



MARKETING SOCIETY AWARDS 2018
BRAND ACTIVATION

SKITTLES:
BREAKING CONVENTIONS WITH PRIDE





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INTRODUCTION

This paper is about breaking conventions. The conventions of the agency model, the conventions of branding and now the conventions of effectiveness case studies.

This was not just an advertising campaign, but an idea that changed everything from production techniques to retailer relationships and won awards for everything from packaging design to activation events.

But increasingly, this is what truly transformative communication ideas need to do. To reach beyond the confines of advertising and influence every aspect of a business.

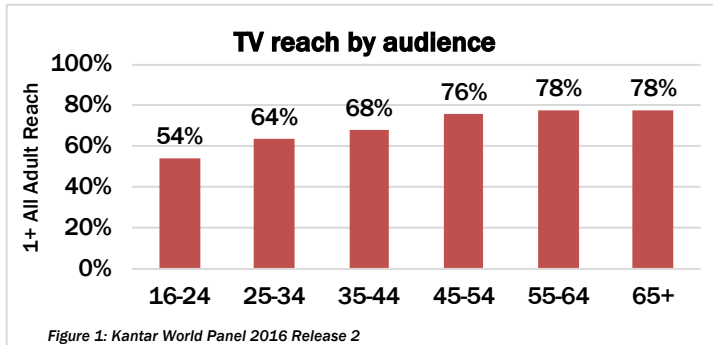
So we won't be excluding things like distribution changes from our results. Instead, we will prove that these impressive business changes were driven directly by our advertising idea.



THE CHALLENGES

Skittles have built a beloved brand on the back of consistent investment in distinctive TV advertising. However, by 2015, Skittles UK were facing two key challenges that couldn't be tackled by their conventional marketing approach.

- 1. Struggling to engage millennials:** Shifts in viewing behaviour meant that their TV led communications were struggling to reach enough of the Millennial target audience, who were vital for the long term health of the brand.



- 2. Losing shelf space:** With many supermarkets looking to cut back on all but the biggest confectionary products, brands like Skittles were facing shrinking shelf space and losing placements altogether. As an impulse purchase, our impact in store is vital to converting hungry shoppers.

Skittles Total Distribution Points YoY (Tesco)

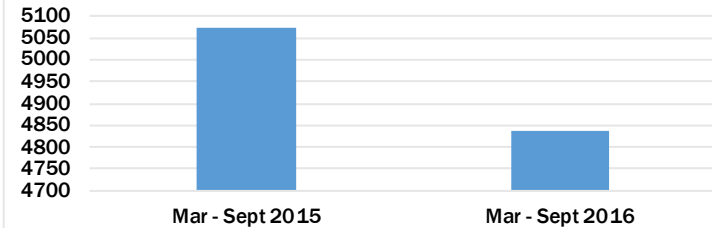


Figure 2: Nielsen ScanTrack

These two factors had contributed to declining Net Sales Value since 2014.

Net Sales Value (£k)

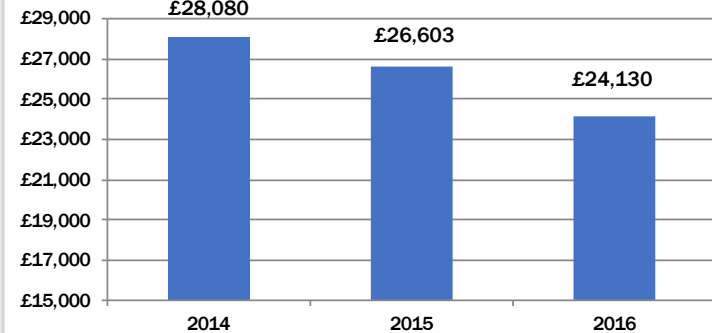


Figure 3: Nielsen ScanTrack

OBJECTIVES SO BIG, WE WEREN'T ASKED TO TACKLE THEM

The objectives for the brand were significant.

Drive retailer desire and support for Skittles: Giving them a reason to get excited about our brand, so that they would...

Improve distribution and store positions: Providing improved visibility in store, which would help us to convert impulse purchases – as long as we could...

Build fame and love for Skittles amongst young adults: Keeping our brand top of mind, to prime them when entering stores and help us to deliver...

