

Burger King
The Creative Debrief

Insights, intelligence, talks, data and commentary into this multi-Lion-winning QSR brand

THE WORK

Fernando Machado recently announced that he would be moving on from Restaurant Brands International, after six years at the helm of Burger King. His impressive tenure saw the business take home 144 trophies. In this debrief, we look at some of his Cannes Lions highlights, his creative ethos and why marketing should be fun.



Fernando Machado became Global Chief Marketing Officer, Restaurant Brands International, in 2020, extending his CMO leadership to sister RBI chains Popeyes and Tim Hortons. Under his leadership, Burger King was awarded Creative Marketer of the Year at Cannes Lions in 2017 and was named Cannes Lions Creative Brand of the Year in 2019.

Burger King: holistic creativity

Fernando Machado, Former Global CMO, RBI, on delivering results with flair.

There is plenty of data proving that creativity yields better results. Yet creativity is not just advertising. It's about the spark of an idea that will help you do something different to other brands out there. Some may believe that creativity should be confined to selling products when in fact, it should permeate an entire organisation and help to deliver results.

> **Machado's advice: establishing a creative culture**
Learn, be humble and adjust. Show that tapping into creativity can help deliver your objectives. If you're risk-averse, start small, with a social media post, or a radio or print ad. That will help pave the way to bigger and bolder things. That's better than doing something vanilla.

In This Creative Debrief...

Be inspired by Burger King's creative performance over the last decade

1

Strengthening Communities



Burger King builds brand equity by engaging with communities in creative and purposeful ways.

2

The Multiplier Effect



Burger King invests in creative ideas that can gain extra mileage from being shared. Participation and PR enables it to extend reach.

3

Outstanding Winners



See exclusive data from LIONS about Multi-Lions-winning work; learn from three that stole the show.

Lessons from Burger King

Four take-outs from this edition of The Creative Debrief

Be a bold challenger

Not the biggest player in your sector? Learn from Burger King about how to maximise your challenger status to your advantage. Recognise how far to push it, and what tone to take.

1

Multiply impact

Burger King multiplies its impact by creating work that can dominate social media and generate PR. Embed assets that can be easily shared into your campaigns to kick-start them and organically lengthen duration.

2

Link promise and purpose

Burger King advocates for inclusion in society and within its organisation, reinforcing the 'have it your way' promise. Consider how to connect your purposeful efforts back to a unique brand positioning.

3

Make creativity ubiquitous

Creativity at Burger King isn't confined to advertising; packaging, restaurant design and product all benefit from it. Consider how creativity could make a difference across your entire business.

4

1

Be a bold challenger

BK: the bold challenger

Be comfortable with challenger status – and work it hard

While McDonald's is one of the largest and most well-known fast-food chains in the world, with 38,695 restaurants, Burger King is its closest competitor, with 17,800. Many of Burger King's most successful campaigns have referenced McDonald's in a playful way, leaning into its challenger status.

Halloween has become an important seasonal event for Burger King. As many claim to find clowns scary, Burger King hones in on Ronald McDonald, using the clown to drive footfall, app downloads or promotions. Many of its Halloween-themed initiatives have also used humour as part of the conversation.



SCARIEST BK | DAVID MIAMI 2017

For instance, Scariest BK dressed up an outlet of Burger King as a McDonald's, reinforcing a point of difference about its brand versus McDonald's.

Scariest BK

Burger King vs McDonald's

2016 McWhopper

To mark International Peace Day, Burger King invited McDonald's to join forces on a combo sandwich, McDonald's declined. So Burger King linked up with other restaurants and invited people to make their own McWhopper.



2019 Burn That Ad

What do you do when your competitor outspends you in media 4:1? Hack their ads. An AR feature on the Burger King app changed every McDonald's ad into one ad for Burger King. Each time, it generated a coupon for a free Whopper.



