

## EFFECTIVENESS FACTORS OF ONLINE ADVERTISING

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**Abstract.** Research of effectiveness of online advertising show the absence of agreed factors of effectiveness. Focus has been placed on the click-through rates, rather than on attitudinal responses, and it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of online advertising from a more comprehensive perspective. Online advertising has sizable effects on brand loyalty and attitudes that can't be reflected in click-through. Online advertising features force consumers to make relationship with company's brand which leads to increase brand image in consumer's mind. Aim is to analyze the impact of the type of online advertising format as well as specific advertisement features on user's response and on the effectiveness of online advertising in general. The methods used: literature analysis, comparison, structured questionnaire, data analysis, observation.

**Keywords:** online advertisement, internet marketing, internet advertizing e-consumer, e-consumer behaviour.

**Jel classification:** L86, M37, M39, O32, O33, O39

### 1. Introduction

The right advertising channels and appropriate advertising campaign is one of success factors of the company in the competitive environment of information age. The proper use of these techniques together with a good website can help companies to draw the traffic as well as achieve internet marketing objectives they have set up. The web site of a company become one of the important tools in competitive environment in the information age, but it is no guaranty that company will gain competitive advantage in the market by e-commerce solution, creating website or choosing right e-logistic channels (Alam, Yasin 2010; Belch, Belch 2009; Bruner II, Kumar 2000; Chaffey *et al.* 2006; Charlesworth 2009; Davidavičienė 2008; Davidavičienė, Tolvaišas 2011; Davidavičienė, Meidutė 2011; Guseva 2010; Jensen 2008; Paliulis, Uturytė-Vrubliauskienė 2010; Pantea 2009, Vitkauskaitė, Gatautis 2008). Other solutions and engaged marketing tools complex, such as advertisements are very important also.

The results of researches (Appiah 2006; Baltas 2003; Bergkvist, Melander 2000; Briggs, Hollis 1997; Charlesworth 2009; Cho, Cheon 2004; Davidavičienė, Tolvaišas 2011; Jensen 2008; Lee 2007; Li, Leckenby 2004; Rosenkrans 2009) of online advertising effectiveness show, that there are no agreed factors of measurement of online advertising

effectiveness and lot of different approaches exist. As a reason of different opinions the dynamics of the markets, the variety of e-advertising tools and rapid changes of technologies can be named, as well as consumer behaviour changes caused by growing computer literacy.

Lot of scientists and practitioners focuses on the click-through rates, rather than on attitudinal responses (Bagherjeiran, Parekh 2008; Burns, Lutz 2006; Ghajarzadeh *et al.* 2010; Papadopoulos *et al.* 2009; Rodgers 2004), and it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of online advertising from a more comprehensive perspective. Online advertising has sizable effects on brand loyalty and attitudes that can't be reflected in click-through.

Aim of the article is to identify factors of e-advertising efficiency. Following tasks were formulated: to analyze effectiveness of online advertising formats, to identify factors/features of online advertisements which have major influence on consumer's mind.

The methods used: literature analysis, comparison, synthesis, structured questionnaire, data analysis.

### 2. Online advertising effectiveness evaluation theories

There is agreement that online advertising can be audited through factors such as brand awareness,

product or service recall, changes in the attitudes and behaviour. The studies and theories of such processes focus on information processing on the internet. Such processes can be illustrated by online advertising information processing models, which are mostly the integration of old theories (such as the product involvement theory, information processing theories, and psychological theories) with some new elements specific to online advertising (Ha 2008). It has been widely argued that the effectiveness of online advertisements should be evaluated by their ability to generate click-through, which refers to a user's clicking on a certain web advertisement, or some other behavioural responses, such as sales or interactions on a website (Bagherjeiran, Parekh 2008; Burns, Lutz 2006; Ghajarzadeh *et al.* 2010; Papadopoulos *et al.* 2009; Rodgers 2004). Others have argued that direct response is a complex phenomenon which is partly determined by factors relating to the predisposition of the audience, not the advertising itself (Baltas 2003; Bruner II, Kumar 2000). A single measure cannot provide a complex picture of online advertising. Discussion of advertising effectiveness must take in to account the objectives in marketing contexts. If the objective is to attract online users to visit its website, then the ability of advertisement to generate the desired behavioural responses should be measured, but if the objective is to increase brand awareness, the level of click may be irrelevant.

