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WEB AD.VANTAGE REPORT:

A SURVEY OF
ONLINE WOMEN'S REACTIONS TO ADVERTISING

Search Engine Marketing

Online Media Buying

Social Media Marketing

Internet Marketing Consulting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There no longer seems to be any doubt about the major role women play in the purchase of all products and services:

- Women make 80 percent of all consumer purchasing decisions, according to estimates by consulting firm A. T. Kearny.
- Married, wealthy women make almost two-thirds of a family's purchase decisions, according to a Luxury Institute survey of women from households with $150,000 or more in annual income.

Currently, however there is not consensus on the role advertising, particularly online advertisng, plays in women's purchasing behavior. Jupiter Media Metrix reports that more than half of all new Web users are women, so it's no surpise that the number of niche-focused Web sites, search engines, online communities, games and e-zines/email newsletters targeting women increase monthly.

To shed light on the women's behaviors, preferences and attitude towards online advertising, Web Ad.vantage surveyed 1,700 "wired women" over the age of 18. The survey was distributed virally through email, posted to popular women's blogs and forums, and promoted through publisher partnerships like Greater Good Network, AllRecipes.com, and SheKnows.com. Web Ad.vantage employed social bookmarking sites like Digg and StumbleUpon, as well as member bulletins through popular social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace.

Reflecting the strong presence of working women in the online world, over two-thirds (68 percent) of survey participants were working women. Just under half (43 percent) were full-time professionals with no children at home, and just under a fifth (14 percent) were full-time working mothers of children under the age of 19.

Additional Web Ad.vantage survey methodology is outlined in the Addendum to this report.

From this survey, a number of truths or "laws" emerged that should be noted by any advertiser seeking to effectively reach women online.

THE SEVEN IMMUTABLE LAWS OF ONLINE ADVERTISING TO WOMEN
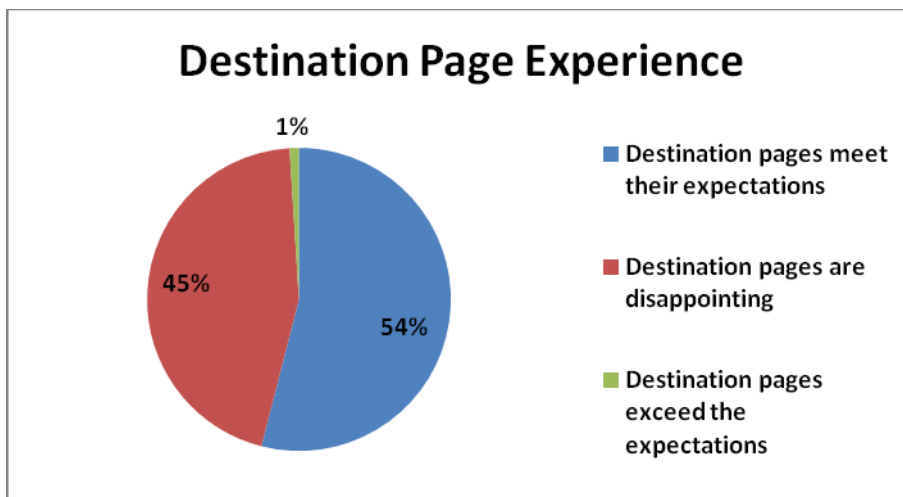
1. *I will respond to a worthy cause.*

One of the most interesting findings from this study was the high response rate received within a relatively short period of time – without any personal incentive 1,700 women completed the online survey within five days. Potential respondents were merely told that a worthy cause near and dear to women would receive a $1,500 donation if 1,500 or more women took the survey. Participants voted on their favorite cause upon completing the survey, with breast cancer receiving the most votes and, therefore, the donation.

- These results are supported by the 2008 Cone/Duke University Behavioral Cause Study which found a strong link between cause-related marketing and consumer choice.

Online marketers, take note -- whenever possible, include an altruistic benefit to women for the purchase of a product or service. In addition, offering an altruistic benefit for product inquiry may reduce the need for a full-range of options in women's online experiences and could greatly help the click-thru rate among women for online ads.

2. *I want to be in control.*

There were a number of indications throughout our survey responses that women like to be in control of their online experience. When women get to a landing page, for example, they do not like pre-roll video or audio. Sixty percent of our respondents prefer to control that experience: "Don't automatically start the audio or video – let me start it." Forty-three percent of respondents desire to have the landing page offer more apparent. Because of these sins and others, about half (45 percent) of online women believe landing pages are disappointing.

Destination Page Experience

- 1%
- 45%
- 54%
- Destination pages meet their expectations
- Destination pages are disappointing
- Destination pages exceed the expectations

Advertisers would be advised not to try to hide offers or content on their landing pages, to provide full disclosure upfront about the offer and let the woman be in control. Other suggestions for improved landing page experiences can be found on the chart below.
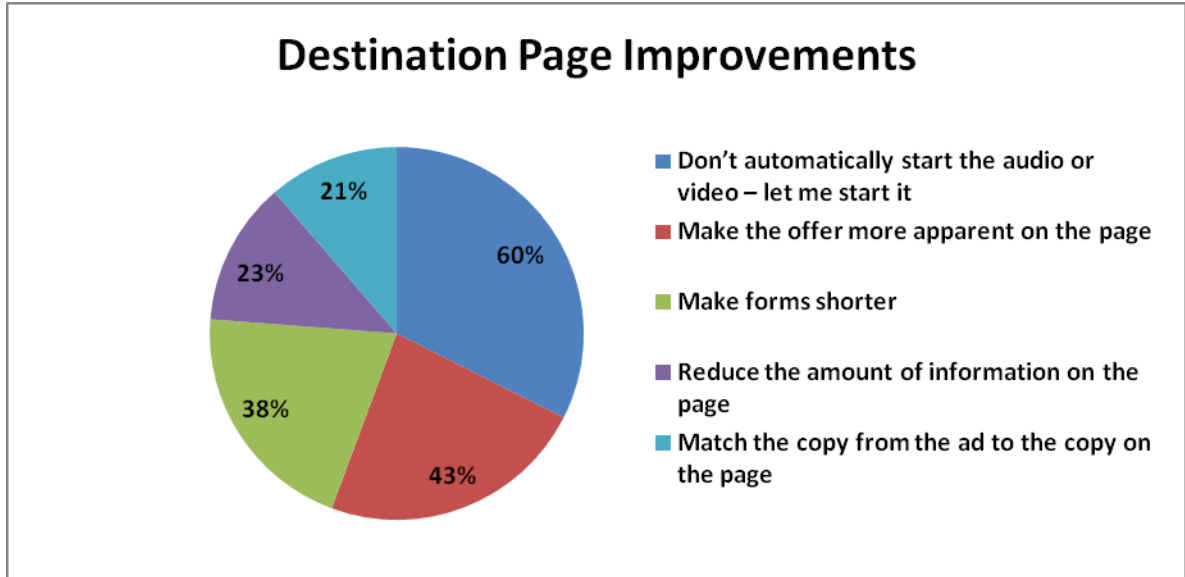
Women also want to be in control when it comes to their advertising experience. When our participants were asked about the type of online ads they find most useful, graphical display ads are cited as most useful by nearly half of all women (47 percent), and it could be argued that it's because these ads quickly convey information and keep the viewer in control. Conversely, video ads and pop-up/pop-under ads are perceived to be least useful by women and, not coincidently, they offer less control for the viewer.

