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# Building a Brand in the Brain

*The New York Times, Droga5 and connecting with consumers through culture, craft, and consistency*

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**FAKE NEWS**  
**BIAS**  
**MISINFORMATION**  
**FACTS**  
**TRUTH**  
**JOURNALISM**

Brainsights & Droga5  
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Authors: Andy Littlewood, Chief Knowledge Officer, Droga5,  
Kevin Keane, Founder, Brainsights

# Executive Summary

Many marketers struggle to understand the impact of their brand-building efforts.

A recent McKinsey [study](#) reported that fewer than 20% of marketers had a strong understanding of brand-building performance.

This may be down to the fact that brands are built in the brain, and the right tools and data to measure consumer brains over time haven't been readily available.

But with the growing accessibility of neuroscience data and technology, this is becoming a reality.

*Building a Brand in the Brain* explores this reality, applying Brainsights' High Connection metric to the evaluation of brand building communications, and charting its growth alongside business growth over a four year period (2017-2020) for *The New York Times*.

Sir John Hegarty of BBH once described brands as “the most valuable real estate in the world - a corner of someone's mind”. Our analysis shows how advertisers can develop this ‘mind real estate’.

Using Brainsights' brain wave data from hundreds of consumers in response to news brand advertising, we conduct a methodical analysis of *The New York Times'* award-winning Truth campaign from Droga5.

Our analysis reveals the underlying drivers of High Connection, providing additional evidence of the accretive quality of consistent branding over time, as well as drawing through lines between content and culture. We examine the relationship between emotion, attention and memory resource deployment to provide much needed insight for marketing effectiveness practitioners grappling with the role each plays in advertising and brand effectiveness.

It is our hope that readers of *Building a Brand in the Brain* will learn of the value of consistency, craft and a strong command of culture in outwitting the competition and helping to persuade millions of consumers to value and buy a product, and be inspired to be brave with your brands in building lasting value.

# **The decline of print journalism has been well-documented, and even the most venerable news publications have not been immune to powerful market forces shifting media investment online.**

Growth of digital “free news” aggregators heaped on more pain - not only was the decline of print pummeling revenue, news content was being repackaged by other online properties for profit.

Compounding the negative impact of these trends is the rise of fake news, mistruths and misinformation. As more and more people consume news through social media platforms, the news media is facing its largest ever existential threat.

Stories of successful business and brand transformations in such a challenging environment are rare, and few rival the narrative of *The New York Times*.

But this isn't the story of *The New York Times*' famous investigative reporting, or its bold move to erect a paywall. You can read about those [here](#) and [here](#). This is the story of how *The Times* - and their agency, Droga5 - persuaded more people than ever that the truth was worth paying for, building a compelling brand position to drive subscriber growth. And this story comes not from *The Times* or Droga5, but from deep inside the minds of those with whom they sought to connect.

To tell that story, Brainsights mined its database for *New York Times* Truth campaign ad data for each year of the Truth campaign (2017-2020). In each of the four years, Brainsights has collected data from the brains of news consumers as they've viewed Truth campaign video advertising.

Brainsights uses electroencephalography (EEG) to record the non-conscious brain wave activity of people as they consume media and experiences. Brain waves occur naturally, and through more than a century of scientific study into brain wave activity, specific waves are found to be associated with specific mental states that are of use to advertisers. Brainsights' measurement platform records levels of Attention, Emotional Connection and Encoding to Memory every two milliseconds and sync this to the millisecond for all content watched by consumers. This occurs in a naturalistic consumption environment (ie, a living room, or office desk).

By recording the brain activity of hundreds of people in a given study, Brainsights can pinpoint the moments that people pay attention to, resonate with and file away to memory.

With more than 100,000 consumer brain hours in its database, Brainsights has a set of well established norms against which to compare video stimuli.

Neuroscientifically analyzing the Truth campaign over its four years can provide us with a deeper understanding of how *The New York Times* and Droga5 successfully made the case to the news consumer that the truth was worth paying for, thus helping to drive the successful transformation of *The New York Times*.

# METHODOLOGY

We've included the following ads in our analysis:

1. **The Truth is Hard to Find - Tyler Hicks** (2017)
2. **The Truth is Hard to Find - Bryan Denton** (2017)
3. **The Truth has a Voice** (2018)
4. **The Truth is Worth It - Resolve** (30) (2019)
5. **The Truth is Worth It - Courage** (30) (2019)
6. **The Truth is Worth It: Perseverance** (2019)
7. **The Truth is Essential: Life Needs Truth** (2020)

We've also researched and analyzed the subconscious response of news consumers for three key competitors of *The Times: The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. These are the ads we have analyzed:

8. **WSJ - Good Things Come to Those who don't wait** (2019)
9. **Washington Post - Democracy Dies in Darkness** (2019)
10. **The Economist - Never Stop Questioning** (2019)

## Data we collect:

Using brain wave readers that consumers wear as they view reels of video content, we collect data that reveals levels of consumer Attention, Emotional Connection and Encoding to Memory every two milliseconds. This is synced at the millisecond level to the stimuli consumed.

## How we analyze the data:

In analyzing how ads perform, we consider average performance of the three metrics, as well as maximum performance (the highest peak reached by a given metric within a spot.) Depending on context, ad objective and competitive environment,

one metric may be more suitable than others. In this analysis, we focus on Connection, and specifically Emotional Strength, which is our Maximum Connection score, and high Connection values, which we've defined as Connection moments that reach or exceed 50% greater than benchmarks.

Each ad analyzed for this study was viewed within a randomized reel of content, which was selected to represent what an average consumer might reasonably have been exposed to/consumed at that time. Benchmarks are created by comparing the performance of ads versus all the content consumers viewed in the randomized reel. The randomized reel include ads, short films, news clips and other entertaining content. For example, in March 2019, a [clip](#) from Bill Maher, as well as ads from Head and Shoulders and Samsung were included. In April 2017, a [clip](#) of Dave Chappelle sharing a Baboon analogy was included, as well as the IT official [trailer](#).