A sales and share uplift: With declining net sales value and share of market, we had to not only arrest our falling sales, but outperform our competitors, who were fighting for the same impulse buyers.

These were big and unwieldy objectives. So big in fact, that our agency didn't receive a brief to tackle them. These kind of challenges would conventionally require a long term response, involving everyone from the NPD team to retail relations.

However, we spotted one objective that we felt could unlock everything.



AN UNEXPECTED SOURCE OF BUSINESS CHANGE

All of these challenges were exacerbated by a lack of buzz around the brand in the UK.

Our target Millennial audience were getting more of their news and views from social media sources, where talkability was king.

Meanwhile, supermarkets would only give their highest converting spaces to the brands that were creating new buzz and driving visits. Be it through surprising innovation, newsworthy marketing or tie-ins with popular occasions.

These two insights gave us hope. Although there were hard hitting business challenges ahead, we felt there was a possibility for comms to make a genuine impact.

However, not only would this involve working without a client brief, we also had no media budget assigned and no product news to work with.

FINDING OUR FOCUS IN A SEA OF CHANGE

We wanted to tackle this pro-active brief, but it would require us to break new ground.

For a start, outside of TV we couldn't rely on the humorous story telling that had made the Skittles brand so famous. And we needed an idea capable of working in everything from OOH posters, right the way through to the packs in our retail partners' stores.

We were far from the brand's comfort zone, so we made a conscious decision to focus our creative brief on something core to Skittles. Our distinctive **Rainbow** branding.



If we could create buzz around our ownership of the rainbow, then our audience would be primed to respond to our brand in store.

However, in our first workshop, we came across a fundamental issue in our strategy. There was another organisation that laid claim to the rainbow - **Pride**.

Their LGBT+ cause is extremely important to our young adult audience, whilst their festivals provide a lively opportunity to celebrate inclusivity every year.

This realisation changed the brief. We now knew that the best way to drive buzz around our rainbow, would be to partner with the most meaningful rainbow in the world.



STANDING OUT WHEN EVERY BRAND LOOKS LIKE YOU

The biggest challenge would be how to stand out at a time of year when everyone adds a Rainbow to their brand.

There were several ideas which tried to make ours the biggest, most noticeable rainbow during pride, but we felt this didn't set the right tone.

We instead focussed on a provocative idea that felt far more supportive.

Rather than fight Pride over the rainbow, we would give ours up - to prove that theirs was the most important.

Our **'Give the Rainbow'** campaign was born.

A powerful gesture and a brilliantly simple idea that flipped the conventions of Pride communications on their head.



BREAKING THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL RULE OF BRANDING

At the heart of the execution would be the Skittles pack. For our gesture to be meaningful, we would have to commit the biggest sin in marketing and remove our most valuable asset from our packaging.

Whilst this would ordinarily be suicidal, we knew that by removing the rainbow, we would not only be showing our support for a cause of great importance, but putting Skittles' association with the Rainbow front and centre in people's minds.



