

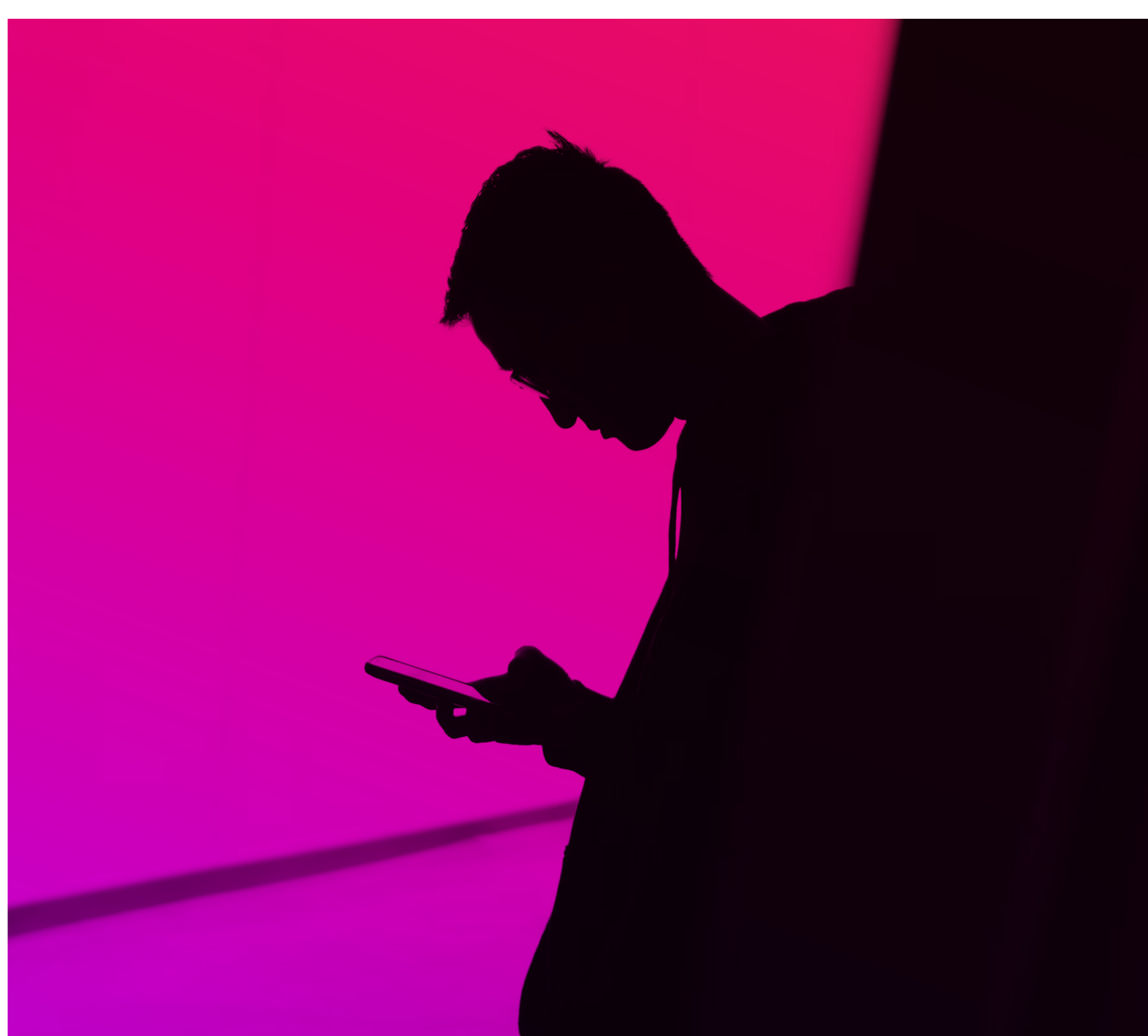
# Take back control in the age of AI

Mission-critical strategies for successful advertisers





It feels like we are on the cusp of a major paradigm shift in the evolution of advertising— one driven by **artificial intelligence.**



The changes brought by AI can feel unsettling and chaotic at times, especially for those who value creativity in advertising. After all, creativity is something that one might argue is innately human.

We've been through these advertising paradigm shifts before. During the digital marketing revolution, even as ad delivery became instant and highly targeted, the basic mission remained the same. **Get their attention, then say something that resonates and supports the goals of your brand.**

# So why does the age of AI feel so different?

Part of the answer is the pace of change. A few years ago, AI was barely at the forefront of marketing conversations. And now it seems to be everywhere. Some commentators predict that by next year, **up to 90% of the content**

**on the internet could be generated by artificial intelligence.** Many marketers fear their content could be engulfed in a sea of noise; one that is even more vast than the one they are already struggling to navigate.




# The more things change, the more they stay the same

Before the digital advertising revolution, most brands produced one or two campaigns a year that were largely built around a flagship TV execution. Today, large marketing organisations frequently have multiple campaigns each year, often overlapping and with as many as 80+ creative executions in each.

Many brands are still playing catch up, trying to scale their content generation and ad testing processes to match the

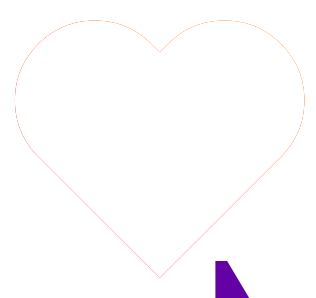
demands of digital marketing. AI-driven content will exacerbate this challenge even further, creating a potential content tsunami, drowning advertisers in more executions than they can possibly attempt to manage.

In fact, we are already seeing changes in the way ads are conceived, developed, and optimised. And there is pressure for organisations at all stages of the advertising value chain to embrace AI even more.



Recent data shows that while only **30% of marketing and sales leaders say their organisation is currently using AI, 90% feel they should be already.**

If you recognise change is coming fast but are unsure how to face it, the time has come to take back control.

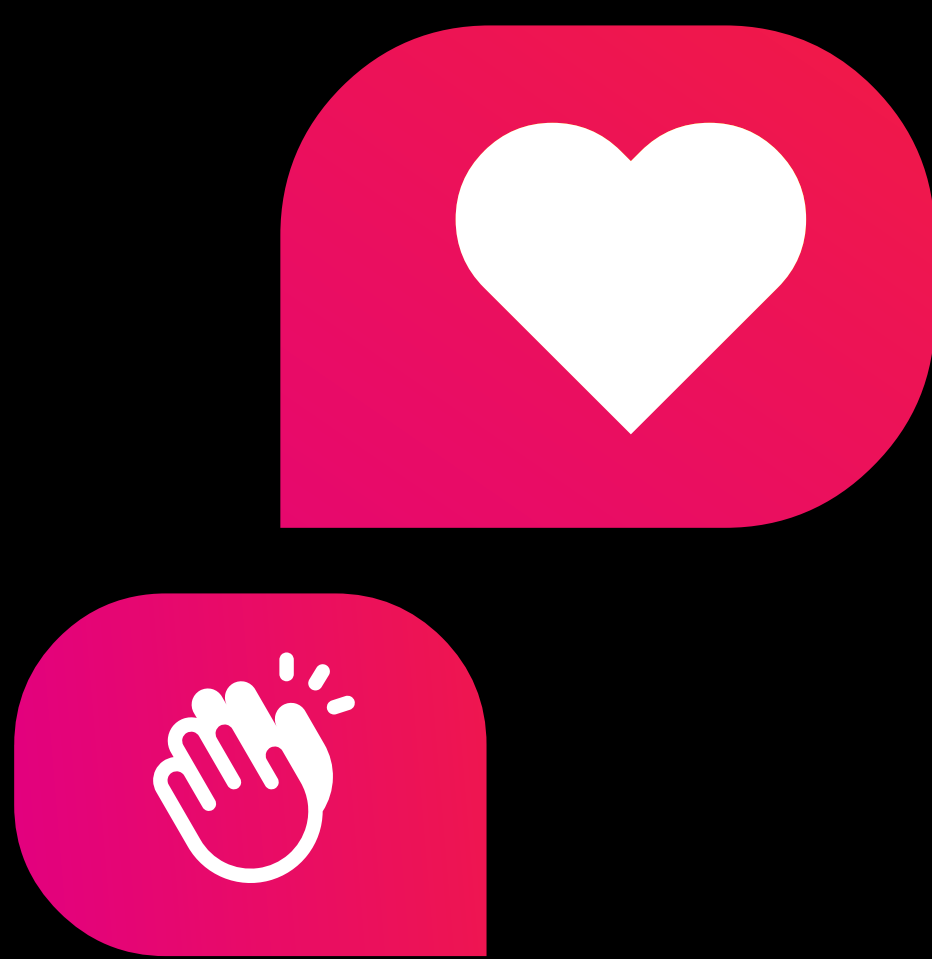
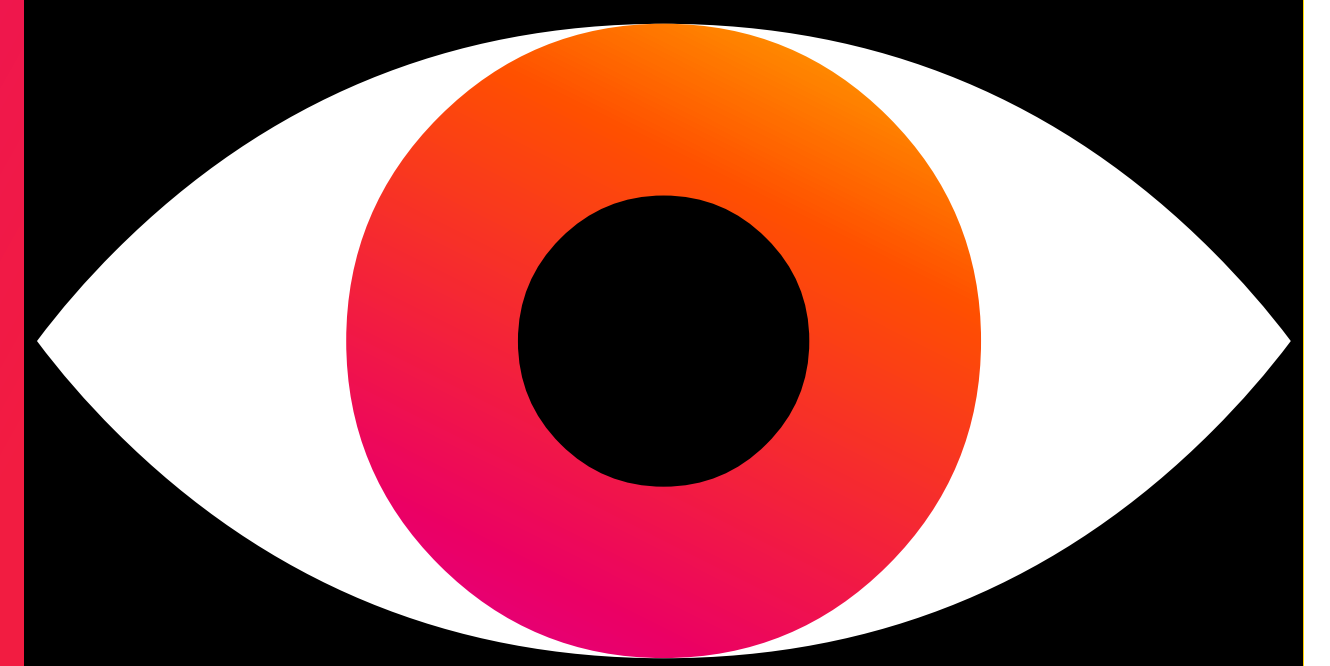


# Mission-critical strategies of successful advertisers

Based on an analysis of Kantar data, we've **identified three strategies** that you can command to make sure you are ready for the AI age of content creation. And the good news is, the fundamentals of good advertising will remain largely constant.