Finally, participant response to this survey and the ability to vote for their chose of a worthy cause not only reinforces the finding that online women like a certain level of control, but it also shows they are willing to forgo personal preferences for the success of the larger mission – in this case, a worthy cause receiving a large donation.

Consequently, online marketers should ensure that they leave women in the driver's seat of the online experience, giving them control or *at least the perception of control* in the presentation of content.

3.   *Respect my privacy.*

Nobody likes an invasion of privacy, and women are especially sensitive to this when online. Just under half of women (47 percent) change their cookie or privacy settings on their Internet browser, and only nine percent of women believe online ads never invade their privacy (hence, 91 percent feel that at some point, online ads *do* invade their privacy). Ads that appear when a woman is reading her Web mail are seen as the most objectionable invasion of privacy (66 percent).
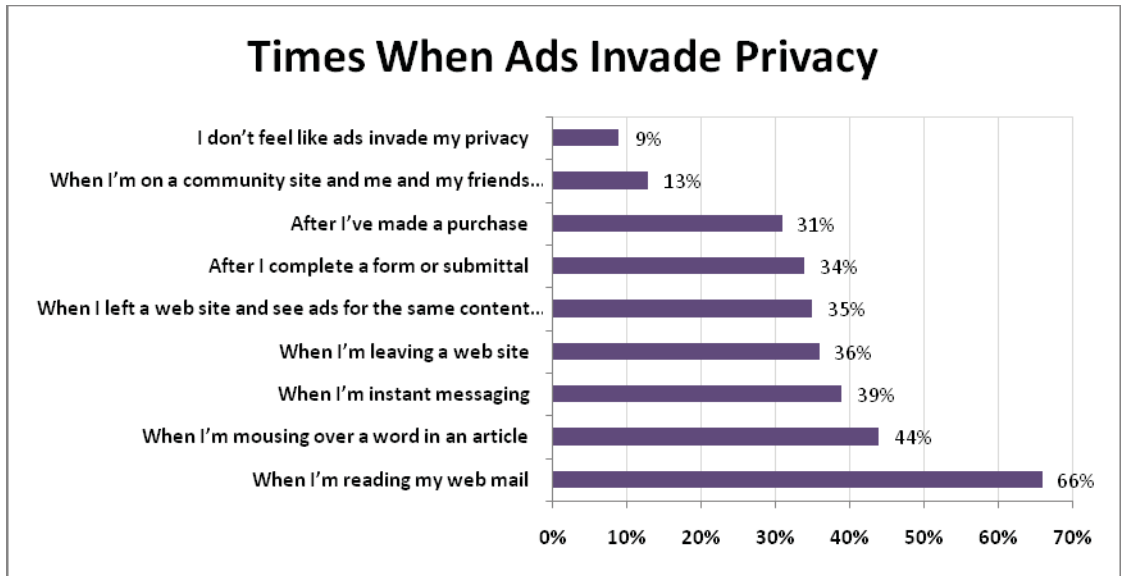
- As a subset, college-aged women are most likely to find online ads to be an invasion of their privacy. Compared to other women (62 percent for college-aged vs. 44 percent for all women), ads launched by mousing over a word in an article or when they are instant messaging is viewed as invasive.

Times When Ads Invade Privacy

I don't feel like ads invade my privacy	9%
When I'm on a community site and me and my friends...	13%
After I've made a purchase	31%
After I complete a form or submittal	34%
When I left a web site and see ads for the same content...	35%
When I'm leaving a web site	36%
When I'm instant messaging	39%
When I'm mousing over a word in an article	44%
When I'm reading my web mail	66%

Advertisers might do well to help educate female consumers about how their privacy is affected by responding to online ads, especially those advertisers targeting younger, more tech-savvy and suspicious women. Carrying this further, any instance in which personal information is requested, key aspects of the privacy policy should be prominently displayed (e.g., "We never provide personal information to third parties") rather than relegated to the Privacy Policy page.

4. *Make it relevant for me right now.*

If the ad content is relevant, you have a woman's undivided attention. For example, a majority of women (56 percent) will respond to online ads when they are reading a newsletter or article and want more information about the items or services mentioned.

When Most Likely to Respond to Online Ads

- When I'm reading a newsletter or article and I want more information about the items or services mentioned
- When I'm researching a product and get to the product detail page
- When I'm on a community site and everyone is talking about a product or service that I want to learn more about
- After I've completed an action (purchase, subscription, submitted a form, etc.)
- When I'm instant messaging
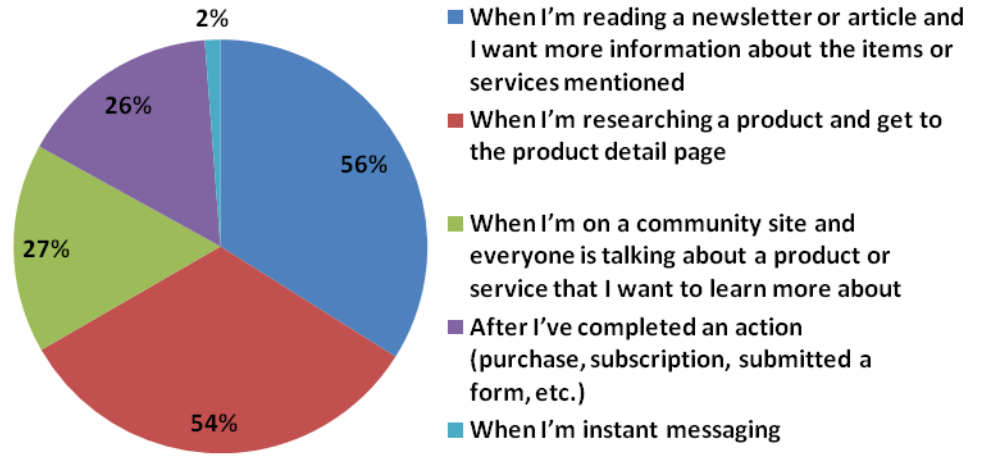
Equally effective are ads that lead directly to a product detail page when women are conducting research on a product (54 percent are likely to respond to product information ads).

