Ep 111 - Interview: Karen Nelson-Field, author of The Attention Economy, on why not all reach is equal

MichaelAaron Flicker: [00:00:00] Welcome back to Behavioral Science for Brands, a podcast where we bridge the gap between academics and practical marketing. Every week we sit down and go deep behind the science that powers some of the world's most successful brands. I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

Richard Shotton: And I'm Richard Shotton

MichaelAaron Flicker: in this week's episode of Behavioral Science for Brands, we welcome Dr. Karen Nelson Field. She's a globally recognized media science researcher, having written two influential books, viral Marketing and the Attention Economy, and How Media Works. I've known Karen's name in the field for a long time, and I've always admired how her work bridges the gap between academic research and real world media.

Buying her thinking should affect how we all plan by and evaluate our media. In today's conversation, we discussed metrics like impressions and time and view, and they how they [00:01:00] have led many marketers astray. We also explored Karen's research into attention and the attention memory threshold and how she uses biometric measurement to reveal what people actually see first, what's merely served.

And we talked about Karen's views on how weighting attention can dramatically reduce wasted media spend.

Karen, welcome. We're so excited to have you on the show today.

Karen Nelson-Field: I've been excited too for this one.

MichaelAaron Flicker: We have so much to talk about and we, the way we thought that we might dive into today's episode is a few get to know you questions quick fire round.

Karen Nelson-Field: Okay.

MichaelAaron Flicker: I will kick us off. If you could have dinner with one marketing or advertising leader, dead or alive, who would it be and why?

Karen Nelson-Field: Easy one. I have had dinner with this person regularly, but Peter Field, and the reason why [00:02:00] is he's a classic marketing effectiveness genius, but he's also moving with the times in that he recognizes change, which a lot of them don't and don't like to think about it. But he has he recognizes the need to adapt his thinking given how different the media and advertising space is in 2026.

Richard Shotton: Karen, is there anything that you once, strongly believe, but now change your mind on?

Karen Nelson-Field: That's a good question. I. My first attention economy book. I thought about the concept of quality scores and things like that and talked a little bit about some of the things that were happening in the industry, but I am vehemently opposed to them now because of their singular nature [00:03:00] and how little they describe the reality of.

Attentive reach and attentive time. So I think if I could go back and write that passage of my book, I would remove it because quality metrics unto themselves are basically viewability on steroids, but not attention.

Richard Shotton: Yeah. So what do you mean by a quality metric? Would this be trying to rate the impact of a

Karen Nelson-Field: particular second media spaces rate the media spaces using timing viewers a proxy with a few extra little.

Secret source things in there. Yeah. So there's a lot of vendors around that do it. But it is essentially an extension of view ability. It just doesn't cut it.

MichaelAaron Flicker: If you could wave a magic wand, what preconception about media measurement would you wanna erase from people's minds?

Karen Nelson-Field: That impressions are the things you should be chasing [00:04:00] because, pre-digital, perhaps when it was measured in a human way. But the time and view counter tells you nothing about how someone's paid attention. So impressions are a false economy.

Richard Shotton: Are there any media measurements, studies that you've admired recently?

Karen Nelson-Field: Not really. Sorry. And is there a

MichaelAaron Flicker: reason why Is,

Karen Nelson-Field: is there a

MichaelAaron Flicker: reason

Karen Nelson-Field: why? Ex professor, methodological rigor. I'm pretty fussy, right? So I wouldn't think there's a lot in our industry that some are okay, but there's a lot to be. Desired under the hood, put it that way.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Final [00:05:00] quick fire question.

What's one thing about media measurement that you think is criminally misunderstood?

Karen Nelson-Field: Criminally is a tough one to put on me because you know who's gonna listen. But I think I alluded to it, the repeated use of time in view as a metric of success that is. A misleading and incorrect. I won't go as far as criminal.