There are some adjustments we as advertisers can make, but recent examples from successful brands show that you don't need to completely reinvent the wheel because of new technology.

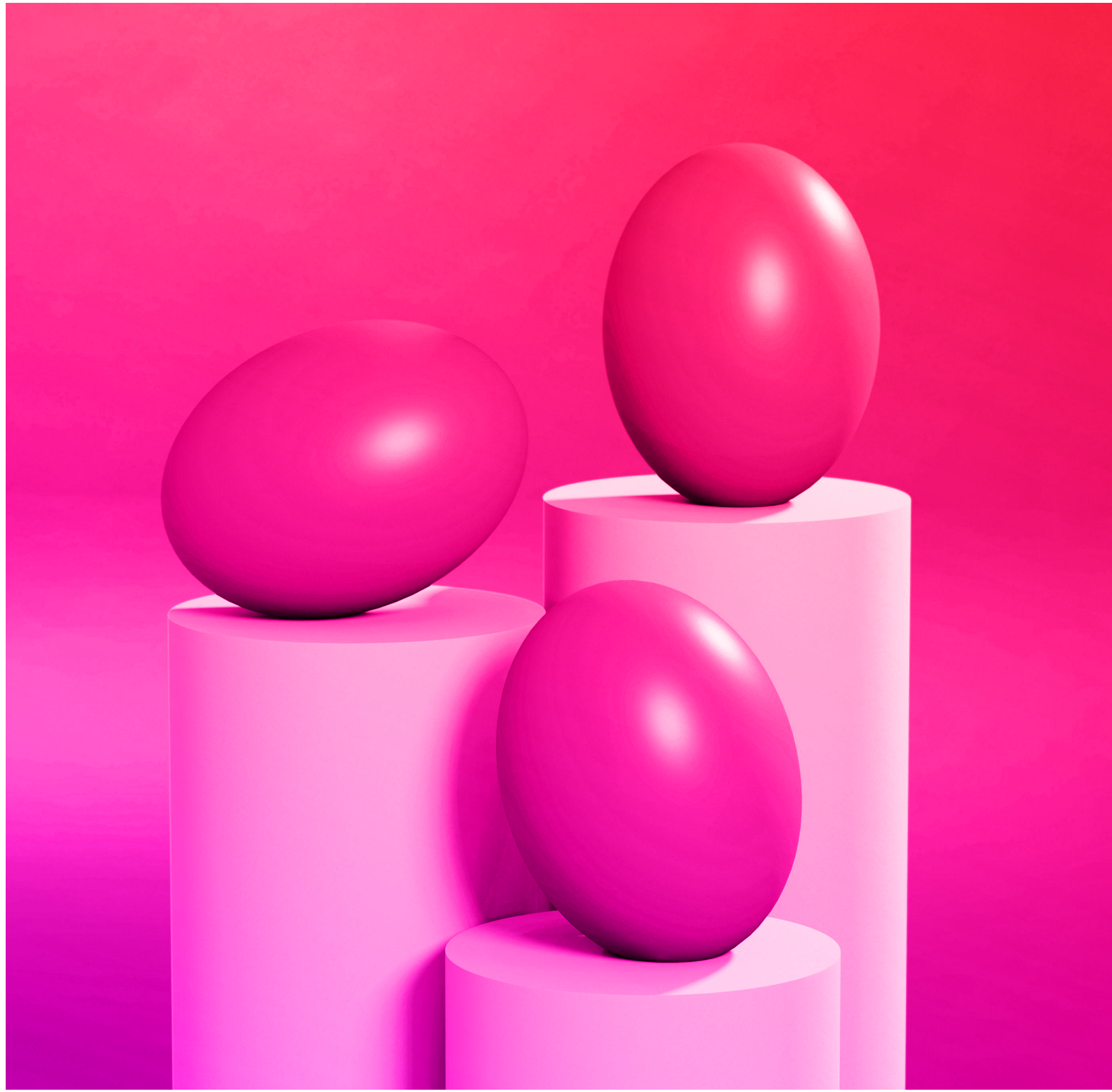
1 Secure their attention



2 Make them feel something

3 Crack the context





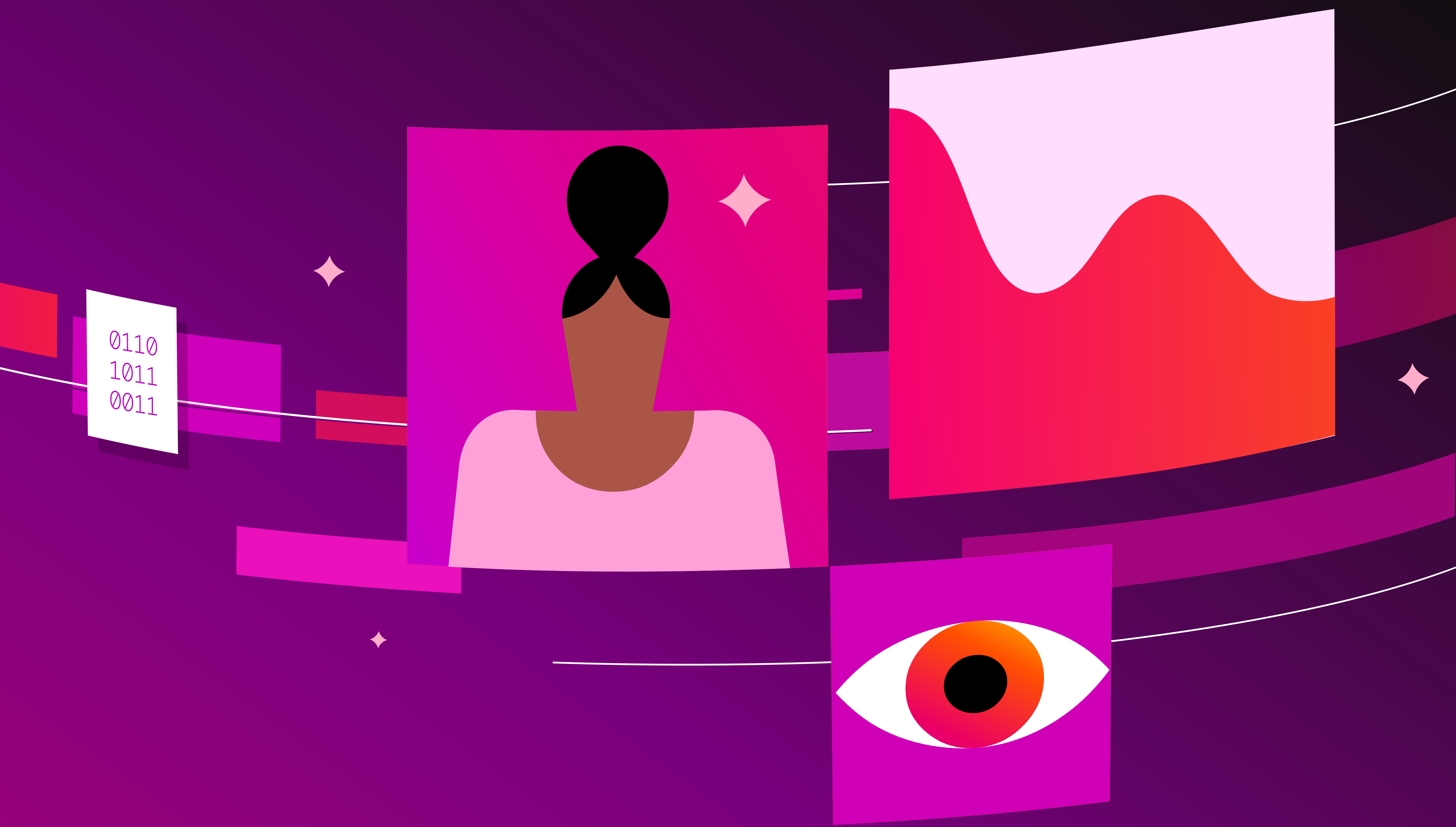
As a marketer, you already know how important these three advertising strategies are. But what you may not realise is how interconnected this best-practice tripod is. Remove one of the legs and the whole thing collapses. Get them all right, and you will be closer to achieving your overall mission by laying the foundation for meaningful difference.

As a result, you predispose more people to your brand. Predisposition is that positive bias paving the way for your brand growth so that you can outpace not only the wave of AI content that's coming, but also your less-prepared competitors.

Attention

Feeling

Context

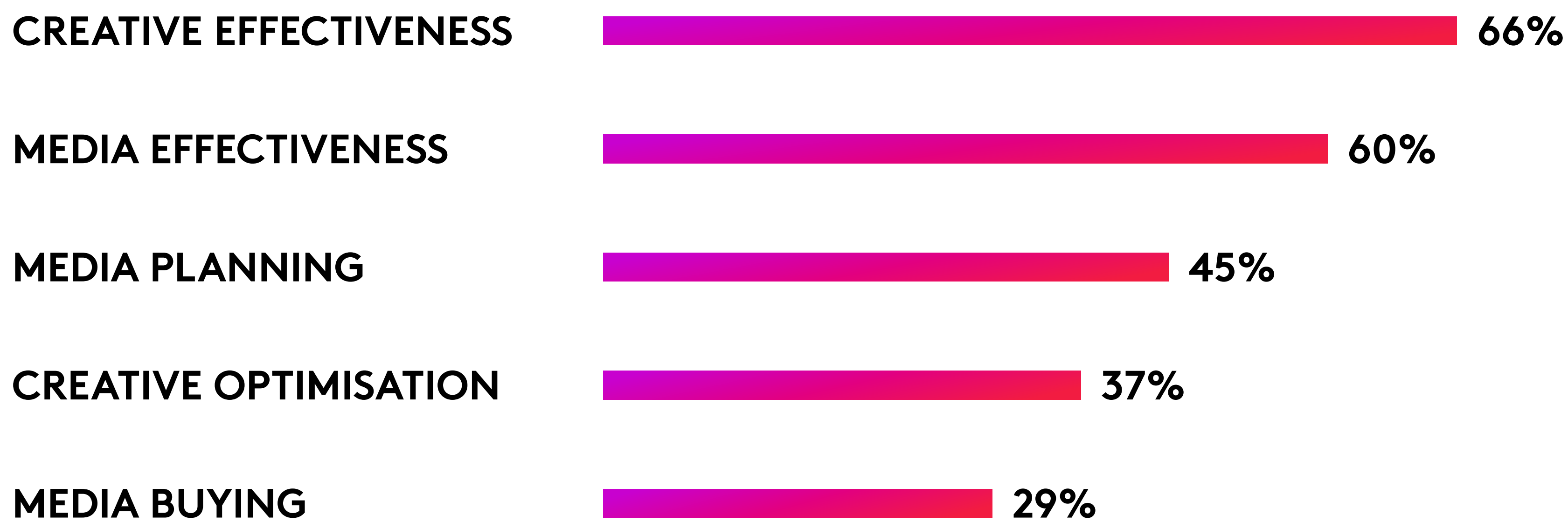


STRATEGY 1:

# Secure their attention

Attention matters. It is now widely appreciated by marketers that grabbing attention is the first step in advertising effectiveness, especially in the digital era, and this will only become more critical as consumers are inundated with even more AI generated content.

