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Business School Students' Perception of Internet Advertising

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Abstract

Internet and internet use, one of the most important developments of our age, has grown rapidly in Turkey. Many researchers associate such rapid growth with young population of Turkey. Internet advertising in Turkey is trying to adapt to these developments. This study aims to unravel the perceptions of internet users in Turkey towards internet advertisement. Conducting a survey for this purpose was chosen as the appropriate method. Population of this study was chosen as the students of the Department of Business Administration at Anadolu University Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences. The scale used for this study was the one used by An and Kim in their 2008 study, with the difference that it was adapted to Turkish. The results show that attitude towards internet advertising is negative.

Key words:

Contact Information of Corresponding author:

Introduction

When the internet was started to be used in 1980s, the prevailing thought was that it would be difficult, or impossible, to use it as an advertising channel. However, with the advancement of communication technologies, internet use became widespread. This was the harbinger of a new channel covering a wide spectrum from advertisers, to advertisement agencies, and to digital advertisement agencies working in connection with advertisement agencies. Especially, with the rapid increase in internet use after 1990s and interest of advertisers in this field, internet advertising started to grow.

From the end of the previous century to present time, internet has come to be seen as an important channel for companies to promote their products and services alongside conventional advertising media such as radio, TV, newspapers and magazines.

Internet

Today, internet may be defined as an electronic network providing a systematic connection between individuals, groups or organizations owing to the network services provided by connecting computers (networking), Intranets (internet within an organization) and Extranets (internet between organizations). It is known that internet emerged as a military project in the United States of America in the 1960s. However, it was not until 1990s that internet had transformed into an effective channel.

In January 1993, there were only 50 web sites in the world. 1993 was an important year for development of the web as alpha version of the Mosaic browser for x-windows was developed and distributed free of charge by Marc Andersen of NCSA in February of the same year. By March 1993, Web had accounted for 0.1 percent of the all internet traffic. In October, the number of web sites on the internet had surged to 500. That meant that the share of the web in the total internet traffic had risen to 1 percent. In 1993, the Cello browser used in the early years of internet was launched. In 1994, new browser programs were offered as standards started to be developed. First web conference was held in Geneva in 1994.The group that developed Mosaic browser released the first beta version of Netscape Navigator through a separate entity named Netscape Communication Corporation (Şar,2007: 9).

Today, there is almost no spot in the world, from Antarctica to jungles of Africa, outside the reach of internet. In fact, even space shuttles have been equipped with internet access lately. Internet provides the communication infrastructure between different points and enables smooth communication among millions of computers of distinct brands with distinct operating systems (Çağıltay, 1997:4).

Internet in Turkey

First experimental internet connection was established in October 1992 to the Netherlands via X.25, while the first official internet connection was established on 12 April 1993 to NSFNet (National Science Foundation

Network) in the US through TCP/IP protocol using the routers of the METU (Middle East Technical University) IT Department and a leased line with a 64 Kbps capacity, following approval of the application filed to PTT (Postal, Telegram & Telephone Service) in 1992 (Onay, 2011:286).

According to findings of the 2012 Households Information Technologies Survey of TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute), 47.2% of households have internet access across Turkey. This ratio was 42.9% in 2011. 27.6% of the households without internet access in their houses stated that the reason they do not access internet at home is that they do not need to use it. Ratio of households with internet access is 55.5% in urban areas and 27.3% in rural areas. Computer and internet use ratios are 48.7% and 47.4% respectively in individuals in the 16-74 age group. These ratios were 46.4% and 45% in 2011. Computer and internet use ratios are 59% and 58.1% in men in the 16-74 age group and 38.5% and 37% in women of the same age group. Computer and internet use ratios are 57.8% and 56.6% in the urban areas, while the figures are 27.6% and 26.4% in rural areas. In the first three months of 2012 (January-March 2012), 37.8% of all individuals in the 16-74 age group used internet regularly (virtually everyday or at least once a week). Regular internet use ratio among individuals in the same age group, who used internet in the same period, is 88.5%.[1]

Internet and advertisements

First advertisement on the internet was first published by hotwired.com in 1994. This company sold banner ads first time in that year. This was at the same time the date when the first commercial web browser Netscape Navigator 1.0 was launched. This activity of hotwired.com bears importance as it was also one of the works towards commercial use of internet (Altınbaşak and Karaca, 2009:466). During the time from 1994 to present day, both means of accessing internet and internet advertising have undergone a rapid development. Internet is now an inseparable part of domestic and international trade.

