

THE EFFECTS OF ONLINE CONTENT STRUCTURE ON
ATTENTION & MEMORY: EXPLORING OPTIMAL STRUCTURE
FOR NEWS ON CORPORATE WEB SITES

Rebecca Marxer

Dr. Paul Bolls, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of online content structure on attention and memory as indicators to overall communication effectiveness. For the purposes of this study, content structure was defined as either Bite-Snack-Meal (BSM), which involved presentation of information through several clickable hyperlinks, or traditional, inverted pyramid news writing without hyperlinks.

The design was a mixed 2 (content structure) x 6 (article) repeated measures design. Heart rate was collected during a 10 second baseline period and during stimulus exposure. A multiple choice recognition test and a short answer cued recall test were utilized to measure memory.

Attention and encoding were tested by submitting the data to a repeated measures ANOVA. Findings suggest that content structure does impact allocation of cognitive resources for controlled attention. BSM requires less effort and fewer cognitive resources allocated during exposure with no significant memory differences.