RADIOCENTRE

HEAR AND NOW

How targeting people at relevant times helps turbocharge ad effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates through the lens of radio advertising how speaking to people at relevant moments can enhance advertising engagement and memorability, and explores how these effects can be amplified through targeting and creative strategies.

With reference to new proprietary research conducted by Neuro-Insight and existing industry studies, it seeks to provide a new dimension to understanding the effects of context on advertising.

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KEY TAKE-OUTS

Targeting people at relevant times helps turbocharge ad effectiveness

1 People feel twice as happy when listening to radio compared to when not consuming any media. This mood-boosting effect of radio editorial is proven to enhance engagement with advertising.

2 Listeners are able to absorb the detail of radio ads when they are participating in tasks or activities as effectively as when engaged in other audio listening or TV viewing experiences.

3 Advertising that directly relates to tasks or activities that listeners are participating in builds on these editorial effects and turbocharges them:

- engagement with advertising rises by 23% as a result of the ads being more personally relevant
- in parallel, long-term memory encoding of details in the advertising increases by 22% (rising to 28% at final branding moments)
- compared to a range of other TV and radio campaigns, the test ads rose from 53rd to 94th percentile when heard in a relevant context (i.e. performing better than 94% of all other ads measured).

4 These effects of speaking to people at relevant times endure beyond the moment to help build brand salience:

- spontaneous advertising recall increases by 56%
- prompted advertising recall improves by 33%.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVERTISERS

1. For advertisers, radio represents a unique and powerful opportunity to bolster advertising effects significantly – turning average campaigns into star performers - by speaking to people at pertinent times, and at scale.

2. Playing out in real time and not demanding primary visual attention, audio advertising is unique in that it can be heard as intended when people are doing other things.

3. On nine out of ten occasions listeners are participating in other activities while listening to radio, providing advertisers with a multitude of opportunities to engage mass audiences at relevant moments.

4. Ads that are creatively tailored to the moment deliver the largest effects - top performers achieved a 70% increase in engagement and 40% increase in memory encoding.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

In *Re-evaluating Media* (Ebiquity, 2018), it was established that 'targeting the right people in the right place at the right time' is the most valued media attribute amongst advertiser and agency decision-makers. Despite evidence to the contrary demonstrating that it is the most flexible medium for targeting purposes, radio was perceived to be the weakest performer against this attribute.

The challenge for radio and other multi-platform media is that digital media have fundamentally reframed our expectations of targeting, to the extent that many people now feel that the right people can only be reached in the right place at the right time through addressable media. However, Ebiquity concluded that conventional targeting approaches still play an important role alongside addressable advertising, particularly in terms of enhancing relevance by reaching people in the right place (editorial context) and at the right time (consumer context).

Editorial context effects

Every medium offers editorial effects and there is a lot of existing research that explores how these add value to advertising communication (see *Impact of Media Context on Advertising Memory: A Meta-Analysis of Advertising Effectiveness* on WARC).

From a radio perspective, Radiocentre's *Emotional Multiplier* study identified that people feel twice as happy when listening to radio compared to when not consuming any media. This mood-boosting radio editorial effect extends into the ad break, enhancing engagement with advertising by 30%.

Consumer context effects

The concept of targeting people at relevant moments to bolster the effects of advertising is attracting increasing interest across the media industry.

Because listeners are engaged in other activities on 90% of radio listening occasions, radio provides advertisers with a multitude of opportunities to engage mass audiences at relevant moments. In addition, because it plays out in real time and doesn't demand primary visual attention, audio advertising is unique in that it can be heard as intended – even when people are doing other things.

But unlike editorial context, the effects of speaking to people at relevant moments is a much less researched field.

That's why we conducted this study, specifically to explore:

- when advertising reaches people at relevant times, to what extent do they engage with it, commit it to memory, and recall it afterwards?
- how can these effects be amplified through targeting and creative strategies?

HOW THE STUDY WAS DONE

Considerations

In setting up this study, the first challenge to overcome was how to control exposure to relevant ads when respondents are engaged in relevant tasks. We decided that this would be best managed in a controlled environment.

Acknowledging that the effects of advertising that speaks to people at relevant moments will not always operate at a conscious level - and therefore could be tricky for people to articulate in a meaningful way – the second challenge was how to measure the implicit as well as the explicit effects of relevance.

Finally, understanding what is driving these effects from a creative perspective called for more granular second-by-second analysis.

Neuroscience offers an objective way of measuring and quantifying the effects of subtle changes in context and environments and so can identify impacts that operate at a subconscious level. Neuro-Insight were therefore appointed to conduct the study.

Method

Neuro-Insight use a method called Steady State Topography (SST) to measure how the brain responds to different types of stimulus. Electrical activity is measured to report on a number of cognitive functions:

- engagement
- memory encoding (left & right brain)
- emotional intensity
- approach/withdraw.

Crucially for this study, because it has a resistance to 'noise' from head movements or muscle tension, SST methodology allows accurate data to be gathered when participants are engaged in a range of different activities.

Working with Neuro-Insight we sought to develop a balanced and credible test that would provide robust results and be relevant to a broad set of advertisers.

