■ Advertising overload

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Advertising overload refers to the practice of not only integrating advertising as a source of revenue in software and websites, but also increasing the number of ads within platforms that consumers use. This has increasingly caused inconvenience to consumers. A commonly cited issue is the ever-increasing length of unskippable ads, which are forcibly shown even to people who need to watch CPR videos.[1][2]

Applications in industries   [edit | edit source]

Operating systems   [edit | edit source]
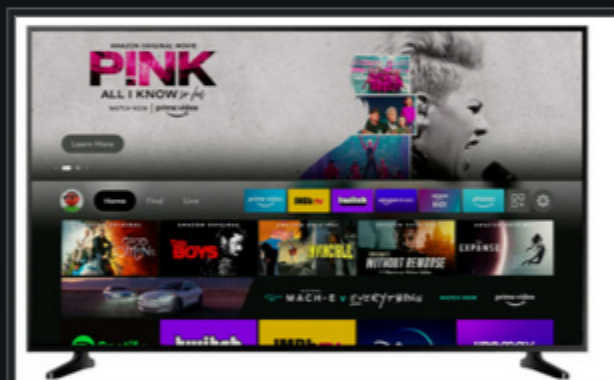
Operating systems have been experiencing advertising overload, most notably the large market lead Windows. King's Candy Crush frequently comes pre-installed on Windows 10 operating systems,[3] without consumer consent, and this game is additionally loaded with ads.[4] Microsoft Solitaire Collection, a mainstay title for Windows devices, has had unnecessary ads inserted into the software.[5][6] Users who purchased Windows 10+ licenses have reported a progressively increasing number of ads within the software.[7][8][9] Windows 10 additionally has pop-ups that frequently prompt legacy users to purchase Windows 11-supported hardware.[10] While it is possible to disable this pop-up via registry editing in Win 10 Pro edition,[11] the registries that are changed with this method are the ones which handle receiving any update, including security updates.

Smart televisions also have been seeing a sharp increase in advertisements within the operating system as well, such as Roku[12] and Amazon Fire TV.[13] Roku has faced criticism for its plans to introduce ads that appear whenever users pause a game they are playing.[14] This introduces privacy concerns since these detection systems depend on constant spying on consumer's activities.
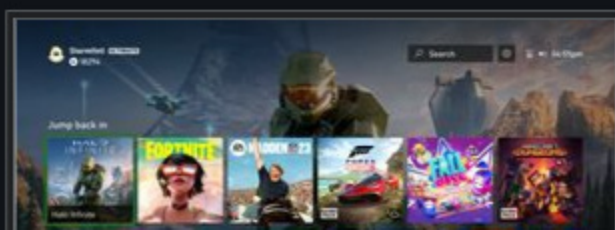
Users of Xbox One/Series[15][16] and PlayStation 4/5 consoles,[17][18][19] have been receiving ads on the home screens of their systems for over a decade.[20] This practice dates back to the 7th console generation, such as on the Xbox 360.[21]

A screenshot of the home screen for an Amazon Fire TV

Streaming services   [edit | edit source]

In the late 2010s, there was a polarizing shift within the streaming service industry. New streaming services like IMDB TV and Roku Television came onto the scene offering free streaming, with the caveat of ads.[22] This inspired corporations who operated premium streaming services to do the same. In the early 2020s, paying users were forced to watch ads.[23] Since then, users have only been reporting an increase in the amounts of ads[24] that they watch on their services.[25] These premium providers, such as Netflix,[23] do offer versions of their services that are ad free at a higher cost. Consumers have labeled this practice as a form of extortion.[26] Plex is one of the few services which only offer a

extortion. ~~~ Flex is one of the few services which only offer a paid, ad-supported version of its platform.

