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Online Advertisements on Homepages of Websites: A Study

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Abstract:
→ Purpose: The purpose of this study is to study the online advertisements on the homepage of the informational portals like Yahoo and Rediff as contrast to the ecommerce sites where lot of research has already been conducted. Therefore, in order to study the layout of the website and the online advertisements appearing on the homepage in context to its layout, placement, size, duration, etc., the study was conducted.
→ Methodology: To conduct this exploratory study, content analysis was used as the method for analysing it. Two websites were selected for the comparison and studied for the period of one week on fixed parameters and then generalised features were analysed for the comparison.
→ Findings: The comparative study concluded that though both are informational websites but Yahoo homepage is more creative and aesthetic as it experiments more with the online advertisements. Banner ads are more extensively used on both the websites on the right side of the website. Yahoo also carries pop up and sponsored ads as compared to Rediff that follows restricted formats. Yahoo is designed on Fixed Sidebar layout whereas Rediff has headline and Gallery format.
→ Significance: The result will be beneficial for the marketers, consumers and designers to understand the type of online advertisements liked by the consumers. Also, the result will also prove to be beneficial for the marketers in order to understand which products are to be marketed online and on which websites. In context to marketers and designers, the result will help to study which type of internet advertisements are most appealing by the netizens, should they be copy heavy or picture heavy, where they should be placed and many such related queries.

Keywords: Netizens, online advertising, layout, homepages, website

1. Introduction
Nowadays the market has been flooded with multiple brands from all over the world for every type of consumer and what has added as the feather to the cap is the ICT concept (Information, Communication, Technologies). These ICTs have not only revolutionized the way of advertising our products but has also made everything available at one click and under one roof through internet advertising. Whether it is furniture, books, flowers, cell phones, footwear, automobiles, etc. everything is available on one click which saves one's time and exertion.

2. Online Advertising
Online advertising refers to the type of marketing strategy that involves the use of internet for promotion of products by delivering the marketing messages to the larger consumers. It includes delivering ads to internet users via websites, e-mail, ad supported software's, text messaging and internet enabled cell phones.
Online advertising is the fastest growing mode of advertising these days and marketers are adopting every way out in terms of design, type of internet ad, aesthetic to attract the netizens for making an online purchase. The various types of online advertisements used in internet is shown below in the diagrammatic format:
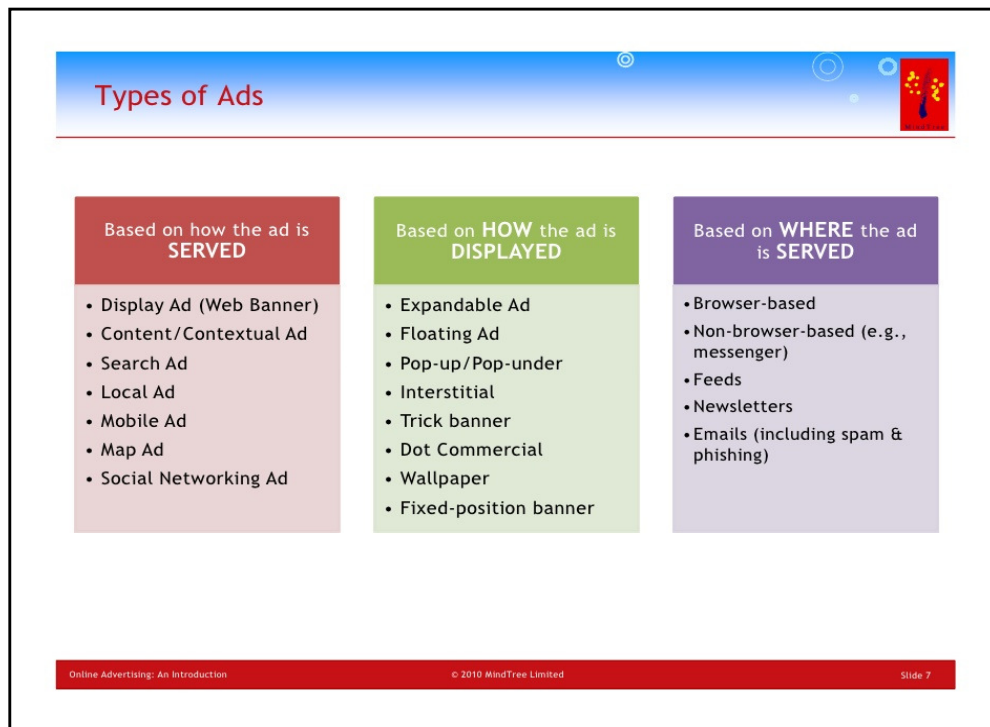
Figure 1

Website refers to the series of World Wide Web file whose initial page is known as homepage. The success or failure of the website depends on the aesthetics of the homepage and its layout.

