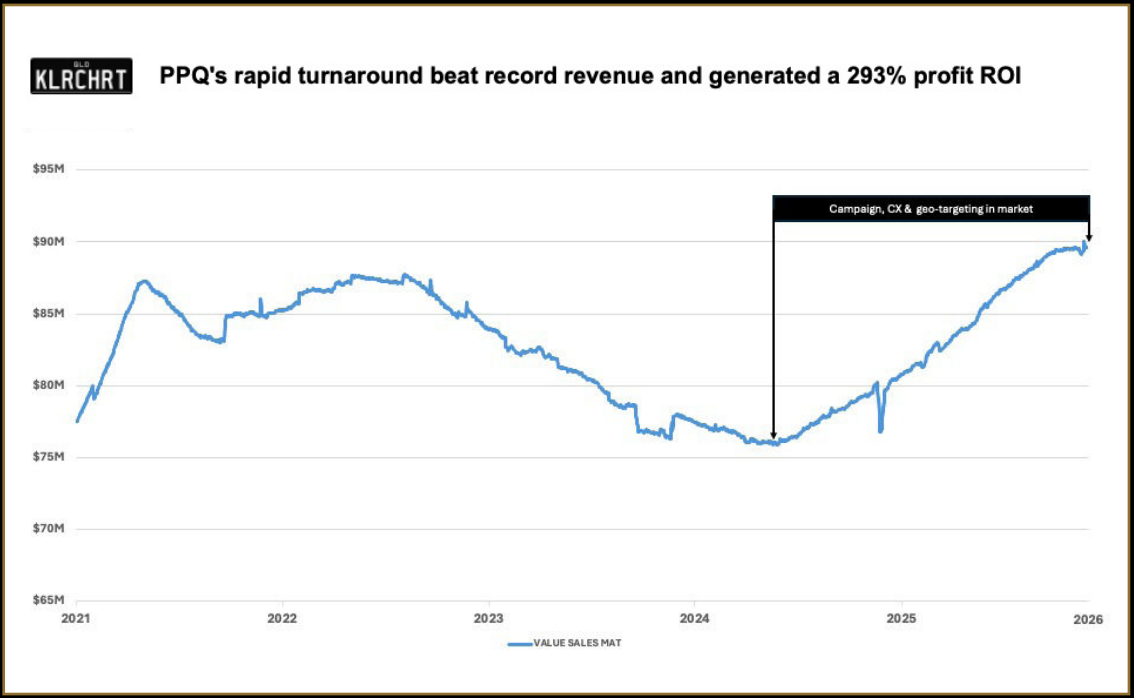
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2026
Case Study



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Agencies
Publicis Australia +
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Client
Personalised Plates Queensland

Title
Effectiveness on a Plate:
The Numbers behind Record
Number Plate Sales

Category
B16. Data-Driven

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Q1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & WHY DOES THIS CASE DESERVE AN AWARD?

Personalised plates are the ultimate discretionary purchase. The alternative is bundled into your rego and bolted onto your Ford/Ferrari.

So when the retail recession bit in 2023, PPQ's (Personalised Plates Queensland) sales withered with it.

Ten straight years of growth gave way to an 8.6% reverse in 2023, followed by another 4.6% by mid-2024. We couldn't spend or discount our way to growth.

So, in came a new mantra: 'to grow, you must know'.

We interrogated 800,000 transactions and the end-to-end customer journey whilst massively boosting consumer research.

For this category, we have a paper where every facet of our approach is data-driven; from consumer to geo-targeting to CX. In particular, our detailed data diagnosis revealed:

1. We were selling to middle-aged 'car guys' while younger demographics and women went ignored, despite having higher consideration levels.
2. Our built-from-scratch propensity model showed millions in latent demand sat untapped in key regional clusters with high propensity but low current volume.
3. Our CX was limiting spend, causing abandonment and forcing customers to our costly call centre.
4. Attitudes were highly polarised, but one thing united rejectors and considerers: 'a plate says a lot about your personality'. For good or ill, they're a powerful form of self-expression.

