

Abandoning websites: Are annoying ads good for business?

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Most consumers have experienced online ads so garish, loud, or aggravating that they can't possibly be ignored. But a new study in the *Journal of Marketing Research* suggests that this way of forcing customer's attention may actually be bad for business.

"Annoying ads are interesting because they both make and cost money for publishers. They make money because advertisers pay publishers to run ads. They cost money when annoyed users abandon a site, leaving the publisher with less [advertising revenue](#)," write authors Daniel G. Goldstein, Siddharth Suri and Fernando Diaz (Microsoft Research), R. Preston McAfee (Microsoft), and Matthew Ekstrand-Abueg (Northeastern University).

Study participants were asked to perform online tasks, some of which exposed participants to web pages with annoying advertisements. An ad's "annoyingness" was determined by factors such as whether it had too much animation, was poorly designed, or had been placed by a company having a questionable reputation.

The study found that even though it would have meant more pay, participants were far less willing to remain on a web page if it contained an annoying advertisement. Participants also did not remember the content very well on pages that contained annoying advertisements.

The authors conclude that any short-term revenue brought in by annoying advertisements is likely outweighed by the negative long-term

effects.

"The practice of running annoying ads can cost more money than it earns, as people are more likely to abandon sites on which they are present. In addition, in the presence of annoying ads, people were less accurate in remembering what they had read. None of these effects on users is desirable from the publisher's perspective."

More information: Daniel G. Goldstein, Siddharth Suri, R. Preston McAfee, Matthew Ekstrand-Abueg, and Fernando Diaz. "The Economic and Cognitive Costs of Annoying Display Advertisements." Forthcoming in the *Journal of Marketing Research*.

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