'cause you can say that very much a misleading and it's criminal from an advertiser's purse perspective. That's for sure. Done a lot of

MichaelAaron Flicker: that. Let's use that as a jumping off point, because I think that's really very provocative. And so talk to us about for those that may not be as experienced in the media measurement space, can you start to lay the foundation of our understanding about what's wrong with the [00:06:00] way we measure media right now?

And, most importantly, what you think brands should be thinking about when they think about the quality of the media they buy.

Karen Nelson-Field: Sure. I talk about this in my last book and that is that the day that the industry decided to use time and view as a metric of success, which is. They needed it when we, bounced off of TV and people meters and radio diaries and things like that and needed to go to a digital metric, time and view was used as the metric of success.

So if your ad was on screen for 1, 2, 3, 4 seconds, it was technically engagement of four seconds and that. As it turns out is completely wrong. And so I talk about the day media measurement died was the day that time of view became the proxy engagement slash attention. And it's not for any criminal intent, [00:07:00] it's more around, that was a metric that was used as an expectation of human engagement.

But what we know now is that humans. The ads on the screen and people aren't watching, even if it's full screen. So humans, if you, in a very different way, we try and exit as quickly as we can, or at least not watch as quickly as we can, even if we can't exit the ad. So the, nature of human behavior is that we switch between quickly seeing if the a's there and waiting for it to go and moving away.

So, the relationship between the two is. Negligible. So that's the big piece for advertisers to understand and that's why not all reach is equal, because the way that humans interact with media by comparison to time and view, which is stable across all media is different. So that's why not all reach is equal.

Richard Shotton: If that's the problem with [00:08:00] time in view and other, what would you recommend instead? What is a better alternative, mark?

Karen Nelson-Field: It's, there isn't a better alternative. That's a great question. The answer is waiting metrics. So time in view was chosen because it is literally universal, and that is correct.

So theoretically it made sense, which is why it went into viewability. As a one of the two variables used. But, or and that will continue to be so attention's never going to be a metric unto itself as much as some people think it will. How I look at it is it's a waiting, it's a waiting signal, and I've said that forever.

I don't see it as a currency unto itself because time and view is just so widespread across all assets. That it just needs weighting down usually. So what it does is it [00:09:00] weights down the amount of impressions, which is what we talked about before, that you're really getting compared to what you think you're getting.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Can you go a little deeper on that point? So if we are waiting different help us, is it channels and the channel gets a weight down so that we can have a better view of effective impressions or help us understand this concept a little deeper, if you would.

Karen Nelson-Field: So it would be like if you were buying. A million impressions on Facebook watch or Facebook feed or Instagram stories or whatever it is.

Then those million impressions would have a multiplier added to it, which basically says, actually you're buying a million impressions on Facebook feed, but you're only buying 850,000 on Instagram even though you've bought a million technically. So it's just awaiting like any good math. But the, waiting is [00:10:00] it comes from the knowledge of how much attention is paid relative to time and view.

So that's the key.

Richard Shotton: So you are saying that rather than treating every impression equally or using a misleading metric like time and view, you look at what actually people are paying attention to on average buy. Site format and then apply that as a waiting factor. Okay.

Karen Nelson-Field: Yeah. And just if anyone wants to query where, and I've been doing this for more than 10 years, so if anyone wants to query how this even started, I was the one that originally coined the word Not all Reach is equal years and years ago.

And the reason why I know this, apart from the obvious, is that we specialize in biometrics at scale. But when I was an academic a very, large. CPG called Unilever commissioned me years ago while I was there to understand the concept of [00:11:00] viewability. So it was reasonably new at the time, and like very, like other famous CMOs, they all were challenging this concept of viewability when it came out, when the MRC said, oh, 50% pixels in two seconds of time.

And they said, is there any way you can check the reality of the impact for us? And so as a research study, I was running a research center at the time. I said, how the hell am I gonna do that? I guess I have to actually get humans involved and start to film people while they're interacting with.

