

MARKETING

ISSUE #475 SEPTEMBER 2026

WEEKENDERTM



**(PROBABLY)
THE MOST
INTEGRATED AGENCY
IN MALAYSIA**



**AMPERSAND
ADVISORY**

business results now!

WEEKENDER

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**MEET THE
MOST INTEGRATED
AGENCY IN
MALAYSIA:
AMPERSAND
ADVISORY**

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**IF AI IS THE DEFAULT,
WHERE IS THE
DIFFERENTIATION?**

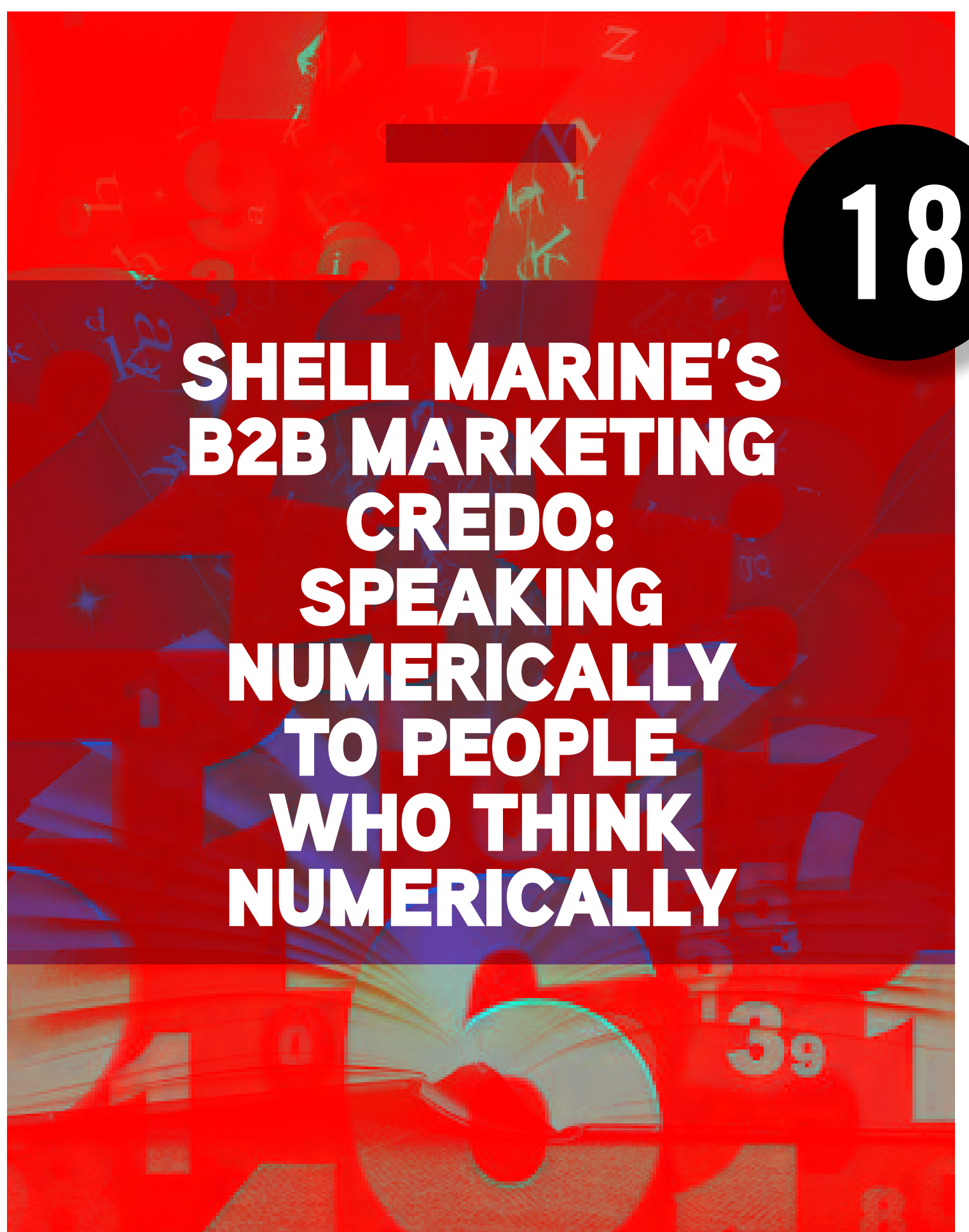
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ARMAGEDDON
IN MALAYSIA**

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**SHELL MARINE'S
B2B MARKETING
CREDO:
SPEAKING
NUMERICALLY
TO PEOPLE
WHO THINK
NUMERICALLY**



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"IF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DOES MORE OF THE SAME FOR LESS, THEREIN LIES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR HUMAN INTELLIGENCE TO DO LESS OF THE SAME FOR MORE."

**TED LIM
CHIEF CREATIVE
CONSULTANT
DIFF CREATIVE
CONSULTANTS**

"DATA TELLS US WHERE THE CUSTOMER IS. MEDIA GETS US THERE. WHAT WE DO WHEN WE ARE FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE CUSTOMER, THAT'S CREATIVE."

"OUR JOB IS TO GET PEOPLE TO STOP, STARE AND SHARE. WE CAN'T DO THAT BY DOING MORE OF THE SAME. BE DIFFERENT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE."



IF AI IS THE DEFAULT, WHERE IS THE DIFFERENTIATION?

Everyone has AI now.

Your competitors have it. Your agency has it. Your interns have it. Soon, your customers' personal AI agents will have it too.

So where is the advantage?

AI can research, analyse, write, design and optimise at astonishing speed. But when everyone is using similar tools, trained on similar information and asking similar questions, we risk producing the same strategies, the same presentations and the same perfectly polished mediocrity.

AI is quickly becoming the floor, not the ceiling.

