



# THE ART OF ALIGNMENT

The relationship between brand personality &  
content appropriateness

M/GNA MEDIA TRIALS

CHANNELFACTORY

# WHERE WE STARTED

In 2021, we uncovered the consequences of ads appearing next to content that is clearly misaligned with brand values due to the visceral reaction it creates in viewers (e.g., skin conditions, ASMR, mukbang). We learned:

- 1 Misaligned content erodes the impact of ads, leading to decreased impact on metrics such as purchase intent
- 2 Ads in both pre-roll and video card environments are susceptible to misaligned content, but pre-roll ads are most impacted



# THERE IS NUANCE IN VIDEO...



## & EVERY BRAND IS PERCEIVED DIFFERENTLY

# THERE'S PLENTY OF GREY IN VIDEO CLASSIFICATION

Classification is complex, and provides a ripe environment for grey content

## ENTERTAINMENT



pet videos

horror movie

fun

sad music

disgusting pranks

nightcore/weirdcore

podcasts

dance

nsfw

comedy

wardrobe malfunction

tv show review

celebrity news

controversial moment

## SPORTS



football highlights

injury reel

hunting

boxing

drag racing

competitive walking

exercise

coaching

stats

bloopers

violent sports

funny moments

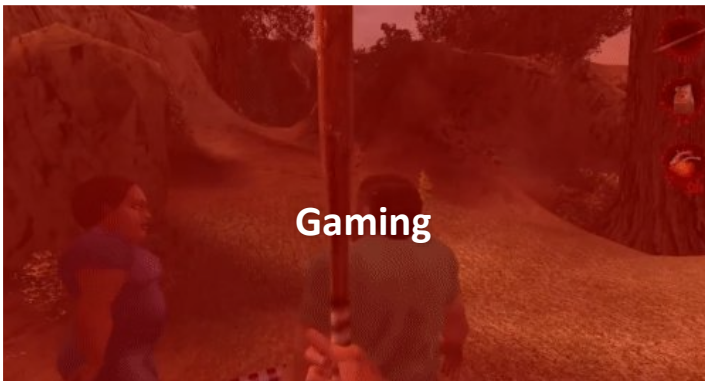
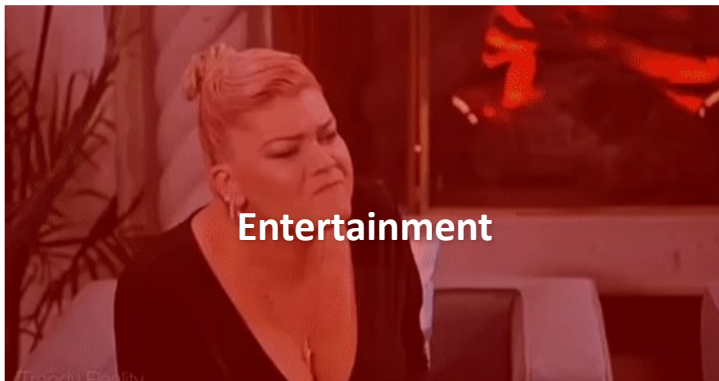
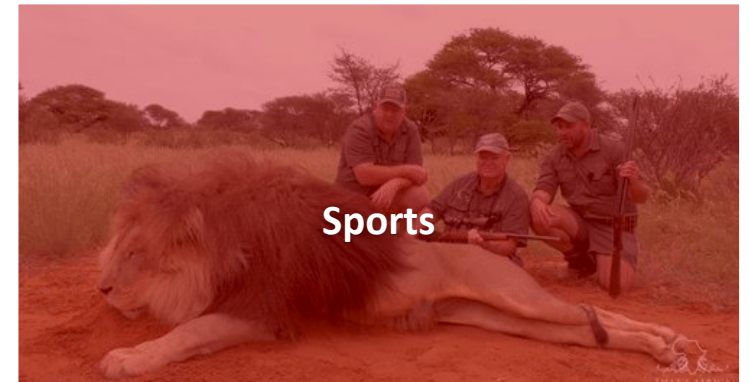
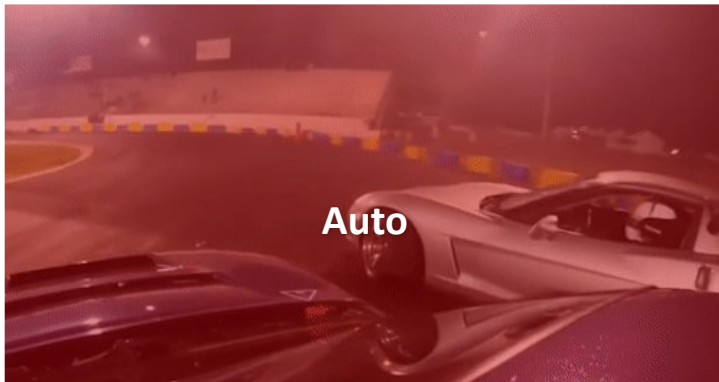
wind surfing

