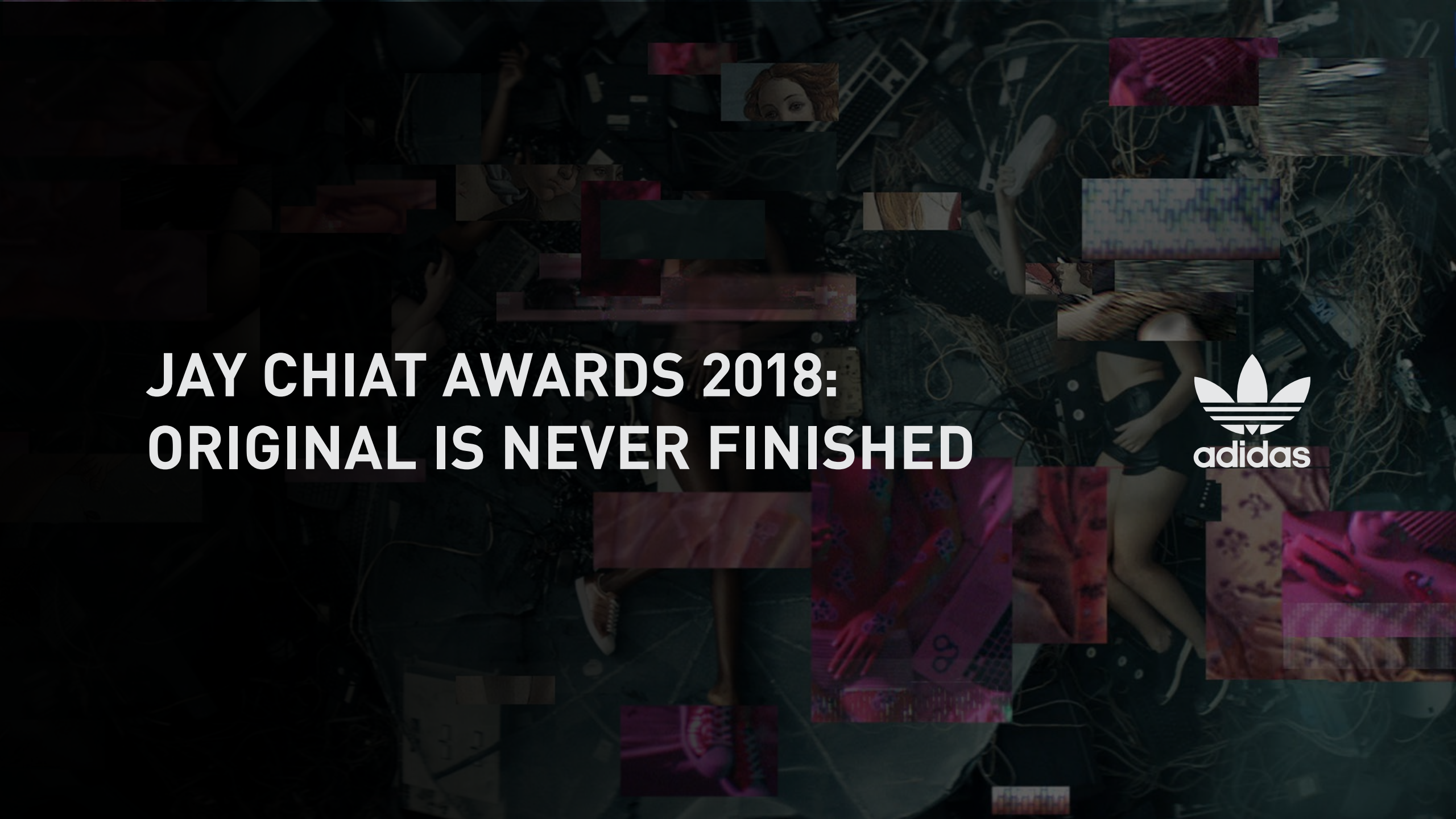

JAY CHIAT AWARDS 2018:
ORIGINAL IS NEVER FINISHED
adidas

SUMMARY

adidas Originals was founded on the principle of taking classic sneakers from the adidas vault, and reimagining them for the modern world.

