



Unskippable Labs: Testing Video Ad Lengths With Netflix

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How much does ad length matter? Most TV ads are 30 seconds long, and YouTube has pioneered a new age of impactful long-form ads. So we wanted to know: What about short ads? How would they stack up? Could they convey a story and drive brand metrics for a company frequently launching new products?

think with 

The phenomenal [growth of mobile](#) in APAC has drastically changed people's consumption habits and redefined what prime-time advertising means. Now that audiences have access to content anytime, anywhere, prime time has become all the time. This means brands have unprecedented opportunities to connect with their audiences in more meaningful ways. It also means that people's attentions are often divided among a myriad of activities.

In this new age, brands and marketers are asking: What kinds of digital videos resonate with viewers? How does that compare to what has worked all these years on TV? The best way to understand this new landscape in APAC is to experiment: Put creative out there and see what people respond to in meaningful, measurable ways. And that's what our Unskippable Labs series aims to do. In this edition, we got together with Netflix to ask these questions: How does ad length influence brand metrics? What formats can boost and sustain awareness for newly launched products?

Experimenting with different ad lengths

While Netflix has high brand and title awareness in Western markets, it still faces challenges in mobile-dominant APAC markets, especially Southeast Asia. It was eager to experiment and see what kind of video tactics would help it [gain mobile users' attention](#).

For Netflix Singapore's launch of the new "Orange Is The New Black" season, we tested how different ad lengths on YouTube could impact brand lift as well as mobile users' behaviour. We showed viewers a 30-second [TrueView ad \(YouTube's skippable ad format\)](#), a 15-second TrueView ad, a [bumper ad](#), or no ads at all. Bumper ads are six seconds long and aren't skippable.

After the campaign period, we ran [Brand Lift studies](#) to analyse how the different ad formats impacted key brand performance indicators (ad recall, brand awareness, and product interest).

The three cuts

Here are the three cuts we tested:

["The Trailer" \(30s\)](#) was an existing asset that followed Netflix's traditional creative cues. It started and ended with the logo in full frame, used an overlay logo throughout the video, and only referenced the show's title towards the end.



["The Teaser" \(15s\)](#) was built following the same structure as the 30-second version, but only included the most impactful moments.



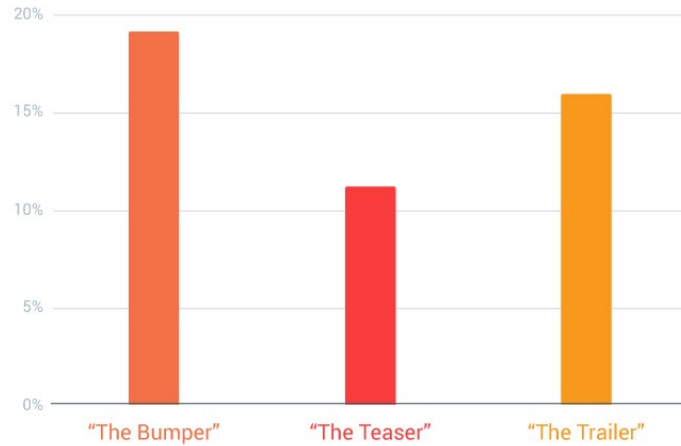
"The Bumper" (6s) focused on the essentials. With only six seconds to work with, the ad showed the three main characters and used similar branding as the longer cuts.

The results are in: Good content wins

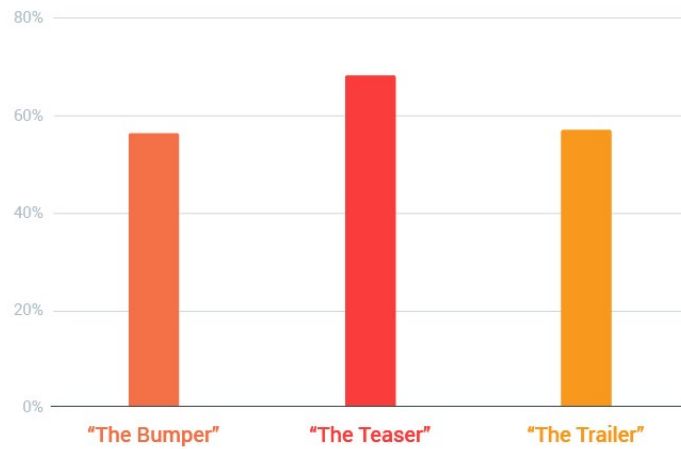
All of the three ads we ran for this experiment did extremely well, obtaining best-in-class results (top 25% of all campaigns ran in APAC over the last year) for both ad recall and product awareness lifts.

