

Get with the program: How TV program sponsorships are more effective than standard TVCs

Peter Hammer

[Research](#)

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Marketing Scientist Group's Peter Hammer says TV program sponsorships can be more effective than a standard TVC in an ad-supported streaming environment because they impact key brand and ad metrics.

- More sponsorship elements in a TV program have greater impact on key ad/brand metrics such as ad recall and brand awareness.
- A key reason why deeper sponsorships are more impactful is that they provide more "opportunities to see" brands.
- Attention seconds are 3.5x higher when sponsorships are fully integrated and 3.1x higher with visual branding.

Why it matters

Advertisers should look beyond standard TVCs and consider TV program sponsorships, which are more effective because the deeper the sponsorship, the greater the uplift in brand/ad metrics. Integrated content is slightly more effective for holding viewers' attention, and fully integrated sponsorships were found to build mental availability, thus helping to grow the brand.

Takeaways

- More sponsorship elements increase all key brand and advertising metrics as more "opportunities to see" mean more attention.
- Deeper TV sponsorships build deeper memories and agreement with campaign messages compared to standard TVCs alone.
- Sponsorships with integrated content have more uplift than TVCs or billboards, with more attention to brands in content than ads.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the idiom “get with the program” means to “accept new ideas and give more attention to what is happening now”. This sentiment is very relevant in 2023 as there are many new media platforms and creative executions that are getting the attention of advertisers to use in promoting their brands.

One older form of promotion that seems new again is TV product placement. For example, brands including Coca-Cola, Sony, Reebok and Lacoste heavily invested in brand placements within the fourth series of Netflix’s *Stranger Things*, which was reported by [YouGov](#) to be worth US\$27.4 million in sponsorship value. Similarly, brands such as McDonald’s have reported success from brand integrations, [growing sales and awareness through its Netflix partnership](#) leveraging its comedy series *Emily in Paris*. This comes at a time when the streaming giant is starting to offer ad-supported [subscription plans](#) in selected territories where some viewers will also be exposed to standard TVCs.

We know from other research that product placements work best [in combination with ads](#) and having both opportunities in streaming services is likely to further boost interest in deeper TV sponsorships like those available from major broadcasters and their ad-supported streaming services. These TV program sponsorships typically include billboards at the start/end of breaks, bespoke TVCs leveraging program content and talent, as well as integrating brands within content via product/logo placement or brand mentions.

While broader TV sponsorships are likely to become even more commonplace amongst all streaming services in the future, there is still limited insight on their effectiveness. As such, we were commissioned by Paramount ANZ, owner of one of Australia’s leading ad-supported streaming services, to explore:

- Are TV program sponsorships more effective than a standard TVC in ad-supported streaming environments?
- What is the impact of different elements on key brand/ad metrics, including on deeper memory measures?

Study on TV program sponsorships

Over a number of years, the [Marketing Scientist Group](#) and Paramount ANZ have worked together on numerous research studies investigating the impact of content integrations and TV sponsorships, which we have collectively named the “Science of Sponsorship”.

In this most recent study, we have expanded on existing work by conducting a large-scale quantitative survey and viewing experiment, exposing 2,200 Australian TV viewers aged 18-69 to different combinations of brand/ad placements within hit TV series such as *MasterChef Australia* and *Australian Survivor*.