Addressing the world of street culture is a tough challenge for big, global brands. Many get it wrong by trying to mirror it. The only way to get it right is by contributing to it. The success of Originals would depend on our ability to add value to the creativity that fuels street culture.

With the word 'Original' in its name, the brand had to explore what originality meant for today's creators. Our insight: while mainstream thinking defined originality by who's done it first, true creators define it not by where you take it from, but where you take it to.

As the brand whose products borrow influences from the past, we felt we had license to do what no other brand could: prove that "original" doesn't come from a vacuum, but a collection of influences. To do this, we created a wholly original campaign - that didn't try to be original.

It served as a powerful demonstration of reinvention that unified key markets, took over the conversation in streetwear, and sold more shoes than any in the history of Originals.

SITUATION

adidas Originals, a sub-brand devoted to streetwear, was founded in 2002 on the principle of taking classics from the adidas vault, and reimagining them for today.

In 2016, the brand was on top of the world. The 47 year-old Superstar shoe was the best-selling sneaker globally, and the brand released its first truly new design – the NMD – to lead it into the future.

SITUATION

At the start of 2017, when our campaign launched, it was getting harder to continue this momentum in the face of a changing environment:

1. Saturation of the Superstar sneaker - the lynchpin for the brand's success in previous years.

2. Brand perception rooted in "retro": After years of reissuing classics, Originals was known mainly for this look despite new designs.

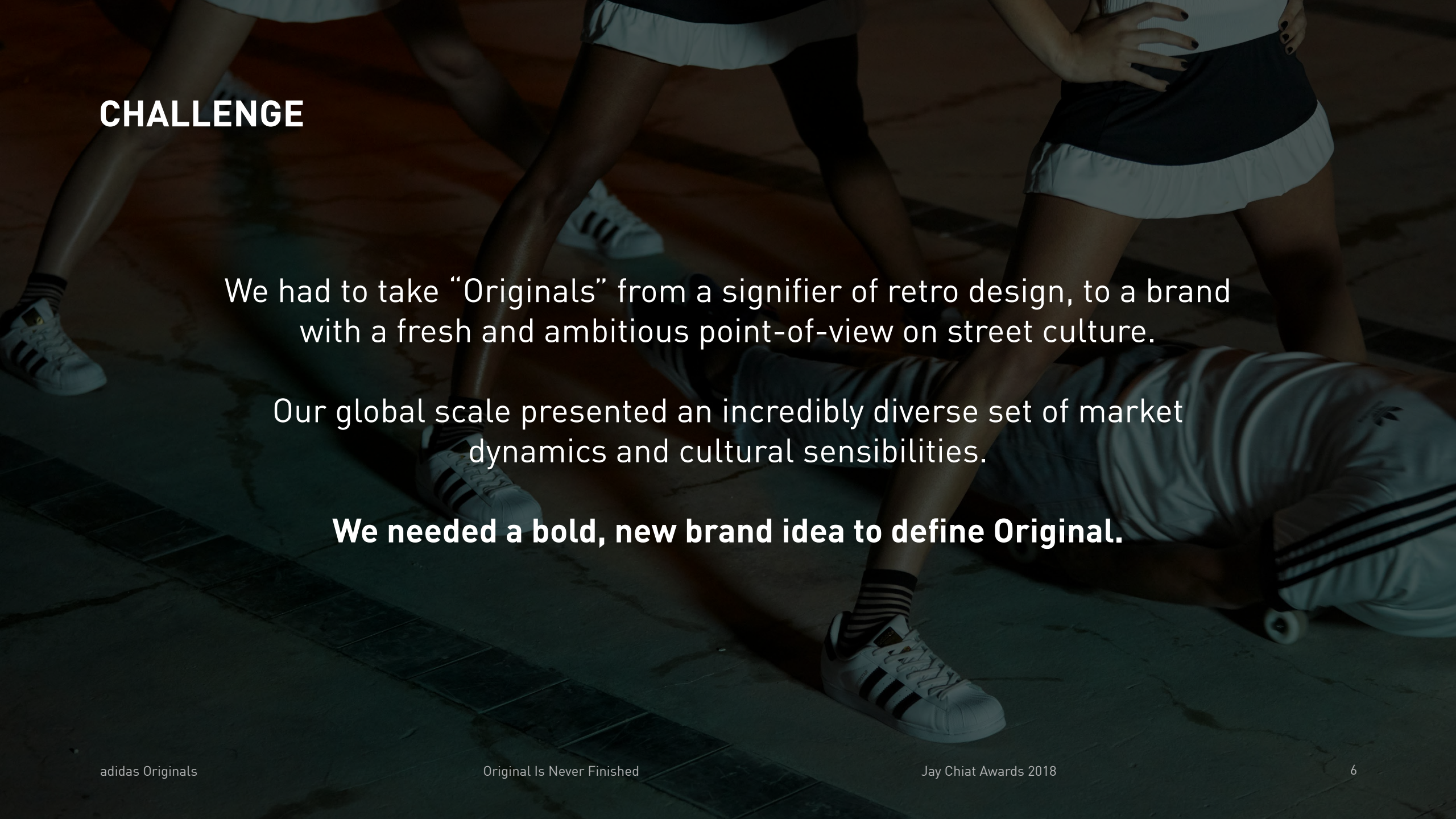
3. A complex portfolio of different shoes appealing to different audiences: Mainsteam retro classics were now mixed with cutting-edge new designs, making the Originals portfolio a dynamic, but complicated one.