Online advertising depends on the *advertiser-specific* aspect (objective advertisement features) and the *customer-specific* aspect (subjective advertisement features) (Rodgers, Thorson 2000). Most of these factors include structural elements, such as advertisement features, formats and types. Factors that are specific to users, such as their personal propensities, perceptions, and motivation, may influence the effectiveness of online advertising as well.

Many hierarchy-of-effects models have been proposed for advertising effectiveness. For example in the DAGMAR (Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results) model it is assumed that advertising works in the sequence of awareness, comprehension, conviction, and action (Scholten 1996). Hierarchy of effect model categorizing elements into three categories: cognition, affection and conation (Li, Leckenby 2004). Conation is natural tendency, impulse, striving, or directed effort, and it was a popular term for behavioral intentions but it has been replaced by behavior as the organizing term.

Studies found that advertising on the web has sizable effects on brand loyalty and attitudes that can't be reflected in click-through (Bergkvist,

Melander 2000; Bruner II, Kumar 2000). However, the internet introduces an additional dimension – alienation (subject's estrangement from its community, society). So, internet is an active media and moving consumer to the role of an active receiver from being a passive receiver. Rodgers and Thorson (2000) draw a distinction in their Internet Advertising Model (IAM) with extra features of online advertisements which are interactivity, attitude toward online advertisements and attitude toward websites. These factors divided into *consumer-controlled* (functions and information process) and *advertiser-control* (structures) that lead to consumer response such as emailing to advertisers, clicking on advertisement, and exploring the website (Ghajarzadeh *et al.* 2010). Model of key success factors of effectiveness of online advertising which are measured by click-through rate was proposed by Papadopoulos *et al.* (2009). First factor is online activity type including article reading, picture tagging, social bookmarking and message exchanging. Second – is social context that is the perceptual influence of friends of a user (McCoy *et al.* 2007). Third success factor is functional elements where motives and behaviour must be considered. Fourth factor is structural element, which are devoted to physical presentation and format of the advertisement (Papadopoulos *et al.* 2009; Bagherjeiran, Parekh 2008). The effectiveness according the Danaher and Mullarkey (2003) can be denoted as the page viewing duration.

In order to identify the online advertising efficiency factors the more detailed analysis of advertising tools and researches in this field necessary.

### 3. Online advertising tools

The internet offers marketers the widest spectrum of advertising tools and formats. According to Interactive advertising bureau (2009), the prevalent means of online advertising are search and display related advertising, which together are responsible for more than 70 % of the total advertising revenues. In addition to established online tools such as e-mail, websites and display advertising, distinguished emerging online advertising vehicles, such as blogs, games, podcasts, social networks, virtual worlds, widgets, wikis and etc (McKinsey... 2007). Scientists dividing online advertising industry into: search advertising, display advertising, classified listings and e-mail based ads (Burns, Lutz 2006; Evans 2008; Evans 2009). Jensen (2008) argues that no accepted framework for categorization of online advertising methods exists and suggests a way to categorize these tools into six major disciplines in accordance

with Chaffey *et al.* (2006). The online activities are categorized by the way they are generally used, and will be taken in to consideration in further research:

1. *search marketing*: search engine advertising (SEA); search engine optimization (SEO);
2. *online public relations*: portal presentations; blogs, RSS, podcasts; social media; community C2C posts; wikis; micro-blogging;
3. *interactive advertising*: display ads, banner ads; rich media; websites, microsites; online games; video marketing;
4. *online partnerships*: link building; sponsorships; affiliate marketing; co-branding;
5. *opt-in e-mail*: cold (rented list); co-branded e-mail; 3<sup>rd</sup> party e-newsletter; house list e-mail;
6. *viral marketing*: web/ e-mail prompt; pass along e-mails; incentivized e-mails; generating media mentions.

In order to evaluate and identify the efficiency criteria and factors of advertising tools the deeper analysis of scientific studies would be proceeded.

