Making a Promise to the Customer:

How to give campaigns a competitive edge

About this report

Over the last two decades, lofty-but-generic brand purpose and product-first mindsets that don't speak to deeper customer needs have been at the heart of positioning for many businesses.

But in today's inflationary macro-economic environment, the stakes for business success have been raised. In this new — and harsh — reality, a coherent Go To Market strategy that optimises for pricing power and creates credible value with customers will separate the winners from the losers.

In this report, we explore a new mental model for businesses — developed by the B2B Institute at LinkedIn and Roger Martin (CEO Advisor, Strategist and Author of "Playing to Win") — that aligns product, marketing, sales, and customer experience within a holistic Promise to the Customer (PTTC) mindset.

Preliminary findings from an analysis of over 2,000 advertising campaigns suggest that brands that make a credible promise to their customers can gain a brand building and commercial advantage.

2,000

advertising campaigns suggest that brands that make a credible promise to their customers can gain a brand building and commercial advantage.

Contents

Foreword from Roger Martin

How making a Promise to the Customer gives campaigns the edge

I have been helping companies build brands as an integral part of their strategies for four decades, from P&G to Thomson-Reuters to Lego to Verizon and many more.

Over time, some of the principles became clear. Make sure you focus on a memorable benefit. Create a compelling right-to-believe. But the results for the brand building companies were still too variable for my liking. Per the famous John Wanamaker quote, it seemed that too much advertising spending was still being wasted — or at least wasn't producing obvious effectiveness.

What was missing? Over time I came to wonder about the relationship between the company and the customer — and actually I focused a lot of my thinking on the B2B customer because the relationship is typically so much more personal, often between a user in the customer company and a salesperson at the supplier. For there to be a brand, that user had to have a high level of trust. And that seemed to happen only over a considerable period of time; with lots of reps.

But I work on lots of things, and for a while, I didn't advance my thinking on this front. I have found over my career that often I need an excuse to focus my attention on a given subject sufficiently to get to a point of clarity. Strategy work with P&G in the mid-1990s was the excuse that led to pushing my strategy thinking to the point that created the frameworks found in "Playing to Win." A big design project with David Kelley, Patrick Whitney and Claudia Kotchka was the excuse that pushed my thinking on the intersection of strategy and design resulting in "The Design of Business."

Roger Martin
CEO Advisor, Strategist and Author of "Playing to Win"

In this case, the excuse came in the form of Jann Schwarz who asked me to work with him at the LinkedIn B2B Institute. As we worked on B2B branding, which I have always believed is more similar to, than different from, B2C branding, we pushed the thinking on trust to promise. That customer trust is built through successive cycles of making and fulfilling a Promise to the Customer.

A brand is nothing more or less than a promise that is made and fulfilled consistently and repeatedly to the point that the customer has complete confidence it will be fulfilled the next time. But we had to test that hypothesis and that is where the next teammates came aboard. Mimi Turner from LinkedIn had started working with us on the journey and had the idea of testing the hypothesis with the good folks from WARC, who had the perfect database of campaigns for this work.

Thankfully, WARC was equally keen on the project and between their folks and Mimi, we were able to crunch the data and the results were even more extreme than I imagined.

It is no exaggeration to say that in the four decades I have been working on strategy and branding, this Promise to the Customer finding is the single most exciting discovery with which I have been involved. Use it and prosper!

> " *A brand is nothing more or less than a promise that is made and fulfilled consistently and repeatedly to the point that the customer has complete confidence it will be fulfilled the next time.*

Roger Martin
CEO Advisor, Strategist and Author of "Playing to Win"

Foreword from WARC

Marketing has a language problem.

The industry uses the terms "brand" and "brand building" liberally. As an industry we have built up an arsenal of knowledge about their power.

Yet these same terms are not well understood outside of marketing. Nor is their power to support the commercial agenda of a business.

This presents a number of problems, not least when it comes to communicating what the marketing team is trying to achieve to other parts of the business. And, indeed, when it comes to securing investment.

That's not where the language issues stop. There are terms like "purpose", which even the marketing industry struggles to define. Plus the many phrases and concepts introduced by marketing science — "category entry points," "long versus short" — which may have clear definitions but are not yet widely understood.

At first glance, then, the addition of another piece of language to the marketing pile seems risky. But there is good reason to do so.

This report looks at a new model called Promise to the Customer (PTTC), developed by business consultant Roger Martin alongside Jann Schwarz and Mimi Turner of the LinkedIn B2B Institute.

And as we have found in doing this research alongside the LinkedIn team, there are a number of reasons PTTC is a useful addition.

1. As a model to be applied upstream in a business, it can help interpret what the marketing department is trying to achieve in words the rest of the business can understand. That has the potential to solve the "brand" problem.

2. As a downstream impetus to communication, PTTC appears to have an edge when it comes to delivering positive impact on brand metrics and sustained commercial impact. That, at least, is what the data in this paper suggests.

In the following pages we define what a Promise to the Customer actually is, we use WARC's case study data to analyse its impact, and we provide examples of what a good promise actually looks like.

Enjoy the report!

David Tiltman
SVP Content WARC

View from The B2B Institute

"Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted. The trouble is, I don't know which half."

This mindset, attributed to advertising pioneer John Wanamaker, has been the curse of marketers for the past decades.

It has forced marketers, particularly those who work in the rational, logical and product-driven world of B2B, into an unwelcome over-reliance on the short-term performance marketing that captures existing demand, often at the expense of making the brand investment that creates demand in the future.

The logic is seductive: demand capture is easy to measure and generates a plethora of shortterm attribution highs. Demand creation is lumpier: it relies on the wetware of the human brain to recall a brand in a specific buying situation, and for the prospective customer to believe that the product will do what it claims to do. The memory structures lodged in the hippocampus are the decision arbiter. No "lastclick" model has yet been invented to attribute for that. But it is nearly impossible to drive long-term value through marketing without it.

At the B2B Institute at LinkedIn, our foundational belief is that long-term brand building is the biggest untapped opportunity for B2B businesses. We want to de-risk brand investment for B2B marketers and make the arguments supporting brand investment easier to explain to stakeholders who don't care or understand brand.

About a year ago, we began talking to Roger Martin, the originator of integrative thinking in business and the architect of the idea of "marketing as strategy", about whether there was a unifying theory that could unite the ideas of demand creation and demand capture for marketers in B2B to use. That is how the idea of making a Promise to the Customer was born.

Mimi Turner
Head of EMEA,
The B2B Institute at LinkedIn

Jann Schwarz
Founder and Head,
The B2B Institute at LinkedIn

Unlike "brand", which has become a word that means many things to many people (including, to many B2B CFOs, an opportunity to cost-save), a Promise to the Customer requires no work to understand, and means the same thing to everyone. Far from replacing existing marketing thinking, we see a Promise to the Customer as a wrapper for the key marketing disciplines everyone already understands.

For a promise to be deliverable, we need to understand Product. By zooming in on the most valuable promise that a marketer needs to make, we have to think about Price and Place. And to make the promise memorable, we need to use brand codes, distinctive assets and the kind of hippocampus-hacking creativity that stores annoying jingles in the brain for life. In short, we need to understand Promotion.

While many marketing outcomes are weighted in favour of the biggest brands with the biggest budgets, when it comes to campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer, the greatest gains we saw were for campaigns with lower levels of budget, channel and campaign duration.

Obviously, every marketer wants more budget and to work for already famous brands. But for newer brands with less confidence and less ability to spend money, a campaign that makes a Promise to the Customer offers a clear competitive advantage. In fact, at every level of campaign, be it budget, number of channels or duration in market, we saw that the brand health, market share, penetration and long-term brand and sales effects were significantly enhanced in Promise to the Customer campaigns.

When we looked at campaigns that did not make a Promise to the Customer, we found that a theme that many had in common was that they tended to be more inward looking. Namely, they tended to attempt to communicate the brand's own social values to the audience rather than communicate the value that the product delivered for the customer. Our approach does not label Promise to the Customer campaigns "good" and non-Promise to the Customer campaigns "bad." It simply attempts to tease out which of the two types delivers better brand and long-term commercial effects.

B2B campaigns were particularly underrepresented in our dataset, making up only just over 100 of our sample of more than 2,000 campaigns. But, we hope this work is the beginning of a new way of thinking about marketing that will help B2B marketers — and their B2C colleagues — to make decisions that deliver better campaigns and more reliable results. We hope the mental model of a Promise to the Customer will guide marketers to greater confidence about what will work.

In fact, we would go as far as to promise it.

Executive summary

→ A **Promise to the Customer (PTTC)** provides a language everyone can understand and makes it easier to explain the **role of marketing in value creation.**

→ Campaigns that contain a PTTC deliver a **brand building** and **commercial advantage** over non-PTTC campaigns, **irrespective of budget, number of channels or duration.**

→ A PTTC can be a key differentiator for **scale-up brands** or businesses with **limited marketing resources.**

→ A PTTC increases the likelihood of campaigns delivering **long-term brand** and **sales growth.**

Chapter 1

What is a Promise to the Customer?

The challenge for brand builders

A brand means many things to many people. This presents a challenge to marketers both externally with their customers and internally with their non-marketing peers. On the other hand, a Promise to the Customer has a more singular and specific meaning which can be more easily and widely understood.

Brand promise

LOFTY SOCIAL PURPOSE

Here's 141

- Of
- My
- Favourite
- Specs
- &
- Product
- Features
- Of
- My
- Favourite
- Specs
- &
- Product
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- Of
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- Product
- Features

Our new vague statement that you will immediately forget

A CLEAR Promise that matters to the Customer

Customer promise

The Promise to the Customer mindset

The Promise to the Customer mindset is a new mental model for businesses developed by the LinkedIn B2B Institute and Roger Martin, designed to help organisations overcome internal silos and unite all GTM activities behind a direct commitment to the customer.

A "promise" mindset acts as a forcing function for the whole organisation to answer the same exam question:

What is the credible value we promise to customers and how do we deliver it?

A clear **Promise to the Customer ("PTTC" henceforth)** separates a successful brand from its more generic alternatives. When a promise is made and then fulfilled with such consistency that the customer stops thinking about it, the promise becomes a true statement of fact.

To create maximum customer value, the whole organisation has to be organised around the promise because that is the only way it will be fulfilled.

"*If you are not making a promise with your brand, you are wasting money.*

Roger Martin
CEO Advisor, Strategist and Author of "Playing to Win"

Campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer

BT Beyond Limits

Promise to the Customer:

"Unbreakable wi-fi for business: All business.
No Drama."

Campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer

Starling Bank: Helping Business Fly

Promise to the Customer:

"Starling Bank has the knowledge and tools to help your small business succeed."

Get off the ground in minutes with speedy signup.

STARLING BANK

Helping Business Fly

Stay on course with instant payment notifications.

STARLING BANK

Helping Business Fly

Keep your business flying with overdrafts of up to £150k.

STARLING BANK

Helping Business Fly

STARLING BANK

Helping Business Fly
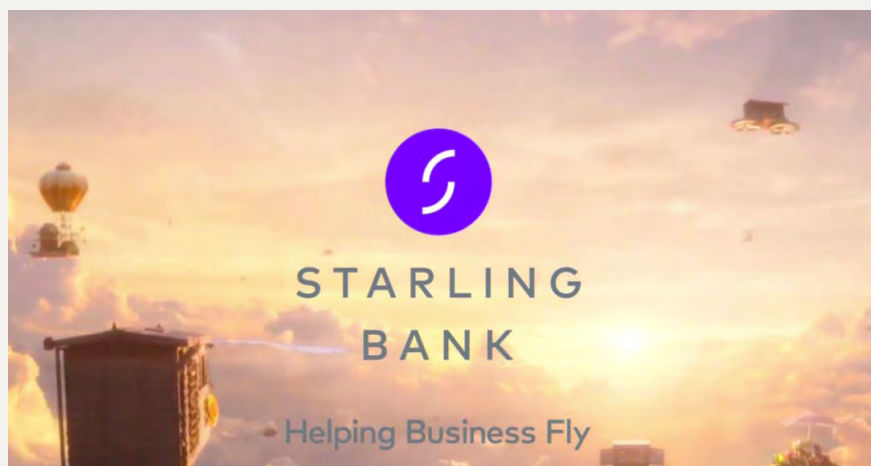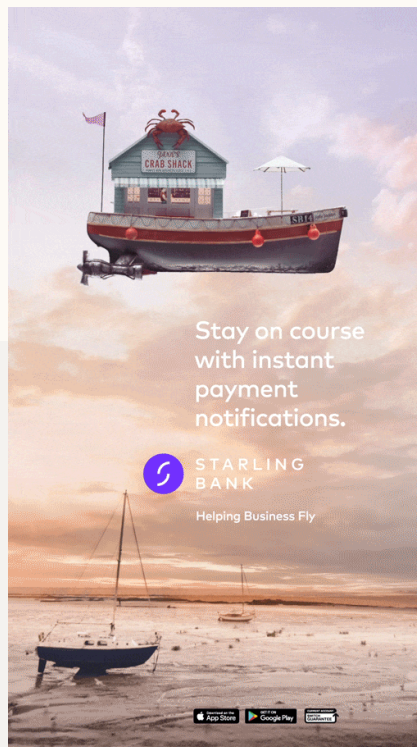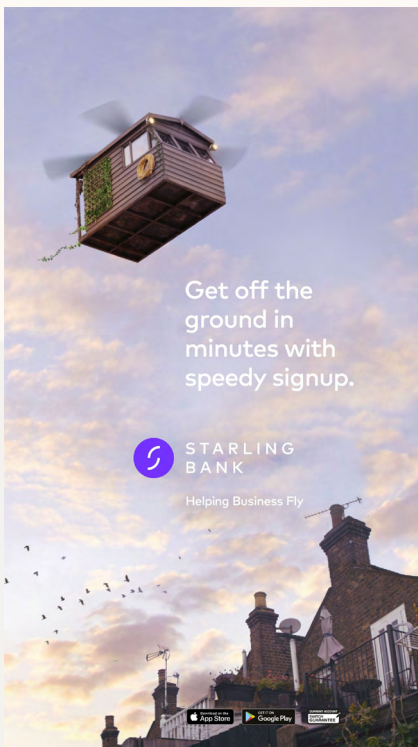
Campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer

