Antecedents and Consequences of the Customer Reactance towards Social and Digital Media Advertisements

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This paper explores forced viewing of "online Advertisements" on the Internet in the context of both the social and digital media and tried to understand better how viewers come to define ads as informative, entertaining and get persuasive and decide to avoid them. Perceived intrusiveness was suggested as the underlying mechanism by which the process occurs. Antecedents of reactance were identified that affect perceptions of ads as too personalised, intrusive and also as informative and entertaining. The consequences of intrusiveness were shown to be caused by feelings of irritation and ad avoidance. The results provide an understanding of how consumers experience forced exposure situations in interactive environments and highlight implications for advertisers seeking to increase the effectiveness of social and digital media advertising. Therefore the relative outcomes of consumer reactance are Ad avoidance, negative cognitions, click through intentions as positive response and persuasiveness towards the social and digital media advertisements. The insights of these study will help the companies and Ad agencies to develop its advertising strategy effectively.

Keywords: Perceived Intrusiveness, Ad Irritation, Ad Avoidance, Ad Attitude

1. Introduction

The idea that, for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction has been termed reactance in psychology literature. Reactance theory is a social psychological theory that explains human behaviour in response to the perceived loss of freedom in an environment (Brehm 1966). Reactance is postulated to be experienced in response to the environment and used to help persons re-establish freedom and control of a situation. When there is a threat to a person’s freedom, that person will attempt to restore the freedom by
exhibiting opposition or resisting pressures to conform (Brehm and Brehm 1981). Similarly, consumers have been shown to interpret commercial messages actively and react against threats of persuasion to further their own goals. This paper explores Web surfers’ reactions when they are forced to view advertising. Reactance may be especially important in light of new advertising delivery techniques developed for the Internet, such asocial and digital media ads. The purpose of this research is twofold: First, we investigate what characteristics of social and digital media ads. Specifically, the study investigates four aspects of ads themselves that may moderate perceptions of social and digital media advertisements as intrusive, entertaining, informative and personalised timing of the display, duration of the ad, congruence with editorial content. Second, we hope to understand better the relationship between the antecedents and consequences of ads being perceived as intrusive by examining reactions such as ad avoidance, Click through intention, Ad persuasiveness and negative cognitions. We believe that, if the point at which advertising becomes forced exposure can be identified, strategies for reducing the avoidance and negative cognitions of advertising can be formulated.

2. Determinants of Consumer Reactance towards Digital and Social Media Context

Earlier studies have explained that there are positive and significant influence on the consumer attitude towards advertisements (Krishnamurthy, 2001; Martin et al., 2003). Therefore, as it was explained by “the theory of information (i.e. advertising is a noise), consumers are goal oriented; thus, the presence of advertisement is often considered as an intrusive”. The research hypothesis with its theoretical linkage in the context of digital and social media will be discussed in the following sub topics. The result is a psychological state called reactance in which consumers are increasingly motivated to restore their freedom of Choice by behaving counter to the intention of the threatening stimulus (Brehm 1966; Brehm 1989; Brehm and Brehm 1981).

Ad in Formativeness, Ad Entertainment, Ad Intrusiveness and Ad Personalisation

The concept Attitude plays an important role on marketing and information systems. Fishbein defined attitude as “a learned predisposition of human beings” (Fishbein, 1967). The “content (in formativeness) and form (entertainment) of ads are important predictors of their value and
are crucial to the effectiveness of Web advertising” (Tsang, M. M et al., 2004; Ducoffe, R. H., 1996). Many studies have found that the ads with interesting information and pleasing ads have a positive and a significant influence on consumers’ attitudes toward product or brand (Mitchell, A.A., and Olson, J.C. 1981; Shimp, T.A. 1981). Pop-ups are one of the popular techniques to deliver rich media ads that are able to contain more sophisticated messages on the Web (Milward Brown Interactive 1999a). Many earlier studies have explained Ad intrusiveness as a consequence of psychological reactance when an audience cognitive processes were interrupted and which in turn leads in avoidance of advertisement. However, few studies have concluded that perceived intrusiveness is depended on the degree of intensity or amount of focus that the audience show during a cognitive process. In other words the degree of intensity is explained as the customer’s level of engagement (mentally) towards certain activity.

