mntn

Your Performance TV Guide to Back-to-School 2024.

Class is back in session — are you ready to be schooled? Now that you're fresh and ready to go after a leisurely summer break, it's time to embark on a new academic year. But it's also a fresh start for brands and advertisers — call it a trial-run for Q4, if you will. Dive into our comprehensive guide to Connected TV advertising for back-to-school, where we cover everything from audience targeting to campaign setup, and all the creative best practices you'll need to drive performance on Connected TV.
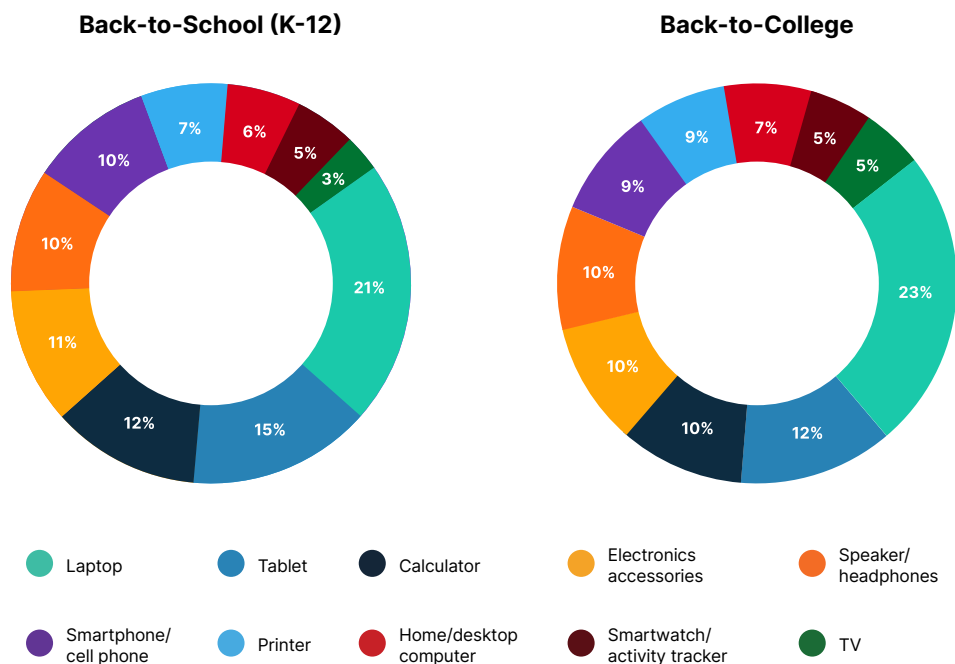
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Let's Talk Trends.

2023's back-to-school was all about the capital "B" — no, not books, billions. $78 billion in ad spend, to be exact. Of course, that wasn't without its challenges. Inflation weighed on shoppers' minds last year, with two-thirds of customers saying it had a big impact on their purchase decisions. In fact, 45% of parents shopping for their kids were doing more comparative shopping online, versus 30% in 2019.

But what are they buying? Big-ticket items, apparently. Electronics topped the list for planned back-to-school purchases.

The Best Selling Items for Back-to-School 2023

Back-to-School (K-12)

Back-to-College

Legend:
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Calculator
- Electronics accessories
- Speaker/headphones
- Smartphone/cell phone
- Printer
- Home/desktop computer
- Smartwatch/activity tracker
- TV

