

A Slice Of Lemon.

A summary of *Lemon* by Orlando Wood



Lemon.

This advertising brain has stopped working properly.

It has lost its power to persuade, its ability to make people feel, and its talent to entertain.

How has this happened? And is there anything we can do about it?

In this challenging book, Orlando Wood argues that a golden age for

advertising technology has been far from a golden age for advertising creativity.

He shows how today's analytical culture has sent the industry's admired reputation for creativity into reverse.

In place of a creative Renaissance, he maintains, we are now witnessing nothing less than a creative Reformation, a 'stripping of the altars'.

Reducing what was once dazzling artform to dreary science.

So how should agencies and clients correct the wrong turn we have taken?

Orlando offers some surprisingly counter-intuitive solutions of his own.

If the advertising brain has stopped working properly, maybe this is the repair manual.

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Lemon, by Orlando Wood, was published by the IPA in October 2019.

This white paper mixes some of Orlando's charts with a written summary of the book for a digest of Lemon's key points.

However, for the full Lemon experience we strongly recommend buying or reading the book itself!

Lemon opens with a focus on the "Crisis In Creativity" identified by analysts Les Binet and Peter Field (among others) and outlined in their recent work for the IPA.

Creative effectiveness is in decline. The "effectiveness multiplier" for creatively awarded work has fallen, and campaigns produce fewer large business effects.



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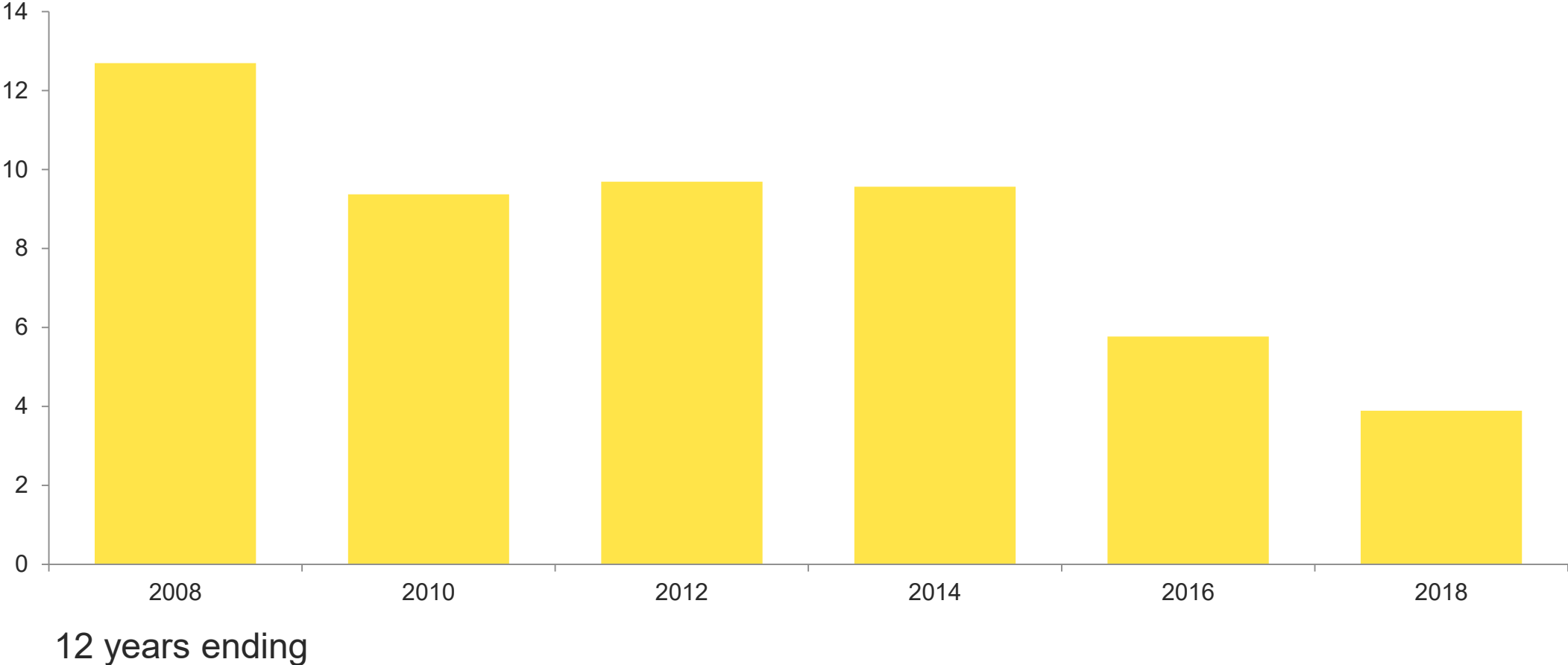
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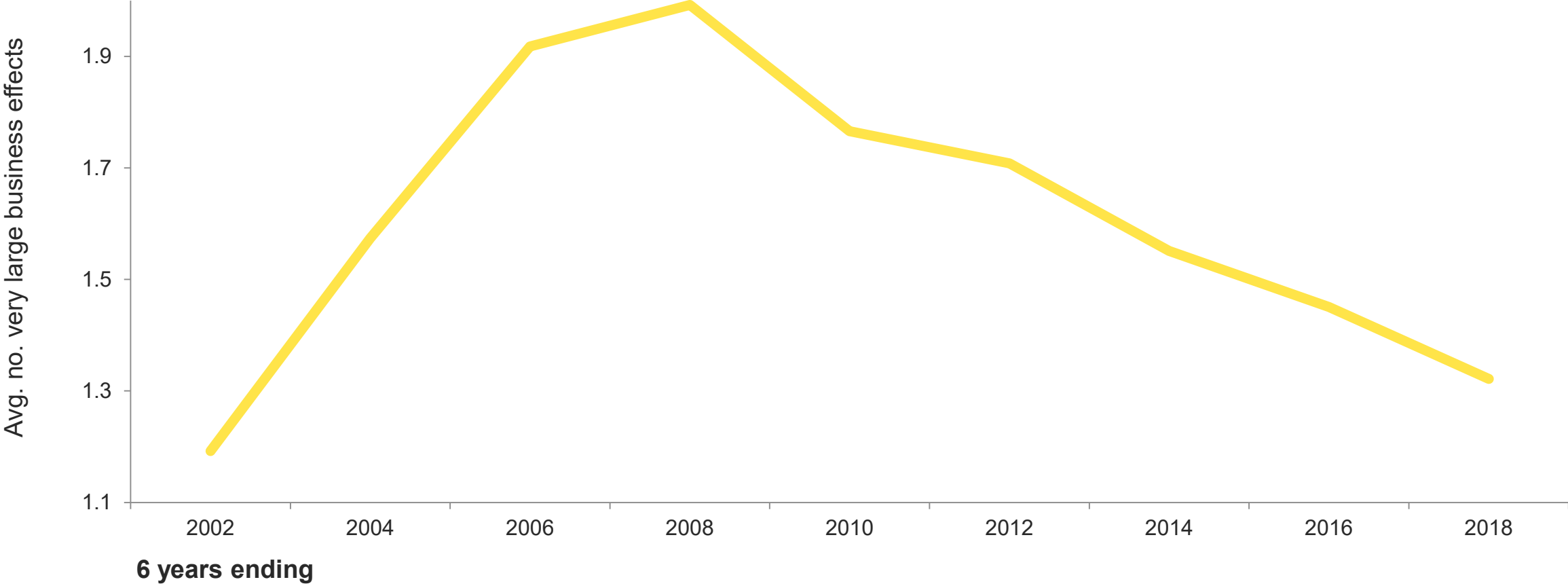
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The crisis in creativity.

