

AFFINITY
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@SCALE

Making an impact
in a personalized
context

Ogilvy

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Affinity@Scale is Affinity For People

If you've been around marketing for the last half decade, you know about personalization at scale. In some ways, it's been thought of as the Holy Grail. And it makes sense. We live in an Amazon-ified world, one where we expect the digital platforms that we use all and every day to cut-and-paste everything for us, just as we'd like it.

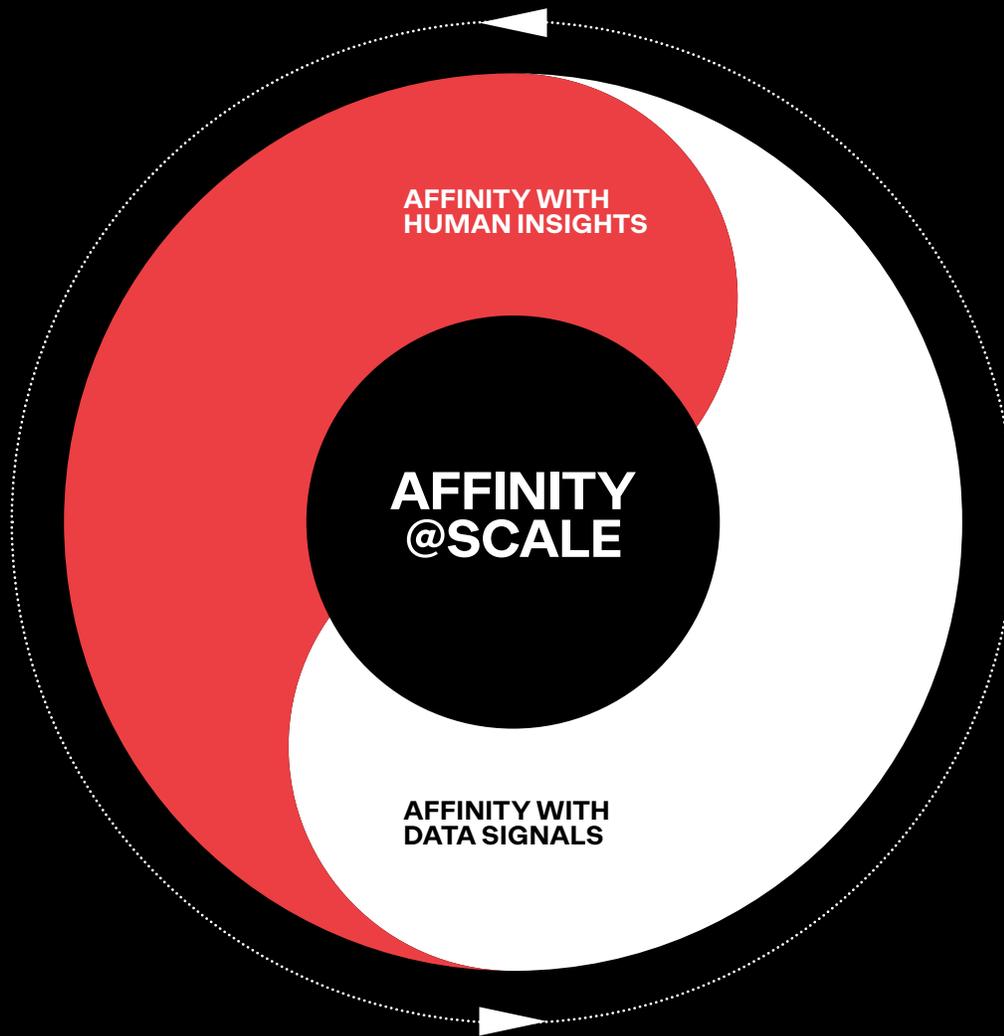
At the same time, like the villain in Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade, we may have chosen the wrong chalice.

Wired, the Bible of the tech world, recently offered a strong dissenting opinion, opining that AdTech might just be the next bubble. Why? It turns out that microtargeting is far less accurate and far less effective at persuading consumers as made out to be. Personalization has been the de-facto foundation of digital advertising, but cracks have started to become visible.

What's gone wrong? Why has personalization—and, at large, the promise of digital advertising—failed to truly deliver yet?

It's time to take it personally. For brands and marketers who manage to deliver true, effective personalization, the opportunity is there.

