

## INTRODUCTION

We are Hearst, Media Brand of the Year 2018. Our brands are a beacon of positivity in a transformational world. We exist to help our readers feel positive and get more out of life. Whether it's advice on baking a cake, running a marathon, getting that perfect look or improving relationships, our brands provide content with purpose.

This purpose is fundamental to us as a business. Firstly, because it creates a unique relationship with our readers. Our content inspires, empowers and motivates.

Secondly, because we know that organisations that stand for something are more likely to succeed. Research has shown that brands with a clear sense of purpose outperform the market in terms of consumer bonding, value creation and profit.<sup>1</sup> Data from Millward Brown's global BrandZ study of over 100,000 brands reveals a strong correlation between purpose and brand equity.<sup>2</sup> Purpose can drive profit.

Simon Sinek's now famous TED Talk "Start with Why" perfectly articulates why this is – "people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it".<sup>3</sup>

Purpose also drives trust. The last two years have seen trust in major institutions decline dramatically. The Edelman Trust Barometer, which measures trust in major institutions in 28 countries, recorded its sharpest ever decline in trust in 2017.<sup>4</sup> Trust in government, NGOs, business and the media fell significantly. And in 2018 the story was no better. Trust scores have not recovered, and in some cases have fallen further.<sup>5</sup>

One institution however has bucked the trend. Against this backdrop of declining trust across institutions, trust in traditional media recorded an **increase** in the most recent Edelman study.

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<sup>1</sup> Millward Brown research in Partnership with Jim Stengel, (2001-2011).

<sup>2</sup> BrandZ *Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands 2018*, (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Simon Sinek, *Start with Why*, Ted Talk, (2009).

<sup>4</sup> Edelman Trust Barometer, (2017).

<sup>5</sup> Edelman Trust Barometer, (2017).

Furthermore, research in the UK from Magnetic suggests that magazines perform particularly well when it comes to trust, with 7 in 10 Britons trusting magazine media over social media.<sup>6</sup>

Consumers' expectations are changing. They are increasingly looking to brands with purpose and whose values reflect their own. MediaCom's 2018 Brand Purpose Tracker found that 62% of people are more likely to buy a brand if it supports a cause that is important to them.<sup>7</sup> At Hearst, we believe that our focus on positivity sets us apart and gives us a unique platform to engage readers. But more than this, we believe that this purpose is good for our business and good for the brands which advertise on our platforms. We've commissioned Theobalds Road Consulting to carry out extensive research on this topic. In this paper we'll explore the power of positivity, its benefit to consumers and its impact for advertisers.

## **WHY IS EVERYTHING SO NEGATIVE?**

According to the Gallup Global Emotions Report, 2017 was the world's most miserable year for more than a decade.<sup>8</sup> And it's easy to see why. Political upheavals, the rise of the far right, the effects of climate change, war, natural disasters, famine and terrorism have all led to an increasingly negative global picture. The Gallup report found that that people experienced sadness, anger, and physical pain more frequently in 2017 than in previous years. "Collectively, the world is more stressed, worried, sad and in pain today than we've ever seen it," wrote Mohamed S. Younis, Gallup's managing editor.

Things aren't much better when we look closer to home. Political in-fighting, uncertainty over Brexit, increases in violent crime, rising poverty and reliance on food banks, increases in racially motivated crime – it's no wonder that we feel as if the state of the world is in decline.

The financial crisis of 2008 for example has had a lasting impact on the UK economy, with annual wages £760 lower than they were a decade ago according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.<sup>9</sup> Knife crime in England and Wales has increased 22% and gun crime by 11% according to police figures. And Home Office statistics reveal that the number of hate crimes in England and Wales has increased by 29% since 2016.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> MediaCom North and Magnetic Study, (2017).

<sup>7</sup> MediaCom Brand Purpose Tracker.

<sup>8</sup> [Gallup 2017 Global Emotions Report](#), (2017).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/13302>.

<sup>10</sup> [Home Office Statistical Bulletin](#), (2017).

