

BRAND MOMENTUM

THE # 1 GROWTH METRIC FOR EVERY BOARDROOM

The science behind business growth and long-term success

How new thinking explains the forces that shape consumer behaviour

TONY LEWIS

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Cover image by: Yesna99, 99Designs
Cartoons by: Gary Markstein
Book design by: SWATT Books Ltd

Printed in the United Kingdom
First Printing, 2024

ISBN: 978-1-0687405-0-3 (Paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-0687405-1-0 (Hardback)
ISBN: 978-1-0687405-2-7 (eBook)

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"This book is, in many ways, the culmination of a life lived in research."

Preface

Alex Brown
(Director of Insights, Vision One Research)

Many years ago, fresh out of university and eager to get my foot on the career ladder, I found myself staring vacantly at an Excel spreadsheet, trying and failing to make sense of all the tables, numbers and significance arrows that crowded the screen. I was working on my first project in my first junior research role. I thought I knew what our client wanted. I thought I had asked the right questions. But, confronted now with the results of my fieldwork, frankly, I was lost. There was no story. No strategy. To me, back then, it was just a lot of noise.

What was I thinking when I chose Research as a career path instead of taking a year off to backpack around Europe and misspend the last proper year of my youth?

As I was busy pulling my hair out, the office door swung open, and my new boss came barrelling through the room. We had yet to meet, but the place instantly lit up upon his arrival. Colleagues who hadn't so much as looked up from their computers all morning were now full of questions. It felt at that moment, that even the phones began to ring off the hook with potential new clients. There was a buzz in the air.

Tony Lewis introduced himself to me with a smile and a welcoming cup of take-out coffee. He sat down, and we spent the rest of the afternoon talking about research, exploring data, exchanging ideas, and figuring things out.

The 'figuring things out' has continued for nearly 15 years. From my career as a Research Executive to my current role as Director of Insights

at Vision One, Tony and I have navigated the often challenging yet always fascinating waters of the Market Research world.

Since then, I have strived to bring that same infectious curiosity and desire for discovery to our work, clients, and team of talented colleagues, all of which gave me the research bug all those years ago.

This book is, in many ways, the culmination of a life lived in research. Throughout his career, understanding how to build and grow successful brands has led to many fruitful and long-lasting relationships with a diverse range of clients and businesses, from start-ups to huge multinational corporations.

Tony and the team at Vision One have worked for nearly 25 years across B2B and consumer sectors to deliver strategic frameworks that have become an essential part of any organisation's brand toolbox. Our BrandVision model is fast becoming one of the most powerful tracking tools available on the market.

Tony has worked across almost every sector imaginable, and in doing so, he learned that one thing connected them all: their pursuit of growth. But even more fascinating was their sheer lack of understanding of that growth journey – about momentum, how to measure it, and how to implement it within a business.

The strategies set out in this book provide business decision-makers with a clear, directive framework for measuring their organisations' momentum, understanding its impact, and, crucially, implementing a strategy for building momentum in every part of their business.

As you might expect from a Market Research professional, the book is grounded in robust insights from both primary and secondary sources. The examples used to illustrate strategies for increasing momentum are accessible, informative, and thought-provoking.

What is fascinating about the book is how it captures the simple but crucial idea of growth and interweaves it into the wider business mission. Tony demonstrates in this book how businesses can only achieve momentum when setting the conditions for it throughout the organisation, be that

brand mission, proposition, advertising effectiveness, or strategy. Tony shows that momentum transcends all business levels and should be key in the decision-making process.

Brand Momentum is essential reading for anyone involved in a brand, which is to say, anyone and everyone in a business. For Marketers and C-suite in particular, a range of powerful tools are outlined to help in their understanding and implementation of a growth strategy.

Recognising the multifarious factors that influence a brand's perception, the idea that brands exist in the mind and are highly influenced by how we see them in a social context, all start to build a picture of the key factors determining a brand's momentum.

These culminate in the calculation and application of an organisation's Brand Velocity Score (BVS), a genuinely innovative measurement based on over 25 years of research and experience. The book successfully argues that any business looking to increase its momentum and grow should not only measure its BVS but also use it as a KPI to shape its current and future goals.

