

WHITE PAPER

Attention Research Findings 2017-2022

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The Industry Problem

On average, 75% of the ads you pay for don't deliver the value you think they do. It's pretty straightforward, if an ad has no human attention paid to it, that same ad can have no positive impact on business outcomes.

What this means:

- advertisers don't get what they pay for
- media spend disappears with minimal value to brands
- our impression system fails advertisers.

Impressions are simply an opportunity-to-see, but we now know that the opportunity they represent is not the same across different platforms and formats. This inequity, and a lack of measurement transparency along with it, is one of the reasons that impressions are failing as a currency.

Proxy metrics, such as likes, clicks and other device data, perpetuate the problem. A human-centred metric that exposes the reality of human viewing in different environments can help fix it. The industry needs to move a measured impression from an opportunity-to-see to a Verified Human View.

This sits at the heart of every research question we have answered.

How we measure

Amplified Intelligence invites people to participate in data collection via panel providers who engage a nationally representative cross-section of the population to participate in the study. The process is triple opt-in and GDPR compliant.

Participants will download our app, which allows us (with their full permission) to film their faces and track their gaze while they view Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, BVOD Mobile, CTV, OOH and Cinema. We intercept the ad load with the same ads across the viewing session. Once they have finished viewing they are directed to a product choice survey. When all steps are complete, the gaze tracking app is made redundant. It does not scrape any personal data. The facial footage is then parsed through our proprietary gaze models.

What we measure

The output is an incredibly granular measure of attention. At this level of granularity we can divide our attention measure into 3 levels:

- Active Attention - looking directly at the ad
- Passive Attention - eyes nearby, but not looking directly at the ad
- Non-Attention - face not detected or, for television, not in the room.

We also collect a range of device metrics, including: spatial clutter (ad screen coverage), viewability (pixels, duration) and sound (on/off), to name a few.

If participants have been directed to a discrete choice survey, we can also measure Mental Availability and STAS (Short Term Advertising Strength).

WHAT WE HAVE FOUND SO FAR...

If you're thinking some of these are fairly basic, it's worth remembering that not too long ago we were collecting data to convince the industry of even these most basic findings.

View duration ≠ attention

Just being viewable by MRC standards, doesn't mean your ad will be viewed. View duration as a proxy for attention tells us little of whether someone has looked at the ad.

Human attention to advertising is more about distraction than focus.

In our data we see that around half of an ad has any attention paid to it, and if we use gold standard active attention (eyes on ad only) that number drops to around 20%. This suggests that view duration can show **distraction** just as easily as it shows **attention**.

It's all there in our second-by-second data. People just don't view ads with sustained and undivided attention. They're distracted by life, so they switch in and out of active (eyes on ad), passive (eyes on screen but not on ad) and non-attention (no eyes at all) across the entire course of an ad view.

This switching happens across every single platform, every single format and in every single country we have collected attention data.

Attention reality check

As at December 2021, 30% of the ads we looked at were not MRC compliant. That's quite a lot!

Accounting for the remaining 70% looks like this:

- 9% were viewable but received no attention
- a whopping 44% were viewable with between 0 and 2 seconds of attention, and
- 17% were viewable and received 2+ seconds of attention.

Problem is, 2 seconds is not enough. More on that later.

Every platform/format is different

When you look closely at the range of viewing environments on offer, some differences start to appear in:

- scrollability
- general page clutter
- coverage - the proportion of the screen the ad covers
- ad pixels - the proportion of the ad on screen.

Ad pixels and scrollability can be the difference between an ad being seen or not. If you don't see the brand, how can your brain process it?

Some platforms offer higher attention switching environments than others, which means they all offer different levels of attention to advertising.

And it is this difference between platforms/formats/environments that undermines the relativity of an impression. Any measurement system, model, methodology or concept that relies on equitable impressions will fail, including market mix modelling/econometrics, creative strategy, and budgeting/SOV analysis.

