

## Determinants of Audience Attitude towards Online Advertising

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### Abstract

*Online advertising is still a largely unexplored phenomenon, especially from the perspective of developing nations such as India. The quantum and the scope of the research carried out by the industry and the academia to understand it are quite limited. It goes without saying that success or failure of any advertising platform depends upon audience attitude towards it, but ironically it is the least explored area in case of online advertising. This study aims to delineate and explicate various factors which lead to formation of positive or negative attitudes towards online advertising. The study is exploratory and based upon survey. The data collected through e-mailed survey questionnaire to 1000 respondents spread across the length and breadth of India is analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics. The results of this study will help in gaining a better understanding of the manner in which online advertising is received and processed by the audiences, and how they form different perceptions and attitudes towards online advertising. The findings of this research may help the online advertisers to modify their online advertising practices in order to make them compatible with the behaviour of the audiences resulting in more value for their advertising expenditure.*

**Key Words:** Online Advertising, Audience Attitude, Determinants of Audience Attitude Formation

### Introduction

Online advertising is the newest entrant in the advertising arena. Along with the rapid increase in the number of Internet users around the world, the World Wide Web has become the fastest growing advertising medium of this decade (Ha, 2008). It has achieved this milestone within first two decades of its arrival on the advertising scene. A report published by the Interactive Advertising Bureau in 2014 based on an industry survey conducted by PwC on its behalf stated that since 2005 internet advertising is growing at a faster annual growth rate every year than any other form of advertising in the United States of America (USA). The same report also stated that the online advertising revenues surpassed the revenues generated by other advertising supported media such as broadcast television, cable television, newspapers and radio in the United States of America in 2013 (IAB / PwC, 2014). Indian digital advertising market is expected to cross the INR100 billion mark by 2018 posting a Cumulative Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of nearly 28 % which is more than three times the expected growth of print and one and a half times of television (FICCI-KPMG, 2014). A report assessing state of online advertising in India said that online marketers were keen to increase their online brand advertising budget by 20 %. They were willing to spend more on online advertising, provided they get a clearer picture of the returns on their advertising investment in terms of sales augmentation and positive brand attitudes (Nielsen, 2013). This is a clear indication of the growth potential of online advertising.

Rapid rise of e-commerce during the past few years in India has also supported the upsurge of online advertising. Indian Railways is the top Indian website in terms of unique monthly visitors. It receives 12 million unique visitors every month. Online Retailers such as Amazon™, Flipkart™, Snapdeal™, Jabong™, Myntra™, etc. receive more than 37 million unique visitors per month. Websites such as MakeMyTrip™ have an average transaction size to the tune of \$204 or INR12,000 (approximately). Travel and retail are the fastest growing categories (comScore, 2012).

Growing e-commerce market translates into growing online advertising opportunities. Real time personalized messages may define the future of the advertising. The unique targeting, audience-segmentation and personalization opportunities proffered by online advertising makes this a lucrative prospect for online marketers and advertisers. For instance, a user searching for budget mobile phones may be approached with an online ad communicating comparative prices offered by different offline or online sellers. This may be helpful to the user in deciding the best budget mobile phone for herself/himself.

The growth in the size of the online advertising industry suggests that advertisers are shifting a sizeable portion of their publicity and promotion budget to the online platform and the audiences are responding positively to online advertising messages at least to some extent. Yet, the variables catalyzing this growth are not clear. For instance, there is limited research available to gauge impact of level of interactivity in an online advertisement, which is considered to be one of the most important characteristic of online advertising, on the process of persuasion. The amount of research available on how targeting and personalization of messages affect the efficacy of an advertising campaign is also not comprehensive. In the absence of practicable data, most of the online advertising activities are based upon the prior experiences of the advertisers with advertising through conventional media.