As a result our approach changed radically. We:

- Developed a vibrant, new platform for PPQ reframing plates as positive self-expression. An act of creativity, not vanity: PPQ is your license to create.
- Radically reoriented our targeting and our creative work towards growth audiences: females and younger.
- Upweighted investment in regions and postcodes that our propensity model identified as most fertile.
- Reworked CX to liberate creativity and reduce costly friction, via personalised recontact with prospective customers.

We're dripping in delicious data-driven results as well.

Highlights:

- A rapid return to growth (+18.4% over 18 months), coinciding exactly with our activity.
- Upweighted areas growing by 29%.
- A 20% increase in online conversion
- A sea-change in attitudes to plates: consideration up 38%, rejection down 18%.
- Younger and female demographics driving growth in sales and perception changes.
- Plate values (not just volumes) surging: up 12%.
- An incremental Return on Investment of 293% ROI provided for road safety initiatives

Behold the KLRCHRT

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Q2. WHAT WAS THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGE?

PPQ FAQ

Personalised Plates Queensland (PPQ) is the sole retailer of personalised license plates in Queensland.

Personalised Plates is part of the Queensland Government's Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR). It stipulates that:

1. Plates are sold to consumers for a one-time fixed fee. Unlike some other states, if you buy a plate in Queensland, you own it for life rather than renting it.
2. Profits are returned to the Queensland government for road safety promotion.
3. Impact and efficiency is key – Our strategy was to not spend our way to growth but to be more impactful and efficient

Fun facts:

92.3% of customers are 'one and done', holding onto their precious plate across multiple vehicles. [1]

Most Plates are sold online - our most profitable channel. The rest, via our call centre and dealers. [2]

The ultimate discretionary purchase

Sadly, no-one needs a personalised number plate. Worse, the default is provided for you and perceptually free.

The nominal cost's ($35) bundled into rego and the plate comes bolted onto your Mini/Maserati.

As shown by Covid bonanza.....

For ten years prior to Covid, PPQ had grown consistently

Then Covid hit. A societal catastrophe, but a massive fillip for plates. Fuelled by government subsidies and increased cocooning, sales went stratospheric: +15% over four months. [3]

....then retail recession reversal

However, in 2023, Queensland retail volumes collapsed by -3.1%, the worst of any state in Australia, as CPI soared. [4]

Indeed, per capita 'real' retail spend went negative for 10 consecutive quarters from late '22. [5]

Plate sales tanked -8.6% in 2023 and another -4.6% in Jan-Jun 2024. That's a 13.2% decline in 18 months. **(CH4RT1)**

Macro-economic malaise and plate perils are closely correlated. The r-squared sits at 76% since 2015 - meaning economic trends explain 76% of the variance. **(CH4RT2)**

Breaking free from the economic undertow was essential.

Business expectations had increased, but growth would be hard to come by.

Covid had set new expectations with a growth ambition to restore to Covid-levels.

However, growth would be hard to come by.

The economic environment was bitter. Meanwhile, the lowest hanging fruit had already been picked.

Many plate customers had purchased recently during the Covid boom.

As 92.3% [6] of customers own just one plate in their lifetime, we'd need to convert a more distant, resistant group.

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The category's widely recognised (96% awareness) but deeply polarising. Consideration sat at 21% pre-campaign, while 44% were active rejectors. [7]

'Pretentious, egocentric pricks', 'Only for wankers' are some of the politer terms bandied around. [8]

Crucially, these rejector perceptions don't sit in isolation. They dampen considerer demand by placing a social penalty on purchase.

Reducing rejector rancour whilst also fuelling considerer flames would be crucial.

Reversing the decline couldn't come from pumping up marketing spend or slashing price

PPQ works within the guideline that we won't increase the marketing budget above CPI. [9]

We also operated under the strategy that discounting was not sustainable for the business.

The Challenge in a Nutshell

Turbo-charge demand for the ultimate discretionary purchase in an adverse economic environment amongst harder-to-persuade audiences, without blowing out the marketing budget or cutting price to the bone.

