

The FreeWheel Viewer Experience Lab Presents

Innovative Ad Formats in Streaming

PRESERVING THE NOVELTY EFFECT

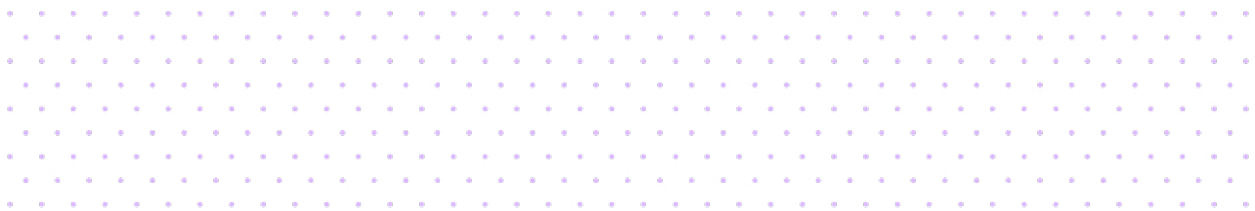
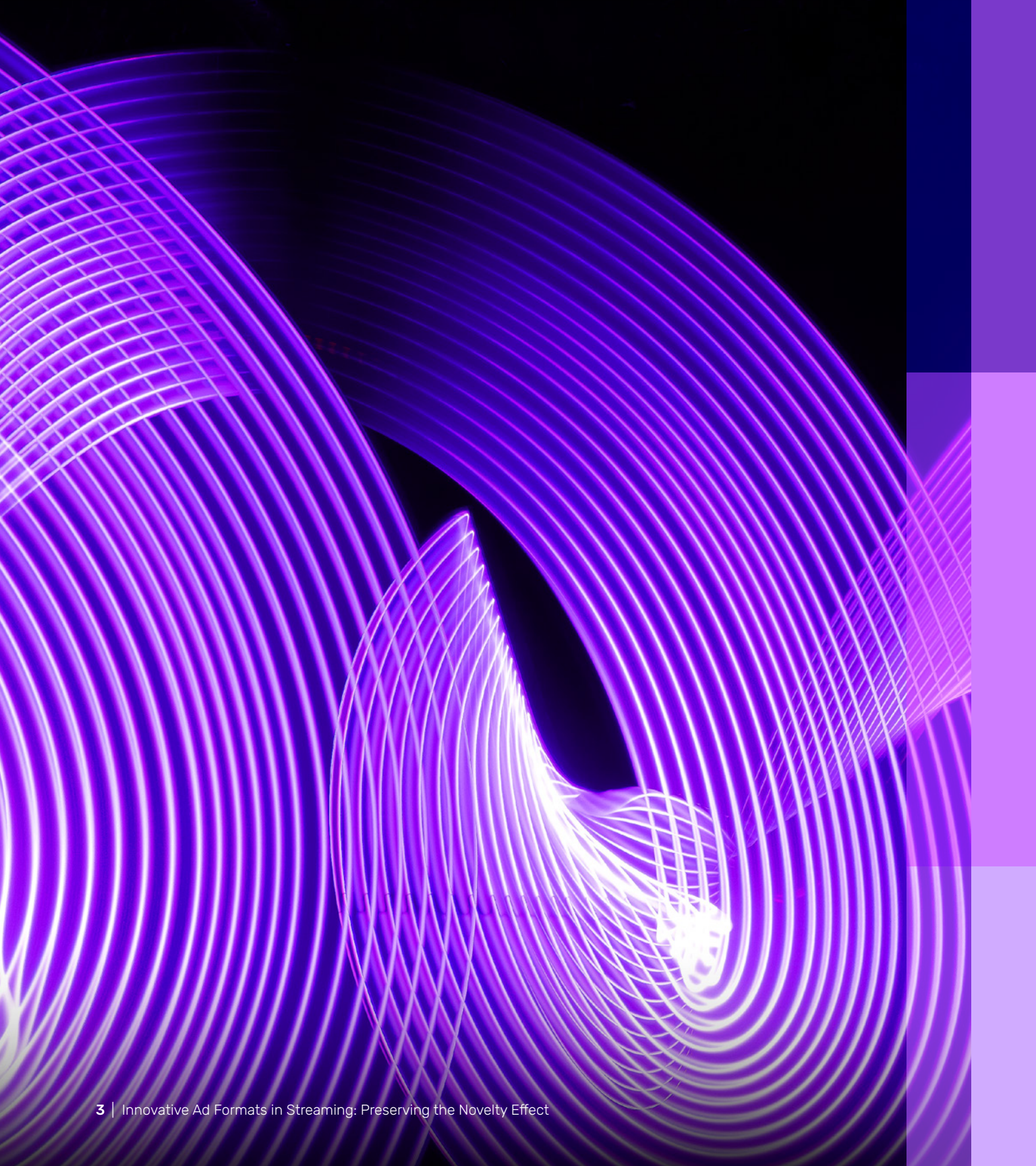
FREEWHEEL
A COMCAST COMPANY



VIEWER EXPERIENCE LAB

About the FreeWheel Viewer Experience Lab

The FreeWheel Viewer Experience Lab is designed to help media companies improve the quality, quantity, and relevance of TV advertising through quantifiable research, solutions, and technology. To learn more, visit freewheel.com/viewerexperiencelab.



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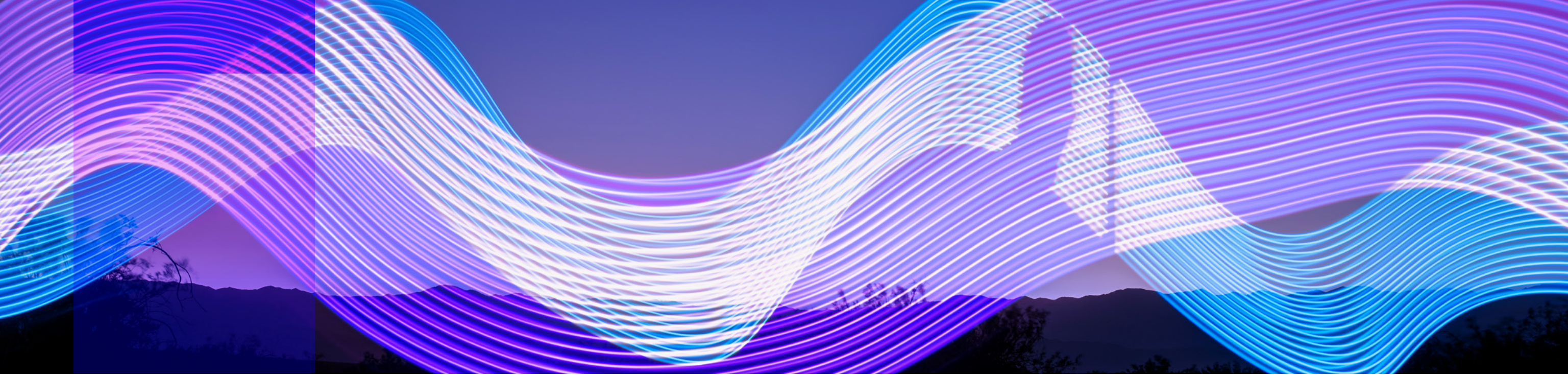
Introduction

