

**79%**

Of people take out **phone, tablet, or computer** when a commercial plays while watching TV

## The Silent Shift:

# Decoding Muting Habits & Caption Culture in the US and Europe

# The New Era of Video Engagement

Digital video is no longer a passive, lean-back experience. Viewing is shaped by the device in hand, the surrounding environment, and the cultural norms of each market.

For global brands, it's not just about getting in front of people anymore. It's about grabbing their attention and holding it.

This guide explores how viewing behaviors diverge across the US and Europe. In Europe, watching on mute has increasingly become the default. In the United States, captions drive engagement beyond accessibility, underscoring the need for regionally tailored video strategies.

Understanding these differences is critical. Brands that move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach can create content that resonates locally while scaling globally.

## About the Research

This data is based on a 2026 consumer survey commissioned by Equativ. The study surveyed **2200 adult respondents across the United States and major European markets** (including France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK) to understand evolving habits in device muting, caption usage, and advertising attention.



# Muting Habits:

## The Culture of Silence

Europeans are significantly more likely than Americans to keep their phones on mute, with a 13-point higher likelihood overall.

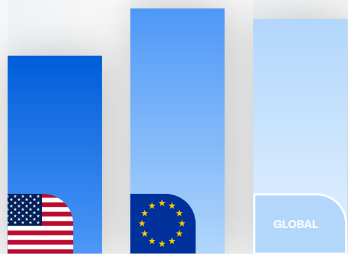
**This stronger muting behavior is especially evident in public settings**, where Europeans prioritize silencing videos more than US users. The habit continues in private spaces as well, though the gap between regions is smaller there.

74%



Of Europeans keep their phone on “silent mode” while **watching videos in public**

52% 65% 62%



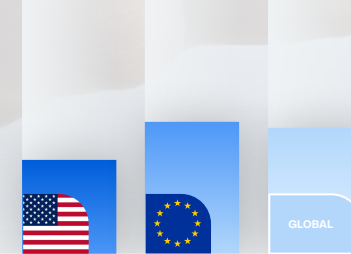
Keep phone on “silent mode”  
as a default

66% 74% 73%



Keep phone on “silent mode” while  
**watching videos in public**

24% 31% 30%



Keep phone on “silent mode” while  
**watching videos in private**

# Accessibility & Engagement: The Caption Imperative

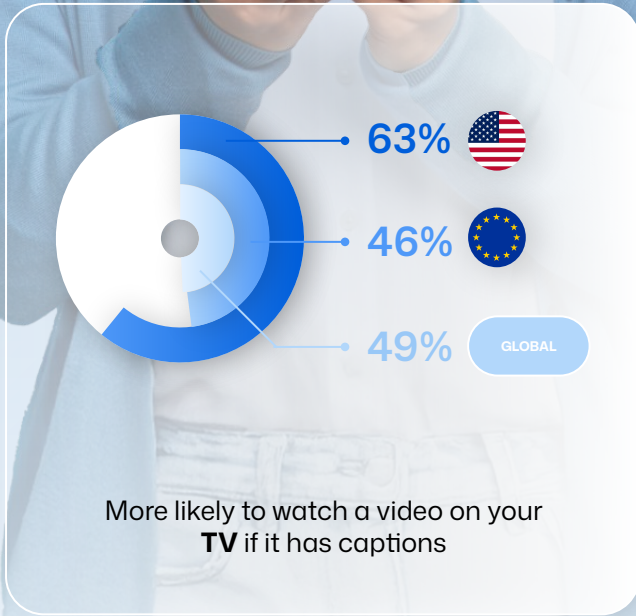
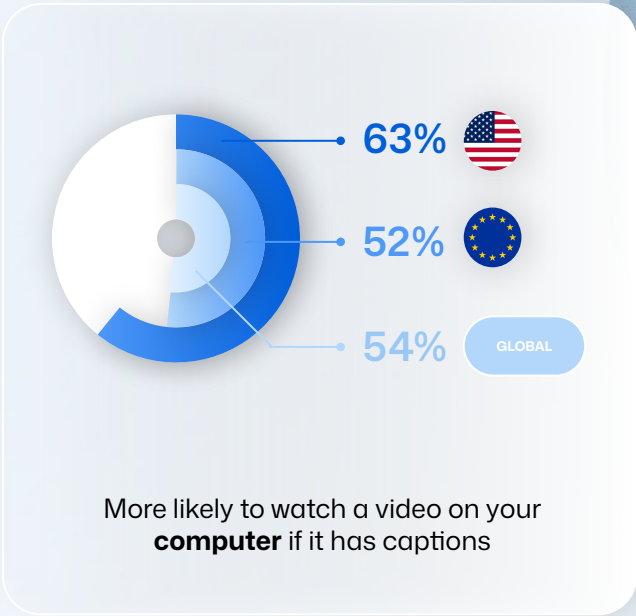
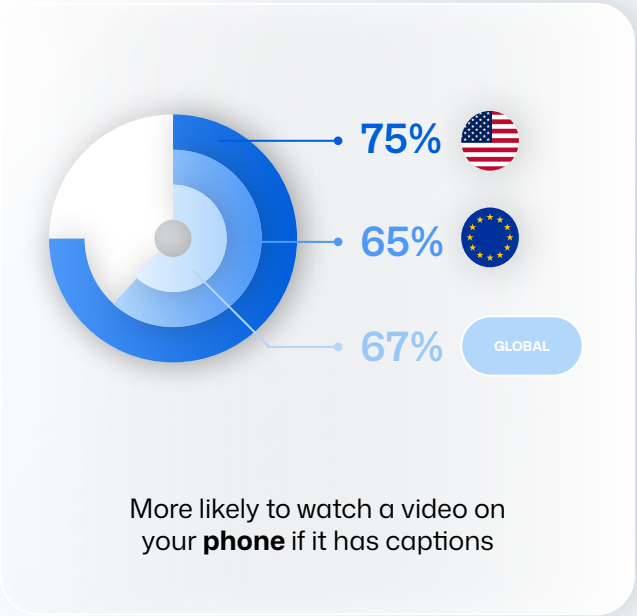
Viewers in the United States are more likely than those in Europe to engage with captions across devices, with the largest difference appearing on TV, where US audiences show a 17-point higher preference.

