

Consumer Response to Context-Sensitive Advertising

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Abstract

This research addresses consumer response to context-sensitive advertising, a strategy wherein advertisement themes are crafted to be congruent with their media context (e.g., a car ad with an election theme placed in a political show during election season). The approach is based on marketers' expectation that this contextual fit enhances consumer attention. Yet prioritizing this congruency at the expense of the promoted product's fit with the media context and ad theme (i.e., cars and political elections have little in common) is, we argue, myopic and potentially detrimental to the brand. We find that while context-sensitive advertising enhances consumers' motivation to process an ad, it often does so at the cost of eliciting negative attitudinal responses. Thus, the use of context-sensitive advertising should consider all forms of congruity engendered by the tactic, while also considering this sensitivity at deeper, semantic levels rather than merely perceptual ones. This is particularly important given that marketers often rely on automated algorithms that place context-sensitive ads within media in real time, with potentially deleterious effects.

Keywords: *advertising, congruity, attention.*

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