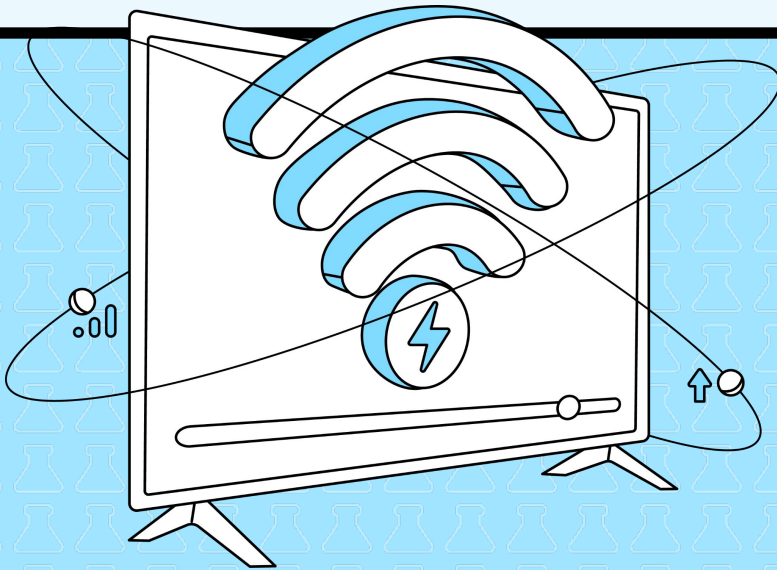




brainlabs

Unified CTV: III

The Future Of Total TV Is Here



Display & Video 360



SB Simply Business | Which?

The Unification Milestone

Fragmentation is no longer a problem to be managed, it is an opportunity to be engineered. This third installment in our series marks the culmination of a multi-year roadmap: where **innovation** meets **intentionality** to redefine the "Big Screen."



The Innovation: Broadcast Content – the Missing Pillar

Driven by our commitment to experimentation, we were the *first agency ever* to technically facilitate and test Sky's integration into the DV360 ecosystem. Building on this breakthrough, we then architected an *industry first Unified CTV buy*— a single, high-performance engine that integrated **BVOD** (Sky, Channel 4), **SVOD** (Netflix, Disney+), and **AVOD** (YouTube) - **all in the same buying platform.**



The Evidence: Unified CTV – Bigger & Better than Ever Before

Partnering with Simply Business, we replaced siloed buys with a single digital entry point. The results were definitive:

- **Incremental Reach at Scale:** We closed the gap by capturing the "missing" audience, delivering 4.5 million unique incremental impressions above the linear baseline.
- **The Power of Dynamic Response:** Unification enabled us to dynamically respond to reach as it happened. Rather than buying in silos, the engine routed impressions across partners. This captured each platform's exclusive audiences whilst balancing the most cost-effective avenue to reach them
- **The Digital Advantage:** Centralisation allowed us to respond to live performance signals in real time, pivoting investment towards high-attention environments as performance emerged, rather than waiting for post-campaign analysis.



The Implications: A New Standard for the Industry

The success of the Simply Business mission signals a fundamental shift for the industry. For advertisers, this proves that complexity is no longer an inevitable byproduct of the digital migration; it is a problem to be solved through integration.

By unifying the world's most premium content into a single, data-driven view, we have moved beyond "digital video" as an add-on. We have established a new standard for Total TV: one where brands can dominate the modern living room with the scale of broadcast and the surgical precision of digital. **This isn't just a new way to buy; it's a superior way to grow.**



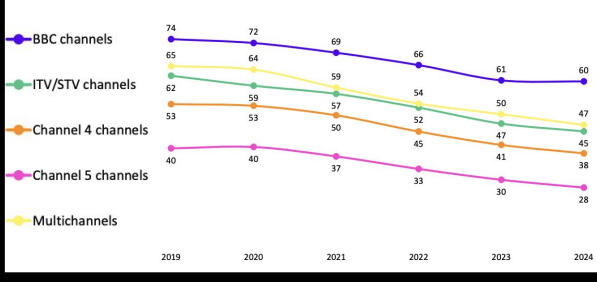
Total TV: Has The Balance Of Reach Shifted?

LINEAR + CONNECTED TV

Linear TV has often been a fail-safe. A reliable, scalable, impactful and cost-effective way to reach your audience en masse on the big screen at home.

Linear still offers impressive reach, but continues to decline...