New ad formats in traditional and streaming TV are appealing to both advertisers and viewers, thanks to the large screen nature of connected TVs and dynamic ad delivery of streaming. While standard 30-second streaming and TV ads remain the foundation of most campaigns – the reliable “bread and butter” that delivers reach, consistency, and impact – innovative formats like shoppable and interactive ads offer exciting opportunities to deepen engagement and drive action. These newer formats allow brands to go beyond storytelling, inviting viewers to participate, explore, and even purchase directly within the ad experience.

But advertisers should be sure not to overuse these new formats. While internet pop-up ads were once a novel creation to help highlight an advertiser’s brand messaging, today they are generally considered disruptive by users; similarly, as consumers become more accustomed to the latest innovative formats, the initial interest may diminish and along with it the benefits to the brand.

To better understand how today’s new ad formats can impact the viewer experience, this report delves into the presence of these formats in streaming content, outlining the extent to which viewers are seeing them globally, the use cases for different types of new ad formats, and the advantages of preserving the novelty of these formats.





Overview of research

Survey

5,600 global respondents were shown static images of different innovative ad formats and asked about their sentiment.

Formats tested: Pause ads, native ads, frame ads during content (also known as L-banner), lower third ads, ads with a shoppable QR code, ads with a trivia question, and standard 30-second ads.

Countries: United States, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and UK.

Viewing session

700 U.S. participants watched an entire 30-minute program with structured ad breaks at home on their connected TV.

Participants were assigned across 10 groups each experiencing a different set and quantity of innovative ad formats.

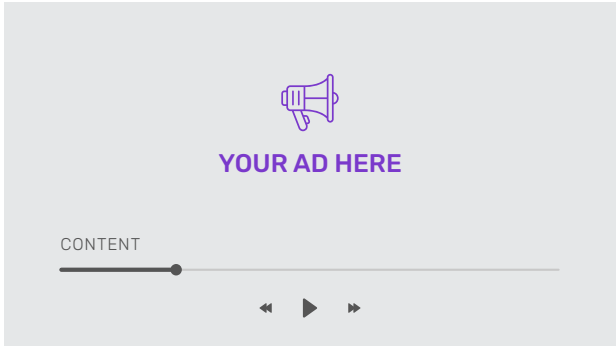
Formats tested: Frame around ad, lower third ads, ad choice, shoppable ads, and ads with a trivia question.