These ad-free tiers additionally are increasing in price,[26] so it often forces consumers who are disinterested in alternative means to either pay an excessive amount of money to watch their favorite media, or be barraged by increasing ads.[24][25]


The Xbox One dashboard as of 2022
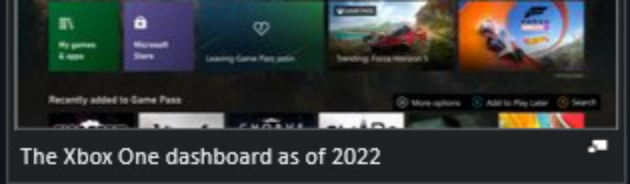
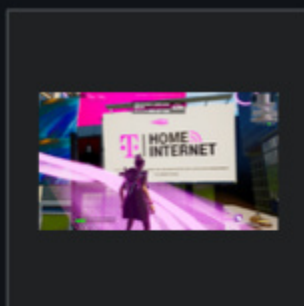## Traditional gaming [edit | edit source]

While not on par with its Mobile gaming counterpart, traditional video games have also been experiencing this heavy increase in advertising. This has especially been seen and documented from titles such as Call of Duty and Fortnite. The home screen and launch screen experience for these games often aim to direct players toward the storefront, encouraging them to purchase the products that are being promoted that day.[27][28] Additionally, killcams in Call of Duty have seen ads as well.[29]

Activision Blizzard has a dedicated advertising division for companies to advertise their products inside their games.[30] Epic Games has done a similar thing.[31][32][33] It is expected that legitimate ads may be progressively more pervasive within the media that users pay for.[34][35] Advertising agencies in general are also trying to integrate billboard ads for legitimate products inside games, such as Trackmania.[36]

Some platforms have gone so far as to send users notifications explicitly promoting these new products available for purchase within the game.[37] Most have kept these notifications in-game, [38] but some have been reported to leave notification pop-ups directly on users' devices.[39][40] It is entirely plausible that these marketplace advertisements will increase in popularity from publishers as time goes on.

In-game ads in Trackmania
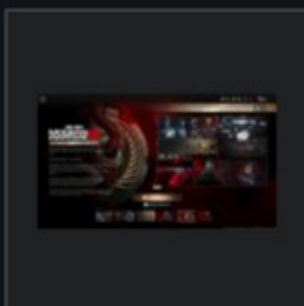
Cod MW3 - Ad in-game marketing the premium version

Fortnite - Ad marketing T-Mobile

Advergaming [edit | edit source]

> Further reading: Advergames

While not as popular as it once was, companies would pay developers to work on games that exist solely to advertise a product, such as McDonald's McWorld, which also advertised other products inside the game.[41] Sometimes these games would also introduce additional anticonsumer practices, often to the detriment of young kids.[42] Many of these games were made as shovelware as well, so many of these games are often not meant for an extended period of time to be accessible. Older advergames often only sold for a short period, only up to a few years at best, so if a game held any quality, there is a problem of FOMO, this has been seen with popular titles such as Pepsiman on the PS1 or Cool Spot on the Sega Genesis. In the 2000s, these games often preferred accessing servers, mostly to encourage serving additional ads. Many of these would not last long, and these products people invest into are just taken away from them, such as ToonTown[43] or

Club Penguin.[44]

In the modern day, Advergaming has largely preferred existing metaverses, such as Roblox[45][46] or the literal Metaverse.[47] These too, have brought controversy[48] and can be seen as anti-consumer.

Mobile gaming   [edit | edit source]

A feature often associated with modern day mobile games are ads, especially misleading ads.[49][50] Unfortunately, publishers such as Puzzle1Studio, Metacore Games, and Rovio have a history of publishing titles that corner the consumer into frequently watching ads in the middle of their games.[51] This practice additionally leeches into Microtransactions, wherein these app developers will intentionally try to coax users into watching ads for increased rewards, or to reduce cooldown times.[51][52]

Major software distribution platforms, such as the Google Play store or the iOS App Store, often allow this behavior[52] to persist from app developers, even featuring these ad-heavy games.