However, forced exposure often interrupts a viewer's normal viewing process, and rich media content may cause a delay in downloading due to large file sizes. Both situations could lead to a negative perception of the advertising as intrusive. Although intrusive advertisements may enhance recall, they also may result in negative attitude formation (Ha 1996) or avoidance of the ads altogether (Abernethy 1991). Thus, an important theoretical and practical issue for pop-up ads on-line is how to minimize the negative perceptions while taking advantage of the potential effective benefits. Another approach to consumer privacy regarding spam stems from the idea of intrusion. Intrusion into privacy is defined as the invasion of solitude, such as intrusion on private affairs (Teeter and Loving 2001). In the current study, unsolicited commercial e-mail can be regarded as an intruder to the private sphere (Huh 2006) and, therefore, an infringement on consumer privacy. Intrusiveness in the context of advertising is characterized by three dimensions: (1) intrusion into online privacy (Milne and Rohm 2004; Sheehan and Hoy 1999). The second type of perceived intrusiveness is related to completing cognitive and physical task performance. Online pop-up ads are known to interrupt thought process or activity (e.g., seeking information; Edwards et al. 2002). This means that perceived intrusiveness of unsolicited commercial e-mail, which is consumers’ thoughts on privacy, may influence attitudes toward the advertising medium and also influence the effectiveness of the advertising medium. As such, intrusiveness should be considered distinct from the emotional or behavioural outcomes that may result. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the
means by which perceptions of intrusiveness can be limited to reduce the negative outcomes that are likely to result. Specifically, we suggest that ad personalization with retargeting can be described along the two dimensions of a banner’s depth and breadth of personalization. Personalization depth, defined as the primary dimension of ad personalization, determines how closely a banner reflects a consumer’s inferred interests. For example, an ad that features products a consumer previously placed in his or her virtual shopping cart reflects that person’s interests closer than an ad that features products the consumer merely inspected without any further purchase related actions. Personalization breadth describes how completely, or exhaustively, a banner with a given personalization depth reflects a consumer’s interests.

Reactance If consumers' reactions to advertising are defensive, it may not be an effective strategy to force them to view advertisements. Reactance theory would dictate that forced exposure will result in negative consequences for advertisers; however, not all forced advertising may be unwelcome. Discovery of the means by which reactance can be minimized may increase the efficacy of advertising that has the potential to threaten viewers' perceptions of freedom. A second positive social influence identified by Bauer and Greyser (1968) and Ducoffe (1995) is entertainment. To the degree that advertisements are perceived as entertaining, they should provide value to the viewer. To the degree that the entertainment is welcome, it should not be perceived as interrupting the cognitive goals of the viewer, and, therefore, it should garner less psychological reactance than advertising judged less entertaining. According to Turow et al. (2009), 84% of all consumers do not want advertisers to tailor ads to their behaviour that was tracked on other websites than the one they currently visit. Correspondingly, Aguirre et al. (2015) show sharp declines in click-through rates when consumers realize their vulnerability to a retailer that has covertly collected their data to provide personalized banners. Moreover, even adjusting ads to a currently visited website elicits privacy or personalisation concerns when banners are obtrusive (Goldfarb and Tucker 2011). The extent to which ads trigger privacy concerns depends on the sensitivity of consumer-specific information is based on (Nowak and Phelps 1992). For any personalize ad, its depth of personalization likely serves as a proxy for the extent to which the advertiser has gained knowledge about a consumer (Anand and Shachar 2009; Winer 2001). It thereby reveals the level of vulnerability to the advertising firm and determines the amount of elicited privacy concerns.
P1. Ads that are perceived as more informative will lead to less reactance towards social and digital media ads.

P2. Ads that are perceived as more Entertainment will lead to less reactance towards social and digital media ads.

P3. Ads that are perceived as more intrusive will lead to more reactance towards social and digital media ads.

P4. Ads that are perceived as more personalised will lead to more reactance towards social and digital media ads.