Sherwin-Williams: Speaking in Color

Promise to the Customer:
"Sherwin-Williams can help you find your dream colour."
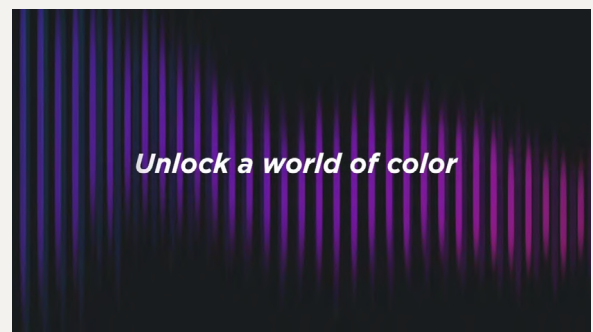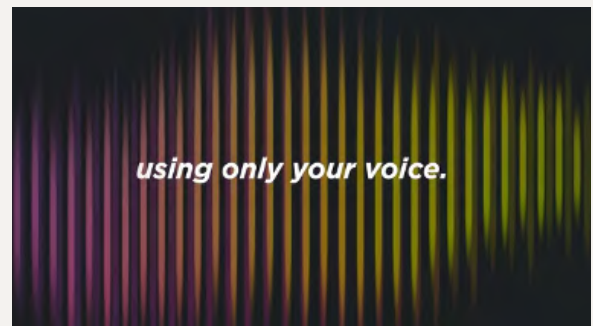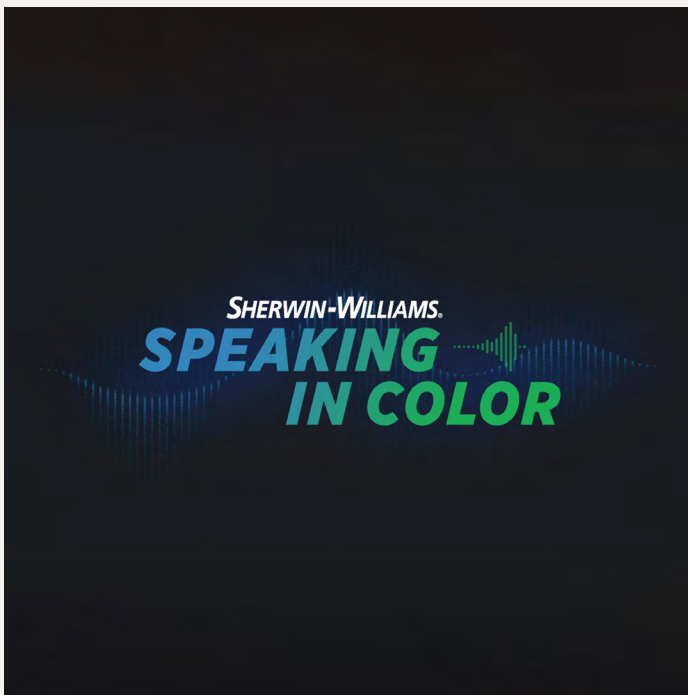
Campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer

Snickers Satisfies: You're Not You When You're Hungry

Promise to the Customer:

"Snickers will satisfy your hunger."

Campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer

Sixt Cars: Rent the Car You Choose

Promise to the Customer:

"Sixt has a superior range of cars for you to choose from."
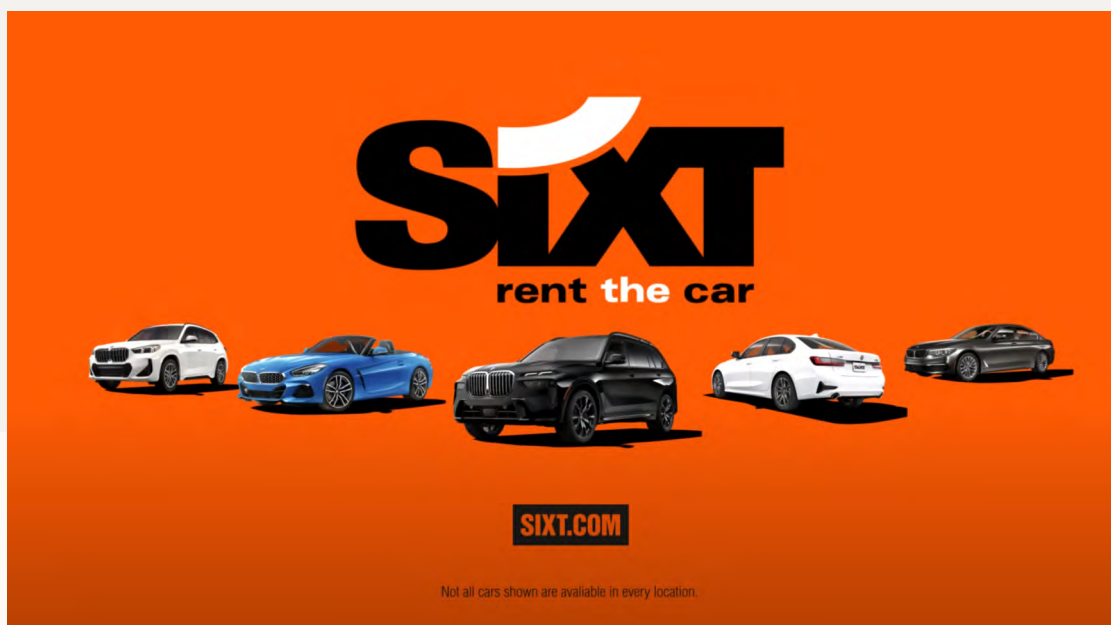
Campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer

Surf: Bursting the Bubble to Sell More Suds

Promise to the Customer:

"No matter what trouble you get into, your clothes will always smell perfect with Surf."

"Understanding the right promise to make to the right customer is the essence of playing to win.

Roger Martin
CEO Advisor, Strategist and Author of "Playing to Win"

Decoding a Promise to the Customer

A Promise to the Customer is a deceptively simple mental model.
But when we decode it, we see that it integrates a multi-model
approach with the basic pillars of marketing, namely Product,
Price, Place and Promotion.

Attribute	Alignment with 4Ps framework
Memorable is a proxy for…	**Promotion** — The memorability of a PTTC partly depends on how effectively it is communicated to the customer. This is where marketing communications has an important role to play: by building mental availability among consumers with attention-grabbing advertising, distinctive branding and other forms of communication.
Valuable is a proxy for…	**Price** — Pricing is an essential part of communicating a brand's value. Hence, a PTTC that is "valuable" will be supported by an optimal pricing strategy.

Place — Selecting the right distribution channels is an important part of adding to, and protecting, the value of a brand. A PTTC that is valuable should leverage the right distribution channels. |
| **Deliverable** is a proxy for… | **Product** — Whatever has been promised to customers must be fulfilled by a product or service, or consumer confidence in the brand will erode. The link, between promise and product, makes marketing a core part of the product development and design process, rather than the department only responsible for promotions. |

A PTTC also had additional, ancillary benefits. Namely, that is easy to understand across
the whole internal organisation. And that it is easily understood by customers.

Putting the Promise to the Customer hypothesis to the test

Marketing communications are fundamentally important to the process of "promise projection" because they are the means by which the organisation describes the Promise to the Customer. This is why memorability is so important — think of Apple's "1,000 songs in your pocket," rather than a forgettable message about memory size. Memorability increases the likelihood of a brand coming to mind in a buying situation.

It's important to note that, when we talk about communicating a promise, we are not recommending a return to a rational "USP" approach to marketing. As we"ll see in this paper, promises are brought to life creatively and, of course, memorably.

But do advertising campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer actually deliver a competitive advantage?

This was the guiding hypothesis of our research, which was concerned with understanding whether a promise mindset can deliver "downstream" benefits to businesses, while functioning as an "upstream" strategic idea.

In total, 2,021 advertising campaigns from the WARC database were analysed. Taken from the last five years (2018-2022) of awards entrants or winners, **all the case studies met a high creative excellence and effectiveness benchmark.** From this sample, we identified 808 (40%) campaigns that made a promise to the customer compared to 1,213 (60%) nonpromise campaigns.

More details on our research methodology and process can be found in the appendix of this report.

Nonpromise campaigns	1,213	60%
Campaigns that made a promise to the customer	808	40%
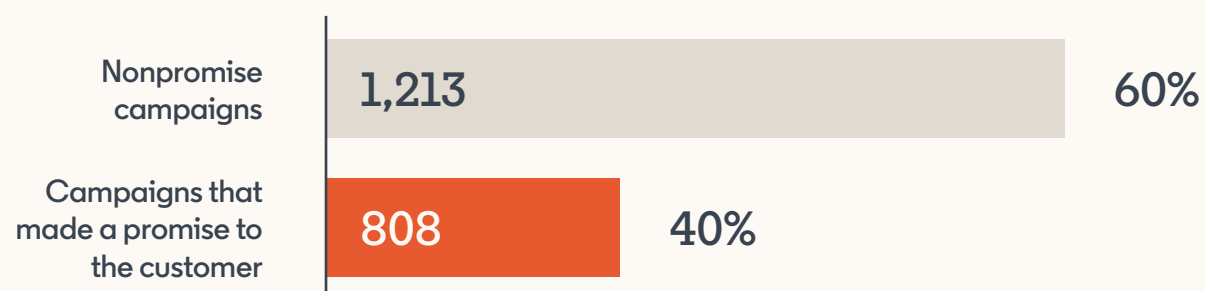
Key takeaways

→ **Keep your PTTC memorable, valuable and deliverable**

A Promise to the Customer comprises three key characteristics —
deliverable, valuable, memorable. To be a PTTC, it must make a
distinctive promise to the customer.

→ **A PTTC should not be confused with "brand purpose"
or a rational USP**

Unlike brand purpose, a Promise to the Customer is defined by an
exclusive commitment to the customer. It can be rational or emotional,
so long as it is memorable, valuable and deliverable.

→ **A first test of PTTC**

This research is the first of its kind to define, validate and analyse a
PTTC using a database of high performing case studies.

There is more to come.

Chapter 2

Impact of PTTC on brand building

We all have the power to make promises that customers believe in... that put them in the centre and cause them to care.

Melissa Selcher
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, LinkedIn

Introduction

Brand tracking is the ongoing measurement of the impact of all brand signals in market — not just advertising campaigns — against key metrics, such as brand awareness and perception, to help understand brand health and identify what needs to be done to improve it.

Strong, healthy brands are a major source of competitive advantage to businesses. They can command higher prices, withstand economic adversity and improve ROI. High brand loyalty and awareness can reduce marketing costs, and help achieve success for new products introduced as brand extensions.

Evidence from our analysis suggests that campaigns with a Promise to the Customer, are more likely to report on and drive increases in brand health measures compared to non-PTTC campaigns.

Examples of brand health measures with sample questions

Brand consideration

- How does this brand make you feel?
- The brand is for people like me.

Purchase intent

- How likely are you to buy this brand/product?

Brand perception

- This brand cares about people.
- Is a brand that I trust.

Brand preference

- How likely would you be to recommend this brand to a friend, family member, or colleague?

Quality perception

- This brand is different from other brands.
- This brand lasts longer or is better quality/taste/experience.

Value perception

- This brand is good value for money.
- This brand is worth paying more for.

PTTC campaigns are more likely to report brand health shifts than non-PTTC

A clear promise, memorably articulated, appears to be an effective way to drive core brand health measures much more than social media buzz or PR value.

When analysing our dataset for frequency of reported metrics, PTTC campaigns were more likely to report an increase in brand health measures (56% of PTTC campaigns vs. 38% of non-PTTC campaigns).

