



The premium vs. non-premium media channel comparison study.

AN ADOBE ADVERTISING RESEARCH REPORT.

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arketers are increasingly under intense pressure to select the right media channels in order to justify the desired return on investment.

From dabbling in emerging options like smart TVs, voice assistants, or digital out-of-home (OOH) assets to juggling TV, print, mobile and radio, each channel has its own set of unique opportunities and challenges.

In addition to the deluge of channel options, there's also the decision of how to effectively balance placements in professional, high-quality, premium content areas—or in contrast, in usergenerated, long-tail, non-premium content realms.

It's no surprise that brands want to reach target audiences in high-quality, desirable media destinations. But how much does the media category matter and what truly has the best impact on consumers?

In a quest to explore the thoughts and feelings of Americans in relation to premium and non-premium channels, our comparison study, in partnership with YouGov, polled more than 3,500 consumers. Additionally, Adobe Digital Insights (ADI) tapped into Adobe Advertising Cloud and analyzed billions of data points related to ad performance across these channels over a six-month period.

The aim was threefold:

- To determine if and how perceptions of professional high-quality ad content are different between premium and non-premium channel properties.
- 2. To observe any performance impact on placements across them
- 3. To provide the advertising industry with an updated view of the extent to which channel matters in advertising decisions.

Here we'll showcase the results and hear from industry experts to get their perspectives on the findings.

Definitions

Premium media

Properties in which all ad inventory is in the context of professionally produced content. Examples include the following:

- Television
- Broadcast over the top (i.e, connected TV)
- · National news and magazine websites
- Other premium digital properties

Non-premium media

Properties in which all or a majority of ad inventory is in the context of content created by individuals. Also known as user-generated content (UGC), anyone online can participate openly and material produced does not need disclosure copy. Examples include the following:

- · User-generated based online properties
- Non-broadcast video
- · Social media sites and messaging services

Executive summary

Produced by Adobe in partnership with YouGov, *The Premium vs.*Non-premium Media Channel Comparison Study explores perceptions of advertising on professional high-quality "premium" channels versus more long-tail, "non-premium" channels.

Advertisers face countless options when it comes to juggling ad spend allocation. And it's because of faster-moving platforms based on user-generated content, as well as the wave of demand for more superior inventory.

Advertisers are looking for campaign cut through, maximum return on investment, and a fair-value exchange based on the channels they choose to invest in

As a result, when dividing advertising budgets and weighing what channels to invest in, advertisers now more than ever must be armed with greater intelligence to help power these critical choices.

Advertisers need to be aware of what consumers truly think and feel when they see ads on these channels to help them fully embrace the opportunities that sit within these ecosystems.

This report provides that intelligence, showing that premium channels overwhelmingly performed as a greater option for advertisers. They won out on all top seven key performance indicators (KPIs) and in terms of associated ad engagement, proving superior across metrics like click through and viewable completion rates.

The need for greater informed advertising decisions is imperative, and this report showcases which channels matter when it comes to driving results.

The research is based on the responses of more than 3,500 American consumers who took part in a YouGov/Adobe survey in June 2019. Respondents analyzed three 30-second video advertisements across seven total channel types (more details available in Methodology section at the end of this report).

Topline survey findings

- Ads on premium channels rated significantly higher on all KPIs.
- Ads were rated significantly higher on premium channel properties.
- For each of the seven channel types, the "in general" results show premium channel types are rated higher than non-premium channel types by three percentage points.
- Ads rated highest on broadcast OTT on all KPIs, followed by national news or magazine websites.
- $\boldsymbol{\cdot}$ Ads on TV were rated significantly higher by ages under 30.
- Over three-quarters use social media, the most common channel type, followed by non-broadcast video (e.g. YouTube).

- · Ads on social media and non-broadcast video rated lowest overall.
- Compared to other channel types, brands are more fragmented across national news and magazine websites and premium digital properties.
- Non-broadcast video and social media/newsfeed were predominantly represented by YouTube and Facebook, respectively.
- Desktop and mobile display CTRs on premium sites are 4.5 and
 2.3 times greater than those on non-premium sites, respectively.
- Viewable completion rates for desktop video ads placed on premium sites are three times greater than those on non-premium sites.
- Desktop display clicks on premium cost 0.27x that of non-premium (\$4.10 less per click).