Sample

The sample comprised 116 respondents (half in London and half in Manchester), nationally representative in the age range 18-54, split into two equal cells of matched respondents. All were regular radio listeners (listening at least 2-3 times a week) and were non-rejectors of Heart, the radio station that was used to provide background content for the study. Respondents were further screened to ensure that they were non-rejectors of the tasks that they would be participating in within the study.

The study

The study was carried out in a central research location (in a normal room, not a laboratory). Respondents were convened in small groups and were unaware of the exact purpose of the study, just given a broad description of what they would be doing.

Sessions started with a short introduction to the method, after which respondents were fitted with headsets featuring 24 felt sensors, each measuring electrical activity in a different part of the brain. Readings were taken continuously as people undertook a range of tasks with radio playing in the background.

After the neuro readings part of the study, respondents completed a short exit survey to probe conscious take-out.

The tasks

There were a total of six tasks, split across the two cells of respondents – meaning that each individual carried out three tasks.

Tasks were selected on the basis that they are common everyday tasks and that radio listening is prominent around them (identified via IPA Touchpoints). A good variety ensured that the findings would enjoy broad relevance. Importantly, they had to be replicable in a controlled environment to a credible degree.

The six tasks chosen were:

COOKING

peeling carrots and/or potatoes

HOUSEWORK

polishing a picture frame using a range of cleaning products

DRIVING

watching video of car journey from POV of driver

SHOPPING

writing a shopping list for the week ahead

EXERCISE

moderate cycling on an exercise bike

WORKING

sorting through emails on an iPad

Controlling exposure to advertising

Throughout the whole study, from the point that people came into the study room, radio was playing in the background. Ad breaks were included as part of this, timed so that advertising was heard when each task was being completed. Respondents were unaware that radio advertising was the subject of the study and their attention was not drawn specifically to radio at any point.

A total of twelve ads were included in the study to acknowledge the differing degrees of relevance available. Our primary focus was six ads with "situational" relevance i.e. that specifically reference creatively the task being carried out (e.g. recipe ad featuring sounds of food preparation heard during the cookery task). These "situational" ads form the main bulk of the findings. For comparison, we also researched six ads with "category" relevance, i.e. where the brand or product has broad relevance to the task being carried out but is less directly related creatively (e.g. car ad heard during the driving task).

Additional factors behind choosing the ads included ensuring that a broad mix of product sectors were represented across the test and avoiding ads that were likely to be outliers that could disrupt the control data (i.e. those prominently featuring highly recognisable songs). The selected ads proved to be highly representative when compared to current benchmarks for TV and radio advertising (in the 53rd percentile in terms of average long-term memory encoding performance).

Across the two cells of respondents in the study, each ad was heard in the relevant context (test) and in a second non-relevant context (control).

GROUP A (50 listeners)			GROUP B (50 listeners)		
Task	Situational Relevance	Category Relevance	Task	Situational Relevance	Category Relevance
 Cooking	Tesco	Branston	 Housework	Plenty	Persil
 Driving	Highways England	Audi	 Shopping	Samsung	Co-op
 Exercise	Currys	Boost energy drink	 Working	Costa Coffee	Monster

The measures
Four brain metrics were tracked second by second in real time.

1. Long-term memory encoding
Memory encoding is key because it correlates with decision-making and purchase intent. Both left brain response (relating to words and detail) and right brain response (relating to more holistic aspects of processing, including music and voice) were measured.

2. Engagement
Engagement is an indicator of how involved people are and is generally triggered by material that is of personal relevance.