Back-to-School (K-12) values: 21%, 15%, 12%, 11%, 10%, 10%, 7%, 6%, 5%, 3%

Back-to-College values: 23%, 12%, 10%, 10%, 10%, 9%, 9%, 7%, 5%, 5%
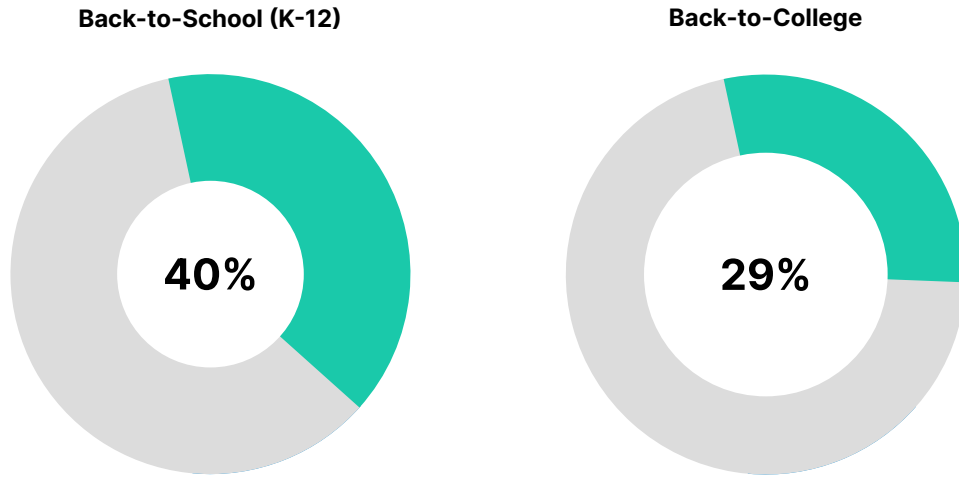
Source: National Retail Federation and Proper Insights & Analytics, 2023

While there's an almost equal split between the top categories between K-12 and back-to-college, the former over-indexed on online purchases.

Back-to-School (K-12) 2024 Ecommerce Purchases Outpace Back-to-College Spending

Back-to-School (K-12)

40%

Back-to-College

29%

Source: eMarketer, Data Drop: 5 Charts on 2024 Back-to-School Shopping, 2024

Speaking of online — while what shoppers are buying is important, there's been a noticeable shift in how they're making their purchases. According to eMarketer's latest 2024 forecast, back-to-school will rely almost entirely on ecommerce for YoY sales growth.
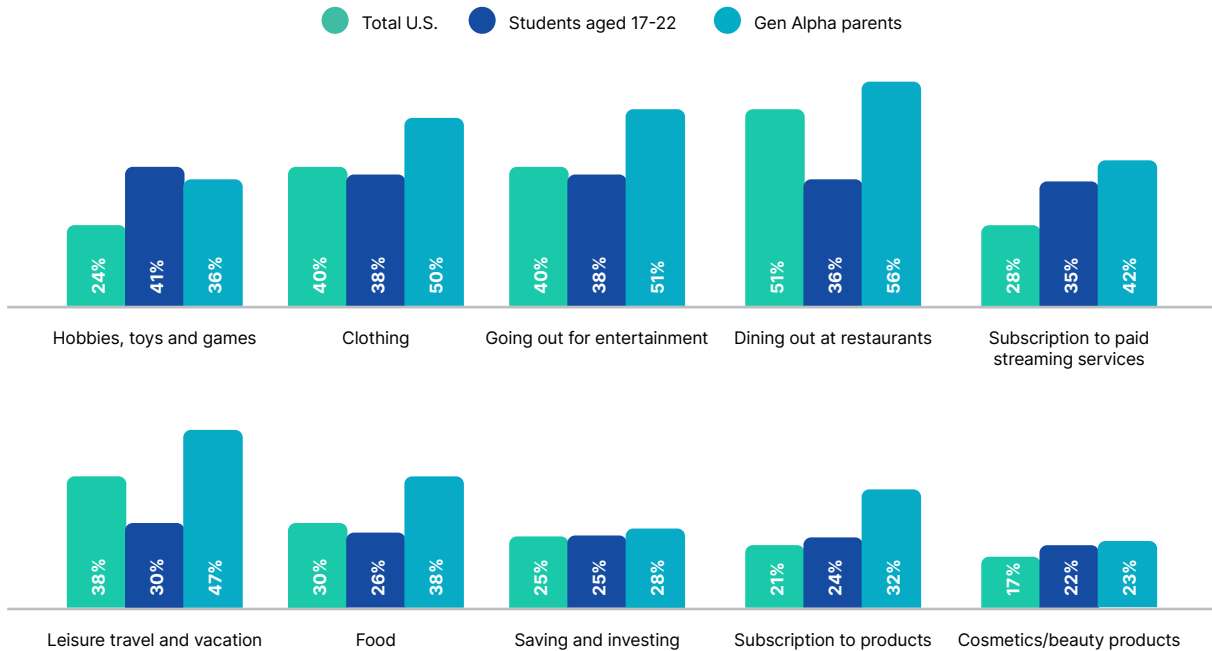
Over 75% of the total $2.4 billion in YoY growth for back-to-school is powered by ecommerce.