- Social relevance played a significant role for the subsets of stay-at-home mother and college women, with 41 percent of stay-at-home mothers and 37 percent of college women responding to ads on a community site "for a product that everyone is talking about."

The message to online marketers? Do your homework. Women are clearly open to online ads, but you must ensure the ads are relevant to women's immediate situation.   This means ensuring your ad placement is connected to the right content and will be delivered at the right opportunity. Unfortunately, much improvement is needed in this area: Only seven percent of our respondents believe the ads on their favorite Web sites are "relevant," while a third find them "annoying."

Ads On Favorite Web Sites
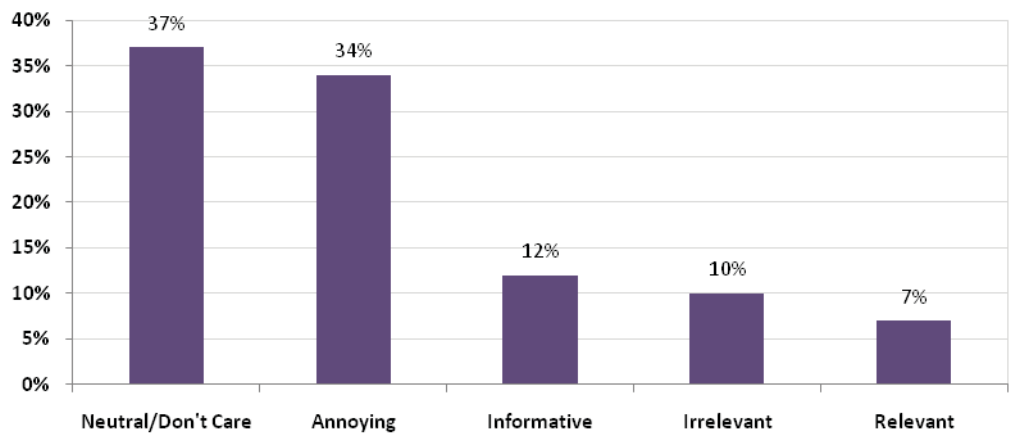
5. A woman's day is never done.

The old adage is just as true for women today. As the day progresses, our survey respondents said they are more likely to respond to online ads (Chart 9). The afternoon hours, however, are somewhat less effective than the morning hours (18 percent vs. 21 percent, a statistically significant difference).

Time of Day Most Likely to Respond

- Before 7am: 5%
- Between 7am - 12pm: 21%
- Between 12pm - 5pm: 18%
- Between 5pm - 8pm: 24%
- After 8pm: 32%
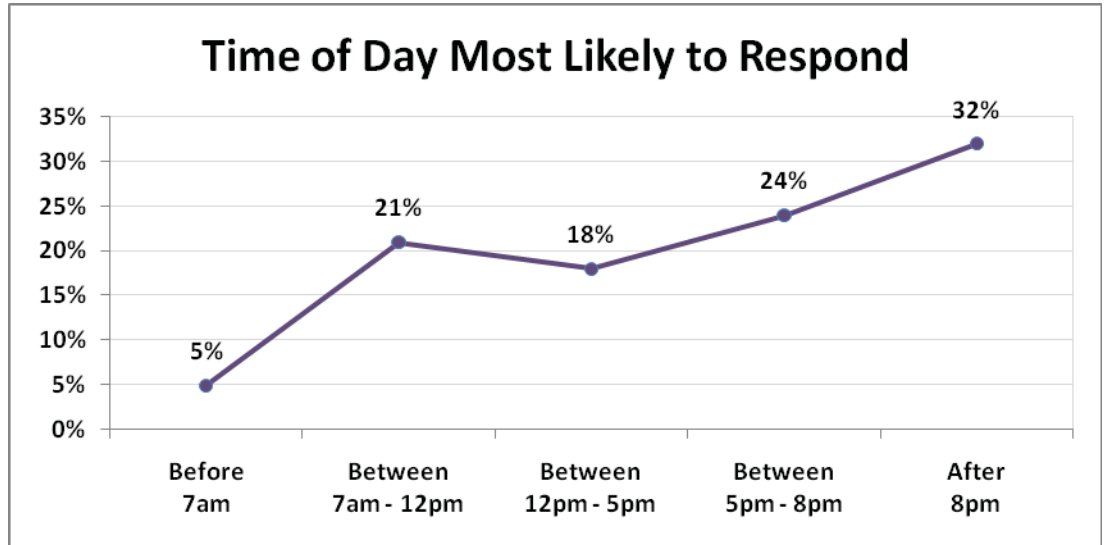
- The morning daypart of 7:00 AM – Noon is more effective for the subsets of retirees and stay-at-home mothers (34 percent and 29 percent, respectively, are most likely to respond to an online ad at this time), while the early evening daypart of 5:00 – 8:00 PM is more effective for full-time professionals without children (traditionally a time for children's dinner and bedtime preparations).

All types of women, however, have the highest response to online ads after 8:00 PM in the evening. Whenever possible, therefore, online advertisers should take advantage of dayparting by audience segment whenever possible, but definitely aim to deliver ads after 8:00 PM.

## 6. I am visually oriented, but I don't like a lot of bells and whistles.

Among the various components of online ads, "images" and the "ad message/ wording" are most likely to appeal to women and capture their attention – with images having the strongest appeal. Interactivity (such as expanding ads, floating ads, video ads, etc.) and the location of the ad on the page are least likely to capture the attention of women. Only 10 percent of our respondents cite either of these elements as most capturing their attention.