## Data collection dates:

1. **The Truth is Hard to Find - Tyler Hicks** (April 2017)
2. **The Truth is Hard to Find - Bryan Denton** (April 2017)
3. **The Truth has a Voice** (January 2018)
4. **The Truth is Worth It - Resolve** (30) (March 2019)
5. **The Truth is Worth It - Courage** (30) (March 2019)
6. **The Truth is Worth It: Perseverance** (March 2019)
7. **The Truth is Essential: Life Needs Truth** (September 2020)
8. **WSJ - Good Things Come to Those Who Don't Wait** (February 2019)
9. **Washington Post - Democracy Dies in Darkness** (January 2019)
10. **The Economist - Never Stop Questioning** (January 2019)

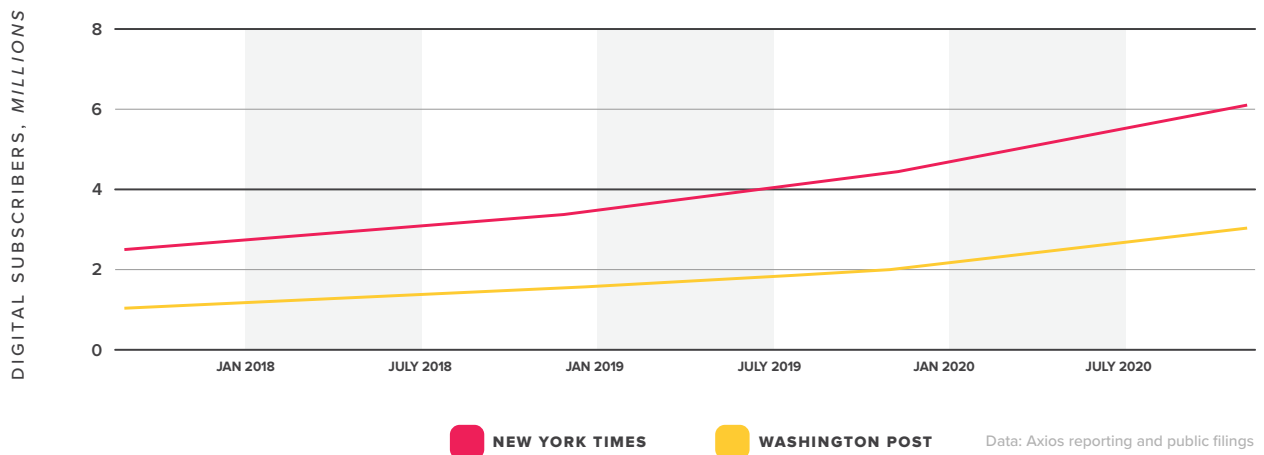
# What persuaded millions of people that The Truth was worth paying for?

The Truth campaign is viewed as one of the most successful advertising campaigns of recent years, its effectiveness recognized with both industry accolade and business performance.

It has won the advertising industry's most prestigious awards (Effies and Cannes Lions), presenting thorough evidence of the campaign's impact on key perception metrics, including increasing consumers' belief that *The Times* relentlessly pursued the truth. This ultimately culminated in more people believing *The Times* was worth paying for: between 2017 and 2020, paid subscriptions grew from 3.6 million to over 7.5 million (Source: *New York Times* 2020 Annual Financial Report) and the NYT share price grew over 65% (vs. the DJI 48%).

The campaign captivated audiences through storytelling, shifting perception of the value of journalism and inspiring action by adding a large cohort of new subscribers, ensuring that *The Times* can pursue its vital mission as a healthy 21st century business.

## What persuaded millions of people that the truth was worth paying for?



# KEY METRICS - EMOTIONAL STRENGTH AND HIGH CONNECTION

## What is Emotional Strength?

Emotional Strength is the peak level of average Audience Connection scores reached in a video.

It is calculated by aggregating and averaging all individual responses to a stimuli, and pinpointing the precise moment in that stimuli that delivers the highest peak across the brains studied.

## What contributes to Emotional Strength?

It's a moment of shared cultural relevance. A moment that connects most strongly, on average, with the consumer brains tested.

Analysis of thousands of ads in the Brainsights database reveals the following contributing factors to high emotional strength moments:

- Moments conveying a fundamental human truth
- Payoffs/climaxes to stories or performances
- Moments that tap into the cultural zeitgeist/are broadly culturally relevant
- Strong brand asset recognition and presence.
- All of the above.

## High Connection

High Connection occurs when the aggregated average consumer connection response breaches +50% versus Connection benchmarks for a moment in a stimuli.

There is always a single peak value (Emotional Strength) within a stimuli; there cannot be multiple peak values within a stimuli.

Furthermore, it's possible that the peak moment

in a stimuli does not breach the +50% versus benchmark - it may be lower. On the other hand, there can be multiple High Connection moments (breaching +50% v benchmarks) in an ad or stimuli.

## What's the difference between High Connection and Emotional Strength?

Emotional Strength is the peak reached in an ad - a moment that can happen only once. High Connection moments can happen multiple times throughout an ad (or not at all), and are moments of strong shared Connection across consumers.

Statistically, High Connection moments can only happen when a significant portion of the population studied responds similarly in the same moment, thus pushing the aggregated average response to above 50% versus benchmarks.

In a study by Brainsights of more than 50,000 moments of Connection, just 3.5% were found to be High Connection, breaching the threshold of 50% or greater versus Connection benchmarks (minimum sample of 50 general population consumers).

This frequency of High Connection moments is twice as high for popular culture/ public interest videos (short films, entertaining show clips, news segments, government COVID PSAs, etc), versus advertising content (5.4% versus 2.7%). For popular culture videos, a High Connection was found on average every 19 seconds. For advertising content, a High Connection moment was found every 39 seconds.

In standing for the Truth, it would be tempting to create a campaign that focused purely on facts.

But while ‘the facts’ are a fundamental part of *The Times*’ product, they aren’t its only weapon; storytelling is, too, and one that can be even more powerful.

Storytelling taps into peoples’ emotions, which galvanizes their response and action, and helps to construct associations: between *The New York Times* and Truth, and the means by which the Truth is discovered and delivered.

