



THE EBOOK OF

# Actionable Creative Insights

BY SMARTLY.IO



*"At Creative Studio, we are the ambassadors  
of data-inspired creative that builds brands  
and drives performance."*



The Smartly.io Creative Studio specializes in paid social working at the intersection of creativity, technology, and data. As fast movers, our philosophy is to continuously learn, test, and iterate in an agile manner. We love exploring new ways to craft storytelling that is optimized for mobile consumption. We consider technology as the enabler of our creative practice. Our mission is to help our customers automate storytelling at scale. We work closely with global brands by running creative workshops, sharing best practices and insights, and producing creative assets for ad automation.



# Get Inspired by Early Learnings from Smartly.io Customers

Smartly.io Creative Studio works with digital advertisers around the world to help them scale their creative with automation as well as video- and mobile-first strategies. This ebook brings early learnings and accumulated insights and learnings from brands around the globe: Smartly.io works with 650+ brands and agencies and handles over \$1 billion in ad spend annually.

You'll learn how to leverage data in briefing and explore actionable creative insights that are, in most cases, proven to drive performance. Get inspired by creative examples from Smartly.io customers and start applying these insights into your workflows today.

## After Reading This You'll Learn How to:

- ◆ Use data for precise creative briefs
- ◆ Interpret and design with behavioral cues
- ◆ Understand different KPIs in the creative context
- ◆ Design for action
- ◆ Leverage seasonal and organic content in your creative



# The Data and the Creative Brief

If you're a creative, chances are that, at some point of your career, you've been briefed with one-liners such as "Let's just wow them!" or "Make this look pretty". While they may sound like vaguely directional advice, these do not a creative brief make.

Vague or non-descriptive briefing is the most common culprit to unsuccessful campaigns. If the creative team is not briefed properly, the result rarely hits the nail on its head – at worst the project can become a complete waste of resources.

The goal of a creative brief is to set the strategic groundwork before moving to creative ideation and concepting, and in our case, always through data. The brief should communicate who the audience is, business challenges, desired outcomes, as well as creative guidelines. This information is paramount for the creative team to design content that serves the correct purpose. The clearer the creative brief, the better the campaign.

Our creatives have had the most success with briefs that include at least:

- ◆ The audience profile
- ◆ Marketing challenges
- ◆ Campaign objective and KPIs
- ◆ Insights from previous campaigns (best/worst performing ads)
- ◆ Budget for the campaign
- ◆ Design and copy guidelines
- ◆ Creative Hypotheses from previous campaigns
- ◆ Testing plan

# Actionable Creative Insights

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Performance marketers live and breathe data and base their decisions on campaign performance. Yet, creative teams are often left to rely on imagination and product information to create campaign assets. How can advertisers bring data and creative one step closer and craft ads that are not only imaginative, but effective, too?

Learn how our creative team uses actionable insights to design beautiful digital advertising.

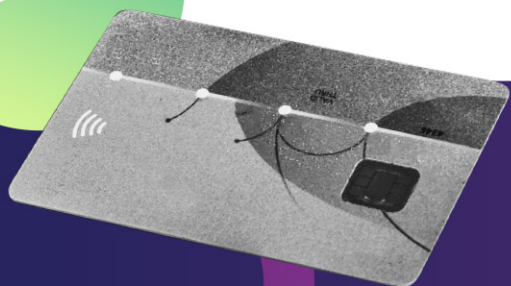


## Go beyond KPIs - Look at Behavioral Clues

When you analyze campaign performance through the lens of a specific objective, such as app installs, your data can tell you much more than just how it is performing against that singular KPI. Take a look at how the audience behaves and base your creative decisions on the bigger picture.

We were working with an app advertiser and analyzed what happened after the audience downloaded their app, from driving purchases within the app to repeat purchase behavior or lack thereof. We realized that while the app rose to the top of its category in terms of downloads, only 10% of the users completed in-app purchases.

Our team then gathered data to produce specific creatives in order to drive purchases up in retargeting campaigns.





