

Case Study: Philips and Ad Placement Effectiveness

An examination of how different sized web display ad units and their location on web pages impacts view attention and brand effectiveness

A research case study by DoubleClick, the Interactive Advertising Bureau, MediaAnalyzer and Florida Atlantic University, with participation from Philips, MSN, Electronic Arts and Survey Sampling International

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Executive Summary

Are certain web display advertising units significantly more effective than others at gaining the attention of web surfers and impacting their brand perceptions? Similarly, does the location of where those ads appear on web pages significantly impact the ads' effectiveness?

Professor Kendall Goodrich of Florida Atlantic University approached DoubleClick seeking help in answering those questions. DoubleClick turned to the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) and research firm MediaAnalyzer to help design and execute the study; Philips contributed creative units from its Norelco shaver ad campaign; MSN and Electronic Arts Pogo.com contributed web pages for redesign with different ad placements, and Survey Sampling International (SSI) contributed several hundred research respondents to the research.

The results of this case study are not broadly applicable conclusions for the industry as a whole, since the test measured only one set of ad creative on two web pages. The findings showed significant differences in effectiveness among the different ad units and positions, and this provides publishers and advertisers with a thought-starter that seems to warrant further study. Here are the key findings of the study:

- The 300x250 medium rectangle ads and the 160x600 skyscraper ads were more effective than the 728x90 leaderboard ad units in terms of being noticed by respondents on the page and in lifting brand recall and purchase intent
- Placing the 728x90 leaderboard partway down the web page as opposed to its usual position at the top of the page had a dramatically positive impact on how many people noticed the ad and recalled the brand it promoted

The clearest implication of this study is that further research into the question of ad placement seems merited. The IAB, DoubleClick and MediaAnalyzer will explore the possibility of pursuing a larger-scale study along similar lines to better understand the impact of page location on ad effectiveness.

Methodology

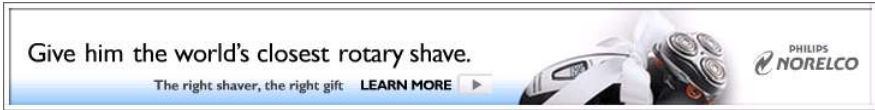
The main objective of the case study was to see whether changing the positioning on the page of ad units affected how well the ads performed at being noticed and influencing brand objectives (namely unaided and aided brand recall and purchase intent).

To this end, the study examined three creative treatments from the same campaign for the Norelco electric shaver from Philips: a 300x250 (pixel) "medium rectangle," a 160x600 "skyscraper" and a 729x90 "leaderboard," as shown in **Figure 1** (see next page).


DoubleClick then took one web page each from MSN (Health and Fitness section) and Electronic Arts (its online game site Pogo.com) and mocked up alternative layouts of those two pages to accommodate each of the three units in two separate placements, for a total of 12 test stimuli (six configurations for both of the two pages tested).

The Creative Units for Philips's Norelco Shaver

Leaderboard 728x90



Medium Rectangle 300x250



Skyscraper 160x600




Figure 1 Source: Philips Consumer Products, DDB Worldwide, 2006

The rectangle units were tested in a higher and a lower position on the page; the skyscrapers were tested on the left and the right sides of the page, and the leaderboards were tested at the top and lower down in the page, as shown in **Figure 2A and 2B**.