Percentage of campaigns that reported an increase in "soft" metrics

Metric	Non PTTC	PTTC
Generated social media, buzz	55%	43%
Increase in PR value	37%	26%
Increase in brand health measures	38%	56%
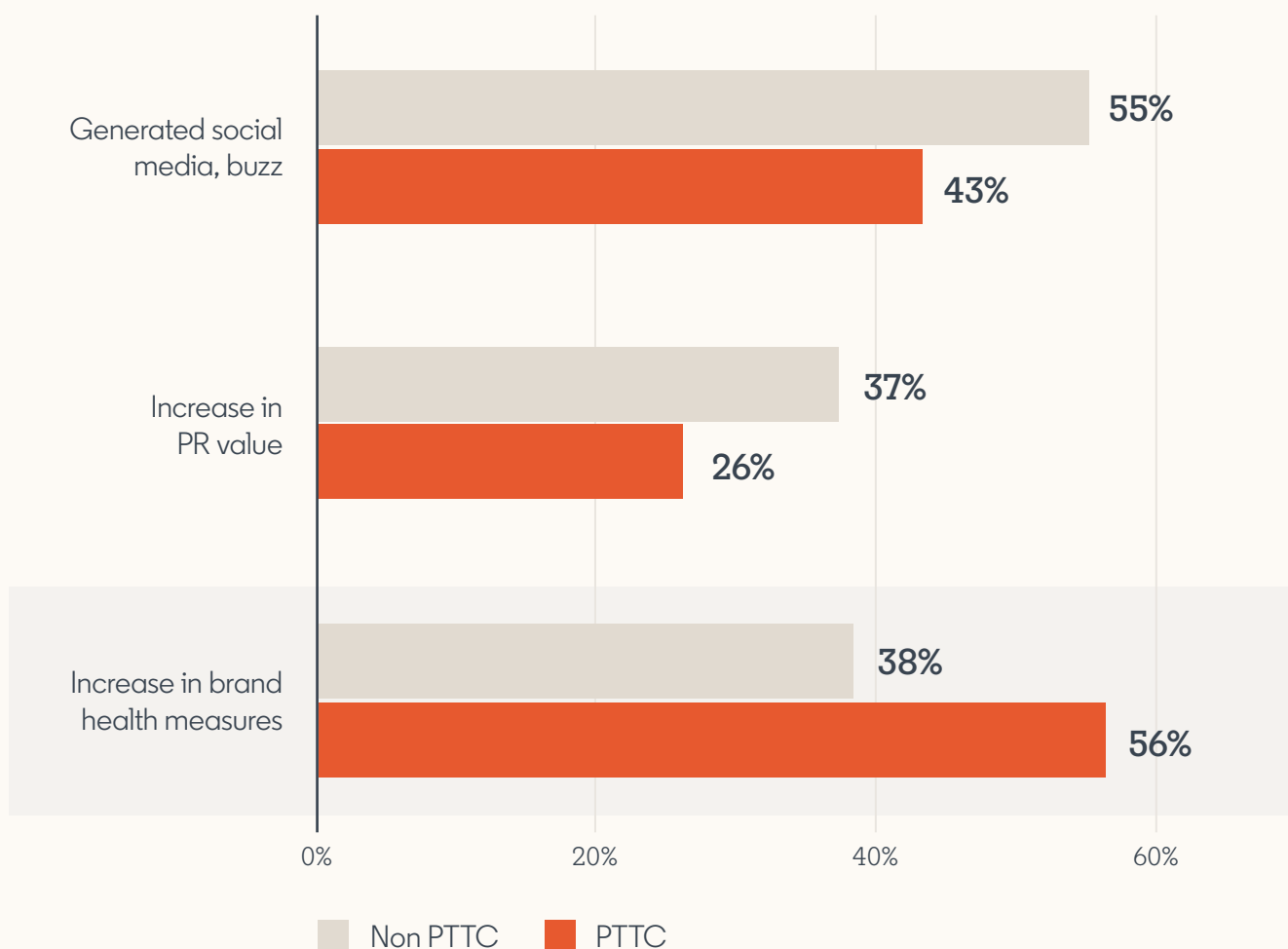
Non PTTC   PTTC

Base: Non-PTTC campaigns n=1121, PTTC campaigns n=726

PTTC campaigns over-index in brand health measures

PTTC campaigns are

48%

more likely to drive brand health improvements than non-PTTC campaigns.

We know that campaigns that evoke favourable emotions can impact brand health by accessing memory cues at the buyer consideration phase.

It is significant that the sample of PTTC campaigns is also much less likely to report PR or social media impact than non-PTTC campaigns. Generally these PTTC campaigns are ones that have been designed to build brand effects over time, rather than gain a "quick hit" of press coverage or social buzz.

Percentage difference between PTTC campaigns and non-PTTC campaigns across soft metrics reported
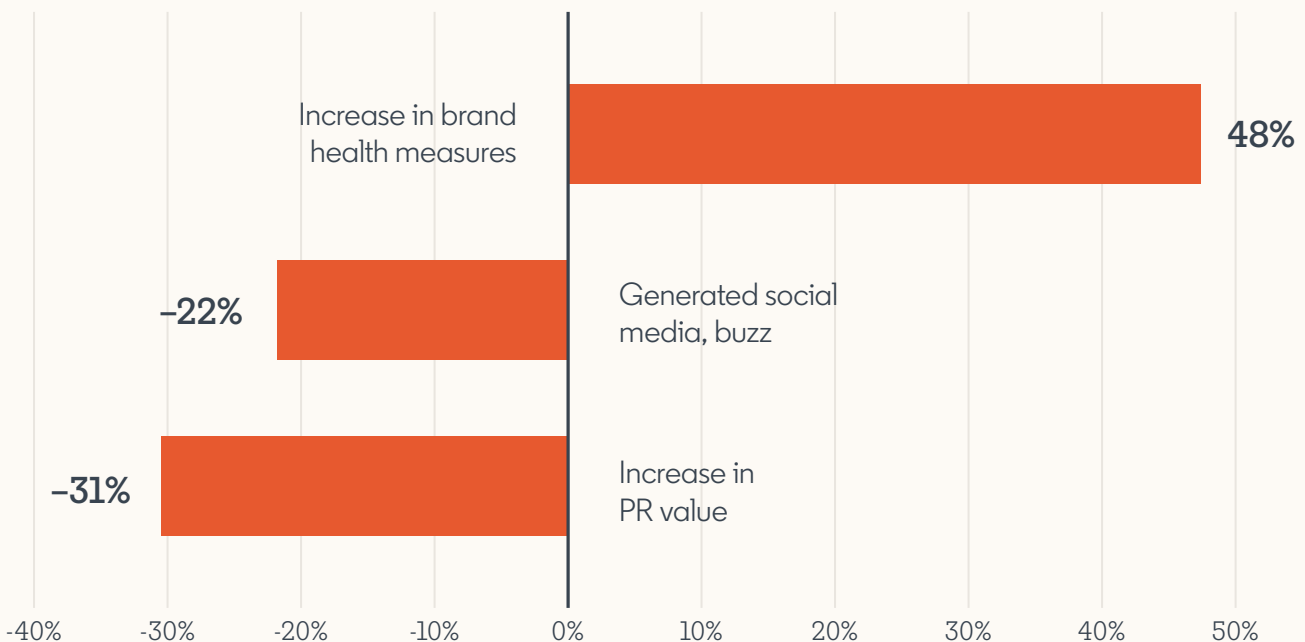
Our brand health measures analysis includes brand consideration, purchase intent, brand perception, brand preference, quality, and value perception.

Base: Non-PTTC campaigns n=1121, PTTC campaigns n=726

How the campaign dynamics of budget, channels, and duration affect PTTC vs. non PTTC campaigns

We know that bigger campaigns (in terms of budget, but also other factors) tend to drive bigger results. So we needed to check that the brand building advantage we observed for PTTC-based campaigns was not simply a function of favourable campaign dynamics. To do that, we used a framework called **Creative Commitment**.

Creative Commitment is a metric developed by marketing effectiveness experts James Hurman and Peter Field to help brands and agencies predict the impact of their campaigns.

Creative Commitment measures three campaign dynamics: budget, campaign duration, and number of media channels. Based on an assessment of these three areas, all campaigns are awarded a Creative Commitment score on a scale ranging from 3–15.

Findings from the WARC Effectiveness Code indicate that the higher the Creative Commitment score, the more effective the campaign.

When we used the Creative Commitment model to assess the effectiveness of PTTC campaigns versus non-PTTC campaigns, our dataset provided encouraging insights for campaigns with smaller budgets.

Budget		Campaign Duration		Number of channels	
Parameters and scores		Parameters and scores		Parameters and scores	
Under $500k	= 1	Under 3 months	= 1	1 – 4 channels	= 1
$500k – $1m	= 2	3 – 6 months	= 2	5 – 7 channels	= 2
$1m – $5m	= 3	6 – 12 months	= 3	8 – 10 channels	= 3
$5m - $10m	= 4	1 – 3 years	= 4	11 – 13 channels	= 4
Over $10m	= 5	Over 3 years	= 5	14+ channels	= 5

+ ... **+**

=

Creative Commitment
Score out of 15

PTTC campaigns outperform non-PTTC campaigns at all levels of Creative Commitment

Our research indicates that regardless of budget size, PTTC campaigns have a brand building advantage **at all levels of Creative Commitment** versus non-PTTC campaigns.

In other words, regardless of budget, duration, or number of channels used, campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer are more likely to drive improvements in brand health metrics.

Percentage of campaigns that reported an increase in brand health measures by Creative Commitment group

Soft metrics measured: Brand health measures 2018-2022,
PTTC campaigns vs. non-PTTC campaigns

Legend: Non PTTC, PTTC
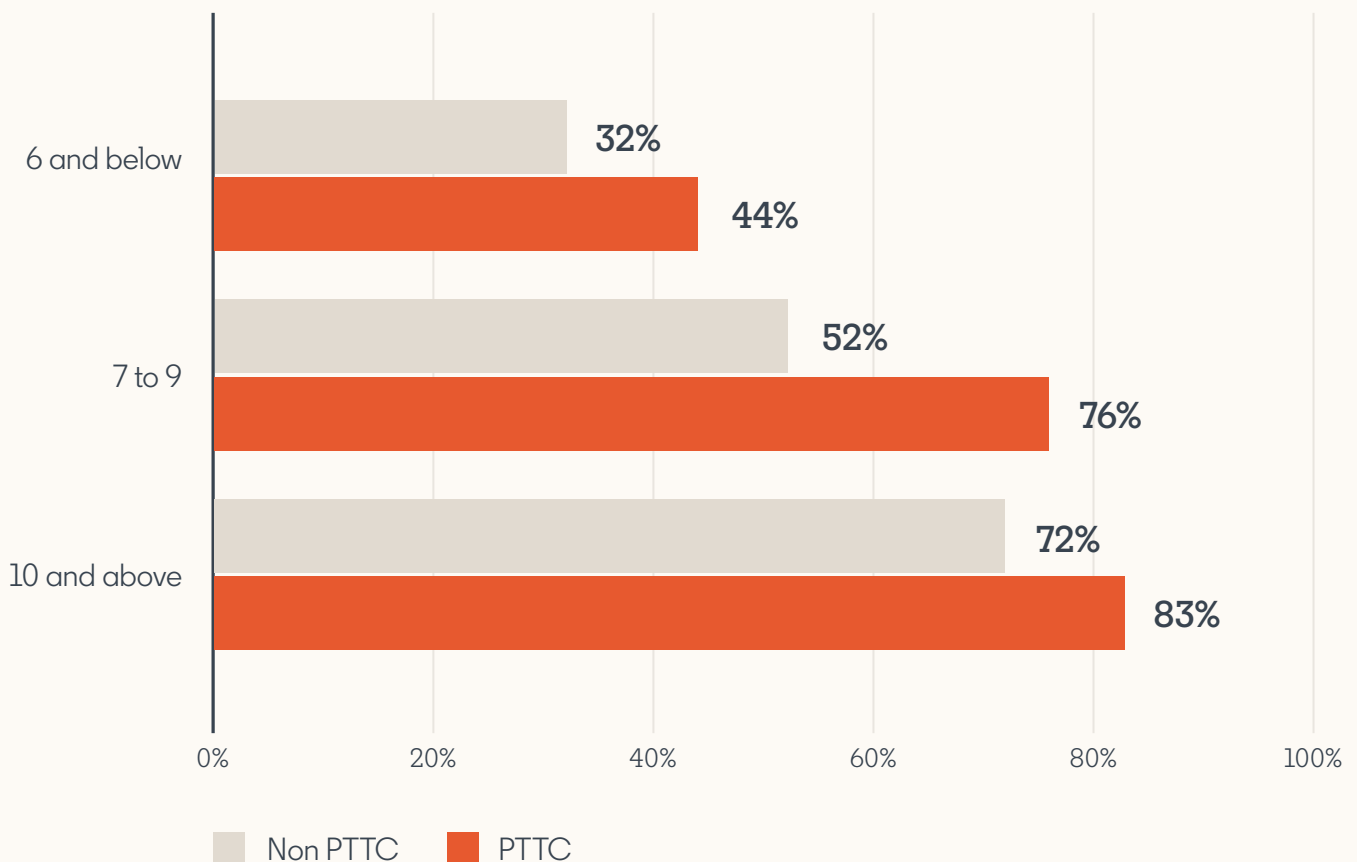
Base below 6 non-PTTC n = 358, PTTC n = 174
7 to 9 non-PTTC n = 154, PTTC n = 124
Above 10 non-PTC n = 88, PTTC n = 80

PTTC campaigns index highest on increasing brand health measures at the lower levels of Creative Commitment

At lower levels of Creative Commitment (6 and below), PTTC campaigns significantly over-index on increasing brand health measures. This should be particularly encouraging for scale-up brands looking to make their first investments in brand advertising, or indeed any business where marketing resources are limited but brand building remains a core objective.

