

WE
HEARD
THE
LIONS
ROAR

Recapping
Cannes Lions
2021

Ogilvy

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CANNES LIONS is the biggest awards festival in the advertising world—simultaneously a celebration of our industry and an examination of it, all the while showcasing the brands and campaigns that turned heads and created impact over the last year.

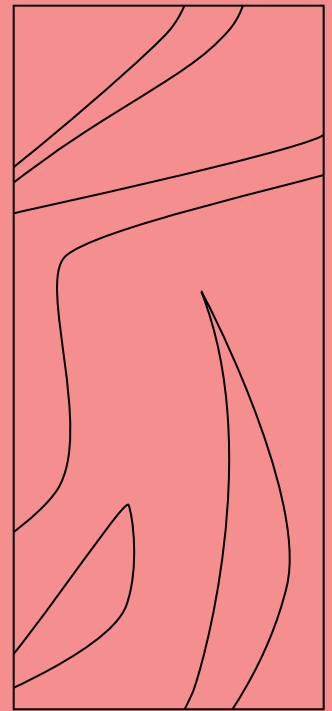
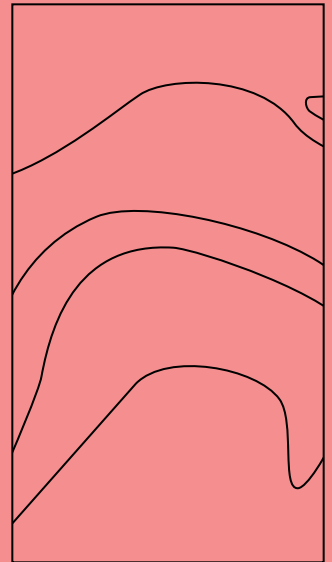
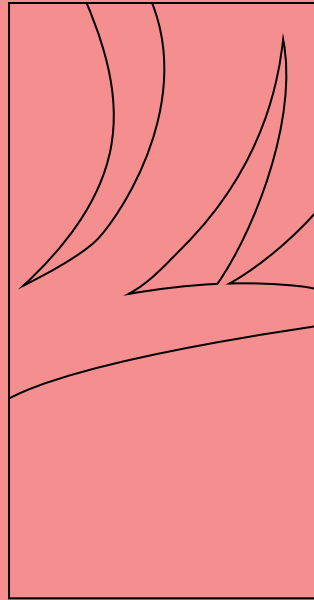
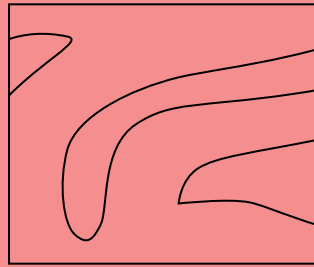
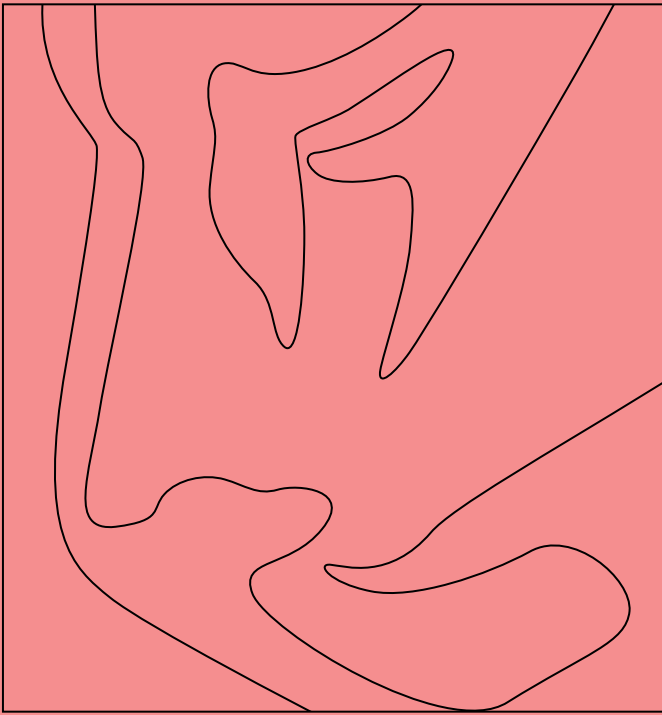
As the prior year's festival was understandably canceled due to the pandemic, the 2021 Lions were more than just a return to the (virtual) Croisette. They represented an industry still grappling with the shocking, fundamental shifts that came about due to the behavioral and societal upheaval brought upon by Covid-19. While not all of the work and sessions dealt with the pandemic head on, it's impossible to ignore the profound effect the uncertainty and disruption the pandemic had on every aspect of our industry, and our lives.

