



# Just One Word

Brand: Cadbury  
Category: Brand Evolution



*Cadbury*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why do we define our brands in such complicated ways?

Frameworks and models. Onions, keyholes, foundations, fundamentals... They feel rigorous. But are they actually useful?

This paper proposes another way. Doing it all in one word.

One word that can be remembered and used no matter where you work in a company. One word that works just as well in sales, HR and R&D as it does in marketing.

Returning time and time again to a single word has had an extraordinary effect on the nation's favourite chocolate: Cadbury.

- Our communications now consistently rank in the top 1% of all UK advertising
- Cadbury is now the 2nd most loved brand in the UK
- Most significantly: **Annual Value Sales are up 37% vs pre-campaign in 2017 - equivalent to an additional £437 million per year.**

That one word?

### ***Generosity.***

A word rooted in Cadbury's 200 year history, which has guided its turnaround since 2017, and continues to inspire its evolution.

*Generosity* has led to unglamorous, quiet storytelling that ignores decades of advertising norms, and finds magic in the ordinary in the process.

*Generosity* has led to millions of people secretly sending chocolate to loved ones from OOH posters, and hiding Easter eggs all around the world for them to find on digital platforms.

*Generosity* has led to millions of chocolate bars hitting shelves shorn of our most distinctive asset.

This six year (and counting) commitment to a single word has created the conditions for what we call "*compound creativity*". A consistency of approach over the long-term that creates a cumulative, compounding effect.

Our brand world, our distinctive assets, our body language, our behaviours, our storytelling copy, the experiences we create; all come from *Generosity*, and over time work in the aggregate to build ever-stronger memory structures and meaning in people's lives.

This effect is borne out in communications tests, and in brand tracking data. Campaign-on-campaign, year-on-year, these measures improve.

*Generosity* has fundamentally transformed the Cadbury brand in the eyes of the British



public. And it has galvanised the business in a way a 30 page brand strategy document never could, extending into retail relationships, product development, our digital ecosystem and other internal initiatives.

So here we are, about to use a few thousand words to extol the virtues of using one. We appreciate the irony.

But we hope other brands - whether fresh-faced start-ups or fellow double centurions - can be inspired by the lesson of *Generosity*.

To steer clear of convoluted frameworks and the refuge of the complex; instead defining their brands clearly, simply and confidently in the most concise way possible.

Perhaps, with just one word.

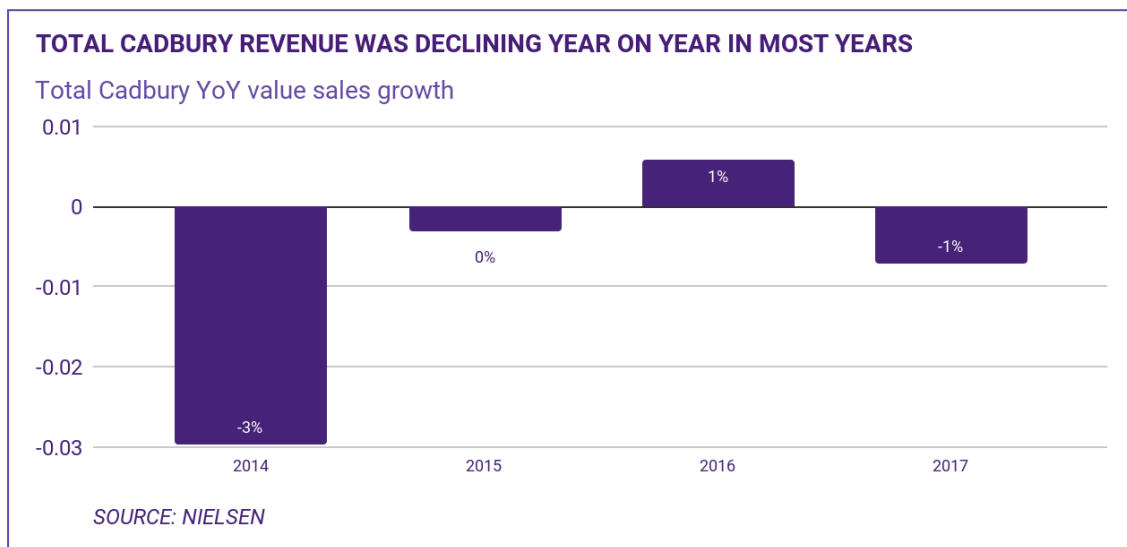
Word Count: 435

## A NATIONAL TREASURE IN DECLINE

200 years old this year, Cadbury is among the most historic brands in the UK. Founded in Birmingham in 1824, its chocolate has been part of the fabric of British life ever since, from picnic baskets to the frontlines of the First World War. It bears the Royal warrant, but is made for anybody and everybody in the country.

But in 2017, this national treasure was in decline.

**Year-on-year declines in annual revenue** had become the norm, and by 2017 the brand was **3% down versus 2013** - equivalent to more than **£41million in annual sales**.



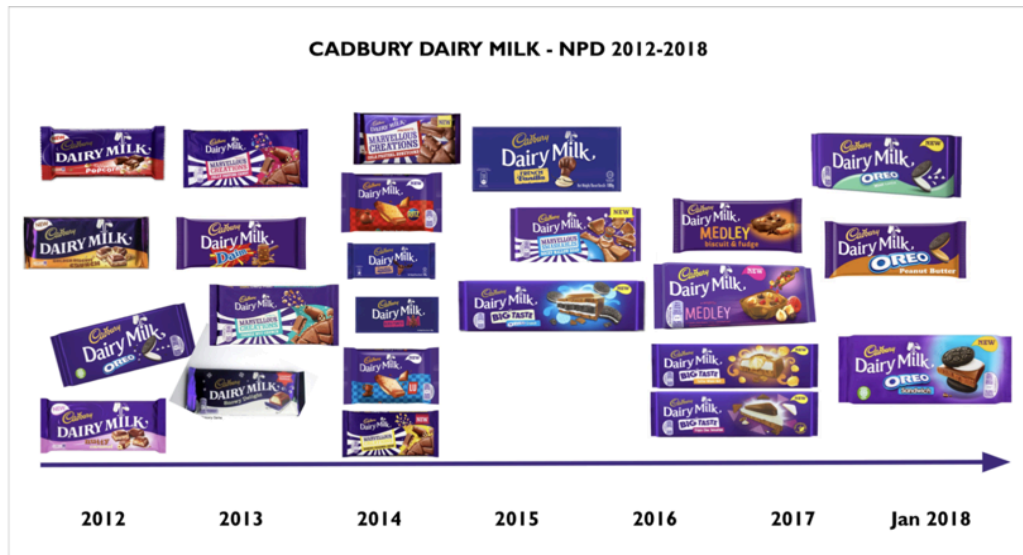
The causes of these declines were multifaceted.

Firstly at a corporate level, this British icon had been the subject of a hostile takeover by American corporation Kraft in 2010, triggering a slew of negative headlines and a sense that the brand was being lost to the nation.





