

KANTAR

30 GOLDEN YEARS OF CREATIVITY

A retrospective of 30 years of 'Gouden Loeki' winners

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30 years of STER Gouden Loeki

A journey through time and an evolving Dutch culture in advertising

This is the 30th year of the STER Gouden Loeki, and with it, we take a moment to reflect on the ads that have stood out over the last three decades. Watching these as a team (and with our colleagues, friends and families around us) there were so many smiles, laughs and nostalgic memories that rose up. That's what these ads do, they build memories, through emotion.

Emotion has played a crucial role in making these ads winners. Some of them probably made you laugh out loud while others managed to touch you through a compelling story, leaving you with feelings of sentimentality. We always thought emotion is key to drive advertising success, but is it enough? It depends on the objective.

This booklet celebrates 30 years of Dutch creativity and reflecting at how this creativity has been adapted to the sentiment over the years. Our culture has evolved, as the Netherlands has become more globalized and influenced in the face of economic turbulence, global pandemics and a host of uncertainty in the world. Advertisers played in on these events and adapted their creativity to them. But, if everyone following the same creative trend, the question is: to what extent are you still unique?

Esmee, Luka, Dean



Dean van Rensburg
managing director
Brand



Luka Cremers
account manager
Creative



Esmee ter Veen
senior executive
Creative

A winners timeline... 1995 to 2009

Calvé Pindakaas



Calvé Pindakaas



Centraal Beheer



Rolo



Dommelsch



Centraal Beheer



SP



1995

1997

1999

2001

2003

2005

2007

2009

1996

1998

2000

2002

2004

2006

2008



KLM



Gouden Gids



Amstel Bier



KPN



Melkunie



Centraal Beheer



Planet Internet



Heineken

A winners timeline... 2010 to 2025

ASR Nederland/ Diergaarde Blijdorp/ Feyenoord

Albert Heijn

Albert Heijn



T-Mobile

Albert Heijn

Staatsloterij

HEMA



2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024



Calvé Pindakaas

KNGF

Staatsloterij

Staatsloterij



Telfort

Jumbo

Staatsloterij



A man and a woman are lying on their stomachs on a grassy field. They are both wearing large, pink pig noses. The man on the left has a full beard and is wearing a blue knit beanie. The woman on the right has long, curly hair and is wearing a light-colored jacket. The scene is lit with a soft, blueish-purple light, creating a dreamy atmosphere. A white diamond shape containing the number '1' is in the top left corner.

1

A Global shift inculture,
affecting the roots of
Dutch Advertising

The culture of advertising, and the voice of Gouden Brands

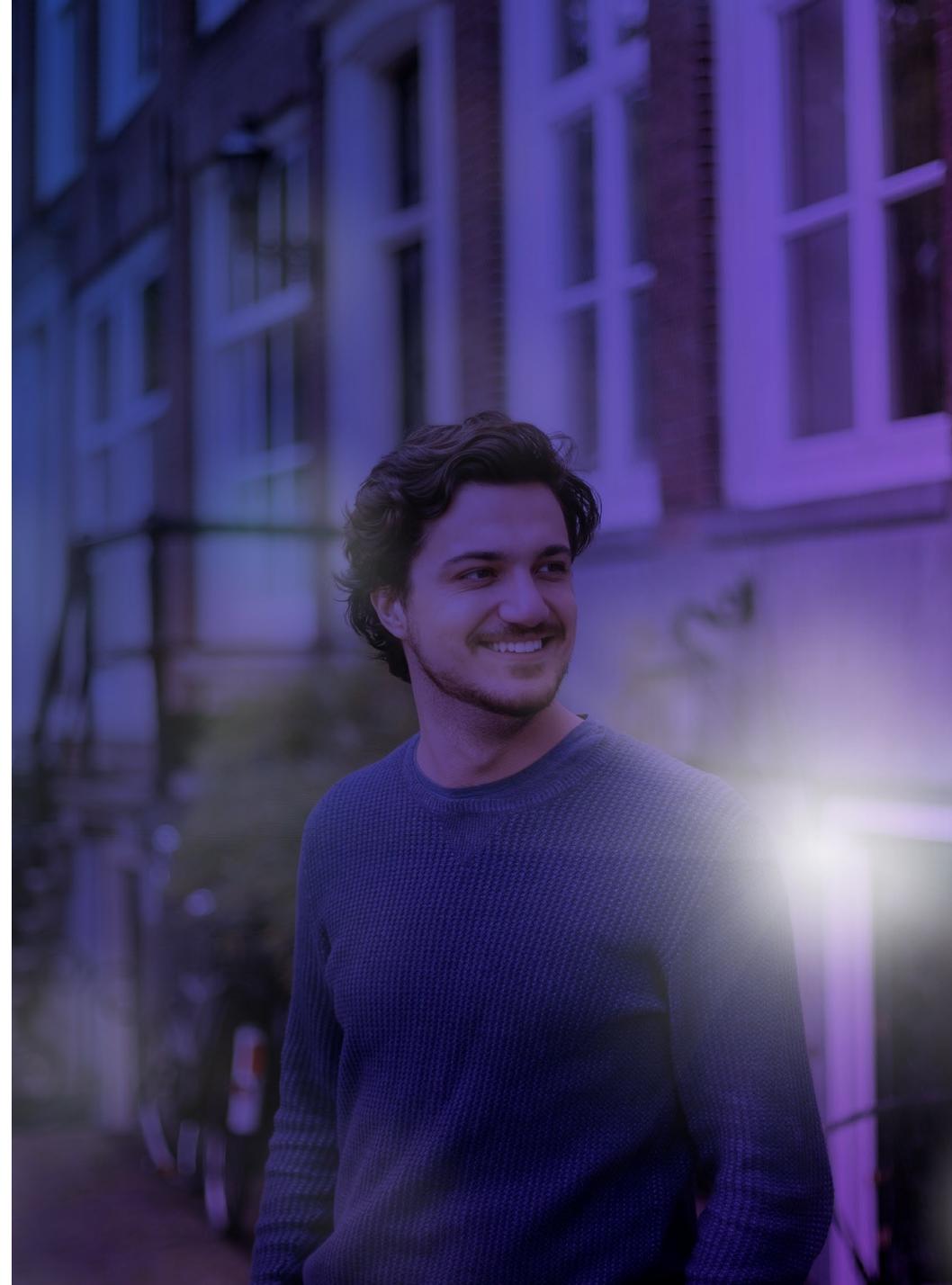
The Shape of the STER Gouden Loeki in the Twenty-Twenties