Other findings

- When asked about views on media channels in general, broadcast OTT is still the highest rated of all channel types, but national news and magazines are the lowest of premium channels.
- Hulu Basic, CNN, and Buzzfeed are the most popular of their respective premium channel types.
- On national news and magazine websites, ads were rated highest on CNN, followed by the New York Times and Fox News.
- Ads on Direct TV Now (changed to AT&T TV Now) were rated highest overall, followed by ESPN+, Blogger, and CNN.
- Across premium digital properties, for credible, trustworthy, and believable, ads rated highest on MSN, Yahoo!, and BuzzFeed.

- While social media is widely common, TV and national news and magazine websites are viewed more by older age groups.
- On social media and news feeds, ads were rated higher on Facebook and Instagram than on Twitter.
- Across premium digital properties, for all KPIs, ads rated lowest on IMDb.
- For all KPIs across non-premium properties, ads rated highest on Blogger and lowest on Reddit and Quora.
- Reddit, YouTube, and Facebook are the most popular of their respective non-premium channel types when it comes to most recently visited.
- Older ages gave lower ratings for both premium and non-premium channels.
- TV and national news and magazine websites skew older, while the non-premium/UGC assignment skews younger.

Ads on <u>premium channels</u> rated *significantly higher* on all KPIs

verall, the findings resoundingly proved positive for premium channels, with non-premium channels having some work to do to win over consumers in key areas like trust and credibility.

Video ads rated significantly higher on premium channel properties. Across all seven KPIs, video ads rated 20–50 percent higher in the context of premium channel properties compared to non-premium channels.

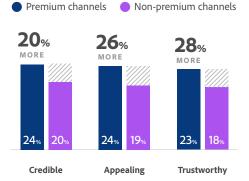
The positive findings in favor of premium video go some way to reinforce the benefits an acceleration in digital video ad spend can have.

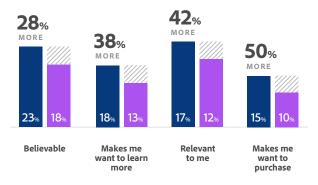
Justin Merickel, VP of Adobe Advertising Cloud at Adobe, said there's no underestimating how impactful premium video ads are. He also mentions that if the engagement and the level of affinity consumers have for content is strong, then the associated marketing messages are able to break through in different ways.

"That's where you're going to find more engaged consumers with the content," Merickel explained.

Video ads rated significantly higher on premium channels

Q: Assuming you were [INSERT CONTEXT]... how much do you agree that this advertisement (is)...





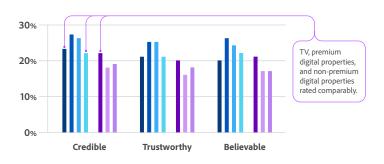
Video ad KPI ratings per channel type (average) | "agree completely" (8-10 rating on 1-10 scale) | total

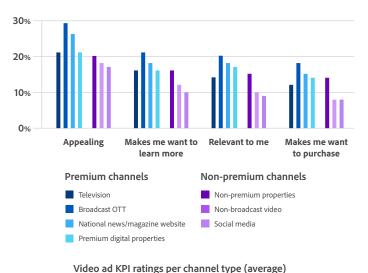
"They care about the content and they tune in at higher numbers so what happens in premium I believe is differentiated more than other channels"

The premium versus non-premium channel comparison study showed video ads rated highest on broadcast OTT on all KPIs, followed by premium national news or magazine websites.

Video ads rated highest on Broadcast OTT on all KPIs, followed by National News or Magazine Websites

Q: Assuming you were [INSERT CONTEXT]... how much do you agree that this advertisement (is)...





| "agree completely" (8-10 rating on 1-10 scale) | total

Consumers agree that ads on premium channels are more credible, trustworthy, and believable.

Merickel said channel success goes back to strong content adjacency and that it's important for marketers to consider not just the type of unit that they've built but also what programming that unit is being delivered around.

"The validity or trustworthiness comes from being associated with what consumers believe is premium high-quality content and the largest programmers are continuing to deliver that. As a result, the brands get affinity and lift from that association," Merickel said.

