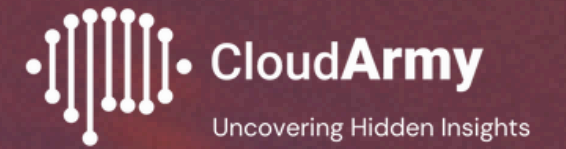


# SOUND SCIENCE




HOW MUSIC IS THE MISSING LINK  
IN MARKETING ROI

**MASSIVEMUSIC**

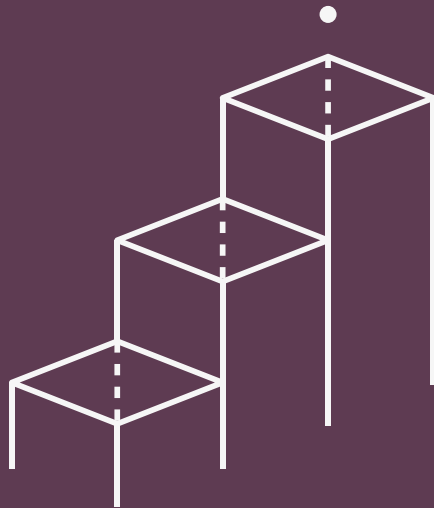
PAGE 3

**INTRODUCTION**



PAGE 8

**METHODOLOGY**



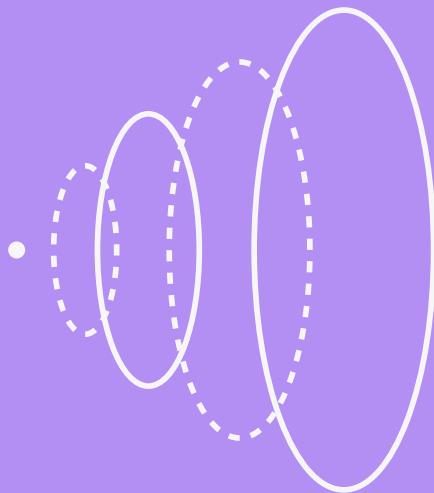
PAGE 14

**RESULTS**



PAGE 23

**IMPLICATIONS**



# INTRO- DUCTION

# We all **feel** the **power of music**, but how does it translate into tangible marketing effectiveness?

Music moves us. It has repeatedly been found to be the **gateway to emotion**: people react 17% faster to sound than they do to visuals (University of Groningen), and brands who use music that is well-suited to the brand see a 13% lift in comprehension of information as well as lifts for creativity, empathy, and emotion (Nielsen, 2015).

**DESPITE A WEALTH OF EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATING MUSIC'S IMPACT ON ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS, MANY DECISION-MAKERS STILL UNDERESTIMATE THE INVESTMENT IT DESERVES.**

Research by Ipsos (2020) showed that sound is the strongest asset a brand can have, driving 8.5x more branded attention compared with all other brand assets, and System1's latest research has reaffirmed

this, with sonic assets causing brand awareness to jump 191%, higher than any other branded asset. And yet, the percentage of brands tapping into music and sound is still low.

Over the past few years, MassiveMusic's research team has explored the power of music across industries such as beer, beauty, and sportswear. With each paper, the methodology improved and new metrics were added. This latest study marks the biggest shift yet: moving from brand metrics to business metrics – both short- and long-term. The goal: to give marketers and creatives the data they need to make confident, evidence-based decisions that drive real business impact.





We’ve already established the power of music on **brand**. This paper goes further, and proves the effect of using the right music on your **business**.

In 2013, Les Binet (Ravensbourne University) and Dr. Daniel Müllensiefen (Hamburg University) were among the first in the industry to demonstrate the link between music in TV advertising with sales effectiveness. Using the IPA Effectiveness Databank, they showed music could boost effectiveness by 20–30%, and the right music can make TV advertising work 10–30% harder. Building on Binet and Field’s groundbreaking “The Long and Short of it”, Binet and Müllensiefen attributed these effects to the long-term nature of emotional memories – providing evidence for music’s power for long-term brand effects, but leaving the question open as to whether music could also influence the short-term.

Working closely with the IPA, our team selected and tested 150 UK TV ads using Campaign MusicIQ, developed with implicit behavioural methodologies in collaboration with our neuroscience partners at CloudArmy. In total, we captured the intuitive responses of 7,500 people across the UK to the music in these ads.

The findings build on a strong legacy of music psychology research, but go further by connecting music directly to business outcomes. They are both robust and actionable – revealing how specific musical choices drive different types of business impact, from immediate effects to longer-term gains. The study also identifies which musical sources are best suited to which goals, while showcasing tested ads as practical examples of how to use music effectively.

IN 2013, THE IPA DATABANK LACKED ENOUGH CASES TO COMPARE SHORT- VS. LONG-TERM EFFECTS. THIS PAPER FILLS THAT GAP, EXPANDING FROM 21 MUSICAL ADS (2008–2012) TO 150 ADS ACROSS 2016–2024, SPANNING FIVE AWARDS CYCLES.

MUSIC MAKES TV ADS MORE EFFECTIVE			
	Number of cases	% cases reporting any very large business effects	Average number of very large business effects reported
Musical ads	21	93%	2.5
Other ads	142	73%	2.3
Difference		+ 28%	+20%

Source: IPA dataBANK,2008-2012





GLOBAL STRATEGY DIRECTOR,  
MASSIVEMUSIC

**ROSCOE  
WILLIAMSON**



This collaboration with the IPA has allowed us to bridge the gap between musical creative intelligence and evidence. It's now proven that music is a powerful, multifaceted lever of campaign effectiveness and that there are repeatable ways to select, brief, curate, or create music that actively fosters it.



RESEARCHER, MASSIVEMUSIC

**LAURA  
DEVIS**



Advertising is emotion, and emotion is music. As the industry increasingly brings data and strategy into the creative process, we have new ways to understand what makes an ad work. Isolating the impact of music will not only show why it works, but provide deeper understanding of how it works. This study is a first step- I'm excited to see how this field evolves, and to help shape it.



PRESIDENT, CLOUDARMY

**THOM  
NOBLE**



It's now well established in cognitive and behavioral science that to really uncover people's reactions to music in advertising, we need to capture data at the deeper, non-conscious level. What makes this seminal study doubly compelling is bringing together IPA business effectiveness metrics with implicit level response metrics.





RAVENSBOURNE UNIVERSITY

LES  
BINET



The power of music is massively underrated. To date, surprisingly little research has been done on its effects. With the results of this study uncovering its effectiveness, music will be the differentiator that helps define many of the most effective campaigns moving forward.



DIRECTOR OF  
EFFECTIVENESS, IPA

LAURENCE  
GREEN



The IPA's effectiveness resource is here to help the advertising industry's makers, not just its measurers. What's wonderful about this research is that it doesn't just prove that sound delivers concrete commercial returns but also shines an intelligent light on how it does.



HAMBURG UNIVERSITY

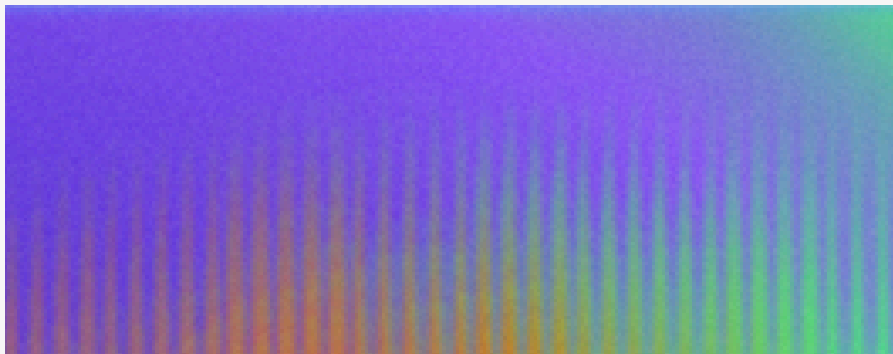
DANIEL  
MÜLLENSIEFEN



This study is a milestone in research on the effectiveness of music and audio in advertising. It is the first one to actually link directly real-world business effects to the implementation of music in advertising campaigns, including data across many different campaigns, brands, and product categories.

