

THE IMPACT OF AD FAST-FORWARDING AND AD REPETITION ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS: INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF FLOW

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ABSTRACT

Viewers save time by fast-forwarding the commercials. This has completely changed the viewers' lifestyles. Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) have significantly changed the television viewing experience. Advertising managers cannot ignore the effect of DVRs on advertising. Advertisers' efforts to reach out to TV viewers face resistance because of fast-forwarding of commercials. International advertisers have started adopting unique ways to reach out to the audience in this time-shifted world. Viewers fast-forwarding through commercials has become a problem for marketers and the current study proposes a possible solution to this problem. Specifically, this research explores whether inducing flow while watching television will help to mitigate the negative advertising impact of fast-forwarded commercials.

Keywords: Time-shifted viewing, Ad fast-forwarding, Ad repetition, Flow, Purchase Intentions.

INTRODUCTION

There is a shift from linear to time-shifted viewing because of new technologies like streaming and digital video recorders over the past two decades Plunkett (2010); Molla (2017); Work (2018). Because of time-shifting, the viewers fast-forward through commercials. This harms the intended impact as viewers who fast-forward recognize 30-50% fewer brands when compared to viewers who watch commercials at a regular speed Stout & Burda (1989); Bellman et al. (2010); Taylor (2015); Rouwenhorst & Zhao (2017). Negative advertising impact causes a decline in revenues for television networks. When revenues decline, firms have less budget to invest in new creative content. When firms do not have creative content, this leads to fewer viewers and hence impacts advertising Jaffe (2005); Taylor (2015); Molla (2017). The current study focuses on finding a solution to lessen the negative advertising influence when viewers fast-forward through commercials.

It is evident that when viewers fast-forward advertising effectiveness gets reduced. Research shows that viewers can process a few aspects of the advertised message, even though they fast-forward through commercials Brasel & Gips (2008); Siefert et al. (2008); Wilbur (2008). Previous research study suggests that alertness and engagement are more for fast-forwarding viewers when compared to those of regular speed viewers. Focus on the screen is higher for fast-forwarding viewers when compared to that of regular speed viewers Siefert et al. (2008). Fast-forwarding viewers want to stop the fast-forwarding when the commercial break ends. Because of this reason, fast-forwarding viewers focus on the center of the screen. Recall of central brand cues is higher for fast-forwarding viewers. Hence, advertisers are encouraged to put brand cues at the center of the screen Brasel & Gips (2008).

Technology has increased consumers' interactive control over traditionally passive media. Time-shifting shows and skipping through commercial breaks are feasible because of digital video recorders (DVRs) Poltrack (2006) DVRs have penetrated the mainstream market. Removal of ad content is a serious concern for marketing managers. Superimposing

branded banners over fast-forwarded advertisements, adding telescoping advertisements, and placing extra advertisements at the end of recorded shows are some of the experiments DVR companies conducted Shim (2005); Reading et al. (2006); Gonsalves (2006). Some companies are of the view that fast-forward buttons during commercials should be disabled Stross (2006). Taking these drastic steps could meet consumer resistance. The effectiveness of television commercials should be enhanced by marketers when consumers fast-forward through commercials. Very little research has been done to shed light on how to increase the effectiveness of fast-forwarded commercials by inducing flow while viewers watch advertisements.

Previous research has examined how repeated advertisements and advertisements played at a normal speed influence purchase intentions. Very few studies have examined the effect of flow on the relationship between zipped, repeated advertisements and purchase intentions. This study attempts to examine the effect of flow to increase purchase intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Zipping

Zipping occurs when viewers fast-forward through commercials. Zipping removes the audio element and retains the visual component of an ad at a faster pace. Zipping can have a detrimental effect on advertising effectiveness. Complementary visual and audio information is present in many television ads. With only visual images, marketers may find it difficult to convey some messages. Prior research found that when consumers see ads with both audio and visual images, it resulted in greater ad recall than seeing the ads with visuals or sound only Unnava & Sirdeshmukh (1994).

Advertising strategists are increasingly concerned regarding the partial exposure issue. When partially exposed to the ad message, comprehension and persuasion of consumers may get decreased Zhao (1997). Lack of sound can have a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of advertising messages. Yet, when viewers fast-forward the ads, they will be able to comprehend something Stout & Burda (1989).

Research suggests that when compared to people talking or leaving the room, zipping may draw attention to the advertising content. Greene (1988). When viewers know when to stop fast-forwarding the ads, they become mentally engaged. Hence, zipping behavior can convert passive audiences into active audiences.

