

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# The Need for a First Second Strategy

## Neuroscience Research Overview



MARCH 2019

## Attention and Cognitive Process in Mobile

The challenge of attention in advertising is not a new problem. Some marketers believe there is a linear relationship of time with attention and impact. In order to understand exposure time, we need to answer some critical questions: How long should an ad stay on a mobile screen in order to trigger attention? Should brands pay a premium to increase that exposure time? And what is the role of creative in terms of triggering consumer attention and emotional response?

Until now, we haven't been able to give a conclusive answer to these questions or provide meaningful guidance to marketers in terms of how to better plan for the new "high velocity" mobile environment. Yet, despite the lack of concrete evidence, most marketers still make a conscious decision to invest media dollars to extend the exposure time of their ads, assuming that there is this linear relationship with consumer attention. As a result, the cost of time and attention continues to skyrocket and at the same time, brands neglect to invest time and resources to optimize their creative for the needs of this new environment.

Is there a better way? Should we rethink the advertising process? In response to this Important Industry question, the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) conducted a scientific study to understand the cognitive process of advertising in a mobile environment, especially Native In-Feed (social and news) and compare it with desktop

### **The MMA Neuroscience Research: A case study for transparency in research**

Using neuroscience to really understand the human brain's reaction to advertising (actual cognitive process) is a relatively new technique applied to advertising that pushes our knowledge boundaries beyond what previous eye tracking studies allowed. This study is focused on the "opportunity to see" both in mobile and desktop.

The research builds on the MMA's commitment to science and truth in marketing for brands. Additionally, this is the first project the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) has reviewed as part of their drive for 'radical transparency' and truth in advertising research.

### **The Need for a First Second Strategy**

The most important insight from this study is that the cognitive process is faster than we thought and that the human brain needs less than 1/2 second to engage with mobile advertising & trigger a reaction, positive or negative. Importantly, the study also highlights that ads that perform poorly tend to overwhelmingly create negative emotional response in that short window of the first second, potentially alienating consumers early on.

The main implication of these findings is that brands have less time than they thought to win consumers in today's fast-paced advertising environment. And, by merely extending exposure time marketers can't possibly repair the damage that is done in the first second. Importantly, this effect is stronger in mobile platforms compared to desktop and is also faster for video ads compared to static, suggesting that brands should place more emphasis on developing the right creative in these areas, which are also attracting increasingly more media spend.

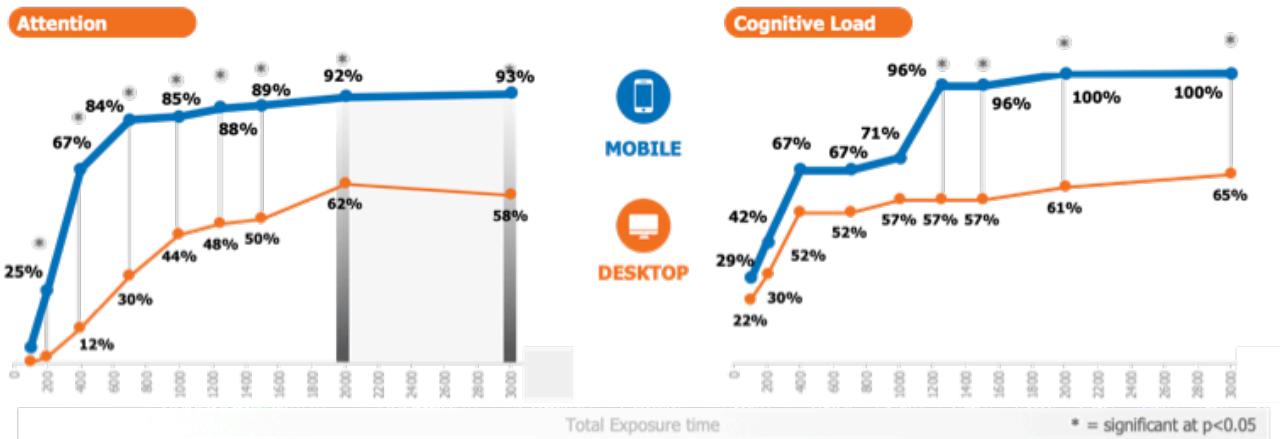


Chart shows percentage of participants who have a minimum of 60ms (3 gaze points) at the ad that they were exposed to. All ads were shown to the same number of participants at each speed.

Chart shows the percentage of Ads who have shown a significant lift in cognitive load compared to the control group at the given speed.

## What to do next

To quote the Buddha, “The Trouble is we think we have time”. In reality, consumer time and attention can’t be taken for granted. By the time viewers blink, their brain has already seen and processed a mobile ad. And by the time it takes for their heart to beat once, they have probably formed an emotion in response to an ad. So before brands make decisions in terms of whether their ads will be 30, 15 or 6 seconds, they need to ensure that they have a First Second Strategy.

“We have to develop a strategy that works for the first second,” said Tressie Lieberman, Vice president for digital marketing and off-premise at Chipotle Mexican Grill. “That doesn’t mean the second second doesn’t matter either, but it’s really about immediately breaking through.”

The MMA has created a framework to help in this effort, highlighting all the areas where brands are making choices when developing creative (even without knowing) to ensure that marketers make informed decisions. These areas include things like:

- how to leverage specific visual elements to capture the brain’s attention
- the importance of balancing aspects like colors and contrast
- the role of image complexity and how to measure it
- the importance of taping into the emotional brain immediately by triggering primary and social needs.

Additionally, the First Second Strategy framework also includes our initial thoughts about the key media implications of these findings and ad cognition in the age of mobile.

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