

User Engagement and Interaction with YouTube Pre-roll Advertisements

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Abstract

Advertising culture and techniques around the globe have come across remarkable changes in the era of New Media. The streaming media including YouTube had revolutionized the viewing experience of the audiences. The enterprises have realized the impact and powerfulness YouTube advertising facilitated by its wide access to billions of people all around the world. Among them, pre-roll advertisements are most used by advertisers to reach their target audience. Internet has grown in recognition as an advanced advertising platform because it allows 24 hours' interactivity between the advertiser and the consumer. This particular study is to find out how the young YouTube users are engage and interact with the pre-roll advertisements benefiting from this dynamic nature of online media. A survey was conducted among the 150 youth (18-35) respondents from Kozhikode district and statistical techniques are used to determine engagement, action, and statistical significance with the variables.

Keywords

Pre-roll Advertisements, Media Engagement, User Interaction, Purchase Decisions

Introduction

Advertising plays a major role in modern life. It shapes consumer behavior and even influences attitudes of the society and the individual. Advertising in social media and online streaming media emerges as an important way of appealing to the viewers in recent years. Seamless access to the Internet and increases in data usage made the marketers concentrate and invest largely on social media and video streaming websites like YouTube. Advertising through this media is different from that of traditional advertising techniques. Interactivity is the key element that separates online video from other media. This considerable feature of YouTube and other online streaming services is also attributed and encompassed in advertising practices over the media. The impact, content and usage patterns of these advertisements are unique and paving the way for new innovations in the area of marketing.

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YouTube Advertising

There is no disagreeing that YouTube has become a legitimate source of entertainment for millions, all in just over a decade. YouTube is currently competing with a number of the most important TV programs and often it wins in terms of views. Most content uploaded to the YouTube is from individuals, many of whom consider it as their job and their channel a primary source of income. In fact, most entertainment and broadcast companies now have their own YouTube channel. Multiple abilities to be one of the largest search engines and as a video content provider to popular audiences make YouTube a very striking option for digital advertisements. YouTube allows the viewer to interact with the campaign and socialize with the brands from the video in an easier way. According to various studies, this video-sharing website has become an increasingly popular place to advertise. In 2017, 20% of all video ad revenues in America will go to YouTube, according to e-Marketer forecasts. Moreover, advertising accounted for more than 80 percent of Google's revenue in the first quarter of 2021, with YouTube in particular emerging as a growth driver. Advertising revenue generated on YouTube grew by 49 percent year-over-year (Richter, 2021). The trend shows YouTube advertising gives marketers an affordable and more effective alternative to television ads.

Nationwide and industry-specific targeting is easy with the suite of options available to advertisers. Because many viewers are logged into their personal YouTube accounts, advertisers can target specific populations based on their search history and other key data. Understanding audiences allow your business to target viewers based on categories of interests. Depending on search terms and video content, businesses can target customers with different types of videos. In brief, like the other online advertising platforms personalization is a key factor contributes to the growth of YouTube advertising. Unlike traditional advertising, online ads especially YouTube ads provide detailed information about the effectiveness of the campaign. Exposures, click-through rates, bounce rates can be identified that would be nearly impossible to objectively measure with radio, billboards and other alternatives. With data about which ads are most effective, the company's campaign is better able to modify promotional and marketing strategies.

Google offers several different video advertising options on YouTube. There are a variety of advertisement options that a business can utilize through YouTube. The major ones are in-stream advertisements, Overlay advertisements and Sponsored cards (YouTube, 2021). Skippable video advertisements is currently the most common ad format for YouTube advertisements with viewers being able to skip over your video after 5 seconds

of viewing. Un-Skippable video ads, just as it sounds they must be fully viewed by the user before the video can be viewed. The user does not have the option to pass over the ad video. Bumper ads are Un-skippable but it is durable only of up to 6 seconds that must be watched before your video can be viewed. Bumper ads are a short video ad format that let you reach more customers and increase awareness about your brand by using a short, memorable message. These video ads can appear when a user initiates video play either in the beginning (pre-roll), at points in between (mid-roll), or after (post-roll).

