



**INSKIN**  
Brand Advertising

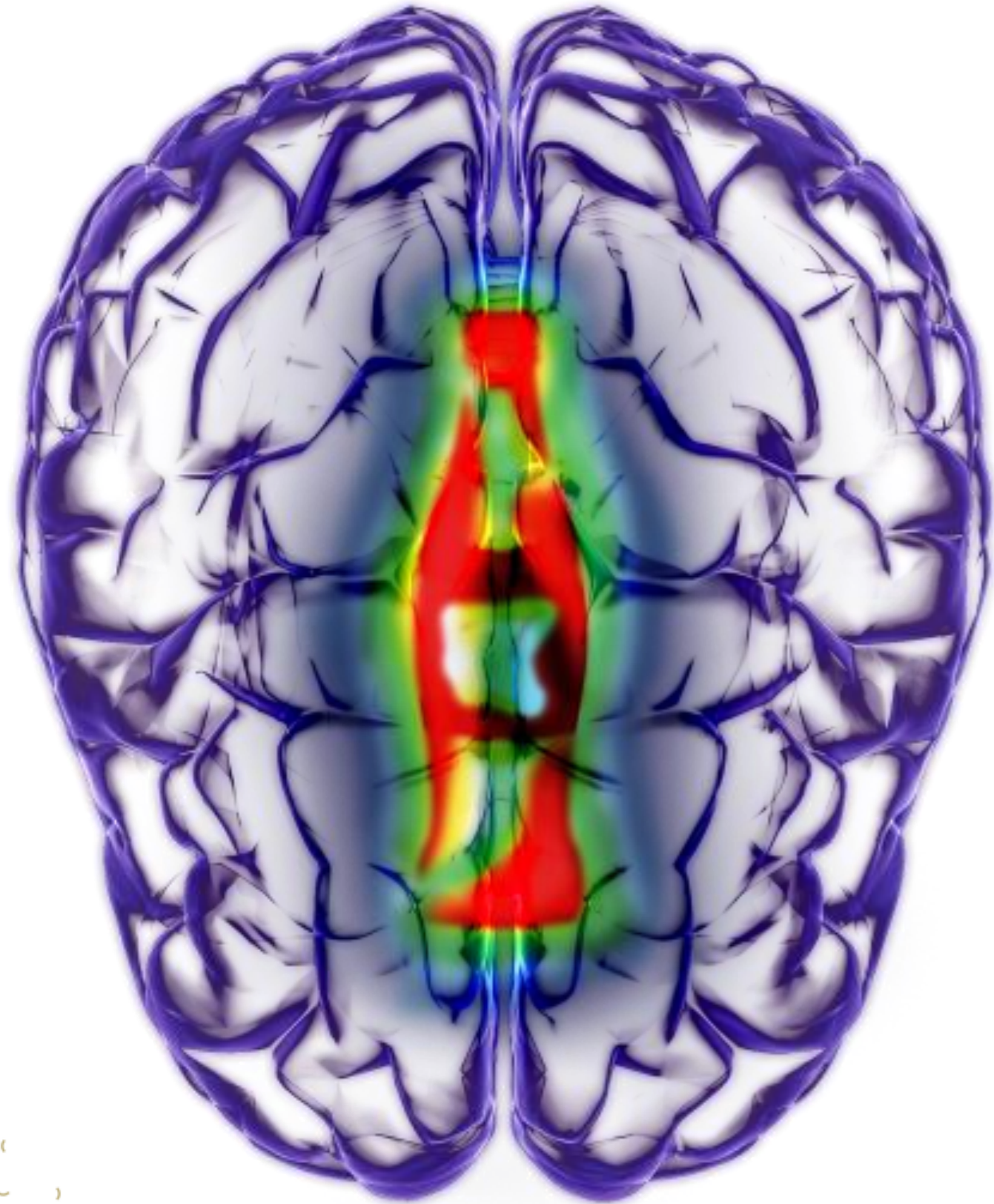
# From Viewability to Visual Engagement

A Joint Research Project by  **INSKIN**



# Contents

3. Reminding Ourselves of Branding Goals
4. Building Knowledge Bridges
5. Birth of a Research Project
6. Viewability is a Good Attention Baseline Indicator
7. Viewability  $\neq$  Visual Engagement
8. Determinants of Attention
9. Visual Engagement Fuels Memory Building
10. Visual Engagement by Ad Format
11. Relevance Drives Attention Intensity
12. The Effect of Ad Clutter on Visual Engagement
13. The Effect of Ad Clutter on Brand Metrics
14. Multi-Dimensional Perspectives Matter
15. Example Classification Framework for Display Ads
16. Determinants of Attention
17. Key Takeaways
18. Questions / Comments



# Reminding Ourselves of Branding Goals

As a media seller, we have observed viewability become a KPI of significant importance in campaign briefs. Optimisation towards viewability has become very common, which makes sense – at least intuitively.

However, we need to be mindful that we are optimising campaigns towards metrics which respond to the campaign's actual objectives. Whenever we at Inskin look at measurement of campaigns, we remind ourselves of the key underlying goal of brand advertising: the continuous building and refreshing of memory structures in the consumer's mind.

Brand advertising's key objective is to **build and refresh memory structures** which support and enhance the brand's availability in the consumer's mind.