Consequences of Consumer Reactance Ad Avoidance, Click through Intentions, Negative Cognitions and Ad Persuasiveness

Abernethy (1991) finds that consumers often leave the room or change channels to avoid advertising. Others have shown that television viewers simply ignore ads (Clancey 1994; Krugman and Johnson 1991). However, what is not clear is why the same advertising is annoying to some but not all consumers. Consumers must re-evaluate their goals to include advertising (acquiesce), or negative reactions are likely to result in the avoidance of advertising in some way. To the extent that advertisements are recognized as disturbing, negative outcomes such as irritation and avoidance may result (Kennedy 1971; Krugman 1983; Park and McClung 1986; Soldow and Principe 1981). Therefore, though irritation is a possible emotional reaction and avoidance is a potential behavioral outcome in response to intrusive advertising, the perception of an ad as intrusive is something different. Some customers may also feel that their privacy has been lost and time consuming, while dealing with such e-mail advertisements (Morimoto and Chang, 2006). However, the perception towards Ad intrusiveness is ignored when the customers feel that an ad is valuable (Edwards et al., 2002). For example, few studies have stressed that the values of advertising will be a deciding factor towards acceptance towards ads in digital and social media. (Martin et al., 2003). Even though there are many factors that influence the underlying values of advertisement (Bauer and Greyser, 1968; Mehta, 2000), mainly three types of values have been identified for the current study are, the quality of information or informative value, the financial reward value, and the entertainment value (Edwards et al., 2002; Mehta, 2000; Pasadeos, 1990). Particular, we explicitly distinguish between perceived usefulness, reactance, and privacy concerns as internal responses that previous studies have not dissected.
and either examined in isolation or with certain ambiguity (e.g., Tucker 2014; Van Doorn and Hoekstra 2013; White et al. 2008). We then link these responses to consumers’ click-through intentions. Altogether, our work helps to explain the existent mixed findings about the impact of personalized online advertising on consumers.

According to PRT (Brehm, 1966), following a freedom threat, individuals will experience psychological reactance, operationalized as a latent variable comprised of anger and negative cognitions (see Dillard & Shen, 2005; Quick, 2012; Rains, 2013). Negative cognitions were collected using the thought-listing technique with negative relevant cognitions retained for the analyses. Cognitions were deemed negative as opposed to favourable or neutral using the participant-as-coder method (Cacioppo, von Hippel, & Ernst, 1997). Providing further evidence that reactance-inducing messages are associated with poor message evaluations was a pair of experiments measuring the persuasiveness of alcohol messages (Bensley & Wu, 1991). However, anger and ad persuasiveness were assessed with multiple items and therefore treated as latent composite variables (see Holbert & Stephenson, 2002).

**P5.** Reactance will be negatively associated with ad persuasiveness social and digital media ads.

**P6.** Reactance will be positively associated with ad avoidance social and digital media ads.

**P7.** Reactance leads to click through intentions towards social and digital media ads.

**P8.** Reactance will be positively associated with negative cognitions towards social and digital media ads.

![Conceptual Framework](image)

**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

### 3. Conclusion & Future Research

The study provides useful insights into understanding of determinants and its effect on the Ad intrusiveness and the Ad attitude in the context of digital and social media. The consumer
reactance acts as a mediator in determining the relationship between Ad in formativeness, Ad entertainment and personalisation and the Ad intrusiveness toward digital and social media. Hope the findings of the study will provide useful insights and better understanding of these concepts for advertising agencies, companies, and research scholars and executives. In this study, quality of information, entertainment, credibility and financial rewards. Where consumer reactance refers to “distracting, disturbing, forced, interfering, intrusive, and obtrusive” (Li et al., 2002). Ad Attitudes considered as the “beliefs about the consequences of accepting e-mail advertising and assessment of the favourability of such consequences.” Finally, the current study concludes the consumer behaviour has been directly affected by Ad attitudes and response. Further, other determinants in the context of digital and social media such as enjoyment, brand equity and efficiency (Holbrook, 1994) can be considered for future works.

4. References


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