



# Steel Cage Debate: The Future of Online Advertising and Apologies from Vanilla Ice

*A discussion between Wharton Professor Eric Clemons, and Danny Sullivan, Editor-in-Chief of SearchEngineLand.com about the future of the online advertising industry and campaigns from the field.*

Dear Reader,

This month's edition of the Goviral Newsletter brings you some very interesting recent campaigns, as well as a debate about the future of online advertising. Eric Clemons recently published a some very controversial statements, which have led to wide debate on the subject. Follow the discussion and rebuttals here or perhaps join in on the discussion your self?

Enjoy!

## Sony VAIO: Mannequins

Advertising is constantly developing to be up-to-date with consumer preferences and styles. This new campaign from the Sony VAIO brand might have gotten its inspiration from the recent T-Mobile campaign from the UK but does an excellent job itself. Sony used models looking and acting like robotic mannequins and placed them in public places around **New York** demonstrating the new lifestyle computer Sony Vaio Notebook.



They also made a showpiece out of themselves at the **Bryant Park Fashion show**, which resulted in some very positive PR. They further built on this attention and launched video sequences of the events online. Sony also created channels on Youtube, designated to the VAIO mannequins, published profiles across social media on Facebook and Flickr. Although the potential could most likely have been better realized with a clearer and more aggressive distribution strategy, the campaign was very original.

[Campaign website](#)  
Grand Central Station

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## Henkel: Powertape

The size and character of online campaigns varies to a large extent. Some brands are successful in orchestrating a brief viral video campaign, creating massive awareness for a short period of time, and then reaping the advantages of the long tail of internet distribution. As users and brands are becoming increasingly adapt to the viral genre, it is beginning to grow and evolve. Henkel has created a massive online campaign, advertising for their brand of strong power tape, Pattex.



But unlike smaller and simpler campaigns, this one is centred around a campaign website. This can usually be a bad distribution strategy, since users are not provided with any incentives to visit the site – despite the quality of the material. The large video sharing sites have begun to pick up some videos from this campaign, and it will be interesting to observe, whether Henkel will have a substantial momentum in their online distribution to reach critical mass.

Once users are visiting the campaign website, they are provided with all the incentives in the world to stay. You can vote on best video, win 10,000 €, watch photos of alternative uses of power tape or simply just sit back and enjoy the collection of very cool and entertaining videos. Many of the creative ideas are very original and well executed. Go to the website and watch for instance '*Vous Faire Passer au 90B*' or '*Initier l'art de Sumos a Paris*'.

NB: The site is in French, but everything is easy to understand.

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## Virgin Mobile: Right Mucis Wrongs

As mobile phones are becoming better and better for playing music on the go, it is not unusual for phone companies to integrate musical themes and elements in their marketing campaigns. Virgin Mobile Australia recently launched a campaign for undoing all the musical failures of the past. They wanted to make a stand against bad music and created this campaign online, and optimized for access from mobiles as well.



The website is loaded with content for users to immerse into for hours at a time. Some of the main features include the “Top 10 Music Wrongs” chart, presenting some of the major wrongs, mainly from the 90’ies. Most of us will either love it or hate it. The creative idea behind the chart is to open a national debate on what bad music really is. Vanilla Ice was put on trial and forced to pay his apologies for the all time best selling rap song – Ice Ice Baby. The users did find him innocent, though. Other candidates for the chart are David Hasselhoff for ‘Hooked on a Feeling’, and former Posh Spice Victoria Beckham is on it for everything, she ever did! Users can report a wrong themselves, which further add to the community feel and potential for user engagement.

The website also serves as a platform for the V Festival, Virgin Mobile’s own music festival in Australia. This way, users are presented with an entire universe that evolves around music, while constantly being reminded of the Virgin Mobile brand to associate with music. It’s very cleverly planned, but it’s also just plain funny to listen to some of these old ‘love them or hate them’ tracks.

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## Insight - Steel Cage Debate On The Future Of Online Advertising: Danny Sullivan Vs. Eric Clemons

As the battle between traditional and online advertising is raging, we sometimes forget to question some of the very most basic assumptions of advertising. What do consumers actually want? Do they need the commercial messages, we try to convey? Is advertising annoying spam in the clutter of an already noisy environment? Or is it rather a means to reduce the growing complexity of consumerism?

In this month’s insight, we tune in on a recent debate between Wharton Professor Eric Clemons and Danny Sullivan, Editor-in-Chief of SearchEngineLand.com Follow the discussion online [here](#) or contribute your self in some of the many channels; this debate has already spread to.

Techcrunch recently published a post by Wharton Professor Eric Clemons by the controversial title of [Why Advertising Is Failing On The Internet](#). Clemons argued that the recent drop in online advertising is not caused by the financial crisis but was caused by a decline in the relevance of internet advertising. He further argued that consumers neither trust, want or need advertising. Another interesting argument, Clemons suggests, is that Google is more in the business of misdirection, than the advertising business. These are some fairly bold statements in a time, where online advertising consecutively has seen double or triple digits growth over the last years. At the time of writing, this post has caused more than 700 comments, which indicates the level of controversy of the statement.

Some of Clemons’ main statements are:

- Users don’t trust ads
- Users don’t want to view ads
- Users don’t need ads
- Ads cannot be the sole source of funding for the internet
- Ad revenue will diminish because of brutal competition brought on by an oversupply of inventory, and it will be replaced in many instances by micropayments and subscription payments for content.
- There are numerous other business models that will work on the net, that will be tried, and that will succeed.

Sullivan rebutes many of these assumptions very persuasively, and argues that users in fact does not care about viewing ads, if content is provided for free in return. He further argues that the metrics of online advertising are far better than those of offline advertising, which surely very few would question by now.

Although some of Clemons’ points seem a little ‘traditional’, his attempt nevertheless raises some important questions, we all need to consider. We should never take for granted that consumers or users will automatically prefer, which ever content they are treated. Nor should we stop to question the quality, of what we serve them.

Read some of the other interesting comments or join in on the debate yourself.

Russell Foltz-Smith joins the debate with some very heavy [rebuttals](#) on his blog, Social Mode. David Dalka joins the debate [here](#), with some managerial perspectives on online advertising.

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Kind regards,

Frederik Thestrup, Editor

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