

HOW ANNOYING ARE DIGITAL MUSIC ADVERTISING? USERS' REACTIONS TOWARD PERCEIVED INTRUSIVENESS OF ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract— Digital music is a fast-growing industry comprised of music streaming, music identification, and video hosting services. Music streaming especially has taken off over the last couple of years, even more so in recent months. Marketers have noticed the trend and start to place advertisements on major players such as Spotify. However, certain potentially negative effect of these advertisements may be underestimated. This study focuses on the effect of perceived advertisement intrusiveness and conducts an experiment to determine the effects of ad length, ad-context congruity, and repeated exposure on perceived intrusiveness of music advertisements and ad recall. Furthermore, we discuss the impact of intrusiveness toward host website and advertisement attitudes, which leads to brand attitude. The managerial implications of this study provide advice on how managers can place advertisements on music streaming to achieve optimal marketing outcomes.

Keywords— Ad intrusiveness, ad length, price discount, disposition to trust, impulsive traits, purchase intention.

I. INTRODUCTION

For the past several decades, television advertising has played an important role in transmitting brand information to customers. However, with the rapid development of

digital technology, people can learn and share the flow of diversified information through Internet. It led marketers to seek new advertising formats to effectively deliver their messages. In 2013, video advertising revenues are growing up 19 percent [16]. Although marketers get benefit by posting advertisements on online video, video ad view growth had decreased year-over-year from 2011 to 2014 [11; 12]. The research brings a warning which tells marketers and advertisers that online video advertising can't be effectively exposed to the audience as it used to be.

Music has been at the forefront of the digital revolution, leading the way for other creative industries and defining the future of digital entertainment. For the past several years, People take intellectual property more seriously because litigation has been brought against individual users of file sharing networks due to the nature of copyright law [3]. The music industry's digital revenues grew by 4.3 percent in 2013 to US\$5.9 billion [17]. Rapid growth in the market for digital music has been led by the rise in popularity of online download stores such as iTunes and streaming services. For consumers, streaming services' unlimited access and specialist playlists encourage discovery. Furthermore, streaming revenues grew from 21% in 2013 to 27% in 2014 [25]. There was steep growth in both revenues and user numbers for subscription services, continued revenue

growth from ad-supported services in most markets [17]. Music streaming service, like Spotify, makes its revenues by selling streaming subscriptions to premium users and advertising placements to third parties. This trend gives advertisers an opportunity to broadcast their brand to the users.

Music streaming trends have created a new era for online marketing. Prior research [18] has evaluated the effectiveness of pre-roll, mid-roll and post-roll online in-stream video advertisements. Another prior research [13] has explored characteristics of online-video advertisements, causing the intrusiveness effects in addition to advertisement avoidance and brand recognition. Although the effects of lengths and ad-context congruity have been studied in prior marketing research, no academic marketing research, to the author's knowledge, has evaluated those effects of music advertisements.

Music ads are displayed between songs which would bring intrusiveness to the users. Because intrusive advertisements interfere with navigation and browsing activities, Internet users have reacted with strong irritation and increased avoidance of the advertisement [9]. Music advertisements are showed with no viewer option to skip the advertisement. Therefore, music advertisements can interfere with intended viewer activity and might be perceived to be intrusive and lead to unintended negative effects.

Thus, the research questions are listed below:

- What are the antecedents of music advertisement intrusiveness, and what are its effects?
- Are attitudes negatively affected by the perceived intrusiveness of an audio advertisement?
- Are effects of intrusiveness different for the advertiser and the host Web site?

Advertisers must attempt to achieve their marketing goals while avoiding user backlash. This study proposes a conceptual model to explain and examine customer reactions to intrusiveness of music advertisements.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS

As we said earlier, prior research [13; 18] has examined length and ad-context congruity towards intrusiveness, and the impact leads to ad recall and ad avoidance. We use those authors' research outcomes as theoretical perspective guiding the research framework for this study.

A. *Ad Intrusiveness*

The theory of psychological reactance has been used to explain potential freedom threatening events, caused by the combination of consumer expectations of freedom, and some threat that infringes upon that freedom [8]. Reference [9] expanded the definition of intrusiveness as a psychological reaction to ads that interfere with a consumer's ongoing cognitive processes. Intrusiveness describes the mechanism by which ads evoke negative emotional reactions, such as irritation or annoyance. Annoyance and intrusiveness normally result in negative attitude toward an advertisement, which can drive down brand attitudes [19] and lead to advertisement avoidance [29].

The perception of an ad's intrusiveness may be affected when an ad offers the viewer either utilitarian or aesthetic value, or both. To the degree that advertising does not provide value, it may be perceived as coercive and unwelcome. It is this feeling of intrusiveness that may drive negative reactions towards ads.

Internet advertisements that interrupt flow are perceived to be more intrusive as compared with other media advertisements [7]. Between content advertisements also make listeners wait for desired content with less user control and greater intrusiveness than pop-ups. As the length of music advertisement increases, waiting time will

increase and perceived intrusiveness would also increase. As described earlier, people tend to notice stimuli that differ from other stimuli around them. Sometimes incongruity ads and repeated exposure would increase perceived intrusiveness which leads to negative response.

