



Attention Unblocked

Lumen Attention and Outcomes Study

November 2025

Background and Objectives

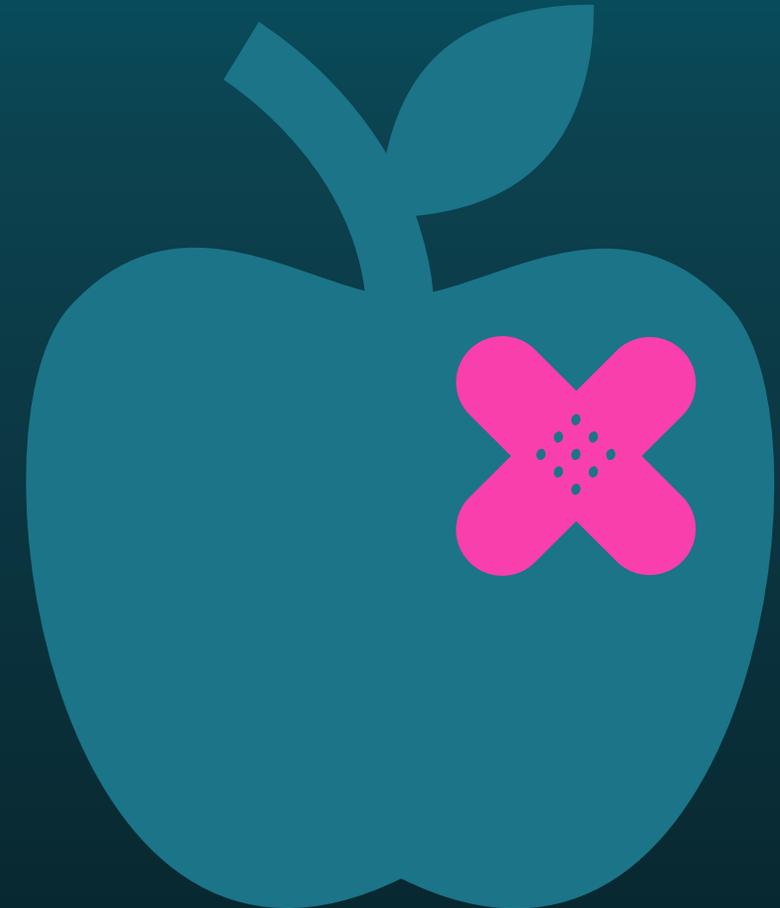
The bruised apple problem...

Background and Objectives

Today, blunt keyword blocking causes brands to avoid entire news sites, even when the content is high-quality, balanced, and aligned with their values. It's like tossing out a whole basket of fruit just because one apple has a bruise.

Instead of just scanning keywords, **Synexus** analyses the tone and topics that are being discussed. This allows advertisers to safely reintroduce premium journalism into their media plans, driving better reach, performance, and efficiency without added risk.

Synexus, alongside **LUMEN**, conducted an attention and outcomes study to prove the value of their technology to brands in terms of helping gain attention and outcomes.

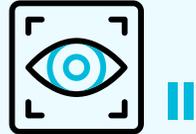


For respondents, the study flowed as below



10-minute online survey with 450 respondents from the US, aged 18+, who are online readers of finance, healthcare or politics topics. They accessed Lumen software via their desktop, turning their device into an eye tracking camera.

A control group of 200 people of the same demographics took part in a non-eye tracking study.



Respondents were split into three test cells of 150 and were asked to browse three webpage articles. Group 1 saw non-polarising news content; Group 2 saw polarising news content (as flagged by Synexus' technology) and Group 3 saw non-news / lifestyle content. **The same 6 test ads were placed across each context to measure impact.** The control group saw the non-news pages too, but with different ads used as a distraction.



Following the task, respondents were asked their **perception of the environment**, such as trustworthiness and suitability for advertising, as well as general perceptions around advertising in different environments.



Respondents also answered questions measuring spontaneous and prompted brand recall, brand choice and brand favourability to **measure impact of exposure on brand outcomes.**



The research environment

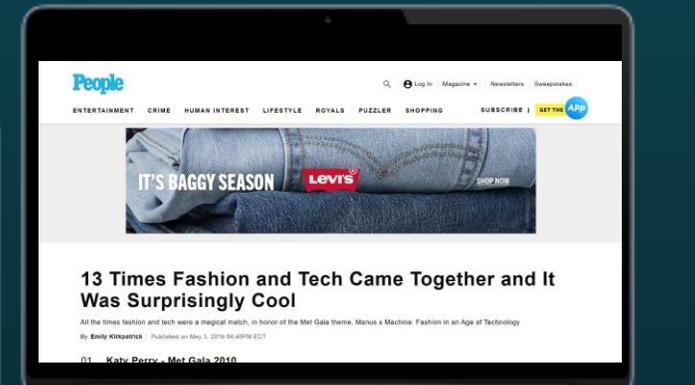
Lumen created **mock versions of real news and lifestyle articles** broadly covering the topics on tech, healthcare and world-related news and information. This allowed for control over the advertising shown on each page. Lumen's eye tracking software was then integrated into the environments allowing for respondent's attention to be captured and linked to the elements appearing on screen.



Example of non-polarising page



Example of polarising page



Example of non-news page



These 6 brands were included in the research, allowing a range of brand categories to be covered.