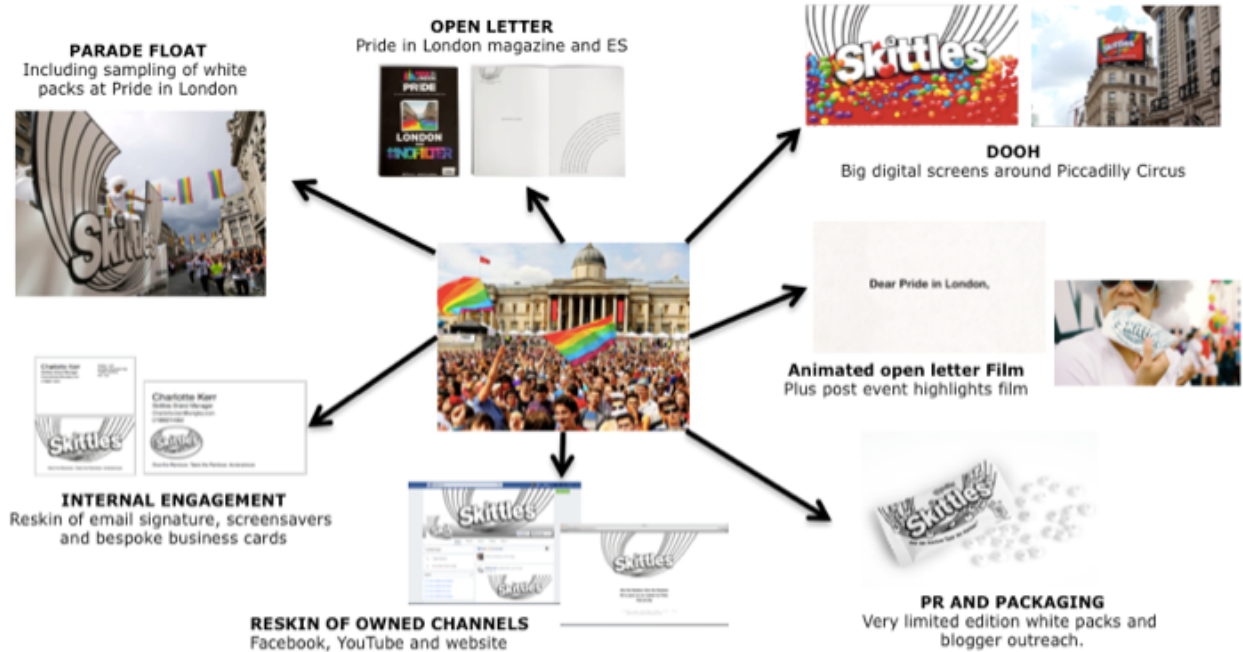
BETA TESTING

When it finally came time to pitch our idea to the client, they fell in love with the idea as much as we had. However, they couldn't fund a nationwide comms launch or the changes needed in production to create rainbowless Skittles and packs at scale. At least, not without a retail partner invested.

So, we reset our ambitions and instead created a beta launch for the campaign, in support of the Pride in London festival. If we could create enough buzz in this local campaign, perhaps we could find a retail partner willing to work with us on a nationwide launch.

From a buzz generating open letter and video to Pride, to an eye catching float and dancers - we would create a brand story and occasion that everyone wanted to talk about.

And, with an extremely limited supply of rainbowless Skittles packs, we had our flash of ankle to the retailers.



BETA TESTING

The media coverage was incredible. The LGBT+ community really got behind us and, not only did we win best newcomer at the Pride parade, but those who saw the rainbowless packs went onto Twitter to demand a full release. And that's where Tesco come in.



BREAKING NEW GROUND WITH RETAILERS

With our first campaign for Pride complete, Skittles now had a much stronger hand when talking to supermarkets.

In fact, Tesco had also been at the Pride in London parade as part of their own commitment to supporting LGBT+ colleagues and customers. They had seen our 'Give the Rainbow' campaign and were excited by the buzz around the limited rainbowless packs. They invited us to talk about working together for next year's Pride festivals – kicking off our second round of pitching for the campaign.

With our mutual support for the LGBT+ community in mind, we set up a series of workshops between adam&eveDDB, Mediacom, Skittles and Tesco. From these, we devised a plan to reinvent the campaign for 2017 as an exclusive partnership, where both Skittles and Tesco could show their support for Pride and raise money for LGBT+ charities.



