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A study of effective Web advertising design to maximize click-through and brand awareness

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**A study of effective Web advertising design to maximize
click-through and brand awareness**

by

Myung Hae Park

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major: Graphic Design

Program of Study Committee:
Roger E. Baer, Major Professor
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2002

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Graduate College
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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

Myung Hae Park

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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ABSTRACT

Technological developments provide important opportunities to advertisers and marketers can now reach large masses of people more efficiently through a variety of media. Web advertising has become widely known as an efficient and effective communication tool, and it is fast becoming the medium for mass communication in the advertising industry. Despite the Web's capability to be a potentially powerful medium for advertising, few research studies have been conducted regarding the effectiveness of visual communication in Web advertising compared to other advertising media.

Generally, there are two main purposes for Web advertising: (a) build a brand, or (b) conduct direct marketing. Brand advertising associates the positive qualities or emotions with a company's product or service, while direct marketing attempts to stimulate a direct sale. Visual design elements need to be formulated that specify exactly which advertising objectives are being targeted. The primary objective of this study was to develop a method to analyze the components of Web design elements and communication styles in banner advertisements to enable Web advertising designers to maximize the effectiveness of Web advertising. The research found that click-through and brand-reinforcement design elements have both a comparative and inverse relationship. The findings demonstrate that a higher level of click-through ad design is associated with lower brand-reinforced ad design.

Similarly, a higher level of brand-reinforced design is associated with lower click-through.

The researcher presented a typology to be used as guidelines to determine the effectiveness of Web advertising design to maximize click-through and brand-reinforcement.

Most studies on Web advertising have been conducted primarily on click-through behavior. Since many demands are based on the importance of brand-reinforcement in Web advertising, this study does provide some groundwork in this field. Therefore, further study in this area is strongly recommended.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Since the fundamental shift in Internet usage from an academic to a commercial environment has taken place, the Internet market has been utilized as valuable mass media resource. The Internet is becoming the fastest method to transit mass media. Morgan Stanley's technology research report (as cited in Hyland, 2001) indicated the time it would take for the Internet to reach 50 million users relative to other communication media: (a) radio—38 yrs.; (b) TV—13 yrs.; (c) cable TV—10 yrs.; and (d) the Internet— 5 yrs. The Strategies Group (2000) noted that more than 100 million people in the U.S. were online during 1999, and nearly 57 million of them regularly signed on daily. A major study of Web usage by a Canadian polling organization (2001) stated that 300 million people are now wired around the globe and suggested that 1 billion will be online by 2005 (as cited in Stone, 2000).

Technological developments provide important opportunities to advertisers and marketers can now reach large masses of people more efficiently through a variety of media. Internet advertising began when HotWired was launched on the Web on October 27, 1994. Since then, Web advertising has become widely known as an efficient and effective

communication tool, and it is fast becoming the medium for mass communication in the advertising industry.

Thousands of marketers have turned to the Internet as a prospective medium for promoting their brands and transacting sales. Currently advertisements appear throughout the Web to attract potential customers. These trends make it important that the effectiveness of these new forms of advertising is explored and that users understand how these forms operate.

Problem of the Study

Despite the Web's capability to be a potentially powerful medium for advertising, few research studies have been conducted regarding the effectiveness of visual communication in Web advertising compared to other advertising media. Nevertheless, there is a need for effective visual communication, and guidance and direction in web advertising.

Considering the Web as a unique hybrid for direct response and as a traditional communication medium, the Internet offers unique and undeniable advantages over other media forms in terms of targeting a niche and direct marketing. Generally, there are two main purposes for Web advertising: (a) build a brand, or (b) conduct direct marketing. Brand advertising associates the positive qualities or emotions with a company's product or service, while direct marketing attempts to stimulate a direct sale. Advertising falls somewhere along

the spectrum between these two points. For some advertising objectives, effective advertising may simply mean raising the level of awareness of selected brands, while others seek an immediate increase in sales volumes.

Need and Objectives

It is important that the message and visual components in advertising are treated individually, as design elements, in the creation of methods to facilitate brand awareness on the Web and for ease of access to interconnections among Web sites. Communication strategies and visual design elements need to be formulated that specify exactly which advertising objectives are being targeted, as well as the anticipated responses. The primary objective of this study was to develop a method to analyze the components of Web design elements and communication styles in banner advertisements to enable Web advertising designers to maximize the effectiveness of Web advertising. The end result was to develop a typology of effective design elements for Web advertising.

Research Questions

It is necessary to understand the elements and styles that contribute to success at communication. The questions addressed in this study were:

1. To what extent do the design elements of (a) brand identification, (b) purchase instructions, (c) visual and verbal, and (d) technical elements interact within a banner ad space to maximize brand impression and clickability in Web advertising?
2. To what extent do the visual communication styles of (a) casualness, (b) contrast, (c) analogy, (d) curiosity, (e) ambiguity, (f) deception, and (g) synecdoche interact within a banner ad space to maximize brand impression and clickability in Web advertising?
3. How can these elements and styles be formulated in a typology to maximize brand impression and clickability on the Web?

These attributes were used to construct a typology of Web advertising to incorporate selected visual communication styles and types of visual elements. The model of typology would enable Web advertisers to strengthening brands or click-through procedures for advertising on the Internet.

Thesis Organization

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background for the study. A review of related literature on Internet usage related to advertising is presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 analyzes the components of Web advertising design elements and communication styles in banner advertisements to develop a typology for Web advertising. The Web advertising typology is presented and discussed in 4. Chapter 5 presents a summary of the research, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising

We are all surrounded by a vast amount of advertising. Advertising is the “communication of a message through a paid medium to intention to influence people to purchase a product or service or to understand and accept an idea or concept” (Advertising Ease, Toronto, Canada, MacLaren Advertising, 1975, as cited in Nelson, 1981, p. 3). It is transmitted to a target audience through a mass medium such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, outdoor displays, or mass transit vehicles. In the new global community, advertising messages may be transmitted via new media, especially the Internet. According to Webster’s dictionary, the purpose of advertising is to attract public attention to a product or business. The Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary defines advertising as a method used to draw attention to give public information about the merits claimed. Thus, advertising informs the public about a product, service, or a benefit. Similar to traditional advertising, advertising in the Web not only gives information on which to act, but also intrigues one to make an inquiry; or ensure a product name or brand identity is recognized. Nelson (1994) summarized the five basic jobs of advertising: “,,,(1) attract attention to itself; (2) enlist reader interest; (3) create desire – or capitalize on existing desire – for the products or services being advertised; (4) persuade readers to buy the products or

services or accept the ideas being advanced; (5) show readers how and where they can buy the products or services or direct readers to specific courses of action” (p. 12). In the *Principles of Advertising* (Lee & Johnson, 1999, p. 8), advertising is summarized as having three functions: (1) inform, or communicate information about the product, its features, and its location of sales, and tell the consumers about new products; (2) persuade consumers to purchase specific brands or to change their attitudes toward the product or company; and (3) remind consumers about a product so that they will keep buying the advertised product instead of the competitor’s brand. In conclusion, this definition addresses that the key purpose of advertising in any media is ultimately to attract the audiences and to promote a response. Clearly advertising is telling the public about advertiser’s product or service, however its key purpose is to increase the number of sales of advertised product.

Web Advertising

Characteristics

The explosive growth of the Web advertising industry parallels the early days of television advertising. Many experts agree that Web growth is a phenomenon. New Web sites appear daily. Currently, growth rate of commercial Web sites is estimated to be more than 4,400 sites per day. NEC Research estimates that currently there are approximately 1.5 billion Web pages, an 88 per cent increase from the previous year. This suggests that 1.9

million Web pages are created every day. IDC expects the number of Web pages to be more than 8 billion by the year 2002 (Armstrong, 2001, p. 3).

The rapid increase in the number of people who can and do access the Internet has resulted in parallel increases in the amount of money spent on online advertising. US business-to-consumer online sales tripled from \$707 million in 1996 to 2.6 billion in 1997. Sales over the Internet will grow from an estimated \$25 billion in 1999 to \$152 billion in 2002, and \$233 billion in 2004 (GIGA Information Group, as cited in Cyberatlas, 2000).

According to Jupiter (2001), online ad spending in the United States will increase only 5 percent in 2001, but it will rebound and grow at a compound rate of 22 percent over the next five years -- reaching a total of more than \$15 billion by 2006 (Table 1). Many marketers make Web advertising a line item in their ad budget alongside magazines, television, and radio (Cleland, 1996, p. 36). According to Forrest Research (Marshall, 1999), "Traditional media will lose advertising market share to online ads as the Internet becomes more mainstream itself. By 2004, radio ad revenue from dot-coms will drop 3%; TV ad revenue will drop 6%; magazine ad revenue will drop 11%; direct mail will lose 17%".

Table 1. Online ad spending in the United States (Jupiter Media Metrics, 2001)

Year	Online Advertising (Billions)
2000	\$ 5.4
2001	\$ 5.7
2002	\$ 6.8
2003	\$ 8.6
2004	\$ 10.6
2005	\$ 12.9
2006	\$ 15.4

Audience

The audience mix is considered in terms of demographics, income, and size relative to the target market. A demographic shift has taken place, from early adopters of new technology who are young, relatively wealthy and predominantly male, to average Americans. Table 2 shows that the most noticeable demographic shift is seen among Internet users by gender. Female audiences have exceeded male audiences in the United States. The percentage of Internet users is 49% male versus 51% female, an improvement over an approximate 80-20 split favoring males a few years ago. The table also shows that the Internet audience is becoming more diverse.

Table 2. Internet adoption by gender, age and income (InsightExpress, 2001)

	1996 Online Population	2001 Online Population	U.S. Population
Male	62%	49%	49%
Female	38%	51%	51%
Household Income	\$62,700	\$49,800	\$40,816
Adults 18-49	88%	76%	63%
Adults 50+	12%	24%	37%

Advantages

Advertising on the Web is fundamentally different from conventional advertising, and has unique advantages. Dolgenos (1996, as cited in Maddox, Mehta, 1997) discussed three distinct advantages about Web advertising: “(1) a low overall cost; (2) a large audience reach; and (3) a message delivery combining sight and sound” (p. 47). The trend toward information reduction required by conventional media is reversed. Conventional advertising is bound by space (for print) and time (for radio and television) constraints. Messages are short and fast-paced; their goal is to create a memorable perception rather than to deliver information. Web ads, however, allow consumers to probe deeper and deeper for more detailed information. Unlike Television, which is perceived to be a effective media which stimulates emotions, the Web site is perceived to be a rational medium, communication detailed information to its audience (Leong, Huang, & Stanners, 1998, p. 48).

Another fact is that the Web is perceived to have capabilities to facilitate more interactions than traditional media. Most traditional mass media, such as the newspaper, radio and broadcast TV, fall into the category of low interactive media. Web advertising is interactive; as such, it allows consumers to actually engage in communication. As long as consumers voluntarily perform an action, such as clicking banners to see the content of advertising messages, information processing is more active and intensive than passive exposure. This voluntary exposure will draw more attention to the messages and activate the cognitive learning process more intensively than involuntary exposure. Consumers are able to control their exposure to a product and ultimately decide whether they want to learn more about it. In this sense, advertising exposure on the Internet is more voluntary or sought-out than traditional media because it requires more commitment via voluntary action. This voluntary action, or active communication, also leads consumers to increased brand awareness. That is, communication via traditional media does not require voluntary action for active information processing; it is a one-way passive process with no extra voluntary action (Cho, 1999, p. 34). Therefore, it can be said that information processing in the Internet requires more conscious cognitive effort because the medium itself requires action to process information; that is, information processing on the Internet is more action-oriented and more interactive than that in traditional media.

Another difference between the Web and traditional media is the increased possibility of short-term advertising effects via the Web. It is more likely that a purchase can take place at the same time as one's exposure to advertising messages or within a relatively short period of time. This is because Web consumers can place an order or request additional information instantly and directly via the medium, rather than having to place an order through another medium. In other words, in Web advertising, it is perceived that the effects of advertising are both long-term and short-term.

Web advertising is more likely to be noticed than other advertising because there is a lower ad-to-edit ratio. With regard to the proportion of advertising to an editorial, the typical ad banner is 468×60 pixels, equaling a total of 28,080 square pixels. The commonly accepted default screen size is 640×480 pixels, for a total of 307,020 square pixels. This means that a typical Web page is 91% editorial and 9% advertising. This difference is dramatic when compared to magazines, which are typically in the 50:50 range, and television, which is closer to 60% programming/40% advertising (Boyce, 2001).

The Internet can provide consumers with continuously updated product information more easily and without the limitation of space and time, and at a low cost. In addition, products, prices, and promotional messages can be changed as often as necessary.

One of the most defining features of Web advertising is its measurability. The technology makes it possible to record the number viewed, or clicks, as well as consumer

behavior. This makes it possible for the Web site to track the effectiveness of an ad in generating traffic. Measurability also encourages ad banner pricing based on results and behavior. This enables advertisers to calculate the precise productivity number of individual ads which leads to rapid learning through experimentation and analysis. In conclusion, Web advertising has a greater ability to reach a narrowly-defined niche audience than other forms of media.

Types

Web advertising is typically placed on the Web page of a web site. Novak et al. (1996) classified Web advertisement sites into three major categories: (1) a sponsored content site, such as Hotwired and ZD Net; (2) sponsored search agents and directories, such as Yahoo!, Excite, and InfoSeek; and (3) entry portal sites, such as Netscape and Microsoft. In 1996, these three categories had 55%, 36% and 19%, respectively, of the total Web advertising (Jupiter, 1996). Increasingly, the Web pages of search engines and entry portals are becoming very popular Web-advertising spots.

Since banner click-through is decreased, some of strategies go beyond the banner to email ads, coupon and game promotions, one-to-one personalization and database techniques, and rewards. The final ad model is web promotions. The most popular are sweepstakes, contests, coupons, general price promotions, and membership programs.

Web advertisements are those which appear on Web pages selected by the audience.

Thus, a user can choose to interact with the advertisement, i.e., click on the advertisement for further information, or simply ignore the advertisement. Following are examples of popular types of advertisements.

Banners. A banner ad is a small, usually rectangular box that is placed on a Web page (Figure 1). Banner ads are graphic images that are often animated and can include small pieces of software code to enable further interaction. Most importantly, they are “clickable” and transport a viewer to the advertiser’s site. A banner ad can be placed anywhere on a Web page and can be any one of a mixture of sizes and styles.

The banner advertisement was first introduced on the pages of the Web-published magazine, *Hot Wired*, in October, 1994. Since then, the banner has spread throughout the Web. Banners are currently the most popular form of Web advertising. Table 3 provides a list of traditional banner sizes. Table 4 shows the standards for the International Advertising Bureau’s (IAB’s) new wave of voluntary guidelines, including seven new Interactive Marketing Unit (IMU) ad formats, two vertical units, and five large rectangular units.

Figure 2 illustrates three applications of these standards. While marketers are experimenting with different creative sizes, the traditional banner (468×60) is still the most common.

However, the adoption by IAB of new creative sizes (such as “skyscrapers”, 160×600, and 120×600) may challenge the traditional banner size.



Figure 1. Banner for NEWAY in the Yahoo! Web site (2001)

Table 3. Existing banner units

Size	Type
468×60 IMU	Full Banner
234×60 IMU	Half Banner
120×240 IMU	Rectangle
300×250 IMU	Medium Rectangle
336×280 IMU	Large Rectangle
240×400 IMU	Vertical Rectangle
250×250 IMU	Square Pop-up

Table 4. New interactive marketing units (IMU)

Size	Type
120×600 IMU	Skyscraper
160×600 IMU	Wide Skyscraper
180×150 IMU	Rectangle
300×250 IMU	Medium Rectangle
336×280 IMU	Large Rectangle
240×400 IMU	Vertical Rectangle
250×250 IMU	Square Pop-up



Banner: 468×60

Skyscraper: 160×600

Large Rectangle: 360×300

Figure 2. IAB new interactive marketing units

Buttons. Button ads are smaller than banner ads and are usually located at the bottom of a Web page (Figure 3). Buttons contain only the name of a company or a brand. Clicking on a button transports the Web visitor to the corporate Web site of the company or brand. Buttons were initially from software companies and enabled Web users to freely download software merely by clicking the button. They are simple and have been successful in leading users to the products of software developers.



Figure 3. Buttons

The sponsorship model has been around since early TV days and continues to be popular on the Web because it enables an advertiser to attach its company name permanently to site content. Thus, advertisers can associate their brands with quality content while building relationships with online audiences on branded sites in key niches. This model can be less intrusive than banners and give an impression of partnership and commitment over time.

Keyword ads. Advertisers can link a specific ad to a text or subject matter that is searched by a visitor. Keyword ads are primarily found on Web search-engine sites. For example, the advertisement shown in Figure 4 is displayed when a search on the keyword “computer” is done on Yahoo!

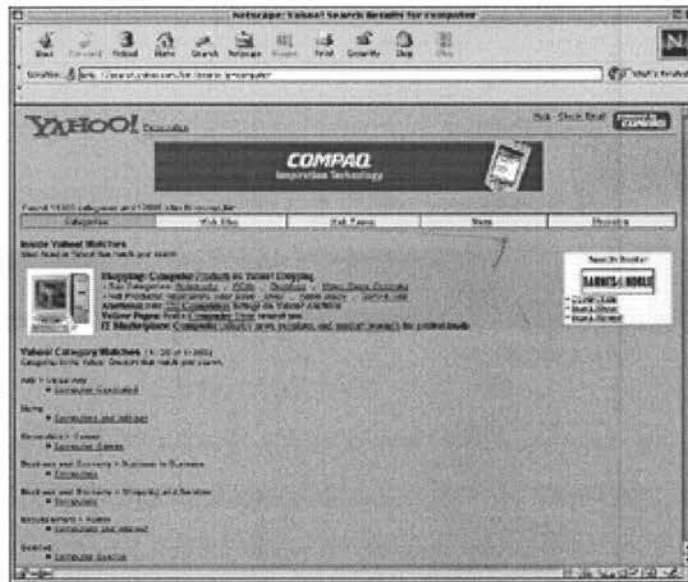


Figure 4. Keyword advertising

Interstitials. These ads are similar to television ads that include video and audio.

When a user clicks on a specific topic at a site, a separate window pops up with the advertisement related to that topic. Such technology displays a message telling the consumer that the Web page is loading while the ad plays.

Email ads. Another method of delivering information to the Web user is by using push technology. Push technology enables a publisher to broadcast to the user rather than wait for the user to enter the page that includes advertising. A popular push advertisement is the e-mail, which is used to send promotional information to a list of users appearing on an address list. Push systems enable Web users to sign up and receive broadcasts of news and information on their computers. This serves as a new vehicle to carry Web advertisements. As the user provides personal information to subscribe to push services, marketers can use the personal profile of the user to target advertisements.

