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Survey Says Americans Respond to Online Advertising that Tells a Story

New study offers glimpse into how consumers respond to online ads

HOPKINS, MINN. (March 16, 2009) — American consumers say articles that include brand information is the type of online advertising they're most likely to read and act upon, compared to banner ads, pop-up ads, email offers or sponsored links, according to a new survey.

Article-based advertising was preferred by 51 percent of respondents, saying they are "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to read and act upon the material. Coveted demographic groups are even more likely to express a preference for articles. According to the survey, 67 percent of people between the ages of 18 and 24, and 56 percent of those making at least \$75,000 per year say they are "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to read and act upon article-based advertising. Pop-up ads were least likely to be read or acted upon.

The national study of 1,074 adults, conducted online by Opinion Research Corporation in March 2009, was sponsored by Adfusion, an article-based advertising network, and a division of ARAnet.

Survey respondents rated their likelihood to read and act upon five types of online advertising: banner ads, pop-up ads, e-mail offers, articles that include brand information, and sponsored search engine links. Respondents said they were "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to read and respond to:

- Articles that include brand information: 51 percent
- Email offers: 47 percent
- Sponsored search engine links: 39 percent
- Banner ads: 25 percent
- Pop-up ads: 13 percent

Further, when asked how frequently they conduct Internet searches for products or services they read about in online articles, half the respondents said "very frequently" or "somewhat frequently." And again, young and high-income people showed their preference for online articles. Sixty-nine percent of 18-to-24-year-olds said they were likely to conduct a search for products or services based on an article, and 57 percent of those making more than \$75,000 per year expressed their likelihood to perform a search.

According to ARAnet president Scott Severson, the preference for article-based advertising is revealing in that both the youngest and the highest-income respondents prefer articles. “A key finding for marketers is that younger audiences respond to information that reaches them in the form of articles. 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,” Severson says. “That tells us that article-based advertising rates highest with these important and discerning consumer audiences. Our interpretation of the data is that, compared to banner ads or other options, people respond better when they can read an article, evaluate it, and then decide to click through for more information.”

Other revealing data from the study included:

- Pop-up ads were the least favorable option for every audience segment, regardless of age, race, income, sex, region, size of household or presence of children in the household (87 percent of survey respondents said they were not very likely or not at all likely to read and act upon pop-up ads).
- 56 percent of households containing three or more people said they are very likely or somewhat likely to read and act upon articles that include brand information.
- 62 percent of households with 13 to 17 year-old children said they are very likely or somewhat likely to read and act upon articles that include brand information.
- 52 percent of college graduates said they conduct Internet searches for products or services they read about in online articles either very frequently or somewhat frequently.

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Editor’s note: The survey presents the findings of a sample of 1,074 adults comprising 520 men and 554 women 18 years of age and older, completed on March 9-10, 2009.

About ARAnet

Founded in 1996, ARAnet is a leading media company with two products to help its clients reach and win new customers, Adfusion and ARAcontent. Adfusion is an article-based cost per click advertising platform. It is one of the nation’s most dynamic online advertising networks, currently delivering billions of impressions monthly through a network of premium publishing partners. ARAcontent generates feature article placements in print and online publications that build awareness of and sales for its clients’ products and services. To learn more, visit www.ARAnetOnline.com or www.Adfusion.com.