Soft metrics measured: Brand health / equity measures

2018-2022, PTTC campaigns vs. non-PTTC campaigns

6 and below — 38%
10 and above — 15%
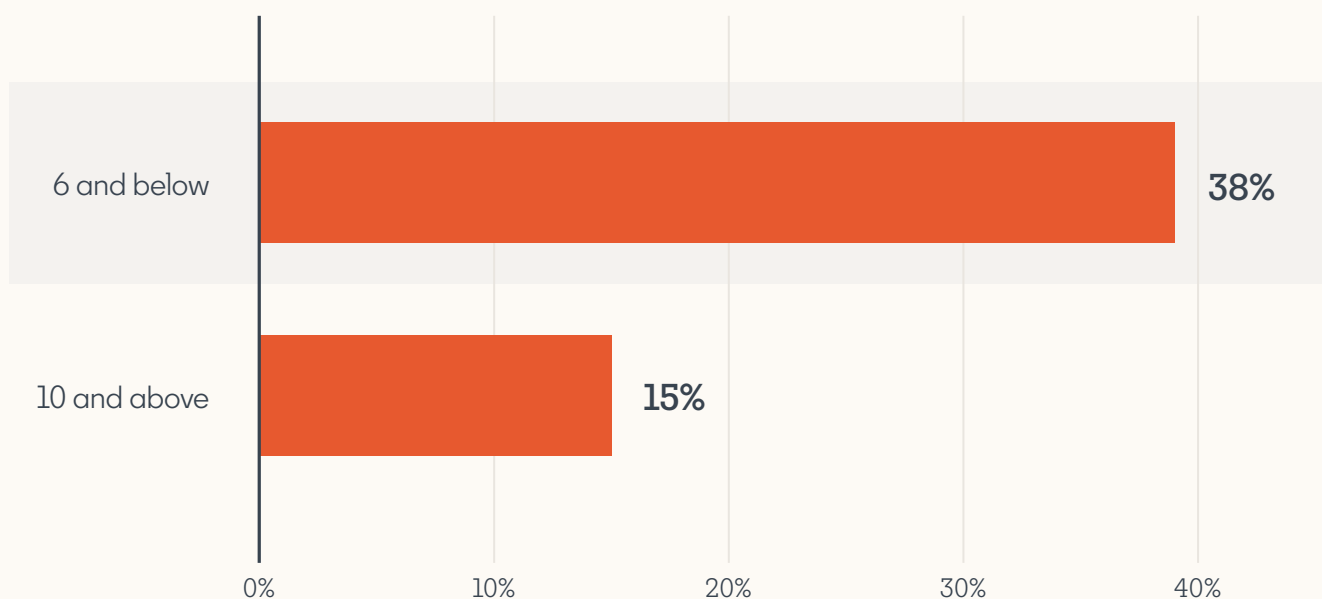
Base: Below 6 non-PTTC n=358, PTTC n=174
Above 10 non-PTTC n=88, PTTC n=80

Key takeaways

→ **A PTTC is more likely to drive meaningful metrics related to brand health**

A PTTC is an effective way to drive core brand health measures over less meaningful metrics related to social media buzz or PR value.

→ **PTTC outperforms at all levels of Creative Commitment**

PTTC campaigns have a brand building advantage over non-PTTC campaigns at all levels of Creative Commitment, but especially at lower levels.

→ **A PTTC is a competitive advantage for smaller brands**

A PTTC can be an amplifier for brands with smaller budgets who need their advertising to get noticed in a crowded market.

Chapter 3

Impact of PTTC on market share and penetration

Introduction

The link between brand strength and commercial performance (in terms of sales, price premiums and profits) has been demonstrated many times. It is fundamental to frameworks such as Les Binet and Peter Field's "long and short."

In our research, we can see that PTTC's brand building impact can translate into commercial success in two ways:

- **Frequency of reported metrics:**
  We observe a higher frequency of reported commercial impacts in PTTC campaigns versus non-PTTC campaigns.

- **Depth of commercial impact:**
  Using the Creative Effectiveness Ladder as a proxy to investigate the impact of campaigns, we find PTTC campaigns are more likely to deliver a sustained commercial impact versus non-PTTC campaigns.

The data in "How can I justify the financial value of marketing investment to the board?" supports the idea that companies with strong brands have a commercial advantage in the stock market.

Stock price performance of companies with strong versus weak brands
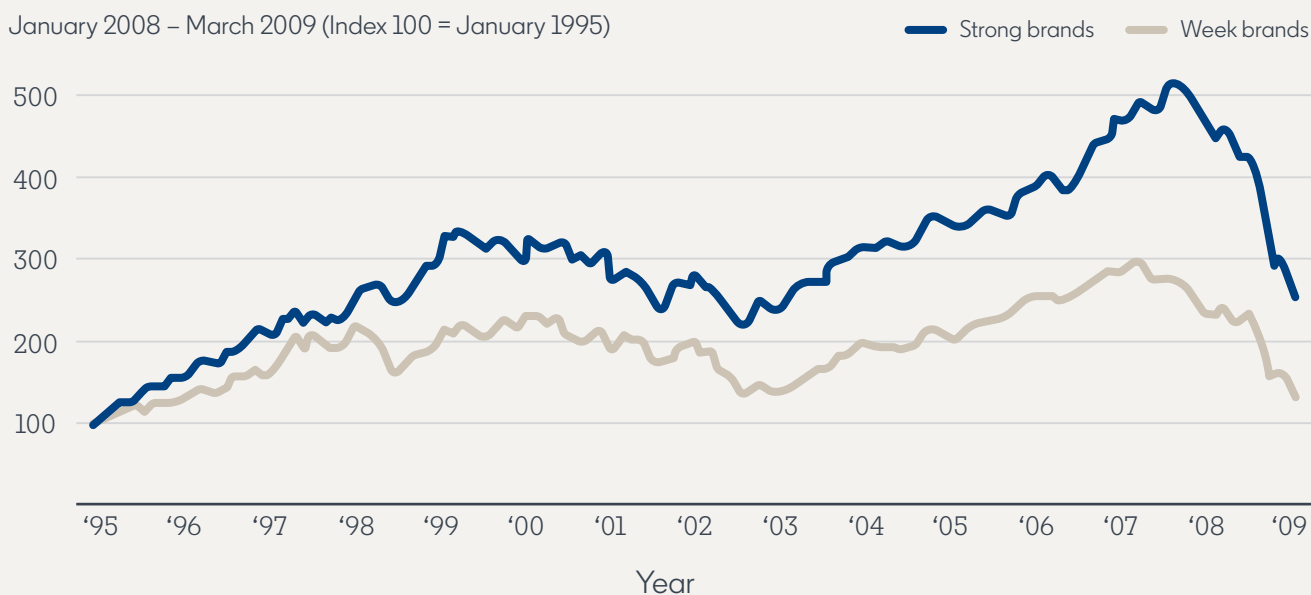
January 2008 – March 2009 (Index 100 = January 1995)

Strong brands   Week brands

Year

PTTC campaigns are more likely to report on market share and market penetration increases than non-PTTC campaigns

A Promise to the Customer delivers a commercial advantage, with PTTC campaigns more likely to report shifts in market share and market penetration.

When analysing our dataset for frequency of reported metrics, nearly half of PTTC campaigns (45%) reported an increase in market penetration versus 38% of non-PTTC campaigns.

This gap was wider for market share, with 27% of PTTC campaigns reporting an increase in market share versus just 17% of non-PTTC campaigns.

Percentage of campaigns that reported an increase in hard metrics

Hard metrics measured: Brand health measures 2018-2022, % of all cases

Increase in market penetration/customer gain — Non PTTC: 38%, PTTC: 45%

Increase in market share — Non PTTC: 17%, PTTC: 27%
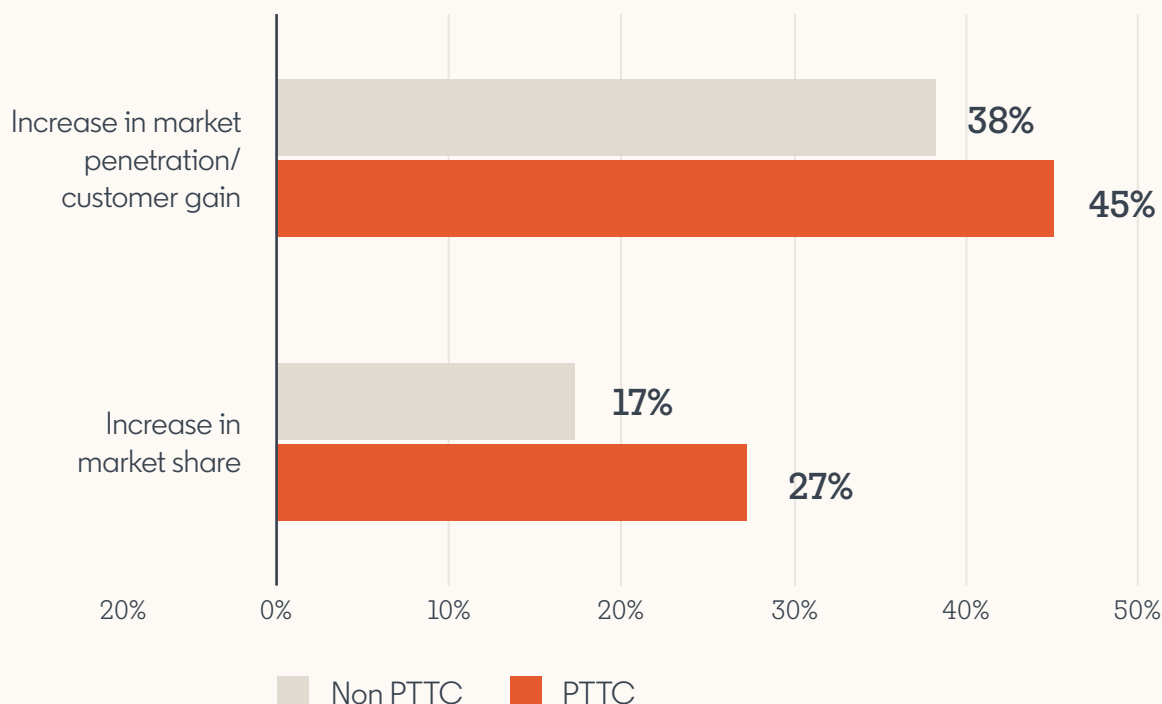
Non PTTC ■ PTTC

Base: Non-PTTC campaigns n=801. PTTC campaigns n=600

PTTC campaigns index higher on increasing market share and market penetration than non-PTTC campaigns

PTTC campaigns are 60% more likely to report increased market share and 17% more likely to report increased market penetration than non-PTTC campaigns.

It is true that just because more campaigns report market share movement does not necessarily mean that market share movement is greater in absolute terms. To check this, we stress-tested the scale of market share movement among a small sample of case studies where this information was provided.

Results indicated that PTTC campaigns were not only more likely to report market share within their case studies, but also, as explained overleaf, drive market share movements of a higher magnitude than their non-PTTC equivalents.

Percentage difference between PTTC campaigns and non-PTTC campaigns across hard metrics reported
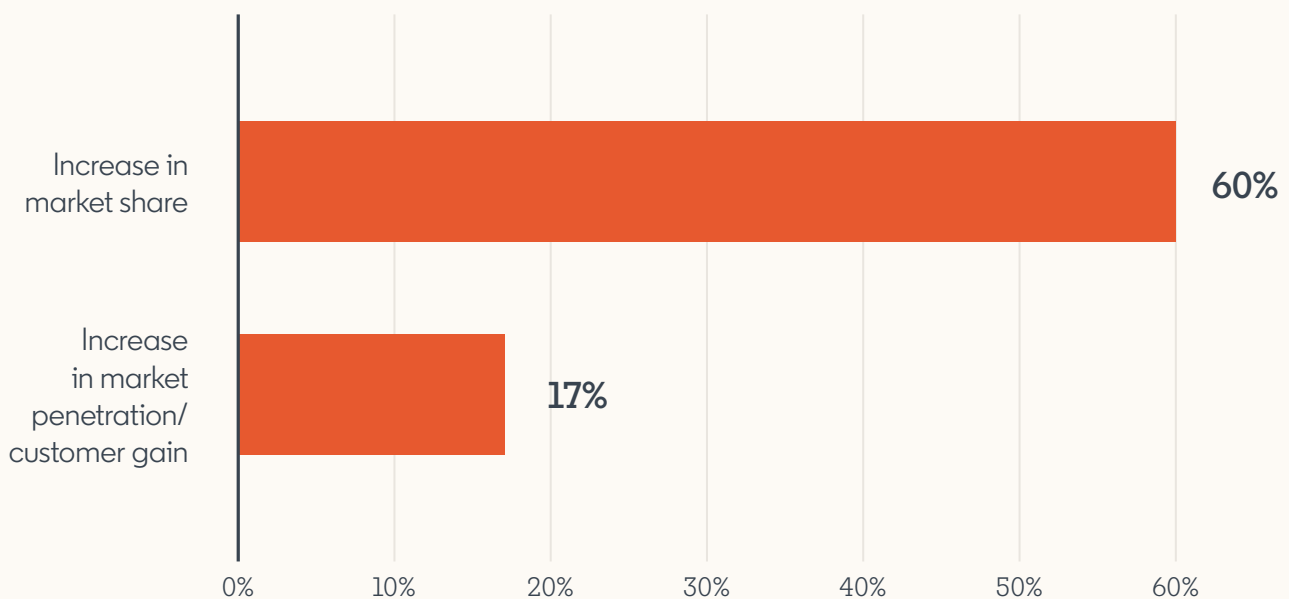
Base: Non-PTTC campaigns n=801. PTTC campaigns n=600

Magnitude of market share increases on an annualised average basis

When we looked at the average annualised magnitude of these market share increases we saw a clear difference: PTTC campaigns, on average, on an annualised basis, increased market share by 4% compared to non-PTTC campaigns which increased market share by 2.3%.

