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MARKETING WEEKENDER™
ISSUE # 467 JULY 2026

EVERYONE HAS AI.
NOW WHAT?

- ☑ AI
- ☑ AI
- ☑ AI
- ☑ AI
- ☑ AI
- ☐

Clues inside cover story…

popculture MARKETING WEEKENDER

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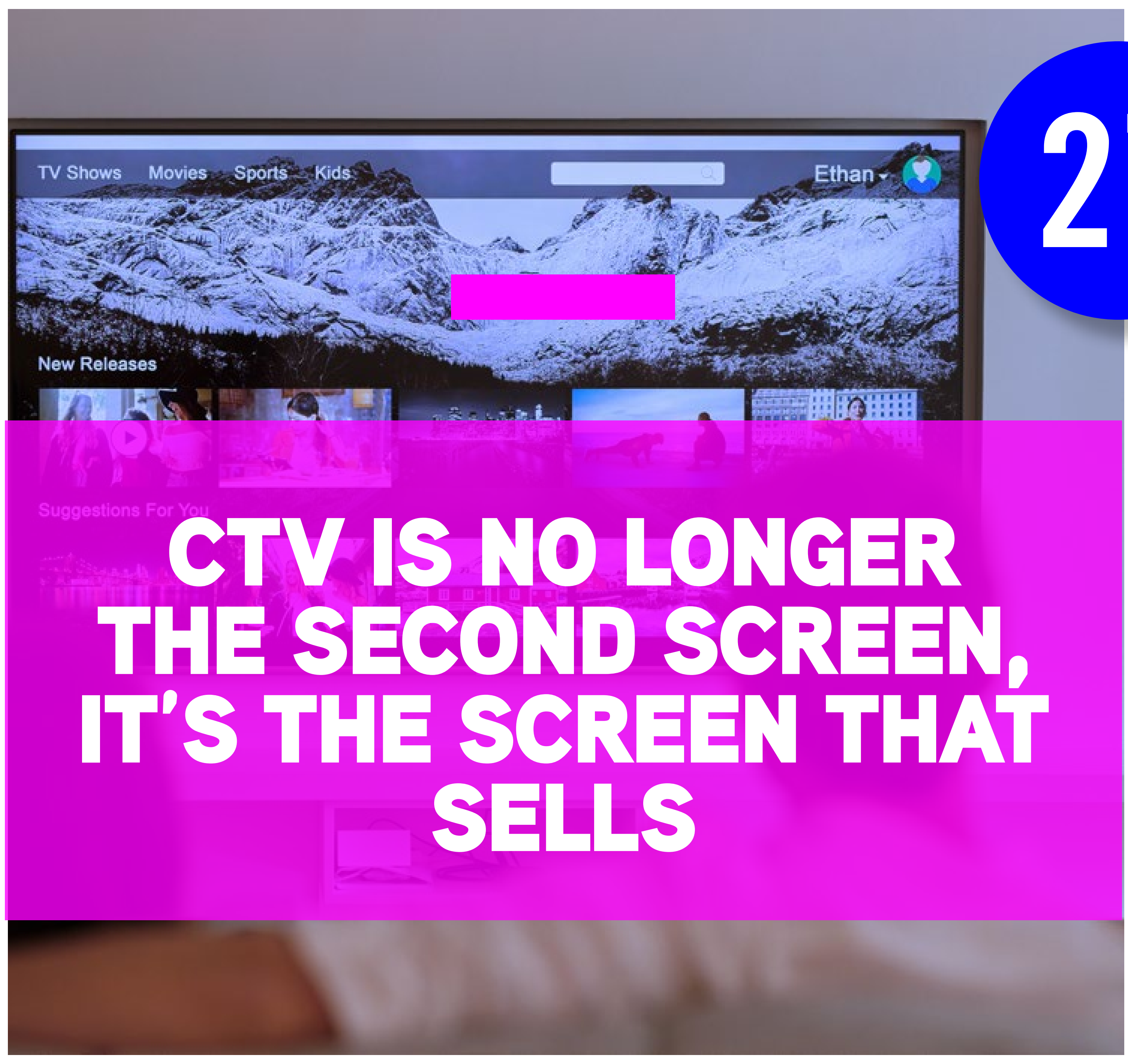


"I'M SURE SEX WOULDN'T BE AS REWARDING AS WINNING THE WORLD CUP. THE WORLD CUP IS EVERY FOUR YEARS. SEX ISN'T."

RONALDO LUÍS NAZÁRIO DE LIMA (R9), BRAZILIAN FORMER PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER

"I'M NOT A DOCTOR, MATE."

Jackson Irvine (Australia) when asked to explain a teammate's condition.

"I CONSIDER MYSELF ONE OF THE GREATEST PLAYERS EVER. AN 11 OUT OF 10."

Romário (during World Cup media coverage)

"MAYBE WE NEED TO STOP THE PRESS CONFERENCE... BECAUSE IT'S LIKE WE LOST 5-1."

Mauricio Pochettino after the US beat Paraguay but faced negative questions.

"FOOTBALL IS A SIMPLE GAME. TWENTY-TWO MEN CHASE A BALL FOR 90 MINUTES, AND AT THE END, THE GERMANS WIN."

Gary Lineker, after England lost to West Germany at Italia '90.

For years, agencies have proudly described themselves as digital-first, mobile-first, social-first, data-first and, more recently, AI-first.

Each reflected the technology of its time.

But none of them answered the only question clients really care about.

Can you think better than everyone else?

Technology comes and goes.

Platforms rise and fall.

Today's competitive advantage has a habit of becoming tomorrow's commodity.

