

# Consumer Psyche & Online Branding, The Indian Context – An exploratory Study

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## Abstract

*The digital media in India is likely to have a huge potential, given the fact that a huge population is below the age group 15 years to 25 years. Even if a small percentage of this huge population starts using the web in future, it will amount to a large target for the digital media. There have been a few studies conducted in the Indian context on the impact of Internet on brand associations. This exploratory study attempts to investigate the impact of online advertising on brand awareness/ brand recall and brand recognition. The authors have done a literature survey before formulating the actual study. The study also incorporates a few aspects of psychographics to emphasize the importance of psychographics on online branding. After assessing the results of the study, authors provide recommendations on how offline and online advertising can be synergized to develop brand associations.*

**Key Words :** Brand Awareness, Brand Recall ,Brand Recognition , Internet Advertising, Marketing Communication.

In a changing environment like the Indian context, marketing communication needs to adapt itself to the changes in consumers' lifestyles and media usage. The challenge of such an emerging environment is that consumers are in a transition stage across several dimensions of their lifestyles – ranging from usage of brands to media usage habits. This transition has the consumer adapting to emerging trends while being rooted in traditional habits and purchases. Consumption

of fast foods and the daily routine of traditional consumption with regard to eating, using SMS in mobiles and e-mail but still using the conventional telephones in office, a raising demand for trendy women's apparel while most women also buy traditional ethnic apparel and online surfing by consumers while shopping as in the past are some of the examples that can be derived from the transition of consumer lifestyles. One of the off-shoot areas of the transition of

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consumer lifestyles is the manner in which consumers pay attention to offline advertisements and online advertisements. While the expenditure on online advertisements may be on the increase, it is still a miniscule percentage of the overall advertising expenditure in the Indian context. The traditional advertising in television and print media continue their dominance over the attention they get from consumers.

Given this situation, brands, especially those are youth-centric need to adapt their strategies combining online and offline advertising without losing focus on brand associations in terms of consistency. This challenge requires marketers to probe into the effectiveness of both offline and online advertising before formulating a strategy combining both these strategies. The basic concepts associated with branding need to be applied to online advertising to provide a basis for the impact of online advertising in a specific category. For example, soft drinks have been traditionally been advertised on the television media but given the youth orientation towards digital devices and online surfing (at least in the urban context), brands in the category need to reorient their strategies to ensure both effectiveness and contemporary cues. Brand awareness, brand recognition and brand recall are some of the fundamental aspects that also lend themselves amenable to online advertising.

### **McKinsey's 2007 Survey on Online Marketing Trends**

A McKinsey survey of global executives in 2007 indicates that companies are moving online across the spectrum of marketing activities; from building awareness to after sales service and they see online tools as an important and effective component of their marketing strategies. In addition to established online tools such as emails, information rich websites & display advertising, survey respondents show a lot of interest in the interactive and collaborative technologies collectively known as Web 2.0 for advertising, product development and customer service. These include blogs, online games, podcasts, social networks, virtual worlds, web services, widgets and wikis. 65% of the respondents in the hi-tech industry feel that online marketing is essential while only 32% in manufacturing feel so. One third of the companies that advertise online are already spending more than 10% of their advertising budgets online. Search advertisements are considered to be the most efficient but they rank only third in usage. While they were developed to generate a direct response, survey respondents feel that they are equally

good in brand building. The barriers to the brand building also seem to be very high, primarily due to insufficient metrics and capabilities of the professionals.

### **\*The State of Online Advertising in India**

On a global level, there have been recent acquisitions of online advertising companies by traditional ad agencies or Internet giants signaling that the bigger players understand its potential (DoubleClick – Google; Right Media – Yahoo; aQuantive – Microsoft; Real Media – WPP).

There is the imminent acquisition of Yahoo by Microsoft (in February 2008) that may produce a formidable competitor to Google. Online advertising in India is worth Rs. 450 crore and is likely to increase to Rs. 2250 crore in 2009. With domestic Internet populace more than 42 million, advertisers are seeing a greater potential in this area. Marketers need to focus on the measurement of Internet advertising. According to Bhatt, Bevans and Sengupta (2002) web measurement can be organized around these major objectives:

1. Popularity of the website or the ad - Page impressions, top pages requested, peak activity, hits, visits, unique visitors, ad impressions, clicks and click through rates
2. Ability to attract and hold user's attention - Average time per visit, average time per visitor, repeat visitor percentage, frequency, recency and stickiness
3. Relevance of the message to the user - Unique visitors, top entry page, top exit page and path analysis
4. Co-marketing opportunities - Clicks and Duplication
5. Efficacy of user targeting - Visitor's profile, country and previous behavior

### **Advantages of Internet Advertising**

- Promises advertisers a sophisticated audience
- Provides a chance to precisely target their advertisements
- Ad copy testing is easier than an ad for a traditional media
- Many models collect money on the basis of performance (click-through) and not promise, as done by traditional media

\*Source: Joshi, P., "Online advertising takes off, finally", Business Standard, January 09, 2008  
[http://www.business-standard.com/common/storypage\\_c.php?leftnm=10&autono=310121](http://www.business-standard.com/common/storypage_c.php?leftnm=10&autono=310121) (Accessed on 11th January 2008)

- The role of an agency is minimized in the advertising process
- Costs less
- Internet provides the capacity to advertise, transact and also distribute.

## Literature Survey

Poh, D., (2005) discusses the relationships between attitude towards the ad and aspects of the advertising hierarchy of effects model in the online marketing context. He suggests that the traditional advertising hierarchy of effects model is relevant in the online marketing environment also. Based on this model, he hypothesizes the following and through a research proves them - Attitude towards the website is related to the attention to the ad; Attitude towards the website is related to the attitude towards the ad; Attitude towards the website is related to brand attitude and Attitude towards the website is related to purchase intention. The most important message coming out here, viz., the kind of website that one advertises has its effect all the way up to the purchase intention. For an online marketer, this finding is significant because he needs to choose the websites carefully where his advertisements would appear. When the online marketer manages his own site, he should take care of the design of the website itself because the amount of liking a user has towards a website directly affects the liking the user will have towards the product. When the marketer has his advertisements carried by other websites (whose design cannot be influenced by him), he needs to make sure that the website has a design likable by the user. This proves why the 'context' based advertising provided by Google Ads may prove counter-productive. For example, a shampoo advertisement might be placed by Google Ads in a site that carries an article on usage of shampoos but if that website is poorly designed, it may affect the liking a user may have towards the shampoo brand. The other major learning that comes out this is that it says that online advertising is more aligned to direct response marketing and evaluation of the investment made involves lifetime value of individual customers rather than short-term measures such as purchase intentions.