B. Ad Length

Prior research on the perceived intrusiveness of music advertisements has been scant, as scholars have focused instead on television commercials and online-video advertisements for fixed-length programming. One model of television advertisement viewing predicts that when a highly rated network decreases its advertising time by 10 percent, the median audience gain is about 25 percent [30]. Thus, there appear to be potentially optimal strategies for the number and duration of television advertisements for media owners to retain their audience.

One industry report [15] found that, in the online environment, 15-second advertisements appear to be as strong as 30-second advertisements for awareness and brand association, whereas 30-second advertisements do best at persuasion and conveying emotion, similar to television advertisement research. We hypothesize that:

H1a: Longer music advertisements will increase levels of intrusiveness.

C. Ad-Context Congruity

Ad-context congruity is defined as the matching of content, or the matching of an affective or emotional execution style or tone, in ads and media vehicles [10; 23]. For music ads, we borrowed partial concepts from previous literature and defined ad-context congruity as the degree to which music is thematically similar to music advertisements. In general, Weber's law indicates the people are more likely to notice stimuli that differ from other stimuli around them [28]. In this study, ads are placed between songs. In such cases, people may form a stronger memory of incongruent ads than congruent ads because

of the distinctiveness effect [14]. We propose the following hypothesis.

H1b: Greater ad-context incongruity will increase levels of perceived intrusiveness.

D. Ad Repeated Exposure

Exposure studies have generally studied the effects of repeated exposures to neutral, relatively meaningless stimuli, but some have examined exposure effects using meaningful stimuli that originally evoked positive or negative responses. These two approaches appear to result in two patterns of exposure effects. The second strand of exposure research has examined effects of exposure on initially affective, meaningful stimuli (e.g., written arguments, music). As [4] has argued, this line of research is important because most stimuli people attend to are motivationally and affectively meaningful.

Due to the length of the commercial, some television advertisements are repeated once in order to make up the time the advertisers have bought. Most of the time, repeated exposure ads are annoying to the consumers. Prior research has evaluated that repeated exposure of music stimuli without lyrics can evoke emotions that vary in unpleasant [31]. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1c: Ad repeated exposure will increase levels of perceived intrusiveness.

E. Ad Recall

Over the years, many studies have shown that longer commercials generally facilitate learning of commercial content [24; 27]. If an ad is too short, it will not reinforce the audience's memory. Longer ads give viewers more time and opportunities to attend to and process the message. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1d: The length of music ads has a positive effect on advertisement recall.

There are two contrasting perspectives in the literature concerning the effect of ad-context congruity on memory for advertisements. One view is that ad-context congruity increases ad memory due to priming effects [32], while another view is

that greater ad–context congruity decreases memory because of interference effects [5; 21]. However, users’ perceptions, performance, and behavior could be quite different in the Internet environment. Research shows that content congruency can have favorable effects on attitude towards the ad [23]. Music’s ad-context incongruity is expected to increase recall.

H1e: Ad-context incongruity will increase advertisements recall.

Research in advertising has examined various factors that affect ad attitude and recall. One tactic that is often used as a tool for strengthening top-of-mind awareness and recall is repeated advertising exposure [26]. Researchers have shown that repetition effects enhance memory for the target ad [2]. Therefore, we hypothesis:

H1f: Repeated exposure advertisements will increase advertisements recall.

Perceived goal impediment is an important factor in generating feeling of intrusiveness and irritation [7]. Similar to prior research on Internet advertisements [22], greater intrusiveness is expected to be associated with greater advertisement recall. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis.

H2a: Perceived intrusiveness of music advertisements will have a positive influence on advertisement recall.

F. Ad Avoidance

Compared with traditional media, the Internet is believed to be a more goal, task, interactivity, and information-oriented medium [6]. Internet users expect to perform specific tasks with limited time. If users feel the interruption from the ads, they will avoid them. According to [1], perceived ad intrusiveness results in negative reactions. Perceived ad intrusiveness is said to be a factor in advertisement avoidance [7]. Thus, we hypothesis:

H2b: Perceived intrusiveness of music steaming advertisements will have a positive influence on advertisement avoidance.

G. Effects on Attitude toward the Advertisement

In the online environment, due to users’ greater goal-related focus [7], longer advertisements will keep a user away from his or her goal for a longer period, potentially increasing feelings toward the advertisement [19]. Greater perceived intrusiveness logically is expected to be associated with less favorable attitudes toward the advertisement:

H3a: Perceived intrusiveness of a music advertisement will have a negative influence on the attitude toward the advertisements.

Typically, a positive relationship exists between attitude toward the advertisement and brand attitude [20].

H3b: Attitude toward the advertisement will be positively related to brand attitude.

Users less likely will form a favorable impression about Web sites that carry more intrusive advertisement.

