

# Creativity for Good: Advertising Award Shows Signalling the Industry in Support of Sustainability

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## ABSTRACT

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*Keywords:*

advertising award shows,  
sustainability,  
creativity,  
signalling.

The Advertising Awards Shows have always been important in signalling to the industry about consumer and business trends. In 2018, the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity partnered with the United Nations to launch the Sustainable Development Goals Lions. As a result, this study explores the messages presented by Cannes Lions from 2018 - 2024. This is an exploratory qualitative study conducted utilizing case study methodology of the awarded works and public interviews of the juries and organizers of the shows. In an industry enamored with winning awards, the signalling by the award shows have worked in getting more brands, clients of the advertising agencies, to develop more creative messages in line with the UN's SDGs. The managerial implications of this study is development of a guide to creating works that promote sustainability. In terms of theoretical implications utilizing the Grounded Theory approach, learning from award shows plays a major influence in the creation of advertising work. It is recommended that future studies explore the impact of awarded work on the actual performance of the brands, which would establish the connection between creativity and impact in making the world a better place.

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## INTRODUCTION

Advertising creativity is a function of the work of the advertising agency (Lynch & West, 2017). In addition, the role of advertising agencies and expectations from the public – the emergence of purpose-led and social-impact communications – growing importance of corporate social responsibility, cause-related marketing, social auditing, cross-sector collaboration, social return on investment, venture philanthropy, social enterprises, and non-profits adopting earned-income strategies (LaVoi and Haley, 2021).

Charyton (2017) explained that Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity has the mission to inspire, challenge, and drive the advertising forward because of its belief in the power of creativity in driving business, change, and making the world a better place. The Cannes Lions represents the changes in the creative landscape addressing the industry shifts resulting from consumer, business, and societal changes.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Lions represent a unique category that measures creative work against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. While creativity remains central to the evaluation, the jury evaluates campaigns not only based on their ingenuity but also on how effectively they contribute to achieving global sustainability targets. The main distinction between the SDG Lions and other categories lies in the emphasis placed on impact—specifically, how the creative work drives real-world, measurable change in relation to the SDGs.

However, advertising and brands cannot effect these changes on their own. Bharadwaj, Naik, and Nath (2022) explained that it is important to integrate sustainability into brand communications since it can contribute to building corporate brand associations. Based on previous research have examined CSR and brand activism, however there are a limited number of studies exploring campaigns attempting to achieve SDGs. This study has the scope for studying the SDG Lions Grand Prix winners from 2018 – 2024, due to constraints in the amount of information available on the campaigns. Thus, the following research questions were developed:

- What are the patterns of collaboration and innovation that emerge in these campaigns?
- How do these campaigns create measurable impact on the SDGs, and how is this linked to the role of the stakeholders?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section traces the evolution of CSR showcased by SDG Lions-winning campaigns. It represents a shift from mere compliance with societal expectations to active participation in driving systemic change aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CSR has traditionally been viewed as a company's obligation to meet societal expectations

through economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary practices (Carroll, 1979; Kotler & Lee, 2005). Over time, CSR has evolved from being seen primarily as a philanthropic activity into a more integrated and strategic effort aimed at creating long-term value for both the company and society (Bhattacharya, Korshun, & Sen, 2009; Piercy & Lane, 2009). This evolution is critical because it underscores the shift from CSR as a voluntary and isolated initiative to CSR as an embedded, value-driven process that supports long-term business sustainability.

CSR has increasingly become about stakeholder engagement and sustainable development, with companies expected to align their business practices with broader societal goals. The rise of consumer activism and the growing demand for brands to stand on social and environmental issues (Sterbenk et al., 2022) is one of the most significant drivers of this change.

SDG Lions campaigns represent the next evolution of CSR, moving beyond traditional charity-based models into a new era where brands are expected not only to generate profits but also to actively engage in solving global challenges. By aligning their efforts with the SDGs, these campaigns are pushing businesses to take bold steps toward systemic change—no longer content with surface-level CSR initiatives.

Thus, SDG Lions exemplify how creativity in advertising can go beyond CSR and become a vehicle for long-term, transformative societal impact. They embody the belief and signal to the industry that brands and their agencies have the power—and the responsibility—to contribute to global well-being in ways that drive both positive change and business growth.

