



Cannes Lions 2023 Rewind

5 Key Themes from This Year's
Festival of Creativity

dentsu

Harnessing the Power of Horizontal Creativity for Growth and Good

Cannes Lions was the perfect showcase to discuss the power of horizontal creativity to drive growth for business and good for society and, most importantly, the ultimate stage to see it in action.

'Horizontal creativity' is creativity that will not stay confined 'within its box' and rather bleeds into media, customer experiences and commerce to inject inspiration as well as to manifest brand purpose at every possible connection point. The most remarkable award-winning work seen at Cannes Lions this year embraced the notion of horizontal creativity as a means to innovate at fast pace and differentiate from competitors.

Generative AI was the 'must' topic that was being name-dropped in virtually every conversation at Cannes this year. Will it replace human creativity and become the new horizontal force that permeates the brand-customer relationship of the future? Several sessions both at the Palais and across the beach houses scattered across the Croisette converged on the notion that Generative AI will mostly be an accelerator that delivers velocity through incremental solutions, optimized performance, and scaled craft, but **human insights will continue to be key to finding the kernels of truth that marketers can authentically address with their brand**, unlocking universal resonance in an increasingly crowded world. This is very much consistent with what we are hearing on a global scale: our upcoming Dentsu Creative report shows a rapidly evolving creative landscape, where CMOs strive to balance the needs of brand and performance, global and local, simplicity and diverse expertise. In these anxious and volatile times CMOs agree that brands today are built through experiences, culture and conversations and believe it's high time brands remembered how to entertain and amuse once again. Against this background, the report shows that 86% CMOs agree that AI will improve efficiency, while 77% agree that it will not be able to create content that moves people: humanity builds emotion.





Furthermore, it was remarked in several Cannes sessions that taste – in the sense of an aesthetic and cultural sensibility that is developed overtime – is unique to humans precisely because the experience of acquiring it is tied to a lived, long-term trajectory and journey through influences versus real-time computing. Similar considerations can be made for other ‘systems’ of connection that humans have developed over time, whether it’d be language (celebrated with the Grand Prix in the Design and Creative Business Transformation categories awarded to Microsoft’s Adlam – An Alphabet to Preserve Culture), or transportation (celebrated with the Grand Prix in the Industry Craft category awarded to JR Group and dentsu’s My Japan Railway), systems that allowed creativity to enrich the human experience by virtue of their evolutionary nature. In this respect, Nike’s Never Done Evolving Featuring Serena, which was awarded the Grand Prix in Digital Craft, was particularly insightful: in this project, AI was used to decode the playing style of Serena Williams at different stages of her career but, ultimately, this celebration of human excellence was prefaced by Williams’ statement: “Maybe the best word to describe what I’m up to is **evolution.**”

Earlier this year, our Creative Trends report evidenced how some brands’ current creative output reflects a sense of disillusionment permeating society: only 42% of U.S. adults think it is very (13%) or somewhat (29%) likely that today’s youth “will have a better living standard, better homes, a better education and so on,” signaling an 18-percentage-point drop since June 2019).¹ At a time ripe with global crises, some of the best examples of work celebrated at Cannes used technology to elevate the human journey and remark on both its glory and its pitfalls.

Here are the 5 emerging themes we have identified considering the most notable award-winning work celebrated at Cannes Lions this year.

THEME 1

Turning Constraint into Opportunity

THEME 2

Bringing Analog Back into a Digital World

THEME 3

Satisfying the Need for Release

THEME 4

Highlighting How Data and Tech-enabled Experiences Can Solve for Human Needs

THEME 5

Addressing a Wider Sustainability Mandate

“

Modern creativity is the only way brands and businesses can expect to thrive in a modern world, where consumer behaviours and expectations are changing at incredible pace and where businesses are built at the intersection of brand, experience and culture. Modern creativity connects growth and good, content and commerce, on and offline to create culture, change society and imagine new possibilities.”

Paulo Fogaca, CEO, Dentsu Creative, US

Before we dive into our themes, we'd like to congratulate all 2023 Cannes Lions winners and acknowledge all the amazing work celebrated by the juries this year that our dentsu colleagues created in partnership with our clients:

Eurofarma – Scrolling Therapy
Dentsu Creative Buenos Aires

Grand Prix, Pharma
Silver, Social & Influencer
Bronze, Brand Experience & Activation
Bronze, Mobile

Intel – Certified Human
Dentsu Creative Chicago

Gold, Creative B2B
Silver, Creative B2B
Silver, Brand Experience & Activation
Bronze, Creative Data
Bronze, Creative Business Transformation

Jardim Sonoro – The Unimaginable Return
Dentsu Creative

Bronze, Design

JR Group – My Japan Railway
Dentsu Inc., Tokyo

Grand Prix, Industry Craft
Gold, Design
Gold, Industry Craft

KFC - Re:Store
Dentsu Creative Shanghai
Bronze, Creative Commerce

Meo – The Forgotten Team
Dentsu Creative Lisbon
Gold, Entertainment Lions for Sport
Bronze, Entertainment Lions for Sport

Mortein – Suraksha Ka Teeka
Dentsu Creative
Bronze, Brand Experience & Activation

