Brain scans reveal the effectiveness of video marketing

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For the first time, researchers have revealed how our brains respond to engaging videos, surprisingly, we all react in a very similar way, according to new research from Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM).

PhD candidate Hang-yee Chan, analysed the brain activity of 60 people as they each watched the same set of 35 commercials. The researchers compared the brain activity patterns of each participant. The comparisons revealed that commercials which stimulated similar neural activity in certain parts of the brains responsible for understanding emotions and narratives.

Hang-yee Chan explains

"We know that people are captivated by video content that's engaging. I wanted to know if people see an interesting commercial, do their brains respond in a similar way?

"We tested this hypothesis by using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to scan the brains of people watching TV commercials, essentially tracking their brain activities while they watch the videos. fMRI measures brain activity by detecting changes associated with blood flow; blood flow increases in an area of the brain that is active.

"The study revealed a correlation between subjects being shown engaging content and the extent to which their brains reacted with similar neural activity, particularly in areas of the brain associated with processing emotions and understanding narratives. In other words, a fascinating video generated similar reactions in the brain, whereas a less engaging video would make people's minds start to wander and 'tune out', creating disparate brain reactions among viewers."

The findings of this study were echoed in a follow-up study that measured brain activity in 28 people watching a sequence of 18 movie trailers; it implies that the same effect on brain activity is observed in people watching any kind of engaging video.

This research is useful for marketing and communication professionals as they will be able to find out how engaging their videos are and shape them accordingly.

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For more information, a copy of the paper, or to speak to Hang-yee Chan, contact Kate Mowbray at BlueSky PR on kate@bluesky-pr.com or call +44 (0)1582 790 711.

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