

hub.

HUB BRANDED CONTENT  
CASE STUDY



# POP UP START UP

## Campaign Overview

Alibaba.com is a B2B ecommerce portal enabling global trade amongst small and medium sized business.

After enjoying huge commercial success in Asia, Alibaba.com identified cracking the Western market as a key business objective for 2016/17 and approached Hub to develop a content strategy simple and robust enough to make this a reality.

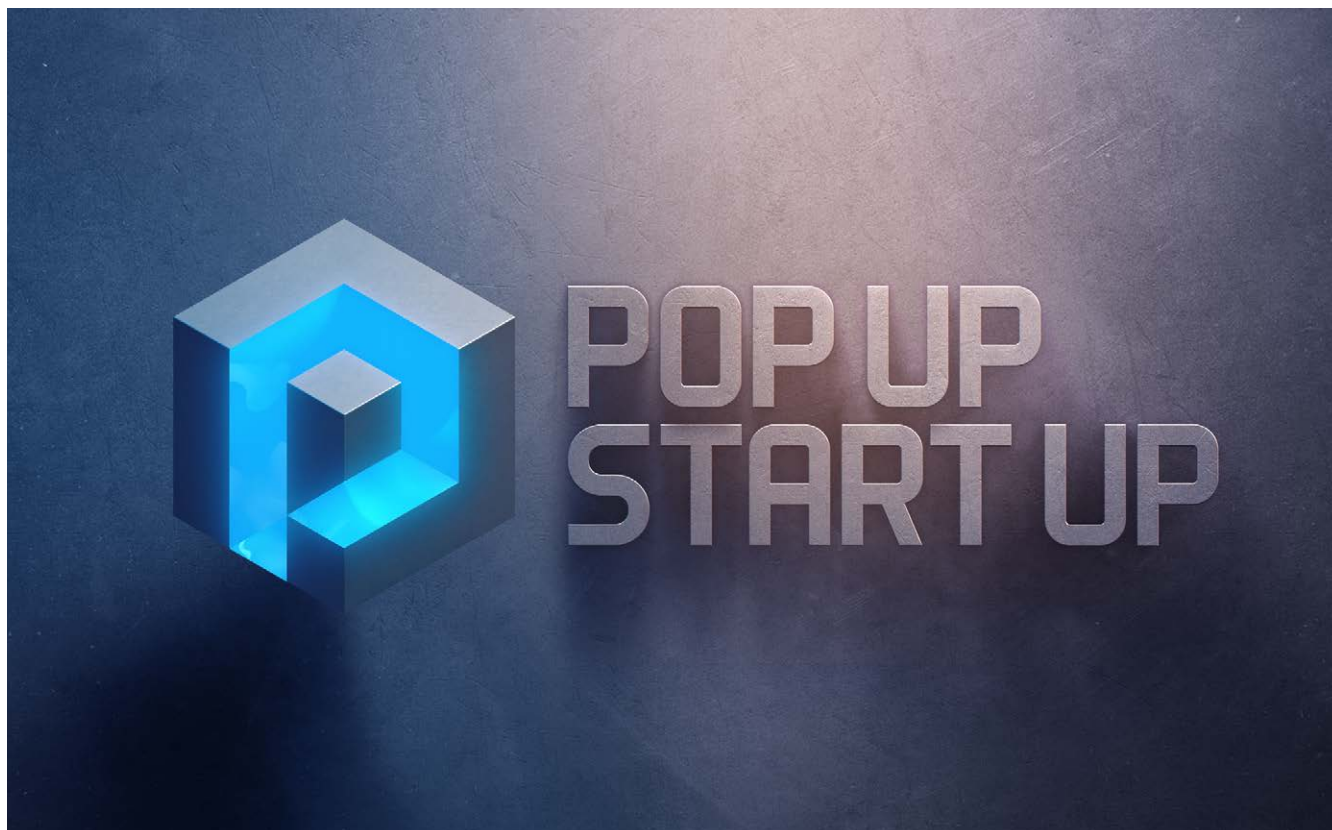
Following the same model that brought them success in Asia's emerging markets, Alibaba wanted to reach existing SME's and would-be entrepreneurs who were eager to launch a business but didn't know where to start, identifying themselves as a trusted partner to the start-up generation.

Building on the global trends of start-up accelerators and pop-up retail, Hub created a television format and integrated TV and online campaign that focused on 12 individuals competing against each other as they start out on their own unique business journeys.

The competing, head-to-head narrative of the series created a powerful emotional connection with the brand for viewers in 108 countries. Audiences could see the transformative power of Alibaba.com as both an instrumental day to day tool and a guiding hand in the long-term growth of each individual's business.

As a result, the campaign became a runaway success, outstripping all expectations by raising brand awareness of Alibaba.com by 31%.

*If you wish to view video case study, please [click below to watch](#).*



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**Brand Awareness  
of Alibaba.com  
increased by 31%.**

*Data source: Ipsos Affluent / Globalwebindex / CNBC Catalyst Connect Pannel*

## BACKGROUND TO CAMPAIGN

### Alibaba.com



After a period of huge growth across Asia, Alibaba.com found their offering wasn't translating to markets and businesses in the West.

A lack of understanding, and trust, was impacting on wider engagement with the brand.

Raising brand awareness and building a sense of trust around the brand internationally became one of their key business objectives for 2016/17.

Alibaba.com's business model is designed to connect existing SME's and start-up entrepreneurs with the goods and services their businesses need. The challenge was to speak to this audience in a format they could easily digest, on a content channel they could trust.

