

Why Creativity Matters More in the Age of Mobile

February 2017



3	Executive summary
4	Introduction: Changing behaviors, changing ads
6	The big shifts: How consumption is different
	Shift 1: Mobile consumption is non-linear
	Shift 2: Mobile behavior is evolving content to be visual-first
	Shift 3: Mobile consumption is not TV consumption
	Shift 4: Different mindsets mean different perceptions
12	Five implications of mobile-driven behaviors on marketing
	Implication 1: Use data as a creative muse
	• Combine hypotheses with data
	Implication 2: Reimagine storytelling
	• Stop thumbs by delivering early
	• Balance your brand
	• Choose stories over seconds
	Implication 3: Use visual cues
	Implication 4: Mix and match your assets
	Implication 5: Design integrated campaigns that allow for versatility
24	Conclusion: Play more and plan more

“The future does not fit in
the containers of the past.”

— Rishad Tobaccowala, Chief Strategist, Publicis Groupe¹



Executive summary

This paper is not about the new “rules” for mobile marketing. There is no guaranteed formula for creative success on mobile, just as there is no guaranteed formula for a blockbuster movie or best-selling book or hit TV show. But if you’re looking to know more about this new context for creativity, you’ve come to the right place.

I don’t know about you, but I didn’t come of age during the dawn of TV or magazines or newspapers, so to be in this moment for mobile is exciting. Figuring this out is a non-optional assignment; mobile will be the central way that brands connect with people. The creative industry, right now, has an incredible opportunity to lead and define the way.

Mobile is setting a new bar for capturing attention. Its connectedness is highlighting the infinite choice that people have at their fingertips to spend time with any piece of content that’s ever been created, ever. Tools like mobile feed are critical for navigating that choice, and for providing the opportunity for discovery. But without a captive audience, there is no more escaping the demand for relevance and reward. Nothing on mobile is passive, and scrolling by is always an option. We believe that for advertising to have value for business, it must have value for people. We often get asked what the best ad is on Facebook. With 1.86 billion people on the platform every month, the answer to that question is, “Who’s Facebook?” As data shows that people’s emotional reactions are heightened on mobile, we see a tremendous opportunity for building more personal connections through relevant data-driven storytelling.

Building for people will mean building for where people are and not where they were. We are seeing an intense compression of time on mobile, from news to entertainment, and yes, advertising, too. As audiences on their phones are shifting between modes of being “on the go,” “leaning in” and “leaning back,” creators are making content that engages the audience on their terms, and getting more reach in the process. The great creators will discover how to hack time and pull people through these consumption behaviors, catching them on-the-go and encouraging them to lean forward or lean back.

Despite all the data you’ll see here about the changes in consumption that are happening in mobile, the one thing that hasn’t changed is that a provocative, meaningful idea is more important than ever. Cinematography, design, art direction, photography and copy also all still play lead roles in this new reality. As people flex and flow across mobile spaces, powerful ideas and excellence in craft are critical to capturing attention and connecting brands and people through real value.

Hopefully you are as excited about this opportunity as I am. As we enter 2017, there is no doubt that the most under-hyped opportunity is mobile. It isn’t the future, it is the present. I can’t wait to see what you create.

— Andrew Keller, Global Creative Director,
Facebook Creative Shop

Introduction: Changing behaviors, changing ads

The rapid rise of mobile as an advertising medium has challenged everything we have learned about how to capture attention and tell stories. Advertisers had decades to get familiar with and proficient on traditional mediums like TV, but mobile is presenting a whole new set of opportunities and challenges.

MOBILE IS ...

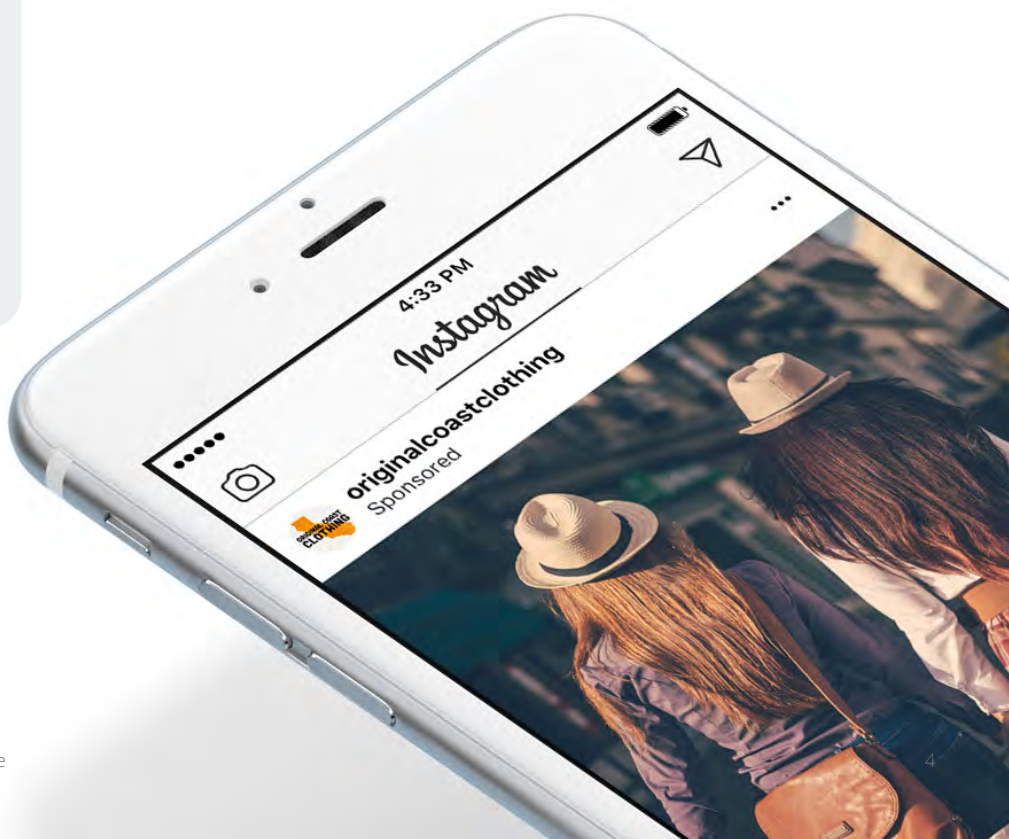
... **Everywhere.** People are spending more and more time on mobile, with their phone often being the first screen they look at in the morning and the last one they check at night.²

... **Fast.** People can look at and process content faster on a mobile device than on a desktop computer, recalling content after only seeing it for a quarter of a second.³