Ad Component That Gets Attention
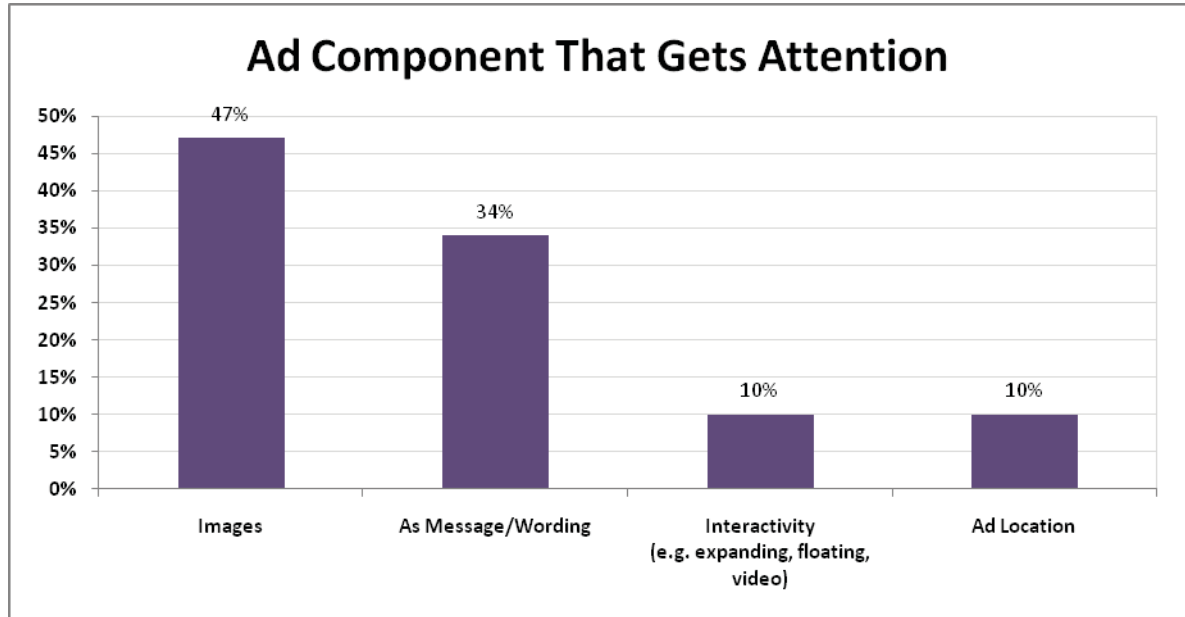
From a marketing perspective, clearly the images used in an online ad are of paramount importance. This is followed by a compelling ad message or copy – not unlike any other advertising medium. But the important finding is that money spent on higher-level interactive elements can be a wasted effort. Here again, we see that women are drawn to a compelling message but recoil from marketing gimmicks that may make them feel less in control.

7. *Just because I visit a Web site frequently doesn't mean it's my favorite.*

Of the types of sites we listed in our survey, while "news/ weather/ traffic" are the most frequently visited sites, "shopping" sites are women's most favorite. Likewise, "financial" Web sites are used frequently by 46 percent of women, but only 23 percent list them among their most favorite. Instead, Web sites that deal with "cooking/ recipes" and "entertainment/ celebrities/ music/ video" in addition to shopping sites, round out their favorites.

Most Frequently Visited Web Sites For Women

Site	Percent
Local News/Weather/Traffic	54%
Shopping	48%
Online Banking/ Financial Management/Investing	46%
National News	40%
Cooking/Recipes	39%
Entertainment/Celebrities/Music/Video	36%
Community/Social Networking	34%
Health/Wellness/Fitness	34%
Travel	26%
Home/Garden/Decorating	23%

Women's Favorite Web Sites

Site	Percent
Shopping	51%
Cooking/Recipes	43%
Entertainment/Celebrities/Music/Video	41%
Local News/Weather/Traffic	40%
Travel	35%
Health/Wellness/Fitness	35%
Community/Social Networking	33%
National News	33%
Home/Garden/Decorating	30%
Online Banking/Financial Management/Investing	23%
Crafts/Hobbies/Cars	23%

These findings reinforce the complexities of online women – not all women have similar interests. For example, "cooking/ recipes" Web sites are especially liked by full-time working mothers – 51 percent list them among their most favorite sites, versus 28 percent among women in college.

Based on our findings, we again advise online advertisers to do their homework: identify the types of sites most frequently visited by your specific female target; do not presume volumes of traffic translate to level of audience engagement or an effective buy.

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Conclusions

While there are, no doubt, more "laws" that can be identified regarding women's responses to online advertising, the seven derived from this survey provide a strong foundation for any online ad campaign targeting women.

Further research needs to be conducted, however, to better understand the precise roles age, diversity, and even geography, play in online advertising targeting women.

