



MEDIA IMPACT REPORT

Why an \$8 Million Super Bowl Ad Is Often Less Effective Than an \$8 Million Year-Round Campaign

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Why an \$8 Million Super Bowl Ad Is Often Less Effective Than an \$8 Million Year-Round Campaign

By [Mark Simon](#), VP, New Business, Rainstorm Direct

Each year, brands debate whether to spend big and gamble on the Super Bowl—often the most expensive advertising moment in the world—or to invest those same dollars in sustained, year-round marketing. A 30-second spot in 2026 is about \$8 million before production costs, so the question is unavoidable: Is a Super Bowl ad really worth it?

There's no denying the cultural power or prestige of the Super Bowl. It's one of the few remaining events where tens of millions of people watch the same content at the same time. This year, viewership peaked at 137.8 million viewers, just slightly higher than last year. But for most brands, a single splashy moment is no longer the most effective way to drive outcomes. When you compare the impact of one high-profile ad against a thoughtful, integrated, long-term strategy, the latter often wins, and by a wide margin.

Here's why:

1. Attention Is High—But Recall Is Low

A Super Bowl ad guarantees exposure, not memorability. With over 50 advertisers competing for attention in a hype-filled environment, the audience is watching hundreds of jokes, celebrities, stunts and special effects in rapid succession. [Research consistently shows](#) that while viewers remember the moment, they often forget the brand behind it.

In short, these moments can generate conversation, but not necessarily conversion. Without ongoing brand exposure, that spike in awareness will fade within days. In contrast, a longer-term campaign can reinforce key messages across platforms which can increase recall and ultimately, purchase.

2. Super Bowl Ads Have High Reach, but Not Necessarily the Right Audiences

While the Super Bowl is undoubtedly mass reach, it is not targeted reach. You're paying to reach people who are outside your core customer base, outside your geographic relevance, or who may never be in your target audience. Meanwhile, linear, digital and omnichannel campaigns enable precision and efficiency, allowing you to reach the right target audience at the right time. A year-round plan also allows for touch points across the funnel and opportunities for personalization.

When comparing a Super Bowl investment with a campaign focused on ongoing sports-related content, we found that the longer-term campaign reached six times as many viewers in a target demographic with half the budget. So, while the Super Bowl provides the largest single-reach opportunity on TV, due to the very high cost, the same budget is much more efficiently placed in an ongoing campaign.



3. One Moment Can't Outperform Continuous Brand Building

Brands are built through consistent storytelling, not one-time fireworks. A Super Bowl ad can be a catalyst, but without sustained follow-through, the effect dissipates.

Continuous campaigns allow you to:

- Evolve the narrative over time.
- Reinforce memory structures.
- Meet consumer needs at various stages of intent.
- Build momentum through repetition.

Marketing science shows that **reach over time is more effective** than reach in a single moment.

4. Year-Round Content Provides Better ROI

Many Super Bowl spots are created for limited use so aren't as easily repurposed as more evergreen content, but a year-round plan can stretch an investment:

- Several TV and video spots
- Always-on search and social
- Influencer partnerships
- Email, CRM, and personalization
- Local campaigns
- Repeat testing and optimization
- Advanced analytics

Compared to the Super Bowl, a longer-term sports campaign typically can result in a higher ROI with a much lower media cost while offering extended exposure and more opportunities to support specific teams/athletes in various channels.

5. Long-Term Campaigns Can Utilize Data for Optimization

A Super Bowl ad is static. Once it airs, it can't be changed. There is no A/B testing, no optimization, and no chance to improve performance. Year-round advertising leverages real-time analytics, A/B creative testing, audience segmentation and opportunities for message refinement. Insights from data enable you to stretch every marketing dollar.

In the end, the opportunity cost of a Super Bowl ad is massive. An \$8 million investment in one tactic means less available budget for proven tactics such as highly-targeted TV and video content. For many brands—especially those not already household names—the opportunity cost is simply too high.





/NOTEPAD

TV is Dead? Long Live Converged TV!

By [Mark Brown](#), Executive Lead

For nearly a decade, and certainly since the explosive growth of streaming during and after the pandemic, a common refrain has been heard in the marketing community citing the death of linear TV. TV is dead, they say. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the reports of TV's death are greatly exaggerated.

