

CAN AWARD WINNING ADS BE EFFECTIVE?

An Ipsos Point of View

Authors: Rachel Rodgers and Shelley Yang

GAME CHANGERS



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Creative techniques that engage and entertain both awards juries and consumers:

- Cheeky, dark and unexpected humor are winners. Non-conformity – *“I haven’t seen that before.”*
- Surprise, humorous juxtaposition and entertaining analogies work.
- Smart use of an organic cultural moment is applauded.
- Purpose themes continue to excite, providing bigger meaning for brand’s actions.

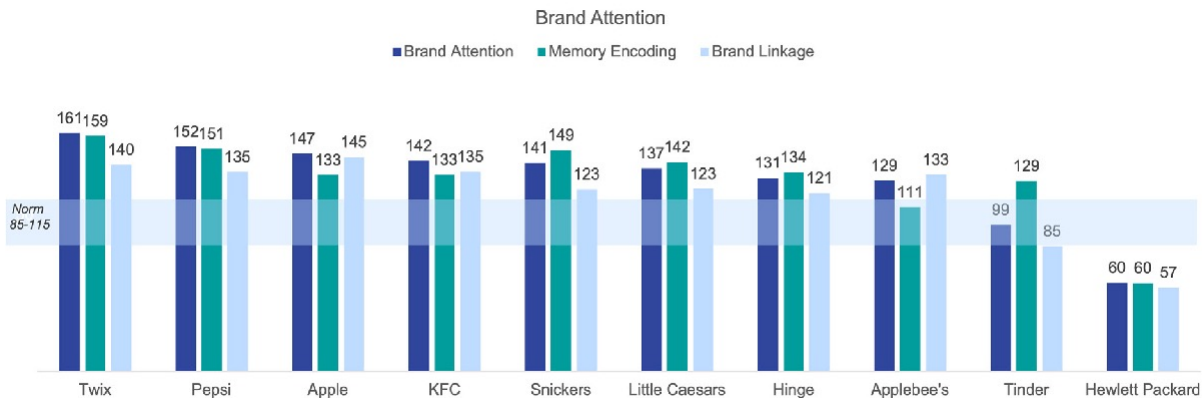
How brands can turn their award-winning creativity into solid commercial impact:

- Make communicating a brand or product benefit the driver of creativity, to deliver integrated messaging, uniqueness, and branding.
- Start with a relevant brand idea that reflects understanding of a consumer tension, and then let creativity explore ways to bring it to life.
- Keep an eye on the fundamentals of product demonstration, appetite appeal, and brand presence.

We know that creative quality is a big driver of advertising effectiveness. That’s why marketers and their agencies place so much emphasis on creativity, and why we have creative awards season each year. We set out to close the circle and deepen our understanding of how creatively awarded ads work to drive effectiveness.

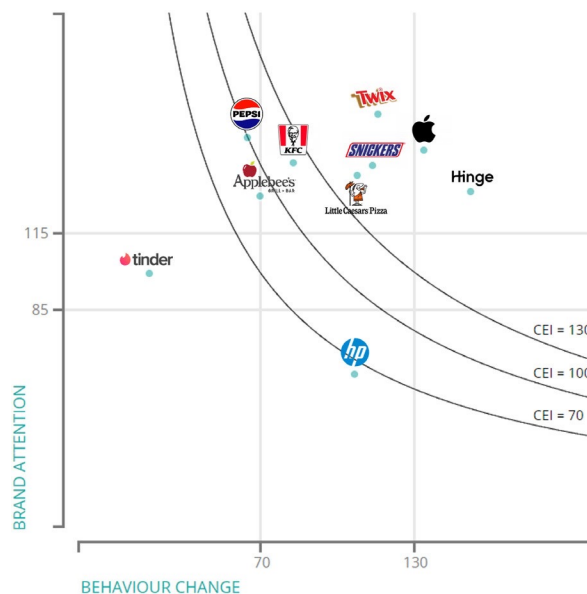
Creativity is an important driver of effectiveness but the impact of creativity on effectiveness can be uneven.

We tested a selection of 10 award-winning ads with [Ipsos' CreativeSpark assessment tool](#) to learn how high levels of creativity impact effectiveness. We found that award-winning ads deliver strong brand attention, illustrating creative focus on engagement and memory making. Award winning ads get attention through creativity. Creativity has a positive effect on brand attention.



Source: Ads tested with Ipsos' Creative Spark solution, N=150, U.S., Men & Women, A18-65

However, they are inconsistent in driving business impact. Despite the strong brand attention among eight of the 10 ads, we see that there is average predicted behavior change and therefore average creative effectiveness. Among the tested ads, they have an average Creative Effect Index (CEI) of 129 and Equity Effect Index (EEI) of 111 (norm 70-130).



Source: Ads tested with Ipsos' Creative Spark solution, N=150, U.S., Men & Women, A18-65

So, what can we learn about both winning creative awards and winning with consumers?