Brand activism, as presented by previous studies, is a form of marketing and corporate strategy where brands take public stances on important societal, environmental, or political issues. Unlike traditional CSR, which focuses on companies fulfilling basic social and ethical obligations, brand activism is much more purpose-driven and value-laden. The key distinction here is that brand activism reflects a deeper engagement with the concerns of consumers, especially in the areas of social justice, environmental sustainability, and public well-being (Junglut & Johnen, 2022; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). One of the trends reported is “humanism” which was the authentic positive reinforcement to people to rise up to the challenge citing Nike’s “Dream Crazy” campaign (Um, 2019).

Brands involved in brand activism create authentic connections with consumers by aligning their products, messaging, and strategies with the values and concerns of their audience. This alignment allows brands to create differentiation, which, as Wettstein & Baur (2016) note, can ultimately translate into increased loyalty, trust, and sales. In this context, the brand is no longer simply a passive participant in the market but an active social actor that uses its influence to address global issues. The SDG Lions campaigns represent a powerful example of this form of activism.

The role of advertising agencies in the context of brand activism has evolved, as agencies are now expected not only to create advertisements but also to lead purpose-driven and social-impact communications. Agencies are expected to align brands with societal issues, creating campaigns that both reflect public values and drive meaningful social change (LaVoi & Haley, 2021). This shift aligns with the rise of cause-related marketing and the increasing importance of corporate social responsibility as integral to business strategy. SDG Lions campaigns exemplify the shift from traditional CSR to more purpose-driven and value-laden brand activism, where brands are expected to engage actively in solving global issues. These campaigns demonstrate how companies and their agencies can use their marketing and advertising platforms not only to sell products but to address critical global challenges in alignment with the SDGs.

## **METHOD**

The case study method was selected because it is suitable for analyzing creative advertising and communication campaigns to examine how the campaigns address societal issues (Dyer, 2019). The winning campaigns at the Cannes Lions are usually highly strategic, integrating creativity with achieving business success that serve as a benchmark for innovation within the industry (Sutherland & Lockwood, 2019; Sutherland, 2016). Campaigns that win at the Cannes Lions reflect shifts in consumer attitudes and shifts in needs particularly in the areas of environmental sustainability, diversity, and digital engagement (Smith & Rees, 2020). Many of the Cannes Lions winners address societal issues from climate change to diversity to social injustice showcasing how creativity can be used to solve real-world problems through generating actionable solutions (Van der Merwe & Lawton, 2021; Brown, 2009). These campaigns leverage compelling storytelling narratives, which is the key for building relationship with brands (Gill, 2020; Schmitt, 2012). Thus, analyzing these campaigns would provide insights on how creativity can drive business success while engaging consumers in meaningful ways (Keller, 2013). Utilizing the case study methodology enables examination of how creativity adapts to the industry trends to help brands remain relevant in a constantly evolving and demanding market (Holt, 2002). Based on the previous research it can be surmised that the case study method is a useful tool for analyzing the Cannes Lions winners. The framework for the analysis of the award-winning campaigns would include examination of the creative strategies and tactics, social, cultural, and environmental implications, effectiveness of the campaigns, impact, and SDGs addressed.

Thus, the case studies from past Cannes SDG Lions Grand Prix winners, focusing on campaigns that have demonstrated measurable impact on one or more SDGs would be examined. The open coding would be utilized as follows:

- Innovative campaign idea: What kind of innovations are being used in these campaigns? (e.g., technological, social, policy-driven)
- Stakeholder roles: How does each sector (government, academia, industry, civil society) contribute to the creation and impact of the campaign?
- Impact measurement: How are the SDG outcomes measured or reported in the campaigns? Are they framed in terms of short-term vs. long-term impact?

Grounded theory is a methodology used in advertising research to examine the world of advertising creatives (Goulding, 2017). Developing grounded theory from case studies of the Cannes SDG Lions Grand Prix involves a systematic approach to data collection, analysis, and theory construction.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the information collected from the seven campaigns. Based on the open coding discussed in the previous section, the case studies are written to encompass the innovative campaign idea, stakeholder roles, and impact measurement.

