WE ~~DON'T~~ NEED TO TALK ABOUT ADS

Why only some advertising gets talked about on social media and becomes famous

By Adam Sheridan | March 2021



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WE NEED TO TALK, JUST NOT ABOUT ADS

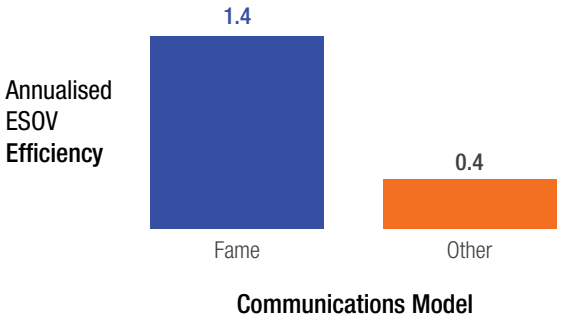
As people, we are social creatures and owe a lot of our success to the way we communicate. From prehistoric times we have shared stories around the campfire and later via the written word to bond socially and teach future generations the values and behaviours needed to progress in life.

It is this trait of social communication and interaction that separates people from primates such as chimpanzees. While both species communicate through vocalisations and gestures, humans tend to do this to be socially helpful, by informing each other about sources of rewards or danger, whereas some observational studies have suggested chimpanzees can be less inclined to exhibit this type of behaviour[1]. Put simply, as people, we need to talk, both for our emotional wellbeing and success in life.

So, where do brands and advertising fit into what we talk about? It turns out, very little. Even among followers of a brand's Facebook page, only 0.5% ever specifically talk about them[2]. And, for advertising, Ipsos Global Trends data paints a less apathetic and more negative picture, with people more than twice as likely to agree online advertising is "annoying" rather than a source of information to "share with colleagues and friends" (73% vs. 30%)[3].

Yet even with apathy and rare presence in our communication, there is evidence that advertising that gets talked about has the potential to deliver unpaid or "earned" reach and therefore more efficiency for marketing investments. In *The Long and the Short of It*, Les Binet and Peter Field observed that "Fame" campaigns, those that "inspire people to share their enthusiasm on and offline", are four times as efficient in generating Excess Share of Voice (ESOV) than non-Fame campaigns[4]:

Figure 1 Media efficiency for Fame vs. other campaign types



Source: The Long and the Short of It, Binet and Field (2013)

With this type of evidence, we see a seductive proposition for marketers. A Fame challenge that very few achieve, with high potential, earned media rewards that the aptly-named communications and advisory company, Contagious, coins very well: "You know what's cooler than paying for advertising? Not paying for advertising."

"You know what's cooler than paying for advertising? Not paying for advertising."

MOVING BEYOND DANCING BABIES

With the Fame challenge set before them, many a self-respecting marketer will understandably look to famous campaigns that have been considered a success in delivering earned media results, and there is none more famous than Evian's 2009 "Roller Babies". A campaign that used dancing babies to convey the brand's message of "Live Young".

Official statistics for the campaign have not been released by Danone. However, the variety of videos published have been reported to have attracted over 100 million views on YouTube and 130,000 comments[5]. This could certainly be considered a likely success if the business objective was to gain earned media efficiency, but how does looking at a campaign with dancing babies help to provide insight and guidance for other brands hoping to achieve similar outcomes?

