

# Attention and Effectiveness

## To ESOV and Beyond Part II

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### Executive Summary

**At the time of writing (in early 2023), CMOs globally face the key challenge of growing brand value and loyalty amid high inflation and the possibility of an economic rough patch. The cost of capital has increased and coupled with the uncertain economic environment, business investment is moving away from areas where risk is perceived to be higher. Simply put, boards are more likely to invest in areas where the return is more easily understood.**

Advertising is an investment, however understanding of its return is often patchy among boards, putting advertising budgets at risk. The onus is on CMOs to be clear about what will make the return from advertising more certain.

The current environment is also a moment of opportunity. For those that take a medium-term view, downturns are typically brief and the expansionary periods that follow are much longer. Marketers can both exploit weaknesses in investment from their competitors while also positioning their brands to take full advantage of the following expansion.

Navigating the upcoming period will be tricky, but the benefits of doing so while maintaining investment support for brands will be significant.

In our previous paper, To ESOV and Beyond, we broke new ground, showing the relationship between advertising investment (ESOV, 'extra share of voice'), brand mental availability growth and the business effects of advertising investment. The report highlighted the critical importance of growing mental availability and the three driving forces behind it.

We also discussed the continued and growing threats to the powerful ESOV methodology, the key one being the dysfunction in the media market which has resulted in the relationship between cost per impression and effectiveness per impression being increasingly broken. The ESOV methodology relies on this relationship.

Professor Karen Nelson-Field contributed to the paper, highlighting the importance of attention paid to advertising and that it is the performance difference between media platforms (in terms of the level of attention they can deliver) that is a key driver of the fracture of the relationship between cost per impression and effectiveness per impression.

In this paper, we look in detail at the importance of creative strength, how media platform selection can either amplify or undermine creative strength, and then revisit the importance of ESOV in the context of this new analysis.

To assess creative strength, we partnered with Professor Karen Nelson-Field and her team to test a sample of video ads from the ACA Effectiveness Database. The test platform was YouTube Australia; thirty-nine (39) ads were tested in October 2022 with each ad viewed by 300 people. Using their highly sophisticated, proprietary eye-tracking technology, Amplified Intelligence measured the active and passive levels of attention gained by each of these ads. This is the measure we use to determine creative strength. In our opinion, an ad that can hold people's attention for longer is creatively stronger.

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However, the differences in performance between media platforms complicate the picture when understanding the link between attention and effectiveness so we can't just draw a straight line between attention gained on the test platform and effects at the campaign level. Therefore, the attention data for every ad has been adjusted based on how their media dollars were invested to create a more accurate picture of the average attention gained during the campaign.

	N=	Avg active attention seconds (Test platform)	Adjusted avg attention seconds (Campaign level)	% of campaigns stating a v. large impact on mental availability	Avg # of v. large business effects (INDEX vs total attention sample)
<b>Lower-attention platforms</b> (<50% of media invested in high-attention platforms)	21	5.6	4.6	35%	76
<b>Higher-attention platforms</b> (>50% of media invested in high-attention platforms)	18	5.9	8.1	52%	125
<b>Difference</b> (High- vs low-attention platforms)		+0.3	+3.5	+17pp	+49

The Australian Effie Awards represent some of the best that marketing has to offer. The benchmark is high, and the spread in quality of thinking and execution is less than in the wider world of marketing: everything tends to be good. However, even within this high-performing group, we demonstrate that attention makes a tangible difference to effectiveness and factoring in the impact of media choices is an important step in understanding why.

We see this clearly when the balance of investment for campaigns is weighted towards lower-attention media platforms, thus undermining the advertising budgets and reducing the impact of creativity. The ACA Effectiveness Database indicates that there is a large effectiveness difference between a high-attention media plan and a low-attention one, even at the top end of the effectiveness spectrum.

	N=	Avg active attention seconds (Test platform)	Adjusted avg attention seconds (Campaign level)	Campaigns reporting a v. large effect on mental availability	Avg # of v. large business effects (INDEX vs total attention sample)
<b>Negative ESOV/</b> Lower-attention platforms	9	6.0	4.7	33%	55
<b>Neutral or positive ESOV/</b> Lower-attention platforms	12	5.4	4.5	42%	90
<b>Neutral or positive ESOV/</b> Higher-attention platforms	14	5.8	7.9	57%	125

ESOV does make a difference but so does the balance of investment across media platforms. Positive ESOV improves campaign effectiveness, but media platform choices also have a significant impact. How much you spend matters, and where you spend it matters too.

That said, higher-attention media platforms come at a cost, but given their greater effectiveness you get what you pay for and then some. It is on these media platforms that the competitive advantage from creative strength is amplified. It is a false economy to spend a more limited budget in lower-attention media channels just because they are cheaper. In fact, the evidence suggests they are not cheap enough.



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## **References for key statistics**

### **1. High-attention media supercharges strong creative by up to 75%.**

This is the difference between adjusted active-attention seconds between campaigns that weighted investment towards higher-attention platforms (8.1 seconds) vs campaigns that weighted attention towards lower-attention platforms (4.6 seconds) Calculation is  $(8.1/4.6)-1 = 75\%$ .

### **2. Even at the top end of the effectiveness spectrum, strong creative holds attention for up to three times longer.**

This is the difference in active-attention seconds between the strongest and weakest performing spots in the Effie sample (ads from 39 case studies in the ACA Effectiveness Database) on the test platform. Strongest = 10.1 sec, weakest = 3.2 sec. Calculation is  $10.1/3.2 = 3.2$  (hence holds attention up to three times longer).

### **3. The business impact of marketing campaign investment increases by 65% when strong creative is placed on high-attention media.**

This is the difference in the business effects index between campaigns that weighted investment towards higher-attention platforms (business effects index = 125) vs campaigns that weighted attention towards lower-attention platforms (business effects index =76). Calculation is  $(125/76)-1 = 65\%$ .

### **4. Effie campaigns deliver more than double the minimum attention required for the investment to be effective.**

The minimum threshold for active attention to impact memory is 2.5 active-attention seconds. The Effie sample averaged 5.8 active-attention seconds. Calculation is  $5.8/2.5 = 2.3$  (hence more than double the attention).

### **5. The competitive advantage delivered by strong creative is enhanced by investment into high-attention media platforms.**

This is supported by the data used for point number 3.