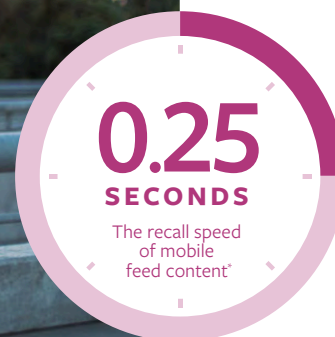
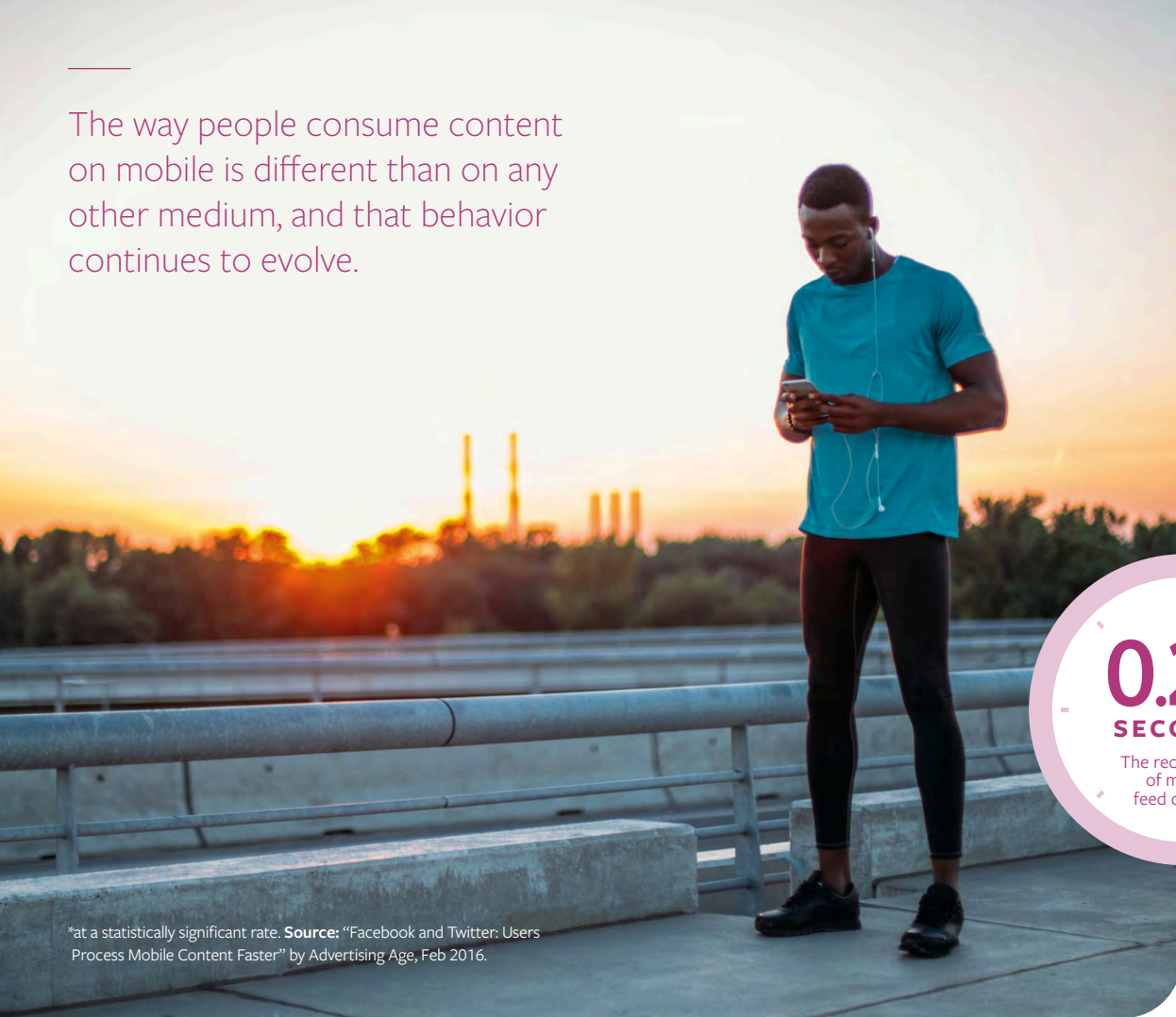
... **Frequent.** Our mobile devices are always within reach, making it easy to open up an app whenever we have a couple of seconds.

It is clear that the way people consume content on mobile is different than on any other medium, and that behavior continues to evolve. Consumer behavior is shifting in real-time, and there is tremendous pressure on the creative ad industry to create campaigns that resonate with how people consume media and content today.

New devices and hardware improvements have contributed to this behavioral evolution. And we've seen first-hand how mobile-first platforms like Facebook and Instagram have accelerated the industry's evolution to align more with how people want to communicate and receive information.



The way people consume content on mobile is different than on any other medium, and that behavior continues to evolve.



*at a statistically significant rate. **Source:** "Facebook and Twitter: Users Process Mobile Content Faster" by Advertising Age, Feb 2016.

Change of this magnitude is hard, but it also presents a chance to chart new territory. Mobile provides an opportunity to create ads that are different—ads that break the conventional rules of advertising, ultimately allowing the industry to reimagine what effective ads “could” look like.

Facebook recognizes these challenges and opportunities, and we want to help. Over the past two years, we have looked at over 2,000 ads from campaigns on Facebook and Instagram and completed more than 12 different analyses that explore the impact and importance of creative on our platforms. Our studies have been conducted in Facebook offices around the globe, highlighting studies from a wide range of markets.

We see that mobile is changing the way people consume content—so much so that new behaviors on mobile are influencing what makes an ad effective. In this paper, we do not just look to prove to you that the “future does not fit in the containers of the past.”¹ Instead, we highlight what the container of the future will look like so that you, the creative ad industry, can understand the foundation on which you are building. We do not have answers to everything, but we are sharing what we know so far. And we are committed to continue offering our learnings to the industry.

