
Effectiveness of Pop-Up Advertisements as Advertising Tools: The Case of the Co-operative University of Kenya

Purity Mbugua and Paul Ndavi¹
The Co-operative University of Kenya,
¹Corresponding author: pndavi@cuk.ac.ke

Abstract

Pop-up ads have been associated with negative perceptions of annoyance, irritation and intrusiveness. Ironically, they are sold as being successful online advertising tools, and are claimed to be more effective than static banner advertisements. The current study investigated whether pop-up ads are effective advertising tools by conducting a case study of the Cooperative University of Kenya Students. The study sought to determine the effectiveness of pop-up ads on reach and creation of awareness, to establish the reliability of pop-ups in creation of brand awareness through recall, to determine the brand attitudes created as a result of pop-up ads, and to determine the influence of pop-up ads on purchase intention. The study used a case study research design. The study used stratified sampling technique to select 100 study respondents. The primary data was collected using questionnaires. The study established that pop up ads have little impact on purchase behavior of social media users due to the formed negative image towards them and that the ads are also seen as intrusive and ineffective. Based on the findings, this study recommends that advertisers and managers should therefore pay particular attention to pop-up ads that are user friendly and less obstructive. In order for pop-up ads to be useful for advertisers/marketers their effectiveness must be improved. To achieve this there is the need for pop-up ads to be designed to provide valuable information to online users.

Keywords: Advertising, Pop-up ads, social media, Co-operative University.

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INTRODUCTION

According to McCoy and Polak (2004), advertising is an integral part to the success of any business as it plays a central role in products promotion, more so in communication of services. If a business is to thrive, it must put itself out there, let people know it exists and why they should select it instead of other products. Due to this, advertising has constantly had to adapt and change to suit new mediums and an increasingly savvy audience, and the digital era has not been an exception (Corvi and Bonera, 2010). The 1900s introduced the “Golden Age” where TV and radio advertising was most dominant. However,

recently consumers are changing as they are better informed and do not have to rely on the marketer for information.

Pop up ads are a form of internet advertising, which originated in the 1990s when Java Script provided the capability for a web page to open another window (McCoy, Galletta, Everard and Polak, 2004). Generally, their purpose is to increase web traffic, directing users to a website where a product can be purchased or a commercial website viewed. These advertisements work when a website opens a new web browser window (without user input) to display a solitary advertisement; they are small windows that appear on top of the website

being viewed. Pop-ups can be timed to occur or can be initiated when a user clicks on a link to another page. Usually a pop-up can be removed by clicking the “x” in the top right hand corner.

Previous research investigating pop-ups has been contradictory; some declaring they are unpopular with internet users while others believe this is not the case and that pop-ups do have a competitive role in marketing. Limited research has been devoted to exploring the intrusiveness of disruptive ads, and users’ avoidance to the media with disruptive designs (Chatterjee, 2008; Rejon-Guardia & Martinez-Lopez, 2014). Therefore, based on the background, the study examined the behavior of online consumer’s attitude towards pop ads and whether the ads influence the ability to process and recall information about the brand’s ads. This study finding is instrumental for scholars and academic researchers, the current study forms a basis upon which future research on pop up ads may be established. The findings may be resourceful in providing viable information to academicians, researchers and consumers on various concepts related to pop up ads.

In 2013, a study about consumer opinion on online advertising and audience targeting (Choicestream, 2013) reported that more than 60% of the surveyed online users ignored online ads, while merely 2.5% clicked through and purchased the advertised product. The first concept is perceived ad intrusiveness which is a cognitive evaluation of pop-up ads and it can be defined as thoughts that consumers produce when they are exposed to advertising. Perceived intrusiveness is one of the key influencers of attitude formation among audiences of digital advertising (Morimoto and Chang, 2009). Edwards *et al.* (2002) conceptualized perceived ad intrusiveness as the point that a person finds presented information contradictory to his or her own goals, as in the context of internet ads such as pop-ups.

