



In Safe Hands
Reach Solutions

Regulation of the digital world is a long-term and ever-evolving problem

Online safety and regulation has been an issue for a number of years, with high profile incidents fuelling concerns among both the public and advertisers.

In 2017, YouTube faced a backlash both from concerned parents when disturbing cartoons were being recommended for their kids, and from concerned advertisers when their ads were being served up on extremist channels.

Similar issues have continued to emerge ever since. Trump's recent ban from social media is an admission that these platforms can never be a truly safe environment – not just for advertisers but for society as a whole.

While there is ongoing work within the industry to try and tackle these problems, as long as technology continues to evolve and new platforms are created, online safety issues won't be disappearing any time soon.

So it's unsurprising brand safety has become one of the industry's most salient issues

Online advertisers should evolve from 'brand safety' to 'brand suitability'

IAB's inaugural Trust Forum is told that online media needs more sophisticated ways of advertising against the context of content, rather than against blunt instruments like keywords that penalise quality media.



Brands and tech giants come together to launch first digital safety alliance

Launched at 2019's Cannes Lions festival, the Global Alliance for Responsible Media marks the first time an alliance that represents all sides of the media industry is forming.

By **Ellen Hammett** | 18 Jun 2019

Share this article



What's the secret to winning a brand safety strategy in 2020?

By **Derek Wise** - 10 February 2020 13:23pm



Brand safety is not a new challenge, yet it remains **top-of-mind** for brands and continues to earn global attention

Brands are right to be worried about where their advertising appears

% OF UK ADULTS AGREEING WITH EACH STATEMENT



87%

**Brands should be careful
about where their ads
appear online**

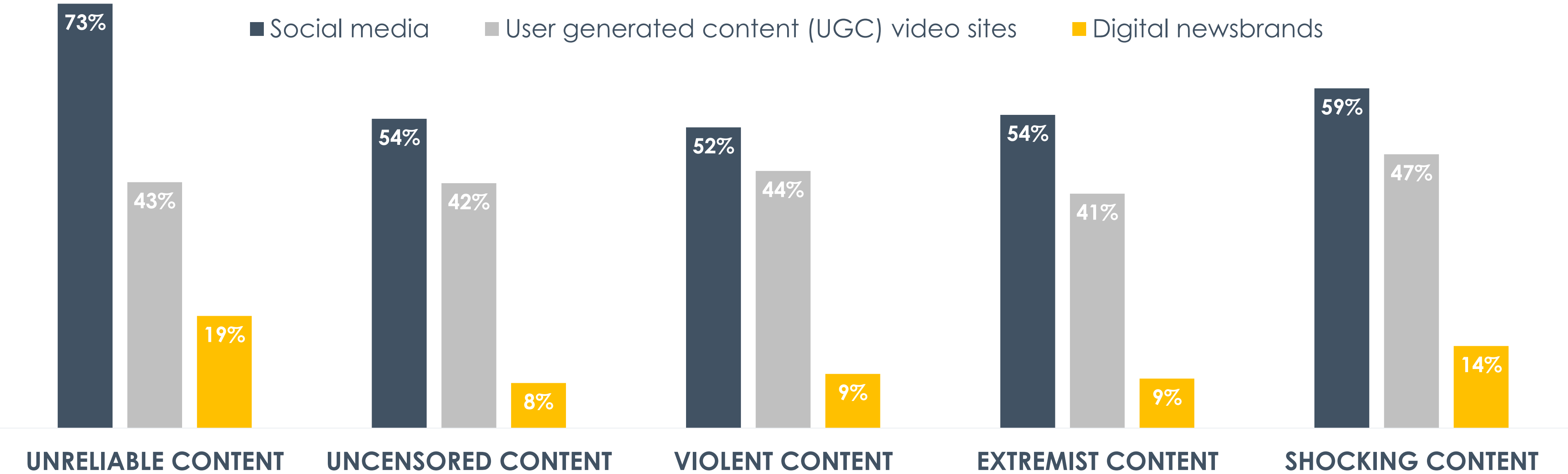


83%

**Expect quality brands to
advertise on quality websites**

But consumer concern is limited to social media and user generated content video sites

% EXPECT TO SEE EACH TYPE OF CONTENT IN EACH SOURCE



Because they know these platforms have little regulation

81%

of UK adults agree that content on social media and UGC video sites *'could be created or posted by anyone'*

"I worry about coming across this sort of content on social media or video sites mainly as **it's less regulated.**"

"I worry about the rubbish/violent/distressing **things that pop up on Facebook** and never know why it's allowed."

"I think **YouTUBE is a worrying place** to see shocking content. I know they have filters within it but **it still somehow gets through to anyone and everyone** regardless of age."

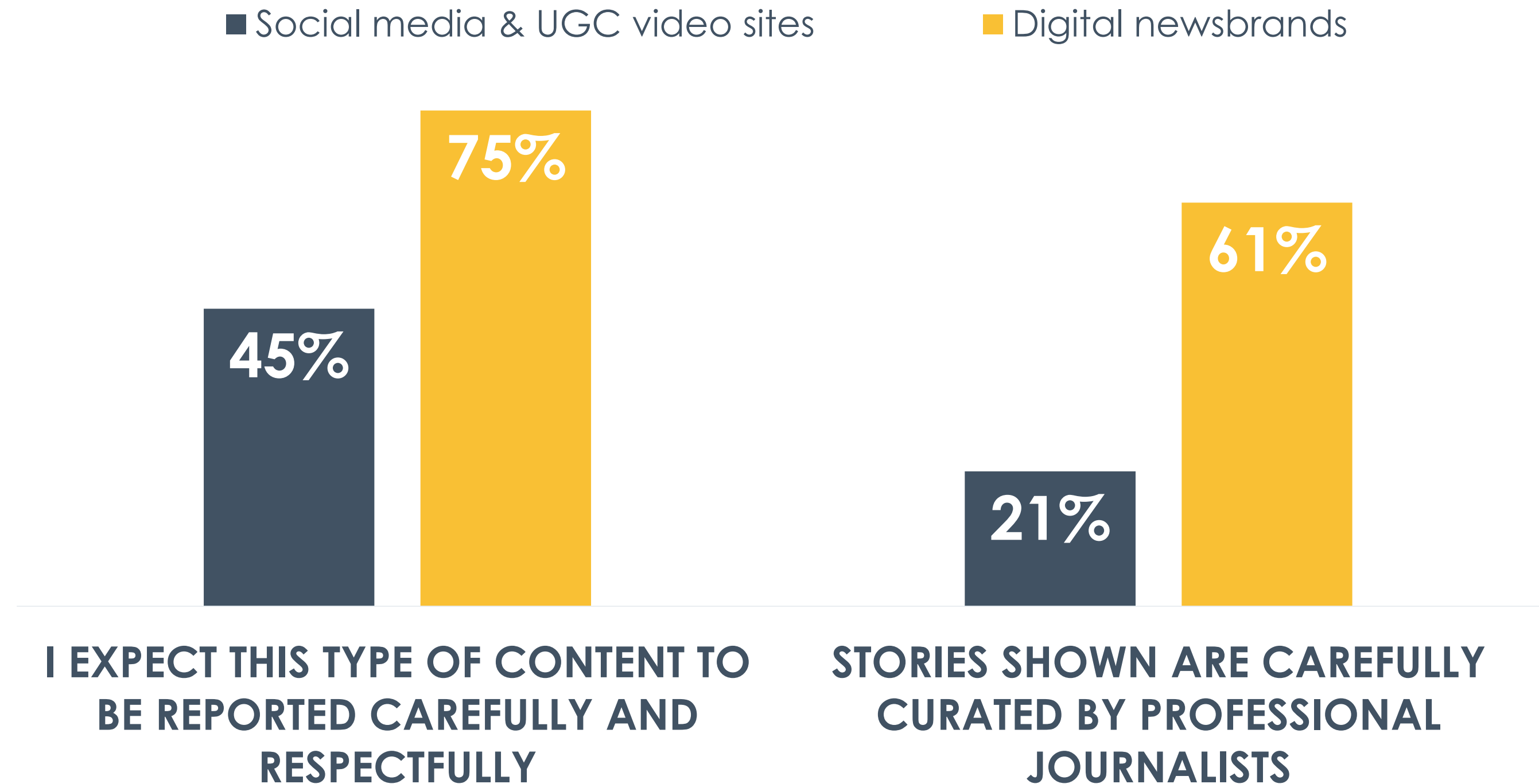
"Most likely social media, **it can somehow trickle through** on pages like Twitter – **needs more regulation and better protection.**"

And lack any form of editorial curation

While there's an expectation among consumers that they may see hard-hitting content covering upsetting subjects within the news, they know that any content they do see on these topics on newsbrand sites will have been reported on in an appropriate way by professional journalists.

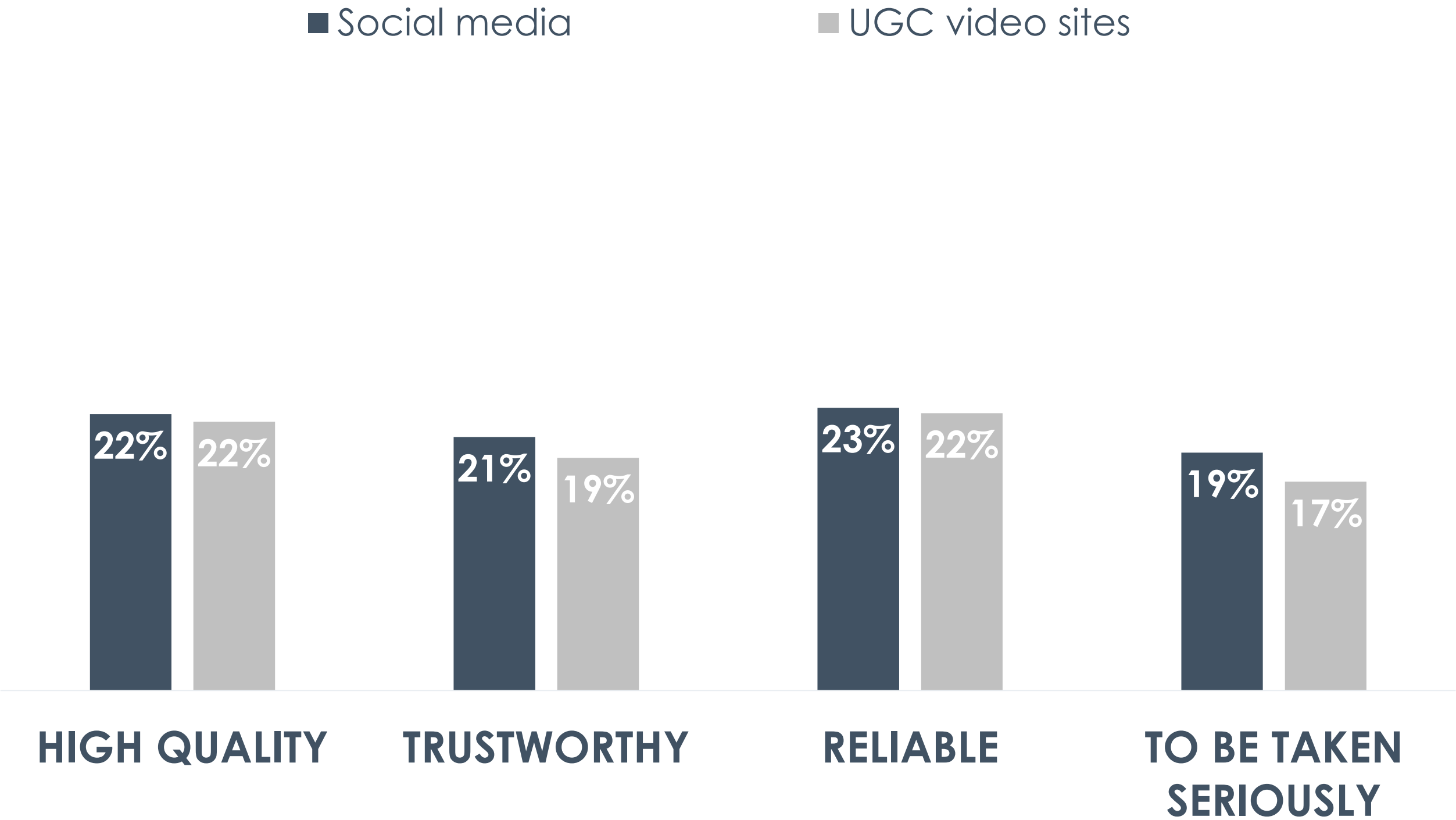
Furthermore, this is being presented within the wider context of a trusted, established news site where they have chosen to seek out news content, rather than appearing unexpectedly among unrelated content on social media.

% AGREEING EACH STATEMENT APPLIES TO THE PLATFORM



Most people don't consider social media or UGC video sites to be the right environment for brands

% WHO WOULD ADVERTISE IN EACH ENVIRONMENT IF THEY WANTED THEIR BRAND TO BE PERCEIVED AS...