Source: eMarketer, Data Drop: 5 Charts on 2024 Back-to-School Shopping, 2024

Even with back-to-school spending on the rise, let's not forget this year's back-to-college cohort will also maintain their customer lifetime value as they mature — and they have a different outlook on spending than the parents of Gen Alpha.

College Students Aren't Cutting Back on Back-to-School Spending

● Total U.S. ● Students aged 17-22 ● Gen Alpha parents

Hobbies, toys and games
24% | 41% | 36%

Clothing
40% | 38% | 50%

Going out for entertainment
40% | 38% | 51%

Dining out at restaurants
51% | 36% | 56%

Subscription to paid streaming services
28% | 35% | 42%

Leisure travel and vacation
38% | 30% | 47%

Food
30% | 26% | 38%

Saving and investing
25% | 25% | 28%

Subscription to products
21% | 24% | 32%

Cosmetics/beauty products
17% | 22% | 23%

Source: GfK Consumer Life Global 2023 Survey (U.S. filter)

Did we mention that, on average, back-to-college spending is 54% higher than back-to-school?
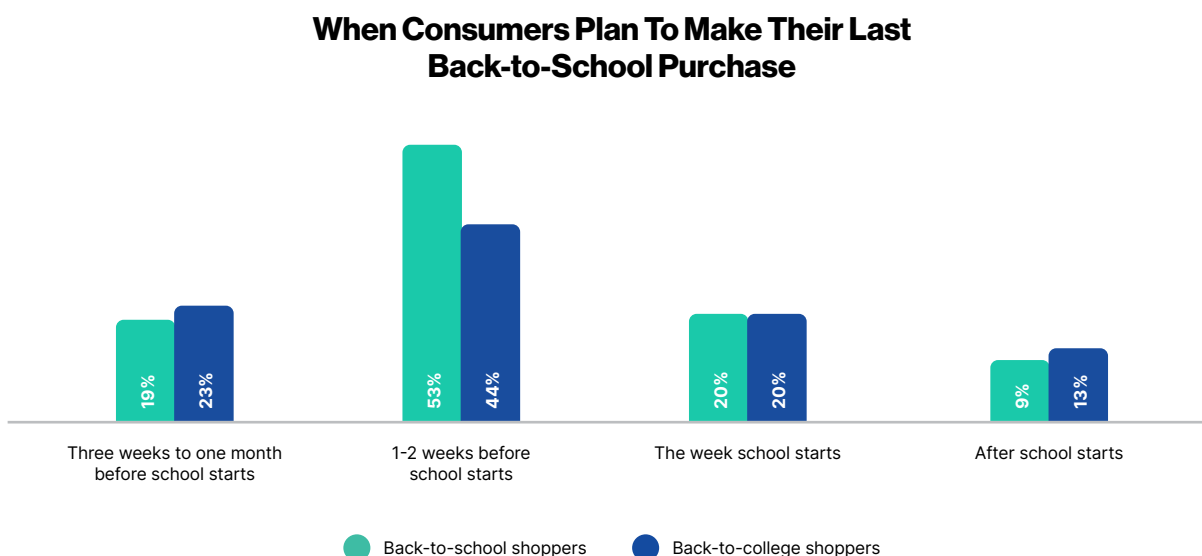
Back-to-School Versus Back-to-College Average Spend