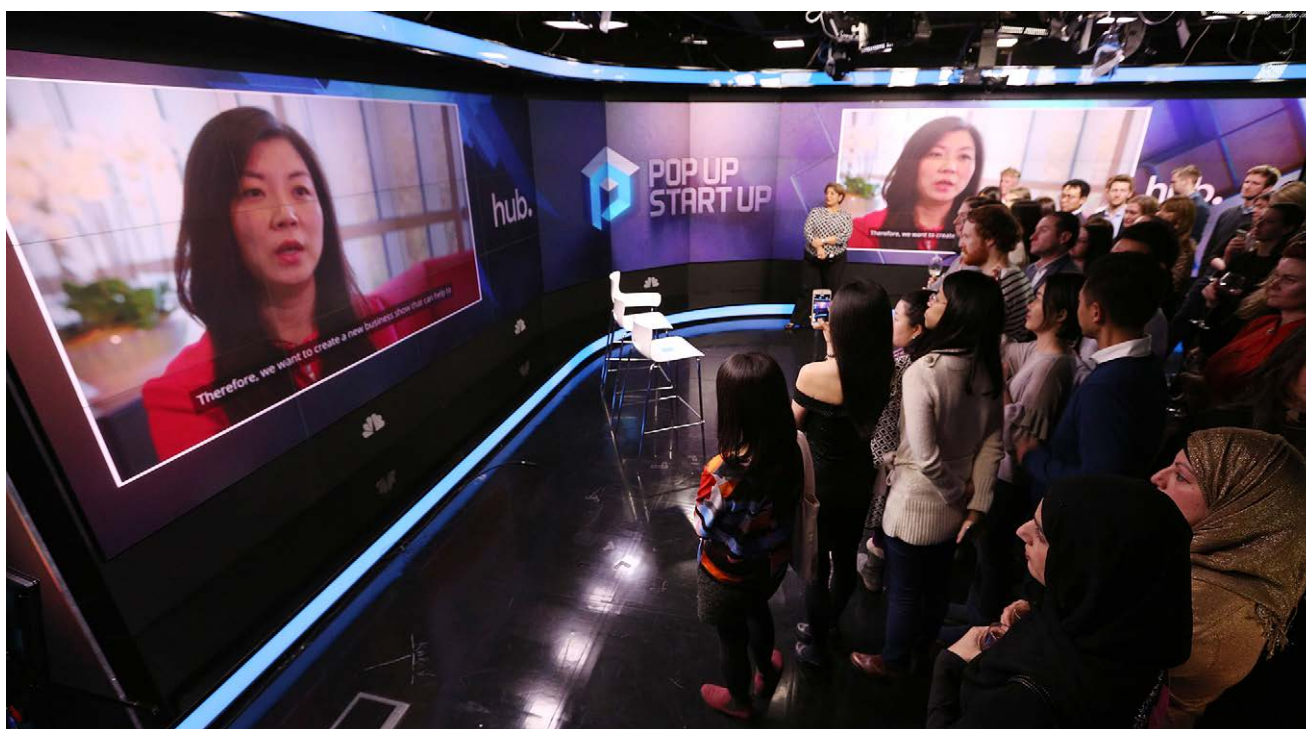
**Campaign  
Objective:  
Increase  
Global Brand  
Awareness  
by 20%**



## Insight

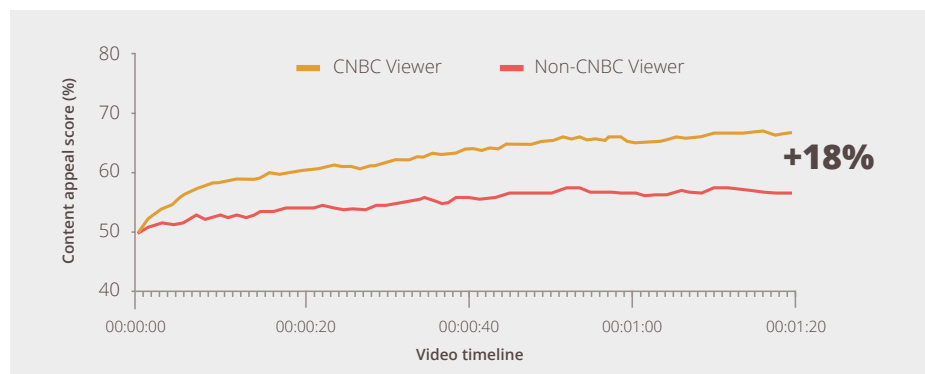
Hub chose CNBC as the place to launch a branded entertainment series, and accompanying microsite, called Pop Up Start Up – an informative and entertaining look at the experience of 12 entrepreneurs, guided on their journey by some of the best business and retail brains around. CNBC'S huge global reach seemed like the perfect for a brand aiming to engage western consumers with new ideas and ways of working.

The format of the content was designed to engage audiences with the world of SME start-ups and nurture a wider sense of Alibaba's status as an angel on the shoulder of growing business leaders everywhere. Insight gained from research into global trends in this sector helped inform the content of the episodes, and shape the tone of the series. The Global Accelerator Report showed double digit growth in accelerator programmes worldwide, whilst the pop-up retail market contributed £2.3billion to the UK economy alone. Bringing these trends together helped create a unique business entertainment series that modern day entrepreneurs would find current, insightful and engaging.