Banner advertisements are the predominate type of advertising, accounting for 40% or two-fifths of the online ad revenues in 2000, followed by sponsorships (31%), classified (10%), referrals (5%), interstitials (5%), e-mail (4%), rich media (2%), and keyword searches (2%). Even though banners still remain the most popular type of Web ad, the trend seems be moving away from using banners. Increases were seen among keyword and classifieds (Table 5). The type of advertising is directly tied to marketing objectives. Banners have proven to be the most effective direct marketing tool, targeting more niche audiences based on their interests. Sponsorships of online content are similar to event sponsorships. If an advertiser has a strict brand-awareness goal, sponsorships are an efficient way to achieve this marketing objective at a lower cost than traditional print (Hyland, 2001).

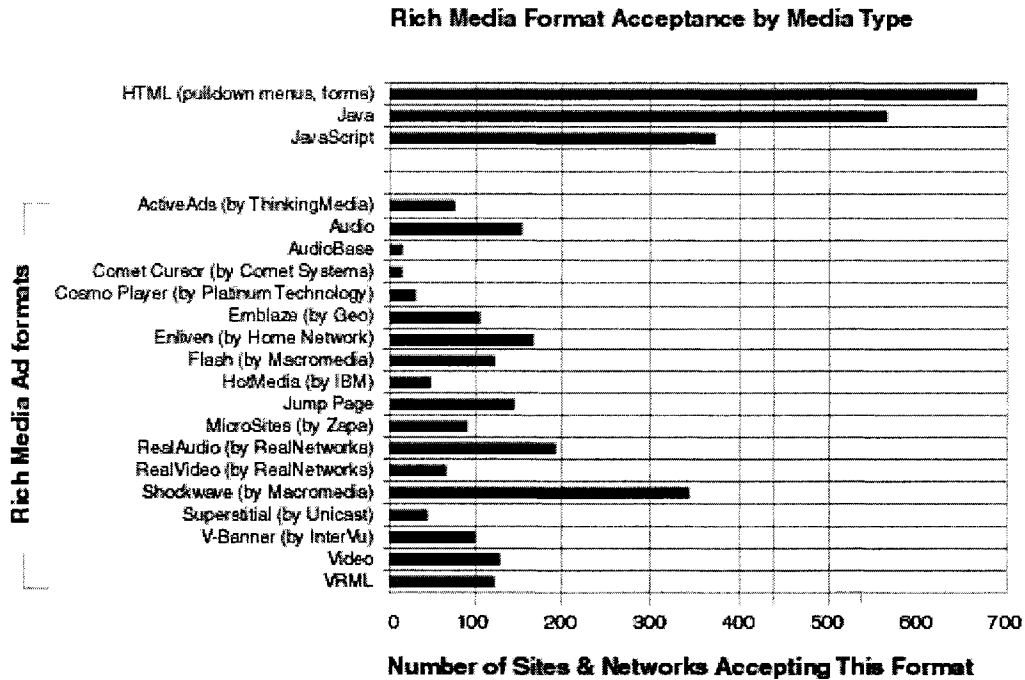
Table 5. Popular online advertising formats (IAB/PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2001)

Format	1st half 2001	1st half 2000
Banners	36%	51%
Sponsorships	28%	27%
Classifieds	15%	5%
Slotting Fees	8%	N/A
Interstitials	3%	3%
Keyword Search	3%	1%
Referrals	2%	3%
Rich Media	2%	2%
E-mail	3%	3%
Other	0%	5%

Graphic formats

Web ads come in a variety of formats. The most common is the GIF format, which is comprised of either one image or a series of animated images. JPEG, Java and HTML banners are sometimes used. Rich-media ads replace one-dimensional graphical ads with HTML-enhanced ads that enable readers to interact with them. A rich media ad uses interactivity, complex animations, sound, and video to create more engaging banners. The bandwidth issue is particularly important for rich media technologies on the Web, which require extremely fast connection speeds. Figure 5 shows the number of sites accepting Web

advertising graphic format. GIF animation is still the most prevalent ad technology. On average, GIF animation is used in approximately 19 of every 25 ads per company and amounts to 58% of the total impressions. On the other hand, the average advertiser creates only 5 JPEG image ads that account for 40% of ad impressions (AdRelevance, 2000).



Source: AdKnowledge System / Sep. 2000

Figure 5. Number of sites accepting Web advertising graphic format

Advertising Effectiveness

Advertising effectiveness refers to the measurement of the results of an advertising campaign or of a particular advertisement, which must be defined in terms of the achievement of the advertising objectives which the advertiser set for his campaign/advertisement. (Beerli and Santana 1999, p. 11). While the ultimate objective of advertising is to improve a company's sales, the aim of advertising is communication rather than sales objectives and attempt to express the impact which the advertiser wishes to achieve with his message, something which does not necessarily coincide with an increase in sales (Berkman & Gilson 1987; Farbey 1994; Lautman & Moriarty 1991; Percy & Kordish 1978, as cited in Beerli and Santana, p. 11).

Many assume that the same banner ad can be equally effective at building brand awareness, generating click-throughs, and boosting sales. However, while individual banners often do accomplish all these objectives, the most effective ones are designed and implemented with just one of these goals. There are two general campaigns used for advertising effectiveness: namely, brand reinforced effects and click-through effects.

The majority of respondents say that their primary reasons for advertising online are branding and driving traffic to the site. This study (Meyers Mediaenomics/IAB, 2000) concluded that the primary reason for advertising online has shifted away from sales generation to Web site traffic building and brand awareness. More than 70 percent used

online ads to drive site traffic, to build brands, or as part of an integrated marketing campaign. Only 46 percent is for the driving e-commerce activity (Table 6). The another data from AdRelevance (2000) on Web advertising campaigns suggest that only 35% of online advertising is designed to drive traffic or sales, with the majority (65%) being branding oriented as the most frequent objective (Table 7). In addition, among the ads run online for the hardware and electronics industries, 83% are aimed at branding, whereas the next highest percentages aimed at branding are: entertainment (73%), retail (64 %), and Web media (63%) (AdRelevance, 2001).

Table 6. Reasons for using online ads (Myers Mediaenovics/IAB, 2000)

Primary reasons for using online ads	
Drive traffic to site	84.9%
Branding	82.0%
Integrated marketing / Multimedia packages	74.5%
Sponsorship opportunities	71.9%

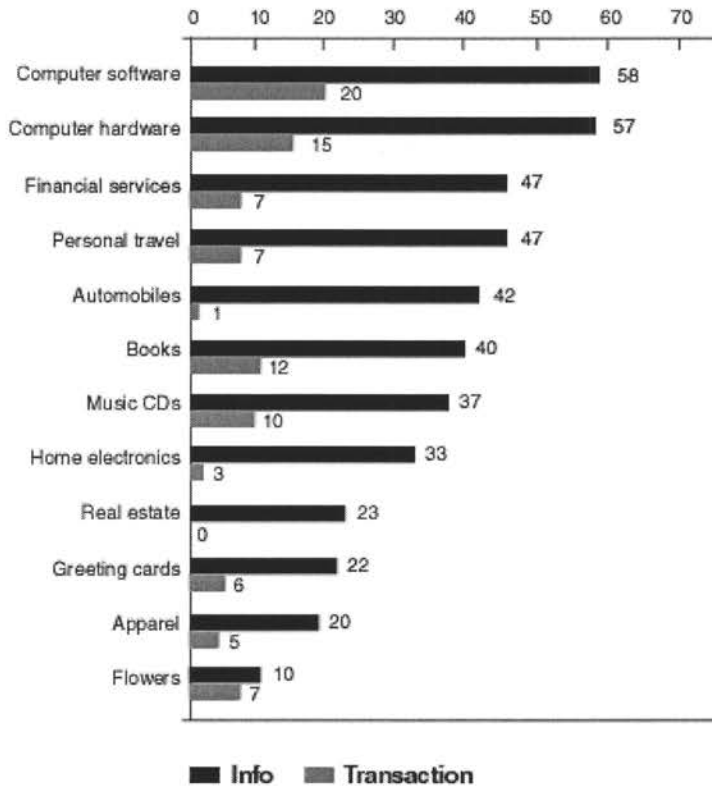
Table 7. Web advertising statistics for click-through versus branding campaigns
(AdRelevance, 2000)

Industry	Campaign percentage	
	Click-through	Branding
Hardware & electronics	17	83
Entertainment	27	73
Retail	36	64
Web media	37	63
Overall use	35	65

Figure 6 indicates the number of consumers who turn to the Web to seek information and purchase a product. As depicted in this figure, high consideration categories, such as automobiles and the real estate industry should emphasize brand campaign advertising rather than click-through campaigns.

Impression/CPM

In traditional media, advertising costs are not linked directly to effectiveness but, rather, they are most often determined by the number of impressions that a given publication or site can deliver to the target audience. These advertising rates are most usually quoted as a cost per thousand impressions, called a “CPM”. The similarity to traditional advertising is



Source: Millward Brown InteractivePanel, Spring 98

Figure 6. Number of consumers turning to the Web
(Millward Brown Interactive Panel, 1998)

seen in the most common pricing approach, cost per thousand impressions (CPM) to measure how many times a banner is displayed. One impression is equivalent to one opportunity to see an ad. Web advertising is typically sold on a “Cost Per Thousand Impressions” basis, or CPM. An impression (also referred to as an “exposure” or “page view”) occurs when a visitor to a Web site views a page where an ad is displayed, whether the ad is seen or not.

Whenever a page is served to computer screen, the measurement software counts the “impression.”

According to the data in Table 8, in December Yahoo and MSN brought in the highest number of ad impressions. A common banner ad package consists of 100,000 impressions costing from \$20 to \$100 per thousand (\$25-\$70 CPM is average for popular sites). The advertising rate quoted by 1.175 sites tracked by AdKnowledge is just under \$40 per thousand impressions, or \$0.04 per banner. There is a wide range of pricing

Table 8. Top sites by number of ad impressions (ADRelevance, 2000)

Site	Impressions (millions)
Yahoo!	7,620
MSN	6,343
IWon	2,556
AOL.com	2,204
eBay	1,582

surrounding this average value. Sites with an especially valuable audiences, such as high-income professionals, may be able to charge a much higher rate. There are sites with rates exceeding \$100 per banner. On the other hand, very general sites with a wide variation in audience will have rates in the \$10 to \$20 CPM range (Hanson, 2000). Buttons, on average, are worth one-half to one-third as much as a full banner.

Click-through/CTR

When users visit a Web page and subsequently click on the advertiser's banner, it is called the "click-through". CTR refers click-through ratio. A method of rating how many times a banner is clicked on whether or not it go through a conversion page. If a banner has a CTR of 20:1, it means that 1 out of 20 people have clicked on it (5% of the people who viewed it). The click-through payment is generally around the \$0.25 (cited in Armstrong, p. 46). For advertisers, the idea of paying for results seems advantageous. When banners were first introduced, click-through rates were 20 to 30% (cited in Armstrong, p. 43). However, the effectiveness of banners has decreased over time, and that figure has dropped to less than 0.5%.

Click-through banners

Clicking an ad is a voluntary action for the purpose of seeing more detailed advertising messages by requesting more information. Click-through advertising expects to build traffic. It is designed to get as many people as possible to click on banner and come to its site. The aim of a click-through campaign is to induce the immediate, spontaneous reaction of the Web users towards an advertisement.

Getting the viewer to respond to its banner ad by clicking does not necessarily serve the goals of a branding campaign. To get the user to click through to its site, the ad needs to employ an action-oriented approach to its banner ad design, and certain design tricks can help encourage customers to click on its banner ad spontaneously. This spontaneous action is highly dependent on peripheral cues. In other words, the favorability of peripheral cues will influence clickability of banner ads. In the case of banner ads, attention-getting or curiosity-generating components of banner ads, such as: a large-sized banner, bright colors, and attention-getting animation would be novelties. Web ads that incorporate four creative components will most likely motivate a consumer to click. Most high click-through banners contain an attention-getting elements, such as a call to action and a reason to click through. According to a source from the Ad Council (2001), the likelihood of click-throughs can be increased if the ad succeeds in: (1) Drawing the eye; (2) Engaging the mind; (3) Creating a desire for more; and (4) Facilitating action. These specific elements will be discussed in the Chapter 3.

Brand-reinforced banners

Banner ads can do more than merely attract clicks. Advertising communication occurs even when users do not directly respond by clicking on a banner. They can reinforce a company's image and help customers remember the advertiser's products and services. The ad banner itself does a significant amount of brand enhancement communication. A branding banner ad does not have to concern itself so much with immediate or short-term results. The goal is not necessarily to get people to click immediately on one's banner ad but to have the company's name stick in the mind of the public through repeated advertising. The purpose of brand-reinforced banners is to make the audience become accustomed to the company's image, or reinforce a feeling of familiarity.

Brand is the composite of the immediate image or message that people experience when they think of a company or product. The brand works by building and enhancing key perceptions and relationships with the consumer such that the next time the consumer reaches out to buy the product, they are more likely to consider their brand. In fact, 97% of the increase in sales came from exposure to the ad, not click-through.

There has yet to be a convincing demonstration of online branding by banners. Several industry-supported studies have raised the possibility of the impact of substantial branding. The revealing study was conducted by Millward Brown Interactive (1996) in which a panel of Web users was given a single exposure to a banner ad. This study

demonstrated that advertising communication occurred even when the users did not directly respond by clicking on the ad. MBInteractive interpreted its study as demonstrating that a single banner impression resulted in effective branding for several familiar brands.

According to their study, brand awareness was significantly greater among the banner-exposed (test) group than the non-exposed (control) group. Specifically, exposure to the ad banners alone increased brand awareness from 12% to 200% in a banner-exposed group.

Another study for banner effectiveness on building brand was conducted by Hot Wired.

According to the study, the impact of a single web banner exposure on consumer loyalty ranged from a 5% increase to over 50%, whether or not the viewer actually clicked on the banner.

The ultimate purpose of advertising is to sell product. In an ideal world, the most convincing demonstration of powerful and effective advertising is an immediate and sizable increase in transaction volume. Figure 7 shows how the Web advertising impacted sales when comparing post-click conversions and post-impression conversions. It indicates that a greater number of increases in sales came from post-impression rather than click-throughs. When users received a branding message via creative banners, not by clicking impulsively, they found their way to the advertiser's site and converted (Engage, 2001, p. 9).

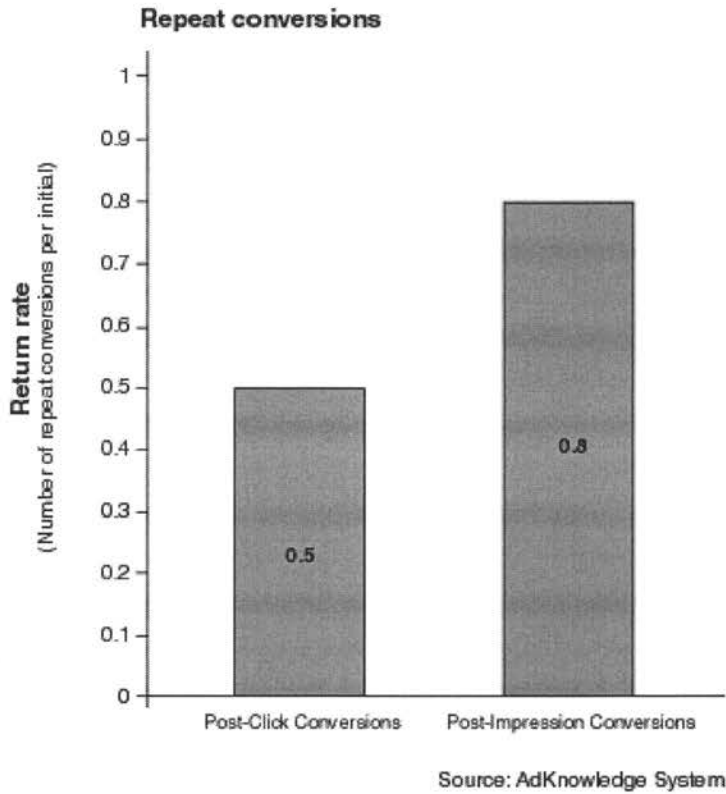
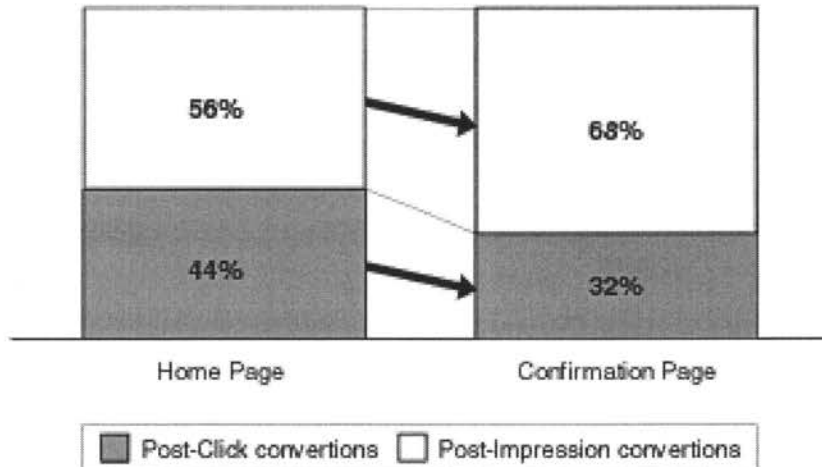


Figure 7. Conversion rate comparing post-click and post-impression

When comparing post-click to post-impression conversions, users who arrived at a advertiser's site and saw an impression but did not click, they were twice as likely to reach the confirmation page, and 60% more likely to repeat their conversion. Slightly more than one-half of ad-driven conversions to the home page come as a result of post-impression conversions. It was also revealed that over two-thirds of all ad-driven conversions are post-impression. Conversely, the percentage of click-driven conversions dropped in the deeper pages of an advertiser's site (Figure 8). The majority of conversions from the online

Site penetration



Source: AdKnowledge System

Figure 8. Confirmation of page penetration

campaign occurred without the users' clicking on the banner. Worldwide, post-impression conversions are greater than post-click conversions. This reaffirms the need for advertisers to look beyond the click. Post-impression conversions have a substantial impact on branding and account for the majority of all conversions attributable to online advertising. The use of creative banners had a sufficiently strong branding effect that the users remembered the brand and returned to the site. The likelihood of remembering brand messages through ads

can be increased if the ad succeeds in: (1) drawing the eye; (2) creating brand awareness; and (3) associating a message with brand name and product. Branding ads are similar to click-through ads only in that they first need to attract a viewer's attention. These specific elements will be discussed in the Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3. WEB ADVERTISING DESIGN ELEMENTS AND COMMUNICATION STYLES

Web Advertising Design Elements

Advertising goals are governed by either click-through or brand reinforcement. The elements of each reinforcement technique are different and have important and unique design considerations. Variations employing the elements of Web advertising can increase the effectiveness of advertising. Four design elements were selected for the current research on Web advertising: (a) brand identification; (b) purchase instructions; (c) visual and verbal; and (d) technical elements. These executives identified main factors as the key to the success of Web advertising. For the purposes of this research, it was posited that the interaction among these elements within the banner ad space is the key to a successful Web ad.