We are seeing worrying trends when it comes to our health too. Britain was named the most overweight nation in Western Europe by an OECD report in 2017.<sup>11</sup> Obesity has risen sharply since 1990, nearly doubling since that time. We are facing a mental health crisis, particularly amongst young people. Mental health issues amongst the young in England have risen sixfold since 1995,<sup>12</sup> and hospital admissions for self-harm among teenage girls have doubled since 1997 according to NHS data.<sup>13</sup>

It's no surprise then that data from Office for National Statistics shows that gains made in life expectancy in recent years have slowed and, in some areas, have even decreased.<sup>14</sup>

### **NEGATIVE MEDIA**

The prevailing global and national backdrop looks bleak. And media, particularly news media, plays a key role in amplifying and perpetuating this negativity.

Research suggests that journalism has grown more negative. In 2011, data scientist Kalev Leetaru produced a paper detailing the findings of a study in which he carried out a sentiment analysis of every article published in the New York Times between 1945 and 2005 and of an archive of translated articles and broadcasts from 130 countries between 1979 and 2010.<sup>15</sup> His analysis found that globally journalism has grown substantially more negative.

And a similar pattern can be seen in the UK. Researchers from Queen Mary University of London found that negative newspaper coverage of the EU increased by 24% between 1974 and 2013.<sup>16</sup> Positive coverage fell by 25% across the same time period. As lecturer and author in positive psychology Dr Tim Lomas says, "negativity sells. The media can amplify concerns or fabricate ones that don't exist. [...] it's part of the media's role to amplify the negative".<sup>17</sup>

This negativity is having an impact on the attitudes and behaviour of news consumers. According to a global Reuters study 29% of people say they often or sometimes avoid the news, with 44% of those saying that they do this because of its potential negative effect on their mood.<sup>18</sup> And in the UK, the

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<sup>11</sup> [OECD](#), Obesity Update, (2017).

<sup>12</sup> Research conducted by Nuffield Trust, in partnership with University College London, Imperial College London and University of Exeter, (2018)

<sup>13</sup> NHS data, (2017)

<sup>14</sup> [ONS report](#), *Changing trends in mortality: a cross-UK comparison, 1981 to 2016*, (2018).

<sup>15</sup> [Kalev H. Leetaru](#), *Culturomics 2:0: Forecasting large-scale human behaviour using global news media tone in time and space*, (2011).

<sup>16</sup> Queen Mary University of London, published in the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (2017).

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Tim Lomas, Interview, 19/06 (2018).

<sup>18</sup> Reuters, (2017).

Edelman Trust Barometer found that some 19% people are actively avoiding news media altogether. 40% of people do so because they find the news too depressing.<sup>19</sup>

This is further perpetuated by digital media, where the need to generate clicks results in more and more sensationalist headlines.<sup>20</sup>

### **Social media**

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests social media could be having a negative impact on our mental health.

There are two powerful factors at play when it comes to social media which are inherent in the way the medium itself is consumed.

Firstly, there is a complete absence of stopping cues.<sup>21</sup> Traditional media has stopping cues baked in – the end of a TV programme, a commercial break, the end of an article, a page, a song on the radio. These moments offer the user an invitation to consider whether they want to stop consuming or to continue. Digital media, and social media in particular, has none. The scroll is endless with no cue or incentive to stop.

Secondly, social media is by its very nature addictive. Engagement with social media has been found to release dopamine. In a 2012 study, Harvard research scientists reported that talking about oneself through social media activates a pleasure sensation in the brain usually associated with food, money and sex.<sup>22</sup> Simon Sinek references this phenomenon in his interview on millennials: “It’s why we count the likes, it’s why we go back ten times to see if the interaction is growing, and if our Instagram is slowing we wonder if we have done something wrong, or if people don’t like us anymore.”<sup>23</sup>

So, the underlying structures of social media are such that we are primed to stay there for as long as possible and to keep going back for more. But what’s happening while we are there? We’re looking at updates from other people and comparing our lives to theirs. Author of *When Likes Aren’t*

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<sup>19</sup> Edelman Trust Barometer, (2018).