Tony and I recently met up in our new offices to discuss his plans for *Brand Momentum* and think about our plans for Vision One over the next year. The learnings about growth and momentum set out in this book are the foundations of our strategy, and we hope that through the continued monitoring and implementation of momentum, we will see the sustained growth the book talks about. We talked for hours, and I couldn't help but reflect that Tony still had the same enthusiasm, desire to discover, and visionary mindset that first gave me that research bug all those years ago.

It wouldn't be fair to say that this book is the end result of Tony's career in research because, knowing him as I do, he has plenty more up his sleeve. However, it is fair to say that when it comes to brand growth, he has figured things out.

"Little did he know that market research
would become part of his life forever!"

About the Author

Tony Lewis was born on 12th July 1963 in Horsham, West Sussex, England. He is the son of Patricia and Philip Lewis and brother to his sister Shirley. He spent most of his childhood and early family years in leafy Sussex and Surrey before moving up to the Lake District (Cumbria), undoubtedly one of Britain's wettest places!

Today, he is the CEO and founder of Vision One, a multi-award-winning international research agency. The company recently celebrated its 25th anniversary since Tony started the venture in 1999. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and has been a long-term UK Market Research Society member.

Perhaps it was fate that Tony's mother worked part-time as a market researcher in halls and various locations across southeast England as a child. Indeed, he often sat quietly during the summer holidays, watching his mother interview people. Little did he know that market research would become part of his life forever!

His career started in the marketing department at Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance Group. Over a period of 15 years, he also worked at other high-profile blue-chip companies, including Lyons Tetley, First Choice Holidays and the Arcadia Group. As he says, starting up his own business was an act of madness, as he had no experience running a company, let alone any experience working in a research agency. But something inside felt like it was the right decision, and he must at least try to make it a success.

The consultancy soon took off, initially working for Marks and Spencer, Debenhams, the Arcadia Group, Sovereign Holidays and New Islington & Hackney Housing Association. Originally trading as 'Interface', Tony soon changed to a new name, 'Vision One', which was inspired by a few things,

including the fact he was a big fan of the rock band Queen and their many hits throughout the 1970s and 80s, which included a song called 'One Vision'. In 2004, Vision One Research became a limited company with offices in Camden, London.

Winding forward to today, and with over 40 years working in marketing and research, Tony has become one of the most experienced researchers in the UK, having worked on over 500 brands of all shapes and sizes. Recent experience includes work for brands across many industries like Cancer Research UK, Coca-Cola, IKEA, Land Rover, Lego, Liberal Democrats, Lidl, L'Oreal, McDonalds, TUI, Unilever, Virgin and many more. He is a consumer psychologist, data analyst, and brand expert. He is skilled in most forms of research – qualitative, quantitative, neuro, behavioural and ethnographical. Essentially, whatever approach will get his clients the right insights!

This multidisciplinary research approach continues at Vision One. In 2023, the company took a step further by creating the Advanced Research Unit (ARU), tasked with tackling the most challenging insight problems – which remains his favourite hobby.

Tony and his son Jamie are in the process of creating The Brand Momentum Agency, a brand and marketing consultancy focusing on brand momentum and furthering the momentum story alongside Vision One.

Dedication



I dedicate this book to my wife Wendy, my son Jamie and our cat Mack*, who has sat beside me throughout the entirety of writing this book. I am eternally grateful for all their support, encouragement and inspiration, which have made this book possible and so enjoyable to write.

* Any typos you might find in this book are definitely Mack's fault – a result of stepping on this keyboard countless times in his attempt to gain some extra attention!

"What started out as a short 30-minute ebook has grown exponentially and become much more than I had hoped or ever anticipated."

Acknowledgements



The first person I must thank is my lifelong friend and wife, Wendy. She deserves special recognition for her continuous support, insightful ideas and unwavering belief in me throughout the year-long process of researching and writing this book. I'm also profoundly grateful to my son Jamie, whose arrival on May 12, 1995, changed my life for the better.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the team at Vision One. In particular, I thank Alex Brown, Kendra Furey, Dr Charlotte Baird and Adam Lunt for their encouragement and support of this project. The expertise and exceptional skills across the Vision One business have been invaluable in contributing to the research and ideas featured in this book.