1. Be entertaining. Cheeky and unexpected humor are winners.



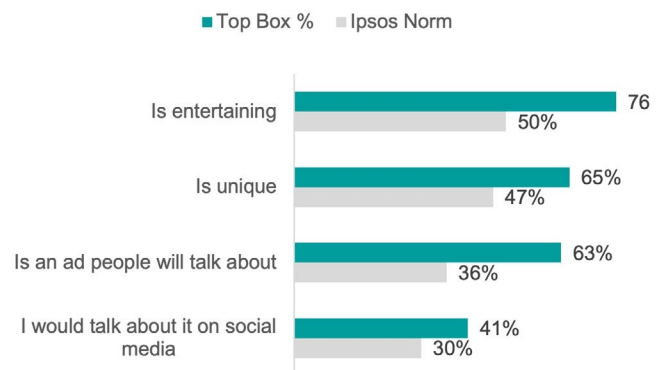
Snickers – Unfiltered

Entrant Company: BBDO, New York

Bronze – 2022 Cannes Lions Awards

How Snickers won over the judges

- Snickers successfully delivers on the “You’re Not You When You’re Hungry” campaign style in a new and unexpected way. It won Bronze at the 2022 Cannes Lions. With a strong brand attention of 141, the ad was considered very entertaining, unique, and buzzworthy.
- While the spot drives interest in Snickers, it is missing the moment where the candy bar is the hero that helps satisfy your craving and “get back to being you” that was part of the campaign. Only 41% found the ad appetizing (54% norm) and 32% (51% norm) found the ad informative since the candy bar was not eaten in the ad.
- The awkward misunderstanding around the “swap” grabs people’s attention, provides a bit of shock value and makes them laugh. 61% said Snickers has a good sense of humor. The ad scored strongly on creative effect with an index of 160 (norm 70-130).



Source: Ads tested with Ipsos' Creative Spark solution, N=150, U.S., Men & Women, A18-65, Top Box %

2. Surprise, humorous juxtaposition, and entertaining analogies work.



Little Caesars - Thin Crust Summer

Entrant Company: McKinney

Gold - 2023 Clio Awards

How Little Caesars won over the judges

- The funny, entertaining storyline coupled with the use of a nostalgic summertime theme grabs attention and drives engagement. [This ad](#) won a Gold at the 2023 Clio Awards. Utilizing distinctive assets coupled with clear branding cues throughout the ad lead to strong branding.
- But the ad fell short in portraying the product in a positive way. A creative hook should not run counter to appetite appeal. Some consumers did not find the idea of throwing pizza across the lake to be appetizing, 53% of people thought the ad was appetizing (norm 54% top box), leading to an average behavior change score of 108 (norm 70-130).
- Overall, Little Caesars clearly lands the strategic message and viewers understood the brand has a thin crust pizza.

3. Smart engagement with an organic cultural moment can be a brand gift.



Applebee's - Fancy Like

Lead Agency: Grey New York

Grand Winner/ Gold – 2022 US Effie Awards

How Applebee's won over the judges

- The Applebee's [campaign](#) won the US Grand Effie by jumping on an organic cultural moment and amplifying it effectively. Country singer Walker Hayes' "Fancy Like" became a viral TikTok dance with 887M views for the hashtag #fancylife. The brand creatively took his unofficial Applebee's song and showcased it in their ad campaign.
- The ad had strong brand attention and social power. People found the ad entertaining, unique, and thought it has a place in pop culture. The ad was effective in terms of awareness and brand saliency, but behavior and relationship change could be stronger.
- Overall, it was an effective marketing campaign as "Fancy Like Applebee's" became the feel-good catchphrase of summer 2021." The ad performed well with younger audiences (18-40) across the board due to catchy music and TikTok dance. 86% like the ad (no one disliked it) vs. 78% (gen pop - top 2 box).

4. Purpose themes continue to excite, providing bigger meaning for brand's actions.



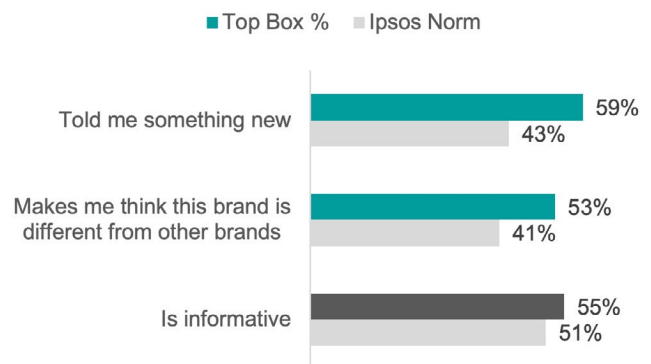
HP - Printing Trees

Advertising Agency: Wieden+Kennedy Portland

Wood Pencil - 2022 D&AD Awards

How HP won over the judges

- HP's announcement of its sustainability initiative leads to positive feelings that the company can make an authentic difference for both judges and consumers alike. This ad won two Wood Pencils at the 2022 D&AD Awards. The idea was that with an HP+ printing subscription, real forests are regenerated with every page you print and by 2024, HP will have restored 200,000 acres of forest. People felt that they were exposed to choices and values they had not seen or thought of before. The ad told them something new, made them think the brand is different, and was informative.
- Unfortunately, imagery of trees and nature are not enough to differentiate from other ads, limiting memory encoding and brand linkage. Through [an Ipsos meta-analysis of sustainability](#) ads, we found that where brands make similar promises and use similar styles, they tend to get lost in a sea of sameness, with on average -5% in brand attention.
- Overall, the ad drove long term brand relationship improvement indicators. 83% liked the ad and that led to positive brand association, especially around the idea that HP was making a difference in the world.



