

Don't advertise during sexy programmes - the viewer won't remember

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People are less able to recall the brand of products advertised during programmes with a lot of sexual content, than if the advert is placed in similar programme that has no sexual content.

This was the key message that came from research carried out at the Department of Psychology at University College London by Ellie Parker and Adrian Furnham. The research is published in this month's edition of *Applied Cognitive Psychology*.

The implication is that advertisers do not spend their money well if they buy space during programmes with high sexual content.

A second, less surprising, finding was that men recalled the brand of products whose adverts contained sexual images, than they did if the adverts were sex-free. Women on the other hand were actively put off by sexual content in adverts.

The studies involved 60 university students (30 men and 30 women) aged 18 to 31, mean age 21, who were divided into four groups. One group saw an overtly sexual episode of "Sex and The City", which had sexy adverts running during the programme breaks. Another saw the same episode with non-sexual adverts. The other two groups saw an episode of "Malcolm in the Middle" which contained no sexual references, with either sexual or non-sexual adverts.

"The fact that recall of adverts was hindered by sexual content in the

programmes suggests that there is something particularly involving or disturbing about sexual programmes. Interestingly this is something that is also found in programmes with aggressive content,” says Furnham.

“Sex seems to have a detrimental effect on females recall for an advertisement,” says Parker. “Sex is only a useful advertising tool when selling to men.”

Source: John Wiley & Sons

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