# Attention measurement:

An international status report.

By Bas De Vos for Screenforce Finland

# Content

# Introduction: A New Era in Attention Measurement

In the everevolving landscape of advertising, attention has emerged as a pivotal metric one that goes beyond traditional measures of exposure to delve into the depth of human interaction with content. This report, commissioned by Screenforce Finland and developed under the stewardship of Bas de Vos, offers an international perspective on the "state of play" in attention measurement.

Drawing from interviews with leading voices in the field each with unique expertise spanning media research, creative development, and practical applications the report captures a dynamic and multifaceted discussion about what attention truly means for advertisers today. Contributors include Andy Brown, Matt Green, Jon Waite, Sorin Patilinet, and Karen Nelson-Field, whose collective experience bridges theory, data, and practice. Their insights shed light on the complexities and opportunities in attention measurement, providing a global lens to bring this burgeoning field into focus.

## What This Report Uncovers

### 1. Defining Attention: More Than Eyes on a Screen

The report begins by exploring foundational questions: What is attention? How can it be measured reliably across diverse media platforms? Karen Nelson-Field provides a compelling dichotomy between active and passive attention, while Andy Brown cautions against oversimplified metrics, emphasising the interplay of visual and audio cues in advertising impact.

### 2. The Misconceptions and Challenges

Among the challenges discussed is the debate around eye-tracking as the dominant method for measuring attention. Sorin Patilinet highlights how creative execution influences attention, while Jon Waite points out the risks of incentivising metrics that focus solely on costefficiency, potentially at the expense of effectiveness. The tension between granular precision and actionable scalability runs as a theme throughout.

### 3. Applications and Value of Attention Metrics

The report teases apart the practical applications of attention data. Matt Green underscores that attention is not a binary concept but exists on a spectrum, with varying levels of engagement driving different outcomes. Whether enhancing brand equity or optimising media spend, the contributors stress the necessity of integrating attention metrics within broader strategic frameworks.

### 4. What's Next in Attention Measurement?

Beyond its current state, the report ventures into the future of attention metrics. It examines emerging technologies like galvanic skin response and hybrid measurement models, hinting at a shift toward more nuanced, multidimensional approaches. The contributors weigh the tradeoffs between technological precision and practical utility, providing a vision for what's next in the field.

## Why Read This Report?

This document is not just a theoretical exploration; it is a practical guide for advertisers, agencies, and researchers seeking to navigate and leverage attention in their strategies. From the insightful commentary of global thought leaders to the actionable recommendations tailored to the advertising ecosystem, the report delivers a comprehensive, engaging, and forwardlooking analysis.

Whether you are grappling with the challenges of defining attention, seeking clarity on its practical applications, or curious about how international insights align with your market, this report is a mustread. It offers a rare confluence of expert opinion, rigorous analysis, and actionable guidance all with the goal of advancing the art and science of attention in advertising. Dive in and discover why attention is not just a metric, but a key to unlocking advertising success in the modern age.

**Bas de Vos**
December, 2024

# A What the experts say!

**Attention in Advertising:
A Comprehensive Exploration
with Experts**

Attention has emerged as a vital focus in advertising, regarded as the bridge between exposure and meaningful outcomes. While there is a consensus on its importance, the nuances of how attention is defined, measured, and applied remain somewhat open to debate.

This chapter draws on the insights of five leading experts Andy Brown, Karen Nelson-Field, Sorin Patilinet, Jon Waite, and Matt Green to provide an indepth exploration of attention's role in advertising. By weaving together their perspectives, we reveal shared beliefs, differing views, and actionable recommendations for advertisers and media buyers.

## 1. Defining Attention: A Spectrum of Engagement

At its core, attention signifies the shift from mere exposure to meaningful engagement. One could say: "From Opportunity to See (OTS)" to "See (S)." However, the experts diverge somewhat in their interpretations, underscoring the complexity of the concept.

Karen Nelson-Field provides a structured definition: "Attention is when a human stops what they're doing and focuses on the ad, even if for a fleeting moment." She emphasises the distinction between active attention, where the audience dedicates full focus to the content, and passive attention, where peripheral stimuli register without full cognitive engagement. Nelson-Field explains that active attention has greater cognitive impact but also notes that passive attention can contribute significantly to brand awareness and recognition over time. "Both are valuable," she explains, "but advertisers naturally prefer active attention, because it represents undivided focus."

Jon Waite anchors his definition in observable behaviour, describing attention as: "Did someone actually look at the ad? How long did they look at it for?" For Waite, attention is a measurable interaction that starts with visual engagement but extends to other elements such as sound and context. "Attention isn't just about whether the ad is visible it's about whether the audience is actually engaging with it," he notes. Waite's focus on measurement reflects his pragmatic approach to integrating attention into campaign strategies.

