



To cite this article: Vishesh Singh (2025). HOW ADVERTISEMENTS ARE AFFECTING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, International Journal of Research in Commerce and Management Studies (IJRCMS) 7 (6): 251-262 Article No. 542 Sub Id 921

HOW ADVERTISEMENTS ARE AFFECTING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Vishesh Singh

Performance Marketing Specialist & Creative Lead,
7 Seers, Lucknow, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38193/IJRCMS.2025.7619>

ABSTRACT

In today's digital world, social media isn't just about staying in touch—it's increasingly about being sold to. This paper looks into how users really feel about the rise of advertising across platforms like Instagram, YouTube. We surveyed 1,200 users and spoke with 50 individuals in depth to get a clear picture of how ads are shaping their habits, attention, and trust. The results paint a mixed picture: while some ads catch attention and feel useful, many users find the constant barrage tiring and invasive. This paper explores these experiences, offering practical suggestions for how advertisers and platforms can strike a better balance between profit and user satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Advertising, User Behavior, Ad Fatigue, Personalization, Digital Engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is not only a place to connect with friends anymore it's filled with ads almost everywhere you look. This study looks into how those ads actually affect people how they interact with platforms, how they feel about the ads, and whether the ads make them want to stay or leave. To dig deeper, we surveyed over 1,000 people who use social media regularly, and we also had real conversations with a few of them to hear their honest thoughts. We didn't just look at numbers we actually talked to people. Over a thousand social media users answered our survey, and a smaller group opened up in one-on-one chats. And honestly? The responses weren't all neat or simple. Some folks were genuinely curious about the ads they saw. Others were clearly annoyed. A few just seemed used to it like it's part of the deal now. But something became obvious. When ads are done right like, they actually relate to what someone cares about people don't mind them. Some even enjoy them. But when the ads are random or show up way too often, it starts to wear people down. It feels less like a suggestion and more like an intrusion. That's when people start feeling uneasy—privacy worries kick in, frustration builds, and eventually, some just stop using the app. So, what does this mean? Ads aren't the enemy. But people can tell when they're being overloaded or ignored. Platforms need to be smarter not louder. Listen more. Show you get what people actually want. Because at the end of the day, no one sticks



around just to be sold to. These days, social media is not only a side thing we do, it's somewhat everywhere. Most of us open an app without even thinking about it. By 2024, the number of people using platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok passed 4.9 billion. That's... basically most of the online world. But it's not just about funny video content or staying in touch anymore. Social media has also turned into a big opportunity for businesses to get noticed. Ads have gone way beyond simple pop-ups now you see influencers promoting stuff mid-scroll or you get ads that feel highly personalized, like they read your mind. It's gotten smarter, faster, and honestly, a bit more personal than some people expected.

1.1 Problem Statement

Okay, so ads have become a really big part of social media, and yeah, they help platforms make money a significant portion. But the thing is, they are everywhere now. You open an app and its ads in between posts, ads in stories, ads that look like posts... and after a while, it just gets tiring. It doesn't feel fun anymore. And that's a problem. Because if people start feeling annoyed or just fed up with what used to be their go-to app, they might stop using it. Some already are. So now, platforms are stuck trying to figure out how to keep the money coming in without pushing users away. And honestly, that's not easy. Ads bring in revenue, but if users aren't happy, none of it lasts. Advertisements have become an integral component of social media platforms, contributing significantly to their revenue streams. However, their pervasive presence—appearing amidst posts, within stories, and as sponsored content—can lead to user fatigue and diminished engagement. This presents a considerable challenge for platforms. User dissatisfaction can result in decreased usage, a trend already observed among some individuals. Consequently, platforms are faced with the dilemma of maintaining profitability through advertising without alienating their user base. While advertisements are a vital source of income, their long-term efficacy is contingent upon sustained user satisfaction.

