

Institutionen för

TENTAMEN

Kurs: Forskningsmetoder och tekniker inom User Experience Design G1F

Examinationsmoment: Salstentamen 2

Kurskod: IT425G

Högskolepoäng för examinationsmomentet: 3

Datum: 2026-01-15

Tentamenstid: 14.15 – 19.30

Ansvarig lärare: Tarja Susi

Berörda lärare: Niklas Torstensson

Hjälpmedel/bilagor: Det är tillåtet att ha med sig kurslitteratur och föreläsninganteckningar.

Övrigt

- Anvisningar
- Ta nytt blad för varje lärare
 - Ta nytt blad för varje ny fråga
 - Skriv endast på en sida av papperet.
 - Skriv namn och personnummer på samtliga inlämnade blad.
 - Numrera lösbladen löpande.
 - Använd inte röd penna.
 - Markera med kryss på omslaget vilka uppgifter som är lösta.

Poänggränser

För att få G på tentamen krävs minst 60% av det totala poängantalet.

För att få VG på tentamen krävs minst 80% av det totala poängantalet.

Skrivningsresultat bör offentliggöras inom 18 arbetsdagar

Lycka till!

Antal sidor totalt 12: framsida = 1, tentamensfrågor = 2, tillhörande artikel = 9 sidor dubbelsidig utskrift (18 sidor ensidig utskrift)

Tentamensfrågor

Fråga 1

(8 p)

Inom kvalitativa undersökningar finns olika strategiska ideal. Din uppgift är att redogöra för vad följande ideal innebär:

- a) Flexibel design
- b) Naturalistisk undersökning

Fråga 2

(12 p)

Ange för var och en av påståendena om det är sant eller falskt. Motivera dina svar utifrån begreppens innebörd. Notera att påståendena inte kan vara *både* sanna och falska.

- a) Icke-deltagande observation innebär att observatören är med och observerar, men ska synas och höras så lite som möjligt
- b) Generaliserbarhet är en viktig del av den kvalitativa ansatsen.
- c) Forskartriangulering innebär att datainsamling ska genomföras av tre olika forskare

Fråga 3

(8 p)

I följande scenario är din uppgift att resonera kring, och motivera, metodval och etiska aspekter. Scenario:

Företaget FunGames håller på att utveckla ett äventyrsspel för PC, för målgruppen 12–15 år. Företaget har gett dig uppdraget att utvärdera en betaversion av spelet för att undersöka hur målgruppen upplever spelet och om det är engagerande. Du ser att en kvalitativ undersökning är lämplig att genomföra, och företaget är villiga att betala för alla resurser du anser att du behöver.

- a) Vilken eller vilka datainsamlingstekniker skulle du använda dig av och varför?
- b) Vilka etiska aspekter tar du hänsyn till när du planerar din undersökning och varför?

Fråga 4
(16 p)

Den bifogade artikeln ligger till grund för denna fråga och ska diskuteras utifrån ett kvalitativt metodperspektiv.

Banerjee, S. & Pal, A. (2023). I hate ads but not the advertised brands: a qualitative study on Internet users' lived experiences with YouTube ads. *Internet Research*, 33(1), 39-56.

För att uppnå en hög grad av trovärdighet (trustworthiness) hos resultaten i en kvalitativ studie finns det olika kvalitetskriterier att beakta.

Kvalitetskriterierna är *tillförlitlighet* (credibility), *överförbarhet* (transferability), *pålitlighet* (dependability) och *överrenstämelse* (confirmability). Du ska med hjälp av dessa faktorer granska den studie som presenteras i artikeln och bedöma studiens trovärdighet.

Din uppgift är att systematiskt gå igenom metod i artikeln (avsnitt Materials and method), och identifiera och diskutera de styrkor och svagheter som finns där. Du kan även behöva inkludera andra delar av artikeln för att bedöma studiens trovärdighet.