Methodology

Visual attention metrics

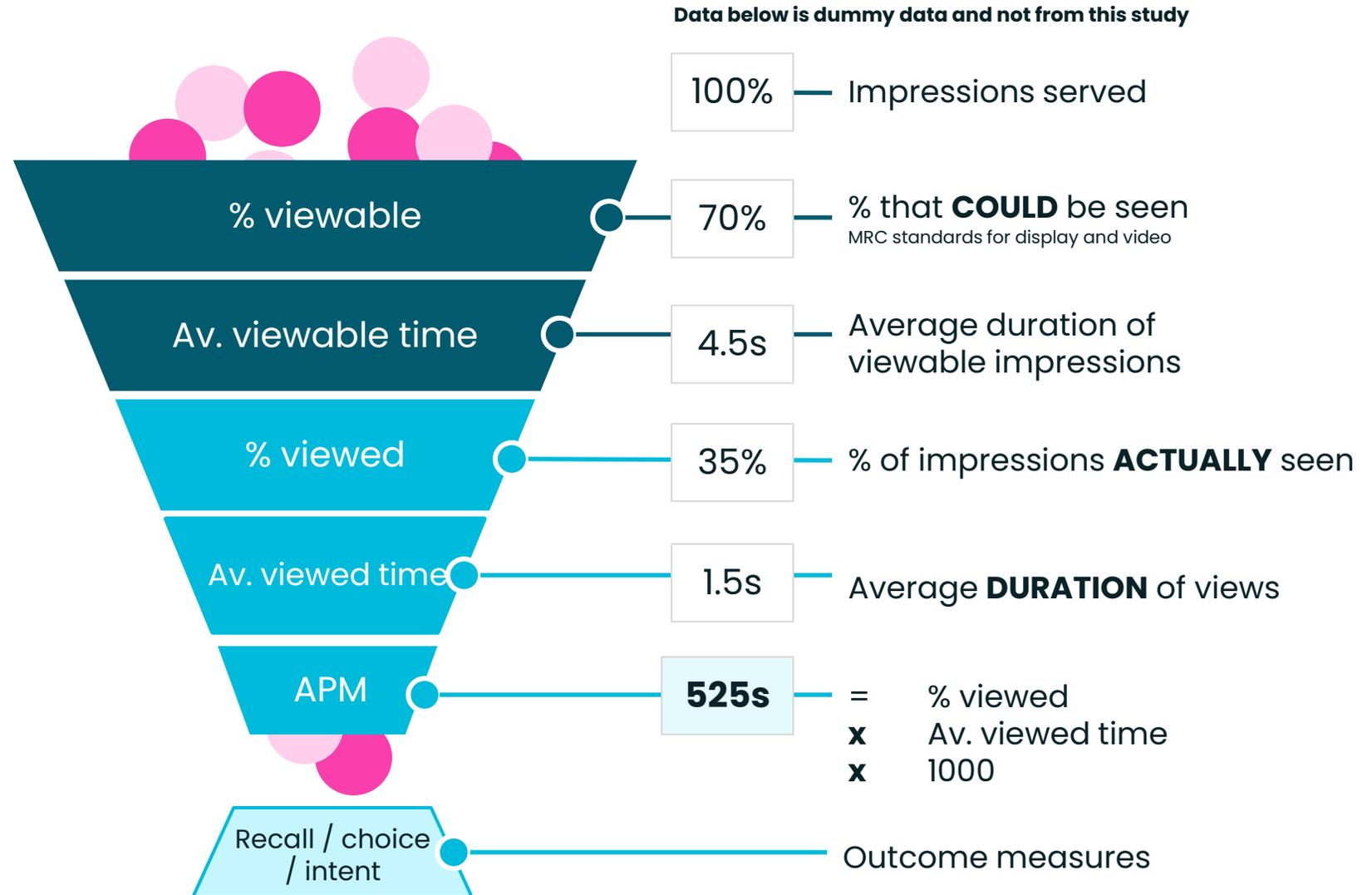
Why the funnel?

Existing verification tools are not effective in determining the attentive quality of media.

Lumen's attention funnel is built on eye-tracking based attention measurement metrics for media effectiveness.

APM (attention per mille)

This composite metric helps us understand the true power of advertising to deliver 'eye balls' for advertisers and can be used as a single metric to assess inventory quality across media channels.



Executive Summary

Synexus: Attention Unblocked



Trust and audience confidence matter

Audiences approach news with mixed confidence, highlighting the importance of trustworthy, balanced environments for advertisers. **Non-polarising and non-news content tested in the study was significantly more trustworthy (+71% uplift)**, highlighting how context perceptions can massively differ.



Attention peaks in non-polarising & lifestyle contexts

While viewability was similar across environments, the proportion of ads actually viewed is highest in non-polarising content (84%) and lowest in polarising (79%). **Polarising contexts reduce the attention generated by ~25%**, reinforcing the risk of divisive environments for brands.



Perceptions suffer in polarising news environments

Only 53% said polarising content is suitable for ads compared to 83–86% in non-polarising/non-news. Among the minority influenced by the content, **polarising news doubled the likelihood of negative ad perceptions**, while non-polarising and non-news strengthened positivity.



Trusted, balanced environments are more efficient for memory formation

Spontaneous and prompted **recall was significantly higher in non-polarising environments** vs. polarising. Non-news content showed similar recall to non-polarising, suggesting trusted environments support memory efficiently. Attention converted to recall faster when shown next to non-polarising content, whereas ads next to polarising content required more attention to achieve the same recall.



Choice & favourability favour non-polarising & non-news

Non-polarising and non-news content provide the strongest overall brand impact in brand choice and favourability; while polarising news delivers minimal gains. Brand choice uplift was highest in non-news (9.1% vs. 4.1% non-polarising and 1% polarising). Choice can benefit from non-news environments, likely due to a relaxed mindset, but memory and perception always peak in trusted, non-polarising contexts.

Attention

Section summary

Non-polarising and non-news content capture more attention than polarising news, with higher % viewed, longer viewed time, and more attentive seconds per 1,000 impressions.