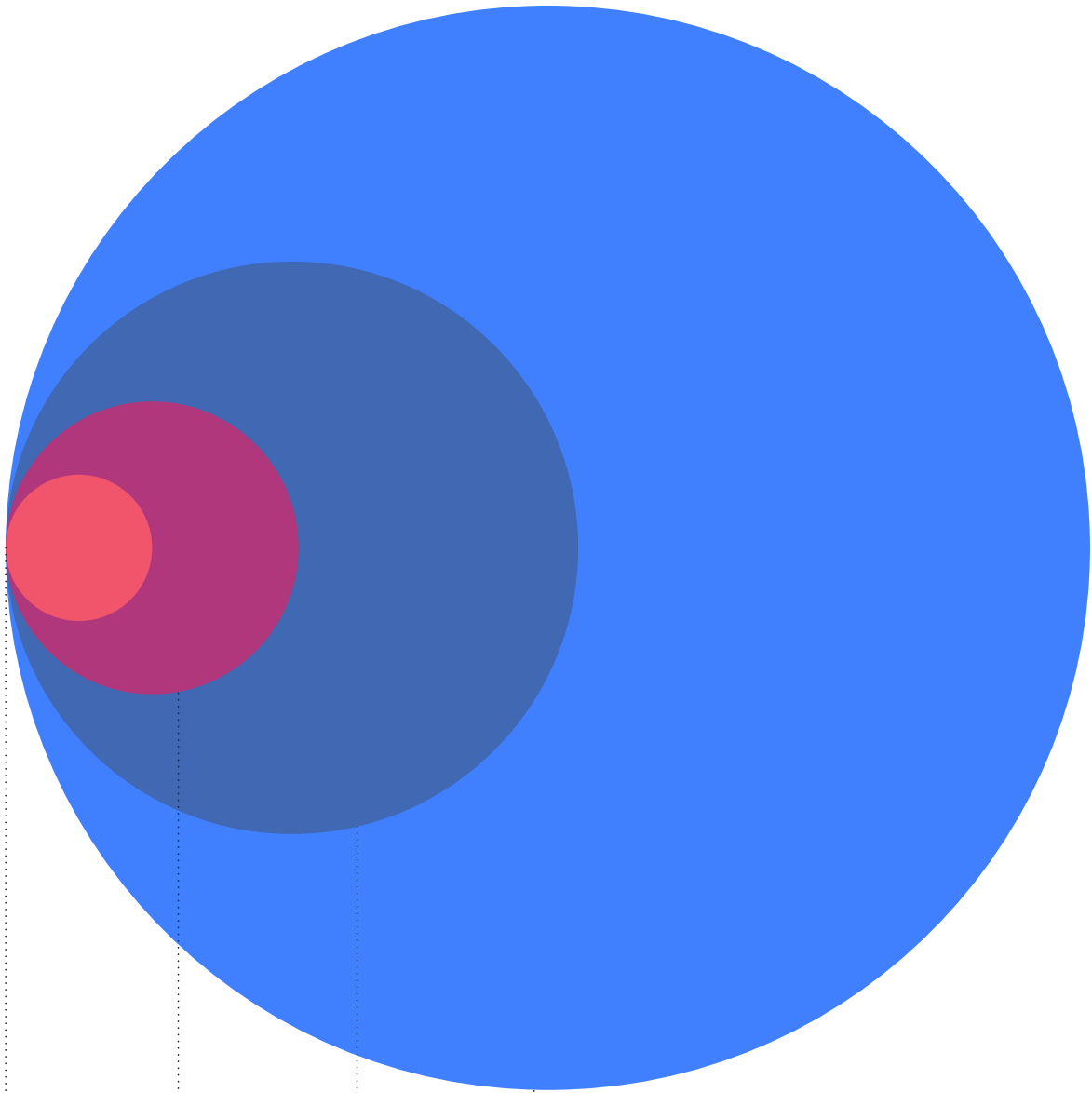
The background of the slide is a blue-tinted aerial photograph of a busy city street. A large group of pedestrians is crossing a wide crosswalk with white diagonal stripes. In the background, there are cars, streetlights, and buildings, creating a sense of a bustling urban environment.

The big shifts: How consumption is different

We are seeing substantial differences in how people behave within the medium of mobile phones and feed environments. And even though the content that people are consuming might be the same across devices, each device has different consumption behaviors that impact how people process content, whether it be an article, a video or an ad. As we see it, mobile is driving the following shifts in behavior.

Average global engagement 2016

Connecting people and creating
a global community



400M
Instagram
users
per day

600M
Instagram
users per
month

1.23B
Facebook
users
per day

1.86B
Facebook
users per
month

Feed by the numbers

As of the end of 2016, Facebook has 1.86 billion monthly active users, 1.23 billion of whom use the platform every day. Instagram has 600 million monthly active users, 400 million of whom use it every day.

The question has rightfully become: “How can we use all of that information to inform and inspire the ads that we make?”

Source: Facebook and Instagram data, Feb 2017.

Shift 1:

Mobile consumption is non-linear

Think about how you read a magazine or watch a TV show. How you experience each type of content is probably similar in that it is linear: you probably read a magazine article from headline to conclusion, and you probably watch a TV show from opening to closing credits.

Mobile phones have disrupted this common linear content experience by creating a space for curation, where each consumer sits in the driver's seat.⁴ According to comScore's 2016 mobile report, "3 out of 4 smartphone users made the effort to customize which apps appear on their home screen,"⁵ meaning no two phones look the same.

People enter and exit apps without a second thought, looking at a piece of content for seconds before moving on but also easily returning to content that caught their eye during an earlier session.⁶ Mobile lends itself to an on-demand approach, as people control what they consume based on where they are and what they want in a given moment.

This has led platforms that are mobile-first to mimic that non-linear consumption style, with feed-based environments inviting people to move back and forth through content as they please. And that's exactly what people do. Indeed, nearly half of US adults say they check their phone 30 times a day.⁷

This encourages fast scrolling behaviors as people look for the pieces of content they want to spend time with. Looking at how Facebook content is consumed on different devices, we have seen that people spend on average 1.7 seconds with any given piece of content on mobile, compared to 2.5 seconds on desktop.⁸ These speeds are even faster for younger audiences.⁸ But regardless of the difference in time spent, we have seen that people can recall mobile News Feed content at a statistically significant rate after only 0.25 seconds of looking at the post.⁸ All of this shows that the non-linear nature of mobile is leading to faster consumption.



No two phones look the same

According to comScore's 2016 report, "3 out of 4 smartphone users made the effort to customize which apps appear on their home screen," meaning no two phones look the same.



Shift 2:

Mobile behavior is evolving content to be visual-first

Over the past decade, we have seen a shift in the types of content that people are using to share and communicate.

According to comScore's 2016 mobile report, three of the five most used apps in the US are photo-, video- and visual-first.⁵ Of the most popular apps comScore classifies as a social network, three are image- or video-first (Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest).⁵

With the proliferation of cameras on phones, using photos and video to communicate has never been easier. As the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." We now know videos are worth a lot more. We have seen this with the rapid adoption of new video formats, like Live video on Facebook. From May 2016 to November 2016, the number of people going Live at any given moment grew 4x—and this is a global trend, with people having shared Live video from all seven continents and from outer space.⁹

Currently, video consumption in feed is often sound-off, meaning that a video needs to visually attract an audience and, in most cases, communicate without sound. Although traditionally considered sight, motion and sound, video is becoming much more about sight and motion. On a macro level, we are seeing the ads on our platform adapt accordingly. When we looked at a random sample of 800 ads from large Facebook advertisers in NA and EMEA that ran between Q1 and Q2 2016, we saw that the share of videos that required sound to understand the message dropped a significant amount in Q2 (29%) from Q1 (35%).⁸

While people are driving visual-first communications, these types of stats show that marketers are starting to recognize that ads are not just about the "benefit visualization" of a product but are instead about "message visualization"—communicating a message using visuals. Marketers are also considering how best to approach designing ads that appeal to sound-off environments while also resonating when the sound is on. As the "Father of Advertising" David Ogilvy said,

"It seems to me you should use their language, the language they use every day, the language in which they think."

Well, the language of today is visual.



Shift 3:

Mobile consumption is not TV consumption



What is cognitive load?

Cognitive load is neural activity related to mental involvement in the information presented. Higher values indicate greater mental effort exerted with the presented information.

How does content seen on a device held in the palm of your hand versus content seen on a TV screen impact consumption? The physical differences of where content is consumed lead to a different viewing experience and trigger different cognitive reactions to the same pieces of content.

We commissioned SalesBrain, a US-based neuromarketing agency, to understand how people processed content on a phone and on a TV.¹⁰ People watched the same content on both devices while SalesBrain measured brain activity. The study found that though TVs have an objective size advantage over a mobile phone, the fact that phones are viewed at a closer range makes the perceived size of the devices more similar. We learned that people had a stronger emotional reaction and higher levels of cognitive engagement when watching content on their phones, while people showed signs of distraction and a higher cognitive load when watching TV.