H4: The greater the perceived intrusiveness of music advertisements, the less favorable the attitude toward the host Web site.

According to the hypotheses above, we develop a theoretical model (See Figure 1). The current study hypothesized that music advertisement length, ad-context incongruity, and repeated exposure would have a significant positive effect on intrusiveness, advertisement recall and avoidance. Furthermore, intrusiveness would have significant negative effects on attitude.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Study Design

The current study uses a randomize experiment with a subset of a 2x2x2x2 between-subjects design. The key design element features a music advertisement broadcasting between two songs on a Web page. Treatment conditions for the music advertisements involve two different types of

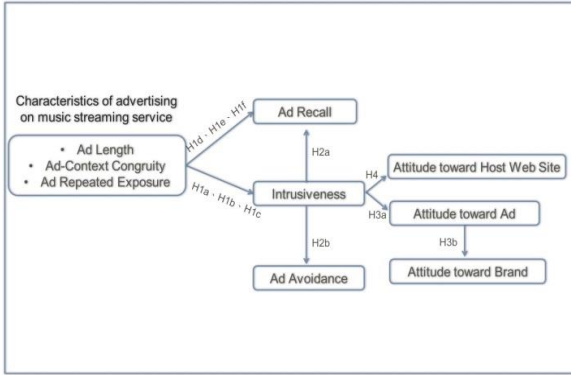


Figure 1 Theoretical Model

songs (brisk songs and love songs); two different types of advertisement (ad-context congruity and incongruity); two different advertisement lengths (15 and 30 seconds); and repeated exposure (repeat and no repeat). Main music songs for different types are included in the study to avoid relying on one type of music and to improve validity of results. Because our target sample would be participants aged 18 to 35, we conduct famous singers and songs to be our main music songs to appeal to young students. However, in order to avoid personal favor to specific singer that would jeopardize our test results, we conduct unfamiliar singers' songs to become our music ads.

B. Pretest

To test our hypothesis, one pretest will be conducted. To minimize the possibility of brand name recognition being brand-or product-specific, singers who are not unfamiliar in Taiwan are selected for music ads. The pretest includes the relation between two main songs and ad-context congruity. To control for the potential influence of the music content, two main music songs from the same type should be related. In addition, because ad-context congruity can influence how people process advertisement intrusiveness, we conduct the pretest to ensure that participants have similar involvement levels with the selected types and are unfamiliar with the chosen brands.

C. Main Study Procedure

Participants visit the research music



Figure 2 First Main Music

streaming Web site. After a brief introduction to the study, participants are allowed to choose from two different types of music (brisk songs or love songs) to induced anticipation of listening to the content music. After participants have finished listening to the first main music (See Figure 2), a music advertisement appears (Figure 4) and starts playing before showing the second main music (See Figure 3). A post-study online survey is used to collect data.

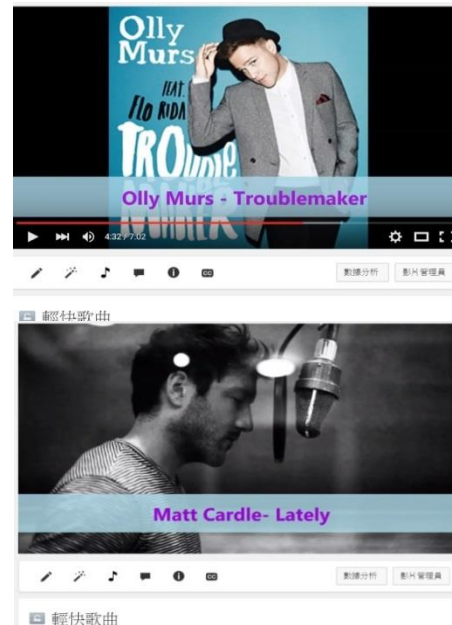


Figure 4 Music Advertisement

IV. ANTICIPATED ACHIEVEMENT OR EXPECTED RESULTS

Based on the study, we expect to realize consumer reactions to intrusiveness of music advertisements and anticipate the following conclusions. First, the results of this study will show significant effects of advertisement length, ad-context incongruity, and repeated exposure, which significantly affect marketing outcomes. Second, advertisement length, ad-context incongruity, and repeated exposure will be positively associated with aided advertisement recall, consistent with prior marketing research on recall. Third, the more intrusive advertisement is, the more recognizable it will be. These findings are particularly important given the damaging effects of intrusiveness on marketing outcomes. For example, more intrusive advertisements are subject to higher avoidance. If viewers avoid listening to the music advertisement little positive effect can be expected for advertisers. The inclusion of ad-context congruity and none repeated exposure, however, can help overcome avoidance and the deleterious effects of advertising intrusiveness.

Higher intrusiveness is associated with less favorable attitudes toward the advertisement and host Web site. Unfavorable attitudes toward the advertisement lead to less favorable attitudes toward the brand, echoing prior research [20]. To continue to retain users for a future advertising base, music streaming service must be more cautious with the type of music advertisements they are running.

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