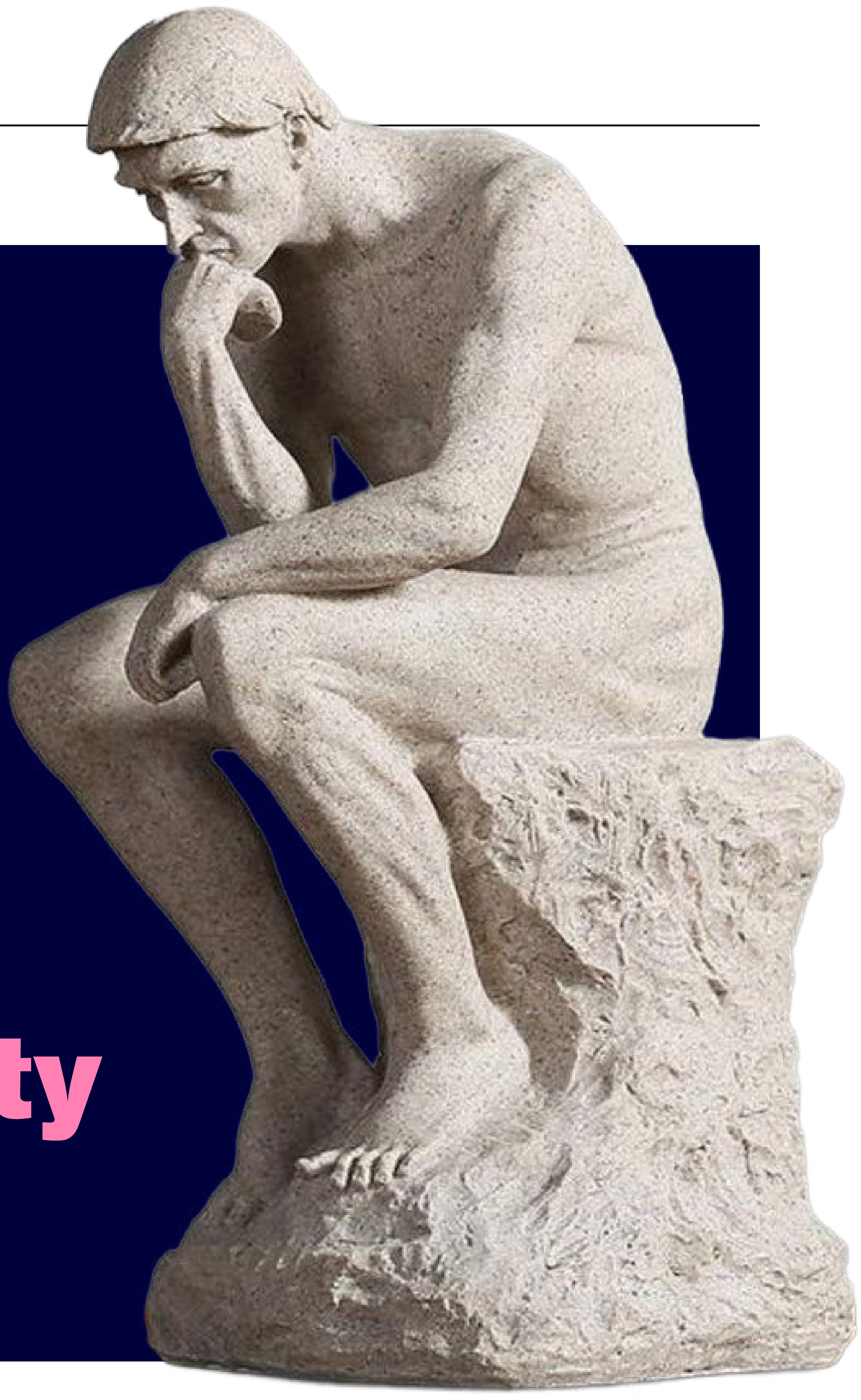
Thought doesn't.

Look at the brands that have reshaped markets.

AirAsia didn't simply make flying affordable. It changed who could fly.

EDITOR'S NOTE

... When everyone has access to the same technology, the only thing left that truly separates one agency from another is the quality of its thinking...



Grab didn't build a better taxi company. It reimagined mobility across Southeast Asia.

ZUS Coffee didn't invent coffee. It challenged the belief that great coffee had to come with a premium price.

99 Speedmart didn't create a new retail model. It understood that being close to the customer mattered more than being in a shopping mall.

None of these companies won because they embraced new technology first.

They won because they saw something others didn't.

That's exactly what clients expect from their agencies.

The ability to spot opportunities others overlook.

The courage to recommend an idea before the evidence is overwhelming.

In a world where every agency has access to the same technology, the only advantage competitors cannot copy is the quality of your thinking.

So perhaps it's time to stop asking whether your agency is digital-first, AI-first or whatever-first.

Perhaps the better question is this.

Are you a thought-first agency?

The technology will keep improving.

The tools will keep multiplying.

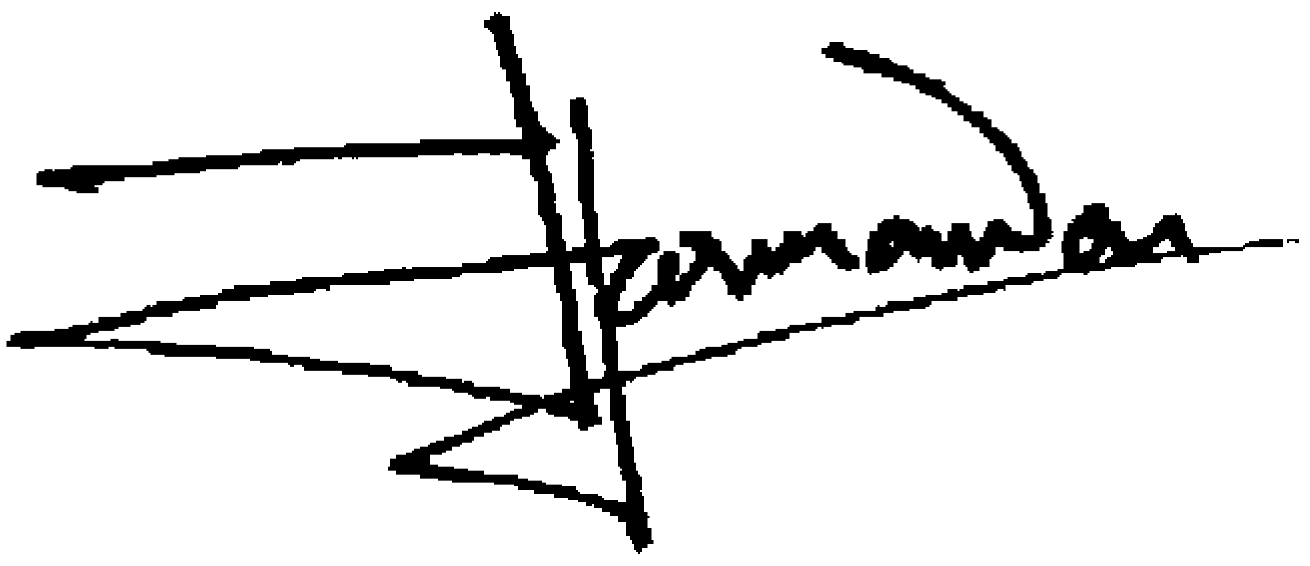
Content will become cheaper.

Execution will become faster.

When everyone has access to the same technology, the only thing left that truly separates one agency from another is the quality of its thinking.

Thought isn't getting cheaper.

It is becoming priceless.




Cover Story
BRAND LEADERSHIP IN THE AGE OF AI
WORKSHOP
BY SUTAPA BHATTACHARYA
12TH AUGUST, 2026
KLGCC CONVENTION CENTRE
ROOF GARDEN
HRDCORP CLAIMABLE
APPROVED HRD CORP
TRAINING PROGRAM
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BEYOND THE TOOLS: SUTAPA BHATTACHARYA ON LEADING BRANDS IN THE AGE OF AI

As artificial intelligence becomes embedded across marketing, customer experience and business operations, adopting the technology is no longer enough to set an organisation apart.

The more important question is whether business leaders have the strategy, judgment and governance required to use AI without weakening brand identity, creativity or consumer trust.

Ahead of the **Brand Leadership in the Age of AI** workshop, Sutapa Bhattacharya discusses the mistakes organisations make when implementing AI, the capabilities that will create sustainable competitive advantage and why human oversight must remain central to brand leadership.

AI ADOPTION IS NO LONGER A DIFFERENTIATOR

According to Sutapa, true brand leadership is not determined by the number of AI platforms an organisation uses. Instead, it is reflected in the judgment, values and human oversight surrounding those technologies.

“AI adoption itself is no longer a differentiator. Recent industry data shows that 71% of organisations now regularly use generative AI, and it powers roughly 15% of all marketing activity. Simply having AI has therefore become table stakes rather than an indication of leadership,” said Sutapa.

She believes organisations must first establish what their brands represent before deciding how AI should be used.

“Leaders need strategic clarity before technology. They must decide what the brand stands for and where AI should amplify that story, rather than allowing the tool to dictate the message,” said Sutapa.

Governance is equally important. Instead of producing large volumes of disconnected AI-generated content, strong organisations build repeatable systems around the technology.

