



Measuring the Impact of Online Video on Brand Metrics

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Engagement metrics show how people react to online videos, but brand metrics prove they move the needle on brand objectives such as awareness, perception and interest. Google's Brand Lift solution reveals these insights about YouTube ads in near real time so you can optimise off the cuff.

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Is the money we're putting into online video making an impact?

Online video is undeniably one of the key areas of focus for marketers in 2015, as well as for the next few years, because spending on desktop online video alone is projected to grow 21% every year until 2019. But as that spend increases, so does the need for brand advertisers to justify budgets and answer questions such as the one above. You need to know that video is an effective way to connect with your audiences – and that its impact can be measured.

For online video platforms such as YouTube, engagement metrics (for instance, views, likes, shares, comments and watch time) provide a basic barometer showing how an audience responds to videos. These metrics are important because they help to inform strategies as well as the content of the video ads. The result – hopefully – is quality content that the audience finds useful, entertaining and shareable. Creating things that an audience likes is only part of the job, though. The effectiveness of an ad campaign is also evaluated by how it affects brand metrics such as awareness, perception and audience interest.

Gaining insight into these metrics has been tricky, however. In the past, you'd put money into a campaign and get feedback in the form of clicks and views. But you could never really be sure about its brand impact without expensive, time-consuming testing, and sometimes those results wouldn't come in until the campaign was over. When it comes to YouTube ads, that's no longer the case: Google's Brand Lift solution allows you to gather brand metrics about YouTube ads in a matter of days. Advertisers across a variety of verticals have used the tool to test and optimise their online video content.

Here we present the results of different meta-analyses that show how YouTube ads are performing for advertisers and what that means for how you should rethink measuring your online video campaigns.

Near real-time data shows the impact of YouTube ads

Quick access to information about brand metrics can shift the way you perceive video content. That's because you can now tell whether the audience likes the content (with engagement metrics) and if it's making an impact (with brand metrics). Most important, if the content fails to measure up, finding that out in near real time means you can react and optimise quickly to get the most out of your online video spend.

After analysing around 50 campaigns from Fortune 100 brands and category leaders running on Google Preferred (some of YouTube's most popular channels), we found that 94% of the campaigns drove a significant lift – an average of 80% – in ad recall. We also found that 65% of Google Preferred ads saw an increase in brand awareness, with an average lift of 17%. This is particularly impressive considering that the brands in the study were already well-known.

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We also measured YouTube's impact on what we call "brand interest", or interest in a brand as measured by an increase in organic searches for it on Google. YouTube proved effective here as well. Looking at over 800 Brand Lift studies, we found that 65% of YouTube TrueView campaigns drove a significant lift in brand interest, with an average lift of 13%.

Together, these numbers tell a compelling story: YouTube campaigns are driving brand impact. So let's talk about three ways you can put that information to use.

1. Test your creative

Faster collection of brand metrics offers great opportunities to test your video campaign, determine what works and fix what doesn't before burning through too much of your media budget. For instance, when you A/B test your campaigns, you can analyse the results by version to see which creative executions are most effective at driving brand lift.

Mondelez International did this for the launch of Trident Unlimited. The agency produced two versions of the same spot: In the first version, the actor put gum in his mouth at the start of the commercial, and in the other he was already chewing the gum. Which one resonated? A Brand Lift study let Mondelez know that the second version had a 5% higher recall rate. And, after optimising budget behind that version, recall rose to 97%. "Brand Lift delivered quickly," says Leonardo Carbonell, the agency's paid media director. "It was good to optimise the campaign while it was running."

Having access to this kind of data in near real time means advertisers such as Mondelez can optimise off the cuff and make sure that their campaigns truly resonate.

2. Optimise and refine your demographic targeting

Brand metrics also help you optimise to ensure that you're reaching the most appropriate audience. Digital platforms such as YouTube allow you to target your video ads. Then data from Brand Lift can inform you about the age ranges and genders that are most affected by your campaign.

This is great for brands that begin at a broad level with their targeting; they can now see which subset the ad performs best with and use that information to refine their targeting and increase their spend where it will be most effective.

Nissan Canada, for instance, created two TrueView ads for the launch of its Micra model in July 2014. One of the ads featured actor Jim Parsons, while the other was a standard brand video. A Brand Lift study was able to confirm that both ads were effective at driving awareness lift and that

one ad was much more successful at increasing ad recall. But the most important finding might have been that the ads resonated strongly with women ages 25 - 34 and 45 - 54. At that point, the brand had an ad that was proven effective, a more specific demographic on which to focus the spend, and a platform to get the ad in front of the target audience. For Nissan, it was a winning combination.

3. Prioritise the metrics that matter most

Every campaign is measured differently, so your path to success won't always be the same. A campaign that's optimised for ad recall may look different than one that's optimised for brand interest or view-through rate. Different metric priorities can lend themselves to distinct creative best practices. Even within Google, we've seen a case study for this.

"We tested seven videos for a recent campaign where our goal was to drive brand metrics," said YouTube's Global Media Lead Maria Chai. "Because we hadn't been able to get real-time brand signals, we looked at view-through rates as a proxy for the creative's ability to move brand measures. Although view-through rate can be a great metric for assessing whether the creative holds the user's attention, we learned that videos with higher view-through rates don't always correlate to a lift in brand metrics. Getting this insight in near real time allowed us to optimise our creative rotation quickly before we fully ramped up the campaign."

The three takeaways above represent a new mind-set for brand advertisers' approach to online video, where measuring brand metrics in near real time is instrumental in driving more effective brand spend. This approach ensures that you're measuring what matters most: how your content and your media expenditure are moving the needle on brand metrics such as awareness, ad recall and brand interest.