Andy Brown critiques the industry's tendency to oversimplify attention. He argues that equating more attention with better results ignores critical factors like creative quality, context, and the medium's unique attributes. "One misconception," Brown notes, "is that attention only involves

> **"Attention isn't just about whether the ad is visible—it's about whether the audience is actually engaging with it."**
>
> **Jon Waite**

what's on the screen, ignoring audio's critical role, especially in TV advertising. It's too simplistic to think of attention as a binary metric." Brown's perspective calls for more holistic understanding, incorporating both the sensory and contextual dimensions of attention.

Matt Green emphasises attention as a continuum rather than a binary state. He describes attention as "any level of engagement with the ad, whether fleeting or sustained." Green suggests that even minimal attention can deliver results, particularly for brands with strong equity. "While active attention is ideal, passive attention still has value especially when paired with strong creative and consistent branding," he explains.

Sorin Patilinet introduces a creative lens to the discussion, arguing that attention is not just about capturing focus but also about sustaining it. "Attention is fleeting in today's media landscape," he notes, "but great storytelling and emotional resonance can hold attention longer, creating deeper connections with the audience." Patilinet emphasises the importance of understanding cultural and emotional triggers to maintain engagement, particularly in cluttered environments.

**"Great storytelling and emotional resonance can hold attention longer, creating deeper connections with the audience."**

**Sorin Patilinet**

**COMMON GROUND**
All the experts agree that attention is a multifaceted concept encompassing active and passive states. While active attention offers higher cognitive value, passive attention also plays a critical role in reinforcing brand messages. The consensus highlights the need for advertisers to approach attention as a dynamic, layered phenomenon rather than a onedimensional metric.

**ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS**
▪ Advertisers should differentiate between active and passive attention in their strategies, prioritising the former for high-impact campaigns while leveraging the latter for broader awareness.

▪ Creative elements like storytelling and emotional resonance are essential for sustaining attention across different media.

## 2. The Role of Attention Measurement: Bridging Exposure and Effectiveness

The measurement of attention has become a cornerstone of modern advertising, providing insights that traditional metrics such as impressions and reach fail to capture. Attention metrics offer advertisers a deeper understanding of how campaigns engage audiences and drive outcomes.

Karen Nelson-Field positions attention metrics as indispensable for understanding advertising effectiveness. "If no attention is paid, no outcome is possible," she asserts.

Nelson-Field highlights that traditional metrics often fail to account for the audience's actual engagement with ads. "Attention data fills this gap," she explains, "by revealing whether and how audiences are interacting with the content."

Jon Waite agrees, emphasising the inefficiencies created by outdated KPIs like clicks and impressions. "Old metrics incentivise bad behaviour, such as prioritising cheap reach over meaningful engagement," he argues. Waite views attention metrics as a more accurate indicator of campaign effectiveness, enabling advertisers to optimise their strategies for impact rather than volume. "If you're not measuring attention, you're flying blind," he adds.

Andy Brown, while acknowledging the value of attention metrics, warns against treating them as standalone solutions. "Attention metrics should complement, not replace, traditional KPIs like GRPs and impressions," he says. For Brown, attention data adds an important layer of insight, but it must be contextualised within broader frameworks to avoid overreliance on a single metric.

Matt Green emphasises attention as a prerequisite for success. "Without attention, there can be no outcome," he states. However, Green also highlights the varying thresholds of attention required for different objectives. "Low attention can still yield results for established brands, but new entrants need higher levels of attention to break through," he explains. His perspective underscores the importance of aligning attention strategies with specific campaign goals.

Sorin Patilinet shifts the focus to creative implications, describing attention metrics as "not just about evaluation but also about optimisation." At Mars, Patilinet's team uses attention data to refine storytelling and creative execution. "It's not just about knowing whether the ad worked—it's about making it work better," he says.

## "Attention metrics should complement, not replace, traditional KPIs like GRPs and impressions."

## Andy Brown

### SHARED PERSPECTIVES

The experts agree that attention metrics are vital for bridging the gap between exposure and effectiveness. They highlight the limitations of traditional KPIs and emphasise the value of attention data in providing actionable insights into audience behaviour.

### ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

■ Integrate attention metrics into broader measurement frameworks, ensuring they complement traditional KPIs.

■ Use attention data not just for evaluation but also for optimising creative strategies and media placements.

## 3. Measuring Attention: Diverse Methods and Innovations

The methodologies for measuring attention reflect the complexity of the concept itself, with different approaches catering to various aspects of engagement.