Julia Nizinski, digital media director of platforms at the Heineken Company, has been at the brand since 2016, and her current role involves being more effective with Heineken's media.

She said when she talks about premium versus non-premium channels, she distinguishes this between a "sit-back environment" and a "non-sit-back environment."

"When we say 'sit back,' we mean when your attention is fully engaged such as with more premium online video or streaming videos where you're about to watch a really engaging piece and you tune it in and you see it, or connected TV is another good example of that," she explained.

"Across the board, the more premium it is, it tends to perform quite well because the consumers are very engaged in it and it tends to be quite credible too."

When specifically looking at the sought after makes me want to purchase KPI, broadcast OTT won out as the most effective channel in this regard. Non-broadcast video (like YouTube) and social media (like Facebook) fared the worst—coming in 10 percent lower than the highest.

"The most interesting thing about this for me is the purchase intent lift on premium versus non-premium channels," said Ian Monaghan, product marketing manager for data and Adobe Experience Cloud integrations at Adobe.

"When we laid out the hypothesis, we probably thought more of the soft metrics like credibility and trustworthiness and believability would be the highest differential. While they were still 20 to 30 percent higher, I was actually surprised how much seeing an ad in a premium context through purchase intent was higher than seeing it in a non-premium context."

Nizinski said there was an element of surprise in the purchase intent ratings not being as high in non-premium channels.

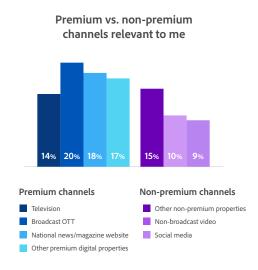
"I can definitely get swayed and sold by a retargeting retail ad so they can be effective and can work. It may come down to if the target is effective, then the ad—whether it's premium or not—is going to be effective on you," said Nizinski.

Ads on premium channel types were rated higher "in general," but ad ratings on national news and magazine websites didn't fare as well without specific video ads and channel context.

TV, premium digital, and non-premium digital properties rated comparably, and non-broadcast video and social media saw the lowest ratings.

The lower KPI ratings on social media channels may surprise some, given how prolific channels like Facebook and YouTube allow advertisers to blend significant reach, targeting, and personalization in their campaigns.

Monaghan said that when comparing social media to TV, most may at first assume the personalization of the non-premium channels would balance out the historical purchase intent of the premium channels. But the stats show that is not the case.



"I was surprised the premium channels were deemed as more relevant as you'd typically think of those as harder to personalize and that non-premium may win out on this KPI," he said.

Despite premium clearly winning out in the study, it isn't feasible for all brands to simply put all ad spend into premium channels alone, for many reasons like cost and past inventory concerns.

"It's about finding the right blend that balances your budgets with your goals and there might need to be a bit of both, which I think is completely okay and reasonable," said Monaghan. "I think it's proven that just chucking it all into Google and Facebook probably isn't going to get you where you need to go—you need both."

Merickel said despite there still being an insufficient supply in premium video, this has improved year over year and that the value exchange for the higher cost pays dividends—as the survey results prove.

"We're not going to get out of a world of paying a premium to access that high-quality inventory, and that scarcity will drive pricing. But we are changing the way that we can consistently measure the impact and can address audiences to ensure we get more value from personalisation in those channels," Merickel said.

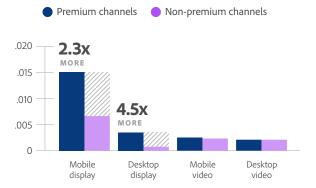
"Scarcity will continue to exist in premium, but the accessibility of software via programmatic pipes to access this is really opening up the ecosystem. This allows the addressable opportunities to continue to grow and allows marketers to isolate the right audiences, to have consistent measurability across those inventory sources and view their investments in a single dashboard."

Corroborating performance with hard metrics

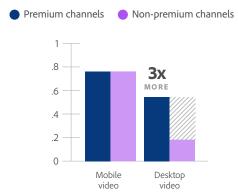
s analyzed by ADI, nearly three billion ad impressions across premium and non-premium channels over a six-month period found that users are more likely to engage with ads on premium sites. They compared ad metrics for advertisers who placed ads on both types of media and found that premium had greater viewable completion and click-through rates, as detailed below:

- Desktop and mobile display CTRs on premium are 4.5x and 2.3x those on non-premium, respectively.
- Viewable completion rates for desktop video ads placed on premium sites offer **3x** those on non-premium.
- Desktop display clicks on premium cost 0.27x that of non-premium (\$4.10 less per click).

