

Advertising Exposure: A Review on Advertising Challenges in Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

Digital advertising have changed the landscape of advertising in the digital era. Yet, getting the viewers' attention to advertisement in both traditional and digital forms is a constant challenge for advertisers. There are limited studies being conducted on the notion of effect of social contact and interaction, and it is not known as to what contributes to the relationship between social interactions and internet advertisement attitudes. While there are many optimistic indicators in digital advertising, decreasing click through rates, confusion concerning suitable advertising pricing models, and uncertainty regarding whether traditional advertising metrics are appropriate for new media like the internet, are contributing to increasing skepticism regarding the value of digital advertising. Thus, the objective of this paper is to contribute to the existing knowledge in the field of advertising exposure. Accordingly, this paper followed deductive approach to review the literature in relation to exposure impact of advertising content with special reference to use of language and the photographs of expressions in advertisements. Finally, this paper concludes the future research priorities on the advertising in digital era.

Key words: Digital Advertising, Ad Exposure, Use of Words, Photographs of Expressions

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are moving away from traditional modes of advertising to digital advertising. According to the Ad Spend and Projections for 2018, global ad expenditure will grow by 3.6 percent in 2018 reaching US\$589.5 billion by the end of the year. Among the ad spend, digital ad spending is predicated to grow globally by 12.6 percent in 2018 reaching US\$220.3 billion. Further, 35.5 percent of global ad spending will take place on television, 38.3 percent on internet, and 26.2 percent is projected to be spent in newspapers and other forms (Cooper T. , 2018). As spending on internet advertising continues to rise, advertisers are looking for new avenues to increase advertising effectiveness (Wu, Lin, & Lin, 2011). According to Kahadawarachchi, Dissanayake & Maitra (2016), consumer and brand should have strong agency supported by strategic communications. In marketing communications, the role of new media in consumer decisions is clearly complex and the media planners in advertising have long recognized that different media have various strengths and weaknesses and are good for different objectives (Faber, Lee, & Nan, 2009). However, as (Batra & Ray, 1986) noted, messages gain an impact for few exposures and the further exposures begin to have a negative effect. Hence, the effectiveness of advertising remains a growing concern to organizations due to many reasons. For instance, continuously decreasing rates of click-through banner ads raise a question regarding internet advertising effectiveness (Barreto, 2013). An advertisement to be effective, the consumer must notice it, react to it, and even visit the web site associated with the ad. Usually, marketers should create enough exposure to the ad. Exposure to advertising ultimately result in generating attention to a stimuli created in the environment, that consequently affect the perception towards it. Accordingly, the repeated exposure to stimuli

creates a stronger representation to generate a perception towards the message in a favorable or unfavorable manner. However, to arouse an effect, the objects need not to be cognized very little, in fact minimally (Kawakami & Yoshida, 2015), known as mere exposure. Mere exposure to the advertisement is significant factor in getting the click-through rate (CTR) for the advertisement, as CTR directly correspond to measure the effectiveness of online advertising. Mere exposure is a necessary precondition in attempting to change attitudes through persuasive communications (Zajonc R. , 1968), despite the attempt is directed toward making the attitude more favorable or less favorable.

Nevertheless, recent studies have succeeded in establishing relations between the attention variable and other variables. Previous findings have identified that the attention paid to contents of advertisements vary page to page (Wang & Day, 2007), that this amount is directly related to the performance of mental activities (Kahneman, 1973). Little scientific knowledge has, however, been acquired on the use of the pictorial element in advertising, and the interplay between textual and visual elements within a print advertisement (Callow & Schiffman, 2004). Hence, attention varies considerably in reading a text in a web site in contrast; to a photo and video-sharing web sites, which require less mental resources (Barreto, 2013). According to (Cummins, Peltier, Schibrowsky, & Nill, 2014) over the past 20 years, the intersection of consumer behavior and interactive marketing has received a steady stream of conceptual and empirical attention.

