

## Maltesers: Looking on the Light Side of Disability

### Executive Summary

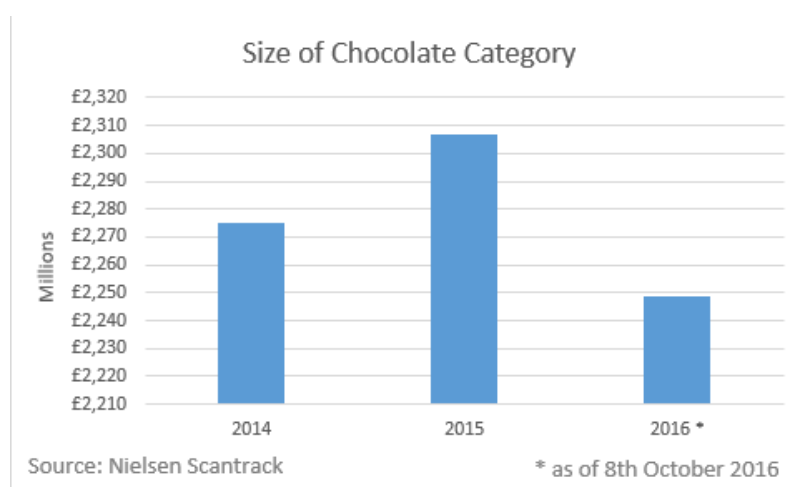
In 2016, Maltesers set out to bring itself back from declining sales and struggling communications with a new brand platform *Look on the Light Side*. An unexpected opportunity in the form of the *Superhumans Wanted* competition run by Channel 4 opened up a strategic avenue – the fairer representation of disabled people – that we had not previously considered in relation to our platform. But this opportunity led us to re-evaluate our activity and objectives. Could we solve our business problems by meeting a burning consumer need? So we reframed our objectives to include how we portrayed people in our work, how the wider industry did this, and on the rift between the expectations of the industry and the nation in this way.

For a brand that hadn't seen sales uplift from a communications campaign in years, this was a pretty ambitious task. Not only were we pinning our business hopes on a new strategic approach, we were also trying to create industry-wide societal change!

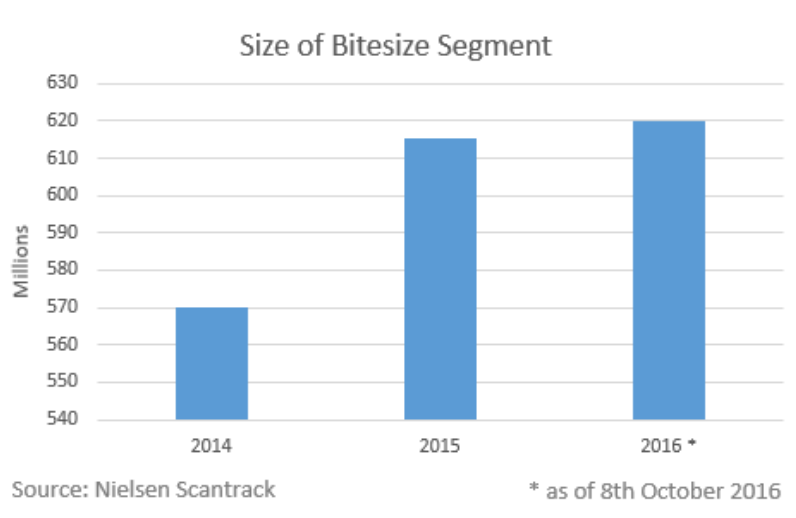
Luckily, with the right partners and insight to guide us, we found an idea big enough for the task. By “looking on the light side” of disability, we created an 8.1% uplift in value sales, 19.4% uplift in units sold, and the most viewed YouTube video in Maltesers' history. The impact of our work spread as far as the House of Commons, generating much needed discussion and debate about the role of advertising in representing British people of all shapes and sizes. But more importantly it really struck a chord with the British consumer, with many feeling that it profoundly changed their preconceptions of disability – with many disabled people feeling a greater sense of validation and acceptance.