Nikkei Inc. – Well-being Index **Dentsu Inc., Tokyo**

Gold, Creative Business Transformation
Silver, PR
Bronze, Sustainable Development Goals

Skip the Dishes - The Inflation Cookbook
Dentsu Creative Canada

Silver, Mobile
Bronze, Creative Data
Bronze, Direct

Vedanti – The Everything Book **Dentsu Creative**

Bronze, Design

World of Warcraft – The Taiwanese World of Warcraft
Dentsu Creative Taiwan

Bronze, Entertainment Lions for Gaming

Dentsu Inc.
Regional Network of the Year, APAC

Dentsu Inc., Tokyo
Agency of the Year - Craft



Turning Constraint into Opportunity

So often, we marketers find ourselves focused on what's keeping us from achieving our vision, what barriers are standing in our way, and what circumstances are working against us. Nearly every one of us has, at one time or another, wished for more resources, different conditions, or fewer limits. But isn't that what creativity is for? To find a way despite the limits?

No less a thinker than Plato wrote how "necessity is the mother of invention." This year's festival featured a range of winning work whose creativity shined **in response** to constraints placed upon them, rather than **despite** those constraints.

Sometimes a mental reframe (and some creativity) is all it takes to turn a **barrier** into an **opportunity**.

The opportunity to **act** – when the imposition of constraint can create the ideal moment to grab attention and galvanize action.

Rather than just promoting your message, circumventing restriction creates a far more compelling story; one more likely to get noticed and break through.

The opportunity to **focus** – when obstacles placed in your way give all new meaning and urgency to your work, and the chance to bring your message and purpose into clearer view. What we fight against can sometimes be more powerful (and noteworthy) than what we're fighting for.

The opportunity to **innovate** – as letting go of what you don't have can help you identify new paths to get what you want and need. Abundance and freedom can easily become a crutch that dulls creativity while constraints sharpen it.

The opportunity to **include** – when reducing impediments for some, can enrich and elevate us all. After all, living your purpose is less impactful (and compelling) when it's easy to do, but when you have to work extra hard and find creative solutions? To bring everyone along? **That** earns credibility and connection.



All Out – Play with Love

As the most popular sporting event in the world, the World Cup is a prime opportunity to speak to a global audience. This year, it offered a particular chance to highlight how the host nation, Qatar, discriminates against its LGBTQ+ citizens (where just being gay can be punished by imprisonment). Multiple teams planned to wear rainbow armbands declaring “One Love.” But FIFA (the World Cup’s governing body) sided with the Qatari government by banning the armbands and imposing sanctions if any players chose to wear it. All Out, an NGO that acts in defence of LGBTQ rights around the world took this moment as an opportunity to hijack center stage with the press. Within 3 days of FIFA banning the armbands, All Out created a new MOD for the FIFA 23 video game which allowed any player to use virtual versions of the banned armbands on any of the 32 playable national teams. All Out became a growing topic of conversation as streamers all over the world played with the banned armbands in virtual versions of Qatar’s stadiums – and there was nothing the Qatar government could do about it. Additionally, All Out drove signatures to the petition called, “Qatar: Love is not a crime” that had been created by Nas Mohamed (the first queer Qatari to publicly come out), asking FIFA to stand up for LGBTQ rights. The bans imposed by Qatar and FIFA became the opportunity to **act** in a way that drove more awareness and conversations globally.

[LEARN MORE](#)



MEO – The Forgotten Team

But this wasn’t the only issue during the Qatari World Cup. MEO, Portugal’s top broadcaster and official sponsor of Portugal’s national team, wanted to call attention to the human rights abuses imposed on the migrant workers building the World Cup facilities under brutal conditions in Qatar (over 6,500 workers died during construction). Dentsu Creative partnered with Amnesty international to raise awareness and funds for the victims’ families by forming the “Forgotten Team” to honor those workers. They created a team jersey inspired by the workers yellow, reflective vests with “Article 4” printed on the back – representing Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights against slavery and forced labor, along with a QR code to drive donations. These were distributed at stadiums to get attention and support the cause. But once again, the authorities stepped in, banning anyone from entering the stadiums with the jerseys. This new constraint focused the nation even more on the cause. MEO viewers were invited to “press yellow button” on their remote to learn more about the Forgotten Team through real migrant worker stories – and make a donation. The jerseys (and the cause) were seen on broadcasts and all-around Portugal, becoming the nation’s most praised World Cup. The sudden barrier became an opportunity to **focus** Portugal on the issue of granting migrant workers human rights.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Michelob Ultra – Dreamcaster

Michelob Ultra has always been a product that makes it easier for people to enjoy their passions – with a purpose to bring joy to everyone. They’ve been proclaiming in their ads “it’s only worth it if you enjoy it.” As the Official Beer of the NBA, they help millions of basketball fans around the world enjoy their favorite game. But not everyone could easily join in. Some fans struggle to follow live games because they’re blind or visually impaired. And one fan in particular, Cameron Black, a blind person, had always dreamed of becoming a sports broadcaster. Michelob Ultra set out to make that dream a reality. Using a haptic vest, spatial audio, special sounds mapped to particular plays, and refreshable braille readers feeding stats and other data in real-time enabled him to call an NBA game live, on air. And he was amazing! By working extra hard to include Cameron, we all benefited. Sometimes constraints can become an opportunity to **include** others in ways that benefit the whole community.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Skinny Mobile – Phone it In