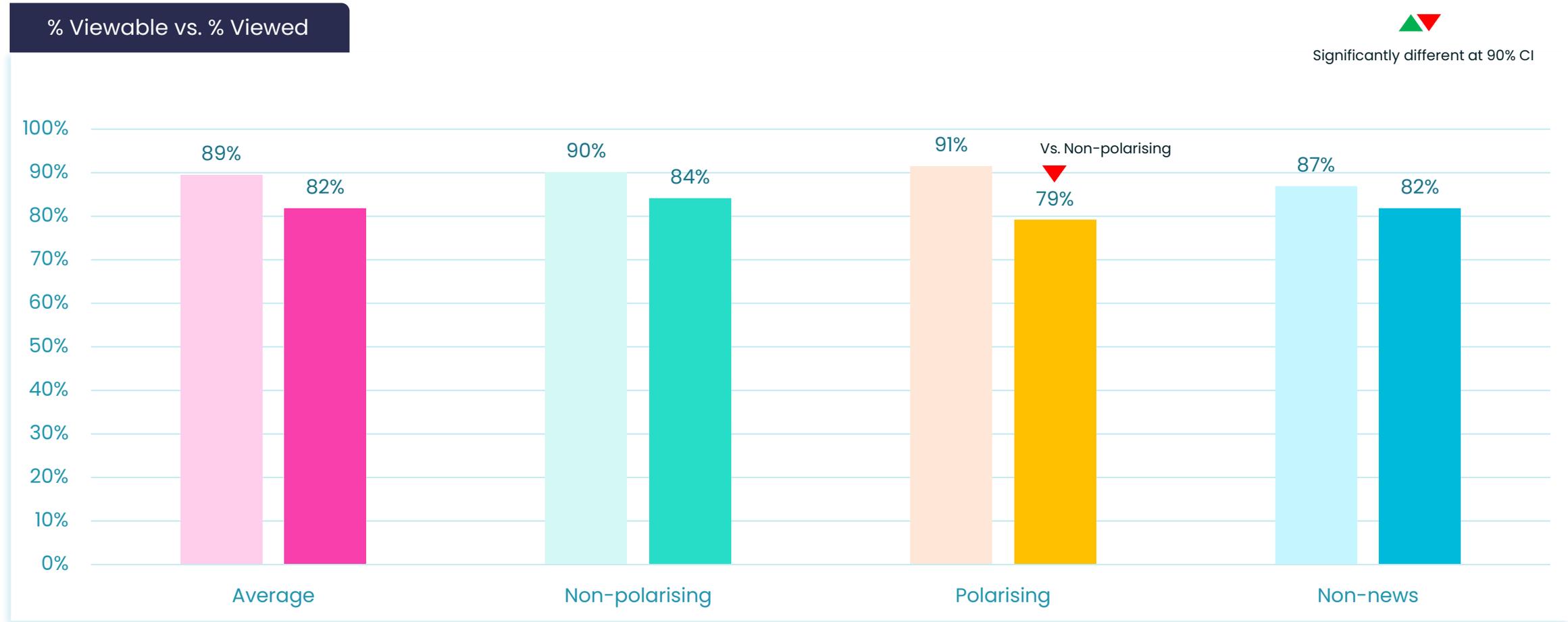
While most users give only brief attention to the display ads (consistent with typical scanning behaviour), those in trusted or engaging environments were more likely to engage with these ads for at least 2s (considered the golden window for outcomes), thus improving recall potential.

Consumers also indicate they **pay more attention to ads when the news interests them**, reinforcing the value of safe, relevant, non-polarising environments for effective advertising.



Trusted, balanced environments increase the likelihood that ads are seen

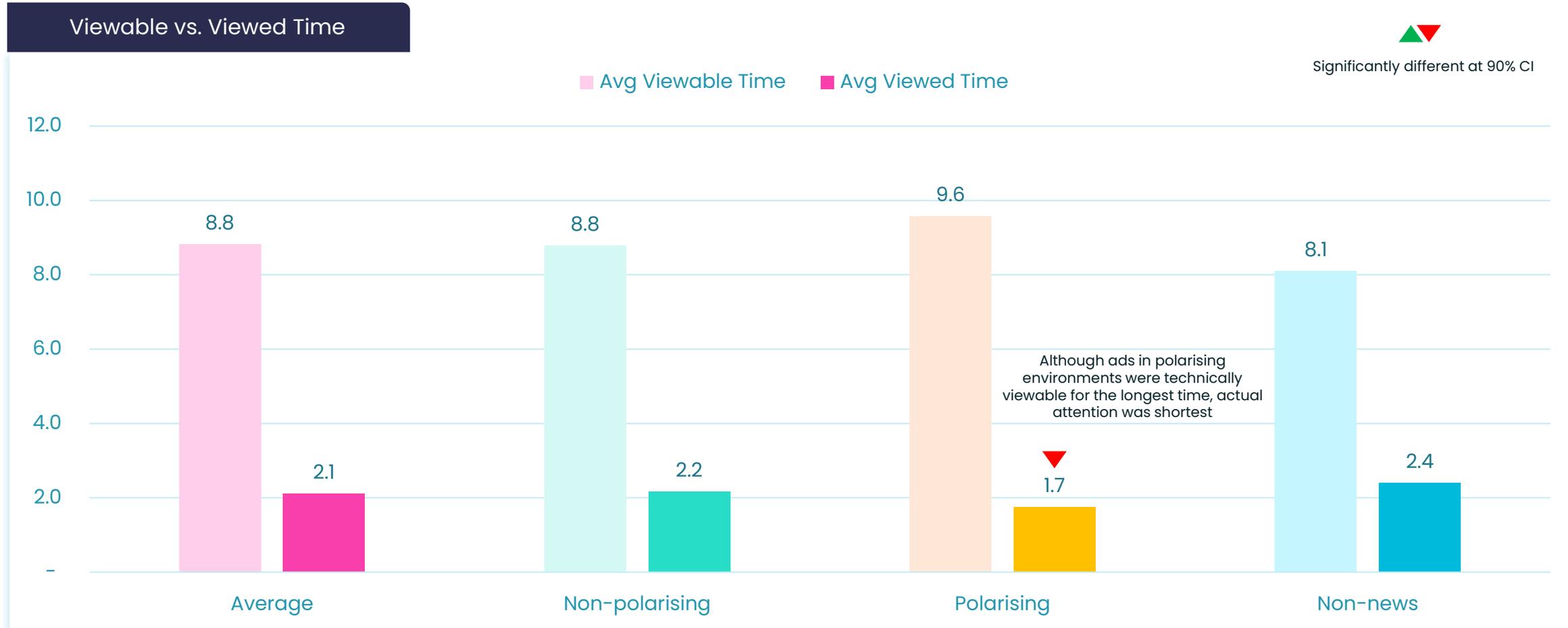
While all environments have similar viewability, the proportion of ads actually viewed is highest in non-polarising content (84%) and lowest in polarising content (79%), highlighting the impact of environment on ad attention.



Number of impressions: All = 1,156, Non-polarising = 420, Polarising = 373, Non-news = 363

Ads in polarising environments are viewed for less time despite similar viewability

While all ads are technically viewable for ~8–9 seconds, actual viewed time is shortest in polarising content (1.7s) and highest in non-news (2.4s) and non-polarising content (2.2s), highlighting the impact of environment on attention.