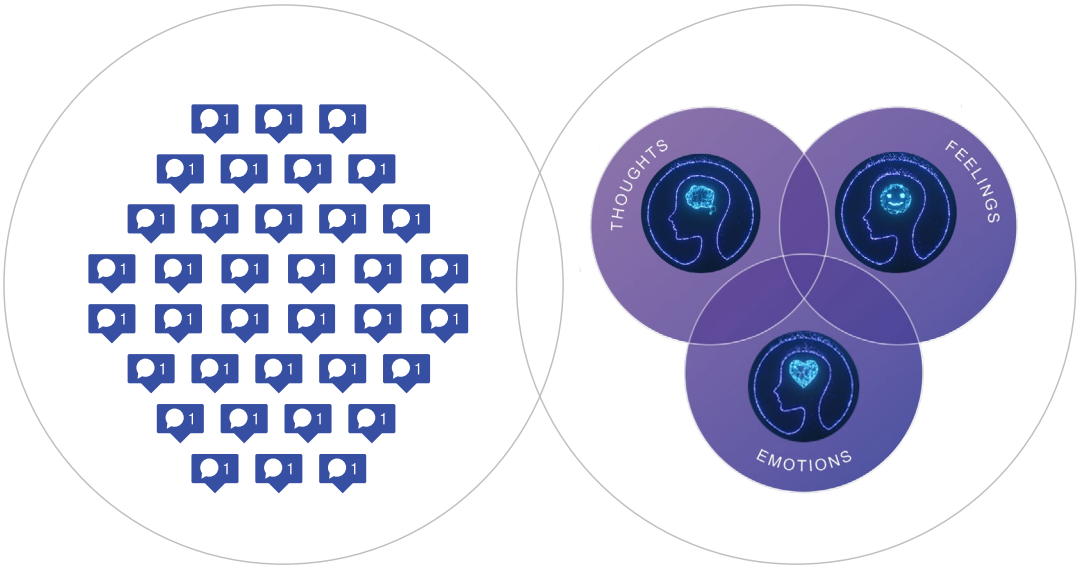
Herein lies the tension, that while a single campaign can inspire brands to try to achieve similar results, it's clear that dancing babies, or indeed any distinct creative device, alone are not generalisable enough to achieve media efficiency for your brand. If we accept that looking at only



one case is not enough, we need to analyse the outcomes for ads that are talked about and those that are not talked about to identify the characteristics and types of responses the more successful campaigns attract, to inspire future campaign planning.

In this paper, we summarise an Ipsos research programme that provides these generalisable findings, looking at the relationship between the volume of mentions for a diverse range of online video campaigns measured in our social intelligence platform, Synthesio, and the creative responses they achieved in our creative evaluation solution, CreativeISpark.

You can find more information about Synthesio here and CreativeISpark here.



synthesio
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CREATIVE | SPARK

THE FOUR TRAITS THAT MATTER

Based on this analysis, we identified four key traits that increase the chances people will talk about an ad online. These are identified below.

We detail the scope of our research that led to these four traits, which we hope will inspire marketers to create truly culturally worthy, brave work, knowing that it is these campaigns that meet the Fame challenge and deliver earned media efficiency.



1. Cultural Impact

Create videos that reflect the world and icons around us beyond the brand itself.



2. Creative Bravery

Surprise people by delivering genuinely unique and divergent creative.



3. Positive Feelings

Make people feel good about the experience after viewing the video.



4. Don't be Afraid to Create Controversy

You don't need to be liked by everyone. If you create a positive feeling and speak to an issue your target audience cares about, it's OK if some people hate your video, as it shows you have stood out from the noise.

"It's OK if some people hate your video, as it shows you have stood out from the noise."