Footnote Sources-

[1] PPQ Data, # of CRN's with multiple Personalised Plates, 2025.

[2] PPQ Data, Sales split by Channel, 2025.

[3] PPQ sales data

[4] ABS Media release Sep '23

[5] ABS Media release Jan '24

[6] PPQ Data, # of CRN's with multiple Personalised Plates, 2025.

[7] Imagine Panel Sep23

[8] Open TOM Verbatim Associations - Sep23

[9] TMR/PPQ contract

Q3. WHAT WERE YOUR OBJECTIVES? State specific goals.

Our core, initial objectives for our June '24 launch were:

Business

1. Revenue/growth: A staged return to growth

Rationale: After 18 months of decline, we plotted a staged return.

Target - **Stabilise sales 2nd half (H2) '24:** from -4.6% in 1st half to 0% growth in 2nd half

Target - **Gear for growth by end 2025:** +2.5% growth vs 2024.

Marketing

1. Increase website visits

Rationale: Increase demand
Target: 10% increase in visits by end 2025

2. CX: Increase online conversions AND reduce call centre volumes

Rationale: Demonstrate customer journey improvements by end 2025

Target: Increase online conversions from (pre-campaign baseline)

Target: Significant reduction in call centre volumes (pre-campaign baseline)

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Brand

Reduce rejection AND increase consideration for plates

Rationale: Increase social credibility while eroding social penalty by end 2025

Target

- Increase consideration from 21%
- Reduce rejection from 44%
- Increase positive AND reduce negative perceptions

Communications

Create a campaign that generated fame for PPQ

Rationale: Make us front-of-mind consistently

Target - Increase spontaneous campaign awareness from 13% (pre-campaign) and sustain [10]

Footnote Sources-

[10] PPQ brand tracker, March '24

Q4. WHAT WAS YOUR STRATEGY AND HOW DID YOU GET THERE?

PPQ's pre-2024 playbook: Car guy-focused. Product-led. In-market audience. Digital focus. Regular discounts.

Prior to 2024, PPQ had a rinse-and-repeat approach to marketing which had delivered growth in easier times.

- 'Car guy' focused
- Heavily product or event-led (think NRL/Father's day)
- Digital-dominated (66% spend) [11]
- Regular discounting to deliver short-term spikes

(CH4RT3)

2024's radical change: from 'rinse and repeat' to 'to grow, you must know'.

The 2023 trough led us to interrogate everything.

Fuelled by a new mantra, 'to grow, you must know', we doubled down on customer insights.

We sweated existing data and quadrupled survey volumes.

We formed a Digital Experience team to analyse and connect our 800,000 customer transactions.

We interrogated product holding across demographics and locations.

We looked closely at friction points in the customer journey.

This gave us unparalleled, end-to-end visibility of issues and opportunities.

The insights transformed everything we did: from growth audience identification to regional prioritisation to radical new brand platform to overhauled CX.

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Insight 1. Buyer base massively skewed to 'middle-aged car guy'. Yet huge potential with women and young.

The data analysis laid bare what the old strategy had set in motion: a massive skew to 'middle-aged car guy'.

35-44 year old men over-indexed significantly (200). And made up 60% of the ownership base. So far, so obvious. [12]

Meanwhile, women and younger audiences (Gen Z & Y) were under-represented: index 86 and 84, respectively. [13]

Crucially, when we looked at the attitudinal data, we could see that there was huge potential upside here.

Indeed, consideration levels amongst younger cohorts (29% Gen Z, 23% Gen Y) were significantly HIGHER than older ones (19% Gen X,13% Boomers). As were women (22%) vs men (19%). [14] **(CH4RT4)**

We'd neglected them, rather than them neglecting us!

Implication: Transformed target audience. Expand beyond core 'car guy' to key growth audiences: younger demographics with a female skew.

Insight 2. Uneven distribution of plate ownership with clusters of unrealised potential.

