

where creativity drives progress

The Cannes Lions Hangover

The Cannes Lions hangover is real.

And just like you, we're tired of the endless "5 key takeaways" While the industry was chasing buzz, we stepped back. We chose to decode the festival not as reporters, but as strategists. From the Strategist's Angle, you see the hidden patterns, not just the shiny objects. This isn't another trend report. This is a new playbook.

The Human Touch in the Age of Al

Use technology as a bionic arm, amplifying - not automating.

Decoding and Rewriting Cultural Codes

Don't just use media, become the media, create your own culture; Turn Cities into Canvases, Traditions into New Narratives.

Bold Creativity StartsWhere Comfort Ends

Choose Discomfort by understanding how humans decide

From Audience to Ally

Create collective passion, connected fandom and turn your fans into builders

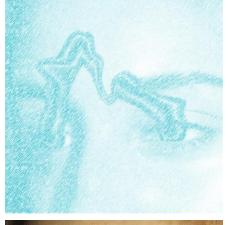
Radical Authenticity

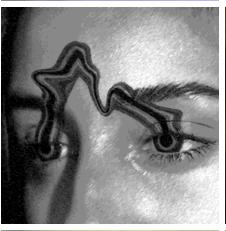
Drop the Mask, Let Imperfection and the Absurd Lead

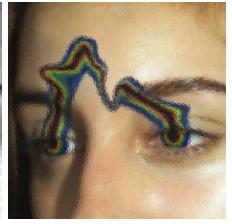
The Human Touch in the Age of Al:

The future belongs to brands and creators who use technology as a bionic arm—amplifying, not automating, the human touch.







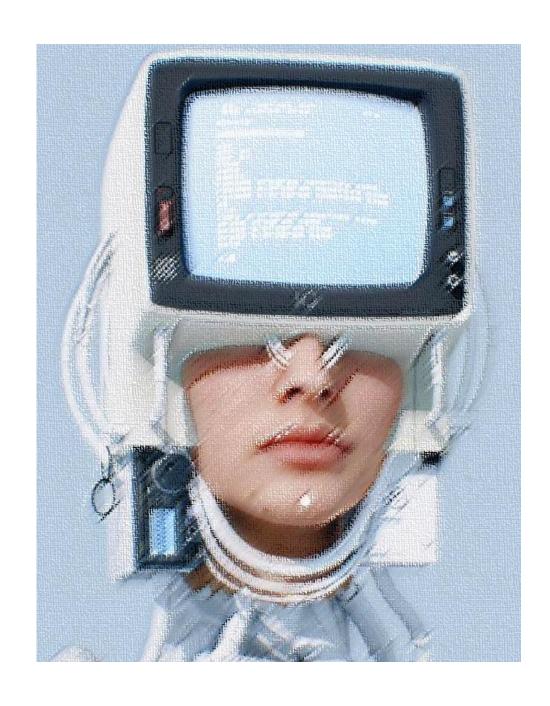






The 2025 Cannes Lions Festival made it clear: the future of creativity is not about AI versus humans, but about the bold, imaginative fusion of both.

The most celebrated work of the year used AI as a powerful enabler—unlocking new insights, amplifying craft, and scaling cultural impact—but always with a human heartbeat at its core. The winning cases and jury insights show that the campaigns which truly stand out are those that use technology to deepen human connection, tell richer stories, and solve real problems with empathy and originality. The future of creativity is human with machine, for humanity.



Al is here for enhancing our creativity not to disrupt it. Let Al be the co-pilot, not the captain.

Al can process information.
Only humans can create meaning.





... Our people have huge knowledge in art, history, about photography, they understand by having a broad knowledge about the world. They are able to ask better questions of the Al. Learning how to ask better questions of Al means you'll be able to leverage these technologies most effectively.

Daniel Hulme, Chief Al Officer WPP / CEO Satalia



The Human Touch: Creativity Can't Be Automated:

This session brought together leaders from Stagwell, 72andSunny, and United Airlines to address the heart of the AI debate. Their message was unequivocal: while AI can generate endless content, only humans can deliver the bold storytelling and emotional resonance that future-proofs brands. They argued that the death of creativity is exaggerated —

Al is a tool, not a replacement. It is a creative collaborator.

The session championed the idea that breakthrough branding lies in blending cutting-edge technology with the irreplaceable power of human creativity, turning data into story-driven insights and building culturally resonant messages that stick.



Inside the Jury Room: Creative Data Lions:

Jury members emphasised that while AI and data are powerful enablers, the winning work stood out for its humanity and craft. AI was never the idea itself, but a means to unlock deeper insights and more impactful storytelling. The jury set clear criteria:

Al must be an enabler, not the core, and the work must be transformational, with a clear, simple story that elevates the brand and connects emotionally.



Inside the Jury Room: Brand Experience & Activation Lions:

Jury presidents and members noted a dual trend: while AI-driven campaigns are on the rise, there is a growing appetite for work that is "really human, really beautifully crafted, that applies intuition and feeling that only we can do." The session referenced

Apple's "Human After All" philosophy, reinforcing that AI should be a bionic arm, but the human element—the intuition, the craft, the cultural nuance remains what truly matters and what wins.



SATO 2531

Awards: 2x Gold, 1x Silver, 2x Bronze

This campaign tackled a uniquely human issue—Japan's law requiring married couples to share a surname, threatening the erasure of 130,000 surnames by 2531. By combining data, AI-driven analytics, and intimate human insight, the campaign highlighted the cultural and emotional consequences of the law, sparking national debate and driving real change. The jury celebrated its "brilliant, intimate human insight at the heart, that simply cannot ever be automated," and its use of AI to connect with audiences in a way that was both strategic and deeply personal.

