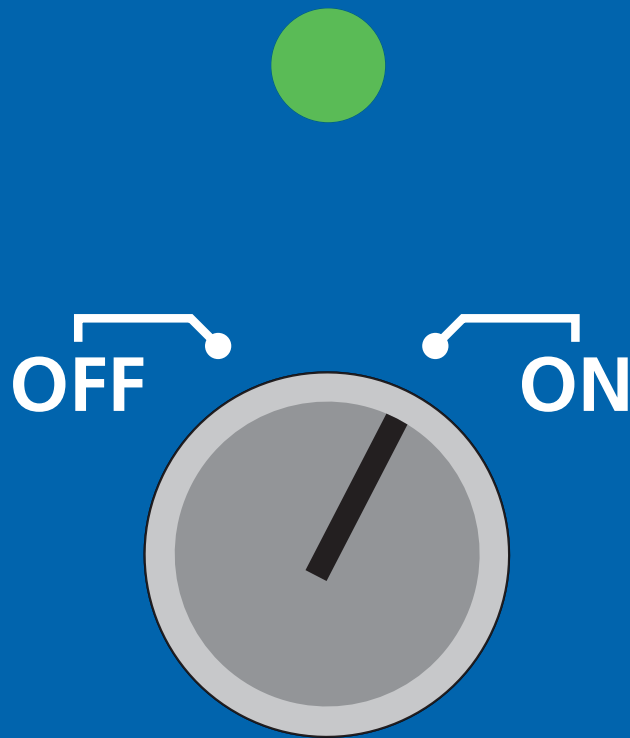




YOU
CAN'T
CLOSE
YOUR
EARS

Reach out with radio in
today's ad avoidance world



“Advertisements are now
so numerous that they are
very negligently perused”

Dr Johnson, January 1759

Contents

Foreword 2

by Robert Heath

Executive summary 3

How radio can maximise outreach in an ad avoidance world.

Introduction 4-6

How ad avoidance is endangering brands' ability to reach out.

The findings 7-13

Why inattentiveness is a bigger challenge than avoidance. The "net outreach" factor for different media.

Implications for advertising 14-19

Connecting with the inattentives.
Creating trace memories with radio.

Appendix 20

Questionnaire wording.
The "mere exposure effect".

Foreword

by Robert Heath

Author of The Hidden Power of Advertising

Bill Bernbach famously asserted that “If your advertising goes unnoticed, everything else is academic”. This idea, that advertising only works if you pay attention to it, permeates the marketing community worldwide. Yet when you study the evidence from psychology, you find it simply isn't true. Advertising is processed very effectively at low levels of attention; it just isn't processed in the same way as it is at high attention.

This study contains two important findings. It shows that inattentive processing is far more common than we think it is; and it shows that radio is one of the best ways to exploit this inattention. Radio is arguably better than other media at insinuating powerful messages into the minds of the consumer, because we are unable to switch our ears off. We hear even when we are not listening.

So even if we are busy doing other things we automatically process music and sound bites and link them to brands. And when we come to buy those brands, our decisions are influenced by these associations, sometimes without our ever knowing it. In this way, far from being a secondary media, radio plays a leading role in what I call 'The Hidden Power of Advertising'.

Executive summary

How radio can maximise outreach in an ad avoidance world

Ad avoidance is key

Ad avoidance is a hot topic now, and has been made particularly critical by the development of the PVR (Personal Video Recorder) for TV, which allows viewers to skip the ads.

Ad avoidance actually endangers one form of advertising above all others – outreach campaigns, where brands seek to reach out and create relationships with new customers.

Radio offers the best outreach

Radio and cinema come joint lowest in terms of ad avoidance – but radio has a far higher coverage.

The real-time media (TV, radio, cinema) suffer from less avoidance than static media (newspapers, magazines).

Radio offers the best outreach because it combines low avoidance and mass coverage. Radio's net reach of 16-44s, taking into account avoidance levels, is actually higher than TV's (17.5 million versus 15.9 million).

Reaching the inattentives

In terms of attentiveness, the biggest group across all media are not the avoiders or the engaged but the inattentives – over half the audience on average.

Radio listeners have low levels of hard avoidance, so they are available to engage with the advertising in varying degrees of inattentiveness: because of this, the creative approach makes all the difference.

Trace memories are created amongst inattentive media consumers. With radio, trace memories are created by:

- music (catchphrases, rhymes, sonics)
- emotion (mood, feelings, memories)

It is vital that radio campaigns take seriously the task of creating trace memories, because radio, as a strong outreach medium, is creating a stock of brand associations in advance of any consumer transaction with the brand.

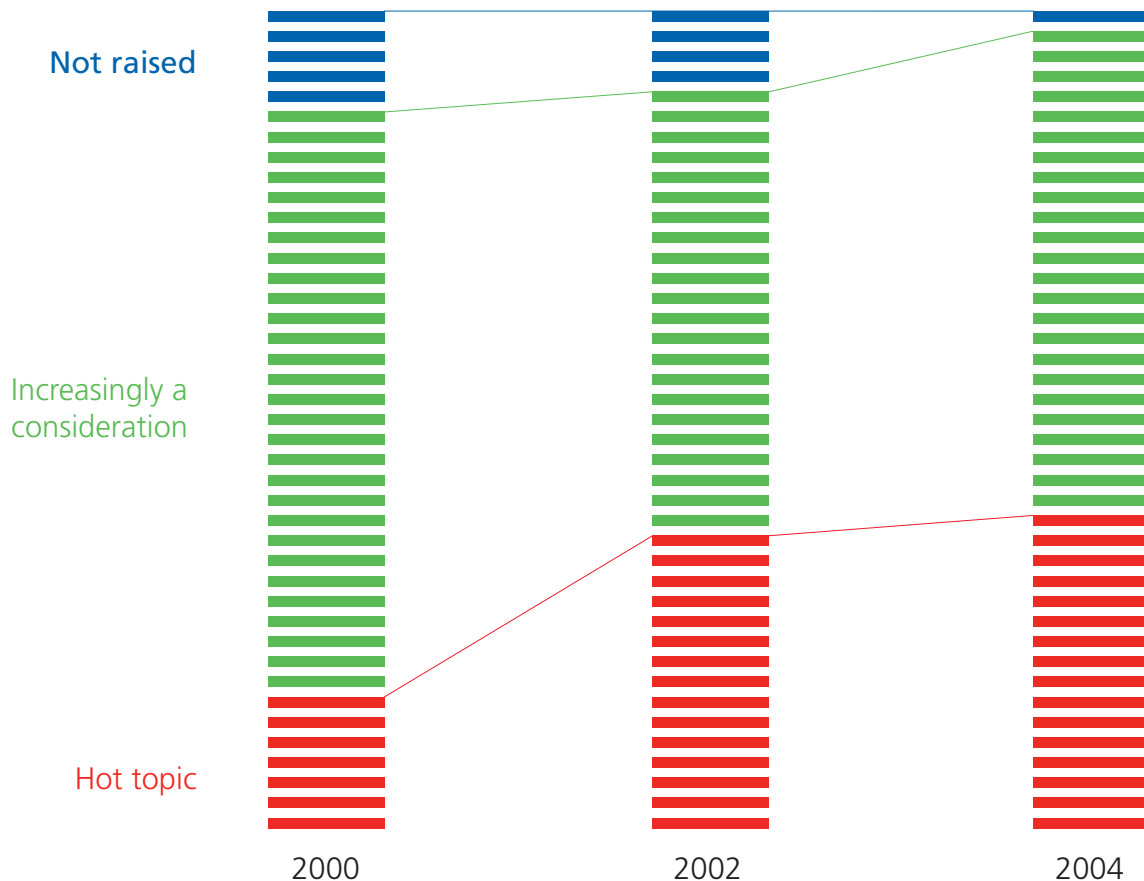


Chart 1: **Ad avoidance has become a “hot topic”**

“To what degree is ad avoidance an issue to you when planning campaigns for the next two years?”