There is little information available on the motives, attitudes and behaviour of the online audiences. Internet usage motives of the audiences may be completely different from their conventional media usage motives. For instance, users may go to the World Wide Web for collecting general information of interest to them; academic research; entertainment; socialization or even shopping. Research scholars have attempted to explicate how these internet motives affect the processing of online advertisements. That is, an user accessing internet for collecting information for her/his research article may be exasperated by online advertisements, whereas; a user going to the world wide web with an intention to purchase a book may find comparative advertisements regarding prices offered by different online and offline retailers of that product expedient. There are no significant research studies available to understand the manner in which internet usage motives of the audiences affect their perception of online advertising. Issues related to privacy concerns of the audiences and the manner in which they affect their perception of online advertising have also not been addressed by the researchers.

Several other variables such as formats of online ads and their content; demographics, etc. and the role they play in the processing of online advertising communications by the audiences have also not received the required attention of the researchers. Most of the research in the field of online advertising carried out is either industry sponsored or is done from the perspective of the advertisers. Online advertising has not yet received the same attention of the academic researchers as the television or the newspapers. This may lead to a lopsided presentation of the facts with little or no representation of the audiences. This is not a propitious proposition for the advertisers because the success of any advertising communication depends upon the attitude of the audiences and their perceptions about it. Without understanding the audiences' attitudes and behaviour towards online advertising, it would be very difficult for the advertisers to fully reap the benefits offered by online advertising. This study would attempt to explicate attitudes of audiences towards online advertising and the factors responsible for formation of these attitudes. This would help in achieving a better understanding of the functioning of online advertising.

## Sampling & Data Collection

For this study, descriptive survey research method was employed. The sample comprising of 1000 respondents was selected through non-probability snowball sampling procedure. The researcher explicitly sought their permission for including them as a participant in the mentioned survey. The sample selected was quite diverse and spread across the length and breadth of the country. This sample was also taken so as to examine the existing relationships between or amongst various variables involved in the process of online advertising instead of proposing generalizations applicable to larger populations with utmost accuracy. The primary data for the purpose of this study was collected through a self-administered questionnaire containing 30 close-ended questions. The questionnaire prepared for this study was pretested with 10 respondents. The data collected was analyzed through descriptive statistics and analyzed within the interpretive paradigm in order to derive valid conclusions.

## Data Analysis & Interpretation

**Demographic Profile:** Out of the total respondents who participated in the study, 300 were in the age-group 21-30, 390 in the age-group 31-40, 220 in the age group 41-50 and 90 in the age-group above 50. The highest number of respondents belonged to the age-group 30-40 and the lowest to the age-group above 50, Out of 1000 respondents, 37 % or 370 were female and remaining 63% or 630 were male. Respondents with graduate or post-graduate degrees comprised 85% of the sample. 36 % of respondents had an average annual income between INR 3 to 5 Lakh; 27% up to INR 3 Lakh; 22% in excess of INR 10 Lakh and 15% between INR 5 to 8 Lakh.

**Internet Connectivity & Usage Patterns:** More than two-thirds of the respondents had access to internet at home. However, only 30 per cent of them had broadband connectivity at home. Approximately, 45% of the respondents spent 1 to 3 hours; more than 33 % spent 3 to 6 hours; nearly 10% spent less than one hour; about 7% users spent 6 to 9 hours and a little more than 5% spent in excess of 9 hours daily on accessing internet. The fact that 78% of the respondents spend 1 to 6 hours daily on internet and approximately 12 % spend more than 6 hours daily on internet augurs well for the purpose of this study as they are expected to have greater probability of coming across or interacting with online advertisements. Approximately, 80 % of the female respondents spent 1 to 6 hours on internet; whereas, the percentage of male respondents doing so was nearly 76 %.

