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Heatmap Guide

All it takes is 50 milliseconds for someone to register a first impression. That means you have the blink of an eye to get your point across. First impressions are based on design. Design, of course, isn't just how a website looks. "Design is how it works," said Steve Jobs. All it takes is a subtle visual cue to throw people off the "conversion scent." For example, let's say that you see a banner ad for the CRM tool Highrise. In it, you see a woman who looks like a customer, a short testimonial, and the company logo on a blue background.

Now people should see those exact elements replicated on the landing page to maintain "conversion scent" and keep people on track.


A design-based first impression isn't just about how much parallax you use. It's about matching the visitor's expectations. Then it's about giving them a clear path toward conversion. Even small, subtle visual cues can throw people off this "scent."

The non-clickable "NO FEES" button was hogging a lot of attention, but it is not a call-to-action and its information isn't the most important on the page.
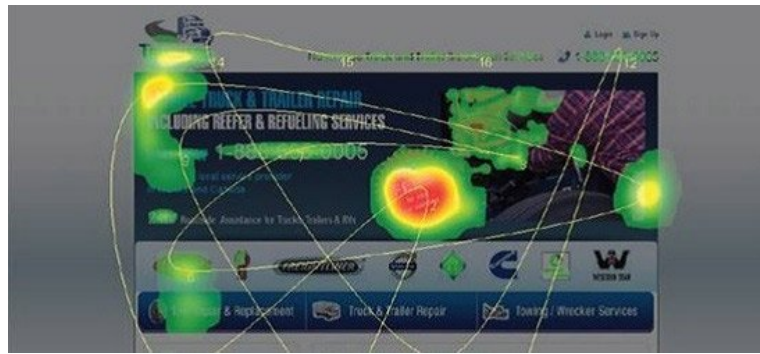
Also, it is right next to one of the most important CTAs on the page (the phone number) and it stands out so much that it actually is drawing people away from other more important elements.
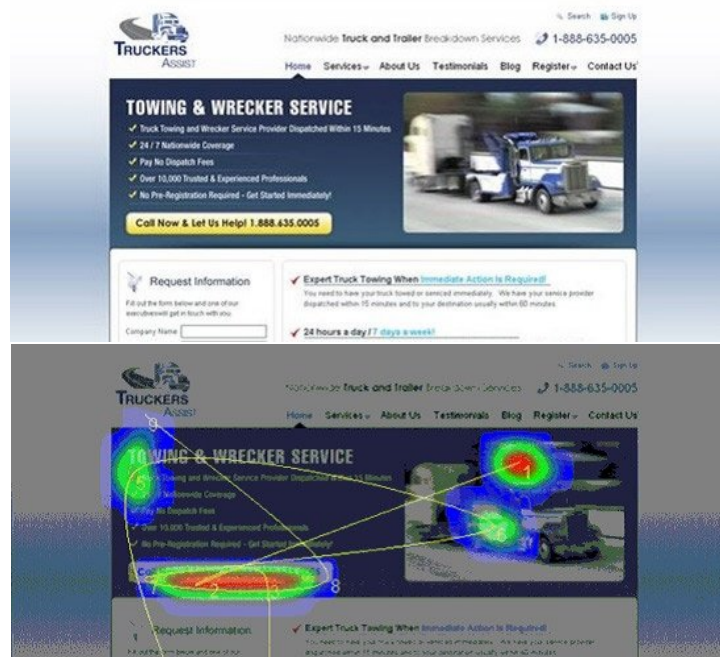

The "Call Now" button clearly is getting a lot of attention over every other section on the page, which is great because it is how customers get started contacting the business!

Lesson learned: When you are assembling a persuasive landing page, be sure the elements that "pop" are the ones that matter, and that you aren't giving too much weight to visuals that don't encourage customers to take action.

Using visual cues to guide visitors to key areas of your site is nothing new, but just how effective is it?

According to studies such as the aptly named Eye Gaze Cannot be Ignored, it is incredibly effective. Human beings have a natural tendency to follow the gaze of others, and we have been coached since birth to follow arrows directing us to where we should be looking and going.

Consider the following eye tracking heat map example that included a page with a baby and a compelling headline for taking care of the baby's skin.
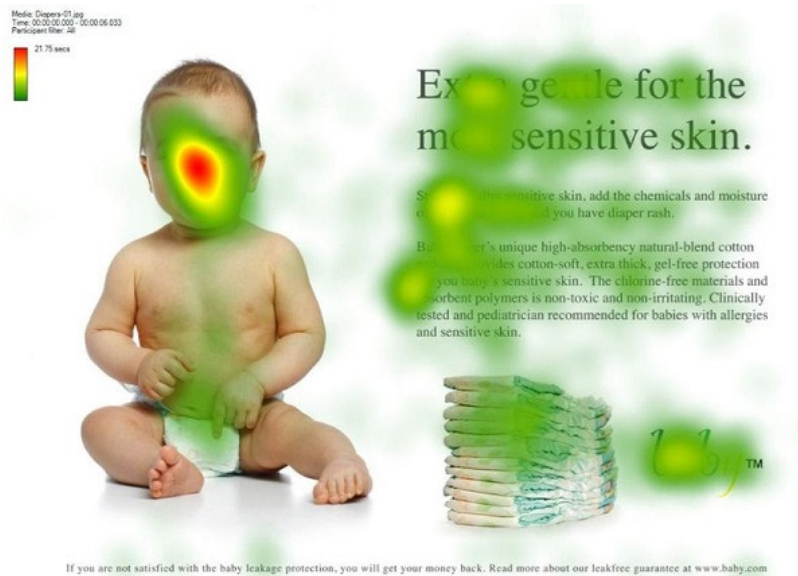
It's obvious that the baby's face is drawing a lot of attention. (As a matter of fact, faces of babies and pretty women draw the longest gazes from all visitors.)

Unfortunately, from a marketing standpoint, this is a problem because the copy isn't commanding enough attention.

Now look at the browsing patterns when an image of the baby facing the text was used

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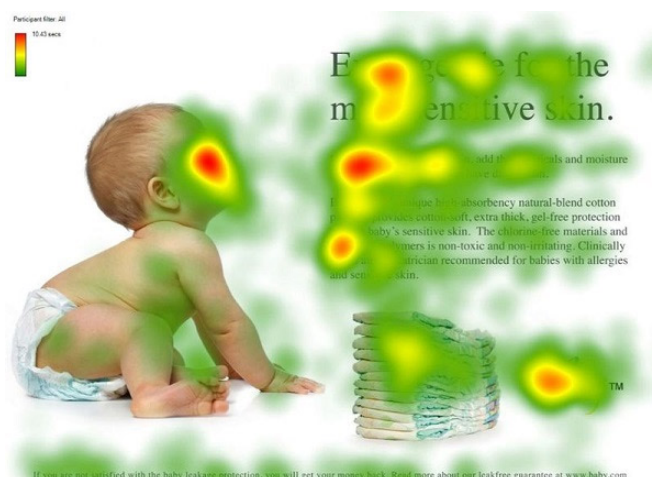
As you can see from the eye tracking heat map, users focused on the baby's face again (from the side) and directly followed the baby's line of sight to the headline and opening copy. Even the area of text that the baby's chin was pointing to was read more!

Lesson learned: Visuals are an important part of a site's overall design, but most pages can be optimized by including images that serve as visual cues for where visitors should look next.