McWhopper (Y&R Auckland)
2 Grands Prix, 6 Golds, 6 Silvers, 3 Bronzes

Scary Clown Night (MullenLowe Madrid)
3 Golds, 2 Bronzes

Burn That Ad (David São Paulo)
1 Gold, 3 Silvers, 5 Bronzes

Whopper Detour (FCB USA)
3 Grands Prix, 5 Golds, 3 Silvers, 1 Bronze

2018 Scary Clown Night



In a nod to McDonald's mascot, Burger King enjoys capitalising on the creepiness of clowns. Here, it invited people to turn up as clowns on Halloween to claim their free Whopper in-store.

2019 Whopper Detour

A challenger campaign to drive app downloads: this mobile promotion steered diners to McDonald's to claim a 1 cent Whopper



Wink, don't punch

Fernando Machado, Former CMO, RBI, on how to be bold

"Burger King is a fun brand. McDonald's is too but it's more family-focused fun. Burger King tries to be a bold challenger. So when we play with our competitors, it's not like a punch in your face, it's more friendly.

That's because people who eat at McDonald's also eat at Burger King and vice versa. If you insult your competition, you insult yourself. That's why being self-deprecating works for us. If you make jokes, you need to be able to take jokes too. It's a mistake to do something harsh; it's a wink not a punch."



BURN THAT AD | DAVID SAO PAULO 2019



"This is a big brand taking on an even bigger competitor, moving quickly, being bold, acting within the brand, acting cheekily, reacting to events, bringing consumers in."

Nick Waters
Group CEO, Dentsu Aegis Network
Jury President, Media Lions, 2016

2

The Multiplier Effect

Bake in social and PR

Burger King reaches its audience through campaigns such as **Whopper Detour** and **Google Home of the Whopper** that rely heavily on social and PR.



WHOPPER DETOUR | FCB USA 2019

And some campaigns, such as **Burning Stores** and **McWhopper**, started with a print ad then became famous. As **Fernando Machado**, Former Global Chief Marketing Officer at RBI says: "**Bill Bernbach** said, 'If no-one notices your advertising, everything else is academic'. If you're attracting interest, you're being noticed and that will help you meet your objectives."

He adds: "PR and social media go hand-in-hand; there's a symbiotic relationship between them. Powerful ideas can trigger both sociability and talkability and that ends up being a multiplier on the media plan. People see our creative output but there is a method in the madness; we are structured in how we work."

Social and PR: Burger King's milestones

2015 Proud Whopper

'We are all the same inside' was the message inside a special edition rainbow-coloured Whopper wrapper to celebrate equal rights.

*** 1.1 billion media impressions**

*** US$21m in earned media**





Burger King spotted a behaviour - keeping Google Home devices near to TVs - to bring this hackable stunt into people's living rooms.

*** 9.3 billion global impressions**

*** US$35m in US media**

2017 Google Home of the Whopper

Proud Whopper (David Miami)
3 Golds, 6 Silvers, 4 Bronzes

Whopper Neutrality (David Miami)
1 Silver, 1 Gold

Google Home of the Whopper (David Miami)
1 Grand Prix, 2 Golds, 5 Silvers, 6 Bronzes

Burning Stores (David Miami)
1 Grand Prix

2016 Whopper Neutrality

Burger King made a stand against net neutrality, making a complex subject easy to understand through a social video.

*** 4.3 billion impressions**

*** US$67m in earned media**

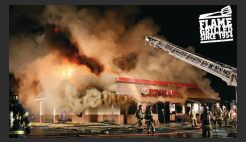


2019 Burning Stores

Mocked up photos of BK outlets on fire hammered home its flame-grilled USP.

*** 100 million impressions**

*** US$1.5m in earned media**



3
Building communities

The purposeful patty

Burger King has invested in purposeful efforts targeting specific communities; the common theme is equal rights and inclusion.
Proud Whopper promoted equal rights in 2015 and, in celebration of National American Sign Language Day, Burger King changed its logo, releasing a film that showed its mascot, The King, signing.



Burger King is also clear about the progress it intends to make in terms of representation within its own organisation.

