Quantifying the Relative Importance of Key Drivers of Landing Page

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Abstract

In the world of Internet surfing, the first impression of a webpage is formed by the quality of its Landing Page. It is important as it drives the visitor's perception of the contents of the website. It influences visitors to make a purchase, sign up for a newsletter, or do any other activity that may be the purpose of the site. In e-commerce / commercial portals, triggering click to action (CTA) has become all the more important. This study aimed to assess the key drivers or attributes responsible for enhancing the quality of the landing page as well as for triggering click to action (CTA) through preference decomposition approach. Each page consists of various elements or combinations of elements such as title, body, font face, background theme or color, etc. This research study attempted to quantify the relative importance of the key attributes that would maximize the click through rate (CTR) apart from attracting visitors to the page and influence them to traverse through the webpage or website entirely. It emerged from our study that high colour impact (31.57%), image in banner (26.31%), relevant theme (15.78%), and flashing relevant ads (15.78%), in that order, were the key drivers.

Keywords : **landing page, click to action (CTA), click through rate (CTR) , e-commerce, website**

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In October 1994, Netscape launched Mosaic Netscape that was a web browser, a desktop application which became synonymous with Web 1.0. According to Cormode and Krishnamurthy (2008) , Web 1.0 is a retronym referring to the first stage of the World Wide Web's evolution. Content creators were few and Internet was used for very limited purposes, the emphasis used to be on providing information through overstuffing of web-pages consisting mainly of static pages hosted on ISP-run web servers, or on free web hosting services. Web 2.0 was introduced in 2003 - 04 to encompass various novel phenomena on the World Wide Web or "Web as Platform," where software applications were built on the web as opposed to on the desktop and users generated content (in the form of ideas, text, videos, or pictures) that could be "harnessed" to create value (O'Reilly, 2005). Web 2.0 fuelled various social media and the concept of e-commerce and e-business. In the Indian context, e - commerce business has, in the last few years, seen a robust growth owing to a better Internet penetration and technological advances (Dhote & Zahoor, 2017). According to Prasad and Sharma (2016), in India, the tug-of-war between the physical and online stores has intensified in recent years with an exponential growth in Internet usage and a subsequent boost to online shopping. Consequently, the retail industry is going through a disruptive phase, and the crux of all these disruptions is the change in the channel usage and preferences of buyers. The adoption and usage of online channels by the buyers has been different for different product categories. Therefore, with evolving technology and increasing competition, it has become extremely important for e- commerce / e- business portals to add value to every channel of business acquisition. For many e-retailers, their websites are key differentiators from

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their competitors, considering that the brick and mortar model is now moving towards the brick and click model.

Consumers are now served with thousands of new brands and other items and services online, and practically, all the competitors of any particular industry offer similar ranges. The key differentiating factor then becomes the customer online experience provided by the website of these companies. Whether a customer is willing to spend time on the website or leave the page/site depends on the very first impression that a customer forms of the landing page of the site. Besides, landing page plays a significant role in the imagery of the organization / brand. Forrester Research's evaluation of websites of various major brands found that the sites often failed basic tests with a failure rate between 50% to 83% (Temkin, 2007). It is of utmost importance, to survive in competition, that firms raise their standards of customer experience provided to online experience. The website designs must be built with understanding of the target customers, and the HiPPO (the highest paid person's opinion) need not be the sole driver. It is required that firms make use of research-based understandings and outcomes to develop the website designs and use experience based differentiation approach (Ensor, 2007 ; Temkin, 2007).

Literature Review

The first encounter that a visitor has with a website is through the landing page, so the objective is to hold the interest of the visitors in pursuing their visit to the website. Today, there are multiple channels available to customers and they, at times, access one channel while in the middle of another channel, like accessing a mobile app from a store that would mean that one transaction can span over more than one channel (Rajan, Swaminathan, & Pavithra, 2017). Therefore, the first impressions about a web page are formed in the first 50 milliseconds by the visitors, and these impressions affect the way the visitors perceive the website to be (Lindgaard, Fernandes, Dudek, & Brown, 2006). About 37 - 50% visitors do not like the landing page and "bounce back" or immediately leave the page from various sites, which are not perceived to be good (White, 2006). The results of these studies prove that conversion from being a visitor to a buyer depends upon various factors and is not directly correlated to the big buck investment on it. The key to improving chances of conversion from a visitor to a buyer is to capture the interest of visitors by enhancing the quality and features of the landing page. Research also indicates that it is primarily the main features and the general appearance of the webpage that catches the attention of visitors, and the quality of the content contributes lesser to forming an impression (Booth, 2006 ; Gofman, 2007; Gofman, Moscowitz, & Mets, 2009).