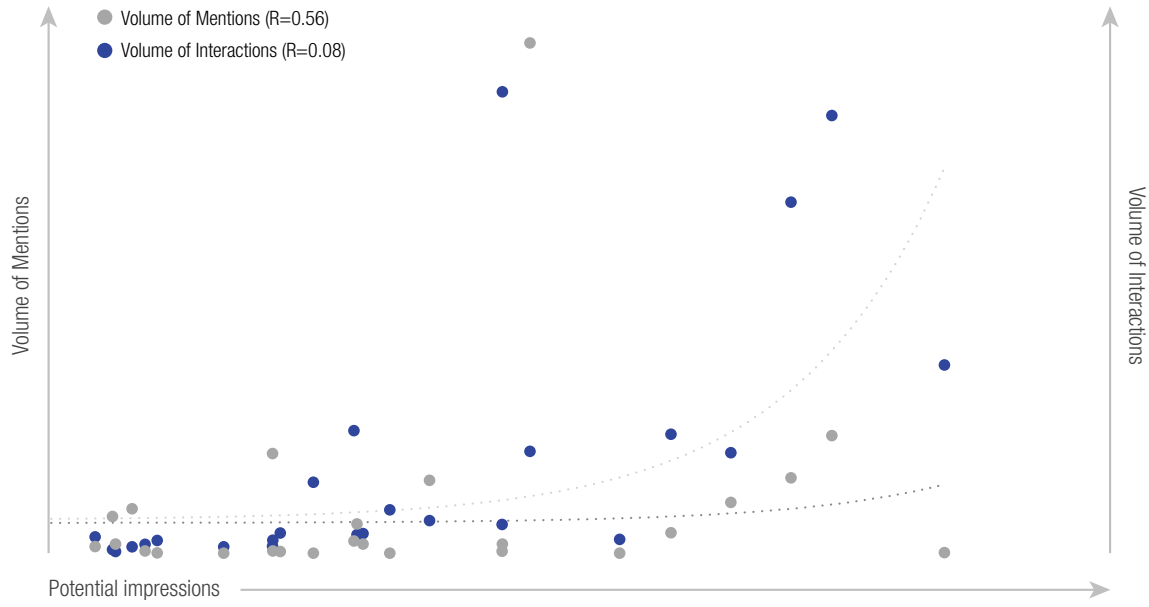
WHAT WE DID

We selected a total of 36 video ads in the USA that were published online between 2019-2020, with varying levels of success in generating online comments. We measured the volume of comments in the first four weeks after the day of launch for each video in our social intelligence platform, Synthesio, enabling us to draw comments from a range of social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Each of the videos were also evaluated in CreativeISpark, either pre-launch or within the first two days of being published online. This provided access to more than 30 measures of creative response across our Thoughts, Feelings and Emotions framework.

With this unified dataset, we analysed the direct relationship between the creative measures and volume of mentions to understand the key traits that are linked to campaigns that people talk about. We selected mentions as our dependent variable, rather than other interactions such as likes and shares, because we observed they have a closer relationship with the total potential impressions achieved by the ads in a four-week period (see Figure 2).

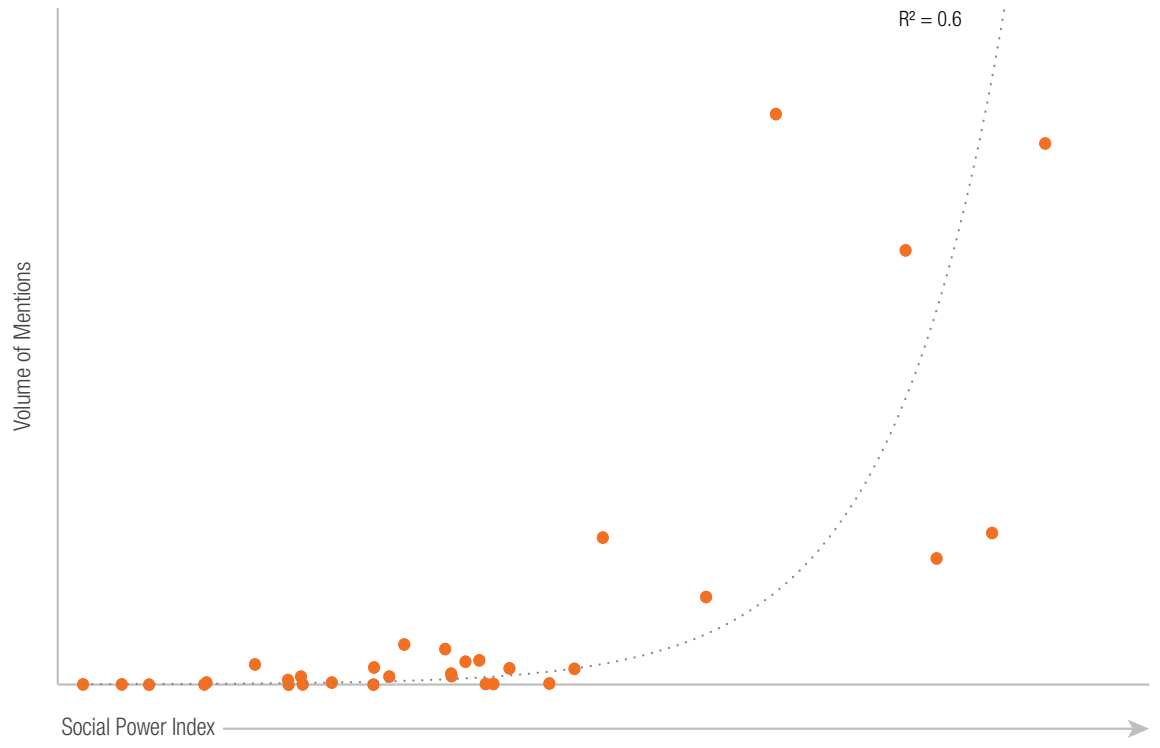
Figure 2 Potential online ad impressions vs. Volume of mentions and interactions



Source: Synthesio volume of comments and interactions tracked for n=36 video ads between 2019-2020.
Synthesio potential impressions: total aggregated reach of all posts where the audience base is duplicated per post from one user, meaning one person may see multiple impressions of the same post.