Sometimes the barrier is simply the cost of producing effective ads. Skinny Mobile, a low-cost telco in New Zealand, is always looking for ways to save money so they can pass those savings onto customers. Rather than paying celebrities to feature in its ads, they came up with a hybrid OOH and audio campaign that turned regular people in to radio spots for the brand. Skinny posted dozens of bespoke radio scripts as OOH placements in spots around the country. Each script was contextually relevant to its location. For example, placed near an exotic dance club, outside office buildings, and even near an ad agency. Each came with a phone number that anybody could dial (from their mobile phone of course) and then record the script directly into an answering machine...for free! From there, the recordings were distributed as radio ads. The result was an OOH campaign that fed a radio campaign that worked as Skinny’s most effective recruitment campaign ever. Working around their limits became an opportunity to **innovate** a whole new way to engage consumers and drive new sign ups.

[LEARN MORE](#)





What Can Brands Do?

- **Embrace Barriers as Opportunities.**
Each constraint contains the possibility of a creative path around or through it. Ask yourself how you can turn your deficits into strengths.
- **Be Flexible and Nimble.**
Circumstances can often conspire to derail even the best laid plans. But with a flexible attitude, and some quick thinking, those circumstances can become the best moments to act, and become creative springboards to unexpected (and powerful) actions.
- **Work at Your Purpose.**
Doing the easy stuff feels easy, but “overworking” to really live your purpose is great way to get attention and earn credibility.
- **Remember the Specific Can Be Universal.**
Not everything has to be about (or for) your ‘average consumer.’ There are truths to be found even in unique (or minority) experiences.

Bringing Analog Back into a Digital World

As the industry continues to look for different ways at approaching ever more complex client challenges and to find new ways to engage audiences within ever increasing demands on their attention, it is perhaps little surprise that this week at Cannes Lions we've seen a recurring theme of brands returning to more analog solutions and looking to the past to inform our future.

So how has this more analog approach been applied and what value does it bring? Firstly, it celebrates **the craft**. Whether through sculpture, through design or just through a more methodical but possibly more laborious, by-hand production method, we saw executions where the craft is celebrated and brought to the front of the campaign. This often linked back to old traditions, such as puppetry or the golden

age of rail where these bygone approaches have been reimagined and reintroduced, perhaps sparking nostalgia in some audiences or curiosity in those younger and exploring for a first time.

Taking these analog approaches also aids the **comprehension** of a campaign. Instead of wondering "how did they do that" or "is that even real?", when faced with something clearly created by hand, the brain understands almost instantaneously, allowing other facets (messaging, storytelling, branding etc.) to be absorbed, instead of having to satisfy its drive for 'sense-making'.¹² This comprehension in turn helps subconsciously remove friction points and create a greater level of **appreciation** for what is being done and said. Finally, the use of more traditional, analog techniques provides an opportunity to **reframe** a subject and help the audience appreciate things in a new light or in some cases, for the first time.

Here are some examples of 'bringing analog back into a digital world' seen at Cannes this year:



AnNahar - Newspapers in a newspaper

In some instances, we've seen examples of brands exclusively using an analog approach. For AnNahar newspaper, as it looked to celebrate the freedom of speech that its assassinated Editor in Chief, Gebran Tueni, long championed and defended, it turned to newspapers of the past, those closed by political pressure and re-printed them within its own newspaper. This simple, but bold gesture of defiance also represented lost traditions as well as an acknowledgement of the importance of local journalism and symbolism of print newspapers. This isn't just an issue in Lebanon, the freedom of speech newspapers deliver is being challenged across the world as commercial pressure increases on independent, local media, which plays a vital role in everything from civic discourse to public safety.³

[LEARN MORE](#)

Activision – The Taiwanese World of Warcraft

This dentsu campaign saw the resurrection of the ancient Taiwanese performance art of puppetry. As popularity of World of Warcraft has waned over the years, this painstaking, detailed approach to storytelling helped reframe the game and tell the story of its characters and gameplay through a new medium. This celebration of Taiwan's customs and traditions through the ages also highlighted the craft and diligence that goes into creating a puppet show.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Makro - Life Extending Stickers

The elegance of this solution stood out to many. When faced with a challenge of food waste, many brands have looked to technology to solve or looked downstream towards the waste and recycling phase to figure out ways to make use of the decomposing edibles. However, Makro brought this right into the kitchen itself by reframing our perceptions of 'ripe' and 'edible' and providing creative uses across the lifecycle of the food. A single sticker was all it took, but not only was this a simple solution, the elegance of the design, using the colour wheel surrounding the cut out for comparison, aided immediate understanding and appreciation for the campaign's aim.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Stella Artois - The Artois of Probability

Another example of finding a new way in to talk about a brand, this campaign reframed the history of Stella Artois with an element of fun. What stood out was that this didn't exist 'just' as a piece of research. Creating an algorithm that could be used digitally to identify other artwork helped effortlessly blend old with new and create a fresh take on art and how to engage with it. Whether we can take the 'science' of the probability totally for granted is up for debate, but the blend of art world tradition and digital craft is not.

[LEARN MORE](#)



What Can Brands Do?

