

A Comparative Study of Effectiveness of Advertising on three Social Networking Sites; Facebook, Snapchat & Instagram

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Abstract

Internet is one of the fastest growing information technology platform with the reliability of proximity and speed, thus, it brings globalization in every facet of communication. Communication with the help of internet is more effective and specific in terms of reaching to the target audiences. In recent years, internet advertising has proved to be more advantageous than traditional mediums like TV or print media. Online marketing has helped the marketing communication to become more personal and interactive. But there are a number of social networking sites like Face book, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat etc. In this research paper, three such social networking sites are compared in terms of reach, interactivity and types of advertisements to understand their effectiveness in communication with customers. This research will help marketers to understand the difference in advertising on these three social networking platforms which will help in devising a good online marketing strategy for their brands.

Keywords: *Internet Marketing, Online Marketing, E-marketing, Facebook advertising, Instagram Advertising, Snapchat Advertising.*

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Introduction

Social Networking Sites:

We describe social networking sites as internet based services that allow individuals to create a public profile within a limited system, communicate a list of other users who use the same platform and with whom they may share a common interest called online friends, and view and go over their list of friends or followers and those made by others within the system. The basic nature and nomenclature of these online friends or connections may vary from site to site. On facebook, they are called friends while on instagram they are called followers, on YouTube they are called subscribers. Other way of explaining Social networking sites is that it is an online platform where people can connect with like-minded people. It can also be used for connecting to old time friends or develop real-life acquaintances through related interests or groups.

In addition to forming important social relationships, these social networking members can share and exchange their opinions and knowledge by joining several forums and groups available online. Some platforms also help users find a job or establish and maintain business contacts. Social networking sites include *Facebook*, *twitter*, *LinkedIn*, *Instagram*, *YouTube* and so on. Most social networking websites also provide additional features which help their users expanding their businesses too. Like Facebook has the feature to form business pages and allow advertising extensively. In addition to forums and blogs, users can also express themselves by designing and managing their profile page in a way that reflects their personality. The most popular additional features comprises of music and video sections. Members can read introductions (bios) of their favorite music artists, listen to their music and can watch videos too. The video section may include almost everything one can think of. Also YouTube is also used for videos of educational nature related to various subjects.

The unique feature of makes social network sites is not that they let their users meet strangers, but rather it is the ability to choose the look of their social media profiles and connect with like-minded people. Most of the people on these social networking sites are not looking to meet strangers, they are more interested in communicating with people who they already know and who are already a part of their extended social acquaintance. While SNS have executed a wide variety of tech related features, their main feature is customised profile and friends list of people who are also users of the system. Profiles are exclusive pages where users can “type oneself into being”. When a user joins any of these social networking sites, they are asked to fill out online forms comprising a series of queries. The profile is created using the responses to

these queries, which usually include descriptions such as name, age, location, likes, interests, and introductory section. These sites also ask users to upload their real pictures to be used as profile photo which allow other users of the website to recognise them if they know them before. These sites not only have the feature of uploading photos but also allow their users to enhance the all over experience of social networking sites by adding multimedia content and customising their own profile page. Another feature of adding other online applications of their interests is also very popular.

Once a user joins a social networking platform and customises his/her profile page, the next step generally includes finding out people who can be added in their friends, contacts or fan / followers list. Different social network sites use different terms for these acquaintances. These can be complete strangers or known people from the user's extended social networks. Generally these friendships or online relationships require permission from both sides but some of the sites do not require permission from both sides. In case of one-sided permissions, these relationships are termed as fans or followers.

On social networking sites, it is not enough to have a good number of contacts added but it is also important to make sure that these contacts see the content that is being shared. Also public display of such connection is important. These social networking sites also have the feature to restrict the viewership of the content added in the user's profile. One can make lists to divide their contacts and decide which content is to be shared with whom. There is also the feature of publicly sharing the content where even those who are not in user's friend list can access that content. Apart from sharing content publicly these social networking sites also have the feature of chatting privately with one person or a group. The content shared with friends or publicly also have the feature of viewers commenting on the content or simply liking it or even sharing it on their own profile. This sometimes leads to the content getting viral. The advertisers try to take advantage of such feature and create such content which more and more users like to share and view.

