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# How Sequencing Ads Drive Impact

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Findings of Ipsos/Google Advertising  
Sequencing Research Experiment

by Par Ljungstrom

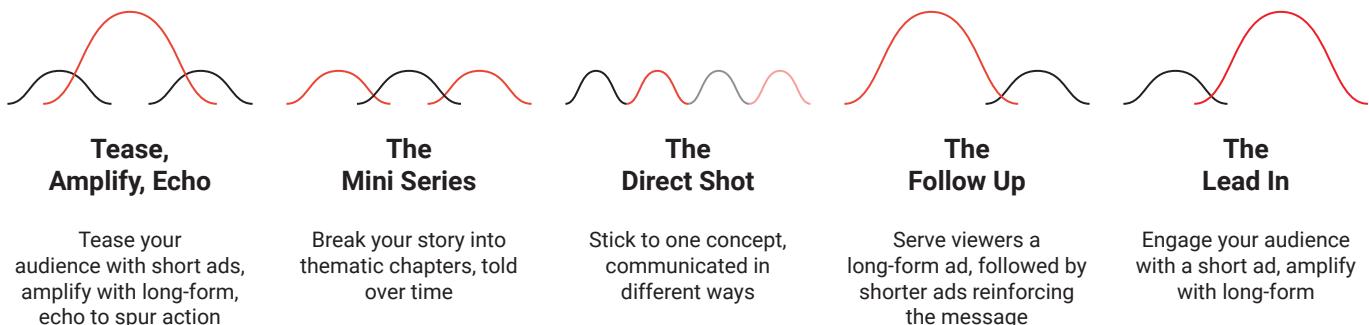
## Background & Objectives

Creativity is a critical driver of advertising impact and can benefit businesses over time: a creative idea is memorable and effective. Yet advertisers have to work harder to push their creative ideas through a cluttered, personalized media environment. As a result, advertisers are constantly striving to get the most impact out of their creative investment. As we know, relative to linear TV and other traditional advertising channels, digital media afford more control to customize what creative is served based on an individual's browsing history and the specific programming watched. However, perhaps less utilized (and explored), the digital medium also offers control over the **order** in which creatives are presented.

Recent research by Ipsos Media Development indicates that advertising is more effective when creative assets are linked and delivered in sequence. This allows brands to tell a more elaborate, more memorable story by moving viewers along a planned sequence of content. This article will present data that shows that the sequencing approach results in a significantly stronger impact on key funnel metrics such as awareness and purchase intent as well as ad recall and message retention.

## Methodology Overview

YouTube commissioned Ipsos to conduct research to prove and quantify any additional lift for 5 possible video ad sequence structures:



The test was conducted among a US consumer audience who were at least monthly YouTube viewers and use a smartphone. Surveys were administered online via the respondents' smartphones in November and December of 2018.

After screening, respondents were taken to a browser-based version of YouTube where they were free to explore and watch videos as they normally would.



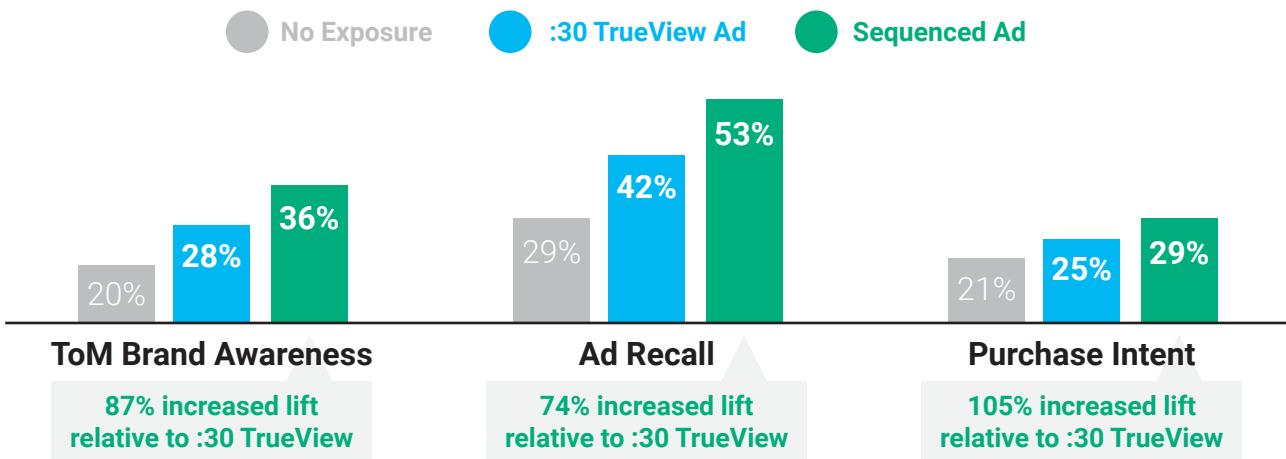
In partnership with EyeSquare, Ipsos inserted test ads at the beginning of the videos selected in the live YouTube environment and followed with a survey to measure brand lift.

