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Generating Clicks: Display Advertising within Social Media

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Abstract - This research study developed a comprehensive social community prototype and tested a variety of display advertising scenarios to determine which scenario motivated social media users to click. Empirical research based on 503 social media users led to the development of several independent variables identified in the study as display advertising scenarios. The display advertising scenarios tested in the study were video, animation, engagement, brand familiarity, and the size and location of the display advertising within each social media prototype web page. Data collected identified which display advertisement scenarios motivated a social media user to click on display advertisements within the social media environment.

Keywords – Online Advertising, Social Media, Consumer Trust, Display Advertising

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers, and/or Practitioners - The uniqueness and versatility of the Internet have contributed to the continued rapid growth of emerging technologies, bringing consumers closer to their brands (Ducoffe, 1996). For advertisers and marketers, it has become critical "to examine the factors that influence how consumers process advertising on the web" (Cho, 1999, p. 45).

Although many other forms of advertising are found online, display ads are the most prevalent (Plummer, Rappaport, Hall, and Baracci, 2007; Cho, 2001; van Ewijk et al., 2021). Display advertisements include many styles and designs, from interactive to static displays. While display advertisements are placed in almost any venue on the Internet, there continues to be an ongoing debate about their effectiveness (Cho, 2003).

Social networking sites have begun to dominate web traffic and have become host environments for consumers worldwide to connect. However, advertisers face challenges in employing these social networks in their marketing strategies. Moreover, understanding what motivates consumers to click through display advertisements has prompted marketers to recognize what advertising formats lead to a better click-through rate.

Introduction

This research study addressed social media users' click-through decisions within the researcher's social community prototype (SCP). This SCP allowed users to interact within the online environment while tracking the user's display advertising click-through decisions. An analysis of the data was conducted, which identified the types of display advertisements preferred by the sample population of 503 consumers within social media environments. This study categorized display advertisement clicks within a theoretical framework.

Research Problem and Its Significance

Social Influence Marketing (SIM) marketing is a critical issue for advertisers in identifying the most effective method to utilize in marketing to their customers (Singh, 2009). The most common method of reaching consumers in a social media environment has been through display/banner advertising. Successful online marketers must identify the type of display advertising best suited to attract consumers and motivate a click. This study researches the problem of how to develop effective display advertising that will motivate consumers to click.

Various elements must be considered when choosing a specific banner advertisement; placement on the website, size, and the targeted audience are integral components of developing an appropriate advertisement (Paulson et al., 2018). An appropriate advertisement is perhaps the most crucial concept; having website visitors as hot leads can be pivotal for any advertisement that receives a click-through. Furthermore, research indicates that display ads are often best utilized in combination with other advertising mediums. "Conversely, display ads can lead to a significant increase in brand sales in high-involvement categories. Display advertising works best in combination with other media for high-involvement products that are hedonic in nature. This may be because combining display advertising and traditional media results in higher levels of attention" (van Ewijk et al., 2021).

Many researchers explore "consumer-related and contextual-factors, and neglect to consider another stream of significant factors: advertiser control factors, such as design factors: color and imagery, message-related factors: catchphrase or tagline, and source-related factors: who the brand is" (Cho, 2003, p. 202) as well as display ad size and location (Sigel et al., 2008). In addition, this study analyzed consumers' click-through preferences within a social media environment and researched the factors that motivated consumers to click on display advertising. Various display advertising scenarios were introduced to consumers within the SCP environment to emulate a simulation of current social media community websites.

Literature Review

Display Advertising and Banner Blindness

When consumers participate in a social media environment, the users' attention is "divided between editorial content and advertising," and due to this division, it is becoming increasingly impossible to "capture visitor attention" (Chtourou and Abide, 2010, p. 108). Display advertising, also known as banner advertising or the "short promotional message occupying some portion of a web page" (Putrevu, 2003, p. 45), can be seen in a variety of forms, such as text links, imagery, animation, classifieds, or sponsorships (Cho, 2003). Capturing the allure of consumers within these social media environments continues to be a challenge for online advertisers.

