



BEST PRACTICES FOR DIGITAL DISPLAY ADS



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DISPLAY ADVERTISING

Display ads are visual advertisements that can be placed on a variety of online media. Display ads come in a wide array of formats such as text, images, video, flash, and more.

Aside from PPC, for many marketers, display advertising is another very large piece of the advertising pie. The great part about display ads is their diversity! You can use pretty much any type of media to get your message across to your audience. And you can target your audience across multiple devices and channels.

You can choose individual websites for your banner ads to be displayed, or you can create banner ads as part of a retargeting campaign—more on that later in the guide. But for your reference, a retargeting ad campaign tracks your website visitors and serves them your ads on multiple channels using a simple JavaScript code or a cookie that is placed on the viewer's browser.

On each website, your banner ads can be displayed in a variety of positions—the most popular positions being at the top and on the right-hand side of a website.

As an example of a header banner ad, take a look at the Visa ad at the top of The New York Times website.

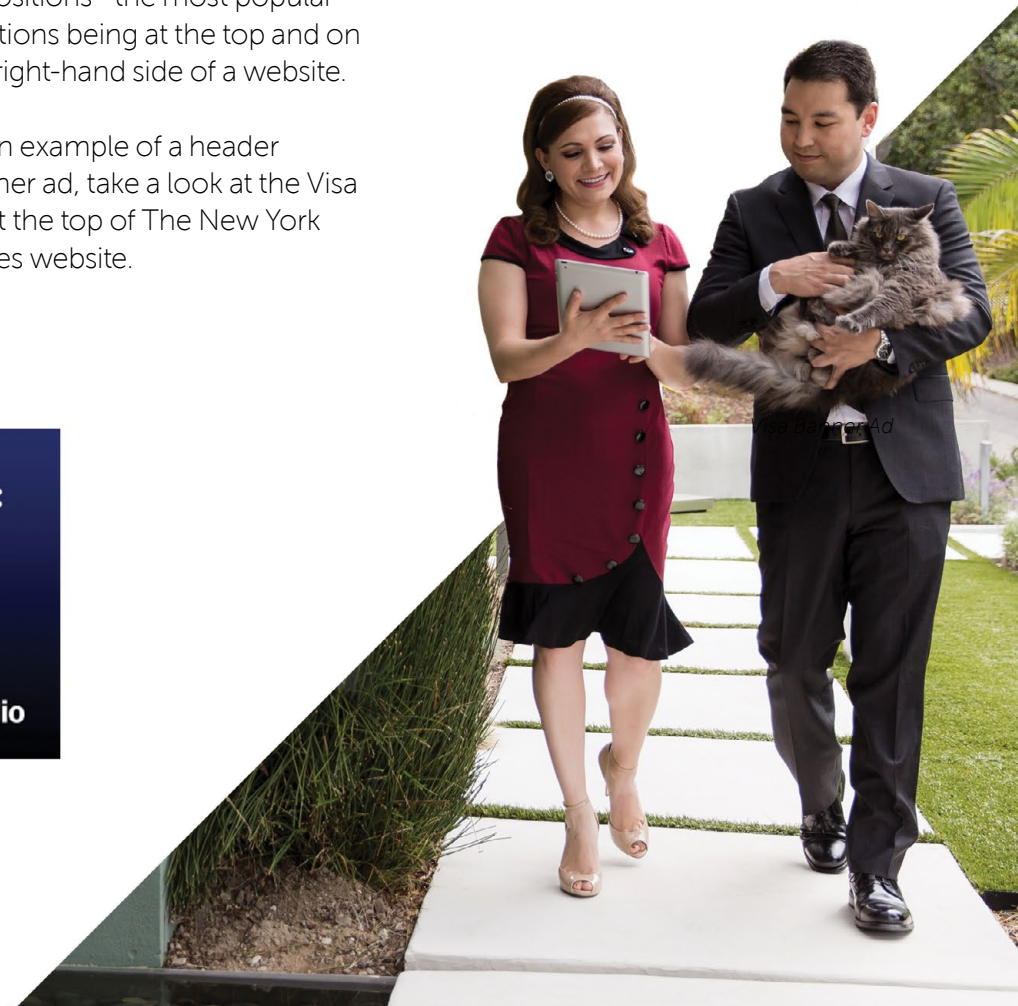
Visa Signature presents:
Experience Miami
Travel is better when you're treated to more.
[See Their Adventure](#)