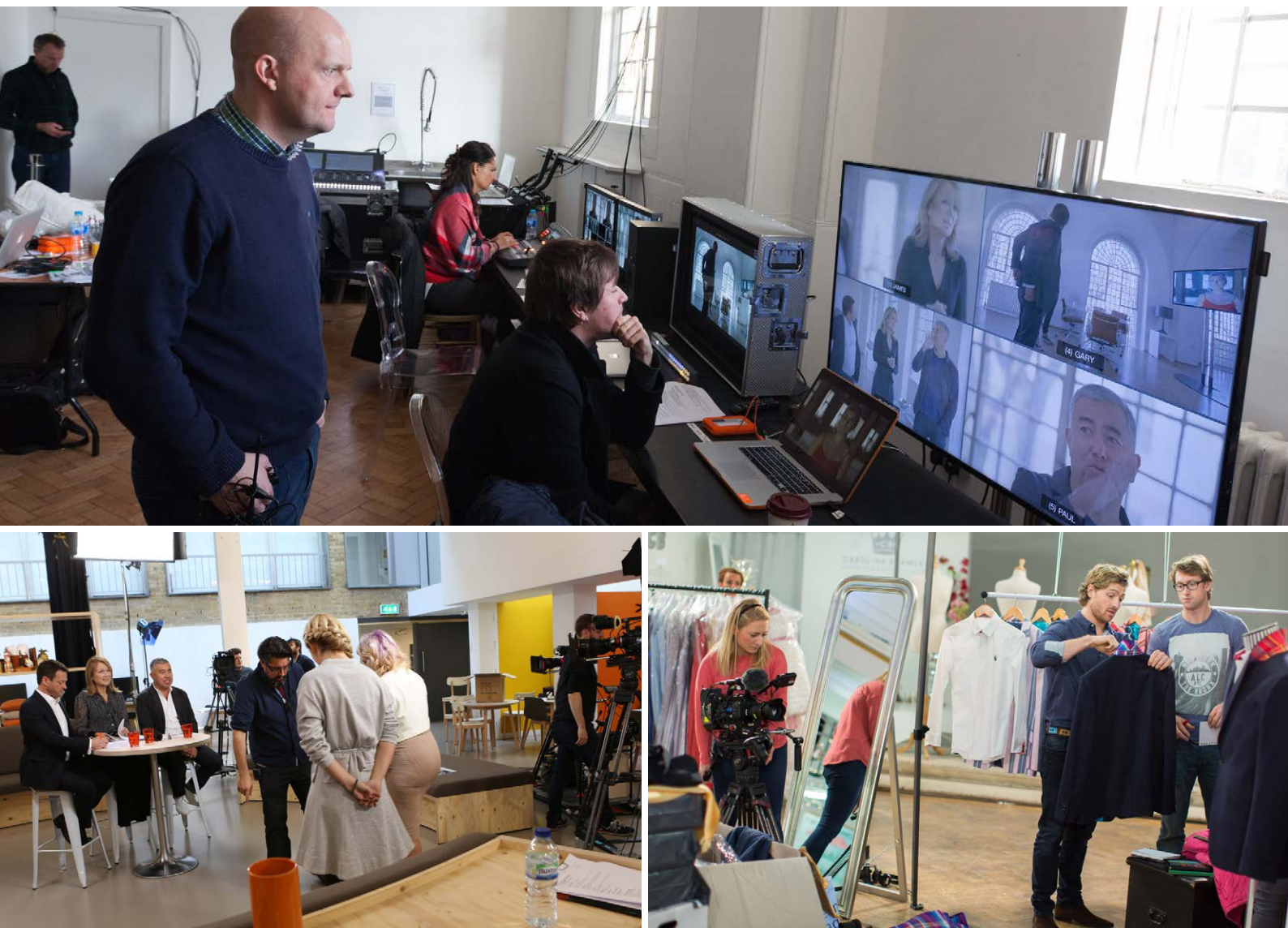


## Dial Test of Content Demonstrates Appeal

Suitability of content with CNBC leads to a higher appeal score amongst viewers - showing the match of the show with the target audience



Source: Catalyst Connect survey /  
GlobalWebIndex: Mar 2017  
Base: CNBC viewers / users (626)  
Non-CNBC users / competitor users  
(314)



TV Series "Pop Up Start Up" contestants

## Pop Up Start Up TV Series

The television series was directed by Sara Brailsford (Masterchef, Mary Queen of Shops) and followed the twelve entrepreneurs in a contest to grow their businesses, from concept to reality in 8-weeks, using seed money and drawing on world class mentoring to maximise their potential.

The head to head format was incentivised with a cash prize £20,000, awarded to the most investable business at the end of each episode. The format of the series broke away from the traditional whittling down of contestants, to a closed end narrative. It demonstrated a positive and supportive environment, while seamlessly integrating the Alibaba.com online buying process, showing entrepreneurs sourcing their products from suppliers online. The characters of the show were the 12 entrepreneurs, buzzing with creative ideas and the energy and enthusiasm to put them into practice.



Sara Brailsford, Series Director for Pop Up Start Up



The campaign used the contestants' personality and passion to bring real world stories of triumph and innovation to vivid life. The format instilled a strong sense of Alibaba.com's role as an enabler to real world innovation and growth. The business was uniquely positioned as the conduit linking UK based entrepreneurs with factories in China and the series provided a step by step user guide to viewers eager to emulate the characters within the series and launch their own businesses or products.

The TV broadcast series was supported by brand spots and promotions across the CNBC network in Europe, Middle East, Africa, US and Asia Pacific. A supporting online campaign across CNBC.com and a global PR campaign was simultaneously launched.



