



Reframe Shared Moments

Unlocking brand growth through
moments that move us.



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growth
DISTILLERY



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Our world feels more **divided and fragmented.**

And it is. People are spread across endless platforms, niche communities, and polarised viewpoints. With a growing sense of division many retreat further into echo chambers, which makes genuine collective experiences rare.

*"Society has changed. People have become **more polarised now** and in the last five years. People are having different opinions, and that polarises the environment, polarises people."*

- Male, 50s



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1in2

Aussies (58%) believe that it seems harder to find **moments or things that bring us all together** these days.

But we are built to come together.

Despite this fragmentation, humans are wired to come together. We crave unity, connection, and belonging. Shared moments are the antidote to division. They are rare events that align both our emotions and attention.

1in2

(58%) say that shared moments (like festivals, celebrations, sports finals, or global events) create a sense of **unity and belonging** that's hard to find elsewhere



*"These moments make me feel connected to others. It creates a sense of **unity, warmth and belonging**, reminding me that I am not alone. These types of feelings tend to stay long after the moment passes."*

- Female, 18-24



Shared experiences amplify emotion, strengthen memory, and build belonging.

When we feel something collectively, it feels more real and more meaningful. From a behavioural science perspective, this means we take emotional cues from others (social proof), our feelings intensify through shared emotion (emotional contagion), and we reinforce who we are through the groups we connect with (social identity).

That's why shared moments **linger longer, feel stronger,** and **carry more cultural weight** than experiences we have alone.



In a fragmented world shared moments are a **rare currency**.



In a noisy, divided culture, true shared moments stand out. They cut through the clutter, carry extra emotional weight, and become cultural touchstones that shape what people remember, talk about, and care about.

*"They can turn **strangers** into temporary **teammates**."*

- Male, 50-54

For brands, shared moments offer a powerful and scarce opportunity to build **relevance, connection** and **cut through en masse**.

When collective attention and emotion align, they trigger behavioural effects that make brands more relevant, more connected, and more memorable at scale.

Done well, brands don't just appear in the moment, they become part of it. These moments embed brands into shared public memory in ways traditional advertising cannot match.



Why are shared moments so powerful for brands?

Relevance

Behavioural Science Principle:

Social Proof & Shared Attention

When everyone is tuned into the same moment, people look to others to decide what matters. This shared attention acts as social proof, it signals that the moment (and any brand within it) is culturally relevant right now.

Connection

Behavioural Science Principle:

Emotional Contagion

Collective emotion amplifies belonging. The joy, pride or unity people feel becomes socially contagious, and because everyone knows others feel it too (Pinker's common knowledge)*, it deepens emotional connection between people, and with the brand that helped enable it.

Cut Through en Masse

Behavioural Science Principle:

Peak-End & Social Amplification

Shared moments create emotional peaks people talk about, share, and remember. The visibility of mass participation turns individual attention into cultural momentum, giving brands a level of reach and memorability traditional advertising can't match.

Reference: Stephen Pinker: *When Everyone Knows That Everyone Knows... Common Knowledge and the Science of Harmony, Hypocrisy and Outrage.* 2025

So how can you
harness the
power of shared
moments?

1. Identify the right moment.
2. Show up in the right way.
3. Avoid the pitfalls.

1. Identify the right moment.

There are three distinct type of shared moments:



Buzz

Quick bursts of fun
and playfulness.



Belong

Harmonious connection
through shared
purpose.



Hope

Powerful calls for
meaningful change.



Buzz moments are quick bursts of fun that bring people together through playfulness and shared trends.

What they feel like: They're light, easy to engage with, and spark joy without asking much from people. It's the excitement of being "in on the joke" or trend with everyone else, like a shared laugh that spreads instantly through a crowd. These moments are playful and energetic, requiring little emotional investment but delivering a quick hit of joy and amusement.

The Feeling: Playful, Joyful, Energetic, Amused.