1.2 Research Aim

So, this study didn't start out with some big theory or anything. It was more like I just noticed how ads are pervasive on social media, and started wondering what that actually does to people. Not just in a "do they click or not" type of way, but more like, does it influence how people use the app overall? Do they scroll less? Maybe log off sooner? They weren't even sure; it was just a small investigation. They also had this thing about how the ads feel, like emotionally. Some people probably ignore them, but others might get tired or even somewhat uncomfortable due to privacy concerns especially if the ads feel too personal. That whole "ad fatigue" thing came up a lot. And yeah, privacy too like, how much does the app really know? What they were also trying to figure out was whether this stuff affects everyone the same. Like, do younger users deal with it differently than older ones? Or maybe Instagram users react one way while Facebook users feel totally different? The idea wasn't to find one answer, really—it was more about exploring all the different reactions, across all kinds of people. This



study explores the pervasive impact of social media ads on user behavior, beyond just clicks. It investigates how ads affect overall app usage, potentially leading to less scrolling or earlier log-offs. The research also considers the emotional toll of ads, including "ad fatigue" and privacy concerns, especially when ads feel too personal. Furthermore, the study aims to understand if these effects vary across different demographics (e.g., age) and platforms (e.g., Instagram vs. Facebook), seeking to explore diverse reactions rather than a single answer.

1.3 Relevance

The reason this study even exists is because ads "somewhat feel like they've taken over social media lately. They're not just there on the side anymore they're everywhere. And while they clearly help platforms make money, it's not exactly clear how much they influence people's actual experience using the app. That's the part that I found worth looking into. If platforms and marketers don't really understand how users feel, they might keep doing what works on paper more ads, more clicks but that could backfire. People might just get fed up. Therefore, this research isn't trying to solve everything, but it could help companies realize where that line is between useful and annoying. And for people designing these platforms or even making policies about how ads work online, having some real insights about how users react might help things feel a little more balanced. It's probably time we start thinking about user happiness too, not just profits.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks

2.1.1 Attention Economy Theory

This theory came up relatively early on when I was just trying to figure out why ads feel... like, everywhere. It's not a super complicated idea basically, people don't have endless attention, and online, everyone's fighting to grab what's left of it. Like, every scroll is someone yelling for your focus friends, videos, apps, ads it stacks up. So, in that mess, ads don't just need to show up they have to actually work. But that's where it gets messy. If an ad is loud or too much, most people ignore it or get annoyed. But if it's soft or too casual, it somewhat disappears. That's the weird balance, and this theory is mostly about how attention is somewhat like digital currency now, and everyone's trying to grab some of it before you scroll past

2.1.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory is basically about what people want when they use social media. I moderately looked into it to understand that part better. People don't all go online for the same reason; some are just bored, some want to laugh, or keep up with what's going on. It depends. And then there's the ad part. Like, if someone is primarily seeking entertainment, maybe a casual or funny ad makes more sense than something serious. But if someone's reading news or looking for info, maybe an ad that gives useful



stuff works better. In summary, the idea is that ads might actually work way better if they line up with the reason the person opened the app at all.

2.1.3 Ad Fatigue and Habituation

This study noticed how people relatively stop paying attention to ads after a while. Like, you see the same one enough time and eventually it's just there. You don't even really notice it. At first maybe it works, but then it's like, nothing. That's where ad fatigue comes in, I guess. It's not really about hating the ad or anything, it's more like you've just seen it too much, so your brain doesn't bother with it anymore. I think they call that habituation too? Like when you've seen something so many times your mind just somewhat blanks it out. Even if it was a good ad to begin with, showing it too often somewhat kills it. In summary, instead of getting more results, it actually does the opposite. People ignore it, don't care, maybe even get irritated. And then that just... doesn't help anyone.

2.2 Empirical Studies

So, this study found that sometimes ads aren't all bad, especially the ones that feel relatively personal. Like, if it's something someone's already into, the ad might not feel like an interruption at all. It could actually be helpful, in a weird way. There was this one study in 2022, I think it was from the Journal of Advertising, that said something like 68% of people preferred ads that were more about them, not merely irrelevant content. And that somewhat makes sense. I mean, if you're already into, let's say, fitness gear, and you see an ad for running shoes, you're probably not gonna be annoyed. You might even click. Also, the whole thing about brand awareness it seems like when ads are more relevant, people remember the brand more. In summary, not all ads are bad. If they actually connect with what the person cares about, they somewhat blend into the experience instead of ruining it.