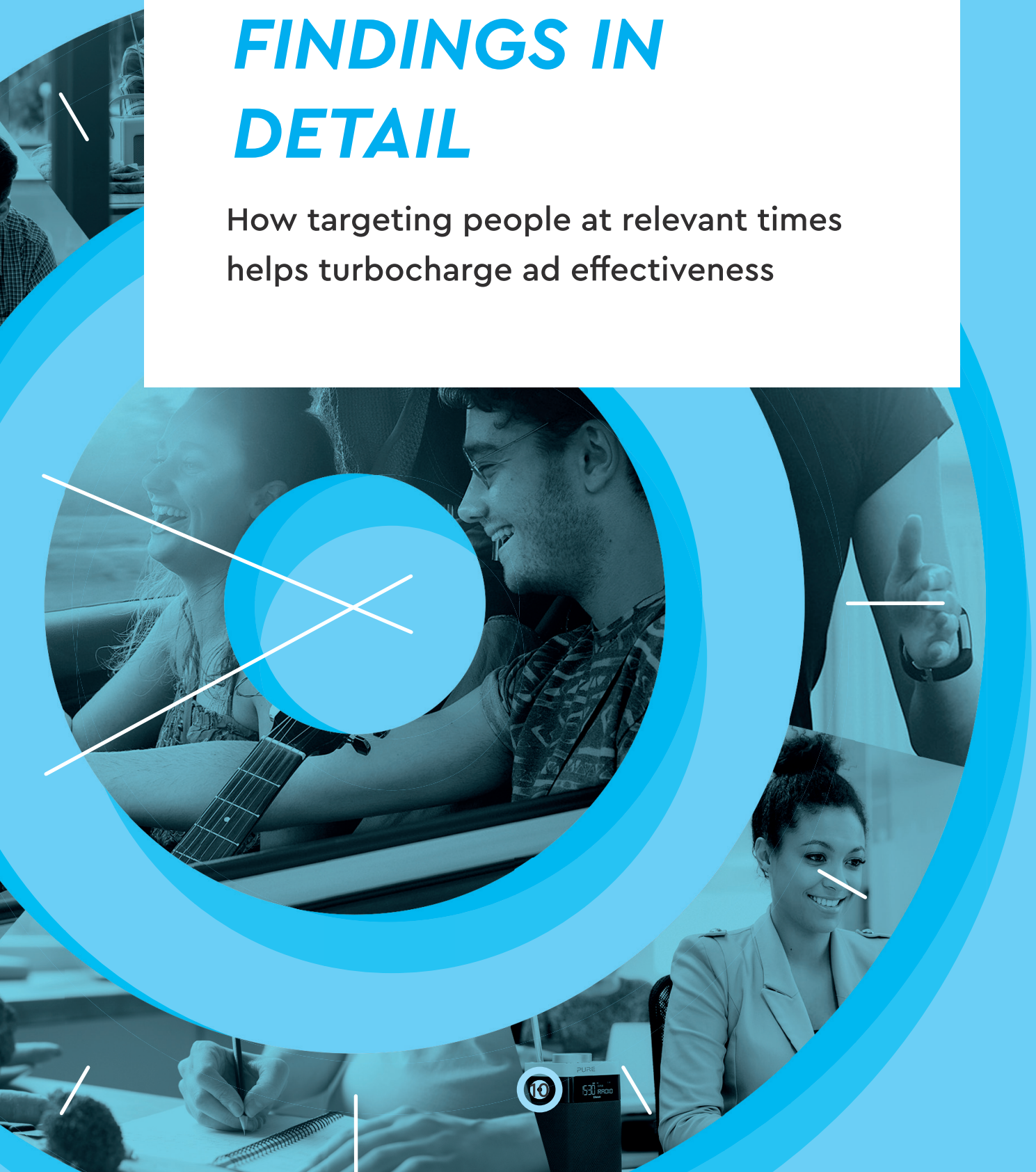
3. Emotional intensity
Emotional intensity relates to the strength of emotion being experienced.

4. Approach/withdrawal
Approach/withdrawal is the "direction" of the emotion being experienced – whether it is positive or negative.

Time series charts showing memory encoding response on a second by second basis have been used to report on some of the "situational" ads featured in the study.

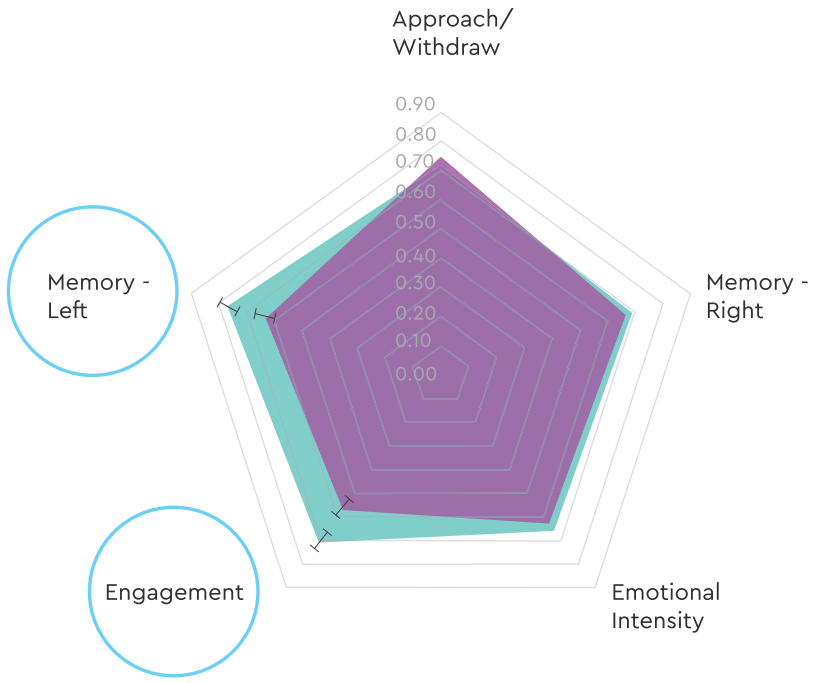
FINDINGS IN DETAIL

How targeting people at relevant times helps turbocharge ad effectiveness



1. Advertising that directly relates to tasks or activities that listeners are participating in builds on editorial effects and boosts them significantly

Situationally relevant ads heard in relevant and non-relevant contexts
Average levels of brain response across all six ads



Source: Neuro-Insight

In the background to this study we reviewed how radio's editorial effect helps listeners feel happier, making them more receptive to the advertising they hear. How does listener context build on this?

When heard in a relevant context the six situationally relevant ads (i.e. specifically referencing the task being carried out) elicited significantly higher levels of engagement and left brain memory encoding than when heard in the control environment. Other metrics were similar across both contexts.