Secondly, the brand had become addicted to new product development, attempting to win people over with Willy Wonka-esque innovations and mash-ups. Over the long-term this served to dilute the intrinsic qualities of Cadbury products, and resulted in a loss of focus on Cadbury's signature product Dairy Milk.



And finally, a decade after creating one of the most popular ads of all time - Gorilla - **Cadbury's communications had become increasingly wacky**, and largely indistinguishable from Mars, M&Ms, Snickers and the rest of the confectionery category.



## A HYPERBOLIC BRAND IN A HYPERBOLIC CATEGORY

*Cadbury*

*The category*



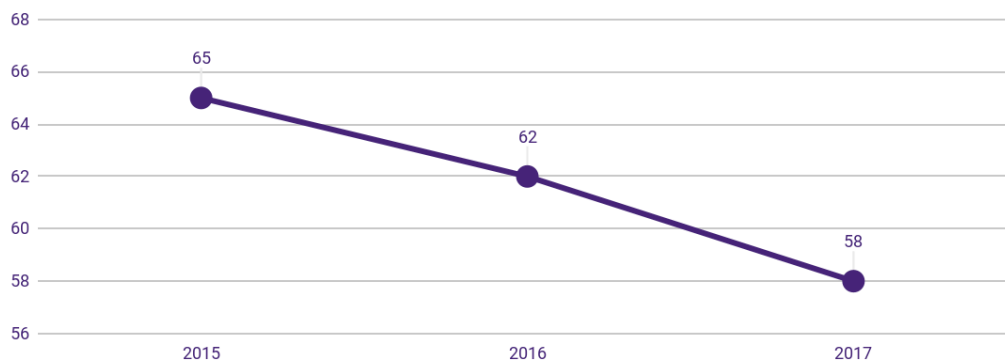
VCCP × *Cadbury*

**In sum:** at corporate, product, and communications levels, **Cadbury had lost its focus**, and was losing connection with the nation,

This was clearly reflected in brand tracking.

### THE NATION WAS LOSING CONNECTION WITH THE CADBURY BRAND

Question: "How close do you feel to the brand?"



SOURCE: IPSOS, Top 3 agreement on a 10 point scale (%)

In the qualitative research commissioned to investigate the problem, one respondent summed it up nicely:

***“Cadbury just doesn’t feel like Cadbury anymore”<sup>1</sup>***

<sup>1</sup> VCCP Qualitative research, 2017



## THE OBJECTIVES

Making Cadbury feel like Cadbury again wasn't just a nice-to-have. It was an imperative if the brand was going to recapture the hearts, and tastebuds, of the British people. Which in turn was non-negotiable if we were going to meet our key target of **growing annual value sales by 9% within five years**.

So it required singular focus. Our objectives were the first reflection of this, stripped of all marketing artifice, clear, and intimately related to one another.

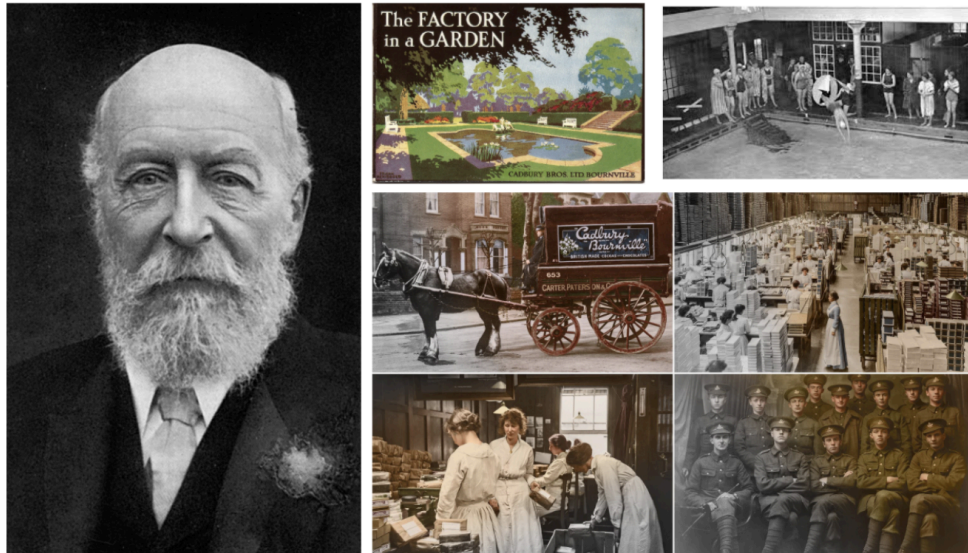


## GOING BACK TO THE START

We chose to focus on the product at the core of Cadbury - Dairy Milk. And the distinctive feature of Dairy Milk - heroed in decades of advertising - is that it contains **a glass & a half of milk**.



This product feature has a long history, dating back to the early days of Cadbury advertising. More broadly, the suggestion of good ingredients in generous helpings points to the brand's beginning.



Cadbury was founded upon deeply-held Quaker values by John Cadbury in 1824. From building Bournville to give its workers a better quality of life, to sending Cadbury care packages to frontline soldiers in the First World War, its history is rich with genuinely purposeful behaviour.

That behaviour seemed to us to stem from the same truth that the glass & a half of milk in every bar points to: **Generosity**.

In 2017, when we were developing the strategy, it felt like the nation was in serious need of *Generosity*. A year in which we suffered terrorism attacks including the Manchester bombings, the shock and sadness of Grenfell and two general elections in quick succession. This was further compounded by the bleak sense of humanity reflected in the news: self-obsessed celebrities, social media culture, the global rise of isolationism in politics.





And yet, just a cursory peek under the bonnet of bad news revealed a world of *Generosity* taking place up and down the country, every day. Neighbours helping neighbours or small acts of kindness between strangers. Ordinary, everyday acts of *Generosity*, borne out of empathy and nothing more, that may be small in scale but are big in meaning.

**Generosity** didn't just describe Dairy Milk's distinctive recipe and Cadbury's history as an organisation. It encapsulated a fundamental human instinct, one that the world needed reminding of in tough times.

We'd found our word. And it gave us our purpose. In short:

**To inspire more Generosity in the world,  
by showing that *there's a glass & a half in everyone.***

We summed this up as follows:



**STRATEGIC SUMMARY**

Cadbury believes there's a **generous instinct** within all of us

Cadbury's purpose is to **inspire more generosity** in the world

**In a sentence:** Cadbury will show that **'there's a glass & a half in everyone.'**

VCCP × Cadbury

The graphic features a purple background with a white illustration of two glasses on a stem. A square Cadbury chocolate bar is positioned to the right, with the word 'Cadbury' embossed on it. Small chocolate shavings are scattered around the bar.



There's a glass & a half in everyone

The visual shows a square Cadbury chocolate bar with a stem-like structure growing from its top. At the end of the stem are two glasses, one slightly larger than the other, both filled with white liquid. The background is purple, and there are small chocolate shavings at the base of the bar.