<sup>20</sup> Tobias Rose-Stockwell, *How Fear and Outrage are Being Sold for Profit*, published for Medium, (2017).

<sup>21</sup> Adam Walter, *Why Our Screens Make Us Less Happy*, Ted Talk, (2017)

<sup>22</sup> Diana I. Tamir and Jason P. Mitchell *Disclosing information about the self is intrinsically rewarding*, Harvard, (2012).

<sup>23</sup> Simon Sinek, *Millennials in the Workplace*, Interview, (2016).

*Enough*, Tim Bono explains “When we derive a sense of worth based on how we are doing relative to others, we place our happiness in a variable that is completely beyond our control”.

Social media use has been linked to higher levels of loneliness, envy, anxiety, depression and narcissism, and to a decrease in social skills. Behavioural scientist Clarissa Silva conducted in-depth interviews with active social media users and found that:<sup>24</sup>

- 60% of people using social media reported that it has impacted their self-esteem in a negative way
- 50% reported social media having negative effects on their relationships
- 80% reported that it is easier to be deceived by others through their sharing on social media

No wonder that a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* that assessed 5,208 subjects found that overall, regular use of Facebook had a negative impact on an individual’s wellbeing, and particularly mental wellbeing<sup>25</sup>. A study conducted by the University of Copenhagen found that those who abstained from using Facebook reported that they felt more satisfied with their lives.<sup>26</sup>

The key question underpinning all of this is – is the world really a more negative place, or does it just feel that way because we have more exposure than ever before to negative stories via news and social media? Does that matter anyway? If people’s perceptions are that things are negative, then for many people that is their reality and the way they experience the world as it is.

### “THE PERILS OF PERCEPTION”

**Only 4% of the UK population believes that the world is improving.<sup>27</sup>**

Behavioural science identifies 3 powerful factors that underpin why so many of us think that the world is getting worse.

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<sup>24</sup> Clarissa Silva, *Social Media’s Impact on Self Esteem*, (2017).

<sup>25</sup> Holly B Shakya, Nicholas A. Christakis, *Association of Facebook Use With Comprised Well-Being: A Longitudinal Study*, *American Journal of Epidemiology* (2017).

<sup>26</sup> Morten Tromholt, *The Facebook Experiment: Quitting Facebook Leads to Higher Levels of Well-Being*, The University of Copenhagen (2016).

<sup>27</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Optimistic-about-the-future-2.png>

### **Negativity bias**

As human beings we are programmed to look for the negative, which means that we tend to view things as being worse than they actually are. It's a coping strategy that we have developed over millennia in order to survive. Psychologist Dr. Tim Lomas observes that "people have an intrinsically negative bias – we are more inclined to critique things. This makes sense in evolutionary terms because man has had to stay alert to predators. It's useful to have this bias because it helps us to survive".<sup>28</sup>

This negativity bias is demonstrated by a 2014 study at McGill University, which found that whilst people say they prefer to read good news, they actually choose to consume negative news stories when faced with the choice.<sup>29</sup>

### **Confirmation bias**

This strong instinct to look for the negative becomes even stronger when combined with confirmation bias - our tendency to seek out evidence that supports our own view and to ignore evidence that contradicts it. This is increasingly apparent online where algorithms serve us content based on what we have already consumed. The possibility of experiencing a world view other than our own therefore becomes much harder to achieve.

### **Availability heuristic**

The availability heuristic means that we calculate the probability of risk based on how readily we can bring it to mind. In the words of Steven Pinker "the easier it is to recall something from memory, the more probable we judge it to be".<sup>30</sup>

Ipsos MORI's work on what they have termed the "Perils of Perception" offers a powerful illustration of these tendencies in action.<sup>31</sup> The study explores the gap between people's perceptions and reality. It asks respondents in 40 countries to estimate levels of teenage pregnancy, obesity, murder rates and immigration, amongst others.