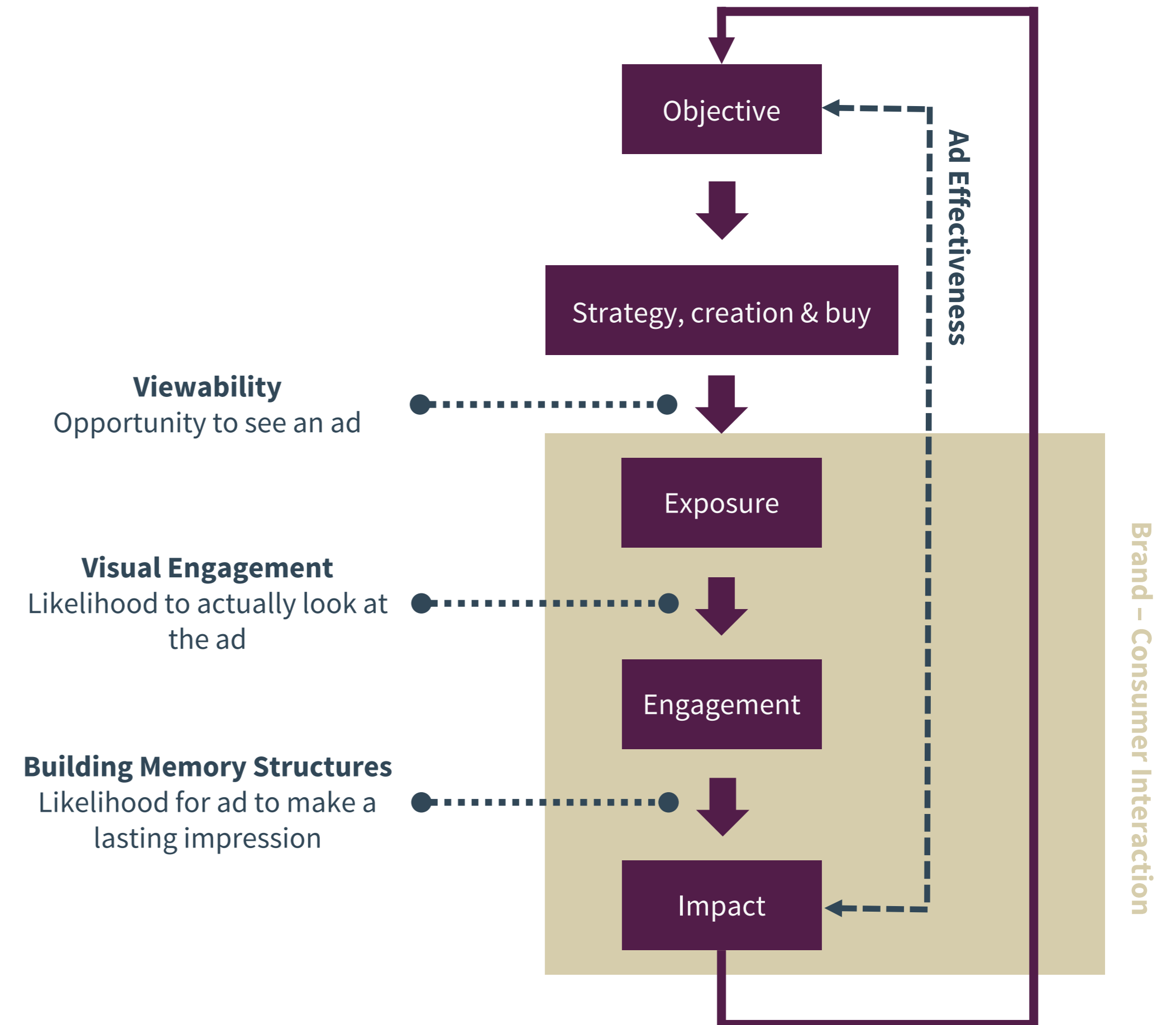


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# Building Knowledge Bridges

We ask ourselves this question because it is obvious that all measurement (be it viewability of a campaign or anything else) needs to help us understand to which degree we have achieved our key objective (building memory structures). Tying individual data points to the overarching objective and understanding their relationships is what we call “building knowledge bridges”.

And this is exactly what we did with viewability: we wanted to understand how it relates to the next step of the exposure journey – visual engagement – and how visual engagement relates to building memory structures.



Merging several different technologies such as viewability measurement and eye-tracking, we partnered with Research Now and Sticky, with data from Moat, to better understand the relationship between viewability, visual engagement and branding impact.

- Are highly viewable ads also more likely to attract the user's attention?
- How do different formats perform with regard to visual engagement?
- Is there a correlation between visual engagement and the development of brand-related memory structures?
- How does ad clutter impact the visual engagement rates of individual ads / formats?



Hypotheses,  
Research Design, Analysis



Research Design,  
Online Panel, Analysis



Research Design,  
Eye-tracking Technology



Viewability Measurement  
Technology

## Birth of a Research Project



FMCG, Automotive, Sportswear



Pageskin Plus, Billboard, Halfpage, MPU



UK Adults 18+



696 Eye-tracking Sessions



4,279 Respondents surveyed



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# Viewability is a Good Attention Baseline Indicator

One of the key findings was that viewability thresholds are good at predicting if an ad has the chance to gain attention, but bad at predicting how much attention it will get.

Ads that did not meet the 50% of pixels / 1 second threshold were extremely unlikely to be looked at, and even when they were looked at they received very little attention.

**86%** of non-viewable\* ads were never looked at

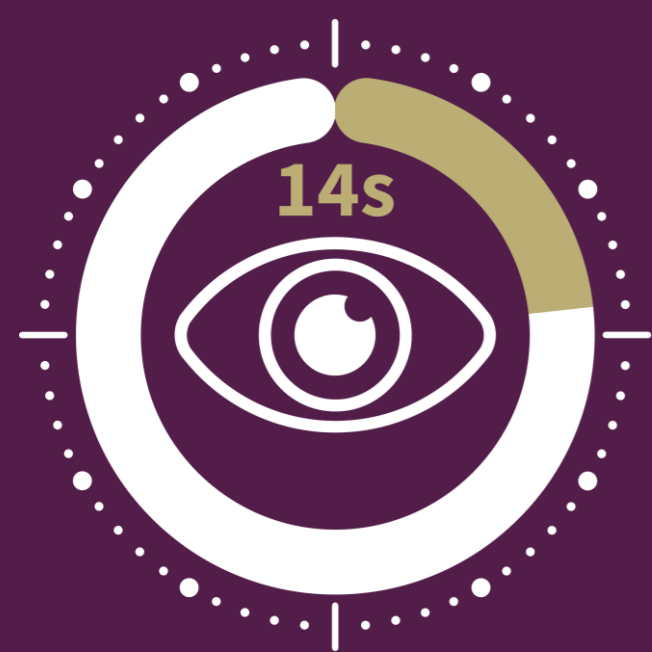
**0%** of non-viewable\* ads got attention for a second or more

\*A “non-viewable” ad does not meet the IAB minimum viewability thresholds (50% of pixels / 1 second)



# Viewability ≠ Visual Engagement

...But Viewability doesn't tell us how much attention an ad will actually get.



Online ads need to be viewable for **14 seconds** to be seen



**42%**

Looked at ad for 1+ second



**33%**

Looked at ad for <1 second



**25%**

No attention

Viewability doesn't tell us if ads are actually looked at.