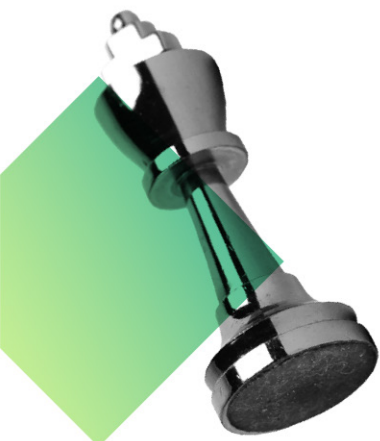


## Beware the tradeoff between different KPIs

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Look at your KPIs across the different stages in the funnel to decipher what they can tell you about your creative; for example, app install campaigns with high click-through-rates may not always turn into a high volume of installs. Use the data to make the right decisions.

Don't make decisions based on the first data point but look at the context. If view-through is good (= your ad is interesting) but conversions are not there (= consumer is not convinced), iterate your creatives so that your offering is clearer. If your creative communicates your value proposition well, you are more likely to convert those clicks to installs. Combine eye-catching motion and a clear value proposition.



# Create Seasonal Content

Another way to look at context with data is when the click-through-rate of high-performing ads starts going down. In these cases, the best way to drive engagement and avoid ad fatigue is to create seasonally relevant content.

Relate to how your audience is feeling during the season (holidays, summer, fall, local celebrations, and events) and produce creatives that convey it. Creatives with seasonal elements are likely to beat that much-feared ad fatigue and improve click-through-rates compared to generic and static content.

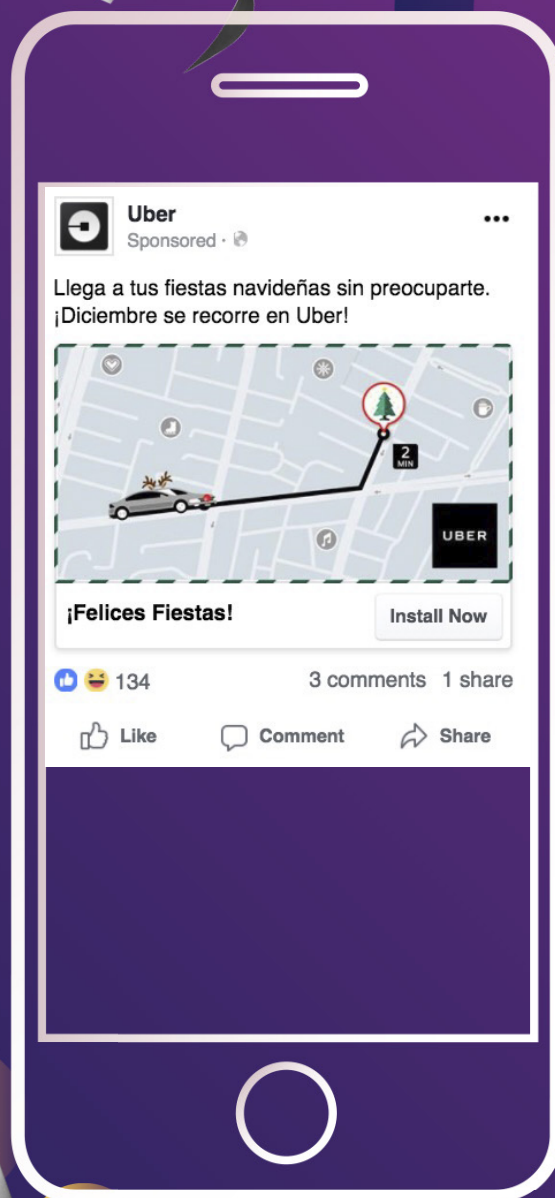
## Case Highlight:

We suggested Uber to iterate their ads to reflect seasonality, current topics, events.

Results:

**BEST PERFORMING  
AD OF THE SEASON**

\* Latin America, 2017.





## Make Your Value Proposition Clear

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Different industries call for different approaches when it comes to highlighting your value proposition, ie. why should a user download your app, buy your product, book your service, and so forth. For example: gaming brands convert users better with actual gameplay videos compared to more branding-focused content.