In recent years, the STER Gouden Loeki has shone the spotlight on some beautiful advertising. These are the ads that people remember because of the gentle storytelling – cozy Christmas moments, beloved friends, family and pets, visually compelling storyboards that pull our gaze into the story with the best creative teams have to offer.

To recognize the brands and agencies that seem to have the winning recipe, there is clear presence of the Supermarket brands in the winners' circle – Jumbo (and Alfred International), Albert Heijn, Lidl, Plus and other retailers like Hema. In the last 6 years more than a third of top 5 Gouden Loeki have been from Supermarket Retailers (which is more interesting with the parallel rise in retail media in the broader industry). We also note Staatsloterij, synonymous with TBWA/Neboko, the agency who has scooped more than a quarter of the top 5 spots since 2018, whose New Year's ads have become something we in the advertising world look forward to every year!

Why do these emotional ads work so well? BrandZ shows us that delivering Pricing Power, the ability to justify your price, for Dutch Grocers makes the importance of meeting the functional and emotional needs of consumers in the top 63% of categories worldwide.

In densely populated Netherlands, Supermarkets chains are part of your community. But consumers often have multiple options in their neighbourhood. Creating a more emotional connection with your consumers, with emotive clarity, makes for strong predisposition to spend hard earned money in your doors. And strong emotional, brand building advertising helps to support the long-term predisposition towards you as a brand that creates real Meaning.



The world we live in has changed dramatically

Advertising often puts a mirror to the world around us

The STER Gouden Loeki was born in the 1990's, a period when the Dutch were expanding internet access, same-sex marriage was legalised, and Amsterdam was becoming a hub for alternative youth culture. As we approached the millennium, people were eager to see what the 21st Century held for us.

Since then, harsh realities of recession, increasing concerns about the environment, immigration, and a global pandemic have fundamentally affected the needs, attitudes and perceptions of Dutch people – and brands have followed suite.

With the adoption of MDGs and SDGs, brands have increasingly recognised their role that they play in being responsible and ethical. With this has come the rise of brand purpose, and consumers recognize it. In fact, the Oxford Said School of business analysed BrandZ data and concluded that Brand Difference alongside being perceived as “responsible”, was the number one driver of abnormal financial success.

However, it has also meant a change for Dutch advertising. Kantar has long highlighted the decline of humour in advertising and the implication for effectiveness. When we look at the winners of the STER Gouden Loeki over the last three decades, the same undertone is clear. In fact, winners have shifted from being brands that create moments of laughter, to moments of introspection, nurture and shining light on issues like social exclusion.

It is not just a trend in terms of winners, but if we look at the nominees over the years, we see that there is evidence that advertisers are leaning sometimes into common communication territories. The upside of this is that smart advertisers can spot the opportunity to break out, offering emotive clarity in communications that creates variety that delights audiences across the full spectrum of feeling.



The music, and humour, Gouden Loeki winners use reflects the cultural shift

The STER Gouden Loeki, as a symphony, reflects the world around us

Music is prominently used by STER Gouden Loeki nominees and winners. Emotive storytelling helps to enable a long-term memory build which does not put a rational, cognitive load on audiences. While rational messaging helps us to inform, persuade and sell, it often doesn't create the long-term affinity with a brand, or impart a genuine sense of, emotively fueled, difference that ultimately helps brands grow their predisposition.

