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AWARDS 2019

**RESEARCH REPORT**

The future of global  
content-led marketing

**JANUARY 2019**

# INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

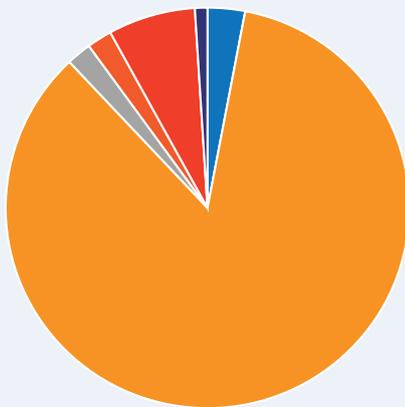
'The future of global content-led marketing' was a survey conducted on behalf of The World Media Group, a strategic alliance of the world's leading media brands who are committed to promoting award winning journalism and the role of international media.

The survey was circulated between 5 November and 5 December 2018 to advertisers, media agencies and media owners with international communications remits, and promoted via the World Media Group's social media channels.

176 responses were received, providing views from around the globe. Asked to describe their primary role, the largest number of respondents [49%] confirmed a planning/strategy role, with 12% working within client advertisers teams and 48% in agencies.

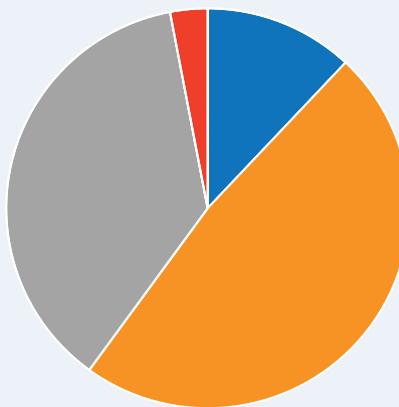
## BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS

**In which region of the world are you based?**



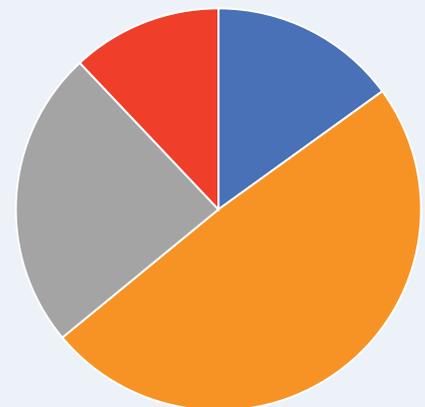
0.6% Africa 3.4% Australasia  
85.7% Europe 1.7% Middle East  
1.7% South America 6.8% USA / Canada

**Who do you work for?**



12% Advertiser 48% Agency  
37% Media Owner Brand Studio  
3% Consultancy

**How would you describe your primary role?**



24% Creative / Content 49% Planning / Strategy  
24% Sales 12% Other

## WORLD MEDIA AWARDS 2019

This survey was conducted to provide insights for the strategic development of The World Media Awards, organised by The World Media Group to celebrate great international, content-led advertising strategy.



The World Media Awards are judged by an independent jury of advertisers, agency representatives and content experts working within media owners. Previous winners include leading international brands such as Shell, Porsche, Tata Motors, Universal Pictures, Visit Faroe Islands, Hennessy XO, and UBS.

The 2019 Awards invite entries in sector categories: Automotive, Corporate Influencer, Financial Services, Luxury, Lifestyle & Fashion, Media & Entertainment, Tech & Telecoms, and Travel & Tourism, as well as entries for the best Brand / Media Owner Partnership. In addition, the 2019 Awards will recognise an individual working for an international advertiser in the new Content Leadership & Innovation Award.

**The deadline for 2019 entries is 7 February 2019.**

**For more information, please visit [www.world-media-group.com/Awards](http://www.world-media-group.com/Awards).**

# SUMMARY

## Content-led advertising set for continued growth

The clear finding of the survey is that content-driven marketing will continue its ascendancy, with 78% of respondents [and 85% of agencies] believing that investment in content marketing will grow over the next two years. 45% of respondents said that more than 50% of the campaigns they work on are now content-driven.