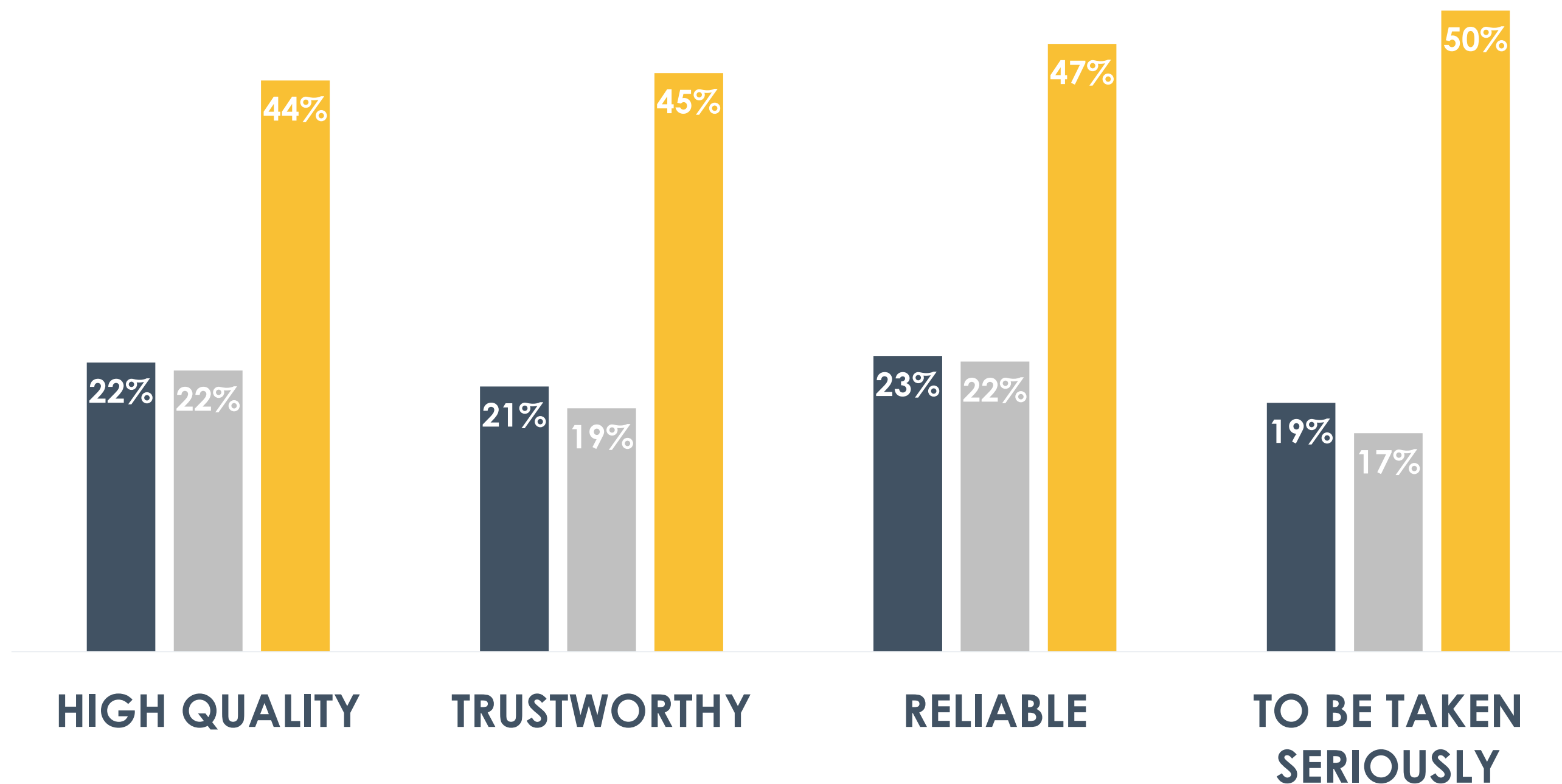


In our survey, respondents were asked to imagine they were in charge of advertising for a brand. We asked them where they would choose to advertise their brand if they wanted it to be associated with these qualities. The proportion aligning these values with social media and user generated content video sites is very low, demonstrating that these aren't considered the right environments for brands to be advertising in.

But they do understand the power of aligning with quality editorial environments

% WHO WOULD ADVERTISE IN EACH ENVIRONMENT IF THEY WANTED THEIR BRAND TO BE PERCEIVED AS...

■ Social media ■ UGC video sites ■ Digital newsbrands



However, the public do understand the power of aligning brands with the values of a quality, editorial news publisher.

These findings have been supported by many other studies within the industry, most recently by Thinkbox's Signalling Success which showed that social media and UGC video sites were the worst performing media channels across all of their identified 'success signals'. In contrast, it was the more established media like newsbrands that were among the top performers.

So brand safety is - and always will be - a social media and UGC issue

Brand Safety Concerns Come to Twitter as Ads Run on Profiles Selling Illegal Drugs

Is TikTok's Advertising Potential Worth The Brand Safety Risk?

Google says YouTube might never be 100% brand-safe

By Imogen Watson - 05 March 2019 17:55pm

BRANDS PROP UP ISIS Household brands unintentionally 'fund terrorism' after adverts appear on terrorist and extremist YouTube propaganda videos

White supremacists and pornographers are also raking in cash from adverts posted on YouTube

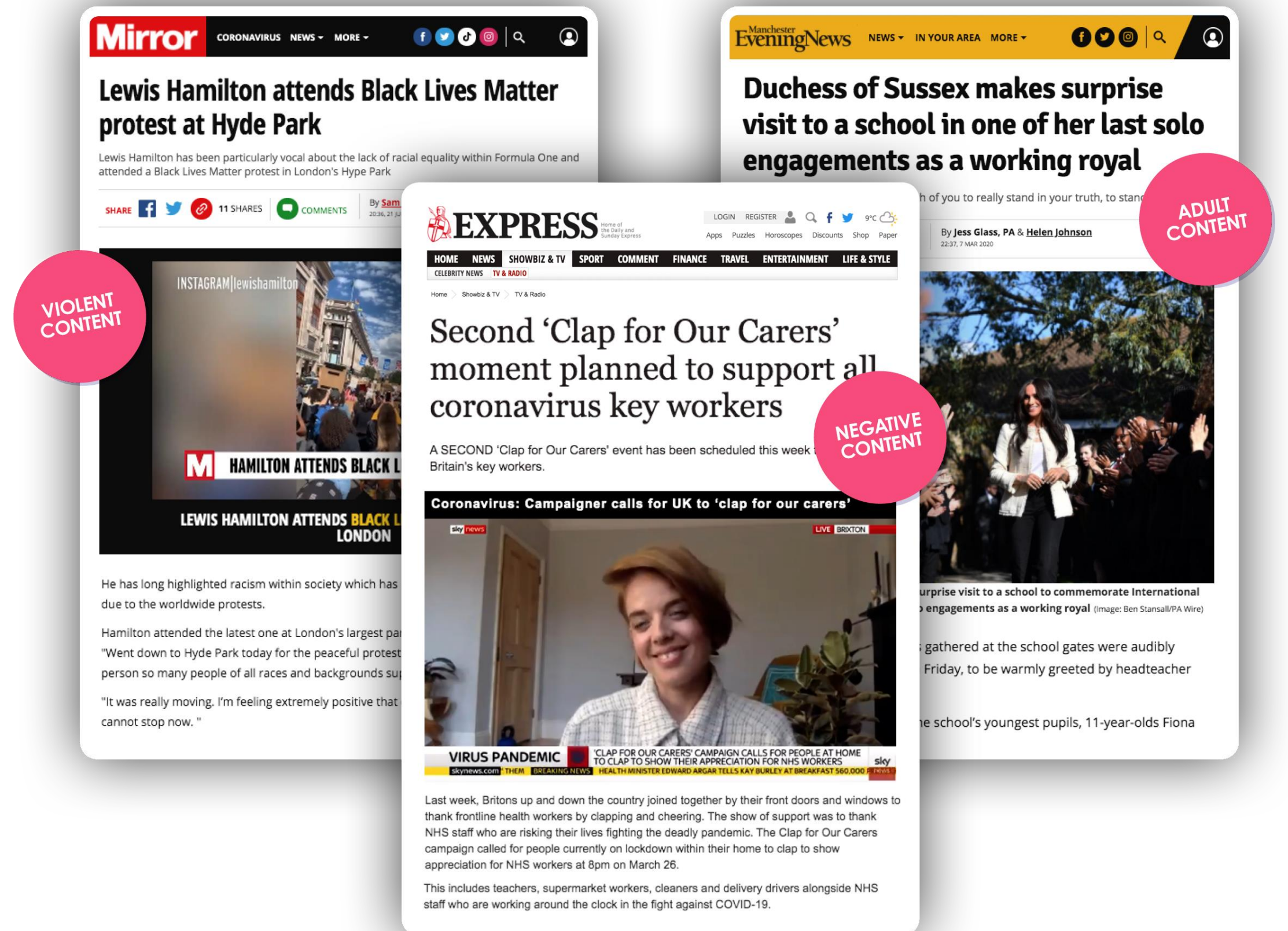
IPA action on Instagram brand safety concerns

But brand safety restrictions have been extended to all publishers

Despite concerns around brand safety originating from the likes of social media and YouTube, the rules and restrictions enforced to identify unsafe content have been extended to the wider publishing world.

Historically, many of the brand safety 'tools' that have been developed have not been very sophisticated in the way they classify 'unsafe' content. The images opposite show some examples of articles on newsbrand sites that have been incorrectly blocked by these tools despite being perfectly safe and inoffensive.

However, there is a lot of work underway in this area to improve this. For example, Reach and IBM Watson have developed brand safety tool Mantis that is able to take the wider context and sentiment into account rather than relying on key word identification alone.



Even though there is no evidence that publisher content is 'unsafe' for brands

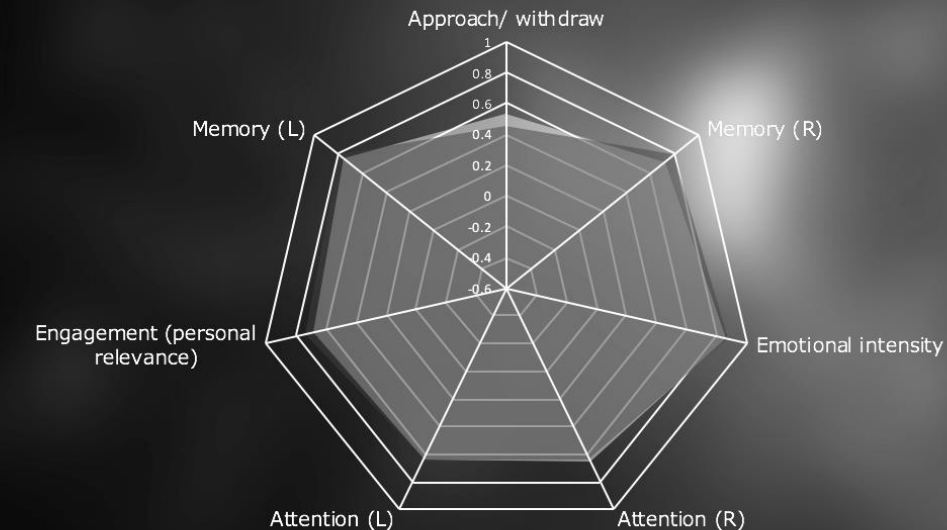
THE HARD NEWS PROJECT

Why avoiding hard news could be damaging your brand

However, beyond the practical limitations of these tools we argue that even content that is legitimately identified as 'unsafe' by them poses no risk to advertiser brands within an established newsbrand website. Previous research has explored this idea; the Newsworks Hard News project used neuroscience techniques to show that people are just as engaged with ads presented alongside 'hard news' as 'soft news'. However, we wanted to look at the impact of ad placement alongside different types of content on the brand metrics that would traditionally be measured to determine the success of a campaign.

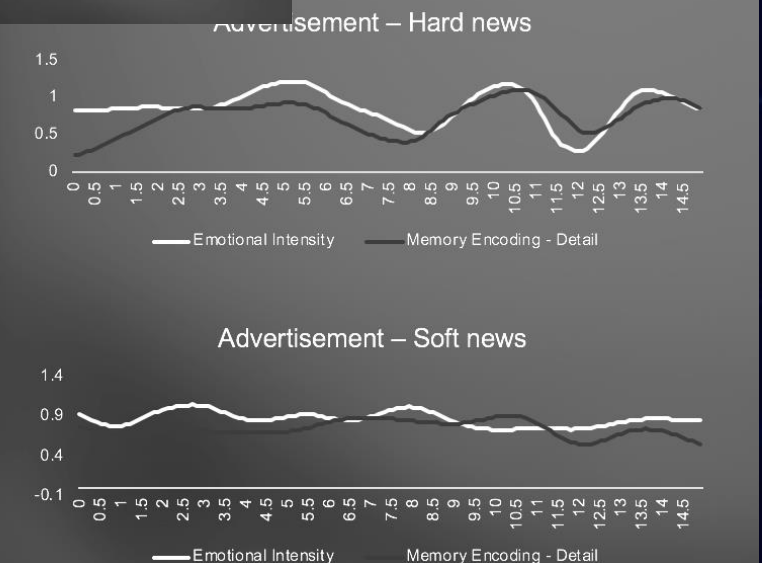
BRAIN RESPONSE IS SIMILAR FOR BOTH TYPES OF STORY

Average levels of brain response to hard and soft editorial content



■ Editorial - Hard ■ Editorial - Soft
Source: Neuro-Insight brain response data

... AND HARD NEWS ADS ELICIT MORE PEAKS AND TROUGHS OF RESPONSE



Source: Neuro-Insight brain response data

**So we decided to test
two hypotheses...**

- 1) Advertising against serious
'unsafe' news stories in a trusted
environment does not negatively
impact on brands**
- 2) Brand safety is context specific
and not content specific**

To test these hypotheses we used a two-stage approach

1. Forced exposure study

- **Forced exposure** experimental study to test the impact of different types of ads on the brands advertising alongside them
- Total of **4500 respondents**
- Research conducted **January 2020** by independent research agency Differentology

2. Nationally representative survey

- **Nationally representative survey** to understand consumer concerns around brand safety and expectations of advertisers
- Total of **2020 respondents**
- Fieldwork conducted **May 2020**

We tested the impact of digital newsbrand content in different contexts on advertiser brands

- Total sample of 4,500 respondents evenly split between 5 cells
 - 4 of those cells contained visitors to Reach's national newsbrand sites (visited at least once a week, samples representative of each site's online audience)
 - The 5th cell was made up of non-visitors to any Reach sites
- We then tested our experimental scenarios by manipulating 3 variables across the 5 cells...