Andy Brown categorises attention measurement into two scaled approaches: eye-tracking and hybrid models. "Eye-tracking focuses on duration and visibility," he explains, "while hybrid models incorporate additional environmental factors like screen placement and platform influence." Brown notes that we should not be dismissive of other solutions that have a role such as neuroscience, or physiological solutions such as galvanic skin response (GSR). In a similar way to which qualitative research complements quantitative, these approaches can offer deeper insights into emotional engagement but tend not to be scalable for continuous use. "These tools are fascinating but not yet practical for large-scale applications," he says.

Karen Nelson-Field and Jon Waite advocate for the scalability and consistency of eye-tracking technology. Waite highlights its ability to measure attention across platforms, while Nelson-Field notes its precision in distinguishing active from passive attention. "Eye-tracking is a reliable starting point for understanding engagement," Nelson-Field says.

> **"Combining biometric and contextual data provides a holistic view of engagement."**
>
> **Matt Green**

Sorin Patilinet introduces predictive analytics as a future tool for using attention measurement data. "Predictive models will allow us to anticipate attention patterns and optimise campaigns proactively," he explains. At Mars, attention metrics have become integral to planning and execution, enabling the team to refine strategies before campaigns launch.

Matt Green emphasises the role of hybrid models in capturing the multifaceted nature of attention. "Combining biometric and contextual data provides a holistic view of engagement," he notes. Green also highlights the growing role of AI in analysing attention patterns, offering real-time insights for optimisation.

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**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

Eye-tracking remains a foundational method for measuring attention, particularly for its scalability and precision.

Hybrid models and predictive analytics represent the next frontier, offering deeper and more actionable insights.

**ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS**

■ Invest in scalable methodologies like hybrid models, while exploring emerging technologies for niche applications.

■ Leverage predictive analytics to move from reactive measurement to proactive strategy.

## 4. Current Usage and Developments: Evolving Practices Across Media

The application of attention metrics across media platforms reflects a complex and uneven landscape. Digital advertising, with its datadriven focus, has embraced attention metrics more readily, while traditional platforms like TV are only beginning to explore their full potential. Each medium presents unique challenges and opportunities for advertisers seeking to understand and optimise attention.

Karen Nelson-Field noted the slower adoption of attention metrics in traditional media, particularly TV. "TV has always relied heavily on reach and frequency as its primary metrics," she explained, "but these don't tell us much about whether the audience is truly engaging with the content." Despite these limitations, she acknowledged TV's significant advantage in fostering sustained engagement, especially through its ability to generate emotional resonance. Nelson-Field suggested that traditional media could benefit from modernising its measurement frameworks to include attention metrics, thereby aligning itself more closely with the precision of digital.

**"It's not just about understanding whether people paid attention—it's about using that information to improve our campaigns."**

**Sorin Patilinet**

Matt Green observed that digital platforms are inherently better suited for attention measurement due to their vast data ecosystems and real-time analytics capabilities. "Digital environments demand precision, because fragmented consumption patterns make it harder to capture and sustain attention," he explained. Green highlighted the role of attention metrics in helping advertisers navigate these complexities, ensuring that campaigns are optimised for high engagement even within limited timeframes.

Jon Waite echoed the advantages of digital platforms in attention measurement, pointing out their ability to use metrics such as dwell time and interaction rates to gauge engagement. However, he cautioned against viewing attention as a "magic bullet," emphasising that it should be considered alongside other key metrics like brand recall and purchase intent. "Attention is crucial, but it's only one piece of the puzzle," Waite remarked.

Sorin Patilinet shared practical examples from Mars, where attention metrics are used to inform both creative development and media planning. "It's not just about understanding whether people paid attention it's about using that information to improve our campaigns," he said. Patilinet described how Mars integrates attention data across platforms, using it to refine storytelling techniques and optimise ad placements. He also highlighted the importance of tailoring attention strategies to the specific characteristics of each medium.

Andy Brown offered a balanced perspective, acknowledging the value of attention metrics while cautioning against their overuse. "In traditional media, we have to be careful not to let attention metrics overshadow

the broader context," he explained. Brown emphasised that while digital platforms excel in data collection, traditional media still offers unique opportunities for sustained engagement that should not be overlooked.

**COMMON GROUND**

The experts agree that attention metrics are more developed and widely used in digital media but hold significant potential for traditional platforms. Both mediums benefit from attention insights, though their application requires different approaches due to the inherent differences in consumption patterns and measurement capabilities.

**ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS**

■ Advertisers should prioritise cross-platform consistency in attention measurement, leveraging digital's precision while exploring ways to modernise traditional metrics.

■ Tailor attention strategies to the strengths of each medium—using TV for its immersive qualities and digital for targeted, real-time engagement.

## 5. TV vs. Digital Advertising: Contrasting Challenges and Strengths

The relationship between TV and digital advertising has often been framed as competitive, yet the experts highlighted their complementary roles in capturing attention. Both formats offer unique strengths that, when combined, can enhance campaign effectiveness.

