

# TikTok's flashy new ad format has some UI problems

Article

**The news:** TikTok has been testing new ad formats, first with on-screen stickers promoting the **Super Bowl** and then with the recent launch of **TikTok Trivia**, a livestreamed event where viewers can win cash prizes for correct answers.

- The events have their own pages within the app that users can access by clicking on a sticker at the top-left of the screen. The sticker can be moved around for convenience, or removed during the viewing session by tapping a small “x” next to it.

**The cost of new activations:** The stickers and event pages are some of the most high-profile activations TikTok has done for advertising partners in recent memory, surfacing the partnership to all users in a region rather than having ads appear alongside videos in its feed. However, the new format has drawbacks.

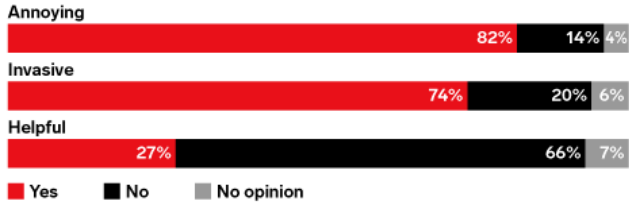
- The two back-to-back prominent examples will likely generate interest from other major advertisers looking to build excitement around major events, media releases, and more.
- But despite the new format being a powerful addition to TikTok’s advertising war chest, the user experience has a long way to go. On the limited screen of a mobile device, stickers obstruct a significant portion of it by default, and attempts to tap the hard-to-target “x” can sometimes unintentionally load the promotion page.
- This, combined with TikTok occasionally prompting users with a large “TRIVIA” pop-up upon opening the app, means that stickers—while a good idea in theory—have created a rather annoying advertising experience reminiscent of early internet pop-up ads and hard-to-close banners.

**What’s the solution?** It’s still early days for TikTok’s newest ad format, so there’s time to work out the kinks and reduce intrusiveness.

- There hasn’t been a significant backlash so far, but as with any internet platform, users can pressure TikTok via viral campaigns when they think their experience has been diminished. Just look at the recent [“de-influencing” trend](#) to see how users are rebelling against platforms’ advertising strategies.
- Being the first thing TikTok’s millions of young, desirable users see when they open the app might have advertisers chomping at the bit, but exercising caution is wise. If the current trend of increasingly intrusive pop-ups continues, a backlash is coming.
- One potential solution that would allow TikTok to immediately surface brands without intruding on the user experience would be to have the app play a promotion for the activation as the first video in the feed when users open the app—or even simply increasing the size of the “x” on the stickers.

## Attitudes of US Internet Users Towards Targeted Ads, Nov 2021

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+; among those who see targeted ads

Source: Washington Post and Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University as cited in article, Dec 22, 2021

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