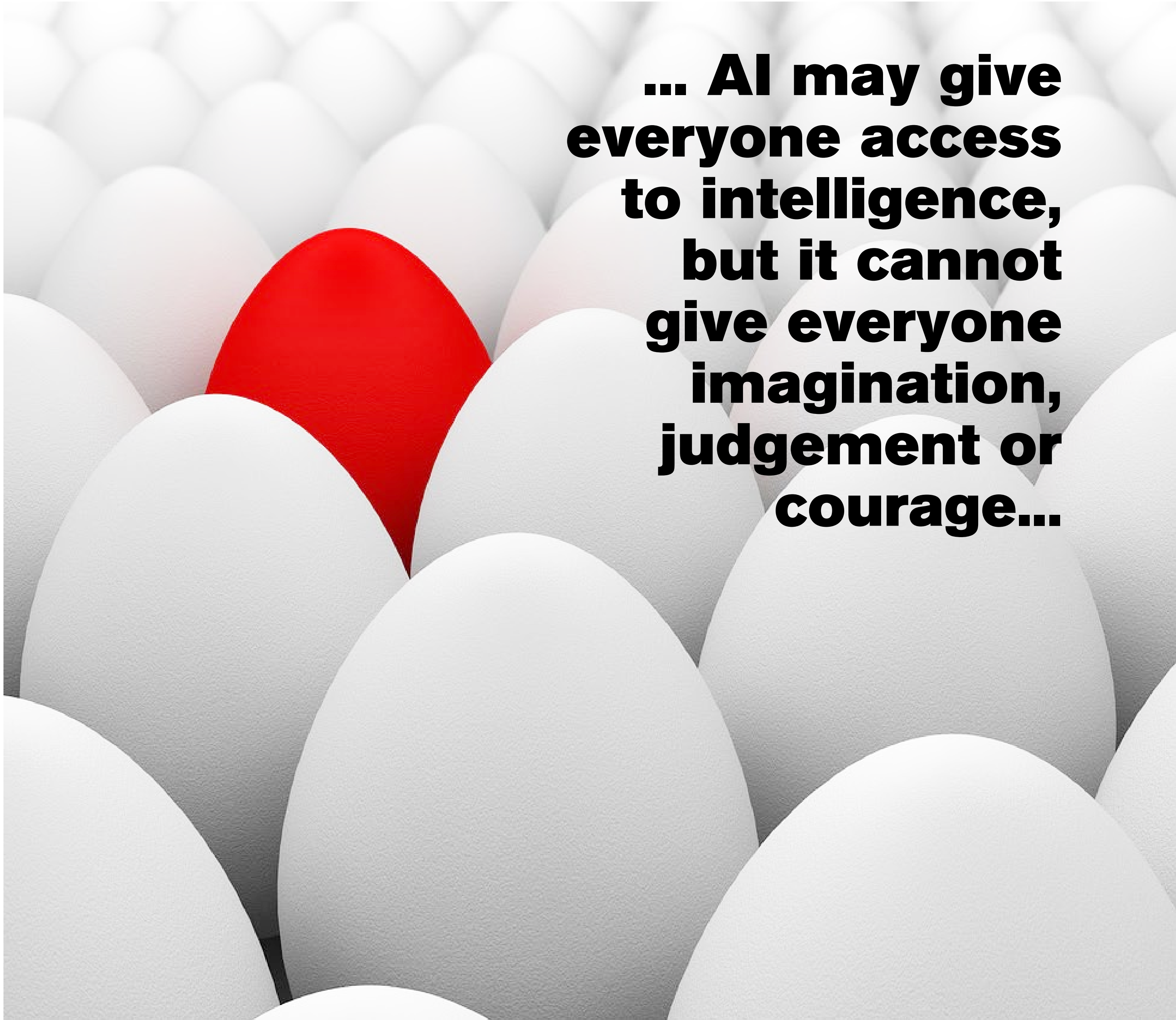
The real competitive advantage will come from what we build above it. The questions nobody else thinks to ask. The connections a machine does not instinctively make.

The courage to challenge a logical answer with a counter-intuitive one.

That is why contrarian thinking matters.

A contrarian is not someone who disagrees merely to appear clever.

A true contrarian immerses deeply, stays curious and



... AI may give everyone access to intelligence, but it cannot give everyone imagination, judgement or courage...

understands the customer well enough to notice what everyone else has missed.

Rajiv Lal understands this territory better than most. He has worked across advertising, data, machine learning, entrepreneurship and consumer behaviour.

He has seen what technology can do at scale, and just as importantly, where it fails.

His central argument is wonderfully uncomfortable: AI may give everyone access to intelligence, but it cannot give everyone imagination, judgement or courage.

Those remain human advantages.

The organisations that win will

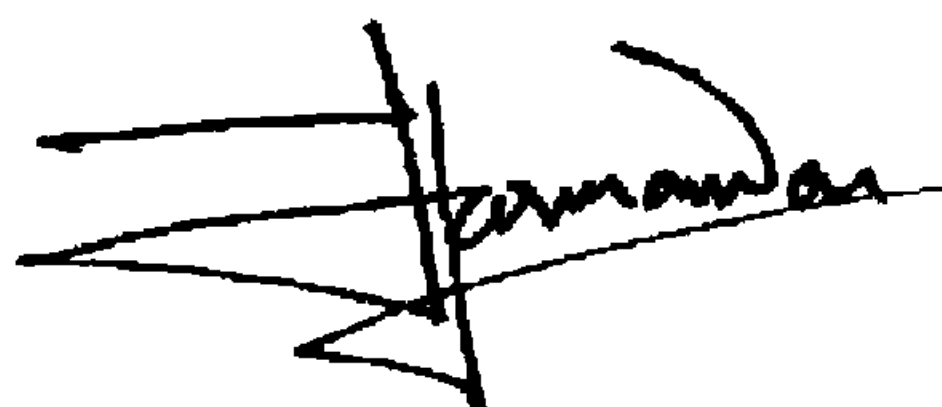
not be those that simply “use AI.”

