

The Round Up

Thinkbox research 2022



thinkbox 

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Foreword

From Matt Hill
Research & Planning Director



It's a good time to be in media research. We've never needed it more to make sense of the change happening around us, and to help planners see into the kaleidoscope of media – how it's changing and how it perhaps isn't.

Subjects that might have stirred a brief flurry of interest not that long ago – like attention – are now centre stage, front page, and leading the industry agenda.

Research is Thinkbox's engine and much of its fuel. As the trade body for TV advertising at a time when the video landscape is changing so quickly, the opportunity to create meaningful research to help shape or re-frame debates – but most importantly to help advertisers – has never been greater.

During the last year, there have been a number of significant Thinkbox research initiatives, which 'The Round Up' brings together. We've also included our pick of the best media research from around the world that we had nothing to do with.

In the coming pages you'll read about the most comprehensive look at broadcaster VOD advertising to date; a fresh look at the advertising attention debate to understand whether measurement is heading in the right direction; a study exploring the differences in media consumption and perception between those who work in media and the average person in the UK; and results from the latest data update to our Media Mix Navigator tool.

I hope you find this compendium useful and insightful. If you have any questions, or want us to come in and go through the research in more detail with you or your team, just let us know.

Media Mix Navigator

In turbulent times, businesses become more risk averse. And although guarantees aren't available, guidance is. The new databank behind the updated Media Mix Navigator and the guidance it provides hopefully offer advertisers some reassurance for 2023. It will help them make the evidence-based business case for continued investment in advertising, and how to mitigate risk, while costs come under even greater scrutiny.

A free media mix allocation tool

Advertisers want visibility and reassurance that their media investments will deliver. Rolling the dice might be an option during the very best of times. In these worst of times, we want the safest bets possible.

It's in this context that we overhauled and updated the vast econometric dataset that sits behind the Media Mix Navigator, Thinkbox's free media mix allocation tool.

The tool gives an idea of the optimal media plan and the likely return you should expect given the context of your specific business. It's designed for those without their own econometric analysis, or as a benchmarking device for those with.

So what does the new data tell us? Three main things...



The White Lotus, Sky Atlantic

Methodology

- Media Mix Navigator was first launched in 2019 (then called the Demand Generator), but a lot has happened since then, and it needed to be brought bang up to date.
- It now covers 2018 to 2021, with econometric data from Mediacom, Wavemaker, Gain Theory, and Mindshare for 52 brands across 14 product categories and 10 media channels collectively representing some £2.2 billion in ad spend.

1. Both linear TV and BVOD deliver good ROI performance

Looking at total ROI delivery (i.e. including both short- and long-term return), data from the Media Mix Navigator database shows that linear TV and BVOD deliver the best ROI performance of all video channels.

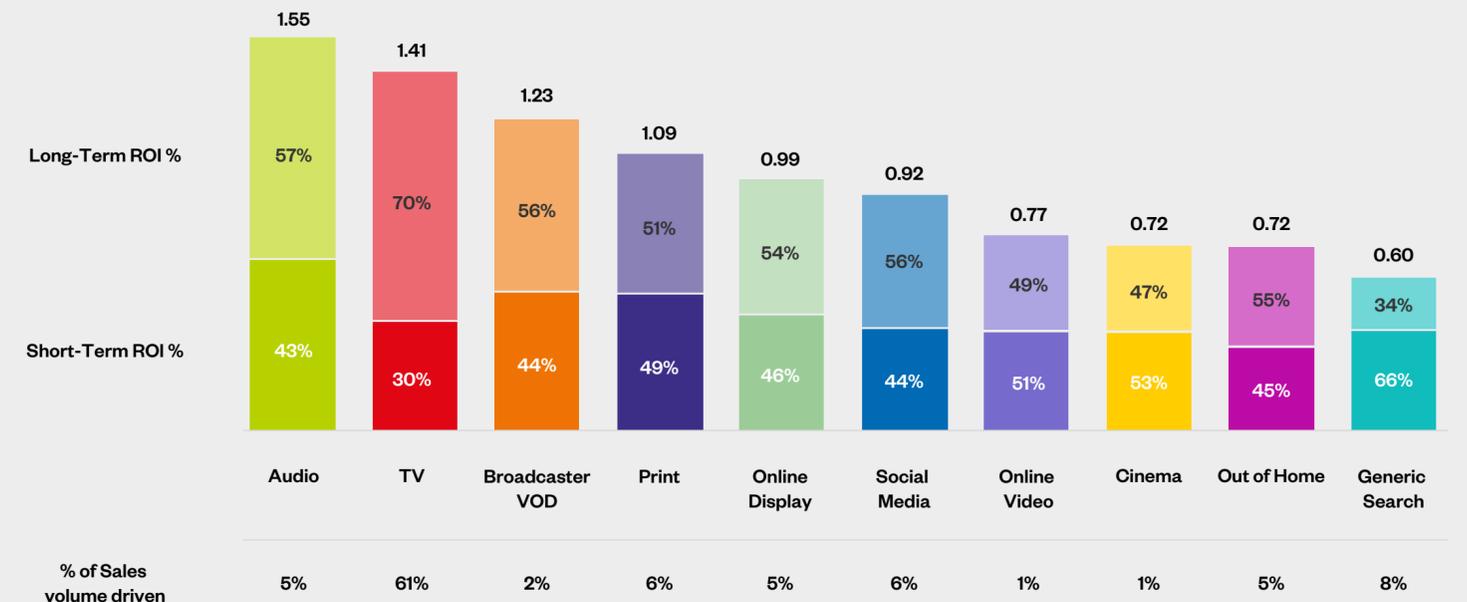
Shown as indices to account for the varying product categories in the dataset, whilst BVOD performs stronger than linear TV in terms of short-term ROI, the addition of the longer-term effect places linear TV at the higher end of the scale in terms of efficiency, becoming the second most efficient channel, after audio.

What really matters in terms of effectiveness is the ability of a channel to deliver a strong efficiency at scale, and this is where linear TV excels – accounting for 61% of the total sales volume delivered by media investments.