Like all exaggerations of demise, there is some truth to the story. In [Nielsen's December 2025 The Gauge report](#) released in late January, streaming TV set new records for share of viewership and handily eclipsed linear TV viewing by nearly six percentage points (47.5% share for streaming vs. 41.6% for linear). While streaming TV has topped linear TV in previous The Gauge reports, it had been by a narrow margin. The past two reports show that gap widening quickly, with streaming besting linear by three percentage points in November and now 5.9 percentage points in December. This latest report has many pundits once again rallying around the "TV is dead!" refrain. I disagree.

First, while linear TV's share of viewing has declined—and will likely continue to decline—41.6% share of viewing time is still a lot of viewing. The Nielsen report measures viewing in minutes, and that 41.6% share equates to just shy of one trillion minutes of time spent watching broadcast and cable TV. Declining, sure, but from a massive base that still has a long way to go before the patient can be declared dead.

Linear TV's Role as a Viable Growth Platform

Second, the streaming viewership figure includes all viewing to streaming platforms, including viewing of non-ad supported content and platforms. Over a quarter of all viewing isn't ad-supported, and the non-ad supported space leans heavily towards streaming, along with what Nielsen calls "other viewing" like gaming, audio, DVDs, and other non-measured viewing. So, when you look only at ad supporting viewing, linear TV still dominates with a 56.4% share of viewing to streaming TV's 45.6% share. When we are talking about the "death of TV," we are looking at it through the lens of a successful advertising platform. Clearly linear TV remains viable there.

That argument doesn't rest on viewership data alone. Ultimately, what matters to marketers is driving results, and TV in all forms consistently delivers results for our clients here at Rain. TV is the number one marketing channel for delivering reach quickly, and reaching more new prospects is the best way to deliver growth. TV drives greater attention to advertising than any other channel, and having a consumer's attention is critical to getting your message heard and acted upon. All that adds up to results. Whether using Rain's proprietary outcomes measurement tool Signal Link™ or third-party outcomes measurement

partners like iSpot, TV is a consistently proven results driver.

All this isn't to say that there isn't a role for streaming TV in a [Transactional Brand Building](#) campaign. On the contrary, we have adopted an approach of Converged TV. Streaming is a significant contributor to business outcomes for our clients, and the share of streaming as a part of the media mix is increasing every year. There are several reasons for that shift. First, as we stated above, the growth of streaming TV audiences is hard to ignore. We need to be advertising where our target audience is spending time. Second, streaming platforms are shifting to be more ad supported. Netflix, HBO, Amazon Prime, and others are pushing their viewers to their ad supported models.

Finally, the safe space that linear TV held for years is being encroached on by streaming platforms. That safe space? Live TV. For years, that was the trump card that broadcast and cable held. Want to watch the game live? You need linear TV. Want breaking news? Linear TV. Major tentpole events? Linear TV. Not so, anymore. One of the reasons that streaming numbers jumped in December was Christmas Day. Amazon Prime Video had a live NFL game. Netflix had two live games, and followed that with the release of

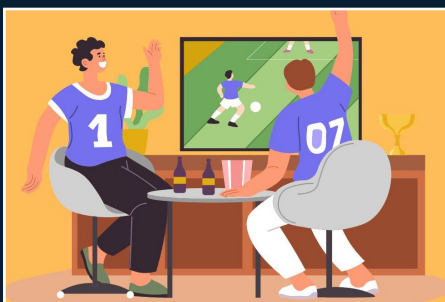
the final episodes of the hit series "Stranger Things." Those two platforms alone accounted for 22.5% of all TV viewing on Christmas Day, with all streaming platforms grabbing 54% of viewing—the highest streaming share ever!

Why a Converged TV Approach is Critical

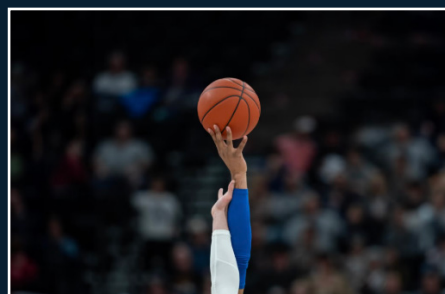
This is a trend that will only increase. Streaming platforms are placing winning bids for more sports rights every year: NFL on Netflix, NFL on Amazon and Peacock, the MLB on AppleTV, and NWSL on Paramount +, just to name a few. In an even bigger shock to the status quo, YouTube recently won the rights to the Academy Awards starting in 2029.