They will be the ones that ask better questions, uncover counter-intuitive insights and organise their people around outcomes instead of job titles.

On 27 October at KLGCC Convention Centre, Rajiv will lead Differentiation in the Age of AI, a workshop for those who refuse to settle for competent sameness.

Because if AI becomes the default, differentiation becomes the only game left.

THE HAMMER



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2026
DRAGONS
OF ASIA



2026
DRAGONS
OF MALAYSIA



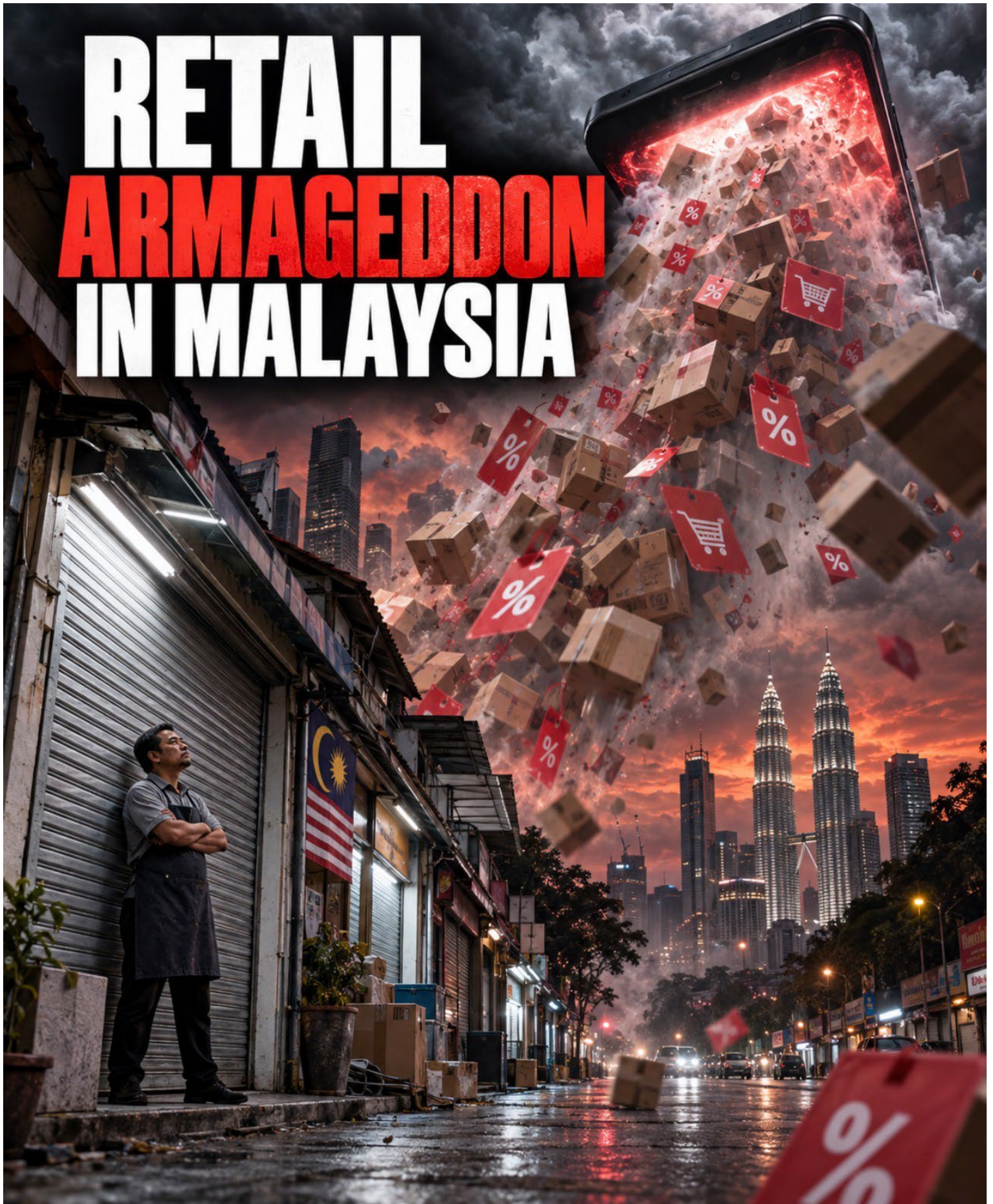
2026
DRAGONS
OF PAKISTAN



2026
DRAGONS
OF SRI LANKA



2026
DRAGONS
OF MENA



Year-end is Malaysia's retail high season.

10.10.

11.11.

12.12.

School holidays.

Christmas.

This is when retailers should feast.

Instead, they are being eaten alive.

China's online giants are flooding Malaysia with discounts, vouchers and subsidised delivery.

They burn billions.

Our retailers bleed.

Padini's nine-month profit fell 17.3%.

Senheng went from profit to a RM1.3 million quarterly loss.

Parkson Malaysia's retail revenue



fell from RM745 million to RM692 million.

And thousands of smaller retailers are suffering silently.

A Malaysian grocer sells 10 kitchen sponges for RM10.80.

Online: RM5.99.

How the hell do you compete?

The local retailer pays rent, salaries, taxes and suppliers.

The foreign platform burns money

until the competition collapses.

This is not competition.

This is commercial extermination.

This year-end will determine more than profits.

It will determine who is still alive in January.

Connect with me on LinkedIn for unvarnished thoughts on marketing.

#SledgehammerSays

MEET THE MOST INTEGRATED AGENCY IN MALAYSIA: AMPERSAND ADVISORY

As we walk into the offices of Ampersand Advisory, in bustling Mid Valley, we are wondering, “Can we make a case that we are going to visit the most integrated agency in Malaysia?”