# METHOD- OLOGY

# We leveraged our **Campaign MusicIQ** methodology, which is built on evidence-based metrics.



01

## ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is how much a track captures the audience’s attention, and is generally influenced by emotional states.<sup>1</sup> Music has the power to elicit intense emotions,<sup>2</sup> and music-induced mood changes can influence our visual attention: music with positive valence often results in higher attentional control.<sup>1</sup>

Higher emotion in an ad’s music might just heighten the audience’s attention to what’s on screen, and could result in other business effects such as purchase intent.<sup>3</sup>

02

## FIT

Musical fit in advertising is how well the music matches the visuals, brand, message, or product. In simple terms, it’s about how “right” the music feels for the ad.<sup>4</sup> When music fits, ads work harder. It can boost how much people like the ad, make the brand or product more memorable, and even help viewers recall specific claims.<sup>5</sup>

And it’s not just about perception – musical fit can also shape behaviour. Well-matched music has been shown to increase purchase intent, nudging consumers closer to buying.<sup>5,6</sup>

03

## SURPRISE

Surprise in music is about choosing tracks that feel unexpected in an ad. Used well, it can unlock stronger emotions and engagement.<sup>7</sup>

Surprising music works by subverting expectations – our brains find pleasure in the mix of predictability and surprise.<sup>5</sup> In ads, this can boost attention, recall, and even make the brand feel more fun or memorable.<sup>9</sup>

04

## RECALL

Recall is the ability to recognise and remember music. In ads, high-recall tracks act like mnemonics – helping people connect the music back to the product.<sup>10</sup>

Well-known, recognisable songs – especially popular tracks with vocals – have been shown to drive stronger ad effects than instrumentals or unknown music.<sup>11</sup>

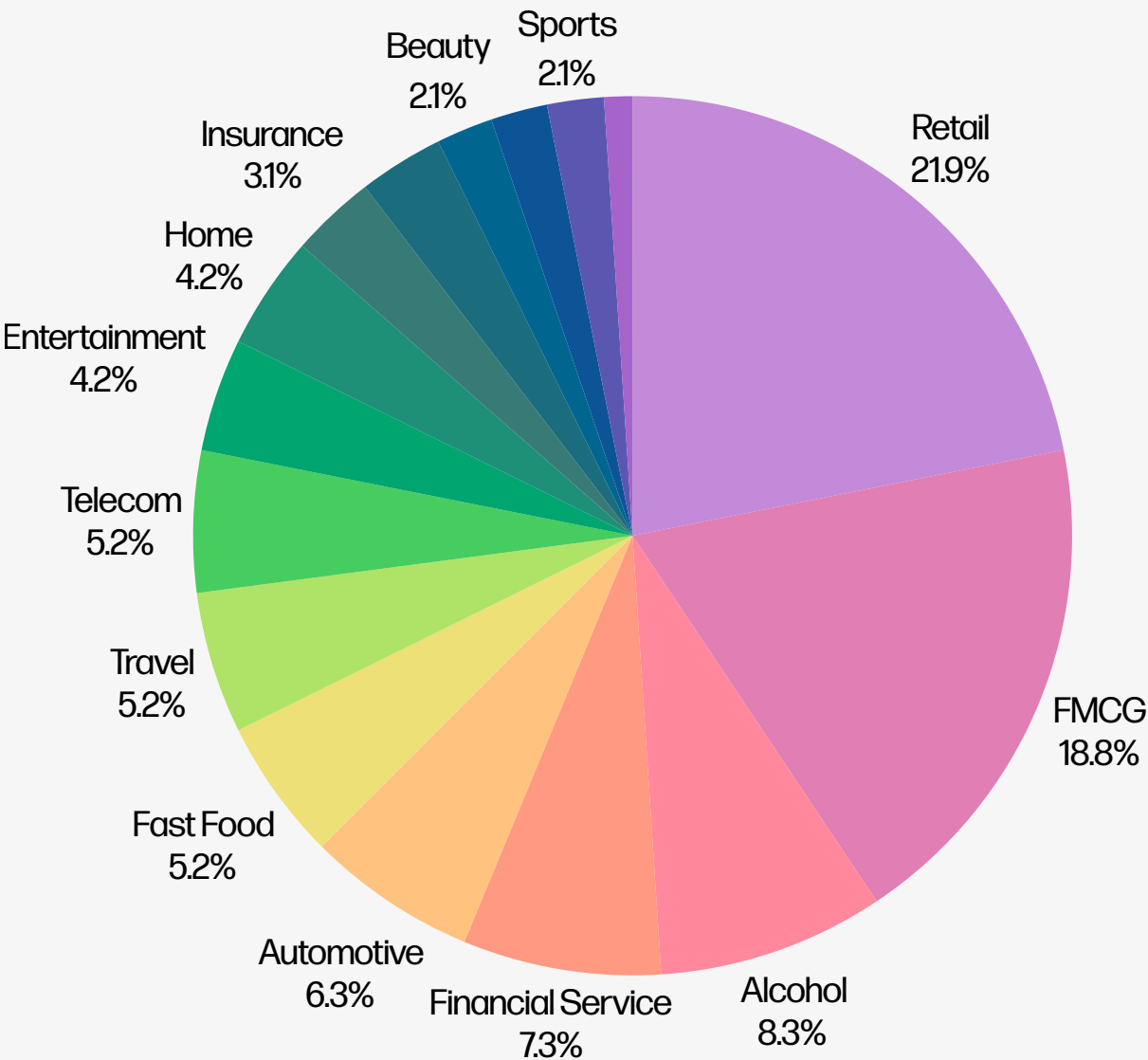
When consumers recognise a track, it can shape brand perception, influence choice, and ultimately boost ROI.<sup>12</sup>

SOURCES:

1. McConnell & Shore, 2010	2. Rickard, 2004	3. Alpert & Alpert, 1990	4. Bruner, 1990	5. North et al., 2006	6. Herget et al., 2020
7. Ausín et al., 2021	8. Alexomanolaki et al., 2007	9. Allan, 2006	10. Anglada-Tort et al., 2022	11. Cheung et al., 2019	12. Abolhasani & Golrokhi, 2021



In collaboration with IPA, we selected 150 of the most prominent UK ads, and tested them with a large UK sample.



**150**  
CAMPAIGN FILMS  
with a unique piece of music

**96**  
IPA CASES  
where audio-visual  
content was key

**84**  
UNIQUE BRANDS  
from 16 different industries

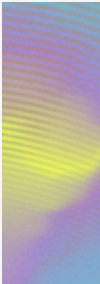
**7,500**  
PARTICIPANTS  
based in the UK, male/female  
gender split, aged 18-90 (M = 46)

# Alongside our research partner CloudArmy, we designed an **implicit methodology** to measure true responses to music.

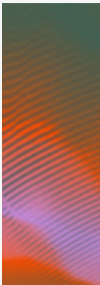
Designed alongside our CloudArmy research partners, and hosted on their implicit testing platform, we co-created an innovative way to test 150 ads, with balanced exposures of at least 100 per ad, keeping the tests short enough to retain attention and ensure high-quality, reliable responses.

The total sample consisted of 7,500 participants, divided into seven batches. Batches were categorised via music type: instrumental or vocal. The study incorporated smart experimental features like randomization, context provision and distractors assigned by music type (instrumental or vocal). In addition, two batches contained exclusively Christmas campaigns, to avoid skewed responses driven by the heightened engagement and emotions typically associated with festive content.

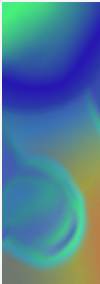
## WHY IMPLICIT?



**BYPASSES CONSCIOUS BIAS**  
Implicit testing measures subconscious reactions, preventing socially desirable or rationalised responses that often distort traditional surveys.



**CAPTURES GRANULAR, RICH RESPONSES**  
Music causes deep emotional responses, and implicit testing uncovers these by incorporating both reactions and reaction-times, providing more differentiating power.



**PREDICTS REAL-WORLD BEHAVIOUR**  
Since music influences consumer decisions on a subconscious level, implicit testing provides a more accurate gauge of its impact on brand perception and purchasing intent.



**CloudArmy**  
Uncovering Hidden Insights

[READ MORE ↗](#)

PREVIOUS WORK

WE MOVE FROM  
BRAND EFFECTS...

MusicIQ

- Implicit Brand Preference
- Brand awareness
- Brand loyalty

CURRENT WORK

...TO BUSINESS  
EFFECTS

Campaign MusicIQ

- ROMI
- Price sensitivity reduction
- Fame effects
- Long-term effects
- Large business effects
- Large brand effects

While our previous whitepapers have focused on brand-level effects, we now shift to **campaign-level business impact.**

Once we carried out the consumer research and calculated the MusicIQ scores, our data was ordinarily linked to the business effect data of IPA.

This data stems from the IPA Effectiveness Awards, held every two years, to which brands submit their best marketing work and business results. All data is stored in the IPA Effectiveness Databank. In this study, data from awards years 2016-2024 were included.

