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# Testing clarity and performance of two landing pages

The impact of people's emotions and perceptions  
on conversions and pages' performance

**Supervisor**

Ch. Prof. Francesca Checchinato

**Graduand**

Angela Simioni  
Matriculation number  
867661

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## Table of contents

<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1. Conversion Rate Optimization: guidelines and analysis to increase conversions.....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	8
1.2 The AIDA model .....	11
Attention.....	12
Interest.....	14
Desire .....	15
Action.....	16
1.3 The world of CRO or Conversion Rate Optimization .....	17
1.4 CRO and neuromarketing: the power of emotions on buying behaviour .....	21
1.5 Conversion research: types of analysis and why is important to convert .....	26
1.5.1 Introduction to analysis techniques .....	26
1.5.2 Technical analysis.....	27
1.5.3 Heuristic analysis.....	29
1.5.4 Web analytics analysis.....	31
1.5.5 Heatmaps and users' sessions replays .....	32
1.5.6 User testings .....	36
1.5.7 Realtime website surveys or polls .....	37
<b>2. Defining, reaching and understanding consumers.....</b>	<b>41</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	41
2.2 Identification of users by using and creating marketing personas.....	42
2.3 Landing pages: types and best practices to reach and engage the audience .....	50
2.3.1 What is a landing page: types and characteristics .....	52
2.3.2 Frictions and best practices: structure of the page.....	54

2.3.3 Frictions and best practices: content and forms .....	57
2.4 Optimization and testing .....	60
2.4.1 The Multivariate Landing Page Optimization technique .....	61
2.4.2 Definition and characteristics of the Limbic map .....	62
<b>3. How and what online page elements control and trigger psychological and emotional mechanisms .....</b>	<b>70</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	70
3.2 Emotional design background and online layout.....	72
3.2.1 Levels of processing .....	72
3.2.2 Interplay between actions and level of processing .....	75
3.2.3 Facilitating visitors' focus and action process .....	77
3.3 Emotions and users' first impression of landing pages.....	80
3.3.1 Visual complexity and aesthetic .....	81
3.3.2 Colours and emotions .....	84
3.4 Designing for humans .....	89
3.4.1 Psychological triggers.....	94
3.4.1.1 Physiological needs .....	94
3.4.1.2 Safety needs .....	95
3.4.1.3 Love and belonging needs .....	96
3.4.1.4 Esteem needs.....	96
3.4.1.5 Self-actualization needs .....	97
3.4.1.6 General effects to include in landing pages .....	97
<b>4. Case study, Ristruttura Smart - Ipercaramica: testing clarity and perception of two landing pages.....</b>	<b>100</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	100
4.2 Objective of the research.....	101
4.3 Ristruttura Smart landing pages .....	102

4.3.1 Description of the landing pages .....	103
4.3.1.1 First version.....	103
4.3.1.2 Second version .....	107
4.4 Research: method and structure.....	111
4.4.1 The research .....	112
4.5 Participants .....	115
4.6 Analysis and results .....	117
4.7 Quantitative data: Google Analytics.....	126
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Appendix – Survey .....</b>	<b>142</b>



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## **Introduction**

The attention to the world of website usability has gained importance in recent years as nowadays, in order to be efficient and improve performance, is not enough to develop a good product or service but also to propose is online in a coherent and consistent way with people expectations.

To answer this new needs firms should invest in CRO activities and research methods; defined as Conversion Rate Optimization, it is that new field of study which concerns about the ability to truly understand customers and their needs, translating the knowledge acquired about it into possible and increasing revenues.

Online increasing performance are correlated to the identification of what, for a website owner or creator, correspond to a micro and macro conversion. The definition of this to action must and usually are correlated to the main goal of the company; as Saleh et al. (2010) defines it, a micro conversion is that action that a visitor of a website takes, which has an intended minor relevance since its real objective is to “take the visitor down the conversion funnel, until he or she is ready to complete the bigger goal”.

From this definition it can be derived that, in order to achieve the above cited increasing revenues or performance, marketers must identify a major conversion goal and design specific pages where to invite and persuade people to complete that action.

One way to think of a customer online journey, is to use as benchmark and reference the AIDA model developed in 1898 by Elias St. Elmo Lewis. This theoretical framework can help to understand the typical cognitive and emotional stages through which potential customers go when purchasing or informing about a product or service. Indeed, any page a website should be created and designed as to follow this framework; when developing a webpage, not only is important to create an appealing design and interesting offer, but also to identify who the specific target audience is, and which are their interests and needs.

As a matter of fact, companies can choose to develop specific pages in order to target selected people, whose needs and desires can be potentially solved by the proposed offer. These are called landing pages.

In order to increase the conversion rate, landing pages should be created by following specific usability best practices – which will be described in chapter two – that have been developed by considering people's general online habits and expectation.

Whenever a landing page, or a new webpage, has been published, every component of it should be tested, aiming to understand if and how people evaluate it. There are different techniques companies can implement to reach this scope, one of which is A/B testing. Inventors of this technique – Dincox, Enos and Brodmerkle (2005) – created it to compare two different versions of a page, to understand the best one in terms of performance.

Anyway, even the big improvements that this type of research can generate, it displays an evident limit which would result in less meaningful insights and performance: the omission of humans' emotions.

Different researcher, like Häusel (2011), developed new model and study techniques in order to include also this psychological aspect in the analysis of webpages. Indeed, emotions have been recognized as meaningful triggers of actions, pushing people to process, interpret and evaluate information or elements in different ways.

Following this discovery, it is therefore necessary to evaluate not only what actions people take on the page, but also to investigate what are the reasons behind that behaviour.

In 2006, researchers Lindgaard et al., proved that even before taking an action people were actually able to evaluate and identify a page offer in just 50 milliseconds. Moreover, another meaningful insight from their research was that, such first evaluation – mainly based focusing on the page design - was usually stable during the subsequent navigation, impacting on their emotion and perception toward the page.

Consequently, the developed landing page should be designed in order to contemplate people's emotions and perceptions, and possibly to control it.

As an example, the company Iperceramica, developed two version of a landing page – for the project Ristruttura Smart - in collaboration with the digital marketing agency MOCA Interactive. This research is dedicated to the study of these two pages, by understanding, through a survey submitted to 150 participants, how people perceive the design and clarity of the object of the page, by analysing their emotional perception. This research has also been developed to identify a potential correlation with emotions and pages performances.