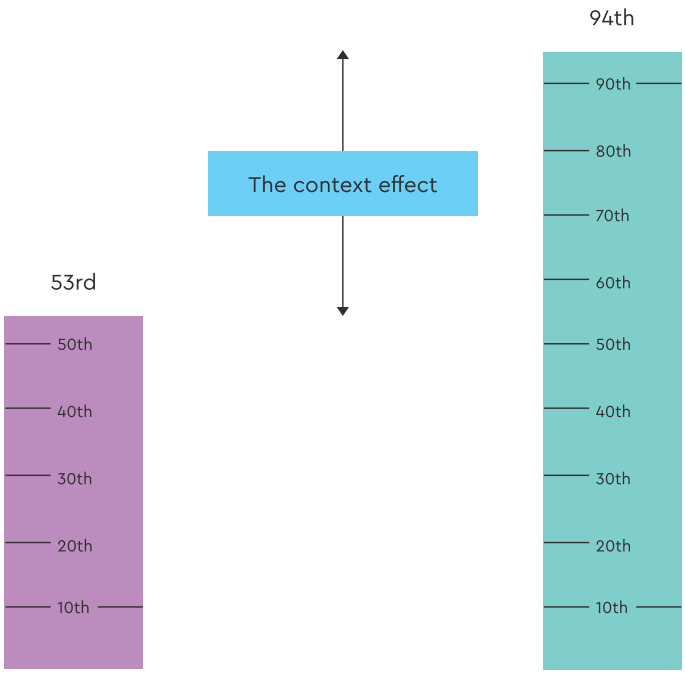
On average, reaching people at relevant times boosts engagement by 23% and memory encoding by 22%. For this set of ads, memory encoding is 28% higher around final branding moments specifically, suggesting that hearing ads in a relevant context has a strong impact on branding effectiveness.

This makes sense. Because the ads refer to the task or activity that people are participating in they become more personally relevant to them in the moment. This is turn drives a higher memory response to the detail of the ads.

The remainder of this study sets out to understand these engagement and memory effects of situationally relevant ads in more depth.

2. Listener context effects turbocharge advertising performance

Percentile performance of test brand ads in relation to other radio and TV campaigns



Source: Neuro-Insight

Base: 400 TV and radio campaigns recently measured in the UK

A percentile is a measure used in statistics to indicate the value below which a given percentage of observations in a group of observations falls. For example, the 20th percentile is the value below which 20% of the observations may be found.

When benchmarked against a range of 400 recent TV and radio campaigns measured by Neuro-Insight, the average memory encoding performance of our "situational" test ads heard in a non-relevant context ranked in the 53rd percentile (i.e. performed better than 53% of all other ads measured).

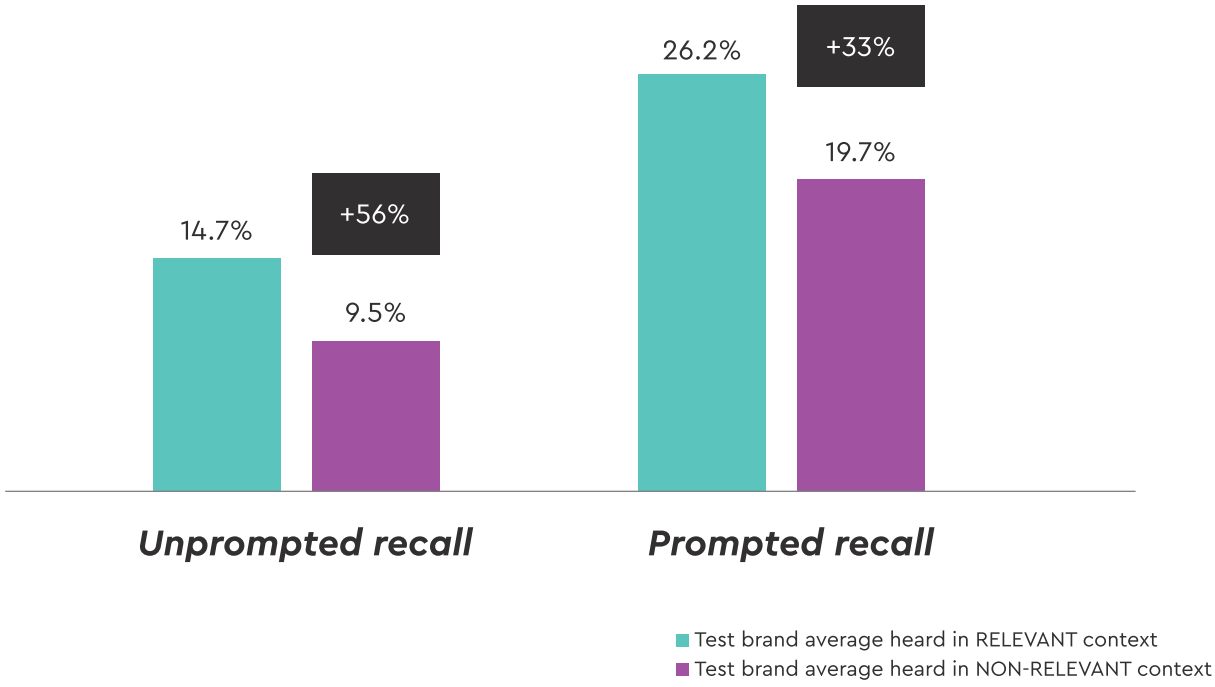
This "average" performance is important because it debunks a perceived weakness of radio i.e. that people are doing other things and therefore unable to listen to ads. All of the ads in our test were heard when people had been asked to focus their attention on a specific task - the radio was just playing in the background and at no point was it mentioned when people were briefed on the task ahead. This data proves categorically that people can absorb the detail of a radio ad when they are engaged in other tasks or activities at the same time.

