

# The B2B Creative Growth Report

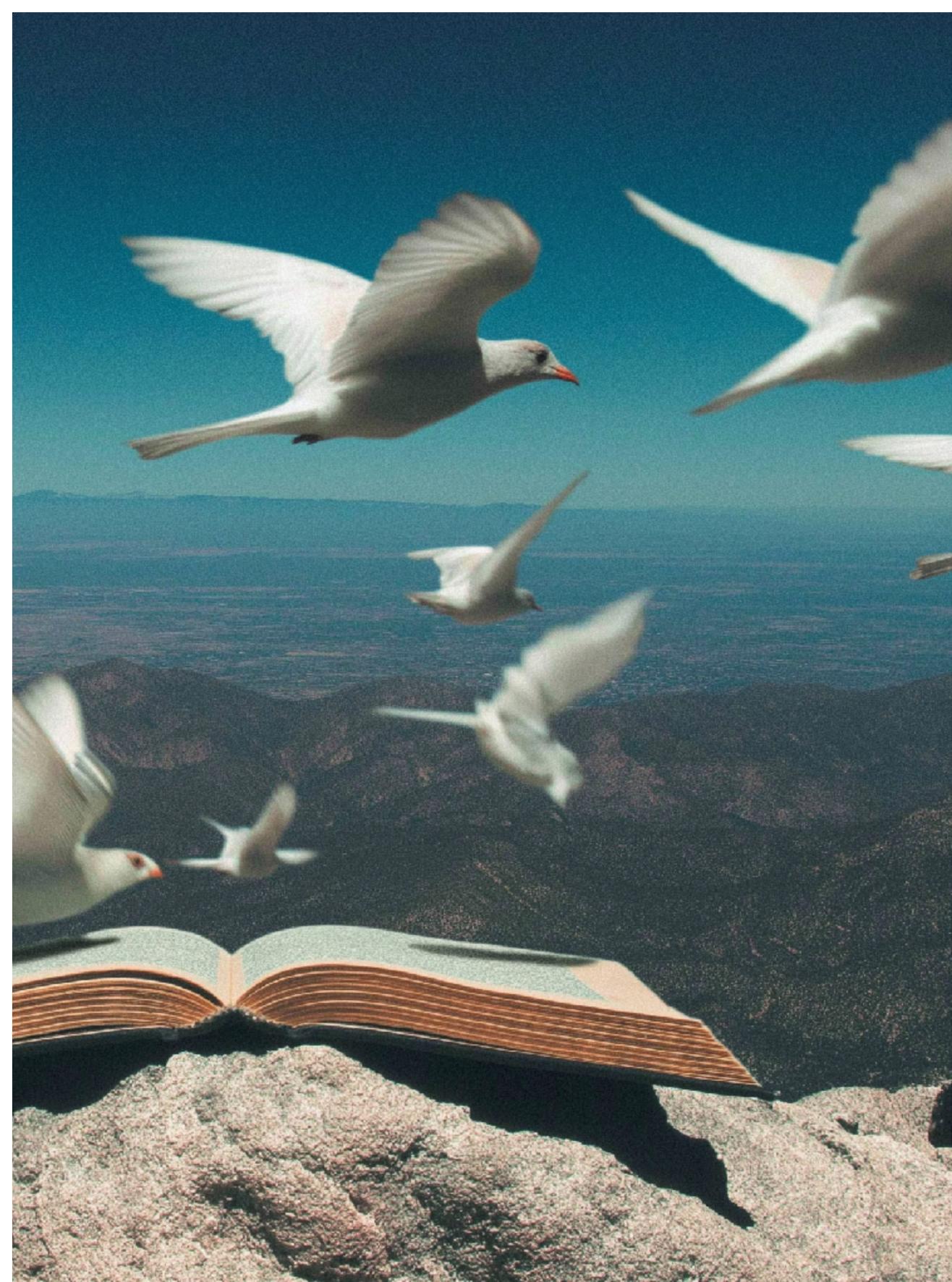


How Emotion, Distinctiveness and Consistency unlock one the biggest growth opportunity in B2B.

