

Introduction

The sales activation vs. brand building scale is an attempt at providing a scale for various types of sales activation and brand building tactics.

It builds upon the excellent work of [Les Binet](#) and [Peter Field](#) that for many companies has been seminal in their approach to marketing.

After having had numerous discussions with clients who wanted to move away from primarily relying on sales activation tactics and start to do more brand building, we realised that they had a very limited view of the possibilities within brand building.

Often this resulted in less than optimal ventures into brand building, and hence, disappointing results.

One key issue we phased multiple times were brands who took a much to big of a leap up the scale.

They went from performance marketing only - all the way to creating an emotional and purposeled campaign that was very loosely connected to product, brand or value proposition. If any connection existed at all other than the proverbial logo at the end.

We realised that many of our clients had forgotten about the other forms of tactics - so we created this scale. To hopefully inspire and bring a common language to marketing teams.

We also realised that people often view the two disciplines of brand building and sales activation as being completely seperate. Meaning, sales activation would never do any branding and branding would never sell.

That's not how advertising works.

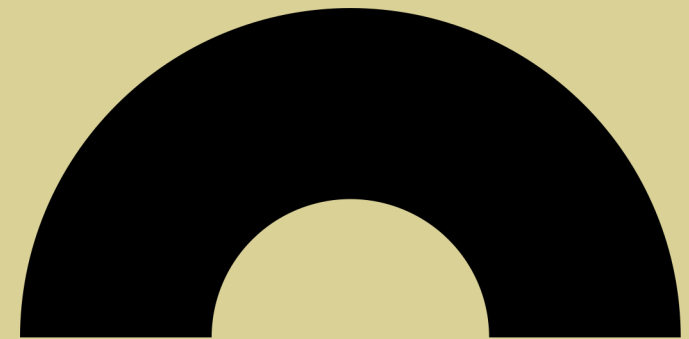
But nuances are often lost. It is Indeed very possible to create an asset that both builds brand and sells. It is however difficult to do both equally well, at the same time. Purpose branding – as we have chosen to call it – is of course possible. In fact it can be highly effective in building a strong brand.

But very few brands can sustain a strong brand build mainly on a strong purpose. If you succeed, you're golden (think Patagonia and Ben&Jerrys) but it's rare.

And risky. But there are other options on the way up there.

For example, you could create a very strong brand response ad, that is still entertaining, creative and emotional, but very clearly states what you sell and why people should buy.

It's not black and white. Night or day. Very few ads do just one thing. And of course, it is always recommended to strike the right balance.