I'm thankful to everyone who reviewed the early transcripts, offering their valuable thoughts, ideas, corrections and additional references. This includes: Susan Fermor, Anthony Harvison, Nigel Hollis, Richard Shotton, Mike Troy and Dan White.

Finally, thank you to the publishing team; Clare Robbin, Mark Beaumont-Thomas and Sam Pearce, along with Dan White, Jonny Moss and Gary Markstein who all played a crucial role in bringing the data and visuals to life.

"Monarch's downfall is a stark warning: brands that ignore their customers will surely risk a similar fate."

Prologue: The Discovery

Here's the origin story of many of the ideas in this book. A seemingly straightforward brand study led to an unexpected discovery.

In short, we uncovered an unexpected connection between brand dynamics and real-world outcomes when we undertook a project related to the airline industry, which happened to coincide with the demise of Monarch Airlines. This led to a deeper exploration of their demise and the lessons it provides boardrooms and brand owners across the globe.

So, the story behind this book started back in 2016, when I was working on an innovation project to create a more advanced brand image tracking system for Vision One's clients, which we later called BrandVision. The programme's focus was to provide a new measure of brand equity and to understand the forces that make brands attractive, and how these forces affect brand usage, loyalty and commitment.

We conducted numerous surveys and experiments, each aiming to test new ideas and provide normative benchmarks for launching this new brand tracking system. Each study focused on a different market, covering a wide range of brand metrics to ensure it was effective across business and consumer markets. Our research extended across entertainment, gaming, travel and leisure, digital and technology, grocery and packaged goods, financial services, retail, and distribution.

For no particular reason, it was focused on airlines on this occasion. While looking at the initial results, I recall noticing one standout finding

that was slightly shocking: one of the brands in question had an extremely weak score. This blip was for Monarch Airlines. Essentially, we recorded a very low rating on a metric, which we later renamed the 'Brand Velocity Score'. Indeed, this score was the lowest we had seen in any of our trials. This result wasn't particularly action-worthy, but what followed was! Within months of this result, the news hit the headlines that Monarch had gone into administration. We were shocked and excited by this, not by the brand being in trouble, but rather that we had correctly identified this outcome simply through a survey and a realisation that we may have stumbled on a tool to predict the future!

About Monarch

Up until 2017, Monarch was the largest airline ever to have ceased trading in the UK, until the collapse of Thomas Cook a couple of years later in 2019. The claimed factors for Monarch's demise were various. Firstly, vicious competition and excess capacity on routes to southern Europe from other low-cost airlines. Secondly, travel fears resulting from terrorism in North Africa and thirdly, Brexit fears causing the depreciation of the pound sterling, which increased operating costs such as fuel, aircraft leasing and airport landing fees.

Why Monarch?

The brand was under significant pressure, but indeed, all UK airlines were subject to the same pressures. This then begged the question, "So what was different about Monarch?" The research we conducted suggested the airline's collapse was partly due to an inherent weakness in the brand image, specifically that it was suffering from low velocity and declining brand momentum. The parallel wasn't lost on us that a plane needs a critical level of momentum and velocity to stay in the air...

Monarch's downfall is a stark warning: brands that ignore their customers will surely risk a similar fate. Staying relevant means listening, adapting and always looking ahead. But there is hope; this story and just a single number proves the power of consumer insights to predict the future, giving brands the essential tools to control their destiny.

Winding forward to today, our understanding of brand momentum that predicted the demise of Monarch has grown significantly. The importance of understanding the direction and velocity of a brand has shown itself to be one of the most critical brand metrics. Current brand and marketing frameworks all position brands as stable, solid objects or phenomena which never change (unless things go wrong). These frameworks have disguised the fact that the most important driver of growth is change, in particular, what we refer to as 'brand velocity', which is the speed at which a brand is seen to be growing or declining.

PART 1
DEFINING MOMENTUM

"Think less about being the biggest and
more about being unstoppable!"

Introduction

Why This Book?



I can teach you how to bewitch the mind and ensnare the senses. I can tell you how to bottle fame, brew glory, and even put a stopper in death.

J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Over the last decade, the marketing world has become obsessed with performance or activation marketing. This obsession means that, in many organisations, the art of brand building has been lost. Start-ups and young brands often seem to believe the world revolves around social media platforms and immediate results. The good news now is that new insights are emerging, emphasising that brand marketing is more critical than performance marketing.