Brand identification

Brand identification is the most basic type of Web advertising element to identify an advertiser. It consists of the brand name, logo, byline, or tagline. Sometimes brand identification is expressed in a subtle way, with a lost line buried in the other elements which can be a less prominent way to identify an advertiser (Figure 9). The elements can be emphasized in a display-size type set apart from other elements in a dominant way (Figure 10).

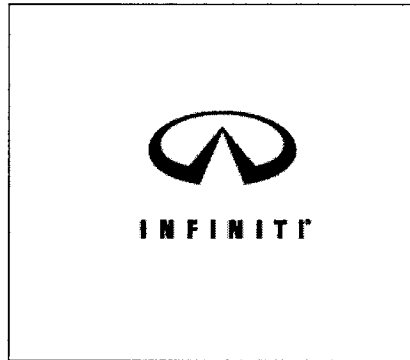
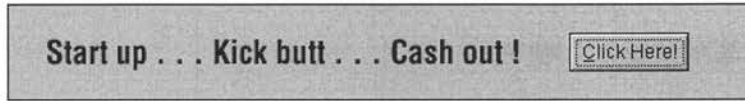


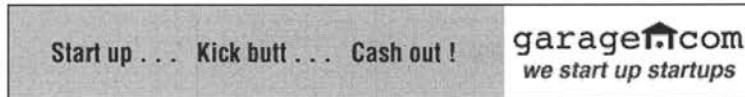
Figure 11. A large rectangle by Infiniti (2001)

The logo itself communicates the brand to the audience. Thus, a banner ad that serves this goal should be included in the brand name or logo.

High click-through banners do not show brand elements in the banner or place them in less prominent way. To increase click-through action by increasing curiosity about the product and company, banners generally do not include both the brand name and logo so that customers are more likely to generate clicking action. Figure 12 shows the different click rates generated based on inclusion or lack of inclusion of the brand name. Banners without a brand name click-through rate generate more click-throughs than banners with a brand name.



(a) Banner without a logo CTR = 1.22% (82:1)



(b) Banner with a logo CTR = 1.06% (95:1)

Figure 12. Click-through rate comparison between banners without and with a logo (July, 1998)

Byline

A byline is the descriptor for the brand. It indicates the business (i.e., corporate) category or physical category to which the brand belongs. The byline clearly communicates to customers and perspective customers where to place the brand's products and services in their mind. It is useful to inform the audience about a company's physical category when no previous existing brand or a familiar brand exists (Figure 13 & 14). However, if a brand's



Figure 13. Banner with a byline by Starmark (2001)



Figure 14. Banner with byline by Neway (2001)

name is very descriptive, it does not need a byline in an ad. Some ads include a byline in the banner whereas others do not; instead they might provide a picture of the product or service to make the customers become aware of the brand category. Most high click-through click-through banners do not inform the customer of the category contents either by text or image but make the customer more curious through the use of cryptic headlines.

Tagline

Taglines are referred to as slogans and sometimes serve as the ad's headline. In contrast to the byline, the tagline is the expressive statement that can dramatize the brand's emotional and functional benefits to the customers. A tagline makes an effective statement about a company's brand position, and communicates its benefits with grabbing persuasion. Taglines that allude to a brand name or are often derived from the brand name make both the tagline and the brand name more memorable (Schnmitt, Tavassoli, & Millard, 1983). The another simplest design for a branding banner is a combination brand logo with a tagline (Figure 15 & 16). This is also the common style in the small button style banner. A survey conducted by Saunders (2000) on the use of design elements in ads reported that the most



Figure 15. Banner with a tagline by Chevrolet (2001)



Figure 16. Banner with a tagline by Sprint

well-remembered element by the audience was the tagline. The another advertising effectiveness study conducted by Diameter for DoubleClick Media (July 2001) demonstrates the power of the elements of ad recall (Table 9). According to the survey, brand logo was the most memorable element in the Web ad space, followed by visual image and tagline. A logo with a tagline that indicates what the company does is more likely to make the visitor remember the company by association of the brand with its tagline.

Table 9. Increase in ad recall based on the element(s) used (DoubleClick, 2001)

Ad recall element	Percent Increase			
	Standard banner	Large rectangle	Skyscraper	Small skyscraper
Brand logo	+7pts	+8pts	+6pts	+5pts
Brand tagline	+5pts	+6pts	+5pts	+3pts
Visual image	+6pts	+9pts	+6pts	+4pts

Purchase instruction

Purchase instruction elements explain how to buy a product brand or service. Most banners contain either “Click here,” “apply now,” or a “URL” to guide consumer to click or visit their site.

Click here

In click-through ads, the ending calls for action by including instructional words, such as “Click here”, to persuade the consumer to click right now (Figure 17). Figure 18 depicts the actual click-through rate that tells the importance of “click here”. “Click here” instruction generates higher click-rates than other instruction, such as “learn more”.



Figure 17. Banner with “Click here” by Compaq(2001)



(a) Banner (5965 bytes), CTR = 0.11% (909:1)



(b) Banner (5921 bytes), CTR = 0.06% (1667:1)

Figure 18. Click rate comparison between banners with “Click here” and with “Learn more” (BannerTips, December 1999)

URL

On the other hand, brand-focused banners might include the URL to reinforce consumers to remember the URL and encourage them to visit to the Web site later. Brand-reinforced banners are not as concerned with immediate results because their purpose is to increase brand awareness rather than click-through behavior. The URL also serves as the company's brand name on the Internet (Figure 19). According to research by Maddox and Mehta (1997, p. 56) on the role and effect of Web addresses in TV advertising, 30% of the respondents indicated that a Web address helps them to remember an advertiser's brand name. In general, people who use the Internet often said that a Web address helps them remember the brand name. Thus, for possible adoption of Web advertising as a URL in Web ads, it can be hypothesized that an increase in the audience's ability to remember a brand name will cause the likelihood of the audience to visit an advertiser's Web site in the future.

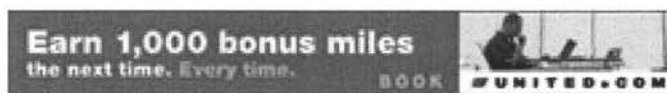


Figure 19. Banner with URL for United Airlines (2001)



Figure 9. Brand identification less dominant banner (2001)



Figure 10. Brand identification dominant banners (2001)


Logo or brand name

A logo is a distinguishing mark used by a company. It forms a key part of the branding of a product or service, and of the corporate identity of the company (Morgan, 1999, p. 8). It conveys an organization's identity in an ad space. The logo has the ability to trigger a response toward a product or service. A logo or brand name is appropriate for "branding" purposes, to circulate a company's name in public so people are more likely to remember the company and its product or service. The goal of a brand campaign is to increase awareness of a company or product. Widely known logos are recognized as they are read, enabling companies to communicate as broadly as possible. The simplest design for a branding banner is a logo that appears alone, without any other element (Figure 11).


Visual and verbal


Ads often include sophisticated combinations of pictures and words. The use of verbal and non-verbal communication is an important element in an ad. Verbal and non-verbal communication is combined to attract attention to an ad. Ads consisting of pictures and words must provide for their working together. They influence our perceptions, attitudes, thinking, and behavior. According to research comparing pictorial information to verbal messages, such images are internalized rapidly and their influence usually remains under the threshold of awareness (Nadin & Zakia, 1994). Passini explained that most people are verbally oriented, therefore, communicating with words enables the audience to respond more quickly to visual syntax. A picture attracts and arouses the viewers' curiosity. Because of the lack of explicitness of visual syntax, arguments made via images often need to be supported by words (Meyers, 1994, pp. [Chap. 10]). Even relatively simple visual juxtapositions are hard to understand without a verbal explanation. Ads on the Web usually fall into three categories between the text and image: (1) text dominant / alone (Figure 20); (2) image dominant / alone (Figure 21); or (3) a combination of both in a balanced proportion that is not necessarily equal.

NEWS "So, should you make the switch [to IE4]?...
the answer is an enthusiastic yes."
Microsoft Internet Explorer
PC World Online 9/29/97: Yael L. Ren, Executive Editor

W HIGH GAUGE DO YOU PREFER? 

See how Nortel Power Networks™ can streamline your communications. [Click Here.](#) NORTEL
NORTHEAST TELECOM

Message: Hi, Just wanted to say I found a great credit card deal from Capital One. 0% APR fixed for 6 months on purchases then 12.9% APR. [Click here to apply.](#) See you soon, Steve 

Error  Search speed too slow. Choose fix to blast off.

Save 50-70% on Term Life Insurance e-term
coverage state Tobacco Use Birthdate(mm/dd/yyyy) gender
\$300k AL select M


Find a mortgage. On your terms.
I need a mortgage for \$

Figure 20. Text dominant / text alone banners (2001)

 
Fiesta
CLICK HERE



 
Fiesta
CLICK HERE

  Sleep on the plane.

 FREE Consultation 
Non-Profit Organization
CLICK HERE

Figure 21. Image dominant / image alone banners (2001)

A study by Electronic Telegraph/Ogilvy & Mather (1997) measured the effects of different creative elements on banner ads. It supports image dominant ads as having a stronger brand-linked recall than text dominant ads (Figure 22). There was a significant difference in response to brand-linked recall of the two IBM ads versus the control ad. Another recent study on advertising effectiveness, conducted by Diameter for DoubleClick Media (July 2001), demonstrated the power of elements of ad recall. The data clearly showed that visual image is second to brand logo as an element eliciting recall via Web ad space.



(a) Image dominant banner by IBM (60%)



(b) Text dominant banner by IBM (56%)

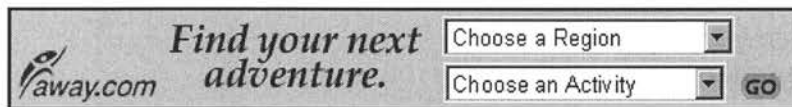


(c) Control ad (48%)

Figure 22. Comparison between image and text dominant banners, and ad recall (1997)

On the other hand, click-through banners serve a difference ad response purpose.

Figure 23 shows that the text dominant banner performs better and elicits a higher response rate, or higher click-through rate, than an image dominant banner. This difference supports the notion that image dominance leads to greater memory recall, thus, ads that are image dominant lead users to connect an image to its brand, while text dominance communicates with words to enable the audience to respond more quickly to visual syntax.



(a) Banner (4144 bytes), CTR = 0.60% (167:1)



(b) Banner(11527 bytes), CTR = 0.12% (862:1)



(c) Banner(11618 bytes), CTR = 0.08% (1,250:1)

Figure 23. Comparison between image and text dominant banners and click rate (BannerTips, June 2000)

Headline

Like news headlines, advertising headlines often come in two units: one in large type, and the other in smaller type with more words. Headlines can also appear as several units of the same size type, and each unit can appear on the ad space by sequence. The headline generally states the ad's theme and can take the place of slogan advertisers. Nelson (1994) summarized the six functions of the headline: "...(1) it can report news about a product in the style of a newspaper headline; (2) it can offer advice, serving as a sort of one-sentence editorial; (3) it can make a promise; (4) it can issue a command; (5) it can arouse curiosity; and (6) it can single out a segment of the audience" (p. 81). The primary job of a headline, especially in Web ads, is to arrest the reader's attention. Because it may be the only part of the copy to be read by most Web users at a glance, it might also have to serve as a selling job. If the headline does its job well, it will lure audiences to seek additional and deeper inquiry; increase click-through behaviors; or reinforce brand recognition.

The most frequent expressions in a headline for a brand campaign are the report of news about a product or service (Figure 24), brand benefits, or use of taglines. Even when they are not clicked, advertisement banners may influence brand awareness and help build the brand awareness through advertisement. The most frequent tactics utilizing headlines for click-through campaigns depend on question-oriented headlines (Figure 25), cryptic



Figure 24. A large rectangle banner by Compaq (2001)

messages, or urgent messages. Question-oriented or cryptic messages induce the consumer's curiosity rather than provide company or product information. Another prominent expression in a headline for a click-through campaign is the use of sales stimuli offerings, such as FREE, sales event, or 0%. Retail advertising in click-through campaigns use a strong price display to maximize their functions. In this case, prices are set in type that is larger and bolder than the other elements in the ad space (Figure 26).



Figure 25. A cryptic message/question banner by Planet feedback.com (2001)



Figure 26. A sales stimuli banner with a prominent price for a Yahoo! Visa card (2001)

The sentence length is another major factor eliciting both branding and click-through behavior. A short sentence gets a message across easily and lock it into the user's memory for a longer period of time. Sentence length is also an important factor that affects click-through rate. A shorter sentence has a higher click-through rate, according to copy testing (Hofacker & Murphy, 1998, p. 707). A short headline such as "Find your soulmate" received a 5.59% click-through rate while a longer headline such as "Specializing in finding your soulmate" received only a 2.87% click-through rate. As shown in Figure 27, the shorter headline (a) received a higher click-through rate when compared to the longer headline (b).

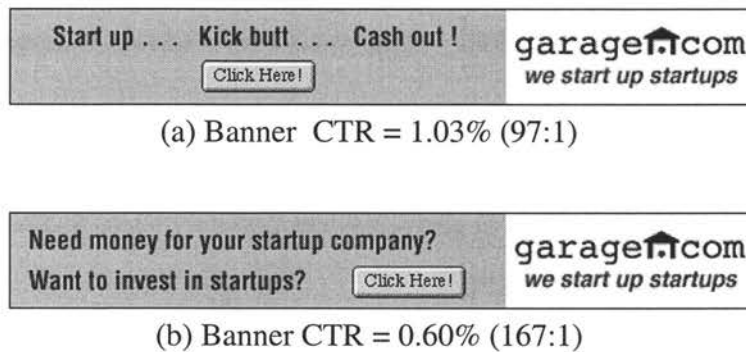


Figure 27. Comparison in click rate between a simple and longer headline (BannerTips, June 1998)

The legibility or readability of a headline also influences branding and click-through campaigns. These are functional aspects of typography related to the ease in which a reader perceives the ad message. The user's eye is an impatient observer and the slightest annoyance may detract it from the reading process (Ernst, 1977, p. 133). Since Web users

are not concerned as much about advertisement, they tend to either ignore or merely glance at a headline. In the Web advertisement, the more complex a message is, the harder it will be to read and lock the message into an audience's memory. In addition, an abundance of messages in a small space created in small type size with poor legibility will result in a decrease in ad readership. Figure 28 illustrates that poor legibility receives a poor response from a Web audience: banner (a) has two lines of information, whereas banner (b) has three lines of information, thus resulting in small letter size and poor legibility in the latter.



Figure 28. Comparison in click rate between a short message and a longer message having poor legibility (BannerTips, Aug. 2001)

Figure 29 provides an example that, even when a message is short and clear, type set with all capital letters (a) is harder to read than type set with upper and lowercase letters (b). All-cap lines resemble geometrical faces while the irregularities in line with upper and lowercase make it easier to recognize words and letters. The outline shape of the word is

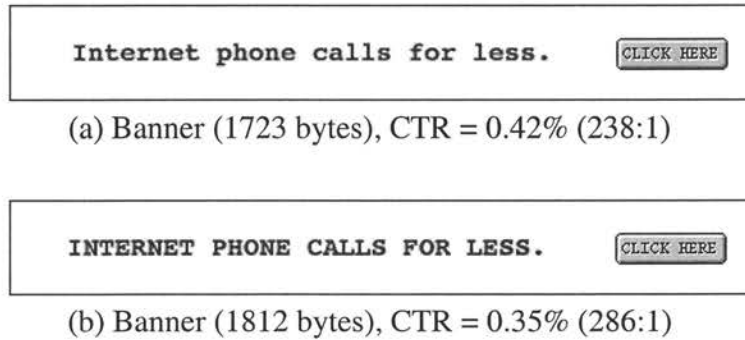


Figure 29. Comparison of click behavior between an all caps letter format and upper/lower letter format in a headline (BannerTips, October 1999)

what is perceived by the eye. The scanning process focuses on the top half of the word and the right sides of the letters (Ernst, 1977, pp. 136-137).

Motion

An effective banner draws a viewer's eyes from Web page content to the banner itself. A study by the MediaDailyNews (as cited in Spindler, 2001) concluded that the most effective method to attract a viewer's eyes to a banner was by use of motion or animation. "Of the 93 Web banners analyzed, only one in the top click-through group was static. In comparison, 35 percent of the least-clicked group were motionless,". Animation provides attention-appeal and an entertaining effect. A study on motion by ZD Net (as cited in Webreference.com, 1996) found that animated ads generated click-through rates at least 15%

more than static ads, and in some cases as much as 40% higher. People pay greater attention to an ad if it has animation, even if the ad does not generate clicking behavior. In low-involvement situations, people are more likely to click a banner ad when it has dynamic animation than when it does not. As shown in Figure 30, by adding simple animation, such as an airplane flying over “enter here” (a), the performance of click-through behavior is greater than in a non-animated banner (b). Thus, animation serves a purpose to catch the audience’s attention and increases ad awareness, which is a critical issue in brand and click-through campaigns.



(a) Banner (8231 bytes), CTR = 0.16% (620:1)



(b) Banner (5159 bytes), CTR = 0.13% (782:1)

Figure 30. Comparison in click behavior between an animated and non-animated banner (BannerTips, April 2000)

Color

Color is a strong element for visual communication in an ad. Favre and November (1979) explained that color “gives life to the visual message, it animates, accentuates it, and makes it more perceptible and of easy identification” (p. 13). The interpretation of a color

online depends on the physiology of the eye, readability, the individual viewer's culture, and the associated profession or industry. "Color is not only for an eye-catcher, but also a potent psychological tool when it is pertinent to the subject or message" (Cheskin, 1954).

The most powerful color effect in Web advertising is that color demands the Web user's attention rather than having a symbolic value. How the human eye processes color is a primary consideration for selecting banner colors. Color has its three dimensions: (1) hue refers to color width; (2) value refers to the depth; and (3) intensity refers the thickness. The hue of a color refers to the name of the color (i.e., yellow, red, blue, etc.), whereas the value has to do with the lightness of the hue. Intensity has to do with the brightness of the color; high-intensity colors are bright colors.