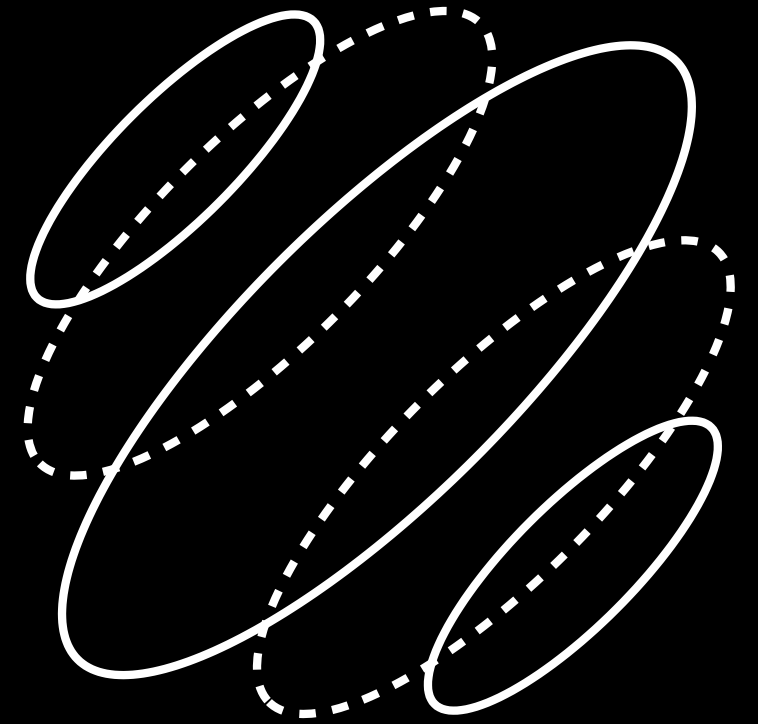


METRIC	DEFINITION
Return on marketing investment (ROMI)	Measures the financial return generated from marketing spend, showing how effectively marketing drives profit or growth
Price sensitivity reduction	The effect of marketing making consumers less reactive to price changes, allowing for stronger margins
Fame effects	The brand being well-known, talked about, and seen as a leading or defining force in its category
Long-term effects	Lasting business benefits such as price support, profitability, and successful product innovation
Large business effects	Measurable outcomes like sales, profit, market share, and customer growth from marketing activities
Large brand effects	Improvements in awareness, loyalty, trust, and distinctiveness that strengthen the brand
Collateral effects	Indirect impacts on media, investors, suppliers, and employees from marketing efforts
Brand salience	The extent to which a brand is easily and quickly thought of by consumers in a buying situation

# RESULTS



For the first time, our study  
proves that the right music  
doesn't just transform ad  
effectiveness, it leads to  
**tangible ROI.**



# Highly engaging music can boost your marketing ROI by an average of 32% – in some cases, it can even double your return.

Consistent with previous findings linking emotional engagement to advertising effectiveness, our analysis reveals a statistically significant linear relationship between engagement with the music in an ad and Return on Marketing Investment (ROMI).

If listeners connect with the track, they'll feel warm toward the brand, which drives purchases and boosts returns. For the first time, we've shown that both the perceived relevance and emotional tone of music can directly influence marketing performance.

The regression model showed a significant positive effect ( $\beta = 9.21, p = 0.05$ ), indicating that higher levels of engagement with the music predict increased ROMI.

## TOP PERFORMING ENGAGEMENT TRACKS

**1st**

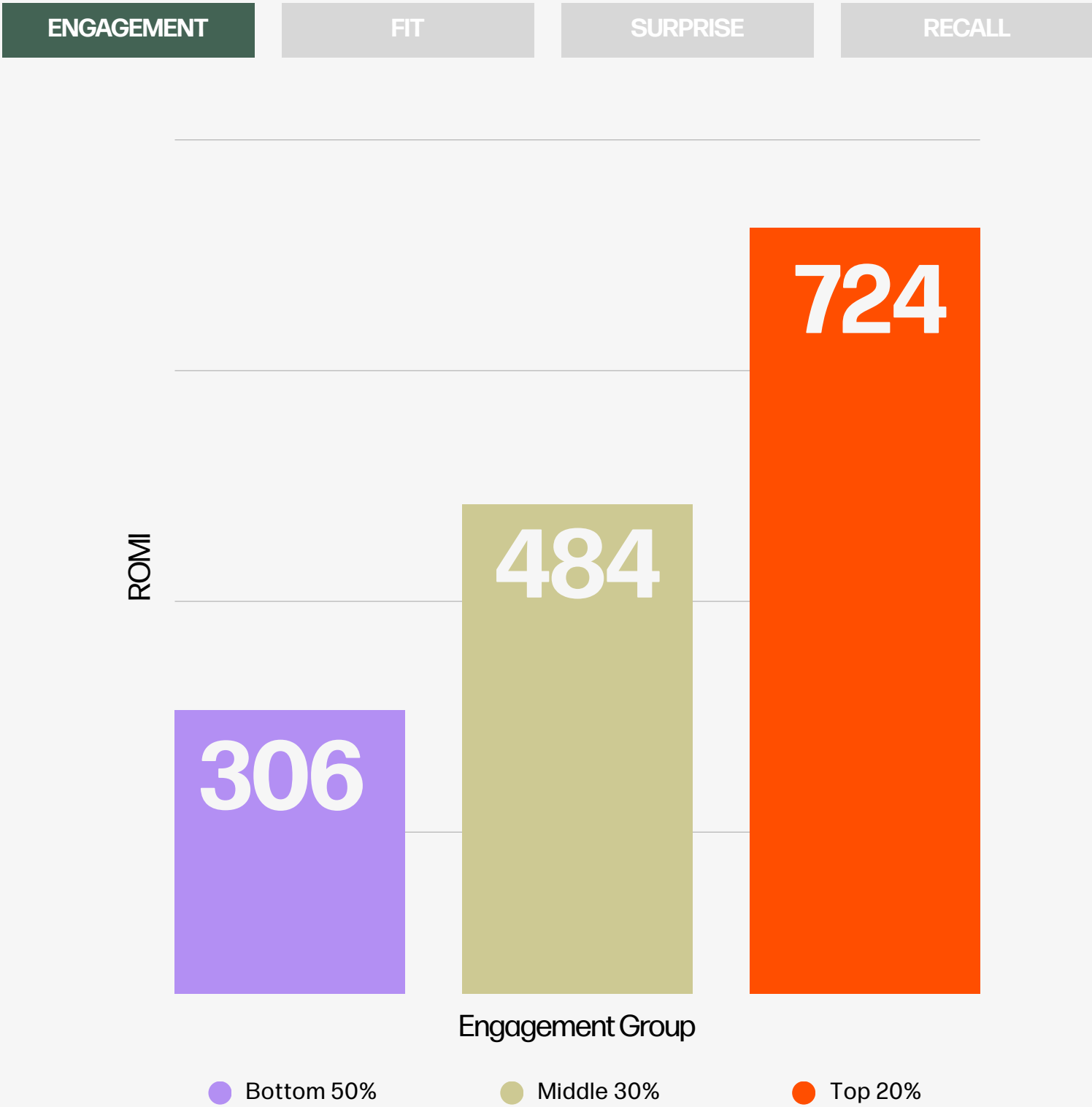
**ALDI (2018):**  
KEVIN THE CARROT

**3rd**

**PHILADELPHIA (2024):**  
YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN PHILLY

**5th**

**M&S FOOD (2016):**  
ADVENTURES IN IMAGINATION



A ROMI Index of 100 refers to the ROMI of the average campaign. So with a ROMI of 724, the highly engaged ads deliver 724% or x8.2 the ROMI of the average ad.


Research conducted on 150 ads, tested via Campaign MusicIQ implicit behavioural methodology, on a sample of 7,500 UK participants. Linear regression results: Musical Engagement × ROMI,  $\beta = 9.21, p = 0.05$



# Using campaign music that is highly fitting with the visual can make consumers nearly 7 times more willing to pay higher prices.