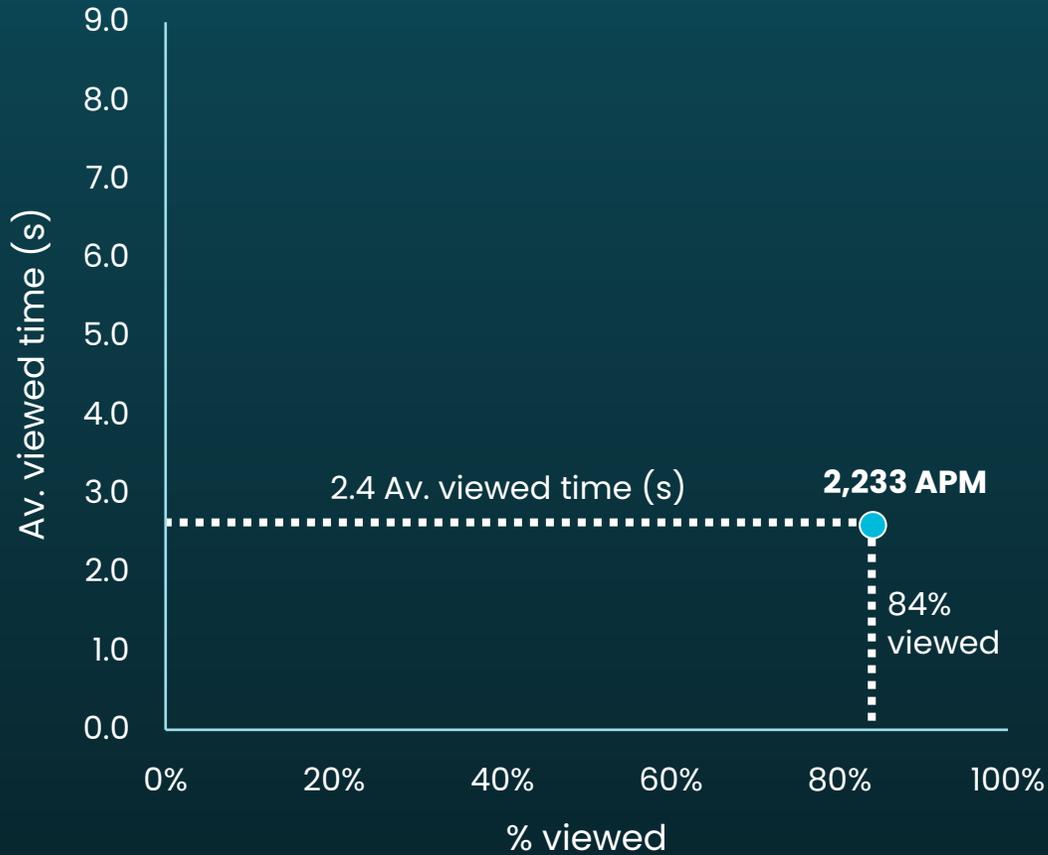
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52%

**...agreed they pay more attention to
ads when reading news that
interests them**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (T2B%)

Data below is dummy data and not from this study



How do Lumen calculate APM?

Attention per mille (APM)

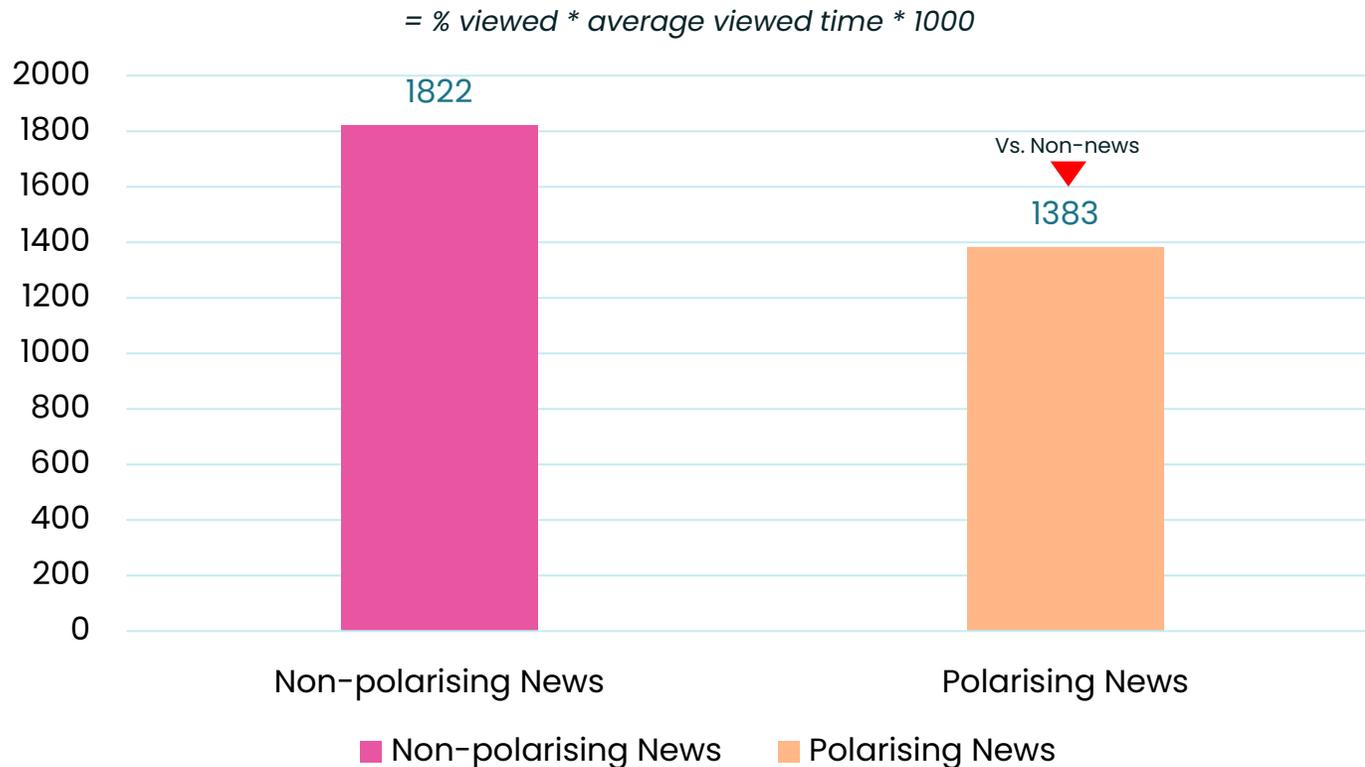
This composite metric helps us understand the true power of advertising to deliver 'eye balls' for advertisers and can be used as a single metric to assess inventory quality across media platforms.