Tänk på att det tydligt ska framgå att du har förstått vad som ökar respektive äventyrar trovärdigheten i en kvalitativ undersökning. Samtliga svar ska motiveras.

I hate ads but not the advertised brands: a qualitative study on Internet users' lived experiences with YouTube ads

I hate ads but
not the
advertised
brands

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to explore Internet users' lived experiences with video ads, both skippable and non-skippable, while watching content on YouTube.

Design/methodology/approach – In-depth interviews were conducted with 22 participants.

Findings – The participants unanimously expressed dissatisfaction with YouTube ads. The dissatisfaction was directed to the platform but did not spill over to the advertised brand/product. Ethical concerns related to privacy also emerged. Specifically, with respect to non-skippable ads, the participants expressed dislike for forced viewing and explained how they would engage in extraneous activities during the ads. Nonetheless, they appreciated the flexibility offered by skippable ads. They also elaborated on how, why and when they would skip/not skip skippable ads.

Originality/value – The findings are discussed in light of the literature on not only online advertising but also platform switching versus continuance intention, spillover effect, privacy–personalization paradox and visual attention.

Keywords Ad skipping, Online advertisement, Online experience, Privacy–personalization paradox, Skippable ad, Video advertising, YouTube, YouTube marketing

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

YouTube has now become the most popular online video-sharing platform (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2021). Staggeringly, Internet users upload over 500 h of video each minute. Moreover, YouTube videos of over a billion hours are watched daily by the online community. Of late, people have reportedly been shifting their preference from subscribing to a pay TV service to watching YouTube (Smith, 2020).

YouTube, however, is up against an intriguing challenge. For one, it has to meet the interests of marketers by allowing them to run video ads in order to reach their target audience (Tafesse, 2020). YouTube and the content creators also earn from ads that are approved for monetization (YouTube Creators, 2019). However, bombarding users with ads hampers their viewing experience (Belanche *et al.*, 2017a, b; Dehghani *et al.*, 2016). Users who are dissatisfied with their YouTube experience may cut back on their viewing time. The lower the time users spend on YouTube, the lower the scope for ads to run, the lower the scope for marketers to have their interests served and the lower the scope for the platform as well as the content creators to earn (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2021).

As a way to tackle this challenge, two disparate video ad formats have become popular (YouTube, 2019). One includes ads up to three minutes long but skippable after five seconds.

The author Anjan Pal was with Nanyang Technological University, Singapore when the project started.

The authors are grateful to Liu Bo for his help with the data collection and analysis. A part of this research has been presented at the 2021 International Conference on Ubiquitous Information Management and Communication (<https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/9377378>).



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The implications of the research for theory and practice are also highlighted. The final section summarizes the key conclusions.

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Literature review

Related works

Early research on online advertising predominantly focused on users' acceptance of the Internet as a medium for advertising (Ducoffe, 1996; Edwards *et al.*, 2002; Yoon and Kim, 2001). Entertainment and informativeness of ads were positively related to the perceived value of the ads in the online setting whereas perceived irritation had a negative association (Ducoffe, 1996). Traditional online ad formats include popups, floating ads and banner ads. It was found that popup ads, which open another window over the browser, along with floating ads, which appear by creating a layer over the web page, score highly in terms of the annoyance factor while banner ads score highly on the information front and are hence viewed relatively more favorably (Burns and Lutz, 2006). Online ads tend to be viewed more negatively than ads in mass communication avenues such as TV commercials (Logan, 2013).

Although early research confirmed that users find online advertising irritable (Ducoffe, 1996), subsequent works started to reveal a gradual shift in attitude (Edwards *et al.*, 2002; Yoon and Kim, 2001). These works also found that a favorable attitude toward online ads tends to be positively associated with the effectiveness of advertising. For example, Cho *et al.* (2001) found that users did not necessarily have a negative attitude toward ads with forced exposure. Expectedly, advertising effectiveness in terms of click-through rates from forced exposure was higher than that from nonforced exposure. Moreover, Li *et al.* (2002) suggested that users' perceptions of interruption and intrusiveness could derive from advertisement length and frequency. According to Smith (2011), characteristics of online ads that cause a high level of annoyance with regard to intrusiveness include length, repetition and the degree of forced exposure.