For these reasons, we focused our analysis on the Emotional Strength and High Connection moments of the Truth campaign and posed the following questions: what contributes to Emotional Strength and High Connection moments? How do these patterns change and develop over time? How does this pattern compare to the competition? And what can the growth of High Connection moments over time tell us about the cultural salience of a brand?



# The Times versus the Competition

Despite the decline of local newspapers, plenty of high quality news products exist in the marketplace. Some of them have even advertised. We looked at three: *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist* and *The Washington Post*.

To understand how *The Times* brand campaign performs in relation to its direct competition, we looked at the Emotional Strength (Max Connection) of each of the Truth Campaign ads, and ranked those against ads from these three competitors.

With one exception, all ads from the Truth Campaign outperform the competition.

No competitive ad produces a High Connection moment - an instance in the spot where Emotional Connection breaches 50% above Connection benchmarks.

Selected news brand ads ranked by Emotional Strength scores	
1	The Truth is Hard to Find - Tyler Hicks (2017)
2	The Truth has a Voice (2018)
3	The Truth is Worth It - Resolve (30) (2019)
4	The Truth is Worth It - Courage (30) (2019)
5	The Truth is Essential: Life Needs Truth (2020)
6	The Truth is Worth It: Perseverance (2019)
7	WSJ - Good Things Come to Those Who Don't Wait (2019)
8	The Truth is Hard to Find - Byran Denton (2017)
9	Washington Post - Democracy Dies in Darkness (2019)
10	The Economist - Never Stop Questioning (2019)

+50% Connection v video benchmarks

Beyond the multi-year commitment was the consistency of The Times' message about the Truth, which builds relevance and memory structures in the brains of consumers.

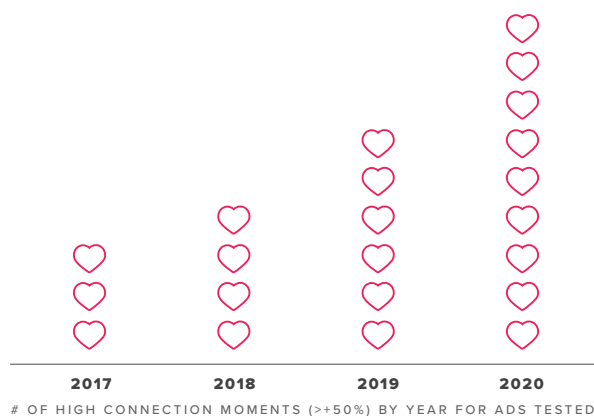
Of course, the multi-year commitment is a large part of *The Times'* success story. The truth must be a commitment. The Truth campaign - as the 2019 ads of the same name suggest - is a story of persistence and resolve.

But even when isolating for the performance of the first year of the Truth campaign against the competition, the data shows the 2017 ad featuring the photojournalism of Tyler Hicks delivered a huge emotional punch.

When the competition began advertising (with video) in 2019, The Times' Truth campaign had a two-year head start.

And in that time, *The Times* effectively defined the category.

Competitors advertised in a tone and with themes set by *The Times*: WSJ's *Read Ambitiously* is in part about pursuit; The Economist's *Never Stop Questioning* is about persistent interrogation; and the Washington Post's *Democracy Dies in Darkness* is about exposing the truth. All are themes that had already been explored in the Truth campaign by the time competitors released their video ads.



Looking at the number of High Connection moments - moments of the brand's cultural salience, its equity in the minds of consumers - The Times had built a commanding lead by the time the competition began its own advertising push.

**But how did it get there?**

# The Truth is Hard to Find

The approach taken by Droga5 used the tools of investigative journalism - the written word and photography - and took viewers behind the scenes of *The Times*' process for investigating, documenting and delivering the truth.

Using distinctive brand assets like the familiar *New York Times* font and *Times* talent, the ads are artful stories about the individuals behind the Truth, their approaches and personal philosophies, their relentless pursuits, and what it takes to bring high quality journalism to the fingertips of consumers.

Take *The Truth is Hard to Find - Tyler Hicks*. The ad opens with a date and a place: October 7, 2015 Lesbos, Greece. Through Tyler Hicks' photography and a voiceover by the photojournalist, the viewer is taken through his thoughts and feelings as he is recalling this assignment of documenting the harrowing experience of Syrian refugees.

The photography sequence ends on the feature image of the story, which the viewer only learns after the camera zooms out to the mobile screenshot of *The New York Times* story.

That instant- second 51, when the entire ad was contextualized and the Truth was revealed - was the highest moment of Emotional Connection observed in Brainsights data from any point in the Truth campaign.



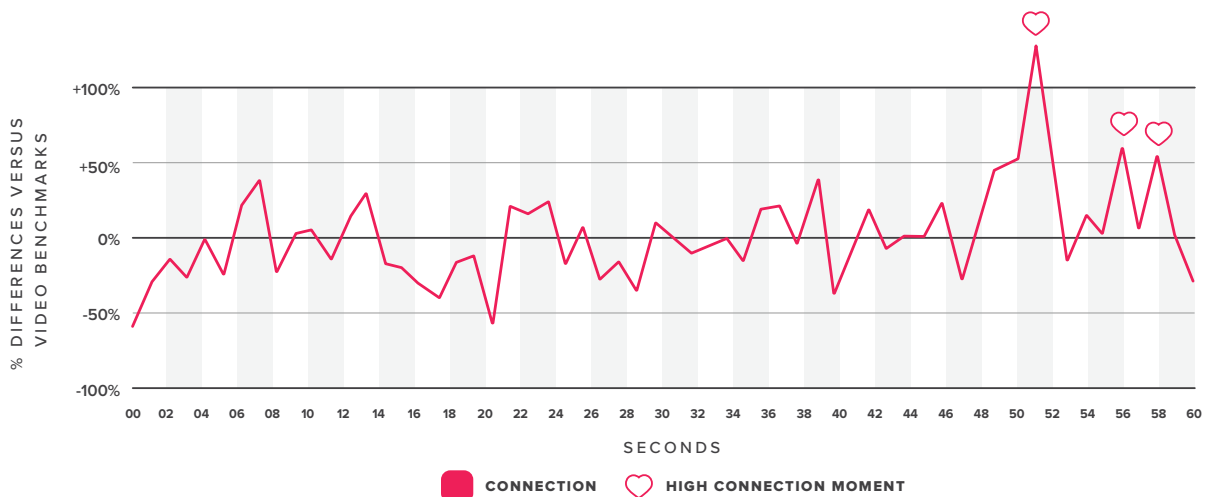
## Why?