“We spend a tremendous amount of time worrying about media targeting, but not nearly enough to think about how we personalize creative messaging,” said WPP CEO Mark Read, hitting the nail on the head. A constant battle, almost as old as the art of advertising itself, the media has far too often won out over the message. Brands haven't spent enough time to understand what kind of message is needed to spark a reaction in the consumer. We overfocused on the media side of the equation, and we left creativity behind.



This mishap is the result of confusion around precision and accuracy. When throwing a football or taking a penalty kick, these things might be the same, but they're quite different in marketing. Precision, as driven by the ability of modern technological platforms, is good at eliminating waste. It ensures that you're reaching the right people. Accuracy, as driven by curating creative excellence, adds value by delivering the right message. Without combining the two, messages are either reaching a lot of people who don't care, or reaching a few of the right people without something interesting to say to them. Only a fusion of precision and accuracy can lead to brand and business growth in today's world.

What does a symbiosis between these two ideals look like? Ideas that live at the intersection of creativity and technology. Ideas that use data signals to personalize messaging but in a creative and highly-empathetic way. Ideas that make an impact by earning's people's attention in a personalized context.

Advertising has long been a battle between art and science, and we can look back to the Gods of creative advertising for some advice and understanding. This isn't about a back to basics approach, but the basics can lead us to a more fruitful future. David Ogilvy's famous "Guinness Guide to Oysters" ads and Bill Bernbach's "Levy's Real Jewish Rye" were early examples

of personalization in advertising. Both Ogilvy and Bernbach understood that in order to make their ideas more relevant to more people, they had to talk on a personal level to different types of people. Both created an idea and built permutations of that idea, which talked to people individually based on certain characteristics, beliefs, and behaviors. What Ogilvy and Bernbach didn't have access to was the technology that we have now, which allows us to reach great numbers of people in a personalized way.

Affinity@Scale is the ability to combine creativity and technology to scale ideas that make an impact by earning people's attention in a personalized context.

Adtech's obsession with this pursuit of simplistic relevance isn't enough. It's what's gotten us to where we are now. Personalization that serves tech platforms lacks affinity—it turns brands into bland. We need a new kind of personalization, an evolution of personalization at scale that combines the crucial data signals but with human insight, which showcases the affinity of brands for people.

We need to move from Personalization at Scale to Affinity@Scale.

So what's the difference between Personalization at Scale and Affinity@Scale? Personalization at Scale can be defined as the ability to use technology to scale messages to people at heroic volume. Affinity@Scale is the ability to combine creativity and technology to scale ideas that make an impact by earning people's attention in a personalized context.

At its beginnings, marketing was synonymous with mass communication, and the intent to communicate a message or idea to the most people possible. It required ideas that were big, with broad messages that could be relevant to all. Media then was used as a megaphone, a means to amplify each of the ideas. When the technology evolved, the jump was made to personalization at scale, and the intent shifted to conversion. The ideas became fragmented, a result of the need to address clusters of people based on certain characteristics. This resulted in too much lower common denominator messaging, intended to bring subsets of consumers together. The resulting messages were relevant in those clusters of people, but too often lacked any relevance to an overarching human truth. Media was the conveyor belt, simply canning these ideas at great speed and accuracy to bring the message to the people. The conclusion was millions of fragmented yet tactical interactions, rarely resulting in any lasting impact because of atrophy of the idea. And worse yet, the brand would get lost in the shuffle.

The promise of Affinity@Scale and the thinking that undergirds it is the creation of real human connections between people and brands through a fusion of the creativity and technology. Affinity@Scale is built on ideas that are based on the beliefs and behaviors identified by the digital breadcrumbs that consumers leave behind as they live their lives online, and properly targeted to those people in the right context. It results in messages that are empathetic, and delivered in partnership with media, not using media solely as an external delivery mechanism.

Affinity@Scale in action

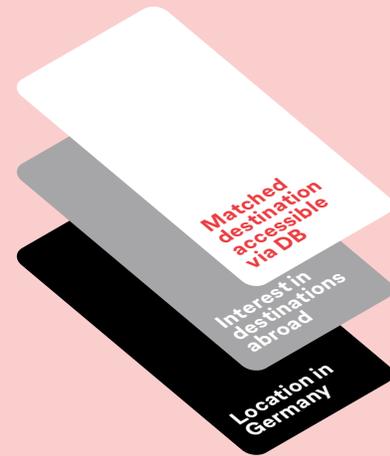
Affinity@Scale is Ogilvy's answer to the next era of personalization, a combination of human insights and data signals in the pursuit of understanding how a brand can show affinity to people and lead into action through the many lenses of a brand's idea. Ideas built from thinking infused by Affinity@Scale can throw a spotlight on a business and win the attention of many, as well as each person individually, and initiate the kind of action that turns consideration to conversion.