For comparability purposes, each of the 5 sequences was created by Ipsos based on the 30 original TrueView ads. Each brand/ad included in this research thus served as both sequence, traditional TrueView and control an equal number of times. In total, Ipsos tested 30 video ad sequences of each type (150 total) vs. the original :30 TrueView ads they were sourced from among 7,500 respondents. Brands covered consumer goods with broad appeal. See appendix for more detail.

## Findings

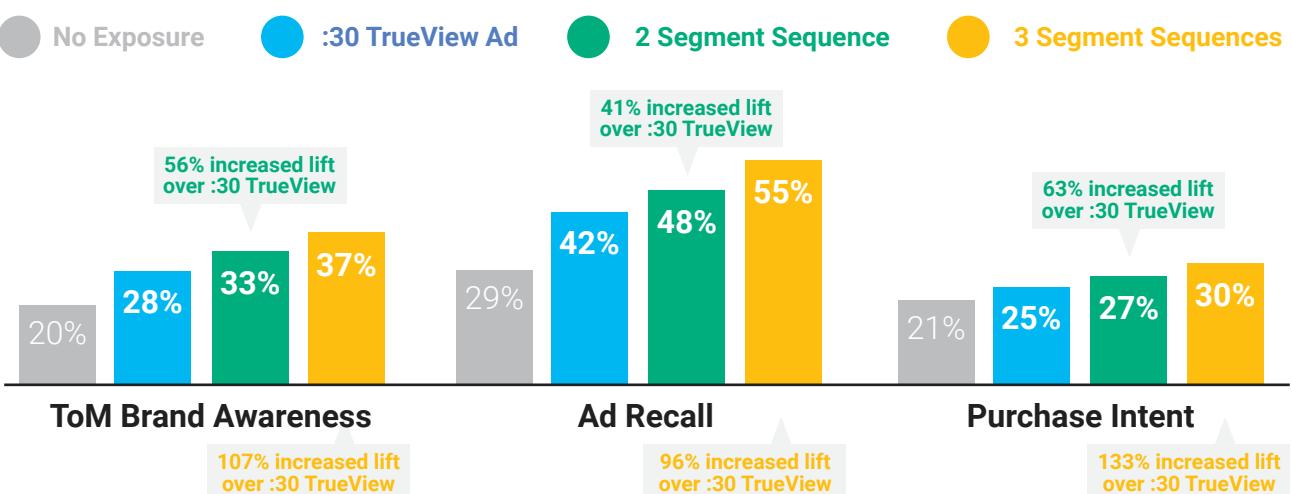
Research results were positive for the sequencing approach and showed – to varying degrees – a significantly increased impact relative to repetition of the same ads in non-sequenced form.

In aggregate, sequences have a significantly greater lift on KPIs across the brand funnel vs. repeating ads. The impact is most noticeable on ToM (Top of Mind) Brand Awareness, Ad Recall and Purchase Intent.



