Roundtable  Repetition and Spacing of Marketing Stimuli: Implications For Memory

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Repetition and Spacing of Marketing Stimuli: Implications for Memory

Much research has shown evidence for strong and robust effects on memory resulting from the spacing of repeated stimuli. Namely, to-be-remembered items presented without a lag between presentations (massed items) are not recalled as well as items that are presented with time or other items intervening between presentations (spaced items). However, researchers are divided on why spacing to-be-remembered items improves recall. Some work suggests that encoding variability drives the effect (Singh, Mishra, Bendapudi and Linville 1994; Umava & Burnkrant 1991). Other results provide evidence for the role of study-phase retrieval practice (Appleton-Knapp et al. 1999; Janiszewski, Noel & Sawyer 2003). Reconstruction is also proposed as contributing to the effects of spacing (Braun 1999; Braun, Ellis & Loftus 2002; Jacoby 1978). Clearly more work is needed to disentangle these processes and to determine how they interact in producing improved memory for spaced material. An understanding of the spacing effect is particularly important for advertisers who can use findings in this area to optimize advertisements and to understand how varying lag lengths between presentations of ads can affect consumer memory.

The purpose of this roundtable is to bring together researchers with differing views to discuss their research and to gain a better understanding of how the spacing effect works and what predictions can be made about spacing in marketing. Braun-LaTour brings expertise in false memory research. Specifically, she can speak to how reconstruction processes can lead to false memories and how false memories are more likely to occur with long lags between product experience and advertising. Appleton-Knapp and Noel have both done work on study-phase retrieval and can discuss its contribution to the spacing effect. Noel, along with C. Janiszewski, is currently examining whether reconstruction can also account for this phenomenon and what are possible moderating variables. In addition, Appleton-Knapp has experimental evidence to show that under some conditions, variation in advertisements can attenuate the spacing effect. Much work on the spacing effect has been conducted in basic psychology. Another benefit of a roundtable on spacing led by this group of researchers is that they all are well-versed in the psychology literature on spacing. Braun-LaTour has worked with Loftus, one of the foremost psychologists working in the false memory domain and Appleton-Knapp has worked with R. Bjork, a renowned psychologist who studies memory processes. A discussion led by Appleton-Knapp, Braun-LaTour and Noel would explore new areas for research in spacing as well as expand the opportunity for collaborative work among researchers in related areas.