



INTERNET ADVERTISING ON CONSUMERS' POINT OF VIEW: CASE OF ERCİYES UNIVERSITY

Assist. Prof. Dr. H. Nur GORKEMLI

Selcuk University
ngorkemli@selcuk.edu.tr

Betul CETINKAYA

Selcuk University
ruzbet@hotmail.com

Abstract

Widespread usage of the internet has made it possible to be considered as an important channel for advertising. Over the years, it has been seen that preference of internet advertising is much more increasing when compared with traditional media. Internet advertising offers a more attractive environment for advertisers with its peculiarities such as cost effectiveness, content creating flexibility and interactivity. Developing technology made it possible to send messages to consumers with new applications. On the other hand, from consumers' standpoint, it is seen that internet users are now increasingly being bombarded with advertising messages, which are increasingly appeared on the internet. This raises the question of whether the ad really creates the desired effect on the victims of message bombardment. This study aimed at understanding the thoughts of internet users about internet advertisements. With a survey covered 268 civil servants working at Erciyes University, thoughts of internet users were analyzed and study showed that internet ads had no positive impact on consumer's attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, no statistically significant differences were found in the respondents' point of view on internet advertising according to gender, age and educational differences.

Keywords: internet, internet advertisements, internet advertising, new media, Erciyes University, civil servants

TÜKETİCİ GÖZÜNDEN İNTERNET REKLAMCILIĞI: ERCİYES ÜNİVERSİTESİ ÖRNEĞİ

Öz

İnternetin yaygın olarak kullanılması onun reklam için de önemli bir mecra olarak değerlendirilmesini gündeme getirmiştir. İnternet reklamcılığının geleneksel mecralara göre yıllar itibariyle artan oranda tercih edildiği görülmektedir. İnternet reklamları sağladığı maliyet avantajları, içerik yaratmadaki esnekliği ve daha fazla çift yönlü etkileşim olanağı tanınması gibi sebeplerle reklam verenler daha cazip hale gelmiştir. Artık gelişen teknolojinin sunduğu yepyeni uygulamalarla tüketicilere çok farklı içerik ve tekniklerle mesajlar vermek olanaklıdır. Diğer taraftan tüketici açısından baktığımızda, internet kullananların artık giderek daha fazla oranda reklam mesajı bombardımanına maruz kaldığına söylemek mümkündür. Bu durum, reklamın hedef kitlesi üzerinde gerçekten arzulanan etkiyi yaratıp yaratmadığı sorusunu gündeme getirmektedir. Bu çalışma kullanıcıların internet reklamları ile ilgili düşüncelerini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Erciyes Üniversitesinde görev yapan 268 memur üzerinde anket tekniği kullanılarak yapılan bu arařtırmada internet reklamlarının genel olarak tüketicilerin tutum ve davranışlarında olumsuz etki yarattığı görülmüştür. Bunun yanı sıra deneklerin tutum ve davranışlarının cinsiyet, yaş ve eğitim faktörlerine baėlı olarak anlamlı fark yaratacak ölçüde deėişmediėi saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnternet, İnternet Reklamları, İnternet Reklamcılığı, Yeni Medya, Erciyes Üniversitesi Memurları.

1. Introduction

Usage of the internet continues to increase every year. In 2016's statistics, Turkish Statistical Institute declared that rate of internet usage in Turkey reached 61,2% and it was only 17,6% in 2005. 94,9% of internet users are called as "regular internet users" (tuik.gov.tr). When the internet usage in the world was analyzed, it was stated that number of internet users had increased tenfold from 1999 to 2013. The first billion threshold was reached in 2005, when the second billion in 2010 and the third billion in 2014. Now there are around 3,7 billion internet users in the world (www.internetlivestats.com).