The strongest trend for content over the next 12 months is the expected increase in the use of short form video, with 69% of respondents predicting that they will be using them more. When asked for the content marketing trend that most excites them, VR [virtual reality] / AR [augmented reality] received the highest number of mentions, followed by audio/podcast/voice-related content and the opportunities afforded by increased personalisation.

45%

Said that more than 50% of the campaigns they work on are now content-driven.

78%

Believe that investment in content marketing will grow over the next two years.

## Alignment and engagement is key

Responses to the survey demonstrate a consistent attitude towards the importance of alignment between the advertising brand, the content focus, the media partner and the audience targeted.

When questioned about the factors which contribute the most to a campaign's success once the story has been created, 66% of respondents said that audience and media alignment was the most important factor, whilst 56% cited brand alignment, where the content developed must make sense for the brand or product.

When asked what content-marketing campaigns are best for, the most popular answer was "brand engagement", chosen by 49% of respondents. When it comes to choosing the right media partner, the "quality of audience engagement" was the second most popular attribute, cited by 65% of respondents and second only to "offering a credible editorial environment".

*"It's great to see that advertisers and agencies expect investment in content-driven advertising to grow, reflecting our experience with the World Media Awards, as we have seen a rise in the number and quality of entries we receive every year. But what is also really interesting is that they are recognising the impact of quality journalism on content campaigns. This sentiment matches independent research carried out by MOAT last year which confirmed that readers display higher attention levels when viewing content within a trusted editorial environment."*

Alex Delamain, President of the World Media Group and SVP, Head of Clients Sales and Services at The Economist,



# UNDERSTANDING THE FUTURE FOR GLOBAL CONTENT-LED MARKETING

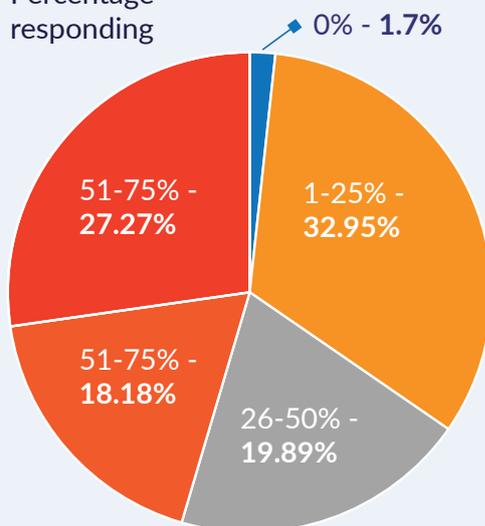
## Predicting the future

The clear finding of this survey of international advertisers, agency strategists, consultants and media owner teams is that investment in content-led advertising will continue to grow.

Over 45% of our respondents stated that 50% or more of the campaigns they currently work on include a branded content element. 78% of our respondents [85% of our agency respondents] believe that content-led campaigns over the next two years will continue to grow. Only 4% of our respondents believe that content-led campaigns will decline.

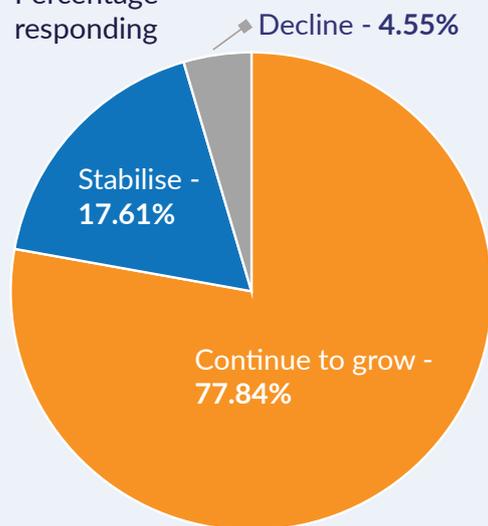
Typically, what proportion of the campaigns that you work on include a branded, content-led component?

