

Americans Online: Differences in Surfing and Evaluating Race-Targeted Web Sites by Black and White Users

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This study explored how Black and White viewers browse and evaluate Web sites based on the racial target of the site. The findings demonstrate that, while Blacks do not necessarily evaluate Black- and White-targeted sites differently, they do spend more time browsing on and recall more information from a Black-targeted site than they do a White-targeted site. In contrast, White viewers display no differences in their browsing, recall, or evaluation patterns based on the racial target of the Web site. Theoretical implications regarding the psychological mechanisms at work when viewers are exposed to race-targeted sites are discussed.

There is some debate on whether Black and White audiences can be reached equally well with the same racially-targeted media. Research on Blacks' and Whites' response to race-specific messages suggests that whites respond no differently to media messages targeted to Blacks or Whites (Appiah 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Bush, Gwinner, & Solomon, 1974; Bush, Hair, & Solomon, 1979; Greenberg, 1986; Pitts, Whalen, O'Keefe, & Murray, 1989; Schlinger & Plummer, 1972; Soley, 1983; Whittler, 1991; Whittler & Dimeo, 1991), while Blacks respond to media messages more favorably when the messages are targeted to Blacks (Appiah 2001a; 2001b, 2002; Choundhury & Schmid, 1974; Greenberg & Atkin, 1982; Whittler, 1989, 1991). Despite the evidence, there still appears to be some disagreement on which racially-targeted media best appeal to audiences, particularly Black audiences. Some argue that White-targeted media is just as effective in reaching Blacks as Black-targeted media (e.g., Askey, 1995; Gadsden, 1985) while others hold that the best way to reach Blacks is through Black-oriented media (Appiah & Wagner, 2002; Fannin, 1989; Harris, 1981). Much of the work used to resolve this debate has focused on audiences' responses to traditional media rather than new media. This

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