In which of these areas do you think that attention has an important influence?

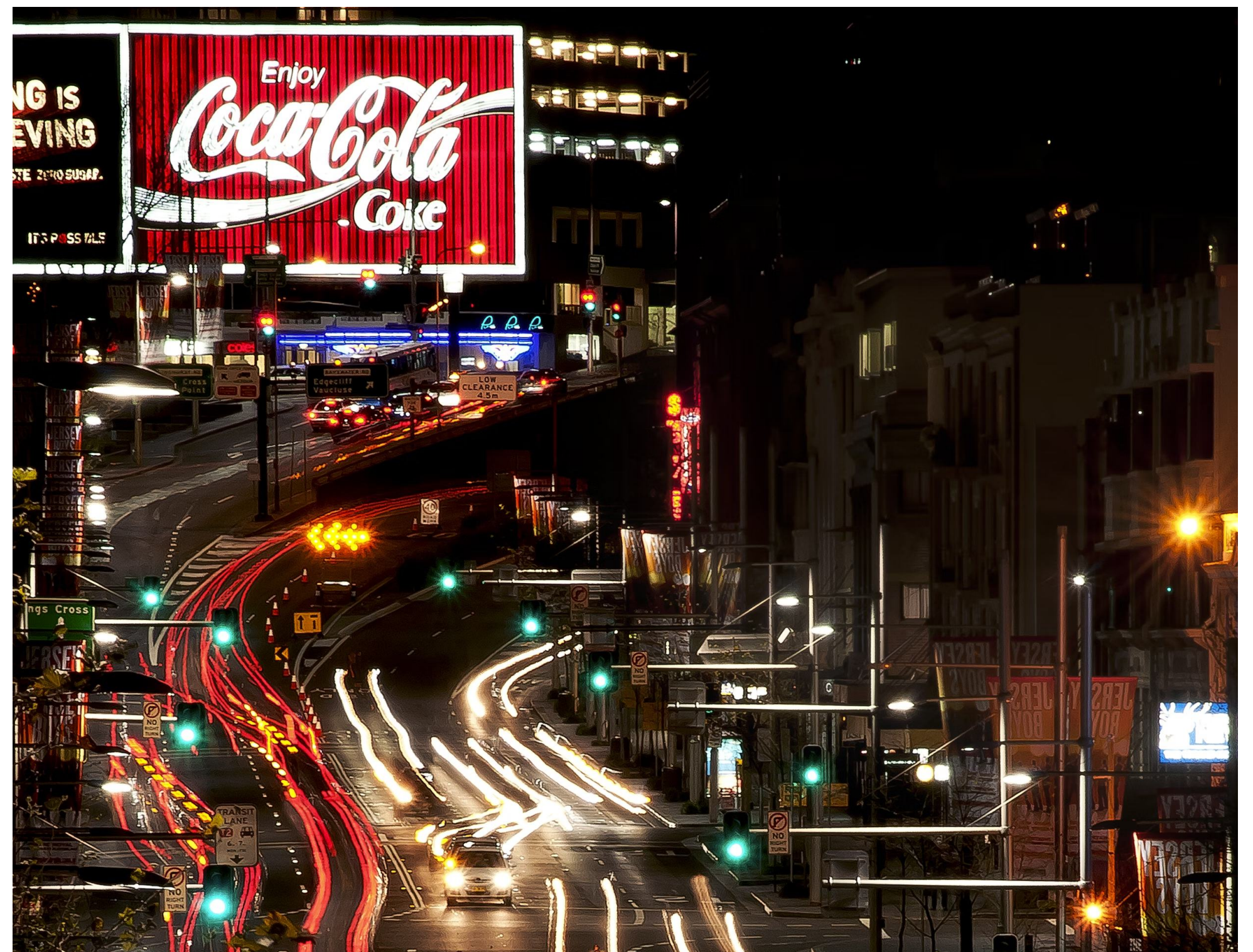


[Source: Kantar Media Reactions 2023]

The average brain already processes an average of 74 GB of data every day.

Processing this much data takes up a lot of energy, so the brain has evolved to prioritise attention on the most critical tasks. Brands need to compete for their place in consumers' already crowded and highly selective mental space.

Despite its importance, the measurement of attention is still often misunderstood by marketers. As Greg Pharo Global Senior Director for Coca-Cola sees it:



**“With attention shifting from tactic to strategy across global marketing practices, it is vital to understand exactly how attention measurement solutions work and their impacts on the industry.”**

Regardless, there are a few well-established tips and tricks that you can employ in your advertising to seize more attention for your brand.

## How we measure attention



Kantar's attention framework analyses the relationship between ad playback, passive attention, and active attention, with comparison to norms and second-by-second traces to diagnose where attention is lost. This comprehensive look at the depth of attention presents the ability to assess the eyes-on-screen moments through passive attention, and how much of it also generates an emotional reaction through active attention.

## Keep things moving

Movement in advertising causes our brain to assume that something being highlighted is worthy of attention. Ads which contain movement can therefore stimulate passive attention to keep our eyes on the screen long enough to help deliver the messages you want to land.

Often those active visual elements will not only be noticed by a viewer, but

also more importantly, remembered.

This ad example for Tylenol illustrates the approach, utilising fast, dynamic movement to grab viewers' attention. It earns the right to deliver messages that are then more likely to be received, and therefore, more easily accessible when consumers are making purchase decisions.



Motrin, 'Strength and Speed' DonerTV USA

# Be courageous and imaginative



We are imaginative beings that respond well to intrigue because it arouses our curiosity. **Unexpected content can therefore be a valuable tool to capture and retain viewers' attention**, as they seek to understand and actively 'fill in' the gaps in their comprehension.

Creating a world that transports the audience away from reality can unlock the imagination and stop the scroll. This is certainly the case with a recent ad from Lego China, which ranked highly in the digital and social category in the [2024 Kantar Creative Effectiveness awards](#).

## LEGO Trademark Campaign China

Lego brilliantly manages to make the important but relatively prosaic topic of counterfeit products attention-grabbing. As a result, they strongly land their message about exactly how consumers should avoid the perils of forgeries.



# Paint a picture with music... and paint!

Music is a staple of advertising. [84% of Kantar-tested ads utilise music](#). It can be a very powerful stimulus to capture attention, especially now that more consumers engage in multitasking and interact with multiple screens while viewing content. Our global ad testing experience shows that **music in ads can significantly increase the connection with audiences across cultures**.

Obviously, the added viewer autonomy in the digital age means less control for the advertiser. [Our data](#) also shows that **up to 85% of Facebook ads may be viewed without sound**. Savvy marketers recognise that they have multiple tools in their advertising arsenal for engaging their audience. In the thousands of ads that we test worldwide each year, we often also see how effective highly colourful content can be at capturing interest and stimulating mental activity.

Combining colour with music can be an effective way to combat increasing audience distraction and drive the emotional involvement needed to support memory formation.

In advertising, consistency and branding throughout the most engaging elements will pay dividends. Utilising music or a jingle that your brand can own over the long term which also includes your brand name is a strong strategy to stop the skip.

Repeated use of the same music and incorporation of the brand name helps with brand association

