolio roles with brand difference. Making focused decisions on where to play frees up time and resource to apply to how to win.

**Paul Cowper**, Senior Partner,  
Kantar Consulting

**Jade McMillan-Hainey**,  
Director of Commercial  
Strategy, Kantar Consulting



# DIFFERENCE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

To analyse the contribution of brand equity on share price growth, Oxford University's Saïd Business School built a sophisticated model based on financial results from 872 brands between 2006-2022 across multiple categories, to understand the contribution of Kantar BrandZ's equity measures to share price outperformance.

The model including brand equity variables had over 99% accuracy, a major advance compared with models using just financial data.

This work showed three things:

**1** **Difference is the No. 1 brand factor** on share outperformance (Corporate Responsibility was third)

**2** **Difference accounts for 35%** of brand impact on outperformance, salience was just 0.6%

**3** **The importance of difference** is increasing over time and salience is decreasing

This evidence exposes as false the assertion that difference doesn't exist between brands or matter much. Consumers do perceive it, and it is the factor that matters most in driving share price outperformance.

**Dom Boyd**, Managing Director UK Insights and Marketing Effectiveness Practice

*"Difference is in the DNA of brands that grow."*

**DOM BOYD**, MANAGING DIRECTOR UK INSIGHTS AND MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS PRACTICE, UK

[Click here](#) for Dom's article.

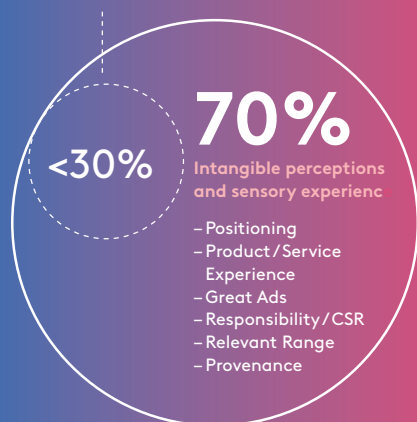


## The DNA of difference: distinctive assets are not enough

Factor analysis on the levers of difference highlights how it's created by the sum of tangible and intangible factors which connect to forge brand memories. Distinctive brand assets (colours, fonts, slogans, characters, etc.) certainly play a role, accounting for 30% of difference. But the vast majority – over 70% of difference – is made from other intangible factors including positioning, product experience, service design, advertising associations, range relevance and responsibility.

**Dom Boyd**, Managing Director UK Insights and Marketing Effectiveness Practice, UK

**Distinctive look and feel**  
Logos, slogans, characters,  
colours, fonts etc.



# INFUSING BRANDS WITH A SENSE OF DIFFERENCE

Difference might seem like a tall order for brands in our connected age, in which good ideas can spread (and spawn imitators) at warp speed. But in fact, to be rated as Different, a brand doesn't have to be absolutely unique in every way.

What the data does show is that for growing businesses, there does have to be something in people's memory separating this brand from that brand – and brands that fail to articulate these distinctions risk falling behind.

### Difference is important – but how do brands build it?

Recently, an investigation by Kantar Analytics Practice looked at 11,000 brand cases to uncover insights about brand growth. And what Kantar found was that there are many ways brands can drive Difference.

In particular, brand structures analysis identified four leading strategies:

**Category Leadership:** Setting the trends and challenging the status quo

**Distinctiveness:** A highly distinctive look and feel and a suite of assets to reinforce this

**Emotive clarity:** Building clear and strong emotional connections with consumers

**Functional benefits:** Superior qualities that can help to set them apart from others

Characteristics that contribute to a sense of Difference can be intrinsic: baked into the design, formulation, and intent of the brand. But they can also be extrinsic, drawing on associations borrowed from the outside world and consumers' social context.

Difference is one of the biggest challenges facing marketers

today. It's about more than simply being distinctive to aid your physical availability. Instead, brand marketing must build and consistently activate the many 'differences' that bring a brand to mind more easily. Harnessing the inter-relatability of your brands intrinsic and extrinsic characteristic to own a point of difference in the audiences' minds.

Over the longer term, brands must work to refresh and reinforce those aspects of Difference that support higher margins in their categories. That's because Difference is, in addition to its other virtues, a major driver of Pricing Power.

**Graham Staplehurst**,  
Director, Thought Leadership,  
Kantar BrandZ

**Ellie Thorpe**, Director, Kantar BrandZ

# Difference in action

some real-world examples of the ways you can create difference

## CASE STUDY

### Category leadership

**TikTok** is the media and entertainment brand in our global ranking that is best known for 'shaking things up' and really leading the way with its creativity, superior algorithm, and association with 'viral' trends.

**TIKTOK \$44,349M #44**

Global strengths

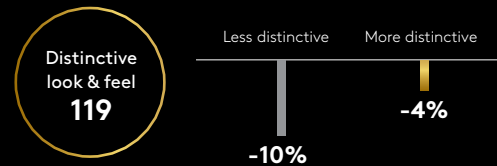


### Distinctiveness

**Louis Vuitton** has some of the most distinctive assets in the world, and successfully leverages these 'brand icons' across its many ranges and partnerships (and also within its emerging forays into spaces like the metaverse).

**LOUIS VUITTON \$124,822M #8**

Luxury brands Average change in Brand Value



### Functional benefits

**Doritos** is particularly known for its superior flavour, standing out from other snacking brands in this regard. At the same time, Doritos also has strong distinctive assets, like its triangle shape – demonstrating that brands can simultaneously leverage multiple aspects to build their Difference.

**DORITOS \$5,376M #19\***

Food & Beverage brands Average change in Brand Value

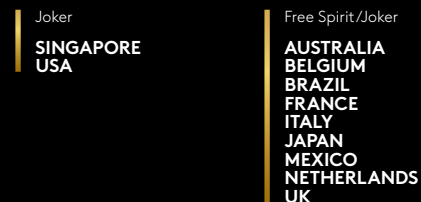


### Emotive clarity

Brands that clearly embody one or two distinct, emotionally-driven personality types tend to do better than brands that straddle too many personalities or don't have much of a strong personality. **Disney+**, for example, has stood out by mirroring its parent brand's consistent personality archetypes. Thanks to its strong heritage, Disney is known as a 'Joker' or a 'Free Spirit' in every market covered by the Kantar BrandZ database.