Online advertising grew rapidly in the United States of America in the 1990s in line with the increasing number of users. In 1991, rules regulating internet use was modified in the US and internet connections became completely free of charge and internet backbone started to be kept continuously up and running. As a result of these arrangements, important developments were experienced in advertising on the internet. Big publishers and internet investors sought ways to use this channel more professionally and started to see web pages as media where they could deliver additional messages other than the primary information they host. Thereby, web pages that offer links to many diverse pages emerged. The developments in the US, where internet advertising had seen a significant surge, started to attract attention of European and Asian companies, which also started to see internet as a serious advertising

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[1] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=60

channel (Altınbaşak and Karaca, 2009:467). Internet advertising has shown a rapid growth since that period and has become the large sector it is today.

It's not wrong to say that soon after internet's birth, the web was commercialized. Marketers found a new, effective and interesting way to advertise their products and services. The web is no longer just the newest mass medium; it is also the newest commercial medium (Kaye and Medoff, 2001:11)

The reason behind such rapid expansion of internet advertising is enrichment of content on the web pages, developments aimed at entertainment, increase of interaction of web pages with other media (magazines, radio, etc.) and emergence of numerous virtual brands. Promoting company identity, making company information accessible, offering the most appropriate service to the user, spurring public interest, elimination of time constraints, offering such information as audio, graphics and films, instant updating of demographic data, ability to answer questions from users, being in constant contact with sales people, opening into international markets, offering services for 7/24, instant updating of changing information, collecting feedbacks from the users, testing the market, reaching out to young and customized markets and offering services to regional markets are the major reasons behind choice of internet advertising by companies (Çakır, 2004:171). Development and evaluation of internet advertising for companies may be summarized as above. Another point that should be taken into consideration while evaluating advertising is the consumers. In that regard, it can be said that there are differences between conventional advertising and internet advertising.

Online advertising, like all advertising, attempts to disseminate information in order to affect a buyer-seller transaction. But Web advertising differs from other mediums by enabling consumers to directly interact with the advertisement (Zeff and Aronson, 1997:10).

One of the major differences between online and conventional advertising is the degree of control by the consumers on their exposure to the advertisement against the organization. In conventional advertising, consumers have no role regarding exposure, when everything is taken into consideration. Advertisements interrupt consumers' attention while they are accessing other information (TV program, radio show or traffic signs). In fact, the advertisement gets "pushed" to them. However, with many forms of online advertising, consumers gain a great degree of control regarding exposure. Consumers can choose how and when they want more advertising content or not. In this case, consumers get "attracted" to the electronic advertising content. At this point, learning attitude towards internet advertising becomes an important topic (Schlosser, Shavitt and Kanfer, 1999:35).

If we try to define internet advertisements according to consumers; one needs to cover a wide range from electronic advertisements resembling conventional commercial advertisements to formats differentiating from conventional advertising (Corporate web sites) (Schlosser, Shavitt and Kanfer, 1999:35). Attitude towards both conventional and internet advertising can be separately

evaluated in this regard with both their differences and resemblances. Of course, making such evaluation requires comprehensive studies in both fields.

When we try to evaluate the issue in terms of marketing, it is possible to define internet as a new media based on broadcasting and publishing. But, in contrast to conventional media, two-way communication between actors facilitates personal sales. However, internet is not face-to-face communication and it has no time constraints (Berthon, Pitt and Watson, 1996:43).

Attitudes towards Internet advertisements

An attitude is learned predisposition to behave in consistently favourable or unfavourable way with respect to given object (e.g. product category, a brand, a service, an advertisement, a web site or a retail establishment). The multi-attribute attitude model such as Fishbein model is the most influential model and assumes that a consumer's attitude (evaluation) of an attitude object will depend on the beliefs he or she has about several or many attributes of the object. Thus, it implies that an attitude toward a product or brand can be predicted by identifying these specific beliefs and combining them to derive a measure of the consumer's overall attitude. Lutz (1985) defined an attitude – toward-the-ad as a predisposition to responding a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion. Attitudinal components of attitude toward the advertisement comprise of hedonism, interest and utilitarianism (Aziz, Yasin and Kadir: 2008:333). According to Mehta (2000), consumers' attitude towards advertising is one of the influential indicators of advertising effectiveness because consumer's cognitive ability towards the advertising are reflected in their thoughts and feelings and subsequently will influence their attitude towards advertising (Ling, Piew and Chai, 2010: 116)

