

# Marketers need to deliver creative that makes a lasting impression and focus less on functional messages

Issued by [Kantar](#)

16 May 2017

*Kantar Millward Brown research finds that just 15% of ads deliver messages that people can quickly absorb*



Although campaigns with a strong focus on emotional relevance and creative engagement lead to increased business, a new report out today from Kantar Millward Brown shows fewer than one in seven ads are designed to deliver a strong emotional message that consumers will quickly absorb.

The new report, [Make a Lasting Impression](#), uses analysis from Kantar Millward Brown's database of 160,000 tested ads to demonstrate how understanding the factors that drive engagement can make advertising more effective. Advertising with high creative impact – driven by emotional engagement – delivers significant improvements in predicted short-term share. Kantar Millward Brown also looked at post-campaign sales across 1,700 campaigns and analysis showed a strong focus on emotional relevance and creative engagement led to increased business.

Similar results have been demonstrated by facial coding (System 1 neuroscience approach), which has been used to assess the expressive response of consumers to ads from more than 9,000 medium/large established brands. The top ads in generating facial expressions perform much more powerfully in terms of sales uplift. At the same time, the report also explored advertising across TV, pre-roll and social media during the course of a week, which showed that just 15% of ads relied entirely on implicit messaging that people can easily absorb.

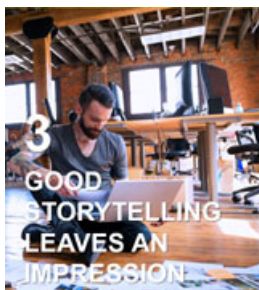
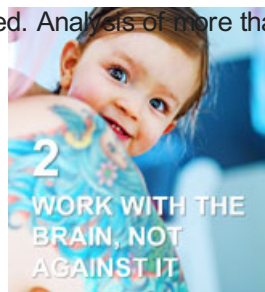
Daren Poole, Global Brand Director, Creative Development at Kantar Millward Brown, commented, "Marketers should move beyond the message and focus on the impression they want the ad – and brand – to leave behind as a whole. This includes the creative idea, what is said in the ad, the way the story is told, and the emotional tone. It's time to stop selling product features – it rarely works. Show; don't tell."

[Make a Lasting Impression](#) highlights five key areas for developing strong creative including:

**Make a meaningful impression:** Kantar Millward Brown's decades of brand tracking and equity work have highlighted the power of being meaningfully different. Advertising needs to dramatise a brand's purpose, what the brand stands for, its point of view and its values. Campaigns such as Always #likeagirl not only provide engaging content but also leave behind impressions that will support the brand long-term.

**Work with the brain, not against it:** Ads that engage people creatively and emotionally work better than those that deliver an explicit message, which viewers tend to filter out. Working the way people's brains do also means restricting the number

of key messages delivered. Analysis of more than 1,000 ads found that where a single message is included, typically 30% will take out that key message; whereas when a campaign has three messages typically only 14% will take out the first key message.



### Good storytelling leaves an impression:

Stories are a key strategy for engaging consumers with the real-life power of a brand. Yet too few brands incorporate them. Kantar Millward Brown research in 14 markets identified Kenya, USA and India as story hotspots where more than 50% of ads contained story elements. However, even

where there was a story, more than half the ads still included explicit product or service messages.



**No brand means no impression:** Even emotionally engaging ads need branding, particularly in digital where skippable formats give just seconds to make an impact. Kantar Millward Brown data over the last 25 years finds that ads with high branding typically deliver strong sales effects – 68% deliver a short-term sales uplift compared to those with low branding where 53% deliver a short-term sales uplift.



**Get the channel right:** Getting the channel right means more than identifying where your consumers view content. It also means identifying the places where they are most receptive and using those formats they feel positive towards. Kantar Millward Brown's [AdReaction Gen X, Y and Z](#) study found that while younger consumers watch less TV for example, they are more receptive to TV ads than they are to all digital formats.

To download the report or for more information, visit our website: [www.millwardbrown.com/impressions](http://www.millwardbrown.com/impressions).

### About Kantar Millward Brown

Kantar Millward Brown is a leading global research agency specialising in advertising effectiveness, strategic communication, media and digital, and brand equity research. The company helps clients grow great brands through comprehensive research-based qualitative and quantitative solutions. Kantar Millward Brown operates in more than 55 countries and is part of WPP's Kantar group, one of the world's leading data, insight and consultancy companies. Learn more at [www.millwardbrown.com](http://www.millwardbrown.com).

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