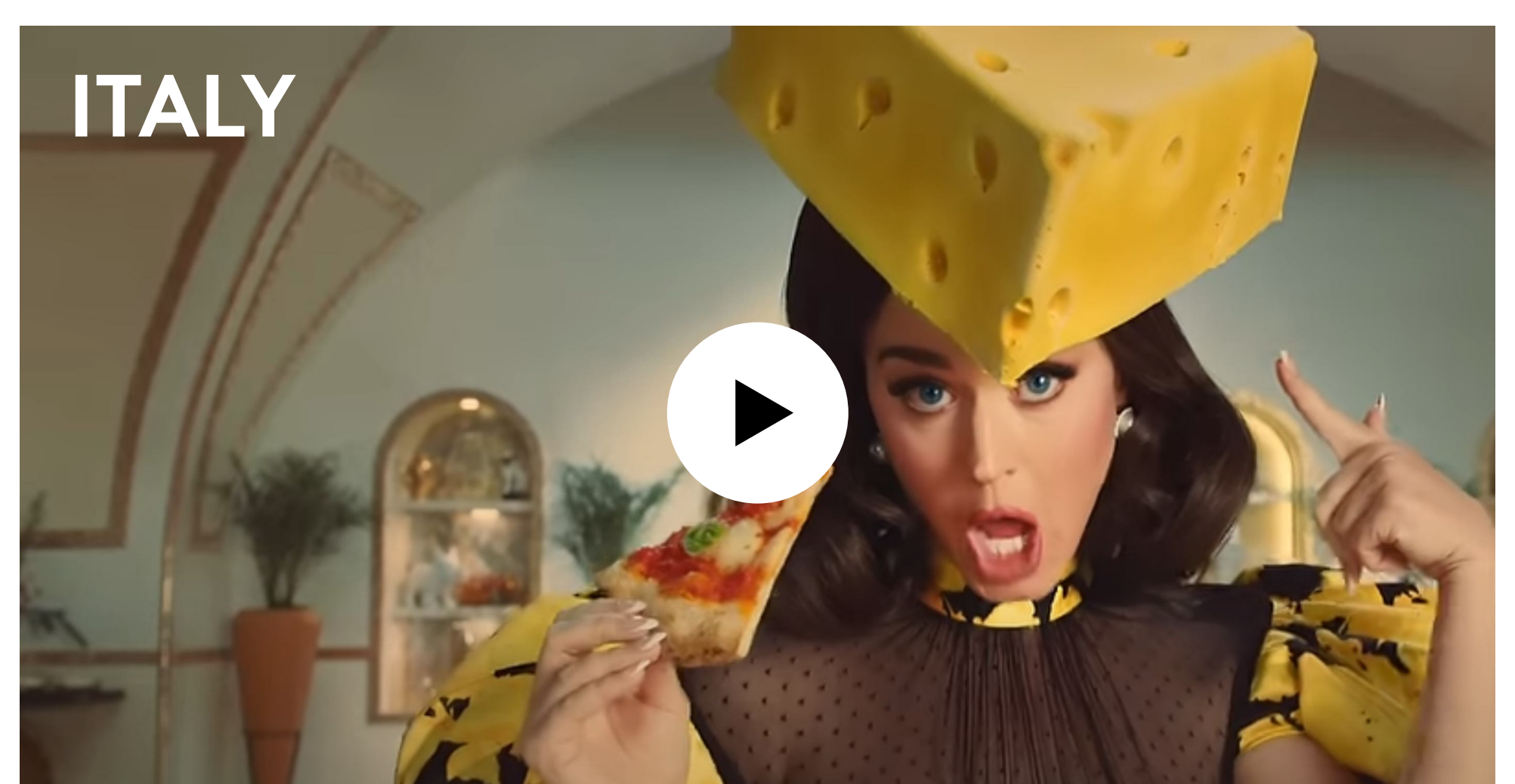
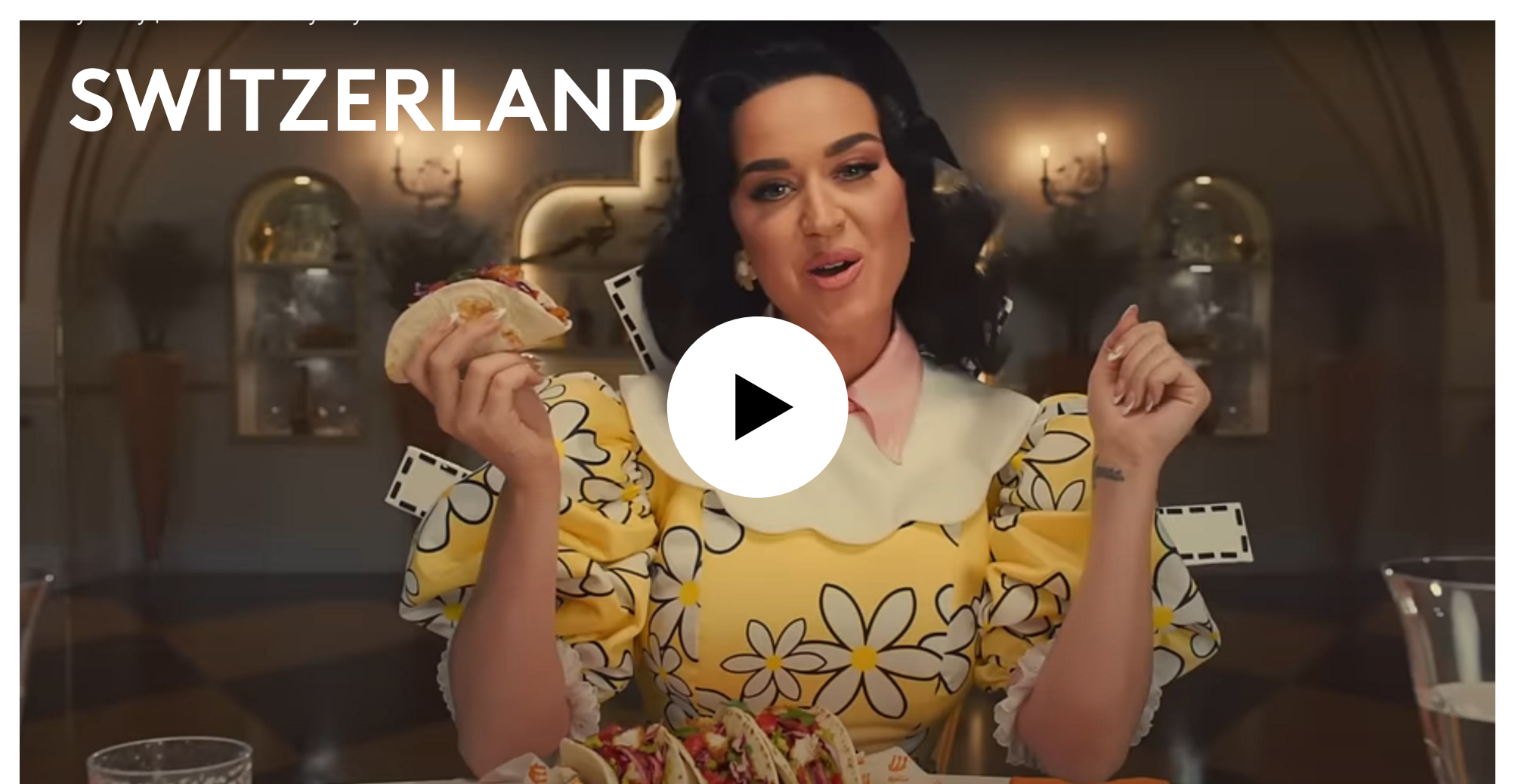
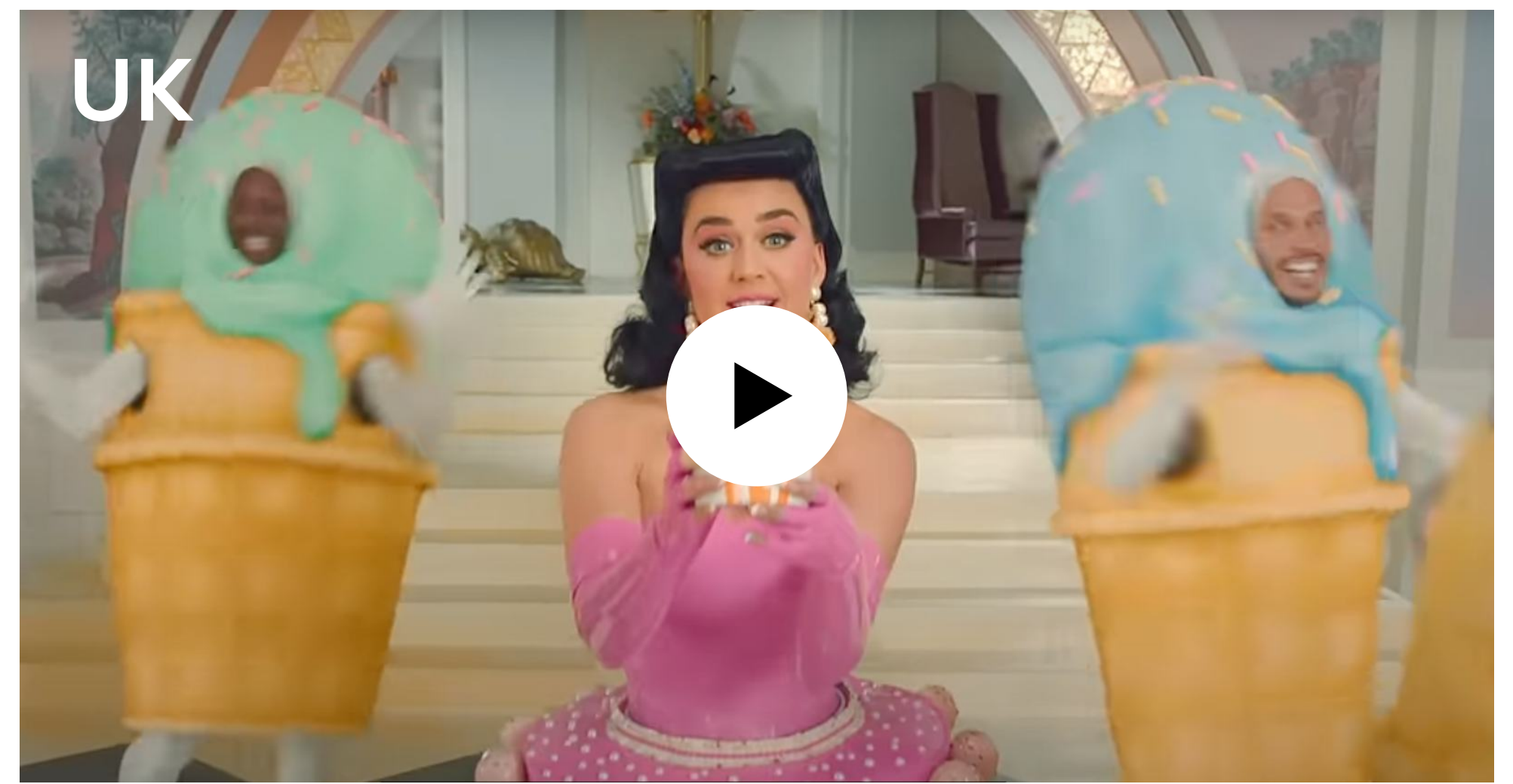


Source: Kantar LINK database

# Confidently repurpose your TV ads for different markets

Good ad performance in one market does not necessarily guarantee an ad will resonate in another. The market transfer capability on LINK AI provides fast AI predictions of your TV ads performance in one market, based on LINK+ survey data from another. This can save time, preserve ad creation budgets and allow you to confidently produce campaigns that maximise return on spend.

## Just Eat ads from around the world:



Just Eat's long-standing and much-admired Did Somebody Say ad creative platform is an excellent example of a campaign that bursts with colour and imaginative worlds. It uses globally famous celebrities to deliver a consistent, ownable musical riff with the brand at its heart.

Furthermore, this medley of executions from around the world demonstrates that for a global brand, these advertising principles travel remarkably well because they are human fundamentals which transcend local culture. This means the brand was able to achieve global consistency and significant economies of scale.