Media now, at the time they were proxy, like we built fake Facebook and fake YouTube at the time. That was years ago. But even, but they were pretty close to it. You can build risk websites that look similar, and particularly in [00:12:00] those days, they were all very basic, but the findings were striking. We're like, oh my God.

So the time and view click has been on for four minutes, four seconds, but someone's watched for half. A second and, it was consistent. We did in three countries and presented it to Unilever and they were also equally found it striking. But at that point I went, there's going to be currency crash, so we've only just decided on the currency, but when advertisers know about this, that's gonna have to change.

So I need to be an industry to help it, which is this academic industry divide that you speak of earlier.

Richard Shotton: And if you've talked about. The time and view being flawed because just 'cause something's interview doesn't mean it's being viewed. Are people still using this metric? Yes. It's, or

Karen Nelson-Field: have they started

Richard Shotton: to move with

Karen Nelson-Field: Oh no, you have to.

That's the fundamental. Measure of [00:13:00] impressions and reach in, in the industry. Yeah so I think as, because it is just so everywhere and, abundant then I, I don't think you can change that. I, like I said, all we need to do is which is what our data does, is it normalizes the reality of.

The reach curve, for example, in media planning. It does a lot of other things too, but that's essentially what this is born to do, what this data is born to do.

Richard Shotton: So I gave a guess question. Slightly different then. Do most people now normalize their time and view data or a lot of people still using it?

It's most kind of crude at full.

Karen Nelson-Field: I'd say that still most people are using it. As like they, most people understand or have heard of attention, I should say.

Richard Shotton: Yeah.

Karen Nelson-Field: But they are not using it to, not everyone is using it to change the way that they by measure [00:14:00] et cetera. And that's just a function of the, attention category.

It's probably truly only about six or seven, eight years old, if that in a strong way. And as vendors in the space, we've all been working through what type of products. All my research over the last eight years of my business has been about understanding this. So then to build product on that the, category is, building product that the industry thinks they need.

But I think there's more to come. Hold that thought.

Richard Shotton: And, why is the industry being slow to adopt it? If time and view is so flawed, what, why is it not being rejected very quickly?

Karen Nelson-Field: What's your alternative when there's not something that's

Richard Shotton: Sorry this is the I'm talking about accrued time of view rather than it being weighted.

Karen Nelson-Field: That's my point. My, my question was what is their so, we understand it all and we are vendors of attention [00:15:00] that, have but, we're not in every single pocket, in every part of the world, in every so it's just the alternatives are still early, really.

MichaelAaron Flicker: You know what strikes me, Karen, about hearing this conversation is that most marketers, I think, will innately agree with this absolute like this is happy news to hear that there's academics and an industry budding about this.

So if you are listening to this and it's clicking for listeners, what are the primary benefits if you apply this weighted approach that what do you get because you've you. Take this this model to the next step.

Karen Nelson-Field: So firstly, you're a hundred percent correct. So everyone again, I've been on many stages for the last nine years of my life.

No one said, that's crap. That's not true. That's, that makes no sense. Everyone thousands and [00:16:00] thousands, industries, ev like advertisers agency, they all go, oh my God, that is profound and correct. What was the second part?

MichaelAaron Flicker: And so if you agree with this and you're interested in the benefits you're gonna get by using an adjusted way to score.

What do you get from this?

Karen Nelson-Field: I don't even know where to start. How

MichaelAaron Flicker: about what are the top two or three things you think brands get?

Karen Nelson-Field: Probably about 70% of your ad budget return to you without being wasted. Maybe more so the financial consequences of it is astounding. And all the work we've done, and you probably have heard of the cost of dull piece of work that I did originally, but it's astounding the financial impact of ineffective ad spend.

Think about it, it's resources, [00:17:00] human resources to start with. It's. Wasted energy. So there's a sustain sustainability component. There's, but moreover, and this is what we can actively measure is wasted money, lower profit you name it.

