

Putting the demand back into Video on Demand

Making VoD services advertising that works

KANTAR



Consumers are getting maxed out on subscriptions

So VoD's need their advertising more than ever to grab attention with why they're the 'must have' subscription.

VoD subscriptions are under pressure. Sign-ups soared during lockdowns but as restrictions have eased, consumer demand for at-home entertainment has slowed. And now streaming brands face a new challenge – the rising cost of living. Kantar's latest Global Issues Barometer shows over a quarter of UK consumers are extremely concerned about their personal finances. As inflation hits hard, consumers are re-examining how and where they spend their disposable income and not surprisingly they are making cuts.

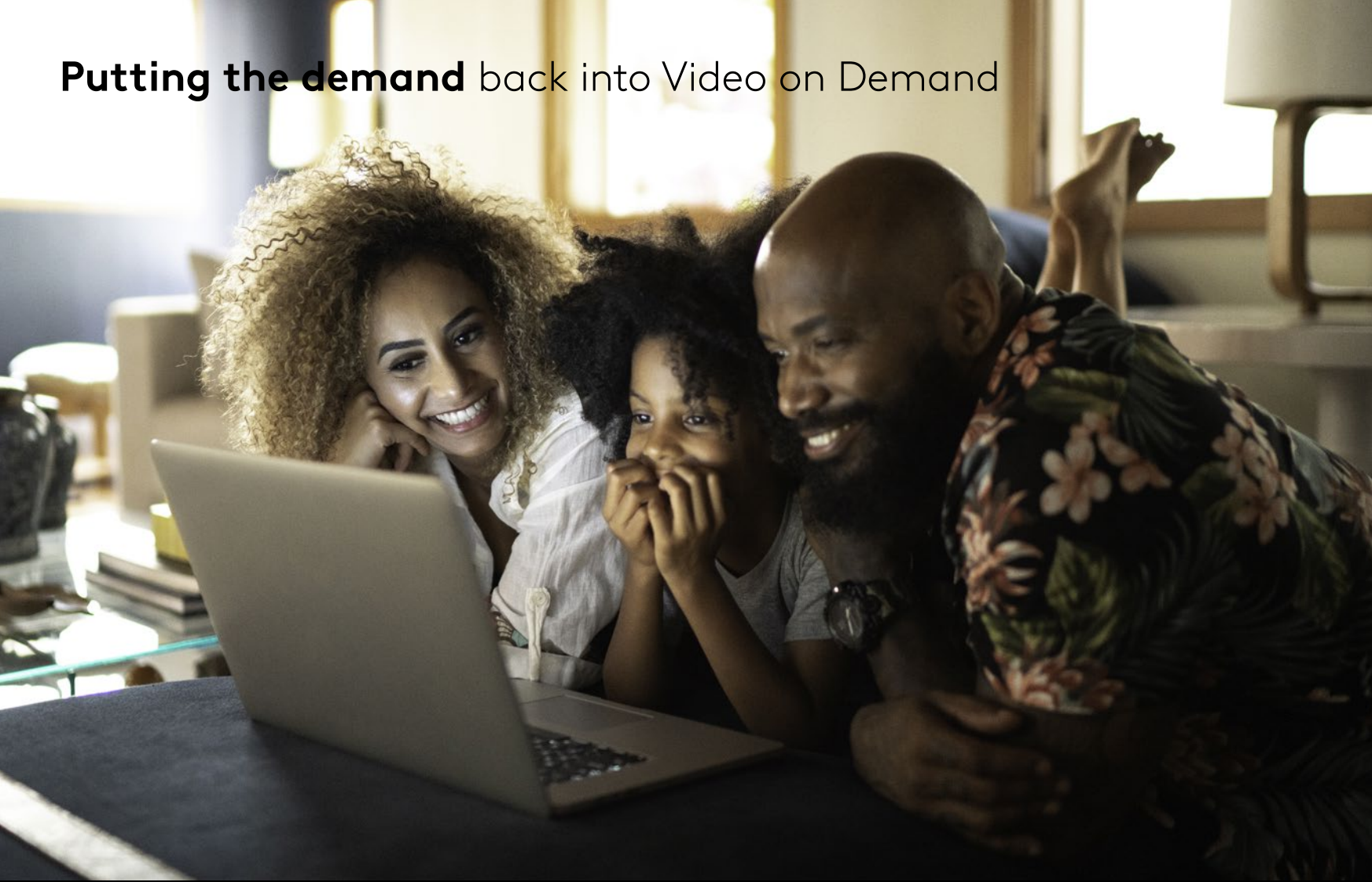
1.5 million VoD accounts were cancelled during the first three months of 2022 alone, according to Kantar Worldpanel data, with cancellations outnumbering new sign ups by 300,000.¹ VoDs are still big business, of course, with 58% of households having at least one subscription service¹, but providers must work harder than ever before

to convince customers why they are the platform they can't do without.