This book is for disruptors, game-changers and visionaries. It's essential reading for C-suite, marketers, and anyone interested in brand building and growing a business. It will show you new ways to grow and improve business sales, built on experience, science and research. It dispels a few myths along the way, too. It's also for market researchers and anyone involved in evaluating brands and brand tracking. The book focuses on helping you create a roadmap for brand health, more effective marketing, and long-term success.

Today, every business is bombarded with promises of how to achieve growth, and every CEO and marketing function appears obsessed with growth at all costs. I began counting the number of books on brand and business growth but soon gave up when I discovered there were over 10,000! Surprisingly, I couldn't find any books specifically about the factor which I believe is equally important, momentum, and how to measure it. There were only a couple taking a more generalised concept of momentum and applying it to business, life, and the stock market! So why are there so few books and authors exploring it? The intention with *Brand Momentum* is to plug this gap.

Chapter I

What is Brand Momentum?

While a good leader sustains momentum, a great leader increases it.

John C. Maxwell

Brand momentum is the public's perception of a brand's performance and success. It measures the energy and influence of a brand on the customer and on its market.

Momentum combines two of the most powerful factors shaping brand perceptions: a brand's size and its velocity. Brand velocity is buyers' and users' perception of whether a brand is growing or not. Sustained brand momentum and sufficient velocity create a positive brand image, develop loyalty, and add value to a brand. They offer a glimpse into the future for many brands, and this predictive quality is unique to brand momentum theory.

Momentum is critical for growing and declining brands, both large and small, and is a must-have metric for all marketers and brand owners to use to measure success. It offers a simple-to-apply strategy and the secret to exponential brand growth.

So, to understand momentum, you need to track two things: how big your ship is (brand mass) and whether people think it's gaining speed or slowing down (brand velocity). Remember, bigger ships naturally lose a bit of speed the bigger they get. So, don't panic if your velocity

drops slightly as your brand gains loyal customers. Focus on that overall momentum score!

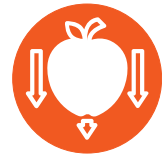
Brand momentum is the hidden energy stored within your brand, the fuel that keeps it growing and thriving. To measure it, keep things simple. Track how many people use your brand and ask the most important question of all: "Do you think this brand is growing, declining, or staying the same?" This taps into the amazing intuition of the crowd, revealing how people perceive your brand's journey.

Mastering momentum and your velocity are the secrets to building a brand that lasts. Think less about being the biggest and more about being unstoppable!

One of the hardest challenges for Marketing Directors is striking the right balance between short-term gains and planning for long-term, sustained success. Achieving one-year or even quarterly sales targets is more often rewarded with bonuses than is 10-year-sustained brand momentum – that is just a harsh fact of boardroom survival. So, developing brand momentum is a far longer game but this book sets out to demonstrate that placing trust in long-term rewards is something all boardrooms should embrace.

So, this book is not about creating short-term wins. What word do you usually associate with 'momentum'? For me it's the word 'building' – building momentum. So, this book sets out a systematic approach to building long-term growth and health through a steady and cumulative process, preparing your brand and business for the battles ahead.

Brand Momentum and the Laws of Physics



This book is a compilation of discoveries and insights I have accumulated over time, drawing inspiration from what at first sight might seem an unlikely source – the realm of physics and the ground-breaking work of Sir Isaac Newton. Newton presented his three laws of motion in the *Principia Mathematica Philosophiae Naturalis* in 1686. The intriguing parallels and analogies between brands and the laws of motion offer a unique perspective to explain consumer behaviour and how to achieve brand momentum.

In the realm of branding, the concept of momentum mirrors the fundamental principles of physics, offering a unique perspective on the behaviour and growth of brands. Just as objects in motion tend to stay in motion unless acted upon by an external force, brands that cultivate momentum are more likely to sustain their forward trajectory in the marketplace.

1. Consider Newton's first law of motion: an object will not alter its motion unless acted upon by a force. Similarly, brands that have built momentum through strategic positioning, effective marketing and strong consumer engagement are less susceptible to external disruptions and will keep going for longer.
2. Newton's second law, which states that the force on an object equals its mass multiplied by its acceleration, can be applied to brands as well. Brands with a higher mass or velocity will exert more influence or force on consumers and the market. This force will create greater attraction – helping brands grow and outpace the competition.
3. Newton's third law, often summarised as "for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction," underscores the interconnectedness

of brands within the market ecosystem. Brands that exert a strong influence on consumers evoke reactions from competitors and stakeholders, shaping the competitive landscape and influencing market dynamics.