### Palau Pledge

The *Palau Pledge* campaign, as explained by Medel (2020), aimed to promote responsible tourism by educating tourists about the importance of environmental conservation. The campaign was created by four local activists who successfully convinced the Palau government to support environmentally conscious tourism practices through an innovative and culturally resonant approach. Developed by Host/Havas Sydney, part of the Red Havas group, the campaign drew from previous promotional materials that presented Palau as "the world's last paradise islands." By analyzing the emotional and symbolic aspects of tourism in Palau, the team identified a powerful opportunity to engage tourists on a deeper emotional level. The core idea was to turn tourists into active partners in protecting the island's fragile ecosystem.

One of the key challenges faced in creating the campaign was Palau's limited budget, which made it difficult to reach tourists worldwide. Despite this, the campaign's objectives were clear: to develop a solution that would change tourists' behavior and create a strong human connection to the island's preservation efforts. The solution needed to be practical and non-intrusive, trusting tourists to align with the island's values and culture. The approach centered on a unique emotional connection between tourists and the island's children, whose involvement added personal depth and meaning to the campaign. This not only humanized the message but also encouraged local community engagement, allowing them to feel ownership of the campaign. The campaign's emotional tone was reinforced by a visual design that reflected the natural colors of Palau's islands, sea, and landscapes, with the children's message serving as the central emotional anchor.

The *Palau Pledge* campaign featured several key elements to ensure its reach and effectiveness. Tourists were invited to physically sign the pledge, which was then stamped in their passports. Additional campaign materials included brochures, an inflight video, a dedicated website, and street signage. Most notably, Palau became the first country in the world to require tourists to sign the pledge as a legal condition for entry, making it a unique piece of immigration legislation. This bold move was supported by the local government, communities, and various community groups, who played a crucial role in the campaign's success.

The results of the campaign were impressive. According to the agency's findings, 96% of tourists reported that the pledge made them "consider their actions more closely," and 65% said they used the principles outlined in the pledge to encourage others to protect the environment during their visit. On the creative front, the campaign won recognition at major international awards such as the Cannes Lions and D&AD, solidifying its impact both locally and globally.

In addition to addressing the need for responsible tourism, the *Palau Pledge* also contributed to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly:

- **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production** — By promoting sustainable tourism practices, the campaign encourages tourists to tread lightly and minimize their environmental impact.
- **SDG 13: Climate Action** — The pledge emphasizes the importance of protecting natural ecosystems, which are increasingly vulnerable to climate change.
- **SDG 14: Life Below Water** — As a marine ecosystem-rich nation, Palau's campaign directly supports the preservation of marine biodiversity.
- **SDG 15: Life on Land** — Through a commitment to environmental stewardship, the pledge contributes to the protection of Palau's terrestrial ecosystems.

By combining innovative idea and communications with a strong emotional appeal, the *Palau Pledge* campaign successfully engaged both tourists and the local community in a shared commitment to sustainability, creating a model for responsible tourism that can inspire other destinations worldwide.

### **The Lion's Share**

The 'Lion's Share' is a global initiative that aims to address the pressing issue of biodiversity loss and encourage greater private sector investment in wildlife conservation. A study found that 25% of Cannes Lions Grand Prix winners over the past decade featured animals in their ads, yet these animals received no benefit from the profits generated. In fact, nine out of ten of the most popular animals used in advertising are either endangered or listed as threatened. The project, launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with various

businesses, asks advertisers to contribute 0.5% of their media spend every time an animal appears in an advertisement. This small contribution helps fund critical wildlife conservation efforts and animal welfare programs worldwide, with the goal of raising \$100 million annually.

The 'Lion's Share' Fund is designed to tackle some of the most urgent conservation challenges. These include eliminating elephant poaching, supporting all-female ranger teams, and preserving marine species in the Coral Triangle. Over the first six years, the Fund aims to achieve several significant objectives: saving the world's last 4,000 wild tigers, combating the illegal trade of exotic animals, including birds, fish, and reptiles, fighting the ivory and rhino horn trade, and protecting 1 million hectares of terrestrial and marine wilderness, including critical corridors for big cat species, elephants, and rhinos.

One of the key aspects of the initiative is its broad and inclusive approach. Since its inception, the 'Lion's Share' Fund has garnered support from over 50 brands and has partnered with seven major organizations, including JCDcaux, The Economist Group, and Human Society International. The involvement of such a wide array of companies demonstrates the potential for collaboration between businesses, NGOs, and international organizations to create meaningful change.