Machado says: “We over-index with Hispanics and Latinos, and we’ve made good progress in terms of LGBTQ+ representation over the last seven years. We lag on African American representation. It’s increasing but it’s not where it should be. The change is coming but it takes time to make an impact.”

“Enhance people’s lives”

Fernando Machado talks about the value of a meaningful mindset in helping communities

“The brands that did well in the pandemic helped people in communities without calculating the short-term ROI of doing so.

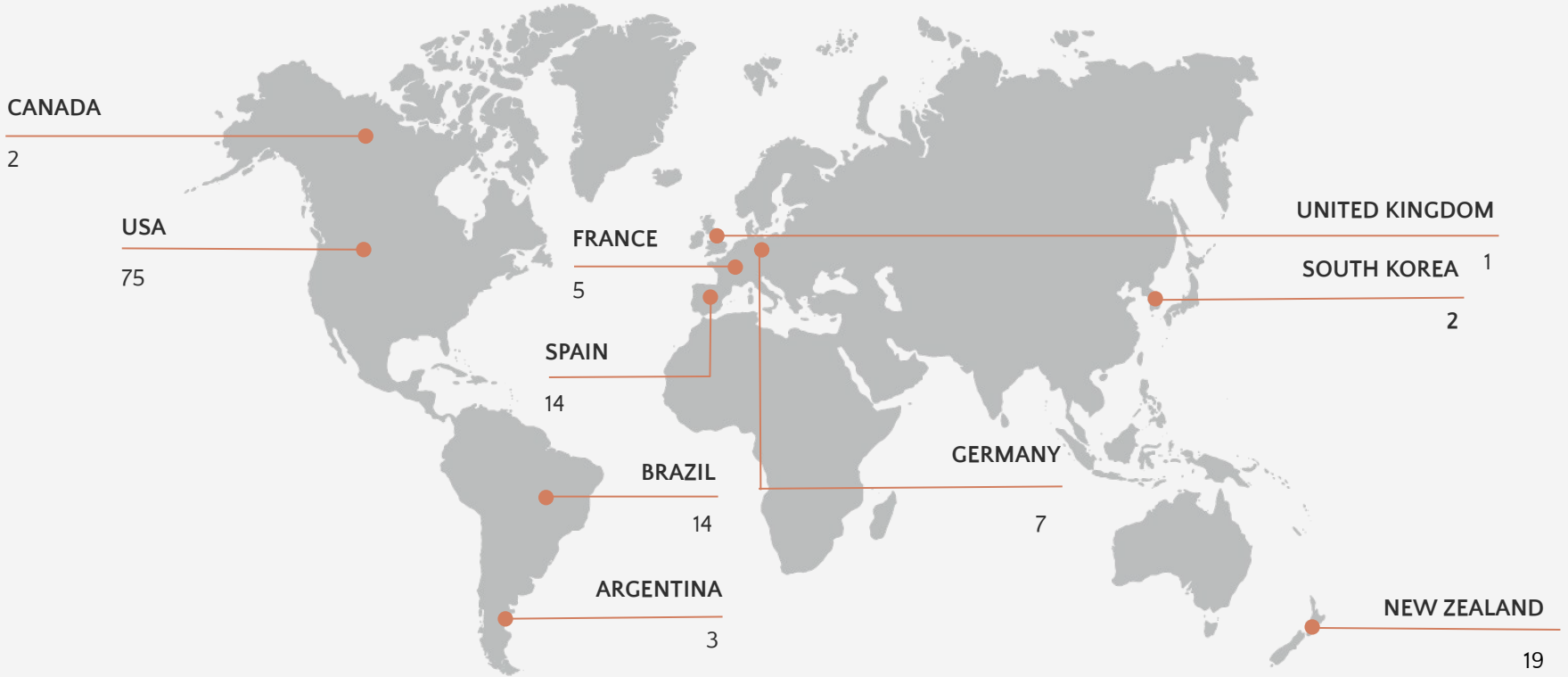
“At Burger King, we donated a million kids meals in the US because kids weren’t eating. What’s the ROI of giving away a million meals? I have no idea. But it was the right thing to do.