Broussard, G., (2000) presents the findings of a study conducted on how advertising frequency (using banner ads) affects the advertising effectiveness in terms of two different aspects – direct response and brand awareness. Direct response is tracked by the number of customers who click on the ad and reach the advertiser's website. Brand awareness has been measured through a survey on a few of the visitors to the

site. Here are some important findings. Direct Response - On a single site, best advertising results, in terms of cost per lead, were achieved when the frequency of banner exposure was low. When a schedule of the weight of exposures was made with the sites with high potential having a higher frequency of the exposure, the overall cost per lead is reduced. Overall, direct response campaigns require a lower level of advertising frequency to achieve campaign objective compared to branding programs. Brand Awareness - Brand advertising had its greatest impact between one and seven exposures. 80% of the effect was achieved by the time the site visitors had seen 7 ads. After 7 repetitions, awareness and product attributes continued to improve, although the rate of growth tailed off. Thus, online advertising can achieve two separate objectives – direct response to increase sales in the short term and brand building that will help in increase of sales in the long term. The same banner ad in a website may help in achieving both of these objectives but the frequency of the ads exposure cause different effects. When the objective is towards a direct response, it is easy to measure through the number of visitors who click the ad and reach the advertiser's website whereas it is not as easy to measure in case of the brand building objective. To achieve direct response, a marketer should make a media schedule of the frequency of the ads in different sites. Lower the frequency, lower the cost per lead but that does not mean that the frequency should be kept low. The weight of the exposure should be made high in high potential websites and low in low potential websites thereby achieving the optimal cost per lead. For building a brand, the frequency of ad can be as low as 7 and then the increase in awareness decreases, so the marketer should make sure that the banner ads are rotated or replaced once every 7 exposures for a particular user in a website.

Drèze, X., and Hussherr, F., (2003) argue that the click-through rates are not effective measures of online advertising. A larger part of the surfer's processing of the banners occurs at a pre-attentive level. So advertisers should rely on more traditional brand equity measures such as brand awareness and advertising recall. Since the banner ad competes for space along with more important (from the surfer's perspective) information on the screen, the first task is to grab a surfer's attention and the second is to induce the surfer to click on the ad. Not only do the surfers do not look at the banners, but they also seem to purposefully avoid looking at them; they are able to avoid because most banner ads are typically of the same size and they occur in typical places (like the top of the screen). Some of the hypotheses from Drèze and Hussherr (2003) are as

follows: Banner ads will have a positive impact on aided advertising recall, unaided recall; brand recognition and brand awareness. Advertising effectiveness increases with the frequency of exposure. Larger banner ads will be more effective than smaller banner ads. Banner ads laid out vertically are more effective than that are laid out horizontally. The effectiveness of a banner ad depends on its environment. The medium of Internet advertising resembles most is the outdoor billboard. A surfer would visit a website on his interest to read the main content in the website. When he encounters a banner, he would consciously avoid looking at the ad and concentrate on the main content. So, the advertiser should concentrate on the content they advertise and not rely on bigger or animated ads to compensate for ineffective content. Since Internet can be compared to outdoor billboards, advertisers should understand that such advertisements influence recognition, recall and awareness even if they only rarely prompt the customer to take immediate action. The advertisements should be designed such that - First they grab the attention of the surfer – not through the size or intrusion but through effective messages; Then they induce the surfer to click the ad which may lead to further information processing or a purchase itself; While the first task alone is sufficient in terms of achieving brand recognition and awareness, success in the second task also means that immediate results are also obtained.

Rappaport, S., (2007) outlines three new models of online advertising – on demand; engagement and advertising as a service. Online advertising contributes most to brand performance when it is planned into the brand campaign from the outset, not used as just another experiment. 'On demand model of advertising' works on the premise that most of the customers in an online environment are content aggregators, filterers, schedulers, exposerers and disposers. So brand marketers should not just stimulate demand but also stimulate interest among consumers to include their brand in the choices they make about what they see, read or listen to. 'Engagement model' works on the idea that the brand should be made highly relevant to the consumer than a mere purchase and towards the development of an emotional connect between the consumers and brands. With this model, the marketers build specialized sites for the products, let the consumers visit and exchange views and also provide personalized content to its consumers. 'Advertising as a service' model is described as first identifying the services and information consumers' need and then creating the messages and experiences relevant to those needs. While an online marketer places an advertisement in a website, it would not be an isolated

event in the branding strategy. It should be consistent with the overall branding strategy and for sure, the online branding strategy of the company. The interrelationship among these three models should be used by the online marketer. Marketers need to start taking the time and energy to transition their models to take full advantage of the desires and competencies of the Internet users to reach the right people with the right message, instead of most people with the same message. An online marketer should decide on which model or which combination of the models he would choose to employ.

Hoffman, D., Novak, T., Chatterjee, P., (2003) develop an analytical approach to modeling consumer responses to banner ad exposures at a sponsored content web site that reveals significant heterogeneity in click proneness across consumers. Within a session, a negative and non-linear effect on click probability due to wear out was noticed. That means earlier ads had a higher probability of being clicked than ads that were exposed later. Across sessions, it was found that longer intersession times in prior sessions, more banner exposures in previous sessions and more time taken since last click in prior sessions led to higher click probabilities in the current session. Click probability decreased with increase in the number of sessions. There will be greater gains in repeating banner ads for consumers that have low click-proneness coefficients in a given session and consumers that in general do not click much on average. Though banner exposures do not immediately lead to a click, it may still lead to enduring communication outcomes. The effect of an ad exposed in an earlier session affects the behavior of a user in the next session. It is possible that the banner ad exposed in one place may lead to clicking in another place or to a similar ad in TV or in the point of purchase.

Wang, C., Zhang, P., Choi, R., and D'Eredita, M., (2002) build upon the findings of the literature on the factors that contribute to the consumer's perceptions of ads (online & offline) – entertainment, irritation, informativeness, credibility and demography. They argue that '*Interactivity*' is also a major factor that contributes to consumer's perceptions. Although online ads can function as a gateway to the next stage of transactions of purchase, they focus on the informing stage of advertising. From an advertiser's perspective, each ad also has a brand building function since it has certain qualities (e.g., a symbol/icon or brand name) that add to brand recognition. From a consumer's perspective, an ad may not motivate further action if it is not perceived to be relevant to his or her current needs, but unique qualities of the ad might result in brand building. In traditional media, the attitude towards the

medium and the attitude towards the advertisement in that medium are the same while in the web, the attitude towards web as a medium could be different from the attitude towards the advertisement. When there is more interactivity in a website, it may lead to better brand building along with the other factors like irritability, informativeness, credibility etc.

Goldsmith, R., and Lafferty, B., (2002) present a study of advertising effectiveness over the Internet. It is a test of 4 hypotheses - Consumers who have a positive response to websites will be more likely to recall brands advertised on the Web than those who do not respond positively; Consumers who have a positive response to a website will see more advantages to advertising on the Internet than those who do not respond positively; Consumers who have a positive response to a website will see few disadvantages to advertising on the Internet than those who do not respond positively; There will be no difference in the valence of response to ads recalled from the Internet compared to ads recalled from commercial media. Consumers who felt that visiting a website improved their view of the brand could recall more brand names than those who felt that visiting a website had no effect in their view of the brand. It was found that the consumers who have a positive response to a website found equal or more disadvantages than those who do not respond positively. While most TV, newspaper and magazine ads were liked; fewer than half of radio and Internet ads were liked. The online marketer should understand that the ads in the websites are not liked as much as ads in TV or a magazine. Therefore more efforts should do into making the ads likable - Since about one-thirds of websites evoked a positive response towards a featured brand, websites seem to be doing a good job in enhancing the brand. The response to a website directly affects the attitude towards the brand advertised in it. So the marketer should choose the websites carefully.