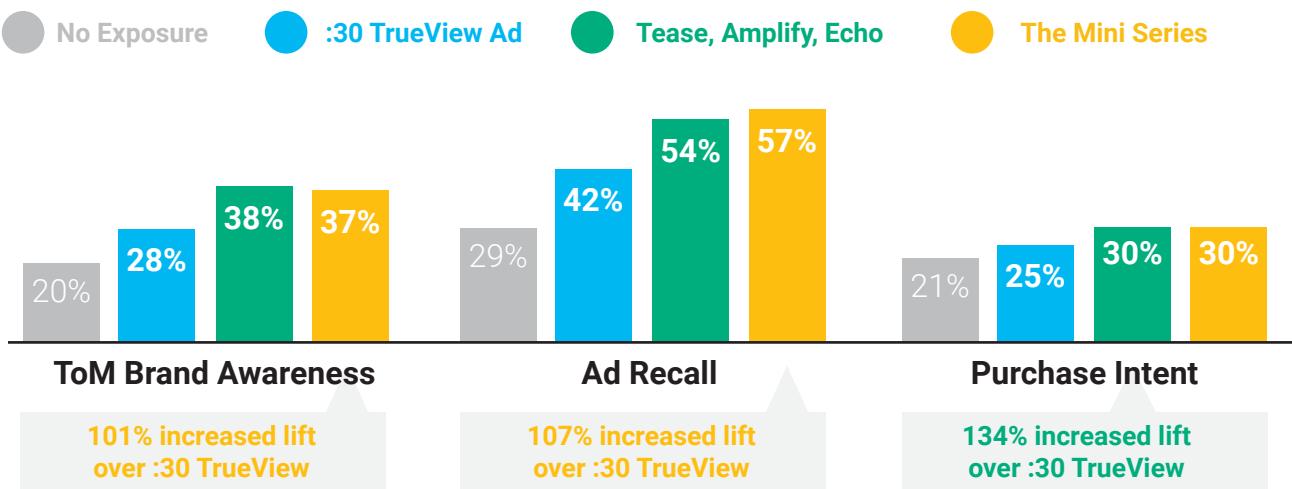
Average brand lift of all 5 sequences. Exposure to either sequenced or repeating ads improve brand KPIs, but sequencing supercharges the lift - video ad sequences had a significantly higher impact than two repeating :30 TrueView ads on Ad Recall and Purchase Intent, with an increased average lift of 74% and 105% relative to no exposure, respectively.

Frequency of ad exposure also plays a role – when we compare 2 segment sequences (e.g. a sequence of two ads) to 3 segment sequences, we see a greater impact among the 3 segment sequences.



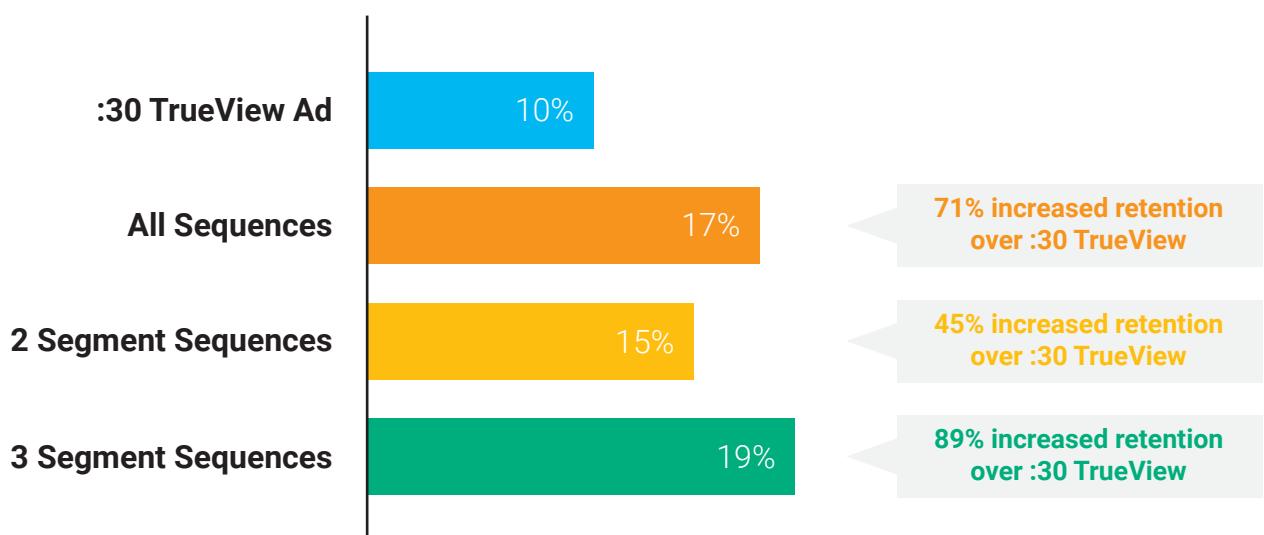
Longer video ad sequences (3 ads) had a significantly higher impact than two repeating :30 TrueView ads on Ad Recall and Purchase Intent, with an increased average lift of 96% and 133% respectively relative to no exposure. Shorter video ad sequences (2 ads) had a significantly higher impact than two repeating :30 TrueView ads on Ad Recall and Purchase Intent, with an increased average lift of 41% and 63% respectively relative to no exposure.