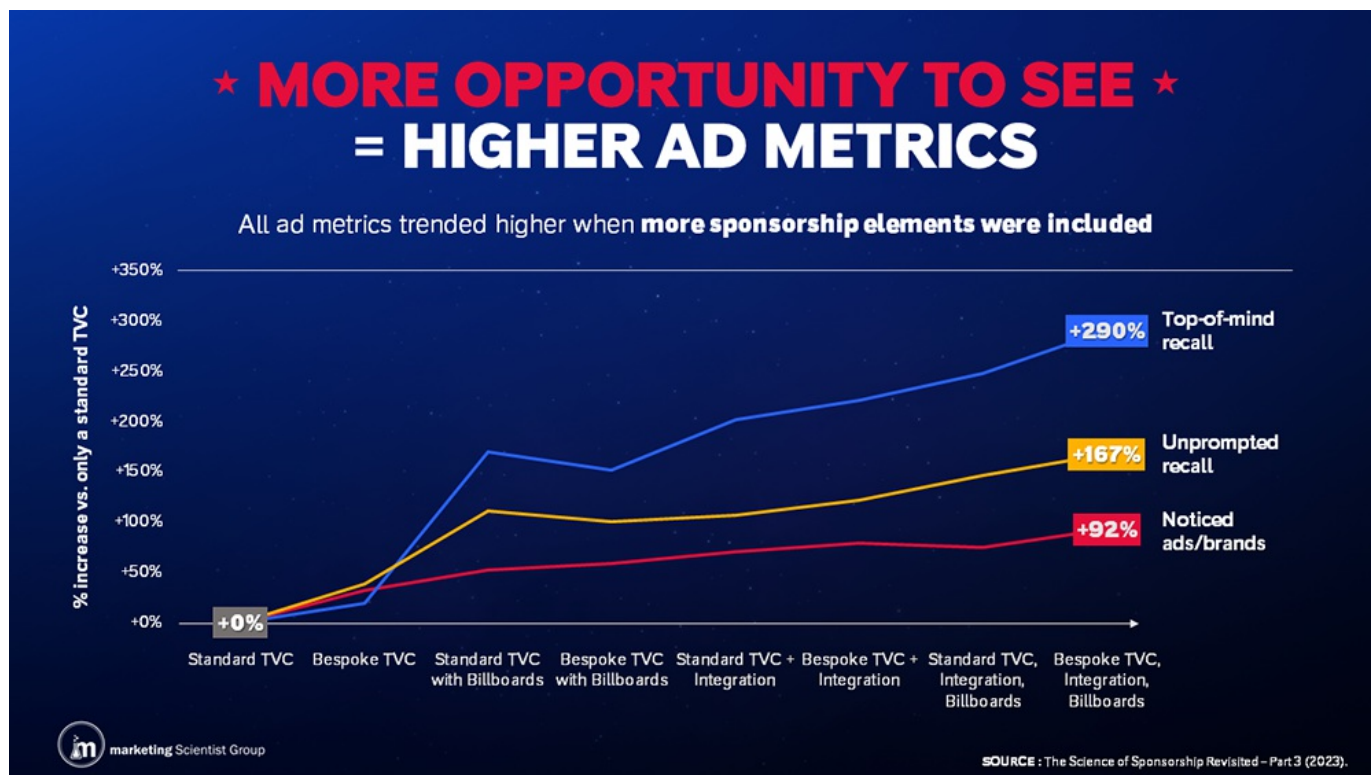
The experiment was conducted for eight different brands across a broad array of categories including automotive, QSR, insurance and healthcare. For each brand, we had eight different clips (64 in total) which included a combination of standard/bespoke TVCs, billboards at the start/end of the break and brand-integrated content (including product/logo placement, brand mentions and storyline integrations).

This research was conducted in homes on computers, smartphones/tablets and TVs to replicate viewing on the service. Also, given the importance of attention in measuring quality reach, we employed passive eye-tracking technology (with user permission) across most of the sample so we could understand what viewers were looking at when watching the content and advertising.

Do more TV sponsorship elements deliver greater impact?

Our first key finding was that when more sponsorship elements were included in the TV program (eg billboards, bespoke TVCs and integrated content), we saw greater impact on key advertising and brand metrics such as ad recall, brand awareness and purchase intent.

For example, average results for top-of-mind and unprompted ad recall were higher by 290% and 167% respectively when a clip was fully integrated (including all sponsorship elements), as compared to when participants were only shown a standard TVC. Noticing ads/brands was almost double (+92%) for fully integrated sponsorships.



