Google AdWords: Understanding its Effectiveness for Digital Communication

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Online advertising has witnessed tremendous growth in recent years. The first article on Internet advertising was published in 1996 (Berthon et al., 1996). Since then there has been considerable research in the field of Internet marketing (Spilker-Attig and Brettel, 2010). Owing to its efficiency in reaching preferred targeted audience, Internet advertising has been a preferred choice of communication for marketers (Jeong and King, 2010). There has been a transition in the type of online advertisement available for marketers ranging from classic banner advertisements to search engine based ads to targeted banner ads (Kim and Mc Millan, 2008). The internet enables the marketer to reach a larger audience at a lower cost than traditional media and help companies to track the effectiveness of advertisement in terms of reach (Kiss, 2010; Castronovo, 2012).

Researchers have studied the effectiveness of online advertisement by exploring the placement and creativity of banner ads (Robinson, Wysocka, and Hand, 2007), engagement of users with online advertisement (Calder, Malthouse, and Schaedel,

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17

2009), customers involvement with respect to banner ads (Palanisamy and Wong, 2003) attitude belief towards online ads (Wang, and Sun, 2010), attitude towards site brand, and comparison between online and traditional media (Bruner and Kumar, 2000; Chang and Thorson, 2004; Kim and McMillan, 2008).

Empirical studies have been conducted to study how users deal with banner ads, and direct response to banner ads (Zenetti et al., 2014; Srinivasan, Vanhuele, and Pauwels, 2010), but the effect of search engine ads has not received much attention (Hollis, 2005).

Through huge reach of the search engine, Google has made it a lucrative advertising medium to the marketers. Google has different advertising options in the form of Google AdWords: Text Ads, Display Ads, Video Ads, and App Ads. Each option of Google AdWords has different benefits for advertisers, and it becomes essential to identify the most effective option amongst the different Google AdWords to reach customers. Customers react differently to different advertising options. Some customers click on the advertisement of their interest so as to reach to the website of the service provider, and some customers tend to avoid online advertisements altogether. This behaviour of the customer clearly indicates the need to study the effectiveness of different types of Google AdWords advertisements in their efficiency to attract and influence the customers. This paper attempts to find the effectiveness of Google AdWords based on users' behaviour on Text, Banner, SEA and Targeted Banner Advertisements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising is a promotional tool which is used to reach a large mass of geographically dispersed customers at a low cost. With changing times, advertisers have witnessed a change in the types of media available to reach the customers. The traditional media consists of television, newspaper, direct mail, magazines, radio, and outdoor media. The Internet is a new medium which has been included in the portfolio of media (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014). It is considered to be a powerful media since it helps in reaching a large mass of audience and helps the advertisers to specifically use their advertisement for specific target audience (Tavor, 2011). Online advertising is considered to be advantageous because it is more focused on consumers' interests. There is a scope for opting for variations like video, sound clip, text, or a combination of all. Online advertising also allows the consumers to control the type and amount of information to be absorbed (Zhou, and Bao, 2002).

Advertising on the Internet allows the advertiser to play with the content. It is also a cheaper option compared to other media and helps the advertiser to find the groups of customer who

have similar interests. It is also easier to trace a customer's reaction to an ad on online medium (Yoon and Klim, 2001; Levin and Milgrom, 2010). Zenetti et al., (2014) studied the effectiveness of search engine ads to help the consumer decide whether to go for an online advertisement for promotional purpose or not. It was found that the search engine had an effect on an advertisement on just one click and banner advertisements exerted a positive effect on brand awareness only with additional exposure to its effect on brand image. Amongst the different online advertising platforms, customers found that embedded video advertisements mixed with animation helped the respondent remember the ad much more than hoardings, pop-ups, and floating ads (Alijani et al., 2010). Banner advertisements were more effective in comparison to pop-ups and supersitials (Palanisamy, 2004).