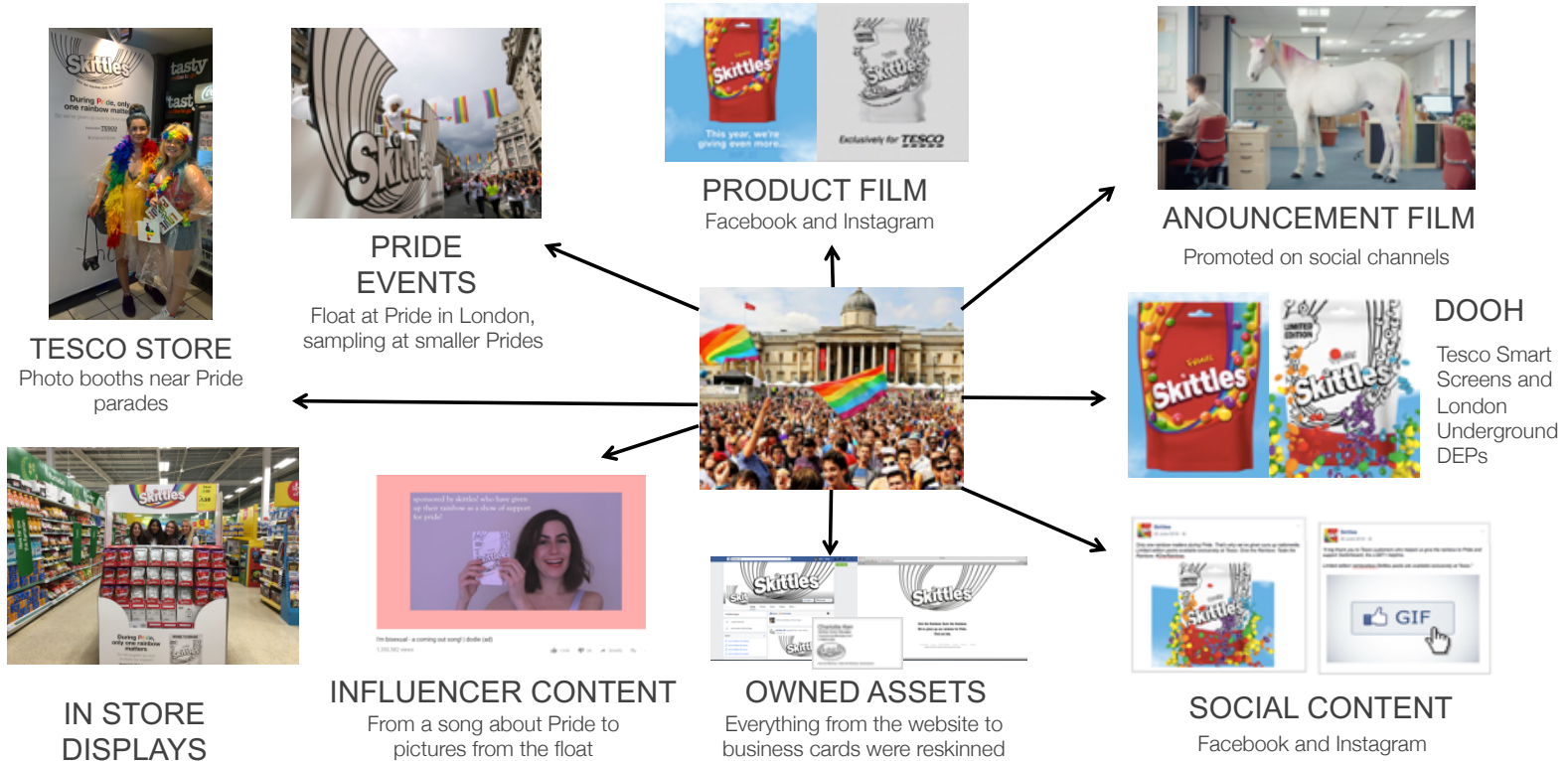
This partnership took us to the next level, with millions of packs on Tesco shelves and a budget to launch our campaign nationwide. The scale of this opportunity even led Skittles to develop a new technique for making rainbowless Skittles, which allowed them to be produced at scale and taste just like the original mix of flavours.

With the deal sealed in early 2017, we raced to get Sue Perkins, a rainbow-maned horse and 100 Skittles and Agency workers/dancers ready for the season of Pride festivals that Summer.



NATIONWIDE ACTIVATION

With £150k production budget and £480k for media, we had to make every aspect of the campaign punch above its weight through PR and share-ability. From a rainbow maned twist in our launch announcement, to taking photo booths in Tesco stores. From distinctive POS to thrusting dancers on our float. We also tapped into influencers to give us a further boost in reach and authenticity.



THE RESULTS – UNCONVENTIONAL SUCCESS

Despite beginning the process with objectives so tough that we didn't even get briefed to tackle them, our campaign had a profound impact on the business.

Driving retailer desire and support for Skittles:

As we have shown, the campaign changed the dynamic of the relationship between Skittles and Tesco, with both companies now working together on a shared commitment to Pride and the LGBT community.