Beyond the overall greater lift for 3 segment vs. 2 segment sequences, differences between sequence types are small. ToM Brand Awareness, Ad Recall and Purchase intent is significantly higher across all sequences compared to two repeating :30 TrueView ads.



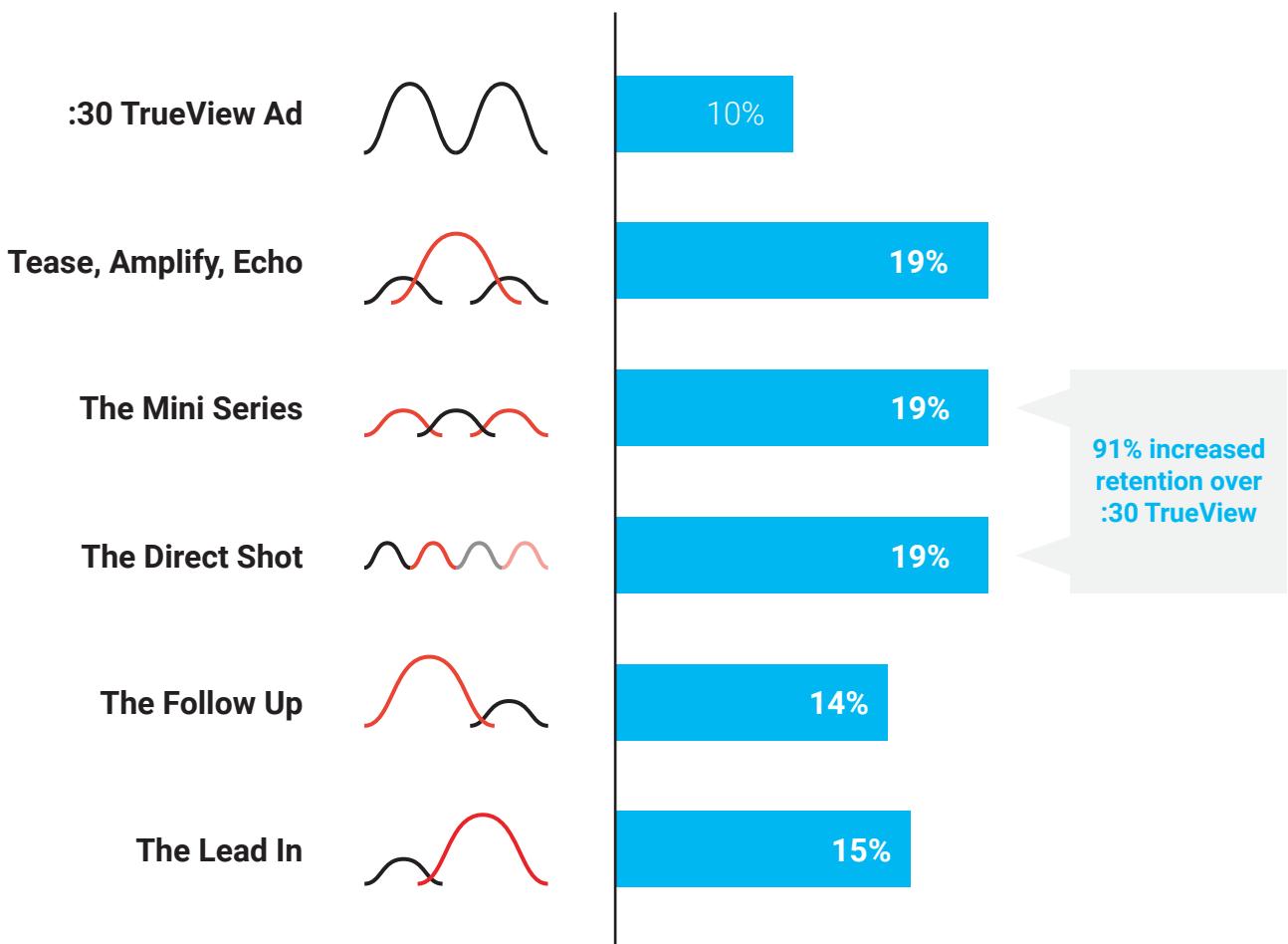
The Mini Series sequence had a significantly higher impact than two repeating :30 TrueView ads on Ad Recall with an increased average lift of 107% relative to no exposure. The Tease, Amplify, Echo sequence had a significantly higher impact than two repeating :30 TrueView ads on Purchase Intent, with an increased average lift of 134% relative to no exposure.