While in the nineties and early 2000s, there was a strong sense of playfulness – whether it was the adventurous sound of Calve “Goal” in 1998, the cacophony of sound in Centraal Beheer’s “Rio” (coupled with the playful jungle beat of Leeuw in 1994).

Similarly, humour in the first 10 years of the STER Gouden Loeki was prominent, with 7/10 winners featuring hearty, “laugh out loud” stories, and the remaining 3 more gentle lighthearted humour. The last 10 years has featured little laughs at all, except for the occasional gently, cosy moment.

What do we say then to advertisers who want to delight audiences, cut through, be seen, and build strong brands?

1. Be Brave: Its too easy to follow in the footsteps of others. There are wonderful advertisers who are showing strong human centric stories, but there is space for more! Be different!
2. Be consistent: with emotion and music, there is so much space to build a distinctive and engaging tone of voice with genuine emotive clarity.
3. Develop your brand with all the senses: Music, humour, language – semiotics are a shortcut to building strong brand delivery that is consistent over time.
4. 4. You cannot afford to be boring: Ride the wave of culture, know your audience, their functional AND emotional needs, and communicate in touch with the world around you.

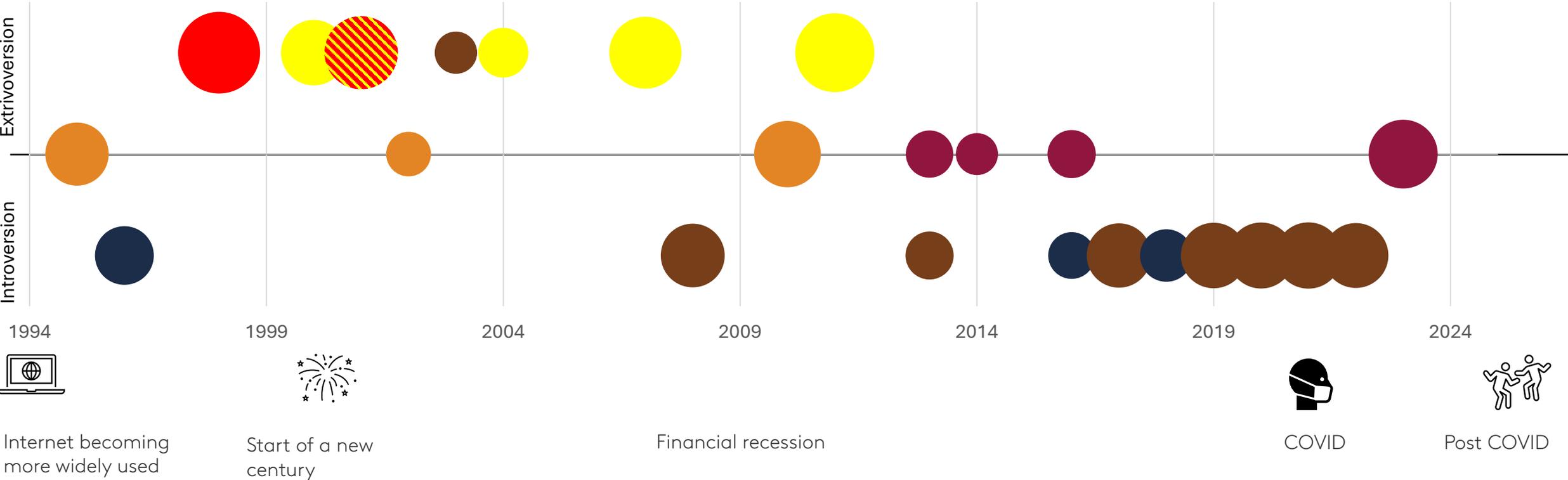
69%

of Loeki winners feature music prominently. Music can be incredibly powerful in how it connects both emotionally and physiologically!

Joyful music changes our breath, feeling sad from music affects heartrate, bloodpressure and skin temperature. Music directly effects cut through and memorability of advertising, especially if used effectively to build tone of voice and sonic branding.

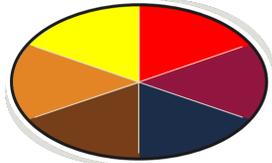
The Music Gouden Loeki winners have used reflects this shift, from upbeat, energised music on the leaderboard before the 2008 recession, to much more gentle, composed music post, well into the pandemic years.

Music 1995 to 2024



Size of the bubble: Indicates intensity of emotion

Extraverted - Energised	Neutral	Introverted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lively, Playful Daring, Exciting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxed/Easygoing Bold, Powerful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composed, Elegant Balanced Nurturing



A photograph of a group of people laughing joyfully at a night event. The scene is illuminated by warm, glowing string lights, creating a bokeh effect in the background. The people are in the foreground, their faces lit up with laughter. The overall mood is festive and celebratory.