Social media   [edit | edit source]

Social media has become a fundamental part of the advertising world, thanks to the ease with which targeted audiences can be reached based on their interests. There are various types of advertising that users encounter when using all major social media platforms.

Native ads (In-feed ads)   [edit | edit source]

Native ads are designed to blend seamlessly into the rest of the feed, mimicking its appearance. They are generally more engaging and lead to stronger brand identification among consumers.[53] Native ads are distinguishable from organic content by the label "sponsored," often written in very small text. As highlighted by Dr. Bartosz W. Wojdynski's research,[54] native ads can easily be misleading. In fact, 68% of participants in his study failed to distinguish them from organic content. Therefore, it is crucial that these ads do not come across as deceptive. The FTC follows these three principles:[55]

1. **Transparency is key**: An advertisement or promotional message should not suggest or imply to consumers that it is anything other than an ad.
2. **Clarity of commercial intent**: Some native ads may be so clearly commercial in nature that they are unlikely to mislead consumers even without a specific disclosure. In other cases, a disclosure may be necessary to ensure consumers understand the content is advertising.
3. **Clear and prominent disclosures**: If a disclosure is necessary to prevent deception, it must be clear and prominent.

Video Ads   [edit | edit source]

Video ads are among the most common forms of advertising on social media. They can appear either as standalone content or be inserted at the beginning, end, or middle of another video. Shorter, skippable, and non-intrusively placed ads perform better, as they respect user autonomy. Targeted ads are more likely to capture interest. As with other ad formats, transparency is crucial here as well, ensuring that the ad is not perceived as intrusive.[56]

Stories Ads   [edit | edit source]

Ads that appear in Stories are full-screen, vertical, and often feature interactive elements like swipe-up links, polls, or countdowns. They expire after 24 hours, giving them an ephemeral nature. Story ads are better perceived when they are creative, non-intrusive, and relevant to users' interests.[57]

Influencer marketing   [edit | edit source]

Influencer marketing is a type of advertising in which brands team up with social media personalities, also known as influencers, to promote a product or service.

Most of these influencers have built a credible standing among a large and engaged following. Brands use brand deals to leverage the influencers' credibility and relatability and reach audiences in ways that feel far more authentic than traditional advertising.

Users are more influenced by social media personalities who share their values and lifestyles. Consequently, authenticity, trustworthiness, and relevance are the key drivers of consumer behavior. Thus, when influencers share real-life experiences of using a product or service, their recommendations are more likely to resonate with followers and result in higher levels of engagement and purchase intent.[58]

Congruence—the match between the persona of the influencer, the product they are promoting, and the interests of the audience—is crucial. When the fit among these elements is strong it makes the campaign appear more genuine, and therefore more credible. Strong congruence will improve the credibility of an influencer, and create a stronger emotional relationship with the audience.[59]

Over-commercialization—when influencers promote too many products or aren't transparent—can erode their audience's trust. Clear disclosures, such as #ad or #sponsored, help to maintain transparency and adherence with advertising regulations. Unfortunately, such disclosures are often hidden among numerous hashtags or omitted altogether.[58][59]

Web   [edit | edit source]

See also: Advertising Overload in Websites

Ever since the introduction of cookies in the early 1990s, websites have been trying to make progressively more money off of advertisers. This pattern used to be easily thwarted, as in the early days of the web, consumers could simply choose not to visit these websites to avoid being so pervasively served advertisements. Unfortunately, in modern times, consumers lack this capability, as mass advertising has now become a systemic problem. Popular news sources, such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and others, are filled to the brim with advertisements. As mentioned by publications such as The Huffington Post,[60] The Conversation,[61] and B2,[62] the web itself has too many ads.

