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 CDP PREFERENCE STRATEGY PITFALLS IDENTICAL
 PLATFORM AVERAGE EXPENSIVE BILLBOARD RAINBOW
 SOFT LAUNCH RETAIL TRAINERS PERFORMANCE DEPRIVED
 BEHAVIOURAL IDENTITY VALUES MEASUREMENT ANALYST
 WIN-WIN BUDGET GOAL ENGAGE MARKET ONLINE NERD
 SILO GRAPH OUTLIER COLLECT CMO IDENTIFIER WORDS
 TOOLKIT CONSUMER EXTRA CRUNCHY
 MACRO OUTCOMES REDUNDANT BARRIER DECISION-MAKING CLASSIC RAW RETURN
 ACCELERATOR B2B PERSONAL SEXY BACON POWER LEAD
 DUPLICATE ATTRIBUTION ROI GOAT MEANINGFUL PETS BUY
 REACH PANEL INVEST FORWARD PURCHASE VERSION CONTROL
 OPERATIONAL IMPRESSION UNIFYING ID LARGEST BIAS
 TREND REAL WORLD SNACKS CREATIVE C-SUITE
 INTELLIGENCE SHARE OF VOICE INFINITE EXPONENTIAL
 COLUMN TRUTH ATTENTION LANGUAGE SPOT SEGMENT
 CORRECT RECOGNISE BARRIER LISTEN BOUNCE RATE
 AUDIENCE WATCH DECAL MARTINI TIME GROCERY SHOWCASE
 HINDSIGHT TOTAL BETTER ETHNICITY RISE SOCIAL
 BIRTHDAY CAKE INDIGENOUS CHAMPION UNDECIDED UPWARD PROCESS
 LISTENER 6.5 BILLION SAMPLE SIZE INFORMATION
 ASSET SLOAN DWELL TIME READER TAKEOVER DOLLARS
 INCREMENTAL RABBIT HOLE CLIENT DRIVER EMOTIONAL
 SKEW CONSISTENT WHAT VARIATION KIWI KID GEN Z
 ANALYSIS BEST PRACTICE WORTH LESSONS SPECIFIC
 CHANNEL B CAT VIEWER ADVERT 3D SPELLING
 BARBECUE YOUTH ECHO CHAMBER LOCAL ACCURACY EDGE
 HEALTH & BEAUTY PRIVACY LOCAL ACCURACY
 FMCG EVENT AUDIO PERFORMANCE COUNTER COST METRICS
 CUSTOMER DATA PLATFORM SOUP SERVICE AI PRINT
 NUANCE PERCEPTION TANGENTIAL RATE SIGNIFICANT
 NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE SILVER SURFER SALES
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 GRANDAD INDIVIDUAL BRIEFING
 TECH STITCHING LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS

RETARGET ATTRACTIVE UNTAPPED MENTAL AVAILABILITY SWITCH
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 NEWS MEDIA WHEN PARAMETERS SIGNIFICANT THIRD-PARTY
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 ASSUMPTION INCOME COOKIES DESIGN IT ATTITUDE
 PERMISSION GOLF ABC1 BRAND CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORK NEW SPACE
 BOAT DISCO DECILE UNDERSTAND
 ACTIVATION PRIZE DRAW SPREADSHEET ACTUAL
 FOCUS GROUP WEALTHY CHANNEL A SHOPPER SUMMARY FAST-PACED SECTOR
 BOOMER IMMERSIVE WORSE MINDSET LOYALTY
 AD CORRELATION SCI-FI HAMSTRUNG BREADWINNER
 COMPLETION CLIP DIGITAL Retail media
 COMMUTER UNIVERSITY opens up
 PERCENTILE EXTRAPOLATE CARS
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 OUT-OF-HOME DATA POINTS MULTI-LINGUAL BASIC
 SOCCER MUM INNOVATION INTERNATIONAL PHONE MEETING
 GLOBAL SPEND ACTIONS MINIMUM HIGH END
 EMOTION 58% NUMBERS AWARD-WINNING WISDOM
 TSUNAMI RESEARCH BUSINESS ACUMEN YOU'RE MY FAVOURITE
 DIVERSITY BUS SHELTER TAGLINE MEANINGFUL
 ECONOMY RELEVANT JUSTIFY RELEVANCY VISION
 NICHE NETWORK DISCERNING CUSTOMERS
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EDITOR

Penny Murray
penny.murray@scg.net.nz

COMMERCIAL MANAGER

Vernene Medcalf
vernene.medcalf@scg.net.nz

DESIGNER

Alisha Kumar

EDITORIAL TEAM

Bernadette Basagre, Niko Kloeten
and Zahra Shahtahmasebi

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Carl Davidson, Anna Gunnell, Lou Harness,
Robin McDonnell, Kate Murchinson,
Carl Sarney and Duncan Stuart

RETAIL & SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER

Monique Bulman
monique.bulman@scg.net.nz

SCG MEDIA CEO

Marcus Hawkins-Adams
marcus.hawkins@scg.net.nz

CONTACT

NZ Marketing is published by SCG Media
20 Vestey Drive, Mount Wellington, 1060
+64 9 361 2834
scgmedia.co.nz

Subscribe to NZ Marketing at
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Welcome to
issue 79 of
NZ Marketing
magazine –

my first in the hotseat.

Coming from a news
background, I'm all about great
stories, well told, but this job
has also involved a whole new
language – lots of jargon and
acronyms to learn! This is
especially true in the field of
data-driven decision making, a
fascinating and huge area. You
can read about it from page 32.

The maths averse might fear
this topic strays perilously
close to number crunching,
but those I talked to used
words like “sparkle”, “standing
out from the crowd” and
“feeling good” to describe the
purpose of their work. In the
best hands, it seems, data can draw out
our most human qualities.

The tension between people and
AI – particularly whether artificial
intelligence will replace human
creativity – is as relevant to marketers
as any other walk of life right now,
and this topic pops up in several
places within these pages. Zahra
Shahtahmasebi found organisations as
diverse as Auckland Theatre Company
(page 78) and Mitre 10 (page 40) are
using AI in very different ways to
connect with their audiences better.

Connecting across cultures is
another theme running through this
issue. On page 81, Bernadette Basagre
explores how brands can get their
messages to land with Chinese
communities, as well as looking at the
efforts of local media and agencies to

understand and promote te ao Māori.
From making video that succeeds
on social (pages 46 and 51) to the
nuance of marketing in each state of
America (page 42), cultural
competence is a must.

Some might say rural Aotearoa
is another country, and they might
be right – though with improved
connectivity the regions are as active
online as anyone. Niko Kloeten reports
how this is changing advertisers'
approach to this practical, resilient
bunch on page 58.

Also practical and resilient are my
NZ Marketing colleagues, who had

mapped out many
of these features
before I arrived.
A big mihi to them,
as well as a big
hello to everyone
who has made me
feel welcome. It's
been a delight to
meet so many in
the industry over
the past few weeks
(enormous thanks
to our Commercial
Manager Vernene
Medcalf for dozens
of introductions),
and I hope to
meet even more
people soon.

Braver creative,
gaming as a
marketing tool
and – rather
surprisingly –
NZTA's 'Ghost

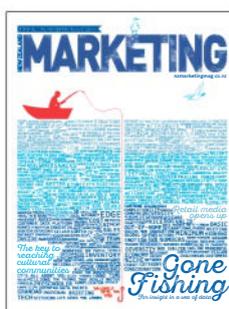
Chips' ad were all mentioned by those
we talked to for this issue, which may
or may not be an indication of what's
on our collective minds.

At NZ Marketing, we've been
thinking about you. Where we've had
the right information, and because we
can, we've put your name on the cover.
I hope you get a kick out of it.

Even if we didn't have enough details
to personalise this issue for you, I hope
lots of useful information catches
your eye.

Kia pai tō rā

Penny Murray, Editor



ON THE COVER...

Hundreds of (mostly
relevant) words swim
with the fishes in a sea
of data. In this issue,
industry experts talk
about how to tame the
tidal wave of raw
numbers and convert
them into useful
insight.

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our contributors

Our magazine leans on the generosity of industry experts sharing their insight. Among those who've weighed in with news and views this issue are:



Kelly Bennett

Founder of One Plus One Group on how PR has evolved over his time in the industry and what the future looks like.



Kate Boreham

Head of Regional and Rural Markets at Stuff on how to reach audiences outside metropolitan New Zealand.



Arnya Karaitiana

Creative Director and Kaiārahi at Special Aotea on how the media landscape should match our diverse peoplescope.



Lisa King

Founder of non-alcoholic drinks brand Curious AF on her major US deal with Target and Walmart.



Joanna O'Connor

Marketing Director at Auckland Theatre Company on the role of community and AI in ATC's latest play.



Samantha Osborne

General Manager of Cartology NZ on the latest trends in retail media.



Jacob Dawson

Co-founder of ODV on what it takes to make a successful video in the digital world.



Anna Gorman

Sponsorship & Events Manager at 2degrees on championing women's rugby with a TikTok livestream.



Alistair Jamison

CEO at Radio Broadcasters Association on why New Zealand's audio space is still thriving.



Skipper Lomiwes

Programmatic & Data Activation Manager at TVNZ on the industry's over-reliance on cookies.



Leni Ma'ia'i

Founder of DIG PR on the importance of media relations and why PR needs a well-functioning fourth estate.



Clara Ng

Client Solutions Lead – Data at Reach Marketing Agency on getting insights to help you stand out from the crowd.



Priya Patel

CEO of DDB Aotearoa on what makes the agency one of the best in the business.



Lewis Tennant

Lecturer at AUT on how podcasts are becoming a big player in the media landscape.



Leanne Too

Marketing Director for KFC on the fast food chain's shift in marketing strategy.

NEW ZEALAND MARKETING ONLINE

Your digital gateway to essential marketing intelligence

The fortnightly *NZ Marketing* magazine newsletter is back

Every two weeks, the *NZ Marketing* mag team is popping into your inbox with a special newsletter featuring up-to-date news, latest trends and insights into the world of marketing.

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Say hi to Penny and Zahra

Earlier in the year, the *NZ Marketing* team gave a warm welcome to our new Editor, Penny Murray and Sub-editor and Feature Writer, Zahra Shahtahmasebi.



Penny has been an editor, writer and production journalist for three decades, in both Aotearoa and the UK. As well as working in newspapers, trade magazines and glossies, she has co-authored a book of short stories and most recently helped lead Stuff's busy Auckland digital newsroom. She loves introducing readers to useful ideas and has never met a dog she didn't like.

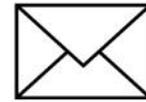


This is Zahra's first foray into the marketing industry after spending the past five years working in health – first as a journalist at *New Zealand Doctor Rata Aotearoa*, then as health writer at Breast Cancer Foundation NZ. She moonlights as co-chief instructor of a kung fu school, Chans Martial Arts Remuera. Having the honour of telling people's stories is her favourite thing in the world (aside from tea).

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If this sounds like you, pitch your idea to the editor: editor@nzmarketingmag.co.nz

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INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

News, views and updates from New Zealand's
marketing community



DRIVING REVENUE IN A RECESSION

When the chips are down and costs are up, what should marketers do? John Buckley, Stuff's Director of Digital Revenue and Strategy and veteran digital agency expert, has five steps for brands navigating New Zealand's cost of living crisis.

It is the marketer's eternal challenge: a recession has been called, consumers grow more vigilant about what they spend and the brands they choose, and marketing budgets are scaled back. Recession marketing is in, and price sensitivity is everywhere.

But you can drive revenue in a recession and the clever will brand-build now while others will suffer from short-termism in the long run. There are, however, a few tricks and strategies to successfully navigating such a challenging time. So, what can you do?

- 1. Get your data in order and make sure you know your customer.** This is, of course, easier for large customer-direct businesses, but the rule applies across the spectrum. Look at your customer lists, investigate their order history and wherever you capture their feedback, consider how it affects the product and service you provide.
- 2. When it comes to activation in paid channels, find your people.** For data-rich advertisers, there are more and more ways to find your audiences on platforms that don't rely on third-party advertising cookies. The technology is complex, but the customer matching experience is safe and smooth, allowing you to talk to customers based on their needs rather than guesswork. For brands that don't have big databases, large-scale news sites like Stuff can provide campaigns with many facets to improve targeting efficiency to make your spend go further.
- 3. Be human and empathetic – customers want to know you care.** The best question brands can ask themselves when navigating a recession is: how can we help? Ensuring your messaging and storytelling is warm, empathetic and matches the mood of the times is critical.
- 4. Measure appropriately and consistently.** We are seeing a trend of advertisers pumping money into so-called performance channels which mark their own homework. The problem with automated buying platforms is that they often have such broad reach they will claim actions such as conversions as theirs alone. The truth is rarely that simple. With digital advertising, it is important to consider the layers of your campaign. One channel rarely works on its own, as consumers need to be nurtured through the classic stages of marketing, from becoming aware of a product, to identifying the need, to deciding to act (in-store or online). When you carry out your campaigns, consider the user journey and apply measurement at each layer, not just at the end.
- 5. Finally, test and learn.** When you review your campaign performance, take a helicopter view and look at what worked and what didn't, but mainly consider the why:
 - Were competitors in or out of the market at the time?
 - Did you have a compelling call to action?
 - Did your investment provide enough visibility and share of voice?
 - If you are promoting an online purchase, were the products available and visible at all times?

There are many stages to digital marketing maturity that brands small and large can follow, but the principles are the same.

LEGACY MEDIA REVEAL THEIR ANNUAL REVENUE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Halfway through the year, select legacy media unveil their annual reports following a tough 2023.

MediaWorks reports that, for the year ending December 2023, the media company has seen a 5% decrease in revenue from FY22, dropping to \$204.1 million.

However, the media company has seen an increase in earnings before interest, tax and depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) and an increase in revenue across its digital and outdoor channels.

“The media industry in New Zealand continued to weather a storm in 2023, with high interest rates, high inflation and the country dipping into recession,” says MediaWorks Chair Barclay Nettlefold.

“In this difficult environment, CEO Wendy Palmer and the team managed to maintain earnings by restructuring aspects of the business to save costs, which has been critical in the current economic environment.”

MediaWorks’ results come after TVNZ reported a net loss of \$16.17 million for the last six months of 2023.

The result was largely due a one-off impairment of \$12.2 million; the state-owned broadcaster reported an EBITDAF of \$0.1 million and an operating loss of \$4.6 million for that period.

Earlier in 2024, TVNZ axed shows including *Sunday* and *Fair Go*, resulting in the loss of 68 jobs.

NZME – the media company behind *NZ Herald*, a number of radio shows and other publications – will release its reports at the end of the year.

Stuff, which owns some of the country’s most read newspapers and news sites, is privately owned and does not have to publicly report its financial results.

Warner Bros Discovery NZ, which announced the closure of Newshub in February – resulting in the loss of up to 300 jobs – releases its annual reports in the middle of the year. At the time of writing, this report had not been published. ▶



➤ Pick me, choose me

Recent studies reveal that Kiwis are no longer trusting brands in an era of information overload, so how does one build trust in a competitive space where everyone is fighting for your attention?

Marketing and email automation platform Mailchimp looks into the consumer behaviours of 1000 Kiwis when it comes to brands in a new study titled “Brand trust in the age of information overload”.

The main takeaway is 54% of Kiwis need to trust and connect with a brand before making a purchase.

This high bar is even tougher to clear amid news that 39% of New Zealanders trust brands less due to misinformation.

So, what can brands do to build trust?

Research and insights company TRA put this question to more than 2000 Kiwis in its new study “Connection”. Participants’ answers included loyalty schemes (46%), supporting causes they care about (39%) and partnerships with groups or interests they feel connected to (27%).

TRA says while there is a significant percentage of people who do feel connected to brands, there is a clear opportunity to increase this proportion by being present in spaces where consumers are, such as social media.

“Connection is a feeling – a shared feeling. We tend to think of people connecting by hanging out together in physical spaces. It was surprising to find that posting online increases people’s sense of connection across everything, virtual and real,” says Colleen Ryan, Partner at TRA.

“The research confirmed we are in a new age of connection. Human connection has adapted, and we have developed a new set of skills to connect with people who have the same interests and world views as us.”

In Mailchimp’s study, 47% of New Zealanders said they enjoy receiving personalised emails.

But beware, 51% say they don’t like repetitive or unimaginative emails – annoyance in the inbox drives them to unsubscribe.

Already, 60% of Kiwis are happy sharing their personal data if they see more value and personalisation coming out of it. Consumer behaviours are shifting to favour shopping coming directly to us, instead of searching for it.

These findings align with the TRA’s sentiment that brands operating in the same bubble as their consumers’ interests and influences – or in social media terms, algorithm – deepens that connection and makes customers more likely to purchase an item.

“It’s not demographics, it’s not life stage, it’s not even platforms that connect us. It’s interests. Instead of trying to speak to everyone through common denominators or demographics, brands need to get in the crosshairs of their audience’s interesting interests. By using this approach, brands will forge connections with customers on their terms – and they can do it at a scale that drives real growth,” adds Ryan.

“For brands, these smaller shared spaces of connection can bridge the gap between mass and personalised marketing.”

With brand trust at a low, now is the time to be looking at building on personalised connections. ▶

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WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSSES, ANOTHER ONE OPENS

Following the announcement that Flybuys will close at the end of 2024 after nearly 30 years, other loyalty programmes are evolving.

In a cost of living crisis, now more than ever, Kiwis are looking at ways to save every cent and one way is through loyalty programmes.

Having been around since 1996, Flybuys has been one of the main players when it comes to loyalty programmes, giving Kiwis the option to earn points and use it for money off their grocery shop, their petrol or as currency to use in the Flybuys store.

But in 2024, the long standing programme announced it will be closing its doors. Its closure comes as Onecard undergoes a major rebrand, becoming Everyday Rewards.

Since its launch in February 2024, Everyday Rewards has tucked 1.7 million Kiwis under its belt.

Mark Burger, Director of Everyday Rewards New Zealand, says the rebrand comes at a time when “New Zealanders are becoming increasingly price conscious, searching for any opportunity to save money and cut costs in their daily lives”.



“In this challenging economic climate, loyalty programmes like Everyday Rewards are gaining traction as they provide tangible benefits.”

MARK BURGER
DIRECTOR, EVERYDAY REWARDS

“In this challenging economic climate, loyalty programmes like Everyday Rewards are gaining traction as they provide tangible benefits and savings on regular purchases.”

Everyday Rewards allows Kiwis to accumulate points at retail partners,

but what makes it different from its Onecard incarnation is the introduction of personalisation to the programme and its offers.

“One of the key advantages of a loyalty programme like Everyday Rewards is the ability to provide personalised rewards.

“Based on individual shopping habits and preferences, members can access tailored boost offers and promotions that are relevant to their needs. For example, if you own a dog and purchase dog food regularly, we won’t send you an offer for cat food,” says Burger.

Every \$1 spent earns one point, and when the tally reaches 2000 points, shoppers earn a \$15 voucher to use on the personalised rewards.

And it is not just local: Everyday Rewards announced in June that it will be adding a Trans-Tasman offer, giving Kiwis more opportunities to collect points and save when visiting Australia.

Loyalty NZ, the company behind the Flybuys programme, announced the closure on LinkedIn, saying the market has “changed significantly”.

“With businesses now having greater access to technology to create their own highly tailored loyalty programmes, the Flybuys model of a services and retailer alliance has run its course,” the post says.

Flybuys is set to close on December 31, 2024.

Tracksuit's Hannah Murphy says a consistent presence is key to getting consumers' attention



↓ Familiarity breeds sales, not contempt

Hannah Murphy, Senior Partner Manager at brand tracking platform Tracksuit – one of the fastest growing start-ups in the country – on why brand consideration is the secret to success.

“It’s not just about getting people to know your brand, it’s what they know about it that drives growth,” says Tracksuit’s Hannah Murphy.

The world is very noisy with an endless number of products out in the market, and the competition to grab consumer attention is cut-throat.

Recent data from Tracksuit revealed that when consumers are making a purchase, they consider two or three brands. In order to stand out and be the main brand considered, Murphy says consistency and familiarity is key.

For many, brand awareness is the first step in any marketing strategy, but this doesn’t guarantee the consumer will buy a product.

“Just think how many brands you recognise, but wouldn’t consider buying from. Our data shows most brands only move about half of aware customers to the consideration stage,” she says.

“Developing brand consistency and familiarity is key to building an emotional connection with potential customers. Once a connection is established, consumers will be more likely to opt for your brand when scanning the shelves or online stores.”

These emotional connections are key – Tracksuit’s data says reliability drives 8%, trustworthiness drives 10%,

value drives 5% and customer experience drives 4.5% of consumers from awareness to consideration.

To build those emotional connections, brands need to be showing up where their consumer is and have regular touchpoints with them, adds Murphy.

Some ways to build these connections can be through shared values, social proof in recommendation and reviews or entertaining people through humour.

Murphy looks at Pals as a successful

example, for the way the ready to drink brand has broken out from an oversaturated market.

“They did this by taking a unique approach to all other RTDs on the market. Rather than creating yet another sugary option, Pals recognised the need and opportunity to create a health-conscious and gender neutral beverage that could look trendy in hand at any social event,” explains Murphy.

“This made Pals stand out in a crowded market and develop a consistent pastel-coloured brand identity that is now favoured by thousands of Kiwis. While the RTD market has seen new entrants

like Kirin Hyoketsu make waves, Pals has established a position as a market leader by prioritising building a distinctive brand.”

Even within the FMCG landscape, Murphy says brands need to secure that shelf space, have distinctive branding and be where the customers are by catching their attention and emotions.

“Once a connection is established, consumers will be more likely to opt for your brand when scanning the shelves or online stores.” ▶





DRIVE GROWTH BY BEING MEANINGFULLY DIFFERENT TO MORE PEOPLE



Kantar's Blueprint for Brand Growth uses 6.5 billion data points to rewrite the marketing playbook.

When you have the world's largest database of how consumers think, feel and act, what do you do? Rewrite the marketing playbook, of course.

That's what Kantar has been doing: combining the 5.4 billion data points from the global BrandZ database of consumer attitudes to brands with the 1.1 billion data points from its Worldpanel of consumer behaviour.

In total, the analysis covers 540 categories across 54 markets and spans 10 years, providing a vital longitudinal view.

The analysis focused on one question: 'How can marketers better drive growth?'

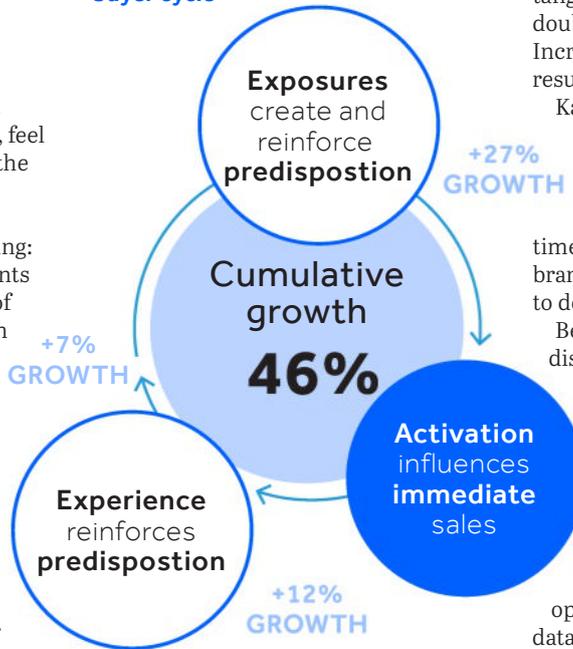
The answer is simple, yet full of nuance. Kantar's Blueprint for Brand Growth proves brands grow by being meaningfully different to more people. Brands that are meaningfully different to more people command five times the market penetration today, and have a real advantage in driving penetration growth over the next two years.

The 'more people' part is clear, but what does 'meaningfully different' mean? A brand should meet needs that matter, that's meaningfulness. Difference is where brands create perceptions of relative competitive difference in a category, whether that's actual functional differentiation, distinctive brand assets or being seen to be unique and setting trends.

Meaningful Difference is not only a predictor of penetration. Brands with high Meaningful Difference are so attractive people will pay up to twice as much for them.

To achieve Meaningful Difference, Kantar recommends marketers:

Activation is an essential point in the buyer cycle



BEING MORE PRESENT converts **predisposition** and captures **extra sales**

- Predispose More People
- Be More Present and
- Find New Space.

Brands can **Predispose More People**, both to buy more and, crucially, pay more. Kantar knows creativity, advertising and experience builds meaningful difference as well as mental availability for brands – in other words, predisposition. When optimally executed, this drives 9x higher volume share, 2x higher average selling price, and a 4x likelihood of growing share in future.

Secondly, **Be More Present**: optimising distribution, customer journey, range, pack, pricing and promotions wins 7x more buyers vs those present in only half of buying occasions.

Finally, **Find New Space**: innovation focused on identifying incremental

spaces (motivations, occasions, tangential categories and services) doubles a brand's chance of growth. Increasing usage occasions by 10% results in revenue growth of 17%.

Kantar's research and experience proves three behaviours are vital to effective execution: being **Consistent** is about maintaining a consistent brand positioning over time – often neglected in a world where brand stakeholders are under pressure to demonstrate value.

Being **Connected** is about using distinctive assets to ensure your brand is recognised, as well as ensuring the exposures to and experiences of your brand are joined up and synergistic.

And being **Optimised** is a culture of curiosity and a 'test and learn' mindset that helps organisations identify opportunities and make objective, data-led decisions – so you can spend money on the things that really matter.

This might sound straightforward, but the nuance is in the application. For example, a small brand should probably focus on growing salience and distribution for a hero product, while a larger brand may need to concentrate on expanding its range, finding new uses for existing offers, or new territories to expand into.

The Blueprint builds on and enhances existing industry research on how brands grow. Importantly, it proves while market penetration growth is crucial, a sole focus on it isn't enough to drive sustainable brand, revenue and margin growth. Kantar's analysis underscores the role of differentiation in forging strong mental connections between consumers and brands as well as defending pricing power.

Kantar New Zealand is helping clients apply these principles to brands of all sizes in all categories, so they can plot a path to profitable growth. 📈

How do you prioritise
your marketing
efforts?

Discover Kantar's

BLUEPRINT
FOR BRAND
GROWTH

...and how you can operationalise it

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KANTAR





Track suits you, sir

KFC is taking its new marketing strategy
where the fans are: on the rails.

advertising

26

Let's take a look
at the Colonel's
viral train
campaign.



THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

DDB Group Aotearoa is part of a large global network, yet aims to behave like a small agency – priding itself on being flexible and agile. We sat down with four of its chiefs to hear more about this big-little winning formula.

WORDS BERNADETTE BASAGRE

In a conference room overlooking the Auckland city skyline sit four of the top dogs at DDB Group Aotearoa, one of the country's most highly acclaimed advertising agencies.

You'd think it might be intimidating. But Group CEO Priya Patel, Chief Strategy Officer Rupert Price, Group Chief Creative Officer Matty Burton, and Chief Creative Officer Gary Steele are a fun bunch.

All are expats and have been in New Zealand for five to 10 years. Only Patel, who was MD at DDB Australia from 2018-21, had worked elsewhere in the company's global network before. So what brought them here?

Their answers share a common thread: the creative work being produced in Aotearoa was enviable for a small and geographically isolated



PRIYA PATEL

country. Our reputation for No. 8 wire ingenuity might result in a few rough edges, but that was also a draw.

"The scrappiness of New Zealand means loads of innovation, smarts and proactivity and it makes the work here really special and different," says Patel.

"I've been watching New Zealand since the beginning of my career and

the work created was always exciting. I don't know what it was, but it was always just pushing boundaries a little bit more," adds Steele.

All four have extensive experience across a number of global agencies, but work emerging from the Land of the Long White Cloud kept catching their eyes.

The landscape – in terms of geographical isolation, population size and the marketing scene – has led DDB Group Aotearoa to evolve in a different way to its global counterparts, growing different companies to embrace different specialisms. Its Mango arm, for example, connects to PR and social media influencers, while Track is data and CRM focused, Tribal is all things digital innovation and Takitoru brings a te ao Māori cultural lens.

“If that sounds like a lot, it’s because we are not just one thing. On the one hand we create lateral solutions for business problems and, on the other, we open up completely new possibilities using both creativity and technology,” Burton explains.

Price says that though all aspects of the business fall under a traditional global advertising group, DDB Group Aotearoa’s fastest growing parts are the non-traditional branches that accelerate innovation.

This set-up fuels the entire group, the four agree. The limit to their creativity is endless, they say, because each arm can feed the need of other parts. For example, if the team at Mango has one idea that calls for a digital solution, they can look to Tribal for help.

“As a business we’re far less reliant on traditional media than people might think, it’s just traditional media is more visible – so that’s what people see and what people assume we do,” adds Price.

The company doesn’t have a set ‘house style’ – instead, it aims to build the right solution for the client’s problem. Steele says some of the most “DDB-esque” work combines the group’s entire expertise.