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<sup>28</sup> Dr. Tim Lomas, Interview, 19/06 (2018).

<sup>29</sup> Marc Trussler, Stuart Soroka, *Consumer Demand for Cynical and Negative News Frames*, McGill, (2014)

<sup>30</sup> Steven Pinker, *The media exaggerates negative news. This distortion has consequences* The Guardian, (2018).

<sup>31</sup> Ipsos *Perils of Perception*, (2017).

When asked to estimate the teenage pregnancy rate in the UK, respondents estimated 19%, whereas in reality, it is 1.4%. When asked if the murder rate was higher or lower than in 2000, 36% of Britons thought it was higher now despite it falling.

Bobby Duffy, managing director of the Ipsos Mori Social Research Institute, said there is one key issue that leads to these misconceptions: “Our brains handle negative information differently and store it more accessibly”.

The negative news agenda speaks directly to these unconscious biases and heuristics. As Steven Pinker observes “whether or not the world really is getting worse, the nature of news will interact with the nature of cognition to make us think that it is.”<sup>32</sup> Put simply, bad news is more memorable and, because it is more readily available in our memories, we think there is more of it than there actually is.

We also tend to think that things are worse than they were in the past. The “myth of decline” is by no means a modern phenomenon, having its roots in Greek mythology. The myth of the Golden Age implies the progressive degeneration of the human race. It is rarely based on actual evidence. In fact two recent books argue the contrary, outlining global progress on several issues including poverty figures, education rates and healthcare.<sup>33</sup> Steven Pinker’s most recent book, *Enlightenment Now*, demonstrates that life has been getting progressively better for most people.<sup>34</sup>

As Bobby Duffy Chair of the International Social Research Institute says “*We [...] have a tendency to think things are worse now than in the past – and this is reflected in our view of decreasing trust in politicians and perceived increases in political and media lying. But the reality, in Britain at least, is there was no recent golden age of trust in politics, and this more reflects our rosy retrospection about the past.*”<sup>35</sup>

## THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

Against this backdrop of increasing negativity there has never been a greater need for positivity. And this isn’t just about improving people’s mood. The growing field of positive psychology is starting to

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<sup>32</sup> Steven Pinker, *The media exaggerates negative news. This distortion has consequences* The Guardian, (2018).

<sup>33</sup> Hans Rosling, Anna Rosling Rönnlund, Ola Rosling, *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We’re Wrong About the World--and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*, (2018).

<sup>34</sup> Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Science, Reason, Humanism and Progress*, (2018).

<sup>35</sup> Ipsos *Perils of Perception*, (2017).

identify the many benefits that having a positive mindset can bring. Research suggests a link between positive emotions and better health, a longer life and greater emotional and physical wellbeing.<sup>36</sup> There is power in positive thinking.

Several research studies have provided compelling evidence for how adopting a positive outlook on life can result in positive outcomes:

- People who express gratitude on a regular basis have better physical health, optimism, progress toward goals, well-being, and help others more (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000).
- People who witness others perform good deeds experience an emotion called 'elevation' and this motivates them to perform their own good deeds (Haidt, 2000).
- Optimism can protect people from mental and physical illness (Taylor et al., 2000).
- People who are optimistic or happy have better performance in work, school and sports, are less depressed, have fewer physical health problems, and have better relationships with other people. Further, optimism can be measured, and it can be learned (Seligman, 1991; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005).
- People who report more positive emotions in young adulthood live longer and healthier lives (Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001).

There are 3 key ways in which positivity can impact our wellbeing.

### **1. Increased resourcefulness**

A positive mindset can make us more open-minded to new ideas and therefore more resourceful and resilient. In her 2009 book *Positivity*, Barbara Frederickson suggests that when threatened with negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, frustration or anger, the mind constricts and focuses on the imposing threat, limiting our ability to be open to new ideas and build resources and relationships.<sup>37</sup>

### **2. Reduced stress**

A positive mindset can have physical benefits, helping to reduce stress levels when given demanding tasks. In a psychological experiment, individuals were given a stress inducing task, in this case writing

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<sup>36</sup> Susan Krauss Whitbourne Ph.D. *Long-term happiness and longevity: Is it all in the telomeres?* (2010).