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Web Ad.vantage, Inc.
321 North Union Avenue
Havre de Grace, MD 21078
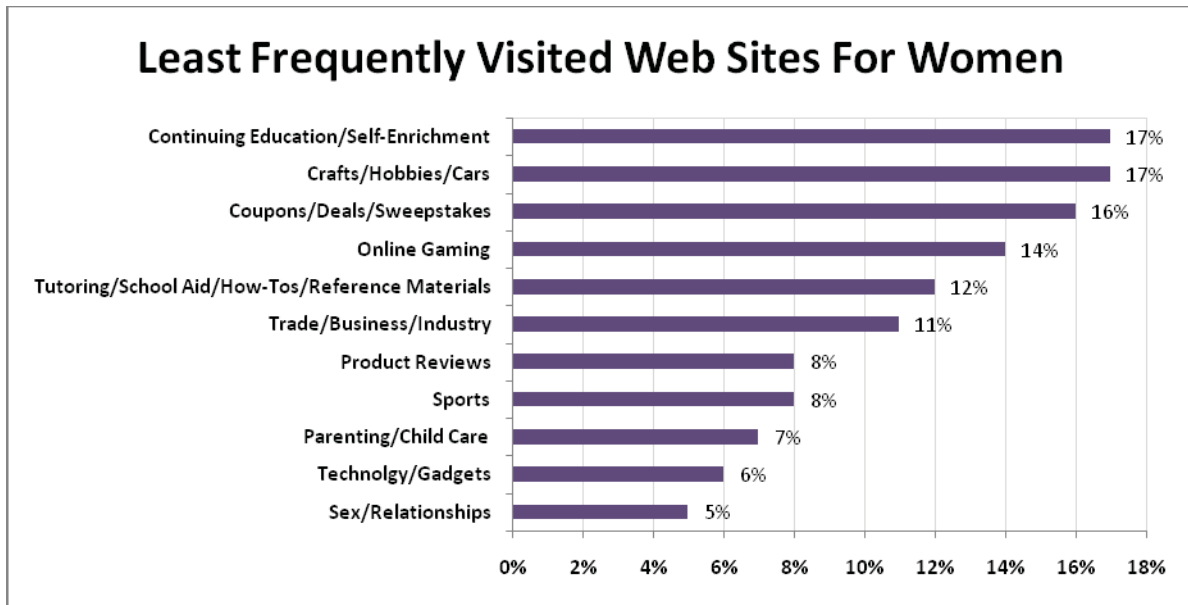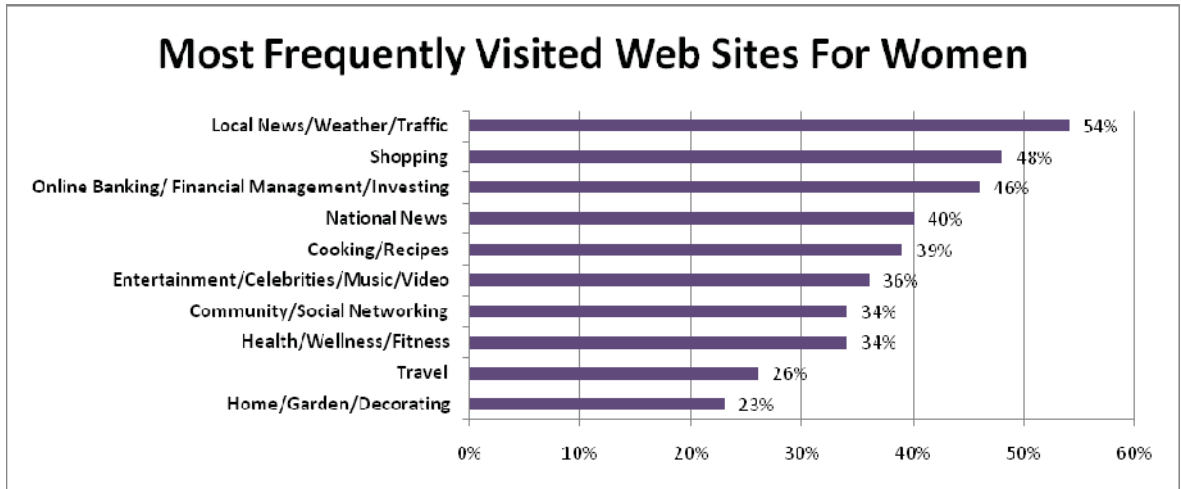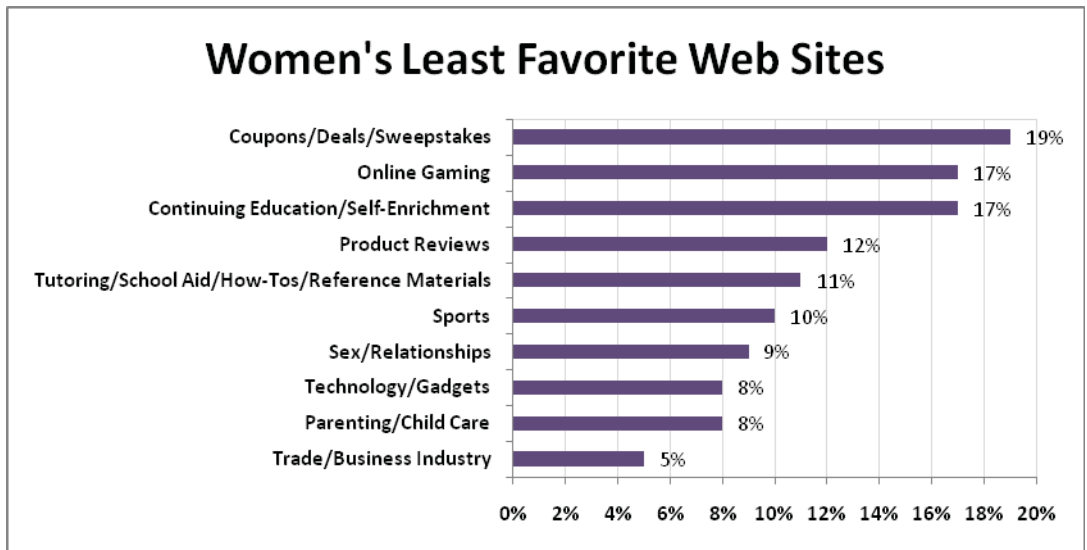
www.webadvantage.net
sales@webadvantage.net

Phone: (410) 942-488
Fax: (410) 942-0487

ADDENDUM: QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

This report was derived from the findings generated from the following questions and responses.

Qualifying Questions:

1. Choose the top (5) five types of sites you personally use most frequently at home or at work:

Most Frequently Visited Web Sites For Women

Site Type	Percentage
Local News/Weather/Traffic	54%
Shopping	48%
Online Banking/ Financial Management/Investing	46%
National News	40%
Cooking/Recipes	39%
Entertainment/Celebrities/Music/Video	36%
Community/Social Networking	34%
Health/Wellness/Fitness	34%
Travel	26%
Home/Garden/Decorating	23%

Least Frequently Visited Web Sites For Women

Site Type	Percentage
Continuing Education/Self-Enrichment	17%
Crafts/Hobbies/Cars	17%
Coupons/Deals/Sweepstakes	16%
Online Gaming	14%
Tutoring/School Aid/How-Tos/Reference Materials	12%
Trade/Business/Industry	11%
Product Reviews	8%
Sports	8%
Parenting/Child Care	7%
Technolgy/Gadgets	6%
Sex/Relationships	5%