1) Test vs. Control

Test cells saw advertising alongside the news content, while the Control group saw no ads

2) Content Intensity

Each cell saw a news article containing either low, medium or high intensity content

3) Environment

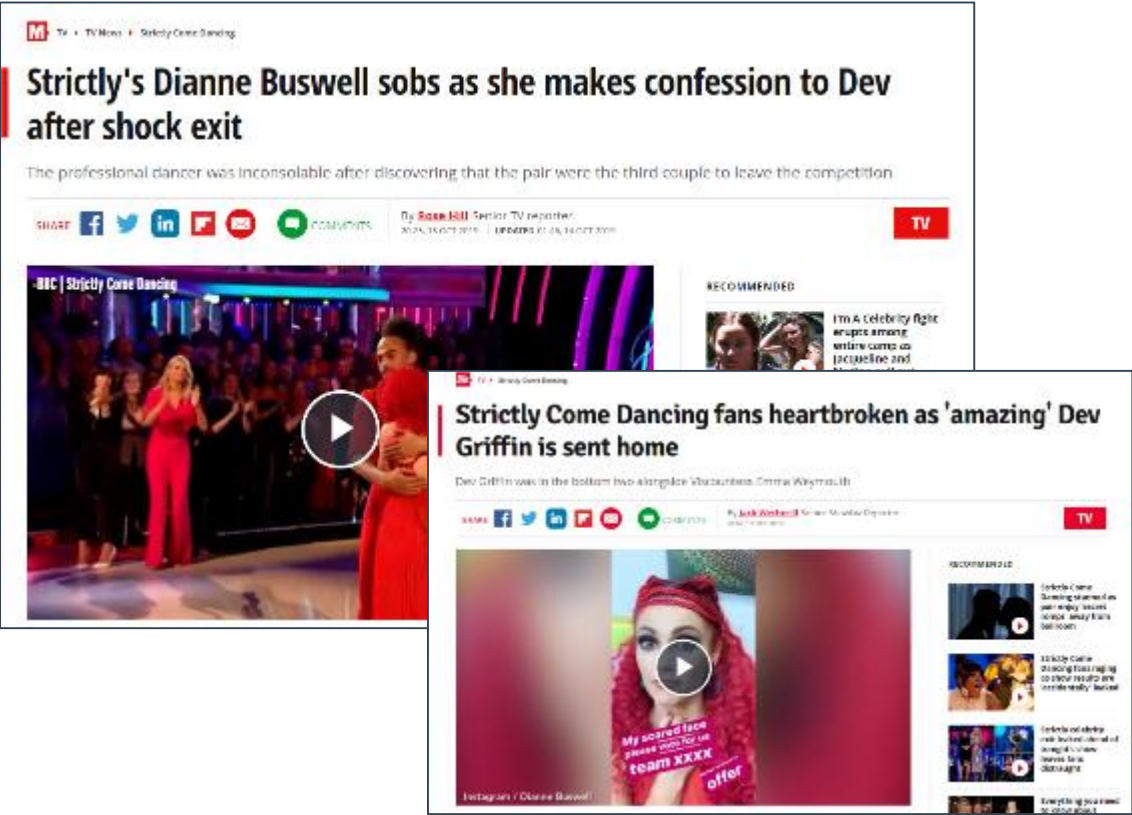
Reach readers saw content within their relevant newsbrand site, while non-readers saw a mocked up news site

We tested the impact of digital newsbrand content in different contexts on advertiser brands

CELL NUMBER	<div>CELL 1 – n=900<ul style="list-style-type: none">300 x Mirror visitors300 x Express visitors300 x Star visitors</div>	<div>CELL 2 – n=900<ul style="list-style-type: none">300 x Mirror visitors300 x Express visitors300 x Star visitors</div>	<div>CELL 3 – n=900<ul style="list-style-type: none">300 x Mirror visitors300 x Express visitors300 x Star visitors</div>	<div>CELL 4 – n=900<ul style="list-style-type: none">300 x Mirror visitors300 x Express visitors300 x Star visitors</div>	<div>CELL 5 – n=900<ul style="list-style-type: none">900 x non-visitors of Reach websites</div>
TEST VS. CONTROL	<div>CONTROL CELL No ad exposure</div>	<div>TEST CELLS Exposed to one of three pre-roll ads (randomized across test cells)</div>			
CONTENT INTENSITY	<div>LOW INTENSITY CONTENT</div>		<div>MEDIUM INTENSITY CONTENT</div>	<div>HIGH INTENSITY CONTENT</div>	<div>MEDIUM INTENSITY CONTENT</div>
ENVIRONMENT	<div>REACH WEBSITES Respondent viewed the article on either the Mirror, Express or Star website, depending on which website they usually visit</div>				<div>MOCKED UP WEBSITE Article viewed on a mocked up news site</div>

Each respondent was shown one of three articles, representing differing levels of content ‘intensity’

LOW INTENSITY
Strictly Come Dancing



CELL 1

CELL 2

MEDIUM INTENSITY
Racism in football



CELL 3

CELL 5

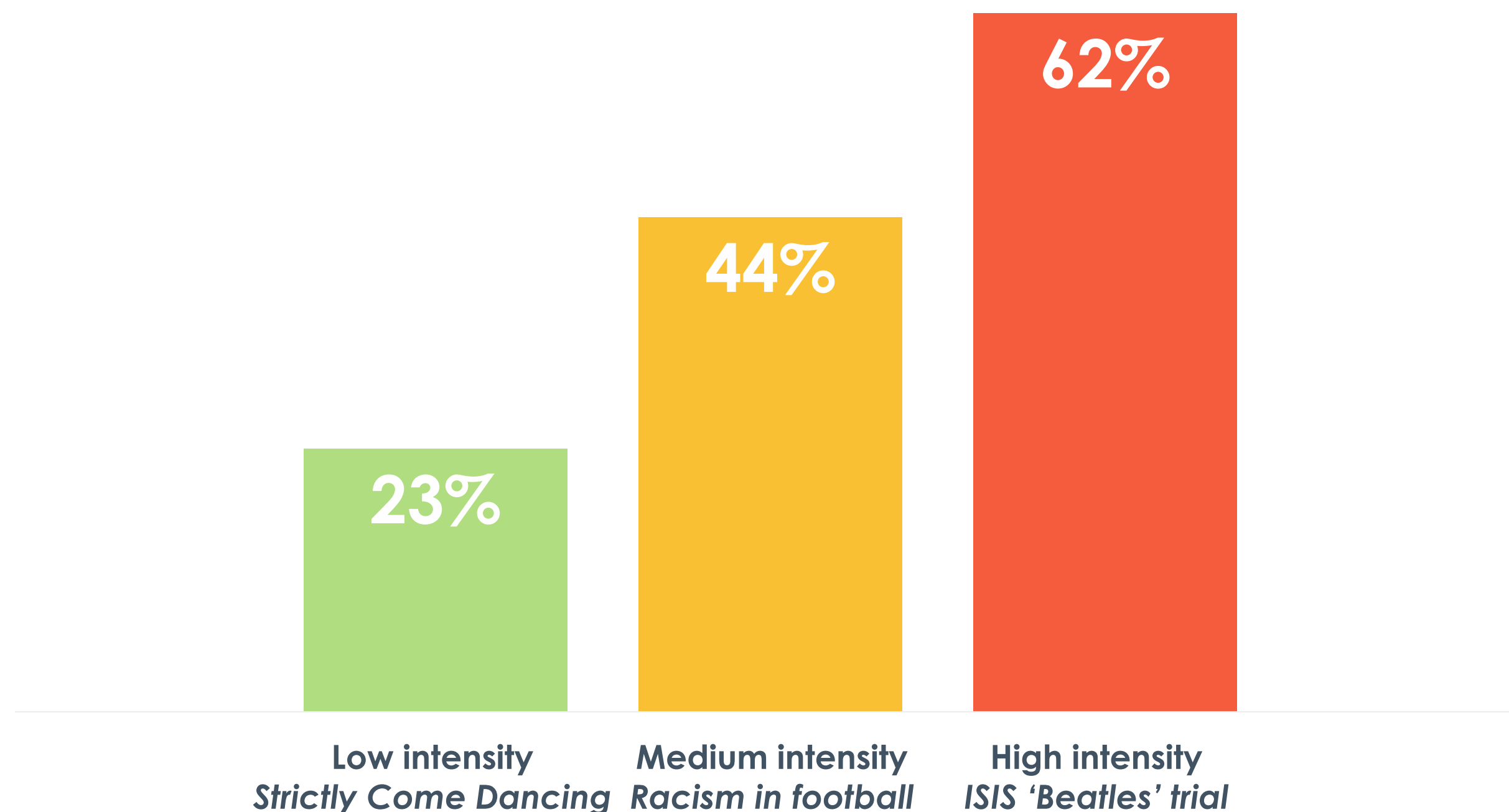
HIGH INTENSITY
ISIS 'Beatles' trial



CELL 4

With this intensity classification verified by sentiment analysis of the content

% OF ARTICLE CONTENT SENTIMENT CLASSIFIED AS NEGATIVE



We worked with a sentiment analysis expert who analysed the sentiment of the words used within these articles. Their analysis verified that the proportion of the article content classified as negative by the analysis tool is in line with our own intensity classification.

This meant we could be confident that these articles were truly reflecting different types of content in terms of their intensity of how 'unsafe' they were.






Each article contained a video, which was preceded by a pre-roll from one of three brands


TV • TV News • Strictly Come Dancing

Strictly's Dianne Buswell sobs as she makes confession to Dev after shock exit

The professional dancer was inconsolable after discovering that the pair were the third couple to leave the competition.

By **Rose Hill** Senior TV reporter
20:23, 13 OCT 2019 | UPDATED 01:40, 14 OCT 2019

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Dianne Buswell was almost inconsolable tonight after discovering that she and Dev Griffin were the third couple to leave the competition.

The professional dancer was in floods of tears after the judges chose to send them home.

Away from the dance floor, DJ Dev consoled her by hugging her and insisted that they still had their highly-praised movie week performance to remember.






Changed out of their dance wear, the pair hugged as a crying Dianne told him: "I believed in you, 150,000,000 per cent."


News • UK News • ISIS

Brit ISIS gang 'The Beatles' face death penalty after being extradited to the US

US prosecutors seek to convict El Shafee Elsheikh and Alexandra Kotey as hostage-taking conspirators - which carries a possible death sentence

By **Danya Bazarra** News Reporter & **Matthew Dresch**
23:35, 9 OCT 2019 | UPDATED 00:47, 10 OCT 2019

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Two British members of 'The Beatles' ISIS cell now face the death penalty after the US decision to extradite them, according to reports.


El Shafee Elsheikh and Alexandra Kotey, who were dubbed the 'George and Ringo' of the four-man gang, took part in brutal hostage executions in Syria.

Their English accents earned them the nickname 'The Beatles' among their hostages, who included Brits John Cantlie, David Haines and Alan Henning.


The group was accused of being responsible for killing a number of high-profile Western captives, such as the beheading of US journalist James Foley.

Elsheikh and Kotey were captured in January last year, sparking an international row over whether they should be returned to the UK for trial or face justice in another jurisdiction.


RECOMMENDED




I'm A Celebrity fight erupts among entire camp as Jacqueline and Nadine pull out




UK set for heavy snow in -8C freeze - find out if it will fall in your area




Teacher cries in class as boy's heartbreaking food question shows stark reality




Family went from having 12 houses and a Porsche to nothing in two weeks




Katie Hopkins forced to sell £1m home and now rents after cringe libel loss



Furious gran told to pay Egyptian toyboy ex who wooed her with camels £40k



If you have one of these surnames, you could inherit a Scottish castle and £370k

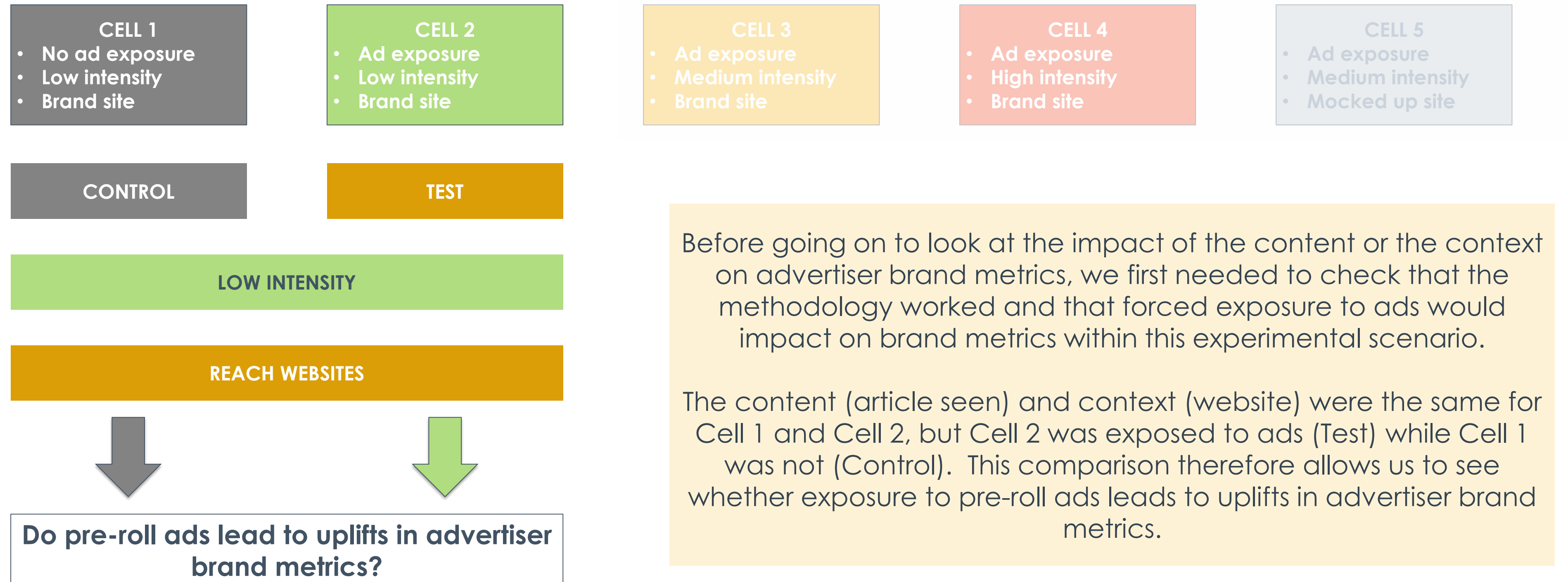


Britain's 'most hated women'

All of the articles shown to respondents contained a video, and for the Test cells each of these videos was preceded by one of three pre-roll ads.