According to Myers (1989, p. 235), the hue's purity affects visibility, thus pure hues advance, and grayed hues recede. A pure hue has greater visibility and power of attraction than tints, tones, or shades. Some pure hues have much greater visibility and attraction power than other hues. Cool colors are the greens and blues, while warnings are the reds and yellows. According to Wong (1997, p. 73), warm and cool colors affect spatial illusion in a design. Because warm colors seem to advance while cool colors seem to recede, warm colors stimulate an audience and move out from the screen as well as the computer screen whereas cool colors tend to recede. Therefore, the warmer the color, the greater visibility it has; the colder, the lesser the visibility. As shown in Figure 31, banner (a) shows that a using



(a) Banner (12013 bytes), CTR = 0.069% (1445:1)



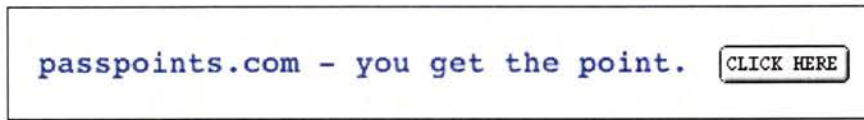
(b) Banner (11892 bytes), CTR = 0.058% (1731:1)

Figure 31. Comparison of click behavior between banners with warm versus cool colors (BannerTips, March 2001)

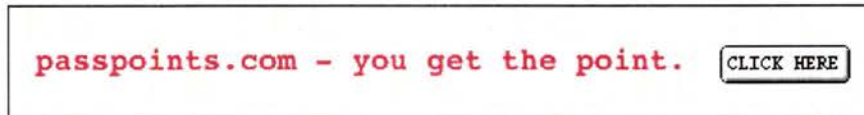
a warm color such as a red tone has a higher click-through rate than a banner (b) with a cold color, blue tone.

Visibility and attraction power is not always effective in increasing legibility. The least vibrant colors are the best for lengthy headline or copy in Web ad space. Figure 32 shows that using a cool color in the text has a better response than a warm color. Even though vibrant colors have strong visibility, they tend to be less legible when used to provide text information with in a small space.

The visibility of a figure-object in a visual field may be enhanced by increasing its color contrast against the ground (Myers, 1989, p. 234). The visibility ratings of colors in the



(a) Banner (2021 bytes), CTR = 0.94% (106:1)



(b) Banner (2027 bytes), CTR = 0.86% (116:1)

Figure 32. Comparison in click behavior between use of a warm versus cool color for text (BannerTips, September 1999)

Web are also based on color as seen against the background color of a Web page that contains an ad. A lack of contrast results in the lost of attention due to clutter. Black is the darkest possible color and is most effectively applied to a white background. Even though a black image on a white background is applied commonly, reversing the two colors would garner greater attention and more visibility. This researcher speculates that the lack of contrast of white banners against Website's background color tends to be absorbed into the Web page background, thus lowering the banner's visibility. Providing greater color contrast against the site background would result in increased recognition. Figure 33 illustrates the difference in visibility between two banners located on the top of the same page in the Yahoo! site. The banner in the example to the left cannot be recognized as well when

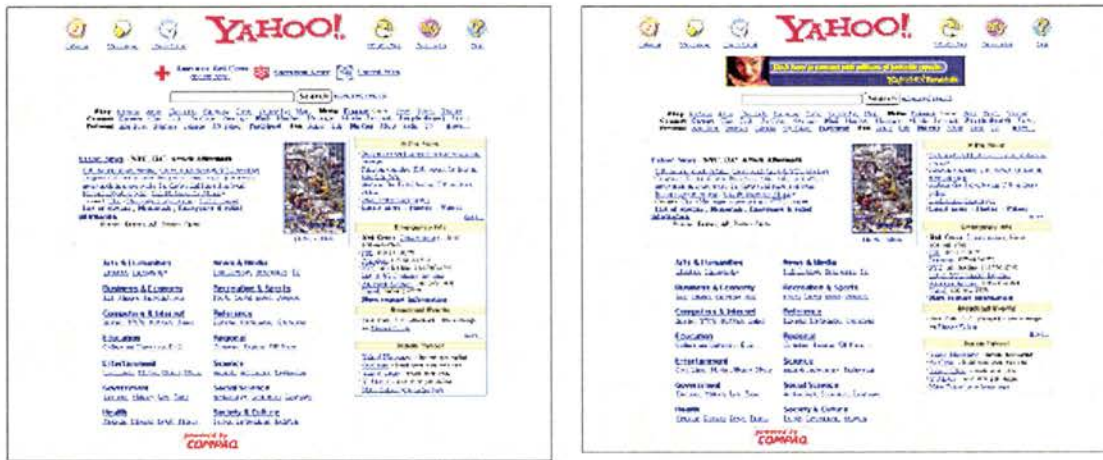


Figure 33. Comparison in banners with different color contrasts against the site background compared to the banner in the example to the right, due to the contrast in color against the background. For this reason, white banners tend to have the lowest CTR record, since most Web site backgrounds are white. In the example provided in Figure 34, the banners generate different click-through results, verifying that a greater color contrast against a background



(a) Banner (12002 bytes), CTR = 0.09% (1122:1)



(b) Banner (6068 bytes), CTR = 0.07% (1535:1)

Figure 34. Color contrast comparison of banners against site background (BannerTips, January 2001)

elicits a greater response. Visibility is also an important element for branding banners, since ad awareness is the first priority of a branding banner.

One of the brand aspects related to color is the use of corporate color. Corporate color stands for an advertiser's identity color that is communicated in a consistent manner to promote brand identity. Instead of using a visible color against a Web page, corporate color enhances brand image over time. As show in Figure 35 and 36, Compaq and Classmate.com maintain consistency in their brand color all the time to firmly establish their corporate identity over time. "Color consistency over a long term can help a brand to be firmly fixed in the mind" (Ries, 1998, p. 140). Thus, the Web user can recognize an advertiser's identification brand easily, by a permanent strong mental association of color etched to create brand association.



Figure 35. Banners establishing Compaq's corporate color (2001)

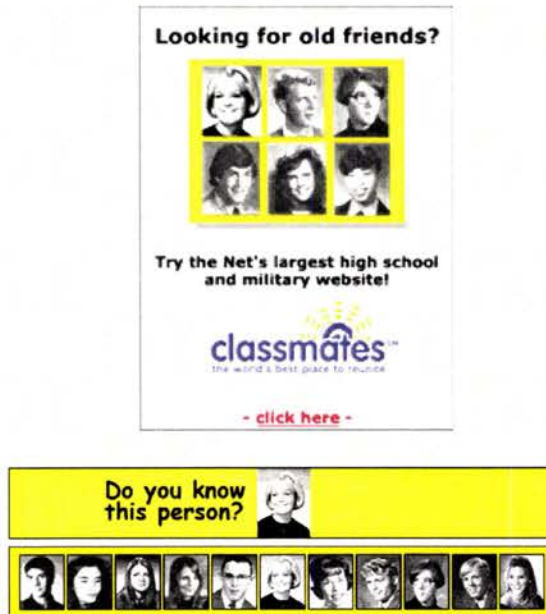


Figure 36. Banners establishing Classmate.com's corporate color (2001)

Layout

A layout is an arrangement of headlines, copy, picture, logo, and other devices.

When principles of design are followed in doing the layout, the ads become more effective and pleasing visual experience for the viewer. Information has to be visually structured so that the setting of the message in an ad space, especially Web site, can be picked up in glance. The level of hierarchy also needs to be considered in the ad space to get the meaning across in a short time because it may encourage the user to read the rest of information.

Reading an ad's elements is crucially affected by layout, the positioning of the elements on the ad space. Reading the arrangement of layouts in the typical horizontal banner is to split between left and right. People tend to read ads from left to right. This researcher speculates the Web ad layout may be following a pattern similar to that of the way of guiding the movement of our reading and a scanning a picture. This generalization works well in ads in which a picture on the left is followed by a headline on the right (Figure 37). Thus, as a person reads, the eye moves from the left of the ad space to the right. Thus, the left-right direction is a key dimension in Web advertising layout. Through habit, the eye moves from left to right or from top to bottom. Utilizing this movement advantageously,



Figure 37. Banner by Buick using a left to right layout direction (2001)

the ad's visual elements can be arranged starting at the left so that users will start to scan at the left. The next direction is to move across to the center when reading messages, and then to the right to connect messages.

The eye also moves naturally from big elements to little elements, black elements to lighter elements, color to no color, unusual shapes to usual shapes, etc. This procedure can be repeated with shapes and sizes; the eye recognizes the related items and moves easily from one to another effortlessly. The visual image is basically positioned at the beginning, headline at the next, and target image at end of sequences. From this knowledge, in brand campaigning the visual image is positioned at the beginning, followed by the headline, and with the brand name at the end, which is at the right or the end of sequences, since the target image is the brand name (Figure 38 & 39). Thus, in a click-through campaign, purchase instruction is positioned at the right corner, or at the end of a sequence (Figure 40 & 41).



Figure 38. Banner by Deplicated Consumer Counseling Inc) starting with a visual image and ending with the brand name, from the left to the right (2001)



Figure 39. Banner by Neway starting with a visual image and ending with the brand name, from the left to the right (2001)



Figure 40. Banner by Topman positioning “click here” at the end of the sequence (2000)

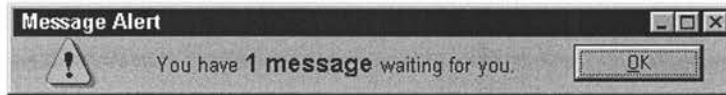


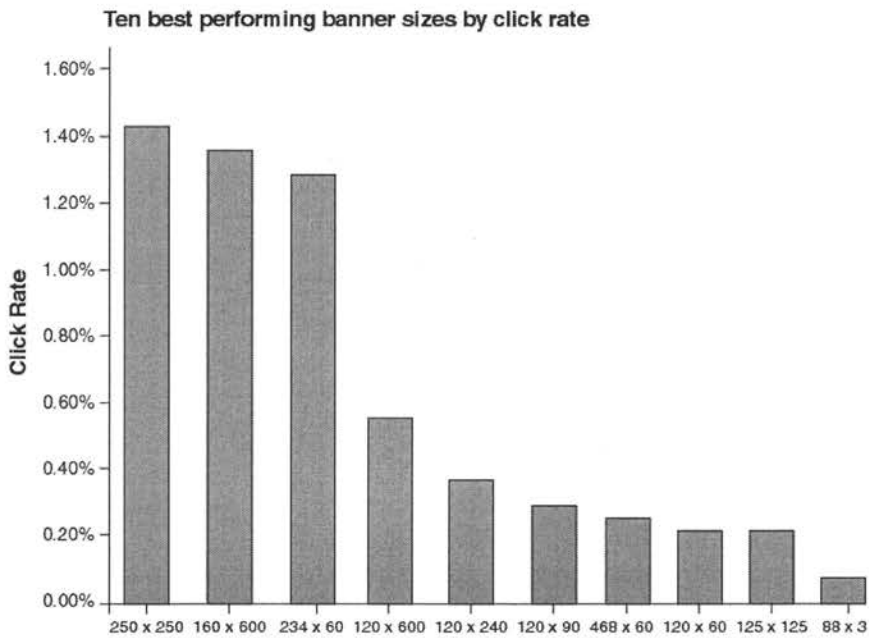
Figure 41. Banner by Bonzi.com positioning “OK” at the right (2000)

Ad size

There are many sizes of banner graphics in common use, ranging from 360×360 for large to 88×31 for micro buttons. For the advertiser, the size should be as large as possible to have high visual impact. The size of the stimulus is an important factor that can affect attention. Thus, larger images are more likely to be noticed than smaller ones. A full-page ad will have a higher chance of drawing attention than a half- or quarter-page ad in printed ad space. Likewise, a larger banner ad will draw more attention than a smaller one. The theory underlying this rationale is that an increase in attention is proportional to the square root of the increase in space. That is, attention will double if an ad is made four times bigger (Rossiter & Percy, 1980). Therefore, a larger banner ad will work as a better peripheral cue to draw the attention of low-involved people than a smaller banner ad.

According to a report by AdRelevance (2000), buttons (short, micro, medium and tall) and different-sized banners (half, short and vertical) collectively make up 63% of all

online ad impressions, while standard banner for only 37%. Standard banners (480×60) still dominate the online marketing industry (18.3% on average), although they do not generate particularly strong click rates and impressions in relation to other banner sizes. Most advertisers rely on buttons—short (25%), micro (16%), and medium (14%)—more readily than other banner sizes—half (14%), vertical (6%), and short (3%) (AdRelevance, 2000). Of the generally accepted IAB banner sizes, the 250×250 (square pop-up) has the highest click rate (Figure 42). The wide skyscraper (160×600) has exhibited strong performance as well.



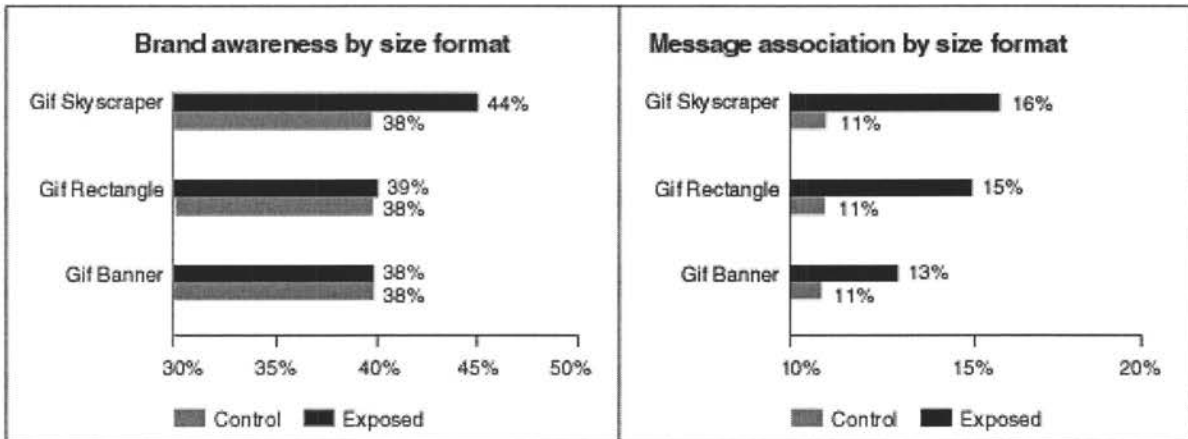
Source: AdKnowledge System

Figure 42. Ten best performing banner sizes based on click rate

The older half-banner format (234×60) also has an above-average performance. On the other hand, the standard creative size 468×60 has seen a relatively low click rate of 0.28%. This figure has been decreasing steadily. This researcher speculates that a non-traditional banner size, such as large rectangle and skyscraper, receives greater customer interest and attention.

The IAB, ACNielsen, CNET.com, DoubleClick and MSN studies (2001) agree on the point that bigger is better. The Skyscraper and Large Rectangle sizes are significantly more effective when compared by click rate and brand awareness rate. The Skyscraper and Large Rectangle improve key branding metrics by an average of 40% for a single ad exposure. The greatest gains were noted for the 336×280 large rectangle, which recorded an average lift of 86% in brand metrics. This result was followed by the 120×600 large skyscraper (an average 64% lift), the 468×60 banner (+56% on average) and 120×240 small skyscraper (an average 40% lift) (IAB, 2001).

MSN network also quantified the effects of an ad impression that includes brand awareness and message association. They compared the impact of size and shape in banners, skyscrapers and large rectangles. The overall findings suggested that skyscraper's creative size has the greatest increase impacting brand awareness and message association (Figure 43). The impact of the skyscraper's creative size is four times the average lift. A study on



Source: MSN Research, July 2001

Figure 43. Increase in brand awareness and message association by ad

the effectiveness of ad size by IAB/Dynamic Logic (June 2001) found that the skyscraper unit was most effective, followed by the large rectangle in terms of brand awareness. In terms of message association, the large rectangle was most effective, followed by the skyscraper. The results of the two studies suggests that larger format sizes have greater visibility, provide for more creative freedom, and allow more space to communicate deeper messaging in both copy and design as compared to standard banners.

Technical elements

Interactivity

As the medium itself changes, technological improvements, such as HTML, Flash, and Java, are increasingly delivering a richer and more participatory experience for Web users. The Interactive Advertising Bureau's (IAB) guidelines for rich media advertising formats are presented in Table 10 – 14. These Rich Media Guidelines cover standard

Table 10. Rich media ad format I (IAB, 2001)

Rich media banner	Description
Definition & Dimensions	Standard banner (468×60 pixels) which use rich media technology such as HTML, Flash and Java
Rich media file size	Up to 15k initial load Up to an additional 85k may be loaded after a user moves their cursor over or clicks on the banner
Rollover expands	A banner may expand to as large as 468×240 after a user moves their cursor over it, and should automatically close when the cursor moves off the banner
Click expands	A banner may expand to as large as 480×240 after a user clicks on it, and can stay expanded until the user clicks a clearly labeled “close” button.

Table 11. Rich media ad format II (IAB, 2001)

Rich media IMU rectangle	Description
Definition & dimensions	Interactive Marketing Units (336×280, 300×250, 180×150 or 240×400 pixels), which use rich media technologies such as HTML, Flash and Java.
Rich media file size	Up to 25k initial load Up to 3 additional loads of up to 50k each may be initiated after a user moves their cursor over or clicks on the rectangle

Table 12. Rich media ad format III (IAB, 2001))

Rich media IMU skyscraper	Description
Definition & dimensions	Interactive Marketing Units (120×600, or 160×600 pixels), which use rich media technologies such as HTML, Flash and Java.
Rich media file Size	Up to 20k initial load Up to 3 additional loads of up to 50k each may be initiated after a user moves their cursor over or clicks on the skyscraper

Table 13. Rich media ad format V (IAB, 2001)

Rich media pop-up	Description
Definition & dimensions	Pop-ups automatically launch in a new browser window when a Web page is loaded with either 250×250 pixels or 550×550 pixels maximum.
Rich media file size	Up to 20k file size for 250×250 Up to 100k file size for 550×550

Table 14. Transitional ads (IAB, 2001)

Transitional ad	Description
Definition & dimensions	Transitional Ads (also called “Interstitials”) appear in the main browser window between two Web pages with 336×280 pixels.
Rich media file size	Up to 20k file size
Play time	Publishers may set their transitional ad pages to automatically forward a user after 7 seconds

banners, Interactive Marketing Unit (IMU) rectangles, IMU skyscrapers, pop-up ad units—the 250×250 IMU and a larger size, of up to 550×550—and transitional ads (interstitials). These new rich media guidelines are designed to open up the vast array of creative possibilities that make advertising effective through the use of interactivity within ad units.

“The more interactivity created by the banners, the higher the click-through rates and the deeper the involvement consumers will have with the brand” (Advertising Age, 2001). To entice the user to click through to the advertiser’s site, an ad needs to have an action-oriented approach to banner ad design by reinforcing interactivity. Action is the goal of a click-through ad, therefore, technology geared for interactivity is likely to be very effective. Interactivity can be used to elicit a click, for example, by presenting a game in which the user must click on part, such as a banner, of the graphic to win the game (Figure 44).