“The strongest performers establish clear briefing processes, brand-voice rules, human review and measurable business outcomes around their use of AI. The operating discipline surrounding the technology, rather than the sophistication of the model itself, is what separates the winners from the rest,” said Sutapa.

However, as adoption increases, consumer confidence cannot be taken for granted.

“Consumer comfort with brands using AI has reportedly fallen from around 57% to 46% within a single year in one major multi-market study. Leaders must therefore actively manage transparency and trust, rather than focusing only on efficiency,” said Sutapa.

“Without that layer, AI multiplies content, not results,”

She points to Heinz’s “AI Ketchup” campaign as an example of a brand using emerging technology without abandoning its established identity. Although the campaign used DALL·E-generated imagery, Heinz’s iconic bottle shape and visual codes remained instantly recognisable.

“The technology created the content, but the brand’s 150-year equity guided the leadership team in deciding which images to keep. AI was used to reinforce the identity of the brand, not replace it,” said Sutapa.

WHY AI ADOPTION DOES NOT ALWAYS PRODUCE BUSINESS GROWTH

Although many organisations have invested in AI, not all have translated those investments into measurable growth.

Sutapa believes the gap between adoption and impact is usually caused by weak strategy and governance rather than technological limitations.

“One of the biggest mistakes is buying platforms and focusing on tools before defining the brand or business outcome they are meant to serve. This produces fragmented pilots instead of a repeatable system that the wider team can use,” said Sutapa.

AI can increase the speed and volume of production, but more content does not automatically produce stronger results.

“AI marketing works only when it operates within a governed workflow involving structured source material, brand-voice rules, human review and a clear business outcome. Without that layer, AI multiplies content, not results,” said Sutapa.

She also cautions organisations against assuming that automated production will automatically improve campaign performance.

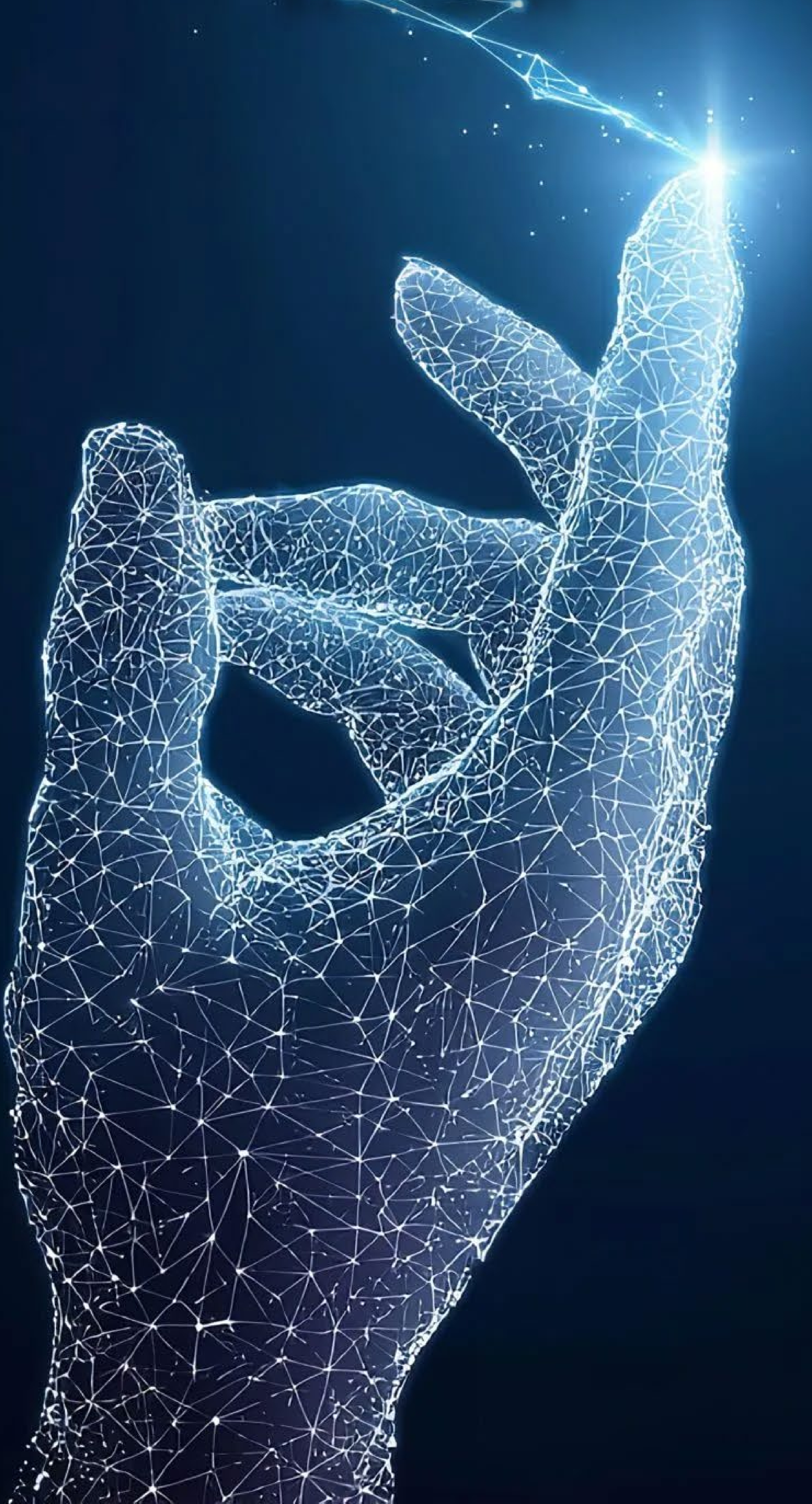
“Platforms are beginning to down-rank generic AI-generated paid social creative, while some AI video tools are producing weaker returns because production overhead remains high even when generation is automated. Unrefined AI output alone does not move performance,” said Sutapa.

Another mistake is pursuing personalisation without recognising how consumers may feel about the use of their information or the growing presence of automation in brand interactions.

“Pushing AI-driven personalisation and content without addressing declining consumer comfort can erode brand equity and trust, even

THE FUTURE BELONGS TO ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN SEAMLESSLY CONNECT:

AI Intelligence + Human Creativity + Brand Purpose + Business Innovation



as operational efficiency rises," said Sutapa.

Organisations must also invest in building internal capabilities instead of viewing AI solely as a cost-cutting mechanism.

"Companies that adopted early and developed internal skills are now seeing approximately double the year-on-year productivity gains of late adopters. A narrow cost-reduction mandate, without an intention to build capability, prevents organisations from capturing the wider value of AI," said Sutapa.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE WILL COME FROM WHAT SURROUNDS THE TECHNOLOGY

As more businesses gain access to the same models and automation platforms, the tools themselves will become increasingly commoditised.

Sutapa says sustainable differentiation will come from the assets, knowledge and operating systems organisations build around AI.

"Proprietary data and customer insight will remain powerful sources of advantage. Enterprise-scale personalisation and audience research consistently produce some of the strongest AI-driven returns because they are built on information that belongs uniquely to the brand," said Sutapa.

Distinctive brand assets will also become more valuable as generative tools make it easier to produce large volumes of similar-looking content.

"Codified brand rules that keep every AI output recognisably yours — including tone, visual identity and values — become the actual business advantage and moat, because the generative layer is shared by everyone," said Sutapa.

She argues that organisations should concentrate on building an AI operating system rather than chasing individual outputs.