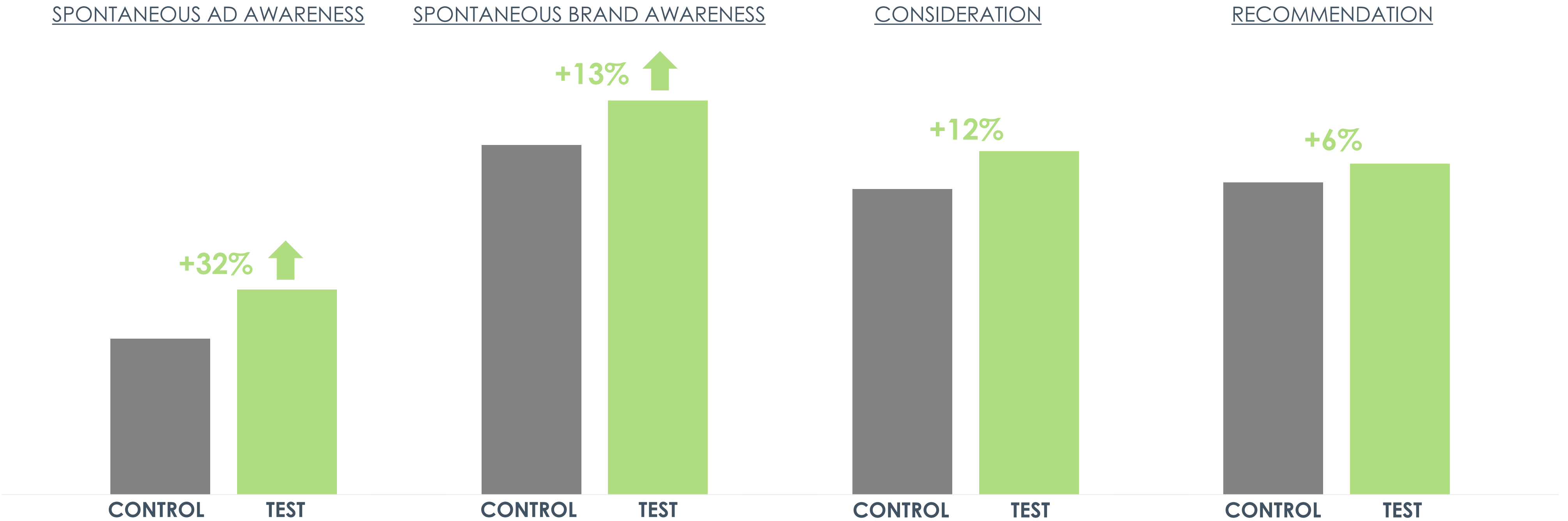
We included ads from well-known brands across different categories (sport, travel and healthcare) to ensure the findings would be applicable to all types of advertisers.

First of all we needed to prove the effectiveness of pre-roll ads in a forced exposure methodology



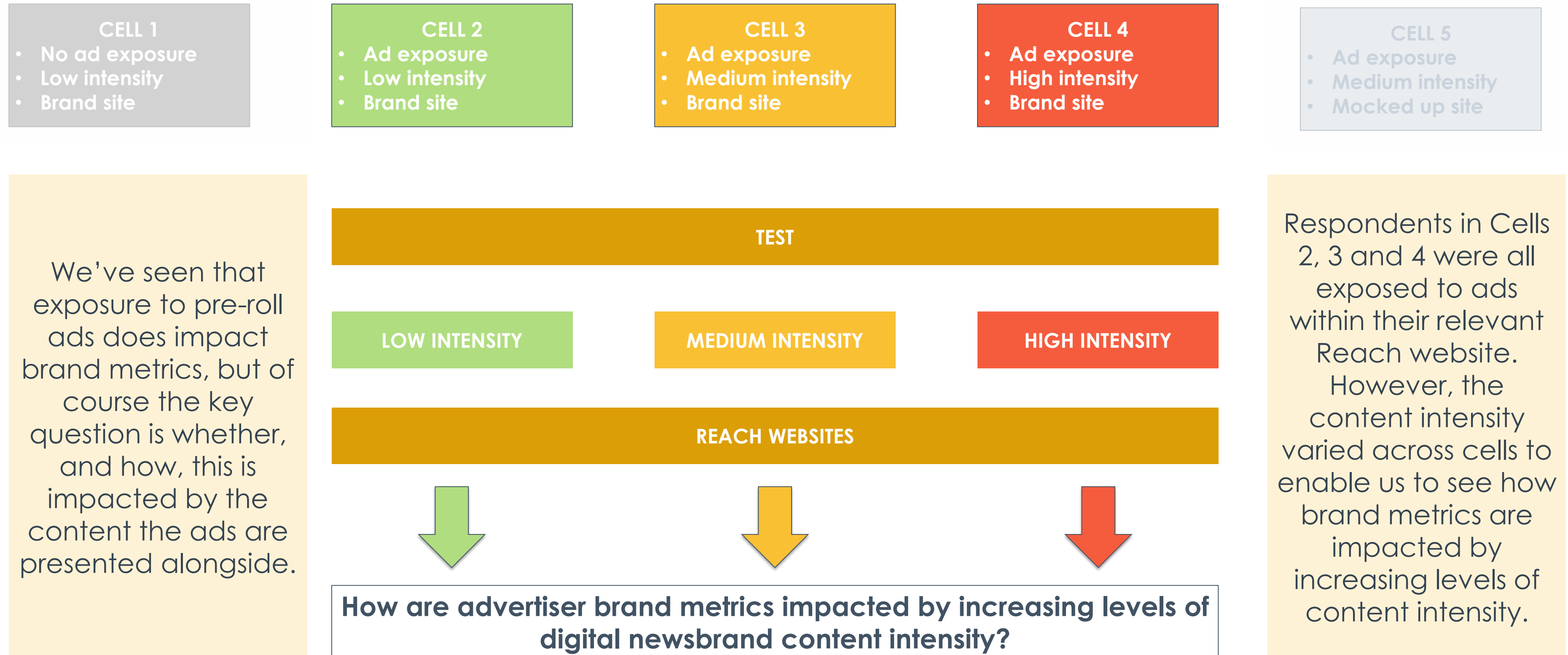
This led to uplifts seen across a range of brand metrics

TEST VS. CONTROL BRAND METRICS
(AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS)



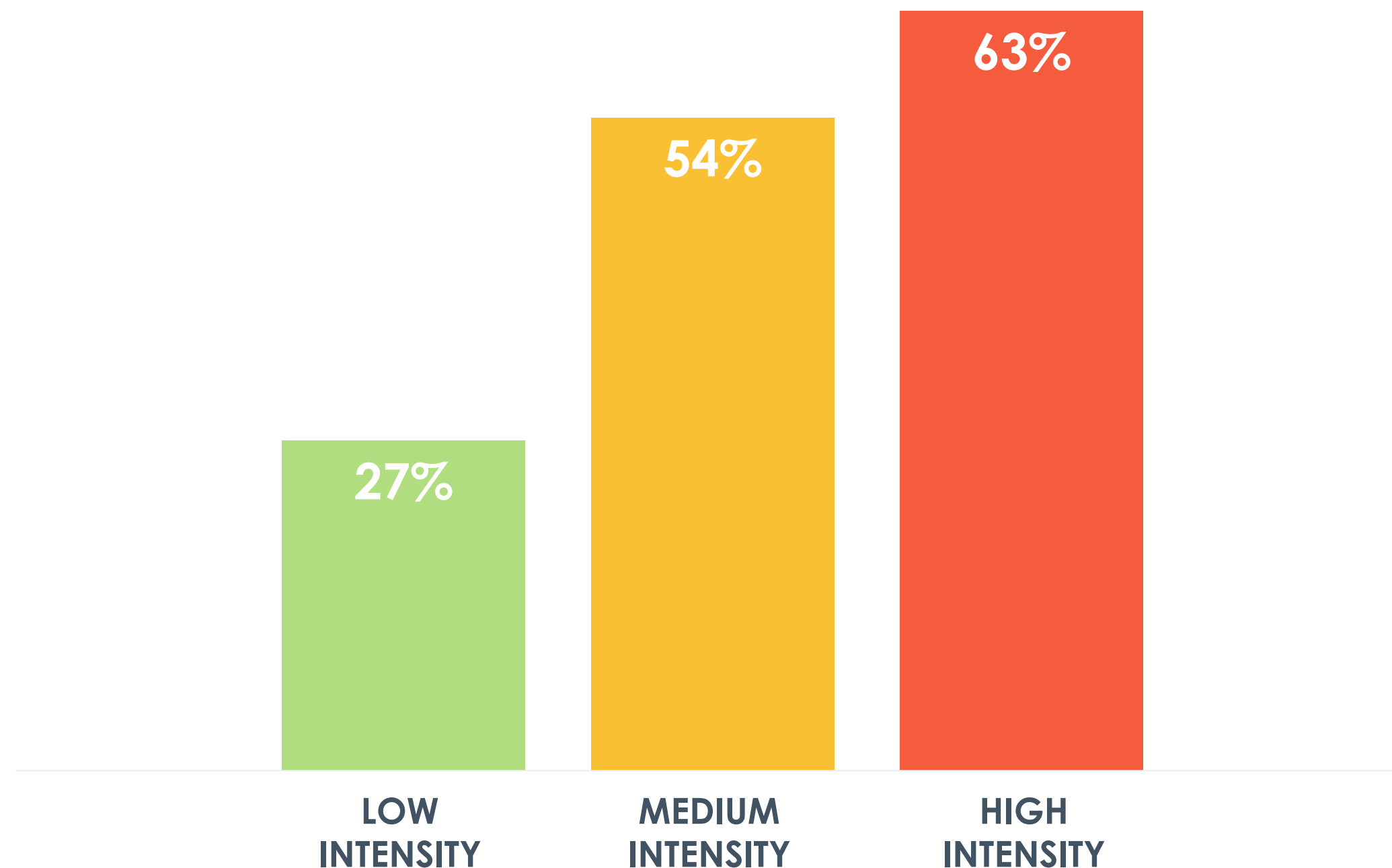
↑ Indicates significant difference between Control and Test group at 95% confidence level. + figures refer to percentage uplift between Control and Test group.

But is this positive brand impact affected by the digital news content it sits alongside?



Respondent negativity towards the articles was in line with our classification

% OF EMOTIONS TOWARDS ARTICLE CONTENT CLASSIFIED AS NEGATIVE



"It was a **fun, exciting** article that I **enjoyed** reading because I **love** Strictly Come Dancing. It **cheers me up** each week so seeing this video made me **happy**."

Daily Star reader, low intensity

"**Disgusted** that this is still happening in the modern world, **disappointed** in football fans, disappointed in UEFA."

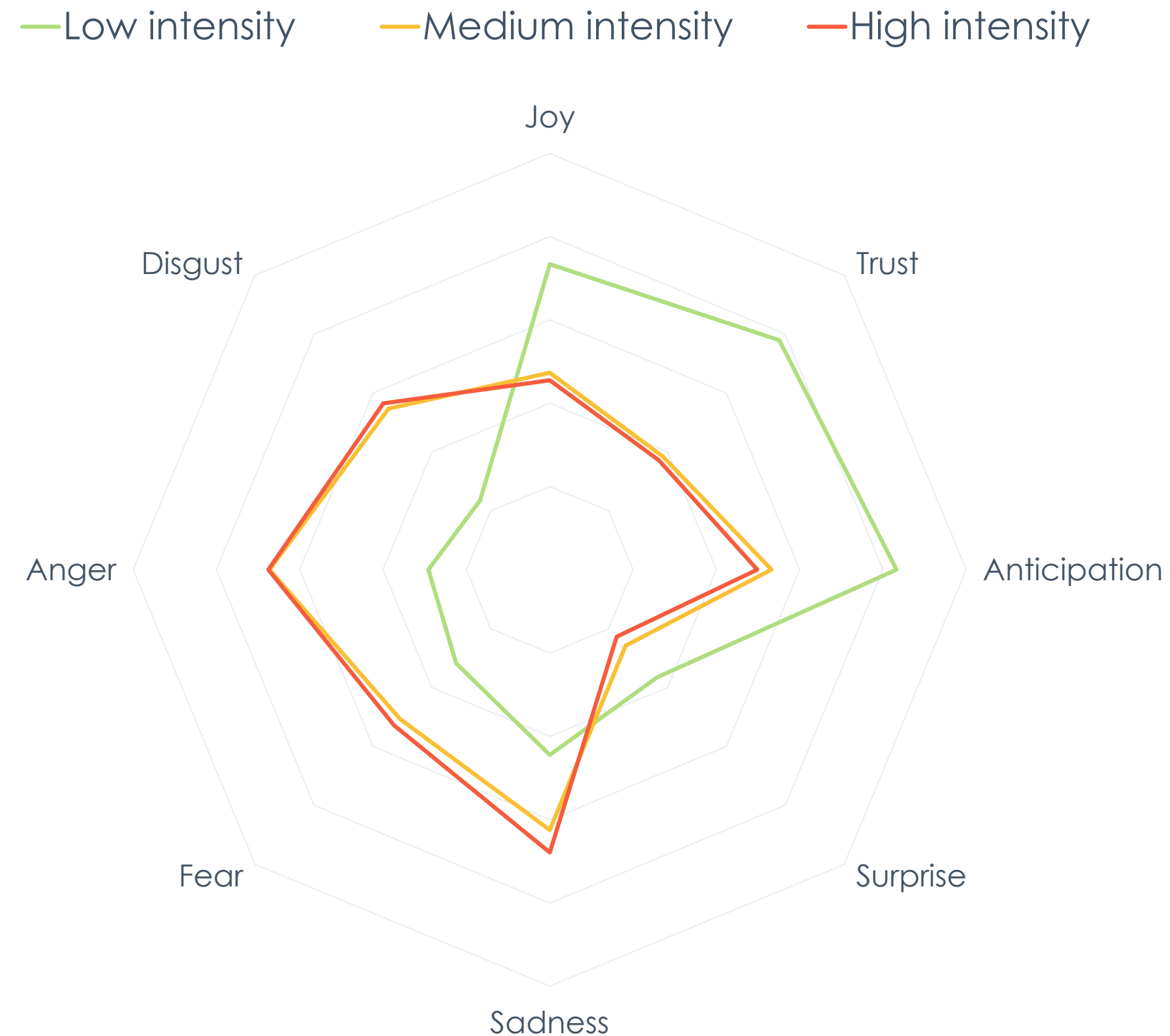
Express reader, medium intensity

"**Scary** and makes you **worry** that more people are around. Quite **sad** that they killed people and that there are people in the world who are that **mean** and **cruel**."

