Chapter II

The Effects of Animated Banner and Pop-Up Ads on Commercial Web Sites

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Abstract

This chapter explores the effects of two specific message-delivery techniques frequently adopted by online stores: continuously animated site banners and unexpected pop-up ads. Results from 128 surveys collected in a two-by-two factorial design showed that each of the two techniques had a significant effect on perceived irritation in the hypothesized direction. This chapter also confirmed that perceived irritation has a significant negative relationship with a visitor’s attitude toward the Web site. This study fills a vacuum in academic research with respect to the negative effects of Web advertising and advises caution in the deployment of certain techniques. This chapter encourages future research exploring the effects of cross-site ads on consumer attitude and advocates additional studies linking format attributes and presentation techniques with attitudinal consequences in the design of commercial Web sites.
Introduction

The Web offers many tools a firm can explore to reap the benefits of this rich medium. Companies find themselves dwelling at the intersection of the real and the virtual, and are faced with a task that is more complex than delivering an attractive Web site (Mitra, 2003). Both practitioners and scholars are beginning to investigate ways to take full advantage of the techniques used in site promotion (Berthon, Pitt, & Watson, 1996; Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Ducoffe, 1996). These techniques may include the overall structure of the online retailing interface (Westland & Au, 1998) and such individual features as banners, animation, sound, video, interstitials, and pop-up ads (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). Features like banner size, image maps, audio, and Web-site interactivity have been found to enhance site appeal (Coyle & Thorson; Li & Bukovac, 1999). In a recent study, banner-ad effectiveness was found to be affected by incentive offerings contained in the ads as well as the emotional appeal imbedded in the ad (Xie, Donthu, Lohtia, & Osmonbekow, 2004). Nonetheless, the use of such promotional techniques also comes with its negative effects. Such effects have been largely overlooked in the academic literature. The question of how certain advertising techniques have influenced consumers’ perceptions of and attitude toward a site calls for more research in this field.

Traditional advertising research has established a hierarchical model of advertising effects, spanning the spectrum from ad content to cognition, attitude, and behavior (Holbrook, 1986; Olney, Holbrook, & Batra, 1991). Olney et al. saw TV advertising content and techniques influence consumers’ emotional dimensions, attitude, and subsequent viewing behavior, for example, zipping and zapping in watching TV and video programs. This chain of links has been well documented in advertising and marketing research where both content and form variables were examined as predictors of attention, memory, recall, click-through, informativeness, attractiveness, and attitude (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000).

Nevertheless, the study of the effects of executional factors extended to the Web involves new factors to be considered and requires a higher level of comprehensiveness due to the volume and scope of a Web site in comparison to print or TV ads. While maintaining that many of the ad features found in traditional media (such as color, size, and typeface in print media, and audio, sound level, animation, and movement in broadcast) are relevant to the Web, Rodgers and Thorson (2000) consider such techniques as banners, sponsorships, interstitials, pop-up windows, and hyperlinks additions to ad formats in interactive marketing. A brief description of each type, based on Rodgers and Thorson, is presented in Table 1.

In addition to information content, format and presentation attributes that contribute to the delivery of Web-site appeal have also been examined (Huizingh,