

MAKE
IT
WARC

Strategy and
effectiveness
lessons from
Cannes Lions 2019

SEVEN THEMES FOR STRATEGISTS FROM CANNES LIONS 2019

WARC's content team spent Cannes Lions 2019 tracking down relevant sessions for marketing strategists (both on the agency- and client-side), interviewing judges of the Creative Effectiveness and Creative Strategy Lions, and, of course, presenting the seven sessions of 'WARC Day' in the Palais.

This report is a bite-sized summary of the industry trends we picked up from the festival:

1. Strategy is evolving in the age of experience
2. There is a crisis in creative effectiveness
3. Judges want to see impact beyond the short term
4. CMOs want action on brand safety, and data on brand purpose
5. Media owners are talking up 'context'
6. Accessibility and inclusion are feeding into brand strategy
7. Emerging categories hold lessons in brand-building

Stay tuned in the coming weeks for more from Cannes Lions: we've already published case studies entered into the Creative Effectiveness Lions; we'll be releasing full reports from the sessions mentioned in this summary; and we'll be publishing our annual analysis of the winning creative effectiveness papers.



Don't forget to download our new *'Anatomy of effectiveness'* white paper at [makeitwarc.com](https://www.makeitwarc.com)



Converting interest is not the same as building memories. It's not the same as building meaning, or creating primary demand, or supporting pricing – the stuff some of us still choose to call brand-building.

Martin Weigel, Head of Planning, Wieden+Kennedy Amsterdam



David Tiltman
VP Content, WARC

50%

of strategists are doing
more CX work than
they were a year ago

INSIGHTS FROM THE STRATEGY SESSIONS

STRATEGY IS EVOLVING IN THE AGE OF EXPERIENCE

'Customer experience' was a term used liberally in Cannes this year – it's a brand priority, and has helped to drive the rise of the management consultancies in marketing services. There's evidence that this agenda is affecting the work of strategists – WARC's Future of Strategy survey found that 50% of strategists are doing more CX work than they were a year ago.

Brand-building is changing

As 'experience' stretches far wider than paid media, companies will need brands to be "organising ideas" or "creative systems", rather than just starting points for creative communications. The concept of brands as 'organising principles' came up both during WARC Day in the Palais, and in judging for the Creative Effectiveness and Creative Strategy Lions. It was claimed that the younger generation of strategists often have deep channel expertise, but lack brand-building experience – an area the industry needs to rectify. Several speakers warned against the surrendering of brand strategy to data (the "outsourcing of common sense", in the words of Harjot Singh, Chief Strategy Officer, McCann Worldgroup EMEA).

Beware too much personalisation

There is pushback against the trend to use data in pursuit of "one-to-one at scale" when it comes to creativity, as too much personalisation destroys the brand. Martin Weigel of Wieden+Kennedy Amsterdam argued that being relevant won't matter if you're boring: "We've been suckered into believing we don't need to build memories."

Share of experience matters

Strategists need to be better at measuring 'share of experience', rather than 'share of voice', according to Dom Boyd, former Chief Strategy Officer at Publicis. This can provide them with more effective ways to benchmark investment and measure performance.



Lena Roland

Managing Editor, WARC Knowledge

52%

of business leaders, including 30% of senior-level marketers, rate their knowledge of brand building as average to very poor

NEW RESEARCH AT CANNES LIONS

THERE IS A CRISIS IN CREATIVE EFFECTIVENESS

Two pieces of research debuted during 'WARC day' in the Palais revealed the crisis in creative effectiveness.

Short-termism is destroying creative effectiveness

A new study by Peter Field and the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) found that creatively awarded campaigns are now no more effective than non-awarded ones – a significant change from earlier research that showed a large effectiveness advantage for creatively awarded work. The change is largely due to the obsession with short-term sales activations over long-term brand building – what Field calls “disposable creativity”. Despite the crisis, there are glimmers of hope: the report identifies best practice examples from brands such as Guinness, Snickers and Maltesers, all of which take a balanced approach to short and long-term objectives.

The C-suite lacks confidence in marketers as brandbuilders

Research conducted by the FT, also in partnership with the IPA, found 52% of business leaders, including 30% of senior-level marketers, rate their knowledge of brand building as average to very poor, even though they are responsible for setting marketing objectives across both the short-and long-term.

Short-termism extends to media choice

Together, the FT and Peter Field studies argue that brands are not investing their media budgets as effectively as they could. In the FT study, senior executives are focused on performance marketing, as this is easier to measure – and as a result online channels such as social media and digital display advertising, alongside word of mouth, are perceived to be the most important. Field argues the best campaigns make much greater use of broad-reach, brand-building media, especially TV but also online video and OOH.



Brands will have to live in the digital reality but they can't be defined by it – they have to have some kind of connection to a physical space.