Figure 15: UK Average weekly reach %: 2019-2024



Source: Barb 28-day consolidated (TV sets only: live viewing plus recorded playback and catch-up BVoD up to 28-days after the live broadcast). Reach criteria: 15+ consecutive minutes.



LINEAR

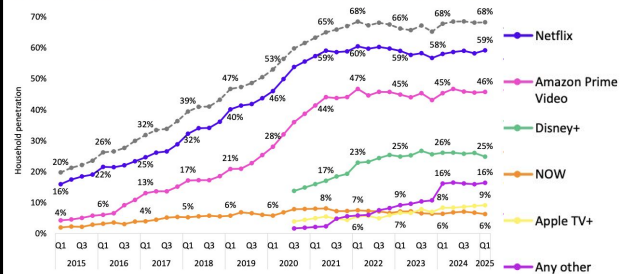
68%

Monthly UK Adult Reach*

*IPA touchpoints 2025

And Connected TV continues to grow

Figure 24: SVoD penetration of UK households, by provider: Q1 2015 to Q1 2025



Source: Barb Establishment Survey. Includes paid-for subscriptions and free trials. No data for Q2 2020, Q4 2020, and Q1 2021 due to the suspension of fieldwork due to the Covid-19 pandemic. 'Any other' includes Hays, Discovery+, Paramount+ and BritBox.



VOD

85%

Monthly UK Adult Reach*

As users seamlessly hop between streaming services and platforms, their attention has been shifting towards digital. Although this remains incredibly divided. Today, it is content that commands their focus, and with more choice than ever before (across Live TV & Sports, Video Streaming, On-Demand, or premium YouTube channels) consumption can differ from person-to-person and day-to-day.

But as audiences continue to migrate towards Connected TV, and advertising opportunities and integrations on these platforms increase, **the ability to identify and reach them in Digital is increasingly scaled**, but also increasingly complex.

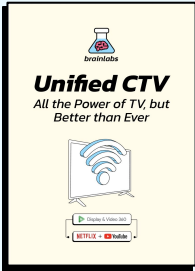


For advertisers and agencies, this has been a reality that we have had to face for a while, and cutting through this fragmentation allows us to truly capitalise on the opportunity that is Connected TV.



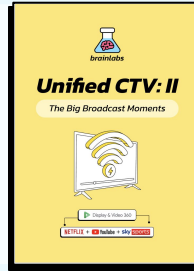
Has The Fragmentation Barrier Shifted – From Challenge To Opportunity?

Throughout this series we have shown that advertisers and agencies can transform the fragmentation challenge into a high-performance opportunity through Unified Buying.



MAY 2025

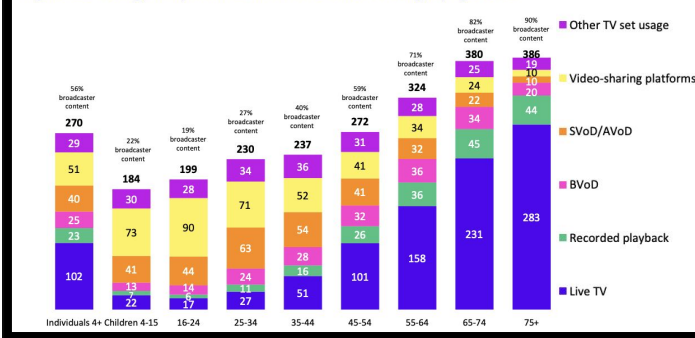
Paper 1 explored some of the very first unified buying in DV360 with Netflix and YouTube. It cut through fragmentation to deliver efficiency, effectiveness & bring the power of Digital to the big screen at home.



AUG 2025

Paper 2 expanded this unified buying to Broadcaster YouTube. It capitalised on the draw and impact of the big broadcast moments, but in one dynamic campaign.

Figure 11: Average daily minutes of in-home video viewing, by age: 2024



The face of TV still continues to change. The average Digital share of total weekly TV viewing, shown in this graph, has **increased +16% over the last two years**, and that has all come from Linear. At every demographic 'less traditional' digital avenues are increasing their footprint, leaving us with a rainbow of viewing experiences that is fragmented for both viewers and marketers.

As an agency that recognises the shifting balance within Total TV, we have seen real value and performance delivered through Unified Buying in CTV. Users are spending more of their time on Digital TV, and with the advertising opportunities on these platforms increasing, the opportunity to rely solely on CTV to reach your target audience has become a possibility.