Pre-roll Advertisements

The benefits of programmatic advertising, including advanced targeting, campaign measurement, and conversion optimization, companies can engage with their consumers and effectively allocate their message to large audiences through pre-roll advertisements. Pre-roll is great for augmented brand awareness, advertisement recollects, and purchase contemplation, mid-roll has advanced completion rates, making it a better option for a company who requires their whole ad to be viewed. Pre-roll video advertising is now commonly found on many websites, including YouTube. The effectiveness of pre-roll video advertising has been attributed to the fact that it's similar to what viewers are used to seeing on the video. Although pre-roll is used across various industries and many digital marketers have embraced the initiative, it is still an underutilized asset.

Pre-roll is potentially a great promotion opportunity for brands that can rise above the initial barriers to access and can pull the space that their competitors are gone out on. There are abundant ways to evaluate the impact of retargeted pre-roll video ads, such as evaluating the view rate, video ad close rate, visitor return rate, surveys and hours of brand engagement. While brand impact and alertness is the common goal for online video programs, smarter, tailored video ads should also be measured for things like conversions; average order value, incremental revenue and revisit on advertisement spend. As we said earlier pre-roll ads can be skippable, un-skippable or bumper ads. Most of the pre-roll ads accompany the link to the product or the business website and an option to share the video advertisement. Share enabled ads can be seen in the YouTube channel of the particular advertiser. Here the users can like or dislike the video ad and comment on them if the option is enabled.

Objectives of the Study

YouTube pre-roll ads have a greater reach to billions of all around the world. Here, the researcher checks the preferences for engagement and interaction of YouTube users with the pre-roll advertisements. This is done under the context

of various demographic variables that may influence the engagement, and consumption of the Pre-roll ads. For materializing this general objective, the researcher set some specific objectives.

1. To find out the user preferences generating viewing engagement with pre-roll advertisements.
2. To identify the level of interaction of YouTube viewers towards the pre-roll Advertisements.
3. To find out whether there is any relationship between the YouTube users Pre-roll advertisement engagement, interaction and demographic variables.

Methodology

This study is an analysis of the engagement and interaction of YouTube pre-roll ads among youth. Considering the varied nature and level of exposure of the viewers, the researcher used the sampling method with an exception that it can represent the whole YouTube viewers in Kozhikode district. Purposive sampling method was employed among the youth respondents from Kozhikode district province. The criterion put in was that they are active viewers of YouTube within the age group of 18-35 and were inhabitants of Kozhikode district. Of the 178 total collected samples, 150 respondents with proper data were scrutinized for study.

Theoretical Background

The AISAS model of consumer behavior is applied in the study to analyze the engagement, and interaction patterns of pre-roll advertisements among the consumers. The linear classic AIDMA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Memory, and Action) model by Hall (1924) has played a central role in describing the psychological processes involved in a consumer's purchase of product. With this model, the buyer is depicted as passing through the stages of Attention, Interest, Desire, Memory, and Action. In the Digital era, where online advertising became a powerful and effective marketing tool, a new approach and model has been put forward by Dentsu (DentsuInc. is a Japanese international advertising and public relations joint stock company headquartered in Tokyo) in 2004. The Attention, Interest, Search, Action, and share (AISAS) is actually derived from the original AIDMA model.

Attention ⇨ **Interest** ⇨ **Search** ⇨ **Action** ⇨ **Share**

It was developed to observe behaviors based on the understanding that the Internet has become prevalent, and that consumers now have access to environments in which they can obtain and transmit information themselves. In this model, the key processes are: Attention, in which the consumer first notices the product or advertisement, followed by Interest. After this, the consumer Searches for information, and then makes a purchase (Action), after which information is Shared with others (Dentsu, 2017).

Here in this study the researcher attempt to analyze how pre-roll ads are capable of attaining the YouTube viewers' attention and directs them towards the next steps in purchase. Since YouTube Pre-Roll advertisements is a powerful form of online advertisement, the digital advertising model AISAS is directly applied to the study. The study analyzes how pre-roll ads grab attention and generates viewing engagement (Analyzing responders' preferences) and whether they click the link Search or Share the advertisements or product (Interaction with pre-roll advertisements).

Findings

Sample Profile

The sample profile of the study is on the basis of the demographic variables gender, age, education and area of living. Out of the total of 150 samples, females contribute to a simple majority (50.7%) and 49.3% of male. A large majority of the sample is between 18-25 years of age (82.7%). In matters of Education about half of the population is PG qualified (49.3%). 35.7% of the respondents have degree qualification. A majority of (54.7%) respondents belongs to the rural areas and a minority (43.3%) lives in urban areas. Only 2% respondents are from the coastal areas.