Together with the increase in internet usage, technological developments facilitated internet connection through mobile devices. Short Message Services, which are called SMS, has been one of the popular communication tools. Since 2001, use of mobile information services and SMS increased dramatically. More than 100 billion SMS messages were sent in a year in the world, more than 50% of 19-34 age group use SMS at least one a day in Taiwan (Tsang et al 2004:65). Of course new applications like WhatsApp decreased the number of SMS, but it is still a popular instrument. In Turkey, number of SMS was 22,9 billion and number of MMS (Multimedia Messaging Services) was 17,7 billion in the first quarter of 2016 with a 10% and 18% decreases respectively when compared to previous year (<http://www.turk-internet.com>). According to Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA), number of mobile telephone subscribers in 2016 was 75.061.699, whereas the number was only 11.077.559 in non-mobile telephone subscribers (www.btk.gov.tr).

Not only via messaging services, there are also various channels for organizations to reach their target groups through different internet applications like social media, search engines, web sites and so on. As mobile devices offering these applications became more popular, this made it a new potential for marketing. Although some studies show a negative trend towards advertisements on customers' point of view over years, as long as internet advertisements are thought to be entertaining and informative, it is expected to create positive attitudes on target groups (Tsang et al 2004:65).

2. A General Overview of Internet Advertisements

Traditional advertisement trends have been changing rapidly and new advertising approaches which have significant impacts on consumers have been argued (Aydin *et al*, 2013: 1211). Increased number of internet users and the developments of internet technology and mobile devices made the internet as a new opportunity for marketing purposes. With its high speed, personalized and interactive structure, cost-effectiveness, space and time-free

opportunities, internet advertisement is an exclusive alternative when compared with traditional media. After the first appearance of the internet for military purposes in late 1960s, it took 1980s for general public's usage purposes. First advertisements on internet appeared on October 27, 1994 with the publication of Hotwired, online version of Wired Magazine. As videos, audios and large graphics slowed down the page, "banner ad" started to be used afterwards (Kozlen, 2006: 1). With its above mentioned peculiarities, the internet is different from other advertisement mediums; all visual and auditory advertisements can exist on internet, and in addition to these, new impressive formats could be developed with its technological features. Due to these advantages, millennium became the period where the development of internet advertisement process accelerated (Aktas, 2010:151).

Since the appearance of the first advertisements on internet, various forms of it appeared on our screens. Ozen and Sari (2008:17-18) classified presentation forms of internet advertisements as follows:

- Standard banner
- Vertical banner
- Pop-up ads
- Floating banner
- Rollover banner
- Showcase banner
- Top-roll banner
- Interstitial and supersitials
- Content sponsorship
- Search engines
- Streaming video
- Rich media
- 3-D presentations
- Advergames

Tsang et al (2004:68) classified mobile internet ads into following forms:

- Permission based: messages are sent only to those who indicated their willingness to receive message
- Incentive-based: these ads provide financial rewards to customers who agreed to receive promotion and campaign messages
- Location based: these ads take the advantage of targeting consumers in certain location. Ads are sent based on their locations.

It was shown by various studies that this developing and popular marketing tool was found more informative and trustworthy than traditional advertising due to its interactive and personalized nature (Tsang et al 2004:67). Moreover, its goal and information- orientedness and interactivity made it preferable medium (Cho and Cheon, 2004: 89).

However, there are some other facts showing negative sides of internet advertisements. For example Hubspot gathered some striking facts about internet advertisements based on some studies of different bodies (blog.hubspot.com):

- Between 2013 and 2014 display ad viewability rates did not change
- Ad blockings grew by 41% globally in 2015
- There were 198 million active ad block users around the world according to 2015 data,
- Only 2.8% of participants thought that ads on websites were relevant.
- A study conducted in 2014 showed that when compared with traditional ads, adults between 18-34 years old were far more likely to ignore online ads.
- About half of the clicks on mobile ads were accidental.
- Reason for not clicking banner ads was their untrustworthiness according to 54% of users.
- 33% of internet users found display ads completely intolerable

According to Hubspot (blog.hubspot.com), besides these facts listed above, there were also statistics showing some positive and successful sides of internet advertisements. For example:

- display of native ads were 53% higher than banner ads, and they were found more effective when compared with other internet ads
- Magoosh Online Test prep campaign resulted in an ROI of 486%.
- Heineken Light reached 35 (54%of audience) in just three days using via video ads through Facebook.