Source: Ads tested with Ipsos' Creative Spark solution, N=150, U.S., Men & Women, A18-65, Top Box %

5. Brands that turned their award-winning creativity into solid commercial impact – and how they did it.

Humor and surprise built around reinforcing unique product attributes.



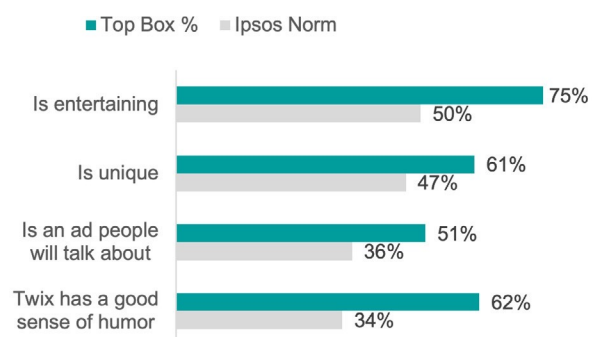
Twix – Bears

Entrant Company: DDB, Chicago / adam&eveDDB, London

Silver – 2022 Cannes Lions Awards

How Twix won over the judges and consumers

- Twix made communicating a brand or product benefit the driver of the ad's creativity, to deliver integrated messaging, uniqueness, and branding. This ad won Silver at the 2022 Cannes Lions Awards.
- Humorous aspects of the ad enable the creative to maintain an extremely high level of brand attention throughout, 161 (norm of 85-115). Using absurdity and dark humor drives engagement and memorability, and makes the ad stand out.
- Parallel dialogue (the humans talking about eating Twix and the bears talking about eating the humans) gives a sense of relatability to the bears. Using twins helps consumers make and remember the connection between the ad, the tagline and the brand.



Source: Ads tested with Ipsos' Creative Spark solution, N=150, U.S., Men & Women, A18-65, Top Box %

6. Engrossing storytelling that is inextricably linked to a unique branded benefit.



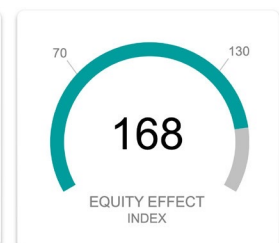
Apple Watch - Apple Watch 911 Campaign (Car, PB, Mountain)

Lead & Client: Apple

Wood Pencil - 2022 D&AD Awards

How Apple won over the judges and consumers

- Apple Watch is the hero in the hiker's story, presenting the brand in a powerful way. This ad won a Wood Pencil at the 2022 D&AD Awards.
- As tension builds throughout the ad, Apple Watch is the facilitator that provides relief and security in the end. The ad successfully showcases both the functional benefits and emotional benefits of Apple Watch.
- The ad had a strong consumer insight that delivers on a tension point. 'Apple Watch saves lives' is the unspoken main message and 74% of respondents got it (significantly above norm Completely Agree/ Top Box).
- The suspenseful demonstration leads to big payoffs.
- Cinematic music, a real 911 recording featuring Siri, and the ominous forest setting tell an emotionally intense story of an Apple Watch calling 911 for a fallen hiker – allowing the ad to captivate viewers and making it easy to remember.
- Supers in Apple's distinctive font and real-world Watch recording communicate the Watch's role in saving a user from danger – believably showing the Watch's relevant benefits and thus persuading viewers to choose Apple. The ad had strong creative effect of 198 (norm 70-130) and equity effect of 168 (norm 70-130).



Looking to optimize your creatives?

Ipsos offers best-in-class solutions that cover the entire creative development journey, providing comprehensive support from strategy to tracking and reflection. All are backed by robust, global normative databases developed over our 40+ year history in creative evaluation. Our services are structured into distinct stages to ensure that each aspect of the creative process is executed effectively.



In particular, Ipsos recognizes the significance of starting early to ensure that communication is founded on relevant and meaningful connections with consumers. Our early-stage research methodology is designed to fast-track the development of impactful creative. By gaining a deep understanding of consumers' needs and preferences from the outset, businesses can tailor their creative strategies with precision, avoiding costly iterations and revisions in the later stages.

+48% improvement in overall ad performance with early stage research

**Based on 500+ Ipsos cases*

Authors:

Rachel Rodgers

Senior Vice President,
Creative Excellence

rachel.rodgers@ipsos.com

Shelley Yang

Director, insights Activation,
Creative Excellence

shelley.yang@ipsos.com

About Ipsos

At Ipsos we are passionately curious about people, markets, brands, and society. We deliver information and analysis that makes our complex world easier and faster to navigate and inspires our clients to make smarter decisions. With a strong presence in 90 countries, Ipsos employs more than 18,000 people and conducts research programs in more than 100 countries. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is controlled and managed by research professionals.