<sup>37</sup> Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity*, (2009).



a speech.<sup>38</sup> The task induced the subjective experience of anxiety, expressed through physical symptoms including increases in heart rate and blood pressure. Participants were then split in to four groups – two of these groups were exposed to positive stimulus, one group to neutral stimulus and one to negative stimulus. Those participants who were put in to the positive condition recovered from the physical effects of the task faster than those in the negative or neutral conditions, suggesting that a positive mindset can help combat physical symptoms of stress.

### 3. Increased productivity

Barbara Frederickson tested the impact of positive emotions on the brain by setting up an experiment.<sup>39</sup> During this experiment, she divided her research subjects into five groups and showed each group different film clips. The first two groups were shown clips that created positive emotions. The last two groups were shown clips that created negative emotions.

After looking at the content, each participant was asked to imagine themselves in a similar situation and write down what they would do in this situation. Participants who saw images of fear and anger wrote down the fewest responses. Participants who saw images of joy and contentment, wrote down a significantly higher number of actions. This suggests that when you experience positive emotions you are likely to carry out more actions. These findings prove that positive emotions open your mind up to more options, whereas negativity can limit thinking and imagination.

This research reveals that people are more open to new influences, ideas and experiences when they are in a positive mindset. They are able to think more creatively and be more productive as a result. As Claire Sanderson, editor of Women's Health says "negative thoughts block out everything else and other opportunities. You cannot be open to new ideas or think creatively when you're thinking negatively".<sup>40</sup>

Positivity has important implications for mental health and wellbeing through promoting increased mental resilience and fostering a sense of purpose and meaning. According to positive psychology researcher Suzanne Segerstrom, "*setbacks are inherent to almost every worthwhile human activity, and a number of studies show that optimists are in general both psychologically and physiologically*

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<sup>38</sup> Barbara Fredrickson, *The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions*, (2001).

<sup>39</sup> Barbara L. Fredrickson and Christine Branigan, *Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires*, (2005).

<sup>40</sup> Claire Sanderson, Interview 21/05, (2018).

healthier."<sup>41</sup> Recent studies have found an inverse correlation between optimism and depressive symptoms,<sup>42</sup> as well as between optimism and suicidal tendencies.<sup>43</sup>

### Can positivity be good for brands?

So, positivity is undoubtedly good for people. But can it be good for brands? Barbara Frederickson's experiment above suggests that there could be an amplification effect of communicating with people at times when they are likely to be in a positive mindset.

This is certainly supported by research carried out by Hearst in 2018 – The Power of Positivity survey. In a nationally representative study of 1000 people, respondents were asked whether they had taken action or considered taking an action as a result of seeing or hearing something in the media. This could range from talking to a friend about what they had seen to buying a product that they had seen or heard about. 72% of people had taken an action.<sup>44</sup> Amongst people with a positive outlook on life this figure rose to 77%, and amongst those with a negative or neutral attitude it was 63%. And people with a positive mindset carried out **more** actions. Those with a positive mindset carried out an average of 3 actions, whereas people with a negative or neutral mindset carried out an average of 2.

The research indicates that a positive context can put people into a mindset that is more open to ideas and more open to the possibility of taking action. This means brands can benefit from advertising to consumers when they are consuming content in a positive mindset. Context matters.

As part of the research we ran a lab test based on an experiment by Friedman and Förster in which participants were assigned to one of 3 conditions – positive, negative or neutral.<sup>45</sup> Those in the positive condition were given a task that was designed to put them in a positive mindset – motivational and reward based. Those in the negative condition were given a task to put them in a negative mindset – preventative. And those in the neutral condition were given no stimulus at all.

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<sup>41</sup> Kendra Cherry, *Benefits of Positive Thinking for Body and Mind*, (2018).