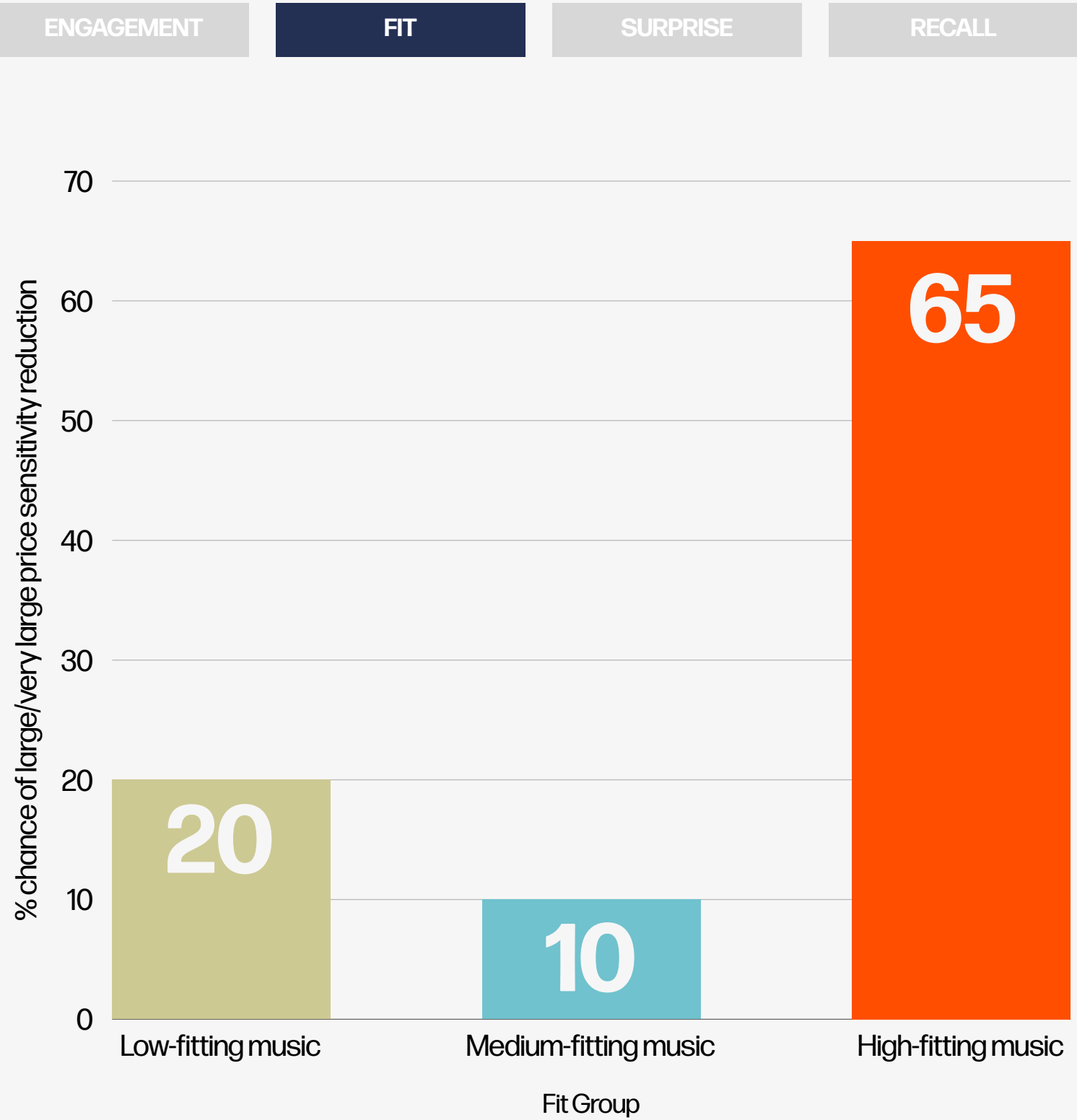
Previous research has shown that music-visual congruency in advertising shapes consumer perception, enhances message processing, and influences brand attitudes. Our findings build on this by showing that the fit between music and visuals not only reduces price sensitivity in a generally linear way- where better fit makes consumers more willing to pay- but also follows a positive quadratic pattern, with the effect accelerating at higher levels of fit.

In other words, moderate improvements in fit yield modest gains, but when music and visuals are highly congruent, they strongly enhance how valuable the product feels, and thus how much people are willing to pay.



**GREAT WESTERN RAILWAYS (2018):**  
FIVE GO ON AN ADVENTURE

In this GWR ad, we follow Enid Blyton's Famous Five, accompanied by seamlessly arranged cinematic orchestral piece that mirrors the upbeat, exciting tone of the film.



Research conducted on 150 ads, tested via Campaign MusicIQ implicit behavioural methodology, on a sample of 7,500 UK participants. Ordinal logistic regression results:  $\beta(\text{linear}) = 1.92, p < 0.05, \beta(\text{quadratic}) = 1.95, p < 0.05.$



# Fit compounds over time, leading to long-term benefits.

Importantly, previous research by Binet and Field suggests that these price effects are long term: music can influence price sensitivity most if used consistently over time. Brands are more likely to keep using a track when it has been carefully selected or designed to align seamlessly with the brand’s identity, and over time, this sustained use strengthens consumer associations with the brand and reinforces the perception of fit.

“Once you’ve got a great track, keep using it. People will increasingly associate the track with the brand and think that it fits. Over time, you get long term benefits, the most important and profitable of which is increased pricing power.”

LES BINET  
RAVENSBORNE UNIVERSITY, FELLOW OF THE IPA

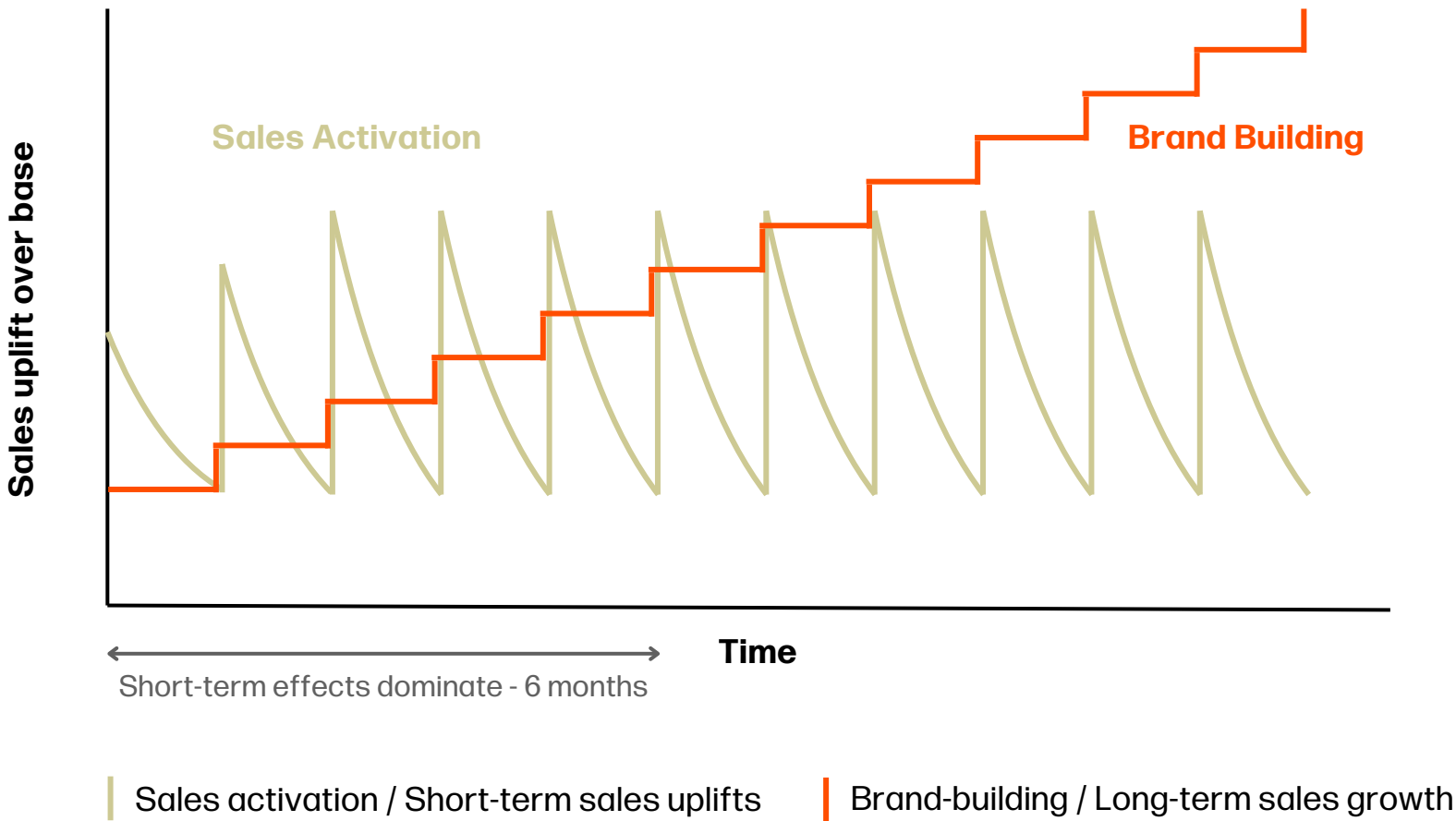
We also found another interesting pattern: negative correlations between Fit and Mental Availability. A possible explanation is that a track that perfectly fits may reduce distinctiveness, which is often a key driver of those upper-funnel brand metrics.