As social media continued to become popular, the advertising ecosystem has been undergoing a paradigm shift from persuasive mass communication to meeting individuals' specific needs (Belanche *et al.*, 2020; Cho *et al.*, 2001; Li *et al.*, 2002; Sundar *et al.*, 2017). Consequently, scholars have been looking into users' perceptions of online ads with a renewed sense of urgency (Belanche *et al.*, 2017a, b, 2020; Dehghani *et al.*, 2016). Specifically, in the context of video-sharing social media, Dehghani *et al.* (2016) found that users' perceptions of entertainment, customization and informativeness were positively related to advertising value while perceived irritation showed a negative association. According to Logan (2013), users rarely view ads as a means of subsidizing the cost of online content. Rather, they tend to dismiss ads as being intrusive.

Meanwhile, the level of users' control over advertising has evolved together with interactive social media. Most pertinently, YouTube introduced skippable video ads in 2010 as an interactive ad format that allows users to watch the ad to completion or skip it after five seconds (Pashkevich *et al.*, 2012). Unlike non-skippable ads, the skippable format allows greater control and positively influences users' attitudes toward online ads. It empowers users by enabling them to choose what ad content to watch, when and where, thereby contributing to a perception of a more user-friendly platform (Belanche *et al.*, 2017a, 2020; Chakraborty *et al.*, 2021; Pashkevich *et al.*, 2012).

Despite the growing popularity of the skippable ad format in online video advertising, the prevalence of ad-skipping tendency and users' inattentiveness toward ads are serious concerns for the advertising industry. With this format, users highly attend to their choice of media content and do not pay attention to ads (Campbell *et al.*, 2017). When ads are not attentively viewed and processed, they essentially fail to serve their purposes (Storme *et al.*, 2015). According to Belanche *et al.* (2017b), as users gain experience in watching online

those ads does not readily fit into any *a priori* theoretical frameworks. This called for employing a qualitative, exploratory and inductive methodology (Martin and Turner, 1986).

Interpretivism was adopted for this paper as it allows understanding of a phenomenon through the views and experiences of participants (Cohen and Manion, 1994; Creswell, 2003; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2011). It is rooted in the ontological assumption that the nature of reality is socially constructed (Tadajewski, 2006). Hence, the interpretivist paradigm matches well with the study objective of interpreting Internet users' lived experiences with skippable and nonskippable ads while watching videos on YouTube (Charmaz, 2003; Lupton and Maslen, 2019; Smith and Osborn, 2003; Templeton *et al.*, 2016). Within the interpretivist tradition, a grounded theory approach was followed. It is a flexible research paradigm that allows room for interpretation and adaptation in studying underresearched and undertheorized phenomena inductively (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Martin and Turner, 1986; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Suddaby, 2006). The intent was to come up with an empirically grounded understanding of the lived experiences with YouTube ads.

Specifically, in-depth interviews were conducted. An in-depth interview method involves an unstructured, direct, personal interview where a participant is probed by an interviewer through open-ended questions to uncover motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings about a topic (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017). It was deemed appropriate to obtain a rich understanding of participants' lived experiences with ads on YouTube.

In-depth interviews require information rich cases. Therefore, through convenience sampling and snowballing, 22 participants (gender: 12 females, 10 males and age group: 21–30 years) were recruited. They were postgraduate students who were all heavy YouTube watchers and were also familiar with other video-on-demand services such as Netflix. Such a young demographic profile is particularly suited to studying online video ads (Belanche *et al.*, 2020; Dehghani *et al.*, 2016).