He points to the Samsung iTest campaign, which received the prestigious Black Pencil award in 2022 – only the second time it had been won in New Zealand.

SAMSUNG ON IPHONE

Steele highlights that Samsung has a perennial problem: how to get people to switch from their much-loved Apple phones. While many ad campaigns worldwide aimed at emotional connection, DDB Group Aotearoa made use of Tribal’s tech capabilities.

Together the teams came up with a web app called Samsung iTest, which allowed iPhone users to try out Samsung’s features from the comfort of their own phone.

“We asked the question, ‘How can we get people to experience Samsung on an iPhone?’ And we had a specialist team who just went, ‘Yeah, sure, we can build that,’” says Steele.

“It makes it much easier to take a step back and go, ‘Let’s look at the whole problem, not just part of the problem,’ and begin finding solutions and ideas from anywhere,” says Price.

Just this year, DDB Group Aotearoa was the brains behind McDonald’s



Clockwise from opposite: Correct the internet, Samsung on iPhone and Driver Tax for McDonald’s are a few of DDB Aotearoa’s recent hits



“As a business we’re far less reliant on traditional media than people might think, it’s just traditional media is more visible – so that’s what people see and what people assume we do”

RUPERT PRICE

Driver Tax campaign, a body of work that saw it combine the minds of its branches to get the campaign running across traditional media, such as TV, radio and outdoor but also in-app and instore.

“We have different front doors and if a client like McDonald’s wants it, we can pull that all capability together to provide one integrated response,” says Patel. “It very much depends on the client needs and asks, then we can tailor it for what they’re after.”

This way of working – and the impressive results – is what makes their global counterparts jealous of the small yet mighty New Zealand office. The world has been envious for almost 60 years: DDB Group Aotearoa was founded in 1966.

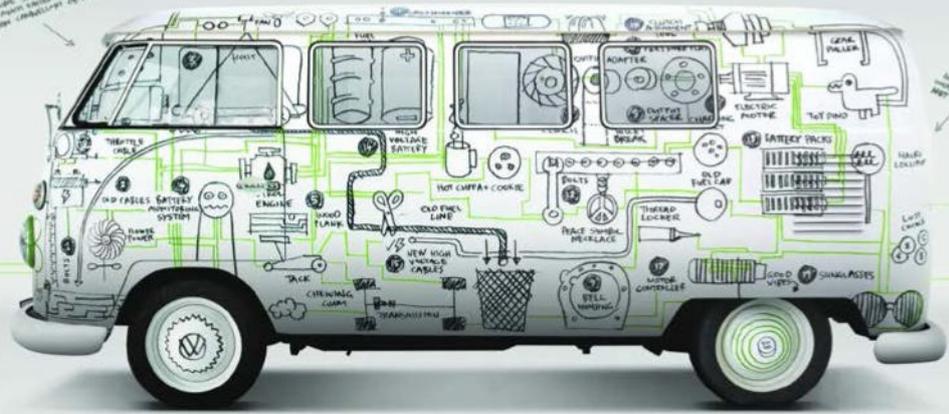
For decades, DDB Worldwide has proven its approach works. So when its people are left to be innovative and experimental, they like to keep in mind their heritage while looking ahead at what is to come: pushing the boundaries, yet always remembering their “successful and proven past, mindset and methodology of building great brands”. ▶

VW Kombi owners love their vans, so DDB Aotearoa devised the 'Greenprint' to help them work towards an electric future

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WHEN DRIVING TO THE STORE, DON'T FORGET TO BRING YOUR OWN RECHARGEABLE BATTERY.

VOLKSWAGEN
THE GREENPRINT
 HOW TO ELECTRIFY YOUR KOMBI IN 20 RELATIVELY EASY STEPS



1. THE BEST OF THE BEST: THE ORIGINAL VOLKSWAGEN KAMBI VAN. THE BEST OF THE BEST: THE ORIGINAL VOLKSWAGEN KAMBI VAN. THE BEST OF THE BEST: THE ORIGINAL VOLKSWAGEN KAMBI VAN.
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SOMETIMES THE BEST NEW CAR FOR THE PLANET IS AN OLD ONE. THAT'S WHY VOLKSWAGEN CREATED THE GREENPRINT - AN OPEN SOURCE SET OF PLANS TO TURN THE CLASSIC KOMBI INTO AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE, AVAILABLE TO ALL.

Patel adds that the “different front doors” can lead to new ways of arriving at a solution to any given problem.

“Ultimately, we’re looking after brands and trying to solve problems – we are the guardians of these brands and their ongoing brand platforms,” she says.

And, says Price, along with tradition, “we need experimentation and innovation. I think one without the other just knocks you out of balance and you’ve got to have both.”

Being part of a worldwide group works for the New Zealand office, says Burton, allowing the team to respond with the agility and speed of a much smaller outfit, yet have strong international backing behind their creative ideas.

“We may seem big in NZ, but we try to act small. We’re fast, we’re scrappy and we make things,” adds Burton.

“The scale we do have enables us to broaden what we can deliver, broaden our skill sets and broaden our mindsets when creating creative solutions. We are not experts at everything, however we do



GARY STEELE

focus on being experts at creative collaboration.”

The local market structures are different to the rest of the world, says Patel. It’s smaller and “flatter”, often with no gap between the C-suite and lower level employees.

Patel says the work here is “integrated by nature”, and because the media landscape is different, you can’t bombard people here with constant ads to get brand awareness, you have to “attract and draw them in”.

“And so yes, I feel like the ideas are smarter. I feel like there’s more humour and playfulness in the work here. And there’s a lot more diversity built in.”

FLEXIBLE, TAILORED

DDB Group Aotearoa’s mission is to lead the DDB network globally and set the standards for great work. But it also needs to meet this market and create work tailored for people here. That requires a more flexible approach than is asked of their siblings in Paris, London or New York, and the team reject the idea that large agencies are slow or ‘gifted’ clients by the network.

Patel says all work is won and held on a local level and DDB Group Aotearoa has to work hard to continually retain its clients.

“We live and breathe what New Zealand does. It is a big agency locally, but we behave like a small agency in our close partnership with clients,” adds Steele.

Another ingredient in DDB Group Aotearoa’s recipe for success is the



MATTY BURTON

competitive environment that is Kiwi Adland. The four say the reason their agency can reach such heights is – in part at least – thanks to the wider industry, which clearly punches above its weight.

A landscape like this is a breeding ground for ideas and results in incredible and creative work, they say.

“The business here is just so much fun. The industry is so much fun, it’s so much more experimental, it’s so much braver and it’s so much more forgiving if you make a mistake,” says Price.

“And for that reason, it’s a fertile bed for creativity and that is why the mindset here is so positive.”

At the time of writing, DDB Group Aotearoa had just nabbed another Agency of the Year award – this time at the global Caples Awards, and its fourth such accolade in 2024 alone.

There is no stopping this small-yet-large multi-armed beast, which will continue mixing innovation and tradition to push the boundaries of creativity even further. ☺



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NOT MUCH CHANGE, BUT A LOT OF DIFFERENCES

Each quarter, The Research Agency asks a nationally representative sample of Kiwis which ads are resonating with them. We ask them a simple, unprompted question: "What is your favourite ad on TV at the moment?" For the first time, Australians were also surveyed.

The latest results are in and New Zealanders have spoken. What's the secret to securing a spot in the top five? Resident New Zealand ad expert Carl Sarney, Head of Strategy at TRA, weighs in on what makes the top ads so memorable.

A WINNING FORMULA

In survey after survey, one of the stand-out favourite ad components uniting the top favourite ads is creative commitment. Creative commitment is an effectiveness strategy identified by James Hurman and Peter Field. It outlines three crucial commitments brands can make to embed their campaigns more deeply in the public's consciousness.

The first crucial commitment is sticking to a recognisable creative platform over the long term – such as characters or consistent use of brand codes.

The second is media spend: brands need a sufficient share of voice in their category. This doesn't necessarily mean having the biggest media investment – it's about having a share of media spend vs competitors that is proportionate to your market share.

The third is executing the recognisable platform across all touchpoints. The top favourite advertisers on TV are extending their famous characters and taglines across cinema, out-of-home, print, radio, and digital, as well as through owned touchpoints like websites, stores and packaging.

One story, spread as big as you can afford to spread it, is creating highly effective, enduring icons that are loved by the public. It's good news for everybody – campaigns loved by the public tend to drive results that are loved by the C-suite too.

1. ASB – BEN AND AMY [NO CHANGE IN RANKINGS]

ASB stays in first place with its 'stay one step ahead of scammers' ad, keeping Ben and Amy ahead of rival ANZ this quarter.

While it's not the only ASB spot to get mentioned in this ranking, it is the most recent. At a time when fraud and scam

cases are making headlines, watching these much-loved characters go about avoiding scams has clearly struck a chord with New Zealanders.

ASB exemplifies strong creative commitment. The ads continue to use these characters to illustrate how ASB is helping everyone stay one step ahead – from product demonstrations to sports sponsorships and now their Scam Hub initiative. All these messages are unmistakably ASB and they're landing. The public is loving it.



2. ANZ – WE DO HOW [NO CHANGE IN RANKINGS]

ANZ has retained its No. 2 spot with another strong example of creative commitment. The latest in the Sharma family series sees a milestone. As viewers watch the family celebrate Claire's two years in business, ANZ illustrates how it can help with the HOWTWO Small Business Support programme.

Like ASB, this latest ad from ANZ isn't the only one in the series to get mentioned. In the battle of the banks, there is a clear winner: creative effectiveness. Commitment to a singular brand platform across messaging and touchpoints is keeping both brands in the minds of New Zealanders, over and over again.

3. TURNERS – TINA FROM TURNERS [NO CHANGE IN RANKINGS]

Tina from Turners is fast becoming a loved personality in her own right. She's described as hilarious, vibrant, positive and

charming. There's no mistaking who the ads are for – Turners gets full credit. Not only is Tina's name humorously linked to the brand, but Tina wears a staff uniform and every story masterfully focuses on her love of selling cars.

Sean Wiggans, General Manager of Marketing at Turners, points to a key effectiveness principle behind the campaign: focusing on one message. In 2022, the campaign picked up the Marketing Supreme Award at the Marketing Awards and was awarded two gold Effies. Since then, results have continued to accelerate, with the campaign delivering another record profit at the end of March 2023.

4. PAK'NSAVE – STICKMAN [NO CHANGE IN RANKINGS]

Stickman has been the face of Pak'nSave for 15 years and is still making Kiwis laugh. This campaign is a masterclass in long-term brand building – the character, voice and yellow and black world are all instantly recognisable, distinctive assets.

Stickman is a consistent reminder of Pak'nSave's brand positioning. Everything the brand does, including its no-frills advertising style, is to save customers money. This consistency and focus is what has helped Pak'nSave fend off fierce competition.

5. GENESIS – GEORGE AND HER FAMILY [+3 PLACES]

While some favourite ads come and go, others stay in the rankings for the long haul. Genesis is yet another high-performing brand that has adopted a long-term creative commitment strategy and won. Genesis has jumped three places in the rankings since December.

Genesis has built an enduring platform to talk to multiple proof points. Kiwis are getting to know more about the family with every execution.

SPECIAL MENTION: 6. NEW WORLD – FIND YOUR WONDERFUL [NEW TO LIST]

A new entrant to the favourite ads rankings. New World has been running brand ads for some time, but its latest effort has finally landed in the top 10.

What's unusual about this is the storytelling. While most favourite ads focus on one story, New World has managed three mini-stories all within one ad.

Supermarket brands have the challenge of appealing to a very broad audience. In this example, New World has managed to represent a young couple, a father and daughter and an older lady with her carer. It's a smart way of signalling that everyone shops at New World.

A particularly clever element about how the story comes together is when the emotional high-point, involving an 'I love you' sausage roll, takes place outside a store with a great big New World logo in the background. When ads telling stories about food could easily be mistaken for other brands, incorporating brand codes into the emotional high point will likely help New World stick in people's memory. 🍷



New World tells three mini-stories in one advert



KFC's 'Look on the Fried Side of Life' is a winner

MEANWHILE IN AUSTRALIA...

While New Zealand and Australia share many cultural references, one thing they don't share is what they look for in an ad.

This year, Aussies were asked what their favourite adverts are, and the results on either side of the Tasman reveal some fascinating insights, says TRA.

Where Kiwis prefer ongoing stories about familiar characters – ASB's Ben and Amy, ANZ's Sharma family – Australians like those focused on branded storytelling and situational humour, as in Cadbury's generosity theme and Toyota's take on a messy divorce.

In Australia, ads resonated because the brand was strongly linked to the creative idea, says TRA Australia's Alex Forrester.

"KFC's 'Look on the Fried Side of Life' is a textbook example, a perfect combination of great human insight and brand truth... that sometimes we do feel defeated by life, and KFC is good because it's bad."

The results suggest New Zealand ads seem to be happier about discussing the idea of "Kiwi-ness", but an equivalent sense of "Aussie-ness" only features indirectly, via sport or the weather.

It could reflect the pride New Zealanders feel about being a Kiwi, says TRA, compared to a sense of unease felt by Australians around being Aussie.



Aldi supermarket came in at No. 3

THE AUSSIE TOP 5

1. KFC 'Look on the Fried Side of Life'
2. Telstra 'This is Footy Country'
3. Aldi 'Shop Aldi First'
4. Cadbury 'There's a Glass & a Half in Everyone'
5. Woolworths 'Packed With Pride'

Wonky thinks out of the box



The fruit and veges Wonky Box saves from the scrapheap don't fit conventional standards of the fast-moving consumer goods market – they're quirky, unusual and small. So is the campaign to promote them.

WORDS BERNADETTE BASAGRE

Wonky Box is on a mission: to fight food waste and support growers. Its business model is deceptively simple – selecting odd-looking produce about to end up in the waste stream and selling it to consumers who value taste over beauty.

Wonky Box has only been around for two years but its TV commercials in early 2024 caught the eyes of consumers as well as research and data insights agency Kantar.

The ads left viewers with a “great impression of the brand”, earning Wonky Box Kantar's February Ad Impact award.

The brand fits within the FMCG market, competing against New Zealand's biggest and most profitable brands, among them Woolworths and Pak'nSave.

But the playing field isn't level when you're the little guy, so Wonky Box has to work harder than most to keep up with the big guns.

In order to stand out, the brand took a different approach to most others in the industry, says Marketing Lead Claire Belford.

“What Wonky Box does differently is probably that in our marketing, we're very much about shining the light on the food system in New Zealand and giving consumers more insight into the journey that produce goes through to make it to their doors,” she says.

“Our marketing gives them the tools to help them think a little bit differently, make informed choices about where they're buying their produce from, and flow on effects to where they shop for their food in general.”

Already, Wonky Box has the advantage of offering something different: imperfect-looking fruit and vegetables from local growers.

That's a USP their large competitors don't have, Belford points out.

Wonky Box is making the most of its products' back story, because your average supermarket shopper can only take produce at face value.





“We’re all about turning our limitations into opportunities. It’s about picking our moments.”

CLAIRE BELFORD *WONKY BOX MARKETING LEAD*

“Supermarkets have so many suppliers, so many different brands, so how do they pick the stories to tell? It would definitely be a bit trickier. We’re quite lucky in that way that it’s a bit simpler for us,” she says.

Even the fact that customers don’t know what will be in their the box until two days before it arrives – which might be challenging from a marketing point of view – is framed as a fun surprise.

The award-winning TV commercial mixed social impact with sustainability messaging, which, in other hands, could have been a recipe for doom and gloom. But when tackling this campaign, production company ODV and Wonky Box leaned into quirkiness and positivity, framing it as a “little bit wonky” to share their mission.

“We really discussed humour and how that has been found to be one of the biggest enhancers of cutting through and making people remember your brand. So, it was really: how can we combine purpose and playfulness? That’s where the magic happens, when you can do both and talk about a serious subject matter in an accessible and engaging way,” Belford explains.

“We created this sort of Wes Anderson-style world out of cardboard for that TV ad. We didn’t even leave our warehouse. We had the cardboard tree, and we used our Wonky Boxes to build a house, and then those same Wonky Boxes were put back on the production line and sent out to customers that week.”

Though it may not be a flashy ad, it got the job done in the most Wonky Box way ever. And, says Belford, this is only the beginning.

Wonky Box, which has a budget half the size of the bigger players, is dabbling with new channels like social media and trying different approaches.

“In the FMCG world, there’s obviously very plush budgets out there for people to work with, and we operate a bit of a leaner machine. We’re all about turning our limitations into opportunities. It’s about picking our moments.”

Belford adds Wonky Box decided to “gather our pennies” to push a TV commercial at the beginning of the year because it coincided with the launch into the South Island, and the time of year when the market would be responsive as people returned from summer holidays.

But as a subscription service, selling one box isn’t enough – the challenge is how to keep customers coming back week after week and month after month.

“The fun areas for us now are playing with that customer retention. What are some fun and funky ways we can keep these customers engaged, or the people that we’ve made warm to our brand. How can we continue to leverage that and keep them interested?”

It’s only been around for two years, but Wonky Box has built momentum in the fiercely competitive FMCG arena by making its marketing strategy just like its produce: a little bit wonky. 🍷

Behind the scenes: Gravy Train puts KFC back on track

The timetable was tight, the package needed to deliver. KFC and Special PR's Super Rugby train team-up was just the ticket for Blues fans.

WORDS BERNADETTE BASAGRE



“It was almost like a sweet spot to go to Super Rugby. The brand has had a partnership for over 10 years – this sponsorship is really important to us.”

LEANNE TOO
KFC MARKETING DIRECTOR

Five weeks. That’s how long it took KFC and Special PR to come up with ‘The Gravy Train’. It’s a world-first for KFC: a wrapped locomotive that not only delivered fans to the Blues game, but fed them hot chicken on the way.

Leanne Too, KFC Marketing Director, says getting on board with the train was part of the company’s new strategy.

KFC’s fresh thinking challenges the traditional mix of digital, out-of-home and TV – aiming to show up in places where Kiwis who love the brand gather.

The Gravy Train, created by Special PR, focused on giving fans an “incredible experience”. The aim of the brief? KFC wanted to shift its metrics on cultural relevance, appeal to a newer audience and deepen its association with the groups it sponsors.

“If you look around the rest of the world, many brands execute big flashy PR stunts like that. There are very few brands in New Zealand that have the courage or the resources to do it, and KFC is one of them,” says Kelly Grindle, Special PR General Manager.

But it is not just about getting in front of pre-existing fans – it’s also about further driving brand consideration.

And what better place than on the way to a Blues game at their home stadium, Auckland’s Eden Park?

“It was almost like a sweet spot to go to Super Rugby. The brand has had a partnership for over 10 years – this sponsorship is really important to us. Just owning that and bringing that fandom experience to the game was



The Gravy Train’s ‘concluctor’ Carlos Spencer and his trusty crew



where we thought we could be,” says Too. “New Zealand’s anchored in sports – Super Rugby and cricket – and those are the two key areas that we really want to put the investment behind. Culturally, it’s grassroots, but we also just want to make sure it’s top of mind in support.”

Putting on events in real life is important for KFC, says Too.

“Driving that experience into in-ground activation and just to encourage fans to enjoy it. Particularly when the shift is all towards digital now. We still want them to go back into the game.”

Grindle says, with KFC’s mixed marketing strategy to meet both digital and traditional channels, Special PR needed to engineer experiences that ▶

New Zealand is anchored in sports – so this partnership between KFC and Super Rugby hit a marketing “sweet spot”



would translate to social and be shareable.

“It is really how all three of those work together: designing an experience that rewards the fans, amplifying that through social as a key channel, and then supporting that with heavy lifting through media relations. If you can tie all three of those threads together, you’re onto a winning formula,” he adds.

Too says The Gravy Train has been KFC’s top-performing campaign to date. It achieved cut-through, broke away from the clutter and enhanced meaning for the brand and its community.

“The Gravy Train really brought it back to community and brought meaningfulness back to the game,” she adds.

Not only did the campaign bring the good vibes, it was picked up internationally – with 350 pieces of coverage on outlets such as Fox in the US and Yahoo – reaching 2 billion people. One piece of influencer content alone accumulated more than 4.1 million views.

“It’s definitely shifted the mark in terms of where the brand should be going and owning within the New Zealand market, if not on global headlines, which is super exciting,” adds Grindle.

Too revealed the company’s brand health statistics with YouGov are back on track since The Gravy Train left the station. KFC was struggling with consideration scores – following the campaign, this metric is now driving its brand health.

“We measure our brand around the relevancy, the modernness, and the sponsorship, awareness of the sponsorship. So, all those metrics shot it out of the park,” adds Too.

“We’ve just literally changed the brand over the last six months, in terms of the positive sentiment, the good vibes and hitting the sweet spot around the cultural relevance that we wanted to do.”

The campaign saw Special PR and KFC work alongside more partners than usual, including Auckland One Rail, Britomart, Eden Park, the Blues, KiwiRail and MediaWorks.

Grindle says The Gravy Train also supported other stakeholders, encouraging Kiwis – who are usually reluctant to leave their cars behind, even when gridlock awaits – to take public transport to events.

The success of this campaign is only the start, says Too, as Special PR and KFC plan more work together.

“It’s just keeping up the momentum because it’s working for us at every level.”

The campaign in numbers



Two train services – on April 5 and May 11

+



500 boxes of chicken

+

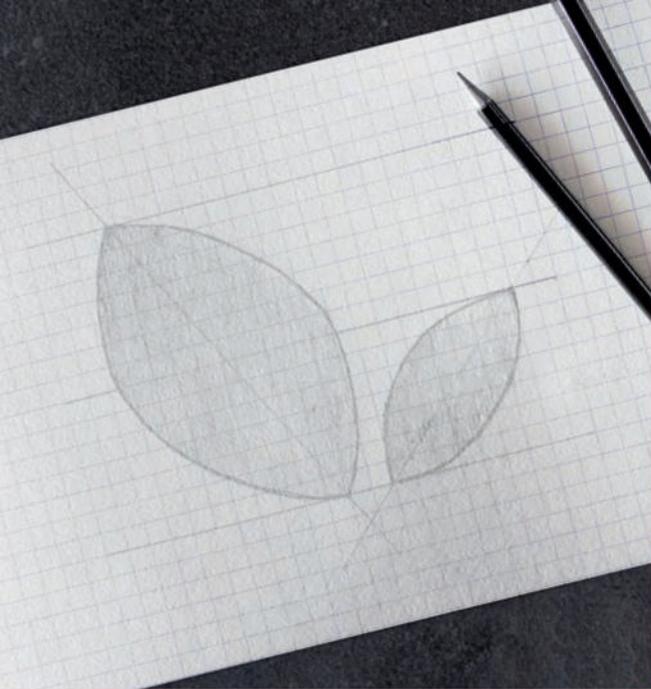


One ‘concluctor’ (Blues legend Carlos Spencer)

=



Good days for the Blues against the Force (50-3) and against the Hurricanes (31-27)



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Farm friends

The way brands advertise to rural Kiwis is evolving.

marketing

58

Now regional audiences are wired up with improved internet and mobile coverage, more marketing channels are available.



THE NEXT BIG THING

Expert advice on how to tame the data tsunami and catch the new wave of decision-making metrics.

WORDS PENNY MURRAY



DATA PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM



Rob Hutchinson and Skipper Lomiwes, TVNZ

A lack of structure, the absence of a unifying ID (for example, email) and a lack of consent can severely hinder data collection and the quality of insights generated from it. Consent should be central in all data collection efforts, because ultimately you are limited by the permissions your customers have given you to use their data.



Clara Ng, Reach

Making assumptions when the data does not clearly and directly support a major business decision, or that the data collection method is not well designed.

My biggest pet peeve is when big business decisions are made based on “a sample of one” – interpreting insights based on the opinion of a very small sample of people.

We used to think it was simple: advertise your brand, wait for the phone to ring.

If it didn't, you just needed to tell your story better, to a bigger audience. “Spray and pay” – spend more money and more people will buy it.

Sure, there were focus groups, consumer panels and (if you were really high-tech) test subjects wired up to EEG caps, but when the internet came along the data collection began in earnest.

It became possible to measure web traffic, click-through and bounce rates. Cookies told us what people were searching for and made it even easier to gather information.

Data, data, everywhere. An ocean of it, a tsunami.

“Looking at data at its most raw form can be overwhelming,” says Clara Ng, Client Solutions Lead – Data, at Reach Marketing Agency. She acknowledges it's easy to “fall into the rabbit hole of just looking at data and getting totally lost in it”.

TIDY UP FIRST

So how do you gain insight from the information you collect? Step one is taming your dataset, says Kevin Doyle, Regional Vice President – Data Cloud & AI (ANZ & ASEAN) at Salesforce.

“The nature of data is that it is imperfect, especially when you first begin working with it,” he says.

“You run across missing and incorrect values, spelling variations and other inconsistencies, outliers that are correct or not, duplicate and redundant information, and other issues that can obscure the operational reality of what your data represents.

“Thorough data preparation can help ensure it's accurate, complete, relevant and sufficiently represents your real-world operations in terms of volume and diversity, allowing marketers to remedy these faults in their data to get the best version of the truth.

“The result is more relevant insights and higher-quality models. Ultimately, context is king when it comes to data, and a lack of context is a massive barrier to extracting meaningful insights.”

Ng likes to “start from the back of the process – from a macro level (asking what do I want to achieve/gain from it) – and work backwards to ensure I have

the right datasets. That way, I will be able to identify the insight that I need to collect, or purchase, to support strategic plans that make me stand out from the crowd.”

THE RIGHT DATASET, NOW WHAT?

Well-organised data is a good start, but converting raw numbers into insight that will give you a competitive edge is the real trick.

“Look for correlations between actions and outcomes to understand what has driven those raw numbers,” says Sorrel Osborne, GumGum's Head of Media, APAC.

“The strongest marketers will run nearly continuous study programmes to trace significant changes in those numbers to their specific marketing efforts. They effectively overlay the raw numbers with insights on improved brand awareness, consideration and/or purchase intent, while considering any seasonality or extraordinary circumstances that may have skewed results.”

Kevin Doyle of Salesforce says to do this, tech is your friend.

“With more data than ever before, much of it still in silos across a business, marketers must look to technology to help get it in shape.”

TVNZ's Robert Hutchinson, GM Digital & Data, and Skipper Lomiwes, Programmatic & Data Activation Manager, agree.

“Marketers need to invest in platforms that unify their data and enable decision makers to find and organise information quickly,” they advise. “Smaller organisations may be able to get away with spreadsheets, but technology is a great accelerator, not only for insights but also for activation and measurement.”

Meanwhile, Kantar says it has just the tool marketers need.

Its Blueprint for Brand Growth, launched in April, is designed to show businesses where they need to focus in order to flourish. It draws on a colossal amount of data collected over 25 years.

“This is the world's largest insights company in every market that matters,” says David Thomas, Chief Commercial Officer at NZ's Insights Division, when we sit down for a chat at Kantar's Auckland office. “Other people either tend to have behavioural (shopper actual purchase) data or attitudinal (research driven) data,” says Thomas.

“Ultimately, context is king when it comes to data, and a lack of context is a massive barrier to extracting meaningful insights.”

KEVIN DOYLE SALESFORCE

“We have both at a massive scale, so billions of data points across those two, 6.5 billion in fact.”

But those datasets “aren’t designed to talk to each other” and working out how to get them communicating took Kantar more than a year.

The resulting blueprint is a breakthrough.

“It means we can map what people say they’re thinking about doing to what they actually do,” says Thomas.

“We can use that data to validate what we are saying about how marketing works. We can say, ‘Oh, you should be doing x, and here’s the proof and you’ll grow four times as fast if you do x.’”

In a nutshell, he says: “The blueprint is the overarching framework that allows you to turn data into insights, into actions – with confidence.”

THE COOKIES ARE CRUMBLING

The slow demise of cookies has transferred the focus from third-party to first-party data. It’s required a mind shift and sometimes a costly switch of platform. Lack of resource can be a barrier.

“The biggest resistance to investing in data is the perception it’s a ‘nice to have’, very complicated/complex, or that it will cost an arm and a leg,” says Ng.

“Most marketers would love to be more data driven, but data platforms can be expensive, can require complex development and are constantly changing,” say Hutchinson and Lomiwes. “For example, data management platforms were widely adopted by many publishers in the past to unify cookies/device IDs and other such identifiers.

“But within five years, these platforms are almost redundant because of the shift to first-party data and customer data platforms.”

Did the industry rely too much on cookies?

Hutchinson and Lomiwes sum up the general gist of responses to this question: “Yes. But you can understand why: they’re cheap, easy to scale, and provide some measure (albeit a flawed one) of advertising performance.

“It was an easy way for marketers to justify spend, which ultimately influenced where budgets were spent.

“Conversations about data have become more sophisticated with the impending deprecation of cookies,” they say. “This is healthy for the industry: to truly understand what, how and why they’re buying certain inventory instead of relying on cookie-powered metrics that are unreliable and flimsy at best.”

In some ways, says Salesforce’s Doyle, life without cookies is a reminder that the job is the same as it ever was.