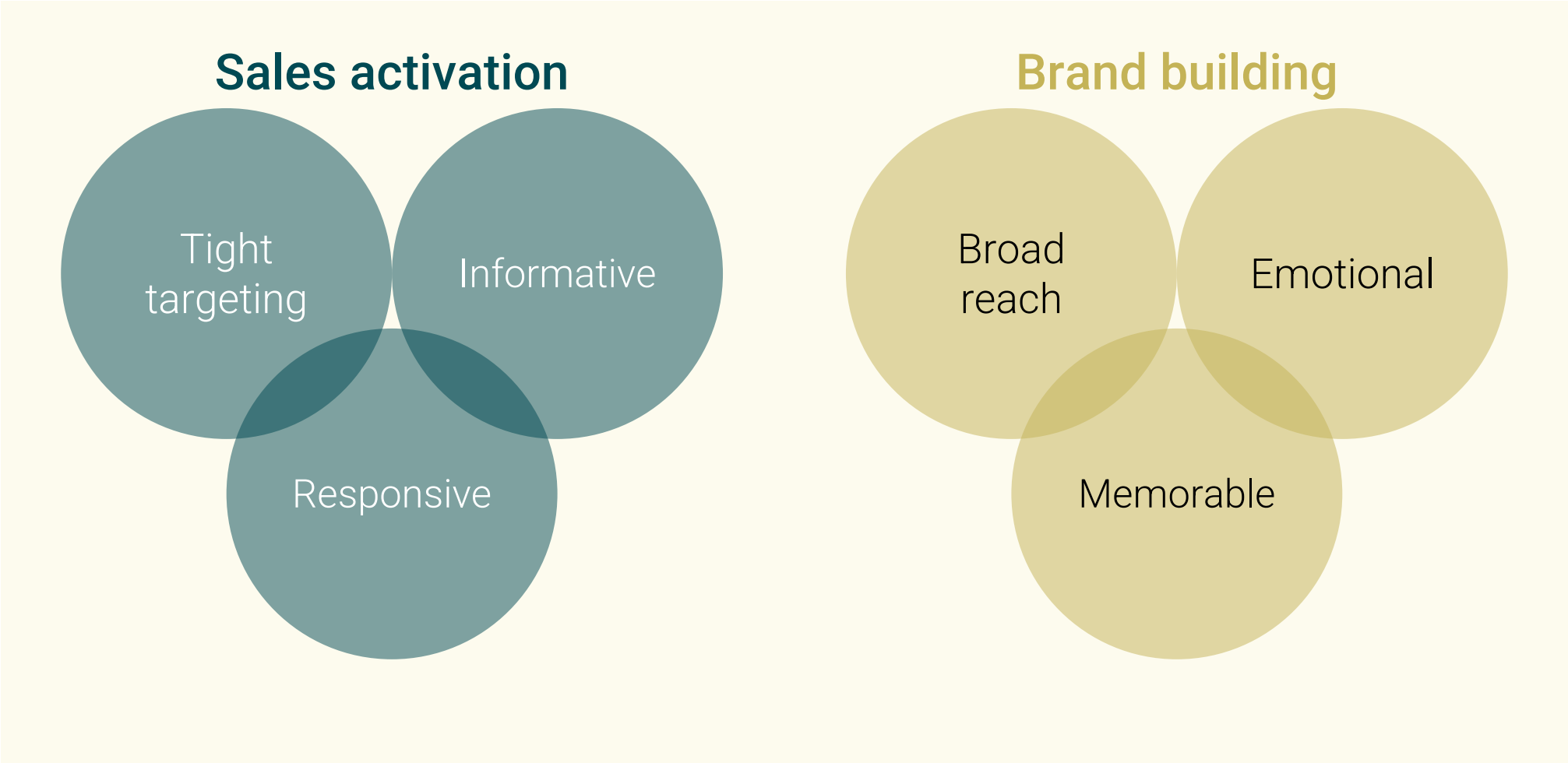


Two kinds of advertising

Brand Building	Sales Activation
Creates mental brand equity	Exploits mental brand equity
Influences future sales	Generates sales now
Broad reach	Tightly targeted
Long term	Short term
Emotional priming	Persuasive messages

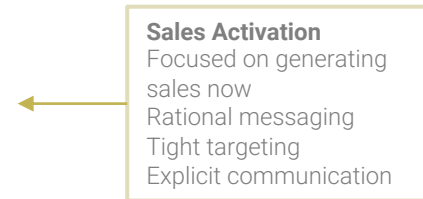
Source: Les Binet and Peter Field, Media in Focus: Marketing Effectiveness in the Digital Era, IPA, (Figure 01)

How to communicate effectively in each discipline?

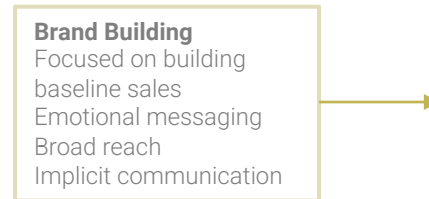




Sales
activation



Sales Activation
Focused on generating
sales now
Rational messaging
Tight targeting
Explicit communication

