CCPC

Summary of research conducted as part of the development of the Joint CCPC/ASAI Guidance on Influencer Marketing and Advertising

1. Introduction

As part of the development of the joint CCPC/ASAI guidance on influencer marketing and advertising, additional research was undertaken to inform our work and provide justification for the inclusion of particular aspects of the guidance. There are three main components to this work:

- Qualitative eye tracking experiment
- Quantitative eye tracking experiment
- Influencer interviews

This note will provide an overview of each research component. This research was independently conducted by Ipsos MRBI.

2. Qualitative Eye Tracking Experiment

In April 2023, Ipsos undertook a qualitative eye tracking experiment in order to enable us to understand how consumers engage with Instagram and in particular to explore the extent to which the current locations and designs of advertising labels on the platform are optimally located in order to maximise awareness and understanding of advertising. Instagram was selected for the experiment as previous research conducted by the CCPC in 2022 identified Instagram as the most popular platform across all age categories for following influencers.

The research was carried out using a mobile testing accessory (MTA) provided by Tobii, who are one of the leading manufacturers of eye tracking technology. In order to use the MTA, the user's own device is placed within it. The benefits of this approach include the fact that the user's activities will be natural and normal as they will be using their own device therefore replicating their normal scrolling activities.

The sample make up was as follows:

- 6 Instagram users aged 16-19 (3 women, 3 men)

- 8 Instagram users aged 20-24 (5 women, 3 men)

- 8 Instagram users aged 25-34 (5 women, 3 men)

- 8 Instagram users aged 35-44 (5 women, 3 men)

30 in-depth interviews took place with users scrolling as normal through their own Instagram feed for a set period of time. The Ipsos research team then analysed their gaze activity, choosing specific examples from their feeds and discussed these with them. Each interview session lasted 45-60 minutes. Following the interviews, more detailed analysis was then conducted on the full sample of interviews with a report provided to us from Ipsos.

The experiment examined the process that users engage in to establish relevant information to enable them to recognise the content ('threshold of recognition') that they view on Instagram (Stories, Reels and Newsfeed). Of particular relevance for the guidance are the findings relating to Instagram Stories and the Newsfeed.

Stories: This is the most stable environment for messaging due to the structured nature of the content presentation. The activity in the top left-hand corner of the screen appears to be amongst the most frequent areas of traffic. The usage of the top left-hand corner under the account handle appears to work effectively for notifications such as 'Sponsored'. Therefore, the inclusion of identifiers such as 'Paid Partnership' are likely to be noticed by users.

Newsfeed: This is the least stable environment as a user's progress through the feed is more fluid. It is also potentially the most congested for content due to account handles being above/below the fold, large blocks of text at the bottom of the posts and a mix of advertising, suggested follows and organic posts. The text element below the post is often searched for further information/exploration such as who had liked the post but the current usage of terms such as AD in this text do not appear to be effective (particularly when this is the only advertising notification in the entire post).

In all of the examples viewed by participants in the experiment, AD was at the start of the description beneath the image but did not include a hashtag. We were of the view that it would be beneficial to test whether the presence of a hashtag before AD would impact on a user's ability to recognise it. In this regard, it is important to note that the inclusion of a

hashtag beside a word in a post's description will change the colour of the font from black to blue. Ipsos also suggested that inclusion of an advertising label in the lower central panel could be considered. It was decided to test this in the quantitative eye tracking experiment.

3. Quantitative Eye Tracking Experiment

Based on the findings from the initial qualitative experiment, Ipsos undertook a quantitative online study in order to explore certain findings from the initial qualitative experiment more fully. It was conducted through computer assisted web (CAWI) interviews, with fieldwork conducted between 13th and 28th June 2023. 500 interviews were conducted among individuals who use Instagram at least 3-4 times a week.

The objective of the online study was to measure Instagram users' awareness and understanding of advertising identifiers. As set out above, in particular, we sought to understand whether the inclusion of a hashtag beside the word AD and the placement of #AD on the image or description impacted on the user's ability to identify it.

Respondents were divided into four different groups as follows:

Group	#AD or AD without # in description only	Organic post	#AD on image in bottom central panel or in upper right corner
1	#AD	✓	#AD - upper
2	AD	✓	#AD - lower
3	#AD	✓	#AD - lower
4	AD	✓	#AD - upper

Each respondent was shown a set of three images as follows: firstly, a commercial post with #AD or AD without # in the description then the organic post and finally another commercial post with #AD on the image either in the upper right corner or in the bottom central panel.

The key findings were as follows:

- #AD was the most commonly correctly identified indicator of commercial content with over 3 out of 5 respondents correctly identifying commercial content when this was present.

- Placement of #AD in either the image or description does not impact on likelihood to correctly identify the content. This is reflected in many respondents identifying content as commercial for other reasons (e.g. tagging a commercial company, composition of the photo etc).

- Respondents were generally quite confident when correctly identifying content, with over 80% confident that they were correct when answering. Those who incorrectly identified content as organic were less confident, although a majority were still confident in their response.

These findings provided us with an evidence base for the inclusion in the guidance of a requirement that a hashtag must be used with an advertising label (e.g. #AD).

4. Influencer Interviews

Ipsos also conducted interviews with four influencers in order to 'test' the guidance and get their feedback on it. The influencers interviewed had a range of follower numbers and different areas of focus. High-level details of the influencers interviewed are set out below:

- fashion and lifestyle content creator who predominantly uses affiliate links
- vegan chef and plant-based nutritionist who is a brand ambassador for a food company
- make-up artist who is brand ambassador for a cosmetics company
- columnist and editor for various newspaper and magazines who also runs a social media account for her own business

These interviews were conducted anonymously. In consultation with Ipsos, a number of questions were devised to ask the influencers in the interviews along with highlighting a number of specific areas of focus within the guidance that we wished to obtain feedback on.

Feedback from the interviews conducted with the influencers was provided in the form of detailed comments on the document itself, enabling us to clearly see what areas the influencers were referring to. Overall, the feedback from the influencers was positive. The influencers felt that they could clearly understand the guidance and welcomed the clarity that it provided on particular aspects. For example, they welcomed the inclusion of a section setting out who the guidance applies to and that it clearly states what rules apply. They also responded positively to the key takeaways (i.e. instantly recognisable, clear, prominent. honest). Based on the feedback received, we made some minor edits to the guidance. The feedback received illustrates that there is an appetite for guidance and education in this area.

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