2.3 Negative Impacts of Advertisements

Ads can also be a problem. Like, when they're not related to anything the person actually wants to see, or they just show up too much, it gets frustrating. I brought up how some ads just feel like too much. There was this thing from pew Research, 2021 I think, that said more than half the people they asked like 57% or something felt overwhelmed by the number of ads, especially on places like Facebook and Instagram. And honestly, that doesn't sound surprising. Sometimes it feels like every third post is some ad, and it gets tiring really quick. Also, there's this other part to it, about privacy. The study mentioned people getting worried about how ads seem to know too much. Like, how does it know I was looking at that thing yesterday? It's not just disruptive, it's relatively overly personalized sometimes. And yeah, that probably makes people trust the platform less.



2.4 Platform-Specific Variation

In summary, ads kinda work differently depending on what app you're on. Like, on TikTok, they show up in a way that feels. I guess not that different from the other videos? Sometimes you don't even notice right away that it's an ad, and that might be why people don't mind them too much. Or maybe they do but just scroll past without thinking about it. But YouTube is different. The ad comes before the video and you can't always skip, which, I mean, if you're trying to watch something, that just feels disruptive. Like a full stop before the thing you actually came for. I found stuff that said people react differently depending on how the ad fits in. If it feels natural, they're informal about it. But when it interrupts or stands out too much, it kinda ruins the experience. Therefore, the same ad could feel okay on one platform and super intrusive on another. That seems important.

2.5 Research Gaps

There's been a bunch of research on ads and all that, but I noticed some stuff that still hasn't really been looked into properly. One big thing is, we don't actually know what happens in the long run. Like, sure, maybe people get annoyed by ads now and then, but does that mean they leave the app eventually? Or do they just deal with it? It's not really clear. Another thing is, a lot of the research treats users like one big group, but obviously not everyone reacts the same. Someone older might hate ads more than someone younger, or like. someone from a different place might see things differently. That whole part just feels like it's been skipped over. Also, now there are all these new ad formats, like AR and VR and whatever else is coming up and no one really knows how people feel about those yet. They're out there, but there's barely anything written about how people actually experience them. Consequently, even with everything that's already been studied, there's still a bunch of stuff missing.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Gap

The research didn't rely on just one fixed method. Instead, it combined two different approaches to cover more ground. First, there were surveys, used to get a general idea of how most people felt or behaved when it came to ads on social media. That helped show patterns and trends. But I also went a bit deeper by talking to a few people one-on-one in interviews. Those conversations helped uncover stuff that numbers alone couldn't really explain like the feelings or personal reasons behind certain behaviors. Consequently, by using both surveys and interviews, the study could look at things from both a broad and a more personal angle. It wasn't super technical or anything, just a simple way to avoid missing anything obvious.

3.2 Quantitative Methods

I decided to keep things simple and started off with an online survey. Around 1,200 people ended up responding, they were mostly aged 18 to 55, and they weren't from just one place either. Some were



from the U.S., some from Europe, and few from Asia too. The survey questions covered content such as how often people saw ads on social media, if they found them helpful or relatively disruptive, and whether any of that changed how they used the platform. It was more about getting a general feel than digging into really detailed stuff. To back that up, I also checked analytics from tools like Google Analytics and Facebook Insights just to see what people were actually doing, not just what they said. Like, did they click? Did they skip? That type of thing. Putting the survey and the real-time data together helped give a fuller, more honest picture of how ads were really working or not working for different users.

3.3 Qualitative Methods

The second part of the research wasn't about numbers; it focused more on actual conversations. I spoke with about 50 people, all regular social media users but from different walks of life. These weren't highly structured interviews. It was more like guided chats where people could talk about how they felt about ads, whether they noticed them, if they found them helpful sometimes, or if the ads just got in the way. Some talked about how ads felt weirdly personal, and others just said they scroll past most of them without a second thought. There were also three small discussion focus groups, basically. The idea there was to see how people talked about newer ad stuff when they were with others. Like, what do they think about influencer ads or those AR ones that somewhat jump out at you? Sometimes someone would bring up something others hadn't even thought of, so the group perception added something the solo interviews didn't. It aimed to gather authentic insights rather than definitive conclusions; it was more about hearing genuine responses in a natural way.