- **Look Back for Inspiration**
Each of these examples built on old traditions or techniques in order to inform a new take on the future.
- **Build in the Luxury of Time**
While we exist in a fast-moving industry, sometimes craft, particularly analog ones, can only be executed when they are appreciated and given the time to be fully explored.
- **Blend Old with New**
These examples didn't exclusively live in analog traditions. They found way to take that inspiration and reform it in a way that was relevant for today and applicable to digital platforms too.
- **Ask: 'Is There a Simple Solve?'**
The analogy (now debunked, but we won't let this get in the way of a nice story) of America spending millions developing a pen to write in space whilst the Russians used a pencil is applicable here. Is there an elegant, simple solution that perhaps sits in the past that we can draw inspiration from?

Satisfying the Need for Release

There was no shortage of work showcased at Cannes Lions this year that addressed and reacted to the global crises of our times, from climate change to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, to the economic recession to name just a few. However, as evidenced in our 2023 Creative Trends: A Tale of Two Cities report, **it is precisely in times like these that we seek refuge in escapism and look at content ripe with joy and humor as a way to disconnect** as much as we can from economic pressures and social anxieties.⁴ This is perhaps why comedy focused sessions at the Palais, such as Tuesday's celebration of Kevin Hart as Entertainment Person of the Year and Wednesday's sneak peek into Saturday Night Live's upcoming 50th anniversary, were the ones that registered some of the most significant line-ups so far into the week

At a time when brands are seeking agility and the ability to react fast to changing consumer behaviors, both these comedy powerhouses taught us lessons in **the value of putting trust in a fluid infrastructure and a craft ecosystem**

that allows for bursts of creativity in the development of escapist content. Hart talked at length about how his personality and celebrity status open doors at the service of broader ecosystem plays between his multiplatform entertainment company Hartbeat, brands, platforms, and agencies that enable companies like P&G to integrate seamlessly into content that is reaching audiences all over the world and creating the new generation of entertainment talent. Lorne Michaels and some of SNL's current cast members discussed at length the process by which 40 pitched sketches get turned into 12-13 aired segments (between live and pre-taped digital video) in the space of 5 days and the level of radical collaboration among departments and trust in the process that is somewhat 'forced upon' writers, cast-members, and guest hosts by the live broadcast deadline.

Ultimately, on different levels both these sessions and some of the award-winning work celebrated by the Lions juries, reminded us of **the value of levity, of immediacy, and of being able to let go**; in other words, they remarked on the importance of creating content and experiences that satisfy our need for release. Here are some examples:



Honest Eggs Co. - Fitchix

Some of the award-winning work celebrated at Lions played up the provocative aspect of humor by flipping the script on how we are used to discuss certain topics, 'crass-ifying' them as it were, by virtue of quantification. Honest Eggs – a regenerative egg farming company in Australia – equipped chickens with a step-counter, or 'FitChix' to remove the confusion generated among consumers by terms like 'free-range', 'open-range', and 'cage-free.' They rather printed on each of their eggs the number of steps walked by their chickens in their lifetime before having those eggs. The campaign was awarded a Gold in the Outdoor category and a Silver in the Media category.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Clash of the Titans – Clash from the Past

In terms of escapism, gaming continues to grow as a favorite pastime and it's a form of entertainment consumers increasingly turn to, with 3.5b people are predicted to be gamers by 2025, generating more than US\$225b in revenue. ⁵ This year, Cannes Lions acknowledged gaming's exponential growth (and its continued rise as an opportunity for brands and advertisers to connect with consumers) by launching the Entertainment Lions for Gaming category. This introduction was remarked by assigning the Grand Prix in this category to Clash from the Past, a campaign that celebrates the history of the gaming genre. The campaign revolves around a mockumentary developed to celebrate the fictional 40th anniversary of Clash of Clans – one of the world's most popular mobile games - when in fact the game is only 10 years old. This maneuver ignited a series of activations paying homage to 'vintage' gaming aesthetics and reimagining the brand in the context of 80s, 90s, and early 2000s culture and business.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Dove - #TurnYouBack

On a more serious note, satisfying the need for release also speaks to preserving our mental health by 'disconnecting' from things that may harm it. In both a Tuesday session at the dentsu Beach House and a Wednesday session at the Palais industry leaders from Dove, the Unilever brand, discussed some of the company's initiatives to engender body confidence, especially among young girls, by combatting digital distortion practices which contribute to setting a standard that becomes a source of anxiety through its dissemination via social media. These incredibly touching initiatives include The Cost of Beauty, which was awarded a Gold Lions in the Health & Wellness category, as well as #TurnYourBack – an influencer-led campaign encouraging TikTok users to boycott the BoldGlamour filter because of the harm this form of digital distortion can cause to social audiences. #TurnYourBack was awarded the Grand Prix in the Media category.

[LEARN MORE](#)





What Can Brands Do?

- **Call It Like It Is.**

As marketers, it's easy to get hung up in jargon, cliches, and catchphrases – especially when it comes to expressing the value proposition of specific industry sectors. Is “mind-blowing” the best way to describe your movie? Does “stunning” describe the benefits of your beauty product? Does all technology have to be “game-changing”? Think about how your value proposition can be boiled down in the most concrete terms possible, whether it's a visual, a statement, or a number.