Good advertising is absolutely essential at a time like this. It is a critical shop window for platforms, and ads have to grab attention quickly, drawing people in, showcasing exciting, fresh content and signposting where to find it. With programmes costing more and more to make – £40m an episode in the case of Prime Video's show 'Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power' – VoD brands simply can't afford to get it wrong. The stakes are high.

VoD services advertising will help determine the champions of this new streaming war and competition is tough. Entertainment brands were the largest advertising spenders last year in the UK² but is this investment as effective as it could be? Is it an Oscar-winning performance or a box office flop?

Putting the demand back into Video on Demand



Kantar knows what makes effective VoD advertising

We have unparalleled insight into human behaviour and what makes effective creative. We know what gets ads noticed by consumers because we've tested over 200,000 of them over the last 50 years.

Using Kantar's Link Express for TV methodology which is supported by Kantar Marketplace, we've analysed consumer reactions to trailers, brand building

campaigns and sports adverts from major VoD players including Netflix, Prime Video, Disney+, BBC, BT, Sky and DAZN in the UK.

From this research, we've learnt:

- When to follow advertising best practice
- When to break with convention
- Why VoD advertisers must do more to boost their branding



The cornerstones of effective creative

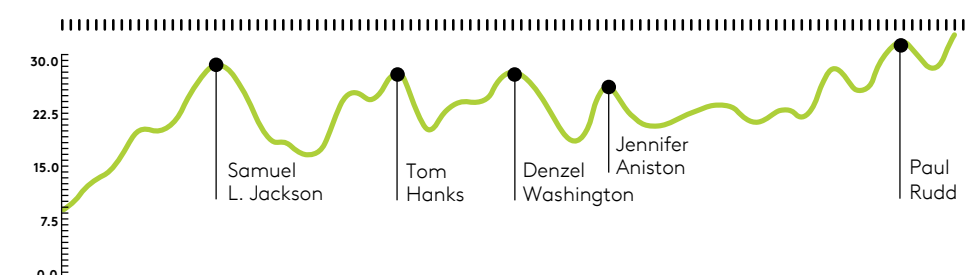
Learning from advertising best practice – how Video on Demand can thrive.

1 Audiences love famous faces:

We know that celebrity talent can significantly boost viewer engagement with ads.³ Entertainment brands should showcase the stars of new shows, putting famous faces centre stage and getting them into clips early to hook people in. Viewers need to know who they're looking at and adding celebrities' names on screen not only helps reinforce recognition,

it also taps into the powerful thoughts, feelings and associations that they bring for consumers.

Facial coding analysis (where we use machine AI to track consumers' emotional reactions as they watch adverts) shows clear peaks in audience expressiveness when they see a famous person in this SVoD ad:

