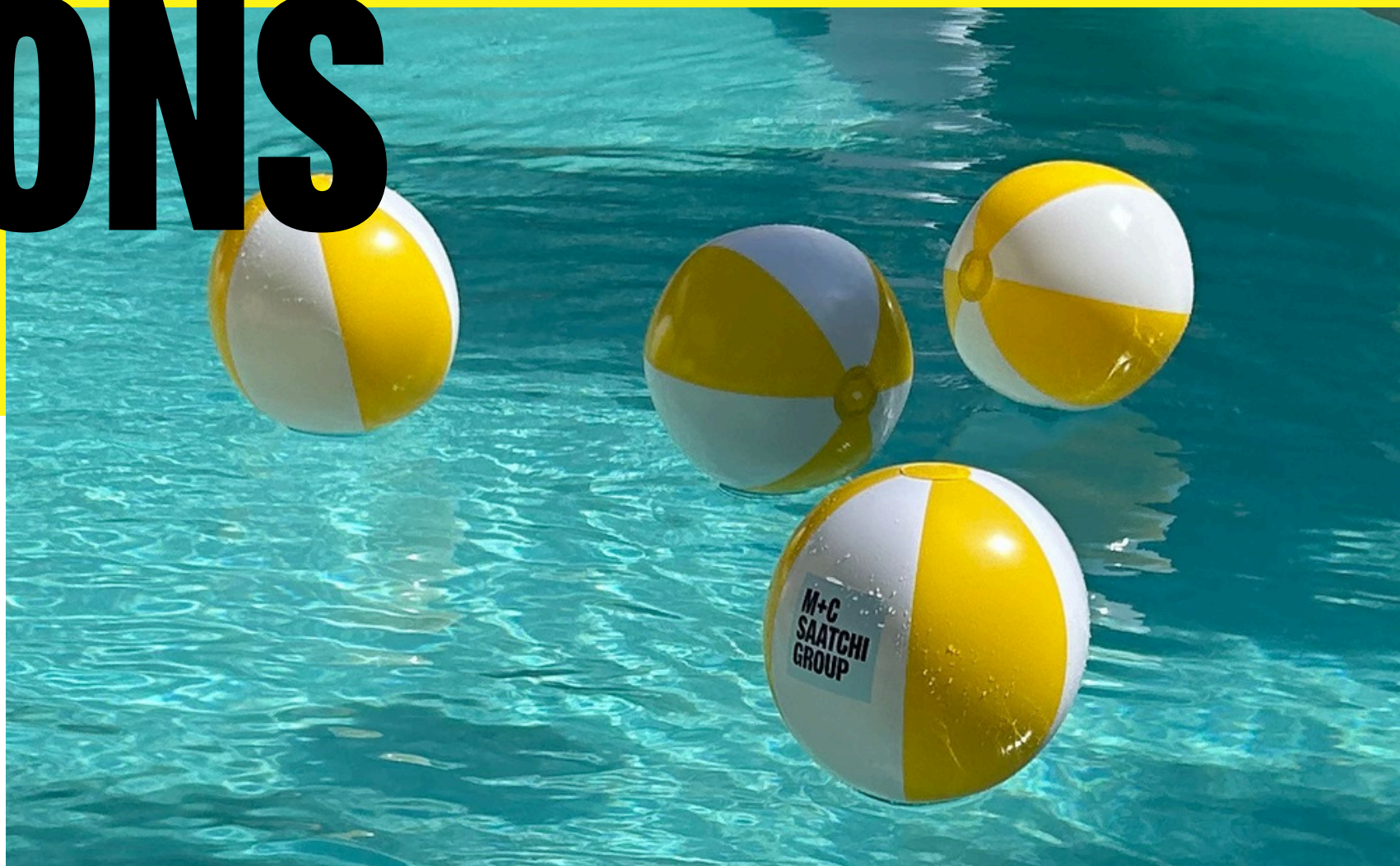


M+C SAATCHI GROUP

HELLO CANNES LIONS



M+‘C IS FOR CANNES’



Like many agencies, M+C Saatchi's presence in Cannes is a business investment. We attend for several reasons. Firstly, to celebrate creativity. It's the lifeblood of our business, after all, and I'm delighted that we came home with some accolades. It's a fabulous recognition of the talent and creativity of our amazing teams. Secondly, to build relationships. Cannes was an opportunity to introduce prospective clients to the Cultural Power we offer brands, and to spend quality time with our wonderful roster of current clients. And lastly, to learn. That's what this newsletter is all about. You'll find plenty of inspiration, brought back by those who attended. Hopefully you'll get a sense of what we found most insightful, and feel inspired to greater heights of creativity.