Hence, homepage of the website can be defined as the webpage that serves as the commencement page of the website. It is the default webpage that loads when you visit a web address that only contains a domain name. Various types of websites appear in the market now days like informational websites, ecommerce websites, blog, company, and personal websites are few to mention.

2.1. Layout

Layout can be defined as a graphic visual representation where visual or eye appealing elements are placement on the page. Every layout whether of website or advertisements generally involves organizational principles of composition to achieve specific communication objectives.

It refers to the arrangement of text, images and other objects on the page. The elements for designing a web page includes page margins, text blocks, images, object padding and any grids used to define position of objects on the page.

2.1.1. Websites under Study

➢ Yahoo.com

'Yet another hierarchical official oracle' better known as YAHOO is an informational website that has been focusing on informing, connecting and entertaining our users. This site was incorporated on 2nd March 1995.Yahoo that initially started off as a search engine has added many services to its portal like Yahoo! Directory, Yahoo! Mail, Yahoo! News, Yahoo! Finance, Yahoo! Groups, Yahoo! Answers, advertising, online mapping, video sharing, fantasy sports and its social media website.

As far the format of the Yahoo website is concerned, its website follows the Fixed side bar layout pattern that has only the centre part moving. Yahoo follows a CPC (pay per click text ads) that makes 2.5 cents from each search. Other forms of advertising which bring in revenue for Yahoo include display and contextual advertising. The yahoo search marketing provides services such as banner ads, sponsored ads and other formats for brand promotion.

Figure 2: Print screen of Yahoo.com homepage

> Rediff.com

Rediff .com is an informational platform that is designed for the Indians and the Indians worldwide and provides various services like free email chats, news updates, search engine and ecommerce platform. The content on the site also provides informational updates from horoscope to airlines updates, cricket updates and other regular information.

As far the aesthetics are concerned, the website follows the Power grid pattern of layout with only one main advertisement on the homepage. In comparison to other informational sites, Rediff provides the ecommerce platform, thus promoting the online trade as well.

Figure 3: Print Screen of Rediff.com homepage

3. Review of Literature
With the increased adoption of ad fission of the internet, World Wide Web is becoming gradually a standard advertisement platform. The web is offering business advertisements world with rich media tool, interactive series and global reach. *(Dr Surender Kumar Gupta, 2013)* Though the online activities have increased over the period of past five years, netizens find e- shopping more convenient and time saving but there is a space for improvement of delivery services and advertising the web products and services for long term success concluded Yuping Liu, Ph.D. In contrast to this, the other school of thought believes that web advertising creates negative and positive perceptions among its consumers. They perceive web advertising as portraying too much of sex and on the other hand as strong source of information and is a good thing to look at concluded Norzalita *Abd Aziz, Ahmad Azmi M. Ariffin (2010).* It is interesting to study that where so much of research has been conducted regarding future of online advertising and the consumer behaviour towards it, less focussed has been given to internet advertisements and their layouts that are carried on the homepages of different websites.

Though people enjoy looking at internet advertisements, its formativeness and utility for making behavioural purchasing decisions also plays a key role *(Ann.E. Schlosser, Sharon Shavit & Alaina (1999)*

According to one of the research conducted on internet advertisements, it was concluded that voluntary and exposure ad formats like banner and text ads are more likely to be cognitively avoided since it is an automatic, sub conscious process that occurs in parallel with browsing activity and does not require any behavioural action by consumer. Another research by *Xavier Dreze & Francis Xavier Husherr (July 2003)* also supported the above research by concluding people actually avoid looking at banner ads during online activities. Intrusive ad formats like Pop ups that interrupt browsing activity and demands immediate response are more likely to be physically avoided by closing them. *(Chatterjee Patrali,2008)*

In another response on context to internet ads it was concluded that banner and pop up ads are both annoying and extensively intrusive in nature. Banner ads are mostly noticed due to their relevancy and location on the page and should include bright colours, interactivity, graphics, videos, logos, sizes and discounts *(Kozen Kavin,2006)*. In one of the research by *Scott Mcloy, Andrea Everard, Dennis Galleta, Peter Polak (2004)* title 'A study of the effects of online advertising: A focus on Pop up and In-line ads' it was concluded that pop up ad reduces a person's retention of both sites and ad content more severely than in-line ads.

