

DIARY OF A CMO

7 takeaways for your
marketing challenges



Foreword by Professor Koen Pauwels



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*Koen Pauwels is the best
marketing academic on
the planet.*

- Mark Ritson

Differentiation strikes back! In its 'Diary of a CMO', I love Kantar's advice 'to find your meaningful difference to propel your brand's growth'. Sure, it's hard. But marketing is the hardest job at a company: that's what you signed up for!

Getting higher mental* and physical availability is tough: **only 11% of brands managed to substantially increase penetration last year**, and my peer-reviewed paper with Oliver Koll shows that differentiation drives penetration, especially for smaller brands and in growing markets.

We now understand that a rigid focus on increasing penetration at all costs is neither comprehensive nor effective in addressing the most intricate and significant brand growth challenges marketers encounter.

Kantar's Blueprint for Brand Growth paper provides practical insights to enhance the quality of a marketer's brand strategies.

DIFFERENTIATION DRIVES PENETRATION

The growth driver and the three growth accelerators underpin crucial consumer mindset metrics to monitor. Now we have quantified the links, from strategy and advertising to price elasticity, and from pricing power to profits.

Kantar also reminds us about the importance of timing: **(1) salience is key to scale after building differentiation, and (2) attitudinal metrics such as pricing power change slowly and need patience**. By assessing your brand's situation, you can carve your individual growth path, act and react with insight and speed to better weather any storm that crosses your way. What are you waiting for?

*mental availability encompasses salience, but also meaningfulness and difference, as Kantar's **Meaningful Different and Salient framework (MDS)** proves.

BRANDS

GROW BY BEING
MEANINGFULLY
DIFFERENT
TO MORE PEOPLE

Growth accelerators for winning marketers to operationalise effectively

PREDISPOSE MORE **PEOPLE**

BE MORE **PRESENT**

FIND NEW **SPACE**

BEHAVIOURS: CONSISTENT, CONNECTED, OPTIMISED

POWERED BY THE MEANINGFUL DIFFERENT AND SALIENT FRAMEWORK AND MOST MEANINGFUL DATA

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Mary Kyriakidi,
Global Thought Leader,
Kantar

Are you still struggling to quantify your brand's strength?

You're not alone. Many of our clients seek a validated way to determine their brand's worth. We start with the evidence: the intangible asset of a brand, or what sits in the minds of people, accounts on average for 32% of a company's value. Our annual **BrandZ** analysis of thousands of brands across hundreds of categories in dozens of markets consistently proves this.

The case of Coca-Cola is well-documented. Back in 1997, Coca-Cola's market value was a staggering \$165 billion, yet the financial books painted a much more modest picture. Remarkably, the brand itself accounted for 90% of the company's value. This disparity highlights the immense power of brand perception in people's minds.

But how can we measure our brand's contribution to the financials of the business?

The answer lies in seven key metrics: Meaningfulness, Difference, Salience, Demand Power, Pricing Power, Activation Power, and Future Power. Each of these metrics can boost your bottom line, as they all have validated links to commercial outcomes.