**Search marketing** is an encompassing term to denote all the techniques that can be utilized to make a certain website visible in the search engines (Chaffey *et al.* 2009). Search results page is divided into the *organic search results* that are based on the relevance of the web page to the keywords entered by the user (SEO) and the *paid search results* which are clearly demarcated text advertisements (SEA) that also look like search results (Evans 2009; Lee 2007). Sponsored search is a mechanism to compete the negativity related to interactive advertising. Lee (2007) indicates that sponsored results are just as relevant as non-sponsored results for search queries. However Jansen and Resnick (2006) research indicates that web users have a negative bias against sponsored link. A selection will result in three to four more clicks than a sponsored search, and that websites must appear in the top three to five search results to have any significant effect on directing search traffic (Sinclair 2007). Those ranked after the top five usually are treated as ineffective. An eye-tracking study indicated that most search users overlook search advertisements almost entirely (Emarketer 2011 a). However, only 28 % of participants looked at right-side advertisements on Google, and just 21 % did the same on Bing - spending around 1 second viewing all ads combined on each search engine. So, users have learned to overlook search advertisements, and they will

continue to ignore as they become more search-savvy.

**Online Public Relations** includes all the activities performed by a company to maximize favourable mentions of its company, brand or website in a range of third party websites such as blogs, social networks and etc., where the target audiences of the company are likely to visit (Chaffey *et al.* 2006, 2009; Pabedinskaitė, Fiodorovaitė 2011). The best step to make online public relations activities successful is to add interactivity. It can be claimed that everything that is done online is public relations activity. This means that undertaking nothing can have a negative influence on the organisation as well (Pantea 2009). Firms with a poor pre-existing brand image become vulnerable to unfavorable consumer-generated content in online communities. Blogs and collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia) have a low level of social presence and media richness, which Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) consider could be explained by that communication mostly consists of text. The amount of social presence and self-disclosure is much higher in blogs than in collaborative project. The communication does no longer only consist of just text but also pictures and videos. Consumers' aim is no longer merely to look for product information or advices concerning a brand, but also to get together and share an experience (Cova, Cova 2002). Social networking is becoming important in this context. Of the Fortune Global 100 companies, 65 % have active Twitter accounts, 54 % have Facebook fan pages, 50 % have YouTube video channels and 33 % have corporate blogs. More than three-quarters (79 %) of the top 100 companies in the rankings are using at least one of the social media platforms to actively engage with stakeholders (Burson-Marsteller communications group 2010). In order to build a community and engagement through social networks, the consistent conversation is needed (one or two company's posts a day) (Emarketer 2011 b). Companies should consider day, time and content than writing posts, because engagement rates are 18% higher on Thursday and Friday than the other days of the week. Shorter message is better, as posts with 80 characters or less have a 27 % higher engagement rate (Emarketer 2011 b). Emarketer (2011 c) reports, that social media is known as a venue for brand discussions, but social sites still not the first choice for customers talking brands. Only 35 % of the overall population, and 56 % of the young adult population, talked about products and services on social sites (Emarketer 2011 c). The work of Bagherjeiran and Parekh (2008) provides evidence to support the claim that social links are correlated with ad response rates (measured by

means of CTR) and whether they can be used as predictors of these rates.

**Interactive advertising** can be defined as the use of online display advertisements such as banners, skyscrapers, and rich media in order to achieve brand awareness and encourage click through to a target website. In one of the early studies of banner advertisement effects Briggs and Hollis (1997) found that even without click-through, banner advertisements resulted in heightened awareness, brand perceptions and attitudinal shifts for brands. The significance of animation and location of banner advertisement with the eye tracking technology studies revealed that animation was not important to attract viewer's attention (Josephson 2005; Sundar, Kalyanaraman 2004; Pabedinskaitė, Fiodorovaitė 2011). But the location plays a significant role and banner advertisements at the top of the webpage were more often viewed (Josephson 2005; Sundar 2004). These findings contradict the results of a study conducted by other scientists (Kim *et al.* 2004; Dreze, Hussherr 2003; Sundar, Kalyanaraman 2004; Zhang 2000; Li, Leckenby 2004) who found that animated banner advertisements generates higher recall, more favourable attitude towards the advertisement and higher click-through intension than static ads.