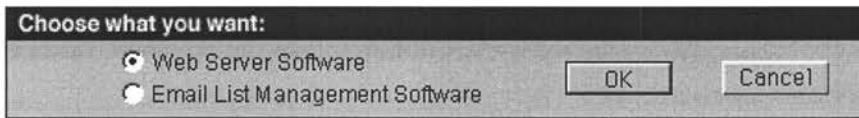


Figure 44. Banner presenting a game

Java scripts or applets that enable users to answer a targeted question by selecting from multiple choices—by clicking on the ad—are other effective interactive elements. Forms make the banner more useful to consumers by helping them find what they want more quickly. They enable consumers to search databases on the sites, and lead them directly to corresponding pages instead of leading to the advertiser's homepage (Figure 45). In Figure 46, two banners from the same advertiser have different click-through rates. The form-embedded banner (a) has a higher click rate than the non-form-embedded banner (b) because it interactively provides the user with a choice.

Save 50-70% on Term Life Insurance e-term					Quote It
coverage	state	Tobacco Use	Birthdate(mmddyyyy)		gender
\$300k	AL	select	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	M

Figure 45. Form-embedded banner by Eterm (2001)



(a) Banner CTR = 0.77% (130:1)



(b) Banner CTR = 0.30% (333:1)

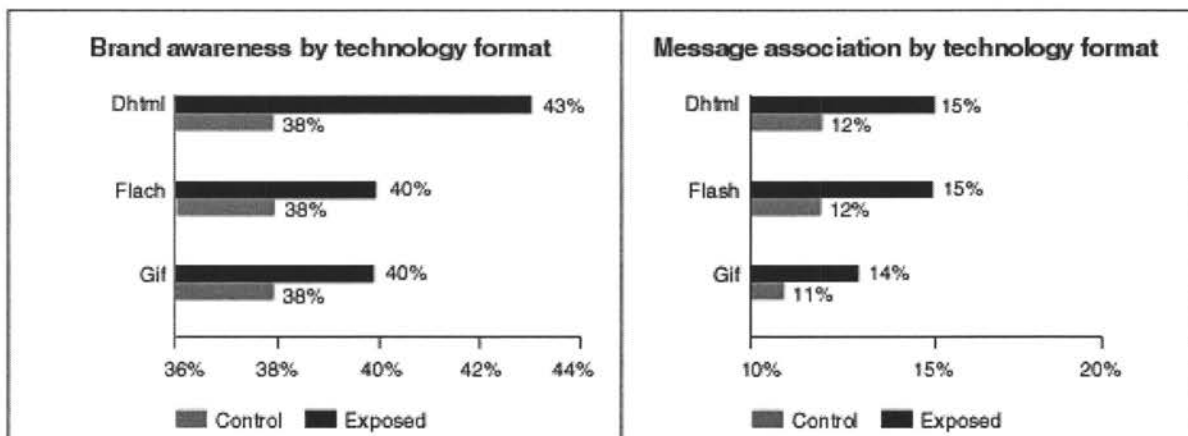
Figure 46. Comparison between form-embedded and non-form-embedded banners involving interactive clicking behavior (BannerTips, December 1998)

The use of Java applets in a “live” banner enables images to move and evolve as the mouse is moved around the banner space; instead of a simple, sequential series of images in an animated GIF, the banner can develop and progress in a user’s engaged manner. An IBM banner (Figure 47) asks users to roll over the mouse and move mouse, then the mouse turns into a water can and makes plants grow along with moving path created by the user as the mouse moves. Screen patterns change with hand movements of site visitors. These interactive elements have been used within banners to provide for user engagement. Such interactivity-enhanced banners are becoming more popular and they are gaining a high rate



Figure 47. Banner sequence by IBM using a Java applets banner (2001)

of success among users, with greater than a 20% click-through. A study by MSN Network (July, 2001) quantified the effects of an ad impression including brand awareness and message association by comparing technologies (DHTML vs. Flash vs. Gif). The findings showed that interactive DHTML units lifted awareness by 13% and doubled the performance of non-interactive creative banners in terms of brand awareness and message association (Figure 48).



Source: MSN Research, July 2001

Figure 48. Increase in brand awareness and message association based on technology format

Frequency

In Web advertising, effective exposure as well as over-exposure can be determined by an analysis of the click-through rates and brand recall. A study by DoubleClick (2001, as cited in Webreference) concluded that the first exposure resulted in click-through averaging 3%; the next two exposures gained click-throughs at 2%; thereafter, the click-through rate fell rapidly below 1%. Unlike the traditional advertising, it would seem that banner advertising evokes immediate banner burnout. It is widely perceived that over-exposure of advertising reduces the conversion rate. To have seen many does not mean that the chance of buying the brand is a linear multiple of the chance if there were few: there are diminishing returns.

Some advertisements need to be seen several times before they can be effective, such as recall, awareness, or click-through. The effective frequency is usually between four and seven for most traditional-media advertising. Exceeding this number of exposure might indicate that an advertisement will be ignored. According to Saunders (2001):

The Alley-based Web ad network and marketing technology firm concluded in a report from its New Diameter Research Division reveals a direct correlation between multiple exposures to online ads and an increase in brand metrics. Double Click said five impressions of Make-A-Wish's ad increased 51% from a baseline awareness of 16% to 25% with five exposures to the ad. Significantly, additional frequencies above five exposures had no measurable

effect on advertising awareness. In contrast, with goals of increasing brand awareness, frequency study shows an increase of 50% with eight exposures to the ad. Additionally, element recall, the ability to remember aspects of the creative increased 126% after eight exposures to the Make-A-Wish banner ad.

According to a study by DoubleClick (2001), after the fourth impression, click response rates dropped from 2.7% to under 1% (banner burnout). The conclusion from this study was that high frequency generates low click response (i.e., rapid burnout) but, on the other hand, high frequency increases brand awareness.

According to Engage's frequency study (2001) on conversion rate, low frequency is related to high performance, while high frequency always produces low performance (Figure 49). For example, a user will more readily notice a brand name as he or she is increasingly exposed to a company's banner. On the other hand, this is not related to the user clicking the banner.

Conversion rate vs frequency of exposure by site

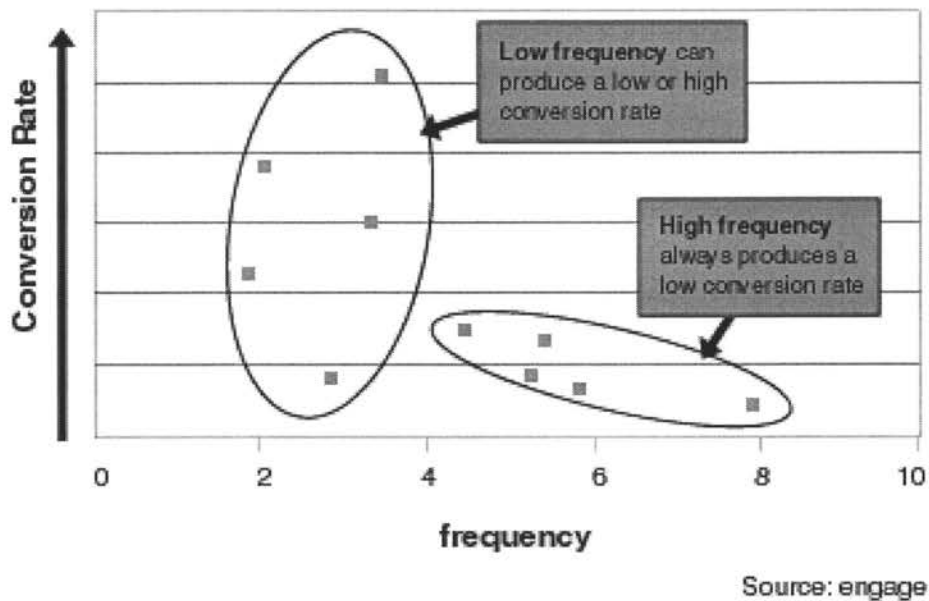


Figure 49. Conversion rate vs. frequency of exposure by site

File size

An ad must appear on the monitor screen before it can be fully observed by the viewer. Loading graphics via the Internet can be frustrating to users, especially those with telephone modems. In such cases, Web users are apt to lose patience and halt a transfer. The faster it appears, the longer it's in front of those eyeballs. Slow downloads are the most obvious foil to branding success. Therefore, most banners are designed to be small so they can be loaded as rapidly as possible. Most sites that accept banner ads also place a size limit

on banner size; many sites restrict banner ads to as little as 10-15 kilobytes. For example, Netscape limits the size of these graphics files to 10K.

Banner ads come in various file sizes based on the amount of graphics and animation. An animated banner takes as much as 3 times as long to load as a static banner. Studies have shown that one of the most important factors affecting banner click-through ratio is load time. It is critically important that banners should be fast-loading. To be effective, an ad must appear on the monitor screen before it can be fully observed by the viewer. In addition, the faster it appears, the longer it will be viewed by the user. Slow downloads are the most frequent foil to branding success. BannerTips (1999) ran a test of six different file sizes of banners. Figure 50 shows that the results from reducing the number of bytes the banner is critical to increasing its CTR. Ideally, a banner should be 6000 bytes or less (BannerTips).

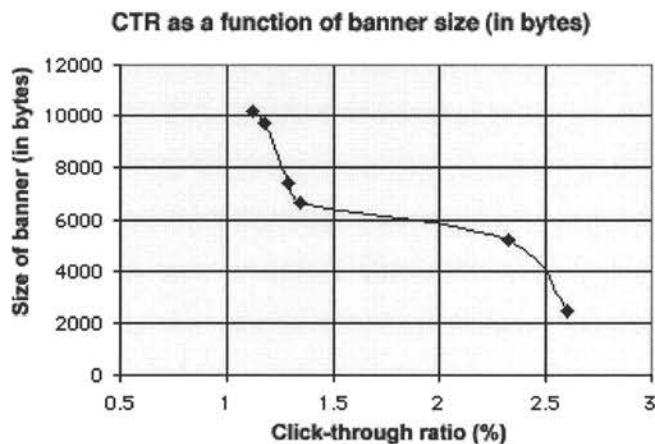


Figure 50. Click-through rate as a function of banner size (in bytes)

Figure 51 presents the same banners, sorted from best CTR to worst based on byte size. A banner can increase its CTR by a factor of 2.3× if its size can be reduced from 10K to 2.5K. Clearly, the reason is because banners with more bytes take a longer time to load. If users do not see a slow-loading banner, then they will not have a chance to click on it (BannerTips, 1999).

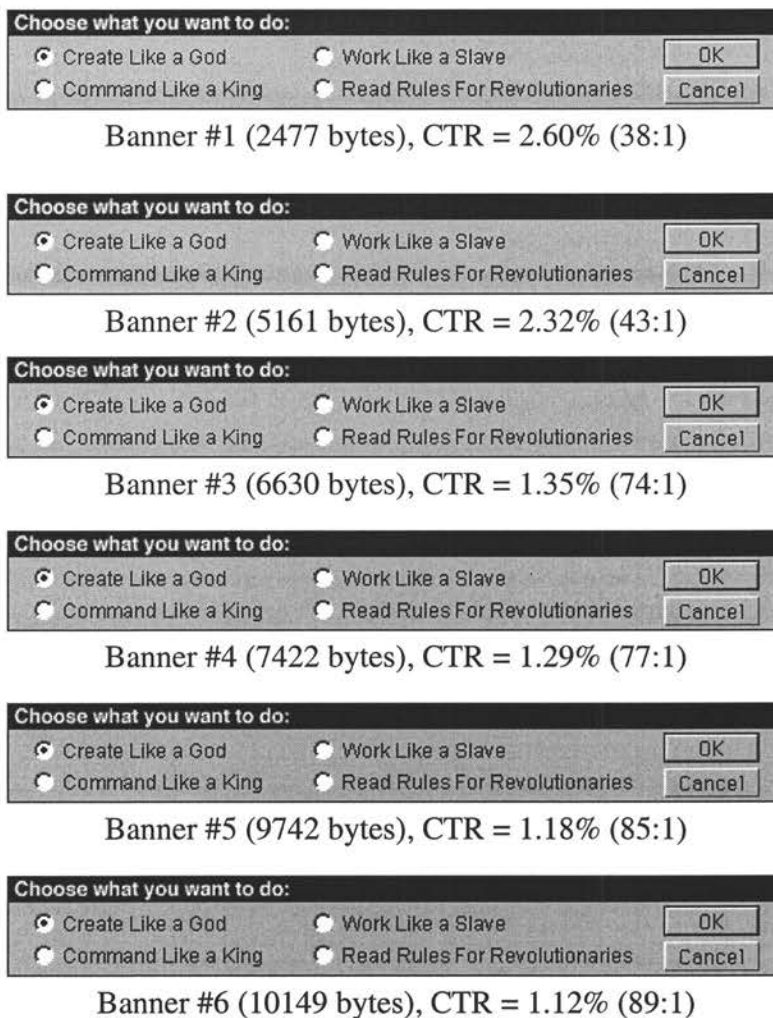


Figure 51. Comparison of different file sizes by click-through rate (BannerTips, February, 1999)

Targeted site

In a study on placement of a Web site by BannerTips (1999, April), CTR increased by 470% when the banner was run on a targeted site, compared to the network-wide run. The effect of advertising is perceived to be at maximum when the contents of the advertising vehicle are relevant to the product categories of the advertisements placed on the media. This is also true for banner ads in the Internet. The effects of banner ads might be minimal when the product categories of banner ads are irrelevant to the contents of the Web site where the banner ads are placed. Therefore, a banner ad with higher relevance between its product category and the contents of the site where the ad is placed will generate more clicking of the banner.

In a study by Forrester (2000), click-through rates for ad banners placed next to relevant topics generate double the click-through rate for randomly inserted banners. More effective are those banner ads that are engineered to appear as a result of a specific user search word or phrase (keyword-triggered ads). Keyword-triggered banners are clicked at three times the rate of randomly rotated ads.

A higher click-through response rate is generated from opt-in e-mail, e-mail messages in which the user has requested or has consented to receive. These e-mail click rates can be 5 to 15 times higher than conventional banner ads randomly inserted on Web sites. Clearly, the higher the relevance, the more likely a banner ad will capture attention (Sacharin, 2001).

Ad position

In addition to Web sites and pages, the position of the banner on the page itself is also important. Most people read something in a specific pattern—scanning briefly while reading material more closely. The reading path involves the eye tracking and positioning within the page, in which some of the positions are more likely to be seen than others. Web pages, in many cases, run to several screenfuls. To read the whole page, users must page down through the text. Banner ads typically run at the top and bottom of a page, but they can also be incorporated anywhere on the Web page.

According to DoubleClick, banners at the top of the pages are twice as effective. Research has found a marked difference of click-through rates for banners placed in the first screenful versus those in subsequent screens. Rates of 3.5% to 4% were observed for banners in the first screenfuls, but rates of only 0.5% for those below the cut. A study on placement of ads by the University of Michigan (1998) reported that banners next to the right scroll bar (in the lower right-hand corner of the first screen) generated a 228% higher click-through rate than ads at the top of the page. Ads also placed one-third down on a page, as opposed to the top, generated 77% higher click-through rates. According to WebWeek, placing a banner on a home page generates more click-through than on pages deeper within a site. With less than 10% of the screen allotted for the banner, it is all too easy for a Web user to quickly bypass an advertisement and a vital first impression may be lost. One feature that

browsers and web pages currently support is the frame. A frame can be used to sub divide a Web page into regions. By using these frames, a banner can be placed on the screen whenever the user scrolls down the page (Figure 52).

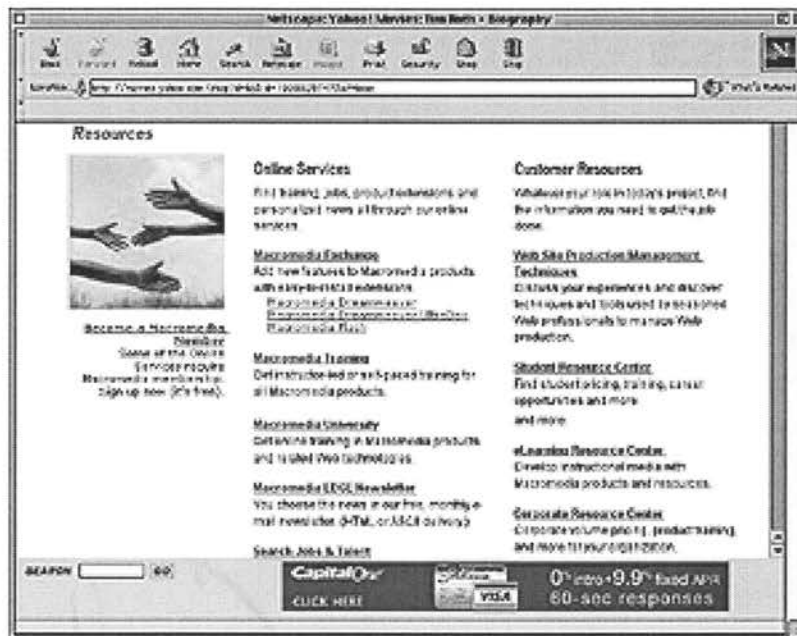


Figure 52. Framed advertising banner for Capital One (2001)

Web Advertising Communication Styles

The MacBride Report noted that the main purpose of advertising is selling goods and services to promote attitudes and life styles that extol acquisition and consumption at the expense of other values. The report continued:

Many social critics have stated that advertising is essentially concerned with exulting the materialistic virtues of consumption by exploiting achievement drives and emulative anxieties, employing tactics of hidden manipulation. Playing on emotions, maximizing appeal and minimizing information, trivializing, eliminating objective considerations. (p. 37)

Advertising is a form of communication that is manipulated by use of different visual communication styles. Messaris outlined three major roles that visual images can play in an ad: “...(1) visual styles can elicit emotions by simulating the images; (2) they can serve as that something did happen; and (3) and they can establish an implicit link between the thing and the desired images” (Messaris, p. vii). These advertising functions stem from several visual communications. Visual communication styles serve a number of important functions for advertising. They create ad awareness and brand awareness, and they cause intellectual and emotional

associations. What kinds of visual communication styles can be used creatively to maximize brand awareness or click-through behavior? The current researcher found seven different styles in Web advertising: casuality, contrast, analogy, curiosity, ambiguity, deception, and synecdoche.

Casuality

Casuality is a basic format of advertising. The basic formats for advertising were defined by Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (1990), with the “product-information format” in which the object or service being sold as the center of attention of the ad (cited in Messaris, 1997, p. 182). Linking a product with a desired image is often intended as a visual analogy between product and desired visual image. It evokes a claim that the product will lead to the kinds of satisfaction illustrated in the image. In short, advertising in which a product is juxtaposed with a positive visual portrayal can be seen as implying a causal link between the product and some outcome related to that portrayal (Messaris, p. 184).