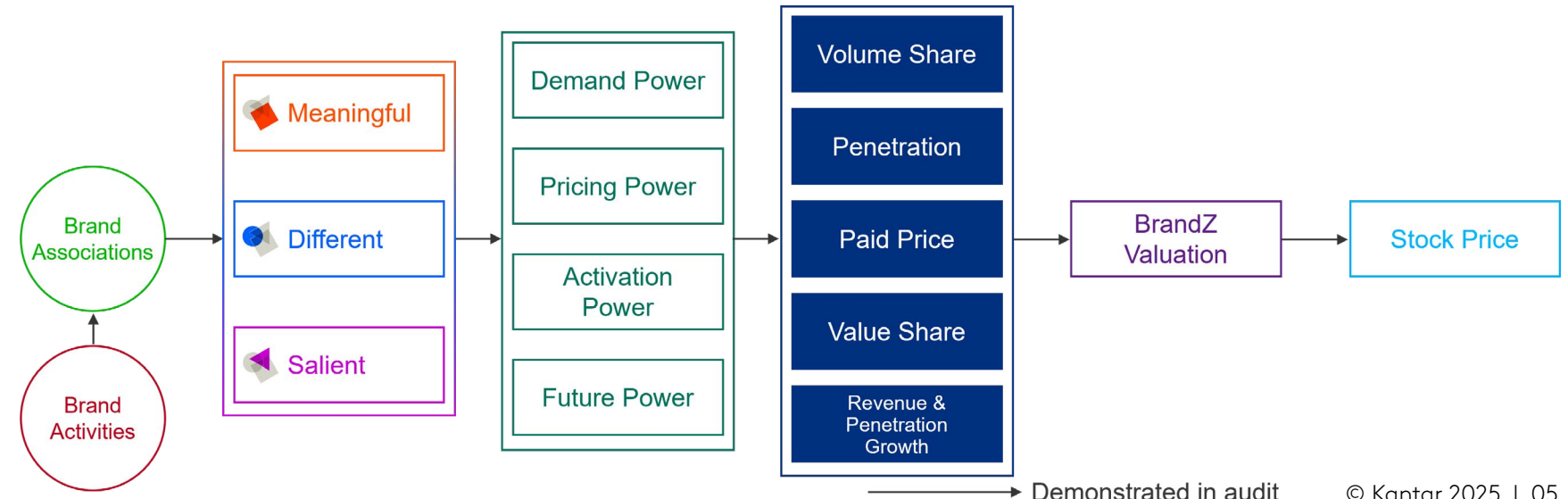


Our Meaningful, Different and Salient framework forms the foundation of the four Powers that can significantly boost your business performance and elevate your stock price - a Kantar truth that's also accreted by the **Marketing Accountability Standards Board (MASB)**.

In the chapters that follow, we explore some of the most pertinent challenges CMOs face. As 'Diary of a CMO' unfolds, a persistent realisation solidifies: brand equity is not an ill-defined concept, but rather a very real, pragmatic way to drive tangible business outcomes. This paper offers evidence-based steps, actionable tips, and strategic insights on how to leverage its brand equity and growth.

KANTAR'S MEANINGFUL DIFFERENT AND SALIENT FRAMEWORK (MDS):

Meaningful, Different, Salient, Demand Power, Pricing Power, Activation Power, Future Power



Source: Kantar 2025

Demonstrated in audit

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#1 | Diagnose first: Align marketing with business objectives



The directive from the top is unmistakable: **“We must reverse the revenue decline.”** Before jumping to sales promotions, it’s essential to diagnose where and why the decline is happening. With these insights, we can set clear objectives and calculate the incremental financial value of achieving each one.

Leveraging Kantar’s Blueprint for Brand Growth, the marketing team of a pet-food brand delves into their brand tracker and sales data to establish their goals:

Here are three essential steps:

01

PREDISPOSE MORE PEOPLE: Boost the perception that brand offers an appealing variety of flavors by 10% by March 31.

02

BE MORE PRESENT: Expand the product assortment in major store chains to include an organic SKU by March 31.

03

FIND NEW SPACE: Position ‘treat or reward’ as an additional demand moment for the brand, aiming to increase the Demand Spread Score from 1.3 to 2 by March 31.

Want to resonate with the boardroom and solidify your partnership with the C-suite? Align your efforts with business goals and demonstrate your financial acumen. This way, your marketing budget is less likely to be on the chopping block during cost-cutting.