## GENEROSITY IN PRACTICE

Inspiring more *Generosity* in the world was no small task to assign ourselves, and we knew as we were setting it that we'd need to act innovatively to deliver upon it in practice.

Accordingly, we broke the campaign into two strands. One - **Storytelling** - was, on the face of it, more traditional, but took an approach that broke decisively from the norms of the category. And a second - **Storydoing** - took a chocolate brand into entirely unknown territory.

Both however, were entirely in service of that one word - *Generosity*.

We summed their roles up as below:

1. **STORYTELLING**: emotionally engaging stories, primarily on TV, of everyday Britons using Cadbury's Dairy Milk to demonstrate *Generosity* to each other
2. **STORYDOING**: emotionally engaging Cadbury initiatives that inspire all of us to show *Generosity* to each other

## STORYTELLING

The first execution was "**Mum's Birthday**", featuring a young girl tentatively buying a birthday bar of Dairy Milk for her mum, using her precious toy buttons and a unicorn. Four further stories of *Generosity* followed in the intervening 6 years.



These stories were vast departures from the typical trappings of chocolate advertising. And advertising more generally.

- *The world is unglamorous* - with the stories set in corner shops, on public buses, or in all-night garages.
- *Everything is quiet* - the only sounds are those of the real world - the radio, the kettle, the traffic in the background. No music, no razzle-dazzle.
- *The people are representative* - real people, from all corners of the UK.

And perhaps most risky of all...

- *No-one eats chocolate* - there are absolutely no eating shots in any of the films. No bite-and-smile moment. No eyes lighting up. Barely a glimpse across the 5 films of the chocolate bar itself inside the wrapper. In fact, in *Bus* the upset girl actually turns down the offer of a piece.
- *And no-one ever says Cadbury* - there isn't a single mention of the brand. It's either "one of those" or "a bar of chocolate please"

These were genuinely brave choices. Ignoring decades of chocolate advertising norms. Finding the magic of the ordinary. Trusting in the powerful emotional heft in each of the stories of *Generosity*. And still managing to tell stories with Dairy Milk at their heart.

## STORYDOING

Inspiring *Generosity* is an active purpose. So it wasn't enough to simply play back generous stories to people. **We also sought to actively spread *Generosity* in the real world.**

This meant taking a CPG chocolate brand in an entirely new direction. Starting by creating digital services that facilitated people's *Generosity* towards their loved ones, using our chocolate, during the commercially crucial Christmas and Easter seasons.

What's more, these repeatable branded properties were based on *generous* insights, ones which elevated the *Generosity* involved.

**At Easter** - *the Generosity is in the hiding of the egg*

- So we designed the **Cadbury Worldwide Hide** - a digital platform built with Google Maps, on which people could virtually hide an Easter Egg anywhere in the world for a loved one to find.





**At Christmas - there's nothing more generous than gifting in secret**

- So we created the **Cadbury Secret Santa** - a nationwide campaign inviting the UK to send chocolate secretly, for free, to someone special via interactive post offices - that is, OOH sites up and down the country.











## Storydoing - Generosity at national scale

To truly prove that there was a generous instinct in *everyone*, we also tackled an issue of national importance in which personal *Generosity* could make a real difference - loneliness.

- **Donate Your Words** - One million bars of Dairy Milk hit shelves with the words removed or 'donated' – along with a 30p donation to Age UK - to encourage people to donate their time and conversation to the 1.4m older people in the U.K who experience loneliness.

### DONATE YOUR WORDS

Raising awareness of the issue	Encouraging "donations"	Showing the impact
		
		

VCCP × Cadbury



## Storydoing - Generosity in retail

We even looked at ways to imbue *Generosity* into our retail promotions.

- **The Big Win-Win** - Recognising the close ties many people have with their local corner shop owners - like the one featured in Mum's Birthday - we created a classic retail "win" mechanic with a generous twist - if you win, your local corner shop wins too. Shared wins for the community, bringing people together.



## IS IT GENEROUS?

All of these choices were bold, risky ones. But they were all guided by a single question, tied to a single word. **Is it generous?**

Asking that question meant;

Rather than removing our most distinctive assets from just a few of our bars for Donate Your Words, they came off one million.

Rather than merely discounting chocolate, we gave people a small way to be generous that didn't cost them a penny, after hearing in research groups that the cost-of-living was preventing them spending as generously as they would have liked.

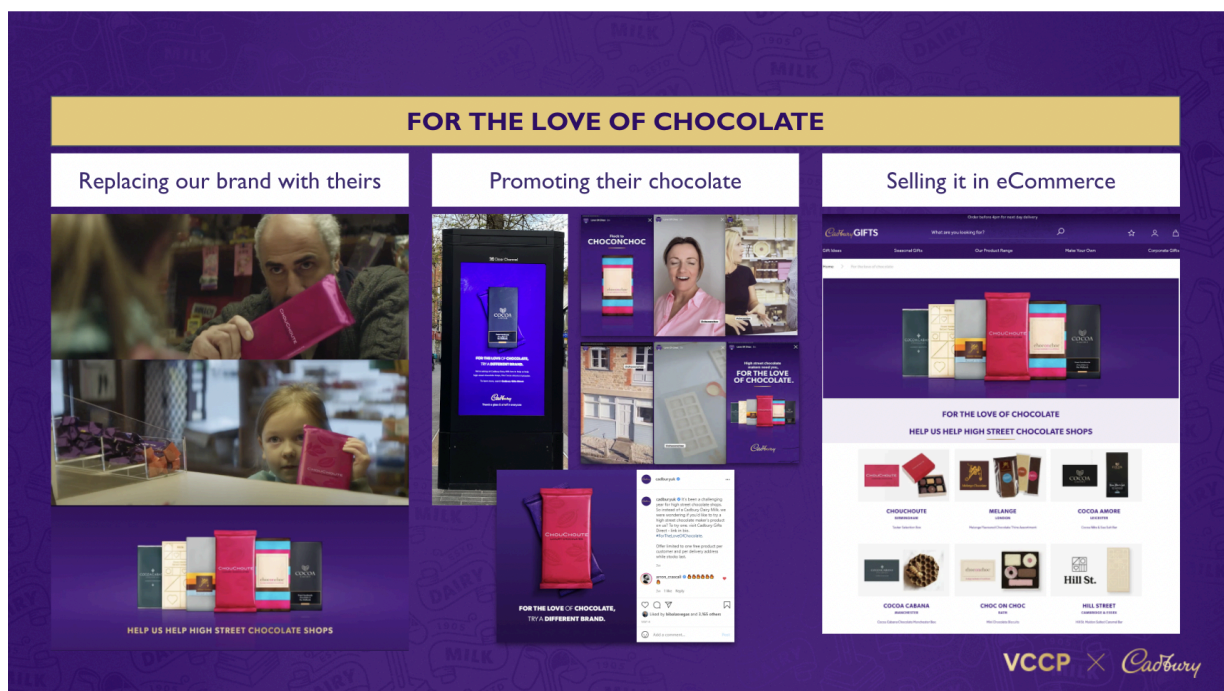
Rather than limiting our activations to certain regions given their high cost, we included the whole of the UK. After all, Cadbury is a proudly inclusive, fabric-of-the-nation brand and Dairy Milk was intentionally designed back in 1905 to make chocolate accessible to everyone.