"Brands need clear systems for briefing, generating, reviewing, approving, localising and measuring AI work. That creates an organisational capability that competitors cannot simply copy by purchasing the same software," said Sutapa.

The ability to experiment quickly must also be accompanied by the ability to validate results responsibly.

"Median payback on AI marketing investment has fallen sharply across the industry. The advantage will increasingly belong to teams that can test and validate faster, not merely produce faster," said Sutapa.

DIVIDING THE WORK BETWEEN AI AND HUMAN CREATIVITY

The relationship between automation and creativity is often presented as a competition. Sutapa, however, believes it should be understood as a deliberate division of labour.

"AI should handle scale, including drafting, content variations, audience segmentation and predictive

“If marketing, product and customer service deploy AI independently, the brand can become fragmented.”

analytics. At the same time, people must remain responsible for meaning, emotional ideas, brand purpose and the final judgment on what should be released,” said Sutapa.

While AI’s share of marketing investment is increasing, spending allocated to human creative talent is declining in some organisations. Sutapa believes leaders must manage this shift carefully.

“The human layer is precisely what protects authenticity. Organisations should not allow investment in human creativity to fall by default simply because AI can produce more material at greater speed,” said Sutapa.

Human review should also be treated as a formal part of the production process rather than a final check performed after the work has already been created.

“The strongest-performing AI campaigns embed human review and brand-voice checks directly into the workflow. That is how organisations achieve efficiency without allowing their work to become generic,” said Sutapa.

Consumer trust should ultimately serve as the clearest signal of whether the balance is working.

“Falling consumer comfort with brand AI is a warning that efficiency gains without visible human and ethical stewardship may erode the emotional connection brands depend on and, eventually, weaken brand equity,” said Sutapa.

BREAKING DOWN ORGANISATIONAL SILOS

AI influences brand strategy, customer experience, product innovation and technology simultaneously. Yet many organisations continue to manage these functions separately.

“The reality is that AI affects how a brand is perceived, how customers are served, what gets built next and how it is delivered. Managing these areas in silos creates serious strategic and operational risks,” said Sutapa.

One of those risks is an inconsistent brand voice across customer touchpoints.

“If marketing, product and customer service deploy AI independently, the brand can become fragmented. Each function may report efficiency gains, while customers experience inconsistent messaging and begin to question whether they can trust the brand," said Sutapa.

Separate investments can also result in duplicated or incompatible systems.

"Without a shared view, technology and innovation teams may build AI capabilities that customer experience and brand teams never adopt. This creates wasted investment and directs resources towards the wrong priorities," said Sutapa.

A connected approach also enables organisations to respond more effectively when public expectations change.

"Because consumer comfort with brand AI is declining even as usage increases, organisations need a joined-up view across strategy, customer experience, innovation and technology. That is the only way to identify and correct the trust gap before it damages the most valuable asset a brand owns: its equity," said Sutapa.

Enterprise case studies, she adds, suggest that organisations treating AI as a cross-functional capability experience stronger productivity growth than those approaching it through isolated departmental pilots.

MOVING FROM AI DEPLOYMENT TO AI LEADERSHIP

Through the Brand Leadership in the Age of AI workshop, Sutapa wants participants to change how they think about the technology.

"I want participants to move from treating AI as a collection of tools to be deployed towards treating it as an organisational capability that must be governed and led," said Sutapa.

Participants will examine where AI is currently producing meaningful returns, including personalisation, audience insights and predictive analytics, as well as areas where performance may remain weaker, such as generic AI video and paid social creative.

"They should leave with a clear-eyed view of where the real return on investment lies, so they can invest based on evidence rather than hype," said Sutapa.

The workshop will also introduce a practical governance framework that participants can adapt within their organisations.

"Every AI workflow should include clear brand-voice rules, a human-review step and a defined business outcome. This is the same discipline that separates high-performing campaigns from the rest," said Sutapa.

More importantly, she hopes participants will return to their organisations with a mandate to bring different functions together.

"Brand, customer experience, innovation and technology leaders need to be in the same room. AI decisions cannot continue to be made in isolation," said Sutapa.

Trust and accountability will remain central to the conversation.

"Efficiency gains mean very little if they dilute consumer affinity. Organisations need a plan that keeps transparency, human judgment and accountability visible to their customers," said Sutapa.

Rather than rushing to adopt every new platform, Sutapa recommends beginning with a focused and measurable initiative.

"Start small and structured. Pilot one governed AI workflow connected to a genuine brand or customer-experience outcome, measure it honestly and use that proof point to build the internal case for wider, better-led adoption," said Sutapa.

As AI becomes increasingly accessible, the organisations that lead will not necessarily be those that use the most advanced tools. They will be the ones capable of combining technological speed with brand clarity, organisational discipline, human creativity and consumer trust.

We are entering an era where traditional sources of competitive advantage are rapidly eroding. AI is transforming business models, consumer expectations are evolving faster than ever, and brands are increasingly expected to create both commercial and societal value.

Success will no longer come from better advertising alone, but from the ability to integrate brand, technology, innovation, and customer experience into a unified growth system.

This training explores how organizations can leverage AI, reinvent branding, redesign portfolio strategies, and create future-ready businesses that thrive amid disruption.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

The branding masterclass is tailored for professionals looking to master brand strategy and innovation in a dynamic marketplace. This includes marketing and branding heads, CMOs, CEOs, digital strategists, product managers, creative directors, and entrepreneurs. It's particularly valuable for senior executives and business leaders who are responsible for building brand equity, driving brand-led growth, and navigating the complexities of branding in the digital age.

The session is also relevant for those looking to align their brand

... Success will no longer come from better advertising alone, but from the ability to integrate brand, technology, innovation, and customer experience...

with social values, create impactful brand narratives, and implement branding strategies that can scale in a crowded and competitive environment.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Participants will leave with the ability to:
- Understand how AI is reshaping competitive advantage
- Build AI-powered marketing and customer engagement systems
- Future-proof brands against disruption
- Identify opportunities for category creation and market leadership
- Design portfolio strategies that unlock future growth
- Integrate brand, technology, and innovation into a single growth model
- Develop an organizational roadmap for business reinvention
- Lead transformation with confidence in an AI-driven economy

ABOUT SUTAPA BHATTACHARYA

An Economics major and Business Graduate from Wharton, Sutapa is an award-winning Brand Specialist, and recognised marketing and communication veteran of more than 29 years in marketing research, media, strategic communication, advertising, and branding across Asia and the Middle East for local, multinational, and regional clients with previous stints in Nielsen/Kantar (marketing research), JWT, Grey and Leo Burnett. She has spent 22 years in Malaysia, starting with Leo Burnett, as Head of Strategy.

Thereafter, she joined the Malaysian utility giant – Tenaga Nasional as General Manager and Head of Corporate Communication.

In this role, she was instrumental in revitalizing utility-energy company, TNB (Tenaga Nasional). Sutapa launched the Energy Efficiency Campaign, the Sustainability Roadmap and related brand and strategic initiatives – GSparx, e-mobility, smart meter rollout, launch of the Hokita platform, Tenaga Gallery, Energy Night Run, etc., completely new initiatives, contributing to an increase in TNB's brand value by +70% and lifting the brand from rank 24 to 16 among global utility players.

She was also responsible for framing the brand purpose of Better. Brighter and rolling it down across the organization.

As Managing Director with DIA Brands, a regional brand consultancy where she successfully rebranded Malakoff Corporation Berhad, IJM, MISC, MERCY and launched Pacific Senior Living and won the PETRONAS business yet again.