4. The brand's most important markets (US, UK, China, Germany) were all different in terms of market share, perception, brand equity and product priorities.

CHALLENGE

Our two-fold challenge:

1. Shift the focus from reliance on individual products and markets to the big, unifying story of Originals.
2. Reclaim our thought-leadership of the streetwear category to elevate the Originals brand.



CHALLENGE

We had to take “Originals” from a signifier of retro design, to a brand with a fresh and ambitious point-of-view on street culture.

Our global scale presented an incredibly diverse set of market dynamics and cultural sensibilities.

We needed a bold, new brand idea to define Original.

SOLUTION

Our solution would come from the universality in global street culture:

Perhaps more than any other category, streetwear is not simply global in scale, but is actually shaped by global influences. The best American denim is made in Tokyo, and the best New York house music comes from Berlin. We could unite our markets based on the underlying, global driver of street culture: the free exchange of influence and creative expression.

TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, WE HAD TO CONTRIBUTE:

Segmentation research showed that the brand's key market opportunity was with an **emerging cohort of youth** who are driving street culture. They have wide influence on the fashion choices of their social circles, and use social media to reach an even wider audience. This is a diverse audience aged 16-26, who actively pursue their own creative projects. Using the digital tools at their disposal, they look to express themselves in new ways, especially when it comes to their own style.

Addressing street culture is one of the toughest challenges for big global brands. Many get it wrong by trying to mirror it. The only way to get it right is by contributing to it.

The future success of Originals would depend on our ability to add value and vision to street culture. Therefore, we needed to work in service of our target's creativity.