More interesting though is the fact that even when an ad is viewable, **visual engagement is far from guaranteed**. In our project, a quarter of all viewable ads received no attention whatsoever.

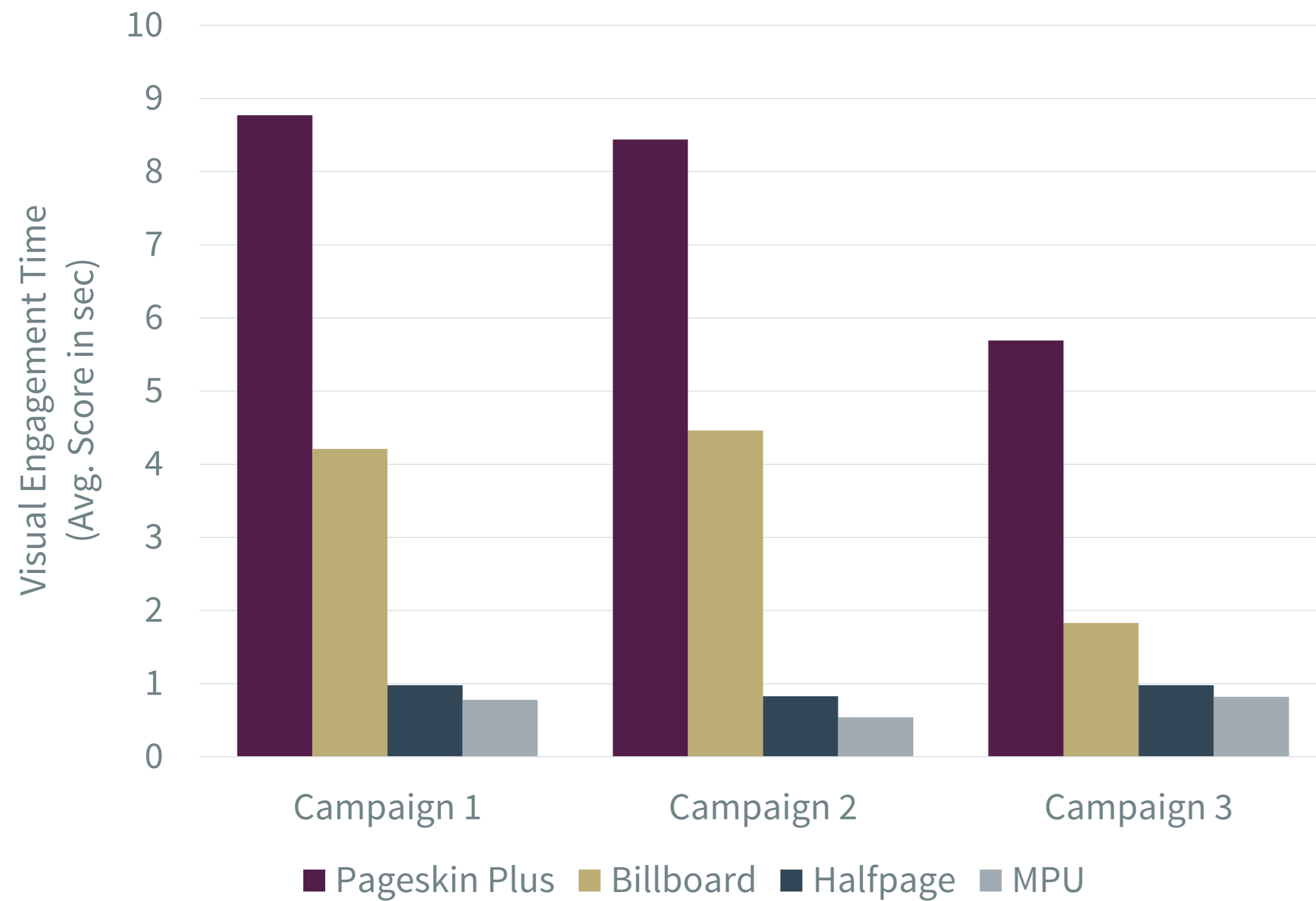
When comparing viewability stats and visual engagement data, it became obvious that some smaller formats can achieve high viewability rates because their size makes it relatively easy for them to hit the viewability thresholds; however, their visual engagement rates were very small.

This tells us that optimising against viewability rates without taking the context into account (e.g. placements and campaign) can be very misleading, and potentially counter-productive to achieving campaign goals.



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Visual Engagement Time by Format and Campaign



Brand advertising's key objective is to **build and refresh memory structures** which support and enhance the brand's availability in the consumer's mind.

## Determinants of Attention

One of the key insights uncovered by the research project related to determinants of attention, and in particular what role formats and creative execution play.

While **relative** visual engagement levels seemed to be fairly consistent across campaigns we observed (i.e. determined by the formats), **absolute** attention seemed to be driven by campaign and / or creative execution.

These findings call for more research into those creative execution techniques that can help maximise a campaign's potential within specific format constraints.