Affinity@Scale relies on the technology that allows brands to have access to online consumer behavior. Even in the coming cookie-less future, consumers will still leave behind digital breadcrumbs. These breadcrumbs can lead to a deeper understanding of consumers' beliefs and behaviors. The key to Affinity@Scale is that

it creates permutations of the brand idea which are informed by these beliefs and behaviors, and allows brands to go beyond personalization to something more meaningful, something which creates a lasting impact. What follows are examples of Affinity@Scale thinking in real-world brand campaigns.

Case

Deutsche Bahn —No Need to Fly



How do you get people to take the train when they want to experience the world?

Results

The campaign resulted in 6,61% conversion rate and the 24% boost in revenue as well as the best ROI of any summer campaign in the brand's history.

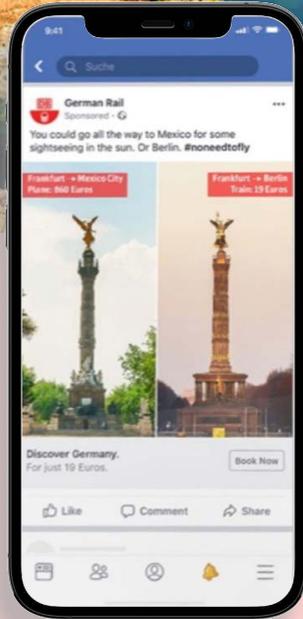
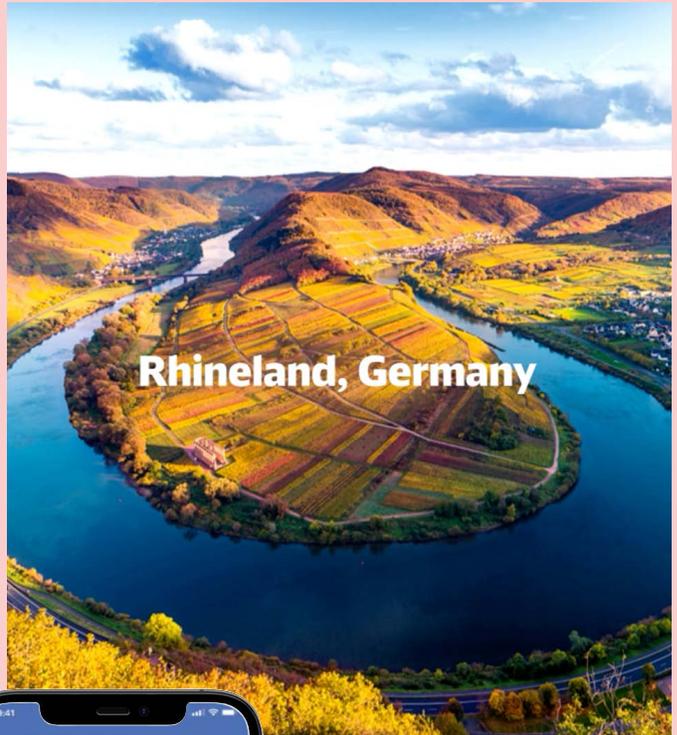
(Germany)

Challenge

Deutsche Bahn (German Rail) needed to find a way to show consumers that experiencing beautiful natural wonders and famous landmarks didn't require people to fly. These locations are right here at home in Germany.

Idea

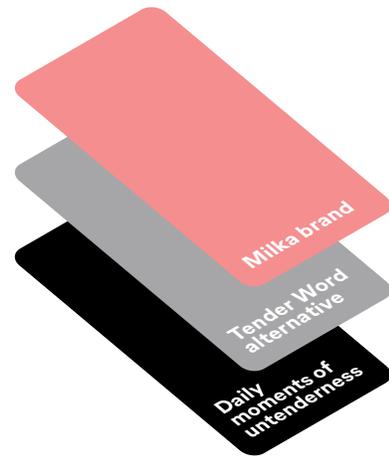
In partnership with Getty Images and Spirable, the brand used an algorithm that identified German locations that closely resemble iconic international destinations that people were searching for when booking their summer travel plans. No Need to Fly was born. A visual campaign that utilized side-by-side images of these international locations with their visually similar German counterparts. And on top of that, the Deutsche Bahn showed how much people could save by traveling to these locations in Germany via rail rather than flying; not only money, but the amount of CO2 emissions, too.



