

Revolutionising the Digital Ad Space



Wissam Badine

Over the past decade, we've seen advertising agencies rapidly shift towards digital communication, yet they haven't fully embraced the power of interactivity. This is why Eastline Marketing, a leading digital agency, has come up with a truly innovative solution: Social Ads. Because of other traditional online media's poor results, these well-seasoned online marketing experts have devised a solution that will finally deliver significant results. Here to tell us more about this breakthrough is **Wissam Badine**, Chief Strategist and Partner at Eastline Marketing.

What created the need for a solution like Social Ads?

For now, about 8 percent of the total advertising spend in the Arab region goes to online media. We're expecting this figure to reach 10 percent by 2015, and amount to \$1 billion by 2017, which goes to show how fast the advertising landscape is shifting. In comparison, the banner ads medium is quickly becoming irrelevant. On an average Lebanese website, click-through rates (CTR) range from 0.1 percent to 0.3 percent for a cost-per-thousand impressions (CPM) of \$10. In layman's terms, if an advertiser wants his ad to appear a thousand times, he will have to pay \$10, but he can only expect 1 to 3 viewers to click on it. If you reverse this equation, any client looking to generate 3,000 visits to his website will have to pay anywhere between \$10,000-\$30,000. This is not good enough because it's a big expense for a low result, which is leaving both clients and agencies unsatisfied.

How would you define a successful online advertising campaign?

Online, users are content consumers, so if you want to grab your audience's attention, interesting content is what you have to deliver. This is why we've seen an incredible rise in native advertising spend. Facebook has sponsored posts, Twitter has sponsored tweets, Google places ads at the top of its search results and video ads at the beginning of YouTube clips. It's a very simple application of a marketing rule that says *"speak the language of your audience."*

What makes Social Ads different from traditional banner ads?

Users want to tell their stories just as much as the brand and traditional banner ads only allow one-way communication. Audiences love engaging, sharing their opinion and talking about their experience with the product or brand. Banners retain the user's attention for an extremely short amount of time.

Since publishers place too many of them on a single page, it creates a negative experience for the user, who chooses to ignore them. On the other hand, Social Ads are integrated in the website's content thus creating a non-intrusive and seamless user experience. Regarding the advertiser, banner ads only deliver two KPIs: impressions and clicks. However, Social Ads take things a lot farther with a wide combination of KPIs, customised according to the kind of content they display. It's not just about clicks and impressions anymore, it's also about likes, tweets, follows, shares, comments, favourites and so on. For all of these reasons, social ads provide much higher CTRs than traditional banner ads.

How are Social Ads changing online advertising?

What really drove the success of Facebook ads was the possibility for users to take action through commenting, liking or sharing. We thought of ways to export that power

and make it available to the consumer all over the web. And that's exactly what Social Ads are about. We debuted our solution with Al-Wadi Al-Akhdar and reached a 1.5 percent CTR, about five times the average performance of a traditional banner ad. In contrast, Social Ads are changing advertising as we know it because they allow clients and advertisers to leverage their social media, blog or website content by turning it into interactive media for the consumer. What sets the whole solution apart is that it inherits all the main social actions. By integrating said actions, Social Ads create a friendly and comfortable consumption space for the end user. It is the first and only solution of its kind in the world.

Imagine transforming the whole web into a massive social network!

What are Premium Social Ads?

Social Ads is also a platform that allows you to run premium media ads such as

quizzes or lead-generation forms without the need for extra development cost. Clients don't need to create a separate landing page or micro site anymore since premium Social Ads can make the ads expandable to host customised forms, pages or even applications. With our years of experience, we were able to make this platform so flexible that it is now usable anywhere and compatible with most ad servers.

So what now?

Well, we've had some time to work with a few clients and now that we've returned with positive results, we are more excited than ever to share our solution with the world. We are working on a Social Ads dashboard that will give clients access to real-time analytics as well as allow them to customise and run their own social ads without the need for our assistance. We've also revamped the Social Ads website that includes an explainer video and some live examples. Between easy implementation, high

customisation and action-friendly user experience, it seems that Social Ads are finally bridging the gap between content and traditional online advertising while leveraging the power of social media actions. In other words, Social Ads incorporate both the paid, owned, media platforms all at once. ■



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