Purpose of the Study

The increasing use of the words and pictorial element in advertising highlights the importance of visual communication in global and domestic marketing, yet academic inquiry into this area is at present limited (Callow & Schiffman, 2004) (Schmid & Kotulla, 2012). Hence, this study primarily focuses on providing an explanation of textual and pictorial elements in internet ads that enhances the exposure impact. Accordingly, the purpose of this study will be to analyze the impact of textual and pictorial elements in creating mere exposure effect in internet advertising. Particularly on internet advertising, (Chatterjee, Hoffman, & Novak, 2003) in their studies have identified that despite the positive indicators, declining click through rates, confusion concerning appropriate advertising pricing models, and uncertainty regarding whether traditional advertising metrics are appropriate for new media like the internet, are contributing to increasing skepticism on the value of advertising in this digital medium.

Methodology

This study adopted the deductive approach in writing this paper, in which the evidences are mainly supported by existing researches empirical evidences. Hence, the author reviewed journal articles and industry publications to review the concepts and applications pertained to mere exposure impact on advertising. The articles were selected from reputed journals on the selected topic. The author highlights the practical cases related to the subject area based on recent Sri Lankan cases.

THEORETICAL REVIEW ON MERE EXPOSURE IMPACT

Early studies on the impact of exposure based on the mere exposure theory. Mere exposure means a condition, which just makes the given stimulus accessible to the individual's perception (Zajonc, 1968). The heart of the mere exposure theory is that repeated exposure of an individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude towards that stimulus (Bornstein & D'Agostino, 1992). Accordingly, mere exposure effect has a contrasting view to law of enhancement by association. However, in the advertising industry, it is not just clear what evidence supports this principle. If the attitudes are enhanced by mere exposure or mere contact with the stimulus object is negligible (Zajonc, 1968).

Experimental studies conducted by Zajonc in (1968), supported this hypothesis, that mere repeated exposure of an individual to a stimulus object enhances his attitude towards it. Several other researchers also found similar evidences in predicting the behavior towards the message received across diverse disciplines and situations. As such, studies conducted on advertising influencers on Instagram (Casaló, Flavián, & Sergio, 2018), advertising effects, (Sergio, 2017), attitude survey Kemp et.al. (2013), pre-attentive exposure (Janiszewski, 2012), emotions in advertising (Sawyer, 1981), social perceptions and behaviors (Saegert, Swap, & Zajonc, 1970), stereotypes and prejudice (Ball & Cantor, 1974), food preferences (Pliner, 1982), environmental preferences (Herzog, Kaplan, & Kaplan, 1976), aesthetic judgments (Berlyne, 1975), implicit memory (Zajonc, Markus, & Wilson, 1974) and attitude formation (Grush, 1975) are prominent in the literature.

Exposure studies have been conducted to assess the familiarity in use of words, photographs of expressions, drawings, polygons, non-sense words. Accordingly, both co-relational and experimental studies have established a strong link to exist between word familiarity and the evaluation given to that word or to the referent (Harrison, 1969). Similarly, the exposure impact has been studied in other fields by several other researchers. Mainly, (Harrison, 1969) conducted studies of 'Propinquity and Friendship' using mere exposure hypothesis, and found that people who are physically close to each other, and hence are apt to come into repeated contact, often, become friends. Thirdly, studies bearing on the mere exposure hypothesis have dealt with people's reactions to musical selections, artworks and other aesthetic stimuli, and have often suggested that low frequency or intermediate frequency stimuli are the best liked (Harrison, 1969). Supportively, the above evidence has demonstrated that exposure increases favorability ratings under wide a range of conditions.