Mean annual increase

Legend: Non PTTC, PTTC

Non PTTC: 2.3
PTTC: 4

Not only are market share increases more frequent for PTTC campaigns, those increases are greater in magnitude.

Because the overall sample of case studies was smaller, we are treating these results as indicative. Results indicated that PTTC campaigns were not only more likely to report market share within their case studies, but also, as explained overleaf, drive market share movements of a higher magnitude than their non-PTTC equivalents.
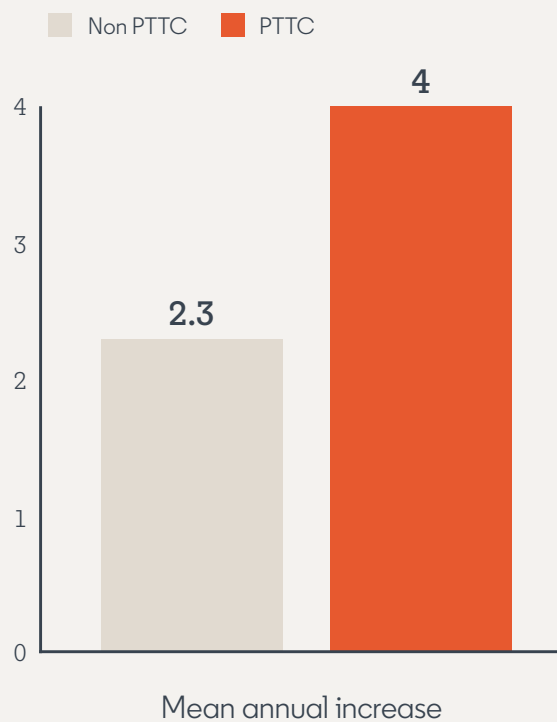
PTTC makes the biggest difference on market share in campaigns with the lowest budget, channels and duration

PTTC campaigns index the highest on increasing market share at the lower levels of Creative Commitment (6 and below).

For scale-up brands or businesses with limited marketing resources, a PTTC not only drives a brand advantage but also a commercial advantage in the form of market share growth.

Hard metrics measured: Market share

2018-2022, PTTC campaigns vs. non-PTTC campaigns
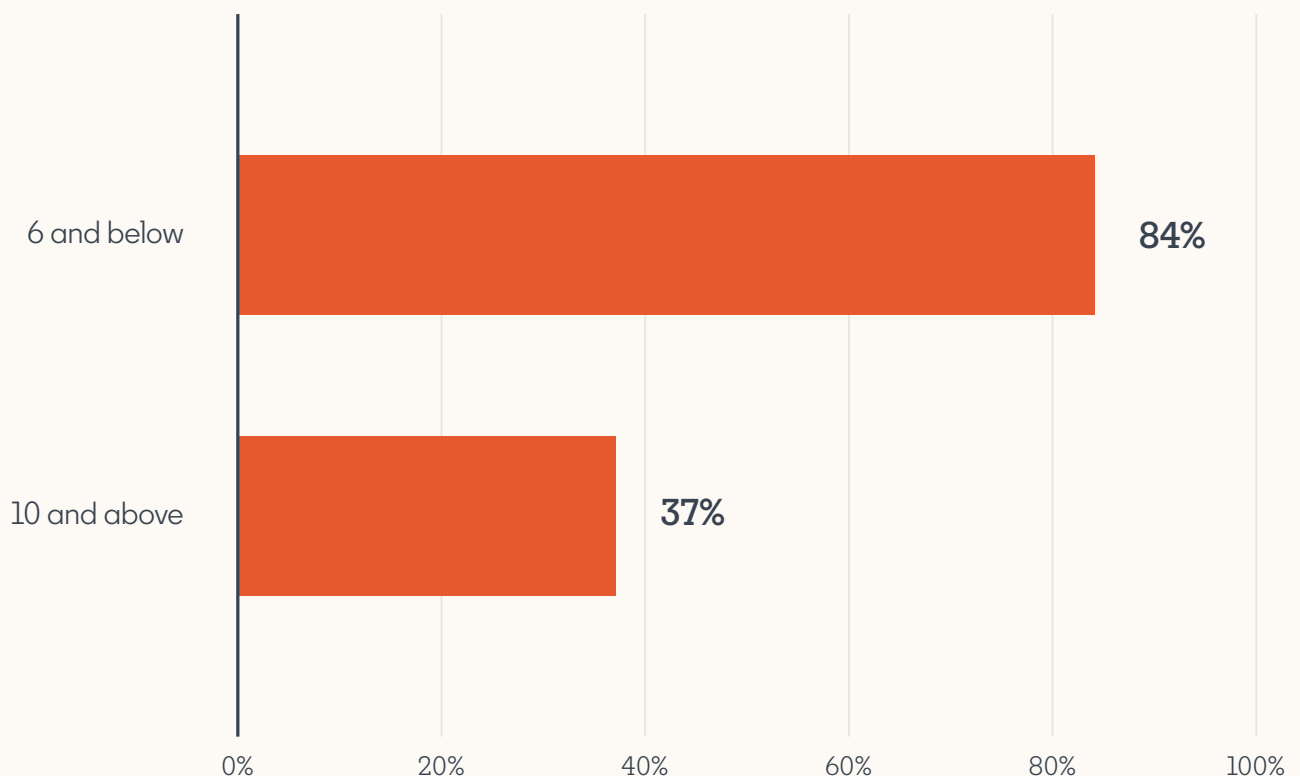
Base: Below 6 non-PTTC n=239, PTTC n=130
Above 10 non-PTTC n=79, PTTC n=81

Key takeaways

→ **A PTTC carries a commercial as well as brand advantage**

PTTC campaigns reported more frequent increases in market share and penetration than non-PTTC campaigns.

→ **PTTC campaigns are more likely to report greater market share movements**

Indicative results suggest that PTTC campaigns drive increases in market share of a greater magnitude compared to non-PTTC campaigns (4% vs. 2.3%).

→ **A PTTC is even more likely to drive increases in market share at lower levels of Creative Commitment**

For brands with limited resources, a PTTC can be a real source of competitive advantage in driving market share improvements.

Chapter 4

Long-term brand and sales effects

Testing the depth of commercial impact against a hierarchy of brand and sales effects

We have established that PTTC campaigns are more likely to report on and drive increases in market share and penetration compared to non-PTTC campaigns.

We wanted to go one step further to see if we could assess the depth of commercial impact of PTTC campaigns. To do this we used a proprietary framework called the Creative Effectiveness Ladder, which ranks campaigns against a hierarchy of brand and sales effects, from least to most impactful. The higher you are on the Ladder, particularly at the top two rungs, the more intense the longterm commercial impact of your work.

The Creative Effectiveness Ladder identifies the six main types of effects that creative marketing produces, setting them in a hierarchy of levels from least to most commercially impactful.

The Creative Effectiveness Ladder

A hierarchy of the six main types of effects that creative marketing produces, from least to most commercially impactful

Enduring Icon — 06

Commercial Triumph — 05

Brand Builder — 04

Sales Spike — 03

Behaviour Breakthrough — 02

Influential Idea — 01

Impact

Commercial

LIONS × WARC

Level 1
Influential Idea

Influential Idea campaigns use creativity to maximise engagement and sharing, resulting in the campaign over-achieving on campaign metrics and media efficiency.

Level 2
Behaviour Breakthrough

Behaviour Breakthrough campaigns use creativity to change the purchase behaviour of customers — or to change other forms of behaviour relevant to the success of the brand.

Level 3
Sales Spike

Sales Spike campaigns use creativity to create short-term, temporary growth in sales, market share or profitability for a brand.

Level 4
Brand Builder

Brand Builder campaigns use creativity to improve the fundamental measures of brand health — including awareness, consideration, preference, purchase intent and image attribute ownership.

Level 5
Commercial Triumph

Commercial Triumph campaigns use creativity to profitably increase sales and market share beyond a single quarter or beyond the duration of the campaign.
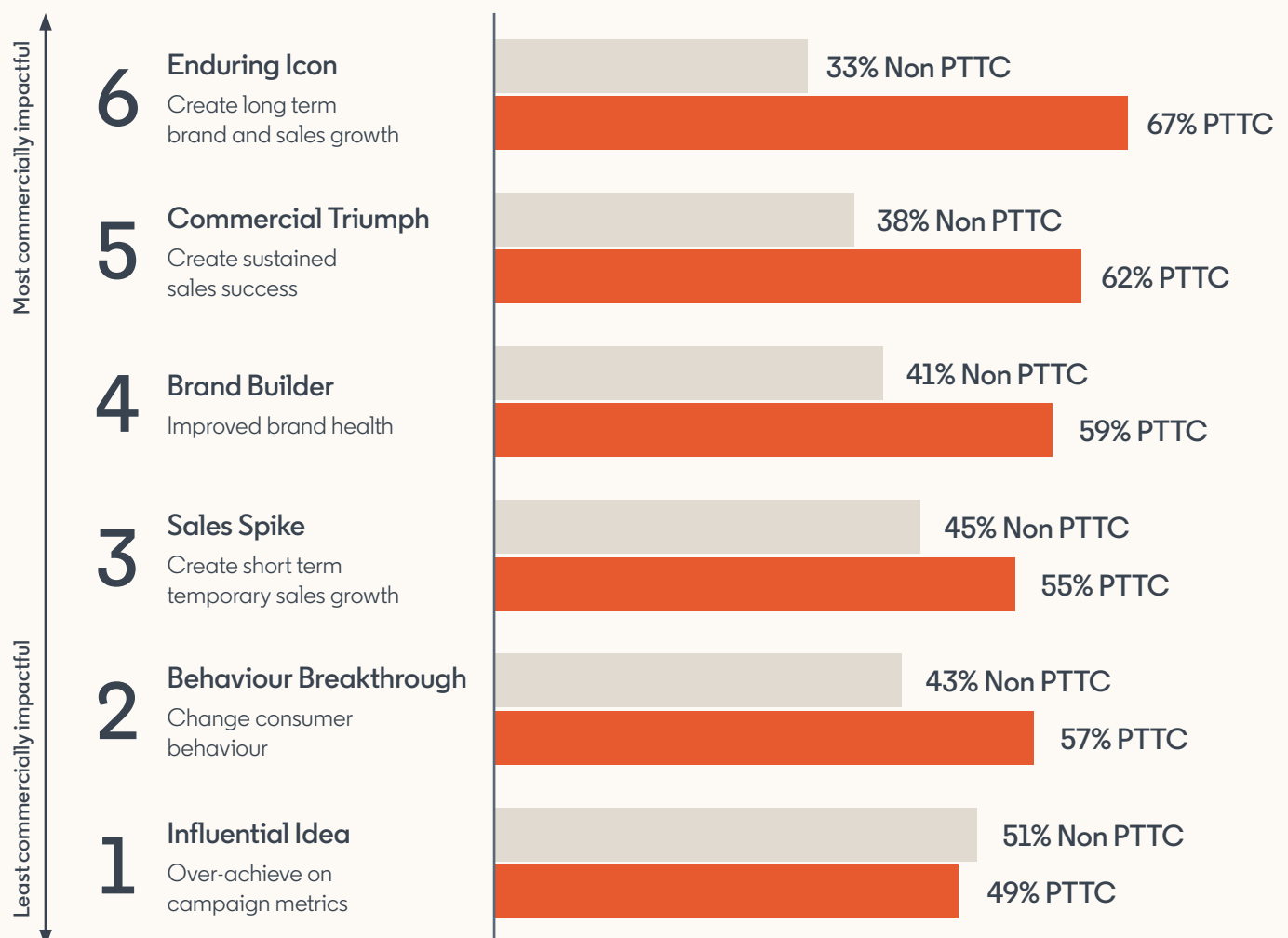
Level 6
Enduring Icon

Enduring Icon campaigns use creativity to drive brand and sales growth consistently over a long period of three years or more. They stick with the same creative strategy or creative work throughout that period, creating sustained commercial outcomes.

There is a greater relative distribution of PTTC campaigns at upper levels of the Ladder

When measuring the relative distribution of PTTC versus non-PTTC campaigns at ascending levels of the Creative Effectiveness Ladder, all but the lowest rung were over-weighted by PTTC campaigns versus their non-PTTC counterparts.

Memorable, valuable and deliverable promises to the customer increase the likelihood of campaigns delivering longterm brand and sales growth.