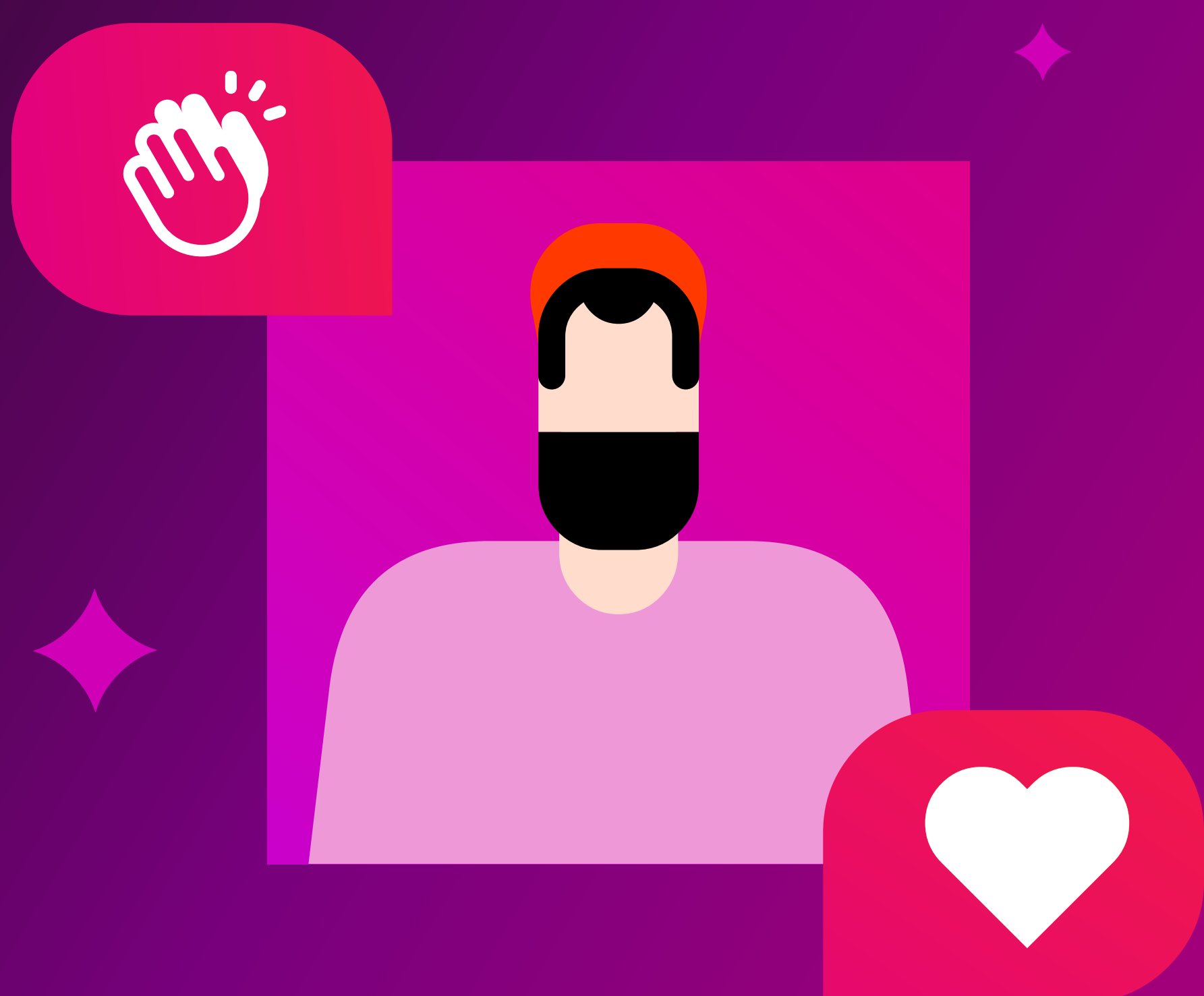
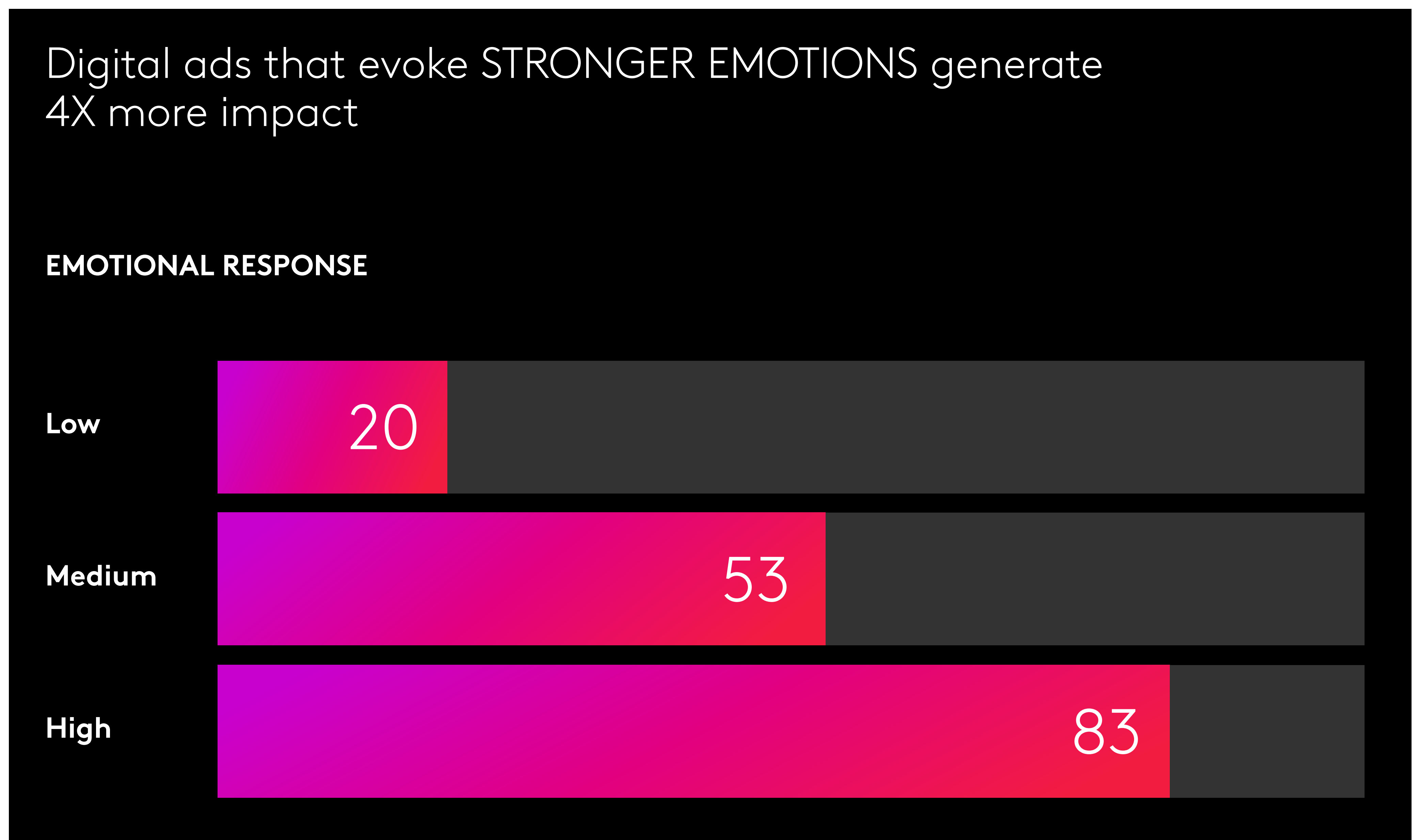
STRATEGY 2:

# Make them feel something

Gaining attention is obviously essential, but attention is perhaps more of an elusive concept than we might think. It's not just about whether people are passively looking at your ad or not. It's about how long they are looking for, what they are looking at, why, and most importantly of all, how it makes them feel. **This added emotional connection to content is what would be referred to as active engagement.**

# Emotion equals impact

There is, beyond a doubt, that emotion impacts advertising. This is clearly evidenced in environments where consumers are bombarded with content. [Kantar data](#) shows that **if you build digital ads that evoke stronger emotions, you could multiply ad impact by 4 times** compared to content that doesn't evoke strong emotions.



Part of the art and science of marketing is taking the active attention you earn and using it to land your message. To do that, you must engage your audience on an emotional level that connects those feelings to your brand. Ads that evoke stronger emotions generate up to 61% more long-term brand equity and 50% more branded engagement.

# What serves your brand best?

Before we get into the details of how to create emotional advertising, it's important to consider what you should aim to achieve. Should you aim primarily to build your brand's meaningful difference for the long term, or increase short-term sales?

## Being meaningfully different

To command a premium price, brands must be both meaningful and different in the eyes of their audience. Communication that clearly delivers a meaningfully differentiating message are proven to be beneficial to both short-term sales and long-term brand equity.

## Meaningful Different and Salient framework

### Different

The extent to which some brands are seen to offer something that others don't and lead the way



### Salient

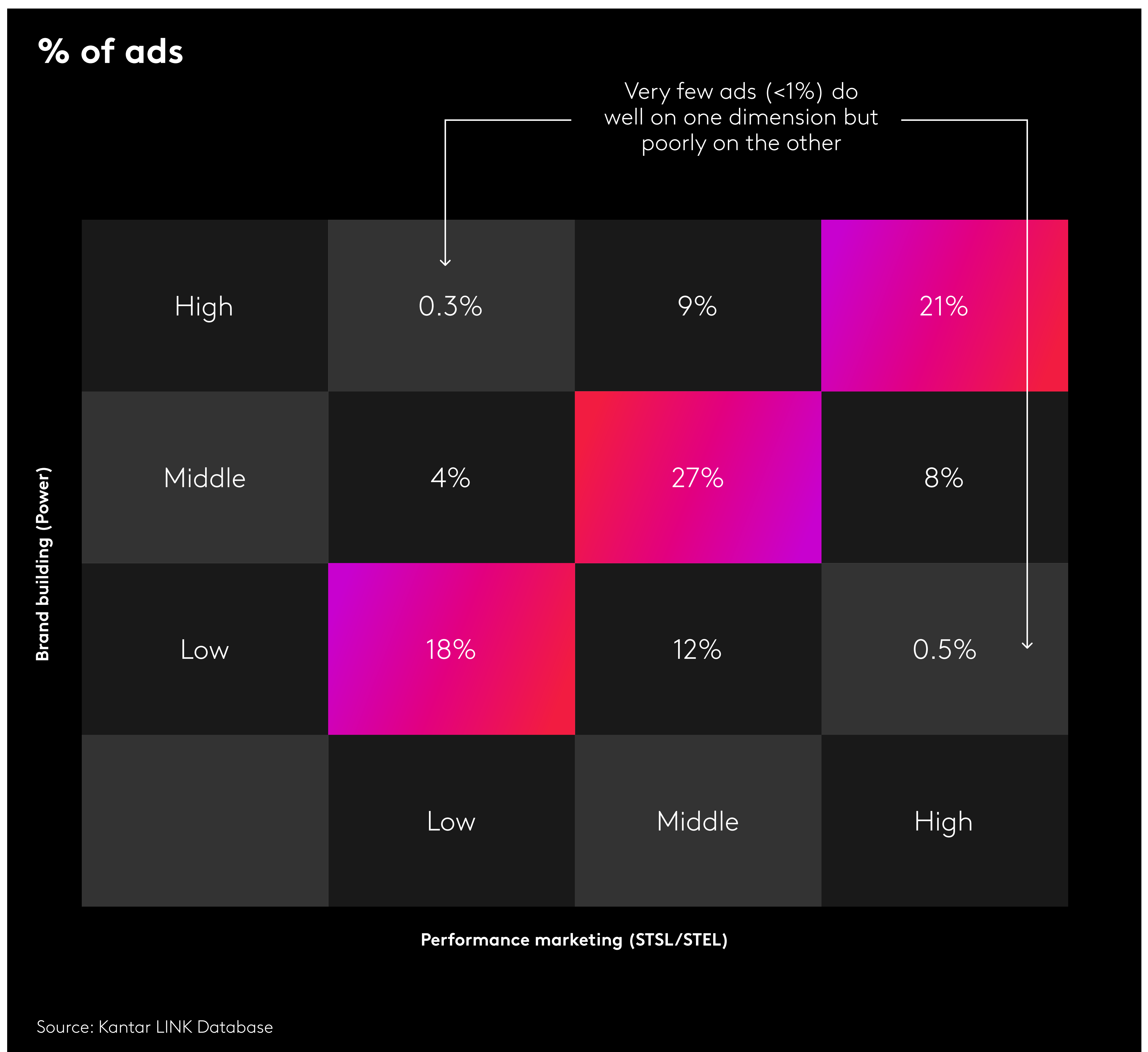
The mental availability of the brand: how quickly and easily it comes to mind when making a purchase or usage decision.