Figure 53 depicts a very common ad format called the product-information format. Representing the product’s image by linking its brand name is often used to announce a new product or define an advertiser’s brand category. This simple style is appropriate when the brand name is not descriptive and not well-known. It helps Web users to become familiar with a brand name with a product or service-related image. Figure 54 juxtaposes a positive

facial image example into the brand product or service, implying satisfaction an advertiser's service. Figure 55 shows that juxtaposing a product with a celebrity endorser may be a means of certifying the product's value, but it is also likely to contain an implicit promise. If you use this product, you will be associated in other people's minds with some of the same



Figure 53. Banner representing the product image of salonselectives (2001)



Figure 54. Banner representing the service image of Dietsmart.com (2001)



Figure 55. Banner by Pepsi representing celebrity (2001)

qualities that this celebrity possesses. Using photographs of famous people in Web ad is another standard tactic lifted from traditional advertising campaigns. This casual style reinforces the link to an advertised product or service into a desired image to lock it into the user's long-term memory.

Contrast

Contrast appears in several widely-used in the traditional ad formats of visual persuasion. An advertising point can be dramatized by setting a contrast in the message. Messages are sometimes divided into several sequences, but the surprise section usually comes first, followed by the contrast argument (Figure 56 & 57). In commercial advertising, visual contrast has at least two kinds of situations: before-and-after juxtapositions. Typically, both situations deploy images as proof of factual claims, as when photographs of the same person before and after dieting are shown as evidence of the effectiveness of a new

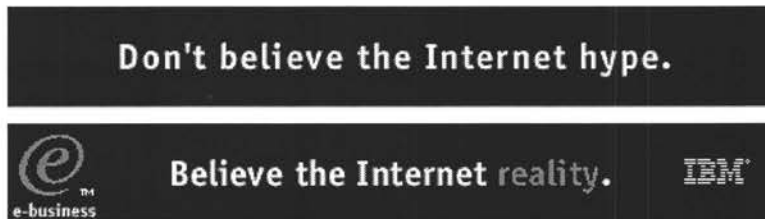


Figure 56. Banner sequence by IBM representing contrasting messages (2001)

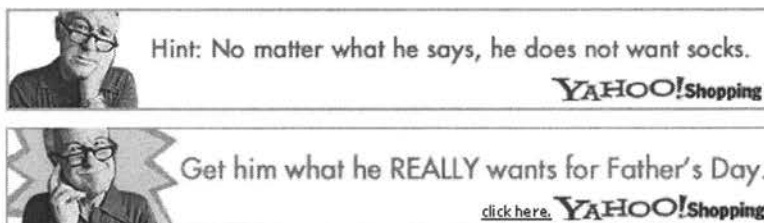


Figure 57. Banner sequence by Yahoo! Shopping which provides visual contrast (2001)

weight-loss product (Figure 58). In cases such as these, the images ordinarily are accompanied by written texts that explicitly spell out how the visual syntax is to be interpreted. The viewer is told how one image differs from another and what to look for in the juxtaposition between them: a difference in weight between the “before” picture and the “after.” This communication style in Web ads attempts to get the audience’s immediate interest as well as response.

Figure 58. Large rectangle by DietSmart (2001) which provides visual contrast

Analogy

Analogy has become one of the standard techniques of visual persuasion in advertising because the juxtaposed image may have the power to affect viewers more strongly than can a picture of the product itself. The principal function of analogical

juxtaposition is its capacity to act as a partial substitute for adjectives and adverbs—two types of meaning that images cannot express directly (Messaris, 1997, p. 193).

Mitchell and Olson (1981) conducted a study that provided evidence that viewers actually do make synthetic connections, by experimenting with a picture of a product, verbal text, and the other juxtaposing images. The results indicated that visual syntax is capable of getting the point across better than verbal statement (cited in Messaris, 1997, p. 204). Thus visual juxtaposition adds something distinctive to the meaning of a product. A juxtaposition between the product and some other image that could be seen as adding a distinctive quality to the brand (Figure 59 & 60).



Figure 59. Banner sequence by Audi (2001) representing analogy

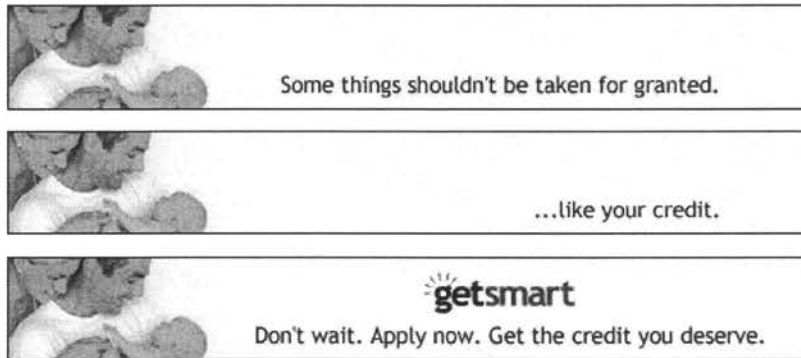


Figure 60. Banner sequence by getsmart (2001) representing analogy

Curiosity

In a recent study, Satya Menon of the University of Chicago and Dilip Somon of the University of Colorado at Boulder outlined in a report entitled, *Managing consumer motivation and learning: Haranessing the power of curiosity for effective advertising strategies* (cited in Sacharin, 2001, p, 91), that curiosity is a powerful thing in an ad. Ads that pique interest but do not reveal the whole story increase consumers' motivation to learn more. Hinting and teasing draw in consumers and make them hungry to learn more. In turn, they will pay some attention to satisfy their curiosity.

Effective click-through ads do not provide much information about a company or a site. That is the job of the site itself. Instead, the banner piques the user's curiosity, often by withholding information in order to create a "mystery" that can be used to generate a question in the user's mind. The simplest type is the headline asks a question. Posing questions appears to attract more attention (Figure 61 & 62).



Figure 61. Banner by Ecompany (2001) inducing curiosity by questioning



Figure 62. Banner sequence by planetfeedback.com (2001) to incite curiosity by questioning

Ambiguity

Ambiguity means that one and the same sign can be interpreted as having various meanings. Ambiguity encourages endless associations. It also stimulates the imagination and triggers feelings. Although it is not the goal of advertisement to be ambiguous, when

ambiguous elements are used, attention is given to limiting the interpretation of the elements (Nadin & Zakia, 1994, p.16). Ads contain words and pictures, and both can be ambiguous (Figure 63). Cryptic messages increase click-through by 18%, but they may not attract the appropriate audience or reinforce branding (Webreference, 1996). Being clear and concise is

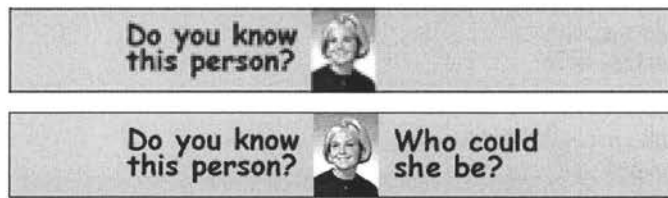


Figure 63. Banner sequence by Classmate (2001) inducing ambiguity

important if the advertiser wishes to lock a brand message into the consumer's long-term memory and have it recalled in an appropriate circumstance. In turn, ambiguity leads to click-through but decrease brand messages.

Deception

Another effective click-through strategy in Web advertising is to design a trick banner ad. Visual signs can enhance truth but they can also be used to deceive or misrepresent. Banner ads resembling dialog boxes have buttons or computer alerts to deceive users by appearing as if they are real alerts or buttons needing an immediate respond (Figure 64). Figure 65 shows that even when two banners employed the same message, the "win \$50,000" banner using deception received the higher click-through rate.

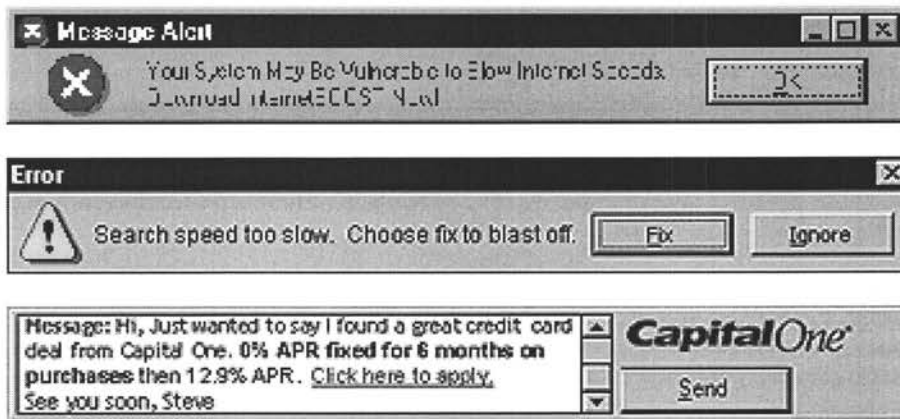
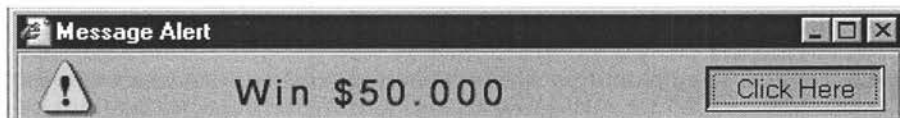


Figure 64. Banners using deception (2001)



Banner (5000 bytes), CTR = 0.32% (312:1)



Banner (15000 bytes), CTR = 0.07% (1,468:1)

Figure 65. Comparison in click rates by banners using deception vs. no deception (2001)

When the audience clicks the trick banner, they tend to feel deceived and their time was wasted. A deception banner tends to incite Web users to harbor negative feelings against a brand image even though it increases click-through rate. The trick banner usually does not include a logo or brand name in order to completely deceive the audience. Most audiences click the trick banner despite the lack of information provided about the advertiser. The

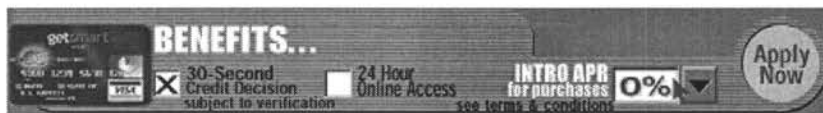
deceptive banner ad attempts to mislead the audience with a message that is more appealing than what is actually being sold. A trick banner may generate a high click-through rate, but this rate is a very poor indication of the actual effectiveness (such as increased revenue) of the ad.

Synecdoche

In synecdoche, the name of a part of something is used to refer to the whole thing. Visually, it is common for ads to show a part to represent the whole. Especially in a small space such as a banner ad on the Web, it is impossible to reinforce a brand image to the customer by exhibiting the entire picture of a product. Although many ads are chosen to present brand products on the Internet by using photographs, the images are often very small. Moreover, the resolution tends to be poor.

By comparing banner (a) and (b), as shown in Figure 66, without closely observing the product image in the (a) banner, the user is not able to recognize a product as well as the brand name due to the inclusion of a small image with poor legibility. Instead of displaying the entire product image Banner (b) shows the part of product image that contains the Visa symbol to make the user aware, even if only by a quick glance, of the product as well as the brand name at the right side. Providing an entire image of a product in a small space such as

a banner does not reinforce brand image to the customer. It merely tells the customer about the product category. On the Internet, general image of product does not make a positive contribution to brand presentation. An alternative might be to present part of product that is representative of the whole product and brand name (Figure 67).



(a) Banner with poor legibility of the product image



(b) Banner with better legibility of the product image

Figure 66. Comparison banner for Getsmart Visa (2001)

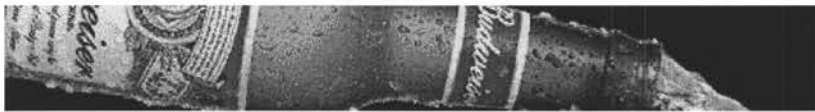


Figure 67. Banner by Budweiser (2001) representing synecdoche

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Analysis

In this study, the researcher attempted to explore the similarities and differences among the attributes of click-through and brand-reinforcement advertising elements in Web advertising. The method used for this typology was based on the elements and styles that analyzed in the Chapter 3. The typology was designed based on quantitative and qualitative analysis as described in Chapter 3 and literature review in Chapter 2.

Current banners were examined and compared using the typology designed by this researcher to determine effective Web advertising in brand-reinforced and click-through ad campaigns. High click-through banner examples were selected from BannerTips.com from August 2001 to January 2000. The top ten impression banner examples were selected based on the Nielson/NetRating for top AD Banners viewed and posted for the week ending September 9, 2001, which was accessed and printed on September 27, 2001.

A typology guideline is developed in the current chapter based on an examination of the full range of design elements through brand-reinforced and click-through ad campaigns in Web advertising. Thus, each typology has two different objectives for comparison: (a) brand reinforcement, and (b) click-through Web advertisement.

This researcher sub-divided the Web advertisement elements into typology matrix based on five categories presented in Chapter 3: (1) brand identification with purchase instruction elements; (2) visual and verbal elements; (3) design elements for visibility and legibility; (4) technical elements; and (5) strategies for Web advertising.

Results

The relative placement of the brand identification elements explored in this study in both types of advertising campaigns is depicted in Figure 68 and Table 15. The design is divided into four quadrants based on two advertising objectives of relative attributes indicating the relative impact of brand-reinforced and click-through ads. The dominant elements appear in the upper left and right quadrants whereas the less dominant to no consideration appear in the lower left and right quadrants. There is an inverse relationship between brand identification elements and level of dominance as compared to Web advertising objectives (brand-reinforced and click-through). As depicted in Figure 68, logo, brand name, and tagline are highly dominant in brand-reinforced campaigns whereas they are less dominant (brand name and logo) or non-existent (tagline) in click-through campaigns. Similarly, click-here behavior is dominant in click-through campaigns versus non-existent in brand-reinforced campaigns.

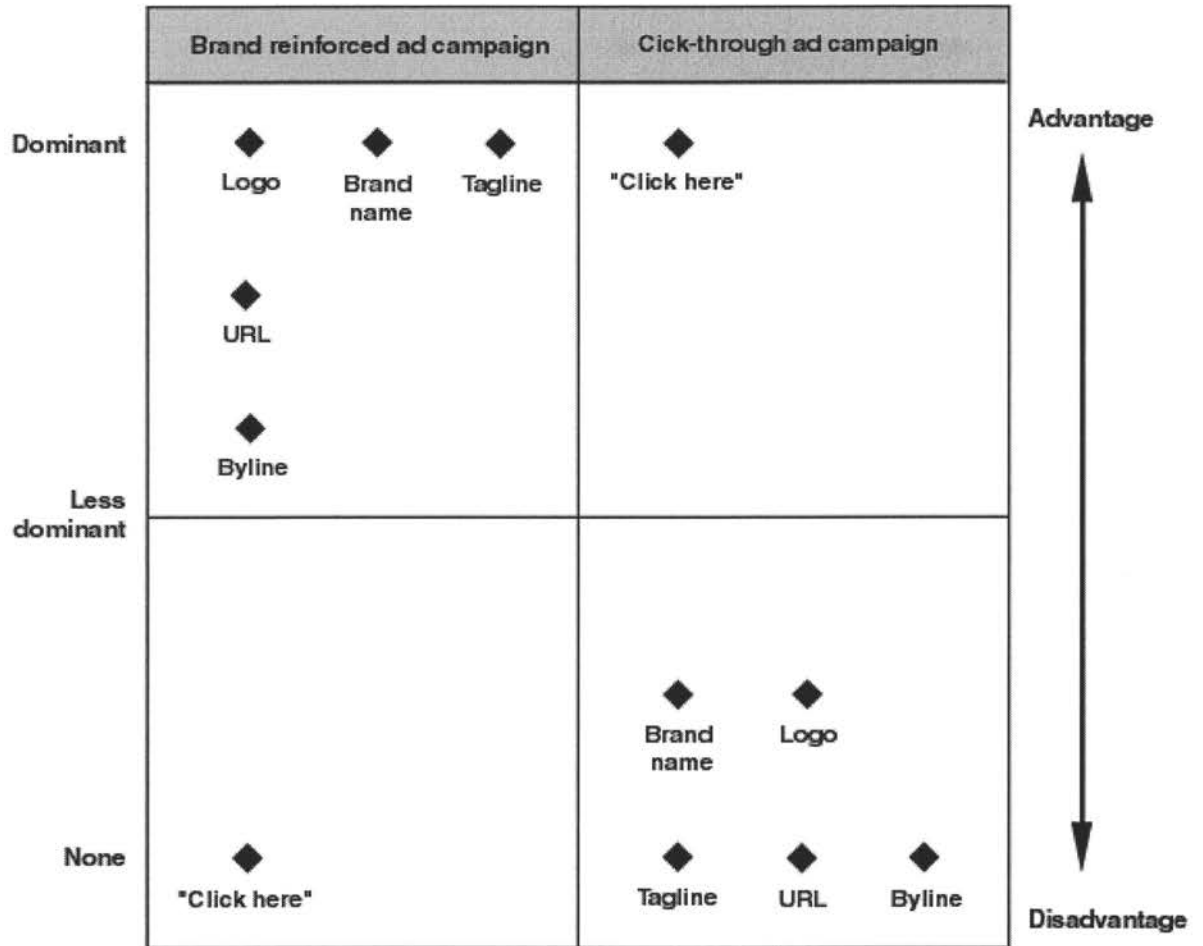


Figure 68. Typology matrix identifying the dominance and impact of brand identification and purchase instruction elements

Table 15. Expected impact of brand identification and purchase instruction attributes

Attribute	Impact	
	Brand-reinforcement	Click-through
Logo	very high	low
Brand name	very high	low
Tagline	very high	low
Byline	high	low
URL	high	low
“Click here”	none	very high

As shown in Table 15, the level of dominance as depicted in Figure 68 is based on each element's impact on the advertising objective. Thus, the impact of the logo and brand name is very high in brand-reinforcement but low in click-through campaigns. By using this typology, advertisers can evaluate a new design for a banner and determine its potential effectiveness in brand-reinforced or click-through ad campaigns. An advertiser who applies this typology would be less likely to use brand names in a click-through ad campaign for a banner ad because its impact is low. The ideal selection for a click-through ad campaign would be to use “click here” because its impact is very high.