2

Mastering the
art of timing

Mastering the moment

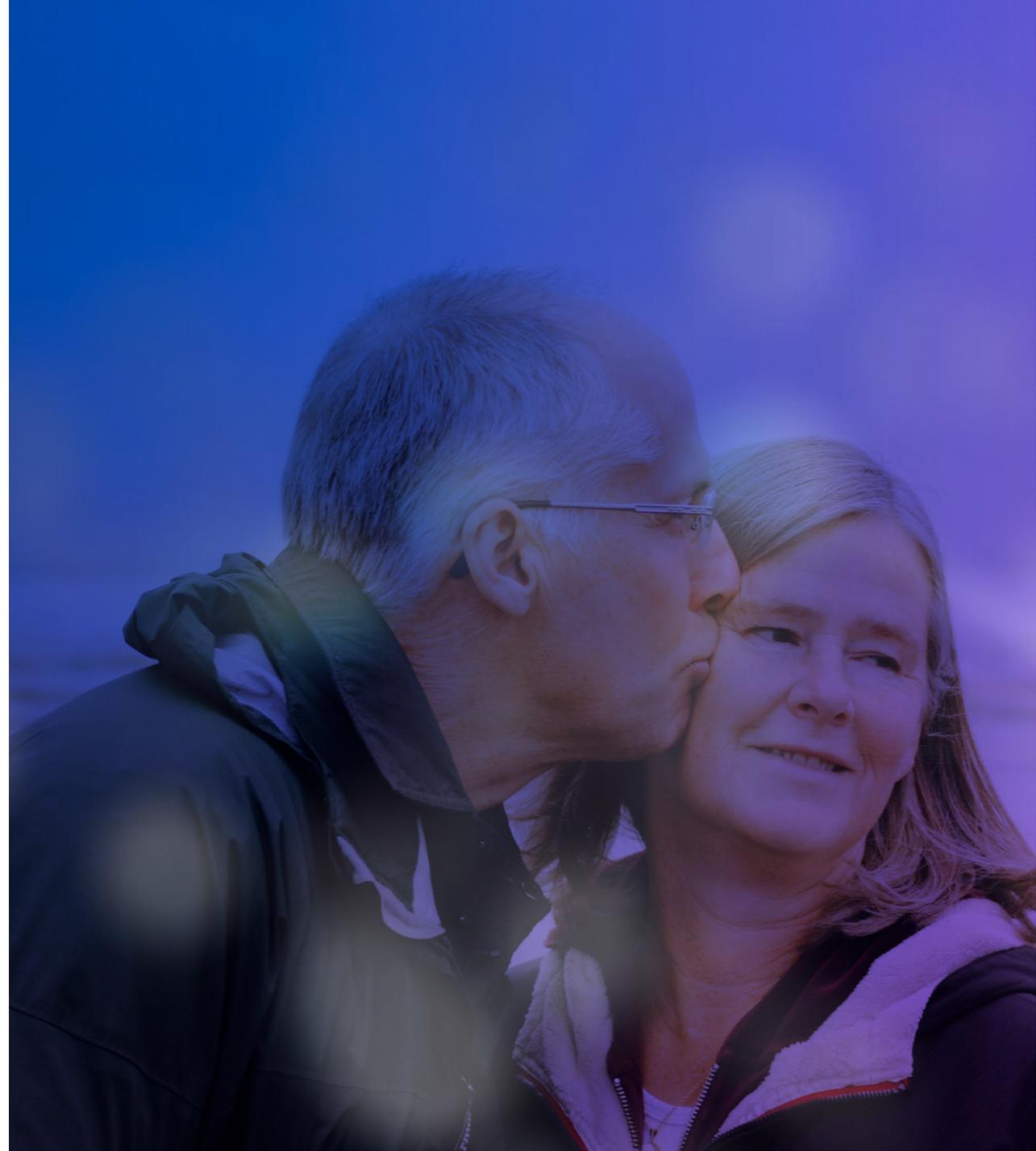
Some Gouden Loeki winners mastered the art of timing, adapting their narratives to fit the cultural and technological landscape while staying true to their brand identity.

Calvé Peanut butter kept its signature sports-driven theme but evolved its messaging. Early ads focused on children growing strong with Calvé Peanut Butter, while later campaigns highlighted professional and Paralympic athletes. This shift kept the brand relevant without losing its essence.

Centraal Beheer thrived until 2010, an era when households relied on landline phones. Their humor-driven commercials resonated in a time when calling your insurer was standard. But as digital services replaced phone calls, how do you remain relevant as a brand?

The Planet Internet commercial perfectly captured its moment, winning a Gouden Loeki upon release. Telecom brands dominated advertising during this period, delivering some of the most humorous and relevant ads. KPN, for instance, won just two years later, proving that tapping into timely themes is key to effectiveness.

These examples show that success in advertising is not just about consistency but about smart adaptation. By evolving their narratives to reflect the times, these brands remained impactful and memorable—an approach advertisers should continue to embrace.