Understanding innovative ad formats

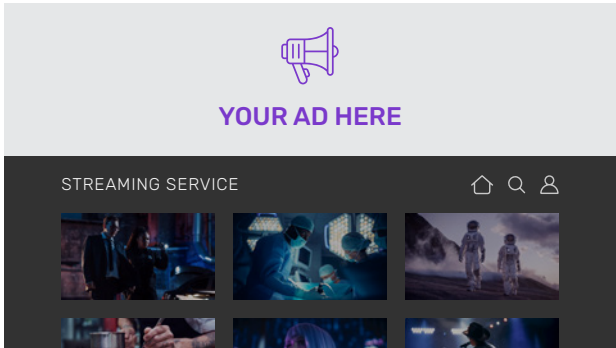


Innovative ad formats appear before and throughout the stream

Content idle

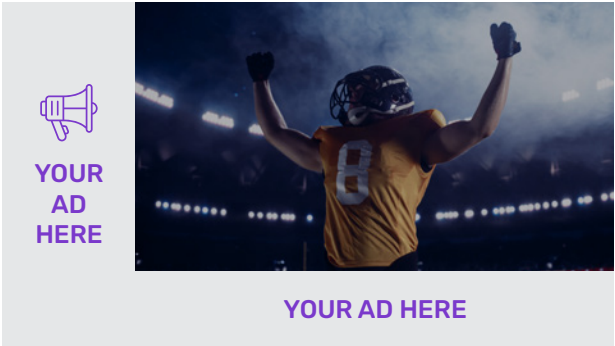


Pause – Appears when content is paused

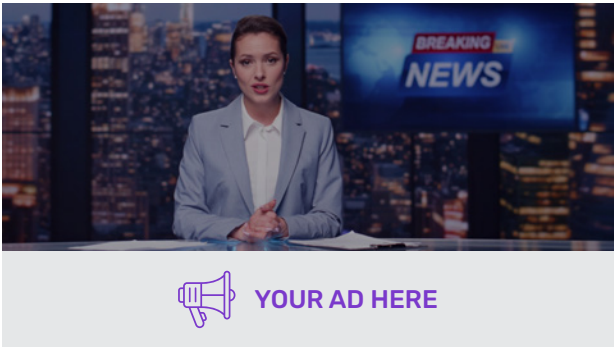


Native – Appears on the home screen while scrolling/searching for what to watch

During content

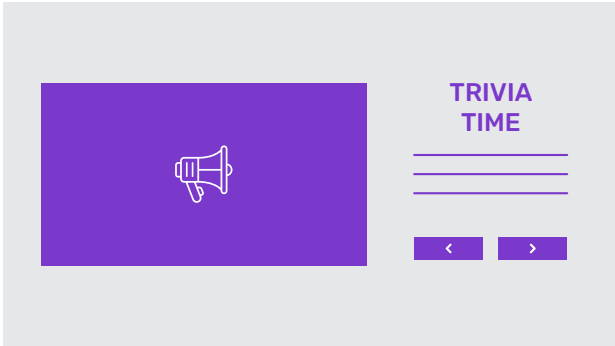


Frame or L-banner – Appears on a portion of the screen while watching content

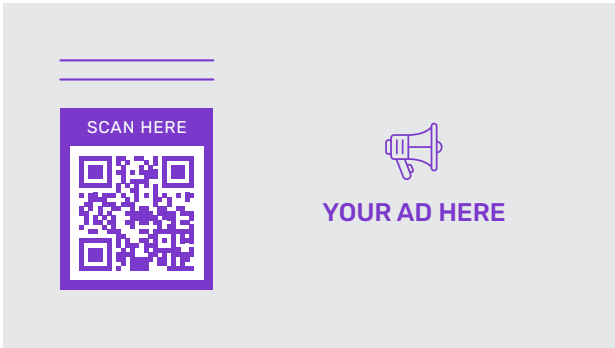


Lower third – Appears at the bottom of the screen while watching content

Ad break



Interactive – An ad with trivia or an interactive game



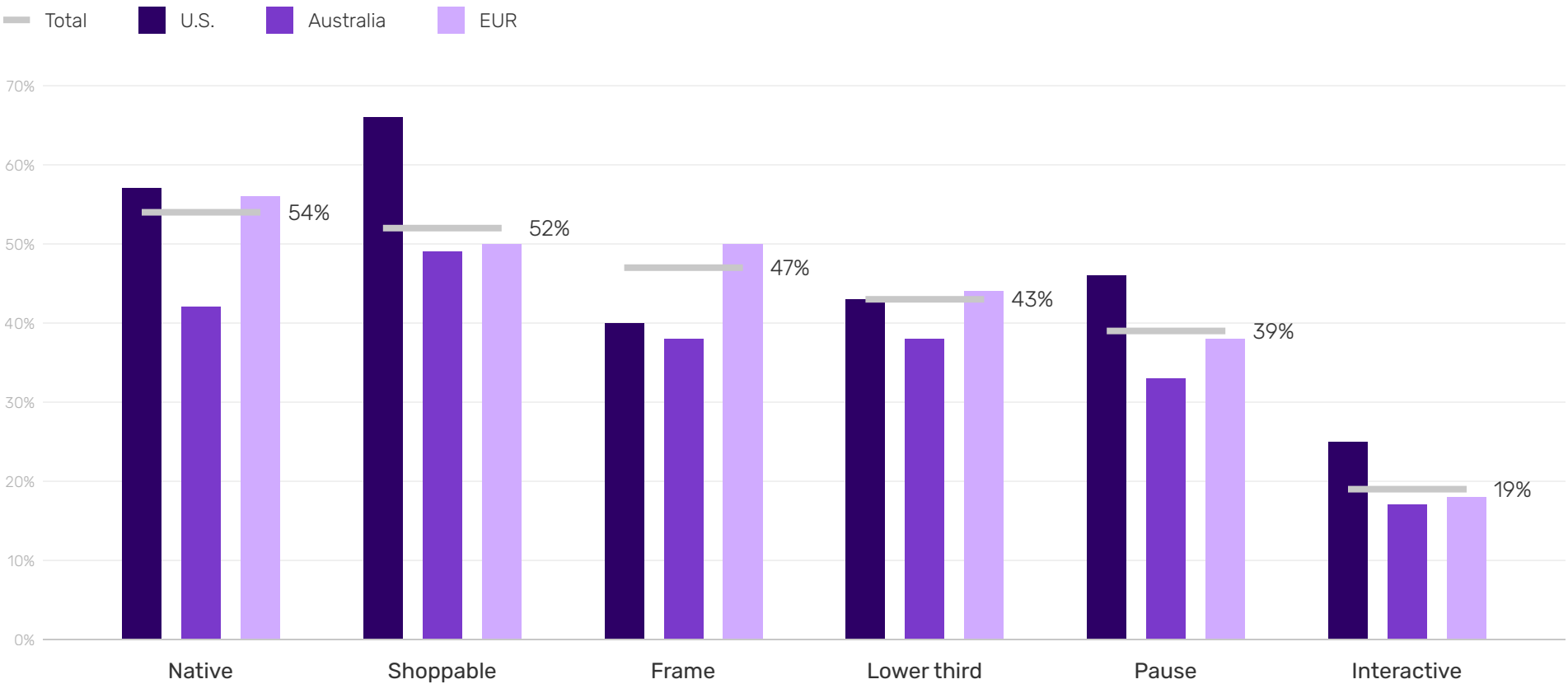
Shoppable – Features a QR code or lets you interact with your remote to give information or access to buy a product

Formats shown are not an exhaustive list of all innovative ad formats in streaming.

Viewer exposure of innovative ads varies by type and geography

% of viewers who have seen ad format on their TV in the past month

Refer to [appendix](#) for detailed breakdown by country



Source: FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, total survey responses, n=5,609.

Key findings

- » Native ads are the most common innovative ad format seen across geographies.
- » Shoppable ads are far more widespread in the U.S.
- » Frame and lower third ads are more adopted in Europe, with the U.S. and Australia trailing behind in use.
- » Interactive ads are the most novel across the globe.

