# Brands face creative confidence crisis as data gaps curb bold advertising risks



What constitutes a risky idea in the advertising world? At its core, a risky creative concept often embodies boldness or unconventionality, disrupting norms to captivate audiences in unexpected ways. However, a recent survey by Lions indicates that only 13% of companies perceive themselves as risk-friendly, while 29% acknowledge an aversion to taking risks. This disparity raises a pertinent question: what prevents brands from embracing creativity more fully?

Kantar’s Jane Ostler highlights the distinction between mere bravado and informed risk-taking, asserting that the most effective creative boldness is underpinned by genuine insights and data. Sensible project management practices further assist in navigating creativity, where risk assessments are evaluated through terms like ‘likelihood’ and ‘impact’. This structured approach allows brands to foresee potential challenges while maximising the strategic potential of their campaigns. Rather than adopting a laissez-faire attitude, organisations are encouraged to navigate risk through informed testing, which can help ensure a stronger outcome.

Among the award-winning ads celebrated at Kantar's Creative Effectiveness Awards, notable examples showcase how creativity can be both daring and meaningful. Deliveroo’s 'Octoman' campaign stands out as particularly striking, featuring a half-man, half-octopus figure enjoying a date on a deserted island. Although seemingly bizarre, the narrative poignantly ties together relatable human experiences with Deliveroo’s service offerings. Lance Kowlessar from Deliveroo expressed that their goal is to showcase how ordinary moments can be enhanced by their platform, thereby resonating with consumers on a deeper level.

L’Oréal Paris also took a creative leap with their 'Magic Retouch Shower' campaign, drawing on horror tropes to create a distinctive narrative during Halloween — a time traditionally overshadowed by beauty brand norms. This venture illustrates that embracing creativity doesn’t merely challenge existing conventions; it can also transform brand perceptions in unexpected contexts.

Yet, the broader industry landscape reveals that creative confidence is at a crossroads. The 2025 State of Creativity report identifies significant barriers, notably the 'insight famine,' where over half of brands contend that their data is insufficient for bold creative ventures. Furthermore, 57% of surveyed marketers admit difficulties in responding promptly to cultural shifts, indicating a pressing need for agility in creative strategies. This challenge is compounded by the tendency to focus on immediate marketing goals, with 63% of respondents prioritising short-term activities over long-term creative investments.

The implications for brands aspiring to improve their creative output are clear. To foster an environment conducive to risk-taking, companies must enhance their teams' capabilities through adequate training and encourage a culture that not only values innovation but also understands the dynamics of consumer insight. When creative risks are grounded in a thorough understanding of audience needs and desires, brands are not just taking chances; they are strategically positioning themselves for potential success in a competitive marketplace.

In a landscape increasingly dominated by data and insights, the creative process must evolve, prioritising educated risk-taking over blind experimentation. When grounded in solid consumer understanding, these calculated creative leaps can yield impressive dividends, making the journey toward bold advertising not just exciting but also strategically sound.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2025/05/29/careless-or-calculated-when-does-it-pay-take-creative-risk), [[2]](https://www.canneslions.com/news/lions-releases-the-state-of-creativity-2025)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2025/05/29/careless-or-calculated-when-does-it-pay-take-creative-risk), [[3]](https://www.marketingdive.com/news/brands-appetite-wanes-creative-risk-taking-per-lions-research/747129/), [[7]](https://lbbonline.com/news/creative-confidence-crisis-revealed-in-2025-lions-state-of-creativity-report)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2025/05/29/careless-or-calculated-when-does-it-pay-take-creative-risk), [[4]](https://www.kantar.com/Inspiration/Advertising-Media/Connecting-with-people-in-the-age-of-AI-trends-in-creative-effectiveness), [[5]](https://www.kantarnewzealand.com/creative-effectiveness-awards-freyas-winner-2025/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://mediabrief.com/kantar-creative-effectiveness-awards-2025-global-winners/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.marketingdive.com/news/brands-appetite-wanes-creative-risk-taking-per-lions-research/747129/), [[7]](https://lbbonline.com/news/creative-confidence-crisis-revealed-in-2025-lions-state-of-creativity-report)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2025/05/29/careless-or-calculated-when-does-it-pay-take-creative-risk> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.canneslions.com/news/lions-releases-the-state-of-creativity-2025> - The 2025 State of Creativity report reveals that only 13% of companies are considered risk-friendly, while 29% are highly risk-averse. The report highlights two main barriers to creative confidence: the 'insight famine', where 51% of brands feel their insights are too weak for bold creativity, and the 'culture lag', with 57% of brands struggling to react quickly to cultural moments. The report suggests that brands should invest in training to enhance teams' skills and capabilities to boost creative confidence.
3. <https://www.marketingdive.com/news/brands-appetite-wanes-creative-risk-taking-per-lions-research/747129/> - According to the 2025 State of Creativity report from Lions, only 13% of brand marketers and creatives view their companies as 'risk-friendly' when it comes to creativity, while 29% are highly risk-averse. The report also reveals that 51% of brands claim their customer insights are too weak to develop bold creative, and 57% struggle to react quickly to cultural moments. Additionally, 63% of respondents said their brands were focusing on short-term marketing activities, up from 53% in 2023.
4. <https://www.kantar.com/Inspiration/Advertising-Media/Connecting-with-people-in-the-age-of-AI-trends-in-creative-effectiveness> - Kantar's Creative Effectiveness Awards celebrate the world's most creative and effective ads as judged by consumers. The awards highlight standout ads that have successfully connected with audiences in the age of AI, across a diverse spread of markets, clients, brands, and categories. The winners showcase how creativity can truly connect with audiences, whether through bizarre moments that stop us in our tracks, relatable stories that touch our hearts, or helping us find our place in today's world.
5. <https://www.kantarnewzealand.com/creative-effectiveness-awards-freyas-winner-2025/> - Kantar's Creative Effectiveness Awards 2025 recognised the most impactful advertising campaigns across digital/social, TV, print and outdoor, and LINK AI-tested ads. The winners include Desperados' 'The Beer With Latin Vibe – Supermarket', CeraVe's 'Grandma', and Tourism Australia's 'Colours of Australia, Taylor’s Version' in the digital/social category. In the TV category, Deliveroo's 'Now just got even better – Octoman' topped the list, followed by KitKat's 'Break Better campaign' and Volkswagen's 'YourWagen 60s TV'.
6. <https://mediabrief.com/kantar-creative-effectiveness-awards-2025-global-winners/> - Kantar has revealed the winners of its 2025 Creative Effectiveness Awards, celebrating the most impactful advertising campaigns globally. Top winners include Coca-Cola, Desperados, Deliveroo, and Freya’s, each taking the number one spot in their respective categories. The awards are based on a combination of LINK+ ad testing scores and qualitative input from Kantar’s global creative experts. LINK+ predicts short-term sales and brand equity, with data showing that creatively effective ads are four times more likely to drive ROI.
7. <https://lbbonline.com/news/creative-confidence-crisis-revealed-in-2025-lions-state-of-creativity-report> - The 2025 State of Creativity report reveals a crisis in creative confidence, with only 13% of companies considered risk-friendly and 29% highly risk-averse. The report identifies two key barriers to creative confidence: the 'insight famine', where 51% of brands feel their insights are too weak for bold creativity, and the 'culture lag', with 57% of brands struggling to react quickly to cultural moments. The report advises companies to build structures that allow for swift, strategic action and to shape culture rather than chase it.