**DISNEY \$46,970M #39**

Emotional positioning



*"So I do worry sometimes that although it's marvellous to put the customer at the heart of everything, it's really dangerous from a differentiation point of view."*

SARA BENNISON FORMER CHIEF PRODUCT AND MARKETING OFFICER, NATIONWIDE, IGNITE GROWTH REPORT FROM THE MARKETING SOCIETY

[Click here](#) to read the report.

Source for the cases: Kantar BrandZ Most Valuable Global Brands 2023



# BRAND POSITIONING WITH EMOTION

No discussion about Brand Strategy would be complete without a reference to Brand Positioning. In turn, you can't overlook the idea of differentiation when thinking about Brand Positioning.

Most marketers will be familiar with the basic brand positioning principles, namely that it is about building a set of associations in consumers' minds to make them consider your brand more favourably. Typically, in ways that set your brand apart from competitors and motivate consumers to choose your brand over competitors. Differentiation is key to this.

Traditionally, this was about 'owning' a unique set of properties. But in practice this proved difficult to achieve. Often, brands within a category share much in common from a consumer's perspective. Differences tend to be subtle. A more nuanced take on this looks for relative strengths in difference rather than trying to own unique attributes.

## The influential role of emotion

There are many ways a brand might capture a point of difference, from disrupting category norms and setting trends, to offering functional qualities that set your brand apart from others. But finding a point of difference is often challenging. In many categories brands are functionally similar.

**In an age where products are so easy to copy, emotion offers such a powerful brand positioning route. This is about building clear and strong emotional connections with consumers through your positioning – driving difference through emotive clarity.**

Appealing to emotive needs is central to this, connecting with the type-1 fast brain decision drivers that neuroscience has proven to be so powerful in building strong brands.

## Emotion and brand positioning

Emotion gives brands a strong foundation upon which to build a powerful brand positioning. This emotion can then permeate every part of the brand and its touchpoints.

The strongest brands are single minded in their emotive positioning. This provides a clear anchor for development of activation and innovation.

For example, take these two popular ice cream brands: Ben & Jerry's and Mövenpick. Functionally, both are premium ice-creams, but they differ starkly in their positioning. The emotion in their positioning plays a big role in creating this difference. The fun and carefree irreverence of Ben & Jerry's contrasts against the sleeker, composed Mövenpick expression. Both brands deliver this emotion across every touchpoint from packaging, to webpage design, to product formulation, to product descriptors, to range architecture and retail experiences.

## Cohesion is key

A powerful brand positioning needs to inform execution across the full marketing mix. In this way emotion needs to 'ladder' cohesively through the layers of brand image. Building on our example, we see how Mövenpick delivers a cohesive set of core emotive values, through to functional expressions. It makes intuitive sense that a brand crafted with care, purity, and passion builds on its heritage and delivers a range of intriguing flavours to appeal to the ice-cream connoisseur in all of us!

## The difference payoff

This type of cohesive brand positioning, delivered consistently over time, yields emotive clarity. The payoff for this is clear. Kantar's BrandZ research reveals that brands with strong emotive clarity have 1.5x the pricing power. Useful for any brand, crucial for a premium brand.

**Myles George,**  
Director, Product Development

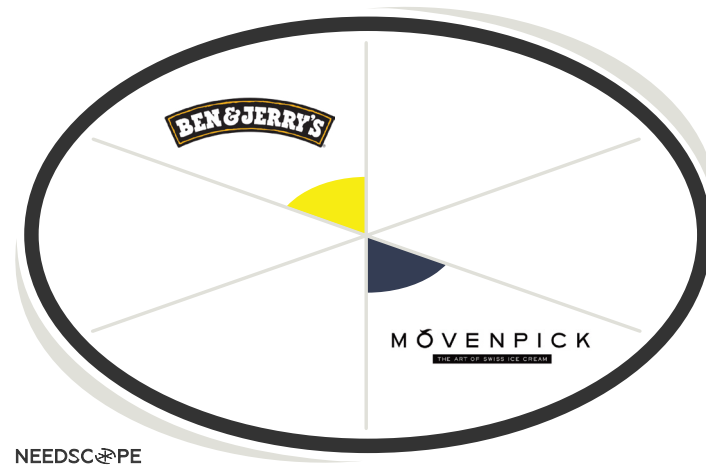
# EMOTIVE BRAND POSITIONING IN ICE-CREAM

Prioritise

23

## Ben & Jerry's and Mövenpick

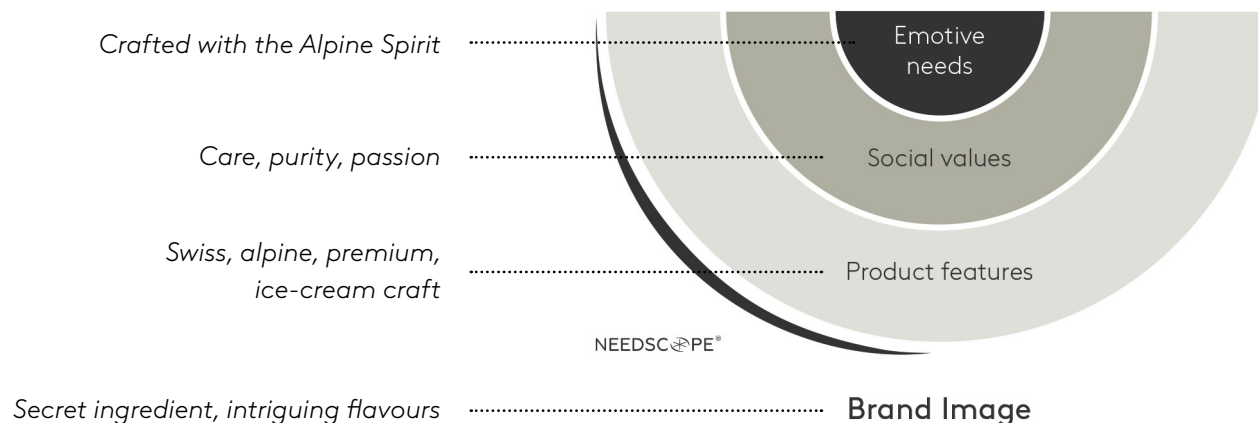
are both premium ice-creams, but they differ starkly in their positioning. The emotion in their positioning plays a big role in creating this difference. The fun and carefree irreverence of Ben & Jerry's contrasts against the sleeker, composed Mövenpick expression.