This moment combined four key elements of high performing, Emotionally Strong ads.

1. The story payoff - the reveal that these images featured in the story;
2. A key brand asset - the NYT story in context;
3. An emotionally charged, relatable story - fundamentally about people seeking a better life for their family;
4. Contextually and culturally relevant for the time - a story about Muslim refugees risking their lives at a time (April 2017) when the American government was turning away those trying to enter the US.

Combining these four elements led to an Emotional Peak that was 128% better than Connection benchmarks. Put another way, it was more than 2.5X as powerful as a High Connection moment, which no competitive spot could attain. And it was 24 percentage points higher than the next highest Connection moment across all ads in the Truth campaign.

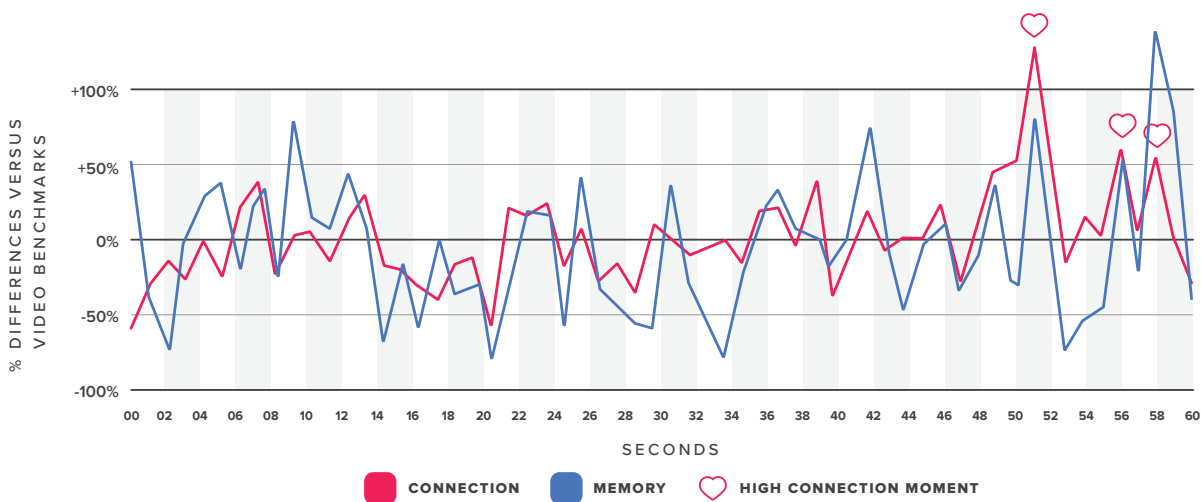
Furthermore, it was followed by two additional High Connection moments, as the below second-by-second trace shows. These happen at second 54/55 (Text on screen: *The Truth is Hard to Find*) and second 57 (Brand plate: *The New York Times*). This indicates a deep emotional resonance between the news consumer, and both the mission and the brand.



In addition to the Emotional Connection heights this spot elicited, it was also successful in laying the groundwork for building deep meaningful associations in the brains of news consumers between *The New York Times* and the challenging process of discovering and delivering the Truth to news readers.

## What does the data reveal?

When we layer on the moment-by-moment Encoding to Memory (blue) response of news consumers to *The Truth is Hard to Find - Tyler Hicks*, we can see the two strongest moments occurred in line with High Connection moments, which are key brand moments - the strongest happened at *The New York Times* brand plate at s57, and the second-strongest happened upon the reveal of the story at second 51.



## What do the combined peaks of Connection and Encoding mean?

In the critical moment of the ad, when the Truth-pursuing efforts of Tyler Hicks were revealed, news consumers deeply connected with this moment more than any other.

When the brand was then revealed a few seconds later, news consumers encoded to memory that moment like no other in the ad (+137% versus Encoding benchmarks). In fact, this was the top Encoding moment of all the Truth campaign ads studied by Brainsights.

According to marketing effectiveness experts Les Binet and Peter Field in *Effectiveness in Context*, “**brand building dominates long-term growth and involves the creation of memory structures** that prime consumers to want to choose the brand. **For brand building, emotions are more important [than rational messages].**”

For *The New York Times* and Droga5, the ad succeeded in building the subconscious associations needed between the Truth, its value, and *The New York Times*. In doing so, this ad successfully laid the foundation for the Truth campaign in the years that followed.

But it wasn’t all positive in that first year of the Truth campaign.

A companion ad released and analyzed at the same time - *The Truth is Hard to Find - Bryan Denton* - was less impactful. Told in a similar style to Tyler Hicks, the angle was on the Iraqi war, and how Bryan Denton was in a vehicle hit by an ISIS car bomb.

But the ad elicited substantially less Connection than Tyler Hicks - 14% on average. It was also the only Truth campaign ad analyzed that did not contain a High Connection moment (>50% v Connection benchmarks).

## Understanding the underperformance of Bryan Denton versus Tyler Hicks

The ad’s subject matter - war and conflict in Iraq - is less relatable for most news consumers compared to themes of family, hope and the pursuit of a better life explored in Tyler Hicks. This is a function both of universality and topicality - pursuing a better life for oneself is more universal to the human experience than the experience of war, and the issues of refugees, asylum and immigration were more topical at that time than conflict in Iraq. This data was collected soon after then-President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 13769 (better known as the “travel ban” or “Muslim ban”). Brainsights research finds that more universally shared individual values and cultural-contextual relevance deliver greater Connection.