Sequenced ads also result in a significantly higher key ad message retention relative to two repeating :30 TrueView ads.



Overall, video ad sequences showed a significantly higher ability to drive key message retention compared to two repeating :30 TrueView ads, with an average increased retention rate of 71% relative to no exposure. Longer video ad sequences showed a significantly higher ability to drive key message retention compared to two repeating :30 TrueView ads, with an average increased key message retention of 89% relative to no exposure. Shorter video ad sequences showed a significantly higher ability to drive key message retention compared to two repeating :30 TrueView ads, with an average increased key message retention of 45% relative to no exposure.

Further – though the 3 vs. 2 segment differences are apparent again - all segment types have significantly higher message retention compared to the two repeating :30 TrueView ads.



The Direct Shot video ad sequence showed a significantly higher ability to drive key message retention compared to two repeating :30 TrueView ads, with an average increased retention rate of 91%.

## Conclusion

The study results clearly show how variation via sequencing lifts brand and ad awareness as well as purchase intent and improves message retention and gives a compelling reason to customize your digital campaigns beyond the standard repeating :30 sec TrueView spot.

Sequencing your creative presents an opportunity to increase impact with the same number of impressions thus adding to the list of advantages afforded by digital platforms over traditional linear media with yet another way to get more bang for your buck.

## Appendix

### Sampling and quotas

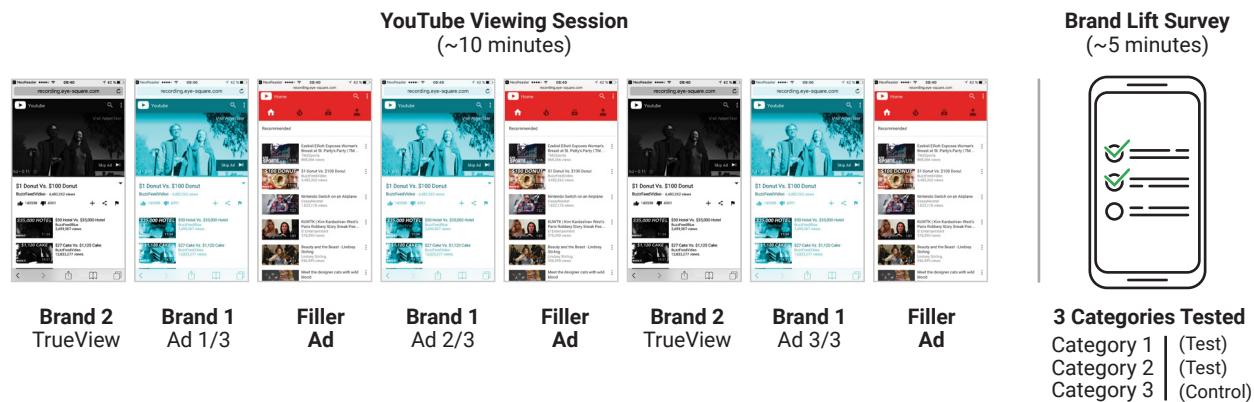
All sample was drawn from Ipsos and partners online panels and used quotas set on age/gender composition to mirror the YouTube user base.

### Ad Exposure

To allow exposure to multiple ads for the test within a reasonable timeframe during the YouTube browsing session, the available content was limited in length to ~2 minutes or shorter videos. The respondent had full freedom to search and select among all YouTube videos that fit the time limit criteria.

