

# The Online Advertising Scandal

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The World Wide Web was an enormous step for mankind, a step not seen since Neil Armstrong sullied the surface of the moon. The idea behind the WWW came across as a veritable information highway where documents, data and info could be rapidly sent and accessed by millions the world over. The potential behind the web is enormous and even now the scope is not fully utilized. The possibilities for growth, for extended usage, are available and enormous yet the system is stagnating and it is very possible that people will soon turn away. The average person seeking information may well return to old-fashioned libraries and the good old book to find the information that they require if the face and image of the WWW is not altered very soon and in-line with customer demand.{bot\_wrgoogle}

The ability of any user to gain information from the Internet is enormous, simple and with positive results. But the information received is increasingly becoming that which a paying body prescribes and thus is advertisement biased or pointed towards the end purchase of a product. Hotels advertise a city or holiday resort with the point of view of potential tourists coming to stay. A detailed description of moon cakes in Taiwan although complete and detailed would certainly be with aim to make people buy some from the store hosting the website involved.

Initially the Internet was heralded as a one-stop point for gaining any type or form of information with the click of the mouse. This is certainly true except with regard to loose information that has no affiliation towards an end purchase or a users change of heart. Certainly this type of information is available and millions of websites exist but unless a user has prior information on how to access this site then the chance of it being found amongst the masses is minimal. Most web users find or locate information by using a search engine. Most web users input their request and wait for results to come up as prescribed and ordered by the search engine system. If for example a request was entered for "travel tales on the sea" many, possibly thousands of choices will appear in return. Number one in the pole position will probably be Amazon.com who feels certain that anybody looking for a story would probably find it amongst their collection – naturally obtainable at a price. The next on the list might be Ebay who feel that certain travel products might appease the searcher or it might be goarticles.com an articles selling service who would assume that travel tales of the sea would be somebody looking to buy such from them and for their own use.

Certainly each and every result that is produced on the first page would point the user towards large companies who are selling an item of one sort or another. The user though may in fact just want to read some Travel Tales of the Sea without having to fork out cash or to issue his/her credit card information over the Internet.

In the bowels of the search results in pages that are covered in dust will reside some very comprehensive and useful websites, eg: <http://www.seadolby.com> a website that is filled with free and in-depth Travel Tales of the Sea. The

possibility of any user keeping interest long enough to get to this web site listing is minimal and long before it is reached the user has either fallen asleep or entered another search on a different note. In short the average user does not get past the first page of a search engines results and probably not past the first three that come up: e.g. amazon.com, ebay.com and goarticles.com

Although not-for-profit informational web sites are many and filled with amazing and detailed info these sites ability to gain attention on the world stage is difficult unless money is poured in to boost their ratings and rank positions on the search engine results. Nowadays many search engines have entered the pay-per-click arena with companies putting forward money to buy keywords that will most likely be used to boost their website. Some company buys the word "Travel" and this word is then basically lost forever to the lone free-for-all info site who cannot afford to pay money to boost their popularity.

The art of advertising and paying for positions on search engines is only available to the sites that can afford the exorbitant fees. Should a lone site owner who has built his site-up decide to fork out of his own pocket the money to boost his ratings this will only be achieved on one or two search engines or directories and the amount required to compete with the mega-sites is far beyond any hobbyist can afford. Naturally the ability to submit ones site on free inclusion pages and directories is available but as the webmaster and author behind Seamania found out, so much energy and time is spent on advancing the ratings of his site that not enough time is given to the writing of travel tales of the sea, which of course is the basis and sole point behind the website in the first place.

Large for profit websites can afford to hire web-orientated staff to control, advertise and spend time on boosting the rankings of their particular website. Single owner for profit websites can afford to pay marketing specialists and to buy keywords at exorbitant rates. The lone not-for-profit website owner can either spend all day and all week controlling and submitting his site to the thousands of ever changing search engines and directories and suffer from a serious loss of updated content on his/her website or place emphasis on building up content and never have a visitor to his portal.

Many other factors go towards reducing the effectiveness of the individual website than just search result rankings. Many single website owners operate outdated and very slow computers, use old or outdated software and only perform on odd occasions when not playing with their children or busy at work. Many other free info sites have found that subscribing to some lists to boost their rankings has in-fact reduced them to near invisibility. Google and now other search engines condemn sites for using link pages that they themselves do not agree with, so by simply subscribing or joining one of these sites Google may drop a future crawl of the website involved. It is also impossible for the lone not-for-profit website to keep up with ever changing trends and policies. Where payment is made for a lifetimes inclusion in a search engine, the next year may see the demise of this particular engine or its partnering up with another – thus the lifetimes inclusion becomes null and void and to prevent being dropped from the listings another fee is required – read the small print!

Other means to increase visibility is often initiated by offering advertising space to companies like Google, Barnes and Noble or other directories or affiliates. This can result in a slight income for websites (The Seamania website made 40US dollars over the last three months) but never enough to afford placement on search engine results or to purchase keywords. It is also against the grain for many free-info website owners to have to place advertising on their websites as not only is it taking up valuable space it detracts and reduces the free effect the content within. Furthermore should a website choose one companies advertising it may boost their rankings within one search engine

but equally so reduce it in another's e.g. allowing Google advertising space on an index page may increase the page rank in Google but seriously reduce it in Yahoos search results and possible exclusion from their Yahoo Directory.

From the point of view of an Internet User in search of free and not-for-profit biased information he/she does not want to see endless sites where a visa card is required to proceed further. It would be very nice to see the advancement of such directories like Zeal.com who divide their listings into those for profit and those who generally provide valuable and non-profit orientated formation. Naturally the question arises as to how such a search engine would manage to cover the costs of these listings but generally with the amount of people available who regard the Internet as a toy and a hobby projects such as Editor of a category volunteers should not be hard to recruit. The other way would be to have search engines run and operated by governments like public libraries are or built and operated by universities as part of study programs – something practical for students to involve themselves with.

Directories abound whose content is managed by volunteers, the Open Directory Project being the most famous. But sites such as Seamania have found to their detriment that trying to get noticed in amongst the debris found in these directories is not easy. Seamania was originally listed as a Personal website in the boating category but over time the emphasis and content of the website has evolved to become a general travel website. It has though proved impossible to change the location of the site in the Dmoz directory to a travel listing rather than a boating listing.

If at all possible and to prevent users who are sick of being asked for their credit card information or being given 30 different porn sites upon entering Travel Tales of the Sea into a search engine, it would be nice to see a shift in emphasis in the way that the search engines operate their listings.

Certainly the idea of switching on a computer and being faced with two choices, one for sites that are-for-profit and one that points towards not-for-profit sites would be a dream come true. To enter in a search request and to not find amazon.com or ebay.com in the first few results would put cheer to any searchers hopes of finding what he wants. And maybe in this way a true exchange of information may be facilitated and the mass exodus of searchers back to the public library for information may be halted.

## About The Author

Ieuan Dolby - Author and Webmaster of Seamania. As a Chief Engineer in the Merchant Navy he has sailed the world for fifteen years. Now living in Taiwan he writes about cultures across the globe and life as he sees it.

[seadolby.com](http://seadolby.com)