



# Audio Amplification

Audio content peaks:  
how ad frequency  
drives purchase



# Keep a good thing going

## Ad engagement climbs with each Audio exposure

"Waste not, want not — Ben Franklin said it best." Everyone wants to spend money wisely, and that's especially true for smart brand marketers with limited, often stretched budgets. And when it comes to creating media campaigns, there's long been a question about how to maximize value regarding reach and frequency.

### What is the sweet spot of frequency where advertisers can reach the audiences they want, without the waste?

Past studies have shown you can expose people to an advertisement only so much before they stop paying attention. But — and this is key — it turns out those previous studies focused on answering the question for television and digital.

## When does Audio content peak? Does Audio have a point of diminishing return?

The idea of digging into the matter came from our partners at Spark Foundry, who approached us with this research challenge: Where's the frequency sweet spot for Audio?

As consultative partners, we at Audacy jumped at the chance to explore this research white space together.

Our ambitious, first-ever neuroscience study got to the heart of the matter, literally. Monitoring variations in heart rates, we measured listeners' Immersion — their attention and emotional connection — as a solid indicator of engagement and purchase intent. And we looked at that Immersion second-by-second before, during, and after the ad, and again when exposed to the same ad multiple times. The study was set in real life. Participants were going about their daily life at home — not a lab setting.

ADAM WEILER, EVP, DATA,  
TECHNOLOGY, ANALYTICS &  
INSIGHTS, SPARK FOUNDRY

"After participating in the study with clients across several categories, the research reinforced that Audio is a critical element in the media mix for brands looking for increased consideration and favorable brand opinion. The study helped us better understand the importance of frequency as a measurement metric, and how it can be used to help brands reach their goal of using Audio to be top of mind for consumers close to the point of purchase."



**Our goal was to uncover the answers to these key questions:**

When does Audio content peak, and when does it erode?

How does peak Immersion correlate to traditional ad metrics?

How does Immersion vary within each creative?

**The results were surprising — in a powerful way. Audio simply does not erode.**

Audio hooks listeners right out of the gate

Repetition increases Immersion — without erosion — even at the highest levels of exposure

Purchase intent and positive brand opinion keep rising with additional ad frequency

**Over time, Audio continuously delivers value and becomes increasingly engaging. The net net? There is no waste.**

# Immersion



## Audio Immersion increases with frequency

To help marketers plan future Audio campaigns, here's a deeper dive into the research details.

Across platforms, genres, and advertiser categories, Audio content is immersive far beyond industry benchmarks. It begins engaging audiences at high levels, and that engagement increases with frequency. In turn, that leads to strong brand and product recall, as well as strong purchase consideration and positive brand opinion.

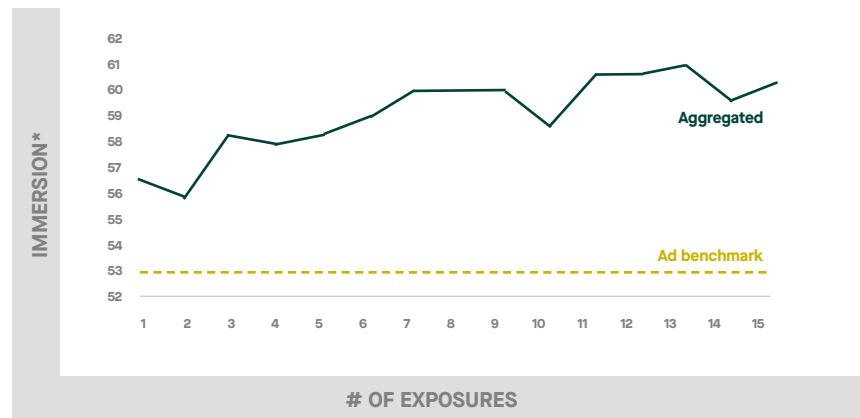
# How does peak Immersion correlate to traditional ad metrics?

## Frequency

### Audio doesn't break

Every Audio impression counts, and Audio doesn't break — it just keeps building. Indeed, Audio consistently drives Immersion through higher frequencies across OTA Radio, streaming, and podcast platforms.

And the results follow the same positive trend, even if you break them down by specific Audio platforms.

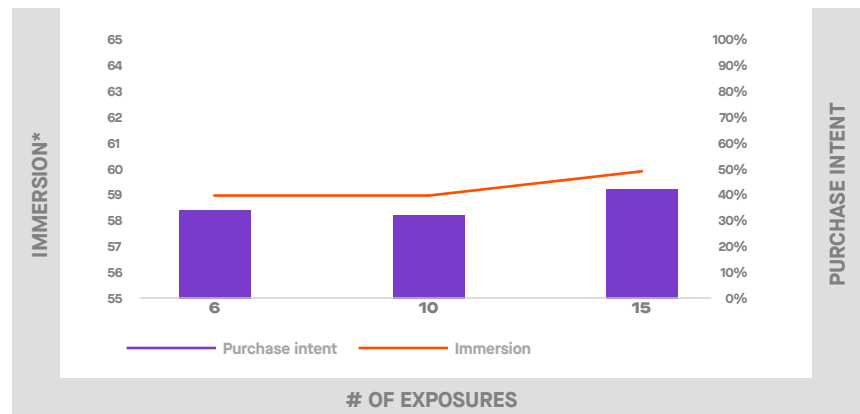


\*Immersion scores are on a scale from 0-100. The higher the number, the more immersive the experience was.