ZAID AL-QASSAB, GLOBAL CEO, M+C SAATCHI GROUP





Spice Girl Melanie C DJs at
M+C Saatchi Group's 30th Birthday party






CULTURAL POWER WINS AT CANNES

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR JOINT GLOBAL
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICERS

ROB DOUBAL & LAURENCE "LOLLY" THOMSON
JOINT GLOBAL CCOS, M+C SAATCHI GROUP







Even the most seasoned of Cannes veterans felt the intensity of what was the most attended Cannes Lions Festival ever this year. With scorching temperatures, hot topics and intense jostling between networks and indies, the race to get their point of view across was relentless—all against the backdrop of an industry aggressively reorganising in response to an increasingly strong tech sector. At the heart of it all was the question of how to balance Human and Artificial Intelligence, a topic that took centre stage.

It was, therefore, a pivotal year for M+C Saatchi Group to show up with a new positioning which landed perfectly in this debate. Whether powered by human or artificial intelligence, the answer lies in creating work that generates Cultural Power.

And this theme was evident in the big winners. The Grand Prix-level work drove cultural groundswell by addressing societal issues and finding brilliantly creative ways to affect change. Meanwhile, the gold, silver and bronze winners were recognised for creatively redefining the culture of how we do commerce and finding new ways to engage audiences.





A special congratulations goes to our Sport & Entertainment team in London for a bronze Lion for LEGO, their first taste of what it feels like to win a Lion at this fierce creative competition.

Congratulations also to Laura Murphy and Amy Morrison from our Australia team for their epic bronze in the Young Lions Awards, a phenomenal achievement.

Our conclusion? We had a great Cannes. We brought home Lions by embracing culture and creativity, ultimately building Cultural Power for the M+C Saatchi Group. A huge thanks to everyone involved in making it happen.



**Amy Morrison and Laura Murphy,
bronze Young Lions Digital competition winners**






STORIES FROM THE CROISSETTE

**BRANDS, BE ENTERTAINING AT BEST,
INTERESTING AT LEAST**

DARREN BOWLES, CCO
M+C SAATCHI CONSULTING





Just back from Cannes Lions.

Yes, AI was everywhere.

Yes, the rosé flowed.

No, I didn't yacht.

Yes, we gutter bar-ed.

But beneath the noise?

A quiet reset.

Less hype. More honesty.

A creative industry asking:

What's worth stopping? What's worth fixing? What's worth creating, and what's worth AI prompt-ing?


1. 'AI is the new Photoshop*, not the new creative'.

(*other creative tools are available)

Everyone's testing tools or making tools. Many echoed British AI entrepreneur, Mustafa Suleyman:

'AI isn't the idea, it's the assistant.'

It makes 'good' effortless, which makes 'excellent' even more essential. Rather than fear the shift, this is our moment to prove what the best creativity can build on top.



2. Culture isn't something you chase. It's something you contribute to.

The best work didn't mimic culture, it moved it.
Empathetic, not opportunistic.

Examples (swap as preferred):

- Samsung's 'The Worst Library'
- Bodyform's 'Periodsomnia'
- Dove's #TurnYourBack
- WhatsApp's 'Privacy for All'
- FT's 'Letters to This New World'
- Coca Cola's 'Shades of Red'

Each grounded in brand truth, not trend. Deeply felt. Not cynically timed.


3. Paralysis is setting in.

Budget freezes. Boardroom jitters. Well, and everything else in the world in 2025.

Resulting in many playing it safe.

But as one speaker put it:

'Fear is a terrible strategist.'



The smartest brands are shifting:
From performance → presence.
From media spend → meaning.

4. Brand is back.

Not as a logo.
As a living system. A constant self exemplar of
resonance.

Cannes introduced Long-Term Brand Platform Lions.
Identity. Voice. Experience.
Design territory, not ad inventory.

As someone whose passion thrives in design, I was glad
to hear this theme echo across the beach.

