

Internet Advertising: An Emerging Media

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Abstract: The main objective of the article is to high light on the application of Internet as a media in advertising. Some selected issues on Internet advertising are discussed in the article. The article comprises issues like the growth, impact and characteristics of Internet advertising, application, problems of Internet advertising as well as various measures to overcome the problems.

Key words: Internet, Advertisement, Information, Technology and Communication

Introduction

It was around three years ago that the content and form of advertising as we witness today was introduced. Over the years sophisticated technology used in creating the advertisement for the better communication that has been constantly upgraded. Advertisers spend billions of rupees every year to communicate their message to their prospective buyers. The advertising industry has crossed TK. 5500 core (1997-98) with a growth rate of 6.9 %. In the 1970's advertising was like a pure art form. Today, it becomes more scientific and accountable. Now, it is a good blend of art and science. As the aesthetic aspects of skills are overlapped with the strategic aspects of communication technology, creative writers realized, they have a critical task in developing advertisements for this new medium. The recent invention of the 'Internet technology' has made the job of advertisers easier and more effective. Internet advertising is a fascinating opportunity for the advertiser. That is why they are early considered by them. The continuous economic liberalization has opened the door of markets with similar characteristics. Countries are becoming border less and this process is taking place with the introduction of new communication technologies. There are rapid strides in the field of information technology towards faster and multi-media data transmission channels evolved with the help of satellite technology for providing the consumer easy and quick access to information and knowledge. The latest edition of Internet is a very powerful and fast growing communication media. Naturally, this development demands the marketers to review their advertising techniques.

Objective of the Study: The main objective of this article is to reveal the application of Internet as a media in advertising. The other objectives include the following:

- to know the growth and impact of Internet on advertising.
- to know the characteristics of Internet advertising.
- to know the application of Internet advertising.
- to identify the problems of Internet advertising.
- finally to provide guidelines to overcome the Internet advertising problems.

Materials and Methods

It may be mentioned here that the study is descriptive in nature. The study was based mainly on secondary data. Secondary data was relevant to the growth, impact, characteristics and application of Internet advertising. These were collected from websites, published books and materials, articles, journals etc. The collected information was analyzed and conversed in order to attain the objectives of the article.

Growth of Internet: Internet is the zenith of the information technology. It is an international network of networks, rather than one big network. It is a virtual world where people may travel for various reasons. It is a global networking process where one hundred fifty million host computers providing access to over eight hundred million people across the world. The two distinct and unique characteristics of Internet are connectivity and interactivity, which make it more versatile. Connectivity refers to the breaking of geographical barriers and making a customer available any time and anywhere. Connectivity makes the job of a marketer easier to reach millions of target customers. The interactive element allows the customers to choose their products and assists the marketers to engage the audience in a dialogue.

The Internet evolved from ARPANET – a research network established by the United States Defense Department in 1969. The ARPANET was created with a view to enable academic and government researchers to communicate by e-mail and to share data and computing resources. Each message sent through the Internet has a unique address and any Internet server of the network can forward it to its destination. However, the growth of Internet in the last five years though confined to the US and Europe has been phenomenal both in terms of subscriptions and uses. By 2005, it is expected that more than twelve hundred million people will be using the Internet all over the world.

Impact of Internet Advertising: Internet could become the most important medium for advertising. Advertising plays important roles in the Internet. Advertisers now started realize that Internet as a medium may be a good idea for direct communication with the customers. Firm can use the Internet as a distribution channels for sales and services to consumer and providing customers support with information about various products and building a customers database for future actions.

Net Advertising: Net advertising is a combination of audio-visual and text messages, which enable potential buyers to make comparison of similar product / service available in the market. 'Web' is the ideal vehicle for promoting sales of product. Firms can develop 'Websites' to advertise their products either by themselves or by organization engaged in the business of 'Web Designing'. The consumers can open the Web Page through the web sites address given specifically for an organization. The consumer can browse and collect the relevant information. For that reason, advertising in the Internet helps citizen groups that support low cost information services. It is a good source of information, which attract Internet users.

Looking Beyond Conventional Advertisements: Net advertisements offer challenges to the advertisement professionals and cooperate them as well. Both of them should have far-sighted approach and vision. They should make a plan for their strategies in the light of threats and opportunities that arising out of using Net as a media. However, developing content for a website is a fascinating task. The advertisement professionals should possess not only the innovative and creative skills needed for bringing out an efficient and effective advertisement but also required a sophisticated information technology picture. In addition, they should have knowledge about the use of graphics and modeling techniques. The great advantage of Net advertisement is that it can be designed and measured effectively as well as the most successful version of Net advertisement can be hosted within a very short period of time for attracting the customers.

Characteristics of Internet Advertising: Four major characteristics of advertisement distinguishing the Internet from their existing media can be summarized as follows:

Low Cost: The cost of the Internet advertisement is still relatively lower than any other media. Employing the Internet is certainly more cost effective for many organizations than building one's own network.

High Speed and Flexibility: Advertising on the Internet can appear immediately. It takes about six weeks to advertise a product in the New York, but in the Internet it can appear immediately even within an hour if the need is urgent. You can also change your advertisement as quickly as much you want because of its low production costs and flexibility.

Content-Orientation: Different from exiting media whose styles and images are important that can easily be incorporated in the Internet advertising in order to be content oriented.

Interactivity or Two-way Communication: The Internet offers an alternative way to mass media communication. Advertising on the Internet is a two-way communication between advertisers and customers. Customers can talk with the advertisers while they watch advertising on the Internet.

