

Data to Dollars

Creativity, Technology and Synergy: Who's getting it right and how?





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SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

Marketers today face a paradox: more data than ever before, yet ongoing friction in turning that data into commercial value. This report explores how marketing leaders can make investments work harder, protect their budget and prove that brand has a very real impact on the bottom line.

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01

Introduction

Modern marketers face a unique and contradictory challenge – more data than ever before, but more friction in translating that data into action.

Despite significant investments in analytics, many brand teams find it hard to turn data into real commercial advantage. Instead of empowering confident decision-making, brand data can become a source of confusion, misalignment and missed opportunity.

The friction comes from a range of challenges. Internal teams often work with different types of data – creative, media, brand tracking and commercial – held in different places and managed by distinct stakeholders. Quality varies and reconciling multiples sources is often slow and complex.

Even when the right data is available, there's no guarantee it will be read consistently or interpreted with the same level of confidence across functions. Some people may be more open than others to what the data is really saying – especially when it challenges assumptions about how and why a brand is successful.



More specifically, many businesses struggle with a disconnect between brand data and commercial performance.

There is often a sense that brand metrics exist in a separate realm from the hard numbers that drive business decisions – revenue, profit and market share. As a result, brand data is under-leveraged or only partially used when it comes to budget allocation, strategic planning and executive reporting.

This report explores how marketing leaders can overcome that disconnect and make their marketing dollars work harder for their brand and business.

We highlight three powerful ways that brand data can unlock value:

**ASSET
TESTING
DATA**



Make smarter, safer bets & reduce waste in your marketing budget.

**BRAND
PERFORMANCE
DATA**



Protect your budget with proof that campaigns are changing sentiment.

**PREDICTIVE
BRAND
DATA**



Prioritize investment and accelerate commercial results.

Taken together, these approaches lead to a more confident path from insight to impact -helping marketers bridge the gap between brand and business and turning data into dollars.



SECTION 2:

PLACE SAFER BETS: ASSET TESTING DATA

Asset testing helps marketers evaluate creative assets against strategic brand goals to ensure spend drives real impact. It sharpens agency collaboration and focuses development on effectiveness, not opinion. But its value depends on using the right metrics and being open to challenging insights.

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02

Place safer bets with asset testing

Asset testing data is the process of evaluating assets throughout the creative development process. It allows marketers to test messaging, visuals and storytelling against strategic brand goals, giving teams the evidence they need to confidently back the right creative.

When used well, asset testing helps brands reduce waste and optimize marketing investment. It also enhances collaboration with agencies by providing clear, objective feedback that sharpens the brief.

However, the value of asset testing hinges on how it's applied. Too often, brands rely on generic indicators of effectiveness, like likeability or recall, rather than linking results to the emotional and functional Drivers that shape buying behaviour.

Another common pitfall is testing in isolation from the brand's strategic priorities – or failing to act on insights when results challenge internal expectations or creative ambition.

Asset testing is most powerful when it's not treated as a tick-box exercise, but as a strategic filter for ensuring every dollar spent on creative is pushing the brand forward.



"Too often, brands rely on generic indicators of effectiveness, like likeability or recall, rather than linking creative to the emotional and functional drivers that shape buying behaviour."



Case Study: Levi's

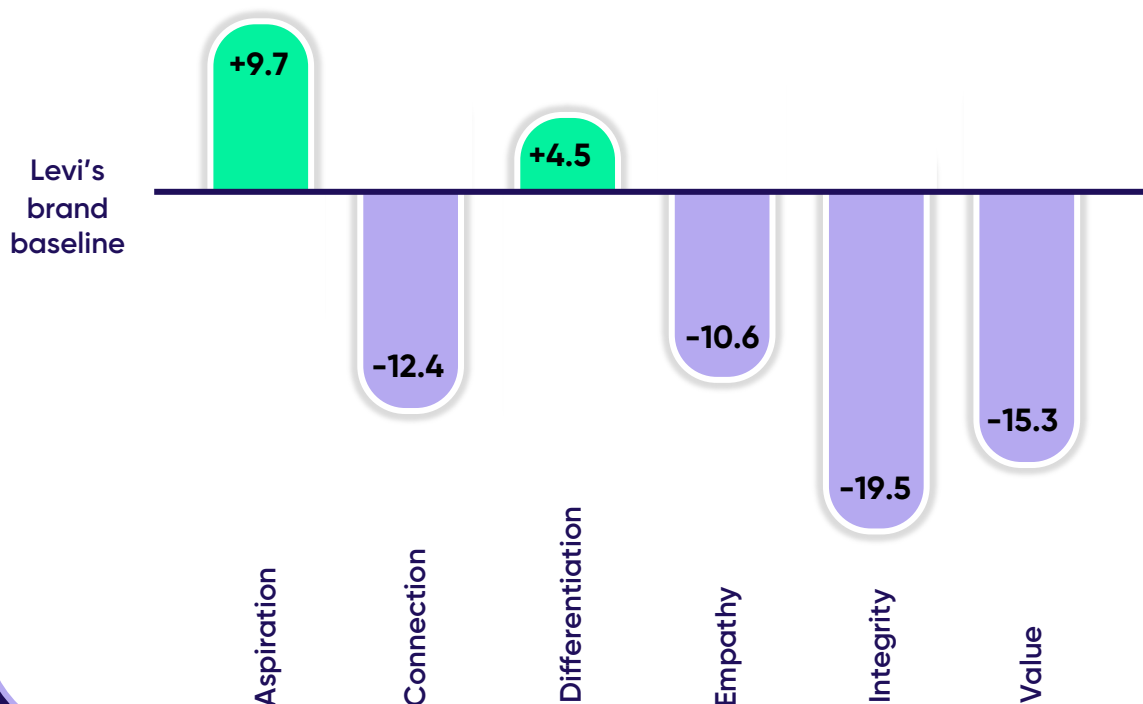
Levi's is a dominant player in denim but its brand strength is fuelled by older shoppers. Buyers aged 18-35 are underserved across the category, with brands failing to deliver on six Drivers: Aspiration, Connection, Differentiation, Empathy, Integrity and Value for Money.