**Mövenpick** delivers a cohesive set of core emotive values, through to functional expressions. It makes intuitive sense that a brand crafted with care,

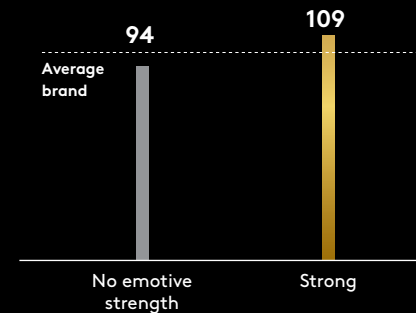
purity, and passion builds on its heritage and delivers a range of intriguing flavours to appeal to the ice-cream connoisseur in all of us.

**MÖVENPICK**  
THE ART OF SWISS ICE CREAM

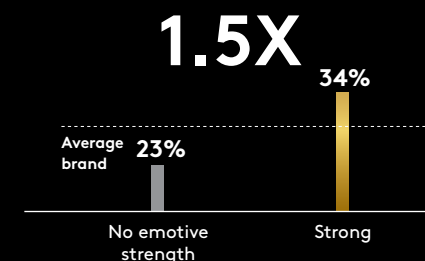


**BRANDS WITH STRONG EMOTIVE CLARITY ARE PERCEIVED AS FAR MORE DIFFERENT AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO JUSTIFY THEIR PRICE**

Difference Index



% of brands with 'extra' Pricing Power



**KANTAR BRANDZ**

Source: Kantar BrandZ database 2020–2023 (13,403 Brands asked Brand Personality Powered by NeedScope)

Source: Kantar BrandZ database 2020–2023 (2,114 Brands with a strong emotive position)

# BRAND PURPOSE IS A STRATEGIC CHOICE, NOT AN IMPERATIVE

Whereas Positioning looks to define a brand's differentiated emotional set of associations, Purpose is about what a brand promises to the people it serves. The latter has been the subject of much debate in recent years. Should brands pursue a higher purpose, will it ensure brand growth?

Kantar BrandZ data shows a strong correlation between Brand Purpose and Brand Power. Having a purpose builds meaningful difference in the minds of consumers which can ultimately lead to them choosing your brand over another.

But having a higher purpose for people or planet is not going to be relevant for all brands. Key questions to ask are whether your brand can credibly and authentically play in this space? Does it matter to people in your category? Will it drive difference vs competitors? Perhaps the most important point to land is that Purpose doesn't have to better the

world or people. For some brands, the best strategic ambition will be to do a brilliant job of serving consumers through product and service alone.



**Let's take Tabasco:** the brand has had a single-minded mission since the day it was founded on Avery Island, Louisiana in 1868. That purpose was to enhance and liven up the flavour of food. The brand stays true to this golden thread – it has defined its innovation, communication, and activations. Has Tabasco suffered from a lack of capital P 'Purpose'? No. Tabasco

has driven Meaningful Difference through its single-mindedness and devotion to a purpose that whilst not bettering society, does offer consumers a real, tangible benefit. But this isn't to say Tabasco isn't doing good too, there is a strong sustainability mission baked into its strategy – it's just not central to its purpose.

When it does make sense for a brand to lean into a Public Issue (social or environmental) with purpose, then that brand needs to consider its appetite for bravery. How brave is it prepared to be to fight for the cause? What risks is it comfortable taking?

Kantar's approach to brand bravery explores purpose through this lens:

**Ally brands** are inclusive and environmentally conscious in their behaviours, but don't necessarily tackle world problems head on.

**Advocate brands** commit more strongly to DEI or sustainability and push conversations and action to promote equity and/or climate action.

**Activist brands** put social issues at the heart of their brand. Activism is their business model. They lead difficult and polarising conversations and take the consequences that come with them.

**Not all brands can be activists, in fact most cannot. Choosing to be an Ally, Advocate or Activist will be dependent on many things: equity; consumer expectations and importantly, a brand's appetite for risk.**

Brand Purpose is a strategic choice – whether you commit or not, and if you do, how deeply you commit.

**Alex Dewdney,**  
Kantar Consulting



# 3

## Build meaningful difference through every brand touchpoint, consistently

Brand Strategy is about embracing change with imagination and refreshed consistency. With a clear destination in mind, navigating a constantly evolving terrain requires a reliable compass to guide and course correct. Consistency is key to cementing your difference in the minds of consumers. To stay consistent means mastering the art of evolving yet remaining the same. Delivering your difference meaningfully, across all touchpoints and innovations in a way that elevates brand value. To check progress against your goals you also need a measurement system that inspires.

Key takeaways:

**1** Consistency is key to building strong brand difference



**2** Balance reinvention with reinforcement, using brand positioning to maintain direction



**3** The right brand performance measures should demonstrate impact and catalyse evolution

# THE FINE ART OF REINFORCING WHILE REFRESHING

Brands need to create perceptions of value to get people to part with their hard-earned cash. Kantar evidence has shown that meaningful difference is the key to value creation – it drives perceptions of being worth paying more for and is integral to building pricing power. So, striving for meaningful difference should be every marketer's goal, but achieving this is not without its challenges.

Kantar evidence shows that consistency is key to establishing difference. The stronger your consistency, the stronger your difference. Brands are built in our memories, in small increments. Little connections accrued across a lifetime of experience and exposure to many touchpoints.

**As the late, but great, Jeremy Bullmore, stated, 'People build brands as birds build nests, from the scraps and straws they chance upon..., the art of strategy is making sure that what people chance upon are the right kind of straws'.**

If a brand is showing up in a consistent, congruent way, each encounter reinforces the next and your virtual bird's nest in the brain becomes stronger and stronger. This is easier said than done.

It requires congruence of the scraps and straws of activation: from messaging, to innovation, to experience. It requires discipline, it's so easy to get bored with direction, tempted by shiny new strategies or distracted by the need to evolve. It also needs crystal clear alignment on what you need to keep consistent so that brand and agency teams across the world can translate it into culturally relevant activation.

To do this, brands need to be clear on their positioning and point of difference so that it can guide decision making. This means understanding what a brand brings to the world, what sets it apart and how it resonates at an emotive level, as well as a functional level. We call this brand centricity.

Given brand and category context is continually changing, category boundaries are blurring, and competitive frames are shifting. To maintain momentum, enrich relevance and find growth, brands must constantly seek ways to evolve in time with changing demand and culture. We call this human centricity.