## Purchase intent

### Audio repetition drives dramatic lift in purchase consideration

Immersion is strongly correlated with key brand success metrics. The higher the Immersion, the higher the purchase intent. And frequency drives it all.



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Base: 6 exposures (n=45), 10 exposures (n=34), 15 exposures (n=62)

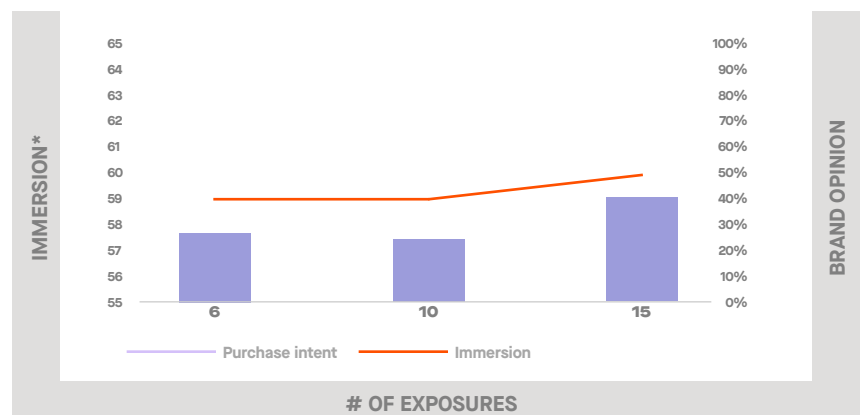
Q3: How strongly would you consider [BRAND] for future purchases?

Purchase Intent is reported at the Top 2 Box level: "I would consider it more than other brands" + "I would definitely consider it"

## Brand opinion

### Audio repetition increases positive brand opinion

Our research shows that — unlike some media — with Audio, repeat messaging builds Immersion. High frequency helps, not hinders, as exposures increase. The higher the exposure, the more attention listeners paid — and the more deeply emotional they got involved.



\*Immersion scores are on a scale from 0-100. The higher the number, the more immersive the experience was.

Base: 6 exposures (n=45), 10 exposures (n=34), 15 exposures (n=62)

Q6: Which of the following statements do you think best describes your overall impression of [BRAND]?

Brand Opinion is reported at the Top 2 Box level: "They are better than most brands" + "They are one of the best brands"

## How did we do it?

Study participants wore smartwatches and consumed media reels online in their homes in a seven-day study. They were exposed to six Audio clips per day for the first six days, and nine clips on the last day. Audio clips were randomized across Audio content type, Audio genre, and ad category.

The smartwatch wristband sensors communicated second-by-second cardiac activity to the Immersion platform.

The Immersion neuroscience software then picked up those signals and, using algorithms developed over decades of research, showed neural activity in real-time.

## Proving Audio impact

Immersion, the key metric in our study, is a scientific measure of emotional connection and attention. It predicts action with an accuracy of >80%.

## Ad exposure

The study tested three categories: Retail, Financial, and Quick Service Restaurants (QSR).

We varied the Audio platform — testing podcasts, Audio streaming, and over-the-air (OTA) Radio.



“Attention is cheap at the beginning,  
but expensive at the end.”

JORGE BARRAZA,  
PHD. CHIEF TECHNICAL  
OFFICER, IMMERSION  
NEUROSCIENCE



# Creative insights



## Audio ads elicit powerful responses from start to finish

Whether you're looking at podcasts, streaming, or OTA Radio, the ad frequency insights were the same — added exposure drives more engagement. But there's more to glean when analyzing individual ads. Not all creative is created equal, and marketers can identify how Immersion varies with each creative element. Brand mentions, product benefits, sonic stimulus - which ad elements grab and hold our attention the best?

### Among the key learnings, we found:

# 1

#### Use sonic stimuli to naturally grab listener's attention.

Ever swivel your head when you hear a whistle, horn, or someone randomly clapping? It's the same for Audio creative. Beginning with a new, moving, meaningful, or surprising stimuli naturally grabs our attention. But this study found, depending on the way you weave the rest of the story, you may either hold or lose that attention. The Immersion data shows that better performances are the ones that grab attention, weave a story, and then grab attention again, ending on a high note.

# 2

#### Mention the brand early and often.

When Audio ads mention the brand soon after start and repeat the brand's name frequently, it activates the orienting response, a characteristic behavioral and psychological reaction to something that's interesting.

# 3

#### Introduce the idea of savings and other benefits to customers.

It just makes sense and comes down to WIIFM — "What's In It For Me?". When your creative speaks to the benefit for consumers — like saving money — they will listen.

## 4

**“Yes” is powerful, so remain upbeat and positive.**

When analyzing creative from a national credit card, the study showed that Immersion increased with the use of the word “yes” as well as a mention of “no limit.”

