

## Do spacing and valence influence brand evaluations?

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### Keywords

Spacing, Valence, Massed Presentations, Affective Habituation, Processing Fluency, Brand Evaluations

### Abstract

*Purpose:* The purpose of this paper is to examine how the spacing of stimuli influences affective reactions.

*Design/Methodology/Approach:* The experiment conducted was a 2 (presentation format of target ads: spaced or massed) x 3 (affective valence: positive, neutral, negative) mixed design. Subjects were presented with a series of print ads. The target ads were all repeated: some were repeated with no intervening filler/neutral ads (massed) and some were separated by several intervening ads (spaced). The spaced ads were all presented at the same fixed interval meaning that the length of the spaced ads was not varied. The ads were pretested to establish affective valence generating three different valences for the advertisements: positive, neutral, negative. After viewing the series of print ads, subjects immediately evaluated their reactions using an established scale to measure affective response toward advertisements and the target ads' respective brands.

*Findings:* The findings indicate that people prefer to receive negative stimuli in massed presentation forms and view positive stimuli in a spaced format. When negative stimuli are spaced, this results in even more negative evaluations. The opposite was supported for positive stimuli; spacing resulted in a more positive evaluation for positively-valenced stimuli. A review of the literature demonstrates that two theories may help explain this phenomenon. Research on processing fluency has demonstrated that people sometimes incorrectly misattribute their high fluency for a stimulus to a higher level of liking for that stimulus (Zajonc 1968). Research on spacing has demonstrated that learning is enhanced when stimuli are spaced apart (Noel & Vallen 2009). Consequently, we hypothesized that the enhanced learning from a spaced presentation format would increase fluency with the advertising stimuli which would be the source of misattribution that leads to an increased liking of the ad stimuli.

*Research Limitations/Future research:* The research results proved interesting; however, further examination of the underlying processes is necessary. Two theories that could explain the results will be examined in future research – processing fluency and affective habituation.

*Originality/value:* While determining which theory is driving these findings is interesting, the findings alone are compelling in their own right. Similar to research conducted by Yang et al. (2014), this research examines how the positioning of advertisements impacts consumers' reactions to these ads. While Yang et al. demonstrate that the position of brand personalities in an advertising sequence influences advertisement evaluation, we argue that the position of advertisements' respective valences are important to how consumers evaluate these ads as well. Developing these findings would help marketing practitioners better understand how their advertisements are influenced by other preceding and subsequent ads. More important to consumer scholars, this research has the potential to uncover a connection between spacing and affect, a connection that has not yet been established in extant literature, but holds much potential for marketing communications.

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