Mirror reader, high intensity

As expected, the higher intensity content is more likely to elicit negative emotions

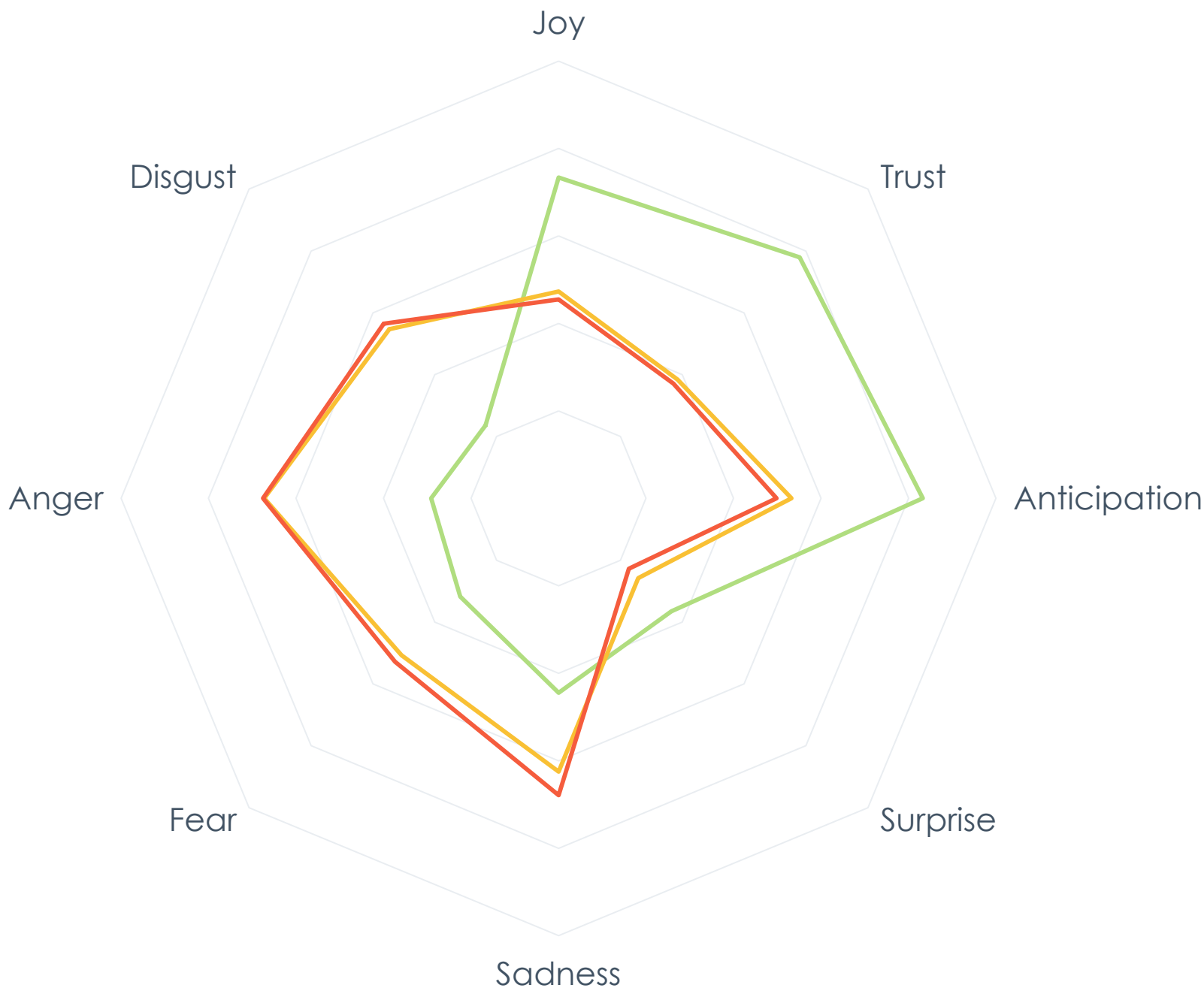
EMOTIONS TOWARDS THE ARTICLE CONTENT



But these negative feelings were not transferred to the advertised brands

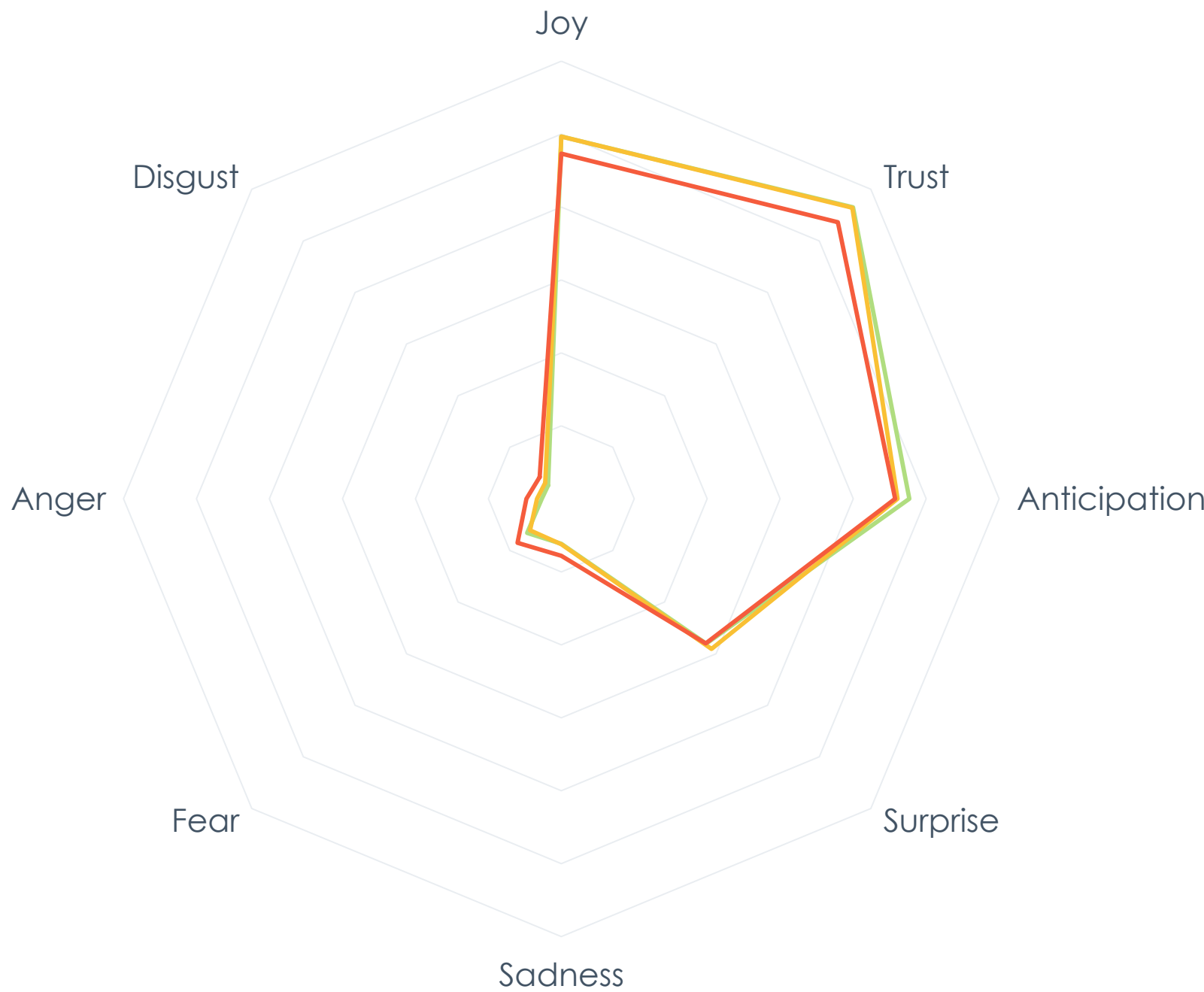
EMOTIONS TOWARDS THE **ARTICLE CONTENT**

Low intensity Medium intensity High intensity



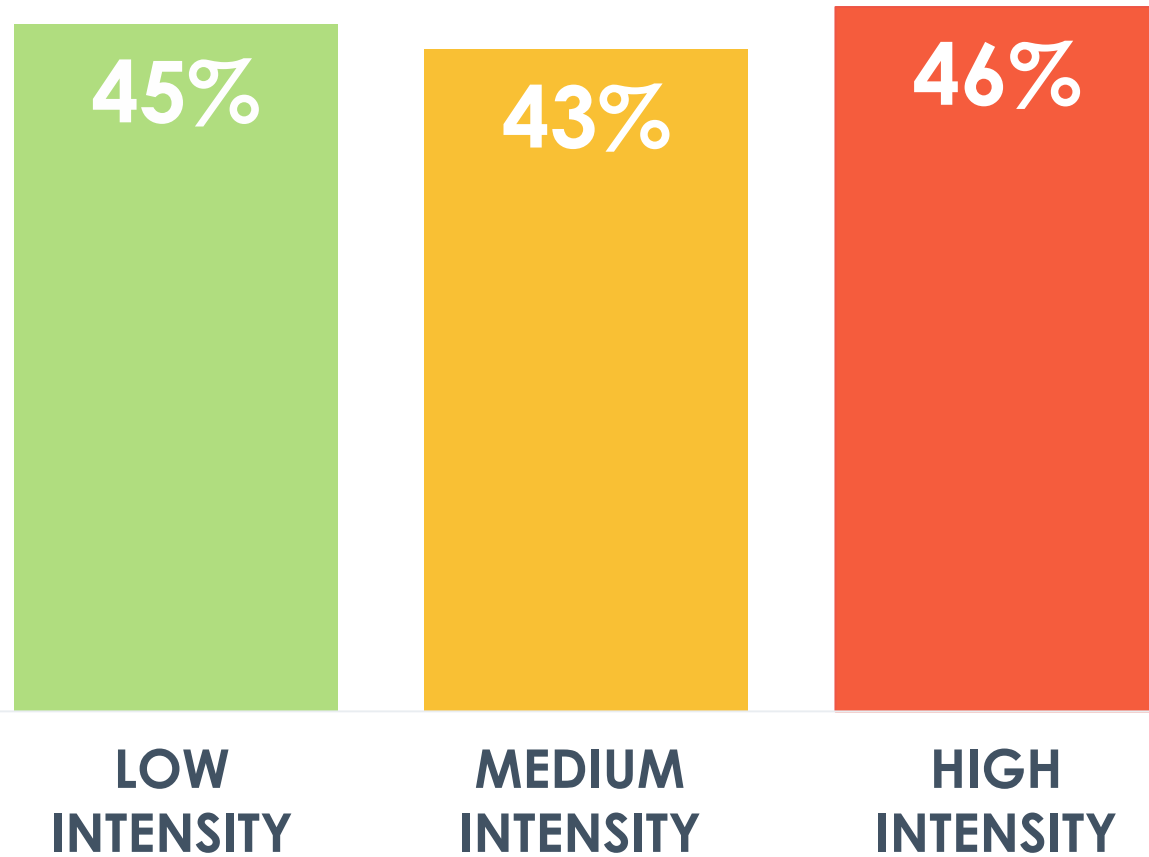
EMOTIONS TOWARDS THE **ADVERTISER BRANDS**

