



Celebrity Partnerships

Do They Really Work?

Millions of marketing dollars are spent on celebrity partnerships each year. Are those investments paying off?





In this report...

Introduction	01
Our Methodology	04
Ben Affleck x Dunkin'	08
Michael Cera x CeraVe	13
Driver Dictionary	22
Contact Us	23

Introduction





The big question around celebrity partnerships: "Are they worth it?"

Researchers seem to think so!

In a 2023 paper, "The Marketing Psychology Behind Celebrity Endorsements," marketing, psychology and neuroscience professors from Wharton came to the conclusion that people are more likely to choose products endorsed by a celebrity rather than a non-celebrity, and they make that choice faster.

The power that celebs have to persuade our decision-making is rooted in our biology and evolution. Both humans and primates follow the lead of high-status individuals in their group by aligning or copying their decisions.

Harvard School of Business Study

If you've studied this topic in the last decade or so, you may be familiar with this stat, published by the Harvard School of Business in 2012: Signing a high-profile celebrity—they used Tiger Woods as a key example at the time—would deliver a 4% sales increase and a quarter of a percent in stock returns.

It's important to note that there were MANY caveats outlined in the paper. And 2012 is basically a century ago in ad-land years.

Celebrities featured in Super Bowl spots...

Let's take a look at our most studied advertising event: the Super Bowl. *The Wall Street Journal* published an article in February this year stating that 40% of the big game ads featured multiple stars in 2023—a six fold increase from 2010. Celebrity-free Super Bowl ads have become a rarity, accounting for less than a third of all commercials shown during the game.

Just because more brands are doing it, doesn't mean it's worth it.

Let's look at what our friends at System 1 have to say...

System 1 has rated every single Superbowl ad over the last 5 years. In 2024, 90% of the ads received a 3 out of 5 star rating or LESS. In fact they saw the most 1-star ads they've ever recorded. With the cost of a 30s spot topping out at \$7 million. Brands are investing notable amounts of marketing spend in campaigns that may not prove to be effective.

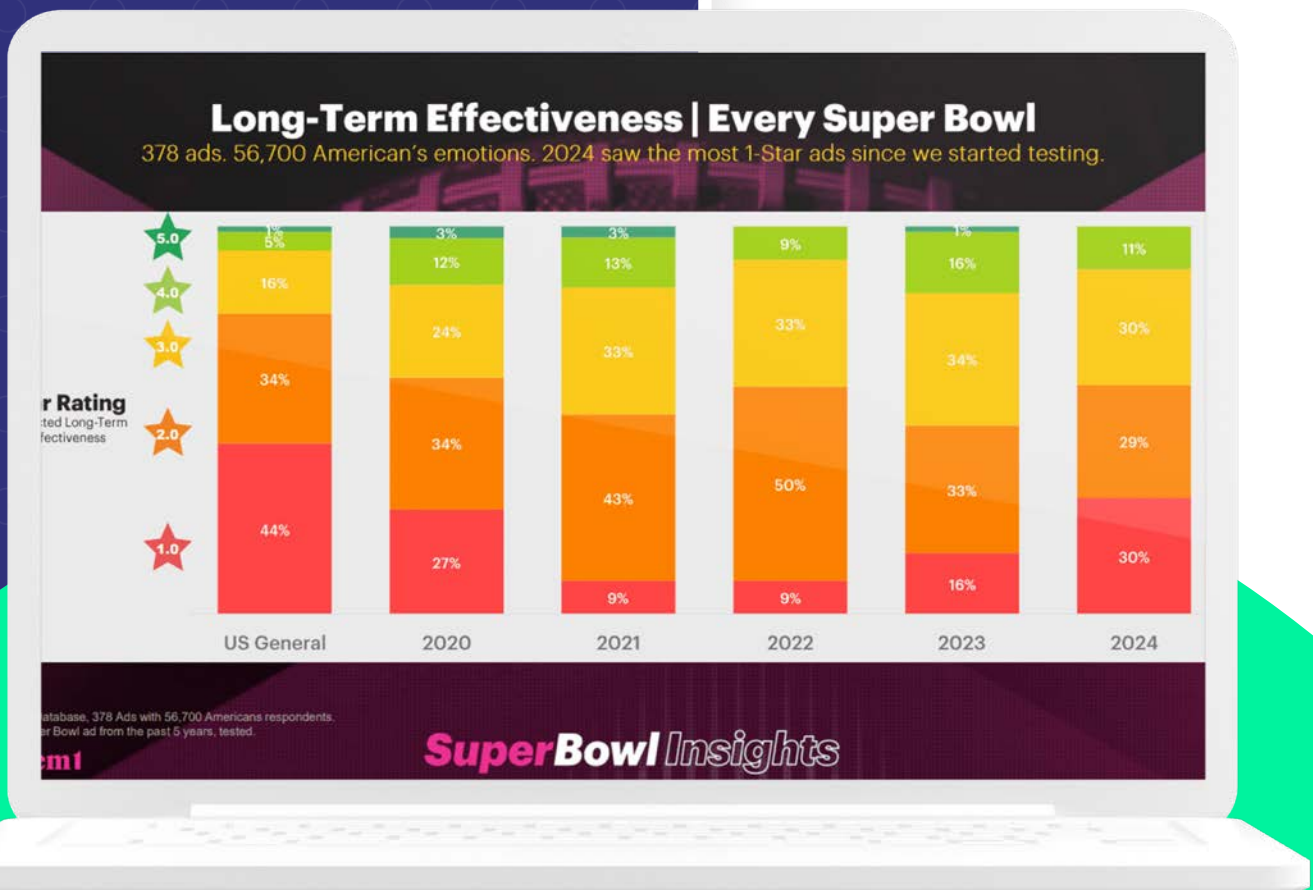
2024 was the year of...

- The most expensive ad space.
- The highest share of ads featuring celebrities—not just 1, but multiple. That adds up!
- And was a 5 year low in effectiveness.

Where does that leave us?

Partnering with a celebrity does NOT guarantee campaign effectiveness.

To build partnerships that give the best possible ROI, you need to understand your brand's strengths and weaknesses and find a celebrity partner that complements you well.



Methodology



We measure people's subconscious feelings.

Consumers are run by their gut.

Our brain responds in two different ways when confronted with a decision. These states are called System 1 and 2:

- **System 1** activates our feelings, causing us to respond quickly, and intuitively.
- **System 2** is effortful thought. It leads to accessible and rational responses.