Rather than giving away a small amount of chocolate as a gesture, we gave away a whopping 120,000 110g bars in our Secret Santa activation alone.

And finally, rather than limiting things to just our own chocolate, with small high-street businesses struggling after more than a year of lockdowns, we supported independent chocolate shops - reminiscent of the one John Cadbury's had launched on Bull Street in Birmingham, almost 200 years ago.

On our eCommerce platform, our social channels, and even in a revised version of *Mum's Birthday*, we urged people to forgo Cadbury and buy from their local chocolate shop instead, *For the love of chocolate*.



## CONTAGIOUS GENEROSITY IN MEDIA

That focus on a single word also extended to our media strategy. We believed that *Generosity* was contagious. That is, the more generous the world around people appeared, the more their generous instinct would come out.

This meant building a media strategy designed to inspire as much *Generosity* as we could. Reaching and engaging a mass audience through broadcast channels such as TV, VOD and OOH. Proving *'There is a glass & a half in everyone'*, to everyone in Britain.

Yet it didn't just mean trying to make people cry on their sofas. It meant using broadcast channels in tandem with digital activity to encourage people to act on their generous instincts. Whether hiding an egg on our Worldwide Hide platform, or looking out for a Secret Santa OOH poster in the real world in order to send free chocolate to a loved one.

## GENEROSITY IN ALL WE DO

Generosity is now the starting point for everything Cadbury does.

**Product Development** - any R&D ideas start with the question “*how can we make this more generous?*”. As just one example, at the start of 2024, *Dairy Milk &More* hit shelves - classic Dairy Milk packed with new layers and textures. Denser, heavier, more generous.



**Digital Ecosystem** - in 2023, we launched Cadbury's new digital ecosystem, one built to enable more people to be more generous in more ways.



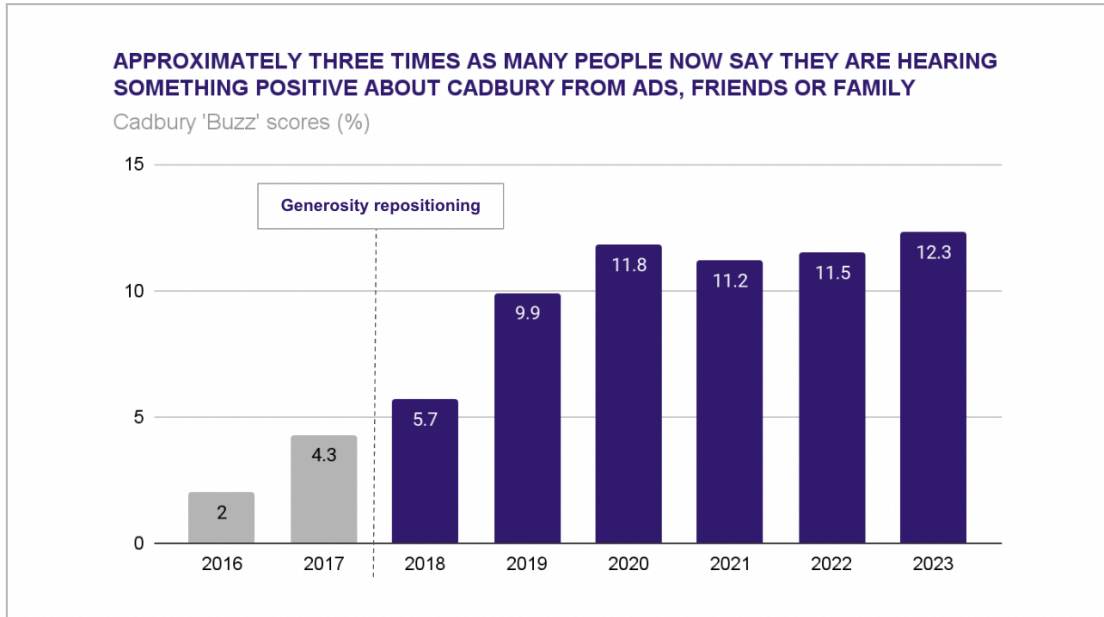
Generosity has also extended into internal award programmes, into our partnerships with retail partners big and small, and into the way Cadbury functions as a brand globally. In every market Cadbury operates in around the world, *that one word*, Generosity, leads the way, and best practices are shared widely through the global 'Purple Collective'.

# RESULTS & A HALF

## COMMUNICATIONS

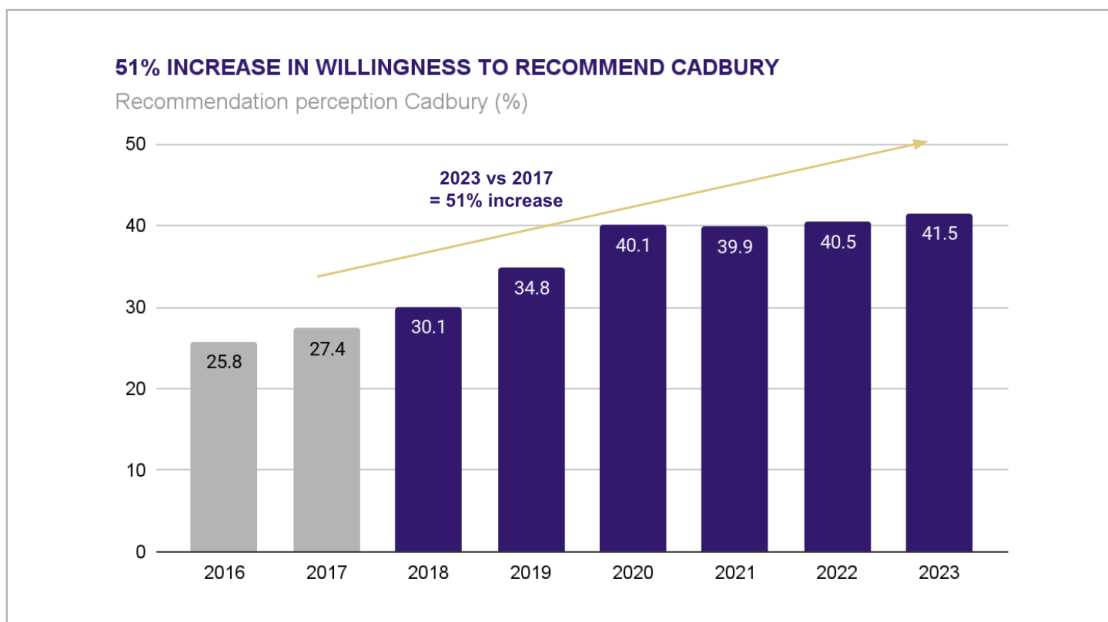
*Generosity* has transformed the way people see Cadbury.