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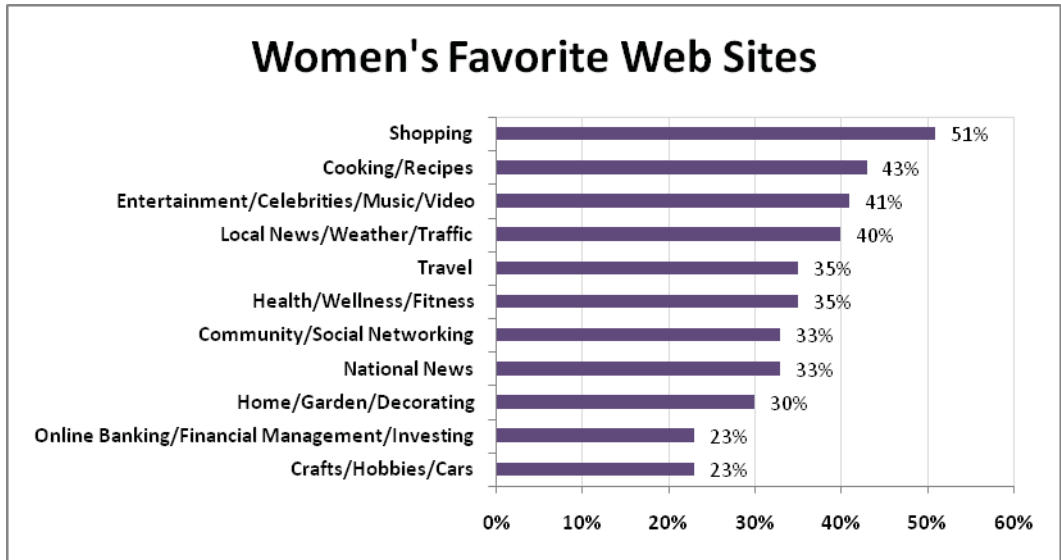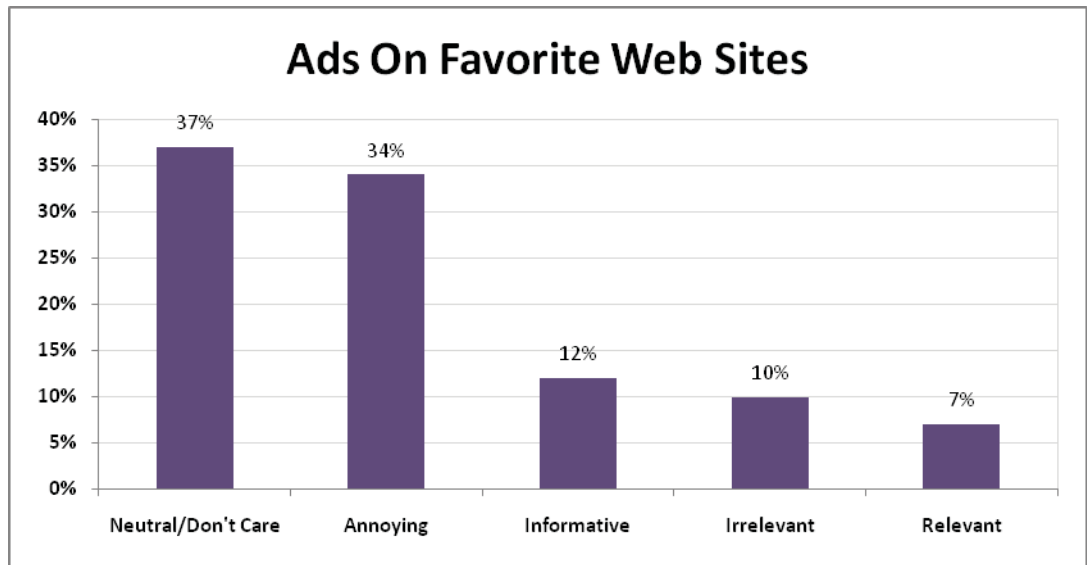
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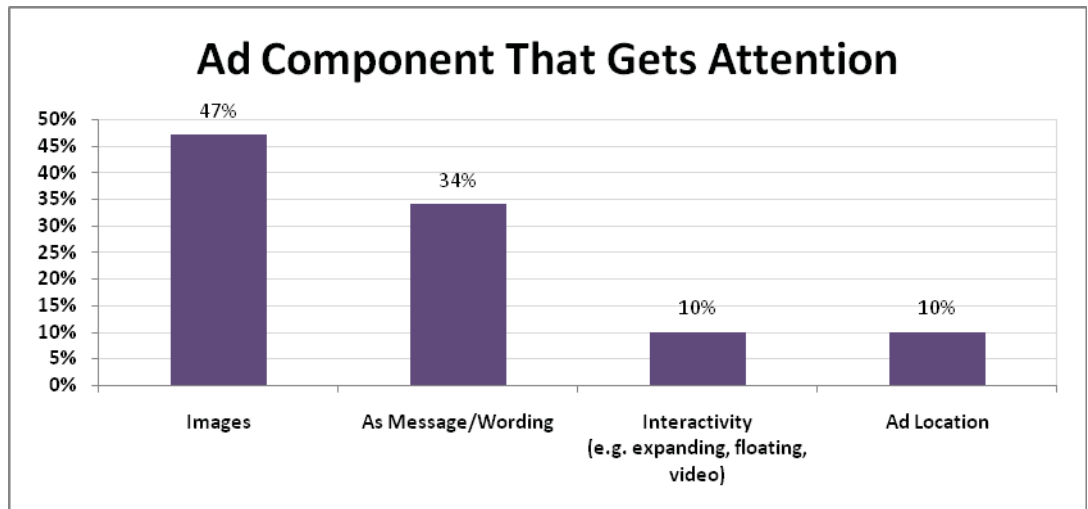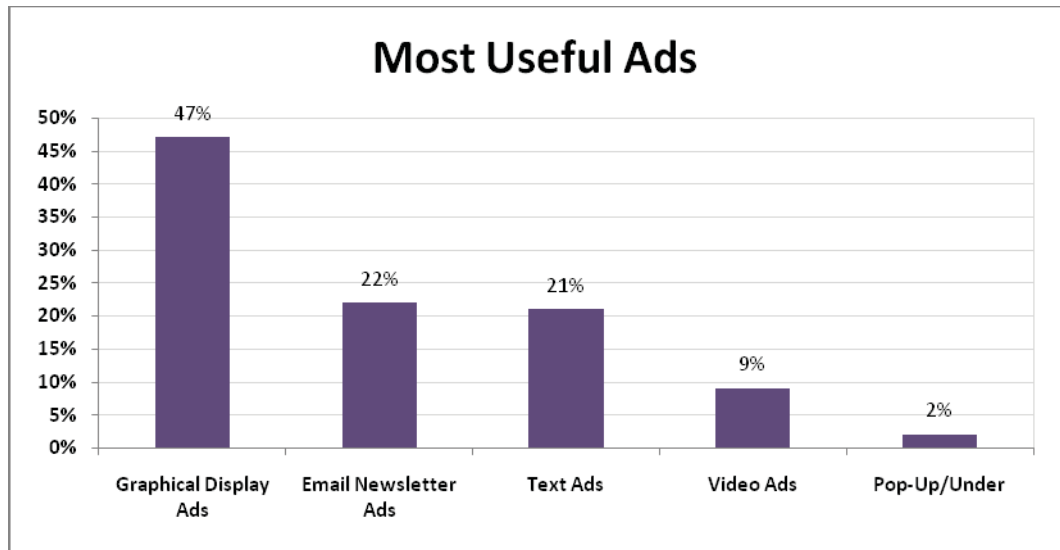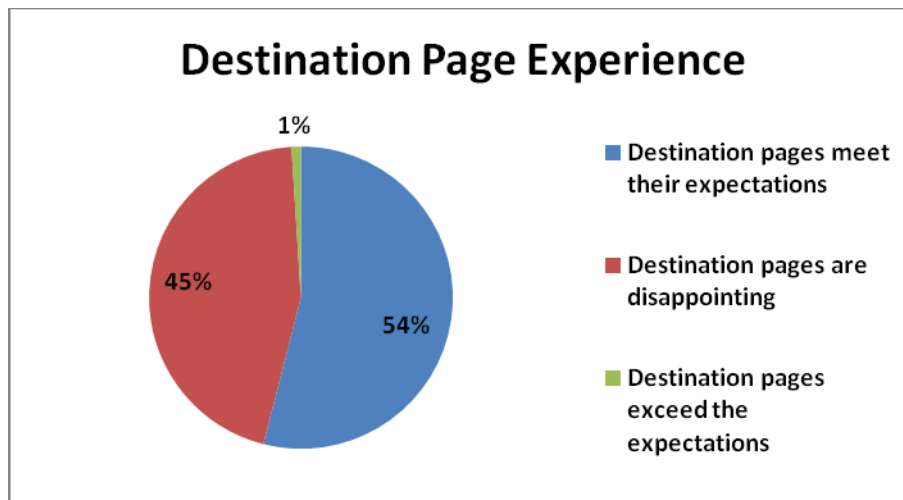Havre de Grace, MD 21078