USbank | VISA Signature × BrandStudio

After Sharp Plunge, Markets Trim Losses
Global Sell-Off Over China Fears; Dow Opens Down 1,000
In early trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1,000 points, or 1.2%, to 12,167.50. The global market turmoil intensified in Asia, Europe and the United States, but the Dow largely recovers after plunging 1,000 points in early trading.
#237 Comments

S. & P. 500 index
1,991.39 -49.50 -2.51%
2:08 PM ET 08/24/2015
2,000

The Opinion Pages
Editorial: An Opening for Diplomacy in Syria
Editorial: A Movable Clot
Editorial: Politics Upended in Britain and America

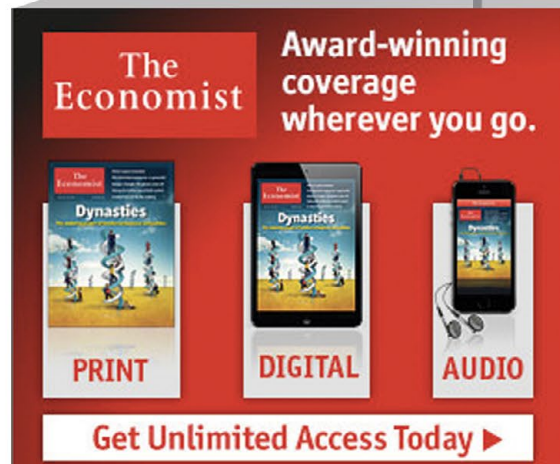


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Here you can see another example of a banner ad placement on the website sfist.com. The Economist has a banner ad in the upper right-hand side of the website.

There are many types of display ads. We will go over some of the most popular types of display ads in the upcoming sections.



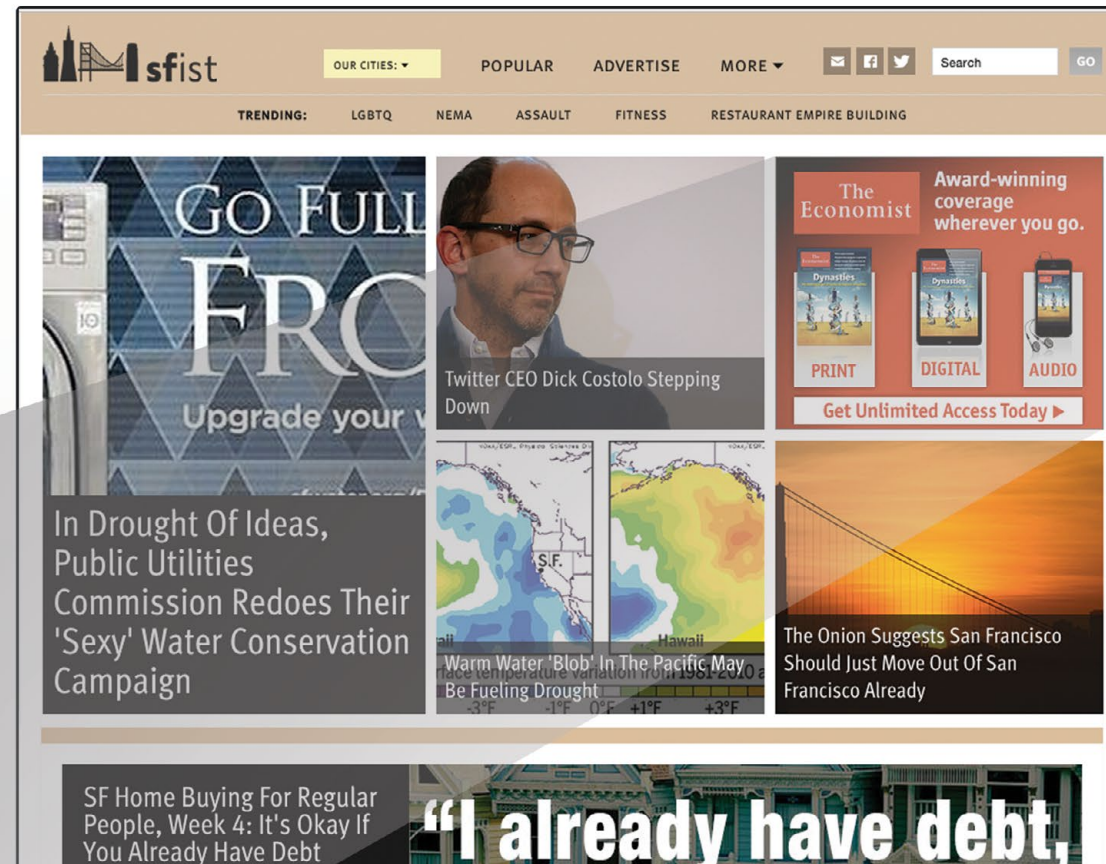
The Economist

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Dynasties

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The Union Suggests San Francisco Should Just Move Out Of San Francisco Already