Since the repositioning, the number of people who say they've heard something positive from the brand - or about the brand - has approximately tripled.



Source: YouGov BrandIndex

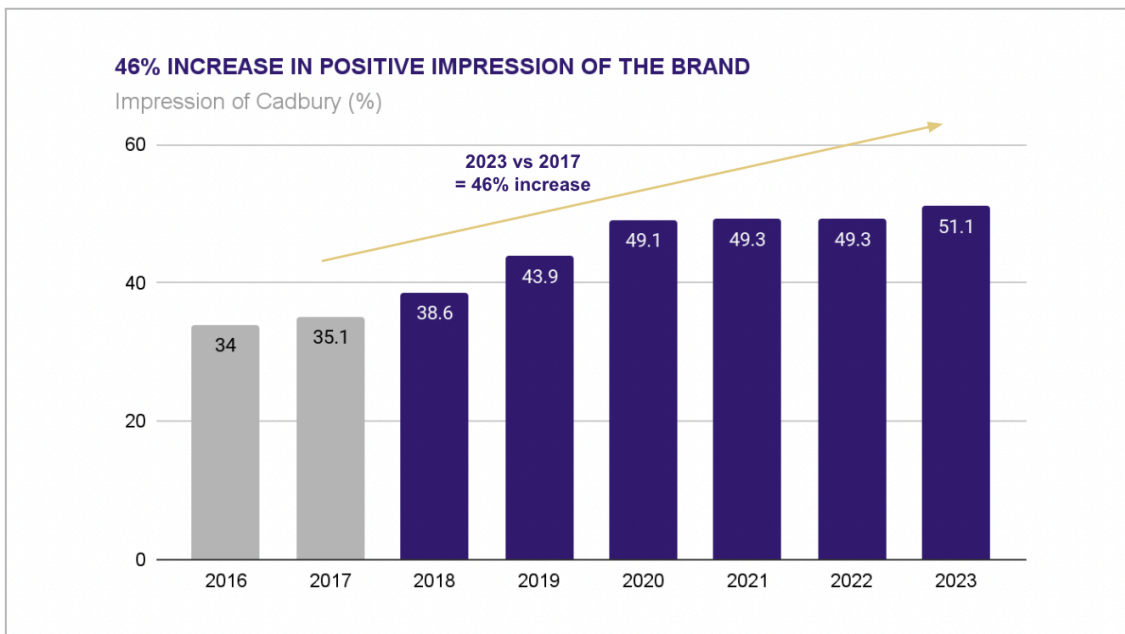
There has been a 51% increase in people's willingness to recommend Cadbury to their friends, and family.



Source: YouGov BrandIndex

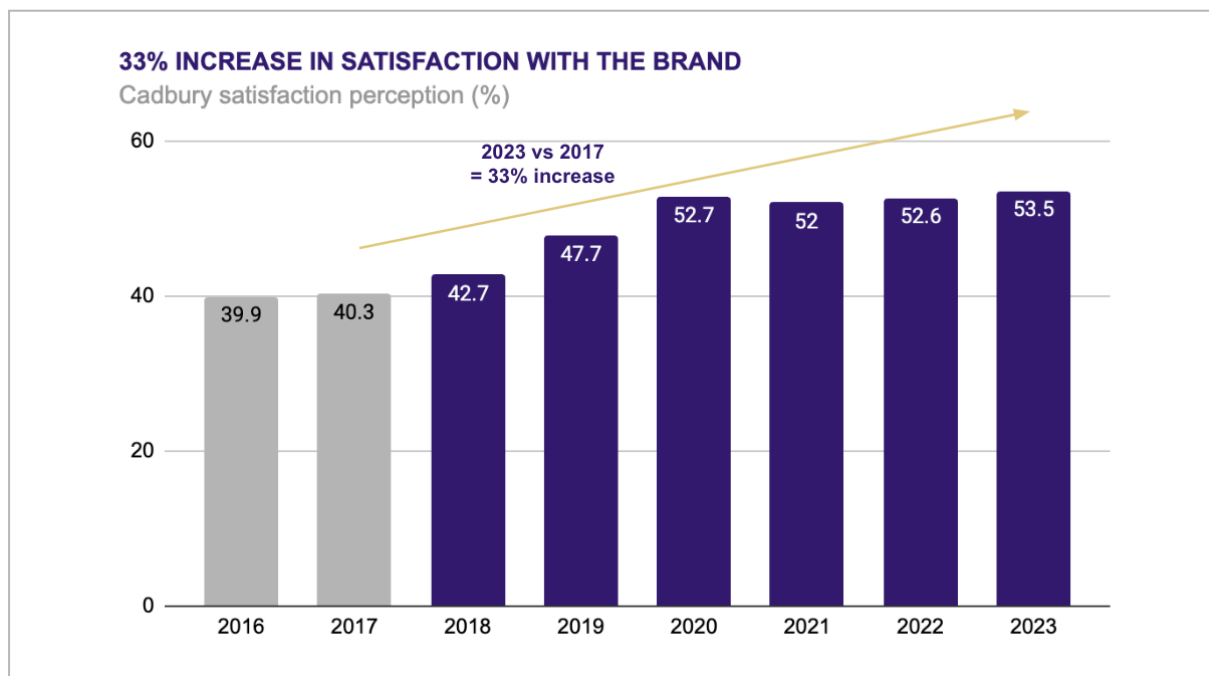


Increasing numbers of people have a positive impression of the Cadbury brand.



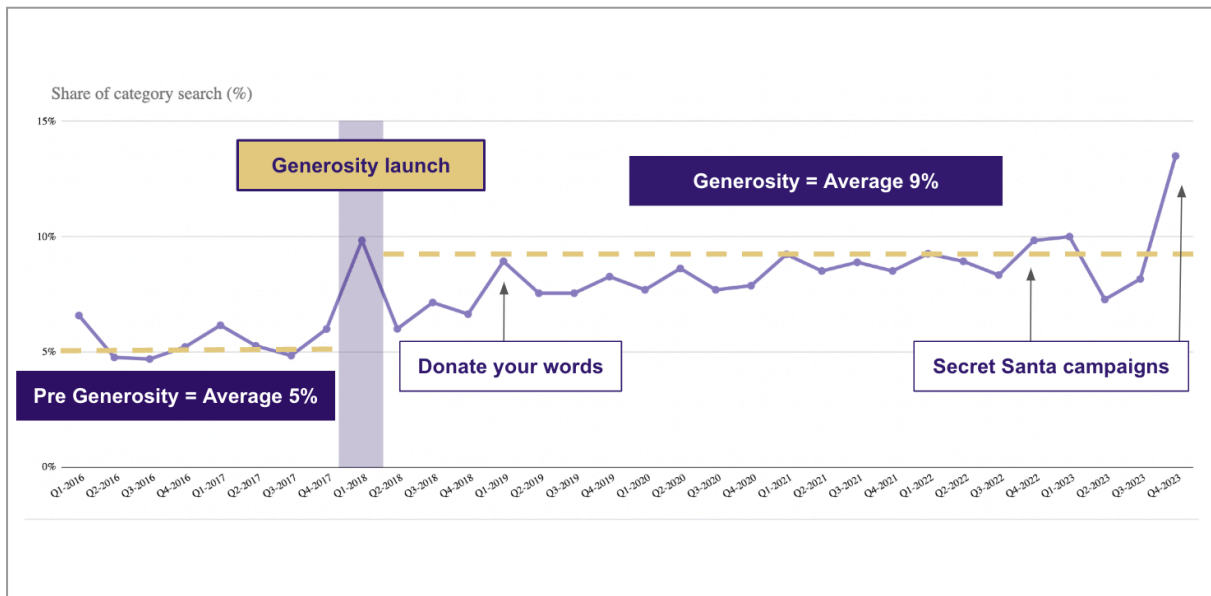
Source: YouGov BrandIndex

Further, there is an increasing sense of satisfaction with Cadbury and our products.