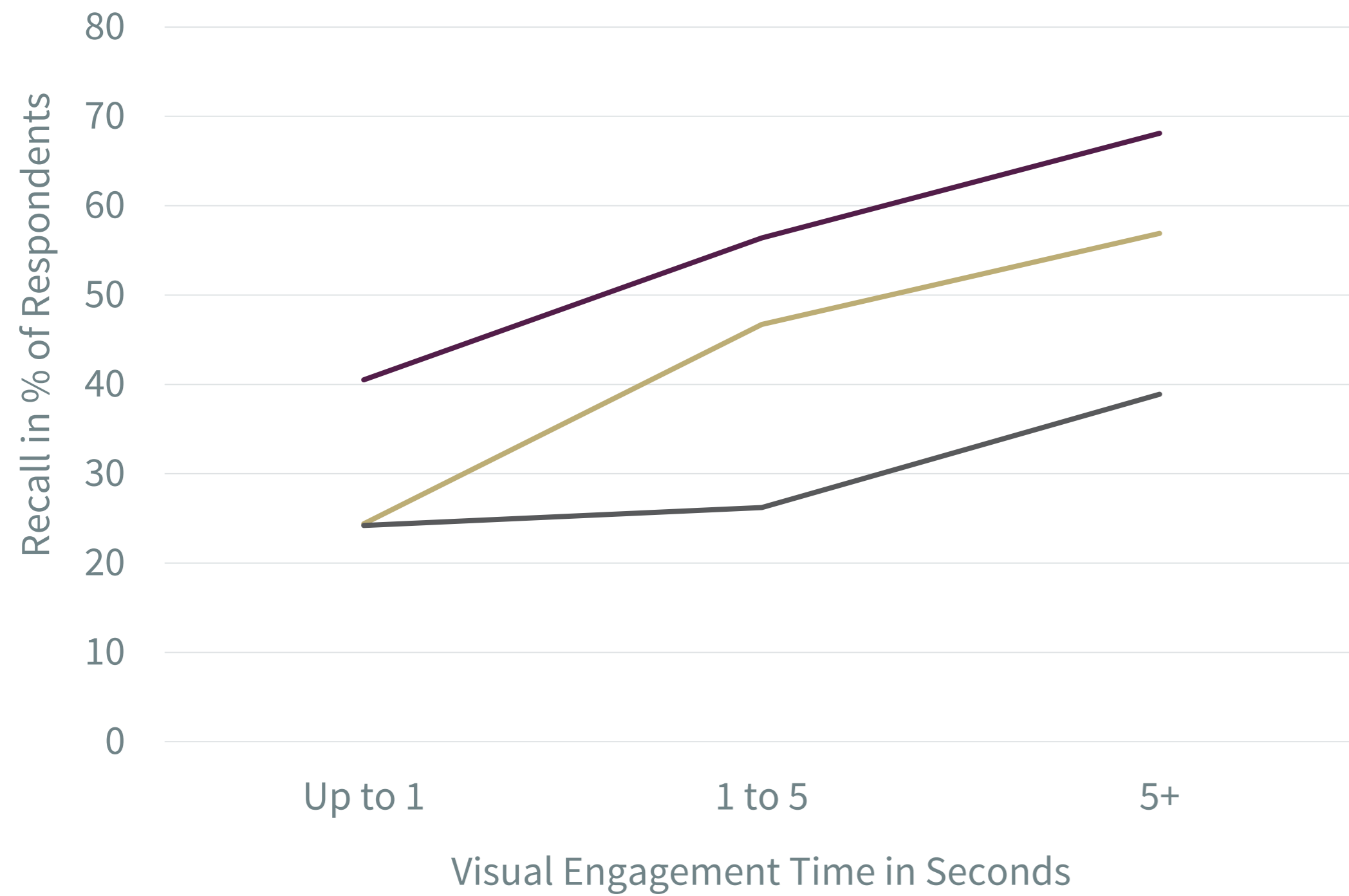




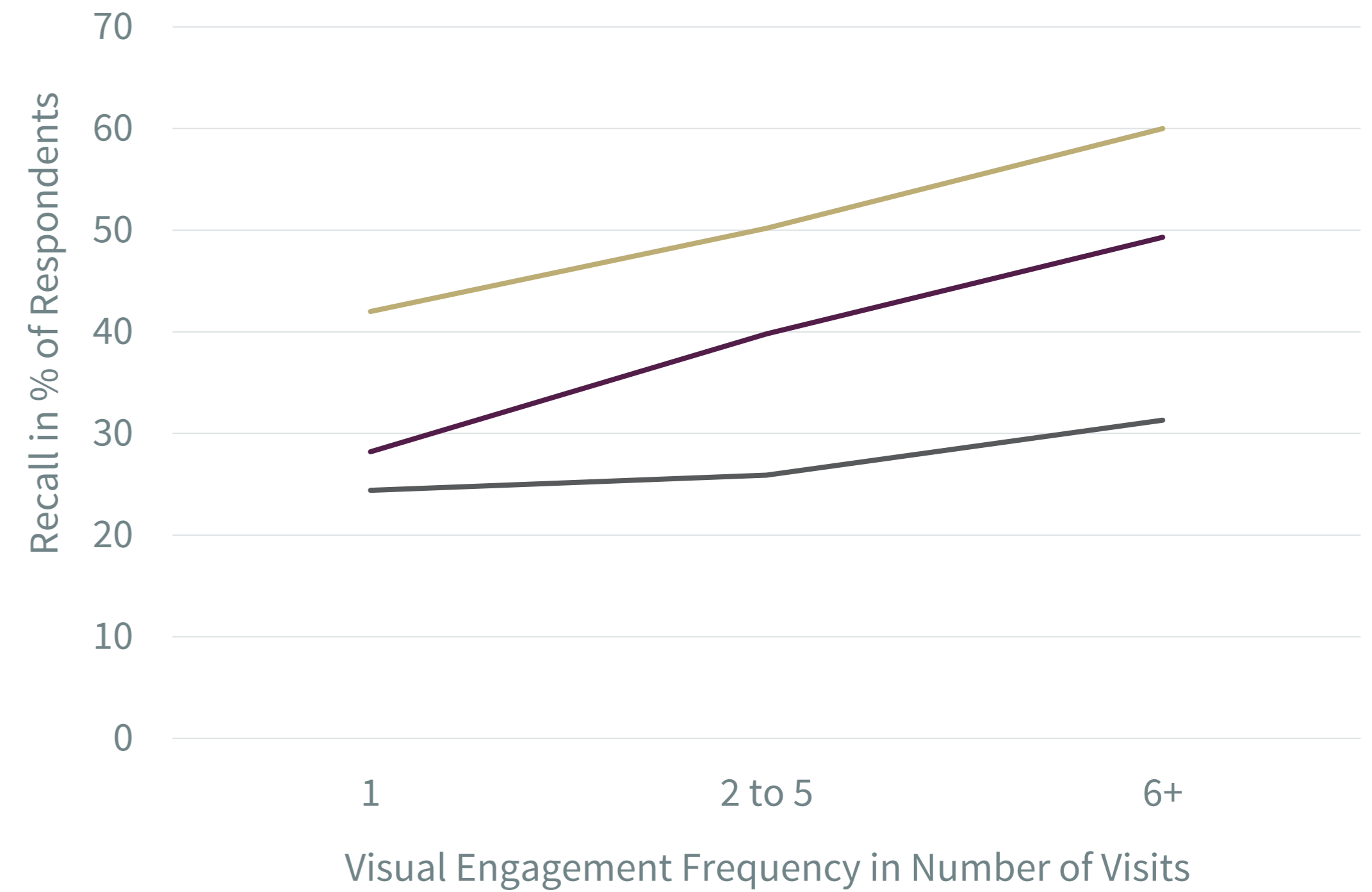
# Visual Engagement Fuels Memory Building