Display ads have varied levels of interactivity, styles, and designs and are placed in many online venues, such as e-commerce sites, internet portals, and social media sites. Many advertisers struggle to achieve the desired profitability from online ads, and advertisers believe banner blindness (Cho, 2003; van Ewijk et al., 2021) may be a factor. The premise behind display advertising is to allow marketers to present the "right message in front of the right customer at the right moment" (Morrissey, 2010, p. 10). Marketers have been searching for the "Holy Grail of a Metric" (Fisher, 2009, p. 190) to learn more about their online advertising investments. A poll by

Marketing Sherpa (Fisher, 2009) indicates marketers resist adopting social media since they struggle to reap the desired financial rewards. Brands spend more on display advertising than almost any other form of non-traditional advertising (Sigel et al., 2008). However, Cho's (2003) concept of banner blindness was supported by a study conducted in April 2009 by McPheters & Co. and Conde Nast (Marsh, 2009), which found that web users did not see 63% of display ads. As Social media has become a powerful medium for online socializing, the 2008 Cone Business in Social Media Study found that 85% of Americans using it believe a company should be available for interaction on the site (Swanson, 2009). Since these users seek relationships with brands (Ko, Cho et al., 2005), it can be assumed that a certain amount of user and brand trust plays a role in engagement.

Programmatic Advertising

Due to algorithms, using programmatic advertising in social media environments has risks for companies. Advertisements are algorithmically placed in what the technology deems as appropriate positions. However, the contrary can occur. "One of the major limitations of programmatic advertising is that marketing managers have limited control over where their ads appear" (Shehu et al., 2021). Effectively, this means that paid ads can appear to non-interested audiences. The result is a poor return on monies invested.

Trust

Ha (2004) and Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal's (2000) research regarding the importance of brand familiarity and trust on the Internet is inherent to this research study. Vaidyanathan and Aggarwal's (2000) research proved that when a familiar brand was marketed with a not-so-familiar brand, it increased the promotion of the not-so-familiar brand. There was a sense of familiarization and trust with the not-so-familiar brand when coupled with the well-known brand. Ha's (2004) research led to developing a model diagram that presented and demonstrated that standardized parameters would build brand trust on the Internet. Research findings suggest a correlation between trust and advertising credibility and posit that ad trust "incorporates behavioral intent: willingness to rely on, not actual behavior: relying on behavior" (Soh et al., 2009, p.86). "Trust in the online context implies the consumer's willingness to be vulnerable to the company and belief that the firm will fulfill its promises and will not exploit that vulnerability for its benefit" (Martin et al., 2008, p. 549). Social communities provide environments for a continuous exchange of information and many opportunities for vulnerability. Users of social communities may already have a sense of trust in their online environment to embrace this vulnerability each time they participate.

Engagement

Social media "has provided the motive opportunity, and means for advertisers to engage consumers more openly and honestly" (Nielsen, 2009, p. 13). Social communities make this honest interaction possible between advertisers and users. Online display advertising strategies are based on the consumer push model (Autry, 2008). Display advertising is pushed based on consumers' behavior and interactions within the online environment, meaning advertisers present display ads based on the user's interaction within the social community. Research reveals that most users engage

because of two motivating factors: first, the needs and wants, which users identify in themselves and the community in which they are participating, and second, the rewards and gratifications, which the user is likely to receive because of their participation (Bruns, 2009). This may indicate that successful social media display advertising will require users to participate or engage directly with the display advertising and receive some sense of gratification or reward. There are many types of display advertising formats. This can complicate advertisers' display advertisement decisions (Rosenkrans, 2009). Rich media display advertising may be one way of accomplishing more engaging ads. Rosenkrans (2009) found that rich media ads gained more user interest, engagement, and user interactivity.

Influencers

Influencers' introduction and utilization have altered how companies advertise to individual users (Kim et al., 2021). Influencers can directly engage with their audience and often obtain the user's trust, depending on the situation (Guoquan et al., 2021). Banner or display advertisements can be added directly to videos or photos the influencers post as they endorse the product, giving the user an easy and immediate link. Influencers often provide discount codes for the product when the user has the item in their online cart; this provides additional incentive and engagement for the company concerning their relationship with the end-user.

Size and Location of Display Ads

Adding to the attributes of rich media, advertisers need to understand display ad size and location. The authors Sigel et al. (2008) found that display ad creative was only one part of the puzzle; the other half is specification, display ad, and location (p. 338). Findings were supported by research data revealing that display ads at the top or left side of a web page received more attention than other locations (Eyetrack III, 2003).