*Pop Up Start Up: behind the scenes in China*

## Brand Spot

The brand spot was directed by commercial director Jamie Maule-ffinch. The aim was to dramatise the array of issues that Alibaba.com was able to solve for its millions of customers. A series of stylish vignettes of business owners wanting to sell unique items to people around the world were created. Each spot used humour to highlight the features and benefits of Alibaba.com and the different problems that they face when typically trading abroad.

## Taking the pain out of international trade

*Alibaba.com brand spot "Taking the pain out of international trade". [Click below to watch.](#)*



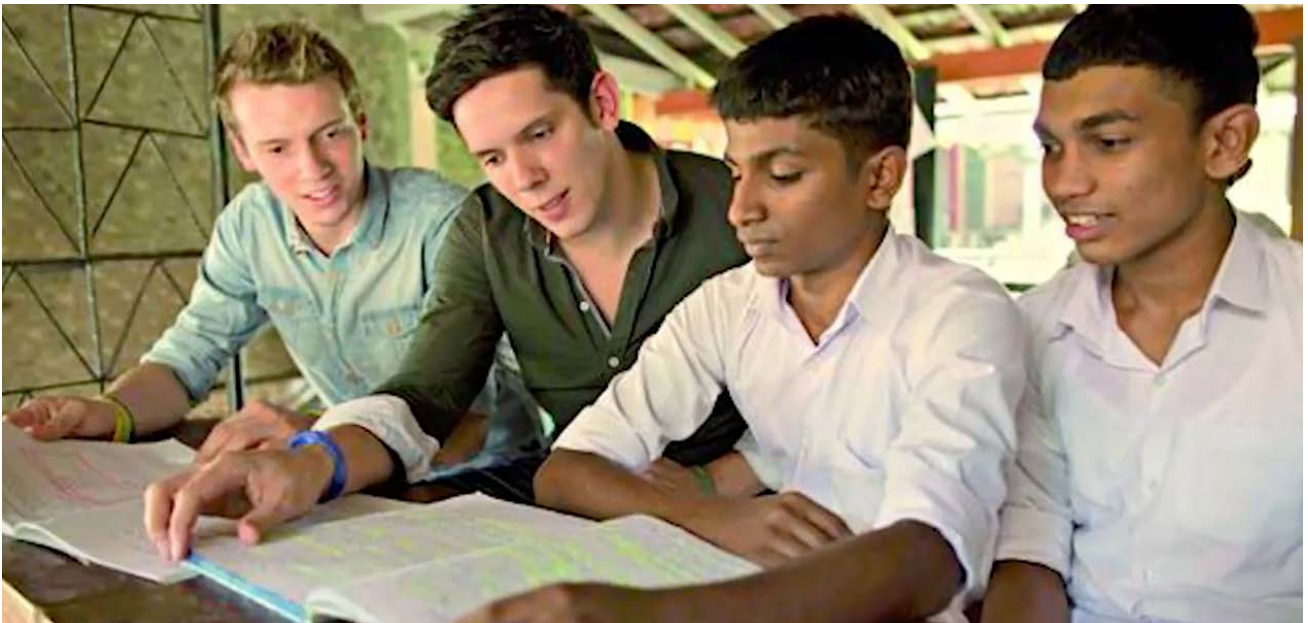


## Product Case Studies

A series of case studies were directed by documentary director Renee Vaughn Sutherland and featured real world business stories of the Alibaba.com customer base. They were sourced to highlight some of the most popular product categories in order for potential customer to be able to both empathise with their stories and feel enabled by seeing their success in their business and the support that Alibaba.com provided to them.

