

Internet Users' Perception Scale

Dr. Rakshita Puranik

Associate Professor, Indore Institute of Management Research Indore (M.P.)

Abstract : *Global advertisers are turning to online advertising to attract the customer with the unique and versatile capabilities of the Internet. The study systematically develops and empirically validates a scale to measure and provide more detailed information about the internet users' perception towards internet advertising. The primary data of the study were collected from the internet users' from the Indore city. The secondary data needed to support the study were also collected from sources like online publications, journals, magazines, newspapers, books, etc*

Keywords: Internet Users', perception, Internet advertisement

Introduction:-

Today market place is shifting towards on-line shopping because by clicking only consumer get the information and product in their hand irrespective of time and place. Internet emerged as a viable channel for organizations as it facilitates the companies to interact with customers at low cost. Growing popularity of internet has become a handy tool for information retrieval. Internet technologies enabled the company to extend its services and business territory to reach more customers. With an increase in the use of the internet and online services, various technologies emerged such as interactive multimedia. The uses of these provide internet to attract more customers (Rao and Santosh, 2008).

Internet is widely accepted as a new medium breaking the traditional boundaries of advertising. It has emerged as a preferred media for advertising and marketing communication worldwide. Internet advertising provides the information in convincing way to the potential consumers to purchase the product. Internet advertising offers consumers to choose the product by providing a variety of options in terms of prices, features and benefits. This provides the great deal of attention, acceptance and growth among consumers. In other words internet acts as a middleman between the advertisers and the web sites. Business firms get the opportunity to pull the customers through the internet ads. The concepts of internet advertising began in the early 1990s. It had a very simple beginning in the form of text-based websites, which held information about the products or services offered by a business. As internet technology improved, the concept also evolved into full-fledged advertising along with graphics (Rajakumari, 2007).

Internet provides the chance to the advertisers to make effective online campaigns by the combination of interactive text, graphics, sound and video in order to entice customers. This provides marketers to find optimal ways to use internet and other online activities in promoting their products. Advertising is validated as an instrument for shaping perceptions. Companies need to realize the various factors influencing advertising. These might include the media, the ad copy, the format and the audience perception (Shilpa 2009). According to Thorson and Leavitt (1986), "unless advertising is understood in terms of consumers and their goals, there is no adequate base for dealing with complex behavior such as responding to persuasive communication". Over the past few years, it has seen that overheated off-line advertising spending by access, commerce, and content companies, were willing-even eager-to pay hundreds of dollars to acquire new customers, seemingly without regard for the lifetime value of the customers," said Patrick Keane, director and senior analyst with Jupiter. The IAB (Internet Advertising Bureau) is an organization that fosters the growth of advertising on the internet.

Many companies are now considering internet advertising as a viable alternative to advertising than traditional media (Dreze and Fred, 1998). Internet advertising has evolved into a vital communication system for both customers and businesses. Its ability to deliver carefully prepared messages to targeted audience has given it a major role in the marketing program of the organizations. Internet advertising helps to place the correct message, to the correct person at the correct moment that is of foremost importance for him/her. It also provides opportunity to target an advertisement to specific groups with specific interests. Internet advertising has become a strong medium with low cost and high speed communication. The main objective of an online advertising is to turn your visitors into buyers to achieve an outstanding performance. This can be achieved when the consumer click on the ad for more information, or take the next step of purchasing the product (Belch and Belch, 2001).

Types of internet ads

The principles of marketing on the net are no different from those for conventional marketing. The format of the ad simply refers to the manner in which it appears. Internet has the capacity to support a various types ad formats. Internet provided multiple advertising opportunities such as banner ads, pop-ups, pop-under and interstitials. Company can choose various type of advertising method to promote its product/services through the Internet.

Pop-Up Ads: Pop-up ads consist of a small window that "pops up" over the main browser window when you enter a site (and sometimes when you leave it). The pop-up windows can contain anything: text, graphics, and a form to collect information or email addresses. These ads are the most annoying type of advertisement. Advertiser's point of view, most pop-up windows can be minimized (hidden behind the other windows) with relative ease, so if the pop-up window is being used to rotate ads on a time basis, your advertisement may not even be visible but you'll still be charged for it!