Watch here



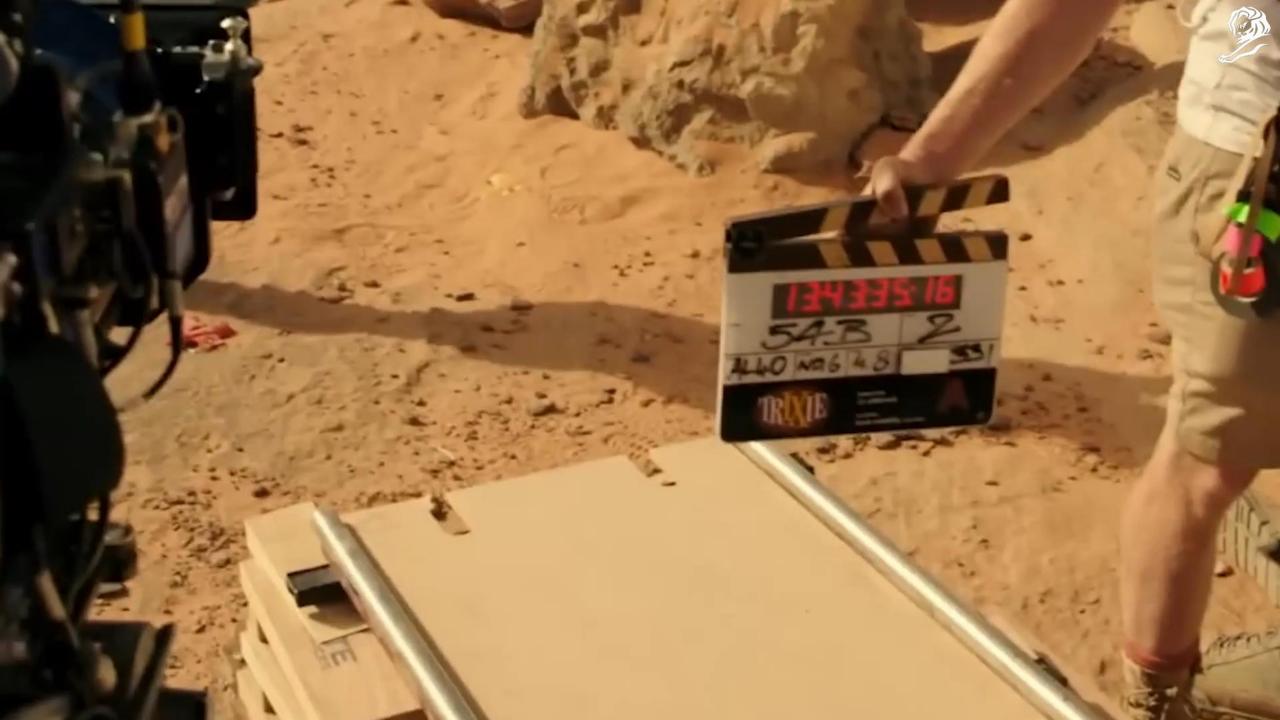


Caption with Intention

Awards: 3x Grand Prix, 1x Titanium, 3x Gold, 2x Silver, 2x Bronze

This project reimagined captions as part of the cinematic language, using dynamic text animation and AI to synchronise captions with spoken word, intonation, and character identification. The innovation was not just technical, but deeply human making content more accessible and emotionally engaging for all audiences. The jury praised the work for pioneering accessibility and using technology to enhance, not replace, the human experience.

Watch here





the cultural nuance

meaning

creative enabler

bionic arm

enhancing creativity

Bold Creativity Starts WhereComfort Ends

Choose Discomfort by understanding how humans decide



Bold creativity means embracing discomfort—challenging conventions, risk, and the unknown—to shift perceptions, business, and culture.

Cannes Lions 2025 reaffirmed that top creativity emerges when brands and agencies embrace discomfort by challenging norms, reframing risk, or reimagining business categories. Key themes from winning work and industry discussions include: reframing risk as opportunity, clarity in bold ideas, human-centric experiences, and the pursuit of craft and cultural resonance. These insights highlight the industry's commitment to choosing discomfort for breakthrough creativity.



It's not the big that beats the small. It's the bold that beats the bureaucratic.

John Hegarty, Why Giants can't dance

What is bold? Bold is boring these days.

Routine is essential for both romantic relationships and brands. Success in branding doesn't come from pursuing fleeting moments, temporary challenges, or passing trends. Instead, it's achieved by understanding cultural shifts and then maintaining a consistent, repetitive approach that helps them succeed for a long time.

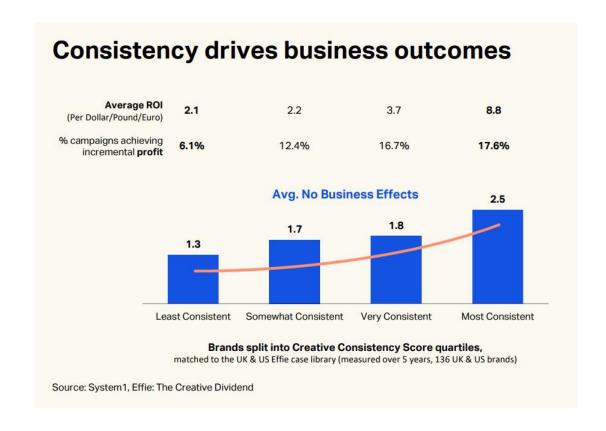




Being bold is one thing, being consistently bold makes a difference in long term.

Research by System1 highlights that consistent brands are significantly more profitable and yield higher ROI, driven by factors like longer campaigns and consistent media use. However, the modern, fragmented media landscape challenge this consistency, potentially leading to increased asset production and reduced impact from varied executions.

