3M Launches Next Generation Visual Attention Service to Maximize Visual Impact of Designs

Web-based Scanning Tool Applies Vision Science to Predict – Within Seconds – Which Elements of Visual Content Will Get Noticed

3M today introduced the next generation of its Visual Attention Service (VAS), the online scanning tool used to optimize the visual impact of design across advertising, marketing, media and the Internet. Built on 3M's decades of research on how consumers react to various visuals, VAS marries deep vision science with cutting edge technology to help designers, marketers and other communicators test the visual impact of their content and increase the probability that viewers will notice the most important elements of a design.

"Quite simply, content can't work if it doesn't get noticed," said Bill Smyth, business manager, 3M Digital Out of Home Department. "3M VAS is a critical tool that supports the design process by providing scientific feedback on what elements of content viewers will see first, thereby assuring everything possible is being done to achieve creative visual goals, and maximize the impact of marketing messages amidst today's clutter."

The 3M VAS software analyzes the graphical and text elements of content and identifies where the average human eye is most likely to look in the first three to five seconds of viewing. 3M VAS algorithms process important visual cues, such as color, edges, faces, shapes and contrast. Results reveal exactly which design elements are most likely to be viewed first, and also those which will not get noticed. To perform the analysis, users upload images to the 3M VAS web portal and within approximately 20 seconds the tool produces results in the form of easy-to-understand visual interest "heat maps" and selectable visual score patterns that offer detailed information.

"Anyone responsible for the development of creative content sets visual goals, and VAS helps to ensure that the desired visual hierarchy is achieved," said Kelly Canavan, marketing manager 3M Commercial Graphics Division. "The benefits of vision science have never been this accessible to the world."

3M VAS can be used to assess the visual impact of all manner of creative content including, but not limited to, websites, print and banner ads, photographs, packaging, in-store signage, direct mail, and billboards.

VAS 3.0 introduces new features including: improved face and edge detection algorithms, a Photoshop plug-in, and URL capture. VAS also recently launched an iPhone app that allows users to assess images they capture with a smart phone. It will soon release an Android app, and offer side-by-side comparisons.

"I am a big fan of VAS," said Rich Butwinick, president, MarketingLab. "At MarketingLab we use it regularly to ensure our communication elements will effectively command the attention of the shopper, be it online or in store. I've heard it described as kind of 'visual spell check', and that's how we utilize it."

The VAS service is available globally, and can be accessed at www.3M.com/VAS. Since the May 2010 launch of VAS 1.0, and the November 2010 launch of VAS 2.0, several thousand customers have already experienced the benefits of VAS. VAS 4.0 is slated to launch in the fourth quarter of 2011, and will feature video capabilities.

For more information:

Free Trial: www.3M.com/VAS
iPhone app: http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/3m-vas/id396772462?mt=8
3M VAS Video: http://www.youtube.com/3MVisualAttention#p/a/u/0/Z2tqlgrxSn8

About 3M

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