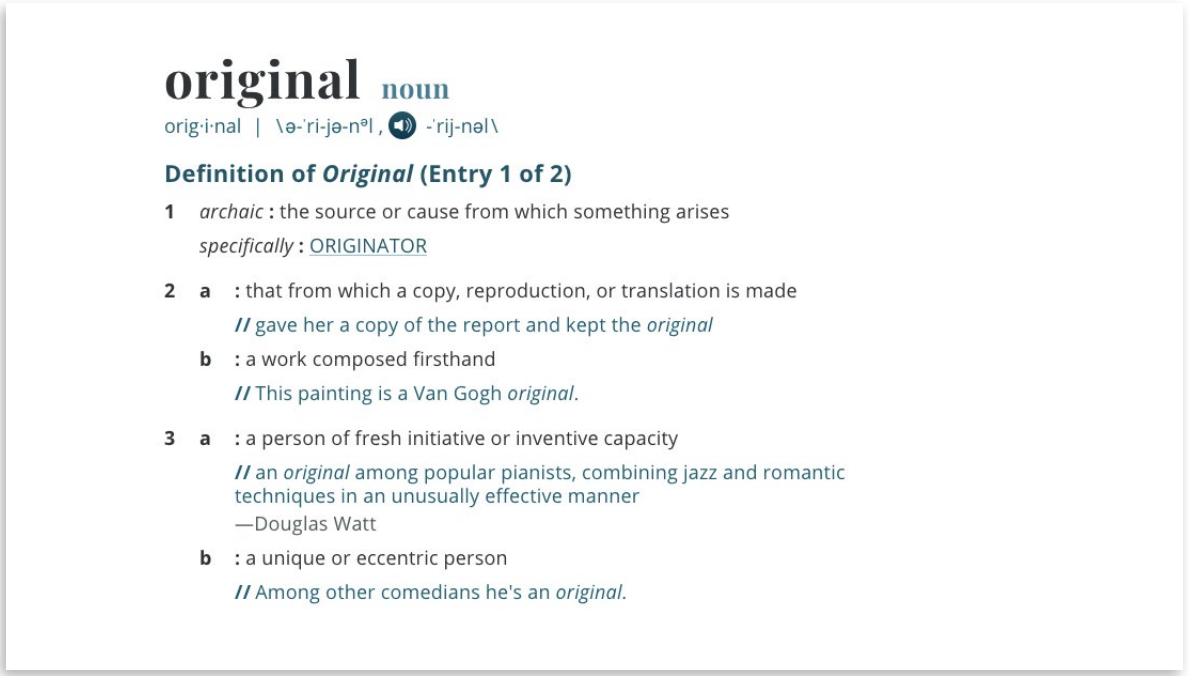
Our campaign would first inspire this core segment, and then radiate towards a wider audience.

INSIGHT

Contributing to street culture meant finding a way to encourage these creators. So we spoke with them to understand their barriers to, and drivers of creativity.

We chose a naturally ownable theme as a lens for this conversation: The meaning of the brand's very name - 'Originals' - in the minds and eyes of this generation of creators.

The mainstream definition of originality is all about the source. Who made it first or where something was born. While the desire to create something conventionally "original" is the ultimate goal of any creator, we were surprised to find that it's also a major barrier.



original noun

orig·i·nal | \ə-ˈri-jə-nᵊl , -ˈrij-nəl\

Definition of *Original* (Entry 1 of 2)

1 *archaic* : the source or cause from which something arises
specifically : ORIGINATOR

2 **a** : that from which a copy, reproduction, or translation is made
// gave her a copy of the report and kept the *original*
b : a work composed firsthand
// This painting is a Van Gogh *original*.

3 **a** : a person of fresh initiative or inventive capacity
// an *original* among popular pianists, combining jazz and romantic techniques in an unusually effective manner
—Douglas Watt
b : a unique or eccentric person
// Among other comedians he's an *original*.

Society has us believe that to be original, you have to be first. And creators told us that they were often held back by worrying if what they were doing had been done before.

A deeper look at the world of creators revealed something powerful - that originality, in the way it's conventionally defined, doesn't exist. It is in fact about putting your own spin on things, about how you make things your own.

Our insight: While mainstream thinking defines originality by who's done it first, Creators define it not by where you take it from, but by where you take it to.

We set out to show how originality is a constantly evolving process, always taking influence from the past to create the future.

