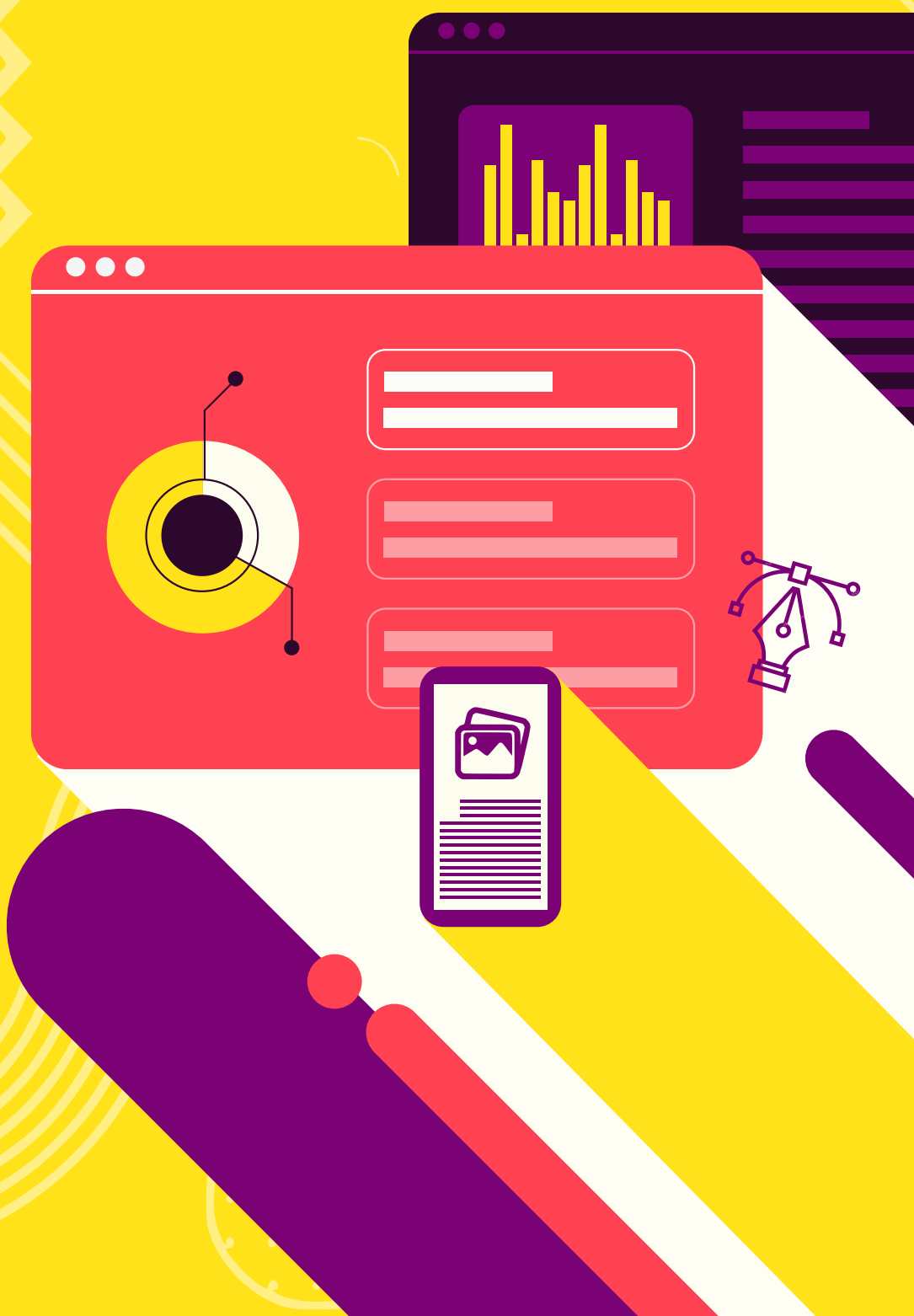# THE METRICS THAT MATTER

How measurement data can prove the impact of native advertising.

This white paper looks at native and sponsored content advertising through the lens of measurement. Drawing on Brand Metrics' extensive campaign benchmark database, drawn from premium publishers across the globe, it explores the challenges of measurement, outlines some key trends from the data and provides practical guidelines for planning future campaigns.

brand
metrics

NATIVE
ADVERTISING
INSTITUTE

Introduction

Native and sponsored content campaigns can provide an extremely powerful channel for advertisers to use to build positive perceptions towards their brand.

They can integrate a brand's message seamlessly into a publisher context in a creative way, taking advantage of the relevance of the environment and the trust of the audience.

Native campaigns can play a different and potent part of an overall campaign mix, using creativity to cut through and engage the publisher's audience in a way that standard display advertising is not normally capable of achieving.

But how do you know if it is working?

Without measurement, creativity risks becoming just another form of noise in the crowded advertising landscape.

According to Twyla Tharp, a renowned US choreographer, "Creativity is messy, and it's unpredictable.

You can't put a meter on it."

But, with respect to Twyla, we do need to find a way to put a meter on it, to prove its effect and to justify the advertiser dollars spent on it.

By gauging brand lift, we can add context to creativity, ensuring that every brushstroke, every word, every frame contributes meaningfully to the brand's story.

And beyond pure campaign effectiveness, there are other positive reasons to embrace native campaign measurement:

1. **"Data is the Muse of Tomorrow's Creatives":**
   In the age of digital storytelling, data isn't just for number crunchers; it's the fuel for creativity. By measuring brand lift, you're not stifling creativity; you're empowering it with insights that transform good ideas into great campaigns.

2. **"Redefining ROI: Return on Imagination":**
   Creatives often talk about ROI in terms of financial gains, but what about the return on the imagination invested in crafting a compelling narrative? Measurement lets us quantify the impact of creativity,

turning intangible concepts into tangible results.

3. **"Break the Echo Chamber of Awesome":**
   Sure, your team might think your campaign is groundbreaking, but what about the wider world? Measurement breaks the echo chamber of internal praise, providing objective feedback from real audiences and revealing blind spots that even the most creative minds might miss.

The measurement challenge

So, if we have decided that we should measure more native campaigns, how do we do it? It is fair to say that native campaign measurement comes with its own unique set of problems to overcome:

- **Size:** native campaigns are small, often making it hard to find enough people to measure the effect, especially when trying to do so via traditional research panels.

- **Audience origins:** native audiences often arrive at the content from social, making them harder to reach for measurement purposes.

- **Contextual relevance:** native advertising's effect relies on the role of the editorial environment, meaning click through rates are of limited use as a metric.

- **Content performance:** seamless integration of advertising and content can make it hard to determine the impact of the advertising alone.

- **Platform variability:** native campaigns may be split across different publishers, adapted to each, making it difficult to measure the overall campaign effect.

- **Campaign role:** the role of native is often intended to impact mid funnel metrics, making it harder to attribute its effect if just using performance-based metrics.

Native advertising needs to be measured differently. It reaches fewer, more engaged people in a more relevant environment, so measurement needs to be more nuanced too.

But measurement also needs to be scalable, so it provides a wider, more holistic view of effectiveness and is not just based on a few bigger campaigns.

Tackling the challenge

Brand Metrics is a Swedish-based technology company, measuring digital campaigns for leading publishers around the world. We measure many thousands of display campaigns for our publisher partners each year, but we also measure branded content campaigns at scale for them too.

We help publishers like Schibsted, Financial Times, The Guardian, Axel Springer, News UK, Burda Forward, Bloomberg and many more measure the effect of their native campaigns to prove the impact of their work and we also provide them with the data to help them plan more effective native campaigns in the future too.

To date, we have measured native campaigns across c.950 million impressions and have captured almost 500k survey responses, so have accumulated a lot of relevant data.

Our methodology is different to the traditional approach. We do not use panels and only survey people on the publisher's own site. We use a single survey question to capture four key metrics and build campaign exposure (frequency and time in view) into our calculations for a more sophisticated view of campaign effect.

This approach has enabled us to measure campaigns that would traditionally have been considered much too small to measure. It also means we capture consistent data at scale, which enables more robust meta-analysis to determine what is working.

This whitepaper is based on learnings from our large native campaign database.

Exploring the data

This paper has explored Brand Metrics' extensive database of native campaign measurements to uncover what is working and then drills down into the details to provide some more granular understandings to help native advertisers plan future campaigns more effectively.

Here are the topics we now explore in the main part of the whitepaper:

- **Chapter 1**: *The effect of native advertising*
- **Chapter 2**: *Comparing native to display*
- **Chapter 3**: *The role of frequency and time*
- **Chapter 4**: *The composition of brand lift*
- **Chapter 5**: *Differences between industry categories*
- **Chapter 6**: *Differences between publisher types*
- **Chapter 7**: *The effect of advertising decay*

1.

The effect of native advertising

This whitepaper is entitled "Did Your Last Campaign Work?" and the first encouraging finding is that across c.2,000 measurements, native advertising really does work.
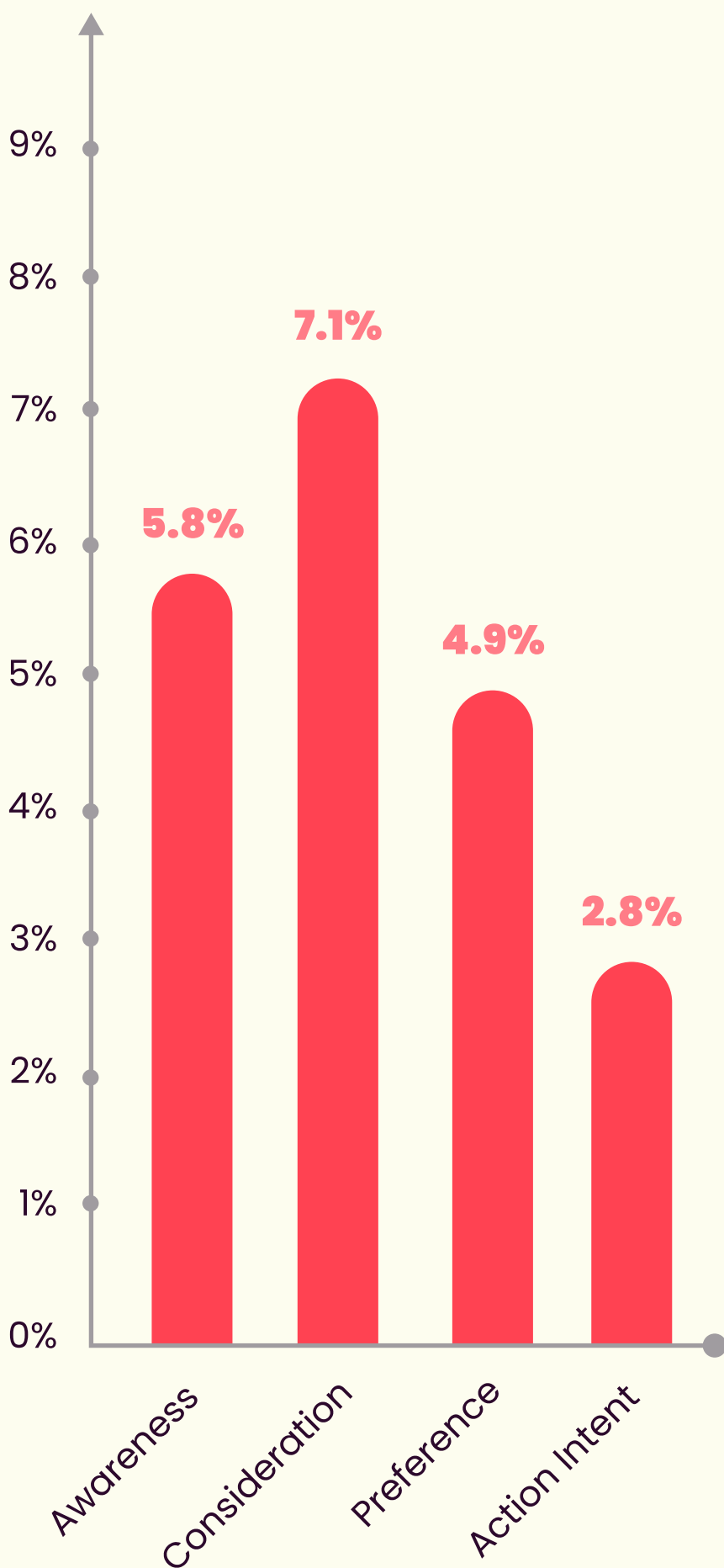
The average total brand lift delivered by these native campaigns is +20.6%, compared to +10.0% for display campaigns.

The average effect of display advertising

9%
8%
7%
6%
5%
4%
3%
2%
1%
0%

3.1% Awareness
2.9% Consideration
2.4% Preference
1.7% Action Intent
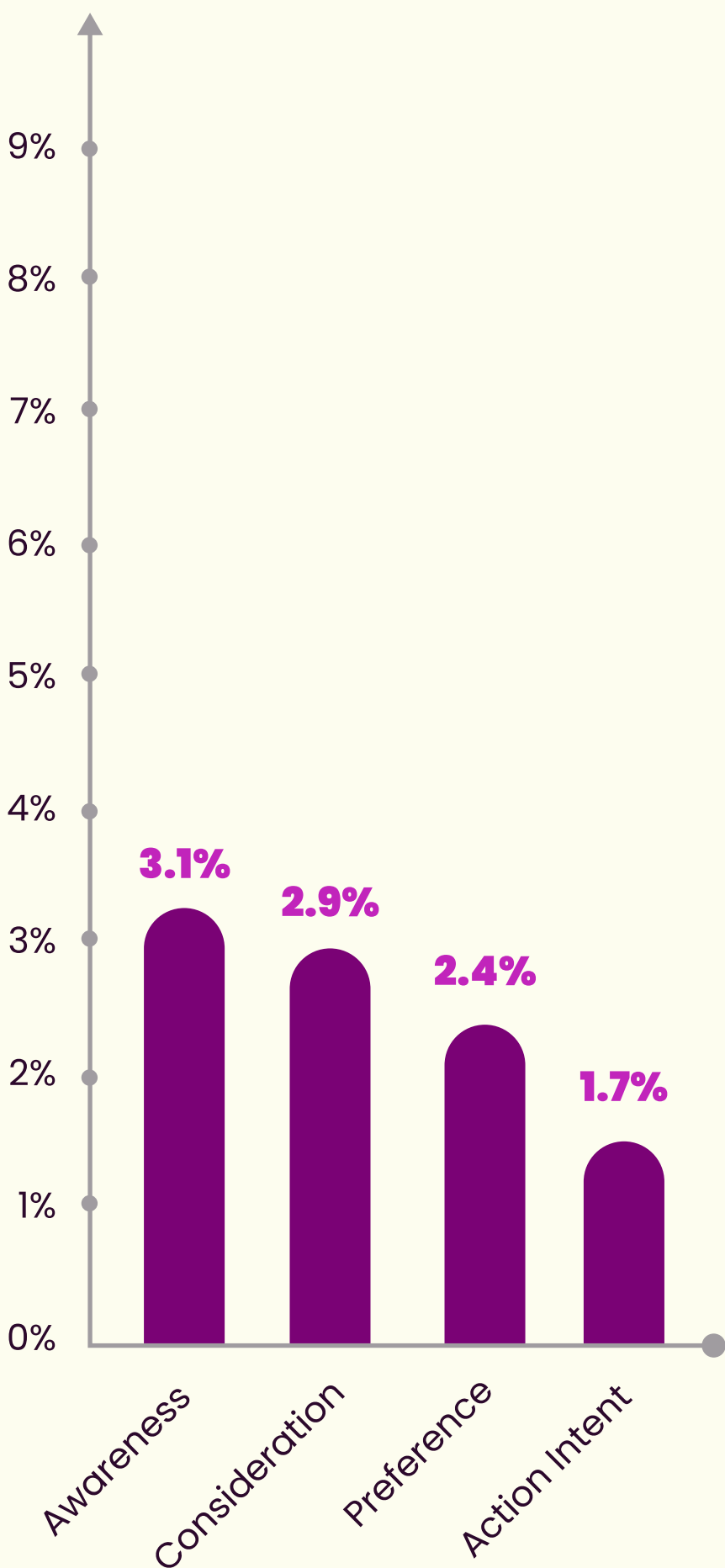
The average effect of native advertising