Andy Brown emphasised TV's unparalleled ability to generate emotional engagement through immersive storytelling. "TV is often a shared experience," he explained, "and its audiovisual format creates a level of connection that digital platforms often struggle to replicate." However, Brown noted that TV's traditional reliance on pure reach and frequency metrics has limited its ability to fully leverage attention insights. "We need to rethink how we measure TV's impact to include attention, especially in an era of second screens and distracted viewing," he added.

Jon Waite contrasted this with the challenges faced by digital platforms, where shorter ad formats and fragmented user behaviour demand precise attention strategies. "Digital advertising is inherently more fleeting," he remarked, "so the focus has to be on maximising those brief moments of engagement." Waite stressed the importance of using attention metrics to identify placements and formats that deliver the highest impact, especially on platforms like social media.

Karen Nelson-Field underscored the complementary nature of TV and digital, arguing that advertisers should view them as parts of a cohesive strategy rather than competing channels. "TV is ideal for building longterm brand equity, while digital excels in driving immediate, targeted engagement," she explained. Nelson-Field suggested that attention metrics could help bridge the gap between these formats, enabling advertisers to understand how they work together to influence audience behaviour.

Matt Green highlighted the role of attention metrics in optimising the interplay between TV and digital. "There's a lot to be learned from how digital platforms measure attention," he noted, "but we also need to

adapt those insights to the unique strengths of TV." Green suggested that advertisers use attention data to balance their media mix, ensuring that both formats contribute to achieving broader campaign objectives.

Sorin Patilinet provided a creative perspective, emphasising the importance of tailoring content to the specific characteristics of each medium. "The way you tell a story on TV is different from how you do it on digital," he explained. Patilinet highlighted the role of attention metrics in guiding these creative decisions, ensuring that ads resonate with audiences regardless of the platform.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS
TV and digital platforms offer distinct but complementary opportunities for capturing attention. TV excels in sustained, emotional engagement, while digital is better suited for precise, targeted interactions.

Attention metrics can help advertisers optimise their media mix, leveraging the strengths of both formats to achieve their objectives.

### ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS
■ Use TV for brandbuilding campaigns that require emotional depth and longterm engagement.

■ Leverage digital platforms for tactical campaigns that demand immediate, high-impact engagement.

■ Employ attention metrics to unify strategies across platforms, ensuring consistent messaging and optimised outcomes.

## "TV excels in creating a connection with the audience that lasts beyond the duration of the ad."

## Karen Nelson-Field

## 6. The Strengths of TV: An Anchor for Sustained Attention
TV continues to hold a unique position in the advertising landscape, particularly for its ability to sustain audience attention and build longterm brand equity.

Karen Nelson-Field praised TV's capacity to sustain attention, particularly through its use of storytelling and emotional resonance. "TV excels in creating a connection with the audience that lasts beyond the duration of the ad," she said. Nelson-Field emphasised that while TV might not capture as much initial active attention as digital, its strength lies in fostering passive engagement that reinforces brand messages over time.

Andy Brown highlighted the role of TV's audio component, which he described as "a critical yet often overlooked element of attention." Brown noted that even when viewers are distracted by second screens, TV's audio can keep them engaged with the ad's message. "Audio is a powerful tool for sustaining attention, especially in multi-tasking environments," he explained.

Sorin Patilinet shared practical examples from Mars, where TV remains a cornerstone of their advertising strategy. "We use TV to build emotional connections with our audience," he said, adding that attention metrics have helped refine their creative approach to maximise engagement. Patilinet stressed the importance of storytelling, noting that wellcrafted narratives are essential for holding attention in today's cluttered media landscape.

Matt Green acknowledged the challenges TV faces in adapting its metrics to the precision of digital platforms but argued that its strengths far outweigh its limitations. "TV is still the best medium for reaching large audiences and building longterm brand recognition," he said. Green suggested that integrating attention metrics into TV planning could help advertisers better understand its impact.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

TV's unique strengths in generating emotional engagement and sustaining attention make it a critical component of any advertising strategy.

Attention metrics can help modernise TV's measurement frameworks, ensuring that advertisers capture its full value.

### ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

■ Use attention data to optimise TV ad placements and creative elements, ensuring maximum engagement.

■ Leverage TV's audiovisual strengths to create multisensory campaigns that resonate with audiences.

## 7. The Future of Attention: Innovations, Challenges, and Opportunities

As attention metrics gain prominence, the field continues to evolve with advancements in technology, methodology, and application. The future of attention in advertising lies in refining its measurement, standardising its use across platforms, and addressing the ethical and practical challenges that come with it.