Source: Ocean Consulting – Media Brands

Introduction

How ad avoidance is endangering brands’ ability to reach out

“Advertisements are now so numerous that they are very negligently perused”

Dr Johnson, January 1759

As the quote from Dr Johnson shows, advertising avoidance has been with us for a very long time, and is a natural human response to information overload. We instinctively look for ways to minimise the time we spend being distracted by messages we see as unwanted or irrelevant.

Recently, concerns about advertising avoidance have been increasing, as media proliferate and the competition for “share of eyeball” becomes more intense. Ocean Consulting identify in their Media Brands study (*Chart 1*) that between 2000 and 2004 the number of media people who rated ad avoidance as a “hot topic” had more than doubled – and for

almost all the rest it was rated as “increasingly a consideration”.

The most authoritative research into advertising avoidance was carried out by Initiative Media during the mid-1990s. This combined a wide variety of different methods and focused on ways that advertisers could overcome avoidance, mainly of TV advertising.

However it also assessed avoidance levels for different media, and these are summarised in *Chart 2*.

This suggested that avoidance levels were very low for radio, and even lower for cinema. But it also raises questions: what are people doing when they are NOT avoiding the advertising? For example, if radio ads are only 16% avoided, what is actually happening the other 84% of the time?

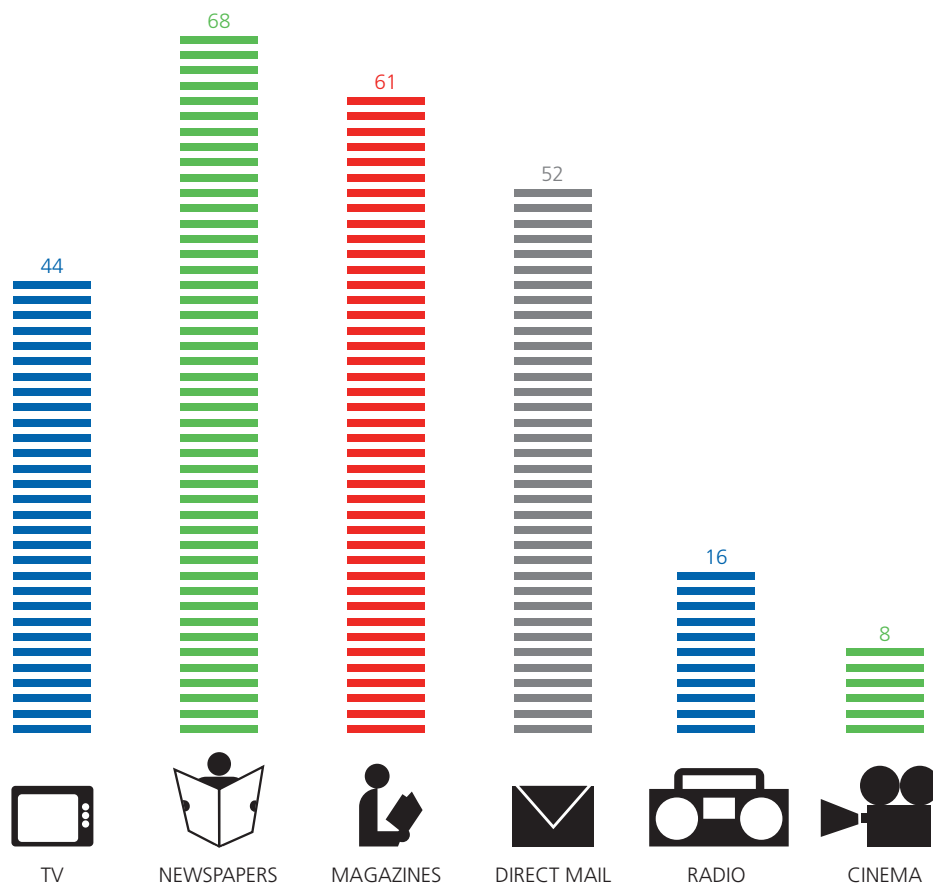


Chart 2: How avoidance varies by medium (the original study)

% who are ad avoiders by medium

Source: Initiative Media

Since the work done by Initiative there have been many other studies looking at this area, and while the methods and results vary somewhat, the patterns are the same – for example, Millward Brown’s finding (headlined in their trade press advertising) that “45% of print ads are ‘edited out’ by readers”.

The role of the PVR in accelerating avoidance

Television has attracted most thinking and concern, because it has held a dominant position for so long. Having already had its effectiveness reduced by the widespread use of remote controls for channel-hopping, TV advertising is now contemplating the likely effect of PVRs (Personal Video Recorders) which amongst other things allow listeners to zip forward through the ads at great speed.

There are currently over 600,000 Sky+ units in place and the cable operators will introduce a PVR by the end of 2005. Starcom forecast that 34% of homes will have a PVR by 2012 (Goldman Sachs THEMEDIA Forum).

Views on the level of threat posed by the PVRs vary widely. While some are insisting that the PVR is comparable to the remote control (i.e. it did not bring about the end of TV advertising as we know it), others see PVRs as a more threatening prospect. The US National Association of Advertisers say that 75% of advertisers expect to cut budgets in response to the rise of the PVR. In Marketing (16 March 2005) Mark Ritson of the London Business School described these as “apocalyptic changes”.

The real issue with ad avoidance – outreach

It is important to be clear that ad avoidance is primarily a threat to one aspect of strategic display advertising, which can be called “outreach”.

In an ad avoidance world, people do not ignore all advertising. People who are having trouble getting upstairs will read advertisements about stairlifts. People thinking of buying a certain car will look at TV commercials for that car, possibly other comparable cars.

But the ads which are avoided are the ones which people sense are unlikely to be relevant or interesting to them – in other words they avoid messages from brands which are trying to reach out to them, and with which they have yet to form a relationship.

This “outreach” function of advertising is one of absolutely critical importance to brands (and one for which TV has historically been very powerful).

In 2005, by the time we buy our first bottle of whisky, we have been exposed in advance to messages from many different whisky brands. The same goes for sofas, washing powder, cars and innumerable other categories where the advertising has been reaching out to us for weeks, months or years before we make a purchase.

But if in the future we select only those ads we consider to be relevant or important to us, this severely inhibits brands’ ability to reach out to new customers.

If PVRs mean that TV struggles to reach out to new customers, many outreach advertising campaigns will migrate to other media.

