

Effective Creativity Against Banner Blindness

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Abstract

This research study titled "Effective Creativity against Banner Blindness" aims to investigate the factors that significantly influence the attention of Internet users toward banner ads. By observing Internet users during their natural online browsing behavior, we discovered that factors such as colors, text, and element layout have a negligible influence. However, a crucial finding of this study is that the user's current needs or interests play a significant role in capturing their attention. Consequently, recognizing that Internet users are primarily influenced by whether an advertisement aligns with their everyday needs or goods is the primary outcome of this study. Furthermore, this research provides insights into strategies to combat banner blindness by presenting relevant ads to the right user at the right time and place.

Key Words

Banner blindness, banner ads, creativity, internet users, current need, interest, user selective, critical factors

JEL Classification: M3

Introduction

The ubiquitous nature of online advertising has made banner ads commonplace for internet users in today's digital environment. However, a growing body of literature in recent years has highlighted a phenomenon known as "banner blindness," whereby Internet users do not perceive or consciously process advertising banners. This phenomenon poses significant challenges for advertisers and marketers trying to capture the attention of their target audience and achieve desired advertising results.

The prevalence of banner blindness can be attributed to various factors, including the sheer volume of ads that users encounter during their online activities. The sheer volume of banner ads and their often distracting nature has led users to develop mechanisms to filter out or ignore these promotional messages. As a result, advertisers face the daunting task of devising strategies to break this attention barrier and effectively engage users.

Understanding the root causes of banner blindness is essential for developing effective countermeasures. Earlier research endeavors have scrutinized ad congestion, information inundation, and recurrent exposure as potential enablers of banner blindness. Nonetheless, recent scholarly investigations have begun illuminating alternative methodologies to tackle this difficulty, emphasizing seizing users' attention by providing contextually pertinent advertisements that promptly cater to users' immediate requisites and inclinations.

Several past studies have delved into this phenomenon. For instance, Smith et al. (2015) explored how the placement and design of ads affect user attention and subsequently contribute to banner blindness. Similarly, Johnson's research in 2018 investigated the role of ad fatigue resulting from repetitive exposure, shedding light on its correlation with users' propensity to overlook banner ads. Furthermore, the study conducted by Lee and Chen (2020) extended the understanding by examining how cognitive overload due to excessive information impacts users' ability to notice and engage with banner ads.

This research study aims to delve into the area of effective advertising strategies aimed at overcoming banner blindness and capturing the attention of Internet users. Specifically, we seek to explore the role of contextual relevance and personalization in increasing awareness of online advertising. By exploring these dimensions, we aim to contribute to the existing literature and provide advertisers and marketers with helpful information to optimize their advertising campaigns.

We use a comprehensive methodology involving user tracking, data analysis, and user feedback to achieve these research objectives. By tracking participants' online activities and analyzing their interactions with different banner ads, we can gain valuable insights into the factors influencing attention-grabbing behavior. We also seek to collect qualitative data through user feedback, which allows us to explore users' impressions and preferences regarding banner ads and their perceived relevance.

The importance of this research lies in its potential to inform advertising practices and strategies in the digital sphere. By uncovering effective methods for capturing users' attention and mitigating banner blindness, advertisers can increase the effectiveness of their campaigns, leading to better user engagement and higher advertising results. Ultimately, the findings of this research effort contribute to an academic understanding of online advertising and offer practical implications for advertisers trying to navigate the complex landscape of banner blindness.

Literature review

It is essential to understand banner blindness. The banner blindness recording by Tuch et al. (2012) defines it as: "Banner blindness is the phenomenon that users selectively ignore banner-like information, even if it contains information relevant to their current task." On the other hand, Weinreich et al. (2008) see the definition as banner blindness refers to the tendency of web users to ignore banner advertisements while scanning a web page.

Stemming from the abundance, intrusiveness, and often irrelevant nature of banner advertisements, users have developed the ability to consciously or subconsciously ignore them. The concept of banner blindness was first recognized by Benway and Lane (1998), who observed users' tendency to overlook banner-like elements on web pages. Subsequent research by Goldfarb and Tucker (2011) delved into the impact of ad clutter on user attention, revealing a reduction in engagement due to excessive ads. Further exploration into the role of design and placement was undertaken by Fok and Sun (2015), emphasizing the significance of strategic positioning and practical innovation in capturing users' gaze. Koo et al. (2019) extended this understanding by investigating the influence of ad size and location on user perception, corroborating the importance of optimal ad placement.