Consistency and innovation

A Dutch tradition: Calvé Peanut Butter and its iconic advertisements

What Dutch person didn't grow up with it? And which Dutch person doesn't immediately think of the advertisements featuring Dutch top athletes who became strong by eating lots of sandwiches with Calvé peanut butter?

Sports traditions

A brand that evokes instant nostalgia, and that is why it is so successful. Calvé advertisements are easily recognizable because of their sports theme, but Calvé advertising did not always feature top athletes. In recent years, it has featured stars like Esther Vergeer and Lieke Martens, but in its early years, one of its most iconic ads simply showed an irresistibly cute little boy practicing hard to score the perfect goal. Very endearingly, he mimicked the moves of a real pro.

Fresh consistency

Calvé is a great example of a brand that has evolved with the times while staying true to its core concept. From little boys to top athletes; everybody has grown strong thanks to Calvé. Later on, with each campaign, the brand introduces a different sport and a new athlete. These days, it is no longer just male athletes in the spotlight; Women and Paralympic athletes also deserve recognition for their successful sports careers. Consistency and innovation combined, that is Calvé. Or as we prefer to call it, a great example of fresh consistency.



Different story, same laugh

A legacy of laughter

'Even Apeldoorn Bellen', have been making Dutch people laugh for years. Thanks to a strong creative platform, Centraal Beheer never had to reinvent the wheel. Instead, they have kept the same type of storyline but presented it in a fresh way. Their ads have been nominated for a Loeki multiple times, winning the award three times.

A changing world

But how many people still call their insurance company when they need help? Aren't we more likely to use an app or a chat these days? Would this platform still provoke the same reaction today as it did 25 years ago? The answer is yes, but to some extent.

A modern twist on a classic formula

In 2022, Centraal Beheer won a Silver Loeki for their 'Container' advertisement. Once again, the same recognizable storyline ended with 'Even Apeldoorn Bellen', but now with an over-the-top problem that feels relevant to today's world. However, the humor was slightly more subdued. Container still made people laugh, but not as loudly as some of their classic ads.

The future of funny ads

How great would it be if, hopefully, another Centraal Beheer advertisement in the future made us laugh out loud again, just like 'Lion', 'Acupunctuur', and 'Rio' did? The fact that 'Container' won a Silver Loeki proves one thing. Dutch people still love to have a good laugh.



Tapping into the time

A timeless struggle: technology moves forward, but challenges remain

Many of us can probably relate to this advertisement. It might remind us of ourselves, our parents, or even our grandparents, even though it aired 20 years ago. The struggle it shows is still relevant today: keeping up with modern technology. Back then, older people had trouble using a GPS like TomTom or taking an internet course. Today, they are expected to understand AI, pay with Apple Pay, or even use a smartwatch. These are just a few examples.

Comedy that stands the test of time

The TV advertisement from Planet Internet, now part of KPN, makes this struggle funny without making anyone feel bad. The jokes are simple and relatable. That is rare these days because it is hard to make an advertisement that is both funny and inoffensive. Since the same technology problems still exist, just in a new form, this ad would still be enjoyable today.

Representation matters in modern society

One thing from this advertisement that, in fact, does not stand the test of time is the cast. The original advertisement features only white actors, which does not reflect today's diverse society. If the people in the advertisement were more diverse and the technology issues were updated, while keeping the dry humor the same, the advertisement would still resonate with audiences in the Netherlands.



A group of young people are laughing together at what appears to be a festival or outdoor event. The scene is bathed in a blue and purple light, suggesting dusk or night. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a teal jacket, is laughing heartily. Next to her, a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a denim jacket, is also laughing. To the right, a man with a beard and a baseball cap is partially visible, looking towards the women. The background is filled with other people, slightly out of focus.

3

What about this
year's nominees

AI-Powered Standouts: The Most Impactful Ads of the Year, Predicted by AI

This year, four standout advertisements captivated us with their ability to entertain, engage, and leave a lasting impression. From humor and nostalgia to deep emotion and social relevance, these ads redefine storytelling, and LINK AI confirms their power.

Albert Heijn's 'Whamster' cleverly revives a nostalgic mascot, creating a holiday campaign that resonates across generations. LINK AI predicts its strong ability to drive brand affinity and emotional engagement.

