



Elements of a Successful Purpose Campaign

April 2020

Defining what makes purpose-driven marketing campaigns successful has historically been more art than science. In an effort to shift the balance squarely back in favor of science, the ARF and Kantar have introduced *Cracking Brand Purpose*, a study that identifies the elements that create leading purpose-driven campaigns and provides a best-in-class framework to shape, guide and evaluate future campaigns.

The study considered existing theory and, as one might expect, analysis of creative award winners such as those entered into the ARF's Ogilvy Awards, the WARC Awards and Cannes Lions. The study also explored social networks, editorials and industry platforms to identify the most talked about brands and organizations within the brand purpose debate. It also takes into account those campaigns that were less successful and even those which resulted in negative outcomes.

According to Adweek's [Creative 100](#), crafting a successful purpose campaign is all about strategy. "Creatively awarded campaigns drive effectiveness by generating fame in the short term and price inelasticity in the long term," Adweek's staff wrote. A good creative strategy should ensure a tight link to the brand, work with the brain rather than against it, and utilize emotion towards the brand's purposes.

A Boston Consulting Group report¹ states that a successful, purpose-driven campaign sits at the nexus of aspiration, external need and action. That report also warns that the use of purpose may have peaked earlier in the last decade. That's because it can be difficult to distinguish between brand purpose, brand value, brand essence, mission and corporate social responsibility.

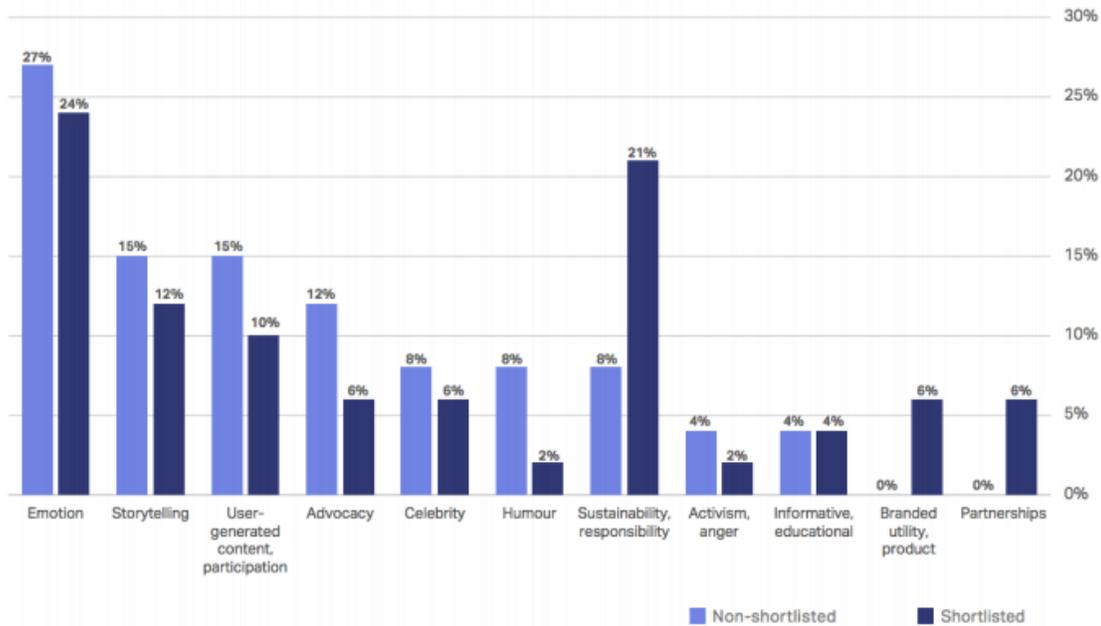
Judges for award programs have noticed patterns surrounding award-winning purpose campaigns. For instance, WARC's Effective Use of Purpose Award has shown repeatedly that purpose requires participation and must be commercially successful. Judges of the Cannes Lion awards say creative that is built around cultural moments, such as diversity or climate change, are particularly effective.