The challenge of advertising avoidance – summary

- Ad avoidance is a very hot topic for marketers, especially regarding TV
- Earlier studies suggest radio is a low avoidance medium
- Ad avoidance mainly threatens “outreach” campaigns, where brands are trying to speak to new customers
- What are the implications for outreach media planning strategies?
- What are the implications for radio and other media?

In order to find out what the implications of this might be for outreach media planning strategies, and for radio and other specific media, we commissioned a new research study.

How the study was conducted

500 people aged 18-44 were asked about how many of the ads in certain media they felt they engaged with, or “hard avoided” (by changing channels, flicking over the page without looking etc) – or something in between. The exact wording of the questions varied for each medium – see appendix.

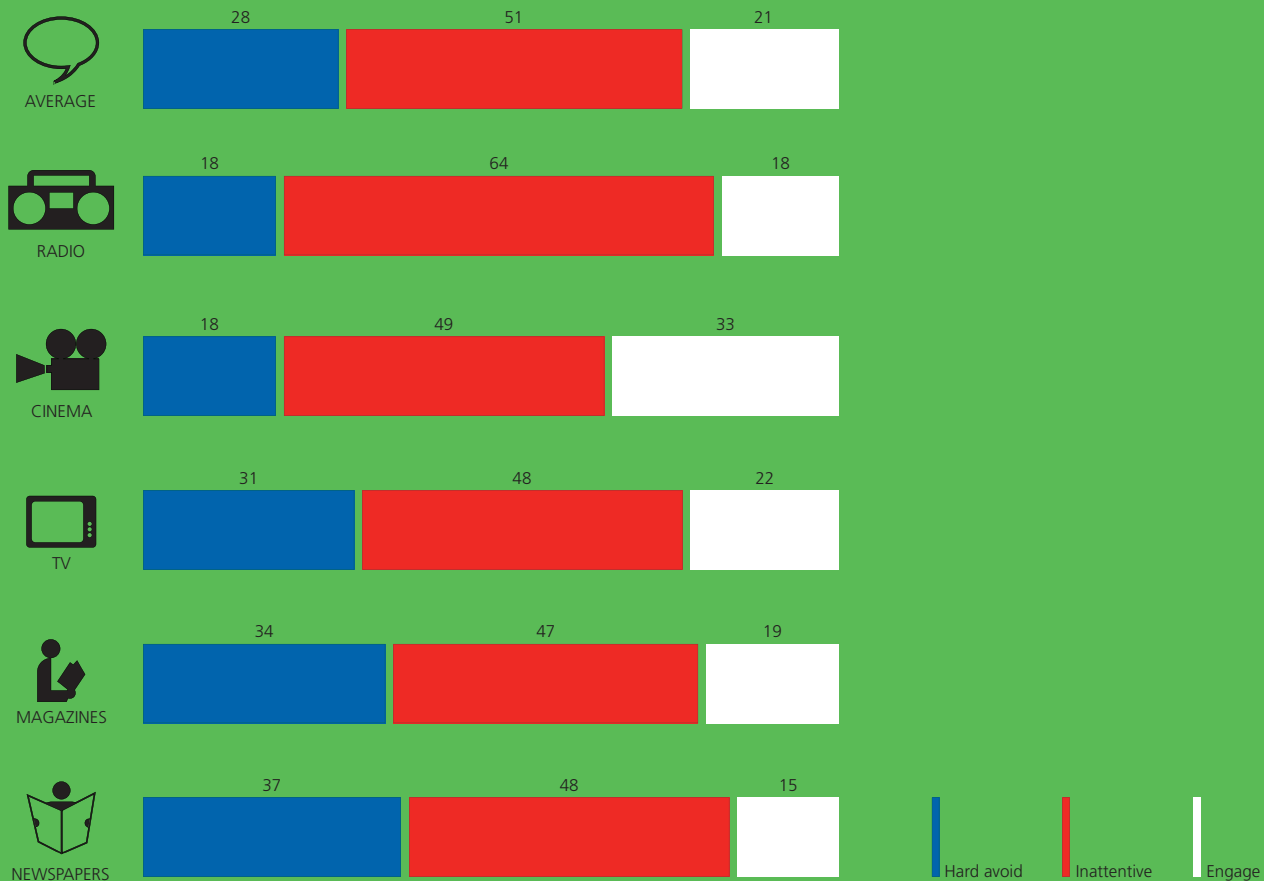


Chart 3: **Attentiveness scores for each medium**

Source: Clark Chapman Research

The findings

Avoidance, engagement and inattentiveness

Chart 3 shows the summary of scores for each of the five display advertising media, plus the average across all five media.

Hard avoidance includes behaviour like zapping TV channels, or skipping past a newspaper ad by turning the page; engagement includes times when the consumer is paying a good measure of attention to advertising, even reading in detail. Inattentiveness covers all states in between.

N.B. These scores are based on people's summary of their own typical behaviour patterns – sometimes they are engaged, sometimes avoiding. So, for example, the 33% engaged score for cinema does not mean "33% of people engage with cinema advertising", it means that, on average, people feel they positively engage with 33% of cinema advertising.

Overall pattern of results

In terms of engagement, four of the five media are about the same – about 20% of the time people feel they engage with the advertising. The exception is cinema, with much higher engagement levels.

In terms of avoidance, there are broadly two groups – a lower avoidance group (radio and cinema) and a higher avoidance group (TV, magazines and newspapers).

However the biggest state of all is inattentiveness – people feel that on average they are in an inattentive state with advertising over half the time (51%).

Results for each medium...

Newspapers

Of the five display media, newspapers have the highest avoidance levels – approximately twice as high as radio and cinema at 37%. Newspapers also have the lowest engagement score, although only marginally so.

These scores seem to reflect the way many people read newspapers – they are often a gap-read in busy lives (journeys, tea-breaks etc) where it isn't always possible to sit back and read the paper in detail.



TV

The scores for TV advertising are almost exactly the same as the five-media average, with the largest state being inattentiveness.

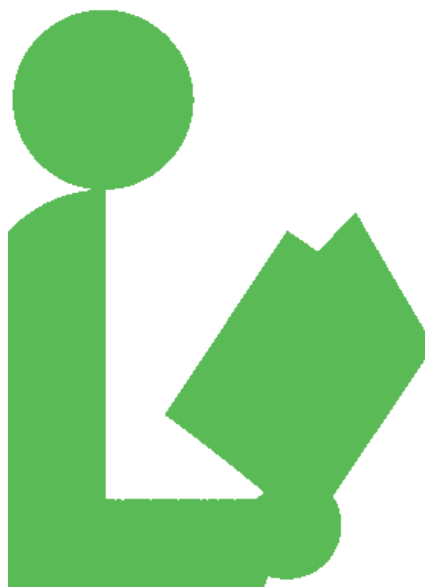
As with cinema, nearly half of the time the TV audience feel that they pay "little/some attention" while the ads are on. But engagement levels are much lower than cinema.