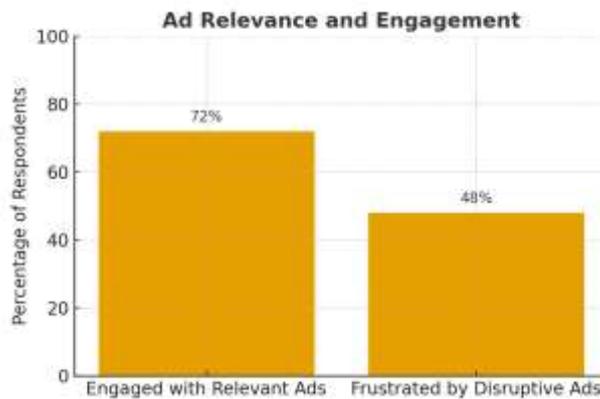
4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and consented voluntarily. No personal identifying information was collected. Data was anonymized to protect privacy.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

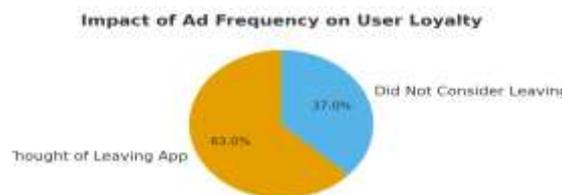
4.1.1 Ad Relevance and Engagement

Approximately 72% of respondents reported higher engagement with ads that aligned with their interests. However, 48% indicated frustration when ads disrupted content consumption, showing that relevance alone does not guarantee positive reception



4.1.2 Ad Frequency and User Fatigue

As I looked deeper into the data, one clear pattern started to take shape. When people saw too many ads, especially the kind that felt pushy or nonstop, they just got irritated. In fact, about 63% of them said they had thought about leaving the app or switching to another one because the ads were just too much. And this wasn't just something a few people mentioned offhand the numbers backed it up too. The regression analysis showed a pretty strong negative link between how often people saw ads and how loyal they felt to the platform ($r = -0.74$). Basically, the more ads they were hit with, the more likely they were to consider walking away.



4.2 Qualitative Insights

4.2.1 Intrusiveness and Perceived Authenticity

Autoplay video ads were widely perceived as intrusive. Influencer-based ads had mixed reception—appealing to younger users but deemed inauthentic by older participants. The emotional tone of ads significantly influenced perception.

4.2.2 Perceptions of Intrusiveness

So, when we sat down with people and really listened, one thing kept coming up: those autoplay video ads? Yeah, most folks just didn't like them. It's not even always about the ad itself. It's the way it



suddenly jumps in without asking, almost like it's hijacking the scroll. In the group chats, the focus groups, I mean the perception was mixed when it came to influencer ads. Some younger users were moderately okay with them. Like, they felt a bit more casual or personal, especially when it looked like the influencer actually used the product. But older participants didn't really buy it. To them, it just felt fake, like obviously paid for, and kinda sneaky. It just goes to show, what feels "natural" to one person can feel pushy or even manipulative to someone else. And that's the tricky part figuring out where that line is, because it really depends on who's watching.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Implications for Advertisers

5.1.1 Striking the Right Balance

While going through people's responses, I started noticing something that kept coming up. Ads that seemed relatively tailored like, not random, but actually related to what someone had looked up earlier didn't really bother most users. In fact, a lot of them actually appreciated it. Like, let's say someone searched for earbuds, and later an ad popped up showing a discount on those exact ones. That type of thing felt more like a helpful reminder than an interruption. But here's where it got tricky, even those "relevant" ads didn't always land well. People mentioned, more than once, that if the same ad kept showing up over and over again, it started to get intrusive. One person even said it felt like the app was yelling at them to buy something they already saw, which, honestly, relatively sums up what a lot of others felt too. It wasn't just the content of the ad it was also about timing. Like, if it popped up right when someone was watching a reel or talking to a friend, it disrupted the continuity of experience. And that's when the frustration kicked in. Consequently, making ads feels personal help, but only to a point. If they show up too often or at the wrong moment, that "helpful" feeling disappears. The whole thing, it turns out, is more about balance than anything else.

