

Inspiring marketing excellence:

Insights from MMA's SMARTIES™ X Global Awards

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Every year, MMA Global hosts the SMARTIES Awards. Aimed at celebrating marketing excellence, the awards recognize brands, agencies, and tech providers leveraging creativity and innovation to drive business impact.

As a knowledge partner and member of MMA Global, we had the pleasure of attending the 2024 awards. Inspired by the brilliance of all the creative work we were witnessing, we rounded up 10 key insights from the winning campaigns. Each insight falls under one of three themes:

Theme 1: Insight identification & action

Across the Gold Awards winners, we observed a consistency in identifying compelling insights that

drive strategy, action, and engagement.

- 1. Powerful insight:** Behind every award-winning campaign is a powerful insight, woven into a well-crafted execution. This is often supported by smart, innovative technology that delivers meaningful business impact. A good example of this is ebay's [Twiggy Full Circle](#) campaign.
- 2. Displaying bravery & disrupting the status quo:** Shattering conventions and breaking from the norm is key to stealing the show. Award winners showcase

how to do things differently. Compelling storytelling is key here, too. [VinFast's VF3 Pre-order on Livestream](#) campaign is a testament to this.

- 3. Fresh consistency:** The best campaigns balance originality with consistency. The trick is to find the sweet spot between foreign and familiar. This balance will help deliver well-branded and meaningful narratives. We love how Dove did this with [#BlackHairIsProfessional](#) campaign.
- 4. Bringing joy to the audience:** A consistent trend across

award winners was their ability to bring a smile to their audience's faces. This was often done by conveying a powerful truth or evoking a sense of nostalgia or fear of missing out in them. In doing so, these campaigns engaged audiences in heartwarming and, consequently, memorable ways. Check out Telstra's [Free Calls to Santa](#) to get an idea of what we mean.

Theme 2: Innovative strategies designed for deeper audience engagement

Award winners go beyond skin deep. They leverage technology and creativity to capture attention and deliver experiences that resonate. Here's how:

- 5. Personalization at scale:** Personalization is key to effective engagement. The use of web 3.0 has opened the door to craft personalized experiences at scale by drawing from geo-targeting, as well as integrating tech platforms and AI to drive results. Winning campaigns embracing this demonstrate the power of leveraging data at scale.
- 6. Lateral thinking:** Some brands have mastered the art of connecting their online advertising with offline activities. In doing so, they're able to bridge the gap between real life

and the digital world, seamlessly engaging audiences across both touchpoints. We love how United 24 and Fortnite executed this in their [The Donation Map](#) initiative.

- 7. Clever targeting:** Award winners are laser-focused on their target audience, which is often as broad as possible (rather than niche targeting, which risks limiting overall impact). They also place importance on contextual targeting, just like in Castrol Magnetic's "[Drive a Car, Not a Tractor](#)" campaign.



Theme 3: Embracing the future Welcoming new ideas, technologies, and approaches is the cornerstone of innovation. We consistently observed these trends among our award winners:

- 8. Effectively adopting AI:** It's no surprise that the use of AI is part of many winning campaigns. We saw a range of AI applications,

from product integration and chatbots to personalization. That said, the potential of AI's predictive powers has not yet been fully tapped into. Singapore's National Library Board did a great job with their [Playbary](#) tool, and we hope to see more of these innovative forms of engagement in 2025.

- 9. Reinvention:** Reinvention is exciting as it brings the promise of new opportunities for creativity and growth. Getting it right involves reimagining the possibilities and chasing them with (branded) bravery. PetPace hit the mark with their [Animal Alerts](#) project.
- 10. Storytelling:** Storytelling is a timeless means of bridging the past and future. Award winners tell their stories with ease, because they understand the fundamental truth behind the narrative. Emotional storytelling is a powerful way of stepping beyond the ordinary. It's not just about saying things that audiences want to hear - it's more about displaying the brand's generosity through acts that drive impact. A prime example is L'Enfant Bleu's [The Hidden Story](#).

As modern marketing continues to evolve, so does the way we judge creative work. What remains the same is the need to cut through the noise and deliver impact. The SMARTIES Awards winners are setting a new standard in marketing excellence, and we look forward to the exciting opportunities the future holds.