So, TV is not dead, but it is certainly evolving. Driving business outcomes will require a converged TV approach—an intelligent combination of both linear and streaming TV, with the right mix dependent on a brand's audience, KPIs, and budget. And it is never a "set it and forget it" approach here at Rain. Our teams are constantly monitoring the marketplace to find the best deals in both linear and streaming, while closely tracking outcomes to deliver superior results. So is TV really dead? Long live TV!

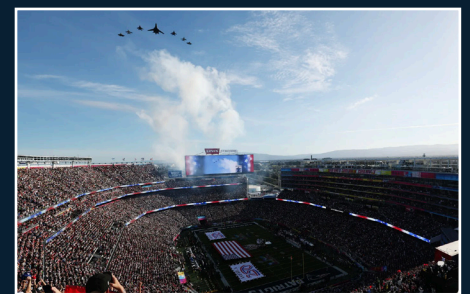
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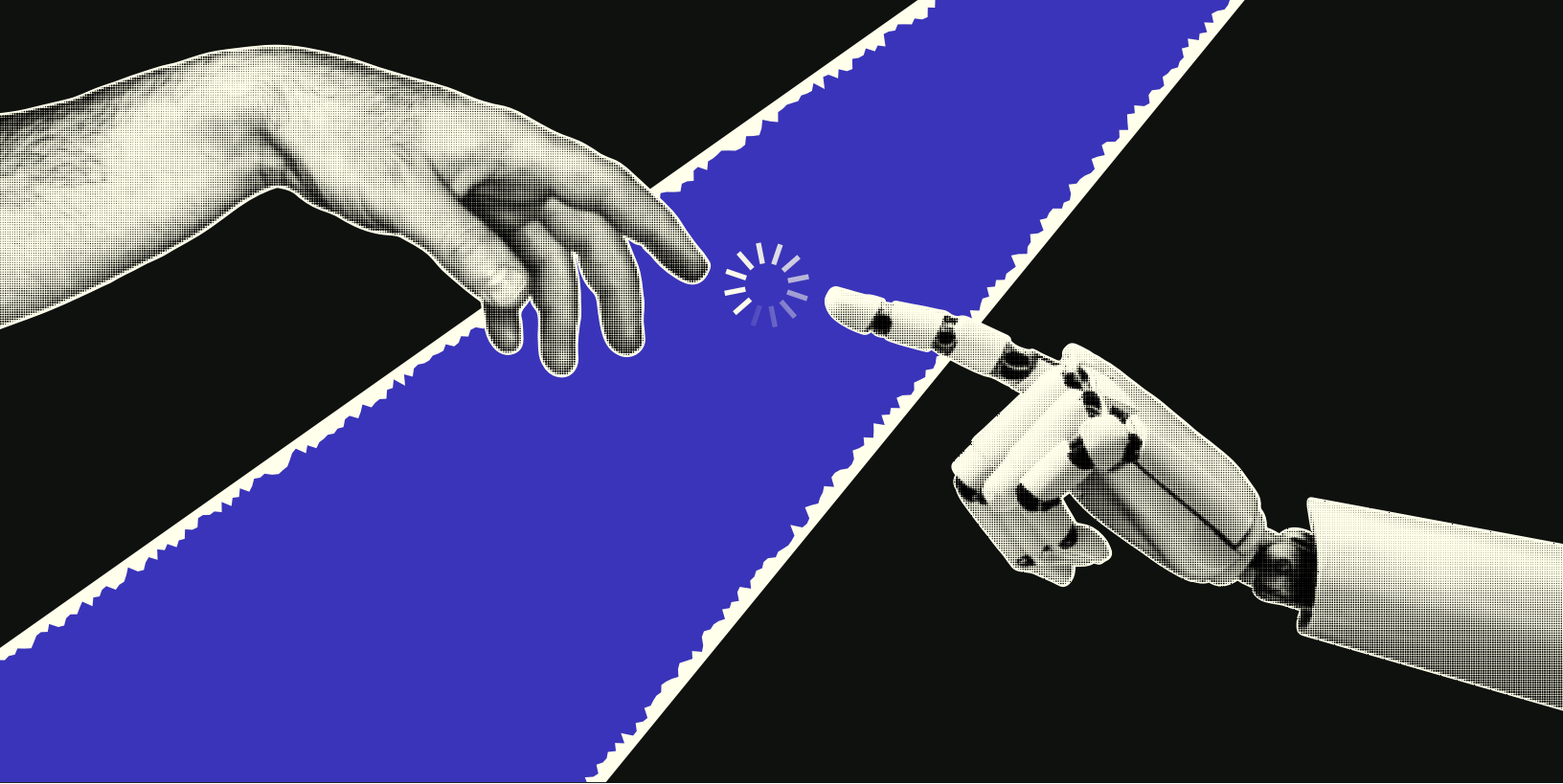
Amount of Sports Programming on Streaming Jumps, Says Gracenote
[\[The Measure\]](#)



