

Submission for the Award of Masters by Research (Marketing)

More than meets the eye.

The effect of audio branding tactics on video advertising memory metrics.

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Abstract

For video advertising to have subsequent effects in-market, viewers need to know which brand is advertised. Therefore, it is imperative that viewers not only see and/or hear ads, but that they also register the brand. The most direct way to communicate the brand to viewers is via the brand name. Brand name execution varies with respect to modality (audio or visual), timing, and frequency; with each playing a role in how the brand is noticed and registered.

Despite the need for advertising to leave some trace of the brand (product or service) in consumer memory, branding execution often fails to capture attention. Correct brand identification is often lacklustre, with more than half of an ad's viewers failing to remember the brand name (Franzen 1994; Rossiter & Bellman 2005). These findings highlight that a significant number of advertising exposures are ineffective, which may stem from poor branding execution (Romaniuk 2009). The effects of ad avoidance also enhance the likelihood of a brand being missed, thus potentially inhibiting brand linkage further (Bellman, Schweda & Varan 2010).

Whilst the brand name can be presented visually or audibly (or both, which is referred to as 'dual branding') in video advertising, a lot of past research has focused on visual branding techniques (e.g Brennan & Babin 2004; Scott & Craig-Lees 2006). Given the increasingly fragmented media environment and the commonality of distracted audiences, audio branding has some unique differences to visual branding that enhance its ability to be noted by consumers.

The objective of this thesis is to understand how to best use audio branding in video advertising to inform creative decision making and enhance the memorability of branding in ads. Specifically, memorability was examined using two key memory measures: free brand recall and brand recognition.

The design of this research is primarily explorative and utilises a dataset built from 14 unique advertising studies. The dataset is made up of 69 real-world ads ranging from 15 to 60-seconds. 51 unique brands are advertised, ranging from consumer goods (e.g., bottled water and milk) to services (e.g., internet or insurance providers). Coding of every ad was undertaken to pair with the post-test survey responses collected by the MediaScience Lab to determine links between advertising effectiveness measures and branding placement and frequency.

The key results and contributions of this thesis include:

- Audio and visual branding (dual branding) in video advertising improves memory metrics, brand recall and brand recognition, compared to visual only branded ads;
- Audio branding should be introduced early in the ad to improve effectiveness;
- Increased audio frequency leads to better memory scores;
- Visual branding remains the primary driver for memory success.

The results show the incremental benefit of incorporating any audio branding (even a single audio mention) to the memorability of video advertising. Given the nature of the media environment and the distractions that persist, audio branding has the power to cut through and reach those viewers whom are not necessarily paying visual attention to the screen. This thesis provides further evidence supporting the empirical generalisation that dual mode branding has a positive relationship with recall (see Romaniuk 2009, for review).

Regarding specific tactics, increasing audio frequency had a significant impact on free brand recall, giving more opportunity for the brand to cut through and impact consumer memory. However, one audio mention was sufficient to impact brand recognition, with two or more mentions having diminishing returns. Given free brand recall is a harder task for respondents, increasing audio frequency has a more profound effect. Whereas brand recognition provides cues and support, thus extra audio mentions may not be needed to strengthen brand memory links. The brand should also be introduced early in the audio track of a video ad to ensure increased space for subsequent verbal mentions.

This thesis contributes to the body of knowledge on branding modality, frequency, and timing in audio-visual media. The analysis adds evidence supporting the empirical generalisation that dual branding has a positive relationship with brand memory, as well as extending this finding to another memory metric; brand recognition. Further evidence on the effect of early branding (visual and audio) introduction to enhance the memorability of an ad is also presented. Adding to the existing academic literature on branding timing is particularly useful given existing results mainly present inconsistent findings, based on varied definitions of early branding.

Understanding the impact of brand name placement can help improve future executions, especially in terms of making ads more effective at connecting to the brand. Presenting the brand name is a vital pre-requisite for advertisers who need to remind and nudge consumers to purchase their brand. Advertisers cannot overlook the value of audio branding and it should be a consideration for the creative briefing and development process. Results provide indicative evidence for practitioners to evaluate their own advertising performance with respect to branding quality.

In summary, this research advances academic and industry understanding of where to place the brand name in video advertising, in order to improve advertising effectiveness that will in turn, help grow brands.