

See a Honda, buy a Mountain Dew? What happens when consumers fast-forward through commercials?

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Consumers are bombarded with advertising throughout the course of any given day, often to the point where they rarely devote any conscious attention to processing the brand information. According to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, this is not necessarily bad news for companies.

"Our research suggests that minimal processing of brand information may not necessarily be a bad thing for either consumers or firms, especially when multiple brands with different personalities are seen together," write authors Linyun W. Yang (University of North Carolina), Keisha M. Cutright (Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania), Tanya L. Chartrand, and Gavan J. Fitzsimons (both Duke University).

"We find that when a focal brand is seen with a brand that has a dissimilar personality, it will seem more distinctive than if it is seen with a brand that has a similar personality."

In one study, consumers watched a video clip of a television series that was interrupted by two commercials both played at faster than normal speed. They viewed a commercial for Mountain Dew preceded either by an ad for Hummer or by an ad for a Honda Pilot. Interestingly, while Mountain Dew is more associated with the rugged brand of Hummer, consumers who saw that ad paired with the relatively dissimilar brand of Honda were more willing to buy Mountain Dew. However, this was only the case when consumers viewed the commercials at the faster than

normal speed. When consumers viewed the commercials at regular speed, there were no differences in preferences for Mountain Dew.

Across other studies the researchers were able to show that the "dissimilarity advantage" is driven by perceptions of uniqueness and distinctiveness related to being exposed to a brand that has a different personality from the others in the environment. The authors' research has implications for a wide variety of situations in which brands are intentionally or unintentionally paired with others and also on how they can better reach [consumers](#) viewing advertisements with DVR technology.

"Our findings suggest that the [brand](#) personalities many companies have so painstakingly cultivated may be influenced in ways that are difficult to control," the authors conclude.

More information: Linyun W. Yang, Keisha M. Cutright, Tanya L. Chartrand, and Gavan J. Fitzsimons. "Distinctively Different: Exposure to Multiple Brands in Low-Elaboration Settings." *Journal of Consumer Research*: February 2014.

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