Opt-In Mailing: An advertising type that is rapidly becoming popular, opt-in mailing consists of sending an email message to a "pre-qualified" list of people i.e. an audience that has expressed an interest in receiving information on a given topic

HTML Ads: HTML ads combine graphics and text with other HTML elements such as pull-down list, check boxes or forms. These can be very effective in getting traffic, but are much harder to serve and track, and generally require very sophisticated software to run properly

Sponsorships/Partnerships Not a different advertising type, exactly, but a different way of approaching advertising; sponsorships and partnerships usually involve embedding the advertising much more into the body of a site. Sponsorships, when done well, can be both discreet *and* effective. Much sponsorship takes the form: "*Site brought to you by Sponsor*" or "*Sponsor's guide by Site*"

Banner ad: It the most popular type of advertising that has been use today. A banner ad is a graphical bar or button containing text or graphics designed to attract a viewer's attention and induce an action. It come in all shapes and sizes, although it can be static or animated. With a static banner there is a picture or logo along with text on the banner to attract the end user for the products. The most popular graphic format for banner ads is GIF format.

Internet Users' Perception towards Internet Advertising:-

The marketers like to draw the online consumer's attention from thousands of other products or brands. Ha and McCann (2008) explain the unique characteristics of internet consumers, who actively 'use' the medium (users) rather than passively receiving content from offline media (audiences). The concept of 'audience' is replaced here by that of 'users', because consumers actively use online media with specific goals, and online media has interactive capability with users' input and advertisers' programming control. Internet users are more active, selective and constructive in information processing than users in traditional media (Coupey 1999). According to Korgaonkar and Wolin (2002) consumers can be classified as heavy, medium and light users of the web.

Rodgers and Cannon (2000) said that to attract and retain the internet customers it is important to understand their web-related perception, attitudes and behaviors. In marketing, perceptions are more important than reality. Mohan (2008) suggested that the reaction of the target audience towards the ads was depend on a number of factors such as content, message, media, perception, attitude and situational characteristics of the audience. Yang's (2004) study shows the diversity of internet users in Taiwan and identified three lifestyle clusters (traditionalists, experiences and self-indulgent). Understanding consumers' perception toward advertising is important because it influence consumer exposure, attention, and reaction (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989). The high growth rate of web advertising becomes it important for practitioners as well researchers to understand the internet users' perception toward advertising which is turn out to be a crucial construct that guides consumer behavior in online ad industry. The purpose of the present study is to develop the scale to measure the perception towards internet advertising.

LITERATURE REVIEW:-

Advertising is the most common and familiar marketing communication tool. It is all about reaching the target customer base at various touch-points with high visibility and at low costs (Rawal, 2009). With the increasing importance of the Web in e-commerce, advertisers are eager to utilize this new channel for advertising activities that fulfill their communication purposes (Wang et al., 2009). Businesses found the web-based cyber media an opportunity for the advertising, marketing and distribution of some of their products (Verity and Hof, 1994).Theonline advertising industry has grown and changed and continues to change every

day. However, although the medium continues to enjoy dramatic growth, advertisers still have some concerns about the real effectiveness of online advertising. Berthon et al., (1996) suggested five advantages of online advertising (i) Awareness efficiency, (ii) local ability, (iii) contact efficiency, (iv) conversion efficiency and (v) retention efficiency.

Internet ads differ from other mediums of advertising by enabling consumers to directly interact with the advertisements. Consumers have control over web-based ads, on what ads, when, where, and how long they would like to see them (Gallagher et al., 2001). Kavoori and Chadha (2001) studied the future of the internet in the developing world by examining the discourse of advertising. Based on a visual record of New Delhi and textual analysis of advertisements in a mass circulated Indian newspaper and magazine, it is suggested that there is a need to rethink the discourse of digital celebration and joy that has accompanied the internet in the developing world, especially India. Advertising can be seen as the process of informing and persuading (Singh and Dalal(1999), Vakratsas, and Ambler(1999)).

Internet has the capacity to support a number of additional ad formats, which are not found in traditional media. Online advertising decisions may be difficult because of the various ranges of ad formats and insufficient knowledge about their effectiveness. All these different kinds of ads, which are available exclusively on the Web, are designed for the purpose of attracting users' attention through various formats of ad presentation and informing consumers of the merits of a brand or a product so as to strengthen their acceptance or purchasing intention (Wang et al., 2009). Briggs and Stipp (2000), share their learning accumulated on the effectiveness of different types of ad formats. Involuntary exposure formats of internet advertising are placed in a medium by a marketer with the intent of reaching a particular audience (Hwang et al., 2003). Burns and

Lutz (2006) examines six distinct online ad formats: banners, floating ads, large rectangles, interstitials, skyscrapers, and pop-ups. They found consumers have different attitudes to different online ad formats.