5. The agency model is compressing.

Group mergers. Consolidated offers. Fewer frills. The
industry accordion squeezes for the next chorus.

Clients want clarity and craft. Scale and agility.
Disciplined creativity is in.
For designers, this isn't a threat, it's an invitation.



6. Be entertaining at best, interesting at least.

The new baseline for attention? Relevance, not reach.

Design isn't decoration.

It's the delivery system for meaning.

Authenticity runs through every detail.

And meaning is the new feeling.

If you believe in distinctiveness, emotional precision, human taste and cultural resonance, Cannes 2025 wasn't a warning. It was a homecoming.






REDEFINING CREATIVITY

**CULTURAL POWER: WHY IT'S A BRAND'S
MOST VALUABLE CURRENCY**


NADJA BELLAN-WHITE, CEO
M+C SAATCHI NORTH AMERICA





At Cannes, the Cultural Power panel brought together voices who don't just comment on culture—they create it. Esi Eggleston Bracey, chief growth and brand officer at Unilever, and award-winning artist Mickalene Thomas, explored how brands can transcend transactional marketing to become true cultural forces. Mickalene challenged the industry to move beyond one-dimensional creativity—what she called “safe, single-surface ideas”—toward three-dimensional collaboration that is immersive, authentic, and culturally rooted. She cited her work with Dior as an example of maintaining artistic integrity while driving commercial success.

Esi shared how Unilever's legacy brands—Vaseline, Dove, and Persil—earn cultural power by listening deeply and showing up with purpose, not polish. Jo Bacon and Rob Doubal expanded the conversation into the future of marketing, where art, commerce, and cultural fluency must intersect to remain relevant. What emerged was not a panel, but a masterclass—one that redefined creativity not as output, but as courageous partnership. As Esi put it, “I never take notes during a panel—but today, I did.” A moment that reminded us: cultural power isn't something you buy. It's something you build.





M+C Saatchi Group's 30th Birthday party






BEAUTY AS CULTURAL POWER

WHO GETS TO DEFINE WHAT'S IN?

STEVIE ARCHER, CCO
M+C SAATCHI NORTH AMERICA







At our brunch, hosted in partnership with Bustle Media Group and featuring Time100 artist Mickalene Thomas, and e.l.f. Beauty chief brand officer, Lauri Lam, we went DEEP. We laughed, we shared, we had crudit  . And we got some incredible gems of wisdom about how we can harness Cultural Power and art to shape our perception of beauty and community.

Mickalene Thomas dug in on how the imagery we create as artists, marketers and brands has immense power to shape and shift our perceptions of beauty and ourselves. Even from our earliest experiences with art and media. And connected the cultural dots between Farrah Fawcett and Lil'Kim as image makers of beauty standards.

Lauri Lam revealed how e.l.f. Beauty has always acted as a disruptor in the beauty category and approaches every choice as a chance to do 'something a beauty brand would never do.' This approach has allowed e.l.f. Beauty to build more than a brand, but a community.

And finally we discussed the importance of diverse thinking and empowering new voices to shape work to create truly resonant and representative marketing.





Guests at M+C Saatchi x Bustle Media x e.l.f Beauty brunch






IT TAKES ONE VOICE

**TAPPING INTO CONSUMER PASSIONS TO
DRIVE BRAND GROWTH**


**ROBIN CLARKE, CEO
M+C SAATCHI PASSIONS & PR**





On a roasting Thursday in Cannes, I found myself sat at a perfectly shaded table at M+C Saatchi House, flanked by razor-sharp minds from University of Oxford, Google, TIME, Wimbledon, Ridley Scott's RSA Films and many other senior executives across the industry. The theme? How the intersection of cultural influence and consumer passions can drive brand growth. But the real topic of conversation? Whether brands have the guts—or the right—to make a real difference in today's highly complex societies.

Here's the truth: most don't. Not because they lack budget, but because they lack the courage to stay the course. Many brands talk a big game, but flinch when it counts and have to react to shifting dynamics in their own businesses. Google's KR Liu nailed it: Regardless of external ecosystems, employees must be empowered to be braver and bolder. There is a risk-taking fear. 'Brands have the ability to shape culture and change laws. It takes just one voice in the room to begin a revolution.'