backyard wrestling

# WE EXPLORED THE GREY AREA

## GREY CONTENT

Content that may or may not be aligned with individual brand values



# THE HOW

# 1

## RECRUITMENT

|                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Total*</b>              | <b>n=5,845</b> |
| Australia (B2C)            | 1,371          |
| United Kingdom (B2C + B2B) | 3,104          |
| United States (B2C)        | 1,370          |



# 2

## SAMPLE DEFINITION

Regular users of popular video social media app

# 3

## EXPERIENCE

Participants driven to controlled mobile version of video social media app to watch content, with a test or control ad delivered based on randomization



# 4

## BRAND KPI MEASUREMENT

Post-exposure survey to measure impact on brand KPIs

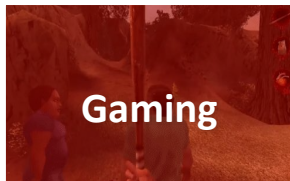
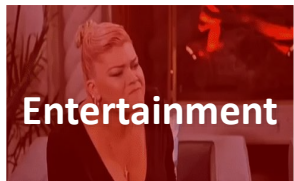
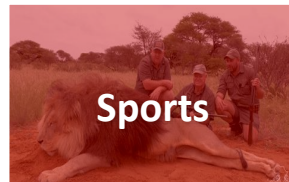
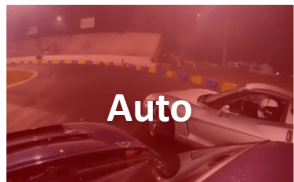


# THE WHAT

## TYPES OF CONTENT

### Grey Content

Content that may or may not be aligned with individual brand values

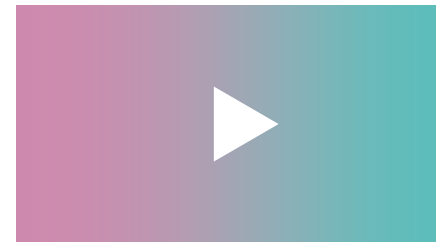


### Standard Content

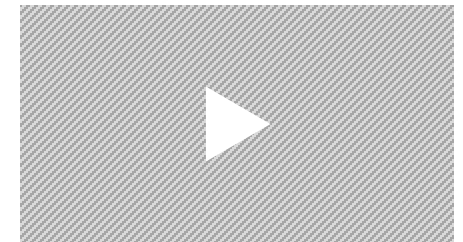


General interest content of a variety of different topics that typically appears on each platform, unrelated to the advertising brands

## TYPES OF ADS



*Brand Ads*



*Control Ads  
(Ads from a brand representing a non-competitive vertical)*

## 6 INDUSTRY VERTICALS



# MULTI-MARKET MEASUREMENT

AUSTRALIA B2C

Sample  
Size = 1,371

UNITED KINGDOM B2B + B2C

Sample  
Size = 3,104

UNITED STATES B2C

Sample  
Size = 1,370

# ADVERTISER “MUST-KNOWS”



## FINDING #1

# BRANDS ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE CONTENT THEY APPEAR ADJACENT TO

Is the brand supporting the content?  
Grey Content - % Strongly/Somewhat Agree

## CONTENT



## BRAND'S AD

% Who agree brand is supporting the content

41%  
UNITED STATES

49%  
UNITED KINGDOM

36%  
AUSTRALIA



Includes B2C only  
United States N= 1,371  
United Kingdom N= 3,104  
Australia: 1,370  
Q; How much do you agree/disagree that [brand] is supporting this video you saw on YouTube today?