Further than customised profiles, Followers/Friends, likes and comments, and private messaging, Social Networking Sites differ greatly in their features structures and user base. Some are mainly video sharing platforms like YouTube, some depend upon features related to photos sharing like Instagram, some are blogging based and some have all these features added in one.

It is true that social networking sites are created to be accessible around the globe but in the initial stage these sites generally are limited to a certain user group. This leads to bifurcation of users into groups based on certain age, interest

or nationality which provides advertisers the ease of choosing their target audiences according to their products and services.

Online Advertising

Online advertising is essentially similar to other forms of advertising except for one very important difference and that is the internet. On internet the way a user behaves is different from a consumer's behaviour on other advertising platforms. Online users are more logical, they have greater expectations from the brands both on advertising front and after service front. Online users are more aware and follow the progression of 'Awareness - Interest - Desire - Action'. Thus all these activities take place instantaneously in Internet advertising. Online advertising includes uploading e-messages on any online platform like website, emails to accomplish following purposes-

- Create awareness for the brand.
- Motivates interest /preference for a product or service.
- Delivers the mode to contact the concerned person for information or to make a purchase.

Online advertising has following advantages:

1. Scalability

Like TV ads, internet ads are not very costly and unlike print ads, online ads don't need to print in multiple copies for the campaign.

2. Hot demographics

The web or online community is more well-to-do, better educated, younger and more eager to spend due to lesser responsibilities than the population at large. These people are more logical and easier to convince.

3. Targeted messages

Internet allows marketers the luxury of choosing their audience according to their target market which is one of the greatest accomplishments of Internet marketing. Online publications attend every plausible audience, from the mass-market to vague niche groups. Outside that, the technology points target customers by their internet usage patterns, Web browsing, domain type or individual domains.

4. Broad and flexible reach

Internet is slowly and steadily reaching to the market penetration and depth of popular advertising platforms like TV. With the rise of smartphone users in India along with network service providers like jio who are providing data packs at a minimal amount, Internet is surely on the path of becoming the most popular and extensively used platform in India. More importantly, because the marketers only need to buy online ads by the

impression, they can buy as much as or as little as possible. Ads cost on internet does not depend upon the size of website's audience but number of audiences that see or click the ad.

5. Cost-effective

Because marketers only pay for what is needed and there are no multiple time costs attached to online ads, online advertising can be extremely competitive as compared to other forms of advertising.

6. Detailed tracking and measurement

Compared to web advertising, traditional advertising is like advertising blindly. The Web allows marketers to gather thorough information about the audience, the time the ad was seen, in what context, number of times the ad was seen or clicked and so on. Another advantage is that all this information can be tracked in real time which allows the marketers to adjust the campaign accordingly.

7. The ability to extend the transaction

Conventionally, advertising is a one-way communication but internet has given way to interactive advertising where target audience can interact with the marketer which allows marketer to get the sense about the target audience easily and precisely.

8. Good Creativity

Internet allows creative ways of advertising which were not available in conventional marketing. Creativity of ads also helps in reaching to the right audience and gaining their trust and loyalty in a short span of time.

9. Hence Content is King

Content is the most vital element of a website. Content rich Web pages appeal users. The matter of importance on the web is information. The beauty and challenge of the internet is that it gives the user, the ability to personalize non-static information and choose exactly what they want to see online.

Facebook:

Facebook is a social networking site which is extensively used by people of all ages and from almost all geographical locations. Facebook was founded by Mark Zukerberg with few fellow students at Harvard College in Feb, 2004. Facebook has the user base of over **2.32 billion monthly active users (MAU) as of December 31, 2018 worldwide.** ⁴

Types of advertisement on Facebook

1. Domain Ads: These ads include links to various websites; so when the user clicks the ad, they are automatically taken to the advertiser's

website. These ads generally have a single picture with description and a link to the website.