# 1. Conversion Rate Optimization: guidelines and analysis to increase conversions

## 1.1 Introduction

Conversion Rate Optimization, can be defined as the analysis of consumers' behaviour, focusing on what motivates a particular market segment to react in a certain way to marketing elements, giving companies advices on how to respond and adjust their website or landing pages<sup>1</sup>. It is a field of study which concerns about the ability to truly understand customers and their needs, translating the knowledge acquired about it into possible and increasing revenues.

The need and emergence for website optimization has gained strength as the concern for usability entered in many companies' business strategies; this interest, created the space for new types of analysis about how and what visitor think and search for in a web platform.

What companies may want to investigate with CRO techniques when talking about usability and the aspect that can be questioned, typically may entail the fill out of a form, download of a catalogue, subscription to a newsletter or, the best case, the purchase of a product. All these interactions that a user can make in a company's website or landing page (this topic is going to be explained in the next chapter), are called *conversions*.

Conversion can be divided in two main groups: micro and macro conversions. Macro conversions can be defined as those actions and interactions a consumer makes on websites, which represent the overall or ultimate conversions on a website. For this, they are directly related to the main activity of the company (e.g. purchase of a product on an e-commerce website or subscription of a service). On the other hand, micro conversions refer to all the other smaller actions proposed, to take the visitor down the conversion funnel, until he or she is ready to

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<sup>1</sup> Saleh K., Shukairy A. (2010). Conversion Optimization: The Art and Science of Converting Prospects to Customers. O'Reilly Media. Page 2

complete the bigger goal.<sup>2</sup>

Images show an example of two actions proposed in the product page of a well-known e-commerce site, Yoox. Priority has been given to the macro conversion “Add to shopping bag” by placing it as the first button in the page; below, near the footer, there is the micro conversion “Sign up”, for those who maybe are not ready to make a purchase or can possibly be returning visitors.

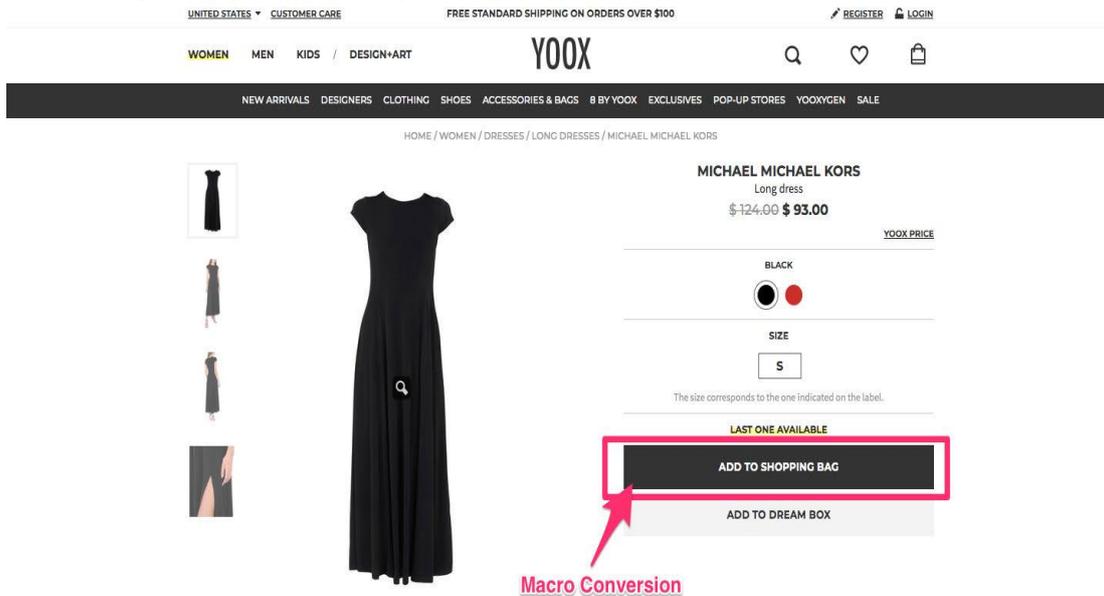


Figure 1.1 Macro conversions on Yoox E-commerce

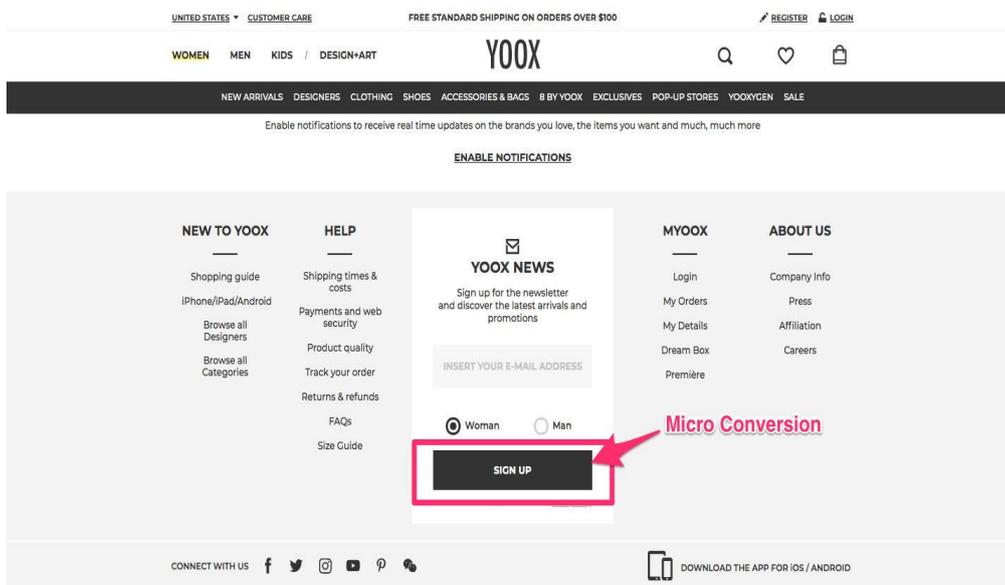


Figure 1.2 Micro conversion on Yoox E-commerce

<sup>2</sup> Saleh K., Shukairy A. (2010). Conversion Optimization: The Art and Science of Converting Prospects to Customers. O'Reilly Media. Pages 22-27

Each type of conversion has a unique value for the company; the word micro and macro help use to identify and understand that some conversions have a greater value, and therefore can turn into greater returns for the firm.