A similar increase was found for brand metrics too. For example, top-of-mind and unprompted awareness was 48% and 32% higher for a fully integrated sponsorship and purchase intent increased by 19%.

We also examined the impact of different combinations of billboard formats. Ad recall was similarly higher when billboard units were used at the start and end of ad breaks, as compared to when they just appeared at the end (i.e. unprompted ad recall uplift = +61% vs +37%).

How do deeper TV sponsorships deliver more impact?

One of the key reasons why deeper sponsorships are more impactful is that they provide more “opportunities to see” brands, that is, when more elements were included, there were more seconds of brand-integrated content, relevant billboards and TVCs.

For example, in our experiment, when participants were exposed to a TV clip with only a standard TVC, they had an opportunity to see 22 seconds of brand time on average across the eight brands, while this was 76 seconds

or 3.4x higher on average for the fully integrated sponsorship clips.

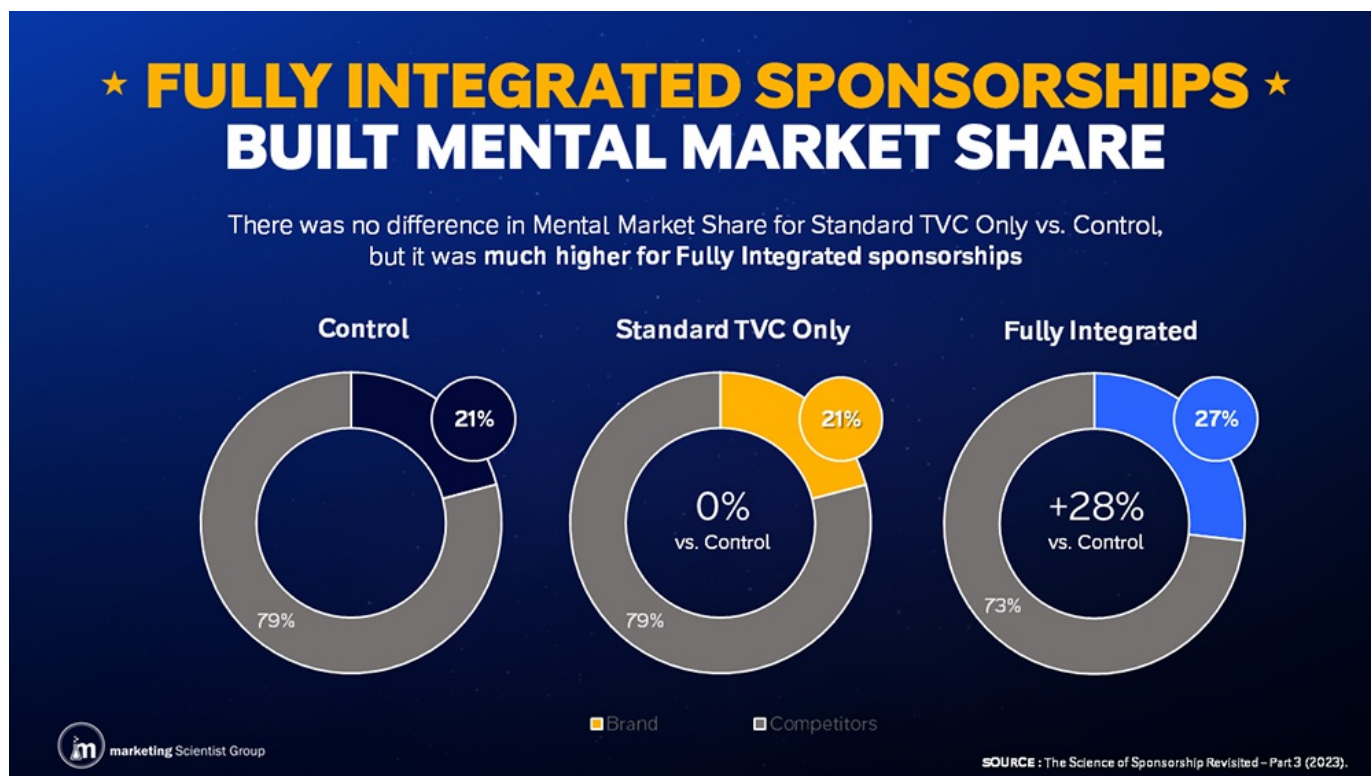
We also wanted to understand whether sponsorships impacted attention, so we leveraged the passive eye-tracking data to observe whether participants were looking at the screen. We found only small differences in average attention per second for brand time across the variety of sponsorships.