There are limited studies on attitude towards internet advertising. Number of participants in Yang's study (2003:43-65), one of these limited studies, is 700. When one looks at the results of the study, belief factors are stronger and fixed compared to other parameters such as demography, internet use, openness to innovations and risk-taking characteristics. At the end of factor analysis, beliefs of internet users in internet advertisements tend to be comparable to belief factors demonstrated against conventional advertisements. Results show that beliefs of consumers in internet advertisements are an indication of their attitude towards internet advertisements. Another result of the study is that behavioral parameters such as internet use and online shopping tendency bear more indicative characteristics than demographic parameters. The study also shows that beliefs in and attitude towards internet advertisements of consumers tend to be consistent despite the initial "new wave of advertisements" perception.

Another study is the research conducted by Schlosser, Shavitt and Kanfer in 1999. According to results of this study, overall perceptions of internet users regarding internet advertisements are positive. The results show that participants are divided into two based on their attitudes of towards internet advertisements. Despite this, half of the participants mention that they find

internet advertisements informative and they are not despised by internet advertisements. Participants also feel themselves comfortable when they use internet advertisements for their buying decisions. Despite this positive aspect, only part of the participants mention a positive attitude towards internet advertising. Researchers tried to explain this by drawing attention to the demographic characteristics of the participants and the possibility that they may have negative attitude towards advertising in general, including conventional advertisements.

Another study in this field was conducted by An and Kim (2008). The scale used in this study, which is based on the survey method, was developed using other scales in the literature. The scale basically consists of two sections. The first section contains questions regarding demographic characteristics of the participants. The second section contains statements aimed at measuring attitude towards internet advertisements. These statements may be evaluated in 5 categories. Each part contains four statements, and the first category generally consists of statements aimed to measure attitudes towards internet advertisements. The second part contains statements about "information" aspect of internet advertisements, while the third part relates to "entertainment" aspect, the fourth part to "trustworthiness" aspect and the fifth part to "irritation" aspect. The statements were asked to be assessed according to 7 point likert scale (1=absolutely disagree, 7=absolutely agree).

An and Kim conducted their survey on two different groups. The first group is composed of Koreans, while the second group involves Americans. According to the results of the study, both groups have negative perception of internet advertisements. However, it was found that Americans and Koreans could differentiate in other categories. The researchers expounded this by the fact that a group belongs to western culture and the other group belongs to eastern culture.

Purpose of the Study

With this study, it is aimed to identify the attitude of students of the Department of Business Administration at Anadolu University Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences towards internet advertisements. In this context, answers to the following questions will be sought:

1) What are the attitudes of business school students towards internet advertisements?
2) Are there any differences between attitudes of male and female participants?
3) Are there any differences between information, entertainment, trustworthiness and irritation categories according to sex?
4) Are there any differences between internet use ratio (average) and "attitude to advertising", "information", "entertainment", "trustworthiness" and "irritation" categories?

Methodology

Surveying was adopted as method of this study. The scale used in the survey is the scale developed by An and Kim (2008) by assessing other scales in the literature. In the literature section of this paper, study of An and Kim and the scale is discussed. The scale was first translated into Turkish by the researcher; later, a faculty member expert in the field translated it for comparison purpose. Then, the scale was given its final form.

Population of the study was chosen as students of the Business Administration Department of Anadolu University. The survey was applied to 115 department students in the 2013 spring semester through convenience sampling. The study is limited to students of the Department of Business Administration at Anadolu University Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences. This study is important as it deals with "attitude towards internet advertisements", which is not studied in Turkey before.

Findings

Frequency values
Table 1. *Genders of the participants*

What's your sex?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Male	50	43.5	43.5	43.5
Valid	Female	65	56.5	56.5	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

As can be seen in Table 1, 50 of the participants are male and 65 of them are female.