An online search by people happens because of varied reasons for different people. However, regardless of the reason, all online searchers continue to search based on dynamic decisions they make regarding continuing to scroll down, click, read further, or leave the page. Therefore, it has been inferred that serial position of content and other features play an important role in influencing visual search on a computer screen, where the target audience is known. Lam, Chau, and Wong (2007) inferred that the later an item appears on the screen, the longer it takes to find the item. It is also probable ,therefore, that the further the items appear on a webpage, the lesser is the probability of their being able to capture a visitor's attention. It has also been researched that human information processing is less effortful for later items in a list than for middle items, even though more time elapses in clicking on later items. This anomalous result could stem from the limitations of the human short term memory store (Hofacker & Murphy, 2009).

The developing impatient nature of humans has led to a study that rather than reading, one prefers to scan pages and leave (Holmqvist, Holsanova, Barthelson, & Lundqvist, 2003). This poses a major challenge to attract customers to stay on the webpage, give them readable data, which is simple yet attractive enough. The features like splitting pages into frames, too many hyperlinks, type of background (wild patterns), and too much animation are major distracters for viewers (DiNucci, Giudice, & Stiles, 2000 ; Lynch & Horton, 2001; Neilsen, 2000). A study by Avery (2005) concluded that aesthetics matter even in informational web page design, but aesthetics is not the only factor. Usability, credibility, and satisfaction are also important. One can ,therefore, infer that the designing

features that hold the viewers are different for a commercial website and a non- commercial site. The lack of feedback option sometimes leads to disappointment amongst the users.

Advertisements have become a part of every webpage. The AIDA model (attention-interest-desire-action) that originated in 1800s still holds true in the advertising literature. According to this model, there is an ordered way in which the consumers respond to ads. Animation has brought an innovation in advertising. According to a study conducted by Yoo, Kim, and Stout (2004), taking the level of animation and product involvement as the dependent variables, it was proved that the animated banners had more impact on viewers in terms of attention grabbing capabilities and higher click through rates than the static ads. Farhan and Yousaf (2016) stated that "to get consumers' attention towards an advertisement, it is necessary to create an attractive format with colour that could highlight the advertisement and make it easy to read" (p. 52).

Given the above, a lot of attention is being paid to optimization of websites. One approach for optimization of web pages that has become popular in the last few years is landing page optimization (LPO). Using this approach, website design can be assessed and then improved. The LPO approach uses statistical design, utilizing respondents who evaluate web pages (Ash, 2008 ; Gofman, 2007). The LPO technique may be target-based (customization of webpages based on user's behavioral information, e.g. past buying records) or experiment-based (user preference captured by some experiment). Creation of multiple prototypes and testing them with consumers is the main idea behind LPO. LPO can be executed in two different modes: live environment (live production website and regular visitors) or simulation/survey-based (with qualified respondents like in traditional market research).

The visitors have different motives to visit a website ranging from specific target to general exploration or entertainment (Hoffman & Novak, 1996 ; Montgomery, Li, Srinivasan, & Liechty, 2004 ; Menon & Kahn, 2002). A user may click on a link because they seek a particular page, while at other times, they may click because they believe that link will take them closer to what they desire. The motivation for search varies across users but, irrespective of motivation, the user continually judges a website based on its look and feel and decides whether to stay on or leave the page. Thus, it is a challenge for a website to retain its visitors from leaving the page and have a delightful user experience.