Banner Ads   [edit | edit source]

Banner ads are the most common form of web ads and one of the oldest forms of digital advertising, usually appearing as rectangular graphics at the top, bottom, or sides of a webpage. However, despite their pervasiveness, their effectiveness has been questioned due to phenomena such as **banner blindness**, where users unconsciously ignore ad-like content. Banner ads work only if they are rightly placed, well designed, and relevant.[63]

This research[63] featured the use of eye-tracking technology to analyze how users behave with banner ads. It was found that such ads placed in central or prominent positions on a webpage receive significantly more attention than those in peripheral areas. Moreover, the animated and interactive banners are better at capturing attention than static ones; however, too much may become distracting and otherwise counterproductive. This also underlines that the relevance of the ad to the user's interests is one of the critical drivers of engagement. If banner ads are contextual, relating either to the content of the webpage or the browsing behavior of the user, they are more likely to be noticed and clicked. Advertisers should focus on creating non-intrusive, contextually relevant advertisements that add value to the user experience—not disrupt it.

Notable Examples   [edit | edit source]

This section is a stub, please add to it!

YouTube   [edit | edit source]

Here's a breakdown of YouTube advertising, focusing on the specific ad formats and experiences across the website, iOS/ Android apps, and TV platforms:

YouTube Ads on the Website   [edit | edit source]

1. **Pre-Roll Ads (Video Ads):**

    - Play before the selected video.
    - **Types:**
        - **Skippable Ads:** Allow users to skip after 5 seconds.
        - **Non-Skippable Ads:** Typically 15-20 seconds long and cannot be skipped.

2. **Mid-Roll Ads:**

    - Appear during longer videos (10 minutes or more) at natural breaks.

3. **Bumper Ads:**

    - Short, non-skippable ads of 6 seconds.

4. **Display Ads:**

    - Banner ads that appear above the video suggestions sidebar.

5. **Overlay Ads:**

    - Semi-transparent banners that appear at the bottom of the video.

YouTube Ads on iOS/Android Apps   [edit | edit source]

1. **Pre-Roll and Mid-Roll Ads:**

    - Similar to the website, but often more frequent due to the higher engagement on mobile devices.

2. **Bumper Ads:**

    - Similar to the website.

3. **In-Feed Ads:**

    - Appear in the home feed or search results as promoted videos.

4. **Shorts Ads:**

    - Short, vertical video ads that appear between YouTube Shorts clips.

YouTube Ads on TV Platforms (Smart TVs, Streaming Devices)   [edit | edit source]

1. **Pre-Roll and Mid-Roll Ads:**

    - Longer pre-roll ads (up to 30 seconds) are common, as viewers are less likely to skip them.
    - Mid-roll ads are placed at natural breaks in longer videos, similar to traditional TV commercials.
    - Non-skippable ads are more prevalent

2. **Interactive Ads:**

    - Ads that allow users to interact using their remote (e.g., clicking for more information).

Youtube premium controversy   [edit | edit source]

Recent controversy has brought up cases in which YouTube Premium subscribers still see advertisements—contrary to the service's own highlighting of offering an ad-free experience. Users have reported both pre-roll ads and mid-roll ads, along with promotional content in the Home feed.[64] In one prominent case, a user in Germany received an email from support at YouTube which said, in essence: "Sometimes promotional ads may appear for specific partnerships or limited-time offers," thereby hinting at the possibility of factors like location, viewing history, or special marketing efforts that could influence the event.

In response to these reports, a YouTube spokesperson confirmed that Premium members should not see either pre-roll or mid-roll ads. They further stated that if subscribers do, they should reach out to support immediately. YouTube also said that Premium members may have access to different rewards with trusted partners, which they outline on their benefits page, but those shouldn't show up as ads within the video itself.[65] A fix for this is also shown in this guide ↗.