David Mitchell's Outsiders, Dave

Total (short and long-term) ROI Index Channel Hierarchy vs. % of Sales Volume driven



Source: Media Mix Navigator, Sep. 2022, MediaCom / Wavemaker / Mindshare / Gain Theory

2. Product sectors make a big difference to optimal channel mix

The Media Mix Navigator tool shows that significant differences in budget allocation across product sectors are required to achieve the best return.

Across all categories, the optimal budget allocation to video channels for an average brand situation is 63%. However, the optimal budget allocation in the FMCG product category, for example, requires a larger share (95%) allocated to video formats.

Similarly, automotive (80%) has a high share of investment in visual based media because it's a 'visual' kind of category. Additionally, print receives a higher proportion of the budget than in other categories because of the specialist

automotive press titles that communicate with consumers who are in market.

Online retail has the lowest blend of AV, but with a higher proportion of budget going into Search than other product categories.

The Media Mix Navigator tool accounts for nuances between categories in order to help users determine the optimal media mix for a given brand situation.

3. There are safer waters to swim in

The two measures that financial teams care about the most when assessing a potential investment are return and risk. As we navigate uncertain times, the focus on the risk of any given investment will increase.

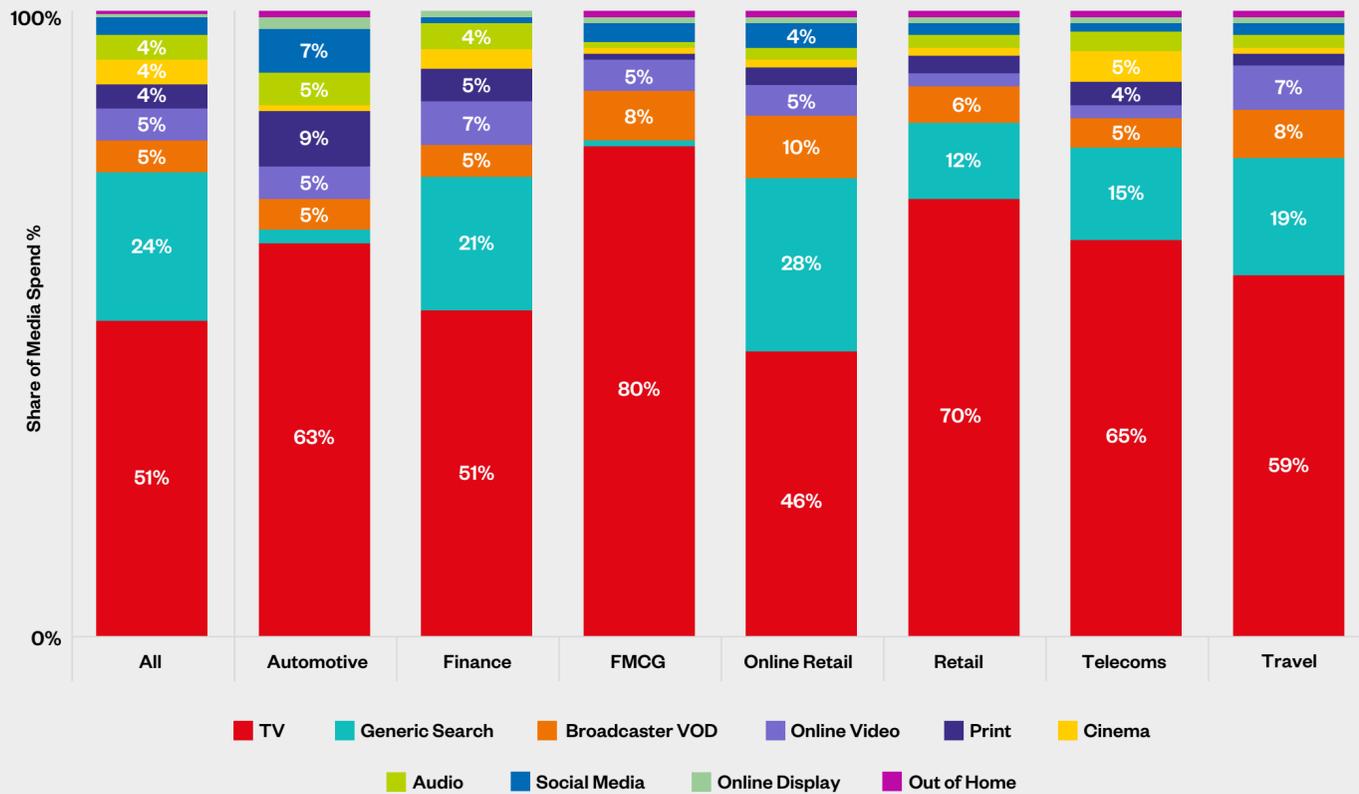
The chart below displays the latest data on the variability of returns by channel. Low variability means that this channel is more likely to return a predictable ROI (less risky), whilst high ROI variability means the opposite (riskier).

As you can see, BVOD is the most predictable (therefore least risky) channel, delivering 20% of variance compared with the median return. This was closely followed by linear TV with a variability of 24%. Social media has the highest variability of return of all channels.

It's worth noting that high variability works both ways: there's the possibility of achieving a much higher than average ROI, as well as a much lower one. Using this data can help planners and CMOs discuss their attitudes to risk for a given media plan and adjust accordingly.