By understanding and leveraging the principles of momentum, brands can navigate the complexities of the modern marketplace with greater clarity and confidence. Like skilled physicists manipulating the forces of nature, marketers can harness the power of momentum to propel their brands toward success, shaping their trajectory and influencing their long-term growth and viability.



This book delves into how businesses create energy and momentum through their actions, especially in marketing and advertising. These activities are vital for boosting growth and building brand momentum. However, they face challenges from various sources, such as competition, societal trends, economic factors and political pressures. Understanding and overcoming these challenges is crucial. In the face of all the confusion from these opposing forces, it is critical to be able to measure your brand's performance and trajectory. To do so, we have created a useful and accurate measurement tool, the Brand Velocity Score (BVS). Unlike other metrics, the BVS has genuine predictive power. It's essential for marketers aiming for ongoing growth and longevity.

Core Beliefs Surrounding Brand Momentum



Brand Momentum introduces a new theory and approach to brand building, born out of evidence-based research, with predictive powers to signpost the future. It aims to give marketers a new way of thinking about brands that will help create new strategies to achieve longer-lasting success.

The ideas in this book are based on my first-hand experience working with brands, and brand tracking studies. However, it also borrows ideas from academia, other evidence-based research studies, and inspirations from hundreds of authors and researchers. It's also built on countless sleepless nights and twice as many café lattes to compensate!

This book is about the art and science of creating brand velocity and momentum. As you will see, it's a straightforward philosophy that is easy to apply and is measured by asking just one question to generate your Brand Velocity Score.

Using these metrics will enable you to see how the public perceives your brand, and give you a truer measurement beyond raw sales numbers as to whether it is growing or declining. It will quantify this with a straightforward, understandable score. This score reflects your brand's standing in consumers' minds. Tracking this regularly (e.g., annually, quarterly or more often) should run in parallel with the routine monitoring of your financial performance and other business indicators.

This single metric will not only help the direction of brands to be predicted, but it will also assist brands in reaching their maximum potential, growing faster, and, more importantly, lasting longer.

You may be familiar with an alternative brand image scoring method, the Net Promoter Score, as put forward by Fred Reichheld. His book *The Ultimate Question*, provides a measurement system and a blueprint for growth by focusing on loyalty and the degree to which customers recommend a brand. This book sets out an alternative brand image measurement system, to focus brand and marketing efforts by measuring brand momentum and building a strategy around that.

Brand momentum is based on three core ideas and beliefs:

1. **Brand momentum and the Brand Velocity Score (BVS) are the most important metrics for marketers.** And when fully understood, most other consumer brand metrics will pale into insignificance.
2. **Brands are in the mind.** They are mental constructs, and the best way to create strong brands starts by understanding the customer.
3. **Brands only succeed if built for the long term.** While short-term gains are significant, they are often tactical and should not be mistaken for long-term success. True, sustainable success is only reached by achieving lasting brand momentum.

Everybody is welcome to freely adopt brand momentum and the processes outlined in this book.

It's important to emphasise that this is just the beginning of my journey. While I have learned much about momentum in recent years, I acknowledge there is still a lot more to discover and questions still to answer. With many exciting projects in the pipeline, we're dedicated to the quest to uncover more about brand momentum, and how brand owners can use it to their advantage.

The Search for Momentum



Marketing and business leaders intuitively understand the universal appeal of momentum. Despite this strong interest, very few know how to measure it, and even fewer possess the knowledge to act on it.

Before writing this book, I had assumed that the momentum metric was well known and understood, but probably not by the majority. How wrong I was! While I have been unable to find any books about measuring or using momentum, I needed to find out whether it was currently being applied in the boardroom. So, we surveyed over 400 marketing leaders and CEOs to determine their awareness and usage of the metric.

Beyond establishing the critical importance of growth, our research explored whether CEOs and CMOs were aware of and interested in the momentum metric. If so, was it used to evaluate their brand marketing activities? Another area of interest was to see if momentum, or a similar metric, was being used by businesses to inform their strategies.