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sales@webadvantage.net

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2. Choose your top (5) five favorite types of sites, regardless of frequency of use:

Women's Favorite Web Sites

Site Type	Percentage
Shopping	51%
Cooking/Recipes	43%
Entertainment/Celebrities/Music/Video	41%
Local News/Weather/Traffic	40%
Travel	35%
Health/Wellness/Fitness	35%
Community/Social Networking	33%
National News	33%
Home/Garden/Decorating	30%
Online Banking/Financial Management/Investing	23%
Crafts/Hobbies/Cars	23%

Women's Least Favorite Web Sites

Site Type	Percentage
Coupons/Deals/Sweepstakes	19%
Online Gaming	17%
Continuing Education/Self-Enrichment	17%
Product Reviews	12%
Tutoring/School Aid/How-Tos/Reference Materials	11%
Sports	10%
Sex/Relationships	9%
Technology/Gadgets	8%
Parenting/Child Care	8%
Trade/Business Industry	5%

3. How would you best describe the ads on your favorite Web sites?

Ads On Favorite Web Sites

- Neutral/Don't Care: 37%
- Annoying: 34%
- Informative: 12%
- Irrelevant: 10%
- Relevant: 7%

4. What component of an ad most appeals to you or gets your attention?:

Ad Component That Gets Attention

- Images: 47%
- As Message/Wording: 34%
- Interactivity (e.g. expanding, floating, video): 10%
- Ad Location: 10%

5. **What type of online ads do you find most useful?**

Most Useful Ads

- Graphical Display Ads: 47%
- Email Newsletter Ads: 22%
- Text Ads: 21%
- Video Ads: 9%
- Pop-Up/Under: 2%

6. **When you click on an ad, how would you describe your experience on the page you are taken to?**

Destination Page Experience

- Destination pages meet their expectations: 54%
- Destination pages are disappointing: 45%
- Destination pages exceed the expectations: 1%