Each respondent was exposed to a sequence for one brand and two repeating :30 TrueView ads (which can be skipped after 5 seconds) for another brand. The follow up survey then asked about the two test brands (sequence and :30 TrueView) as well as a third control brand.

Example of YouTube viewing session flow:



Each respondent was exposed to ads for 2 test brands and provided responses for another brand for control purposes.

- **Test Stimuli 1** One of the following sequences for one brand:

- Tease, Amplify, Echo: 3 ads (6" + TrV|30" + 6")
- The Mini Series: 3 ads (6" + 6" + 6")
- The Direct Shot: 3 ads (6" + 6" + 6")
- The Follow Up: 2 ads (TrV|30" + 6")
- The Lead In: 2 ads (6" + TrV|30")

- **Test Stimuli 2** One :30 TrueView ad for a different brand, served twice (to balance estimated watchtime with sequences)

- Ads were presented in a fixed order with a rotation to have an equal number of instances where the sequenced ad and non-sequenced ad is presented last to eliminate any order bias.

The following rotation was used for sequences with three segments:

- Tease, Amplify, Echo: 3 ads (6" + TrV|30" + 6")
- The Mini Series: 3 ads (6" + 6" + 6")
- The Direct Shot: 3 ads (6" + 6" + 6")

	Ad 1	Ad 2	Ad 3	Ad 4	Ad 5	Ad 6	Ad 7	Ad 8
1	H	S1	F1	S2	F2	H	S3	F3
2	S1	H	F1	S2	F2	S3	H	F3

The following rotation was used for sequences with two segments:

- The Follow Up: 2 ads (TrV|30" + 6")
- The Lead In: 2 ads (6" + TrV|30")

	Ad 1	Ad 2	Ad 3	Ad 4	Ad 5	Ad 6	Ad 7	Ad 8
1	F1	H	S1	F2	F3	H	S2	F4
2	F1	S1	H	F2	F3	S2	H	F4

F = filler ad

H = non-sequenced ad

S = sequenced ad

## Ad Selection

The ads selected for this study had the key components of a complete dramatic arc (exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution) so they could be edited and split into individual pieces of the sequence, like a teaser, a follow up, a chapter in a series, etc.

General guidelines for ad and brand selection:

- Recent ads: all ads have been “on air” within the past 6-8 months.
- Geographically relevant ads: ads must have been “on air” in the test market
- Broad target ads: avoid ads focused on regions within the market or those targeted to specific demographic groups only.
- Branding issues: avoid brands with very complex names or ads presenting more than one brand.
- Avoid promotional and/or seasonal ads: ads for specific holiday season or specific/time sensitive promo.
- Ads must be of public domain: all ads must be available on YouTube.
- Format: all ads used as the :30 TrueView ads are exactly :30 seconds long.

## Ad Editing

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Each of the original ads in this study were edited to produce the 5 sequences needed by an Ipsos partner. Broad directions for editing were given as below and the final stimuli was arrived at via an iterative process with final approval from Google.

General guidelines for ad and brand selection:

- Tease, Amplify, Echo: use the beginning (exposition, conflict, rising action) as a teaser with a 6" ad; follow this with the full video (TrueView 30"); and follow up showing how the brand resolves the conflict with another 6", with emphasis on the key brand message.
- The Mini Series: split the original ad into 3 chapters showcasing how the brand resolves the conflict; use a 6" ad to introduce to the conflict, another 6" to present the climax and a third 6" to present the resolution to the conflict.
- The Direct Shot: based on the hero ad, create 3-4 6" ads to reinforce one concept. Other ads part of a similar campaign can be used to produce the short form ads.
- The Follow Up: full video (TrueView 30") and a 6" ad as follow up showing how the brand resolves the conflict, with emphasis on the key brand message.
- The Lead In: use the beginning (exposition, conflict, rising action) as a way to engage the audience with a 6" ad; follow this with the full video (TrueView 30").

## Ad Categories

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Full list of ad categories in the survey.