This difference in story focus and point of view necessitated stylistic choices that may have hindered the Bryan Denton ad’s ability to connect with audiences. Whereas Hicks’ spot was rich in close ups of the human faces of refugees - the subjects of the story - which conveyed the emotional arc of despair to hope that he narrates, Denton *was* the subject of the story. His camera faced away from him. The story was what was happening around him, *to him*. As harrowing as this experience surely was, it was deprived of the visual canvas on which to paint that emotional picture - Denton himself. It’s exceptionally difficult to pull off this emotional story from this point of view, and even *The Times* couldn’t do so.

Despite this, there were moments in the spot that did connect meaningfully with news consumers and support the Truth positioning. One occurred when Denton translated the Arabic phrase (s24 - “which means ‘booby-trapped’ car”) - Connection reached 37% above benchmark, with Encoding strong, too (+73%). The moment reinforces the perception of *Times* talent as ‘truth insiders’.

Another moment of meaningful Connection happened during the tagline (s53/54 - *The Truth is Hard to Find*) with Connection reaching 30% above benchmarks and Encoding performing solidly at 15% above benchmark, supporting meaningful associations between *The Times* and this positioning. But it’s clear from these results that in 2017 the Tyler Hicks spot had a much greater impact on news consumers.

# The Truth Has a Voice

Building on the foundations laid in 2017, which focused on the efforts required to pursue, document and deliver the truth, 2018’s ad underlined the impact of this effort: systemic gender bias laid bare.

But if 2017 was the artful, visual narrative of photojournalistic assignments, 2018 leaned in to the power of the written word. Not to tell a single story, but to tell the story of a movement. Not in going out to find the truth, but inviting in: the historically marginalized and suppressed, the unheard, the victims.

The result was powerful. *The Truth Has a Voice* delivered more High Connection moments more efficiently than any other Truth campaign ad. It averaged one every 7.5 seconds, making it by far the most efficiently effective spot in the campaign.

Average Time per High Connection Moment	
Year	Seconds
Popular Culture Average	19s
Commercial Average	39s
<b>2017</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>7.5</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>16</b>

The ad actually started as a print concept, but the team at Droga5 felt that it could play well in film.

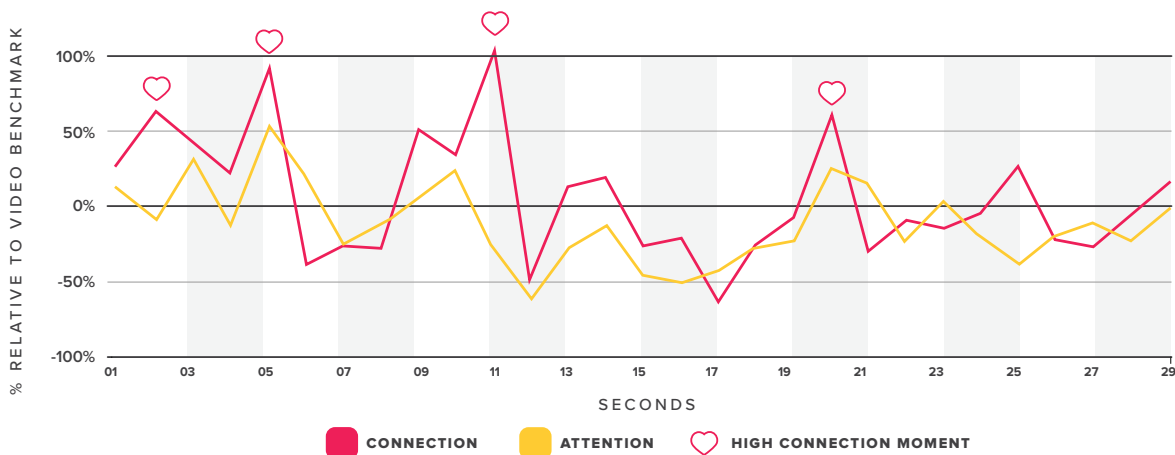
Even more astonishing, this ad contained just three words: “he”, “she” and “said”.

But the manner and frequency with which these words were used in the ad, as well as the broader cultural and political context they articulated, ensured they delivered meaningful Connection to news consumers.

And more than this, the ad demanded reflection and introspection from its viewers.



# What the data says



When we layer on the Attention curves (yellow) to the second-by-second Emotional Connection levels of news consumers, we can see three moments where these diverge significantly - seconds 2, 11, and 25. These interactions between Attention and Emotional Connection imply a collective reflection - consumers are withdrawing from the stimuli (Attention curve slopes downward), but it's strongly resonating with them (Connection slopes upward simultaneously).

What the data suggests is happening here, based on this interaction between Attention and Connection, is that news consumers are forced to confront and challenge uncomfortable and biased realities through reflection on the printed words they see.

<p>He said.</p>	<p>He said. She said. He said. She said. He said. She said.</p>	<p><b>The truth will not be threatened.</b></p>
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Screenshots: The New York Times - The Truth Has a Voice

Unlike Tyler Hicks, the spot does not build to a big reveal, but rather uses the pacing to play at multiple levels in the mind of the news consumer: Cultural, Contextual and Product.

Moving from slow to fast, the pacing changes as the music kicks in, a sort of ‘audio cue awakening’ to the mounting pressure/expectation/evidence to address inequities in power that cut along gender lines.

The pacing accelerates as “She said” repeats and repeats, conveying both a cultural movement for change, the growing velocity of that change, and the weight of evidence brought against Harvey Weinstein in a *New York Times* investigation. The “He said. She said.” tired and corrosive cliché - and the patriarchal system it reflects - overwhelmed by the marquee investigative journalism from *The New York Times*, connects the product with the context and broader cultural conversation. The result is a simple, yet powerful 30s spot that further builds *The Times*’ cultural salience.

# The Truth is Worth It

2019 saw a further evolution of the Truth campaign, and combined the unique angles of the 2017 and 2018 editions. The ads showcased the efforts by *Times* reporters in tracking down the truth both in the US and abroad, and challenging power holders and their versions of the facts.

The style of the ads returned to 2017's on-the-ground experience of Denton and Hicks, but instead of photos of the experience, it was a visual journey of investigative reporters collecting and documenting facts and stories, with text on screen conveying how the story would come together. It showcases the qualities required and present behind every headline.

