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RECENT INTERNET-MARKETING TRENDS

Many of the most interesting and effective global marketing strategies are currently being developed on the Internet. Viral and guerrilla marketing is easier than ever using electronic communication. After all, you can make a virtually unlimited number of copies for absolutely nothing. People who would change the channel automatically when the commercials come on still may be willing to look at a clever video that your company has put together. If they like it, they will even send it on to their friends. By studying Internet consumer habits, you can use global marketing trends that take care of themselves.

Marketers face some tough choices in these challenging economic times. How much of their budgets should they devote to new advertising options such as social media? Is this a time to cut back on marketing budgets, or should marketers spend more to compete for scarce consumer dollars?

A recent marketing survey conducted by Adweek provides some useful insights into what experts in the field are thinking and doing right now. Participants were given a menu of responses to the question, "How will the economic downturn most affect advertising?" The response chosen most often (by 30% of participants) was that marketers will "use better targeted ads to improve return on investment." A smaller number (22%) said that advertisers would spend less. Apparently most people in marketing believe that cutting back on advertising is not an appropriate way to respond to difficult economic conditions.

The survey results also showed a strong interest in Internet advertising, with 23% of participants saying that the most important marketing trend is that "the shift to online would accelerate." Another 15% of participants believed the most important trend was that "ads will follow traffic to social media."

Despite these results, online advertising still represents a fairly small slice of the advertising pie. According to the latest figures from Advertising Age, Internet advertising receives only about 10% of advertising dollars, compared to more than 40% for all types of TV advertising. The research service eMarketer predicts that Internet advertising will continue to grow at a steady rate, and by 2013 will represent 15% of total spending.

The consulting firm Anderson Analytics recently surveyed members of the Marketing Executives Networking Group to learn what they considered the top marketing trends for 2009. More than half of those surveyed thought their budgets would decrease because of the ailing economy. Survey results focused on these five trends:

1. Insight and innovation are more important than ever. Participants cited the need for more effective market research to communicate the right message to the right customers.
2. Customer satisfaction and customer retention were cited as the two most important issues for marketers, followed by return on investment, brand loyalty, and segmentation. Apparently marketers are focusing more on keeping the customers they have than on finding new ones.
3. There is less interest in environmental issues. Global warming fell significantly as a topic of interest to marketers. "Green marketing" also lost ground. Marketing executives seem to feel that in tough times these topics take a back seat to economic concerns.
4. Marketers are "sick" of hearing about social media. Although marketing executives recognize that social media have become extremely popular, they seem to think they have been over-hyped, at least in terms of their marketing potential.
5. Boomers are still the most promising target for marketers. Baby boomers may be getting gray, and many are retiring, but they still represent a vast, lucrative market. Some are tech savvy and some are not. The challenge for marketers is to choose a medium and a message that will appeal to such a large, inherently diverse group.