## **But how do brands balance the change vs. consistency conundrum?**

The imperative is to master the art of evolving yet staying the same. To do this, you need to strike the balance between reinvention and reinforcement. The balance between being human centric enough to ensure your brand remains relevant and being brand centric enough to ensure that you are reinforcing brand memories congruently. Taking this approach ensures that even while you're changing, you build on and maintain the shared and enduring associations your brand owns.

We're increasingly seeing that brands who can execute in a way that is different to the competition, authentic to themselves but consistent across time and across touchpoints are more different. The following case studies show how this can be done.

**Lindsay Gorton-Lee** is Brand Strategy Consultant, Kantar Insights UK

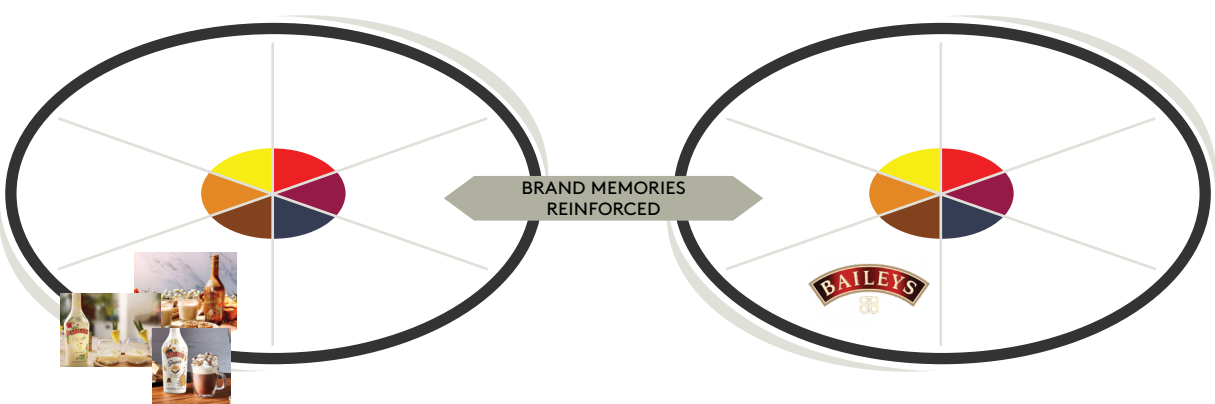
***"Do what others aren't doing and keep doing it consistently."***

**JONATHAN MCCARTHY,**  
(FORMER) GLOBAL HEAD OF BRAND,  
CADBURY, AT CANNES 2023

# Refreshed consistency in action

**Baileys designed for difference while reinforcing their quintessential Baileys-ness**  
Baileys extended their footprint into new occasions, new consumers, and new moments through their Treating strategy. We used our whizzy NeedScope Ai decoder to assess whether Baileys assets communicating their new Treat positioning use similar codes to one another? And do these semiotic codes

align with what people might expect of Baileys? Indeed, they did! When mapped together, there is clear evidence of the emotive clarity and consistency across the campaign. Comparing it to consumers' emotive expectations of the brand (uncovered through our BrandZ Personality data), demonstrates that Baileys have successfully reinforced brand memories while reinventing for growth.



## McDonald's evolved their product, comms and experience so that it feels it was always that way



**McDonald's is a great practitioner of artful reinvention while reinforcing.**  
They are always evolving their outlets, menus, and routes to market to meet the changing needs of new generations. We now see a world where flat whites, McPlant burgers and McDelivery all seamlessly blend with the stalwarts BigMac and HappyMeal. While McDonald's evolution has been constant, in every reinvention they have

remained true to their core. This means that they always seem fresh and contemporary, while weirdly it seems that nothing has changed at all. This consistent connection across time and touchpoints has meant McDonald's meaningful difference and value growth has benefited. They have moved from #9 in the BrandZ Top100 in 2019 to #5 in 2023, jostling against the powerful tech brands at the top.



## CASE STUDY

# From Joy to Generosity: Unlocking emotion to aid Cadbury's revival

In 2016, Cadbury was a brand in decline. Cadbury had lost its way and its competitive edge. Cadbury sought a strategic reset: A way to win back hearts, minds and share that was enduring (not a short-term fix) and translatable across cultures.

Kantar was engaged to bring deep human insight: to untangle options and underpin decision making, help find meaning, difference, and inspire creative process. We proposed an approach rooted in emotive understanding. Emotion transcends culture and can endure even in the face of renovation and reinvention. It's also a key ingredient in effective creative, a powerful lever to engage consumers and inspire brand centric culture.

### The aha moment that changed everything

Unpacking emotion led to the discovery that Cadbury's positioning cornerstone, 'Joy', was a category fundamental. Instead of making them more famous, it

was making them more generic. Even more importantly, the 'Joy' positioning expression was at odds with people's expectations of Cadbury which were of warmth, approachability, and sincerity. The brand was becoming confusing and as a result, meaningful difference was being eroded. 'Joy' was not a viable route to difference and long-term value.

### A new expression around Generosity

Digging deeper, we uncovered a rich, alternative, emotive territory that aligned with people's expectations of Cadbury, the brand's Quaker roots and what the Cadbury team loved about the brand. A tightly defined space was agreed upon that 'felt right' and provided an authentic and meaningful way to differentiate.

Cadbury then worked with VCCP to create the IPA award winning, Generous Instinct campaign. "Is it generous?" is a question Cadbury ask at every stage, from briefing, to development, to evaluation.

It is so simple and intuitive to convey, avoiding misinterpretation, enabling consistency.

### There was still a long road ahead

Having unlocked a new positioning, it was important to steer the course. Kantar identified real

tensions from which creative could springboard. Early and pre-launch creative testing checked effectiveness.

We partnered with Cadbury to stay the course in a constantly shifting market, assessing compatibility

of new opportunities, devising organising principles for the wider portfolio, and finding authentic approaches to new territories. Throughout we applied an emotive lens to ensure that the brand continues to reinforce its positioning.