Low intensity Medium intensity High intensity

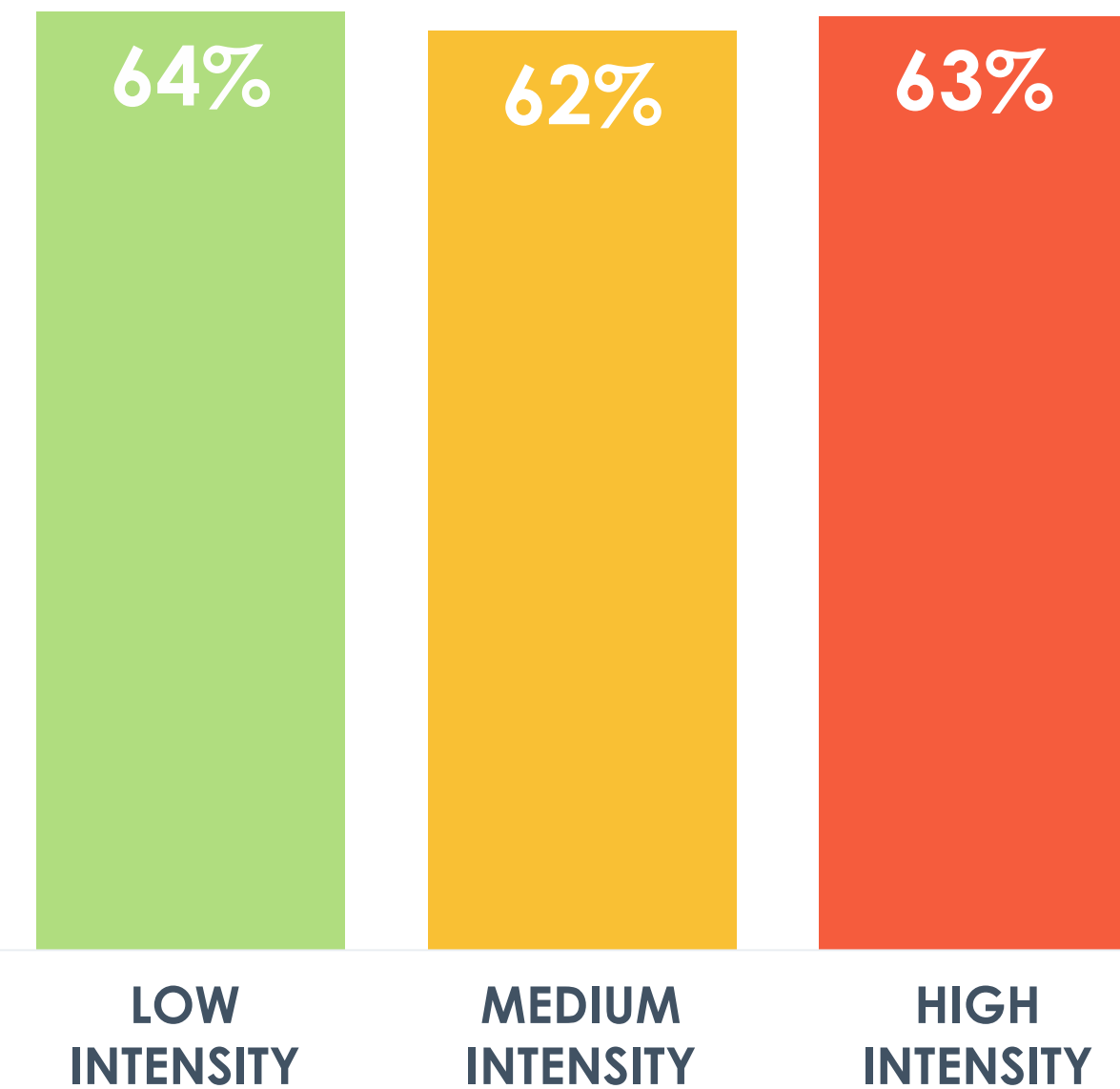


The impact on brand metrics is the same regardless of the content intensity

POSITIVITY TOWARDS **ADVERTISER BRAND** (8-10 RATING) – AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS

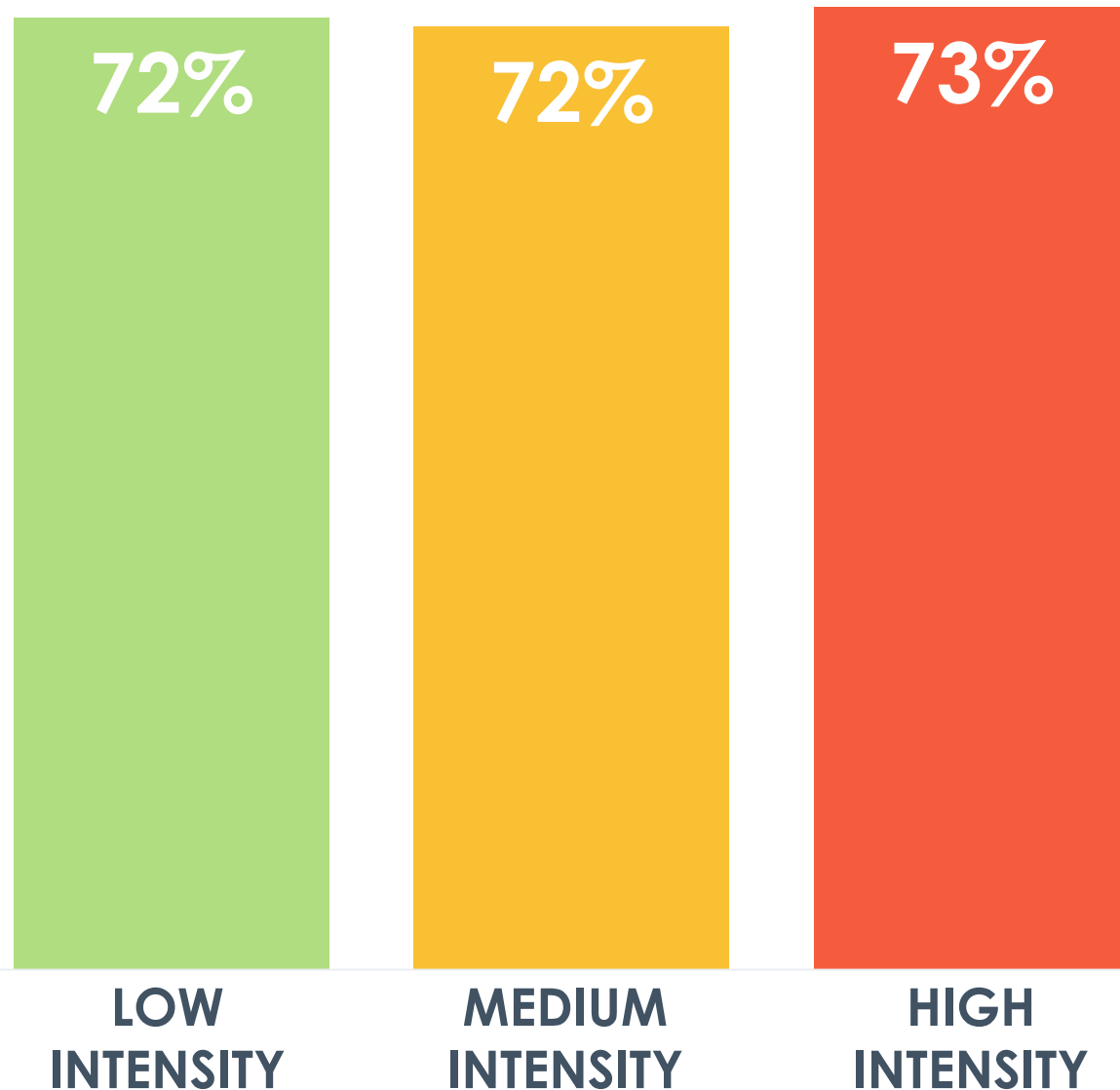


AGREEMENT WITH POSITIVE STATEMENTS ABOUT **ADVERTISER BRAND** – AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS

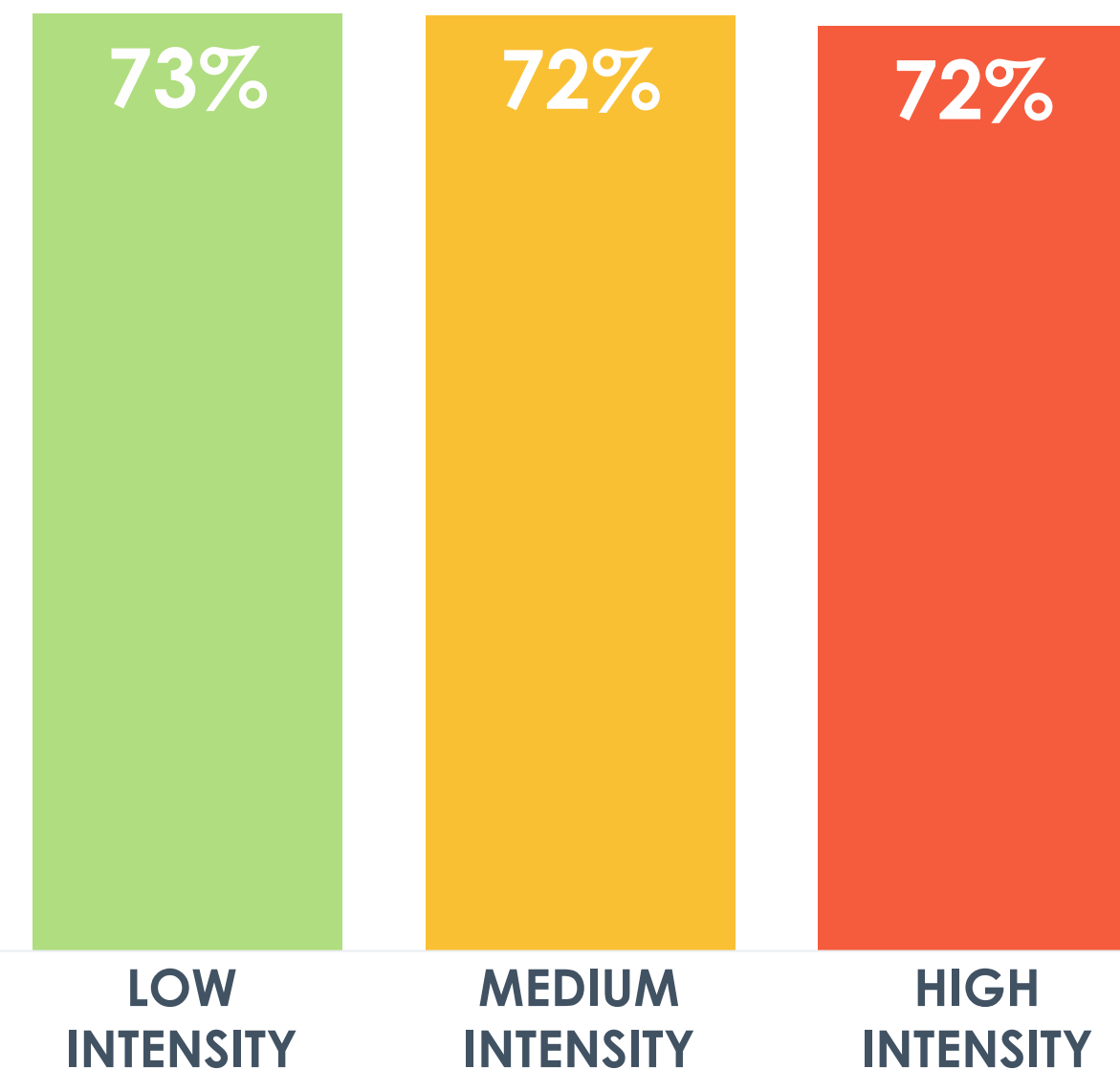


Meaning that advertising is equally effective when shown with newsbrand content that would usually be blocked

ADVERTISER BRAND CONSIDERATION
– AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS



ADVERTISER BRAND RECOMMENDATION
– AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS



But we also wanted to reinforce the importance of the environment

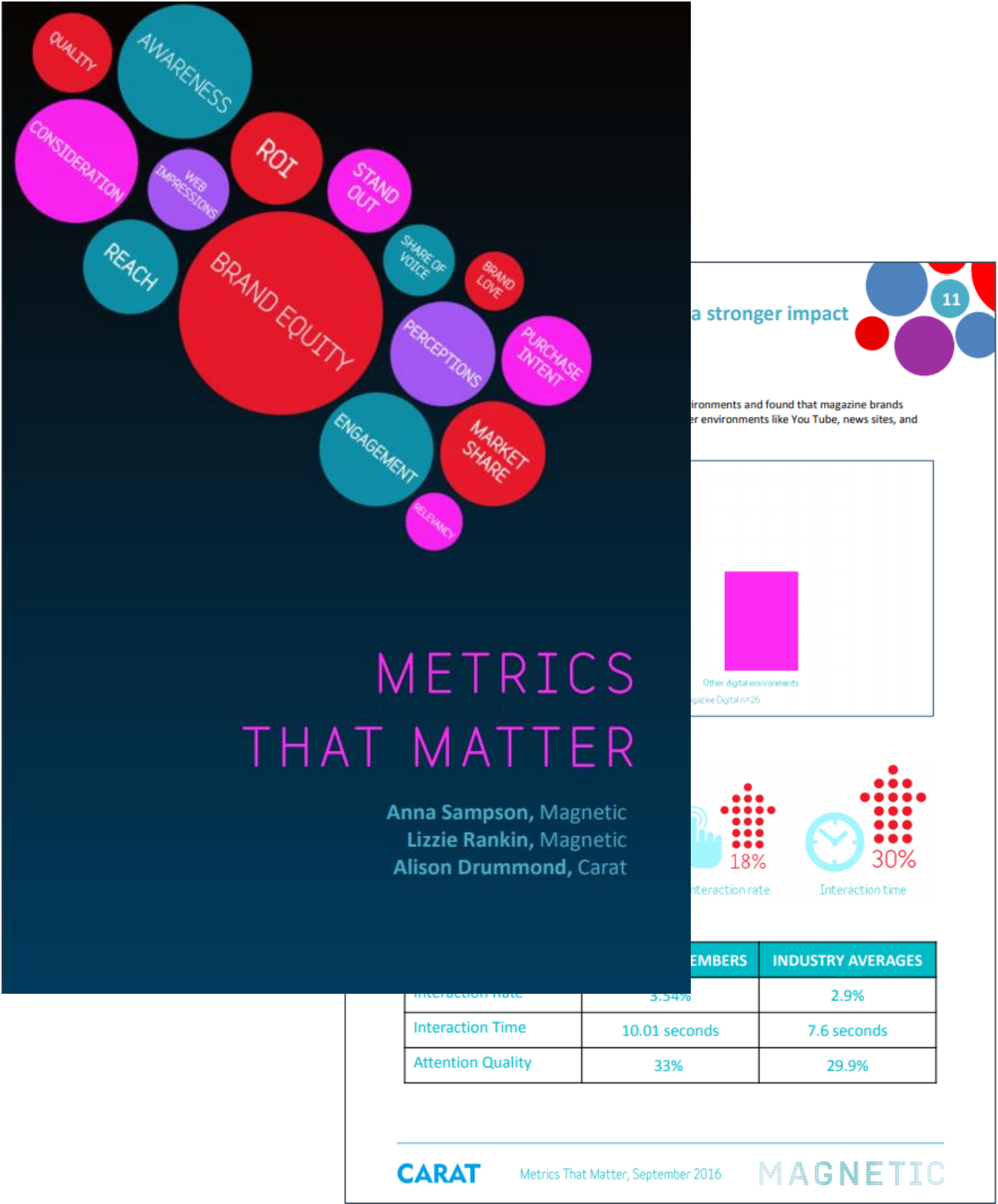
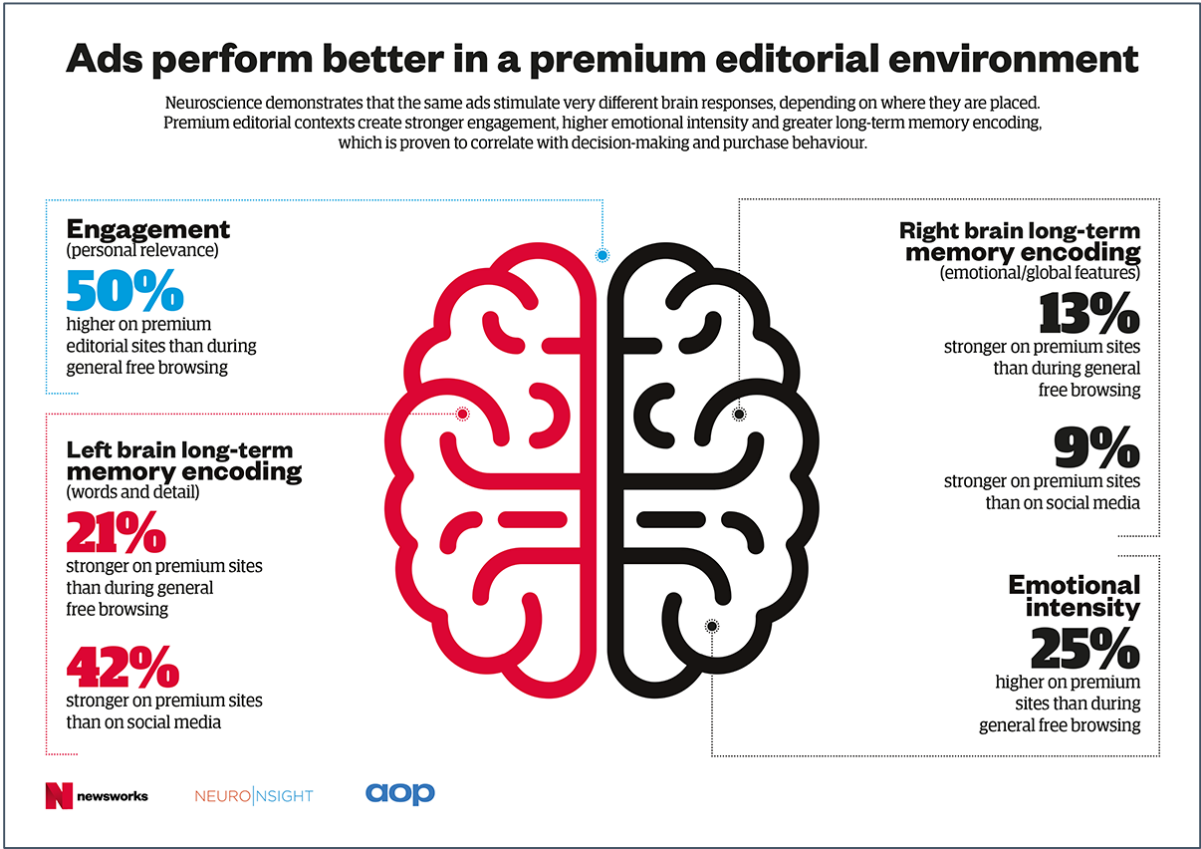


NEURO|NSIGHT



Context Matters:

A brain science study revealing why ads in quality editorial environments are more effective



We've seen that the type of content ads are shown alongside has no impact on brands when shown within one of our Reach websites. However, we wanted to go further to understand the role that the environment plays.