MSN Stimuli


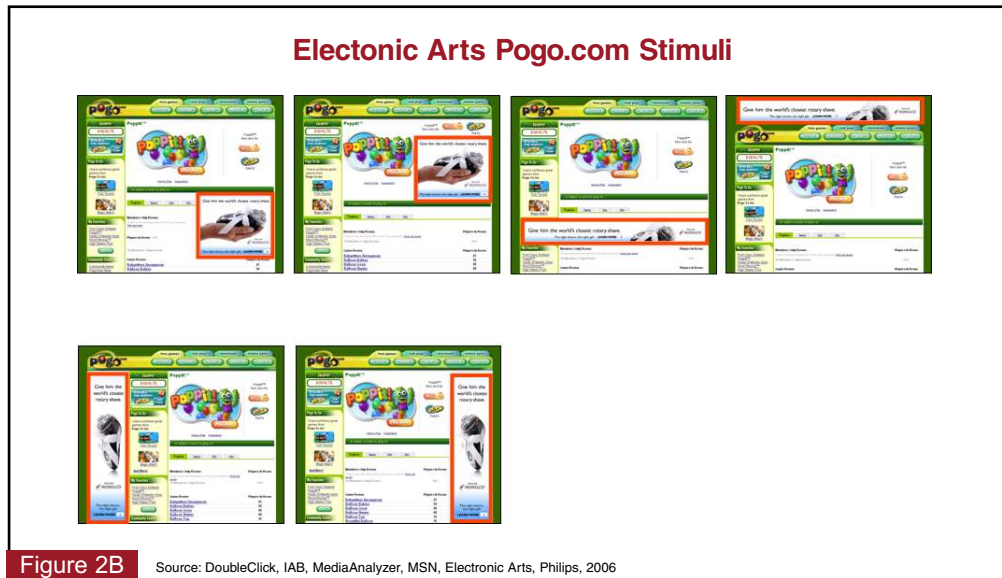


Figure 2A Source: DoubleClick, IAB, MediaAnalyzer, MSN, Electronic Arts, Philips, 2006



All of the ad placements were visible “above the fold” (that is, the test respondents would not have to scroll down on the page to encounter the ads; they would be visible in the top portion of the page as the browsers loaded). In each page configuration, the test ad was the only ad shown on the page, and the content on the page was otherwise the same for each of the six stimuli for both web page treatments.

MediaAnalyzer then incorporated these 12 page layouts into its online research lab environment to test attention (an online simulation of eye tracking) and brand attitudes with a short survey. Respondents from among Survey Sampling International’s panel of online research volunteers were first given a quick orientation as to how to record where on the page they were focusing their attention by coordinating their eye movements with their mouse clicks (i.e., MediaAnalyzer’s “attention-tracking” methodology). They were then shown a series of eight web pages, to introduce an environment of clutter to the test (e.g., pages from a portal, an automotive site, a technology site, a news site, etc.). Only one of the eight pages was an actual test stimuli. Respondents were not told what the purpose of the test was, so as they viewed the various web pages, they had no idea which page was the test stimulus or that advertising was the subject of the research.

The 12 test stimuli pages were broken into test cells of no fewer than 100 respondents. In total, 1,822 respondents participated in the test.

By tracking where on the page respondents clicked their mouses, MediaAnalyzer could determine where they were directing their attention (a methodology that MediaAnalyzer has previously demonstrated correlates with a high degree of accuracy to traditional “eye-tracking” tests common in the print and web world, enabling larger sample sizes for the same research costs).

In addition, MediaAnalyzer concluded the test with a short survey to determine the following brand metrics:

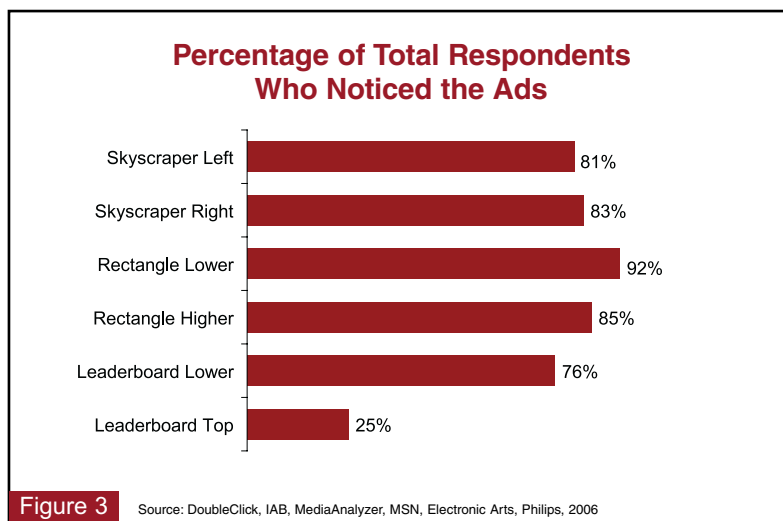
- **unaided brand recall**, using an open-ended question asking what brand of shaver respondents remembered seeing advertised on the preceding pages
- **aided brand recall**, asking them to pick from a list of advertiser names whose ads they had seen (the list included Norelco along with other names shown in ads on the clutter pages, plus some brand names not shown in any ads in the test)
- **purchase intent**, asking them whether or not they intended to purchase the product in the near future

Case Study Results

The following results are composite averages for the ad placements on both the MSN and Electronic Arts pages.

Vast majority of respondents noticed all ad positions except top leaderboard

In the test of the Norelco ads, between eight and nine out of ten of the respondents directed their attention to both the skyscraper ads and the rectangle ads, with relatively little difference among the placement positions for those units, as shown in **Figure 3**.



The rectangle ad unit was seen by 92% of respondents when placed lower on the page compared to 85% when placed slightly higher on the page, a difference that is not statistically significant at a high confidence level. The placements of the skyscrapers were also noticed by slightly more than 80% of respondents, and the difference between right and left placements was statistically insignificant.