Calculation

$\% \text{ viewed} \times \text{av. viewed time} \times 1000 = \text{APM}$

Advertising next to non-polarizing content improves the attention generated by 25%

Attentive seconds per 1,000 impressions



Utilising Lumen's eye tracking technology, due to higher % viewed and longer dwell, Attentive seconds per 1,000 impressions (APM) is highest in non-polarising news content (1,822), compared with polarising news content (1,383).

Non-polarising contexts improves the efficiency of ad exposure by ~25%, reinforcing the risk of divisive environments for brands.

Significantly different at 95% CI

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Perceptions

Section summary

Polarising news diminishes trust, ad suitability, and advertising impact, whereas non-polarising and lifestyle content provide safe, high-performing environments.

While most respondents say articles don't influence their perceptions, the minority who do show a clear pattern: **divisive content harms, trusted content protects.**

Consumers also indicate they prefer brands next to reliable, serious news - reinforcing the value of safe, non-polarising environments for advertising.



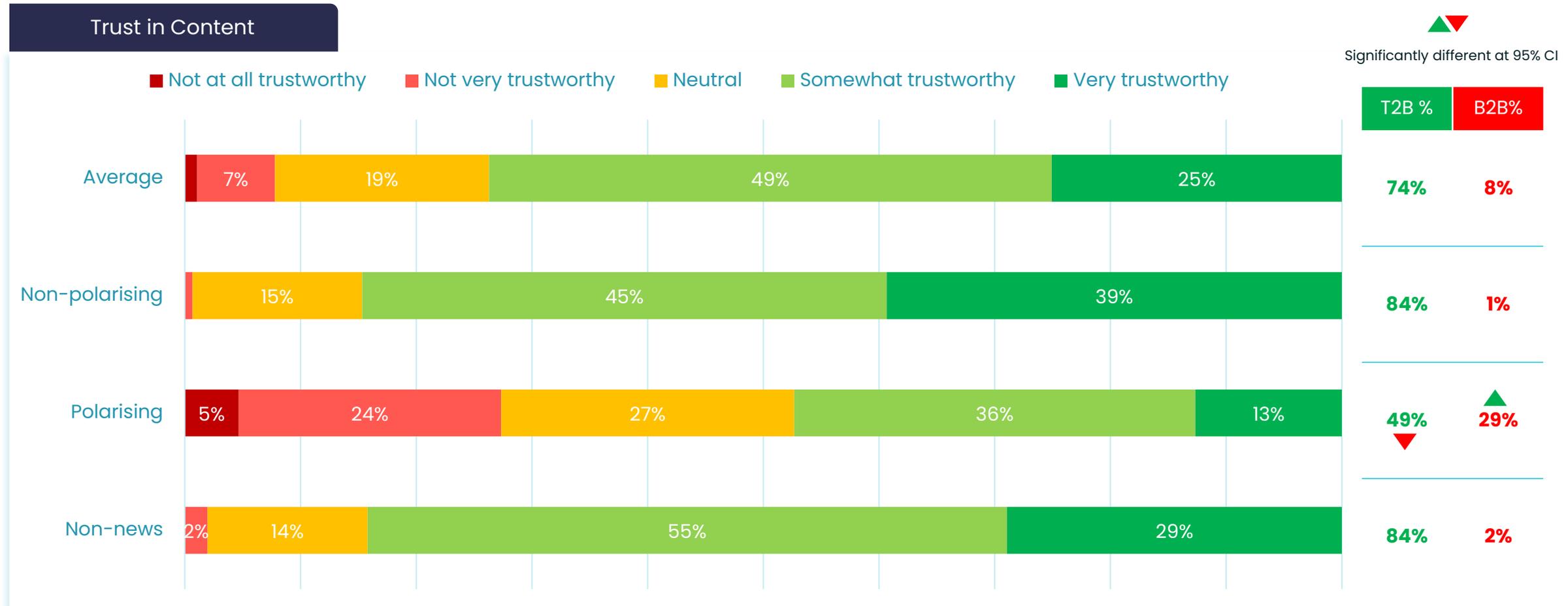
78%

**...agreed that trusted news websites
are a safe place for brands to
advertise**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (T2B%)

Trust collapses in polarising news environments, but stays strong in balanced news and lifestyle contexts

Trust in article content is dramatically lower in polarising environments (49% vs. 84% in non-polarising and non-news, leading to +71% proportional uplift vs. polarising), with nearly one in three finding such content untrustworthy - highlighting the fragility of trust in divisive contexts.



Trust in content: How trustworthy did you find the article content?

Questionnaire Base: All = 654, Non-polarising = 150, Polarising = 150, Non-news = 152, Control = 202

79%

**...agreed that brands should support
quality journalism by advertising on
reliable news sites**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (T2B%)

73%

...agreed Just because a news article mentions a sensitive or serious topic doesn't mean it's a bad place for advertising

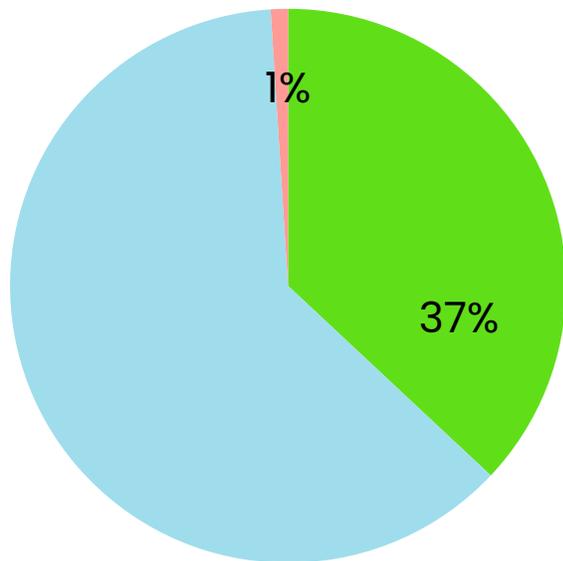
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (T2B%)

Negative ad perceptions are 18x more likely when appearing next to polarizing content

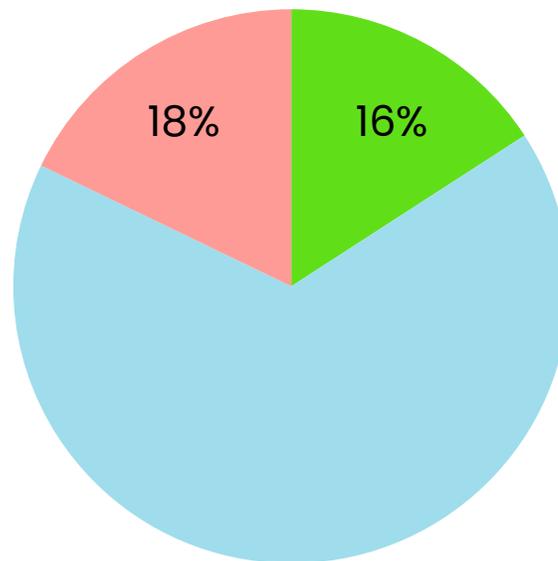
Although many claimed the ad's environment had little effect, non-polarising news more than doubled the likelihood of positive ad perceptions.