What is known is that eliciting an emotional response and sustainability are the creative strategies that work best. Other analyses show that building on cultural moments is effective at instilling the desired emotional response. The most common objectives of a purpose campaign are brand strength and appeal. The ARF has been building a searchable database of Ogilvy award applicants for research purposes. Culling information from this database, we discovered that branding and behavioral change were the most frequently listed objectives in purpose campaigns.

¹ <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2019/getting-uncomfortable-on-purpose.aspx>



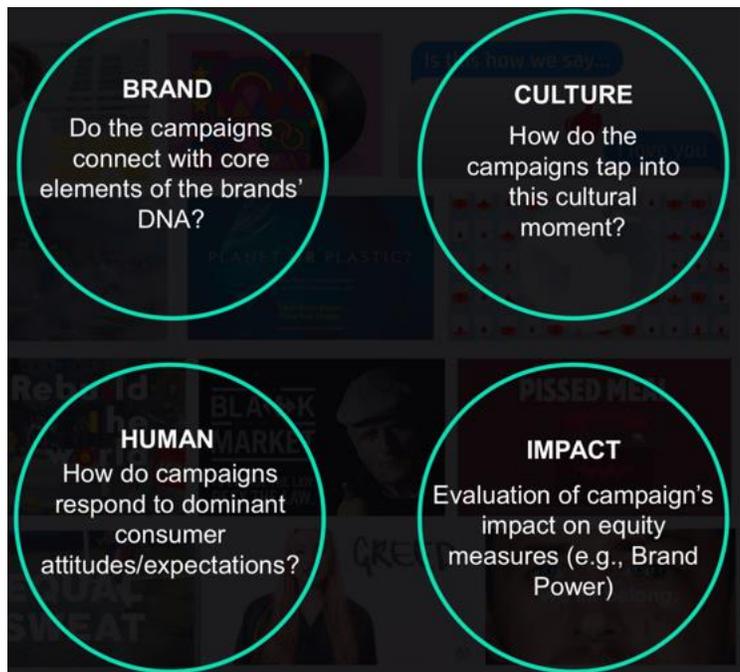
Creative strategy



Approach

In *Cracking Brand Purpose*, Kantar collected a cross-section of purpose-driven campaigns that garnered significant industry or consumer response. These campaigns were gathered from the WARC Awards: Effective Use of Brand Purpose, the WARC: Global Effectiveness Rankings, the IPA Effectiveness Awards and the Cannes Lions. Kantar also selected campaigns using social listening, studying over 100,000 conversations on social media.

A total of 45 campaigns were analyzed through four lenses: brand, culture, human and impact.





Summary of Findings

While there is debate in the industry on what constitutes a purpose campaign, researchers in this study agreed that it must relate to something bigger than the brand itself. A purpose campaign is a contribution to the good of the world. The most important elements are: You, Them and The World.



YOU

Be yourself: Create an authentic foundation for your campaign rooted in who you are as a brand



THEM

Center people, not your brand: involve them in your process, solve a problem that affects them and let them tell their story



THE WORLD

Make the world a better place: drive social change by solving problems, tapping into culture and committing to long-term impact

You Must Be Authentic

Those brands whose purpose is already known to consumers are one step ahead of the game. Others should view a purpose campaign as an opportunity. No matter the industry, brands can draw on their own DNA to align themselves with a purpose. But beware, those brands who aren't authentically in pursuit of their purpose open themselves up to ridicule. Their efforts appear like a stunt rather than a call to action.

In short, there must be a precedent in the brand for the purpose, it must be linked to the brand's core and must be an obvious move for the brand.

Make It About Them

"A campaign that effectively taps into cultural moments will become a force in people's hearts and minds".² Advertisers and marketers recognize that deep human truths are the gateway to consumers' hearts. The best way to communicate these is through leveraging the specifics of culture. The most impactful purpose campaigns

START WITH YOU:
CASE STUDY

1. HAVE PRECEDENT

Volvo's EVA campaign has a strong brand precedent from 60 years prior. In 1959, Volvo invented the modern 3-point seat belt. Instead of patenting the design, the company released it publicly for all car manufacturers to use. The 2019 campaign celebrated this decision by releasing Volvo's inclusive safety research for all car manufacturers to use, continuing the brand's legacy of generosity in the name of safety.