Cho and Cheon (2004: 89-90) claimed that click-through rates have declined since the beginning year of first banner ads' appearance on the internet in 1994 and banner-blindness increased because of cluster-bomb approach of internet ads. And they listed the reason of low response to internet ads could be listed as follows:

- irritation occurred due to high number of internet ads and this cause a perception of the internet as an advertisement medium
- people saw internet ads as goal impediment since they interrupted their goals and caused slowing down in internet, therefore undesirable outcomes like aggravation, negative attitude and ad-avoidance occurred.
- prior negative experiences could also cause ad avoidance.

Cho and Cheon (2004: 91) also classified types of internet avoidance as cognitive (negative belief associated with internet ads), affective (people who dislike internet ads and avoid looking ad) and behavioral (it is more than lack of attendance like scrolling down the web page or clicking away)

Attitude can be described as predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation (www.businessdictionary.com). Attitudes towards internet ads have long been examined by various studies. In a study, Zanot (1984:3-15) chronically listed 38 public opinion surveys concerning advertising and showed that attitudes towards ads were increasingly negative after 1970's. Tsang et al (2004: 65-78) tested 5 hypothesis in a survey conducted on 380 samples in 2002. Some of the prominent findings of the study were:

- respondents' attitudes toward mobile ads were negative
- permission based ads resulted in positive attitude
- unauthorized spamming created negative attitude
- entertainment, informativeness and credibility features of ads were positively correlated to attitude.
- 61,6% of respondents had no willingness to receive mobile ads, but intention to receive SMS based mobile ads increase when incentives were given
- people who didn't want to receive mobile ads tend to ignore and not read messages.
- in general and permission-based ads entertainment and credibility significantly affects attitudes. However, in unauthorized advertising, credibility is the only significant factor affecting attitude.

Using a self-administered survey with 442 sample size, Baek and Morimoto (2012:59) indicated that while ad skepticism partially mediated the relationship between ad avoidance and its three determinants (perceived personalization, privacy concerns, and ad irritation), both privacy concerns and ad irritation had a direct positive effect on ad avoidance. Edwards *et al* (2002:92) conducted a survey with 379 respondents and showed that when ads were perceived as intrusive, feelings of irritation were elicited and advertisements were avoided. In a study on internet advertising with 400 respondents, Ozen and Sari (2008:25-26) showed that top three the most irritating forms of advertisements were SPAMs (65,3%), pop-ups (53,5%) and banners (36,5%). The most interesting ones among internet ads were search engine ads (58%), content sponsorships (18,3%) and banners (16,3%). Another finding of the study showed that of the respondents, who willingly examined the internet ad, 47,1% of them purchased that advertised product or service; on the other hand, this rate of purchasing was

16% in respondents who unwillingly faced and examined internet ad, study also showed that irritation decreased as shopping-proposed internet use increased.

3. A Case Study: Internet Advertising on Consumer's Point of View

This study is designed to understand the efficacy of internet ads on consumers' perspective. In this context, the sample should need to be composed of employed people in certain institutions since they have ability to buy –as people having purchasing power are one of the main target groups of advertisements. Therefore officers working at Erciyes University, located in Kayseri, Turkey, were selected as the sample in the study. The total number of officers working at Erciyes University was 2675 according to the data given by Personnel Affairs Department of the university in the year of 2015. Sample size was determined as 268 within the limits of 5% acceptable error and 90% level of confidence.

30 people were pre-tested and then the necessary changes were made on survey form. The final questionnaire was composed of 44 questions. 8 of them were about demographically features, 30 of them were about attitudes toward internet ads and finally 6 were about their purchasing behaviors related to these ads. 268 officers were selected by random sampling method, and the forms were filled out face to face. Attitude and behavioral questions were designed according to five-point Likert scale. Data were processed by using SPSS program.

a. Demographical Findings:

53,4% of the respondents were males and 46,6% were females. When age distribution of the samples was analyzed, majority of the respondents were at the age of 31-40 scale with 36%, 21-30 age scale with 27,6% and 41-50 age scale with 26,9%. The distribution of educational background of the respondents was analyzed and it was seen that general educational level of the sample was high. More than 70% of the respondents had a university background.