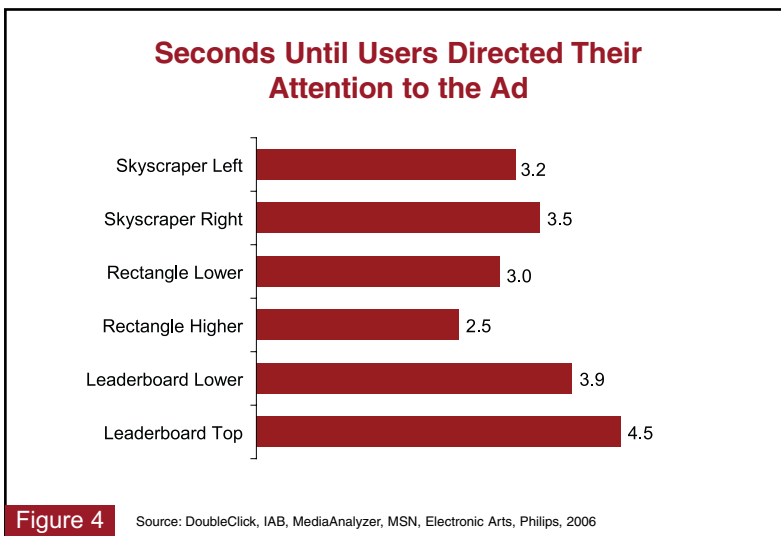
The placement of the leaderboard ad unit in this test, however, made a large difference as to the percentage of people who noticed the ad on the page. Overall, only 25% of respondents noticed the leaderboard ad when it was at the top position of the page versus three times more (76%) when the leaderboard was located further down the page, in the middle of the page content.

Rectangle ads were noticed most quickly

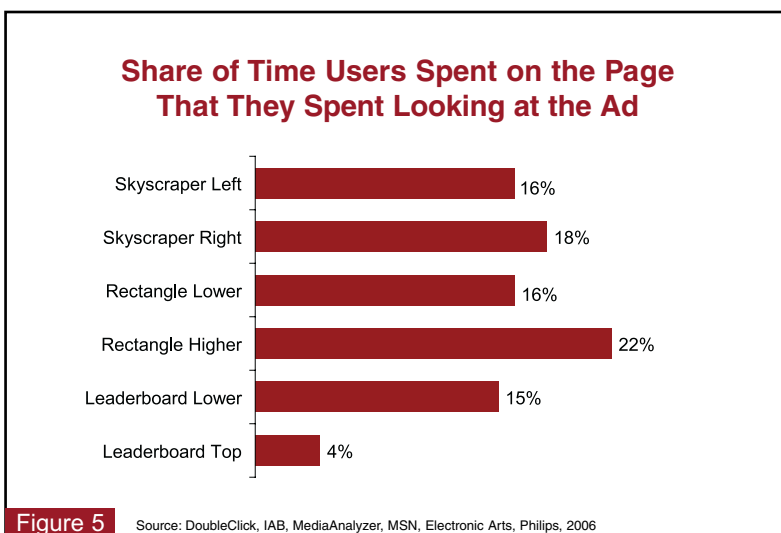
Respondents noticed the rectangle ad units most quickly, especially those placed in the higher position, which took respondents on average 2.5 seconds to see as opposed to 3 seconds for rectangles in a lower position, as shown in **Figure 4**. The skyscraper ads took respondents slightly more than 3 seconds on average to spot. The leaderboard ads took respondents nearly 4 seconds to see when they were in the lower position and 4.5 seconds on average to notice when they were placed at the top of the page.

Rectangle and lower leaderboards engaged users most

Once users noticed the ads, they found the rectangle units and the leaderboard in the lower position most engaging, when expressed as the share of all the time they spend looking at the page that was devoted to looking at the ad.

