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Categorical Muting of Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

An online advertisement muting system gives a user an ability to mute certain ads shown to the user. The system can receive an input to mute an advertisement when the ad is being played on a screen associated with the system. The system presents a list of muting categories to the user. A few examples of these categories are format of the ad, language of the ad, topic of the ad, brand of the ad, ad geographical location of interest, etc. Based on the user selection, the system receives the selection of a muting category for the ad. Subsequently, the system mutes the current ad according to the chosen muting category. Additionally, the system can also modify future ad targeting based on the received selection. The system can also provide the ability for users to mute ad categories in a preference manager at an initial sign up, or login of the user account.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Businesses are increasingly relying on online advertising to reach out to customers. As a result, Internet users are deluged with advertisements in any given web-browsing session. This is not only problematic for users, who sit through advertisements that are of no interest or relation to them, but advertising publishers as well, who get minimal return on investment for advertising impressions wasted on such users. To reduce the volume of unwanted ads shown to users, online advertising platforms have introduced the ability for users to mute specific advertisements. While helpful, this individual treatment of advertisements does not realistically allow a user to
customize his online experience so that he only sees advertisements that are of interest to him. A method and system that allows users to mute entire categories of advertisements is disclosed.

**ONLINE ADVERTISEMENT MUTING SYSTEM**

The systems and techniques described in this disclosure relate to an online advertisement muting system. The system can be implemented for use in an Internet, an intranet, or another client and server environment. The system can be implemented as program instructions locally on a client device or implemented across a client device and server environment. The client device can be any electronic device such as a mobile device, a smartphone, a tablet, a handheld electronic device, a wearable device, a laptop, etc.

Fig. 1 illustrates an example method 100 for muting the advertisements shown to a user. Method 100 can be performed by an online advertisement muting system.

The system receives an input from a user to mute an ad when the ad is displayed (block 110). The ad is run by an advertising platform. The system can be integrated as part of the advertising platform or separate from the advertising platform. The user can be browsing the web, streaming a video, listening to music, or any other web-based activity on a client device when he is presented the ad by the advertising platform. The graphical user interface (GUI) of the ad includes a soft button which allows the user to mute the advertisement as shown in Fig. 2A. Additionally, or alternatively, the GUI can present a list of advertisement preference options to the user for the user to choose from. The user can select the mute option using an input device, e.g., touchscreen or mouse, associated with the client device.
After the system receives the input to mute the ad, the system presents a list of muting categories to the user (block 120). The system may present the various muting categories via a scroll down menu or a list view as shown in Fig. 2B. The muting categories allow the user to identify entire categories of advertisements that he would like to mute. Examples of categories include the format of the ad, the language of the ad, the topic of the ad, the brand of the ad, changing from formats that take over navigational clicks to formats which are the most suited for the display, and the geographical location of interest. The format of the ad category can be the video quality or resolution of the ad, the language of the ad category can be the language spoken in the ad, the brand of the ad category can be the company or brand represented in the ad, geographical location of interest can be receiving or not receiving ads from a particular location of interest, 

After the list of muting categories is presented to the user, the system receives a selection of a muting category (block 130). The user can select one or more categories from the list depending on the user’s preferences. For example, the user is shown a high-resolution ad on his client device but his client device uses a low bandwidth service. The ad buffers slowly and stutters, resulting in a poor user experience that can be easily prevented by allowing the user to mute video, flash, or rich image ads, specifically at the time the user is on a low bandwidth service. Therefore, the user can select the “format of the ad” muting category from the list of muting categories presented to the user (see 206, Fig. 2B). The selection of this category will cause the system to prevent any ads of the same format as the instant ad, i.e., high resolution, to be displayed to the user.
As another example, the user is shown a tourism ad for “San Francisco,” a popular tourist
destination that is of no interest to the user. The user is not interested in any local ads for San
Francisco, such as discounts at San Francisco cafe’s or shopping coupons for particular stores in
San Francisco. Therefore, the user can select “geographical location of interest” muting category.
The selection of this category will cause the system to prevent any ads related to the same
geographical location of interest as the instant ad, i.e., San Francisco, to be displayed to the user.
The system will ignore cookies and user history related to that particular area used to provide the
location specific ads to the user and mute all ads pertaining to that geographical location.

Additionally, or alternatively, the system can provide the ability for users to mute ad
categories in a preference manager at an initial sign up, or login of the user account. The user can
also specify muting of ad categories specific to certain browsers and client devices. Additionally,
the ads preference manager can provide the user the ability to mute a subset of categories and
formats. For example, while setting up the preferences for the format category in the preference
manager, the user can choose a subset of formats, such as, muting only in 4K resolution. The
preference manager may be linked to directly from the mute button on a displayed ad. If a user
mutes the ad, he can go directly to the preference manager and make a selection of additional
categories to mute.

Subsequently, the system mutes the current ad and modifies future ad targeting based on
the received selection (block 140). The advertisement platform will avoid serving the user future
ads that fall within the muted category. The ability to mute certain ad categories from the ads
shown to the user can narrow the ads shown to the user and improve ad targeting, giving the user
a better experience, as well as giving advertisers and publishers increase return on investment for their advertisement campaigns.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of an exemplary environment that shows components of a system for implementing the techniques described in this disclosure. The environment includes client devices 310, servers 330, and network 340. Network 340 connects client devices 310 to servers 330. Client device 310 is an electronic device. Client device 310 may be capable of requesting and receiving data/communications over network 340. Example client devices 310 are personal computers (e.g., laptops), mobile communication devices, (e.g. smartphones, tablet computing devices), set-top boxes, game-consoles, embedded systems, and other devices 310’ that can send and receive data/communications over network 340. Client device 310 may execute an application, such as a web browser 312 or 314 or a native application 316. Web applications 313 and 315 may be displayed via a web browser 312 or 314. Server 330 may be a web server capable of sending, receiving and storing web pages 332. Web page(s) 332 may be stored on or accessible via server 330. Web page(s) 332 may be associated with web application 313 or 315 and accessed using a web browser, e.g., 312. When accessed, webpage(s) 332 may be transmitted and displayed on a client device, e.g., 310 or 310’. Resources 318 and 318’ are resources available to the client device 310 and/or applications thereon, or server(s) 330 and/or web pages(s) accessible therefrom, respectively. Resources 318’ may be, for example, memory or storage resources; a text, image, video, audio, JavaScript, CSS, or other file or object; or other relevant resources. Network 340 may be any network or combination of networks that can carry data communication.
The subject matter described in this disclosure can be implemented in software and/or hardware (for example, computers, circuits, or processors). The subject matter can be implemented on a single device or across multiple devices (for example, a client device and a server device). Devices implementing the subject matter can be connected through a wired and/or wireless network. Such devices can receive inputs from a user (for example, from a mouse, keyboard, or touchscreen) and produce an output to a user (for example, through a display). Specific examples disclosed are provided for illustrative purposes and do not limit the scope of the disclosure.

**DRAWINGS**
FIG. 1

100
Receive an input to mute an ad when the ad is being displayed

120
Presents a list of muting categories to the user

130
Receive a selection of a muting category

140
Mute the current ad and modify future ad targeting based on the received selection
Figure 2A