From previous research, particularly in work by the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute and Les Binet & Peter Field, we know that Fame and Mental Availability are often driven by salience, novelty, and distinctiveness: things that make an ad stand out. In contrast, a perfectly matched soundtrack may make the ad feel seamless, pleasant, and persuasive, but less attention-grabbing. In other words, perfect fit may enhance persuasion (e.g., willingness to pay) but limit the deeper brand metrics such as brand salience. Although this seems like a trade-off, fit and fame can co-exist – which could, for example, be achieved through balancing unexpectedness with seamless audiovisual sync.

- ENGAGEMENT
- FIT
- SURPRISE
- RECALL

## BRAND BUILDING AND SALES ACTIVATION WORK OVER DIFFERENT TIMESCALES

SOURCE: LES BINET AND PETER FIELD, MEDIA IN FOCUS: MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE DIGITAL ERA. IPA






# Surprising, highly unexpected music makes ads 5× more likely to drive brand fame.

Music that is surprising for a film might be an unexpected choice or hidden gem, capturing attention and making an ad stand out.

Our analysis shows that surprise has a positive causal effect on Fame, supported by prior research on advertising memorability and brand salience. Unexpected or unconventional music is a powerful attention-capturing device: by defying expectations, it cuts through cognitive filters, raises arousal, and creates novelty that strengthens memory encoding.


Psychologically, surprise triggers the orienting response, drawing attention and increasing cognitive resources devoted to the stimulus. This is especially relevant for upper-funnel metrics like Fame, which capture how widely an ad is remembered, discussed, or culturally recognised.



**COSTA (2016):**  
A NATION OF COSTA LOVERS

1st

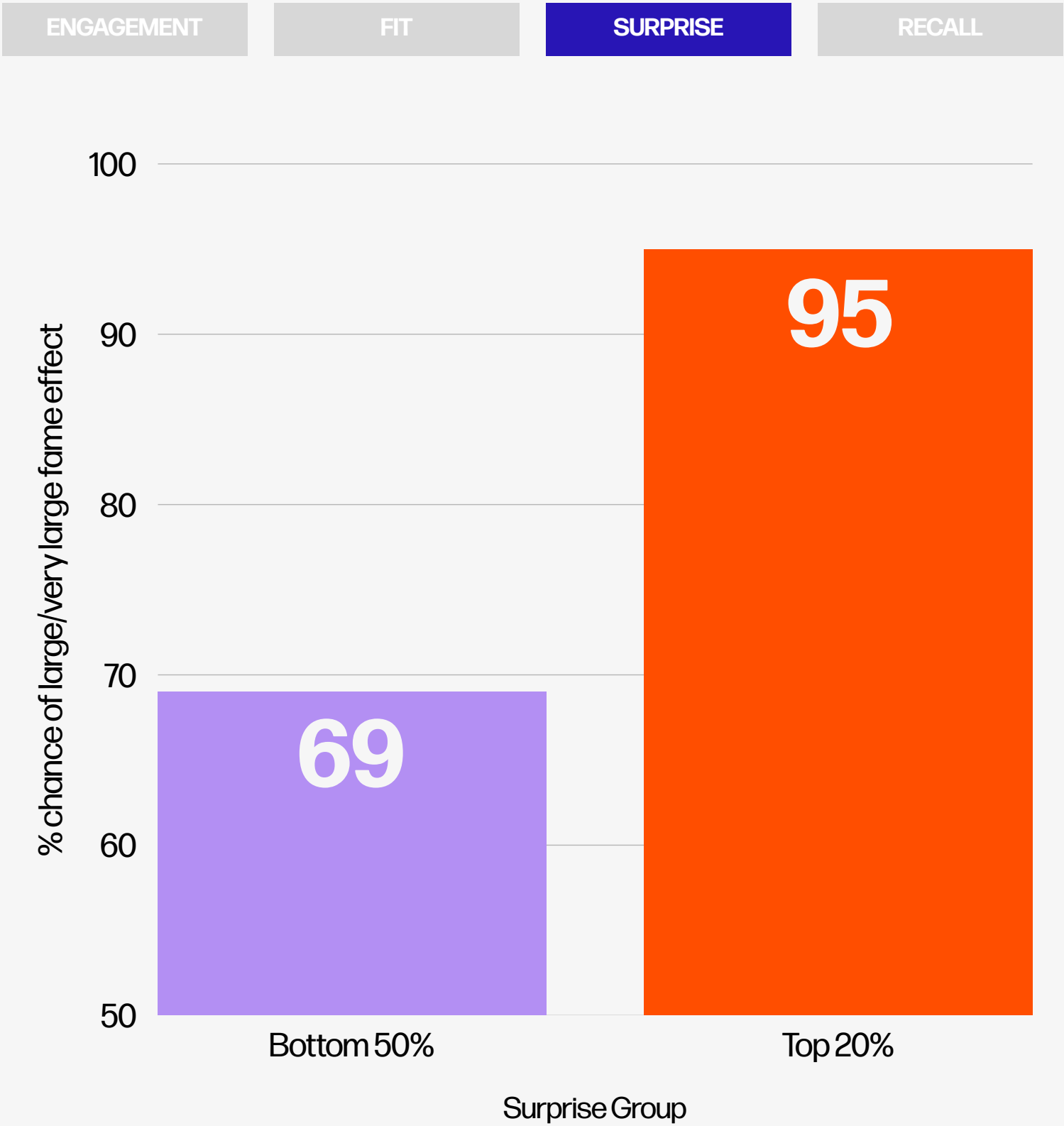
Re-recording Kiss’ “I Was Made For Loving You” by a musical choir: Costa Coffee took a creative leap and were rewarded most surprising ad by our sample.



**KFC (2024):**  
BELIEVE IN CHICKEN

3rd

Using a classical opera track, namely Puccini’s “Turandot, Act III: Nessun dormal” in a fast food kitchen launched this KFC Christmas campaign to a third place on Surprise.



Research conducted on 150 ads, tested via Campaign MusicIQ implicit behavioural methodology, on a sample of 7,500 UK participants. Ordinal logistic regression:  $\beta = 1.66, p < 0.1$ . Correlation with ROMI:  $R = 0.29, p < 0.1$ .



# Surprise sells: the commercial power of creative music choices.

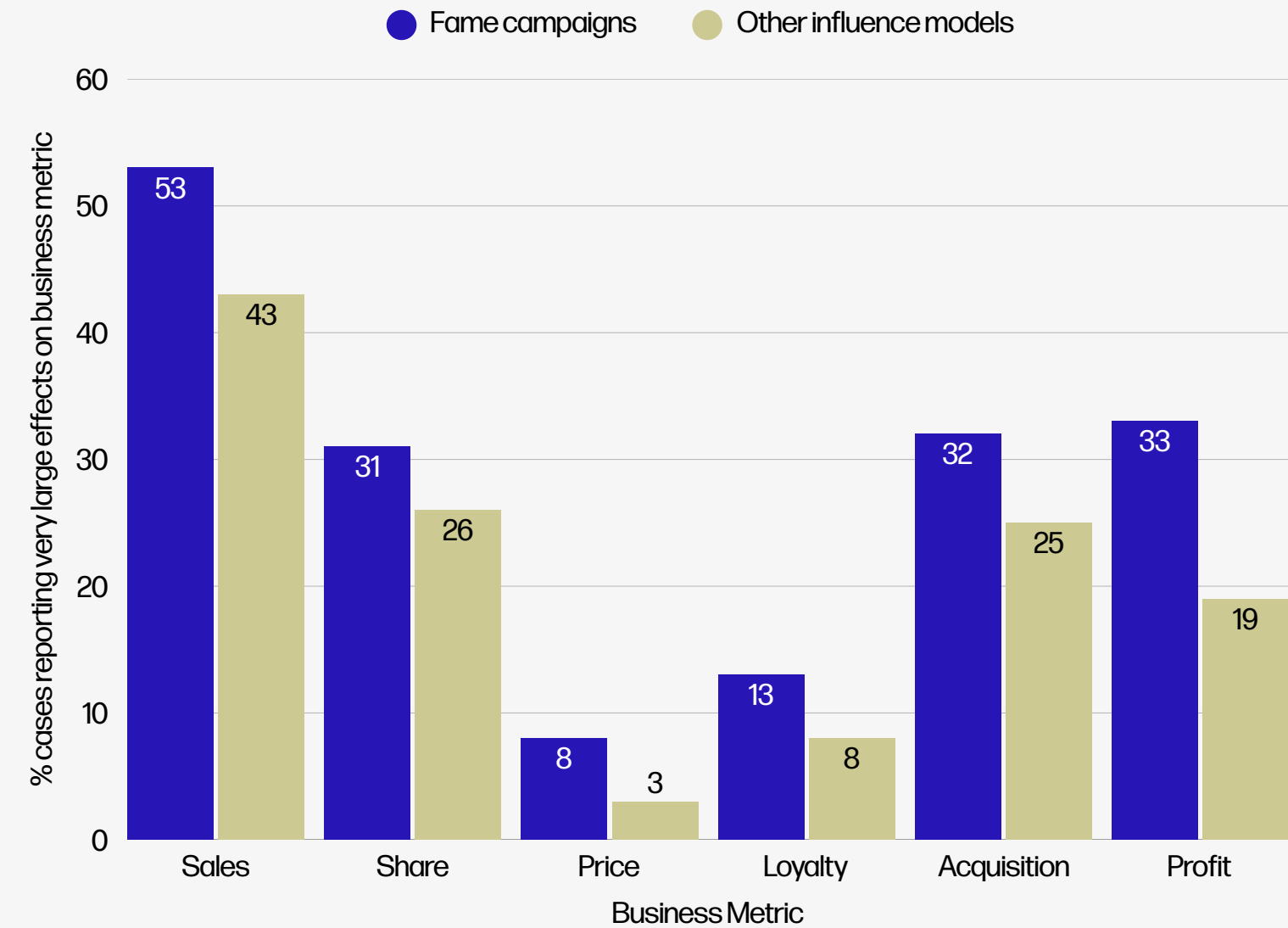
Creative advertising literature also supports this. Les Binet and Peter Field have shown that emotional impact and fame effects are often driven by creative excellence and originality, which underlie our Surprise metric. Additionally, Binet and Field have found that fame is more profitable than mere awareness, and fame campaigns have longer and broader effects.