How To Dominate March Madness With Show-Level Data
[\[adexchanger\]](#)



Getting In The Game For A 'Bargain': How Brands Hacked The Super Bowl
[\[Marketing Brew\]](#)



/NOTEPAD

AI Isn't Replacing Media Teams—It's Supercharging Them

By [Michelle Fallon](#), SVP, Rainstorm Direct

Everyone's talking about AI right now. At Rainstorm Direct, we're focused on something more meaningful: using AI to make planning, buying, and optimizations faster, smarter, and more accountable. And the results are real.

Drawing on insights contributed by Rain's Chief Technology Officer, Rian Schmidt, our approach is anchored in three principles that keep the work focused on outcomes rather than buzzwords.

- 1. AI as a collaborative partner:** We view AI as a collaborative partner that amplifies the expertise and judgment of our team, rather than a replacement for the capabilities of our team. Our experts work with AI output to ensure the information is carefully interpreted and contextually applied to each client's unique needs.
- 2. Continuous innovation:** We are committed to an ongoing process of developing our own internal AI tools while also forging strategic partnerships with industry-leading AI vendors. This allows us to stay at the cutting edge of AI capabilities and to continue to deliver innovative solutions to our clients.

- 3. Responsible use:** We are acutely aware of the importance of quality, accuracy, and brand safety when applying AI. That's why we have implemented rigorous guidelines to ensure the reliability and integrity of our AI-powered solutions.

One of the most impactful ways we use AI is by dramatically improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our media planning, buying, and optimization. Our proprietary, AI-driven tools—embedded within our fully customized [Tracker platform](#)—leverage extensive historical data and machine learning to forecast and optimize media investments in minutes. This translates to greater cost efficiency, faster speed to market, and stronger campaign performance. Our media mix modeling platform, also built on machine learning, incorporates AI to fine-tune parameters and deliver clearer, more actionable insights.

We use AI across our entire media ecosystem to continuously improve KPIs by unifying advanced modeling, rich data inputs, and streamlined workflows. In linear TV, our Tracker platform



integrates AI-driven tools like Schedule Optimizer and Signal Link™ to generate optimized schedules in minutes and attribute performance at the spot level, enabling real-time planning, buying, and analytics in a closed-loop system. At the touch of a button, Schedule Optimizer evaluates pre-logs, historical clearance, seasonality, CPMs, spot lengths, and rotation-level performance to generate optimized schedules. Tracker also houses Nielsen ratings and web response data. Using this data, Signal Link attributes incremental “spike” activity at the spot level by comparing real-time web behavior to dynamically generated baselines, enabling precise last-touch attribution within a two-to-eight-minute response window. These inputs power daily workflows across planning, buying, analytics, and client service. Planners build and revise plans using AI-modeled projections, buyers execute in-flight changes tied directly to projected CPA outcomes, and analysts use spike-level KPIs to drive immediate, evidence-based optimizations.



AI's Role in Defining Audiences

AI also plays a critical role in customer profiling and audience activation. Rain's AI-driven segmentation and profiling systems analyze demographic, behavioral, contextual, and psychographic signals to build more precise audience clusters. Our **audience strategy** is powered by sophisticated profiling tools—including Magnolia, Terrain™, MindReader™, ConsumerID™, and Lifemind AI—along with machine learning models that deepen segmentation and dynamically value each impression. For digital and CTV, we build custom AI algorithms that optimize programmatic campaigns directly to client KPIs, automate budget and bid decisions, and operate within privacy-safe data frameworks. By automating complex decisions and reducing manual effort, AI frees our teams to focus on high-value analysis and strategic optimization, driving smarter, faster, and more efficient performance across channels.



AI isn't about cutting corners—it's about unlocking speed, precision, and scale. When you embed AI into daily workflows, everything becomes faster, smarter, and more accountable. At Rain and Rainstorm Direct, that's exactly how we're helping brands grow—responsibly, transparently, and with measurable impact.