Many previous studies have already proven how important context is for advertisers and shown that ads perform much better within a premium editorial environment. However, we wanted to see what role it plays more specifically in terms of 'unsafe' content.

By examining the role that context plays in brand safety

<div>CELL 1</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">No ad exposureLow intensityBrand site	<div>CELL 2</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ad exposureLow intensityBrand site	<div>CELL 3</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ad exposureMedium intensityBrand site	<div>CELL 4</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ad exposureHigh intensityBrand site	<div>CELL 5</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ad exposureMedium intensityMocked up site
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All the results so far in this report have been based on Reach website visitors seeing the articles and ads within their own regular newsbrand website. So how does this change when we show ‘unsafe’ content within an unfamiliar context?

For this final piece of analysis we looked at Cells 3 and 5 who were both exposed to ads alongside the same medium intensity content. However, this time it was the environment that differed with Cell 5 seeing the content in an unfamiliar news site.

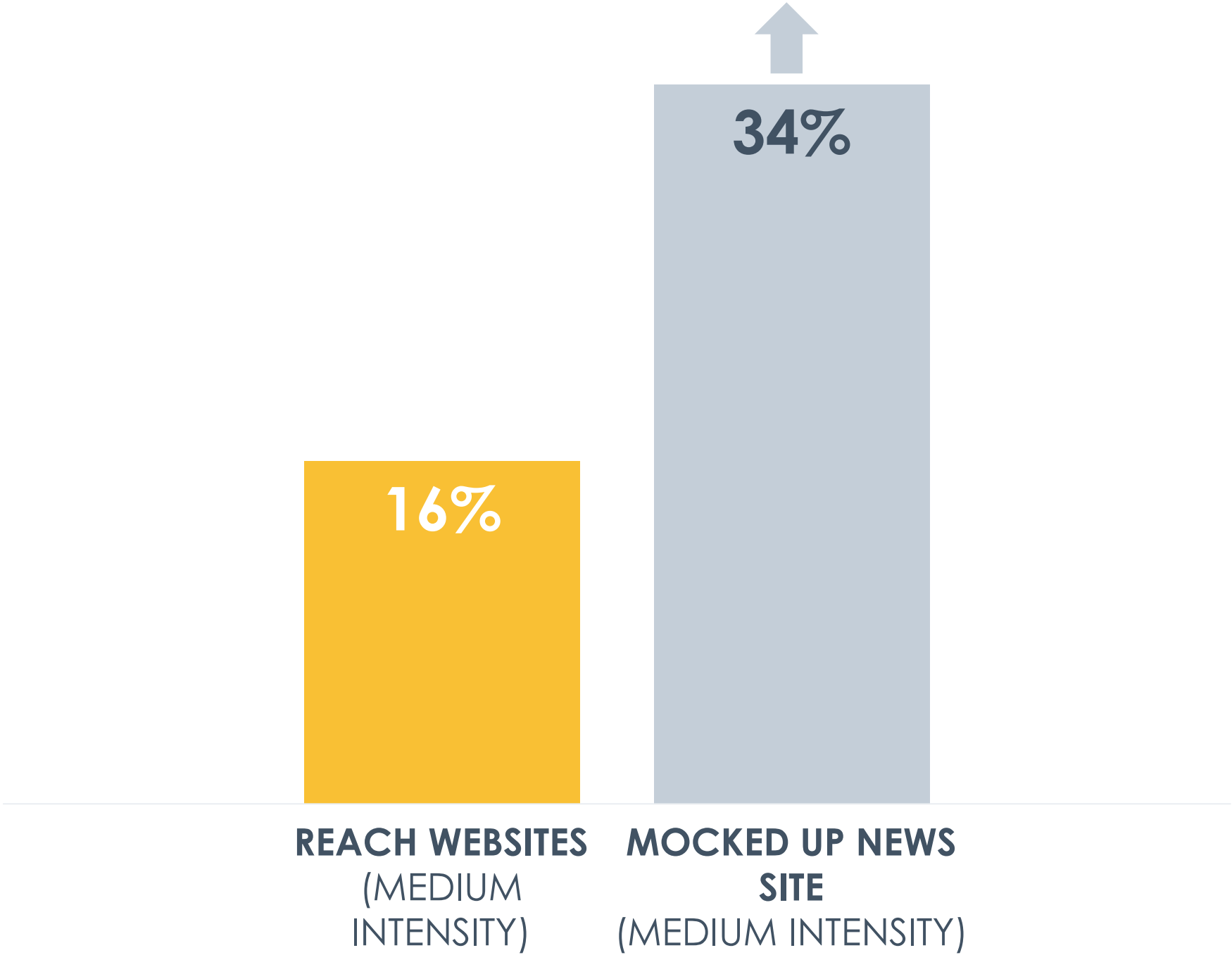


We created a mocked up news website 'Circulate' to compare against our established newsbrands

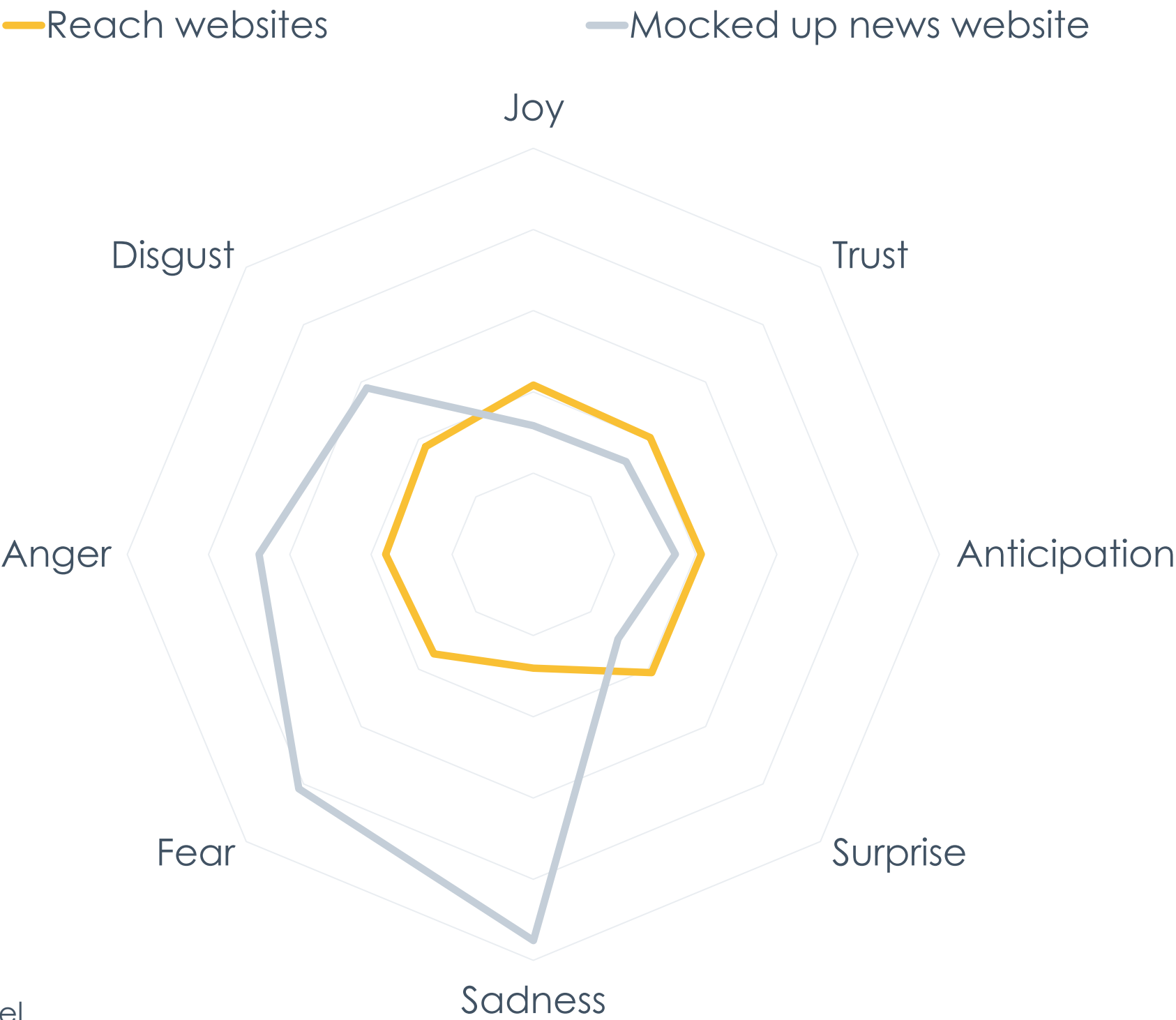


An unfamiliar environment prompts negative emotions

% OF EMOTIONS TOWARDS WEBSITES CLASSIFIED AS NEGATIVE



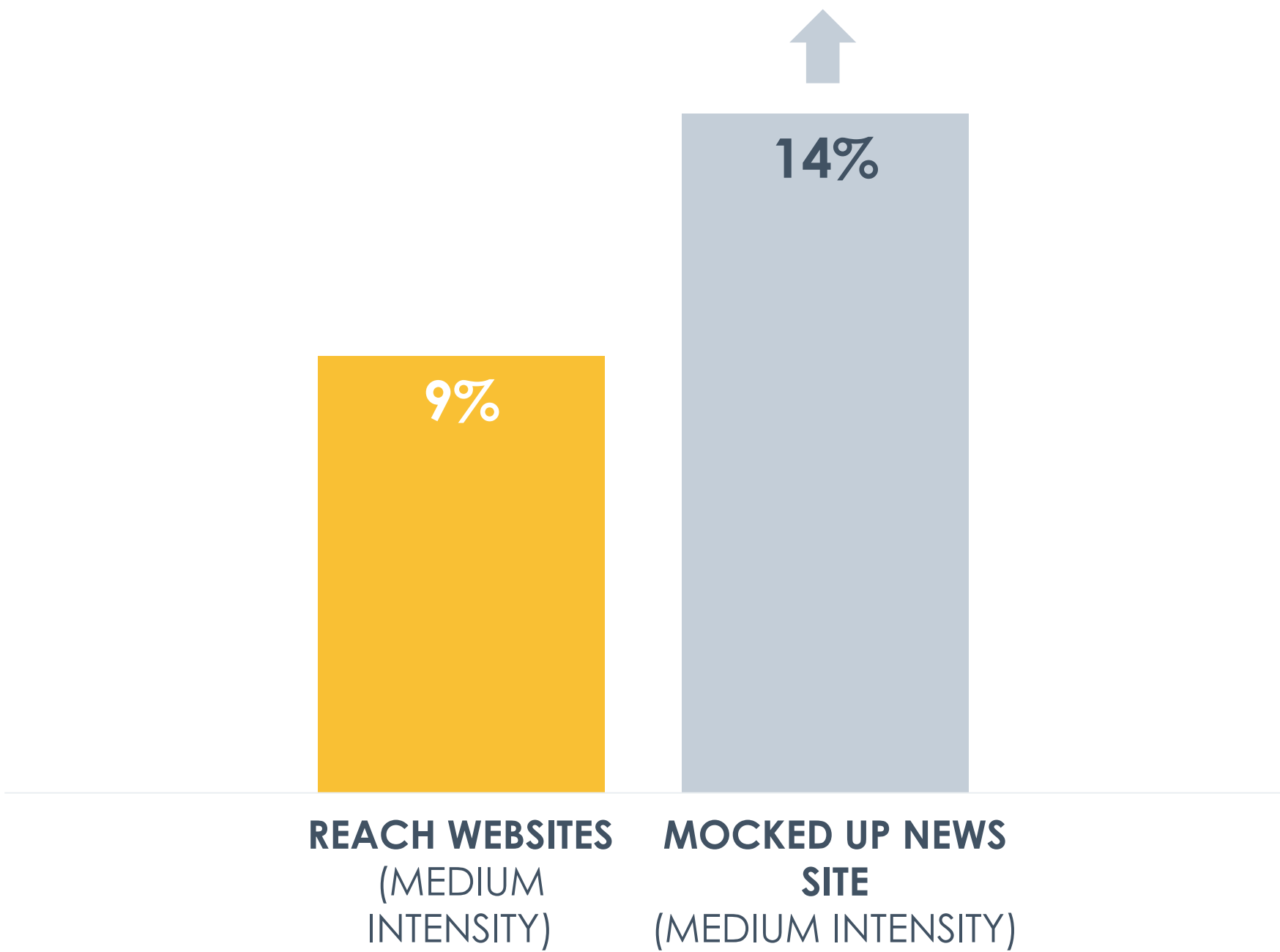
EMOTIONS FELT TOWARDS WEBSITES (INDEX VS. AVERAGE)



↑ Indicates significant difference between Reach websites and Mocked up website at 95% confidence level