SF Home Buying For Regular People, Week 4: It's Okay If You Already Have Debt

"I already have debt,

Economist Banner Ad

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Static Display Ads

Your static ads are the bread and butter of your display ad strategy. These banner ads typically use an image and have some copy, your brand logo, and a clear call-to-action. A static ad has no movement and works on a variety of channels and devices. This type of ad is also the least expensive to create, so it is the most scalable.

Take a look at a typical static display ad from the company Curata. This ad includes the brand logo, a clear CTA, and an image of the offer.



Curata Static Display Ad

Here is another example of a static display ad from the company Sungevity. Its headline is compelling and simple: "Easy solar quote, no home visit required". And its CTA is clear: "See if solar is right for you!"



Sungevity Static Banner Ad

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Best Practices for Static Display Ads

According to SwellPath, there are 10 best practices when it comes to static display ads:

1. Have a clear CTA:

This is the most important best practice when it comes to your advertising. You are paying good money for your banner ads so you want to ensure that the people who click on your ad do exactly what you want them to do. Keep your CTA short, and if possible, action-oriented. Some great examples are "Download Now", "Shop Now", "Buy Now", "Learn More", and so on.

2. Have a great hero image:

You need an image that is essentially the hero of your ad. Websites can be extremely noisy. Your buyers might even be surrounded by a variety of other banner ads. So make sure

your image stands out from the crowd. Make it eye-catching, have high contrast imagery, and consider using lifestyle imagery, as studies show this tends to perform better.

3. Have great branding:

Make sure that your ad branding is consistent with your website and other collateral. Your ad should have your brand colors, brand fonts, and other elements so people know that the ad is from you!

4. Company logo:

This seems pretty simple, but be sure to include your brand logo! You can test placement, but according to data from SwellPath, logos work best in the top left or right corners or the bottom left or right corners.

5. Include a promotion:

By including some type of promotion in your ad, you could yield a higher click-through rate (CTR). Consider offering a discount, free shipping, or other offer.

6. Include a sense of urgency:

You can include a sense of urgency by saying that your promotion "Ends Today" or that this is a buyer's "Last Chance". People are much more likely to click on ads that include this sort of verbiage.

7. Include a headline:

Be sure to add a text headline, in addition to your image, so your audience knows exactly how to think and feel as well as what to do.

8. Match your landing page to your ad:

We have said this a few times, but it begs being repeated. Make sure that your landing page matches your ad! If your ad promotes a pair of red shoes and your landing page promotes a pair of blue shoes, you are risking drop-off. We will go into more detail on landing page optimization in the next section.

9. Size correctly:

There are definitely banner ad sizes that outperform, so make sure you are focusing time on the following sizes:

- a. 300x250
- b. 160x600
- c. 728x90
- d. 600x315 (Facebook)

10. Always be testing:

You can test various elements of your banner ads, so make sure you are proactively testing! We will go into much more detail on testing later on in this guide.

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Video Display Ads

Video display ads take banner ads to the next level by adding video—making your ads much more interesting and interactive for your viewer. Your video ads are similar to your static display ads in that there is typically an engaging image, a headline, and a brand logo.

But video ads have, well, video! So the CTA for your video ads will typically be “Watch the Video” or “Discover the Video”, and so on.

Video ads have extremely high engagement rates. According to comScore, video ad impressions surpassed 20 billion in June 2013, and video ads reached nearly 54% of the population an average of 121 times per month.

And marketers agree. According to a BrightRoll survey of top ad executives, 91% believe online video ads are equally or more effective than display advertising, 75% believe they are more effective than TV, and 68% believe they are more effective than social media.

Take a look at an example of a video ad from Dior. The ad features the musician Rihanna, which immediately catches a viewer’s attention due to her pop icon status. The Dior ad uses eye-catching imagery and includes the CTA to watch the video.



Dior Video Display Ad

Here is another example of a video ad from a new CNN original content video series, *The Seventies: One Nation Under Change*. Not only does CNN have a video display ad to promote its show, but it also has special branding across the header of the website.