**Internet Usage Motive:** About 33% of female respondents said that shopping was their primary motive for going online; 30% went online for socialization; while, research and entertainment were cited as reasons for accessing the internet by nearly 18% of them. Entertainment was preferred internet usage motive for approximately 33% male respondents followed by socialization as stated by 34% of them. More than 26 % claimed shopping to be their primary internet usage motive while less than 7 % said that research was their primary internet usage motive. Social Networking Websites (SNS) were preferred online destinations for 30% female and 28% male respondents. Nearly, 25% female and 33% male respondents visited entertainment websites more often than other genres of websites. News websites were visited by approximately 19 % of the male and 10 % of the female respondents. Approximately, 26 % of the female respondents marked e-commerce websites as their most preferred internet destination, while only 10 % of the male respondents chose them. Information and education based websites were the least preferred ones with only about 8 % female and 9 % male respondents showing a preference for such websites.

**Exposure to Online Ads and Perceived Intrusiveness:** The data reveals that more than 90 % of the respondents were aware of online advertising and more than 80 % came across more than 5 online ads in a day. This indicates that they had a basic understanding of the formats of online advertising and are expected to have some opinions or have formed some attitudes towards online advertising. Virtually an equal percentage of the female (31.08%) and the male (31.74%) respondents came across 11 to 15 online ads daily. Approximately, 27 % of the female and 23 % of the male respondents viewed 16 to 20 online ads in a day. The percentage of female respondents and the male respondents exposed to more than 20 online ads in a day was also comparable with nearly 15 % of the former and 16 % of the latter claiming to have been exposed to more than 20 online ads in a day. Nearly, 40 % of the respondents replied that they did not consume any online ad voluntarily, while a little more than 37 % of the respondents acknowledged that they voluntarily interacted with the online ads they were exposed to in a day. A very high proportion – 54% of the female respondents and 31% of the male respondents said that their exposure to online advertising was involuntary. The number of male users responding voluntarily to online advertising was considerably higher than that of the female users. The data indicates that male respondents were comparatively more responsive to online advertising than the female respondents.

Approximately, 70 % of the respondents believed that online advertisements always interfere with their primary internet usage motives, while only about 9 % of them said that it did not and less than 5 % of the respondents did not have any opinion in this regard. Respondents almost unanimously, irrespective of the time spent by them on internet, regarded involuntary exposure to online advertising as an obstacle in accomplishing their primary internet usage motives. 80% of the respondents, who went online to get entertainment, perceived involuntary exposure to online ads as intrusive. Approximately, 90% of the visitors to education websites found this involuntary exposure to be intrusive. The data indicate that nearly 90 % of the respondents did regard online advertising as a threat to their privacy at some point of time. More than 63 % of the respondents were of the opinion that they would be more receptive toward online advertising which is relevant to them. Nearly, 19 % of the respondents said that they would be occasionally receptive towards relevant online advertising. Approximately, 12 % of the respondents said that they would not like to receive online advertisements even if they were relevant, while about 6 % did not have any opinion in this regard. The data make it conspicuous that relevant online advertising messages would be perceived as less intrusive by most of the users and therefore, would prove to be more efficient in accomplishing the goals of the advertisers.

**Attitude towards Online Advertising:** The data reveal that nearly 80 % of the respondents had considered online advertising useful at some point of time. This is a fairly large percentage and augurs well for future growth prospects of online advertising. 40 % of the respondents stated that online ads were not more appealing than ads delivered through conventional media such as radio or television. Only about 18% of them found online ads comparatively more appealing. This shows that the ads delivered through conventional media are still considered to be more appealing by the audiences than the ads delivered via the internet.

Approximately, 32 % of the respondents felt that interactivity options proffered by online ad platforms and formats would render online ads more useful for them; more than 27 % claimed that online ads would be more useful to them if they were relevant to their internet usage motive; 21 % of the audiences believed that personalized online ads would be more useful for them and a little less than 20 % of the respondents were of the opinion that the completeness of the information regarding the products or services advertised would make online ads more useful for them. All these factors form the core of online advertising and audiences apparently would be more receptive

towards it if these characteristics of online advertising were employed intelligently by the advertisers.

