

MARKETING

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WEEKENDERTM



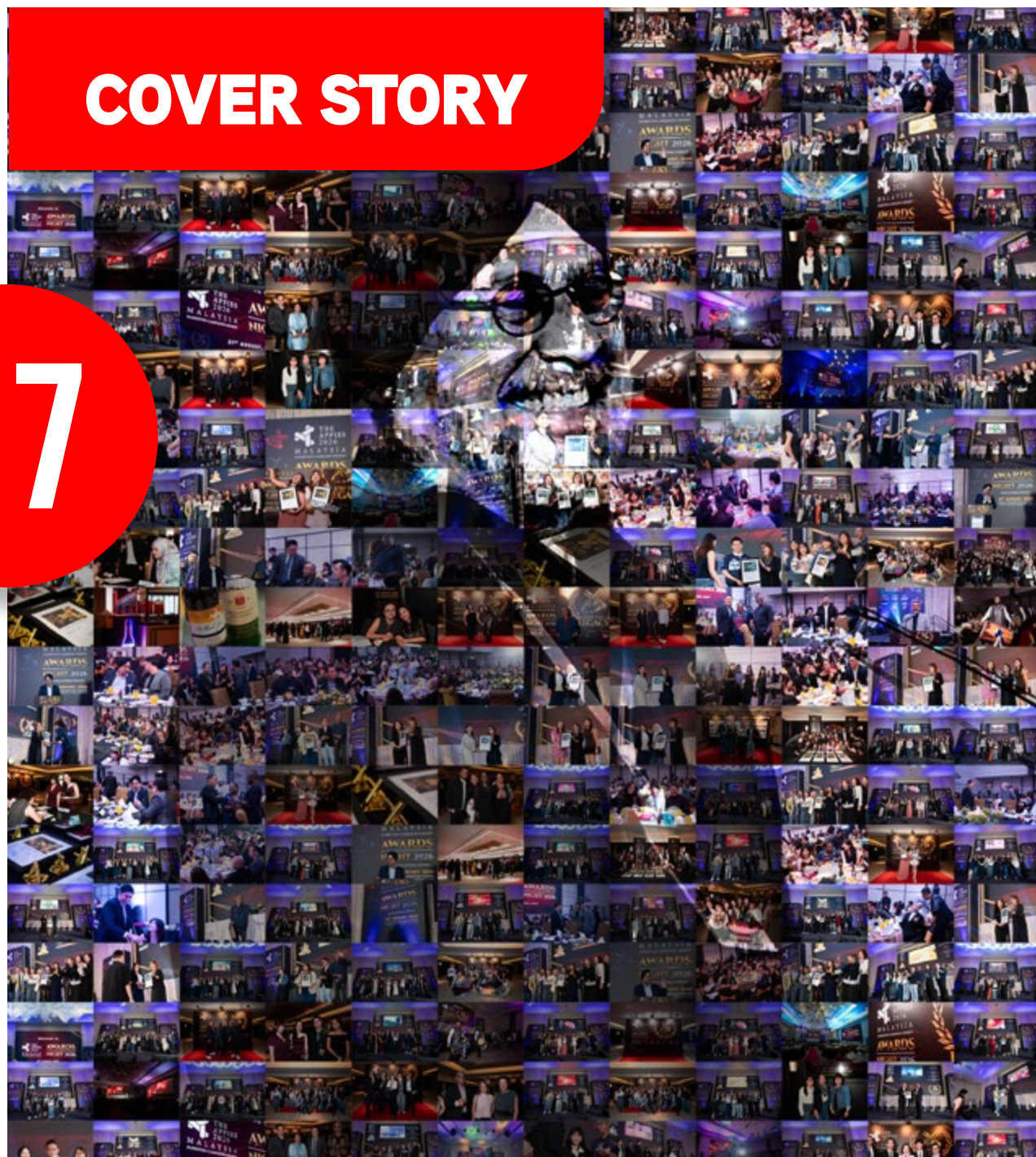
BE APPIE!

WEEKENDER

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**APPIES MALAYSIA
2026:
AFTER 11 YEARS,
I STILL GET A KICK
OUT OF GREAT
MARKETING.**