There have been many conflicting data regarding the size of display ads. Li and Bukovac (1999) and Robinson et al. (2007) found that larger-sized display ads were promising when attracting internet users and motivating a click. However, Dreze and Hussherr (2003) found conflicting evidence about whether size played a role in motivating a click. Furthermore, the prime location of display ads is also up for debate. There is significant variability in determining the best location for a display advertisement coupled with high cost (Agarwal et al., 2011).

Hosanagar and Smith, 2011). Success in social media advertising means overcoming obstacles.

Whatever the formula for good social media advertising, rich media, size, or location may be some of "the ingredients that could form the future of best practices for interactive advertising." (Nielsen, 2009, p. 13).

Methodology

Research Question

Social media communities and marketers need to understand how consumers behave and what types of advertising motivate consumers to click on display advertising within social media environments. Are consumer clicks based on brand familiarity, brand trust, engagement, size, or

location of a display advertisement? The research problem in this study focused on social media users' motivation to click and which advertising motivators worked best in a prototype of a social media environment. The question was: RQ1: What motivates social media users to click on display advertisements in the social media environment?

Hypothesis

H0a: There is no significant relationship between display engagement advertisement and clicking on the social community display advertisement.

H0b: There is no significant relationship between the size of a display advertisement and clicking on the social community display advertisement.

H0c: There is no significant relationship between the location of the display advertisement and clicking on the social community display advertisement.

H1d: There is a significant relationship between brand familiarity display advertisements and clicking on the social community display advertisement.

H0e: There is no significant relationship between the display advertisement scenario and the social media users' motivation to click on a display advertisement within a social media community.

Population and Sample

The population targeted for this study consisted of 503 social media users who were at least 18 years of age and who used social media in some form at least once per week.

Limitations and Delimitations

For the purpose of this study, display advertisements were selected from the web, and some were uniquely developed. The display advertisements were limited to four display sizes (Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), (2010), and their placement was limited to four locations within the social community prototype (SCP). The participants were limited to 503 weekly social media users over 18, and the study was conducted over two months. Another delimitation may have been brand familiarity and limiting the number of variables to be tracked.

Methodology

This study examined different types of display advertising scenarios, including media type, size, and location. This study identified consumer motivations to click on display advertisements within social media environments. The model of this study was based on research conducted by Cho (1999, 2003), referring to the term "banner blindness" (p. 204), Ha (2004) research concerning "brand familiarity" (p. 329), Chtourou and Abida (2010) findings on the effectiveness of animation in display advertising, and Sigel et al., (2008) findings on display advertisement size and location. The methodology used to determine motivator factors were the following: media type or display advertisement scenario, brand familiarity, size, and location; then determining which of these

factors were more prevalent when motivating a social media user to click on a display advertisement in a social community.

Research Design

The method used in this study was advertising analysis using the following variables:

- Engagement: video, gaming, and animation (Chtourou and Abida, 2010)
- Brand familiarity (Ha, 2004)
- Size of a display advertisement (Sigel, Braun, and Sena, 2008)
- Location of the display advertisement (Sigel, Braun, and Sena, 2008)
- Relationship between display advertisement scenario and clicks on display advertisements (Cho, 2003).

The research design for this study was based on developing a six-page prototype of a social community website where display ads were limited to four sizes and locations on the prototype.

1. Wide Skyscraper 160x600 - Left side
2. Leader Board 728x90 – Top
3. Medium Rectangle 250x250 – Right top side
4. Vertical Rectangle 240x400 - Right bottom side

Participants

Participants were able to freely and anonymously click on the wall announcement opened by the researcher, which directed them to the home page of the SCP. The website's home page or first page displayed directions and disclosed information related to the study.

Prototype Format

The SCP contained the following display ad scenarios:

1. Video Display Advertisements
2. Animation Display Advertisements
3. Engagement Display Advertisements

4. Brand Familiarity Display Advertisements
5. Assortment Display Advertisements

Participants proceeded through each web page and clicked on only one display ad on each page.

The data was then tallied up using site analytics.

Data Collection and Analysis

Clicks from users were collected by a content management system embedded in the SCP. The content management system collected each display advertisement clicked by participants and saved the data to an administration page. Statistical analysis was conducted using PSW statistical software, which analyzed several independent variables represented by the display advertisement scenarios: size, brand familiarity, location, and display advertisement scenario. In order to evaluate which ad display scenario received more clicks, a frequency test was conducted, identifying the amount of clicks each ad display scenario received. To test the Hypotheses, a main chi-square analysis was conducted along with a post hoc test for chi-square analyses, which involved pairwise comparisons throughout all pages. The model used for the post hoc test is the Bonferroni correction.