## FINDING #2

# FOR CONSUMERS, BRAND SUPPORT OF CONTENT IS SIMPLE – IT'S ALL ABOUT ADJACENCY

Consumers appear to be getting savvier about the advertising ecosystem

What made you think that [brand] is supporting the video you saw today?

Grey Content

Ad showed before video

Because it showed their ad right before the video started

Ads appearing before this creator's content

Ads support influencers online

Ads that play during videos are usually supporting the video

I didn't think it was directly just a random ad for a random video

Advert was attached to it

Advertising on [platform] helps support the content creator

Affiliate links and/or sponsored ads

Agreed to run advertising on it

Any [platform] video can be supported by any type of advertiser

The Brand looks to be supporting the video since it has placed their ad in it

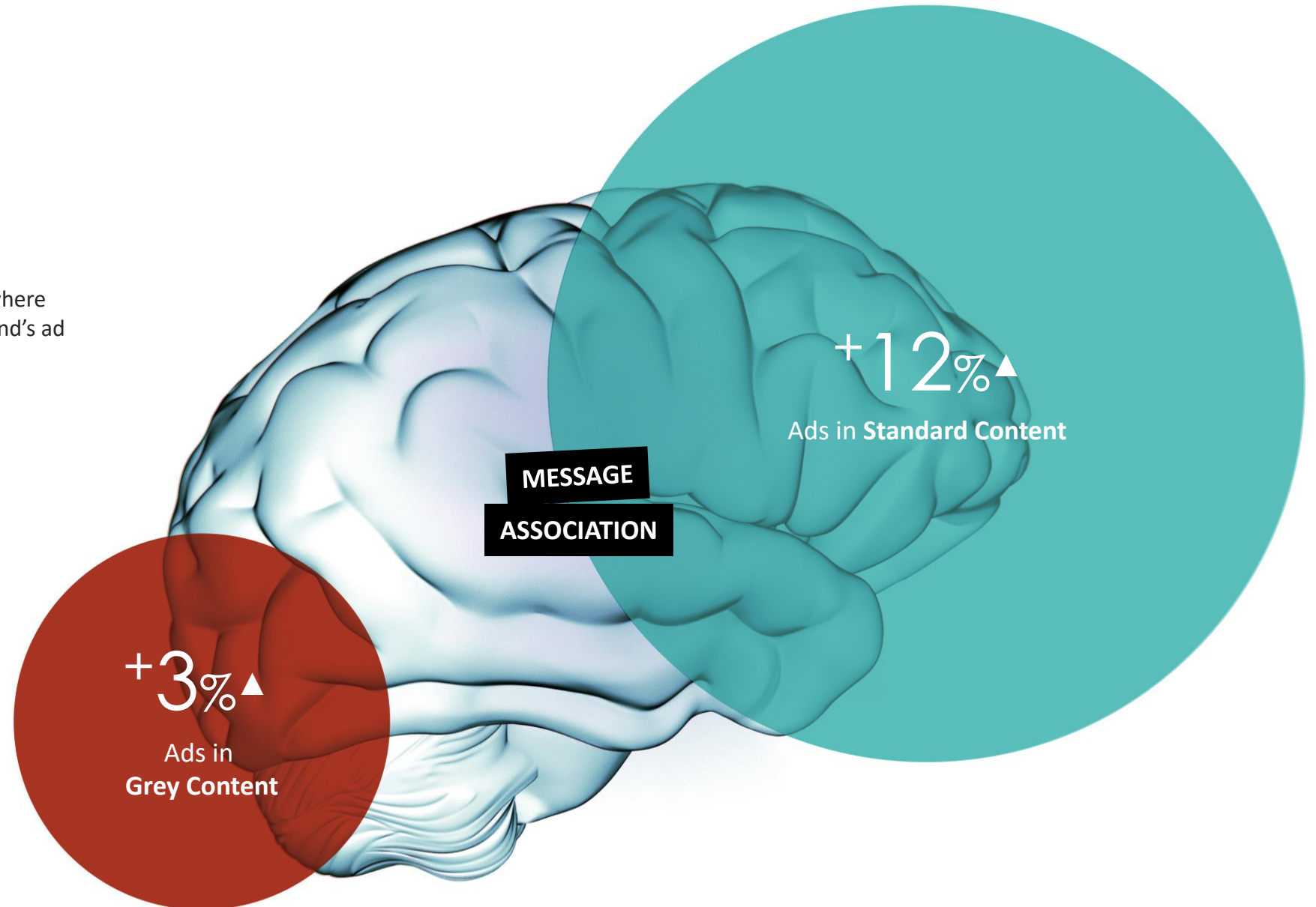
### FINDING #3

## GREY CONTENT PREVENTS THE MESSAGE FROM STICKING

The type of content largely determines where people focus their attention – on the brand's ad or the content itself

### All Markets

Delta (Exposed – Control)



*Includes B2C only*

*Standard Content: Message Association Control N= 500 Exposed N= 500*

*Grey Content: Message Association Control N= 2,500 Exposed N= 2,500*

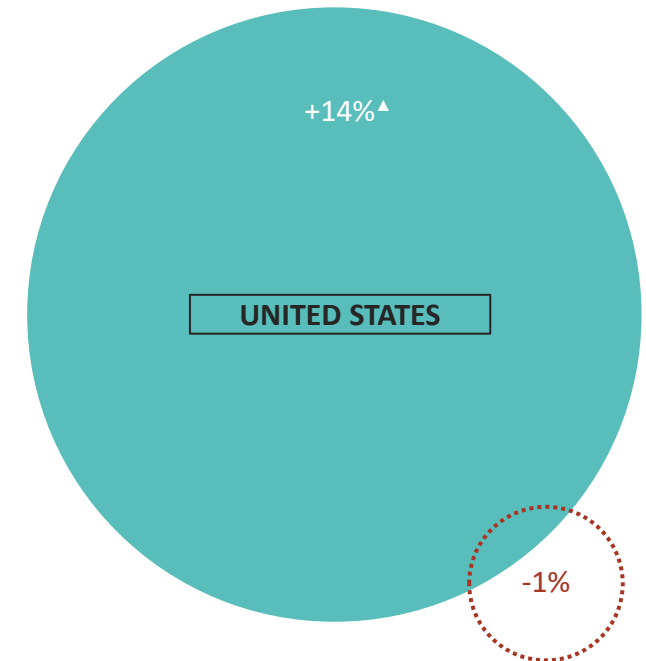
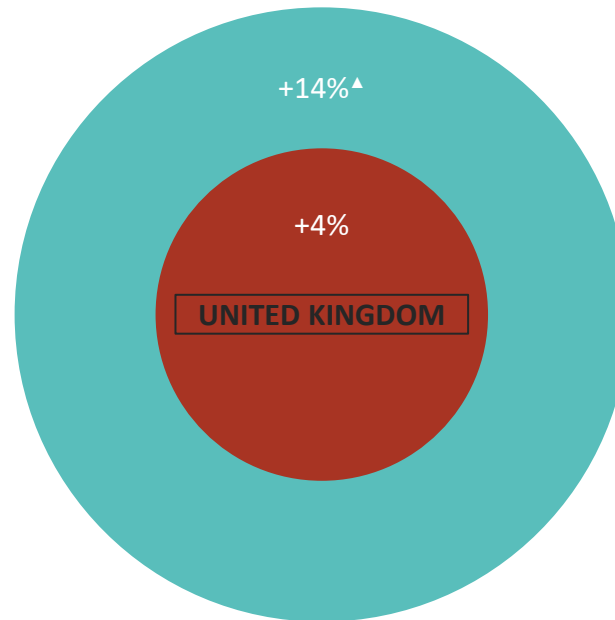
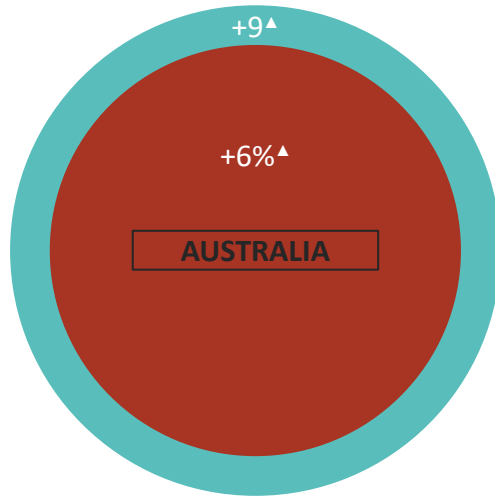
*▲ = Statistically significant difference between exposed/control at ≥90% confidence*