Back-to-School (K-12)
$890
on average

Back-to-College
$1,367
on average

Source: National Retail Federation and Proper Insights & Analytics, 2023

It pays to play the long game this back-to-school season, even if almost the majority of shoppers are waiting until 1-2 weeks before school starts to shop (per the chart below). Keep in mind that school start dates vary depending on region and state — so take this as an opportunity to get ahead of the season and tell shoppers what they want (even before they know they need it).

When Consumers Plan To Make Their Last Back-to-School Purchase

	Three weeks to one month before school starts	1-2 weeks before school starts	The week school starts	After school starts
Back-to-school shoppers	19%	53%	20%	9%
Back-to-college shoppers	23%	44%	20%	13%

Source: NRF's 2023 August Spending survey, conducted by Prosper Insights & Analytics

What else can we tell you about the second biggest shopping event of the year? We analyzed our own first-party MNTN Performance TV data over back-to-school 2023, with some valuable insights that will help inform your strategy this year. Click below for the full write up.

More insights here

Campaign Best Practices.

What does a full-funnel approach look like? And what's the best way of getting in front of savvy shoppers this summer? Let's cover the foundations, from selecting the right campaign goals and audiences (including those you haven't heard of) to creative and messaging and much more. With MNTN Performance TV, you can build TV audiences with the same control, ease, and precision of your other digital marketing channels.

And now, with MNTN Matched, we've made it even easier to identify the high performing audiences who are most likely to love your brand and convert during any holiday season. This proprietary system uses AI to score and categorize consumers in over 99% of US households based on their shopping behavior, recent life events, and most relevant interests.

Here's how we suggest setting up your campaigns with MNTN Matched in the mix:

01 **Prospecting:** At this stage, your goal is to add more site traffic to create a larger retargeting pool. Activate MNTN Matched to create a list of recommended audience keywords for you based on your website and mobile app data, which you can then add to and remove from (just like with paid search). MNTN's Audience AI uses these keywords to find consumers who are most likely to visit your site and convert. Your budget will automatically be allocated to your highest intent audiences first. Visit our Audience Segmentation section below for more information on how it works.

02   Retargeting: Recapture the value of online window-shoppers and past buyers by targeting website visitors whose online behaviors indicate their willingness to purchase now (or again). Segment your site visitors based on time spent on site, number of page views, site visit frequency, cart abandoners, average order value, and recent conversions.

03   CRM: Our platform makes it easy to touch base with loyal customers who already have a high intent to purchase. Simply upload your customer data via our CRM database, and our technology matches it to consumers in over 99% of US households using proper privacy standards.

04   Layer steps one, two, and three together to maximize your efforts and drive conversions at the top, middle, and bottom of the funnel.

05   Want to see how each of your audiences are performing? Check out Audience Segment Reporting to help optimize your targeting strategy.

AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

Gone are the days of (second-)guessing keywords and picking audience segments in the hope that something sticks. MNTN Matched does this guesswork for you — and it delivers higher performance.

Here's how it works:

01   MNTN's Generative AI analyzes your website and mobile app to determine what your company sells and what services you provide, then creates a list of recommended audience keywords. You can then add and remove keywords, just like you do with paid search. Consider including additional seasonal keywords here based on the types of products/services that your audience is likely to buy over the back-to-school season.

02 MNTN's Audience AI uses your keywords to find consumers in over 99% of US households who, based on their predicted shopping habits, are most likely to visit your site and convert.

03 Your ad budget is automatically allocated to your highest intent audiences first. And you'll get estimated audience sizes for three buckets:
- **High Intent Audiences**, who most likely visit your site and convert today.
- **Medium Intent Audiences**, who are still likely to engage with your brand and convert — maybe today, or maybe in the near future.
- **Maximum Reach Audiences**, who you can include to increase your brand awareness. They can be useful to reach because today's brand building can become tomorrow's performance.