“Since I took Marketing 101 at university over two decades ago, the goal of the CMO hasn’t changed: to deliver the right message to the right person at the right time to help influence a decision.”

...Only now it can be done more effectively.

“By moving to a first-party data approach, primarily using data collected directly from your own audience, marketers can better understand and engage with their customers effectively,” says Doyle.

“It allows you to retarget and nurture your audience based on their preferences and behaviours, leading to improved marketing and decision-making processes.

“Marketers now can get a much richer, more accurate picture of customer behaviour, that also respects customer privacy while delivering better experiences. It’s a win-win.”

This realisation could be why, as Ng notes, “marketers have been quick to adapt, adopting first-party data to unravel invaluable audience insights” to support targeting and drive growth. ▶



Sorrel Osborne, GumGum

Inherent bias in the way you collect or interpret data will naturally skew the results. If you use that [skewed] data for future targeting/planning insights, you may end up doubling down on those biases.

Not all data is created equally or is, in fact, relevant to the insights looking to be gleaned, and marketers should be aware that more data doesn’t necessarily equal better results.

Knowing how to parse data sets for relevancy, accuracy and applicability is crucial to achieving the best outcomes.



Kevin Doyle, Salesforce

Most marketers are hamstringing by only using data created and managed by their own business area, when a wealth of valuable data is sitting across all levels of the organisation, including sales, service, and commerce.

The most important first step is to start breaking down these organisational and enterprise technology silos. By creating a seamless, unified data experience, marketers and businesses will be able to realise the true power of AI and drive a full, single view of customer. Unlocking this trapped data has the power to drive a rapid, positive impact.



David Thomas, Kantar

Working without data is making assumptions, using untried hypotheses, using sample of one-type analysis: I heard something at a barbecue. In the absence of data, you are at risk of going down some blind alleys and being susceptible to the loudest voice in the room.



Phil Townend, Magnetic

We're still stuck on share of voice as a proxy for share of mind, and we're still stuck on viewability as a proxy for something actually being seen.

Share of marketing spend supposedly equals share of voice, but not all marketing spend or not every impression is born equal.

I could be spending a million dollars and my competitor could be spending a million dollars and he could be buying higher attention impressions and I could be buying lower attention impressions. He might have double the share of mind that I've got, even though share of voice tells us that our spend is the same, therefore our market share will be the same.

So I think the pitfalls are that we remain so attached to what we've always built everything on top of, that we are mired in an inertia where we can't move forward.

“With the next wave of predictive analytics, you can upload a video into the cloud, put your target audience, and it will show you on a scene-by-scene basis exactly the emotions that video would make someone feel.”

PHIL TOWNEND *MAGNETIC*

There's clear agreement that the old methods of measuring are no longer relevant.

“The old attribution modelling, which requires cookies, that's last decade stuff really,” says Thomas.

Phil Townend, CEO of data solution provider Magnetic, puts it more bluntly: “The demise of the cookie means that attribution modelling as it stands today is dead in the water.

“If you think about the way media is planned, we're still using reach. We're using digital metrics like view-through rate and completion rate to work out how effective a different channel or ad format is.

“Should I put more into channel A or B? Oh, look, I've got more of a dwell time on this ad on channel A than channel B. Let's put more into channel A.”

But digital metrics can give a false impression.

“I'm looking at the screen and an ad pops up and the counter starts ticking: 1, 2, 3, 4.. But I can be doing this [looks away] or I can be doing this [looks at phone]. Or I can be looking at the newsfeed but not at the ad. A lot of the signals currently being used to quantify performance of ads aren't correlated with real attention.”

Townend says the industry needs to move beyond these proxy measures. The good news is, he says, “the data now exists to move beyond looking at gross reach to net attentive reach, and it will take into consideration all the different attention of different channels”.

The next wave of data signals is here, he says, but the question is how we systemise them. He says contextual targeting is the way forward – and the data exists for marketers to do it.

“How do we use these new signals – like attention, emotion,

psychographics, contexts – and put them into an engine that allows us to start making decisions based on those proper data points?”

Context is crucial, Townend says. Contextual targeting moves beyond the “who's looking” of cookies, to “what are they looking at”, and stitching together rows of data attached to the email addresses of real people.

“This is why advertisers are investing heavily in customer data platforms and why they're also investing in programmes where they can – at a really basic level – run competitions or incentives for people to give them their email address,” Townend notes.

“Once they've got your email address in the CDP, you have a first-party data row. But how do you then work out what their age is, or who they are? How do you add extra columns of information against that line item?”

CATCH THE NEXT WAVE

Technology that can stitch an email address to other information and provide a fuller picture of that person will be key.

The next step is understanding their interests, so you can target them contextually rather than just demographically.

“So it's moving from reach to attention, and moving from demographics to psychographics and context, and moving from being overly salesy to more emotive,” says Townend.

Let's come back to Kantar's Blueprint for Brand Growth for a minute. It instructs companies to predispose more people to their brand by being “meaningfully different”, Thomas explains.

“There is one train of thought in the marketing world that all you've got to do is tell people about your brand:

drive salience, awareness, mental availability.

“According to our data, that explains about 40% of brand predisposition. Which leaves 60%.”

‘Meaningful difference’ explains that 60%, he says. It’s why shoppers will choose brand A over brand B, even when both are sitting side by side in the supermarket – the same pack size at the same price point.

“Meaningfulness is providing something meaningful and relevant to a consumer – at both a functional and an emotive or an affinity lens: you’re getting what you need and you’re feeling good about it,” says Thomas.

“As well as the different part, where you’re saying that your brand is unique, it’s setting trends, it’s got momentum, so what you’re getting from that product or service is different to what other brands are giving you.”

THE HUMAN TOUCH

Townend puts it this way: “If you want to build a long-term relationship with someone and nurture them and have them think about your brand over other brands at point of purchase, you’ve got to be able to understand them at a human level.”

Ironically, the robots might help us understand the humans better and faster than ever before.

Townend works with predictive analytics. “The machines can now

analyse a piece of creative and predict where eyes are going to go on that asset with 95% confidence bounds,” he says.

While we talk, he uploads an advert for cheese to an AI tool. It takes about a minute, but no more than two, to analyse the creative and show a heatmap of where it predicts eyeballs would linger.

That’s the kind of information it would take a couple of weeks and cost tens of thousands of dollars to gather using real human subjects. But the AI is using 10 billion data points previously gathered from actual people – and it’s so accurate these days the AI predictions and real-life test results are indistinguishable, says Townend.

It means creatives can finesse the content to elicit more of the desired reaction, and make better use of consumers’ attention.

“With some of the next wave of predictive analytics, you can upload a video into the cloud, put your target audience – let’s say mums in New Zealand – and it will show you on a scene-by-scene basis exactly the emotions that video would make someone feel.

“So a scene of children with a cricket ball, that would make 38% of the panel feel delight at an eight out of 10, and then in second 12 of the video ad it would make someone feel like this.

“Then, if you’re a client, you can go, ‘Oh my gosh. Without even having to test them on humans, I know that among my target audience of mums, my videos are going to be driving

inspiration, pride, and delight – and these are the scenes that are driving those emotions.’

“And then I can edit my videos for different platforms, so I can make my shorter edit for Facebook and I can make my longer edit.”

It means that, as well as pinpointing your audience, data can show you where they’re looking and how they feel, moment by moment, Townend says.

AI... THE MARKETER'S FRIEND?

If the AI analysis says a more risqué ad will resonate with an audience better than something more “middle of the road”, it might even lead to agencies and clients being more adventurous with their creative, says Townend.

But the machines aren’t about to make all the decisions yet – or lead to every advert following the same formula and becoming boring. The personal touch will be crucial.

“How do we avoid everything looking the same and feeling the same? It’s because we interpret,” says Townend. “And we, in our usual human way, add the sparkle to what’s coming out.”

Perhaps it’s all about story after all. Same as it ever was.

Catching eyes might be harder than ever, but the tools exist to help pinpoint your audience. Data can help us find out when they’re looking, what they’re into and – even better – when they’re paying attention. 📍



Your *attention* please

Data solution provider Magnetic is on a mission to help your ad dollars go further, using attention metrics to improve creative and keep eyeballs on your brand.

In today's media landscape, the 'Attention Economy' has become a pivotal concept in advertising and marketing.

As brands vie for customers' fleeting attention, attracting and retaining focus is a critical challenge. Here we look at the dynamics of the attention economy, exploring why captivating and holding audience interest is paramount in a competitive brand ecosystem and why innovative strategies and new data-driven insights are essential.

Data-driven marketing stretches far beyond first-party data strategies. The major gains are in ensuring the media plans and channel mix we choose – and the creative we make for those channels – are optimised for attention.

Magnetic analysed advertising across every major category for advertisers spending over \$1m per year in New Zealand (720 of them according to Nielsen) – to gauge whether fit-for-purpose, fit-for-platform is a reality or a myth. We found wastage in adverts from two out of three of NZ's top advertisers, where key branded moments in videos played while less than 20% of the paid eyeballs would still be watching. It confirms our view that there is an ad wastage epidemic across all categories, for large, medium and smaller advertisers. The conclusion? "Fit for purpose" is a nice sentiment, but doesn't match the current reality where ads are made and deployed in creative and media agency silos.

The role of storytelling and brand building has never been more important in today's cluttered 'buy, buy, buy' economy – and there are channels for that job. There are also fleeting attention platforms more suited to 'response & reminder'. A common

complaint from key advertisers we talk to is that every media plan they receive looks largely the same, as the same channels and media formats are deployed regardless of the campaign objectives.

HOW WILL BRANDS ADOPT TECH TO GAIN ADVANTAGE?

Brands face an uphill battle to capture consumers' ever-dwindling attention. Traditional metrics like reach and viewability have become increasingly obsolete, failing to account for whether audiences actively engage with ads. This disconnect between assumed and actual viewership has led to a staggering estimated \$1.89 billion in wasted ad spend annually in the NZ market*.

As the economic climate tightens, maximising return on ad spend has become paramount. Fortunately, a new wave of AI-driven solutions promises

to revolutionise how advertisers connect with audiences and optimise their investment across both creative and media.

'Reach', the number of people exposed to an ad campaign, has long been a cornerstone metric for advertising success. But it fails to differentiate between active and passive viewership, falsely equating a person scrolling past an ad with genuine engagement.

'Viewability', which tracks whether an ad impression had the opportunity to be seen, has similar shortcomings. An ad may be technically viewable but can fail to capture viewer attention because of poor creative, improper context, or viewer disinterest.

As a result, brands in NZ pour billions into ads that go largely unnoticed, yielding minimal returns on investment. A recent study by Lumen Research found a staggering

Example Audience attention for a 30" digital video ad



Audience attention drops sharply after six seconds, but the brand logo doesn't appear until 15 seconds into this digital video ad



Emotional analytics show craving being measured in a New World ad

63% of digital ad impressions never had a chance to be seen, and Amplified Intelligence found a 69% discrepancy between 'time on screen' and actual eyes on ad attention.

PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS

So many of our communication and entertainment devices (mobiles, laptops, TVs) have cameras these days. This, plus the multitude of companies undertaking EEG/neuro ad engagement tracking, means the volume of real attention and engagement data – where eyes are going, and how humans are reacting to ads cognitively and emotionally – has exploded.

Companies from the US, Europe, UK and Australia are sitting on tens of billions of real human data points measuring:

- Media attention norms: real eyes on ads across different channels and formats – in terms of seconds of attention, by demographic, device and media type
- Creative attention/engagement norms: how different types of audio-visual stimulus drive emotion or attract consumers' eyeballs/ears – across OOH, web, Meta, YouTube, TikTok, cinema, TV, VOD, print, radio, streaming, point of sale and packaging.

This gave rise to Magnetic, launched to address the significant ad wastage in NZ and give advertisers more certainty

around how their investments actually deliver returns. Using computer vision, AI and more than 25 billion human data points, Magnetic's proprietary methodology draws on leading academic research on attention and emotions to understand how audiences truly engage with brand messages.

"We've secured exclusive access to cutting-edge technologies from the US, UK and Australia which are not currently deployed in the NZ market," explains Phil Townend, a 25-year veteran of the global advertising industry and Magnetic's CEO.

"By harnessing the data from these platforms, and using local norms, we can build unique outputs, insights and recommendations to transform brands' return on ad spend – within 48 hours – not weeks."

OPTIMISING CREATIVE AND MEDIA STRATEGIES

Magnetic's FocusLift™ solution analyses ad creative across all major on and offline channels, measuring emotional impact, brand uplift, attention and engagement second by second. This granular data empowers brands to identify and optimise the key moments that resonate most with target audiences, or optimise elements of their visual creative across TVC, (D)OOH, Meta, YouTube, display and packaging or POS to drive significant uplifts in user attention/engagement.

Magnetic's AttentionBoost™ takes this a step further. It enables advertisers to calculate exactly how much real attention their media dollars can deliver – by reach point and impression, by channel and copy length/format – to identify potential reach to attention gaps in their media plans before deploying ad dollars. By quantifying the attentive vs inattentive impressions their budgets will secure across multiple channels, brands can adjust their media mix to maximise performance without increasing spend.

'FIT FOR PURPOSE': BEYOND BUZZWORD TO REALITY

As the advertising landscape continues to evolve, brands that fail to adapt risk falling behind. Those possessing and harnessing real attention data – and using creative analytics to optimise their assets – can achieve a disproportionate increase in their category share of attention. Meanwhile competitors will be fumbling in the dark, measuring and optimising opportunities to see, which are equally opportunities to ignore.

By embracing AI-driven attention analytics, brands can ensure their messages resonate with audiences on a deeper level to maximise every fleeting moment of attention.

Magnetic is leading the charge, helping advertisers optimise creative and media strategies for maximum impact and ROI. At a basic level, this means ensuring fewer branded moments play when no one is looking. With uplifts in marketing efficiency/effectiveness of up to 20% being demonstrated – through reductions in wastage, lower cost per acquisition, or increased sales or brand impact – this example of data-driven marketing delivers quantifiable benefits.

"In today's swiftly changing advertising arena, Magnetic emerges as a revolutionary ally for brands wanting an objective appraisal of their creative and media investments and to enhance their advertising efficacy," says Townend.

As economic pressures mount, the ability to stretch ad dollars further is a crucial competitive advantage. By prioritising attention data over outdated metrics, brands can unlock the full potential of their advertising investments and systemise a new data-driven approach across the campaign lifecycle – aligning creative and media more closely, regardless of their current media or creative agency relationships. 🗨

‘I ABSOLUTELY BLEED ORANGE’

Jules Lloyd-Jones loves a bit of do-it-yourself, so her role as CMO at Mitre 10 suits her perfectly. As the big tangerine toolshed marks 50 years, she reflects on the brand's past, present and future.

WORDS ZAHRA SHAHTAHMASEBI

DIY is definitely in Jules Lloyd-Jones' DNA. Growing up with her dad being a builder, she's no stranger to getting hands-on with a project, especially around the home.

And for the past seven years and counting, she has brought that creativity to one of the country's most well-known brands in her role as Chief Marketing Officer of Mitre 10.

The big tangerine toolshed is under her skin. "I absolutely bleed orange, I love DIY," laughs Lloyd-Jones.

With previous roles at both Foodstuffs and Air New Zealand, brands from Aotearoa – like Mitre 10 – are where her heart lies.

As we sat down to chat all things DIY over video call, Mitre 10 was gearing up to celebrate its 50th anniversary on June 20.

There were celebrations across the month, with birthday parties for its teams, \$120,000 cash giveaway for shoppers, as well as special price offers, running birthday parties for kids, and classic prize spinning wheels.

At the end of July, Mitre 10 will have one final birthday bash, a gala event with all of its members and suppliers – "to really celebrate our people and partners", says Lloyd-Jones.

You could say the company has really built up since it began as a timber co-operative by a group of supply merchants in 1974.

Mitre 10 has grown to 84 stores – 41 Mitre 10s and 43 Mitre 10 Megastores. From Kaitiāia to Invercargill, there's one in nearly every community in New Zealand, says Lloyd-Jones.

But despite its growth, it remains a co-operative with the stores owned by 65 members.

In May, Mitre 10 was named New Zealand's most trusted home

improvement brand for the 14th time by Reader's Digest, as well as the second most trusted brand overall.

Lloyd-Jones recalls another proud moment: when her team won the inaugural Marketing Team of the Year at the NZ Marketing Awards in 2022.

"I am incredibly proud. We have a great culture and that brought us all closer together and shows that if you do the mahi, you get the outcomes."

This impressive trajectory is down to Mitre 10 having its heart in the local communities it serves, says Lloyd-Jones.

Before the birthday partying commenced, Lloyd-Jones and the rest of the executive team took their annual two-week tour of Mitre 10 regions – a "wonderful way" to connect in person with the members.

Generations of workers

On their travels they see Mitre 10's legacy but also its longevity: "So many of the stores are multi-generational... Fathers, sons, daughters, working together, a long commitment. Some of them have worked for us for nearly 50 years.

"We're a family-owned co-operative business with a total of 84 stores, and our internal brand too is that we're a family."

With a total staff of 8,000, this culture is no small feat, says Lloyd-Jones.

"We're in it for the long haul" is the promise they make to their customers, suppliers as well as to each other.

She adds: "Our key difference is our customer service excellence. Most people can see the difference between us and our competitors."

The in-store experience is an important aspect of this, so when customers walk in, they feel welcomed. No question is too big or small – or too

non-descriptive, Lloyd-Jones says with a smile.

"If you purchase a supermarket item and you don't like it, you just buy a different thing the next time, as the cost is relatively low. With DIY project, the investment is higher and so it's important to get the correct advice upfront to ensure the right products and tools."

Mitre 10 has always been about being an active member in its community

Mitre 10 CMO Jules Lloyd-Jones says the store's 50th anniversary was a chance to celebrate its people





Mitre 10's Marketing team, who won the inaugural team of the year at the NZ Marketing Awards in 2022

and its marketing strategy continues to reflect that, connecting with Kiwis in a variety of ways.

With a stable of well-known characters and figures – including Lyn of Tawa, Billy McCormick, Billy T James, Tim Shadbolt, Levi Vaoga, known as the biggest guy in New Zealand – Mitre 10's brand adverts have become iconic.

And, who could forget those three young boys in the sandpit from the 2008 TV commercial, Sandpit?

The ad, which featured the three boys discussing one's DIY plans for the weekend, was the recipient of many awards, and remains quoted by Kiwis to this day.

Lloyd-Jones laughs, saying that ad kicked off the “DIY, it's in our DNA” campaign.

Mitre 10 has become one of New Zealand's largest content producers, she says, pumping out a huge volume of content every year.

Under its ‘Easy As’ service offering, a plethora of video advice guides feature qualified builder Stan showing how to use garden equipment, like a line trimmer, to building a treasure chest.

Easy As also extends to free workshops for children aged six to 12, teaching them how to make

hanging decorations, pots, and even a mini garden.

“We want to build early that concept of making and creating stuff,” she says.

Lloyd-Jones reels off a list of ways Mitre 10 supports Kiwis nationwide. In 2021, it started Helping Hands to pitch in with community projects.

Project Playground was launched to support primary schools by building play areas for those most in need. More than 500 schools asked to be considered, with the most recent one completed at Eskdale School, in Esk Valley, Hawke's Bay. Its playground was washed away by Cyclone Gabrielle last year.

Evolving needs

Over the next 50 years, customers and their needs will continue to evolve. Mitre 10 expects more and more people to live in cities, in rental homes or apartments, as well as increasing use of smart home technology and a general push for greater sustainability.

Covid-19 lockdown forced Kiwis to scrutinise their homes but also reminded us how house proud we all are, says Lloyd-Jones.

“There has been a continued interest in home being where people want to spend more time.

“Less people over time will own their homes, but there's great opportunities in rentals with indoor plants, storage units and veggie pods.”

Remaining relevant to all New Zealanders is another key aspect, especially connecting with migrants.

“We get involved with ethnic social platforms, ethnic radio and publications and cultural events like Diwali and Chinese New Year.”

For Lloyd-Jones, successful marketing is all about personalisation. This means unlocking the power for first-party data to curate more targeted and specialised offers, including on Mitre 10's website.

The rising use of artificial intelligence should make workloads and workflows more manageable, she says. For example, enhancing copywriting, product photography, as well as product descriptions, of which at Mitre 10 there are more than 40,000.

“Personalisation, you gotta do it; and we need to embrace AI but not at the expense of creativity. Find the balance between art and the science – become data and AI-savvy but don't forget connection with your customers,” says Lloyd-Jones. 📍

Global AF: Kiwi mocktails take US market by storm

When Lisa King launched Curious AF in the US last year, giant retailers weren't in her sights. Now, the Aotearoa brand is celebrating a deal that will distribute its alcohol-free products in 700 Target and 800 Walmart stores across the country.

WORDS ZAHRA SHAHTAHMASEBI

The Curious AF bottle store, in Auckland's Grey Lynn, is true to its name. Tucked away on the corner of Crummer Road and less than 500 metres from the nearest Glengarry Wines, it is everything a bottle shop is not.

Colourfully packaged drinks, an assortment of dried flowers and other delicate decorations beam down on passerbys from a vast window display. Inside, I'm met by Curious AF founder Lisa King and office dog Noodle.

Before we sit down to talk the details of AF's major US deal, King takes me through a tasting – there are AF's OG canned mocktails such as grapefruit margarita and apero spritz topped with a slice of dried orange. Plus newer products: sparkling rose, which smells distinctly like wine, and sparkling sake, delicate and flavoured with yuzu.

The bottle shop is a dream come true for this non-drinker, who has spent years sipping juice instead of alcohol at events.

King says the idea for Curious AF came to her mind after having that same experience when she cut back on alcohol a few years ago.

Realising the range of non-alcoholic drinks while out at dinner or a bar was slim at best, she was determined to create something to give herself, and fellow Kiwis, more options.

The first 15 years of her career was spent working in FMCG, including in beverages, and this knowledge spurred her on to develop Curious AF – an “adult drink” that was alcohol free.

The result is a low-sugar canned brew that uses New Zealand botanical Afterglow, which gives a warmth similar to an alcoholic drink but with none of the aftereffects.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

“It was driven by: I wanted a gin and tonic without the alcohol,” King laughs.

“Drawing on my past experience of knowing how flavour technology and product development works, I just thought, ‘Well why not use that to create these amazing drinks that taste just like a gin and tonic?’”

Looking overseas, she could see this trend starting to take root in countries like the UK, where you can now find Guinness Zero on tap in most pubs.

At first, there was some resistance

from the Kiwi market, with some asking: “What's the point?”

But after four years of business in Aotearoa, that narrative has changed and AF now has 40% market share of the alcohol-free category.

And one year of AF in the US has resulted in a major brand deal with Target and Walmart.

“The US is just this massive market and we always thought we'll go in there, do a trial, maybe like 50 stores, see how it goes,” says King.

“A lot of people had said to us this is still a very new emerging category. Target and Walmart won't be interested until it's fully proven.”

So in April 2023, Curious AF first launched in 400 Sprouts stores, a farmer's market-style supermarket specialising in organic products and alternative offerings – King likens it to a Moore Wilsons or a Farro here – as well as on Amazon.

At the time, there was nothing like AF on US shelves, with Sprouts one of the first retailers to make space for the non-alcoholic category, says King.

Now, the brand is the No. 1 alcohol-free seller in Sprouts. There's no

Lisa King says
Curious AF's
flexibility has been
a real plus in the
US market



alcohol-free segment on Amazon, but AF ranks No. 9 under “juice”, she adds.

Then, last October, King was approached by Target.

“They were setting up these non-alcoholic sections in their stores and asked to include us,” says King. “It was really great to be sought out.”

Within weeks, King was invited to Bentonville, Arkansas – the home of Walmart – to pitch to a panel of buyers.

“It was very *Dragon’s Den*,” she laughs. “You had 10 minutes to pitch, they taste your products and then on the spot they would say yes or no.”

GOLDEN TICKET

Instead of the iconic stacks of cash as seen on the TV show, the buyers had golden tickets to give to the brands they liked. One of these was for King.

She still thought it would take a while before AF hit Walmart shelves, but the cans are already in the storefront, because of how much the buyers loved the taste and branding.

“The look of the brand is premium, it’s modern but it’s still very accessible.”

Further feedback from the US retailers shows a love of the company’s

**“It was very
Dragon’s Den. You had
10 minutes to pitch,
they taste your
products and then on
the spot they would say
yes or no.”**

ability to innovate – starting with four drinks in Sprouts, growing to six – as well as its agility.

“Speaking to Target recently, the buyer said to us she loved AF because we are just incredibly flexible and we can respond to their opportunities and demands easily,” says King.

Being able to move with speed is definitely AF’s biggest advantage at the moment. Not only was it the pioneer of the alcohol-free market in New Zealand, it has held its position at the forefront of the category.

The intention from the beginning was always that AF would go global, and this has played into how the brand markets itself, says King.

“We don’t tie ourselves to a New Zealand story or a New Zealand brand, we always set our sights globally. New Zealand’s a great test market, but it’s also very small and limited.”

There was of course an opportunity to go across the ditch to Australia first, but for the “size of the prize” and the same amount of effort, the US made more sense, despite the team not being as familiar with the market.

“The numbers and the scale is crazy, there’s nothing in New Zealand that could even compare,” says King.

In this new brand deal, AF will be stocked in 700 out of more than 2000 Target stores, and 800 of 4000 Walmart stores nationwide.

Speaking to AF’s success, she says this comes down to its investment in brand and marketing.

“Our creative team is incredible. Between them, they’ve had over 100 years of brand building experience.”

While the creative team, made up of Arch MacDonnell, Nick Worthington and James Hurman, agree, they say the secret to its success is the product’s duality – it both tastes and looks great. ►



A grown-up, sophisticated look is important for the packaging as well as the Grey Lynn store

That, and using ‘AF’ in the name – it stands for alcohol free but is also a acronym widely used in our vernacular.

“It gives the product attitude, and that also can be transferred over to people and personalities,” says MacDonnell.

In fact, this was one of the reasons he jumped on board. The sample deck from Worthington and Hurman included the idea for the Drunk AF podcast – interviewing celebrities about their relationships with alcohol and included pictures of Bradley Cooper and Pharrell Williams with the taglines ‘Funny AF’ and ‘Cool AF’.

You also don’t get calls from ad legends like Worthington and Hurman very often, so MacDonnell knew this was an offer he couldn’t refuse.

PRODUCT FAMILY

As a team, the creatives also jumped at the opportunity to work with King, a dynamo with a track record of making exciting projects come to life.

“Her tenacity, her patience and her pain tolerance is just way higher than all of us,” says Hurman.

As the designer, the challenge for MacDonnell was creating a design system that would grow with the brand and allow for a family of products.

The resulting marbling pattern that decorates AF’s cans was a hands-on affair created with an Auckland printmaker. It acts as a metaphor for mixology and changes colours to represent each flavour, he says.

When the goal was designing a brand that could resonate anywhere in the world, the team find it extremely gratifying to see it do just that in the

US. But this still doesn’t make it easy to comprehend, says Worthington.

“It’s been so beautiful building the brand as a really tiny team, but as it gets bigger and offshore, it gets harder. Everything is lining up how we planned, but when the actual plan turns up, you go, ‘Goddamn!’”

AF’s modest beginnings here have provided great lessons to inform the US launch, but there’s also been a lot to learn about Americans as consumers.

The widespread nature of the US meant Curious AF had to understand the cultural nuances, research each state carefully, then be targeted in its marketing. Using this knowledge, it is trying to maximise return on its spend.

There are so many more regional media outlets and Americans are so much more influencer and celebrity driven compared to New Zealand, with large audiences consuming content on TikTok.

Curious AF is embracing the social media platform, and has been invested in creating a local network of people who represent the brand well, as well as encouraging the public to try it at instore samplings.

Shopping behaviour is so different over there too, explains King. People might shop at multiple spots through the day: Amazon to get milk delivered, Sprouts to get something nice for dinner and Walmart for their basics.

A goal is to make not drinking aspirational – King refers to the podcast Drunk AF, saying it makes you realise there’s lots of people who aren’t drinking or don’t want to and that this

doesn’t mean they’re boring with no social life.

But the idea of AF isn’t to stop people drinking entirely.

King herself still enjoys a glass of wine from time to time, but for her and the team it’s about changing culture and encouraging reduction and moderation.

ASPIRATIONAL MODERATION

“When you go out and you don’t order something alcoholic and everyone’s like, ‘What’s wrong? Are you pregnant?’ I found it so weird. Why do I have to feel embarrassed or justify myself for not drinking?”

“The more research I did into alcohol, it’s one of the most dangerous drugs in the world, but it’s so commonly accepted and normalised to a large extent.”

King thought this mindset would mean those going sober would be her sole customer base, but she’s found AF has had the desired effect in creating alternatives for all people.

“The majority of our customers still drink alcohol... From the States, 94% of people who buy these types of products also buy alcohol at the same time.