THE IDEA

To prove that original is “where you take it to”,
we created an original campaign out of nothing original.

APPROACH

As the brand that takes from its past to create the future of sports-inspired streetwear, we felt we had license to do what no other brand could: prove that “original” doesn’t come from a vacuum, but a collection of influences. To do this, we would have to create a wholly original campaign - that didn’t try to be original.

We started with the world’s most overdone track, Frank Sinatra’s “My Way”, then pushed it so far that it became our own. Remixing it with a new generation of musicians, the result was a powerful message: “Original is never finished.”

APPROACH

The reimagined track inspired our visual language - a reinvention of iconic moments in art, pop-culture, sports and adidas' own cultural memory.

The film features a multi-generational cast of some of the world's biggest and most exciting names, including Snoop Dogg, Dev Hynes, Stormzy, Petra Collins, Dej Loaf and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. In partnership with our talent, we reinterpreted icons of culture - from Botticelli's Birth of Venus to Snoop Dogg's Doggystyle album cover - and demonstrated that if you push something that's been done before far enough, it becomes original again.

It's an ode to reinvention, inspiring creators to feed off of new and old.

ROLL-OUT

“Original Is Never Finished” was a multi-channel effort, carefully plotted around consumer behavior and culturally relevant moments of the year.

Kicking off the season, the film was launched through online channels in January.
Social media takeover commenced featuring content from the film.

In February, the film made its broadcast debut during music’s biggest night - the Grammys.
Alongside the aforementioned film, we created three music videos to hit the web for this occasion.
They featured Snoop Dogg, MadeinTYO and Desiigner remixing “Original is Never Finished” in their own ways. Each track was pushed until it was new again.

ROLL-OUT

On social media, behind-the-scenes footage blanketed our channels.

A different cut of the film launched in Women's Month - March - carrying forward the "Never Finished" motif. The scenes and vocals featured an all-female cast. The campaign then begun appearing in cinemas around the world.

In the back end of the year to further prove our POV, we reshot the original launch film using modern creators taking the place of those who came before, like James Harden and Kendall Jenner.

The reaction to the launch film was so positive in China that we shot a local version featuring Chinese themes and influencers, which went live in the Fall/Winter 2017 Season.

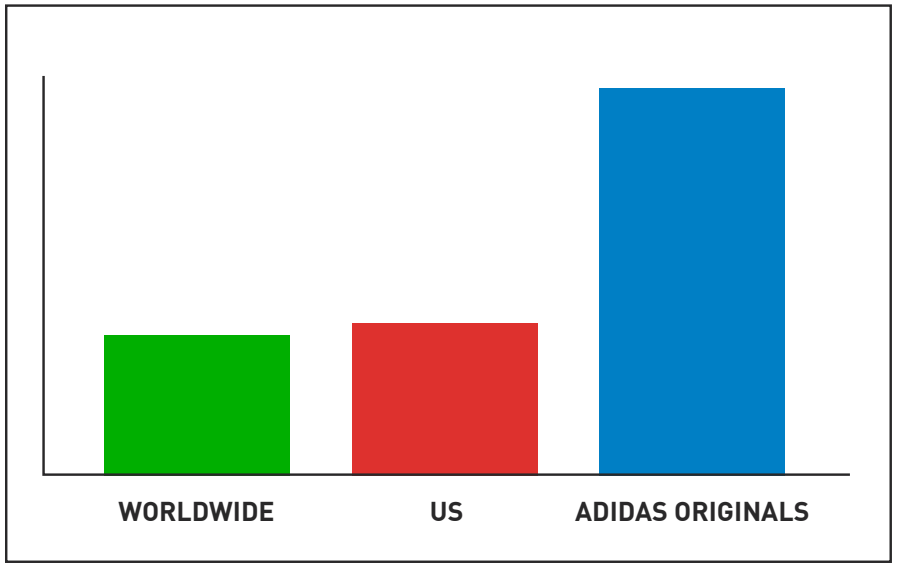
RESULTS

It was one of Originals' most successful campaigns ever, with stunning improvements in sales, advocacy and buzz.