Attitude toward advertisement has a record as an index of effectiveness (Aaker and Bruzzone, 1985; Brown and Staymen, 1992). Chen and Wells (1999) studied attitude toward the ads is widely used in studies of traditional mass media advertising. As e-commerce becomes more important, attitude toward the site will gain parallel status in evaluating effectiveness. They develop and present a reliable and valid scale that measures attitude toward a website. And also develop and present additional scales that provide more detailed information. Consumers' attitudes toward advertising have been considered important to track because they likely influence consumers' exposure, attention, and reaction to individual ads (Alwitt and Prabhakar, 1992). Zhou and Bau(2002) investigate how users' ability to use the Internet affects their attitudes toward Web advertising.

Yoon and Kim (2001) suggested that there is an explicit shift in online advertising strategy that favors deriving behavioral response from selected target audiences over providing exposure to many audience groups. Rodgers and Cannon (2000) said that to attract and retain the internet customers it is important to understand their web-related perception, attitudes and behaviors. Korgaonkar and Wolin (2002) explored that a more positive attitude toward online advertising is likely to lead to more frequent online purchasing and more dollars spent on these purchases. The perceptual antecedents of users' attitudes toward advertising can be classified into two broad aspects, informativeness and entertainment, based on their functions in satisfying user's utilitarian or hedonic needs (Ducoffle 1996).

Understanding consumers' perception toward advertising is important because these attitudes influence consumer exposure, attention, and reaction to individual advertisements. Perception can take different forms from attitude change to behavior change depending on the advertising. In marketing, perceptions are more important than reality. Shah and Souza (2009) said that it is essential for marketers to know the consumers' perception for planning and adapting the marketing mix and communication strategies. Understanding consumers' perception toward advertising is important because it influence consumer exposure, attention, and reaction (MacKenzie and Lutz, 1989).

In the growing diversity of media and the arrival of new technologies, notably the internet, the consumers have become better informed than ever before. After a look at available literature on internet advertising effectiveness it was found that there is a vacuum in the literature pertaining to the standardized measures for internet advertisement. To fill this void, the present study is undertaken with an aim to generate knowledge about the effectiveness of internet advertising that can be meaningfully used by the researchers, advertisers and marketers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:-**The Study:-**

The present research is an exploratory investigation primarily aimed to develop the scale for internet users' perception towards internet advertising with reference.

Sample for scale Development:-

The sample of the study constituted of 614 individuals selected from the population of internet users located in Indore city of Madhya Pradesh. In the absence of sampling frame non-probability judgment sampling method was applied to select the sample from population. According to Saunders (2000) the inability to specify a sampling frame may indicate the use of one or a number of non-probability sampling techniques, which was the case in the present research study. Saunders (2000) further suggests a purposive or judgment sampling through which the researcher chooses those cases that will facilitate the answering of the research questions. Using judgment sampling 700 surveys were collected with 86 rejections due to response errors. The sample of 614 respondents was finalized with response rate of 87.71 percent

Tools for Data Collection:-

The primary data for this study were collected from the internet users by using self administrated scale. Review of literature indicated unavailability of standard instruments for measuring internet users' perception towards internet advertising in Indian context. Therefore a scale for measuring the internet users' perception towards internet advertising was self-developed and administered. The additional data needed to support the study were also collected from secondary sources like: online publications, journals, magazines, newspapers, books, etc. The description of the developed scale used to collect primary data is as follows:

Internet Advertising Perception Scale:-

The standard procedure was followed for developing and standardizing the scale. The lists of 94 items were prepared after reviewing the relevant literature on internet users' perception towards internet advertising with special reference to banner ads. The initial screening by eliminating the repetition and irrelevant items provided 51 items. The selected 51 items were presented to a sample of 50 judges (20 judges from advertisers, 20 from ad agencies and 10 from academia representing marketing and advertising specializations) along with definition of internet advertising for assessing content and construct validities of each. The lists of 36 items (with 75.5 percent acceptance amongst judges) were finalized. Then each item was presented on five point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree (5)' to 'Strongly Disagree (1)' and finally administered on the sample of 614 respondents. Frequently advertised banner ads available on the popular websites at the time of data collection were shown to the respondents, just to ensure their involvement while responding to the items of the scale.