Karen Nelson-Field predicted significant advancements in passive attention measurement, driven by innovations in biometric and neurotechnologies. "The ability to measure passive attention at scale will be a gamechanger," she said. Nelson-Field highlighted emerging tools that could make it easier for advertisers to capture subtle forms of engagement, such as peripheral awareness and subconscious processing. However, she also warned against relying too heavily on new technologies without robust validation. "We need to ensure that the metrics we use are reliable and actionable," she added.

Sorin Patilinet emphasised the potential of predictive analytics in shaping the future of attention measurement. At Mars, his team is already using predictive models to anticipate attention trends and refine campaign strategies. "It's no longer just about measuring what happened," he explained. "It's about forecasting what will happen and using that insight to plan proactively." Patilinet sees predictive analytics as a way to stay ahead of audience behaviour, particularly in an increasingly crowded media landscape.

Andy Brown called for global standardisation in attention measurement, warning that the proliferation of conflicting methodologies

could undermine its credibility. "If we're not careful, attention will become just another buzzword, diluted by inconsistent definitions and unreliable metrics," he cautioned. Brown advocated for industrywide collaboration to establish clear guidelines and best practices, ensuring that attention metrics are both comparable and actionable across platforms. He also said that there may not be a single approach, and standardisation may start with best practices for the different methodologies. (see IAB/MRC and ARF work)

Jon Waite echoed the need for consistency, emphasising the importance of creating metrics that work across both digital and traditional media. "We need a unified approach that allows advertisers to compare attention data seamlessly," he said. Waite also highlighted the role of education in the adoption of attention metrics, noting that many advertisers and agencies still struggle to understand their value and application. "It's not just about having the data—it's about knowing how to use it effectively," he explained.

Matt Green explored the role of artificial intelligence and machine learning in advancing attention measurement. He described how these technologies could analyse large volumes of data in real time, offering advertisers unprecedented insights into audience behaviour. However, Green also raised ethical concerns, particularly around privacy and transparency. "We need to ensure that the way we collect and use attention data respects consumer rights," he said. Green sees AI as a powerful tool but stressed the importance of using it responsibly.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**
The future of attention measurement lies in refining existing methodologies, embracing predictive analytics, and integrating advanced technologies like AI.

Standardisation is critical to ensuring that attention metrics remain credible and actionable across platforms.

Ethical considerations, particularly around privacy, must be central to the development and application of attention metrics.

**ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS**
■ Invest in emerging technologies and predictive analytics to stay ahead of audience behaviour and optimise campaigns proactively.

■ Advocate for global standards to ensure consistency and comparability in attention measurement.

■ Balance innovation with ethical practices, ensuring transparency and consumer trust.

**"We need a unified approach that allows advertisers to compare attention data seamlessly."**

**Jon Waite**

## Conclusion: The Role of Attention in Advertising

The insights shared by these five experts paint a rich and multi-dimensional picture of attention in advertising. While there is widespread agreement on its importance, the nuances of how attention is defined, measured, and applied reveal the depth and diversity of the topic. This chapter has explored these dimensions, offering a rich synthesis of perspectives that advertisers and media buyers can use to navigate this evolving field.

**Defining Attention:** Attention is a spectrum that ranges from active engagement to passive awareness. Advertisers must understand and leverage this complexity, recognising that even fleeting moments of attention can contribute to campaign success.

**Measuring Attention:** Eye-tracking, hybrid models, and predictive analytics offer diverse tools for capturing attention, each with its strengths and limitations. The future of measurement lies in integrating these approaches to provide a holistic view of audience engagement.

**TV and Digital:** Although TV and digital platforms offer complementary strengths, attention measurement data offer the unique opportunity to have a comparable metric, which is unified across platforms. So, attention metrics can help unify strategies across these formats, maximising their combined impact.

**The Future:** Innovations in technology and methodology will continue to shape the field, but success will depend on transparency, clarification of approaches used and standardisation where possible. Attention metrics must remain credible, actionable, and respectful of consumer privacy.

For advertisers and media buyers, the path forward involves embracing attention as a dynamic and multi-faceted concept. By integrating advanced measurement tools, fostering collaboration, and maintaining a focus on ethical practices, the industry can unlock new levels of effectiveness and relevance in its campaigns.

# B What the interviewer sees.

## The Interviewers' View: Summary of Key Takeaways

Reflecting on conversations with leading experts in the field, several central themes and conclusions emerge about the evolving role of attention metrics in advertising:

### A. From Opportunity to See (OTS) to "See"

Attention metrics act as a crucial weighting factor, moving beyond traditional "Opportunity to See" to measuring actual visual engagement. This evolution aligns measurement practices more closely with how advertising is consumed in reality.

### B. Filling Gaps in the Advertising Funnel

Attention data bridges critical gaps in the execution of advertising. It complements existing metrics by providing insights into how well audiences engage with creatives and placements, effectively completing the "toolbox" for advertisers.