Source: YouGov BrandIndex

People are searching for Cadbury more, and doing so around key moments in the marketing calendar.



Source: Google

Large numbers of people have, each and every year, responded to our invitations to be generous and got involved.

### HIGH LEVELS OF INTERACTION WITH CAMPAIGNS

<b>Worldwide Hide</b>	<b>1,655,252</b> virtual eggs being hidden
<b>Secret Santa</b>	<b>3,384,895</b> people visiting the site, and all available bars successfully given away
<b>Donate Your Words</b>	<b>990,423</b> participants donated their words

VCCP X Cadbury

Beyond statistics, we can also see the impact of the campaign in popular culture.



Our films have scored very highly wherever they were tested: *Mum's Birthday* ranked in the **top 1% most emotionally engaging ads** in the Kantar database and *Fence* became System 1's second most emotionally engaging ad of 2019, out of almost 15,000 tested.

In 2023, System 1's best performing ad was the 30" version of *Garage*, while their 3rd best testing ad was the 20" cut down of the same film.

It's of note that the effectiveness of these films has improved over time - as the careful, consistent architecture of our storytelling, brand world and tone of voice has bedded in and become familiar to people. **We call this effect "compound creativity"**.

	Benchmark	Advertisement				
		Mum's Birthday	Fence	Bus	Speakerphone	Garage
		Years on air				
		2018, 2019	2019, 2020, 2021	2021, 2022	2023	
Hate it = 0 Love it = 100	68	75	80	97	96	99

Source: Kantar



And it wasn't just our storytelling ads that proved emotionally engaging. Our AV film for Secret Santa, *one designed to send people looking for OOH posters*, was reported to be the season's best performing TV ad.

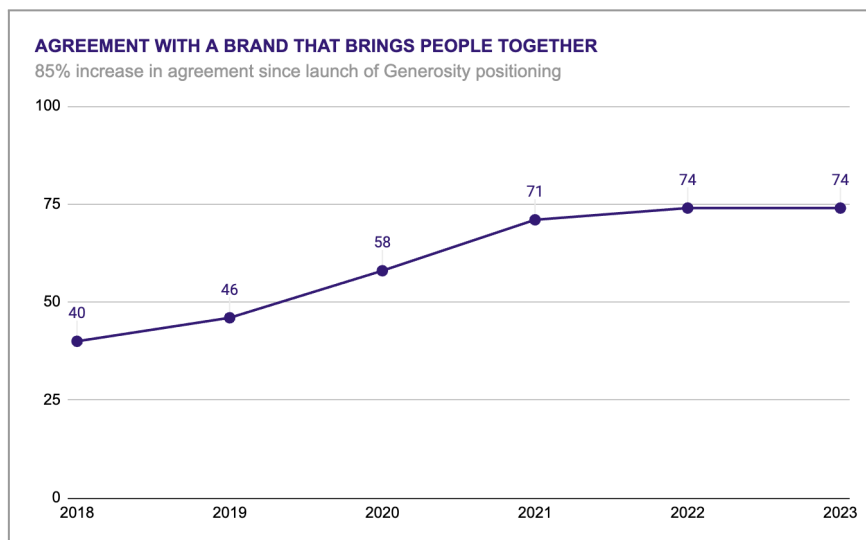
Indeed, looking at specific measures, "Cadbury Secret Santa" was the most distinctive, most affinity-building, and also most feel-good TV ad of **any brand at Christmas since 2019**.<sup>2</sup>



## BRAND

The compounding success of our communications has had a similar compounding effect on overall perceptions of the Cadbury brand.

Agreement that Cadbury brings people together - something that is a natural consequence of generosity - has grown from 40% when tracking on this measure began in 2018 to 74% in 2023.<sup>3</sup>



Source: Kantar / MetrixLab

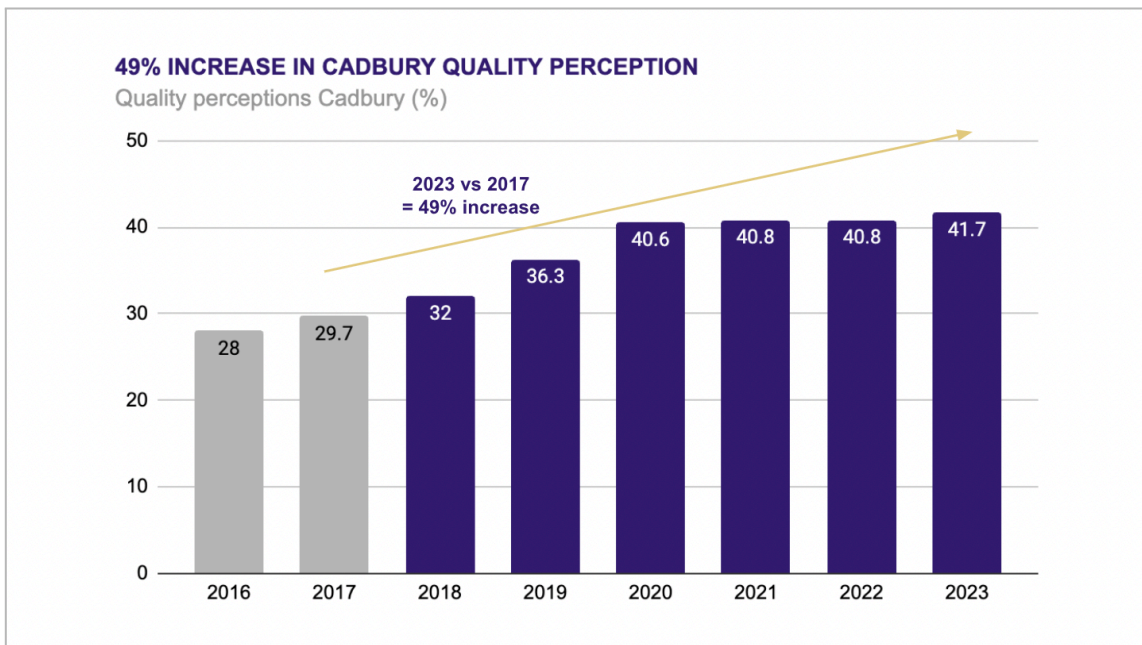
<sup>2</sup> Kantar, "The best Christmas ads 2022"

<sup>3</sup> Note: Cadbury changed tracking providers in 2021 from Kantar to Metrixlab, including a calibration exercise. Though the absolute values here differ, the upwards trend across both providers is clear.