Therefore, it can be seen that though much research has been done on, consumer behaviour and ecommerce sites in context to online advertising but very less emphasis has been given on the layouts of the home pages and the advertisements on it and their layouts. Hence, the exploratory study endeavours to analyse the following research areas:

→ What type of internet advertisements are carried out on websites like Yahoo and Rediff?
→ What type of layouts is used for designing the website and online advertisements?
→ To study the online advertisements more deeply in terms of their placement, information availability, duration of stay and many others.

4. Research Methodology

To locate the answers to the above question, a strategic methodology i.e. Content Analysis was adopted by the researcher   Based on the review of literature, few parameters were fixed for studying and comparing both the informational web portals i.e. Yahoo and Rediff.

Each website was studied for a period of one week regularly and independently to study the trend of the online advertisements appearing on the websites. After studying the websites for one week, generalized trend was noted for both the websites and their comparison was drawn.

4.1. Data Analysis of Yahoo

		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
	Parameters							
1	Type of website	Web portal	Web portal	Web portal	Web portal	Web portal	Web portal	Web portal
2	Types of internet advertisement	banner (padding top), rectangle banner, sponsored ad, stream wrapper	banner square, sponsored Ads,	Banner ad, sponsored Ads, Banner square (grid spread)	Banner Ad	Banner (padding top) of Micromax	Pepperfry (banner sandbox)	Pepperfry (banner square box)
3	Space	Volkswagen (960*60 pixels), (298*248 pixels), (494-129.82 pixels), (247*85 pixels), 299*249 pixels	Pepperfry (300*250 pixels), **Sponsored ads** (Maruti Suzuki, ICICI, Vodafone, Flickr (Flickr (300*216.16 pixels), Tresseme, Magic bricks, Club Mahindra, Koovs, Facebook (247*85 pixels), chumbak (300*250 pixels)	Moto 360(970*250 pixels), comscore(300*250 pixels) Flickr(300*216.16 pixels), Sponsored ads-Koovs, Facebook(247*85 pixels)	Frey Goose Stylish(970*250 pixels), koovs.com(300*250 pixels),Flickr(300*216.16 pixels	Micromax (970*250 pixels), Flickr(300*216.16)pixels, Sponsored Ads of intel, Koovs, Tressme, shaadi(247*85 pixels)	Banner ad-Pepperfry(300*250pixels)Flickr(300*216.16)pixels, Sponsored ads-Pepperfry, Craftvilla, kotakmahindra, magic bricks, tressme, shaadi.com(247*85 pixels)	Banner square ad(299*249pixels), Sponsored ad(247*85 pixels),Flickr (300*216.16)pixels
4	Number of ads on homepage	Six ads	Nine ads	Five ads	Three ads	Five ads	Six ads	Seven ads
5	Product category	Volkswagen, Koovs.com, Facebook, Flickr, Pepperfry	Pepperfry, Koovs.com, Maruti Suzuki, chumbak, Vodafone,	Mobiles, Social networking sites, Hair oil, ecommerce, designing site	TV Show, clothing site	Mobile, clothing, matrimonial, hair style	Pepperfry, craftvilla, kotakmahindra, magic bricks, tresmme,	Pepperfry, craftvilla, Koovs(2), Kotak, Tressme,face

