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Banner Blindness: why using popups is the best way to be invisible (guest post)

Design

Great guest post by Nicola Trentin, UX Researcher & Neuromarketing @ Neuro Web Design



The effectiveness of banners and pop ups within a website has long been an issue on which researchers and web marketing experts have often questioned about. Surfing the internet, we can find several articles about it, usually reporting different opinions.

What is certain is that since 1994, the year of the appearance of the first banner the percentage of CTR has decreased dramatically: from a 2% of the beginnings, the data for 2016 reported a decline up to about 0.2%, a click per thousand visitors. (Source: doubleclick)

During these 23 years an attitude of indifference towards banners and pop-ups, named by researchers Benway and Lane "**Banner Blindness**", has been established among web users.

According to this theory, users who browse the web tend to ignore, consciously or unconsciously, the content presented in banners or pop-ups, as usually related to third parties advertisements, which are related to the site.

Anyone who enters a website has a goal: find some information, buy a product, read an article, etc. Our objectives are very clear and we are hardly interested in elements that have nothing to do with what we are looking for. We all know pop-up's shapes and their placement, so we can easily avoid them. In these days, the majority of the people who daily use internet ignore banners automatically. In the course of our researches on Web usability, regarding especially tourism and hotel websites, we noted that elements such as pop-ups and banners are used not only for advertising, but mostly to draw attention to some information or details concerning the offer, the product. For example, it is not unusual that a hotel wants to highlight a promotion with a pop-up window.

Using Eye Tracking technology as the main instrument to conduct our user tests, we found that **once the pop-up window appears, users search immediately the "X" to close it.**

This instant reaction does not allow them to focus their attention on the content of the window, on that information that might be useful to get some benefits in the purchase of the product (e.g. a discount on extra services, the promotion of a daily trip, etc...).

So, a simple advice we, the Neuro Web Design team, can give you is to think carefully before using pop-ups or banner to highlight information considered useful for visitors, because it is likely they do not even consider it.

Try instead different solutions on your own page, rather than catching attention with a surprise. Change the size of the main words, highlight the text using contrasts or insert captivating images and photographs. And don't forget to test the changes of your website on your possible users, because what is clear and visible to you, could not be for your customers. And their opinions matter.