### The Business Challenge

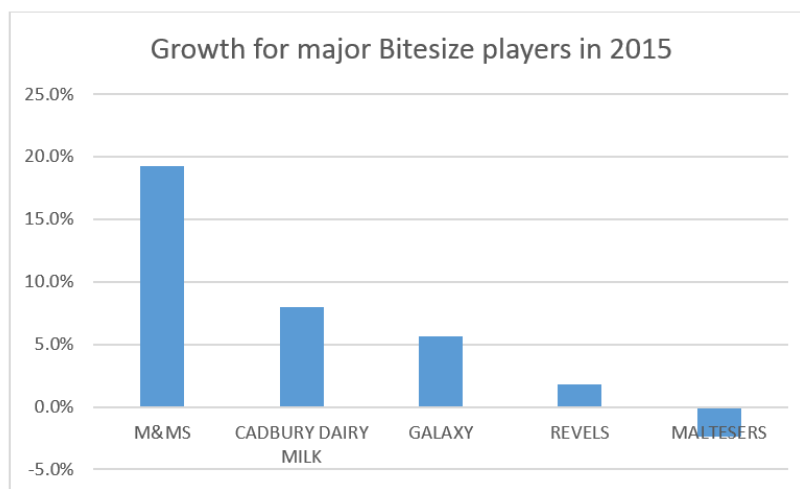
Ever since it was introduced, chocolate has been one of Britain's favourite treats. The everyday chocolate category today has grown to become a £2bn industry; an exceptionally competitive space to do business. The maturity of the Chocolate Category means that growth is slow: in 2015 it was 1.4%.



However, the more permissible format of Bitesize Chocolate is faring better, with the Segment growing 7.9% in 2015. This has made Bitesize a key battleground for all the major brands – seeing them all refocusing toward Bitesize formats in the past 2 years.



This is the space in which our imperfect, wobbly little chocolate balls have to compete. Maltesers is a hugely loved brand in the UK, but love alone is not enough! For years Maltesers have struggled to find communications that could create measurable sales uplift, and 2015 saw supply issues cause a -2.4% decline. In the same year, Maltesers’ main competitor Cadbury Dairy Milk achieved 8% growth.



Source: Nielsen [Scantrack](#)

## The Communications Challenge

Maltesers has always been about having fun with real people, in real life. The sort of person who you'd have a good laugh with. Historically our advertising had been about humorous everyday moments, like playing with Maltesers whilst watching TV with your partner.

But the competitive Segment pushed us to differentiate ourselves, and do more exciting work, so we moved to more unusual moments. In producing more unusual work we accidentally lost connection to our everyday sense of humour, creating work that wasn't relevant or funny to the everyday people that loved us.

We hypothesised that we could reconnect with the nation by returning to celebrating everyday moments. Not just because this was our heartland, but also because it seemed there was an industry-wide disconnect between consumers and advertisers in this way. Research from 2014 showed that 65% of people in Britain believed that advertising did not reflect the full range of lives and experiences of people across the country<sup>1</sup> – and 1 in 5 people in the UK live with a disability,<sup>2</sup> yet are virtually never featured in advertising. The nation wanted to be better represented, and we saw how the breadth of Britain presented us with an exciting array of diverse insights to inform our stories.

In 2016 we were presented with an opportunity to kickstart this process. The Channel 4 *Superhumans Wanted* competition was galvanising brands to better represent disability in their advertising, and giving the winner £1 million of free airtime during the Paralympics. A great business opportunity. But more than this, we saw how its sentiment chimed with our brand ambitions, and the potential of such an activation to truly create some change and improve the representation of consumers in advertising.

### Our Objectives

Our hypothesis was that by rekindling our sense of humour, and celebrating genuine everyday stories, we would reconnect with the nation and improve sales. We measured our progress against this hypothesis through:

1. Brand tracking: specifically a 10% increase in brand relevance, brand affinity, and the brand's impact on the representation of real people.
2. Reach: since most people in the country buy chocolate once a year, our message would need to connect with the whole nation.
3. Sales: since Maltesers had declined 2.4% in 2015, to grow we would need to stem this decline and outperform the category's growth by a factor of 3 in 2016. This was an ambitious target.

### The Research Process

With the competition guiding us, we honed our ambition: to regain our place in the nation's hearts with work that better represented disabled people. We were familiar with the typical campaigns aired around the Paralympics, but felt that this inspirational approach to disability was not a viable way forwards. We needed to reflect people's everyday lives, not exceptional

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<sup>1</sup> The Whole Picture, Credos, October 2014

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/321594/disability-prevalence.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321594/disability-prevalence.pdf)

ones. We forged a relationship with the disability charity Scope UK, and conducted focus groups to get to the heart of everyday life with a disability.