Stage	Effect
Awareness	5.8%
Consideration	7.1%
Preference	4.9%
Action Intent	2.8%

This is a very positive picture for native advertising, but within any average scores, there are always going to be highs and lows.
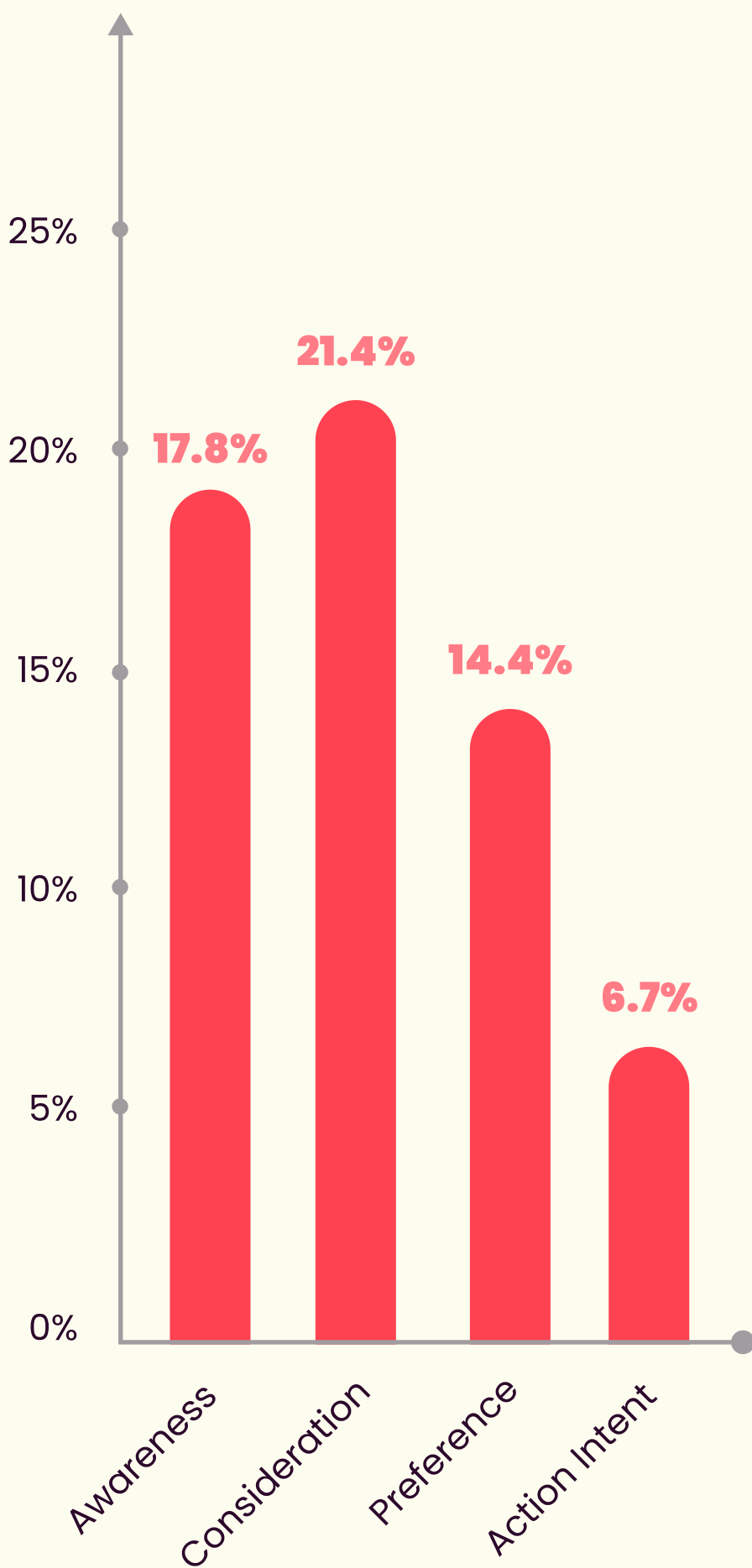
On the one hand, the minimum brand lift is zero, since there will always be campaigns with no measurable effect at all.

But on the other hand, there will also be campaigns that outperform this average, often considerably.

This graph depicts the brand lift delivered by the top 10% best performing campaigns.

The **potential** effect of native advertising

25% •

21.4%

20% •   17.8%

15% •   14.4%

10% •

6.7%

5% •

0%

Awareness   Consideration   Preference   Action Intent

In summary, if you create a poor native campaign, you risk wasting the entire investment. But, if you do it particularly well, the potential is a factor of 3x compared to the brand lift average for native campaigns.

At the end of this presentation, we will give some guidelines for future success. But first, let's have a closer look at what native advertising is and what makes it different.

2.
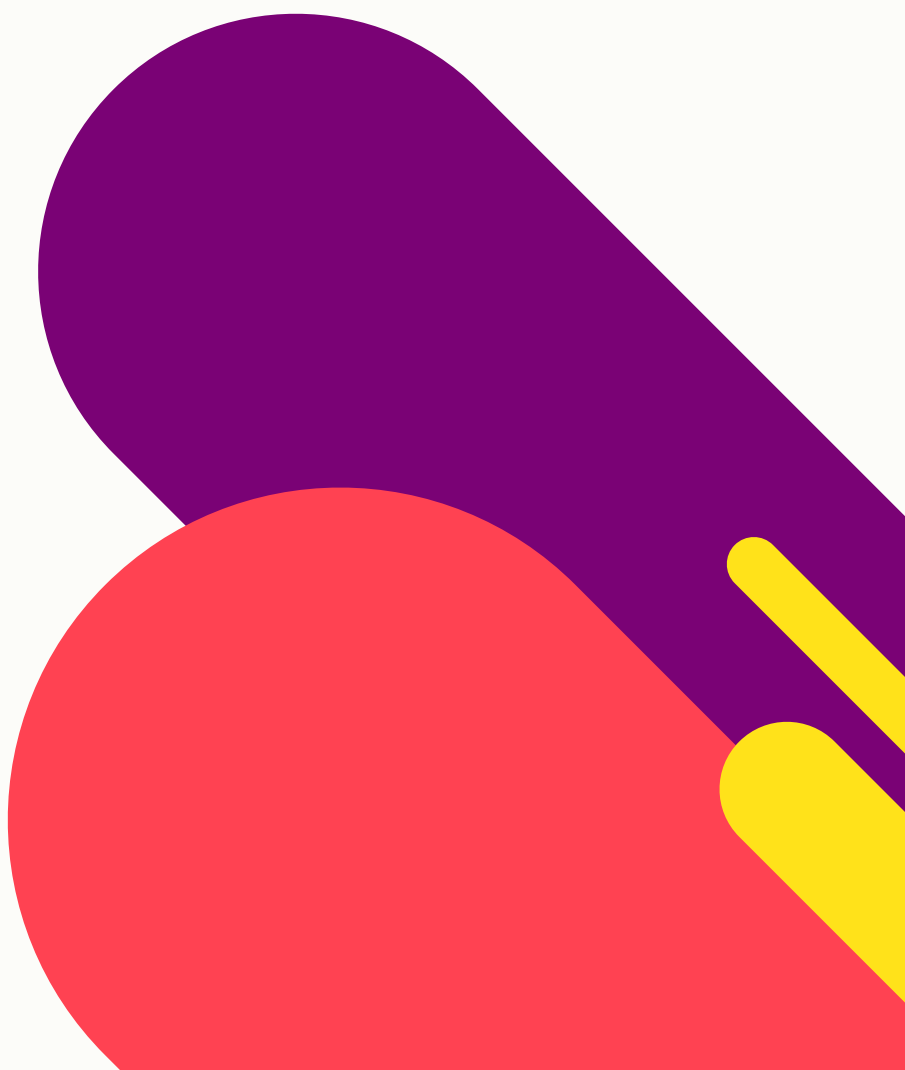
Comparing native to display

So, native advertising clearly works, but it works in a different way to display advertising.

Let's use an everyday metaphor to explain it further:

If display is you working in a cafe, meeting lots of different people, and indeed the same person many

times, across the counter, then native is you having dinner with one person for a long time, eye to eye, across a small table.

Working in the cafe might be an excellent way of acquainting yourself with lots of people who you could potentially ask out for dinner, but it's not going to get you married.
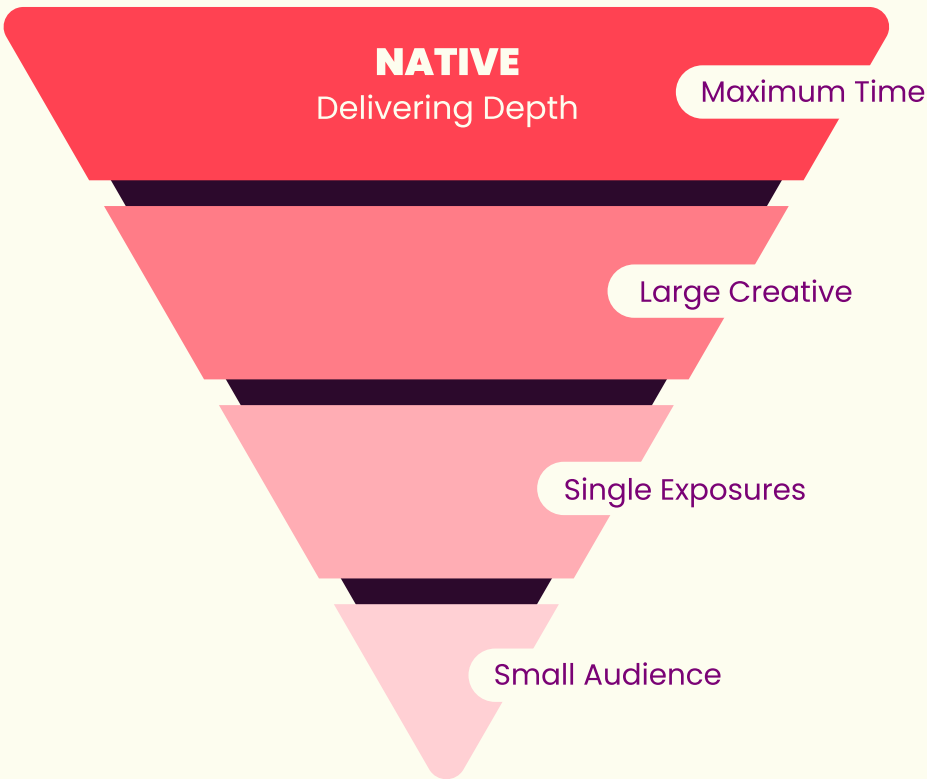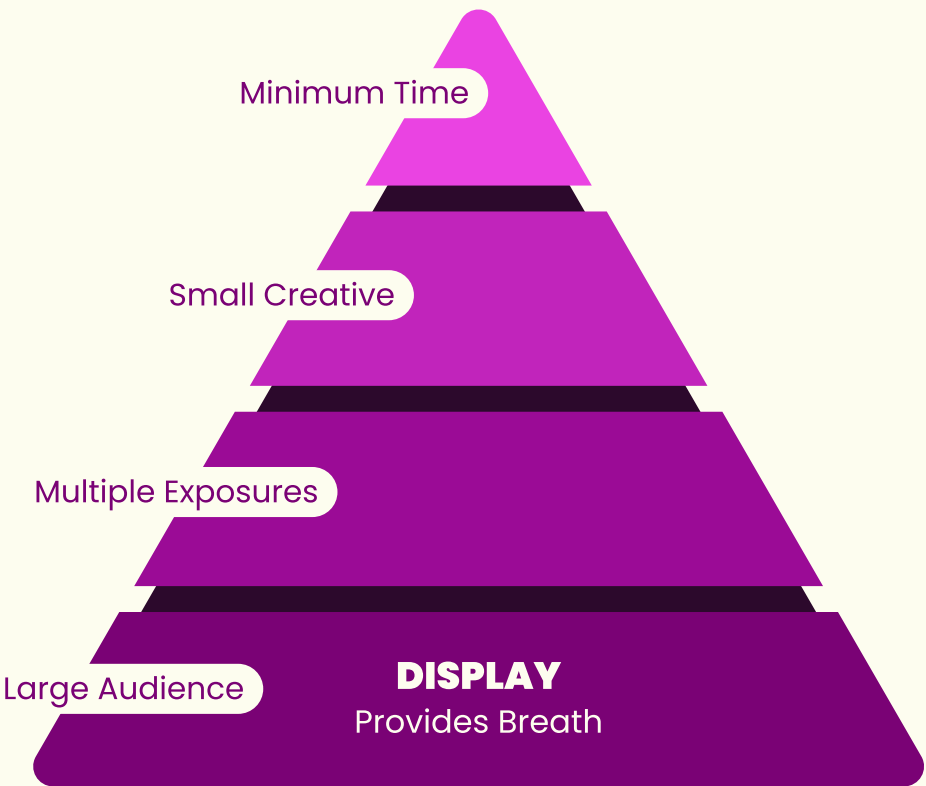
Having dinner might lead to this, but remember that acquaintances are much likelier than strangers to accept your dinner invite.

The four dimensions of impact

Let's think for a moment about the different way in which display and native campaigns work. In some ways, they can be considered to be mirror images of each other.