Youtube influencer marketing   [edit | edit source]

Influencer marketing on YouTube is a highly common practice that manifests in several forms. The most frequent format is **sponsored videos**, where influencers create content entirely focused on a specific product or service. Another widely used format is **product placements**, where influencers casually integrate a product into their regular videos. However, these can sometimes be the most frustrating for viewers, particularly when the sponsored product has little to no connection to the video's topic and is marketed in a misleading manner. For example, VPN services promoted by influencers are often claimed to guarantee complete privacy and no data collection while browsing the web, which can feel deceptive if not properly substantiated. Lastly, **shoutouts and affiliate links** represent a subtle yet effective method for influencers to promote products. In this case, the influencer briefly mentions a product or service and encourages viewers to explore it further, often including a link in the description or a discount code.

Fortnite [edit | edit source]

Here are some of the notable ways Fortnite has advertised products inside the game:

- Music Collaborations:

    - Marshmello concert (attended by 10.7 million players)
    - Weezer-themed island with a jukebox playing Weezer tracks

- Sports and Entertainment Collaborations:

    - Soccer skins and interactive pitches (World Cup 2018)
    - NFL skins (Fall 2018)
    - Avengers crossover (Infinity Stones and Thanos)
    - John Wick mode (bounty hunters)

- Fashion and Lifestyle Collaborations:

    - Jordan sneakers (Downtown Drop mode)
    - Nike collaboration with community creators (Tollmolia and Notnellaf)

- Other Advertisements:

    - Dynamic ads and static ads (displayed on the gaming screen)
    - Gamevertising (integrating brands within popular maps)

These advertisements and collaborations have been a key part of Fortnite for over 7 years so far.

Windows [edit | edit source]

During the use of Windows, users may encounter various types of advertisements, particularly in specific applications, services, or interfaces. Here's an overview of the most common types of ads that appear in Windows environments:

1. Microsoft Store Ads   [edit | edit source]

- **Where they appear:** Within the Microsoft Store app, which is used to download apps, games, and other software.
- **What they look like:** Promoted apps or games displayed prominently on the homepage or in search results.

2. Start Menu and Lock Screen Ads[66]   [edit | edit source]

- **Where they appear:** On the **Start Menu** (e.g., suggested apps) or the **Lock Screen** (e.g., background images with promotional content).
- **What they look like:** Tiles or notifications promoting Microsoft services like OneDrive, Office 365, or third-party apps.

3. In-App Ads (e.g., Microsoft Solitaire, Weather, News)   [edit | edit source]

- **Where they appear:** In pre-installed Microsoft apps like **Solitaire Collection**, **Weather**, **News**, or **Sports**.
- **What they look like:** Banner ads, video ads, or interstitial ads (full-screen ads between levels or content).
- **Purpose:** To monetize free versions of apps, with options to remove ads through paid subscriptions

4. Bing Ads in Search and Widgets   [edit | edit source]

- **Where they appear:** In the **Bing Search Bar** (on the taskbar) or the **Widgets Panel** (accessible via Win + W).

- **What they look like:** Sponsored search results or promoted content within the widgets interface.

5. Outlook.com Ads (Free Version) [edit | edit source]

- **Where they appear:** In the free version of **Outlook.com** (web or app).
- **What they look like:** Banner ads or promotional emails within the inbox.
- **Purpose:** To monetize the free email service, with ads removed in the paid (Microsoft 365) version.

6. Edge Browser Ads [edit | edit source]

- **Where they appear:** In the **Microsoft Edge** browser, particularly on the **New Tab Page** or within certain websites.
- **What they look like:** Promoted content, sponsored news articles, or shopping suggestions.

7. Windows Tips and Notifications [edit | edit source]

- **Where they appear:** In the **Action Center** or as pop-up notifications.
- **What they look like:** Tips or suggestions to try new features, services, or apps (e.g., OneDrive, Microsoft 365).

8. Game Bar and Xbox App Ads [edit | edit source]

- **Where they appear:** In the **Xbox Game Bar** (accessible via Win + G) or the **Xbox App**.

What they look like: Promotions for Xbox Game Pass, new game releases, or in-game content.

How to Reduce or Disable Ads in Windows: [edit | edit source]

There's the option to disable some of these ads, as shown in this ↗ guide.

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