CNN "The Seventies" Video Display Ad



What Do Certain Colors Mean in Digital Advertising?

According to Stream Companies, color is a powerful element in digital advertising. Here are some best practices to keep in mind:

Red is a powerful color in digital ads, stimulating consumers' minds and encouraging them to make impulse purchases.

Orange is known to increase oxygen supply to the brain and stimulate mental activity.

Green represents confidence and safety, reassuring buyers that they're making the right, safe choice.

Blue has a calming effect in consumers as well as varied connotations including smoothness, cleanliness, and nature.

Yellow encourages consumers to see a product as conjuring playfulness and youth.

Black tends to be associated with luxury, attitude, and power.

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Best Practices for Video Display Ads

Like static display ads, there are best practices that you can utilize to make your video ads a success. According to Entrepreneur Magazine, there are six best practices to keep in mind when creating your video ads:

1. Define your audience before creating your video:

Instead of creating one video that spans all of your ads, make sure that you are creating videos that speak to the target audience you have in mind. A video that resonates with one audience may not resonate with another. So keep that in mind during creation and filming.

2. Get to the point:

People have short attention spans, especially for advertising. According to Entrepreneur, “the first five seconds will make or break your video ads”. And we believe that! Put your main point and even your CTA in the beginning of the video so you can ensure that people actually get the point, even if they don’t watch until the end.

3. Keep it short:

In the same vein as above, keep your video short. Your audience is easily distracted; make it simple for them to pay attention. Keep your video short—no longer than 30 seconds for optimal appeal.

4. Create an obvious storyline:

Some people may view your video ad on silent as they work, so make sure that you have an obvious storyline that works even when the video is silent.

5. Test different video components:

Make sure to create multiple versions of a video so you can test. Consider testing where you put your CTA in the video, if you use voiceover, dialogue, or text subtitles, what music you may use, and what you include in the first five seconds.

6. Capitalize on blockbuster concepts:

Assess pop culture and trends to find out what’s hot. What is everyone talking about? Which stories and themes do everyone recognize? Take advantage of these bits of common knowledge and incorporate them into your video so that it’s relatable for your viewer.



Native Video on Social

Video ads are starting to pop up all over social. And instead of having your video hosted on an outside channel, such as YouTube or Vimeo, most social channels now allow you to host your video ads directly on that channel so your audience doesn’t have to click out.

Another benefit of native video ads is that they will automatically play once your audience scrolls over them, meaning fewer clicks for the viewer and more opportunity for you to pull them into the action immediately.

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Cinemagraphic Display Ads

Cinemagraphs use a mix of static imagery and video to grab the attention of an audience. These types of ads are typically seen on websites, but they are now becoming more common on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram.

A cinemagraph uses mostly photography, but with very specific added movement to catch the eye of the viewer, encouraging them to interact with your brand.

Here is a series of cinemagraphic display ads created by the shoe brand Stuart Weitzman and shown on Facebook and Instagram. While the best way to get the point of a cinemagraph is to view it yourself, we will try and describe the movement to the best of our ability!

The first ad shows movement in the shoe's fringe and in the feathers of the model's hat. By adding movement to the fringe, the eye is drawn to the shoes.

The next ad in the series shows a woman tapping her foot and listening to a record. In the ad you can see the foot moving and the record spinning. As you can see (or imagine) in both ads, the movement draws the viewers attention to the branded item—in this case, it's all about the shoes.

Best Practices for Cinemagraphic Display Ads

While there are elements of static and video display ads in a cinemagraphic ad, they do come with their own sets of rules and best practices. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

1. Select the right images:

With cinemagraphic ads, take time to choose the right image. Your image should be on-brand, but it should also be creative and journalistic—something that can be the center of your ad. While you will be drawing attention to various details, the ad in its entirety will catch the viewer's attention.



Stuart Weitzman Cinemagraphic Ad 1



Stuart Weitzman Cinemagraphic Ad 2

2. Choose the right elements for movement:

The moving elements that you choose for your ads will be critical for engagement. The movement is where your viewer's eyes will go first, so make sure that your movement gets your message across. The Stuart Weitzman ad is a great example of this, as the main points of movement are the shoes—drawing your attention to the product. Other ideas might be to add movement to your brand logo or CTA.

3. Highlight the movement with color:

Make the movement stand out even more by using vibrant colors that contrast with the background image. Consider a black and white image with a bright pop of moving color.

4. Test your movement:

There is a lot of testing you can do in cinemagraphic ads. You can test various places of movement to see what engages the audience the most. You can also test different color schemes and different types of movement.