More importantly, when heard in a relevant context the average memory encoding performance of "situational" test ads rose from 53rd percentile to 94th percentile (i.e. performing better than 94% of all other ads measured).

This suggests that getting ads heard in a relevant context can turn average performers into star turns.

3. The effects of speaking to people at relevant times endure beyond the moment to help build brand salience

Recall of situationally relevant ads
Averaged across all 6 ads



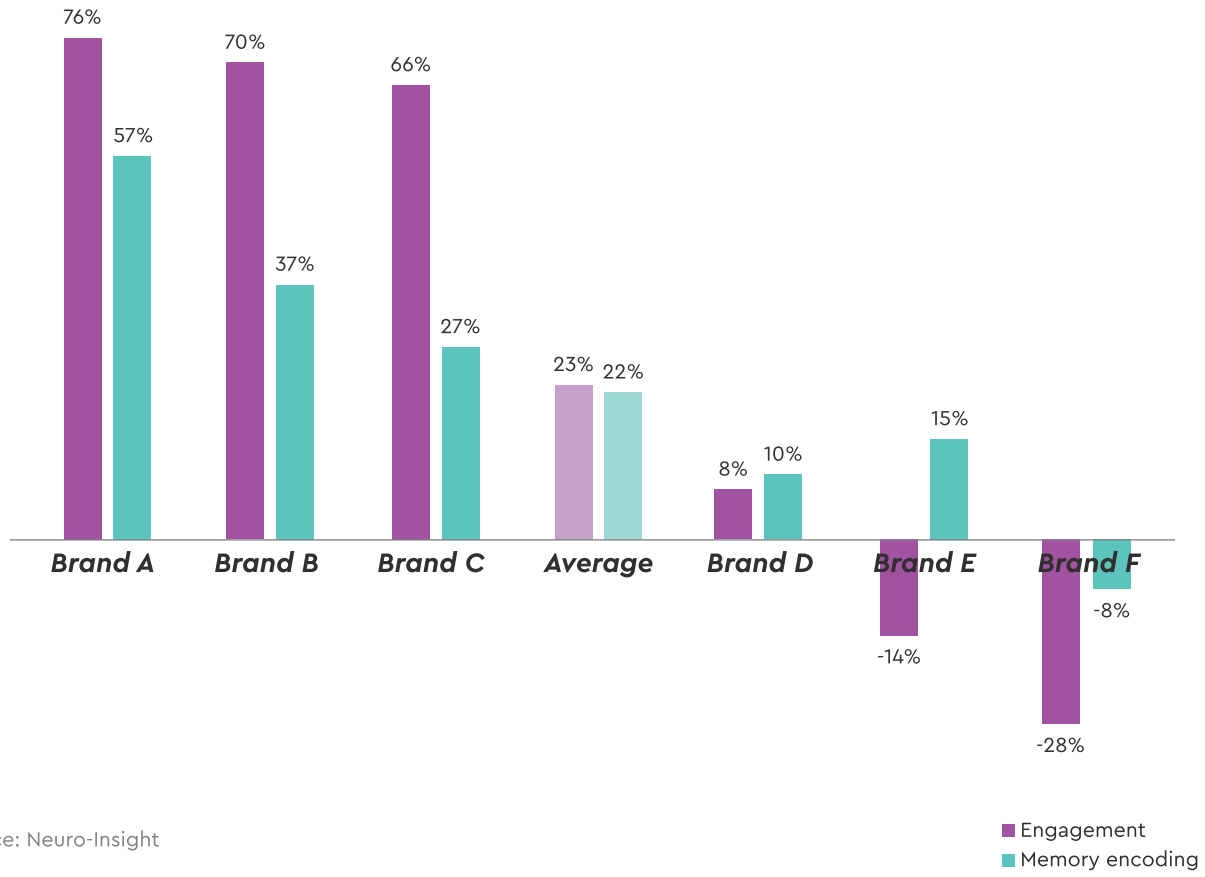
Source: Neuro-Insight Q: What advertising do you remember hearing on the radio whilst the session was being run today?

The higher engagement and memory encoding enjoyed by situationally relevant ads heard in context is reflected in higher levels of conscious recall, especially at an unprompted level. This suggests that speaking to people at relevant times can impact beyond the moment to help brands spring to mind more easily.

This links with wider marketing theory. In *How Brands Grow*, Byron Sharp advocates that speaking to people across a range of locations and occasions can play an important role in building mental availability.