The divergent roles of display & native

Minimum Time

Small Creative

Multiple Exposures

Large Audience

DISPLAY
Provides Breath

NATIVE
Delivering Depth

Maximum Time

Large Creative

Single Exposures

Small Audience

Display can be described as "push" advertising. It reaches large numbers of people on multiple occasions and seeks to push its message to a broad audience who are not necessarily looking to receive communications from the brand.
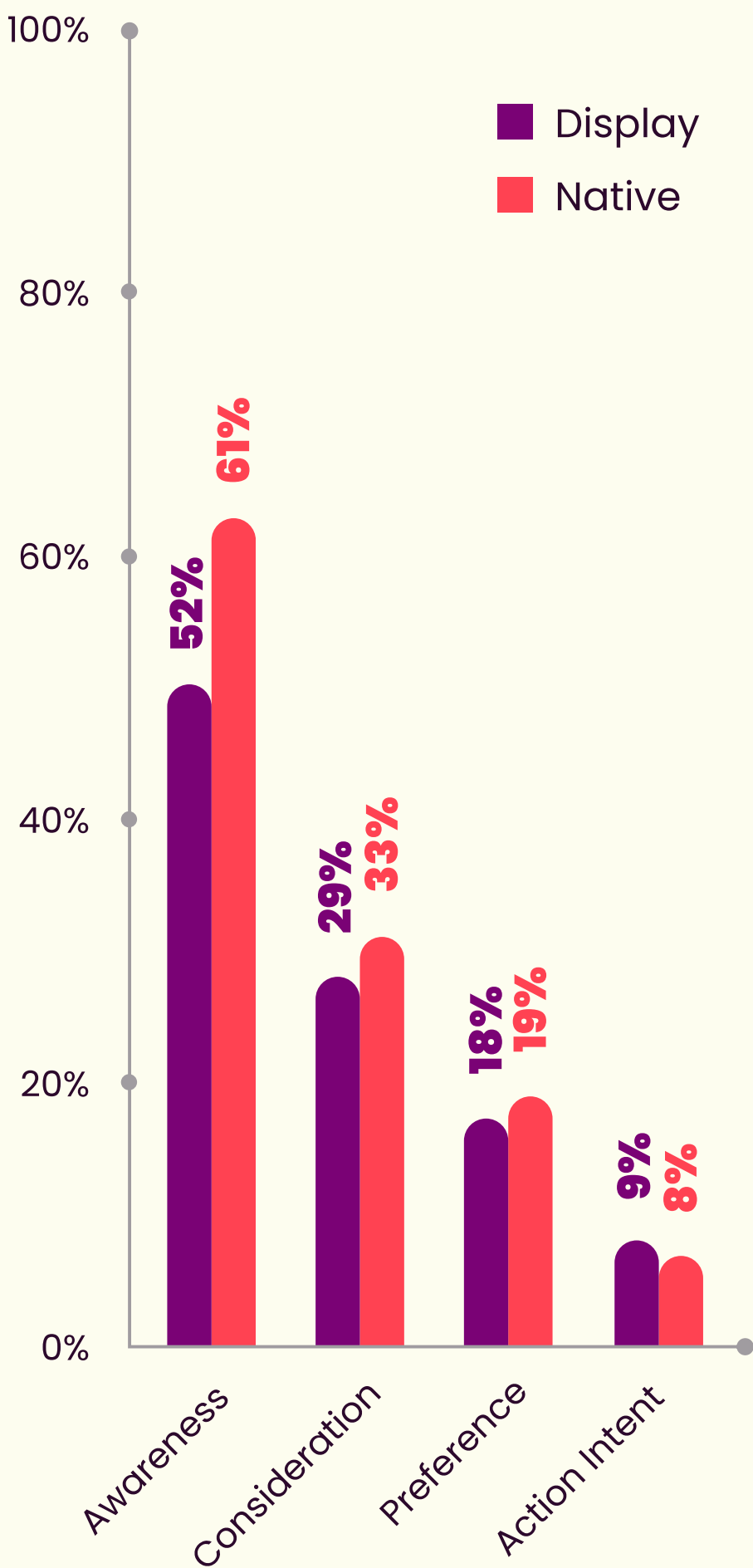
By contrast, native can be described as "pull" advertising. It reaches a smaller audience who are potentially more interested in the category and the advertised brand and are interested in a greater depth of communication.

The data can further explain this point if we look at the baseline levels, showing how those being exposed to native campaigns are typically more familiar with the advertised brands, compared to those exposed to display campaigns.

Comparing the campaign start points

Legend:
- Display
- Native

	Awareness	Consideration	Preference	Action Intent
Display	52%	29%	18%	9%
Native	61%	33%	19%	8%

Y-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, 100%

In other words, those being exposed to native campaigns, (like the previous dinner date example), are typically more familiar with the brand in the first place and are therefore potentially a more fertile audience for receiving an in-depth brand message.

This understanding of the differences between display and native has an impact on how both types of advertising can work most efficiently together and, within this, the role that native advertising can most effectively play.

3.

The role of frequency and time

The previous chapter talked about the overall differences between display advertising ("push") and native advertising ("pull"), with two key factors being frequency and time.
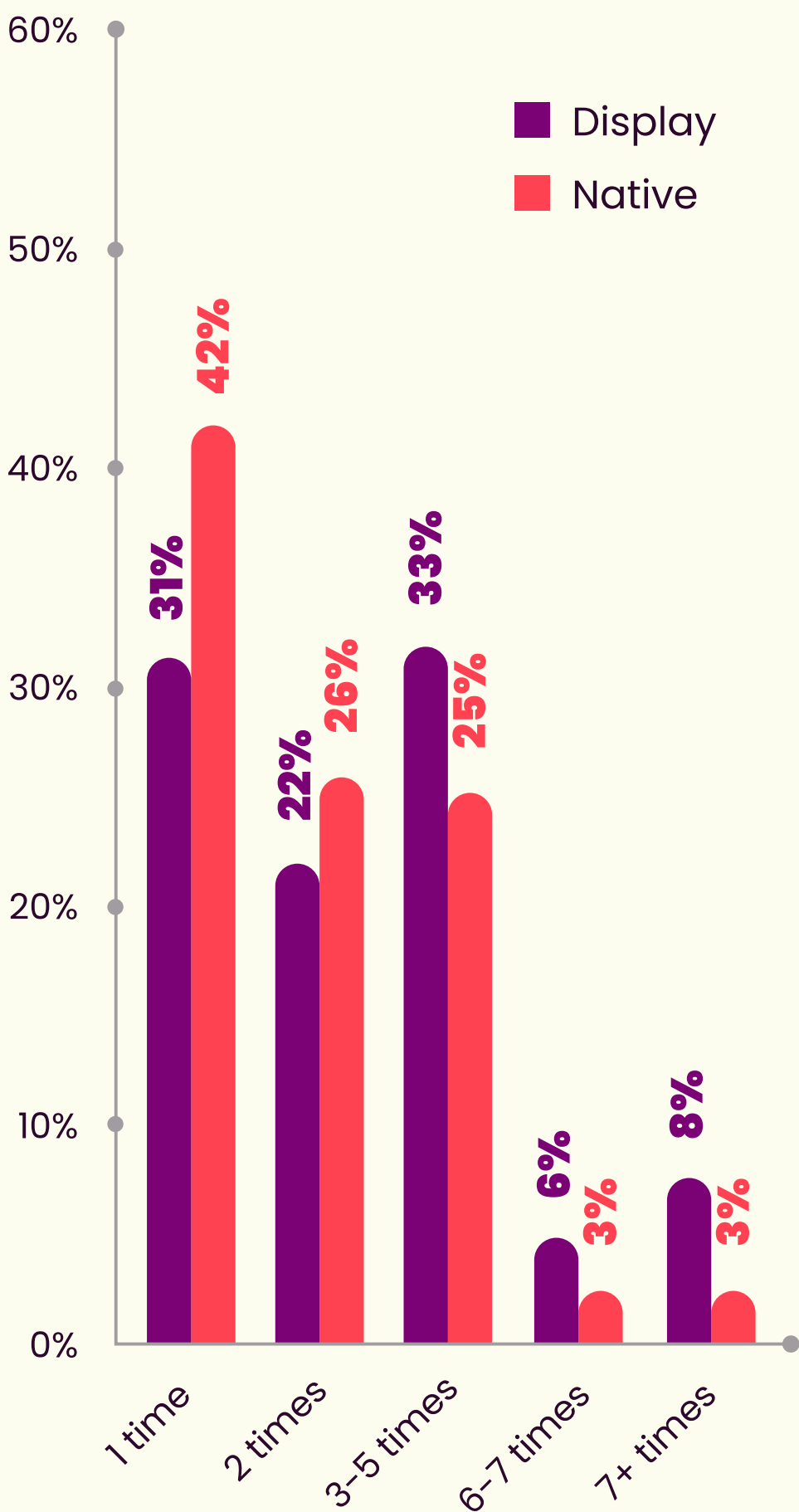
If we look first at frequency, we can see that as much as 42% of all respondents exposed to native

campaigns are only exposed once and just 6% are exposed six times or more.

For display advertising, it's the other way around: only 31% are exposed once and as many 14% are exposed six times or more.
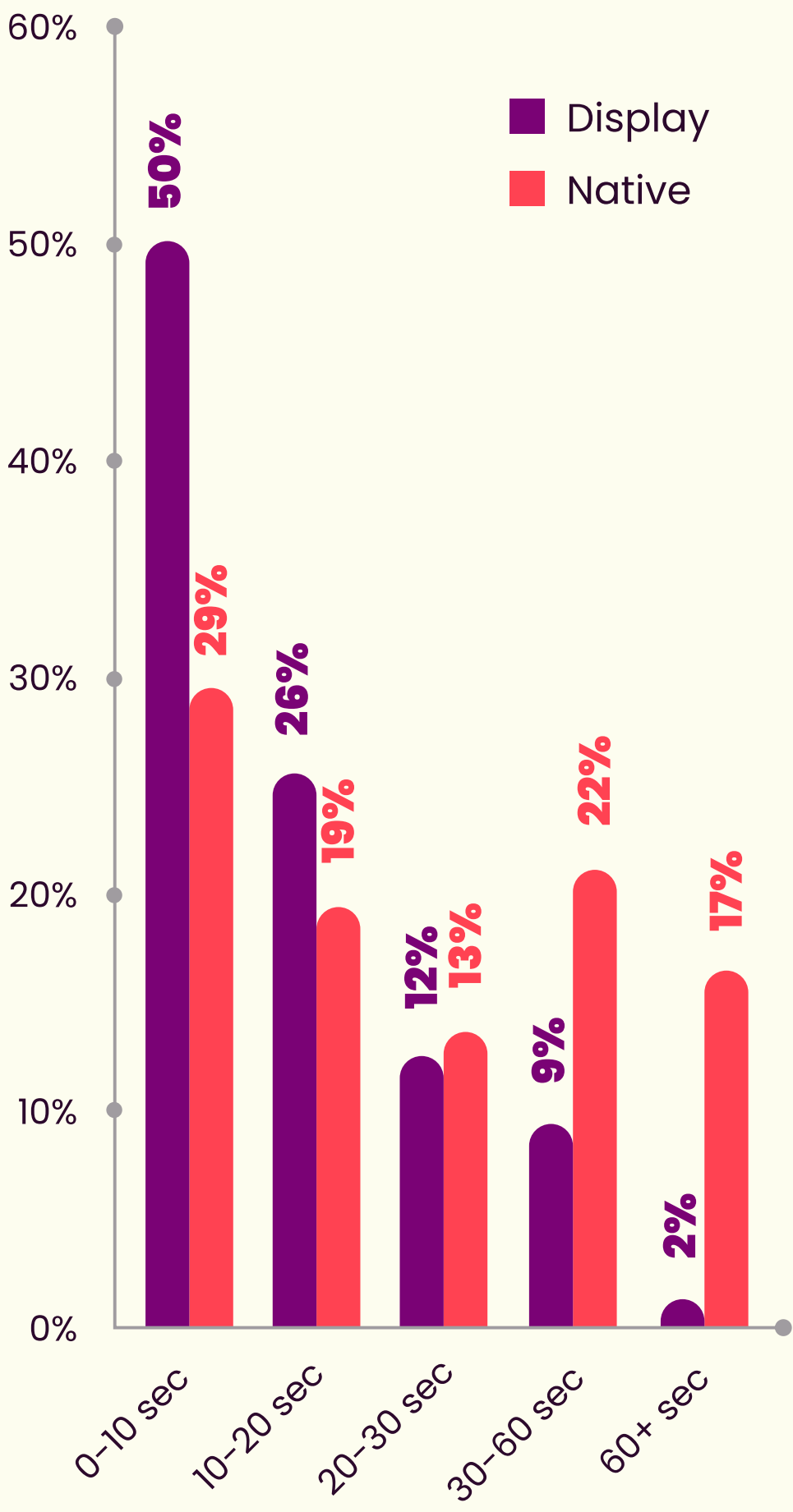
How **frequency** differs between display & native

Display
Native

- 60%
- 50%
- 40%
- 30%
- 20%
- 10%
- 0%

1 time: 31% / 42%
2 times: 22% / 26%
3–5 times: 33% / 25%
6–7 times: 6% / 3%
7+ times: 8% / 3%

But if we look at the average duration of exposure, for display advertising, 50% of the audience is exposed for less than 10 seconds, compared to just 29% of those exposed to native. On the other hand, almost 40% are exposed to native advertising for more than half a minute, with the corresponding figure for display being just 11%.

How time differs between display & native

Legend: Display, Native

Time	0–10 sec	10–20 sec	20–30 sec	30–60 sec	60+ sec
Display	50%	26%	12%	9%	2%
Native	29%	19%	13%	22%	17%

These two graphs show a very clear pattern: Push advertising gets higher frequencies and pull advertising gets longer exposure time.

That's fine, but how do these different exposure patterns translate through to campaign effectiveness? As it turns out these characteristics are also precursors of success.
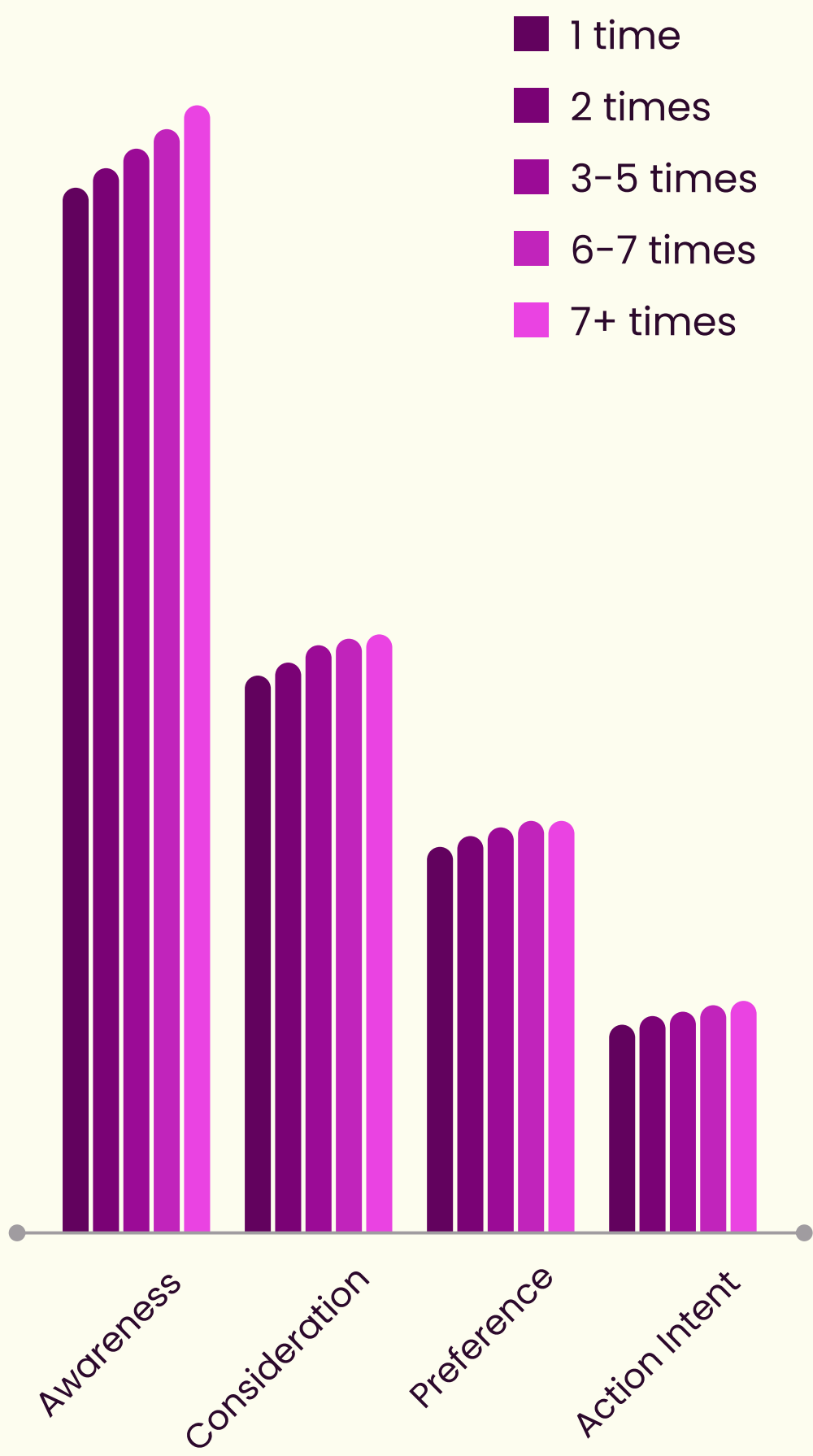
Getting higher frequencies in display has demonstrable impact, whilst getting longer exposure time doesn't. And for native it's the opposite pattern – getting longer exposure times provides extra effectiveness, but the effect of frequency is weaker.