Qualitative research showed the campaign going a long way to getting Cadbury “back in the good books of the British public”, reversing the damage done during the Kraft takeover.

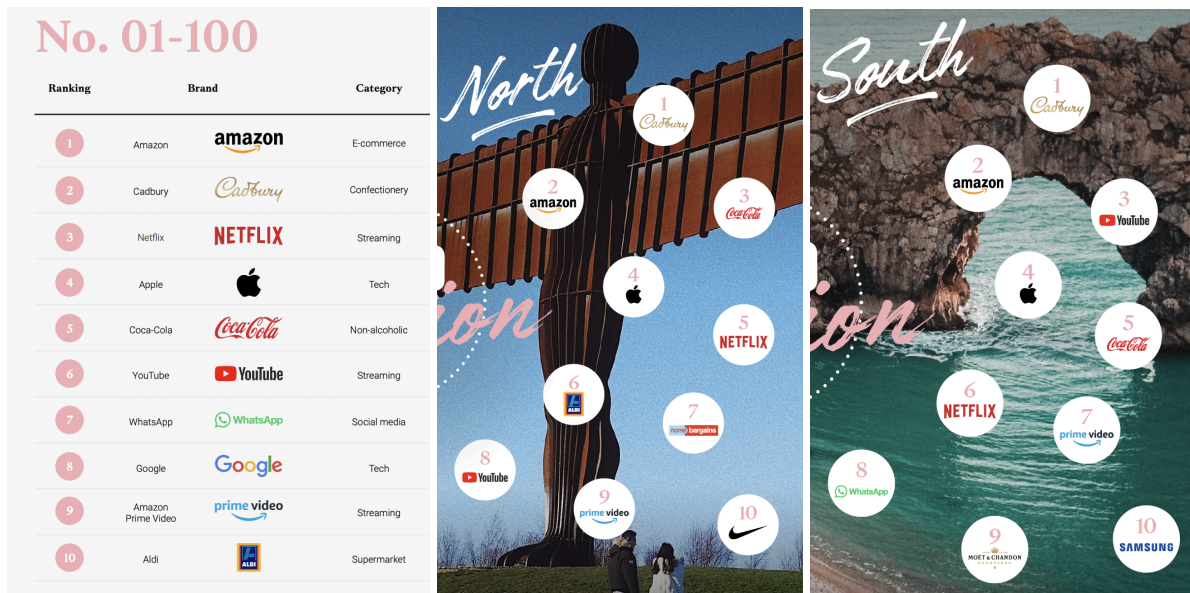


**Furthermore the campaign revived love for our chocolate.** Over the last 6 years, quality perceptions have increased 49%.



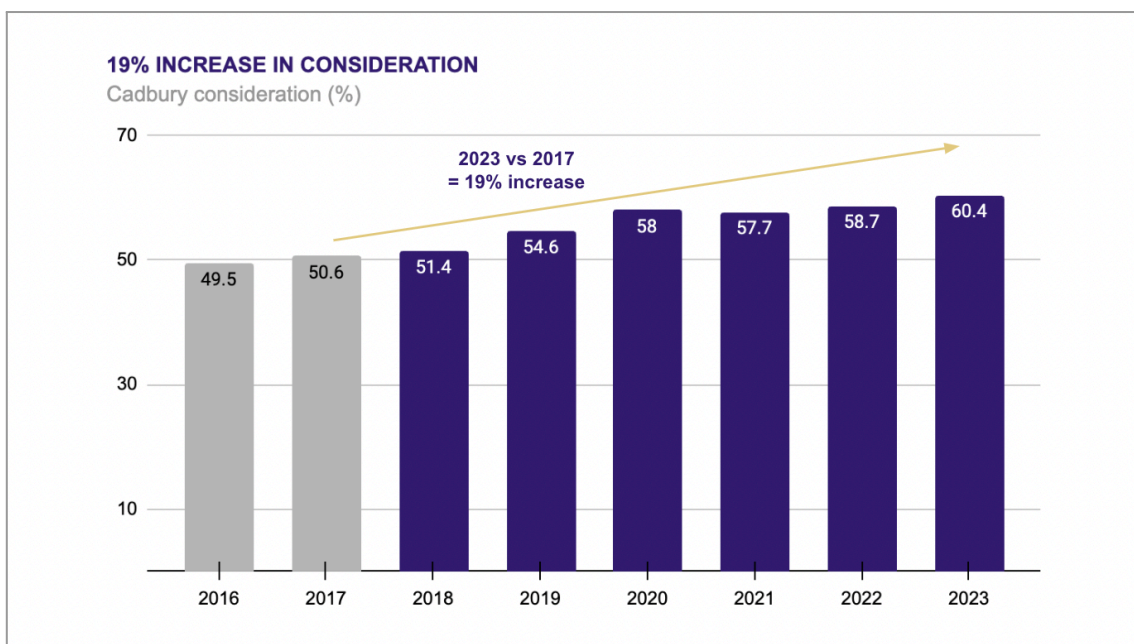
Source: YouGov BrandIndex

This newfound love was not only about the taste. Savanta lists the 100 most generally loved brands in the UK every year. Cadbury was not mentioned at all in the years before the campaign. **In 2023, it is the UK's second most loved brand**, and comes out top in both the North and South of England.



Source: Savanta UK's Most Loved Brands

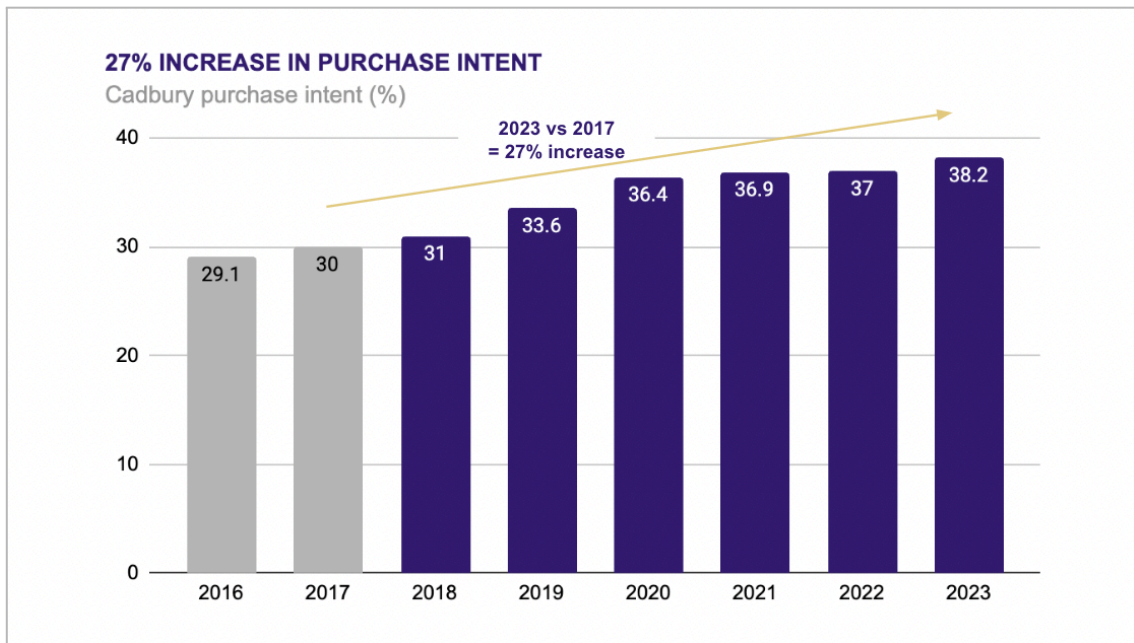
But *Generosity* hasn't just created a warm chocolatey feeling. Crucially, more people report being willing to consider Cadbury chocolate.