“Which makes sense, because there’s always times when you’re not drinking, you’re driving or on medication, doesn’t mean you want to go completely alcohol free. The total addressable market is incredibly wide.”

It’s been a surprisingly short journey from wondering what the point of a product like AF is, to now when no one is questioning it, says King. Cheers to that. 🍷

How to make CONTENT PEOPLE WATCH



Filming
What Next, a
show looking
at NZ's future

Ruckus, the people behind some of New Zealand's best documentaries and factual series, sit down with *NZ Marketing* to talk about why their content attracts so many viewers.

What do *You've Been Scammed* by Nigel Latta, *Stan*, *Mind over Money* and the *Patrick Gower: On Booze, Vaping and Weed* series have in common? They were all high-rating shows made by Ruckus.

Spearheaded by producer Arwen O'Connor and director Mitchell Hawkes, Ruckus emerged from the pair's many years of work in the TV industry. O'Connor and Hawkes met while working on the iconic weekly gos Kiwi youth show *IceTV*. And after working with Nigel Latta on *Nigel Blows Stuff Up*, the three of them formed their own production company in 2017.

"With all of our collective experience, we decided it was time to set up Ruckus to make editorial content that could be either commercially funded or funded by NZ On Air," says O'Connor.

The team's expertise shines through their body of work, and Hawkes says the programmes they make focus on connecting with an audience. They've produced documentaries on topics as varied as Stan Walker, neurodiversity and the New Zealand team at the World Butchers Challenge – the Olympics of meat!

"We've always been big on authentic and organic stories, so when we make these documentaries, we're searching for the emotional connection that will find and resonate with a big audience," says O'Connor.

The pair enjoy making content that presents complicated facts to audiences in a digestible way so viewers can use that information in their own lives. One example is their financial literacy series *Mind Over Money*, which was commissioned by Kiwibank and its agency OMD, for TVNZ.

Ruckus used its expertise to translate Kiwibank's brand objectives into entertaining content. Kiwibank's research showed that two-thirds of people associated the series with the bank, and nearly half the viewers said it would change how they manage their money. A National Business Review article noted that the show "was the gold standard for how ethical companies can make a mainstream TV series that has real public good".



Ruckus founders Mitchell Hawkes
and Arwen O'Connor

"We naturally gravitate towards psychology and science because we find it fascinating. We dive deep into the subject, but because we're not experts, we strip it back and make it entertaining while keeping it accurate," says Hawkes.

"When working on commercial projects, we've developed a skill set in communicating complicated ideas while integrating brand values. We can do that by working with agencies or directly with a client. That's what we like to think of as the Ruckus USP," adds O'Connor.

One of their most recent series, *You've Been Scammed*, was commissioned by The Banking Ombudsman Scheme to get New Zealanders to change their behaviour around scams. And it worked. Ruckus received feedback from people who had avoided scams because of viewing the series.

The four-part factual series screened on TVNZ and TVNZ+, averaging over 400,000 viewers for each episode. It achieved a trifecta of success: impressive ratings, critical acclaim and extensive media coverage. The press coverage alone is estimated to be equal to a \$1.2m PR spend, which far surpassed the cost of making the series.

While some commentators make a big deal about where content is found, Hawkes and O'Connor are less concerned. "People will search out strong narratives and connect with them no matter where they are," says Hawkes. O'Connor gives the example of *Patrick Gower: On Vaping*, which was seen by 400,000 people on Three and ThreeNow, but a piece from the documentary excerpted for TikTok has received more than 12 million views!

For Ruckus, it's all about the story – and that's why the company is making some of the country's best content – wherever you might watch it. 📺

www.ruckus.media

Tiny



blockbusters



They've taught us to tie a tie and showed us cats being silly, but what is it about online videos that intrigue the everyday person, and what can they teach us about elevating brands and bringing legacy media to a new audience?

WORDS BERNADETTE BASAGRE

I love *Hot Ones*: that YouTube show where celebrities are grilled as they eat progressively spicier chicken wings.

Maybe I like it because I want to see these celebrities in pain. Or maybe because I think I have what it takes to eat a chicken wing doused in hot chilli sauce that scores 2 million on the Scoville scale.

Whichever it is, I just prefer it over traditional TV. If anything, I use my telly to watch *Hot Ones* on a bigger screen.

Video sharing platform YouTube has been a trailblazer for the medium. The site has more than 500 hours of content uploaded every minute, with viewers watching more than 1 billion hours of it a day.

Since its launch in 2005, there is no denying people have also used YouTube for sensible reasons: to see educational videos on how to tie a tie or how to make a delicious tiramisu, along with short or feature-length films – I highly recommend *nothing, except everything*

by Wesley Wang. And of course, if you have a favourite content creator, they are most likely making videos on the platform.

With a seemingly limitless selection of silly and serious content to choose from, it's no surprise that many people across New Zealand and the world are ditching linear TV, retiring their remote controls and sitting down to enjoy digital video platforms.

Variety and stories

Arwen O'Connor and Mitchell Hawkes, documentary makers and Ruckus Media co-founders, say the appeal of online videos is storytelling – and the fact that viewers aren't restricted by a network or subscription service's programming list.

Feel like watching a funny video about a cat being surprised in a kitchen? Thousands are yours at the click of a button. Or perhaps you're in the mood for tragedy. It's easy to find something to sob along to.

"Audiences now have more variety, accessibility, and personalisation than ever before. This rapid influx of choice has scattered attention, leaving traditional TV channels struggling to retain their audience base over time," says Geoff Holmes, Co-Founder and Creative Director at creative production agency Fanaticals.

"Additionally, entry-level production costs are now virtually zero, allowing young creators to produce audience-specific content from their bedrooms, competing for the same attention that TV once dominated."

Compare that with TV audiences, who are restricted by programme scheduling.

"YouTube is more customisable, it adapts to your lifestyle and availability, and it's ready with unending entertainment as soon as you want it," says Jacob Dawson, co-founder of video production company ODV.

"We're a fast-moving, dopamine-addicted generation... love it or hate it, YouTube understands that."



ODV's Esther Dawson behind the scenes during work on Academy EX's campaign

Dawson points to chat shows from the UK and US, which clip up the best snippets from guest interviews and make them available in snackable segments – perfect for today's tiny attention spans.

"Shows like Graham Norton and Jimmy Fallon have also learned to adapt their models of distribution. Everything is multi-purposed and lives on every channel. There's a lot of brands that could learn from that too."

YouTube might be the best known, but it's not the only platform to house user-generated short-form video.

Audiences got a taste of micro content in 2013 with Vine, a platform that focused on six-second clips. Some of the biggest social media influencers in the world started off on Vine. YouTuber and professional wrestler Logan Paul, for example – he now has north of 23 million subscribers to his channel and, according to *Forbes*, was the highest paid creator on YouTube in 2017, 2018 and 2021.

The death of Vine was followed by the rise of TikTok: now at the helm and clocking in more than 1 billion users. The app is now being used more than Google as a search engine, among Gen Zers at least.

It's no surprise why. TikTok has it all: tutorials, dances, vlogs and news content – but especially a genius

algorithm that curates users' feeds uncannily well.

While seconds-long content is hugely popular, Dawson says video length or whether consumers now have shorter attention spans isn't the most important factor – quality content will always win out.

"Video length doesn't really matter as long as the content is interesting and contains multiple hooks to retain attention. Short-form works well for ads and long-form works well for episodic, story-based content," he says.

Holmes says video is a medium for crafting narratives, while the platform is just a way to help boost the story and resonate with your audience.

Snappy edits

Snipping longer content into smaller bites isn't just for chat shows. An 89-second clip from the 45-minute doco *Patrick Gower: On Vaping*, made by Ruckus, is the most popular video on Newshub's TikTok. At latest count, the journalist taking three puffs on a vape had clocked up 12.7 million views.

Ruckus' Hawkes and O'Connor say if the quality is there, longer-form video is relatively easy to edit into shorter clips.

"That's what we think about when creating videos. That it can be cut up

and it's still quality. Quality content will always win," adds Hawkes.

TikTok's algorithm makes it easier for short-form videos like the Paddy Gower clip to go viral among a demographic the traditional media landscape struggles to reach. The idea is younger audiences who no longer tune into linear TV will be tempted to download the Three Now app and watch the full documentary.

"TV still has its place for certain demographics, but the smartphone changed everything and set consumer preferences on an unalterable course," says Esther Dawson, Marketing Director at ODV.

"From an advertiser perspective, it's so much cheaper and easier to reach your target audience and get deep data on view time, rewatches, and engagement rates. From a consumer perspective, YouTube is a far more customisable place – you tell the algorithm what you want to watch and it builds a super watchable homepage for you."

As the landscape moves digital, legacy media is taking notes.

"It's no secret that viewers are progressively moving away from TV and towards content housed on YouTube," adds Jacob Dawson.

"Video is more powerful than any other medium because it requires ▶



“A clear objective allows creatives to develop fit-for-purpose concepts that deliver the message effectively.”

GEOFF HOLMES
CO-FOUNDER, FANATICALS



ODV lives by two golden rules: have one message and make your customer the hero

the least amount of effort to engage with. You don't have to read anything because there's audio, and you don't need to imagine anything because there's visuals. Video has the power to emote, especially when it centres on a human – that's why story-led advertising is such a powerful way of capturing brand love and attention.”

Over in the States, traditional TV comedy is thriving on YouTube – *The Late Late Show with James Corden* has 28.4 million subscribers, while *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* boasts 31.6 million.

James Corden's famous *Carpool Karaoke* episode with Adele has topped 264 million YouTube views. That's the size of Indonesia, the fourth most populous country in the world.

Even *Saturday Night Live* – the granddaddy of America TV's late night comedy sketch scene, having been around since 1975 – has safely stepped into the digital space on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, garnering millions of views.

SNL hired comedy trio Please Don't Destroy, who specialise in creating sketch videos for YouTube and TikTok, to help the show make the transition.

Old-school TV formats aren't being ditched altogether though: many successful new digital video shows are a hybrid of legacy and new approaches.

Chicken Shop Date with Amelia Dimoldenberg, for example, is a traditional interview show made easily clippable for digital. It has more than 2.3 million subscribers and books guests ranging from Cher and Ed Sheeran to popular internet stars like Chunkz and Yung Filly.

Snackable takeaways

As more and more people tune out of linear broadcasts and into the digital world, what worked for shows and brands on TV will still work on the likes of YouTube and TikTok – with a tweak or two. ODV's Dawson has a couple of golden rules.

“One, convey a single message in your video. When you try and say everything, people hear nothing. But if you say one thing, people will hear everything,” he says.

“And two, make sure your customer is the hero of the story, not your brand. This is a subtle but incredibly important shift and we reckon it's the biggest difference between how Apple and Samsung advertise their products. Apple almost always leads with their hero, the customer.”

ODV says its most successful videos run for 90 seconds or less and immediately hook the audience. Telling a good story is vital and not shying

away from comedic elements so there's something to watch on repeat.

Holmes at Fanaticals says a successful video comes down to what you want to achieve.

“While there are countless ways to achieve this, starting with a clear objective is the first crucial step. A clear objective allows creatives to develop fit-for-purpose concepts that deliver the message effectively,” he says.

“Problems arise when marketers try to squeeze too many objectives into a brief or budget, leading to a diluted message, compromised quality and a campaign that doesn't create the desired impact.”

Brands that don't integrate digital video into their strategy will be left behind, warns Holmes.

And the first steps don't need to involve creating masses of new content. There are plenty of sponsorship, advertising and marketing opportunities in the world of video. This could range from sponsoring a popular YouTube video series, to simply putting your ad up on Instagram Reels where the algorithm could get you a sizeable organic viewership number.

Video might feel new, but we've been playing around with it for decades. It's just a case of switching the channel to digital. 🎥

COMEDIC ADVERTISING IS HAVING A COMEBACK

Creative agency ODV specialises in comedic commercials. The team believes humour has the best cut-through in advertising – here's why.

THE RISE, FALL AND RISE AGAIN OF FUNNY ADS

In the early to mid 2000s, comedy was king in advertising. The iconic Old Spice commercial was launched in 2010 and NZ's very own Ghost Chips ad was released the next year.

What followed was an age of purpose-led advertising. Brands finally put money behind their values and started talking about some very important topics. But as more brands jumped on the bandwagon, it began to feel a little... insincere.

On top of that, humans' capacity to care is not infinite. With more brands demanding attention for their cause, viewers became fatigued and tuned out the noise.

Ever since the Collins dictionary picked 'permacrisis' as its word of the year in 2022, people have been craving relief from the seriousness of the world. And that's why comedic advertising is in its comeback era.

Humour doesn't drain the mind, it gives energy. People are naturally receptive to it. Comedy-led ads engage customers where they are: searching for escape as they scroll a social platform whose primary purpose is to entertain. And they're not just fun to watch...

WHY HUMOUR GETS RESULTS

Humour makes us feel good! Humans love a good laugh, so we strategically inject comedy into our videos wherever we can. Humour has the power to turn a relatively mundane concept into something ridiculously engaging.

In 2022, Oracle Fusion Cloud Customer Experience and Gretchen Rubin conducted a fascinating study.

Dubbed 'The Happiness Report', it surveyed 12,000 customers and business leaders across 14 countries and revealed an almost unanimous customer preference for brands that are funny.

It found:

- 91% of people prefer brands to be funny.
- 72% would choose a brand that uses humour over the competition.
- Despite this, only 20% of brands report using humour in their advertising.

Playing it safe with your brand might just be robbing your business blind.

HOW TO DO IT YOURSELF

Humour isn't easy, otherwise every marketing manager would be doing it. Then again, marketers like a challenge, so what's behind their reticence?

ODV's Humour Hot Takes:

90% of people are more likely to remember ads that are funny. People want to laugh and brands that know this are succeeding.

Being funny makes you money. **72%** of people say they would choose a brand that uses humour over the competition.

Funny and professional aren't mutually exclusive!

We asked some, and got responses like: "humour isn't professional" and "our brand is too serious for humour".

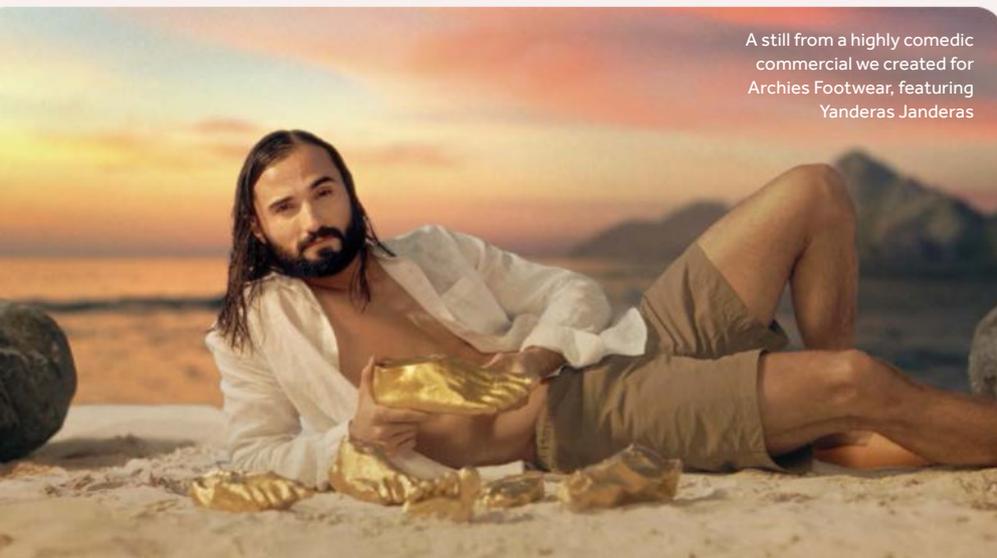
Sure, a few industries should give comedy a wide berth, but comedy is far more useable in your advertising than you might believe.

Think of comedy like fire. You can have a raging bonfire-amount of humour that, in the right circumstances (outside, away from trees), hits perfectly. But you can also have a small, tasteful, candle-flame amount of humour. Both will make your brand messaging far more memorable.

Remember Ghost Chips? That funny, quotable ad really worked. Not only did the video hit one million views in two weeks, the focus on funny over fear transformed behaviour. The number of under-17s caught drink-driving went from 630 in 2007 to 305 after the campaign was released in 2011. Now that's what we call impact.

Watch our favourite funny ads at odv.co.nz or give rodney@onedayvideo.co.nz a bell if you want to chat video – we're bursting with creative ideas.

A still from a highly comedic commercial we created for Archies Footwear, featuring Yanderas Janderas



Pitch Perfect BROADCAST



Earlier this year, the final of the Super Rugby Aupiki streamed live on TikTok. Reporter (and rugby fan) Zahra Shahtahmasebi hears how 2degrees and TBWA\New Zealand made this happen, and why they are passionate champions for women's rugby.

Kiwi telco 2degrees wants Aotearoa to see women's rugby differently – literally and figuratively. Fuelled by its mission of “fighting for fair”, it simultaneously championed women's rugby and challenged traditional sports broadcasting when it live streamed the Super Rugby Aupiki final on TikTok in April.

“We wanted to bring greater visibility and awareness to the teams and players... as a result we put women at the centre of something fun and exciting,” says Anna Gorman, 2degrees Sponsorship & Events Manager.

The telco has been sponsor of Super Rugby Aupiki, the professional women's rugby competition played across Aotearoa, since its inaugural season in March 2022.

Knowing Aupiki doesn't get as much coverage and support as the men's competition, 2degrees was driven to champion the wāhine putting in the hard yards on the pitch.

Thinking about where people spend their time, it saw a great opportunity to bring a game to the audience by live streaming on TikTok, says Gorman.

And while streaming sport from your phone might not sound special, this wasn't just any broadcast.

Working with TBWA\New Zealand and Sky, the match livestream was designed and built for TikTok – filmed vertically with its own commentary team, including the likes of Black Fern Kendra Cocksedge, a roving reporter in the stands, polls and split screens.

It was a world first, says Shane Bradnick, TBWA\NZ Chief Creative Officer, as typically, linear TV broadcasts are repurposed for social media platforms.

But the teams at TBWA\NZ, 2degrees and Sky wanted to give viewers a new experience.

TikTok streaming opened the final up to a wider audience and made it more accessible – you didn't need to be in the stadium, at a bar or have access to a TV to watch it live, says Bradnick. The vertical format meant the broadcast focused more closely on the action and helped connect the audience with the players – viewers were literally seeing the game differently, he adds.

The end result was a more immersive and intimate experience. “It wasn't just the same TV broadcast, it was bespoke and leant into the platform features. People were encouraged to get involved and interact,” says Bradnick.

“It goes a long way to show 2degrees' dedication to giving people a different experience and supporting women's rugby.”

If they didn't already know about it, people could come across the broadcast by scrolling through their TikTok feed. As a result, TikTok recorded a total of 18,000 views – double the number at the final last year – as well as 160,000 likes and comments. The 6,000 comments, Gorman notes, were all overwhelmingly favourable.

“All of the sentiments and comments and vibes of the game were so positive, there were no keyboard warriors. Everyone was so engaged and excited.”

With the objective to create new fans and give people the experience of rugby, Gorman says the teams nailed the brief.

She's proud of her team at 2degrees, TBWA\NZ and Sky who pushed the boundaries to champion women's sport.

“There was no script, but our media partners and creative agency, we all really cared.”

Both Gorman and Bradnick believe social media will play a bigger role in sport – after all, it would be rude not to after their Super Rugby Aupiki experience created such deep and rich experiences for viewers, all while fighting the good fight for women's rugby. 🗨️



Camera chameleon

We know video is essential, but how do you shoot for success on different social platforms? Webflicks founder Lou Harness gives a quick rundown.



Video has a visceral, immersive quality that engages and connects far beyond the written word. As a medium it combines visuals and sound – tapping into our strongest senses. Moving images and sound grab attention, invite engagement and create an emotional response – empathy, trust and memorability. Video makes an impression that lasts.

In a video narrative we can read an expression and follow emotional cues and action even without understanding a word, making it a powerful tool for communicating across cultures and languages. We can observe real people and experiences – creating trust and relatability. Humans are hardwired for story and video can weave narratives that capture attention and create emotional impact.

BRANDS AND VIDEO: A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Consumers increasingly use video as an integral part of their journey with brands – and businesses that want their messaging to resonate are creating more video than ever.

An area of speciality for many marketing leaders and teams, brand story has a special relationship with video. Across stratified audiences and platforms – through all the levels and types of video production – video storytelling has the power to delight, engage and connect.

But video production costs can be off-putting for small business owners and SMEs. With supple strategy, businesses can plan brand stories with high production values alongside lower cost video across channels. A suite of content can be created to appeal to different audiences – it can be targeted, affordable and incredibly successful. And did we say fun?

PLATFORM CHAMELEON TACTICS

The power and versatility of video make it perfect for crafting with specific social media platforms in mind. Each platform has different audiences, styles and particular format requirements, which can be easily accommodated by forward planning during production and edit. You can take one video story and re-edit for these different parameters or craft an entirely fresh story for specific platforms. Here's a basic guide:

TikTok & Instagram Reels: Playful Casual

Keep it short, sweet and insanely creative. Hook viewers in the first few seconds with eye-catching visuals and sound or clever edits. Showcase your brand personality, share milestones, fun team moments or explore product features in a playful way – or jump on a viral trend with a unique twist.

LinkedIn: Professional Authentic

Focus on establishing thought leadership and industry expertise. Create videos that address industry challenges, offer insights, or showcase successful team or client profiles. High-quality production video with powerful and concise messaging works perfectly here but the community also values authentic selfie-style sharing moments.

Facebook: The Everyman

Strike a balance between informative and entertaining. Use shorter videos with eye-catching visuals or sound to grab attention in the feed.

Keep learning

As versatile as video can be, it's also an ever-evolving medium that requires businesses to learn and ideate to stay ahead of the curve. Right now there are so many exciting approaches to creating, sharing and viewing video content – making it the best time to embrace change and stay relevant.

There are always shifts and trends: short form and vertical video, the lightning proliferation of AI video generation (Open AI Sora, Deepbrain AI, Runway, Flicki), the metaverse. Integrating this incredible array of generative AI creator tech to streamline and augment video development, creation and editing is on everyone's agenda. But it'll be tempting to move to a quantity not quality approach – watch the explosion of a tonne of AI gen social content that likely lacks nuance and value.

Even in its simplest forms, this will make well-crafted, considered and authentic video story an even more powerful tool for connection. 🗣️

THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL STICK-UP

In Hong Kong, Phantom Billstickers CEO Robin McDonnell attends the 2024 World Out of Home Congress. His trip features industry insights, dim sum and an illegal billsticker run.

Hong Kong is a vibrant hub of outdoor advertising, providing the ideal setting to celebrate the best in the business. Upon arrival, our billsticking crew took to the streets, with assorted poem posters from Aotearoa's finest: Isla Huia, Ben Brown, and Janet Frame.

Along the way, we discovered dim sum restaurant Tim Ho Wan – known globally for its mouth-watering barbecue pork buns and as an affordable Michelin dining experience. Naturally, we stopped to indulge.

While there are some similarities, out-of-home in Hong Kong looks vastly different to that in New Zealand. Hong Kong billboards adorn the tops of skyscrapers and the digital ones are brand-heavy, displaying a single animated message.

As we discovered from a friendly record shop proprietor, billposters operate outside the law, taking over any empty space. The 600 HKD (NZ\$125) fine is little deterrent when the only limit is a pile of posters and your own tenacity.

Fortunately, we learnt about the on-the-spot fines after already leaving a trail of poem posters for locals to enjoy.

As for the local billstickers, they keep going regardless. There are always more posters and always more walls.

At the congress, World Out of Home President Tom Goddard kick-started proceedings. We honoured industry excellence with the formal dinner and awards ceremony.

Across two days, we heard from global industry leaders and innovators. Here are my quick-fire takeaways:

AUTOMATION

The OOH industry needs to embrace automation beyond programmatic trading to encompass all OOH advertising and promote an omnichannel approach. At most, 25% of OOH is programmatic. Ad tech vendors should work together to create flow between platforms.

THE OMNICHANNEL APPROACH

The growth of outdoor advertising stems from its ability to complement other channels. A prime example is Oatly's recent campaign, which combined physical and digital advertising to ingeniously overcome France's strict laws that prohibit logos on murals. It reached millions worldwide, exemplifying the power of an omnichannel approach, as neither digital nor OOH advertising alone could achieve such widespread recognition.



Oatly's campaign in France combined physical and digital advertising

RETAIL MEDIA

Propelled by the decline of cookies, FMCG brands are now racing to discover alternatives to connect with and convert shoppers. While retail involvement in media isn't novel, what's different now is retailers possess extensive consumer databases, an online presence and a network of physical stores – ideal for tapping into consumer purchasing intent.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability remains a key focus, with responsible businesses actively working to minimise their environmental footprint. If your OOH supplier isn't carbon neutral or employing science-based reduction strategies, it's important to question why. Ad Net Zero serves as a beacon, guiding decisions beyond mere profitability. It's crucial for the industry to consistently advocate for sustainability – we're collectively striving for progress, not division.

MEASUREMENT

Methods of measuring OOH effectiveness and ROI have become more refined – the industry has matured past basing potential audience reach on maximum theoretical exposure. Instead, it's embracing a more nuanced approach: counting people, not devices for an accurate estimation of the audience.

OOH advertising remains exceptionally valuable, delivering CPM rates lower than any other industry.

CREATIVITY

Creativity is the superpower of OOH, transforming potential audience members into loyal customers by being memorable and creating brand fame. It explains why this age-old form of marketing has endured – when creativity is combined with contextual relevance and expansive reach, its impact becomes unstoppable. 📍

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‘HEARS’ THE THING ABOUT AUDIO

After the closure of Newshub and select programmes at TVNZ, all eyes are looking at content for consumption, advertising and marketing in other forms of media. One industry that continues to thrive is the audio space.

WORDS BERNADETTE BASAGRE

6.30am, that's when I tune in to the radio. It is usually on my drive to the gym when I listen to Mai FM's 'Mai Morning Crew'.

Lewis Tennant, AUT lecturer and host of the Verbal Highs podcast, describes it perfectly: radio continues to be popular because it is "habitual, easy to access and have on everywhere".

Listening to the Mai Morning Crew is part of my daily routine. And while the station changes, most of Aotearoa's population share the same habit.

Alistair Jamison, CEO of the Radio Broadcasters Association (RBA), says New Zealanders' radio listening figures over the past few years have been "boringly stable".

Every quarter, the RBA releases the independent Gfk survey, which gauges what's happening in radioland. Results consistently show 74 to 75% of Kiwis listen in.

Auckland's (horrific) traffic and popular broadcasting personalities contribute to our loyal listenership, but it's not the whole story. Whether you need a diversion on your hour-long commute, or a you're big fan of Mike Hosking, radio offers an intimacy and

sense of community that other media can't match.

And while your car's multi-speaker set-up is a world away from tinny transistor radio of decades ago, "the relationship between the listener and the personality has probably not changed that much in 50 years", Jamison says.

Over the airwaves, listeners can get to know the Jesse Mulligans and Toni Streets on a deeper level than TV can provide.

The challenge of diversifying to digital was part of the mix that saw Newshub and select TVNZ shows close, so all eyes are looking to see how the audio space will fare as the media environment changes.

Jamison isn't worried. He says audio is already deeply embedded within the digital sphere.

"We are still subject to all of the pressures of digital transformation. But I think the audio space has been able to navigate that a bit differently.

"If you look at radio since it started and the way they've operated and created content, it has been about personalities, it's been about the people and is not production heavy. So, it is very easy for that to naturally migrate into social channels," he adds.

And it's not just social channels that audio has adopted easily.

Both NZME's and MediaWorks' large body of radio work is now available on podcast platforms such as rova, iHeartRadio, and Spotify – so listeners can tune in whenever, and broadcasters can build an audience outside the set timeslot.

"We are offering consumers options. We're offering an option of listening live, picking it up later when it suits them or a summary version. You've got lots of options. It's all about connecting back to the brand and to experience the relationship you as an individual have with it, which makes it a lot stickier," says Jamison.

Consumption habits have changed and media on demand is now an expectation around the world, adds Tennant.

Big radio media players are stepping up to the digital plate.

Richie Culph, MediaWorks' Head of Digital Audio, says the business is making the switch to meet "multi-modal consumption" and retain audiences.

"As audiences move to more digital consumption, having a strong digital platform should be a priority for broadcasters. This enables maximum

understanding of users for personalised experiences and ad-targeting. Owning and developing our own digital platform specifically for the NZ market is a key strategy for MediaWorks' continued digital success," explains Culph.

"Broadcasters can no longer rely on a few big 'pipes' [radio frequency licences]. We must create new digital IP that is viable for the long term. Podcasts offer great opportunities in this space."

The shift has resulted in *Duncan Garner – Editor in Chief: Live*, a new daily live show broadcast that's expected to reach five to 10 times more ears than a standard podcast.

"While our inflection point is yet to really hit in NZ, I believe radio in NZ will be more resilient to change as we operate on a more cost efficient and dynamic model that is easier to adapt," says Culph.