The relative direction of the visual and verbal elements explored in this study is depicted in Figure 69 for both types of advertising campaigns. This perceptual map is constructed based on the previous visual and verbal elements analysis described in Chapter 3. The vectors (i.e., attributes) represent the advantage as well as inverse relationship based on

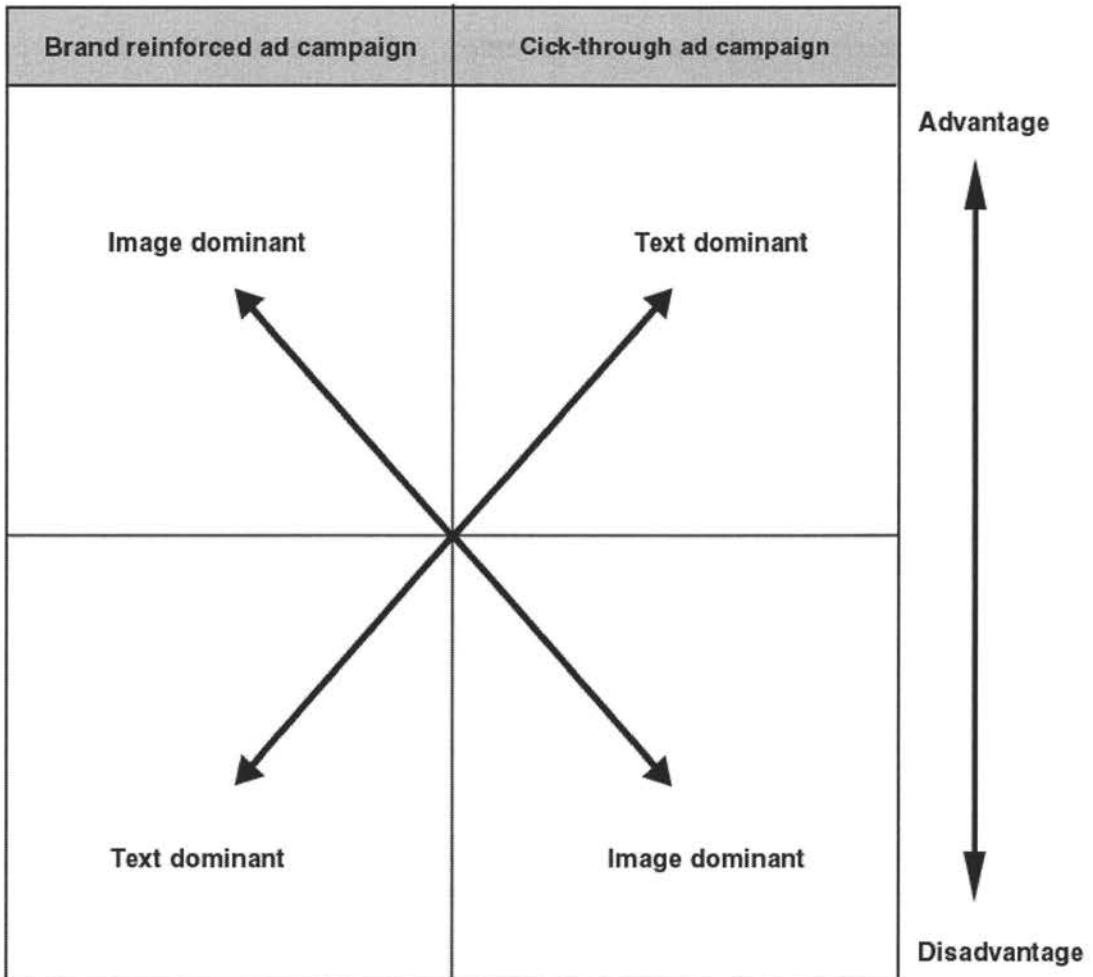


Figure 69. Typology matrix comparing the effectiveness of visual and verbal elements

directional flow (e.g., Northwest to Southeast). There are four quadrants comprising impact of visual and verbal elements for brand-reinforced and click-through ad campaigns. The advantageous elements appear in the upper left and right quadrants whereas the disadvantageous elements appear in the lower left and right quadrants. There is an inverse relationship between the elements of brand-reinforced and click-through campaigns. In this perceptual map, the impact attributes are identified clearly. For example, image dominant is highly advantageous in brand-reinforced campaigns versus disadvantageous (image dominant) in click-through campaigns. Similarly, text dominant is highly advantageous in click-through campaigns versus highly disadvantageous (text dominant) in brand-reinforced campaigns.

As shown in Table 16, the impact of the visual and verbal elements as depicted in Figure 69 is based on the advertising objective. Thus, the impact of image dominant is very high in brand-reinforcement but low in click-through campaigns. By using this typology, advertisers can evaluate a new design for a banner and determine its potential effectiveness in brand-reinforced or click-through ad campaigns. An advertiser who applies this typology would be less likely to use “image” in a click-through ad campaign for a banner ad because its impact is low. The ideal selection for a click-through ad campaign would be to use “text dominant” because its impact is very high.

Table 16. Expected effectiveness of visual (image) versus verbal (text)

Attribute	Effectiveness	
	Brand-reinforcement	Click-through
Image dominant	increase	decrease
Text dominant	decrease	increase

Visibility and legibility are the first priorities in both brand and click-through ad objectives. Web ad design should take into consideration the visibility and legibility components used in design elements, such as color, type, size, motion, and layout. Ad information on the Web usually glanced at or passed by the Web audience whose main concern is to search for information. Therefore, legibility and visibility play important roles in the Web environment to garner attention and solicit readership for an ad message.

The visibility and legibility of the visual and verbal elements explored in this study in both types of advertising campaigns are listed in Table 17. Five design elements (i.e., color, type, size, motion, and layout) were analyzed based on visibility and legibility. For the element “color”, warm, hard, and high contrast colors used against the site background color have higher visibility. For the element “type”, bold letterforms and big letter sizes have higher visibility against the computer screen. Ads that are large in size and use animation have greater visibility.

Legibility is analyzed based on the elements of type and layout. For the element “type”, short messages and upper and lowercase letterforms are more legible when applied in a small space. They are easy to recognize and to read based on the rapid eye movement and quick scanning techniques employed by the audience within the Web environment. For the element “layout”, a left to right or top to bottom layout is more legible.

Table 17. Visibility and legibility based on the five design elements in Web advertising










Design elements	Visibility	Legibility
Color	High contrast Warm Hard	
Type	Bold letterform Big size	Short message Upper and lowercase
Size	Large ad	
Motion	Animation	
Layout		Left to right Top to bottom

Based on Table 17, the top 10 ad impression banners viewed at week end of September were incorporated into Table 18 to determine the current usage of the five design elements to promote visibility and legibility. For example, the current top 10 ad impression banners use type and motion elements effectively approximately 80 – 100% based on

visibility. In addition, the current top 10 ad impression banners effectively use type with short message and upper & lower-case approximately 70 – 90% to promote legibility.

Similarly, layout is effectively used with left to right direction employed approximately 90% to promote legibility.

Table 18. Visibility and legibility of the top impression banners based on five design elements

Design elements		Visibility		Legibility
Color	high contrast			
	warm			
	hard			
Type	bold		short message	
	big size		upper & lowercase	
Size				
Motion	animation			
Layout			left to right	

The relative placement of high click-through banners selected from BannerTips and explored in this study is depicted in Figure 70 based on major color usage. There are four quadrants based on a color scale of warm, cool, hard, and soft. Warm and hard colors appear in the upper left quadrant, and hard and cool colors appear in the lower left quadrant. The warm and soft colors appear in the upper right quadrant and the soft and cool colors appear in

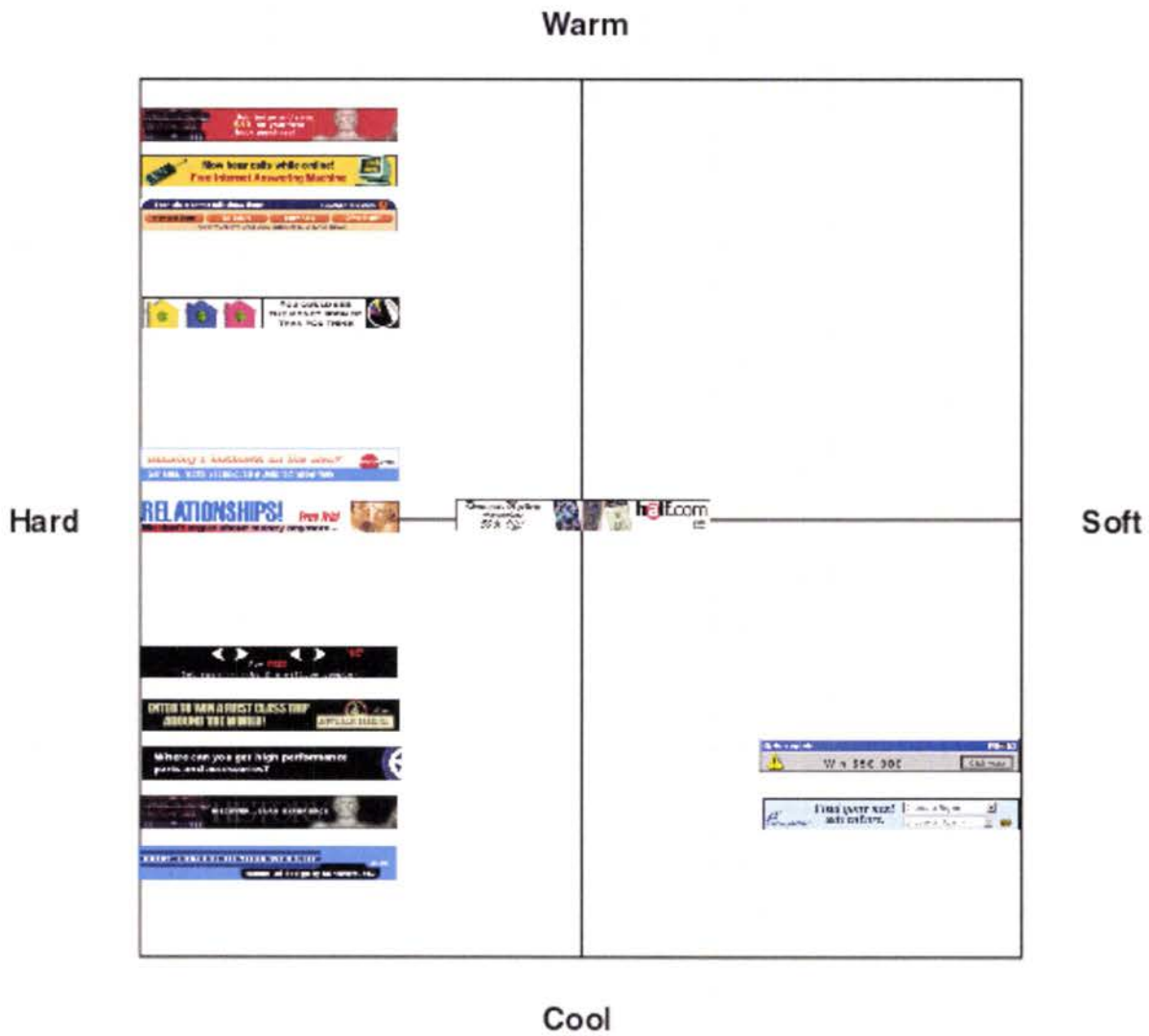


Figure 70. Usage of color in high click-through banners

the lower right quadrant. As depicted in Figure 70, current high-click banners effectively use hard colors with warm and cool colors. On the other hand, current high click-through banners use soft colors sparingly.

The usage of color by the current top 10 impression banners are scattered throughout the four quadrants as depicted in Figure 71. On the other hand, the top 10 impression

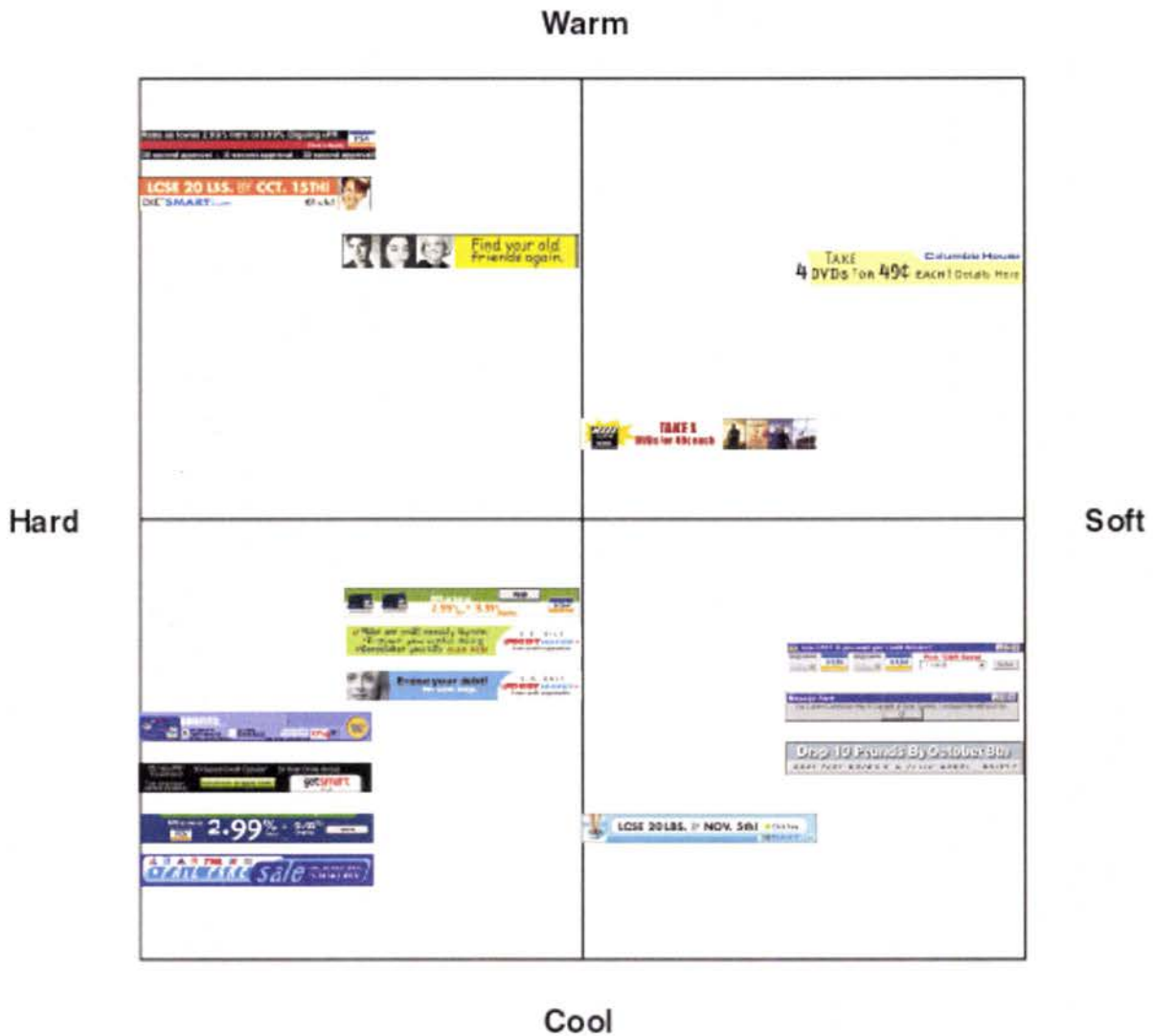


Figure 71. Color usage by the top ten impression banners

banners employ warm colors less often, preferring to mix hard with cool, and soft with cool colors.

The relative placement of the technical elements explored in this study in both types of advertising campaigns is depicted in Figure 72. There are four quadrants comprising effective Web advertising for brand-reinforced and click-through ad campaigns. The advantageous elements appear in the upper left and right quadrants whereas the disadvantageous elements appear in the lower left and right quadrants. There is both an inverse and similar relationship in advantage of brand-reinforced and click-through elements. For example, rich interactivity, small file size, and targeted placement are highly advantageous in both brand-reinforced and click-through campaigns. Non-interactivity, network-wide placement, and big file size are disadvantageous in both brand-reinforced and click-through campaigns. On the other hand, there is an inverse relationship in the frequency of use. The effectiveness of high frequency (i.e., exhibited many times) is high in brand-reinforcement ads but low in click-through ads. The impact of low frequency (i.e., exhibited less often) is low in brand-reinforcement ads but high in click-through ads.

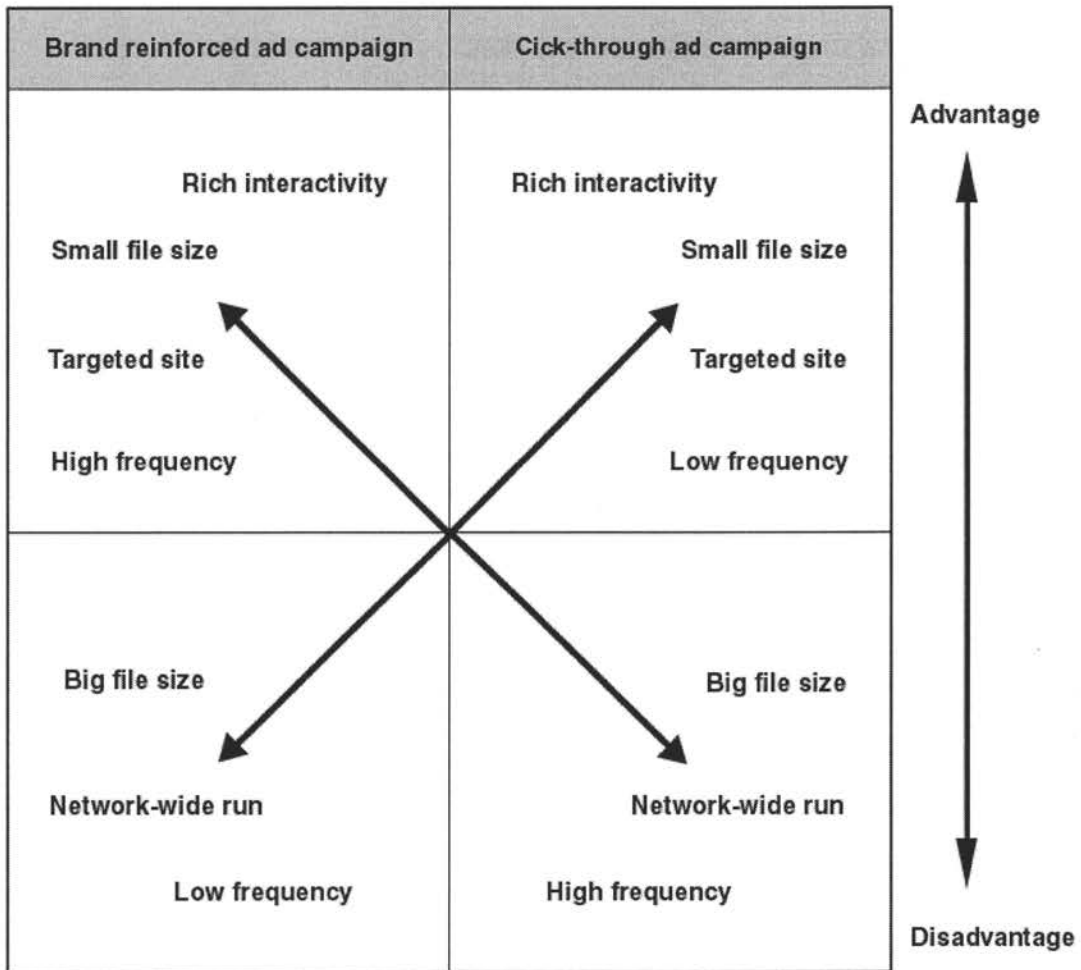


Figure 72. Typology matrix comparing the level of effectiveness of technical elements

As shown in Table 19, the effectiveness of the technical elements as depicted in Figure 72 is based on the advertising objective. Rich-interactivity, frequency, and small file size are ideal for both brand-reinforcement and click-through ad campaigns because their effectiveness is high. On the other hand, the ideal selection for a click-through ad campaign would be to frequently change an ad through new creative displays of the same ad, whereas a brand-reinforcement campaign would strive for a higher frequency of display of the same ad to promote familiarity.