- **Be Creative with Nostalgia.**

The Back to the Future rule – reference what was popular 30 years ago to hit the jackpot with consumers who are more likely to have disposable income as well as be in a position to influence their children's fandom – is a safe bet for marketers, but purely referential nostalgia has overcrowded advertising. Think about how you can be playful with the past and your brand's myths.

- **Power Up with the Off Switch.**

Media is often creating noise in the quest for impressions and clicks. But attention can sometimes emanate by doing less rather than more. Especially when it's driven by authentic brand purpose, restraint can actually be an extremely powerful means of making an impact in the collective imagination.

Highlighting How Data and Tech-enabled Experiences Can Solve for Human Needs

As discussed in the introduction, coming into Cannes Lions 2023 after months in which Generative AI has dominated discourse in the media due to Chat GTP's incredible adoption rate, it was not a surprise that much of the programming was focused on how the increasing pace of technology innovation may affect human creativity. Responding to these underlying concerns, a lot of the work showcased and up for juries' consideration highlighted how, rather than work in contrast with human qualities, technology is helping us address human needs. As remarked in a dentsu Beach House session titled 'Digital Transformation, Changing Consumer Expectations and the Future of Customer Experience,' brands trade in trust and their ability to make an impact on society is dependent on the trust they're able to gain through the personalized experiences they deliver.

In order to achieve true personalization, organizations need findable, transferable and interoperable data that can be propagated across channels, as well as a content engine that can respond to the demands dictated by the desire for 1:1 brand experiences. The success rate of traditional, multi-year digital transformation programs was low and for years 'hyper-personalization' was a much talked about but seldom achieved 'white whale' chased by experience marketers, who were lacking excellence in either if not both of the two camps. This is why reimagining data and technology is an imperative for brands at this moment in time: a data insights-led experience strategy injects agility into the business, engenders stronger relationships with customers that account for rapidly changing behaviors, and it can empower an organization to interrogate its enterprise platform and unearth new findings that lead to solving for unmet needs.⁶

Consumer understanding, data, tech-enabled experiences, and personalization build the journey that allows brands to evolve as the expression of a consumer necessity. Here are three examples of work celebrated at Cannes this year that showed how data and tech-enabled experiences meet human needs:



Eurofarma – Scrolling Therapy

In this Dentsu Creative case study, patients with Parkinson's interact with social media through facial expressions while looking at their mobile phones – scrolling, liking, and reacting to post thanks to the power of AI and facial recognition. This type of exercise helps them slow the progression of symptoms of this neurodegenerative disease. Scrolling Therapy was awarded a Grand Prix in the Pharma category, as well as a Gold Lions in Design, a Silver Lions in the Social & Influencer category, and Bronze Lions in both the Brand Experience & Activation and Mobile categories.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Mastercard – Where to Settle

In this case study, Mastercard built a platform to help Ukrainian refugees who crossed the Polish border with an online and mobile tool that combines multiple datasets to find the most promising area in Poland to make their new home. This emanated from the need of relieving Warsaw, the city where most of the millions of refugees where landing, from the strain the sudden demand was causing in its ability to deliver basic services like housing and employment and perfectly reflected Mastercard's ambition to support economic inclusion for everyone. Among several awards, Where to Settle received the Grand Prix in the Sustainable Development Goals category.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Skip the Dishes – The Inflation Cookbook

Fuelled by rising food prices, food bank use rose to its highest level in 2022 according to Food Banks Canada. When times get tough, Canadians tend to reach for lower priced packaged foods, ones that are likely to be more processed and less healthy. In this Dentsu Creative case study, a grocery shopping tool that predicts price drops and generates recipes was developed to help budget-conscious Canadians make thoughtful decisions as they navigate price volatility in this uncertain economic environment. This case study was awarded a Silver Lions in the Mobile category and Bronze Lions in both the Creative Data and Direct categories.

[LEARN MORE](#)

“

As the infrastructure of the enterprise continues to grow, keeping up with the pace of change is dependent upon being able to comb through data to find meaningful insights on changing customer behaviors. A composable data approach allows organizations to get feeds in real-time and develop knowledge models that ultimately result in the orchestration of personalized, meaningful experiences.

Michael Komasinski, CEO, dentsu Americas



What Can Brands Do?

- **Inject the Currency of Identity in Data Management**

By collecting zero-party data that is volunteered by customers in exchange for value-led experiences and by reconciling and bolstering the data you own with second- and third-party data, you can create a stronger foundation for the next generation of personalized customer experiences you'll deliver.