Research Gap and Hypotheses

Most of the above studies have been in the Western context with Western consumers. There has not been adequate research on quantifying the relative importance of key drivers of landing page amongst Indian consumers. Most of the available research, in the Indian context, has focused upon the emergence of e-commerce and factors that influence Indian consumers' attitude towards e-tailing and purchase intentions. However, none of these research papers have any pointers on quantifying the relative importance of key drivers of landing page amongst Indian consumers.

Lack of adequate research in the Indian consumer context, paucity of literature on relative importance of key drivers of landing page in the Indian context, and the need to identify the key drivers of landing page as a tool for the full integration of the online customer shopping experience was the motivation for undertaking this research in the Indian context. Besides, literature survey, a focus group on qualitative analysis of netnography, blogs, customer reviews was done. Focus group discussion was used for the exploratory research, and a quantitative research through a rule-based experimentation methodology was used for quantitative analysis that was based on prototypes of various combinations of elements in the form of a questionnaire instrument to Internet users. This study was done in the year 2014 - 2015. Data were collected in 2014, and the analysis was done in 2015 - 2016.

Research Questions and Variables

The comprehensive literature review above raises the following research questions:

(1) Is it possible to identify the key aesthetic elements of a landing page that will throw light on the existing perception of website developers and designers with regard to maximizing click through rate (CTR) ?

(2) What are the factors/attributes that should be taken into consideration for click to action (CTA) to take place ?

A focus group discussion was undertaken to get insights and identify important variables that would help answering the above research questions. The key variables are as under :

Variables

(i) Number of colors used on the page,
(ii) Theme on landing page,
(iii) Font face,
(iv) Using images in the banner,
(v) Flashing ads on the landing page.

(i) Variable 1 - Impact of the Number of Colours Used on the Page : Whether usage of a different colour to denote different segments of a page is attractive for a user to continue going further on a website or not ?

(ii) Variable 2 - Impact of Theme on Landing Page : Whether usage of watermark on the page increases the perception of users about the information as credible or not ?

(iii) Variable 3 - Impact of Font Face : While reading a review of a novel, Comic Sans is perceived well, but while seeking serious information on some topic, a formal font face is perceived better.

(iv) Variable 4 - Impact of Using Images in the Banner : Whether using college campus photographs is preferred by viewers or informing about admission status through the banner used on the page.

(v) Variable 5 - Impact of Flashing Ads on the Landing Page : Do ads drive away the visitor from the webpage or do they contribute to the credibility of the webpage ?

Methodology

This research was based upon the assumption that the respondents had already clicked on the desired links and had already landed on a landing page. A thorough qualitative research through focus group discussions was conducted to understand the existing notion of website developers and designers about the significant aesthetic elements of a landing page. Qualitative research gave rich insights on the factors to be taken into consideration while going forward with the study.

Quantitative research was then carried out in order to quantify the constructs and the measures that were identified during the qualitative research. Quantitative analysis that incorporated prototypes of various combinations of elements was presented to the respondents to elicit the required information for conjoint analysis in the form of a questionnaire. Salient features of the questionnaire instrument used are :

- Each landing page prototype had a combination of multiple variables.
- Each question was composed of a prototype containing a different combination of the variables, and the responses were captured on a scale of 1 to 10.

For each variable, multiple questions, in different combinations, were posed so as to achieve a credible measure for the same.

A pre-test was conducted on a small set of responses to ensure that the questions were identifying the correct constructs. The final questionnaire was administered to about 130 target sample size, and the responses were then analyzed further. The experimentation questionnaire included all measures of the constructs which came to light with the qualitative research. The experiment was conducted in the form of a survey, which was filled by selected focused group of respondents who used Internet for surfing and other e-commerce modes ; 118 responses were captured in order to quantify the research. For a study of this nature dominated by the age group between 18 and 30 years, this sample size is considered reasonably large and adequate. The data captured was made ready for further analysis by averaging the various responses and organizing them by categorizing as per constructs and demographics variables.

The demographics of the respondents were thoroughly analyzed and the following facts came out on analysis of the same :

(i) Age Categorization of the Respondents :

- Less than 18 years : 0.84% (approx.),
- 18-30 years : 75.4% (approx.),
- 31-45 years : 22.03% (approx.),
- 45-60 years : 0.84% (approx.),
- More than 60 years : 0.84% (approx.).