### C. A Layer on Top of Reach?

The potential of attention metrics lies in overlaying them onto traditional reach figures. By weighing reach with attention data, advertisers can better evaluate creative and placement effectiveness. This approach promotes informed decision-making across platforms, especially where existing reach metrics are robust.

### D. Digital Advertising: Addressing Metric Deficiencies

In digital advertising, where reliable reach data is often lacking, attention metrics initially emerged to fill this void. By providing an engagement lens, they offered a solution where reach and frequency data were insufficient. In contrast, in television, where strong reach data already exists, the focus is on measuring true attention—not using attention as a proxy for reach.

### E. Three Clusters of Measurement Approaches

Current methodologies in attention measurement fall into three broad categories:

- Biometric: Direct, physical measures of attention (e.g. eye tracking).

- Hybrid: Combining biometric and heuristic data for broader applicability.

- Platform-Based: Utilising proxies like cursor movement or dwell time on screen.

Each approach serves different needs, but human input remains essential to interpret and operationalise the findings effectively.

### F. Operationalising Data: A Core Challenge

A consistent hurdle is transitioning from raw attention data to actionable insights in daily advertising operations. Building tools and frameworks that translate these metrics into practical outcomes is essential for widespread adoption. Additionally, existing trading practices might push back against using attention data, as it might steer away from agreed trading approaches.

### G. Creative vs. Context Attention

Distinctions between creative and contextual attention are critical. While both dimensions influence engagement, they require different applications in media planning and optimisation.

# C What the research says!

## Update on international Attention Research

To add some more research-based context to the overall topics we try to cover, we have reviewed 8 more recent papers and presentations on attention measurement from the international stage. Details for the papers used can be found in appendix A.

In today's media-saturated landscape, attention has emerged as a critical determinant of advertising success. For advertisers and media buyers, understanding how attention operates, how it can be measured, and its implications for strategy is no longer optional it's essential. This chapter synthesises insights from the eight industry papers and presentations to provide a comprehensive examination of attention in advertising. By addressing definitions, methodologies, practical applications, and future directions, this chapter offers actionable insights and a nuanced understanding of attention's evolving role in the advertising ecosystem.

## 1. Defining Attention

### Core Themes
Attention is the mental engagement an individual directs toward an advertisement, acting as the gateway to higher-level cognitive processes like recall, persuasion, and action. Across the sources, attention is presented as a "pivotal metric" in assessing advertising effectiveness. Reports such as the CESP-IREP White Paper (2024) highlight the distinction between "active attention" (focused directly on the ad), "passive attention" (general awareness without focus), and "no attention".

Karen Nelson-Field's typology emphasises that most ad exposure occurs in passive or low-attention states, making it critical for advertisers to develop creative that can capture and retain focus. Similarly, the Ireland study emphasises that attention is not static but dynamic, fluctuating depending on the medium, content, and user context.

### Differing Perspectives
While most sources agree on the broad importance of attention, they diverge on how it is defined and categorised. For instance, Lumen Research's work focuses on "attentive seconds per impression" as a key unit of measurement. Meanwhile, Nelson-Field and others propose a more fluid continuum, arguing that attention is influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

### Unique Contributions
The "ecology of attention," as explored in the CESP-IREP White Paper (2024) report, links attention to sustainability by advocating for more effective, less wasteful advertising campaigns. This perspective adds a layer of social responsibility to the discussion, positioning attention as not just a measure of effectiveness but also a means to reduce advertising's carbon footprint.

### Actionable Takeaways
1. Advertisers must consider attention as a spectrum, optimising campaigns to engage both passive and active viewers.

2. Attention strategies should be tailored to the medium, leveraging insights on how attention varies by platform and context.

## 2. Role of Attention Measurement

### Core Themes

Attention measurement bridges the gap between ad exposure and its effectiveness, offering advertisers insights into how well their messages resonate. Studies consistently highlight a "strong correlation between attention and outcomes" such as brand lift, purchase intent, and ROI.

Lumen Research, for example, demonstrates how attentive seconds per 1,000 impressions correlate with incremental profit, establishing attention as a direct driver of financial performance. Similarly, Amplified Intelligence's Ireland study underscores that attention metrics are not just academic but have realworld implications for optimising campaigns.

### Differing Perspectives

The reports differ in their emphasis on how attention should be used. Some, like the Lumen, EGTA (2024) argue for attention metrics as "predictive tools" to inform future campaign planning. Others suggest a more retrospective application, evaluating past campaigns to refine strategies moving forward.

### Unique Contributions

The notion of "attention decay" from the Ireland study is particularly compelling,

**Attention measurement bridges the gap between ad exposure and its effectiveness, offering advertisers insights into how well their messages resonate.**

showing how different platforms sustain or lose attention over time. TV, for instance, retains attention consistently, while digital platforms like social media see steep drop-offs after just a few seconds.