# Emotion isn't the soft stuff. It's the growth engine.

B2B stands for business to business. But in reality, it's human to human. Somewhere along the way, we forgot. In the pursuit of logic, we turned off what makes us human – emotion. Now, science proves what instinct has been shouting all along: growth is emotional. So here's our manifesto for a new kind of B2B. Whatever you do, don't be boring.

# The Creative Growth Gap



## Why logic alone won't move markets

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For decades, B2B has been obsessed with performance – not progress. We've optimized funnels, automated journeys, and measured everything that moves, except what actually makes business people move; emotions. In the process, we've created an attention economy without attention, and a category defined more by efficiency than effectiveness.

But when creativity leaves the room, growth leaves with it. LinkedIn's B2B Institute have shown that 75% of all B2B advertising is ineffective, failing to generate any long-term growth. The reason? It's not a lack of strategy, it's a lack of human feeling.

Creativity isn't the opposite of logic; it's what gives logic life. Brands that invest in emotional storytelling, consistent brand codes, and do it over time don't just win attention – they win business effects. This is what we call The Creative Growth Gap: the widening distance between the brands that feel something and the brands that don't.

And the evidence is clear – closing that gap is one of the single biggest growth opportunities in B2B today.

# The Facts Behind the Gap

What the data says about creativity, emotion, and growth in B2B.

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75% of B2B advertising doesn't work.

According to LinkedIn's B2B Institute, three out of four B2B ads fail to generate any **long-term growth**. They score one star or less on emotional response — meaning they're invisible in memory, no matter how much media you buy.

Emotion fuels effectiveness.

Emotional B2B campaigns deliver **6x higher brand lift** and **20% stronger recall** than rational ones. Across categories, campaigns that evoke positive emotion are **10x more effective** at driving long-term growth. Because feeling drives remembering and remembering drives results.

Distinctiveness cut through low attention.

85% of digital ads receive **less than 2.5 seconds** of active attention. Codifying visual, sonic, and tonal cues ensures your brand is recognized even when it's barely seen. In complex B2B environments, these fluent codes act as shortcuts — helping buyers recognize, trust, and choose faster.

Consistency compounds creativity.

Brands that stay creatively consistent over time achieve up to **6x higher profit growth** than those that don't. Consistency in idea, tone, and brand codes amplifies both memory and margin. Because repetition isn't routine — it's how creativity compounds.

Emotion lasts longer  
than impressions.