2. LINK TO THE BRAND'S CORE

Volvo's conscientiousness and attention to safety are key differentiating factors in the brand's value proposition. This campaign is rooted in both of these celebrated equities.

3. AN OBVIOUS MOVE FOR THE BRAND

This campaign is a no-brainer for Volvo. In the words of the brand's art director at Forsman & Bodenfors: "Everyone knows Volvo is a leader in safety, and that's why Volvo is the one manufacturer that can do this campaign."

² Cannes Lions 2019: Insights from the Creative Effectiveness Winners



do more than sell a brand. They create a movement. And movements always take place within a cultural context.

One way to do this is to tap into a current tension. An example of this is *The New York Times* Truth is Hard (2017) campaign, which tapped into the fear and mistrust surrounding online disinformation and fake news. Another was Nike's support of professional football players taking a knee, portrayed in the Believe in Something (2018) campaign. Purpose campaigns disconnected from culture are less impactful, even if they are highly acclaimed by the industry.

In short, partner with people who care, let them tell their own story and give them line of sight to action.

Make the World a Better Place

Campaigns that take a stand or solve a problem deliver on their promise. Action and follow through is pivotal. Just putting an ad out is not enough. While campaigns can feature a hero, consumers expect a brand to act. Those purpose campaigns that took steps to solve a problem were, in this analysis, the most successful.

One example is Rexona's Movement for Movement (2017) campaign. The Australian deodorant brand, manufactured by Unilever, worked with a car service to develop a mobile app that offered people with disabilities a better way to get around, which fulfilled Rexona's brand promise—to help people move. Another example, the French supermarket Carrefour brought awareness to the plight of small European farmers in its The Black Supermarket (2018) campaign. Here, the brand mounted an illegal supermarket within its stores to sell produce from such farmers, bringing awareness to unfair EU agricultural laws.

Campaigns that choose to address a problem affecting a specific, underserved group were the most effective, the study found. An example is Aflac's My Special Duck campaign. Here, the company recognized that child cancer patients often lack access to stuffed animals, which provide crucial emotional comfort during long hospital stays. So, Aflac provided these patients smart stuffed animal companions.

In short, help solve a problem by tapping into culture and commit for the long haul.

IMPACT THE WORLD: CASE STUDY

1. HELP SOLVE A PROBLEM

The amount of protected public land in the United States is dwindling. This poses a threat to indigenous communities who live and rely on the land, as well as to other Americans who benefit from the land's beauty and its role as a natural sanctuary. The Patagonia campaign is a commitment to fighting this problem and keeping land in the hands of the people.

2. TAP INTO CULTURE

The company's bold declaration, "The President Stole Your Land," tapped into Americans' rising resentment of their government, especially around environmental issues, which occupy an increasing part of the public consciousness.

3. COMMIT FOR THE LONG HAUL

The campaign was part of an existing commitment to Bears Ears and the communities around the land: Patagonia was part of the lobbying group that pressured President Obama to declare Bears Ears a national monument. The company plans to continue protecting the land and to more broadly promote the role of public lands in America.



KNOWLEDGE AT HAND

In conclusion, the framework for developing a successful purpose campaign is selecting an authentic purpose that aligns with a brand's DNA, tapping into culture effectively, taking action to solve the problem and putting the consumer at the center of it all.

Sources

Adweek Staff. (2019, June 10). *Adweek's Creative 100: Meet 2019's Most Fascinating People in Marketing, Media and Culture: Our annual list of inspiring leaders and rising stars*. Adweek. <https://www.adweek.com/creativity/adweek-creative-100-2019/#/>

The ARF & Kantar. (2020, March). *Cracking Brand Purpose: Campaign Analysis*. The ARF Purpose Report.