### Actionable Takeaways

1. Incorporate attention metrics into both campaign planning and post-campaign analysis.

2. Prioritise platforms with slower attention decay for storytelling and brand-building campaigns.

## 3. Attention Measurement Methods

### Core Themes

The evolution of attention measurement reflects a growing recognition of its complexity and importance. Traditional methods like "surveys and recall studies" have given way to advanced technologies such as "eye-tracking," "facial recognition," "biometric sensors," and "neurometrics." These methods aim to capture both the quantity (how much attention) and quality (type of attention) of viewer engagement.

Hybrid models are becoming increasingly prevalent, combining observational methods (e.g. webcam-based eye-tracking) with physiological measurements (e.g. skin conductance) and self-reported data to provide a multidimensional view of attention.

### Differing Perspectives

There is a clear divergence in how measurement methods are chosen and implemented. High-budget campaigns often employ neurometrics, like EEG and fMRI, to capture deep emotional and cognitive responses. However, such methods are costly and may not scale well for broader applications. In contrast, tools like gaze-

tracking and webcam-based analysis are more accessible but sacrifice some precision.

Some reports favour simpler, scalable methods, arguing that "relative comparisons across channels" are more valuable than precise but isolated measurements. For example, the Lumen, EGTA (2024) presentation emphasises attention as an actionable metric when combined with cost data, such as cost-per-attentive-second.

**Unique Contributions**
The "Track the Success" study by Screenforce Germany uses an innovative blend of human experience testing, which integrates emotional, cognitive, and visual attention metrics. This approach aligns with the growing consensus that attention should be measured not only as a static event but as part of an ongoing interaction with the ad.

**Actionable Takeaways**
1. "Match measurement tools to campaign needs:" Use neurometrics for deep insights in high-budget campaigns and scalable methods for large-scale, multi-channel campaigns.

2. "Focus on hybrid approaches:" Combining observational data with physiological and cognitive metrics provides a more holistic view of attention.

**Attention should be measured not only as a static event but as part of an ongoing interaction with the ad.**

**Screenforce, "Track the Success" study**

## 4. Current Usage and Developments

**Core Themes**
Attention metrics are increasingly integrated into advertising workflows, serving both as "diagnostic tools" for evaluating campaign performance and as "predictive tools" for media planning. Reports highlight their role in optimising both creative execution and channel selection.

Lumen Research and Ebiquity's work demonstrates how "attentive seconds per 1,000 impressions" can act as a benchmark for comparing media performance. This data allows advertisers to allocate budgets more effectively, directing resources toward platforms that deliver the highest attention ROI.

**Differing Perspectives**
Not all sources agree on how attention metrics should be used in practice. While some, like the the Lumen, EGTA (2024) presentation advocate for integrating these metrics into programmatic buying platforms, others caution against over-reliance, stressing the need to contextualise attention within broader effectiveness frameworks.

**Unique Contributions**
The FCP "Ad-Tention" study introduces the concept of "attention entropy," acknowledging the variability of attention across platforms and time. This perspective emphasises that attention is not a fixed attribute, but a dynamic state influenced by numerous factors.

**Actionable Takeaways**
1. "Integrate attention data into planning tools:" Use benchmarks like attentive seconds to guide media buying decisions.

2. "Leverage attention entropy:" Develop strategies to adapt creative and placement to fluctuating attention dynamics.

## 5. Total TV vs. Digital Advertising

**Core Themes**
A recurring theme in the reports is the distinct nature of attention dynamics across TV and digital platforms. TV is consistently positioned as a "high-attention environment," with immersive formats and longer ad durations that encourage sustained viewer engagement. Digital platforms, by contrast, are often characterised by "shorter attention spans" and "higher fragmentation."

**Differing Perspectives**
Some sources treat TV and digital as entirely distinct domains, requiring separate metrics and strategies. Others advocate for cross-platform approaches, emphasising the need for unified metrics that account for both digital precision and TV's storytelling strengths.

**Unique Contributions**
The Ireland study highlights the "attention decay curve," showing how TV retains attention more effectively over time compared to digital platforms like YouTube or Meta. This underscores TV's ability to sustain narratives and emotional connections.

**Actionable Takeaways**
1. "Optimise campaigns by platform:" Use TV for storytelling and emotional branding, while leveraging digital for targeted and high-frequency messaging.

2. "Balance cross-platform strategies:" Where feasible, develop unified metrics to evaluate performance across TV and digital channels.