“We started off as a data-driven media consulting company. The goal was not to execute, but to provide digital-first perspectives. Remember, back in 2017, digital adex was still less than 30% of Malaysian adex...”

We will shortly discover that integration is not simply a list of services, which today every agency claims on its slide deck. Let’s listen to Sandeep Mark Joseph, CEO and co-founder of Ampersand Advisory, who started the agency with Tan Sri Vincent Lee in February 2017, almost 10 years ago.

“We started off as a data-driven media consulting company. The goal was not to execute, but to provide digital-first perspectives. Remember, back in 2017, digital adex was still less than 30% of Malaysian adex, but me and my team had been digital experts for many years prior, and we knew which way the wind was blowing. Our media offering took off faster than we expected, and because clients trusted our strategy they requested us to do both digital and traditional. We also had a small creative unit, because it just felt more complete. That started growing too, especially when we took on social-first mid-sized accounts.

Winning awards for media first, then for creative, at awards competitions judged by clients not agency folk, was proof to ourselves that we must be doing something good. I personally, and some of our senior staff, had begun our careers in the 1990s when various disciplines of advertising were all under one roof. I have always believed in integration, and many of our people see things in a more complete, 360 manner.

If you ask me, the rush, late 1990s onwards, to create media specialization led to big agency groups creating many entities, and chopping up the holistic advertising and media task into many small pieces, claiming that this focus drives better outcomes. Twenty years later, it clearly hasn’t, and hence the current rush to bundle up stuff or simplify offerings. We never had that problem, fortunately, as we only had one P&L account, and we always had an integrated mindset. Our mission has always been “business results, now!”, focused on delivering real benefits and not just media outputs or creative giggles. As we kept delivering results, and sales, for clients, I realized one piece of the puzzle was missing and was significant: Public Relations. That space was going through its own disruption, with the rise of digital publications and new media, like FMT and Malaysiakini, that, in some circles, were considered more credible than many mainstream ones. Hence we launched our PR department, which is the pocket-

THE ULTIMATE ELEVATOR PITCH



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FOUNDING PARTNER & CEO
1337 VENTURES

KELLEE KAM
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
ALLIANCE BANK

NATALIE TAN
PARTNER
5X CAPITAL

ALLIANCE BANK PRESENTS A FILM BY AMPERSAND ADVISORY PRODUCTION
DIRECTED BY SANDEEP JOSEPH ASST. DIRECTOR & ART DIRECTION JEFF NG PRODUCER JANICE KIEW
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DR. AARON SUM SHAYNE KOH STORY BY IVEY TEH CHIEF EDITOR LINA HALIM
EDITORS AMIR RASHID TENGKU UMAR SAHNIZAL ARYANDY HOST FRED A LIU

sized overachiever. Within 5 years we have won Asia-level Overall PR Champion of the Year, and a lot of that is because of integrated efforts with the media and creative teams.”

Integration is actually reflected in

how the agency is structured, how disciplines work together, and—most importantly—what outputs and outcomes are delivered to clients and to the market. Our key team leads: Lee Tse Yoon, COO and

COVER STORY

RECENT MEDIA TITLES	RECENT PR AGENCY TITLES	RECENT CREATIVE AGENCY TITLES	RECENT INTEGRATED TITLES	RECENT ASIA TITLES
Overall Media Usage MARKie 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026	Overall PR Agency Champion of the Year, 2026 PR Awards (Asia)	Overall Creative Idea MARKie 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026	AOTY Overall Agency of the Year 2024, 2025, 2026	Red Dragon, Dragons of Asia (Best in Asia) 2024, 2025
APPIES Media Agency of the Decade 2016-2025	AOTY PR Agency of the Year 2025, Gold	APPIES Advertising Agency of the Year 2026	AOTY Integrated Marketing Agency of the Year 2026, Silver	Engagement Agency of the Year 2025 (A+M)
APPIES Media Agency of the Year 2024, 2025	Campaign PR Agency of the Year 2025, Bronze	Campaign Creative Agency of the Year 2025, Bronze	Best Use of Integrated Media, Gold, MSA Awards 2026	APPIES Media Agency of the Year Asia Pacific 2022
AOTY Media Agency of the Year 2026, Gold	AOTY PR Agency of the Year 2026, Bronze	AOTY Creative Agency of the Year 2026, Silver		

... we are “**Radically Collaborative Specialists**” and explicitly talk about the “**radical teaming**” of creative, PR and media, using data and insight as the common foundation...

head of media, Mandy Chan, Head of Performance, Janice Kiew, Head of Creative Business, and Claudia Low, Creative Director, are very good at working together, and believe in integration deeply.

Some key aspects of how we do it:

1. WE HAVE UNUSUALLY BROAD CAPABILITY UNDER ONE ROOF

We describe our model as combining consulting, creative, media, PR, analytics, data/ MarTech, software, filmmaking

and AI. Its own positioning is telling: a “consultagency” — agency capabilities with consulting wisdom.

That creates a chain that few conventional agency structures can cover end-to-end:

Business problem → Data → Insight → Strategy → Creative → PR → Media → Content → Performance → Analytics → Optimisation

The integration therefore starts before communications and continues after the campaign goes live.

2. INTEGRATION HAPPENS AT THE THINKING STAGE, NOT THE EXECUTION STAGE

Many “integrated” agencies actually operate as several specialist departments sitting underneath the same corporate name. A brief gets passed from strategy to creative, then to media, digital and PR.

Our stated model is different: we are “Radically Collaborative Specialists” and explicitly talk about the “radical teaming” of creative, PR



HomeSoy drives 27K screenings, wins 30 awards

and media, using data and insight as the common foundation.

