

Will Google's advertising investment in Chrome payoff?



By [Craig Kolb](#)

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In September 2008, Google Chrome was released to the world as an alternative to Microsoft's market leading Internet Explorer. Americans have since been subjected to an unprecedented barrage of advertising which, fortunately or unfortunately, we seem to have escaped in Africa.

Almost 18% of American browser users had seen a Google Chrome advert in the four-week period prior to the survey, from 9 February to 8 March 2010. This has successfully driven up consumer awareness levels. This begs the question though, "Is Google's advertising investment enough to make the new browser a success?". Will Chrome replace Internet Explorer as the dominant browser or at least replace Firefox as the main alternative to Internet Explorer?

Survey in a key market

To answer this question and other marketing questions, an online concept test survey was conducted by Acentric within the USA market in March 2010. How Chrome performs in this key market is likely to determine the outcome of the browser battle in Africa.

While the survey revealed Chrome has achieved high levels of prompted awareness (48%), it still only controls a small fraction of the market. As of 9 March 2010, Chrome controlled a miniscule 4%* of the home consumer market in the USA.

Projections using the Acentric Express Test model revealed an eventual market share peak of at most 18.82% (taking into account sampling error*), for the current incarnation of Google Chrome. In effect this means that no matter how much Google invests in advertising, the current browser concept is not likely to exceed 18.82%. This leaves Google in an awkward position if it aims to even claim the number two position ahead of Firefox.

The consumer's point of view

Google Chrome's main strength is its speed according to the consumer's surveyed. This is closely followed by its zen-like simplicity.

However, being slightly faster and simpler than other browsers does not appear to be enough of a value proposition. Most consumers did not feel that Google Chrome's browser was "unique" enough and an even greater number did not feel it was "important" to them. In short the message from consumers was that Chrome is not strongly differentiated enough to make a real difference in their lives.

Internet Explorer's dominance is in part due to it being a standard installation when purchasing a PC or laptop, and it was clear from the survey a large number of users also happen to prefer it. In particular older users aged 35 and above seem to prefer it. Younger users had a clear preference for Firefox and a greater number also preferred Chrome when compared to the older group.

Rather take on Firefox

In summary Google's investment in browser advertising is unprecedented, but advertising on its own is clearly not enough. Google will have to improve its current product offering to gain traction.

Firefox has already successfully positioned its browser as the "Microsoft alternative" designed to appeal to those who simply want to spite Microsoft or perhaps simply want more features. Google needs to take aim at Firefox users, not just Microsoft users many of whom are quite comfortable with what is in practice a default setting on their computers. This means taking aim at younger consumers (below 35 years) who have a clear preference for alternative brands and the battle will be waged against Firefox not Internet Explorer within this group.

**A 3.84% sampling margin of error applies to this statistic (95% confidence, n=100).*

ABOUT CRAIG KOLB

Craig Kolb owns and operates South African marketing research consultancy, Acentric. Kolb has a decade of experience in the field of marketing research. His areas of expertise include: research management, statistical analysis, marketing research methodology, questionnaire design, interpretation and report writing. He is widely published in the area of marketing research, having written numerous articles and conference papers for both local and international conferences. Contact Craig at craigkolb@acentric.co.za.

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