Consumer Preferences in Engagement

In order to access the user preferences in consuming pre-roll advertisements, audience view on specific video advertisement elements have been analyzed. It includes Music, presence of celebrity, brand and storyline.

Music and Engagement

The following table shows the opinion of respondents towards the statement denoting music as an instrument to watch pre-roll ads. The analysis is based on the level of agreement given by the respondents.

Table 1 Preference for Music

Level of Agreement	Frequency (%)
Strongly Agree	10 (6.6)
Agree	40 (26.7)
Neutral	52 (34.7)
Disagree	39 (26.0)
Strongly Disagree	9 (6.0)
Total	150(100)

The study shows that a large minority (34.7) of the population doesn't convey any agreement or disagreement to the statement that they watch Pre Roll ads with interesting music. 26.7% of the respondents agreed and 6.6% strongly agreed to the statement that they watch pre-roll ads with interesting music. 26% of the population disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed with the statement.

Celebrity Presences and Audience' Engagement

This table shows the level of agreement of the population towards the statement that they watch Pre Roll ad acted by a celebrity.

Table 2 Celebrity Presence as a Preference

Level of Agreement	Frequency (%)
Strongly Agree	6 (4.0)
Agree	31 (20.7)
Neutral	52 (34.7)
Disagree	48 (32.0)
Strongly Disagree	13 (8.7)
Total	150 (100)

Here also a vast minority of the population (34.7) remained neutral to the statement that they will watch pre-roll advertisement acted by a celebrity. 32% of respondents disagreed and 8.7% strongly disagreed with the statement. Only a 20.7 agreed and 4% strongly agreed that showing celebrity will make them watching a pre-roll ad.

Preference to the Brand

The table below describes the respondent's level of agreement towards the statement of preference for watching the advertisements of a favorite brand.

Table 3- Preference to the Brand

Level of Agreement	Frequency (%)
Strongly Agree	7 (4.7)
Agree	58 (38.7)
Neutral	41 (27.3)
Disagree	35 (23.3)
Strongly Disagree	9 (6.0)
Total	150 (100)

The results show a large minority (38.7) agree that they don't skip the pre-roll ads of their favorite brand. 4.7% of the population strongly agrees with the statement. Neutral to the statement is opted by 27.3% of the respondents. Only a 23.3% opined that they don't watch the pre-roll ad even though it's on their favorite brand. Along with them a 6% population strongly disagreed to the statement.

Storyline and Audience Engagement

Here the researcher describes the role of storyline in engaging the YouTube audience to watch the whole pre-roll ad without skipping. The analysis is based on the level of agreement of the respondents to the statement that they watch the pre-roll ads with the good storyline.

Table 4- Preference to Storyline

Level of Agreement	Frequency (%)
Strongly Agree	26 (17.3)
Agree	70 (46.7)
Neutral	29 (19.3)
Disagree	18 (12.0)
Strongly Disagree	7 (4.7)
Total	150 (100)

According to the survey, a large minority (46.7) agree that they prefer to watch pre-roll ads with the good storyline. Along with them 17.3% of the population strongly agrees with the statement. 19.3% of respondents stay neutral. Only a few opined that story line doesn't influence them to watch the pre-roll ads. (12% and 4.7% respectively)

Engagement Level of Respondents

The below tables discusses the level of viewing engagement of respondents on pre-roll ads. It describes how different variables (Gender, Area of living) are related to the level of engagement. Level of agreement to the statements regarding ad viewing preferences (Music, Celebrity, Brand, Storyline) are used to identify the respondents' engagement.

Table 5- Viewing Engagement by Gender

Level of Engagement	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
High	24 (32.4)	25 (32.9)	49 (32.7)
Medium	32 (43.2)	28 (36.8)	60 (40)
Low	18 (24.3)	23 (30.3)	41 (27.3)
Total	74	76	150
<i>Pearson Chi-Square= .870, df=2, P value=.647</i>			

As per the study, there is no major difference between males and females (32.4 and 32.9) in high-level engagement. A majority of people (43.2) who have a medium level of engagement are males, while females form the minority (36.8). Females are slightly higher (30.3) in low-level usage pattern when comparing to males (24.3). P value (.647) denotes that the association between level of engagement and respondent's gender is not significant.