What it Looks Like: Memes, viral trends, topical jokes.

"Random breakout dance groups in the middle of the city. Moments that make people *feel like children* again."

- Female, 30s



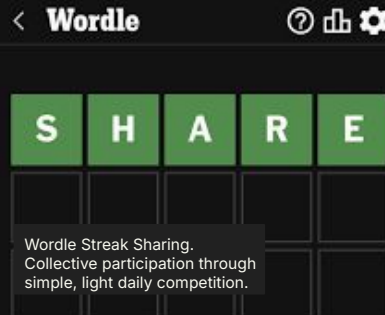
The Coldplay Concert cheating scandal created a meme that people spoke about in person and online.



Rachel Gunn's 'Raygun' performance at the Paris Olympics generated lots of conversation.



Sharing of songs picked for Triple J's hottest 100, followed by the collective countdown ritual.



"I think these days there is more space and appetite for *light-hearted moments* - memes to break tension in our heavy world."

- Male, 50s

"These moments make me feel **most loved and seen.**"

- Female, 20s



Mardi Gras parade



Diwali Festival



Sydney Vivid



Gardening Club

"Huge concerts Taylor Swift thousands of people gather together creating moments of **Joy, excitement and great happiness.**"

- Female, 60s



Belong moments bring people together with comfort and trust. They're about feeling part of something where everyone is welcome and in sync.

What they feel like: The feeling is one of comfort, harmony, and connection. It's the warmth that comes from being part of a community with a shared identity or purpose. Whether it's the quiet comradery of a local club or the collective joy of a festival, the core emotion is a powerful sense of unity and togetherness.

The Feeling: Connection, Trust, Joy, Safety, Comradery.

What it Looks Like: Community events, cultural festivals, shared interests (e.g., City2Surf, a local gardening club, music concerts).



Hope moments are powerful surges of collective conviction that inspire change and challenge the status quo.

What they feel like: For those involved, the feeling is one of empowerment, passion, and pride. Strangers bond over a shared goal, creating a powerful sense of "people power" and optimism. It's the feeling that a collective voice is strong enough to be heard and make a difference.

The Feeling: Empowered, Passionate, Optimistic.

What it Looks Like: Protests, fundraising, social movements, bushfire relief or flood appeals.

"It makes me feel hopeful, it makes me feel human. It's important to **see ourselves and our values reflected in others** in all different places in the world."

- Female, 20s



Community support for bushfire and flood relief.



Ice Bucket challenge.



Climate change protests.