MichaelAaron Flicker: And so beyond it just being measurement. You recommend that your clients then use this to get money refunded back from the vendors where they're buying media from?

Maybe explain that part of this. How would, how does it return money back?

Karen Nelson-Field: How it returns money back is they adjust their media mix so that they, that at the end of the day it is not fraudulent that Facebook's using time and view. So there, there's no due need for them to give money back.

They're not, it's not. Impressions. They're not buying, they are buying them technically on the, way that the industry [00:18:00] measures them. It's more important to, to adjust your media mix, knowing or so, so put more impressions here because the gap between seen and served is not as bad. There'll always be a gap.

No human is gonna sit there. If you buy a million impressions you're not going to have the a hundred percent of the people that you expose it to watching sustainably across the 10 seconds. It just doesn't work that way. But the gap between what is seen and served is different on better higher engaging kind of, formats, if you like. So if you understand the difference and you adjust your media mix, the financial impact is huge. Huge. So not just about saving money, but improving the cost of goods sold, or I'm not one [00:19:00] for some of the vendors in the market carry on about it's an outcomes driven space, which I guess at the end of the day it is.

But efficiency underneath that is. Is really what's driving outcomes so, attention is, related to outcomes, but at the end of the day, sometimes an ad isn't good enough to drive a new outcome. Particularly the brand. Let's just go, the creative's really boring as hell. But if it, leads to. Reno or McDonald's and you still know, even though it's boring, but you still know who's advertising, then it will probably work. But the creative piece is a big piece in the outcomes piece. And most attention vendors don't consider the capability of the branding to be able to lead you to an outcome.

So outcomes is important. Absolutely. But it's not like you're just gonna get more [00:20:00] sales. That's just. Crap. What you're gonna do is the sales you do get are gonna be significantly more efficient.

MichaelAaron Flicker: So often in the, our conversations with guests, we talk about on the, behavioral science side, that what someone claims to be their motivations is often very different from their actual behaviors.

And that's post-rationalization. So we Exactly. So in your work. You noticed this 10 plus 10 years ago in your work with Unilever, how does. How do you observe their, the quality of their attention? So you're talking about that not all impressions are equal. You've used biometric marchers to wa to, to have a better sense of what these, what their attention is.

Can you talk to us a little bit more about how that how that's different by channel or how you how your [00:21:00] methodology works?

Karen Nelson-Field: That's an excellent question. Firstly that you made a very. Significant truism that your claimed behavior and your actual behavior is vastly different. So when we first looked at attention, 'cause at the time all we're doing is really talking about this word engagement.

'cause all the years before that, everyone told, oh, our ads need to be engaged. No, we'd have to engage in the no one really could codify that. So even when I was an academic at the Ehrenberg Bass Institute. 'cause my original PhD was audience measurement, and then my postdoc was a lot around understanding different media in the early days and this concept of engagement and what it meant for brands.

But, so all this is, engagement, but codifying in a much more clever academic way. But the question was. The how do you, what's your methodology? So the truth is you might think that you're engaging or [00:22:00] you might, tell you might. So we, tested that in the early days and the truth is that how much tension you think you're paying is very vastly different to what you actually are.

So we were never going to just talk to the human, get diaries, get we are gonna say, how long did you reckon you spent watching? We had to pick a method that was passive passively metering your behavior. So long story short, nine years later with permission, what happens is we might go and recruit a panel of 500 people in Finland and we wanna collect data on five or six different formats, and we ask permission for that.

And so they download our app and then when they turn their phone on, we are filming them like you are family me Now. And then we also launch accessibility behind the view. So if you are on Facebook, not only am I filming you, but I'm collecting time in view, [00:23:00] scroll speed, volume ear, whether you've got ear pods in or whatever buds, whatever they're called.

And all these different things, how you're orientating your phone, et cetera. I'm. Essentially capturing your experience, what I call outward facing and your experience inward facing. And then we align the two, so then I can, not me, but the machine learning team will then align how your face and how your eyes are looking at.