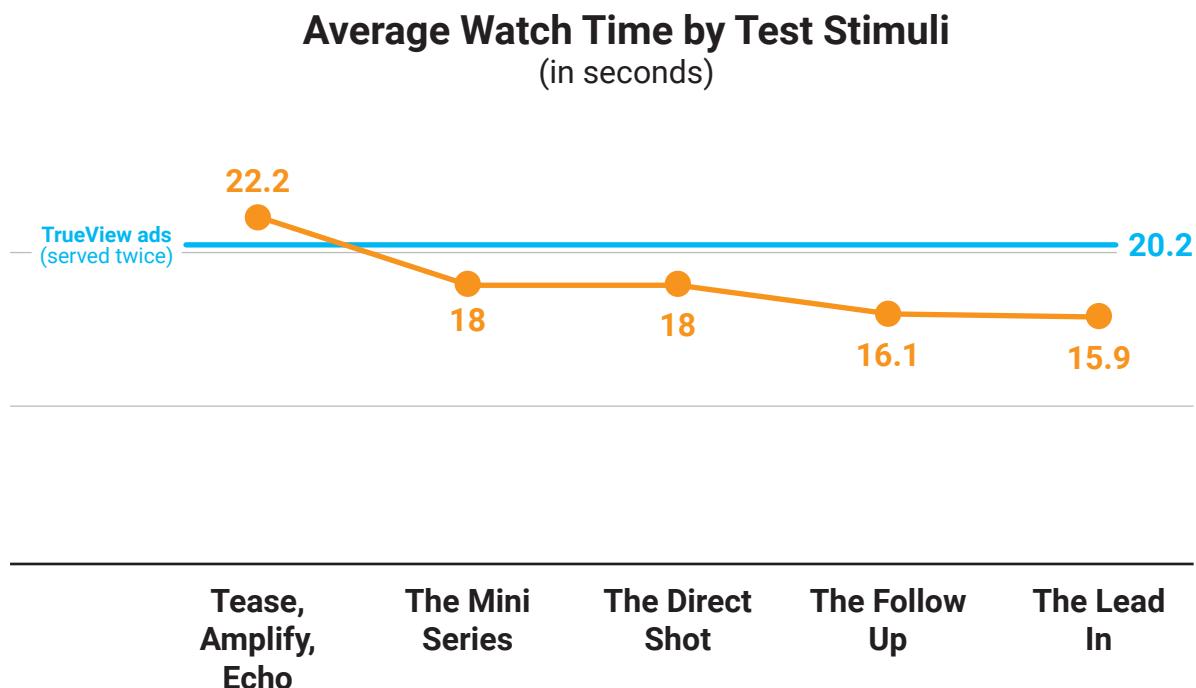
- Airline tickets
- Tooth paste
- Booking services
- Toilet paper
- Batteries
- Chips
- Fast food
- Delivery pizza
- Beer
- Cookies
- Car tires
- Yogurt
- Cell phone service provider
- Kitchen range
- Mattresses
- Water filters
- Energy drinks
- Cell phones
- Car insurance
- Odor eliminators
- Package shipping services
- Frozen pizza
- A new car
- Meal kit subscriptions
- Paper towels
- Television
- Vacuums
- Pain relief
- Pest control
- Detergent

## Ad View Time

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Since sequences are, by definition, a series of ads, the benchmark TrueView ad was served twice to reduce the potential impact of total number of seconds on screen of sequences versus TrueViews.

Benchmark TrueView ads had an estimated average watch time of 20.2 seconds, while our longer sequences averages ranged between 18 and 22.2 seconds. Shorter sequences estimated average watch time was about 16 seconds.



## Key Message Retention

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Respondents who recalled seeing the specific ads shown in sequence, or as repeating :30 sec TrueViews were asked to describe the content in an open-ended survey question. These answers were reviewed and compared to the ad narrative and coded as either correct or incorrect. Key message retention percentages shown in this article is the share 'correct' based to all respondents.

## About Ipsos

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Ipsos is an independent market research company controlled and managed by research professionals. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has grown into a worldwide research group with a strong presence in all key markets. Ipsos ranks fourth in the global research industry.

With offices in 89 countries, Ipsos delivers insightful expertise across five research specializations: brand, advertising and media; customer loyalty; marketing; public affairs research; and survey management.

Ipsos researchers assess market potential and interpret market trends. They develop and build brands. They help clients build long-term relationships with their customers. They test advertising and study audience responses to various media and they measure public opinion around the globe.

Ipsos has been listed on the Paris Stock Exchange since 1999 and generated global revenues of €1,749.5 million in 2018.

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