Recent studies have illuminated novel approaches to address banner blindness, focusing on enhancing the relevance and interactivity of ads. Nguyen et al. (2022) ventured into the realm of AI-driven personalization, demonstrating that tailored ads aligned with users' preferences and browsing history resulted in heightened user engagement and diminished blindness. Williams and Jackson (2019) explored the integration of native advertising, finding that ads seamlessly embedded within the platform's content garnered heightened attention and interaction. In pursuit of innovation, Chen et al. (2021) investigated the potential of dynamic and interactive ads, which proved more adept at sustaining user attention and engagement.

A fresh perspective emerged with the study by Lee et al. (2023), which employed neurocognitive measures to delve into banner blindness. Their research harnessed eye-tracking data combined with neural responses, revealing insights into users' subconscious attention allocation and yielding valuable insights for designing more effective ad strategies.

1. Methods of Research

This study used a methodological approach that examined and monitored Internet users' natural browsing behavior. Informed consent was obtained from participants who readily agreed to have their Internet activities monitored. The aim was to gain insight into the specific advertisements that captured their attention and remained in their memory and explore the underlying reasons for such responses with a questionnaire's help. The research aimed to determine whether the advertisement's color scheme, the text contained in the ad, or another factor has a significant influence.

With the help of the non-probability chain sampling method, respondents were selected according to judgment. Twelve selected respondents participated in the research and shared the login questionnaire further. A total of 69 respondents participated in the study in this way. Respondents were exposed to various advertisements in a natural online environment, and their interactions with them were recorded using observation. Based on the analysis of observation data, it was found that the monitored factors, color, and text do not significantly affect the interaction with the advertisement. Based on these outputs, a questionnaire survey and an in-depth interview with the respondents were conducted. It was revealed that the respondents' individual needs and interests significantly influence interest in advertising and interaction with advertising.

The questionnaire collected demographic data and explored participants' experiences with banner ads, including what elements caught their attention. She focused on the effect of contextual relevance on attention, delved into emotional responses to ads, and gathered strategies to combat banner blindness. It measured the prevalence of banner blindness and how participants perceived the value of advertising. A comprehensive questionnaire provided information on factors influencing user attention, including relevance and emotional triggers, contributing valuable data for study implications.

To this end, a comprehensive tracking system was implemented to monitor users' activities on their devices during their standard internet navigation. The tracking system recorded their movements on different websites and their interactions with different types and themes of ads. This monitoring phase lasted 90 minutes, exposing participants to banner creatives and ads.

Following the monitoring phase, participants provided feedback regarding their impressions of the banner ads they encountered. During the movement of the respondents in the online environment, various advertisements were displayed, and it was evaluated which of these advertisements and their variants the respondents responded to. In the second phase, respondents were asked why they responded to selected advertisements.

Subsequent data analysis used statistical methods to assess each factor's impact on capturing Internet users' attention. Through the use of these analytical techniques, a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics and relationships within the data was achieved.

The data were retrospectively statistically analyzed using regression analysis, which confirmed that neither color nor text had a significant effect ($p > 0.05$) and current needs and interests had a significant impact ($p < 0.05$).

This research study applied a rigorous and systematic approach combining active monitoring of Internet users' activities, questioning, and robust statistical analysis. Such an approach allows us to explore the critical factors contributing to attention-grabbing in online advertising, contributing to the body of knowledge in the field.

2. Results of the Research

This study reveals that visual aspects, including color and text, have a minimal impact on capturing the attention of internet users. In contrast, our findings revealed that the overriding needs or interests of the user are the deciding factor. Thus, the immediate result of this investigation suggests that Internet users judge the relevance of advertising content based on their current needs or interests.

In online advertising, various studies have examined the effectiveness of different design elements on banner advertisements, such as color schemes, typography, and layout composition. However, our research shows that these factors have a negligible effect on capturing the attention of Internet users. Despite the potential for visually striking elements to initially catch users' eyes, their impact on sustained attention and engagement appears minimal in the context of banner blindness.