The data revealed two insights that revamped our approach:

1. Plate-holding was unevenly distributed

2. It was 'clustered' in communities. People don't just buy as individuals, they buy in packs.

This led us to build a community-level propensity model.

Combining internal transactional and behavioural data with ABS census statistics, we inputted 200 different variables and reduced these down to the 20 most predictive.

This allowed us to measure 'Current vs. Predicted' demand by postcode and region and prioritise accordingly. **(CH4RT5)**

In particular, we were able to identify areas where current demand fell well shy of the predictive model: Logan-Beaudesert, for example.

These high propensity, low performance areas represented latent growth opportunity.

Implication: Geo-located targeting that upweighted hotspot areas.

Insight 3. CX friction was costing us customers AND increasing cost-to-serve

We analysed 21 elements of the customer journey: it was eye-opening.

One particular friction point cost us dearly. Either losing customers entirely or increasing cost-to-serve by shifting demand to the call centre.

26% of calls to our call centre were the result of the 7-day 'product hold' feature. [15]

This kicked into gear after you'd created a plate to ensure no registration could be sold twice.

For customers who didn't buy on the spot, they'd find their combo 'taken' when they returned to the site (ironically, by themselves!).

Implication: Find a workaround that reduced abandonment AND call centre cost-to-serve.

Insight 4. Plate rejectors and considerers were poles apart - except on one point.

The data demonstrated that rejectors had wildly different perceptions to considerers and owners. [16]

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Across all diagnostics from 'Personalised Plates are for everyday people' to 'Personalised plates are generally for show offs', the data revealed that rejectors are from Mars, considerers from Venus.

Except for ***one fundamental point.***

Both rejectors (53%) and considerers (59%) agreed that they said 'a lot about someone's personality.' [17] **(CH4RT6)**

For good or ill, they were a potent form of self-expression.

Our task was immediately clear: we needed to show that this self-expression was unequivocally positive, not negative.

To reinforce considerer conviction and defuse rejector damnation.

Implication: Reframe personalised plates from negative to positive self-expression.

This unlocked a new strategic platform for plates.

Pre-mid '24, we'd been very product-led, leaving customers to infer meaning from plates.

PPQ needed to step into this void and land a compelling point of view.

There are many forms of self-expression from sharing opinions to making a fashion statement.

Most are inherently divisive or tribal.

However, one is universal AND unifying: creativity.

It's not only rewarding for the creator, it's also appreciated by the audience; an admirable trait AND an enjoyable activity.

It resonates in Queensland: 98% of Queenslanders actively participate in creative acts and want to do more. [18]

It resonates strongly with our core target audience who identify as creative like no-one else. Nearly 2 in 3 (64%) Gen Z Australians describe themselves as 'creative people', compared to only 48% of Australians overall. [19]

Our new strategic platform emerged directly from these insights: **PPQ is your license to create.**

This reframed the brand from act of vanity to act of creativity.

Defusing rejection AND fuelling consideration.

Footnote Sources-

[11] 2020-3 Zenith Media Spend Splits

[12] Publics Edge, Database Profile Analysis. Index vs ABS Population Split (Driving Age)

[13] Database Profile Analysis. Index vs ABS Population Split (Driving Age)

[14] Publicis Imagine Panel Research 'Nov 23

[15] PPQ Internal Call Centre Data 2022-3

[16] Publicis Imagine Panel Research Nov 2023

[17] Publicis Imagine Panel Data, Nov '23

[18] National Arts Participation Survey 2019

[19] McCrindle, "Australia's Gen Z: Creative Identity", Special Report for National Youth Week, 2021

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Q5. HOW WAS YOUR STRATEGY BROUGHT TO LIFE?

1. A new, long idea: 'Create'. Not just a new creative platform but a new mode of behaviour

Our work stemmed simply and directly from the strategic platform.

The 'Create' campaign came to life everywhere: from messaging to media behaviour to CX.

1. ***We celebrated creativity in broadcast media and sponsorship.***

   Spearheaded by our Roller Girl TVC, we rolled out new semiotics and messaging for the brand.

