

BE BOLD, BE CREATIVE, DO RESEARCH!

How early communication research enables marketers to make more creative, bolder advertising... faster

By Arnaud Debia | October 2019



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Strong ideas are essential for advertisers to grab attention and grow powerful brands. This requires making bolder creative choices. They can effectively turn around a category and a brand's business, yet risks to make a wrong turn remain. The recent Gillette and Nike Kaepernick cases are examples of this. So, where to find the courage to be bold, to be decisive, and have the inspiration for breakthrough, business-building creative? Carling, Carrefour and Libresse have found the answer: Early communication research.

People and brands have never faced a more fragmented world than now. Supermarkets are flooded with brands and products, and Amazon search results offers the choice of hundreds of options. More and more content is available across more and more channels, and advertising is everywhere, struggling to catch the attention of a busy public.

Agile brands and seasoned advertising agencies have long known what it takes to shake and move people with their communication, to trigger a meaningful behaviour towards the brand: delivering the right content, with the right creative execution that will be effective and trigger the right reactions.

But, as the window to make an impression is dramatically reducing, it now requires something extra too: the brave spark, a bold creative expression, immediate, strong, and deep, which will reveal the brand's relevance, make it unique and distinctive. As Captain Kirk would say, bold enough to go where no-one has gone before.

Figure 1 Gillette



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koPmuEyP3a0>

NIKE DREAM CRAZY: REBELS STAND OUT, BUT DIVIDE

Figure 2 Nike



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/kaepernick7>

Nike has a longstanding history of communicating its empowerment purpose with tremendous skill, illustrated by its iconic Just Do It signature and a legacy of rebellious, yet charismatic ambassadors. However, the brand had been lacking credibility recently among Millennials and Generation Z, seduced by edgier, newer brands. With Dream Crazy, they found the right spark to move a whole generation closer to the swoosh.

Dream Crazy effectively combines the right execution and the right content – a two-minute anthem full of inspiration to dream bigger, with the best spokesperson the brand could find to spark a nationwide debate. In 2016, American football player Colin Kaepernick grabbed headlines for kneeling during the US national anthem, in protest at police violence and brutality in the country. A decision which Kaepernick claims has cost him an NFL team over the last two years.

Choosing Kaepernick was extremely brave, but not crazy. Nike knew what they wanted to do and they just did it!

They just did it, first, to get noticed by generating a strong reaction to the campaign. Two months after it was first aired, an Ipsos poll found¹, 72% of people correctly associated the campaign with Nike. They succeeded by generating strong reactions with around 45% of Americans being much more positive about the brand.... Or much more negative.

Indeed, the ad shook the public, to say the least, causing polarising reactions. Dozens (of American Conservatives) posted pictures and videos of themselves burning Nike shoes in anger to Kaepernick becoming the brand's new hero. Donald Trump even tweeted to call Nike crazy and pushed for a boycott. But the campaign's supporters, especially African Americans, Democrats and younger generations stood by Nike.

33% of Americans declare they are more negative towards Nike, while 31% are more positive, our poll finds. This positivity rises to 36% of Gen Z, 57% of African Americans, and 48% of Democrats.

Was this worth the risk? If we listen to what Nike communicated it resulted in increased brand sales and a 5% rise in Nike's stock value.

So how do great brands not only get the inspiration to create breakthrough advertising, but also find the confidence to choose the boldest route over the safest avenue?

Contrary to the stereotype that says adventurers just trust their guts, three brands leveraged Ipsos creative development research at an early stage, to reveal how to be bolder, and be more creative, with better business results.

“But in order to change you have to be able to agitate people at times. I think that’s something that’s very necessary for us to improve as a country.”

Colin Kaepernick

LIBRESSE VIVA LA VULVA: COURAGE AND GUIDANCE ON HOW BEST TO BREAK TABOOS

The feminine care category is packed with strong competitors, including a market leader who has told great emotional stories around the purpose of women empowerment. So, for Essity's Libresse (also called Bodyform or Nana in some countries), to stand-out was a huge challenge, and the brand needed a creative miracle to more closely connect and engage with women.

With their first campaign, Libresse achieved this by tackling taboos surrounding periods, such as women being ashamed of asking for a sanitary towel in public and men feeling embarrassed about adding them to their shopping list. They adopted the view that periods are not shameful but natural and shouldn't be hidden. This was successfully translated into #Bloodnormal, a campaign that shows what periods really are; not a blue liquid on a pad as represented in other adverts, but real blood, and in this way promoted a change in mindset.

Now how could Libresse repeat the miracle, continue to strengthen affinity with women, recruit Gen Z and grow share? Well, by breaking another taboo. And making sure

its advertising expression is positively bold, aspirational and contagious.

Here's another feminine taboo. Women feel incredibly insecure about how their genitals appear as they strive for perfection there too – 44% of women feel dissatisfied about how they look². Now, this is such an intrinsically intimate topic, no one knows what normal looks like. And that's precisely the point of view Libresse strived to defend: to feel good about how your vulva looks, to be proud and promote well-being.

To translate that into Viva la Vulva, Libresse partnered early on with Ipsos, exploring early creative stories and identifying how to best express such a sensitive and bold stand.

Like #Bloodnormal before, Viva La Vulva got women's attention and seems to impact the brand positively. We wish it continues to follow the same path as last year's campaign, wins in market and creative awards in 2019, proving again the "creativity equals business" equation.

