

## **Do Users Look at Banner Ads on Facebook?**

Ana Margarida Barreto (New University of Lisbon, Portugal)

The main purpose of this research, descriptive and interpretive in nature, was to determine whether users of the online social network site Facebook actually look at the ads displayed, thus ascertaining the effectiveness of paid advertising. Briefly, to test the existence of the phenomenon known as «banner blindness» on that website. This study also aimed to provide valuable information and a greater knowledge on experiences based on the use of eye tracking technology applied to advertising and communication.

It was developed an experience, using eye tracking technology, followed by the application of a questionnaire to a sample of 20 university students. The data was after analyzed using statistics tests, such as t-test and correlation of Pearson.

The findings show that there is a positive, very low correlation, between the variables ads displayed and ads seen. Indeed, participants view less than one quarter of the ads displayed. Possible explanations are the fact that ads compete with several ads in the same space, are present in a short period of time, plus, their location is predictable. Besides, there are small differences between the number of ads seen by female and male. Data also show that dissemination of advertising information in the form of recommendation by social network members reveals more interest to users and therefore is more likely to be observed.

The originality of this study comes from the fact that the majority of studies that analyze the effectiveness of banner ads did not examine through an analysis of eye movements, like in the present research. Instead were based on the performance of memory tests or self-report procedures. Plus, considering the different results obtained in previous studies on advertising effectiveness, it becomes clear the need for more research, applied in alternative contexts, and representative of the current Internet users habits, able to contribute to the solution of the dilemma of the presence or absence of the phenomenon of banner blindness. Finally, with this study it is suggested a more complete definition of the social networking site concept.