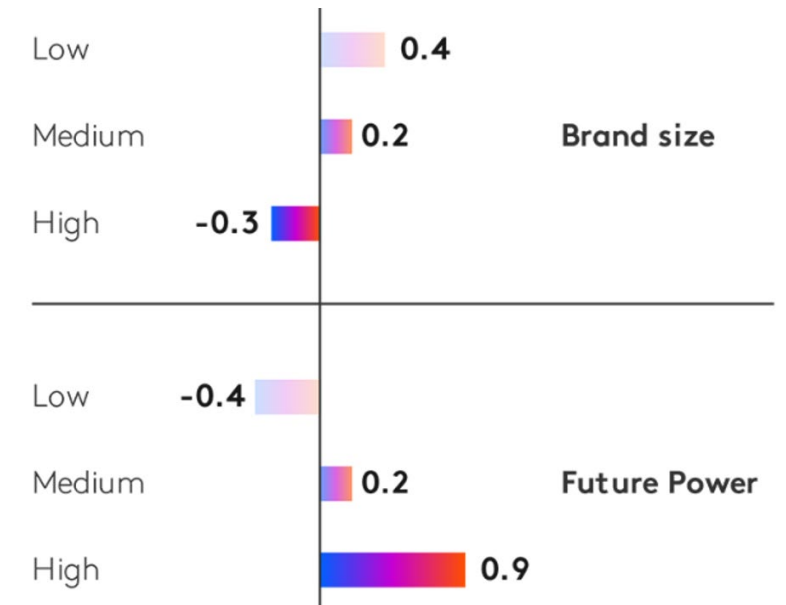
AVERAGE CHANGE IN PENETRATION 2 YEARS AFTER INITIAL MEASURE

Brand size/Future Power:

Low: Brands that rank at the Bottom 20% of the metric.

Medium: Brands that rank between the 20% to 80% of the metric.

High: Brands that rank at the Top 20% of the metric.



Source: 14,623 brands with matched data points two years apart using BrandZ data, linked to Kantar Worldpanel data

Want to accelerate your brand’s growth with a bespoke guidance system?

Diagnose the strength of your brand as an asset, stay on track to deliver value, maximise the impact of your campaign. **LEARN MORE**

Read the full article

#2 | Strategic penetration: it begins with your Meaningful Difference



The story of David and Goliath isn't just a feel-good metaphor; it's a powerful analogy for branding. David used a sling and a rock to defeat Goliath. Our advice to you is to find your meaningful difference to propel your brand's growth. Penetration growth is tough: only 11% of brands managed to significantly increase it last year.

The common factor among them was a higher relative Difference than expected for their size. These brands leverage Difference into increased Salience and Meaning.

If you're a small brand with big dreams, you need to break people's habits.

Here are three key points:

01

YOUR BATTLE FOR CONSUMERS DOESN'T START IN THE AISLES. IT STARTS IN THE CONSUMER'S MIND. People buy brands based on their equity, so the more people you predispose, the greater the chances your brand will be purchased.

02

...BUT IT'S IN THE AISLES WHERE IT REACHES A CRESCENDO. A 1% gain in penetration can lead to a 0.6% increase in market share. Be where choices are made.

03

WHAT YOU ARE MISSING ON SIZE, YOU NEED TO MAKE UP IN CAMPAIGN EFFECTIVENESS. Effie winners have shown that you CAN achieve more with less, proving that a smaller media budget and high creative quality can coexist.

STRONG GROWTH OFTEN STARTS WITH STRONG PERCEIVED DIFFERENTIATION

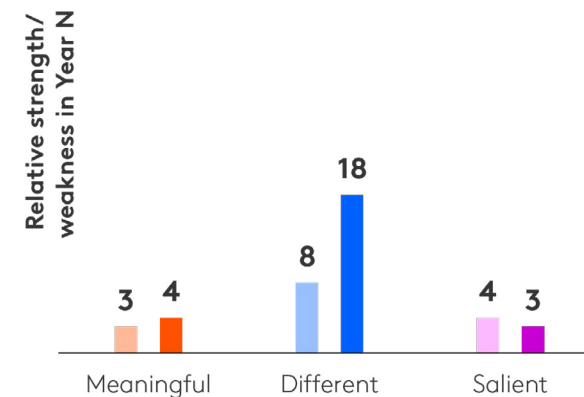
Subsequently that difference is leveraged into increased salience and meaning