- **Be Transparent About Data and AI Usage**

Experiences should engender trust and empathy in the brand customer relationship, but this can only happen if transparency is at the heart of them. Be transparent about the data you're collecting and how it's being used. The same goes for AI: a recent dentsu Consumer Navigator study found that, on average, 76% U.S. consumers believe brands should disclose when AI is being used to interact with them, deliver a service, or create branded content.⁷

- **Tell Your Brand Story at Every Step**

When designing customer experiences, it's easy to get hyper-focused on optimization and removing friction from the user journey. But don't forget that even 'tactical' interactions are a stage to manifest your brand, its purpose, its differentiation, its unique story and that transactional moments, when customer attention is ripe with intent, are the biggest opportunity to stand apart from the digital 'sea of sameness.'⁸

Addressing a Wider Industry Sustainability Mandate

A fresh off the press dentsu Consumer Navigator report shows a growing understanding of the holistic definition of ‘sustainability’. For instance, while 64% of U.S. consumers associate sustainability with environmental actions like reducing consumption and waste or using renewable energy, 35% understand the need to place people at the heart of the net zero transition. The definition of sustainability as a balance of environmental protection and restoration, social wellbeing and economic growth is especially resonant among younger consumers – for example, 37% of Gen Zers associate “addressing mental health” to sustainability, compared to just 15% of Boomers.⁹

Cannes Lions brings together some of the greatest creative minds to explore the solutions we need for a more sustainable and inclusive future. It is an opportunity to celebrate the creative work that will hopefully inspire new, more sustainable consumer behaviours, while provoking marketers to reflect on and transform their own practices. As it was remarked in a dentsu Beach House session titled ‘Growth through Good: How Sustainable Business Practices Drive Growth’, sustainability is the biggest driver of innovation that we will see in our lifetime.

Three core pillars of the industry’s sustainability mandate (and opportunity) that emerged from various discussions among industry leaders this week were: - the **need to shape a more environmentally sustainable world** and radically decarbonise our own operations; - the need to empower the rise of a **more fair and open society**; - and the need to **use the power of digital technologies for good**. Here are some examples of work seen at Cannes this week that addressed these three pillars:



Solar Impulse - Prêt à Voter

When it comes to **shaping a more sustainable world** by engendering behaviors that preserve and regenerate our planet's natural resources, 'Marketing For a Better Future', research conducted by dentsu and Kantar in the Asia Pacific that was highlighted at the Beach House on Wednesday, found that while 98% of respondents said they are prepared to take action to live a more sustainable lifestyle, only 17% of them said they are actively changing their behaviors accordingly.¹⁰ The responsibility to drive this change lies with brands, needing to integrate their sustainability strategies into their marketing principles to make it easier for consumers to adopt a lower carbon lifestyle, driving transformation across their value chains. Marketers are essential for driving this demand, as they are a critical bridge to consumers and have the skills to drive this at scale.

Solar Impulse's Prêt à Voter, which was awarded Gold Lions in both the Print & Publishing, Sustainable Development Goals, and in the Direct categories, is a great example of closing the intent-to-action gap. This French NGO observed that, while there is no shortage of debate around the criticality of environmental sustainability among politicians, the legislative process is so cumbersome that seldom sufficient action is taken in time to address these issues. They thus produced a book where 50 environmental solutions were drafted as laws ready to be voted upon in the National Assembly and sent it to all its 577 members. Some of these resolutions have already been approved and others are in the Assembly's forthcoming agenda.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Nikkei Inc. – The Well-being Index

Inequities in society exacerbate the crises the population faces at both a local and global level, including the environmental crisis. Dentsu and Nikkei inc. – one of the most prominent financial newspapers in the world – partnered with Harvard, Oxford, and Tokyo University to develop a transformative new way to measure a country's growth, the Well-Being Index (GDW), taking into account indicators like employment, wages, work-life balance, housing, health, education, social connections, the natural environment, and the ease of raising children. The **development of a more fair and open society** requires a measurement tool to benchmark against and the GDW, used alongside the GDP, can help governments and companies make informed decisions while structuring their investments and policies. The Well-Being Index project also shows just how much an ecosystem approach is required to make significant strides in the sustainability agenda. The Well-Being Index was awarded a Gold Lions in the Business Transformation category, a Silver Lions in PR, and a Bronze Lions in the Sustainable Development Goals Category.