Table 2. *Ages of the participants*

How old are you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	18	4	3.5	3.5	3.5
	19	8	7.0	7.0	10.4
	20	11	9.6	9.6	20.0
	21	30	26.1	26.1	46.1
	22	33	28.7	28.7	74.8
Valid	23	21	18.3	18.3	93.0
	24	1	.9	.9	93.9
	25	4	3.5	3.5	97.4
	26	2	1.7	1.7	99.1
	28	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

As can be seen in Table 2, 4 of the participants are 18 years old, 8 of them are 19 years old, 11 are 20 years old, 33 are 22 years old, 2 are 23 years old, 1 is 24 years old, 4 are 25 years old, 2 are 26 years old and 1 is 28 years old.

The findings show us that the participants belong to generation Z. 93% of the participants are below age 23, therefore they were born in 1990 and after.

> *Generation Z,* *those who were born during the middle 1990s and late 2000s, is the generation of full technological users so-called "instant online". Neologisms describing this group are proposed following the latest trends of technology development, i. e. Generation I, The Internet Generation or Generation Next, Net Generation or iGeneration. Strauss and Howe (1991) offer the term The New Silent Generation. Mission and Ministry (2010) define Generation Z as world's first 21st Century generation – the digital natives, the dot-com kids, Generation Media. According to them, Generation Z is differentiated from any other generation by 3 factors: 1) age and life stage (ontological factors); 2) times and technology (sociological factors); and 3) events and experiences (historical factors) (Transmit: Levickaite, 2010:173).*

Table 3. *Computer use history of the participants*

How long have you been using computer?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1 year	2	1.7	1.7	1.7
	1-2 years	1	.9	.9	2.6
	2-3 years	2	1.7	1.7	4.3
	3-4 years	7	6.1	6.1	10.4
	more than 4 years	103	89.6	89.6	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

Bulk of the participants used computers for more than 4 years. 2 participants stated that they have been using computers since less than a year ago, 1 participant for some time between 1-2 years, 2 participants between 2-3 years, 7 participants between 3-4 years and 103 participants for more than 4 years. The findings show us that the participants used computers possibly in their homes or at the high school they attended. They started using computers in their childhood or puberty ages.

Table 4. *Time spent using internet by the participants*
How many hour/hours do you use internet in a day?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I don't use internet every day	20	17.4	17.4	17.4
	less than 1 hour	6	5.2	5.2	22.6
	1-2 hours	25	21.7	21.7	44.3
	2-3 hours	30	26.1	26.1	70.4
	more than 3 hours	34	29.6	29.6	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

As can been in Table 4, 20 participants use internet every day. 6 participants use internet less than an hour per day, 25 participants 1-2 hours a day, 30 participants 2-3 hours a day and 34 participants more than 3 hours a day.

Table 5. *Means and standard deviations of the statements in the "Attitude towards advertisements" category*

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
My general opinion of Internet advertising is favorable	3.57	1.902	115
I consider Internet advertising essential	3.76	1.899	115
Overall, I like internet advertising	3.15	1.925	115
Overall, I consider Internet advertising a good thing	3.13	1.745	115

Table 5 shows the average values and standard deviations of the statements in the "attitude towards advertisements" category of the survey. Averages are above 3 for all statements. Scale reliability of this section was found to be Cronbach's Alpha .944

Average values are seen to be over 3 but do not exceeding 4. It can be said that attitudes towards internet advertisements are close to the mid value but still in the negative region.

Table 6. *Means and standard deviations of the statements in the "Information" category*

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Internet advertising is a good source of product information	3.90	1.980	115
Internet advertising provides timely information	3.18	1.720	115
Internet advertising is a good source of up-to-date information	4.14	1.991	115
Internet advertising provides complete information	2.56	1.563	115

Table 6 shows the average values and standard deviations of the statements in the information category of the survey. Scale reliability of this section was found to be Cronbach's Alpha .846

Average values of this category are seen to be varying. Values of those seeing internet advertising as a good source for product information is close to 4 (3.90). However, it should be considered that the mid value is not exceeded and the value is still in the negative range. Yet, average value is lower when internet advertisements are evaluated in terms of "appropriateness" (3.18). It is seen that the median value is surpassed, albeit slightly, when advertisements are assessed in terms of their "currency" (4.14). In this context, it can be said that the participants evaluate internet advertisements under slightly more positive light in terms of up-to-date information. Average values are the lowest in this category, when "completeness of information" is of concern. This shows us that the participants evaluate completeness of information in the internet advertisements more negatively.