81 % of the respondents were of the opinion that both online advertising and advertising delivered through conventional media are equally accurate and truthful (or inaccurate and untruthful). This indicates that majority of the audiences do not distinguish between online advertising and advertising delivered via conventional media in terms of accuracy and veracity. About 40% of the respondents considered online ads to be most intrusive. When the respondents were queried about the perceived intrusiveness of online advertising separately, more than 70 % had replied that they regarded involuntary exposure to online advertising as interference to their primary internet usage motives. However, when they were enquired about their opinion regarding comparative intrusiveness of advertisements delivered through different media, the percentage of the respondents considering online advertising as intrusive plummeted to about 40. This data analysis indicates that nearly 60 % of the respondents consider online advertising less intrusive than advertising delivered through conventional media. This is a promising sign for future growth prospects of online advertising.

More than 54 % of the respondents claimed that the authenticity of the websites through which online ads are delivered does affect their perception of the ads. Approximately, 20 % of the respondents were of the opinion that the authenticity of the websites does not affect their perception regarding the online ads viewed by them. 45 % of the respondents said that they would prefer to opt-out of receiving ads of products and services irrelevant to them, while a little more than 32 % of the respondents said that they would do so if the ads delivered to them were intrusive in nature and interfered with their primary internet usage motives.

Approximately, 24 % of the respondents were of the opinion that online advertising had the potential to become the most preferred form of advertising in the future, while a little more than 25 % did not think so. More than 40 % of the respondents were not sure regarding the potential of online advertising to become the most preferred form of advertising in the future. Approximately, 10 % of the respondents did not have any opinion regarding the potential of online advertising to become the most preferred form of advertising in the future. The highest percentage of the respondents had opted for 'maybe' as their choice. This suggests that sufficient information was not available to the respondents regarding various positive and negative aspects of online advertising and therefore, they were not able to take a concrete decision regarding its potential and future prospects.

## Discussion

The number of male respondents who participated in this study is almost double the number of female respondents; however, the percentage analysis of their replies to different survey questions indicated that their opinions regarding online advertising are comparable. Internet is a unique medium in the sense that it may concurrently fulfil multifarious motives of the audiences. That is, users may use social networking websites to communicate with friends; listen to their favourite song on an online music store and shop for sunglasses, simultaneously. The motives play a significant role in the formation of audiences' perceptions and attitudes towards online advertising. For instance, if users are going online for shopping, then they may respond more positively to online ads regarding products or services that they intend to purchase (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). The internet usage motives are complex in nature. The audiences may switch between different motives in a matter of seconds. Thus, to decide the primary internet usage motive of user at any given point of time becomes quite a cumbersome task. Rodgers (2002) while studying the effects of

internet motives on attitudes and behavioural responses towards online advertising using banner ads as stimuli arrived at the conclusion that these motives do affect cognitive responses to online advertising. The websites visited by the users may give an indication of the primary internet usage motive of the audiences. For instance, users logged on to social networking websites or online retail stores may have socialization or shopping as their primary internet usage motive, respectively. However, if the users are logged on to both types of websites simultaneously, then it may not be possible to get an accurate idea about their primary internet usage motive.

Entertainment and social networking websites are two of the most preferred internet destinations for almost two-thirds of the internet users; news and e-commerce websites are preferred by about one-third of them; whereas, only about one-tenth of the users go online for gathering information or educational purposes. This content-based preference for different websites is in consonance with the favoured primary internet usage motives of the audiences. The percentage analysis of the data revealed that the preferences of the female as well as the male respondents regarding the types of websites (based on content) are practically similar.

Almost, each and every one of the internet user is exposed to online advertising on a daily basis regardless of her internet usage motive, preferred websites, gender or time spent on the internet. Excessive exposure to online ads leads to ad clutter. Cho & Cheon (2004) suggested that perceived ad clutter is one of the major reasons for avoidance of online advertising by the audiences. This advertising clutter interferes with the consumption of the editorial content and therefore, lead to ad avoidance (Ha & McCann, 2008). Most of the exposure to online advertising is involuntary and more than two-thirds of the users regard this as an impediment to the achievement of their primary internet usage motives. Approximately, half of the female users and one-third of the male users do not consume any online ad voluntarily. This involuntary exposure to online advertising may lead to formation of negative attitudes towards online advertising.