The ad or not at a, in a sub-second level. So you know, you're scrolling. So we can tell if you've looked at it for 0.2 of a second, or if you've looked at it for five seconds. So we do that at scale. We do the same for tv. We do the same for cinema. We do the same for outdoor. We've worked with outdoor vendors where they put big cameras up and we can film people we're doing in car right now, literally today.[00:24:00]

So it's the same methodology we've done but the math changes depending on how far away you are from the camera. That's as simple as it is. Now we will have those who are in behavioral science that'll say, but that's not understanding how people are thinking. No, that's so true. So if I am staring at an ad, it's likely that I am staring at the ad because I'm reading it.

But not always. So we, but we chose. To use this method because it was passive and it's scalable. Whereas biometrics using neuro is not scalable in any kind of way. So my, as an academic in audience measurement and in media buying, that's my choice. My choice was to use bio in that sense, not to understand if someone's enjoying it or liking it or would.

[00:25:00] Intend to do anything.

Richard Shotton: And as you say that everything else is academic. If someone's ever seen your ad, then all those other metrics you might be interested in are basically impossible to to move

Karen Nelson-Field: a hundred percent. And my original cost of dull work codified we, had 190 campaigns.

I can't remember them all off exactly the, depth, but it was a global studies, 12 countries, et cetera, and we looked at. The level of wastage across four quartiles and from memory the, what we call extremely dull. 'cause I was, I don't know if much about the series, but with Adam Grant Adam Morgan and Peter was a contributor as well, and Orlando did the first one.

I was following their lead around the methodology, so I split wastage into four quartiles and my point was. [00:26:00] Even at the best, there is still some wastage. And what I talk about wastage is how long has it been on screen relative to how long people have watched it. But at the bottom end, it was something like 95% wasted, like no one saw it 95% of the time in.

And so what the original cost of Doll did is that put a price on that gap. Put a price on that, so you have to read. It's a free download, but yeah. So yeah.

Richard Shotton: Now you mentioned 95% was at the worst end. Is that 95% never even looked at the ad or it didn't hit your attention memory threshold?

Karen Nelson-Field: Nothing about that at all.

Literally zero viewing.

Richard Shotton: Okay. Because the attention memory threshold's pretty shocking as well. You did a huge study. A hundred hundred thousand ads continued to, yeah, just continued to Oh, I didn't realize that. Yeah.

FS-25-2067_KarenNelsonField v2: So

Karen Nelson-Field: That, we see that in every single data set we ever collect, and we're in market in some countries every day.[00:27:00]

So the for the listeners the attention memory threshold is a line in the sand. So sometimes there's the other side and but, I'll tell you the boundaries of that. But two and a half seconds is basically a point where we see. Where there's enough, there's clearly enough going on that someone says, someone recognizes what it is quickly, and then outcomes become, they go up from there.

But under two and a half seconds, it's a lot more rare to get outcomes from your ad. The, boundaries are, I did a big piece of work with, vCCP, which you would know Richard, last year, there are a great bunch of men and women. Brilliant. Yeah. And we did this big piece of work to test that theory on highly distinctive [00:28:00] content.

So highly distinctive brand assets. So I think they made, went public with, who was about like the cre egg and the, it wasn't in there, but the mere cat, and the, go to market, whatever. Compare the market cat kind of stuff, like Absolutely. Everyone knows and everyone

Richard Shotton: knows. Yeah.

Karen Nelson-Field: And the reality is distinctiveness doesn't stop you scrolling, but you can actually get outcomes slightly earlier.

So we worked that the, if you have a distinctive asset in your portfolio, about one and a half seconds is okay, but. Most people think their assets are distinctive, so you have to really make sure they're super strong and you maintain them. As well. So yeah so the two and a half, the attention memory threshold is amazing.

'cause even in every single study we see the general population, that's the point at which you start [00:29:00] to see the outcomes kind of move away from flat baselines. But yeah with small caveats around it.