Table 6- Viewing Engagement by Area of Living

Level of Engagement	Area of Living			Total
	Rural	Urban	Coastal	
High	26 (31.7)	21 (32.3)	2 (66.7)	49 (32.7)
Medium	37 (45.1)	23 (35.4)	0	60 (40)
Low	19 (23.2)	21 (32.3)	1 (33.3)	41 (27.3)
Total	82	65	3	150
<i>Pearson Chi-Square= 4.319, df=4, P value=.365</i>				

As per the findings there no major difference in high-level engagement of the rural and urban population (31.7 and 32.3). Considering the medium level of engagement, a majority of people (45.1) belongs to a rural area, while the minorities (35.4) comprise in the urban group. The majority of people who have a low level of engagement belong to the urban area (32.3) while the minority of people (23.2) belongs to the rural group. Since the P value is .365,

it is evident that there is no association between the level of engagement and respondents' area of living.

Audience Interaction with Pre-roll Ads

For identifying the audience interaction with pre-roll advertisements, respondents' attitude on generating actions with video ad elements has been analyzed. It includes click the links accompanying the pre-roll ad, sharing the video ads and search and visit the websites of product advertised.

Action with Links

Here the researcher describes the interactivity of pre-roll ad by analysing the respondents' attitudes towards clicking links in the pre-roll advertisement. This table shows the level of agreement of the population towards the statement that they prefer to click the links accompanying pre-roll ads.

Table 7 Click Links in Pre-Roll Ads

Level of Agreement	Frequency (%)
Strongly Agree	0 (0)
Agree	5 (3.3)
Neutral	16 (10.7)
Disagree	74 (49.3)
Strongly Disagree	55 (36.7)
Total	150 (100)

As per the study, 49.3% disagreed and 36.7 strongly disagreed that they prefer to click the link given in the pre-roll ads. Only a few (3.3%) agreed that they choose to click the link after watching pre-rolls. No one in the population strongly agreed with the statement. 10.7% neither expressed any agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Sharing Pre-roll Ads

The table below shows the respondents' attitude towards sharing pre-roll ads. The analysis is based on the respondents' level of agreement towards the statement that they prefer to share the Pre Roll ad if they found it interesting.

Table 8 Sharing Pre-roll Ads

Level of Agreement	Frequency (%)
Strongly Agree	4 (2.7)
Agree	12 (8.0)
Neutral	17 (11.3)
Disagree	70 (46.7)
Strongly Disagree	47 (31.3)
Total	150(100)

The result shows a large population disagrees or strongly disagrees (46.7% and 31.3% respectively) in sharing pre-roll ads. Only a few prefer to share pre-roll ads if they found it interesting (8% agree and 2.7% strongly agree). 11.3% remained neutral to the statement.

Search about the Product

The table below shows the respondents' attitude towards initiating search for the product advertised. The analysis is based on the respondents' level of agreement towards the statement that they prefer to search about the product shown in pre-roll ad.

Table 9 Search the Product

Level of Agreement	Frequency (%)
Strongly Agree	1 (0.7)
Agree	9 (6.0)
Neutral	41 (27.3)
Disagree	62 (41.3)
Strongly Disagree	37 (24.6)
Total	150(100)

As per the study, 41.3% disagreed and 24.6% strongly disagreed that they prefer to generate search on the product advertised. Only a few (6%) agreed that they choose to search about the product after watching pre-rolls. Only one respondent strongly agreed with the statement. 27.3% neither expressed any agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Interaction level of Respondents

The below tables discuss the interaction level of respondents on pre-roll ads. It describes how different variables (Gender, Device) are related to the level of interaction. Level of agreement to the statements regarding click links, share ad and product search are used to measure the level of interaction.

Table 10 Level of Interaction by Gender

Level of Interaction	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
High	29 (39.2)	26 (34.2)	55 (36.7)
Medium	24 (32.4)	26 (34.2)	50 (33.3)
Low	21 (28.4)	24 (31.6)	45 (30)
Total	74	76	150
<i>Pearson Chi-Square= .417, df=2, P value=.812</i>			

Table 10 indicates how the level of interaction is related to gender. As per the results, there is no major difference between male and female in all these three levels. A narrow majority of people (39.2) who have a high level of interaction is males while 34.2 % are females. 34.2% females and 32.4 males have a medium level of interaction with pre-roll ads. Regarding the low level of interaction, a slight majority of people (31.6) are females while 28.4% are males. As the p-value (.812) denotes the association between the level of interaction and the respondent’s gender is not significant. In other words, gender is not a significant factor that contributes to the difference in the interaction level of pre-roll ads.