Median age of the respondents was found to be : 18-30 years.

(ii) Gender Categorization of the Respondents :

- Men : 69% (approx.),
- Women : 30.5% (approx.).

Analysis and Results

As the collected data contained a multi-item scale data in the form of variables like theme, ads, font face, colour, and images in banner, mean value was calculated for the various responses. The main objectives of the analysis are:

(i) To come up with a score to understand the general notion about the various prototypes presented,

(ii) To understand the part-worth utility of each variable using conjoint analysis. The conjoint analysis was done using two different approaches: ordinary least square (OLS) and least absolute deviation (LAD) methods,

(iii) The outputs of both the approaches were compared from the accuracy angle.

The above mentioned variables are further divided into different levels to achieve the part-worth utility of each variable as shown in the Table 1.

To record the responses, the five variables shown in the Table 1 are presented in different combinations in the form of prototypes, where the occurrence of each variable was uniform across the questionnaire. For the purpose of this study, 12 prototypes were used and respondents were required to rate each prototype on a Likert scale of 1-10.

1 being the *least impressive* and 10 being the *most impressive*.

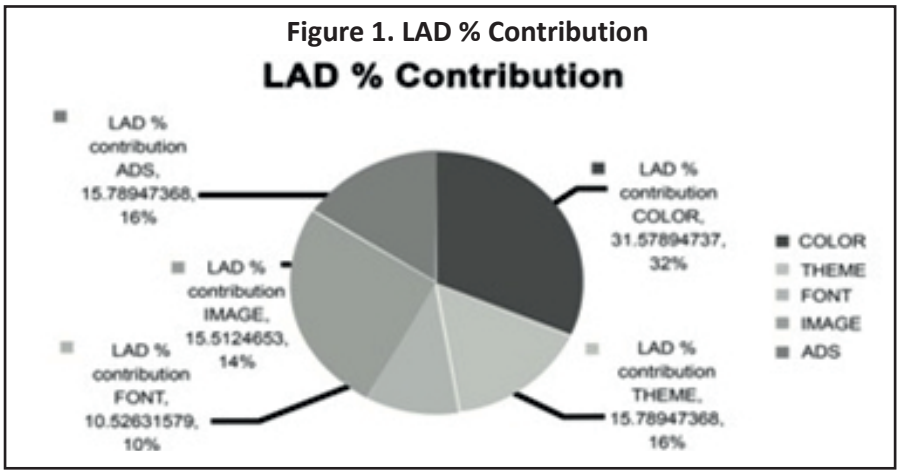
Table 1. Variables Tested

	Variables	Levels
1	Colours	High Impact
		Low Impact
2	Theme	Relevant Theme
		Any Theme
3	Font Face	Relevant Font
		Any Font
4	Image	Usage in Banner
		None
5	Flashing Ads	Relevant Ad
		Any Ad

Table 2. Derived Utilities

COLOR	LAD Utility	OLS Utility
High	1.5 (31.57%)	2.107(39.42%)
Low (Base)	0	0
THEME		
Relevant	0.75(15.78%)	0.591(12.44%)
Any (Base)	0	0
FONT		
Relevant	0.5(10.52%)	0.824(17.35%)
Any (Base)	0	0
IMAGE		
In Banner	1.25(26.31%)	0.736(15.78%)
None (Base)	0	0
ADS		
Relevant	0.75(15.78%)	1.084(22.82%)
Any (Base)	0	0

Figure 1. LAD % Contribution



- OLS utility was derived using the regression model.
- LAD utility was derived using simplex linear programming model.

Overall, the derived utilities of the variables for both LAD and OLS approaches have been derived keeping base variants as 0.

The Table 2 shows a comparative part-worth utility of all the variables considered for this research. From the Table 2 and Figure 1, the following inferences can be made from least absolute deviation method (LAD) :

- Colour is the most important attribute that attracts customers to a landing page (Importance: 31.57%).
- Image is the second most important attribute that attracts customers to a landing page (Importance : 26.31%).
- Theme and ads are of equal importance and the third most important attribute that attract customers to a landing page (Importance: 15.78%).
- Font face is the fourth most important attribute that attracts customers to a landing page (Importance: 10.52%).