"Radio has always been a very personal, high-trust medium and we see this as people turn to it with events like the flooding in Hawke's Bay in 2023. Podcasting garners even deeper trust, as audiences are making conscious choices to listen to specific content."

NZME shares this sentiment, seeing "remarkable growth" in digital audio and podcasting.

Jason Winstanley, NZME's Chief Audio Officer, says the broadcaster has seen a 23% growth in digital audio and 54% increase in podcast revenue in the past year.

This is thanks to changing consumer behaviour, which NZME is meeting by providing diverse and on-the-go content.

"It's been incredibly challenging to see our industry colleagues go through these closures and changes. What we have seen through this, in the face of the media landscape's shifts and challenges, is the resilience of radio in New Zealand," he says.

"Together, radio, digital audio and podcasting form a robust platform for information and entertainment, and strong opportunities for advertisers."

But the move to digital doesn't mean one medium is being favoured over the other. Rather, Winstanley says NZME is using the strengths of both mediums to grow the audio space.

Meanwhile media company Stuff, which doesn't specialise in audio, is disrupting the landscape. Tennant says rather than relying solely on big personalities to build relationships with listeners, Stuff Group has been using the medium to showcase investigative work from its larger newsrooms.



Laura Heathcote, Head of Audio at Stuff, says adding audio allows the business to become a "multimedia one-stop-shop for audiences" when it comes to news and investigations.

Knowing that Kiwis are already big podcast listeners, Stuff is keen to feed its audio-hungry audiences and has birthed a range of investigative work including *The Lake* and *The Commune* – along with its first subscriber series, *The Lost Boy*. Bite-sized content, such as *Tova* and the award-winning *Newsable*, covers more topical subjects.



"As audiences move to more digital consumption, having a strong digital platform should be a priority for broadcasters."

RICHIE CULPH
HEAD OF DIGITAL AUDIO,
MEDIAWORKS

Named Best New Audio Product at the INMA Global Media Awards, Stuff's *Newsable* is tailored for 25 to 40-year-olds, blending hard news, human interest stories and pop culture tidbits.

"We set out to deliver important and relevant news – but in a podcast format that younger, often news-avoidant audiences would love," says Heathcote.

"*Newsable's* success is a fabulous example of how Stuff Audio differentiates itself from the market."

But it's not just about the big media players. Tennant says independents like *The Morning Shift*, are disruptors, taking the daily morning radio format into podcast form and taking up a large amount of the audio market.

For the smaller shows, Tennant says the success and popularity of *The Morning Shift* can be seen as a big opportunity in realising the power of podcasting.

"It's about directly connecting with someone, making a podcast about a topic that totally relates to that goods or service provider's audience or market," says Tennant.

"You know that everyone in the audience wants your products because that's why they're listening. It's very different to trying to advertise to everyone on TV or radio when your podcast is more niche."

There's no doubt that the audio landscape is changing, and "blurring between mediums" seems to be why it's thriving.

As for my usual 6.30am listen in the car, I'll stick to hearing Mai FM's Morning Crew 'live', safe in the knowledge I can catch up with the podcast if I've got a day off. ▶

The Morning Shift shifts the audio space

After a successful stint on radio, *The Morning Shift* took what they learned, elevated it and applied it to a daily podcast. It's huge.

It feels safe to say every Gen Zer knows about *The Morning Shift*, which is charting at No 1 on Spotify in New Zealand and is in Australia's top 20.

The Morning Shift are the leaders in the podcast space with 6.2 million downloads since March 2023.

Hosted by Jordan Rivers, Brooke Ruscoe and producer Marc 'Matua Marc' Peard, *The Morning Shift* covers sports, entertainment, culture, but also thought-provoking commentary.

Peard, who worked in live radio for 20 years, says daily podcasting holds the same unpolished charm: not fine-tuning it and being rough around the edges can make a show. But what sets *The Morning Shift* apart is its content.

"There's a real change in content and audio, where we've now had social media long enough for us all to be good enough judges of what's genuine and what's not," says Peard.

The Morning Shift has taken off because they understand the shift in audience behaviour. Traditional media relies heavily on characters, which can be seen as a lack of genuineness, says Peard. Their podcast tackles this formula.

"We are who we say we are, we argue about the same things that you may be arguing about at home. We are friends, we're not a group of people that got put together for salary to make radio content. We are genuinely wanting to be there together and generally have strong opinions on certain topics," he says.

This more genuine approach extends to advertising. Instead of accepting money from fast food outlets, loan companies or gambling organisations, *The Morning Shift* seeks financial partnerships that evoke education and conversation.

"This isn't an audience you can buy, and it's not an audience for sale as we view it, our community could be perceived as being particularly

vulnerable. This is a powerful community that's hard to reach for the likes of the government – and we understand that. So with that comes great responsibility," he says.

"The beautiful thing is that we all know what we want to achieve, and it isn't personal fame, it's not anything to do with money. It's genuinely having these conversations to an audience that's really hard to reach for mainstream mediums and hoping that those conversations then get had in the homes of people that need to have them."

Peard cites a partnership with Lion as an example. While it's an alcohol brand, the Speight's campaign that focused on mental health checks over a drink resonated with the team.

The Morning Shift also worked with Chemist Warehouse, happy to spread its work in ditching the \$5 prescription fee.

Partnerships like this allow the podcast to stay genuine. It's a winning formula for the crew, who have gained a cult following among Kiwis and Aussies alike.

"I'll notice that we're doing well because over the last year I get stopped now 42 times a day to get photos, but the fame of doing the podcast is a side product," adds Peard.

"The end goal is – and the same remains for the boys – is that there is a genuine want to do better, to be better and to do what's right by our community." 🗨️



The Morning Shift crew, from left: Jordan Rivers, Brooke Ruscoe and 'Matua' Marc Peard

BOOTS TO BOARDROOMS

How two kids from the country grew Plato, the South Island's largest full-service agency.

People might look at Plato today and only see the largest full-service agency in the South Island. Based in Christchurch, it's easy to assume they're proverbial city slickers. But this business was co-founded by country kids who simply had big ambitions.

John Plato grew up in the rural town of Leeston while Lisa Plato hails from Alexandra. John was working as a diesel mechanic and Lisa was putting her marketing qualification to use at Ravensdown when the couple met in their early 20s and decided they wanted to launch their own business. So Plato was founded and of course they started out with what they knew best – the agriculture sector. Over the first three years of business, 80% of Plato's clients were in agribusiness, a sector they still serve to this day.

WHAT IS PLATO'S 'ORIGIN STORY'?

We began in 2007 on the cusp of the GFC. But challenges like that have never held us back from striving for growth. Like many owner/operators, we went all in – self-funded and self-driven, working out of our home. But it only took around six months before we needed to upscale in both premises and staff numbers.

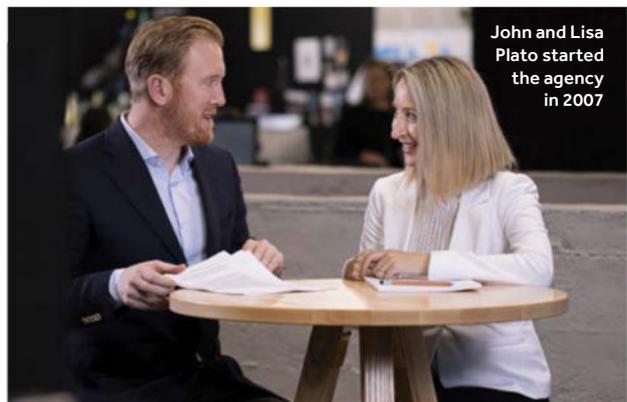
In the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes we lost and replaced our office and equipment TWICE. But that taught us to be responsive, resourceful and resilient.

Fast-forward 17 years and we're now a team of over 70. It's all down to a simple model: focus on client service, deliver commercial outcomes and build long-term partnerships.

We've never looked at how other agencies do it. Instead, we modelled ourselves as a customer-centric professional service. That's been key – helping us win business awards for service, craft, culture, and growth.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE RURAL SECTOR TO PLATO?

We are still very passionate about agribusiness and the rural communities of the South Island, given our agency was born to serve this sector primarily. We believe what's good for agribusiness is good for New Zealand. Rural communities are a vital part of our society and national identity, and the country's economy relies heavily on rural-based activities. Our vision at Plato is to inspire our client partners to think bigger and go further by delivering effective work that accelerates growth. By embracing the norms of social capital – trust, reciprocity, and mutuality – we can effectively support rural businesses to chase growth in an ever changing and highly competitive market.



HOW IS PLATO'S ROLE AS AN AGENCY EVOLVING?

From being involved with businesses outside of our agency capacity, for example sitting on boards, we know firsthand how much the opportunities and conversations being had today have changed as the world continues to witness rapid shifts in technology, communication, and consumer behaviour. Plato has responded to these evolving market demands by strategically adding to our specialist capabilities to ensure our clients have access to essential strategy and planning, creative, marketing and comms and digital skills.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

Our strategy is to strengthen our South Island business while exploring acquisition opportunities to continue our growth. Alongside this, we have been investing heavily in bringing in experience and talent to grow our specialist departments of marketing, web and tech, and brand.

Ultimately the plan remains the same, it's about helping our clients build their brands, grow sales and provide certainty and stability in their businesses. 🍷

platocreative.co.nz

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A paved road curves through the center of the frame, flanked by vibrant green fields. Several haystacks are scattered across the fields, casting long shadows. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with a clear sky.

GRASSROOTS CONNECTIONS

They do things differently in the country... sort of. We speak to the experts about how to market to Kiwis in rural and regional areas, and the best media options for reaching them.

WORDS NIKO KLOETEN



If you just look at the raw numbers, it would seem the country that gave the world the electric fence and Fred Dagg isn't rural at all. New Zealand is one of the most urbanised nations in the world: our three biggest cities (Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch) account for half our population of 5.2 million people, while only one in seven New Zealanders (14%) live rurally. Just 2-3% are farmers or their families.

That's why, with a few notable exceptions (such as *Country Calendar* and ad breaks during the rugby), our mainstream media doesn't have a huge rural focus. But our rural sector is crucial to the economy. New Zealand's food and fibre sector export earnings hit a record \$56 billion in 2023, projected to reach \$62 billion by 2027.

When combined with regional towns that service the primary industry and support other key sectors such as tourism, the rural audience is crucial for many advertisers. David Ramirez, Marketing Strategist at Plato Creative, says this group's distinct characteristics set them apart from their urban counterparts, making it essential for advertisers to tailor their messaging to engage and connect effectively.

"Rural New Zealanders often lead self-sufficient, practical lifestyles. So, advertisers should emphasise practical benefits and clearly communicate how their products or services can enhance daily life, whether by improving agricultural efficiency or offering cost-effective solutions for everyday needs," he says.

This audience also values trust highly due to their close-knit communities, so building long-term relationships is more effective than executing one-off campaigns, says Ramirez. "Through authentic storytelling, being transparent about product benefits, and consistently engaging with the community, advertisers can establish and maintain trust with this audience."

Ramirez says improved internet access and mobile connectivity to rural areas has seen a significant increase in digital engagement. More rural New Zealanders are now using social media and online news sites. "Despite this digital uptick, traditional media remains influential. According to the 2022 Nielsen Rural Survey, nearly 70% of rural residents still read at least one rural newspaper each month, and 80% tune into the radio weekly."

AVID READERS

Kate Boreham, Stuff Head of Regional and Rural Markets, says these Kiwis make up an important part of Stuff's audience. "Stuff gets rural and regional New Zealand. We have the largest regional news network in the country, reaching 79% of those living rurally or regionally," she says.

"With this comes deep and long-standing connections to communities across the motu. Each month, we get to the heart of what's happening in the agricultural sector in *NZ Farmer*, the country's largest rural publication. We help brands get their story in the mailboxes of farmers and in front of the people who drive primary industries."

Boreham says some of Stuff's channels have particularly strong rural audiences, with those living in rural and regional areas 17% more likely to visit social platform Neighbourly compared to its audience as a whole. "More than half (53%) of readers of Stuff's six regional newspapers (*Manawatū Standard*, *Taranaki Daily News*, *The Marlborough Express*, *The Nelson Mail*, *The Timaru Herald*, *The Southland Times*) live rurally."

Boreham says Stuff is also in the process of creating a more cohesive network of community and regional mastheads, tightly aligned to their communities' needs.

"The latest step in this process was Stuff's acquisition in May of the *Wairarapa Times-Age* masthead. This will strengthen our leading position in the lower North Island and unlock more great opportunities for our commercial partners."

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

Better connectivity has created more opportunities for advertisers to reach rural Kiwis on social platforms. Spencer Bailey, Head of Meta New Zealand, says: "When looking to expand your business to rural and regional communities, there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach and it will always depend on the business and the people within specific communities they are trying to reach."

However, Bailey does recommend a few ways to connect. "First do your research into the regional community you are trying to target and see if there are any cultural moments that align with your business that you can tap into. It could include posting a Reel ▶



tapping into this cultural moment, or a poll, questionnaire, or even sparking a conversation with some organic content on your Facebook page or Instagram profile.”

Another way to tap into regional communities could be engaging local creators that resonate with them, Bailey says. “This is a great way to tap into a local culture – leveraging someone who understands the local nuances who has a trusted relationship with this audience, and can act as a bridge between them and your business.”

In addition to these strategies, Meta’s Ads Manager offers targeting tools that allow you to campaign at specific locations, he says.

“This approach will enable you to reach your desired audience with precision and accuracy. By using these options, businesses can effectively reach and engage with rural and regional New Zealanders, ultimately expanding their customer base and growing their brand.”

LOVING THE LETTERBOX

Despite the rise of social, advertisers looking to get the attention of those in rural and regional areas shouldn’t underestimate the continued power of the letterbox drop. Clara Ng, Client Solutions Lead – Data at Reach Marketing Agency, says research shows that rural communities and those in the agri sector actively engage with both traditional and digital media.

“They still rely on traditional channels like letterbox as a key source of connection, and some of our most successful campaigns have driven huge



SPENCER BAILEY,
HEAD OF META NEW ZEALAND

sales for rural products and services within these communities. The fact that we can overlay a digital marketing layer targeting those same households or audience segments receiving the traditional letterbox component is also really powerful. Farmers and rural locals are also very much online, engaging with groups and brands via social media.”

Ng says Reach always focuses on using multiple channels to target and engage with the right audience. “Audience segments differ across New Zealand, and Reach offers unique insight into where those optimal audiences are for brands within a regional or rural market – which often looks different to Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. We have the ability to speak directly to those New Zealanders with relevance and multiple touch points to drive brand awareness and messaging.”

Ng says over the past few years Reach has seen many advertisers finding it hard to stand out in cluttered digital marketplaces. “This is where the power of the letterbox is really strong in the regional and rural sector,”

she says. “We had one rural campaign in particular where the business owner called us saying, ‘My phone will not stop ringing’ – best sales period he’d had in years. So yes, this is a sector in particular that benefits from letterbox.”

DOING IT TOUGH

While the rural sector is crucial to the New Zealand economy, it has been going through tough times. Nicola Harrop, Chief Marketing Officer for Kiwi agritech business Gallagher Animal Management, says for any brand, it is first and foremost important to understand the challenges your customers face, and what problems you can solve for them.

“This is especially true in the rural sector. Farmers are increasingly under growing pressure as economic and climate factors impact their day-to-day operations, so we feel it’s crucial that we are constantly looking for new ways to make life easier for them. That is true not just of our solutions offering but also our marketing,” she says.

“It is about making that decision making process easier, streamlining their route to purchase and removing any hassle. Our farmers are notoriously short on time, so it’s essential we take a solutions-first approach: no frills, no fuss!”

Harrop says Gallagher likes to take an omnichannel approach to its marketing efforts, ensuring that customers experience its brand consistently, “whether that is online via our active social channels, at Field Days, or through our dedicated retail partners”. While Gallagher’s digital



presence has grown in recent years, she says it recognises the importance of a local, grassroots approach with its New Zealand audience.

“We recently conducted some customer insights work and an overwhelming number of respondents spoke of their strong retailer relationships – which was great to hear, as we place a lot of focus on working closely with our distribution partners to create the best in-store experience for Gallagher customers.”

COMMUNITY CRUCIAL

Heather Claycomb, founder of Hamilton-based communications agency HMC, says the way her clients reach rural audiences has changed significantly in the 20 years she’s been in business, although radio and community newspapers can still be effective. She says one big way rural audiences differ from urbanites is that they really prioritise community.

“They’re volunteering at school, they’re going to church, they’re doing all these different things. And if you’re going to serve that community or want

to be influencing that community, you need to be part of that. You might do some sponsorship, but it’s not just writing a cheque. It’s being seen at the school, manning the barbecue for the fundraiser.”

Another aspect to watch out for when dealing with farmers is their “bullshit meter”, Claycomb warns. “Don’t bring in your corporate speak because they’re able to spot that right away.” She says farmers trust other farmers, and word of mouth “travels like wildfire” in those rural communities.

“You can use that to your advantage – or watch out if you’ve done something wrong; it’ll kill you, it’ll burn you. That’s what I might call second-party endorsement. When farmers want to talk to farmers, they’re going to ask, ‘What is this? What’s the product like?’ That sort of thing.”

Rural communities may be different, but Richard Aitken, Marketing Manager for rural insurer FMG, says sometimes it’s not about doing things differently but about asking the basic questions. “Are we helping farmers be better farmers, helping them to improve and thrive? As a mutual insurer, we keep highlighting our heritage, sharing our knowledge and fight to keep relationships strong, all that has not changed,” he says.

“How we do each of those things is changing, like sharing more targeted data and insights to clients and enhancing relationships through easy-to-use tools.

“Our clients want more than a transactional relationship with us because it holds us to account. Clients

like tech for productivity and react well if we help them in that way.”

Besides a broad television audience, rural has some strong and very helpful media partners who are “bigger than the numbers”, Aitken says. “Print still has a place, radio is strong and using partnerships to carry influence and messages is key. Supporting value-based programmes and organisations like Farmstrong and Melanoma NZ fill a rural need, and are influential channels because they illustrate the strong partnership you need to provide with rural communities.”

BABY STEPS WITH AI

One trend that has taken the marketing world (and much of the world in general) by storm over the past couple of years is AI. However, there are some challenges in terms of using it for producing rural content, according to Hot Mustard Managing Director Paul Bell. He says AI tools can come up with inaccurate information, while AI image generators are also not ideal for creating context-specific rural images.

“We’re dealing with companies where whatever we write has got to be sourced. And so if you start using tools like AI and it’s not sourced, you can get into an awful lot of trouble, or you get into copyright issues.”

Bell says Hot Mustard has been using AI at the back end to improve efficiency and make administration easier. “But the traditional stuff that AI is being used for in media and advertising, because our needs are so specific for the audience, it doesn’t exist yet.”



NICOLA HARROP,
CMO GALLAGHER
ANIMAL MANAGEMENT



Hot Mustard adds **extra flavour**

Takapuna is not known as an agribusiness hub, but tucked away in this suburb on Auckland's North Shore is New Zealand's most influential rural marketing agency. *NZ Marketing* spoke to the team at Hot Mustard about how they stay relevant to our ever-changing agri sector.

The world looks very different to how it did in 1997, when Hot Mustard, this country's first specialist rural marketing agency, was founded by Paul Bell and Nickie Miles. New Zealand has undergone its own immense changes in that time, and few parts of our economy have experienced more ups and downs than our rural sector.

The pace of change is only increasing, not just for farmers but also in tech, marketing and media, and Hot Mustard is adapting its offering in response to the evolving needs of marketers.

A key component in this evolution is Group Account Director Natalie Allen, who rejoined Hot Mustard last year after first working for the agency

nearly 20 years ago. "It was my first job after graduating from Otago University," she says. "Nickie and Paul took me under their wing, and I just loved the fast-paced energy of advertising. Back in those days, there was so much print production as the letterbox was the main channel for reaching farmers."

These days the focus is much more on digital and social media, video content and, of course, measuring performance and ROI. Allen brings significant experience agency-side and in the retail sector, and she sees her learnings from retail as being crucial to what she is doing at Hot Mustard.

"Even though our current clients aren't necessarily FMCG retail businesses, it's still ultimately about

understanding the customer, and using brand to drive conversion. I'm really enjoying applying those fundamental marketing skills to add value to our client's business."

Digital is another big theme of Allen's CV, and she is using that know-how to help rural clients get better bang for their buck with their campaigns. "We understand the pressures facing sales and marketing teams, and being able to add tangible value is exciting, especially at a time when every marketing dollar needs to be accountable," says Allen.

"Hot Mustard has always been results oriented, but we're taking it to the next level with investment in reporting tools that make it simple to see what's working and what's not."

Hot Mustard is no stranger to adapting to new technology and forms of media; as Bell notes, it was the first rural marketing agency in New Zealand to use social media. Mobile phones, which were little more than a novelty when he started the agency back in 1997, are now a major source of media consumption for growers and farmers.

“Over 70% of traffic to our clients’ websites comes from a mobile phone. It’s a big part of day-to-day farm business. They also watch a lot of video content,” he says. “Facebook and YouTube are dominant channels amongst rural audiences as sources of information.”

The way Hot Mustard works with clients to get the message out may have changed, but the things Bell loves about working with the rural sector haven’t.

“When we left Tauranga almost 30 years ago and came to Auckland, we decided to set up an agency specialising in agriculture. I loved the people – the people were amazing, and everything was really down to earth and pragmatic. Most of our clients were outside of Auckland, but I love travelling. So we just travelled all over New Zealand seeing clients, and we still do.”

Bell admits some of his clients started out sceptical when speaking to an

Auckland about rural matters, but he eventually won them over.

“It’s about being genuine, being honest and taking the time to understand their part in that sector and who in that sector they’re actually marketing to, because there are different types of farmers and different sectors of farming.”

One of the things that sets Hot Mustard apart is having dedicated specialists in strategy, creative, content, media and digital all under one roof, with sister businesses Diamond Media (a media buying agency) and Hum Interactive (website creation) bringing additional capabilities.

This also means Hot Mustard is fully accountable and agile, being able to optimise campaign performance quickly. To make things simpler for its clients in the up-and-down rural economy, Hot Mustard doesn’t insist on long-term contracts or retainers. Bell says: “We believe a true partnership is based on mutual benefit and respect, so every brief is an opportunity to prove our worth.”

Content is king in the digital age, and Hot Mustard is led in this regard by Creative Director Jayson Houghton, who was born and bred on a farm. “Jayson is our ideas engine,” says Allen. “He’s been with Hot Mustard for over 20 years and has a unique ability to make highly technical and complicated messages simple and meaningful.”

Gone are the days of spending weeks out on farm doing a TV shoot, but Allen says Houghton is ideally suited to the “nimble” era of today.

“Jay’s one of those creatives that just gets it. He’s seen how tech and digital have changed the landscape, and knows the challenge now is to stop the scroll and cut through the noise.”

With Allen on board, Hot Mustard can offer the best of both worlds: rural knowledge and cutting-edge marketing and digital expertise. “We’ve got the experience both in sector and in marketing,” she says. “And we’re also just the right size, so our clients get to work directly with key people in our agency – making us efficient, agile and fully accountable.”

*Curious to learn more?
Contact Natalie Allen for a chat:
natalie@hotmustard.co.nz
0210314869
hotmustard.co.nz · diamondmedia.co.nz*

Natalie’s top five tips for agri business marketers to survive 2024

1. The initial challenge will be recovering from this deep downturn that has significantly affected the bottom line of most agri businesses. The impact of restructures on product knowledge and continuity will be felt for a few years, so it’s going to be important to keep investing in building people and culture.

2. Keep up a marketing presence so that product is top of mind when the market turns. It is important to maintain your social presence, continue to create engaging content that keeps conversations with customers going, even when there is no appetite to purchase.

3. Be as efficient as possible with media selection, geotargeting where possible. Work out how you want to measure success and be prepared to change if the results don’t deliver.

4. Be nimble enough to capitalise on any opportunities that may arise. The GFC and Covid-19 changed the marketing landscape considerably. I expect this downturn will drive agri marketing further in a digital and social direction, but there will also be big opportunities to stand out and make an impact in other print and broadcast-based mediums, as competitors potentially exit long-term partnerships.

5. Stay positive! While it feels more challenging than ever right now, things will improve, and new opportunities will arise. Be ready to shift from maintenance to growth mode quickly when it does.



Natalie Allen is back at Hot Mustard after nearly 20 years away.

A TOAST TO THE GREATEST CAMPAIGNS OF THE LAST

50 YEARS

To celebrate its half century, the Marketing Association wants your help to find the best NZ campaigns of the past five decades. CEO John Miles talks Penny Murray through his favourites.



John Miles is reminiscing. The Marketing Association turns the big 5-0 this year and he's been taking a walk down memory lane. Marketing Campaign Lane, that is.

From Crunchie's "Great Train Robbery" mini movie in the 70s to Tina from Turners' catchphrase in the 2020s – with everything from Air New Zealand's Middle-earth safety videos and BASF's "Dear John" song playing crisply on cassette in between – the past five decades have seen some terrific campaigns, says Miles.

He should know. The Marketing Association CEO has been whittling down a list of great TV ads, posters, jingles, characters and slogans from that time period. Not just for his own entertainment (though it's been a fun exercise, he says, with a wide grin), but so the public can vote on their favourites.

So what can modern marketers learn from the last half century? Miles answers by taking us back a little further.

"One of the greatest story writers of all time was Howard Gossage, an ad man out of San Francisco in the late 50s early 60s, who said that people read or watch what's interesting to them – and that every now and then it might be an ad.

"Having looked at 50 years of advertising campaigns, it really highlighted to me that – when it comes to entertainment and putting a smile on people's faces – we used to do it a bit better."

Entertaining risk takers

The reason why is simple, says Miles.

"Part of it has been that people are more risk averse nowadays. Some of the things you could get away with in earlier years – having someone who's courageous enough to use what at the time was a swear word, like 'bugger' [as Toyota did in its famously controversial Hilux ads] – I think that sort of risk taking's gone. You've got a lot more of the

heartwarming campaigns, but do they really entertain or put a smile on people's faces? I'm not really sure."

Is there still a place for risk taking in these deeply sensitive times? Miles is adamant: "We have to get back into that."

Humour is one way of making your campaign memorable – and beer ads have been among the most successful, he says.

"In the old days, you had television as an entertainment medium, so if you wanted to capture people's attention you really needed to entertain. Or be footstomping. Some of the Speight's ads – which were very blokey and meant to be doing the quintessential Southern Man thing – they were comedy. They were designed to be boys' comedy. Women hated them, but it was schoolboy humour."

That series might not have dated so well, but others stand up today. And while local references can hit the spot, "good comedy is good comedy", says Miles.

"If you go back to 1987 when Griff Rhys Jones and Mel Smith did the Steinlager ad, it was set in a London pub. [Tagline: They're drinking our beer here.] It won the best alcohol ad in the world, and it's just good humour. It travels.

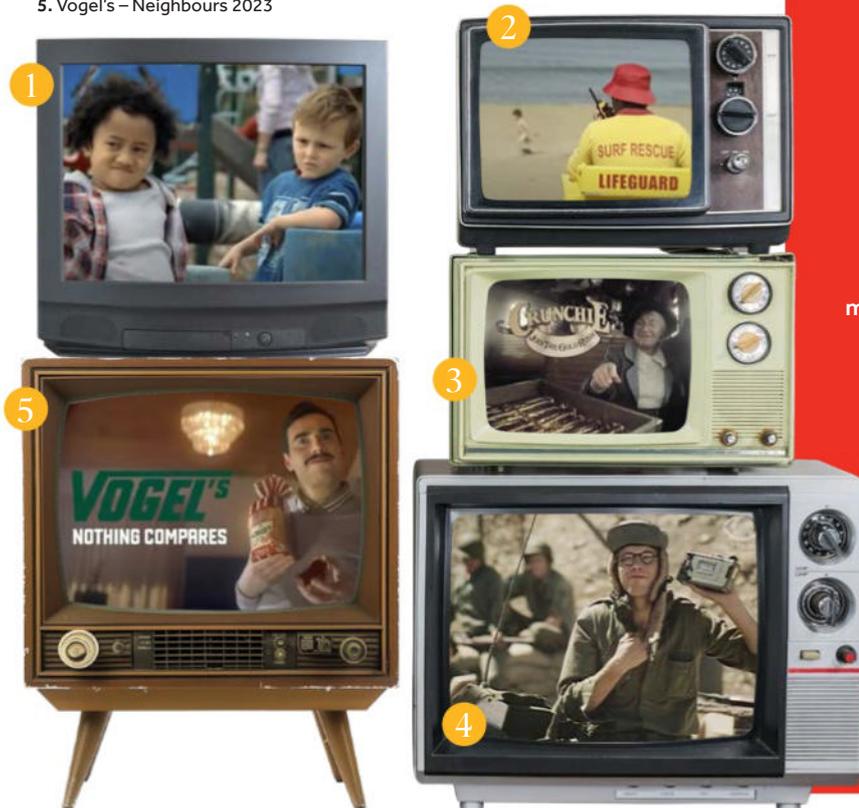
Consistent, provocative

"The really memorable ones have that little quirkiness to them," says Miles.