Over the years, she has worked on various categories and major brands – from Finance, F&B, Energy, Real Estate and more.

She has accumulated multiple industry awards and for consecutive years – Effies, Appies, Dragons, Campaign Asia, 4 times Brand Consultancy of the Year, Malaysian Chief Marketing Officer of the Year etc.

Sutapa regularly contributes to various marketing publications, is a known speaker at marketing conferences and conducts regular Brand Planning workshops for the marketing industry. In 2022, she was named Chief Marketing Officer in Malaysia. She is a regular judge at the Effies.

Sutapa is also an Adjunct Professor for Taylor's University and Saito University as well as on the Industry Advisory Panel. And was a Council Member of the 4as She is noted for her deep understanding of human behavior and insight generation that helps to craft the most effective communication strategies driving behavior change and brand relationship building. Her tenure in Tenaga and LB working with Maybank and Petronas provided valuable insights and experience in managing communication with the masses and rural audiences as well stakeholder engagement with Govt and regulators.

In recent years and in her new role, she has explored the impact of AI on branding, weaving it effortlessly into her own projects and consultancies, thereby carving out a new space in the world of advertising and branding. Everyone uses AI in their work nowadays. But making it work for brand leadership and business success is her aspiration for the clients she works for.

LESSONS FROM THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

By SANDEEP JOSEPH

The World Cup has ended, and while we suffer from withdrawal symptoms, and feel that the next installment in 2030 is very far away, there is still, in fact there is always, an opportunity for some learnings.

In the tongue in cheek tradition that can sometimes be extremely painful, where even the tying of a shoelace can result in profound philosophical LinkedIn learnings about dealing with adversity and how loops can be good for management, let's take a look at what transpired in this 104 game gargantuan and longest World Cup ever, to see what marketers and advertisers can learn.

MORE CAN MEAN MORE MOOLAH:

Brands should consider going bigger, to create more excitement and buzz. This year's World Cup was the biggest ever, with 48 countries qualifying. FIFA's bold gamble reversed 96 years of elitism, in a sense. With only 32 teams being the largest number of participants thus far, the new format led to more unpredictability, more matches to watch for audiences, more surprise heroes and villains, and just overall more moolah for FIFA. If you are a marketer, who is stuck in BAU or quests for ROI, do consider how going bigger, placing bigger bets, can help grow your brand.

A VOZINHA WILL RISE:

Let me introduce you to Vozinha. He is the bearded breakout star of this Cup. He did not sign his first professional contract until he was 25 years old. Instead of playing in top-tier European leagues, the journeyman goalkeeper spent years grinding in smaller leagues across Angola, Moldova, Cyprus, Slovakia, and Portugal. He was born Josimar Dias, but earned the nickname "Vozinha" (which translates to "little granny" in Portuguese) from childhood friends who used to tease him for "running back to his grandmother" whenever he lost a street match. As Cape Verde, an island nation of 500,000 people made its debut against the mighty Spain, Vozinha made 7 saves to enable a goalless draw. His instagram following exploded, from less than 30,000 to 29 million in 1 month, and FIFA ensured his mum could come see him play his next game.

When Cape Verde finally bowed out after a courageous display against Argentina, he was friends by then with Lionel Messi and his island nation was expecting billions from tourism.

Brand managers need to find their Vozinhas: undervalued, authentic assets, sometimes with beards, sometimes without, who can help drive interest with authentic human stories and capture the world's imagination.

STAY HAPPY, STAY HAALAND:

Erling Haaland terrorizes defenses in the Premier League, but seems like a fearsome yet bland scoring machine. This World Cup changed all that. Haaland won the social media game, with his goofy personality, cowboy hats, a stuffed "drunk" raccoon in his hand carry luggage, funny facial expressions and sheer joy while his country went deep in his first World Cup, after 28 years of hurt. He gained about 32 million new followers, and became more followed than any Premier

▲ *Levi's Stadium*

▲ *Gillette Stadium*

▶ *Spain is the new goat!*

League team. When asked how Norway would play against France, he shrugged and said "they will probably win anyways". He masked his true drive, put Brazil to the sword, and gave England an almighty scare too. He led his country's Viking chant of "Ro" and the supporters rowing action became the iconic meme and moment of the World Cup.

Marketers, it makes sense to find your brand's Haaland. Upset the conventional with humour and a different lens, and you may end up with unexpected results! Don't be afraid to challenge your cherished icons and traditional methods.

ROLL WITH THE RULES

FIFA is very strict about the usage of its logos, its sponsorships, and tries very hard to prevent brands from hijacking its showpiece event. So it had strict guidelines restricting brands who were not official sponsors. Even though Levi's sponsors stadiums, they were asked to cover their logo. The stadium was temporarily renamed the San Francisco Bay Area stadium, instead of the Levi's stadium.

Cue marketing magic: the brand wrapped up its iconic "batwing" logo, which ironically created

more awareness from the brand, as imagery of the wrapped up yet unmistakable logo spread globally.

Marketers need to create within the guidelines, and use the power of people's curiosity and humour to cut through. Don't talk at consumers, persuade them with personality and engage them to win.

IT'S NOT COMING HOME, IF YOU RETREAT

Finally, the saddest learning if you are an England supporter, is that retreating doesn't drive success. The island nation was leading against the previous champions, and went into a shell after they scored their 55th minute goal. Messi magic and Argentinian resilience shone through, and they lost 2-1 within normal game time.

The pundits pontificated, the newspapers railed against fate and Thomas Tuchel, their coach. But they should have taken a leaf from the book of Spain, the eventual winners, who didn't rest when they were ahead against France, but pushed on to score a second and guarantee success.

Marketers need to not rest on their laurels, or hope their opponents can be contained. It's not over till the referee blows his whistle, and it's critical to keep fighting and trying to gain share instead of merely defending with a passive game.

Energy and enterprise can overcome opponents who may seem to be in the lead.

As this World Cup ends thankfully with the "good guys" of Spain winning, marketers should ponder these lessons, while FIFA plots another entertaining installment.

Sandeep Joseph is the CEO and co-founder of Ampersand Advisory, an independent agency with over 600 awards in creative, media, data and PR. Ampersand Advisory was the APPIES Media Agency of the Decade 2016-2025. He can be reached at sandeep@ampersand-advisory.com