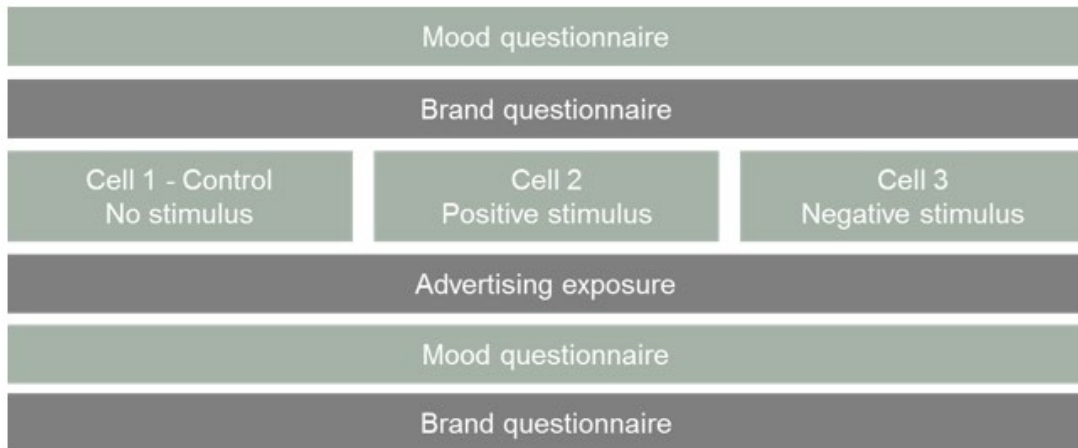
<sup>42</sup> Chang EC, Sanna LJ, *Optimism, pessimism, and positive and negative affectivity in middle-aged adults: a test of a cognitive-affective model of psychological adjustment*, (2001).

<sup>43</sup> Hirsch JK, Conner KR, Duberstein PR, *Optimism and suicide ideation among young adult college students*, (2007).

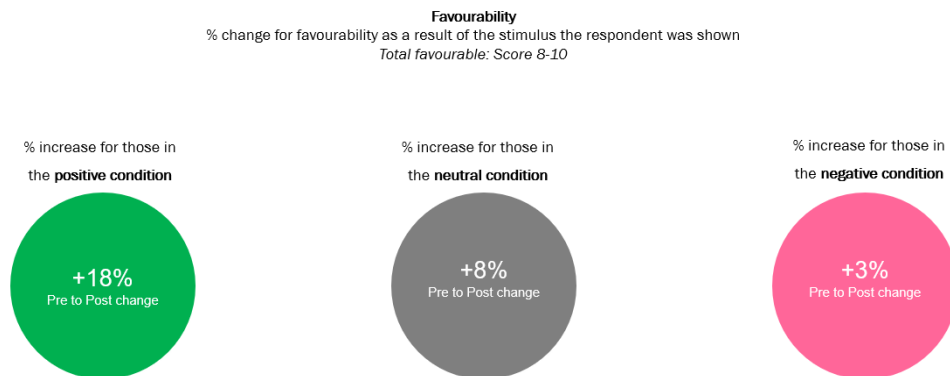
<sup>44</sup> "The Power of Positivity", Hearst research conducted by the insight team at MediaCom, (2018).

<sup>45</sup> Jens Förster and Ronald S. Friedman, *The Effects of Promotion and Prevention Cues on Creativity*, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, (2004).

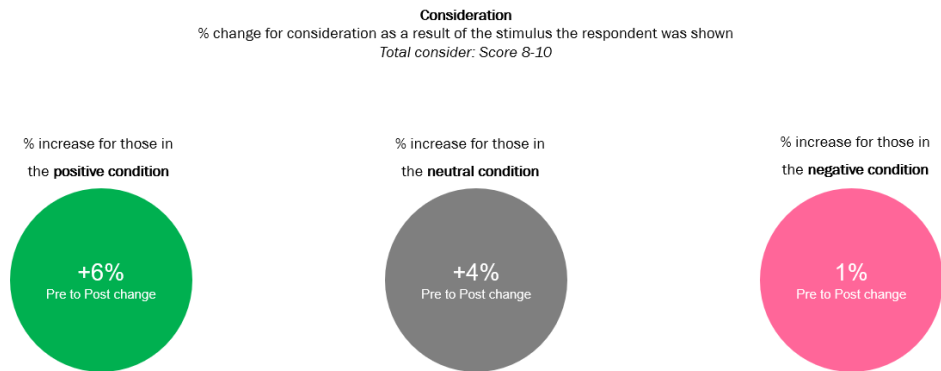
Participants were asked some mood and brand questions, presented with their stimulus and then shown a selection of ads. They were then asked the mood and brand questions again.