"And a great campaign line. The Tui 'Yeah right' billboards were legendary. It was the cheapest production in the world and they used contemporary issues to create humour. People would come into work and go: 'Did you see the latest Tui billboard?'"

Opposite: Marketing Association CEO John Miles

1. Mitre 10 – ‘You’re Dreaming’
2. Sky Television – Life needs more sport
3. Cadbury Crunchie – Great Crunchie Train Robbery
4. BASF – Dear John
5. Vogel’s – Neighbours 2023



How to vote

To select the shortlist, the Marketing Association looked at memorability, impact, creativity, longevity and whether a campaign had won any awards. Now the public can vote on their favourites.

Here's how: Scan this QR code or head to marketing.org.nz and search for "greatest campaigns".



Watch the ads in each decade, and complete the form to choose the ad you think should win per decade.

Enter your full name and email address, and you'll go into the draw to WIN a year's supply of Vogel's!



"The one I remember – which has come true – was: 'Camilla for Queen. Yeah right.' They were always consistent, always provocative. A little on the nose."

And while comedy cuts through, it's not the whole story.

Miles has a very soft spot in his heart for Telecom's 2005 "Keep in touch" Father's Day ad – a set of home video clips of dad and lad, growing up and growing older, ending with the adult son devastated by grief.

"Father and Son – I'd say it's the most emotional ad of all time. It's entertaining, with the amazing Cat Stevens singing, and it's got such a powerful message at the end. But that's not comedy, that's heart rending. It's fabulous."

NZTA's Legend campaign from 2011 gets a special mention from Miles also, for delivering powerful messages leavened with humour. One line – "You know I can't grab your ghost chips" – became a cultural phenomenon.

He says Vogel's has been consistent with humour and music in its adverts and the latest one, where straitlaced Gareth goes over to the gang pad and asks for his Vogel's back, is no exception. Chris Knox's "Not Given Lightly" has been the soundtrack for 20 years – "Now it signposts a Vogel's ad."

Takeaways for modern marketers

And on the subject of music, Miles highlights the benefits of bespoke jingles.

"Cadbury Creme Eggs had 'Don't get caught with egg on your face' – such fabulous use of music, composed by Murray Grindlay. We could learn from what used to be done with the special composing of music, so you owned the rights."

Many of the classic campaigns Miles mentions are from the days when viewers couldn't skip or pause as the commercials played out for minutes at a time. Today's shorter attention spans mean creativity is more important than ever, he says.

"Now, with the different mediums available, if you want to hold on to a person and get them to watch more than 10 seconds at the beginning of a YouTube video, you actually have to be even more creative in that first 10 seconds, so they'll watch the 30 seconds."

Many fondly remembered campaigns from the past still stand up today.

"Oh yeah, the original Vogel's does. 'Bugger' does – if they put some new Toyota models in there. The Legends campaign from New Zealand Transport.

"I should mention Air New Zealand as well – what they did with the Hobbit inflight videos revolutionised something that was boring as batshit, around the world.

"The police epic recruitment video [2017] – that was EPIC. And I defy any son not to want to call their dad after watching 'Father and Son' for Telecom."

And though Miles would like brands to venture away from the safety of the middle of the road more often, he's aware lots of courageous ideas are knocked back by clients.

"I'd love to see more bravery from clients saying to their agencies, 'Hey, give us more 'buggers' of the world.'" 🍌

The Marketing Association thanks Mosh Social Media for help with the social advertising.



GRAB YOUR EARLY-BIRD TICKET NOW

The Marketing Association brings you another inspiring Brand Summit coming this September in Auckland!

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monthly marketing meetup

The Marketing Association and its Special Interest Groups host fantastic networking and learning events every month! Come along in-person to meet industry peers, learn, and enjoy nibbles and drinks. Or, join us online to watch the panel via live-stream!

Thanks to Mosh Social Media for supporting these events!

These events are Free for MA Members.





The client-side guide to managing stakeholders

during your next branding project

Before you embark on a major branding project, take a minute to consider your stakeholders. Kate Murchison, General Manager at branding agency Principals Aotearoa, explains.

Stakeholder engagement can be the trickiest part of a branding project. The challenge is branding is subjective: what one person loves, another might hate. It becomes a balancing act where you need to get buy-in, ensure everyone feels included while deciding which feedback to take on board and which to ignore.

But with clear communication, well-defined goals, and a bit of planning, you can keep everyone on the same page.

Remember – you’re the expert

It’s easy to lose sight of that with all the questions and differing opinions, but you were hired for your expertise.

People look to you for direction, leadership, and a clear point of view. They expect you to listen to their feedback and explain why some things work and others don’t.

But you’re not on your own. Your branding agency wants the same success you do and will happily help.

So, when you need to refine your message or deal with a tricky query, don’t hesitate to lean on them.

Identify your key ‘players’

At the start, take some time to identify your key stakeholders. A power-interest grid is a great tool for this. It lets you quickly sort people into four groups: players (high power, high

interest), subjects (high interest, low power), context setters (low interest, high power), and the crowd (low power, low interest).

Your top priority should be the “players”, the folks with the most influence and the biggest stake. They’re the VIPs, so keep them in the loop.

Think of the grid as your cheat sheet – it shows you where to focus your energy and who should be at the key meetings. It also helps you avoid being sidetracked by the “crowd,” so you can stay on track with the people who matter most to the project’s success.

Prep your engagement

Once you have identified your key stakeholders, make sure you plan how and when to bring them into the mix.

It’s easy to be overly optimistic about

how much time you’ll have to process feedback but this can lead to a mad scramble.

So do yourself a favour, give yourself a couple of extra days after stakeholder presentations to really let the feedback simmer and figure out what’s useful and what’s just noise.

Share these plans with your agency so they can add key meeting dates, discussion needs, and feedback timing to the production schedule. This way, everyone is on the same page. Your future self will thank you.

Set some boundaries

We’ve all been there: you’re cruising through a project, everything’s going smoothly, and then, out of nowhere, someone questions a decision that was made ages ago. Suddenly, everyone’s spooked and you’re back to square one.

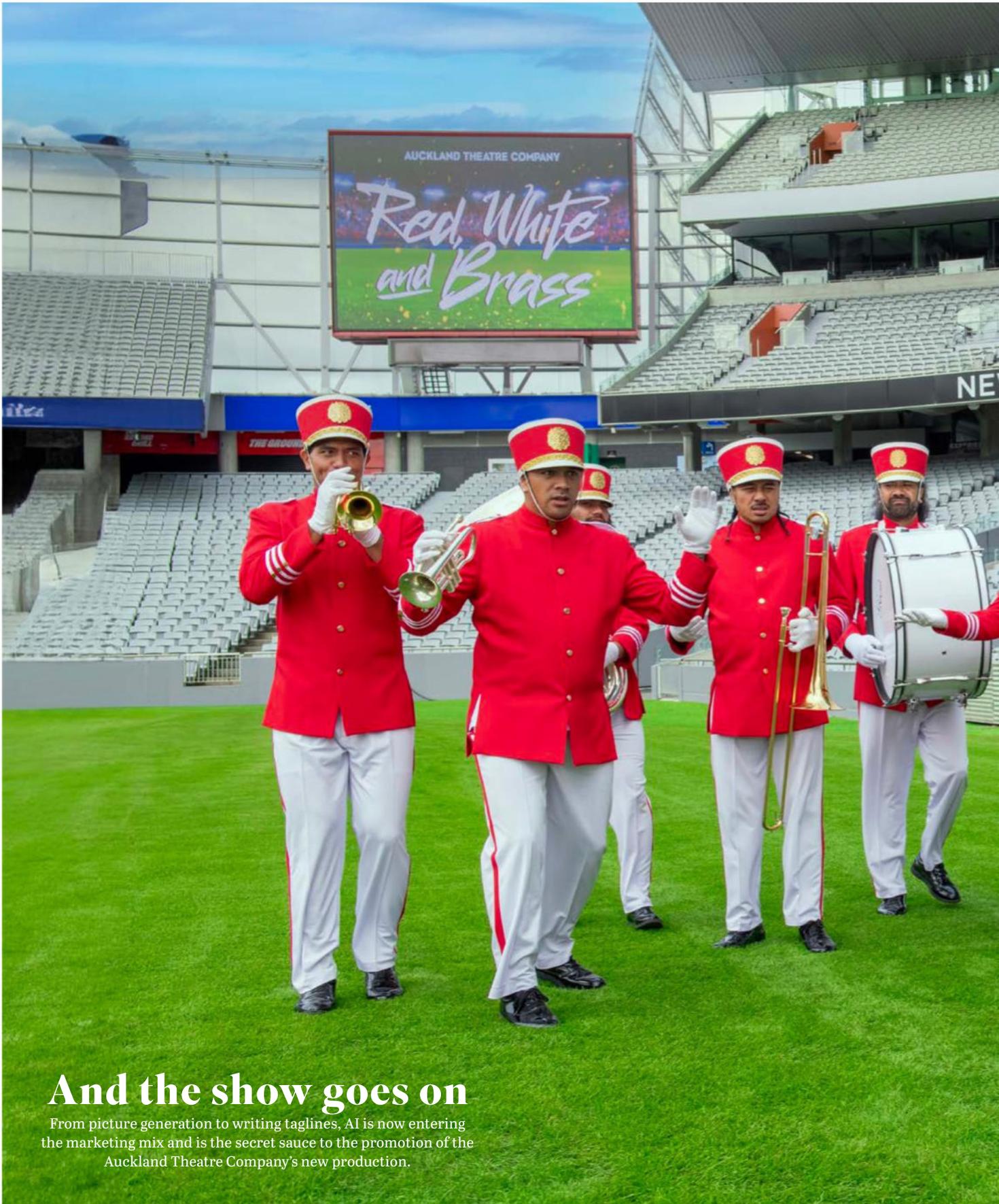
To avoid this kind of chaos, it’s crucial to clearly communicate which parts of the project are open to feedback and which ones aren’t, either because they’re already agreed or it comes down to personal taste.

By setting these boundaries at each engagement, you can keep everyone focused and prevent unnecessary backtracking.

Embarking on a branding project can feel daunting. It takes confidence, co-ordination, and a knack for keeping everyone on track. But with a solid engagement plan, a few well-placed boundaries and a trusty branding agency by your side, you can juggle all the feedback and steer the project to success without losing your sanity. ☘

Kate Murchison has led a host of branding projects, agency and client-side, including the most recent rebrand of Kiwi telco Chorus.

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| HIGH INTEREST | Subjects | Players |
| | Crowd | Context Setters |
| LOW INTEREST | POWERLESS | POWERFUL |



And the show goes on

From picture generation to writing taglines, AI is now entering the marketing mix and is the secret sauce to the promotion of the Auckland Theatre Company's new production.



media

78

A peek behind the curtain of *Red, White and Brass* reveals a new way to reach your target audience.

THE RISE OF RETAIL MEDIA

In a fragmented media market, retailers are getting in on the action, selling advertising solutions and even setting up their own media agencies. We look at the big trends in the growing retail media sector.

WORDS NIKO KLOETEN

A digital advertising screen in a Woolworths supermarket



There are few parts of New Zealand's media industry younger than retail media.

If the agencies involved were people, they would all be in kindergarten. The main players are Woolworths' agency Cartology (a wizened three years old), Foodstuffs' equivalent Precision Media (an 18-month-old toddler) and Marketmedia, which launched as The Warehouse's unified retail media group in late 2022.

But what does 'retail media' actually mean? Sally Tobin, Managing Director ANZ at Mars United Commerce (formerly the Mars Agency), defines it as any form of media that is owned by the retailer themselves. "I think just defining it as 'owned assets' probably covers your in-store and out-of-store assets. When it comes to social amplification, we just refer to that as their off-platform partnerships."

The concept of retail media was pioneered globally by the likes of online retail giant Amazon, which realised the value of its huge customer base (and first-party data) to other advertisers. Tobin says New Zealand's retail media sector is still in its infancy, but she



SALLY TOBIN
MANAGING DIRECTOR ANZ
AT MARS UNITED COMMERCE

Right: Woolworths pop-up activations for Listerine and Persil



ALEX LAWSON
HEAD OF STRATEGY &
MEDIA FOR MARKETMEDIA

picks it to have a “much more rapid evolution” than elsewhere in the world.

“That’s because they’ve taken a little bit of a different approach, in that a lot of the people running the media networks actually have come from media agency backgrounds, so they are hitting the ground running. It’s a very different way to how the US established retail media, where it was very much retail-centric experts starting in the retail media space.”

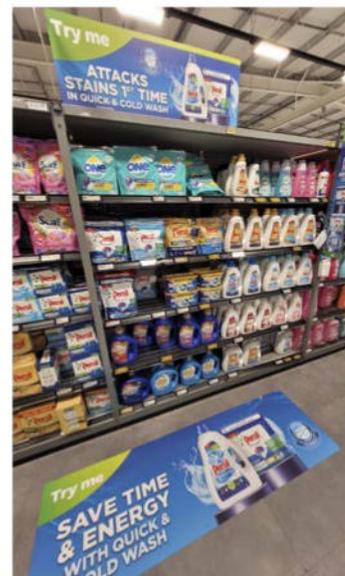
THE BENEFITS OF YOUTH

Mars United Commerce recently launched its Retail Media Report Card in New Zealand, examining 62 key capabilities across five performance areas – targeting, measurement, media opportunities, innovation and partnership. Tobin says one benefit of New Zealand’s retail media scene being so young and comparatively small is that agencies can learn from all around the globe.

“They’re not the first market to go in, so they’re actually able to understand all the best tech stacks and all the best ways of working and offerings from global business models, and they’re able to adapt that quite quickly.” The relatively small size of New Zealand’s retail media players also means they can experiment, she says.

Tobin uses the example of Zitcha, a self-service retail media ad platform developed as a joint venture between MarketMedia and an Australian digital agency. “No one’s done that level of platform in Australia, but we’re a bigger market and everyone’s moving at pace and the idea of self-service was quite risky. New Zealand can lean into innovation a little bit more heavily and quite quicker with less risk in some sense.”

Alex Lawson, Head of Strategy & Media for MarketMedia, says that while



there is plenty to learn from big international players like Walmart, Aotearoa is leading the world in some aspects of retail media. “Because New Zealand is small, because we don’t have the budgets that are available to others, we have a much better mentality,” he says.

“As a country, we’ve got a No. 8 wire mentality. We’ve always been a test bed from a marketing perspective; we’re one of the most creative marketing countries in the world, and we’ve been leading the world in a lot of this development.”

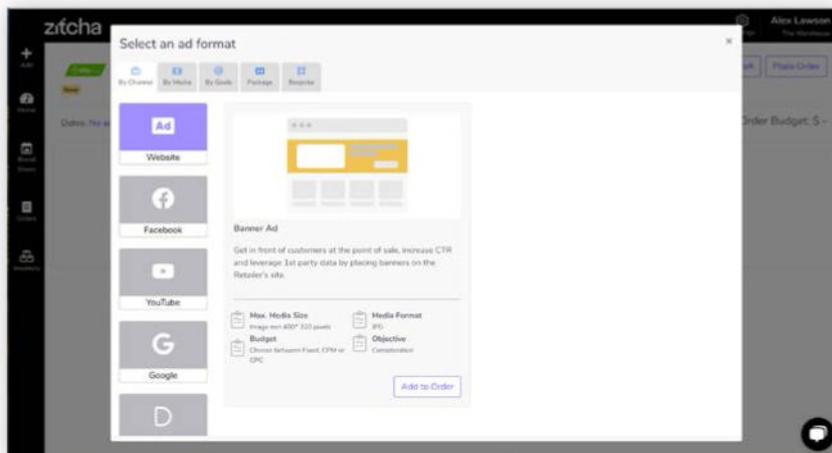
DIY APPROACH

Lawson says MarketMedia decided to build Zitcha after engaging with several major global platforms looking for the tools it was after. “But they didn’t do everything we wanted them

to do, and they wouldn’t engineer it because we weren’t important, so we did it ourselves.”

They have received positive feedback on Zitcha when travelling abroad to meet others in the industry, including from some of the world’s biggest retailers, Lawson says. “A person from Walmart said to our face, ‘You are massively ahead of us in a tech platform base.’ Now, they are ahead of us in other places, but in certain areas we have that ability to play and to develop things, because we’re in New Zealand,” he says.

“We can do it, we can try, we can fail. It doesn’t cost us as much. It’s like, ‘Okay, that didn’t work. Let’s pivot it and do this, move it that way.’ Whereas if you’re at a Walmart or somewhere like that, if your project fails, you probably get fired.” ▶



MarketMedia developed the Zitcha platform in a joint venture



Digital in-store advertising at The Warehouse

Kim Leybourne, Head of Precision Media, says one of the biggest drawcards for retail media is data, particularly at a time when third-party cookies are due to be phased out. “When you’ve got first-party data, you have a great opportunity to be able to connect with consumers. And by connecting with those consumers, we can close the loop on how we report back on their behaviour.”

Leybourne says Precision Media’s philosophy is to create a “win-win-win” situation with its advertising. “It’s a win for the customer because we are putting the right messages in front of them at the right time to be able to give them that relevancy of product. It’s a win for suppliers because we’re able to provide new customers for them and give them a sales lift. And it’s a win for our store owners, which is super important for us because it’s all about them being able to deliver category growth.”

STANDARDISATION IS KEY

As the retail media industry grows, Leybourne says one issue that needs to be resolved is standardising the way results are measured. “This is critical for us as an industry to get right. They still don’t have it right globally. I think that makes it really difficult for suppliers to understand and measure how certain retail media networks are working versus others.”

However, Leybourne is confident the key players in New Zealand can work together to find a solution relevant to our market. “Across the globe, they’ve

got these big forums where they’re all getting together and it’s all quite dramatic. I don’t think we need to be like that. I think there’s some really easy wins for us to come together as a team basically, team of five million and all that good stuff.”

Leybourne says Precision Media always focuses on awareness, conversion and retention, and they have certain products or assets within both their store and online environment that align to those. “If you were coming in with an NPD [New Product Development] as an example, we would look at all of our banners at point of shelf. We have digital screens at front of the store, so we would look at attracting your attention at the front of the store.

“And then we always talk about how do we close that loop? So how do we come back through something like an EDM once we know that you’ve either purchased the product or that you potentially are in that interest category. We obviously look at online as well. As of the 1st of May, we have a homepage banner, which is super exciting. And our sell-out rate already is 100% up to August.”

CHANGING CUSTOMERS

Samantha Osborne, General Manager at Cartology NZ, says customers have changed, and they are in control like never before – in control of the media they consume, brands they engage with and the products they buy (as well as when and how).

“They are harder to reach in the traditional ways we have in the past. No longer is a TV spot in primetime going to capture your audience. Audiences are digital-first, streaming, skipping and scrolling. And in a cookie-less world, understanding who your audience is has become even harder. We are talking about real

customer understanding, not audiences, cookies or inferred customers.”

Customers are also harder to impact and harder to measure, says Osborne. “We’ve seen the return to privacy. With the decline of cookies and IDFA tracking changes, consumers are more in control of how their data is managed. These changes mean having true 1:1 relationships with customers is deeply important.”

In a more competitive environment, innovative brands will increasingly use store media to build deeper connections with customers. The connected store offers brands the opportunity to tell a cohesive brand story where their customers are, speaking to them at every point on their journey, Osborne says.

“They can inspire at the entrance, inform between the aisles and influence near the shelf. And while every channel serves its own specific role, they are more powerful combined – enabling brands to reinforce their value across a varied creative canvas.”

In an average supermarket today, thousands of products are on promotion at the same time, Osborne says. “Shopping budgets are under pressure, and the popularity of own label continues to grow. ‘Sleep shopping’ is commonplace. In short, competition is everywhere, and brands can’t rely on price alone to stand out.”

Osborne says one area Cartology has focused significant resource in is its digital product and platforms.

“Working in conjunction with the WooliesX team, we have been able to build, test and launch a variety of new exciting products that help our clients find new to brand customers, returning customers, but most importantly drive overall ROI.

“As this part of the business continues to grow and customers become more demanding in how they shop and what they expect through personalisation we are at the forefront of ensuring we create products that enable our clients to capture these customers.”

CONTEXT IS QUEEN

Retail media has opened new ways for brands to connect to customers, but are they making the most of the opportunity? Ben Partington, CEO of retail marketing and media agency Hyper, says: “If content is king, context is queen.” While retail media has



SAMANTHA OSBORNE
GENERAL MANAGER AT
CARTOLOGY NZ



KIM LEYBOURNE
HEAD OF PRECISION MEDIA

dramatically increased the number of media touchpoints and formats available to advertisers, he says best practice use of these channels is in its infancy.

“We’re finding that while media agencies and brands are excited by the opportunity to speak more directly to shoppers, based on the context of these environments, it seems that creative agencies aren’t currently part of the conversation, making supply of environment-specific content rare.”

SIGNIFICANT GROWTH

Hyper has achieved significant growth over the past year, underpinned by the signing of five new retailer partnerships and the deployment more than 500 new digital screens nationwide. “As the network has grown, so too has our utility to agencies and brands, leading to a sharp uptick in revenue in 2023. We were delighted to observe 176% growth in new advertiser categories and over 70% growth in gross media sales,” Partington says.

“Our expansion has been complemented by the integration of programmatic trading via Hivestack and Vistar, which, together with the rollout of a new proprietary inventory and campaign management system, has significantly enhanced our audience targeting, delivery and reporting capabilities.” Despite this, Partington says brands can do more with what retail media offers them.

“The bulk of the campaigns we’re serving are generic brand or trade communications. In order to harness the true power of contextual relevance, agency villages need to come together more effectively in the planning phase. We believe that DCO [Dynamic Creative Optimisation] will become more prevalent to reduce the operational load for agency teams and drive cost efficiencies for brands.”

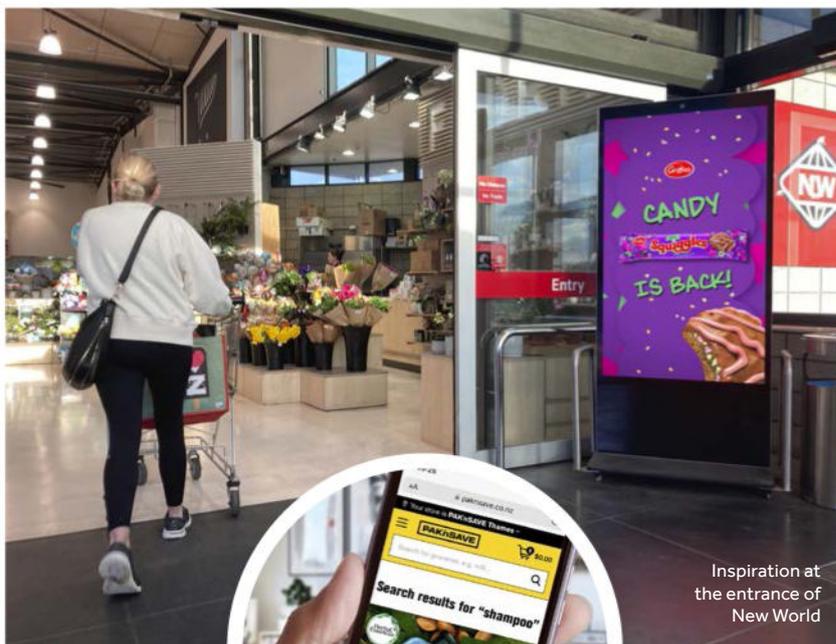
Lawson, of Marketmedia, echoes the need to get your creative right to get the



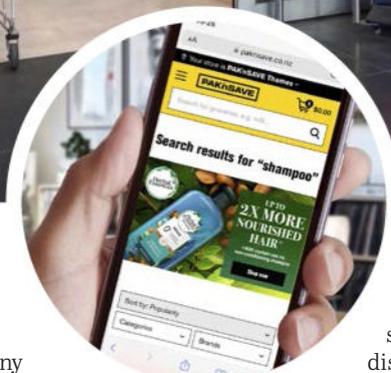
Retail media signage can be small



A ‘flanner’ (flag/banner) in a New World



Inspiration at the entrance of New World



Pak'nSave's website serves sponsored products to browsers

full benefits of retail media. “If you spend any time in media agencies or creative agencies like I have, you know the stats will be anywhere from 70% to 86% of the effectiveness of any ad campaign is down to the creative.

“And in retail media, it’s no different. In fact, you could argue it’s almost more important because if you’re directly able to track results of a campaign at a sales level, back to individual units of media.”

Lawson says it is important to work with advertisers to establish what they are trying to do, and advise them on

the best ways that retail media creative works. He says some suppliers have had disappointing results and blamed the channel

itself, when the problem may have been their campaign execution or even misinterpretation of data.

“If you’ve got somebody who’s going, ‘Hey, I’m going to literally decide whether you provide value or not based on the sale that happens,’ and then they’re putting out a totally bland piece of creative with no call to action, no incentive for somebody to pick up at that moment and buy or anything like that, then you are between a rock and a hard place right from the start.”

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Collaboration, vision and **HOPE**

Anna Gunnell, Head of Planning NZ at global creative company VML, reports from the North American Social Marketing Conference in Florida, where she presented two campaigns.

Florida is Trump country – not exactly where you’d expect to discover a dose of hope. Yet, at the North American Social Marketing Conference in May, I found just that.

The conference is a yearly hub where social marketers converge to share insights, network and fuel each other’s efforts to drive meaningful change. Representing VML New Zealand, I presented two of our campaigns: ‘Stick it to Hep C’ and ‘Tatau Tātou: All of Us Count’ alongside our Health New Zealand client, Brooke Cheeseright. The experience was a treasure trove of insights for social marketers in Aotearoa. Here, I share some of them with you.



COLLABORATION IS KEY TO TACKLING THE WORLD’S BIG ISSUES

Amid the chaos of today’s societal challenges, unity emerged as a key theme. We need to harness diverse thinking – uniting academics with social marketers, the private with public sector, and those with lived experiences with tech experts. The ultimate takeaway? Collaboration is essential. Always ask: “Who can I collaborate with?”

A VISION BEYOND OUR LIFETIMES

Transgenerational psychologist Raquel Schlosser offered a profound statement: “Pain is silent. It doesn’t talk and when you express it, it becomes a pattern. But hope lies in the fact that what I do today will last for the next four generations.” She encouraged us to have a multi-generational vision for behaviour change, seeding impacts today that will ripple through time.

WHERE ARE THE TRIBES?

Tosheena Nez, a multicultural communications specialist, led a powerful session called ‘Improving Lives: Determinants of Health for Native People and Cultural Competency’, where she told stories of health disparities familiar to those in Aotearoa. She challenged us to ask: “Where are the tribes?” This held huge power because it made the lack of representation in the room glaringly obvious. It made me think of our own iwi here in Aotearoa, and how they’re often missing from conversations about them. Nez offered a way to address that: “Cultural competency is important, but cultural humility will take you further.”

Cultural competency says we can create campaigns for audiences without them so long as we have cultural experts. Cultural humility admits there is only so much we can learn – lived experience trumps learned expertise every time.

AI – A TOOL FOR GOOD?

The importance of including those with lived experience in social marketing programmes was also championed by other speakers and delegates. But the power of lived experiences was juxtaposed by exploring artificial intelligence as a ‘tool for good’. Yes, AI contributes to misinformation, but it could also provide more personalised health conversations, for example. Despite its divisive use today, AI could help us connect more effectively in the future.

HOLDING OUR OWN ON THE WORLD STAGE

Listening to world-leading academics and social marketing practitioners, I found their strategies resonated with our approach here in Aotearoa. We’re big on people-centred solutions, we practice diversity and collaboration daily, we’re not afraid to test new thinking or technology and, though we’re small, we punch well above our weight when it comes to global action. In fact, the campaigns I presented felt like they stacked up on a world stage. Our campaigns not only hold their own regionally, but they also shine on a global level.

That’s why I have hope, especially for Aotearoa. Although we’re faced with some tough societal issues right now, I believe we, as social marketers, can and will do our part to tackle them. We’re ready for the challenge. 🗣️

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF WEAVING CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

Understanding audiences and their cultural worldviews is crucial for crafting effective campaigns and communications that resonate with ethnic-specific audiences. Spearheading the art of weaving and unlocking cultural insights is Aotearoa-Pacific agency Bright Sunday.

When Bright Sunday delivered health campaigns to Pacific communities during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, it showed the importance of creating ethnic-specific and culturally nuanced messages to achieve behaviour change.

“Instead of taking the clinical English message and translating it as is, we workshoped the message with our village of Pacific creatives and cultural experts and asked them to express it in a way that made sense for their respective communities,” says Bright Sunday’s Founder and Chief of Strategy, Galumalemana Stella Muller.

The result was a successful health campaign delivered to nine ethnic-specific Pacific communities that worked quickly to build trust and confidence.