All the respondents except one had internet access in their workplace whereas 69,8% had access of internet at home. Majority of the respondents (93,7%) used internet via their smart phones. Almost half of them used internet up to 5 hours a day, whereas 37,8% use internet between 6-10 hours and 10,7% use it more than 11 hours. Social media applications are very important medium for internet advertisements. It was seen that most of the officers used social media applications, mainly Facebook with a rate of 81,7%. Names and shares of prominent applications were Twitter (31%) and Instagram (36,6%). More than half of the of the respondents (54,9%) did online shopping. Demographic findings were gathered in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Findings

Sex	Freq.	%	Internet connection at work	Freq.	%
Female	125	46,6	Yes	267	99,6
Male	143	53,4	No	1	0,4
Total	268	100	Total	268	100
Age	Freq.	%	Internet connection via smart phones	Freq.	%
16-20	1	0,4	Yes	210	93,7
21-30	74	27,6	No	58	6,3
31-40	97	36,2	Total	268	100
41-50	72	26,9	Daily time spent on the internet	Freq.	%
51+	24	9	1-5 hours	137	51,1
Total	268	100	6-10 hours	102	38,1
Latest School completed	Freq.	%	11-15 hours	29	10,8
Primary	4	1,5	Total	268	100
Secondary	2	0,7	Being member of social media	Freq.	%
High school	63	23,5	Facebook	219	81,7
Associate degree	50	18,7	Twitter	83	31,0
Undergraduate degree	116	43,3	Instagram	98	36,6
Masters	32	11,9	LinkedIn	10	3,7
Doctorate	1	0,4	MySpace	6	2,2
Total	268	100	Google+	56	20,9
Internet connection at home	Freq.	%	Other	24	9,0
Yes	187	69,8	Total	268	100
No	81	30,2	Doing online shopping	Freq.	%
Total	268	100	Yes	147	54,9
			No	121	45,1
			Total	268	100

b. Attitudinal Findings

A group of statements were listed in order to understand the participants' attitudes towards internet advertisements. Five-point Likert scale, which allowed us to evaluate the degrees of the opinions, was used and in this scale point 1 represented "strongly disagree", whereas point 5 represented "strongly agree". Statements and the means of the answers are shown in Diagram 1 below. It was seen that the following group of answers got the highest point (above 3.100):

- Unauthorized e-mails affects my attitudes negatively towards the brand/organization ($\bar{X} = 3.8993$)

- Internet advertisements create visual pollution ($\bar{X} = 3.5896$)

- Internet advertisements can be misleading ($\bar{X} = 3.5448$)

- My attitudes towards internet advertisement could be positively influenced if permission was previously taken ($\bar{X} = 3.4515$)

- Unauthorized internet advertisements negatively affects my purchasing decisions ($\bar{X} = 3.3881$)

- Internet advertisements interrupts my performance during internet search ($\bar{X} = 3.3619$)