95% of purchasing decisions are made via our System 1, the subconscious part of our brain. We use it to watch ads and make most purchasing decisions.

How does this framework benefit brands?

If you know that consumers make purchasing decisions based primarily on their gut feel, you can invest more time into crafting a brand which generates a more visceral impression on people.

Our 'Dual Systems' approach is proven to drive commercial brand growth. Through the framework, you can identify strengths and weaknesses and easily action strategies to optimize brand performance.



So, how do we capture people's feelings?

We use an industry-leading **Implicit Response Timing** approach when asking people how they feel about your brand.

- If they respond quickly, we know they feel strongly about that aspect of your brand.
- If they hesitate, we know they're less sure.
- And if they take too long, we know that they've begun thinking, not feeling.

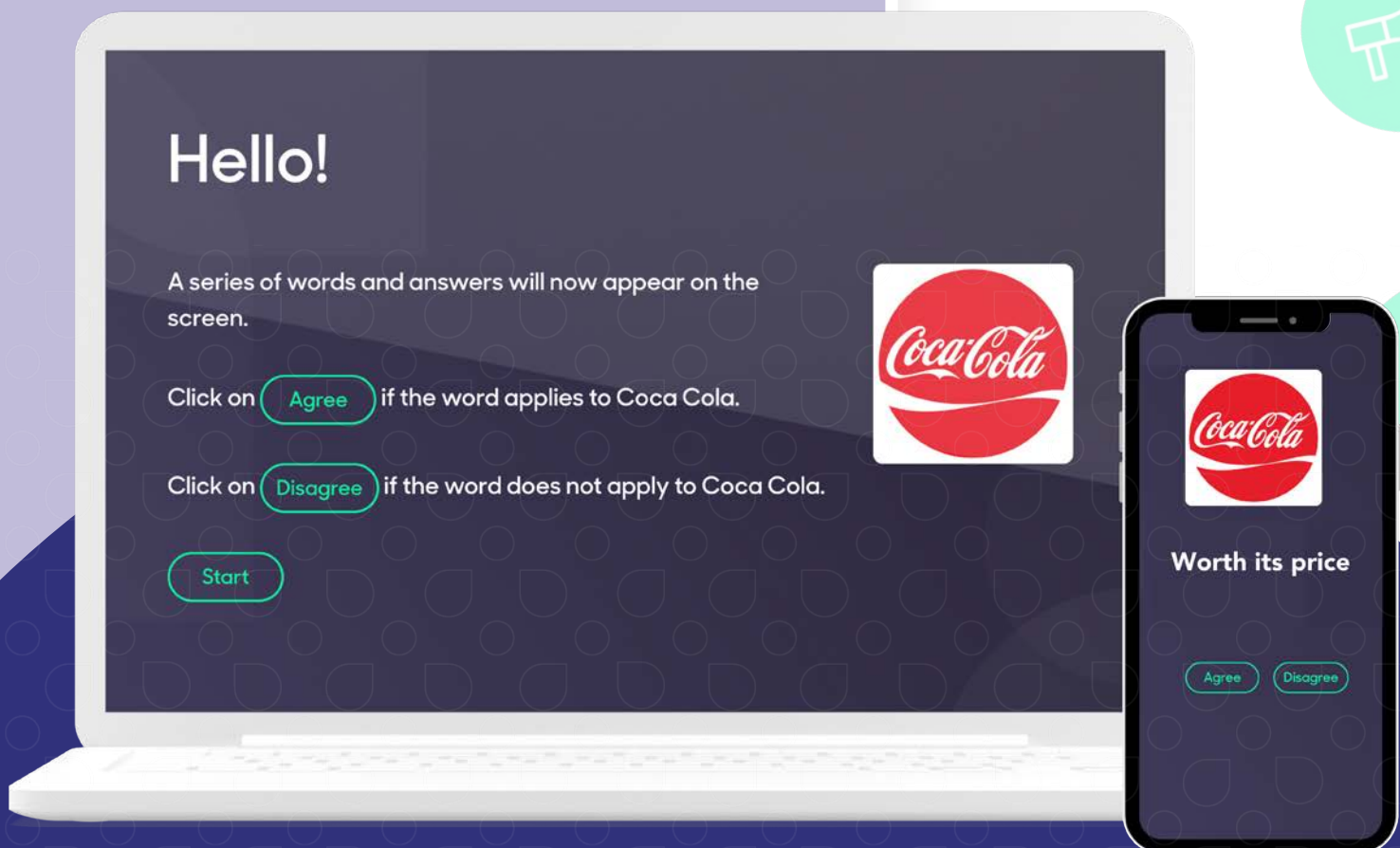
This form of IRT leads to cleaner data, as it eliminates 20-30% of inaccurate responses compared to the industry standard of 7-8%.

We captured people's implicit responses... Now what?

Let's look at our 16 Equity Drivers!

Through many years of research and testing, we have identified 16 attributes that define how people feel about brands. We call these the "16 Equity Drivers." When we interact with consumers, it's this framework that guides our data collection.

These Drivers offer granularity into how your brand is performing, showing you what areas need improvement in comparison to competitors and your category, and what you can do to supercharge your brand's growth.



How do we measure the effectiveness of celebrity campaigns?



First, we measure how people feel about the brand.

We do this through capturing implicit responses against our 16 Equity Drivers, and averaging them into an overall Brand Equity score.



Next, we test the creative assets using the same metrics.

We run the creative tests using the same 16 Driver methodology to capture how people feel about the brand after seeing each asset.



Using ProQuo's Creative Testing tool, we can find out how the asset impacts brand perception.

By comparing the creative scores against the brand baseline, we can take a granular look at the Drivers most impacted by the assets.



With System 2 responses, we can dive deeper into the results.

Following the IRT questions, we ask custom open-ended questions to better understand what people both think and feel.

Dunkin's partnership with Ben Affleck



Ben Affleck x Dunkin'

Affleck's partnership with Dunkin' blossomed in 2023, and has included two Super Bowl commercials. We tested their 2024 campaign to see if Affleck's likeness has had a positive impact on Dunkin's brand equity.

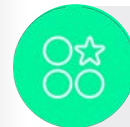
At ProQuo, we've been tracking Dunkin's brand equity in the Coffee Pod category for some time, collecting more than 40,000 responses from category users.

