

Commercial Break Analysis

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Abstract

This paper explores an analysis of commercials that were recorded over the span of 4 hours of television shows. The analysis was done on the Universal HD Channel from 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. during 3 episodes of the show House. It will delve into the analysis of what age groups were targeted in these commercials, commercial positions during breaks and why this is important for an effective commercial, and how emotions can play an important role in the effectiveness of commercial positions.

Keywords: commercial effectiveness, advertising,

Commercial Break Analysis

Over the course of 4 hours, commercial breaks were recorded and analyzed as means to find any sort of correlation they may have with one another and the television show that was being aired at the moment. Prior to that, there were two studies that were reviewed in order to go into this analysis; with this in mind, it was discovered who the predominant audience were for the commercials, as well as how a multitude of tactics were used in certain commercials to achieve the best responses from their targeted audience.

Targeted Audience

When it comes to commercials, knowing who the targeted audience as well as their age plays a key role in how a commercial will be created. Margot van der Goot, Eva van Reijmersdal, and Mariska Kleemans conducted a study on how different age groups have different preferences when it comes to television commercials. They came to the conclusion that while younger audience members had a preference to exciting, fast paced, and shorter commercials, whereas older audiences had a preference for calmer and more relaxing commercials. It was also shown that having two versions of the same commercial could help the targeted audience become broader and include both older and younger generations (van der Goot, p.309-311). According to van der Goot and her team (2015) this is what they had to say in regards to how commercials should be placed throughout the day:

Effective media planning should make sure that the calmer commercial is placed around programming that reaches older adults, whereas the arousing commercial should be placed around programming popular among younger target groups. (p.311)

With this in mind, it was clear as to who the main targeted audience members were for these commercials; adults ranging from their 30's – 50's. Roughly 90% of the commercials

were calm, long, and the voice overs predominantly maintained a calm and soothing voice as they tried to sell their products or services. There were 4 commercials in total that ran approximately 5 minutes long, 4 of these commercials had to do with skin care and products that would be beneficial to a woman's face and skin; the fifth commercial was a 5 minute video of the ASPCA asking for donations. The commercials were for the most part of a woman speaking in a softer and persuasive tone with soft ambient music in the background, a clear attempt to making a commercial that targeted women who were more mature and preferred these sort of commercials. There were also instances where other commercials would have different versions of what they aired; one commercial would be longer than the other version shown at a later time. With what van der Goot and her team have discovered, this could be a tactic used to draw in younger adults who may be watching at the time. There was also a mix of other commercials that did not follow the algorithm to draw in an older audience; instead, they were faster paced, stimulating and seemed to pertain to a young adult audience; airing commercials that pertained to reality shows television series, places to obtain affordable furniture, and even online computer games. With this in mind, it could then be speculated that their range is not only older adults, but a mix of both older and younger adults in their 20's.

Commercial Break Positions

Yongick Jeong (2011) conducted a study to determine the impact of commercial break position on advertising in different mood settings and came to the conclusion that not only are the commercials in the first break were remembered more efficiently than those which were on a later commercial break (Jeong, p. 310), but the participants of the study were more favorable of the ads when in a positive mood conditions rather than later when their minds would be filled with mental clutter (p. 306)

With this in mind, it I went over the commercial breaks that happened throughout the 4 hours of television; there seemed to be a pattern of the type of commercial that would happen on the first break, which were commercials that involved several commercials that pertained to an older adult audience and would also have at least one shorter and more stimulating commercial that would pertain to a younger audience. The commercials in the first break that pertained to the older audience would have an emphasis on empathy in their commercials whereas the commercials pertaining to the younger audiences would put more emphasis on what the show or video game was about rather than trying to sympathize with their audience.

Going back to the idea that ads are more favorable when the viewer is in a positive mood, the commercials that lasted around 5 minutes were predominantly placed in later breaks rather early on during the first commercial break. An assumption can be made here that this is a tactic used to bring the desired audience into a calmer and more positive state with the use of all the features that are more favorable by an older audience as well as the extensive technique to try and sympathize with their desired audience; this can also be a tactic used to allow the viewer to have more time to remember the commercial and potentially convince them to look into their product.

Conclusion

In the end, the main targeted audience appeared to be those who were adults who were older as shown by how the majority of the commercials used tactics to make their ads to be calmer and slower, as these tend to be more favorable of older audiences. Their secondary audience appeared to be younger adults as portrayed by the more stimulating and louder commercials that tend to be the preference of younger adults and teens. Commercial positions during breaks seemed to have an impact on the favorability of the commercial as Jeong's study

showed that people favored the commercials during the first commercial breaks as well as commercials when the viewer was in a positive environment. That being said, commercials that were of a longer nature were usually placed in later commercial breaks with the speculation that this tactic could be used as a means to bring the viewer to a more positive and calmer state of mind as means to stimulate them to potentially take interest in their product.

References

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