

CANNES
2026



DESIGN
FOR
INFLUENCE

Lessons from
Cannes Lions 2026

WPP Media

Our View of the Work ✨

Across categories, the strongest work shared one characteristic: it understood how influence is changing.

Rather than treating media, technology, and creativity separately, the best brands designed around the systems that shape how people, discover, trust, and choose today.

We distilled the work into three shifts we believe will matter most for future growth.



JOIN THE CONSUMER JOURNEY

Cannes 2026 Reinforced a Simple Idea

The most effective brands join, rather than interrupt, the consumer decision journey.

Rather than building campaigns around media channels, they build around behaviours, communities, and moments of participation.

✦ The work consistently followed three principles: ✦

01

Start with how your audience sees the world.

02

Find an intervention point; a place in the consumer journey where the brand can step in to increase the brand's influence power.

03

Build your Owned, Earned, and Shared first. Remember these touchpoints have 3X the influence power of paid.

Source: WPP & Said Business School's "How Humans Decide"



Lime Guides

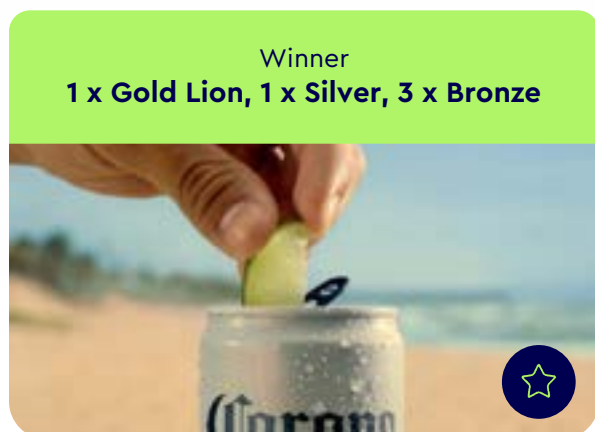
The **Corona** brand has a very strong distinctive asset: the slice of lime in the top of the bottle. But there's also a micro problem in the user experience — it can be tricky to cut the lime to the right size to fit.

So, Corona decided to focus on the lime as a piece of communication. Making changes in the operations process, the brand inserted "lime tattooing" rigs before limes were distributed to supermarkets.

These devices traced dotted lines on to the limes, showing exactly where to cut to get a right-sized slice.

This clever brand intervention meant that audiences were prompted by a lime purchase to seek out a Corona.

Activated in four countries, with 6,000 limes printed a day, this was no one-off stunt. 320,000 limes, 66 million social impressions and +19% sales volume growth later, Corona is celebrating a wonderful example of a creative brand intervention.

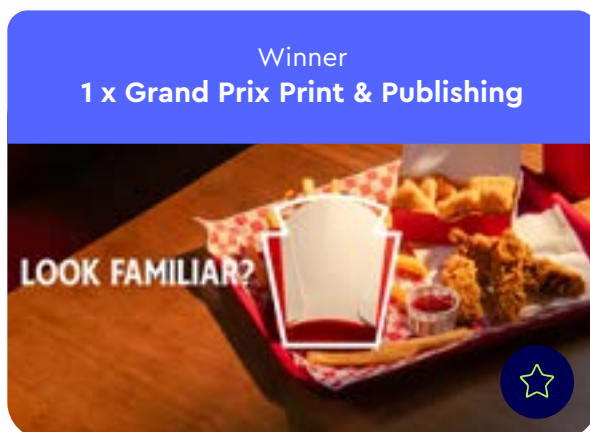


Heinz Look Familiar

Rather than trying to create a new consumption moment, Heinz looked at an existing one.

Consumers carefully choose their fries yet rarely think about the ketchup that comes with them. By recognizing that the shape of a fry carton naturally echoed Heinz's iconic keystone, the brand inserted itself into a familiar eating ritual, reminding consumers of Heinz at the exact moment a condiment decision is made.

The work extended into Uber Eats, appearing between food selection and condiment choice to reinforce that same behaviour.



INFLUENCE HUMANS AND MACHINES

The best brands didn't just optimize for algorithms; They understood the systems behind them. They recognized that algorithms, communities, and platforms increasingly shape how ideas are discovered, validated, and shared by both humans and AI.

Dove and LUX showed how a deep understanding of these systems can unlock stronger ideas and better business outcomes.





Dove r/real Reviews

Trust has shifted from institutions to peer-to-peer communities where honesty is messy, and unfiltered. Platforms like Reddit have become cultural proof engines because credibility is built through transparency, not positivity.

Dove invited the brutal honesty of the Reddit community to review its hair mask and used those reviews in its advertising disrupting category norms of perfection — even in its use of more gritty and "real" wild posting out of home formats and locations.

Dove Hair Mask sales surged by +108.4% vs. the previous year. The mask became the No. 1 bestseller in the during the campaign.

Increasingly, as people use platforms like ChatGPT for recommendations and comparisons, using communities like Reddit can positively influence AI. On ChatGPT, Dove was No. 1 with 58% presence in answers and recommended 89% of the time.



Winner

**2 x Gold Lion,
1 x Silver,
3 x Bronze**





LUX My Algorithm

This case study is based on both human and algorithmic behavioural insight: When you're in a rabbit hole, it's hard to break out. Social listening identified that people feel frustrated by the narrowing of their feeds to one aesthetic — particularly prevalent in the beauty category and the antithesis of LUX's brand belief.