John Seifert, CEO, Ogilvy Worldwide; Jury President, Creative Effectiveness Lions 2019



Lucy Aitken

Managing Editor, Case Studies,
WARC

+10%

Sales growth in Carrefour's
produce section, in the wake
of its 'Black Supermarket'
initiative, and instore traffic
grew by +15%

INSIGHTS FROM THE CREATIVE EFFECTIVENESS LIONS

JUDGES WANT TO SEE IMPACT BEYOND THE SHORT TERM

The Creative Effectiveness Lions put a spotlight on the types of creativity that are driving business impact. In their interviews with WARC, judges highlighted a number of trends in the work.

Effective brands look for sustained impact

The most effective brands do not focus on the short term; effectiveness winners looked beyond traditional campaign cycles to invest in creative ideas that will carry on under their own momentum after the official campaign duration period has ended. Whether it's an idea that lives on in culture ([It's a Tide Ad](#)) or a more participatory business model ([Xbox](#)), successful brands are setting the bar high and often achieving results with a lasting legacy – in the case of Grand Prix winner Carrefour, this included policy change ([Carrefour](#)).

The enduring power of the 'real'

As spend in digital channels increases, some brands are achieving exceptional stand-out by investing in 'real world' statement pieces at the heart of their campaigns. The Creative Effectiveness winners showed some memorable examples, for instance a striking installation in central London, to raise awareness around male suicide for UK charity [CALM](#). Meanwhile, [National Safety Council](#)'s sticker and memorial wall helped stem the prescription opioid crisis in the US and Grand Prix winner Carrefour's Black Supermarket, an installation inside branches of the French retailer prompted legislative change.

Effectiveness cases show power of channel thinking

Clients are looking to understand how combinations of channels, and the right phasing, can help creative messages leave a long-lasting impact on culture. As John Seifert of Ogilvy Worldwide, president of this year's Creative Effectiveness jury, commented, the single biggest demand of clients is "to piece things together in a way that not only creates impact in the medium term but has the ability to influence the whole mix".



Anna Hamill
Senior Editor, Brands, WARC

65%

of consumers would stop using a brand or product that appears alongside fake or inflammatory content

INSIGHTS FROM THE MARKETER SESSIONS

CMOS WANT ACTION ON BRAND SAFETY, AND DATA ON BRAND PURPOSE

Senior marketers were out in force at this year's Cannes Lions – both on the stages and at the dedicated CMO Growth Council sessions.

Brand safety is top of mind

Brand safety remains top-of-mind as data breaches, hateful content and privacy concerns erode CMO trust in some of the tech platforms. Ensuring civility should be a core responsibility, noted P&G's Chief Brand Officer, Marc Pritchard. While platforms are listening to industry concerns about safety, he said, marketers themselves can do more. Building alternative owned-media platforms, shared standards on cross-platform measurement and working with proven safe platforms were among potential solutions. A [new alliance for 'responsible media'](#) from the World Federation of Advertisers aims to keep up momentum in this area.

Brand safety and data ethics are issues for consumers, not just brands

[Harris Poll and DoubleVerify research](#) shows 65% of consumers would stop using a brand or product that appears alongside fake or inflammatory content. The poll of 2,010 consumers revealed that 71% of consumers said they share less data with brands today because of concerns around data collection and privacy.

Purpose gets practical

Purpose remains a staple of Cannes Lions. But in 2019 brands acknowledged the need for more research to show that it is having an impact. Mars [released analysis of gender equality](#) in its advertising so that it can track progress over time. [Unilever partnered with UCL](#) to understand how the unconscious biases of marketing staff affected creativity; it also revealed that its 'sustainable living' brands are driving 75% of its growth. Not before time, brands are backing purpose with cold, hard data.



We offer a tiny ad load compared to any other proposition that exists out there. Which means the customer is going to have a great experience. What advertisers get excited about is that each ad stands alone. And every single piece of content on Quibi is curated, so it's brand safe.

Jeffrey Katzenberg, Founder, Quibi; Cannes Lions Media Person of the Year 2019



Alex Brownsell
Senior Editor, Media, WARC

70+

minutes. The average daily mobile content consumption in 2019, up from 60 minutes in 2018, 39 minutes in 2017 and 6 minutes in 2012
(Quibi estimates)

INSIGHTS FROM THE MEDIA SESSIONS

MEDIA OWNERS ARE TALKING UP 'CONTEXT'

A far cry from the hyper-targeting eulogised at previous Cannes Lions festivals, this year saw environment and context return to the fore. Publishers urged marketers to take a more strategic approach to contextual suitability, and to understand user intentions within media environments.