Therefore, we could say that a company cannot focus solely on micro conversions, since they can be defined as those actions that support the goal of the online business but are not enough for its survival.

By analyzing different companies' website, it can be seen that all of them present different call to actions, CTAs, that invite consumers to make both micro and macro conversion. Following the logic, some might argue that the presence of multiple actions can distract and confuse users instead of attracting and convincing them to convert. This is a topic that has been largely discussed.

First, we need to understand what a CTA or a button for a conversion specialist is; it is represented by a button or a link located in some pages of websites, with the goal to attract and invite people to take specific actions, like complete form to subscribe to a service, add some products to the cart, and so on.

Interactions with CTAs in a website or in a landing page, allow marketers and specialist to calculate what is called the *conversion rate*; this is one of the metrics that matter the most in the field of Conversion Rate Optimization. It is calculated by dividing the number visitors who took an action on the website or landing page (the action to examine might change according to the company's goal) by the total number of visitors of the website or page.

$$\text{Conversion rate} = \frac{\text{Number of visitors who convert}}{\text{Total number of visitors}} \times 100$$

Knowing the percentage of a website conversion rate is a way to always be updated about the effectiveness of the contents and information provided on the website, but also a measure of the satisfaction of customers. Whenever a company is considering to provide more content on the website, it should first check the percentage of conversion rates, and assure that what is displayed is appreciated and is actually interesting for its visitors.

In order to improve the amount of people that actually convert or choose to take an action on the website, the type of users that interact and their actual level of interest and engagement should be analysed.

## **1.2 The AIDA model**

To better understand visitors' needs and desires, first it is important to identify types of visitors that can interact with the website, but also at which stage of the conversion funnel they are.

In this case, a well-known model might help companies to understand where and what content or triggers to put in order to draw visitors' attention and motivate them to convert, based on the stage they are. In fact, in 1898 Elias St. Elmo Lewis proposed a theoretical framework, called AIDA model, for describing the different stages of consumer interest and behaviour. Following his model, visitors are considered to go through four stages when taking into consideration the purchase of a product or service; none of these stages can be skipped. Every visitor will sequentially pass through each stage, no matter the type of conversion goal. Anyway, this is not to say that every visitor will devote the same amount of attention and time to a specific stage, but that the firm should "create a clear path and the proper support to keep them moving forward toward the conversion goal"<sup>3</sup>.

With the AIDA model, as researchers describe, marketers are able to identify the different cognitive and also emotional stages which customers go through in the purchasing process. The four steps, as the

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<sup>3</sup> Ash T., Page R., Ginty M., Landing Page Optimization: the definitive guide to testing and turning for conversions. John Wiley & Sons, 2012. Page 39

acronym highlights, are *Attention (or Awareness), Interest, Desire (or Decision) and Action*.

Even if this is a model which was developed centuries ago and that has gone through a lot of modifications and critics, it still has some main implication that apply also to website visitors. Main traits and patterns of the stages include:

- A first cognitive level at which marketers should design the website or landing page to draw the attention of visitors; this correspond to the stage of Attention
- An intermediate step where the website or landing page should display information about products or services in order to cause users interest, and therefore engage them, leading to the creation of desire toward the purchase. This is the effective level corresponding to Interest and Desire steps of the model
- The path should end with a behavioural level, where the visitors become customers making the action proposed in the website or landing page.

Anyway, steps might not have the same length, in terms of time, and the same strength in terms of emotion. Marketers should consider that decision of converting depends also on the website users have visited, researches that have been conducted and if visitors find the offer of the website or landing page unique. At this level, when users first enter a website or landing page, usually ask themselves two questions: “Do the website have what I want?” and “Why should I buy it here?”; for this the value proposition of the website should be clear and should answer to those questions. That is the requirement to make visitors go through the AIDA funnel.

Each step of the model, presents some basic rules to follow and explains how users process information.

*Attention*

Nowadays, given the vast amount of information available and the higher accessibility to it, it is even more difficult for firms to attract visitors and gain their attention. The main challenge that marketers are facing, is to give users all the information without generating cognitive and information overload.

Usually, visitors that are going through the attention or awareness stage, are first session users, which means that they are visiting the website or the landing page for the first time; engagement and commitment levels are definitely very low at this stage, as well as the average time they spend visiting the website: at this level, marketers should display website's content so that visitors do not click away at any moment.

As the researcher Saba Montazeribarforoushi describes in her article "On the hierarchy of choice: An applied neuroscience perspective on the AIDA model", because in the first step of Attention individuals are not so committed, there is a higher probability that users will be very selective in analysing information available. In fact, "individuals are capable of not only filtering out unnecessary information but also ignoring either endogenous or exogenous distraction."<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, websites' homepage and landing pages should be designed in order to display all useful and relevant information as first element in the page. It has also been proven and studied that the psychological mechanism of selecting relevant information from websites, may vary depending on the age of the visitor. For example, from different studies conducted over this topic, emerges that older adults usually have a higher difficulty in excluding irrelevant information, compared to younger adults; findings of studies were explained as depending on the fact that older visitors exhibit a decreased memory capacity or a visual system deficiency.

Since these behaviours and related difficulties cannot be controlled, there are three activities that should be conducted in order to reduce the impact of these effects and to facilitate the cognitive process to attract

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<sup>4</sup> Montazeribarforoushi S., On the hierarchy of choice: An applied neuroscience perspective on the AIDA model, 2017. Page 12

people's attention. First, it is necessary to eliminate all those visual elements, including photos, videos, banners and so on, that might be perceived as "screams"; efforts should be put instead in producing compelling and clear headline and information that support the main conversion goal of the website or page. Moreover, making things obvious can facilitate navigation for users: employment of short paragraphs, presentation of relevant information by using bullet lists and whitespaces, might easily catch users' attention and lead them to Interest step of the model.

### *Interest*

As visitors start to shift from the Attention to the Interest phase, firm should have understood who their visitor is, what is he or she searching for and defined how to present on the website or landing page, different alternatives to meet their needs.