Percentage responding



Do you think that content-led campaigns over the next 2 years will:

Percentage responding



*"Here's a sobering thought: we now have a generation of consumers that has never lived without broadband. This technology has transformed everything, and for advertisers it has opened a wealth of opportunities to deliver relevant and engaging content. While people may be blind to banner ads, or choose to install an ad blocker, we all respond to a great story – whether that's text, video or audio. This is a hugely positive development and gives us, as an industry, the opportunity to be much more creative in how we develop communication."*

Caroline Foster Kenny, CEO EMEA, IPG Mediabrands  
Jury Co Chair, World Media Awards 2019



Asked to predict the most exciting trends that they expect to see in content-led advertising over the next two years, our respondents provided a wide array of forecasts – from formats, to strategic trends. As our word cloud shows, there was consensus and excitement around developing formats such as Augmented Reality [AR], Virtual Reality [VR], and use of voice and chatbots. Whilst perhaps less innovative in its technology, the increased use of audio podcasts was also frequently cited. Our respondents see an increased impact of AI technology on content-led marketing, with many mentioning more dynamic creative and increased personalisation. At the same time, there was a clear recognition that there would be a greater emphasis on getting more of the basics right – better stories, improved integration with marketing strategy, authenticity, and effective engagement.

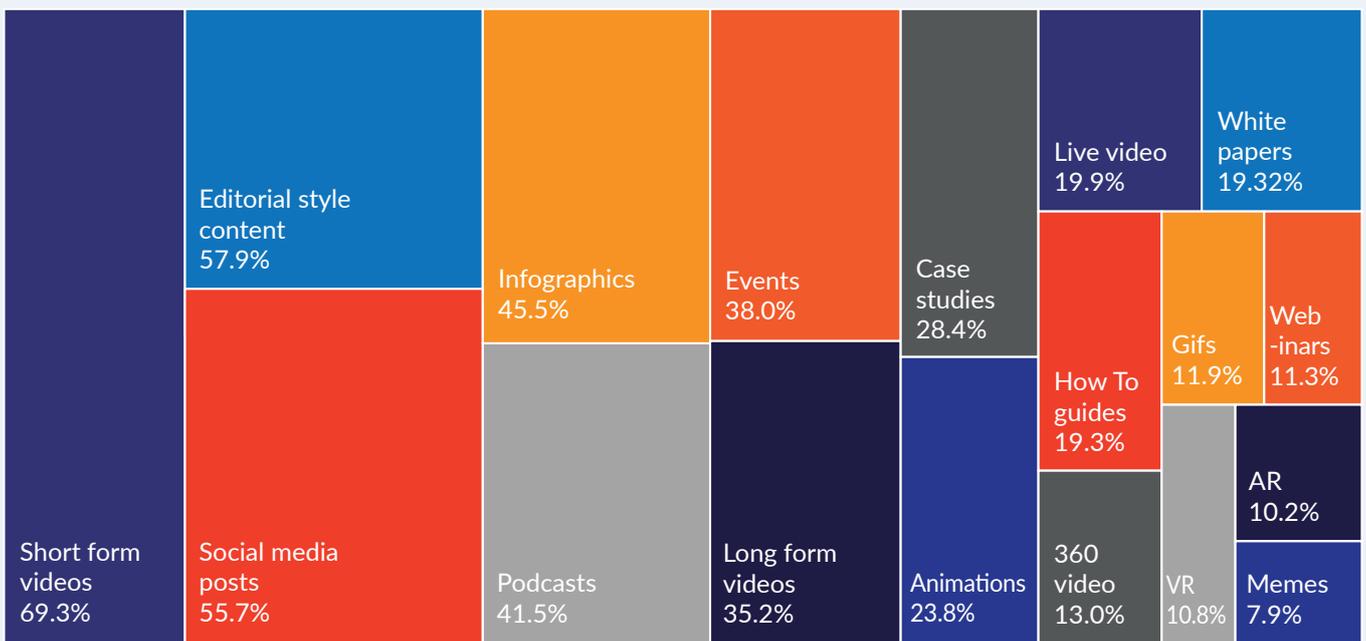
**What are the most exciting trends you expect to see in branding content over the next two years?**



Having asked our respondents to predict the most exciting trends, the survey then drilled down in to the formats that were going to attract the most investment.