Gordon, M., and Turner, K., (1997) examine how Internet users make trade-offs among attributes associated with Internet advertising policy. They use the learning from the social contract framework previously used to describe direct marketing. It identifies 5 attributes that will govern an interaction between an advertiser on the web and the customer as these – access to advertisements (who is in more control – advertiser or the consumer), placement of advertising (mixed with content, content & ad in the same page like print media or content and ad separated like a TV ad), message (entertaining or informative), influence of fees (like newspapers being cheap due to subsidy from ad revenue) and information collection (privacy issues). A survey was conducted to test if these 5 attributes hold

good. The results showed that these indeed hold good & the consumers make implicit trade- offs between these attributes. Consumers do not object to advertisements as long as they are clearly identified; prefer that advertisement be target specific. They accept the idea that their click streams be tracked – because it helps in targeting effectively. They also prefer entertaining ads than informative ads. There is a social contract involved in the relation between an advertiser and the consumer in Internet advertising, similar to the direct mail. The advertiser should be careful enough to create a give & take policy on these attributes. For example, if there is an advertisement shown to the user, it better be entertaining than being informative and if it is disturbing his 'flow', then the service better be free than being charged; Online marketers should target their advertisements very effectively. When they do that genuinely, the customers would not even mind their privacy being lost a bit in the process

Coyle, J., and Thorson, E., (2001) present the findings of an experiment that examined the interactivity and vividness in commercial websites. The following hypotheses were tested - Towards interactivity: Perceived tele-presence will increase as levels of interactivity in a website will increase; Attitude towards websites that are more interactive will be more positive than those toward less interactive sites; Attitude behavior consistency related to websites that are more interactive will be higher than attitude-behavior consistency related to websites that are less interactive. Towards vividness: Perceived tele-presence will increase as levels of vividness in a website will increase; Attitudes towards websites that are more vivid will be more positive than those towards less vivid sites; Attitude behavior consistency related to websites that are more vivid will be higher than attitude-behavior consistency related to websites that are less vivid; Attitude towards websites that are more vivid will be more enduring than that are less vivid. Interactivity and vividness are two most important aspects of a website that should be considered by a marketer before he chooses a website to advertise – because these factors affect the perceived tele-presence of the user. Since it is proven that the attitude towards the website affects the attitude towards the ad and consequently the brand being advertised, the marketer should make sure that the websites and the advertisements are interactive and vivid

Danaher, P., and Mullarkey, G., (2003) examine the following factors – viewing mode, duration of page viewing and web page context factors (including text and page backgrounds) and the style of banner advertisements. The following are the hypotheses that

are proposed - Longer web page exposure duration will result in higher recall and recognition of advertising content contained in web pages. Goal directed web page viewing results in lower recall and recognition than exploratory web page viewing. Web firms supported largely by advertising revenue should design their sites to be sticky, where the user will remain in the site for 40 or more seconds; Even though website context effects affect the attitude towards the site and the advertisement, it does not affect recall or recognition; The mode of the user when in a website affects the advertising recognition – he sees and remembers an advertisement when in surfing mode than when in a goal oriented mode. So ads are better placed in a site that can retain a user for more time than one that does not retain users; Ads are better placed in sites where the user is in a surfing mode than in a goal oriented mode. This means that the advertisements are more effective in a site that is visited when the user is in a relaxed state of mind than when he is 'on-the-job'.

Simmons, G., (2007) builds upon three pillars in the branding literature, viz. understanding the customer, marketing communications and continuous interaction with consumers. To these, the content; he adds a fourth dimension, integrates all dimensions and presents a framework for online branding. The four pillars of branding should be integrated well for the branding communication to be effective. Since there is interactivity with the customers, marketing communication can be inserted into it so marketing communications and interactivity pillars have a link. Content and understanding customers are linked this way – an understanding of customers is essential to have the appropriate content. Online content can be effectively customized to suit different customer needs too. Also, an interactive content drives a consumer to visit the site regularly and also induces to make related purchase decisions. Thus content and interactivity are linked too. Effective communication through aspects like viral marketing can be done through good content. Therefore, the four pillars of branding presented here should be integrated well for the branding exercise to succeed; Content plays a vital role in this – since marketers might advertise in third party websites, they need to be careful about the content; Marketing communication can be effected through viral marketing and a lot of caution is in order here; Companies that have a stronger offline brand are more capable of leveraging the power of the four themes than otherwise.

## Summary of the Literature Survey

The major insights from the literature survey are captured as below.

The awareness level of brands that

- Are advertised in websites liked by the user is more than that of brands that are advertised in websites not liked by the user?
- A user is exposed more frequently is more than that of brands that a user is exposed less frequently?
- Whose ads attract the attention of a consumer is more than that of brands whose ads do not attract the attention of a consumer?
- Are advertised in home pages of websites are more than the awareness level of brands that are advertised in other pages?
- Are advertised in interactive web sites are more than the awareness level of brands that are advertised in non-interactive websites?
- Are advertised in websites where a user spends more time is more than the awareness level of brands that are advertised in websites where a user spends less time?
- Are advertised in websites that a user visits to relax is more than the awareness level of brands that are advertised in websites that a user visits to finish a task?

The researchers formulated the objectives of the study taking into consideration the limitations of the literature survey besides the fact that very little exploratory research on online branding has been in the Indian context.

## Objective of The Study

Replicating every insight from the literature to the Indian context would be a cumbersome exercise, given the scope and nature of this project. This project tries to validate a few hypotheses about online advertisements in India at a generic level and future research may try to validate specific concepts in this area. Therefore, the objective of the project is – *“To test if online advertisements contribute to brand awareness, recognition and recall among Indian Internet users and provide recommendations to an online marketer based on the insights from the literature survey.”*

The definitions of Keller, (1993) for brand awareness, recognition and recall as provided in this paragraph are used for the purpose of this project. **Brand Awareness** is related to the strength of a brand node or trace in memory, as reflected by the consumer's ability to

identify the brand under different conditions. **Brand recognition** relates to the consumer's ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue. **Brand recall** relates to the consumer's ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the product category or some other type of probe as the cue. Further, the model suggested by Aaker (1991) shows the relation between brand awareness, recognition and recall as follows. At the lowest level, one is unaware of the brand. As the exposure increases, recognition, recall and top of the mind recall happen. For example, a customer not aware of a brand, say, Coca Cola is at the 'unaware' state. Once the brand is introduced to him, (by whatever means) a trace or a node is created in his mind and he becomes 'aware' of the brand. Further, if a cue of Coca cola is given to him (by mentioning it, showing a coke bottle etc), if he is able to recollect that he is aware of Coca cola, it means that he 'recognizes' the brand. At the next level, if he is able to recollect Coca cola through other cues (like 'soft drinks'), it means that he 'recalls' the brand. At the final level, if at the mention of soft drinks, Coca cola is the first brand he recollects, that is 'top of the mind recall'

## Methodology

This research was performed as a single, cross sectional descriptive research. The results from the research are expected to be useful to a marketer in advertising over the Internet towards building a brand.