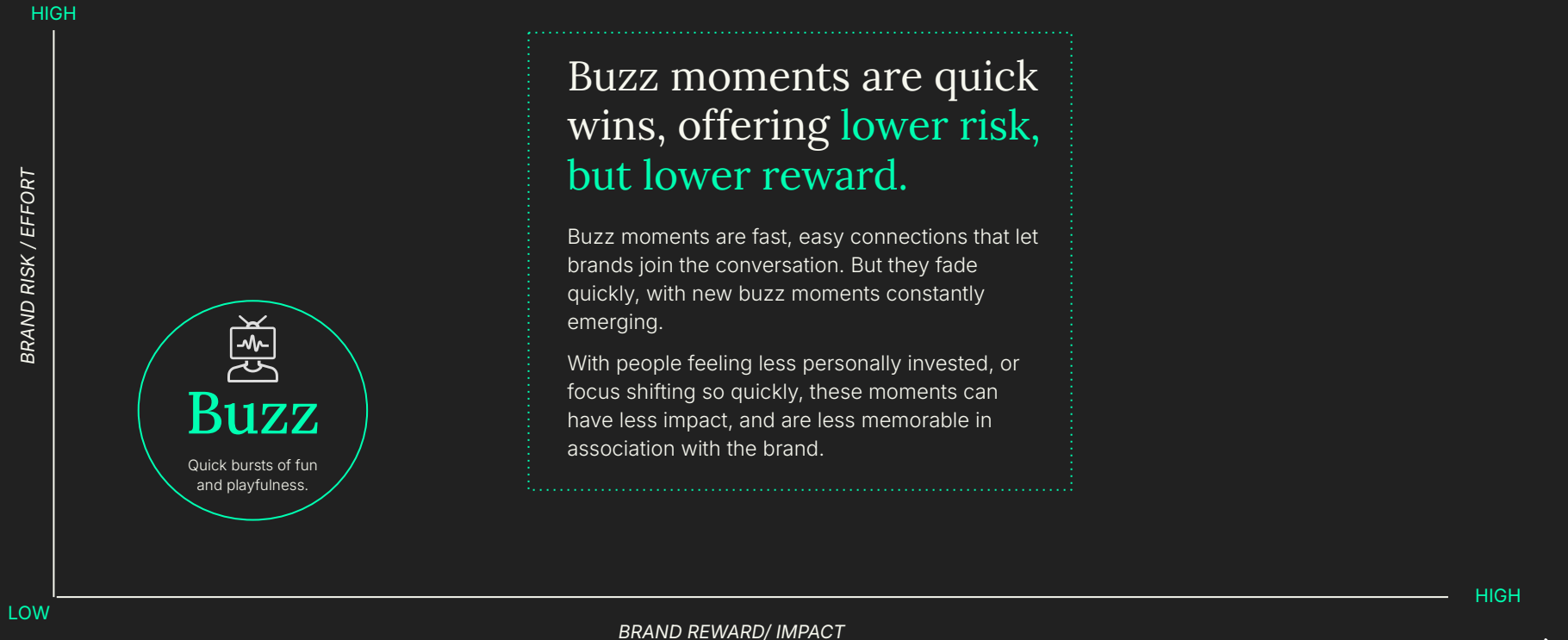
Marriage equality in Australia.

"You feel important, you feel **empowered** to be able to openly express your views and challenge others."