Efficacy and efficiency of activities at this step depend on the capacity of the firm to make everything about the consumer. Every element of the website or landing page must be closely connected to their interest; if in fact, attention is sufficiently strong, it might happen that visitors immediately click and make the conversion. However, if information presented are not relevant to them, the interest might vanish and the only action visitors will make is to abandon the page. Since interest has been defined to be a "transient pull and concentration of the attention on a particular object" (Ash, Page, Ginty. 2012), observations must be taken about different motivations and rewards that can influence this aspect. Usually, interest can be divided into two main branches: self-selection and need-recognition.

Both the aspects concern and play on the identification of the visitor with a specific role or need. In the first, visitors usually tend to identify with a specific role to proceed with the navigation; for example, categories of the main navigation menu should be designed to help customer identify with the label. On the other hand, need-recognition is more fleeting; needs might in fact change depending on the situation visitors are living. Due to the high instability, there is a great margin for

firm to influence visitors' interest; rewards and motivational offers have a decisive role at this level.

As a matter of fact, neuroscientists have shown that using economic but also emotional stimuli in a website or a landing page can “significantly affect the consumer's brain and trigger the psychological motivations that influence their purchase behaviour” (Montazeribarforoushi, 2017). When level of commitment and engagement of visitors is high enough, that is the exact moment when the attention and interest turn into desire to have that specific product or service.

### *Desire*

Following what Elias St. Elmo Lewis presents in his model as the step of desire, this is where websites and landing pages should engage users by proposing a compelling reason to proceed in the purchase of the product or service. In fact, in this phase, usually users are more careful and accurate at the information they are looking for and may dedicate more than an hour in finding the best solution responding to their needs. With visitors willing to spend more time and attention at a website or landing page, effort must be put in developing strong headlines and body copy to convince and take them to the end of process, which should end with a click on the call to action.

However, leading users to take a decisive action on a website is not as easy as it seems.

The first rule to follow in order to gain users engagement, is to make them feel understood and empathize with them; to do so in a website, the right amount of useful information should be provided to stimulate and trigger the intent to take an action on a page. Users need to feel knowledgeable, independent and certain before even consider completing an action.

Second, but not less important, visitors must perceive to be in the right place and that they will be helped if they complete the purchase; it is always essential to design both homepage and landing page in a way that reassures visitors about the credibility and trustworthiness of the company. Usually social proof elements, like reviews and trust symbols

play an important role in contributing in this phase of the decision-making process.

The key to engage and convince people to buy the product or subscribe to a service online is to be honest and transparent since the beginning; if people will perceive this from the homepage of the website, there is a great probability they will complete the purchase.

### *Action*

The last step of the AIDA model corresponds exactly to the conversion, that can be macro or micro, which is the end of the decision process. Since now, it has been analysed and considered each step of the model separately; however, the truth is that each step is strictly connected and gives and receives strength from the next one, especially those of desire and action. As a matter of fact, the action is the “behavioural result of complete awareness and cognition, where consumers are required to make the decision whether to purchase or not” (Saba Montazeribarforoushi, 2017).

At this level, it is fundamental to allow users to easily interact and complete the purchase funnel, which for example can include easiness of payment, few interactions, which reduce also the probability of making mistakes and decreases feelings like frustration and disappointment. Everything that can be done to make it easier for visitors to complete the conversion, the higher is the probability that they will come back to the website and convert again.

Nonetheless, the funnel does not end with the purchase of the product or service; active interaction and maintenance of a strong bond with users especially after the first conversion, should be implemented. Such engagement, will trigger and push people to take repeated and larger conversions on the website.

However, researchers have demonstrated that most of the decision that people take both online and offline are taken subconsciously. Scholar like Benjamin Libet and Patrick Haggard proved that human intuition usually result in far more satisfying and better decisions that when they

evaluate alternatives and characteristics of different product or services by using a conscious reasoning.

This represents a big challenge but also a big opportunity for firms, which should create an online experience which, in its easiness and clearness, engage cognitively and emotionally with visitors.

But, despite visitors are autonomous and know what and where to search for a specific information or product, they still need to be carried along the discovery of such product, and experience interest and desire within the path.

### **1.3 The world of CRO or Conversion Rate Optimization**

Notwithstanding the importance of conversion rate as the final measure to understand how well a website or a page is doing, depending on the type of conversion actions being proposed, there are also other different efficiency metrics to consider to better understand the value of that conversion. In order to identify what to measure, some examples of the most common types of actions that can be found on online sites are discussed.

The most widespread and biggest objective a website can have is the *purchase*; of course, this action refers to those firms which sell their products online, basically called e-commerce. The measurement of the efficiency of this action appears to be very easy to calculate: this is the sum of the total number of sales. This is a consideration which can be valid if a company is selling only one type of product. Anyway, most of nowadays e-commerce present distinct and multiple products which are sold at different prices. So, what should be measured to understand the value of conversions, is the gross margin profit per visitor; by calculating this metric, assumptions about most or least profitable products could be done.

Another type of common conversion action that can be found on almost every website, is the *form-filling*. With this goal firms aim to gather data about visitors in order to reach them up after the first interaction and possibly influence users' future conversions. Usually this type of action

is called lead gathering. The measure of the efficiency of this action is expressed by the form-fill rate (which is a percentage measure), that calculates the success of form completion process. There are by the way some factors that can affect this metric; first the complexity and the effort required to fill the form. For example, if the time needed to complete the form is too long, probably visitors won't be incentivized to take the action, and the form-fill rate will decrease. Moreover, also the number of fields and the sensitivity of the data which are requested, are factors that can lower the metric. Anyway, the higher is the form-fill rate, the more the website or the landing page is successful.

Other well-known actions, that does not represent a direct economic return for the firm but play a decisive role in influencing first or repeated conversions, include: downloads and printouts, account creation, subscription, and so on. In the middle, exists a way through which companies can increase their success and the overall conversion rate, almost for free; this refers to the user-generated content, comments and ratings. By allowing users to comment and express their opinion about a product or a service, companies can increase their online visibility and credibility; in this case, visitors advocate for the firm, influencing prospects that visit the website. Generally, the success of this type of action can be measured by comments per post, average reviews, and others.

The analysis of all these actions should be extended by including also a funnel analysis. Explanation and definition of this type of analysis will be further discussed in the third part of the chapter. As defined before, what matters is that there are pages, and therefore actions, that are critical for the success of a website, therefore, the goal should be to guide as much visitors as possible to those major pages. A dimension to take into consideration when there is the need to measure the effectiveness of the funnel in leading visitors through pages and making them convert, is the *clickthrough rate* or *CTR*.