The outcome: Cadbury has won back hearts, minds & share

The resultant impact is astonishing:

**+22%**

**Commercial impact:** overall value sales **+22%** (2017-2021)

**+27%**

**Regained competitive edge:** Perceived Meaningful Difference **+29%** (2018 - 2022).

**+49%**

**Brand value growth:** Kantar BrandZ valuation of Cadbury UK **+49%** (2018 - 2022).

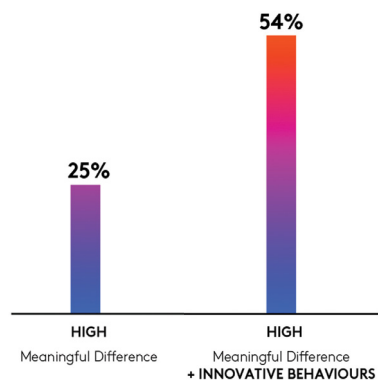
*"Your collaboration has enabled us to consistently and authentically bring to life Cadbury's Generosity."*

MARIARITA MUGNAI, CADBURY'S GLOBAL CONSUMER INSIGHTS MANAGER



Kantar BrandZ data shows us that brands who are not only meaningful and different but also demonstrate innovative behaviours double their chances of growth. Innovation gives brands the opportunity to drive meaningful difference by creating innovative products, experiences and services that meet needs better than the competition in new ways.

## Brand Value Growth



Source: Kantar BrandZ. 138 brands valued in 2019 and 2023.  
Innovative behaviours: Shaking things up/and/or well-designed products

However, not all innovation is right for all brands. Brands need to identify incremental innovations that will drive category growth as well as deliver long term brand equity benefits.

Successful innovation starts with what the brand stands for. Brands who successfully use innovation to drive both short- and long-term growth use their meaningful difference as their north star.

Those with clear brand strategies are likely to produce the best innovations. This also gives them the red thread to activate with better advertising and deliver better more meaningful brand experiences (Connected Innovation, 2024).

**McDonald's** and **Baileys** (as previously mentioned) are great examples of brands that innovated in a way that was right for their brand using innovation as a strong lever of growth.

Another example of a brand doing this well, is **Oreo**. Their brand strategy around playfulness is the guiding force behind everything they do, including their innovation.

Eugelia Zalis, Global Head of Marketing and Brand for **Oreo**, told us,

“Our purpose is at the heart of everything for **Oreo** and innovation is the way to bring that purpose alive”.

Their work on flavour innovation, limited editions and new launch Cakesters made them a winner in Kantar's Outstanding Innovation awards, 2023.

Having a strong brand strategy, however, is not enough to ensure success. Our Outstanding Innovation award winners also put the consumer at the heart of everything they did.

They looked inside and outside their organisation for fuel to identify new ways to be meaningful and different.

They also took a learn, test learn approach building confidence and momentum along the way to enable them to take more risks (Kantar Outstanding Innovation Awards, 2024).

## Dr. Nicki Morley

Head of Behavioural Science and Innovation Expertise, Kantar

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

*“Our purpose is at the heart of everything for Oreo and innovation is the way to bring that purpose alive”*

**EUGELIA ZALIS,**  
**GLOBAL HEAD OF MARKETING**  
**AND BRAND FOR OREO**

‘Playfulness’ is the guiding force behind everything that **Oreo** does

## FLAVOUR INNOVATION



## MEANINGFUL LIMITED EDITIONS



## NEW SPACS BEYOND THE CORE



Experiences are extraordinarily important for growth. Better experiences mean customers are more likely to stay, buy again, and tell everyone about it. And this drives market share growth. New Kantar evidence shows that, over a two-year period, brands that improve their experience are 2.5x more likely to grow their market share than brands that don't improve.

We often think of strong brands as driven by great advertising, and paid media. This is, of course, an important part of it. But not the whole story.

**Kantar research into the touchpoints that drive brand growth shows that 75% of brand predisposition is driven by touchpoints other than paid media**

– this includes the places you own and the places you earn.

For example, in financial services, 40% of brand predisposition comes from your owned channels. This has some surprising implications, for example, branded cash machines have more impact on brand perceptions than out-of-home advertising.

### Harder, better, faster, stronger

Experience channels must work hard on several levels.

The experiences need to be optimised to serve customers faster and more effortlessly, leading to higher conversion, and lower service costs. This creates the most quantifiable short-term commercial returns. In addition, they must be meaningful and contribute to the clear, consistent picture of the brand in the minds of your customers, setting the brand apart from the competition. This is how strong brands are built, driving growth by creating meaningful difference over the long term.

### Delivering on your difference

Brand clarity is vital to achieving this. Customers need to understand who they are buying from, with their difference made clear and obvious, reinforced consistently at every possibility. A Kantar study found that brands with strong emotive consistency, where they feel tonally consistent at all points of interaction score 13 points higher in brand difference.

This difference makes a big difference, for retaining your existing customers and bringing in new ones. Kantar found that customers who considered their main bank to be a little or a lot more 'different' to the alternatives were 2x more likely to be completely uninterested in alternative providers, and 68% more likely to recommend their bank to others.

### The frontline drives the bottom line

Your owned channels and the experiences you create, are vital places to deliver on your difference. These interactions create the brand, and they build memories for your customers, which influence buying decisions and willingness to pay more.

Brand leaders must work closely with the teams that design or deliver these experiences.

There must be a clear experience vision and brand culture in the business that steers all activities. As a result, colleagues must understand, live and breathe the brand, when creating experiences that impact customers every day.