**Initial profile BEFORE growth
START WITH DIFFERENCE**

The stronger the relative perceived differentiation to start, the stronger the growth

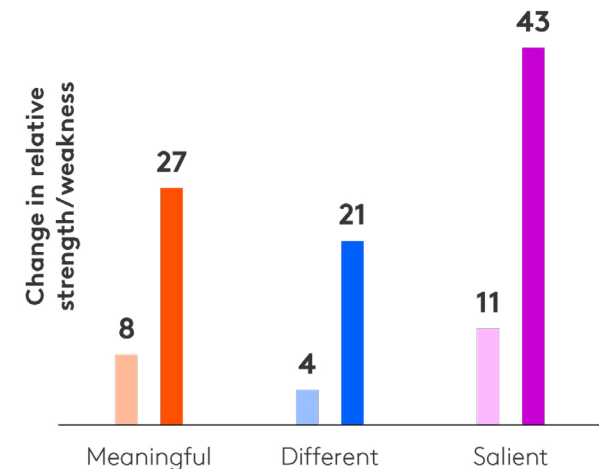
**Subsequent profile AFTER growth
BUILD SALIENCE**

A brand's initial perceived difference needs to be amplified to grow salience and meaning



Legend: Grew 3.5 to 9.9% (light), Grew 10+% (dark)

Source: Kantar BrandZ



Interested in discovering the power of brand building?

Whether you're looking to move your brand into new categories or occasions, expand your audience or inspire new product development.
FIND OUT MORE



[Read the full article](#)



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#3 | All Ps matter. Especially Price

When it comes to understanding price elasticity, the key survey-derived metric to focus on is Pricing Power.

If you're aiming for a price correction with minimal losses, keep these two main considerations in mind:

01

THERE'S A DIRECT CORRELATION BETWEEN PRICING POWER AND PRICE ELASTICITY. The higher your Pricing Power, the less sensitive your brand is to price changes. Essentially, consumers become more desensitised to price adjustments.

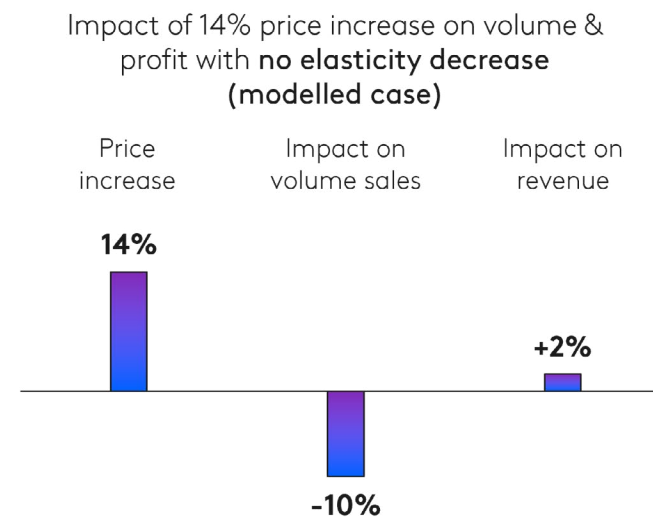
02

PATIENCE IS KEY: Pricing Power is an attitudinal metric and evolves more slowly than other behavioral metrics in your tracker. By adopting a sophisticated price management strategy, you should observe changes within 6-12 months.