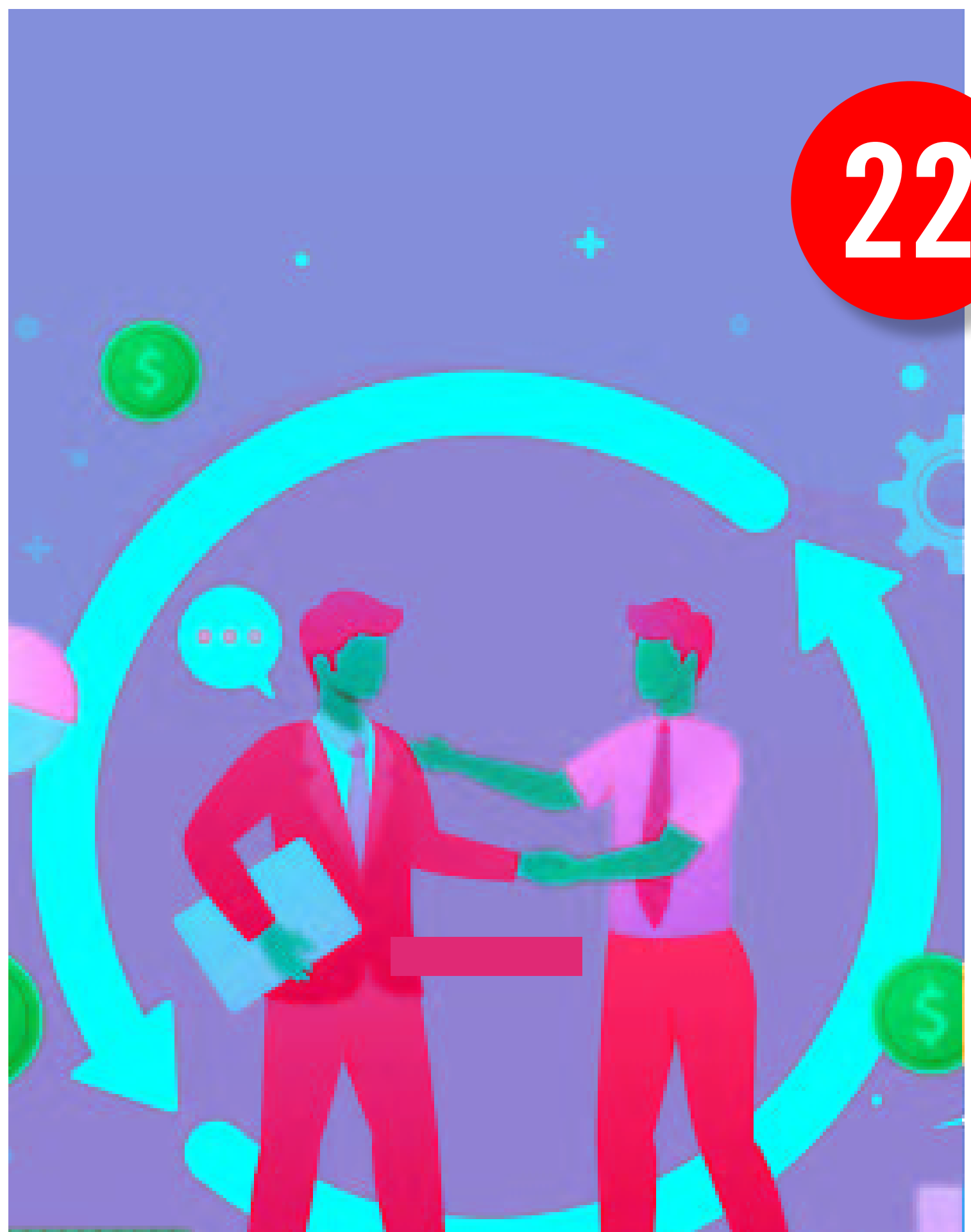
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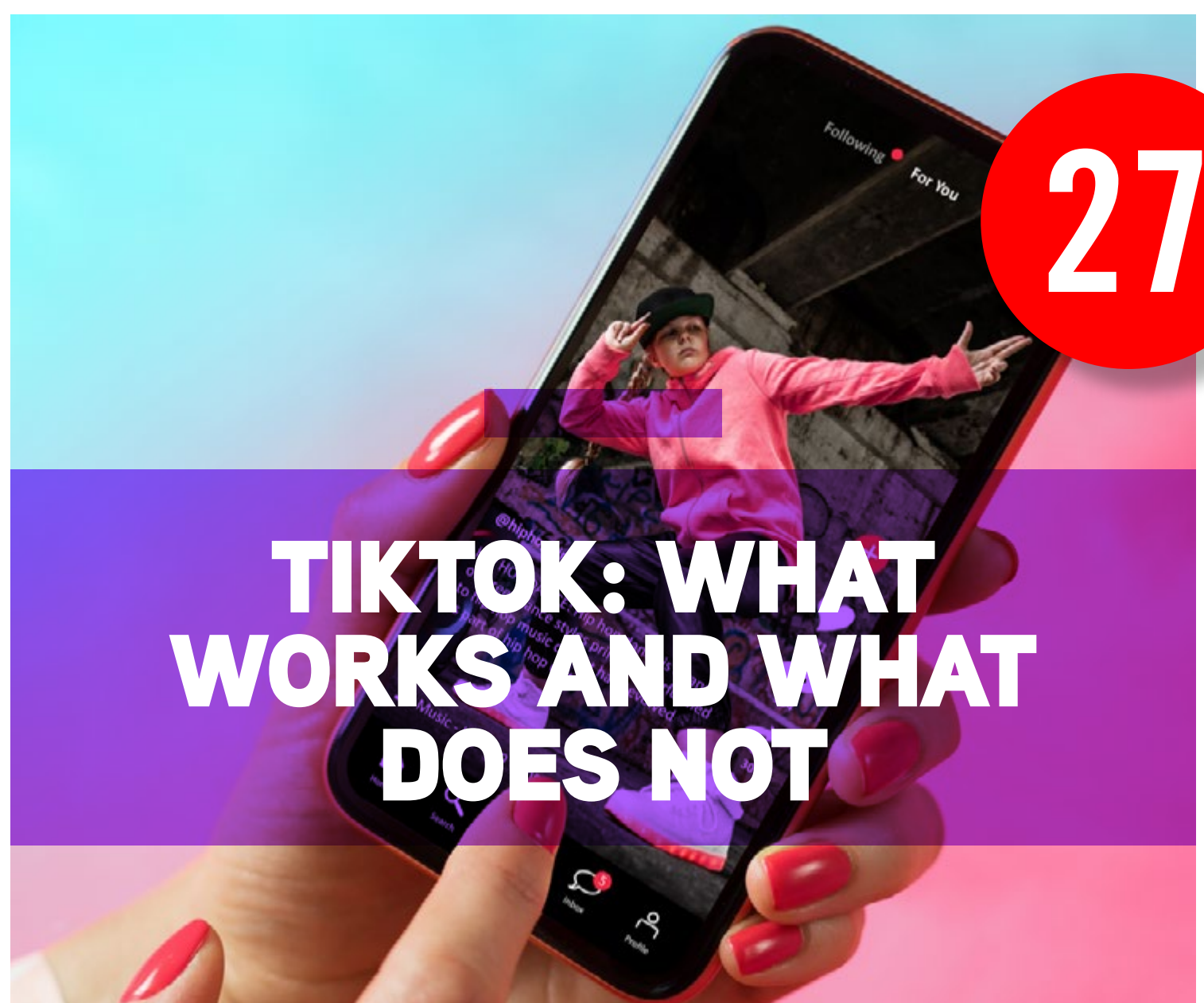
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**TIKTOK: WHAT
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**“TRYING TO MAKE
SOMETHING EFFICIENT
AND TRYING TO
MAKE SOMETHING
EFFECTIVE ARE NOT
THE SAME THING.”**

Rory Sutherland



**“ADVERTISING
ISN'T A SERIOUS
BUSINESS.”**

Neil French



**“NOBODY
BUYS A SOFT
DRINK WHILE
DROWNING.”**

**Ali Rez, arguing that purpose-
led creativity is essential to
commerce, not separate from it.**



**“CONTENT
IS KING, BUT
CONTEXT IS
KING KONG.”**

Josy Paul



**“PEOPLE WHO
COME IN AND
SWING A BAT
AND AXE AROUND
ARE DOOMED TO
FAIL.”**

Reed Collins



WINNING NEW BUSINESS HAS BECOME HARDER.

Almost every agency now arrives with impressive credentials, integrated capabilities, data, technology and an AI story. To stand out, agencies must offer more than a polished presentation. Here are 10 ways to win over clients today.

1. Understand the business

Do not begin with advertising. Understand how the client makes money, where growth is coming from and what is preventing it. The communications brief may not contain the real business problem.

2. Do your homework

Know the category, competitors, customers and cultural forces shaping the market. Clients can immediately tell the difference between genuine preparation and a presentation assembled from online searches.

3. Ask better questions

The quality of an agency's questions often reveals more than the

confidence of its answers. A good question can expose an opportunity the client has not considered.

4. Bring a fresh perspective

Do not simply repeat the brief using more fashionable language. Show the client something new about its customers, brand or business.

5. Be useful before being appointed

Offer an insight, identify an overlooked opportunity or respectfully challenge an assumption.

There is a difference between giving away creative work and demonstrating the value of your thinking.

6. Sell outcomes, not services

Clients are not looking for a list of departments. They want to know what will change. Can you attract new customers, restore relevance, enter a new market or turn attention into sales?

**7. Put the real team in the room**

Do not win the pitch with senior personalities who disappear once the business is secured. Introduce the people who will actually lead the account, solve the problems and deliver the work.

8. Have a point of view

The fear of losing can make agencies agree with everything. But agreement is not partnership. A valuable agency must sometimes be prepared to say, “We do not believe that is the real problem”—and explain why.

9. Make chemistry count

Clients are selecting people they may have to solve difficult problems with under intense pressure. Be confident, candid and collaborative. Chemistry matters, but it must be supported by capability.

10. Create confidence

Ultimately, clients are not simply buying advertising. They are buying confidence: confidence that the agency understands the business, will exercise good judgment and can turn its thinking into results.

AI will make every agency faster and every presentation more polished. It will not necessarily make agencies more valuable.