Ratio of awarded: non-awarded SOV Efficiency



The decline in advertising effectiveness.



What's Behind The Crisis?

If creativity is under threat, then what's responsible? Accounts of the crisis look to a variety of factors – like shifts in spend towards digital channels, greater emphasis on the short-term, and structural changes in the advertising industry.

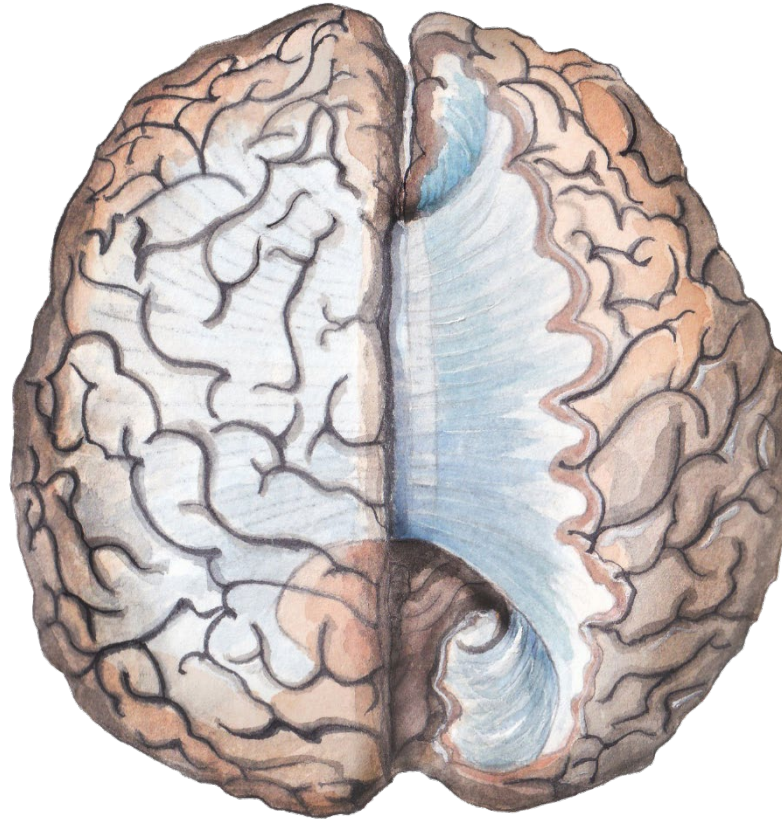
Lemon asks – what if there's a deeper pattern influencing these? Might the answer lie in psychology and the science of how we perceive and relate to the world?

