

Google and MediaVest Tap Biometrics for InVideo Ads Play

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By Mike Shields, Oct 23, 2008

Google is so confident that its InVideo Ads product—those semi-transparent/animated overlay ads it launched on YouTube last year—are game changers that the company is turning to brain wave researchers to prove their effectiveness.



The search giant—in conjunction with MediaVest—has partnered with NeuroFocus, a researcher that specializes in biometrics, to gauge both how users respond to InVideo ads and how well those ads complement traditional banner ads. NeuroFocus specializes in measuring individuals' brain response—by literally placing sensors on their heads—as well as other factors like pupil dilation and skin response.

“We were really interested in looking at what we think of as a pretty innovative ad unit,” explained Leah Spalding, advertising research manager, Google, who emphasized that since InVideo ads are designed to be non-intrusive, they warrant an evaluation that goes beyond traditional measures like click-through rates. “Standard metrics don’t tell the whole story. Google is an innovative company, and we want to embrace innovative technology...these ads require an approach that is more technologically sensitive.”

Thus, Google and MediaVest have collaborated to produce a research report that goes way beyond the typical online survey. The companies, which will present this study during a Webinar scheduled for Oct. 23, found that when shown to users, InVideo ads proved to be more compelling than other forms of

advertising (while this sort of research is fairly new for the online space, NeuroFocus has conducted similar studies on hundreds of ad campaigns).

Specifically, after fielding a study among 40 participants last May, InVideo ads scored above average on a scale of one to 10 for measures like “attention” (8.5), “emotional engagement” (7.3) and “effectiveness” (6.6). According to officials, a 6.6 score is considered strong.

Plus, across the board, these scores showed significant improvement when users in the study were presented both InVideo and corresponding banner ads—which officials believe confirms conventional wisdom that the two forms of online advertising complement each other. “That underscores what we know,” said Spalding. Scores also improved for overall brand response. “We’ve definitely been able to demonstrate that these ads work and are very effective. We’ve really seen that the overlay component gives a significant boost to a campaign.”

According to Yaakov Kimelfeld, Ph.D., senior vp, digital research and analytics director at MediaVest USA, while this sort of brain research has been used extensively to gauge users reactions to ads (it’s also effective in researching and treating conditions like Attention Deficit Disorder), it is less established when it comes to measuring the pure emotional impact of advertising—though that’s something researchers are working on.

But he’s quite confident that this study goes far enough to prove the overall efficacy of InVideo ads. “These are high numbers versus other studies,” he said. “And when users experience overlays versus just non-overlay ads, there is a very clear difference.”

Plus, given overlay ads’ non-intrusive nature, “It’s not a given [respondents] would notice them. It’s good that they notice them and it’s good that we have a tool to prove it...We don’t want to invest in a medium where people don’t [notice ads].”