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Raghuram Rajan

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# Advertising technology companies target Internet users who browse in languages other than English

By Payal Ganguly, ET Bureau | 5 Feb, 2015, 01.11PM IST

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"Advertisers are not leveraging vernacular languages."

HYDERABAD: Advertising technology companies are coming up with strategies and products targeted at Internet users browsing in languages other than English and bundling them with analytics that will collect data on user preferences and measure reach.

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The platforms offered by ad... will not only make digital ad... languages more relevant, it... them an edge over pureplay... companies.

"Advertisers are not leveraging vernacular languages efficiently. While the destination is in a local language, the banner ads are usually in English," says Dippak Khurana of Vserv, which developed a product to display advertising in the same language as the website being viewed and currently supports 21 Indian languages.

Incorporated in 2010, Vserv is targeting revenue of \$100 million (Rs 617 crore) by FY 2015-16 and is in talks to raise \$15 million. The company works with advertisers including Freecharge, Snapdeal and Paytm. While language is an issue, the bigger problem is data, according to Khurana.

"Our analytics platform is language-agnostic. What we are gathering is additional data on customer's language preference. The need is to drive the relevant users," he says. The use of vernacular content online is estimated to increase from 45% in 2013 to more than 60% in 2018, mirroring consumption patterns in mainstream media such as print and television, according to a report by the Internet & Mobile Association of India.

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The growth points to the need for greater analysis of digital advertising in local languages.

"There is no choice in terms of advertising in local languages. While the key data points measured to gauge the success of English and non-English ads are the same, the challenge is to map the sites people visit for targeting the right audience," says Ambika Sharma, managing director and CEO of [Pulp Strategy Communications](#).

Looking beyond display ads, the focus has shifted to engaging consumers through content related to the product or service.

"We have developed a product which provides relevant image and content for searches in 27 different languages. It is a big risk to take as the brand association with a specific image has to be positive," says Samar Varma, founder and CEO of Fork Media, which started developing the local-language focussed technology a month ago.

The company incubated with Rishi Khiani-led AntFarm is likely to generate Rs 18 to 20 crore in revenue for FY 2014-15.

This new market has not been captured by third-party data analytics companies, which map consumer behaviour predictions. "A library gets built around a language and based on search of keywords, it is determined which ads can be targeted at the user. The library of related words around a search term has to be built separately for each language and that will take time," says Ajay Kelkar, COO and founder at Hansa Cequity, a marketing services company which combines data and analytics technology.

He adds that the major challenge for advertisers using end-to-end platforms offered by adtech companies that integrate analytics and local-language platforms for digital advertising would be to become hostage to the services of a single agency.

This is an opportunity ad-tech companies will look to cash in on, given the slow movement of third-party analytics providers.

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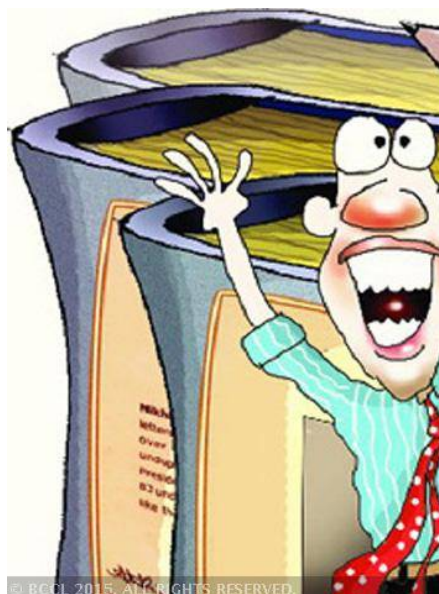
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