

Jason Louv Company

The Jason Louv Company

After the Virus: Advertising in the Age of BitTorrent and YouTube

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If pornographers are inevitably the first to take advantage of any new medium, advertisers are often the last, perpetually in a race to discover how to capitalize on new modes of communication just as artists race to find ways to use them to show the human experience from new angles. From the Winston cigarette commercials that pioneered the age of television advertising to the dawn of the Internet pop-up ad, redirecting some of the attention directed at new media towards client interests has been the order of the day. While the “media virus” and “viral marketing” were metaphors developed to align advertising with the age of the HTML, the internet experience is now dominated by peer-to-peer file sharing programs like BitTorrent, and slowly replacing older media—what forms need advertising mutate into to communicate its message in such an environment?

The rush to adapt has already begun—ad campaigns like the Dove Self-Esteem Fund have even taken root in Second Life, a foretaste of what ad-saturated virtual reality will look like. As computer technology improves and high-speed internet becomes more readily available, especially in the third world, there’s no telling what new challenges digital media will pose to older, more entrenched models. While television and movie concerns wring their hands over loss of product to YouTube, and the music industry shrinks before the onslaught of BitTorrent, will the advertising industry be similarly affected, or will it thrive by capitalizing on such an open exchange of information by finding ways to effectively insert its message into the flow. (Could it be any truer, for instance, that the first team to figure out how to advertise effectively on YouTube will become the newest billionaires of the decade?)

Written by antlerhead

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