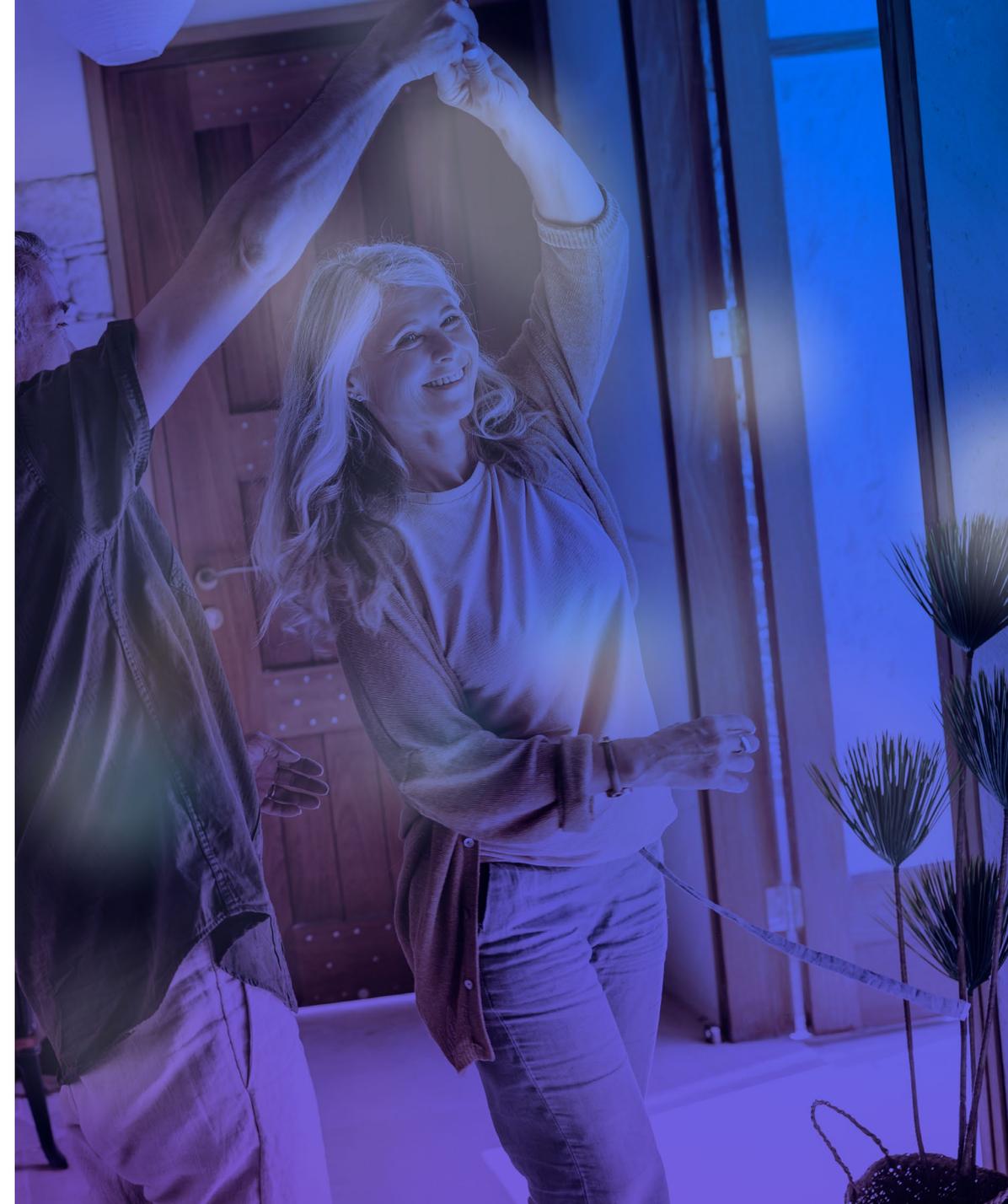
Kruidvat's 'Christmas Romance' blends humor, warmth, and surprise, highlighting the magic of small, meaningful connections. It's no surprise that LINK AI ranks it among the top performers in driving meaningful brand differentiation.

Staatsloterij's 'New Year's Eve Draw' tugs at the heartstrings with a touching tale of generosity and luck. LINK AI not only predicts its relevance but also its ability to elevate emotional engagement.

KPN's 'Piece of Me' takes a bold stance on a serious social issue, proving that impactful advertising is not just about enjoyment but about making a lasting statement. LINK AI highlights its strength in emotionally involving viewers, but this advertisement also perfectly fits in the brown needstate as described before.

HEMA also leveraged nostalgia with Takkie and Siepke, a consistent and effective driver of brand growth. LINK AI predicts its success in reinforcing Meaningful Difference for HEMA. However, as this advertisement won the STER Gouden Loeki last year, we chose to focus on the four other advertisements that really stood out to us this year.

Each of these ads offers something special, whether it's a fresh twist on tradition, a deep emotional connection, or a bold message that lingers.





“ Even though it is a lengthy commercial, you want to see and hear it over and over again. Not only because of the iconic Wham Last Xmas song, but also because the ad contains many scenes with funny details and double layers for audiences of all ages. Even without showing an AH logo or store this ‘Whamster’ tvc is also a typical Albert Heijn commercial. Lastly, this ad shows and confirms Albert Heijn leadership in the category: other retailers also produced nice Xmas commercials, but ‘Whamster’ is by far the best of them all and sticks in your mind. ”

- Rob van Benthem, Client Director Creative

Albert Heijn’s ‘Whamster’

Taking it up a notch

Turn on the TV on any random day in 2024, and chances are you’ll stumble upon a story featuring Ilse, the Albert Heijn supermarket manager, sharing an adventure with her husband Bart or her mom. But for the 2024 Christmas advertisement, Albert Heijn took things up a notch, blending two ad concepts into one and giving Ilse’s hamster a moment in the spotlight.

