

CNN International Commercial

THE FAST EFFECT

How streaming news is creating a new behavioral layer

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Why continuous, repeat engagement is becoming the architecture of news consumption

As FAST turns streaming news into a daily habit — quick to access, easy to revisit and built around repeat check-ins — it is reshaping not just where people watch, but how news fits into the day.

For brands, that creates a different kind of opportunity: less about owning one peak moment, and more about building presence across the moments that now matter.

THE END OF APPOINTMENT VIEWING?

For most of television history, news was something audiences scheduled their day around: a bulletin at breakfast, a broadcast at six. With the growth of digital platforms, social media, user-generated content, and on-demand viewing, that behavior has been evolving over time.

And now free ad-supported streaming television (FAST) is accelerating this behavior, further evolving the architecture of news consumption. News is more than a single fixed appointment to be tuned in to. This new layer allows audiences to pick their own broadcast schedule.



How often current FAST news viewers tune in

% among FAST news viewers

24 HOUR **65%**

Watch FAST news daily[1]

7 DAY **92%**

Watch FAST news weekly[1]

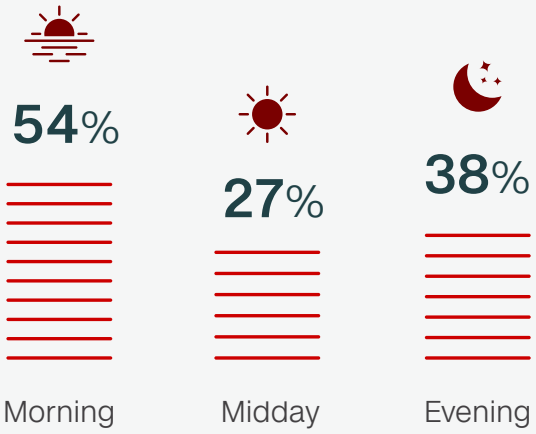
FROM VIEWING PEAKS TO CONTINUOUS PRESENCE

Linear television is built around the peaks of breakfast and primetime. FAST news breaks that tradition. Data reveals that 54% of FAST viewing happens in the morning, followed by 27% at midday, and rising again to 38% in the evening[1]. This cadence of engagement provides coverage for low-competition timeslots that traditional schedules can overlook. In doing so, repeated opportunities for engagement appear between traditional viewing peaks, rather than a cluster of high-priority moments at peak times.

For advertisers accustomed to buying a single high-value moment, FAST creates more opportunities to connect with audiences when they have consciously chosen to engage with the platform.

When audiences are watching FAST News[1]

% among FAST news viewers



THE ANATOMY OF A CHECK-IN

What does that behavior look like in practice? FAST news audiences engage in a mix of quick headline updates and longer sit-down viewing sessions, reflecting a more flexible approach to news consumption than fixed appointment TV.

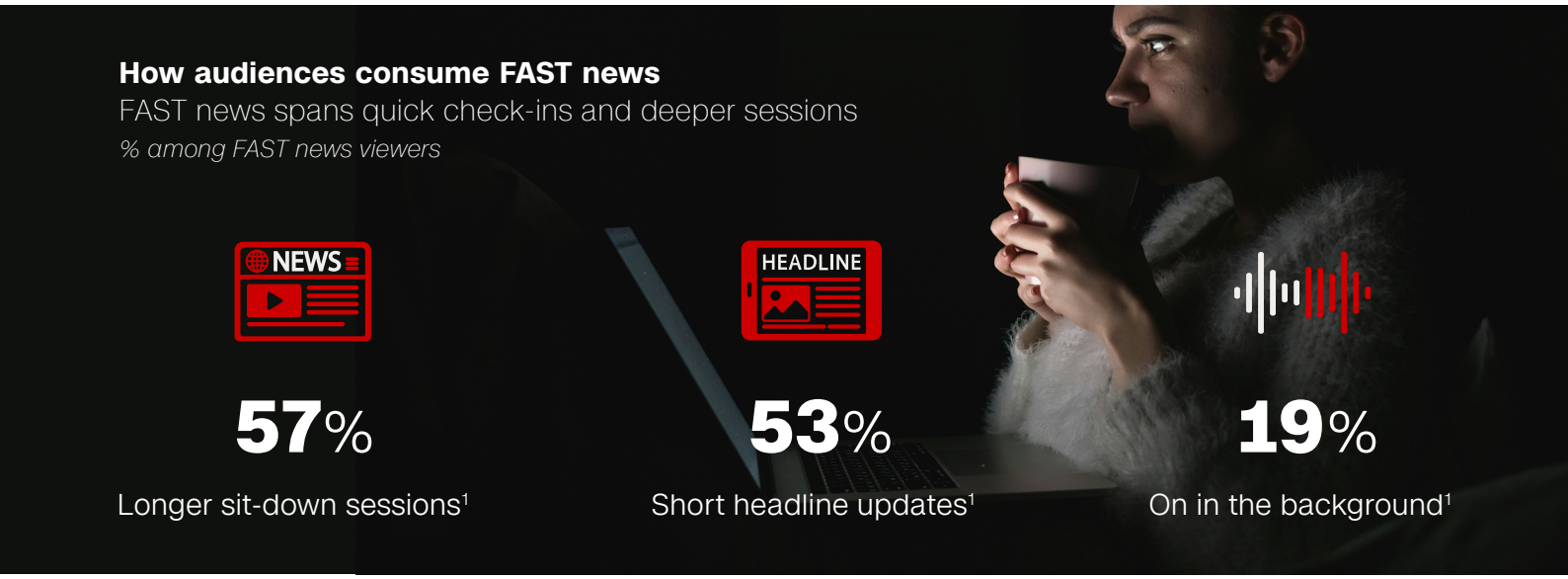
These are not passive, wallpaper viewers. The data reveals engaged and intentional viewing habits.