However, contrary to the previous notion, (Mandler, Nakamura, & Van Zandt, 1987) in their research found that, contexts that provide impoverished exposures or limited processing resources could make it difficult for people to recognize a previously presented stimulus. Yet, these exposures are sufficient to generate a feeling of familiarity that is later interpreted as a preference for the stimulus. Studies conducted by (Benway, 1998) also suggested that internet users defend themselves from this kind of unsolicited advertising through a kind of self-induced blindness, referred to as "banner blindness". Supportively, they found out that, even previously most noticeable, colorful and vibrant banner advertisements may be ignored due to banner blindness. Hence, there are contradictory evidence to the previously discussed theory with the recent findings.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW ON EXPOSURE TO ADVERTISING

Exposure impact should be used to enhance the attention to stimuli to create a positive impact. In studies conducted by (Ahluwalia, 2002) the familiarity of the brand were studied based on written positive and negative information. Brand promotions supported by celebrities provide significant exposure to generate positive brand evaluation and brand relationship (Dissanayake & Weerasiri, 2017). Accordingly, they found that negative information were supportive towards a negative impact, when the brand was unfamiliar. The opposite reaction was true, to a familiar brand. Hence, they argued that brand familiarity reduces the perception of the greater analysis of negative information. Additionally, under these circumstances, positive information may be perceived to be more valuable than negative information when, used objectively.

Increasingly, consumers use internet to look for information and share the information with other social communities (Schultz & Peltier, 2013). Hence, knowing how the word of mouth

communication occur with the technology, affect and is affected by, cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral consumer tendencies is thus key for forming and nurturing strong customer relationships (El-Gohary, 2010); (Kim & Song, 2010). Growth of internet based communication studies started in early 1990s, (Mehta & Sivadas, 1995) and online advertising (Schlosser & Shavitt, 1999). Based on these studies, the recent studies have focused their attention towards the consumer's attitudes and the impact of advertising expense. Accordingly, (Wu S. I., 2006) studied the impact of attitude towards online advertisement to measure the purchase intention towards a brand as a performance indicator. Online brand activations are also significant to create positive consumer behavioral responses, but further researches are much needed to configure their long-term effects (Dissanayake & Gunawardane, 2018). Several other researches also carried out studies on Web site to attitude toward the brand (Ruiz & Reynolds, 2006) of Web site interactivity on attitudes and persuasion (Sundar & Kim, 2011) and enhanced attitude toward the viewed advertisement (Tung, Moore, & Engelland, 2006). Attitudes toward specific online product categories and attitudinal differences and determinants among consumers who switch from a brick and mortar to an online channel (Friedman & Gould, 2007). Some studies conducted on advertising exposure had looked at design features of web sites on consumer attitudes. Among them, (Cheng, Blankson, Wang, & Chen, 2001) explore valence toward four types of digital advertising. Accordingly, he found that consumers are most irritated by e-mail and SMS advertisements, while they were least upset when viewing online and MMS advertisements. In another research on attitudes conducted by (Akar & Topçu, 2011) they found, consumer attitudes towards social media marketing is increasingly attractive but unclear. The impact on consumer attitudes of Web site personalization (Vlasic & Kesic, 2007) and Web site congruity with retailer's brick and mortar stores (Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012) are explored. Finally, a recent study sheds light on precursors to consumer attitudes toward self-service technologies, and may inform e-commerce planners when implementing self-service Web site features (Liu et al., 2012).

Experimental research conducted by (Benway, 1998) to explore the behavior of banner blindness. In the experiment, they directed the participants to find information on a specific web page. They designed two experiments to identify the behavior. In the first experiment, the information they were seeking were found to be found by selecting a banner, while in the second experiment, the answer was inside a box that was shaped like a banner. Evidence in the experiment showed that the respondents were unable to find the information because, they omitted the information included in the banner due to banner blindness. Hence, they argued based on the evidence that banner blindness may occur with text heavy advertisements. A similar, yet large-scale experiment was conducted by Xavier Dre`ze and Francois-Xavier Hussherr in 2003 internet users' recall, recognition and awareness of banner advertising. The survey included 49 respondents, and they found that the respondents watched less than 50 percent of the advertisements that have been displayed. Further, it was either because the advertisement that was located outside a focal area of attention or are based on the expected location of the ad. Internet users know the traditional dimensions of a web ad, hence, it allows users to recognize an advertisement, even if they do not see it directly and, therefore, avoid it if that is the intention.