At a total level, Dunkin' out-performs the competition. Dunkin' scored an average Equity Score of 53.6, the highest in the category. However, amongst Brand Users, their competitiveness starts to weaken, which leaves them vulnerable to losing customers.

Next, we'll take a deeper look at that Equity Score to see what brand users are feeling.

Areas of Focus | Dunkin'

There are two areas driving the Dunkin' brand to fall behind amongst Brand Users...

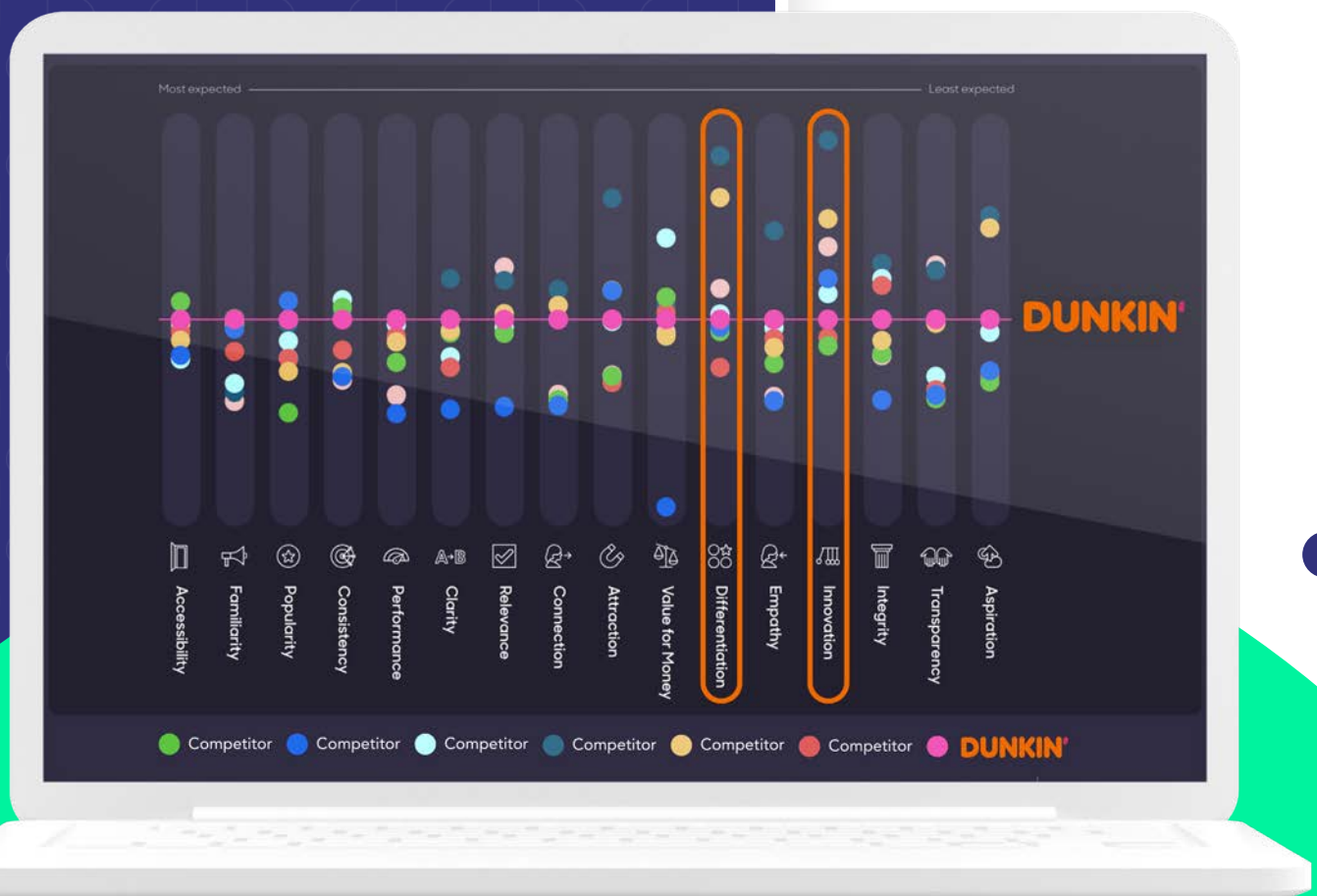


Differentiation



Innovation

Dunkin' Brand Users feel the brand fails to stand out as being forward-thinking or unique. A more exciting brand could come along and turn their head.



We tested three assets...

A paparazzi shot of Ben fumbling with a huge Dunkin' run, leaked in January 2024.

A 60-second spot from the new Dunkin's campaign launched at Superbowl LVIII.

A 30-second spot from the same Dunkin's campaign, released in February 2024.

When testing creative, we use the same 16 metrics and IRT technique that we use to measure brand equity to allow for easy comparability and maximum actionability. A successful partnership for Dunkin' would be one that boosted their equity with Brand Users by improving on Differentiation and Innovation.



Let's take a look at the results...

Was the Ben Affleck partnership worth it?

It's not a slam dunk for Dunkin'.

At a total level, the only ad to lift Dunkin's brand equity was the 60-second spot. The 30-second spot made little impact, but didn't hurt their brand equity. People giving a pass on the fake paparazzi shot, but this isn't surprising, as these types of viral campaigns tend to have a short-lived impact.

The ads scored highest with Brand Users

The 60-second spot, again, performed best with a 3-point lift to Dunkin's Equity Score. While this isn't a staggering boost, this directional improvement suggests that the Ben Affleck partnership is hitting the mark.

Looking at the Driver Scores, the 60-second spot lifts the Dunkin's Differentiation the most, followed by Innovation and Aspiration (which reflects desirability).

That's a lot of ticks on the brief! But what about this ad made Brand Users feel it was desirable, unique, and forward-thinking? For that we turn to our System 2 responses to connect the dots...