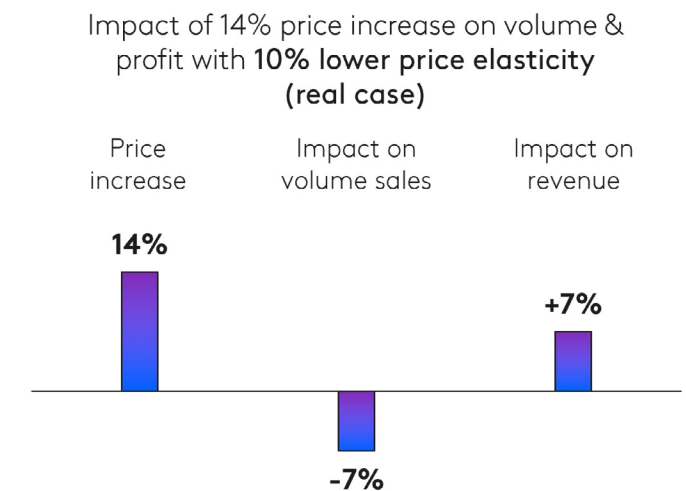
REAL CASE STUDY: We analysed data for a UK skincare brand and found that without improving price elasticity, volume sales would drop significantly, leading to weaker revenue growth. Leveraging your equity can boost your revenue by 5pp.

Never forget: Consumers will always invest in what they perceive as valuable and cut back on what they don't. Ensure that value remains your guiding principle and that your pricing aligns with this value.

WITHOUT IMPROVED PRICE ELASTICITY, VOLUME SALES WOULD DECLINE MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, AND REVENUE GROWTH WOULD BE WEAKER.



The brand decreased its price elasticity by 10% in past 12 months



Source: Google/Kantar, DE, UK, The Effectiveness Equation, Feb 2025

[Read the full article](#)

Want to lower customer price sensitivity, yield healthy margins and increase profitability?

Speak to potential buyers and find your sweet spot of pricing success within 24 hours.
FIND OUT MORE



#4

Defeat the copycats with unmissable on-brand experiences

Did you know that a great experience trumps advertising when it comes to brand choice?

If your CX and brand teams are ready to dive into a shared workflow, don't fear the copycats, get ready to welcome growth.

Here are three actions to enhance your experiences (let's say you're a bank):

Read the full article

- 01

BOOST MEMORIES: Experiences matter more than exposures. Touchpoints like the app, website, customer care, and ATMs are more impactful than advertising promises. Consistent, emotive touchpoints create stronger memories and greater market share.
- 02

BE EASY TO BUY AND EASY TO CHOOSE: People often bank with multiple providers. By being present at every touchpoint and making products and services easier to buy, your bank can capture choices from competitors.
- 03

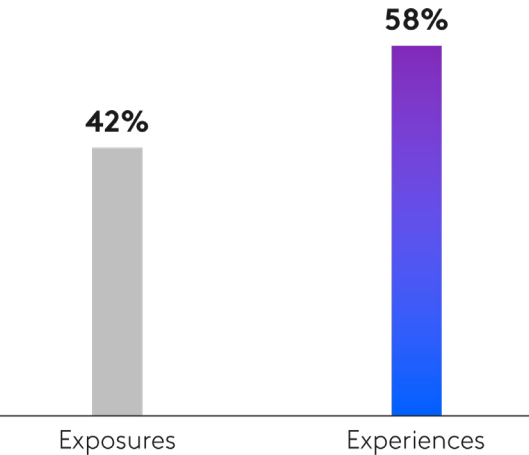
STAND OUT: Customers who feel your bank's experiences are unique are twice as likely to stay loyal. By creating meaningfully different experiences that meet customers' needs and express your brand's personality, your bank will increase advocacy and retention.
- Better experience = Better market share.

Experiences fuel brand memories, driving decisions. By creating consistent, distinctive, and unexpected experiences and you are **2.5 times more likely to significantly boost your market share.**



A GOOD EXPERIENCE MATTERS MORE THAN ADVERTISING IN GETTING YOUR BRAND CHOSEN

Contribution of experiences to brand predisposition compared with exposure



Source: Kantar Connect, Financial Services, 2022

- EXPERIENCES INCLUDE**
Brand app, website, branch, customer care, product experience, ATM, news-letters, recommendations from others, chatbots, documentation
- EXPOSURES INCLUDE**
TV ads, social media, out of home, online search and adverts, print, radio, sponsorship, news coverage.

Want to move beyond simply meeting the needs of your consumers?