### Meaningful

The extent to which brands build a clear and consistent emotional connection and are seen to deliver against consumer needs.

Kantar data shows that **the choice between short-term sales and long-term brand building might not be a real dichotomy**. In the vast majority of ads we test, if the ad is good at building brand equity (i.e. it has a high Power score and will drive meaningful difference), then it's also likely to have a beneficial impact on sales and vice versa. And the same is true for ads that are poor at brand building-- they are much less likely to support sales.

So that answers the what and the why but how do you make advertising that is likely to resonate emotionally and cut through when consumers are exposed to more and more content.



# Tell them a human story

Our data shows that **ads with a strong narrative structure benefit on average from a 20% uplift in expressiveness (i.e. active attention)**. And telling a human story will help not only to engage people in your story but also get them actively involved in a shared and co-produced reality.

When we tested last year's Effie Europe winners using LINK AI on Kantar Marketplace, **the results revealed a catalogue of advertising brilliance and best practices**. Almost all the ads employed emotion and superb storytelling. One incredibly resonant example came from the Danish Cancer

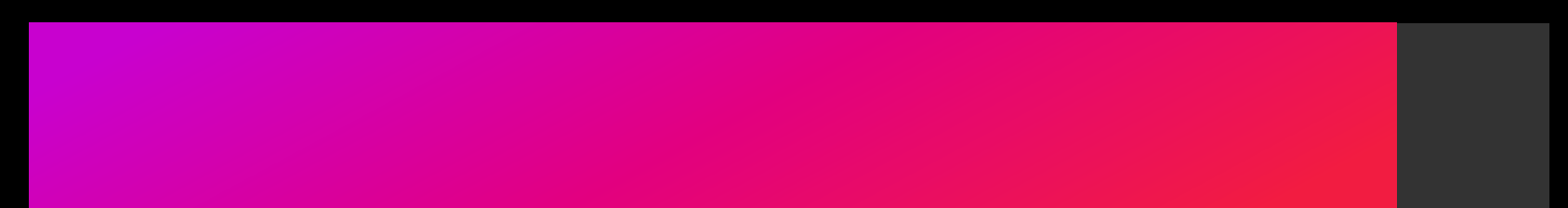
Society's public awareness campaign Save Your Father's Day.

By building their campaign around the connection between parent and child, they produced an almost universally understood and emotionally resonant story. The test results speak for themselves.

## Save your Father's Day



IMPACT TOP 10%



INVOLVEMENT TOP 10%



RELEVANCE TOP 15%



ENJOYMENT TOP 20%



Source: <https://www.reddinfar.dk/>

By understanding culture across your geographical footprint, you can gain an incredibly powerful competitive advantage. Tap into communal memories and experiences, and you'll deliver stronger enjoyment and emotional connection. However, some realities aren't as globally transcendent as the parent-child connection, so you need to ensure you have a good handle on culture in every market you operate in.



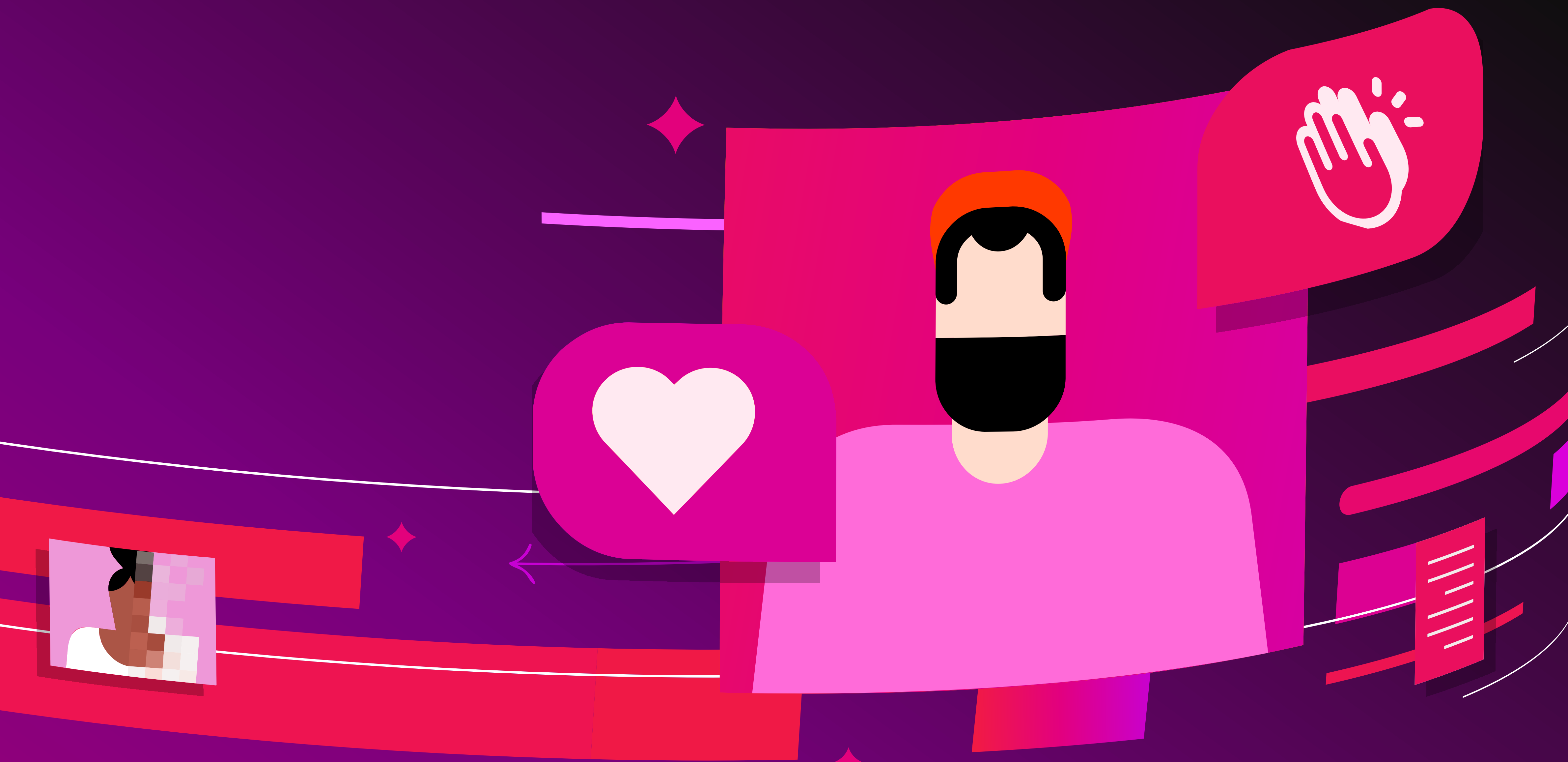
In the same way you wouldn't use the same execution for print and online, don't assume a story will travel from market to market without some tailoring. Less than half of the ads Kantar tests that perform well in one country perform as strongly in another.

Producing advertising that builds consumer perceptions that your brand is more meaningful and different than the alternatives has always been important. However, in the age of AI, this importance is magnified. When your advertising emotionally resonates with your brand and strategy, it is the best way to ensure your creative efforts and media dollars don't go to waste.

## Meaning, mastered

Once you have cut through the AI-generated noise and delivered a meaningful message, the next-step to make even more of that investment is to consider how the environment consumers see your ad impacts its effectiveness.





STRATEGY 3:

# Crack the context

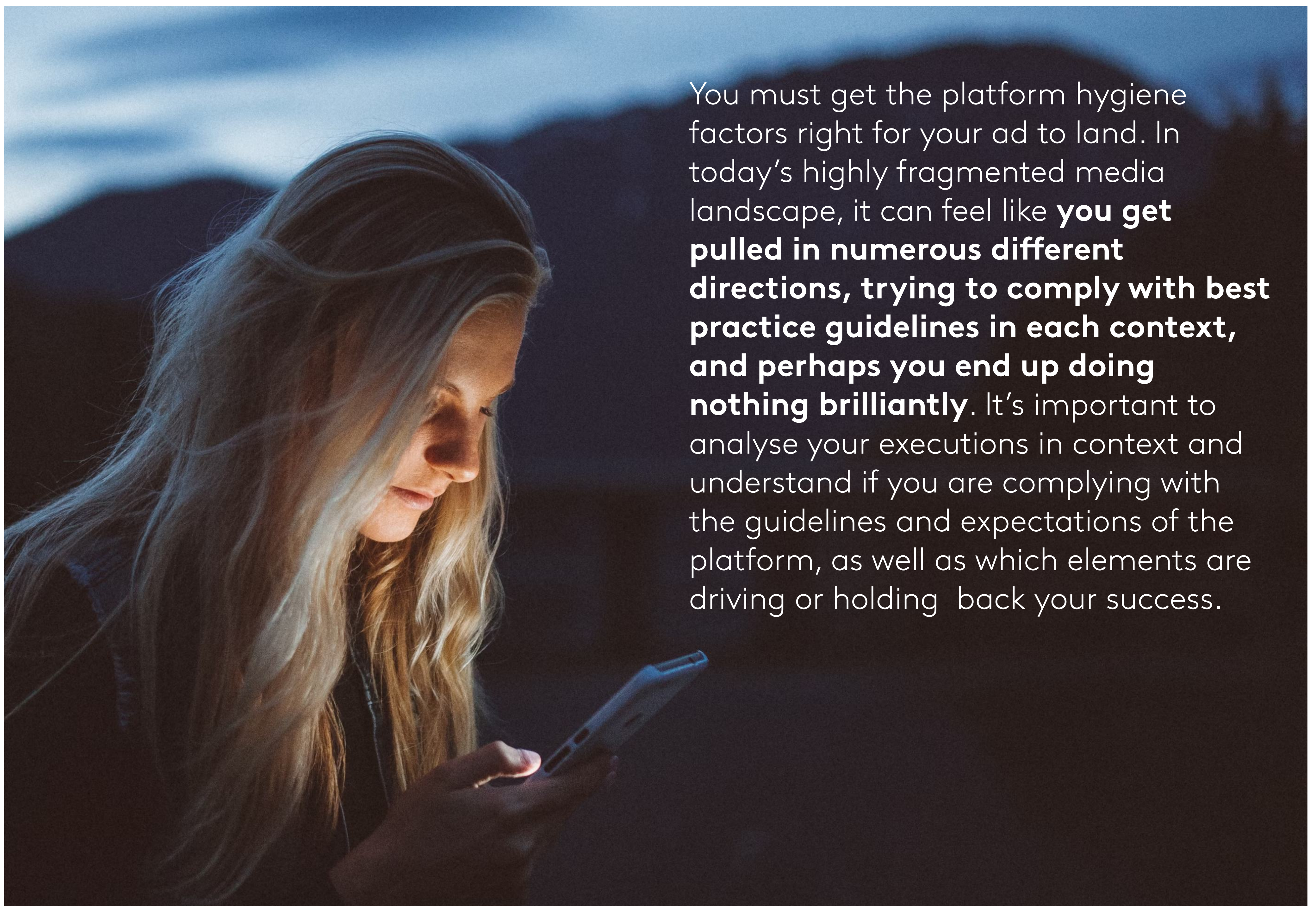
As we have already seen, the elements of winning ads are often interdependent. As with attention and emotion, the third strategy of the tripod, context, leans on and interacts with the other two. It's not just that the right ad in the wrong environment will perform poorly. If your ad isn't considerate of context, it's much less likely to resonate emotionally. And in the fast-moving digital world, it might be completely ignored.