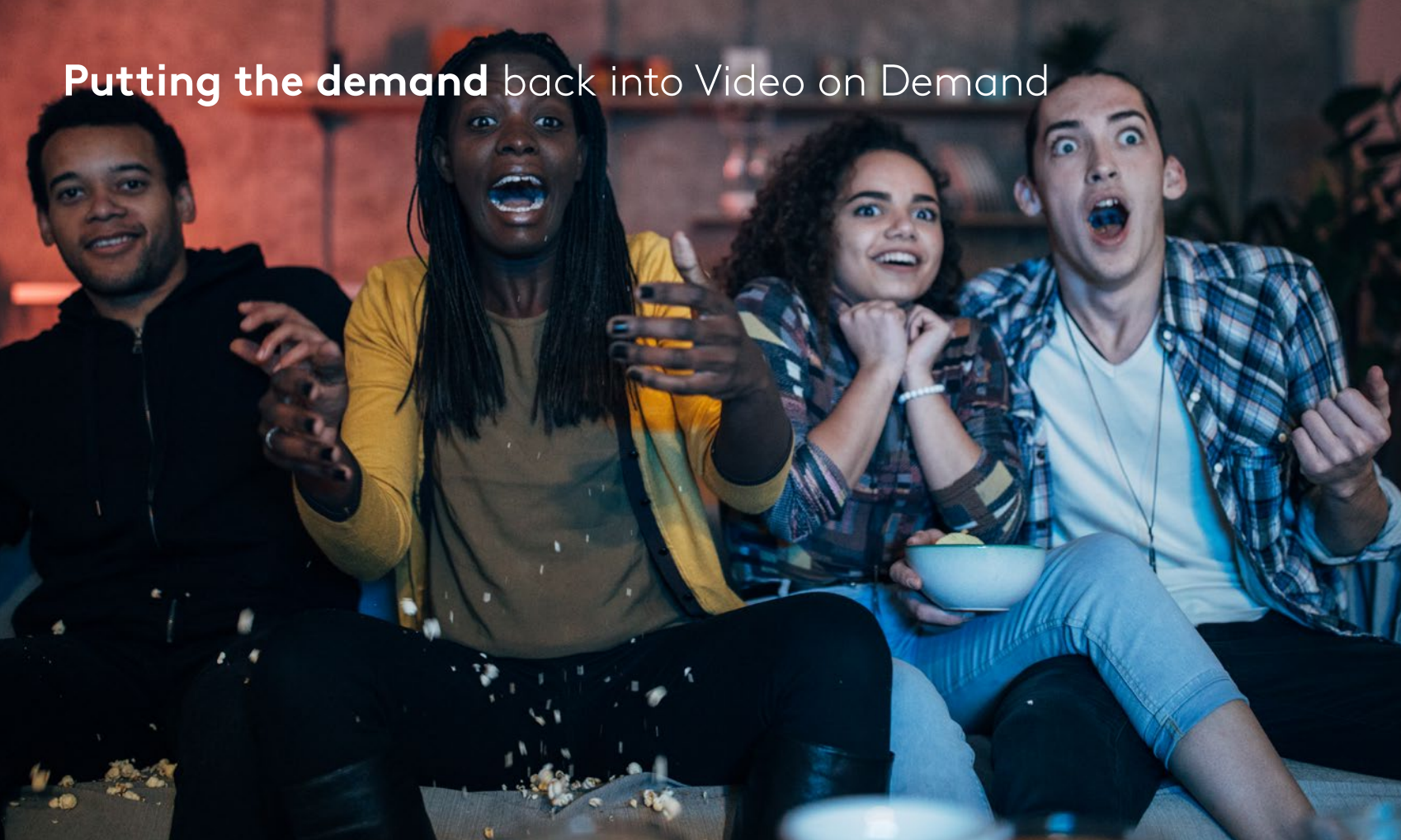


Apple TV ad, 'Everyone But Jon Hamm' watch it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VD3wy3drkyA>

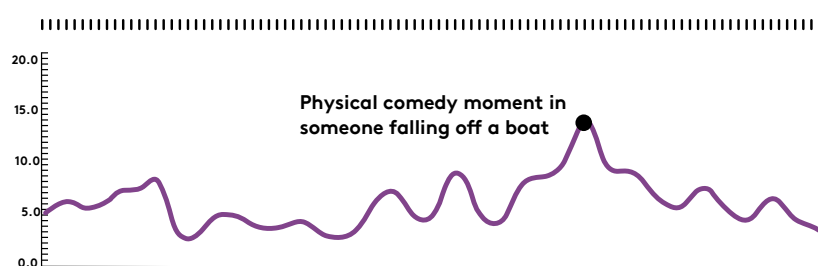
Scale: expressiveness (a summary measure of the intensity of emotional engagement while watching) from Kantar's facial coding in Link. Peak points highlighted are when a famous actor is revealed.

Putting the demand back into Video on Demand



2 Feel free to be funny: Good ads make people feel something. The use of humour in advertising has declined by around 20% in the past 20 years⁴ but it's an excellent – and underused – tool to get an emotional and visceral reaction from audiences. In fact, our research shows that humour is the most powerful enhancer of ad receptivity across all generations.⁵ Of course, content has to be tonally appropriate, and pre-testing with consumers helps to de-risk the creative process and ensure laughs land in the way they're intended.