SALES

Global sales during the 2017 campaign period indexed at 130 against the previous year, despite the saturation in the brand's biggest and traditionally best-performing franchise - Superstar.

Originals growth vs Category growth



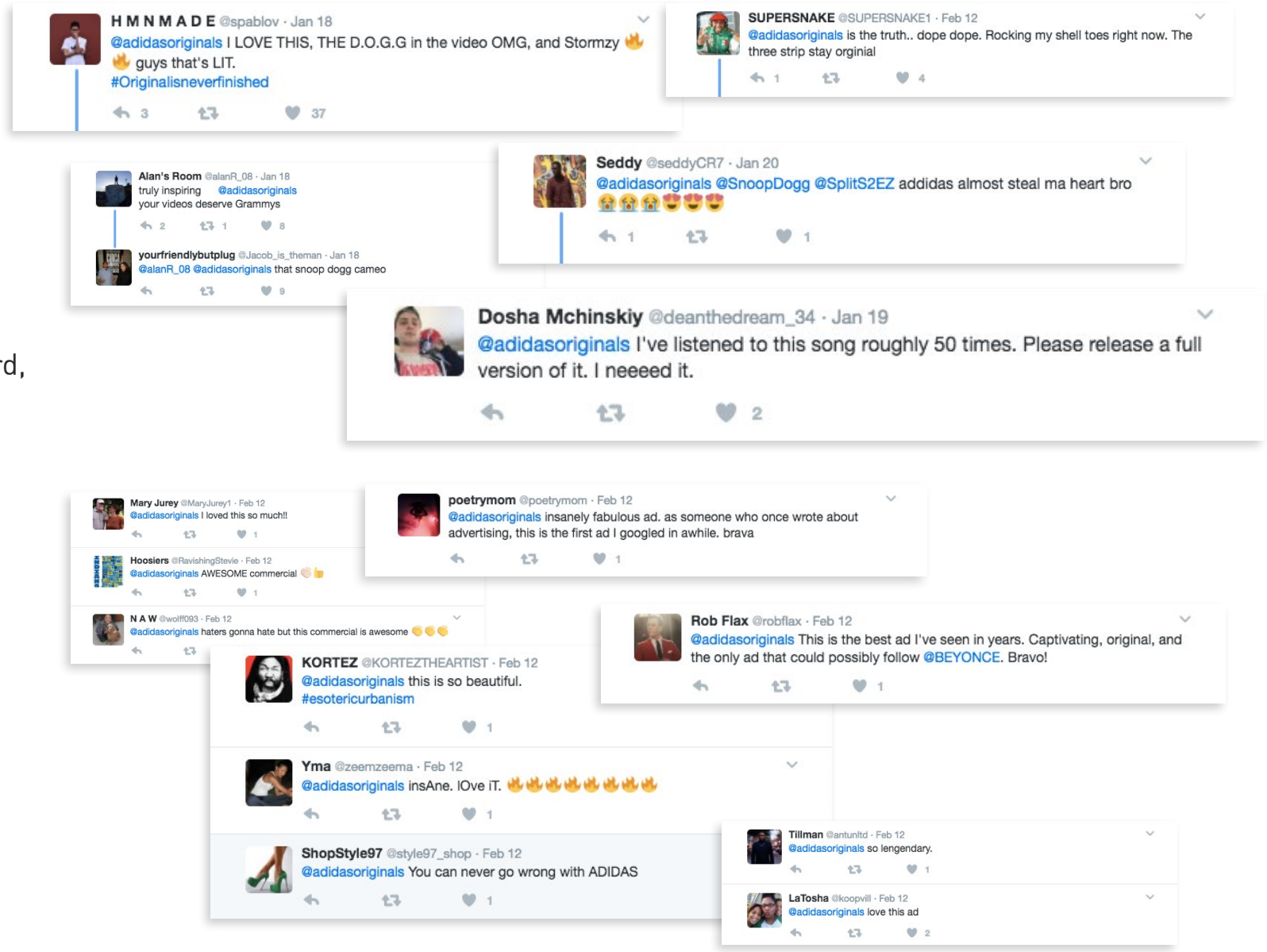
Originals outpaced both the global sneaker category growth and the US sneaker market growth in 2017.