After identifying the creative measures with the strongest relationship to mentions, we placed them into a stepwise regression model to understand which weighted combination of measures could explain the most variance of comment volume. This in turn led to the creation of the **Social Power Index** we now offer to clients to help them understand which creative has the most potential to get people talking and deliver earned reach for the brand.

Figure 3 Social Power Index vs. Volume of mentions



Source: Synthesio volume of comments and interactions tracked for n=36 video ads between 2019-2020

When compared to the actual volume of mentions, the Social Power Index explains 60% of the variance in mentions, confirming its value in selecting and optimising the best creative to deliver earned reach objectives (see Figure 3).

Irrespective of the underlying creative response measures, this level of explained variance confirms that **creative quality matters when trying to evoke conversations online and achieve fame effects for the brand.** This means that while media seeding investment and placement are no doubt important in being part of the fuel of earned media value, the ad itself needs to deliver an experience of a standard that is worth talking about.

In the following section we list the key traits and underlying measures in the Social Power Index that marketers can consider when developing campaigns with earned media objectives. These are not meant to act as a set of rules, but more as a list of principles that can give inspiration to create advertising that will make people engaged enough to talk about your ads.

"The ad itself needs to deliver an experience of a standard that is worth talking about."

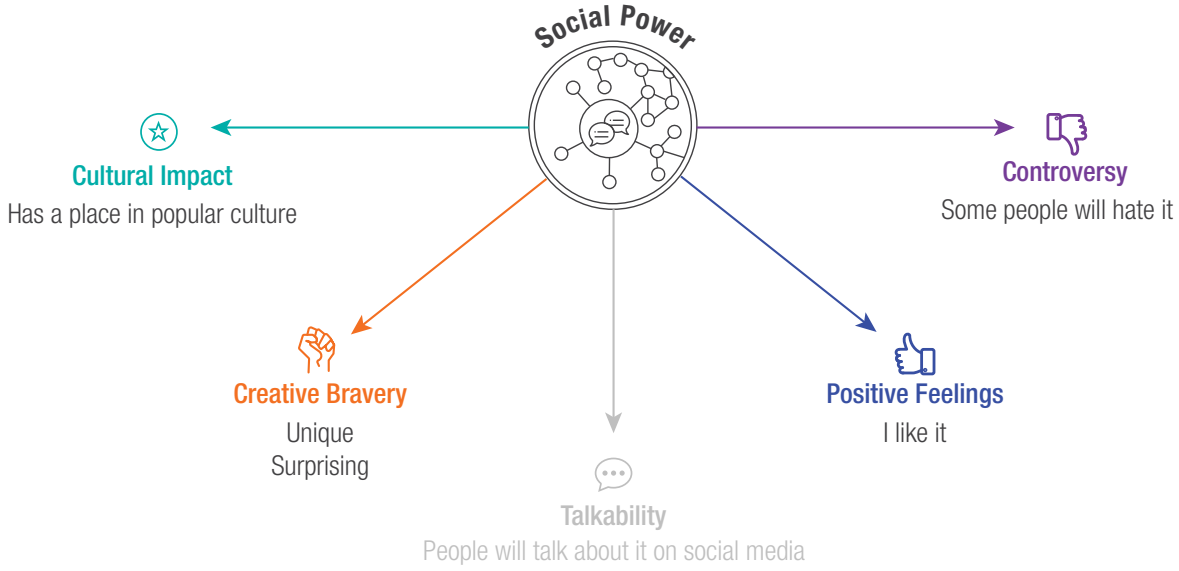


"Ads generate conversation online when they reflect the broader world and culture around them, rather than just their products."

THE FOUR TRAITS IN ACTION

When reviewing the measures available in the data, we identified seven that had the strongest individual relationship with total volume of mentions. Two of these measures related to an expectation that others would talk about the ad or an expectation that respondents themselves would talk about it online, while the other five related less to the desired outcome and more to the traits or types of responses evoked by advertising that gets talked about.