#### FINDING #4

# NO MARKET IS IMMUNE TO GREY CONTENT

Message Association By Market - Delta (Exposed – Control)

Ads in \_\_\_\_: ■ Standard Content ■ Grey Content



*Includes B2C only*

*AU Standard Content: Control N= 200 Exposed N= 200; US Grey Content: Control N= 1,000 Exposed N= 1,000*

*UK Standard Content: Control N= 100 Exposed N= 100; US Grey Content: Control N= 500 Exposed N= 500*

*US Standard Content: Control N= 200 Exposed N= 200; US Grey Content: Control N= 1,000 Exposed N= 1,000*

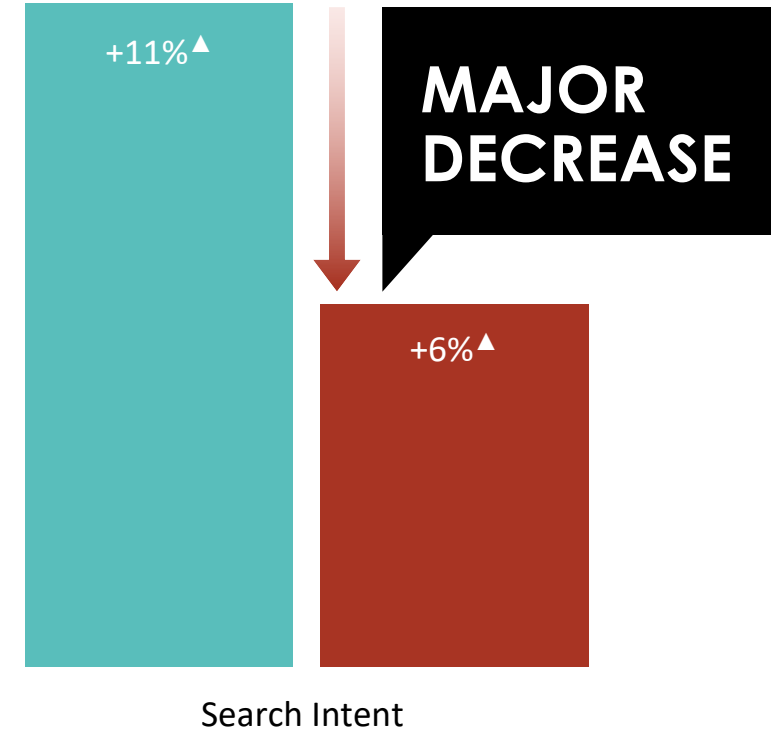
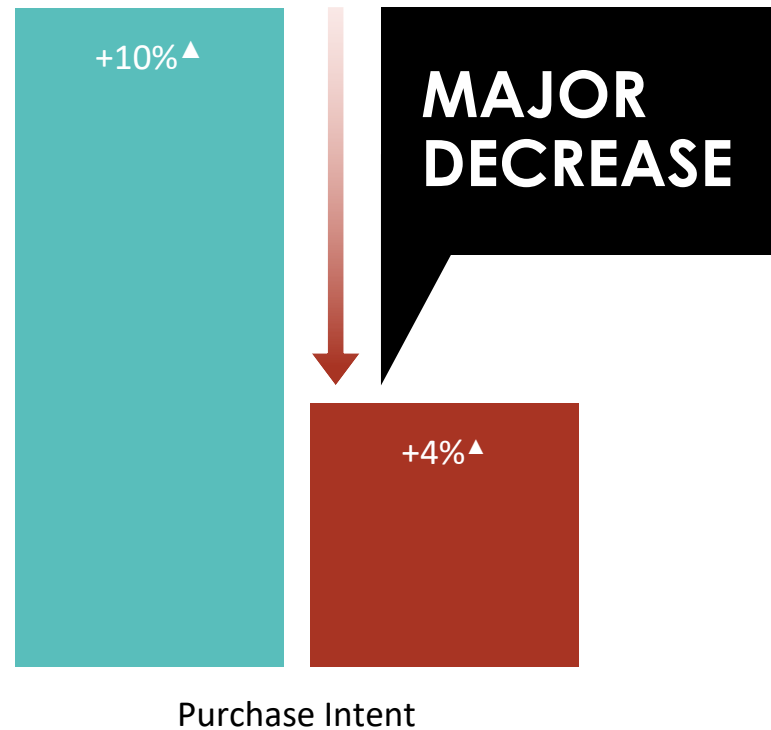
*▲ = Statistically significant difference between exposed/control at ≥90% confidence*