New business is not won by the agency that says the most. It is won by the agency that understands the client’s problem most clearly.

And finally, don’t kill yourself dealing with idiots.

Time is money.

popculture
**MARKETING
EXPERTS'
CHOICE
MERDEKA
TVC AWARDS 2026**



**SUBMIT YOUR
ENTRY NOW**



APPIES MALAYSIA 2026: AFTER 11 YEARS, I STILL GET A KICK OUT OF GREAT MARKETING.

BY THE HAMMER

I have been around advertising and marketing for a long time. Long enough to have seen agencies rise and disappear, media empires disrupted, technologies arrive with great fanfare and quietly become obsolete, and more marketing buzzwords than I care to remember.



But there is one thing I have never tired of.

A bloody good idea that works.

That, for me, is what APPIES has always been about.

When we brought APPIES to Malaysia 11 years ago, I wanted something different from another awards show where beautifully packaged entries disappeared behind closed doors and emerged weeks later carrying medals.

I wanted the industry to see the work.

More importantly, I wanted us to hear the people behind the work explain themselves.

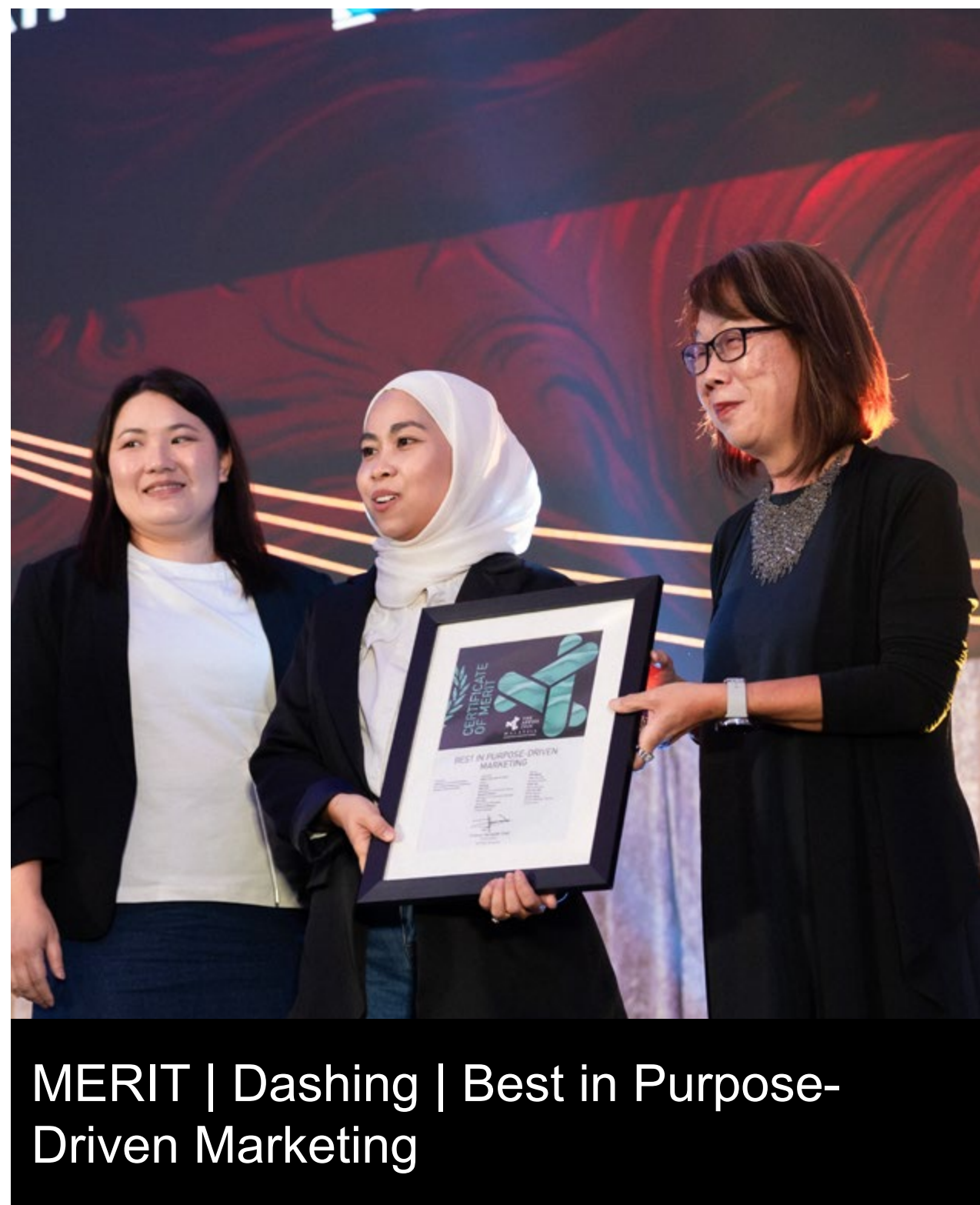
What was the problem? What did you see that everybody else missed?



Why did you take that risk? What went wrong? What changed along the way? And finally, did the idea actually move the business?

That spirit was very much alive at APPIES Malaysia 2026.

On 9 and 10 July at the KLGCC Convention Centre, we watched more than 100 campaigns presented live by over 50 of Malaysia's leading brands, in front of marketers, agency



MERIT | Dashing | Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing

MERIT | Grab | Best in Festive Marketing



MERIT | Wonda Coffee | Best in Experiential & Activation



MERIT | Astro Malaysia | Best in Crisis Response & Brand Recovery
Inilah Kita, Sehati Bersama



MERIT | Ryt Bank | Best in Customer Acquisition

leaders, business decision-makers and around 30 CMOs.

Then on 21 August, we came together again to celebrate the winners.

But standing there that evening, I found myself thinking less about the trophies and more about what the work was telling us about Malaysian marketing in 2026.

MALAYSIAN MARKETING IS GROWING UP

I've watched this market long enough to remember when advertising effectiveness was sometimes treated as the boring cousin of creativity. Make people laugh. Make them cry. Win an award.



BRONZE | Sime Darby Property | Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing