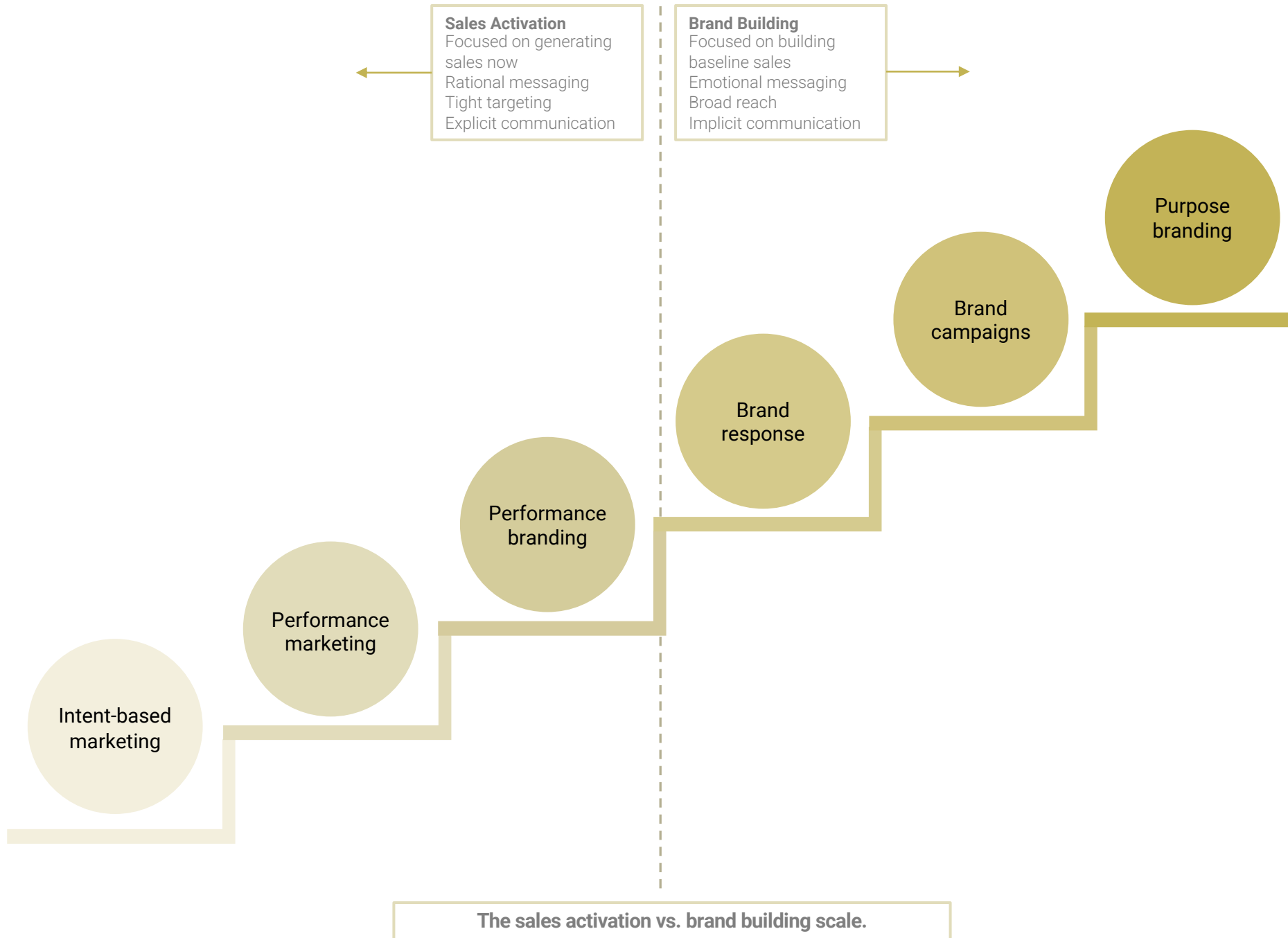


Brand Building
Focused on building
baseline sales
Emotional messaging
Broad reach
Implicit communication