Scale Purification:-

Collected data were further analyzed for eliminating the weak or insignificant items by measuring internal consistency through item-total correlation. In the first iteration, values of correlation coefficient between each 'Item' and 'Total of Items' were found to be more than 0.195 (standard value of correlation coefficient for more than 100 respondents Zikmund (2003)) except one insignificant item (item number 33 - I feel hesitate to provide my personal information if required by the internet advertisers). Therefore in first iteration only one item was dropped (see Appendix B1). In the second iteration remaining 35 items were again subjected to item-total correlation. None of these items were found to be insignificant and therefore all 35 items were selected for the final scale (see Appendix B3).

Reliability and Validity of Scale:-

After ensuring the content and construct validities of the items selected, the reliability of the scale was determined by Cronbach's Alpha method. The reliability coefficient alpha (α) was found to be 0.911 that showed high reliability of the scale. The closer the reliability coefficient alpha (α) is to 1.00, the greater the internal consistency of items in the instrument being assessed (Georage and Mallery, 2006). When a scale is developed for a particular situation and no other standardized instrument is available, the reliability index based on reliability coefficient (square root of reliability coefficient) can be taken as equivalent to validity of the scale (Garrett, 1981). Since, the scale developed for present study was also unique in nature; the validity was taken to be equivalent to reliability index and computed as 0.954. ProfileTool: Internet Advertising Perception Scale

Author : Self

Subject : Internet User

Nature: Verbal

Structure: 35 items, 5 point Likert scale

Duration: No time limit

Reliability: 0.911

Validity : 0.954

Source : Self

Description:-

1. The scale is self-administering.
2. The subject is asked to interpret each item himself/herself.
3. The subject is expected to tick (√) mark on any one of 'one to five choices' given against each statement. The choices range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There is not right or wrong answer hence subject is free to give his/her opinion on each item.
4. Unwanted expectation or apprehensions are not raised in the mind of the subject.
5. The scale yields the measure of internet users' perceptions towards internet advertising with reference to banner ads in various regards.

Scoring:-

1. Scoring is done manually.
2. Each item is awarded 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for not sure/neutral, 2 for disagree and 1 for strongly disagree.
3. The sum of scores of the items for each subject is his/her 'internet advertising perception score'. Higher the score better is the perception whereas lower the score, poor/negative is the perception towards the internet advertising with reference to banner ads.

TOOLS FOR DATA ANALYSIS:-

The following statistical tools were applied using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS 17.0) and MS Excel 2003 for the analysis of collected data and to arrive at meaningful conclusions.

Normality:-

As the subsequent experiments required the assumption of normal distribution of the sample as the pre-requisite for the analysis, it became necessary to test the veracity of the assumption of normal distribution of collected data on internet users' perception towards internet advertising vis-à-vis the sample. Normality test statistics by 'Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test' assesses that whether a particular distribution differs significantly from normal distribution (Carver and Nash, 2006). Thus the total score calculated from the responses of 614 respondents collected using 'Internet Advertising Perception Scale' were tested for veracity of the assumption of normal distribution by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The significance value (p-value) for this test was found to be

0.579 (greater than 0.05) and indicated that the distribution of final points does not differ significantly from normal distribution. This inferred that the assumption of normality with respect to the sample chosen was valid. Therefore the experiments and analysis based on normality concept could be carried out with the sample of 614 respondents (see Appendix D1).

Skewness and Kurtosis as the measures of deviation from normality were also calculated. A value between ± 2.0 for both Skewness and Kurtosis is acceptable for showing normality of data (George and Mallery, 2009). The value of Skewness was found to be -0.155 and for Kurtosis it was 0.434. In both the case values fell within acceptable range of ± 2.0 . The values of standard error for Kurtosis (0.197) and Skewness (0.099) found

sufficiently small, which were indicating greater stability of data. The values related to Skewness and Kurtosis and the histogram of frequency distribution are shown in the Appendix D2 and Appendix D3 respectively.

Conclusion and Implication

In the growing diversity of media and the arrival of new technologies, notably the internet, the consumers have become better informed than ever before. After a look at available literature on internet advertising it was found that there is a vacuum in the literature pertaining to the standardized measures for internet advertisement perception. To fill this void, the Internet Advertising Perception scale was designed for the purpose of providing standardization to measure the internet users' perception towards internet advertising. It focuses on how internet users' perceived the internet ads on thirty six structured questions using five point likert- with a range from Strongly Disagree [1] to Strongly Agree [5]. This scale was designed with an aim to generate knowledge about the perception of internet advertising that can be meaningfully used by the researchers, advertisers and marketers. The implication of the study would also contribute to the existing knowledge base of the internet advertising.