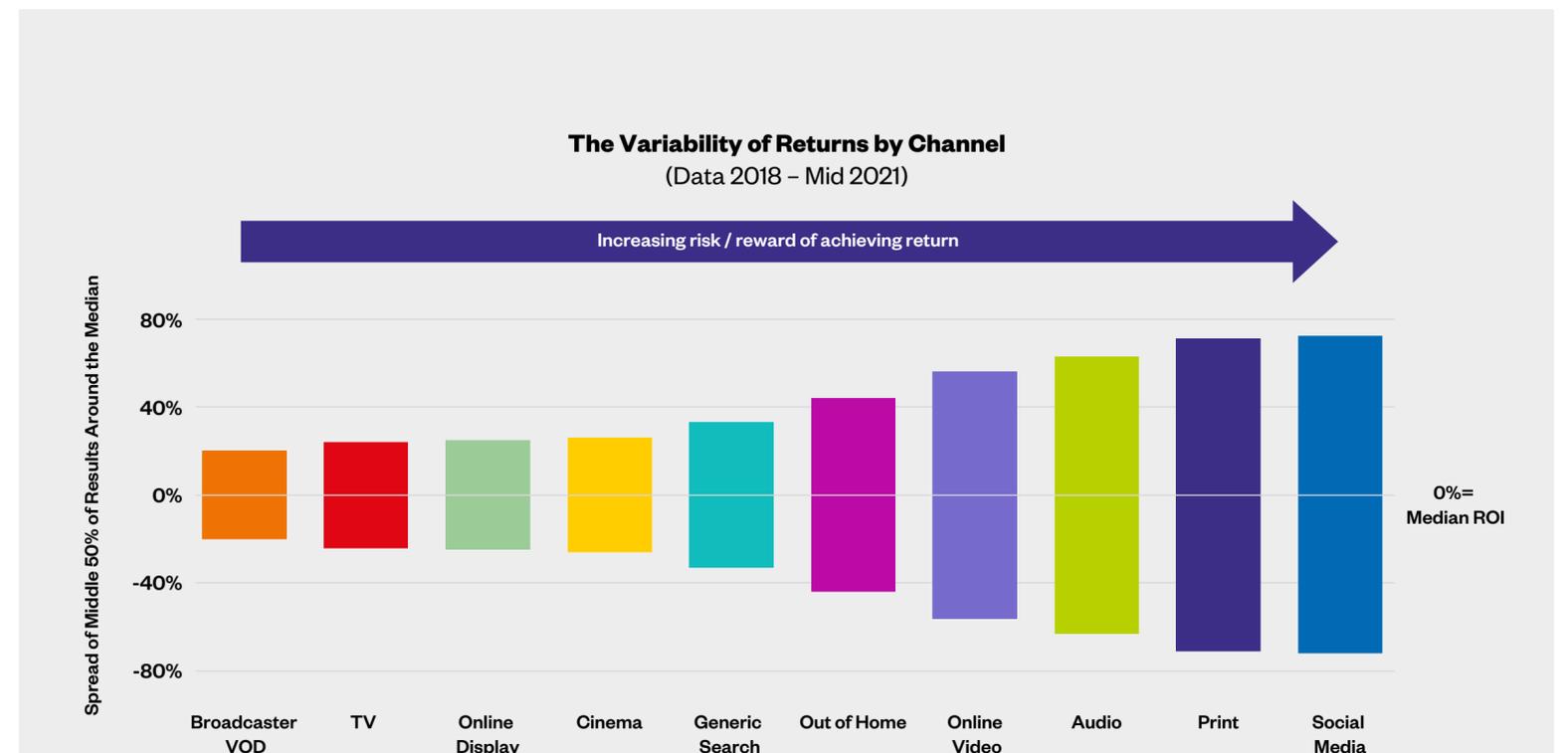
So the question is what matters more: higher confidence in a certain result, or the potential for a higher return with the risk it may backfire?

[Try the tool for yourself here](#)



Source: Media Mix Navigator, Sep. 2022, MediaCom / Wavemaker / Mindshare / Gain Theory. Channels with sufficient sector level benchmarks only. Based on £500m brand size (£300m for FMCG), 11-20% online sales, high risk tolerance and media budget of £20m.

The predictability of payback varies greatly by channel



Source: Media Mix Navigator, Sep. 2022, MediaCom / Wavemaker / Mindshare / Gain Theory

Adnormal Behaviour

It's been a decade since Thinkbox's first "Ad Nation", a landmark study exploring the differences in media consumption and perception between those who work in media and the average person in the UK. Back then – and again in an update in 2016 – we discovered a chasm between the media consumption habits of the UK public and media professionals. Has this changed since?

Key findings

- Adland's media behaviour has been changed by the pandemic more than the UK public's.
- Both the UK public and media professionals underestimate the proportion of live TV viewing that occurs.
- Media professionals have a good feel for the penetration of most platforms but overestimate new and emerging platforms.
- Both groups view TV as being the most trusted, most emotional, and most memorable form of advertising.

Methodology

- "Adnormal Behaviour" was based on a random probability survey by Ipsos of 1,158 people weighted to be representative of the national population, and a survey of 216 media professionals.
- It examined claimed attitudinal and behavioural data on TV content and viewership, device/platform usage, and perceptions of advertising.

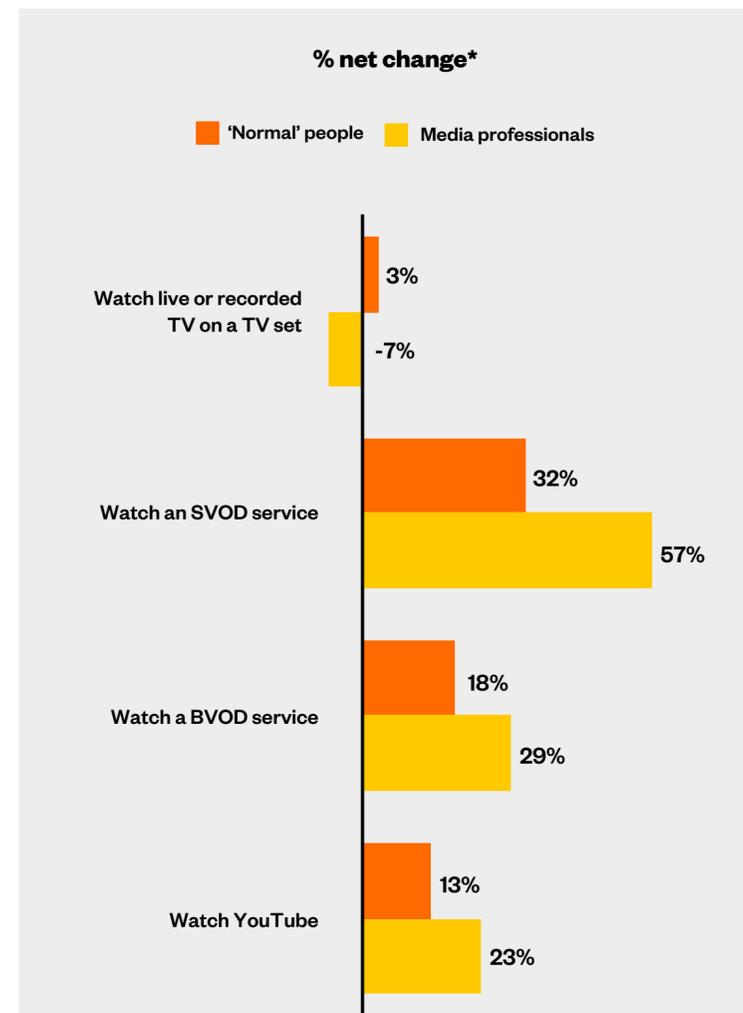
Adland's media behaviour has been changed by the pandemic more than the UK public