The analysis of the data reveals that users are most receptive towards online advertising when their primary internet usage motive is shopping. Entertainment and research are the next two internet motives considerably compatible with reception of online advertising. The audiences are most non-receptive towards online advertising when they go online to socialize. This may be because socialization is a comparatively more personal activity and any interference during this is perceived as an intrusion upon privacy by the audiences. Cho & Cheon (2004) carried out a research study to determine the reasons for avoidance of online advertising by the audiences and found out that perceived goal impediment was one of the primary reasons for this behaviour. Any obstruction to the accomplishment of the primary internet usage motives of the audiences will lead to the formation of negative perceptions and attitudes in the minds of the audiences. More than two-thirds of the audiences perceive online advertising as an intrusion upon their privacy. Sheehan & Hoy (1999) suggest that there is a definite correlation between the privacy concerns of the audiences and their behaviour towards online advertising. The users may form negative attitudes towards online advertising if it is perceived as intrusive by them.

The audiences are more receptive towards online advertising when the ads are relevant to them. The interactive advertising model proposed by Rodgers & Thorson in 2000, also suggests that 'relevance' is an important factor in the context of perception and reception of online advertising by the audiences. This relevance arises out of the compatibility of online advertising with the primary internet usage motives of the audiences. If online ads delivered to the audiences are consistent with their internet usage motives, then the relevance of such ads for the audiences will increase significantly, leading to formation of positive perceptions and generation of favourable behavioural responses. One mechanism to increase the relevance of online ads for the audiences is to solicit

their permission regarding the types of ads (in terms of products or formats) that they would prefer to receive and the time of delivery of those ads. A significant population of internet users is positively disposed towards receiving permission based online advertising. Major players in the online advertising arena are do offer choices to the users regarding online advertising. Network Advertising Initiative, which is a self-regulatory body for third-party online and mobile advertising and has some of the biggest names in the field of online advertising including Google™ and Microsoft™ as its members, offers to the users an option to ‘opt-out’ of online advertising served by its members. However, almost none of the internet users seems to be aware of these options.

The users are willing to provide their personal information to the online advertisers in order to receive relevant online advertising on conditions of solicitation of their prior permission for collecting the information and safe and fair usage of the information. Most of the internet users find online advertising useful at least on some occasions. This suggests that if certain concerns of the audiences regarding privacy issues, safety and fair usage of their personal information and intrusiveness were addressed properly by the online advertising industry, then its future growth prospects would improve substantially. Interactivity, relevance, personalization and comprehensiveness, respectively, are the factors which may render online ads more useful for the audiences. Interactivity allows users to control their ad viewing experience; relevance makes online ads less interfering with the primary internet usage motive; personalization leads to increase relevance and comprehensiveness leads to better decision making. Kim & Sundar (2010) suggest that there is a positive relationship between interactivity attitudes of the audiences towards the ad and the product. Their research also indicates that interactivity influences the persuasion process of the audiences in multifarious ways.

A research study carried out to understand predictors of attitudes towards online advertising suggested that trust, usability and informativeness have ‘positive significant influence on consumers’ attitude toward online advertising’ (Li-Ming, Wai, Hussin, & Mat, 2013). A study published by International Journal of Advertising (2002) also suggested that information was positively related to attitude toward online advertising. The same study also indicated that trust towards online advertising is significant factor in the context of formation of attitudes towards online advertising. (Wolin, Korgaonkar, & Lund, 2002). The audiences are more likely to form positive attitudes toward online advertising if the information provided by the ads regarding the products advertised is comprehensive. A general trust towards accuracy of online advertising also contributes to formation of positive perceptions and attitudes towards the products or brands being advertised. The advertisers will have to keep in mind these factors in order to make their online advertising campaigns more effective and efficacious.