# Why emotion works

## The human shortcut to growth.

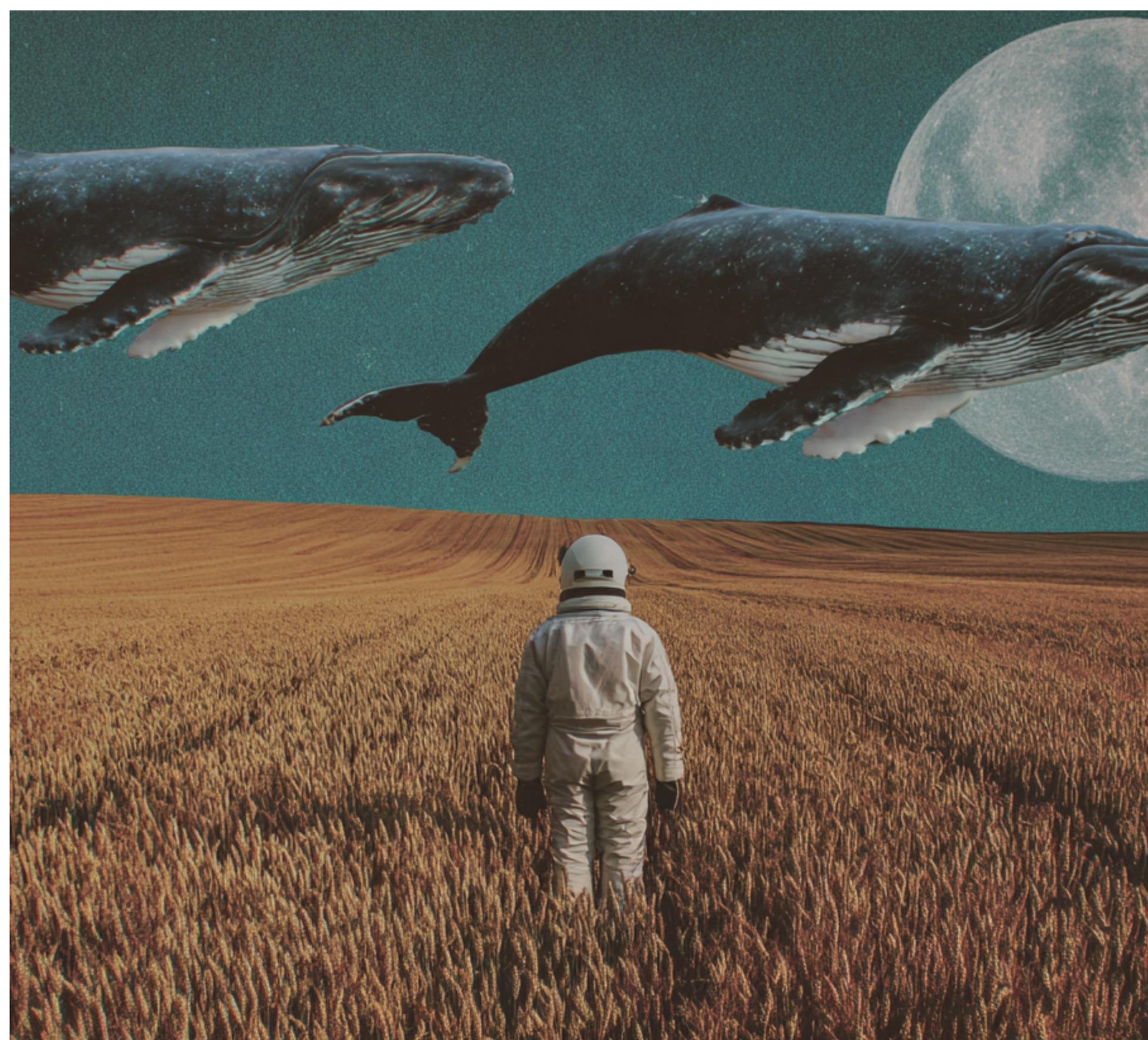
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We like to think we're rational – especially in business – that decisions are made in spreadsheets, not stomachs. But the truth, proven again and again by behavioral science, is that most of what drives us happens long before logic ever gets a vote.

Daniel Kahneman, awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2002 for his research on human decision-making, stated a simple first principle: humans don't like to think. The reason is clear – mental energy is limited, and thinking is hard work.

To survive complexity, evolution equipped us with a system of cognitive shortcuts: intuition, pattern recognition, and emotion. Up to 95% of our daily decisions are made this way – automatic, intuitive, and emotionally biased.

That's not a flaw. It's efficiency. Emotion is the brain's way of deciding fast, especially in situations that feel uncertain, risky, or complex. Which, ironically, describes pretty much every B2B purchase.



# Why emotion works

## How feelings shape the market long before facts do.

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Emotion acts as a kind of mental adhesive – it helps information stick, accelerates recall, and builds trust long before the buying moment arrives.

Only 5% of your potential B2B customers are ready to buy right now. The other 95% are not in-market – but they're still forming impressions, memories, and associations.

This is where B2B brand building happens. Strong brands don't wait for intent. They build mental spaces – easy to think of, easy to buy, impossible to forget. When the rational moment finally arrives, emotion decides who gets remembered.