To understand more about the Covid effect, the Adnormal Behaviour study asked respondents to think about whether the frequency with which they did particular activities had been impacted in any way since the start of the pandemic (so whether it increased, decreased or stayed the same).

Specifically focusing on the consumption of video-based content and looking at the net change for each activity, data shows that 'normal' people saw an increase in change across the board – including a slight increase in live/recorded TV viewing on a TV set.

However, two key differences can be seen in the habit changes reported by media professionals. Firstly, their consumption of subscription service (SVOD), broadcaster VOD (BVOD), and YouTube increased at a higher rate than 'normal' people. And second, they reported a drop in live/recorded TV viewing.

Whilst media professionals saw a larger shift in their consumption habits, it is clear that the UK public did not mimic the same behaviour to such a significant effect.



Source: Adnormal Behaviour, 2022, Ipsos / Thinkbox. Q.TNAN23/23a. Thinking about now, as compared to February 2020 (prior to the start of the pandemic), how has the frequency with which you do each of the following been impacted, if at all? Base: 'normal' people (1,158); Media professionals (216). *Net change = % stating frequency of doing activity increased minus % stating frequency of doing activity decreased

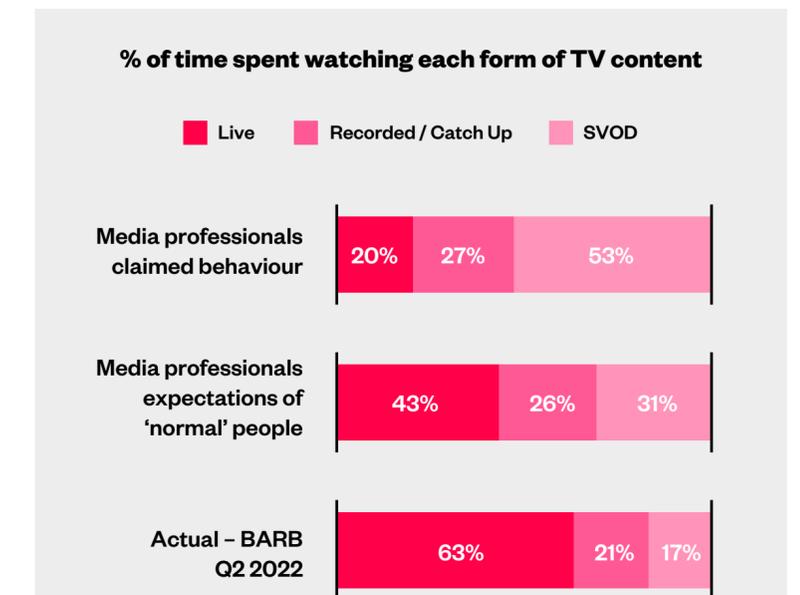
We all underestimate the amount of live TV viewing

While it is true that viewing is shifting from live to on demand, this is often over-estimated – and this was seen again in this study.

The media professionals we spoke to claimed that over half of their time spent watching TV was spent watching SVOD (53%), with recorded/catch up accounting for 27%, and live TV 20%.

Predicting what the UK public in general did, media professionals acknowledged there would be a difference. They thought SVOD would get a smaller share (31%), recorded/catch-up would be similar to their own behaviour (26%), and live TV would account for a lot more (43%).

The truth is somewhat different. The actual data from BARB from the same time period as the survey shows that live TV accounts for 63% of the UK's viewing, recorded/catch up accounts for 21%, and SVOD is actually the smallest with just 17%. The proportion of time people spend watching live TV is clearly being underestimated!



Percentage labels shown on the chart have been rounded.

Source: Adnormal Behaviour, 2022, Ipsos / Thinkbox. Q.AN14 / TN14. Of the time you (the British public) spend watching television, what proportion of that time (do you think) is spent watching... Base: Media professionals (216). BARB, Q2 2022, Adults 16+, Online Multiple Screens Network – viewing across four screens – TV sets, tablet, PCs and smartphones.

Adland has a good feel for the penetration of most platforms but overestimates new and emerging platforms

Since Thinkbox's original "Ad Nation" study, there have been a number of other ad industry studies – including Reach Solutions' "The Empathy Delusion" and Newsworks' "Sample of One" – that have sought to have a positive impact on media professionals' ability to better estimate the media consumption patterns of the UK public. They appear to have succeeded.

Despite claiming very different usage levels themselves, the media professionals' estimates of the penetration of some social media apps - Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and Snapchat – were within a 10 percentage-point margin of the penetration reported by the UK public.

Having different media consumption habits from 'normal' people is not materially an issue as it is adland's job is to understand the audience, and this study shows that they're heading in a better direction.

Yet, some gaps remain – especially in perceptions and use of some social media platforms – specifically the newer and emerging ones which look to be overstated in their usage. For example, 17% of the UK public claims to have used TikTok in the last three months. However, the media professionals put this at 35%, more than double the actual figure.