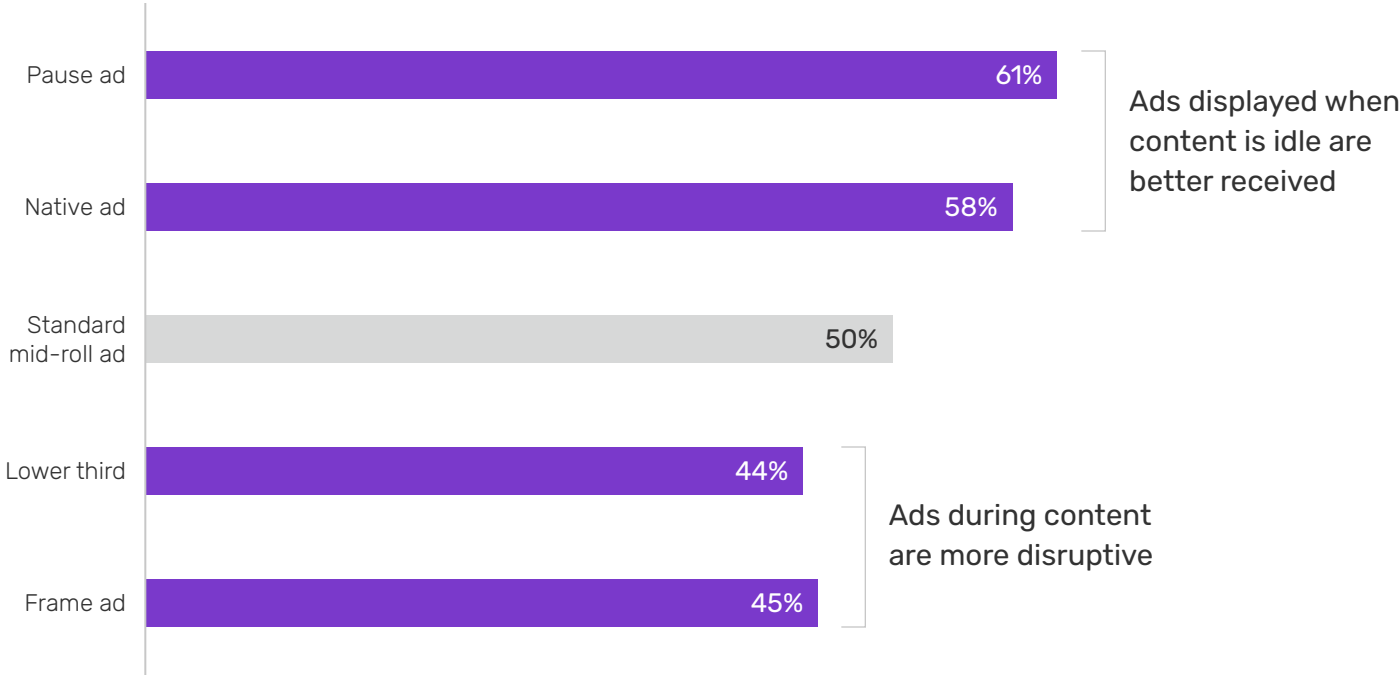
How are different ad formats best used to prioritize the viewer experience?



Native and pause ads boost ad units, instead of ad time

Ad format fits in seamlessly with content

% of respondents



Native and pause ads can increase ad inventory without extending the length of ad breaks, reaching viewers more seamlessly and with less disruption.

“I like the ads that appear when paused. They’re less intrusive and feel more natural.”
– Female, 36

“Some of the newer formats are much better than cutting away from the viewing experience like with a traditional commercial.”
– Male, 46

Source: FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, U.S. survey responses, n=801. Q: Think about the following types of ads that you have seen while watching TV. How do they typically impact your viewing experience? Base: Viewers who have watched ad format.

Frame and lower third ads preserve content flow

Frame and lower third ads perform best when they are preserving the flow of the content. **Sports and other live content** are a natural fit for these ad formats.

31%
better opinion

Viewers of **live content** have a +31% better opinion of lower third / frame ads (vs. all viewers)

18%
less disruptive

Live content viewers are -18% less likely to find these ads disruptive (vs. on-demand viewers)

Source: FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, U.S. survey responses, n=801. Opinions based on strongly agree/agree responses for how much the ad type resonates, captures attention, uniqueness, and how easy they make it to learn about products.



“[Frame] ads work well with sports so we don’t lose any action.”
– Male, 67

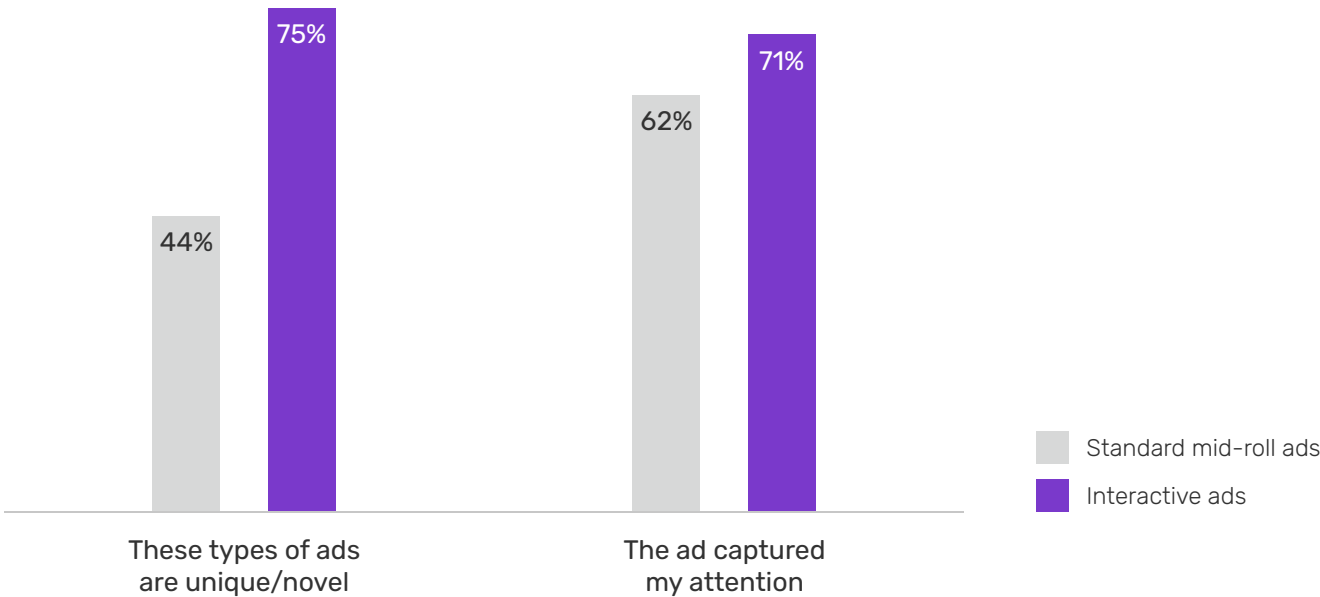


“I like side-by-side ads on live sports like NASCAR.”
– Female, 29

Shoppable and interactive ads increase consideration and engagement

Viewers were **+80%** more likely to seek more info online after seeing a **shoppable ad** (vs. seeing the same brand's standard mid-roll ad).¹

Interactive ads, % agree by ad format²



Sources:
1. FreeWheel, MediaScience study, CTV viewing session followed by post-exposure survey, April 2025, n=700. Shoppable ads vs. same brand mid-roll ads.
2. FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, U.S. survey responses, n=801. Base: Viewers who have watched ad format.