“Brands emerging strong from the pandemic had the same mindset. Those brands understand that being purposeful and playing a role is not about picking a random cause; it’s about enhancing people’s lives.”

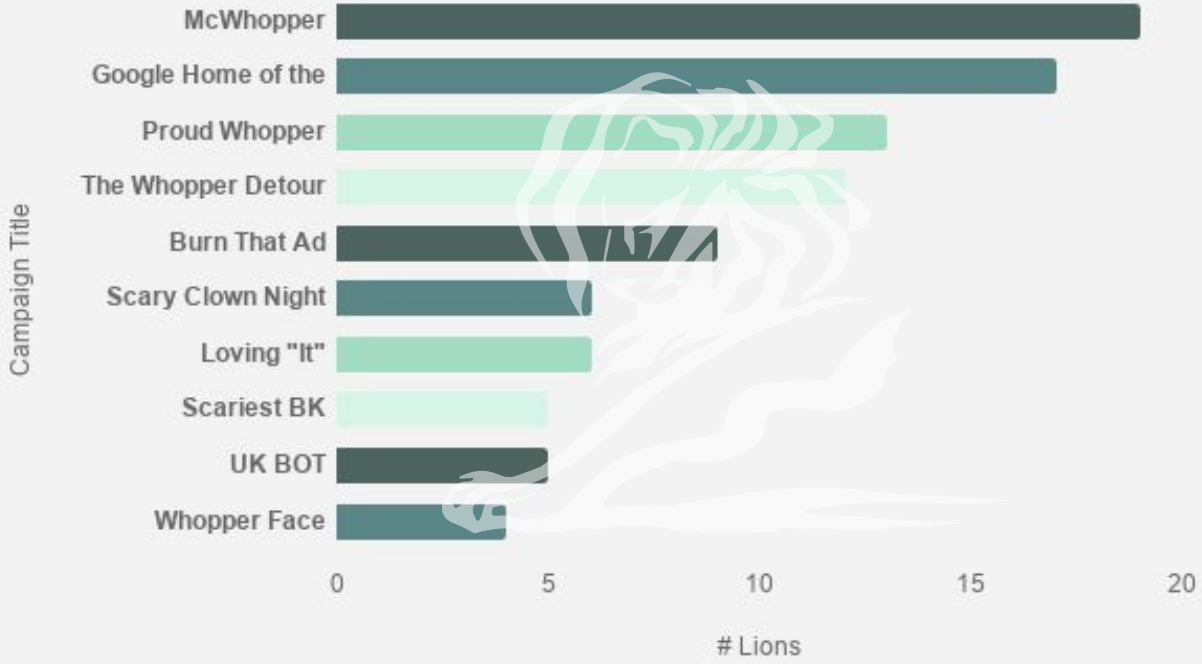


4
Data

Burger King Lions: 2010–2019



Most awarded work, 2010–2020



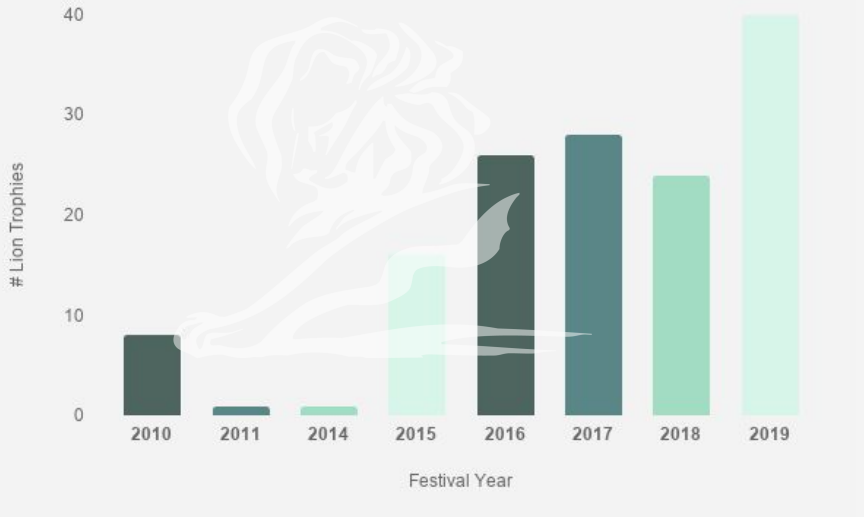
- Winners featured won four Lions or more.
- **McWhopper** has won the most Lions (19) followed by **Google Home of the Whopper** (17).
- **Proud Whopper** won 13 Lions, while **The Whopper Detour** took 12.

