

Just Not Seeing It: Exploring the Relationship between Inattention Blindness and Banner Blindness

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Abstract : Despite a viewer's thought that they may be paying attention, many times they are missing out on their surrounds--a phenomenon referred to as inattention blindness. Inattention blindness refers to the failure of an individual to orient their attention to a particular item in their visual field. This well-defined in the psychology literature. Similarly, this phenomenon has been evaluated in media types in advertising. In advertising, not comprehending/remembering items in one's field of vision is known as banner blindness. On the other hand, banner blindness is a phenomenon that occurs when individuals habitually see a banner in a specific area on a webpage, and thus condition themselves to ignore those habitual areas. Another reason that individuals avoid these habitual areas (usually on the top or sides of a webpage) is due to the lack of personal relevance or pertinent information to the viewer. Banner blindness, while a web-based concept, may also relate this inattention blindness. This paper is proposing an analysis of the true similarities and differences between these concepts bridging the two dimensions of thinking together. Forty participants participated in an eye-tracking and post-survey experiment to test attention and memory measures in both a banner blindness and inattention blindness condition. The two conditions were conducted between subjects semi-randomized order. Half of participants were told to search through the content ignoring the advertising banners; the other half of participants were first told to search through the content ignoring the distractor icon. These groups were switched after 5 trials and then 5 more trials were completed. In review of the literature, sustainability communication was found to have many inconsistencies with message production and viewer awareness. For the purpose of this study, we used advertising materials as stimuli. Results suggest that there are gaps between the two concepts and that more research should be done testing these effects in a real world setting versus an online environment. This contributes to theory by exploring the overlapping concepts--inattention blindness and banner blindness and providing the advertising industry with support that viewers can still fall victim to ignoring items in their field of view even if not consciously, which will impact message development.

Keywords : attention, banner blindness, eye movement, inattention blindness

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