Figure 3 Libresse



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k-_4WIoY6Y

CARREFOUR: NURTURING (FRENCH) CONSUMERS' TASTE FOR OBJECTIONS

Figure 4 Carrefour



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMhOurCU90I>

In September 2018, a new front opened in the ongoing battle between French food and retail giants: who will be crowned champion of the food revolution? Which brand would best demonstrate sustainable, health-conscious food?

During that race for the health consciousness trophy, many campaigns hit French consumers' screens, from Auchan and System U to Leclerc and Danone. Retailer Carrefour was certainly not the most obvious candidate, yet it seems, it outsmarted all its competitors. Not only in terms of attention, but also becoming the brand people trust most to "act for food".... Through bolder, more creative choices.

This stroke of genius happened by identifying with Ipsos how to truly be relevant in one of France's sacred domains: food. It meant first being honest about how French people perceive brands when it comes to food-related topics: mistrust.

Retailers and the industry have appeared for years as the champions of industrialisation, far from the environmental, health, and societal concerns which developed over recent years. Thus, research showed Carrefour's communication had to be humble and evidence-based, to demonstrate the brand was not only surfing on a trend, but genuinely committing to the cause with real outcomes. The creative idea was born off the back of this insight and helped the Carrefour campaign successfully stand-out.

Consumers, in France in particular, are known to resist, object, oppose, disagree, sometimes even to demonstrate against, overly positive messages or stories that are too good to be true. Carrefour thus carved out its campaign by answering French objections to its core actions. They took a bottom-up approach removing all the barriers that the sceptical French consumers would verbalise, with strong arguments based on facts and tangible actions, whether on social media or within the advertisements themselves. For example, if a consumer reacts on Facebook to the fact organic eggs are three times more expensive than non-organic, Carrefour would reply instantly saying that's why they are signing long-term financing contracts with organic egg producers to help them invest and bring prices down.

Result: a thumbs-up from the questioning consumer. This required the right message, insights and a great creative story, but also real bravery to embed negative challenges that the brand may have faced and be prepared to answer them on the spot.

And it really paid off.

The battle to head the food revolution has only just started, yet Carrefour Google search results, YouTube views, Facebook comments as well as share performance, tend to indicate the brand is taking the lead in this fight.

CARLING: STRIKING THE CHORD OF REAL, STRONG, BOLD MASCULINITY

Figure 5 Carling



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6nQ3gUM3Ec>

Two years ago, Carling Black Label was experiencing a decline in relevance and penetration, with younger South African consumers. The brand had to reinvent itself and redefine a more inspirational purpose to strive again and stand out in crowded beer market.

As you certainly suspect now, the answer is meant to be more creative and bold, re-positioning the brand and what masculinity means at the same time. This required good research leading to creative that ensures Carling Black Label was best capturing its younger consumers' aspirations.

On its path to reinvention, in-depth investigation of modern South African males revealed a tension – masculinity has a lot to do with strength, yet male strength is often stereotyped by society as brutal muscle, mindless sexual appetite and violence. South Africans do not recognize themselves in that stereotypical way, and masculinity can thus become a burden.

Carling Black Label seized the opportunity to paint a 21st century portrait of masculinity that could rally all men under its banner: bold, brave, strong men are those who are true to themselves and use their strength to do the right thing. This sensible message required research-driven content to ensure the right chord is struck by the advertising.

Just after the campaign was aired, Carling saw positive sales changes in volume and share, significant improvements in the brand perceptions and now the brand is enjoying solid growth.

As Grant Pereira, Carling's Chief Marketing Officer puts it: "The bravest work is the work that understands the consumer the best. Carling Bold Brave Strong is the perfect case of how research-driven content can breakthrough and turn around a brand".

CONCLUSION: BE CREATIVE AND BOLD, AND ACCELERATE WITH GOOD RESEARCH

As Leo Burnett wrote, “Creativity has the power to change human behaviour”. And that’s exactly what brands need in a fragmented world, to stand out and revolutionise themselves if they want to continue to be relevant.

These three Ipsos cases (Carling, Carrefour and Libresse) illustrate how the right research, at the right moment can help reveal a stronger idea, be a catalyst for creativity and support the brand teams in launching a bold and purposeful campaign that drives their business successfully.

This does not mean one should delegate decision-making entirely to research, of course. Being bold and having courage is key for success. Creative campaigns, require breakthrough, edgy expressions, and because they hold the future of a brand, they need intelligence and precision, capturing the right insight, executing the idea in the best possible way. Early communication research is not (just) about making the decision. It’s about learning how to make it the right decision.

An unexpected benefit is that it helps speed up the process and make creative development significantly more efficient.

Research does not only become an excellence catalyst, it’s an accelerator of creative development. Anheuser-Busch’s 2017 “The Hard Way”, the internationally acclaimed Super Bowl campaign, was developed in just three months with Ipsos from brief to airing. It took advantage of an early idea and creative research, yet this clearly sped up the whole process: in just one intense day spent with consumers, teams netted faster on how to best express the idea and produce the execution, winning precious weeks for production.

“What really matters is not so much the decision, but what you learn throughout the research journey to help turn your idea into great, business building creative.”

These stories encapsulate what our Ipsos Creative Development service aims to do with our clients and agencies: bring inspiration to help nurture stronger creative, to unlock what triggers and drives creative excellence, as our experience has demonstrated - great creative means great business.

We also want to be sources of courage and confidence: courage to make the best creative choices, and confidence that these choices are also the right ones, by decoding real people’s aspirations and reactions to guide and drive the discussion towards daring, breakthrough creative.

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