The Burns and Lutz (2006) studied consumers' attitudes to six different online advertisement formats (banners, floating ads, large rectangles, interstitials, skyscrapers and pop-ups) and found that banner score highest on the information factor and received highest overall positive attitude from consumers. Banner, during that research, did best in all behavioural measures such as click-through percentage, percent visit later and click-through frequency among the six online ad formats they tested.

A interstitials (pop-ups and pop-under) are the most controversial format of internet advertising. Interstitials are perceived to be intrusive because they put audiences in a forced exposure mode. Studies that use the pop-up in the experiment show negative attitudes and reactance from the consumer resulting in ad avoidance and feeling of irritation (Cho, Cheon 2004). Burns and Lutz (2006) studied revealed that pop-up and floating ads scored highest on the annoyance factor, but highest on the entertainment factor. Rich media is highly interactive, visually influential internet advertising format. Most rich media advertisements are displayed in a voluntary exposure, so they are acceptable for most users. Appiah (2006) tested the impact of multimedia on commercial website and found that the advertisements with audio and video results are in better perception, because they are

more targeted, ensure better rating on the site in comparison with text and graphics only. So, the new technologies improve the effectiveness of online advertising, because studies confirmed that rich media advertisements are more effective than banner advertisements (Emarketer 2011 a; Li, Leckenby 2004), video marketing was named as a hottest new format for online advertising with high engagement factor (Hallerman 2007; Bruner, Singh 2007). The game-based advertisements are very effective also, but in many cases, game players may feel annoyed with advertisements while they are playing games (Chang *et al.* 2001).

The most commonly used tools of **online partnerships** are: link-building, sponsorship, co-branding (arrangement between two or more companies where they agree to jointly display content and to conduct joint promotions using brand logos or advertisements), affiliate marketing (a scheme where a company pays another affiliate for links that are generated via affiliate's website to the company's website). Studies that examine sponsorship effects online revealed significant benefits for sponsors of content websites (e.g., newspapers). Sponsors whose products match the news content induce higher memory, attitudes, and purchase intentions for the sponsored brand than do sponsors and stories that do not match (Rodgers *et al.* 2005). Attitudes toward the sponsor are positive when the advertisement occurs at the beginning of the news story, is highest in the middle and lowest for advertisement placed at the end (Rosenkrans 2009).

**Opt-in e-mail** marketing is a form which exploits electronic mail. Types of e-mail advertisements: e-mail newsletters, e-mail discussion lists, the subscribed e-mail marketing channels. Email is a great form of communication, however it is the least effective when it comes to marketing. Personalization is important in marketing via email because only 1 % of adults read all email advertising available to them, 20 % occasionally read emails personalized to them (Charlesworth 2009; eMarketer 2010 d). Too frequent commercial e-mails create a negative impression on email advertising among web users (Chang *et al.* 2001) and could be considered as spam email.

**Viral marketing** is an advertising method that encourages people to pass along a message. Terms as buzz marketing, word-of-mouth are used as synonyms of viral marketing in the literature. Viral marketing is an efficient way to distribute a message to a wide audience and facilitate building a list (Blumberg *et al.* 2005). Viral marketing through e-mails can occur most commonly in three different ways: through pass-along e-mails, e-mail or a web prompt and incentivized e-mails. A social

ties (e.g. a close friend) are more influential and serve as bridge through which referrals will more likely flow (Blumberg *et al.* 2005). So, influence of viral marketing is greater than classic advertising media.

Studies conducted by scientists give quite clear vision of internet advertising tools efficiency and evaluation criterions, but it would be beneficial to conduct empirical research of perception and internet users behaviour concerning web advertising tools.

#### 4. Online advertisements efficiency research

The online advertising formats included in the research are based on studies conducted by the Belch and Belch (2009), Burns and Lutz (2006), Chaffey *et al.* (2006, 2009), Jensen (2008), Rodgers and Thorson (2000), Wolin *et al.* (2002) and others. The research period – spring of 2011. The 24 questions were related to hypothesis developed from literature analysis and 4 additional questions in order to get the demographic and internet motive data (Raudienė 2011). 121 filled questionnaires were received out of which 61 % female and 72 % of age group between 25-44 years. Most of the respondents (90 %) were users, accessing internet every (or almost every) day. Among the most popular online activities were email (90 %), reading online news, newspapers or magazines (82 %), searching for information (79 %) and banking online (7 %). Regarding the general attitude toward online advertising, only 15 % have negative attitudes (consider as irritating, indulgent and interruptive), 31 % have positive attitudes, 14 % does not pay attention and 40 % affirm having different attitudes toward online advertising (depends on product, advertising features, etc.).