Interactivity is one of the most important attributes of online advertising. It offers users a sense of control. It allows them to be an active participant in the process of online advertising. It is the availability of choices regarding the manner in which the audiences intend to consume online advertising. The Dual-Process Model of Interactivity Effects given by Liu and Shrum in 2009 proposes that interactivity may have positive as well as negative effects on processing of online advertising by the audiences. For instance, availability of excess information or options may distract the the audiences from the central appeal of the ads. Liu and Shrum (2002) suggest that effects of interactivity on audiences’ perceptions and attitudes regarding online advertising depend upon different factors including situational and personal factors and it does not a positive cue for all the audiences. Thus, advertisers will have to be quite cautious while instilling interactivity elements in their online advertisements.

The number of audiences who make a purchase based on online advertising is still very limited. Audiences construe no perceptible difference between advertising delivered through the internet and the conventional media such as radio, television and newspapers. The rise of internet as an ad delivery platform is only about two decade old; still, the audiences are not antagonistic to it. They are willing to be more accommodative to it provided that ads delivered through are non-intrusive in nature and do not encroach upon their privacy. Television advertising is perceived as more intrusive than online advertising. However, the issue with online advertising is that it is delivered through a much more personalized medium and therefore, the 'sense of intrusion' becomes accentuated. This sense of intrusion may be eliminated by delivering permission based relevant online ads to the audiences.

Credibility of the advertisers and the websites through which they deliver their ads has a bearing upon the formation of consumers' attitudes towards the advertised product. Authenticity of the websites as well as the advertisers is also taken into account by the advertisers in order to determine the believability of an online ad (Choi & Rifon, 2002). The data collected for current research study also indicates that authenticity of the websites through which online ads are delivered plays an important role in formation of perceptions and attitudes towards the products / services or the brands advertised. This indicates that online ads delivered through authentic websites having credibility amongst the audiences are more likely to lead to formation of positive perceptions and attitudes towards the products / services or the brands advertised. This suggests that the advertisers need to be extremely meticulous with their media planning and select only credible websites for delivery vehicles for their ads; otherwise, it may lead to generation of negative attitudinal and behavioural responses from the audiences.

The users are not in favour of completely opting-out of online advertising even if presented with an option. The only demands they have pertain to the relevance of online advertising and intrusiveness. They show an inclination to be receptive toward online advertising if the ads delivered to them are relevant and do not intrude upon their privacy. The users are not yet ready to pay for an 'ad-free' internet experience. This means that online advertising will remain a part of the world wide web at least in the near future. Nevertheless, the data available reveals that they would find ways to avoid online ads if these ads were intrusive and were obstructing the achievement of their primary internet objectives. For instance, an increasing concern towards privacy issues leads audiences to adopt behaviours such as providing incomplete information or requesting removal from e-mailing lists (Sheehan & Hoy, 1999). Privacy issues need immediate attention of the advertisers in order to ensure that they do not alienate the audiences.

### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

The attitudes of the audiences towards online advertising are quite positive considering the fact that it is the latest entrant in the field and has to compete with well-established giants of the industry such as television advertising or print advertising. In spite of being habitual to these advertising media, most of the users are agreeable (at least conditionally) to give online advertising a chance of proving itself. Their primary concerns regarding online advertising pertain to privacy; safe and fair usage of their personal information and intrusiveness. Although, they do not consider online advertising more intrusive, they would prefer it to be even less intrusive. Multifarious tools and techniques made available by the online environment should be utilized by online advertisers to address the privacy concerns of the audiences and make online advertising even less intrusive. One of the reasons behind formation of negative attitudes and perceptions towards online advertising is the lack of awareness amongst the advertisers regarding the functioning of online advertising and the advantages it has over the advertising delivered through conventional media. The advertisers

will also have to apprise the audiences regarding the benefits of online advertising to them and make the process of online advertising as transparent as possible in order to win their trust and garner their support. Approximately, one-fourth of the participants of this study are positive about the future growth prospects of online advertising. This is a propitious sign for the online advertising industry.