*Click below to watch.*

### Gandys



### Morphsuits

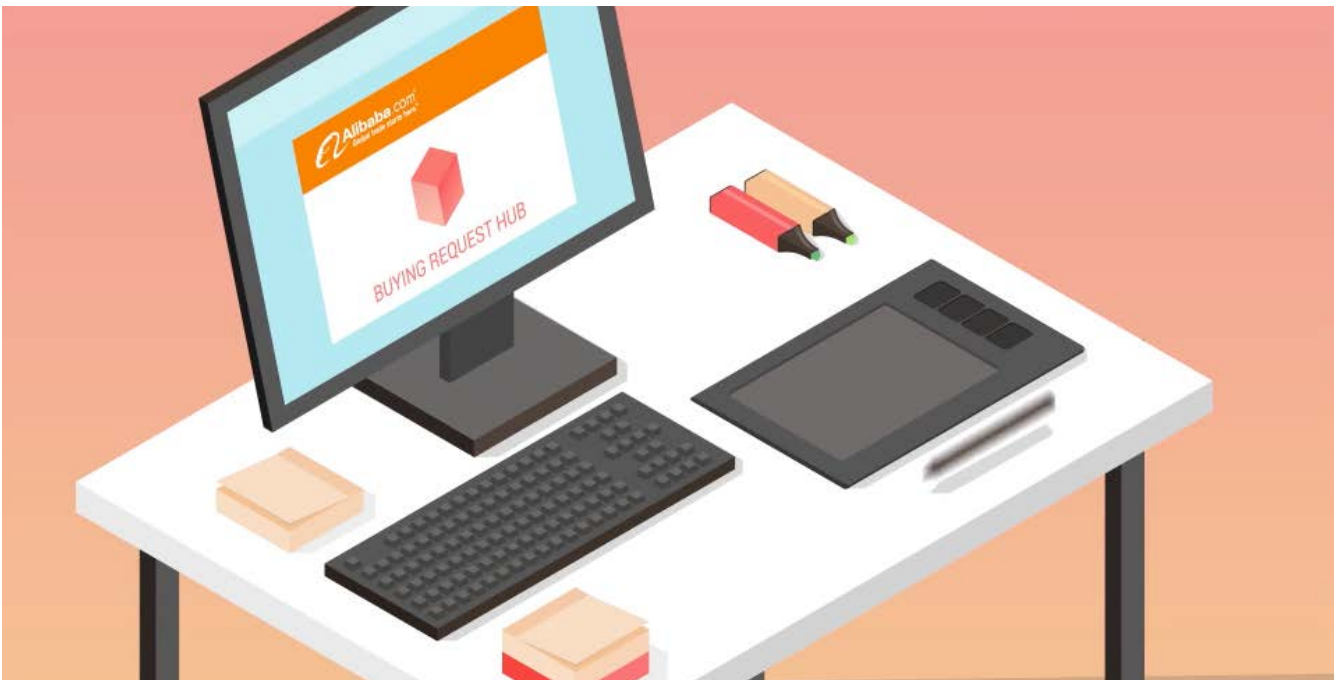


## Product Explainer Animations

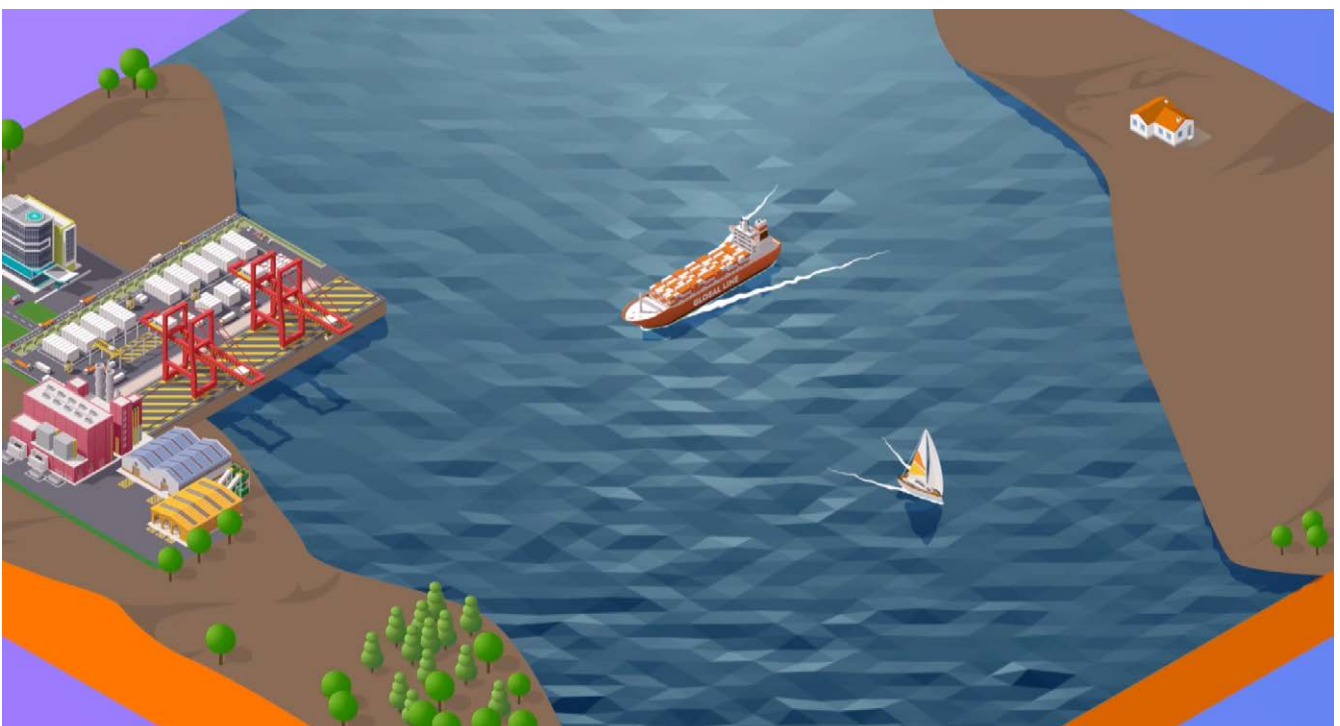
A suite of product explainer animations were created to showcase some of the products available on Alibaba.com to assist both buyers and suppliers. The product features were scripted into a short easily digestible narratives and brought to life in a 3D animated world. The script was designed to be SEO friendly through strategic use of keywords and phrases for online search.

*Click below to watch.*

### Buying Request



### Open an Account



## OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

### Objectives

Our brief was to elevate levels of awareness and trust around the Alibaba brand globally by 20% and to present the company's brand values and product benefits in a way that felt desirable to SMEs in western markets.

### Strategy

To enable the campaign to influence such a broad audience, we needed a global distribution strategy. We identified CNBC as the ideal network to be able to broadcast the series and launch it to 108 countries across Europe, North America, South America and the Asia Pacific region.

We identified a range of touch points the content would have to hit to deliver audience engagement with Alibaba.com. A multi-platform campaign was therefore the perfect solution to engage such a wide-ranging audience – allowing business owners and entrepreneurs to interact with the brand on their own terms. A blended suite of content increased the overall reach of a campaign and in total consisted of: a six-part broadcast series, a broadcast television commercial; online promotional adverts; eight customer video case study videos, six product explainer animations and digital online drivers.