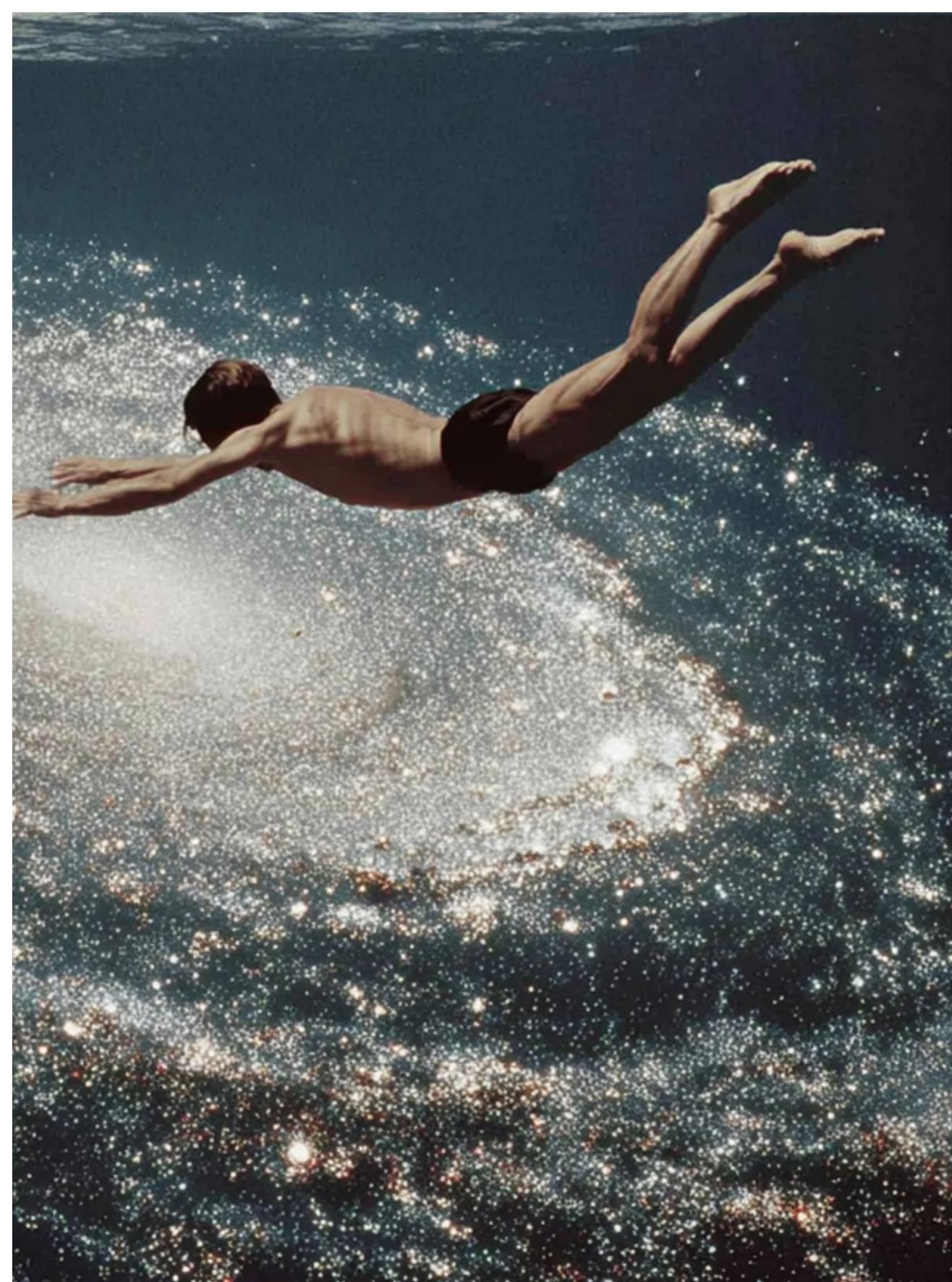
Ehrenberg-Bass calls it mental availability – the ease with which a brand comes to mind in buying situations. It's not about persuasion – it's about presence. And emotion builds that presence faster than facts ever could.

The more complex the decision, the more emotion matters. Long sales cycles, multiple stakeholders, intangible offers – all of it pushes decisions away from pure logic. That's why emotion is the most rational investment a B2B brand can make.



Brand codes isn't decoration.  
It's distribution for the mind.