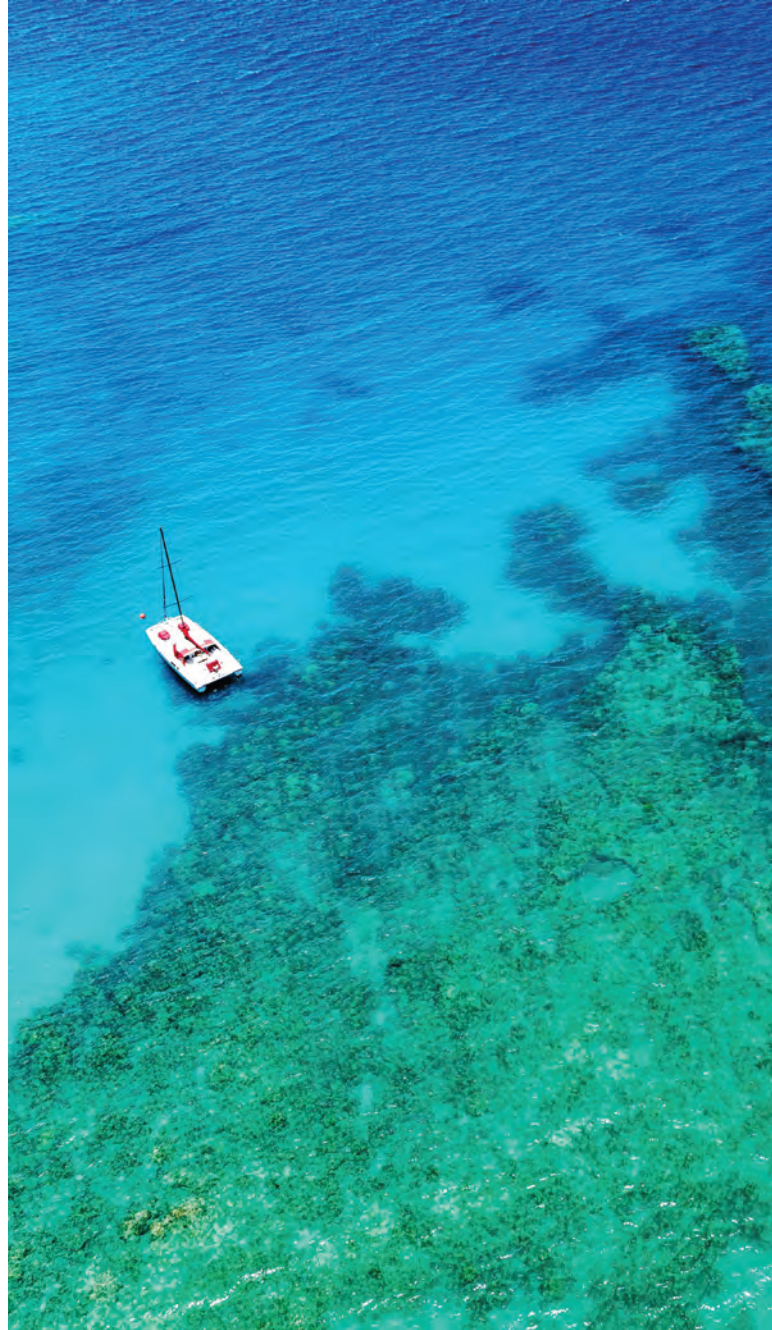
[LEARN MORE](#)



The Government of Tuvalu – The First Digital Nation

Now that sustainability transformation has, arguably, replaced digital transformation as the primary evolution for businesses to remain relevant, **purpose-driven brands are pivoting to adopt a ‘digital for good’ mindset**. Cannes Lions celebrated several great examples of ‘digital for good’ this year, most notable The First Digital Nation which received the prestigious Titanium award. At the current rate of climate change, Tuvalu, a Pacific nation, is bound to disappear due to rising sea levels, since international law currently states that without a physical territory a country cannot exist. This would mean a loss of maritime borders, rights, and representation on the global stage. Tuvalu’s Minister Simon Coffie announced at COP27 the plan to move Tuvalu to the cloud and establish it as the first “digital nation.” The announcement reached 2.1B people with a budget of \$0 USD. So far, 9 countries have recognized Tuvalu’s digital sovereignty.

[LEARN MORE](#)



“

The real test of whether a brand is committed to sustainability is whether their commitment goes beyond the spotlight that Cannes Lions represents to real business transformation. Sustainability is a business transformation agenda. It de-risks your business, transforms the cost base, is a powerful driver of engagement and talent retention, and ultimately powers growth.

Anna Lungley, Chief Sustainability Officer, International Markets, dentsu



What Can Brands Do?

- **Be True to Yourself and Those You Serve**

Consider which sustainability challenges your products and services' value propositions are inherently attached to and which communities are most affected by those challenges to ensure your initiatives are authentic.

- **Develop an Ecosystem Mindset**

Focusing on local challenges that are specifically tied to your brand is a good way to start, but no single organization can solve broader sustainability challenges on its own. Determine which organizations across the business, NGO, government, and consumer community spectrum are touched by the challenge you identified and develop a flywheel ecosystem proposition.

- **Make it Actionable for Consumers, Over Time**

Ultimately, responsible behaviors are more likely to emerge when you are empowering consumers to make a difference at a big picture level by giving them something that benefits their day to day. Ask yourself "what's in it for them?" and "why should they keep on caring?"

Bringing It All Back Home

We have seen some truly amazing examples of creativity and inspiration at Cannes this year and heard industry leaders discuss at length how their mandate is expanding from taking action in favor of environmental sustainability, to living up to the values of diversity, equity and inclusion, to navigating the balance between opportunity and responsibility when it comes to the emerging possibilities opened up by AI. However, stepping away from the Croisette we need to consider a critical element required to ensure all these discussions and inspiring works don't remain a moment in time, and actually have a lived impact out into the world at large: the consumer. Will the work that the Lions juries have deemed worthy of the highest honors have the same resonance among the average population? Is the work being supported by the strategies and platforms needed to reach its intended audience?

A session at the dentsu Beach House titled 'Media as a Matchmaker: Your Content, My Platform' remarked on the importance of context and marketers' quest for high engagement environments where brand messages are best performing with both existing customers and untapped audiences. In our recent Global Ad Spend Forecast we remarked that **several areas in the media landscape are undergoing a process of expansion and reinvention.**¹¹ Some of the work seen at Cannes this year played with some of the tropes of media's current transformation, such as consumers' increasing intolerance for interruption, and matched delightful content and the right context to actually lead audiences to welcome in the brands that were so loudly knocking on their doors.