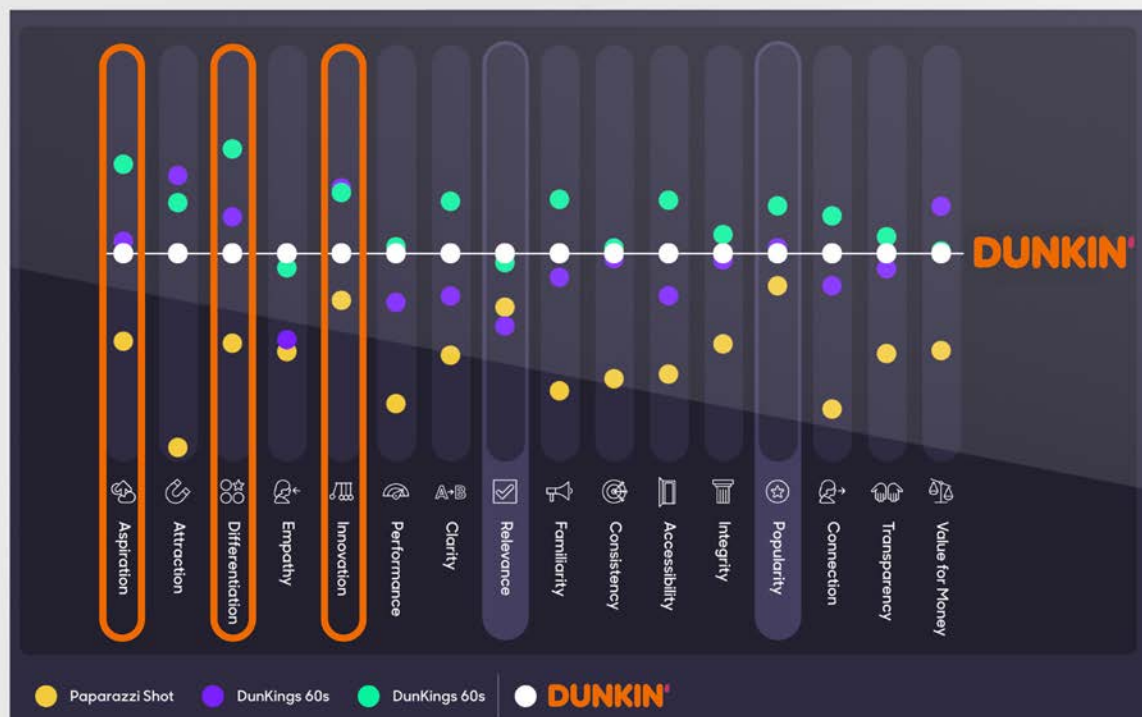
System 2 Responses:

What did Brand Users like about the DunkKings 60s spot?

- "Ben and Matt are funny and the commercial was different from other similar brands."
- "Fun, different commercial. Nice to see celebrities being a little goofy."
- "He is a good fit for brand."

Does the partnership make Brand Users more likely to buy Dunkin'?

- "More because it's funny and unexpected."
- "Yes, he's funny and likable and relatable"
- "I love Dunkin before Ben's partnership so for me it's just a nice addition."



How has Ben Affleck impacted Dunkin's brand equity?

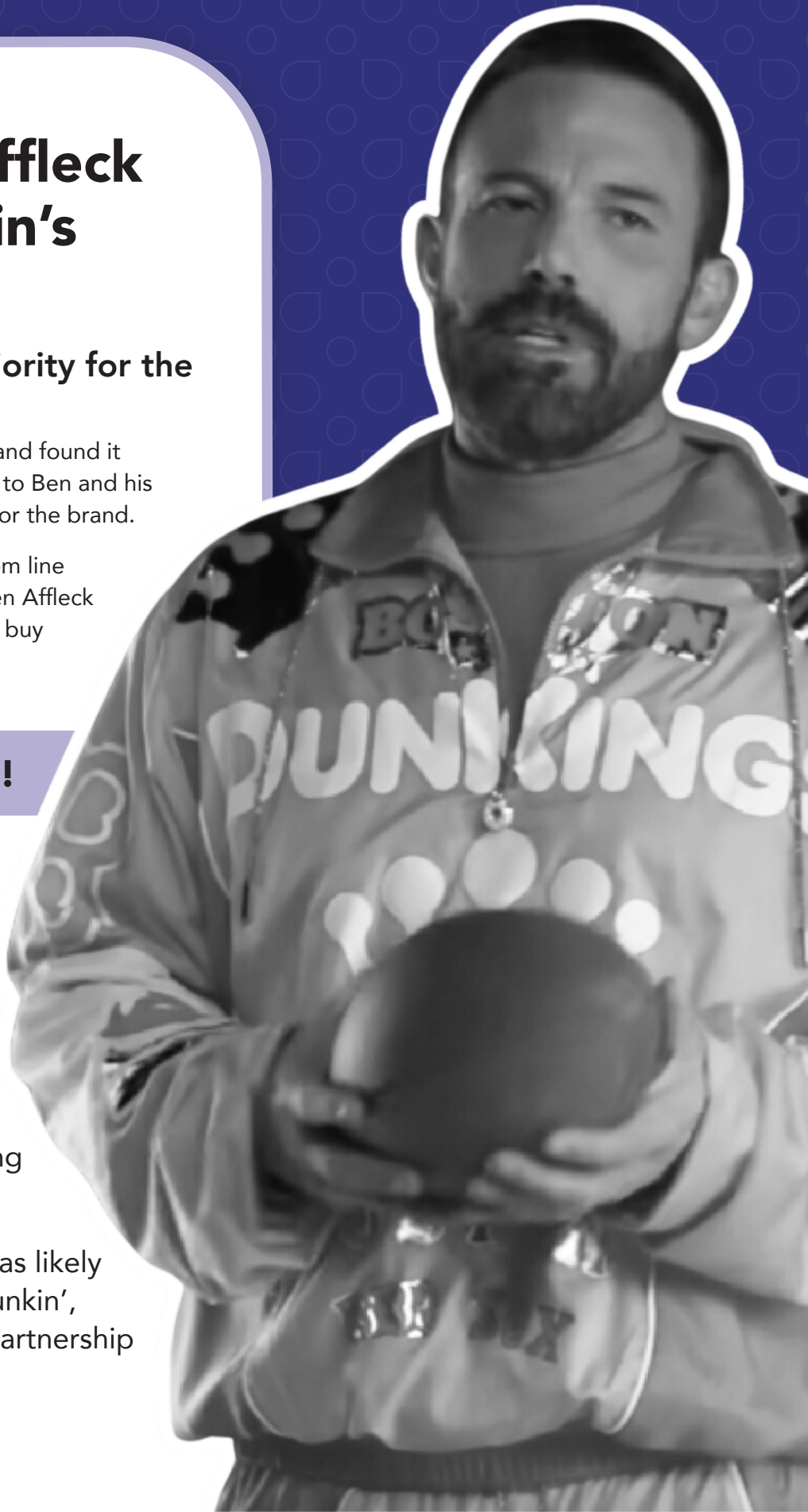
It addresses a strategic priority for the Dunkin' brand.