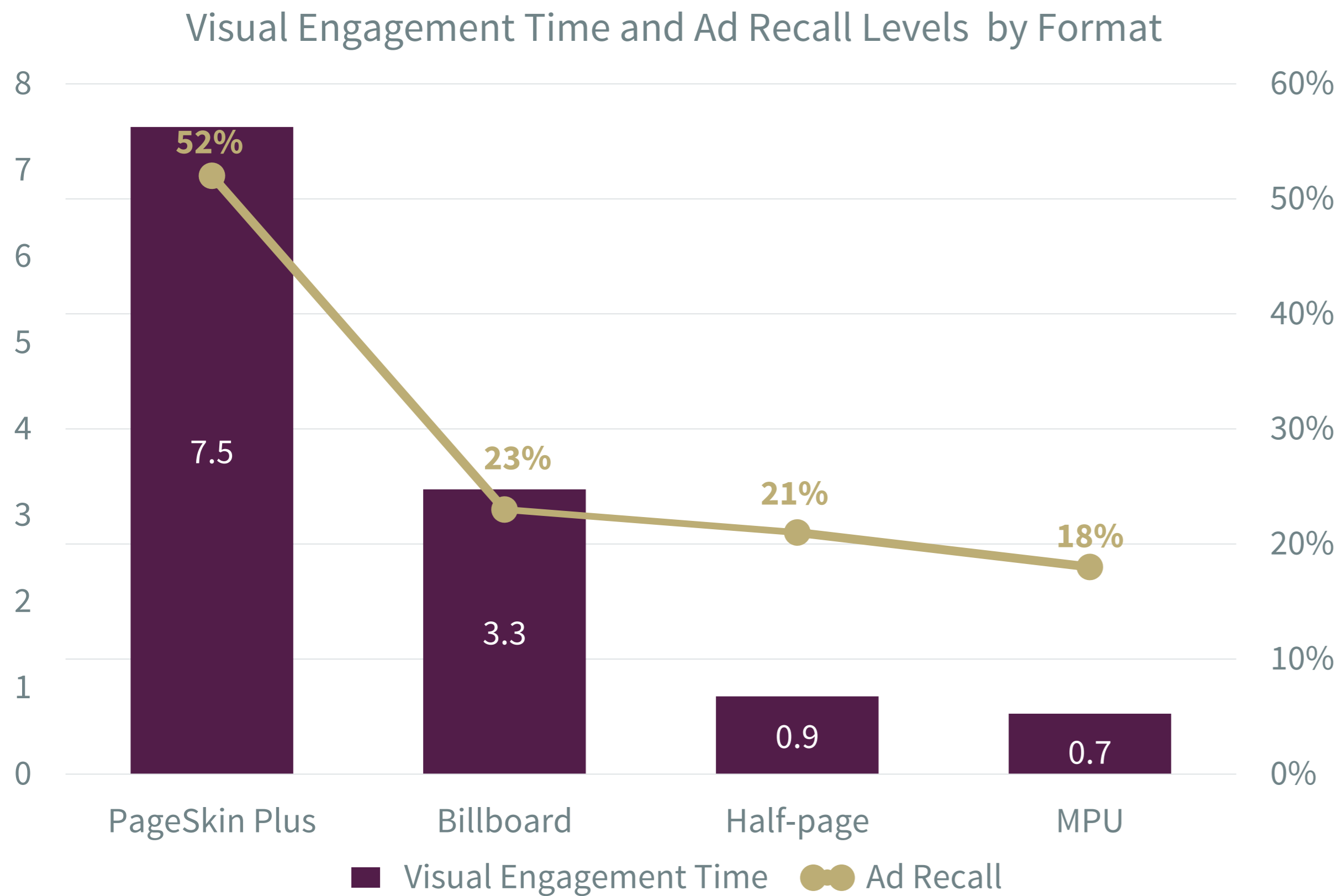
Aided Brand Recall %   Unaided Brand Recall %   Message Recall %

### Relationship between Visual Engagement Time and Recall



### Relationship between Visual Engagement Frequency and Recall





## Visual Engagement by Ad Format

Furthermore, our research showed that visual engagement fuels memory-building, i.e. the very objective we're trying to achieve.

Higher visual engagement times (the amount of time users spent looking at an ad) and visual engagement frequencies (the number of times users looked at the ad) led to increased recall levels (see charts on previous page).

### Visual Engagement Time Differs by Ad Format

The time people spent looking at ads and ad recall differed significantly across four key formats covered – led by Pageskin Plus at 7.5 seconds, down to MPUs at 0.7 seconds.



# Relevance Drives Attention Intensity

When comparing the visual engagement levels and brand metric lifts for target groups vs. non-target groups, it became apparent that relevance was another important factor for attention intensity: unsurprisingly, users that fell into the target group for a specific campaign looked at the ad for longer and more often than users outside the target group, and were thus also more likely to comprehend and recall the advertising message.

**+14%**

Avg. **increase in time spent looking** at an ad for campaign target groups vs. non-target segments

**+10%**

Avg. **increase in visual engagement frequency** at an ad for campaign target groups vs. non-target groups

**+32%**

Avg. **increase in likelihood to recall correct message / tagline** for campaign target groups vs. non-target groups

# The Effect of Ad Clutter on Visual Engagement

In cluttered\* scenarios, the average time spent gazing at an individual format, as well as the number of total visual engagements, dropped noticeably (by -37% and -31%, respectively).