REFERENCES:-

- Aaker, D. A. and Bruzzone, D. E. (1985). Viewer Perceptions of Prime-Time Television Advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 21(5), 15-23.
- Thorson, E., and Leavitt, C. (1986). Probabilistic functionalism and the search for taxonomy of commercials. Unpublished paper.
- MacKenzie, S. B. and Lutz Richard J. (1989). An Empirical Examination of the Structural Antecedents of Attitude toward the Ad in an Advertising Pretesting Context, *Journal of Marketing*, 53 (April), 48–56
- Brown, S. P. and Staymen, D. M. (1992). Antecedents and Consequences of Attitude toward the Ad: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(1), 34-51.
- Alwitt, L. F., & Prabhakar, P. R. (1992). Functional and Belief Dimensions of Attitudes to Television Advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 32(5), 30–42.
- Verity, J.W. and Hof, R.D. (1994). The Internet: How it will Change the Way You Do Business. *Business Week* (November), 80-86.
- Berthon, Pierre, Leyland Errr F. and Watson, Rjchard T. (1996). The World Wide Web as an Advertising Medium: Toward an Understanding of Conversion Efficiency. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36(1), 43-54.
- Ducoffe, R. H. (1996). Advertising value and advertising on the web. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36 (5), 21 – 36.
- Chen, Qimei and Wells, William D. (1999). Attitude toward the Site. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 39(5), 27-37.
- Coupey, Eloise (1999). Advertising in an Interactive Environment: A Research Agenda. *Marketing and the WWW*, 193-211.
- Singh, S.N., and Dalal, N.P. Web home pages as advertisements. *Communications of the ACM*, 42, 8 (August 1999), 91–98.
- Vakratsas, D., and Ambler, T. How advertising works: What do we really know? *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 1 (January 1999), 26–43.
- Rodgers, Shelly and Cannon, H. M. (2000). The many faces of web users: An exploratory study of functionally-based web-usage groups. Paper presented at the 2000 Conference of the American Academy of Advertising, Rhode Island.
- Saunders, Mark, Philip, Lewis and Adrian Thorn hill (2000). *Research Methods for Business Students*. 3rd Edition, New Delhi: Pearson Education
- Gallagher, K., Parsons, J. and Foster K. (2001). A Tale of Two Studies: Replicating Advertising Effectiveness and Content Evaluation in Print on the Web. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 41(4), 71-81.

- Yoon, Sung-Joon, and Kim Joo-Ho (2001). Is the Internet More Effective Than Traditional Media? Factors Affecting the Choice of Media. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 41(6), 53–60.
- Belch, Group and Belch, Michal. (2001). *Advertising and Promotion*. New Delhi, 5th Edition, Prentice Hall Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Korgaonkar Pradeep and Wolin Lori D. (2002). Web usage, advertising, and shopping relationship patterns. *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Application and Policy*, 12(2), 191-204.
- Zhou Zheng, and Bao Yeqing (2002). Users' Attitudes toward Web Advertising: Effects of Internet Motivation and Internet Ability. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 29, Pages 71-78.
- Hwang, J.S., MacMillan, S. J. and Lee Guiok, (2003). Corporate Web Sites as Advertising: An Analysis of Function, Audience and Message Strategy *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 3(2).
- Yang Kenneth C. C. (2004). A comparison of attitudes towards Internet advertising among lifestyle segments in Taiwan. *Journal OF Marketing Communications*, 10 (September), 195–212.
- Burns, Kelli and Lutz Richard J. (2006). The Function of Format. *The Journal of Advertising*, 35(1), 53-64.
- Rajakumari K. (2007). Internet Advertising- A destination for evolving strategies. *Advertising Express*. VII (I), 47-50.
- Ha Louisa and McCann Kim (2008). An integrated model of advertising clutter in offline and online media. *International Journal of Advertising*, 27(4), 569- 592
- Mohan Manendra (2008). *Advertising Management*. 5th Edition, Tata McGraw- Hill Publishing Company Limited.
- Rao, Srinivasa D. and Santosh K. E. (2008). E-Business and Apple Business. *E-Business*, IX (12), 45-48.
- Shah Kruti and Souza Alan D. (2009). *Advertising and Promotions an IMC Perspective*. Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.
- Shilpa, S.K. (2009). Measuring Ad Effectiveness. *Advertising Express*, IX (4), ICFAI publication, 28-31.
- Wang, Ying, Wilkinson, Pop Timothy J, Nicolae A. and. Vaduva, Sebastian A. (2009). Romanian Consumers' Perceptions and Attitudes toward Online Advertising. *The Marketing Management Journal*, 19(1), 73-83.