Website Selection: A website was chosen based on the following criteria – This website caters to the online consumers in India and has (sticky) banner advertisements in their home page. Sticky banner ads are those ads that do not change with the content of the pages (that is, not context based) and remain in the same position till the time the page is redesigned by the web master of the site.

Five websites, popular among the population of this research are identified

- Rediff ([www.rediff.com](http://www.rediff.com))
- Indiatimes ([www.indiatimes.com](http://www.indiatimes.com))
- Cricinfo ([www.cricinfo.com](http://www.cricinfo.com))
- NDTV ([www.ndtv.com](http://www.ndtv.com))
- CNN IBN ([www.ibnlive.com](http://www.ibnlive.com))
- Yahoo ([www.yahoo.co.in](http://www.yahoo.co.in))

These websites were tracked for a period of 3 days to ensure that there are enough advertisements that are sticky at their home page. None of the websites actually had advertisements that were sticky forever. NDTV and

IBN Live had one advertisement that stuck for three days but just one advertisement would not be enough for the survey questions. However, there was no change in the advertisements on a single day in IBN Live. So, the survey was done based on the IBN Live site between 21st and 31st January 2008.

### Sampling:

- Population: The common characteristics of the population for this survey (both sets of respondents) are these:
  - Indians
  - IT Professionals
  - Browse > 20 hours a week
  - Are between 25 and 40 years old
  - Belong to an urban background
  - Live in a city with a population of > 1 million
  - Belong to SEC-A category of the country's population
  - Visit sites like Yahoo & Google at least 4 times a week
- Sampling Unit: The sampling unit is same as the sample itself
- Sampling Frame: The sampling frame is the email directory of IIM-Bangalore, REC, Jaipur and Samsung India Software Operations
- Sampling Technique: A judgment sample was used from the sampling frame. 40 people from the sampling frame were informed in advance about the research and survey administered a week later.
- No. of respondents: In all, 60 respondents were chosen to participate in the survey.
- Limitations
  - The sampling is done on convenience & judgment on a non-probabilistic basis, the results would be more exploratory in nature
  - A more thorough research through a probability sampling may be done and the results can be verified. If found similar, the recommendations hold good

### Questionnaire Design & Scaling

- Sections: The questionnaire contains three sections:
  - Questions related to Brand Awareness: Product Category Recall; Brand Recall; Brand Recognition; Message Recall;

- Message Recognition and Feedback on the website
- Psychographics through Activities, Interests and Opinions of the target segment
  - Demographics of the target segment
  - **Scaling:** The nature of this research demands that a mix of comparative and non-comparative scaling techniques be used. Each question may have different scaling technique. The respondents are not informed of any scale and that is done after the survey is complete. The survey questions to the respondents do not contain a scale to measure. The researcher's subjective discretion would be used to assign a scale to each respondent's answers.

The survey questions are present in the appendix I.

The respondents were selected based on the procedure explained in the sampling section (Malhotra, 1999). The respondents were told to visit the homepage of the website ([www.ibnlive.com](http://www.ibnlive.com)) and spend about 5-10 minutes (they were not told that there would be questions on the advertisements in the page). After that, they were requested to answer a few questions related to brand awareness, recognition and recall of the advertisements in the home page (sample questions are in the appendix). While answering the questions, the respondents were strictly told not to look back into the website. There was no scale provided in the survey questionnaire for the questions on recognition and recall. If provided, the difference in awareness, recognition and recall would need to be informed to the respondent and that might become incomprehensible to the respondent. There were 4 advertisements that were 'sticky', that is, did not change based on time or context.

These 4 advertisements were chosen as the reference for questions on recall and recognition

- Airtel
- Dr. Batra
- Progress Infrastructure Solutions
- Carazoo used cars buying website

The data collection was done online, over the survey site of IIM-Bangalore. Since the survey was not published to many and the sample was based on judgment, the researcher was able to track every response separately. The survey was sent to 60 respondents. 54 of the respondents submitted their responses. 4 responses were rejected. After every response, researchers assigned a weightage to the responses for recognition and recall separately. For example, if the respondent wrote down 10 brands they

could recall, the researcher would classify them as brands from text based ads, dynamic banner ads and sticky banner ads. Brands that were not advertised at all were ignored. There were respondents whose browser had blocked advertisements, respondents who had not filled the survey with the spirit of it (they could reproduce all ads, that means, they had visited the site again) etc. Those responses were discarded. Once the survey was complete, the responses were exported to a Microsoft XL sheet for further analysis.

From the individual responses to the survey questions, the following values were calculated

1. Mean value of product category recall (No of product categories recalled)
2. Mean value of product category recognition (No of product categories recognized)
3. Mean value of brand recall (No of brands recalled)
4. Mean value of brand recognition (No of brands recognized)
5. Mean value of message recall (No of messages recalled)
6. Mean value for the site design rating (1-5)
7. Mean value of the involvement in each of the online activities identified (1-5)
8. Mean value of the involvement in each of the offline activities identified (1-5)
9. Mean value of the interests in each of the areas identified (1-5)
10. Mean value of the opinion on each of the statements identified (1-5)

Detailed results from the survey have been added to the appendix II.

Following were the discretion of researchers in the methodology:

- Choice of the website: No scientific methodology was employed for the choice of the site. The site, most comfortable (with more sticky banner ads) was chosen. The survey results could have been different for another site
- Sampling: A judgment sample of the author's acquaintances was used. This could have skewed the survey results
- A-I-Os: The psychographics related questions were based on the typical activities, interests and opinions the author assumed of the target population. There was no field for the respondents to enter anything other than those
- Scaling for brand awareness questions: The



scaling for brand awareness questions were decided by the author. For brand recall, the field was open to respondents to enter as many brands. Relevant brands were identified by the author and the number of brands was identified. For brand recognition, the number of brands the respondent chose from the list was identified & the number assigned.

- For choosing the statistical hypothesis, the 30% and 50% brand recall and recognition was chosen at the discretion of the author, without any scientific basis

The brands CNN IBN, Airtel, Dr. Batra's, Carazoo and Progress Infrastructure solutions are used purely for an academic study. The survey results and the recommendations may not reflect the status of the brand. No prior permission was obtained from these owners for the study.

## Analysis

### Hypotheses Testing

Based on the literature survey, the following hypotheses were made. They were verified through the survey results.

### Research Hypothesis

The research hypotheses are as follows

H1: "Online advertisements contribute to brand recall among Indian consumers"

H2: "Online advertisements contribute to brand recognition among Indian consumers"

H3: "Online advertisements contribute to brand awareness among Indian consumers"

This is a test of association. The association between the presence of online advertisements and brand awareness, recognition & recall was tested.