Which transfers to the advertiser brands

% OF EMOTIONS TOWARDS ADVERTISER BRANDS
CLASSIFIED AS NEGATIVE



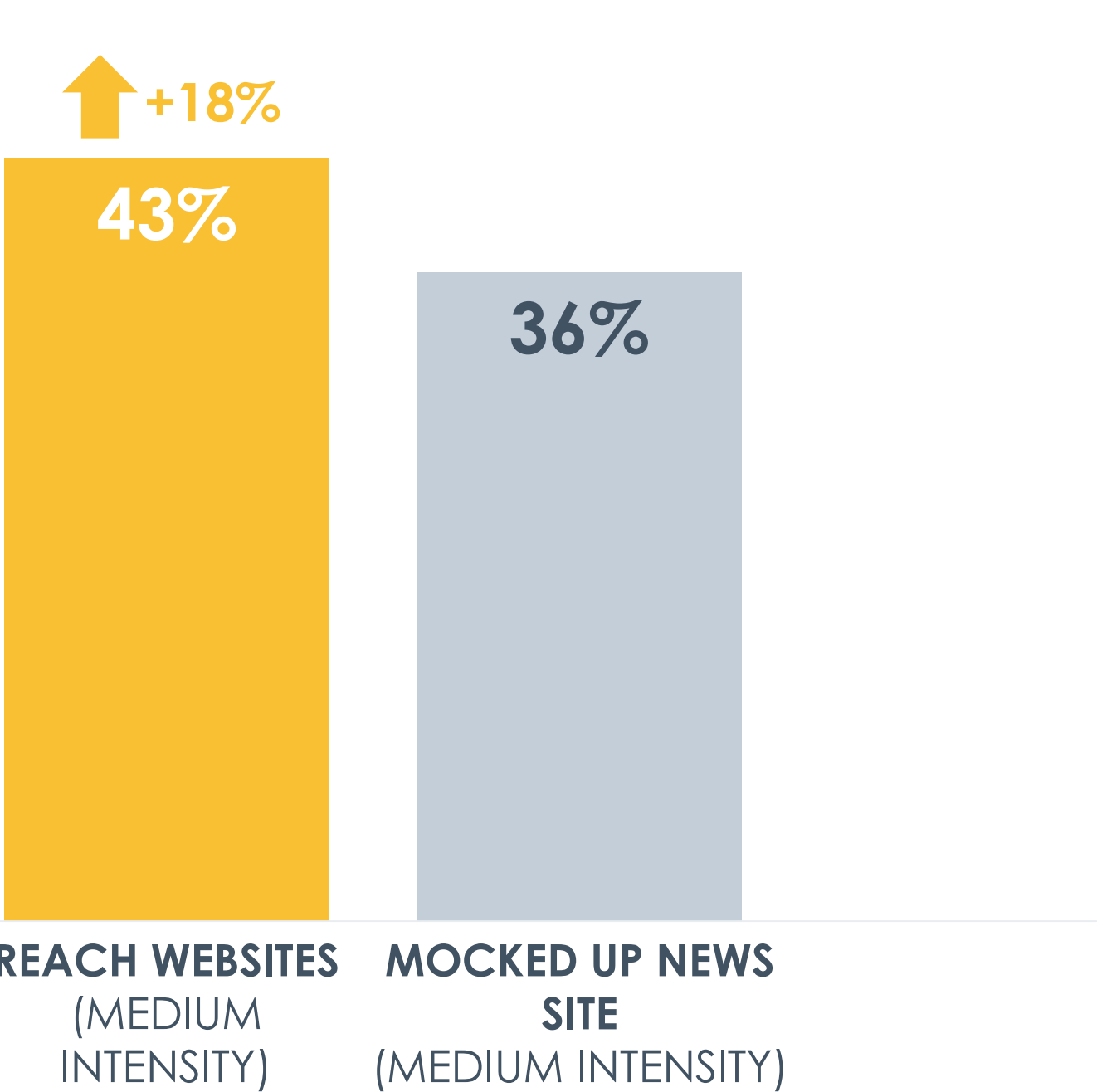
For Cell 5 respondents, being in an unfamiliar environment prompted negative emotions which have transferred onto the advertiser brands.

Those who were exposed to the ads alongside moderate intensity content within a mocked up news site expressed significantly more negative emotions towards the advertiser brands than those who saw the ads alongside the same content within a Reach site.

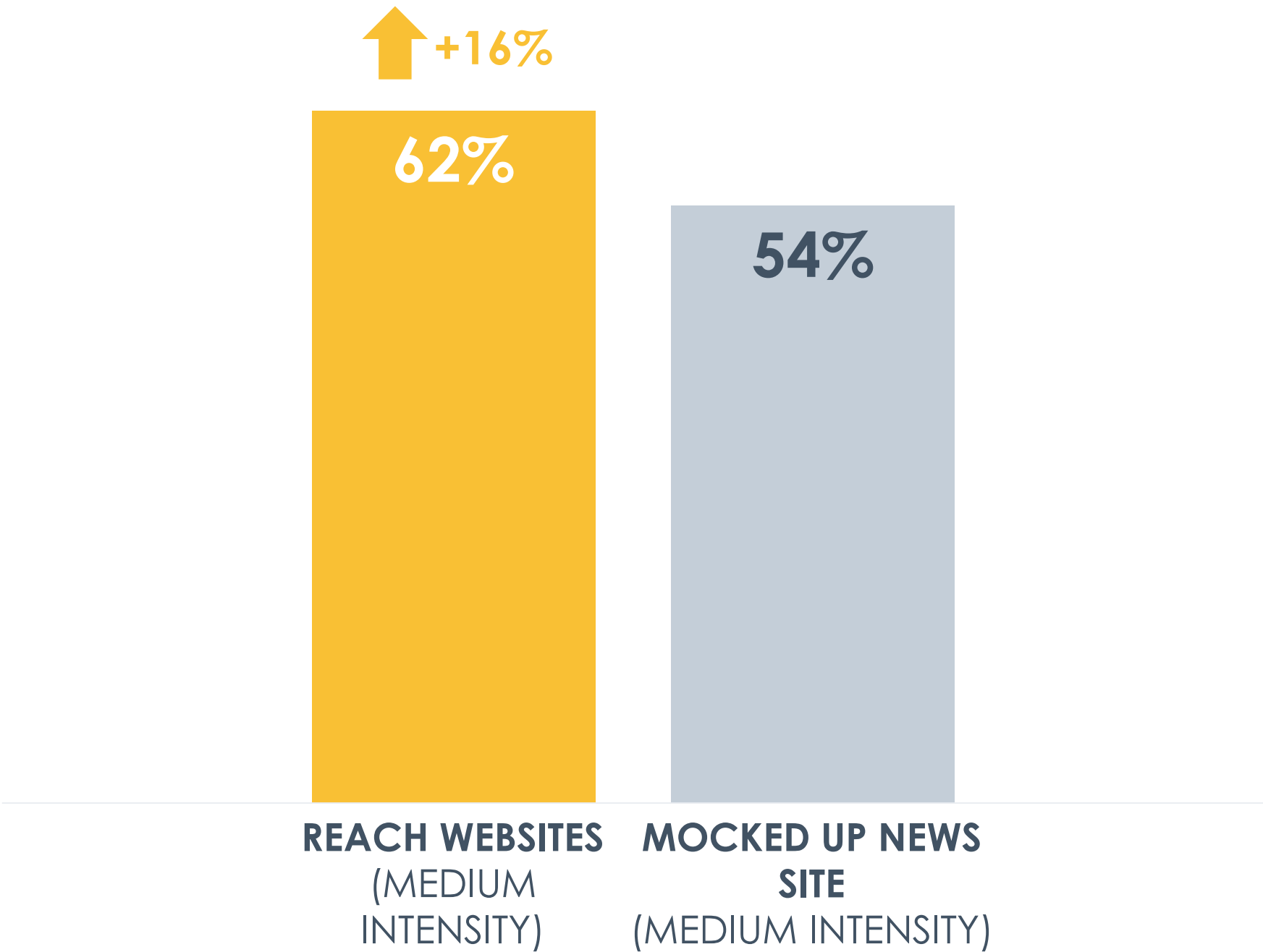
↑ Indicates significant difference between Reach websites and Mocked up website at 95% confidence level

Leading to more positive perceptions for brands advertised on trusted websites

POSITIVITY TOWARDS **ADVERTISER BRANDS** (8-10)
– AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS



AGREE WITH POSITIVE STATEMENTS ABOUT **ADVERTISER BRANDS**
– AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS



↑ Indicates significant difference between Reach websites and Mocked up website at 95% confidence level. + figures refer to percentage uplift between Reach websites and Mocked up website

Proving that brands are not negatively impacted by 'unsafe' content, as long as this is within a trusted environment

CONSIDERATION OF ADVERTISER BRANDS
– AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS

↑ +18%



REACH WEBSITES
(MEDIUM
INTENSITY)

61%



MOCKED UP NEWS
SITE
(MEDIUM INTENSITY)

LIKELIHOOD TO RECOMMEND ADVERTISER BRANDS
– AVERAGE ACROSS BRANDS

↑ +25%



REACH WEBSITES
(MEDIUM
INTENSITY)

58%



MOCKED UP NEWS
SITE
(MEDIUM INTENSITY)

↑ Indicates significant difference between Reach websites and Mocked up website at 95% confidence level. + figures refer to percentage uplift between Reach websites and Mocked up website

Key take-outs

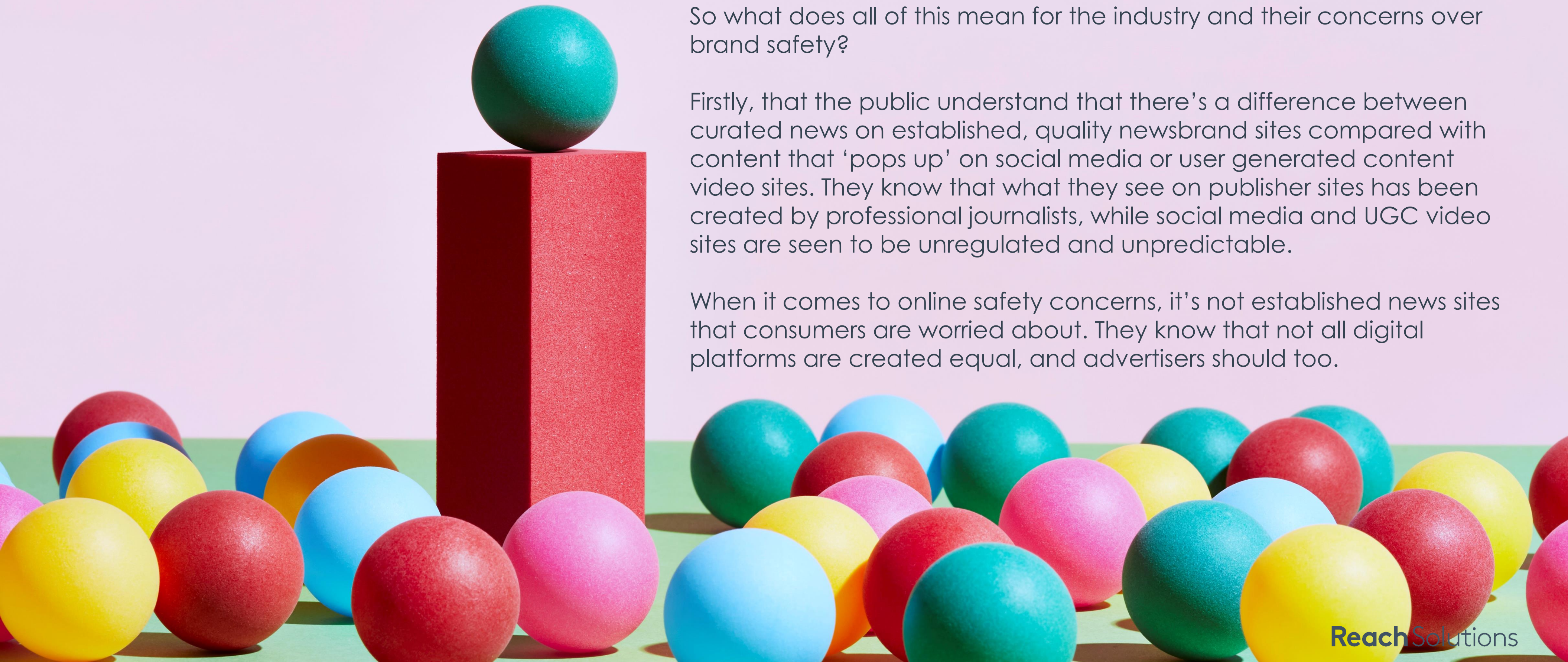
1. When shown in a trusted digital newsbrand environment, the level of content intensity does not adversely impact advertised brands
2. Environment is key to this. When the safety of an established news site is taken away, responses to ads shown alongside intense content are significantly more negative

The public know that not all digital platforms are created equal

So what does all of this mean for the industry and their concerns over brand safety?

Firstly, that the public understand that there's a difference between curated news on established, quality newsbrand sites compared with content that 'pops up' on social media or user generated content video sites. They know that what they see on publisher sites has been created by professional journalists, while social media and UGC video sites are seen to be unregulated and unpredictable.

When it comes to online safety concerns, it's not established news sites that consumers are worried about. They know that not all digital platforms are created equal, and advertisers should too.



And that quality environments matter

Even those outside the industry understand the importance of a quality, trusted environment and the benefits this brings for brands. The context of a safe, familiar news environment ‘protects’ advertiser brands from any negative associations with the content it sits alongside, and instead it’s the qualities of the environment that brands align themselves with.

As a result, advertisers should be more concerned about *where* their ads are being placed and what this environment says about their brand, rather than placing disproportionate focus on *what* content it may sit alongside.



So brand safety shouldn't be a 'one size fits all' approach

Over recent years publishers have been treated in the same way as social media and YouTube, with the creation and universal application of brand safety tools resulting in perfectly 'safe' content on news sites being blocked by advertisers. However, even content that is 'correctly' classified as 'unsafe' by these tools shouldn't be off limits to advertising. As long as this type of content is presented within a quality editorial environment, there is no detrimental impact to brands.

So while advertisers are unlikely to completely abandon brand safety rules, these rules need to be nuanced to take the content provider and surrounding environment into account. There is no 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to brand safety, and believing there is will lead to wasted inventory for publishers and wasted opportunities for advertisers.