Table 1 presents the sample distribution of the effects of display advertisement type on the number of clicks for each display advertisement scenario. The display advertisement scenarios represent the type of advertisement scenario participants preferred viewing within the SCP.

Table 1: Effects of Display Advertisement Type on Number of Clicks for Each Scenario

<i>Characteristic</i>	Wide Skyscraper	Leader Board	Medium Rectangle	Vertical Rectangle	Expected		
Scenario	Left	Top	Top Right	Bottom Right	Total	Cell Count	χ^2 (3)
Video	33 (6.6%)	229 (45.5%)	190 (17.8%)	51 (10.1%)	125.75	503	230.45* **
Animation	130 (25.8%)	86 (17.1%)	124 (24.7%)	163 (32.4%)	125.75	503	23.77* **
Engagement	176 (35.0%)	121 (24.1%)	104 (20.7%)	102 (20.3%)	125.75	503	28.51**

Brand Familiarity	110 (21.9%)	52 (10.3%)	68 (13.5%)	273 (54.3%)	125.75	503	244.17* **
Assorted	66 (13.1%)	61 (12.1%)	196 (39.0%)	180 (35.8%)	125.75	503	124.380 ***
All Scenarios Combined	449 (22.3%)	488 (24.3%)	486 (24.2%)	589 (29.3%)	503.00	2012	21.53** *

*** $p < .001$

Research Findings

This study investigated what type of display advertisement scenario motivated a social media user to click on a display advertisement. Table 1 summarizes the results of this study. In response to Research Question One, the motivating factors behind social media users clicking on display advertisements in the social media environment were ascertained through factor analyses. In testing each hypothesis, H0a, H0b, H0c, and H0e, the main effects of the display advertisement scenario were not confirmed; therefore, this study rejects the null hypotheses, suggesting display advertisement, size, location (Sigel et al., 2008; van Ewijk et al., 2021) and scenario, (Chtourou and Abida, 2010) all play a significant role in motivating a social media user to click on a display advertisement within a social media environment. In testing hypothesis H1a, the main effects of the display advertisement scenario were once again confirmed; therefore, this study supports the alternative hypothesis, suggesting display advertisement brand familiarity (Ha, 2004) played a significant role in motivating a social media user to click on a display advertisement within a social media environment.

Table 2: Summary of Test Results for each Hypotheses

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>Test results</i>
H0a: There is no significant relationship between display engagement advertisement and clicking on the social community display advertisement.	not supported
H0b: There is no significant relationship between the size of a display advertisement and clicking on the social community display advertisement.	not supported

H0c: There is no significant relationship between the location of the display advertisement and clicking on the social community display advertisement.	not supported
H1d: There is a significant relationship between brand familiarity display advertisements and clicking on the social community display advertisement.	supported
H0e: There is no significant relationship between the display advertisement scenario and the social media users' motivation to click on a display advertisement within a social media community.	not supported

Discussion and Implications

This study provides insight to how display advertising may be approached within social media environments. Stringer (2007) suggests the 5 W's: why, what, who, where, and when. Stakeholders can ask the following questions while analyzing the data from this study. Why did participants click on a specified display advertisement? What motivated the participant to click on the display advertisement? Who clicked? Where is the location of the display advertisement? When was the decision made to click? Although not all of the questions can be answered from one study due to its development limitations, it certainly can be the foundation for pursuing future research to find the answers to the remaining unknown questions.

Although this study confirmed once again the importance of brand familiarity (Ha, 2004) in advertising, even within social media environments, it also demonstrated the importance of other creative online factors (Plummer et al., 2007), display advertisement size, location, and scenario, which should be considered when developing an online advertising campaign within social media environments.

Interactive advertising is considered very valuable to businesses (Andreasen and Kotler, 2008), and every online environment should be considered, understanding social media and, most importantly, that social media is critical to the success of an online advertising campaign. Online social communities allow businesses to engage directly with their target audience and receive feedback from their audience (Peterson, 2009). This interaction creates value innovation for brands and an opportunity to develop and build brand trust.

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