Participants in the positive condition showed higher levels of brand favourability after exposure to the ads than those in neutral and negative conditions.



Those in the positive condition showed significantly higher levels of consideration after seeing the advertising than those in negative and neutral conditions.



Research from MediaCom Business Science has shown that a 1% point increase in brand consideration can drive a 0.8% increase in sales over the longer term. Which suggests that advertising consumed in a positive mindset can result in a **1.6% incremental sales uplift** versus advertising consumed in a neutral mindset.

So, advertising that is consumed in a positive mindset can drive stronger ad effects. And media is a vehicle that can drive positivity. There is academic research to support this. Psychologist Meghan B Keener explores the notion of positive media in her work.<sup>46</sup> In her paper *Positive Media: An Introductory Explanation* she examines how media incorporates elements of wellbeing. Keener defines positive media as “media that measurably promotes, depicts, or facilitates elements of wellbeing, either by creating a positive outcome or a positive process in the viewer or participant”. Keener claims that during the hours that we spend consuming media recreationally, we are “intrinsically motivated” and that “these intrinsically motivated activities we do for hours every day can be harnessed to help improve our quality of life”. Dr. Art Raney, James E. Kirk Professor of Communication in the School of Communication at Florida State University says, “media can be used as a tool to help one find positivity in our lives... media has the potential to make us more positive”.<sup>47</sup>

Within the Power of Positivity survey, respondents were asked what influences them in having a positive outlook on life. Areas to do with purpose, mental wellbeing and resilience all scored highly – strong mental health 70%, having a sense of purpose 65%, strong ability to deal with problems when

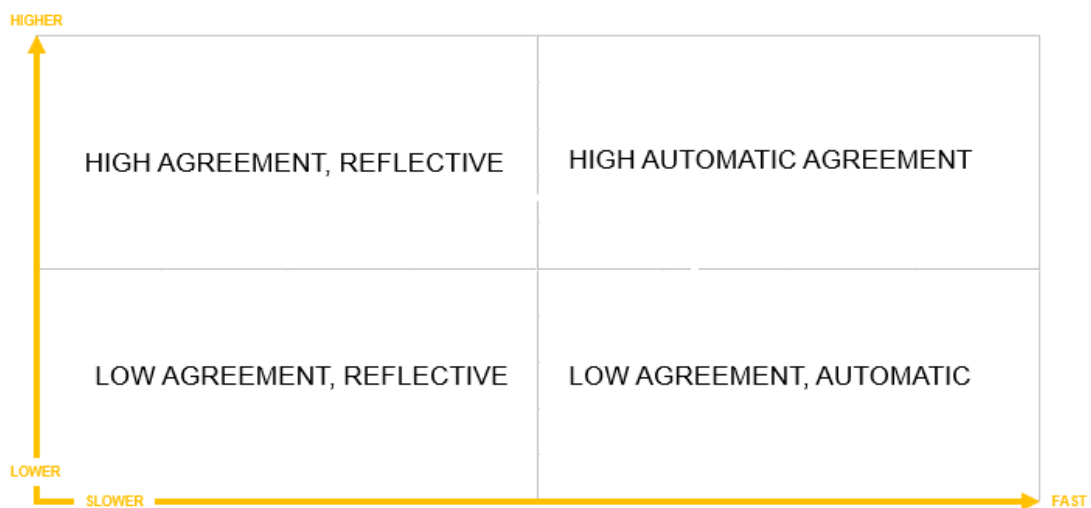
<sup>46</sup> M.B. Keener, *Positive Media: An Introductory Exploration*, (2012).