For brands in other industries, such as e-commerce or travel, we have seen that clear and concise copy describing the main value proposition or offering has driven better conversions than long and fuzzy texts.



# Suggest the Action You're Driving in the Creative

Use visual and verbal cues (when the creative is a video) to encourage users to take action. In Carousel ads, your creatives should encourage users to swipe right to move to the next carousel card. In Instagram Stories, try adding a “swipe up” arrow or message to your video.

## Case Highlight:

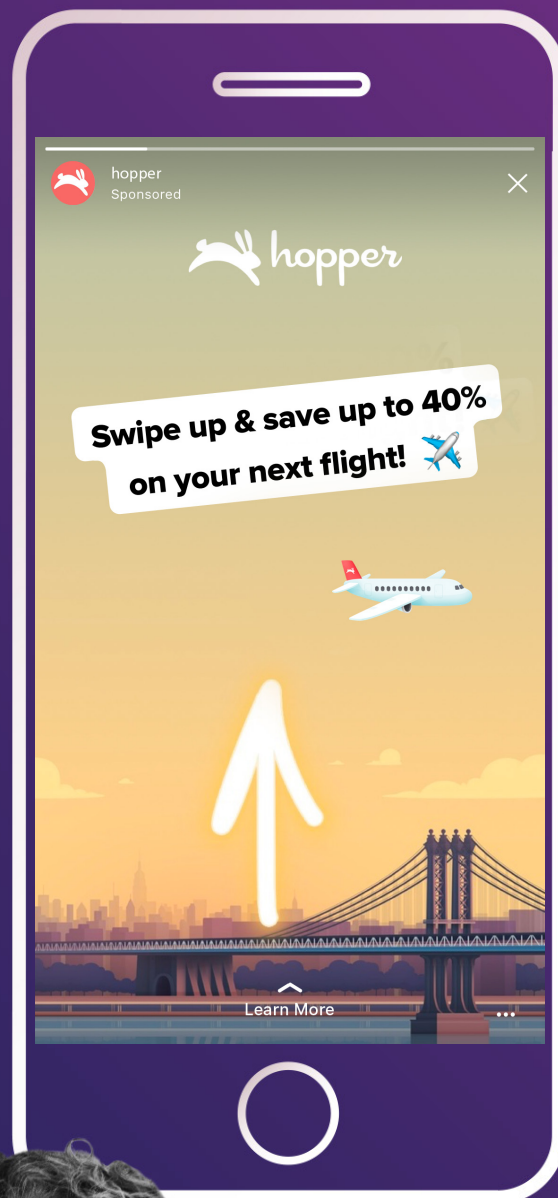
Hopper is an award-winning travel app that predicts future airfare prices. They saw a drop in cost-per-installs on Instagram Stories after adding an arrow animation that prompted users to swipe up,

Incorporating these kinds of que elements can increase your conversion rates as you encourage format-native behavior.

## Results:

<b>+67%</b> INSTALLS	<b>3X</b> C V
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\* As a result, over 50% of their ad spend was moved to Instagram Stories.



# Asset Optimization: Create for a Variety of Ad Placements

To drive performance, consider diversifying your campaign creatives. Adapt assets to a variety of ad placements the Facebook family of apps offers – Facebook’s Create to Convert studies show that combining video with still assets within the same campaign leads to better performance for DR objectives and results in more conversions than video-only or static image-only campaigns. According to Facebook, mixing and matching assets is key to engaging audiences and driving results.

## Case Highlight:

BIG SMILE WEEKS is a seasonal campaign that TUI runs multiple times a year with up to 50% in discounts. Previously, TUI had used two videos with two language versions to run the promotion on Instagram Stories – a placement similar to Facebook Stories.

Creative Studio produced new video creatives that pulled dynamic content from their destination catalog and combined with TUI brand elements to ensure creative quality and consistency – even when running a high volume of ad placement variations.

## Results:

<b>+14%</b>	<b>-12%</b>
CTR	CPA

\* When incorporating Facebook Stories as a placement.




