

Ads communicate message in as little as tenth of a second, helped by color

December 10 2014

Ads can communicate their main message in as little as a tenth of a second, helped by color, according to a new study published in *Marketing Science*, a publication of the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS).

The Buffer Effect: The Role of Color When Advertising Exposures Are Brief and Blurred is by Michel Wedel, PepsiCo Chaired Professor of Marketing at the Robert H. Smith School of Business of the University of Maryland and Rik Pieters, Professor of Marketing at the Tilburg School of Economics and Management of the University of Tilburg (Netherlands).

The study reveals for the first time that despite [ads'](#) brief and blurred exposure to [consumers](#), some ads still strongly communicate their main message.

Because of increasing advertising clutter and decreasing consumer attention, consumers glance at a majority of ads only very briefly, for less than a second. This fleeting attention holds not only for magazine ads and TV commercials but also for billboards and online ads. Not only are these common exposures very brief, but because they occur at a distance or in the periphery of vision, people don't see much detail. Most advertising gets at best a very brief and blurred glimpse.

It has long been thought that these brief and blurred exposures render ads ineffective. However, says Wedel, "If well designed, ads can still

communicate their main message and cut through the clutter."

While advertisers are often recognized and rewarded for producing unique, surprising and atypical ads, these ads do not communicate their meaning very well when exposures are brief and blurred. Under these conditions, ads that are typical for the category or brand do very well. Such ads have a central diagnostic object, such as a car in a car ad or a female face in a personal care ad.

Pieters comments, "These diagnostic objects help consumers rapidly get the gist of these ads."

Further, when exposure is blurred and lacks visual detail, the color of the central object in these ads is particularly important, in contrast to the traditional color strategy of advertisers. Some advertisers use the color of the brand logo for the background of their ads to "infuse" the whole ad with its color. This strategy did not pay off under brief and blurred ad exposures.

The experiment in the study features a perceptual decision task in which ads are flashed for 100 milliseconds and participants are asked to identify the ad, its category, and the brand advertised. The study uses a Bayesian statistical model, a tool used in [operations research](#) and analytics, to demonstrate these effects. Advertising agencies can use the method to investigate how diagnostic the [color](#) scheme of a specific ad is.

"Clearly, rapid perception or 'ad cut through' should be considered as a communication goal in advertising strategy," Pieters says.

And Wedel adds: "Our study shows how in the face of increasingly brief exposures to ads, advertisers can capitalize on the impressive ability of consumers to grasp their gist in one tenth of a second or less."

Provided by Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

Citation: Ads communicate message in as little as tenth of a second, helped by color (2014, December 10) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-12-ads-message-tenth.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.