The isolation that many of us felt during the last 16 months made a massive difference in how we worked and created. Many of this year's talks focused on that impact, with leaders in the industry encouraging strategic and creative minds to take pauses; "to be on the frontline of real life" as Aline Santos, Chief Brand Officer of Unilever put it. Our desks at home can be a dangerously small place to gain inspiration, and author Juliet Funt argued at Cannes that the time we spend not thinking at all often helps us produce our best ideas. In some ways, it's crucial for our industry to begin to rethink how we think.

A once-in-a-generation event like the pandemic can—and likely should—result in shifting priorities. A common theme at this year's festival was that now is the time for the ad world to think bigger. Not in dollars and cents and viral hits, but in longterm cultural impact. A talk from the LEGO Group challenged viewers to think of imagination as a renewable resource, while speakers from Google and Global Citizen encouraged us to view creative storytelling as our most powerful tool in driving change. As Sarah Acer of Global Citizen put it, "A great story well-told has the potential to release the advocate in all of us."

Due to the changes brought upon by the pandemic—many of them permanent—the opportunity is there for brands who embrace this challenge. Consumers are no longer bracing for external changes, but rather looking to maintain the beneficial changes they have made since the start of the pandemic. Andrea Mallard of Pinterest warns that if brands turn to consumers with another message of "everything is changing", they "risk exacerbating consumers' fear — as they fear losing the positive changes they have made within themselves."

If consumers are making changes for the better, so can our industry. Much of this year's awarded work shows that many among us are heading in the right direction. But it's on everyone in our industry to not only understand the impact brands can have, but their increasing responsibility to do so.



**THE
WORK**
THEMES
AND
TAKEAWAYS

Unexpected Partnerships Create Influence

IF THE WINNING WORK at this year's festival is any indication (and we believe that it is), brands have found new and exciting ways to amplify their message by taking a different approach to influence. Partnerships have long been a tactic used by brands to reach new audiences and strengthen their position with others, but we're beginning to see new and innovative partnerships that are resulting in mass attention and engagement with less need for the traditional legwork required. This year's examples include brands who have incentivized fans to amplify their brand in lieu of a star studded team sponsorship, while others are earning the attention of a totally new audience by partnering with brands that sit firmly opposite their own.



Stevenage Challenge, Burger King.

BURGER KING cleverly achieved the big play for its brand in the popular video game FIFA 2020 with a real-life sponsorship of an obscure soccer club, Stevenage. The move turned a relatively unknown team into an internet sensation within the FIFA game. Competitors clad in Burger King shirts got picked up by players, helped along with rewards of free food to gamers who participated in a variety of challenges.

Direct Lions Jury President Reed Collins, Chief Creative Officer of Ogilvy APAC, remarked this was a great insight and understanding into “hacking the system”.

XBOX successfully broadened themselves from a gaming company to a tourism company by introducing Gaming Tourism. Built on the realization that in-game experiences feature enough beautiful landscapes to attract a wholly different audience to the interface, XBOX partnered with well-established travel company Rough Guides to create virtual travel experiences, creating a memorable

experience and garnering attention from a totally new audience base.

REDDIT is a home for underdog communities that are changing the world, as proven last year when a small group of people from an investment community on the platform shook up the financial industry. To acknowledge the impact of this moment, Reddit decided to make a small statement on one of the world’s biggest stages – the Super Bowl. Many mistook Reddit’s 5 second ad for a glitch, garnering even more head turning curiosity. Their ad quickly became the most searched from the event, and solidified their brand as masters of seemingly-accidental-influence.

Reddit’s success—and many others from this year’s festival—was a product of a few courageous choices: leaning into an unexpected media moment, not hesitating to toe the line between confusion and curiosity, and a deep self-awareness of the cultural conversation surrounding the brand.