While viewers may not always scan or shop with their remote in the moment, shoppable ads do make them more likely to want to research the brand in the moment or later, helping to drive engagement and ultimately consideration for a brand.

“I like interactive ads as they allow me to really understand the brand better and give me a sense of control.”
– Female, 38



KEY TAKEAWAYS

When used strategically, innovative ad formats can provide a better viewer experience

Boost ad units, not ad time

Native and pause

Native and pause ads are a win-win for advertisers and viewers since they reach viewers without increasing ad break lengths.

Preserve content flow

Frame and lower third

Sports and other live content is a natural fit for these ad formats because they ensure the viewer doesn't miss any action.

Increase engagement

Shoppable and interactive

These ads offer a creative outlet for viewers to interact with a brand, allowing ads to stand out and make them feel more engaging.

Can frequency diminish impact?



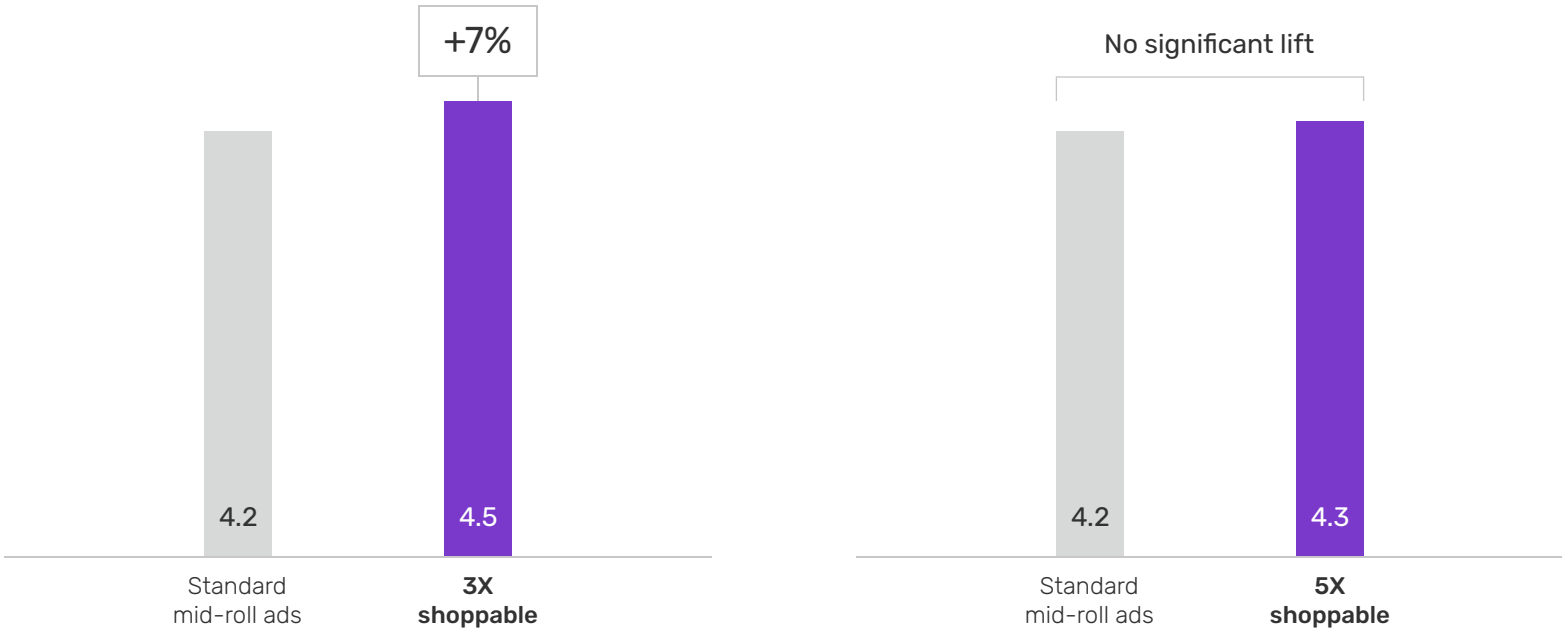
Novelty impact wears off with frequency

Shoppable ads are seen as more cutting-edge and innovative compared to the standard 30-second mid-roll ads from the same brands.

But, as viewers saw more of the same ad format, perceptions decreased. This could signify a loss in the novelty of the ad format.

Viewer ratings of ad being ‘cutting edge’

Scale 1-7 (7 being best)



Source: FreeWheel, MediaScience study, CTV viewing session followed by post-exposure survey, April 2025, n=700. Control cell contained all standard 15- or 30-second ad units.



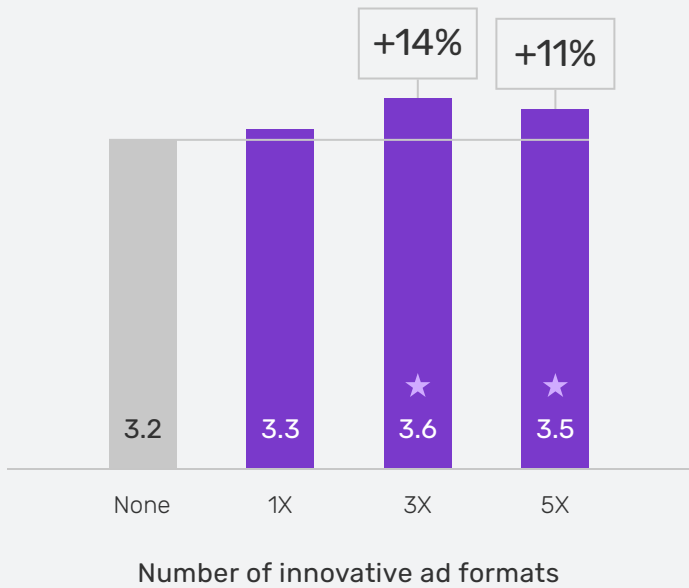
And, too many innovative ad formats in a stream may harm the viewer experience

Introducing more than one innovative ad format per program can result in a more intrusive ad environment, ultimately impacting program engagement.