In another neuromarketing study, we commissioned Neuro-Insight to study how the sequence of mediums that someone is exposed to during a campaign can affect ad performance in the US.¹¹ The first sequence split the two groups' viewing experiences between first watching the same ad on either a mobile device or on a TV. Next, both groups watched that same campaign on the other device. The group that saw the campaign on their mobile phone first had a stronger neurological reaction, with higher levels of emotional intensity and memory encoding than the group that first saw the campaign on TV.

Put plainly, the act of consuming content on mobile has a different effect than consuming that content on TV. Even the introduction of content on mobile first can lead to a stronger emotional reaction when seeing the same content on TV later, demonstrating the emotional potential of mobile. Media planners have started recognizing this effect, and we are working with many of them on ways that Facebook can play a complementary role to TV.

Shift 4:

Different mindsets mean different perceptions

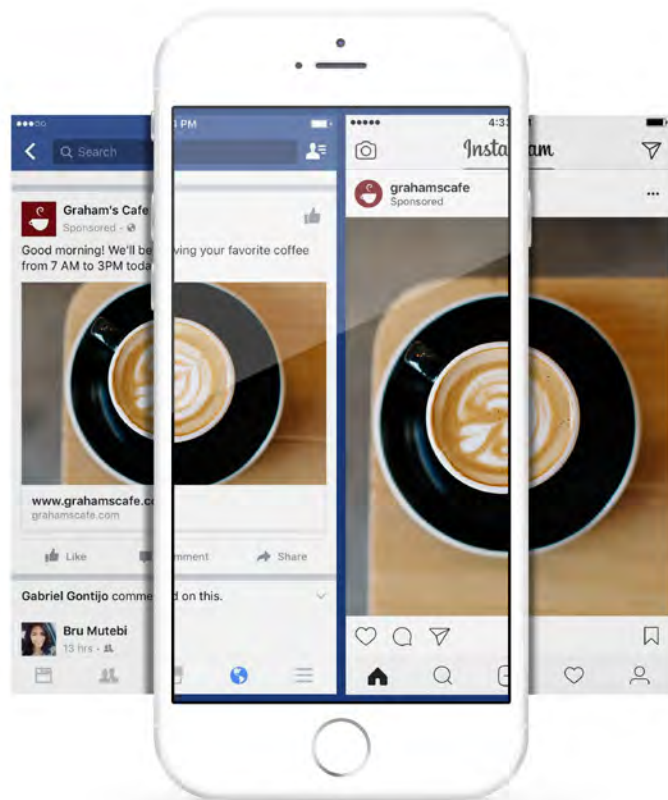
Different mobile platforms offer as different experiences as different TV channels do. The reasoning and mindset of a person who would watch ESPN are likely different from those causing someone to watch the Food Network. It is not enough to understand the difference of the ad experience across devices, it is also important to understand the nuances within the ad experience in a mobile environment.

Recognizing the different need states of people on a platform can help shape your messaging on that platform. We have seen that people's intentions for using a platform can influence how they perceive and evaluate the content they see there. Through interviews and an online survey of people in Australia, Brazil, France, Japan, the UK and the US, we found that people open Facebook to satisfy their need for "connection" and gain recognition, whereas people turn to Instagram to relax and discover new content.¹²

We also looked at the impact each platform can have on ad perception by showing participants the same ad images. We mocked up text in Facebook and Instagram feeds and then surveyed Millennials in the UK, France and Germany about their opinions and attitudes towards those ads.¹³ The study looked at the difference between positive and negative ratings for each characteristic and was able to identify where perceptions of the exact same ad differed based on

the platform context. Ad descriptors like "beautiful," "distinctive" and "high quality" were rated significantly higher on Instagram than on Facebook. However, the study saw more emotive elements of the ads. The ratings for the ads being perceived as "creative," "imaginative," "relatable" and "uplifting" were the same on both platforms. Notably, placing an ad on Instagram appeared to "elevate" the ad's perceived aesthetic value.

We have seen that people use different apps for different purposes and the active choice of opening an app indicates a specific mindset.⁷ Mindsets can have a profound impact on the way content is perceived, and this is important to understand when building ads for feed-based environments.



Five implications of mobile-driven behaviors on marketing

Even though people consume content on mobile differently than on other mediums, we see that mobile ads are still being produced according to the rules of TV or print. For example, in our analysis of over 800 video ads from 2015 and H1 2016 of major advertisers in NA and EMEA, only 22% could be understood in the first 10 seconds without sound.¹⁴

While the future will not fit in the containers of the past, it will take new shapes that open up new opportunities. The following implications are being driven by the shifts we described in the previous section.

Implication 1:

Use data as a creative muse

In the first shift—mobile consumption being non-linear—we explored how the way people are interacting with mobile content is generating a lot of data. These mass amounts of data are giving us new levels of insight into our audiences and allowing us to build and deliver more relevant creative.

The most valuable aspect of a creative brief is its ability to inspire a creative team through an understanding of their target audience. Large-scale data can help provide context and color about the audience, helping to inspire a creative idea that will be relevant to the audience an advertiser is trying to reach. This type of data can give information about a particular platform. It can also inspire a campaign or product idea.

Facebook is exploring how advertisers and agencies can be inspired by Facebook's Audience Insights tool to create campaigns that are meaningful to their target consumers while driving business results. This Facebook API allows advertisers and agencies to get deeper learnings about audiences based on how they express themselves on our platforms. Combining topic data of the behaviors and interests of specific audiences with other data sources can not only inform planning but can also help validate an insight, creating impactful campaigns across formats and channels.



Combine hypotheses with data

One of the difficulties of working with topic data can be the overwhelming amounts of it. We created a process to scale analyses on the platform.

1. **Identify and get to know your audience:** This is the audience you care about—the audience that is most often your target audience.
2. **Specify a hypothesis about the audience:** A hypothesis forms the basis of this process. The hypothesis is normally a gut feeling or a follow-up question a planner or creative has.
3. **Use data to prove or disprove the hypothesis:** By structuring your data extraction to the narrower hypothesis-led topic area, one can prove or disprove the hypothesis.

Though audience-based topic data can provide meaningful insight into people and their relationships with a product category, the raw nature of the data can make it difficult to analyze. In an interview with a Facebook researcher about creative strategies with topic data, we explored the importance of under-

standing and accounting for audience biases through normalization.¹⁵ For example, when considering data from Facebook conversations about food, it is important to distinguish whether women produce the majority of the comments because women talk about food more or because they comment more than men in general. Our advice? Make sure that you always have a clear idea of what you are comparing to help control for other factors.

We also know that adding topic and audience data to the initial client brief allows a planner to design a creative brief that can spark creative ideas that resonate with the right audience.

