

TVs and second screens a bad combination for advertisers

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If you're watching television while using a second screen - like a smartphone or tablet - new research suggests that some of the most expensive marketing messages aimed at you are missing their mark.

While the trend of "second screen" use has become pervasive, this is the first study to show that viewers have trouble recalling brands they see (or hear) on TV if they're using such devices.

"Viewers don't even remember that your brand was there on TV because they were busy posting on Facebook or Twitter or reading email," said Jonathan Jensen, who led the study as a doctoral student in sport management in the Department of Human Sciences at The Ohio State University.

"This should provide a measure of pause to brand marketers who are spending a lot of money to get their products integrated into live sporting events and other TV shows."

The study was recently published in the *Journal of Consumer Marketing*.

The problem posed by second screens is a big one for brands. A new report by the firm Accenture found that 87 percent of consumers use a second screen while watching TV.

This new research examined whether viewers could recognize and recall brand names that announcers mentioned during a college football game

[broadcast](#). This wasn't about advertisements - it was about "brand integration," or the promotion of products during the actual broadcast, achieved via sponsorships of events. For example, in this study, the Allstate logo was featured on nets behind the goal posts when field goals were kicked. Allstate was also mentioned as a sponsor by the announcers during the game.

"With DVR penetration approaching 50 percent of households, there's no guarantee anymore that people are watching commercials. But marketers thought that if they could get their brands mentioned and shown during the broadcast they would have a foolproof way to reach consumers," Jensen said.

"But now with so many people using second screens, even brand integration is not foolproof."

The study involved two related experiments. In both, young participants (average age of about 20) watched a six-minute segment consisting of clips from two real college football games broadcast on ESPN. The clip included promotion of three brands - Allstate, Capital One and Russell Athletic. The participants in the study were not told beforehand that the study was marketing related or that they would have to recall brands seen or heard during the broadcast.

The first experiment included 98 people aged 18 to 24. The participants were exposed to the [college football](#) broadcast in one of three ways. Some had a traditional viewing experience, in which they experienced both the audio and the visual of the broadcast. The visual-only group had no audio, such as a fan might experience watching on a computer at the office or on a public television in a loud bar. The audio-only group didn't see the visual, approximating a distracted viewing experience, such as listening to the broadcast while reading or writing on another device.

When asked after the six-minute broadcast whether they could recognize and recall any of the brands present in the clip, those who had the full audiovisual experience did best. The audio-only and visual-only groups did significantly worse, remembering fewer than two brands.

Consistent with a cognitive theory called "dual coding," these results confirmed that people process and remember information better if they receive it both through audio and visual channels, Jensen said. This is a key when people may be using two different screens at one time.

"If consumers aren't taking in information using both the audio and visual subsystems at the same time, they're not going to process and retain the information as effectively," he said.

The second experiment included 189 people between the ages of 18 and 24 who participated in the same setup as the first experiment - except that half the people in each condition were using a second screen. These second-screen participants were asked to send at least four texts during the six-minute broadcast using their own mobile phone and reporting on elements in the clip that they found "relevant to them."

The results were striking, especially for those who watched a traditional broadcast with both audio and visual. In that case, those who were not engaged with a second screen were able to recall an average of 2.43 of the three brands without any hints - but those who had the second screen could recall only 1.62 brands.

The performance of those using a second screen with a full audiovisual broadcast wasn't much better than people who consumed only the audio or visual portions of the broadcast while using a second screen (recalling 1.35 of the brands).

Participants who used a second screen were still able to recognize the

brands they had seen and heard (after seeing a list to choose from) at the same level as those who did not use a second screen. This result indicates that they did have the ability to multitask, and were not simply distracted by use of the second screens.

"Given that they were able to recognize but not recall the brands, we believe that using the second screen is short-circuiting the process that would allow them to recall the [brand names](#) from memory," Jensen said. "They can recognize them when they see them, but they can't pull them straight from memory."

Jensen noted that the participants had to watch only a relatively short six-minute clip.

"They had just watched the clip and saw the brands mentioned literally minutes ago. But if they were on their phones, their recall of the brands was impaired," he said.

While this study looked at a sports broadcast, Jensen said the results should be similar in any live broadcast, such as television award shows or talent competitions. It may also be relevant to brand placements in scripted shows as well, although more study would be needed to confirm that.

"Distracted viewing is a real problem if you're in the [brand](#) marketing business," he said.

Provided by The Ohio State University

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