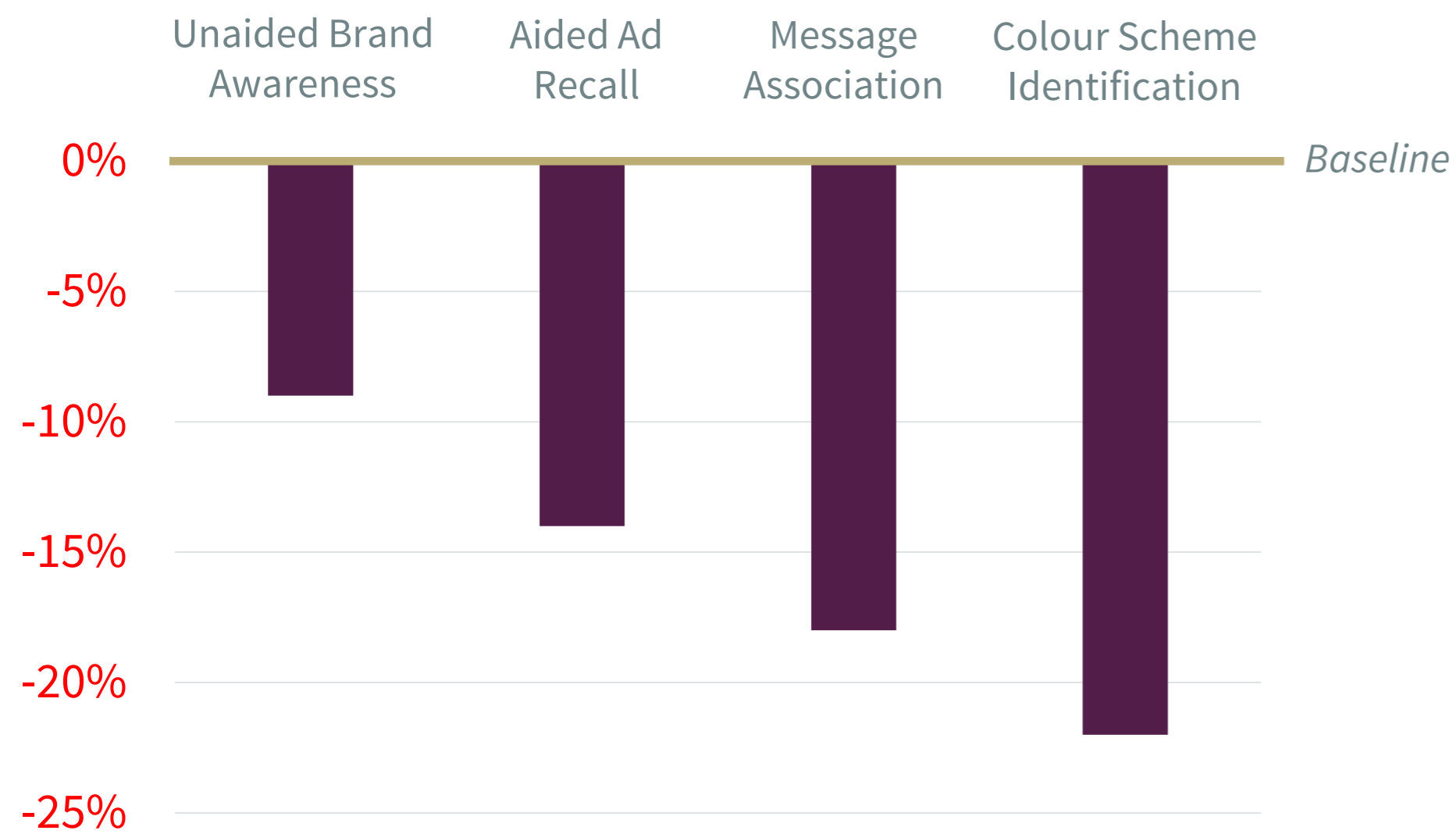
Less Attention  More Attention

Graphical representation only, not based on actual creatives used for the study

# The Effect of Ad Clutter on Brand Metrics

We also researched the impact of ad clutter on branding metrics, and the results largely reflected what we expected to see: when more formats were on a page, the attention that each individual ad received decreased significantly. This translated into weaker breakthrough and thus lower ad effectiveness. However, we were not able to observe any decreases in memory-building capabilities for the tested high-impact format (Pageskin Plus). While this seemed surprising, it might indicate that certain formats do not suffer from a decrease in recall once certain attention thresholds are met; however, this hypothesis requires more research.

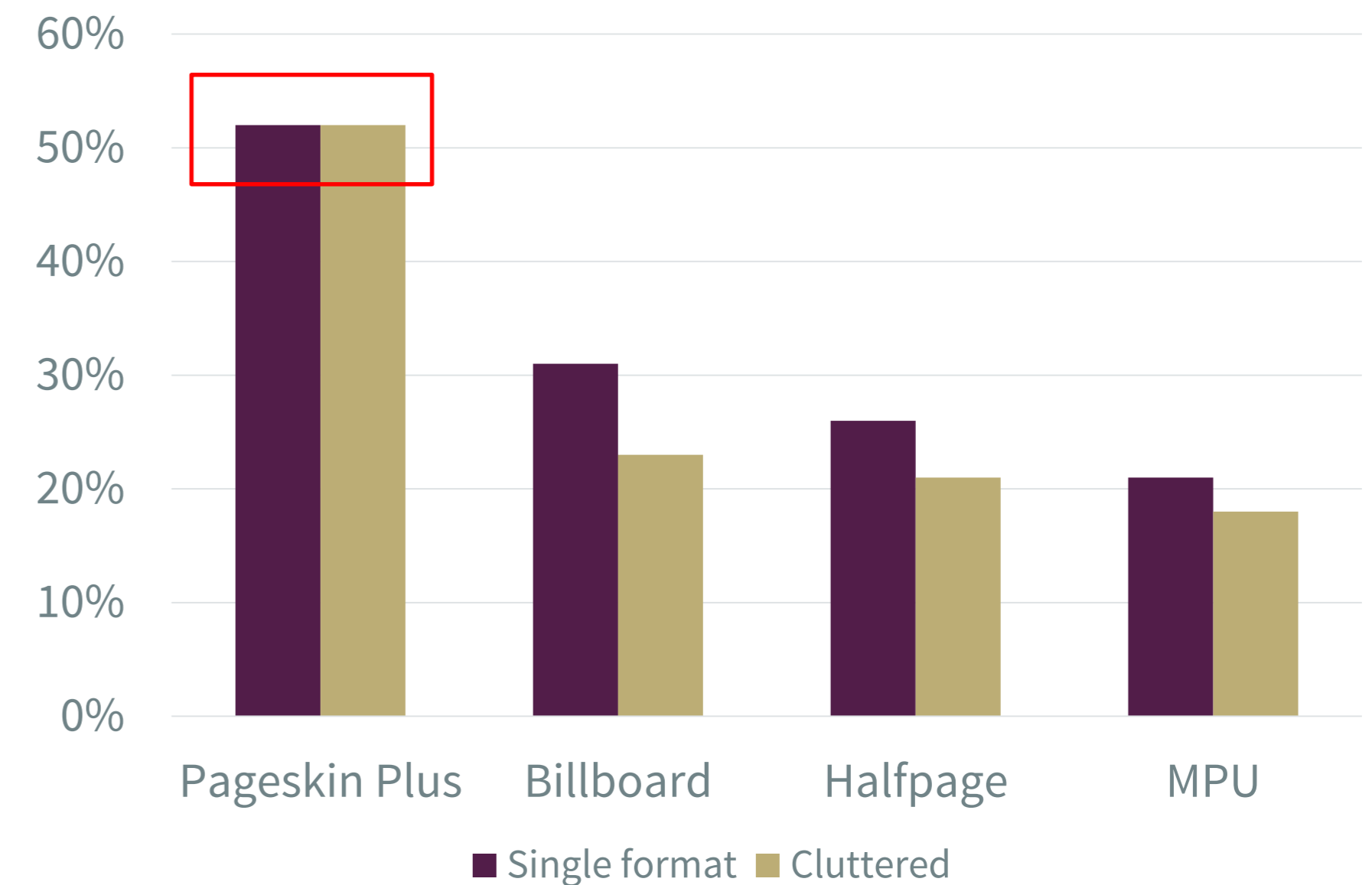
### Ad Clutter Impact on Brand Metrics IAB Standard Formats only