BRONZE | Goodday | Best in Festive Marketing



BRONZE | Wonda Coffee | Best in Omnichannel & Integrated Marketing



BRONZE | 7UP/Mirinda | Best in Food & Beverages



BRONZE | TikTok Shop Malaysia | Best in Festive Marketing



BRONZE | Kia Malaysia | Best in PR & Communications Effectiveness



BRONZE | CelcomDigi | Best in Content & Branded Entertainment



BRONZE | Tune Talk | Best in Customer Acquisition



BRONZE | Kia Malaysia | Best in OOH/DOOH



Dashing | Best in Experiential & Activation



SILVER | Safi Shayla | Best in Omnichannel & Integrated Marketing



SILVER | Safi | Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing



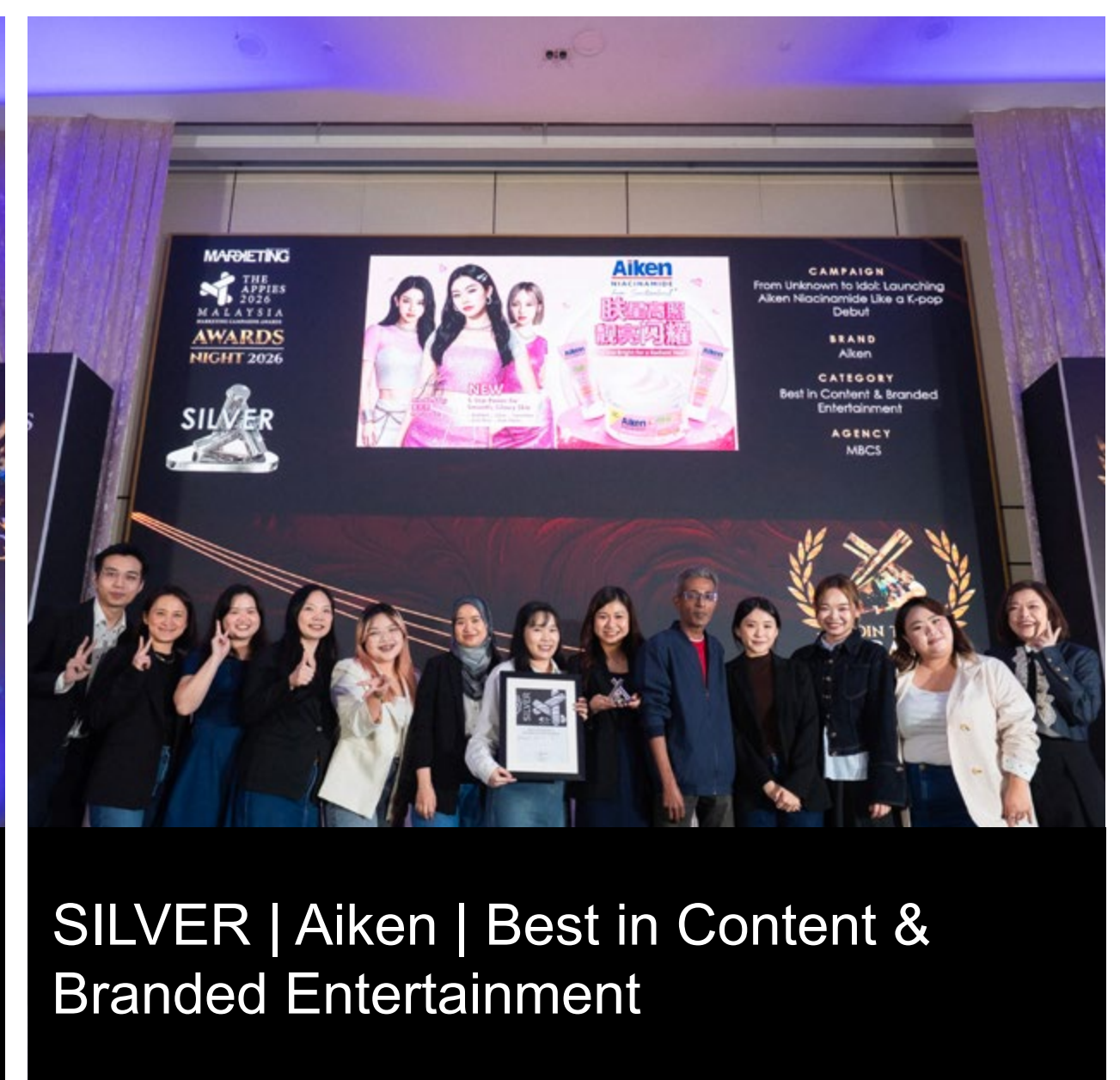
SILVER | CelcomDigi | Best in Gaming, eSports & Gamification



SILVER | Enchanteur | Best in Content & Branded Entertainment



SILVER | Scentify | Best in Festive Marketing



SILVER | Aiken | Best in Content & Branded Entertainment



SILVER | Ryt Bank | Best in Performance Marketing



SILVER | Wonda Coffee | Best in Social



SILVER | Aiken | Best in Community & Cultural Impact



SILVER | 7UP/Mirinda | Best in Innovation

Then somebody from finance would eventually ask what happened to sales.

Those days are disappearing.

The best work I saw at APPIES this year understood that creativity and commercial performance belong in the same conversation.

We saw campaigns tackling financial inclusion, scams, women's health, youth empowerment, telecommunications, entertainment, personal care, food, property and digital banking.

We saw established brands fighting to stay relevant to younger Malaysians.

We saw technology and AI being used not merely because they are fashionable, but because they could solve actual marketing problems.

We saw entertainment become commerce.

We saw media become an experience.

We saw cultural insight translated into business growth.

And perhaps most encouragingly, we saw marketers prepared to stand in front of their peers and explain how they did it.

That takes courage.

THE PART OF APPIES I VALUE THE MOST

Over the years, I have attended and been involved with enough awards programmes to appreciate what trophies can do for careers, agencies and brands.

But the bit I love most about



SILVER | BIG Pharmacy | Best in Healthcare & Wellness



SILVER | Grab / MyTeksi | Best in Hyperlocal / Tribal Marketing



SILVER | Jollibee Malaysia | Best in Food & Beverage

APPIES happens before anybody gets a trophy.

It happens on stage.

A team has a limited amount of time to tell a room full of experienced marketers what it did and why.

Then comes the questioning.

There is nowhere to hide.

You cannot disguise weak thinking with a beautifully edited case film. You have to know your business, your consumer, your strategy and your results.

That is why I have always regarded APPIES as a learning festival disguised as an awards show.

You can spend two days sitting in that room and receive a remarkable education in what is actually happening in Malaysian marketing.

WHAT THE 2026 WORK TOLD ME.

One lesson came through particularly strongly this year.

Relevance has become brutally difficult to maintain.

Consumers move faster than organisations. Culture moves faster than annual marketing plans. Technology moves faster than almost everybody.

Yet some of Malaysia's oldest and most established brands showed that age is not necessarily a disadvantage.

They found new audiences. They entered new conversations. They experimented with entertainment, creators, social platforms, AI and unconventional media.



SILVER | Ryt Bank | Best in Omnichannel Marketing



SILVER | Scentify | Best in Content & Branded Entertainment



SILVER | Tiger Beer | Best in PR & Communications Effectiveness

The common denominator wasn't technology.

It was curiosity.

The strongest marketers were prepared to ask a dangerous question:

What if the way we have always done it isn't the way we should do it next?

After all these years in this business, I still think that is one of the most valuable questions a marketer can ask.

AND THEN, THERE ARE THE PEOPLE..

Campaigns don't create themselves.

Behind every case we saw were marketers, strategists, creatives, media specialists, researchers, technologists, production people and agency partners arguing, persuading, compromising, fighting for budgets and somehow getting the work out of the door.

I know enough about this industry to know how difficult that last part can be.

So when we recognise an APPIES winner, we are not merely recognising an advertisement or campaign.

We are recognising the hundreds of decisions that made it possible.

Some brilliant.

Some brave.

Some probably made at 2am.



