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A view from inside the Creative Data Lions Jury

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Wavemaker x Cannes 2022

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Last week I spent two days locked in a dark room with nine of my industry peers, meticulously dissecting 260 case studies. Sounds horrible? Surprisingly not, but rather a positive, emotional and inspiring experience. As the Cannes Lions Creative Data jury, my fantastic co-judges and I created a shortlist of 50 and awarded 13 medals. The best work in the world. Now that these Lions have all reached their rightful homes, let's look at what the work is telling us, first in the overall campaign themes, and then in more detail about how data and tech are being used.

Campaign themes

Levelling up

The biggest theme was campaigns that sought to redress balance to help the marginalised. Our Grand Prix winner, Data Tienda, was the perfect example of this. A shocking 87% of women in Mexico have no credit history which means that their loan applications will be rejected and that it is almost impossible for them to join the digitised banking world. However, many of these women have unofficial credit history, saved in the notebooks and ledgers of hundreds of thousands local storekeepers. WeCapital created a wonderful way to access this data and through it, empower their female customers.

Another example is Black Characters which uses the 'leftover' space in tweets to pull in relevant black stories from Raca magazine's back catalogue, and by doing so help to amplify black voices in Brazil.

Purpose and utility

Purpose was a theme in many Cannes categories again this year, and Creative Data was no exception. The Gold winning Shah-Rukh-Khan My Ad from Cadbury India (and Wavemaker India) brings together creativity and data to give 130,000 COVID-hit small businesses their own free online ads, each featuring a Bollywood star. The campaign went on to also win the prestigious Titanium Lion for game-changing creativity.

Australian Insurance company AAMI created a service, Rest Towns to reduce deaths of young people caused by driving when too tired. They connected their data on dangerspots and combined it with Spotify playlists and integrations on Instagram, TikTok and Waze to create a live tool that tells drivers when to pull over, and gives them personalised recommendations of things to do when they stop.

Fun

The last two years have been tough, and the work we saw at Cannes reflected that – but some brands also showed us there is a way back to joy. Skittles's Apologise the Rainbow was reassuringly upbeat, trivial and made us all laugh. Marketing is so obsessed with using data 'in real time' that it was refreshing to see a creative use of social data that was almost 10 years old.

Data themes

First party data but not as you know it

First party data has had a lot of airtime in the industry over the last 12 months, but it shows up in an especially interesting way in the Creative Data category. Of the 50 campaigns shortlisted, 49% used first party data, but only 11% for targeting (ie identity). Second party data was the most used data type (60%), and third party still has a role to fill at 36%.

A massive 71% of shortlisted campaigns were collecting first party data though. Take the earlier mentioned Black Characters campaign; their first party data are all the articles in their back catalogue. Or in Fertility Finder the first party data they use is their own database of thousands of employers who have employee fertility treatment within their healthcare provisions. First party data yes, first party identity data less so.

Tricking the tech

It's not always about squeezing the most out of the tech we use. This year we saw many examples of tech subversion; getting the tech to do something completely different than what it was designed for. The gold winning HetzJeager campaign tricked the Spotify recommendation algorithm by purposely building a song that plays into all the elements that neo-nazi music contains. But these extremist groups were instead exposed to a song that is all about love and unity…

KFC Spain used YouTube search to gamify the Colonel's 'special recipe', getting people to hunt down all videos containing copycat recipes across the platform, gate-crash their comments and then collect a KFC coupon for each new find (KFCopypaste.)

Bad Movie Index used the Rotten Tomatoes film reviews for the top 10 watched Netflix movies and lowered their subscription price the worse the Netflix review scores became.

Simplicity vs sophistication

The width of the shortlist showed that you can create award winning work that is sophisticated, crunching lots of data and working with AI driven tech *and* that you can create just as much impact without a laboratory of data scientists or a big budget.

The already mentioned Data Tienda uses very simple data and a small survey built via a WhatsApp chat bot – and won the Grand Prix. Green Light Signal by Edelman uses existing data on the energy mix in the US and UK to change the colour of a smart lightbulb in people's homes, letting them know the 'greenest' time to use their appliances.

React for Real for the International Red Cross simply picks up on the use of a handful of emojis (for example the Afghan flag), to reply with a relevant message asking for support.

All simple, yet powerful and effective.

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