   Out went male-focused, product-led communications housed mainly in digital.

   In came, bright, youthful creative vigour with a female slant, broadcast to the entire Queensland community.

   Spend shifted radically. Where digital had dominated, broadcast was redefined to make impact 20

   We showcased and encouraged creativity in our sponsorships (Supercars and NRL).

   For example, the public were invited to create relevant plates for Supercar driver, Brodie Kostecki, which were rotated onto his car. CH4MP when he won, HOTWATR when disqualified.

2. ***We tailored creativity to particular locations and demographics.***

   Encouraging Fortitude Valley residents to showcase their incredible kebabs (KEB4B5), for example.

3. ***We showcased creativity from consumers in digital and OOH.***

   We featured user-generated 'PL8 statements' and featured them in digital and OOH.

   For example, Jim, in Marburg, posed the R1ZZ or C4RI5MA? Dilemma. (CRE8IVREEL)

4. ***We unlocked creativity in our user flow.***

   We overhauled our CX to be simpler and hero our CREATE-A-PLATE tool rather than leaning into price and showcasing a bewildering array of options. (CH4RT7)

2. Prioritised investment via our propensity model.

We upweighted OOH, digital and contextual placements in the regions identified as having the greatest incremental upside:

1. ***'Invest': high propensity, low performance e.g Townsville 4810 and Logan 4114.***

2. ***'Protect': high propensity, high performance e.g Gold Coast 4217.***

3. ***Reworked CX, starring The 'Payment Phantom': a CX workaround that increased conversion and reduced call centre seepage.***

We overhauled end-to-end CX including rebuilding the checkout, automating the layby payments and spotlighting our Create-A-Plate tool.

However, one big issue remained: the 'product hold' feature which kept barring returning purchasers from getting their own plate!

This was reducing conversion and increasing call centre usage.

So we found a data-driven workaround using Tealium to power a 'Payment Phantom' program to re-engage and convert online.

When a user abandoned the journey, their exact plate combination was captured and linked to a persistent identity across devices and sessions.

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We then served up tailored comms via email, SMS and paid media that referenced the specific plate created and gave a personalised return link to the website. **(CH4RT8)**

On return, users were seamlessly reconnected with their creation through on-site personalisation. This allowed them to continue where they left off, overcoming the product hold issue and radically reducing the need for an irate call and/or abandonment.

Footnote Sources-

[20] Zenith Media Spend data 2022-5

Q6. HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOUR CAMPAIGN WAS SUCCESSFUL?

We blew the doors off every target with turbo-charged growth and record revenue.

We even outstripped the Covid highs, despite the chill winds of retail recession. Freeing ourselves from the miserable macro-economic undertow.

The recovery coincides exactly with the CX and campaign launching and bedding in. [21] **(CH4RT9)**

The campaign worked in precisely the way we'd intended with greater perceptual and purchase uplifts from growth demographics and regions.

Meanwhile, the CX changes increased the value of plates purchased and improved online revenue/conversion, while also reducing call centre usage.

Business

1. ***Revenue/Growth:***

   Target: H2 ' 24: Stabilise sales 0% growth

   Result: H2 '24: SURGING sales +9% growth over 6 months

   Target: 2025: Gear for growth +2.5%

   Result 2025: Beyond target growth: +12.8%

   In all, **18.4% growth** over the pre-campaign baseline.

   Amazingly, we out-performed Covid highs: **more than our Covid peak**

   Added bonuses:

   Value of plates sold increased, not just volume

   'Create' - and particularly the Create-A-Plate tool - encouraged people to express themselves and invent higher value plates. This increased average revenue per user by **12% over 18 months. (CH4RT10)**

   Prioritised regions delivered as predicted - delivering 29% growth (vs 18.4% overall) (CH4RT11)

   Hotspot 'defend' and 'invest' regions delivered the latent demand that was predicted, drastically out-performing 'control' regions.

   Growth demographics delivered disproportionately

   Gen Y (+16%) and Gen Z (+21%) led the growth surge outpacing Gen X (+12%), Boomers (+6%).