We all agreed: emotional connection fuels impact and trust. And brand-led partnerships enabled by empowered people drive scalable growth. Wimbledon's Usama Al-Qassab said it best: do one thing brilliantly and mean it. Don't just show up in culture—belong there.

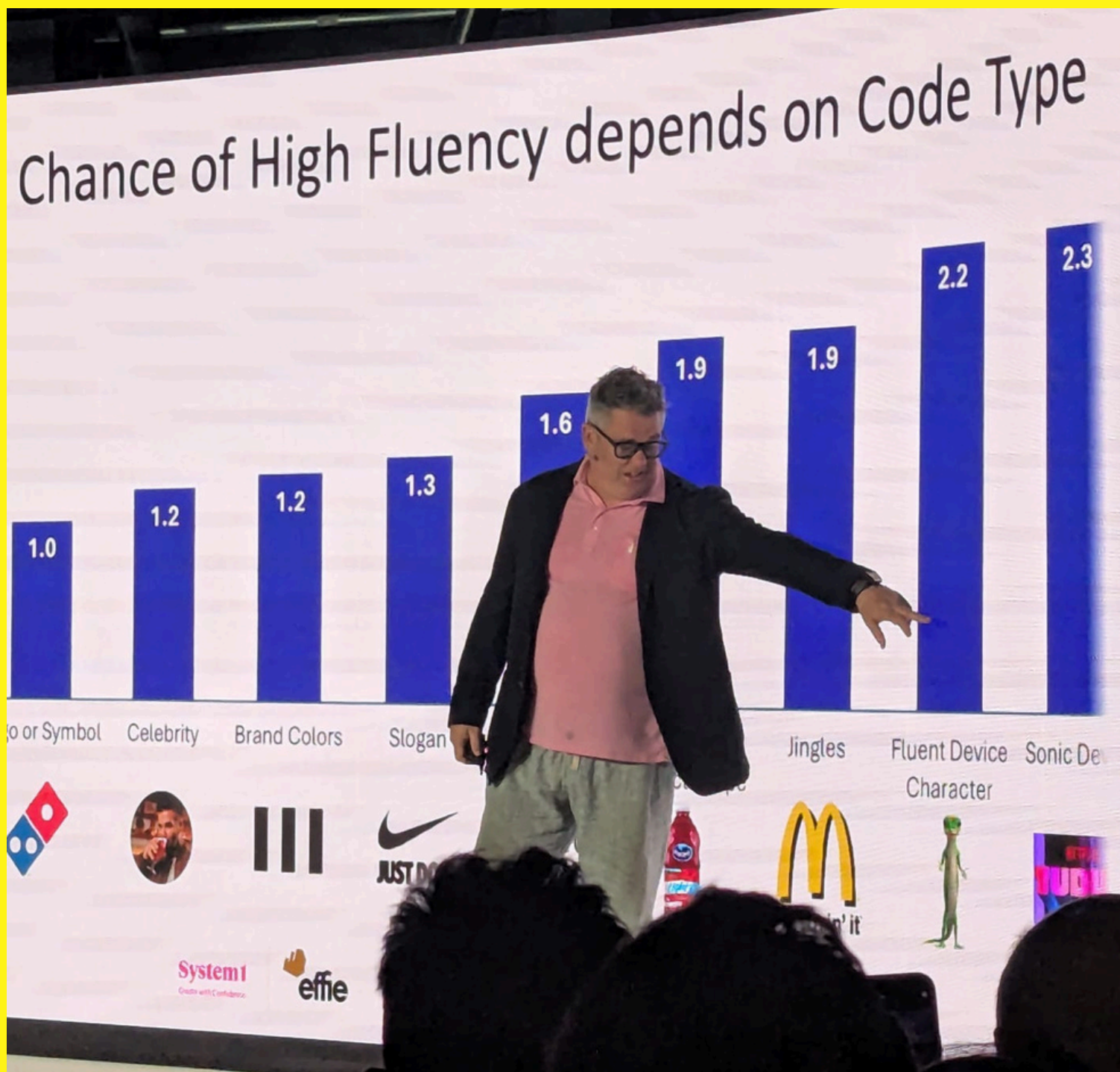
We launched our Cultural Power Index with University of Oxford to help brands measure their cultural relevance—and earn their place. Because if your brand doesn't stand for something, it's just more noise. And Cannes has plenty of that already.