In talking to disabled people about their lives, and the various mishaps that ensue, we discovered that awkward and embarrassing stories about disability make non-disabled people cringe – but disabled people roar with laughter. We hypothesised that non-disabled peoples’ lack of knowledge and understanding creates this awkwardness. This was corroborated by Scope, whose aim is to #endtheawkward by creating more dialogue between the two groups.<sup>3</sup>

Another theme strongly reflected in our focus groups was that whilst disabled people are typically under-represented in adverts, when they are featured they are often objectified rather than treated as equals. Stella Young explains how images of disabled people are often used as “inspiration porn” to ‘put things in perspective’ for non-disabled people.<sup>4</sup>

We realised that we would need to truly understand the line between genuine inclusive behaviour and tokenistic inclusivity if we wanted to be more representative of disabled people in our work. We did not want to objectify them, but we also did not want to cast a “token” disabled person in the story.

**By recognising that disabled people want to be accepted, not exceptionalised, we found a unique creative angle with which to approach our comms.**

## The Big Idea

Our big idea went straight to the heart of our insights: by showing disabled people laughing about their own mishaps we could cut through awkwardness, in dramatising a universal behaviour that everyone can relate to. This would help us create work that was entertaining and different, channelling the well-loved Maltesers’ sense of humour, and ultimately starting a movement toward better representing disabled people.

This led us to our first script *New Boyfriend* which, because of its realistic depiction of disability, won the *Superhumans Wanted* competition. It shows a girl telling close friends about an awkward mishap in her love life that’s related to her disability, using Maltesers as a prop.



By featuring a story about disability and sex, and starring disabled talent in a central role, we aimed to create a funny, relatable and inclusive spot that wasn’t objectifying our cast. By continuing the use of our endline *Look on the Light Side* we created a credible role for Maltesers to play.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.scope.org.uk/end-the-awkward>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ted.com/talks/stella\\_young\\_i\\_m\\_not\\_your\\_inspiration\\_thank\\_you\\_very\\_much](https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much)

To expand, we developed a suite of scripts designed to reflect a range of disabilities. To reflect the nation better, we needed to show some understanding that disabled people do not all have the same disability. For example our spot Theo's Dog, Britain's first ever fully-signed TV ad, was initially aired without any subtitles.



### Activating the Idea

The competition prize gave us free airtime as well as a launch during the Opening Ceremony. TV was clearly the most effective medium for us to reach the most people in the country, so we complemented the £1 million prize by investing across all TV. We also booked online video to ensure that we were effectively reaching out to younger audiences, who are increasingly consuming content online.

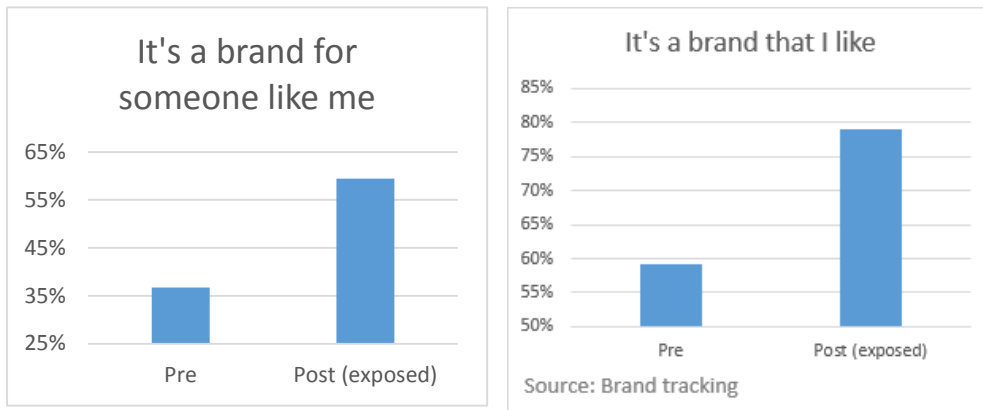
We supported the TV on Facebook and Twitter by creating gifs of the most engaging moments. The use of social was critical, as it gave us the opportunity to harness the power of earned media and increase our reach beyond that of paid. We maximised this opportunity by engaging our talent to write about the campaign, and seeding editorials about the work with consumer and trade publications.