Ads that provoke higher expressiveness from consumers ultimately drive higher sales for a brand – it makes them memorable. Facial coding analysis shows clear peaks in people smiling when they've seen something really funny in this ad, lifting the performance of the whole asset.



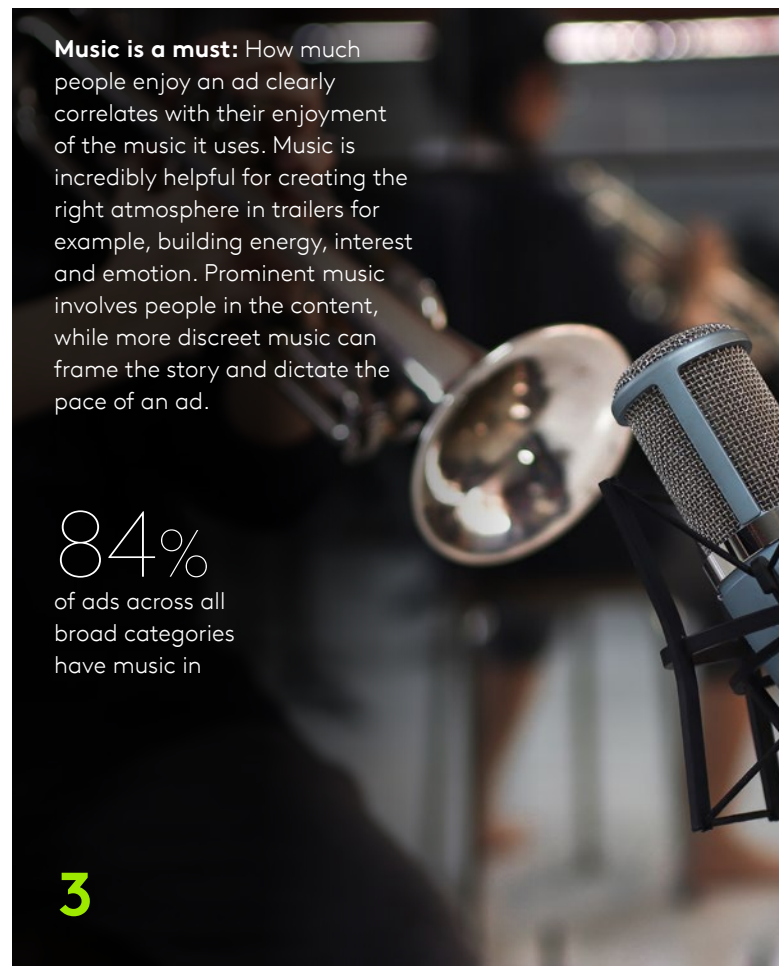
Britbox TV ad, 'Brand Sizzle' watch it here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1SJpwJEZCI>

Scale: levels of smiles (the sum of any smile in respondents they make whilst watching) from Kantar's facial coding in Link.

Music is a must: How much people enjoy an ad clearly correlates with their enjoyment of the music it uses. Music is incredibly helpful for creating the right atmosphere in trailers for example, building energy, interest and emotion. Prominent music involves people in the content, while more discreet music can frame the story and dictate the pace of an ad.

84%
 of ads across all broad categories have music in

3



Break some of the rules

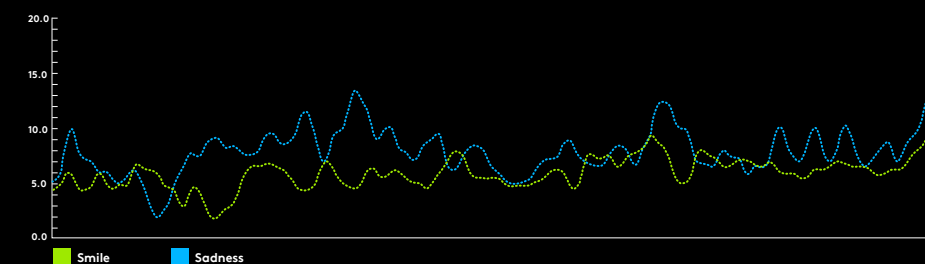
Ads should reflect the unique proposition of VoD brands – provoke people and leave them wanting more.

Make people feel something... but it doesn't always have to be positive.