However, one critical pillar of the UK viewing experience has remained somewhat siloed, elusive, and separated.

That pillar was **BVOD**. **Until now**.

BVOD is a big part of that reach for a lot of demographics, and the integration of the UK's premium broadcasters into the programmatic ecosystem is not a coincidence: it is a response to a "perfect storm" of audience migration and unprecedented advertiser demand. From DSP integrations, to announcing their own unified marketplaces, **now is the tipping point** and the crucial time to test the scale and impact of bringing CTV all into one place : into one Unified Buy!

And that's exactly what we did through a Pilot test with our partner Which?





"We are nearly there with DV360, fancy testing something this side of Xmas?"

...is the kind of email we love receiving at Brainlabs. Receiving it 1 week before Christmas is the kind of challenge we inherently thrive on.

Objectives

- Find an advertiser willing to back something that had never been done before
- Secure available budget, Clearcast-approved creative, and the correct usage rights
- Troubleshoot a live technical integration between Sky and DV360 in real time
- Go live before the turkey hits the table

Easy Right?! Luckily at Brainlabs we have a pretty ambitious set of clients, who are just as keen to test and push the boundaries as we are, and in this instance Kat Chinnock (Head of Brand & Comms Planning at Which?) answered the call!



What we were trying to learn was simple:

- 🔦 Can you actually buy Sky Digital Linear & BVOD through DV360? I.e., does it actually work?
- 🔦 What opportunities does this provide? Can we build on Which?'s baseline linear activity?

The Verdict

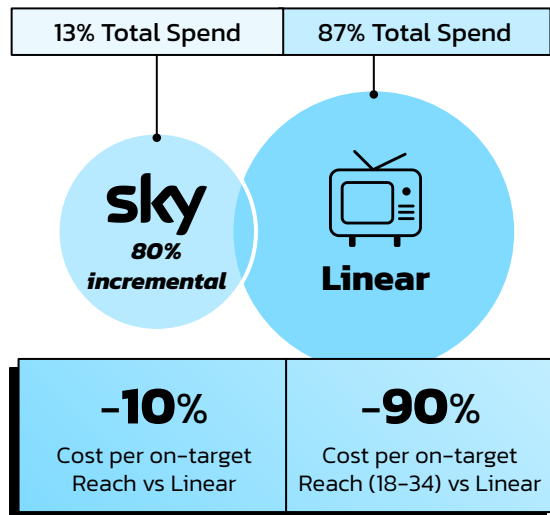
Well, **you can now buy Sky Digital Linear & BVOD through DV360.**

Pretty cool, huh?

And guess what?
It works really well.

80% of the reach we achieved with Sky's activity through Dv360 was **completely incremental** to our Linear TV campaign! Meaning we were able to reach customers we had not been able to communicate with yet!

XMR Results



For a single test, born out of curiosity, not only did it work, but it helped us to significantly build on that Linear baseline with great success.

But the reach wasn't the only cool thing. For our Programmatic team at Brainlabs, this was the first time they were buying TV content like this, which meant serving across things like Live Sports for the very first time!



25%

Digital Linear



75%

BVOD

Live TV

We weren't only buying BVOD. By targeting Sky Go, Sky Glass, and NOW inventory on CTV devices, we were able to reach users watching Live TV!

Live Sport

Within that Live TV, we also served across plenty of live sport, from the Women's Super League, to the EFL.



The Very Best of TV

We even capitalised on the demand and viewership of Knight of the Seven Kingdoms. Episodes 4 & 5 are now some of the highest-rated TV episodes **of all time**, at one stage commanding a record breaking 10/10 on IMDB. In this campaign they were also our top two individual pieces of content which drove incredible reach!

Buying Live TV programmatically in the UK is a dream come true for many Programmatic old timers. The very best content, bought and sold programmatically. It combines the scale, trust, and cultural relevance of broadcast with the precision, flexibility, and accountability digital has always promised.

Crucially, what did we learn from this test?

- BVOD remains an exceptionally great way to target cord cutters and extend reach beyond linear buys. Who knew, eh?
- **It is now available to buy programmatically**

So what does any ambitious, award-winning agency do with these newly established capabilities? We put them to the test to see if the promise matched the reality.



Our success with the Which? pilot moved the conversation from theory to reality. By exploring the "Missing Pillar" of BVOD in DV360, we proved that we no longer have to choose between the broad scale of traditional TV and the precision of digital.