### The Results

Our objectives over the 8 week campaign period were to:

1. Increase all brand metrics by at least 10%, including: brand relevance, brand affinity, and the brand's impact on the representation of real people.
2. Connect with as much of the nation as possible.
3. Stem sales decline and contribute towards an ambitious growth target – we wanted to outgrow the category by a factor of 3 across 2016.

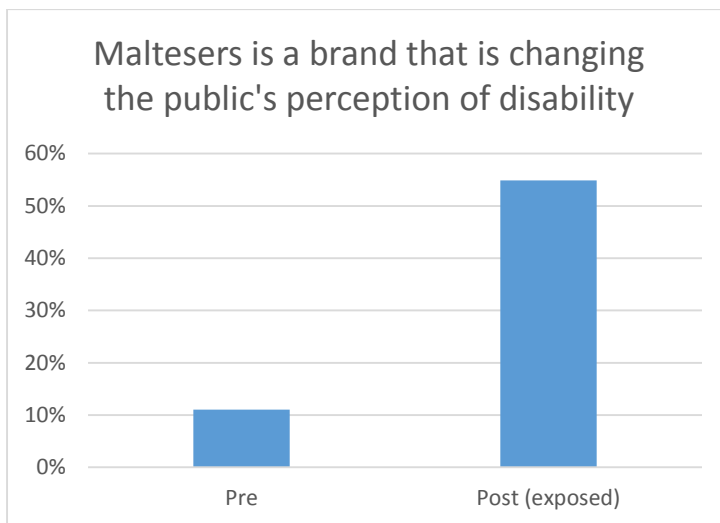
Looking at our brand tracking, we found that people who had seen the campaign were 20% more likely to say that they liked Maltesers as a brand, and 22% more likely to say that they thought Maltesers were a brand for “someone like me”.



By reconnecting with our sense of humour, we had created an increase in affinity and relevance, and were closer to reclaiming our heartland.

As we aired, the industry and press praised Maltesers for leading the charge on improving the representation of disabled people. Over the next few months, Maltesers were invited to debate at multiple industry panel discussions about the work, and the role of advertising in society. The work was even shown in the House of Commons as part of the annual Parliamentary Reception.

Our desire to genuinely create change was successfully stirring the right kinds of debate in the industry, and had clearly connected with consumers too. Our brand tracking confirmed that consumers were 44% more likely to say that they thought Maltesers were changing the way the nation perceives disability.



And that we were representing disabled people in a way they want to be represented:

[-] emilyeverafter 5862 points 5 months ago\* 🙄x11

Holy [REDACTED]

Oh my God, I'm crying.

I'm a twenty year-old disabled girl who studies sexology simply because my sex education curriculum only addressed sexuality in disabled people by saying,

"Young, disabled woman are four times more likely to be raped than their able-bodied counterparts."

Leading me to hate my own sexuality and the boys to call me "Rape Food."

I have been waiting my entire life to find a space where I am not made out to be disgusting and weird, but also not made into super-special-inspirational-motivational-oh-my-god INSPIRATION PORN.

I made cripple jokes.

I make running jokes.

I make jokes about sex and my spasms.

And people either love it or get uncomfortable because they'd rather me say "Oh my god, I love my body! I can do EVERYTHING!"

I hate my disability. I love my figure. I can't do a lot of things. I have major depressive disorder because of it and my life is not motivational. I just want to laugh about it so it doesn't seem so heavy.

I have been waiting my entire life for something that says,

"It's okay to laugh at yourself. It's okay to be sexual."

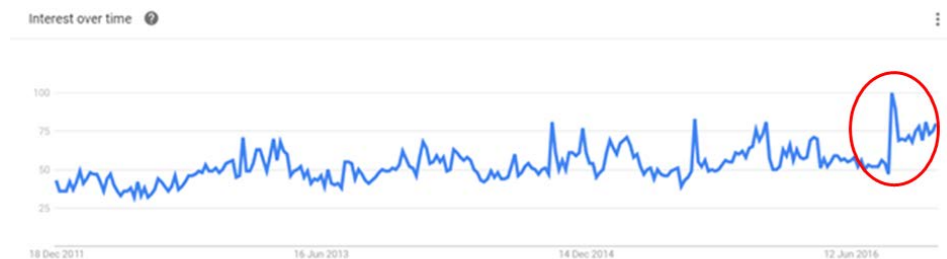
And Maltesers just did that in thirty seconds.