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Flash Display Ads

Flash display ads use motion and animation to increase the engagement of your ad. Typically, these ads are 15-30 seconds and can either be looped or end with a CTA.

The key to a great flash display ad is to make sure you have just the right amount of movement—too much can be distracting (and annoying) for your audience. And not enough movement will fail to attract the viewer's eye.

Flash banner ads can also be interactive—you can ask the viewer to click on an element to customize the user experience further.

Here is an example of a flash banner ad from Hot Pockets. Each element illustrates a separate piece of animation in the ad. Notice that the ad isn't too busy and has a clear CTA at the end—to learn more about the new SideShots product.

Hot Pockets Flash Banner Ad



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Best Practices for Flash Banner Ads

Flash banner ads are a great way to attract the attention of your audience on busy website pages. Here are some best practices to keep in mind when considering this format:

1. Technical concerns:

Since most rich media banner ads contain flash, there may be technical concerns. Flash is plug-in reliant and does not show up on an iPhone, so take this into consideration when you choose flash ads. Consider a universally complaint solution whenever possible.

2. Keep your eye on file size:

As you add more and more animations, the file size of your ad increases, which can become problematic for ad submission and page load time.

3. Don't distract from your overall message:

As mentioned above, it can be really easy to get carried away when it comes to animation choices. But remember that more is not necessarily better in the land of display ads. Instead, make sure the animations you choose complement your CTA and message—not detract from them.

4. Make sure your CTA is clear and eye-catching:

While this, of course, can be said for all of your banner ads, when dealing with flash ads it is critical that your CTA stand out from the rest of the animation. Our suggestion is to put your CTA at the end of your ad, using a high-contrast button and obvious copy. It's critical that your audience actually makes it to the end! So make sure that your animation is short, sweet, and compels a person to continue watching.



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Pop-Up Ads

Pop-up ads are controversial. This is primarily because they can be annoying—if you do them incorrectly. Back when pop-up ads began in 2004, they typically opened in a new window. However, due to the advent of pop-up ad blockers, advertisers have found new and innovative ways to use pop-ups in their advertising.

Today, pop-up ads occur mainly on an in-window overlay. Sometimes these ads appear right away, sometimes they are delayed, and sometimes you even have to perform a certain action to get back to reading your content.

When considering pop-up ads, these types are the most popular:

- **Time-Based:**

This type of pop-up shows your ad after a visitor has spent a certain amount of time on your website. These work well because someone who is on your website for a certain amount of time is likely more engaged.

- **Scroll:**

A scroll pop-up shows your ad after the visitor has scrolled to a particular place on your website.

Take a look at some of these compelling pop-up ad stats from the site WebMeUp:

- 70% of Americans say they get annoyed by irrelevant pop-up ads.
- Pop-ups are the #1 reason people block a website or never come back to your site.

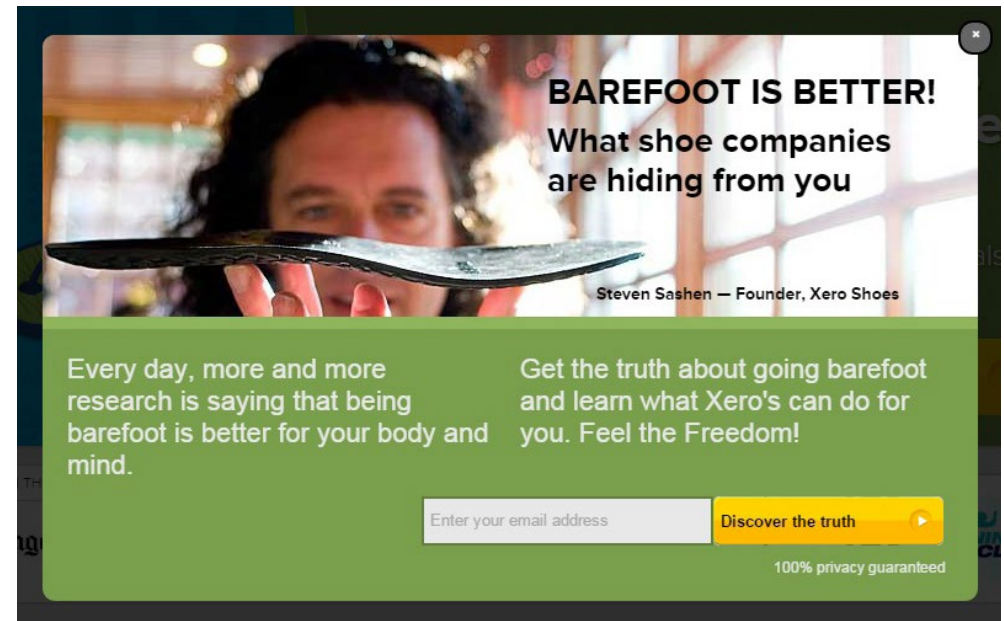
But...