Influence on Ad Perceptions

Non-Polarising



Polarising



■ Net positive ■ Neutral ■ Net Negative ■ Net positive ■ Neutral ■ Net Negative

Of those who were influenced there was a clear pattern: polarising content harms, trusted content protects; with negative ad perceptions up to 18x more likely when ads appeared against polarising content.

When ads appear against non polarising news content, positive perceptions are >2x more likely

Content influence: How much did the article content influence your perception of the advertising on the pages you were shown?

Questionnaire Base: All = 654, Non-polarising = 150, Polarising = 150, Non-news = 152, Control = 202

58%

...agreed they trust brands more when they see their ads next to serious, trustworthy content rather than clickbait

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (T2B%)

Outcomes

Section summary

Brands perform better in trusted, non-polarising environments, with higher spontaneous and prompted recall and faster memory encoding compared with polarising content.

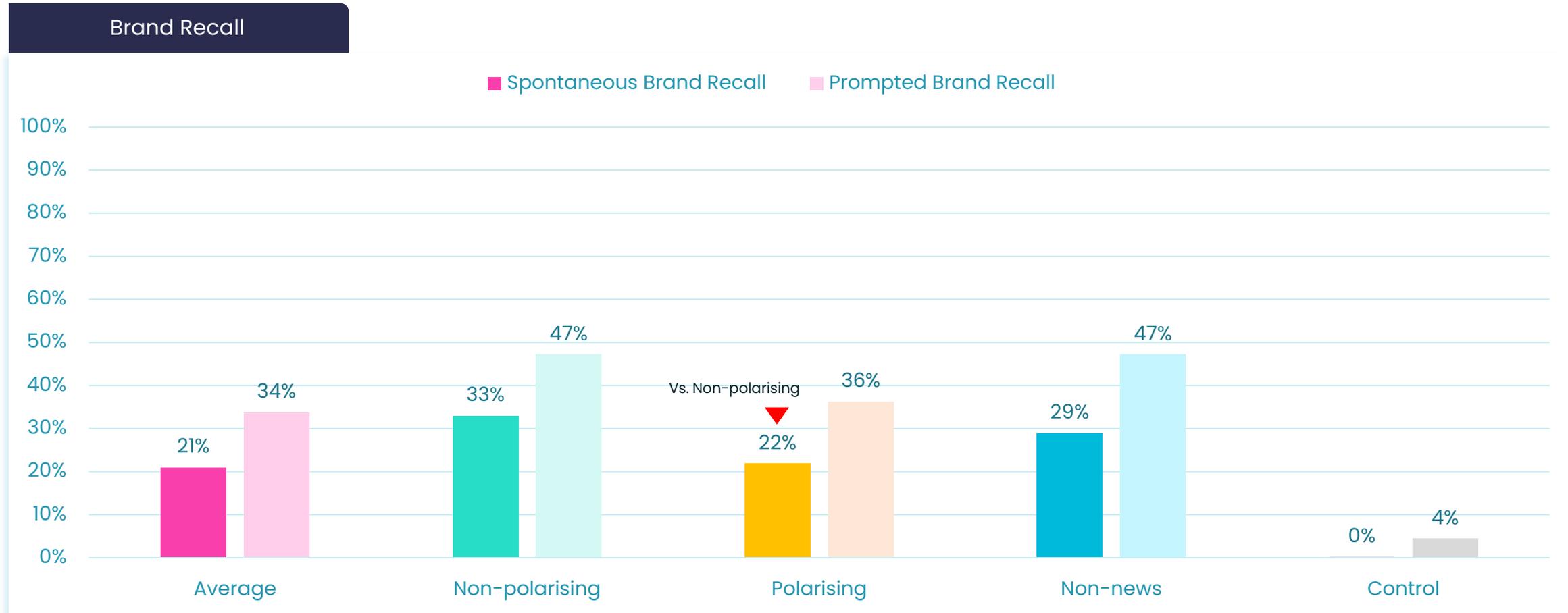
Non-news, lifestyle content shows similar strong recall, highlighting the effectiveness of neutral contexts.

Advertising in non-polarising or non-news environments also **drives greater brand favourability and choice uplifts**, whereas polarising content delivers minimal gains. Even modest differences underscore the value of safe, balanced environments for building attention, memory, and brand attitudes.



Brands are remembered better in trusted, non-polarising environments

Spontaneous recall is significantly higher in non-polarising contexts (33%, vs. 22% for polarising), while prompted recall is also elevated (47% vs 36%). Non-news lifestyle content shows similar strong recall to non-polarising, suggesting neutral environments enhance brand memory compared with divisive content.



Spontaneous Recall: Which brands, if any, do you remember seeing advertising for on the pages you were just shown?

Prompted Recall: Did any of these companies have ads in the session you just experienced?