# The power of brand codes



## Why distinctiveness is the key to being remembered.

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Every second of marketing is a battle for recognition. While emotion builds memory, distinctiveness decides whose memory it becomes.

That's where brand codes come in – the visual, sonic, and verbal cues that trigger instant familiarity. In complex B2B environments, these cues do the heavy lifting that logos and taglines can't. The brain's memory system is lazy by design. It doesn't store logos or slogans in isolation – it stores patterns

Distinctiveness isn't about shouting louder. It's about building recognizable patterns the brain can process faster than it can think. It's what turns attention into memory, and memory into growth.

Because true distinctiveness isn't about doing something new every time. It's about doing something recognizable every time – and making it impossible to ignore

# The power of brand codes

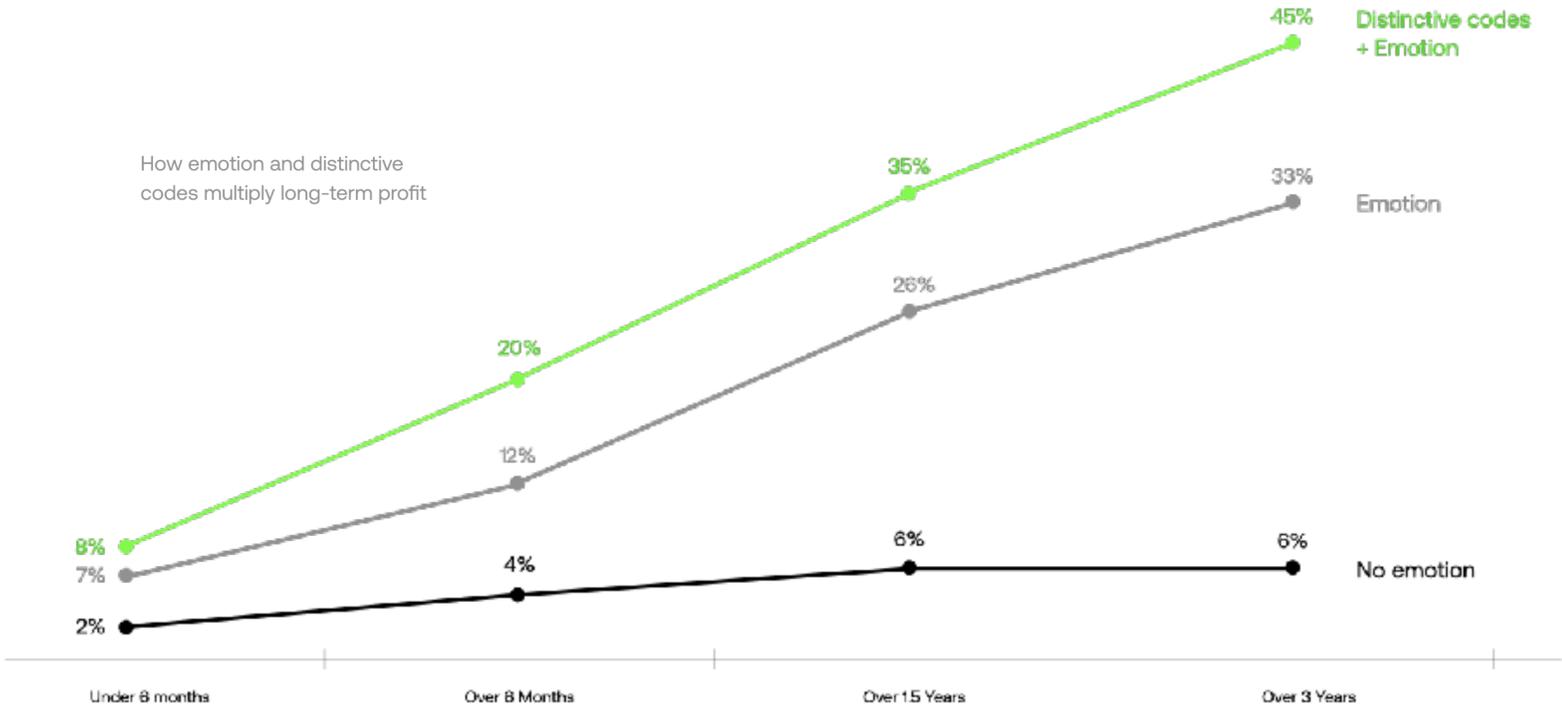
## Emotion + Brand Codes = The Effectiveness Engine

Emotion makes people care – but distinctiveness makes them act, and keep remembering why they cared.