Media professionals and the public have similar views on TV advertising

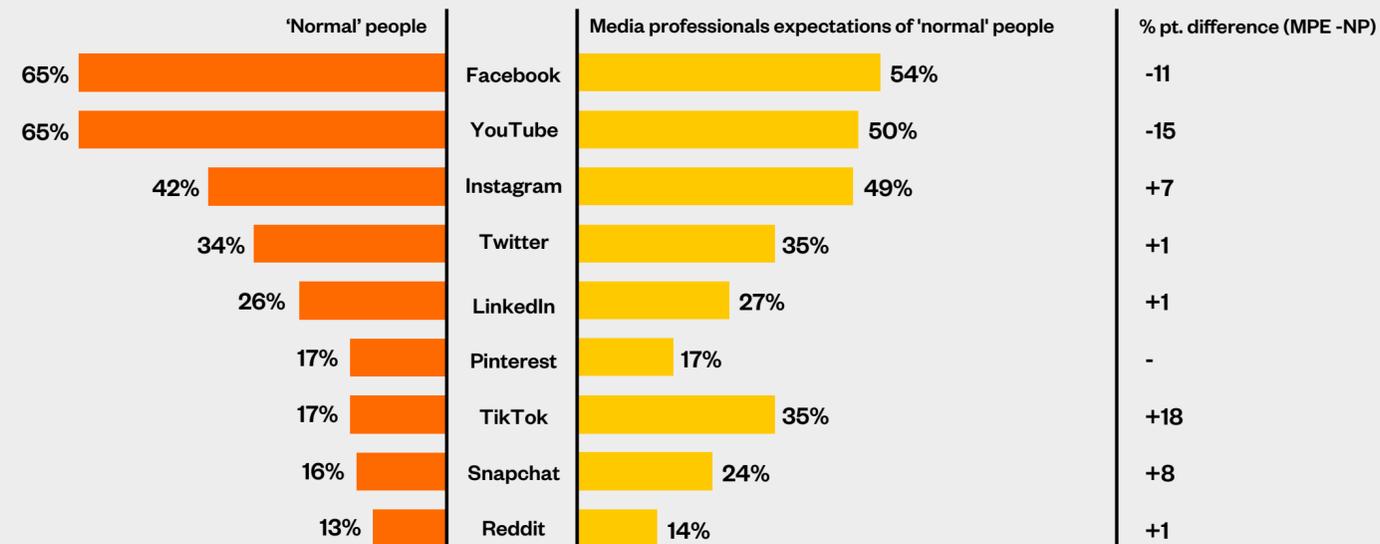
When both the public and the media professionals were asked where they were most likely to find advertising that they liked, trusted, or would stick in their memory, among other attributes, TV received the highest number of mentions for nearly all statements.

For example, TV was the leading source of advertising that the UK public liked (40%), that made them laugh (52%), and that they felt made brands, products, or services more famous (66%).

Looking specifically at where they were most likely to find advertising that they trust, makes them feel emotional, and draws their attention, TV performed favorably for both samples. However they differed on their second choice: media professionals thought cinema advertising was the second highest performer across most attributes, but the public had social media as the second highest ranking medium for the majority of statements.

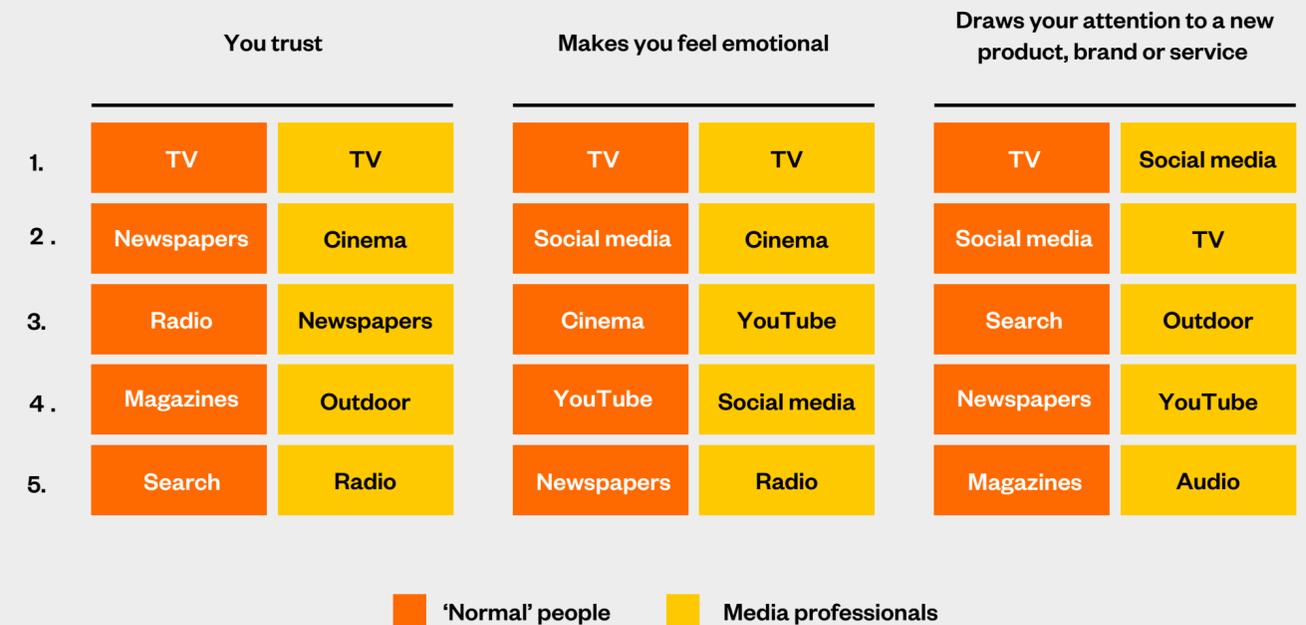
[Download all the charts here](#)

% who accessed website / service / app in past 3 months



Source: Adnormal Behaviour, 2022, Ipsos / Thinkbox. Q.TN / AN21. Which, if any, of the following websites, apps or services have you visited or used in the last 3 months?
Base: 'normal' people (1,158); Media professionals (216)

Where are you most likely to find advertising that...