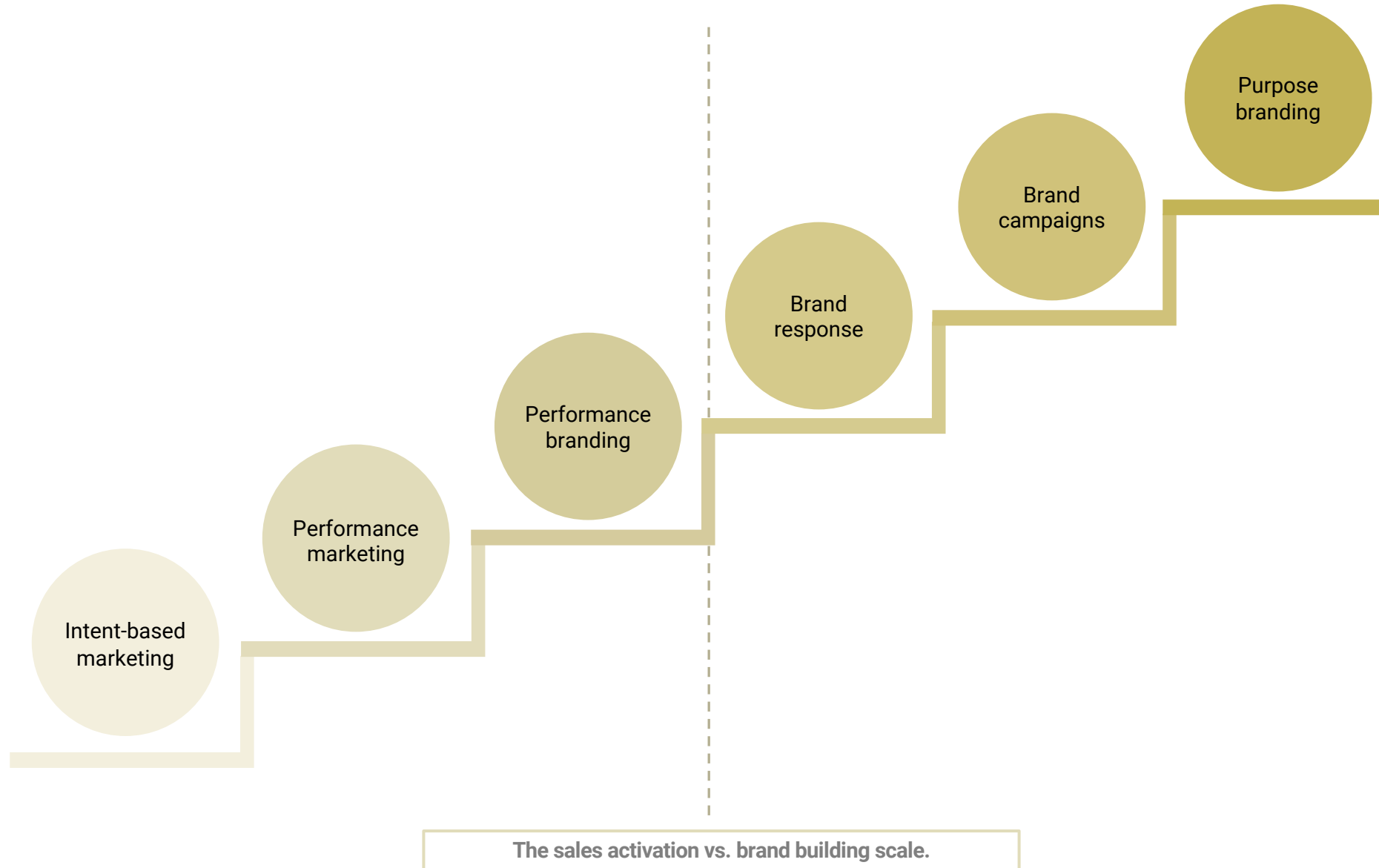


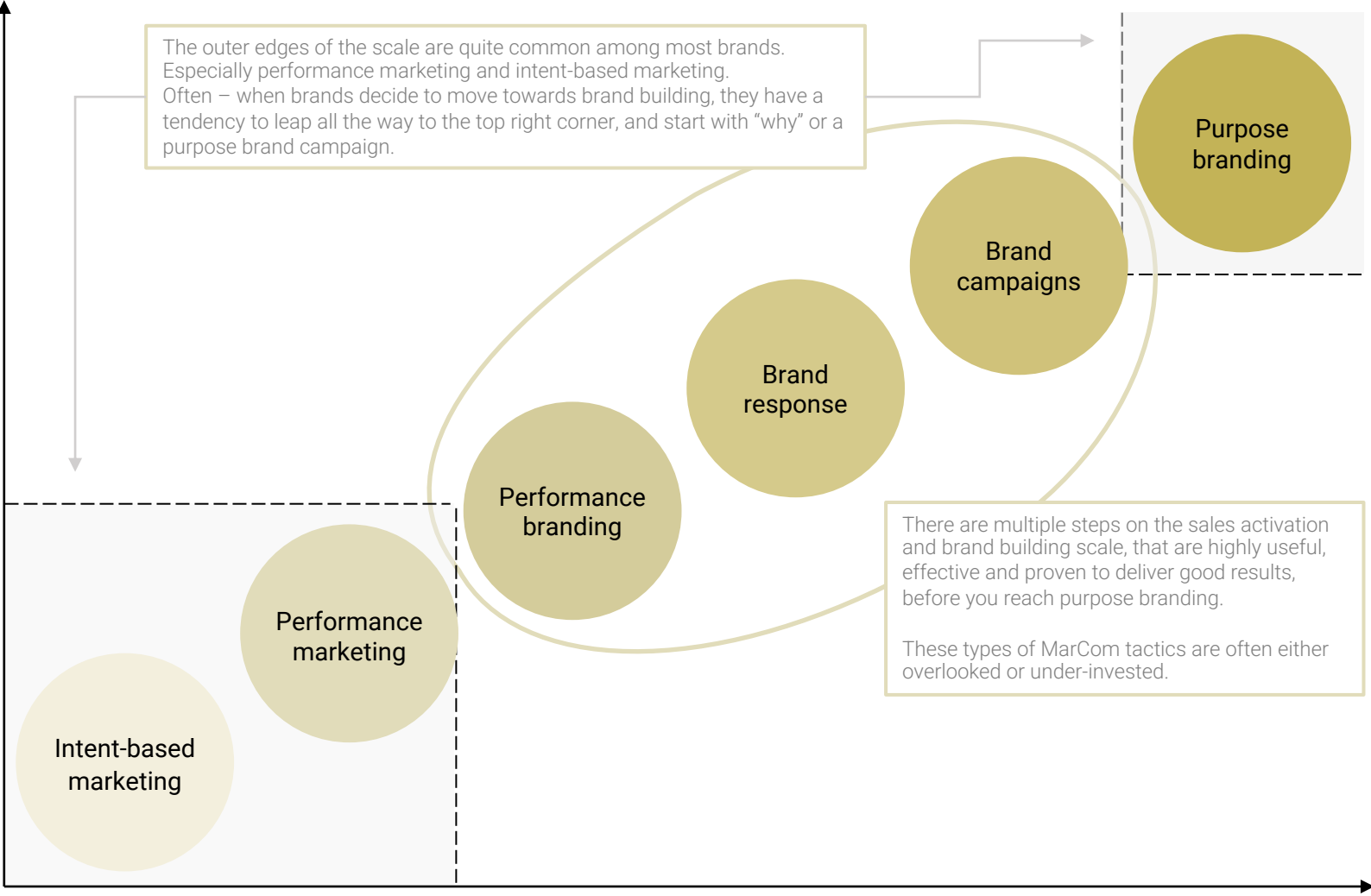
Brand
building

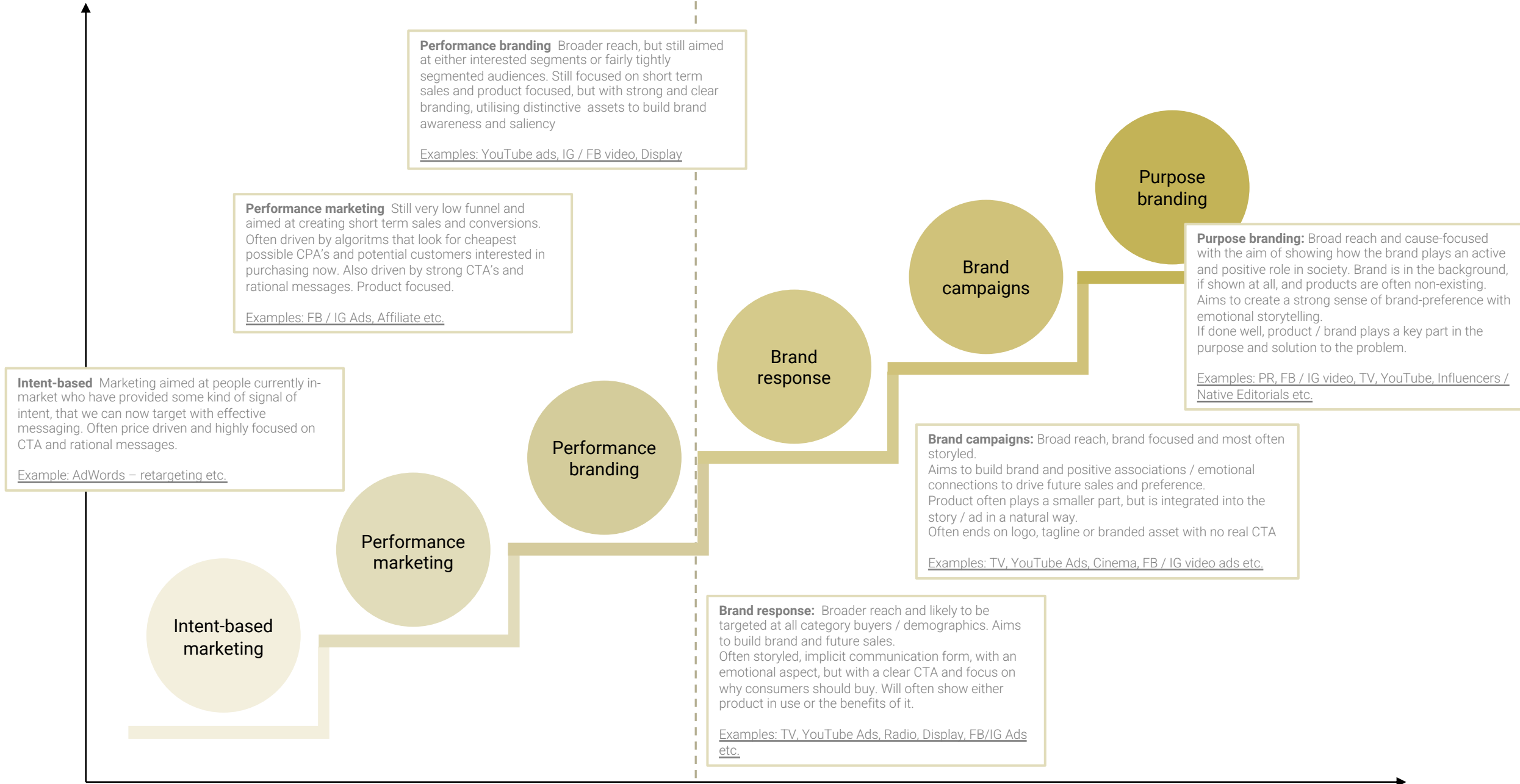
The sales activation vs. brand building scale.



There are multiple types of sales activation and brand building







Intent-based Marketing aimed at people currently in-market who have provided some kind of signal of intent, that we can now target with effective messaging. Often price driven and highly focused on CTA and rational messages.
Example: AdWords – retargeting etc.

Intent-based marketing

Performance marketing Still very low funnel and aimed at creating short term sales and conversions. Often driven by algorithms that look for cheapest possible CPA's and potential customers interested in purchasing now. Also driven by strong CTA's and rational messages. Product focused.
Examples: FB / IG Ads, Affiliate etc.

Performance marketing

Performance branding Broader reach, but still aimed at either interested segments or fairly tightly segmented audiences. Still focused on short term sales and product focused, but with strong and clear branding, utilising distinctive assets to build brand awareness and saliency
Examples: YouTube ads, IG / FB video, Display

Performance branding

Brand response: Broader reach and likely to be targeted at all category buyers / demographics. Aims to build brand and future sales. Often storyled, implicit communication form, with an emotional aspect, but with a clear CTA and focus on why consumers should buy. Will often show either product in use or the benefits of it.
Examples: TV, YouTube Ads, Radio, Display, FB/IG Ads etc.