To navigate this, experts suggest brands operate as a "system of ideas" with strong "distinctive codes," creating a "brand universe" where core characteristics remain consistent while allowing flexibility in execution style and leveraging "freedom within a framework" for diverse content creation.



Cultural relevance # Instant reaction

True cultural relevance isn't about keeping up with every meme. It's about reading the room and also living in the room.



Unshittifying CX Reconnecting Funnels and Feelings

Despite advanced tech, customer experience satisfaction is falling. Outdated marketing and CX, disconnected from human emotion, create a loyalty crisis. Learn how Sephora, a top customer-centric brand, partners with R/GA to bridge brand promises and experience delivery, building strong loyalty.

Business of Influence: Closing the Gap Between Creativity & ROI:

This session highlighted how brands like Dove use creator marketing to drive commercial performance through emotional impact. Authentic stories and emotions boost both engagement and results. The talk identified a gap in influencer measurement, **urging a focus on emotional storytelling for ROI.** The future of influencer marketing hinges on linking creativity and measurable impact via emotional connection.



The Power of Connection: Driving Decisions Through Emotional Impact

Brand Bias is 84% Emotional

The vast majority of purchase decisions are predetermined by a consumer's existing emotional attachment and favorability towards a brand.

This "brand predisposition" means sales are won long before active search. Our primary focus must be on cultivating deep, meaningful connections that resonate emotionally.

ESO Drives Influence (16%)

In the active decision phase, where consumers seek information, earned, shared, and owned (ESO) media are 3x more impactful than paid advertising.

These channels leverage authentic human connections (e.g., recommendations, reviews, direct experiences) which build trust and influence decisions more effectively than traditional ads.

Personalize for Loyalty & Satisfaction:

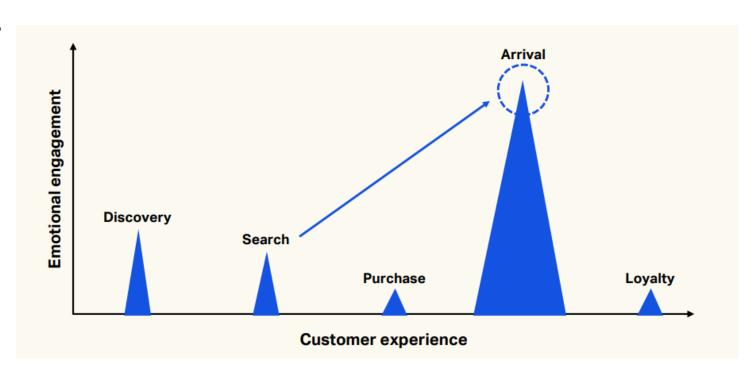
By strategically combining technology and creativity, we can deliver highly tailored and emotionally resonant experiences.

This personalized approach meets consumers where they are, reduces choice overload, and fosters long-term loyalty and satisfaction, turning customers into advocates.

Even little details make lots of difference in consumer journey. Mercado Libre is a prominent example of crafting CX journey with human touch.

Mercado Libre, Latin America's e-commerce leader, discovered a trust gap in the customer journey, specifically between placing an order and its delivery. Their CMO, Sean Summers, explained that customers doubted if their orders would actually arrive. Analysis showed the arrival moment generated the highest emotional engagement.

Recognizing this, they leveraged the arrival experience to build trust, resulting in their new tagline: «The best is coming»





The promise of brand is real-time. It's data-driven, it's dynamic, and it's multitouch points. Our jobs, as marketers of the brand, live in those touch points.

Yael Cesarkas

I can't remember anymore



Make love last: Redefining Intimacy in a Restricted Market

Awards: 1x Grand Prix, 1x Bronze

Viagra's "MAKE LOVE LAST" campaign in China used artistic long-exposure photography of real couples to subtly convey "lasting intimacy," bypassing strict advertising rules. This unbranded approach generated 350 million impressions and 1.89 million organic conversations, proving emotional resonance could effectively reach a sensitive audience in a regulated market.

Watch here

se censors cut Kate Winslet nude from Titanic 3D O Chinese Whispers

Censorship and sexuality: being gay in China

Chinese censorship, Game of es becomes a mundane medieval entary

> American TikTokers Get a Taste of Chinese Censorship as They Rush to RedNote

dramas dance around **Q** censors

China-censored version of 'The Shape of Water' adds shadows to erase nudity

China's forced invisib of LGBTQ communit on social media

AUSMA BERNOT

A safe place for young people in China to discuss sexual and gender identities has suddenly been sil

Why It's Time for Chinese Educators to Open **Up About Sex** Chinese censors shut do

Let's Talk About Sex (Education in China)

Middle school in China under fire for telling girls not to 'behave flirtatiously' to avoid sexual harassment

Tampon tax: Chinese women are breaking period taboos to campaign for lower prices