Let's start by looking at **frequency**.

Display: the impact of frequency

Legend:
- 1 time
- 2 times
- 3-5 times
- 6-7 times
- 7+ times

Categories: Awareness, Consideration, Preference, Action Intent

Native: the impact of frequency

Legend:
- 1 time
- 2 times
- 3-5 times
- 6-7 times
- 7+ times

Categories:
- Awareness
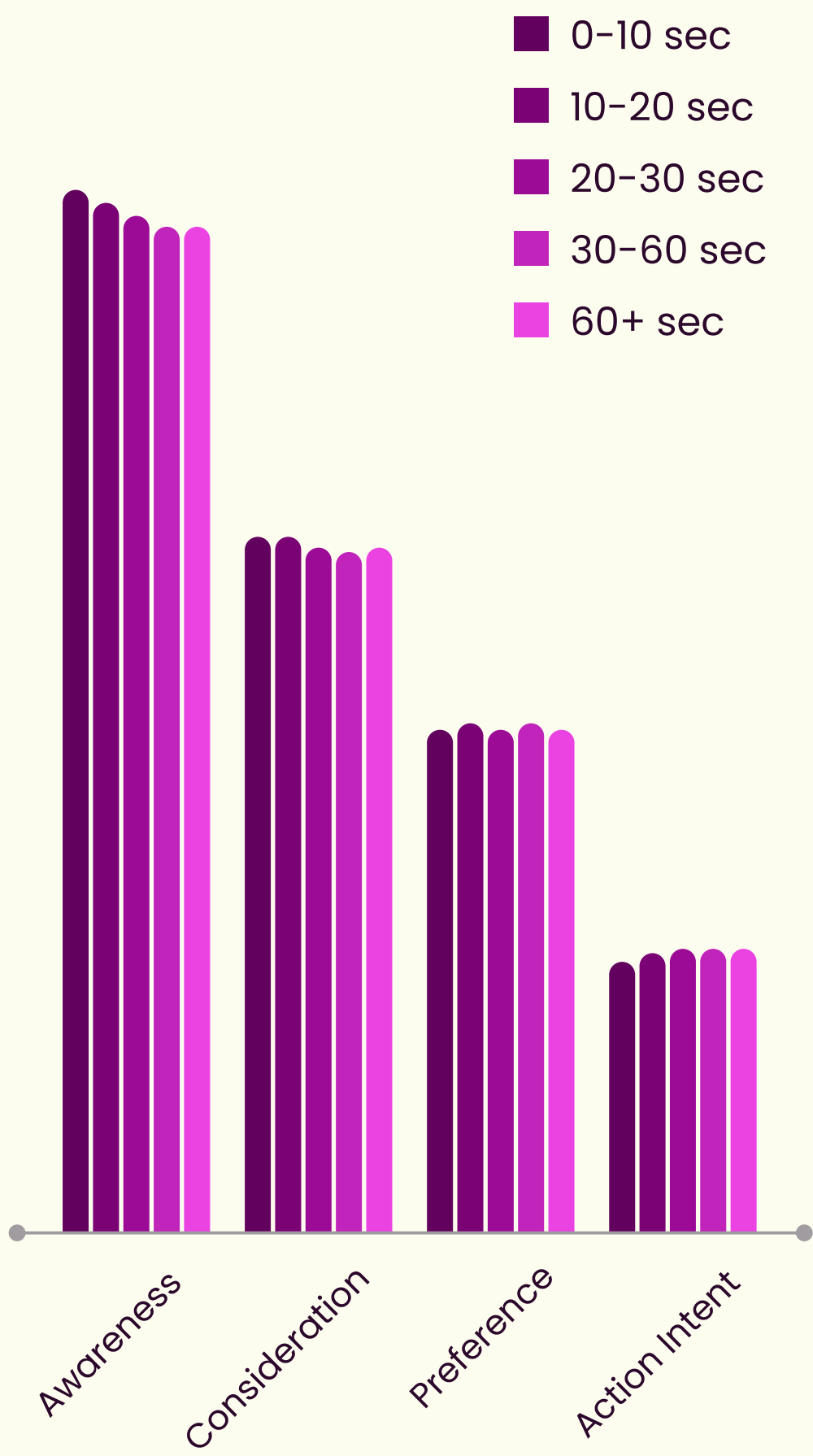- Consideration
- Preference
- Action Intent

The "display" graph clearly shows how higher frequency of exposure leads to stronger brand perceptions.

Much in line with research and theory (e.g. Binet & Field), the impact is especially strong with the awareness metric. It is also clear for brand consideration; it is there for preference too, but absent for purchase intent. This just means that if people don't pick up on an offer the first time it's shown to them in an ad, they are not going to do so from having the same offer repeated. But it will increase their awareness of the brand.
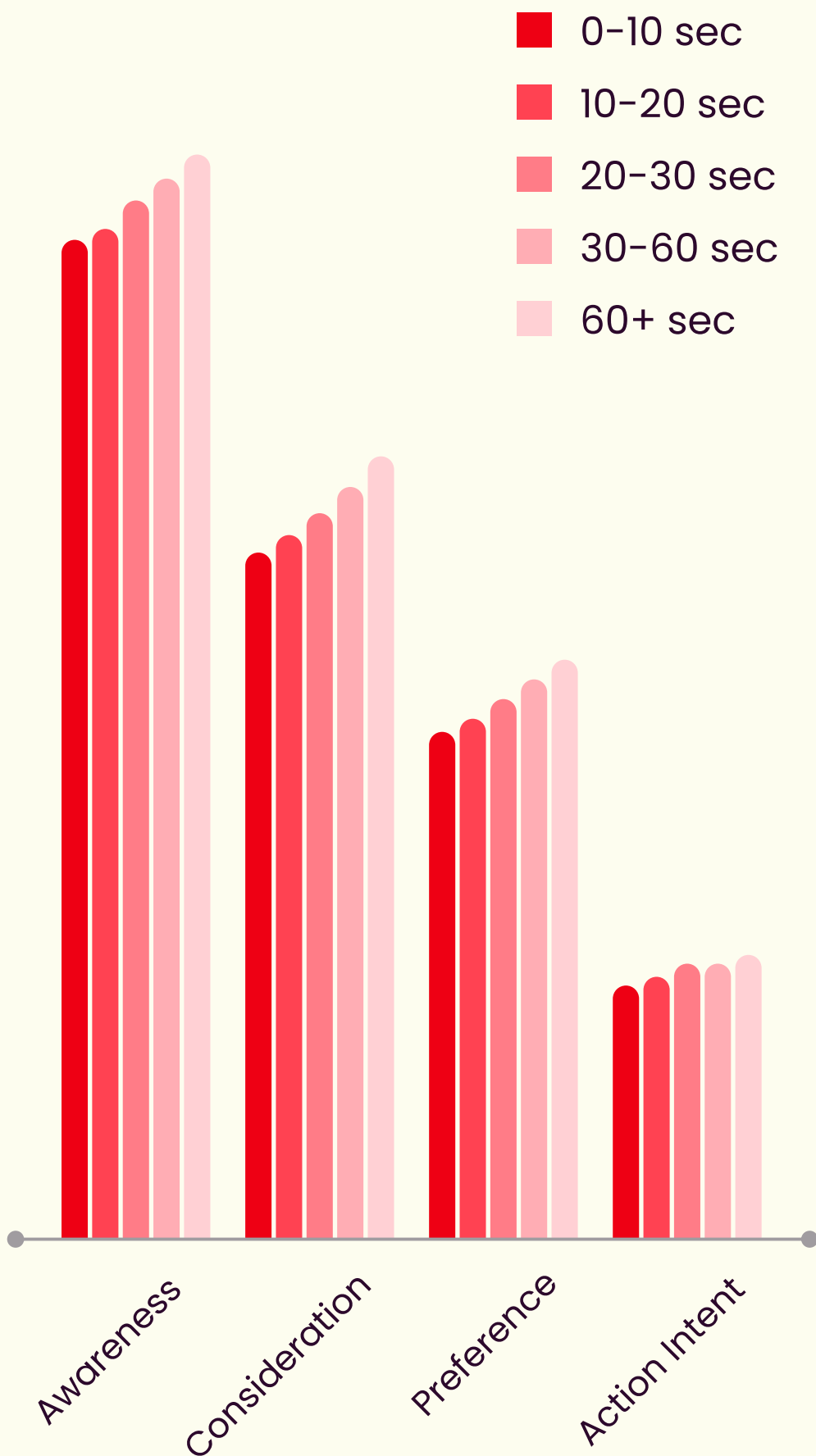
In the frequency graph, we see the impact of frequency on the audience of native campaigns. The same pattern is there, but it is weaker.

Now, let's make the same comparison for the time people are exposed to a campaign.

Display: the impact of time

Legend:
- 0–10 sec
- 10–20 sec
- 20–30 sec
- 30–60 sec
- 60+ sec

Categories:
- Awareness
- Consideration
- Preference
- Action Intent

Native: the impact of time

Legend:
- 0-10 sec
- 10-20 sec
- 20-30 sec
- 30-60 sec
- 60+ sec

Categories:
- Awareness
- Consideration
- Preference
- Action Intent

This analysis shows that it is display advertising that now shows the weaker impact. Getting longer exposure time per impression has little or no effect on display brand lift.

But in the right graph, we see the same thing for native and it is clear that gaining extra exposure-time strongly influences campaign effectiveness, especially for brand consideration, which is where native advertising often has its strongest impact.

Changing attitudes, here expressed as consideration and preference, takes time. By capturing extra time with the audience via native, this potential can be maximized.

So in conclusion: display (push) is a high-frequency form of advertising, so to be successful, brands should also aim for higher frequencies and not worry so much about the time spent with the ad in screen.

Native (pull) is a long-duration form of of advertising and to be successful, brands should strive to achieve longer duration time and not be so concerned about frequency.
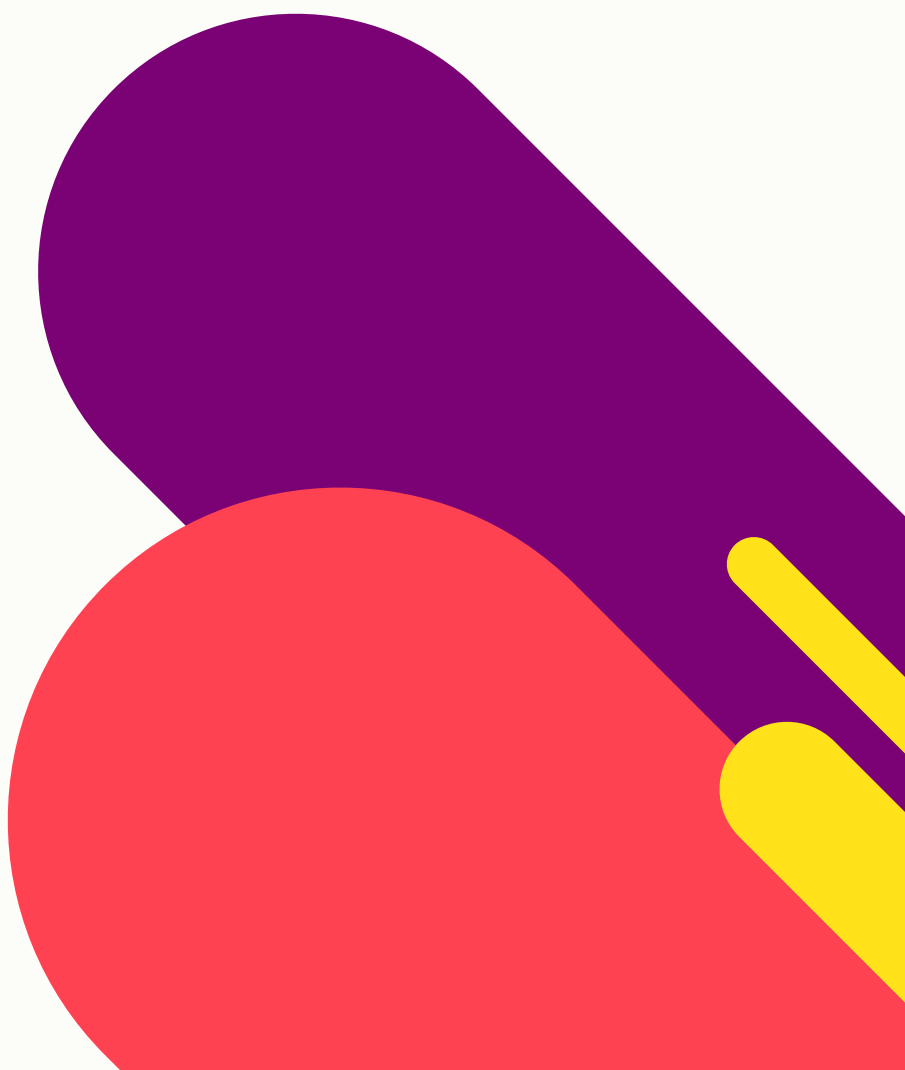
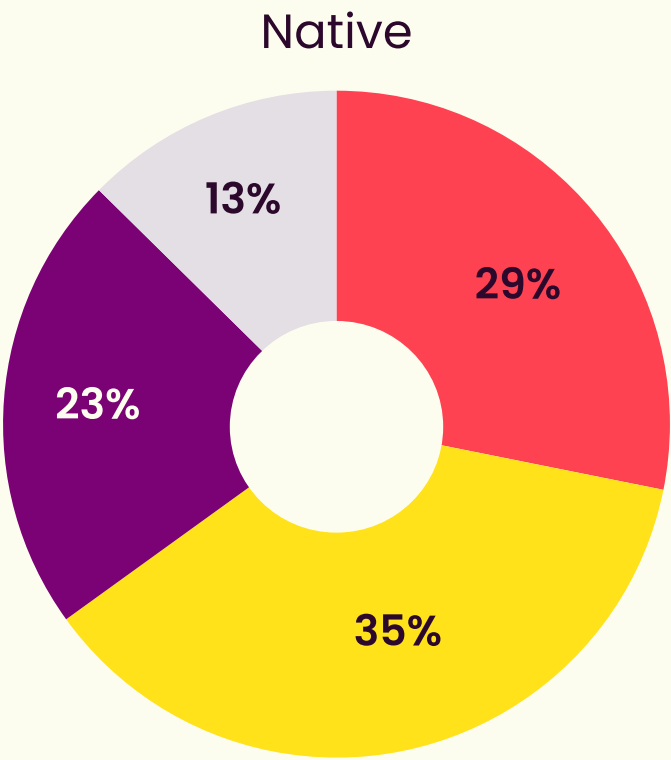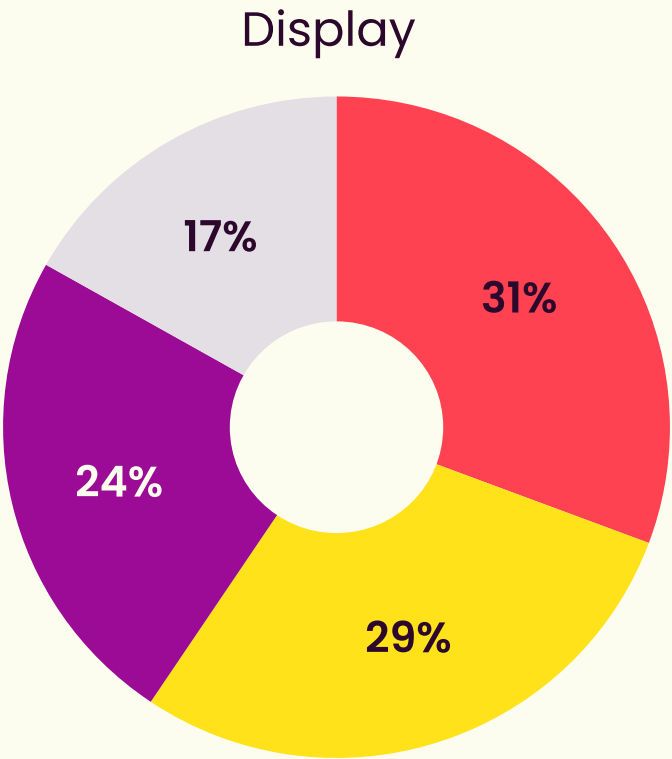# 4.