CATEGORY	CAMPAIGN	ADVERTISER	BRAND	AGENCY
GOLD				
Best in Hyperlocal / Tribal Marketing	Beyond the Hijab, Solving the Real Cause of Flat Hair	Wipro Unza (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.	Safi Shayla	MBCS
Best in Retail & Shopper Marketing	Pilihan Raya MYDIN	Mydin Mohamed Holdings Berhad	Mydin Mohamed Holdings Berhad	Mydin Mohamed Holdings Berhad
Best in Market Expansion	Sunlight's Eat The Skin	Unilever	Sunlight	Unilever
Best in Telco & Technology	Tune Talk: The Telco That Built an Audience Before Customers	Edelman Malaysia	Tune Talk	Tune Talk
Best in Experiential & Activation	Kisah Benar: Real Stories. Real Threats. Real Protection	CelcomDigi	CelcomDigi	OMD (M) Sdn Bhd
Best in Content & Brand Publishing	The Story That Made a Nation cry: Driving 23% Sales Growth	Etika Group of Companies	7up/Mirinda	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing	Kisah Benar: Turning Scam Awareness into Lived Experience	CelcomDigi	CelcomDigi	OMD (M) Sdn Bhd
Best in Healthcare & Wellness	Stopping That Dot Together: Partnerships and media drive +155% More Breast Cancer Screenings, +189% sales growth	Ace Canning	HOMESOY	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Social	Sunlight's Eat The Skin	Unilever	Sunlight	Unilever
Best in E-Commerce Platforms	TikTok Shop: Home is Where the Huat is	TikTok Shop (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.	TikTok Shop Mall Malaysia	JUNO
Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing	Stop That Dot Together: Media Mobilises Women, Driving 27,557 Cancer Screenings and +189% Sales Growth	Ace Canning	HOMESOY	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Telco & Technology	Hotlink Geng Bijak Berbajet: Turning Smart Spending into a Social Identity	Maxis	Hotlink	Publicis Groupe Malaysia
Best in Innovation	Let's Chat Before You Click. The Ad That Transfrom into a Sales Agent.	CelcomDigi	CelcomDigi	OMD (M) Sdn Bhd
Best in Content & Branded Entertainment	CelcomDigi x Gegar Vaganza: Ada Top Up, Ada Vote Lagi!	CelcomDigi	CelcomDigi	OMD (M) Sdn Bhd
Best in Social	Enchanteur's If Amelie is in Malaysia: Giving Fragrance Quality Main Character Energy	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Enchanteur	TBWA
Best in Digital	From K-Pop Fandom to Purchase: How AIKEN BRIGHT PINK Converted Digital Engagement into Brand and Sales Growth	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Aiken	PHD Media
Best in Retail & Shopper Marketing	BIG Rehab - The Stronger Side	BIG CARING GROUP BHD	BIG Pharmacy	JUNO
Best in AI & Marketing Technology	CelcomDigi Convergence: From Display to Dialogue	CelcomDigi	CelcomDigi	OMD (M) Sdn Bhd
Best in Inclusivity & Cultural Impact	From Harvest to Youth-Led Movement — Driving +14% Growth in East Malaysia	Etika Group of Companies	Pepsi	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Social	Safi Naturi Built for the Feed: Winning Gen Alpha by Working With the Algorithm thru AI	Wipro Unza (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.	Safi	MBCS
Best in Retail & Shopper Marketing	TikTok Shop: Home is Where the Huat is	TikTok Shop (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.	TikTok Shop Mall Malaysia	JUNO
Best in Innovation	Tune Talk: The Telco That Built an Audience Before Customers	Tune Talk	Tune Talk	Edelman Malaysia
SILVER				
Best in Omnichannel & Integrated Marketing	Beyond the Screen: Using Helmet Compression as a Living Media Channel for Safi Shayla	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Safi Shayla	PHD Media
Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing	Biasiswa Siswi Safi: Investing in Young Women's Futures, Winning a New Generation	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Safi	MBCS
Best in Gaming, eSports & Gamification	From Players to Customers	CelcomDigi	CelcomDigi	GrowthOps Pte Ltd
Best in Content & Branded Entertainment	If Amélie Is in Malaysia: How Enchanteur Turned Education into Entertainment	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Enchanteur	PHD Media
Best in Festive Marketing	Scntify turns fragrance into episodic CNY Social Drama - the 'Scent-ertainment' on XiaoHongShu	Wipro Unza Malaysia	Scntify	PHD Media
Best in Content & Branded Entertainment	From Unknown to Idol: Launching Aiken Niacinamide Like a K-pop Debut	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Aiken	MBCS
Best in Performance Marketing	Last to First: Building Malaysia's Most Trusted Digital Bank, in 7 months, one pixel at a time!	YTL Group (Digital Bank)	Ryt Bank	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Social	STAY STRONG AT WONDA MALAM TERLARANG	ETIKA SDN BHD	Wonda Coffee	ASTRO SHAW SDN BHD
Best in Community & Cultural Impact	From Unknown to Idol: Launching Aiken Niacinamide Like a K-pop Debut	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Aiken	MBCS
Best in Innovation	The Story That United A Nation: Driving 23% Sales Growth	Etika Group of Companies	7up/Mirinda	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Healthcare & Wellness	BIG Rehab - The Stronger Side	BIG CARING GROUP BHD	BIG Pharmacy	JUNO
Best in Hyperlocal / Tribal Marketing	GrabMart Satu Order Dua Waktu	MyTeksi Sdn Bhd	Grab	MyTeksi Sdn Bhd
Best in Food & Beverage	Oh My Gravy: Changing the Way Malaysia Enjoys Fried Chicken	Jollibee Malaysia	Jollibee	Yellow Leads
Best in Omnichannel Marketing	Ryt Bank: Full-Funnel Integrated Media launch creates Malaysia's #1 most downloaded app!	YTL Group (Digital Bank)	Ryt Bank	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Content & Branded Entertainment	Scntify turns fragrance into episodic CNY social drama - the 'Scent-ertainment' on XiaoHongShu	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Scntify	PHD Media
Best in Brand Launch & Repositioning	From Bath-Time Toy to Gen Alpha Icon: How Carrie Repositioned Its Elephant to Turn Brand Lapsing into Business Growth	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Carrie Super Protect	PHD Media
Best in PR & Communications Effectiveness	The Banners of Trafford Den	Heineken Malaysia Berhad	Tiger Beer	Sambal Lab
BRONZE				
Best in Experiential & Activation	Beyond Football Sponsorship	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Dashing	TBWA\Kuala Lumpur
Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing	From Land Developer to Nature Custodian	Sime Darby Property Berhad	Sime Darby Property	M+C Saatchi KARSA
Best in Festive Marketing	How Goodday Turned Blockbuster Entertainment into Ramadan's Biggest Food Experience	Etika Group of Companies	Goodday	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Omnichannel & Integrated Marketing	STAY STRONG AT WONDA MALAM TERLARANG	ETIKA SDN BHD	Wonda Coffee	ASTRO SHAW SDN BHD
Best in Food & Beverages	The Story That Made A Nation Cry: Driving 23% Sales Growth	Etika Group of Companies	7up/Mirinda	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Festive Marketing	TikTok Shop: Home is Where the Huat is	TikTok Shop (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.	TikTok Shop Mall Malaysia	JUNO
Best in PR & Communications Effectiveness	Why Kia?	Kia Sales Malaysia	Kia Malaysia	BLWN
Best in Content & Branded Entertainment	The Destiny Network: Turning Fortune Into Entertainment	CelcomDigi Berhad	CelcomDigi	Astro Media Solutions
Best in Customer Acquisition	Tune Talk: The Telco That Built an Audience Before Customers	Tune Talk	Tune Talk	Edelman Malaysia
Best in OOH/DOOH	Why Kia?	Kia Sales Malaysia	Kia Malaysia	BLWN
MERIT				
Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing	Dashing Converted Purchases Into Football Dreams at Tottenham Hotspur, United Kingdom	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Dashing	PHD Media
Best in Festive Marketing	Grab: Sabar's On The Way	MyTeksi Sdn Bhd	Grab	MyTeksi Sdn Bhd
Best in Experiential & Activation	STAY STRONG AT WONDA MALAM TERLARANG	ETIKA SDN BHD	Wonda Coffee	ASTRO SHAW SDN BHD
Best in Revenue Growth / Sales Impact	Dashing Converted Purchases Into Football Dreams at Tottenham Hotspur, United Kingdom	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Dashing	PHD Media
Best in Customer Acquisition	From Zero to 1,100,000 Accounts: Acquisition Engine Unleashes The Fastest Growing Digital Bank!	YTL Group (Digital Bank)	Ryt Bank	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Influencer & Creator Marketing	If Amélie Is in Malaysia: How Enchanteur Turned Education into Entertainment	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Enchanteur	PHD Media
Best in Crisis Response & Brand Recovery	Inilah Kita, Sehati Bersama	Astro Malaysia	Astro Malaysia	Astro Media Solutions
Best in Market Expansion	Beyond the Nursery: Expanding Carrie Junior into Malaysia's Adult Market	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Carrie Junior Talcum	PHD Media
Best in Brand Launch & Repositioning	From Zero to 1,900,000 Installs in just 7 months: Launching The Ryt way!	YTL Group (Digital Bank)	Ryt Bank	Ampersand Advisory
Best in Customer Retention & Loyalty Growth	GrabCoins Rebrand	MyTeksi Sdn Bhd	Grab	MyTeksi Sdn Bhd
Best in Data, Personalisation & Programmatic	Hot Deals is for everyone.	MyTeksi Sdn Bhd	Grab	MyTeksi Sdn Bhd
Best in Non-Food FMCG	Safi Biasiswa Siswi: From My Mother's Brand to Mine: How Safi Won a New Generation of Hijabis	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Safi	MBCS
Best in Revenue Growth / Sales Impact	Scent of Raya - A Cat Tale	Wipro Unza (M) Sdn Bhd	Scntify & Enchanteur	PHD Media
Best in Influencer & Creator Marketing	U Mobile Powers Youth Ambition by Incubating Influencers from the Ground Up	U Mobile Sdn Bhd	U Mobile	Astro Media Solutions
ADVERTISING AGENCY OF THE YEAR	Ampersand Advisory			
MEDIA AGENCY OF THE YEAR	OMD			
MARKETER OF THE YEAR	CelcomDigi.			



