

How Marketers and Advertisers Get Our Attention

How do marketers and advertisers get our attention? The best answer – it depends.

It depends a lot of things – the medium, platform, the content, the way it's delivered, and most importantly, the consumer.

For this blog post's sake, the medium I'll focus on is the Internet. The platforms will be Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, and Spotify.

There are tons of different kinds of advertisements we see when using the Internet. For any general site that isn't a social media site, you'll find ads that pop-up, make noise, that are posted all around the content you're accessing, especially large banner ads like this one.

However, advertisements like those ones aren't welcomed on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Obviously, there are ads – a lot of them. But they aren't as "up in your face," *per se*, then you'll see on other websites. Starting with Facebook, with how it looks today, there are always sponsored ads underneath the trending topics. But they usually aren't just random ads; they are tailored to the consumer. The two trending ads for me as of right now are for a Discover student credit card and for a fantasy football site. I play fantasy football, and am at a time in my life where looking at signing up for a credit card are relevant, so naturally these ads have grabbed my

attention.

This brings me to another important reason an ad may get someone's attention: relevance. Is the ad relevant to the consumer? Obviously it depends on someone's personal preference. I spoke to two 21 year old students who had extremely different ways they used the Internet.

The first one uses social media for professional reasons, as he is a play-by-play broadcaster for a minor league baseball team. His feeds are compromised of things related to baseball, so when he sees ads related to baseball he clicks on them to see what they have to say. Right now he is disappointed with how Twitter uses sponsored ads because they get in the way and break up the flow of his feed. As he put it, "why would I want to read about some kitchen product when everything else in my feed has to do with baseball?"

The other student consumes social media in an entirely different way. He uses it for leisure, a way to relax and read about interesting things. But despite his different social media consumption, content relevance is the reason he clicks on an ad. He explained, "If I saw an ad on YouTube before a video that had a guy in a suit on a boat with tons of girls, and it was for Twinkies, I'd click on it because the lifestyle it sells is something I find interesting."

Moving ahead, effective ads need to be either interactive or have a wide-array of emotional appeals. If it is engaging, either through a story or game, the ad will get attention. Instead of ads that just get in the way, like the one posted above, marketers are finding more ways to make interactive ads or ones that tell stories. Thanks to data mining, marketers have gotten a lot better at this by trying to personalize advertisements, tailoring them to the individual consumer. On my Facebook page I saw an advertisement for a shirt that said, "It's a Darrow Thing." Dumbfounded when I stumbled upon it, I clicked on it. It caught my attention right away because of how personalized it was.

Another person I spoke with experienced a similar phenomenon, just over a longer time-frame. She explained that she'll look up something like concert tickets on a Monday, and then on Thursday she'd find ads on her feeds that are promoting the band she looked at tickets for. She said, "It's really freaky, but I get how effective it is. It's actually useful, even though I find it unnerving. Everything is related to what I'm interested in."

Now here is my personal take. I'll effectively review how the different ads get my attention or not on various forms of social media.

Facebook: As I mentioned before, I think the ads that are personalized are the best ones. Though kind of freaky, for lack of a better word, at times, it works. 9 times out of 10, I'll engage the ad just to see how relevant it may be.

Twitter: The sponsored ads irritate me. I scroll right through any ad that has the "sponsored" logo. Even though the content may be interesting, they aren't presented in any way I can interact with them, and often times aren't relevant at all.

YouTube: Most of the time, I click right through the ads before the videos if I can. When the ads are used as annotations in the videos, it really bothers me. They get my attention *because* they are annoying. However, I usually won't engage with them.

LinkedIn: For more of a marketing standpoint, I do read sponsored content every so often. It is often related to what I'm on the site for, sometimes helps me find new perspectives in business concepts and industry-related topics. However, they aren't trying to sell me something, so I automatically have a better feeling viewing the content.

Instagram: I loved the app before there were ads. Now, they ruin the flow of the feed with sponsored pictures and videos. I rarely engage with the ads because their presence irritates me.

Snapchat: I think it's very creative how they use advertisements. They never get in the way of a user's content if they don't want it to. Since users have the option to engage and interact with

sponsored content, it is an effective way of getting user attention. Only downside is that it is almost too timid. However, they app has to be careful where to draw the line between invasive ads and sponsored content that isn't easily accessible.

Spotify: Can't complain about the ads here, as it is a free service. I listen to the ads, but there isn't much of a way around that. I'm not going to take my headphones out, so having a minute or so of ads every 30 minutes isn't a problem. Definitely reach the consumer.

Overall, advertisers and marketers have a ton of different ways to get their product, idea, or concept out there. They have to be careful about how they do it, but if they are interactive, relevant, and engaging, they've got the attention they need.