

Shorter ads deliver better attention on social media

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Report found that active and passive attention are important on social media (Photo: Getty Images)

Study has shown that ads on Twitter delivered the most total attention, while TikTok had the strongest active attention.

Shorter ads that are tailor-made for a social media feed are more effective and efficient than longer ad units, according to a new study that measured active and passive attention across Twitter, TikTok, Facebook and Instagram.

Considering active and passive attention provides useful signals on how creative and media should be planned, which should form part of a campaign strategy.

Twitter performed best on total attention, which includes passive and active, while TikTok had the strongest active attention. Attention for Facebook ads increased substantially once volume was turned on, but the message across the category was clear.

The report, commissioned by Twitter and OMD and carried out by Amplified Intelligence, studied nearly 4,000 respondents in the UK, France, Canada and Mexico, looking at 16 test ads and “in the wild” ads generating 20,300 views.

It used Amplified Intelligence’s technology that measures how much active and passive attention a respondent pays to each ad – and this is important because not all attention is created equal. Both passive attention (eyes on screen) and active attention (eyes on ad) contribute to the “shape of attention” for an individual’s use of a social media platform, which can provide important insights to drive short-term brand choice and long-term brand preference in advertising.

The study revealed an interplay between active and passive attention in feed environments can deliver a positive impact on brand choice and brand preference. Twitter generated the highest total attention seconds overall (5.3), including the highest share of passive attention.

It also delivered the highest index for post-exposure brand choice and mental availability (MA) uplift. This means that within feed environments where active attention is quick and fleeting, passive attention can add an impact by driving up total attention and time on screen for the ad.

Twitter's head of agency research Lisa Cowie told *Campaign* that what has surprised her and clients is how much attention is diminished for ads that run beyond the six seconds mark.

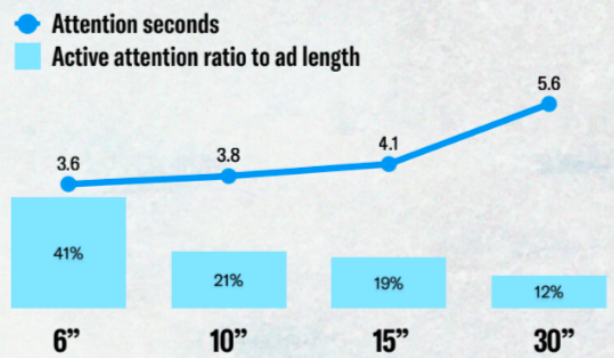
"Some of the outcomes that we have seen are based on three or four seconds of attention when the ad is great, highly optimised and with upfront branding and products," she said.

"Until now the 'passive attention' seemed like it's not desirable or positive, but when you've got this type of attention you can keep people there longer. You have this interplay between active and passive, which was the unique differentiator for Twitter."

Short bursts of attention are reflective of the feed

Shorter ads are more efficient.

In scrollable formats, ad length is not related to active attention seconds. So, putting longer ads on feed formats doesn't, by default, bestow more attention, it just gives you more wastage (non attention).



Advertisers should aim for ads that run for 6 seconds rather than longer formats of 10 seconds or 15 seconds.

Social media feeds, by design, work on short bursts of attention, and the study showed that in scrollable/swipeable formats, the ad length is not related to active attention seconds (see chart below).

Ads that were six, 10 and 15 seconds earned the same level of active attention as four seconds, while a 30-second ad only increased the active attention to ad length ratio by another two seconds. In feed formats, longer ads won't translate to more attention.

The *Attention in the Feed* report found that for ads designed for a feed, there was a strong relationship to mental availability uplift after just one exposure. For example, a six-second ad for an FMCG brand that delivered between two and four attention seconds, drove significant mental availability uplift across all platforms. Mental availability refers to the likelihood of a brand to come to mind during the purchasing process.

Due to differences in how people consume content across platforms, as well as variations in ad real estate, the same creative can perform differently depending on the platform on which it's viewed.

Amplified Intelligence founder and chief executive Karen Nelson-Field said that frequency can be useful if an ad is not properly seen the first time, but this was more akin to “righting a wrong”.

“The reality is if an ad isn't shown the first time for long enough, it does need another occasion for it to sort of sink in, we've shown all along that more attention is important for memory retention,” she said. However, she warned that too much frequency can be “a waste” and “the damage is done not to the brand, but it's done to the efficiency of the campaign”.

“Without a doubt, the amount of passive attention that Twitter gets really pushes the needle in terms of total attention and the ability then for that to translate to mental availability and outcomes. And that's, that's rare for a feed, if you like, so that's probably a good comparison.”



OMD Worldwide managing director of product, Jean-Paul Edwards said the study confirmed that “you shouldn't be recycling old messages and creative from TV for social”.

He added: “What surprised me, and there was a fair amount of nuance within that, is that these individual platforms are big enough now that they actually justify thinking about individually, by optimising for the specific human experience that happens on each of those platforms. They justify the smaller creative costs to optimise the platform.”

Edwards believes the study provides fuel for thought about how creative and media should come together to consider attention at the start of campaign planning.

“Once we understand that, it can help enlighten the creative brief and also the media brief to come together to a significant degree.”

Nelson-Field, a global expert on the role of attention in media, believes these studies show the role of attention in advertising is less about being a currency, and more about providing signals.

“I often think about where this is going and where the ecosystem is going to land. And the more I think about it, the more I think attention provides signals to creative, signals to buying and signals to planning versus a currency unto itself. There’s something in it also from a strategy perspective.”

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The image shows a promotional graphic for the 'Campaign US Sawww' blog. The top half has a red background with the word 'campaign' in a black serif font and 'US' in a smaller red font to its right. Below this, the word 'Sawww' is written in a large, white, stylized font. Underneath 'Sawww', the text 'A BLOG FOR MARKETERS' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. On the right side of the red area, there is a portrait of a woman with long brown hair, smiling. Below the red area, the text 'by Alison Weissbrot' is written in a black serif font. At the bottom of the graphic, the article title 'The three factors driving Google's cookie delay' is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

by Alison Weissbrot

The three factors driving Google's cookie delay



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