Ad recall had an over +50% lift for the three ads, driven by strong performances on mobile. "The Bumper" in particular was effective on mobile, leading to a +65% lift in ad recall.

Product Awareness Lifts



Branded Ad Recall Lifts



We attribute this to interesting storytelling, and—importantly—good branding. Branding elements were introduced in the first five seconds and stayed present on the screen throughout, ending with a strong finish.

Entertainment is a competitive category, and having product awareness lifts over 10% is rare. In this experiment, all creatives achieved this, with "The Bumper" achieving the highest lift at 19%. Our takeaway is that users (especially mobile audiences) can really be moved and engaged by shorter narratives.

"The Bumper" led to the highest lifts in search queries

Not only was "The Bumper" effective at driving brand lift, it was also the strongest at driving action. After seeing the ad, viewers of "The Bumper" had a 300% lift in search queries for "Orange Is The New Black." That was 75% higher than the search query lift from viewers of "The Trailer."

Search Lift



On the other hand, **"The Bumper" didn't lift awareness at all amongst female audiences**, and the lifts amongst females for "The Teaser" and "The Trailer" was on par with males.

We think this type of ad led to increased search interest for Netflix and the show because bumper ads generate maximum reach at lower costs, allowing the brand to get a simple message out to a lot of people during a short campaign window. It also worked in this case because Netflix had a simple message to tell. Brands that will be most effective with shorter ads are ones that have precise, singular messaging to convey.

Bumper ads can also be relatively easy to produce from a creative perspective. Netflix was able to adapt its version from "The Trailer" in less than a day. As the number of video ad platforms grows, having simple formats that can be easily adapted from their original form will be valuable for all brands.

Combining YouTube ad formats to drive interest and awareness of new products

Netflix plans to use the learnings from this experiment to effectively get the word out and drive interest when it's releasing new shows and new seasons. It plans to use bumpers in combination with longer trailers to tease the audience before the release and re-engage with them after it. As storytellers and content creators, this is a great way for Netflix to keep engaging their users.

"We knew that a large part of our audience was on YouTube, and we have seen tremendous engagement around our trailers already. With this experiment, we've learnt that shorter forms of content can do as well as longer ones, and they convey our brand message impactfully," said James Rothwell, director of marketing, Netflix Asia. "With bumper ads we have really found a simple way to get new audiences to care about our shows and tell our story while keeping our existing users engaged at all times."



Netflix - Unskippable Labs & Bumper Ads | YouTube Advertisers

We think campaign approaches similar to what's outlined below can be particularly effective for brands whose business success depends on the frequent release of new products. Strategically using a variety of ad formats will allow brands to constantly engage with their users, maintaining top-of-mind awareness and driving consideration.

1. Tease

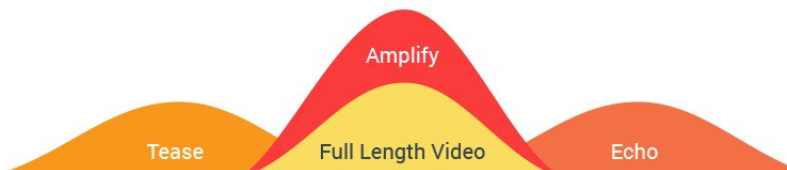
Tease a brand announcement with bumpers, then tell the full story with full-length videos (TrueView) upon launch

2. Amplify

Run bumpers and longer form videos (TrueView or Google Preferred) together for incremental reach and brand impact

3. Echo

Tell the full story with full-length videos (TrueView), then remarket to users with bumpers for a follow-up message or product update



Experimenting and adapting

In a world that has shifted to multiscreen, always-on consumption, advertisers will need to continually experiment and look for ways to adjust and adapt their creative and media tactics. While the traditional 30-second ad and longer-form content have proven to be efficient at building brands, much shorter video formats can also be hugely impactful to shape viewers preferences and retain their attention.

Experimenting on the questions most pressing for your brand or at your agency is a great way to get out there and see what works. Play with different ad lengths, where logos are displayed, and different kinds of music. Consumers will continue to adapt and evolve—and experimenting will help savvy marketers be right there with them.