Source: YouGov BrandIndex



And this carries through into purchase intent. Once again, these measures continue to improve over time. **Compound creativity in action.**



Source: YouGov BrandIndex

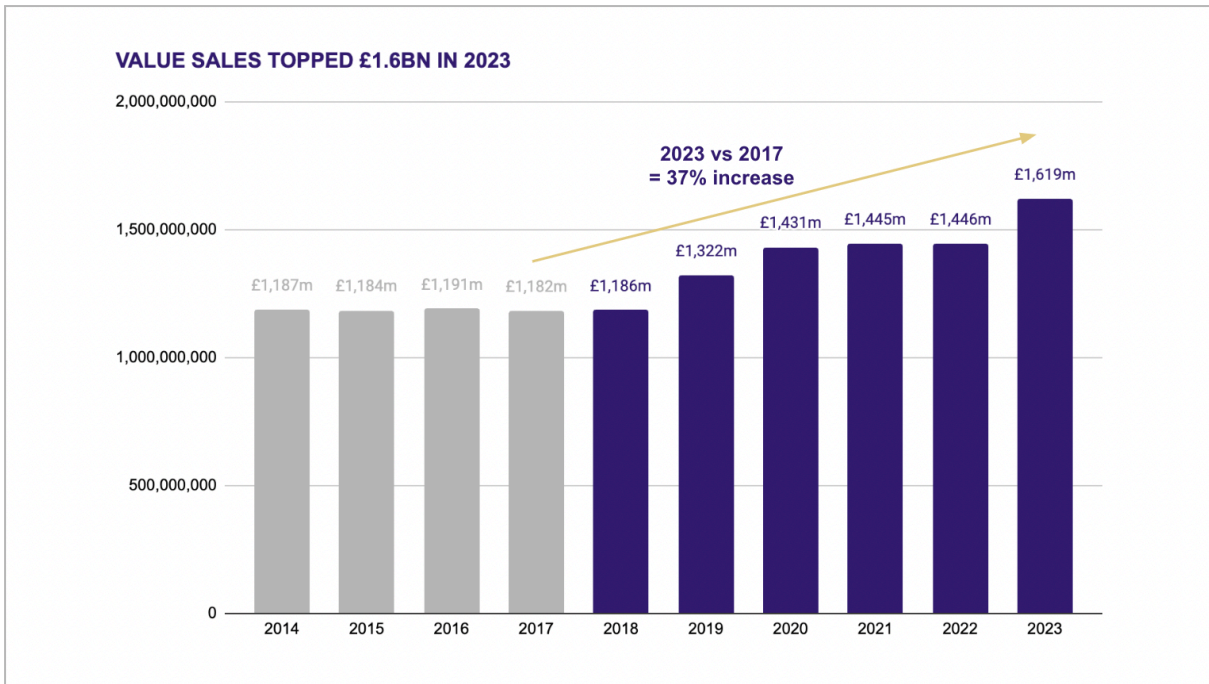
## COMMERCIAL

Most significantly of all, the strengthening of the Cadbury brand has in turn led to remarkable commercial success.

Cadbury's annual sales have been transformed since Generosity was introduced.

Our initial target had been 9% growth within 5 years.

**In 2023, the brand passed £1.6bn in annual sales, a 37% increase on the figure from 2017, and one which equates to an additional £437 million per year.**



Source: Nielsen

In sum, *there's a glass & a half in everyone* has delivered results & a half for Cadbury, exceeding our campaign objectives significantly.

## HOW WE EXCEEDED CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES:

<b>Comms objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make emotionally engaging comms that re-establish Cadbury as a fabric of the nation brand</li> <li>- Comms in top 1% of emotionally engaging ads (Kantar &amp; System I)</li> <li>- 85% increase in agreement that Cadbury brings people together</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rebuild perceptions of the quality of Cadbury chocolate</li> <li>- Rebuild love for the broader Cadbury brand</li> <li>- 49% increase in perceived product quality</li> <li>- Now the 2nd Most Loved Brand in UK</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Grow annual value sales by 9% within 5 years</u></li> <li>- <u>37% growth in annual value sales after 6 years - equivalent to an extra £437 million per year</u></li> </ul>

VCCP × Cadbury

## OTHER FACTORS

Many of the typical drivers of growth cannot explain Cadbury's recent success. There were no recipe changes. The number of product innovations was consistent with the pre-campaign period. Packaging did change, but 3 years into an already successful turnaround.

While it is true that Cadbury "had a good Covid", it is also true that in the following years we have been hit by twin forces. **The cost-of-living crisis** has driven many shoppers towards cheaper private label products as prices have risen to keep up with the inflationary cost of cocoa and sugar. What's more, **in-store HFSS legislation** has dramatically impacted distribution of all chocolate.

Despite these facts, Cadbury has continued to grow.

## JUST ONE WORD

*Generosity* is just one word. But it has led to millions of people secretly sending chocolate to loved ones from postboxes and hiding Easter eggs all around the world.

It has created the conditions for compound creativity.

It has also generated fairly staggering revenue growth.

But distilling 200 years of history down to a single word has had a much more profound effect on the Cadbury brand and those who work on it.

Everything we do is influenced by *Generosity*.

How can we collaborate with our retail partners to facilitate *Generosity*? How can our comms inspire *Generosity* in others? How can we design digital services to enable the generous instinct in everyone? How can we make new products more generous as we develop them? What can we do for the nation that is generous?

The story of Cadbury and *Generosity* is therefore one of the power of marketing to create genuine singularity of vision for a brand and business.

As much as it is tempting to say more about our brands; in a world of foundations, fundamentals, architectures, models *and 3000 word award papers*... less truly is more.

**One word can galvanise an organisation in a way a 30 page brand strategy never will.**

**So maybe find yours. It's the generous thing to do for everyone.**