Burger King: best-performing agencies

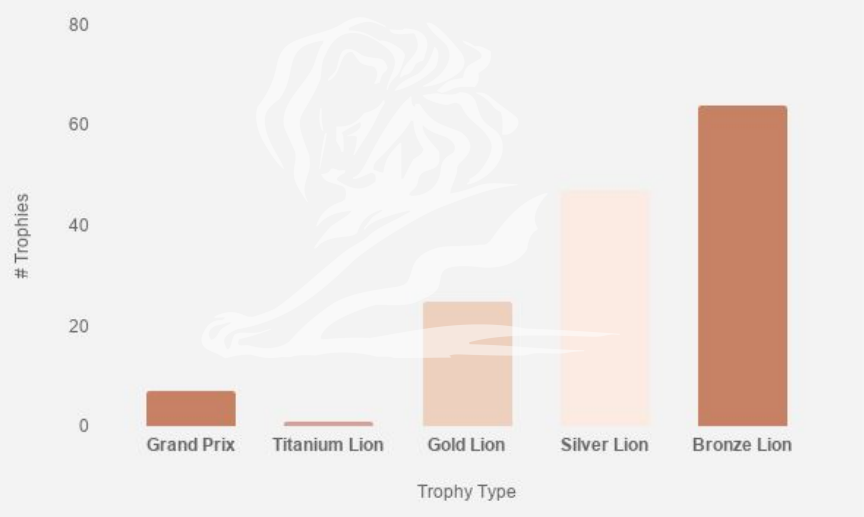
Agency	Country	Number of Lions
DAVID Miami	US	53
Y&R NZ	NZ	17
LOLA MullenLowe	Spain	13
FCB New York	US	12
DAVID São Paulo	Brazil	9
Grabarz & Partner	Germany	7
Buzzman Paris	France	5
Ogilvy Brasil São Paulo	Brazil	4
INGO Stockholm	Sweden	4
Crispin Porter + Bogusky Boulder	US	4

- Individual agencies listed have won four or more Lions for **Burger King** over the last decade.
- **David Miami** has won the most trophies, with 53.
- **Y&R New Zealand** is in second place with 17.
- **LOLA MullenLowe** is third, with 13 Lions.
- **FCB New York**, in fourth place, has won 12 Lions for Burger King work.

