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Investigating consumer visual memory of 360-degree and standard video advertisements: A social information-processing theory perspective

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Abstract

In the modern era, marketers focus more on digital channels, although online marketing efforts are considered a popular topic (Lynch, 2015). The 360-degree video technology is not a completely new nor a completely old concept as it recently has gained attention (in year 2017) by joining the list of standard video formats (Feng, 2018; Feng, Xie, & Lou, 2019). In 2017, around 86% of businesses had used 360-degree videos as part of their respective marketing campaigns (Feng, Xie, & Lou, 2019). The purpose of this study is to investigate the differential effects of 360-degree and standard video advertisements on consumer visual memory under single and multiple viewing conditions. This study addresses two main research questions, "How do the effects of 360-degree video advertisements on visual memory differ from the effects of standard video advertisements?" and "How do the effects of 360-degree video advertisements on visual memory differ from the effects of standard video advertisements, after repeated viewing?" using two studies. Study 1 addresses the first research question and study 2 addresses the second research question.

 The data were collected using experimental surveys and interviews with 40 participants and were analysed using a qualitative thematic approach via NVivo QSR software. This study explores consumer visual memory using the theoretical constructs of a theory of social information processing by Wyer (2003)—a social psychology theory that focuses on several aspects in the social cognition stages (Wyer, 2003). The four theoretical constructs of the 'workspace' unit were used, which are comprehender, encoder, inference maker and response selector to explore consumer visual memory. In the single viewing condition, a total of 10 main themes are identified under the four categories of visual comprehension, encoding, inference making and response selection. These are colour detection, facial expressions, visuals on locations, visuals on objects, visuals on people, visuals on actions, multi-cultural symbols, behavioural engagement, visuals on product details and visuals on brand details. In the repeated viewing condition, a total of 11 main themes are identified under the four categories of visual comprehension, encoding, inference making and response selection. These are colour detection, facial expressions, plot or storytelling, visuals on locations, visuals on objects, visuals on people, visuals on actions, emotional engagement , behavioural engagement, visuals on product details and product benefits.

The findings of this study are as follows. From a theoretical perspective, the application of a social psychology theory for the advertising sector enables us to gather more insights about the social cognition stages of the human mindset, such as information retrieval, judgement, decision making, goal stimulation, and short- and long-term memory (Wyer, 2003). This study not only explores consumer visual memory of 360-degree video advertisements and standard video advertisements, but also contributes to the theory of social information processing by Wyer (2003) by being among the first few comparative study. From a practical perspective, findings of this study provide a solid foundation for advertising firms or agencies, marketers, and salespeople on how to arrange visuals in standard and 360-degree video advertisements in a way that appeals to consumer visual memory, by considering the four categories of comprehender, encoder, inference maker and response selector in visual working memory.

Keywords: 360-degree videos, standard videos, qualitative thematic analysis, visual memory, social information processing, social psychology, advertising