Table 19. Expected effectiveness of technical elements

Technical element	Attribute	Effectiveness	
		Brand-reinforcement	Click-through
Interactivity	rich	increase	increase
Frequency	high	increase	decrease
	low	decrease	increase
File size	small	increase	increase
	big	decrease	decrease
Targeted site		increase	increase

Table 20 depicts a strategic matrix developed to examine all of the Web advertising elements and styles presented in Chapter 3. This table is also a composite of all of the characteristics explored in the preceding figures and tables in Chapter 4. Analytic usage of the content is represented by a cross-section of design elements and styles.

Table 20. Strategic metrix comprised the design elements and styles based on shared relationship between high/low click-through and advantageous/disadvantageous on brand-reinforcement

			A High click-through & advantageous on brand	B High click-through & disadvantageous on brand	C Low click-through & advantageous on brand	D Low click-through & disadvantageous on brand	
Web advertising design elements	Brand Identification	Logo		non-use		dominant	
		Tagline				as a headline	
		Byline		non-use		as a business identifier	
	Purchasing Instruction	Click here		"Click here"			
		URL				use	
	Visual Verbal	Visual/verbal		text dominant			
		Headline	upper & lowercase letterform, short	sale stimulus			long/multiple message, all caps
		Motion	animated				non-animated
		Color	high contrast, warm and hard	warm/hard	corporate		low contrast
		Layout	left to right, top to bottom	message to purchase instruction	message to brand name		
		Ad size	bigger				smaller
	Technical Elements	Interactivity	rich interactivity				non-interactivity
		Frequency		low	high		
		File size	smaller				big
Placement		targeted site				network-wide run	
Web advertising communication styles		contrast	deception	casuality			
		synecdoche	curiosity	analogy			

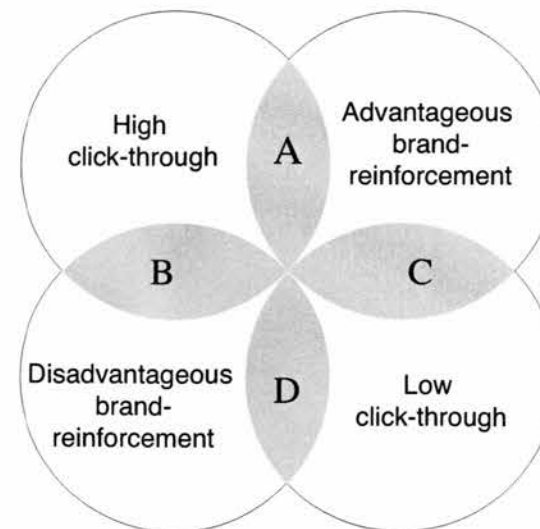


Figure 73. Graphical representation of the shared relationship between high/low click-through and advantageous/disadvantageous on brand-reinforcement

There are four strategic relationships in brand-reinforced and click-through ad campaigns, with a shared (i.e., overlapping) high/low click-through and advantage/disadvantage on brand-reinforcement. In Figure 73 graphically depicts the relationship among the four different overlapped/shared areas listed in Table 20. The shaded areas represent the following: (A) high click-through [overlap] advantageous on brand-reinforcement; (B) high click-through [overlap] disadvantageous on brand-reinforcement; (C) low click-through [overlap] advantage on brand-reinforcement; and (D) low click-through [overlap] disadvantageous on brand-reinforcement. The specification of elements and styles are listed under each category (A-D) to indicate whether the selected design element or communication style has either a high/low shared relationship in click-through and/or it is advantageous/disadvantageous in brand-reinforcement. Use of the strategic matrix displaying the variables of elements and styles in Table 20 will enable designers to quickly identify the relationships and differences among the attributes and the guidelines for improving click-through and brand-reinforcement.

The shaded area (A) in Figure 73 indicates a shared relationship with high click-through and advantageous on brand-reinforcement with the variables of Web advertising elements (Table 20). For example, shaded area (A) in Figure 73 is comprised of Web advertising elements which are: upper and low-case letterform, short sentence, animation, high contrast, warm and hard color, left to right or top to bottom layout, bigger ad size,

highly engaging interactivity, smaller file size, and targeted ad placement. In Web advertising style, contrast and synecdoche are also overlapped in high click-through and advantageous brand-reinforcement.

The shaded area (B) in Figure 73 indicates a shared relationship with high click-through and disadvantageous on brand-reinforcement with variables that are high consideration for click-through without consideration for brand-reinforcement (Table 20). Similarly, the shaded area (C) indicates a shared relationship with low click-through and advantageous on brand-reinforcement with variables that are of high consideration for brand-reinforcement without consideration for click-through. Finally, the shaded area (D) indicates a shared relationship with low-click through and disadvantageous on brand-reinforcement indicating that the designer should avoid using this list of variables.

Next, the content of each design elements and styles were examined with high click-through banners and the top 10 impression ad banners (see Figures 74 & 75). In Figures 74 and 75, each red dot represents an element of click-through and the blue dot indicates an element of brand-reinforcement. A comparison of the number of red dots and blue dots will explain how well each banner uses the Web advertising elements and styles.

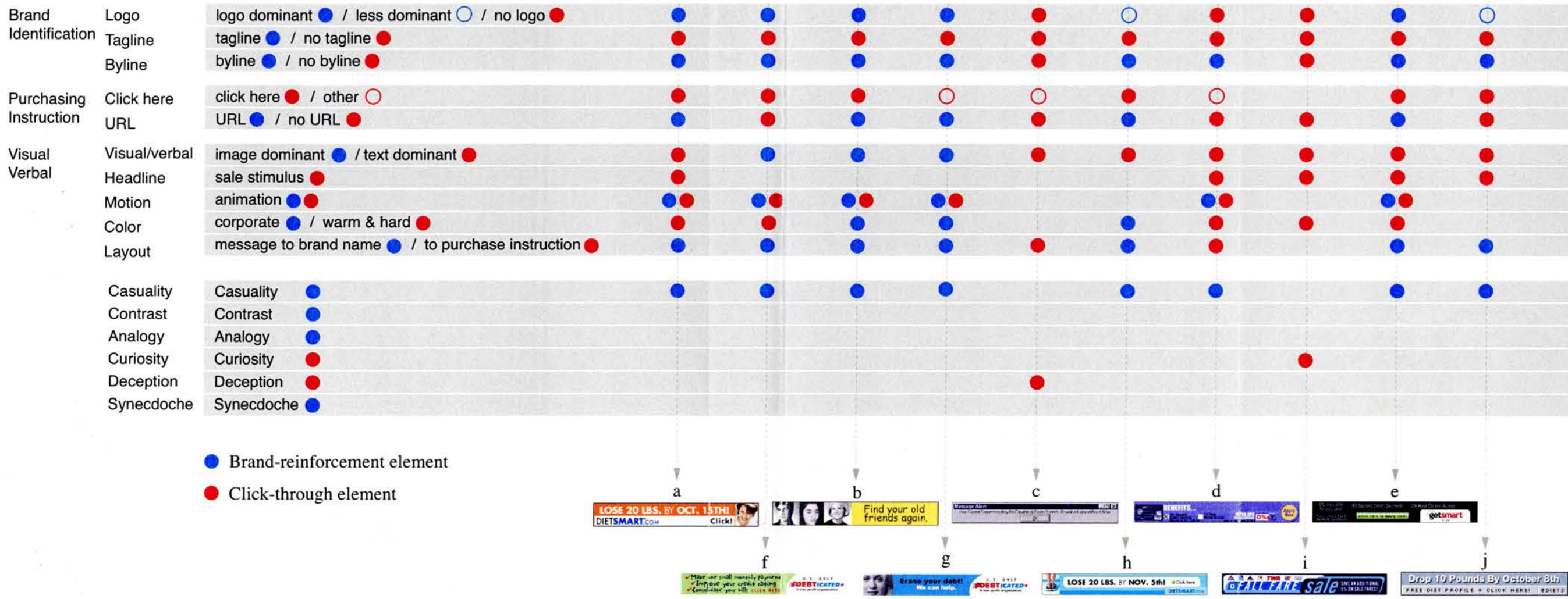


Figure 74. Top 10 impression banner usage matrix

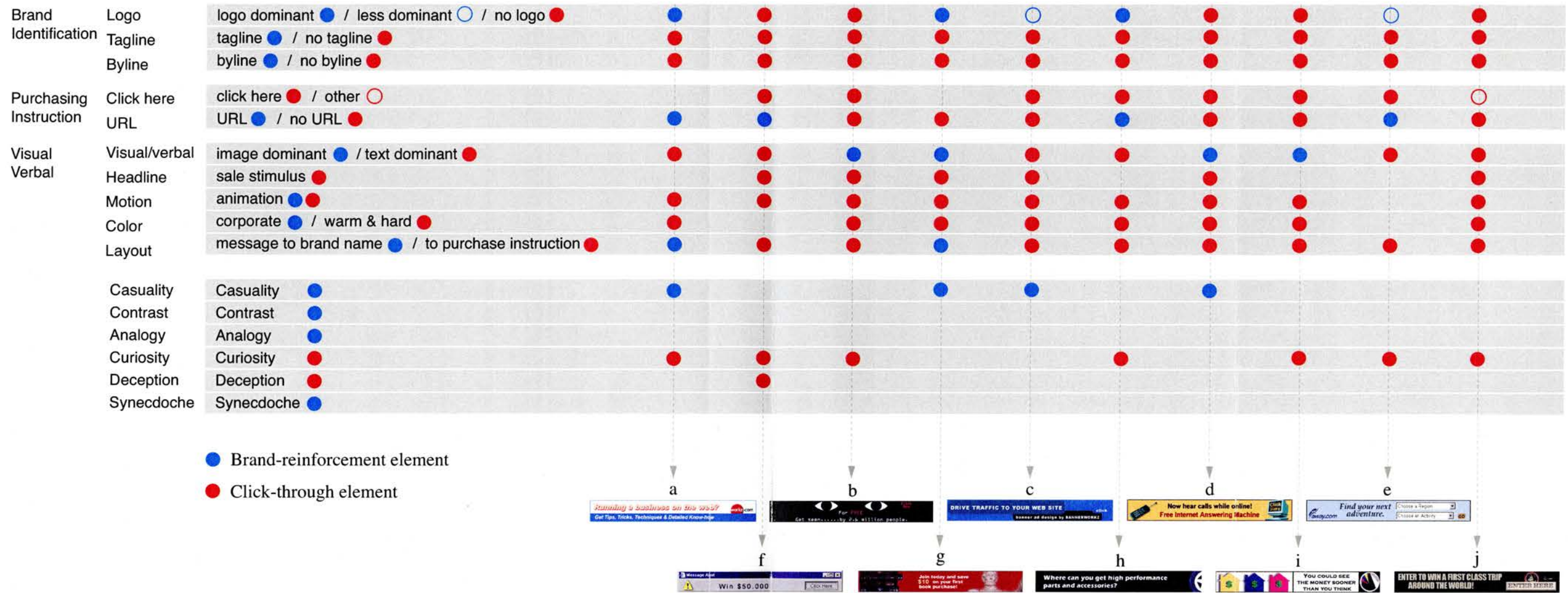


Figure 75. High click-through banner usage metrix

Figure 74 depicts an examination of the top 10 ad impression banners from the Nielson/NetRatings which were viewed during the week of September, 2001. It clearly indicates that the current top 10 impression banners are balanced in use of click-through and brand reinforcement elements (red and blue dots). Frequent use of each elements is depicted by reading horizontally across for each element. For example, brand identification elements and purchase instruction, such as “Click here” are highly used together whether it is a click-through or brand-reinforcement campaign. An examination of casuality, which is either product-information or positive visual portrayal expression, is commonly used by each banner. By reading vertically, each banner can be identified either click-through banner or brand-reinforcement banner. For example, banner “c” and “i” are highly used with click-through elements and styles, while banner “b” and “g” are highly used with brand-reinforced elements and styles.

Figure 75 depicts the high click-through banners selected from BannerTips.com and examined from August 2001 to January 2000 using the strategic matrix. As indicated by the blue and red dots, the high click-through banners highly use click-through elements (red dots). In addition, curiosity, which is one of the most effective Web advertising communication styles, is heavily used with sales stimuli for click-through banners.

Brand identification elements are also used even though they are not effective for click-through behavior. When viewing Figures 74 and 75, one notices that advertisers are aware of the advertising effectiveness of click-through and brand-reinforcement, and try to utilize both campaigns in a single ad.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, FINDING, AND RECOMENDATIONS

Summary

The Web is a potentially powerful medium for advertising with greater advantages than traditional media forms such as radio, television and the newspaper. The Internet offers unique and undeniable advantages in terms of targeting a niche in direct marketing.

Considering the Web as a unique hybrid for direct response and as a brand communication medium, brand-reinforcement associates the positive qualities or emotions with a company's product or service, while click-through ads attempt to stimulate direct click behaviors.

Advertising falls somewhere along the spectrum between these two points. For some advertising objectives, effective advertising may simply mean raising the level of awareness of selected brands, while for others it seeks an immediate increase in sales volume. Thus, Web advertising is governed by either click-through or brand reinforcement.

The variables in Web advertising elements and communication styles are different based on each advertising objective. Variations employing the elements of Web advertising can increase the effectiveness of advertising by either click-through or brand reinforcement.

Four design elements were selected for the current research on Web advertising: (1) brand identification; (2) purchase instructions; (3) visual and verbal; and (4) technical elements.

These attributes are key factors to successful Web advertising and, as such, were used in this research to construct a typology of Web advertising.

Each element has a different level of importance in ad design, and is based upon two main advertising objectives: brand-reinforcement and click-through campaigns. The elements of brand identification, visual and verbal, technical, and communication styles contribute to the relative effectiveness of the different advertising objectives. There is an inverse relationship in the brand identification elements, purchase instructions, and visual and verbal elements between click-through and brand-reinforcement. In other words, there is an impact among elements high in brand-reinforcement but low in click-through ad versus low in brand-reinforcement but high in click-through. There is reverse and similar relationship in technical elements between click-through and brand-reinforcement. The impact among technical elements is high in both brand-reinforcement and click-through, but the impact having high frequency is high in brand-reinforcement and low in click-through versus the impact having low frequency is low in brand-reinforcement and high in click-through. This typology model would enable Web advertisers to strengthen brand or click-through procedures for advertising on the Web. It could be a useful guide for effective design and communication visually and verbally in Web advertising.

Findings

This study empirically investigated the relationship between click-through and brand-reinforcement in Web advertising. Advertising effectiveness refers to the advertising objectives which must be defined either click-through or brand-reinforcement. As click-through and brand reinforcement ad campaigns have different purposes, advertising effectiveness should not be confused between the objectives of each campaign. The results indicated in Chapter 4 suggest that click-through and brand-reinforcement design elements have both a comparative and inverse relationship. The findings demonstrate that a higher level of click-through ad design is associated with lower brand-reinforced ad design. Similarly, a higher level of brand-reinforced design is associated with lower click-through. Therefore, evaluation of the web advertising should be carried out based on the advertising objectives.

Nevertheless, the existing Web advertising campaigns that were selected for the study represent brand elements as well as click-through elements altogether in one ad space. This researcher speculates that most advertisers attempt to utilize both click-through and brand effectiveness simultaneously in a single banner ad. Each banner has two simultaneous tasks: (a) reinforcing click behavior while (b) reinforcing the brand, by representing both click-

through elements and brand elements. The advertising objectives are considered to be among the most important stages in the advertising process. However, these objectives tend to be established in a rather vague manner, which often results in a conflicting behavioral messages transmitted in many of the current advertising banners.

Limitations

In this study, this researcher described a method for comparison and evaluation of the effectiveness Web advertising elements and styles based on two different Web advertising objectives: (1) click-through and (2) brand-reinforcement. This study is pioneering in the sense that it is the first research on effective Web advertising design for click-through and brand-reinforced ad banners. A limitation of this study is that the samples for brand-reinforcement banner were not compared in a real situation. Click-through data for analysis were gathered quantitatively, while brand-reinforcement data were gathered by qualitatively. Although the typology was drawn from both data, the results were not fully examined in actual settings nor tested by equal situations for click-through and brand-reinforcement campaigns. In order to measure accurately the effects of the advertising elements, it would be necessary to examine actual brand-reinforced results based on quantitative analysis.

Recommendations

Recommendations for practice

In this study, the researcher presented a typology to be used as guidelines to determine the effectiveness of Web advertising design to maximize click-through and brand-reinforcement. The objective of this research was to establish the basic Web advertising elements that are used by Web developers and designers to determine which techniques are used in successful brand-reinforcement and click-through campaigns. The indicators vary in terms of the advertising objective of each campaign. Thus, the typology matrix developed in this study could be applied as a guideline to create effective banner designs for Web-based advertising. The matrix can also be used to quickly identify attributes that could potentially be improved to increase the likelihood of success of Web-based advertising campaigns. This might dramatically impact sales through the design of effective brand and click-through ad campaigns on the Web.

Recommendations for future research

Despite the increasing significance of Web advertising, there has been no research on design elements for both click-through and brand-reinforcement ad banners. Most studies on Web advertising have been conducted primarily on click-through behavior. Since many demands are based on the importance of brand-reinforcement in Web advertising, this study

does provide some groundwork in this field. Therefore, further study in this area is strongly recommended. The guidelines could be used to design Web advertising effectively for either advertising objective: click-through or brand-reinforcement. In addition these guidelines can be used to help establish an evaluation method and evaluation criteria for current or planned advertising. Future experiments can be conducted over years to analyze the Web advertising in the framework of the guidelines. The analysis of the Web advertising over years will show the trends in the Web advertising. Since the analysis will be carried out in the framework of the guidelines, the elements beneath the trends could be identified. Once the elements are identified the guideline will have a power of prediction for the imminent trends of Web advertising. Any occurrence of new elements is possible as long as new concepts and technologies advance.

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