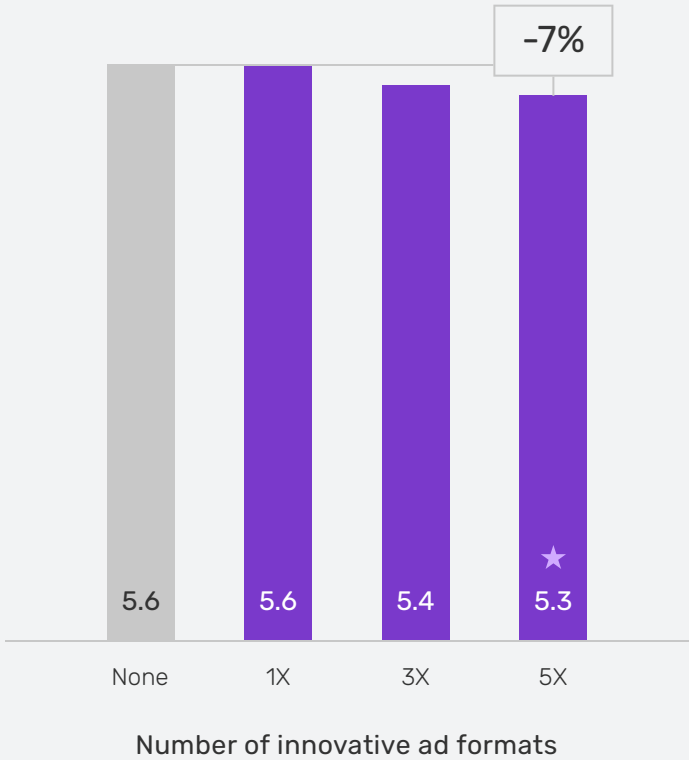
These ad formats have value and drive viewer response, but the industry should be mindful of how they can preserve those benefits by not inundating viewers with too many in a stream.

Source: FreeWheel, MediaScience study, CTV viewing session followed by post-exposure survey, April 2025, n=700. Control cell contained all standard 15- or 30-second ad units.

Ad intrusiveness
Scale 1-7 (7 being most intrusive)



Program engagement
Scale 1-7 (7 being best)



Actionable advice for driving positive viewer experiences with innovative ads

Innovative ad formats are an opportunity for advertisers to have their message noticed in new ways, and to avoid disrupting programming as a typical ad break might. As always, the quantity, quality, and relevance of the ad experience matters:

Quantity

Limit the number of new ad formats within ad breaks to preserve the viewer experience and the novelty of the format.

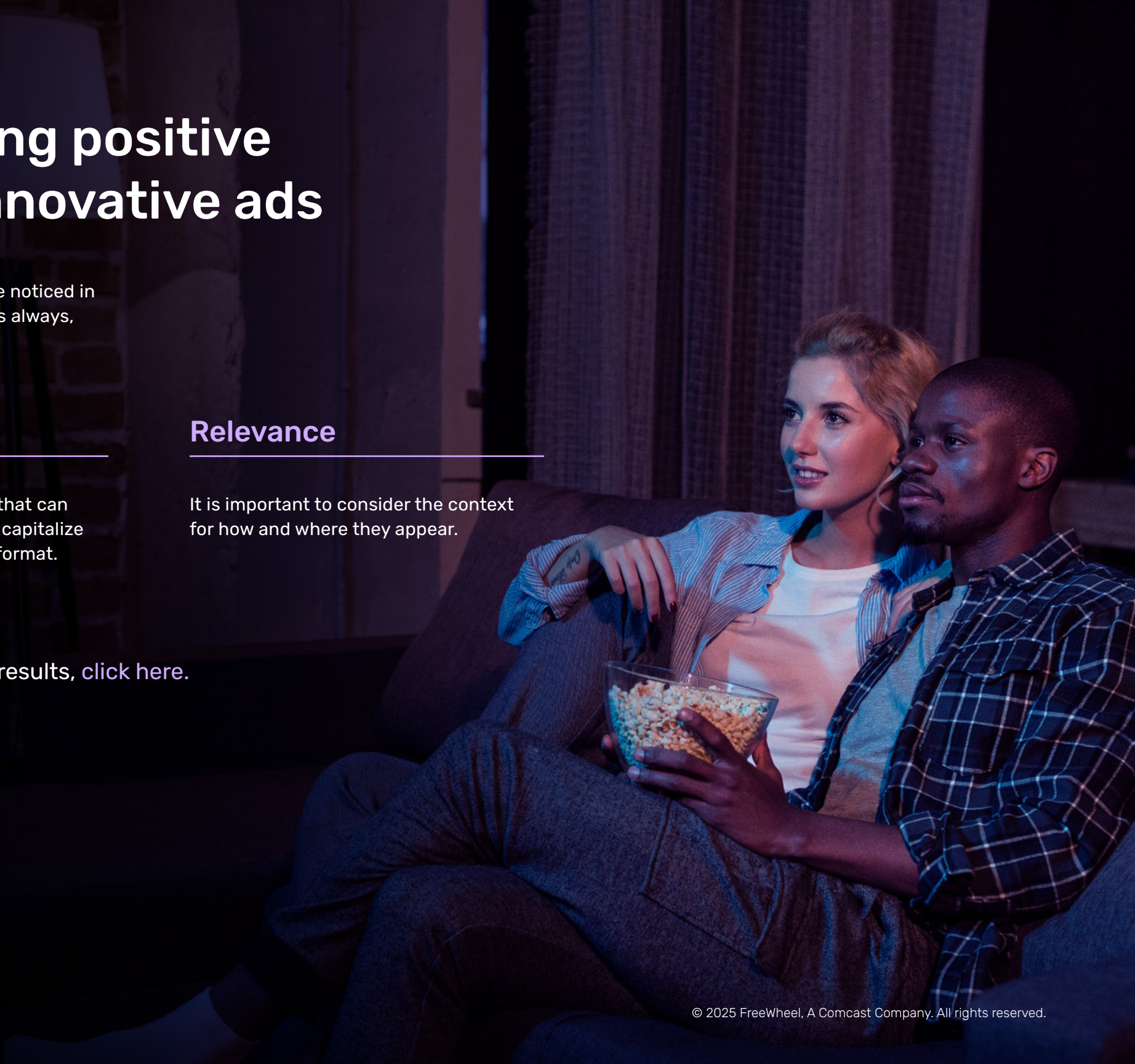
Quality

Work with quality partners that can create and enable ads that capitalize on the engagement of the format.