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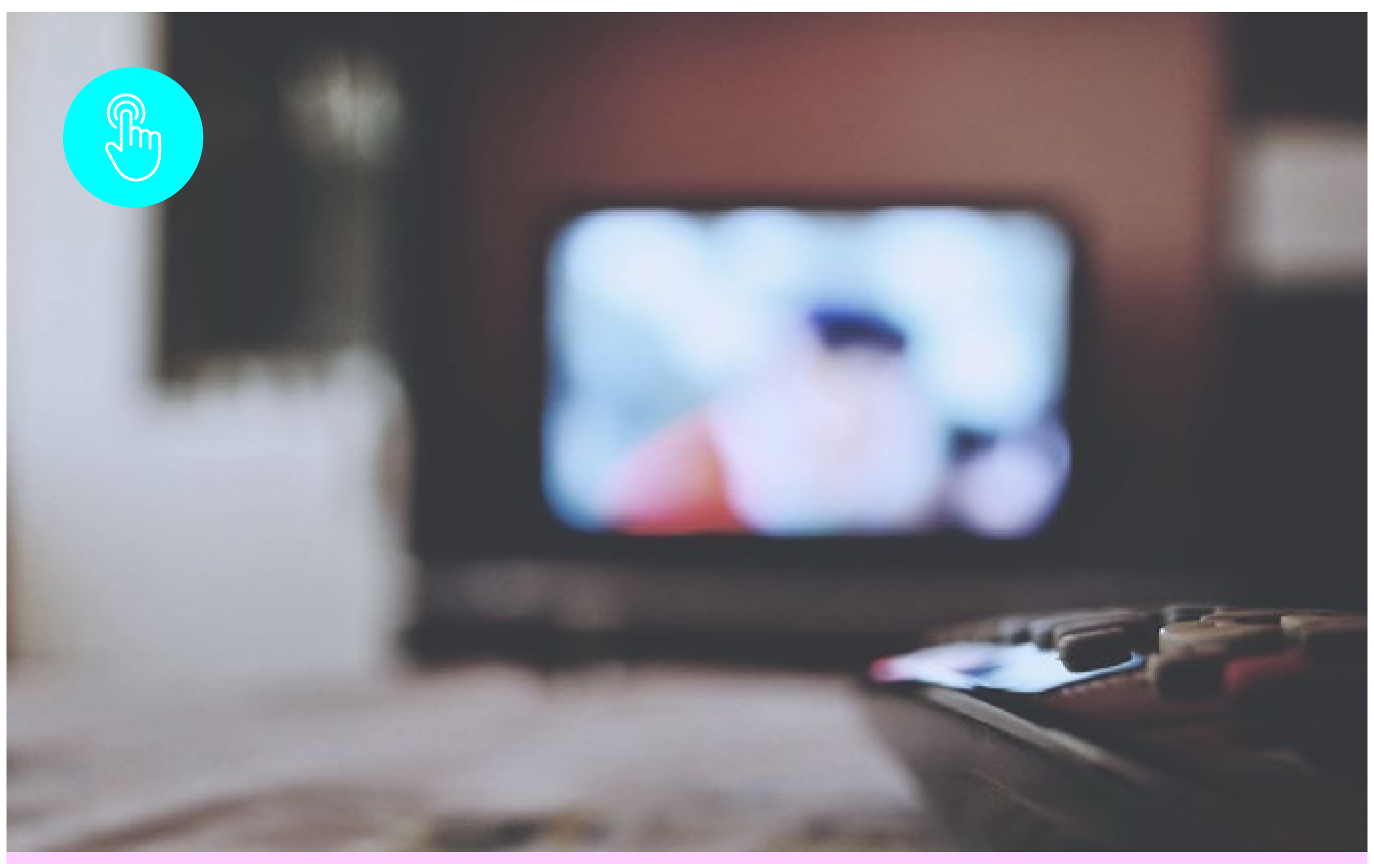

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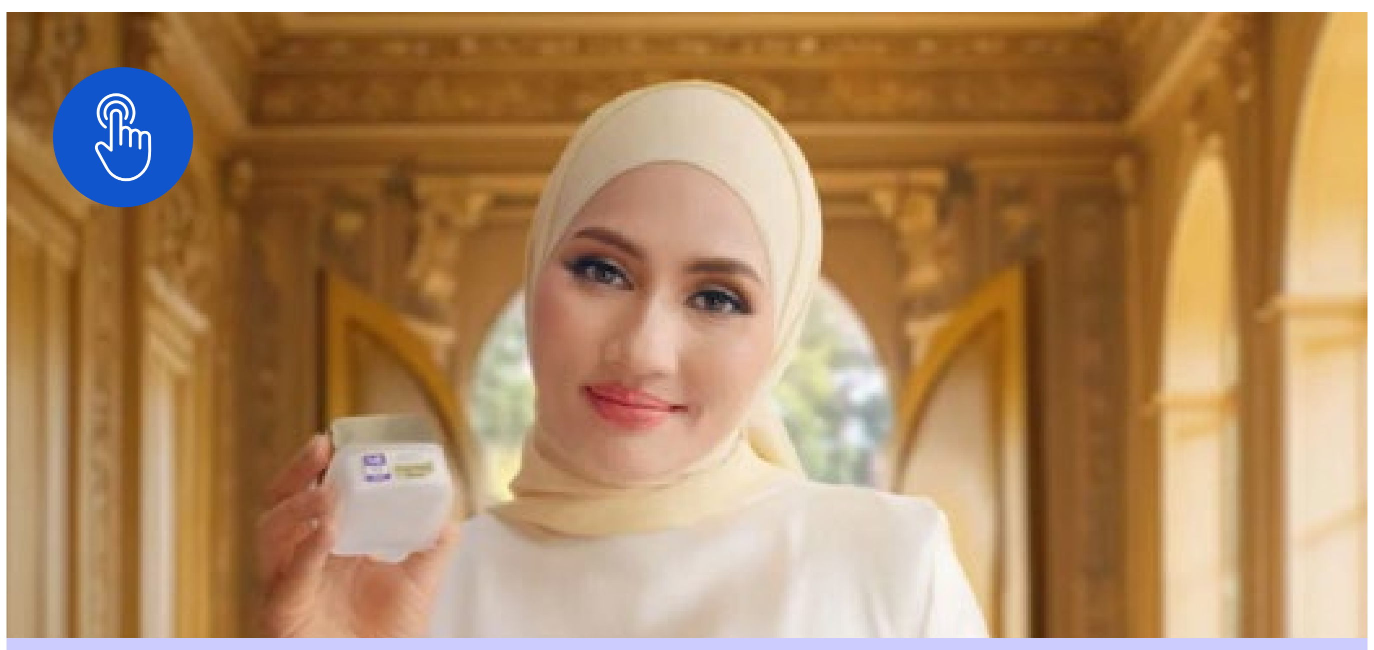

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From a distance...

The Future Does Not Fit in the Containers of the Past.Edition 308.

Rishad Tobaccowala

The impact of many experiences we have, the people we meet and places we visit are often best appreciated from a distance.

A distance of space and/or time that allows for the right perspective, hidden meanings and appropriate reflection that reveal and deepen.

Truths and forecasts shared that initially may feel like delusions and hallucinations but time proves them true and we wish we had acted and listened when we first heard them.

Situations or people we take for granted but realize their importance when they are no longer there.

Carly Simon in "Anticipation" sings that she "*will stay right here because these are the good old days*".

THE JOY OF FINDING LOST THINGS.

The Poet Kate Ryan writes of the "*joy of finding lost things*"

All of us have lost things and sometimes re-found them.

Often not.

A set of keys, a wallet, a passport.

Sometimes a child in a crowd and sometimes a friend after an argument who we make up with.