AGENCY/MARKETING/CLIENT OF THE YEAR

RIISING STAR/TRAILBLAZING PRESENTER OF THE YEAR

GOLD

SILVER

BRONZE



GOLD | Safi Shayla | Best in Hyperlocal / Tribal Marketing



GOLD | Sunlight | Best in Market Expansion



GOLD | MYDIN | Best in Retail & Shopper Marketing

GOLD | Tune Talk | Best in Telco & Technology



GOLD | CelcomDigi | Best in Experiential & Activation



GOLD | 7UP/Mirinda | Best in Content & Brand Publishing



GOLD | CelcomDigi | Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing



GOLD | HOMESOY | Best in Healthcare & Wellness





Sunlight | Best in Social



GOLD | TikTok Shop Malaysia | Best in E-Commerce Platforms

GOLD | HOMESOY | Best in Purpose-Driven Marketing



GOLD | Hotlink / Maxis | Best in Telco & Technology



GOLD | CelcomDigi | Best in Innovation
GOLD |



GOLD | CelcomDigi | Best in Content & Branded Entertainment



GOLD | Enchanteur | Best in Social



GOLD | BIG Pharmacy | Best in Retail & Shopper Marketing



GOLD | CelcomDigi | Best in AI & Marketing Technology



GOLD | Pepsi | Best in Inclusivity & Cultural Impact



GOLD | Safi Naturi | Best in Social



GOLD | TikTok Shop Malaysia | Best in Retail & Shopper Marketing



GOLD | Tune Talk | Best in Innovation



GOLD | 7UP/Mirinda | Best in Content & Brand Publishing



GOLD | Aiken | Best in Digital



GOLD | TikTok Shop Malaysia | Best in E-Commerce Platforms





MARKETER
OF THE YEAR
| CelcomDigi



ADVERTISING
AGENCY OF
THE YEAR |
Ampersand
Advisory



MEDIA
AGENCY OF
THE YEAR |
OMD



RISING STAR / TRAILBLAZING PRESENTER
OF THE YEAR
Shazwan Zulkifli | Edelman Malaysia



RISING STAR / TRAILBLAZING
PRESENTER OF THE YEAR
Dennis Kam | JUNO



BEST PRESENTER | Ivy Tan - Grab / MyTeksi



BEST PRESENTER UNDER 30 | Rachel Heng - Tune Talk

APPIES MALAYSIA 2026 | Winners and industry teams at Awards Night



ELEVEN YEARS ON.

Eleven years into APPIES Malaysia, I remain fascinated by what happens when you put the industry's work on a stage and ask its creators to defend it.

The platforms have changed.

The consumer has changed.

The technology has certainly changed.

Marketing itself sometimes seems to reinvent its vocabulary every six months. But the fundamentals remain remarkably stubborn.

Understand people.

Find a genuine problem.

Have an insight.

Create something worth noticing.

Execute it brilliantly.

And produce a result.

Everything else is decoration.

To every advertiser, marketer, agency, campaign team and presenter who participated in APPIES Malaysia 2026, thank you.

And to this year's winners, congratulations.

You didn't simply win metal.

You gave the rest of us something to learn from.

After more than three decades of watching this industry, that is still what excites me most.

Great marketing teaches. Great marketing moves people. And great marketing moves business.

Thank you to all our partners, sponsors and friends for making it happen: Zoomer Media, Sime Darby Property, Tiger Beer, Green Zing Enterprise.



[Picture
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Case Studies](#)



APPIES TROPHIES REORDERS

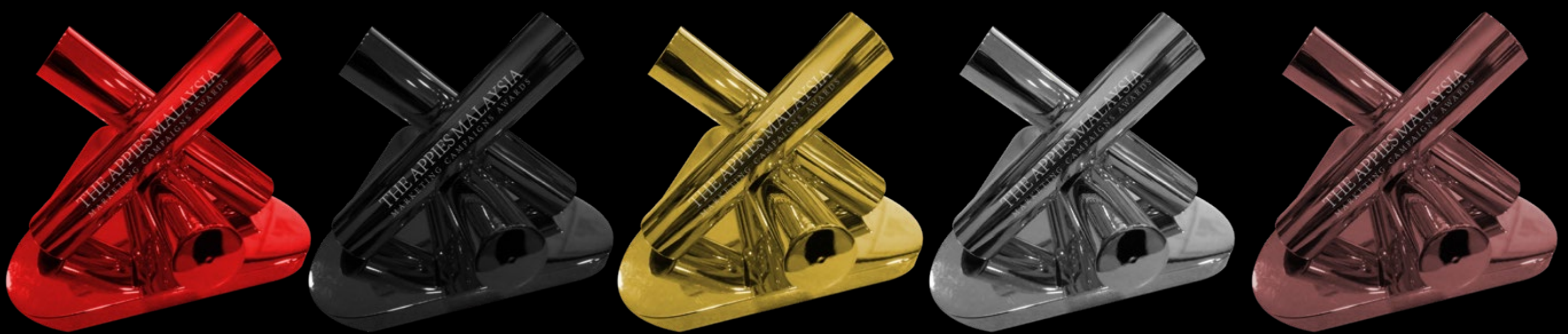
Three bars of solid metal intersect to form an abstract form of the capital letter A, which can be viewed from various viewpoints. The dynamic structure of the trophy alludes to the qualities of a campaign worthiness of an APPIES... impactful, forward-thinking and creatively executed.