[Click here to watch the video](#)



## Other Placements for TUI

Examples of Feed Video, Carousel and Link Ads.



 Click here to watch the video





# Support Direct Response with Branded Video

Unless you are a category leader or very well known in your industry, chances are that your audience needs to be introduced and educated about your company and brand before they feel comfortable enough to purchase your service or product. Running direct response and brand video campaigns simultaneously for the same audience can nudge consumers to trust you and thus, convert.

## Case Highlight:

An Asian e-commerce advertiser saw a 23% increase in performance with this combination.





## Combine Branding with Direct Response Tactics

Take cue from your top performing branding campaigns. Combine direct response tactics with these insights to drive relevance.

Our Creative Studio helped Tokopedia, the largest Indonesian marketplace, turn their influencer footage into ads that combined product with branding.

The campaign consisted on automated videos that pulled products from a product catalog and added relevant influencer videos to accompany the offering.

Results:

**INCREASED TRAFFIC FOR  
FEMALE AUDIENCES**



[Click here to watch the video](#)



## Personalize Creative with Technology

Relevancy determines whether your audience will stop and watch your creatives. Adding a localized element will help capture attention and stand out from the rest. Producing localized creatives manually is cumbersome and slow – there are solutions that automate localization at scale, all you need to do is have all the ad building blocks in a feed format, such as an online spreadsheet. This way, you can use the same base creative and overlay localized copy such as the name of the country, city or neighborhood, address of the nearest location of your business, opening hours, local promotions or even local weather conditions with feed-based video creation solutions.

Localization is particularly effective for retail, travel and education advertisers, or restaurant chains and other franchises. Any service which availability is tied to location, or products for which there is local inventory or availability data.

For example, the media agency Carat automated hyper-localized and weather-based creatives for the convenience store chain Mix – each of the ads were unique to the 150 locations the chain has.



# Build for Mobile Viewing - Always

Mobile is the new norm, and you have seconds to capture attention. Whether you're running direct response or branding, you need to be interesting right off the bat. When driving action such as click-throughs and purchases, consider making your product the hero of the story in a creative manner. How can you be surprising, funny, interesting or useful with the limited time you have? Incorporate your brand identity early to build brand trust. Use engaging post copy, express yourself in the same language your ideal customers are using. For video, consolidate your message to fifteen seconds or less on mobile. When your objective is branding, longer videos can also work.

## Mobile Considerations:

- ◆ Remember Sound Off viewing: captions are key
- ◆ Delight with sound design for those who do have sounds turned on
- ◆ Frame for mobile first / vertical
- ◆ Highlight key elements
- ◆ Create visual surprises
- ◆ Design for vertical views
- ◆ Run with the shortest version that conveys your message
- ◆ The longer your video, the higher need for a narrative





# Reflect Your Audience's Realities in Your Ads

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If you're looking to build a stronger connection between your brand and audience, build a creative that reflects the realities of your audience back to them. When designing content, you need to understand the mobile-first behavior many consumers are exhibiting:

- ◆ Consumers have higher expectations than ever for “right here, right now experiences”
- ◆ People are making on-the-spot decisions, can your creatives reflect that?
- ◆ People expect to receive products and services immediately, can they buy what is in the creative?
- ◆ People are increasingly making last-minute plans
- ◆ The well-advised consumer: they will read reviews and research.
- ◆ Can you incorporate reasons to trust and buy within your creative?
- ◆ Marketing effectively to consumers means reflecting these realities back to them.





## Create Consistent Design Experiences

Think about continuity and design all your touchpoints from ads to landing pages to convey a consistent aesthetic. If you run ads that differ dramatically from the next destination (such as your website), chances are that you might not drive the action you desire or lose people along the way. We've seen with our customers that design consistency correlates positively with engagement rates.