The campaign is also focused on promoting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to the environment and conservation. The 'Lion's Share' initiative directly contributes to the following SDGs:

- SDG 13: Climate Action: The initiative supports conservation efforts that contribute to mitigating climate change, particularly by preserving critical ecosystems such as forests, marine areas, and wilderness corridors that act as carbon sinks.
- SDG 14: Life Below Water: By funding the preservation of marine species in the Coral Triangle and other critical marine habitats, the 'Lion's Share' contributes to protecting life beneath the oceans and ensuring sustainable use of marine resources.
- SDG 15: Life on Land: The initiative's focus on saving endangered species such as tigers, elephants, and rhinos directly supports the protection of terrestrial biodiversity. It also works toward securing wilderness areas, safeguarding ecosystems, and halting deforestation.
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals: The 'Lion's Share' exemplifies the power of cross-sector partnerships, bringing together businesses, NGOs, and international organizations to fund and implement wildlife conservation projects. This collaborative model is key to achieving the global goals, as it pools resources and expertise to address complex challenges.

The UNDP emphasized that the initiative's strength lies in its simplicity and scalability. By tapping into the advertising industry, which has vast global influence, the campaign can mobilize both financial resources and public awareness. Through the 'Lion's Share', brands like Mars are

calling on other companies, media outlets, and creative agencies to join the movement and make a tangible impact on biodiversity and animal conservation.

In conclusion, the ‘Lion’s Share’ is a unique, creative solution to a critical environmental problem, offering a scalable model for businesses and brands to take action on biodiversity conservation. It highlights the power of collaboration and the role of the private sector in advancing the UN SDGs, making a real difference in the fight against biodiversity loss and contributing to a more sustainable world.

### **The Move to -15°C**

The ‘Move to -15°C’ (2020) is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at decarbonizing the refrigeration industry, particularly in the global logistics and cold chain sectors. The project, led by a partnership between experts from the International Institute of Refrigeration (Paris), the University of Birmingham (UK), and DP World, sought to challenge an industry norm that had remained unchanged for nearly a century. For almost 100 years, the standard temperature for transporting frozen food in refrigerated containers was set at -18°C, despite advancements in refrigeration technology that made this standard increasingly inefficient in terms of energy consumption and environmental impact.

The project’s core objective was to lower the temperature used for frozen food transportation by just 3°C, shifting from -18°C to -15°C. This seemingly small change could have a significant positive impact on the environment by reducing the carbon footprint of the cold chain industry, which plays a crucial role in global logistics. The findings of this initiative were designed to support decarbonization across the refrigeration sector globally, while also delivering cost-saving benefits for companies in the industry.

The project’s strategy was unique in that it encouraged competitors to become partners in this collaborative effort. The initiative adopted a neutral, unbranded name—The Move to -15°C—to ensure that its findings and carbon-saving approaches could be embraced by the entire cold chain shipping industry. This collaborative spirit was critical to the success of the project, as it required the buy-in of global companies, including major food producers, retailers, refrigeration companies, haulers, and warehouses. Industry expert Thomas Eskesen, with 40 years of experience in cold chain logistics, was also involved in promoting the project and gathering support from industry stakeholders.

The project was launched at COP28, the leading global conference for climate action, where the research findings were presented alongside a comprehensive campaign that included a hero film and various visual assets. The launch event at COP28 helped to raise awareness about the initiative and provided a platform for key academics and industry leaders to discuss the

research's implications. Another significant event was held at the DP World House, where experts came together to discuss the potential for creating a Coalition of industry stakeholders committed to the findings.

The key insight from the research was that lowering the cold chain temperature by just 3°C would not compromise food safety but would have a massive environmental benefit. The 'Move to -15°C' could reduce the industry's greenhouse gas emissions by 17.7 million tons annually, which is equivalent to taking 3.8 million cars off the road each year. Additionally, the change could lead to energy savings of between 5-7% annually, with the potential to reach 12% savings in some cases. This reduction in energy use could save about 25 terawatt-hours of energy per year, which is approximately 8.63% of the UK's annual energy consumption.

By the end of the first year, 60% of the global shipping container industry had signed on to the initiative, including 30 of the world's largest food producers, retailers, and refrigeration companies. The initiative gained significant traction, with the hero film of the campaign receiving 4.4 million views (including both organic and paid views) and an 11% increase in trust for the DP World brand. The initiative also received widespread positive media coverage, both in global business media and leading specialist sector publications.