Brand Users really enjoyed the content and found it entertaining. They responded positively to Ben and his goofiness, and feel like he is a good fit for the brand.

What does that do for the brand's bottom line though? We asked Brand Users if the Ben Affleck partnership made the any more likely to buy Dunkin', and the outlook looks good.

Let's review the results!

- ✓ Boosts brand equity among Brand Users
- ✓ Lifts brand attributes where Brand Users feel the brand is falling behind: Innovation and Differentiation
- ✓ Entertaining and clever, aiding in memorability
- ✓ Brand Users claim to be just as likely or more likely to shop for Dunkin', regardless if they liked the partnership



CeraVe's partnership with Michael Cera



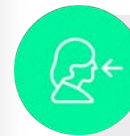
Michael Cera x CeraVe

At the start of 2024, Michael Cera sparked confusion online when he was spotted strolling around New York with bags filled with CeraVe Moisturizing Cream. Influencers shared videos of him in stores autographing bottles, all while tagging CeraVe. This viral collaboration was all part of a marketing strategy leading up to CeraVe's first-ever Super Bowl commercial.

At ProQuo, we've spoken to over 90,000 users in the Skincare category. CeraVe is leading the category with a total Brand Equity score of 58.2. However, the category is competitive, with competitors like The Ordinary closing in. To pull ahead of its competitors and secure its position as the #1 skincare brand in both the US and UK, CeraVe must improve its Brand User experience and address the areas where it falls behind.

Areas of Focus | CeraVe

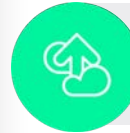
Skincare is a very Rational category overall. CeraVe scores well in the top consideration Drivers for the skincare category. However, the brand falls behind when it comes to the less-expected Emotional Drivers.