Thank you guys so much for this link and your progressive comments.

I'm so happy to be alive right now.

By investing the majority of our media money in TV, we were able to speak to 85% of UK adults: 44.8 million people. But the real power of the idea came through in earned media.

We launched after 9pm on the 7th September. By the morning of the 8th September Maltesers was a trending topic on Facebook, and we saw the greatest spike in Maltesers' Google search in the history of the brand.



On YouTube we saw the launch spot *New Boyfriend* watched 1,351,182 times in its first 27 hours. This was impressive. Particularly so because the terms of the *Superhumans Wanted* competition embargoed us from supporting our work with paid media for the first 24 hours. So all of this was achieved whilst the work was only live on Channel 4 and our social media pages.

As the campaign continued, so did its success. The first 4 days accrued 16 million potential impressions on social media alone, with post volume about Maltesers increasing by 521%. By the end of our campaign period this had risen to an estimated 50 million impressions. Over the course of September the campaign earned coverage in 51 pieces of consumer and trade press, with *New Boyfriend* winning "Ad of the Week" in the Grocer, the September / October Thinkbox award, and becoming the #1 UK YouTube video for September.



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### 'Brilliantly Filthy' Maltesers Advert Is The Talk Of Twitter During Paralympics

We'll never look at a packet of Maltesers in the same way again.

© 36/9/2016 12:39 | Updated 09 September 2016

7.7k

The Grocer

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### Ad of the Week: Mars disability push pays off in new Maltesers ads

08 Sep 2016 | Mark Dishman

Mirror

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DOES PARALYMPICS MALTESERS AD MAKE A NAUGHTY JOKE?

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This Maltesers advert aired on Channel 4 during the Paralympics had the internet laughing over a particularly filthy joke.

658 SHARES

The clip - featuring disabled actress Storme Toolis - opens with three friends sitting at a picnic table sharing a pack of the popular chocolate treats.

3 Storme, who is in a wheelchair, tells her friends about her "new boyfriend" and how they are "back at

METRO

NEWS... BUT NOT AS 97M SHARES


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UK WORLD WEIRD TECH

### Maltesers actress with cerebral palsy wins everyone's hearts

Simon Robb for Metro.co.uk Thursday 8 Sep 2016 5:05 pm

137

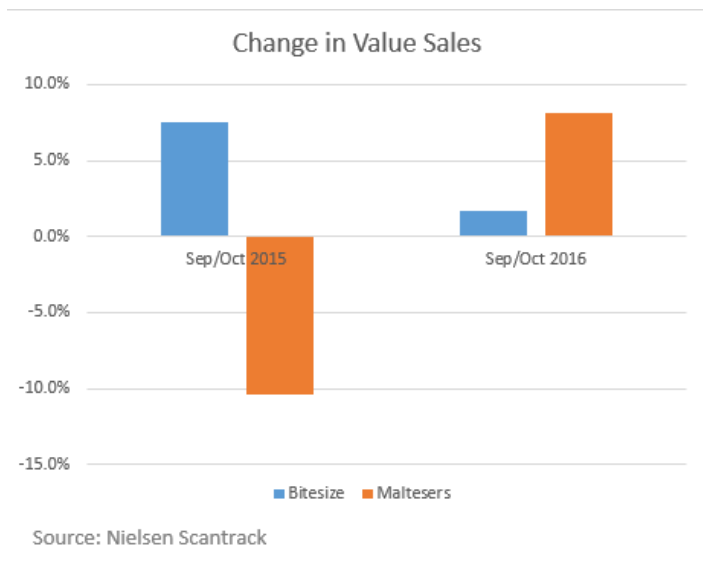


<p>British Airways shared Video</p> <p>22nd September, 2016</p> <h4>Aviators, British Airways To Fly To Serve</h4> <p>British Airways - To Fly. To Serve. See how these four words...</p> 	<p>Maltesers shared Video</p> <p>7th September, 2016</p> <h4>NEW Maltesers Ad   New Boyfriend</h4> <p>When a romantic moment is interrupted by a spasm, our</p> 	<p>Official EA UK shared Video</p> <p>12th September, 2016</p> <h4>Titanfall 2: Come Together</h4> <p>Pilot and titan unite as never before in Respawn Entertainment's...</p> 
<p>Total Interactions: 5 059</p> <p>Likes: 4 926</p> <p>Dislikes: 133</p> <p>Comments: 0</p> <p>Interaction per 1k Fans: 74.11</p> <p>Views: 791 946</p>	<p>Total Interactions: 8 147</p> <p>Likes: 6 924</p> <p>Dislikes: 941</p> <p>Comments: 282</p> <p>Interaction per 1k Fans: 3381.9</p> <p>Views: 1 758 398</p>	<p>Total Interactions: 3 951</p> <p>Likes: 2 604</p> <p>Dislikes: 992</p> <p>Comments: 355</p> <p>Interaction per 1k Fans: 14.78</p> <p>Views: 1 954 339</p>