Of the five ads created by Droga5 for the Truth campaign in 2019, Brainsights collected data from news consumers on three - *Resolve*, *Courage* (both 30s ads) and the extended two-minute version of *Perseverance*.

*Resolve* involved a *Times* investigation into the Myanmar government cover up of the return of Rohingya refugees.

*Courage* was an investigation about the Mexican government spying on journalists and their families. *Perseverance* was a story about hundreds of immigrant children being separated from their parents at the US border. Each ad elicited at least one high Connection moment.

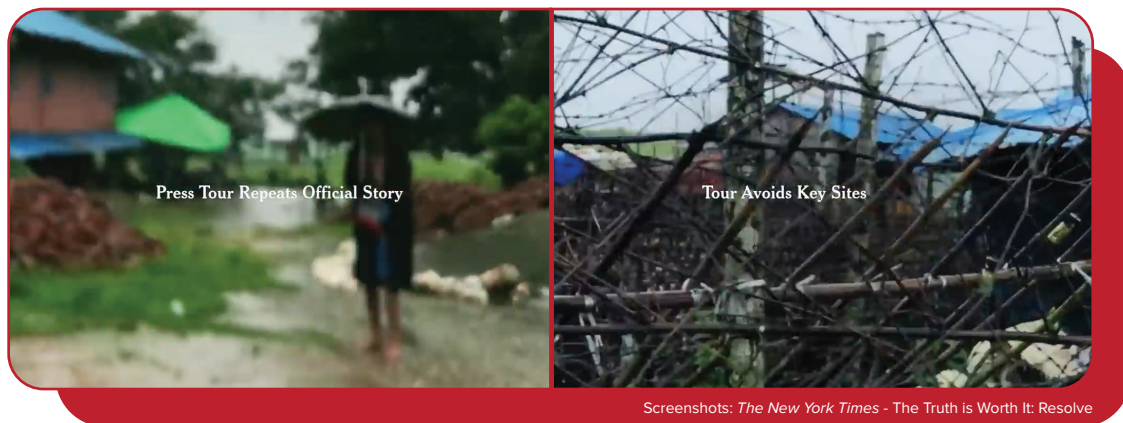
Investigating each of these High Connection moments, three key themes emerge:

- The relationship between governments and journalists
- The role of children
- The tenacity of journalists

In *Courage*, the two High Connection moments came when “Threat to Journalists” was on screen, and when the final story headline was revealed, announcing how the Mexican government was spying on journalists.



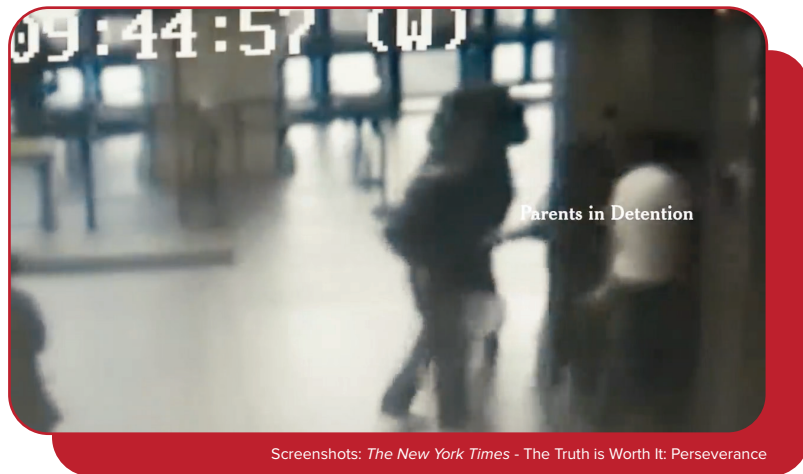
In *Resolve*, two High Connection moments come when a *New York Times* reporter dispatches her experience on an official press tour: “Press Tour Repeats Official Story” and “Tour Avoids Key Sites”, which suggest an official cover up.



In both instances, the news consumer resonates with a *Times* reporter coming face to face with the forces obstructing the pursuit of the truth.

Children play a unique role in two of the three ads from 2019.

In *Perseverance*, a grainy security camera image with “Parents in Detention” on screen follows a harrowing sequence where *Times* journalists are confirming with shelter operators the presence of traumatized children separated from their parents.



In *Resolve*, the *Times* reporter finds and interviews children, who were the only reliable source of truth when everyone else she spoke to was afraid to share.

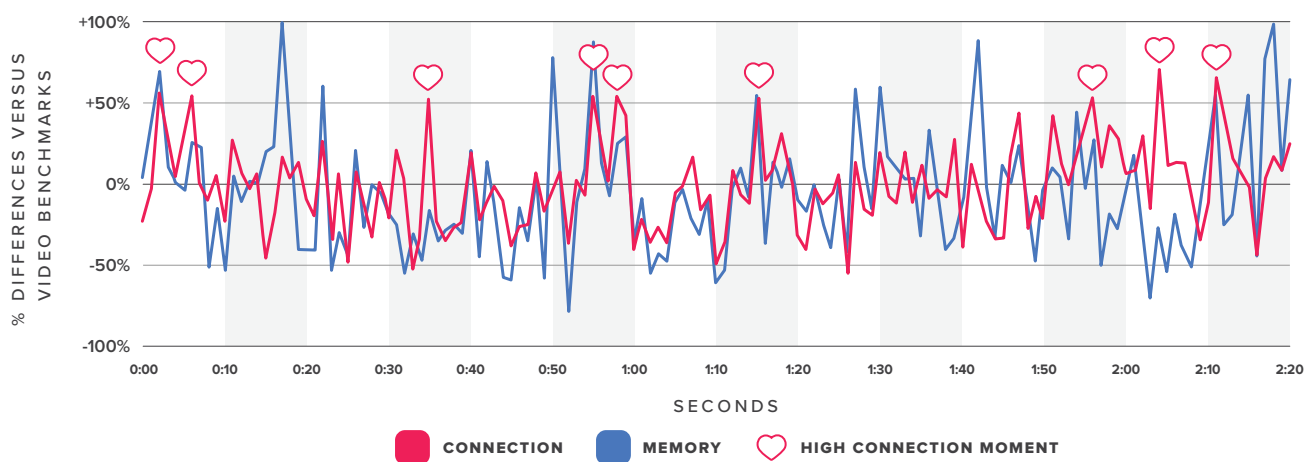


Each of these moments also underline the tenacity of *Times* journalists, which is further reinforced by a moment, in *Resolve*, of the investigative reporter faking illness to pursue the truth, which she found in her interview with the kids.