Inclusivity: Walk the Talk

WHILE MANY EXPECTED the pandemic to be the key theme of most of this year's winning work, in fact we saw much lauded work that focused on themes of diversity and inclusivity. These topics have long been talked about by brands, but that is no longer good enough. The most successful brands of today aren't just telling us they care about inclusivity — they're showing us. Reaching beyond performative communications, brands are ensuring their commitment to inclusivity informs everything they do, either by developing new products and services or by tailoring existing ones to support overlooked communities. Today, brand position must stretch beyond communications and actually inform product and service development. The brands set up for future, long-term success are those who will work to meet the genuine needs of underserved communities, and actually live the promise of inclusivity.



Naming the Invisible by Digital Birth Registration, Telenor Pakistan.

MASTERCARD's "True Name" campaign empowered transgender and nonbinary cardholders to use their chosen names on their credit cards, presenting the cards as one safe place for people who frequently feel unsafe amid harassment and violence directed at them elsewhere in their lives. This was more than changing a social media avatar or putting out a statement—in this case, MasterCard solved a real problem that transgender and nonbinary cardholders face. Jury President Vicki Maguire, Chief Creative Officer of Havas, U.K., described it as work that "touches you, that hits something that you feel before you actually comprehend it."

An example of a brand living inclusivity in its product design, Unilever deodorant brand **DEGREE** created a deodorant line that includes a hooked design for one-handed usage; magnetic closures that make it easier to take the cap off and put it back on for people with limited grip or no arms; a Braille label and instructions; and a larger

roll-on applicator that makes it easier to reach more surface per swipe.

In Pakistan, it is not easy for those in rural villages to get birth certificates, and those without that documentation are far less likely to receive vital services. **TELENOR**, Pakistan's second-largest mobile network, developed an app that allows undocumented Pakistanis to submit personal information for the chance to have their own birth certificate created. The simple technology and infrastructure helped 426 villages in Pakistan become enabled to register births digitally, 1083% more than the original goal, resulting in the registration of 1.2 million children.

These campaigns are examples of brands looking at their ability to solve actual, real-world problems and following through. In the future, consumers will continue to reward brands who prove they share the same values, not merely talk about it.

Listen Until the End of the Story

SKIPPABLE ADS, TikToks, Stories and Tweets—it's understandable for brands to think that anything that lasts more than a few seconds is simply not worth doing anymore. But then again, the same audiences are binging 13-hour television series in one weekend. If it's interesting, people will engage.

Many brands embraced this challenge, showing they were not afraid to take an imaginative, long form approach to do so. These cases should inspire others to consider the way they tell stories — which subjects and misconceptions are nuanced and expansive enough to warrant a deeper exploration? Those who are unafraid to take viewers on a rich, imaginative storytelling journey are effectively challenging dynamics that surround their product.

It's worth asking: What are the larger challenges tied to the way people perceive our brand and experience our product? Which perceptions could we challenge by telling a full, textured story about them?

Spanish spirits brand Ruavieja created a tool capable of calculating the time we have left to spend with the people we love. Essentially an algorithm based on various statistical sources, "The Time We Have

Don't be afraid to tell stories that take time. If the story is strong and powerful enough, the depth and length will be a feature, not a bug.

Left” campaign raised awareness about the need to see more of each other. Based on a simple insight that people want to see more of each other, but life gets in the way and it becomes deprioritized, the brand found an innovative and engaging way to showcase it to consumers, while also upending preconceived notions about the brand and its usual way of communicating.

Libresse/Bodyform’s “Womb Stories” has been lauded for portraying women’s experiences that are often shrouded in stigma or shame, from menopause and miscarriage to painful periods and endometriosis. This is a big step in the right direction, but the work is not complete. “Womb Stories” is another initiative aiming to break taboos about women’s bodies and health. Any time a brand takes on these types of topics, there will be pushback and challenges. The brands that stake their claim boldly and forge ahead are the ones

that will be rewarded and will truly make an impact on consumers’ lives.

And the vital, bold campaign “You Love Me” from Beats by Dre unpacks the pain of a country that loves Black culture, but shows much less love for black people. Chris Thorne, Beats’ CMO, said “Beats has a responsibility to tell bold stories. We’ll keep using our platform and pushing for change.” This commitment shines through in this long-form 2 minute piece. Beats builds on their own humanity and credibility as a brand by painting an honest, nuanced picture of the gap between the lived Black experience and the celebration of Black culture.