The sample size was not predetermined. Instead, data collection continued in tandem with data coding and analysis. The former was stopped when the latter started to reveal repetitive themes, denoting the possibility of theoretical saturation (Guest *et al.*, 2006). The sample size of 22 is comparable to that used in in-depth interviews (e.g. Hazeri and Martin, 2009; Olaisen and Revang, 2017). In fact, 16 in-depth interviews are usually considered sufficient for saturation (Francis *et al.*, 2010; Guest *et al.*, 2006; Hagaman and Wutich, 2017).

A research assistant was trained to help with the interviews, each of which lasted about 30–45 min. There was a set of questions asking the participants how they usually felt when exposed to ads on YouTube, and what they liked/disliked about skippable as well as nonskippable ads. Nonetheless, the structure of the interview was kept flexible and conversational (see Appendix). The participants were also asked to share their recent experiences while watching YouTube videos. The purpose was to stimulate in-depth accounts with minimal restrictions. During the interview, the participants were free to play any YouTube video of their choice on their mobile phones and explain their real-time ad experience (Kawaf, 2019). Unscripted probe questions such as “What else can you recall about that experience?” and “Can you give an example?” were asked regularly to encourage deeper insights as far as possible (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017).

The interviews were conducted face to face and were audio recorded. The research assistant also took handwritten observation notes during the interviews. At the end, permission was sought from the participants to exchange follow-up emails for clarification, if needed. The research assistant transcribed the audio recordings verbatim for coding and analysis.

Data coding and analysis

Consistent with the recommendations for conducting exploratory qualitative research using grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1990),

month. Clearly, the student segment of the population does not appear too keen to pay for a YouTube Premium.

Lengthy ads seldom drew favorable responses. For example, Participant 19 complained, “If it is too long, it makes me feel frustrated.” Echoed Participant 22, “Short advertisements are easy to accept when they are attractive enough. Even two or three ad lines, a logo I think is enough. The focus has been highlighted, and interested people will search for themselves.” According to Participant 13, “I’m sensitive to time. It’s too much for me [to watch lengthy ads].” Participant 9 said, “Watching long ads is not possible in the busy life. However, if they are watched, I think long ads help me remember the product advertised very well . . . If it has story it will be more acceptable. But I still prefer a short one.”

Dislike for the platform but not the brand. Participants’ dislike for ads seemed to engender a negative attitude toward YouTube as a platform but not necessarily toward the brand or the product advertised. Only three participants indicated that they would transfer the annoyance caused by the ads to the brand. “If a platform, let’s say, forces me to watch the commercial for two minutes before each video, I would feel a little bit repulsive of this kind of behavior of making money. Because it feels like that the platform and the brand sacrifice my time for own benefits,” said Participant 22.

Among the rest, Participant 8 opined, “Ads don’t positively influence my attitude toward the [advertised] brand. But it may change my attitude to the platform. I will change the platform, open other tabs, or go to Twitch. I have more interesting things to do than watching boring YouTube ads.”

“It will not affect the brand. But it may affect the platform as I feel that the platform is annoying,” echoed Participant 17. Agreed Participant 3, “For the brand, I will not be disgusted . . . I think manufacturers are doing the right thing by advertising. But the way the platform is choosing them to display is not good . . . If they force to look at them, I will give up the use of the platform.”

Ethical dimensions. One participant pointed out an advantage of being annoyed by ads on YouTube – it helps curb binge watching. Contemplated Participant 15, “I sometimes find it hard to stop watching YouTube, and keep on watching multiple videos one after another. I find ads very irritating as they are very intrusive, but it is because of those ads that I think enough is enough and I stop. The intrusive ads strangely are helpful for me to check my video watching addiction.” The unethical property of intrusiveness of ads, bizarrely, may have a positive influence in managing online addiction.