Lions won by year and trophy type

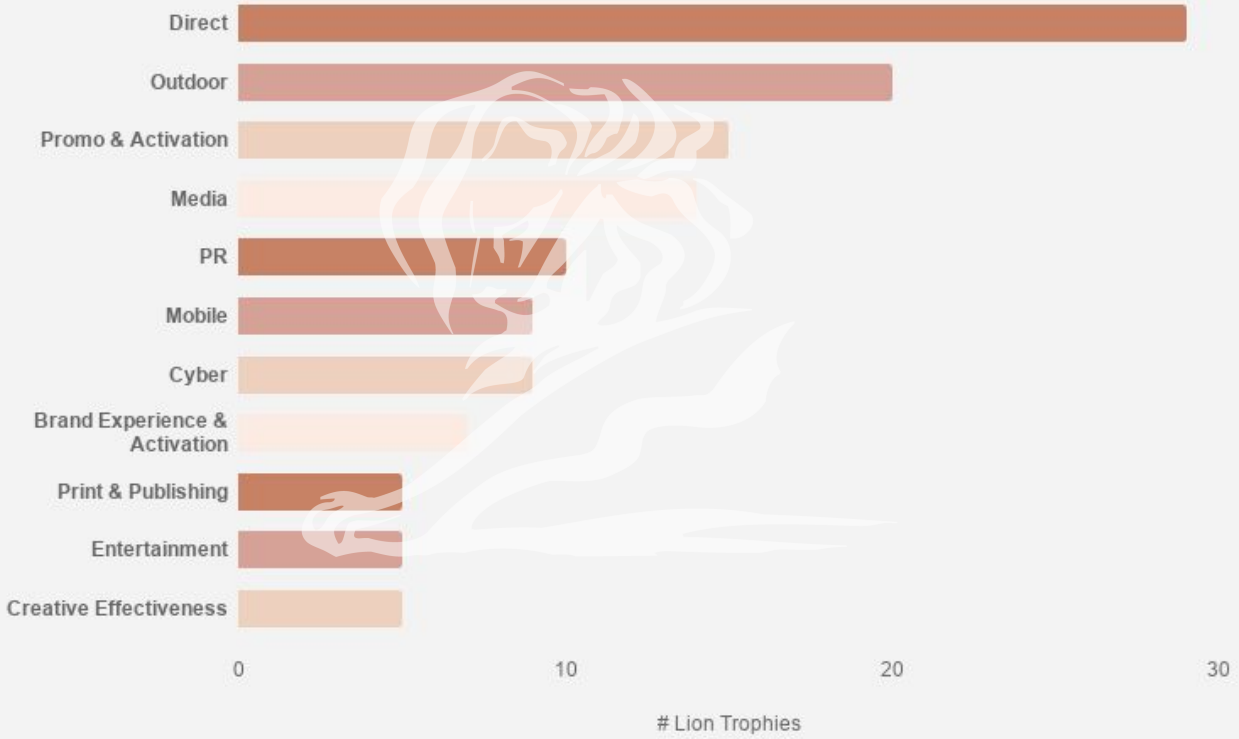


2019 was an especially strong year for Burger King, building on a solid haul of Lions between 2015 and 2018.



Over the last decade, Burger King has picked up 144 trophies, including seven Grands Prix and one Titanium, for McWhopper.

Wins by category: 2010-2020



- This shows the categories in which Burger King has won five or more Lions since 2010.
- Burger King has won the most Lions for Direct (29), with Outdoor (20) in second place, followed by Promo & Activation (15) and Media (14).
- Between 2010 and 2014, wins were in five categories, whereas between 2015 and 2019, trophies diversified across 18 Lions.

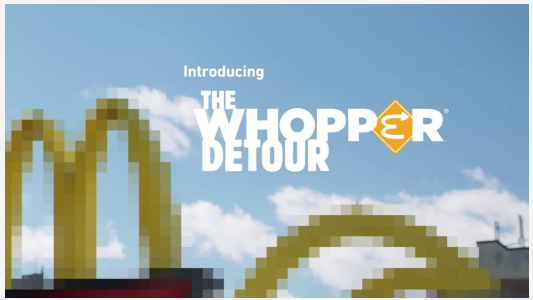
5
Outstanding Winners

Top Performers, Lions: 2010-2020

McWhopper is the most awarded work for Burger King, with 19 Lions, followed by **Google Home of the Whopper,** with 17. **Whopper Detour** took 12 Lions in 2019.



MCWHOPPER | Y&R NZ 2016



WHOPPER DETOUR | FCB USA 2019

Here, we take a closer look at McWhopper, Google Home of the Whopper and Whopper Detour.

Learn take-outs and hear from the Cannes Lions Jury Presidents.



GOOGLE HOME OF THE WHOPPER | DAVID MIAMI 2017

Google: Home of the Whopper

Burger King aired a TV spot that ended with the question: “Ok Google, what is in the Whopper Burger?” triggering thousands of devices that started reading the list of ingredients from The Whopper’s Wikipedia page.

The new behaviour that Burger King spotted people – keeping Google Home devices near to TVs – was key to activation.