Guests at M+C Saatchi Group lunch






WHY GREAT ADS ENDURE

THE CREATIVE DIVIDEND: ADVERTISING THAT PAYS BACK

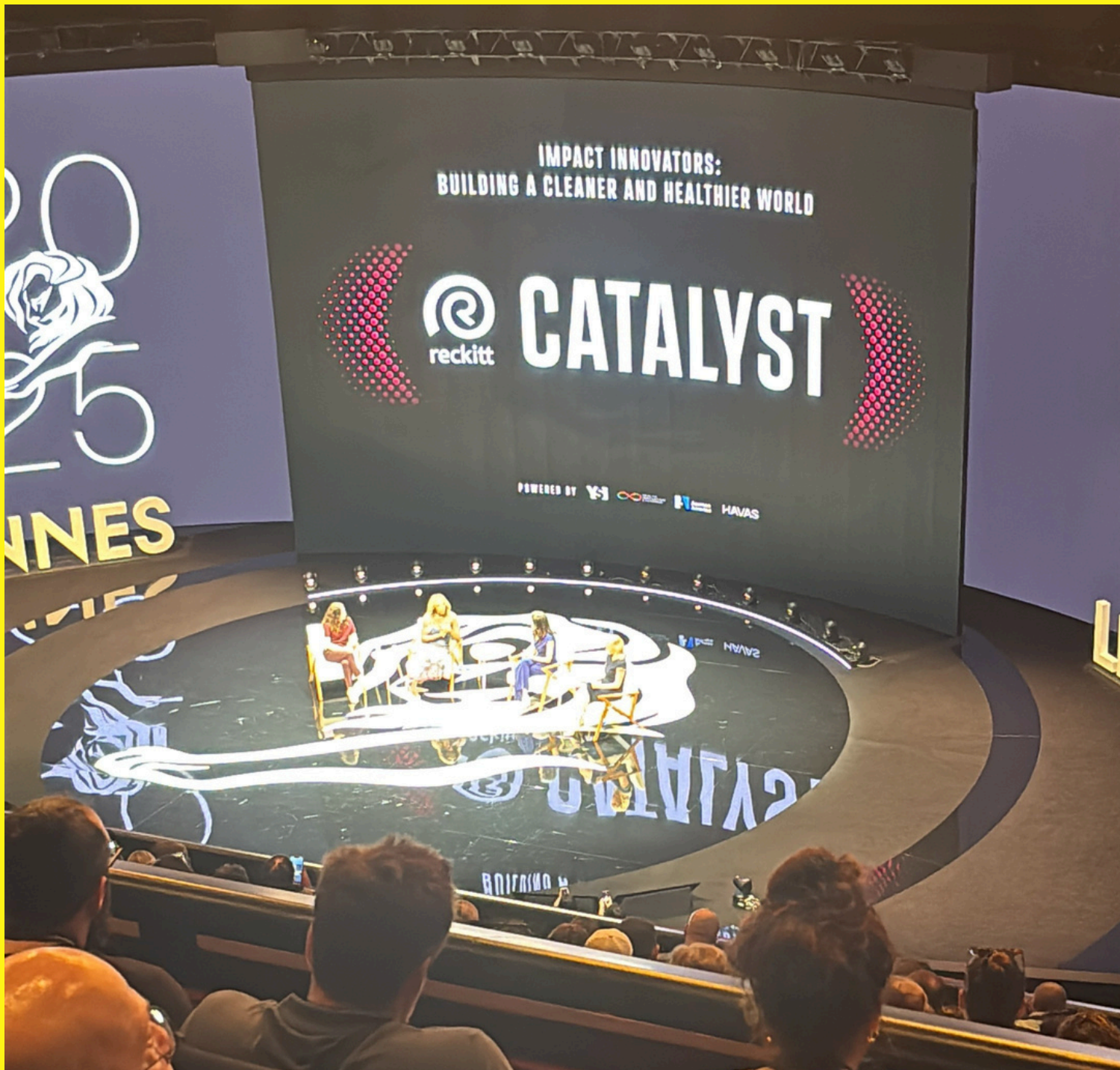
ANT FIRTH-CLARK, SENIOR STRATEGIST
M+C SAATCHI SPORT & ENTERTAINMENT UK



When Mark Ritson, the Stewart Lee of the marketing industry, steps onto a stage—you are always guaranteed two things: deeply researched truth-bombs about advertising, and cynical wit.