Below are the four traits we identified earlier in the paper, along with their underlying measures.





To further illustrate the traits in action and give context to these generalisable insights, we have outlined some of the best examples, explaining how these ads got talked about at significantly higher levels than other cases in the dataset.

1. CULTURAL IMPACT: REFLECT THE WORLD AND YOUR BRAND'S PLACE IN IT

It is clear from Ipsos data already cited in this paper that people claim to not be positive about the advertising they view. Nobody likes to be sold to. So perhaps it is not surprising that one of the key variables we identified to separate the ads that generate conversation online is when they reflect the broader world and culture around them, rather than just their products.

One such example is Google's *100 Billion Words*. In this video, Google show a range of cultures around the world, and the power of Google Translate in bringing people together in one common language. The ad works beautifully to weave in the functional value of the app in moments of togetherness, while highlighting the positivity of human communication by revealing that the most commonly translated words are those such as, "How are you?" and "Thank you".

Google: 100 Billion Words



112 Social Power Index

Ranking in the Dataset by Volume of Mentions measured online in Synthesio: **#10**

"I can't get over how beautiful this Google Super Bowl commercial is. Just another way technology is closing the gap between connections with people."

"It's focused on the Unifying Power of Language 😍 and illustrates how Google Translate brings strangers and loved ones together."

"Thanks for capturing the spirit of this. Beautiful way to start the week!"

Source: https://youtu.be/uXfJc8up6cM

Another example that touches the cultural zeitgeist, for very different reasons, is Walmart's *Grocery Pickup*. The ad features a range of popular vehicle characters from entertainment, such as ECTO-1 from Ghostbusters and KITT from Knight Rider. These vehicles are all woven into the message of home delivery from Walmart, while also clearly rekindling memories of cultural icons for audiences.

Walmart: Grocery Pickup



121 **Social Power Index**

Ranking in the Dataset by Volume of Mentions measured online in Synthesio: **#11**

"@Walmart "Here in my car" #SuperBowl commercial just brought back a flood of my best childhood memories, using the most iconic show/movie cars of all time! Great way to start the commercial-off! Woot!"

"1) I love that Bumblebee just carries the groceries back to wherever he's being kept now. What a sweet lad. 2) That's gotta suck for whichever version of the ghostbusters to come back from whatever they were doing and see that slimer ate all of their groceries. Come on dude"

"Probably my favorite Superbowl commercial this year. Walmart really hit their target audience with nostalgia in a pretty effective way! Props to the team who worked on this! 😉 #SuperBowlAd #SuperBowl2019 #Walmart #WalmartGroceryPickup"

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whpJBY5W7xo

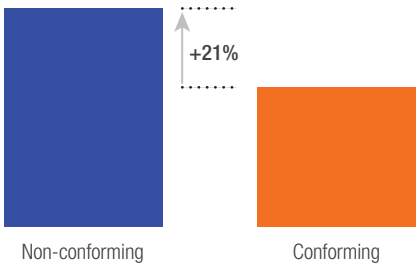
"Create videos that reflect the world and icons around us beyond the brand itself."

2. CREATIVE BRAVERY: AIR BRAVE AND UNIQUE WORK

Outside of this dataset, we know that non-conventional creative considered to go outside category codes and norms is more effective at encoding branded memories, with non-conventional ads 20% more likely to feature in the top quintile of our database for Brand Attention than conventional ads. This would suggest your advertising is more likely to be remembered if it's truly brave and unique work (see Figure 4).

In this context, it is no wonder that ads described as "unique" or "surprising" were more likely to be talked about online. It is these ads that at times can cross the Rubicon by delivering a content experience rather than an "ad" and one example of this is Budweiser's *This Bud's for 3*. In this video, Budweiser filmed NBA Basketball star Dwayne Wade being surprised by people from his past and present that he had provided help and support to, and by their thanks for his selfless acts of kindness. As well as showing several emotional reactions, the ad was described as "unique" and "surprising" at high levels by pivoting from an initial expectation of being a simple sporting tribute to a retiring player.

Figure 4 Likelihood of top quintile placement for Brand Attention dataset



Source: Ipsos Creative Excellence Meta-analysis (2,015 cases)

Budweiser: This Bud's for 3



151 **Social Power Index**

Ranking in the Dataset by Volume of Mentions measured online in Synthesio: **#4**

"Have to admit, not a big beer guy, but Budweiser's tribute to Dwayne Wade brought me to tears and is one of the best commercials I've seen. How have YOU made a difference in someone's life by simply reaching out with love?"