A world map with a dark blue background. The landmasses are outlined in a lighter blue. Several regions are highlighted in a darker shade of blue, including North America, South America, Europe, and parts of Asia and Africa, indicating the global distribution of the campaign.

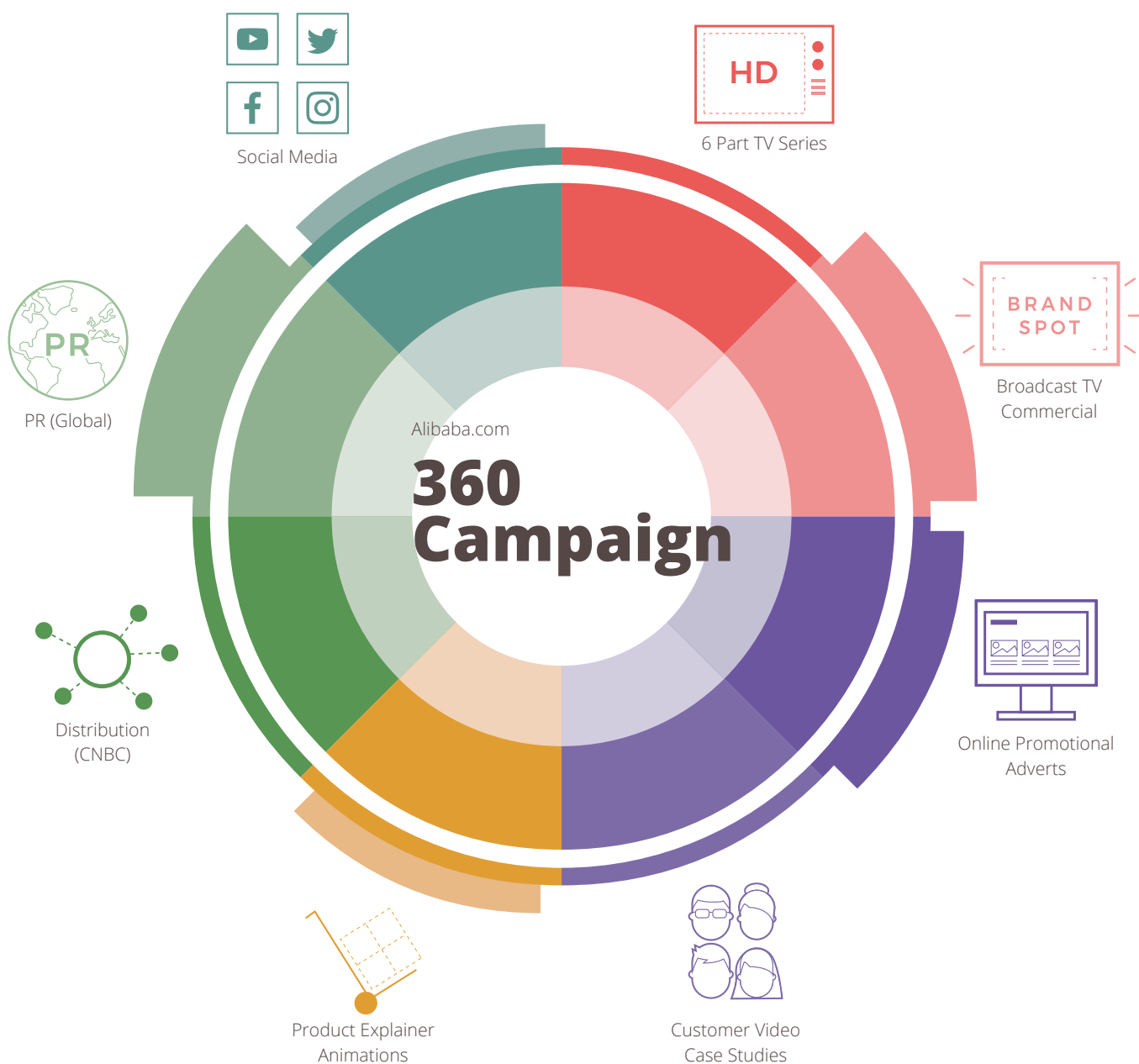
DISTRIBUTED TO  
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WORLDWIDE