They come from China.

There are made from a unique customised mould.

They take three months to make, ship and arrive.

They are priceless.



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before **4th of September, 2026.**

Reorders will arrive around the end of the year, in December.





THE B2B BUYER HAS CHANGED. HAVE YOU?

Something fundamental has shifted in how businesses buy from other businesses, and most marketing departments have not caught up.

Shawn Low, Regional Director for Asia at Green Hat and a speaker at the ASEAN B2B Conference 2027, sees it every day. The familiar pain points are still there: buying committees of eight, ten or twelve people; sales cycles stretching twelve to twenty-four months. But in the past year, he has watched buyer behaviour change.

“Traditionally, buyers would go away as a committee, define their requirements, build their shortlist, and only reach out to vendors roughly two-thirds of the way through the cycle,” he explains. “But now they are reaching out much earlier, and a big reason for that is AI.”



**... do they
trust you?
And does
bold, creative
advertising
help build
that trust, or
undermine it?**

That change matters because buyers now have access to information, comparisons and expert opinions. The discovery process is happening earlier, more independently and often outside the view of sales teams. That means brands are being assessed before an opportunity becomes visible.

As Shawn puts it, “Your brand, your content and your credibility are being judged long before your sales team knows the deal exists.”

Human, Emotional Content Builds Trust. AI Raises the Stakes.

If buyers are researching earlier and deciding before they ever speak to you, one question towers above all others: do they trust you? And does bold, creative advertising help build that trust, or undermine it?

Joel Harrison, co-founder of B2B Marketing, Propolis and the B2B Marketing Awards, opens the conference with this theme. In B2B,

buyers rarely choose vendors on features, price or presentations alone. They choose companies they believe in, people they trust and brands that reduce perceived risk. In many B2B decisions, the person approving a supplier is also putting their own reputation on the line.

Harrison brings evidence into that discussion. Drawing on analysis of shortlisted entries in the 2025 B2B Marketing Awards, judged by more than 100 independent, client-side judges, he has been making a provocative case: consumer-grade entertainment is no longer a “nice to have” in B2B.

It can build distinctive brands, engage buyers and improve commercial performance. His research also challenges the assumption that braver creative work requires bigger budgets. Entertainment-led marketing, he argues, can outperform traditional approaches without demanding a cost premium.

“The best B2B work really happens when commercial depth meets creative bravery, and that takes both the client and the agency coming together to achieve it.”

His view on AI is challenging. As AI pushes the cost of producing content towards zero, the market risks becoming flooded with similar messages, formats and ideas. When everyone can create more, differentiation shifts towards the things that are harder to automate: distinctive positioning, memorable creative ideas, customer insight, human emotion and brand investment.

In other words, AI does not weaken the case for entertaining, brand-led B2B work. It strengthens it.

“Consumer-grade entertainment lets us cut through the AI flood of content — and engage and move B2B’s new buyers as never before,” claims Joel Harrison.

His research into award-winning B2B marketing case studies also found that entertaining creative work is 21% more likely to beat its own

objectives.

The principle echoes one of advertising’s most enduring observations from David Ogilvy: “You cannot bore people into buying your product.”

For B2B marketers, that line feels relevant. A serious purchase does not require dull communication. Complex products do not need to be marketed in complicated ways. And professional audiences do not stop being human because they are making decisions for a company.

Commercial Depth Meets Creative Bravery

Cannes Lions and Spikes Creative B2B jury chair Wendy Walker offers her own formula for the work that wins, at Cannes and in the boardroom.

“The best B2B work really happens when commercial depth meets creative bravery, and that takes both the client and the agency coming together to achieve it.”

That balance is important. Creativity in B2B is not about being loud for the sake. It is about making a brand distinctive, memorable and easier to choose. It is also about helping buyers make sense of complicated decisions in a way that feels clear and relevant.

“Strong B2B brands are not built on rational messaging alone. They are built through ideas that connect, stay with people, and ultimately influence commercial outcomes. Not every B2B company needs a Super Bowl ad, but every B2B company

needs to manage perception.”

As Wendy notes, reputation “is still marketing. It may be informal, but it is shaping demand. I think the real question is not whether you need marketing, but whether you are being intentional about it.”

That intention matters more as the profile of the B2B buyer changes. Millennials now make up 73% of B2B buyers, procurement is more sophisticated, and boards are increasingly risk-aware. Buyers are doing more research independently, relying on digital channels, content, recommendations and brand signals before engaging directly with a supplier.

“Marketing today is all about shaping discovery, building trust, and enabling decision-making in a world where buyers are doing most of their research independently.”

At the heart of all this, however, one truth remains unchanged: B2B marketing is still marketing to people.

“That’s why we constantly emphasise the importance of emotion in marketing, regardless of whether it’s B2B or B2C, because we know that emotion drives connection, recall and familiarity,” adds Wendy Walker.

That is the challenge facing B2B marketers now. Buyers are moving faster, researching earlier and expecting more. AI is increasing the volume of content while making sameness easier to produce. The brands that stand out will combine insight, creativity, credibility and human relevance.

The ASEAN B2B Conference 2027 will bring these conversations together, with industry leaders examining how B2B brands can build trust, create stronger content, embrace creative bravery and respond to modern buying realities for marketers.

Join us on 12 and 13 January 2027 at the KLGCC Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur for two days of B2B strategy, creativity, case studies and practical insights designed to help marketers become more relevant, trusted and commercially effective.

EARLY BIRD SPECIAL

All registrations confirmed before September 30 will be offered special pricing on group booking! HRDC Claimable.

Registrations are now open. Contact Ruby at +603-7726 2588 or ruby@adoimagazine.com. For sponsorship opportunities, contact Vishnu at vishnu@adoimagazine.com.



ONCE UPON A TIME...