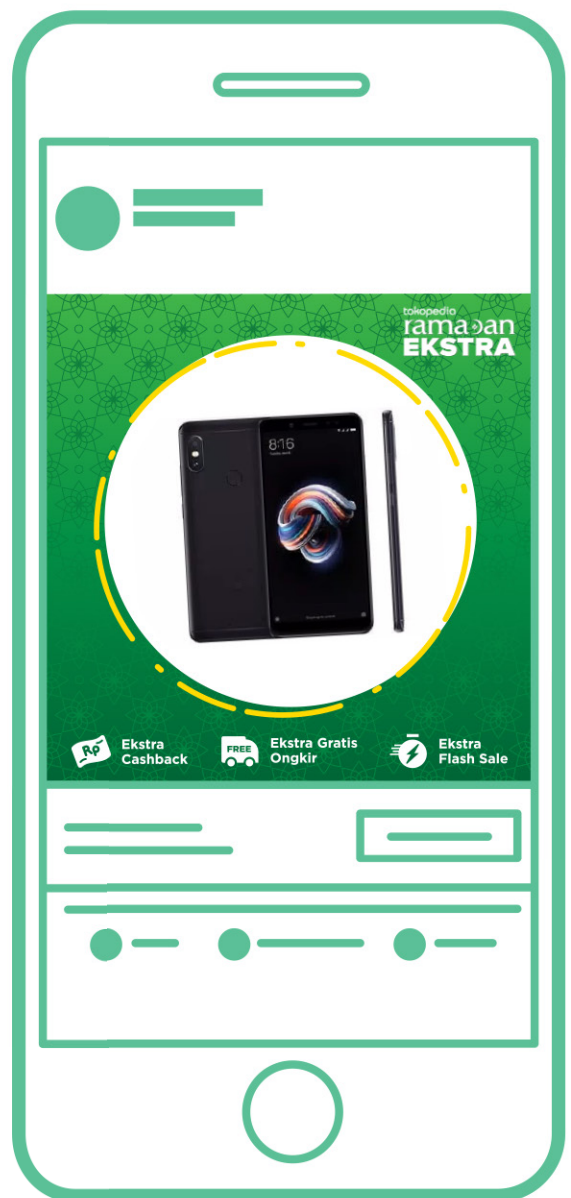
### Case Highlight:

Ramadan EKSTRA is an important seasonal campaign Tokopedia runs to drive sales during the celebration. As a listing marketplace, their product feed imagery consists of user-generated content and thus have no control over image quality. With Image Templates (ie. branded overlays), Tokopedia was able to run ads that were designed to mimic the destination aesthetic – even with images taken and uploaded by resellers.

### Results:

**HIGHEST NO. OF CONVERSIONS**

\* During the seasonal campaign.





# Experiment to Learn, Plan to Test

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If you're first starting out in social video advertising or creating ads with for new formats like Collection or Instagram Stories, make a testing plan and assume you'll be editing your creatives, especially videos, based on performance data. Elements to consider in your testing plan include alternative calls-to-action, different cuts and lengths, and copy versions. Only test one change at a time to determine what moves the needle. Read our ebook "The Ultimate Framework for Creative Testing" for more.

With creative testing, it pays off to be hypothesis-driven. As important as it is to test just one variable at a time, you should always start by asking yourself a few questions:

- ◆ Which variables/elements am I considering to test and why?
- ◆ What kind of approaches have worked in the past that I could methodically test to verify the hypothesis?
- ◆ What kind of testing plan will bring meaningful learnings for my brand?



## Final Notes



With creative insights and best practices, it's important to mention that they can only take you so far. Try to drill down and understand what these insights could mean for your brand, so you can apply them only when they fit your business and company.

# Why Partner With Smartly.io?



## Extension Of Your Team

No tickets or waiting – we answer and solve fast.

## Measurable Results At Scale

Optimize your return on ad spend.

## Efficiency Through Automation

Wave goodbye to manual work.

## Creative Automation And Services

Data-inspired creatives, human insights.

## Innovate Faster

Access what's new before the competition.

Smartly.io makes online advertising easy, effective, and enjoyable. We combine creative automation, ad operations, and outstanding customer service to help over 600+ brands scale their results – not headcount.

[www.smartly.io](http://www.smartly.io)



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