It is an intermediate metric that can help to detect if the website has

been designed correctly, presenting visitors a successful and clear path to follow, leading to conversion.

Going back to the previous definition of call to action and taking into consideration the aspects we have discussed since now, what can be inferred is that, even if actions or buttons are created with the objective to redirect the visitor to a specific page where there is a macro or micro conversion to make, visitors need to be guided, persuaded and motivated during the navigation.

This has gained particular importance due to the fact that everything, from computers and the Internet, to the way we use and explore websites and platforms, has evolved. We can basically highlight three main big changes in this panorama, which led and fostered the emergence of new services and jobs:

1. Rapid growth of technology
2. Improvement of Web features
3. Emergence of usability

The development of brand-new devices has changed what, where and how we can use the Web in our lives; if we just go back to ten years ago, we were at home looking at a big and static desktop, searching for some information on a website. Now, using a small device, that is what we call smartphone, we have the world in our hand: mobility has increased, as the expectation of what a website or an app should offer. This is the point at which we move to the second big change; given the expectation that people have about the features and the opportunities a business should offer online, companies and agencies have gone, and still go, through a big challenge: always make clear, fast and useful websites.

A decade ago, no one was concerned of users, or at least not as much as today. In 2000, the world of usability was still confused and blurred; only when people like Steve Jobs talked about it, companies and agencies started to care. As many players began to consider needs and desires of visitors in developing and creating their websites, usability became one of their main concern.

Usability, also known as UXD or UX (User Experience Design or User Experience), is a field which encompasses different activities, but also professions, which aim to improve users' online experience. Nevertheless, making a good website is not only about visual and design aspect, but the concern should be to make all of it about the customers. This means that every company should have clear in mind to whom they wish to sell their products or services, and which are their characteristics.

Since we understood that what matters now is the user, we also need to highlight that even if technology changes rapidly, users don't; websites features and characteristics may change within the time of a day, but visitors still surf and search for information in a way that is the same as they did years ago. What has changed is instead the knowledge behind motivation and intention to take the action and the attitude toward the navigation: nowadays everyone wants to save time.

As Steve Krug (2014) writes in his book "Don't make me think: A common sense approach to web usability"<sup>5</sup>, in order to save time, most of the times we don't choose the best option available, but we select the *first reasonable option*, which is a practice that Herbert Simon calls "satisficing".

As many psychology scholars suggest, we are complex machine, and most of the time we use to act following our instinct; taking this consideration as given, what companies can do is to follow some usability best practices, in order to be able to reach, attract and make their websites convert.

Therefore, what matters is the capability to persuade users along the conversion-funnel.

In order to motivate and persuade people to take an action on the website or page, each element should be designed and thought carefully, considering needs and experiences of the target audience. For example, this means that every Call to Action should be designed to be

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<sup>5</sup> Krug Steve, Don't make me think: a common sense approach to web usability. New Riders, 2014. Page 24

clear, easy to understand and should stand out from the page or website in which it is placed, in order to attract users' attention. Anyway, forcing users to make a specific action won't turn into positive results for a website; instead, "providing and helping customers to easily get and see what they want, where they want and in a way that they want...will reward you with an action that speaks louder than words: a conversion"<sup>6</sup>.

It is exactly in this field that Conversion Rate Optimization activities enter in play.

#### **1.4 CRO and neuromarketing: the power of emotions on buying behaviour**

Before analysing in depth all different activities that specialists can conduct on a website or landing page to understand more about consumers and their attitude toward information provided, defining why to consider emotions, will help us to comprehend the usefulness of the analysis.

Many researches have been conducted in order to understand why consumers choose a specific product or service, and if that choice can said to be rational or if it has been influenced by some unconscious drivers. Studies of researchers in the field of neuromarketing are still trying to find an explanation to this topic, and since now, what has been found is that for sure, emotions play an essential role in the purchase choice.

As the prediction of some consumers' decisions, also the definition of what neuromarketing constitute is somehow uncertain and difficult to define nowadays; anyway, even if during recent years there has been improvement that might expand areas covered by this science, it exists a basic definition.

The first to present what neuromarketing is, was Ale Smidts which

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<sup>6</sup> Eisenberg B., Eisenberg J., Call to Action: Secret Formulas to Improve Online Results. HarperCollins Leadership, 2006. Page 20

identified it as “the study of the cerebral mechanism to understand consumer behaviour in order to improve marketing strategies”<sup>7</sup>. Starting from this definition, which was stated in 2002, and considering the developments on field, others gave their contribute to identify scope and consequences of neuromarketing studies. Words like emotions, instinctive response, cognitions and cognitive response, were included in the definition, marking the discovery that what influence consumers in the decision-making process, might not be all under the control of the company offering its products or service online.

Therefore, neuromarketing for sure concerns the study of how human brain works, identifying the role played by the emotions, in order to make use of that knowledge to improve products, services and the mean through which they are presented, in this case, the website or landing page.

As Alexander Piazza highlights in his research, by looking at some neuromarketing researches, it is not possible to take into consideration the existence of a rational and conscious consumer. As a matter of fact, emotions are critical in a way that they trigger and influence consumer behaviour when evaluating alternatives and finally taking an action. Besides all the specific technologies used to analyse the mechanisms of humans’ nervous system, this has led to enormous challenges for companies, especially in all their online activities. Thinking to find out what are emotional triggers pushing people to buy a product online, almost seems an impossible activity; nonetheless, we will see that CRO activities are essential to understand what customers think, therefore inferring on which emotions should a website or a landing page be designed on.

Anyway, it should be also comprehended what is an emotion and why it should be considered to possibly improve conversion rates of a website.

Proof has been given that mostly of today’s buying decisions are been made unconsciously; as demonstrated by some studies, for example

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<sup>7</sup> Weng Marc Lim, Demystifying neuromarketing, 2018

those of Häusel and Pispers, by excluding 5% of conscious decisions, the remaining 95% is triggered by emotions.

Emotion can be considered as a “subjective mental state that is related to a specific object and influences the behaviour or at least the motivation of a person”<sup>8</sup>; it identifies readiness of a person to carry a specific action which backs up the emotion felt. The entity and importance of that action depends deeply on the strength and the meaning a person attach to the emotion perceived.