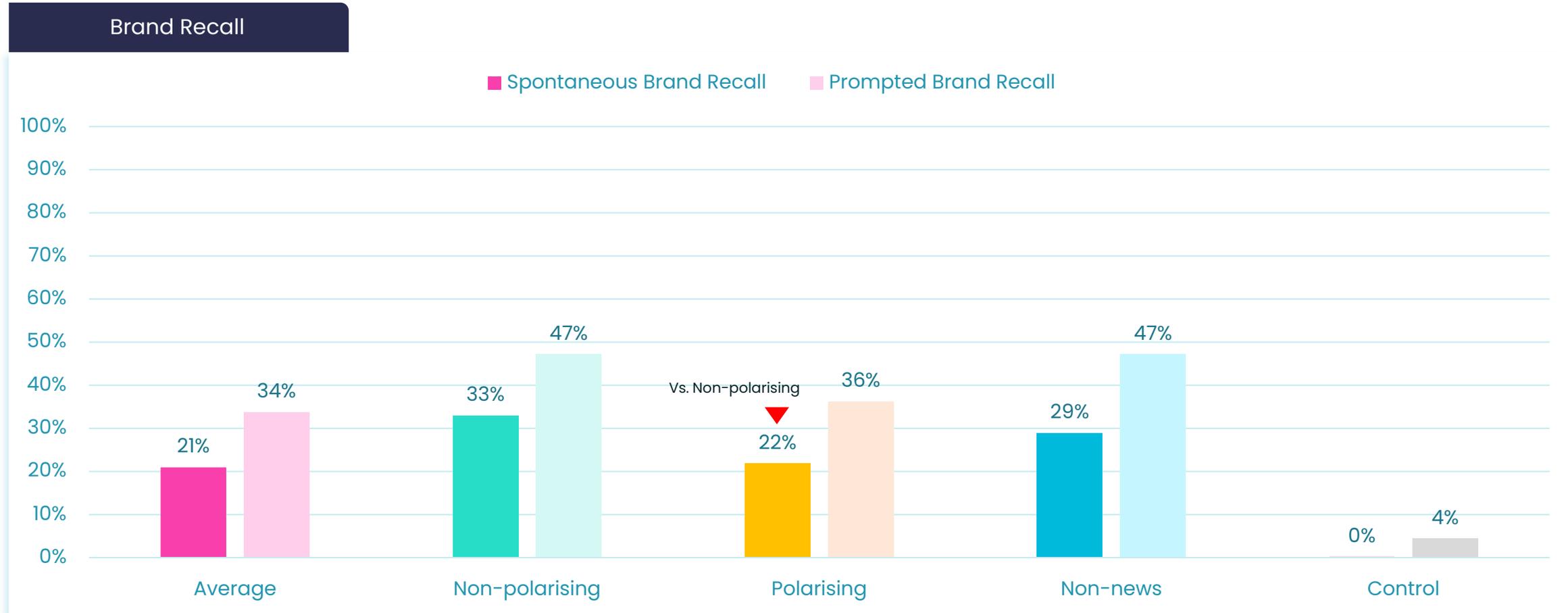
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▲ ▼ Significantly different at 95% CI



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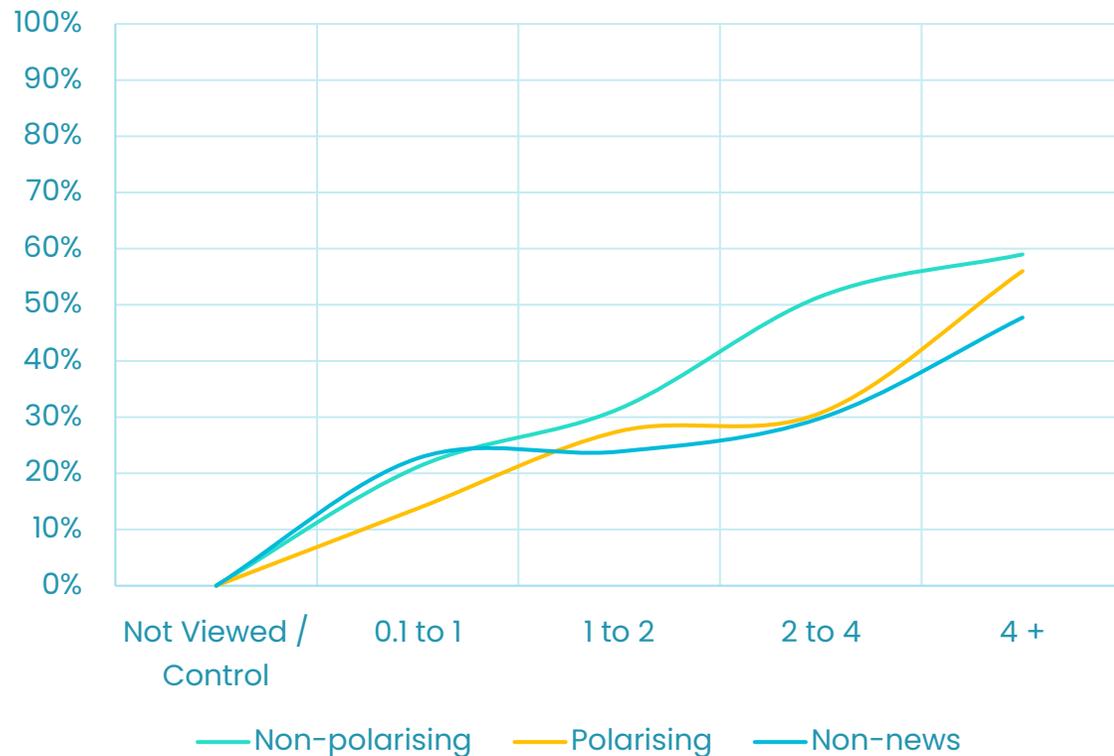
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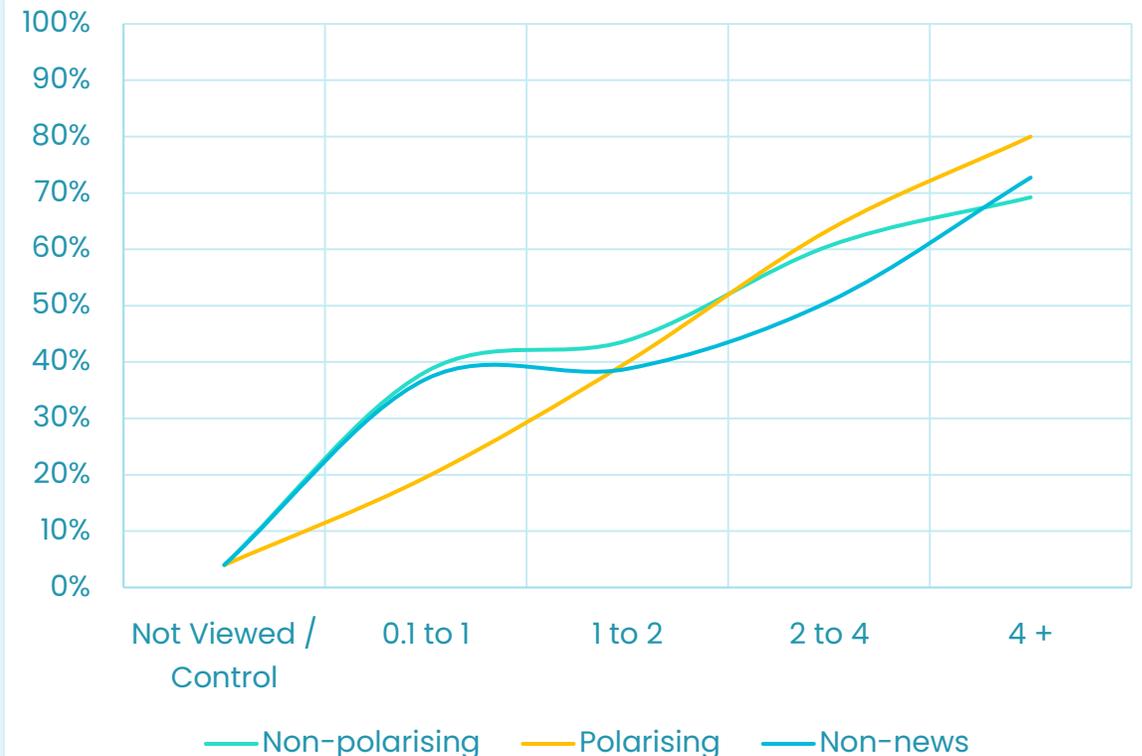
Brands also get faster recall in non-polarising environments, whereas polarising content slows impact