- Pop-ups can double your subscription rate.
- Entrepreneur.com increased their sales by 162%, thanks to pop-ups.

Clearly, pop-up ads can work for or against you depending on how you use them.

But before we go into more detail regarding best practices, take a look at an example of a pop-up ad in action.

This example is from the barefoot running shoe company, Xero Shoes. This ad is an in-window overlay where the viewer can easily click out, or they can sign up for Xero's newsletter.



Xero Shoes Pop-Up Inlay Ad

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Best Practices for Pop-Up Ads

Pop-up ads can be considered interruption marketing, and they are known to annoy customers, so be very careful with your ad and offer. Here are some best practices to keep in mind:

1. Keep your CTA high value:

This is probably one of the most important best practices for pop-up ad success.

Because you are interrupting your site visitor's actions, make sure your CTA is for something that is meaningful. If you ask for an email address, consider offering an incentive like a promotion or discount.

2. Make your exit simple:

Have you ever received a pop-up ad only to have trouble closing it? Make sure your ad has a good user experience and offer a simple and easy way for your site visitors to close your ad.

3. Timing is critical:

Think long and hard about when you want your pop-up ad to display. Do you want your ad to pop up right when a person enters your site? Or do you want a delay? And if you want a delay, how long should that delay be? According to e-Strategy Blog, best practice is a one-minute delay.

4. Always test:

A pop-up ad is one of the most critical types of display ads to test. You should be testing length of time on site before your ad pops-up, CTA, copy, headline, color, exit strategy, and placement. By constantly testing you can be in a much better place to determine what works and what doesn't for your audience.



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Mobile Ads

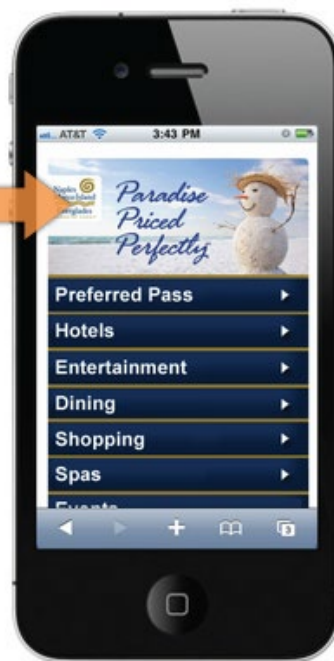
Since the introduction of the iPhone in 2007, mobile devices have permeated all aspects of our lives. And of course, because these devices are tied to our hips, marketers have created different ways to advertise to mobile device users, both in-app and on the web. In fact, mobile advertising is growing quicker than any other ad space. Data from BI Intelligence points out that in the U.S., mobile ad spend will top \$42 billion in 2018.

Many of the ad types described in the prior pages can be shown on mobile. But here is a simple chart to help you break down mobile ads:

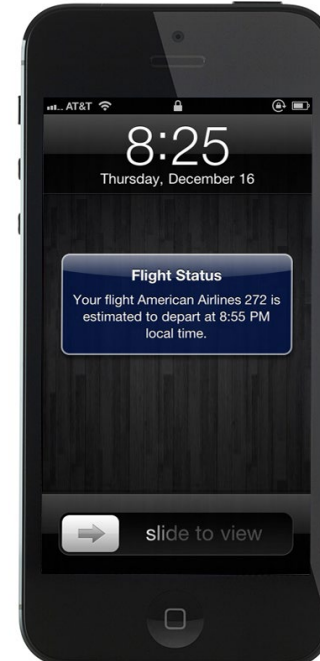
Mobile Ad Locations & Types		
In-Browser <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Text Ads• Static Banner Ads• Video Ads• Cinemagraphic Ads• Pop-up Ads• Social Ads	In-App <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Push Notification• In-App Messaging• Image Ads• Text Ads• Video Ads	Opt-In Text Messaging <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SMS and MMS Messaging



In-Browser Banner Ad



Mobile Landing Page for Banner Ad



Push Notification



Opt-In SMS Text Message