

Exposing the 'brand suitability' myth



Introduction

The thinking around 'brand suitability', that has led some advertisers and their agencies to avoid placing ads in news publishing, isn't based on facts.

New evidence strongly contradicts claims that brands suffer from advertising in news publishing content. Furthermore, evidence shows this misconception is leading advertisers to miss out on significant ROI and profit.

ThinkNewsBrands has combined the latest global and local research from Stagwell / HarrisX, Edelman, NewsWorks, the University of Canberra, and FiftyFive5 to dispel the 'brand suitability' myth and show the opportunity cost advertisers are suffering by avoiding news environments.

New data shows:

- No negative impact from advertising in news publishing
- Advertisers are sacrificing significant ROI by avoiding news



Index of reports and resources cited

International



Australia



'Hard news' is high-impact. Evidence shows no negative impact on brand performance from advertising in 'hard news'.

Contrary to myths that hard news may cause undesirable brand associations, 2024 research from Stagwell and HarrisX involving 50,000 adults found **placing ads next to 'hard news' had no discernible difference on brand reputation, purchase intent or favourability** compared to placing ads next to 'soft news'.

Average brand perception across 8 key brand metrics

67.2%

Ads on high-impact news stories
Trump, Middle East, Crime, Biden, Inflation

68.3%










Ads on soft news stories
Business, Sports, Entertainment

The evidence is clear. Audiences do not link the brand attributes of advertisers to the sentiments or theme of the story they appear alongside.
















Contrary to myths that ‘hard news’ may cause undesirable topic associations, data shows no negative impact on brand perception from advertising in ‘hard news’.

There is **no discernible difference** in appearing alongside positive or negative (‘hard’ or ‘soft’) news topics. The **brand impact is equal**.

Soft news

	Business	Entertainment	Sports
Purchase Intent	 61%	 62%	 64%
Favourability	 70%	 73%	 72%
8 Metric Average	 68%	 68%	 70%

Hard news

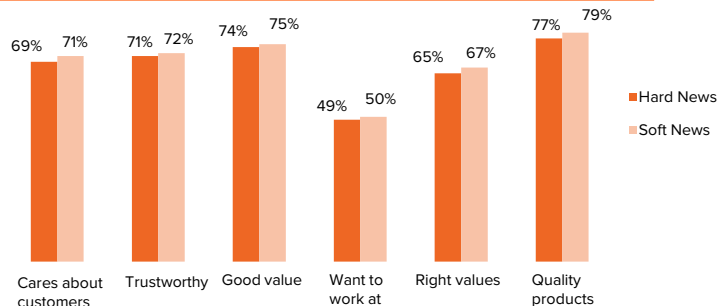
	Middle East	Crime	Trump	Biden	Inflation
Purchase Intent	 62%	 63%	 62%	 61%	 64%
Favourability	 70%	 71%	 68%	 69%	 72%
8 Metric Average	 67%	 68%	 67%	 66%	 69%

Regardless of the 'brand suitability' metric, the research found the impact of advertising in hard and soft news is largely equal.



Reputational Brand Metric (% Top 2 box)	Average	Middle East	Crime	Trump	Biden	Inflation	Business	Entertainment	Sports
Cares about customers	70%	69%	71%	68%	68%	71%	70%	70%	72%
Trustworthy	72%	71%	71%	71%	70%	72%	71%	72%	74%
Good value	74%	73%	75%	73%	73%	75%	75%	75%	76%
Want to work at	49%	49%	48%	49%	48%	50%	49%	49%	51%
Right values	66%	65%	66%	65%	63%	67%	66%	66%	68%
Quality products	78%	76%	79%	77%	76%	78%	78%	78%	80%

Brand suitability average: hard news vs. soft news



This also rings true at a demographic level, where there is little difference between 'hard' and 'soft' news.

Effective planning decisions should be made based on the receptiveness and trust of the platform they are appearing on, and not based on the individual topic, stories, sentiments or themes.

“What matters is how engaging the article is, not whether or not it is hard news.”

Among mums,

the average purchase intent for brands whose ads were placed next to articles on the inflation and business was:



compared to:

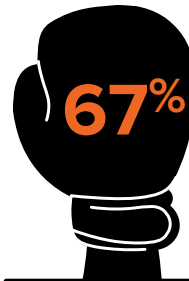
72% for crime

68% for entertainment

72% for sports

Among Gen Z,

the average purchase intent for brands whose ads were placed next to articles on crime was:



compared to:

65% for middle east

66% for inflation

62% for entertainment

Concern should be elsewhere, especially with rising distrust on social media.

Brand suitability actions seem reserved for news, despite other platforms housing harmful content, increasing deepfakes, AI-generated content and misinformation that really can impact brand perception.

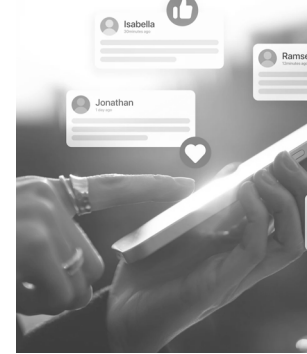
75% Australians concerned about misinformation on social media: **11pt rise since 2022.**

40% Fewer people trust social media platforms compared to traditional media channels.

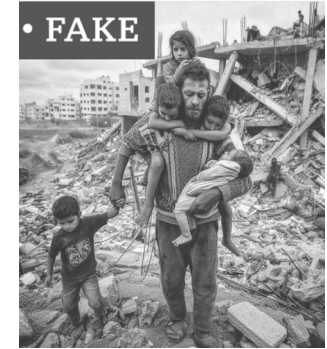
-2.3% The decline of users on social media in Australia from early 2023 to early 2024.