The best consumer advertising usually makes people feel good, but VoD is different. People can experience a range of emotions when watching an entertainment ad, from fear to sadness, but still reflect afterwards that

they enjoyed it. That's because VoD advertising is all about selling stories – tales of love, loss, and triumph, tragedies, comedies and everything else in between.

In this trailer example, sadness is the dominant emotion people feel but upon reflection viewers still say they enjoyed the ad:



Top 20% of all ads on enjoyment

It's ok to make people uncomfortable, and even a little confused.

By their nature VoD ads tend to make viewers feel double the levels of unpleasant and disturbing feelings that a typical ad would. However, this negative reaction can be acceptable if it's tonally right for the content on show and faithfully reflects what's on offer.

Ads traditionally need to be easy to understand for people to enjoy watching them, but VoD ads break this convention. They can often make people feel confused by what they've seen. That's a good thing and VoD advertisers should aim to leave some questions unanswered – building intrigue and encouraging people to go and watch shows or films on their platforms.

Always tell a story, but not the whole story:

Storytelling is a fantastic device for engaging people in advertising generally, but people hate spoilers. VoD service brands have a unique challenge. They need to tell enough of a story to get consumers bought in without ruining the plot.





But VoD advertising doesn't get everything right

Consumers are struggling to remember which brand ads are for.

VoD ads are often hugely enjoyable and entertaining, but they aren't doing enough to serve their commercial purpose. Across the 30 assets we tested, the average branding score (how easily consumers could say the ad they watched was for the right brand) landed in the bottom third of our database. Very few were seen as different from others in the category.

Kantar research shows that clear branding is the single most important predictor of whether an ad will translate into commercial success. However compellingly creative your ad is, ultimately, you can't win subscribers if no-one can remember who it was for.

VoD creative struggles with branding, especially in longer adverts shown on digital sites like YouTube. Their ads have a lot of work to do, as well as conveying the VoD provider brand they often need to include the show or movie title too.

Branding in this category typically relies on 'bookending', showing the streaming brand at the start and end of an ad, sometimes only in the outro screen or by placing a logo in the corner. These devices just aren't impactful enough. It's problematic for longer trailers in particular where the proportion of brand time on screen versus content is very small.

People are inherently lazy: unless they are especially invested, they won't search across multiple platforms to find shows, so ads need to make it easy for them. By failing to put their brand front and centre, VoD services aren't creating a clear link between themselves and the fantastic content they offer – and that's going to hurt them in the long term if they can't build a sense of distinctiveness. Intellectual property is extremely important in this category, especially for longer running series or movie franchises. Most people know that Stranger Things or Squid Games can be found on Netflix and it's that connection that will keep them coming back to the platform.

Learn from sports broadcasters to link your ad to your brand.

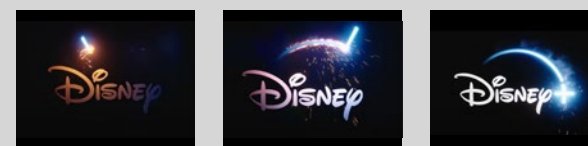
Sports broadcasters do a great job of championing their intellectual property. It's easier to attribute certain sports and events to them than it is to attribute titles to VoD providers – football fans for example can easily identify that a clip of a Champions League game is from BT Sport. The brand cues score for the sports adverts we tested was particularly high and far outpaced wider VoD providers.

Using established brand cues is one way to drive stronger branding but these take time to build and not every brand has them. Colour in particular can be hard to own – both Prime Video and Disney+ use blue. Sports brands balance this by using other elements linked to their channel, such as commentators.



Harness emotional highs to boost brand.

Having the brand on screen at emotional peaks in the story can be a great way to cement it in people's minds, though this needs to be done carefully to avoid interrupting content flow in VoD assets. Creative devices that integrate the brand logo with the content can also help, consider how Disney+ blends the iconic lightsaber with its logo for the new Obi Wan Kenobi series.



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Ads shouldn't just focus on specific shows. Brand (range) adverts are a compelling way to showcase who you are and what you offer, and make it easier for people to find something to love about you.

Ultimately, VoD assets aren't differentiated enough and that's making it harder for consumers to understand what's unique about service providers. Ads tend to take a similar creative approach and deploy the same

branding mechanisms without much impact. Our data shows that being meaningfully different, for example by setting yourself apart from other providers or leading trends in a category, is key to achieving brand growth. Product and service delivery are paramount to this, but an individual creative style is also imperative. For VoD brands, which fundamentally exist to entertain, it's even more important to establish a sense of distinctiveness – to be bold and stand out from the crowd.