So the proposition isn't:

Strategy + Creative + Media + PR

It is: **Strategy × Creative × Media × PR × Data**

The multiplication sign matters. Each discipline should build and transmogrify what the others do.

3. THE WORK ITSELF CROSSES TRADITIONAL AGENCY BOUNDARIES

Consider the wide range of some of our most recent winning work.

The HOMESOY “**Stop That Dot Together**” campaign combined cause marketing, media, content and action, reportedly mobilising **27,557 cancer screenings** while generating commercial results. It won the Grand Prix at the 2026 MSA Awards. And this continuing campaign has more than 30 awards to date.

For Etika, integrated work has

crossed entertainment, culture, media and commerce. In 2025, Wonda’s Keluang Man campaign won Gold for Integrated Media and Interactive Storytelling; Pepsi work won across digital and multicultural marketing in East Malaysia.

Goodday KidSTART, which began on a relatively shoestring budget with a memorable phone call from Amy Gan, VP Marketing, Etika, in late 2022, is another sterling case of integration. Touted as Malaysia’s Biggest KidPreneur programme, this effort spans on ground activation, PR, digital ads, an Astro TV series and potentially more. Uncovering over eight thousand talented and passionate kids thus far, and entering its 4th season now, Goodday KidSTART is globally recognized and multi-awarded too.

This suggests integration is occurring **inside individual ideas**, and creating lasting value rather than merely across an agency credentials slide.

COVER STORY



Overall PR Champion of Asia



Ampersand Advisory is Advertising Agency of the Year at Appies 2026

4. MEDIA DOESN'T COME AFTER THE IDEA

This is an important distinction.

The conventional process is:

Creative idea → media plan → amplification

A genuinely integrated process can instead be:

Culture + audience + data + media behaviour → idea → experience → amplification → transaction

Media should kickstart the process with deep audience understanding, and itself can become creative. PR can become

content. Content can become commerce. Data can change the creative execution in real time.

Remember the Wonda Real M Nasir Campaign? Zus started with a cheeky ad, Wonda raised the roof with a simple digital billboard buy, amplified smartly by PR to become a viral sensation that spawned memes, many copycat brands (we're honoured!) and even a legal case! Most importantly, it put a smile on people's faces and drove 8% sales growth that month!

Or take the case of Ryt Bank: Malaysia's fifth and last digital bank to launch, more than a after



That winning integrated feeling

GX Bank. Within 10 months, Ryt had overtaken 4 others, to become Malaysia's #1 digital bank. And the app that's most downloaded in Malaysia! (and not just in the finance category!) Ampersand Advisory managed the media buys, blending traditional with digital.

We even sponsored MFL as possibly the world's first VAR (video assistant referee) sponsor. While in this case we didn't handle creative, which was done by TBWA and then in-house, our integrated experience and performance chops helped us give relevant creative inputs. And we've also provided PR counsel.

5. WE INTEGRATES BUSINESS THINKING WITH COMMUNICATIONS

Perhaps the biggest differentiator is the word **"Advisory."**

We say we drive business results beyond media ROI and describe

our offer as encompassing business consulting, e-commerce, creative, marketing, design, activation and more. That means the starting question can become:

"What business problem are we solving?"

rather than:

"What campaign are we making?"

Once that happens, the answer might be advertising—but it might equally involve PR, an on ground experience, data, technology, commerce, partnerships, content or a combination of all of them. We also have a capable sports marketing team that drives commercial sponsorships for the Malaysian Football League, and we have brought over RM 25 million worth of sponsorships to Malaysia's favourite sport. We do whatever it takes to solve client issues.

Says Sandeep, "We have even made a full length feature film for Alliance Bank, called the Ultimate Elevator Pitch", which made business



Grand Prix winner, MSA Awards



Integrated team

sense to do. The film trended on IQiyi for 3 weeks straight, and has received over 7 million views. We managed creative, filmmaking and consulted on events in this case, and owe a big thank you to Dr Aaron Sum and Shayne Koh from Alliance Bank, for trusting us.

I wouldn't literally claim **"Ampersand is Malaysia's most integrated agency"**. The more defensible claim we would humbly stake, as we cross over 600 awards:

Ampersand Advisory has a compelling claim to being one

of Malaysia's most genuinely integrated agencies—not because we necessarily offer everything, but because everything we offer works together and drives business results now!"

Finally we asked Sandeep, "Why should integration matter to clients?"

He said, "It saves dealing with multiple conflicting agencies. It helps build longer-term assets and brand IPs. It can help manage budgets better, and do what suits the brand best. Most importantly, when done well, it leads to better business results."

MALAYSIAN MEDIA CONFERENCE 2026

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and everyone sells a different
route to results.

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SHELL MARINE'S B2B MARKETING CREDO:

SPEAKING NUMERICALLY TO PEOPLE WHO THINK NUMERICALLY

In B2B marketing, especially in highly technical industries, creativity does not always mean being louder, more provocative or more entertaining.

Sometimes, it means making complex value easier to understand.

For Jade Choong, Global Marketing Communication Manager at Shell, that is at the heart of how Shell Marine communicates with customers across the global shipping industry.

Jade leads marketing communications for Shell Marine, an end-to-end global business providing fuels, lubricants and technical services for a wide range of vessels,

from fishing boats and yachts to tankers, container ships and other large commercial carriers.

Her responsibilities cover everything from brand management and content creation to leadership communications, thought leadership and crisis communications.

"I lead marketing communications for that business," Jade explains. "That means being custodian of the Shell Marine brand, creating assets that regional marketers then implement, producing content for our LinkedIn page, managing leadership comms, and building thought leadership campaigns."

The challenge is that marine



fuels and lubricants are not naturally exciting products to communicate.

They are highly functional, highly technical and often bought by people who are making decisions based on reliability, efficiency, cost and operational performance.