Analysis of thousands of campaigns by System1 shows that emotion alone drives strong, sustained growth – but when combined with fluent and distinctive brand codes, the impact multiplies.

After six months, emotional and rational campaigns perform about the same. But over time, the gap explodes. After three years, fluent and emotional campaigns deliver more than seven times the profit growth of rational ones. It's not magic – it's memory. When creative ideas are linked to consistent codes, each exposure strengthens the next.

This is the creative compound effect: feeling sparks attention, distinctiveness stores it, and together they build momentum beyond what metrics can explain.



# The power of brand codes

## Not Just a Logo – Which Brand Codes Actually Work

So which brand codes work best?

We tend to overestimate the power of logos and colors, and underestimate what truly makes brands recognizable.

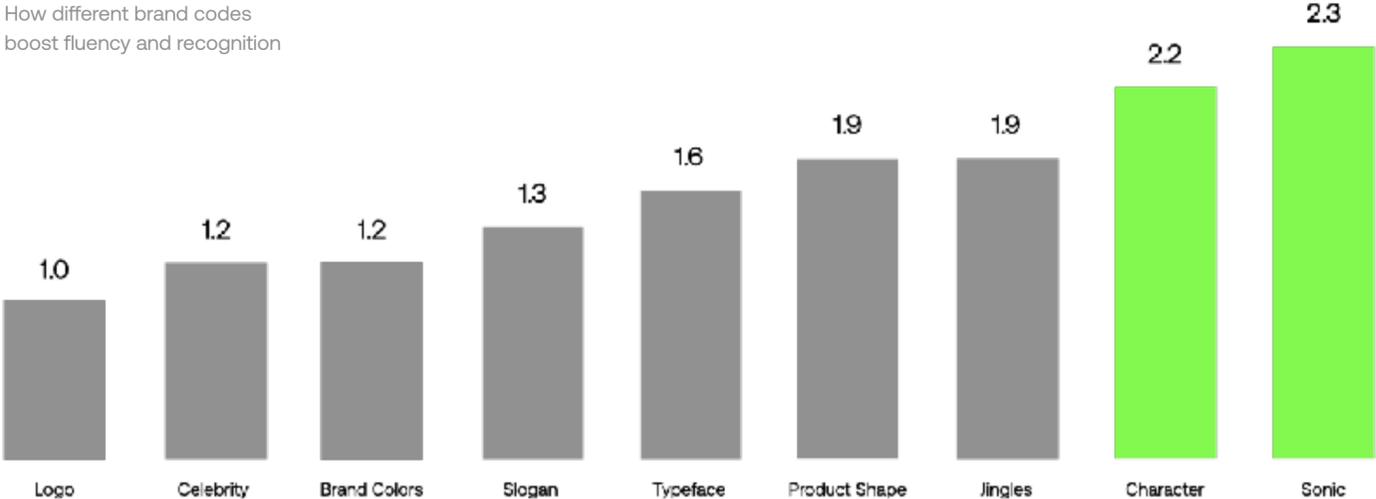
Studies across tens of thousands of campaigns reveal that characters and sonic identities generate more than twice the branded attention of visual elements alone – yet fewer than one in ten campaigns use them.

Sound travels faster than sight – triggering recognition in under half a second. Fluent devices (recurring characters, taglines, or story worlds) create continuity that builds emotional familiarity over years, not months.

In B2B, where complexity and clutter are high, these cues cut through the noise faster than any message ever could. Together, they outperform static design because they activate multiple senses and emotions at once.