Has advertising's brain turned sour?

To answer this, Orlando turned to the work of Iain McGilchrist, author of *The Master And His Emissary*, and an expert on *brain lateralisation* – the science of the left and right brain.

Narrow
Goal-orientated
Abstraction (parts)
Categorises
Explicit
Cause and effect
Repeatability
Literal, factual
Self-absorbed and dogmatic
Language, signs and symbols
Rhythm

Left



Broad
Vigilant
Context (whole)
Empathises
Implicit
Connections and relationships
Novelty
Metaphorical
Self-aware and questioning
Time, space and depth
Music

Right

The Left And Right Brains.

You've probably heard of the left and right brain.

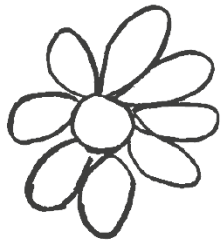
You may also have heard that the differences are a myth.

In fact, it's less a myth, more a misunderstanding. It's not that the two hemispheres "do different things".

They just "do things differently".



Left brain represents



Left Only

Right brain sees the whole



Whole brain



Right Only

Left- And Right-Brained Culture.

McGilchrist's work doesn't just outline the latest science on the left- and right-brain, it shows how a shift in thinking style leaves traces in culture.

Lemon follows in these footsteps, tracing the impact of these two ways of attending the world across time and cultural movements.

It shows the pendulum swinging, again and again, between culture that reflects a balanced-brain view of the world and culture that reflects a more left-brained way of approaching things.

Here's an example of the shift from mid- to late-Roman Imperial mosaic art.





Scene from New Comedy (street musicians), mosaic, Pompeii, late 2nd Century or beginning of 1st Century B.C.



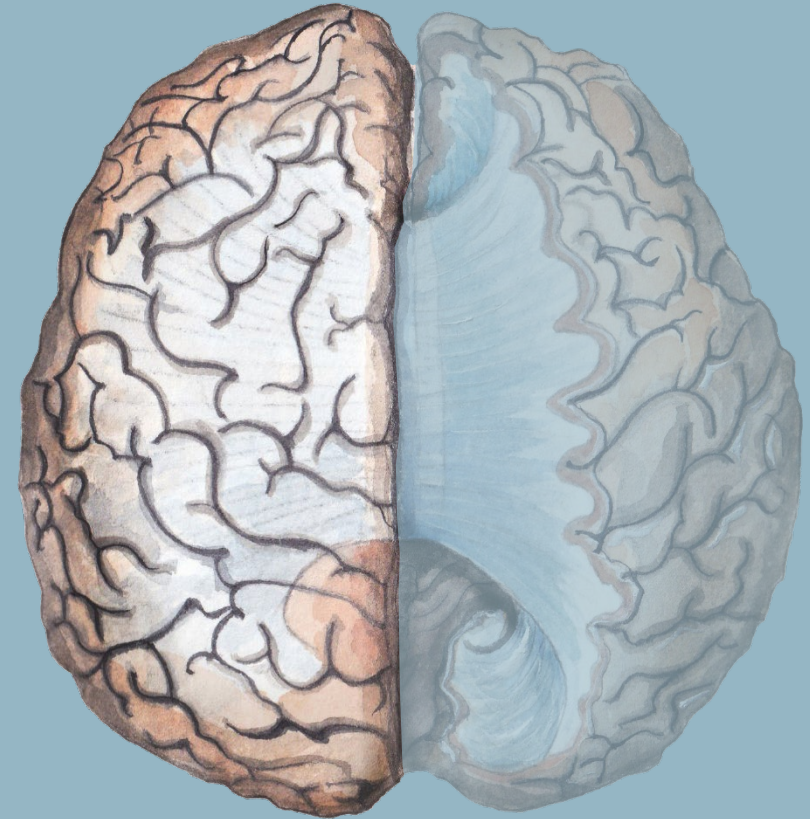
The Image of Christ, mosaic, Hinton St Mary, Dorset, 4th Century A.D., British Museum

When The Left Brain Takes Over.

In the first picture, we saw depth of perspective and detail, ambiguity, a moment caught in time and a strong sense of 'betweenness' – informal and emotional relationships between figures. These are right-brained characteristics.