In line with Binet and Field’s work, we also found a positive correlation between Surprise and ROMI. Unexpected musical choices make an ad more distinctive, which is known to improve marketing efficiency. The significant correlation between Surprise and ROMI in this analysis suggests that using surprising, creative, and original music doesn't just grab attention; it also pays off commercially.

- ENGAGEMENT
- FIT
- SURPRISE**
- RECALL

FAME CAMPAIGNS OUTPERFORM ON ALL BUSINESS METRICS, ESPECIALLY OVER THE LONG TERM

SOURCE: IPA DATABANK RESEARCH, LES BINET, 2015



# Highly memorable music can make your brand 4× more effective at driving brand salience.

This relationship is well-supported by prior research on brand memory and mental availability. Music that is highly memorable, whether due to familiarity, catchiness, emotional impact, or repetition, strengthens encoding and retrieval cues associated with the ad and the brand. When people can easily recall the music from an ad, they are more likely to remember the ad itself and the brand it promotes. This enhances mental availability, which refers to how easily and often a brand comes to mind in buying situations.

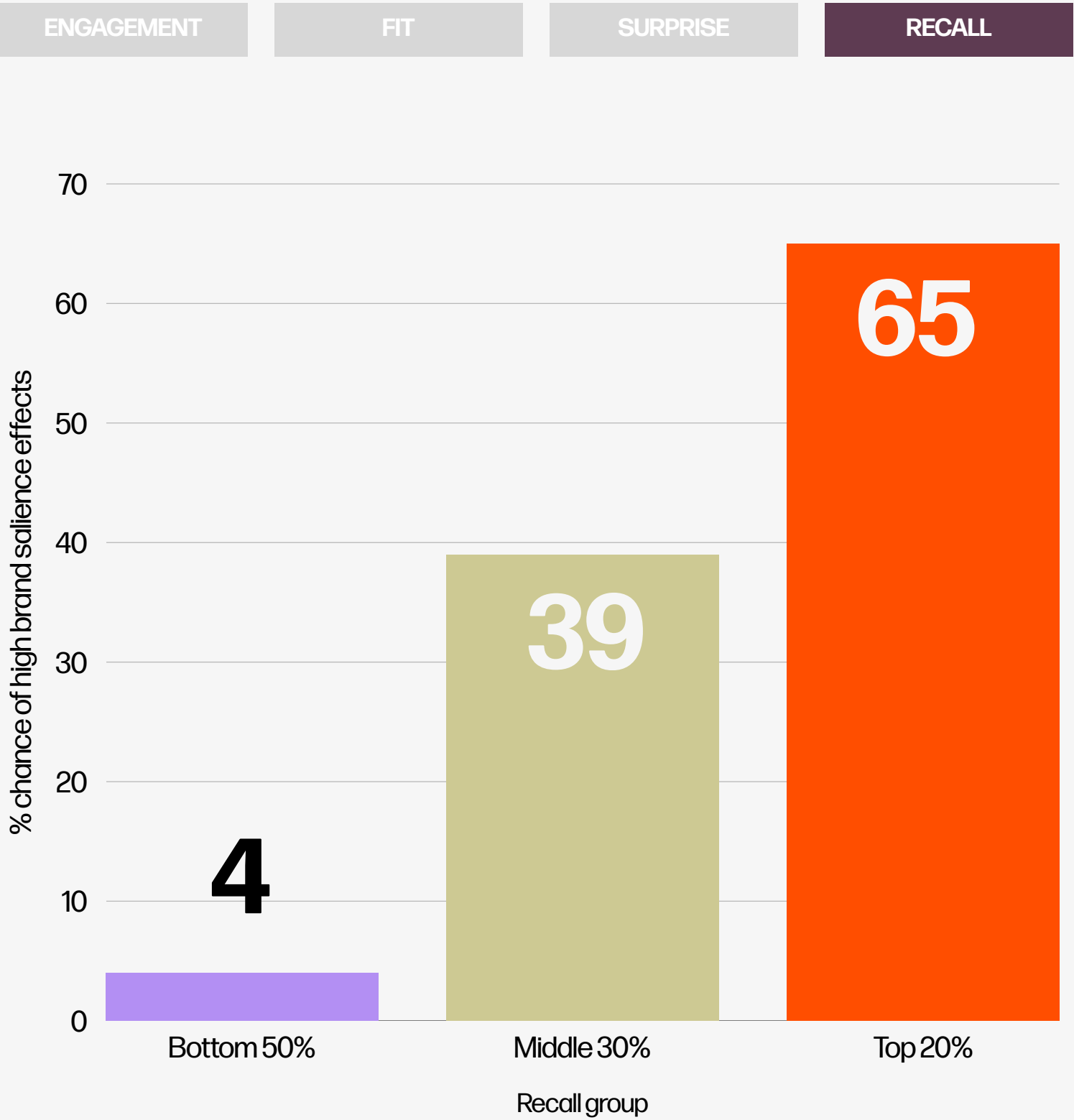
The significant correlation between musical recall and mental availability in this analysis suggests that when music is easy to remember, it plays a key role in keeping the brand mentally “top of mind,” improving the chances it will be recalled at the point of purchase.



TUI (2016):  
WE DOT THE IS, CROSS THE TS AND PUT U IN THE MIDDLE



TUI's 2017 ad with Felix Jaehn's re-record of "Ain't Nobody" got people talking. Love it or hate it, everyone remembered it, and it ended up ranking as the most memorable track in our sample.