04 Once you're live, you'll deliver best-in-class performance. We found that our audiences deliver 6x the site traffic, 2x higher ROAS, and 2x lower CPA than audiences built by traditional forms of TV audience segment targeting.

05 You'll get real-time reporting down to the keyword level, and you can use these insights to inform optimizations in MNTN and across your other marketing channels.
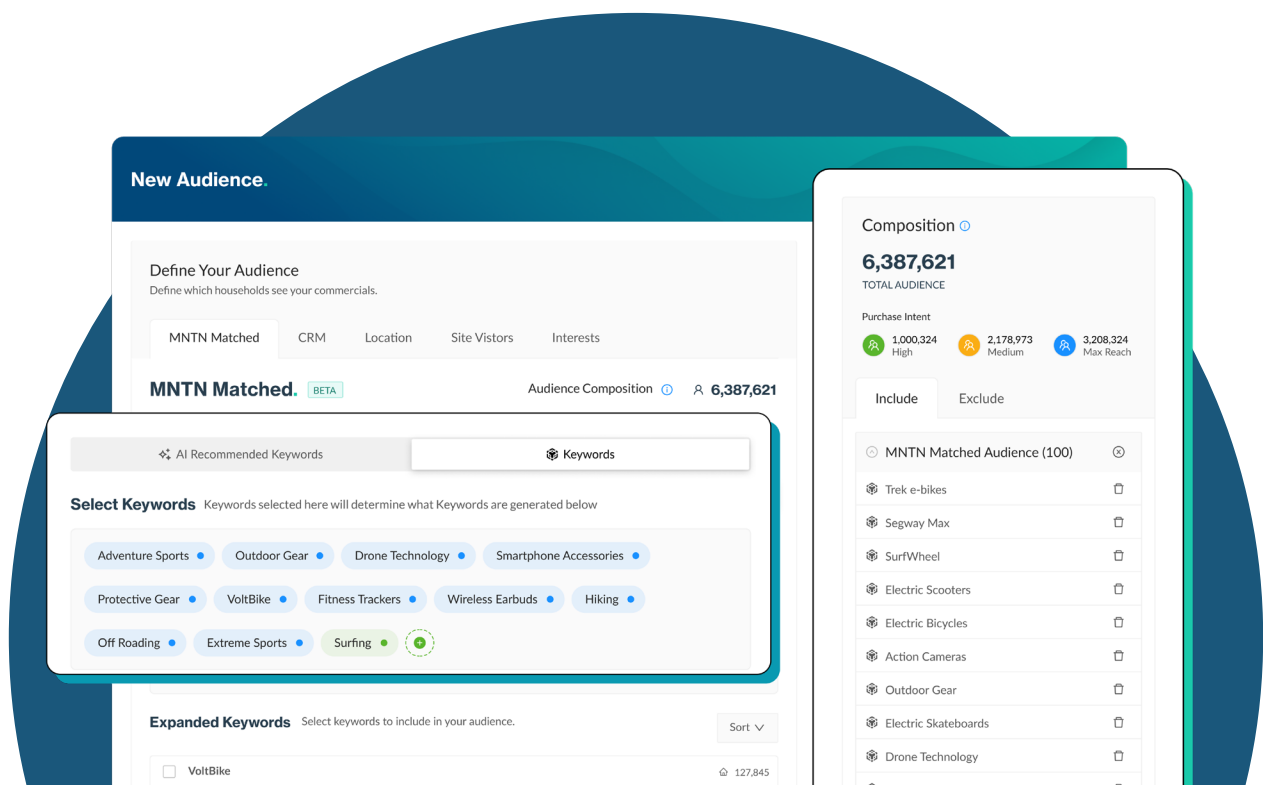
Campaign and Budget Pacing.