Political Events: arguments, conspiracy and trolls



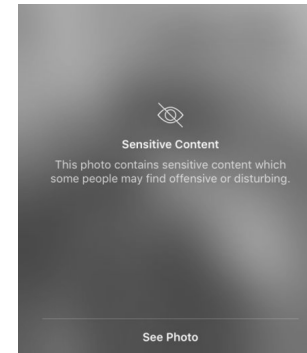
Scams: hoaxes, hacks and deceptions



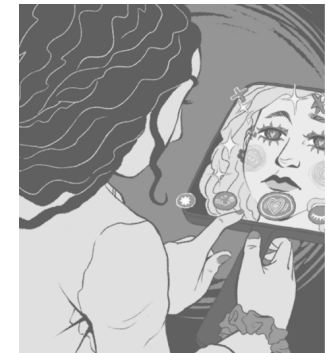
AI & Deepfakes: increasing synthetic content



Misinformation: unverified sources not held to standards



Exposure: harmful or graphic content defying social norms



Self-image: Body image, procrastination and guilt.

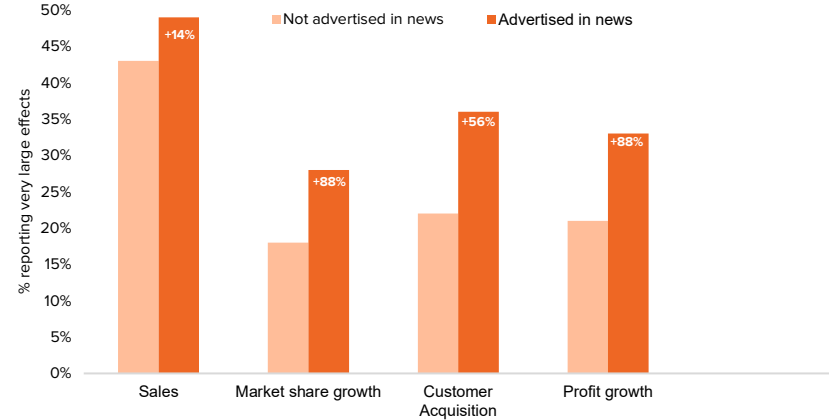
The 'brand suitability' myth regarding news publishing is causing advertisers to sacrifice significant ROI and profit

Research by Peter Field, shows **campaigns that avoid news are less effective in delivering sales, market share, acquisition and profit** compared to those that do use news.

60%

Of respondents trust ads more when they appear on premium news content.

NEWS BRAND ADVERTISING EFFECTS

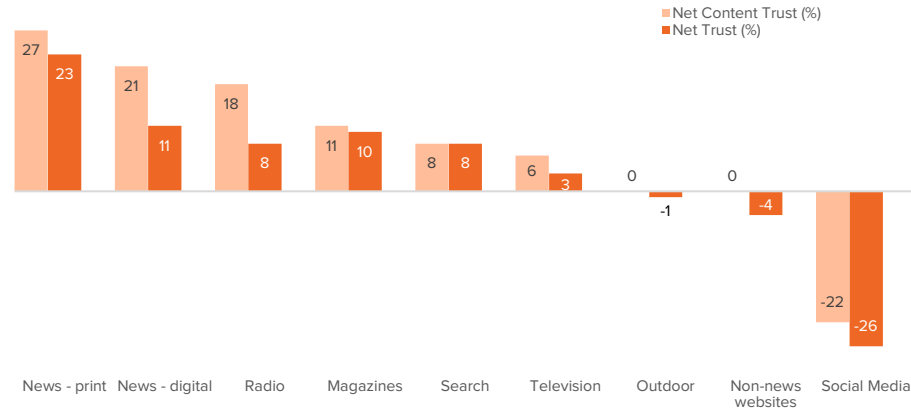


Campaigns using news advertising realise significant increases in sales, market share and profit growth.

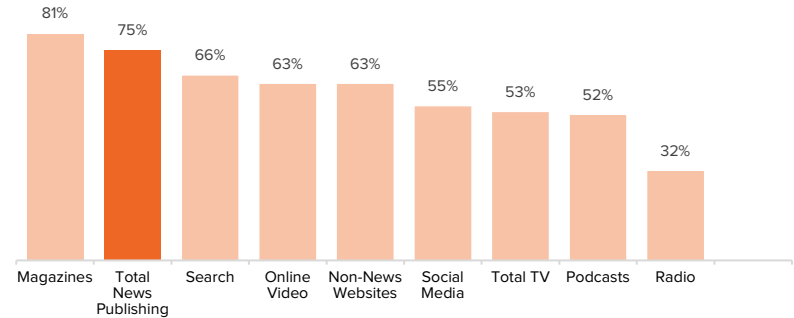
These studies are also supported by Australian research including ThinkNewsBrands own effectiveness research

Studies in the Australian market show news media's high trust and engagement are passed on to advertising within it, boosting brand recall and effectiveness.

CONSUMER TRUST IN CONTENT AND ADS



% LEVEL OF ATTENTION: I'M TYPICALLY FOCUSED



6x

Brand recall and 3.5 times brand lift compared to run-of-internet advertising for under 40s

85%

Australian consumers who agree that 'seeing a brand or product in news brands gives me more confidence that it's right for me.'

Conclusion

The data is clear:

- News publishing has no negative impact on brand performance or brand perception
- The 'brand suitability' myth is causing Australian advertisers to sacrifice significant ROI and profit

In the interest of their brands, the marketing and media communities must reassess their thinking and practices around 'brand suitability' and recognise it for the pervasive myth that it is.

For better campaign outcomes, brands should be investing more in news, not less.