Usually, we would say that we can derive and interpret what a person is feeling by looking at his or her posture, facial expression or action; understand the role played by emotion in a website is not that easy, especially since person are not able to interact with a product. Given this unchangeable “obstacle”, what marketers should define in creating a website or landing page, is which emotions they want visitors to feel when surfing the page. Every detail and content of the website should abide by that emotion.

The objective of all marketers aiming to develop a usable and satisfying experience online for their visitors, should be to structure their website or landing page by creating an engaging design and content, which appeals to users’ needs and emotions.

There are some aspects about emotions to take into consideration, which might help in deciding the purpose and how to structure a website. As we have seen, emotions influence how users behave, both in offline and online situations; in these situations, usually people tend to focus on a specific object or information which can be seen as the trigger of a specific emotion. For this, we can say that emotions are object and behaviour related. These specific traits, highlight the need to understand what are those external stimuli on which the website or landing page should be based on, to originate visitors interest and desire.

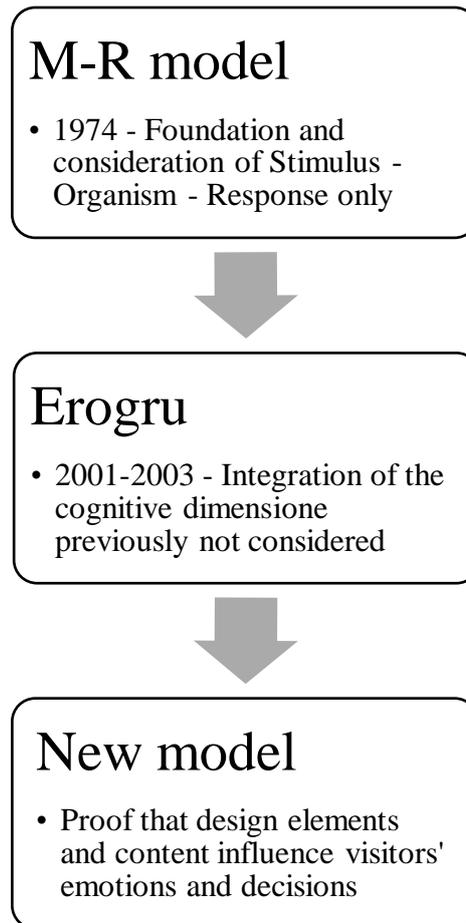
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<sup>8</sup> Piazza A., *Emotionalizing e-Commerce Pages: Empirical Evaluation of Design Strategies for Increasing the Affective Customer Response*. 2018

Researchers Hyejeong Kim and Sharron J. Lennon conducted a research on this topic, by testing the M-R model in online apparel e-commerce, to understand the effect of stimuli in the online environment on behavioural, cognitive and emotional responses of visitors. As the authors of this research explain, the M-R model developed in 1974, which brings his name from researchers Mehrabian and Russel, bases its assumptions on the Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm. What the model propose is that “stimuli in the environment influence internal states (emotional reactions), which in turn evoke approach/avoidance behaviours” (Hyejeong Kim, Sharron J. Lennon, 2018).

By taking this statement as a benchmark, between 2001 and 2003 the scholar Erogru analysed how consumers’ emotions and decisions were influenced and triggered by the online environment and the atmosphere created by the website elements. He integrated another dimension to the M-R model, the cognitive one, which was not taken into consideration previously.

Consequently, Erogru was able to prove that website design and content elements like image, icons, type of font and colors, can positively and negatively influence visitors’ emotions and decisions. Therefore, choice of how to display products on online platforms in a crucial decision, which should have the purpose to provide users the easiest and pleasant environment.



*Figure 1.3: Evolution of effect and stimuli of design elements on visitors' emotions and decisions*

By doing so, individuals will probably have a greater propensity for engage in the exploration of products and information on the website, but also more able to process and evaluate a big amount of alternative, experiencing pleasure and enjoyment.

Due to these conclusions, firms must carry out as much as deep, efficient and effective analysis as possible; all of this should be done to understand how first time visitors, but also returning ones, feel about the website, what are the critical elements which could create friction or clarity problems during the navigation, and what can collected data about the website highlight.

The most complete type of research to investigate usability problems, that involves different but complementary analysis, is the conversion research, which will be explained in the next paragraph.

## **1.5 Conversion research: types of analysis and why is important to convert**

### *1.5.1 Introduction to analysis techniques*

Conversion rate optimization activities help marketers to understand how to enhance the overall experience for users and where to operate, by listening and benchmarking websites with some best practices that visitors expect to be present.

An essential characteristic to survive online and to provoke people's interest, is easiness of use; following Norman & Nielsen recommendations, every website or landing page should be designed focusing on usability. By adopting this attribute, every interface should possess five attributes, which compose the overall usability property: learnability, efficiency, memorability, errors and satisfaction.

Since usability is the core element to provide users features they want in the easiest way possible, some specific analysis must be conducted in order to get the most out of the website or landing page and make it convert.

The ConversionXL Institute developed a framework which has rapidly become one of the most followed best practice to detach problems of usability. The common conversion research framework includes six types of analysis which encompass different activities, from data gathering to analysis, shown in the image below:

- Technical analysis
- Heuristic analysis
- Web analytics analysis
- Heatmaps and users' sessions replays
- User testing
- Website surveys and polls



Figure 1.4. Source: [www.conversionxl.com](http://www.conversionxl.com)

### 1.5.2 Technical analysis

The first step usually contemplates a *technical analysis* of the website or the landing page, which aims to track down all possible bug and elements of friction across different devices and browsers. Even if this step is maybe the easiest and the one that can be carried out almost immediately, it is the most essential. The activity of identification of all the present errors in the website, is crucial and necessary for the functioning and the success of the other activities.

A useful tool to start the technical analysis, which will be used also in another step, is Google Analytics; this software allows any marketer to easily have access to all the data concerning a website or a landing page. This tool helps to identify, given a specific period, characteristics of the audience, the technology and most used browsers or devices. Knowing how the target audience is structured in terms of age, gender, interests and country of origin, helps marketers to better understand what audience interests are and what should and should not be the content provided.

Additionally, also the investigation of the type of technology and

devices with which users mostly visit the website or landing page is interesting and useful insights can be drawn out of it. For example, by starting to analyze the website from the most used device, a specialist is able to identify if the website is optimized and efficient or if there are any bugs that can invalidate the surfing for users.