The findings clearly showed that only a tiny proportion used or prioritised momentum as a KPI. However, it was encouraging to see that the research discovered that nine out of ten business and marketing leaders were very interested in the concept; it also confirmed that leaders were in search of momentum. Clearly, there was a gap in the market for this book and that there was a need for the momentum story to be told.

The survey results and other conversations with business leaders revealed another startling fact: there was no consensus on which KPI was the most important. There were no clear standout metrics with broad appeal or widespread usage, and the most common metrics were related to customer satisfaction and brand awareness. However, a small group of CMOs, less than one in ten, prioritised a momentum-related metric as their main KPI – suggesting that a few are utilising this metric. Nonetheless, this also implies that this book faces a significant challenge, if my hopes of helping businesses discover and adopt momentum in every boardroom are to be realised.

To be honest, these results deflated me. I couldn't understand why so few companies used momentum or other growth metrics. Perhaps it was because those in the know were keeping it a secret? But this didn't make much sense. So, I was left with the notion that neither academia, marketing, nor business experts were aware of it, which would certainly explain why no one had written about it.

Given that virtually all businesses are focused on growth, don't you think the most natural question in the world could be to ask how consumers feel the brand is doing and whether they think it is growing or not? Surely, if a brand does its job, people will perceive it as evolving with a sense of direction, and purpose. Good examples are Virgin, Microsoft and Apple where they not only adapt but create new opportunities without compromising their core values or credibility.

We will revisit momentum and other metrics in more detail in Chapter IV, Measuring Brand Health. In the next chapter, we shall look at some of the ideas around how brands evolve throughout brand life stages, the importance of being first, brand mortality, and brand energy.

Marketers appear obsessed with brand reputation and image, and to such an extent, this focus is possibly to the detriment of brand growth. This focus on brand image could ultimately lead to a stagnant brand or even a tarnished marketing career if the brand doesn't perform. CMOs certainly have the tools to create growth, so if they are not going to lead the charge on growth – who is? The chances are it will fall to someone else – either the CEO or the Chief Strategy Officer (CSO).

The piece of the jigsaw that I believe many marketers are missing is the fact that increasing brand size and consumer perceptions of growth are the best way to improve brand reputation in the long term. One of the easiest ways to improve the brand image is simply to create brand velocity, and marketing has this at its fingertips.

Key Insight

The momentum paradox, in place today in so many companies, is that every business wants momentum, but very few seem to know how to measure or harness it. Understanding this metric is the key to unlocking sustainable growth.

Quick Definitions/Glossary



Included here are some mathematical equations, which may at first sight look complicated! In fact, as you will see in their use throughout this book, they are merely a shorthand way of describing some of the marketing principles around brand momentum.

Brand awareness (%) – Prompted awareness of a brand where consumers are presented with the brand name, typically within the market or category concerned.

Brand mass (m) – The number of users/buyers of a brand, i.e. the size of a brand.

Brand purpose – The reason for being for a company and its brands. This is often related to how the brand supports the wider world and tends to be more altruistic in nature.

Brand Velocity Score (BVS)* **–** The Brand Velocity on a scale of 0-100

Category entry points – The thoughts that buyers have as they transition into making a category purchase (e.g., Usage occasions).

Distinctive brand assets – Elements that can trigger the brand into memory for category buyers (excluding the brand name).

Impulse (i) – The change in momentum (i = mv2 – mv1).

IPA – The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising

Kinetic energy (e) – e ½ v2/m, i.e. the energy of a moving object.

* Brand Velocity Score and BVS are trademarks of Tony Lewis and Vision X

Mental availability – Mental availability is when the buyer notices, recognises or thinks of a brand when considering a purchase.

Momentum (p) – Mass times Velocity (m x v).

Net Promoter Score (NPS)† **–** Measure of the potential for word of mouth or 'Buzz' (NPS = promoters minus detractors).

User imagery – Perception of the target customer of a brand (who the brand is for).

Velocity (v) – The speed and direction of travel of an object.

WARC – World Advertising Research Centre

† Net Promoter®, NPS®, are registered trademarks of Bain & Company, Inc., NICE Systems, Inc., and Fred Reichheld.