			Tresmme, ICICI, magic bricks, Facebook given in ads like Pepperfry, Vodafone				shaadi.com	book, Flickr
6	Purchase option	In few ads given, not in all		its mentioned Buy now in ad of Moto G, Koovs	Shop now used in Koovs.com	NO	No	No
7	Textual/Pictorial/Visual	Pictorial+ visual + minimal text	Pictures+ Text	Pictures(images of product shown)+ text	Static, only Koovs ad had effects	Ad layout is more pictures heavy and the Micromax includes the video ad as well.	the ad was more picture layout	Big Picture Lyout
8	Functionality	provided of Volkswagen ad	Not provided	No	No	Yes for the Micromax canvas it is played in the video	No	NO
9	Search option	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Search for site
10	User friendly	The ads on the site are user friendly as when clicked it directly takes you to the homepage of the brand	Yes as when you click the ad, it takes you directly to the link	Yes as when you click the ad, it takes you directly to the link	Yes as when you click the ad, it takes you directly to the link where the offers are available.	Yes as when you click the ad, it takes you directly to the link where the offers are available.	Yes as when you click the ad, it takes you directly to the link where the offers are available.	Yes as when you click the ad, it takes you directly to the link where the offers are available.
11	Page Layout	Fixed Sidebar and Advance grid	Fixed Sidebar and advance grid	Fixed Sidebar and Advance grid	Fixed Sidebar and Advance grid	Fixed Sidebar and Advance grid	Fixed Sidebar and Advance grid	Fixed Sidebar and Advance grid
12	Information availability	Information like products offered, Variety, Price, offers available along with pictures are provided on the ads	Information like products offered, Variety, Price, offers available along with pictures are provided on the ads	Information regarding Moto 360 watch collection (choose the watch you like), shop now, post our ad free. The information caters to the features on the products that are advertised.	Information regarding timings of the show, shop now, post our ad free. The sponsored ads are the featured ads that contain information catering to the features on the products that are advertised.	The ads reflect the features of the products in the pictures plus text.	The ads reflect the features of the products in the pictures plus text.	The ads reflect the features of the products in the pictures plus text.
13	Placement of ad	banner rectangular in strip form, right square banner,	banner ad on the right rectangular side and in the centre	Banner ad on the top and sponsored ads in the centre and square or rectangular banner ad on the right side of page	Banner ad on the top and sponsored ads in the centre and square or rectangular banner ad on the right side of page	Banner ad on the top and sponsored ads in the centre and square or rectangular banner ad on the right side of page	Banner ad on the top and sponsored ads in the centre and square or rectangular banner ad on the right side of page	sponsored ads in the centre and square or rectangular banner ad on the right side of page
14	Duration of ad	Permanent	Permanent	The sponsored advertisements and the one placed on the right side of the page at the end bar changes every time you refresh the page except the banner ad that is on the top	The sponsored advertisements and the one placed on the right side of the page at the end bar changes everytime you refresh the page except the banner ad that is on the top	The sponsored advertisements and the one placed on the right side of the page at the end bar changes everytime you refresh the page except the banner ad that is on the top	this date , there was no ad on the top of the page	this date , there was no ad on the top of the page
15	Animation used	Yes	No	Yes for Koovs ad when placed in the right bar	Yes for Koovs ad when placed in the right bar	Yes along with the video	No	No
16	Use of words for persuasion	Shop now, Ad feedback, know more	Shop now, Ad feedback, now more, Contest	Shop now, Buy now, Download,	Shop Now, Click to watch, Available	Shop Now, Click to watch, Available	Join now, shop now, post now	Not required
17	Close option available	No	No	Close option is just available on top banner ad	Close option is just available on top banner ad of Grey Goose Stylish	Close option is just available on top banner ad of Grey Goose Stylish	Not required	Not required

Table 1

4.2. Data Analysis of Rediff

	Parameters	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
1	Type of website	Information site	Information site	Information site	Information site	Information site	Information site	Information site
2	Types of internet advertisement	Banner ad	Banner ad	Banner ad	Banner ad	Banner ad	Banner ad	No Ad
3	Space	LIC-300*250 pixels, 195*321 pixels (block ads), 970*90 pixels (rediff ad)	LIC-300*250 pixels, 195*321 pixels (block ads), 970*90 pixels (rediff ad)	LIC-300*250 pixels, 195*321 pixels (block ads), 970*90 pixels(rediff ad)	Lufthasana-300*250 pixels,195*321 pixels(block ads), 970*90 pixels(rediff ad)	Moto G-300*250 pixels, 195*321 pixels(block ads), 970*90 pixels(rediff ad)	LIC-300*250 pixels, 195*321 pixels(block ads), 970*90 pixels(rediff ad)	970*90 pixels(rediff ad)
4	Number of ads on homepage	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	Product category	LIC	LIC	LIC	LIC	LIC	LIC	LIC
6	Purchase option	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Textual/Pictorial/Visual	Animation(just banner ad)+picture+text	Animation(just banner ad)+picture+text	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad	Animation(just banner ad)+picture+text	Animation(just banner ad)+picture+text	Animation(just banner ad)+picture+text	Animation(just banner ad)+picture+text
8	Functionality	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
9	Search option	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	User friendly	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11	Page Layout	Headline and Gallery	Headline and Gallery	Headline and Gallery	Headline and Gallery	Headline and Gallery	Headline and Gallery	Headline and Gallery
12	Information availability	Product price and discount on it,	Product price and discount on it,	Product price and discount on it,	Product price and discount on it,	Product price and discount on it,	Product price and discount on it,	Product price and discount on it,
13	Placement of ad	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad
14	Duration of ad	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent
15	Animation used	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
16	Use of words for persuasion	Buy now, %Off, More like this	Buy now, %Off, More like this	Buy now, %Off, More like this	Buy now, %Off, More like this	Buy now, %Off, More like this	Buy now, %Off, More like this	Buy now, %Off, More like this
17	Close option available	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Table 2