We found that broadcaster content could live successfully within a programmatic ecosystem, providing a clear, holistic view of how the modern viewer interacts with premium TV content.

The advantage of this isn't just a simpler spreadsheet; it's a more effective way to reach your audience.

By proving that BVOD can be unified into a digital environment, we can fundamentally change how we manage the Big Screen at home.

THAT is what this paper is going to explore.

Building on the foundations of our previous papers and the technical breakthrough of the Which? pilot, we wanted to see if this model could deliver at true scale. We set out to prove that bringing **BVOD**, **SVOD**, and **AVOD** together for the first time can:



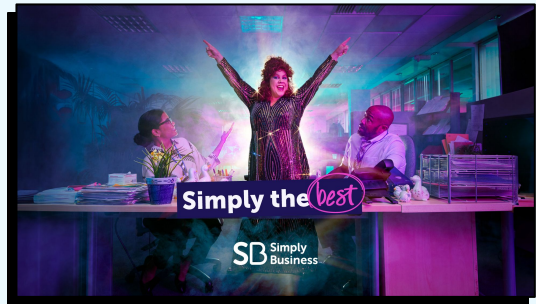
Find More of Your Audience: Connecting the dots between different platforms to reach the viewers you are currently missing.



Add Digital Intelligence to the Big Screen: Bringing the precision and power of digital advertising to the best screen in the house.

To do this, we had to go big. This required another partner with a sophisticated brand strategy and a team bold enough to stress-test the boundaries of modern TV. We found that partner in **Simply Business** - one of the UK's biggest providers of small business insurance!

With a brilliant TV asset, a history of strong Linear TV campaigns and a formidable marketing team who are not afraid to test their way to success, Simply Business was the perfect collaborator for our first full-scale execution of Unified CTV.



Moving beyond what had been done before, to integrate the entire on-demand landscape—BVOD, SVOD, and AVOD—within a single DV360 ecosystem



The goal was to level-up the balancing act. We weren't just looking for reach; we wanted to see if we could effectively scale incremental impressions. Our aim was to complement Simply Business's effective Linear TV plan, while maintaining the efficiency that a fragmented approach usually sacrifices.

In short, we were chasing the 'Holy Grail' of Unified Buying: **proving that consolidation doesn't just simplify the plan, it amplifies the performance.** Oh, and we were adding another Broadcaster to the Mix in Channel 4 BVOD!



The Hypothesis

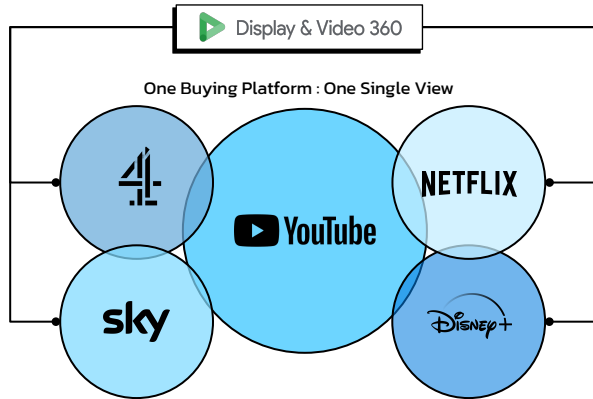
By moving away from several disconnected digital buys and consolidating them into a single, Unified CTV campaign, we can fundamentally improve the performance of the overall media mix. We set out to prove that a BVOD, SVOD, AVOD Unified campaign could deliver three key things:

- Stronger Total Reach
- Better Control over Ad Exposure
- Faster, Clearer Reporting & Optimisation

The Linear Baseline



The Unified Campaign



The Approach

We secured individual deals with Sky, Channel 4, Netflix, and Disney+ directly within DV360. We aligned these placements with the existing Brand strategy and Linear activity to ensure a cohesive presence. These were then housed in a single campaign alongside YouTube—all restricted to big-screen CTV inventory—to create a unified footprint at a scale that had never been attempted before.

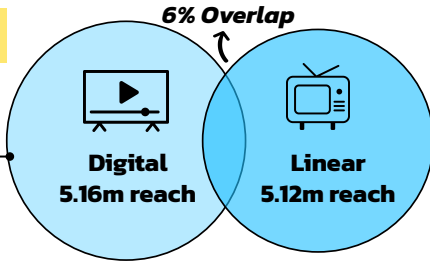
This approach transformed our workflow. What would typically be managed as six separate, siloed campaigns was reduced to just two: Linear and Unified CTV. With everything in one place, we could finally oversee and manage the balance of the digital side in real-time.