In contrast, different findings also have been evident with (Bachofer, 1998) high recognition rates of the presence of banners. He conducted an experiment using eye-tracking device with 71 respondents and found a high recognition of banner ads in an online magazine advertisement. Bayles found similar results in (2000), where he obtained 74 percent recognition and remembrance for banner ads in his experiment. Another recent study conducted by Hervert et al. (2011), found 82 percent of the participants fixated on at least one

of the four banners while visiting the web pages. Furthermore, studies indicate that people notice ads, but dislike them; thus, site credibility suffers (Fogg, et al., 2001).

CASE REVIEW ON USE OF WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF EXPRESSIONS.

A number of studies has shown a positive relation to exist between word frequency, word value, and visual duration thresholds (Johnson, Thomson, & Frincke, 1960). The main empirical support for the positive words exposure hypothesis comes from the research conducted by Zajonc in his word frequencies studies Zajonc (1968). His studies were based on the systematic research conducted by Johnson, Thomson, and Frincke, (1960) showing a positive relationship with "positive" meaning words leading to a higher frequency counts than vice versa. The research conducted by (Campbell & Keller, 2003) identified that people tend to attempt to learn about and evaluate novel stimuli. In an attempt to examine the generality of this phenomenon, Zajonc (1968) studied the evaluations of 154 antonym pairs and the results were that, on half of the items, the agreement exceeded 95%. In addition, in an overwhelming majority of the items, the preferred word is also the more frequent one and only 28 of the 154 antonym pairs (18%) show a negative relationship between frequency and desirability Zajonc (1968). There were only six reversals. Towards the end of the list, the frequencies of the two antonyms often were nearly the same Zajonc (1968). Studies conducted by Zajonc (1968) were based on Thorndike-Lorge count (1944), in which, the word "happiness" occurred 761 times, "unhappiness" occurred only 49 times. "Beauty" was found at least 41 times as often as "ugliness", and "wealth" outdid "poverty" by a factor of 1.6. We "laugh" 2.4 times as often as we "cry"; we "love" almost 7 times more often than we "hate"; we are "in" at least 5 times more often than we are "out"; "up" twice as often as we are "down"; much more often "successful" than "unsuccessful"; and we "find" things 4.5 times more often than we "lose" them - all because most of us are "lucky" (220) rather than "unlucky" (17) Zajonc (1968).

There is also evidence from word association studies showing that word counts do reflect general verbal habits of the population Zajonc (1968). Palermo and Jenkins (1964) studied the association of norms to 200 words collected from a sample of 4,500 schoolchildren and college students in Minneapolis, and, the results were similar. Study of facial expressions is not a relatively new phenomenon. Research on this begins with Charles Darwin's (1872/1998) 'The Expression of the emotions in Man and Animals' His experiments on the expressions of emotions revealed that, the evidence for universality is expressed through-out the world with remarkable uniformity (Harrison, 1969). However, this notion of universality later has been argued by several researchers (Ekman, 1999).

Research done by (Ekman & Friesen, 1971) considered the contradictory viewpoint within a framework, which distinguished between those elements of facial behavior that are universal and those that are culture specific. Based on later studies, they hypothesized that "universals are to be found in the relationship between distinctive patterns of facial muscles and particular emotions (happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, disgust, interest). Further, they added that, cultural differences would be seen in some of the stimuli, which through learning become established as elicitors of particular emotions, in the rules of controlling facial behavior in particular social settings, and in many of the consequences of emotional arousal".

Studies conducted by (Russell, 1994) discovered that, "by far, the most extensive body of data in the field of human emotions is on facial expressions of emotion". Prolonged and at times heated controversy has failed to demonstrate whether facial behaviors associated with emotion are universal for man or specific to each culture Ekman & Friesen (1971). Recent reviews of those data agree that the face reveals emotion in a way that is universally

understood: Happiness, surprise, fear, anger, contempt, disgust, and sadness—these seven emotions, plus or minus two, are recognized from facial expressions by all human beings, regardless of their cultural background (Russell, 1994).

