

## On Demand Digital Video Duration

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In the world of marketing, no topic is hotter than the digitization of traditional media and the new metrics that are available as television becomes accountable. “Engagement” is the buzzword that marketers hope will mature into a useful metric for measuring the impact that advertising has on marketers’ goals. Discussions of engagement turn on the simpler metric of exposure duration, and the Atlas Institute has made this the subject of our first piece of research in the digital video category. This work is a continuation of our Digital Marketing Insight (DMI) from 2004, “Introduction to Brand Exposure Duration.” We expand that original focus of the research—rich media exposure tracking—to take a closer look at duration in digital video.

*Video segment length is critical to maximizing Brand Exposure Duration, a key measure of engagement. The best creative generated four times the brand exposure.*

### The Digital Video Landscape and Duration

On demand digital video currently has two preeminent distribution channels: cable’s video on demand (VOD) and web video. VOD is provided by cable companies to homes with digitally enabled set-top boxes and allows marketers both long-form (where the entire piece of content is the marketing message) and short-form (traditional commercial spots embedded in surrounding programming) opportunities. Web video is video served over the internet, typically from large online publishers or from video content aggregators. The ad units are often short-form although long-form opportunities exist (think of the American Express Seinfeld spots, the recent Unilever webisodes, or film trailers). There are a number of other client-side technologies that provide digital video (iPods, digital video recorders, and cell phones are examples), but either their scale or their ad models have yet to mature for significant investment from advertisers.

The historical methods to estimate reach, frequency and gross rating points (GRPs) merely scratch the surface of what can be measured with digital video. As we make the transition from a push-based medium to one where consumers request digital content, we have the opportunity to report on census viewership figures. The anonymous log files captured from server devices (VOD servers) today and from client-side devices (digital set-top boxes) in the future afford marketers a look into how customers interact with the brand through the medium. The amount of time that viewers spend with an advertiser’s brand provides insight into a number of effectiveness measures for the campaign: the acceptability of the message and format; the quality of the creative; the receptivity of the audience; and the level of engagement with the message versus the interruption it has caused.

### Brand Exposure Duration

At first glance, Brand Exposure Duration (BXD) is a really simple metric: the total time viewers have spent with the video content of a campaign. If we look at the levers that influence BXD, we see that there are really three main components:

$$BXD = Views \times Percent\ of\ Segment\ Viewed \times Segment\ Length$$

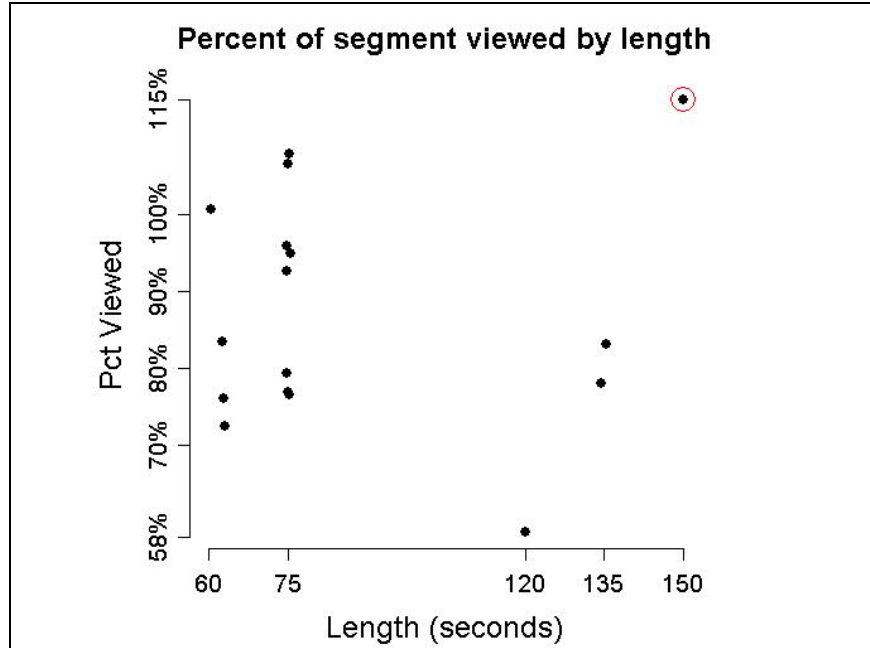
There is an important interplay between the second and third of these variables. It is generally assumed that, all else being equal, a longer asset is viewed at a lower percentage than a shorter asset. Viewers have a limited appetite for commercial content and longer assets give greater opportunity for viewers to fast-forward through or leave the video stream.



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To investigate how these last two components influence BXD, we gathered data from a variety of long-form video on demand campaigns. We analyzed campaigns with segments ranging in length from 60 seconds to 150 seconds. In Figure 1, we see the interplay between segment length and percent of segment viewed.

Figure 1.