Interestingly, on this list of the content formats that our respondents were most likely to actually use in the next 12 months, AR and VR appear much lower – perhaps still only the chosen formats for early adopters. Video is still the leading format, with 69% of respondents expecting to use short form video, 35% planning to use long form video, 20% planning live video, and 13% planning 360 video. 58% of respondents will be focused on editorial-style content, 56% will be using social media posts, 45% will include infographics, and 41% will be creating podcasts. Interestingly, 38% of our respondents are also planning live events as content to directly engage with target audiences.

**What type of content are you likely to use more in the next 12 months? Please select all that apply.**



“The appetite amongst marketers for short form video is getting stronger, driven by audience behaviours on platforms that they access increasingly via mobile. The ‘6 second’ format is being touted as the industry’s next big thing - in the crowded digital world we live in that’s about as long as you get to grab someone’s attention. But like all shiny new marketing toys it’d be a mistake to rely on this alone to get your point across, especially in a B2B context where audiences actually need some sort of follow up that gives them real value.”

Angela Everitt,  
SVP Creative Strategy & Agency Solutions, The Economist Group

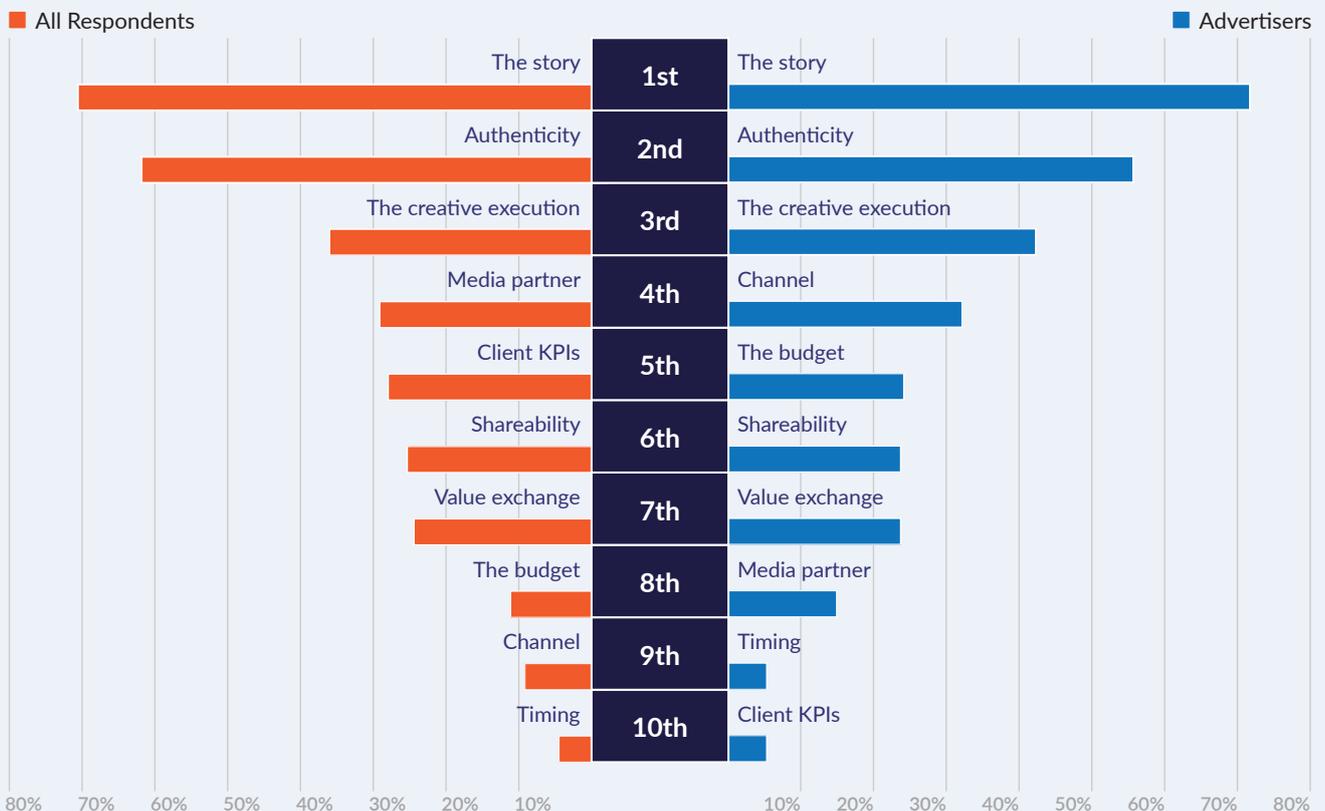


## Planning for and defining success

Our respondents were asked to shortlist the most important elements of a content-led campaign that would help ensure success.

There was consensus amongst our advertiser, agency, consultant and media owner respondents in terms of the three most commonly cited factors: with “the story”, authenticity and creative execution appearing as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd most important factors according to all respondents, and also according to our advertiser respondents. There was also consensus around shareability and creating the right value exchange, appearing at 6th and 7th respectively on both rankings. However, advertiser respondents’ order of priorities differed from the group response on other factors. Whilst 33% of our advertisers selected choice of channel as an important factor, ranking it as the fourth most important factor, choice of channel was down the table as the 9th most important factor according to all respondents. Interestingly advertisers cited “client KPIs” as an important factor the least often, whilst this was ranked 5th by all respondents.

### Please select the most important factors when creating a content-led campaign



*"The most important factor is the added value provided to the consumer, ie: answer the question, 'is my content bringing something useful to my consumer?'"*

Thibaut Portal, Global Media Hub Leader,  
Pernod Ricard World Media Award 2019 Juror