<sup>47</sup> Dr. Art Raney, Interview, 09/05, (2018).

they occur 61%. **57%** of the sample said that consuming media has a strong influence on them having a positive outlook on life. This is the same as the number of people who chose a close family network. So, media is seen to be as important as close family in terms of influencing a positive mindset and has a significant role to play.

Within media, magazines are seen as a positive medium. 77% of respondents feel positive when reading magazines, more so than for newspapers (67%), radio (75%) and social media (59%).

The study uses implicit response testing measurement, both the explicit level of agreement between a brand and attribute, as well as the speed of association. Fast response means that the association is automatic, whereas a slower response time means that the association is more reflective and therefore does not come as readily to mind.



The top right quadrant is the most desirable place for a brand to be, as associations here have a high level of agreement and are automatic.

It stands to reason then that magazine readers are more positive than non-readers. 58% of respondents in our study have a positive outlook on life. Amongst magazine readers this figure is significantly higher at 68%. Amongst magazine non-readers it is 53%.

Echoing the findings of Barbara Frederickson's experiments, our research has also shown that people are highly likely to take an action as a result of consuming media that puts them in a positive mindset. We saw earlier that 72% of respondents took action because of something they had seen, read or heard in positive media.

Our research has identified that **positivity can drive profit** for brands, by encouraging action and increasing brand favourability and consideration.

### **CONCLUSION [from Hearst]**

Against a backdrop of an increasingly negative news agenda, there has never been a greater need for positivity in people's lives. A positive mindset can bring huge benefits to people in terms of their physical and mental wellbeing and their productivity.

Our research has shown that:

1. Media is a vehicle that can drive positivity and create a positive mindset
2. Magazines are viewed as being better than other media brands at driving attributes that contribute to positivity
3. Viewing advertising when in a positive mindset can have an amplification effect on brand favourability and can significantly increase consideration. So much so that advertising viewed in a positive mindset can drive a 1.6% incremental sales uplift versus advertising seen in a neutral mindset
4. Magazine readers have a more positive outlook than non-readers

Hearst are helping consumers change their world. Our lifestyle-based content helps people to lead more fulfilling lives – achieving their ambitions and making the most of their hobbies and pastimes. Our focus on the positive empowers our readers to get more out of life.

Editorial campaigns are tackling important issues and are helping to create positive societal change. The Mend the Gap mental health campaign in Men's Health seeks to change the perception of mental health at personal, societal, institutional and governmental levels. And the In Shape My

Shape campaign in Women's Health promotes body positivity and challenges the narrative that there is one type of healthy body shape.

By giving our readers content that makes them feel good and motivates and inspires them, we are putting them in a mindset that is positive, receptive and open to new ideas and opportunities. And what advertiser wouldn't want to communicate with an audience like that?

## **METHODOLOGY**

We ran a 5-stage research programme:

1. Literature review – to review the latest thinking and academic research on this topic
2. Expert interviews – with academics in the field of positive psychology and with media experts
3. The Power of Positivity survey - a nationally representative survey of 1000 people exploring a range of topics related to positivity, including what influences a positive mindset. It also explores view on positivity on media channels, as well as implicit response tests on a number of different media brands to identify underlying associations with some of the attributes that drive positivity.
4. Lab test – based on an experiment by Friedman and Förster. Participants were divided into 3 cells. Each cell was exposed to the same advertising but preceded by either positive or negative stimulus (or no stimulus for the control group). Surveys at the beginning and end measured changes in positivity, mood, and brand metrics.
5. Positivity index survey - a research study to assign a positivity index score to a number of media brands, including Hearst brands, non-Hearst magazine brands, news brands, social and TV & audio brands. Attributes tested were identified from the Power of Positivity survey, based on how strongly they correlated to positivity. The research was carried out among regular users of each media brands (sample size 1800)