FINDING #5

# PERSUASION METRICS TAKE A HIT WITH GREY CONTENT

All Markets - Delta (Exposed – Control)

Ads in \_\_\_\_\_:   ■ Standard Content   ■ Grey Content



*Includes B2C only*

*Standard Content: Control N= 600 Exposed N= 600*

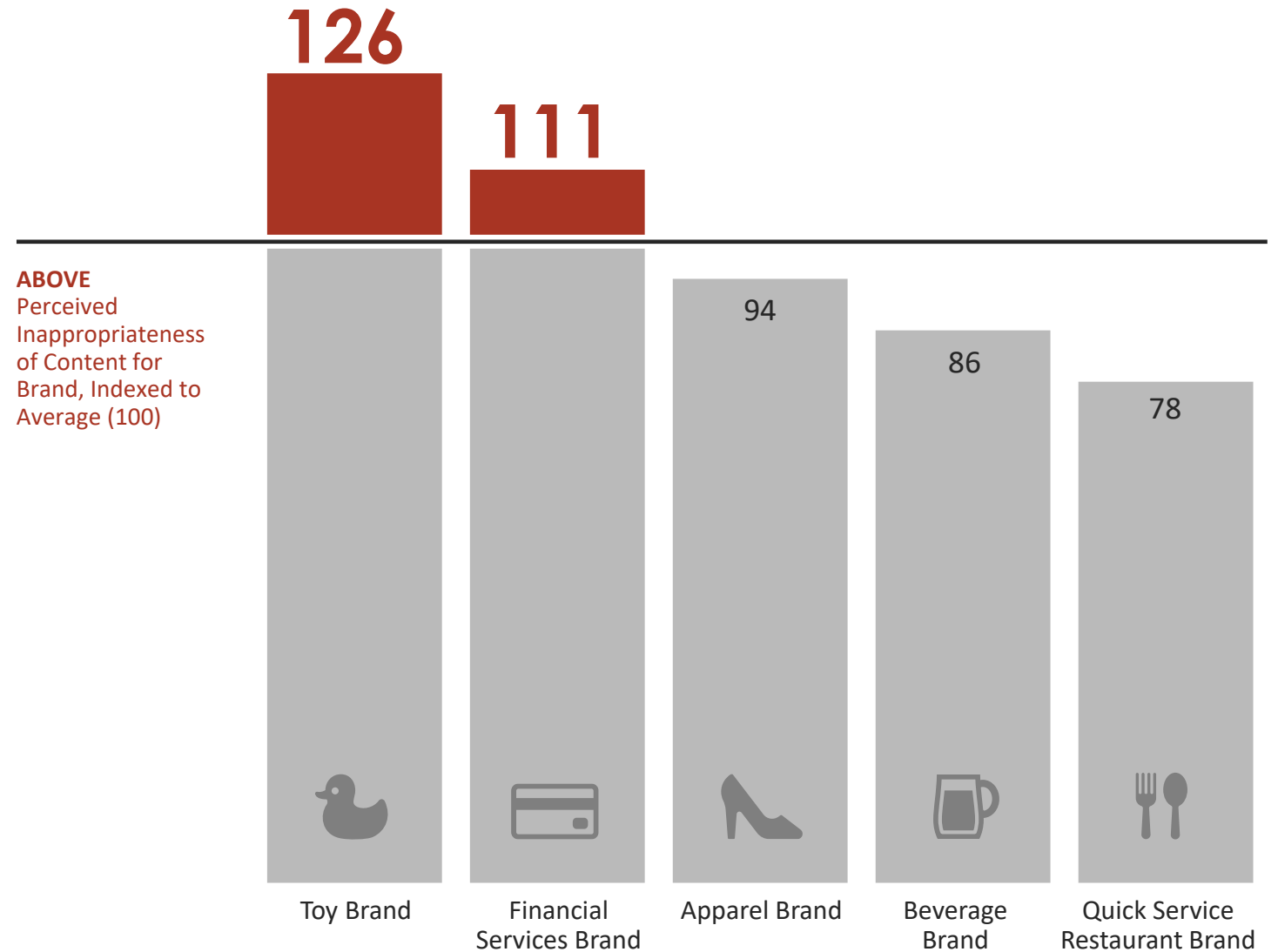
*Grey Content: Control N= 3,000 Exposed N= 3,000*

