Chapter 3.16
Negative Effects of Advertising Techniques in Electronic Commerce

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INTRODUCTION

Companies who engage in online commerce find themselves dwelling at the intersection of the real and the virtual, and facing a task that is more complex than delivering an attractive Web site (Mitra, 2003). Practitioners and scholars have paid attention to techniques used in site and product promotion, which include the overall structure of the online retailing interface and individual features like banners, animation, sound, video, interstitials, and pop-up ads (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000; Westland & Au, 1998). Banner size, image maps, audio, and Web site interactivity have been found to enhance site appeal (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Li & Bukovac, 1999;). Banner ads effectiveness was also 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 that could influence consumers' perceptions of and attitude toward a site.

BACKGROUND

A hierarchical chain of media effects in traditional advertising research spans the spectrum of ad content to cognition, attitude, and behavior (Olney, Holbrook, & Batra, 1991). Both content and form variables were considered predictors of attention, memory, recall, click-through, infor-

mativeness, attractiveness, and attitude (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). The study of the effects of executional factors extended to the Web involves new techniques such as banners, sponsorships, interstitials, pop-up windows, and hyperlinks that need to be considered and require a higher level of comprehensiveness than print or TV ads. They may potentially contribute to the delivery of Web content and the enhancement of Web site appeal. Consumer behavior related to online shopping experience has also been continuously explored in the information systems literature (Jarvenpaa & Todd, 1997; Koufaris, 2002; Koufaris, Kambil, & Labarbera, 2001; Van den Poel & Buckinx, 2005; Vijayasarathy, 2003). Researchers have examined Web site design from the perspective of building a cognitive framework, emphasizing enhanced usability through coherent choice of design elements and composition of the layout (Rosen, Purinton, & Lloyd, 2004).

CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARD WEB SITES

Attitude toward the ad (Aad) is an important traditional measure for developing marketing and advertising strategies. Aad mediates advertising responses to influence brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Brown & Stayman, 1992). Attitude toward the site (Ast) is a measure parallel to Aad and was developed in response to a need to evaluate site effectiveness, measuring a Web user's predisposition to respond either favorably or unfavorably to the content of a Web site in a natural exposure situation (Chen & Wells, 1999).

The similarity between Aad and Ast arises from the fact that a commercial Web site contains information similar to that contained in traditional advertising. An informative site appealingly organized in an entertaining form is likely to be appreciated by the visitors and hence is likely to receive a favorable attitude toward the site. Ast is a direct result of a visitor's perceptual dimensions

such as perceived entertainment and perceived irritation (Ducoffe, 1996; Gao, 2003).

Online consumers place great value on the Web as a source of information. In the meantime, consumers also seek entertainment and appreciate information in an enjoyable context. Studies have also shown that product representation, the quality of the shopping experience, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the Web site have a significant effect on attitude toward online shopping, intention to buy, and actual shopping behavior (Del Giudice, 2004; Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003; Koufaris, 2002; Mummalaneni, 2005).

PERCEIVED IRRITATION

The experience and perception of a visitor are individual specific. A Web site intended to be entertaining and informative may produce an unintended outcome of a user's feeling of irritation. In traditional advertising research, irritation is believed to be caused by tactics perceived to be annoying, offensive, or insulting, as well as ad features that are overly manipulative (Ducoffe, 1996). An irritating commercial is one that provokes and causes displeasure and momentary impatience (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1985). In the Web context, irritation can indicate a user's confusion and distraction or the messiness of the site.

Web-based features that may have negative effects on visitor perceptions and attitude include scrolling text across the screen or the status bar, continuously running animation, nonstandard link colors, outdated information, complex URLs, broken links or anchors, error messages, and pop-up ads, among others (Nielsen, 2003). In traditional media, annoyance and irritation are the main reasons why people criticize advertising (Bauer & Greyser, 1968). Irritation leads to reduction in advertising effectiveness (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1985). Ducoffe (1996) found a negative and significant correlation of -0.52 between

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