In his most recent foray at Cannes, amongst a myriad of points, he makes a claim that most brands invest in new ads too quickly and that, should you have delivered on the key creative points of emotional storytelling, emphasising distinctive brand assets repeatedly, the same quality brand advert could remain effective for years.

That's not to say a brand ad is the only thing you do, but rather you should pair it with a programme of consumer and culture relevant media outputs and tactical activations that engage people on a more contextual level over time. Great ads were named (Twix and Kit Kat), and others shamed, and when all was said and done, Mr Ritson stormed off the stage to a rapturous applause at the end of Day 4 on the Rotunde Stage.



INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

**CATALYST - A BOLD NEW MODEL FOR
INCLUSIVE GROWTH**

ANNA KING, MANAGING DIRECTOR EMEA
M+C SAATCHI CONSULTING



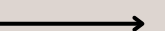


Launched at Cannes Lions, Catalyst is Reckitt's £10M commitment to support 200 ventures founded by women and under-represented entrepreneurs—aiming to improve health and hygiene access for five million people by 2030. But this isn't a CSR initiative—it's a brand-powered growth platform built on commercial expertise, innovation, and impact.

Reckitt is rethinking who gets in at the top of the funnel—prioritising lived experience and proximity to the problem. Catalyst is designed to build scalable businesses, not just fund one-off projects, offering founders deep brand, communications, and commercial support.

Serena Williams plays an active role as Entrepreneur-in-Residence, bringing a mindset of resilience and learning from failure to every stage of the journey.

With partners including Acumen, Yunus Social Innovation and HIX, Catalyst is creating a replicable, global-local model—proving what's possible when brands choose to build, back and believe in inclusive innovation.






BE MORE ZESPRI

**CANNES LIONS X WARC: CREATIVE
IMPACT UNPACKED**

NATALIE COOKE, GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR
M+C SAATCHI MIDDLE EAST





What does it really take to build brands fast, without losing your soul (or your margin)?

Creativity with purpose, pace and people at the heart. Take notes—from the fruit aisle.

Be More Zespri

Zespri didn't just slap a logo on a kiwi. They rewrote the rules of commodity branding—sustainably. They created the fruit sticker not just for fame, but for traceability, quality assurance, zero glue and consumer trust. It told you where the fruit came from, how it was grown, and why it mattered. Suddenly, a generic green fruit had story, value, and meaning.

They turned a low-interest product into a premium experience. All while leading the charge on ethical farming, grower partnerships, and environmental standards. That's creativity and integrity—and it changed the fruit game globally.



Fast is Nothing Without Impact

Speed is great. But speed without distinction, insight, or connection is just noise. The work that wins (and works) moves people, not just metrics.

Escape the Beige

Most ads disappear. Why? They forget to stand out. Zespri leaned into what made them weird, wonderful, and ownable. If you don't show up with something only you could say—why show up at all?

Know Your Audience, Then Trust Them

When you use humour, clarity or freshness, you're not dumbing down—you're showing respect. The best brands don't patronise. They empathise. Zespri understood the modern shopper wanted more than just sweetness—they wanted sustainability with substance.





Creativity = Business Growth

Zespri didn't become a global billion-dollar brand by chance. They invested in consistent, creative, values-led storytelling. Over time, it added up—faster than short-term tactics ever could.

Creativity isn't soft. It's strategic. And when done like Zespri, it can turn a humble fruit into a global benchmark for branding done right.





KNOW ME. SHOW ME. GROW

**CANNES LIONS X ANA CMO GROWTH
COUNCIL**

**SURESH RAJ, CHIEF GROWTH OFFICER
M+C SAATCHI NORTH AMERICA**





At the Cannes Lions-ANA CMO Growth Council, I joined industry leaders, including Mark Pritchard, to address the global CMO community on the urgent themes of inclusivity and sustainability amid growing media fragmentation and fears of DEI initiatives being sidelined.

The session emphasised that truly great brands build emotional connections grounded in authentic brand values—especially through the powerful emotions of joy and trust.

A key insight was the importance of a brand's Inclusive Emotional Quotient (IEQ), a strategic tool for fostering deeper, more diverse consumer relationships.