Transform your brand with Meaningfully Different Experiences. Kantar has redefined Customer Experience with a new framework that drives brand growth and resilience through Meaningfully Different Experiences. **LEARN MORE**

#5 | Category ceiling falling? Discover your best innovation path



Staying within the confines of your comfort zone can stifle growth, both for businesses and CMOs. However, gently nudging the boundaries of your brand and its category can significantly drive growth.

So, how do you determine the best innovation path for your brand?

Here are three essential steps:

01

MAP YOUR CURRENT PENETRATION VS. YOUR VALIDATED PREDICTION OF FUTURE GROWTH:

Assess where your brand stands today and project its future growth based on its current strength (Future Power).

02

KNOW THAT YOUR CURRENT PENETRATION CAN BE IMPROVED:

Consumers focus on their needs rather than making linear choices, so it's crucial to look beyond direct competitors and identify latent opportunities.

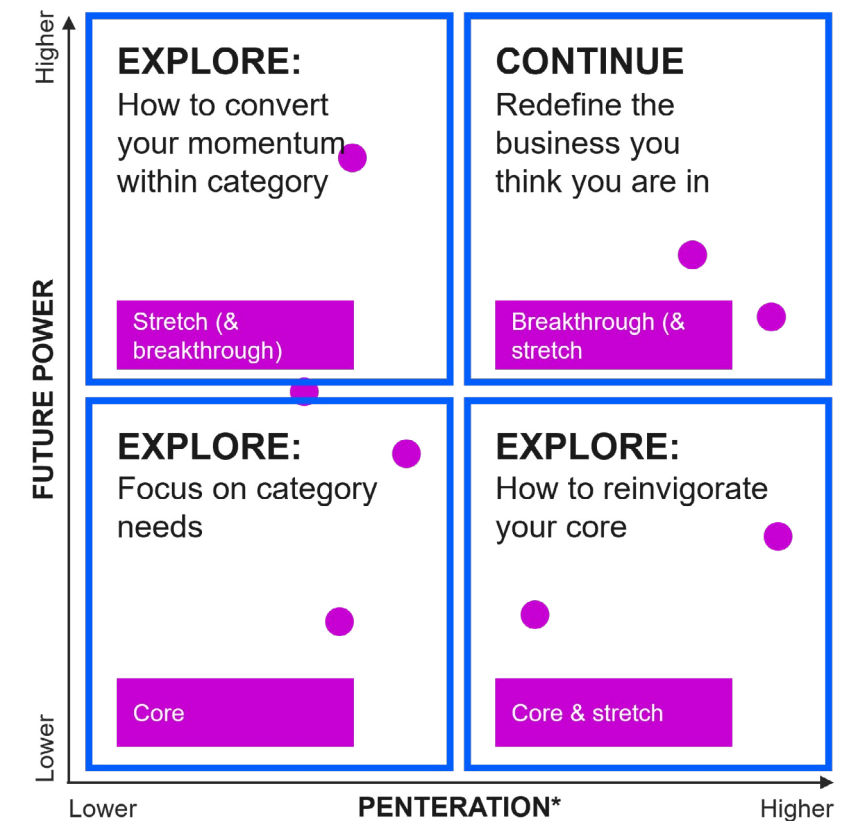
03

REFLECT AND REASSESS: Take a moment to evaluate your relevance. Ask yourself, "Am I still relevant?" If you're a major brand with significant growth potential, it's crucial to look beyond your current scope.

The question of whether to innovate is a false dilemma. **Our data shows that brands that innovate are twice as likely to grow.** However, innovation should be strategic and incremental. First, secure your core and defend your current position. Then, sit back and enjoy your innovation journey.

[Read the full article](#)

DEPENDENT ON WHERE YOUR BRAND SITS, YOU'LL NEED TO FOCUS EFFORTS IN DIFFERENT PLACES



Source: Blueprint for Brand Growth, Kantar

Seeking the best route to innovation success?