The second concept is ad irritation. Ads like pop-ups that stimulate the consumer’s

senses can bring feelings of irritation (Edwards *et al.*,2002). Perceived ad intrusiveness due to interruptions to tasks caused by the volume of ads on screen can be considered excessive stimuli. Ad Irritation can be described as the negative, impatient and displeasing feelings that consumers experience due to advertising stimuli (Morimoto and Chang, 2009). Previous scholars have identified influencers of irritation in perceived ad intrusiveness, in product categories and in amount of ads and ad appearances. The psychological reactance theory predicts that people tend to respond to persuasive messages in a negative manner if they appear to dissatisfy the consumer’s need for self-determination and control. Ad irritation may cause affective responses such as attitudes towards advertising, consumer skepticism and behavioral outcomes, like ad avoidance. Understanding this concept will be key for businesses in formulating effective advertising strategies which is paramount towards creating a strong brand recall

Lastly is ad avoidance. The study adopted attitude-toward-the-ad theory which is a theory based in marketing communications and advertising research and has an huge following (Bruner & Kumar, 2000). The study through the theory, investigated online advertising consumer behavior, attitudes and perceptions, finding that consumers make such negative attitudes towards the ads that they avoid them when possible. Cho and Cheon (2004) have proposed three dimensions of ad avoidance in the internet context: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Cognitive ad avoidance is when consumers intentionally ignore ads, affective ad avoidance is when consumers dislike the ads and avoid the source of the ads, and behavioral ad avoidance is the actual physical action taken to avoid ads (Cho and Cheon, 2004).

Ad avoidance takes place in several patterns: consumers can select opt-out options from mailing lists to avoid future reception of ads (e.g., Milne and Rohm, 2004), individuals can attempt to minimize

time spent viewing ads by closing pop up ads (Edwards *et al.*, 2002), and ads can also be avoided cognitively, meaning, they are not paid attention to (Fransen, Verlegh, Kirmani, and Smit, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This study was guided by a stratified sampling technique targeting 100 undergraduate students of the Cooperative University of Kenya. This sample was stratified into each of the four years of study and respondents were randomly selected from each stratum to come up with the representative sample of 100 for the entire population. This is a viable sampling technique since it gives the advantages of focusing on important subpopulations and allows the use of different sampling techniques for different subpopulations in improving the accuracy of estimation.

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents who were sampled either at the library, classes, or the university square or within the hostels. The administered questionnaire were collected after completion by the respondents on the same day and their responses used for analysis. The questionnaire had both open ended and close ended questions to enable guide the respondent through filling of the questionnaire as well as probe them for more information. Content validity refers to the extent to which an instrument represents the factors under study. To achieve content validity, questionnaires included a variety of questions on the knowledge of students on pop-up ads and their effectiveness. All the subjects completed the questionnaires in the presence of the researcher. This was done to prevent subjects from giving questionnaires to other people to complete on their behalf.

Data collection bias was minimized by the researcher being the only one to administer the questionnaires, and standardizing conditions such as exhibiting similar personal attributes to all respondents, e.g., friendliness and support. Pilot testing was carried out by the researcher to identify any flaws on the questionnaire to reduce

errors of measurement and test for consistency. Qualitative and quantitative data was reviewed and thoroughly checked for accuracy and completeness. The data was coded to enable statistical analysis to be done and descriptive statistical analysis was employed. The analysis involved the uses of Microsoft excel software. The results of the analysis were then presented by use of graphs, tabular description as well as through written explanation. The responses received were analyzed using SPSS software.

FINDINGS

A response rate of 76% was attained. This response rate was sufficient and representative and conforms to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) stipulation that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting, a rate of 60% is good while a response rate of 70% and over is excellent.

The characteristics of the participants’ population are represented in Table 1. The results reveal more respondents were in 2nd and 3rd year respectively compared to 1st years and 4th years with the third-year students forming the highest proportion of the sample size while most respondents are aged between 19-25 years. The findings also indicate that most of the respondents were male students. Majority of the students have some experience with social media and spend some hours per day on the internet.