This project contributes directly to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- **SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy:** The reduction in energy use across the cold chain could lead to massive energy savings, contributing to more sustainable energy consumption globally.
- **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** By leveraging technological advancements and collaboration among industry leaders, this initiative helps drive innovation and promotes sustainable infrastructure within the logistics and cold chain sectors.
- **SDG 13: Climate Action:** The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 17.7 million tons annually is a significant contribution to global efforts to combat climate change and reduce carbon footprints.
- **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production:** The project encourages more sustainable practices in the logistics and food industries, promoting energy efficiency and the responsible use of resources.

In conclusion, the 'Move to -15°C' represents a visionary approach to decarbonizing a vital global industry. It shows how collaboration and small adjustments in industry practices can lead to major environmental and financial benefits, contributing to the achievement of global sustainability goals.

### **The 2030 Calculator**

The '2030 Calculator' (2021) is a transformative tool designed to empower both consumers and brands in reducing their carbon footprint by providing easy-to-understand, reliable calculations

of the environmental impact of the products they buy and use. Developed by the Swedish impact-tech startup Doconomy, in collaboration with global brands such as Mastercard, Klarna, and key partners including IKEA and the UNFCCC, the ‘2030 Calculator’ aims to integrate environmental awareness into everyday decision-making. This tool serves as an essential step toward a more sustainable future, enabling individuals, businesses, and investors to understand and act on their environmental impact in a simple, accessible way.

The ‘2030 Calculator’ provides quick, accurate, and customizable carbon footprint calculations that are essential for carbon labelling. By using a combination of company-specific activity data and secondary data sources, the ‘Calculator’ helps brands and manufacturers assess the carbon footprint of their products, from material sourcing to manufacturing processes and transportation. This tool streamlines the complex process of life cycle analysis (LCA) without the need for costly, time-intensive resources typically associated with sustainability calculations. By allowing brands to map their product value chains, companies can now be more transparent about their environmental impact and integrate sustainability into their product development and marketing strategies.

One of the key aspects of the ‘2030 Calculator’ is its simplicity. Its user-friendly interface and quick carbon footprint calculations make it accessible to a wide audience, from small businesses to multinational corporations. It also provides manufacturers with the ability to calculate product emissions without requiring deep expertise in carbon labelling or life cycle analysis (LCA). The tool leverages existing carbon emissions databases to calculate cradle-to-gate emissions, which include the entire life cycle of the product—from material sourcing and manufacturing to transportation—using standardized methodologies based on ISO 14040 (life cycle analysis) and ISO 14067 (carbon footprint of products).

The adoption of the ‘2030 Calculator’ by major companies like Patagonia and H&M demonstrates its effectiveness in helping large-scale retailers track and reduce their carbon footprints. The partnership with Klarna to integrate carbon impact calculations into transactions for over 90 million users brings sustainability directly into consumers' daily purchasing decisions. Similarly, the collaboration with Mastercard allows banks to integrate the calculator into their apps, giving consumers a tool to assess the environmental impact of their financial transactions, further driving the shift toward sustainability.

The ‘2030 Calculator’ directly contributes to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: By enabling consumers and brands to track and reduce their carbon footprints, the tool supports responsible production and consumption patterns, encouraging sustainable business practices and informed purchasing decisions.

- SDG 13: Climate Action: The calculator directly contributes to efforts to combat climate change by providing an easy way to measure and reduce carbon emissions associated with products, helping brands and consumers alike to reduce their environmental impact.
- SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: By driving innovation in sustainability and making carbon footprint calculations more accessible, the '2030 Calculator' supports industries in adopting cleaner, greener technologies and practices, fostering more sustainable infrastructure.
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals: The project exemplifies the power of collaboration, bringing together a diverse set of stakeholders, including tech companies, banks, retailers, and academia, to work toward a common goal of reducing carbon emissions and fostering global sustainability.

In conclusion, the '2030 Calculator' is an innovative tool that provides a practical and scalable solution for reducing carbon footprints across the supply chain, from individual consumers to large corporations. By fostering transparency and empowerment, it encourages responsible consumption and production while promoting a culture of sustainability in business and everyday life. This project is a clear example of how creativity, technology, and cross-sector collaboration can work together to drive significant positive environmental change and contribute to achieving the UN's SDGs for a sustainable future.