Now for the nuts and bolts of your campaign. Here, we'll cover setting up goals, timing, and budget pacing.

GOALS

It's not uncommon for brands to have multiple goals for their campaigns — in fact, we recommend it. Split up your goals according to your prospecting or retargeting campaigns.

Prospecting

This depends on the following:

- **Cost Per Visit (CPV),** if your focus is driving engaged new users to your website.

- **Return On Ad Spend (ROAS)/Cost Per Acquisition (CPA),** if conversions or revenue is a focus.

- **Cost Per Completed View (CPCV),** if you want to focus on reaching a larger audience and creating more brand awareness.
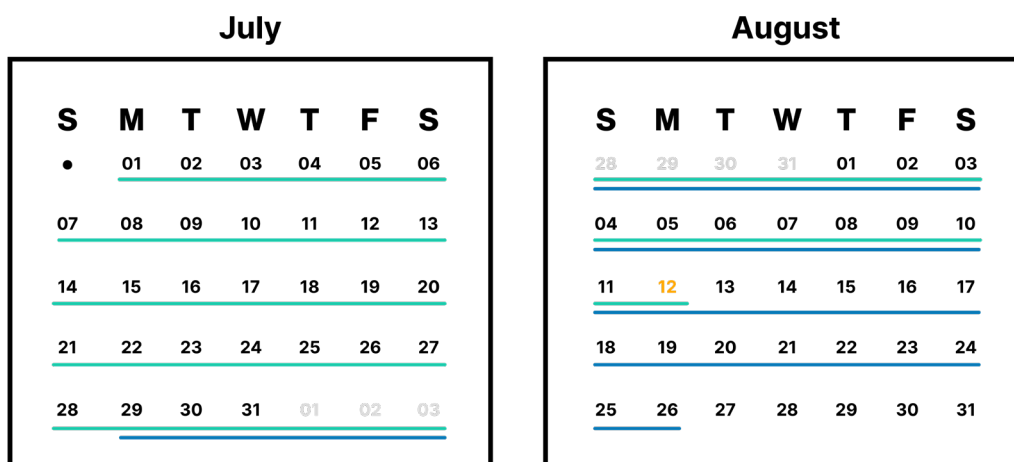
Retargeting

- ROAS or CPA

BUDGET AND TIMING

Like your goals, you'll also want to split up your budget based on your prospecting and retargeting efforts. Use the calendar below as a guide on when to time your campaigns.

Back-to-School Season

*Note: Back-to-School varies from county to county

- Set aside 60-90% of your budget for your prospecting or upper-funnel campaigns, and start them 3-6 weeks out to allow time for setup, testing, campaign optimization and to generate a large site visitor pool.

- Set aside 10%-40% of your budget for your retargeting or lower-funnel campaign efforts to re-engage your audiences. Launch these 1-2 weeks out as well as a week afterward to catch those residual shoppers.

- Don't let those insights go to waste, either. We always say the best approach is an evergreen approach, so keep your campaigns on to ensure you're capitalizing on those learnings each season — don't forget that the lucrative Q4 holiday period is right around the corner!

Creative and Messaging.

Now, the part you've been waiting for — how to fine-tune your Connected TV creative. Did you know that viewers retain 95% of a message when they watch it on video? Or that Connected TV ad completion rates continue to remain high at 98%? It's no surprise, considering two-thirds of Americans will use CTV this year, and time spent on CTV devices has nearly doubled over the last four years. Here are some creative best practices to check off for the back-to-school season (and all year round):

01 A clear call-to-action (CTA) with urgency and direction. This applies to both your voiceover and on-screen copy in your creative's end card.

02 A URL (persistent, if possible) so viewers know where they can learn more — and where to convert.

03 Consistent creative across ad channels to drive brand recall. With MNTN's Multi-Touch feature, you can easily extend your creative and messaging beyond the CTV screen to other household devices.