With the launch "Launderette", a campaign featuring Beyoncé, Levi's had an opportunity to drive engagement with younger shoppers. Did such a significant investment create the impact that was intended?

Asset testing reveals perhaps not. On the surface, the investment seemed well placed. The advert improved perceptions of the brand's Aspiration, with comments like *"I liked that it had a recognizable celebrity and related back to one of the earlier ads"*.

But, testing also highlighted missed opportunities, "Launderette" underperformed on emotional Drivers like Empathy and Connection. Younger shoppers are looking for brands that are made for them; they want to express their personal style in jeans that fit their body size and shape. The Launderette campaign failed to convey these themes and as a result, didn't drive the impact it could have given the scale of investment.

Levi's "Launderette" performance on key opportunity Drivers for 18-35-year-olds





SECTION 3:

PROTECT YOUR BUDGET: PERFORMANCE DATA

Brand performance data enables marketers to demonstrate how brand building efforts influence consumer sentiment. By tracking shifts in awareness, consideration and brand equity marketers can build a credible narrative of impact. This approach can help secure budget and establish stakeholder confidence.

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03

Protect your budget with brand performance data

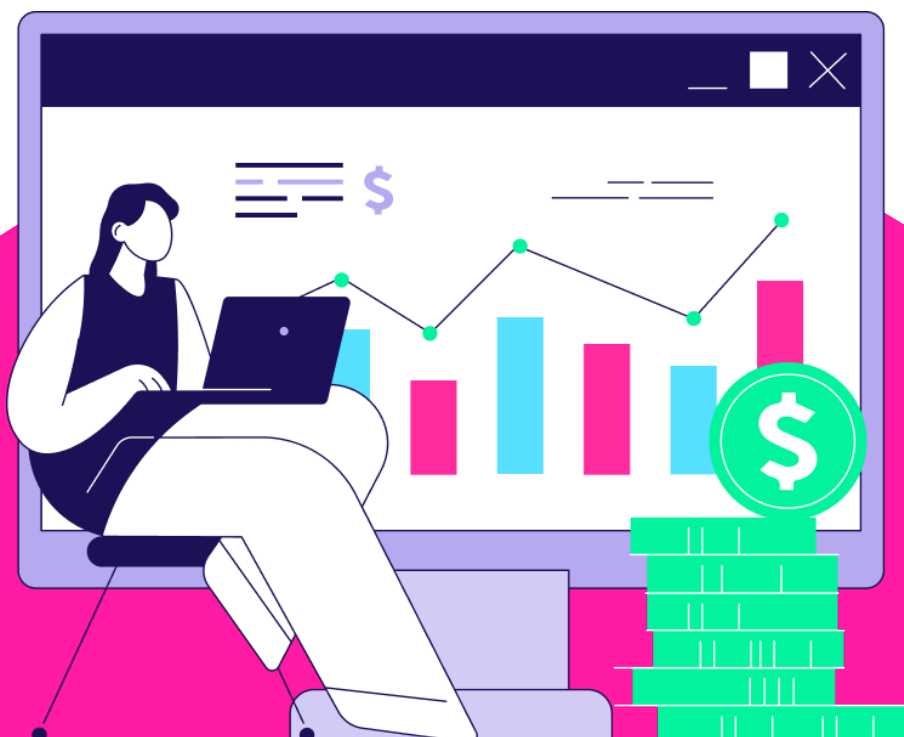
Brand performance data – funnel metrics (like awareness, consideration and purchase) and brand equity data – shows how marketing activity influences consumer sentiment. When used well, it helps prove that marketing is not just creative but commercially meaningful.