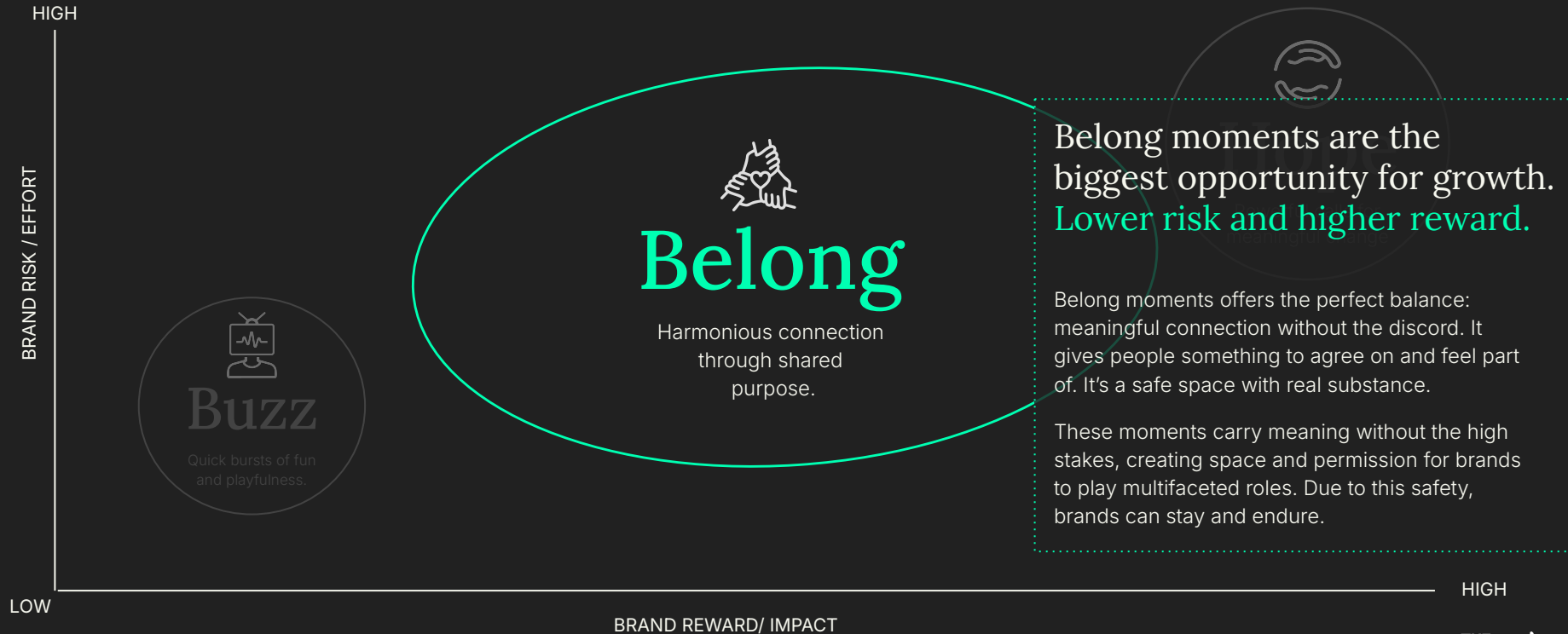
- Male, 50s



In today's culture, not all shared moments are created equal, each connects people in different ways, with its own risks and rewards.







Brands don't just have permission to play in Belong moments, there is a genuine **desire for brands to play a greater role.**

Belong moments offer the greatest upside for brands. There is not only greater permission for brands to play in these moments, but untapped potential, with people wanting brands to play a greater role

1in2

Aussies (52%) say they feel positive towards brands who help to **support or create shared moments/ events.** Only 9% disagree.



The typologies are constant, but **shared moments** are alive and can be responsive to culture.

Shared moments evolve with culture. What once united can divide, and what once protested can now be celebrated. It's crucial to understand how people experience a moment today and connect in a way that feels true to its current meaning. Misreading that shift can make a brand feel out of step or tone-deaf.



Sydney's Mardi Gras has shifted from a Hope moment in the form of the protests of '78 to have become a Belong moment as the annual pride parade and celebration.



Australia Day is evolving from a Belong moment for the nation to come together towards more of a Hope moment in the movement for First Nations recognition.

Once the shared
moment has
been identified,
brands need to...

1. Identify the right moment
2. Show up in the right way
3. Avoid the pitfalls



How to show up in the right way.

To meaningfully connect in these moments, brands need to follow any of these three core principles:

1

Participate in trends and moments.

- Jump in on a cultural moment or joke that naturally aligns with your identity.
- Add your own creative spin rather than copying what others have done verbatim.
- Use these moments to show a more human, relatable side of the brand.

2

Create your own trend or playful hook.

- Launch a distinctive take or content format that others can engage with, remix, or adopt.
- Tie the trend back to your brand's core values or product truth to ensure it feels authentic.
- Encourage community participation - trends gain momentum when people feel invited in.

3

Utilise humour as a connector.

- Play with lighthearted, inclusive humour that builds shared enjoyment.
- Self-aware or self-deprecating humour can make a brand feel more approachable.
- Stay true to your voice: banter should sound like an extension of how your brand usually communicates.



Avoid the pitfalls.



Don't punch down

Joining in on someone else's misfortune or ridicule feels cheap and damaging. Humour should bring people in, not alienate or humiliate.

Speed is key

Moments move fast. If you're late, it looks forced or out of touch and risks being tone deaf if the conversation has moved on to something more serious.

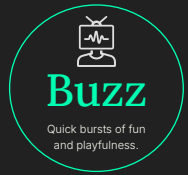
Authenticity matters

People spot when brands are chasing cultural relevance without a real connection. Participation should feel like a natural extension of your brand's role.

Avoid bandwagoning

Jumping on every viral moment risks diluting credibility. Choose moments selectively, where you can add value or perspective.