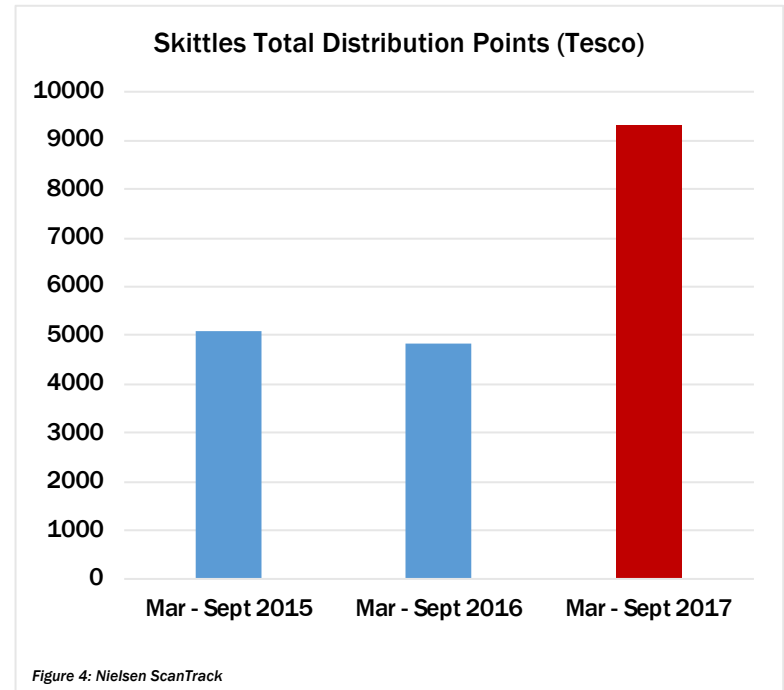
And that change in dynamic led to an equally large change in sentiment.

“With the feedback from Tesco colleagues and all the posts of shoppers online, I really think we have created something to be very proud of!”

– National Tesco Manager

Improved distribution and store positions:

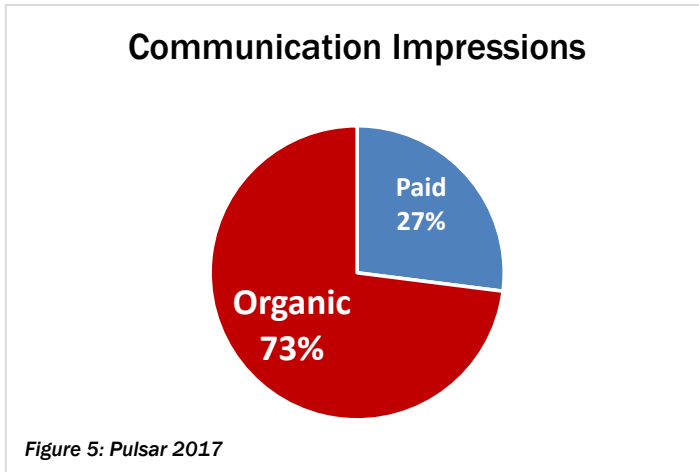
Tesco's support for the campaign and Rainbowless product helped to drive a significant YoY increase in distribution points at the country's biggest retailer.



THE RESULTS – UNCONVENTIONAL SUCCESS

Building fame and love for Skittles amongst young adults:

The campaign exploded across the UK and beyond. Generating **250 million Impressions**, 73% of which were Organic.



The campaign made headlines across newspapers, websites and blogs.

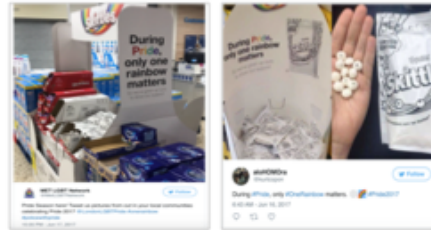
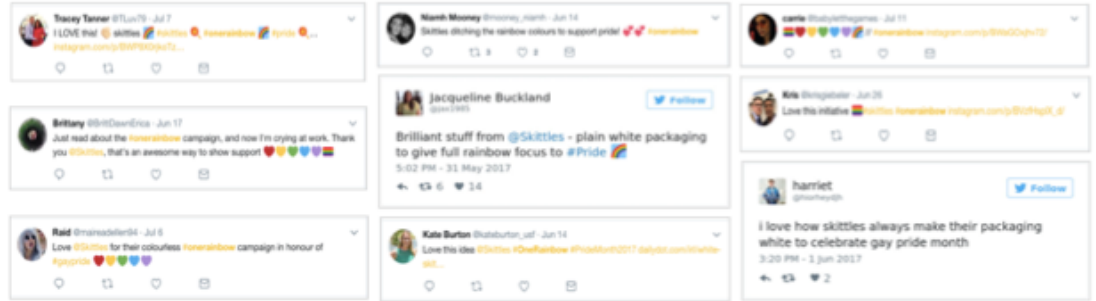


THE RESULTS – UNCONVENTIONAL SUCCESS

Twitter lit up with talk of our campaign and packs. From those simply cheering on our gesture, to heart warming family stories, such as a parent buying a pack to show their support for their child.