Another participant echoed concerns about privacy. “When I am signed in, I have noticed that I get a certain kind of ads. Those are different from the ads that I get when I am not signed in. It seems after I sign in, somebody is watching everything I am doing and giving me what I like . . . I don’t like this feeling. To avoid it, I often deliberately sign out and then watch YouTube. It means I have to spend a little more time to find the videos that I like, but I don’t mind spending that extra few seconds as at least there is more privacy,” said Participant 5.

A similar view was also expressed by Participant 20, “I am someone who likes to guard my privacy. But as soon as I sign out, I often get this sort of a pop-up saying that I am signed out of YouTube, and I need to sign in to like, comment, subscribe, etc. Come on, YouTube should not tell me what I have to do, I know what I am doing, and I will not let you monitor what I watch so that you can irritate me with [personalized] ads.”

Occasional positivity. A few participants echoed positive sentiments about YouTube ads. For example, Participant 1 was willing to spend time watching ads that have an interesting storyline: “If an ad has a good story, it is equivalent to watching a drama. Sometimes the story can be really impressive.” Participant 6 opined that “watching this kind of [interesting] advertising is pure entertainment.” Participant 17 was open to ads that are “beautifully made” in terms of visual aesthetics: “An ad that has a particularly good visual effect/content, I will watch for a while . . . They have to be relevant to me though [personalized].”

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Moreover, the option to either skip after five seconds or watch to completion gave participants the impression that the platform cares about their rights. For instance, Participant 18 commented, "With skippable ads, I feel respected. I think the platform and the advertising company respect our right to choose. Contrast to that, when I am not allowed to skip but forced to view, I feel deprived of my rights." According to Participant 22, "YouTube ads that allow me to choose to skip are the most tolerable."

Duration of non-skippability. Opinion was divided in terms of the duration of non-skippability for skippable ads. About half of the participants were satisfied with five seconds. For example, Participant 8 commented, "Five seconds are good enough. When I am impressed in the first five seconds, I can't skip." Participant 15 too indicated, "If I'm interested in the first five seconds, I watch it until it ends. If I'm not, that's it!" Concurred Participant 20, "I think [a duration of] five seconds is enough to judge whether you want to continue watching."

Among the remaining half, however, Participants 1, 6 and 17 were happy to allow a longer non-skippability of 10 s. For example, Participant 6 stated, "I don't mind another five seconds on top of five seconds." The rest advocated for either no non-skippability at all or at most a non-skippability of three seconds. For instance, Participant 5 commented, "I think it will be best if I can skip as soon as the ad starts playing." According to Participant 16, "The first three seconds are sufficient already, I can get it whether I want to watch or not."

When skippable ads are skipped. All participants alluded to their habitual skipping behavior with respect to skippable ads. For example, Participant 4 indicated, "I always want to skip. My patience for ads has become very low." Participant 8 confirmed, "Repeated skipping creates a habit of skipping." Participant 13 stated, "Study and work is too tight, almost no time for entertainment. Finally, when I have some time to watch video, I certainly wish not to waste time. Sometimes I skip some part in the video which is not very important. So how can I not skip ads that are skippable? I rarely don't skip, unless you do something else in the middle." Participant 21 also confessed having developed a habit of skipping, "I click the button to skip straight away almost in an autopilot mode."

During the first five seconds of non-skippability, participants seldom paid attention to the content of the ads. For instance, Participant 12 said, "I skip as soon as [. . . it can be skipped] . . . Before I am able to skip, I pay attention to the timer at the corner and watch that." Participant 14 echoed a similar view, "As soon as I find a skippable ad, I will try to jump to the main video. I will jump and jump every time without paying any attention to the ad. If I am using my laptop, I place my cursor right at the position of the 'Skip Ad' option."

The moment it is allowed, skipping skippable ads appears to be the default setting. To this end, Participant 9 commented, "When I come across a lot of skippable ads, I skip them all subconsciously without much thinking. If there are less skippable ads, maybe we may be more accepting." Subconscious skipping is occasionally regretted. For example, Participant 19 recalled, "After I skipped, I was suddenly like - Oh no, I needed to watch that! I feel that I missed out something exciting. This is a problem of uncontrolled skipping, but I still like skippable ads more than non-skippable ads."