   Meanwhile female purchasers grew 50% faster than men (+18% vs +12%). 22 (CH4RT12)

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Marketing

1. ***Increase website visits***

   Website visits surged

   Target: 10% increase by end 2025

   Result: 21% increase by end 2025

   Added bonus: Search also surged

   Search also surged by 68% reinforcing rising plate interest. [23] (CH4RT13)

2. ***CX: Increase online conversions AND reduce call centre volumes***

   The 'Payment Phantom' haunted abandoning customers to excellent effect!

   Target: Reduction in call centre volumes from *pre-campaign* baseline

   Result: Call centre volumes reduced -23.4% in 2025

   Target: Increase in online conversions from *pre-campaign* baseline

   Result: Conversion rate increased +20%) in 2025 CHART14

Brand

Reduce rejection AND increase consideration

Social penalty plummeted; social positivity, supercharged.

Target: Increase consideration from 21% by end '25

Result: Consideration increased to 28%

Target: Reduce rejection from 44% by 'end 25

Result: Rejection reduced to 36% by 'end 25 (CH4RT15)

Target: Increase positive AND reduce negative perceptions

Result: 'Creative' perceptions boosted by 110% (8-19%), negative perceptions down by average of 38%. [24] **(CH4RT16)**

Added bonus: Biggest perception changes amongst key audiences

Women and younger demographics' attitudes showed the highest levels of transformation across the board. **(CH4RT17)**

Communications

Target: Increase spontaneous campaign awareness from 13%

Result: Spontaneous Awareness jumped to 21% by Dec24 and has stayed at that level since.

Added bonus: Driven by younger demos and women

GenZ (13% to 27%), Gen Y (14% to 27%) and women (10% to 21%) fuelled this surge. **(CH4RT18)**

Footnote Sources-

[21] PPQ Internal Sales data: 2022-5

[22] PPQ Internal Sales data 2023 vs 2024/5

[23] Google Trends Analysis and PPQ internal sales data

[24] PPQ Brand Tracker, Sept '23 vs Nov '25

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Q7. WAS THE CAMPAIGN A GOOD INVESTMENT?

1. An incremental 293% return on investment ROI road safety

We've been meticulous to invest wisely, efficiently and with impact.

We've:

1. Used only incremental sales generated over the pre-campaign baseline
2. Assumed a 'do nothing' scenario of sales remaining flat when they'd likely have continued to fall.
3. Factored in external CX/data build costs

2. Profitability boosted by reducing cost-to-serve

Many campaigns increase profitability by generating demand.

We added another dimension: reduced cost-to-serve.

We shaved off call volumes with staff redeployed to other areas of the business (notably CX).

3. Brand investment and CX overhaul funded from existing budget

Brand and CX investment were fully funded by reallocating, not radically increasing, funds.

We pulled out of discounting and reinvested it to increase media spend in 2025 (and fund the CX improvements). Self-liquidating splendidness.[25] **(CH4RT19)**

Not only did it allow us to be thrifty, it also generated transformative returns. Winning.

4. Definitively decoupled from economic undertow

PPQ's sales were closely correlated with the macro-economic environment.

This campaign has definitively decoupled us from that relationship.

Retail turnover has flatlined (+0.3%) after the cratering of 23/4. But we have soared. (+18%).

The interim r-squared (too few data points) sits at 15%.

This should give the C-suite confidence we've recovered despite economic headwinds.[26] **(CH4RT20)**

5. Even our previously sceptical CFO's convinced!

Pre-campaign, our own finance director was in favour of discounting: "Stopping discount-led sales felt risky, and I opposed the change. This campaign proved me wrong, as there's no question it worked."

Freda Dixon, PPQ Finance Director

6. Finally, foundations laid for years to come

Our investments in data richness and diagnosis, propensity models, CX improvements and a rich, long idea will yield dividends for years to come. Indeed, they're driving growth as we speak.