Ad repetition

The effects of repeated ad exposures on purchase behavior have garnered the interest of marketing researchers Burke & Srull (1988); Rethans et al. (1986). In the advertising context, repetition of an ad increased the processing opportunity, and viewers are better able to comprehend and process the advertising messages (MacInnis et al., 1991). Ad repetition strengthens the associative linkages in memory Grunert (1996). Viewers can easily retrieve ad information Rethans et al. (1986). Ad repetition positively affects product familiarity Alpert et al. (1983).

Interaction Effects of Zipping and Repetition

Very few studies have focused on the interaction effects of zipping and repetition. Zipping removes ad audio elements. Viewers pay attention to the ad to some extent. When we zip the repeated advertisement, the visual elements of the ad may act as cues and consumers try to understand ad content resulting in message elaboration. As a result, viewers

should be able to recognize and recall the ads Malaviya et al. (1996), compared with the effects of a normal speed advertisement that is played only once MacInnis et al. (1991).

Flow

Flow is the optimal psychological state consumers reach when they engage in numerous activities such as games, hobbies, writing, work, and sports Novak et al. (2000). Consumers reach flow in computer-mediated environments because of the increase in the levels of pleasure Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi (1990); Hoffman & Novak (1996). Online marketers can be successful if they make consumers experience flow Hoffman & Novak (1996).

Intensity

According to the flow theory, if consumers involve in playful and exploratory experiences, they get self-motivated. Through repetitive behavior, consumers want to experience feelings of pleasure. Consumers may shop online because of the pleasure they derive from the process. Though flow refers to a specific state, it is a continuous variable. Different levels of flow can occur. Playful and exploratory experiences may be more in some interactions. Flow can range from none to intense Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi (1992); Trevino & Webster (1992). Not all flow experiences while watching advertising will be very intense. Therefore, this study suggests that flow intensity can have a significant effect on the relationship between zipped, repeated advertisements and purchase intention.

Duration

Though flow is a continuous variable, the duration of the flow varies. Some consumers may experience flow for a longer time. Consumers' upbringing and their openness to the flow experiences are some of the factors that affect the duration of the flow Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi (1992). Research suggests that consumers may engage in different types of shopping behaviors depending upon the length of the flow. Therefore, this study suggests that flow duration can have a significant effect on the relationship between zipped, repeated advertisements and purchase intention.

RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

The following propositions were formulated:

- P1: Individuals viewing advertisements played at normal speed with greater flow intensity will exhibit greater purchase intentions than those viewing with milder flow intensity.*
- P2: Individuals viewing a repeated advertisement with greater flow intensity will exhibit greater purchase intentions than those viewing with milder flow intensity.*
- P3: Individuals viewing zipped, repeated advertisements with greater flow intensity will exhibit greater purchase intentions than those viewing with milder flow intensity.*
- P4: Individuals viewing advertisements played at normal speed with longer flow duration will exhibit greater purchase intentions than those viewing with shorter flow duration.*
- P5: Individuals viewing a repeated advertisement with a longer flow duration will exhibit greater purchase intentions than those viewing with a shorter flow duration.*
- P6: Individuals viewing zipped, repeated advertisements with longer flow duration will exhibit greater purchase intentions than those viewing with shorter flow duration.*

CONCLUSION

Time-shifted viewing is causing great harm to advertising effectiveness which affects the revenues for television networks. Marketers are interested in making the advertisements more effective so that even in the case of zipped, repeated advertisements, purchase intentions get enhanced. This research suggests that inducing flow can be one of the potential solutions to increase advertising effectiveness. If marketers can understand the nature of the flow, it will enable them to allocate resources and efficiently manage marketing capabilities. If marketing researchers can examine the effect of flow on the relationship between zipped, repeated advertisements on purchase intentions, they can increase the likelihood of purchase behavior.

Though some researchers are of the view that flow represents an optimal state, other researchers are of the view that varied types of flow influence various consumers differently. The research propositions are presented with a view of investigating whether inducing flow that is of greater intensity and longer duration can influence purchase intentions positively. Moreover, the propositions are framed to comprehend whether, in the case of zipped, repeated advertisements, viewers will be able to better understand the advertising messages and recall the ads if they are in a state of flow. Against this backdrop, future research can investigate if there will be an increase in purchase intentions, which is the ultimate goal of many firms.

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