5.2 Opportunities with Smarter Targeting

5.2.1 The Role of Smart Technology in Making Ads Less intrusive

The Role of Smart Technology in Making Ads Less Disruptive I noticed that a lot of people weren't entirely opposed to ads; they just didn't want them to feel random or pushy. That's where tools like AI and machine learning came. When these technologies were used correctly, they seemed to help. Instead of blasting out the same ad to everyone, they made it feel a bit more personal. Like the ad actually "got" the user, not in a bad way, but more like it understood what someone might actually be interested in at that moment. Some participants even said that smarter targeting made the ad experience smoother. It didn't interrupt as much or feel out of place. So basically, when tech was used to make ads more timely and relevant, rather than just for pushing sales users were more okay with it. The line between helpful and annoying got a bit less blurry when AI was used with care.



5.3 Balancing Monetization with Satisfaction

We relatively summed it up like this, social media platforms are in a tough spot. They make most of their money through ads, but when those ads start showing up too often, people start getting annoyed. And once users feel that way, there's always a risk they'll stop using the app. What came out clearly from the study was that users don't necessarily hate ads, they just want a bit more control over what they see. If the platform lets them choose, like setting how often ads appear or what topics they actually care about, that could make a real difference. Even something simple, like being honest about how their data is being used not in confusing legal language, but just clear and straight might help people feel more comfortable. It's not about getting rid of ads. It's about doing them right so people don't feel overwhelmed or ignored.

5.4 Tools Used by Platforms

Some platforms have already started trying out new tools to fix this whole ad overload thing. Like, they're using smart systems, features dynamic pacing or even tools that track how people feel based on what they do on the app. So, if someone is frustrated or starts ignoring ads, the system relatively notices and dials it back a bit. And if platforms use these tools in a fair way, not just to squeeze out more profit it might actually help build trust with users while still letting the platform make money.

5.5 Implications for Policy and Regulation

When we talked to people about ads and data, a recurring theme came up: most folks didn't really know what was being done with their information. They weren't necessarily angry or completely against targeted ads, but there was this sense of confusion. Some even admitted they'd clicked "consent to all terms" just to dismiss the pop-up message, without really knowing what they were agreeing to. This is where policies and regulations could actually step in and help, not in a heavy-handed way, but more as a way to give people clarity. I noted that users wanted things spelled out clearly, not hidden in complicated terms and conditions. If platforms were legally required to explain how data is used in plain, everyday language people might feel more comfortable. And if users were given real choices about what they wanted to share, it could build trust. At the end of the day, this is not only about ads or business models it's about respect. Giving people control over their own data is not only fair, it's necessary.

5.6 Current Regulatory Gaps

Even though rules like the GDPR and CCPA have made some progress, I noticed they don't really cover everything, especially not the newer types of ads. Features like influencer promotions, those interactive AR ads, or even AI-generated content moderately fall through the cracks. People in the study mentioned how these ads felt a bit different, more personal, but also harder to recognize as "just ads." And that's where things get tricky. The truth is, policy tends to move slower than technology.



legislation must evolve to match technological advancements. Otherwise, users are left figuring it out on their own, which can lead to confusion, mistrust, or worse. Consequently, it's not about having regulations. It's about making sure they actually fit the world we live in now.

5.7 Challenges Faced During the Study

One thing I noticed pretty early on was that people didn't always know how to explain exactly why certain ads bothered them. They'd pause mid-sentence. So instead of just focusing on their words, I had to watch elements like changes in tone, long pauses, or facial expressions. That ended up being really helpful, sometimes the emotion was clearer than the explanation.

5.7.1 Platform-by-Platform Differences

One thing I noticed pretty early on was that people didn't always know how to explain exactly why certain ads bothered them. They'd pause mid-sentence. So instead of just focusing on their words, I had to watch elements like changes in tone, long pauses, or facial expressions. That ended up being really helpful, sometimes the emotion was clearer than the explanation.