That means B2B marketing has to work differently.

MAKING TECHNICAL VALUE TANGIBLE

For Shell Marine, one of the key ways to differentiate is through technical services.

Jade notes that many core products in the industry can appear similar from one supplier to another. As a result, Shell Marine focuses heavily on demonstrating the value of the services built around those products.

One example is the Shell Marine Sensor Service, which monitors the condition of oil on board a vessel.

“It’s mounted on the vessel and checks the oil every 30 seconds,”

Jade explains.

That kind of real-time monitoring can help identify issues such as water entering the lubricant almost as they happen, rather than relying only on conventional oil samples being sent to a laboratory.

This is where marketing becomes more than messaging.

Shell Marine develops brochures, infographics and case studies that help sales teams explain those services more clearly to customers.

Rather than making aggressive claims, the objective is to show how the solution works and why it matters.

For Jade, the key is making the value proposition visible and understandable.

“Customers may not interact with marine lubricants in the same way they engage with consumer brands, so marketers must work harder to bridge the gap between technical performance and customer understanding.”

That is where thought leadership becomes particularly important.

B2B DOES NOT HAVE TO BE BORING

B2B communication has long carried a reputation for being dry, technical or overly corporate.

Jade sees a different opportunity.

The answer, she argues, is not to force a consumer-style creative approach onto an audience that is looking for evidence, performance and technical credibility.

Instead, marketers need to understand what their customers genuinely care about.

“Engineers and technical buyers respond well to demonstrations, tests, and data, because that’s genuinely what interests them,” Jade says.

“It’s less about being edgy and more about being honest about what your audience actually cares about.”

That principle shapes how Shell Marine approaches events and customer engagement.

Rather than relying only on presentations or promotional claims, the team uses live demonstrations to make technical value more tangible.

At maritime events, for example, visitors can interact directly with oil-condition sensor technology and see how it works.

The goal is not simply to attract attention.

It is to help the customer understand what the technology actually does for them.

“The key question every B2B

marketer must answer is: how do you bring your value proposition to life for customers?” Jade says.

“Get that right, and creativity has a clear purpose—and a powerful role to play.”

SPEAKING NUMERICALLY TO PEOPLE WHO THINK NUMERICALLY

The same philosophy applies when price becomes part of the conversation.

Shell is not always positioned as the cheapest option, so the marketing challenge is not simply to defend a higher upfront price.

It is to demonstrate value over time.

That means shifting the conversation towards total cost of ownership.

“We lean into total cost of ownership,” Jade explains.

“The message becomes about paying a bit more upfront but getting more value over time, whether that’s a vessel running longer or a truck staying on the road instead of coming in for service.”

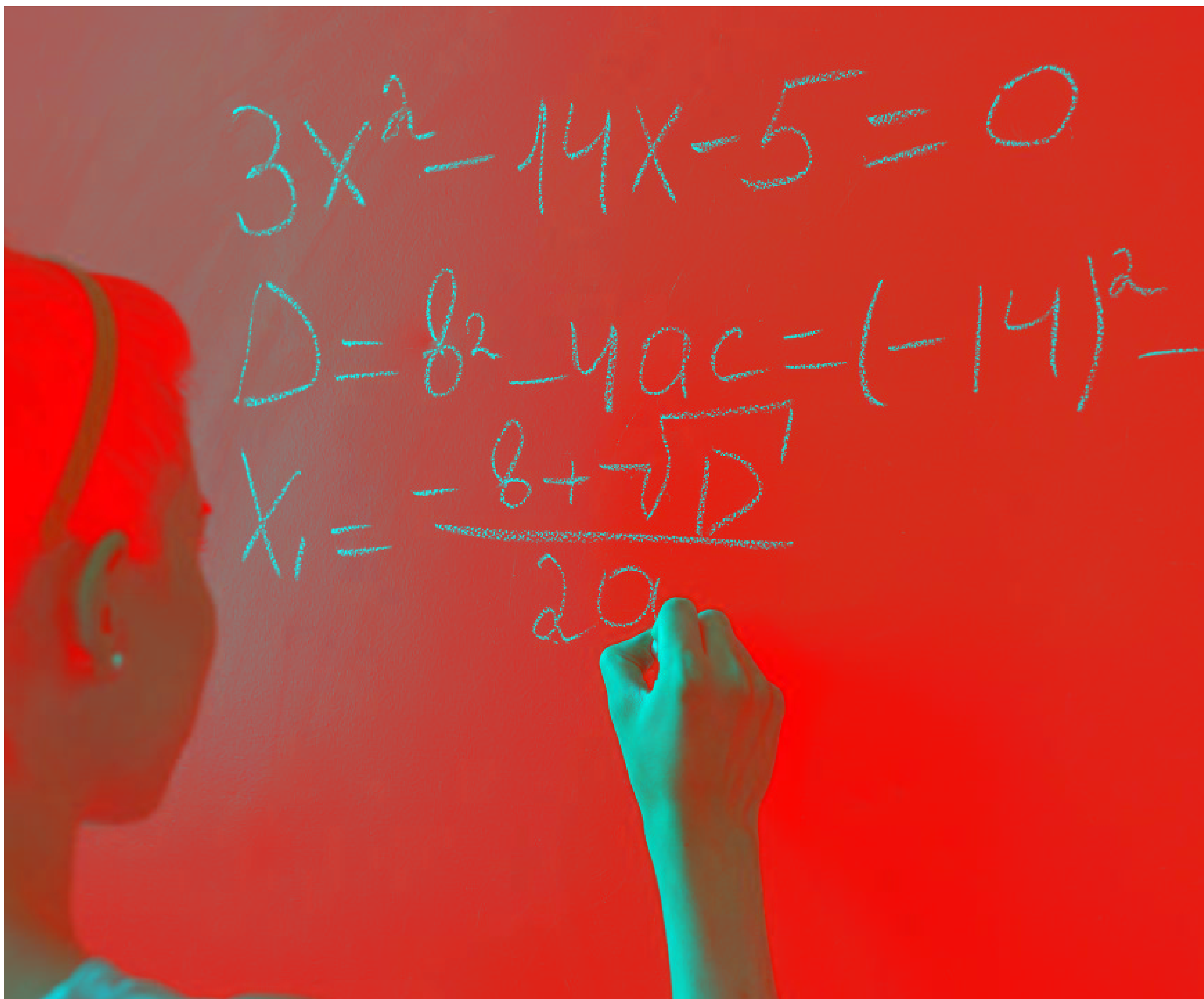
For technical buyers, procurement teams and operational decision-makers, this type of communication is often far more persuasive than broad brand language.