21 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Grand Prix ●

Gold Lion ● ● ● ● ● ●

Silver Lion ● ● ● ● ●

Bronze Lion ● ● ●

Shortlisted ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

> **Takeout**: marketers can spot opportunities by keeping close tabs on how new technological devices and platforms are integrating with existing channels. Within that integration could be a new way for your brand to communicate with its audience.

Google Home of the Whopper



"It gets to you in your living room. It messes with you. It was just outstanding, outrageous, simply incredible, and we loved it to bits."

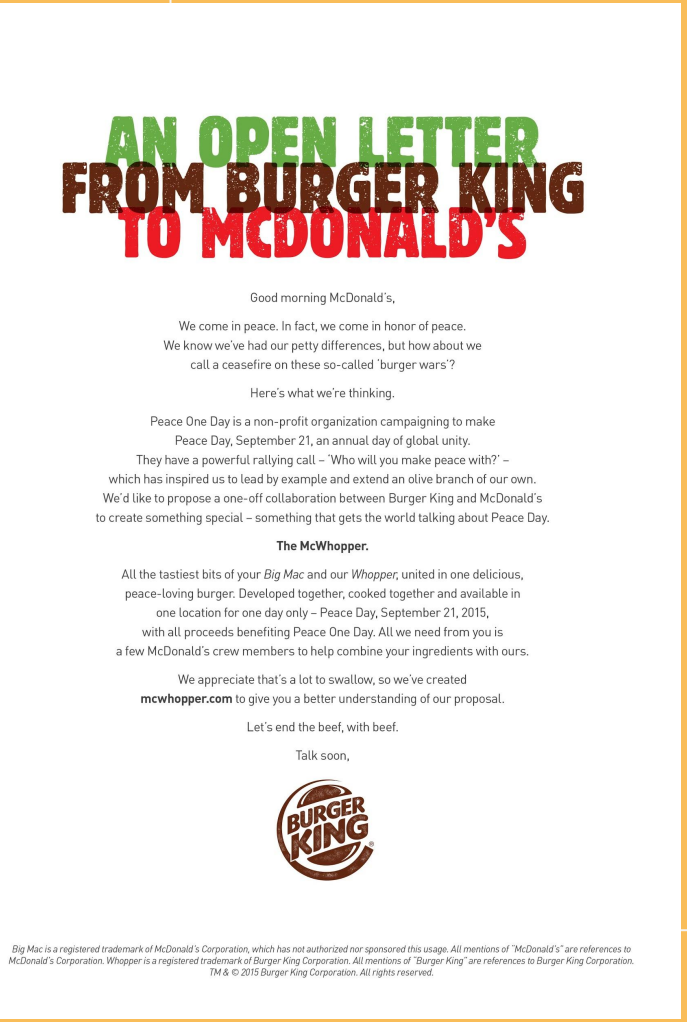
Ted Lim, Creative Consultant
Jury President, Direct, 2017

McWhopper: noise around peace

Burger King suggested a tie-up with McDonald's: the McWhopper, a combo sandwich. Proceeds would benefit the non-profit organisation Peace One Day. Kicking off with a full page ad in the *Chicago Tribune* and *The New York Times*, it wanted to raise awareness of International Peace Day. Cue more PR and social when McDonald's refused.



> **Takeout**: make your campaign inherently easy to share by providing ready-made assets. McWhopper encouraged people to mash up their own McWhoppers, giving it additional reach.



AN OPEN LETTER
FROM BURGER KING
TO MCDONALD'S

Good morning McDonald's,

We come in peace. In fact, we come in honor of peace.
We know we've had our petty differences, but how about we
call a ceasefire on these so-called 'burger wars'?

Here's what we're thinking.

Peace One Day is a non-profit organization campaigning to make
Peace Day, September 21, an annual day of global unity.
They have a powerful rallying call – 'Who will you make peace with?' –
which has inspired us to lead by example and extend an olive branch of our own.
We'd like to propose a one-off collaboration between Burger King and McDonald's
to create something special – something that gets the world talking about Peace Day.

The McWhopper.