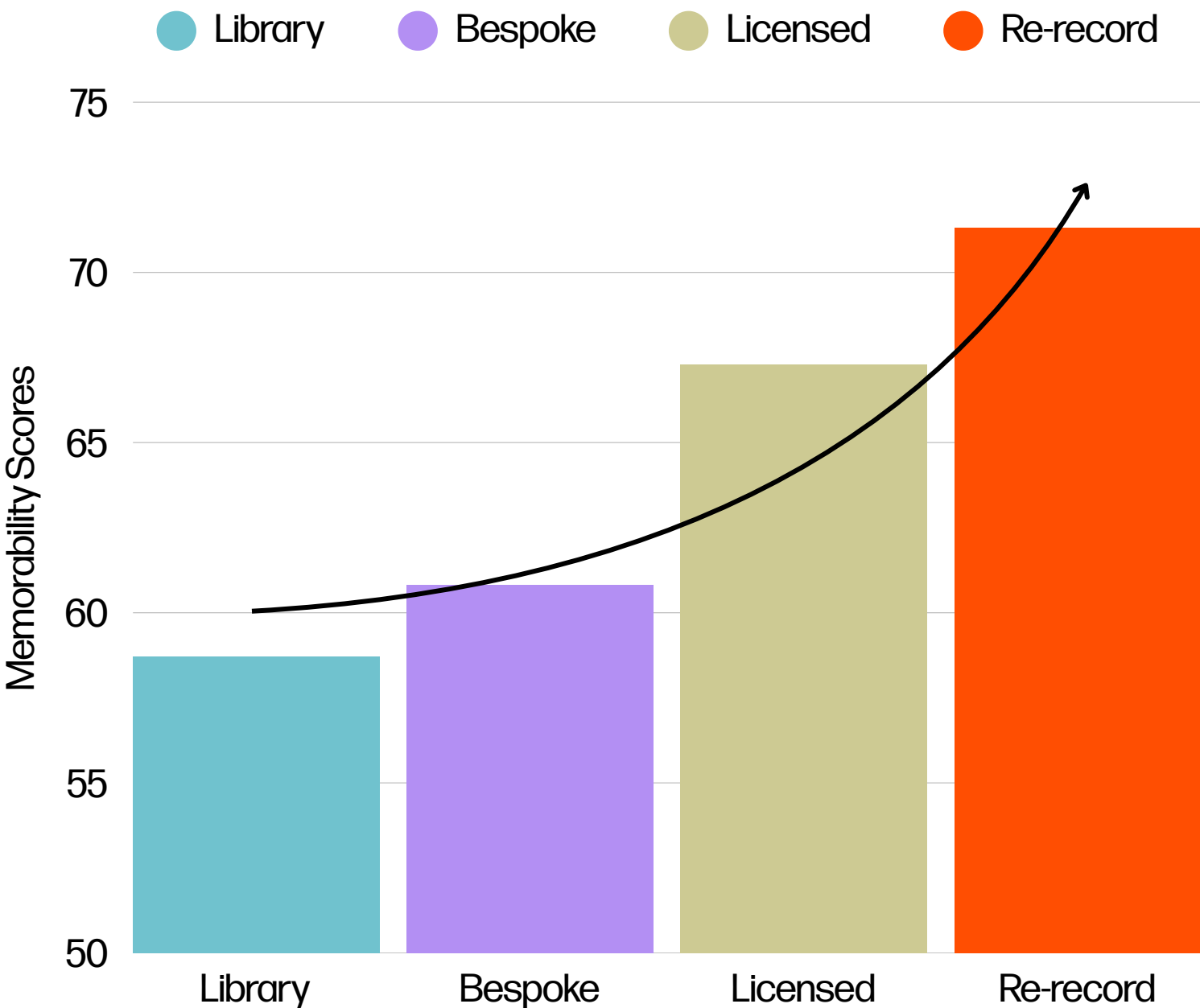
Predicted probability of a 'High' outcome increases across Low, Medium, and High levels of the predictor variable, illustrating a positive association between the predictor and the likelihood of a high outcome category. This trend reflects the ordinal logistic regression coefficient ( $\beta = 1.50$ ), corresponding to approximately a 4.5× increase in cumulative odds of being in a higher outcome category per unit increase in the predictor.

# Creative re-records are the top choice for a highly memorable campaign.

In our research, creative re-records significantly outperformed other musical sources on memorability.

Tracks such as Lloyd's piano rendition of "Mad World" in their "For Your Next Step" campaign or Gala Bingo's clever rework of the Bananarama song "Na Na Hey Hey" yielded high recall scores in our sample.

When it comes to creative approaches, previous research shows that effective re-imaginings of existing tracks deliver a double impact on the brain: the instant recognition of a familiar song combined with the intrigue of fresh, unexpected musical elements. This balance of familiarity and surprise is precisely what helps embed the message in long-term memory.



Research conducted on 150 ads, tested via Campaign MusicIQ implicit behavioural methodology, on a sample of 7,500 UK participants. Re-record (71.28) and Licensed music (67.3) significantly higher recall than bespoke (60.8) and library (58.7),  $p < 0.05$ .

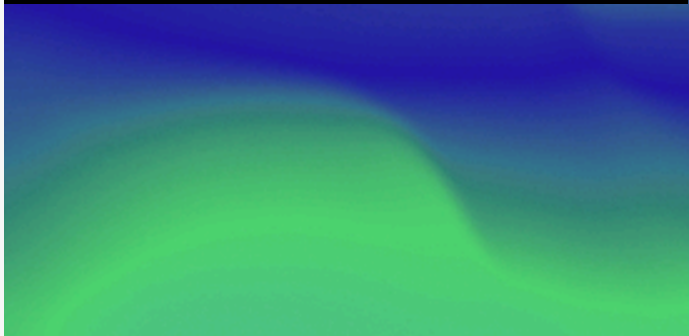
# IMPLI- CATIONS

# THE SOUND RECIPE FOR A BREAKTHROUGH CAMPAIGN

01

## ENGAGING

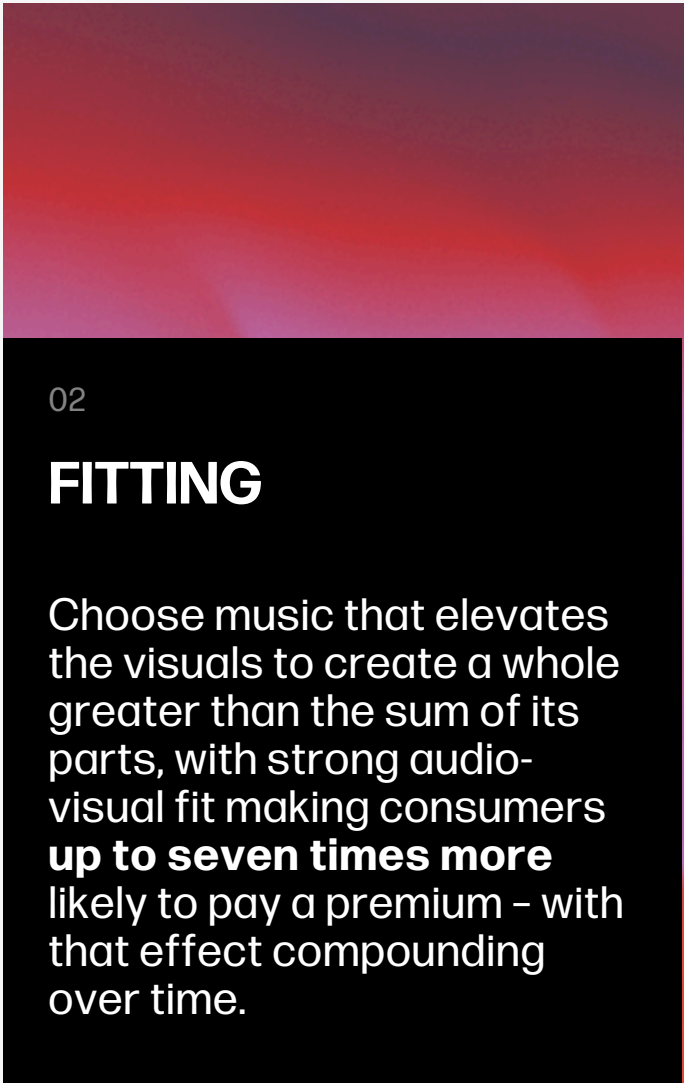
Choose music that captures attention and keeps people listening – engaging tracks can make your ads perform **up to twice** as efficiently, delivering significantly stronger returns on your marketing spend.



02

## FITTING

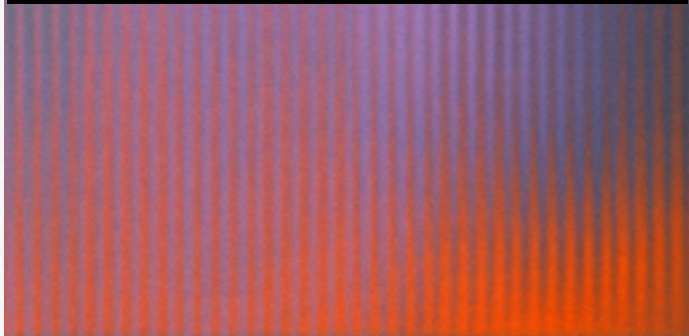
Choose music that elevates the visuals to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts, with strong audio-visual fit making consumers **up to seven times more** likely to pay a premium – with that effect compounding over time.