Jade sums it up simply:

“It’s about speaking numerically to people who think numerically.”

That line captures a wider lesson for B2B marketers.

Good marketing does not



always mean simplifying everything into emotional language.

Sometimes, good marketing means understanding how the audience evaluates risk, value and performance, and then communicating in the language that makes sense to them.

GLOBAL MESSAGE, LOCAL EXECUTION

Jade also oversees communications across different markets, which creates another challenge: how do you maintain one global brand narrative while still respecting local behaviours and cultural expectations?

The answer is flexibility.

Shell Marine begins with a central narrative built around the awareness or message it wants to create. Regional marketers then adapt the

execution depending on the market.

In North Asia, for example, WeChat may require a more casual tone, including emojis or animated content. In Turkey, the strategy might involve an in-person technical event followed by drinks.

“The core message stays the same, but the format and tone shift for each market,” Jade explains.

Visual language can also change.

Colours, design styles and communication habits do not carry the same meaning everywhere, so regional teams often consult closely with local sales teams before finalising creative materials.

Those sales teams are closest to the market and often have the clearest understanding of what customers will respond to.

This balance between consistency and localisation is

B2B MARKETING

central to global B2B marketing.

The brand needs to remain recognisable, but the communication still needs to feel relevant to the people receiving it.

CREATIVITY WITH A PURPOSE

Jade's approach to B2B marketing is not built around pushing boundaries for the sake of it.

"We are not trying to push the envelope."

Instead, the focus is on relevance, usefulness and credibility.

For technical B2B brands, that may be the more important form of creativity.

It means turning a complicated service into something a customer can immediately understand.

It means showing value rather than simply describing it.

It means using data when the audience wants data, demonstrations when they want proof, and local adaptation when different markets require different approaches.

Above all, it means respecting the way customers make decisions.

For Shell Marine, marketing is not about making technical products appear less technical.

It is about communicating their technical value more effectively.

And for B2B marketers trying to reach engineers, procurement teams, technical specialists and senior decision-makers, that may be one of the most important lessons of all.

Hear More from Jade Choong at Elevate B2B Conference 2027

Jade Choong will speak at the Elevate B2B Conference 2027 on 12 January 2027 in Kuala Lumpur, sharing practical insights into how technical B2B brands can communicate value, build thought leadership and connect more effectively with decision-makers.

Join leading B2B voices for two days of strategy, creativity, case studies and practical learning at KLGCC Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur, on 12 & 13 January 2027.

Registrations are now open.

For enquiries and group registrations, contact Ruby at **+603-7726 2588** or ruby@adoimagazine.com & For sponsorship Opportunities*, Contact vishnu@adoimagazine.com.



NAPOLEÓN BONAPARTE

Born in Corsica, an island that had just come under French rule.

He betrays the leader of the Corsican independence movement. **Hunted down and facing death**, he flees to France, where he struggles with severe financial difficulties.

Already serving in the army, **he fires cannons on an uprising in Paris** and becomes a hero of the Revolution.

He conquers Italy and invades Egypt. He survives the war, the sinking of his fleet, and the bubonic plague.

He stages a coup and becomes **First Consul**.

After betraying the leaders of the French Revolution, **he survives an assassination attempt involving the first car bomb in history.** 200 people are injured. He escapes unharmed.

He declares himself **Emperor** and conquers much of Europe.

He invades Russia, his former ally, and captures Moscow. **Before abandoning the city**, the Russians set it on fire.

He is defeated at Waterloo, **abdicates, surrenders to the British**, and is exiled to Saint Helena.

He dies of stomach cancer.

1769

1793

1795

1796 - 1799

1799

1800

1804 - 1811

1812

1815

1821

Stomach cancer
DEADLIER THAN
THE DEADLIEST.



We teach you
how to prevent it.





THE DARK SECRETS NO ONE TELLS YOU BEFORE INVESTING IN MEDIA

Stop buying impressions alone. Shamin Logan explains why IRL media and OOH must prove real-world credibility, audience influence, and business outcomes.

by Shamin Logan

Head of Global Brand & Communications
Moving Walls

There is a moment in every media plan when someone has to make the call. The budget is approved, the agency recommendation is on the table, the numbers look convincing, and the audience appears to be right. There is reach, frequency, impressions and a clear rationale for why the plan should work.

So you sign off. I have been that person.

Before I worked on the media side, I was the client sitting across the table from agencies and media owners, responsible for deciding where the money should go. I had the presentations, the audience figures, the recommendations and the reassurance that we were making the right choice. But there was something I did not always have: the full picture. I knew what I was buying, I knew how much it cost,

and I knew the audience I was being told I could reach.

What I did not always know was what my investment was actually changing. Looking back, I realise that this was not necessarily a failure of the agencies or the media owners. It was simply the reality of what measurement could tell us at the time. The uncomfortable truth was that we were often making decisions with an incomplete view of the journey.