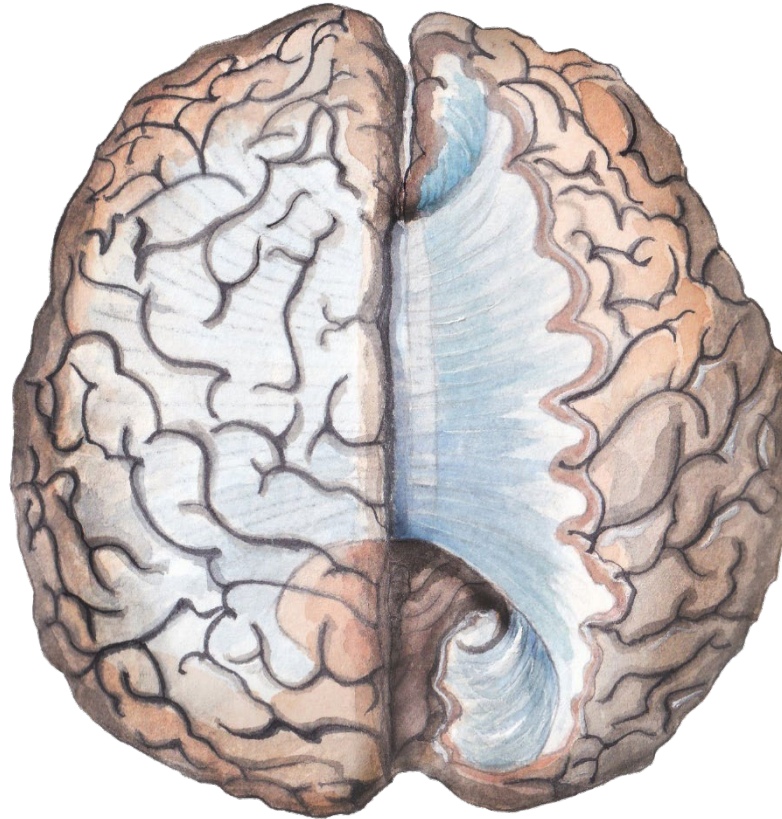
In the second, perhaps 400 years later, that perspective is gone. In its place is flatness, cruder and more schematic figure work, unilateral communication and direct symbolism. These appeal far more to the left brain.

Lemon is full of examples from Roman to modern times. It uses art and sculpture to describe the traces that left- and whole-brained thinking leave on culture. And shows how a similar shift in thinking style has happened this century in business, society and advertising.



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The Divided Brain In The 21st Century.

In *Lemon*, Orlando Wood applies McGilchrist's insights to advertising.

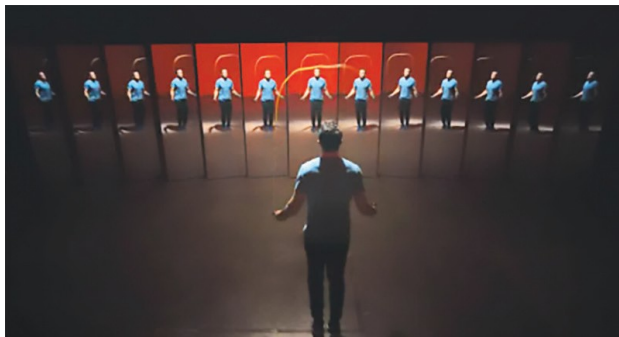
Taking a broad and quantified view of modern popular culture, *Lemon* finds evidence of a shift towards material which appeals to the left brain.

This century, songs have become simpler and lyrics more repetitive. The proportion of sequels and franchise movies in the cinema has increased. There are fewer sitcoms on TV and more competitive shows and programmes about making things.

Advertising is part of culture, and it would be surprising if advertising did not show similar changes.

Lemon shows that it does.

The Left Brain in Advertising.



In this one 2018 ad for GoDaddy, we see a host of left-brained tropes: obtrusive text, abstracted body parts, flat colour fields and an obsession with the self – mirrors, make-up and solo exercise.

Is The Left Brain Dominating Advertising?

Not all ads are as extreme in their embrace of left-brain elements.

But at the heart of *Lemon* is a unique longitudinal analysis by System1 that shows the rise of the left-brained style of advertising in the last 10-15 years.

Orlando started by identifying features that appealed either to the left- or right- brain.

Here are some examples of contrasts between left- and right-brain ads. For the full list we analysed, see *Lemon*.

(All analysis of left- and right-brained features in ads was conducted using an independent contractor with no other knowledge of the project, to minimise bias in results.)



Left Brain

Flatness

Abstracted body part (e.g. hands, mouth)

Monologue (e.g. testimonial)

Adjectives used as nouns

Highly rhythmic soundtrack

Right Brain

A clear sense of place

Characters with agency (voice, movement, expression)

Dialogue

Play on words or subversion of language

Music with melody

The Rise Of The Left Brain?

We then took advertising breaks from one of the UK's longest-running shows, *Coronation Street*.

By choosing ads which ran in the same week of the same show, year-on-year, we could run an analysis which minimised other shifts in the media landscape to focus on the work itself.