Picture 1: Facebook Domain Ad;

Source: <https://adespresso.com/guides/facebook-ads-beginner/facebook-ads-types/>

2. Multi- product ads: These ads were started in 2015. The main motive of these ads was to showcase products according to the browsing behaviour of users and their interests. These are actually a space where most clicked ads are shown first and least clicked last in the newsfeed.

3. Offer ads: As the name suggests, these ad have a coupon code or discount information added to the ad and when clicked these ads will take the users to the discounted offer given by the company. Many companies promote these ads as the only way of accepting offer coupons, so when the customer goes directly to the websites, he/she will not find the offers.

4. Video Ads: Video ads are a great way of advertising as these ads are more attractive than picture ads. Companies often use creative ways of adding information in videos by making the content of the video more interesting.

5. Lead Ads: These ads collect information from the user. Facebook uses the information that it already has related to the user account and fills it in. Rest of the information is asked from the user. These ads look similar to the domain ads except when the user clicks on it, they are redirected to a feedback form.

6. Canvas Ads: Canvas ads are the interactive ads available on facebook which allows the user to have a complete picture by moving the screen of their smart phone.

7. Dynamic Ads: Ads displayed according to the search on a particular website on last user visits.

8. Sponsored Mentions: These ads are actually paid promotions of the brands by established names of the related fields.

Snapchat:

Snapchat is a social media platform for exchanging messages created by former students of Stanford University; Evan Spiegel; Bobby Murphy; Reggie Brown. It was founded in 2011. In last quarter of 2018, Snapchat boosted 186 million global Daily active users worldwide.⁵

Types of ads on snapchat

- 1. Web View:** One can attach their websites in these ads which play between snapchat stories and can go to these websites by clicking on these ads or can purchase the offerings without leaving the snapchat app.
- 2. Article ads:** These ads are available in the discover section of the app with all the snapchat stories. It includes text, gifs and videos.
- 3. App Install:** These ads have an install button in the bottom of the ad which encourages users of snapchat to install the advertised app.
- 4. Long Videos:** For complicated products and services, marketers use long video ads which have the option for skipping the video after a certain amount of time for the users.
- 5. Sponsored Geofilters:** Geofilters are ads which are visible to users in a specific geographical location only.
- 6. Sponsored Lenses:** These are interactive ads which recognise faces of the users and add various filters to their faces like adding make-up, bunny ears or dog ears etc.

Instagram:

Instagram is also a photo sharing social media platform which is owned by Facebook only in 2010. In June 2018 Instagram boosted an impressive figure of 1 billion daily active users.⁶

Types of ads on Instagram

- 1. Stories Ads:** Just like Facebook feed, these are normal picture ads in the Instagram feed but they have more than one picture. The idea is to tell a story with the help of pictures.
- 2. Photo Ads:** These are one picture ads with text and link of the website.
- 3. Video Ads:** These are videos with interesting content for advertisements.

4. **Carousel Ads:** These include a series of product and services seen in one ad while being able to swipe to see all the pictures or videos uploaded by the marketer.
5. **Collection Ads:** These ads enable users to browse, select and purchase products or offerings from a collection of products / services.

All the three social media networking sites have different reach and different kind of users profile accessing these sites. For a successful marketing campaign the marketing managers must clearly outline their audiences and their internet using patterns and then opt for one or a combination of different social networking sites. The choice of such sites also depends upon the type of product or services offered by the marketing managers as all three of the websites have different type of advertisements. The marketer must choose the website whose technology and ad specifics complement their product and service the most.

From the above discussion, it is evident that facebook is indeed the most versatile platform while for more specifically targeted audience Instagram & Snapchat have their own niche markets.

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