

Ads on websites: If they don't see it, doesn't matter how it's designed.

Marketing Sherpa's 2008 *Online Advertising Handbook + Benchmarks* (www.sherpastore.com/onlinead08.html) research and eye-tracking study, conducted with Eyetools, shows that most individuals don't see the majority of ads served to them—especially ads served below the fold.

The Poynter Eyetracking III (www.poynterextra.org/eyetrack2004/advertising.htm#2.1) research found in examining ad viewing behavior across four distinct home page designs, that on average, most ads were seen by less than half of the group. Here's a table showing the percent looking directly at banner ads based on placement:

Percent of viewers seeing banner ads by placement on page

Ad location	% seeing ad
Left column	68
Top of page	55
Right column	34
Bottom of page	14

J.C. Wang and R.F. Day in "The Effects of Attention Inertia on Advertisements on the WWW" from *Computers in Human Behavior* (2007) observed that:

- Users are more sensitive to ads that are relevant to what they are already thinking about/looking at.
- Text-based ads that appeal to users' logic are more likely to drive attitude change when they appear toward the *beginning* or *end* of the meaningful task path.
- In the *middle* of the task path, emotional appeals engage more interaction (e.g., images of cancer survivors on a cancer research site can heighten emotional connections for potential donors).

Other useful findings are:

- Brand early. People don't want to wait to find out who you are.
- Use simple messages; easy to understand in a few seconds.
- Use animated ads rather than static ones.
- Keep the graphics clean, pique interest, don't be obscure.
- Keep banner ad size small. If the page takes too long to load, a lot of visitors will go on to another page.