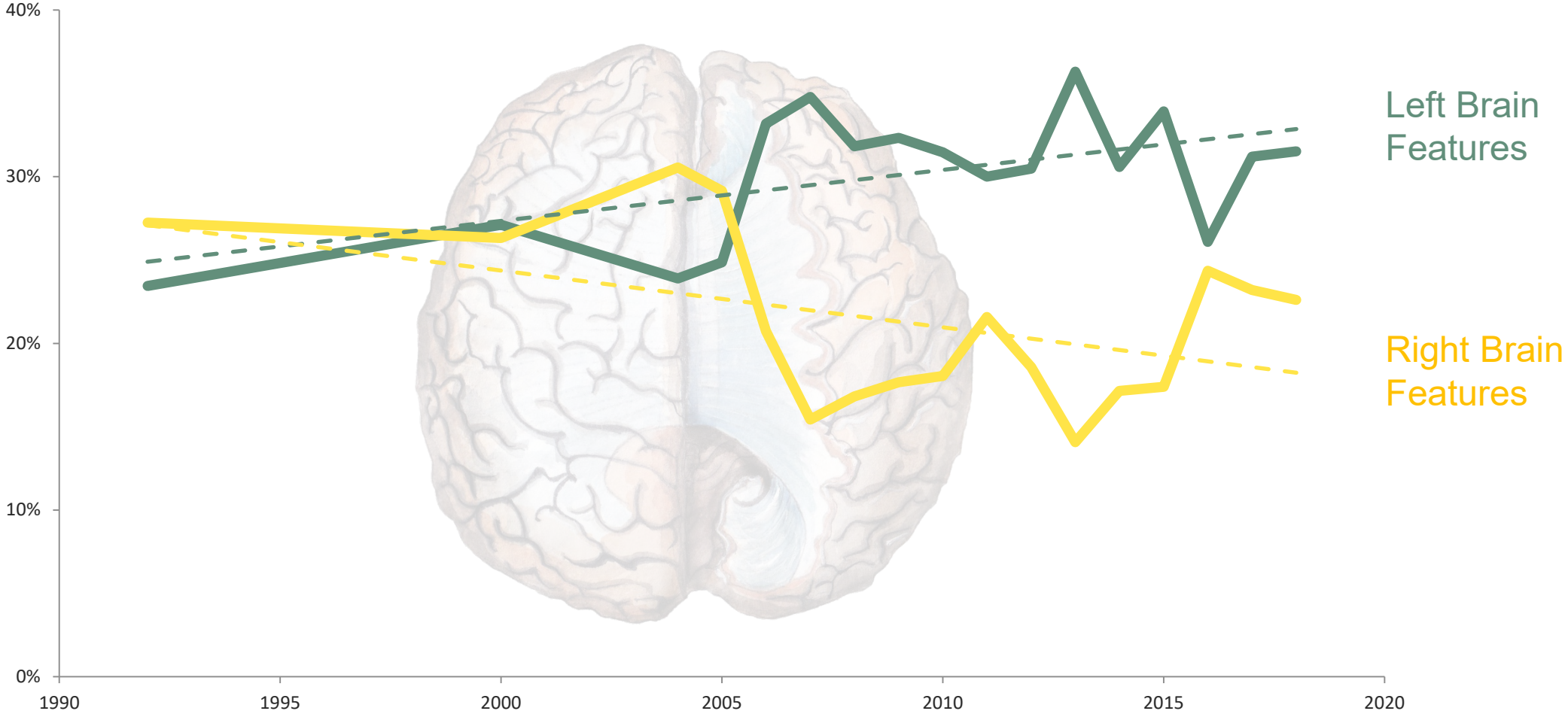
We analysed each ad for the presence of the left- and right-brained elements.

We were looking for evidence of shifts in the style of advertising – and whether these shifts favoured the way the left brain sees the world.

Here's what we found.

Right-brain features have declined; left-brain features now dominate.

Average proportion of left and right brain features present across all ads in ad breaks from each year