Note: cluttered environment for this study was 3 formats on the page



### Top-of-Mind Ad Recall by Format Single Format vs. Cluttered Environment



# Multi-Dimensional Perspectives Matter

## Beacons

What we strive for: highly viewable formats that are visually engaging and grab the user's attention.

## Opportunists

Formats which achieve lower viewability rates, but attract attention when / if they enter the viewport, probably due to high-quality creative execution.

## White Spacers

Achieve low viewability rates and are not visually engaging even when they become viewable. These ads are bad investments.

## Wasters

Achieve relatively high in-view rates but do not make much of their opportunity to be seen as they are not looked at. Wasters are dangerous because their high viewability rates can mislead marketers.

One learning is certainly that we should leverage the use of technologies such as eye-tracking to better understand visual engagement.

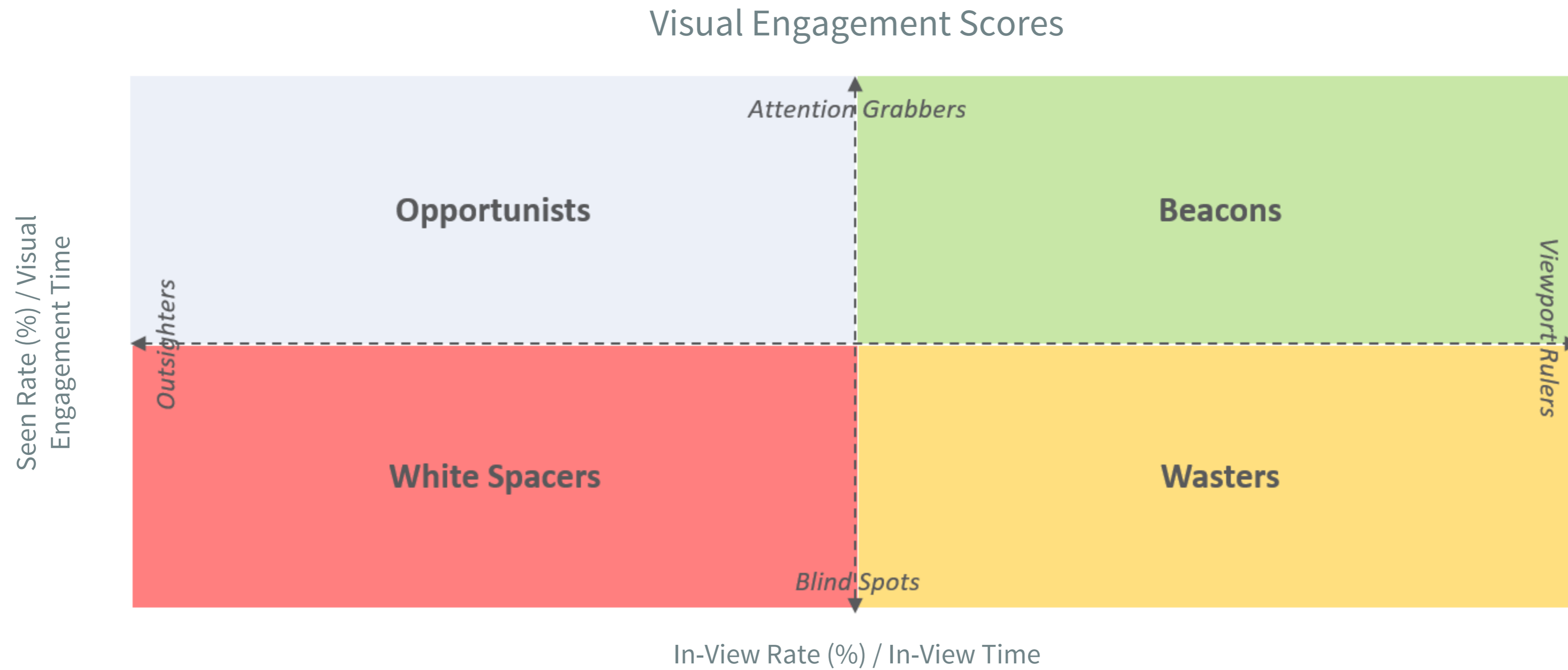
Looking at a campaign's assets and understanding how likely they are to grab users' attention can help us add another insight dimension to viewability measurement. Applying a classification framework for display ads that assesses both viewability and visual engagement will give us a better indication of what we should expect and how we can effectively optimise the campaign's impact.

The chart on the following page shows two dimensions: viewability on the x-axis and visual engagement on the y-axis. It shows a hypothetical classification framework of campaign-specific formats.

Methods such as pre-testing using eye-tracking technologies can help marketers better understand the relationship between viewability and visual engagement of their specific campaign. When they then measure the campaign's viewability in-flight, their interpretation of the results becomes more informed.