MichaelAaron Flicker: And Karen, when you're saying two and a half seconds, I'm imagining a Facebook scroll, but is this across all channels that it's two and a half seconds for the attention memory threshold?

Karen Nelson-Field: Yep. Because it's time with an ad in the true sense of it, not in the fake sense of it, like time and view. It's the actual two and a half seconds of use looking at something. Actively, not passively, actively to, and then you get it not always, but that's consistently the line of the sand and we've seen that for years and years.

So the last so, in the digital space, [00:30:00] the other media are typically a hundred percent of the time. So if you, yeah, in, in, if you go streaming tv, CTV, cinema it's a hundred percent of the time. If you are asking me about digital and social the average is about 15 to 20%. Hit that number.

MichaelAaron Flicker: It's interesting, I didn't immediately assume that out of home boards would fare so well. Maybe it's my style of driving rather than the media, the chat

Karen Nelson-Field: out of home's Interesting. Because not always so out-of-home. So we measure out-of-home, but it's harder to generalize whereas all of the others you can generalize because the way you use Facebook in the US is the same as the way you use in the UK is the same.

We went down under. So Facebook and the [00:31:00] user experience is the same. YouTube is the same. TikTok, iss the same, et cetera, et cetera. But outdoors, very related to the corner that you're on and how busy it is, so outdoors, amazing. But there are, they have the same, they have some that are high veers. You stare at it because it's right in front of your face, and then you have others that you drive past and you're in a.

Shit show of a car problem, so it's it's not as generalizable as the cinema or TV or Netflix or anything like that.

Richard Shotton: And how much does the kind of market take this into account? Like you you mentioned earlier about this idea of all reach not being equal, I guess people have.

Worked that assumption pre-digital to a certain degree in that people always used to pay a higher cost per thousand for [00:32:00] cinema than tv. But is that being fully taken into account now? Once you start I love you

Karen Nelson-Field: asking that question. The reason why I love that you asked me that question is because ironically, that was in my original PhD.

So my PhD was, a long time ago now, but that was all about the CPM and relative price for value. And what I love about the question you asked me is because at in those days. In those days, it's like I'm a hundred. In those days, CPM was relative, so you would pay more for TV because you would literally get more reach because the TV's on and people are not, exactly perfect if the TV's on someone's around and the cinema is higher because et cetera, et cetera.

But in the advent of digital, if. You haven't read my second book. I call it cost per Meaningless thousand because Cost per meaningless thousand [00:33:00] so people think they're paying a relative number. That's complete crap. So the reason, there's two reasons for it. So the cost of value can't be codified because they use time and view as the value exchange.

So that's wrong. But then the second piece happens is with digital pricing and CPM can be manipulated so easily or change so easily because people bid differently. And so the CPMs are all over the place and they're not relative in any country. And it's so now CPM is. A metric that you, in most cases, and some of this comes from the cost of dull piece and there's a whole page on it that cheaper doesn't mean cheaper.

It actually should be cheaper again. It's not cheap enough. And, I got my first experience from that. Really early on, straight out of of the academic role and it got [00:34:00] published in Wall Street Journal and it was raised a, flag was raised because no one had challenged this currency, which it was, which was CPM at the time.

But I feel for the where it's harder is and this was starting to happen when I was doing my PhD 'cause I, my PhD was at a time when the Facebook was new. But there was something going on in the digital space, which is why I jumped on it straight away to become a researcher in digital.

I could already see the struggle that traditional media had because of the, costs to run a TV network, for example. So their CPMs were already starting to look higher. Relative to reach at the time because early. Quick and easy digital stuff was coming out.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Yeah. Their cogs are much higher.