Muller emphasises that when marketing to ethnic-specific audiences, culturally nuanced creative messaging should be the standard.

“Taking the message and thinking: what is the Māori way, what is the Samoan way, what is the Tongan way of saying this? There’s more to it than just translating an English message into each language,” she says.

“There are always more interesting and relatable ways to communicate messages – often inspired by indigenous and Pacific worldviews, stories and constructs.”

When Muller started her communications career 22 years ago in the public sector, she says it was rare to see ethnic-specific campaigns and communications.

“Back then it was grassroots Māori and Pacific organisations pushing ethnic-specific communications because they understood the value of this approach – and they proved that it worked,” she says.

Since setting up Bright Sunday in 2010, she has seen the landscape of her industry change and client needs evolve out of a desire to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori and Pacific people.

“There’s now a real appreciation for the work that agencies like ours bring to the table. We’re heavily invested in getting it right for our communities and that’s why we work differently,” says Muller.

Bright Sunday’s Covid campaign messages were workshoped with Pacific cultural experts so they struck a chord with each community



“Our practice of raranga-lalaga is the art and science of weaving together audience perspectives and worldviews to form the patterns or insights for strong strategy and engaging creative communications,” Muller says. “That’s our craft.”

A recent example of Bright Sunday’s work is the Pacific cervical screening campaign promoting screening choices and the new HPV self-test option.

The lalaga conversations they had with Pacific women and screening providers resulted in the creation of resources and a digital campaign that offered a “beautiful” way to talk about a taboo topic from a Pacific cultural perspective.

“We heard from women that they weren’t scared to talk about cervical screening, but they did need communications to be framed in a culturally appropriate way that acknowledged the mana and sacredness of Pacific women. This insight opened up a creative way to express the message successfully to engage Pacific women,” Muller says.

Another important aspect of this approach is journeying with clients to build their confidence and understanding of ethnic-specific and cultural approaches.

“We often work with non-Māori and non-Pacific people who have a real passion to make a difference for our communities, but sometimes worry they might get it wrong.

“We often work with non-Māori and non-Pacific people who have a real passion to make a difference for our communities, but sometimes worry they might get it wrong.”

“Our role goes beyond creating and launching an exceptional campaign. We are committed to collaborating with clients and stakeholders to ensure the job is done the ‘right way’, offering cultural guidance and encouragement throughout the process. We genuinely feel a deep responsibility to support (awhi) them every step of the journey.”

She also challenges clients to factor in appropriate resources and timelines for the planning and engagement process.

“These are the communities we all come from, so we have a responsibility to reciprocate and keep them informed – when the client invests in that relational way of doing the work, they’re going to get better outcomes,” Muller says.

“We have to do things differently and push the boundaries because the work we do in advertising and marketing significantly influences people’s choices and life decisions. Especially with health campaigns, lives quite literally depend on us disrupting the status quo.”

With the explosion of independent agencies and the growing presence of Māori and Pacific agencies in the Aotearoa Pacific region, Muller agrees the best is yet to come.

“We’re only scratching at the surface of what can be achieved,” she says, “and I believe our industry can lead the way to show the world how we roll to unlock cultural worldviews and truths for impactful and life-changing campaigns.

“Let’s weave!” 🗨️

stella@brightsunday.co.nz · brightsunday.co.nz

Galumalemana Stella Muller challenges the advertising industry to factor in time for engagement
Below: Bright Sunday’s cervical screening campaign offered a “beautiful” way to talk about the subject



THEATRE COMPANY FLIPS THE SCRIPT

From church groups to AI, Auckland Theatre Company found innovative ways to get audiences in to see *Red, White and Brass* – a celebration of community engagement.

WORDS ZAHRA SHAHTAHMASEBI

In *Red, White and Brass*, Tongan rugby superfan Maka will stop at nothing to see his team play the opening match against France at the 2011 Rugby World Cup... Including starting his own brass band to perform at the international tournament, with only four weeks to spare.

Naturally, a comedy of errors ensues, laughs ATC Marketing Director Joanna O'Connor.

Red, White and Brass is a stage adaptation of a 2023 film by the same name. It's based on true events and is one of the eight plays to be performed by Auckland Theatre Company in 2024.

O'Connor highlights it for how every aspect – from adaptation to the casting to the marketing – embodies ATC's goal, set by artistic director and CEO, Jonathan Bielski.

"That we are not the theatre company for a group of Auckland, we are Auckland's theatre company, so we have to reflect Auckland with our programming that's on stage, but also the audiences we invite in," says O'Connor.

"It's a large-scale professional production, but it speaks to a particular community. It is their story, it is told by them for them – and everybody can enjoy it."

The play's co-producers and talent are vibrantly active in their communities – with playwright Leki Jackson-Bourke hugely involved in the Polynesian theatre world and cast member Diamond Langi with 58,000 Instagram followers.

While a large social media following is not a requirement for casting, it helps to create a groundswell and speaks to the heart of the target audience, O'Connor adds.

For *Red, White and Brass*, ATC produced a lot of visual assets, bilingual videos and ran open photo shoots, giving the team full rein to capture and share content.

While tapping into the networks of their creatives and talent, ATC also sought out community leaders to spread the word at local churches, town hall groups, libraries and in Facebook groups.

Tastemakers and social media influencers also made an appearance, says O'Connor. They were invited to experience theatremaking, whether at a script reading or sitting in on a rehearsal.

Sponsored content prices not-for-profits organisations like ATC out of the market, so there was no pay for play.

But O'Connor says some of the niche influencers have more impact than ATC getting a four-minute spot on a mainstream TV show.

Sometimes – being a Pākehā organisation with a predominantly Pākehā marketing team – it can feel daunting to deliver work like *Red, White Brass* in a culturally competent way, she says.

"You want to make sure the artist feels safe... that you are not asking them to do anything which to you just automatically feels fine.

"But what's really awesome about this group is that everything is just so warm and fun. It's been a lot of fun doing this show and working with them and engaging new influencers we haven't worked with before."

O'Connor says the play's co-producers are the team's most important cultural competency ambassadors – they set the direction and support ATC to take the right steps.

"It is a shared kaupapa. Sometimes we start with a lot of initial meetings where we just listen... They hold the mana to be able to say, 'This is our work, this is our story, this is how we want to tell our story and this is how you can properly connect with our community in order to tell it.'"

For O'Connor, coming from the Australian Ballet in Melbourne, practising cultural competency has been a fascinating learning curve – when you're used to being nimble and reactive, this takes time and patience as well as leaving your ego at the door, she says.

Best of all, she loves the myth-busting that happens when the traditional theatre audiences come to watch plays like *Red, White and Brass*.

"There's a myth that if you do a Tongan play, then it's only for Tongan people and that's absolutely not the case.





AI was used to help generate artwork, but there were also plenty of real-life photoshoots

“That’s why these co-productions works so well because the idea is these are works that reflect our multicultural city.”

ATC’s community outreach work has become even more important after Meta recently changed its advertising policies to prevent companies from targeting people based on their lifestyle preferences or ethnicity.

It’s a measure to protect vulnerable groups from aggressive advertising practices, but it also prevents arts institutions from getting their content in front of key audiences, says O’Connor.

For example, Pride Festival can’t target the LGBTQIA+ community and Black Theatre NYC can’t target African Americans, even though these not-for-profits specifically produce art for those groups, she adds.

AI EASES FRICTION

Keeping ATC’s marketing inclusive but not stigmatised, while working within a limited budget, means teams like O’Connor’s have to be creative. That’s where AI comes in.

O’Connor was one of the first million users to jump on board with ChatGPT. Her first uses were personal – as a vegan, it took ages to trawl through blog posts to get to the recipes. With ChatGPT she could input what ingredients she had and ask the AI for cooking instructions.

Could this tool that eased the friction from her personal life do the same for her professional life?

Rewind to August last year, when O’Connor was presented with the eight plays ATC were to perform in 2024.

“And I need to come up with creative concepts for how we are going to promote these plays... When I’m confronted with eight plays, there’s a lot of reading,” she laughs.

“So I use CodyAI to upload the scripts and it told me the themes, the major conflicts, the character profiles, top quotes. I even went so far as to ask it to give me some taglines.”



JOANNA O’CONNOR
ATC MARKETING
DIRECTOR

Anyone who has used ChatGPT knows that what it gives you is never the final product, but it gave O’Connor a foundation to quickly build upon.

To produce the artwork for the each of the plays, she talked with her team of artists about how they wanted it to look, then got their consent to use AI tools to render these concepts before the photo shoots.

“There’s usually this almost conflicting space between an artist wanting to uphold their artistic integrity and then a marketer wanting to commercialise the artwork. AI was able to help us meet in the middle,” says O’Connor.

“I present them with the image, and they’re like, ‘We love that, that’s what we were imagining.’”

“We go into the photoshoot and the artist, photographer, the talent, everybody knows what we’re trying to do. It removed all friction from the process.”

AI didn’t replace anyone’s jobs, it just made everyone get on better, she says.

The challenges lie in the AI learning profiles being predominantly American – O’Connor says it’s hard to find proper representations of people of colour, particularly Polynesian people.

Because of this, she remains cautious of how, and who in her team uses the AI tools – reminds herself to check for any subconscious biases and remains aware the AI might not be right.

“You can’t just take the AI for what it’s saying, because sometimes it goes off on its own tangent.”

Overall, O’Connor says AI has levelled the playing field for ATC.

“These are enterprise solutions that are completely democratised and accessible for organisations of any scale. It’s really enabled us to be progressive.” 🗨️



Speak the language, win hearts

Stu Rutherford, Managing Director at The Agency 88, offers straightforward tips for brands wanting to connect with Asian communities.

NZ Marketing: Tell us a little about The Agency 88 and the work you're doing.

Stu Rutherford: The Agency 88 is a local specialist marketing and communications agency helping brands connect with growing Asian communities in both New Zealand and Australia. We deliver a range of services including campaign work, social content for the likes of WeChat, translation services, plus we also carry out Asian community research projects.

NZM: Are we seeing more marketers recognising the growing Asian audiences in New Zealand?

SR: The short answer is yes. However, diversified marketing efforts in this space remain relatively underdeveloped and there is plenty of work still to do. That said, it does feel like we are reaching some kind of tipping point. I do think – as more businesses examine our ethnic make-up and consider where their future growth is going to come from – that a greater focus on multicultural marketing will emerge.

By 2028, our Asian community will easily surpass 1 million, representing 20% of the total population. The opportunity is amplified further in Auckland of course where Asian communities represent 30% of the population. Interestingly, 50% of Aucklanders currently identify as European, the other 50% don't.

So, we are dealing with a rapidly growing Asian community and I would argue the marketing and business communities have been somewhat slow to adapt. I think marketers largely get it – and yet it's hard to make changes overnight. Arguably, it really needs to start in boardrooms where a diversified migrant business strategy can be established, from which marketers can be properly supported.

NZM: What are common mistakes brands can make when looking to connect with the local Asian community?

SR: The easiest mistake, or misconception, is in thinking that the Asian community has a sound understanding and awareness of your brand. Don't think your brand health metrics are reflected in equal measure across ethnicities – they aren't.

We tell clients, "This is a marathon, not a sprint" – and it's so true. Most need to adapt brand comms that not only grow basic awareness and consideration, but talk in a way that builds trust, understanding and reassurance. Asian migrants don't always know your brand's legacy or business credentials,

often they are skeptical and need further assurance. This is where employing and, importantly, promoting your Asian language-speaking staff can be the difference in brand choice.

The other easy misconception is around media usage, and the thought that "surely they are seeing our ads". This issue is particularly true for the Chinese community. We recently carried out a local Chinese community study and it showcased the alarming lack of connection the Chinese have with local media brands. Unsurprisingly, Chinese people use Chinese media.



The Agency 88 team members Nico Ni and Chester Chen

NZM: What should local brands focus on to make better connections?

SR: Four areas: celebrate festivals, be social first, promote your Asian language-speaking staff and adopt an always-on approach.

"Win the hearts of the Asian communities" is a lesson I learnt early on. Authentic involvement with cultural festivals and celebrations is a great fast-track to building trust and appreciation.

It's no surprise that social platforms dominate within Asian communities. Given their population sizes, China and India are home to the largest numbers of social users on the planet with 1 billion and 755 million users respectively. Understanding platform capabilities locally and user behaviour across apps such as WeChat and Little Red Book is important.

At a practical level, employ and promote your Asian language-speaking support or sale staff, whether they speak Mandarin, Hindi or the Filipino language Tagalog. Ensure you have translated landing pages, online content, and are of course translating external campaigns appropriately. 🗣️

stu@theAgency88.com

文化融合

IN

— THE

MIX

New Zealand's population is becoming more diverse, as migrants from across the globe make their home here. It's an opportunity for advertisers and marketers, but how do they communicate with the evolving peoplescape of Aotearoa?

WORDS BERNADETTE BASAGRE



The cultural makeup of New Zealand is diverse. While our nation's founding agreement is between Māori and Pākehā, Aotearoa has abundant pockets of other cultures.

From Pasifika, to Asian to European, New Zealand is a real mix of ethnicities. Yet our media and advertising landscape doesn't always reflect the many faces of our land.

It's a missed opportunity. In an especially difficult economy, it is more important than ever for brands and companies to reach as much of the population as they can, and the best way to do so is by connecting with all cultures who live here.

The new mainstream audience

In 2018, Census figures showed Chinese New Zealanders numbered over 250,000, or 4.9% of the population. While early data from the 2023 Census doesn't indicate ethnicity at this level, it shows our Asian community now stands at 861,576 people – that's 17.3% of our country's inhabitants.

Ken Freer, Head of Flying Tiger, the Chinese marketing arm at Thompson Spencer, says this group is "too valuable to ignore".

They are considered untapped potential, and with the proportion expected to reach 20 or 30% by 2030, many brands are missing out on millions of domestic customers – some distracted by those who are considering leaving the country.

Stu Rutherford, Director at Asian marketing specialist The Agency 88, says although many in this demographic might be unaware of local marketing efforts, they will eventually become more plugged into the mainstream. He warns, down the line, Kiwi brands that fail to engage this community now will lose to bigger, global brands that are making the effort to meet the Chinese on their 'turf'.

"What remains a relatively small population is quickly diversifying," says Rutherford.

"Our perception of mainstream audiences is now shifting – to a point that businesses will have to grow revenue through diversity. Businesses that are growing recognise this."

Rather than thinking about it as a marketing strategy for the next year, communicating to a wider range of ethnicities should be looked at as futureproofing your business, he says.

"Because the nature of the populace is shifting, there's the opportunity for every brand to think about that at a commercial level and ask, 'How am I going to test the opportunity to find revenues for growth there?'" Rutherford says.

Translating isn't enough

Reaching a Chinese audience isn't as simple as putting an existing campaign through Google Translate. You have to understand where the community likes to hang out.

"It's a particularly challenging audience to reach and engage with via Western marketing channels," says Flying Tiger's Freer.

Many Chinese people are not frequent users of social media platforms such as Instagram, and are instead found in places they are most familiar with, for example WeChat and

Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book). Though they may be aware of what many marketers consider "normal channels", they're likely to stick with the ones they know.

"Because of this, many brands choose to ignore this important group of potential customers," adds Freer.

The audience is too big to ignore, but hard to reach using the usual channels, so what's the best way forward?

The first step is considering and engaging in a strategy that acknowledges the Chinese audience. When settling in to Aotearoa, Chinese immigrants will often be drawn to global brands they are already familiar with. When choosing a bank or insurance, for example, new residents will take advice from the diaspora – listening to word of mouth and choosing where to put their money accordingly.

"The key thing for most brands is to recognise the audience. Not so much your target audience, but the people who walk in the door," says Rutherford.

Big local retailers, like supermarket chains Pak'nSave or telco One New Zealand, can start from the ground up.

Pak'nSave is one of The Agency 88's clients, and Rutherford believes it is the "perfect proposition" for a broad ethnic audience. Chinese consumers love premium brands, but when it comes to food, good quality and low prices are a winning combination, he says.

So next comes the job of communicating this proposition to the Chinese community. Enter Stickman on WeChat.

Pak'nSave has transferred the hugely successful marketing strategy to where the target community is already. On WeChat, Stickman speaks Chinese to communicate deals of the week, making sure to highlight products this audience is most likely to purchase.

"The key element is having a very clear focus on what your opportunity is in the Chinese-speaking market, then developing a platform and content strategy that gives the best access and engagement to the market in a way that delivers measurable and sustainable results," says Freer.

Having a presence on the same platforms and channels as your customers is a good start. Next is understanding what's important in that community's culture.

Big holidays like Chinese New Year are already celebrated by local brands, but many customers see businesses ticking a box and showing up once a year. In fact, media consumption by Chinese drops dramatically during this period, as a significant chunk of the community heads back to China to celebrate.

"Because the nature of the populace is shifting, there's the opportunity for every brand to think about that at a commercial level and ask, 'How am I going to test the opportunity to find revenues for growth there?'"

STU RUTHERFORD *DIRECTOR, THE AGENCY 88*

To avoid looking like a brand that only turns up for the annual party, businesses should build a calendar of key dates, such as Dragon Boat Festival, Mooncake Festival and Children's Day.

By understanding where the Chinese community is and creating bespoke information for them, brands can expect high value over time.

"The decision-making journey for a new migrant can be lengthy, simply because they don't have that brand awareness, knowledge, trust, credits – all of that sort of stuff. So building your credentials over time and maintaining it is super important," says Rutherford.

In touch with our roots

As a country with strong indigenous roots, it is vital that the New Zealand media and advertising landscape communicates with Māori.

"We are a bicultural nation. That's our makeup and that's what we should be celebrating."

So says Arnya Karaitiana (Rangitāne, Ngāti Ranginui, Te Arawa), Kaiārahi of Special Aotea, when asked what it's like to bring te ao Māori into creative work for briefs and clients.

"It's always been about inclusion and speaking to everyone at the same time," she says.

Special Aotea is a subgroup of locally owned creative agency Special that champions te ao Māori within its creative, strategy and business.

Special Aotea is bringing together Māori creatives to ensure their cultural experiences and perspectives are brought to the table – because Aotearoa is a bicultural nation that needs to have indigenous kaupapa seen and heard.

"Our purpose is to make a positive difference to our people and our place, our clients and our next generation by drawing knowledge and inspiration from our te ao Māori worldview," says Karaitiana.

The subgroup follows three pou (pillars):

- Special Whānau, building cultural capabilities internally through the people and the place.
- Special Tāngata, building ama (connection), auaha (creative expression) and atawhai (consideration and care) for clients as they navigate te ao Māori.
- Special Rangatahi, where a percentage of the annual profit from Special Aotea is given to a pathways programme that supports young Māori entering the industry.

Karaitiana says te ao Māori is heavily engraved in the history of New Zealand and so it's important for that to be reflected in the creative work produced for clients.

"It's important to acknowledge and continue to be curious about te ao Māori, and support and celebrate it – because if it doesn't exist anywhere else, then why is it there?" she says.

And the best way to support and celebrate is with work by Māori – you can't beat lived experience.

"With Special Aotea, it was really about establishing something within a creative environment that supports and gives time to really search for and be curious. This gives an opportunity to Māori to voice their stories that we can creatively build on," she says.

"It's important to acknowledge and continue to be curious about te ao Māori and support and celebrate it – because if it doesn't exist anywhere else, then why is it there?"

ARNYA KARAITIANA KAIĀRAHI OF SPECIAL AOTEA

"For me, it's really important to break down the silos we all live in and work in to allow te ao Māori to be discussed and to ever help each other strengthen our understanding of it."

For Special, it's not about reaching one specific cultural group, but rather considering the space of everyone in New Zealand. As a multicultural country, brands will benefit more when they speak to everyone instead of just one cultural group.

And over the years, there has been a real desire for not just clients of Special, but for local and global brands to understand New Zealand on a deeper level, so everyone feels connected to their work, says Karaitiana.

"I think for many of us as New Zealanders, te ao Māori is still a really foreign concept. I think more education and understanding would help lift the fear and the feelings of the unknown, to encourage us to embrace it more. I think that includes the fear of being wrong or fear of being culturally inappropriate," she says.

Through understanding and engaging with the Māori community, one can understand about the land and the people. The best way to engage and meet ethnic audiences is by providing opportunities for all voices, experiences and values to be heard.

By having a part of its business dedicated to doing exactly that, Special as an entire group can understand clients better – from strategy to design to communications.

"Te ao Māori consideration on a strategic level can help in understanding. It can help us to understand the meaning behind a specific brand's values and therefore inform particular brand behaviours," says Karaitiana.

"Really getting into and actually infusing te ao Māori perspectives throughout the process gives us a really good outcome."

Special Aotea worked closely with clients on campaigns for Tourism New Zealand, Education New Zealand and the recent rebrand of Kiwibank – helping them gain a deeper understanding of their value in this country.

Communicating to the masses

It's not just brands that want to amplify the voices of underrepresented groups. One media platform that puts heavy focus on communicating with the diverse ethnic audiences of New Zealand is Stuff.co.nz.

The digital media company is dedicated to delivering content for the underserved communities – specifically Māori – through its Pou Tiaki kaupapa. ▶



Pou Tiaki was developed to ensure fair representation in Stuff's work through embedding te ao Māori across the company, says Laura Maxwell, Stuff Group Chief Executive.

"We have a dedicated Pou Tiaki editorial team telling the stories of underserved communities, a fantastic kaiwhakamāori (translator) helping us scale the number of articles we publish in te reo Māori and a Pou Tiaki integration lead to develop and deliver data-driven, creative campaigns focussed on Māori audiences and businesses," she says.

"Importantly, the Pou Tiaki principle is embedded in our company charter and all our people are expected to apply it to their mahi to safeguard from discrimination and inequity."

The Pou Tiaki kaupapa is embedded in Stuff's company culture, but there's always room for more innovation.

Stuff's recent partnership with Microsoft and AI tech service Straker means more articles can be published in te reo Māori, which Maxwell says supports the language's revitalisation.

As well as promoting te reo, Stuff knows it's good for the bottom line to serve the 79% of its audience who identify as having a non-Pākehā background.

"Understanding your audience is vital for any media organisation. I'm proud of our commitment at Stuff to foster diversity and inclusion because this is not just an ethical choice, it's a business decision," says Maxwell.

This commitment can be seen at a people level as well as through company policy – the newsroom staff reflect many cultures, so they understand how to reach, help and communicate with a wide variety of communities.

"These stories matter to the whole of New Zealand, not just the communities we're writing about, and can be powerful catalysts for increasing representation.

"Seeing and hearing stories like this can encourage others to share their stories too, and raises awareness about the issues affecting different communities so that more heads can get together and work on solutions," she says.

Having a diverse newsroom isn't the end point for Stuff. It also has Harakeke, an integration unit that looks at creative and strategic storytelling to reflect and reach diverse audiences for their commercial partners.

Named after the te reo word for flax, Harakeke looks to weave multiple strands for creative expression.

"Ko te Harakeke o Puna, our Harakeke at Stuff, weaves together creative and commercial aspirations, delivering brilliant story-led content and campaigns for audiences through our collective strength right across our ecosystem of products," explains Maxwell.

"Our large audience is very diverse, with scale and reach right around Aotearoa. We understand our audience better than anyone and having an integration unit in-house means we can use that knowledge to help our partners tell their story in a way that resonates with and reaches people and communities across the motu."

There's no doubt Aotearoa looks very different from how it did 30 years ago, and the coming decades will see even more change. The message from experts is clear: diversity is fast becoming the new mainstream, and the path to success lies in making the effort to communicate in a way that will be heard. 🗣️

Three things you should know about Chinese Kiwis

YouTube is banned in China, so it's one of the first sites Chinese immigrants landing in New Zealand explore. This seemingly simple observation highlights the nuanced approach Marketing Minds takes to reaching the local Chinese market.

Since 2017, Marketing Minds, an award-winning marketing agency, has delved into the complexities of new migrant marketing, specifically focusing on the Chinese demographic.

Through its journey, the agency has identified three key strategies for success:

1. Understanding the evolving Chinese Kiwi:

The Chinese migrant population in New Zealand isn't simply a replica of the people back home. They're a unique blend, their heritage interwoven with the threads of Kiwi culture. It is important to understand what resonates with this evolving group and how their preferences adapt over time.

2. Beyond the usual channels:

Forget Facebook and Instagram. While some Chinese migrants might dabble in these platforms, the dominant channels operate in a different digital ecosystem. WeChat, Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book), and TikTok's Chinese cousin Douyin reign supreme. This market also embraces a mix of international sites and mobile apps. Consequently, it is key to not market via one or two Chinese channels alone, but using an integrated multi-channel approach that reaches the audience effectively.

3. Bridging the language gap:

Many Chinese migrants grapple with English, which affects their confidence and integration. This naturally leads them to rely on Chinese channels and communities for information. Overcoming and bridging this language barrier is crucial to tap into the full potential of this market.

Nuance is the key to reaching *migrant audiences*

Award-winning agency Marketing Minds has been getting the message through to Chinese and Indian migrants since 2017.

Marketing to New Zealand's growing Chinese and Indian migrant population demands a deeper understanding than just language and channel selection, according to Marketing Minds, an award-winning marketing agency specialising in this space.

"Indian migrants aren't simply 'Indian,' and Chinese migrants aren't just 'Chinese'. The longer they reside in New Zealand, the more their identities evolve into uniquely 'migrant Indian' and 'migrant Chinese,'" says Anne Casey, Marketing Minds founder.

Many New Zealand companies mistakenly see these migrant groups as homogenous, but the reality is far more nuanced. Even within their home countries, these populations encompass a vast spectrum of cultures and social structures. Migrants can originate from diverse regions within China and India, have varying levels of wealth, and be at different stages in life. While they all share the decision to come here, their experiences and preferences diverge significantly.

Casey emphasises the importance of recognising these distinctions: "Imagine considering all New Zealanders to be one target audience and trying to market to them with a single strategy. It simply wouldn't be effective.

"Furthermore, reaching these new migrant groups effectively goes beyond simply translating messages," says Casey. "Their identities become a blend of their heritage and their adopted Kiwi culture, shaping their values, tastes, and perspectives."

This cultural subtlety is particularly important in areas like humour.

"Kiwi humour is usually lost in translation for new migrants, who have a more direct sense of humour when they first arrive. This can isolate them,"



ANNE CASEY, *MARKETING MINDS*

Casey says. "However, the longer they reside here, they become more 'Kiwi' and start understanding the humour."

This careful understanding is a key differentiator for Marketing Minds, which has been successfully connecting businesses with migrant audiences in New Zealand since 2017. The agency goes beyond basic translation, crafting targeted campaigns that resonate with the specific culture of each community.

THE CHINESE MARKET

Marketing to New Zealand's Chinese migrant community requires a dynamic approach that recognises evolving media consumption habits.

"While WeChat remains the primary communication platform for Chinese migrants, we're witnessing a significant shift towards platforms like Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) and Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok)," says Casey.

This trend underscores the importance of a holistic marketing strategy that considers the entire Chinese migrant media landscape. "A channel-by-channel approach is no longer sufficient. We're seeing a

constant decline in the reach and effectiveness of brand WeChat Official Accounts, both in China and here in New Zealand, post-Covid."

THE INDIAN AUDIENCE

Casey says the Indian market in New Zealand is even more fragmented, but not impenetrable.

Aotearoa's Indian community comes from a country with an estimated 780 spoken languages, including 22 official ones. Even though Hindi is predominant, it is not universally spoken or accepted.

Indian migrants typically use English language channels such as Meta platforms and Google, however, in New Zealand, there are already more than 20 dedicated Indian channels. This highlights the diversity of the Indian migrants and a need for sharply targeted communication. At customer service level, the availability of their go-to app – WhatsApp – is important.

Casey says: "Brands should establish communication with new migrants before they arrive. Their journey starts with online research even before they set foot in Aotearoa. To ensure businesses aren't trying to play catch-up, we design marketing approaches that provide a competitive advantage as we build authentic trust and engagement with the target markets at the right time, right place and in the right way."

Navigating the maze with Marketing Minds:

With a focus on NZ migrants since 2017, Marketing Minds boasts a team with firsthand knowledge and experienced marketers. Using a blend of lived experience and data-driven insights, they've honed their understanding and strategies to help companies penetrate this dynamic market.

For more info, visit marketingminds.co.nz

Mr Bates vs The Marketers?

The British Post Office scandal ruined lives, but an unhealthy corporate culture that protected 'the brand' at the expense of people allowed it to happen, say insights experts Carl Davidson and Duncan Stuart.

If you saw the TV show *Mr Bates vs The Post Office*, you will know about the British Post Office scandal. The inquiry into this debacle shone a revealing light on the IT failures that led to more than 900 Post Office branch managers being bankrupted and wrongly prosecuted for fraud. But the harshest beam fell on the toxic culture of the upper management team that ran the Post Office.

The inquiry showed how the chief executive and many of her senior management team ignored information that contradicted their views – and then lied to cover their malfeasance. Those lies stretched all the way from Mr Bates' village Post Office to the Houses of Parliament.