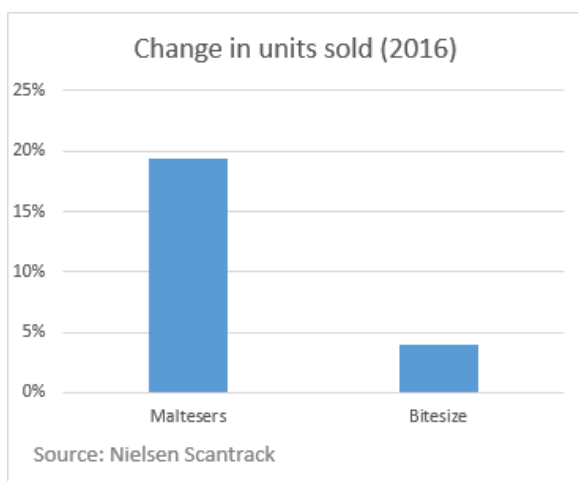
But we didn't yet know if we had impacted the business.



Our value sales for the campaign period saw an increase of +8.1% compared to the same period in 2015. This was in comparison to only 1.7% segment growth over the same period. That's over 4 times as much as the segment.

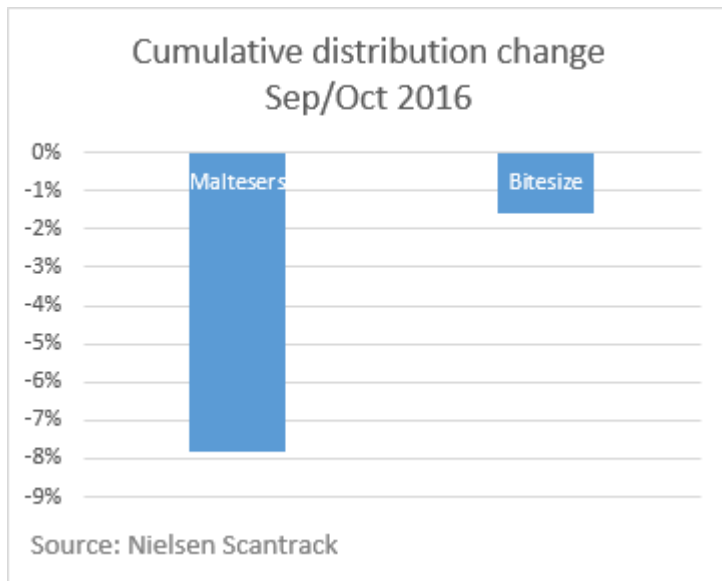


Volume sales corroborated this, seeing an increase of +19.4% units sold compared to the same period in 2015, and compared to a segment performance of only +4%. Again, outgrowing the segment's growth by over 4 times.



For an 80 year old brand, in a segment with aggressive competition, this was a remarkable success. What's more, this met our ambition of helping Maltesers outpace the category by a factor of 3 over the course of 2016.

To account for other factors we checked our distribution, which in September & October 2016 saw a -7.8% drop compared to Sep & Oct in 2015, where the category only fell -1.6%.



This drop in distribution particularly impacted our singles pack SKU. As the number of singles packs available dropped, we saw a rise in the percentage of the larger promotional pouches sold – creating an increase of 8.4% sold on promotion. However as our shelf and promotional pricing at the time were both consistent with Sep & Oct 2015, we can discount this factor as driving our sales increase. Spend on the promotional deal actually decreased 13.7% compared with 2015.

## Conclusion

What we learnt from this campaign was not just about effective marketing. We saw how a deeply insightful piece of communications could pay back for its brand in huge dividends. But it could also create societal change, sparking necessary debate at even a parliamentary level, and improve the lives of others by simply questioning people’s assumptions and stereotypes.

Word count: 1992