We crossed the Atlantic and featured on a US chat show, despite all spend being UK based.

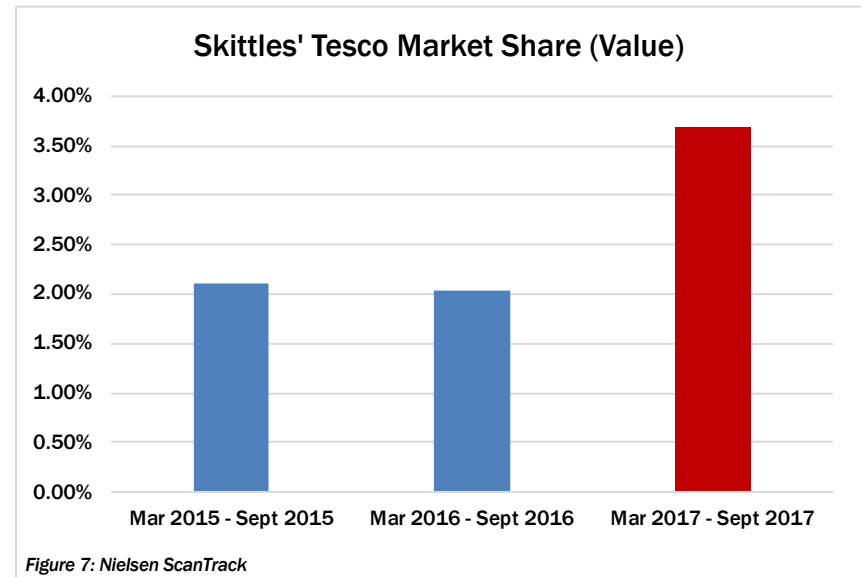
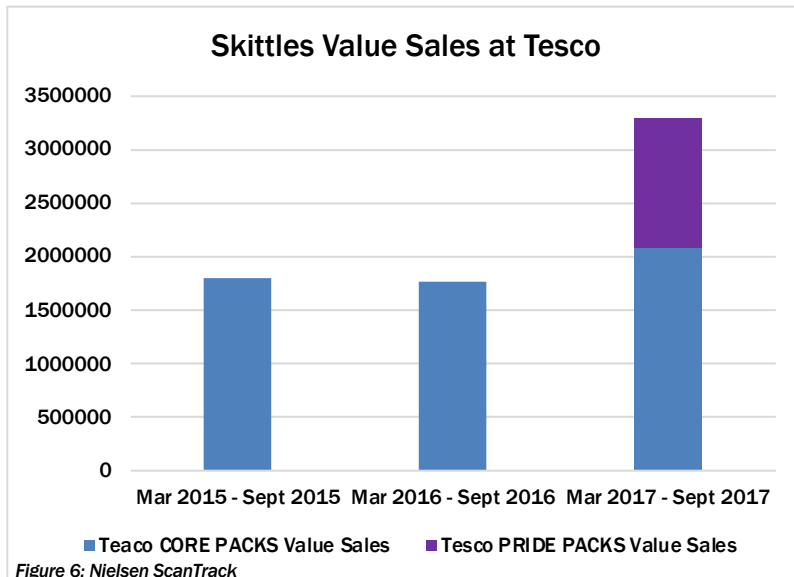
Even the POS went viral, with shoppers eager to share our message and rainbowless packs with their friends before they had even left the stores.