How brands have harnessed Buzz moments



Coca-Cola Share a Coke



Coca-Cola replaced its logo on bottles with popular names, encouraging people to find one with their name, share it, tag friends, and post. It turned a simple, shareable idea into a social phenomenon that perfectly aligned with Coca-Cola's spirit of connection.

Bunnings Warehouse × Bluey



Several Bunnings stores in Australia rebranded temporarily as "Hammerbarn" (from the TV show Bluey), included kids' DIY workshops, meet-and-greets and exclusive merchandise. Showing how a brand in an unexpected context can create high share-momentum when the activation is fun, visible and connected to culture.

Duolingo Owl



Duolingo is playful, self-aware, and fast, turning user-created jokes like Death of the Duo Owl into viral gold by leaning into humour, trend-hijacking, and using its mischievous mascot to stay culturally relevant and endlessly shareable.

"They made themselves stand out by participating in trends. This made me feel like they have a sense of humour and they understand what people think about them."
18-24, Female



How to show up in the right way.

To meaningfully connect in these moments, brands need to follow one of three core principles.

1

Create moments of connection.

- Develop new ways for people to come together that align with your brand's purpose and values.
- Build from the ground up: start local, nurture trust, and grow moments into large scale rituals over time.
- Co-create with communities so the moment feels shared, not branded.

2

Support shared experiences.

- Provide visible, long-term support for community and cultural moments through sponsorship or partnerships.
- Be present on the ground, supply relevant goods, services, or people power that enhance the experience.
- Leverage what you do or provide as a brand to support a shared moment (e.g. transport, tech, hydration).
- Offer access to resources or tools that empower communities.

3

Ritualise belonging.

- Embed your brand into recurring rituals that unite people, from annual events to everyday habits.
- Turn brand interactions into social traditions that people look forward to.
- Create small tokens, cues, or touchpoints that anchor shared memories to your brand.
- Join cultural rituals that authentically fit your identity and celebrate connection.



Avoid the pitfalls.



Don't be the hero.

Your goal is to facilitate connection, not to put your brand in the spotlight at the community's expense.

Brand actions in Belong moments need to be about connecting, easing friction, and not about prioritising yourself. You're not the main character

Values must align.

Your actions must line up with your brand's purpose, inside and out. Consumers will see through any disconnect.

If you haven't found your fit from the beginning, you won't be able to belong.

Don't fake it.

If you're not genuinely part of the community or care about it, don't try to force it. People who belong can spot an outsider instantly.

Read the room.

Be careful not to mistake a Hope moment for a harmonious Belong moment by ensuring you are getting a total read on the sentiment of the group.

How brands have harnessed **Belong** moments.



Cobram Estate Tasting



Cobram Estate created a virtual live-streamed tasting event that made it in the Guinness World Records for the most viewers for an olive oil tasting event on YouTube.

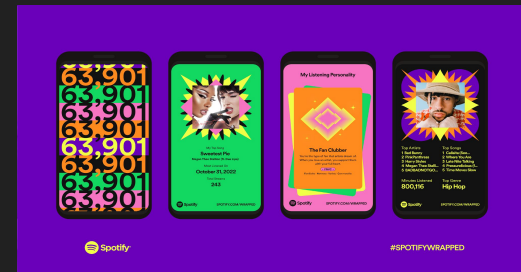
"There was a counter there showing how many people were participating in the livestream and it was really exciting to watch the counter increase as the livestream continued." - 50-54, Female

Toyota Good For Footy



Toyota's long-running Good for Footy program has become one of the AFL's biggest grassroots enablers. Through the national raffle platform, Toyota covers all admin and prize costs so that 100% of the funds raised stay with local clubs - amounting to millions over the life of the program. Alongside gear grants and sponsorship, it's a clear example of a brand providing financial support that directly sustains community sport at scale.