The focus of these Truth ads on the power of governments to distort and threaten the Truth - juxtaposed with the innocence and honesty of children - effectively positioned the *Times'* journalists as both Truth fighters and Truth protectors. In doing so, it also tapped into two deep values shared across cultures - the need to hold accountable those in power, and the need to protect those most vulnerable. In telling these stories, Droga5 at once reflects and further cements *The New York Times'* product (news) and its creators (journalists) with the Truth, connecting strongly with news consumers through shared cultural values.

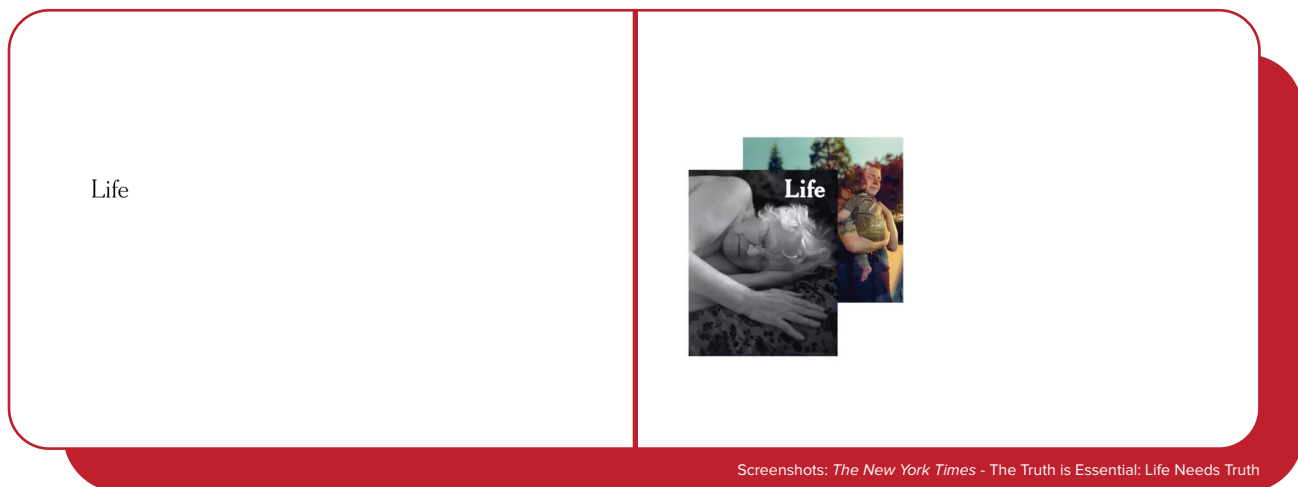
# The Truth is Essential: Life Needs Truth

*The Truth is Essential: Life Needs Truth* was released in August 2020, and evolved the Truth campaign once more. Shifting focus from single-themed stories to all the stories that comprise our lives, the 2:20 short film delivered nine moments of High Connection, a 50% increase versus 2019.



The piece builds on the style and content successes of previous years, with the choice of a unique jazz song aurally signalling the evolution - expansive, messy, dynamic, full.

The film begins with a simple, yet rich and complex word: Life. These opening moments, crafted in familiar black font on white screen, and then joined by a set of photographs blooming from the word, deliver two High Connection moments.

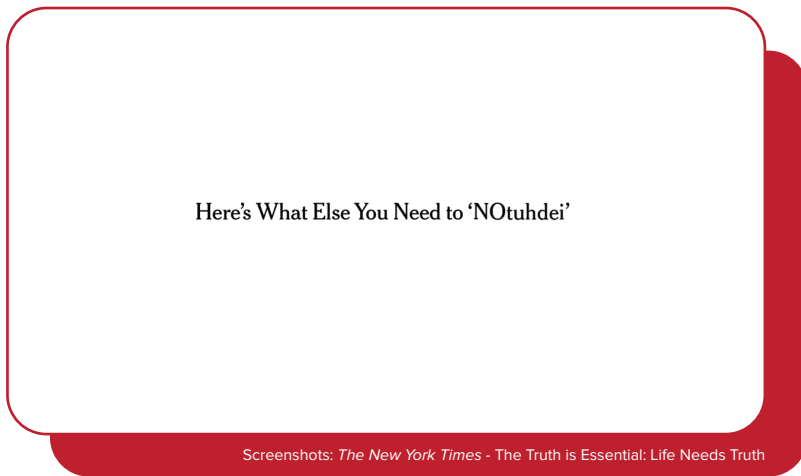


Screenshots: *The New York Times* - *The Truth is Essential: Life Needs Truth*

Set against the backdrop of global, social upheaval - from race relations to COVID-19, mental health to climate change - *Life Needs Truth* showcases the topics and issues that reflect our experience today - and *The Times* as the source for information and journalism on how best to manage it.

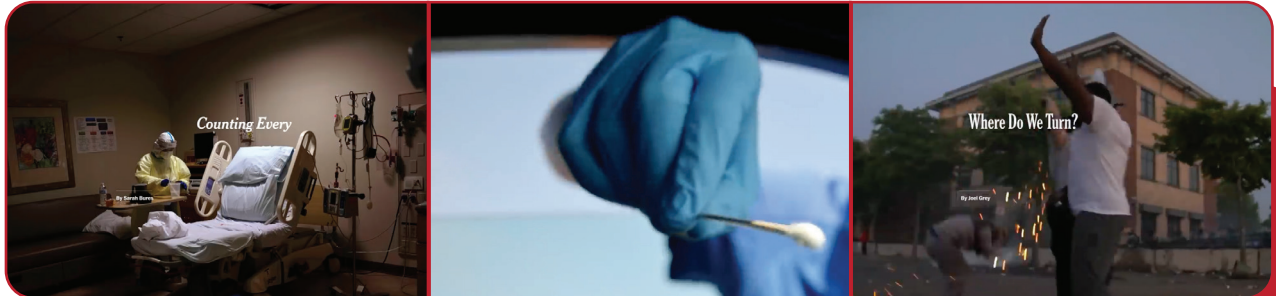
Leveraging a similar style to previous years of typing out copy and headlines, and moving through a curated, visual tapestry to bring those headlines to life, the film takes news consumers on a journey through the news and life stories that matter. In this way, the campaign showcases *The Times*' complete journalism product - not just its award-winning investigative journalism, but also food ("Late night pasta"), travel ("Take a virtual tour of Rome") and health ("How to get a better night's sleep") - into a source of truth on the human experience.