From the Table 2 and Figure 2, the following inferences can be made from ordinary least square method (OLS):

- Colour is the most important attribute that attracts customers to a landing page (Importance : 39.42%).
- Ads are the second most important attribute that attract customers to a landing page (Importance : 22.82%).
- Font face is the third most important attribute that attracts customers to a landing page (Importance : 17.35%).
- Image is the fourth most important attribute that attracts customers to a landing page (Importance: 15.78%).
- Theme is the fifth most important attribute that attracts customers to a landing page (Importance: 12.44%).

From the Table 3, the following inferences can be drawn :

- Mean absolute deviation error (MADE) of LAD method is found to be more accurate than mean absolute deviation error (MADE) of OLS.
- MADE of OLS Method : 0.6.
- MADE of LAD Method : 0.5.
- Also, from the point of view of predictive accuracy, it is important to compare the predicted value with the actual value (the difference measures the error). In the LAD method, we find that for 6 out of the 12 data points, the predicted value is equal to the actual value (error zero) ; whereas, in the OLS method, not a single data point has

Figure 2. OLS % Contribution

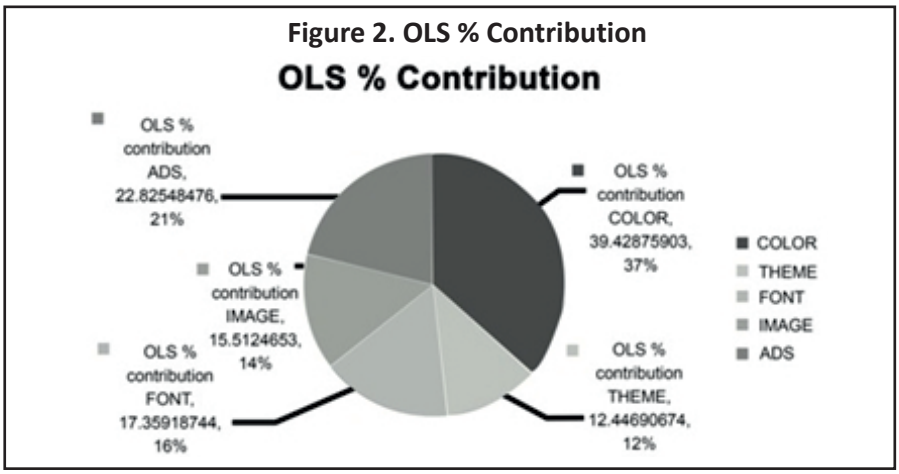


Table 3. Comparative Picture of Errors - OLS versus LAD

LAD	OLS
0.75	0.52
0.00	0.75
0.75	0.66
1.25	1.19
0.00	0.07
0.25	0.02
0.00	0.25
0.00	0.71
0.00	0.18
2.25	1.70
0.00	0.04
0.75	0.78
MADE=0.5	MADE=0.6

Table 4. Regression Statistics

SUMMARY OUTPUT					
Regression Statistics					
Multiple *R*	0.887813448				
R Square	0.788212719				
Adjusted *R* Square	0.611723319				
Standard Error	1.062794507				
Observations	12				
ANOVA					
	df	***SS***	***MS***	***F***	***Significance F (P-Value)***
Regression	5	25.22280702	5.044561	4.466063	0.048136106
Residual	6	6.777192982	1.129532		
Total	11	32			

predicted value equal to the actual value, leading to a larger error. Hence, the LAD method was preferred.

From the Table 4, the inferences are :

- There is a strong multiple correlation of 88.78% between the rating and all the attributes (color, theme, font, image, and ads).
- The coefficient of multiple determination R^2 (78.82%) implies that 78.82% of the variations in the rating is explained or captured by the predictor variables (color, theme, font, image, and ads), pointing to the robustness of the model postulated.
- *F* - statistic (4.466063) of ANOVA part is significant at the 5% level (*p* - value 0.048136106), indicating that the regression model postulated is valid statistically on an overall basis.