Table 7. *Means and standard deviations of the statements in the "Entertainment" category*

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Internet advertising is entertaining	3.86	1.696	115
Internet advertising is enjoyable	3.17	1.711	115
Internet advertising is pleasing	2.94	1.656	115
Internet advertising is fun to use	3.08	1.692	115

Average values and standard deviations of the statements in the entertainment category of the survey can be seen in Table 7. Scale reliability of this section was found to be Cronbach's Alpha .898

When one looks at the statements in the entertainment category, the highest value belongs to the statement regarding entertaining character of the advertisements (3.86). Even this could not exceed the mid value of 4 and it is in the negative region. Other values have averages very close to 3. It can be

said that internet advertisements are assessed in the negative region in terms of entertainment.

Table 8. *Means and standard deviations of the statements in the "Trustworthiness" category*

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Internet advertising is trustworthy	2.58	1.46	115
The product advertised on the internet is trustworthy	2.68	1.44	115
Internet advertising helps buy the best brand for the price	3.44	1.82	115
Internet advertising is deceptive *	3.95	1.87	115

* Item is reverse coded.

Average values and standard deviations of the statements in the trustworthiness category of the survey can be seen in Table 8. Scale reliability of this section was found to be Cronbach's Alpha .753

Highest value in this category belongs to the statement that defines internet advertisements as "deceptive" (3.95). However, average value of this statement could not exceed 4. Average values of other statements vary between 2.58 and 3.44 and the attitudes are in the negative regions. This shows that the participants lie in the negative regions in terms of "trust" in the internet advertisements.

Table 9: *Means and standard deviations of the statements in the "Irritation" category*

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Internet advertising insults my intelligence	2.70	1.919	115
Internet advertising annoying	3.46	2.153	115
Internet advertising is irritating	3.58	2.136	115
Internet advertising is confusing	3.24	1.890	115

Average values and standard deviations of the statements in the irritation category of the survey can be seen in Table 9. Scale reliability of this section was found to be Cronbach's Alpha .853

Average values are below 4 in the "irritation" category too. It can be said that the participants see this category in negative light, with average values varying between 2.70 and 3.58.

T-test

At the end of the t-test analysis, no statistically significant difference between attitudes of male and female participants was found. There is still no significant difference between male and female participants in the "information" category.

In the "entertainment" category, male and female participants differentiated in the statement "internet advertising is pleasing" (Female Mean: 3.25, Male Mean:2.54, $p < .05$, sig. value .043). No significant difference between male and female participants was found in the "trustworthiness" category. In the "irritation" category, only significant difference between male and female participants was found in the statement "internet advertising is confusing" (Female Mean: 2.95, Male Mean: 3.62, $p < .05$, sig. value .041).

One-way Anova

The One-way Anova analysis revealed no significant difference between internet use ratio (average) and "attitude to advertising", "information", "entertainment", "trustworthiness" and "irritation" categories.

Conclusions and Discussion

One of the most important results of the study is that the participants started using computers and internet in their early ages before they came to the university, perhaps even when they were children. It can be said that this should be evaluated in relation to the ages of the participants. The participants are members of generation Z, when their years of birth are considered. This generation got familiar with the new communication technologies in very early ages. In this regard, it is important to identify their attitude towards internet advertisements.

When the study is evaluated overall, it can be said that participants expressed negative attitude towards internet advertisements in every category. This may be assessed in many different aspects. For example, the important question that whether the participants have negative attitude towards all advertising, including conventional advertising, or only towards internet advertising arises. Yang (2003) said that attitude towards internet advertisements is in parallel to attitude towards conventional advertisements.

There is no comprehensive study in Turkey evaluating attitude towards traditional advertisements. Therefore, there is no available data yet, which we can compare results of this study with. Qualitative study conducted by Onay in 2012 attempted to evaluate attitudes towards conventional advertisements. Being "qualitative", it had limited number of participants, but still could unravel various approaches regarding attitudes towards conventional advertisements According to the data put forth, attitudes towards conventional advertisements were assessed as "positive", "negative" and "undecided". There are different perspectives where participants in three categories could state the reasons for their attitude. Of course, this study is not sufficient to evaluate the attitude towards traditional advertisements in Turkey. There is need for studies with more participation and based on quantitative data collection methods.

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