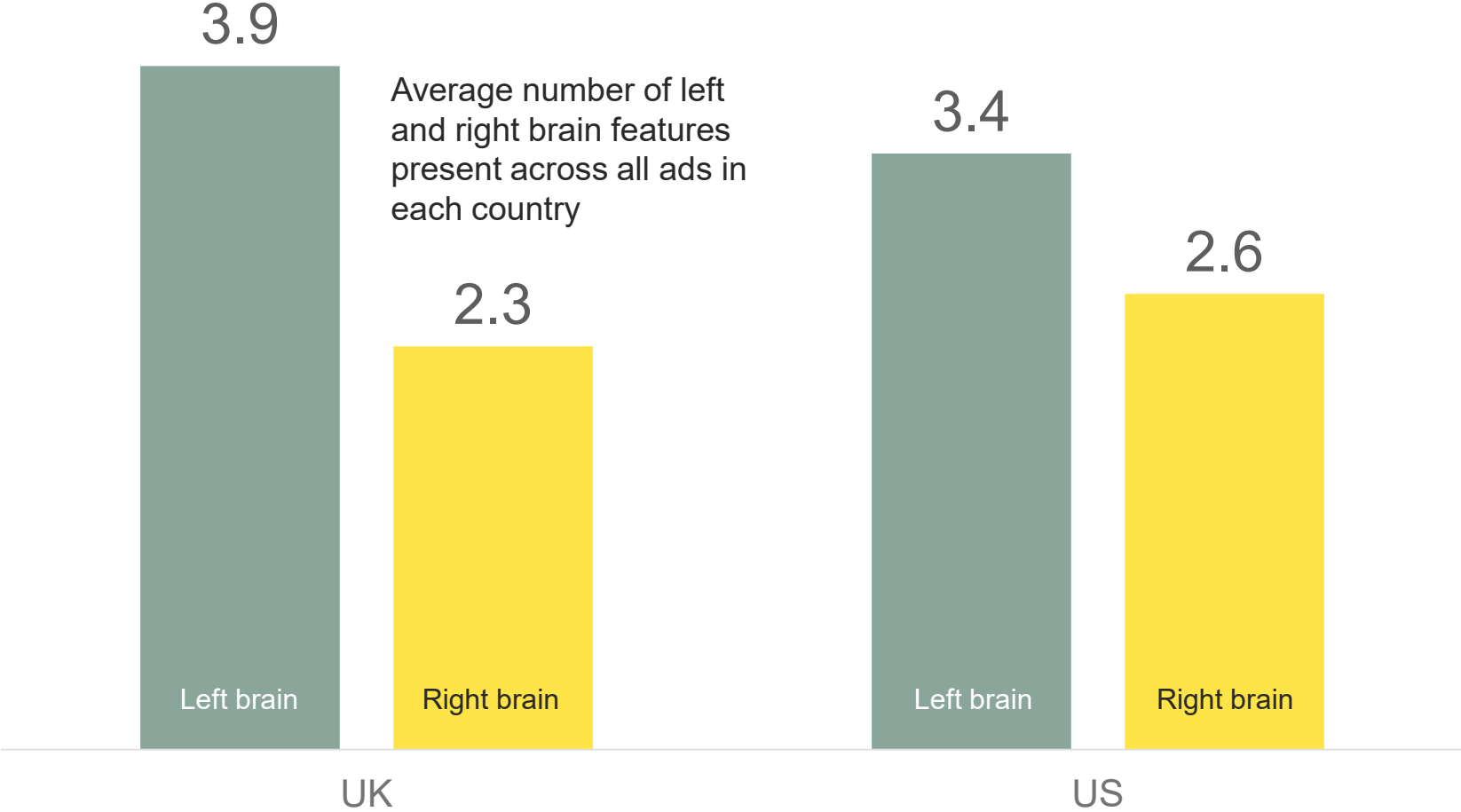


A Left-Brained Era.

We ran the same analysis on contemporary ads, taking a random sample of US and UK ads from System1's Ad Ratings database, which includes every ad that airs in 7 major sectors.

The results confirm that left-brained features are far more common in today's advertising than right-brained elements.

Left-brain dominance today in the UK and the US.



Are Left-Brained Ads Less Effective?

None of this would matter if a preference for left- or right-brained elements in ads was simply a matter of taste.

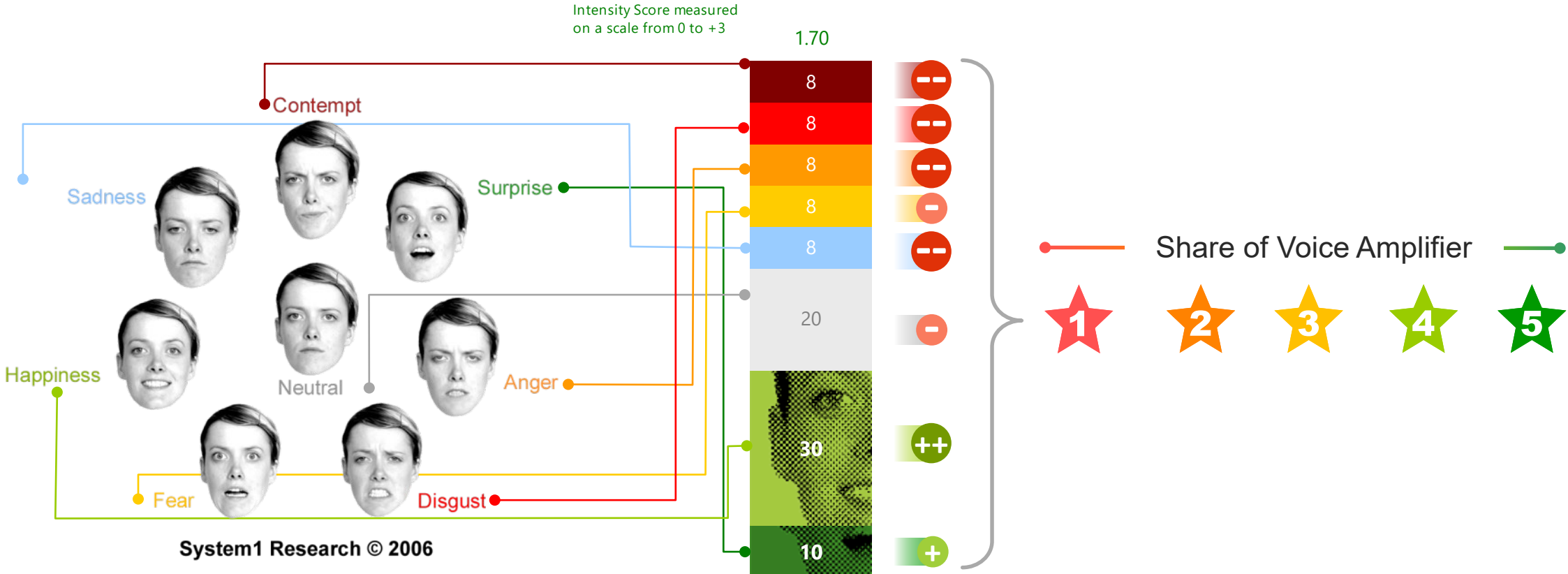
The rise in left-brained elements coincides with the decline in creative effectiveness. But is it just a coincidence?