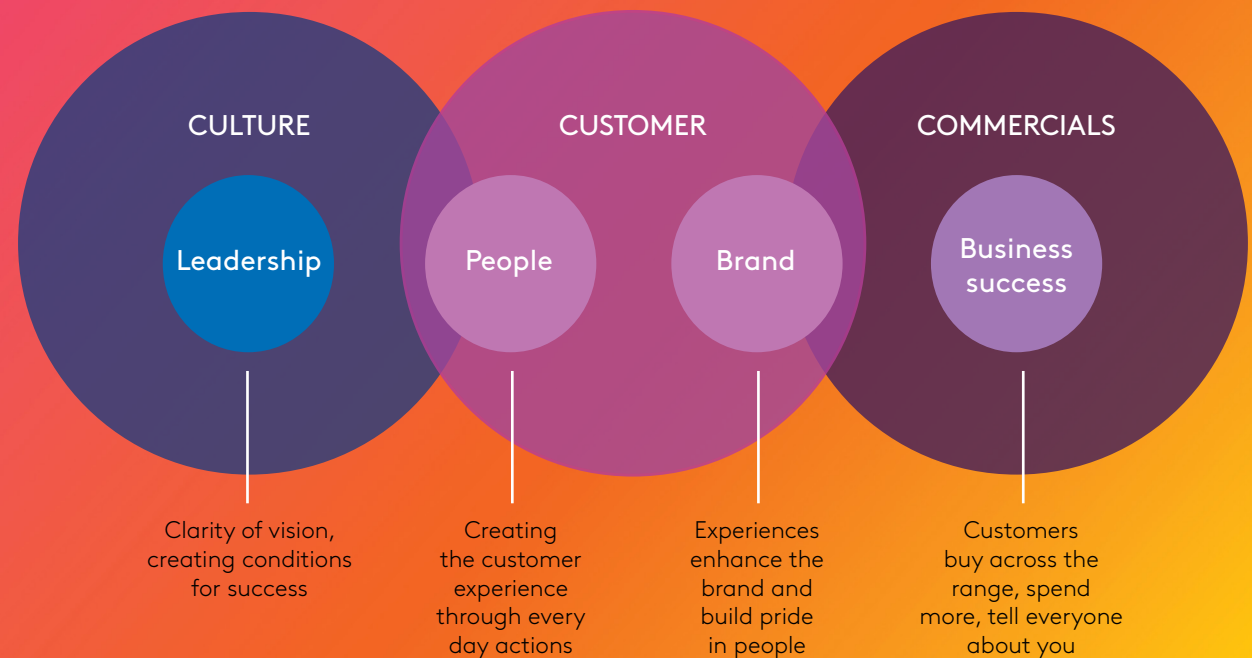
This will lead to exceptional, meaningfully different, experiences that mean customers will spend more with you, buy across the range, and tell everyone about your brand. In this way, frontline staff drive the bottom line.

**Peter Aitken**

Head of Customer Strategy

## THE FRONTLINE DRIVES THE BOTTOM LINE

How do you activate the organisation?





# DIGITAL MEDIA NEEDS MORE ATTENTION

Getting your audience's attention requires a balance of creative quality and media effectiveness. Getting your media decisions right is important. The digital revolution has made selecting the optimal media mix more complex, but digital media offers marketers the opportunity to harness a brand building superpower - difference. New Kantar insight presented at IPA #Effworks shows offline channels drive saliency, but digital does a stronger job of driving difference.

Brands with stronger difference are twice as likely to grow vs. those with a weaker difference; and new research leveraging Kantar's Global campaign measurement database shows us that digital media is now the driving force behind creating this brand difference.

Almost 60% of the impact on difference now comes from digital channels, with longer standing social channels, Facebook and YouTube, currently the strongest contributors to share of difference impact. So right now is the time to seize the moment with Facebook and YouTube, but things are constantly evolving, the likes of TikTok are not far behind and other digital channels will emerge tomorrow so it's equally important to keep a finger on the digital pulse.

This alone should exponentially increase marketers' confidence in justifying the shift in investments to fuel digital growth. While digital is a strong lever for driving difference, it has not yet reached its full potential in driving conversion (purchase intent), so using digital in synergy with offline channels remains important.

## WHAT'S HOLDING BACK DIGITAL MEDIA SUCCESS?

We observe three common barriers to fully engaging the power of digital:

1. Digital requires a digitally appropriate strategic approach. Too often digital strategy is disregarded.
2. The digital environment means the consumer has more control of what they want to see and how they want to see it – stress testing digital content becomes critical in any brand's journey to marketing effectiveness. Not enough digital content is tested.
3. Kantar analysis shows that digital advertising that evokes strong emotions is four times more likely to generate impact and deliver long-term brand equity, but digital tends to under-index in this arena. An emotional connection can be as easy as making the audience laugh or leaving them feeling positive about your brand.

## REALISING REWARDS IN DIGITAL

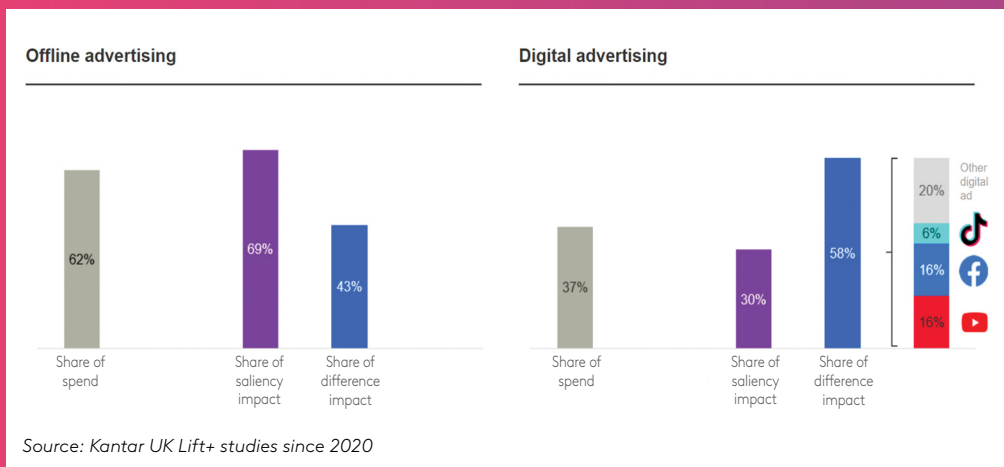
The secret sauce to realizing rewards in digital is simple:

1. **Tailor your content to the digital channel.** One of the biggest successes of TikTok is its user experience. TikTok have revolutionised short-form video because they work with consumer brains not against it! Campaigns are seven times more effective amongst a receptive audience. To avoid that skip, content needs to be highly visible, demand engagement and evoke emotive reaction.
2. **Attention is more than just the click.** To avoid people just scrolling past, digital media needs to work hard to grab attention. So, creating content that gets the audience to stop and engage in is key.
3. **Continue to compliment digital with other channels.** Offline channels remain the cornerstone of building brand saliency. Using strengths of both offline and online can be a powerful combination for media planning.

Marketers should invest in digitally appropriate strategy, customise content in a channel appropriate way and leverage content that evokes emotion to effectively use digital as a vehicle for brand building.

**Anusha Harri**

Client Director, Media Insights, UK & Ireland



# EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING AMPLIFIES BRAND STRATEGY

Capturing the essence of your brand strategy in your creative brief in a way that's unambiguous and inspiring is a fantastic springboard to success; but a powerful strategy alone doesn't guarantee that your advertising will be effective. Great advertising acts as an amplifier, supercharging your strategy, its impact on brand value and future growth.