Affinity@Scale applied

No Need to Fly shows how Affinity@Scale merges data and technology with human emotion and creativity to create impact for both people and the brand. The campaign leaned on the data of the most searched-for international destinations by German travellers, then used this data to inform an algorithm that found the best matched local German destinations. This informed the creative idea of putting the images side by side, as well as the emotional appeal of saving money and time while also doing good for the world. Through technology, the brands were able to serve up the message in a highly personalized context, shown to people who had expressed interest in visiting the international destinations online.

Milka —Tender Words



How do you reconnect with a new generation of consumers?

Results

The campaign achieved a unique Reach of 8.6M consumers in Germany alone, with a 38% lower cost per thousand (CPM) and average viewability of 67% above the benchmark.

The ad recall lift was 68% higher versus the non-personalized control group. Users exposed to Affinity@Scale showed 48% more interest in the brand than the control group.

Finally, the campaign contributed to a +16% volume growth for Milka in Germany, and a penetration increase of +2%pts.

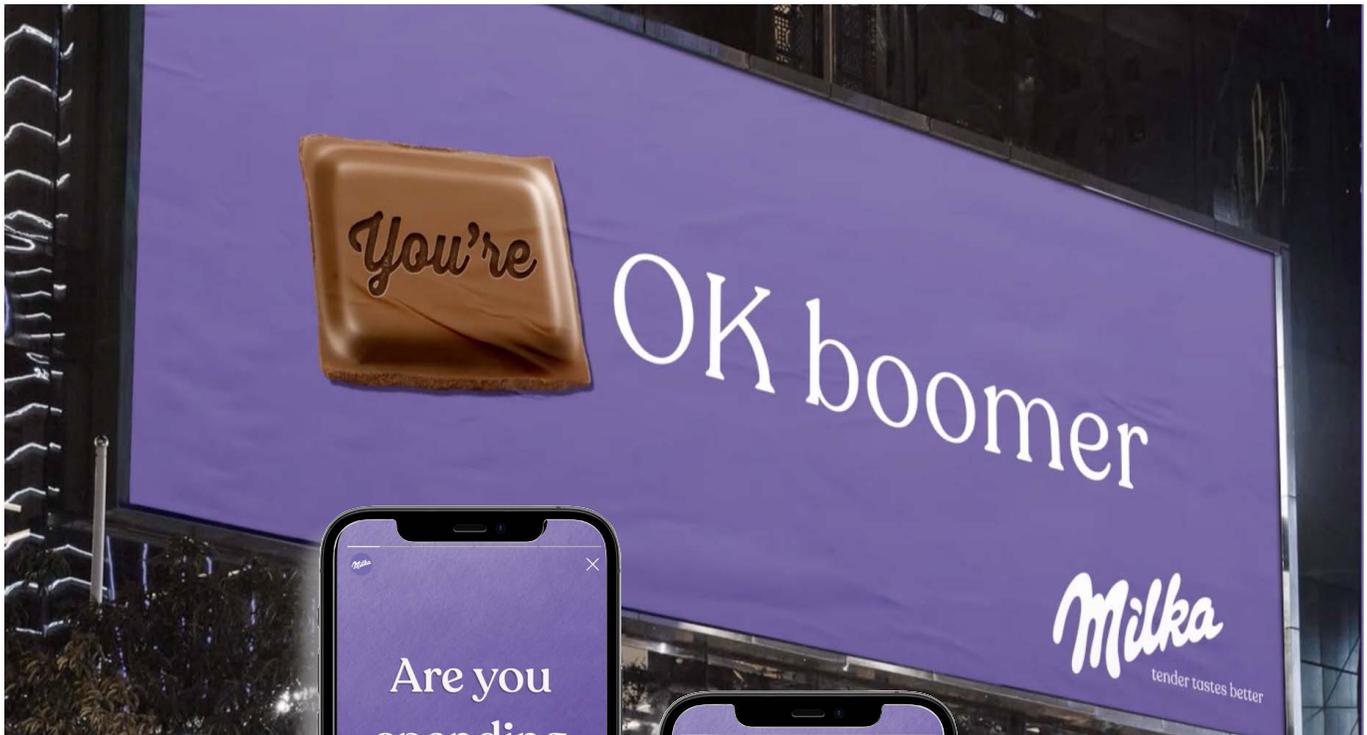
(Germany, France, Spain, Netherlands)

Challenge

Under its new creative platform Tender Tastes Better, Milka sought to boost its brand purpose of inspiring tenderness. Particularly, driving the understanding with younger consumers in Western Europe that tenderness goes beyond taste and that there is more to Milka than tender chocolate and lilac packaging.

