Native Advertising
is in Town

By Ala Alaeddin

I n the new digital era, people are becoming more and more resistant to traditional advertising. They change the TV channel once an ad appears, or even use IPTV that has zero advertisements. The time spent listening to the radio is becoming less frequent, and print newspapers have all but disappeared. One would think that traditional digital media advertising is the solution, but guess what? Readers have become more aware of all types of traditional digital advertising, such as Web banners, and they are learning how to ignore it. What is the solution, you ask? Native advertising. Native advertising is "paid advertising where the ad matches the form, feel and function of the content of the media on which it appears."[i]

"It has been found that the less an advertisement looks like an advertisement and the more it looks like an editorial, the more readers stop, look and read." David Ogilvy, known as the father of advertising

In other words, native advertising does not look anything at all like advertising; rather it appears to be part of the content and thus attracts the readers to click on it since it matches their interests. The success of native advertising depends on how well the promotional content dissolves into the real content and how difficult it is for readers to distinguish between the two.

We have all seen native advertising on the Web, but for sure we haven't realized it since it appeared to be genuine content rather than advertising. Next time you read an article on any news website pay attention to the section that follows that article, which might be labeled as "Content from Web," or "Related Articles," or "Other Articles." In the midst of those articles, you can find very tiny grey sentences under which are found headings such as "Sponsored Content" or the name of specific advertisers. This is native advertising.

Studies show that, compared to other tools, native advertising generates the highest CTR (click-through rate). This has already been proven throughout Europe and the United States, and recently in the Arab World. In addition, 33 percent of readers are equally inclined to click on an article that comes from a brand as on an editorial article.[ii]

We can't talk about native advertising without touching on content advertising. Although some people consider native advertising a synonym for content advertising, it is in fact a totally different tool. Content advertising is the creation of content in order to promote some product or event, for instance. This content could be distributed through paid channels, such as Google ads or PPC, by placing it on certain websites. A good example is an article about tips on what to look for when buying appliances for the purpose of promoting a certain brand. The article would speak about this particular brand, highlight its advantages, and make comparisons with other brands. Content advertising can be direct or indirect. The above example that highlights a certain brand is called direct advertising since it mentions the brand in a very clear way. On the other hand, indirect marketing would convince the reader in a subtle way that this is the best brand, without directly highlighting it.

And in case you are wondering: In Palestine? Yes! Native advertising is available in Palestine and has already been installed on many Palestinian websites.

I n the United States and Europe there are many significant native- and content-ad networks that dominate the markets, for example, Recontent, Outbrain, Taboola, and Gravity.

Advertisers can now use this tool through Digital Plus, with affiliation to MPI (Market Place Investment) powered by Postquare. There are more than 3,500 websites spread throughout the Arab world. Content advertising is found there as well.

So next time you want to run a digital media campaign, make sure to include native and/or content advertising as one of the primary tools.

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[i] Anders Vinderslev, *Native Advertising Definition*, Native Advertising Institute, March 2015, available at http://nativeadvertisinginstitute.com/blog/the-definition-of-native-advertising/.

[ii] Jesper Laursen, "Native Advertising: The way to speed up content marketing," #44, in Slideshare, June 2016, available at http://www.slideshare.net/ContentNorge/native-advertising-the-way-to-speed-up-content-marketing.

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*Comscore study, June 2013
** ContentPlus research, 2013

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