Source: Adnormal Behaviour, 2022, Ipsos / Thinkbox. Q.TN3 / AN3a. In which, if any, of the following places are you (do you think the British public are) most likely to find advertising that ...
Base: 'normal' people (1,158); Media professionals (216)

Giving attention a little attention

Attention is one of the industry's hottest topics. There are many companies looking to provide the industry with a view on how TV performs, so it felt like the right time to build a better understanding of what attention actually is and how we should approach the use of attention metrics when it comes to TV planning. Undertaken by award-winning cognitive scientist Dr Ali Goode, this wide-ranging white paper provided a deeper understanding of current attention thinking. In particular, it examined how attention is understood in academic cognitive science and how this compares with its commercial application within media. Here are the key points from the white paper.



Key findings

- The application of theories such as Perceptual Load Theory to understand how ads are processed is likely to help reveal factors such as how much attention may be needed to achieve effective communication.
- Selective Attention (how we choose to pay attention to one out of multiple sources) may be a way to understand how ads can better compete for attention, particularly the consideration of auditory attention in addition to visual attention.
- Mental processes associated with learning and memory, such as encoding, storage and retrieval, also need to be considered.
- The way attention is considered across different media may need to differ.



Where is advertising's attention exploration now?

From Dentsu's 'Attention Economy' project, to Ebiquity's 'The Challenge of Attention', to the extensive work by Professor Karen Nelson-Field from Amplified Intelligence, to PwC's 'The Battle for Attention', there have been a number of projects in recent years that have focused on attention and advertising effectiveness.

These studies have often employed technology that measures visual attention, such as device-based eye tracking or head tracking and have all shown that not all advertising is paid visual attention to.

Measures of visual attention have been successful in showing increases in short-term advertising strength (STAS) as well as prompted recall and brand choice. However, there are some questions about the approach, such as:

- Visual attention is often considered in terms of 'dwell time', which is a passive measure of attention as opposed to an active attention measure demonstrating eye movements that show ad processing (e.g. reading).
- There is often conflation between 'ad processing' and 'gaze direction', however the second does not always prove the first.
- Facebook has argued that dwell time as an ad metric can lead to bad practice as it biases creativity towards 'cuddly animal content', which rarely drives business results.
- How does low attention processing fit in? Academics such as Robert Heath and Thales Teixeira have both argued that advertising works at low attention.

So, still plenty to be explored. But how does advertising's study of attention differ from academia's?

Evolution and encoding

Academics have often focused on how attention gave us an evolutionary advantage or how it functions specifically as the capacity of our senses to process external stimulus (i.e. how much our senses can allow through for our brains to encode). One key area of academic debate has been how attention moves around our environment. This is considered as being due to two factors:

- 'Top down' factors where we deliberately push our attention around our environment in order to complete a task (e.g. navigating around a new city with a map)
- 'Bottom up' factors where something in our environment, such as a noise or a flash, automatically pulls our attention towards it.



Selective Attention and Perceptual Load Theory

Selective Attention is how we choose to pay attention to one out of multiple sources in a setting such as a party or a bar. Involved in this is how much attention is paid to the things we choose to ignore.

Nilli Lavie's Perceptual Load Theory showed that attention is shared across our senses and the amount of mental effort the brain is engaged in effects how much can be processed.

So a low perceptual load activity, like listening to music, leaves enough attention to be shared with another task, like writing.

However, if people engage in two tasks that require more perceptual load than the brain is capable of – e.g. texting while driving a car – an 'attentional deficit' will occur and there is risk that neither task will be executed correctly.

Some studies have even shown that if people are given a highly complex task in one sense that 'fills up' perceptual load, it can lead to a deficit in another sense such as 'blindness' or 'deafness' - i.e. people fail to see or hear things right in front of them as they are mentally focused on another factor.

Academia and advertising agree on visual attention

There is clear convergence between business and academic findings regarding visual attention. Both show the kinds of stimuli that attract attention. For example, faces (especially those expressing emotion), moving objects (particularly looming, areas of high contrast), and words all naturally attract visual attention. They also show that things that do get visual gaze are more likely to have an impact.

But one thing has been largely missing from advertising's attention exploration, which is fundamental to the academic studies.

The role of auditory attention

A key point in the academic study of attention is the different roles that visual and auditory attention have.

Work by Molloy, Lavie, and Chait suggests that our auditory system is 'on' permanently, so even if we are visually engaged in a task, our auditory attentional system is still 'open'. Auditory attention evolved this way as an early warning system to alert us to something we may need to pay attention to, even when visually engaged with another task.

But auditory attention has, so far, been absent from advertising's exploration of attention. Ad attention has been overwhelmingly focused on the visual, which means an important and influential part of the picture (or symphony) is currently missing. Academic work on attention puts more emphasis on how auditory attention directs, maintains, and adds to an advert's narrative, also its role in persuasion.



House of the Dragon, Sky Atlantic

Where do we go from here?

Firstly, considering Perceptual Load, we need to understand:

- How much Perceptual Load is measured by current technologies assessing visual attention?
- How much attention is actually required for an ad to effectively communicate in order to create mental availability for a brand?
- As much advertising is experienced in complex, attention-demanding situations, do we attention switch to process them, or are there situations when we can truly multitask?

Secondly, considering Selective Attention:

- What factors make us selectively attend to (switch our attention fully to) adverts?
- If we are visually engaged in one task (e.g. looking at one ad while hearing another), which one will be the more likely to create mental availability and why?
- How much do sonic and visual cues add to each other?

Also, as attention is focused on perceptual capacity, we need to consider what goes on beyond attention:

- What is the relationship between attention and the encoding and storage of unique brand assets from ads and how are they retrieved to impact purchase choice?