Premium vs. non-premium average viewable completion rate by ad format



Median of viewable completion rate

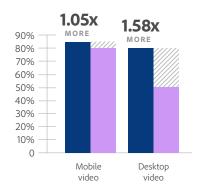


Acknowledging that true performance can be difficult given the disparity in ad content, ADI adjusted for stylistic and brand differences by comparing the best advertisers with ads on premium and non-premium sites. The data shows that the ceiling for engagement performance is significantly higher for premium:

- 1.58x viewable completion rates for desktop video and a 1.05x for mobile video.
- 1.5x higher CTRs on desktop video and 3.8x for desktop display.
- 1.18x viewability for desktop display and 1.31x for desktop video.

Top-performing viewable completion rate

Premium channelsNon-premium channels



Top-performing click-through rates

Premium channels Non-premium channels 1.5x 60% MORE 3.8x 50% MORE 40% 30% 20% 10% 0 Desktop Desktop display video

A <u>challenging</u> year may impact sentiment

rom data hacks and consumer data privacy scandals, some of the non-premium content leaders have had challenges. Which Monaghan adds may have also affected the non-premium survey ratings.

He added that with "2019 not being kind" to some of the social media and digital clients, this may have also had a knock on impact on some of KPIs, like credibility and trustworthiness.

"The non-premium channels in particular seem to be investing a lot of money into content and positioning themselves as more premium types of solutions. But despite this, there seems like there's still a lot of inertia or friction to overcome," Monaghan said.

Consider this second level of convergent evidence. When asked how survey respondents feel "in general" about ads they see on channel types they visit for each of the seven channel types, the results still show premium channel types rated higher than non-premium channel types by three percentage points.

Based on each of the places where video ads are shown, broadcast OTT was still the highest rated of all channel types.

National news and magazines were the lowest of premium channels, which may have something to do with perceptions of actual ads that currently run on these channels.

Among the non-premium channels, non-premium properties were still rated the highest overall.

Wildly <u>different</u> playing fields in different *ecosystems*

ooking at individual publishers and networks winning out within premium or non-premium, ads in broadcast OTT rated significantly higher on all KPIs and channels on pay-TV streaming service DirecTV Now (changed to AT&T TV Now)—except for majority Disney-owned sports streaming service ESPN+, which was the second highest.

The lowest rated in broadcast OTT was paid-for-streaming service YouTube TV and budget-streaming offering Hulu Basic.

Zooming in on national news and magazine websites, ads were rated highest on American news-based pay television channel CNN, followed by a publication which has won more Pulitzer Prizes than any other newspaper—the *New York Times*. In third spot was Rupert Murdoch–owned Fox News.

Across premium digital properties, for credible, trustworthy, and believable KPIs, ads rated highest on MSN, Yahoo!, and BuzzFeed, a U.S. media, news, and entertainment platform.

In premium digital properties, across all KPIs, ads rated the lowest for IMDb, the movie, TV, and celebrity online database.

For all KPIs across non-premium properties, ads rated highest on blogpublishing service Blogger and lowest on Reddit, a social news aggregation and discussion site, and Quora, a Q&A site.

Across social media and news feeds, ads were rated higher on Facebook and Instagram than on microblogging site Twitter for all KPIs. Reasons may vary, but Facebook has more user and brand posting options compared to Twitter, which limits users to 280 characters per tweet. Image-based Instagram has also rapidly grown in popularity, hitting off one billion monthly active users in June 2018.

The efforts brands now go to reach the right people at the appropriate time has ramped up significantly. And the era of marketing experimentation is well upon us.

Ask any marketer what the future of the TV ad buy is, and what was once a simple one-channel answer has now spawned into a multifaceted web of digital video channels and options. From subscription video on demand to on-demand TV and a whole variety of ad formats including outstream, native, skippable, long form, short form, 360, autoplay, dynamic, in-stream ads—the list rattles on.