### Statistical Hypotheses (Malhotra, 1999)

H1: After a browsing session, on an average, consumers can recall (unaided) 30% of the brands that they see getting advertised on a website

That is,

Null Hypothesis: Consumers can recall 30% of the brands

H0:  $\mu = 0.3$ ;

Alternate Hypothesis: Consumers can recall only less than 30% of the brands

Ha:  $\mu < 0.3$

H2: After a browsing session, on an average, consumers recognize (aided recall) 50% of the brands that they see getting advertised on a website

That is,

Null Hypothesis: Consumers can recognize 50% of the brands

H0:  $\mu = 0.5$ ;

Alternate Hypothesis: Consumers can recognize only less than 50% of the brands

Ha:  $\mu < 0.5$

H3: Though brand awareness means that the respondents should be able to remember a brand under different conditions, for the purpose of this project, even if one of H1 and H2 are proven, H3 automatically gets proven. If both H1 and H2 are not proven, H3 automatically is not proven.

"When the sample size is large (>30) and sample mean is used as the statistic, the z-test is the most appropriate for this kind of a research" (Black, K., 2006). So, for these brand awareness measures, z-statistic is used. The Type-1 error rate ( $\alpha$ ) is set to be 0.05.

### Testing Hypotheses

Statistical Hypothesis #1: After a browsing session, on an average, consumers can recall (unaided) 30% of the brands that they see getting advertised on a website

That is,

H0:  $\mu = 0.3$ ; Ha:  $\mu < 0.3$ ; Confidence: 0.95

Test for z statistic:

$\mu = 0.3$ ;  $x = 0.355$  (from the survey result);  $s = 0.23$ ;  $n = 50$ ;  $z = 1.691$

Critical Value: NORMINV (0.05, 0, 1) = -1.645

Region of non-rejection:  $z \geq -1.645$

So, do not reject H0. ('z' exceeds critical value)

Statistical Hypothesis #2: After a browsing session, on an average, consumers recognize (aided recall) 50% of the brands that they see getting advertised on a website

That is,

H0:  $\mu = 0.5$ ; Ha:  $\mu < 0.5$ ; Confidence: 0.95

Test for z statistic:

$\mu = 0.5$ ;  $x = 0.51$  (from the survey result);  $s = 0.26$ ;  $n = 50$ ;  $z = 0.27$

Critical Value: NORMINV (0.05, 0, 1) = -1.645

Region of non-rejection:  $z \geq -1.645$

So, do not reject  $H_0$ . ('z' exceeds critical value)

H3: " Online advertisements contribute to brand awareness among Indian consumers"

As indicated in the hypothesis definition, since H1 and H2 have been proved, H3 automatically stands proved, so no separate survey needs to be created for that.

Thus all the hypotheses made in this study have been validated.

## Conclusion

This project attempted to find out the influence of online advertisements on branding among Indian consumers. Of the different means of online advertising, banner ads were chosen to be tested. Based on the survey of scholarly and trade literature, three hypotheses were developed. The hypotheses were tested amongst the young, affluent, urban, Internet savvy people at Bangalore. The z-test on the mean of the brand recall and recognition confirmed that the hypotheses are correct.

While the brand recall and recognition was as expected, message recall was very less at around only 10%. Where there were some traces of the message left, it was on the negative, with advertisements annoying the respondent's browsing experience. For example, the pop-up banner ads that were displayed in the tested site during the first page load annoyed 25% of the respondents. Many respondents claimed to have closed it without even looking at it.

The study also indicated that more the number of hours spent on the Internet (savvier the user with the Internet), less the possibility of the user noticing an advertisement. Two users in the survey who spend many hours every day on the site that was tested, reported lesser number of brands. They seemed to have learnt the knack of skipping the advertisements and concentrating only on the news item in the site. Two users in this study reported to have seen no advertisements. It was later found that their browser (Fire fox) settings had all advertisements to be blocked. With the browsers getting sophisticated, this could come as a significant warning to the advertisers to go for creative ways of advertising on the web.

Banner ads had a better recall than text-based ads. Text-based ads from Google are probably more relevant in a search scenario than a news website. Banner ads were the main focus of this study and so text based ads were not studied in detail. However the results and recommendations (provided in the next section) may be also applicable to text advertisements. The reason for the inclusion of psychographics in this study is discussed under "Implications to managers"

## Managerial Implications

### Strategies to Synergize Online and Offline Branding Associations

The study explores certain important and interesting dimensions for marketers. India has a huge population consisting of youth (larger than markets) forming the target segment for several product and service categories. While the penetration of Internet may be low as compared to several developed markets, large number of websites among youth provides a unique opportunity for brands to use online advertising in synergy with offline advertising. Branding associations and brand personality associations need to be developed over a period of time. The authors recommend a synergy of online and offline brand building efforts based on search quality, experiential quality and credence quality associated with products and services (Kotler and Keller, 2006). While this concept was originally used for marketing services, it can be used for synergizing online and offline brand building efforts. Search quality refers to the quality that consumers will be able to evaluate even before buying product category. Several categories like soaps, apparel, television and cars are some examples. A variant of this approach is to consider brands instead of categories. An established brand is one, which has a specific and focused perception among consumers; they know the functional aspects and benefits of the brand. Such a brand needs to reinforce the successful associations it has built up over a period of time. In this context, there is some discussion also required on experiential quality. By the original definition, it refers to the ability of consumers to evaluate a category after consumers experience the category. Such categories can be typical services like hotels, banking services, vacation resorts and hospitals. Experiential can also mean hedonism, the fantasy or consumption pleasure

associated with brands. With such an approach the taste of Cadbury chocolate can also be associated with hedonism. Hence extending search or experience qualities to categories will depend on the brand's proposition. Besides, search qualities need not necessarily mean functional attributes or tangible brand benefits. It can mean psychological aspects like having a social identity or self-identity. The search quality of a brand like Fastrack or Raga is very different from a brand that offers functional performance. A number of brands across product categories convey psychological proposition. Psychographics plays an important role in the formulation of search/experiential qualities associated with the brand. The study probed into psychographics to emphasize its importance. Credence quality refers to those quality of a product or service that cannot be judged by a consumer even after consuming the product or service. Even in such product service categories like psychological counseling and medical diagnosis, a brand can build strong search qualities like trustworthiness and credibility.

Having discussed the application of various qualities that can be associated with products or services, the authors provide a few examples of how the various kinds of qualities can be associated with brands.

- A well-known brand of soap that has a germ-killing proposition may like to reinforce such associations. If the brand's imagery in the mass media reflects the family's well-being based on the brand's benefit, the brand's website can have articles on how germs affect health when consumers are exposed to the harsh physical environment may reinforce the brand's association. An occasional family context revolving around "germ-free" home also reinforces the family imagery associated with the brand.

On the contrary a new brand of male soap targeting youth may require an online presence like Axe deodorant, backed up by macho brand associations in its offline advertisements. The brand may also have an "adventure game" on the web. Developing an online brand community may be the ultimate objective of the brand. A brand of baby powder or detergent can provide useful information on how the brand conveys the functional benefit. This will enhance the search quality associated with the brand.

- Soft drinks, coffee, tea, snacks, biscuits and chocolates offer a vast scope for capturing the experiential qualities associated with brands.