For advertisers, FAST viewing is often driven by active choice rather than passive consumption, creating moments of attention rather than passive exposure to brands and branded content.

How audiences consume FAST news

FAST news spans quick check-ins and deeper sessions

% among FAST news viewers



ADDITIVE, NOT A REPLACEMENT

It would be fair to question whether FAST news viewers simply replace existing news consumption; however, the evidence says otherwise. The audience is incremental, rather than a shift of viewers already reached elsewhere.

FAST exclusively reaches a quarter of US Comcast news-watching households that cable and network news do not reach alone, showing that it is not simply duplicating the traditional TV audience[2]. It's reaching cord-cutters and cord-nevers alongside pay-TV subscribers.

Europe has not missed the FAST news opportunity, with the proportion of FAST viewers consuming news increasing from 27% to 36% in the Netherlands and from 27% to 39% in Germany[3] since 2024. At the same time, Ofcom found that overall in-home video viewing in the UK remained broadly stable. Audiences aren't watching less; they're just watching differently[4].

Crucially for advertisers, FAST news reaches a highly commercially influential younger audience: over four in ten viewers are aged 25 to 44, more than half devote a significant share of their spending to technology, travel and luxury, and 57% influence the purchasing decisions of family, friends or colleagues[1].

The audience opportunity for brands is therefore incremental as well as behavioral: FAST news adds new occasions and a different mix of influential viewers.



THE PLATFORM SIGNAL

FAST has become a significant part of the global television ecosystem, reaching an estimated one billion connected TV users in 2026[5] and accounting for 6.1% of total television viewing, with usage among viewers aged 50 and over now approaching Netflix levels[6].

But the real story lies in what happens when scale combines with repeat usage. Engagement is deepening. According to a recent Wurl report, average daily FAST viewing per household increased by nearly 16%, while session length rose 25% year on year from September 2024 to August 2025, suggesting FAST has become an established part of the viewing routine[7]. In the US, 55% of TV viewers have used a FAST service, and 46% of regular FAST viewers consider it a "must-have"[8].

Together, these trends position FAST as an increasingly powerful environment for brands, delivering growing reach, deeper engagement and access to viewers with both spending power and influence.



STRATEGIC IMPLICATION

FAST is helping to create a pattern of consumption built around intentional news engagement. CNN built the always-on news model when it launched the first 24-hour news network in 1980. FAST is where that behavior now migrates — always-on news for the streaming generation, in the environments audiences already use, and on a schedule they set themselves.

The opportunity this creates extends beyond a single viewing occasion allowing repeated visits across a day with no single peak.

For advertisers, it's time to switch up strategy and ask how to build presence across the recurring, repeatable moments.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR GLOBAL BRANDS AND ADVERTISERS

1. Is your media plan built around one peak moment, or around the multiple daily check-ins FAST news audiences actually make?
2. Is your content built to work across both a quick two-minute glance and a longer, deliberate sit-down, or does it only land in one viewing habit?
3. Are you capturing the midday and evening dayparts where FAST news attention is growing fastest, and where competitive inventory is thinnest?



WHAT'S NEXT?

Get in touch to explore how CNN's business insights can connect your brand to an engaged, global audience, in the right place at the right time.

For further information about this report please contact:

Data Inquiries
Jo.Tenzer@cnn.com
Director of Audience Insights

Advertising Inquiries
commercial.cnn.com/contact-us

Sources:
[1] FAST News Audience April 2026: CNN International Commercial and Differentology. n=2,140 FAST news viewers in US, UK, FR, DE, SP
[2] Comcast aggregated ad exposure data for TV and streaming, Time Periods used: 2023=Jan-Dec 2023 and 2024=Jan-May 2024
[3] ShowHeroes and Omnicom Media Netherlands: Every Screen is a Stage. Respondents, aged 18–65, FAST-channel users. n=4,377 in NL, DE, UK SP, IT FR.
[4] Ofcom, Media Nations 2025 – UK Report (30 July 2025).
[5] Statista Market Insights. September 2026
[6] Nielsen data cited in Amagi, Streaming 2026: Why FAST Viewership Is Growing Faster Than Its Revenue (March 2026).
[7] Whurl: The CTV Trends Report: Advertiser Edition 2025 https://www.wurl.com/reports/the-ctv-trends-report-september-2025/
[8] Hub Research, 2026 FAST FULL THROTTLE (May 2026).

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