Findings by property

Broadcast OTT

Ads rated significantly higher on **DirecTV Now (AT&T TV Now)** for all KPIs and channels except **ESPN+**, which was a clear second highest of the Broadband OTT channels. Overall, compared to all channels across all channel types, **DirecTV Now (AT&T TV Now)** had the highest KPI ratings. Lowest were **YouTube TV** and **Hulu Basic.**

National news and magazine websites

For all KPIs, ads were rated highest on CNN.

For *credible*, *trustworthy*, and *believable*, ads rated second highest on *New York Times* and **Fox News**.

Premium digital properties

For credible, trustworthy, and believable, ads rated highest on MSN, Yahoo!, and BuzzFeed.

For all KPIs, ads rated lowest on IMDb.

Non-premium/UGC properties

For all KPIs, ads rated highest on **Blogger**, lowest on **Reddit** and **Quora**.

Social media/news feeds

Directionally, ads rated lower on **Twitter** than on **Facebook** or **Instagram** for all KPIs.

As a result, when it comes to working out where to spread the ad spend, marketers are left with an overwhelming amount of choice and tough decisions.

Despite the positive KPI stats around premium channels, respondents actually spend more time on non-premium channels. Which means it can be tough for marketers to work out what media channels to use.

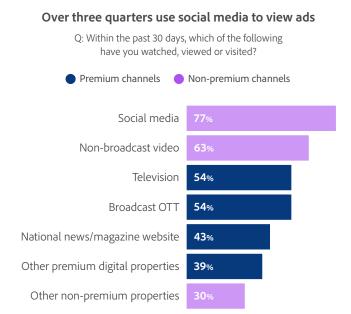
Nizinski said the challenge for Heineken is trying to find that balance between efficiency and effectiveness.

"I am a big part of connected TV but we see a challenge there that it is much more expensive than linear or TV channels so for us...it's how do you make use of something that carries a much higher CPM?" she said.

"That has been a challenge—achieving the balance of finding the right mix between the tried and true channels and things that are emerging and are getting into like connected TV and finding that balance on a cost perspective, because premium channels tend to carry a higher cost."

Nizinski said it has been a "constant trial and error" but she'd like to get to a place where once it aligns with the brand objectives, it's able to attribute, for example, a 70/20/10 mix or the 80/20 mix that is a tried-and-true method.

When asked which of the seven channels respondents have watched, viewed, or visited within the past 30 days, 77 percent of survey respondents said social media sites, 63 percent said non-broadcast video (YouTube), 54 percent said television, 54 percent national news and magazine websites, and 43 percent said broadcast OTT.



Channel type recently viewed/visited | total

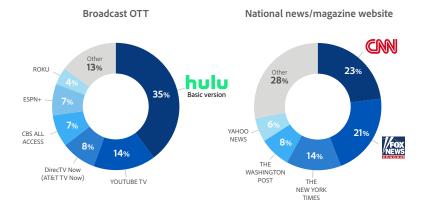
While it's important to be aware of where consumers are spending time online, Monaghan said ad effectiveness should ultimately win out when it comes to making a decision on ad spend.

Interestingly, when looking at the premium landscape compared to the non-premium landscape, there are far more options for marketers to choose from.

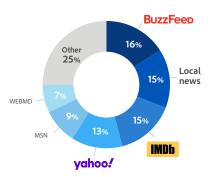
Compared to other channel types, brands are more fragmented across national news and magazine websites and premium digital properties.

Premium channel breakdown

Q: Assuming you were watching/viewing a movie/ program/content/video on [insert channel]...

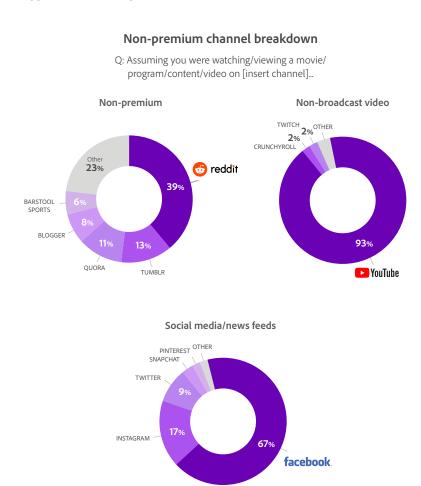


Premium digital properties



A quick glance at non-broadcast video and social media and news feed shows that they're predominantly represented by YouTube and Facebook, respectively.