But measuring effectiveness isn't always straightforward. Funnel metrics tend to move slowly – and not every campaign will show an immediate or isolated impact. Brands are often activating different strategies at once across channels, product, packaging and promotion – all set against a backdrop of competitor activity and other external events.

This makes attribution messy. Brand metrics don't follow a clean, linear cause-and-effect model. It's difficult – and often unhelpful – to expect every piece of marketing to shift perception in a measurable way. What matters is being able to track brand performance in real-time, across the right emotional and rational drivers, to build a credible narrative of influence over time.



"It's unhelpful to expect every piece of marketing to shift perception in a measurable way. What matters is being able to track brand performance in real-time, across the right drivers, to build a credible narrative of influence over time."



Case Study: Jo Malone

At the start of 2024, Jo Malone held a strong position in the gifting category – but by April, something had shifted. The brand's equity among male shoppers had dropped by 18%, driven by steep declines in perceptions of Relevance, Connection, Empathy and Value.

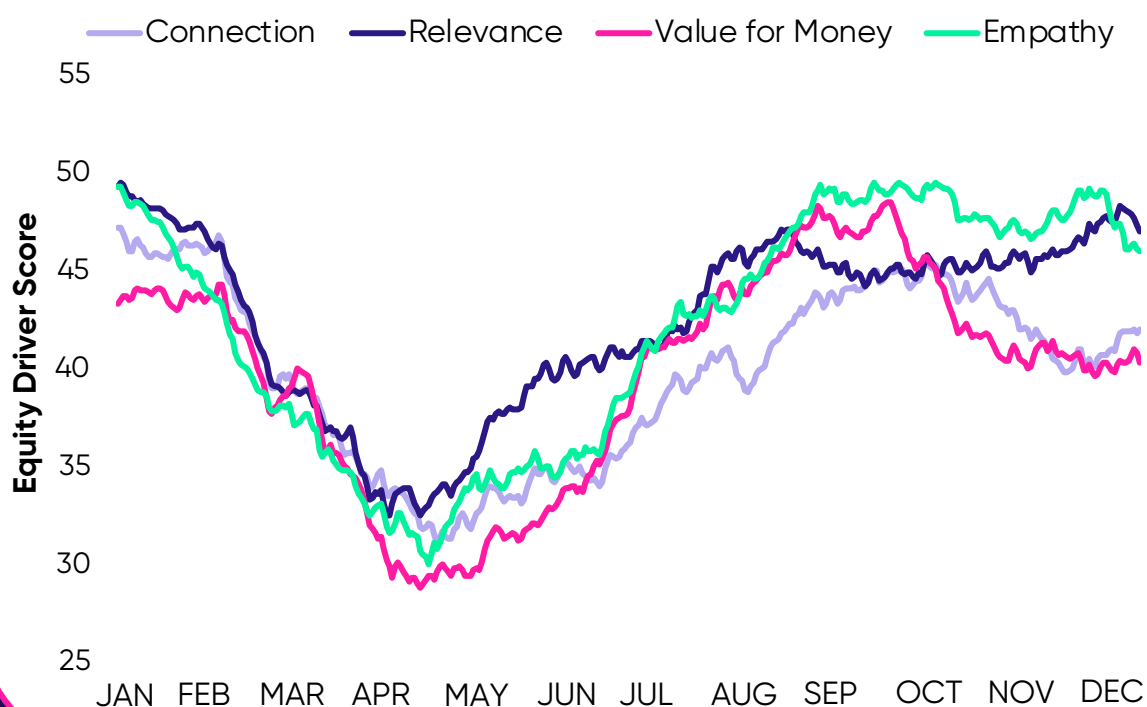
In May, the brand made a decisive move – announcing actor Tom Hardy as its new brand ambassador and launching a sustained campaign across social and out-of-home.

The results were significant. By December, Jo Malone's brand equity had overtaken competitors, with major improvements in the very areas that had previously declined: Relevance (+37%), Empathy (+38%), Value (+34%), and Connection (+29%).

This shift wasn't coincidental. The data showed a clear turning point that aligned with the campaign's launch – providing strong evidence that it had reignited emotional connection and brand appeal.

For Jo Malone, brand performance data tells a credible story: one that justifies investment and demonstrates impact.

Jo Malone Daily Equity Driver Performance 2024 - Men





SECTION 4:

ACCELERATE COMMERCIAL RESULTS: PREDICTIVE DATA

Predictive brand metrics show which elements of brand perception drive commercial performance, helping marketers prove impact and set better priorities. By focusing on emotional and functional brand equity Drivers – measured through a relationship-based framework – teams can guide strategy, adjust campaigns in real time and accelerate sales.