Relevance

It is important to consider the context for how and where they appear.

To learn more about how you can go direct and maximize your results, [click here](#).



APPENDIX

Responses by country



Innovative ad formats are becoming more common across the globe

% of viewers who have seen ad format on their TV in the past month

Global data:

	Total	U.S.	Australia	EUR
Native	54%	57%	42%	56%
Pause	39%	46%	33%	38%
Lower third	43%	43%	38%	44%
Frame	47%	40%	38%	50%
Shoppable	52%	66%	49%	50%
Interactive	19%	25%	17%	18%

EUR breakdown by country:

	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	UK
Native	46%	49%	61%	57%	66%
Pause	32%	43%	37%	41%	38%
Lower third	34%	43%	61%	43%	38%
Frame	34%	51%	70%	53%	41%
Shoppable	44%	43%	57%	52%	52%
Interactive	16%	17%	18%	21%	21%

Source: FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, total survey responses, n=5,609.

Native and pause ads boost ad units, instead of ad time

Think about the following types of ads that you have seen while watching TV.
How do they typically impact your viewing experience?

Responses: These ads fit in seamlessly or these ads fit in somewhat

Global data:

	Total	U.S.	Australia	EUR
Pause	58%	61%	49%	58%
Native	57%	58%	58%	56%
Standard mid-roll	50%	50%	44%	51%
Lower third	43%	44%	41%	43%
Frame	46%	45%	48%	46%

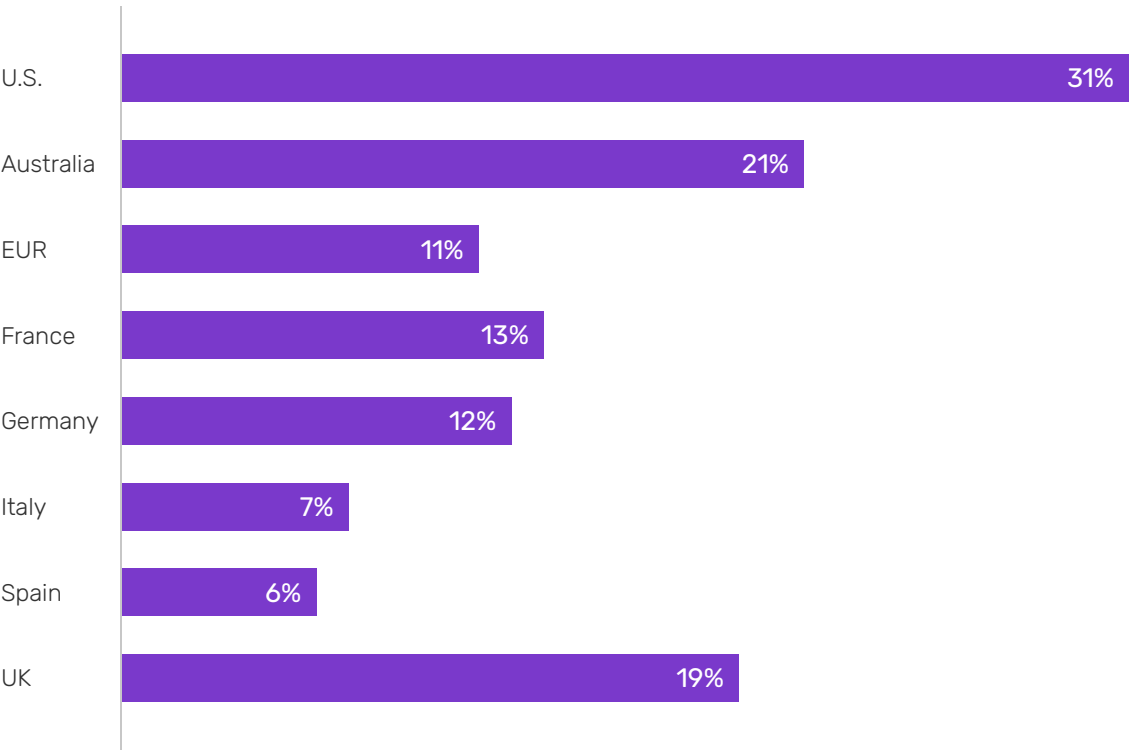
EUR breakdown by country:

	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	UK
Pause	57%	55%	65%	57%	56%
Native	54%	56%	58%	57%	56%
Standard mid-roll	47%	46%	58%	56%	45%
Lower third	43%	38%	47%	39%	47%
Frame	38%	39%	50%	46%	53%

Source: FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, total survey responses, n=5,609. Base: Viewers who have watched ad format.

Frame and lower third ads preserve content flow

Lift in frame/lower third ad opinion for live viewers compared to all viewers



How to read: Live viewers in the UK have a 19% better opinion of frame/lower third ads compared to all viewers.

Source: FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, total survey responses, n=5,609. Opinions based on strongly agree/agree responses for how much the ad type resonates, captures attention, uniqueness, and how easy they make it to learn about products.

% of viewers that rate frame/lower third ads very or somewhat disruptive by content type