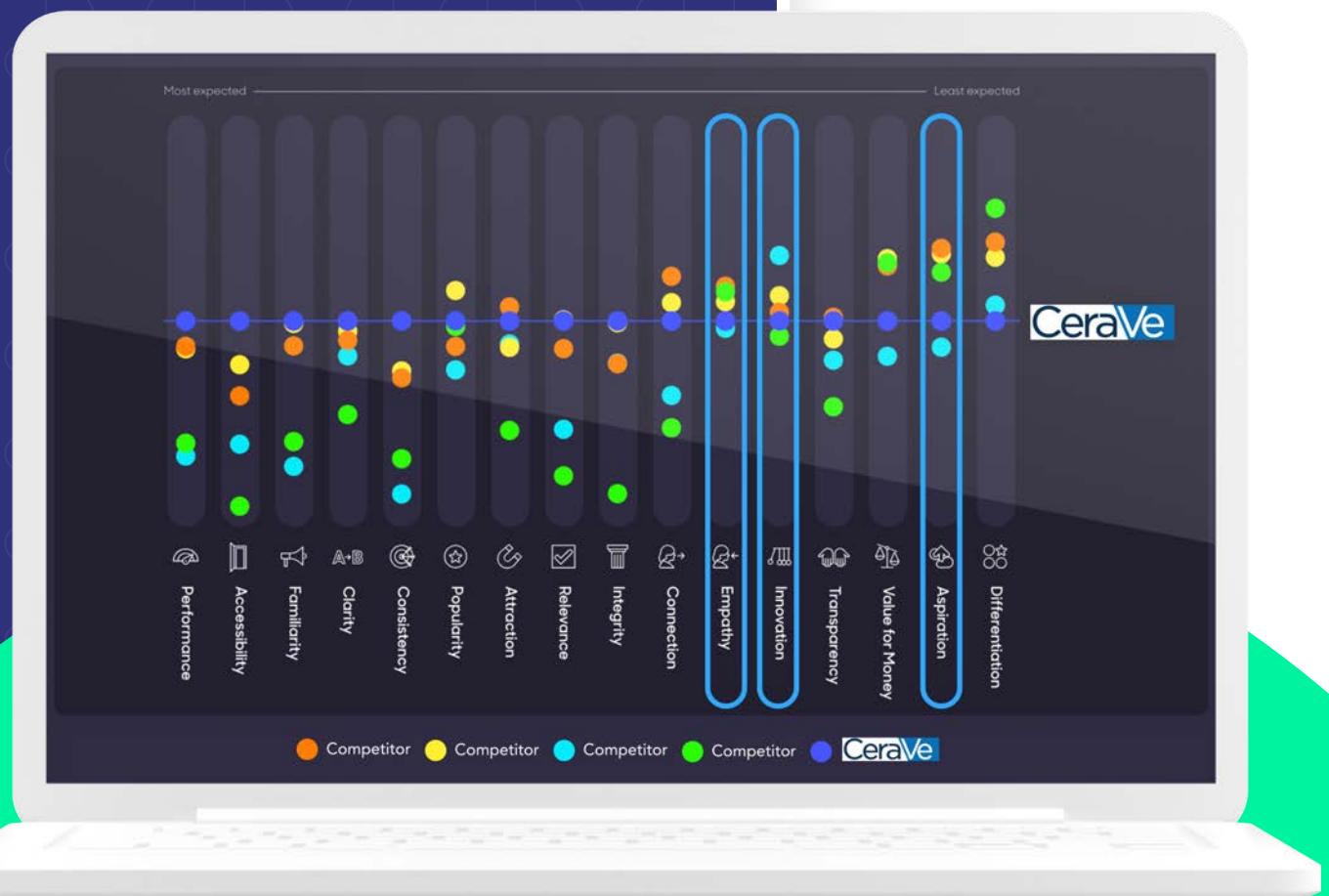
Empathy



Innovation



Aspiration



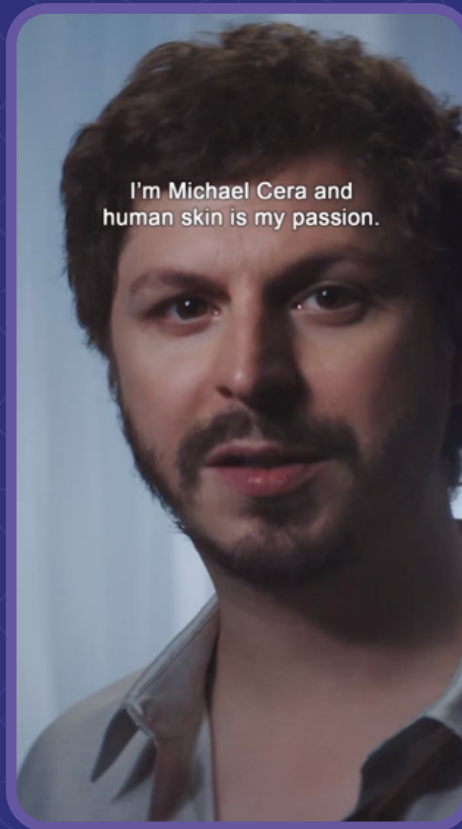
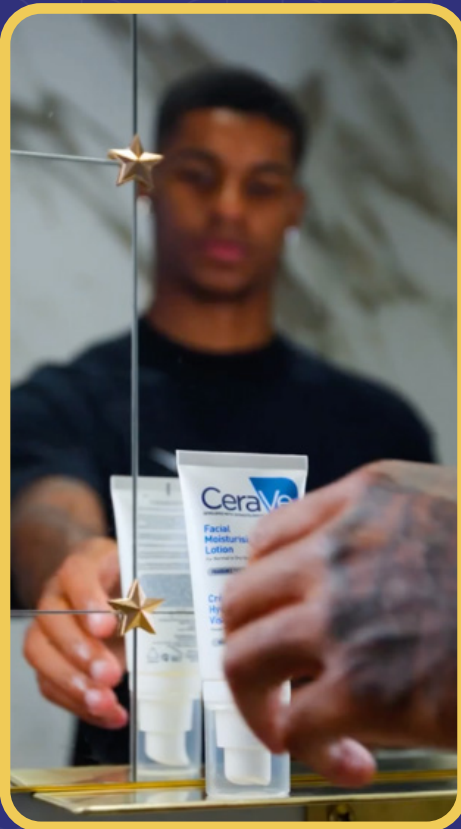
We tested three partnerships...

Marcus Rashford, a Pro Footballer with an Instagram Reach of 17.1M

Michael Cera, Celebrity and Actor with no social media presence

Dr. Fab, an Influencer and Dermatologist with an Instagram Reach of 120K

When testing creative, we use the same 16 metrics and IRT technique that we use to measure brand equity to allow for easy comparability and maximum actionability. A successful partnership for CeraVe in the UK would be one that boosts their emotional performance amongst Users, specifically it Empathy, Innovation and Aspiration.



Let's take a look at the results...

Was the Michael Cera partnership worth it?

The campaign was memorable!

Despite its poor System 1 scores, people shared very positive reactions to the 30-second Michael Cera spot. If we were to base results on the System 2 responses alone, it would appear that Cera's ad was a big success. However, it's not enough that the ad is considered entertaining and memorable—it needs to impact people feel about the brand in order to be effective.

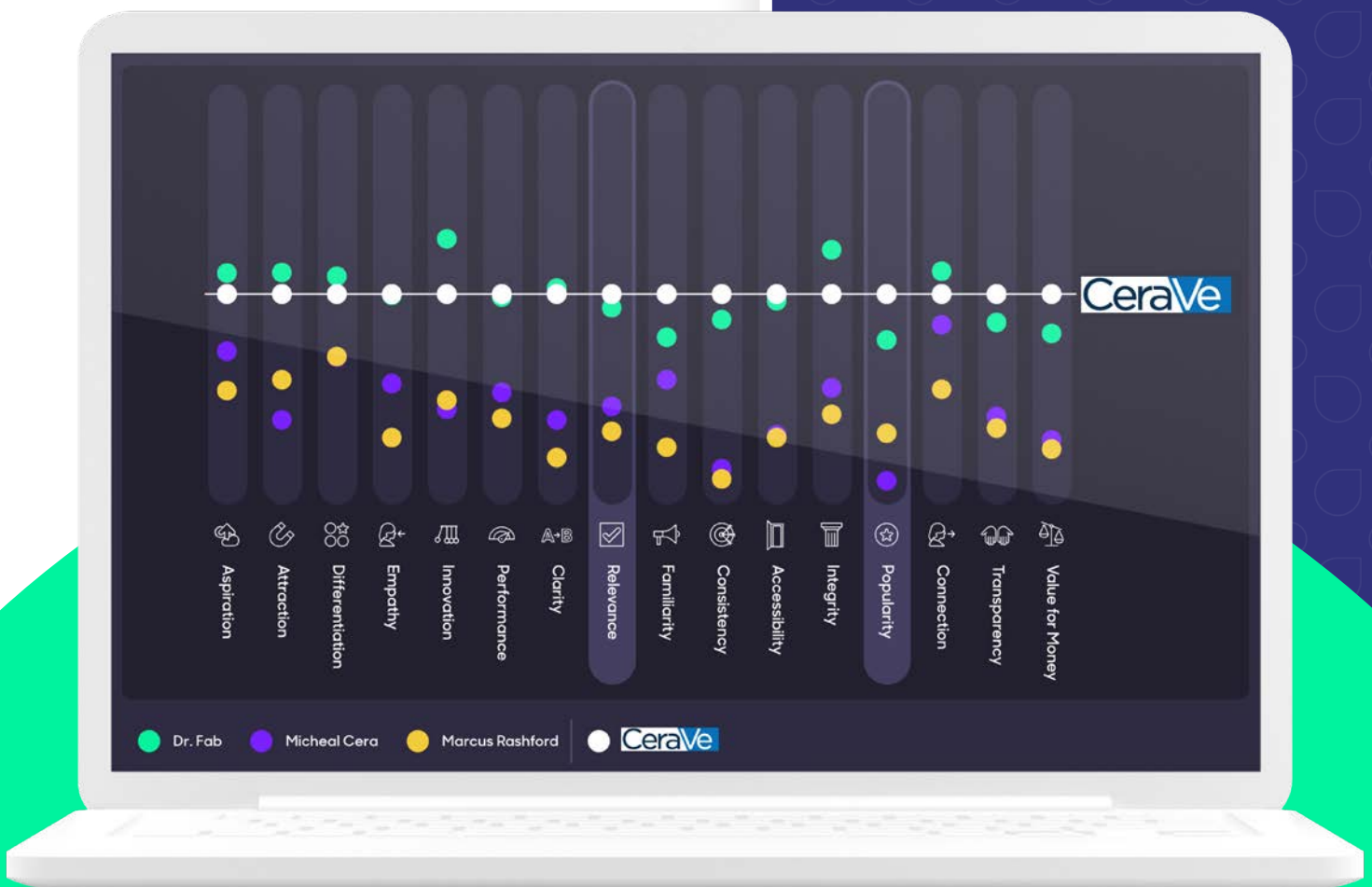
The partnership did not impact how people feel about the brand.