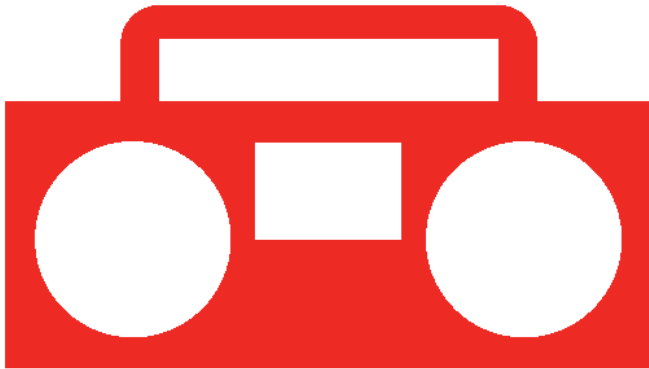


Magazines

At 34%, avoidance levels with magazines are somewhat higher than average. It seems fair to surmise that these will vary widely according to the relationship between reader and magazine – some titles are much more strongly identified with than others.

Engagement levels for magazines are about the same as radio, TV and newspapers.

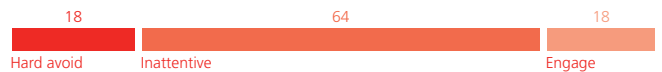




Radio

Radio’s avoidance score is joint-lowest (with cinema), and its engagement score is about average. This engagement score is higher than many in media planning might have guessed.

Radio’s most distinctive feature however is the “inattentiveness” score of 64%. This fits with previous research into radio listening – while levels of hard avoidance are low (most people rarely switch radio stations to avoid the advertising), most listeners “zone in and out” of radio content all the time according to their level of interest or distraction.

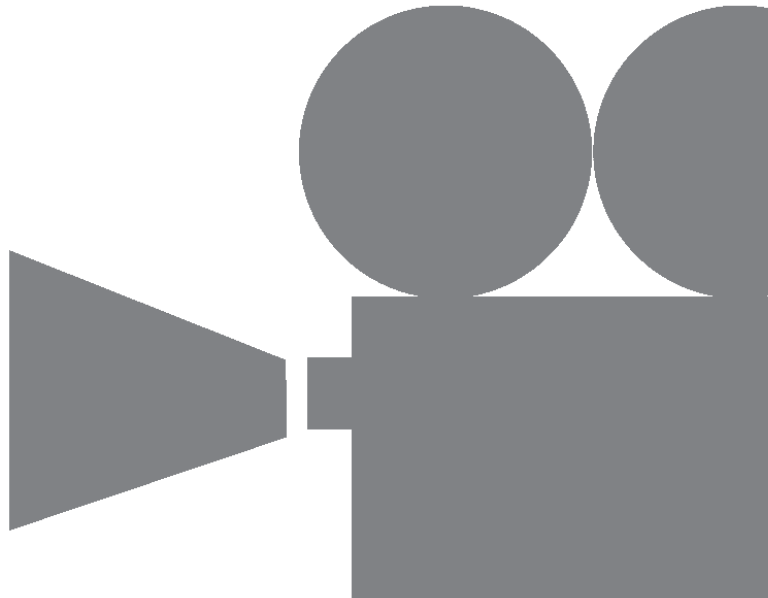


Cinema

It’s not surprising to see that cinema has the highest engagement score, and joint-lowest ad avoidance score.

This makes sense, as there is little else to do while in the cinema and the ads are seen by many as part of the cinema experience.

However, the 33% engagement score is lower than many would expect – rather than being fully engaged by the on-screen advertising, many cinema-goers feel they are in a somewhat inattentive state (paying “little/some attention to” the ads).

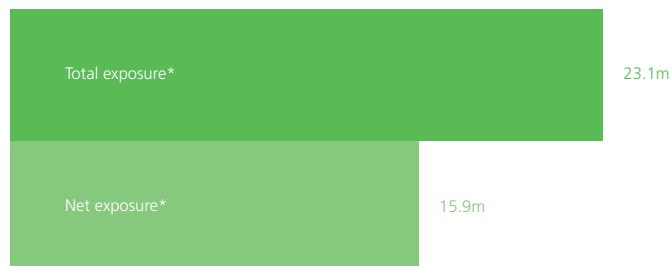




COMM RADIO



COMM TV



CINEMA

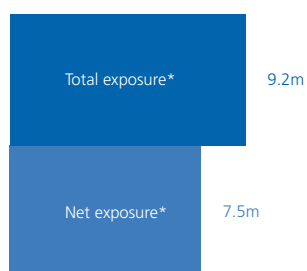


Chart 4: **Low avoidance gives radio highest outreach**

*Exposure = total reach of 16-44s, net = reach adjusted for hard avoidance levels
Source: Rajar, Barb, Caviar (15-44), Clark Chapman

Radio has the strongest net outreach

There is a media-family finding here. Broadly, the static media family – magazines and newspapers – have far higher levels of avoidance than the real-time media family (cinema, radio and TV).

This is probably because, as real-time media elapse, there are many different opportunities for the viewer/listener to become engaged (in a 40-second ad, there are 40 seconds' worth of opportunities). By contrast, if a reader has decided (consciously or otherwise) to by-pass an ad in a magazine or newspaper, that's it – there aren't usually any more opportunities for the ad to overcome that decision.

But while real-time media offer the lowest levels of avoidance, within this the scores take no account

of the relative scale of the different media.

Chart 4 takes the overall reach of each medium amongst 16-44s (or equivalent) and then factors it down according to hard avoidance levels.

So, Commercial Radio's total 16-44 reach of 21.3 million is factored down by 18%, leaving a total net audience of 17.5 million.

In contrast, the total 16-44 reach of commercial TV is factored down by 31%, leaving a total net audience of only 15.9 million.

This makes it clear that, once avoidance is taken into account, radio has the highest net outreach among 16-44 year-olds.