China blamed for Goddess of Victory: N censorship, despite being unavailable in

LGBTQ+ social media acc

SOCIETY & CULTURE

'We're going backward': Chinese vie by censorship of LGBTQ content in

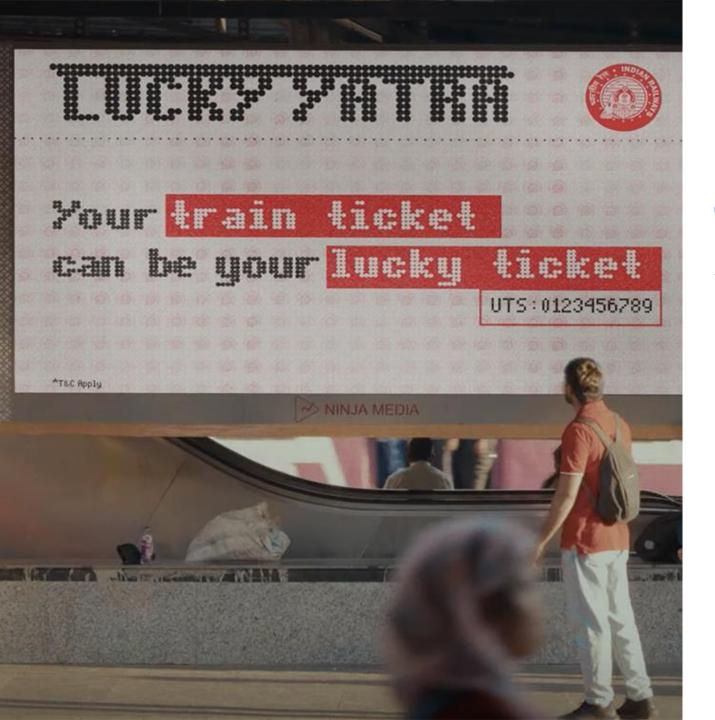
Netflix's Arcane: Vi and Caitly sapphic romance censored i China

DeepSeek is the hot new Alchatbot bu

China's censors increasingly play the part of morality

Painter Tao Sigi's Explores

isers move to RedNote, some are



Lucky Yatra: Turning Train Tickets into Hope

Awards: 1x Grand Prix, 6x Gold, 1x Silver, 1x Bronze

Facing massive revenue loss from ticketless riding, Indian Railways launched "Lucky Yatra," transforming every train ticket into a lottery entry. Tapping into India's belief in luck, this campaign incentivized ticket purchases by offering prizes, reframing compliance as an opportunity. Seamlessly integrated, it significantly boosted revenue and fostered positive behavioral change.

Watch here





"No Lay's, No Game": Match Day Essential

Awards: 1x Silver, 1x Bronze

Lay's sought to become indispensable for football viewing. Their "No Lay's, No Game" campaign turned the Champions League pregame show into a live, unscripted "Lay's Bar Crawl" with football legends. This immersive experience, amplified by fan engagement, transformed Lay's into a cultural must-have for match day. It generated massive views and sales, proving: no Lay's, no game.

Watch here





cultural relevance

living in the room

embracing discomfort

emotional storytelling

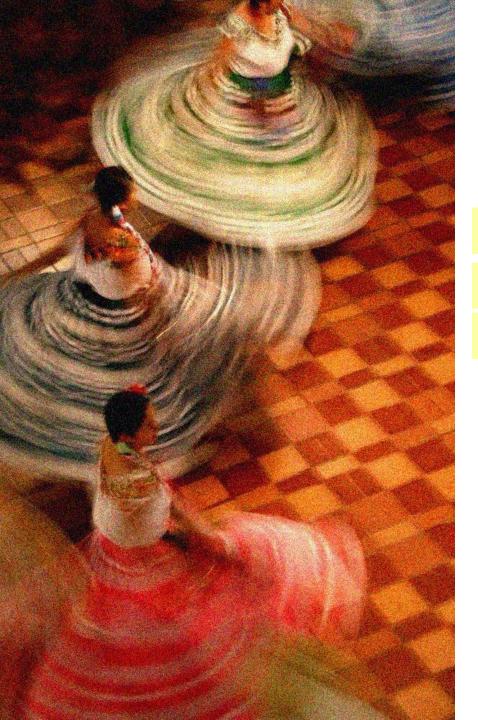
consistency, routines

Decoding and Rewriting Cultural Codes

Don't just use media, become the media, create your own culture.

Turn Cities into Canvases,

Traditions into New Narratives.



Decoding and rewriting cultural codes is the process by which brands and creators identify the implicit symbols and narratives that shape society

This goes beyond surface-level representation or trend-jumping. It involves deep cultural listening, co-creation with communities, and the transformation of both media and physical environments into platforms for new, more inclusive, and resonant stories. In 2025, this means not just using media, but becoming the media: embedding brand purpose and creativity into the very fabric of public life, digital interaction, and cultural ritual.





Inside the Jury Room: Brand Experience & Activation Lions

Jury members emphasized that globally resonant work needs clarity, simplicity, and cultural depth, often using humor or emotion. They predict a future where AI and human creativity coexist, with a renewed focus on human intuition and emotionally resonant, well-crafted work, urging brands to be active cultural participants.

Changemakers: Fireside Edition

Speakers emphasised the power of language and inclusion in shaping culture. The most effective campaigns are those that find universal human truths and create propositions everyone can participate in. The role of creatives is to challenge briefs, broaden perspectives, and ensure that the work is not just for a segment, but for all. This aligns with the theme of rewriting cultural codes by making inclusion and participation central to the narrative, rather than an afterthought.