We set out to find out if left-brained ads were less effective.

In their 2012 book, *The Long And The Short Of It*, Binet and Field showed that campaigns which took an emotional approach were far more likely to create long-term profitable growth than campaigns which used a more rational, message-driven strategy.

If you want to predict the effectiveness of an ad – its potential to drive growth – the simplest and best way of doing that is to measure people's emotional response to it.

Predicting share gain from emotional response.



Amplifying Share Of Voice.

Measuring the emotional response to ads gives us a Star-Rating from 1- to 5. This predicts how much the quality of the ad can amplify the investment made in it.

We see this most dramatically at category level. *Lemon* includes an example, from the UK cereals sector.

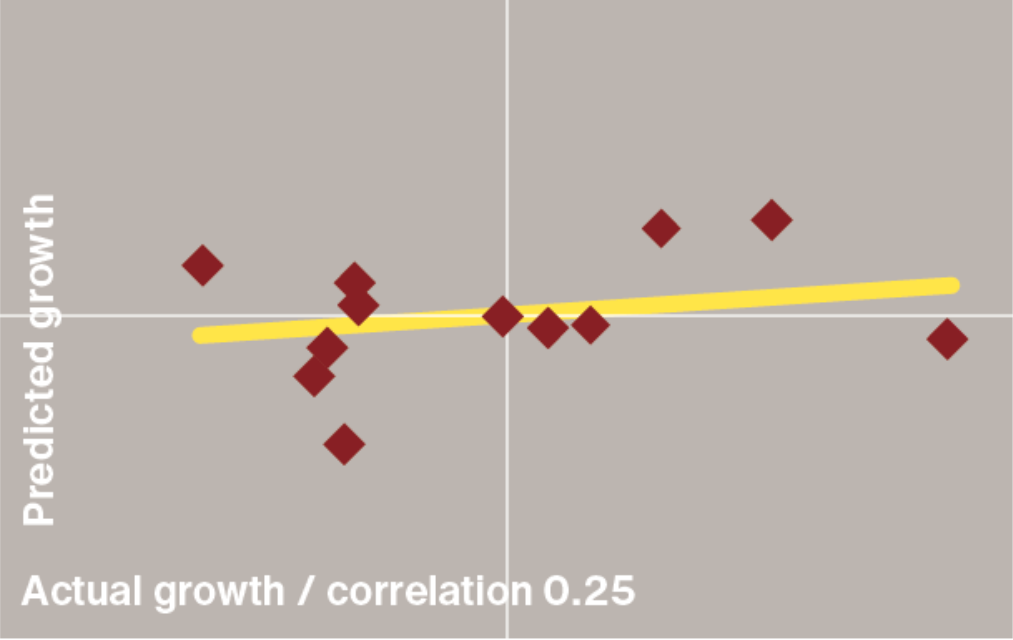
Without the Star Rating quality measurement, a share of voice model only shows a small correlation with subsequent growth. Share of voice alone is not very predictive.

With Star Rating included, the correlation with subsequent market share growth improves markedly.

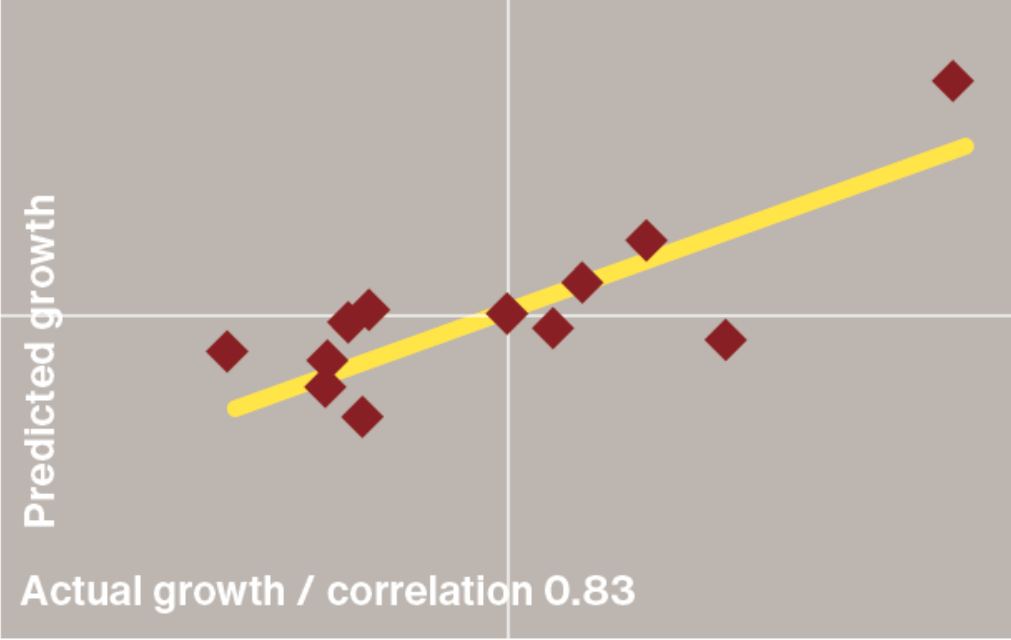
Better, more emotional ads are amplifying brands' share of voice.