Most of these product categories target youth and the hedonistic orientation can be captured by several aspects of online and offline associations. Coke's website is a good example of how the target segment can relate to "cool and refreshing" aspects that happens to be the proposition of the brand. Red Bull's website is another example of how the energy proposition of the brand is projected through several visuals associated with extreme adventure sports. Associations of energy in synergy with extreme sports associations form a dominant part of the brand's association. The pleasure/hedonic orientation can have a direct connection with the brand's proposition or can be sustained with appropriate metaphors. In categories like entertainment, the basic proposition is hedonism and websites can use a variety of creative ways to capture hedonism. Hedonism need not necessarily be associated with the brand's proposition. A brand of coffee or tea or chocolate having a strong imagery of romantic happiness portrays hedonism by associating itself with "happy moments". 5-Star several decades back had the "togetherness proposition" targeting youth. Online advertising requires a theme or imagery that will reinforce and sustain the brand associations created by offline advertisements, when brands use hedonism or experiential qualities to develop associations.

Service categories like medical diagnosis and psychological counseling relate to credence qualities. Even in such categories a brand can build a positive word of mouth through online communities. The effective brand proposition of trustworthiness, need to be built up over a period of time. In such qualities, a brand will be able to develop "search qualities" only through a consistent performance over a period of time. Satisfied customers spread the good word of mouth. Online advertising is useful to create brand recognition when the brand is new and brand recall when the brand establishes itself through its performance.

With the exception of impulse product categories, that to a large extent rely on brand excitement, created through offline and online advertising, most categories require brands to fulfill the expectations of consumers in terms of functional or psychological needs. The digital approach to brand recognition/recall enables marketers to plan and nurture synergies with off-line advertising.

## Limitations & Future Research

- The research hypotheses made in this study were made with an assumption of 30% brand recall and

50% brand recognition. More sophisticated methods to find out the recall, recognition and awareness need to be employed

- The survey was limited to one website and the questionnaire was administered immediately after the site was visited. Similar studies have had sites designed for such surveys with advertisements placed at appropriate places, as the study needs. Such a study would be needed to validate the results from this study
- Cross tabulation of different results have not been done. Cross tabulation and chi square testing need to be done
- This project has been at an exploratory level of branding effectiveness of the Internet. It focused on the branding aspect of Internet only at a very high level. Further aspects, as noted in the literature survey can be tested in the Indian context

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## Appendix - I

### Survey Questions

#### Part 1: Online Brand Recall

A sample question for the IBN Live as of 1400 hours on 11th January 2008

##### Product Category Recall

1. What all categories of products did you see getting advertised?

##### Product/Service Recognition

2. Did you see any insurance related advertisement in the web page?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Was there any ad related to paints?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. Did you notice an ad related to selling cars?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Did you observe a homoeopathy clinic's ad?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Was there an ad related to investment banking?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

##### Brand Recall

7. What all brands did you see getting advertised in the site?

##### Brand Recognition

8. Choose the brands that you saw getting advertised in the web page
  - a. Asian Paints
  - b. Nerolac
  - c. HP
  - d. Maruti

##### Message Recall

9. Do you recall what else message about the product/service was conveyed by an advertisement? (Choose any advertisement and explain)

##### Message Recognition

10. What do you remember about the ads?
  - a. A list of messages would be provided

##### General

11. The ads in the website were
  - a. Annoying
  - b. Interesting
  - c. Informative
  - d. Confusing
  - e. No opinion
12. What do you feel about the site?
  - a. Good ... Bad (Semantic Differential scale)

### Part 2: Psychographics

#### Scaling:

A Likert scale is used to capture the psychographics. This is a rating scale that requires the respondents to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statements. Typically, each scale item has five response categories ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (Malhotra, 1999). In this case, a Likert scale was considered to be most appropriate, as the measurements would be more easily captured through a scale that provides the exact attributes and asked for agreement in accordance with the respective activities, interests and opinions.

#### Activities

Listed below are different activities over the Internet that you may be associated with or like. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each as one of your favorite pastime activity by using the following scale:

1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agrees nor disagrees
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
1. Chatting : \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Social Networking (Orkut/ Facebook):  
\_\_\_\_\_
  3. Shopping: \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Reading: \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Simple browsing without a focus: \_\_\_\_\_
  6. Sports: \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Games: \_\_\_\_\_

Following are some activities that you may be associated with offline. Please indicate in a scale of 1 to 5 as below.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agrees nor disagrees

4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
8. Playing Cricket : \_\_\_\_\_
9. Playing other sports : \_\_\_\_\_
10. Social Work : \_\_\_\_\_
11. Go to resorts for relaxing : \_\_\_\_\_
12. Trekking/Adventure sports : \_\_\_\_\_
13. Hang out at malls & multiplexes : \_\_\_\_\_
14. Shopping : \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interests

Listed below are interests that you may have in general that may find its way to your online behavior. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each as one of interest to you by using the following scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agrees nor disagrees
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
15. Music : \_\_\_\_\_
16. Reading Fiction : \_\_\_\_\_
17. Reading Non Fiction : \_\_\_\_\_
18. Writing : \_\_\_\_\_
19. Movies : \_\_\_\_\_
20. Current affairs : \_\_\_\_\_
21. Personal Development : \_\_\_\_\_
22. Cricket : \_\_\_\_\_
23. Other sports : \_\_\_\_\_
24. Lifestyle shows : \_\_\_\_\_
25. Shopping : \_\_\_\_\_
26. Adventure : \_\_\_\_\_

#### Opinions

Listed below are some opinions you may have on Internet & online & offline advertisements. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each as one an opinion you have by using the following scale:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agrees nor disagrees
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
27. Websites that have more interactivity are preferable : \_\_\_\_\_
28. Spending time on the Internet makes me feel

good : \_\_\_\_\_

29. India-based websites cater to me better than US-based ones: \_\_\_\_\_
30. Advertisements in websites entertain me: \_\_\_\_\_
31. Seeing some advertisements to get free services is acceptable : \_\_\_\_\_
32. Spending time on the Internet is a waste of time : \_\_\_\_\_
33. Advertisements in websites are relevant: \_\_\_\_\_
34. I remember most of the advertisements I see on the Internet: \_\_\_\_\_
35. Advertisements are a necessary evil in any medium: \_\_\_\_\_
36. Internet is set to become the primary medium of entertainment : \_\_\_\_\_
37. Online shopping is safe: \_\_\_\_\_
38. Internet is an information-only medium, unsuitable for commerce: \_\_\_\_\_
39. Ads in Internet influence my purchase decisions (online/offline): \_\_\_\_\_
40. Internet has changed my lifestyle: \_\_\_\_\_
41. Internet helps me relax: \_\_\_\_\_
42. Internet helps me learn: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 3: Demographics

1. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Profession : \_\_\_\_\_
3. Age : \_\_\_\_\_
4. City living in : \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of hours spent in Internet every day: \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your annual household income: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix - II

### Survey Results

#### Recognition/ Recall

#### Product Category Recall

- On an average, respondents remembered 1.58 product categories from the 4 selected advertisements
- From the overall advertisements, respondents remembered 3.3 product categories, on an average

**Product Category Recognition**

- Product categories (of the 4 targeted advertisements) were shown to the respondents and asked if they recognize seeing it. Respondents remembered 2.06 of them. This is higher than the 1.58 that the respondents could recall.