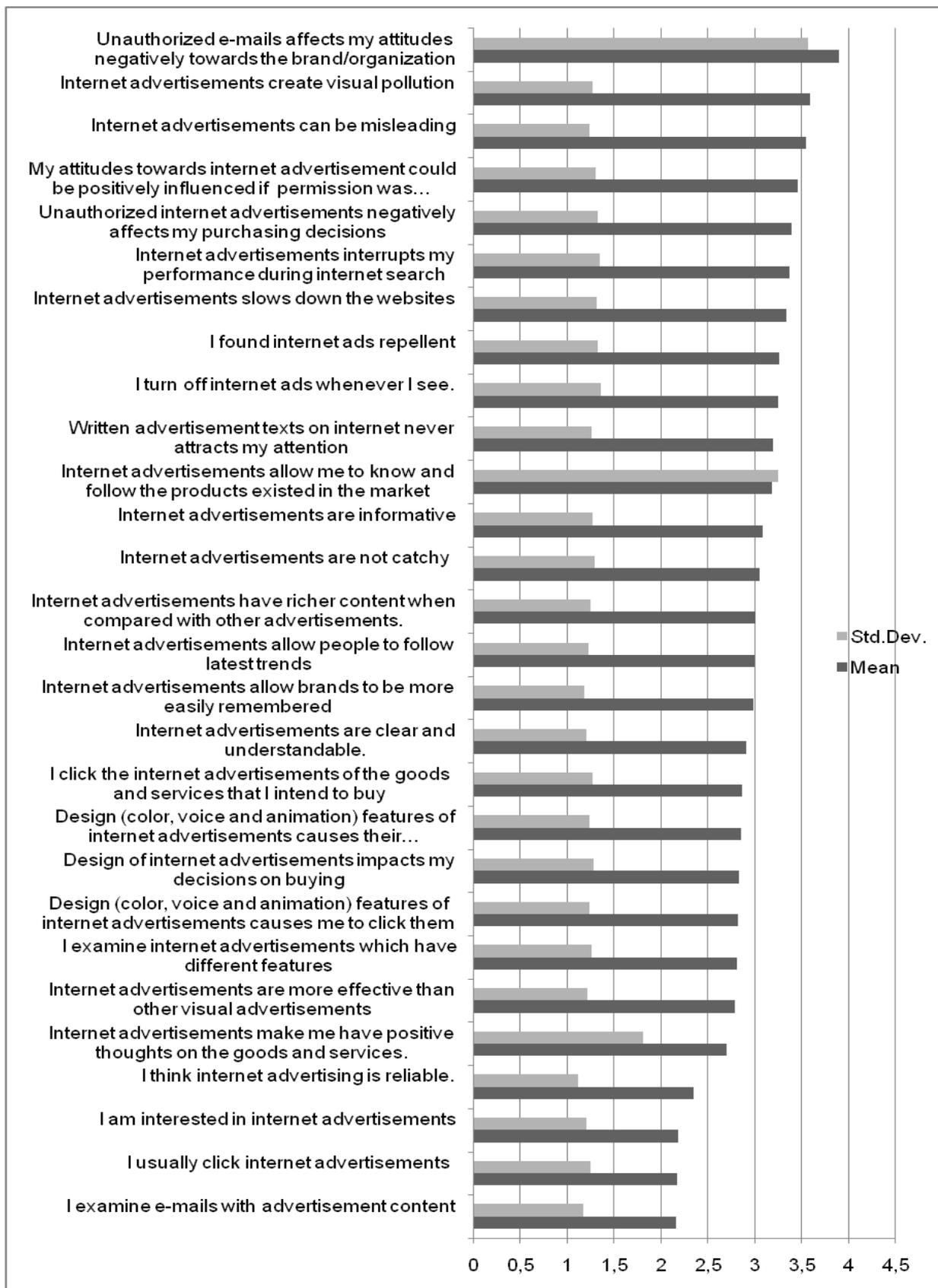
- Internet advertisements slows down the websites ($\bar{X} = 3.3358$)

- I found internet ads repellent ($\bar{X} = 3.2537$)
- I turn off internet ads whenever I see ($\bar{X} = 3.2463$)
- Written advertisement texts on internet never attracts my attention ($\bar{X} = 3.1940$)

Following statements got the minimum average means when compared with the rest. It means that subjects' disagree rate was high with the following statements (statements below 2.900 were taken into consideration):