Breakdown of PTTC and non-PTTC campaigns at each level of the Creative Effectiveness Ladder

Most commercially impactful

6 **Enduring Icon**
Create long term brand and sales growth
33% Non PTTC
67% PTTC

5 **Commercial Triumph**
Create sustained sales success
38% Non PTTC
62% PTTC

4 **Brand Builder**
Improved brand health
41% Non PTTC
59% PTTC

3 **Sales Spike**
Create short term temporary sales growth
45% Non PTTC
55% PTTC

2 **Behaviour Breakthrough**
Change consumer behaviour
43% Non PTTC
57% PTTC

1 **Influential Idea**
Over-achieve on campaign metrics
51% Non PTTC
49% PTTC

Least commercially impactful

PTTC campaigns over-index at upper levels of the Ladder

PTTC campaigns are more likely to drive sustained brand and sales growth compared to non-PTTC campaigns. This intensifies the further we scale the Creative Effectiveness Ladder.

Legend: Non PTTC, PTTC

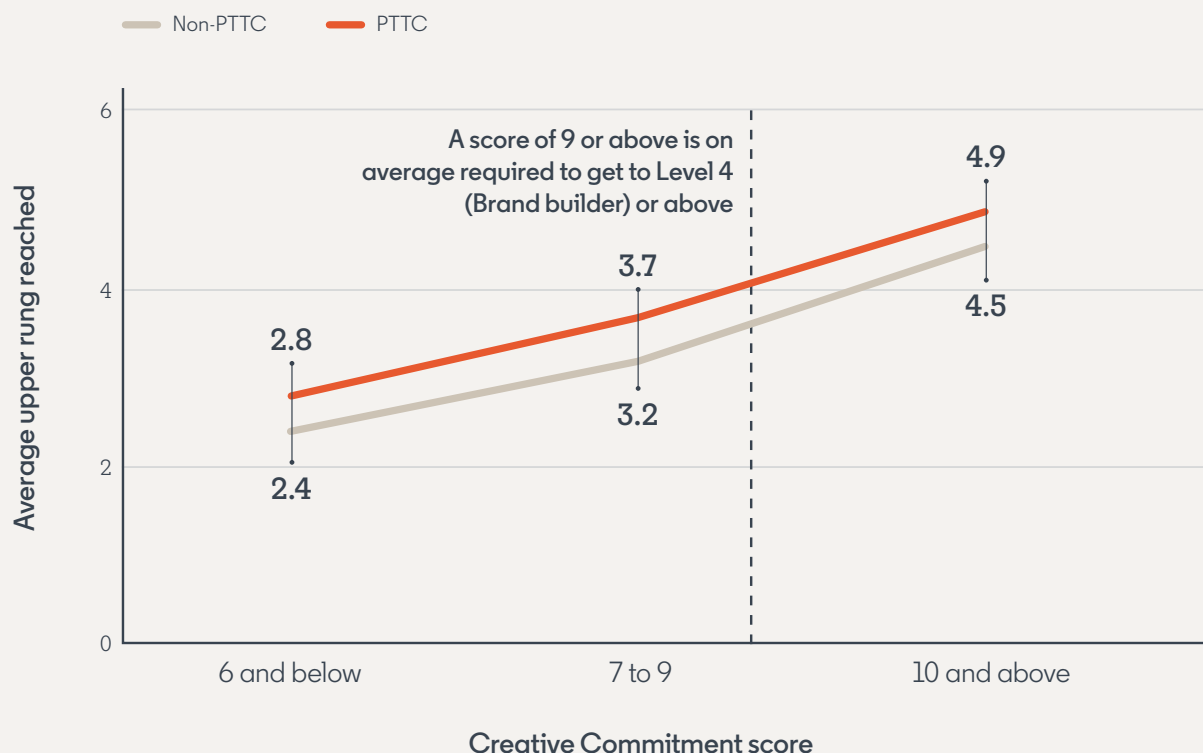|	Non PTTC	PTTC
Influential Idea — Over-achieve on campaign	51%	49%
Behaviour Breakthrough — Change consumer behaviour	43%	57%
Sales Spike — Create short-term temporary sales growth	45%	55%
Brand Builder — Improved brand health	41%	59%
Commercial Triumph — Create sustained sales success	38%	62%
Enduring Icon — Create long-term brand and sales growth	33%	67%
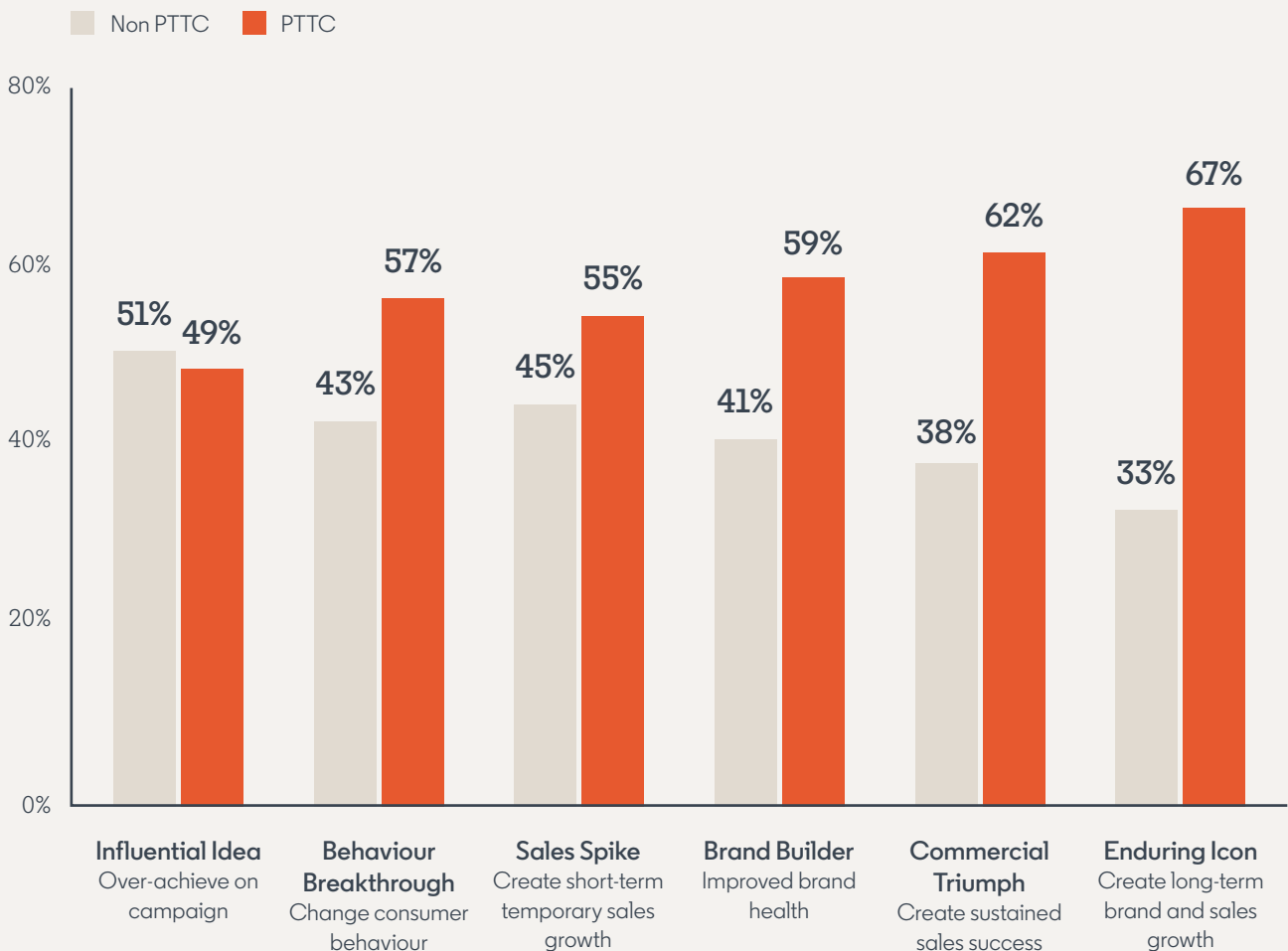
Base: Non-PTTC campaigns n = 1213, PTTC campaigns n = 808 (PTTC volume was upweighted to match the non-PTC volume for distribution calculation)

At all levels of Creative Commitment, the average highest rung for PTTC is higher than its non-PTTC equivalent

As with brand advantage, we wanted to check the commercial advantage delivered by PTTC campaigns wasn't simply a function of size or scale.

What we discovered was that at all levels of Creative Commitment, the average highest rung on the Creative Ladder for PTTC campaigns was higher than for non-PTTC campaigns.

In other words, irrespective of budget, duration or number of channels used, PTTC campaigns drove slightly larger brand and sales effects compared to non-PTTC campaigns.

Base: Non-PTTC 6 and below n=386, 7 to 9 n=163, 10 and above n=92
PTTC 6 and below n=189, 7 to 9 n=133 and 10 and above n=86
Note: A single campaign can appear at multiple levels of the Ladder

When we drill down into Creative Commitment's component parts, the same pattern of results is observed

When we break down Creative Commitment into its component parts, we see that PTTC is more effective at reaching higher levels of the Creative Effectiveness Ladder at every level of budget, duration and number of channels.

Brands should ultimately aim to reach higher levels of the Creative Effectiveness Ladder to achieve long-lasting and sustainable success.

However, even for smaller brands with a smaller budget or less capacity for broad media reach, PTTC can provide an advantage to overperform commercially.

More details on our research methodology and process can be found in the appendix of this report.

Budget

Legend: Non-PTTC, PTTC

Average upper rung reached vs. Budget

Budget	PTTC	Non-PTTC
Under $500K	2.8	2.5
$500K - $1M	3	2.5
$1M - $5M	3.8	3.3
$5M - $10M	3.8	3.2
Over $10M	4.5	4.2
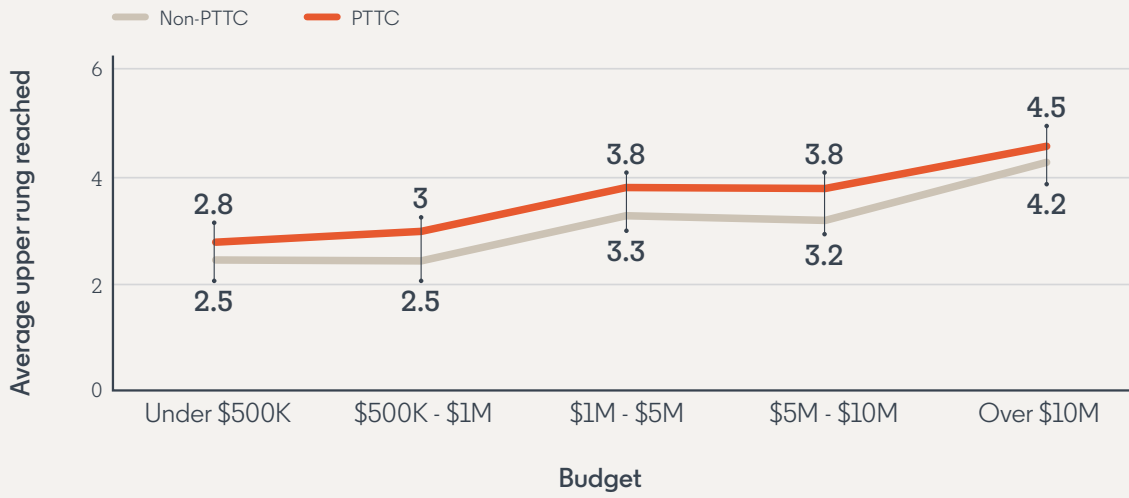
Base: Non-PTTC n=707, PTTC n=446

Campaign duration

Legend: Non-PTTC, PTTC

Average upper rung reached vs. Campaign duration

Campaign duration	PTTC	Non-PTTC
Under 3 months	2.6	2.3
3 - 6 months	3.3	2.8
6 - 12 months	3.8	3.3
1 - 3 years	4.7	3.9
Over 3 years	5.6	5.3
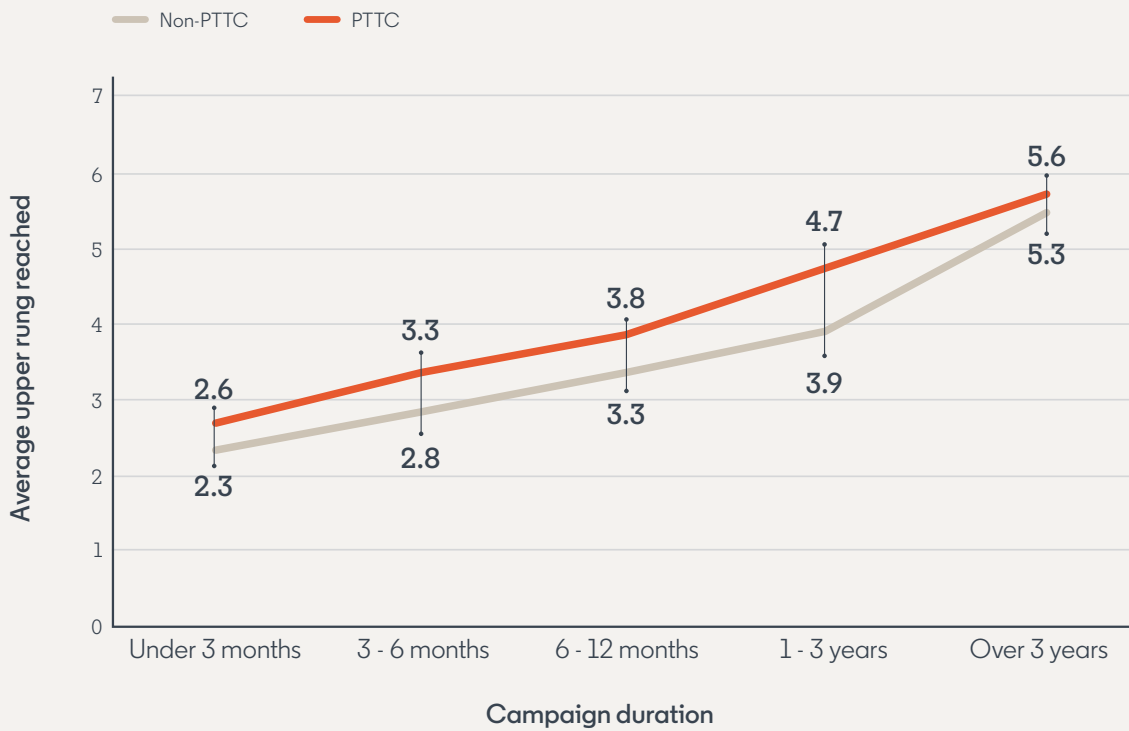
Base: Non-PTTC n=863, PTTC n=534