Brand response

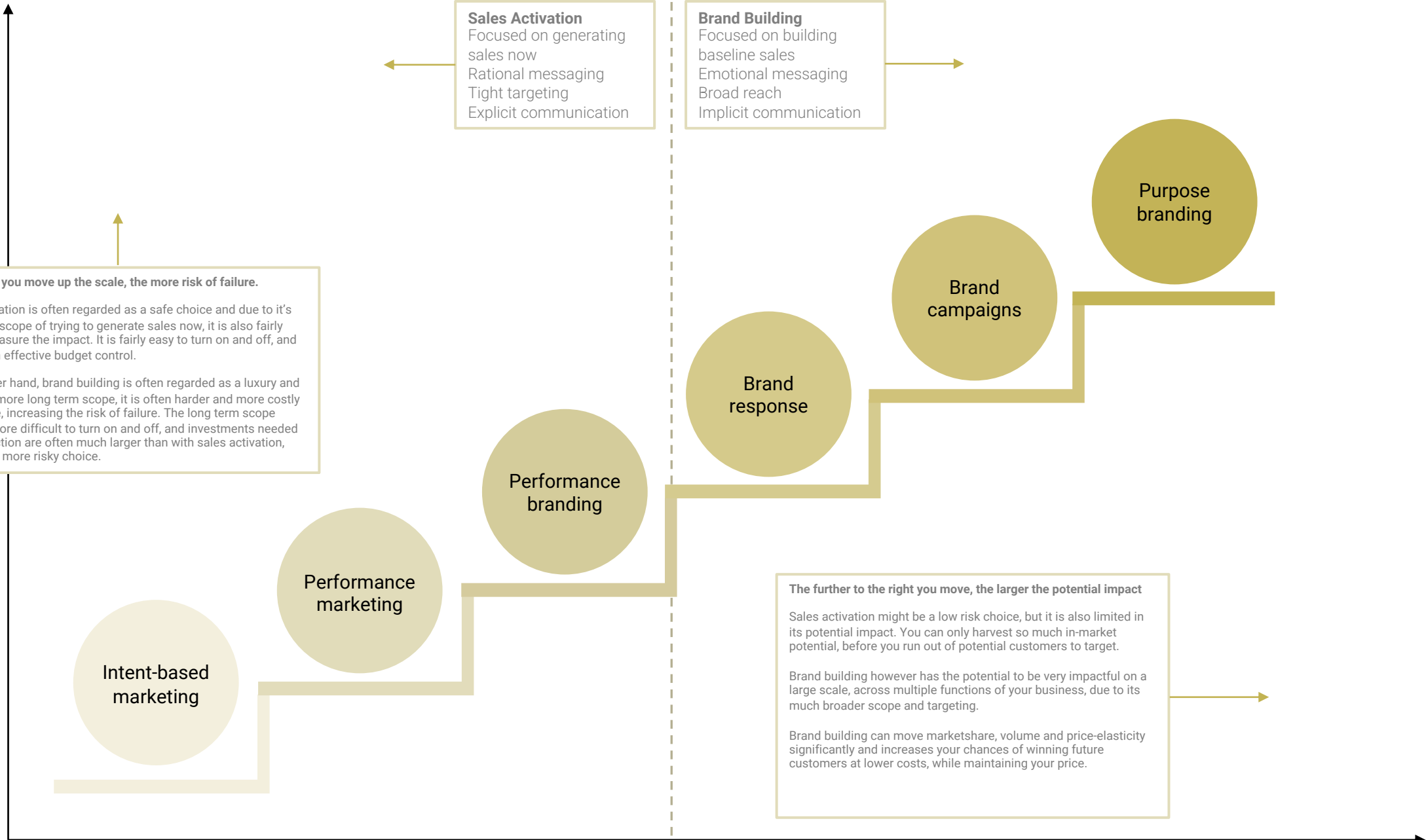
Brand campaigns: Broad reach, brand focused and most often storyled. Aims to build brand and positive associations / emotional connections to drive future sales and preference. Product often plays a smaller part, but is integrated into the story / ad in a natural way. Often ends on logo, tagline or branded asset with no real CTA
Examples: TV, YouTube Ads, Cinema, FB / IG video ads etc.

Brand campaigns

Purpose branding: Broad reach and cause-focused with the aim of showing how the brand plays an active and positive role in society. Brand is in the background, if shown at all, and products are often non-existing. Aims to create a strong sense of brand-preference with emotional storytelling. If done well, product / brand plays a key part in the purpose and solution to the problem.
Examples: PR, FB / IG video, TV, YouTube, Influencers / Native Editorials etc.

Purpose branding

RISK



Sales Activation
Focused on generating sales now
Rational messaging
Tight targeting
Explicit communication

Brand Building
Focused on building baseline sales
Emotional messaging
Broad reach
Implicit communication

The higher you move up the scale, the more risk of failure.

Sales activation is often regarded as a safe choice and due to its short term scope of trying to generate sales now, it is also fairly easy to measure the impact. It is fairly easy to turn on and off, and to maintain effective budget control.

On the other hand, brand building is often regarded as a luxury and due to its more long term scope, it is often harder and more costly to measure, increasing the risk of failure. The long term scope makes it more difficult to turn on and off, and investments needed to gain traction are often much larger than with sales activation, making it a more risky choice.

The further to the right you move, the larger the potential impact

Sales activation might be a low risk choice, but it is also limited in its potential impact. You can only harvest so much in-market potential, before you run out of potential customers to target.