### **The Missing Chapter**

The campaign 'The Missing Chapter', a collaboration between P&G's Whisper and Leo Burnett India, is a powerful example of how creativity can drive social change. As Rajdeepak Das, CEO & Chief Creative Officer of Leo Burnett South Asia, explained, the initiative was built on the belief that creativity has the power to transform human behavior. The campaign sought to address a major issue in India: around 23 million girls drop out of school each year due to a lack of menstrual education. Without proper knowledge about menstruation, girls often feel shame and isolation, which ultimately contributes to them abandoning their education.

Whisper's overarching goal—'Keeping Girls in School'—aimed to combat this by making menstrual education a part of the school curriculum. The campaign centered around a simple but crucial idea: educating girls and society about menstruation so that girls would feel empowered and supported during puberty. In many parts of India, menstruation is a taboo topic, and there is a cultural reluctance to discuss it openly. This taboo contributes to an environment where girls don't receive the information they need to manage their periods with confidence, and as a result, many drop out of school.

'The Missing Chapter' aimed to remove this stigma by petitioning the government to include menstruation education in school textbooks. The chapter, which explained the basic

biology of periods, was presented as a simple and necessary part of growing up. But rather than just placing the chapter in textbooks, the campaign took a more creative and widespread approach to ensure that the message reached all corners of India.

One of the most innovative aspects of the campaign was its use of local art. Working with regional artists, the ‘Missing Chapter’ was adapted into 28 different art styles and languages, ensuring it resonated with diverse communities across the country. These adaptations were then displayed on walls in schools, villages, and public spaces. This approach ensured that the message was visible and accessible to a broad audience, even in rural areas with limited access to traditional media.

The success of the campaign was due to its comprehensive approach, involving various stakeholders at each step. From the agencies that developed the concept, to the media that amplified the message, to political leaders and policymakers who advocated for it, ‘The Missing Chapter’ exemplified the power of collaboration. By engaging all parts of the ecosystem—government, media, educators, and artists—the campaign sparked lasting change, impacting not just the lives of individual girls but the entire education system in India.

This initiative directly supports SDG 4: Quality Education, particularly Target 4.5, which aims to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to education for all, including addressing the barriers faced by girls in accessing education. By integrating menstrual education into school curriculums, the campaign contributes to breaking down one of the significant barriers that prevent girls from staying in school.

Ultimately, ‘The Missing Chapter’ serves as a powerful reminder of how creative ideas, when paired with strategic collaboration, can tackle deeply entrenched societal issues and transform lives on a national scale.

## **Where to Settle**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine led to a humanitarian crisis, displacing over 10 million people. Many of these refugees sought refuge in neighboring Poland, where they encountered overcrowded shelters, inflated rental prices, and limited resources. In response to this, Mastercard, in collaboration with McCann New York and McCann Poland, launched the ‘Where to Settle’ digital platform—a solution aimed at helping Ukrainian refugees find affordable housing and improve their living conditions.

The campaign’s core insight stemmed from an understanding of the refugee crisis in Poland. The sudden influx of people created severe pressure on housing in major cities, driving rent prices to unsustainable levels. Shelters were overcrowded, and refugees were struggling to find stable accommodation. The ‘Where to Settle’ platform sought to provide an answer by

leveraging data from multiple sources, including job markets, the real estate sector, Mastercard's consumer spending insights, and the Polish Central Statistical Office. By analyzing this data, the platform was able to direct refugees to housing options outside crowded urban areas, focusing on smaller cities and rural regions where the cost of living was more manageable.

This digital platform became an immediate success, with reports showing that 20% of Ukrainian refugees in Poland used it to find housing. It gave refugees a vital tool to make informed decisions about where to settle, enabling them to rebuild their lives in a safer, more stable environment. The platform provided not only housing options but also useful local insights, helping refugees understand the economic landscape of different regions in Poland.

The success of the 'Where to Settle' platform highlights the importance of cross-sector collaboration in addressing complex global challenges. The campaign's swift execution required partnerships between technology companies, governments, NGOs, and local communities, demonstrating that large-scale change is only possible when multiple stakeholders come together for a common cause. The platform's ability to deliver results quickly was key, as refugees urgently needed stable housing and the opportunity to start new lives away from the chaos of war.