**Brand Recall**

- On an average, respondents remembered 1.42 brands from the 4 selected advertisements. This is lower than the 1.58 product categories that they could remember.
- Apart from the brands from the 4 targeted advertisements, there were many other banner and text based ads also in the site
  - Respondents remembered 1.1 brands from dynamic banner ads over and above the advertisements targeted

- Respondents remembered 0.24 brands from the text ads also

- In all, respondents remembered 2.75 brands

**Brand Recognition**

- A list of brands (from the 4 targeted advertisements) were shown to the respondents and asked if they recognize seeing it. Respondents remembered 2.04 of them, on an average. This is higher than the 1.42 that the respondents could recall.

**Message Recall**

Message Recall was very insignificant. There was only a recall of annoyance from the respondents on the flash pop-up that was coming up during the first visit to the page.

The following table summarizes this section

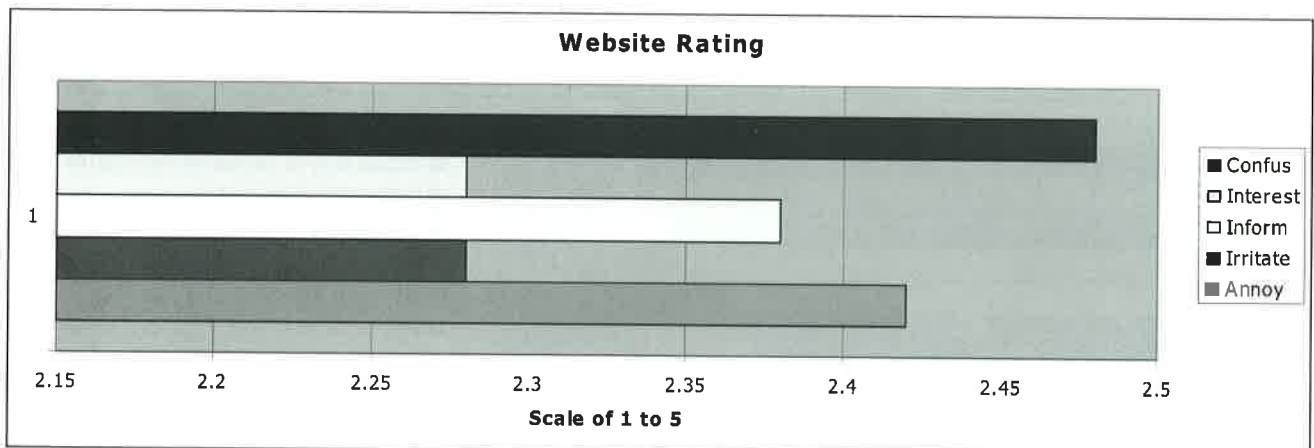
**Table I : Recognition / Recall**

Product Category	Recall			Recognition	
	Target (4)	Overall		Target (4)	Overall
	1.58	3.3		2.06	NA
Brand	Target (4)	Ban	Text	Target (4)	Others
	1.42	1.1	0.24	2.04	NA
Message	Not Significant			NA	

**Site Design**

- The average rating given to the site design was 3.52 (on a scale of 5).
- So the design can be considered as 'Average to Good'

- On a scale of 1 to 5, the respondents were told to rate each of certain aspects of the site – annoying, irritating, informative, interesting and confusing. Results are as below



**Figure I : Website Rating**

## Psychographics

Table II : Activities (Online)

Sl. #	Activity	Average Score (out of 5)
1	Chat	2.9
2	Social Networking	2.78
3	Shopping	2.56
4	Reading	3.9
5	Just browsing	2.84
6	Sports	3.5
7	Games	2.3

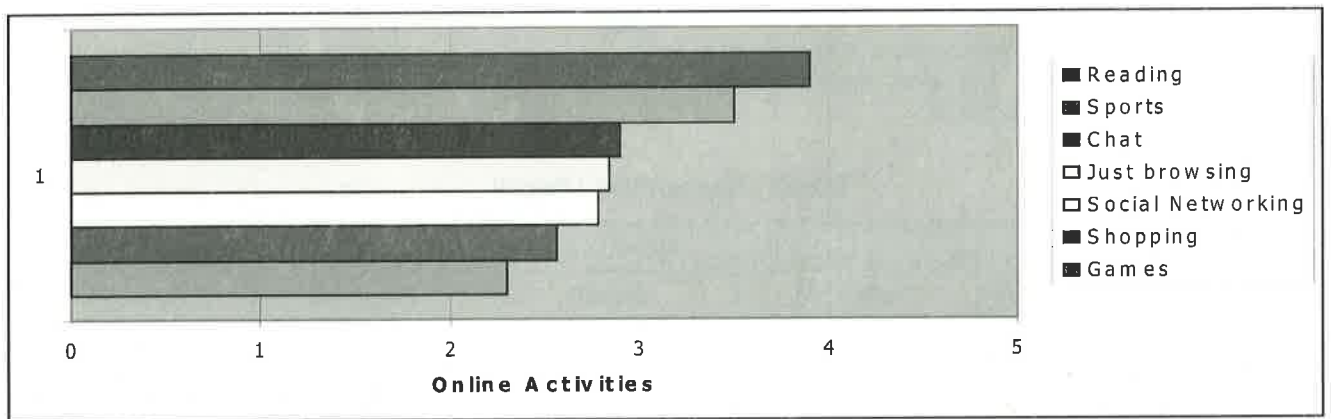


Table III : Activities (Offline)

Sl. #	Activity	Average Score (out of 5)
1	Play cricket	2.32
2	Play other sports	2.82
3	Social Work	2.28
4	Go to resorts	2.48
5	Trekking/Adventure	2.7
6	Hang out in malls & multiplexes	2.9
7	Shopping	2.74