4. Relevance effects vary widely between brands

Variance in engagement and memory encoding
(heard during relevant task vs. non-relevant task)



Source: Neuro-Insight

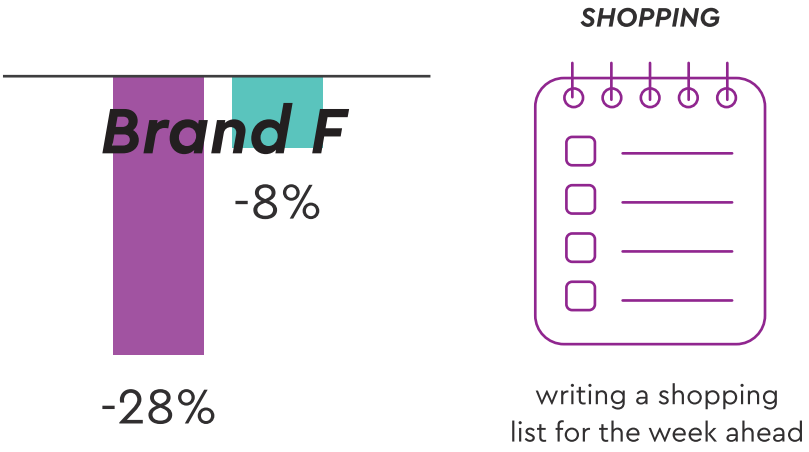
As with all advertising effects, there was a wide variation in results across the six situationally relevant ads. While the average uplifts in engagement and memory encoding were 23% and 22% respectively, the lowest performing campaigns saw a decrease in these measures. However, the best performing campaign saw an uplift of 74% in engagement (3x the average) and 57% in memory encoding (2.5x the average).

This suggests that the effect of situational relevance is not universal and can be impacted by other factors.

What can we learn from these different campaigns about optimising context effects?

5. The nature of the task being undertaken can impact results

Variance in engagement and memory encoding
(heard during relevant task vs. non-relevant task)



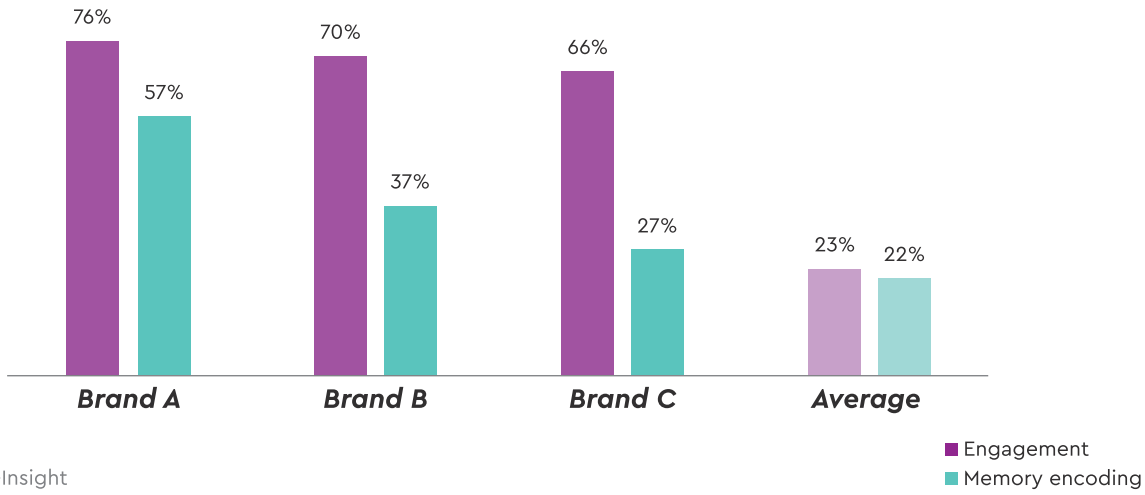
Source: Neuro-Insight

Brand F saw the worst performance of all brands in the study. This does not appear to be an issue with the quality of the ad (it benchmarked in the 49th percentile i.e. average, when heard in a non-relevant context) but more to do with the nature of the task.

The situational context for Brand F's advertising was shopping where people were asked to think ahead and write a shopping list for the next time they go to the supermarket. This task is much more focused than all of the other tasks, requiring a higher cognitive effort. This suggests that when a task requires higher cognitive effort, relevance has less impact.

6. Ads that are creatively tailored to the moment deliver the largest effects

Variance in engagement and memory encoding
(heard during relevant task vs. non-relevant task)