The ad integrates more than the written word and imagery of past ads, with a now-iconic phrase from *The New York Times* podcast host, Michael Barbaro, which delivers another High Connection moment.





*Life Needs Truth* reminds us of the issues where clear headed, comprehensive, fact-based and principled journalism are essential, like the global COVID-19 pandemic where misinformation has been rife, and race relations in America, where bias is so ingrained.

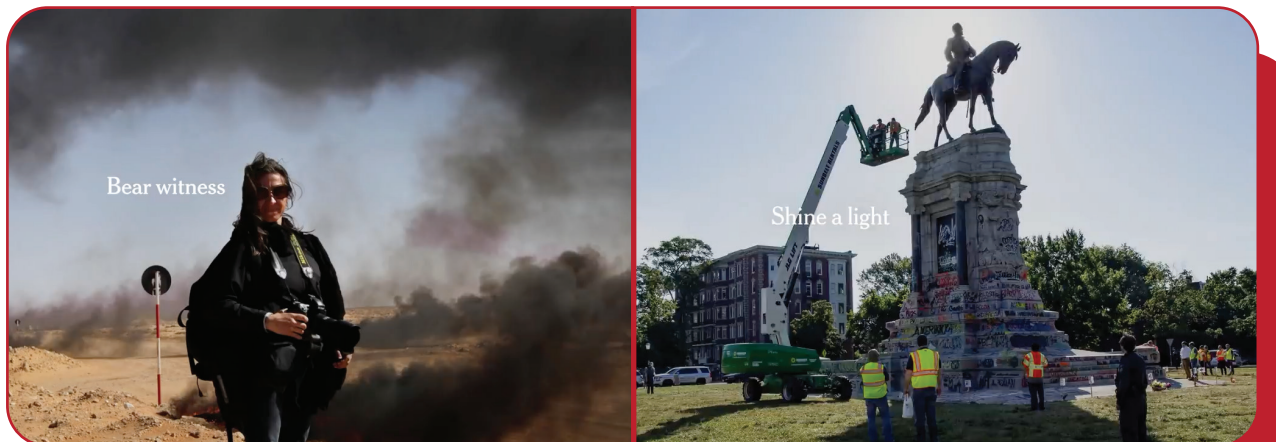


*Covid-19 and Race relations moments deliver High Connection moments in Life Needs Truth*

Screenshots: The New York Times - The Truth is Essential: Life Needs Truth

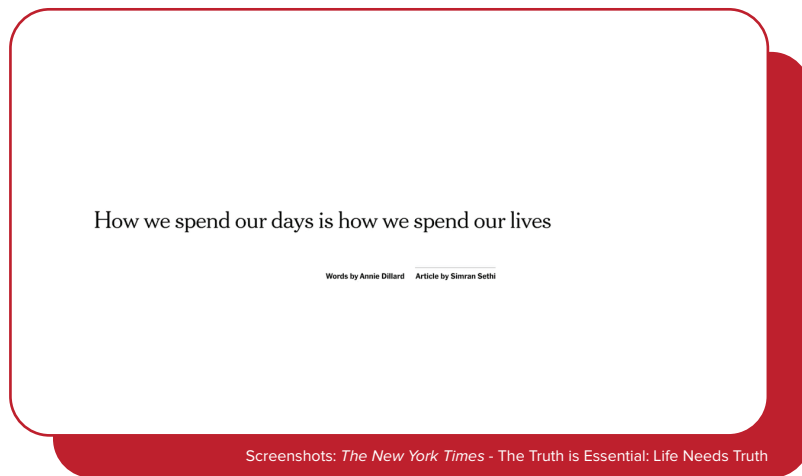
Issues aren't the only stimuli that connect deeply - **how** *The Times* brings this truth to news consumers do, too.

'Bear Witness', and 'Shine a Light', the latter against a backdrop of a Confederate monument, also elicited High Connection scores.



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In a final flourish, a blank white screen returns, and the words “How we spend our days is how we spend our lives” appears, alongside author details.



This final High Connection point has a catalyzing effect that carries over into the final tagline and brand plates, delivering strong average Connection (+14%) and Encoding (+29%) scores over the final ten seconds of the spot (versus respective benchmarks).

These strong Emotional Connection and Encoding scores are important for constructing memory structures in the minds of consumers, building the associations *The Times* desires between its product and the Truth, and reminding people that it isn't simply the powerful investigative journalism for which the truth is needed, it's also the full scope of human life.

# The Future of Truth

By combining stylistic ingenuity with powerful relevant content, Droga5 and *The New York Times* built a powerful brand platform. Underpinned by strong early performance of *The Truth is Hard* (2017), and *The Truth Has a Voice* (2018), the Truth campaign went from strength to strength, delivering more High Connection moments year over year.

Finding various angles to communicate the development and delivery of the truth resonated deeply with news consumers and built the necessary associations between the brand and its product. From images captured by photojournalists in far flung places, to stories of journalistic ingenuity in seeking out the story, to words on screen that convey the reporting process, the story of a movement, and the stories of our lives, the Truth campaign has helped to persuade millions of news consumers to pay for and support high quality journalism.

And the pursuit is not complete. Indeed, it is a constant endeavour.

Wherever life happens, we will need the truth; and wherever the truth is, *The Times* has promised to bring it to us.



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