However, it was clear that when there were more opportunities to see sponsorships, there were more seconds of attention overall. Specifically, attention seconds for any brand time was 3.5x higher when sponsorships were fully integrated and there were more attention seconds with the visual branding (3.1x) and brand mentions (5.8x) in these program clips.

Do deeper TV sponsorships build mental availability?

While the findings for brand metrics were consistent with our earlier studies, we also wanted to look at the impact on deeper memory measures like mental availability – the likelihood that a consumer will think of an advertiser’s brand when they are in a buying situation.

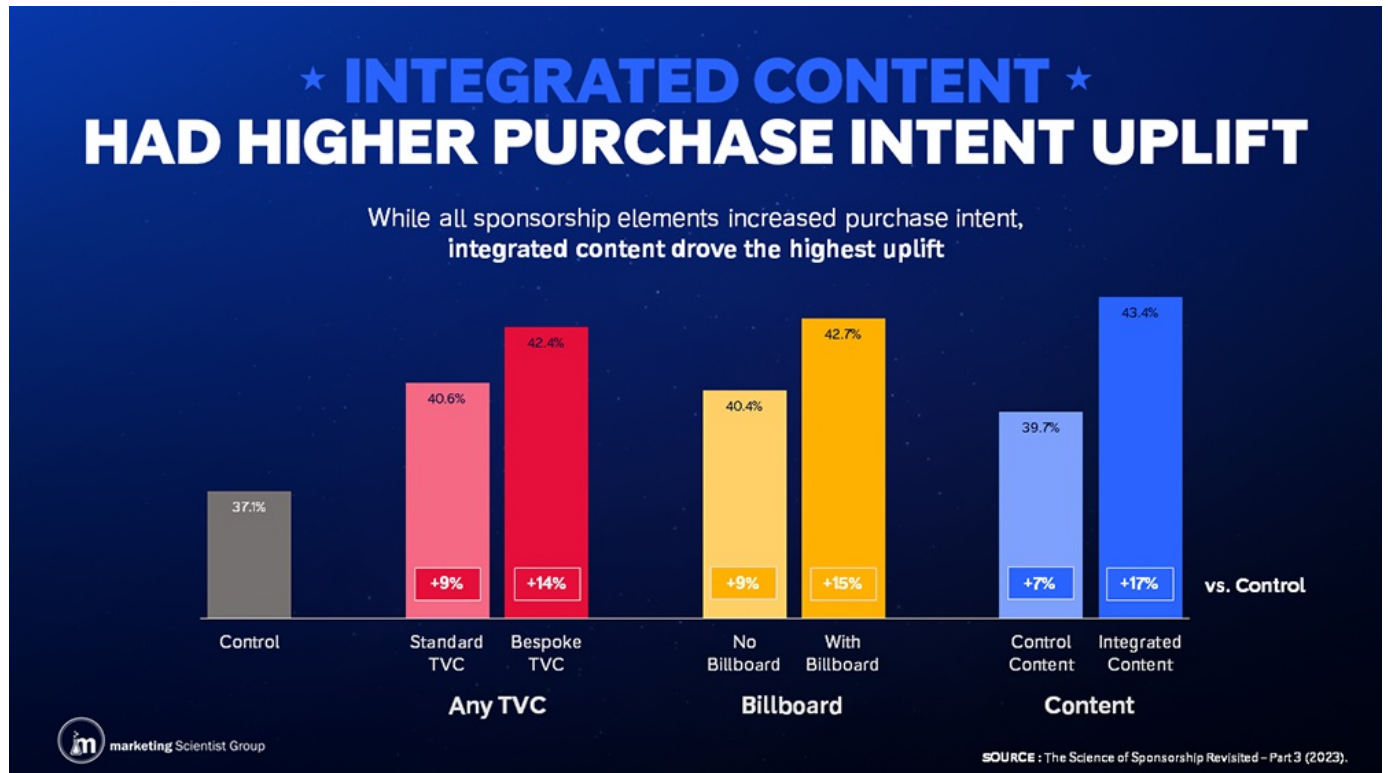
The results showed that deeper memory measures were moved by deeper sponsorships. For example, when calculating the average mental market share for eight brands, we found largely no difference for the control group exposed to the standard TVC. However, when participants were exposed to fully integrated sponsorships, mental market share increased by 28% on average (when compared to the control group).