Number of channels

Legend: —— Non-PTTC   —— PTTC

Chart: "Average upper rung reached" (y-axis, 0 to 5) vs "Number of channels" (x-axis)

Number of channels	Non-PTTC	PTTC
1–4 channels	2.4	2.9
5–7 channels	2.9	3.3
8–10 channels	3.3	3.8
11–13 channels	3.8	4
14+ channels	3.6	4.2
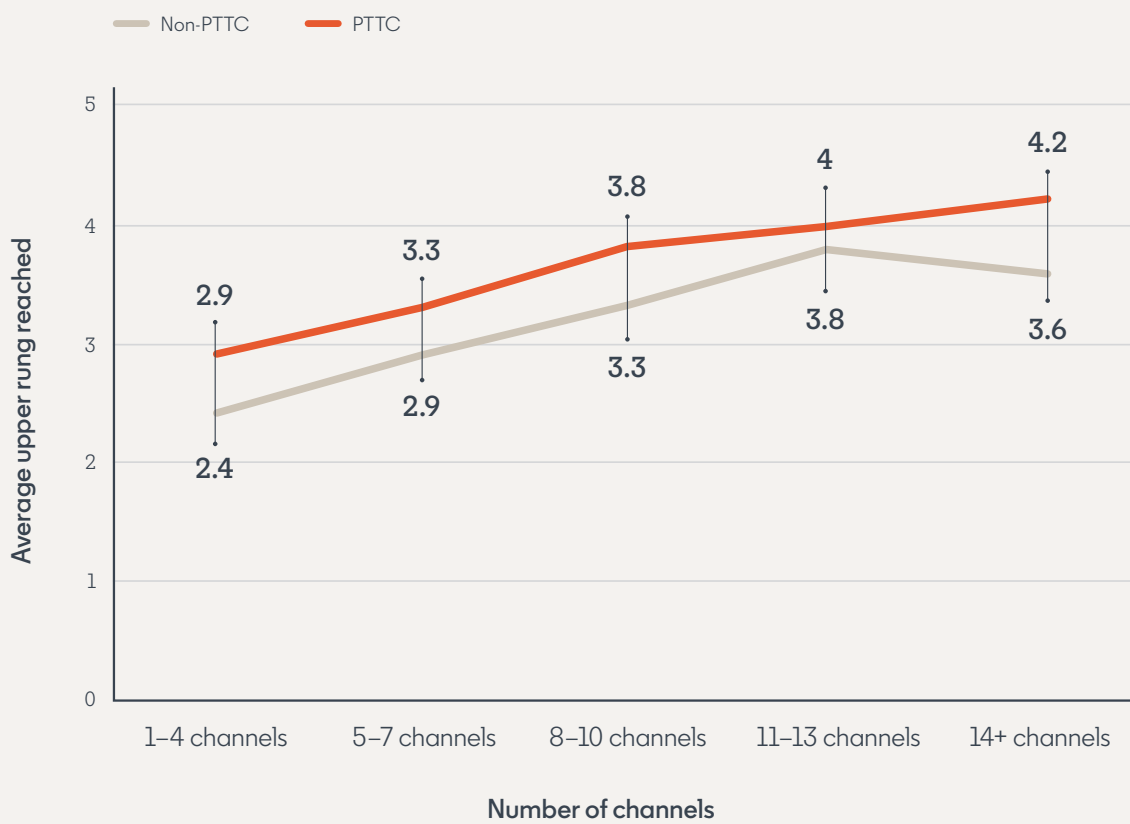
Base: Non-PTTC n=1208, PTTC n=806

Key takeaways

→ **PTTC campaigns are more prevalent at higher levels of the Creative Effectiveness Ladder**

A PTTC increases the likelihood of a campaign delivering long-term brand and sales growth.

→ **At all levels of Creative Commitment, PTTC campaigns deliver a greater impact**

Irrespective of budget, duration or number of channels, PTTC campaigns drive larger brand and sales effects than non-PTTC campaigns.
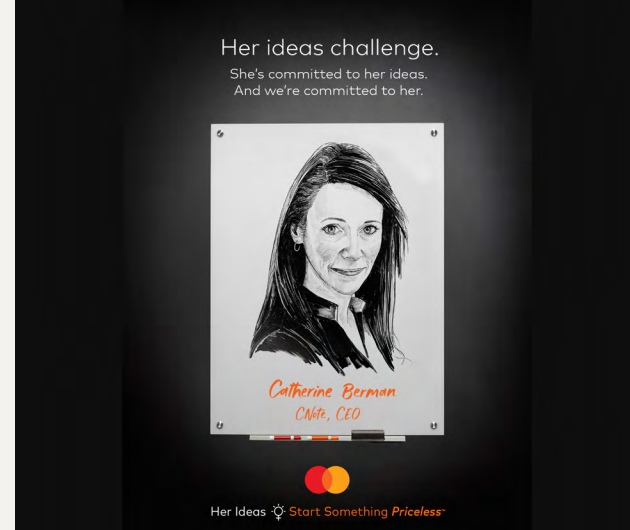
Chapter 5

Case studies

Mastercard: SMB

Promise to the Customer:

"If you are a woman-owned small business, Mastercard will invest in you."

Context

- 99.9% of all US businesses are small businesses.
- Women-owned small businesses receive 2% of venture capital funding, while men receive the other 98%.
- Mastercard identified an opportunity to make a real impact with a unique approach, focusing on a niche: women-owned small businesses.

Objective

- Mastercard's goal was to stand out in the small business space and show business owners, regular consumers, partners, and merchants alike that Mastercard is invested in the success of women-owned small businesses.
- The campaign supported 5,000+ women small business owners in pursuing their ideas, making a positive impact, and starting something priceless.

Strategy

- To engage women-owned small businesses, Mastercard created Her Ideas Start Something Priceless.
- This effort celebrated the impact women-owned small businesses make in their communities by telling some of their stories, and supporting initiatives that address problems these business owners face.

Source: Mastercard SMB — WARC Awards for Effectiveness

Key results:

- Each Mastercard campaign increased brand salience and mental availability.
- An 8-point gain (from 66% to 74%) in positive brand opinion and 4-point gain in consideration (70% to 74%) among small business owners.
- A 6-point gain (66 to 72%) in brand opinion and 10-point gain in consideration (57% to 67%) among affluent women.

Aldi:
From shame to pride

Promise to the Customer:

"Aldi is a supermarket where you can feel proud, not ashamed, to shop."

Context

- Aldi opened its first UK store in 1990. As a limited-range, deep-discounter in a nation whose supermarkets were expanding and becoming more premium, its launch was met with derision.
- Over a 10 year period from 2010, Aldi focused on tackling negative consumer perceptions in the course of four campaigns, demonstrating quality, product range, pricing and provenance.

Objective

- Aldi's ambition was to break out from 20 years as a niche player and become one of the UK's top-five grocery retailers within ten years (by 2020).
- Getting families to swap their usual supermarket for Aldi to discover they could get everything they wanted, and the quality they demanded, while saving money.

Strategy

- Aldi doubled down on the myth that it wasn't special enough for Christmas. To debunk this myth, Aldi used its humblest item, a carrot, as spokesman for its wonderful Christmas indulgences.
- A challenger mindset took Aldi from being a store where people were ashamed to shop, to one people felt proud of.
- "Aldi does not ask how much [it] can charge for a product; [it] asks how little they can sell it for."

Source: Aldi: From shame to pride — WARC Awards for Effectiveness
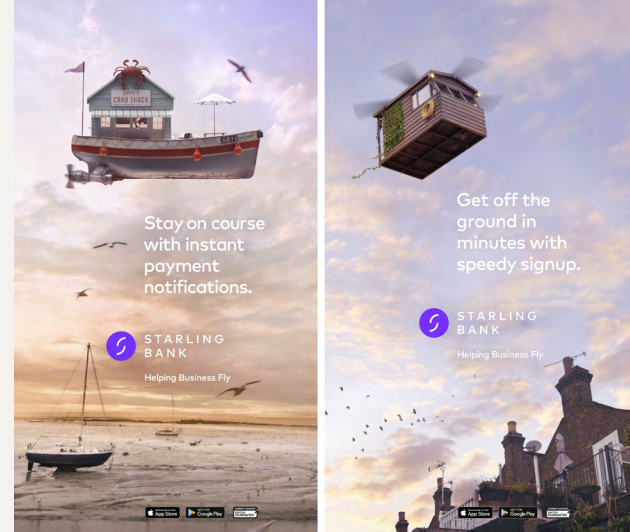
Key results:

- By 2017, it achieved fifth-place with 6.2% share; by 2019 it had 7.9% share.
- Annual sales of £9.49bn.
- 64% penetration.
- 20.6 frequency and basket size of 19.1 — the most of any competitor.

Starling Bank:
Helping business fly

Promise to the Customer:

"Starling Bank has the knowledge and tools to help your small business succeed."

Context

- In 2018, Starling launched its business account. Unlike most competitors this business account had no monthly cost, no overseas fees, no fees when transferring to another business account and took just 10 minutes to set up. It was a revolutionary piece of financial technology and consequently voted the UK's best business account in 2019 and 2020.

- The problem was few people knew about it and, as a new "digital" entrant, even fewer trusted it.

Objective

- Starling saw an opportunity to position itself as a digital bank (with all its innovations)with substance and heart (on a mission to change banking for good).

- It was with this substance and heart that Starling felt they could awaken SME customers from their inertia. Research showed that this apathy was not due to contented customers but instead existed because they did not think there was anything else better.

Strategy

- Starling landed on a creative platform called "Helping Business Fly." It perfectly surmised the active role the bank could play in helping SMEs, whilst also enabling it to display empathy towards the category. It also had the word "fly" in it which helped link back to the brand name.

- The relevancy of the platform meant that rather than running the ad for the intended three months, it would run on and off throughout 2020. Starling saw an opportunity to continue to expand its share of voice as the big banks started pulling their ad spend in the wake of lockdown.

Source: Starling Bank: Help business fly — The Marketing Society Awards

Key results:

- After six months the message of Helping Business Fly had reached over 98% of the UK population. Awareness amongst business decision makers jumped from 57% to 70%.
- The number of business accounts for the bank more than tripled, from 95,000 accounts in 2019 to over 310,000 in 2020.

MiraLAX: From nuclear laxatives to holistic health

Promise to the Customer:
"MiraLAX helps you heal the mind-gut connection and relieve stress."

Context

- MiraLAX had been available as an overthe-counter laxative for over 15 years, growing to become the dominant player in the category on the strength of its unique product superiority: unlike harsh stimulant laxatives, MiraLAX works with the water in your body for gentle, yet effective relief.

Objective

- The laxative category is an aging one. Even as the category leader, MiraLAX struggled to attract younger constipation sufferers.
- Dubbed the "Wellness Generation", millennials have an intense focus on promoting holistic well-being for themselves, and they go to extremes to avoid taking laxatives (to the point that they were willing to wait out their constipation for 8-10 days before using one).

Objective

- Reframe constipation relief as holistic wellness: when your gut is good, it's all good.
- The category stopped short with its focus on functional benefits, but MiraLAX saw the opportunity to connect with the mental and emotional side of constipation, not just the physical. It could be the only laxative brand tapping directly into the mind-gut connection in a direct, authentic way.

Source: MiraLAX: From nuclear laxatives to holistic health — Jay Chiat Strategic Excellence Awards

Key results:

- For 2021, MiraLAX outpaced private label brands and its biggest competitor, with millennials driving a disproportionate share of the sales increase.
- +30% dollar sales among millennials.
- +15% dollars sales overall.
- +1.4 points in household penetration.
- +1 point market share.

Sherwin-Williams: Speaking in Color

Promise to the Customer:
"Sherwin-Williams can help you find your dream colour."

Context

- Architects and like-minded innovators are obsessed with finding the perfect colour to match their vision. And while the human eye can detect over one million colours, we don't see, experience, or remember them in the same way — meaning finding THE perfect colour is a huge challenge.

Objective

- Colour is personal — it's human. To architects, it can change the feel of a city, evoke emotion, and create the building's character.
- As a global leader in colour coatings, Sherwin-Williams Coil Coatings set out to make finding the perfect colour as intuitive as possible.