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7. In your opinion, how could that page experience be improved? (select all that apply)
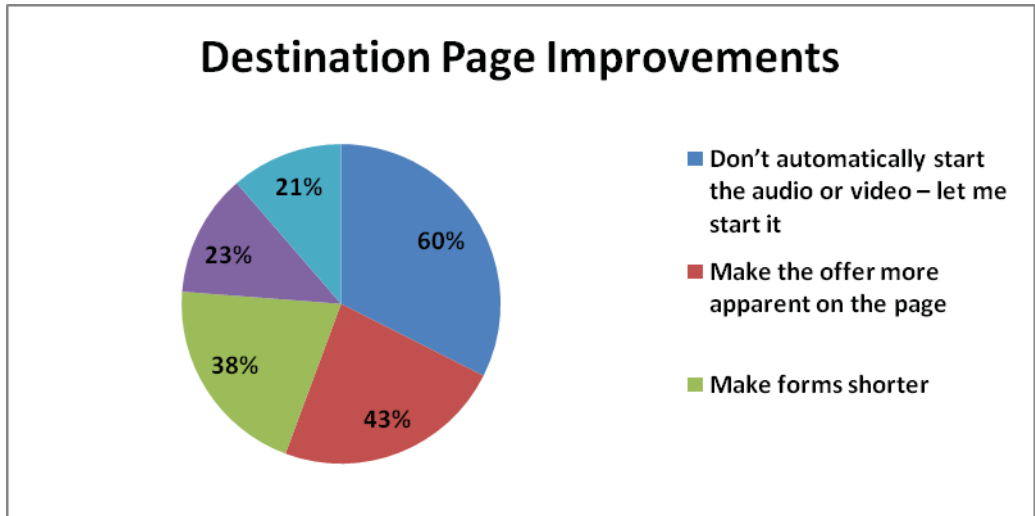
8. In which situations would you be more likely to pay attention and respond to online ads? (Select all that apply)
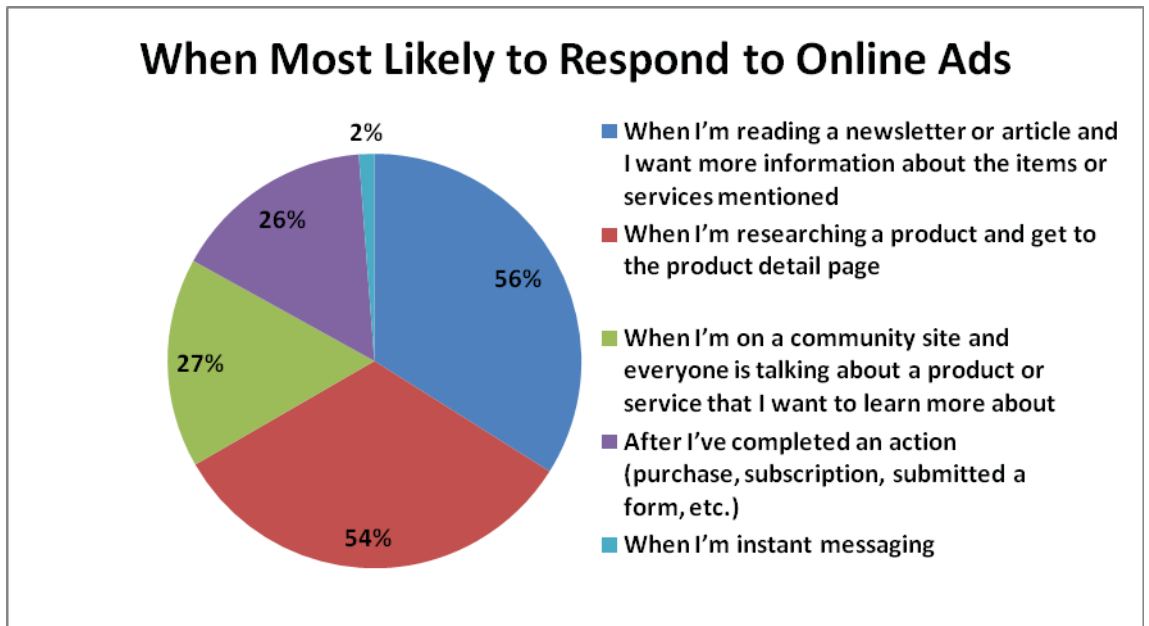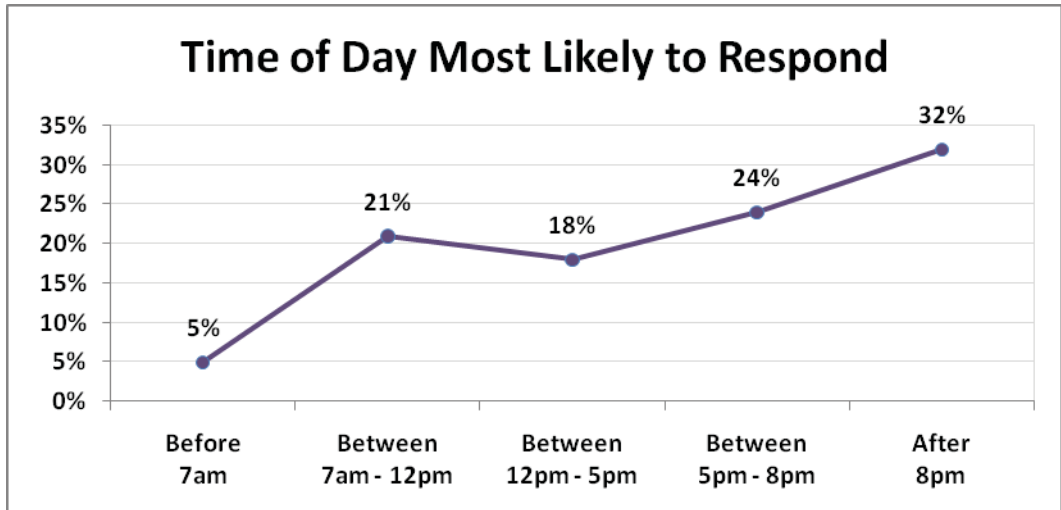
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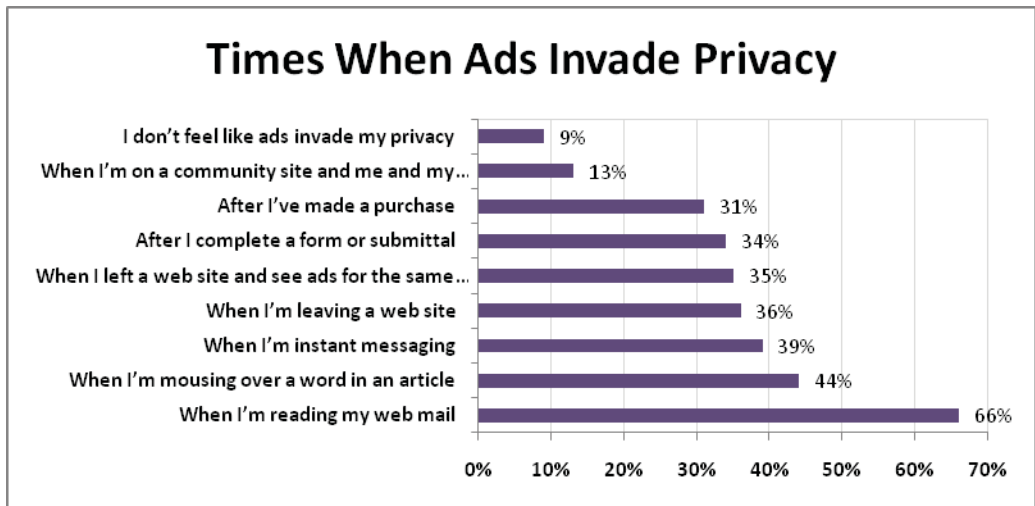Fax: (410) 942-0487

9. At what time of day are you more likely to pay attention and respond to online ads?

10. Do you change the cookie and/or privacy settings on your Internet browser?

Just under half of online women change their cookie or privacy settings on their Internet browser (47 percent). College students and part-time professional women without children are most likely to do this (52 percent and 54 percent, respectively).

11. Under what circumstances do you feel an ad is invading your privacy?

METHODOLOGY

In February 2008, Web Ad.vantage conducted a survey targeted towards female Internet users. A total of 1,700 women over the age of 18 responded. Respondents were asked 11 multiple choice or multiple selection questions about their Web site usage, their reaction to ads and destination pages, and privacy concerns. Each respondent was asked 2 qualifying questions regarding age and gender, and 1 question on family and marital status characteristics.

The survey link to the Web-based survey form and invitation was distributed virally through email. Solicitations were posted to popular women's blogs and forums and promoted through publisher partnerships like TheHungerSite.com / TheAnimalRescueSite.com, AllRecipes.com, and SheKnows.com in the form of banner ads. The survey form page and invitation also appeared on social bookmarking sites like Digg and StumbleUpon, as well as and on member bulletins of popular social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace.

The survey was distributed with a cause-related incentive. If the goal of 1,500 participants was reached, Web Ad.vantage would donate $1,500.00 to a charity that the survey participants could vote for at the close of the survey. The survey respondents chose to support breast cancer, and a donation was made to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation headquartered in NYC.

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ABOUT WEB AD.VANTAGE

Founded in 1998, Web Ad.vantage is an online marketing company that provides strategic Internet marketing services, including: search engine optimization, PPC campaign management, online media planning, social media marketing, and Internet marketing consulting.

Web Ad.vantage collaborative, high-touch, results-centric approach to solutions has consistently garnered awards and loyal clients, including: Nokia USA, Baltimore Area Convention & Visitors Association, Nature Made Vitamins, Check Point Software, St. Agnes Hospital, Johns Hopkins University, Blair Corporation, Long Fence, and Sunoco.

President and founder Hollis Thomases won 2008 "Enterprising Woman of the Year," was the Maryland 2007 SBA "Small Business Person of the Year," and authors the "Online Media Buying Agency Strategies" column for ClickZ.com and "Business Perspective on Online Marketing" for citybizlist.com's CityBizBlogs.

Learn more about Web Ad.vantage's Internet Marketing Services at http://www.webadvantage.net/

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