The concept of 'Know Me, Show Me' captured the future of brand engagement: hyper-personalisation driven by AI. This personalisation must align with five core principles—Empower Me, Know Me, Reach Me, Show Me, and Delight Me.





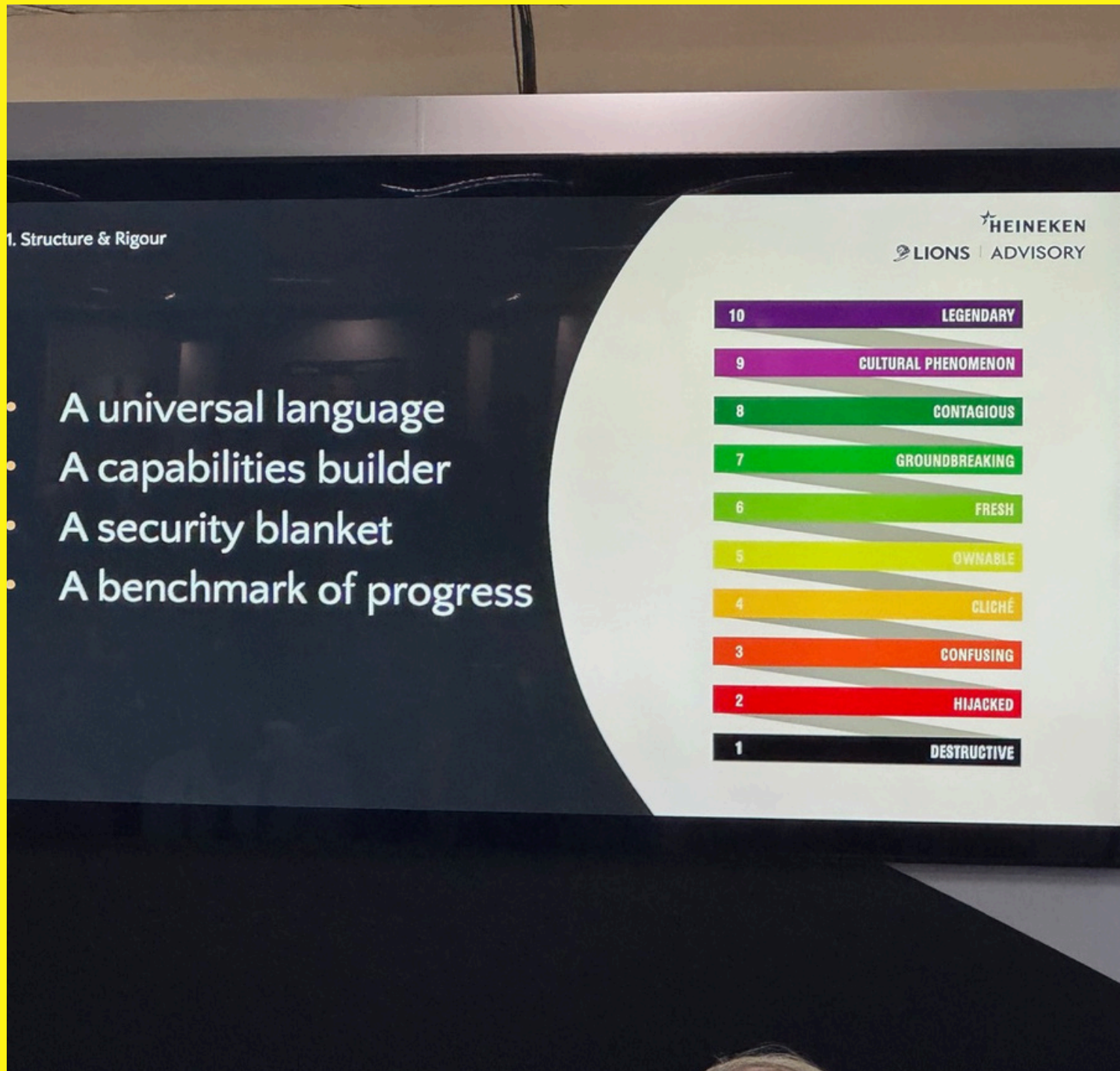
Two thought-provoking research papers from Microsoft Advertising underscored the role of inclusion and AI in shaping next-gen consumer experiences.