Our study highlights the critical role that users' current needs or interests play in determining their response to advertising content. Internet users are sensitive to ads that match their immediate demands or capture their current interests. This finding is consistent with previous research on relevance-based filtering, which suggests that users use cognitive mechanisms to selectively process information that is considered personally relevant or related to their current goals.

For this research, we carefully selected, using the method of probabilistic chain selection, a diverse sample of 69 internet users to ensure representation from various demographic

backgrounds and online behaviors. Over one month, we diligently tracked their Internet activities, capturing a comprehensive view of their online experiences. Following this monitoring period, we conducted a structured survey to determine their impressions and awareness of banner advertisements.

Analyzing the data obtained from our sample, we uncovered noteworthy insights regarding the prevalence of banner blindness among Internet users. Our findings revealed that a substantial majority, comprising 80 % of the participants, reported no recollection or notice of any banner ads during the entire observation period. This staggering percentage indicates the pervasive nature of banner blindness and the challenges advertisers face in effectively capturing users' attention.

Further examination of the survey responses indicated that a modest portion of users, accounting for 15 % of the sample, acknowledged the presence of a solitary ad during their online engagements. This group represents individuals who overcame banner blindness and noticed at least one advertisement amidst the sea of online content. Conversely, a mere 5 % of the participants recognized multiple ads, signifying a minority subgroup with heightened attentiveness to banner advertisements.

Regarding the critical factors, the questionnaire found that:

Contextual Relevance and User Needs:

An overwhelming majority of participants (approximately 80%) emphasized that banner ads aligned with their immediate needs or interests significantly captured their attention.

The study underscores the pivotal role of contextual relevance in overcoming the challenge of banner blindness.

Visual Aspects and Design:

Contrary to common assumptions, visual elements like color and text had minimal impact on capturing attention.

While visually creative elements might catch initial glances, their sustained influence is limited in the context of banner blindness.

Emotional Engagement:

Approximately 50% of participants acknowledged that emotionally resonant banner ads, stirring curiosity or interest, contributed to capturing their attention.

Emotional engagement appeared tied to the ad content's alignment with users' aspirations and desires.

Strategies to Combat Banner Blindness:

A substantial proportion (over 70%) of participants highlighted the need for relevant ad delivery to address banner blindness effectively.

Personalized content, timing, and placement were recommended strategies to engage users amidst the online clutter.

Prevalence of Banner Blindness:

A striking 80% of respondents reported no recollection or awareness of banner ads during the observation period. A smaller segment (15%) overcame banner blindness and noticed one ad, while an even smaller portion (5%) recognized multiple ads.

The statistical interpretation of our data strongly supports the assumption that a significant majority of Internet users experience banner blindness, leading to an overlooked or disregarded perception of banner ads. The high percentage of users failing to notice any ads, coupled with the limited proportions of individuals seeing one or multiple ads, substantiates the prevalence of this phenomenon in the online advertising landscape.

These findings hold profound implications for advertisers seeking to optimize their strategies in the face of banner blindness. Traditional approaches relying solely on creative elements like color, text, and layout may yield less effectiveness in capturing users' attention. Instead, targeting users based on their needs, interests, and online behaviors becomes imperative. By delivering contextually relevant and personalized content, advertisers can enhance their chances of breaking through the banner blindness barrier and engaging users effectively.

Moreover, the observed data highlights the importance of continuously refining advertising strategies to address the challenge of banner blindness. Advertisers must leverage advanced technologies and analytical tools to gather actionable user behavior, preferences, and interactions insights. Such insights can enable the development of tailored advertising campaigns that align with users' immediate needs and interests, increasing the likelihood of capturing their attention.

It is important to note that while our research implies the prevalence of banner blindness among Internet users, it is not without limitations. The sample size and duration of the study may impact the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Internet users. Additionally, the self-reporting nature of the survey responses introduces the possibility of recall bias or subjective interpretations. Future research endeavors should consider addressing these limitations and further explore the factors contributing to banner blindness, such as ad positioning, ad format, and user interface design, to enhance our understanding of this complex phenomenon.

In conclusion, our study substantiates the assumption that most Internet users suffer from banner blindness, resulting in the non-notice or disregard of banner advertisements. These findings emphasize the need for advertisers to adopt innovative strategies that go beyond traditional creative elements, focusing on targeted and personalized approaches. By effectively addressing banner blindness, advertisers can optimize their advertising efforts, enhance user engagement, and ultimately achieve their marketing objectives in the digital realm.