Strategy

- Speaking in Color is a voice-activated AI colour system that produces hues based on human inspiration. For example, by simply speaking: "Crystal clear, Caribbean water" millions of images are analysed in a search algorithm, and optical recognition technology creates a custom colour palette. Using the intuitive power of AI, any colour can be fine-tuned by saying, "A little brighter" or "Blend in a bit more blue" to find that one in a million colour.
- For the first time ever, colour can be spoken into existence.

Source: Speaking in color — Wunderman Thompson

Key results:

- With each use, Speaking in Color is creating one of the largest datasets of colour attribution in the world.
- As a result, Sherwin-Williams is gaining insights into the global, cultural, and geographical influences of individual colours. This gives the business an advantage in colour mapping, predicting trends, and understanding the role colour plays in all of our lives.

Surf: Bursting the bubble to sell more suds

Promise to the Customer:
"No matter what trouble you get into, your clothes will always smell perfect with Surf."

YOU'LL ALWAYS SMELL

PERF WITH SUR

Context

- Surf, a laundry detergent brand, was suffering from a decline in awareness and relevance, a gradual untethering from the brand's previous associations with strong fragrance, and consistent share losses despite continuous format innovation.

- Semiotics showed the laundry category was characterised by a woefully outdated "quest" for moral purity and domestic excellence. It set impossible expectations: like asking its audience to "perform the role of caregiver in the family."

Objective

- It made Surf think twice about who they were talking to, and how.

- Why target the 2.8 million "sensorial seeking pre-family households" when it could target the 83% of laundry buyers who "love to wear clothes that smell as great as they look?" Surf called them "Surfies:" a 7.7 millon strong tribe whose lust for life was matched only by its emphatic love of great-smelling garms.

- By bursting the Adland bubble, planning unlocked a more insightful, mainstream audience and found a fresh new role for Surf that challenged outdated category tropes and celebrated the marvelous mess and muck of Surfie life.

Strategy

- "Perf with Surf" is a dead simple idea: no matter what trouble you get into, your clothes will always smell #PERF with Surf.

Source: Surf: Bursting the bubble to sell more suds — APG awards (UK)

Key results:

- Unaided brand awareness sky-rocketed, from 30% to 41%.
- Agreement that Surf has great fragrances increased instantly from 30% to 40%, whilst agreement that Surf offered better quality than other brands also ended up increasing from 19% to 25%.
- Since Perf with Surf, the brand has grown to become the number one brand in powders, the fastest growing liquids brand (up +4.4%), and also the fastest growing capsules brand (up a whopping +28%).

Chapter 6

Conclusions

The value of a Promise to the Customer

The "promise" mindset is a compelling upstream strategic idea that is capable of delivering clear downstream benefits to businesses.

This is the key insight from our research, which demonstrates that marketing campaigns that make a Promise to the Customer can deliver a brand building and commercial advantage.

This is true for campaigns of all levels, regardless of factors relating to budget, duration or number of channels used. Hence, a Promise to the Customer can be a source of competitive advantage for organisations of all sizes, in particular scale-up brands and businesses with limited marketing resources.

While these findings are promising, it is important to remember that the cases examined in this research met a high creative excellence and effectiveness benchmark. In this regard, a Promise to the Customer should be viewed as a strategic amplifier for brands; not a replacement for robust strategy and media planning.

Takeaways:
What the data shows us

→ **A PTTC delivers a brand advantage**

Advertising campaigns that make a PTTC are more likely to report on and drive increases in core brand health measures compared to non-PTTC campaigns.

→ **A PTTC delivers a commercial advantage**

Advertising campaigns that make a PTTC are more likely to report on and drive increases in market penetration and market share compared to non-PTTC campaigns.

→ **A PTTC delivers more sustained brand and sales effects**

When measured against a hierarchy of brand and sales effects (Creative Effectiveness Ladder), PTTC campaigns are more likely to drive sustained brand and sales growth compared to non-PTTC campaigns.

Takeaways for marketers

→ **Leverage a PTTC to make marketing more accountable**

A PTTC is a mental model that can help businesses overcome internal silos and unite all GTM activities behind a direct commitment to the customer. For marketers, a PTTC makes it easier to communicate the role of marketing in customer value creation, as opposed to words like "brand" and "brand purpose", which are less easily understood by those outside of marketing.

→ **Make a PTTC that matters**

The nature of the promise is extremely important to customer value creation. A clear, credible Promise to the Customer should be memorable and designed for a particular buying situation; it should be valuable by tapping into a fundamental customer need; and it should be deliverable in order to build confidence with customers.

→ **A PTTC can be a source of competitive advantage, particularly for smaller brands**

PTTC campaigns are more effective than non-PTTC campaigns at all levels of Creative Commitment (budget, duration, number of channels used). If you're a scale-up business and/or brand with limited marketing resources, a PTTC can be a smart approach for driving efficient brand building and commercial impact.

"

I'm really excited about the future of B2B marketing, where B2B marketers understand the way you create economic value is through promise making. What is the credible promise that your company can make, to its customers, to its own employees and to its investors and really deliver on?

Jann Schwarz
Founder and Head, The B2B Institute at LinkedIn

Appendix

Glossary of terms

Promise to the Customer

PTTC is a new mental model for businesses developed by the LinkedIn B2B Institute and Roger Martin (CEO Advisor, Strategist and Author of "Playing to Win"), designed to help organisations overcome internal silos and unite all activities behind a direct commitment to the customer.

Creative Commitment

A composite metric that measures three campaign dynamics: budget, campaign duration and number of media channels. Based on an assessment of these three areas, campaigns are awarded a Creative Commitment score on a scale ranging from 3-15.

Creative Effectiveness Ladder

A framework that ranks campaigns against a hierarchy of brand and sales effects, from least to most impactful.

Brand health

A collection of metrics that demonstrate how a brand is perceived by its consumers.

Market share

The portion or percentage of sales within the category of a particular brand or product.

Market penetration

A measure of how much a product or service is being used by customers compared to the total estimated market for that product or service. Customer gain is when a campaign strategy leads to new customers engaging with the brand.

Research methodology

To test the theory of whether PTTC is an enabler of marketing effectiveness, the WARC team developed a three-step approach to identify and validate a dataset of award winning, shortlisted and entered PTTC campaigns.

Step 1: Define

WARC and the B2B Institute confirmed the definition of a Promise to the Customer (PTTC) as memorable, valuable, and deliverable.

Taken from the last five years of awards entrants or winners, all the case studies met a high creative excellence and effectiveness benchmark. Qualitatively, WARC identified and then categorised various types of PTTC campaigns into 4 categories — product based, CX / path to purchase, emotional appeal, and purpose based.

Step 2: Validate

WARC excluded campaigns with ambiguity in their customer promise to ensure the PTTC dataset remained as standardised and consistent as possible. This dataset does not include any non-profit organisations.

From the WARC database, 2,021 valid cases from 2018 to 2022 were chosen. The case studies were peer reviewed for promise-type validation. From this group, we identified 808 (40%) cases that make an overt Promise to the Customer which we then divided into promisetype categories.

This is the first research-based test of the notion of identifying and developing Promise to the Customer (PTTC) categories.

Step 2: Analyse

808 valid PTTC cases were analysed and compared to 1,213 non-PTTC cases through three lenses to test the hypothesis that PTTC campaigns are more effective:

1. Comparison of PTTC vs. non-PTTC across frequency of reported metrics.
2. Assessment of PTTC vs. non-PTTC via Creative Commitment scores.
3. Analysis of PTTC vs. non-PTTC against the Creative Effectiveness Ladder.

Emerging types of promise and definitions

Our research team differentiated promises and categorised them as below:

Category	Type	Description
Product based (37%)	Quality/range of products	A brand makes a Promise to the Customer about the superior quality (comfort, safety, security, effectiveness, taste, ingredients, etc.) of its products.
	Value for money	A brand makes a Promise to the Customer that its product / service is worth investing in and provides value for money.
Emotional appeal (35%)	Emotional promise*	A brand makes a Promise to the Customer that they will feel differently when they use its products or services.**
Customer experience/ path to purchase (24%)	Customer experience/ service	A brand commits to taking away the pain points in the purchase process and/or providing the best customer experience or service.
	Winning back trust	A brand commits to winning back their customers after crisis.
Sustainability (4%)	Purpose based	A brand promises to help their customers live more sustainable lives.

* Category of "emotional promise" excludes campaigns that fail to link a specific product/service with a change in the customer's emotional state (e.g., the John Lewis Christmas advert would not qualify — this is an advert that leverages emotion but without making a clear or explicit promise to the customer.)

** This includes emotional support: A promise to provide support to its customers every day / at key stages in their lives / in specific moments of need by, for example, relieving pain, reducing anxiety, and so on.

Emotional appeal and product based promises tend to dominate

When categorising PTTC campaigns, emotional appeal and product based promises tended to dominate our dataset. These types of campaigns tend to focus primarily on tapping into psychologist Daniel Kahneman's famous System 1 thinking. This is thinking which is fast, instinctive and emotional to guide our decision making rather than the slower, more deliberate and logical System 2 mode of thinking.

Many effectiveness studies have found emotion to be the biggest driver of campaign effectiveness. It also tends to be the most memorable, tapping into mental cues and distinctive amplified brand characteristics to speed up the decision making process.

- Emotional appeal and product based promises dominate, representing 72% of all PTTC campaigns.

- Customer experience / path to purchase promises represent 24% of all PTTC cases.

- As expected, purpose promises are the least common promise type.

4%
(n=30)

24%

37%

35%

■ Product based   ■ Emotional appeal   ■ CX / Path to purchase   ■ Purpose based
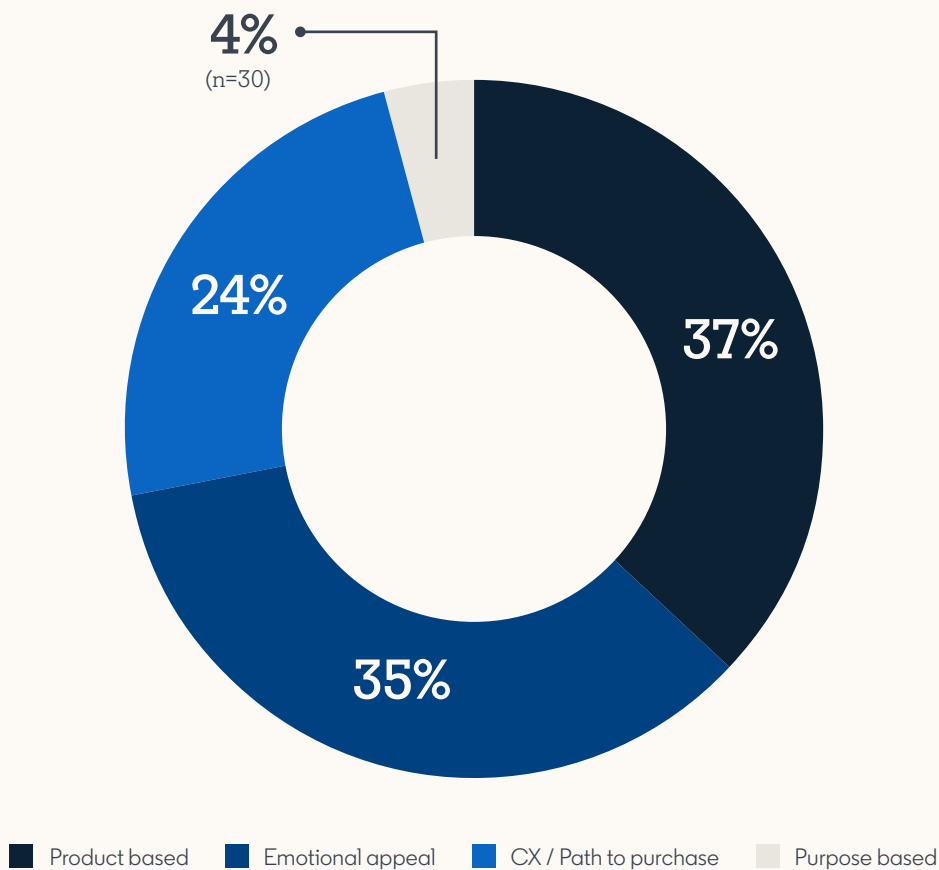
Base: Non-PTTC campaigns n=1213, PTTC campaigns n=808

About the B2B Institute at LinkedIn

The B2B Institute is a LinkedIn Think Tank that researches new approaches to B2B growth.

The Institute partners with leading academic and industry experts to empower the B2B community with breakthrough ideas and category-defining research. They are a diverse team of talented strategists and storytellers who are passionate about helping B2B marketers realise the opportunity brand advertising has in driving growth.

Follow us on LinkedIn to stay-up-to date and visit our website at www.B2Binstitute.org.

About WARC

WARC
AN ASCENTIAL COMPANY

At WARC, our purpose is to save the world from ineffective marketing by putting evidence at the heart of every marketing decision.

We believe that effective marketing is based on facts and not opinions.

Since 1985, we've brought confidence to marketing decisions through the most trusted research, case studies, best practice, data and inspiration.

Today, we help 75,000+ marketers across 100+ countries. Our clients include the world's leading brands, advertising and media agencies, media owners, research companies and universities — including the top-five largest agency groups and top-five largest advertisers in the world.

Learn more about WARC Advisory.

For more information on bespoke advisory projects, contact imaad.ahmed@warc.com.

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