It is also found that customers react negatively to digital advertisements McCoy et al., (2007) have suggested that pop up ads on windows annoy 69 per cent of users and many have used blockers to block pop-up advertisements. Consumers can be divided into four categories depending on their usage of the Internet: exploration, entertainment, shopping, and information (Cotte et al., 2006). There were 78 per cent positive responses when asked whether users watch online advertisements for entertainment, information, and purchasing while 22 per cent respondents felt irritated with them. (Priyanka, 2012)

Online marketing has not developed because fewer people use the Internet and do not believe in online shopping for security reasons. Respondents are ready for online marketing if the legal framework becomes flawless (Singh and Gautam, 2001) and 4 per cent respondents who consider advertisements as the price paid in order to get free access to the Internet are ready to pay for the access to get rid of advertisements. 8 per cent respondents believe online advertising is trustworthy and 41 per cent believe it is effective (Dabrowski, 2006). 55.1 per cent respondents believe that the competitive nature of online advertising is beneficial to customers. Majority of the respondents are of opinion that products can easily be found according to their required needs. (Previte and Forrest, 1998)

There are a few disadvantages associated with Internet advertising like invasion of privacy. Many a time marketers track the online activities of the consumers and bombard them with unwanted advertisements against the user's wishes (Tavor, 2011).

ONLINE ADVERTISEMENTS AND GOOGLE ADWORDS

According to Rodgers and Thorson (2000), the online advertising platform has undergone several changes owing to changes in technology. The Internet has the capacity to support several types of advertisements which cannot be run on other regular advertisement platforms such as the television or newspapers. Sponsorship is the only common advertisement format between the internet and television. They have identified four

additional advertisement formats other than sponsorship which is prevalent on the web: keyword linking, commercial sites, pop-up advertising, and banners. Burns and Lutz (2006) identified six formats of online advertisement on the basis of prevalence, importance, distinction, and emergence. The ad formats identified are banners, floating ads, large rectangles, interstitials, skyscrapers, and Pop-ups. Search engines like Yahoo, Google, MSN, and Rediff work as an intermediary between the marketer and the consumer.

The reach of the communication medium is one of the important criteria that media planners take into consideration when they decide the media vehicles suitable for their advertisements (Cheong, Gregorio, and Kim, 2010). The large user base of Google search engine has made it an attractive advertising platform for the marketer. Google generates a substantial amount of revenue by providing a cost effecting advertising platform to the marketer.

Google AdWords is Google's text-based system for advertising on search engine results of Google (Jansen et al., 2008). Google AdWords not only provides a digital platform to reach the right customer at the right time both locally and globally but it also lets its users to attract more customers. It is the largest media vehicle in the online world which is used by almost every marketer. Google AdWords is also a cost-effective medium for advertising the subscribers need to make payment only if the user clicks on the advertisement. Google AdWords service can be availed at a low cost of Rs. 100 to 200 per day and one can target advertisements to any region of the world, specific countries, or cities and that too to a specific demographic.

Google AdWords is a keyword-driven tool that places an advertisement on top or right side of the search result. It depends upon the search engine optimization, content, and campaign of the advertisement (Dahl, 2009). Google AdWords provides four choices to their advertisers: search ads, display ads. video ads, and app ads. Google search ads are placed next to Google search results when consumers look for the products and services that they are interested in. they can see the ads placed by the advertisers.

The performance of the advertisement on Google Adword can be determined through Click Through Rate (CTR) which measures the number of clicks divided by the number of impressions that the ads have received, Conversion Rate which is determined by the conversion rate of the user clicks, and Return on Investment (ROI) which is measured by the number of buyers who have clicked on the ad (Guerini, Strapparava, and Stock, 2010).

AdWords have been found to be an accurate, flexible and fast way of reaching the target audience (Guerini, Strapparava, and Stock, 2010). Google AdWords helps the marketer to know the customer's behavioural reaction to the advertisement by adding the 'click' feature to the advertisements. This enables the advertiser to save the expense associated with designing eye catchy advertisements. Bagged with the user's reaction, advertisers can plan their advertising strategies so as to maximize the return on investment (Kang, and McAllister, 2011).

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

According to information theory, the effectiveness of an advertisement can be measured by studying the user's motivation to acquire additional information about the advertised brand (MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski, 1991). The user's urge to acquire information is also dependent on the internal flexibility of the user. The internal flexibility of the user is defined as the ability to react with little penalty in cost, effort, time, and performance. Internal flexibility provides options to customers about freedom of choice and ability to change during the decision-making process (Palanisamy and Wong, 2003). Generally, a consumer follows the cognitive approach of 'thinking', 'knowledge', and 'beliefs' during any decision-making process (Zenetti et al., 2014). Advertising on the Internet is dependent on user-driven content, search, requirements, and demographic profiles. Hence, if the users find appropriate content, information, they are motivated to make the purchase.