3. Discussion

The results of this study highlight the critical importance of addressing Internet users' current needs and interests as a key strategy for overcoming the widespread problem of banner blindness. Our research shows that capturing and retaining users' attention in Internet advertising requires a targeted and personalized approach, where ads are tailored to match the user's immediate situation and preferences. By being aware of and responding to specific user needs, advertisers can create a more meaningful and engaging advertising experience that circumvents the phenomenon of banner blindness.

The traditional emphasis on creative elements such as color, text, and layout within ad design has long been a focus for marketers. However, our findings challenge entrenched perceptions by revealing that these creative aspects have less impact on attention-grabbing than the ad's contextual relevance. Although color, text, and layout undoubtedly contribute to the overall aesthetic appeal of an ad, their influence pales in comparison to the user's current frame of mind and personal interests. Contextual relevance assumes that ads perceived as directly applicable and relevant to the user's current situation are more likely to engage and hold the user's attention. If an ad responds to a user's immediate needs, wants, or current interests, it is more likely to break through the barriers of banner blindness and resonate with the user on a deeper level.

Marketers must deeply understand their target audience, preferences, and online behavior to achieve contextual relevance. This understanding can be gained through comprehensive data analysis and user segmentation, allowing marketers to effectively identify and target specific user segments with tailored and timely advertising. Advanced targeting techniques and technologies further enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of an advertising campaign, ensuring that the right ad reaches the right user at the right time and place. In addition, introducing advanced technologies such as machine learning and artificial intelligence enables real-time analysis of user data, enabling dynamic and adaptive ad delivery. By continuously tracking and analyzing user behavior, advertisers can adjust their advertising strategies in real time and optimize the relevance and impact of their ads based on evolving user needs and interests.

Although the findings of this research highlight the importance of contextual relevance, it is essential to note that creative elements still have a role to play in advertising. Visual aesthetics and design can contribute to an ad's overall perception and appeal, reinforcing its message and increasing its memorability. However, their impact should be considered with contextual relevance, prioritizing delivering targeted and personalized content that resonates with users.

Our research implies for the future that focusing on Internet users' current needs and interests is essential to combat banner blindness effectively. The findings suggest that while still relevant, creative elements should be subordinated to contextual relevance in ad design. By adopting a user-centered and personalized approach, advertisers can deliver ads relevant to users' immediate needs and interests, capturing and retaining their attention. These findings contribute to the academic understanding of online advertising and offer practical implications for marketers seeking to optimize their advertising strategies in the context of banner blindness.

Conclusion

This research study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of creative strategies in mitigating the phenomenon of banner blindness. The primary objective was to identify the key factors that play a crucial role in capturing the attention of Internet users amidst the overwhelming presence of online advertising. Another outcome of this study was identifying approaches to circumvent banner blindness by delivering ads tailored to individual users' specific needs and interests, presented at the appropriate time and in the appropriate context.

A comprehensive investigation of user behavior and preferences was conducted to achieve these research objectives. Study participants readily agreed to have their online activities tracked, which allowed for collecting rich and detailed data regarding their natural browsing patterns. This data included users' interactions with various advertising formats, including banner creatives, on different sites and platforms.

Following the observation phase, participants engaged in a post-activity evaluation to gather their impressions and recollections of the ads they encountered. Using a questionnaire filled with open-ended questions, the researchers sought to gain in-depth insights into the ads that managed to capture users' attention and spark lasting interest. This questioning facilitated the honest expression of participants' perspectives and experiences.

Subsequently, the data collected was subjected to rigorous analysis using advanced statistical methodologies. These analytical techniques allowed us to evaluate the influence of each factor on the engagement of Internet users' attention.

The research results underscore the importance of tailoring ads to match Internet users' immediate needs and interests. By tailoring to users' specific preferences and desires, advertisers can effectively overcome the pervasive phenomenon of banner blindness. The study further highlights the importance of delivering ads to the intended recipient at the optimal time and in the most relevant context as a strategic approach to combat banner blindness.

Overall, this research effort represents a rigorous scientific investigation with comprehensive user behavior analysis, questioning, and robust statistical methodologies. The findings contribute to the professional discourse on effective advertising strategies and provide valuable insights for marketers and practitioners.

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