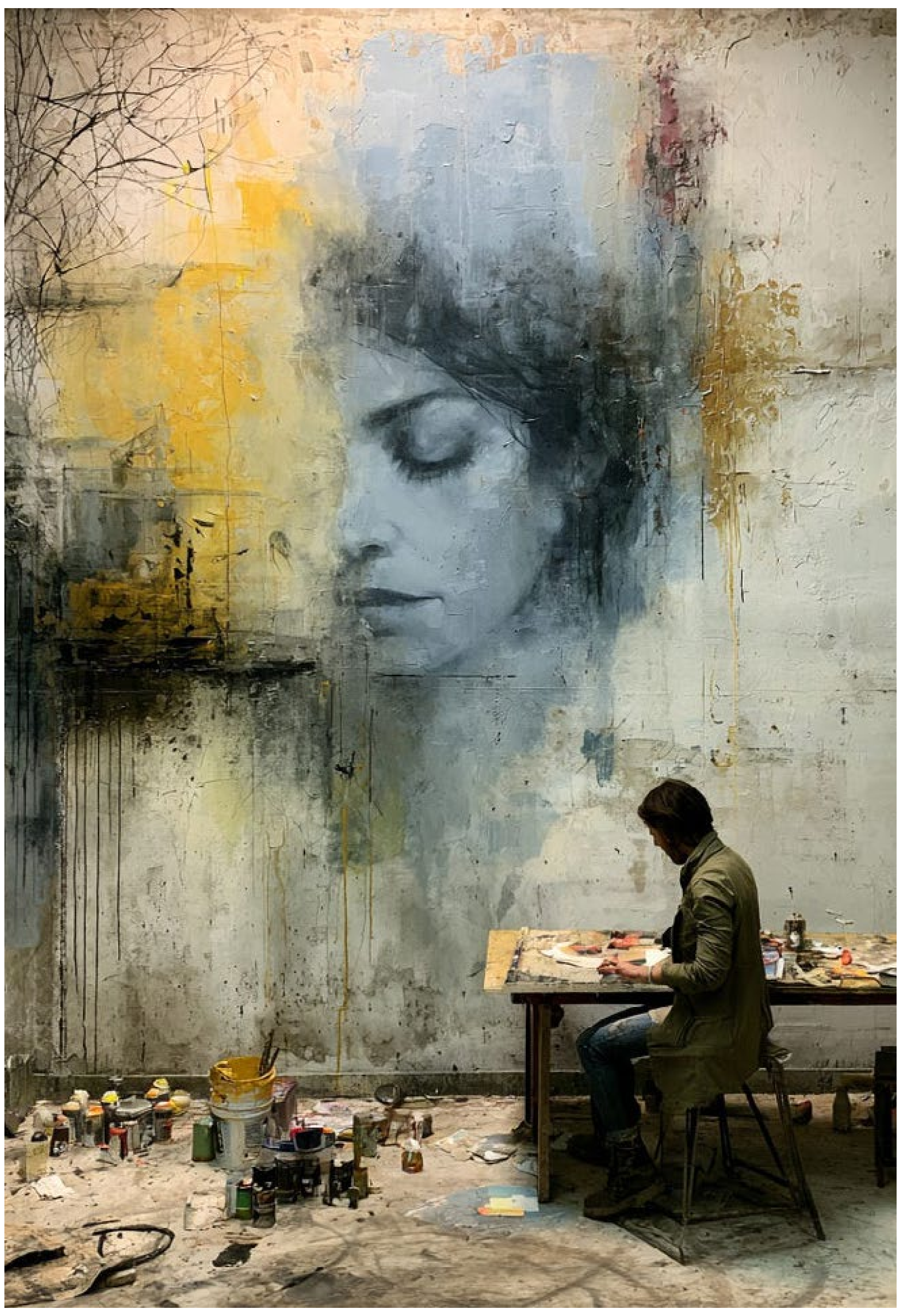
Other times it is our health or a home or a job.

When we lose something, we often feel more pain in its absence than the joy we had in its presence.

Whenever we have the opportunity to recover it, we appreciate it more than ever before.

An exercise from the Stoics is to imagine you have lost something to appreciate what one has.

As the line goes “we do not know what we have until we have lost it”



THE REGRETS OF OMISSION VERSUS THE ERRORS OF COMMISSION.

Study after study of people at the end of their lives find that what gave them the greatest joy were relationships and what they most regretted were ***not things they had done*** but ***what they had not done.***

The errors of omission versus the errors of commission.

Time and distance make people regret the people they did not reach out to share their feelings with, the path less traveled they did not take and that “person” they saw but never talked to.

Here is a single minute from Citizen Kane about “that girl in white” about an opportunity not taken which is one of the most powerful scenes from a movie with many of them:

... Time and distance make people regret the people they did not reach out to share their feelings with, the path less traveled they did not take and that “person” they saw but never talked to...

Often a moment of time is pregnant with possibility and then it passes. Over time one begins to realize that door wide open has now shut close.

The time and opportunity may not come again.

"We forget all too soon the things we thought we could never forget. We forget the loves and the betrayals alike..."

TIME AND "THE ORDINARY DAY".

In the future the ritual of the ordinary day will be special.

Life does not have to be lived forward and understood backward if we decide to pay attention.

Be aware of the fading moments of now.

Look around you. Watch the special quality of light or listen to the hiss of the air duct.

Treasure the conversations and even the repetition and lack of differentiation of day after day.

Because one day it will not be so…

"CARPE DIEM" AS EXPRESSED BY JOAN DIDION.

The late and famed essayist Joan Didion once wrote about the distance we travel from our own selves and how as time moves forward and people, places and hopes come and go people are shaped by what is no more.

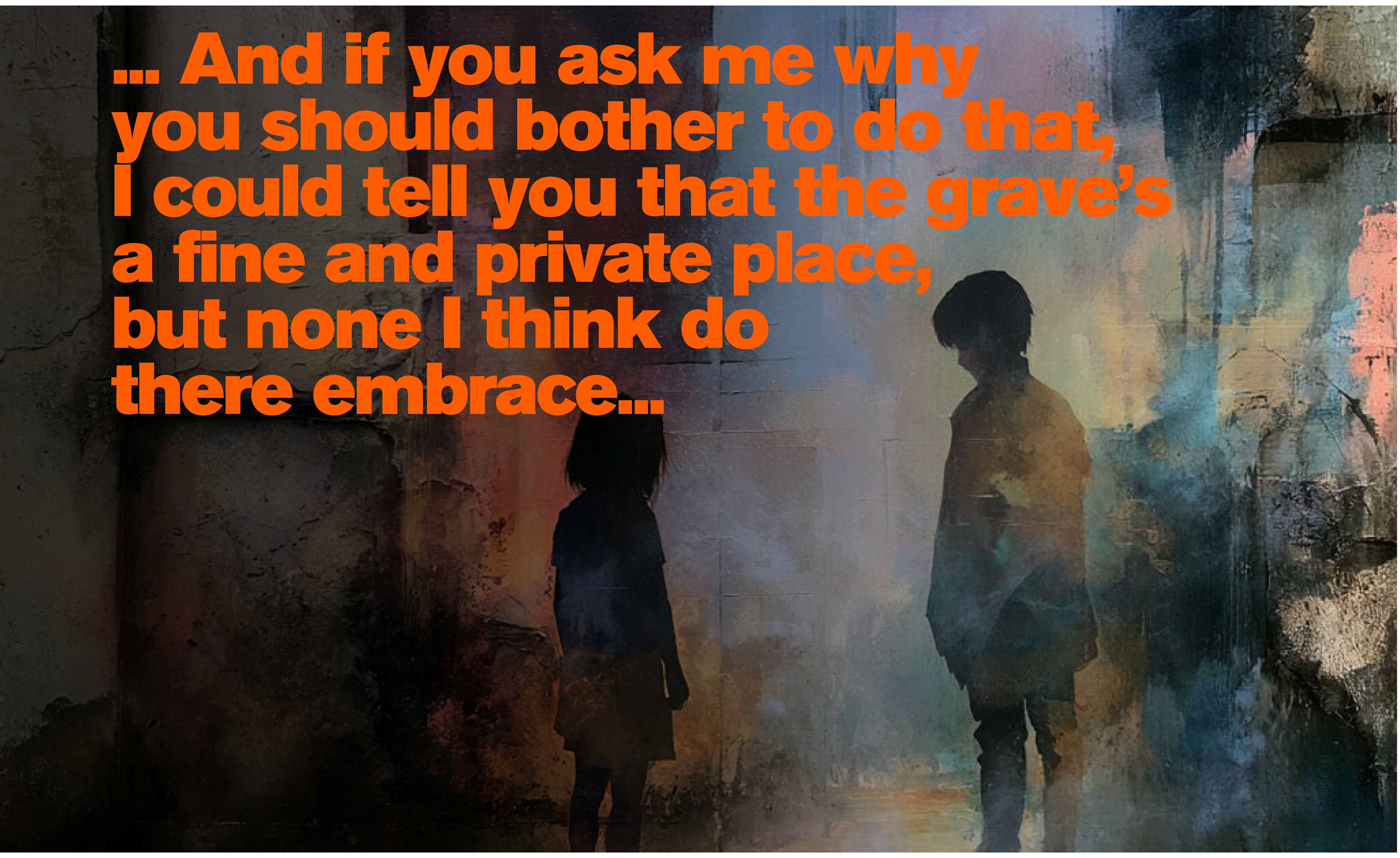
"We are imperfect mortal beings, aware of that mortality even as we push it away, failed by our very complication, so wired that when we mourn our losses we also mourn, for better or for worse, ourselves. As we were. As we are no longer. As we will one day is not at all"