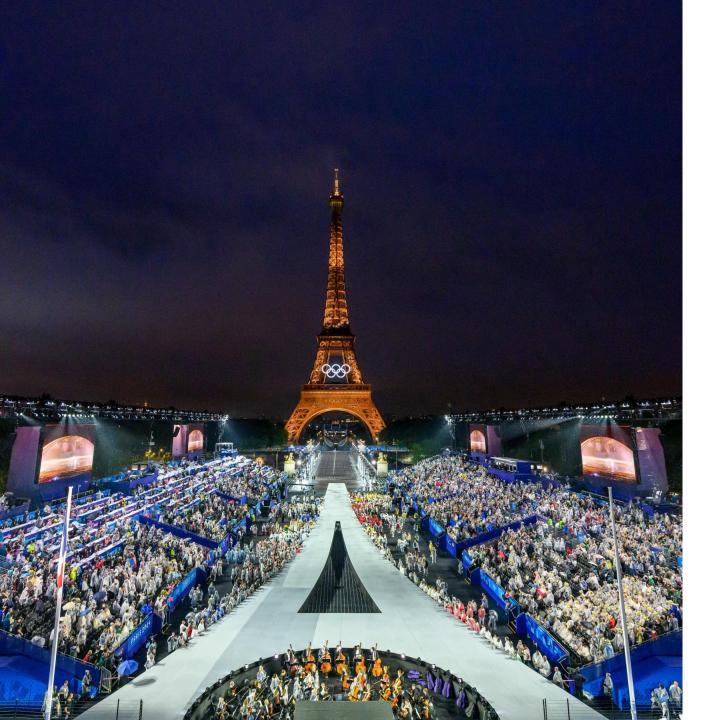


Inside the Jury Room: Media Lions

The jury discussed how the most successful work in 2025 blurred the lines between media consumer and media maker, with brands collaborating with platforms and audiences to co-create content. The future of media is expansive, with brands turning unconventional spaces and systems into new channels for engagement and commerce. The session highlighted the importance of media informing the message, not the other way around, and celebrated work that set new paths for how brands can become the media itself.

Creator Darwinism: The New Creative Advantage

Ashley Rudder and Diana Hong-Elsey discussed creators' evolution from content producers to strategic leaders, driven by audience demand for resonant, participatory storytelling. This shifts media ownership from brands to audiences, with creators acting as trusted narrators, earning trust through co-creation, as seen in Mastercard's "Abracadabra" campaign.

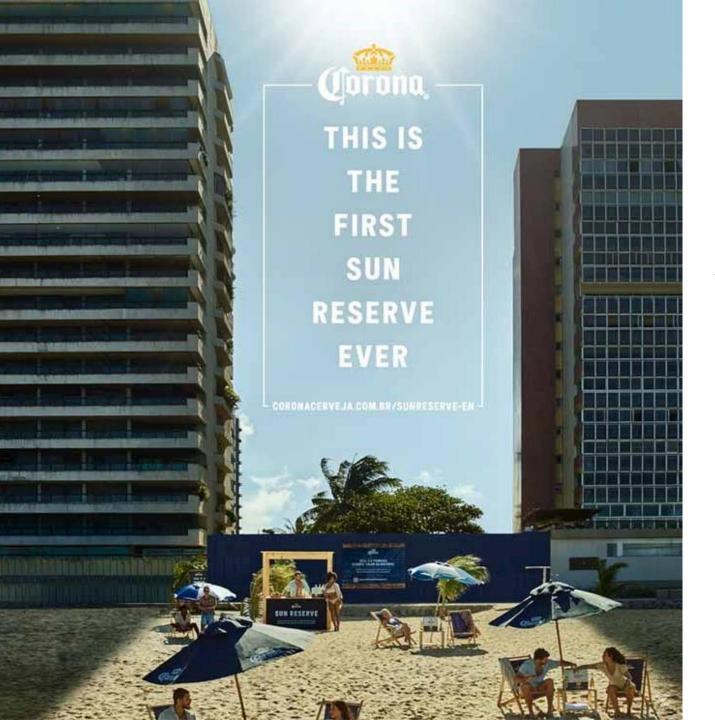


Paris 2024 Opening Ceremony: Celebration of Universal Values

Awards: 1x Grand Prix, 1x Gold, 3x Silver

Breaking tradition, the Paris 2024 Opening Ceremony moved from a stadium to the Seine, transforming 6km of Paris into a stage for "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Through twelve acts and an athlete flotilla, it celebrated inclusion and human dignity against iconic backdrops, reaching 2 billion viewers. This unique, public spectacle reaffirmed universal values in a polarizing world, earning widespread critical acclaim.





Corona's "Sun Reserve" Protects Beach Sunlight, Sparks Global Change

Awards: 1x Gold, 1x Silver

For its 100th anniversary, Corona launched "Sun Reserve," using a real estate law to protect beachfront sunlight from development. This initiative, inspired by environmental reserves, aims to preserve natural beach experiences and spark global awareness, with the first reserve in Brazil already influencing policy and inspiring future projects.





cultural participants

shaping society

becoming media from content producers to strategic leaders

creating propositions

From Audience to Ally

Create collective passion, connected fandom and turn your fans into builders



Fandom is no longer a niche. It's a powerful, cultural force that is fundamentally reshaping how brands connect with audiences and drive relevance. At Cannes Lions 2025, it was clear: the future of marketing lies in authentically nurturing these passionate communities. Fans are no longer just passive consumers; they are active participants with the power to steer culture.



Journey to the Heart of Fandom

Before we dive into campaigns and metrics, let's remember what fandom truly is: a deeply human phenomenon. It's about passion, belonging, and identity. For centuries, people have gathered around shared interests, from ancient guilds to literary salons.

What's different today is the scale, speed, and digital amplification of these connections. Fandom taps into our fundamental need for community, for shared stories, and for a place where our passions are not just tolerated, but celebrated. It's where individuals find their tribe, where niche interests become global movements, and where emotional investment fuels unparalleled loyalty. This isn't just a marketing opportunity; it's a reflection of how people connect and find meaning in the modern world.



From Niche Passion to Cultural Mainstream

For decades, fandom was often seen as a fringe activity, confined to specific genres or niche communities. But the last 20 years, particularly with the rise of platforms like YouTube, have fundamentally shifted this perception. Creators, empowered by direct access to their audiences, have cultivated communities so vast and influential that their collective voice now shapes mainstream culture.