Text Advertisements

A text ad is a form of marketing communication that is used to promote a product or service on the Google Network. Since the text advertisement is short and brief and many times in the local language as per the user's accessed location, its visibility is limited on the web page (Zenetti et al., 2014; Kim and Lennon, 2008). Text advertisement also keyword driven, targeted by audience demographics is considered as a contextual form of advertising. This type of ad matches the context of the website and displays the best match with the content of the website. The keyword-driven search engine mainly focuses on textual advertisements without audio, visual, and graphical components in the ads (Goldfarb, 2014). Past research has shown that the written language (which generally is local language in the text advertisement) can evoke feelings and emotions of customers and should have positive impact on making purchase decision (Zabadi, Shura, and Elsayed, 2012), this leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: Exposure to text advertisements has a positive impact on making a purchase decision.

Banner Advertisements

The banner ad encourages a customer to click on an ad to get additional information about the product or brand. But the empirical findings contrast the success of banner ad with estimated 1 per cent click-through rate (Hollis, 2005). Banner ads are actively avoided by the Internet user, and the response rate for them have also been reduced drastically over time (Drèze and Hussherr, 2003; Goldfarb and Tucker, 2011)

Research on banner ads reveals that click-through rate and direct response measure have underestimated this tool of advertisement medium (Dreze and Hussherr 2003; Yoon and Lee 2007). Advertisers are using banner advertisements in order to generate web traffic. It has been considered to enhance brand preference and purchase motivations amongst the users (Briggs and Hollis 1997). Exposure to a banner ad without clicking on it increases brand awareness whether making a purchase or not (Wang, Shih, and Peracchio, 2013). Hence, we believe that the impact of banner ads on purchase intention is not extensive and hypothesize that:

H2: Exposure to banner ads does not have an impact on making a purchase decision.

Search Engine Advertisements (SEAs)

SEAs and banner advertisements are considered as very cost effective on the web platform. The effectiveness of SEAs are measured though impression generated, click through rate, and conversion rate. The validity of these performance measures is a matter of in-depth discussion and debate (Danaher and Mullarkey, 2003; Zenetti et al., 2014). So, the midway solution that the researcher found was to prefer click-through rates for measurement amongst others. Yet, the very low rate quoted by advertisers questions the appropriateness of the technique (Hoffman and Novak, 2000). This study uses a different approach to measure the effectiveness of SEA. Consumers are asked how they respond to SEA ads and whether these ads are helpful in making purchase decisions.

The customer is searching for information, products, service, etc. on the Internet which the search engine algorithms of Google, Yahoo, etc. bring on front rows to acquire consumers (Rutz and Trusov, 2011; Goldfarb, 2014). As compared to other advertisement patterns, since SEAs work on the keywords algorithm, they are considered as a better ad tools to meet the user's requirements and queries. These characteristics of SEAs motivate users to go further

to acquire information about the product. Information processing theory indicates that the effectiveness of any communication depends on the motivation, opportunity, and consumers' willingness to acquire brand information. Hence, we hypothesize that

H3: Exposure to search engines has a positive impact on making a purchase decision.

Targeted Banner Ads

Google display network is a kind of banner ad which is a new and effective form of advertisement in Google AdWords. Every users' online activities are tracked and advertisement of similar products appears on the screen when the users are visiting any websites. It is also called targeted banner-ad (Ferner, 2010).

The display ad may be in the form of text ad, banner ad, or customized Gmail ad. Google display ads have been able to reach 90 per cent of the internet users. Google AdWords video ads are target based and aim at reaching the right customers. The target banner ads are based on the Googles' Adsense technology which includes audios, visuals, and more obtrusive features which make it difficult for Internet users to avoid (Goldfarb and Tucker, 2011). Since advertisements of a particular product expose users repeatedly to them (as users have searched on different web pages) it becomes difficult for users to avoid them. Multiple exposures to the same advertisement make users curious and force them to click for more information. As already discussed, the effectiveness of any communication depends on the motivation, opportunity, and consumers' willingness to acquire brand information. The theory of information processing also holds true in the case of targeted banner advertisements. Thus we hypothesize:

H4: Exposure to targeted banner ads have a positive impact on making a purchase decision.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the study was collected through a questionnaire from respondents residing in Ahmedabad, India. The questionnaire was sent to 400 people out of which 200 responses were received. Out of these 200 responses, 150 complete responses were received and these were found appropriate for the study. The sample comprises approximately 84 per cent respondents in the age group of 18 to 35 years and the rest above 35 years. About 74 per cent respondents were male while 26 per cent were comprised of female. In the male category, 51.4 per cent respondents were below age 25 while in the case of female category the

percentage was 66.70. The sample consisted of 79.3 per cent respondents whose educational qualification is graduation or more.