Table 11 Level of Interaction by Device

Level of Interaction	Device				Total
	Desktop	Laptop	Mobile	Tab	
High	1 (50)	12 (34.3)	41 (36.6)	1 (100)	55 (36.7)
Medium	1 (50)	10 (28.6)	39 (34.8)	0	50 (33.3)
Low	0	13 (37.1)	32 (28.6)	0	45 (30)
Total	2	35	112	1	150
<i>Pearson Chi-Square=3.629, df=6, P value=.727</i>					

It is evident from table , the majority of people who use a laptop (37.1) have a low level of interaction while the minorities (28.6) are those use mobile. In the case of medium level of interaction, majorities (34.8%) are mobile users while the minorities (28.6%) are laptop users. Considering the high level of interaction with pre-roll ads a narrow majority of people (36.6) are mobile users, while 34.3% are laptop users. As the tab and desktop users are just a few in the sample it's not included in the common comparison. The p-value (.727) indicates that the association between the level of interaction and device used for watching YouTube is not significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

People have varied preferences in the reception of advertisements. Their preferences depend on various factors. Pre-Roll ads reach almost every YouTube viewers when they click for their desired video. In an era where the numbers of online audiences emerge, YouTube pre-roll ads have an eminent position in the promotional campaigns. There are several factors that urge the viewers to watch an advertisement. The marketers will make use of these elements for better reaching their target audience. In YouTube pre-roll advertising where the audience has the freedom to skip the ad is also available; certain elements have a greater role in pursuing the viewer to watch the whole advertisement. Understanding viewing engagement of the YouTube viewers is one of the major objectives of the study.

The study indicated that a slight majority of the responders have a high level of engagement. Among Music, Celebrity, brand, and storyline the respondents opined that they wish to watch the ads of their favourite brand and ads with the good storyline. Music and the presence of celebrity are not considered by respondents as a motivating force to engage with an advertisement. In open-ended questions too, some of the respondents mentioned the ads of their favourite brand and ads with the good storyline. This indicates that most of the YouTube viewers will not skip the ad if it has a good starting an interesting story to tell. The responders recollected the pre-roll ads of Red Label campaigns due to the storyline that it follows. The concern towards the favourite brand in generating a viewing engagement is also evident. Here in this study to some of the respondents' recollected pre-roll ads of their favourite brands. The ads of Royal Enfield and KFC are being mentioned by a few respondents on these grounds. According to the both AIDMA and AISAS models, gaining attention is the first phase in the advertising process. As per the study using good storyline and utilizing brand image the advertiser can gain the attention and generate viewing engagement.

Interactivity is the most celebrated feature of online media. In its rising year's online advertising also developed as an area which offers interactive engagement with the audience. The study also focused on the level of interaction pre-roll ads has with the YouTube viewers. YouTube provides audiences the options to share and click links in the ad and visit website of the products. They can also search for the products immediately on web for making online purchase decisions. A vast majority of the responders opined that they do not prefer to click the link accompanying the pre-roll ad. Similarly, most of the population doesn't like to share the pre-roll ads even though they found it interesting. The same trend follows in search for products on internet.

The AISAS model explains the process in which consumers respond to communication is based on the sequence of cognitive, affective, and behaviour. Cognitive refers to consumer noticing the product and thus may have the motivation to seek additional information. Affective is the stage where the consumer gains the interest and desire to make the purchase whereas the final behaviour or action stage is the actual consumption. Since YouTube is used by the audience to access the desired video and the interaction they wishes do is with those videos. As we all know the YouTube users are highly active in liking, commenting and sharing these videos. Therefore their primary concern of engagement is with those videos and pre-roll ads are only secondary even though they found it interesting. The findings conclude that mobile YouTube viewers are more interacted with pre-roll ads than those who use other devices. Smartphones are more user-friendly and interactive than the desktop and laptop. The availability of various social media apps in smartphones helps in the sharing the interesting contents. According to the Media Richness theory, the feedback system is an important element in achieving high richness level. Therefore YouTube pre-roll ads are rich in the sense that it allows the audience to interact with the ad. Even though the option is available there most of the responders are not interested to try it.

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