**This preference also extends to computer and mobile viewing.** On mobile, captions allow US audiences to engage even when audio isn't convenient.

By understanding these behaviors, brands can design video experiences that meet regional engagement habits, using captions not only as an accessibility feature but as a key driver of attention and retention.

**75%**

Of Americans are more likely to watch a video on your **phone** if it has captions



# Device Audio Habits: Controlling the Noise

Device-level audio behaviors reveal a more nuanced picture across regions.

Europeans are slightly more likely to keep their computers on silent while watching videos, reinforcing the broader pattern of higher mobile muting highlighted earlier. At the same time, Americans are significantly more likely to keep their TVs muted all the time, suggesting that audio expectations vary widely depending on both device and viewing environment.

For brands, the takeaway is clear: **video creative should be designed to communicate effectively even without sound.** Silent-first storytelling, clear visual cues, and captions ensure content remains engaging regardless of how audiences choose to watch.



31%

Of Europeans keep their **computer** on “silent mode” while a video plays



29%

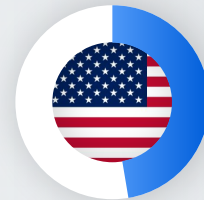


31%



31%

Keep your **computer** on “silent mode” while a video plays



46%



24%



28%

Keep your **TV** on “silent mode” all the time

# The Challenge of Attention

Viewers in the US and Europe are equally likely to turn to a second screen during ads, indicating similar levels of divided attention.

However, Europeans are slightly more inclined to skip or ignore commercials when they appear. **Overall, the challenge of maintaining attention during TV advertising is consistent across regions**, underscoring the global need for more integrated, seamless, and non-interruptive ad strategies that keep viewers engaged rather than prompting avoidance.

**79%**

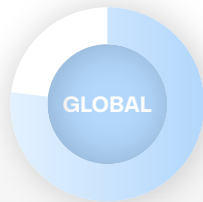
Of people take out **phone, tablet, or computer** when a commercial plays while watching TV



79%



79%



79%

Take out your **phone, tablet, or computer** when a commercial plays while watching TV



63%



67%



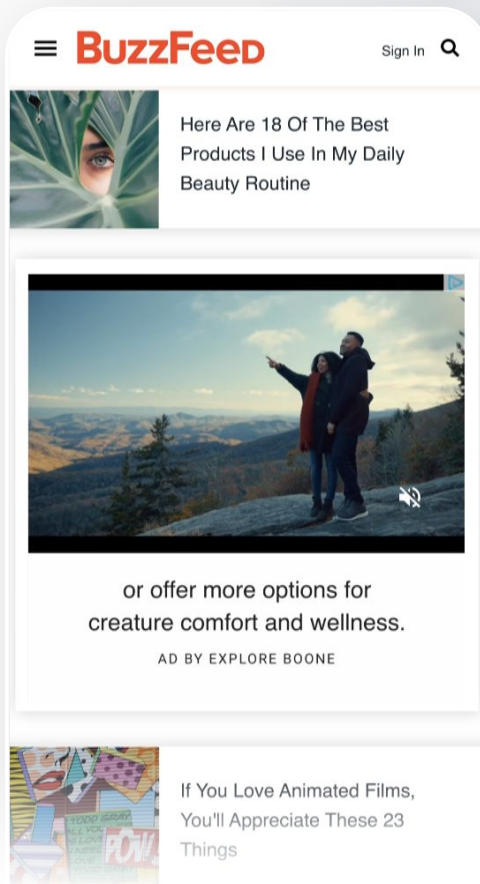
66%

**Avoid the commercials** when they play while watching TV

# Turn Silence into Engagement With Equativ's Solutions

As the data shows, a "one-size-fits-all" audio strategy is a relic of the past.