The 55 % of respondents that have negative attitudes (15 %) or have different (negative or positive) attitudes depending on product being advertised (40 %) were asked to answer the additional questions in order to investigate if the overall negative attitude toward online advertising has an impact on the effectiveness of online advertising. Total of 66 respondents answered this question out of which 55 % states that they may respond to online advertising if they find the product interesting or relevant to their personal needs and 26 % stated that they may find it interesting if the advertisement is eye-catching or exceptional from others.

As the most effective online advertising formats the rich media (22 %), banner advertisements (20 %) and contextual advertisements (19 %) were indicated.

The pop-ups (74 %) were found as the most irritating online advertising format. The most

acceptable online advertising format features are idea uniqueness (50 %), eye-catching design (44 %) and photos or pictures embedded in the ad (29 %). As the most irritating ad features are no „exit“ option to stop or delete the ad (74 %), moving across the screen or blinking (flashing) ads (57 %) and ads that cover the content the consumer is watching/reading (52 %). Regarding the online ad features that attracts the viewer's attention the most, the results show that viewers pay attention to the ads that are relevant to their personal needs (55 %), not interruptive (39 %) and exclusive from the context, contrastive ads (24 %).

The results show that the banner advertisement size has no impact on the effectiveness of this format (64 %), but banner located on the top of the page (47 %) are more attention-grabbing than on the side (29 %) or on the bottom of the page (3 %). Moreover it was found that banner advertisements with short phrase (38 %), logo/brand name (35 %) or animation (27 %) have more chances to grab attention than banner with long text message (0 %).

The results indicate that relevant to content sponsorships are more efficient (63 %) than irrelevant (16 %). Depending on motives, the internet users respond to relevant sponsorships (60 %) when they searching for the information, than internet surfers for entertainment or leisure (16 %). Users have a negative bias against sponsored search results (50 %) and 32 % of respondents indicate that sponsored results are just as relevant as non-sponsored results for search queries. Only 18 % of respondents in most cases use sponsored results. In organic search result list 42 % of respondents view the results ranked in more than one page of result list and 34 % of respondents indicate that only first page of organic search results. 24 % of respondents view only up to top five of organic search results.

52 % of respondents open and read advertising emails if they found the email title interesting and 29 % do not open advertising email at all. Investigating the features of what make email advertising effective, respondents indicate that the personalization (49 %) and creativeness (36 %) does not influence much on their interests. The loyalty programs were found equality influencing the interest. The strongest influence on interest to open and read email advertisements have the interesting and compelling title of the message (37 %) as well as interesting and useful email message content (38 %). In order to investigate the desired frequency of email messages being received, 32 % of respondents prefer one or more advertising emails per week, 39 % of respondents prefer one or two advertising emails per month and 23 % of respondents prefer less than one advertising email per month.

Regarding interactive pictures embedded in the article text that can get most attention, one third of the respondents indicate that the most attention attracts the pictures or photos placed right after the article title (33 %) and 20 % of the respondents claim that the picture or photo placed in the right or left side of an article may attract the most of their attention, less attention attract photos in article text (16 %) or on the bottom of the article (13 %). Regarding the attitudes towards online discussion issues, 57 % of respondents prefer more traditional methods for product discussions as they usually discuss such issues on face-to-face conversations. Only 4 % of the population discuss products and services on internet (social sites, forums and etc.) and 21 % of respondents discuss it equally on the internet and face-to-face. 24 % of population tend to read the information by themselves but do not recommend it to their friends and colleagues with only 15 % ignoring such recommendations as they do not have time or do not think it will be useful. The results indicate that 40 % of respondents forward the buzz creating messages to their friends and colleagues either they found it interesting themselves and others will like it as well (31 %) or forward the message as it is required in order to get the benefit (9 %).