Focus on context and 'brand suitable' media

Brands are often unaware of the words they are blocking through programmatic buying systems, with terms as ordinary as 'LGBT' and even 'pregnant' on blacklists. Companies as varied as Facebook, CNN and VICE each argued the industry should focus on media that is 'brand suitable' and appropriate to marketing KPIs, as opposed to simply 'brand safe'.

New ad formats can learn lessons from the past

Media owners in areas such as audio and connected TV were warned not to upset user experience in the rush to monetise. Gerry D'Angelo, Global Media Director at Procter & Gamble, told platforms and publishers to "look in the rear-view mirror" and understand the mistakes of the past before rolling out new ad formats and capabilities. New mobile video subscription platform Quibi appears to agree, [promising a light ad load](#) to its users and advertisers.

Gaming media goes mainstream

This focus on context extended to all channels. Gaming media tipped into the Cannes mainstream in 2019, with Activision Blizzard promoting the value of highly engaged and demographically diverse gamers. Meanwhile, audio media brands like Spotify emphasised the need for advertisers to tailor creative to music streaming and podcast environments.



Stephen Whiteside
Reports Editor, WARC

0.8%

of recent winning or shortlisted entries in the Lions' Film Craft category feature disabled people

INSIGHTS FROM THE TALKS

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION ARE FEEDING INTO BRAND STRATEGY

Accessibility and inclusion were major themes at this year's Cannes Lions, as brands seek to create products and services that meet the needs of people with disabilities, and make ads more inclusive, too. Twelve of the 25 shortlisted entries for the Innovation Lions, for instance, were related to disability in some way. And various talks offered further insight into the latest developments in this area, too.

Tommy Hilfiger's 'adaptive clothing'

Tommy Hilfiger discussed its adaptive clothing, which uses features like magnetic buttons and adjustable hems to simplify the process of getting dressed. Target's adaptive clothes, from its Cat & Jack brand for kids, have the same aim. Todd Waterbury, the retailer's chief creative officer, argued it fulfils a "dream" for parents, as their child can thus "feel like every other kid."

Designing for inclusivity makes a broader statement

Kathleen Hall, Microsoft's corporate vice president/brand, advertising and research, talked about an Xbox controller designed for Xbox gamers with disabilities, which was promoted in a 2019 Super Bowl ad. "We were marketing to a subset of people who had some challenges with dexterity and playing games. But, in doing so, you make a statement to everybody else," she said.

People with disabilities lack visibility

Research by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media found that disabled people feature in only in 0.8% of recent winning or shortlisted entries in the Lions' Film Craft category. "We have a lot of work to do," said Madeleine Di Nonno, the organisation's chief executive.



Sam Peña-Taylor
Reporter, WARC

50%

Oatly sales growth in six months as a result of its new strategy

INSIGHTS FROM THE TALKS

EMERGING CATEGORIES HOLD LESSONS IN BRAND-BUILDING

It wasn't just the big, established brands at Cannes Lions. Several talks from small brands driving emerging product categories revealed some of the challenges of building a brand from scratch in the current market

Fewer marketers = better effectiveness?

Swedish oat milk brand, Oatly, has built its brand without the aid of a marketing department. Its complaint is that classic marketing teams slow down the relationship between creatives and the business. The brand, though small, has a creative team with a direct line to the CEO. This enabled a strategic shift – the brand initially held to the clean aesthetics of the health food category before a strategic shift to an environmental purpose liberated the brand's communications.

Cannabis brands seek to build trust

There is a race to build brands in the emerging legal cannabis sector. In pharma, Greenwich biosciences needed to assure medical professionals that its CBD products were consistent enough to prescribe as a treatment for severely epileptic patients, and created a VR experience for doctors to witness and explore the firm's precision and professionalism, driving a sharp increase in brand recognition.

Balancing focused media with CSR

One marijuana retail brand, MedMen, is seeking to push the category away from 'stoner culture'. That involves removing the stigma from the category, and breaking down barriers so people can find the right products for them. Faced with significant regulation on its media placement, it has used "hyper-local old-school tactics" such as radio, cinema, OOH, and regional print. It is balancing its ad strategy with a new CSR programme designed to mitigate the legacy of illegal marijuana use.

MAKE IT WARC

Coming soon

WARC's analysis of the
Creative Effectiveness
papers

More from WARC's coverage of Cannes Lions 2019

Be inspired by creativity that works, with the
[Creative Effectiveness case studies](#)

Read in-depth coverage on brand strategy
and new research from the festival in
[WARC's event reports](#)

Read the '[The Anatomy of Effectiveness](#)'

Get in touch with our team

[Nicola Tillin](#), VP Commercial EMEA
& Americas
+44 (0)207 467 8110

[Edward Pank](#), VP Commercial APAC
+65 (0) 9327 3180

enquiries@warc.com
warc.com/demo