From the Table 5, among the individual coefficients, color is highly significant and the rest of the variables are

Table 5. Part-Worth

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t* - stat	*p* -value
Intercept	3.140350877	0.764579908	4.107289	0.006306
Color_High	2.107017544	0.686752662	3.068088	0.021996
Theme_Relevant	0.59122807	0.798803224	0.740142	0.487154
Font_Relevant	0.824561404	0.724660869	1.137858	0.298567
Image_Yes	0.736842105	0.689632141	1.068457	0.326405
Ads_Relevant	1.084210526	0.841096801	1.289044	0.244847

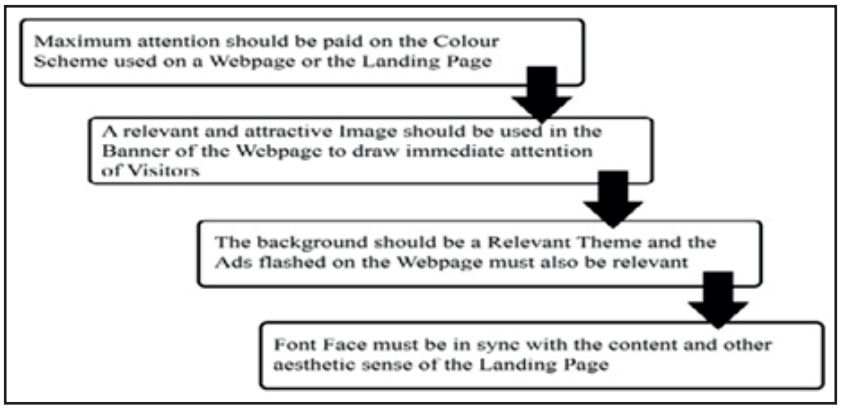
not significant. In conjoint analysis, part-worth utilities and the relative importance of the attributes are more important, given the fact that the overall linear model is significant at the 5% level (*p* - value : 0.048136106).

Discussion

As per our analysis, the results of the least absolute deviation (LAD) are more accurate as it gives us the minimum error while predicting the response. So, the results of LAD can be considered to be more appropriate in this case than the results of OLS. Part worth utility analysis gives a clearer picture about customer's preference regarding attribute levels. The conjoint analysis model results, as discussed above, give the following hypothesis as significant and drive the key aesthetic variables of a landing page as per LAD (the percentages given below reflect the relative importance of the attributes) :

- High Colour Impact : Usage of colours on a landing page drive click through rate of a landing page : 31.57%.
- Using image in banner attracts visitors to a webpage : 26.31%.
- Using a relevant theme in the background on a landing page is considered as the third most important variable : 15.78%.
- Flashing relevant ads on the landing page are considered as important as using a relevant theme : 15.78%.
- Font face is considered the least important factor that may drive likeability of a landing page : 10.52%.

Moreover, the results from the part worth utility of the various factors achieved through the conjoint analysis are used to define an ideal landing page (based on the chosen variables) that the website developers and webpage designers should focus on :



Managerial Implications

The results from the experimental design clearly convey the customer's preference for aesthetic factors of a landing page that drive the customer to become a consumer of the offerings of the page. These findings can be leveraged upon by organizations to increase the click through rate of their websites. Moreover, the results from the conjoint model can be a reference point for enhancing the various features of the webpages or developing new ones. The identification of the consumer preferences through this experimental survey can prove to be of good use to the marketing and sales department of the organization such as those involved in e-commerce. In quintessence, click through rate of the landing page can be maximized using the conjoint utilities derived by leveraging on them in the order of importance.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

- Demographics of survey respondents have further scope to include other age groups to make the study more exhaustive.
- This research has been carried out on respondents belonging to a particular target segment.
- The variables used for this experimental study are limited to a few aesthetic factors, decided based upon our literature review and focus group discussion. This list of the variables is not exhaustive.
- The research does not take into account factors such as the load time of a webpage.
- The research is limited to analysis of e-commerce webpages only.

With enormous computing power and large scale data becoming available, non-linear and non-parametric models like the neural network, multinominal logistic regression, and classification and regression tree (CART) can be fruitfully explored in future studies.

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