

If you want to capture your customers' attention, advertise on the big screen

Issued by [aHead Marketing Services](#)

1 Nov 2023

A person's attention span while watching an advertisement on an average video platform is 2,5 seconds, according to attention technology research conducted by Lumen. What can your customers recall in those few seconds?



Post Covid, marketers are under pressure to win back the hearts and minds of their customers – and that job requires more than 2,5 seconds, especially with longer duration assets.

The challenge now for marketers is how to rebuild brand love and customer engagement in an increasingly competitive landscape. Advertising on the big screen is the perfect medium for doing just that.

According to Eric Blignaut, national sales manager at Ster-Kinekor, research conducted by Lumen, attention specialists who work with media clients to better understand audience attention to advertising, shows that the cinema audience's attention span is seven times higher than any other video platform.

The research further shows that the second highest attention media is YouTube 'unskippable' ads. However, attention drops as the ad starts and after 2,5 seconds, the ad has lost 42% of the viewer's attention. In comparison, after 15 seconds, cinema advertising has lost only 7%.

"The Lumen research provides compelling evidence regarding audience retention of adverts viewed on the big screen. As such, we are more than happy to share the findings with any of our current advertisers or prospective clients," comments Blignaut.

Further to this, Kantar research shows that, compared to other channels, cinema ads are considered to be trustworthy, and more relevant, useful, fun and entertaining, innovative and perceived to be of better quality (despite cinema hardly ever receiving its own asset). So, while cinema reach may be overshadowed by other media types, it outperforms other media including all video platforms when it comes to cutting through the noise (Kantar CrossMedia Impact Learning, March 2020).



Ster-Kinekor represents 60% of the cinema market in South Africa and is the single biggest cinema chain on the continent. “Cinema delivers on environment, impact and attention because the audience displays a high affinity for the medium, as Kantar recently revealed in its Media Reactions report. As such, cinema is a critical channel for growing brand affinity and maintaining brand perceptions while building incremental reach,” says Blignaut.

Despite the current tough economic outlook, people still have a propensity to be entertained, and going out to watch a movie on the big screen delivers a great entertainment experience. The various Ster-Kinekor loyalty programmes, including the SK Club card and movie club subscription offerings, and partnerships with Discovery Vitality and Edgars, make it a more affordable option.

“As a medium, cinema is resilient – it has been around for 128 years, has survived a number of technology disruptions and is still going strong, showing a steady recovery post-Covid. It remains unique in its fresh content slate and delivery, and offers a lucrative, economically active audience who wants to be there,” comments Blignaut.

Globally, cinema audiences are returning to cinemas in big numbers, a trend that has been improving since the end of the pandemic lockdowns. This year, the release of *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* contributed to making the week of 21 July the biggest trading week to date this year, while *Barbie* also recorded the third biggest opening week in the past 12 months, after *Black Panther* in November and *Avatar* in December.

Advertiser confidence has followed a similar pattern to attendances. In the past fiscal to June 2023, SK sales enjoyed a 67% increase in the number of booked campaigns, with 41% of total campaigns screened coming from new advertisers predominantly in the alcohol, retail, tech, and financial categories.



“What has been most encouraging for us is the loyalty shown to our media platform from our advertisers. Even when attendances were down coming out of the hard Covid lockdowns, they kept their ads on our screens. For us, this speaks volumes to the power of cinema advertising and the results that these advertisers have come to achieve from the medium.

“We have also addressed the requirement from advertisers for clear-cut cinema ROI by developing audience guarantee packages and forecasting models. If we overlay this with the attention research, cinema delivers as a unique and extremely compelling advertising channel,” says Blignaut.

Tasneem Lorgat, senior manager advertising at Toyota South Africa, says: “Adverts scripted to tell stories that resonate with South Africans is very much part of Toyota’s DNA. And cinema has stood the test of time in delivering an immersive audience experience. It therefore remains an integral part of our media strategy.”

Jeannette Saayman, buying manager at The Media Shop, concurs, adding that for the right brand fit, cinema will always be included on their media schedules. “The advantage of big screen advertising is that cinema allows us to showcase our clients’ longer duration creatives in an environment where audiences are conducive to receiving commercial messages,” notes Saayman.

“Cinema advertising leads the media pack in attention and brand safety attributes. It delivers audited audience numbers and a limited number of ads in a controlled environment. Marketers make their ads to be seen, whether it’s a big brand campaign or a retail promotion, and the big screen delivers on this premise in every department,” concludes Blignaut.

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