/UPDATES

TikTok Is Now a U.S. Company: What This Means for Advertisers

By [Shatesha Scales Flanigan](#), Supervisor, Paid Social

Well, it finally happened. TikTok, [now TikTok USDS Joint Venture LLC](#), became a majority-United States-owned company on January 23, 2026. After years of court battles and looming ban threats, TikTok now has a U.S. home, but its rocky start left the public questioning its viability.

What Happened?

Shortly after the deal closed, TikTok users were prompted to accept updated Terms & Conditions under the new corporate structure. Although the language had been in place since 2024, curious creators and publications began combing through [the new terms](#). And while it's common for apps to track personal identification, they found that the app's tracking of users' precise geo-location, sexual identity data, and immigration status to be concerning. As a result, some users decided to delete the app due to overall privacy concerns; others were more wary of privacy integrity under the new ownership. Those that stayed encountered outages, as TikTok temporarily went dark in the U.S., citing a power distribution at its domestic data center. The platform returned within hours, but users reported glitches and shifts in their "For You Page" feeds, leaving them uneasy and skeptical.

Why Does This Matter?

TikTok is now a substantial content provider, and so any major shifts can significantly impact advertiser strategy. And with more than 170 million U.S. users

and millions of active advertisers, it's not only a cultural engine, but a performance driver. TikTok has hovered under uncertainty for years, with brands operating under the cloud of "what if it gets banned?" That apprehension affected long-term investment planning, influencer contracts, and even creative strategy. Now, that existential risk is gone. The conversation now shifts from "Will TikTok stay?" to "How does TikTok evolve?"

The Core Issues at Stake

- **Data Governance & Consumer Trust:** Ownership changed, but privacy concerns remain. Consumers are more aware of how their data is used, and brands should expect continued scrutiny around transparency, targeting, and accountability. This is an industry-wide issue, not just on TikTok.
- **Algorithm Stability:** The biggest unknown is the impact on TikTok's coveted proprietary algorithm. TikTok's algorithm drives discovery and commerce. The new ownership may influence content amplification, [a major concern for both creators and users at the moment](#). For advertisers, it's how paid performance is measured, so marketers should closely monitor buying costs and conversion trends.

What's Next for TikTok?

In the short term, stabilization. The outage has been resolved. Users are still scrolling. Advertisers are still

spending. The broader ecosystem appears intact. In the long term, expect continued adjustments to data policies and community standards, as well as initiatives aimed at retaining creators. TikTok has every incentive to prove itself as a stable, compliant, performance-driven U.S. company. We've seen ownership shifts before, with Facebook acquiring Instagram and, perhaps, the biggest shake-up, Twitter shifting to X ownership. Only time will tell the longevity of TikTok with the new ownership. But one thing is for certain: the app's longevity over the next year will hinge on how it handles censorship and quality creator retention, because a platform is only as strong as its content.

What This Means for Brands

TikTok remains a powerful discovery engine and, in many categories, a conversion driver when creative aligns with platform behavior. Now is the time for brands to lean into the data and do a fair assessment of not only campaign performance but core audience shifts. Keep an eye on trends and understand how campaigns/messages resonate with consumers. Follow the audience and the data. This is not a pullback moment. It's a measurement moment.

Our Advice to Advertisers

1. Don't Panic

News cycles move faster than user behavior. The good news is that, despite deletion headlines and outrage chatter, TikTok's audience remains active. Performance data—not feelings or memes—should continue to dictate investment decisions.

2. Diversify, Diversify, Diversify

No platform should operate in isolation. Even with ownership certainty, a smart media strategy requires balance. Ensure your mix spans multiple channels and that creative is adapted and flexible across platforms. TikTok may be core for discovery, but diversification protects performance. Diversification should extend beyond traditional channel mix and include partnering with influencers and creators whose content and audience are versatile across platforms.

3. Lean Into Creative Learning

TikTok's strength has always been cultural fluency and algorithmic precision. Even if targeting evolves under tighter privacy norms, creative will remain the primary lever. Brands that understand native storytelling, community signals, and trend responsiveness will continue to win, regardless of platform.

TikTok is now a U.S.-owned media platform entering its next growth phase. For advertisers, the directive is simple: measure carefully, diversify strategically, and create natively.



Need More Guidance?



Rachel Baker

SVP, Head of Video Investment & Partnerships

rachel.baker@rainforgrowth.com



Robin Cohen

EVP, Integrated Media Investment & Planning

robin.cohen@rainforgrowth.com

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