It costs a lot more to run a TV network. But Karen, I'm, [00:35:00] as I'm loving the conversation we're having and I'm wondering if listeners might think from this conversation that digital ha shoulders a lot of the blame for all of these metrics going out of whack. And I wonder if you could talk about, the other side of the coin, which is as more and more people spend more and more total hours on these channels is it really about waiting it correctly so that we don't, and so that we don't waste our media investment? Or is there more it, what else is there to it?

Karen Nelson-Field: Let's not talk about the social impact of addictive technology.

Sure, we can, let's not discuss that, but, the short answer is digital's amazing. It's amazing because you can reach so many people technically. But once, look I, rev, I say that from an a social [00:36:00] perspective, long tail programmatic, I call it the, long tail of programmatic shit is not where I would be spending my money.

I think that's always gonna be called the long child programmatic shit in my mind. But, digital's amazing because of its amazing coverage and the algorithms that sit behind it, I guess from a targeting perspective. So not a lot of traditional media can do that, so I don't bag digital and it's not their fault.

That time in view became the default metric. It was a thing, a decision. Between industry bodies and pro publishers and MRCs and blah, blah, blah. But I, I think where I get annoyed is where publishers continue to claim time and view as the, as their default. And there are a [00:37:00] few, but a lot of publishers have gone, okay, we need to be able to report.

Quality outcomes or quality impressions versus, when I say quality, the reality of attentive impressions versus time and view. So I guess I'm trying to back step and go Digital is a part of our lives and you have to have this perfect flywheel of. Bigger brand building, appropriate media, and then reinforcement media that you cannot spend a fortune on and just have repeated exposures at scale and targeted.

So there's, it's just getting the mix right. It's getting the mix.

Richard Shotton: You've talked about this figure eight to 5% of impressions not hitting the attention memory threshold. So if we focus on the positive, the 15%, what is it that the publishers are [00:38:00] doing to ensure those areas get attention? Is it about ad load?

Is it about size? Is it about high quality journalism that people stay on the page or what it's driving success?

Karen Nelson-Field: And it was good of you to pick it up because it is ultimately about the user experience of the platform. So it's a combination of less distraction to which could be ad load, it could be stickiness of the ad, it could be the non skip skippable kind of combo.

But also its quality. So it's a value exchange piece. So when you go onto an MFA kind of site, like a made for advertising site that you just. You click on something and then you regret it instantly because you can't even read the goddamn thing because there's just 4 trillion messages. Yeah.

Makes it as quick as you can, but they call that reach. That's my point about [00:39:00] an impression. But there are publishers that you wanna go onto and you wanna read the content and you wanna pin things and you wanna watch the Netflix special and you wanna do this and to me, the publishers that get right are the ones that have the value exchange with enough advertising that it benefits them and enough content that it's quality that benefits me as a human.

MichaelAaron Flicker: We've heard you talk about attentional elasticity. Can you explain that concept and then talk about the opportunities for brands and creatives?

Karen Nelson-Field: Wow. It's a hard one to talk about at 7:00 AM in the morning just stretching the

MichaelAaron Flicker: brain.

Karen Nelson-Field: So amazing you asked me that. That is a pretty deep concept to explain to people that are not used to this.

The reality is, and we've [00:40:00] just been talking about it, the user experience defines how much attention you can earn. Everyone thinks that if I put a crazy, beautiful creative. On the long programmatic tale of shit that it means I'll get 10 seconds of time. That is not true. Even amazing creative will have the same amount of attention.

Regardless, it would be slightly better than average, don't get me wrong, but there's a range of attention possible. In cinema, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, Netflix, long tail, programmatic shit. And that is the window that you are dealing with. That's called attentional elasticity. So there's a baseline, good creative stretches above it, average creative stretches below it, but ultimately that's your range that you work with, and we see that every single day.

So far, I think we're up to 59 billion [00:41:00] human data points and counting. So the, what that means is that creative works, so the same creative works differently across different assets in terms of how much attention it can earn. So you have to be. And, no amount of emotion. It it emotional ads are tempered by that.