Table 1. Profile of respondents

Variable	Classification	No.	%
Gender	Male	50	65.79
	Female	26	34.21
Age (yrs)	19-25	70	92.11
	26-35	6	7.89
Internet access frequency	Less than 1 hr	6	7.89
	1-2 hrs	8	10.53
	2-4 hrs	20	26.32
	4-6 hrs	26	34.21
	Over 6 hrs	16	21.05
Education level	First year	14	18.42
	Second year	23	30.26
	Third year	27	35.53
	Fourth year	12	15.79

In Figure 1, 48.68% of respondents attested to having seen pop-up ads often, followed closely by the 26.32% that indicated they had seen pop-up ads sometimes. Evidently, pop-up ads can be said to be successful in reaching people. An individual's perception of online advertisement plays a major role in whether they are motivated to partake in consumption activities (Mady 2011) which is in line with the findings that 22.73% of the respondents were able to remember the last three ads they had seen. This means that although most respondents had been reached by the pop-up ads, they were not attracted enough to actually decode the information presented to them, let alone, recall it.

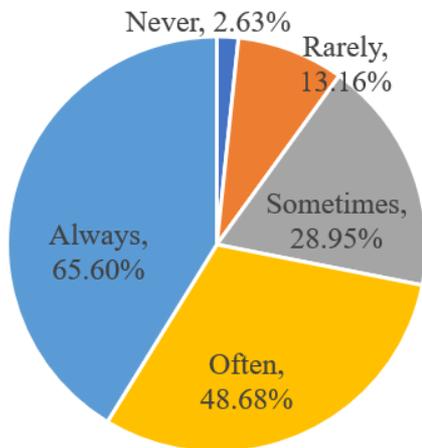


Figure 1: Frequency of seeing pop-up ads

Based on Figure 2 below which sought to collect the respondents' attitude towards pop ups, only 2 out of the 76 respondents like pop-up ads and brands that use pop-up advertising. 40 respondents indicated that they strongly disliked pop-ups. Compared to the majority that showed dislike for pop-up ads, lesser respondents seemed to dislike brands that used pop-up advertising with only 21 showing strong dislike. This agrees with Edwards *et al.* (2002) who explain that pop-up ads are perceived as irritating and annoying. The reason why described as intrusive is that most often it interrupts the online activities of users.

The research also sought to determine whether pop-up ads influence purchase intention. Surprisingly, 46.68% of the

respondents claimed to click pop-ups sometimes, closely followed by the 30.26% that indicated often as indicated in Figure 3.