Drive incremental growth by finding new spaces. Create Meaningfully Different new products and services with fast, reliable insights. [LEARN MORE](#)

#6 | Navigate the messy middle for sales conversion

We crunched the numbers and discovered a shocking truth: one of the UK's Top 75 most valuable car brands is leaving a staggering £1.8 billion on the table. Despite being well-known and highly regarded, this brand fails to convert predisposition into sales when it matters most.

Our shopper journey data reveals the mechanics of conversion:

55% driven by brand equity, and 45% by various touchpoints on the consumer journey.

When a brand's high salience doesn't align with its share of search (its proportion of total category searches), it's a clear signal for action. Our data proves that Iceland's salience and share of search are not in sync, with the former far outweighing the latter.

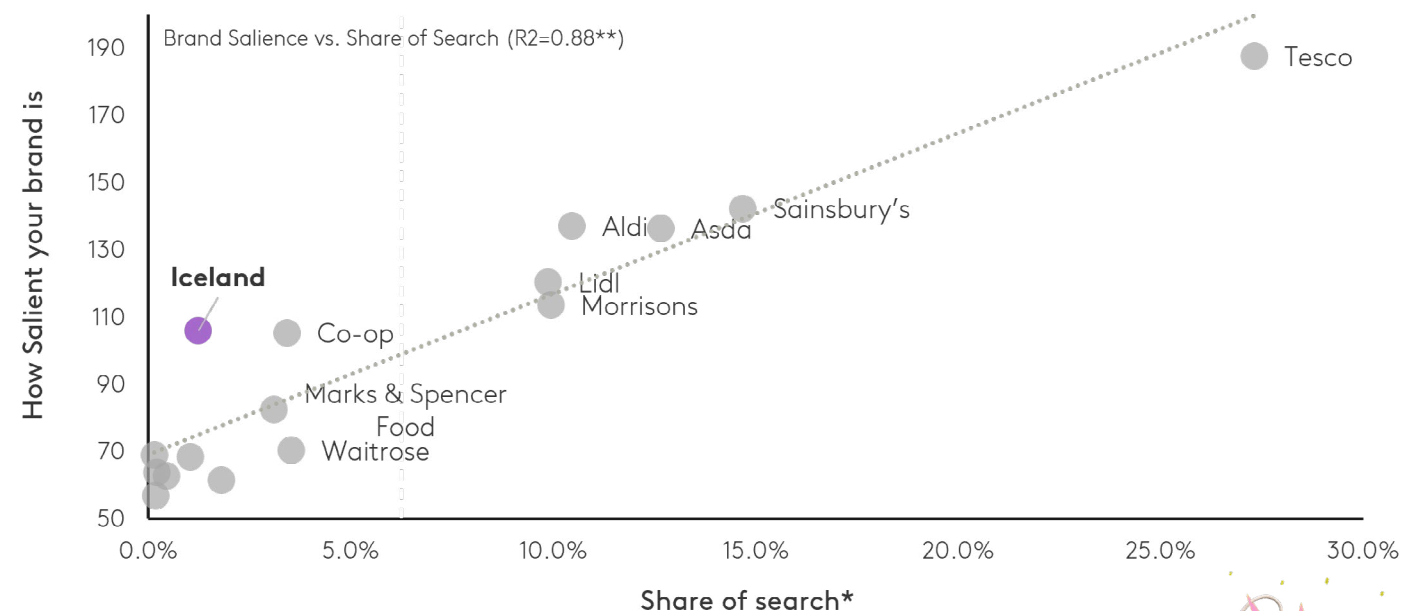
Why is this, and what would make consumers go the extra mile to buy from the British frozen-foods supermarket chain?

We diagnosed the following: expanding the product range, especially in popular categories like vegan/vegetarian foods, fresh/deli items, slimming/weight-loss products, and allergy-friendly goods, along with opening more stores and adding amenities like toilets and baby changing facilities, will push Iceland's purple dot significantly down the x-axis.

Untangling the messy middle could be your most powerful strategy to boost sales conversion and fend off the surge of Private Label brands too.