It's not just what you say, but how you bring it to life that determines your success. Whilst there is no recipe to make an effective ad, the most effective advertising campaigns unlock three things, leveraging the power of LINKED creativity:

## 1. LINK meaningfully and memorably with the audience

Our brain pays attention to things that are that are different, entertaining, personally relevant and make us feel something. The more we feel, the more deeply we process an experience, which in turn creates more enduring memories.

Tapping into the cultural pulse is a powerful way to link meaningfully and memorably with your audience. McDonald's UK Christmas ad instantly resonated with audiences by showing people escaping to **McDonald's** from symbolic Christmas moments that they were not enjoying.

## 2. LINK natively with where the advertising will be experienced

Effective ads are enjoyable, entertaining, and/or personally relevant. They are not an unwelcome disruption or interruption to people's lives. Content must feel like it belongs in the context where it will be experienced. Ads that are integrated with the campaign and tailored to context increase effectiveness by 57%.

Designing ads to work where they will be experienced increases the ROI from your hard-earned media money. The **Nike's** 'She's Ballin' ad on **TikTok** is a fantastic example of content that feels at one with the medium, maximising the opportunity for meaningful and memorable engagement.

## 3. LINK across encounters to drive brand difference in a consistent, connected way

Effective ads embody the brand and are unashamedly branded. They bring to life what makes the brand meaningfully different in a distinctive and unambiguous way. Success comes when brands commit unwaveringly and single-mindedly to their strategy, bringing to life the distillation of what the brand wants to be famous for, across all encounters.

**Cadbury's** multi award-winning 'Glass and a half' campaign is an effective and inspiring example of true discipline in committing to both strategy and the brand's creative platform across geography, time, and connection points.

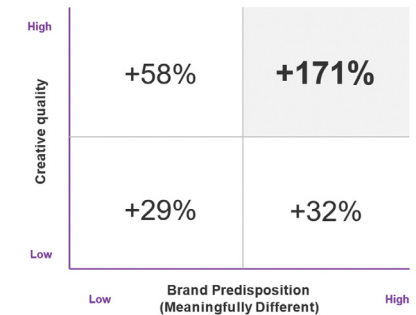
Familiarity with an idea people like heightens people's emotional response and makes it easier to be more adventurous and creative over time.

Cracking this requires evolving to stay fresh and relevant whilst remaining distinctly recognisable.

Integrating distinctive brand assets is another component of linking to your brand, but ads that truly magnify the brand go beyond this, making the brand central and inseparable from the creative, not peripheral to it. If you can describe the ad without mentioning the brand, alarm bells should ring.

**Coca-Cola's** 'Holidays are coming' shows the power of reusing the same ad on repeat (for more than 25 years!). The most effective Coca-Cola ads integrate distinctive brand assets, elicit the same emotive positioning, and put the brand at the centre of the story.

## Coupling effective creative with a strong brand supercharges brand value



KANTAR BRANDZ Analysis Of Some 86 Brands: Average change in brand value from 2006 -2017

## Cultivate an effectiveness culture in the way that you bring your brand strategy to life.

Drive profit, brand value and future growth by linking meaningfully with your audience, connecting natively where you show up and reinforcing the essence of your brand in every encounter, consistently.

**Lynne Deason**

Head of Creative Excellence

# NEW HABITS TO SUPERCHARGE BRAND GROWTH

It's been an unusually tumultuous few years for consumer-facing businesses. While it can feel chaotic and disorienting at times, states of flux can challenge a brand's resilience. Brands can apply a behavioural science lens to deliver the loyalty and spend of their target audiences in the long term, no matter the business climate.

Whether brands are innovating new products, or growing existing ones, there are three rules we like to follow to help your brand be easy to choose, easy to buy and difficult to leave:

**Make it stick** – Consumers' actions and intentions don't often match: it's something we call the value-action gap and often happens due to the frictions of adoption. Understanding the points of friction that might be holding people back is essential. Any new product must design for successful behaviour change by removing these frictions and providing real benefits to the

consumer in both the experience and end benefit.

**Make it positive** – Removing barriers to purchase is one side of the coin. The other is giving people good reasons to buy. Persuading shoppers that they're making a positive change rather than a sacrifice is key. Moving the conversation away completely from any sense of compromise or cutting back is where the magic of your marketing comes into play. The important thing is to give people something they actively want to adopt, not a battle to give up something they love.

**Make it easy** – Change must be straightforward. Consumers make split-second decisions about what to put in their baskets. If they can't quickly identify what a product is for or how it would fit into their lives, it's unlikely to be bought. Anything that requires a lot of work on the part of shoppers or makes them feel they are at odds with social

norms will struggle. At the very least any product, innovation or brand execution must feel effortless to incorporate into their lives.

While these three stages may sound simple, the art of behavioural change takes commitment. Brands

need to get to the heart of what deters people and what motivates them to change. Helping customers plug this cognitive dissonance gap between values and actions is crucial. People are juggling many pressures, and businesses that add to this list with complicated or

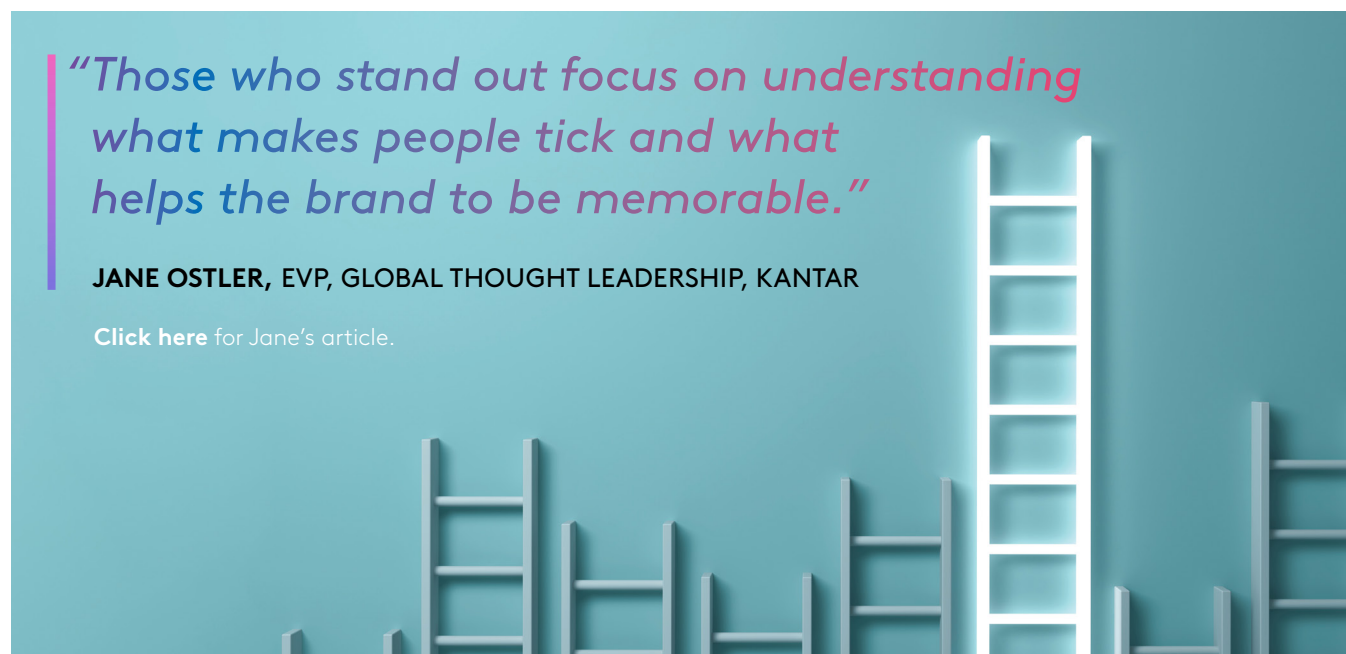
confusing products will fail to win them over. Life is much easier when we work with the grain of human psychology, not against it.