04 Multiple iterations of your ad creative to A/B test throughout and refresh your campaign. Test different product groups, featuring different talent in your creative, and even switch up your copy and call to action to see what resonates with your audience.

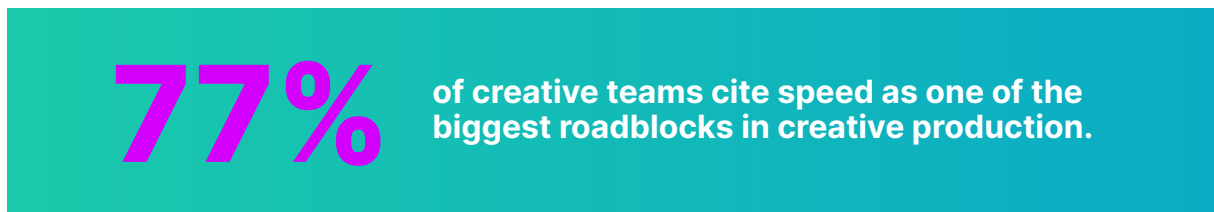prominent branding throughout ad creative

clear call-to-action and URL

NO (OR MO') CREATIVE? NO PROBLEM.

Keeping creative production consistent throughout the year is a challenge for many brands. Combine it with tightening budgets and lean teams, and you've got a perfect storm.


77% **of creative teams cite speed as one of the biggest roadblocks in creative production.**

Source: Lytho's 5 Creative Professional Statistics for 2023

MNTN's Creative-as-a-Subscription™ (CaaS) was created to meet these ongoing needs. The idea is simple: get a steady stream of fresh creative, at no additional cost beyond what you'll pay in media. You can A/B test, discover what's working, and spend more budget on driving results.

Standard TV Commercial & Media.

TV Media

Budget

Creative

Commercials Produced

CaaS.

TV Media

Budget

Commercials Produced
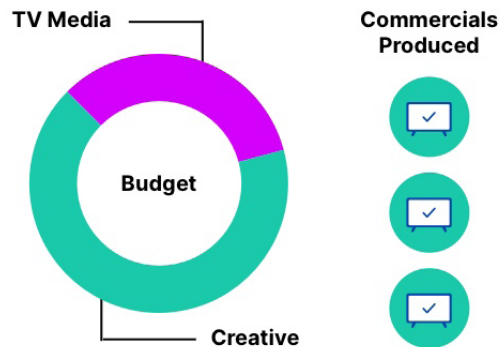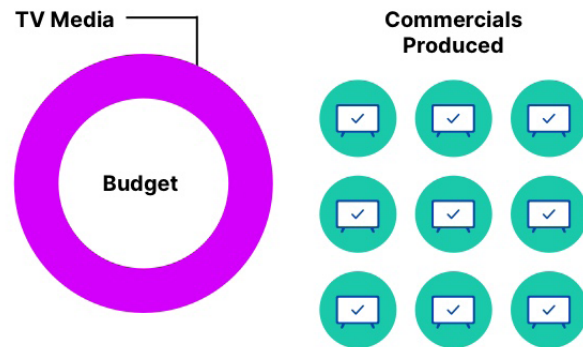
Through our partnership with QuickFrame, CaaS pairs your brand with a video maker from a diverse community of production experts to support your CTV creative end-to-end, from ideation to execution.

The end result? More performance-optimized creative that drives compounded revenue over time.

Significant Cost Savings

Creative Optimized to Drive Conversions

Faster, More Agile Video Production

Opportunities for Continuous A/B Testing

Refreshes to Avoid Creative Fatigue

Capitalize on Seasonality

Time to Ace Your CTV Campaigns.

And hit your performance goals with MNTN Performance TV.

Want to learn more?

Visit mountain.com

References:
eMarketer, Data Drop: 5 Charts on 2024 Back-to-School Shopping, May 2024
National Retail Federation, Back-to-Class Data Center