When skippable ads are not skipped. Skippable ads are not skipped when they are congruent with expectations and can captivate the audience within the first five seconds. For example, Participant 17 indicated, "Sometimes from the first few seconds, I know that the topic is interesting to me, so I would watch fully." Participant 1 said, "Some ads have a very interesting opening. So I can't skip." Skippable ads are watched beyond five seconds only when the content somehow resonates with viewers. Participant 22 indicated, "I would not skip after five seconds only if there is something really interesting." Participant 2 agreed, "I will watch till the end only if it [is] something really emotional and there is an interesting story right from the start. But it rarely happens. Only one I remember in my last few days!"

2013; Smith, 2011). Consistent with this stream, this paper finds almost unanimous dislike for YouTube ads, as reflected in comments such as “I hate all types of ads on YouTube” (Participant 2) and “I don’t like ads on YouTube” (Participant 19). Advertising has long been accepted as essential in mass communication (Logan, 2013). However, when it comes to YouTube, users still seem reluctant to accept ads as a means of subsidizing the cost of online content. Instead of acknowledging the monetization of free online videos, they consider ads to be severely intrusive. Yet, the participants refused to pay for a YouTube Premium. The students in the sample did not appreciate YouTube’s freemium business model, which offers free but constrained access to services with the option to remove the constraints through payment (Anderson, 2009).

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The second stream of literature is the one that documents preference for skippable ads *vis-à-vis* non-skippable ads (Belanche *et al.*, 2017a, b, 2020; Pashkevich *et al.*, 2012). Consistent with this stream, the interviews reveal that non-skippable ads, in particular, can have a damning effect on users’ experiences with YouTube, even if they are short. This is evident from retorts such as “you can’t force me to watch those ads” (Participant 21). Skippable ads appear relatively better from the perspective of users’ viewing experience.

This paper further shows that non-skippable ads rarely receive the attention that they are after. Worryingly for marketers, these ads failed to promote brand recall despite being played in full. This is akin to the zipping/zapping phenomenon (Olney *et al.*, 1991), which explains how people refuse to pay attention to TV commercials, but in the contemporary media landscape. The paper further deepens the scholarly understanding of how, why and when users skip/not skip skippable ads. In terms of how, a tendency to skip “almost in autopilot mode” (e.g. Participant 21) was evident. Participants could not wait to skip especially when they were in the middle of work- or education-related videos. They were, however, more forgiving of ads when they were watching videos for recreational purposes. According to Participant 15, skipping was relatively more difficult when watching YouTube on mobile for relaxation than on laptop for studies: “I connect YouTube on TV when I am relaxing . . . too lazy to move out of bed. So, even if there is an advertisement, I can watch it . . . But when . . . I want to watch this Ted talk my professor recommended in class on my laptop, usually I would always skip.” As Edwards *et al.* (2002) suggested, behavioral responses to ads differ when users surf the Internet mindlessly versus goal-directedly.

The third stream of literature focuses on users’ intention to either continue using an online platform or switch to another related service. To this end, Wu *et al.* (2014) explained how poor service quality and inconvenience can translate into users’ switching behavior in the context of social networking sites. Fatigue has been shown to be negatively related to continuance intention for platforms such as WeChat (Zong *et al.*, 2019). Although no similar research has been conducted for YouTube, this paper finds evidence that ads on YouTube can promote platform switching tendencies – as expressed by Participant 8, “I will change the platform” – due to their intrusiveness. Hence, it is important for YouTube to better manage the expectations of its users with respect to ads in the increasingly competitive audio-visual online marketplace.