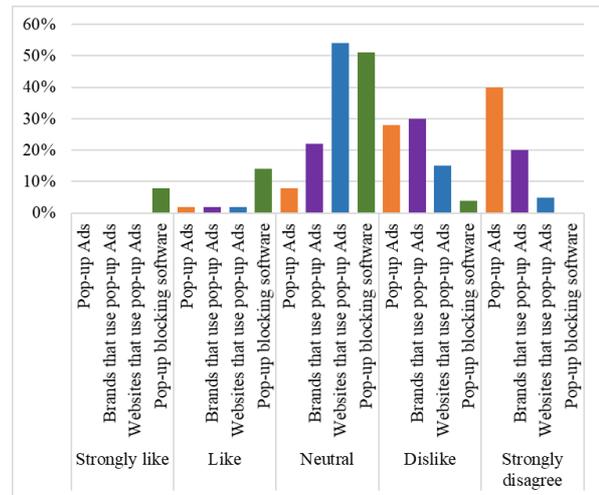


Figure 2: Attitudes towards pop-up ads and other items related to pop-up ads

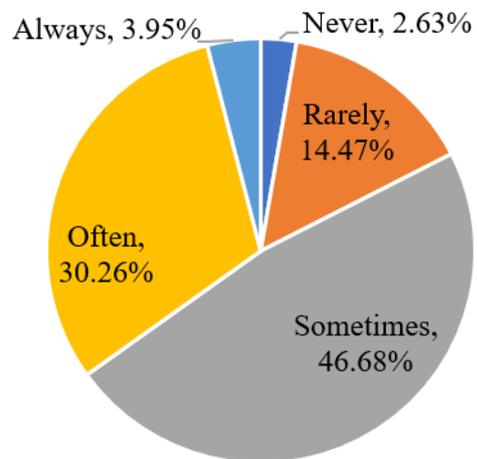


Figure 3: Frequency of Clicking on Pop-Up Ads

Findings on if pop-up ads influence their purchase behavior and result indicates that only 3.95% are highly influenced by these ads while 9.21% of the respondents are influenced but only to a very low extend. Majority of the respondents stated that they are not influenced by these pop-up ads. This means that they either ignore these ads as unimportant or do not give them the attention they deserve as shown in Figure 4.

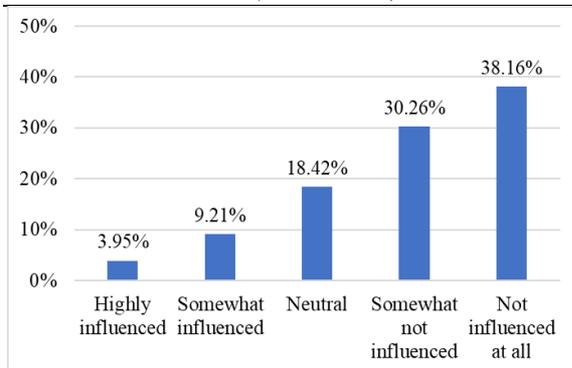


Figure 4: Influence of Pop-Up Ads on Purchase Intention

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that pop-up ads could be relied upon to reach target audience noting the amount of time various respondents spent on the internet hence a higher chance of encountering pop-ups. As a result, there is a higher chance of memory recall towards a particular brand thus for creating brand awareness.

According to the attitude-toward-the-ad theory, negative attitudes towards an ad may highly affect brand perception, consequently yielding negative brand attitudes and vice versa with majority of the respondents agreeing that pop-ups being intrusive. The study findings indicate that positive on-line reviews tend to have a positive effect on consumers' purchasing intention and purchasing intention which increases as the number of reviews increases.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that pop-up ads are still widely used in the advertising industry for social media and may present a problem for social media users. Most social media sites use different forms of techniques to design and present sponsored message that sometimes demands users' immediate attention and action, but at other times can simply appear and then fade away but still interrupt and seize viewers' attention, away from their original media use goal. The effectiveness of pop-ups on reach was determined by the use of internet and time spent on it and based on findings, pop-up ads proved to be effective in reaching target audience. However, in spite of the diverse

usage of internet and wide interaction with pop-ups, fewer respondents were able to recall the pop-up ads they had seen. The implications of these findings suggests that users of the Internet notice pop-ups online, but do not fully attend to the information contained within them. Thus implying that the effectiveness of pop-ups through memory recall is quite low.

The study reveals that users of the internet have negative attitudes towards pop-up ads mainly because of their intrusive/obstructive nature. As a result, these ads are not positively influencing their brand attitudes. In other words, the products/services advertised through pop-up ads do not appeal to these users. In fact, pop-ups can damage brands by creating a poor online user experience and this can have a detrimental effect on the entire brand.

The overall conclusion is that pop-ups are unnecessary cognitive and psychologically damaging distractions to Internet users and are ineffective as advertising tools online. As was suggested by Gong and Maddox (2003), "future research can look into the impact of web advertising across different countries and cultures to enhance the global understanding of web advertising effectiveness" (p: 46). As pop-up ads that contain both audio and video elements are on the increase, so will the interruptions to information seeking and the level of user annoyance, hence the need for further systematic research.

This study recommends that advertisers and managers should therefore pay particular attention to pop-up ads that are user friendly and less obstructive. In order for pop-up ads to be useful for advertisers/marketers its effectiveness must be improved. To achieve this there is the need for pop-up ads to be designed in such a way that it provides valuable information to online users. Alternatively, online advertisers should focus on alternative and more effective forms of advertising.

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