Throughout the creative development process, teams should ask five important questions:

- Is the ad tailored to the brand, or could it be an ad for a competitor or even the wider category?
- Is the creative consistent with previous campaigns in terms of mood, tone and style?
- Are the brand personality and values reflected in the creative?
- Does the brand have a clear role in the story?
- Is it impossible to talk about the ad without referring to the brand?

CASE STUDY: AN AD THAT BLENDS THE WHAT, THE WHERE AND THE WOW

BBC iPlayer
'New for 2022'

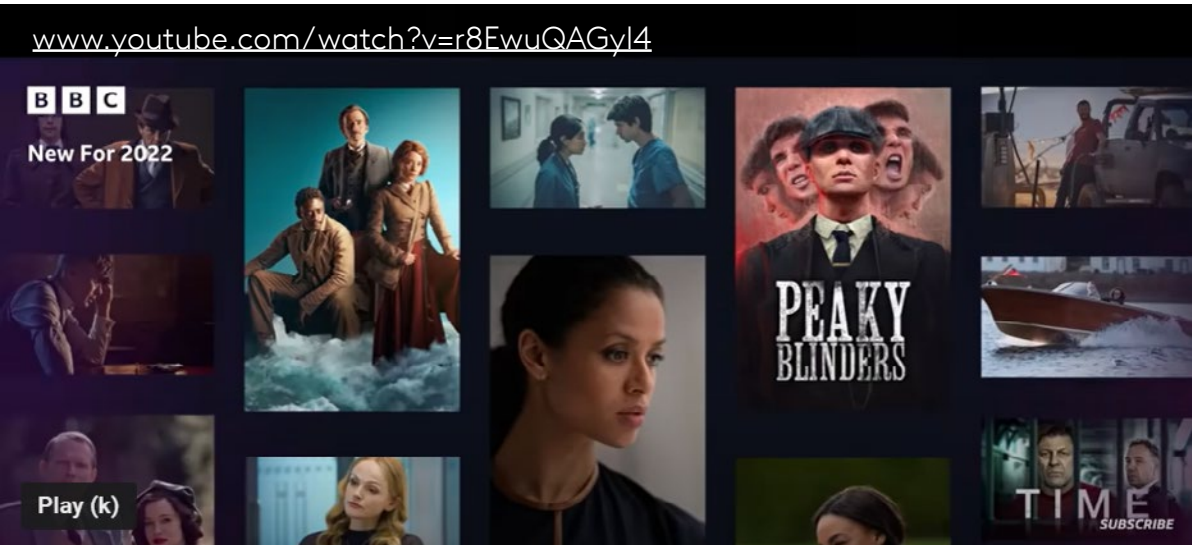
One of the best performing Video on Demand assets we tested was a brand range piece for BBC iPlayer called 'New for 2022'. It featured a range of upcoming content including: The Responder, The Tourist, This is Going to Hurt, Chloe and Peaky Blinders.

The advert follows some of the traditional rules of making great creative. It showcases famous faces throughout, including Jamie Dornan, Ben Wishaw, Martin Freeman, Cillian Murphy and Jodie Comer. It also uses music to create an exciting tempo and setting. Music enjoyment was extremely high among viewers who mentioned it unprompted as something they particularly liked, even if they couldn't name the song (My New life by Nick Kingsley and Danial Farrant).

This winning combination of content, talent, and music made for an incredibly strong emotional connection with viewers – feel good factor (a summary measure of emotions) was especially high. Consumers used words like 'excited' and

'inspired' as well as 'affectionate' and 'proud' to describe it, reflecting the BBC's reputation as a creator of home-grown content.

The advert also breaks the rules of traditional advertising. Facial coding (below) showed that intuitive responses were dominated by brow furrow and sadness as people concentrated and found some of the content difficult to watch, but their enjoyment remained extremely high. At times people felt confused but again, this wasn't necessarily a bad thing. These short clips show how VoD brands can create interest and intrigue – the footage scored higher than average for being 'involving'. The variety of shows worked well too, with consumers commenting on the range of genres in spontaneous feedback.