Other deeper memories were created with deeper sponsorships. For example, agreement with key campaign messages lifted by 28% for fully integrated sponsorship exposures, as compared to the control. Interestingly, we found that agreement with campaign messages actually dropped below the control on average when participants were exposed to a standard TVC alone, suggesting that some standard TVCs may actually distract from key messages rather than help them.

Which TV sponsorship elements deliver the greatest uplift?

While all sponsorship elements performed better than standard TVCs alone, integrated content delivered the greatest incremental uplift for key brand metrics including purchase intent, agreement with campaign messages and attention.



Content integrations also made participants feel more positive about the sponsorships generally, that is, they received higher responses than TVCs and billboards to statements related to the sponsorship being a “natural fit”, “enhancing their opinion” of the brand and likelihood “to take action”.

The success of sponsorship integrations within content appears to be a function, in part due to increased attention. For example, data from our controlled experiment showed that average attention to the screen was 5% higher in the content before the ad break, as compared to ad-break attention (this is impacted by the limitation that participants could not actively avoid viewing in this study). This also resulted in more eyes-on-screen when a brand was mentioned within integrated content, as compared to when they were mentioned in ad breaks (+17%), helping to boost the effectiveness of this sponsorship element.

What this means for advertisers

These results significantly advance our understanding of the effectiveness of TV program sponsorships and provide important takeaways for advertisers:

- **More is more:** More sponsorship elements were found to increase all key brand and advertising metrics.
- **More “opportunities to see” = more attention:** Sponsorships enabled more brand time on screen, which has a direct impact on the attention seconds captured by brands.

- **Deeper TV sponsorships can build deeper memories:** Sponsorships were found to build mental availability and agreement with campaign messages, while standard TVCs alone did not.
- **Integrated content is typically more impactful:** Sponsorships with integrated content generated more uplift in key metrics than other elements (TVCs and billboards) because viewers pay more attention to brands in content than ads.

While buying standard TVCs will likely remain a typical and convenient opportunity for advertisers, our results prove that deeper TV program sponsorship is much more effective at moving the needle.

However, TV program sponsorships are more expensive, which raises the question: Is the investment worth it?

Billboards can be produced with limited investment by the advertiser. In combination with just a standard TVC, they will prove more effective than a standard TVC alone. Adding in bespoke TVCs requires greater resources but our research shows that the deeper the sponsorship, the greater the uplift in brand/ad metrics.

As for integrated content, this is likely the most resource-intensive approach but not only is it effective, it offers a medium that other advertising formats cannot. It holds viewers' attention, delivers more impactful brand time and builds mental availability, which will ultimately grow the brand.

The findings of this study are a call to action for advertisers, to look beyond standard TVCs and consider the opportunities presented by TV program sponsorships, to get creative, get attention and get results. In other words, it's time for advertisers to get with the program.

About the author

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