Studies conducted by Tabibnia, Lieberman, & Craske (2008) have discovered that verbalization of feelings can help reduce distress is not new in psychology. Several empirical studies conducted by Hemenover (2003) Pennebaker (1997) have demonstrated that verbal disclosure of a traumatic experience can improve physical and psychological wellbeing in the long-term. Studies conducted by (Kensinger & Schacter, 2006) stated that, one widely accepted framework used to classify these diverse emotional experiences describes emotion in two orthogonal dimensions: Valence is a continuum specifying how negative or positive an event is, whereas arousal refers to the intensity of an event, ranging from very calming to highly exciting or agitating. The current research has suggested that Irwin et al (1996), Morris et al (1996), Phillips et al (1997), Whalen et al (1998), and Whalen et al (2001) as cited in Kensinger & Schacter (2006) concluded that the amygdala often responds preferentially to fear-evoking stimuli, in comparison with stimuli evoking other types of emotions (e.g., happiness, disgust, or anger) and patients with damage to the amygdala often are proportionately impaired at recognizing or expressing fear.

Studies conducted by Zajonc (1980) have revealed that, affect is considered by most contemporary theories to be post-cognitive, that is, to occur only after considerable cognitive operations have been accomplished. Further, he added that, an affective re-action such as liking, disliking, preference, evaluation, or the experience of pleasure or dis-pleasure, is based on a prior cognitive process in which variety of content discriminations are made and features are identified, examined for their value, and weighted for their contributions.” (Zajonc, 1980). However, to arouse affect, objects need to be cognised very little, in fact, minimally. (Zajonc, 1980). Affect dominates social interaction, and that it is the major currency in which social intercourse is transacted, and it is transmitted not only by verbal channels but also by non-verbal clues as well (Zajonc, 1980). Further he argues that 1) Affect is primary 2) Affective reactions are inescapable 3) Affective judgment tend to be irrevocable 4) Affective judgment implicates the self. 5) Affective reactions are difficult to verbalise. 6) Affective reactions need to depend on cognition and 7) Affective reactions may become separated from content.

Based on studies on feelings and thought patterns, several researchers have identified the following as measures of affect. Hyde and Jenkins (1969) carried out an experiment in which subjects were tested for recall of word lists to which they were exposed under different conditions. Their results were very strong. Another group of similar studies used recognition memory, rather than recall, and they suggest strong participation of affect in information processing. In another study, Keenan & Bailett (1979) used similar methods and administered recognition memory tests, and reported results that have an important bearing on the form of information processing that may emerge when affect is involved. (Martín-Santana & Beerli-Palacio, 2012) State that effective communication on the internet is becoming increasingly difficult for advertisers as advertising clutter on the internet has increased, and consumers generally focus on web page content as opposed to banners.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The sample type and the sample size inhibit the generalization of the findings to other populations in many of previous research conducted as stated above. For further validation of the findings, it is necessary to include a larger sample. Social advertisements (ads that are targeted based on underlying social networks) on Facebook would be interesting to analyze the effectiveness of the type of ads on users' attention using eye-tracking technology, and

compare the results with posted recommendations. The new digital media marketing promotions and their impacts on brands and consumer enegamnets had been referred as a research priority (Siriwardane & Dissanayake, 2018). Further, use a survey to assess and compare the disrepute levels between banner ads and friends' recommendations. According to the previously mentioned theoretical explanations, during navigation without concrete objectives, it is expected that ads' features (graphic and/or content) will attract the participants' attention. Thus, an appealing ad (about verbal and/or visual communication) is expected to attract users' attention. However, these research findings revealed that the success or failure of an advertisement is not merely due to its characteristics, at least in the social network site context. In conclusion, further analysis of visual attention measures is suggested, namely the duration of attention and rapid eye movement, inter and intra elements supported by eye-tracking technology.

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