CASE STUDY SUCCESS



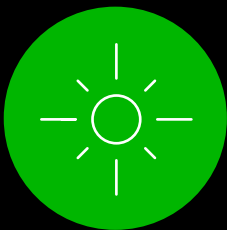
BRANDING
66



ENJOYMENT
86



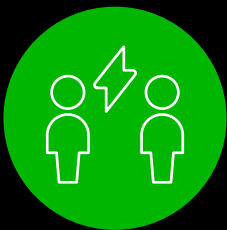
INVOLVEMENT
83



FEEL GOOD FACTOR
77



AFFINITY
80



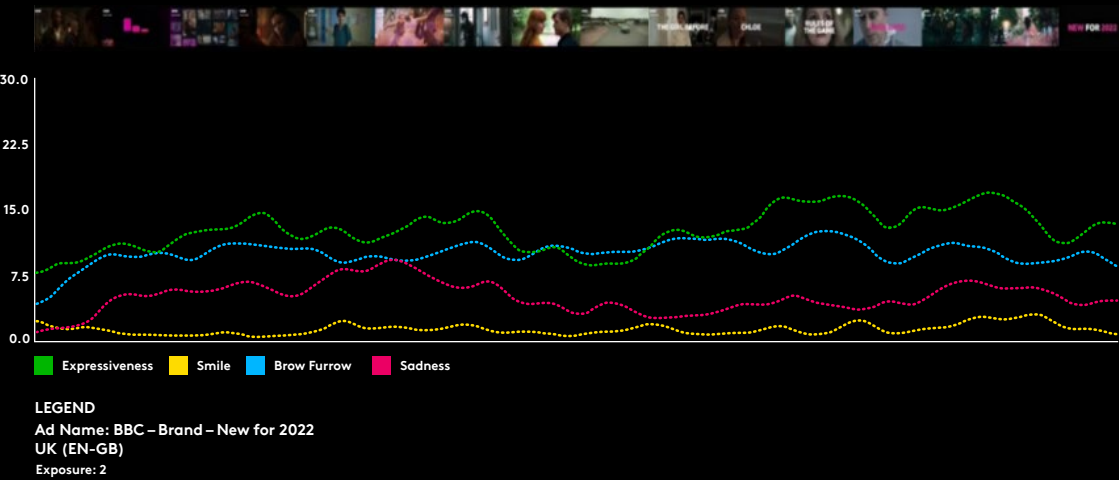
PERSUASION
74

This ad achieved the fourth highest branding score of the 30 we tested – it didn't quite make the top 30% of adverts within the Kantar database but there are still lessons to be learnt. The asset maximises several elements to create a strong link to the brand. Firstly, intellectual property – these types of shows, even specific programmes, are easily linked

to the BBC and the addition of the show names reinforces this. Secondly, the ad uses colour really well. It's a hard thing to get right; colour doesn't always cue a specific brand because it isn't ownable. Many brands like Virgin, Vodafone and Coke use red for example, but the BBC's strength is in its consistency. The pink, black and white identity has been used

for iPlayer since it launched in 2007. Finally, the ad shows the platform briefly and how people interact with it, making it very clear exactly where viewers should go.

In this case study, creativity has been combined with practicality – melding the what, the where and the wow.



Get in touch

Contact us to maximise your advertising ROI

At Kantar we are experts in the creative development process

To find out more about how we support VoD businesses to create great ads contact:

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James.Shepherd@kantar.com

We'd love to talk to you about how to put the spark in your next campaign. Join the 90% of the world's top advertisers who use

Link testing to optimise their creative. Our services boost advertising efficiency by 38%, with results delivered in just six hours by Kantar Marketplace.

Find out if your advertising will get noticed and build your brand; and discover more about our in-depth learnings on VoD advertising – whether it be brand ads, trailers or sports.

Authors:

Zoe Denny, Nicky, Carman, Mary Lumley.

Sources:

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¹ Kantar. Q1 2022. Entertainment on Demand Survey.

² Advertising Association, WARC. 2021. AA/WARC Expenditure Report. p.2.

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³ Based on Kantar Link database of global ads (2016-2021). No of ads :with celebrity (8,181) and without celebrity (40,116). Percentile point in engagement +9 for ads with celebrity.

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⁴ Based on 66267 Global TV, Digital, Static ads, (2016-2021) Kantar Link tested.

⁵ Kantar. 2022. Creative Effectiveness Awards: Revealing the world's most creative and effective ads. p.20.