▲ = Statistically significant difference between exposed/control at ≥90% confidence

## FINDING #6

# WHAT'S OKAY FOR ONE BRAND, MAY NOT BE FOR ANOTHER

Perceptions of appropriateness vary by brand; while grey content feels most inappropriate for the toy and finserv brands, it's less likely to be perceived as misaligned for the beverage and quick service brands



## FINDING #7

# PERCEIVED APPROPRIATENESS IS BASED ON BRAND PERSONALITY AS MUCH, IF NOT MORE, THAN THE VERTICAL



**WHY AUDIENCES FEEL THE VIDEO IS INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE BRAND**



"[Brand] is a serious brand, don't think it should be associated with a cheap prank video"

"An advert advertising [product] I feel shouldn't be next to videos of animals killing each other"

"Absolutely no link and dumbs down [brand]"

"I view [brand] as sophisticated and that is the furthest thing from sophisticated"

"[Brand] has always meant business. Hard to take them as serious next to this"

"[Brand] is a prestige brand, why would they advertise alongside idiot drivers?"

"Because it doesn't pertain to [brand product]"

"Although edgy like [brand] it seemed out of step with the brand. Personally, I'd go for content that is a closer match to what you can do for [brand], like gigs or trendy content."

"Not a good match. The video scared me, [brand] excites me."

"I would not understand why an edgy [product] brand would want to associate itself with this kind of entertainment."

"[Brand] is a serious sophisticated brand while the video was funny and cringe worthy"

"...I feel less about [brand] being associated with something so awful."