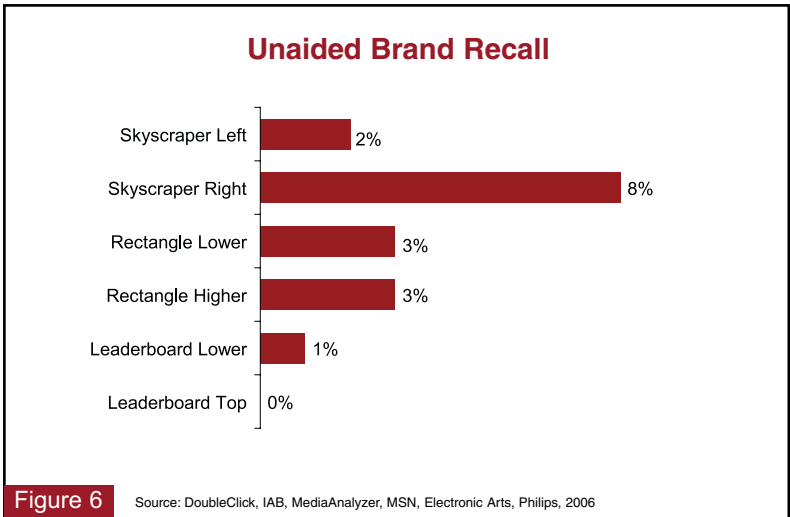


The rectangle ads in the higher position accounted for almost a quarter of the time respondents looked at the page, compared to 16% for rectangles in the lower position, as shown in **Figure 5**. Leaderboards in the lower position were almost as engaging as the lower rectangles, at 15% of time users spend on the page. Skyscrapers engaged users on averaged 18% on the right and 16% on the left as a share of the time they spent on the page, while the leaderboard in the top position engaged users for only 4% of their total page visitation time.

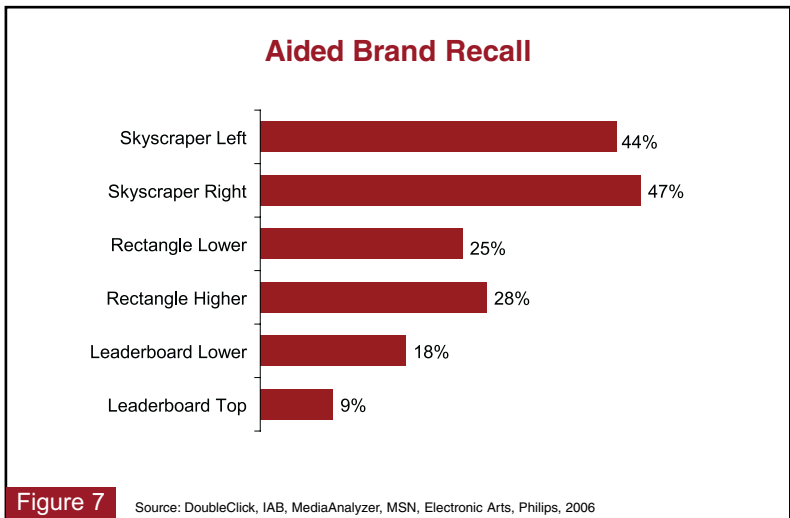


None of the ads drove double-digit recall of the test advertiser without prompting

When respondents were asked in an open-ended question for the name of a shaver manufacturer advertised on one of the previous pages they had seen, the skyscraper in the right position produced the

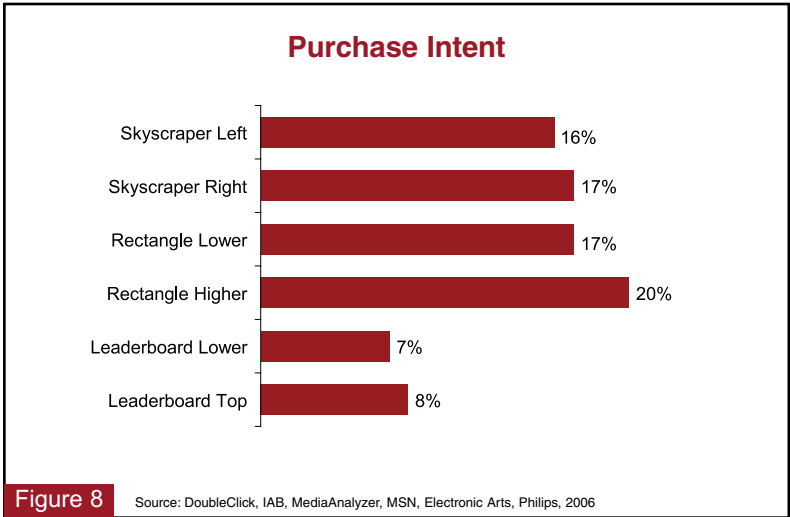


highest results, with 8% of respondents in that stimulus cell saying Norelco, as shown in **Figure 6**. That number, however, does not reach the threshold for statistical significance at a high degree of confidence for being meaningfully different than the 2% who recalled the advertiser's name of those who saw the skyscraper in the left position.