"I was surprised how dominant YouTube was in the non-broadcast video part. Obviously we know they are a duopoly for a reason, Google and Facebook, but I thought Twitch, Daily Motion, and Vimeo would have had a bit of a bigger chunk," Monaghan said.



He argued that a healthier marketplace is one that looks more like the premium spread landscape, with fragmentation and greater choices being better for brands.

Findings by <u>age group</u> go against *traditional* stigmas

hen looking at specific demographics, the stats shattered stereotypes. In contrast to common perceptions that younger people don't watch TV and older generations are far more likely to be swayed by premium content than younger generations, the data proved otherwise.

The YouGov results showed that ads on TV were rated significantly higher by ages under 30 across all KPIs.

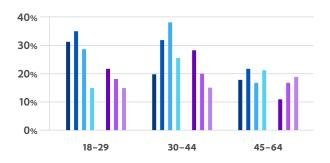
As an example, 30 percent of respondents aged 18–29 rated ads on TV as being the most trustworthy, compared to 16 percent who trust non-broadcast video.

"We assume that millennials are these super cynics of advertising, but they don't seem to be," Monaghan said.

"Perhaps the reason for this is that as there's so much cord cutting and choice within the younger generation, when they do watch TV they watch it much more purposefully."

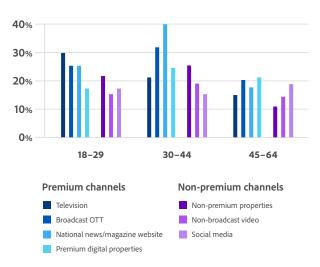
Ads rated "appealing" by age

Q: Assuming you were [INSERT CONTEXT]... how much do you agree that this advertisement (is)...



Ads rated "trustworthy" by age

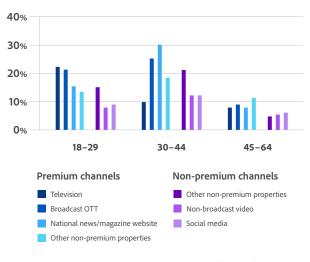
Q: Assuming you were [INSERT CONTEXT]... how much do you agree that this advertisement (is)...



Video ad KPI ratings per channel type (average) | "agree completely" (8-10 rating on 1-10 scale) | total In looking at the "makes me want to purchase" KPI for people under 30, 22 percent voted that TV was most likely to have that impact when seeing an ad on that medium, compared to 8 percent who feel compelled to buy when seeing the video ad on non-broadcast video.

Ads rated "makes me want to purchase" by age

Q: Assuming you were [INSERT CONTEXT]... how much do you agree that this advertisement (is)...



Video ad KPI ratings per channel type (average) | "agree completely" (8-10 rating on 1-10 scale) | total

Nizinski said Heineken conducts their own market research to look at the best way different demographics can be targeted and agrees that older people are often present in more traditional channels and younger within more social channels.

She said that once you're more aware of what media they're consuming, you start to see where your audience can help you inform your media strategy.

"However, that doesn't mean that there's no cross pollination between the two," she said.

"The older generation is also online, it just may be that the way they consume online is different to how the younger generation consumes it, and the spaces they are online might be different."

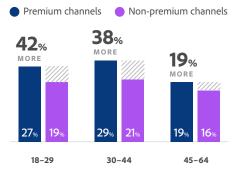
Also in video ad KPI ratings, while the 45–64 age group gave higher ratings for premium as compared to non-premium channels, their ratings per KPI for both channels were lower on average, compared to the ratings given by the two younger age groups.

"One thing I was also completely thrown off by was that across all channels, the older age group, which we would have assumed would be more open to traditional channels and the premium channels, actually rated it lower than the youths," Monaghan said.

As an example, 27 percent of people under 30 found video ads on premium channels appealing, and 18 percent said the ads would make them want to purchase. But only 19 percent of people over 45 agreed that the ads on this channel were appealing, and 9 percent said the ads would make them want to purchase.

