

## **Investigating the Factors Influencing YouTube Advertising Avoidance: An Empirical Study on Sri Lankan YouTube Enthusiasts**

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This study investigates the factors influencing YouTube advertising avoidance among Sri Lankan YouTube enthusiasts. It examines the roles of goal impediment, perceived personalization, and privacy concerns as independent variables. Additionally, the study explores advertising value as a mediating component, encompassing informativeness, entertainment, irritation, and credibility. The research highlights the increasing frequency of advertising avoidance behavior on the YouTube platform, with a particular focus on Sri Lankan-specific contextual factors. By incorporating theoretical frameworks such as Ducoffe's Advertising Value Model (Ducoffe, 1996; Brackett & Carr, 2001) and the Psychological Reactance Theory (Brehm, 1966), the study contributes to the conversation on maximizing digital advertising strategies to reduce avoidance and enhance user engagement.

Adopting a quantitative approach, the study surveys 384 Sri Lankan YouTube users aged 18 to 65. Demographic and behavioral data were collected via an online questionnaire using non-probability convenience sampling during the data collection phase. Statistical analyses, including regression and mediation tests, were conducted using SPSS to investigate the relationships between the variables. To ensure robustness, pretests and reliability tests were implemented, and the research components were operationalized in alignment with recognized measurement scales.

The results show that goal impediment (Beta = 0.280,  $p < 0.001$ ) and privacy concerns (Beta = 0.387,  $p < 0.001$ ) are significant drivers of YouTube advertising avoidance, with privacy concerns being the strongest predictor. Perceived personalization has a weaker yet significant impact (Beta = 0.115,  $p = 0.007$ ), demonstrating dual effects based on balance. Advertising value mediates these relationships, with informativeness and entertainment

reducing avoidance, while irritation increases it. The regression model explains 44.9% of the variance in avoidance ( $R^2 = 0.449$ ). These findings emphasize the importance of minimizing intrusiveness and improving advertising value to increase user engagement. Privacy concerns and goal impediment are identified as the main factors influencing YouTube ad avoidance. Advertisements that disrupt users' main goals on the platform lead to negative emotional responses, resulting in heightened avoidance. Privacy concerns, especially regarding data exploitation, complicate this further. While overly intrusive personalization fosters skepticism and annoyance, well-tailored ads reduce avoidance by being more relevant. Advertising value plays a crucial mediating role, with irritation increasing avoidance, while entertainment and informativeness help decrease it.

The study's findings offer valuable insights for advertisers to develop campaigns that limit intrusive elements and better align with user preferences. However, the study's focus on YouTube advertising limits its ability to address trends in cross-platform advertising, setting it apart from other digital networks. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias, which could influence the accuracy of respondents' views and behaviors. Future research could address these limitations by utilizing observational data, expanding the scope to include other platforms, and applying probabilistic sampling techniques.

This paper makes a theoretical contribution to the understanding of the interactions between goal impediment, perceived personalization, privacy concerns, and advertising value in influencing individuals to avoid digital ads. These dynamics add to the literature, particularly in the context of Sri Lanka's digital landscape, which remains underexplored. The findings provide marketers with strategic insights for creating non-intrusive yet engaging advertising experiences. Recommendations include reducing annoyance, emphasizing the value of information and enjoyment, and leveraging data-driven expertise to design more private and personalized formats. Policymakers can also use these findings to regulate ethical advertising. Future studies should focus on the long-term effects of advertising campaigns and further investigate the intricate contextual factors that contribute to ad avoidance.

**Keywords:** *Ad Avoidance, Advertising Value, Goal Impediment, Perceived Personalization, Privacy Concerns, YouTube Advertising*