"Simply The Best" Way Of Reaching Our Audience

When it came to total reach, we were blown away. The campaign had massive scale, reaching 5.1 million of our target audience. What's more, it looked to have reached hugely incremental audiences to the Linear TV Baseline, (with **just a 6% overlap** between the two), which is quite frankly a lower overlap than we were expecting.

XMR Results

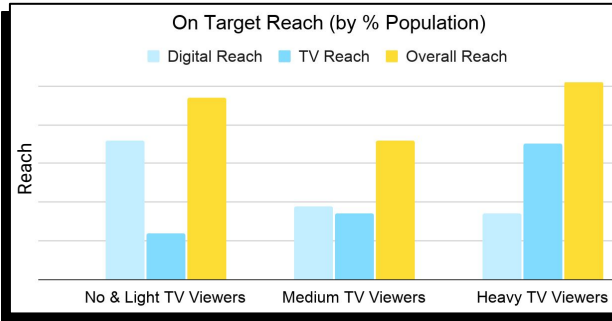


9.6m

Total TV Unique Reach

+15% Digital Reach
Vs Forecast

The Unified CTV test did far more than just scale well. It successfully captured missing audiences from the Linear campaign, particularly those lighter TV viewers, Gen Z, and Millennials, delivering **2x the reach of 25-34 year olds** vs Linear. These are the audiences who have shown the most significant migration to on-demand and streaming. It therefore makes sense that Linear drove higher reach against older demographics like 55-64. But what's great is how this Unified Linear test worked to scale reach against Simply Business' target audience (on top of their existing linear baseline) by tapping into the audience reach of each partner and maximising effectiveness through Unified buying.

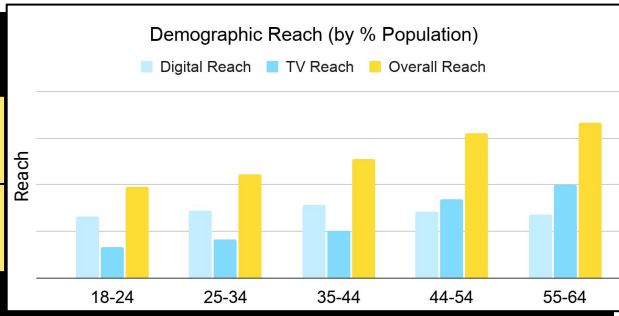


3x The reach of **Light TV Viewers** vs Linear

1.1x The reach of **Medium TV Viewers** vs Linear

1.5-2x The reach of **18-44 year olds** vs Linear

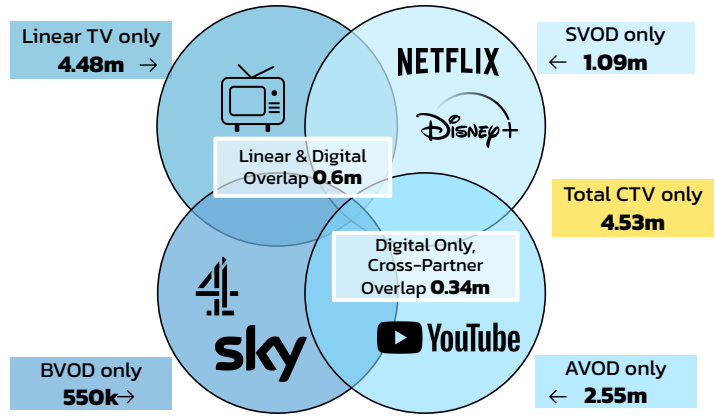
0.7x The reach of **55-64 year olds** vs Linear



Was The Unified Methodology Effective?

We saw the effects of the partners coming together in a unified buy, from the staggering **4.5m Incremental reach** delivered in the campaign. But understanding the effectiveness of this new unified buy as a whole was not our only objective. We brought BVOD (through Sky & Channel 4) into this campaign as the “missing piece of the Unified puzzle”. This allowed us to capitalise on the opportunity BVOD provides to reach our target audience across some of the biggest & best content. Again, to our delight - it did exactly that.