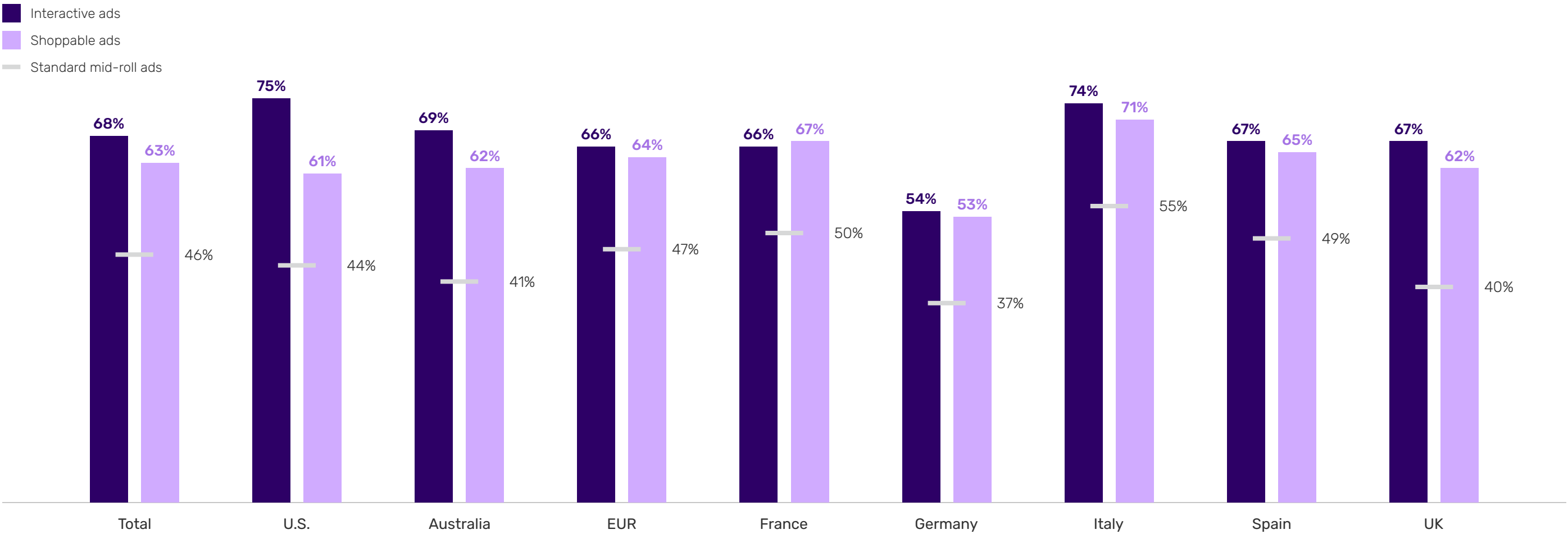
	On-Demand	Live	Difference
U.S.	40%	33%	-18%*
Australia	38%	37%	-4%
EUR	37%	35%	-5%*
France	43%	44%	4%
Germany	38%	39%	4%
Italy	30%	31%	1%
Spain	34%	30%	-12%*
UK	40%	35%	-12%*

How to read: Live viewers in EUR are 5% less likely to find frame/lower third ads disruptive compared to on-demand viewers.

* Indicates differences are statistically significant.

Shoppable and interactive ads are novel

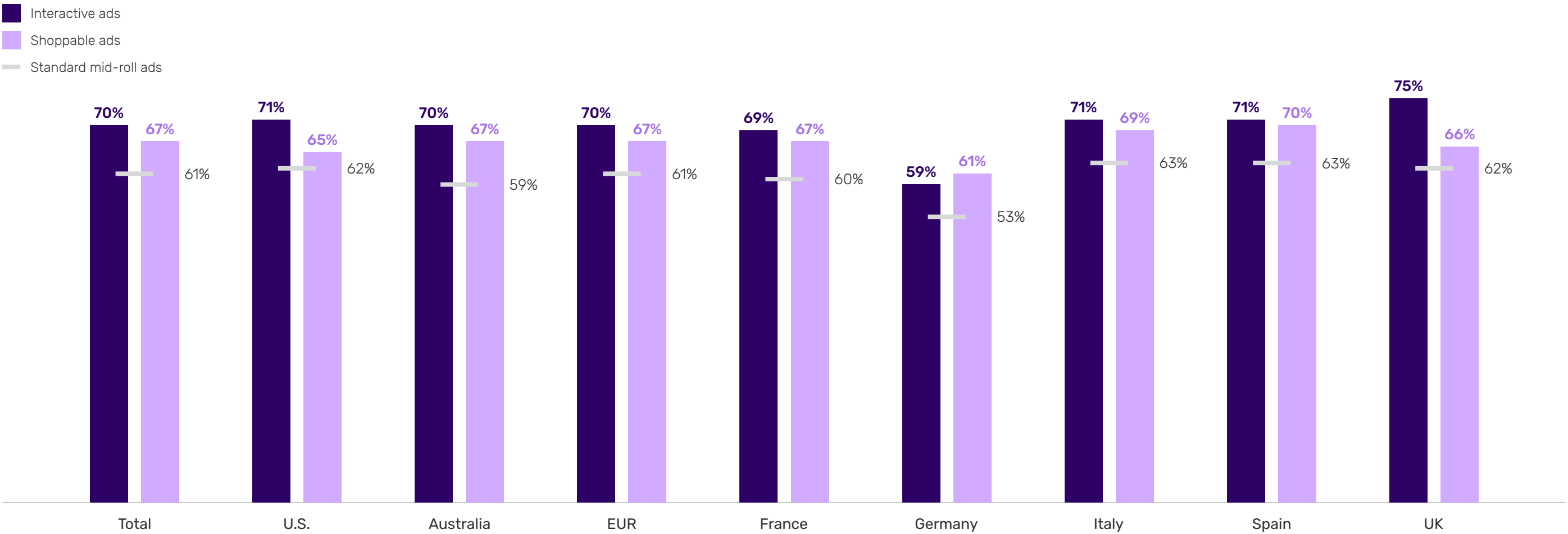
These ads are unique/novel, % agree by ad format



Source: FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, total survey responses, n=5,609. Base: Viewers exposed to ad format in the past month.

Shoppable and interactive ads capture interest

These ads capture attention, % agree by ad format



Source: FreeWheel consumer study conducted by Dynata. May 2025, total survey responses, n=5,609. Base: Viewers exposed to ad format in the past month.



FreeWheel technology is built for streaming and TV ads. We connect buyers and sellers directly, making it easier to access supply and demand. We provide all the tools, data, and insights you need to maximize results. [Read more insights on TV and premium video advertising here.](#)



FreeWheel Video Marketplace Report

Trends in the monetization of streaming content

The FreeWheel Video Marketplace Report highlights the changing dynamics of how enterprise-class content owners and distributors are monetizing premium digital video content.

[Download Report →](#)



Making the Ad Experience More Relevant

The importance of ad relevancy and the viewer experience

The report shares insights into how relevant ads can have a positive impact on brand outcomes. It also lays out the steps that buyers and sellers need to consider when developing more relevant ad experiences for their audiences.

[Download Report →](#)



Improving the Quality of Ad Experiences

How and why to provide a consistent, high-quality ad experience

This report explores how programmers and advertisers can provide a consistent, high-quality ad experience to positively impact the overall viewing experience.

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