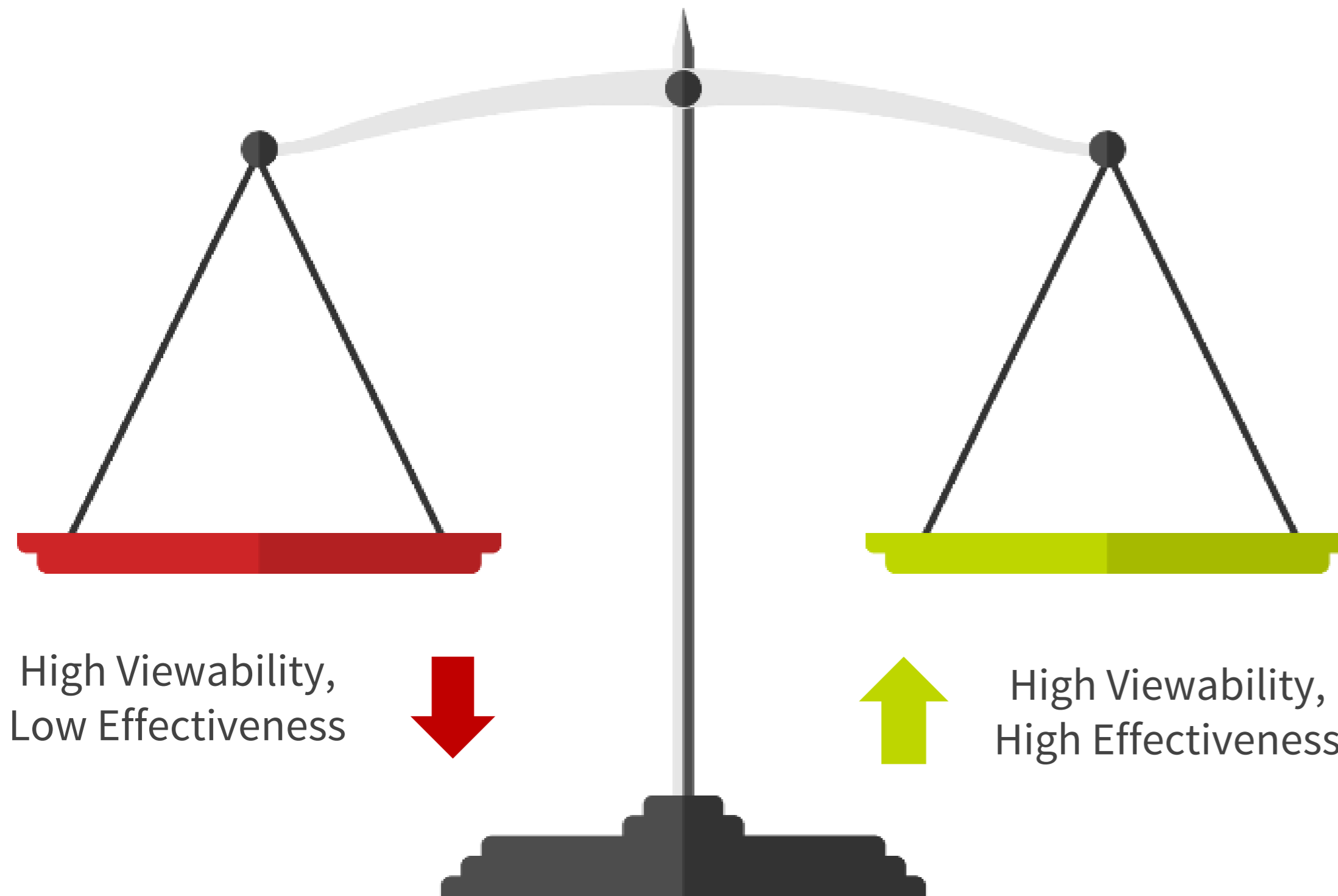


# Example Classification Framework for Display Ads



Clutter above-the-fold  
Minimising format size  
Highly intrusive formats

Editorial Restructuring  
Auto-refresh capping  
Lazy-loading ads



# Determinants of Attention

At the beginning of this report we mentioned that viewability has become a sought after commodity, but high in-view rates can be achieved through lots of different means.

Cluttering highly viewable portions of the page, investing in small formats, and investing in highly intrusive overlays and interstitials will all contribute to higher viewability rates, but are likely to be detrimental to a campaign's success.

Conversely, factors such as auto-refresh capping (i.e. avoiding that ads get delivered on inactive browser tabs because the page refreshes) or pushing lazy-loading ads can also push viewability rates without having negative effects on the user experience.

The key is that context matters, and we need to ensure that when we optimise against a certain form of measurement, this optimisation is reflected at the campaign objective level.





# Key Takeaways

- ✓ Viewability thresholds are **good at predicting if** an ad has the chance to gain attention, but **bad at predicting how much** attention it will get.

*Viewability is a valuable ad validation method, but was never designed to tell us anything about effectiveness. Be aware of viewability's limitations, and always assess it in context.*

- ✓ Visual engagement supports **memory-building**.

*Achieving high visual engagement is a positive thing. Invest in research that helps you shed more light on this topic, and use insights to optimise creative executions.*

- ✓ **Exposure time** needs to reach significant levels in order to enable even moderate **visual engagement**.

*There is a multiplier effect from visual engagement to viewability.*

- ✓ **Ad clutter** is detrimental to effectiveness.

*Ads work less well when they compete for attention. High-impact formats seem to be less affected by this, but more research is required.*

- ✓ **Formats** define **relative** visual engagement, **creative executions** define **absolute** visual engagement.

*Invest in formats that maximise the impact potential, but be aware that creative execution and campaign assets set a limit to what can be achieved.*

# Questions / Comments



 T: + 44 203 301 9099

 [inskinmedia.com](mailto:inskinmedia.com)

## **UK Sales Team:**

 [agencies@inskinmedia.com](mailto:agencies@inskinmedia.com)

## **Insight Team:**

 [Insight@inskinmedia.com](mailto:Insight@inskinmedia.com)



 T: +44 20 7084 3000

 [researchnow.com](http://researchnow.com)

 [infoUK@researchnow.com](mailto:infoUK@researchnow.com)



 T: +1 415-525-9689

 [Sticky.ai](http://Sticky.ai)

 [info@sticky.ad](mailto:info@sticky.ad)