The Michael Cera partnership didn't boost the brand's performance with UK Users in the areas that it needed to address: Empathy, Innovation, Aspiration. While memorable, the campaign didn't support CeraVe's objective of securing its leading position in the category.

System 2 Responses:

Michael Cera's CeraVe partnership was enjoyable and boosted memorability of the brand.

- "I love this advert, love Michael Cera! Great funny advert, draws you in immediately and it's so well made, thumbs up!"
- "Really funny. Surprised me as CeraVe seems like quite a 'dull' brand."
- "Comedian attached with a gimmick to it. Makes it funny."
- "The partnership with Michael Cera. Comedy goes a long way to make an advert and a product memorable."
- "Michael Cera - most recognisable to me. Used humour."



Let's look at CeraVe's Fluent Device Performance

Brand Story: A 30-second ad about CeraVe's commitment to skincare developed by dermatologists

Emma Chamberlain: A collaboration between CeraVe's dermatologists and influencer Emma Chamberlain that encourages people to share their results on social media.

#CleansLikeADerm: A 6-second product ad promoting products for all different skin types.

CeraVe have been investing in their own asset for years: their expert Dermatologists in white lab coats. We wanted to test the impact of this asset in comparison to the more high-profile partnerships that didn't deliver the uplift we had hoped to see.



Did any of these assets make an impact?

#CleanseLikeADerm was the only ad to have a positive impact.

The simple 6-second ad delivered what the high-profile partnerships could not.

The only ad to show a meaningful lift on the brand's Empathy, Innovation and Aspiration was #CleanseLikeADerm. People appreciated the simple and straightforward messaging of the ad. It featured products for different skin types as well as the familiar "white lab coat" dermatologist expert that people have grown to associate with the brand. They came away from the ad knowing more about CeraVe and trusting in what the brand offers.

System 2 Responses:

Why did #CleanseLikeADerm resonate so much with Users?

- "I like how it refers to all skin types and shows you which product your skin needs."
- "Simple to understand and suitable for all skin types."
- "Easy to pick out what product would suit your skin."
- "CeraVe caters for all skin types."
- "I like the rotation of the different types of products and the fact that the ad was different from ads I have seen before."
- "It was fresh and fun, for a normally difficult product to make fun."



Partnerships did not improve the perception of CeraVe in the UK.

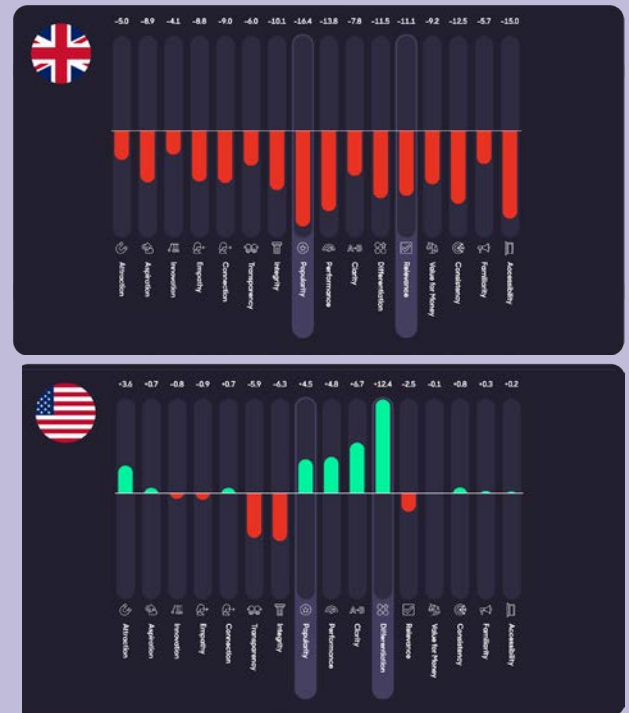
Why? They're all flash, no substance.

UK consumers appear to be a bit more skeptical about celebrity endorsements than their US counterparts. The partnerships struggled to build credibility and likability in the UK because they took the focus off the product. UK customers want the hero of brand communication to be the product and its benefits.

The Michael Cera partnership serves different needs depending on the market.

That same 30-second ad had a positive impact on CeraVe's brand perception in the US, with notable improvements on Differentiation (+12.9), Clarity (+6.7), Performance (+4.8), and Popularity (+4.5).

The Michael Cera ad had a positive impact in the US.



"Just **perpetuates the whole Instagram and pressure to look good** simply for others on socials. It rather trivialises the problems people feel when they have poor skin and have a need for these products."



"It was **just the same** as every other skincare advert."
"Young attractive model with skin that's already good"



"It was too 'sales'. It was promoting himself without telling us about the **product**. I don't know what it does or is it for me."
"Doesn't tell you enough about the **product**."



"It told me absolutely nothing new! And the football theme felt very generic. I see it a lot for a lot of products, and it just **isn't relevant to me** (nor do I get the link!)"

So, have celebrity partnerships impacted CeraVe's brand equity?

It's an effective ingredient to a broader strategy, but not a game-changer on its own.

A one-size-fits-all strategy simply doesn't work in today's hyper-competitive market. Brands need multi-pronged strategies to better communicate with consumers who vary in their skincare needs and cultural norms. The System 1 responses show us that, even when a campaign is seen as interesting or entertaining across different markets, its effectiveness in improving brand perception may not translate as easily between markets.

Let's review the results!

- ✓ Boosts memorability and builds the brand's top of funnel
- ✓ Lifts brand equity for American consumers, but not in the UK
- ✗ Does not address the brand's strategic priority of building relationships with Users
- ✗ Does not sufficiently support product education



Resources



Equity Driver Dictionary



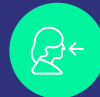
Attraction: A brand that's appealing: whether that's because it looks good or presents itself well. Its physical character draws you to the brand.