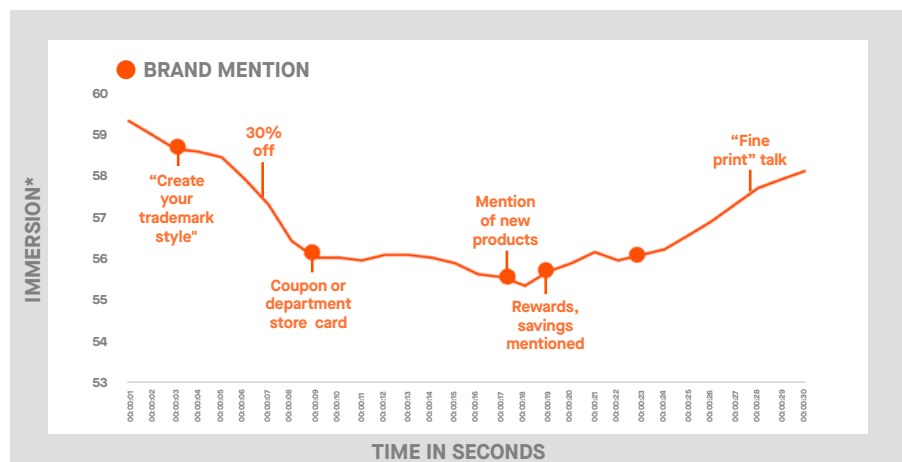
## 5

**Strong messaging at the end helps seal the deal.**

The Peak-End Rule states that message endings are particularly important, as engagement during endings defines the quality of the experience. Grabbing attention at the start of a brand message and driving engagement back up at the end proves a successful formula for Immersion and memorability.



**These tactics deliver listener Immersion that escalates within the 30-second ad, ending brand time with listeners on a high note.**



\*Immersion scores are on a scale from 0-100. The higher the number, the more immersive the experience was.

Audio investments should be more than a quick touch. This groundbreaking media landscape study offers the first solid answer for Audio attention in the attention economy. The data show that Audio content does not erode. Marketers can trust that the higher the frequency, the higher the levels of Immersion. And that's true across industries, Audio platforms, and genres.

The research shows that exposing audiences to Audio messages consistently offers resounding benefits in terms of brand equity and purchase. And when effects from other media fade away, Audio keeps going! Podcasts, streaming, and OTA — they all seize attention and build intention, frequency after frequency. Audio offers brands opportunities for engagement and impact throughout the life of a campaign. Audiences keep listening. Make sure your brand's sound stays right there with them.

The finding underscores the value of Audio for effective and efficient media planning and buying. To drive purchase intent, you really need to drive higher messaging exposures. So, brand marketers need a medium that will withstand the pressure of that high frequency. Audio, this study demonstrates, absolutely can.

Takeaway

# Methology

Audio delivers engaged impressions, and every Audio impression is valuable.

## Study design

The Audio Amplification: The Connection Between Frequency and Purchase study used samples of Spark Foundry client advertisements in the retail, financial services, and QSR industries. Participants aged 18 to 54 were exposed to a randomized rotation of Audio content and advertisements as many as 15 times over the course of a week. Through a follow-up survey, it also measured key performance indicators including recall and intent to purchase.

## Ad exposure

### Categories

As we hypothesized that peak Immersion occurs at different time points depending on the category, we tested three categories identified by Spark Foundry:

**RETAIL | FINANCIAL | QSR (QUICK SERVICE RESTURANTS)**

### Audio platforms & genres

We also varied the Audio platform, mirroring a cross-platform Audio portfolio:

#### PODCASTS

Health & Wellness  
Music  
Society & Culture

#### STREAMING

Music  
News  
Sports

#### OTA

Music  
News  
Sports

30 seconds of  
content lead-in

30 second ad

30 seconds of  
content outro

## Proving Audio impact

Immersion, the key metric in our study, is a scientific measure of **emotional connection and attention. It predicts action.\***

Immersion is measured through variations in heart rate.

- Science shows the brain is directly connected to the heart.
- By measuring variations in heart rate, researchers understand what the brain values.

\*Immersion scores predict action with an accuracy of >80%. Used by leading brands like Warner Bros., Paramount, Microsoft, Accenture, CBS, and many others, Immersion reveals what audiences truly love and predict their future actions. Backed by 20 years of peer-reviewed science funded by DARPA, Immersion is the only software platform on the market that can accurately predict human behavior from the brain's emotional activity.



# Our research partners

## ALTER AGENTS

Alter Agents is a full-service market research consultancy reimagining research in the age of the constant change. With a long history of brand strategy and communications experience, the company focuses on collaborating with brands to reveal consumer needs, priorities, and context. Alter Agents specializes in reframing the context for consumer research to yield powerful insights for its clients, including brand giants such as Google, Snapchat, Activision and Viking Cruises.



## Immersion

Immersion is a software platform that measures the value of experiences, events, and compelling content and can predict future action with >80% accuracy. Immersion revolutionizes business by revealing what customers and employees truly love and predict their future actions. Backed by 20 years of peer-reviewed science funded by DARPA, Immersion is the only software platform on the market that can accurately predict human behavior from the brain's emotional activity.