For a marketer holding the budget, that distinction matters enormously. Because the objective was never really to buy impressions. It was to influence someone. We wanted people to notice a brand, remember it, consider it, visit a store, choose one product over another and ultimately buy. Yet much of the language of media buying was built around what could be measured most easily: audience, reach, frequency and exposure. These are important measures, but they describe the opportunity to see an advertisement rather than necessarily what happened because someone saw it.

The real value of media sits somewhere between exposure and action, in that space where familiarity can become consideration and consideration can become a decision. That is the part of the journey I wish I had been able to see more clearly when I was on the buying side.

It is also why my perspective on IRL media has changed so

... The real value of media sits somewhere between exposure and action, in that space where familiarity can become consideration and consideration can become a decision...

significantly. Consumers do not experience life in media channels. They experience it in the real world. They leave home, drive to work, walk through malls, stop for coffee, pass stores, meet people and make decisions. IRL media exists within that journey. A billboard on a familiar route, a screen in a shopping environment, a brand presence outside a retail location or an advertisement encountered on the way to a destination can become part of the environment in which a decision is made. It does not necessarily need to interrupt the consumer's life to get attention. It can simply be there when life is happening. That physical presence is one of the reasons I have become such a strong advocate for IRL media. It has the ability to meet consumers in the context of their everyday lives, often much closer to the places, behaviours and moments that ultimately matter to a brand.

“As a buyer, I did not need more impressions. I needed to know whether the media was building credibility and influencing choice.”

But being an advocate for IRL media does not mean asking marketers to believe in it blindly. In fact, I believe it means asking the medium to prove more. For years, Out of Home has understandably been measured through visibility: how many people passed the site, how many impressions were delivered and what reach the network could generate. Those measures have played an important role in establishing the scale and value of OOH, but they largely tell us that an opportunity to see existed. They do not necessarily tell us what that opportunity influenced.

“As a buyer, I did not need more impressions. I needed to know whether the media was building credibility and influencing choice.”

That is where I believe one of the biggest secrets in media buying sits: an impression is not an outcome. As a buyer, I could receive a beautifully presented number telling me that millions of people could have seen my campaign. What I really wanted to know, however, was whether those people did something differently because they saw it. Did they visit the store? Did more people visit than would otherwise have done? Did the campaign reach audiences that other channels were not reaching? Did exposure move someone closer to a purchase? Did it contribute to the commercial result the brand was trying to achieve? More fundamentally, did the presence of the brand build the credibility and familiarity that can make a consumer more comfortable choosing it when the moment came?

Those were the questions I wish I had been able to answer then. The agency understood the media landscape. I understood my brand and my budget. We were both trying to make the right decision, but there were things neither of us could always see clearly because the measurement simply was not there. That experience has stayed with me because being the person responsible for a budget changes the way you think about media. You are not simply buying space, screens, impressions or reach. You are investing in the possibility of an outcome. You want to know whether the money you have been entrusted with is creating value, and you want

evidence that allows you to make the next decision with greater confidence than the last one.

Today, that picture is beginning to change. Audience intelligence, location, movement, insights, exposure and real-world outcomes can increasingly be brought together to give marketers a clearer understanding of what happens beyond the impression. For someone who has been the buyer, that is not simply a technological advancement. It is a shift in confidence.

Measurement should not exist simply to make the person selling the media more convincing; it should exist to make the person buying it more certain. That distinction is important because better measurement does not mean every brand should suddenly spend more on OOH. It means brands can understand where IRL media genuinely creates an advantage and where it fits within the broader consumer journey.

Every brand has a different consumer, a different category and a different path to purchase. There are different moments when influence matters and different places where a brand needs to show up. The smartest media investment is therefore not necessarily the one that delivers the biggest audience. It is the one that has the greatest ability to influence the outcome that matters to the business. That is a much more useful conversation for a marketer than simply asking which medium can deliver the most impressions. It moves the discussion from buying

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exposure to understanding influence, and from relying on assumptions to making decisions with evidence.

There is another dimension to IRL media that I think deserves more attention: credibility. There is a difference between encountering a brand in the physical world and seeing another message disappear in a digital feed. A brand that consistently shows up in the places where people live, move and spend can become part of the environment itself. Its presence can signal confidence, familiarity and relevance. It can create a sense that a brand belongs in the world around us. That does not mean every billboard creates credibility, nor that physical presence automatically translates into preference. But when the right message reaches the right audience in the right context, IRL media has the ability to contribute to something that is harder to build through exposure alone: a brand that feels present, established and familiar.



That is ultimately why I have become an advocate for IRL media. Not because I believe every brand should buy more of it, but because I believe brands should be able to understand exactly why they are buying it. When I was the buyer, I did not need another person telling me that a medium was effective. I needed evidence that helped me make the decision for myself. I needed to know where it was working, who it was influencing and what role it was playing in the journey towards choice. Today, we have a greater opportunity to answer those questions, and that should change the way we approach the medium.

The real secret is not that the media does not work. It is that for too long, we have been better at proving that people could see advertising than proving what happened because they did. We have measured visibility because visibility was easier to measure. But the world does not stop at the impression. People continue moving, shopping, considering, comparing and choosing. IRL media lives within

that real-world journey, and its value should be understood within it.

For me, this is where the conversation becomes much bigger than Out of Home. It is about giving the person holding the budget the confidence that I once wished I had. It is about moving from being told what media can deliver to understanding what it actually contributes. It is about recognising that credibility, influence and choice are ultimately more meaningful than an impression on its own.

I may no longer be sitting on the buying side of the table, but I have not forgotten what it felt like to be there. And perhaps that is the reason I believe so strongly in what Out Of Home as an advertising medium can become. We have always known that it can be seen. We now have the opportunity to understand how being seen can build credibility, influence choice and create value.

The next generation of media buying should not simply tell brands that their advertising was seen. It should help them understand whether it made a difference for their business.

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