Aspiration: A brand that feels desirable and has something special that you want. The brand gives you an urge to have it, and may also feel exclusive.



Innovation: A brand that does things in new ways. It's always iterating: developing and discovering original ways of thinking and doing things. This brand has



Empathy: A brand that is perceptive of you: seeing what it is that you need and want. The brand is sensitive not only to what you want, but also why you want it.



Performance: A brand that fulfils its promise. It does so noticeably well. It delivers strongly against what you are expecting from its category.



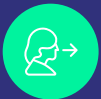
Relevance: A brand that is relevant to you: it meets your needs or wants. What the brand offers has a direct bearing on your life.



Clarity: A brand which has clear purpose in your life. You know what it stands for, and what to do with it. There's no ambiguity about this brand.



Differentiation: A brand that stands out from the crowd. It is in some way unique - in its character, communications or in what it offers.



Connection: A brand that you respond positively to because of how it behaves. You find yourself relating to the brand. It does things in a way that you appreciate



Integrity: A brand that has principles. It always chooses to do the right thing because of the clear values it holds. The brand behaves honestly.



Transparency: A brand that is free of pretence and deceit - it doesn't camouflage its activities. It readily offers up details about itself, so that it is better understood. It makes sure it's open about what it does and doesn't do.



Popularity: A brand that is loved by many; it is often famous or prominent in the world. It is widely applauded and endorsed, giving it popular acclaim.



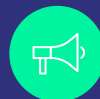
Consistency: A brand that shows a steady conformity in all that it does. It has been reliably the same over time, creating a strong reputation; or it is the same across all its products and services.



Value for Money: A brand that is worth investing in.



Accessibility: A brand that is so easy to use: the experience of it once you have it is uncomplicated and intuitive.



Familiarity: A brand that you know and feel you know something about.



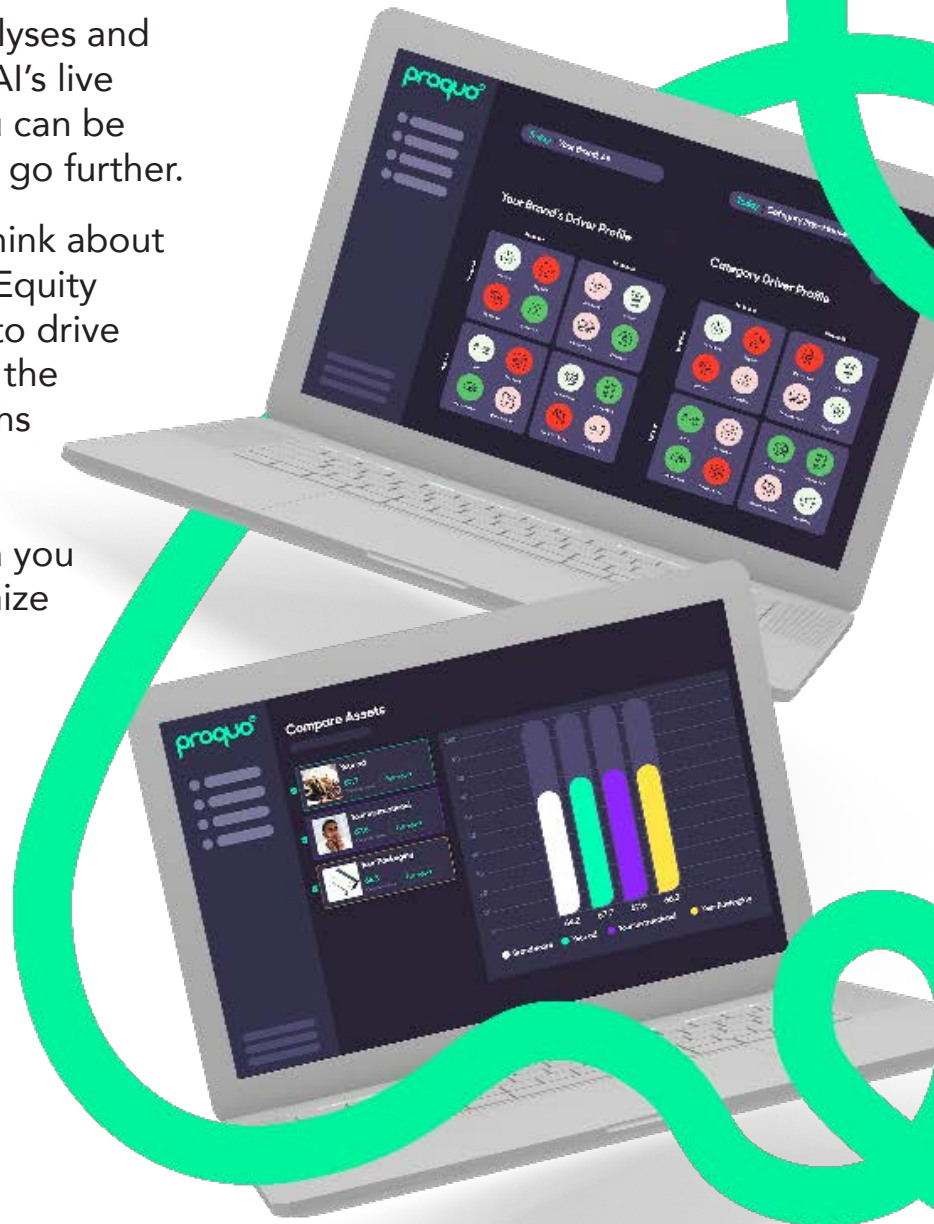
Explain which marketing is working and WHY.

Say goodbye to post-campaign analyses and static brand insights. With ProQuo AI's live consumer intelligence platform, you can be more certain your marketing dollars go further.

We measure how people feel and think about brands, every day, using our Brand Equity Framework. This method is proven to drive commercial brand growth. Through the framework, you can identify strengths and weaknesses and find hidden opportunities within categories and against competitors. Using this data you can easily action strategies to optimize brand performance.

See how ProQuo can supercharge your growth!

Reach out today to chat with one of our brand specialists about your brand's needs and explore the features that make growing your brand a cinch.



[Book a meeting](#)