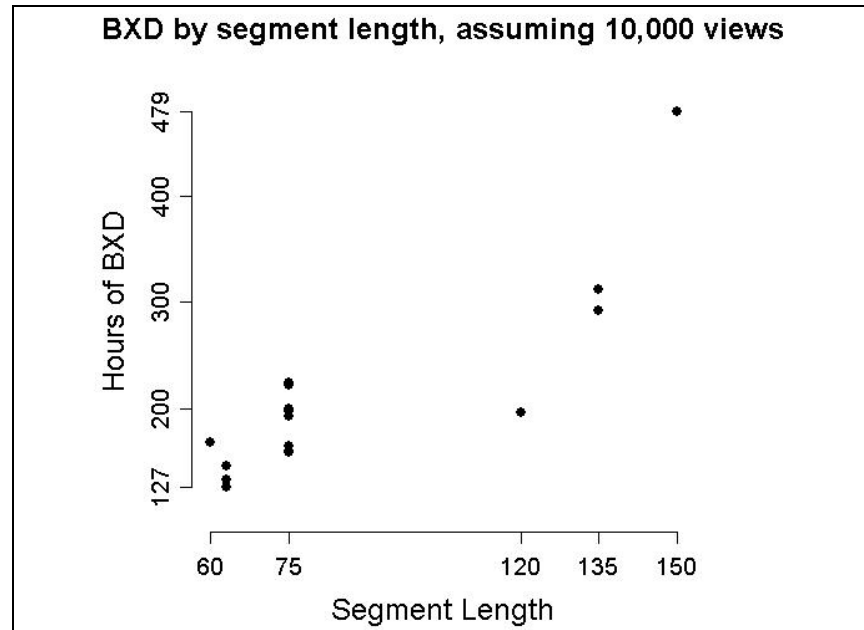
*This figure illustrates the relationship between segment length and percent of the segment that was viewed. The key message is that at all content lengths there is a wide variety of ad performance: notice the range of viewership at 60 and 75 seconds. Additionally, the longest asset in this sample actually shows the greatest viewing duration, debunking the conventional wisdom that viewers will watch less of longer assets.*

Figure 1 shows us that the relationship between view percentage and segment length is complex. For the shorter segments there is a large range in percentage viewed, although the lower bound seems to be around 70%. There is a slight downward tendency as the segments grow longer, but it is important to note that the longest viewership occurred on the longest asset. This value of 115% viewed is not in error; it indicates that many viewers watched this asset multiple times through rewinding. Users will engage willingly with advertising content if it is entertaining enough.

To see the impact of this relationship on BXD, we now add viewership to determine total duration. BXD is heavily dependent on the number of viewers and the number views for these assets varied across two orders of magnitude. Since our goal is to measure engagement with the video segment, we will now look at resulting BXD from these segments giving each asset 10,000 views to level the analysis. The results are seen in Figure 2.

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Figure 2.



This figure shows the total duration in hours by video segment length. While there is some variability in the BXD at a given segment length, overall we see BXD increases as the length of the video segment increases. Also note the 377% increase of the best-performing segment over the worst performing segment.

This view of the data shows us that there is a great deal of variability in creative BXD performance even for assets of roughly the same length. The worst performing asset had a BXD of 127 hours while the best asset garnered 479 hours of brand exposure duration. This wide swing indicates that marketers have a great deal of flexibility when it comes to improving campaign performance through creative.

### What this Means for Marketers

When planning or managing a digital video campaign, a few points should be remembered:

1. **BXD hinges on asset length:** In general, the longer the asset, the higher the BXD. This relationship is illustrated by the generally upward trend of the points in Figure 2. When working with short-form video, push for 30s over 15s, 60s over 30s. The number of people who will drop-off because of the greater length will be outweighed by the increased time that most spend with your segment. In long form advertising on VOD or webisodes, strive to lengthen shorter segments with relevant content or even repurpose longer productions into long-form ads.
2. **Use percent viewed to optimize creative:** There now exists the right metric for video creative optimization. This paper not only describes the method to analyze these data, but also calls attention to the importance of carrying out optimization since there is great variability in performance.

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3. **Separate ad reporting from program reporting:** Today short-form ads are typically encoded with programs. This means that, while we know parts of the stream were viewed, we do not know if the ad was viewed. Several organizations, Atlas included, are working to create standards that allow for separation of ads and programs. This technology enables discrete reporting for ads and programs and will allow short-cycle creative optimization. Marketers should request the use of this technology from their buy-side partners.
4. **Do not rush to require “no FF” zones:** There is powerful learning to be had in the on-demand digital video space. We have analyzed campaigns where the best-performing creative was the worst in certain DMAs and vice versa. Additionally, we have seen creative assets for some advertisers that were viewed up to five times longer than other creative assets of the same length for the same advertiser in the same campaign. If these campaigns ran in streams that did not allow fast-forwarding, this learning would have been lost as would the opportunity for creative optimization. By requiring that ads cannot be fast forwarded, we lose the ability to determine which ads engage users. Marketers should test the value of restricted FF.

As always, our principal recommendation is to measure your advertising consumption and performance wherever possible. Digital video combines the accountability of digital media with the sight, sound and motion of television. When content is being targeted, do not hesitate to lengthen your creative assets—this will yield greater brand exposure.

### About the Atlas Institute

The Atlas Institute is the research and education arm of Atlas, a provider of accountable marketing tools and expertise for agencies, marketers and publishers. The Institute publishes Digital Marketing Insights, a series of publications by Atlas senior marketing analysts and digital marketing experts that help our customers and the entire industry improve their digital marketing effectiveness. Each Digital Marketing Insight report is designed to help marketers more successfully build value with their customers throughout the customer lifecycle: from awareness to acquisition and from retention to growth. To view a full listing of the Atlas Institute’s Digital Marketing Insights, please visit [www.AtlasSolutions.com/insights](http://www.AtlasSolutions.com/insights).

### About Atlas On Demand

Atlas On Demand is a division within Atlas, focusing on the emerging digital TV market. As television media becomes more addressable and fragmented, advertising agencies are looking for technology solutions to assist them in the delivery and purchase of On Demand media. Atlas On Demand assists these agencies as well as programmers and operators to complete an On Demand advertising buy from purchase to delivery.