Idea

Milka's consumers today experience a daily lack of tenderness, especially on social media which is often aggressive. While in-store, the limited-edition bar of the most tender Alpine Milk chocolate carried a tender word on each piece to inspire more tender gestures in real life with the goal of extending Tender Words in the digital world. Milka set out in a highly insightful and ambitious way to make social media a more empathetic place to be.



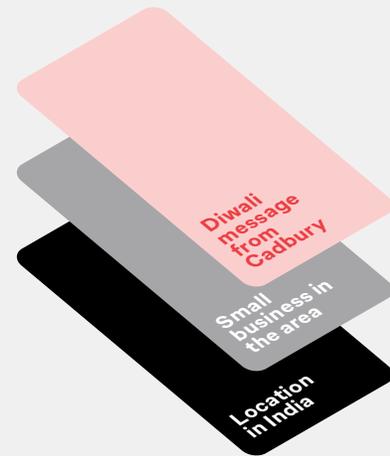
Affinity@Scale applied

The team combined a series of data signals with a set of insights to react to 30+ daily moments of un-tenderness (e.g. rush hour, snow, a tense Bundesliga match, playing online games) experienced by young Germans. The creative vehicle was a simple animation of a Milka chocolate chunk with a Tender Word, digitally “tenderizing” an un-tender sentence to flip its sentiment. A state-of-the-art targeting and personalisation options were created with the platform partners Google and Facebook to deploy the collateral including the creation of a bespoke dynamic weather response targeting tool.

Case

Cadbury Celebrations —Not Just a Cadbury Ad

How to communicate your brand purpose in a personalised way?



Results

The Affinity@Scale campaign performance overtook Google's category benchmarks by 40%. It led to a 6% improvement in consideration, and 32% jump in sales as well as 26% increase of average stock per store.

(India)

Challenge

Adjusting ads to make them more relevant for local markets is a long-standing marketing strategy. But to improve meaningfulness of the brand, Cadbury wanted to take this approach to an entirely new level with its campaign “Not Just a Cadbury Ad”.

Idea

Local small businesses were among the hardest hit during the pandemic, as lockdowns put them in a fight for survival. Cadbury stands for Generosity, and during the Indian festival Diwali, the brand decided that it wanted to help these struggling small businesses. Adding to the campaign complexity was the fact that the far majority of these businesses have no digital presence. So The brand come up with an innovative solution - what if a Cadbury ad could also double as an ad for a small business? And even bigger than that, what if a Cadbury ad could double as an ad for thousands of small businesses?



📍 Mumbai

Affinity@Scale applied

Cadbury manually created a database of local small businesses, mapping them out across 260 locations. Then, the brand created four separate digital ads, each one telling the story of generosity and gift-giving around Diwali. Using Dynamic Creative Optimization, the ads were then personalized for the user based on their location. This meant that when someone saw the ad—which at first looked like a regular, mass-audience Cadbury ad—they also saw the name of a small business close to their location which they could shop at to buy similar items to the ones shown in each ad. The AI-enabled system created thousands of permutations, resulting in an emotional, relevant experience for the consumer in a highly personalized context.

Personal yet empathetic

Affinity@Scale differs from Personalization at Scale

because it seeks a more natural balance between data affinity and people affinity. This is a congruent process, one with the aim of ending up with the strongest possible combination of affinity and scale. Many great advertising ideas are born from an individual's own idea, and while that remains the case, Affinity@Scale requires a highly-collaborative environment. Creative, content, and context strategy must all be in lockstep.

Just as Personalization at Scale isn't for every marketing campaign, Affinity@Scale is not for every marketing campaign either. But Affinity@Scale thinking can almost always be applied, and if done so correctly, a brand will find itself with an opportunity to reach millions and make an impact with every individual interaction and connection.

Perhaps the most difficult part of achieving Affinity@Scale is that it relies on a humane understanding of people. Data and technology are crucial to helping us get there, but true Affinity@Scale is achieved when marketers remember that people are not personas, that

they were not static beings. People are beautifully unpredictable, navigating mental shortcuts, influenced by rapidly-changing emotions and often times at the mercy of an increasingly-stressful world around them. Instead of thinking in terms of rigid consumer definitions, think dynamically. Data signals should be thought of as breadcrumbs, clues that consumers leave so that we can follow them not for the sake of following them, but so that we can make an impact on them. And to do that, we need to approach every interaction with them in a personal yet empathetic way.



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