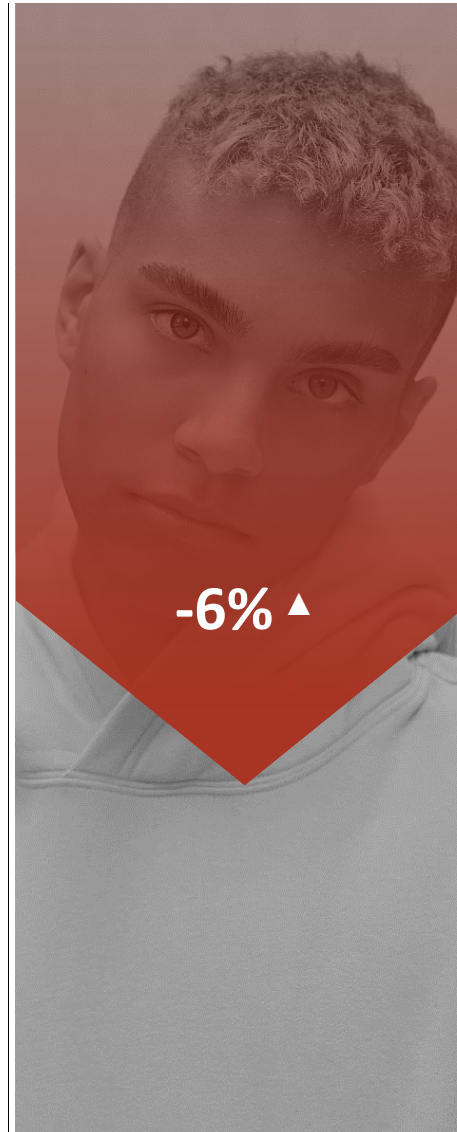
FINDING #8

# BRANDS HAVE THE MOST TO LOSE WITH GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS

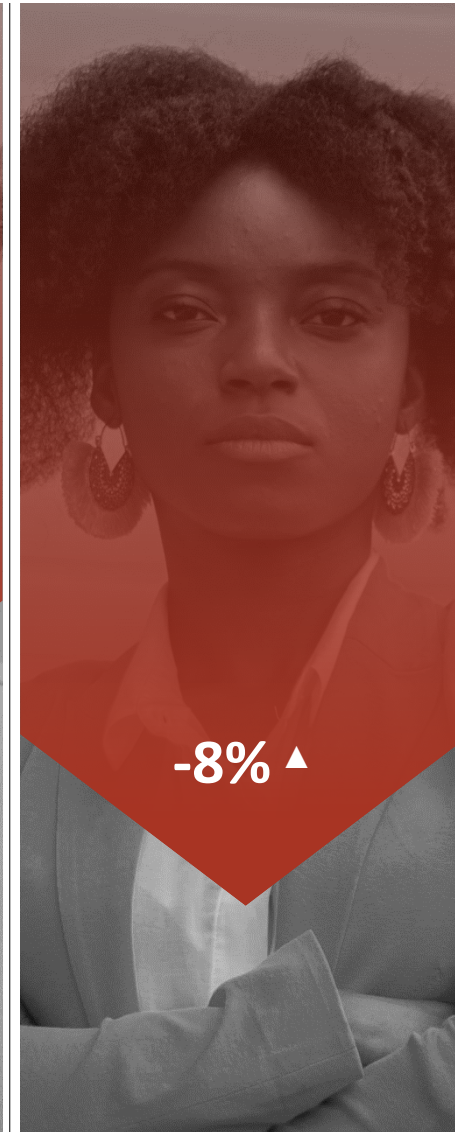
## Purchase Intent, All Markets

Difference in Impact (Delta) Between Standard Content and Grey Content

ADULT GEN Z



MILLENNIALS



GENERATION X



*Includes B2C only*

*Generation Z: Standard Content Control N= 184 Exposed N= 184; Grey Content Control N= 994 Exposed N=994*

*Millennials: Standard Content Control N= 223 Exposed N= 223; Grey Content Control N= 1,053 Exposed N= 1,053*

*Generation X Standard Content Control N= 192 Exposed N= 192; Grey Content Control N= 954 Exposed N= 954*

*▲ = Statistically significant difference between difference in deltas*

## FINDING #9

# IN A PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT, BRANDS SHOULD BE EVEN MORE CAUTIOUS ABOUT SUITABILITY

Consumers are more critical of B2B brands as opposed to B2C brands, signifying the importance of strategically navigating grey content

## Consumer Perceived Inappropriateness of Content for Brand

% Strongly/Somewhat Agree



# IMPLICATIONS

# IMPLICATIONS



## **BRANDS ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE TO THE CONTENT THEY'RE ADJACENT TO**

Brands need to be mindful about the context in which they advertise, as poor alignment can impact brand perceptions. Consumers see a direct correlation between the brand and the content to which they appear adjacent, demonstrating their growing savviness of the advertising ecosystem.



## **BRANDS HAVE THE MOST TO LOSE WITH YOUNGER GENERATIONS**

To maintain engagement with younger generations, brands need to be cognizant of how younger generations perceive content appropriateness. Brands aligned with grey content have more to lose with younger generations, who are less likely to purchase from such brands.



## **GREY CONTENT PREVENTS THE MESSAGE FROM STICKING**

Brands need to be proactive in navigating grey content, as it can tank persuasion metrics. The impact of grey content is twofold – brands lose out on communicating their message, while also seeing decreases across search intent and purchase intent.

# THANK YOU

M/GNA MEDIA TRIALS



CHANNELFACTORY