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Crash Exercise

I. Research Impetus

The reason for this research is to understand when effective advertising becomes ineffective. It is important for advertisers to understand at what point their advertisements become too much for the consumer, ultimately proving ineffective. We want to understand whether the bombardment of advertisements affects a customer's willingness to see ads in the future. We hope that this research will help websites learn how to effectively show consumers advertisements, in turn creating a mutually beneficial balance in advertisements for both the consumer and advertiser.

II. Variables of Interest

The independent variable of this experiment will be the absence or presence of annoying, excessive advertising on a webpage. We will manipulate the amount and placement of advertisements on a news website's homepage. The dependent variable will be people's motivation to reduce or eliminate seeing advertisements. The control will be the same news homepage with zero visible advertisements. We are testing to see if priming participants with an obnoxious amount of advertisements will increase the likelihood of them seeking out an ad blocker.

III. Theoretical Rationale

The theoretical rationale behind this experiment is based on the theory of media priming. This theory refers to the idea that people's unconscious can be motivated by images that stimulate associated networks and thoughts in our minds. Based on this theory of priming, our research aims to prime viewers minds by exposing them to advertisements on a particular webpage. We will analyse how priming viewers with an excessive amount of annoying

advertisements on a webpage influences the likelihood that they will seek out ad blockers or methods of avoiding advertisements in the future.

IV. Research Design

In order to conduct this research, participants will be randomly distributed to one of three different groups. All groups will be viewing the same news website but will be exposed to different advertising experiences. The experiment will focus on a news article because it takes advantage of the focused attention of the participants. Unlike with casual browsing, participants are more likely to notice advertisements while intently searching for information.

The first group, the control group, will view the website with no advertisements. The second group will view the news article with a moderate amount of advertisements. This means that the page will only display one to two advertisements in different locations on the page. For example, participants may see one banner advertisement and a sidebar advertisement or one pop-up advertisement while viewing the news story. The last group will be exposed to an overkill advertising experience. This group will view multiple sidebar, pop-up, and banner advertisements,

After fully viewing the webpage, each participant will take a survey about their experiences. This survey will gauge the participant's interest in finding alternatives to viewing advertisements. Some of these questions may include:

- On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to seek out viewing alternatives?
- On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to pay to not see advertisements?
- Have you ever sought out an advertisement-blocking application on your browser?
- Would you consider using an advertisement-blocking application?
- On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to download one of these applications?

V. Implications

From the experiment, we expect that users in the “overkill advertisements” group will be most likely to opt out of receiving ads (i.e. select 7 or more on a scale of 1-10 concerning likeliness of opting out of an ad), followed by the “low advertisement” group, and lastly the “no

advertisements” control group. We hypothesize that the low advertisement and control groups will be more neutral about opting out of the advertising experience (i.e. selecting 6 or less on a scale of 1-10 concerning likeliness of opting out of an ad), as long as the ad does not detract from their ability to accomplish their goal: reading a news story. With overkill advertising, we predict that the ads will distract the reader from their goal, prompting them to opt out of the ad experience. If this is the case, then we have a better understanding of the threshold associated with ad placements on websites and similar platforms.

However, if our hypothesis is wrong and all the groups communicate a likeliness of 7 or more concerning opting out of an ad, then the evidence underlines that any amount of advertising will push consumers to opt out. If this is the case, the question becomes how can we make ineffective advertising effective? We acknowledge that advertising on these platforms cannot and will not stop due to the convenience and cost effectiveness of the placements. Companies can easily track the number of impressions and ad conversions utilizing online advertising. Instead, companies will have to think of innovative ways to approach advertising in order to capture consumer attention without annoying them and turning them off to the brand.

Based on the results of the experiment, more questions will arise that should be explored through additional research. For example, if our hypothesis is proven and the evidence points to a threshold for advertising, we would like to better estimate what the current threshold is. Or there’s likely room for exploration surrounding whether consumers take a website more or less seriously depending on the number of ads? Therefore, whether the experiment supports or doesn’t support the proposed hypothesis, we understand that more clarity is needed in the online advertising category as a whole to better deem when effective advertising turns ineffective.