## 6. Strengths of TV – Total Video

**Core Themes**
TV's strengths as an advertising medium are well-documented across the reports. Its ability to deliver "consistent attention," "high recall rates," and "broad reach" makes it a cornerstone of effective campaigns. TV's immersive environment allows for deeper engagement compared to digital platforms, where distractions are more prevalent.

Reports like the Lumen, EGTA (2024) presentation describe TV as an "attention bargain," offering cost-effective attentive seconds compared to digital platforms. For example, the cost per attentive second for TV is significantly lower than for mobile digital formats.

**Differing Perspectives**
While TV's advantages are widely recognised, some sources suggest that emerging formats like "connected TV (CTV)" and "non-skippable YouTube ads" are beginning to close the gap.

**Unique Contributions**
The "magnetism" of TV's editorial content, as described in the the report from Screenforce Germany, enhances ad retention even during program breaks, making TV uniquely effective for long-term branding.

**Actionable Takeaways**
1. "Prioritise TV for long-term campaigns:" Use it as a foundation for building brand equity and trust.

2. "Leverage TV's cost-efficiency:" Incorporate it into media plans for campaigns requiring high recall and ROI.

**TV's ability to deliver "consistent attention," "high recall rates," and "broad reach" makes it a cornerstone of effective campaigns.**

## 7. Future Directions

### Core Themes
The future of attention in advertising will likely see the convergence of "AI-driven analytics," "cross-platform standardisation," and "sustainability-focused strategies." AI tools are already being used to predict attention dynamics and optimise creative execution in real-time.

### Unique Contributions
Havas Media's focus on "sustainable advertising" highlights how attention metrics can be aligned with broader environmental goals. By reducing waste through better-targeted campaigns, advertisers can achieve both financial and ecological benefits.

Reports also predict greater collaboration between platforms to standardise attention metrics, enabling more consistent comparisons across TV, digital, and out-of-home media.

### Actionable Takeaways
1. "Invest in AI technologies:" Use predictive models to refine creative strategies and media placements.

2. "Adopt sustainable practices:" Use attention data to minimise campaign waste and support environmental goals.

## 8. Practical Applications

### Core Themes
Attention metrics are increasingly being used to refine "creative strategies," "optimise media buying," and "improve ROI." Advertisers are leveraging these insights to design ads that not only capture but sustain viewer attention, aligning creative elements with the specific strengths of each platform.

### Unique Contributions
The integration of attention data with business metrics like sales lift and ROI, as demonstrated by Lumen Research, offers a compelling framework for evaluating campaign effectiveness.

### Actionable Takeaways
1. "Optimise creative execution:" Use attention insights to tailor ad formats and messaging for maximum engagement.

2. "Enhance media planning:" Incorporate attention metrics into budget allocation and channel selection decisions.

### Conclusion
Attention is not just a metric—it is a strategic asset that links advertising to measurable business outcomes. The findings from these reports underscore the critical role of attention in bridging the gap between ad exposure and consumer impact. Whether it's through advanced neurometrics, scalable eye-tracking methods, or integrated cross-platform strategies, advertisers have a growing toolkit to navigate the complexities of attention in modern media.

As the advertising ecosystem continues to evolve, attention metrics will play an increasingly central role in campaign planning and evaluation. By understanding and applying these insights, advertisers can not only enhance their immediate campaign performance but also contribute to sustainable, effective, and responsible advertising practices.

**Attention is not just a metric—it is a strategic asset that links advertising to measurable business outcomes.**

# Appendix A:

**List of papers/presentations used for desk research overview.**

**a) Maximising Profit Through Attention, Ebiquity x Lumen:**
  - Authors/Organisation: Ebiquity and Lumen Research
  - Date/Year: October 31, 2024

**b) Attention Update, presented at Magic of TV Event, Helsinki**
  - Authors/Organisation: Jon Waite, Havas Media Network
  - Date/Year: October 24, 2024

**c) Advertising Attention: CESP-IREP presentation at ASI, Venice 2024.**
  - Authors/Organisation: CESP and IREP
  - Date/Year: September 2024

**d) FCP Ad-Tention**
  - Authors/Organisation: Politecnico di Milano and Nielsen
  - Date/Year: September 2024

**e) Attention in AV: Ireland Study**
  - Authors/Organisation: TAM Ireland, Red C Research, and Amplified Intelligence
  - Date/Year: 2024

**f) SNP Presentation: Attention – Version Anglaise**
  - Authors/Organisation: SNPTV and Mediamento Institute
  - Date/Year: November 2023

**g) Track the Success: Screenforce and Eye Square**
  - Authors/Organisation: Eye Square and Screenforce Germany
  - Date/Year: September 2021

**h) The Last Attention Bargain?  Lumen Research presentation at EGTA MIM, Madrid.**
  - Authors/Organisation: Lumen Research, presented by Erik Bogsnes
  - Date/Year: March 2024

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