

Placing ads: Location, location, location

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Marketers have always known they must carefully choose where they place their ads, but a new study in *Journal of Consumer Research* shows that even the nearby content in a publication—its difficulty and design—affect consumers' perception and acceptance of the ad message. They also found that the ad's relationship to the editorial material affected consumer acceptance.

After a series of experiments, researchers Hao Shen (Chinese University of Hong Kong) Yuwei Jiang (Hong Kong Polytechnic University) and Rashmi Adaval (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) found "the thematic relationship between the magazine article and the [advertising](#) is critical in diagnosing which type of effect is likely to occur." For example, when the content of the ad is related to the article, [negative feelings](#) elicited by difficult-to-read articles spill over to the advertisement and the advertised product. "However, if the advertisement is unrelated to the article, placing it after a difficult-to-read article leads to more favorable evaluations of the advertisement and the product," the authors write.

In one study, participants were asked about their reactions to movie reviews of films shown at a film festival in both difficult and easy-to-read fonts. Participants were presented with an easy-to-read advertisement for a watch. However, in one condition the relationship between the movie and the watch was made explicit (i.e. the watch was listed as a sponsor of the film festival). In the other, the relationship was not mentioned. The researchers found that "as the difficulty of reading the movie review increased, participants found it easier to process the

advertisement and evaluated the watch more favorably. However, when the watch was listed as a sponsor of the film festival, the negative feelings elicited by the difficult-to-read movie review apparently spilled over to the watch. That is, as difficulty in reading the movie review increased, evaluations of the watch became more negative."

"Our findings suggest that if the magazine content is likely to be difficult to read or understand, it might be better to show advertisements that are easy to read and for unrelated products on adjacent or following pages," the authors write. When possible, marketers may want to pay attention to whether the articles are easy or difficult to read when they place their advertisements in magazines.

More information: Hao Shen, Yuwei Jiang, and Rashmi Adaval.

"Contrast and Assimilation Effects of Processing Fluency." [Journal of Consumer Research](#): February 2010 (published online August 20, 2009).

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