

# How good is our memory of everyday visual stimuli?

March 23 2015

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In our world of branding and repetitive advertising, it is feasible that we dutifully soak up visuals and messages and store them accurately in our mind's eye. New research published in the *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* tests this theory by examining our memory of the ubiquitous Apple logo and our perceived ability for recall. Blake, Castel and Nazarian ask 'are we really paying attention?' Their experiment reveals some surprising insights.

Apple: a logo recognised the world over, visually appealing, highly recognisable and seen by most every single day. With such visibility surely we stand a good chance of remembering it? Past research has shown that memory can be poor for daily items, our brains glossing over the details and only taking the gist.

So the question remains; does exposure enhance memory? The authors test the theory via an experiment during which a group of undergraduates (both Apple and PC users) were asked to draw the logo from memory and then choose the correct logo from a set of 8 alternatives. The study rated candidates' confidence levels pre and post experiment. Astonishingly, only 1 out of 85 was able to accurately draw the logo and less than half chose the correct image from the selection. Confidence levels and recognition did not correlate; confidence pre task was 55% higher than post. Candidates rapidly adjusted their confidence estimates post retrieval upon realising the complexity of the task. This striking difference shows our memory to be much poorer than we believe and highlights lack of self-awareness to our own attention lapses.

This experiment has given unique insight into accuracy of [visual memory](#) and recall judgement. The authors suggest the poor performance is due to "attentional saturation", they note "Increased exposure increases familiarity and confidence, but does not reliably affect memory. Despite frequent exposure to a simple and visually pleasing logo, attention and memory are not always tuned to remembering what we may think is memorable."

**More information:** "The Apple of the mind's eye: Everyday attention, metamemory, and reconstructive memory for the Apple logo." *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* [DOI: 10.1080/17470218.2014.1002798](#)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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