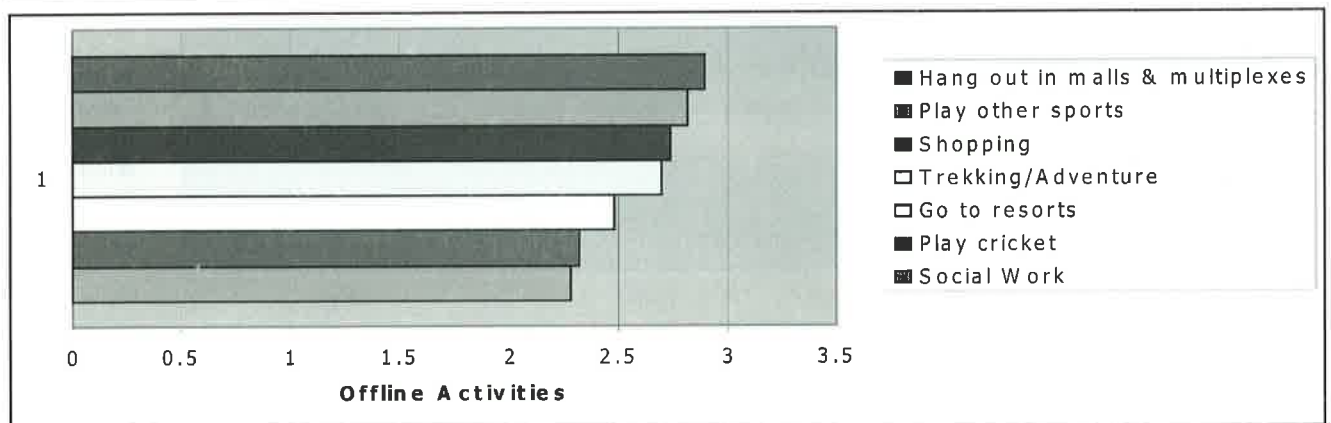




Table IV : Interests

Sl. #	Activity	Average Score (out of 5)
1	Music	3.7
2	Reading (Fiction)	2.82
3	Reading (Non Fiction)	3
4	Writing	2.46
5	Movies	3.48
6	Current Affairs	3.9
7	Personal Development	3.56
8	Cricket	3.22
9	Other Sports	3.06
10	Lifestyle Shows	2.06
11	Shopping	2.76
12	Adventure	3.02

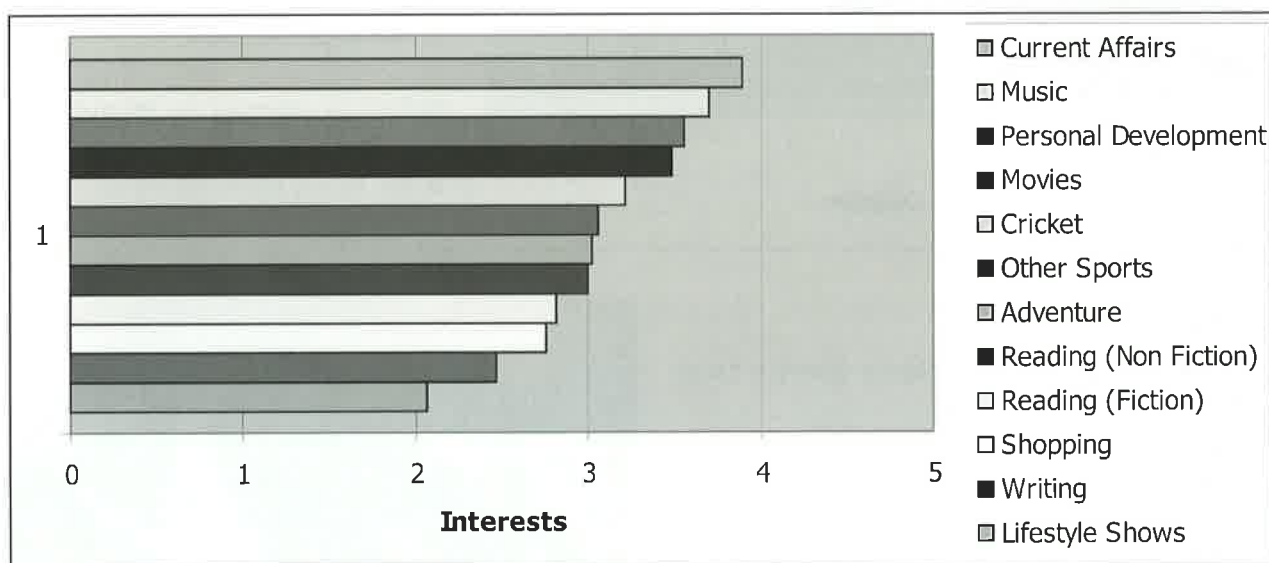
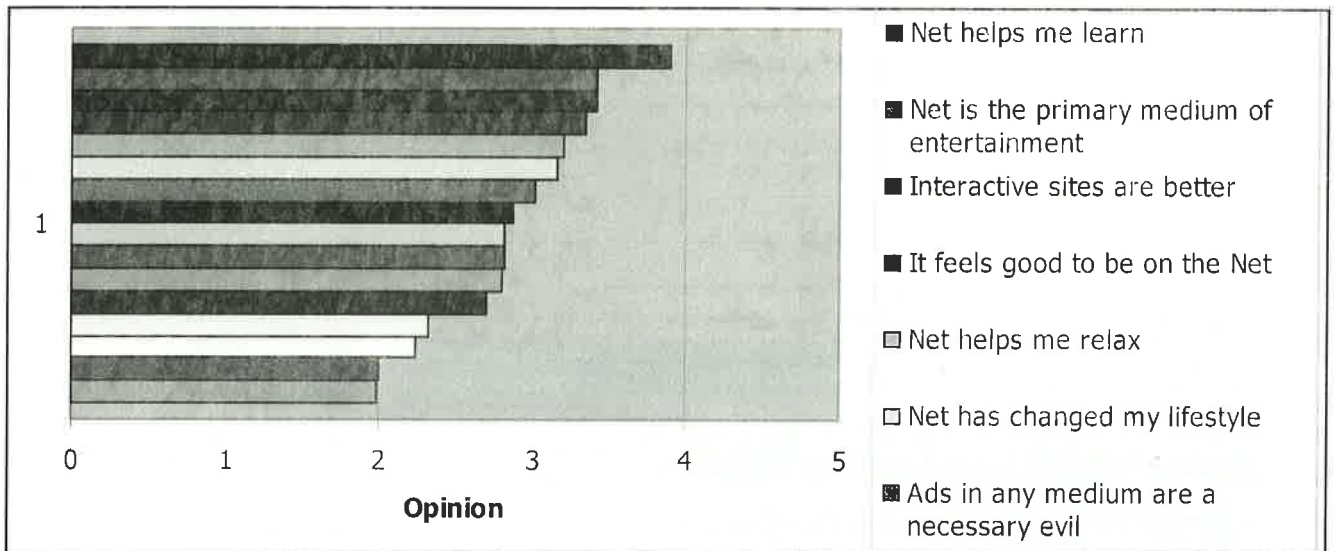


Table V : Opinion

Sl. #	Activity	Average Score (out of 5)
1	Interactive sites are better	3.42
2	It feels good to be on the Internet	3.34
3	India based sites are better than US based ones	2.82
4	Ads in websites entertain	2.24
5	Being shown Ads for free service is acceptable	2.7
6	Internet is a waste of time	2
7	Ads in websites are relevant to me	2.88
8	I remember most ads that appear in websites	2.32
9	Ads in any medium are a necessary evil	3.02
10	Internet is the primary medium of entertainment	3.42

Sl. #	Activity	Average Score (out of 5)
11	Online shopping is safe	2.8
12	Internet is an information only medium; No commerce	1.98
13	Ads in the Internet influence purchase	2.82
14	Internet has changed my lifestyle	3.16
15	Internet helps me relax	3.2
16	Internet helps me learn	3.9



### Demographics

- On an average, the respondents spend 4 hours every day on the Internet
- The average annual household income is 11.75 l.p.a
- The average age of the respondents was 27.7 years
- There were 7 female and 43 male respondents.