[Read the full article](#)

LISTING HIGH DEMAND CATEGORIES WILL BRIDGE ICELAND'S HIGH SALIENCE VS LOW SHARE OF SEARCH GAP



Source: Kantar's BrandDynamics & BrandDigital | June '24



Want to stay on top of disruptors and expand your view of the market?

Fuelled by Kantar's proprietary AI toolkit, BrandDigital provides a much-expanded view of the market: geographies, languages, categories and brands as well as hard-to-reach markets. Stay on top of disruptors and expand your view of the market. [LEARN MORE](#)

#7 | Key metrics to prioritise for brand growth

J. Walker Smith, our Knowledge Lead, is right again: “Impediments to growth sit within a company itself. Growth is rarely hostage to the marketplace.”

And once again, Marketoonist creator Tom Fishburne brings a smile to our faces reminding us that relying on the ‘**growth fairy**’ is futile.

So, how can we identify growth opportunities?

Instead of a typical epilogue that reveals the fate of a book’s characters, **I’d rather reveal the top three insights CMOs jot down in their diaries:**

- The speed at which a brand springs to mind, referred to as **saliency** (distinct from mere awareness), serves as a reliable indicator of short-term performance. When a brand is top-of-mind during pivotal decision-making moments, it stands a greater chance of being selected. Yet, while saliency is undeniably vital, it alone does not assure a sale or long-term success.
- Brand equity is a leading indicator of behavioral outcomes. When our brand becomes meaningfully different to more people, we can achieve higher penetration and growth. Investing in strong brand equity is a smart move for better sales performance and market share in the long run.
- Balancing short-term and long-term indicators is crucial. Short-term metrics, like ad awareness and positive buzz, give us immediate feedback on campaign effectiveness. Long-term indicators, such as brand equity and saliency, **show the lasting impact** of our efforts and help us understand our brand’s perception over time.

In the dynamic world of brand management, our data shows that success isn’t a matter of luck but the result of deliberate and strategic actions. The simplistic idea of ‘meaningless distinctiveness’ will only stir our luck momentarily. It’s by focusing on the right metrics that we can unlock our brand’s true potential and drive sustainable growth.

Seriously, do you still believe in growth fairies?



Want to get early indicators to guide your future decisions?

Future ready tracking program for your brand, your category, your market - built on 50+ years of experience tracking the world’s most valuable brands. **LEARN MORE**

Conclusion

All brand perceptions are equal. But some are more equal than others

As the marketing industry evolves rapidly, understanding the intricate dynamics between consumer attitudes and behaviours remains paramount.

The influence of one on the other isn't always in the same direction, and sometimes perceptions and behaviours don't match at all. However, these mismatches often reveal insights to influence the right decisions.

Not all types of brand perception metrics are of equal value.

The marketing challenges in our 'Diary of a CMO' highlight that a brand metric with no proven link to sales outcomes won't help you focus on the right things. You won't maximize your brand's price elasticity by pulling the same brand perception levers that predominantly increase penetration. **Your brand's size today is not a great predictor of its growth chances tomorrow. Choose your brand metrics carefully.**

Kantar's work spanning decades, thousands of brands, and hundreds of categories has identified the building blocks of what makes some brands deliver more value. Brands that sell more, can

charge more, and have better future growth chances share broad qualities: they are better at meeting needs, more well-liked, more distinctive, more dynamic, and come to mind quickly across various category needs and occasions. They are more Meaningful, Different, and Salient than their competition.

Get the complete picture of how to drive growth for your brand by integrating brand behaviours with brand perceptions. But don't settle for equal, make sure your metrics stand out.



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CONTACT US

Here are the brilliant minds whose insights and expertise shaped this report. Thank you.

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Kantar is the world's leading marketing data and analytics business and an indispensable brand partner to the world's top companies, including 96 of the world's 100 biggest advertisers. We combine the most meaningful attitudinal and behavioural data with deep expertise and technology platforms to track how people think and act. We help clients develop the marketing strategies that shape their future and deliver sustainable growth.

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