Working directly with Meta and TikTok's platform teams, LUX mapped precisely which signals carry the most algorithmic weight, and in what order.

That intelligence became the brief for brand and creators. This is the first time a brand designed social advertising not to influence people, but to influence the systems that determine what people see.

Assets became an instruction to cleanse the user's algorithm.

LUX intervened to break the doom scroll by serving new codes and signals. Visuals, audio, captions, and call-to-action imagery redirected the algorithm in a new content direction, in this case more positive beauty content. Women did not just see the ads — they replayed them.

The top performing asset recorded 96 seconds of average watch time on an 8-second video. Twelve replays, on average, per person. 96% of women confirmed their feed had visibly changed, and 9 in 10 shared the content with someone else.

They even made their own tagline

"I luxed my algorithm"





BUILD PLATFORMS THAT COMPOUND

The brands that consistently outperform at Cannes rarely reinvent themselves. Instead, they build enduring platforms by repeatedly reinforcing the same meaning through distinctive assets and fresh executions.

In an increasingly fragmented media landscape, enduring growth comes from compounding. Every execution reinforces the same brand meaning, making assets more recognizable, platforms more memorable, and future communications more effective.

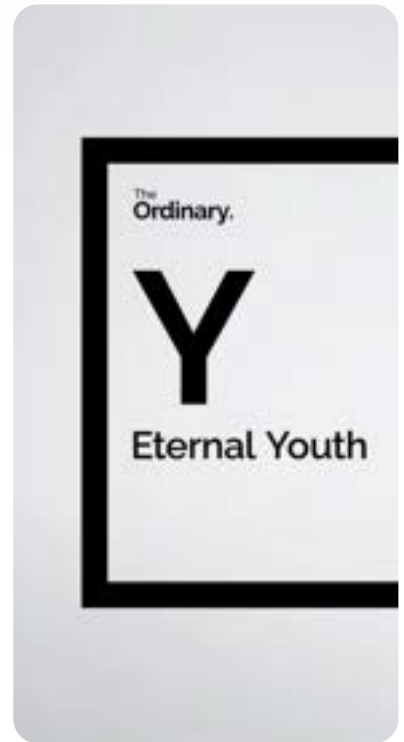


The Ordinary's The Periodic Fable

Canadian brand, **The Ordinary** has built its brand on one enduring belief: radical transparency.

Rather than introducing another product campaign, the brand extended that platform by challenging 49 skincare marketing buzzwords with science-backed evidence.

By expressing the same belief in a fresh way, The Ordinary reinforced what consumers already know and trust about the brand, proving that enduring platforms grow through consistency rather than reinvention.





Viagra Blue Brands

Viagra, banned by Chinese regulation from ever mentioning their brand name in pharmaceutical advertising, registered the Viagra trademark across 16 consumer goods categories and launched a range of lifestyle products built around hardness, power, and sustained performance.

No pharmaceutical copy. No pill. Just Viagra blue, applied to everything from hair wax to baguettes. The blue did the work that the regulations wouldn't allow the words to do. Consumers' minds completed the ad themselves.

When meaning is sufficiently clear and a distinctive asset sufficiently owned, the brand doesn't even need to show up in its own category to be understood.

That's the compounding brand platform in action — and it seems to be the cheat code for cutting through today's ever-changing communications landscape.



Winner
1 x Gold Lion, 1 x Bronze

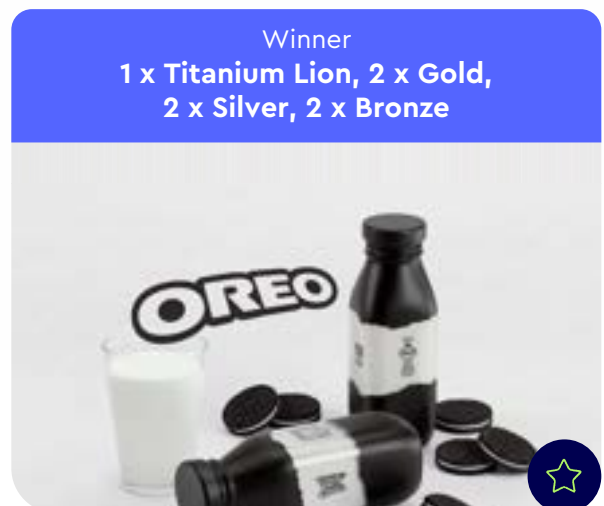


The Oreo Cows

Oreo identified a breed of cow in rural Mexico whose black-and-white markings are a near-perfect replica of their cookie and built a mockumentary around the farmer who swore his herd produced the only milk worthy of dunking one.

This sparked a national debate about whether the cows were real — and then made the myth tangible by launching a co-branded milk nationwide.

The brand didn't advertise the dunking ritual; it created folklore around it.



Winner
1 x Titanium Lion, 2 x Gold,
2 x Silver, 2 x Bronze

Three questions to ask before every campaign

★ 01 ★

WHAT CONSUMER SYSTEM ARE WE JOINING?

Design around existing behaviours, routines, and decision moments rather than creating new ones.

★ 02 ★

HOW WILL HUMANS AND MACHINES DISCOVER THIS?

Create work that is memorable and easy to recommend across both human conversations and AI-powered discovery.

★ 03 ★

WHAT BRAND PLATFORM ARE WE COMPOUNDING?

Build on the assets, beliefs, and meanings your brand already owns instead of starting from scratch.