The inquiry makes for fascinating viewing, as good as any literal car-crash TV. When asked about her involvement in different stages of the cover-up, the CEO's defensive body language hit 11 on the Spinal Tap scale. The CEO tried duck-shoving too, saying responsibility for the fiasco lay outside of her job description – which, memorably, led the incredulous prosecutor to bluntly ask what, if anything, did she actually do?

This matters if you're a marketer because the rancid corporate culture at

head office level was predicated on protecting the trustworthiness of the brand.

You heard it right: the management team viewed the brand as an asset whose value was measured by a computer system that – if plans had gone smoothly – would not only handle stamps and mail transactions, but would in time have hosted a mighty network of banking services. Business growth hinged on the trustworthiness of this computer system.

Management, ignoring evidence to the contrary, maintained that the IT system was fault-free and any discrepancies therefore had to be due to isolated incompetence or dishonesty of the retailers.

In this equation, the actual people who served local customers were seen as an expendable expense. They were hung out to dry.

The Post Office scandal has been called one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in UK history. Yet it has important lessons for all of us who care about marketing. Namely, the marketing decisions you make ultimately depend on your organisation's culture.

Corporate culture was identified and labelled in the mid-1950s by psychologist Ed Schein. He studied



soldiers who faced hostile interrogation during the Korean War. He had expected to find a tribe of tough, stoic soldiers who could withstand the pressure, and alongside them, a tribe of weaker individuals who would likely succumb. What he found surprised him. The key variable was not individual toughness, it was the strength and cohesiveness of the culture within each soldier's unit.

Schein published hundreds of articles and more than 30 books and was a darling of business schools in the 1980s. Even after his death, at age 94, his star is once more in the ascendancy thanks to what he had to say about culture, psychological safety, and the challenges of hybrid work.

One of his great insights is that most organisations are an amalgam of three main tribes, with each having its own sub-culture and ways of making decisions. Very often these tribes either ignore the others or simply fail to communicate.



The three tribes are:

- The financial people. Starting with the CFO, but including the accountants and payroll. Most CEOs live here.
- The engineers. The people who look after the infrastructure of doing business. In an energy company, they are responsible for getting electricity generated and delivered. In FMCG, these are the people in charge of physically making the product. IT lives here also.
- The 'people' people. Includes marketers, those in communications, advertising, PR as well as the brand or product managers, the researchers and the designers.

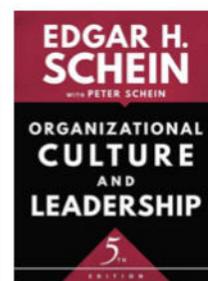
The elegance of Schein's insight is that it puts marketers into context. Marketers frequently complain they're not included in the C-Suite and that their recommendations go unheeded. Instead of seeing research, product

development and advertising as an investment, what the CEO, CFO and the chief of operations see is an unwelcome expense and a target for cost-cutting. Welcome to Schein's culture wars. It can be an uphill battle.

When is marketing facing too much of an uphill battle? One telltale sign is when discussion of the brand, which was once the domain of the marketers, has been hijacked by the financial people.

This is what happened at the British Post Office. The financial people and the engineers took control of the brand, redefined it (but not as the people tribe would define it), and spent millions prosecuting anyone who dared question the IT engineering.

Marketers need to ponder their workplace culture. If you're losing the culture war, you need some serious negotiations with the CEO – or, failing that, start a conversation with an organisation where the 'people' people are respected. ☺



If you want to know more then just about anything Ed Schein wrote is worth reading. We're tempted to say that

marketers would most benefit from reading Schein's *Humble Inquiry* or *Humble Consulting*. But his analysis of cultures, and the way they misunderstand each other, is best set out in his *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. It's worth reading just to understand Schein's notion of 'cultural artifacts'.

This a seminal work for understanding organisations, and is name-checked by many of today's guru consultants and leadership coaches.



Modern PRs: the Swiss Army knives of storytelling

The decline of traditional outlets, the rise of social media and influencers plus increasing audience diversification has changed how public relations practitioners work. Now they're more proactive – and multi-skilled – than ever.

WORDS ZAHRA SHAHTAHMASEBI

A key skill of the PR practitioner in 2024 is the ability to keep pace with an industry moving at lightning speed.

“If your head is not around it, you’ll get left behind,” says Heather Claycomb, Director of Waikato-based communications agency HMC, and Chair of the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ).

When Claycomb set up HMC 20 years ago from her home in Hamilton, she only needed her brain, a computer, a tiny little Nokia and a love of telling stories.

While the necessary equipment hasn’t changed significantly since then, the technological capabilities and the number of ways to reach people certainly has.

“I recently hired two new people and I had to think about what software products do they need to know? It’s a tech-savvy job, there’s so many ways to get the message out there,” says Claycomb. “We’re story creators but we have to be good at tech too.”

She finds irony within this discourse, however: “We’re relying on tech in jobs, but humanised stories will be more important than ever... That won’t change, and robots can’t do that.”

The way PR practitioners have had to evolve with the way consumers receive and engage with news and brands continues to develop.

Especially with the recent rise of influencer-led content, which can have more power over consumers than some media, says Georgia Coleman, General Manager of Tonic Communications.



“Commercial storytelling is our heart, and the process of telling that story could be anything.”

MAX BURT
GENERAL MANAGER,
ONE PLUS ONE

Throughout her career, and now at Tonic, Attivo Group’s trans-Tasman offering for integrated PR and marketing services, Coleman has made a point of staying on top of social trends, because she knows how influential they are.

“Originally, social media was a tick box, and now it’s so integrated that PR practitioners should have a very thorough knowledge of socials and current social trends.

“Equally, a social media manager should have the same level of knowledge about what makes something newsworthy.”

When she started in PR in 2010, the industry was already moving away from a media-first approach and social media was becoming more prominent.

The way it lends itself to a conversation between brands and consumers was and still is exciting, says Coleman.

“I think it’s an incredible way to communicate with your audiences – at the time I would use Twitter if I couldn’t get hold of someone and they would respond immediately.”

In a world where anyone can go viral, the most successful campaigns become part of culture, says Coleman, “playing on that to create a moment to get your brand in there in a really authentic, organic way”.

In a truly integrated campaign,

you’re thinking about all of the potential touchpoints to reach your audience – whether that is LinkedIn, an email newsletter, a billboard or a news outlet, she adds.

“Some clients want to do a little bit of everything, but I highly recommend to just do less better. Ask the why – you don’t necessarily need to be constantly doing everything or leaning on every reactive moment.”

She regularly sees news and trends breaking on TikTok. Her recommendation? Surround yourselves with the Gen Zs of the world. “They are the ones leading the way,” Coleman laughs.

But despite the technological advancements, the heart of PR remains the same – it’s still about building trust in an organisation or a person, says Claycomb.

“The discipline or purpose – the ‘why’ – hasn’t changed, but ‘the how’ is incredibly different.”

This rings true for the team at One Plus One Group, an independent corporate communications consultancy that recently won gold for PR Consultancy of the Year at the PRINZ Awards, alongside Special PR.

“Our core skill is telling a really great story on behalf of a client that’s strategically informed so it delivers a business outcome for them,” says One Plus One General Manager Max Burt.

Historically, that story would have focused on landing a piece of earned coverage in a traditional media outlet.

“But if that’s the only thing we are doing, we are not going to grow and we are not going to be ultimately helping our clients,” says Burt.

“You’ve got traditional media changing, but then also this proliferation of all these other channels. If you come back to what our core business is, we’d be doing our clients a disservice if we weren’t

helping them show up in all of those spaces as well.”

In the past year, One Plus One has designed and placed billboards, built websites, created video content and managed social media channels for clients.

Burt still gets a thrill from writing a media release or op-ed on behalf of a client, but loves the broad scope of his work.

Corporate communications is One Plus One’s bread and butter, but there’s an expectation now that most agencies can do a bit of everything, he adds.

“To be successful in this day and age, you need to be a Swiss Army knife. You need to be able to execute in lots of different channels, in lots of different ways with lots of different audiences and make complex things simple for clients.”

Keep it clear

To prevent a jack of all trades, master of none scenario, Burt says agencies must be clear about the core proposition.

“Commercial storytelling is our heart, and the process of telling that story could be anything.”

The ones that can keep that clear concept at the heart of everything they do, but still be flexible will continue to do well.

One Plus One founder Kelly Bennett agrees, saying it’s a “pretty simple industry”.

“I had a boss who used to say, ‘We’re not curing cancer.’ We’re corporate storytellers, we exist to help companies with communications challenges.”

The media headcount in Aotearoa has been reducing for several years, but this year’s Newshub closure and cuts to TVNZ’s current events shows hit hard.

It means the selection of media targets for agencies has to be more considered, Bennett adds.

Where audiences are shifting, and it’s an agency’s role to connect with them, says Burt. He mentions a client One Plus One recently got to feature on a trade-focused podcast – a niche slot but well-listened to by the client’s key stakeholders.

“So we’ve gotta be smart about how we do that and be energised, because ultimately if you’re defeatist and you’re telling clients it’s really hard to reach ▶



GEORGIA COLEMAN
GENERAL MANAGER, TONIC
COMMUNICATIONS

your audience, then why are they working with us?”

Having many interesting and creative ways to specifically target your audience is great, but there still remains a need to speak to Kiwis en masse, Burt adds.

In the past, you could safely rely on reaching half the country at once with a story on *Seven Sharp*, or an ad during an episode of *Friends*, but this has changed dramatically with the decline of appointment viewing.

“You used to be able to reach the mass audience much more simply, whereas now you probably need to show up in five or six different ways at once... which is actually quite a cool and fun challenge – it’s not one people should be despairing about.”

It’s a challenge that requires agencies to be more forensic, finding where people are and reaching them in an authentic way, says Bennett.

The end of collective experience

This death of monoculture is something the team at Pead speak to as well. The independent full-service agency has been operating in Auckland for more than 20 years.

“We used to have a lot more collective experiences as a nation,” says partner Louisa Kraitzick.

“There were really clear inroads to reach Kiwis, but now we’ve diversified and our experiences are more complicated.”

Not everyone is sitting down to read the newspaper or watch TV, so agencies must focus on who truly matters, what it knows about them and how it can reach them, says fellow partner Anna Farrera.

“The demands of knowing your audience is much higher... People remember how you make them feel.”

To that point, the diversity of the communities in Aotearoa can no longer be ignored, says Claycomb.

Outlining your audience is becoming harder as increasingly people don’t want to be defined by their gender, age or religion – choosing their own identities instead.

The act of defining people might be an uncomfortable topic, but for the PR practitioner it’s paramount to build relationships, gain feedback, distribute information and encourage conversations, says Claycomb.

Looking to the future, Burt and Bennett agree the PR industry will always be about storytelling – but how those stories are told will continue to change, much like it has done so far.

“Gaming is the biggest form of media in the world. You could conceive that in the very near future, agencies like ours are spending much more of their time trying to help our brands show up inside of games,” says Bennett.

But practitioners like himself and Burt will continue to feel that rush of adrenaline when they create outcomes for clients, whether it’s through earned, social or owned media.

“That’s what we delight in. That’s what makes us keep coming back for sure, I can’t see that changing in the next 10 years,” Bennett adds.

Along with an increase in social media platforms, the industry has also been contending with the rise of artificial intelligence and what role it will play in future.

Claycomb’s suggestion is to embrace it, saying tools like ChatGPT can help with the creative and planning processes.

One Plus One agrees AI will become a major player, but until then, its almost too early to truly say what impact it will have on the industry.

“I am sceptical of people who purport to be able to predict where it’s all going. I think it’s going to be highly unpredictable,” says Burt.

Show up in real life

And as a discipline, PR remains predicated on personal connections and reputations – and those can’t be digitally manufactured.

“Reputations – how people in the companies they represent show up in real life, what they do, how they act and how they sound... All of those can’t be engineered by AI,” says Bennett.

This is a point Jane Sweeney makes too: in an increasingly virtual world, people are searching for authenticity and transparency over anything else.

Alongside Carolyn Kerr, Sweeney founded Auckland-based communications and marketing agency Anthem, which recently celebrated its 10th birthday.

What they’ve found in that time is “there is no place to hide”, says Sweeney.

Anthem encourages clients to embrace any opportunity to be open



“Long gone is the total balance of media relations. But... the role of media has become even more important to us”

JANE SWEENEY
CO-FOUNDER, ANTHEM

and honest – whether that’s sharing lessons from a crisis or issue, or a more positive insight.

It’s something a lot of companies are cautious about – they don’t want to seem like they’re not on top of things.

But this level of honesty has become even more important, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic which triggered conversations about reputation, fairness and whether what a company says lines up with its actions, says Sweeney.

“We are trying to promote this idea to companies that you really need to think about your reputation through a lens of fairness... What’s fair to the customer, what’s fair to your communities and how do you show up not only through the good times, but the tough times?” says Sweeney.

The two are proud of Anthem’s integrated communications approach, which works to create cohesion in their clients’ companies.

“We have clients who say they feel safe on our watch because we do everything from complex corporate comms right through to product launches. We see the whole of the client’s business,” says Sweeney.

When asked about favourite campaigns, Anthem’s work with transport company Dopplemayr, that won gold at the 2023 PR Asia Awards,

springs to Kerr's mind. It presented a compelling case for aerial cable cars as an urban and public transport option – one now being considered at a local and national government level.

"You can really see the impact of communication, engaging the community at all levels in different ways over time, with a shared purpose to actually help deliver transport solutions that have environmental, social, economic benefits for the country."

For Sweeney, it was getting a better outcome for older New Zealanders, including achieving pay parity for aged care nurses, and getting into the coalition government agenda a plan to improve the aged care funding model.

"You feel like you're making a real difference for older people, but also for communities where resources are better utilised. It's very satisfying."

It was a complicated story that took two years to tell, using everything from economists to billboards to microsites to government engagement to earned and paid media.

"So long gone is the total balance of media relations. But interestingly, the role of media has become even more important to us, especially with it reducing," says Sweeney. "We are very respectful of our relationships with media... Understanding what they want and forming a relationship."

Let the PRs pay

While all of the agencies NZ Marketing spoke with lamented the declining media landscape, Leni Ma'ia'i was the most concerned about the impact it is having on the PR industry in Aotearoa.

Head chef and founder at DIG PR, Ma'ia'i says aside from the journalists themselves, PR has the most to lose.

His solution is a simple one: PR agencies pay an annual levy to keep journalism running effectively.

At DIG PR, media relations is the heart of what he and Sous Chef Daniel Smith do. They both take a more journalistic approach to their work and Ma'ia'i gets his kicks from delivering yarns on difficult topics.

"Engaging in a more meaningful and more powerful way... Those sugar hit stories just don't resonate. Society benefits from clear communications, and people who work to push the envelope."



LENI MA'IA'I
DIG PR

While he's not a stalwart that remembers "the fresh newspaper smell", he's learnt enough from his career to know the numbers on the graph are going the wrong way – without a well-functioning fourth estate, the media in general becomes less potent.

"Media relations is pretty important... Owned media pales in comparison to someone else verifying what you say is correct.

"You can't recreate the total excitement of gathering around the TV to watch your campaign on the news... People are not framing a piece from an email newsletter, but their piece that made *The New York Times*."

What this means for DIG PR is good storytelling remains at the forefront of what they do.

Ma'ia'i recalls favourite campaigns: launching fusion energy company Open Star in Wellington – which saw DIG land a long-form piece on TVNZ's *Sunday*, a piece in the *Listener* and one of Kim Hill's final interviews on RNZ – as well as launching the K' Road perfume with advertising agency Motion Sickness.

"We did bugger all ads for it, it resonated as media stories and we had people queuing up at local pharmacies to buy the perfume. It created the hype to get people to visit the street, which was the goal."

But for him the best campaigns are actually the ones that might never see the light of day – the ones that protect the reputation of a brand, or the crisis management – essentially "stopping issues before they become issues".

In general, he finds the industry is scarcely understood – no mother of a PR professional can explain what their kid does, he laughs.

But that is his favourite part: it's vague, weird and difficult to explain and requires a broad scope and vast

tool kit to deal with a wide spectrum of issues. "Organisations and people appreciate your work, you help them solve problems they wouldn't have solved on their own."

Pead partners Farrera and Kraitzick say as PR practitioners they thrive in an environment of change.

"When it comes to news media outlets, it's not the end, it's evolving. Video didn't kill the radio star, and it's really important for brands to understand how many relations need to evolve in their strategy." 🗣️



Five tips to stay sharp

HMC's Heather Claycomb has a handful of tips for those wanting to prepare for the future:

1

Learn how to harness the power of AI, technology and data.

2

Move from being a content creator to a strategic interpreter.

3

Change the way we think about and use third-party endorsement.

4

Embrace a philosophy of continuous learning.

5

Remain steadfast in promoting ethical PR practice.

Staying true to that last point is the most important, says Claycomb – so come what may, PR's heart and purpose will always be in the right place.



Her first five and the next five

Grace Chittock, Media Planner for Spark Foundry and Deputy Chairperson of First Five Rungs, looks back at her first five years and the upcoming five.

When asked what a media planner's job looks like day-to-day, Grace Chittock simply says, "We do a lot."

Tucked away in a little room in Spark Foundry's Auckland-based office, she manages media campaigns from the planning stages to booking in and finally implementing the ads – all while keeping a long line of stakeholders in the loop.

It's clear Chittock likes to be busy.

And boy, is she busy. From taking care of clients such as Westpac to holding breakfast events for Breast Cancer Foundation NZ, it's all in a day's work.

As if that wasn't enough, earlier in 2024, Chittock was appointed Deputy Chair at First Five Rungs, a Comms Council initiative to support people in their first five years in the industry. She says this position is her biggest career achievement so far.

"That is something I am really proud of, because helping people is something I am quite passionate about. I would like to be a people leader."

Though she'd always been interested in marketing, Chittock didn't know much about the world of media. But she thought it was "really cool".

There was a lot of jargon and concepts she couldn't wrap her head around when she started in the industry, and First Five Rungs really helped her find her feet.

"When I first started out, there was a lot that I didn't really know about the industry. So when I found out about

First Five Rungs and went to some of the events, I found it helpful and also just inspiring," she says.

"A lot of the events are educational. Hearing speakers that are more senior, looking at where you could be in a few years' time – that's what made me want to join the committee."

Now with a few years as a media planner/buyer under her belt, Chittock says her position as Deputy Chair at First Five Rungs came at the perfect time.

Part of her role includes hosting networking events for her colleagues.

Still in her early 20s and yet to clock

up five years in the industry, Chittock knows what others are going through and what they need.

"You're closer to where they're at and because you can relate to them, you know the best ways to help them.

"I wouldn't want anyone to be struggling, so knowing I can help is definitely rewarding. I am just trying to be the person that I needed or that I had when I first started."

Looking ahead, Chittock says she wants to take more opportunities and is hoping to lead campaign strategies.

Chittock has another bright five years on the horizon. 🌟

"Helping people is something I am quite passionate about. I would like to be a people leader. I really enjoy helping and training people."



BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION NZ IS ONE OF GRACE CHITTOCK'S CLIENTS

‘DON’T FEAR BEING WRONG’

If sport has taught Scotty Stevenson anything, it's the power of holding on to your dream.

WORDS ZAHRA SHAHTAHMASEBI

Scotty Stevenson vividly remembers the moment he first dreamed of becoming a sports commentator. It was 1987 and Stevenson was 10 years old, watching sports broadcaster Keith Quinn on TV, commentating an All Blacks match in the inaugural Rugby World Cup.

“Listening to that, it just seemed like the most amazing job,” laughs Stevenson. “That’s what I genuinely always wanted to do, to commentate live sport. I can’t really for the life of me understand why, but I don’t really question it.”

Stevenson says that while it took two decades from that pivotal moment to achieve it, that dream never went away. Commentating is an incredibly hard area to get into, but in 2007, he landed his first gig with Sky Sport.

“The jobs don’t come up very often,” he says, namechecking Kiwi commentator Grant Nisbett – who has been in his role nigh on 35 years – to illustrate his point.

“Those jobs, they’re scarce. You have to work hard for them, you have to have a bit of luck with your timing – and about the people who give you those opportunities.”

He lists his standout moments from the last 17 years: the first Winter Olympics held in Russia in 2014, covering the

2016 Summer Olympics in Rio, as well as the All Blacks at the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan and the 2022 Women’s Rugby World Cup in New Zealand.

Now, with many job titles under his belt – from commentator to broadcaster, reporter, author and television presenter, and currently working dual roles in sports media both on TV and radio – Stevenson considers himself remarkably blessed.

Working two jobs has its challenges, but mostly just requires getting up a bit earlier in the morning, he says with a grin.

His full-time post with TVNZ sees him working on live sport and content production, including a free weekly newsletter that arrives in subscribers’ inboxes on a Monday, wrapping up sports coverage from the weekend.

But after taking up his second gig as breakfast show host for independent sports radio station SENZ at the end of April, his day now starts at 5am, long before he’s due at the TVNZ building.

Stevenson co-hosts the 6am to 9am show with former All Black Israel Dagg and finds radio a great medium – he loves the immediacy and the spontaneity of it.

“It’s been a lot of fun, the last two weeks anyway. Ask me again in another six months,” he laughs. ►



Scotty Stevenson has advice for anyone who is following their passion but fears they might not succeed: "Just keep doing it."

He adds that the thrill of the unknown is what keeps him coming back to live sport broadcasting – showing up and not knowing what’s going to happen until the final whistle blows.

Reflecting on his career, he believes in a country like New Zealand, you should never be afraid to tell people what you really want to do.

“If they believe in you and they can see you believe in yourself, they’ll find a way to help you open the doors you need to open.”

Stevenson says he’s been lucky to have been supported and employed by “some very smart operators”. A list of names follows, including Andrea McVeigh, Andrew Fyfe and Melodie Robinson.

But working in media, particularly as a commentator, means working in a “taste business” and realising you might not be everyone’s cup of tea, he says.

When you pour your heart and soul into your work, this reality hurts, but that’s life, he adds.

“You could be a great athlete and not everyone thinks you’re great – you just have to get used to it.”

Reminding yourself who you are doing it all for is important. What drives Stevenson is doing a good job for the team around him as well doing justice to the sportspeople out there on the field.

“The athletes you’re commentating, they’re out there living out their dreams as well, and doing their best to succeed.

“There’s a duty of care to get the details right, but to also give your best for the viewer, for the listener, for the athlete and for those around that athlete as well.”

With so much of the media industry in Aotearoa in turmoil, Stevenson empathises with those who have lost their jobs as well as the concern over shuttered current events programmes.

He notes sports journalism continues to diminish, and finds his role with SENZ to be an important way of keeping those narratives alive.

The fractured landscape in New Zealand has resulted in differing opinions about the media’s value, but the fourth estate must be nurtured because what journalism offers democracy is crucial, says Stevenson.

“Everyone wants attention in this world, but we provide scrutiny – and those are two different things. Sport may feel trivial in that mix but it’s part of who we are, what we do and what we’re passionate about.”

Scrutiny also comes in handy when looking at male and female sports teams and the stark differences in resourcing between them, says Stevenson.

“If you looked at two national teams and one’s flying business class and one’s turning right... We have a duty of care to those who are trying to perform at the highest levels, to make sure they too have the resources at their disposal.”

Spending much of his career alongside his current manager, former Black Fern and two-time World Cup winner Melodie Robinson, along with sports commentator and former netabller Andrea McVeigh, has shown him just how many barriers female athletes in this country contend with that men simply don’t have to. And yet, they keep fighting.

This pair, as well as his female commentator colleagues and his late wife, who died two years ago, inspire him to champion female athletes however he can.

“We have incredible women in this country... my late wife was an incredible producer, executive producer, political journalist and so I was blessed to be surrounded by really strong, intelligent women and still the best company you can find.”

Together we recall the electricity we felt at Eden Park for the women’s Rugby World Cup final in 2022. Stevenson was covering the tournament alongside Bernandine Oliver-Kerby, Kristina Sue, Narelle Sindos, Sene Naoupu and Brodie Kane.

It was England versus the Black Ferns, in a game that went right down to the wire. We laugh that we both nearly fainted from the tension (and we’re only half-joking).

“Hands down, that match would be the greatest atmosphere I’ve ever experienced at Eden Park,” says Stevenson.

I ask Stevenson if he still supports his childhood sports team. He stays true to his home province, citing Northland Rugby as his team. But generally speaking, as a commentator, he says you have to remain objective, which is challenging when you start getting to know the players personally too.

“It’s tough enough when you know the players on the losing side and the winning side – that’s an emotional rollercoaster in itself.”

When England beat the All Blacks in the 2019 Rugby World Cup semi-final, Stevenson was also ghostwriting a biography for Kieran Read, who was captain at the time but had also become a friend.

“I’ve done some interviews in my time, but finishing that game... he was a broken man and we were in this vast Tokyo hotel lobby, trying to make sense of it all.

“That wasn’t the way either of us wanted that book to end.”

Just another moment that reinforces what a tough business sport is.

That’s why when he was asked to host TVNZ’s new show *The Upside* earlier this year, he leapt at the chance, despite it being his first foray outside the sports world.

The show featured intimate

conversations with six well-known New Zealanders about mental wellbeing, where he found some familiar faces including Dame Valerie Adams and Sir Graham Henry.

Sitting face to face in a darkened room, Stevenson and the guests delve beneath their own public personas to reveal health troubles, the challenges of parenthood and depression.

Each guest on the show had travelled a different path, but there was a beautiful commonality to their stories, which was how they dealt with their own personal pressures.

“The message was to let people know their problems are important and they don’t have to deal with those problems alone.”

And if sport has taught him anything, it’s: “Don’t fear being wrong.

“Don’t fear not succeeding, just do everything you can and throw every ounce of your energy into succeeding. Whether you do or not is another question, but in the process of doing that, you’ll get the most out of yourself and out of your life,” says Stevenson.

“What if you are passionate about doing something? Just keep doing it. Look for another way and if that door closes, open another one. And if there are no doors, break down a wall or smash a window.”

“Everyone wants attention in this world, but we provide scrutiny – and those are two different things. Sport may feel trivial in that mix but it’s part of who we are, what we do and what we’re passionate about.”

WHITE KNUCKLE RIDE

Kate Humphries, Programme Director for Creative Advertising at Media Design School and recent winner of the Comms Council's Outstanding Achievement award, talks about developing creativity within the younger generation and the food she could eat forever.

What does your day-to-day life look like at Media Design School?

A chaos of joyful bits, humbling bits, and frustrating bits all mashed in, with me barely holding it together. But somehow it works. It should also be noted that I work with a dedicated, full-on, hard-working bunch of passionate people at MDS. And, when they don't stay in their lanes, they're inspirational.

As programme director for creative advertising at Media Design School and having won the Comms Council's Outstanding Achievement award, you must love working to foster the creativity of future generations. Why is that?

It's unpredictable. Every single year is a white-knuckle ride. For nine months you're on your toes, constantly having to tweak the alchemy of the room. But then, there's the bliss of seeing people fall in love with ideas, of seeing an unexpected pairing suddenly go off like a crazed firework, of seeing sheer delight wrap itself around an entire cohort when last year's 52 MadStars finalist bursts into the room.

What else do I love? The two-way learnings, where you learn just as much from them as they do from you. The ongoing conversation between students and industry mentors, where you get to witness a much tighter idea unpeeling itself. And, as the year draws to a close, seeing a student team start to trust their gut on an idea.

Specifically working with the younger generation, what do you think they will bring into the next era of creative advertising?

I think they will bring insight, together with a media neutrality that will allow them to effortlessly unfold an idea in the places where they spend their time. I've witnessed it happening over the last few years with idea after idea that cleverly uses gaming platforms in so many unexpected ways.

I think this will happen more and more, as the joy of the glittering surfaces on which they live fuses with what they've learnt in their time with us. That delightful awe that can happen when you stop and dig a bit, and just like that, a new form of play emerges for a brand.

When it comes to bringing out the creativity in other people, what does that process look like?

A lot of time initially is spent on removing the hefty obstacles people put in their own way.

It's also about getting them to trust the process, to be both relaxed and deliberate with cultivating different areas of the brain. To be clever and strategic when they need to be. And, at other times, to be boldly and unashamedly stupid in their creative leaps. It also involves them learning to know when to park their own ego and allow their creative partner, tutor, or industry mentor to coax, tease and draw out the threads of their insights and ideas. ☺



Quick fire 5

1. Favourite cuisine you could eat every day?

Don't make me choose! When push comes to shove, my comfort food will always be Catalan. In fact, I'm off right now to rub raw garlic on charred bread and slather it with oily anchovies.

2. Live in the 90s or 2000s?

Both.

3. First country you've been to?

When I was six months old, my parents hot-footed it from Aotearoa to the UK via a big Italian cruise liner. That right there, I believe, was a whole country in itself.

4. Best book you've read?

Oh God, again, choosing. I read like a beast, it is my joy and my anchor. But I love Steve Toltz, *A Fraction of the Whole*. It teems with a love of language.

5. Three words to describe yourself?

Not really here.



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