But in the end Didion notes we go on by forging new stories and finding new places and begin forgetting.

"We forget all too soon the things we thought we could never forget. We forget the loves and the betrayals alike, forget what we whispered and what we screamed, forget who we were."

But one must forge ahead…

"Do not whine...Do not complain.



Work harder. Spend more time alone."

And to college graduates a few years ago she made the case for living deeply…

"I'm not telling you to make the world better, because I don't think that progress is necessarily part of the package. I'm just telling you to live in it. Not just to endure it, not just to suffer it, not just to pass through it, but to live in it. To look at it. To try to get the picture. To live recklessly. To take chances. To make your own work and take pride in it. To seize the moment. And if you ask me why you should bother to do that, I could tell you that the grave's a fine and private place, but none I think do there embrace. Nor do they sing there, or write, or argue, or see the tidal bore on the Amazon, or touch their children. And that's what there is to do and get it while you can and good luck at it."

All images created by Rishad Tobaccowala using MidJourney

ONE SINGLE THING.

Among the very best thinkers about AI and its implications is Ethan Mollick.

He writes a free Substack named "One Useful Thing" which is a must read. He is the author of a great book called Co-Intelligence and his new book Co-Existence is available for pre-order

His latest post "The Twilight of the Chatbots" will make you really think…

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CTV IS NO LONGER THE SECOND SCREEN, IT'S THE SCREEN THAT SELLS

By The Malketeer

The living-room television is getting a new job description.

For years, Connected TV (CTV) was treated as a digital extension of traditional television: useful for incremental reach, demographic targeting and catching audiences drifting away from scheduled programming.

New research from dentsu and CTV Scale, supported by YouGov, suggests that definition may already be outdated.

The Indonesian study found consumers exposed to a premium baby diaper campaign on Smart TV were 2.4 times more likely to consider the brand, 2.1 times more likely to have used it in the previous three months and 1.7 times more likely to make it their most-used brand.

That moves CTV beyond the awareness column and closer to the commercial end of the marketing funnel.

The research surveyed 1,000 upper-middle socioeconomic mothers aged 21 to 35 with children under five. All watched internet-delivered content on a Smart TV or Connected TV at least weekly.

Conducted between 30 December 2025 and 8 January

2026, it compared 715 respondents exposed to the anonymised diaper campaign with a control group of 285 who had not seen it.

The most revealing lesson, however, was not simply that the advertisement was seen. It was whether viewers remembered who it was for.

BRANDING CLARITY BECOMES THE MULTIPLIER

Among exposed viewers, only 293 correctly identified the advertiser, while 422 associated the commercial with the wrong brand.

Those who correctly recalled the brand were 3.5 times more likely to consider it, 3.7 times more likely to have used it recently and 3.2 times more likely to regard it as their main diaper brand than viewers who experienced “brand slippage”.

This is a warning for marketers seduced by cinematic storytelling but reluctant to introduce the brand until the closing frame.

An advertisement can be entertaining, emotionally resonant and beautifully produced—and still end up benefiting the category or even a competitor.

On CTV, brand attribution is not a final creative detail. It is fundamental to performance.

The creative tested appeared strong among respondents who correctly recalled it. Some 97% considered it distinctive, 91% found its message clear and 86% described it as appealing. Another 83% expressed interest in learning more about the brand, while 78% said the advertisement increased consideration.

The implication is straightforward: place distinctive brand cues early, repeat them naturally and ensure the product benefit cannot be separated from the advertiser.

THE RETURN OF QUALITY ATTENTION

The study also challenges the assumption that all video impressions are broadly interchangeable.

Smart TV viewing was a daily habit for 77% of respondents, while 82% watched during the 6pm-to-10pm prime-time window. More than 90% streamed over-the-top content through their Smart TVs.

This is not the hurried, thumb-driven attention of a social feed. It is generally a larger-screen, lean-back environment built around movies, music, children’s programming, news and series.

CTV and e-commerce emerged as the two strongest sources of advertising awareness in the diaper category. Smart TV and CTV recorded recall levels of between 46% and 52%, compared with 46% to 49% for e-commerce. TikTok led the social platforms at between 32% and 36%.

Significantly, 67% of respondents considered Smart TV advertising effective and 68% described it as non-intrusive. Yet only 52% reported paying attention to the advertising, leaving marketers with both an opportunity and a warning.

The screen can create favourable conditions for attention. It cannot guarantee that the creative deserves it.

“CTV is not just another line in a media plan,” said Ahmad Ghozali, Research and Analytics Director at dentsu Indonesia.

“It is a signal of how Indonesian audiences actually want to be reached, with something worth their attention.”

A MALAYSIAN LESSON HIDING IN INDONESIAN DATA

The findings are specific to a defined Indonesian audience and one high-frequency product category. They should not be treated as universal proof that every CTV campaign will produce the same uplift.

The study also reports odds ratios, which compare the odds of an outcome between groups. They should not be misread as simple percentage increases or conclusive proof of causation.

Nevertheless, the strategic lesson travels well across Southeast Asia, including Malaysia.

As streaming migrates onto television screens, marketers should stop organising media around the increasingly artificial divide between “television” and “digital”. The more useful distinction is between fleeting exposure and quality attention.

... The smartest brands will stop asking how cheaply they can buy the screen...

CTV combines television’s scale, sound and emotional power with digital delivery and targeting. That makes it particularly valuable for categories requiring explanation, demonstration or reassurance—from financial services and automotive to healthcare, household products and premium food.

It also means CTV should not be populated automatically with advertisements cut down from television or stretched up from social media.

The large screen demands work designed for the large screen: strong opening brand cues, focused benefits, visual demonstration, emotional pacing and a clear next action.

The bigger story is not that CTV is killing television. It is that television is becoming addressable, measurable and increasingly accountable.

The smartest brands will stop asking how cheaply they can buy the screen.

They will ask how effectively they can earn the attention it commands.


No Turning Back
APPIES 2026 AWARDS NIGHT
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Vishnu has the keys: 012-327 0125