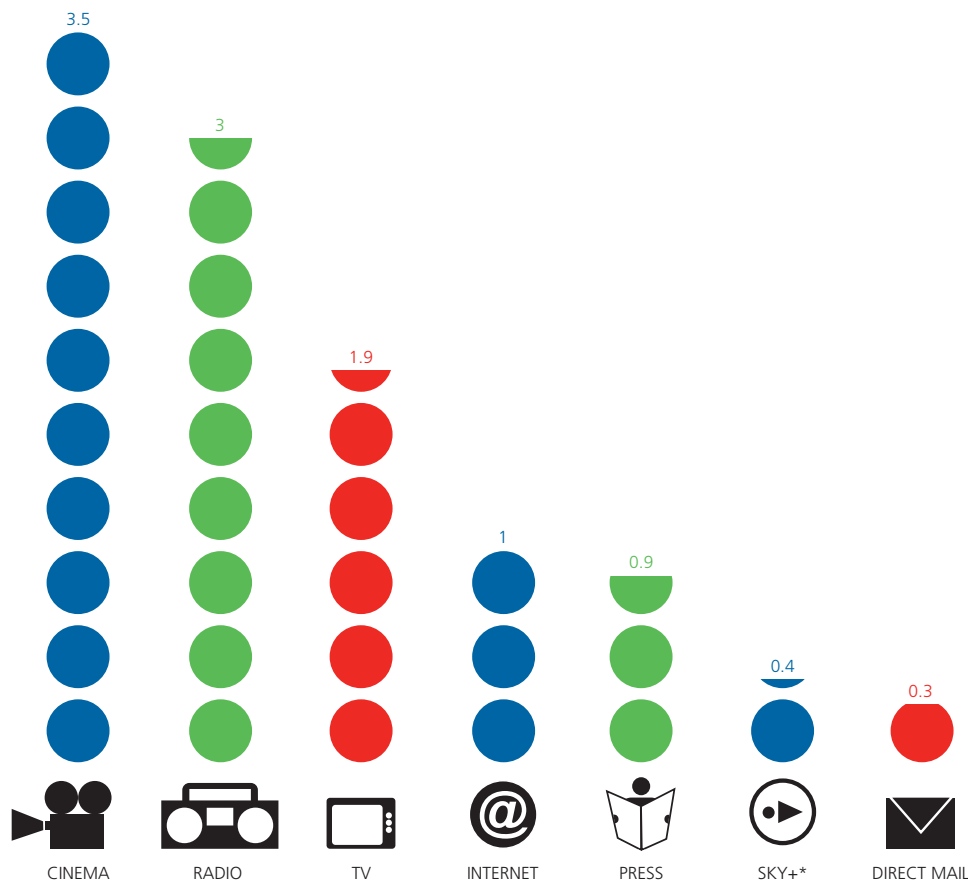


Chart 5: Difficult/easy to completely avoid - by media

% respondents who agreed "It's difficult to completely avoid the advertising", divided by the % who said "It's easy to completely avoid the advertising" in each medium
Source: Clark Chapman / RAB *Sky+ sample = 50 subscribers

In some media the advertising is more difficult to avoid

In a separate part of the survey, respondents were asked to make a stark choice for each of seven media – would they describe the advertising in that medium as easy or difficult to avoid completely?

This was part of the survey where we looked specifically at Sky+ advertising, using the sub-sample of 50 subscribers.

It is clear that, while radio and cinema are still the two media where it is hardest to completely avoid the advertising, Sky+ has a very strong score, second only to direct mail in terms of being easy to avoid.

Looking at the internet, although respondents said they avoided internet advertising to a large degree (banners

and pop-ups to differing extents) they clearly find the advertising very difficult to avoid. On the one hand this could be seen as a benefit for advertisers on the internet – on the other, it suggests that their intrusions are unwelcome, albeit hard to get away from.

Planning campaigns to maximise outreach

As explored earlier, the type of advertising which is most threatened by ad avoidance is outreach advertising – the campaigns which seek to reach out to new consumers in new markets.

This would include:

- well established brands which are developing new products or services
- brands in “low interest” categories such as personal finance
- advertisers targeting consumers who are actively resistant to their message (pensions, anti-smoking, charities)

These are fairly obvious candidates, but in fact the list of advertisers using outreach strategies would be very long indeed – every car ad is at least partly targeted at new “conquest” customers, every retail ad reaches people who would not ordinarily shop at that store, etc.

This means that any brands which needs to reach out to new customers will have to consider how much the effect of ad avoidance is reducing their impact, and what media mix would help to offset this.

Radio is uniquely well-placed to help here.

Not only does it offer very low levels of ad avoidance, it also reaches out to huge audiences in real-time.

It is worth taking some more extreme examples to put this thinking into perspective. As well as display advertising media, the survey included feedback on direct mail and the two main forms of internet advertising – banners and pop-ups.

Chart 6 doesn't indicate that the internet is an ineffectual medium – in fact it's becoming the most important communication tool in the 21st century. But it does show how the internet works less well as an “interruption model” medium: people tend to use it as a “pull medium”, and clearly try to get away from unsolicited messages that are pushed towards them.

This makes pop-ups inefficient for achieving outreach – and this is where radio can help.

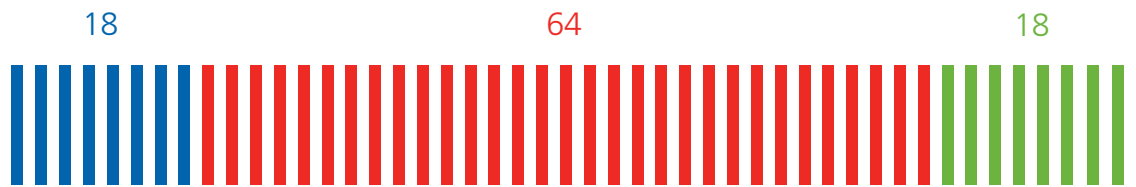
A recent project (see RAB OnLine rab.co.uk) conducted by the RAB jointly with the Internet Advertising Bureau revealed that radio and internet are highly complementary in this respect. Amongst people who listen to radio while online (20% of web users at any given time):

- 57% say they have “checked things out on the internet after just hearing about them on the radio”
- 39% say that “radio ads have prompted me to search for something on the internet”

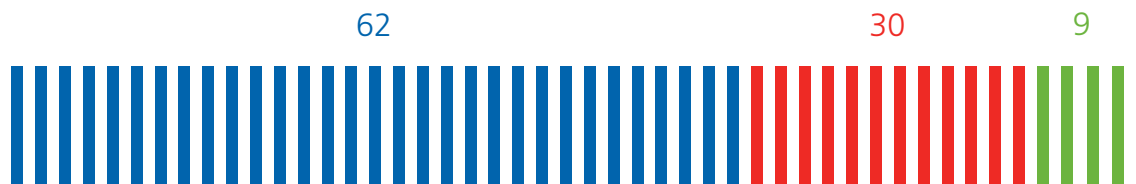
So outreach strategy becomes a matter of using strong outreach media like radio together with good follow-up media like the internet.



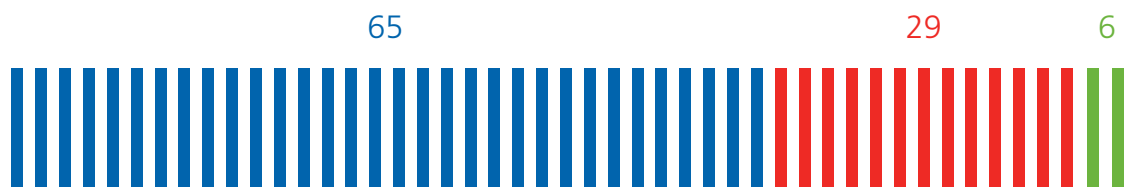
RADIO



DIRECT MAIL



INTERNET
BANNERS



INTERNET
POPUPS

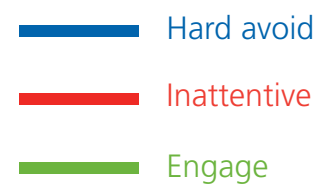
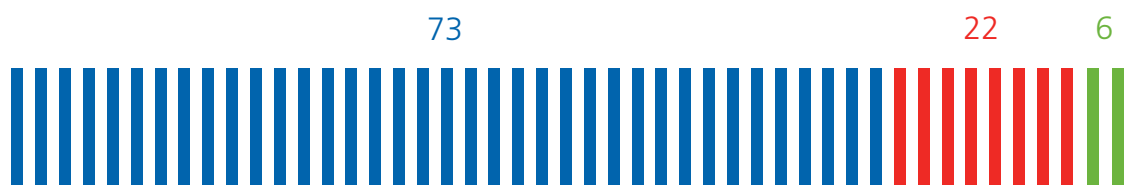


Chart 6: **Avoidance – radio compared to 3 non-display media**

Source: Clark Chapman

e.g. Coke bottle, Toilet Duck bottle neck

Design

e.g. FirstDirect / black, Orange / orange

e.g. Felix black & white cartoon

Layout

Colour

e.g. Intel Inside

Jingle

Chart 7: “What makes us remember?”