Brand building however has the potential to be very impactful on a large scale, across multiple functions of your business, due to its much broader scope and targeting.

Brand building can move marketshare, volume and price-elasticity significantly and increases your chances of winning future customers at lower costs, while maintaining your price.

The sales activation vs. brand building scale.

IMPACT

Performance branding

Performance branding is one of the newest kids on the block.

It's also one of the most misunderstood terms.

But when deployed correctly it's an effective combination of fairly tight targeting but with high intensity creative, that has the main goal of achieving short term sales, but still leaves a strong branded impression.

It's often product-focused, explicit and very direct in its communication, but has clear branding and utilises the brands distinctive assets to drive recall and build further awareness and positive brand associations.

For many brands who heavily rely on sales activation as their primary marketing channel, this level of the scale can also be the top funnel / highest level in their MarCom mix.



Shaping New Tomorrow – Tomorrow Pants



- Strongly focused on the pants, their materials and features.
- Clear representation of the brand through personal representation and a big exposure of logos.
- Builds distinction and positive associations via the mission of making "life as convenient as possible"

Other examples:

[Airtox- FS22 Safety Sandal](#) & [Bang & Olufsen – Beosound Balance](#)

Brand response

Brand response is the first category on the brandbuilding side of our scale.

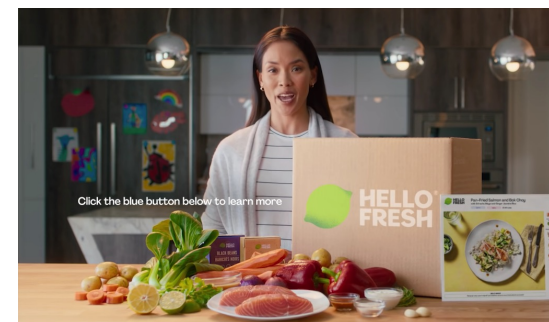
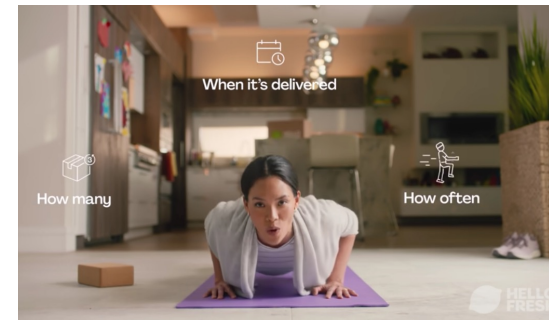
The category aims to build brand and future sales.

It typically has a broader reach, is likely to be targeted at all category buyers and is also built for traditional media like TV, Display or Radio.

The communication is often led by storytelling and has a very implicit and emotional nature. Mostly, brand response campaigns does though still have a clear CTA and the emotional aspect really just surrounds the reason why consumers should buy.

Product or benefits of usage does most often play a central role.

[HelloFresh - Canada](#)



- A relatable story about a once stressed mother, who is now in complete zen. Even her kid is.
- Uses humorous language ("Don't give a fork"), a funny kid and a purposely exaggerated value prop.
- There's still a quite clear CTA in the end ("Click the button").

Other examples:

[MoneySupermarket – Dave's Epic Strut](#), [Dollar Shave Club – Great razors get borrowed](#) & [Livet er dyrt – Gå i Netto \(Danish\)](#)

Brand campaigns

Brand campaigns aim to build brand and drive future sales and preference through positive associations and emotional connections.

The communication is highly brand focused and storyled. The product often plays a small part, but is integrated into the story in a more natural or implicit way.

It typically has a broad reach, is likely to be targeted at all category buyers and is also built for traditional media like TV, Display or Radio. The format also often works in SoMe ads.

Brand campaigns does typically end on a logo-frame, a tagline or a branded asset with no real CTA.

AA – Singing baby



- A 'happy go lucky'-story with a singing baby, a loving father and a dancing mechanic.
- Natural incorporation of AA's product as the service that saves the day. It plays a small role but with a clear connection to the emotional drivers.
- Ends on a tagline and a logo-frame.

Other examples:

[John Lewis – Christmas Ad feat. Elton John](#) & [Carlsberg – The Danish Way feat. Mads Mikkelsen](#)