Beyond serving as inspiration, audience insights tools, along with first-party research, can help paint a picture of a target audience, show how a campaign will need to speak to that audience and heighten the ability for campaign customization. This type of work speaks to the core concepts of a campaign, as was seen through a segmentation we did for Ubisoft.¹⁶

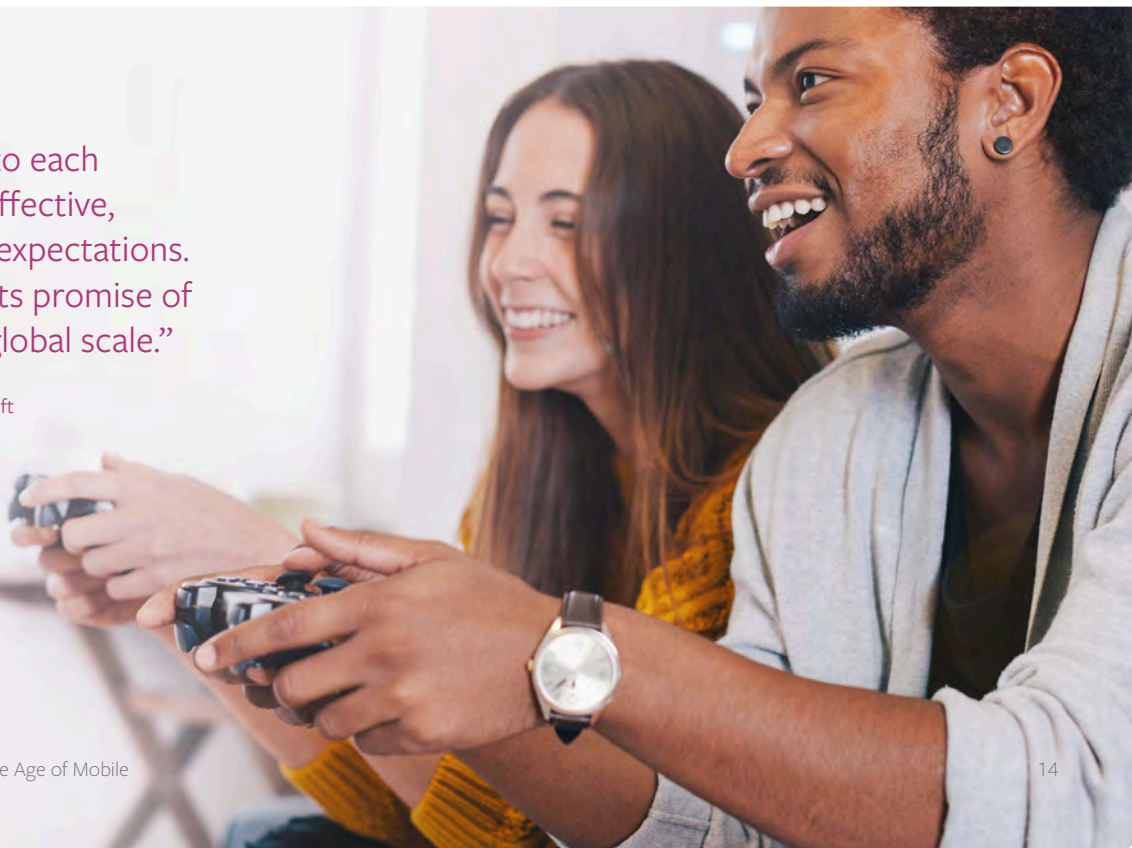


What is normalization?

Normalization is the process of taking into account biases that are introduced by the audience and then ensuring that you are pulling out the right insights.

“Developing creative specific to each group proved exceptionally effective, surpassing some of our own expectations. Facebook truly delivered on its promise of personalized marketing at a global scale.”

—Jill Steinberg, VP of Media and Promotion, Ubisoft



Success story: Cadbury Dairy Milk

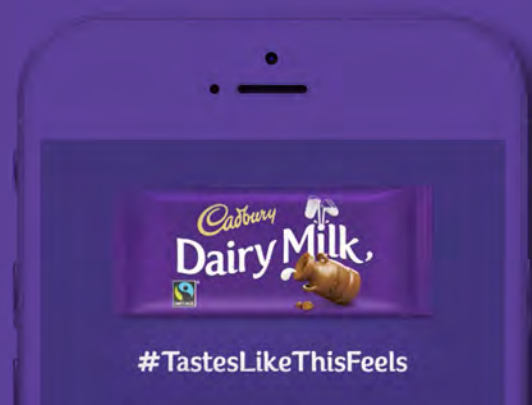
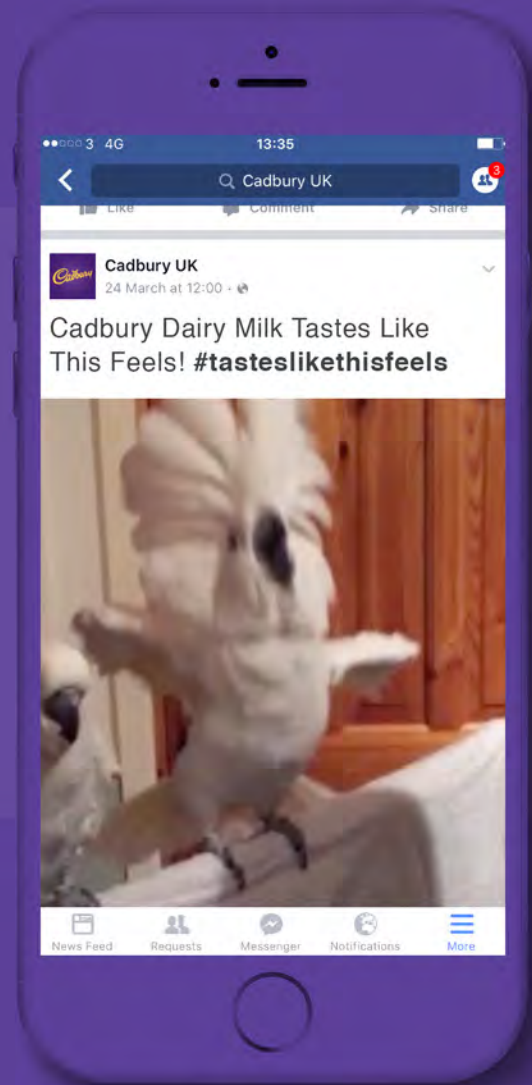
Sweet success with Audience Insights

The UK chocolate maker became one of the first brands to use Facebook's Audience Insights API to understand its customers better, helping it create an entertaining campaign that gave a big boost in awareness.

“Our ‘Taste like Joy Feels’ campaign demonstrated that scaled, personalised, mobile-first advertising creative is incredibly impactful. Facebook’s Audience Insights API helped us better understand how our consumers think about chocolate and how those feelings change depending on the day of the week. As a result, we were able to deliver a more meaningful campaign, achieving unprecedented campaign awareness.”

— Gerry D’Angelo, Director,
Media MEU and Global Digital Media Partnerships, Mondelez International

Want to learn more? Check out the full success story on [Facebook Business](#).



Source: "Cadbury Dairy Milk" by Facebook Business.

Implication 2:

Reimagine storytelling

As discussed in the first shift, the non-linear nature of mobile is also driving faster, more frequent and choice-driven consumption of content in mobile environments. Gone are the days where we could spend 20–50 seconds building anticipation for a payoff. People have trigger-finger reflexes to skip ads online—especially on mobile. We have learned that it is important to express brand ideas early and often in video ads in feed to keep the thumb from scrolling.

Let's challenge what a video ad could and should look like on mobile platforms and in feed-based environments like Facebook and Instagram. Imagine if some of TV's greatest ads were designed for today's environment. How would that affect how ads were developed? Would Apple's "1984" Macintosh campaign or Proctor and Gamble's "Thank You Mom" campaign still look the same? Or would those amazing ideas be executed in a way that makes them look totally different?