This initiative directly contributes to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. By helping refugees find housing outside overcrowded cities, the "Where to Settle" platform alleviates the pressure on urban areas and promotes more balanced and sustainable settlement patterns. Additionally, the platform supports SDG 1: No Poverty, by helping vulnerable populations access affordable housing and opportunities for a better life. It also aligns with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, by ensuring that displaced people have access to resources and opportunities to help them rebuild their lives with dignity.

The 'Where to Settle' campaign is a powerful example of how brands can use technology, data, and collaboration to provide tangible solutions to global crises. In a world increasingly marked by displacement and uncertainty, it showcases how businesses can make a meaningful impact by aligning their resources with urgent humanitarian needs, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable future.

## **Cars to Work**

In France, there are areas referred to as mobility deserts, where public transportation is either scarce or entirely non-existent. In these regions, approximately 40% of the population lacks access to reliable public transport, creating significant barriers to employment. Without a means of transportation, many individuals in these areas are unable to commute to work, which results in higher unemployment rates, particularly in rural and suburban communities. This mobility gap

perpetuates a cycle of poverty and joblessness—No Car, No Job, No Loan, No Car—leaving vulnerable populations trapped in a difficult situation.

In response to this issue, Renault Group launched the ‘Cars to Work’ initiative, developed in collaboration with Publicis Conseil Paris. The campaign was designed to help individuals who are in the critical phase of a job trial period, a time when they are at risk of losing their job if they cannot meet the commuting demands. The insight behind the initiative was simple but profound: many people need a car to secure a job, but without a job, they can't afford a car. This creates a vicious cycle, preventing vulnerable individuals from improving their economic situation. The ‘Cars to Work’ campaign aimed to break this cycle by offering cars to people during their three-month job trial period—a crucial window where job security is still uncertain.

The initiative was designed to be both practical and low-risk for individuals. Renault offered cars without requiring any upfront payment. Instead, the payment for the car would begin only once the employee had secured permanent job status, ensuring that those in precarious work situations wouldn't have to face additional financial burdens during the trial period. This approach helped remove one of the biggest barriers to employment in mobility-deprived areas: access to reliable transportation.

Renault partnered with the French Public Employment Service to make the ‘Cars to Work’ program accessible to those who needed it most. The collaboration ensured that the program reached individuals in areas with high unemployment and low access to transportation, where securing a stable job is often contingent on being able to get to work reliably. By providing people with access to vehicles during their job trials, Renault not only helped them secure employment but also contributed to long-term financial independence and mobility.

The success of ‘Cars to Work’ goes beyond just helping individuals find jobs—it also benefits Renault's business by creating strong brand loyalty. By supporting people through the critical period when they are most vulnerable to losing their job, Renault builds a connection with potential customers that is rooted in trust and support. Once individuals gain job security, they are more likely to continue their relationship with Renault and purchase a car on more traditional terms.

The ‘Cars to Work’ initiative directly contributes to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, which aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. By facilitating access to jobs for people in mobility deserts, Renault helps reduce unemployment in underserved areas, fostering greater economic inclusion. It also supports SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, by addressing the mobility gap that disproportionately affects vulnerable groups. Finally, the initiative aligns with SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, by leveraging innovative solutions to tackle societal issues related to transportation and access to employment.

In conclusion, Renault's 'Cars to Work' is a powerful example of how a brand can create meaningful social impact while also achieving business goals. The initiative not only addresses critical mobility challenges but also helps individuals break the cycle of poverty, contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable society.

## DISCUSSION

First and foremost, the case study analysis reveals that the campaigns have been awarded for their simple and creative solution. Furthermore, it is found that all of the campaigns reveal the necessity of collaboration beyond just the agency and the brand. One of the most important partners is the government as seen in the case of the 'Pledge for Palau' and 'The Missing Chapter'. International institutions such as the United Nations and its affiliates are also important supporters such as the UNDP in the case of 'The Lion's Share' and UNFCCC in the case of '2030 Calculator'. Another issue that is clearly identified is that successful campaigns usually address more than one SDG, showing the linkages between them. The following section highlights specific cases that showcase unique collaborations that set benchmarks for the industry.