Skyscrapers produce best results for aided brand recall

When respondents were given a list of advertiser names that included Norelco (along with a mix of other company names, including some that had appeared in ads in the clutter pages as well as names that did not appear in any ads), the skyscrapers were clearly the most effective at producing aided brand recall, as shown in **Figure 7**. The aided brand recall numbers for the skyscraper ads were nearly twice that of the rectangle ads, and the rectangle ads were also significantly more effective than the leaderboard ads for prompting aided brand recall, especially the leaderboard in the top position.



Rectangles and skyscrapers most effective for producing purchase intent

Again, when it came to measuring respondents' intent

to purchase the product, those who were exposed to the leaderboard ad units in both positions were significantly less likely to express purchase intent than those who saw either the skyscrapers or the rectangle ad units, as shown in **Figure 8** (see previous page).

Conclusions

It is tempting to conclude from this study that leaderboards, especially at the top position of the page, do not perform as well as rectangles and skyscrapers. But the authors strongly caution readers from jumping to that conclusion on a widely generalized basis. This case study was limited to three creative treatments of one ad campaign on two different web pages. A number of factors, including elements of the creative design of these units and/or the web pages tested, seasonality and so on, could have been largely responsible for the variation observed here.

These results were clearly informative to Philips about the effectiveness of the relative creative units in the various positions on those two websites. But since this was a case study and not a broad research study, the results should be understood by other publishers and advertisers only as a thought-starter for a new way to evaluate their own campaigns.

About the Research Sponsors and Participants

About DoubleClick

DoubleClick provides technology and services that empower marketers, agencies and web publishers to work together successfully and profit from their digital marketing investments. Our focus on innovation, reliability and insight enables clients to improve productivity and results.

Since 1996, DoubleClick has empowered the original thinkers and leaders in the digital advertising industry to deliver on the promise of the rich possibilities of our medium. Today, the company's DART and Performics divisions power the online advertising marketplace. Tomorrow, we will continue to enable clients to profit from opportunities across all digital advertising channels as consumers worldwide embrace them.

DoubleClick has global headquarters in New York City and maintains 21 offices around the world to serve its more than 1500 clients.

About MediaAnalyzer

MediaAnalyzer Software & Research was founded in 2001 and is a full-service market research company. The internationally active company serves more than 100 customers, including Barclaycard, Cadbury, The Economist, ESPN, GfK, IBM, Heinz, Honda, Ipsos, Johnson & Johnson, L'Oreal, Siemens, Toyota, Unilever and ZDNet. More information on MediaAnalyzer is available at www.mediaanalyzer.com.

About the IAB

Founded in 1996, the Interactive Advertising Bureau (www.iab.net) represents over 250 leading interactive companies that actively engage in, and support the sale of interactive advertising. IAB members are responsible for selling over 86% of online advertising in the United States. On behalf of its members, the IAB evaluates and recommends standards and practices; fields interactive effectiveness research, and educates the advertising industry about interactive advertising.

About Electronic Arts

Electronic Arts Inc. (EA), headquartered in Redwood City, California, is the world's leading interactive entertainment software company. Founded in 1982, the company develops, publishes and distributes interactive software worldwide for videogame systems, personal computers and the Internet. Electronic Arts markets its products under four brand names: EA SPORTS™, EA™, EA SPORTS BIG™ and POGO™. In fiscal 2006, EA posted revenue of \$2.95 billion and had 27 titles that sold more than one million copies. EA's homepage and online game site is www.ea.com. More information about EA's products and full text of press releases can be found on the Internet at <http://info.ea.com>.

About MSN

MSN attracts more than 465 million unique users worldwide per month. With localized versions available globally in 42 markets and 21 languages, MSN is a world leader in delivering compelling programmed content experiences to consumers and online advertising opportunities to businesses worldwide. MSN is located on the Web at <http://www.msn.com>.

About Royal Philips Electronics

Royal Philips Electronics of the Netherlands (NYSE: PHG, AEX: PHI) is one of the world's biggest electronics companies and Europe's largest, with sales of EUR 30.3 billion in 2004. With activities in the three interlocking domains of healthcare, lifestyle and technology and 159,709 employees in more than 60 countries, it has market leadership positions in medical diagnostic imaging and patient monitoring, color television sets, electric shavers, lighting and silicon system solutions. News from Philips is located at www.philips.com/newscenter.

About Survey Sampling International

With offices in Australia, China, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Spain, UK, and the Eastern and Western U.S., and an international staff of more than 180 employees representing 15 countries and 25 languages, SSI is well on its way to establishing proprietary panels and service offices in all major economies in the world. SSI now provides researchers access to proprietary panels of nearly 9 million household members, representing more than 3.7 million unique e-mail addresses worldwide.