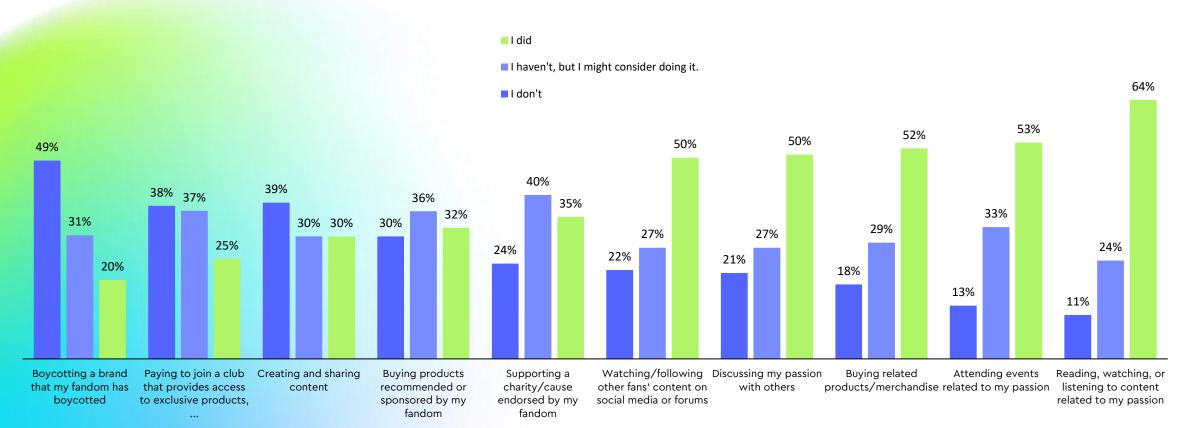
This evolution means that what was once a subculture can now dictate trends, influence purchasing decisions, and even drive social change. Brands are no longer just observing; they are recognizing that these passionate communities hold immense cultural power, capable of "flipping formats, blending genres, and pushing deeper into the mainstream" as Neal Mohan suggests. Understanding this journey is key to authentically engaging with fandom today.



85% of internet users aged 14-44 identify themselves as a fan of something or someone

While content consumption and social interaction dominate fandom activities, active measures like boycotts are less popular. People are open to participation but need encouragement, suggesting fandoms require diverse engagement strategies.

*Regarding things you are a fan of or passionate about, have you done any of the following, or would you consider doing them?



Cannes 2025: Fandom as the Heart of Modern Brand Strategy

The most celebrated campaigns at Cannes 2025 demonstrated a profound shift: successful brands don't just speak to fans; they invite them into the story, empowering them to shape narratives and blur the lines between brand, entertainment, and culture. This requires moving beyond surface-level engagement to truly immerse in fan cultures, empowering fans as valuable partners in content and narrative development, and creating participatory experiences for them to actively contribute and belong. Campaigns that tap into the emotional core of fandoms achieve deeper impact and loyalty, fostering true cultural resonance.



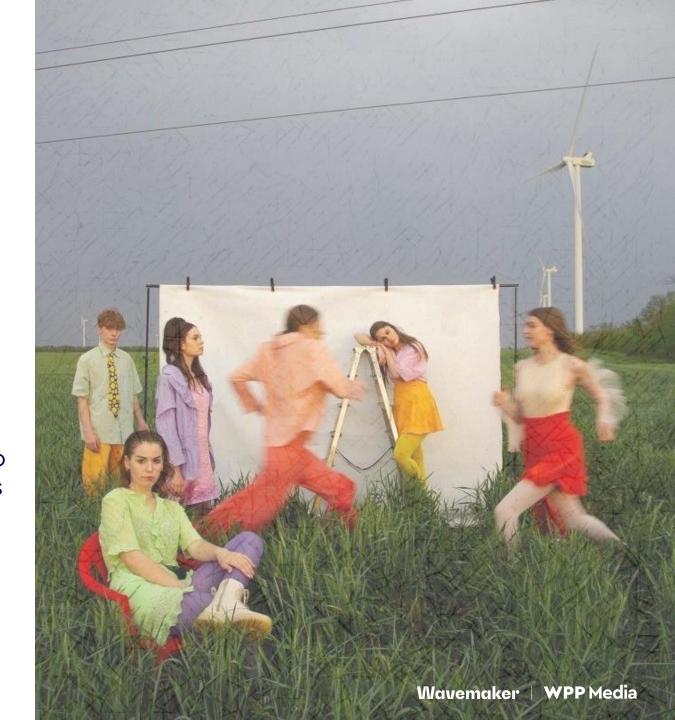






The Unstoppable Power of Fandom in Modern Branding

Cannes Lions highlighted a profound strategic shift: fandom as a core driver of brand success. Brands now tap into the inherent human desire for belonging and shared passion, moving beyond traditional marketing. It's about recognizing and nurturing existing communities who organically champion a brand. By empowering these devoted followers, brands transform passive consumers into active advocates, leveraging their authentic voices and collective energy.





Abracadabra: From Fan to Featured

Awards: 1 x Gold, 1 x Bronze

Mastercard's "Abracadabra: From Fan to Featured" campaign transformed passive consumption into active co-creation. It launched Gaga's new music video during the GRAMMYs, then invited fans to recreate choreography for a chance to be featured in an official fan edit. This ignited a viral dance movement (1.4B+ views) and significantly boosted Gen Z brand preference. The campaign empowered fans as active collaborators, proving their cultural influence is key to brand relevance and drove Mastercard's largest ever Gen Z brand uplift.



DO YOU KNOW

DO YOU KNOW THIS SONG?





DO YOU KNOW THIS SONG? DO YOU KNOW THIS SONG?





Budweiser - One Second Ads

Awards: 1 x Grand Prix, 1 x Gold, 2 x Silver, 2 x Bronze

Budweiser's "One Second Ads" brilliantly engaged music fans by challenging them to identify iconic songs from just a one-second audio clip in TikTok ads. Based on the insight that true fans recognize tracks instantly, this campaign turned passive viewing into an interactive test of fandom. By rewarding correct guesses and targeting music profiles, it sparked a viral movement. This innovative approach generated over 68 million impressions and 125,000+ comments, while cleverly avoiding music licensing costs. It positioned Budweiser as a brand that truly understands its audience's passions.