There is an observable difference in the income of the respondents: while 53.3 per cent respondents had income between Rs.1 lakh and 8 lakh, approximately 38 per cent did not have any income.

The sampling profile selected for this study was appropriate, as it comprises of respondents who are young in age, educated and could understand the questionnaire. The questionnaire used for the study was validated by the faculty members from the area of marketing and experts from the industry. On the basis of the feedback received from industry experts working in the area of online advertising along with the support of literature, the effectiveness of online advertising was judged by user's response to the advertisement in the form "clicking on the advertisement". Mentioned below are the questions that were designed and found suitable to evaluate the effectiveness of online advertisements

1. When you see an ad (text advertisement) you are likely to click on it to get more information about the product or service.

2. When you see an online ad (banner advertisement), you are likely to click on it

3. Do you visit the advertisement placed by Google in the top three results (SEA advertisement) or at the right side when you are searching for any information?

4. Do you find that targeted banner advertisement influences your buying decision?

5. Do you find digital advertisement effective?

6. How often does your purchase decision get affected/influenced by an online advertisement?

Q1 and Q2 were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from disagree to agree. Q3 and Q4 were dichotomous and trichotomous variables which was used to judge the users' behaviour towards online advertisement in terms of the user's response to an online advertisement. Q5 and Q6 were dichotomous and 4 point-quadritomous variables respectively and the purpose was to check the effectiveness of Google AdWords. Q5 measured the past behaviour of users towards online advertisement i.e. whether ads

influence the consumers' purchase decision, and Q6 measured the perception of users towards Google AdWords.

<p style="text-align:center">Table 1: Sampling Profile</p>

Gender	%	Age Group	%	Educational Qualification	%	Income Group	%
Male	74.0	18-24	55.3	Upto higher secondary	9.3	None	38.0
Female	26.0	25-35	28.7	Graduate	53.3	Less than Rs 1 lakh	3.3
		36-50	8.7	Post graduate	36.7	Rs 1 lakh - 3 lakh	30.7
		51 and above	7.3	Doctorate	.7	Rs 3 lakh - 8 lakh	19.3
						Rs 8 lakh - 15 lakh	6.7
						Rs 15 lakh and above	2.0
Total	100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0

Logistics regression was used to find the users' behaviour towards Google Adword namely Text Advertisements, SEA advertisements, Banner Advertisements, and Targeted Banner Advertisements which are independent variables in the study. The contribution of independent variables on the dependent variable (perceptual effectiveness of Google AdWords) was measured. Multiple logistic regression (MLR) model was developed to check the combined effect of independent variable on the effectiveness of Google AdWords. The model is:

$$Yi = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + E_1$$

where i = 1 and 2

1 = Perception of users towards AdWords

2 = Decision made by users for purchase

X_1 to X_4 are independent variables (Text Advertisement, SEA advertisement, Banner Advertisements, and Targeted Banner Advertisements), β_0 and E_1 are the constant and error

terms respectively. To know the perceptual effectiveness we have used multiple logistics regression model since the dependent variable is dichotomous in nature. The decision-making variable has been tested using ordinal logistics regression. The analysis of data has been useful in collecting following information:

The contribution of the independent variable in making Google AdWords effective. The coefficient calculated for each independent variable represents the corresponding change (increase/ decrease) in the dependent variable (log odds) when changes are made in an independent variable. The marginal effect will give the probability of changes in the depended variable with one point change in the independent variable or predictor.

Findings from Multiple and Multinominal Logistics Regression Analysis

To examine the perceptual effectiveness of Google Adwords, multiple logistic regression (MLR) was used. Table 2 shows the contribution of an independent variable in the model, in which we have studied the probability of perceptual effectiveness of Google Adwords based on users' behaviour on text, banner, SEA and targeted banner advertisements. The findings indicate that text advertisement contributes to the model. For text advertisement, n = - 0.11388, coefficient = - 0.818 and odd ratio = 0.441, this shows that for a one-point change in text advertisement, there will be a decrease of 0.441 times in the perceptual effectiveness of Google AdWords. The marginal effect indicates that for an increase in one point of on text advertisement there will be a decrease of .11 in the dependent variable. It is also found that Banner and SEA advertisements are not significant in the model. But targeted banner advertisements positively affect the perception of users towards Google AdWords.