This is where things start to get exciting, as it is only the beginning. Exploring new story arcs that challenge the traditional, linear approach of storytelling has just started, but it is already redefining what a good ad campaign is. We are seeing some brands experiment with speed, rhythm and order as they consider ways to grab attention early and thrive in a feed environment.

Next we explore a few of the ways storytelling will need to change to succeed on mobile-first platforms.

Stop thumbs by delivering early

Having only a couple of seconds to get noticed can be a challenge, and in our view there are two ways to tackle this challenge. One, create an ad with a hook that draws in people in the beginning with a celebrity or an attention-grabbing tactic that delivers the value proposition for watching more, or two, deliver the "reason to believe" early. Proving the effectiveness of the first approach is difficult to research, since this is much more about the idea and the audience. Hooks can be created from a variety of tactics, and what will be effective will depend a lot on that specific audience.

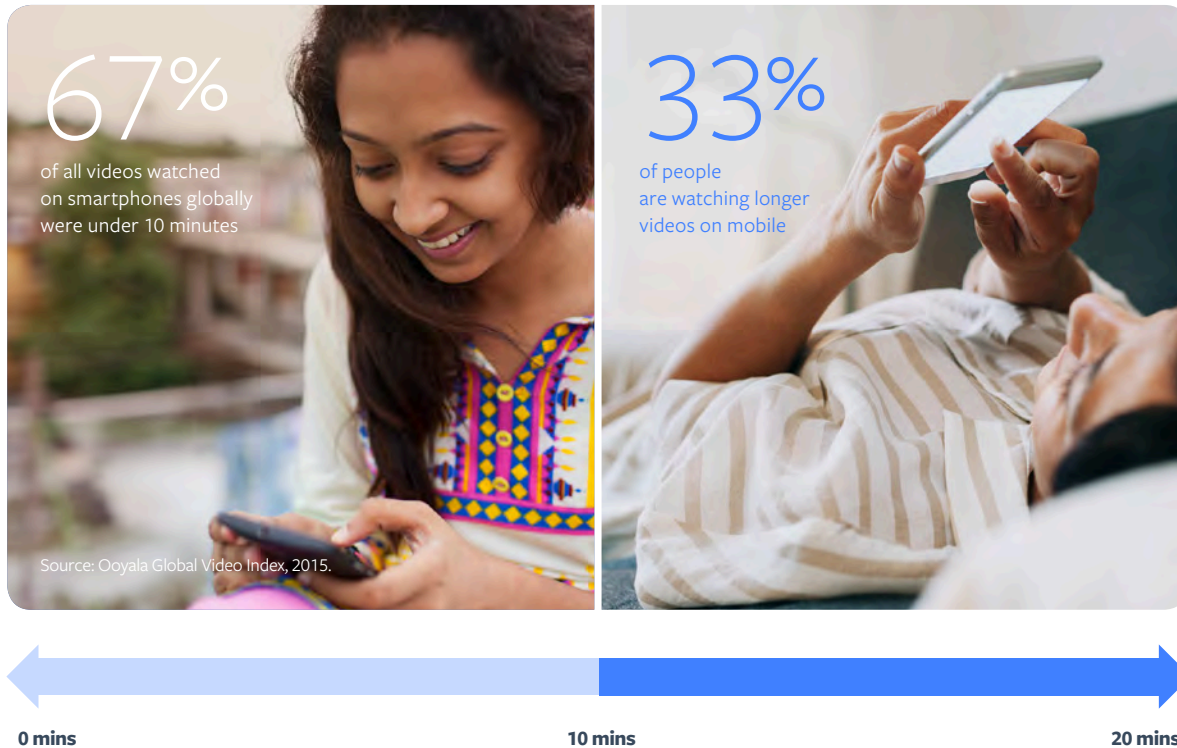


Video lengths differ from feed to feed

The requirements for a video can range depending on the mobile feed environment. Before designing an ad for feed, advertisers should consider how those requirements can influence the assets they produce, whether that applies to on-screen text or the length of a video.



Content consumption is evolving



We have completed three MetrixLab studies in APAC, EMEA and NA to better understand how Facebook creative is impacted by different branding and messaging tactics.¹⁷ Within the MetrixLab studies in NA and EMEA, we saw the benefit to the second approach. Within the NA MetrixLab study, we saw that ads that delivered the key message in the first 10 seconds were correlated with stronger brand and message recall. The EMEA MetrixLab study suggested the strength of the second tactic with better performing ads, as defined by MetrixLab, where delivering the main message sooner was correlated with longer views. By leading with the brand message, you are more likely to attract an audience interested in your product and have them watch your ad.

Based on our research to date, we believe that early messaging leads to better ad performance in terms of recall and getting people to watch more of an ad within feed. And while getting the message across early is effective, it does not mean that as soon as your message is delivered your ad is over. Instead you are now left with an audience that is watching your ad because they were interested in that message, and you can take the time you need to explore your “big idea.”

Beyond delivering the message early, communicating the message without sound also impacts the way the brand message is received. The results from the APAC MetrixLab study showed that ads that could be understood without sound were perceived as being more in line with what participants thought the brand represented. Further, the NA MetrixLab study found that if branding was clear and easily identifiable it drove the perception that the video ad represented what people knew about that brand.

Branding also played a role in the effectiveness of the ad. Early branding that appeared in the first three seconds of a video ad tended to have higher message recall for that ad. Higher breakthrough happened when at least half of the video’s content had some amount of branding in it.

Not only showing a brand but also highlighting product benefits in action can impact how an ad is received. The APAC MetrixLab study found that when a product was shown in action, the research from that video ad was more likely to drive interest in the brand and increase purchase intent.

Balance your brand

The method of integrating the brand is as important as making sure there is enough branding in the spot overall. In the EMEA MetrixLab study, both the lowest and highest performing ads, as defined by MetrixLab, had more early branding compared to the ads ranked in the middle. However, the lowest ranked ads were doing a poor job of branding their video ads. Early branding does not mean just putting a logo on the front—good brand integration requires communicating who the advertiser is without annoying the consumer. The APAC MetrixLab study also showed that too much and too little branding can

lead to poor results, with too little branding resulting in lower brand recall.

While there is not an absolute answer of what the “right” amount of branding is to stand out in feed, including branding elements early helps to mitigate the impact of drop-off. A brand’s marketplace positioning may help define what level of branding is needed, considering whether their brand is new or established and whether they have established brand cues?

How did sample ads perform?

