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Brand Mentions Preferred over Ads

APRIL 20, 2009

Young people especially receptive.

Want to get Internet users to visit your Website or follow your brand?

The best way to accomplish those tasks, according to ARAnet, based on polling by Opinion Research Corporation, may *not* be advertising.

Compared with banner ads, pop-up ads, e-mail offers and sponsored links, articles that include brand information were most likely to lead US Internet users to read—and act.

US Internet Users Who Are Very/Somewhat Likely to Read and Take Action After Viewing Online Ads, by Format, March 2009 (% of respondents)

Online articles that include brand information	51%
E-mail offers	47%
Sponsored search engine links	39%
Banner ads	25%
Pop-up ads	13%

Note: n=1,074 ages 18+
Source: ARAnet Adfusion survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation as cited in press release, March 16, 2009

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In addition to making a product so compelling it demands coverage, this requires a more natural, PR-focused strategy of getting the word out. Or in some cases, tailoring ads so they look like articles.

How likely viewers were to take action depended slightly on demographic factors. About one-half of both men and women were likely or somewhat likely to respond to articles that have brand information included in them.

Internet users were more likely to take action the younger they were, and African-Americans and Hispanics were more likely to take action than whites.

Demographic Profile of US Internet Users Who Are Likely to Read Online Articles that Include Brand Information and Take Action Afterward, March 2009 (% of respondents)

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely
Gender				
Female	10%	40%	20%	29%
Male	15%	36%	23%	26%
Age				
18-24	21%	46%	17%	16%
25-34	13%	41%	25%	21%
35-44	12%	43%	17%	27%
45-54	12%	38%	22%	29%
55-64	10%	32%	27%	31%
65+	9%	28%	23%	40%
Race/ethnicity				
African-American	19%	32%	20%	29%
Hispanic	15%	49%	20%	16%
White	10%	37%	24%	30%
Household income				
<\$25,000	11%	40%	22%	27%
\$25,000-\$40,000	16%	39%	19%	26%
\$40,000-\$50,000	11%	36%	24%	29%
\$50,000-\$75,000	9%	32%	22%	37%
\$75,000+	14%	42%	22%	21%

Note: n=1,074; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: ARAnet Adfusion survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, provided to eMarketer, March 16, 2009

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"A key finding for marketers is that younger audiences respond to information that reaches them in the form of articles," said ARAnet president Scott Severson. "More than two-thirds of the respondents between 18 and 34 said they conduct Internet searches for products or services they read about in online articles either very frequently or somewhat frequently."

Long-shunned pop-up ads remained the least favorable option for every audience segment, regardless of age, race, income, sex, region or size of household: 87% of respondents said they were not very likely or not at all likely to read and respond to them.

How can a company attract attention from potential customers without a large PR team, a clever writing staff or a CEO that gives out business cards to anyone with enough fingers?

Fortunately, e-mail marketing and paid search still had relatively high rates of action.

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