Concerning word-of-mouth influence on consumers' choices – 48 % of respondents think the opinion of their friends, relatives or colleagues are of high importance and shapes positive attitudes towards the product, 42 % of respondents state the opinions of other people are important, but the choice to purchase is determined by other criteria (price and etc.) with only 10 % saying that the opinions of other people do not influence the choice to purchase.

The results are summarized in Table 1 and extents effective advertising criteria list, detailing the physical presentation of formats in order to meet the effectiveness criteria and show the interaction.

Concluding the research main aspects should be outlined: creative quality is a key to any brand success; optimization of exposure frequency, evaluation should be processed taking in to conser the objective of campaign.

In the case of brand building, click may provide additional benefit but is not the only measure to look at. Recall, awareness, liking, image are keys to the evaluation process and are indeed likely to move with multiple exposures. Online brand building is in line with these findings and suggests that optimal levels of frequency depend on the value of the copy and the brand itself. Advertizing frequency coupled with personal relevance impacts the way individual's process information.

Interaction in an online context requires active participation on the user's part.

**Table 1.** Effective Physical Presentation of Online Advertising Formats (created by author)

Advertis- ing category	Physical presentation	Character- istics	Relation- ships	
Search mar- keting	Search results being opti- mized to show up within the first page of search result list.	Relevance Accessibil- ity	Communi- cation	
Online public rela- tions	Company generated posts; Daily frequency; Video, audio, picture, photo con- sisting communication; Involvement stimulation; All possible activities in order to maximize favour- able mentions and respond to unfavourable mentions.	Interactivi- ty Frequency Relevance Accessibil- ity	Communi- cation Feedback Customer Support	
Interactive advertising	Banner Ads	Animated; Located on the top of the web page; Frequency of 6-7 expo- sures to each viewer.	Creativity Interactivi- ty Frequency Accessibil- ity	Communi- cation
	Rich Media	Video, audio streaming content; 3D Visualization Graphics; Flash Technology	Creativity Interactivi- ty Frequency Accessibil- ity	Communi- cation
	Websites/ Micro-sites	N/A	Creativity Interactivi- ty Accessibil- ity	Communi- cation Feedback Customer Support
Online partnerships	Context- tual	Matching the content sponsorships; Located on the top of the content;	Relevance Interactivi- ty	Communi- cation
	Co- brand- ing	Content related links	Relevance Interactivi- ty	Communi- cation
Opt-in e-mail	Compelling and interest- ing title; Useful content; Frequency of 1-2 com- mercial emails per month;	Interactivi- ty Relevance Accessibil- ity Frequency	Communi- cation Feedback Customer support	
Viral marketing	Compelling and useful content with no require- ment to pass-along the message;	Interactivi- ty Relevance Accessibil- ity Creativity	Communi- cation	

Any form of online advertising can be considered as a tool for communication between company and its stakeholders. The interactivity of online environment enables to get customer feedback

which is a capability to collect information regarding the consumers' needs, preferences, attitudes and behaviour. The ability to get customer feedback enables to provide customer support.

## 5. Conclusions

The literature analysis provided a review of researches related to online advertising. Theories of advertising efficiency evaluation were discussed, followed by studies on internet advertising tools efficiency analysis. The effectiveness analysis of different online advertising formats revealed some controversial results. For some formats there are a lack of research data regarding the effectiveness of those formats. Still, the literature reviewed provided a solid foundation for the empirical research.

Based on literature analysis as well as descriptive research results, online advertising formats such as pop-ups, interstitials and sponsored results on search engines were found as the least effective. As the most effective formats can be mentioned banner advertisements, rich media and contextual sponsorships. The online advertising features, such as interactivity, creativity and content relevance were found as the most influential on consumer's mind.

The effective online advertising features to each particular online advertising format are identified: top page location, animation and frequency (6-7 exposures) of banner, audio/video streaming contents of rich media, SEO results location within the first page of results list, top location, content related sponsorships, useful content, compelling titles and frequency of 1-2 times per month of email newsletters, compelling and useful content with no requirement to pass-along the message of viral marketing and public relation activities with video, audio, picture and photo containing communication, involvement stimulation and company generated daily posts.

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