Spotify Wrapped



Spotify Wrapped turns a personal habit into a shared yearly ritual. Its predictable timing and social sharing create a sense of belonging that people now anticipate as part of the cultural calendar.

"Reviewing highlights / memories shared was a nice trip down memory lane! Packaging the year up was an interesting touch, made me feel as though Spotify cared about what it's users were listening to." - 35-39, Female



How to show up in the right way.

To meaningfully connect in these moments, brands need to follow one of three core principles.

1

Amplify the right voices.

- Use your brand's reach to spotlight those already driving change. individuals, communities, and organisations leading the movement.
- Share their stories and perspectives to elevate their impact, not your profile.
- Be a platform for the progress of others, not the centre of attention.

2

Provide tangible support.

- Back causes with real commitments and resources e.g money, time, tools, or expertise that create measurable, lasting impact.
- Show up in visible, meaningful ways: staff involvement, local partnerships, or on-the-ground activation.
- Partner with credible organisations to drive systemic or long-term change.

3

Lead with conviction.

- Be clear about why your brand belongs in the moment and what it stands for.
- Demonstrate belief through consistent action, transparency, and accountability.
- Get your own house in order first, ensure your brand's actions, values, and internal practices align with the cause you support.



Avoid the pitfalls.



For the long run

Support must be consistent and sustained, not a one-off campaign. Transient gestures feel opportunistic.

Stay the course, communicate progress, and show up even when attention fades, that's where trust is earned.

Live your values

Causes should naturally connect to the brand's identity, product, or role in society. Misaligned support can come across as performative.

Actions need to line up with brand purpose and everyday behaviours. Transparency about who benefits, and how, reassures people it's not just a PR move.

Show up physically

Active, hands-on involvement shows commitment beyond financial support. When employees volunteer or brands engage locally, it signals genuine care and connection.

Partnering with established charities or community groups adds legitimacy, but only if the partnership feels genuine.

Avoid bandwagoning

Lead with your own convictions.

People respond best when brands act authentically and independently, not just echoing what others are doing. Take time to define your unique stance. When a cause or cultural moment aligns, participate because it's true to who you are, not because everyone else is.

How brands have harnessed Hope moments.

Woolworth Disaster Response



Woolworths mobilised stores, staff, and supply chains to support affected communities during the 2019–20 bushfires and floods. It created a national sense of unity and practical hope, with Australians seeing action, not advertising.

Hope shared moments thrive when brands enable community action rather than claiming credit.

Ben & Jerry's Climate Action



Ben & Jerry's closed its stores and joined millions around the world in the Global Climate Strikes, standing alongside young activists demanding urgent climate action. By launching the limited-edition Unfudge Our Future flavour, proceeds funded real environmental initiatives, turning protest into participation. The brand transformed collective frustration into constructive optimism, embodying its long-held commitment to social justice and sustainability.

Nike She Runs the Night



Nike created safe night-time running events for women in Sydney, responding directly to concerns about safety and empowerment. By partnering with communities and creating a physical, visible platform, the campaign provided hope by reframing urban space as inclusive and safe. It showed up in people's lives authentically and aligned tightly with Nike's purpose of enabling human potential.



Harness Shared Moments to *Unlock Brand Growth.*

Choose your moment wisely

Not all moments are created equal.

Buzz moments build quick connection, Hope moments inspire change, and Belong moments foster trust and endurance. Know which emotion you're tapping and why you belong there.

Act with authenticity

Credibility is everything.

Shared moments amplify emotion, but they also amplify missteps. Only show up where your purpose, audience, and actions align.

Create meaning not noise

In a world of fleeting attention, brands that help people feel something together stand out. Lean into moments that strengthen connection, not just visibility.

Play the long game

The most powerful shared moments aren't one-offs, they continue and evolve over time.

Ritualise your presence, sustain your support, and build from participation to partnership.

Add value to the collective

Whether through joy, comfort, or conviction, brands earn their place when they enable connection, belonging, or progress of others, not when they dominate the spotlight for themselves.