Links were shared for further exploration on the themes of the psychology of inclusion and hyper-personalisation powered by AI.

[The psychology of inclusion of the effects of advertising: Gen Z](#)

[The future of AI personalisation is inclusive](#)






SCALING CREATIVITY

HOW TO EMBED WORLD-CLASS
CREATIVITY: A STORY OF SYSTEMS AND
CULTURE AT HEINEKEN

CHRISTIAN “KIDDE” SCHUCK, CCO
M+C SAATCHI EUROPE





In this session, Sharon Annette, global commerce capabilities director, Heineken, and James Womersley, director of creative capabilities, Lions Advisory, explored Heineken's systematic approach to leveraging creativity as a key driver of brand power and growth.

For Heineken creativity is just as consequential as product quality—not merely a matter of brand aesthetics.

Creativity is considered vital to business growth and ranks #2 among the top drivers of advertising profitability. For example, winning 22 of the 46 Cannes Lions awarded to beer brands in 2024 contributed to a profit increase of 8.9%.

To globally guarantee locally meaningful creativity, Heineken invests in a systemised, bold, creativity-driven culture, where leaders are encouraged to take risks—because not taking risks is seen as the far greater business risk.

Through structure and rigour, senior buy-in and advocacy, and strong internal and external partnerships,



they drive a universal understanding of how to assess creativity, create an environment of fearless risk-takers, and grow a meaningful global organisation across many culturally-nuanced markets.

At the core of this approach is their Creativity Ladder, which includes 10 ‘wrongs’. This framework is not only a shared language for evaluating ideas (which are often judged subjectively), but also acts as a safety net, a decision-making tool and a progress map.

In a world where brands and agencies are moving back toward centralised global structures, Heineken’s system offers a model worth learning from.





MOMENTS OVER MESSAGES

MARKETING THAT HAPPENS: REAL-TIME TRUTHS THAT MOVE CULTURE

GUY BRADBURY, CREATIVE PARTNER
M+C SAATCHI UK





I went to a great talk at Cannes by Todd Kaplan, CMO Kraft, who kicked things off with a killer question:

Is the work that's winning in here... actually winning out there?

In the hearts and minds of real people?

Do we still know how to truly connect with an audience—cut through, stand out, mean something?

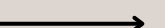
Because the old model?

Brand → Strategy → Creative → Media blast—it's not quite hitting like it used to.

Sure, campaigns are launching. But are people really engaging? Or are we filling the airwaves.

Let's face it: audiences today gave too much choice.

They're scrolling, multitasking, drowning in options.





We've got every song ever made in our pocket—yet we hit shuffle.

Every show at our fingertips—yet nothing to watch.

We can order anything to eat on an app, yet stick to the same three meals.

To rise above the noise, we need more than messages.

We need attention.

And to earn that, there are two key ingredients:

Context & Culture.

Context – Show up in ways that matter. Be useful. Be relevant. Be in the moment of people's lives.

Culture – Don't interrupt what people love. Become what they love.





Tap into the passion. Ride the wave. Be part of the conversation, not just noise in the feed.

One perfect example? Kraft's **Mustaaaaard** Campaign.

They didn't promote the product.

They amplified a real beef between two artists—in real time.

It wasn't an ad. It was a moment.

That's cultural power.

That's attention.

That's what wins out there.

#culturalpower






REINVENTING SNACK CULTURE

**STIRRING THE CREATIVE POT: HOW
CONNECTION THROUGH FOOD FUELS GROWTH**

**MARK HAYCOCK, REGIONAL HEAD OF STRATEGY
M+C SAATCHI MIDDLE EAST**





Jane Wakely, global CCMO at PepsiCo, built the case for understanding food culture as a growth driver for established brands; as 70% of all PepsiCo growth is coming from growing categories, versus stealing market share.

In Mexico, they repositioned their Tostitos nacho brand from a snack to a meal product, after discovering local street vendors were adding a bunch of ingredients over a sideways opened bag.

In India, they optimised the taste of Lays Magic Massale—their most popular flavour—to cater to spice preferences in different regions.

And, most famously, they evolved Cheetos from a kids' snack to an adult snack through their long-standing platform around Cheetos dust.

They also gave out free snacks to the audience to open up yet another category entry point!



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