THE RESULTS – UNCONVENTIONAL SUCCESS

A sales and share uplift:

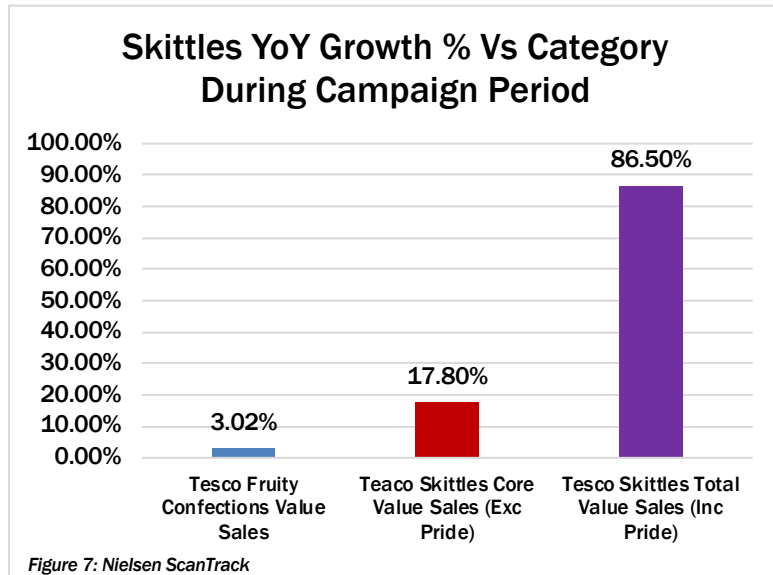
Sales of Skittles' dramatically increased at Tesco, which in turn grew Skittles' market share of the fruity confection category at the stores.



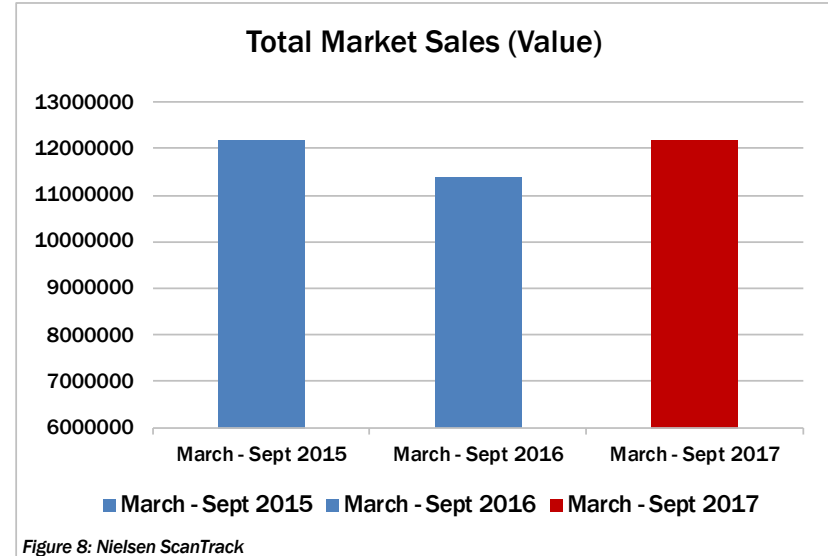
THE RESULTS – UNCONVENTIONAL SUCCESS

A sales and share uplift:

This dramatic year on year growth was driven by the Rainbowless Pride packs, but the buzz and improved store placements also saw a Halo effect on our core products, which outperformed the market.



The impact of the campaign was so strong, that it pushed the brand into overall growth for the first time in years, despite the Pride packs being exclusive to Tesco.



And of course, these sales helped us to raise thousands of pounds for Tesco's chosen LGBT+ charity.

A GLOBAL FUTURE

With the incredible feedback from the LGBT+ community and the Pride packs surpassing the expectations of both Skittles and Tesco, we're looking to turn this one-off event into a regular commitment to Pride festivals across the country.

What's more, with the buzz reaching far beyond the UK, markets around the world are now looking at using our campaign to promote their local Pride festivals.



THE POWER OF BREAKING CONVENTIONS

We couldn't have delivered such a dramatic shift to the Skittles business without the bravery of agency, clients and partners to break with convention.

The bravery to tackle big objectives, beyond our remit: Writing our own brief, designed to use our communication skills to take on challenges beyond our usual control

The bravery to go beyond communications and change the wider business: The 'Give the rainbow' campaign and product could only happen because of changes in the wider Skittles business - from email signatures, to production methods.

The bravery to break branding guidelines: There's no two ways about it, removing your most valuable brand asset is a huge risk, that flies in the face of branding convention. But with a strong purpose and strategy behind it, doing the unthinkable worked in our favour.

The bravery to work in new ways: From agency led client briefs to retailers working as partners during idea development - everyone worked differently, to the benefit of brand, retailer and charity.