Samsung's Flipvertising, which was awarded a Grand Prix in the Social and Influencer category, played with users' understanding of targeting by 'embedding' free phones into YouTube ads, driving GenZ influencers and audiences to test intricate keyword searches in an attempt to willingly get targeted.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Pedidos Ya, a food delivery service in Argentina, sent its subscribers an unexpected delivery push notification, leading most to fear they were victims of a scam. Ultimately, what was being delivered was the FIFA World Cup the Argentina national team had just won and was flying back with. When opening the notification, users were able to track the cup's journey home. This clever 'intrusion' got the brand 32% more mentions than Messi and the number one spot as a Twitter trending topic (above #ArgentinaCampeon and #MessiCampeon) in the wake of the World Cup victory. Pedidos Ya's World Cup Delivery was awarded Gold Lions in both the Social and Influencer category and the Media category.

[LEARN MORE](#)

These are two brilliant examples showing how media strategy and context are keys to effectively earn the most coveted currency in a fragmented landscape: attention. Leveraging a study developed by National CineMedia in partnership with dentsu and Lumen research, a Monday session at the Palais remarked that a 60 second ad spot in the movie theatre garners 45,927 attentive seconds per 1,000 impressions versus the 9,594 attentive seconds garnered by a linear television ad of the same length and much lower results in other, more commodified environments like 5 second digital video ads to make the point that as content makers we often assume the levels of attention we associate with cinema to any form of video content we produce, but this is very much not the case.¹²

As the delivery mechanism for content that moves people, media is incredibly powerful in forging connections. As it continues to undergo its expansion and reinvention, **identity, context, and attention are the three pillars that need to work in synergy to make sure that inspiration and purpose go beyond industry forums** such as Cannes Lions and that as brands, agencies, and platforms we are actually bringing it all back home.

“

To ensure innovation is making the right impact, attention has to be the lens we use when comparing the actual value of advertising across channels, platforms, and devices. In today's environment, we need to be able to help brands get the best return on their media investment and, that's why we pioneered and continue to lead the idea of Attention Economy within the industry. By understanding the effectiveness of a campaign, we're able to get creative with plans, to explore new technologies, to optimize around new signals such as carbon emissions and, still have the confidence we're delivering results.

Paulo Fogaca, CEO, Dentsu Creative, US

Key Takeaways

THEME 1

Turning Constraint into Opportunity

- Embrace Barriers as Opportunities
- Be Flexible and Nimble
- Work at Your Purpose
- Remember the Specific Can Be Universal

THEME 2

Bringing Analog Back into a Digital World

- Look Back for Inspiration
- Build in the Luxury of Time
- Blend the Old with the New
- Ask: 'Is There a Simple Solve?'

THEME 3

Satisfying the Need for Release

- Call It Like It Is
- Be Playful with Nostalgia
- Power Up with the Off Switch

THEME 4

Highlighting How Data and Tech-enabled Experiences Can Solve for Human Needs

- Inject the Currency of Identity in Data Management
- Be Transparent About Data and AI Usage
- Tell Your Brand Story at Every Step

THEME 5

Addressing a Wider Industry Sustainability Mandate

- Be True to Yourself and Those You Serve
- Develop an Ecosystem Mindset
- Make It Actionable for Consumers, Over Time



References

1. [2023 Creative Trends: A Tale of New Cities](#) (Dentsu Creative).
2. [The Under-appreciated Drive for Sense Making](#) (ScienceDirect).
3. [Local media isn't about lowest CPMs, it's about quality connections](#) (The Message).
4. [2023 Creative Trends: A Tale of Two Cities](#) (Dentsu Creative).
5. [For the Game](#) (dentsu).
6. [2023 CX Imperatives – Scaling-Up: Designing Tomorrow's Experiences Today](#) (Merkle).
7. [Generative AI 2023](#) (Dentsu Consumer Navigator).
8. [Desperate for Differentiation: Creativity Galvanizes the Total Brand Experience](#) (Forrester).
9. [Sustainability 2023](#) (Dentsu Consumer Navigator).
10. [Marketing a Better Future](#) (Dentsu + Kantar)
11. [Global Ad Spend Forecasts – May 2023](#) (dentsu).
12. [NCM Releases Cinema Attention Measurement Study in collaboration with dentsu and Lumen \(NCM\).](#)

Thanks to our contributors

Anna Lungley

Chief Sustainability Officer, International Markets, dentsu

Brad Alperin

EVP, Integrated Strategy Lead, dentsu

Charlie Almond

EVP, Strategy & Innovation, dentsu

Jack Boitani

VP, Content, dentsu

Michael Komasinski

CEO, dentsu Americas

Paulo Fogaca

CEO, Dentsu Creative, US

Peter Huijboom

CEO Media, International Markets, dentsu



About dentsu

Dentsu is the network designed for what's next, helping clients predict and plan for disruptive future opportunities and create new paths to growth in the sustainable economy. Taking a people-centered approach to business transformation, we use insights to connect brand, content, commerce and experience, underpinned by modern creativity. As part of Dentsu Group Inc. (Tokyo: 4324; ISIN: JP3551520004), we are headquartered in Tokyo, Japan and our 69,000-strong employee-base of dedicated professionals work across four regions (Japan, Americas, EMEA and APAC). Dentsu combines Japanese innovation with a diverse, global perspective to drive client growth and to shape society.

Visit: dentsu.com