So make sure your brand doesn't just have a visual identity – but a Brand Code Identity. A visual identity gets you recognized. A Brand Code Identity makes you remembered.

How different brand codes boost fluency and recognition



Consistency isn't the enemy of creativity.  
It's how creativity compounds.

# Play it long

## Let it wear in, not wear out.

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Short bursts of creativity can win attention. But sustained creativity wins market share.

In B2B, where buying cycles stretch over years and decisions involve multiple stakeholders, consistency isn't just creative discipline – it's commercial advantage.

Campaigns that stay creatively consistent – same emotional story world, tone, and brand codes – generate far stronger effects than those that start over each season.

In the short run, the difference is barely visible. But after three years, it's undeniable: consistent campaigns deliver 6x more brand effects and 3x more business effects than one-offs.

Because creativity compounds. Every time an idea returns, it strengthens the emotional link, deepens memory, and expands distinctiveness. The brands that grow are the ones that let ideas wear in – not wear out.

Growth doesn't come from what you reinvent. It comes from what you return to – again, and again, until mental availability sticks.



Whatever you do, don't be boring.

# The cost of boring is bigger than you think.

In B2B, dull has too often become the default. We rationalize it as professionalism, confuse safety with strategy, and call it “serious business.” But dull isn’t safe – it’s expensive.

Every generic ad, every templated message, every half-hearted campaign slowly erodes distinctiveness, emotion, and the very memory structures growth depends on. When brands stop making people feel, they stop being chosen.

The antidote isn’t efficiency – it’s emotion. The truth is simple: attention is earned, not automated. Relevance doesn’t come from data – it comes from difference. And creativity isn’t an expense – it’s a compound investment.

So whatever you do, don’t be boring. Because in B2B, the most dangerous thing you can be isn’t wrong. It’s forgettable.



# Selected references

Across every study, one conclusion repeats: Emotion builds memory. Distinctiveness builds recognition. Consistency compounds both. Together, they form the most reliable engine of growth in modern B2B marketing

**Ehrenberg-Bass Institute (2021). Category Entry Points in a B2B World.**

Demonstrates how brand growth in B2B depends on building mental availability across buying situations.

**LinkedIn B2B Institute (2023). Get Emotional at Work.**

Shows that emotional storytelling in B2B increases effectiveness by up to seven times compared to rational campaigns.

**System1 (2023). Feelings vs. Function: The Power of Emotional Advertising in B2B.**

Confirms that emotion, not information, drives long-term business growth in B2B marketing.

**System1 & Effie Worldwide (2024). The Creative Dividend.**

Large-scale analysis proving that emotional and fluent creativity delivers stronger, more sustainable profit growth.

**IPA & System1 (2024). The Power of Compound Creativity.**

Evidence that consistent creative ideas deliver 6x more brand effects and 3x more business effects over time.

**Ipsos (2022). Brand Codes: The Power of You.**

Identifies which brand assets — characters, sonic cues, and fluent devices — create the strongest branded attention.

**Karen Nelson-Field (2023). The Cost of Dull Media. Amplified Intelligence.**

Demonstrates how low-attention advertising fails to generate memory or brand effects.

**Binet, L. & Field, P. (2013). The Long and the Short of It.**

Defines the balance between brand building and activation — and the importance of emotion for sustained growth.

## About us

In a world overdosed on dopamine and drowning in sameness, brands don't need more noise. They need tension. When beauty and tension collide, brands don't just get noticed – they get remembered. This is our Creative Compass™. Not north. Not safe. Not predictable. But pointed squarely at attention.

## Our belief

- <sup>(01)</sup> **Ideas above all**
- <sup>(02)</sup> **Better together**
- <sup>(03)</sup> **Things matter**
- <sup>(04)</sup> **Friction is good**
- <sup>(05)</sup> **Safe is forgettable**
- <sup>(06)</sup> **Be humble**
- <sup>(07)</sup> **Care with passion**
- <sup>(08)</sup> **Do good**



## Contact

If this sparked something, let's talk.

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