ESOV and the emotional multiplier explain market share growth.

Quantity of advertising
(TV ESOV)



Quantity and quality of advertising
(TV ESOV x Star rating)



The Price Of Left-Brain Advertising.

When we know the Star Rating of an ad, we can plot that against how many left- and right-brained elements it contains.

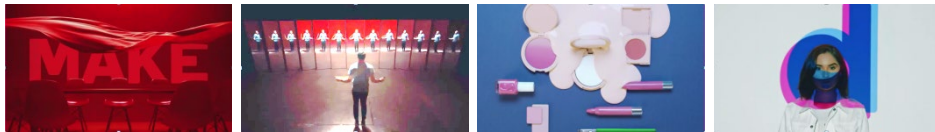
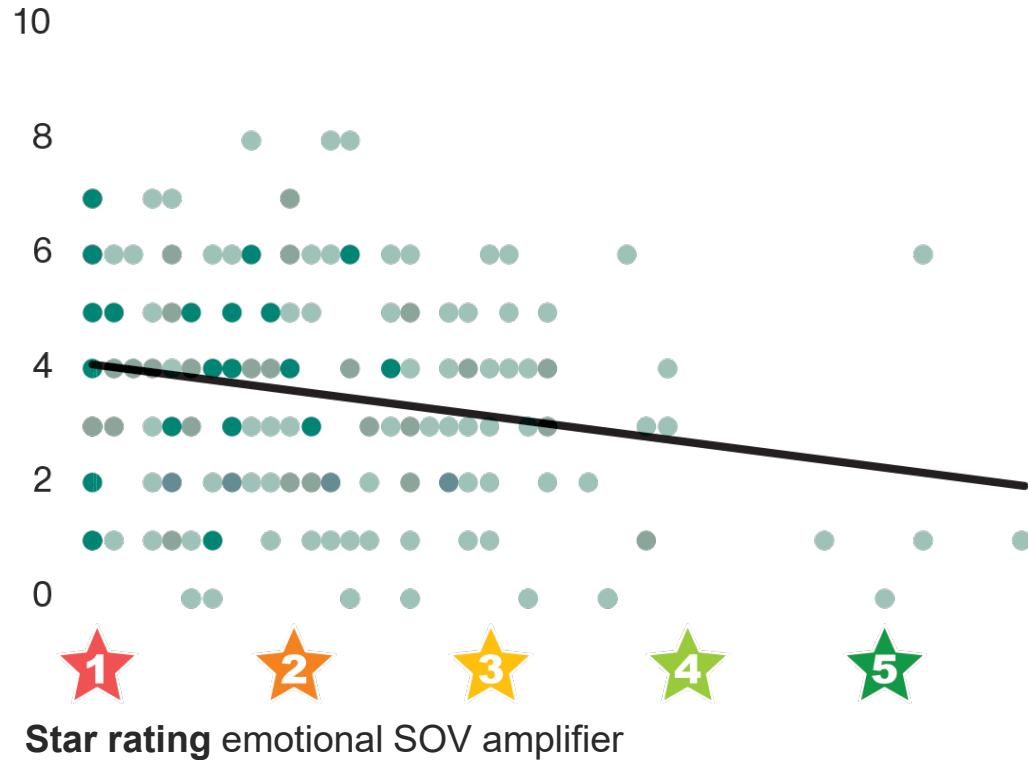
Here are the results, which show that left-brained advertising really is less effective.

The modern style of flat, abstract, left-brained advertising is sapping effectiveness.

Marketers have a golden opportunity to rediscover the virtues of advertising that appeals to the right brain.

Entertain for commercial gain.

No. of 'left brain' features in ad



Flatness and Abstraction

No. of 'right brain' features in ad



Depth and Humanity

More Slices Of Lemon.

Lemon offers a diagnosis and a cure.

It reveals the cultural changes we've seen this century and explains the febrile world of today.

It identifies the structural shifts in advertising that make left-brained work more prevalent.

It describes the emerging gulf between advertisers and their audiences.

And it shows how brands and agencies can make more effective, right-brained ads.

To buy the book, go to <http://ipa.co.uk>

To find out more about System1, Orlando, and our work on advertising effectiveness, get in touch:
enquiries@system1group.com



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