'The Missing Chapter' campaign by Whisper (P&G), India, which tackled the taboo of menstruation in India and aimed to keep girls in school by educating them about periods. This campaign, through its integration of local culture, art, and policy advocacy, highlights how a creative idea can transcend traditional advertising to spark social change. By presenting the campaign as a case study, we can examine the multifaceted collaboration between advertising agencies, NGOs, local artists, and government bodies. The success of the campaign demonstrates how advertising can serve as a powerful tool to drive awareness and address societal issues, ultimately transforming consumer behavior and influencing public policy.

On a different note, data and partnerships came together for an innovative solution to a humanitarian necessity. Mastercard's 'Where to Settle' campaign helped Ukrainian refugees in Poland find housing and jobs, leveraged data technology to solve a humanitarian issue. By focusing on data-driven insights—such as real estate prices, job markets, and Mastercard spending trends—the campaign addressed immediate refugee needs and provided a platform for integration into new communities. Analyzing this campaign through the case study method revealed the interplay between technology, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and creativity in delivering solutions that are both commercially viable and socially responsible.

The Renault 'Cars to Work' initiative addresses a systemic issue in mobility deserts in France, where people struggle to access transportation to reach potential jobs. The innovative solution of offering cars to individuals on probationary work periods without upfront costs speaks to strategic empathy—designing a campaign that not only helps vulnerable populations but also

aligns with the business objectives of the brand. the Renault case study successfully integrates a pragmatic solution with social impact goals, addressing both employment barriers and brand loyalty. By studying the case through detailed analysis, we see how strategic goals—such as market penetration and brand differentiation—are met by a socially responsible initiative that goes beyond product sales, focusing on inclusive access to opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

The SDG Lions highlight how creativity can play a pivotal role in addressing the most urgent issues facing the world today. It is a means where the juries signal expectations for the industry, which is the managerial contribution. In addition, this becomes the guide to other award shows such as ADFest Asia to develop their own category for SDGs. This trend reflects a growing movement in the advertising industry towards purpose-driven campaigns, where creativity meets global challenges, and brands use their platforms to support UN SDGs. By focusing on the impact of creative campaigns, the SDG Lions encourage brands, agencies, and non-profits to go beyond traditional CSR and embrace purpose-driven innovation that directly contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals. The growing recognition of cross-sector collaboration and real-world results in SDG Lions campaigns signals a shift toward a future where the impact of creative work is measured not just in accolades, but in its capacity to drive tangible, long-term progress.

In terms of the theoretical contribution, the grounded theory approach is used. During the coding process the concepts identified include collaborative innovation, SDG alignment through multi-stakeholder, and impact measurement as a driver of innovation. Successful SDG campaigns arise from the effective collaboration between government, industry, academia, and civil society. Secondly, the interaction between these sectors creates unique, scalable, and impactful solutions to sustainable development challenges. The campaigns that excel in the SDG Lions Grand Prix often result from efforts that integrate academic research (innovation), business resources (implementation), government policies (regulation and support), and civil society involvement (engagement). Finally, the ability to measure and report on SDG outcomes is a key driver for creative and effective collaboration across the stakeholders.

A concept that could be used as the basis for this purpose is the University Technology Transfer (UTT), which expounds on the players critical in the adoption and implementation of technology for the betterment of society. The Triple Helix was developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (2000; 1995), which explained the interaction between academic, industry, and government for creating innovative entrepreneurship to stimulate economic growth in a knowledge-based economy. This is in line with the findings from the study that advertising agencies, brands, and the government need to work together. However, the study also identified

the importance of society and community. Thus, another concept that better aligns with these findings is the Quadruple Helix, which added the public, civil society, or community as the fourth leg of the helix to ensure sustainability (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009). As a result, this study would like to propose a Quadruple Partnership Model, where campaigns successful in working towards the achievement of SDGs need a collaboration between agency, brands, government (or international institutions or trade associations), and society (or community).

There are two major limitations to this research. First of all, the information collected for the case studies focus on the short-term outcomes, such as the campaign's immediate success or recognition. Thus, future research might explore long-term outcomes on the partners such as brand equity or customer loyalty for the brands, and even sustainable societal impact. The information collected for the development of the case studies are taken from creative narratives and anecdotal evidence lacking actual sales figures, customer retention rates, or even long-term brand loyalty. As a result, future research may conduct additional qualitative and quantitative studies through interviews with SDG juries and creatives to examine these concepts. In addition, based on the grounded theory developed through collaborative innovation, SDG alignment through multi-stakeholder, and impact measurement as a driver of innovation, need validation in future research.

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