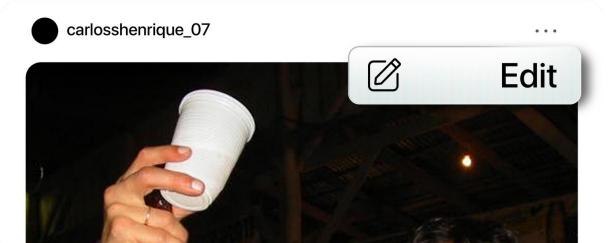
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE RAIN?



(I CAN'T GET NO) SATISFACTION



BACK IN BLACK





carlosshenrique_07 #retroad

Retro Influencers - Skol

Awards: 1x Gold, 1x Silver

Skol's "Retro Influencers" campaign redefined influencer marketing by celebrating genuine brand loyalty. For its 60th anniversary, Skol turned to its existing fandom - loyal fans who had organically shared their love for the brand asking them to simply add #retroad to the captions of their old social media posts, transforming personal memories into a national advertising campaign. This approach proved the immense power of authentic advocacy: Skol not only saved \$500K in influencer fees but also saw a 170% boost in social engagement, tripled brand mentions, and a 15% sales uplift, demonstrating that true influence comes from empowering your most loyal supporters.





OOA

+170% engagement

vs previous campaigns rate



steering culture

shared passion

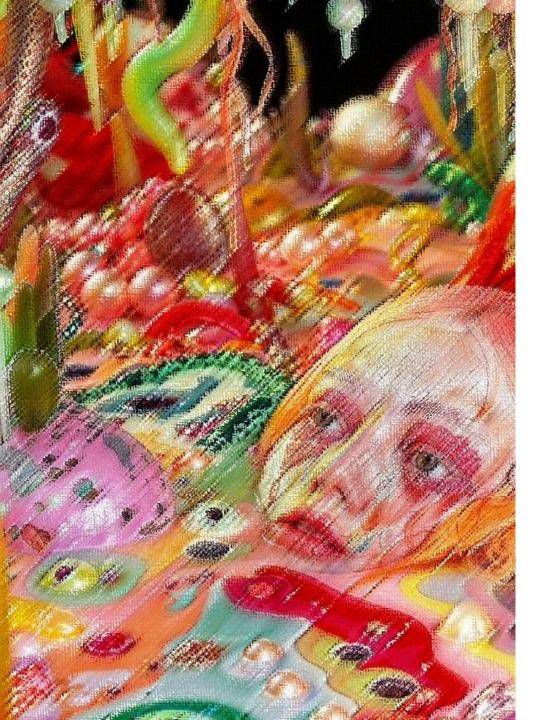
empowering existing fan communities

passive consumers into active advocates

enthusiastic communities

Radical Authenticity

Drop the Mask, Let Imperfection and the Absurd Lead



Radical Authenticity is a bold return to emotion, imperfection, and the absurd beauty of being real.

No filters. No façades. Radical Authenticity asks brands to be real even if it's messy or strange.

At Cannes Lions 2025, this truth-first approach stole the spotlight, showing that emotion and imperfection win not just attention, but hearts.

It rises as rebellion.



Let that person be that person. Brands want to mold them, but people can sniff it out immediately.



John Hegarty



"How Humans Decide"

Brand influence often takes shape well before the buying journey begins—when people are most open, unfiltered, and emotionally present. To truly connect, brands must show up in subtle, authentic, and imperfect human moments.

A bold call to shift from sales-chasing to deep emotional resonance. Authenticity lies in reaching people when they are unfiltered and human.

Key Points: 84% of a brand's sales-driving effect happens when people are not actively shopping. Brands must tap into human emotion, imperfection, and context—not just logic or data. Receptivity is the new metric.



T

"Purpose Gets Personal"

Edelman's 2025 research shows that brand purpose is shifting from big promises to personal impact—serving real lives, not just causes. In a high-stakes world, brands must act with authenticity and relevance, or risk losing trust.

Key Quote: "Let go of brand mask; show emotional intention" – Richard Edelman

"Storytelling as Cultural Power"

Shonda Rhimes argued for emotional narrative as a premium creative force, something Al can't mimic. She stressed intent and authenticity as vital for cultural relevance. Emotion and vulnerability over automation and scale. Her call echoes the idea that imperfection and truth resonate more than precision.

Key Quote: "When done with intent and authenticity, strong brand storytelling can drive cultural impact and commercial success." - Shonda Rhimes x WPP



Flaws aren't flaws—they're features. It's the cracks and corners that let us be seen.



Tolga Karacelik





What kind of beauty do we want Al to learn?

By 2025, 90% of online content is predicted to be generated by Artificial Intelligence. Dove will keep committed to real beauty. Learn more at: Dove.com

20 years changing beauty Artificial Intelligence has been used in this odvertising for the

sole purpose of showing beauty bias in generative Al tools.