To capture attention in a world of muted devices and second screens, brands must move beyond traditional video and embrace **silent-first, engagement-heavy** creative. Equativ's suite of creative solutions empowers advertisers to bridge the gap between regional habits and campaign performance:



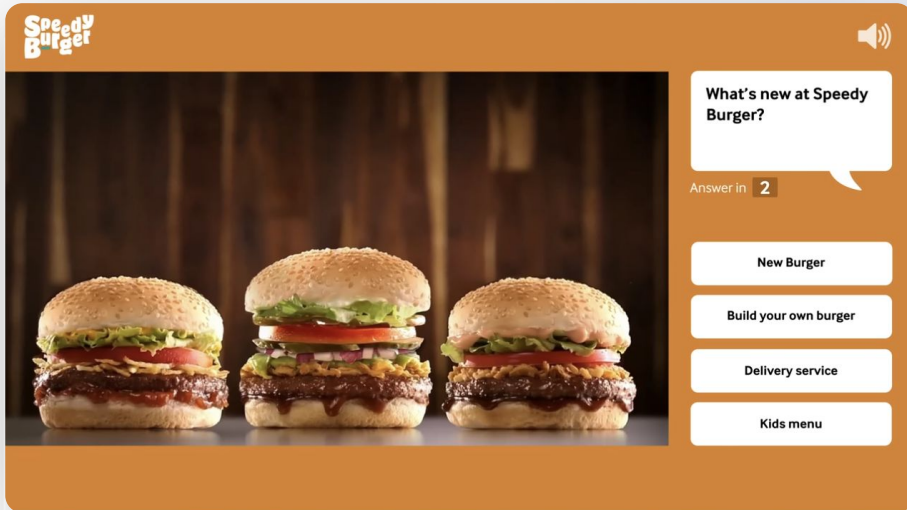
## Dynamic Captioning & Localized Overlays

Automatically integrate high-impact captions that align with the US preference for text-heavy engagement and the European necessity for silent clarity.



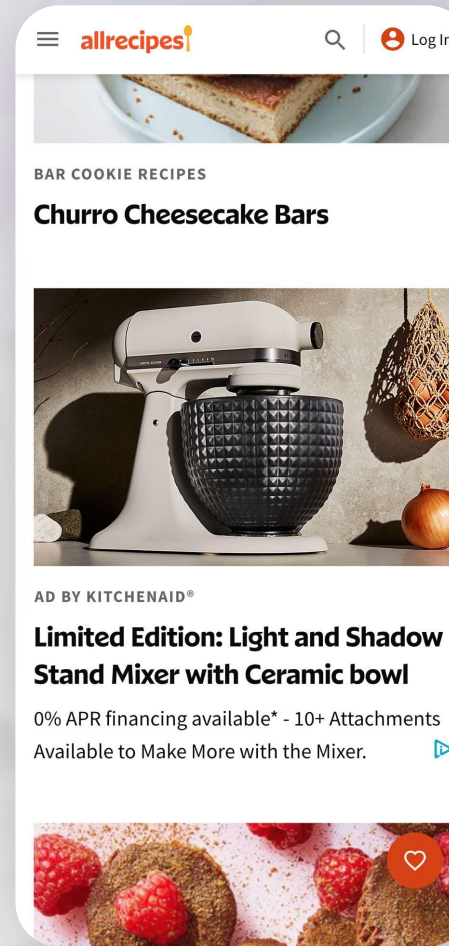
## Capturing attention is just the first step.

To drive real impact, brands must go further, using interactivity and context to turn passive viewing into active engagement.



### Creative Enhancements

Move beyond the "skip" button with interactive elements that maintain attention even when the user is multitasking on a second screen.



### Contextual Relevance

Align your message with the environment. Whether it's a silent news scroll in Paris or a captioned TV binge in New York, our platform ensures your creative feels native to the user's behavior.

## The Bottom Line?

Don't fight the silent shift, lead it. We're here to help you optimize your global video strategy. Request a demo with our team to audit your current video assets and see live examples of our creative solutions in action.

[Book a Demo →](#)

# About Equativ

Equativ is a global, end-to-end media platform empowering advertisers and publishers to achieve real outcomes by uniting premium inventory, dynamic creative formats, and engaged audiences with advanced curation and AI-powered ad tech across all channels. Purpose-built for the attention economy, Equativ delivers quality, engagement, and performance while prioritizing respectful, user-centric ad experiences. With a team of over 750 professionals across 19 countries, Equativ combines global scale with deep local expertise.

[Learn More →](#)