Finally, considering the digital origin of the attention measuring technology:

- Can we apply the same attention rules to all media, or do we need to think differently about attention dependent on the media we are considering?

Although current thinking on advertising attention is aligned with the academic attention research, it is clear that there is still some way to go before we can fully understand how attention can be used to enhance ad effectiveness and advance what we know already.



I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here, ITV



You can read the whitepaper in full here

BVOD Almighty: Reach and Return

The broadcasters' VOD services were the original streamers, now they're the beating heart of the expanding world of connected TV. BVOD advertising in the UK is rapidly growing, with investment predicted to increase by 10.1% in 2022 and continued growth forecasted for 2023, according to Advertising Association/WARC figures. Yet, until now, there has been relatively little large-scale evidence for the effectiveness of BVOD advertising. This study – in collaboration with Channel 4, ITV, and Sky – filled that knowledge gap. It's the most comprehensive exploration of broadcaster VOD advertising to date.

Key findings

- Driven by screen size, shared viewing, and an appreciated value exchange, broadcaster VOD delivers advertising engagement.
- Campaigns that use both linear TV and BVOD are more effective than linear alone.
- BVOD is the least risky video advertising investment, offering the most predictable returns.
- Driven by its ability to reach the valuable 'middle tier' of viewers, BVOD adds, on average, a 4% increase in Adult (16+) reach to a linear campaign, a 6% increase for Adult ABC1s, and an 8% increase for 16-34s.

Methodology

The study brought together a wealth of different research skill-sets and techniques:

- Acacia Avenue conducted an ethnographic and videographic study of 30 households to understand the way that people are watching different types of video, and to specifically focus on the characteristics of their advertising experience and engagement.
- Gain Theory, MediaCom, Wavemaker and Mindshare pooled their econometrics databanks to analyse £1.1 billion of advertising expenditure across video channels (linear TV, BVOD, social media and online video, 2018 to mid-2021) to help understand the role for BVOD.
- PwC UK combined data from BARB's Focal Meter and 1,259 campaigns measured by CFlight (July 2021 to August 2022) to evaluate BVOD viewing patterns and reach contribution. They applied advanced data science statistical techniques and machine learning to unpick the variables that impact incremental campaign reach.

Context matters

Acacia Avenue's ethnographic and videographic part of the study revealed that what viewers take from video advertising is affected not only by the creative they see but also by the platform/environment and the device they see it on.

Three key themes emerged:

1. Ad to content value exchange

Viewers like the predictability of established advertising rhythms and patterns and a fair value exchange in terms of the calibre of production and time spent watching content vs. the amount of ads. If that value exchange falls short, viewers will move on or actively avoid the ads.

2. Advertising environment

Screen size is the main driver of a shared viewing experience. Shared viewing creates talkability and a more immersive, impactful viewing environment. Device-based advertising can be effective when correctly targeted, but the high volume of unknown or smaller brands on social media can negatively affect perceptions. Randomly placed ads, or ads disguised as content in social media, create mistrust and frustration.