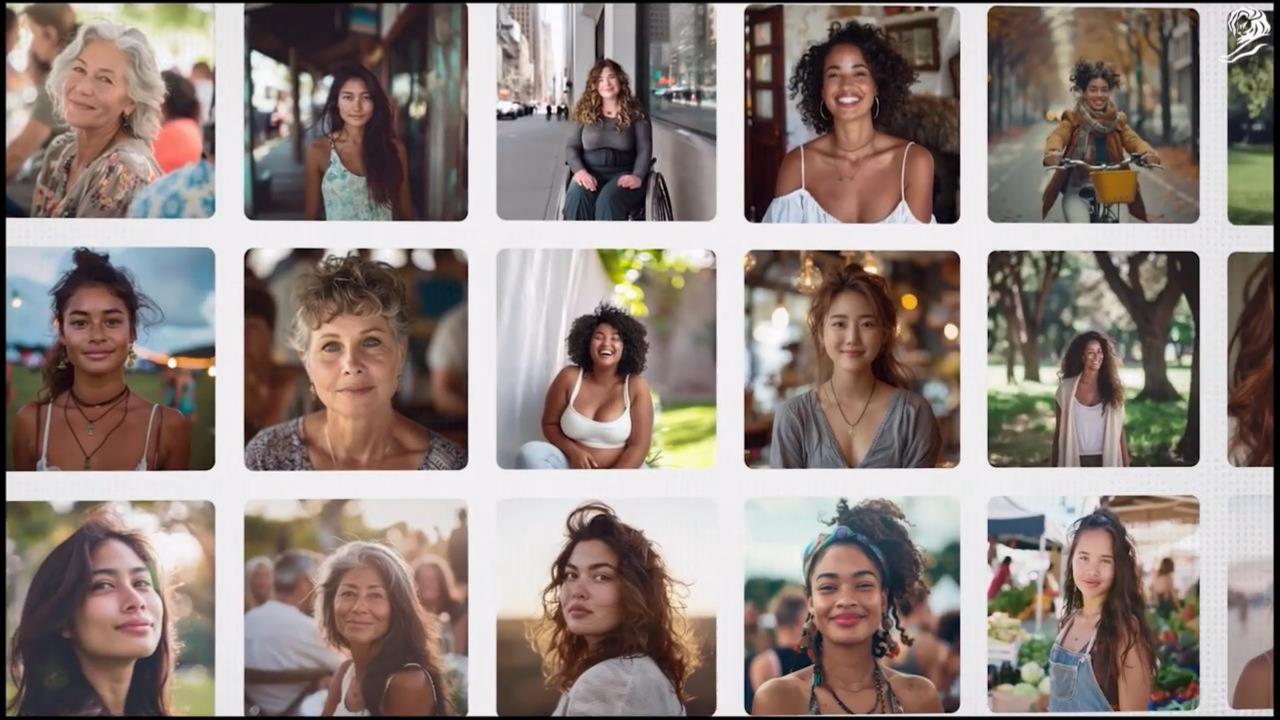
Real Beauty - Dove

Awards: 2x Grand Prix, 1x Silver

Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign redefined beauty by rejecting unrealistic standards and embracing authenticity.

Only 2% of women saw themselves as beautiful. So, Dove acted by spotlighting real women instead of models. They challenged the beauty norms, started a worldwide movement, and built lasting brand growth.

Today, "Real Beauty" stands as a benchmark for purpose-led marketing and radical authenticity.





llon Specht was more than a legendary advertising copywriter; she was a visionary who transformed our perception of beauty with the idea, «Because I'm Worth It.»

Her powerful words challenged the beauty industry's standards from the inside and inspired women to recognize their inherent value.

> we echo her affirmation with gratitude for her courage and the lasting impact of those iconic words.

> > MERCI ILON.

The Final Copy of Ilon Specht - L'Oreal

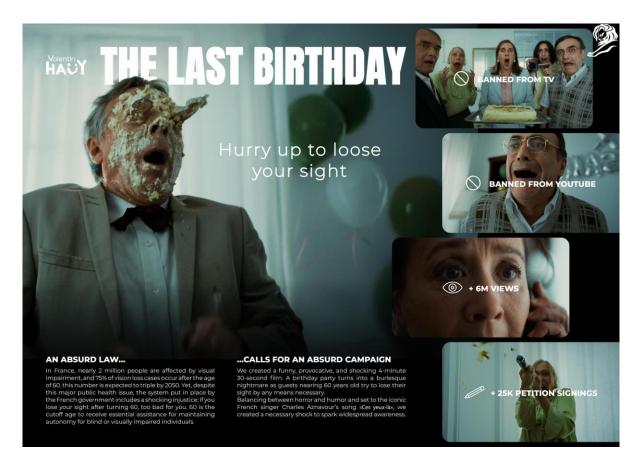
Awards: 1x Grand Prix, 1 Gold, 2 Silver

L'Oréal Paris reclaimed the meaning behind "Because I'm Worth It" by giving the spotlight back to Ilon Specht—the woman who wrote it.

Shot unscripted in her own home, the documentary captured Ilon's story in her voice—restoring both authorship and authenticity.

More than a campaign, it became a movement—proving that a woman's worth starts with being truly heard.





The Last Birthday- Josiane, Association Valentin Haüy

Award: 1x Grand Prix

Lose your sight after 60? No more disability benefits.

In France, that's the law. Absurd? Absolutely. Valentin Haüy Association turned this injustice into a darkly comic film, where a 59th birthday party becomes a mad dash to go blind before midnight.

Tiny budget (€80K), massive impact: 6M+ views, 25K signatures, and a law now under fire.

Absurd law. Absurd film. Real change.





let that person be that person

receptivity is the new metric

cracks & corners absurd = real change

imperfection & the truth

WPP Media delivered extra ordinary performance concluding as the most awarded media company of the festival!





Titanium



x16

Gold



x13

Silver



x38

Bronze

The Strategist's Final Shot:

The playground for 2025 is simple.

Drop the mask. Find the feeling. Build a universe with machine but absolutely for human and invite everyone in. This universe will be a mechanism that curates, grows and improves on its own.

The Final Local Shot as Turkey: Our Code is Our Authenticity

Amidst the global trends and digital noise, the most powerful truth remains unchanged here: our own story. True authenticity for us isn't a trend; it's decoding our own cultural codes—the unspoken warmth, the shared inside jokes, the collective spirit that makes us 'us'. The brands that win here won't be the loudest, but those that understand the shortest path to our hearts is to simply, and genuinely, be one of us.

Mecla