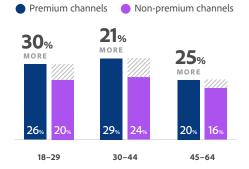
Ads rated "appealing" by age

Q: Assuming you were [INSERT CONTEXT]... how much do you agree that this advertisement (is)...



Ads rated "credible" by age

Q: Assuming you were [INSERT CONTEXT]... how much do you agree that this advertisement (is)...



Video ad KPI ratings per channel type (average) | "agree completely" (8-10 rating on 1-10 scale) | total

Those aged 30–44 rated both premium and non-premium channels higher on all KPIs compared to the other two demographics, suggesting this is the age group that advertisers can most easily win over.

The 45–64 cohort also gave overall lower ratings across all KPIs on both channel types covered in the survey.

"As a marketing or communications strategy, we do a pretty good job at the demographic elements, but now we just need to take into account the demographic with the contextual element," Monaghan said.

"As we have seen, when young people are on TV, they're more receptive. We can't just assume that 'oh you're young and you're on this type of property." It goes deeper than that, and we need to layer in tailoring that age in a specific channel context."

Final thoughts

The importance and value of premium content and premium channels must not be overlooked.

The findings from this comparison study between premium and non-premium media channels validate the vital role and significant ROI that go hand in hand with advertising on high-quality channels.

Many of the premium publishers and networks winning out, particularly in OTT, come with long-standing reputations and legacies that no doubt help cement brand loyalty and attract dedicated subscribers.

These channels also tend to be highly regarded when it comes to brand safety expectations.

Brand trust and heritage go some way to suggest why people back such premium channels. And paywalls give a sense of trust and set the expectation that value is on the way.

Plus, the key KPIs in this report—like credibility, believability, relevance, and purchase intent—go that step further to really show and cement how consumers truly feel about seeing ads in these environments.

While the future for brands has to be around valuing premium as much as consumers do, it's also about understanding and being able to use premium

channels alongside non-premium channels. This means checking facts and doing due diligence to ensure that your KPIs are appropriately aligned to the right areas.

As we've seen, just because a channel may be popular and may lure vast waves of people, it doesn't mean this is where someone will necessarily most likely act on an advertisement.

Despite global behemoth dominance, there's still opportunity in social and the non-premium digital channels.

The fragmented and competitive premium market is brimming with a variety of channel options, but the non-premium pool is smaller and lacks choice. However, this must be viewed as an opportunity to broaden the non-premium playing field, offering premium players a chance to explore new strategies and tactics in this area.

To really extract incremental value from both premium and non-premium channels, marketers must be truly aware of what channels bring what to the table.

This requires a robust understanding of what drives certain KPIs and getting to firm grips with what consumers think and feel when presented with ads in certain environments.

It remains to be seen how brands will continue to adapt to the everchanging media landscape and how media spend will continue to teeter between premium and non-premium. But one thing is clear—brands can't afford to overlook the value of premium.

Learn more

Survey details

YouGov methodology

The survey base, which breaks down to be 52 percent male and 48 percent female and is representative of the U.S. online population age 18–64, asked people advertising-related questions to determine their views on ads on certain channels.

Respondents rated three 30-second video advertisements imagined on specific channels based on seven common brand KPIs of if they were appealing, believable, credible, trustworthy, relevant to me, makes me want to learn more, and makes me want to purchase.

The channel types rated included four premium content areas of *TV, broadcast OTT* (like on DirectTV Now and ESPN+), *national news and magazine websites* (like CNN and the *New York Times*) and *premium digital properties* (like BuzzFeed, IMDb, and local news).

Three non-premium content areas were also studied, including *user-generated* content (like Reddit, Tumblr, and Quora), *non-broadcast video* (like YouTube, Vimeo, and Twitch) and *social media and news feeds* (like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter).

ADI methodology

Data from Adobe Advertising Cloud includes over 2.8 billion impressions and 1,546 advertisers from 6 months of data (June–November 2019).

All summary data points are derived from the median advertiser performance for the ad format, device type, and segment of each displayed metric.

The Adobe Advertising Cloud dataset has been limited to include only ads that were placed on the identified premium and non-premium sites. This list mimics as closely as possible the customized media property lists from the YouGov survey.

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