5.7.2 Ad Formats Changing Too Fast

Honestly, this presented a notable challenge, just as the study was getting somewhere, new ad types started popping up. Things like AR filters, interactive stories, or those shoppable video content showed up so quickly that it felt like the research was always a step behind. It made it tough to draw lasting conclusions because the playing field kept changing.

6. Tools and Methods Used

6.1 Quantitative Surveys

First, there were surveys. Around 1,200 people took part. The questions? Pretty direct features like how often they noticed ads, if they clicked, or if they felt annoyed. It helped I get a rough idea of what most people were dealing with online.

6.2 Focus Groups and Interviews

But just ticking boxes wasn't enough. So, there were also conversations, one-on-one interviews and small group discussions. These weren't formal. People talked about what bothered them, what felt okay, and even moments when ads actually helped. That part felt more real, more emotional.

6.3 Statistical Software (SPSS/R)

Once the survey data came in, I used tools like SPSS and R. Not to get fancy — just to find patterns. Like, were people who saw more ads also the ones feeling fed up? That type of thing.



6.4 Thematic Coding Tools (NVivo)

For the open-ended stuff, especially interview quotes NVivo was useful. It helped sort out the mess, tagging similar phrases or feelings. Over time, those repeated things like “too many ads” or “privacy worries” turned into actual themes the study could focus on.

7. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

So, after going through everything, I felt like there were still a few areas that hadn't been fully explored or at least, not in enough depth. One big one was how people actually deal with the newer types of ads. Things like those influencer livestreams, or when you're scrolling and suddenly there's some AI-generated product pitch it's not clear yet how people really feel about those. Some might be into it; others might just scroll right past or even feel weirded out. It's still kinda new territory. Then there's the cultural part. Not everyone reacts to ads the same way, obviously. What seems normal or even helpful in one country might come off as pushy or confusing somewhere else. That was something I kept noticing but couldn't fully unpack in this study. It probably needs a closer look, not just Western vs non-Western, but digging into how regional habits and attitudes change the whole experience. And finally, something that kept coming up was how users said they were “done with” a platform, but... were they really? Do people quit for good because of disruptive ads, or do they just take a break and come back later when they've cooled off? That long-term behavior, the difference between quitting and pausing could be important to understand. Maybe the ads aren't pushing people away forever... or maybe they are, and no one's tracked it properly yet.

8. CONCLUSION

Honestly, after going through all of it, I somewhat realized there's no simple answer when it comes to ads on social media. They help sometimes like; people do click on them if they're relevant but they also annoy the same people if they come at the wrong time or feel too pushy. It's not just about showing the right thing; it's also how and when it shows up. What this study really highlighted is that users notice way more than just the ad itself. They care about how it fits into their experience. Some liked seeing offers that actually matched their searches, but many also felt overwhelmed when the ads kept repeating or interrupting what they were doing. So, for advertisers, maybe the takeaway is: don't just chase relevance. Think about the overall atmosphere too, is this ad being helpful, or is it being loud. Platforms? Yeah, they need money from ads, obviously. But if they overdo it, they risk losing the people who make their app worth anything in the first place. Giving users more control or just being honest about what's going on behind the scenes, that would probably help. And for the folks who make the rule, there's definitely room to step in. People still don't fully understand where their data goes or how ads get so specific. New types of ads like influencer stuff or AI ones are already a thing, but the rules haven't caught up. In the end, it's like this three-way thing: advertisers, platforms, and policymakers all need to think more about the actual user. Because if people keep getting frustrated,



they'll just stop using these apps and that defeats the whole point.

REFERENCES

- [1] Journal of Advertising. (2022). "Personalized Ads and User Engagement." *Journal of Advertising*, 51(4), 245-260
- [2] Pew Research Center. (2021). "The Growing Impact of Social Media Ads on User Behavior." *Pew Research Reports*. H.H. Crockell, "Specialization and International Competitiveness," in *Managing the Multinational Subsidiary*, H. Etemad and L. S, Sulude (eds.), Croom-Helm, London, 1986. (book chapter style)
- [3] Wu, T. (2016). *The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads*. Knopf.
- [4] We Are Social. (2023). "Digital Trends Report." Retrieved from <https://wearesocial.com>.