## Quickly understand the ad components that will drive performance

Use the power of AI to expose what features are present in each ad you test with LINK AI. You can identify and assess a vast range of elements including humour, music, characters, brand logos etc. This powerful combination of market-leading AI creative effectiveness evaluation and creative tagging will help you ensure you are complying with context best practice and building the strongest possible campaigns.

## Adhere to platform best practices

Advertising campaigns are 7 times more impactful among receptive audiences so it is essential to understand the strengths, weaknesses, and precise benefits each ad platform can offer your brand.



You must get the platform hygiene factors right for your ad to land. In today's highly fragmented media landscape, it can feel like **you get pulled in numerous different directions, trying to comply with best practice guidelines in each context, and perhaps you end up doing nothing brilliantly**. It's important to analyse your executions in context and understand if you are complying with the guidelines and expectations of the platform, as well as which elements are driving or holding back your success.

# Adapt to the context

Remember that using tailored content makes you more persuasive. Different contexts demand different content to stand out and retain attention, so customising your ad for each media channel is key. What is funny on one platform may not have the same effect on another. Similarly, what catches attention in one channel may go unnoticed in another.



Here are some tips on making great content for different digital contexts.



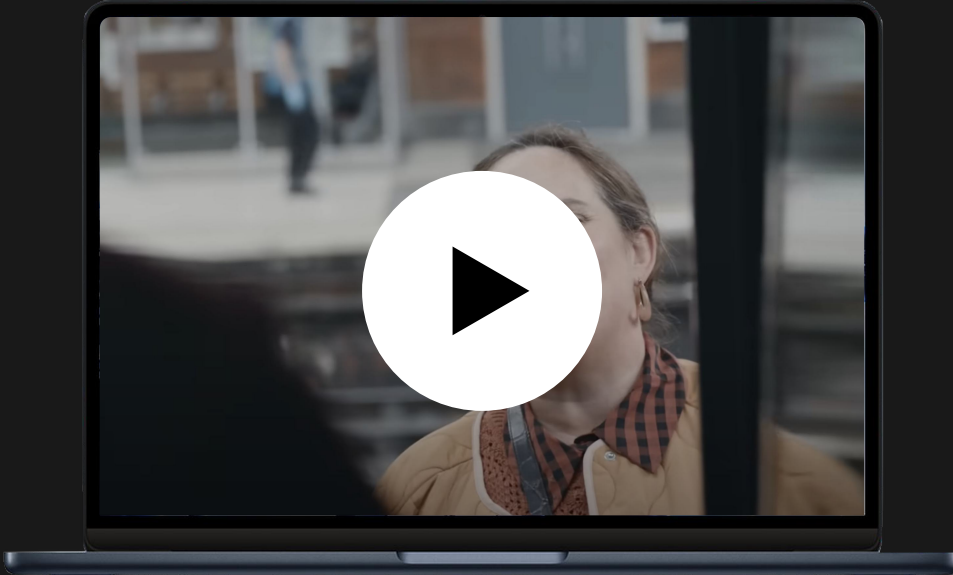
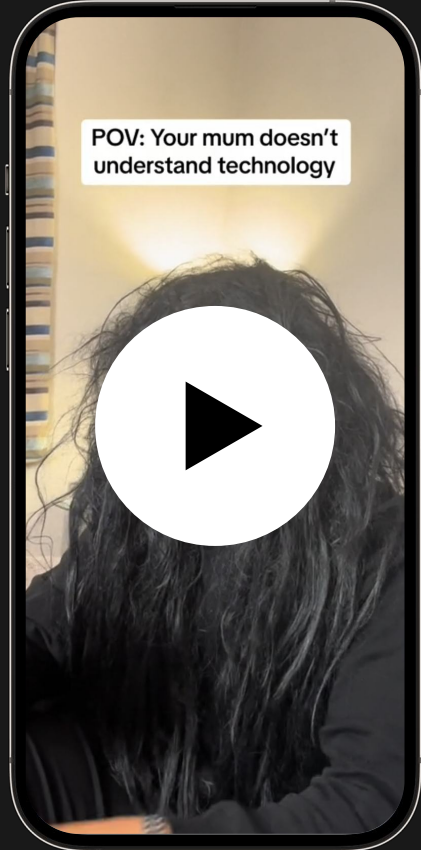
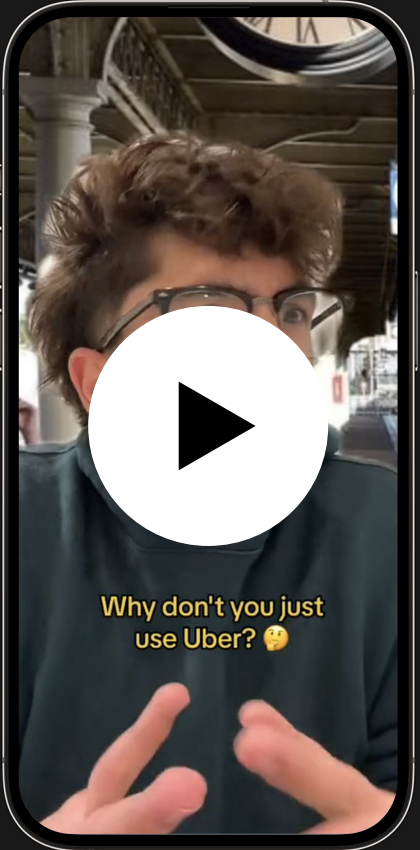
# 1 If you can't beat them, join them

The more content can reflect a channel's character and purpose, the less disruptive and more persuasive it may be. By trying to blend in stylistically and blur the lines a little to make your ads look more like native or influencer content, you can use context to your advantage. Doing this can help stop the scroll and delay the skip.

A great example of both tailoring to context and utilising influencers comes from Uber's, Trains now on Uber campaign. We tested three executions: Gina, (which recently won a Gold Lion at Cannes), a more traditional ad appearing on YouTube, Jack Joseph a humorous influencer POV ad on TikTok and another by influencer NDA which

recreated the style of his usual informative content. By mimicking the style and production values of content consumers expected in the respective contexts, Uber made three very different but highly effective executions in the same campaign that still strongly delivered a consistent message.

## Uber tailors ads to the platform to ensure audience engagement

			
	Gina	Jack Joseph	NDA
Enjoyment	Top 35	Top 5	Top 15
Brand Difference	Top 20	Top 10	Top 15
Ad Distinctiveness	Top 20	Top 10	Top 25

Source: Kantar LINK Database

# 2 The long and the short of it

Video ad length in digital advertising has also been the subject of a healthy and longstanding debate. While you need enough time to convey your message, the longer an ad is, the harder it is to keep people watching. It's important to find that sweet spot where your ad can retain maximum attention and deliver the creative objective in the minimum amount of time. This can vary from channel to channel.

We utilised LINK facial coding to test both the 6-second and 15-second versions of the same ad for an FMCG brand. Although the shorter ad generated relatively more passive attention (85% vs 64%), the longer ad generated more active attention (10% vs 16%). It used the additional time to do a far better job of setting up the joke and delivered a greater overall impact.

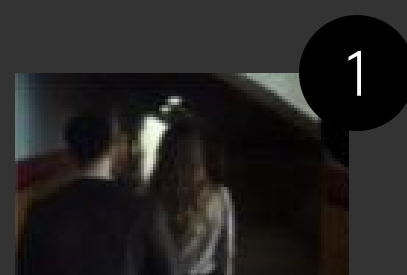


# 3 Get to the point

And the point is your brand! While we're not necessarily advocating for being self-serving, your brand needs to be properly integrated into the ad as a whole, with emphasis on the 'creative magnifier' or the moments of most attention. Facial coding can be incredible at identifying whether those moments are landing. It can also help you build emotional momentum as the ad move towards that moment. It can reassure you that the viewer is feeling what you want them to feel.