The composition of brand lift

The differences in the roles of display and native can also be illustrated by the data, comparing the relative proportion of the total brand lift that is delivered by each metric.

These examples assume the total brand lift equals 100% and then it looks at how that brand lift is distributed across the four metrics in the brand lift funnel (as captured in Brand Metrics' standard reporting), again comparing native and display.

Relative contribution by metric

Display

31% — Awareness
29% — Consideration
24% — Preference
17% — Action Intent

Native

29% — Awareness
35% — Consideration
23% — Preference
13% — Action Intent

■ Awareness ■ Preference

■ Consideration ■ Action Intent

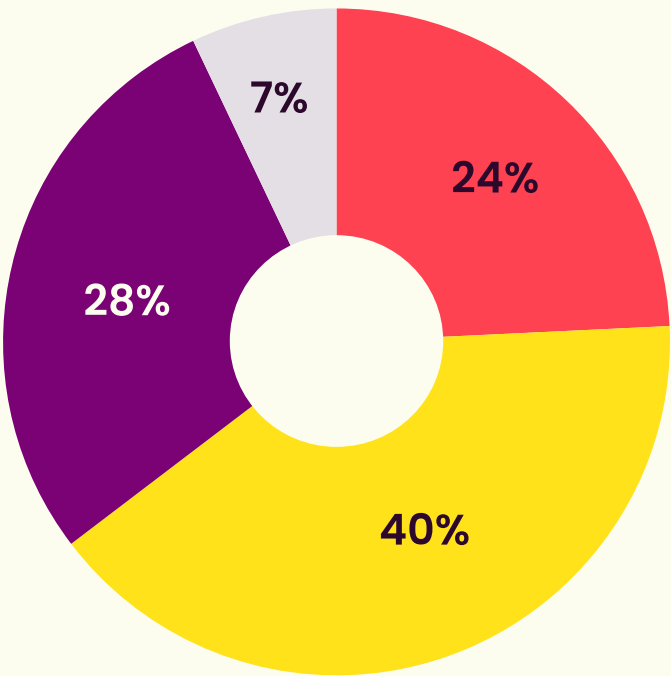These graphs show that, compared to display, the effect of native advertising is greater in the mid funnel, with "consideration" being the metric that is most strongly impacted.

We can also dig deeper and explore how the relative distribution of brand lift differs by metric in different industry categories. Looking at two of the many categories we measure, let's compare Gambling with Professional & Trade Services.
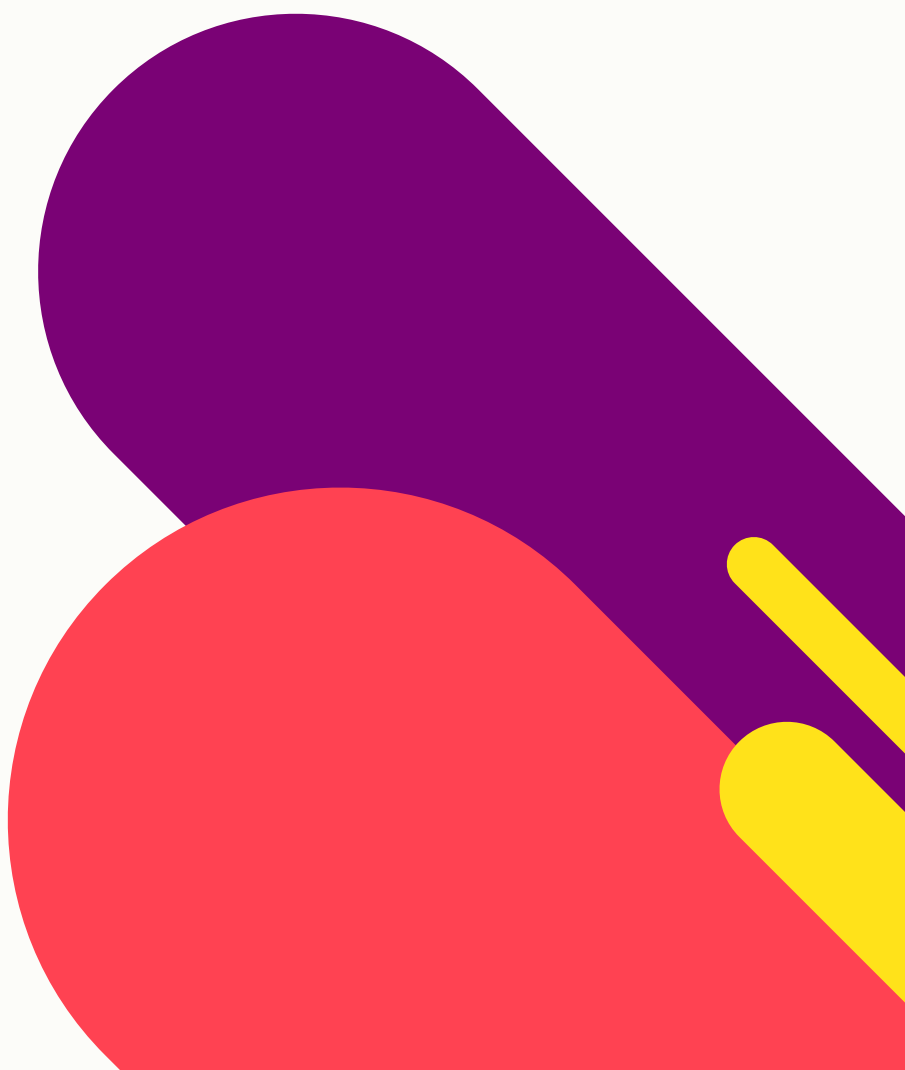
Relative contribution by metric

Gambling

- 7% (Action Intent)
- 24% (Awareness)
- 40% (Consideration)
- 28% (Preference)

Professional & Trade Services

- 17% (Action Intent)
- 26% (Awareness)
- 36% (Consideration)
- 26% (Preference)
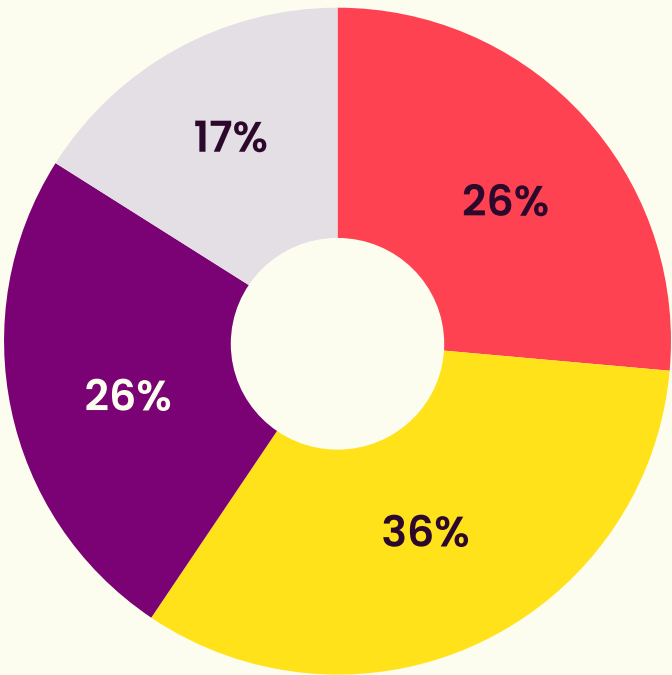
Legend:
- Awareness
- Preference
- Consideration
- Action Intent

This example indicates that for something as high frequency and conversion-focused as gambling, the role of native is to build brand attitudes, expressed as higher consideration and preference, to ensure that the gambling brand is always seen as an option to use, whereas in the sector of professional services, where purchases may be less frequent, using native to build a strong level of purchase intent is important.

By exploring different categories and understanding the different patterns when it comes to where native campaigns deliver most impact, brands can identify opportunities where native advertising can have its best effect.

5.
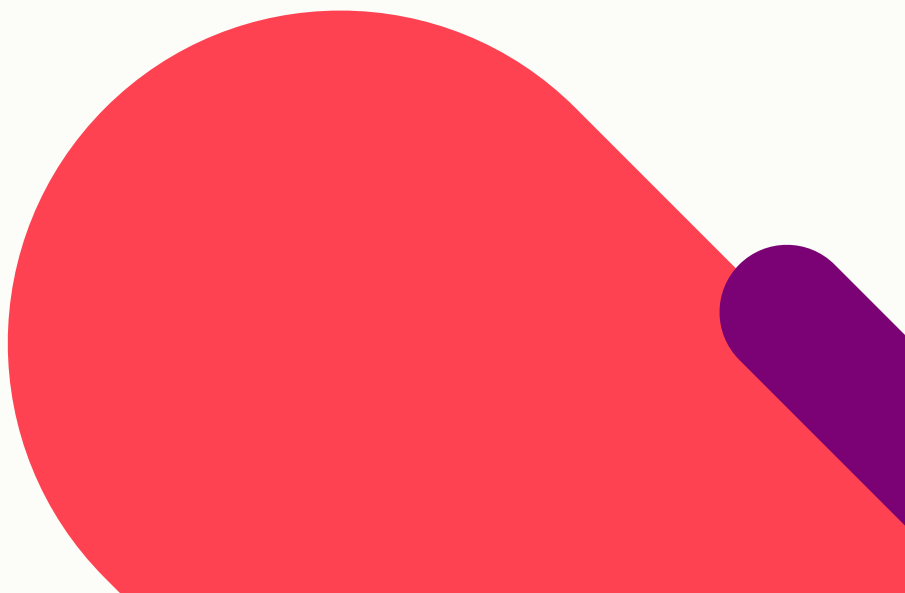
Differences between industry categories

So, having established that native advertising works and that it works differently to display, the next opportunity is to understand the data in a more granular way.

Firstly, an overall view. Which industry categories show the highest average brand lift scores from their native campaigns? And which are the lowest performing categories?

Total brand lift:
Top 5 industry categories

Category	Value
Travel & Tourism	24.2%
Media	23.1%
Retail	22.6%
Insurance	21.4%
Automotive	21.4%
Average	21.0%
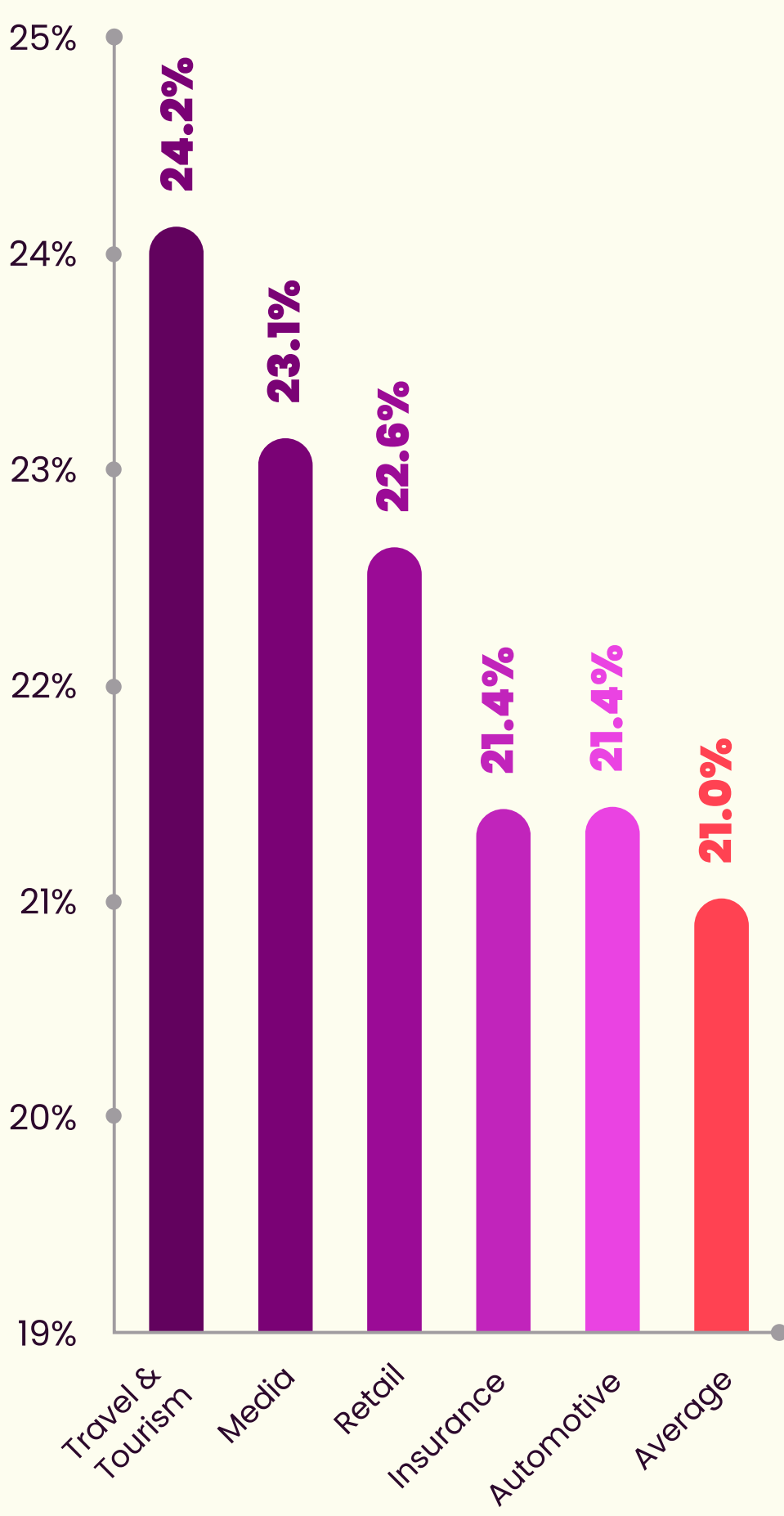
Most of these categories make sense. Categories which people either are interested in (Travel, Media, Automotive), or need to become interested in on occasions (Insurance)

Perhaps the most surprising category here was Retail, normally associated with shorter term messaging, often carried via display advertising.

However, looking still deeper into the data shows further insights. Looking at the results from the different retail subcategories for instance, shows that different levels of brand lift may indicate differing levels of involvement with each subcategory.