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04

Accelerate sales growth with predictive brand data

Brand equity isn't just a measure of how well your brand is perceived – it can be a powerful predictor of commercial performance. By identifying which equity drivers correlate with sales, marketers can set strategic priorities that accelerate growth and build greater credibility with stakeholders.

The foundation of this approach lies in having a robust Brand Equity tracker. A relationship-based framework that captures how people connect with a brand is the most effective way of diagnosing buying behaviour, making it the most likely to link with commercial performance.

But, understanding which brand equity Drivers are predictive of commercial performance requires rigour and careful analysis. One of the most common pitfalls is assuming that total brand equity will always correlate neatly with commercial outcomes – in reality, it rarely does.

To predict sales shifts with accuracy, marketers need to work with specialist data scientists who can analyse, in detail, where linkages between brand data and commercial metrics exist. The work is complex, but the payoff is significant.



"A relationship-based Brand Equity framework that captures how people connect with a brand is the most effective way of diagnosing buying behaviour, making it the most likely to link with commercial performance."



Case Study: Starbucks

In recent years, Starbucks has faced a clear business challenge: declining sales and weakening Gen Z appeal. By comparing weekly sales data across 2023 and 2024 with daily brand equity metrics in the same timeframe, it's possible to identify the root cause.

Certain equity drivers act as leading indicators – moving days or even weeks before sales volumes shift. Perceptions of taste among non-users shows a strong correlation with sales patterns, with a noticeable 0.7 correlation emerging 30 days before a drop in sales.

Clarity of brand proposition among younger consumers shows an equally strong correlation of 0.6 30 days before sales volumes change. Empathy – how well the brand was perceived to understand and reflect customer needs – correlated at 0.7, with changes in Empathy perceptions surfacing around 5 days before sales moved.

If Starbucks can re-establish itself as a location for quality coffee, communicate a compelling brand story and become a location that connects with the needs of a Gen Z audience, it will reverse its commercial decline.

Equity Drivers with the strongest correlation with Starbucks Sales performance

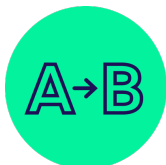
Medium-term leading indicators
(Equity Drivers shift 30 days before sales movement)



Taste
Non-users
Correlation 0.7



Consistency
Non-users
Correlation 0.6



Clarity
18-39 YOs
Correlation 0.6

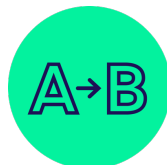
Short-term leading indicators
(Equity Drivers shift 5 days before sales movement)



Taste
Non-users
Correlation 0.7



Empathy
18-39
Correlation 0.7



Clarity
18-39 YOs
Correlation 0.8



SECTION 5:

CONCLUSION

Asset testing, brand performance, and predictive metrics each help marketers reduce waste, secure investment, and prove impact. But to unlock their full value, they must be used with clarity, precision, and realistic expectations.

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05

Conclusion

Asset testing data, brand performance data, and predictive brand metrics each play a distinct and vital role in driving smarter marketing decisions. Used together, they provide a robust set of tools for making every marketing dollar work harder – helping you to reduce waste, secure internal investment, and accelerate commercial growth.

But to unlock their full potential, marketers need to use these data types with precision and purpose. Start by being clear with your teams and stakeholders about the type of data you're referring to – confusion over definitions and outcomes leads to misaligned expectations.

Next, be honest about what each type of data can realistically deliver. Not every dataset will tell you everything – but each can tell you something important if used the right way.

To truly demonstrate ROI, you need tracking that's granular, continuous, and comparable to the commercial metrics you're measuring against. One-off reports or high-level equity scores aren't enough – always-on insight is the only way to link brand performance to business outcomes with confidence.

Finally, this is not a journey you need to take alone. The complexity of modern marketing data – across sources, teams, and timelines – means that working with expert partners is critical. They can help you triangulate insight, surface what matters, and turn brand data into a commercial growth engine.

Marketing is under more pressure than ever to prove its value. The good news is: the means of capturing quality data is already there. The opportunity is in how you use it.



“Used together, asset testing data, brand performance data and predictive brand metrics provide a robust set of tools for making every marketing dollar work harder – helping you to reduce waste, secure investment and accelerate growth.”

Get to know Traction

We are a consumer intelligence company that helps ambitious brands track performance, measure marketing effectiveness, and accelerate growth by providing real-time insights on what drives consumer decisions.

Our unique framework goes beyond surface-level metrics, uncovering the emotional and rational drivers that shape brand preference and loyalty. With our insights, businesses can act with clarity, agility, and confidence, ensuring every marketing move leads to measurable commercial success.



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