Attention translates to recall in all environments, but non-polarising content achieves higher spontaneous and prompted recall more quickly. Polarising news requires more exposure to drive the same brand memory, making it a less efficient environment for advertising.

Attention to Spontaneous recall



Attention to Prompted recall



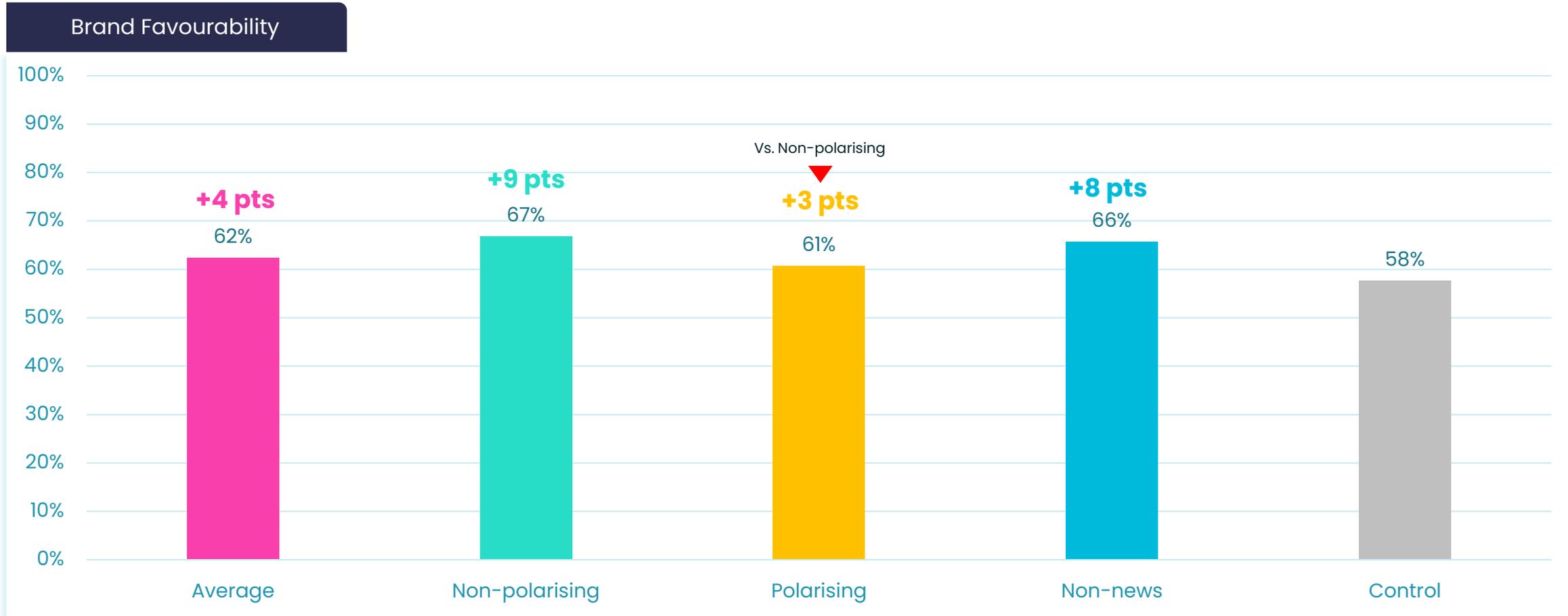
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Non-polarising and non-news environments boost brand favourability uplifts more than polarising news contexts

Advertising in non-polarising or non-news content delivers the strongest favourability improvements; while polarising content shows minimal gains. Even modest differences highlight the advantage of safe, balanced environments for building brand attitudes.



Brand Favourability: How would you describe your overall opinion of the following brands?

Questionnaire Base: All = 654, Non-polarising = 150, Polarising = 150, Non-news = 152, Control = 202

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Industry evidence supports trusted environments

Our study finds that non-polarising, trusted content maximizes attention, recall, and brand favourability; while polarising content reduces engagement and slows recall. This aligns with industry research from Teads & Lumen, which shows that advertising alongside traditional, **quality journalism drives 20% higher ad attention and stronger upper-funnel brand outcomes** compared with soft or entertainment content.

External evidence shows that serious news isn't inherently harmful for brands. The Teads study found that even when serious content triggers stronger emotions, brand outcomes remain unaffected. Our results echo this: 73% of people say serious or sensitive topics aren't automatically a bad place for advertising.

However, our study also makes the key distinction: **it's not seriousness, but divisiveness, that limits performance.** Non-polarising and neutral environments consistently outperform polarising ones across attention, perceptions, and recall, reinforcing that balanced content provides the safest and most effective space for brands.



Now what?

The study reveals that non-polarising and lifestyle content consistently outperform polarising environments across attention, memory, brand choice, and favourability, **highlighting the tangible benefits of Synexus' technology.**

With these insights, advertisers can **safely reintroduce premium journalism into their media plans**, driving stronger reach, more efficient campaigns, and better brand outcomes without added risk.



synexus



Questions?

contact: info@sy.nexus