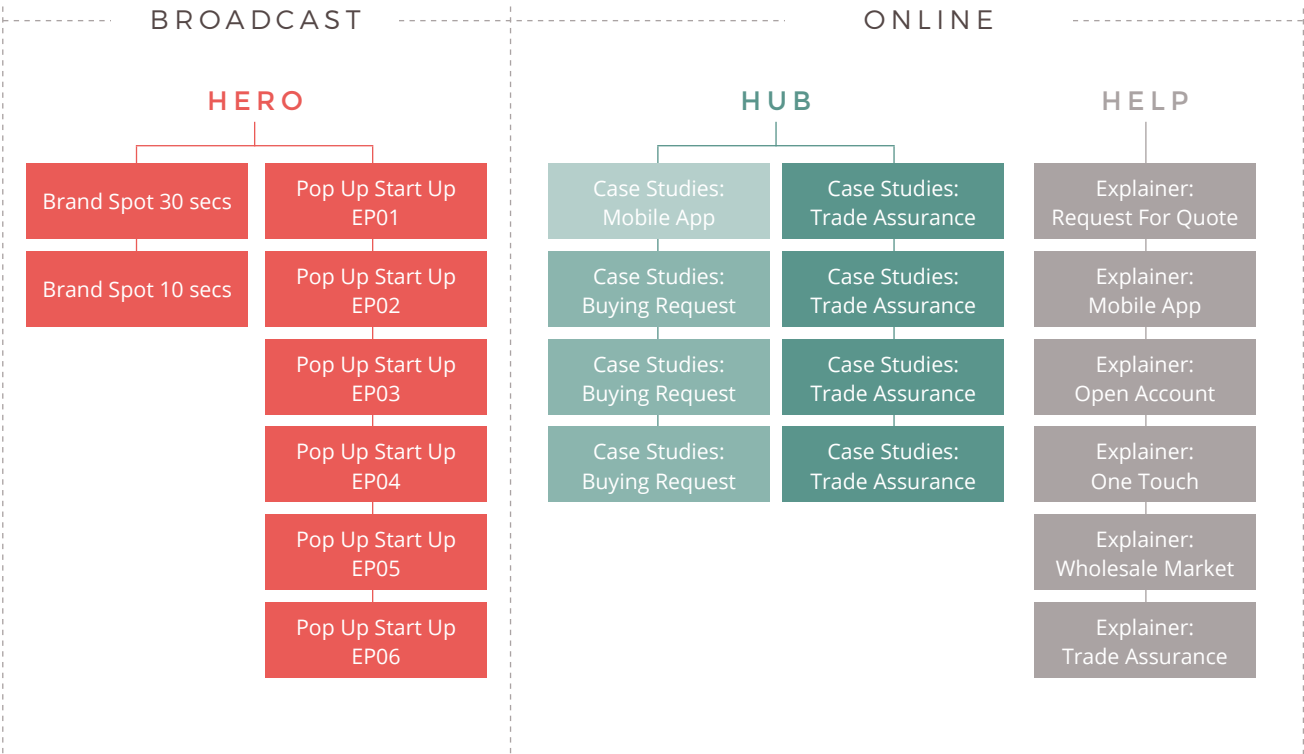
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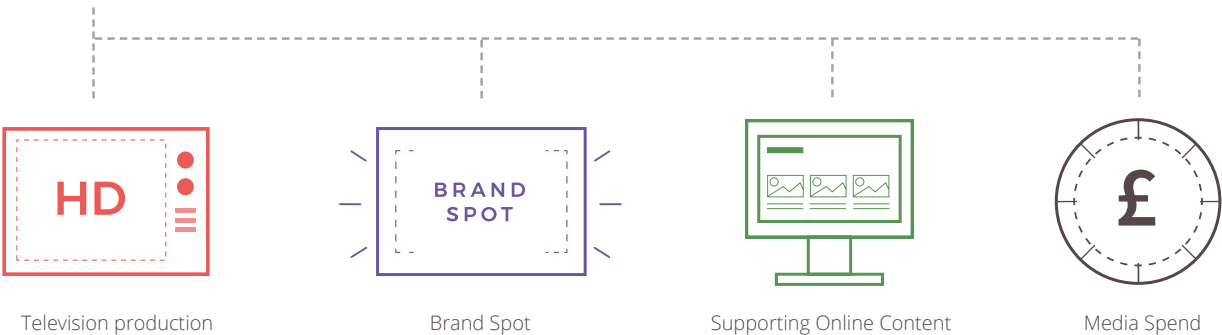


A full 360 campaign was created to support the broadcast series, using digital and social elements to immerse the audience in Alibaba.com values. Over the three month period (Dec-Feb) the campaign drove audience to a series microsite house on CNBC.com, with homepage take-overs strategically scheduled to coincide with the show's premieres.

Breakdown of 360 Campaign



BUDGET DISTRIBUTION



Further integration saw both CNBC and Alibaba.com use their own platforms and social media channels to drive engagement. CNBC featured contestants on its flagship morning news show, Squawk Box Europe.

The team monitored the campaign daily, optimising its reach and effectiveness at driving audience engagement with the show and its content.

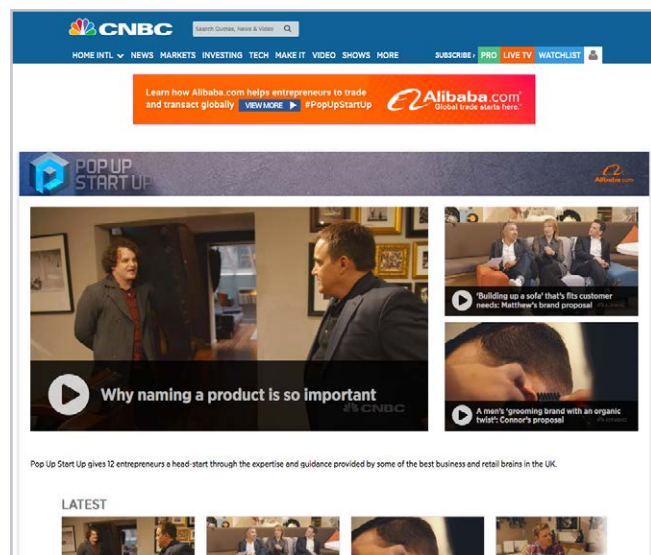
A comprehensive PR plan was also created to align with the transmission schedule for the series. Around the transmission the campaign PR teams would work seamlessly to brief the contestants and map the PR opportunities relating to their local and regional media as well as the vertical media relating to their business (for example, food and drink, technology, lifestyle).

Once the contestants were briefed, the PR teams pitched their stories to media. Contestants were made available throughout the week for interview to tell their story and why they were so passionate about their business. The PR teams worked tirelessly to ensure coverage was truly global.