The Net already supports many applications for real-time access and retrieval systems such as Email, Usenet newsgroups, Chatting, Telnet, Gophers, Archie, WAIS and World Wide Web (WWW).

Application of Internet in Advertising: The Internet revolution helps both the organizations and *Netizens* (people who frequently search in the Net) to fulfill their needs. The following part is discussed to describe how the advertising agencies could gain competitive advantage through the effective use of Internet. The major applications of the Internet

in their advertising field can be discussed in the following angles:

Borderless World: Internet can be used as a mode of advertisement to enable the message to reach to anybody and anywhere in the world within a very few time. Because of the Internet advertisement, a buyer sitting in front of his computer in Japan can choose a product at his/her own choice manufactured in Bangladesh. Information about international products has become a reality with the help of Internet service.

Effectiveness of an Advertisement: The effectiveness of an advertisement placed in the Internet can be easily measured within twenty-four hours. By simply incorporating an introductory discount coupon, the responses of the browsers can be measured immediately after the advertisement. It helps the marketers to reformulate their advertising strategies to keep pace with the buyers.

Choosing the Best Version: The advertiser can place different versions of their advertisement and can monitor the reactions of the buyers on a daily basis. They can incorporate the most successful version on basis of feedback from the browsers.

Composite Advertising: Two or more companies can have some sort of understanding to have the synergic effect of their advertisement spending. That is when a customer searches for information about a particular product, advertising for another product related to it can pop up.

Selective Selling: A marketer can use different advertising versions for different target customers. For example, HMT watch company can exhibit its different products based on the value expectations of its clients such as price range, features, size, gender based models, etc.

Convenient Comparison: For customers who are interested to compare among different brands before making a final decision, net advertisement comes to their resume.

Two-Way Communication: Releasing advertisements in any media, refers to one-way communication whereas 'Net advertising' enjoys the advantage of two-way communication, wherein prospective buyers are entitled to engage themselves in a 'dialogue' with the marketers to make buying decisions.

Follow-up-Action: Based on information regarding a browser, who is interested to buy a product in the web site, the firm can take immediate follow-up action.

Safely Lock for Sensitive Products: Releasing advertisements for products like contraceptives, pornographies, sexual hormone developers, etc are sensitive issues in the market of Bangladesh and India because of the value systems and cultural barriers. Elders feel embraces when youngsters see these kinds of advertisements and ask for explanation. This problem can be avoided by placing such advertisements in the Internet, where only adults can reach.

Problems to be Managed: The uses of Internet as an advertising media are still suffering by various technological deficiencies in our country. Such problems are highlighted in the following lines:

Problems Pertaining to Advertisement: The important barrier is related to the waiting time for a large advertisement to download from the web page. Creating awareness about the merits of using net advertising among the public is also an important issue to consider. So, culture of the different countries must be kept in mind while preparing the advertisement. One may be suited in Bangladeshi culture but may not be allowed in western countries.

Economic Factors: A large amount of money need to be invested to install an Internet set by the way of purchasing high configured computer, modem, UPS and owing a telephone line. At present the cost of browsing time is also high. Hence, a selective segment could alone go for the Internet connection.

Inadequate Infrastructure: The major problem currently we face is the quality of access. We are aware that telephone

lines are primarily used to link with Internet, but in Bangladesh the poor quality of telephone cables is a big barrier to Internet connection. The second problem arises in the use of low configured computers.

Impulse Purchase is not Feasible: The people who are in the need of specific product requirements as well as are interested in browsing, hence impulse purchase is not much effective.

Cannot be a Sole Media of Advertising: It is true that net advertisement cannot totally replace the existing media of advertisement. Not doubt it is an effective mass media but cannot act independently.

Not Suitable for all Sorts of Products: At present, people browse only for industrial goods and consumer products in the Internet not for all categories of items.

Various Measures to Overcome the Problems

Need to Increase the Scope of Net Advertising: To increase the uses of net advertising by domestic customers, the number of Internet users should be expanded, by the way of making price affordable but do not underestimate the intelligence of customers.

Government Should Abolish Excise Duty: The Government should totally remove all types of excises and duties imposed on computer accessories and peripherals.

Serious Long-Term Steps: While the Government towards the ease of access in terms of coverage and cost has taken few steps, serious long-term steps are needed in providing with improved quality of access.

Increasing the Handling Capacity of Existing Lines: In order to increase the handling capacity of the existing lines by using the fiber optical cable may result virtual world turning alive. Providing less expensive bandwidth with competitive environment will also help to solve the problems.

Developing More Software Professionals: A good number of software professionals who are skilled and efficient in writing programs in Java and C++ for creating new and innovative 'Web Sites' should also be developed.

Product Based Web Site Address: Product based web site address must be systematically prepared and published.

Treatment of the Customer: Treat the customer like king. The expectations, desires and likings of the customer should be emphasized when designing the web page.

Conclusions

Internet is the stepping-stone for the advertisers to reap the benefits of information technology. Though the base of Net users in Bangladesh and India are currently small, the future of Net advertisement is very bright. It is high time for marketers to refocus their ideology about advertising in the context of the use of Internet and the policy regarding privatization of the Internet service. Moreover, unless the Bangladeshi and Indian firms review their strategic functioning with a comprehensive understanding of the scope of participating with the Internet boom, they may find themselves lagging far behind and highly inadequate to face the challenges posed by international companies. Finally, it is sure that Internet will soon bang as a powerful media for advertising in the next millennium.

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