The fourth stream of literature deals with the spillover effect, which refers to the phenomenon of how individuals’ perception of an object has a bearing on their perception of another. The literature has highlighted spill over taking place within a product category (Balachander and Ghose, 2003), across product categories (Erdem, 1998) and from one product attribute to another (Ahluwalia *et al.*, 2000). It has also been shown that individuals commonly associate the affect engendered by a given content (video ads on YouTube in this case) with the advertised brand or product (Gelb and Pickett, 1983). In this vein, this paper reveals that even though the participants disliked ads on YouTube, their dissatisfaction was mostly directed to the platform but did not spill over to the advertised brand or product. As Participant 17 said, “It will not affect the brand. But it may affect the platform as I feel that the platform is annoying.”

Practical implications

The paper has a number of practical implications. For one, platforms such as YouTube are recommended to better manage users' expectations about ads. In general, the participants' dislike for ads was unequivocal. If users' expectations about ads on a given platform are not well managed, they may discontinue using the platform. Hence, users should be made aware of YouTube's business model, and the need for ads. To this end, it should be noted that YouTube recently updated its terms of service, "YouTube has the right to monetize all content on the platform and ads may appear on videos . . ." (Owsinski, 2020). This seems to be a step in the right direction.

Moreover, the paper reveals that skippable ads are received more favorably compared with non-skippable ads, even if the former is longer than the latter. Therefore, non-skippable ads should be used sparingly. To further enhance the flexibility offered by skippable ads, users may be allowed to customize the duration of non-skippability. As indicated earlier, a few participants were happy to allow a longer non-skippability of 10 s whereas a few others wanted it to be reduced to three seconds. Furthermore, to hinder habitual skipping, YouTube may want to experiment with the positioning of the "Skip Ad" button.

Where possible, the ads should be made relevant to users through personalization. In light of the privacy–personalization paradox, users need to be made more data literate. They should have a clear understanding of how the platform uses their digital footprint. Being transparent about data practices may promote users' willingness to disclose personal information and preferences (Jacobson *et al.*, 2020), which in turn will facilitate personalization without being perceived as intrusive. The platform, its viewers, its content creators as well as marketers need to come to an agreed ad exposure policy in the best interest of all the involved stakeholders.

The paper also highlights that marketers have their work cut out for them in measuring the effectiveness of video ads on YouTube. Marketers usually pay when users watch the full ad if it is short or at least 30 s if it is longer. However, users playing ads for such durations do not necessarily mean they are paying attention. Their gaze could be fixated on the terminal area of the screen. Alternatively, they could use the time to "go to the kitchen," "use WhatsApp," or "rest [their] eyes from screen time." To aggravate the problem, examples of effective advertising were rare: "I can't remember ever being persuaded to buy anything as a consequence of YouTube ads" (Participant 10). Nonetheless, on an optimistic note for marketers, while the negative attitude generally engendered by ads does not spill over to the advertised brand or product, the positive attitude fostered by skippable ads does.

Finally, the paper finds the participants to be almost addicted to multiscreening. They could not wait to watch their intended content, and hence were unforgiving of ads. Even when the ads played, they would work on "other tabs" on their browsers, "check emails," or look through notifications on their phones to allay nomophobia – the fear of missing out caused by the lack of contact with mobile phones (Dhir *et al.*, 2018). This multiscreen addiction among individuals aged between 21 and 30 years is certainly unhealthy (Lin *et al.*, 2020). Hence, they are advised to make efforts to curb the tendency through greater self-regulation. It is far from ideal if the youth, like Participant 15, has to rely on the annoyance created by ads – rather than one's sense of consciousness – to keep binge watching at bay: "The intrusive ads strangely are helpful for me to check my video watching addiction."

Limitations and future research directions

This paper has two limitations. First, the sample included students, who were heavy YouTube watchers and belonged to the 21–30 years age bracket. Hence, the findings should not be generalized to the wider online populace. That said, this demographic profile is suitable for studying online video ads (Belanche *et al.*, 2020; Dehghani *et al.*, 2016; Smith, 2020). Second,

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