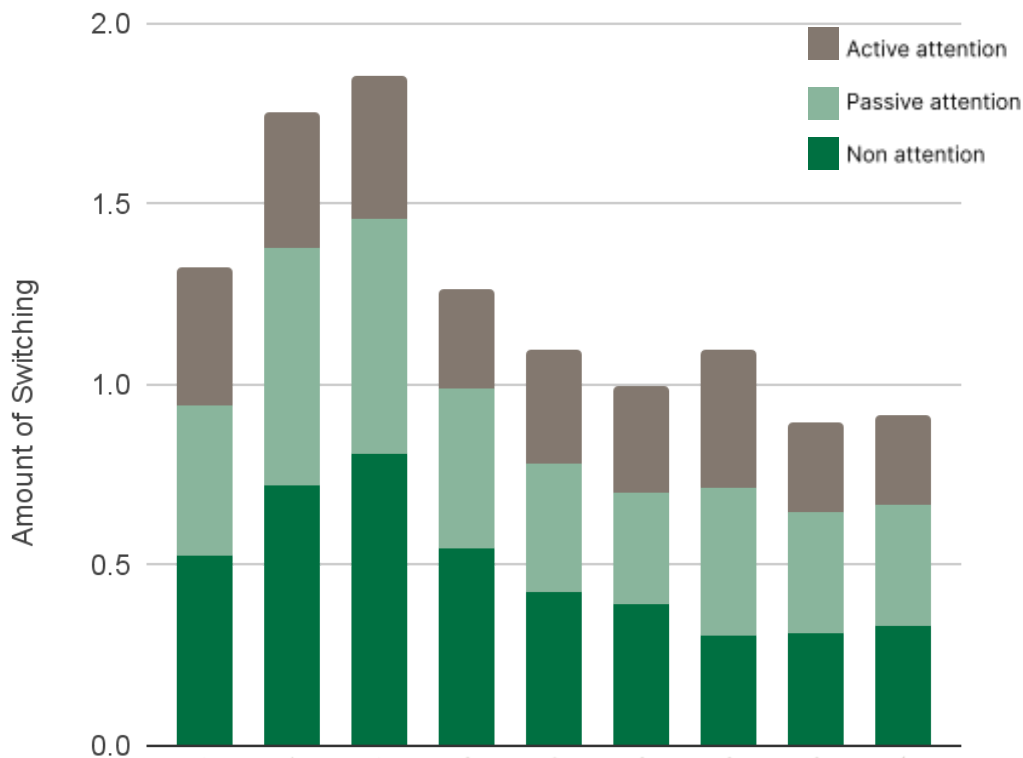


Figure 1: Human visual switching by Platform (Amplified, 2022)

Attention is related to Short Term Advertising Strength

Using regression analysis, we see that there is a strong and significant relationship between active (eyes-on-ad) attention seconds and Short Term Advertising Strength (STAS).

STAS is an index between those who were exposed and bought the product and those who were not exposed and bought the product. A STAS score of 100 is the baseline, anything above 100 indicates that the advertising had a positive effect on brand choice.

We can see in Figure 2 that when the number of active attention seconds goes up, so do STAS points ($r = .82$, $p = < .001$). Not surprisingly, if no active attention is gained, we can expect zero uplift. It's probably time to accept that human attention is a precursor to ad impact.



Figure 2: Active Attention Seconds to STAS Uplift (Amplified, 2020)

2 seconds is not enough for brand uplift

It takes time for a human brain to process what it's looking at, more than 2 seconds in fact.

In Figure 3 we see that 2 active attention seconds can generate some STAS points, some platforms, but sales uplift grows as attention time passes.

This table shows brand choice uplift using STAS, above and below the 2-second mark.

You can see that STAS is much higher when the viewer has paid more than 2 active attention seconds to the ad.

Two seconds is just not enough.

Above 2 secs attention	Below/= 2 secs attention	STAS points difference
148	140	-8
135	124	-11
135	125	-10
121	111	-10
118	118	0
116	109	-7
115	108	-7
113	108	-5
109	109	0
100	93	-7
109	104	-5
120	114	-6

Figure 3: STAS above and below 2 seconds of attention (Amplified, 2020)

You need 3 seconds for memory

Human attention is also a precursor to memory retention, which is needed for long-term ad impact.

Figure 4 shows that the more active attention seconds paid, the longer the brand stays in memory. Which means that attention and ad decay are related.

Memory retention doesn't kick in until an ad is seen for about 3 seconds, after which on average every active attention second leads to an average 3 days in memory ($r=.76$, $p=.05$).