So you'll see the same, A gets less and less and less attention seconds when that little range gets smaller and smaller and smaller So that's attention elasticity. So advertisers have to think about how they build creative. So even a ten second ad on something like, let's call it TikTok, is a waste of your money.

It's too long. 'cause you just won't, you're wasting the o the other end of it. So you've, gotta think about at length expected where your [00:42:00] brand is. Don't leave it to a second. Four, you'll have 5% of people watching. That kind of stuff.

I think there's a big disconnect between creative and media. The creatives are struggling because it's less creative. I think with the advent of creative versioning and ai, there's some improvement. About classic creative groups. Struggle with it. Yeah, struggle with it. Until they see the facts, until they see them like you, you go and do a piece of work and they go, oh my God, it failed us.

MichaelAaron Flicker: What comes to mind for me is creative leaders I've worked with in the past have always said, the tighter the brief, make me a small box and I [00:43:00] can do even better work because those constraints lead you to thinking about. Solving problems in different ways. And so to me there's a bright spot in this conversation that great insights from the media planners combined with tight briefs for the creatives can lead to new interesting work that can drive a lot more value for the brand if that connection exists.

But Karen, what's your reaction to that?

Karen Nelson-Field: I love that you said that. So I talk about the future state of our economy. There's a couple of things. I'll give you the second one in a minute, but the first one is the unification of creative and media because one begats the other, so I think there are agencies that are thinking more and more about this, and the more they see the work that we do, the more they go, oh my God, we don't have a lot of choice. We have to run, we have to work with them together. So I think that's a really important point.

MichaelAaron Flicker: And then you said you teased us.

[00:44:00] You said there was a second thing in your predictions.

Karen Nelson-Field: So the second piece is how AI will reroute the entire attention economy. So I'll hold that space and maybe we can chat again post can but I'm pretty excited for where this next phase is gonna go and I think it will completely change our industry and a lot of the vendors that sit within it,

MichaelAaron Flicker: Karen people on the edge of their seats.

So we will. So you'll have some stuff you'll be sharing. It can, and we can learn more about it there and hopefully have you back on to break it down for us.

Karen Nelson-Field: Definitely. We would love to come back.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Love that. A final question, if you had to leave. Brand marketers, folks who own businesses or own brands, with a final message of [00:45:00] what they should think about and feel empowered to do.

Based on our conversation today, what's the thing you wanna leave them with so that they can take that and make action coming out of this podcast?

Karen Nelson-Field: I think I'll appeal to the challenger brands because they're the ones that can, ill afford the. The gap. Big brands their procurement rabbit holes and their big budgets.

I look at it and it's, just horrible how much money they're spending or wasting, but they can afford it. But the challenges are the one that suffered the most, they also are the ones that, it's a bit of a double JE, double jeopardy. They're also the ones that say we can't afford higher CPMs, so therefore we will go lower CPMs.

But that is highly inefficient and a false economy. So I'll appeal to the challenges who are trying to get ahead [00:46:00] beyond their bigger competitors. Be smarter with your media. Buy, invest. More in absolute dollars because you'll get but less overall. So, move your medium, mix smaller. Forget about the CPM.

Think more about the outcomes about what you get for it, but also make sure you continually invest in your distinctive assets. Because we talked about it before, that means you can put these distinctive assets on a lot more of the less expensive. Gap type media, but still get some impressions remembered.

I don't know if that made sense at all.

MichaelAaron Flicker: It makes beautiful sense. Beautiful. Karen, thank you for joining us today. It was a lovely conversation.

Karen Nelson-Field: Fun.

MichaelAaron Flicker: So fun. For [00:47:00] those listening, if you found this interesting, if you took something away, please share it with others who are as excited about great effective marketing.

And. If you're listening, please comment or follow our pages so that we can reach more people just like you. And until next time, I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

Richard Shotton: And I'm Richard Shotton.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Karen, thanks for being with us today.

Karen Nelson-Field: Pleasure.