4.3. Combined Analysis of all the Four Websites

	Parameters	Yahoo	Rediff
1	Type of website	Web portal (1040*643)	(Web portal)1040*3244
2	Types of internet advertisement	banner ads, rectangle banner, sponsored ad, stream wrapper, pop up	medium rectangle banner, leader board, skyscraper,
3	Space	247*85 pixels and 300*216 pixels, 970*250, 300*250 standard sizes	300*250, 195*321, 970*90 pixels are standard sizes available
4	Number of ads on homepage	Average of 6 ads	1
5	Product category	Ecommerce sites, SSFs, Mobile phones, Real estate, clothing ecommerce	Life Insurance, airlines, mobile
6	Purchase option	though the word shop now is used but it is not a regular feature	Yes
7	Textual/Pictorial/Visual	More emphasis has been laid on big picture layout, effects and video though its frequency is less	Animation (just banner ad)+picture+ text
8	Functionality	it is only shown in video ads but is less in frequency	No
9	Search option	Yes	Yes
10	User friendly	Yes as when you click the ad, it takes you directly to the link	Yes
11	Page Layout	Fixed Sidebar and Advance grid	Headline and Gallery
12	Information availability	Information regarding offers, discounts, variety of products, features is available	Product price and discount on it,
13	Placement of ad	Banner ad on the top and sponsored ads in the centre and square or rectangular banner ad on the right side of page	Strip format in the centre ad right banner ad
14	Duration of ad	The sponsored advertisements and the one placed on the right side of the page at the end bar changes every time you refresh the page except the banner ad that is on the top	Permanent
15	Animation used	yes, use it frequently	Yes
16	Use of words for persuasion	Shop now, post now, buy now, Contest	Buy now, % off, More like this
17	Close option available	Close option is just available on top banner ad of Moto 360	No

Table 3

4.4. Conclusion

The content analysis of two informational websites i.e. yahoo and rediff for a period of one week can be concluded in the following ways on the basis of parameters studied.

➢ The format of banner online ads like rectangular banner, medium rectangle banner, leader board are used on both the website format where pop up and sponsored type of online ads are frequently used on yahoo homepage whereas Rediff uses skyscraper format for advertising.

➢ Yahoo experiments more with the online ads in terms of ad space i.e. 247*85 pixels and 300*216 pixels, 970*250, 300*250 are standardized ad format and Rediff has fixed ad space like 300*250, 195*321, 970*90.

➢ Yahoo homepage has more number of ads of different product and brands categories on its webpage whereas Rediff has ecommerce page on its website and the homepage has the advertisement of the single brand.

➢ The homepage of Yahoo.com has advertisements of product categories like ecommerce, Social networking sites, real estate, mobile phones and clothing whereas rediff.com carries advertisements of life insurance, airlines and mobile phones.

➢ As Yahoo.com homepage carries only the online advertisements, the words like buy now and shop now will be mentioned on the advertisements when clicked it will take the netizen to separate page but as Rediff has ecommerce page with title Rediff shopping it does provide purchase option.

➢ As Yahoo.com carries more advertisements, most of the still ads are of Big Picture Layout and the page also carries video and animated ads although they are less in frequency. Rediff on the other hand uses animated effects on the ads containing more text.

➢ Both the homepages are user friendly and provides search option for the easy accessibility for the users.

➢ The layout format for the Yahoo.com website is fixed sidebar whereas Rediff.com is designed in Headline and Gallery format.

➢ Ads on yahoo homepage carries more information as there are more number of ads of different product category like offers, discount, variety, features whereas ads on Rediff carries the price and the discount offered.

➢ The ads on Yahoo.com are placed on the top, right side and centre of the information as sponsored ads. The ads on Rediff.com page are mostly placed on the right side and strip ad format in centre of the page.

➢ The sponsored advertisements and the one placed on the right side of the page at the end bar changes every time you refresh the page except the banner ad that is on the top in Yahoo homepage but as there is advertisement of single brand on Rediff homepage, it remains constant for longer period.

➢ Yahoo.com has more visually ads and hence provides options like close, expand, collapse for dealing with video ads but ads rediff homepage carries no such option of close.

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