Web site design affects how children process information

January 14 2009

Tacoma, WA - January 14, 2009 -A new study in the journal *Psychology & Marketing* investigates the influence of website design on children's information processing. Results show that the type of interface used can significantly affect how children process and retain information; age strongly affected this relationship.

Researchers used a sample of around 200 boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 13 to examine how website design and age affected how children processed information.

Four experimental websites were constructed, which differed in terms of their navigational aids and learning cues. Specifically, websites were designed with either a map, a content list, a map with learning cues, or a content list with learning cues. Learning cues were pop-up windows designed to reinforce specific information as one exit a Web page. Children were randomly assigned to one of the four Websites.

The study found that the type of navigational aid used (map or just a content list), along with the presence or absence of learning cues, significantly affected search accuracy and information recall among younger children (ages 7 - 9).

Younger children (ages 7 - 9) preferred a map because they tend to process information holistically. Older children (ages 10 - 13) were better able to use a content list, because they are more equipped to select information and ignore irrelevant material.

Additionally, to reinforce younger children's learning of Web information, learning cues were provided to emphasize specific information to be remembered. These learning cues aided younger children's recall of information, while older children were able to process this information without these cues.

Source: Wiley