The current study delineates the manner in which online advertising is perceived by the audiences. The findings of the study prognosticate a lucrative future for online advertising provided certain concerns of the audiences are addressed properly. Generally, the audiences are positively disposed towards online advertising. Within a short span of its arrival on the advertising scene, it has carved out a niche for itself in the advertising industry. At present, it is the fastest growing type of advertising across the globe and is expected to become one of the most preferred type of advertising in the near future (comScore, 2012 & 2013; Deloitte, 2014; FICCI-KPMG, 2014; IMAI, 2011 & 2013; Nielsen, 2013). Although, the audience generally perceive online advertising positively, they have certain apprehensions regarding it. These reservations of the audiences regarding online advertising may prove to be a hindrance for further advancement of online advertising.

One of the primary concerns of the audiences pertains to the perceived impediment of their primary internet usage objectives subsequent to involuntary exposure to online advertising. As per the data collected during current study, involuntary exposure to online ads is almost always perceived as interfering by most of the users. They are more agreeable to the idea of receiving permission based relevant online ads because such advertising is not expected to be interfering with their primary internet motives. They are also willing to part with their personal information in order to enable them to deliver relevant online ads if the advertisers are willing to ensure safe and fair usage of their personal information. They also want advertisers to take explicit prior permission from them before collecting their personal data. The online advertisers will have to address privacy concerns of the audiences on a priority basis and ensure that exposure to online ads does not interfere with the primary internet usage objectives of the audiences.

According to the data collected during the course of this study, the audiences do not consider online advertising more intrusive than advertising delivered through television, which is one of the biggest media in terms of generation of advertising revenues. In fact, more respondents considered television advertising more intrusive than advertising delivered through online platforms. Irrelevance of the online ads and their intrusive nature are two major irritants for the audiences. The online advertisers will have to come up with innovative ad formats to deliver relevant online ads to their desired target audiences in a non-intrusive manner. They also need to undertake the task of informing the audiences about various choices available to them in the context of online advertising and the control that the audiences may apply over their exposure to online advertising by using various control options. These 'control' options may be utilized by the online audiences in order to receive more relevant and not-intrusive online ads. This will lead to better audience segmentation and consequently, improve the efficiency of their online advertising campaigns leading to better returns on their advertising investment. Approximately, one-fourth of the audiences of this study, think that online advertising has the potential to become the most preferred type of advertising in the near future. This augurs well for the future growth prospects of online advertising.

### **Delimitations of the Study and Scope for further Research**

The primary limitation of this study is that it is based upon non-probability sampling and hence, the results cannot be generalized to the population. Even though this research work proffers interesting findings that may be expedient in understanding the attitude of the audiences towards online

advertising, some of the findings may be better regarded as ‘intuitive’. Concrete research is required to substantiate these findings. The findings of this study may be empirically tested with bigger and more diverse samples. The future research studies may attempt to delineate the causal factors underlying formation of positive or negative perceptions towards online advertising. It may be interesting to find out the manner in which internet access devices such as desktops, laptops or smartphones affect the perception of online advertising by the audiences and their behavioural responses to it.

Future researchers in the field may also attempt to examine the applicability of various models of online advertising to the Indian audiences. Further research is required in order to explore the effect of various internet usage motives of the audiences on their perceptions and attitudes towards online advertising. The factors that lead to perception of online advertising as intrusive and an impediment to accomplishment of primary internet usage motives may be examined in order to understand reasons underlying formation of negative perceptions and attitudes towards online advertising. A comparative study of perceived intrusiveness of advertising delivered through different media may be carried out to understand audiences’ attitudes towards online advertising. The researchers may also attempt to find out the best time to deliver online advertising to the audiences or websites that would be most pertinent from the perspective of the online advertisers.

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