BUZZ

a. Views
The idea struck a chord. The film became **YouTube's 7th Most Watched Ad of 2017** (globally,) demonstrating that taking a stand draws more interest.

To be eligible for the YouTube Ads Leaderboard, videos must be marked as ads on YouTube (i.e., they get some paid views) but must also earn significant organic views. The algorithm factors in paid views, organic views and audience retention.

b. Social Conversation
We tapped into the heart of pop culture and stole the show. Originals became the most talked about brand on Twitter during the Grammys weekend.

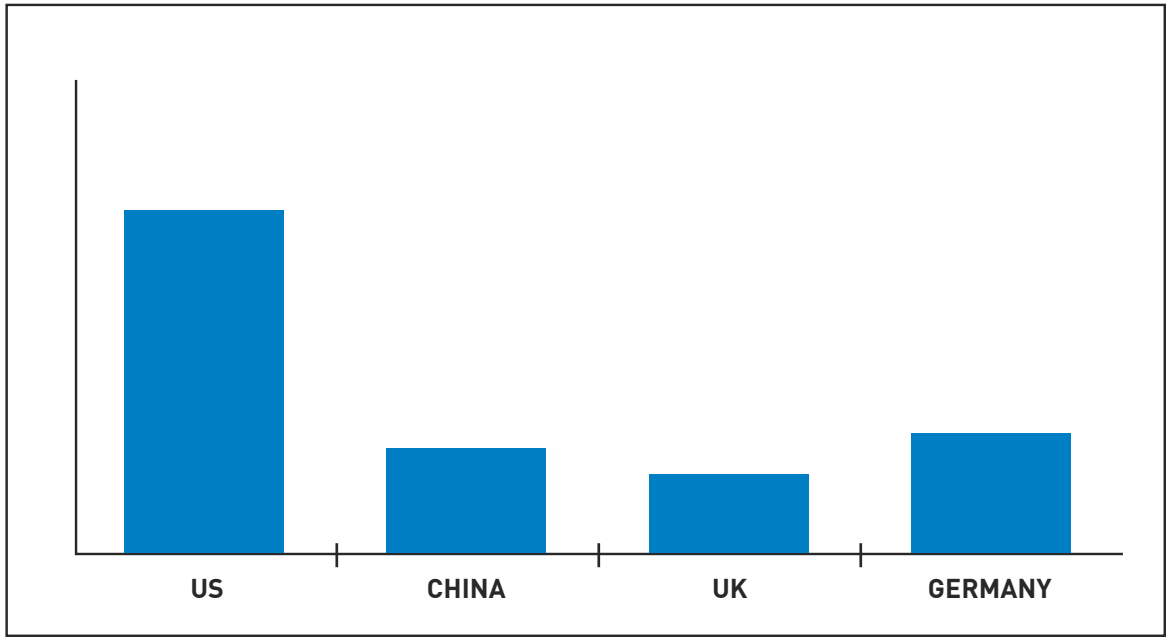


ADVOCACY

adidas doesn't track awareness in the traditional sense; it measures brand advocacy - the most powerful measure of consumer connection.

The campaign generated stronger advocacy for Originals. NPS - the global internal tool that calculates advocates versus detractors of a brand - improved significantly in our most important markets during the campaign period. In contrast, our competition, saw its NPS dip in those four markets over the same time period.

Change in Net Promoter Score in 1H 2016



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