The actual effectiveness of Google AdWords (whether an online advertisement has an influence on making purchase decision) has been studied with the help of multinomial logistics regression. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 2 : Multiple Logistic Regression

Dependent Variable	Model Fit	Independent Variable	Coefficient	Marginal Effects (n)	Wald Test	Sig.	Odds Ratio Exp(B)
Perceptual Effectiveness	Nagelkerke R Square = 0.286	Text Advertisement	-.818	-0.113885	8.163	.004	.441
	Chi-square = 33.286	Banner Advertisement	.225	0.0313537	.897	.343	1.252
	df = 4	SEA Advertisement	.675	0.0940773	2.199	.138	1.965
	Signif = 0.000	Targeted Banner Advertisement	.858	0.1194942	10.829	.001	2.358
		Constant	-1.605		6.018	.014	.201

In this analysis, we have compared the responses of different types of consumers towards online advertisements. Consumers were identified on the basis of the influence that they experienced. There are three types of consumers namely: consumers who have never been influenced, those who have been occasionally influenced, and those who have been frequently influenced in a purchase decision.

When we take into consideration the users' response towards different Google AdWords for the consumers whose purchase decision has never been influenced by advertisement, the significant value of all independent variables is > 0.05, which means there is no significant difference in users' behaviour towards any type of advertisement.

In the next category in which users were occasionally influenced by advertisement, results were almost same except for targeted banner advertisements (sig = 0.001, Coefficient = -.852 & Odd Ratio = .426). In this particular case, users affect less than the rarely by 0.426 times. Since in the target banner advertisements cookies capture the data of the users' online behaviour they may be influenced if advertisement come across many times in front of users. For users who are frequently influenced by banner advertisements (sig = 0.044, coefficient = 2.326 and odd ratio = 10.241).

The estimated odds ratio favoured positively in the model developed and in comparison to who are rarely influenced by Google Adword product by approx. 10.241 times. So finally, users who are occasionally and frequently influenced by online advertisements are the ones

who come across banner and targeted banner advertisement while as per users' perception targeted banner ads are more effective than others.

Table 3 : Multinominal Logistic Regression

Reference	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Coefficient	Wald	Sig.	Odd Ratio
Rarely	Never	Constant	.319	.261	.609	
		Text Advertisement	-.487	3.189	.074	.615
		Banner Advertisement	.229	.953	.329	1.258
		SEA Advertisement	-.267	.352	.553	.766
		Targeted Banner Advertisement	-.354	2.087	.149	.702
	Occasionally	Constant	-.520	.591	.442	
		Text Advertisement	.070	.066	.797	1.072
		Banner Advertisement	.335	2.038	.153	1.397
		SEA Advertisement	-.017	.001	.970	.983
		Targeted Banner Advertisement	-.852	11.354	.001	.426
	Frequently	Constant	-6.357	3.518	.061	
		Text Advertisement	-.445	.646	.422	.641
		Banner Advertisement	2.326	4.068	.044	10.241
		SEA Advertisement	-22.001			2.785E-10
		Targeted Banner Advertisement	-.208	.118	.731	.812

DISCUSSION

Results in this paper suggest that online advertisement is an effective medium to reach the right audience at the right place at the right time. The findings of our study support the earlier research on the effectiveness of online advertisement. In addition to this, our study also identifies the patterns of online advertisement prevalent in online marketing and users' response towards it.

The findings of the study indicate that targeted banner advertisements are most effective in influencing the consumer both in terms of capturing his attention and influencing his purchase decision. It is also found that consumers tend to ignore other forms of Google AdWords like text advertisements and the SEA advertisements.

Targeted advertisements are effective in reaching the audience because such advertisements are specifically designed for specific individuals. When a receptive viewer sees a targeted banner advertisement, it is likely that he or she will click on the advertisement. The results also indicate that though targeted banner advertisements might be expensive than other forms of Google AdWords, it would be more cost-effective and the return on investment would be higher. The main purpose of an online advertisement is to bring the consumer to the advertiser's web page, the targeted banner advertisement appears to be effective in doing so.

The findings of this research are not without limitations. It did not consider the effect of control variables (age, gender, educational qualification) which also can interfere with the result. The present study studied the contribution of different advertisement patterns on the effectiveness with specific focus to Google AdWords. There are other online advertising tools which can be used for advertising on the Internet. The study is in the context of B2C and responses were collected from general Internet users. Specific research can be conducted for the business-to-business (B2B) segment. There is an increase in the number of B2B advertisers using online advertising as a medium to reach their target audience. In the B2B context, media selection needs to be more specific and accurate in order to reap benefits from the advertising activity.

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