03

## SURPRISING

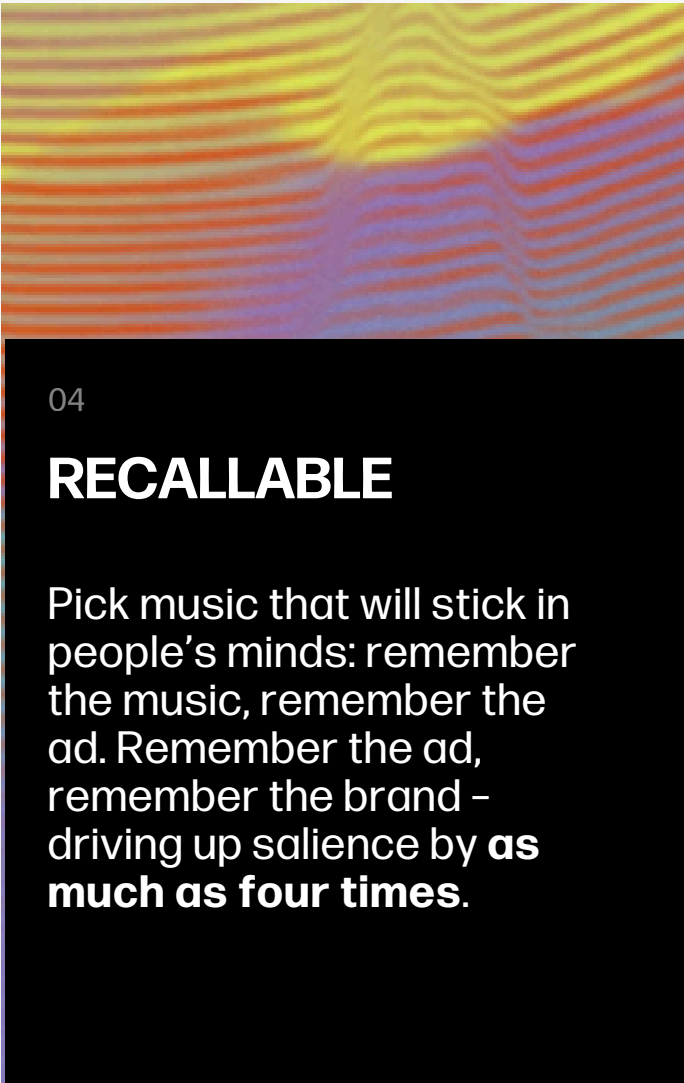
Unleash creativity and make bold music choices: surprising music cuts through the noise and can be **up to five times more** effective at driving brand fame.



04

## RECALLABLE

Pick music that will stick in people's minds: remember the music, remember the ad. Remember the ad, remember the brand – driving up salience by **as much as four times**.





# SURPRISE MATURES INTO UNIQUENESS

When a piece of music is used consistently over time, people begin to associate it uniquely with the brand. What may have started as a surprising or unconventional choice evolves into a distinctive sonic asset - one that strengthens brand identity and drives long-term value. As perceived fit compounds, so too do the commercial benefits, the most significant being increased pricing power. This insight echoes System1’s idea of *Compound Creativity*: the notion that creativity builds effectiveness when nurtured and repeated over time.

For brands and creative agencies, this is a reminder that **taking calculated risks pays off**; not just in attention or fame, but in tangible business results. Playing it safe might make sense in the short term, but it’s the **bold, unexpected creative decisions** that stand the test of time.

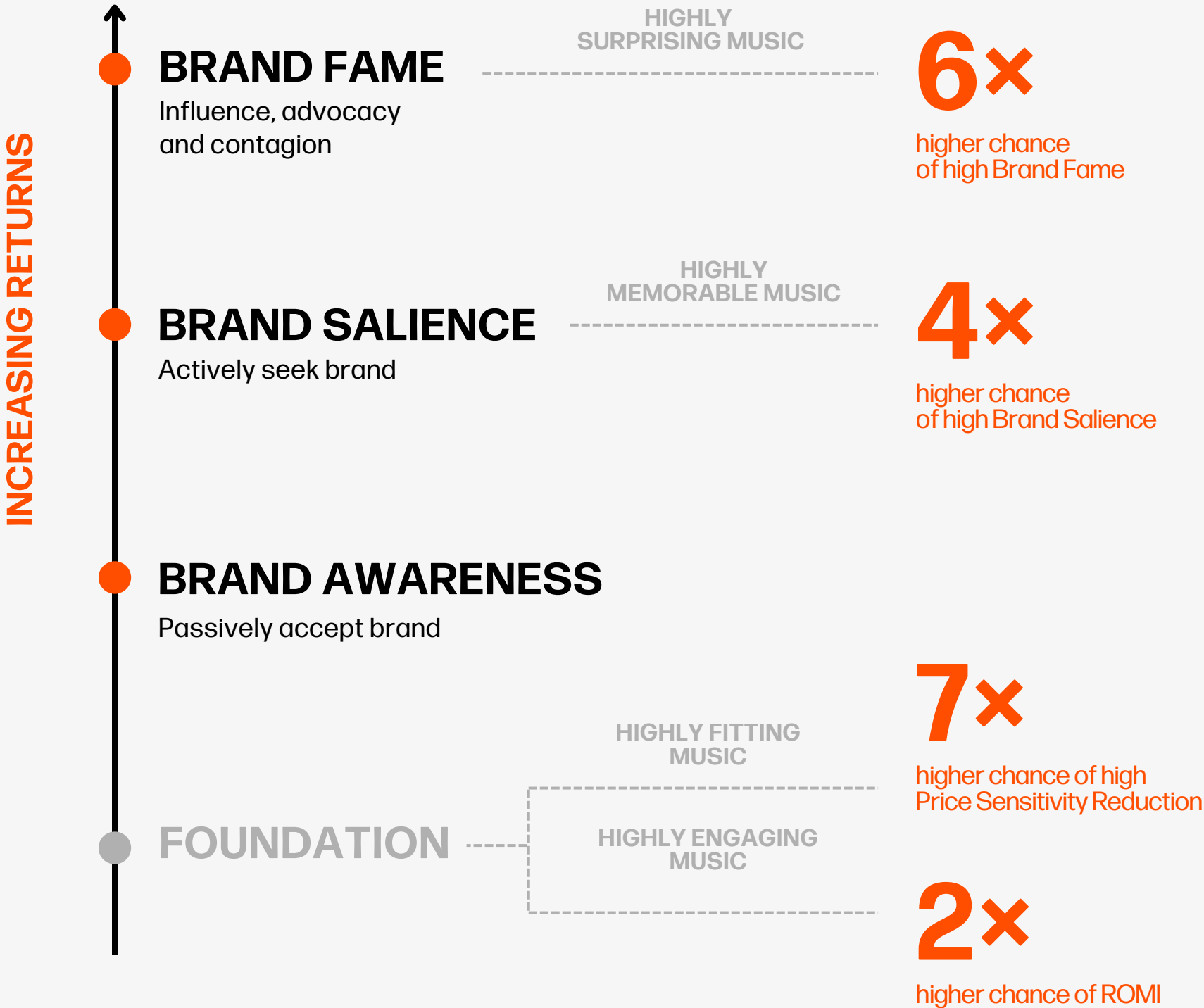


# ACHIEVING BRAND FAME THROUGH THE RIGHT TRACK

Putting all our results together, and linking it with previous research by Binet and Field on mental availability, salience and fame, we uncovered how music influences brand effects.

**Engagement** and **Fit** are the essential foundations. When music captures attention and feels right for the film, it sets the stage for strong awareness. But to truly elevate results and move toward brand fame, it's **Recall** and **Surprise** that make the difference. Memorable, unexpected musical choices have the power to cut through and stick.

These metrics don't work in silos - a highly surprising choice of music will inevitably also be more memorable. Additionally, Fit and Surprise can co-exist - especially if a track is used over a longer period of time.



# MUSIC MEANS BUSINESS

Music is complex, emotional, and powerful. Ask yourself this when choosing music for your next campaign:

IS OUR MUSIC CHOICE SURPRISING?  
DOES IT FIT?  
DOES IT ENGAGE?  
DOES IT FEEL MEMORABLE?

These simple questions can serve as smart, strategic guardrails - helping you make choices that don't just sound good, but will drive business results.



# OUR TOOLS, METHODOLOGIES AND REPORTS CAN HELP YOUR BRAND DISCOVER WHICH MUSIC WORKS

If you want to dive deeper into the effectiveness of your next music choice, we are here to help.

**Campaign MusicIQ** is a consumer-based metric that quantifies the effectiveness of a piece of music, based on how engaging it is, how well it fits the visuals, how creatively surprising it is, and how well it can be remembered.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

GET IN TOUCH

[EMEA@MASSIVEMUSIC.COM](mailto:EMEA@MASSIVEMUSIC.COM)







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If you have any questions regarding this study,  
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# THANK YOU

**MASSIVEMUSIC**