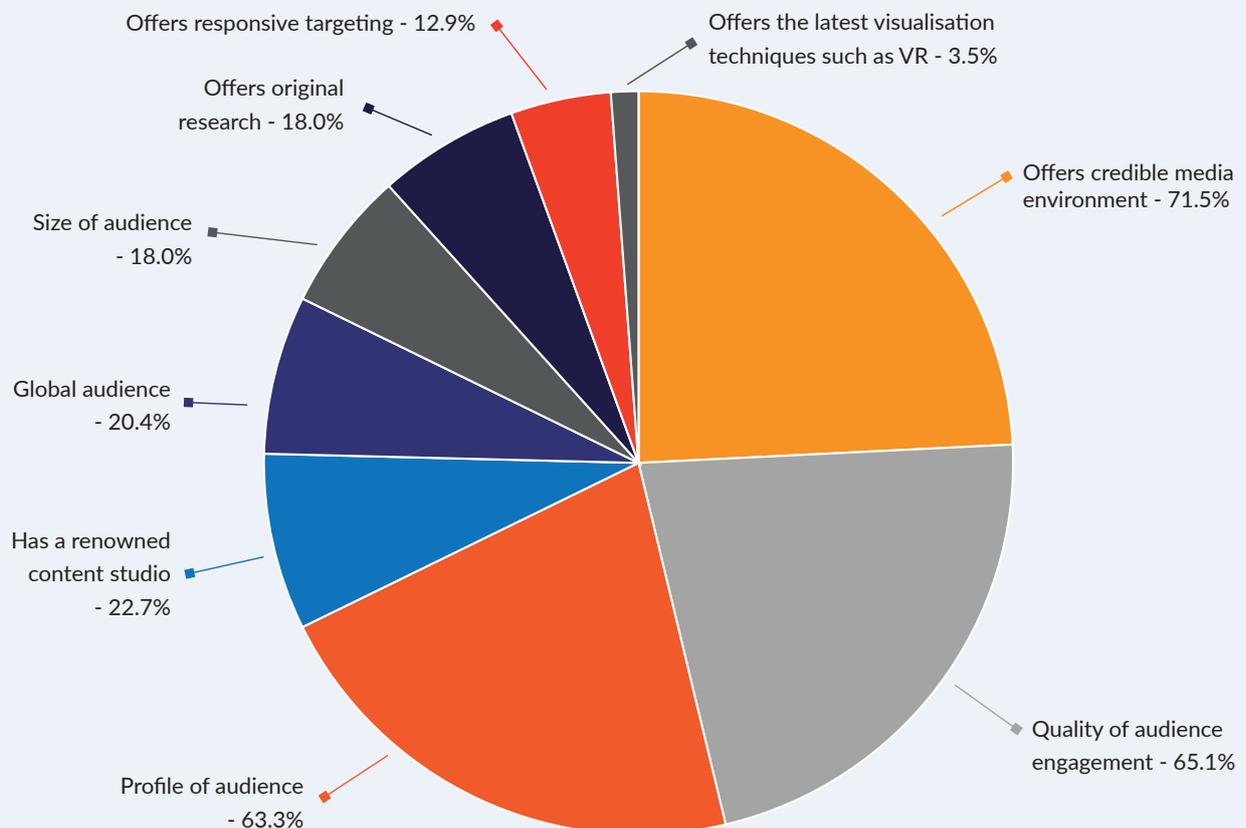


The survey invited our respondents to further define the ingredients for success – having a great story is only the starting point, what are the factors which then contribute the most to a campaign's success?

Our respondents are looking for alignment – with 65% seeking audience and media alignment with the story, and 56% seeking alignment with the brand. Also key is a story that keeps on giving, with 52% looking for "content with legs", with rich themes that can be continued; 45% looking for content that is shared to grow organic reach; and 44% hoping to be able to amplify the story further, through – for example - podcasts and live events.

Given the perceived importance of audience and media alignment, it's perhaps not surprising that the most important factor for a lead media partner in a content-led campaign is that it should offer a credible editorial environment and a high quality of audience engagement. 71% of respondents cited the importance of a credible editorial environment, 65% the quality of audience engagement, and 63% the profile of the audience delivered by the media partner – these three factors garnering much higher responses than any other of the listed factors, with the next most important differentiation that a media owner can offer being the existence of a renowned content studio, cited by 22% of respondents.