Another important step of the technical analysis, which recently has gained even more importance, is the speed analysis. The objective is to figure out whether the website speed is too slow, which could compromise the offering of a usable and enjoyable online experience, and to analyse and detect the possible reason for this malfunctioning. What experts in the field suggest is that the website or landing page should load within three to seven seconds; if the loading time reaches ten seconds or more, that could be a problem. Even if this may seem an insignificant problem, visitors today are not willing to wait and spend such amount of time, especially if it is their first visit on the website. Therefore, marketers need to keep under control such aspect; for example, especially on landing pages, one of the main factors generating long loading time is the presence of heavy images or visual content. The image below comes from one of ConversionXL articles, and gives the demonstration on average, of how much an additional 1% to those seven seconds of loading time will probably cost in term of dollars.

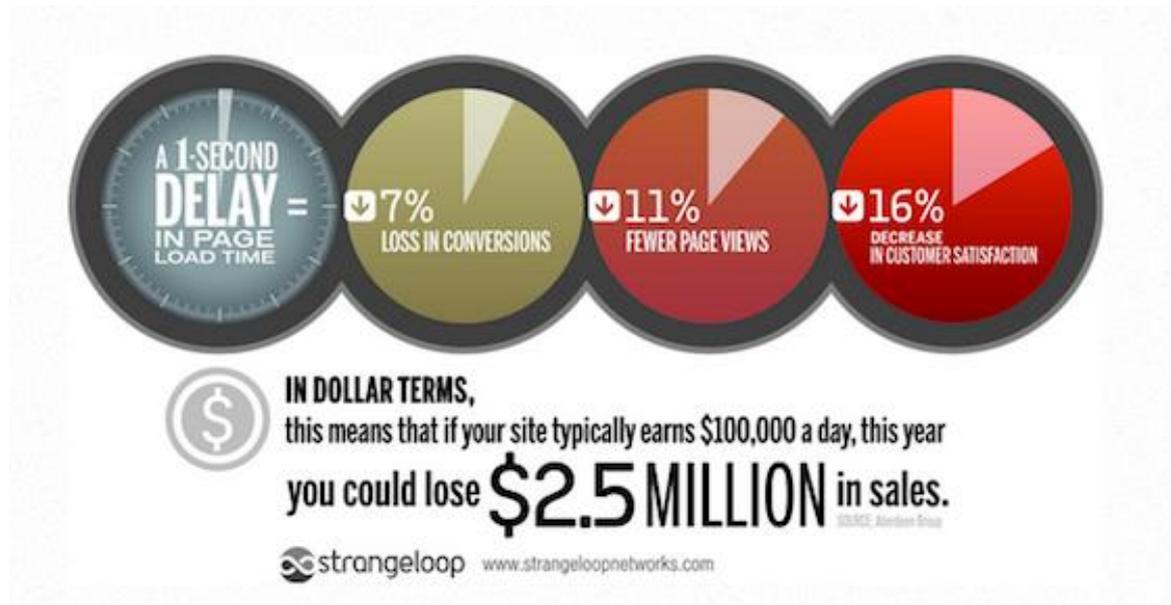


Figure 1.5. Source: [www.conversionxl.com/blog/11-low-hanging-fruits-for-increasing-website-speed-and-conversions/](http://www.conversionxl.com/blog/11-low-hanging-fruits-for-increasing-website-speed-and-conversions/)

### 1.5.3 Heuristic analysis

The main advantage of this kind of analysis, is that it can be done quickly, with respect to the other activities. However, beside of this quality, since it is a subjective assessment of what works and not on a website, it might not be fully optimal.

As ConversionXL institute defines it, it is an experience-based assessment of a website or landing page, which is done by a conversion specialist; this is a subjective investigation based on the experience and best practices known in the field. The website or landing page is assessed by looking at some specific areas of interest, identifying emerging problems and then classifying them into five categories:

- *Relevancy*: this pertains to the fact that the page should always meet visitors' expectation, and if not, problems or relevancy might emerge. Insights are then drawn out to identify what can be done to make content or design more relevant
- *Clarity*: every page should propose content and/or products in the clearest way as possible; problems of clarity usually concern

communication and copywriting. The solution is to make things simpler and understandable

- *Value/Motivation*: the page should communicate the value of the offer to the visitors. Sometimes the action is clear and present, but there is no incentive for users to take that action. In this case, communicating the value and benefits usually solves problems of motivation
- *Friction*: this is usually the most evident type of problem; it refers to every element that is causing users doubts or impossibility to proceed the navigation. Every problem causing friction should be eliminated or at least reduced to the minimum, to get rid of any distraction or hesitating in concluding the funnel. Most of the friction problems are found when analysing forms
- *Distraction*: this problem refers to any visual element which is unnecessary to the users. This usually are element of distractions that might make people leave the page, both intentionally and not. Examples of this problem are the presence of external links that can make visitors leave the main site

This is a structured analysis ending up with the production of a written document, where specialist review every template or page of the website, making a benchmark with the best practices of the branch, categorizing problems into the five areas described at the beginning of this paragraph. What is important to underline, is that all emerging insights are just technical opinions about what should be done better or in a different way. For this reason, insights can be called *areas of interest*. It is in fact the role of other types of qualitative and quantitative analysis, like survey or user video sessions, to support and confirm or maybe to bring out new insights which were not included in the heuristic analysis.

#### *1.5.4 Web analytics analysis*

How Hasan L., Morris A. and Probets S. describe in their paper “Using Google Analytics to Evaluate the Usability of E-commerce Sites”, web analytics can be defined as “an approach that involves collecting, measuring, monitoring, analysing and reporting web usage data to understand visitors’ experiences”.

By including the use of quantitative tools like Google Analytics, marketers are able to study what are consumers’ interaction with the website, which are pages’ performances and how do they contribute to the relative success of the website. Moreover, web analytics allows to investigate which are the purchase funnel steps where consumers decide to leave, that represent fewer conversions and dropping of economic returns.

This type of analysis is useful in the fact that it gives a quantitative measure to support all the other qualitative insights that marketers have drawn out from previous analysis. It does not give an explanation of why a consumer is leaving a specific page or he/she has subscribed to the newsletter, web analytics is more about understanding the what, where and how much data can tell us about that online path.

Because every important interaction on the website should be measured, there is the need to identify which are all those significant metrics to take into consideration. These are called KPIs.