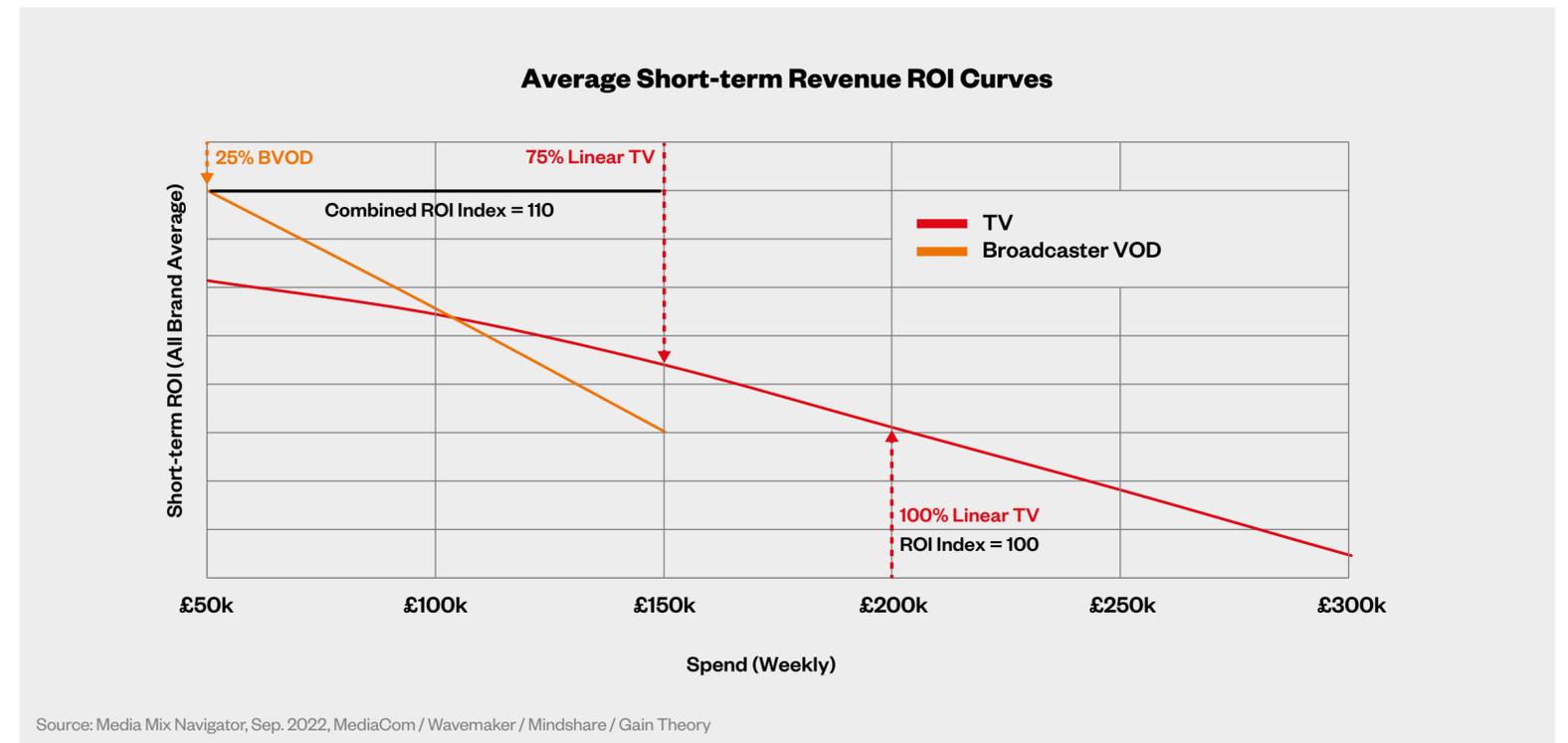
3. Perception of targeting

Ads on a TV screen aren't scrutinised for their relevance - as long as they resonate with the viewer, they're accepted. Ads on a device are scrutinised for their personal relevance and are questioned if they fail at this.

BVOD content is actively sought out by viewers, is trusted and respected. Mainly watched on a big TV screen, it commands attention and provides an immersive mindset. Ad engagement within BVOD is strong; driven by clear signposting and an understanding of the value exchange brought over from linear TV.

Better together

The joint analysis by Gain Theory, MediaCom, Wavemaker, and Mindshare found that campaigns that use both linear TV together with BVOD are typically up to 10% more effective than linear alone at delivering ROI. The chart below shows how even at low spends, a diversified approach to video investments maximises return.



BVOD is the least risky form of video investment

Gain Theory, MediaCom, Wavemaker, and Mindshare also found that the variability of returns differs significantly across different forms of advertising. We found that BVOD is the least risky of all video channels, delivering 20% of variance compared with the median return. This was closely followed by linear TV with a variability of 24%.

It's worth noting that variability works both ways: whilst high variability involves greater risk, there is the possibility of achieving a much higher than average ROI (as well as a much lower one).

[Click here](#) for more information on the predictability of channels.

BVOD builds incremental reach

PwC's analysis found that, on average, BVOD adds a 4% increase in incremental Adult (16+) reach to a linear TV campaign, a 6% increase for Adult ABC1s, and an 8% increase for 16-34s.

Among the top performing 10% of campaigns, the % increase rises to 9% for Adults, 8% for Adult ABC1s, and 11% for 16-34s.

One of the main reasons for this incremental reach is the ease of reaching light linear TV viewers on BVOD – specifically the 'middle tier'.

The middle tier is the 20-50% decile group in terms of linear TV viewing who also heavily over index on BVOD. They account for 7% of total linear TV viewing but 28% of BVOD consumption.

This group skews towards attractive audiences for advertisers - ABC1 Adults (71%) and 16-34s (42%).

Analysis shows that the chance of reaching somebody in this attractive group with a spot on linear TV is 1 in 14. However, when running a BVOD campaign, you are proportionately more likely to access the 'middle tier' with a 1 in 4 chance of reaching somebody in this segment.



The Big Narstie Show, Channel 4



The Last Of Us, Sky Atlantic

'Middle tier' of light viewers key driver of incremental reach

Weight of Linear viewing	Average minutes per day	Proportion of TV consumption [%]		Contribution to platform [%]		Odds of reaching each segment (1 in x)		
		Linear	BVOD	Linear	BVOD	Linear	BVOD	BVOD to linear odds
Bottom 0-10%	4	41%	59%	0%	3%	185	12	17x
Bottom 10-20%	12	64%	36%	1%	6%			
Bottom 20-30%	25	77%	23%	1%	7%	14	4	4x
Bottom 30-40%	47	83%	17%	2%	10%			
Bottom 40-50%	75	88%	12%	4%	11%			
Top 50-60%	115	92%	8%	6%	11%	1.1	2	0.5x
Top 60-70%	169	94%	6%	9%	12%			
Top 70-80%	244	96%	4%	14%	13%			
Top 80-90%	360	97%	3%	21%	13%			
Top 90-100%	734	98%	2%	42%	15%			
Total	89	95%	5%	100%	100%			

The 'middle tier' skews towards ABC1 adults (71%) and 16-34 adults (42%)

Source: PwC UK, BARB, 2022

BVOD planning insights

PwC identified five key BVOD planning tactics that lead to increased total TV reach. These are:

1. Plan longer campaigns. The BVOD element of TV campaigns should run for longer than 30 days to optimise total TV reach. Campaigns that run for 30-50 days deliver 3 times the incremental reach of campaigns that run for under 30 days.
2. Plan across all three TV sales houses. Light viewers are more likely to be found by spreading your plan across all sales points; using three sales houses delivers a 41% uplift in incremental reach of a single sales house.
3. Plan in and around key programming, such as Love Island (ITV), Gogglebox (C4), or high-profile box set dramas like The Midwich Cuckoos (Sky).
4. Plan across multiple genres. Campaigns delivered across 6-10 genres provide twice the incremental reach of those delivered across only 1-5 genres.
5. Plan across a longer daypart. BVOD peak time is a longer window than linear (17.30-00.30 compared with linear's 20.00-23.00).



Watch the BVOD in focus: planning for success event here

The best of the rest

It goes without saying – or, in this case, with saying – that Thinkbox's research is of the highest possible quality. It shimmers with insight and usefulness, don't you think? Well, we hope so. But there's loads more brilliant research out there to discover and digest, and we are more than happy to point you towards it.

Here we have shared some quick links to some other recent studies that we think you ought to know about.

TV Makes Memories

By Comcast Advertising and MediaScience

Triple Jeopardy of Attention

By Peter Field, Karen Nelson-Field & Orlando Wood, with the IPA and WARC

Mirrors & Windows

By Google

What does the pandemic teach us about effective advertising in uncertain times?

By Grace Kite

Marketing in a post-covid economy

By Les Binet

The Big Squeeze

By Mail Metro Media

Video Impact

By Seven.One Media (Germany)



The Great British Bake Off, Channel 4