### When selecting a lead media partner, what do you look for? Please select the top 3 factors.

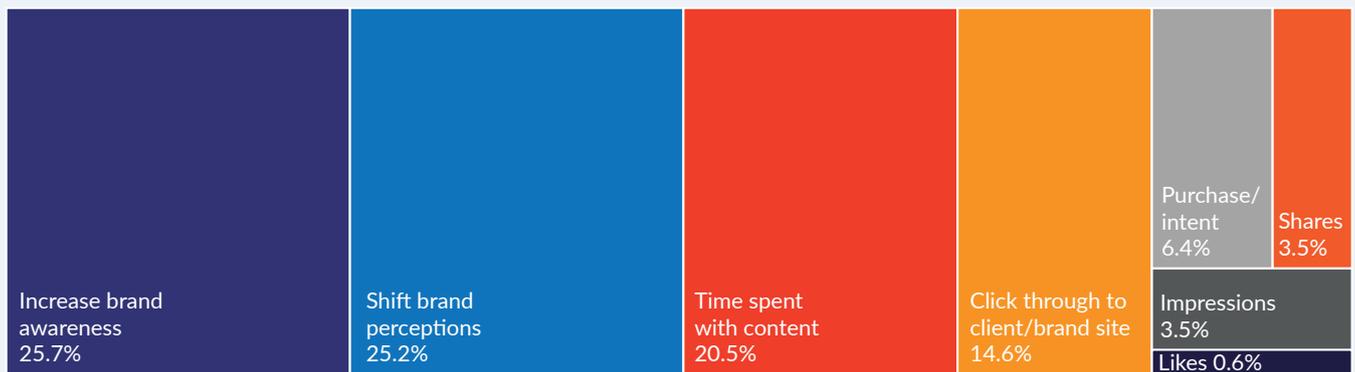


## Setting KPIs and evaluating success

Responses to the survey reveal a slight disconnect between what our respondents perceive to be the best outcomes for content-led marketing and the KPIs that are set to evaluate success.

When asked what a content-led campaign is best for, a clear majority of respondents [49.1%] cite brand engagement. Far fewer respondents [28.3%] suggest that they believe content-led marketing is best for changing perceptions, and 16.8% cite building awareness as a reasonable objective. It's interesting therefore that, when asked what was the main KPI of the most recent campaign our respondents worked on, the two most popular KPIs were a measurable increase in brand awareness and a shift in brand perceptions [each scoring just over 25%]. "Time spent with content", an engagement measure, was only the third most common KPI at 20.5%.

**For the most recent content campaign you worked on, what was the main KPI? [Please select one]**



*"Even within one campaign there can be a vast difference between what content is across both platforms and publishers. There can be hundreds of different iterations. Yet often you are expected to measure these all in the same way – but can editorial really be judged in the same way as a video? In reality it is difficult to apply blanket standards. It's important to first off have a fundamental understanding of what clients want to do and then build content around this – and then set KPIs. Sometimes, though, it can be useful to have overarching measures that are standard across all campaigns, with different metrics for specific channels and executions. As important as data and metrics are, there is often a gap in the understanding they provide when creating campaigns. They miss the magic of the creative spark that can make a good campaign great and they tend to look at averages – when content is all about talking to ONE person and engaging them in a personal and magical way. They look to the demographics and not the individual."*

Jim Piercy, Creative Director, Custom Studios EMEA/Asia, The Wall Street Journal  
Jury Co-Chair, World Media Awards 2019



Whilst the World Media Awards are looking for entries from campaigns that demonstrate the success of content-led, cross-border campaigns, it's also interesting to look at who or what is seen to be at fault when campaigns fail to deliver. The survey results suggest that everyone blames everyone else. For advertisers, the blame lies predominantly in failings with the creative [32%]. However, agencies blame poor strategy [30%] and lack of media support [22%], while media brands see the fault also resting with poor strategy [37%] or being given a bad brief [21%].

**In your experience, what is the most likely cause of a content campaign failing to deliver?**

[Please select one]

Ranking	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Advertiser	Poor creative 31.8%	Poor strategy 18.2%	Bad brief 18.2%	Lack of media support 13.6%	Insufficient content budget 9.0%	Poor targeting 4.6%	Lack of SEO 4.6%
Agency	Poor strategy 30.1%	Lack of media support 21.7%	Bad brief 21.7%	Poor creative 18.1%	Poor targeting 6.0%	Insufficient content budget 2.4%	Lack of SEO 0.00%
Media brand studio	Poor strategy 36.5%	Bad brief 20.7%	Lack of media support 12.7%	Insufficient content budget 11.1%	Poor creative 11.1%	Poor targeting 7.9%	Lack of SEO 0.00%



## FURTHER READING

For examples of great content-led advertising communication targeting global audiences, please visit [www.world-media-group.com/Awards/Hall-of-Fame](http://www.world-media-group.com/Awards/Hall-of-Fame)

To find out how to enter the World Media Awards 2019, please contact: [katie@world-media-group.com](mailto:katie@world-media-group.com)