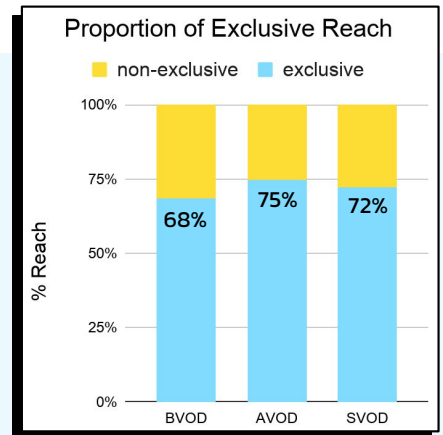
In fact, every single element of the plan, from the Unified Partners to Linear TV held their own. Not only providing significant scale against our target audience, but providing unique opportunities to reach & engage with them that the others did not. So maybe we were right? Maybe this is the way Digital TV should be bought moving forwards.



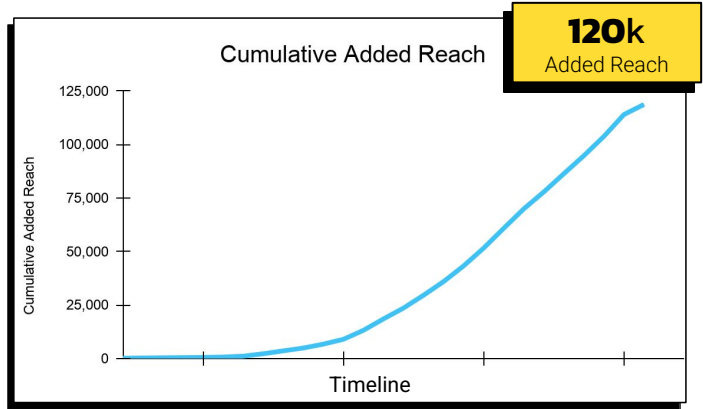
This Venn Diagram is not proportional, it is used for visualisation purposes.

This data comes from Dv360’s upgraded Cross Media Reach (XMR) reporting, and certainly for me, is the first time I have ever seen this level of granularity & sophistication of the results of a TV plan, and how each partner interacts with each other. Whichever route / buying platform you are using to run your Unified CTV buys, make sure you are not just using it as a buying avenue, but using the data to help make better decisions, and improve the effectiveness of your campaign.

Such low overlaps between partners may instinctively seem incorrect - but it’s not, **it is deliberate and was actively managed by our programmatic team**. The point of this campaign was to leverage the partners to drive as much incremental reach as possible - and with the live data we pulled from our XMR reporting (on top of the frequency controls we have in platform), we minimised partner overlap and forced them to really focus on the incremental users that they themselves had the most exclusive opportunity to reach!



Managing this reach across partners meant that not only did we minimise any unwanted overlap, but in the instances where this would have occurred, we were able to force the platform to take that budget, and apply it to find new users. This resulted in over 100,000 additional users reached, for the same media budget!



The important bit here is the ability to optimise and make effective decisions. In reality, are a lot of ways/platforms/tools you can use to run Unified CTV campaigns. Our papers have been very focussed on DV360, as the buying avenue for this, and that's not just because of the availability of Youtube & integrations with publishers. It is about the campaign data we can access mid-flight to make better decisions. We aren't tied to the fate of 5 disparate buys, that are each separately trying to push in the same direction.



Visibility fuels optimisation, optimisation drives outcomes.

And beyond Cross-partner frequency management, there are loads you can do:

Finding the Right Total Frequency

Our first action was to optimise the frequency. Simply Business' ad is extremely impactful, and was driving strong recall against our target audience, with a lower frequency than usual. We took this insight and used it to tighten frequency, with the theory being that we could spend the additional budget to find more users at an effective frequency, in turn, driving higher total Ad Recall.

Spoiler alert: It worked.

Maximising Campaign Outcomes Beyond Reach

We then noticed that a certain demographic were responding particularly well to the ad. Furthermore this was also an audience that were comparatively under-exposed by the Linear campaign. So again, we pulled the necessary levers in the campaign, to focus our Unified Engine at finding as many of these users as possible. This contributed to huge impact in intent, with a search lift for the campaign finishing at 18%



Did All That Reach Have Any Impact?

Overall, we couldn't have been happier with the results. Not only did the campaign work in tandem with the rest of the Simply Business plan. But it delivered against its performance objectives, and most importantly, we learned so much in the process. It is safe to say, we are more confident than ever that Unified CTV is a big and powerful part of the future of Total TV.