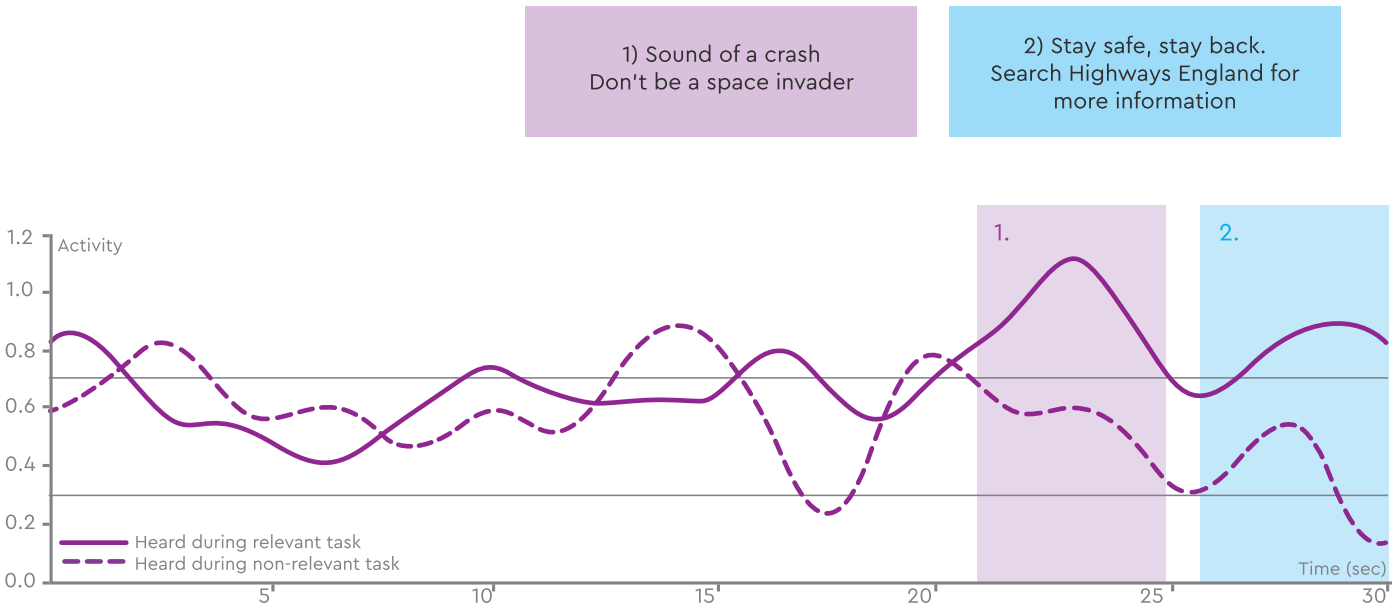


Source: Neuro-Insight

Concentrating on the top performers, Brands A, B, and C achieved significantly above average results – the aggregate increase in engagement was 70% and memory encoding 40%. Reviewing these, the linking factor appears to be how specifically the creative content of the ad is related to the task. The closer the explicit task reference is to the brand mention, the more likely it is that increases in memory encoding will extend to the brand.

In the case of Highways England (driving task) there is a sharp rise in left brain memory encoding when the sound of a crash is heard and response continues to rise into the final branding message.

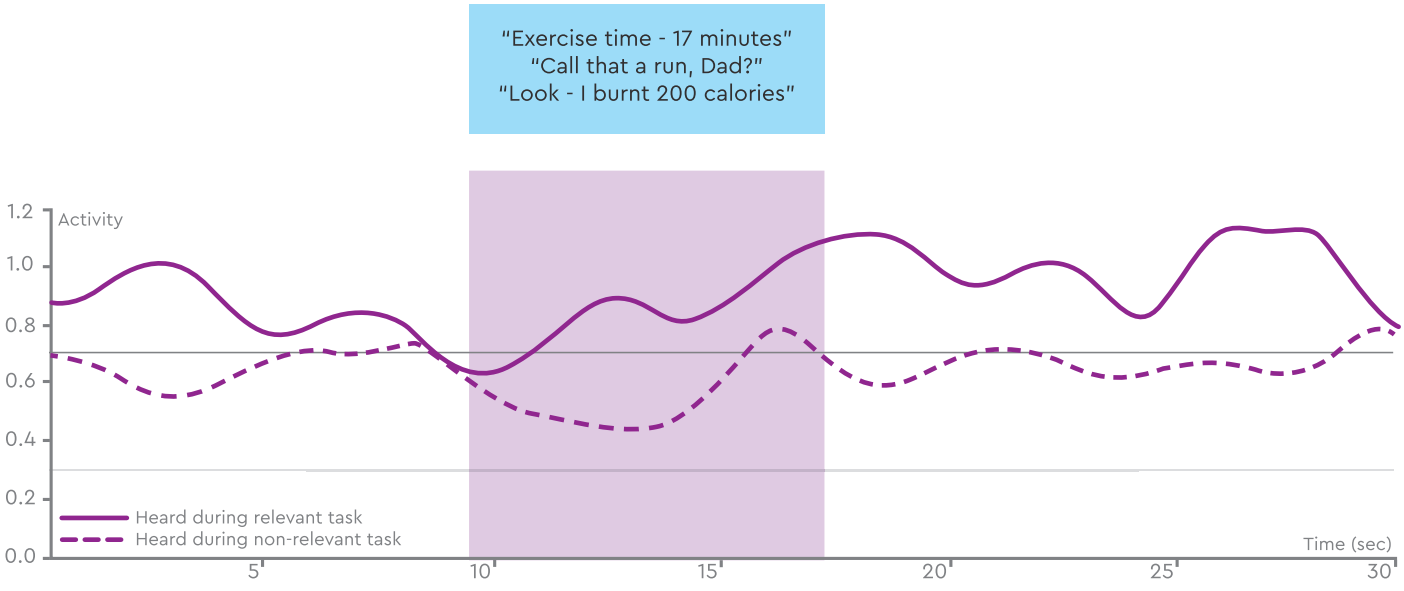
Highways England: time line of left brain memory encoding response



Source: Neuro-Insight

In the Currys ad for the Apple Watch, the specific mention of exercise triggers particularly strong memory encoding when heard in the relevant exercise bike context, whereas responses fall in the non-relevant part of the sample. Again, memory encoding remains high for end branding when heard in the relevant context.