Sub Categories within retail

Category	Value
Toys/Gaming	56.7%
Home Interiors	30.6%
Grocery	21.2%
Dept. Stores	14.7%
Retail Average	22.6%
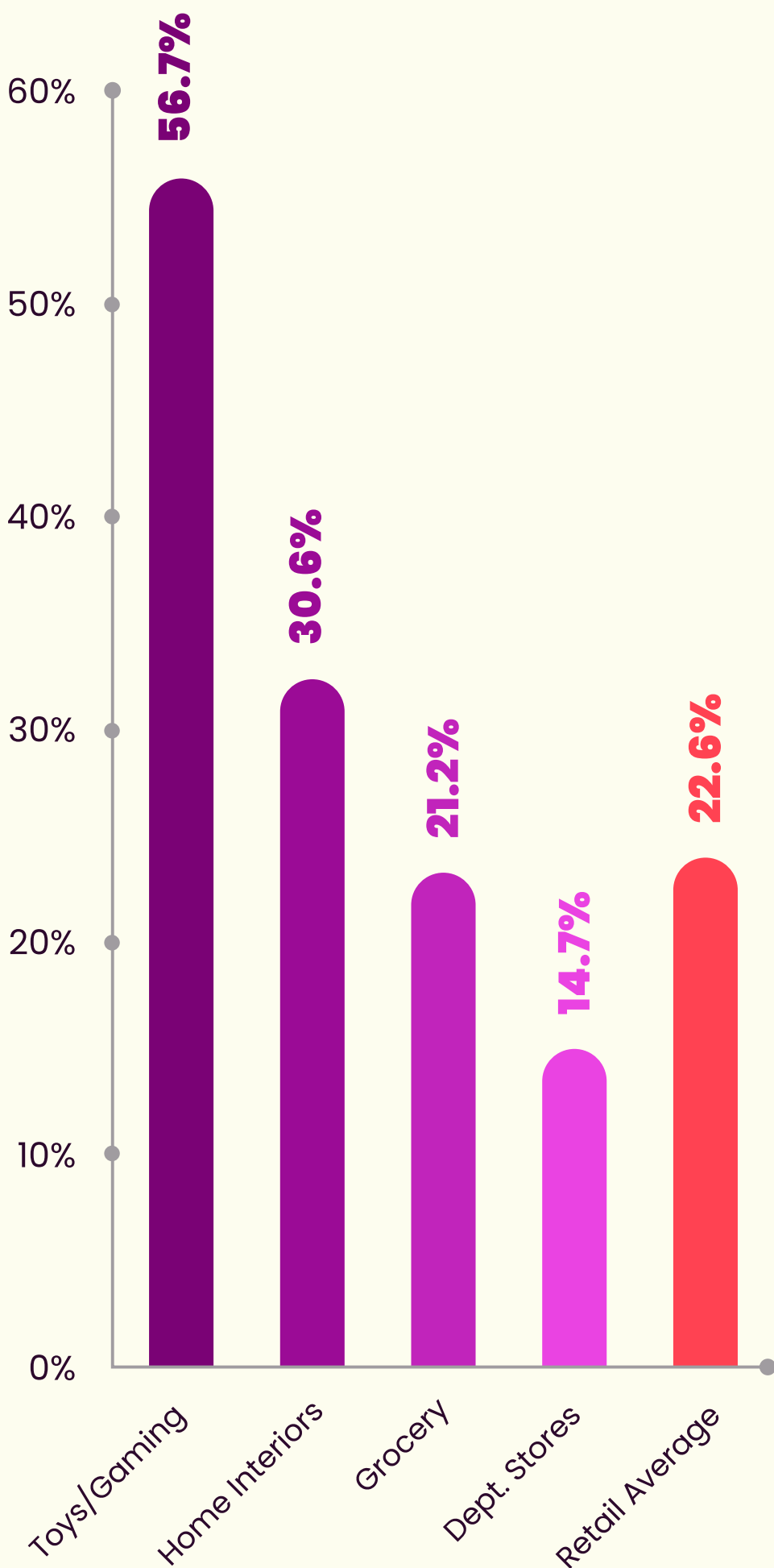
Here we can see that category importance plays a role. Retail overall may be of less interest than Travel or Media, but within Retail there are high-interest retail subcategories such as Toys/Gaming. Even Home Interiors is more interesting than Groceries and Department stores, highlighting people's emotional involvement with their home.

But what about the lower performing categories? What can we learn from these results?

Total brand lift:
Bottom 5 industry categories

Category	Value
Home & Garden	18.9%
Real Estate	18.6%
Health	17.4%
Career & Education	15.4%
Fashion & Clothing	15.0%
Average	21.0%
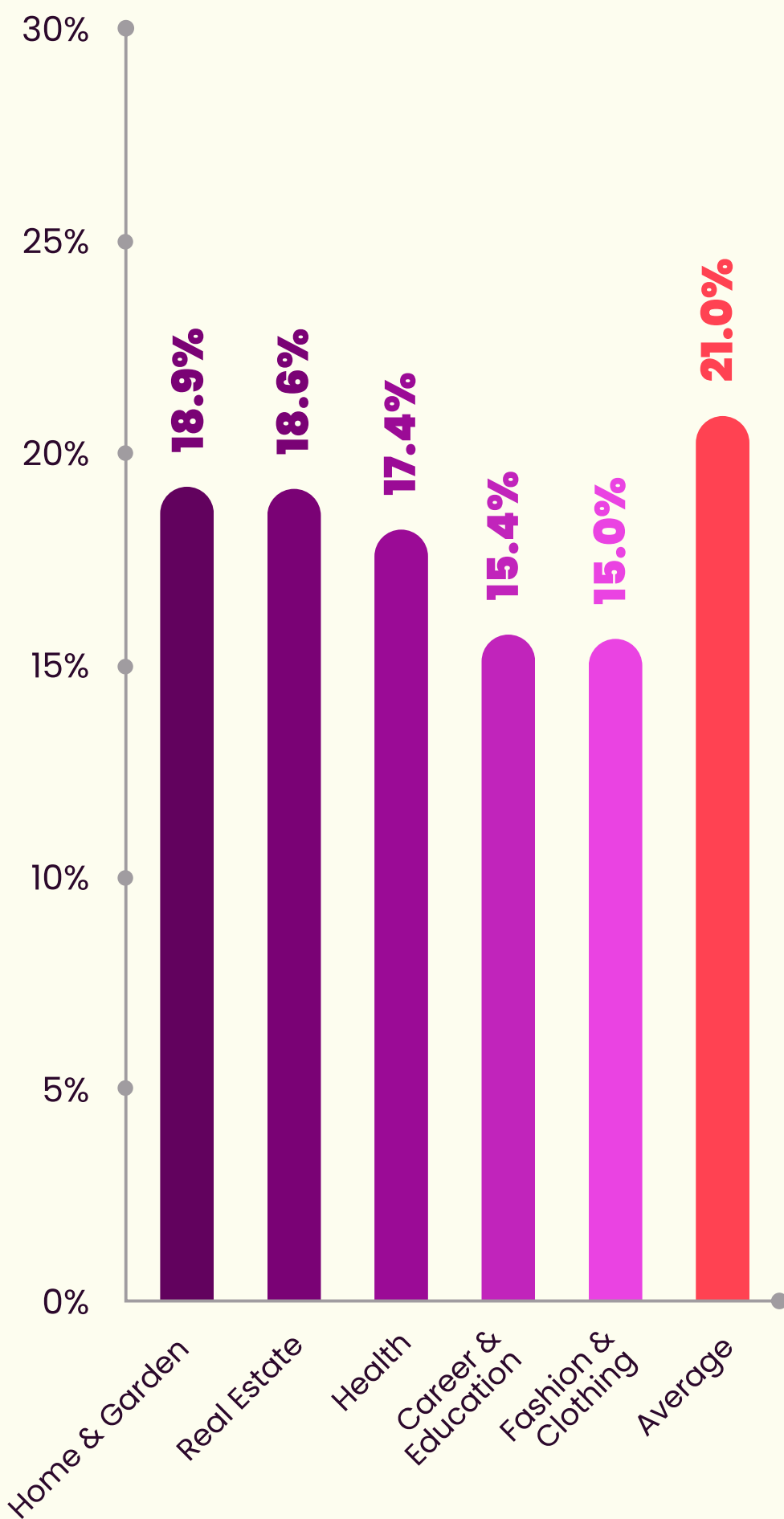
Here too we see how category interest is influencing the outcomes. The categories with lowest brand lift performance are again typically thought of as more functional and less emotionally involving than categories such as Tourism, Entertainment, Gaming and Toys.

The outlier in this graph is Fashion and Clothing, a category that is typically seen as being more high-involvement. The likely explanation for this result is that a majority of the native campaigns for Fashion and Clothing brands measured in the Brand Metrics database are from lower profile retail clothing brands rather than high-end fashion brands.

Understanding what is working effectively and also why some categories are showing lower than average brand lift results is important. It helps us understand the intrinsic function of the categories themselves and also identifies new opportunities for brands.

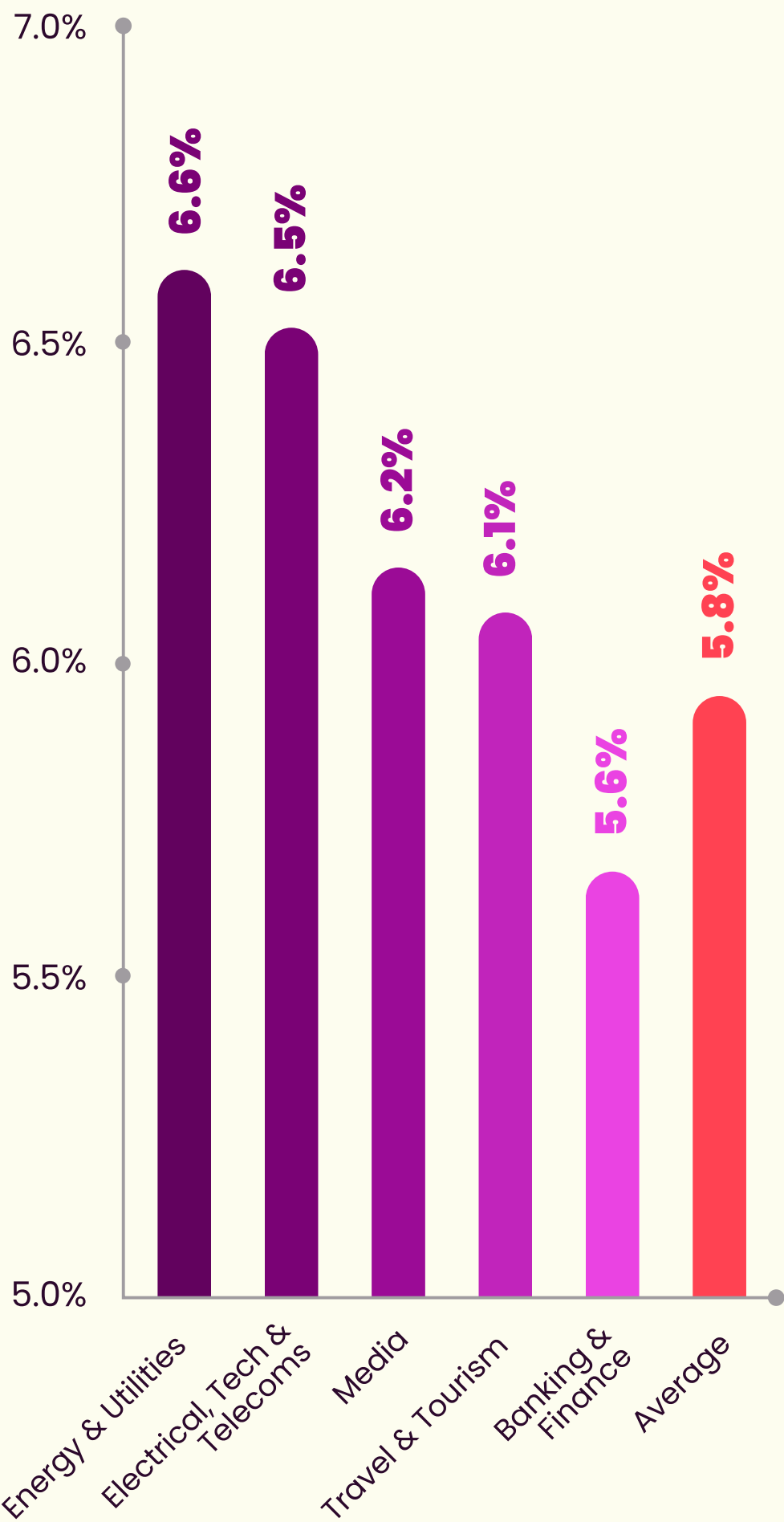## Digging deeper into industry categories

Exploring the category data in more detail can also show how different metrics are performing in different industry categories.

Take awareness, for instance, where brands are wanting to establish their familiarity via native advertising. Which categories show the highest levels of brand lift?

Awareness brand lift:
Top 5 industry categories

Category	Value
Energy & Utilities	6.6%
Electrical, Tech & Telecoms	6.5%
Media	6.2%
Travel & Tourism	6.1%
Banking & Finance	5.6%
Average	5.8%

What about consideration - the metric that is typically where native advertising has its greatest impact. Which categories perform most strongly here?