With only 11% of ads evaluated falling into the top performing areas, there’s **an opportunity to improve the performance of video ads across EMEA.**

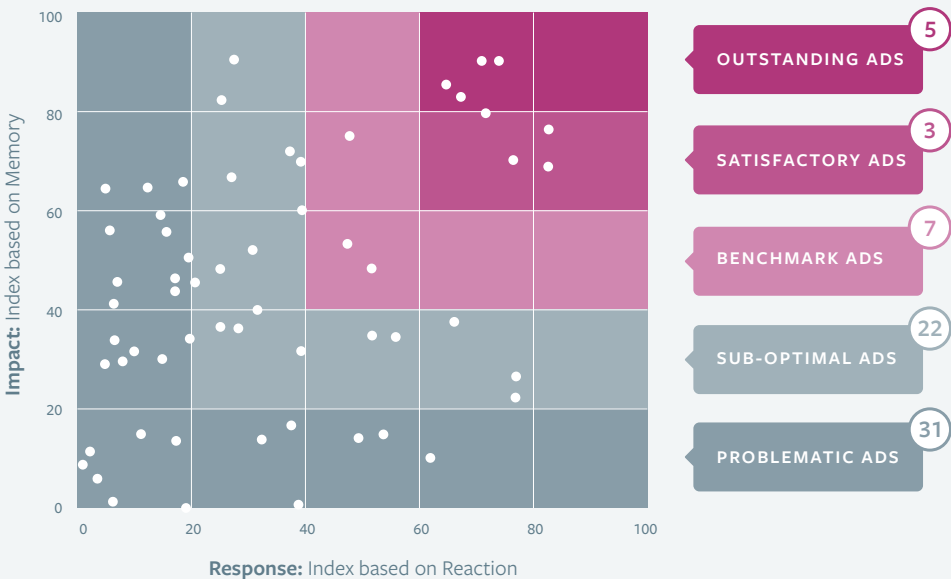
Impact index

Aggregate of Brand Recall, Message Recall, Ad Recognition

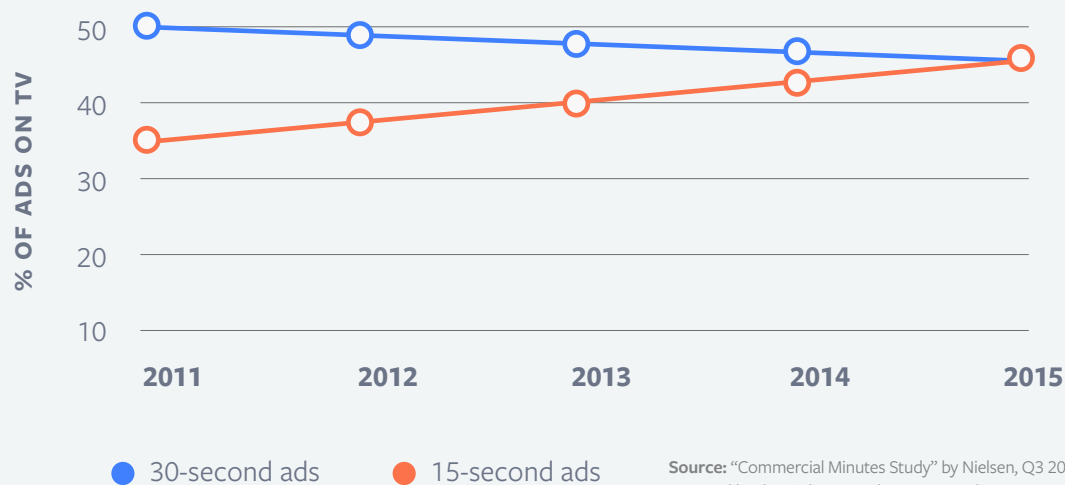
Response index

Aggregate of Enjoyment, Relevance, Credibility, Brand Fit, Easy to Understand, Differentiation, Purchase Intent, Brand Interest

Source: EMEA Video Study” by MetrixLab (Facebook-commissioned study of 68 video ads from six categories in DE, ES, FR, IT, KSA, NL, PL, RO, TR and UK, and studied against 6,807 target consumers), Jan–Mar 2016.



Average TV ad run time percentages



Choose stories over seconds

15 and 30 seconds are considered the standard lengths of a TV commercial, but when it comes to feed-based environments like Facebook and Instagram, the question often becomes "What is the optimal length for video ads in feed?"

We have not found a magic number; instead our research has shown the nuances between viewing behavior and performance.¹⁷

Shorter videos are more likely to be watched in their entirety. This makes intuitive sense, with a shorter video asking less time of a viewer to complete the video than a longer video. According to the results of the EMEA Metrixlab analysis, there was no significant relationship between the ad length and the percentage of a video that a respondent watched or that respondent's ability to recall the brand. Instead, the ad content and relevance were more important factors in impacting how long a person watched or the memorability of the video ad.

Despite these results, we are seeing a broader trend towards shorter videos in the ecosystem. In 2011, Nielsen saw that on average about 50% of TV ads were

30 seconds and only about 35% were 15 seconds, but less than four years later, the number of 30-second and 15-second ads have been at about 45% each.¹⁸

Shorter videos tend to have an advantage in feed environments like Facebook and Instagram. Shorter videos force an advertiser to have messaging and branding earlier in the ad, leading to more people seeing the message. We saw within the APAC Metrix-Lab study that shorter ads, with earlier branding and messaging, encouraged people to watch the videos longer and tended to have better recall of the brand and the message.

Separating out the impact of length and early branding and messaging is hard to do and often leads people to think that shorter-form ads, like six seconds or less, are best for a feed environment. It is not that the length of a video itself is driving better results but rather that the way the brand and message are delivered in shorter videos is more effective.

A visual-first TV ad that makes sense without audio cues will be easier to adapt for other platforms and devices.



Implication 3:

Use visual cues

The second big shift we have seen is that, when it comes to mobile, people are choosing visual-first communication. Now that people are speaking in this new language, marketers are asking how they can use visual cues to create effective ads within feed. To understand this question, we looked at both still ads and video ads.

We commissioned Nielsen to conduct a neuromarketing study in Brazil to understand how brands could make their display assets on Instagram more visually impactful.¹⁹ They looked across three brands in the Quick Service Restaurants and Retail verticals to understand the role of text and imagery in drawing a person's attention. The research found that with new brands, display ads benefited from using a combination of text and imagery, whereas established brands could use more imagery to generate memory activation. The established brand that was tested could rely on previous marketing to provide the context to that specific display ad, with the image-only ads resulting in higher emotional engagement.

Additionally, this study showed us how people explore a display ad and their visual path when viewing a display ad using eye-tracking software. Interestingly, across the nine display ads tested, there was no consistent path for exploration. However, people consistently looked at the image part of the ad, as opposed to the surrounding content, when they first viewed the display ad. This relays the importance of identifying the right image in communicating the message of the ad and brand.

We also ran a study with nine video ad campaigns that compared a TV ad and a feed-optimized version of the same TV ad in the US.²⁰ To optimize the TV ads for Facebook News Feed, the creative teams for each of the TV campaigns were tasked with recutting and editing the original made-for-TV ad into a new version that was specifically designed for the Facebook feed.

Our study found that three of the nine feed-optimized ads and their associated TV ads were statistically significant in driving more people to associate the main message of the ads with the correct brand, compared to people who did not see the ads. Factors that could have contributed to the success of the three feed-optimized video ads on Facebook could be that their original TV ads made sense without sound and told the brand's story visually through demonstrative imagery.

It is also worth noting that four out of the nine optimized video ads significantly outperformed the TV ads in ad recall. The four top performing feed-optimized ads quickened the video ads story and were already visual, making them stand out in feed.

The upshot: If you start with a TV ad that leads with visuals first, meaning it makes sense without audio or auditory cues, it will be easier to adapt that ad for other platforms and devices.