Source: The mind, the brain and the media, Sue Elms and John Svendsen, Carat Insight (Admap April 2005)

Implications for advertising

How can advertising connect with the inattentives?

Avoidance only accounts for about a fifth of the audience. A much bigger part – over half – of the audience is in an inattentive state when they process our advertising: what does this mean for the way we advertise?

Models of thinking about the way advertising works are in a constant state of change, but one of the most important recent developments in this area is passive reception – most notably described by Robert Heath in his book about low-involvement processing “The Hidden Power of Advertising”.

His central point is that, while some advertising is processed at high levels of involvement, most of it flows across our eyes and ears while we are only semi-attentive. Yet it still has an effect: we can remember ideas, slogans, scenes and sounds –

and brand names – from advertising we have barely been conscious of consuming.

This is important because, to summarise the “Mere Exposure Effect” in psychology (see appendix), familiarity breeds liking. In other words, people are demonstrably more inclined to like things which they feel are familiar (brands, thoughts, people, devices, sounds, images). This is sometimes easier to understand the other way round: we are less inclined to like things which seem unfamiliar.

People

e.g. Halifax & Howard

Logos

e.g. Kellogg's K, Nike Swoosh, Adidas Stripes

Alliteration

e.g. 118 118

Music

e.g. British Airways music

The key points about low-involvement (or low-attention) processing of advertising are these:

- when we process advertising in this way we are learning implicitly rather than explicitly – it's not a deliberate activity
- implicit learning sees people absorbing data differently
- implicit memories are not semantic (they can't hold logical arguments)
- implicit memories can be described as impressionistic – they leave us with impressions rather than detail
- these impressions can be very strong (strong enough to affect brand preferences) but they are mainly emotional

Similar thinking is reflected in Chart 7, (repeated in text below). The memory-prompts described are quite simplified, as this is what people remember: there is little in the way of literal meaning, just particles of meaning. In addition, it is worth noting that many of these mnemonic factors are framed in sound rather than vision – which is why radio is such a powerful medium for trace memory creation.

People (e.g. Halifax & Howard)

Jingles (e.g. Intel Inside)

Music (e.g. British Airways music)

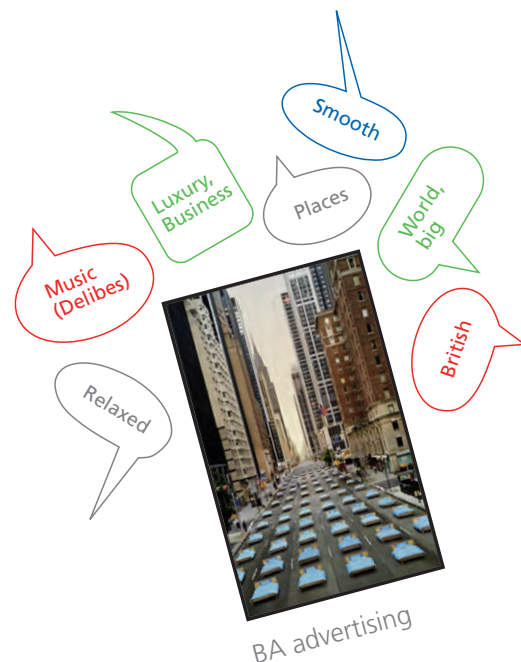
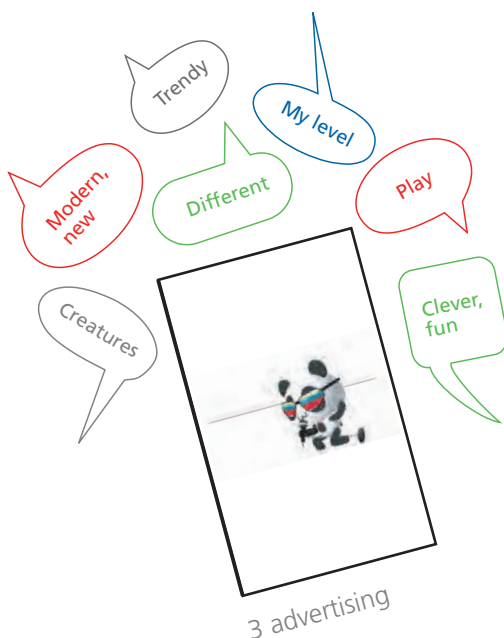
Logos (e.g. Kellogg's K, Nike Swoosh, Adidas Stripes)

Colours (e.g. FirstDirect / black, Orange / orange)

Design (e.g. Coke bottle, Toilet Duck bottle neck)

Alliteration (e.g. 118 118)

Layout (e.g. Felix black & white cartoon)



Examples of brand trace memories left by advertising

Above are some examples of brands which have trace memories created mainly by advertising. Some of the memories are stronger, others weaker – some are visual, some are acoustic.

It's important to note that they are not semantic or logical: people don't talk about what the interest rate actually is in the ING Direct advertising, they just mention the fact that there are interest rates.

These are not at all exhaustive: they are based on informal RAB research (July 2005), where we asked respondents "What sort of impressions about these brands can you remember from their advertising?"

Creating trace memories with radio

a) Musical trace memories

One aspect of the way radio creates trace memories is famous – the jingle, sonic, or (as lawyers now call them) the sound-mark.

People often take pride in reciting the catchphrases and jingles they can remember from radio campaigns – even if the advertiser in question is completely irrelevant to them (local conservatory or double-glazing companies are usually a good example). They have a way of sticking in the mind which is extraordinary, and based on musical principles – rhythm, melody, sequences, rhymes etc.

This is how we recall nursery rhymes, pop songs and catchphrases, whether or not we have ever stopped

