

ONLINE POLITICAL ADVERTISING GAINING MOMENTUM



Voters in the states of Iowa and New Hampshire, as they browse the internet, are probably finding advertisements for Republican Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama next to advertisements for electronics and other holiday gifts. The advertisements for the campaigns will follow the voters all over the internet. Those ads will appear in Google search results, on social networking websites, and on news websites. Advertising on the internet used to be solely for reaching young consumers but it now encompasses presidential and other political campaigns as the 2012 election comes into focus. Experts in the advertising industry do not expect online ads to replace TV ads anytime soon but they are believed to be the most nimble ads available because they are very affordable. "Online advertising cuts through because of its ability to target. It's unparalleled in any other medium," said Romney's digital director, Zac Moffatt. "TV may be more effective for driving a big message, but per usage, the Internet is more powerful. We are probably one presidential cycle from everyone believing that." Online advertisements come in various types; the text-only advertisement, the graphic advertisement, video advertisements and even pre-rolls. Pre-rolls are 15 to 30 second commercials that a viewer will have to watch before a news clip or YouTube video loads onto their screen. Online advertisements can target people based on their zip code, their demographics, and their internet browsing history. Television advertisements are used to reach a mass audience at one time. For instance, if someone has visited the Obama campaign website, that person will more than likely begin seeing Obama online ads on almost all of the websites they visit that post ads. "When someone expresses interest in politics online, it's an incredibly good time for the campaigns to talk to them," said Andrew Roos, a Google account leader. Roos also works with Democratic campaigns, helping figure out their internet ad strategy. "You want to grab people when they are paying attention and ask them to take another action, like send money or attend an offline event. It's an old-school organization principle that has been working its way online." As the corporate industry moved to the internet years ago to advertise products and services, campaigns did not make the move until recently. In the third quarter of 2011, internet advertising revenue jumped to \$7.9 billion, which is up by 22 percent from the third quarter of 2010. Companies are spending anywhere from 18 to 28 percent of their advertising budgets on online ads. This can be compared to campaigns that spent no more than 5 percent of their ad budgets for internet ads. "Online ads are very metric driven — you can figure out how many impressions you got, how many people clicked, how many people signed up for an email address. All of that is calculated in real time," Google's Roos said. "It's much more efficient than direct mail and TV."

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