The message from the success of these brand’s campaigns is clear: Don’t be afraid to tell stories that take time. If the story is strong and powerful enough, the depth and length will be a feature, not a bug.

The Power of Brand in Times of Change

THE GLOBAL UPRISING against racism and police brutality against Black people last summer began just before Cannes 2020 was to happen, but it's no surprise that the summer of activism and protest has continued to have an impact.

This year we saw several pieces of work that show brands investing in brave, long term brand building, often by refusing to shy away from unpopular or controversial viewpoints. This has allowed brands to transcend time horizons and retain cultural relevance despite the unprecedented changes we witnessed over the last 15 months.



Courage Is Beautiful, Dove.

DOVE is no stranger to boldly standing behind women and upending the patriarchal definitions of beauty. The brand merged this ethos with stunning work around the pandemic, honoring the front-liners on the battle against Covid-19. “Courage is Beautiful” showed the faces of healthcare workers marked by the protective gear they’ve been wearing during the crisis, with photos taken at the height of the pandemic. This was a simple repositioning of their timeless story showing real beauty in the world, and also tied to action’s Dove and Unilever were taking to help combat the pandemic.

NIKE also continued in its stand in the fight for social justice and racial equality with their partnership with Colin Kaepernick and the campaign “Dream Crazy”. Though an unfortunately controversial figure, Kaepernick is also extremely popular with many people, and the effort led to \$163 million in earned media, boosted the brand’s

value by \$6 billion and led to a 31% sales increase.

THE NEW YORK TIMES beautifully stitched together headlines and imagery from decades worth of reporting to land a singular belief which gave the campaign its title: “Life Needs Truth”. This long form video is a celebration of journalism and truth at large, a space that New York Times has carved out space to claim, many years in the making.

For brands that haven’t yet explored the position of taking a stand and truly living a brand’s values, it’s worth exploring: How might we challenge ourselves to define, express, and stand by our own brand’s point of view? Are we prepared to stand by this point of view in crisis, conflict, or tension? How are we preparing to speak to the short term moment, but also our long term future?

Make Your Product NOT Perfect

WE ALL LIKE TO SAY that nobody or nothing is perfect, but it's another thing for a brand to embrace its own flaws or imperfections. In some cases, doing so can actually show you're your product or brand's true self to the public.

At Cannes, a few winners took a commonly known fact about their product and reframed it as a fun, enjoyable wink to consumers. In each case, brands took the risk of not portraying their product in a hyper polished, perfectionist light. This won themselves more attention from consumers.

Cheetos taste great, but the dusting of crumbs gets all over your hands, making it so you can't really touch anything. The brand took this famous drawback and used it to create a memorable musical spot, turning it into a benefit and punctuating the statement with MC Hammer.

Burger King is proud that their Whoppers have fewer preservatives, but that simple fact doesn't seem like something you can build an exciting campaign around. In "Moldy Whopper" though, the brand went to extremes to prove their Whoppers have fewer preservatives, creating striking

visuals that show what happens to a Whopper that sits out for a long time.

"The beauty of real food is that it gets ugly" says Fer Machado, Restaurant Brands International's Global CMO. In this case, Burger King was brave enough to depart from perfectionist portrayals of their product, and it paid off by capturing attention and visualizing an important benefit of their menu.

It takes courage and creativity to be a brand and lean into something that can be perceived as an "issue" or imperfection. But this thinking represents how brands can lead through authenticity. Is there a gap between the way we present our product and the way it is enjoyed by consumers? If there is, it presents a possible opportunity to shine a light on it, rather than hide it. Embracing this can actually be so norm shattering, so unexpected that the brand can turn heads and lure in new audiences.

Conclusion

If this year's Cannes Lions showed us anything, it's that now is the time for brands to understand the influence they have to make an impact and drive change in the real world. If they do, and seize this chance, brands will set themselves up for longterm growth.

To do so, however, brands must stay away from the short-term thinking that, truth be told, has often been rewarded at award shows like Cannes in the past. The pandemic has radically altered not only consumer behavior patterns, but the power companies have to make a positive impact on people's lives.

It's time for all of us as an industry to reorient ourselves around long-term ambitions. To create new conditions for creativity to flourish so that it contributes to lasting growth. In fact, it may be time for our industry to consider its focus on doing fewer but bigger, better, and bolder things to build our brands.

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