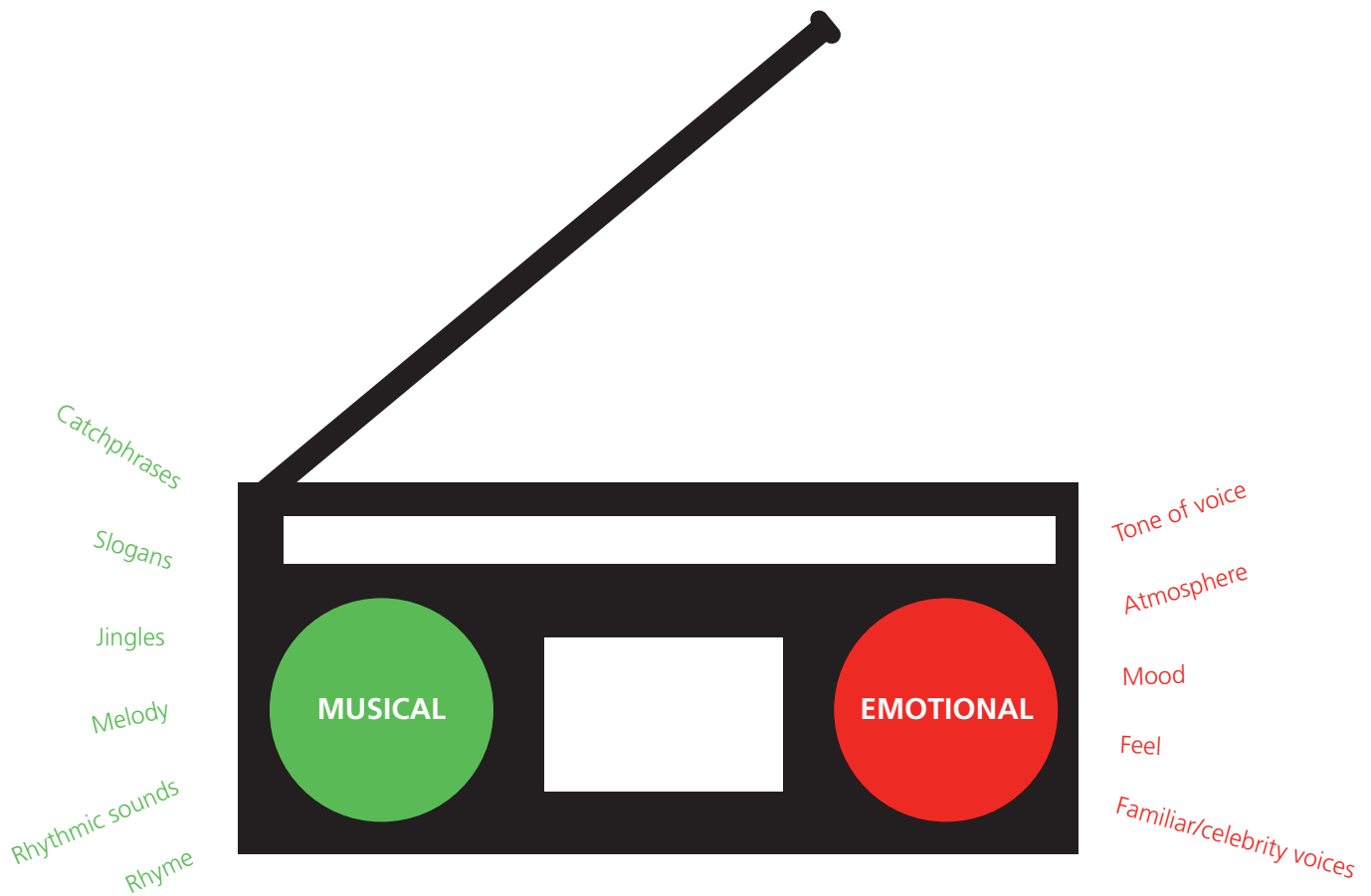


Chart 8: **Creating trace memories with radio**

Source: RAB

to think about what they contain or mean (i.e. engaged / high-attention processing).

Sound-marks which work well are a kind of marketing nirvana: they can create a situation where people are singing the brand name to themselves.

b) Emotional trace memories

Emotional impressions are left by radio regardless of attentiveness – you can sense how people are speaking to you, or to each other.

This happens at the emotional level even if we can't hear or don't understand the words. It's like hearing people next door – even if you can't hear the words you can tell if they are having a row, or being lovey-dovey, or speaking to someone they don't know on the phone.

So while these are the trace memories left by radio, the challenge of course is to attach advertising impressions to the brand. While brands leave trace memories through both musical and emotional routes, it is much easier to attach a brand identity to the musical route.

But this is why celebrity/well-known spokesmen are so popular in radio advertising – they are an instant shorthand for brand impression or emotional tone regardless of the attentiveness of the listener. If Vic Reeves is the spokesman for a brand, a certain impression will be left because of people's perception of his personality.

This is part of the secret of Carphone Warehouse's success with their advertising vehicle – Ed Byrne and Mowbli: they leave a strong brand trace memory regardless of listening attentiveness.



Chart 9: **What makes people listen?**

Source: RAB

Implications for radio advertising creativity

Radio is the medium with the biggest inattentiveness segment – well over half the time with radio ads we are in varying degrees of distraction. This is sometimes wrongly seen as a barrier for radio, leading some advertisers to use irritating tricks to get the listeners' attention (which inevitably leads listeners to see the advertiser as an irritant).

In fact it's very easy to get the attention of listeners. We know from previous research that people "zone in and out" of all radio content (news, weather, chat, interviews, advertising) according to whether they find it interesting or relevant. In other words, the vast majority of the audience are available to be engaged by the advertising – but it's up to the advertiser to be engaging.

The contrast here is with the high avoidance media, where over a third of the audience are already likely to have taken avoiding action before the advertiser has a chance to make their case at any length.

Engaging: what makes people zone in to radio?

Zoning in is usually a pre-conscious activity, which takes place in our heads. We just find ourselves listening to some things and ignoring others – it's true for advertising as it is for people.

The chart above is based on RAB workshops conducted with national radio advertisers, looking at the factors likely to make listeners zone in or out.

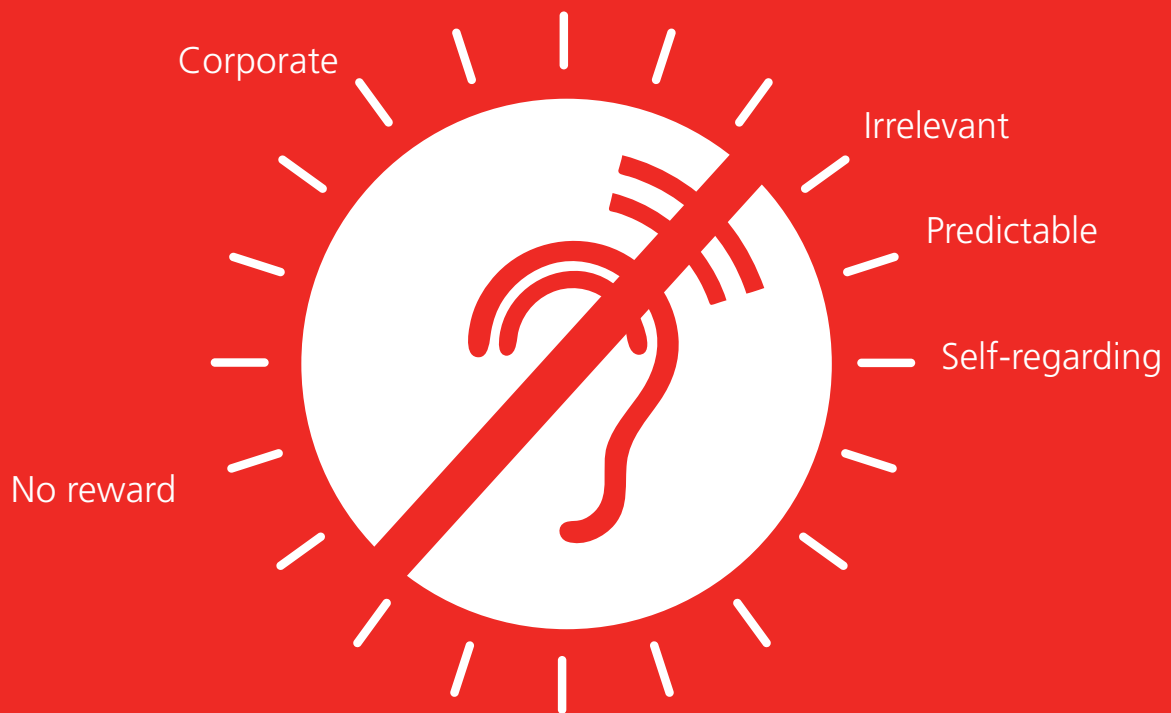


Chart 10: **What makes people not listen?**

Source: RAB

The list of factors in the chart above are probably the ones which eventually produce hard avoidance, such as listeners being frustrated enough to change station.