All the tastiest bits of your *Big Mac* and our *Whopper*, united in one delicious,
peace-loving burger. Developed together, cooked together and available in
one location for one day only – Peace Day, September 21, 2015,
with all proceeds benefiting Peace One Day. All we need from you is
a few McDonald's crew members to help combine your ingredients with ours.

We appreciate that's a lot to swallow, so we've created
mcwhopper.com to give you a better understanding of our proposal.

Let's end the beef, with beef.

Talk soon,

BURGER KING

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"It's a very simple print ad but it started a huge movement. It got hijacked by the press, hijacked by TV. Everybody was talking about it. That's the power of a great print ad."

Joji Jacob, Co-Founder and
Creative Partner, BLKJ
Jury President, Print, 2016

McWhopper: noise around peace



16 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Grand Prix ●●

Gold Lion ●●●●●●

Silver Lion ●●●●●

Bronze Lion ●●●

Shortlisted ○○○○○○○○○

Results:

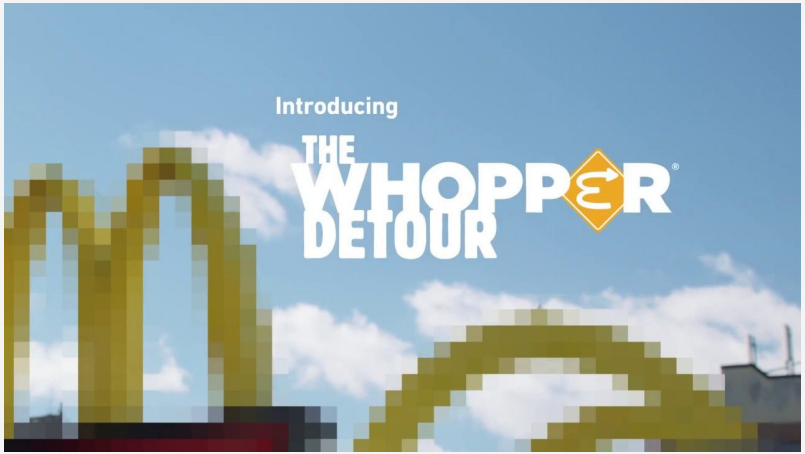
- **8.9 billion** media impressions
- **$138m** earned media
- **+25%** BK purchase consideration
- **40%** increase in Peace Day awareness

McWhopper on The Work

Whopper Detour: direct action

Burger King wanted to encourage downloads of its mobile ordering app. This initiative geo-fenced outlets of McDonald's, encouraging people to visit McDonald's to redeem a voucher that gave them a Whopper for a cent.

Watch an interview with Gabriel Schmitt, Chief Creative Officer, FCB New York, from Cannes Lions in 2019



19 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Grand Prix	● ● ●
Gold Lion	● ● ● ● ●
Silver Lion	● ● ●
Bronze Lion	●
Shortlisted	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

> Takeout: Going where your audience is and being clear about what you want them to do is key to successful creativity. One of Burger King's strengths is direct-to-consumer marketing campaigns. It goes to its audience with a clear call-to-action or with a particular customer journey mapped out.



“It was a complete, direct campaign... It asked you to do something and millions of people did it, but it was actually answering a business problem.”

Nicky Bullard, Chairwoman & Chief Creative Officer, MRM
Jury President, Direct, 2019

LIONS | THE WORK

- THE WORK

—Campaigns
over 200,000 Cannes Lions winning campaigns; featuring the stories behind them, how they were briefed, researched, conceived and crafted

Behind The Work
research, expert opinion, docuseries and podcasts from Lions and partners

Talks
1,600 Festival talks from 2011 onwards - available to watch in full

Daily Inspiration
best-in-class work curated by experts

Benchmarking
official rankings covering top-performing agencies, brands and people

Classic
watch beautifully restored work from 1954-2000

The next edition of The Creative Debrief, on IKEA, will be published in June.

If you are interested in hearing more about specific creative trends or in benchmarking your organisation's creative work, please contact **lionsadvisory@canneslions.com**