
The impact of repetition and spacing on memory for advertising

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Abstract

It is well established in the advertising literature that memory for advertising is dependent on media scheduling. Two consistent themes have been present in that literature: first, repetition of advertising enhances memory, and second, distributing advertisements over time increases their longer-term retention. The verbal learning literature refers to such memory enhancement as the "spacing effect" and three theories have been forwarded to account for these prevalent findings: encoding variability, study-phase retrieval, and reconstruction. The purpose of this investigation is to, through a series of experiments; determine the theory that best explains the spacing effect in an advertising setting.

We have been able to identify two different theories that provide robust explanations of the spacing effect in this context. The sheer ubiquity of this effect has led to several multifactorial explanations of the spacing effect to describe different patterns of results obtained by using different materials (familiar vs. unfamiliar) or different memory tasks (cued vs. free recall) (Dempster 1996; Janiszewski, Noel and Sawyer 2003).

Our research furthers our understanding of the spacing effect, and how time might influence how the various pieces of information are used in memory. Our results support reconstruction theory, and this finding has both theoretical and practical implications for media scheduling, ad design, and advertising research. The spacing effect paradigm could be used to help guide the timing and distribution of advertising messages. More specifically, reconstruction theory could be used to form specific hypotheses concerning the timing, type, and potential media environment.

References

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