Currys Apple Watch: time line of left brain memory encoding response

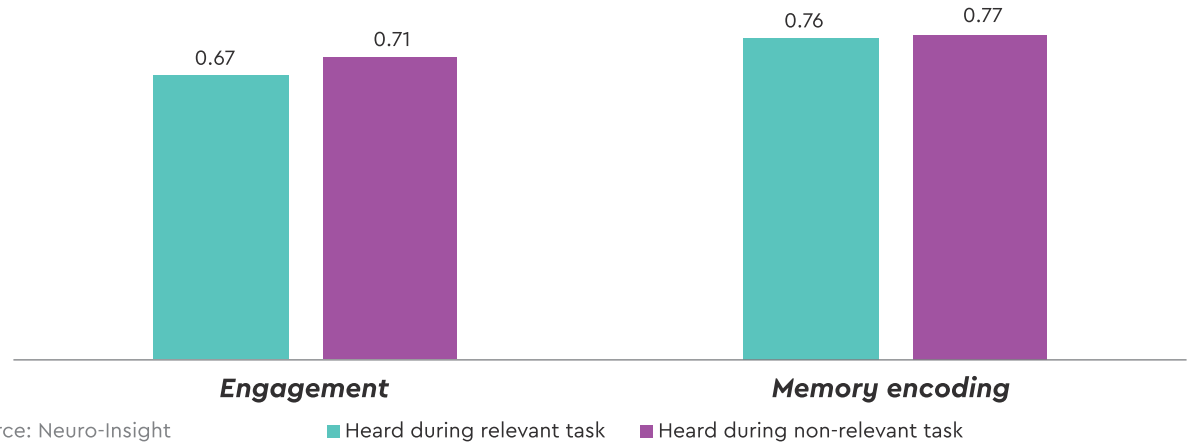


Source: Neuro-Insight

This hypothesis that specific references to the task in the ad content is a primary driver of relevance effects is reinforced by the data relating to our category relevant ads (i.e. where brand or product is broadly relevant to the task being carried out, but less directly related). This shows no noticeable increase in either engagement or memory encoding between people hearing them during relevant tasks over non-relevant tasks.

From this we can conclude that, while still delivering strong effects, ads which are only loosely relevant to the task or activity being undertaken are less likely to benefit from immediate increases in response as a result of being heard in a relevant context. However, it is important to note that ongoing placement of advertising around specific tasks and activities may help build relevant associations for the brand in the longer term.

Strength of brain response relating to engagement and memory encoding averaged across 6x CATEGORY relevant ads (heard during relevant task vs. non-relevant task)



Source: Neuro-Insight

HOW TO BOOST AD EFFECTIVENESS BY TARGETING RELEVANT MOMENTS

The results of this study are clear: radio represents a unique and powerful opportunity to bolster advertising effects by speaking to audiences at relevant times. How can marketers optimise these effects?

1. Make explicit references in the ad creative to the task or activity you are targeting
As we have seen from the top performing campaigns measured in the study, ads that are creatively tailored to the moment deliver the largest effects. These effects are optimised if linked closely with the brand, either in terms of the brand's role in a story and/or proximity of branding to any explicit contextual reference, helping to extend enhanced memory encoding effects to encompass the brand.

2. Bring in references to context early to get the brain involved right from the start
If the brain makes the link between an ad and a task in which it is engaged, then it is more likely to process the advertising. Establishing this link early increases the chance that more of the ad will be processed.

3. Don't let listening context override a fundamental understanding of the target audience
While the data highlights how situational relevance can make a huge difference to advertising effects, it is important to remember that it is an addition to - rather than a replacement for - the personal relevance of the core advertising message.

4. Exploit the opportunity offered by tasks involving lower cognitive effort
The research suggests that when a task requires higher cognitive effort, the uplift effects of relevance on engagement and memory encoding are reduced. The good news is that, in general, people listen to radio to help lift their mood when engaged in everyday tasks, the majority of which are executed with the brain on autopilot (e.g. driving, housework, cooking, exercise) and present excellent opportunities for communicating relevant messages. If seeking to build relevance around higher cognitive effort tasks such as office work, consider targeting people on their way to the office or during coffee/lunch breaks.

For more detail about when people are engaged specific tasks/activities and listening to radio, check out Radiocentre's context-based planning tool Snapshots (www.uksnapshots.com).

For case studies of advertisers that have used radio to target audiences when engaged in specific tasks/activities, check out the Consumer Context search function in Radiocentre's Case Study Finder (http://casestudies.radiocentre.org/).

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About Radiocentre
Radiocentre is the industry body for commercial radio, working on behalf of stakeholders who represent 90% of commercial radio in terms of listening and revenue.

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