- I examine advertisement e-mails ($\bar{X} = 2.1604$)
- I usually click on internet advertisements ($\bar{X} = 2.1642$)
- I am interested in internet advertisements ($\bar{X} = 2.1791$)
- Internet advertisements are reliable ($\bar{X} = 2.3396$)
- Internet advertisements make me have positive thoughts on the goods and services ($\bar{X} = 2.6978$)
- Internet advertisements are more effective than other visual advertisements ($\bar{X} = 2.7836$)
- I examine internet advertisements which have different features ($\bar{X} = 2.8060$)
- Design (color, voice and animation) features of internet advertisements causes me to click them ($\bar{X} = 2.8172$)
- Design of internet advertisements impacts my decisions on buying ($\bar{X} = 2.8321$)
- Design (color, voice and animation) features of internet advertisements causes their attractiveness ($\bar{X} = 2.8507$)
- I click the internet advertisements of the goods and services that I intend to buy ($\bar{X} = 2.8619$)

Diagram 1. Attitudinal Findings on Internet Advertising



c. Behavioral Findings

Behavioral findings of respondents revealed that internet advertisements had low positive impact on purchasing behavior as shown in Table 2. Like the previous group of questions, participants marked their view on five-point Likert scale. When the answers were examined, it was seen in great extent that respondents disagreed that internet advertisements have positive impact on purchasing. They believed that these advertisements neither change their preference nor encourage their purchase. Both attitudinal and behavioral findings were analyzed with independent t-tests (dual comparisons), one-way ANOVA (multiple comparisons) and Tukey tests (changes between groups) and no statistically significance was observed in terms of sex, age and education.

Table 2. Findings on Purchasing Behavior

Criterion	Total	Mean	Stand. Dev.
Internet advertisements affect positively my purchasing behavior	268	2.8097	1.2136
When I see an internet advertisement of a product that I need, I usually buy it	268	2.5709	1.1174
Among the competitive goods, I prefer to buy the one that has better internet ad	268	2.6194	1.2165
In general, internet advertisements encourage purchasing	268	2.5410	1.2550

4. Conclusion

Due to rapid developments in technology, new channels opened for advertisers besides traditional media. Advertisements increasingly exist in these new channels, which provide goal oriented, personalized and interactive environments for users. They are relatively cost-effective, time and space-free and highly effective. However, over years with the extensive usage of internet advertising, people exposed to heavy bombardment of ads which caused irritation problems, banner-blindness and increased usage of ad blockings. Moreover, untrustworthiness of internet advertisements can be seen as another problem.

Respondents, who were 268 non-academic administrative officers working in Erciyes University, were mostly in 31-40 years old; 21-30 and 41-50 age groups followed this group with close percentages. More than 70% of the staff had university degree. They had high internet access and social media usage rates. Having Facebook account was well ahead in comparison with being member of other social media applications. Half of them used the internet up to 5 hours a day and around 38% used it 6-10 hours daily. Around 55% did online shopping.

Attitudinal answers of the samples agglomerated on negative points about internet advertisements. Among those negative answers, irritation to unauthorized emails took the first place; however, it was indicated that attitudes to the ad might change positively if permission was taken. Having trust issues to internet advertising was seen as the other prominent problem; respondents tend to find internet ads as misleading and not reliable. They also found that those ads slow down their internet usage and they prefer to skip ads. They didn't find

internet ads more preferable to other ads and design, color and other visual features didn't change their attitude towards ads. When behavioral findings analyzed, it could be said that internet advertisements had negative impact on purchasing behavior. They mostly expressed that these advertisements didn't change their preference and encourage their purchasing behavior. No statistically significance was seen in terms of sex, age and education for both attitudinal and behavioral findings after analysis.

It is clear that with its widely usage, the internet is a very important tool for marketing goods and services; however, due to various reasons like heavy advertisement bombardment, internet ads loss their attractiveness and may cause irritation. Even their visual characteristics couldn't change peoples' minds and they may not have positive impact on purchasing behavior. Moreover, it has credibility problems. With all these negative points, advertisers and marketers should keep in mind to overcome these issues in order to reach their marketing targets. With upper scale regulations like permission obligations, setting measurements for reliability and restrictions for inappropriate contents may have positive impact to reach marketing goals. Moreover, taking security precautions for internet shopping can create more positive attitude for internet advertisements.

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