One of the great positives of working with radio – or indeed any of the real-time media – is that in a commercial which is 40 seconds long, the advertiser has 40 seconds' worth of opportunity to get the listener to zone in. Decisions about avoiding the ads are made much more quickly in static media like press and magazines.

Reaching the inattentive listener – trace memories

When any given spot is broadcast, some of the 64% of radio listeners that are listening inattentively will be available to be engaged by the creative work – but others will remain inattentive, and will retain only trace memories.

How can advertisers ensure that the impression they leave with these inattentives will be positive for the brand?

Ensure that trace memories are connected to the brand:

this either means using a sonic or sound-mark of some kind (like Intel or British Airways), or using a tone of voice or style in the advertising which listeners easily connect with the brand (e.g. Carphone Warehouse consistently use Ed Byrne and his partner little Mowbli).

Ensure that positive emotional traces are left:

commercials can leave a strong emotional trace pattern even when listeners are inattentive – these are driven by mood, atmosphere, memory and feelings.

Appendix

Method

The survey was run by Clark Chapman Research using web-based interviewing. 500 people aged 18-44 were asked to complete an online questionnaire about the way they dealt with advertising.

The questions were structurally similar for each medium, but the language varied to reflect the different ways in which they were consumed – and the web software helped people to get their time allocations to add up correctly.

Questionnaire – key wordings

When you have the radio on (on a commercial station), what proportion of the ads do you feel you...

- a: miss completely – by switching stations, or turning the radio right down
- b: hear, but pay little attention to
- c: hear, paying some attention to
- d: hear, paying full attention

When you're reading a newspaper, what proportion of the ads (not including the small ads) do you feel you...

- a: miss completely – by flicking straight past them without even looking
- b: pass your eye over, but pay little attention to
- c: pass your eye over and read or look at a little of it
- d: look at and read quite fully

When you're looking at a magazine, what proportion of the ads do you feel you...

- a: miss completely – by flicking straight past them without even looking
- b: pass your eye over, but pay little attention to
- c: pass your eye over and read or look at a little of it
- d: look at and read quite fully

When you're watching TV (on a commercial channel), what proportion of the ads do you feel you...

- a: miss completely – by flicking channels, or leaving the room
- b: watch, but pay little attention to
- c: watch, paying some attention to
- d: watch, paying full attention

Thinking of direct mail (the letters and cards that come through the letterbox advertising different services and products), what proportion do you feel you...

- a: miss completely – by throwing out straight away
- b: pass your eye over, but pay little attention to
- c: pass your eye over and read or look at a little of it
- d: look at and read quite fully

When you're at the cinema, what proportion of the ads they show on screen do you feel you...

- a: miss completely – by not going in until the film is about to start or leaving your seat
- b: watch, but pay little attention to
- c: watch, paying some attention to
- d: watch, paying full attention

Thinking of the ads you could see on the Internet when you are on-line, there are two main styles, those that pop-up on the screen and those that are on banners (across the top of the screen for instance). What proportion of pop-ups do you feel you...

- a: miss completely – by closing before reading them or blocking them
- b: pass your eye over, but pay little attention to
- c: pass your eye over and read or look at a little of it
- d: look at and read quite fully

What proportion of banner ads do you feel you...

- a: miss completely – by scrolling away, moving to a new screen, etc.
- b: pass your eye over, but pay little attention to
- c: pass your eye over and read or look at a little of it
- d: look at and read quite fully

Results

Respondents allocated their answers between options b and c almost exactly 50:50 for all media, which suggests that there is little useful distinction in their minds between the two different levels of attentiveness. So, in the report, these figures are combined.

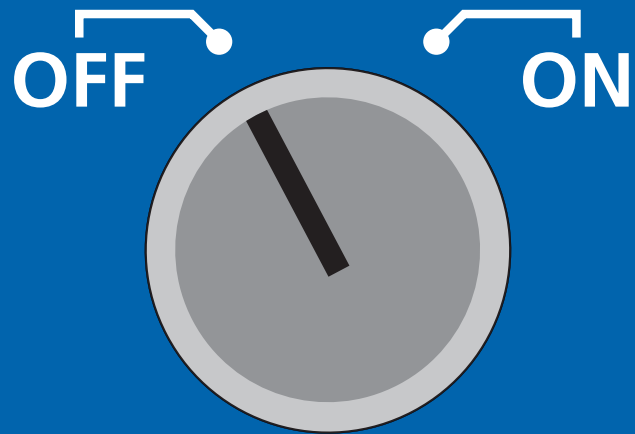
The study could not cover outdoor because, in the absence of an editorial context, consumers find it impossible to say how they deal with advertising in this medium (although it is probably a lower-avoidance medium because of this).

The study included a separate booster sample of fifty Sky+ users – their scores are included in the main sample of 500, but broken out separately in the section about whether ads in certain media are difficult/easy to avoid completely.

The “mere exposure effect”

The mere exposure effect is a psychological artifact well known to advertisers where people express undue liking for things merely because they are familiar with them. This effect has been nicknamed the “familiarity breeds liking” effect. Simply exposing experimental subjects to a picture or a piece of music led those subjects to later rate it more positively than other, similar stimuli which they had not been shown earlier.

In another experiment, students were shown a Chinese character on a tachistoscope faster than could be perceived consciously. Later, students rated these characters as better than those to which they had not been exposed. Interestingly, when asked, the students were able to cite specific and detailed reasons why they preferred the characters that they did (which must have been at least partially rationalization). This effect was first studied by Robert Zajonc.



Ad avoidance is mainly a threat to outreach advertising. This is one of the biggest advertising categories, where brands are trying to engage new customers or extend into new markets.

Radio attracts very low levels of ad avoidance.

Real-time media (TV, cinema, radio) are significantly less avoided than static media (newspapers, magazines).

Radio's low level of avoidance and wide coverage mean it is very well-placed to play a key role in outreach advertising. In fact, if media reach is factored down to take into account avoidance behaviour, radio has a bigger net outreach than even TV.

Creativity is the key to minimising avoidance, but this report also looks at techniques for reaching the inattentives – the single largest constituency of all.

Radio Advertising Bureau

The Radio Advertising Bureau is funded by the Commercial Radio industry to help national advertisers and their agencies towards effective use of radio advertising.

For further information, go to: RAB OnLine (rab.co.uk)

