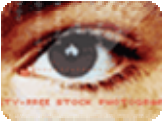


A Site for Banner Ad Freaks



Most internet users try to ignore banner ads, but web designer Tari Akpodiete can't stop collecting them. She's put her collection of 15,000 ad samples online for all who care to look.

By [Daniel Terdiman](#) - 02:00 AM Aug. 23, 2004 PT

Tari Akpodiete has what might be called a mildly unnatural preoccupation with banner ads. For the last couple of years, she's been copying just about every one she's come across onto a website, and in the process has built what she believes is the largest collection of such ads in the world.

This month, the Toronto web designer decided to make that collection publicly available. And her site, [Banner Report](#), has become at once a veritable banner ad museum and a tool where designers of new ads can investigate the countless styles that have been tried in the past.

"I thought it would be a good resource for creative types and people who might have an interest in that kind of thing," Akpodiete said. "It has become a little bit obsessive, though."

Perhaps, but the 15,000 banner ad samples she's gathered do display a remarkable range of styles, features, dimensions and animation, all searchable by keyword, size and type. For designers involved in making the next generation of banners -- an advertising medium often criticized as annoying and ineffective -- more attractive and profitable, Akpodiete's site may well be a gold mine.

"It gives designers a feel for what banners work and what doesn't," said Marque Guilbeault, the creative director of online marketing firm Contestix. "A lot of banner designs are based on the original site that (they are) representing. This can give designers creative ideas beyond just banner ads."

Banner Report isn't the first site to collect and display large numbers of banner ads. Past efforts include the Banner Ad Museum and CoolHomepages.com. But the sheer number of ads on display at Banner Report leaves others in the dust.

To Akpodiete, the site has become her contribution to the art of making banner ads better. "I definitely wanted to establish some sort of resource guide," she said. "If you're in an advertising agency, or a student, it's like looking through books for inspiration, to see what people do."

Still, while many agree that Banner Report is a bonanza for designers, some aren't so sure the site can help marketers very much.

Grant Crowell, principle at Grantastic Designs, cautions that people often confuse what looks good in a banner ad with what actually helps the advertiser's bottom line.

"People shouldn't confuse flashy with successful," Crowell said. "This gives people creative ideas, but it's not a marketing factor in saying what's successful."

A nice-looking banner ad in and of itself can't induce sales, according to Crowell. For that, the ad needs to reach the right audience and fit well with the advertiser's site.


Still, Banner Report is a free resource, and to people like Chris Tilley, an English IT consultant, it's the best thing going. Tilly said he finds its information more useful than what's provided on the website of the Interactive Advertising Bureau, or IAB, the online advertising industry's standards-setting body.

"The practical demonstration given on Banner Report of the IAB recommendations side by side, as well as with real-world examples, is precisely what I was looking for," he said. "By looking at, say, what well-known, large corporations with massive marketing budgets are outputting, the closet designer right up to professional media artists can find ideas."

Akpodiete believes the best ideas in banner ads today are coming from entertainment companies.

"I like film and TV (banners). They're very striking and always visually interesting," she said. "They know they have to grab you right away and they really seem to."

Meanwhile, Akpodiete enjoys the reactions of visitors to Banner Report and is willing to laugh at her ongoing obsession with the ads.

"I don't have to take every banner ad," she said. "That's what I tell myself out loud. But I'm still doing it." 

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