Get inspired

Create mockups for your next pitch with mobile in mind. By playing with mobile, you can experience how your work would appear in feed before it goes live.

To learn how to bring your ideas to life, visit Creative Hub: www.facebook.com/ads/creativehub/

Mix and match your assets

The third shift that mobile has driven is around how people interact with and feel about the content they consume. Our neuromarketing research has shown that content viewed on mobile leads to different cognitive responses than when it is viewed on TV. This means that we should not just think of mobile campaigns within the context of the TV campaign but instead think about all of the behavioral differences we see on mobile and let that shape the campaign design.

In the offline world, different people have different preferences when it comes to where and how they consume content, whether that be in print, on TV or elsewhere. Getting the right mix of assets to achieve maximum impact is crucial.

Finding the right mix of assets online is just as crucial. When feeds are personalized and ad units and content types vary—as is the case on Facebook and Instagram—you need to rethink how to plan your assets. Our ads research has shown that mixing formats online greatly impacts ad performance.

We ran an eight-day test for a direct-response brand in the US to understand the impact of sequencing ads using three strategies:

1. Video ad followed by a display ad
2. Display ad followed by video ad
3. Display ad followed by display ad²¹

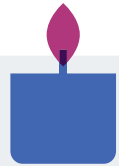
While the display-only campaign was able to drive the most visits to the brand's website, the video followed by static cell drove the most online conversions. The results were that different formats might drive different outcomes and, in this case, that a combination of formats can drive the most revenue.

We also ran a study that showed how you can take a single TV ad and translate it into multiple asset types for Facebook, such as video, carousel and display ads.²² Executing these transformations can be hard to get right, but initial testing has shown that when the edits take into account mobile viewing behaviors, the original TV spot contains visual content that can be edited into more snackable content and there is not too heavy of an offline campaign running, we see better results from the mixed assets.

By creating the right mix of assets, you will make sure that people are seeing the content that is most likely to grab their attention. This does not mean making every unit for every campaign. The unit should still be the right fit for the idea, but by having some variety of assets you improve the likelihood of campaign success.

In another study on finding the right media mix, we looked at the use of cinemagraphs across five cross-media campaigns in Australia with Millward Brown.²³ As Millward Brown put it, “The differences between the stronger versus weaker performing cinemagraphs reflects the need to always ensure creative assets meet the needs of the audience, and that the format of the advertising has a valid role in the communications mix.”

Unlike TV, feed is not limited to a single asset. It is able to present stories that can be told across time and in different formats, giving people the right type of content at the right time.



What is a cinemagraph?

A cinemagraph animates a piece of a static image and creates the sense of movement within the image.

Implication 5:

Design integrated campaigns that allow for versatility

The final shift is understanding that not all platforms on mobile are the same or lead to the same content experiences. Just like on TV, where you may run an ad fit for a specific channel, mobile platforms offer opportunities to make choices that can enhance creative.

A question that we often get is, “Should advertisers be building different creative assets based on the platforms?” We commissioned MetrixLab to run a meta-analysis asking US-based Instagram users to look at an Instagram feed with an ad in it and then rate that ad.²⁴ The respondents saw one of two types of ads:

1. An ad that had previously run on Facebook as part of a successful campaign (as defined by significant movement in brand metrics) and that had been mocked up as an Instagram ad.
2. An actual Instagram ad that made use of a hashtag or visual cue inspired by the Instagram community (like #thingsorganizedneatly).

The study showed that on recall, likeability, relevance and stated intent metrics, high-performing Facebook ads mocked up in the Instagram ad format were rated the same as the community-inspired Instagram ads.

What we can take away is first, quality ads in feed—those able to move brand metrics—will perform well regardless of platform context. This means that when you build for feed, you are investing in all platforms that are feed-based. But from our earlier research showing that the same ads are perceived differently on Facebook and Instagram, we know that once you have a high-quality feed ad concept, you can play with the executions based on what people perceive that platform to deliver for their need states and/or associations. Leveraging these potential halo effects and different need states is not unlike taking advantage of digital’s ability to precisely target based on interests and behaviors. Layering in the platform-specific associations and nuances can be what takes a good feed ad and makes it a great feed ad.



Conclusion:

Play more and plan more

Over the last decade, we have seen a dramatic change in the way people are consuming content—especially content on mobile. The experience of content on mobile is non-linear and leading to faster, more frequent and personalized experiences. People are increasingly communicating in a visual language, especially through photos and video.

We have also learned that the cognitive load of mobile is different than that of TV and that mobile is not a homogenous experience, with different platforms having different effects.

Research on these shifts and our understanding of how people use mobile have led us to five implications for building ads for mobile.

Mobile has also opened up new opportunities when it comes to designing ads. A significant increase in the amount of available data is allowing for new sources of inspiration. More ad formats are allowing an idea to explore different forms and unique platform experiences.

Given the dominance of the medium, making ads that work on mobile and within the platforms that are prevalent on mobile is necessary to creating truly cohesive campaigns. This means that we as marketers must go beyond just how an idea will fit into a TV spot to ask the important questions: “How will that idea look on mobile?” “How will those two executions work together?”

As Sarah Watson, Chief Strategy Officer of BBH New York, said in an Advertising Research Foundation panel when talking about how the plethora of platforms is impacting strategic continuity, “All this media puts a lot more responsibility on clients [...] for me it puts much more onus on the strength of the idea, so I find that actually a lot more of my conversations are more traditional than they used to be. What is this insight? What is this big idea that is going to hold this together?”

Mobile has also opened up new opportunities when it comes to designing ads. A significant increase in the amount of available data is allowing for new sources of inspiration. Different consumption patterns are pushing us to rethink story arcs. More ad formats are allowing an idea to explore different forms and unique platform experiences. It is undeniable—mobile has wiped the canvas blank in terms of what an ad should look like, and it is pushing us as an industry to try new things.

From you, we ask that you stop thinking about the elements that have traditionally made great ads and instead take a step back and think about how people are experiencing ads in our mobile-first world. If you can internalize the behavioral shifts that mobile is driving, you will be able to go beyond the implications that we have outlined here and start to make ads that are not just adapted for mobile but built with the spirit of mobile in mind. This is a big mental shift, and we know it might require organizational restructuring. It means planning for mobile at the beginning of a campaign, not including it as an afterthought. (Even harder to achieve is making sure that the budget to shoot mobile content is earmarked from the start.)

From our side, this means continuing to do research to understand the behaviors that we are seeing on our platforms and on mobile. We will continue sharing our findings with you, the people who are creating the ads we are studying.

What we have shared is what we know so far, but it is likely the beginning of what we are going to learn. And we are committed to sharing our knowledge and working with you in the partnership and spirit of learning. The world of content consumption has changed, and now it is up to us as an industry to adapt and push the boundaries of this new frontier.

*Definitions

APAC covers the Asia Pacific region.

EMEA covers Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

LATAM covers the Latin American region.

NA covers North America.

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Contributions

We compiled this research into a single perspective representing contributions from experts in APAC, EMEA, LATAM and NA* from the following Facebook Teams: Ads Research, Client Measurement, Consumer-Insights, Creative Agency Partners, Creative Shop, Product, Platform and Insights and Product.