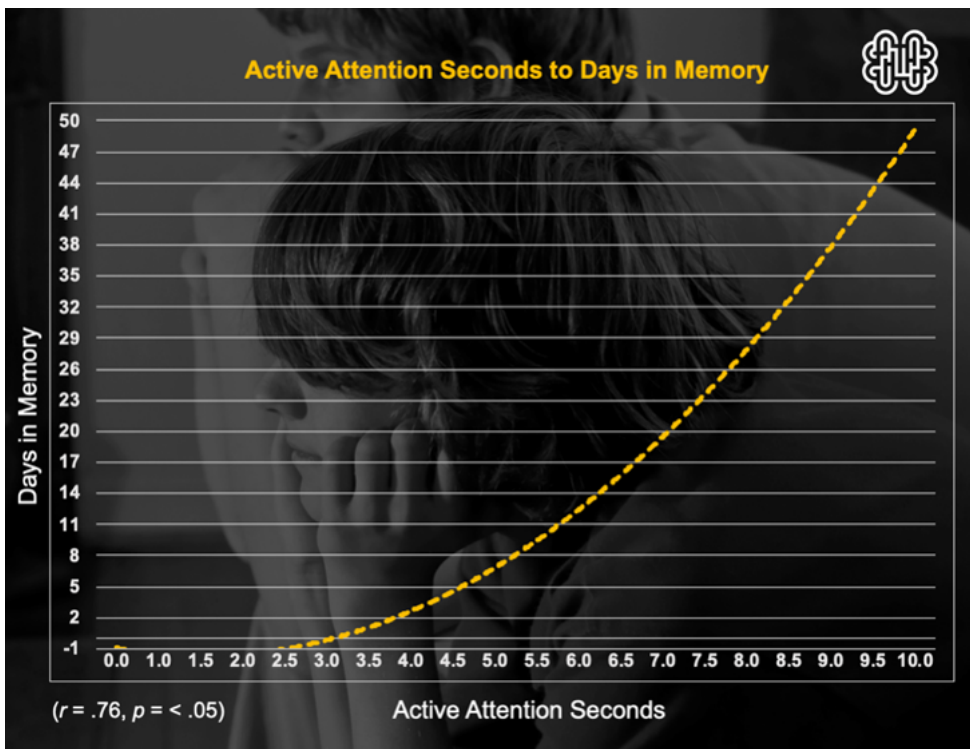


Figure 4: Active Attention to Days in Memory (Amplified, 2020)

Media placement dominates

Even great creative can only perform as well as the platform performance lets it. If creative was the dominant force of attention, creative would perform equally across all platforms, but it doesn't.

To ensure the influence of media is better isolated and captured across different platforms we control the creative. In dozens of sets of data, we see that the same creative performs worse/better in line with the overall attention performance of the platform.

	Platform A	Platform B	Platform C	Platform D	Avg Attention Seconds
Brand A	7.0	5.5	3.3	2.9	4.7
Brand B	7.2	4.5	3.4	2.3	4.4
Brand C	6.5	5.1	2.9	2.8	4.3
Brand D	6.9	3.7	3.3	3.2	4.3
Brand E	6.4	4.1	3.2	2.7	4.1
Brand F	5.5	4.8	3.4	2.4	4.0
Brand G	5.8	3.8	3.1	2.7	3.9
Brand H	5.9	4.3	2.7	2.5	3.9
Brand I	6.0	3.9	2.8	2.4	3.8
Brand J	6.1	3.8	2.5	2.2	3.7
Brand K	5.4	3.9	2.3	2.5	3.5
Brand L	4.6	4.3	2.1	2.4	3.4
Brand M	5.5	2.8	2.5	2.3	3.3

Figure 5: Brand Creative x Platform Performance - Platform A Best to Platform D worst (Amplified, 2021)

In Figure 5 we can see that Brand A has the highest attention paid overall, and is therefore defined as 'good' creative. But look at the declining amount of attention paid across different platforms. So, let's look at Brand M which has the lowest attention paid overall and can be defined as 'weak' creative. It suffers the same decline in attention across different platforms.

This is the impact of media choice over creative.

No attention. No impact

When we put it all together, it's easy to see how advertising budgets are potentially being wasted on impressions that humans don't see, and creative that doesn't even get the chance to do its thing.

The bottom line is that for advertising to work it needs human eyeballs and human ears to see and hear messages. It needs to be placed in an environment where humans unders distraction overload, at least have a decent chance to pay attention.

Revealing and quantifying the differences between platforms, formats and environments goes some way to empowering brands and agencies to plan, trade and measure campaigns with more clarity.

What next?

If you would like to use attention metrics for media planning, or to Attention Adjust™ an existing campaign, have a look at [attentionPLAN™](#).

If you are thinking of buying media using attention metrics, keep an eye out for our new product attentionTRADE™ or contact us for a chat.

If you have more questions, just send them through to hello@amplifiedintelligence.com.au and one of our team will find an answer for you.