**Dr Nicki Morley**, Head of Behavioural Science and Innovation Expertise, Kantar

*“Those who stand out focus on understanding what makes people tick and what helps the brand to be memorable.”*

**JANE OSTLER**, EVP, GLOBAL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, KANTAR

[Click here](#) for Jane's article.





# MEASUREMENT THAT INSPIRES

Long gone are the days where tracking was purely a reflective task, looking back on what has happened, today your brand tracking should inspire your next evolution.

Your tracking is a valuable part of your diagnosis and market understanding toolkit. Used alongside strategic thinking to truly understand your brand, as well as your competition and what really matters to your target audiences. When used correctly, your tracking can have major benefits to your business as discussed below.

## Insights to influence

Understanding your brand's Meaningful, Different and Salient scores as part of your diagnosis is key but by continuing this analysis over time creates a consistent picture on how to influence long term brand building.

By focusing on common metrics in your tracking you create a common language within your business, but the magic really happens when

those brand equity measures can be linked to your financial performance. Giving marketers the credibility and right to talk growth beyond the marketing department. Proving the value of their brand in being the fuel for shareholder returns.

## Uncovering the inarguable truths

With the right mix of tracking metrics and KPIs you create situations that cannot be ignored and reasons to make the right decisions. By analysing brand data alongside other metrics, such as market factors, NPS or awareness scores, you can start to see where the opportunities lie for greater investment.

These insights give power to influence where you don't have authority, but this is more than just knocking down doors, this is about creating reasons for collaboration. Bringing together teams across marketing, innovation, and experience to find solutions to the inarguable truths in your data.

## Consistency through the chaos

We said goodbye to stability some time ago and we now live in an age where change is abundant and frequent. If a brand were to shift tactics every time a new trend or disruption entered the world, brands would become the tinder that fuels the fire. By organising your brand around the consistency that measurement and tracking deliver, you can build tactics built from strategic insight rather than reactive impulse.

Tracking therefore gives you the reasons to change, but also the reasons to stay the same. Shining the light on where your strategy is working and how to improve it over time. Driving greater understanding of how to leverage your Demand Power and more reasons to work in collaboration to bring forward the growth your stakeholders and board members desire.

**Tom Lees**, Brand Strategy Consultant, Kantar

*“However you decide to approach the change vs. consistency conundrum, simply don't stay static. Evolve with the times, maintain your relevance, whilst keeping a vigilant eye on how you are doing against your ambition”*

**MARY KYRIAKIDI**, GLOBAL THOUGHT LEADER

# CONCLUSIONS

There is now undeniable evidence that great brand strategy has the potential to influence not just sales, but also business value and resilience. There is no doubt that every brand strategy journey will be a dynamic one with many twists and turns but to conclude, here are three simple rules of thumb that you could apply to ease your way:

**1** Insights should precede strategy and strategy should precede tactics. **Make insights an essential part of your brand strategy foundations.** This is key to building on human truths rather than assumptions and connecting to the cultural drumbeat. A cornerstone of this groundwork should be the diagnosis of your brand's current equity and pricing power and the monitoring of brand progress against this goal to inspire and influence your next evolution.

**2** When you prioritise, ensure that finding and maintaining difference that is meaningful, is front and centre of your criteria. Find routes to growth that extend beyond the confines of your category and build uniqueness through leadership, functional difference, distinctive assets and emotive clarity. Emotion can offer a powerful route to difference.

**3** Build strong brand difference through refreshed consistency.

Embrace change but ensure your brand positioning and brand difference guides all your decision making. Reinforce brand memories through every touchpoint while reinventing to maintain relevance. We call this balancing human centricity with brand centricity. This requires discipline, alignment, and congruence in activation: from communication, to innovation, to experience.

*“Breakthrough Brand’ leaders frequently describe a common approach. They start with a clear compelling position, amplify it with powerful emotive communications and reinforce it through meaningfully differentiated innovation and product/service experiences.”*

**DOM BOYD**, MANAGING DIRECTOR UK INSIGHTS AND MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS PRACTICE, UK

[Click here](#) for Dom's article.



We hope that you have enjoyed our unpacking of the strategic journey and that we have provided you with useful structure as well as inspiration and food for thought.

**Lindsay Gorton-Lee**  
Brand Strategy Consultant

### **About Kantar**

Kantar is the world's leading marketing data and analytics business and an indispensable brand partner to the world's top companies. We combine the most meaningful attitudinal and behavioural data with deep expertise and advanced analytics to uncover how people think and act. We help clients understand what has happened and why and how to shape the marketing strategies that shape their future.

[www.kantar.com/uki](http://www.kantar.com/uki)

Get in touch:

**Lindsay Gorton-Lee**

*Brand Strategy Consultant*

*[lindsay.gorton-lee@kantar.com](mailto:lindsay.gorton-lee@kantar.com)*

**Tom Lees**

*Brand Strategy Consultant*

*[tom.lees@kantar.com](mailto:tom.lees@kantar.com)*