"Someone is cutting onions around me. I can't stop crying."

"OMG.....What a freaking great commercial. I don't even drink beer, but after watching this commercial; I would have a Budweiser just in honor of this commercial. I like the basketball player, and the good humanitarian he is. Like his mother said, He is a better man!!! Great Commercial 😎😎😎👍👍👍"

Source: https://youtu.be/syuXV6A7O6g

3&4. POSITIVE FEELING AND CONTROVERSY: DELIVER A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE AND DON'T BE AFRAID IF SOME PEOPLE NOT IN YOUR TARGET HATE YOUR AD

Many marketers would likely agree that if you want to influence someone it's better they feel good about your communication than not, and Ipsos data bears this out, where we have observed that ads that build a positive immediate emotional response over time are more likely to be remembered than those that are comparatively flat[6]. But getting people talking is a more nuanced undertaking, where often instantly they will take an action to comment online, to voice an opinion. To facilitate these actions of commenting, we see a number of examples in the dataset that are both liked, delivering a positive experience, and carry an expectation that others will "hate them".

One stand-out example is Nike's *Dream Crazier*. Building off their previous *Dream Crazy* campaign, the ad continues to shine a light on female inequality in sport in a direct and near confrontational way that was liked by three quarters (76%) of respondents, while a third (32%) also expected that some people would hate it.

"Ads that build a positive immediate emotional response over time are more likely to be remembered than those that are comparatively flat."

Nike: Dream Crazier



139 **Social Power Index**

Ranking in the Dataset by Volume of Mentions measured online in Synthesio **#2**

"The point is not "when anyone ever said women playing sports are crazy?" (which btw happened in history). The point is empowering women!!!! The point is not "women who are good at sports are never called crazy". The point what more can we do!!!!!! In any level! We are not delusional, we are not hysterical, we are not dramatic! We are equal to men and this is when we are called crazy for even thinking about it and we have to fight for that cause it's not here yet!!!"

"Hmmm.... think I'll just stick with Reebok"

"More pathetic than Gillette"

Source: https://youtu.be/zWfX5jeF6k4

Another case in the dataset with a very different message and purpose is Sandy Hook Promise's *Back-to-School Essentials*. This hard-hitting video shows children talking about the items they are taking back to school as they are being attacked by a gunman. While liked by just over half of the respondents who saw the ad (57%), we can presume due to the effectiveness of the message, a similar 54% expected some people to "hate" it.

These examples, and others in the dataset, represent the value of controversy in general in getting people talking and often the expectation that some people will hate an ad can be a spark to attract discussion and comments.

Sandy Hook Promise: Back-to-School Essentials



183 **Social Power Index**

Ranking in the Dataset by Volume of Mentions measured online in Synthesio: **#1**

"This is the most offensive commercial I've ever seen in my entire life."

Source: https://youtu.be/b5ykNZI9mTQ



BE PART OF CULTURE, BE BRAVE, BE BOLD

In this dataset, we have discovered four creative key traits that represent the types of ads that attract comments online, which in turn are linked to earned media effects.

While each of these traits can be considered in your creative strategy, they are united by a key principle worth consideration. Whether you focus on developing unique creative, speak to a wider issue in society, or represent a sense of nostalgia with cultural icons, all these traits ladder up to delivering an experience truly worthy of discussion that the brand plays a part in.

Which brings us back to the reality: people need to talk, just not about ads. Instead they will talk about experiences they think will benefit themselves or others, which is why many of the campaigns that achieved the Fame challenge were experiences rather than traditional ads. Based on our observations in the data we recommend that if you want people to talk about your communication, **think about delivering an experience worthy of discussion that your brand is part of, rather than an ad that simply sells your product.**



WHAT WE DID

We tracked the online mentions volume of 36 video ads in the USA between 2019-2020 and measured the creative responses to the same ad in an online survey.

With this unified dataset, we measured the relationships between the creative responses and mentions volume and identified seven key creative measures. These formed the basis of the Social Power Index, a proprietary index model, that can help advertisers select the video ads with the most potential to get talked about online and drive earned media value.

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