01



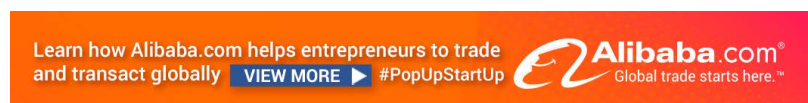
02



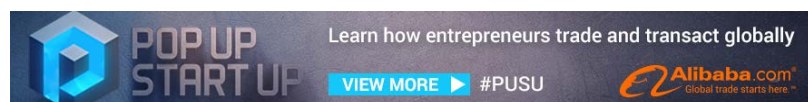
03



04



05



## Online and Microsite Campaign

01: Online promotional material for the show.

02 & 03: Pages from CNBC microsite for Pop Up Start Up.

04: One of the interactive, animated banners which directs viewers to Alibaba.com's website.

05: One of the interactive, animated banner which redirects viewers to Alibaba.com's website.



## RESULTS

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**The overall campaign received 653 million cross platform impressions with 110 million unique viewers reached on air (Content 63m, Commercial 47m).**

*Data source: Ipsos Affluent / Globalwebindex / Sky*

A brand study was completed prior to and post campaign with an online quantitative survey with 940 interviews across 5 markets and qualitative research of 12 interviews split between US and UK.

The results showed brand awareness of Alibaba.com increased by 31% during the campaign, brand familiarity by 127% and brand consideration by 266%. Also 83% of Pop Up Start Up viewers were aware of the Trade Assurance product compared to 29% of non viewers.

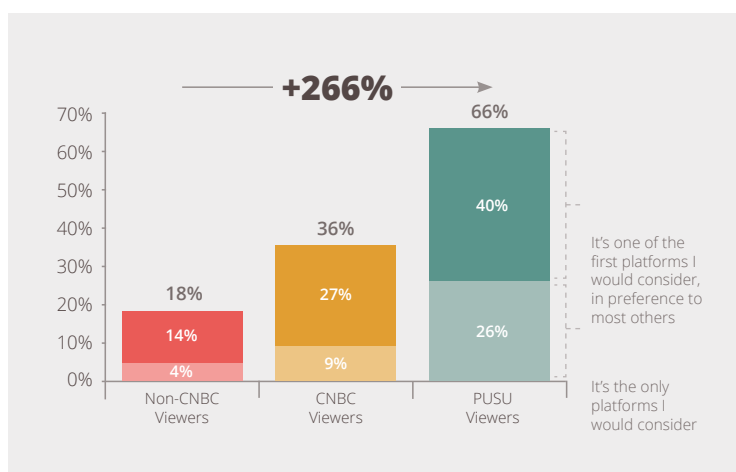
*Source: Catalyst Connect Survey, GlobalWebIndex: Mar 2017.*

*Branded keyword search, another critical KPI for the marketing campaign, increased by 250%.*

On the campaign microsite there was an average two minute dwell time on Pop Up Start Up content, PR was able to ensure average completion rate on campaign related videos was 64%.

### Significant Uplifts in Consideration for Alibaba.com

The show has had a clear impact upon future consideration with 2 in 3 viewers of PUSU now considering the brand



*Source: Catalyst Connect survey / GlobalWebIndex: Mar 2017*

*Q: Which of these statements best describes how likely you would be consider Alibaba.com as an ecommerce platform?*

*Base: PUSU viewers (171), CNBC viewers / users (626) Non-CNBC users / competition users (314)*

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## Brand Awareness of Alibaba.com increased by 31%.

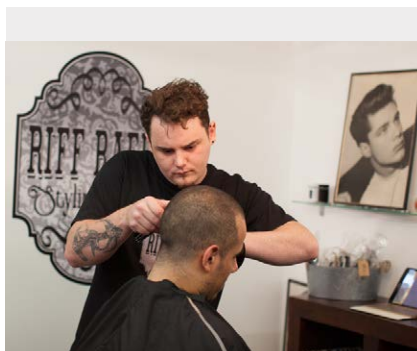
Data source: Ipsos Affluent / Globalwebindex / CNBC Catalyst Connect Pannel

### Key Ingredients for Success



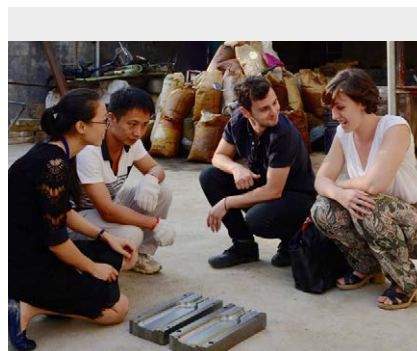
#### Not just entertaining - educational as well

"If the content provides me with some value, then I'm definitely going to watch. Entertainment is good too but if you can combine it with knowledge, it's better."



#### Less contrived, more authentic

"I feel like if it's on a news station it's going to be a little less dramatic, it might be a little more fact based. So as far as that goes I think it's a great match for CNBC."



#### A global view of business

"I think it's cool to see these people going overseas and working with their suppliers. So actually seeing them do it and go to the factories is interesting to me just because it's a behind the scenes kind of look that you don't normally see."

Source: Catalyst Connect survey / Qualitative user testing: Mar 2017.



“

Hub are a dedicated creative video agency that make a concerted effort to meet their client's needs. They are very professional always asking what more they can do. This project was a complicated global project involving a branded content television series, supporting online content with brand spots and online advertising distributed across the CNBC media network. The campaign was a great success exceeding the target objectives in growing brand awareness and branded keyword search.

*EMEA, Head of Marketing: Alibaba*



## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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