Show of recognition

Usually, the hamsters pop up in Albert Heijn’s promotional campaigns, with only the occasional starring role. But this time, the brand flipped the script, making the little creature a central character in a heartwarming holiday ad.

To us, this approach is brilliant. It breaks away from the usual advertisement formula, giving the campaign a fresh twist while still using a well-loved brand element. By giving the Hamster a personality in these special campaign times (like Christmas and Easter) Albert Heijn adds an extra layer of charm and distinction to its ads.

A few things about this advertisement really stand out. First, it captivates audiences of all ages. Older generations recognize the iconic Wham! Singer Andrew Ridgeley, while longtime fans remember the hamsters from past campaigns, and newer viewers have fallen in love with Ilse and Bart’s on-screen moments. Second, the ‘plot twist’ keeps viewers hooked, drawing them into the touching story of a hamster who, at first, seems to be forgotten in the Christmas celebrations. And finally, the masterstroke, pairing a celebrity with a world-famous holiday song, as a brand cue to your brand using both audio and visual (hamsters, Bart & Ilse). Since this tune is already a seasonal favorite on the radio and in homes (and practically playing non-stop in Albert Heijn stores), it subtly reinforces the brand every time people hear it. Smart, sentimental, and seriously effective.

Kruidvat's 'Christmas Romance'

Blending humor, romance, and the magic of the season.

Kruidvat has once again captured the holiday spirit with its 2024 Christmas advertisement, *"Everyone Deserves a Beautiful Christmas."* This heartwarming ad brings back the beloved character Lies and her adorable dog, Costa, in a feel-good story that perfectly blends humor, romance, and the magic of the season.

The right ingredients

In some ways, this advertisement brings to mind the Albert Heijn advertisement. But simply featuring a store shopper or manager in a heartwarming story with an animal isn't what makes it a success - right? Just like having all the ingredients for a great Italian dish doesn't automatically make you a great chef. The real secret lies in blending each element in a unique and meaningful way that aligns with your brand and sets you apart from the rest.

Small gestures, kindness and connection

In the advertisement, Costa proves to be more than just a cute companion, he becomes the ultimate matchmaker! With a little mischief and charm, he helps Lies connect with her new neighbor, leading to an unexpected but heartwarming Christmas romance. The story beautifully highlights the importance of small gestures, kindness, and connection during the festive season.

So, why is this advertisement such a hit? First, it plays on emotions we all recognize: love, togetherness, and the joy of giving. The return of Lies and Costa makes it feel familiar and comforting, like a yearly tradition. Plus, the mix of humor and surprise keeps viewers engaged from start to finish.



“ Kruidvat opts for a light-hearted feel-good Christmas commercial with a humorous twist. Although humor has been proven effective for both short- and long-term brand growth, its use has significantly declined over the past twenty years. Especially around Christmas, we see more tear-jerkers, which is why Kruidvat's approach is refreshing and successful. The scene where the dog Costa pees a heart in the snow is memorable and lends itself perfectly for cross-media translation. ”

- Marjo van den Akker, Strategy Director MeMo2

Staatsloterij's 'New Year's Eve Draw'

The festive period adds extra power to the campaign message

One of the 10 nominated ads we believe has the best chances of winning, is the Oudejaarstrekking ad from Staatsloterij. The touching story about a boy who brings a meal to his neighbor but then has to rush to find a new lottery ticket because one of the dogs ate it. The relief moment is ultimately the other way round: the lottery ticket that the neighbor had in her house was ultimately meant for the boy himself. 'Give each other a little bit of luck' is the underlying campaign idea that is especially powerful during the festive holidays, where we like to spend time with our dearest ones.

Who would you give a little bit of luck?

This advertisement does well on the elements that we now know are important to win a Gouden Loeki: enjoyment and emotion. Even though it is not a 'laughing out loud' advertisement, it amuses from start to finish through a compelling story that is strongly fueled by the captivating music at the right moments. And, precisely because of that powerful campaign message, the ad also makes you wonder at the end to whom you would like to give a little bit of luck to (in these difficult times).

Fresh consistency is the key to success

The previous Staatsloterij ads had the same campaign message and therefore follow a similar storyline. That also makes the current edit a nice posterboard example of consistency. But the dividing line between consistency and being repetitive is thin, and so consistency has to be executed in a refreshing way, if it wants to keep amusing people - instead of boring them. Fortunately, the story of this year's New Year's Eve Draw is different enough not to bore viewers, but we do see, for example, that in many of this year's nominees, animals are used to reinforce the story, in a sentimental way, instead of driving humor. The risk? Not being able to stand out and becoming wallpaper, altogether. And if sentimentality is the dominating emotion in many of this year's nominees, how distinctive are you as a brand? And how does this still work to your brand's advantage?