Footer Sources-

[25] PPQ/Zenith Marketing/Media Mix analysis

[26] ABS Per capital retail turnover data 2022-5, PPQ Internal Sales data

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Q8. DEMONSTRATE THAT THE RESULT WAS NOT DUE TO OTHER FACTORS

The end of the retail recession? No. The retail recession's barreled onwards. Crucially, we've decoupled results from economic environment via this campaign.

Price promotion? No. We reduced our sales promotions and invested in CX and communications.

Car sales surging? No. Car sales in '24 and '25 were down on '23 numbers. [27]

Product innovation? No. We reduced product innovation during this period. Our comms platform invited people to do the innovation for us. Much cheaper!

Increased media spend or sponsorships? Yes, but by redeploying discounting budget, not conjuring it out of thin air.

Positive sentiment? No. Media sentiment did not change. Our campaign has driven the change in sentiment.

Increased search? No. Investment in digital has been reduced by 30% since pre-campaign.

Legal changes? Nope.

THX4REDIN

Footer Sources-

[27] VFACTS December '25

Q9. GIVE CONTEXT TO BUDGET IN COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS.

Not Applicable

Q10. GIVE CONTEXT TO THE BRAND'S OVERALL BUDGET.

Brand budget is about the same

Q11. MEDIA BUDGET ELABORATION

To elaborate on the media spend across the 18 month period from June 2024 - December 2025.

The media spend's only 9% higher than the prior 18 months as the marketing spend is strategically not increased above CPI.

Paid

We increased the TV, BVOD and Out of Home spend to drive a perception change with relevance to our growth audiences of females and GenZPaid Digital, Social, Search = 30% - This was down weighted but more targeted to the regions we identified for growth right down to postcode level.

Owned

Website/CX Improvements = 10%. This was a one-off cost that we invested into the PPQ website to improve the experience and reduce the friction to increase conversion

Shared

Sponsorships and Activation = 10% - We diverted minimal additional investment in sponsorships in 2024/25 to activate the two key sponsorships of NRL and Supercars with more meaning to embed the brand in culture with our audiences.

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Q12. DESCRIBE OWNED MEDIA ACTIVITY

The website is www.ppq.com.au which is an e-commerce site now operating in the Top 100 of Websites in Australia for transactions. This is the channel we have invested in analysing the data and making improvements to the CX.

PPQ also run a Call Centre that is a key customer touchpoint.

Owned Social Channels activated include Facebook and Instagram.

Q13. OUTLINE ANY SPONSORSHIPS

SuperCars/Dick Johnson Racing (DJR): PPQ's motorsport partnership journey began with a small sponsorship of a Bathurst 1000, wildcard entry that featured a pairing of the youngest driver in the field alongside the only female driver competing in the event - directly aligning with our strategy. Building on the success of this initiative, PPQ expanded its involvement in 2025 by becoming a major partner of Dick Johnson Racing and transforming the sponsorship into a powerful demonstration of its "Licence to Create" platform. Rather than relying on traditional branding alone, PPQ placed Personalised Plates at the centre of the racing experience, featuring them on race cars and inviting fans to CREATE plates that could appear on track. The initiative continued throughout the season, using personalised plates to celebrate significant moments and bring fan-submitted ideas to life, including the tribute plate "THX WIL" for Will Davison's final race with the team. By turning spectators into participants, the partnership showcased the creativity, personalisation and emotional connection that make Personalised Plates unique

Rugby League/Queensland Maroons: A smaller sponsorship for the 8-week State Of Origin series that involves players' names being replaced with Personalised Plates on the back of their training gurneys - for example, Pat Carrigen has “P4T7Y” on his back, while Val Homes has "V4L". It is helping to embed PPQ in Queensland culture to normalise and popularise personalised plates in new audiences; creating interest with people asking what they would have on their plate/training shirt. The sponsorship is activated via game-day activations, OOH and social channels.

Q14. OUTLINE COMMUNICATION TOUCHPOINTS

TV

BVOD

Out of Home

Radio

Digital

Social

Sponsorship Activations

Website

Call Centre

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