Consideration brand lift: Top 5 industry categories

Category	Value
Travel & Tourism	8.5%
Real Estate	8.5%
Automotive	8.3%
Gambling	8.0%
Retail	7.6%
Average	7.1%
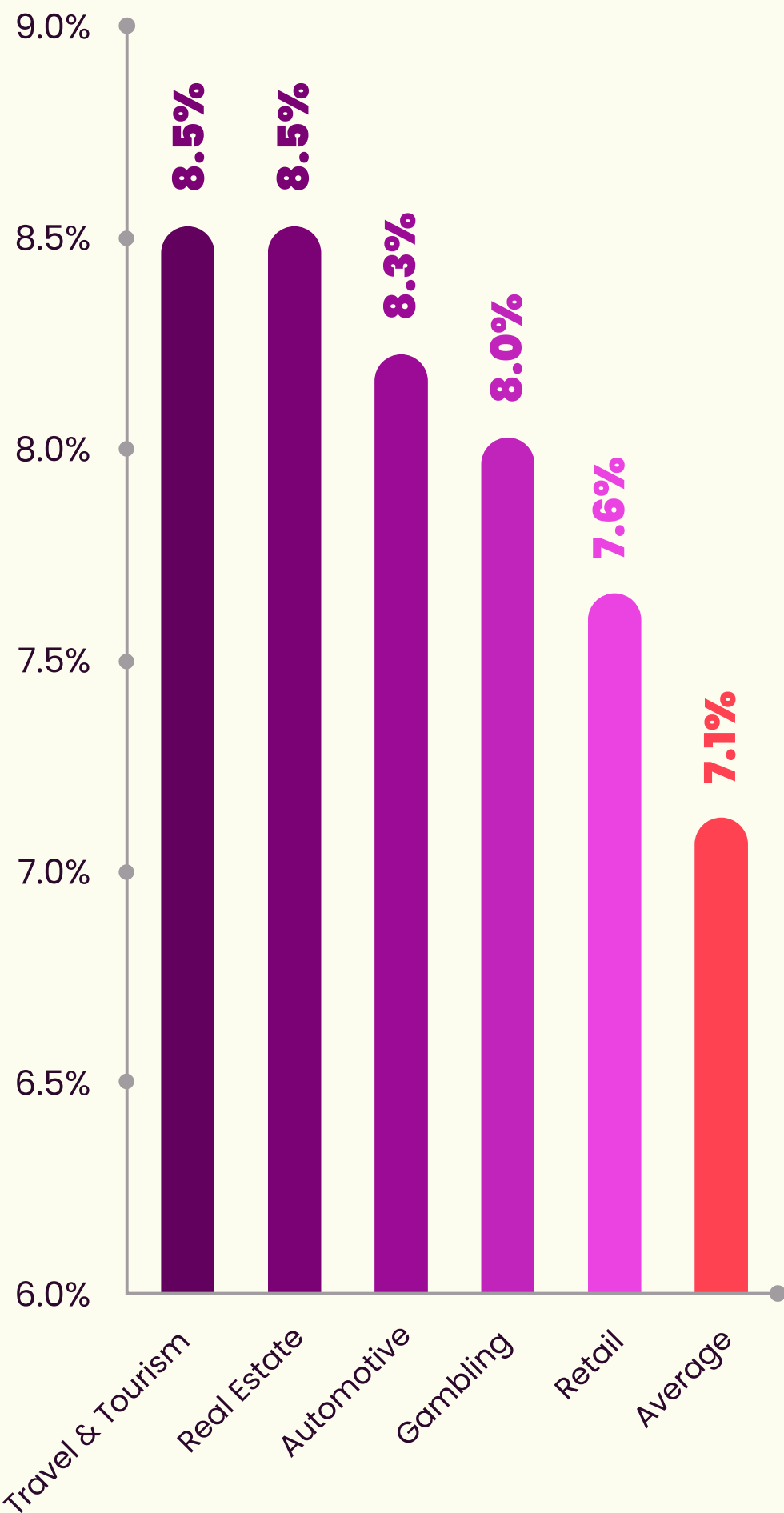
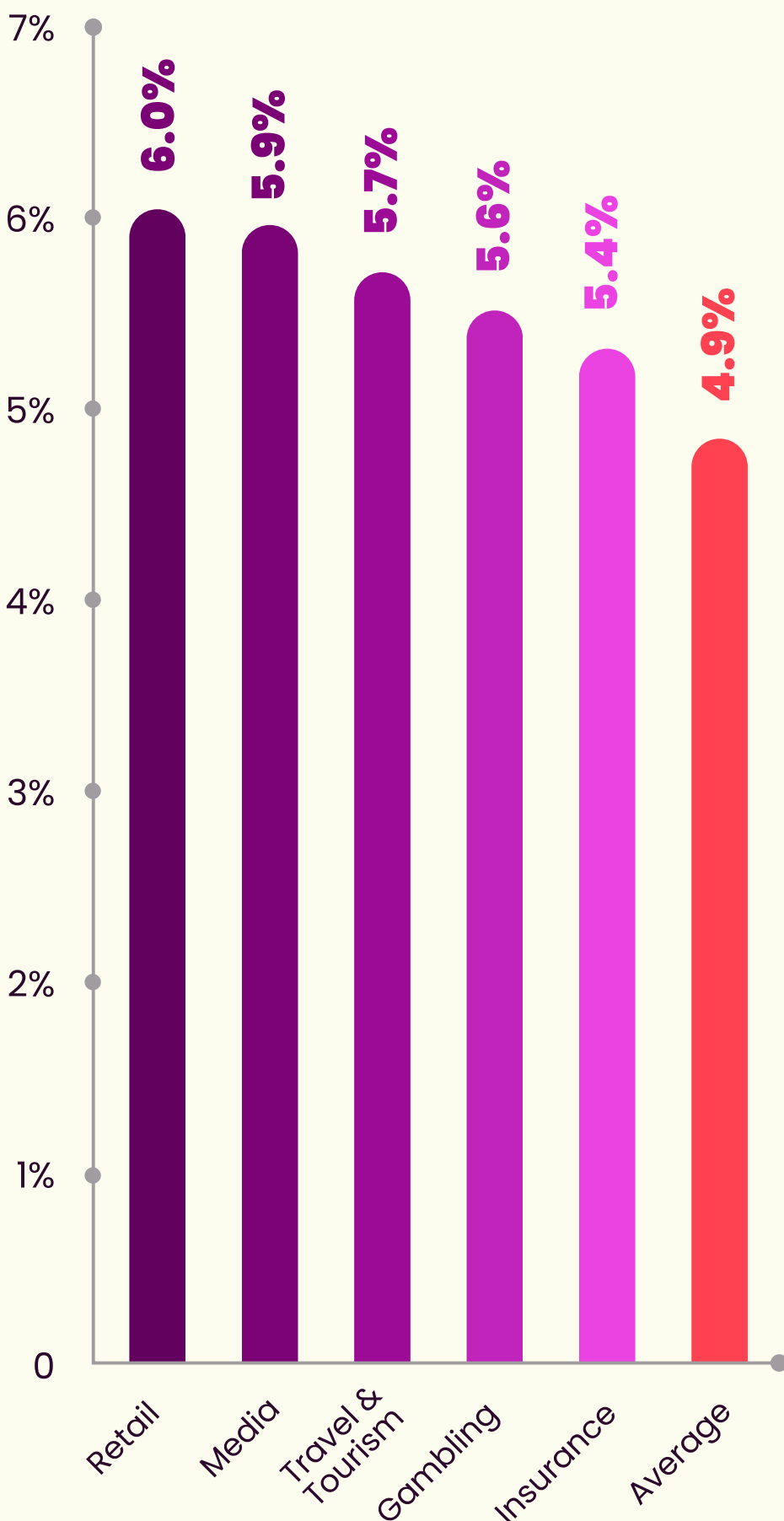Further down the funnel, what about preference? In which categories can brands use native advertising to differentiate themselves from competitors and gain higher than average levels of preference brand lift?

Preference brand lift:
Top 5 industry categories

Category	Value
Retail	6.0%
Media	5.9%
Travel & Tourism	5.7%
Gambling	5.6%
Insurance	5.4%
Average	4.9%

And finally, action intent. Typically display advertising is seen as the territory for such campaigns, but which categories show above average levels of brand lift for intent?

Action intent brand lift: Top 5 industry categories

Category	Value
Retail	3.8%
Professional & Trade Services	3.6%
Travel & Tourism	3.5%
Media	3.5%
Beauty	3.1%
Average	2.8%
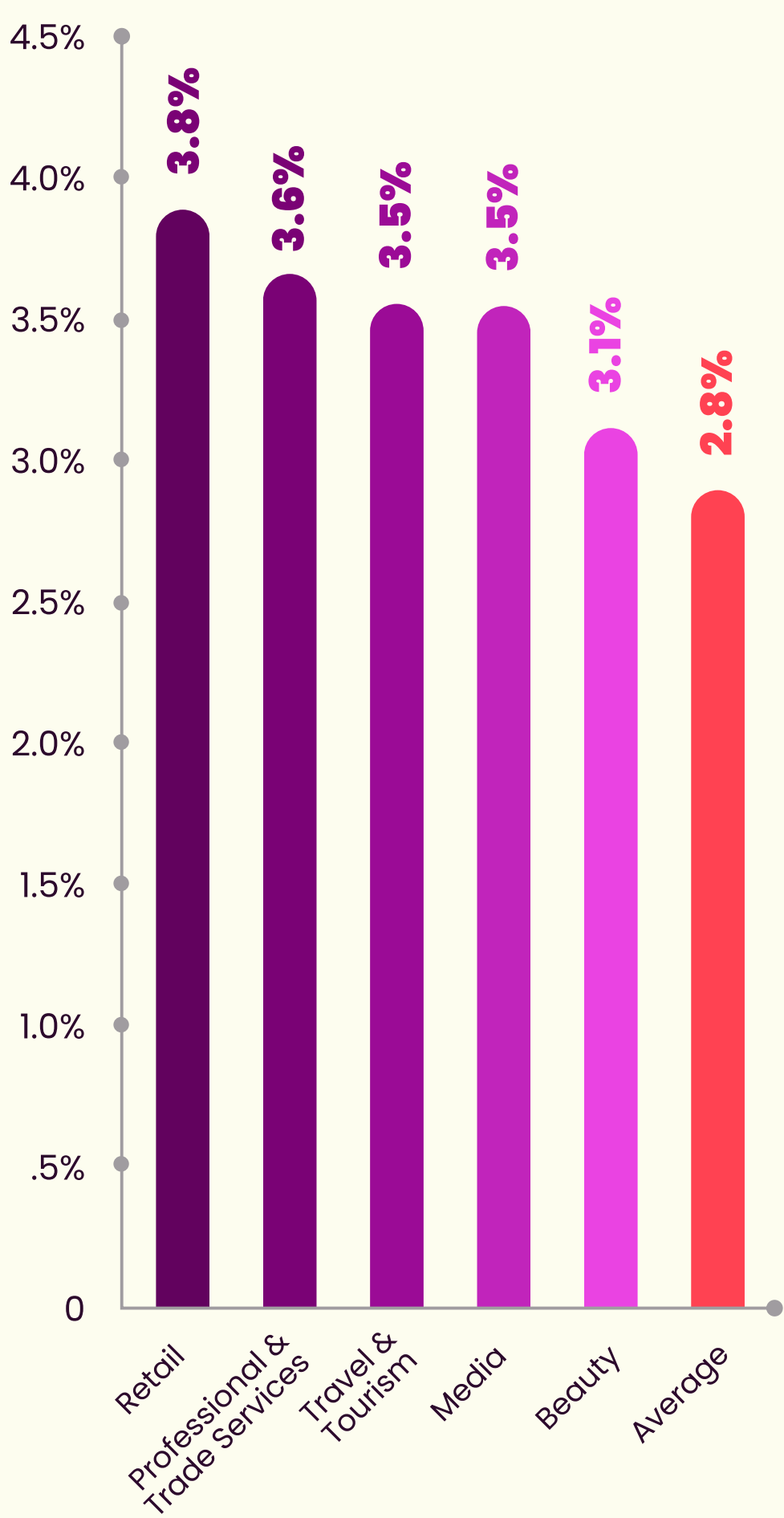
In general, we see that the differences between categories comes down to the characteristics of the category. In categories where there are many brands and the offer is abstract rather than material (e.g. Energy and Telcos), it is more of an awareness game. In categories where it is about shifting goods, (e.g. Retail) it is more of a purchase intent game, and for categories with high involvement (e.g. Travel, Media and Real Estate), the focus is more on shifting attitudes via increased consideration and preference levels.

Capturing brand lift data at scale across native advertising campaigns helps advertisers better understand the role it can play in individual categories – where it has been proven to work and where the potential new opportunities lie.

6.

Differences between publisher types

Different publishers have different editorial focuses, be that news, lifestyle, business or special interest. But does the overall publisher environment have any effect on the effectiveness of native advertising campaigns?

The following chart shows native campaigns split by publisher type, based on each publisher's primary focus.

These topline results show that the strongest effect is with "lifestyle" publishers and there could be various reasons – more natural fit to the editorial format? reaching people when in a relaxed frame of mind? promoting brands that fit with a lifestyle environment?

Average total brand lift by publisher type

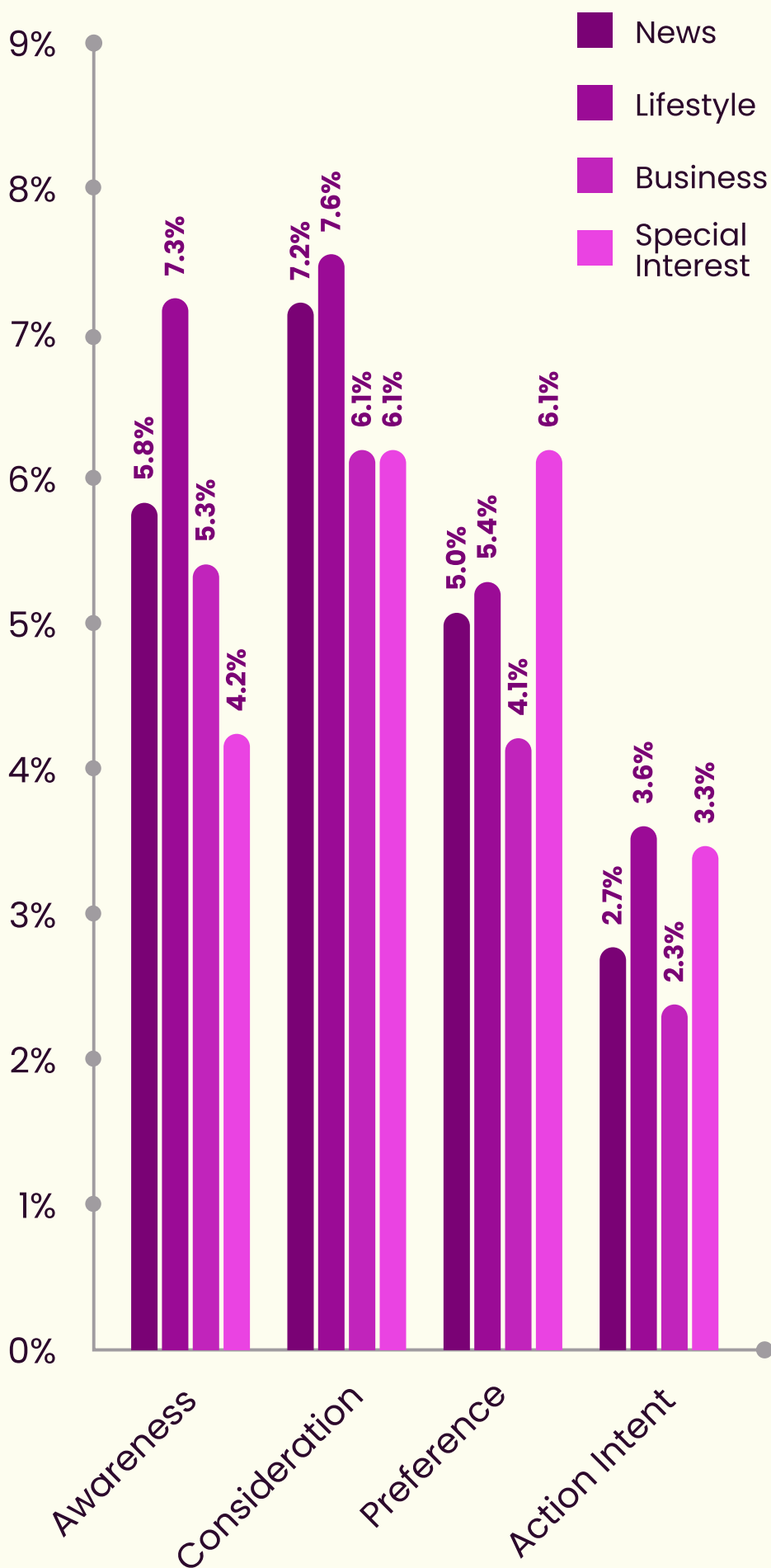| Publisher Type	Brand Lift
News	20.9%
Lifestyle	23.8%
Business	17.7%
Special Interest	19.8%
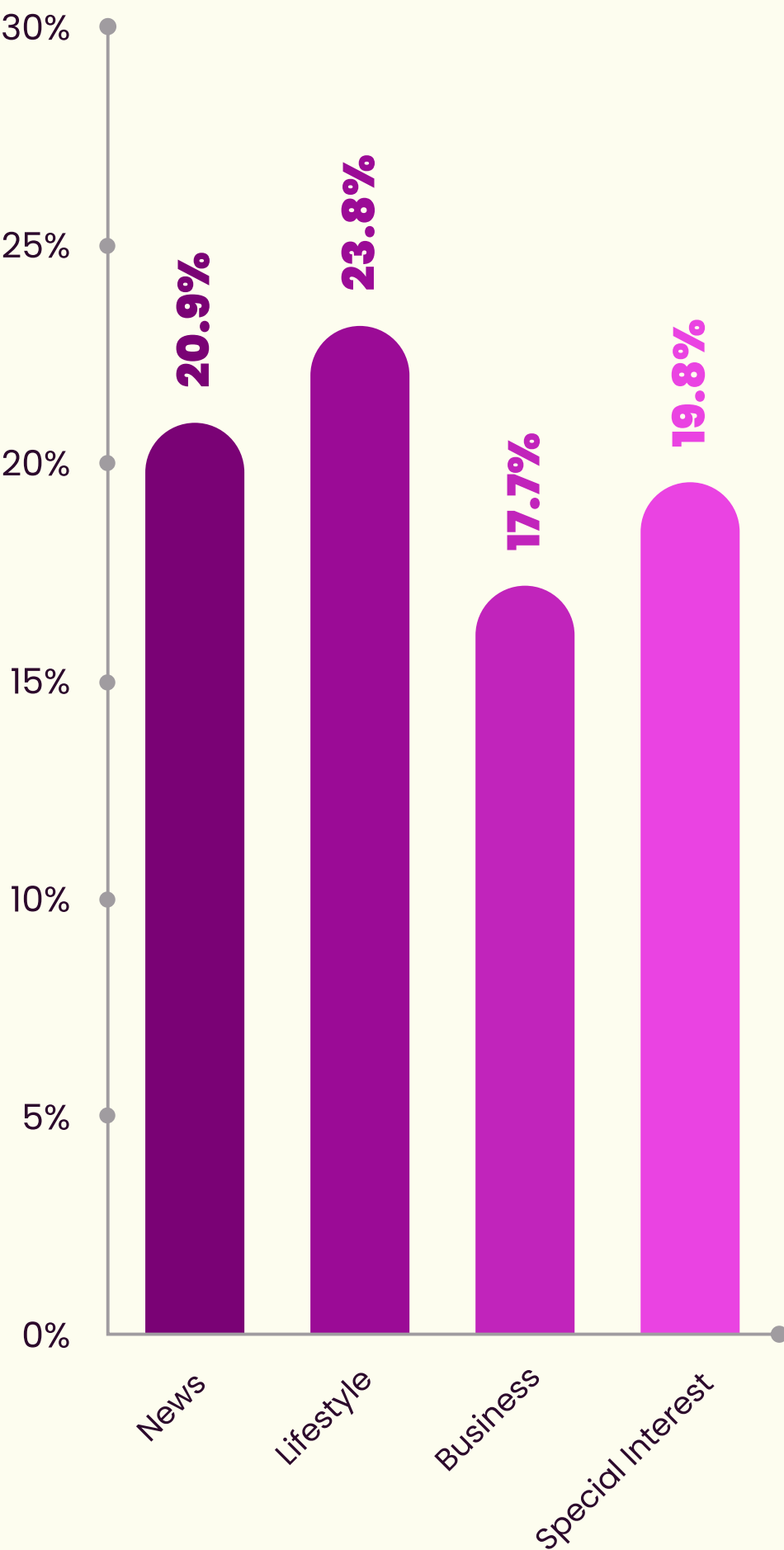
These results can be further broken down by metric and, with sufficient data available, could be broken down still further by industry category.