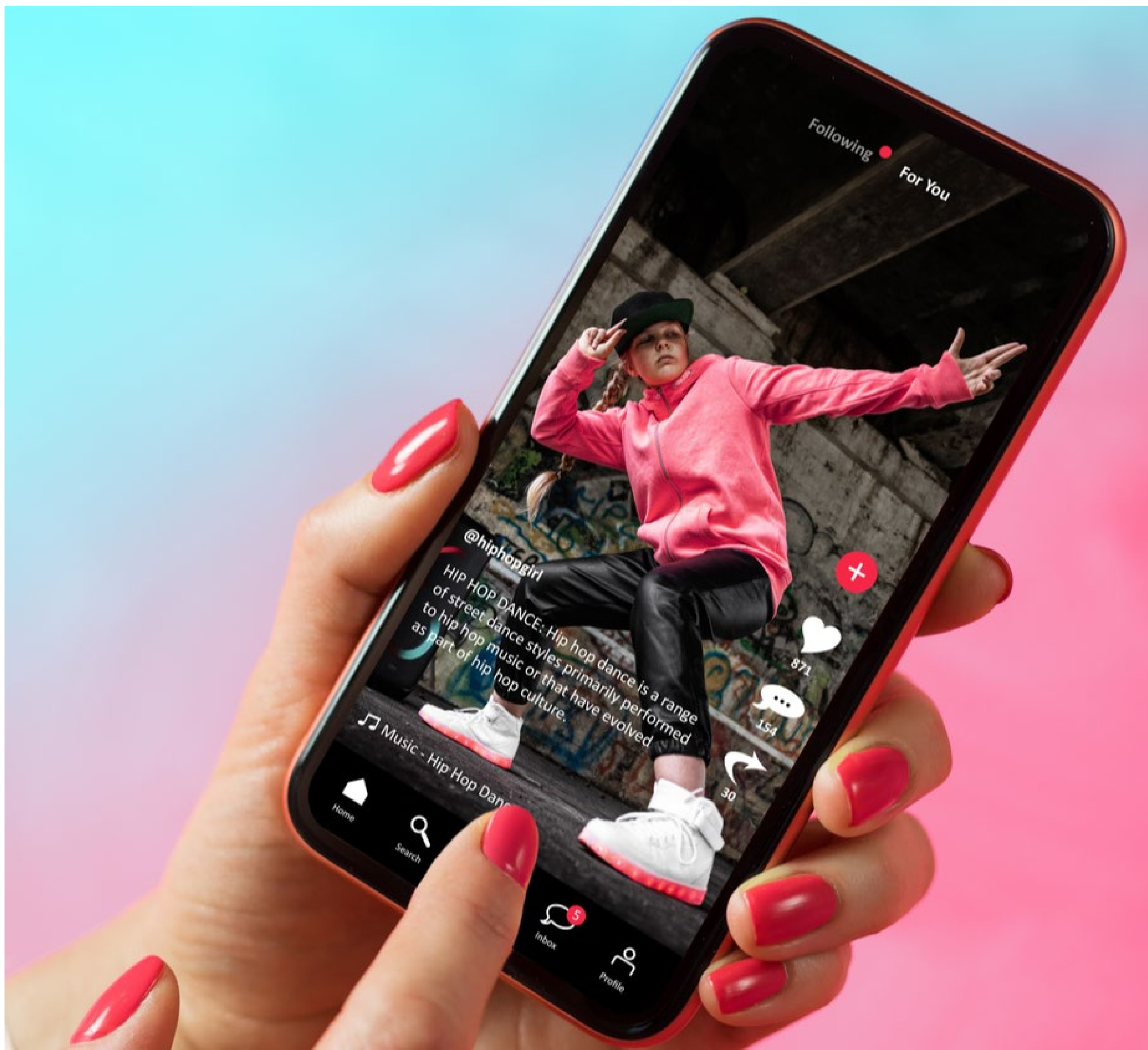
1959: BOZELL begins its Malaysian journey in the form of Grant Advertising. Its corporate journey travels through the forms of Grant, Kenyon & Eckhardt; Kenyon & Eckhardt; Bozell, Jacobs, Kenyon & Eckhardt; and finally Bozell Worldwide.

In the early 60s, Grant Advertising grows to become the biggest agency in the market. One of the early managers, and a great character, was Jimmy McMullen. He first started with Grant in Singapore but transferred to KL after closing the Singapore office due to union activity. Jimmy was an avid motorsports fan and his voice became very well known as a radio commentator at motor races.

The other long-time leader of Bozell was Bob Seymour who arrived in KL early 1976 and did a sterling job of leadership, creativity and innovation by steering Bozell always into the top ranks of industry players.

In 1973, all Grant operations in Asia were bought over by Kenyon & Eckhardt. That company was later merged with Bozell Jacobs. Early in this progression, the Malaysian company had taken on board a significant local equity partner. This meant that, when the Interpublic Group bought over the worldwide Bozell operations, the Malaysian company retained its independence.

Bob, after working with Grant/Bozell companies for some 44 years in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia, retired in 2003. The company ceased operations in 2009. Bob's full name is Robert Arthur Seymour. He passed away in July 2025.



TIKTOK: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOES NOT

Every brand wants to be on TikTok.

The more important question is whether TikTok wants the brand.

Too many marketers still treat the platform as another place to distribute advertising. They crop a television commercial vertically, add trending music and expect young consumers to pay attention.

That is not a TikTok strategy. It is media recycling.

TikTok has its own language, rhythm and culture. Brands that understand this can earn extraordinary attention. Those that do not become another interruption users swipe past.

WHAT WORKS

Start with something worth watching

TikTok recommends placing the hook within the opening six seconds. But a hook is not simply fast editing or somebody saying, “Wait until the end.”

A real hook creates immediate curiosity through a surprising problem, unresolved question, human truth or arresting image.

Attention is not earned by shouting first. It is earned by becoming interesting quickly.

Make people the protagonists

Creators, employees and customers generally feel more natural on TikTok than corporate spokespeople.

Creators should not be treated as inexpensive actors hired to repeat brand language. They understand their audiences, timing and formats. Give them the problem, product and necessary boundaries—then allow them to create.

Show the process

People increasingly want honesty, access and behind-the-scenes reality rather than heavily curated perfection.

Show how the product is made. Demonstrate what it does. Reveal mistakes. Answer difficult questions. Introduce the people behind the business.

Authenticity does not mean poor production. It means removing the distance between the brand and its audience.

Treat comments as creative material

TikTok is a conversation, not a broadcasting tower.

Comments can reveal the next episode, product question, objection or cultural insight. The smartest brands respond with videos and allow their audiences to influence what happens next.

Build formats, not isolated posts

A single viral video is not a strategy.

Recurring characters, continuing stories and useful series give people a reason to return. They also help the brand discover what it can credibly talk about.

WHAT DOES NOT WORK

Repurposed television commercials rarely feel native. Being vertical does not make something TikTok.

Chasing every trend is equally dangerous. By the time a marketing committee approves one, the culture may have moved on. Participate only when the brand can add something distinctive.

Forced slang, fake informality and carefully scripted “spontaneous”



moments also fail. TikTok users do not expect every brand to behave like a teenager. They expect brands to understand the room.

Overcontrolling creators produces the same problem. If every gesture, pause and sentence has been approved, the content may retain the creator's face but lose the creator's voice.

Nor should marketers confuse views with effectiveness. Millions of views may be valuable, but did people remember the brand? Did search, consideration or sales

increase?

Finally, producing more content simply because AI makes it cheaper is not a strategy. The future problem will not be scarcity. It will be an abundance of competent sameness.

TikTok works when brands contribute something people would choose to watch even if it were not advertising.

Do not ask how to make an advertisement look like TikTok. Ask how to make something TikTok considers worth watching.



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DIFFERENTIATION IN THE



AGE OF AI

BY RAJIV LAL

27TH OCTOBER, 2026
KLGCC CONVENTION
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