“ Who doesn't buy a lottery ticket for New Year's Eve? Hoping that you are lucky enough to start the year well! But sometimes we also wish it for someone else. It's a perfect gift, especially during this time of year. It's quite exciting too. Imagine if the other person wins the grand prize.... It's nice to see that the giver is aware that they don't really need much, except a little care from someone else. Isn't that what we all want? ”

- Erzsi Eleveld, Client Director Brand

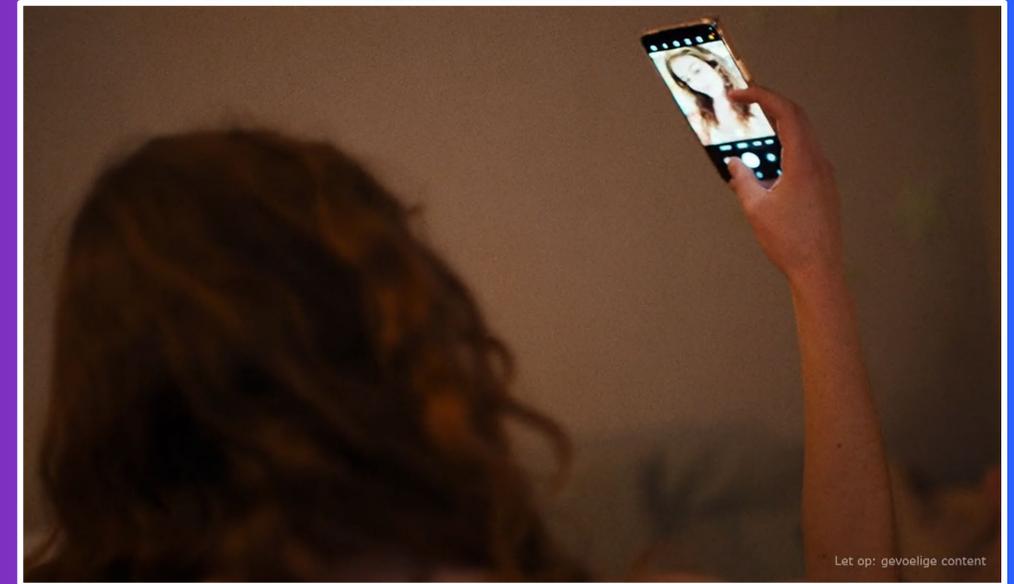
KPN 'Piece of me'

The power of a social theme in advertising receptivity

Certainly not the most enjoyable ad, but an ad where emotion is prevalent. And not just during certain scenes, but throughout the entire story. A advertisement with an important social message. Something that KPN does not even 'need' to concern itself with but does. A story about a girl who literally and figuratively exposes too much of herself on social media. A stupid mistake that she makes because she likes someone. The advertisement shows an intense scenario of everything that happens afterwards: bullying, rejection and a distorted self-image which leads to an attempted suicide. What we think makes this ad one of the contenders is the social message that is accompanied by a lot of emotion. Regardless of our age, we all experience the downside of social media. Perhaps not in this (intense) way, but risks such as privacy violations and going viral are omnipresent.

Dare to be different

KPN distinguishes itself by making an advertisement that does not necessarily have to be enjoyable. Despite the girl in the story doesn't end up committing suicide, the advertisement doesn't leave you with an 'everything will be fine' feeling, something we do see at Kruidvat, Albert Heijn and Staatsloterij. The KPN advertisement leaves you with a 'what if' feeling and is therefore different. It's precisely that differentness that makes the advertisement powerful. While we know the importance of showing your relevance to consumers, brands often neglect doing this in a distinctive way. Brands that dare to be different are often perceived as front runners, which paves the way for long-term success. Here, KPN showed its consumers the other side of the (social media) coin and opened their eyes. Then they will not only see, in this case, the dangers of social media, but they will also see the position that you as a brand are taking to help prevent it.



“ What a beautifully touching film. KPN demonstrates real courage by advertising without explicitly advertising: Prioritizing long-term over short-term, taking time to build image by contributing to societal issues. Super well done. ”

- Rogier Kalmthout, Creative Domain Lead

Curious about the potential impact of your advertisement?

We are happy to help you!



Dean van Rensburg
managing director
Brand



Luka Cremers
accountmanager
Creative



Esmee ter Veen
senior executive
Creative

LINK AI will help you build better ads at scale because it:

- Is trained on the **world's largest ad testing database** of over 260k ads so you get confident predictions you can act on
- Is **validated** and available for your TV & Digital videos, benchmarked against extensive **norms in 55 markets**
- Includes **advanced cultural features** like celebrity recognition for more nuanced predictions
- Provides access a **larger set of validated** brand, creative & behavioural measures than any competitor to get a deeper diagnosis and understand emotions
- Incorporates automated creative tagging to **fuel best practice** meta-analysis and ensure your ads comply with platform best practices
- Is **seamlessly integrated** into creative development workflows, self-serve or serviced, automation integrations on request