## Long digital content could have power to create an impact by taking viewers on an emotional journey with a spectrum of positive and negative reactions

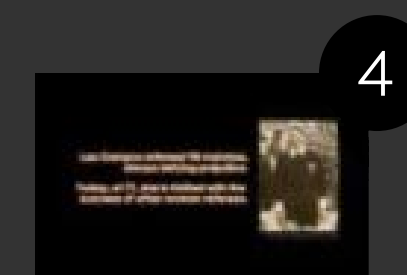
Kotex,  
Lea Campos,  
YouTube



1  
In 1967, Lea Campos was ready to be one of the world's first female referees.



2  
And what about when you are on your period?



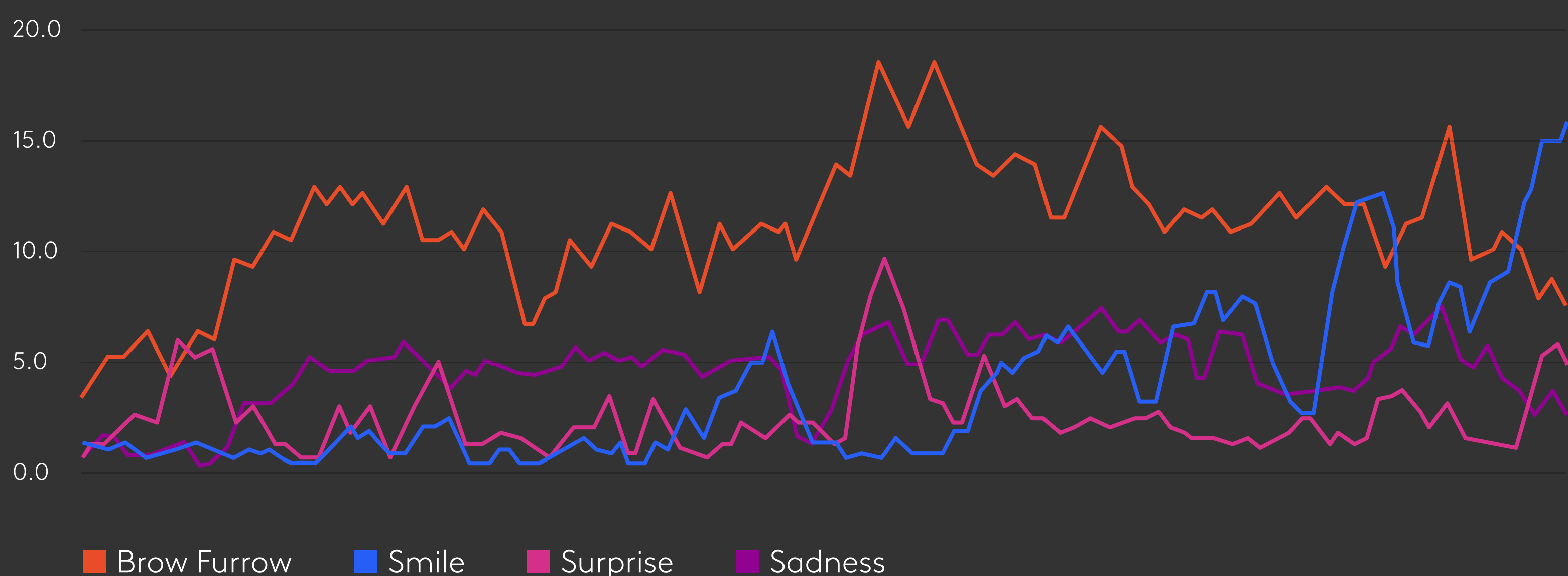
3  
4  
Lea Campos refereed 98 matches, always defying prejudice. Today, at 77, she is thrilled with the success of other women referees.

**Power**  
Top 10%

**Expressiveness**  
Top 25%

**Enjoyment**  
Top 5%

**Affinity**  
Top 1%



## Capture second-by-second emotional response

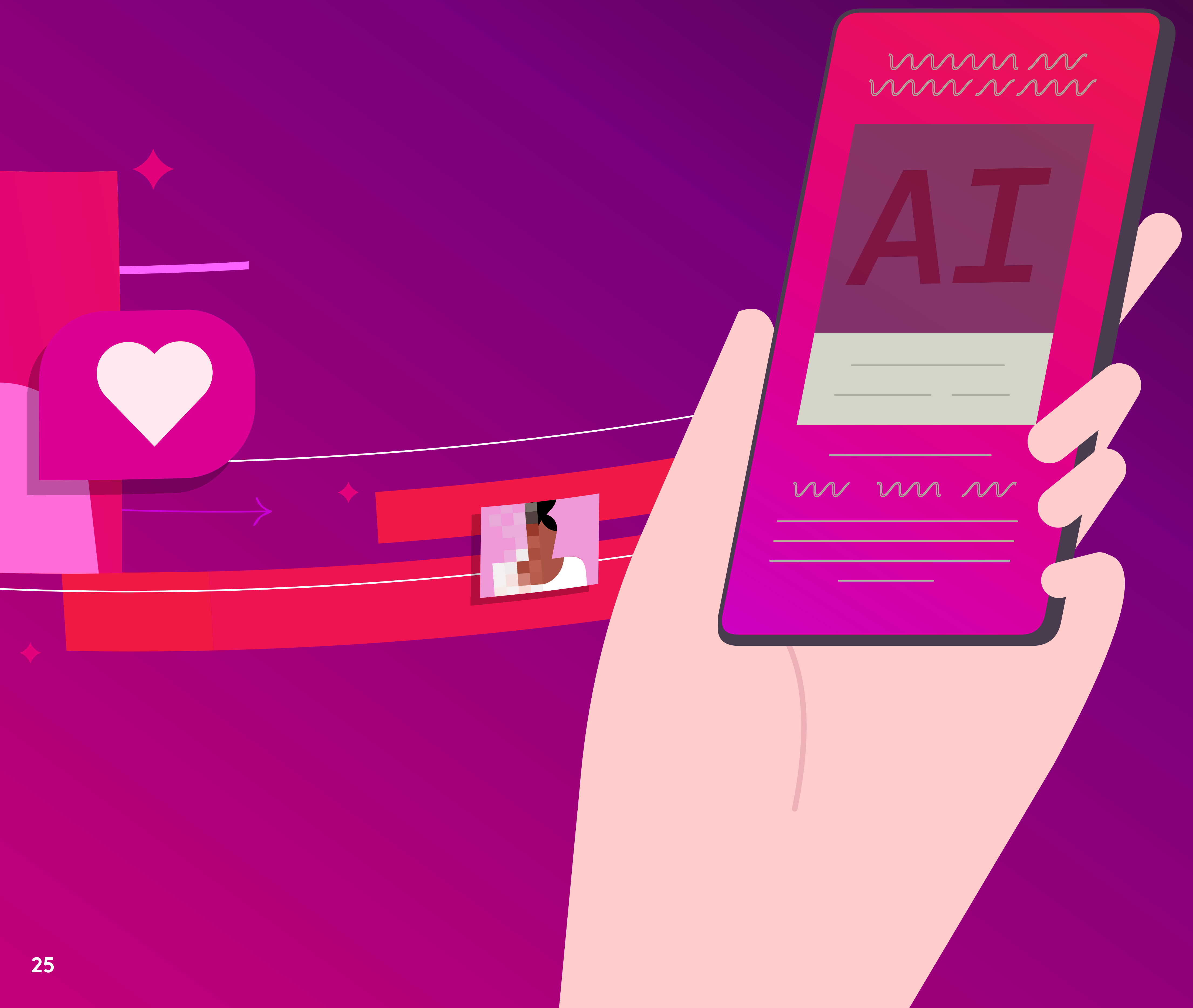
Facial coding is a neuroscience capability available on LINK+ that gives you optimisation insights. By recording and analysing viewers' facial movements and micro-expressions as they watch your ad, you can access instinctive unfiltered consumer responses at a level of granularity that enables impactful scene-by-scene fine-tuning.

# Mission accomplished!

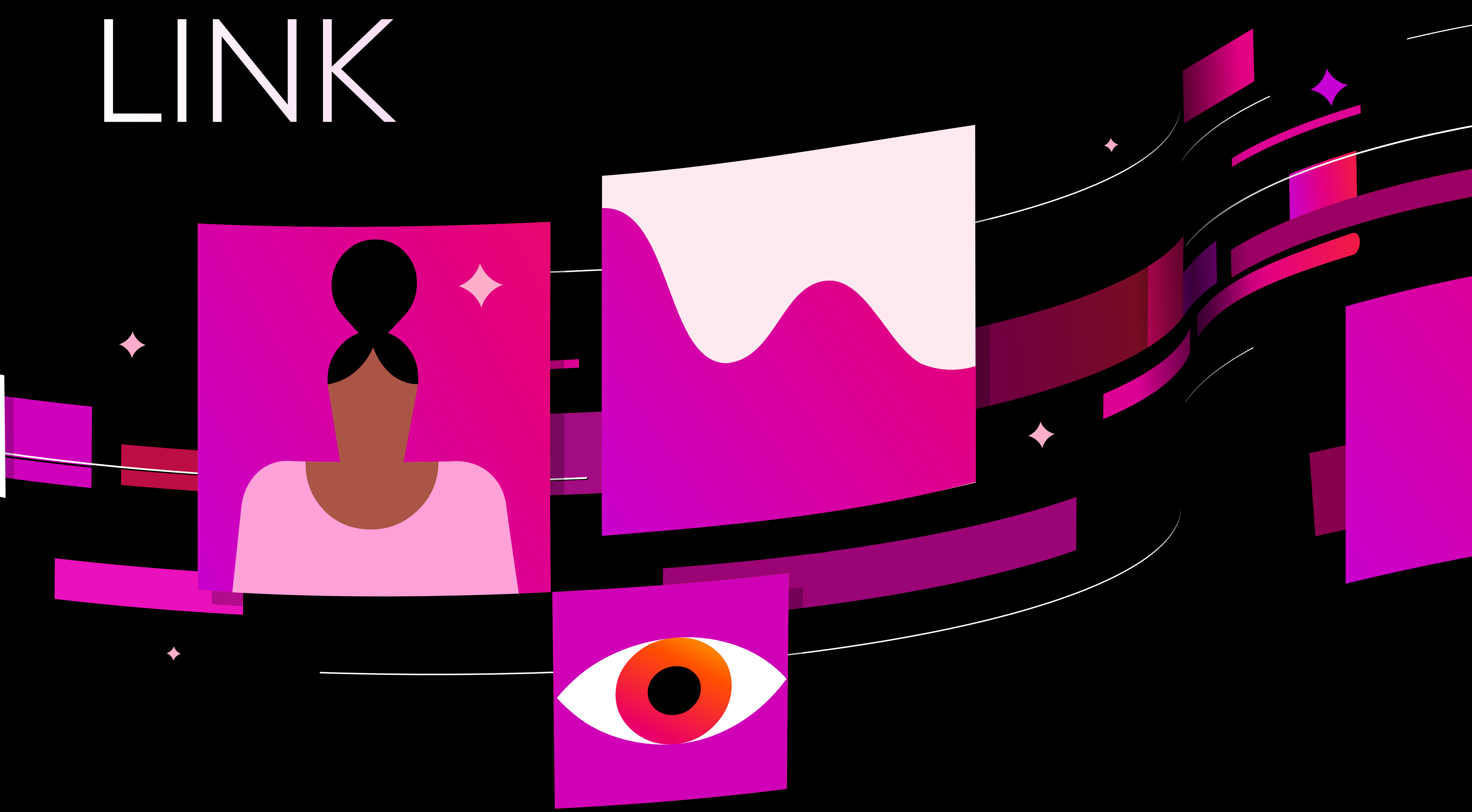
The three strategies we've covered in this playbook are not new. But they will take on a new level of importance in the era of AI-generated content. If you can do all these things well, you can achieve your mission to build meaningfully different brand associations

and deliver impactful ad campaigns.

Take back control with effective creative to ensure you are a driving force of your marketing, rather than a passenger, as we enter the next marketing era of AI.



# Achieve creative excellence with LINK



Kantar's LINK solutions deliver fast, powerful creative insights using cutting-edge AI, qualitative research, and survey methodologies. Transform your ads, maximise media impact, and accelerate brand growth with LINK's expert creative optimisation.

Request your Kantar Marketplace demo today and take control of your creative future in the age of AI.

[Book a demo](#)