4.5M Incremental Reach from Digital



+70.7%

Ad Recall

386,238 Lifted Users



18.3%

Search Lift

120k Added Reach



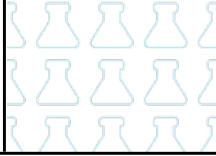
And What did Simply Business Think?

"At Simply Business, we know our creative is working hard to set us apart, so the task for us is to expose more of our target audience to our Simply The Best ad – ensuring that when SMEs and landlords need tailored business insurance, 'Simply Business' is the first name they remember."

"Our CTV test with Brainlabs allowed us to do exactly that – making the most of an innovative new way of buying digital AV to drive efficient and incremental reach. While our linear TV plan continues to lay a strong foundation for the Simply Business brand, this industry-first test has helped us scale our campaign to new audiences, proving the power of a unified media strategy."



So What Does All Of This Mean For Advertisers?



1 The Future of Total TV really is NOW

The total and incremental reach from the Unified CTV test was immense, and the complementary nature of each digital channel was significant. Collectively, it demonstrates how scalable and important Unified CTV can be when it comes to reaching your audience. Our mission is to continue to experiment with scaling. More Broadcasters, more OEM's, more streaming services - all provide new potential opportunities to reach our target audience - and you don't know what they add until you test!

2 The Scales are Tipping

The Digital Migration is happening... gradually... but it is happening. This paper featured examples of a strong Linear foundation, enhanced with previously unattainable digital reach. But that is not the only way to use this! Digital Scale is huge, and while not universal (yet), it presents the widest opportunity to target most demographics. Reaching them in an environment enriched with digital controls, visibility and targeting is undeniably an improvement. So maybe you don't always have to start from a Linear base. Dependent on your brand, your budget, your campaign, your objectives, and (most importantly) your target audience, a Digital Base, or Digital only TV campaign could be the right way to go. Personally, I'm surprised this isn't more common.

3 The power of Unified is real

The successful scale and impact driven by these case studies can be largely credited to the conditions created by the Unified Buy. It facilitates the opportunity to leverage the effectiveness of each partners collectively, as it provides a single view of our target audience. Utilising partners as vehicles for quality engagements and reach, then optimising towards the best outcomes. Programmatic trading 101. If you aren't doing Unified CTV buying in some form, you should be.

4 YOU can make it perform better

The Advanced targeting and measurement solutions in CTV don't just allow us to reach more specific audiences & have more transparent/granular live reporting (although these are not to be undervalued) - the beauty of digital is how dynamic we can be. When you are running a Unified CTV campaign, pull all the data you can and set up feeds from your platforms into your dashboards. This data is live, and it is rich. That's what we do, and the insights are game-changing. They inform better decision-making & campaign results. We have set the tone for a new style of TV campaign management, optimising in-flight to; how users are responding to our ads, consumption habits, reach enhancement. And all with the same budget. You cannot do that in Linear TV.



And... ***What's Coming Next ?***

In truth, I've always preferred a trilogy. But there is still so much to test and so much is changing in CTV. So I can't promise this will be the last you hear from us on Unified CTV. Although I can promise it won't be a Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*.

As always, there are still continuous publisher launches & integrations, platform updates, data integrations, format updates, and new measurement opportunities coming at us every single day.

But here are my (current) Top 3 things to get excited about in CTV



The World Cup

A major football tournament, with all the highs and lows (*no more penalty shootouts please*), is the kind of dynamic consumption environment digital campaigns thrive in. Add to the mix 8-hour time differences, and the consumption window jumps from 90 mins to 10 hours. Digital coverage will be front and centre, and this will be the CTV World Cup!



Shoppable CTV

You've all seen it, it is coming. We've been testing Shoppable CTV and it's been driving sales. Whether it is engaging through a QR code, or purchasing through the press of a remote; shoppable CTV is rearing its head, and you would be silly not to take notice.



Sponsorships

Netflix and Disney are doing this SO well. Whether it's movies, TV series, genres, seasonal packages or live sporting events, the statement piece of traditional TV has well and truly announced itself in the CTV world, and it's pretty darn exciting!

That's just my pick – there's plenty, plenty more to get excited about.



Insights

brought to you by



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Programmatic

Huge thanks to our amazing clients

SB Simply
Business

Which?

And our fantastic partners

NETFLIX

Disney+

YouTube



**Display &
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