Brand lift metrics by publisher type

Legend:
- News
- Lifestyle
- Business
- Special Interest

	News	Lifestyle	Business	Special Interest
Awareness	5.8%	7.3%	5.3%	4.2%
Consideration	7.2%	7.6%	6.1%	6.1%
Preference	5.0%	5.4%	4.1%	6.1%
Action Intent	2.7%	3.6%	2.3%	3.3%

In this analysis, News media behaves like the overall average, with high uplifts across all metrics, in particular brand consideration. Lifestyle media overperforms the other categories across all four metrics. Business media has its strengths in the upper, more cognitive part of the funnel, but is less prominent when it comes to the emotional and behavioral dimensions of campaign effectiveness. For Special Interest media it is the other way around, which makes sense from the roles that these different content environments play in people's lives.

Having granular data like this does not provide all the answers, but it does allow for a more analytical evaluation of what has worked previously. It may help to explain why it worked and, importantly, identifies where the opportunities lie to drive future success.
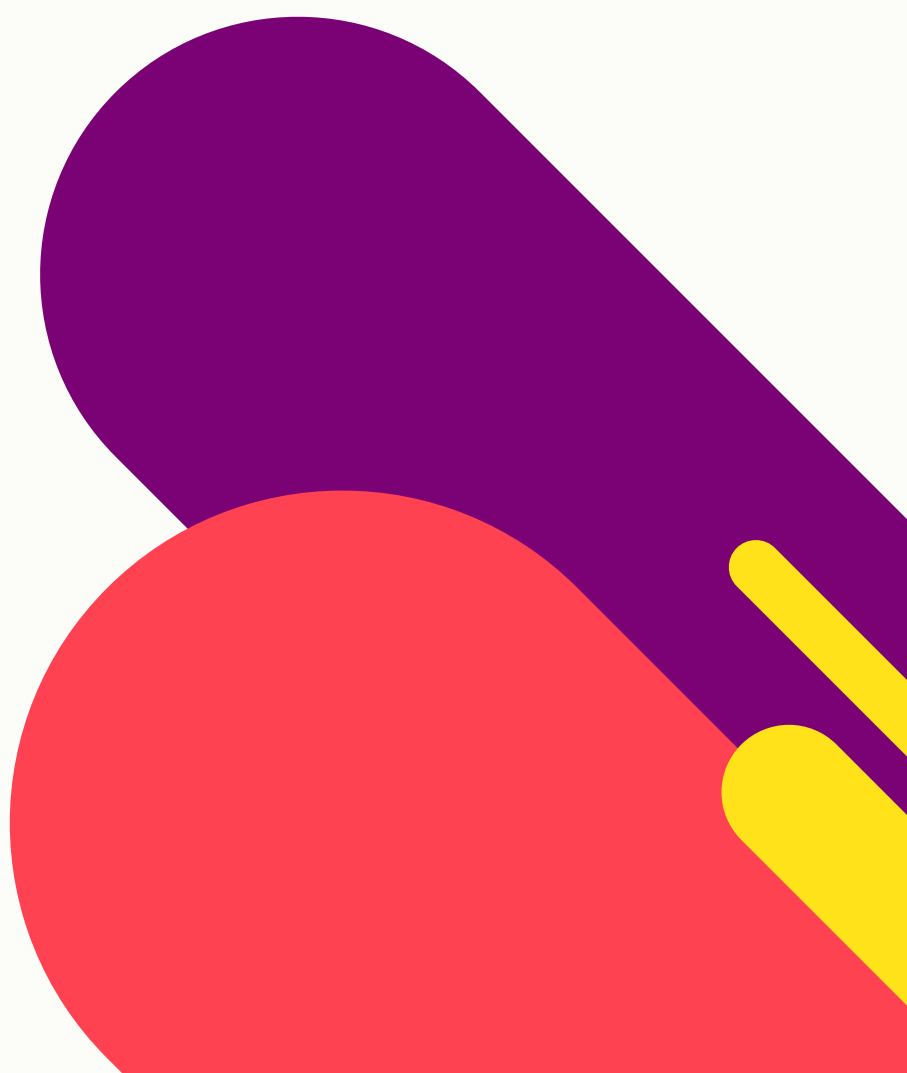
7.
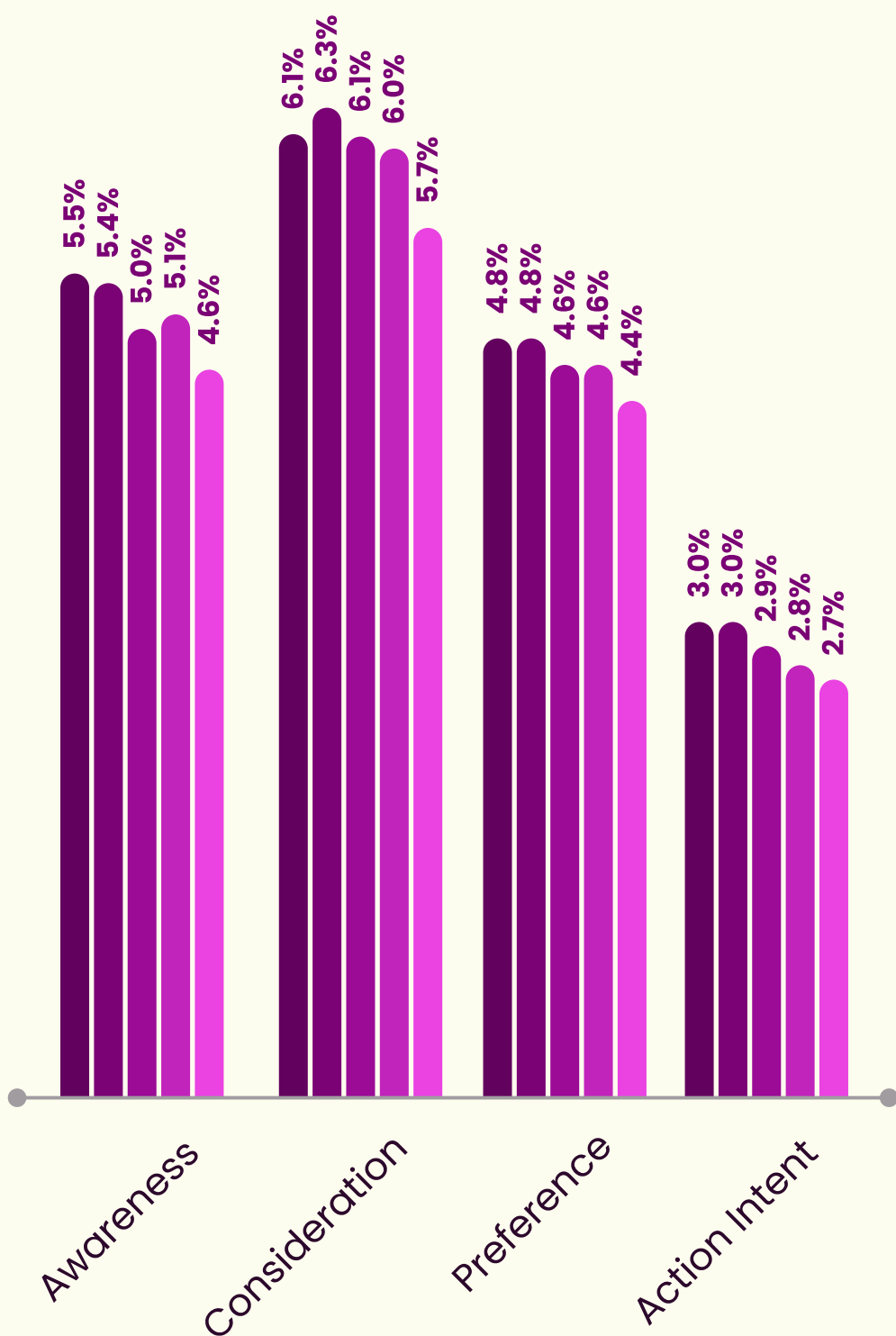
The effect of advertising decay

Brand Metrics' methodology involves algorithmically analyzing the relationship between campaign exposure, captured by technical tracking of browsers, and people's brand perceptions, as recorded in a survey question.

This means we can look at the impact time between exposure to a campaign and its impact on brand lift. The below graph demonstrates how much of the reported brand lift disappears as time goes by from when a respondent was last exposed to the campaign.

The effect of decay on brand lift

Legend:
- 1 day
- 2-3 days
- 3-6 days
- 6-14 days
- 14+ days

Awareness
- 5.5%
- 5.4%
- 5.0%
- 5.1%
- 4.6%

Consideration
- 6.1%
- 6.3%
- 6.1%
- 6.0%
- 5.7%

Preference
- 4.8%
- 4.8%
- 4.6%
- 4.6%
- 4.4%

Action Intent
- 3.0%
- 3.0%
- 2.9%
- 2.8%
- 2.7%

As the graph shows, the brand lift effect is gradually eroding, starting from only a few days after the campaign was viewed. The final bar shows the remaining brand lift two weeks after exposure to the campaign.

Unfortunately, our actual data does not go beyond this point, but we can model the slope. Doing that tells that tells us that in 3-4 months, the achieved awareness effect will be gone, as will the purchase intent uplift of those who already liked the brand before being exposed. In half a year, the consideration and preference effects, on those who already knew the brand before the campaign, will be gone too.

This is no mystery. It just means that as a brand, you must constantly reinvest in market communication. That tremendously successful campaign that you ran in January will not still occupy the minds and the hearts of the consumers by Christmas. That place will then be taken by your

competitors, unless you remind them you still exist.

However, the good news for native advertising is that two weeks after being exposed to a campaign, the remaining effects are still stronger than the average effect of any display campaign, highlighting the ability of native campaign messages to remain in people's minds for longer.

Exploring new hypotheses

So far, this whitepaper has looked backwards at campaigns that have already been measured and uncovered some overall understandings from their data.

But the ability to measure native campaigns at scale also opens the door to explore new hypotheses that might be particularly relevant to publishers and their advertisers.

Here are three examples:

Hypothesis 1: brands with a story are more effective.

Whilst almost every brand has a story, some may have stories with greater depth. This might partly be a function of the category they operate in, but what about brands like Harley Davidson, Red Cross, Johnnie Walker or Patagonia? Would their provenance and back story provide richer content for a more engaging, effective native campaign?

Hypothesis 2: creative elements can be optimized for greater effect.

What type of creative has the biggest effect? What is the balance between a long copy approach and a visually-led approach? What role do presenters play? How does the effect differ by category? What creative style delivers the longest levels of engagement?

Hypothesis 3: overall brand effect increases with sequential campaigns.

What happens if your native campaigns build a story over time, with each campaign followed by another campaign? What is the cumulative effect of multiple campaigns with differing messages, versus a single message run over the same timescale? What is the optimum duration for each campaign to run in order to maximise the brand effect?

What else would you like to learn more about? What other ideas do you have for future native campaigns that you think could be successful?

If you are measuring your native campaigns consistently and at scale, you have the opportunity to both learn from your previous campaigns and set up new test-and-learn scenarios to help inform your future learnings.

Conclusion

This whitepaper just scratches the surface of the data we already have, and continue to collect daily, on behalf of native advertisers around the world. We hope you find the initial findings interesting and would leave you with the following five broad learnings:

Learning 1: native campaigns work differently to display campaigns

Whilst display campaigns reach a large audience and "push" their messages, native campaigns reach a smaller, more engaged audience who have been "pulled" towards the brand. The challenge to advertisers is in developing native campaigns that will build on the audience's greater familiarity with the brand.

Learning 2: native campaigns are consumed for longer periods of time

Native campaigns are typically consumed less frequently and for longer periods of time and it is this that leads to greater positive effect on the brand. The challenge to advertisers is in developing native campaigns that can engage an audience and encourage them to stay longer with the message.

Learning 3: native campaigns work most strongly in the mid funnel

The data shows native campaigns have a greater relative effect on mid funnel metrics, especially consideration. The challenge for advertisers is in deciding on which metric they want to influence and then developing content to address that objective e.g. "Why would people want to consider our brand more often?"

Learning 4: native campaigns work differently in different industry categories

We measure campaigns across 19 major categories and 122 subcategories with the data showing how native advertising performs differently in different categories. The challenge for advertisers is to understand how native advertising works in their category, which metrics are most typically impacted and what creative is best placed to have a positive impact.

Learning 5: campaign planning benefits from consistent measurement data

To develop future campaigns based on insight from the past, it is necessary to be measuring as many native campaigns as possible. The more data you have, the more hypotheses you can explore and the more granular your analysis can become. The challenge to advertisers is to

integrate a measurement element into their processes to capture brand lift metrics in a simple and scalable way.

And as a final catchphrase to leave you with, *"Don't Let Creativity Fly Blind".*

Imagine crafting a masterpiece without ever stepping back to see if it resonated with your audience. Measurement is the lens that sharpens creative brilliance, ensuring it's not just visually stunning but also strategically effective.

Sean Adams
Chief Marketing Officer
Brand Metrics

brand
metrics

NATIVE
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