Key Performance Indicators are those metrics marketers should measure to understand how the website is going, in terms of performance, comparing it to the company’s objectives. Of course, these metrics should also be aligned with the possible action consumers can take on the website; for example, among the most common there are “revenue per visitor” or “number of newsletter’s subscription per month”.

After having defined what metrics to observe, all those interactions contributing to achieving those objectives must be tracked down in Google Analytics. The tool allows marketers to implement tracking on

specific actions by setting up Events and Goals. The official Google Analytics website defines them respectively as:

- “Events are user interactions with content that can be measured independently from a web page or a screen load”
- “A goal represents a completed activity, called a conversion, that contributes to the success of your business”

The main difference between the two is that goals are usually associated with all actions implying an economic return, whereas events are not; moreover, as the definition suggests, events are basic interaction users make with the website, like click on a video or download of a content. Additionally, potential correlation between events and goals can be made; for example, marketers may want to understand if a specific content, like a video, is contributing to the main objective, which can be the request of a quote or a purchase.

Anyway, analysis using Google Analytics is really variable and onerous, since there is no unique and best path to follow for each website. The aim in introducing this type of quantitative analysis in the conversion research process, allows to optimise the overall insights, giving a whole perspective by combining data with qualitative aspects, to improve the performance of the website or landing page.

#### *1.5.5 Heatmaps and users' sessions replays*

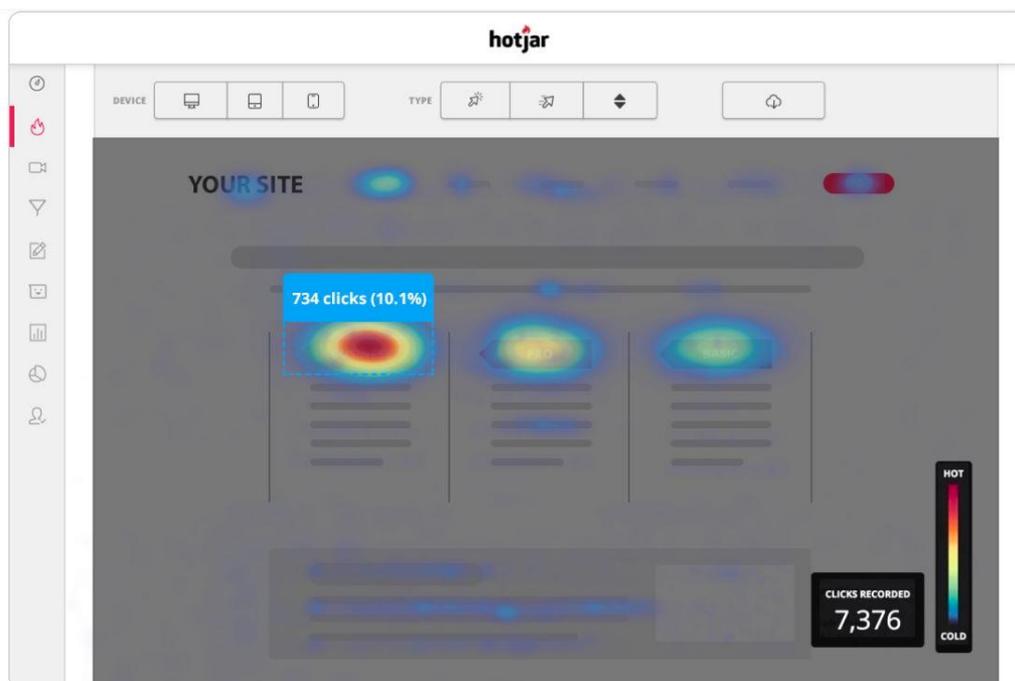
Sometimes marketers may want also to investigate and draw out specific insights from a unique page, that might be the most important (e.g. homepage) or the one which contains the action representing the main objective of the website (e.g. cart and checkout). Specifically, there are some tools that help to identify where visitors are clicking the most or which can show and record their entire original session on the website.

Analysis including heatmaps (which comprehend different types, like scrollmaps and clickmaps) and users' session recordings are the best to answer these specific requests.

“A heat map (or heatmap) is a graphical representation of data that shows the most popular (hot) and unpopular (cold) elements of a webpage”<sup>9</sup>. This term includes different types of heatmaps, which allow to draw out meaningful insights about users’ behaviour.

### *Clickmaps*

In all types of heatmaps, usually the value that a person attribute to a specific content on the page is represented by colors; the image below represents a clickmap in which spaces where visitors have taken a lot of actions are associated with the red color, whereas blue areas are those where no action were taken. Yellow, green, purple and other shades represent middle areas to which users devote less attention, but that are not so insignificant.



*Image 1.6: Hotjar heatmap*

Heatmaps act as useful tool to understand if, for example, a CTA stands out or is at least visible on the page and if people click on it. Anyway, this is also a very inaccurate instrument, which should always be supported by other types of analysis. For instance, red areas indicate spaces which with people have interacted with their mouse or finger,

<sup>9</sup> Definition from <https://www.hotjar.com/heatmaps>

but there is no clue if that interaction correspond exactly to where the user has given its attention. For sure accuracy is not really the strength of this technique, but it helps to overhaul if salient sections and actions on the page are been considered by visitors.

### *Scrollmaps*

Differently than clickmaps, scrollmaps help marketers to see where visitors stop scrolling the page, pinpointing which are seen and not seen sections and content.

Scrollmaps give a percentage measure of how many visitors have scrolled up to a certain point in the page and, as for clickmaps, it uses colors to highlight areas where users have devoted greater attention. Of course, the redder is the section, the higher is the number of people who have seen that information.

This technique is useful in case of very long and rich of content pages; on average, usually long pages have a low scroll depth. By using scrollmaps, it should be easy to understand if all relevant content is seen by visitors or not. If it emerges that people do not scroll down below the average fold of the page, it means there is need for a prioritization of content.

Indeed, it is best practice to put all primary content in the redder area shown by the scrollmap: by doing so, it is 99% guaranteed that all users will see and probably interact with it.

Sometimes scrollmaps also help to figure out if users perceive “logical ends”, by which we mean when they think the page is over or there is no more content below. Usually, identifying this problem is straightforward, since change of colors on the heatmap is drastic; to avoid people think there is a “false bottom”, introducing graphic elements (e.g. arrows) might visually suggest users there is more content below that space.

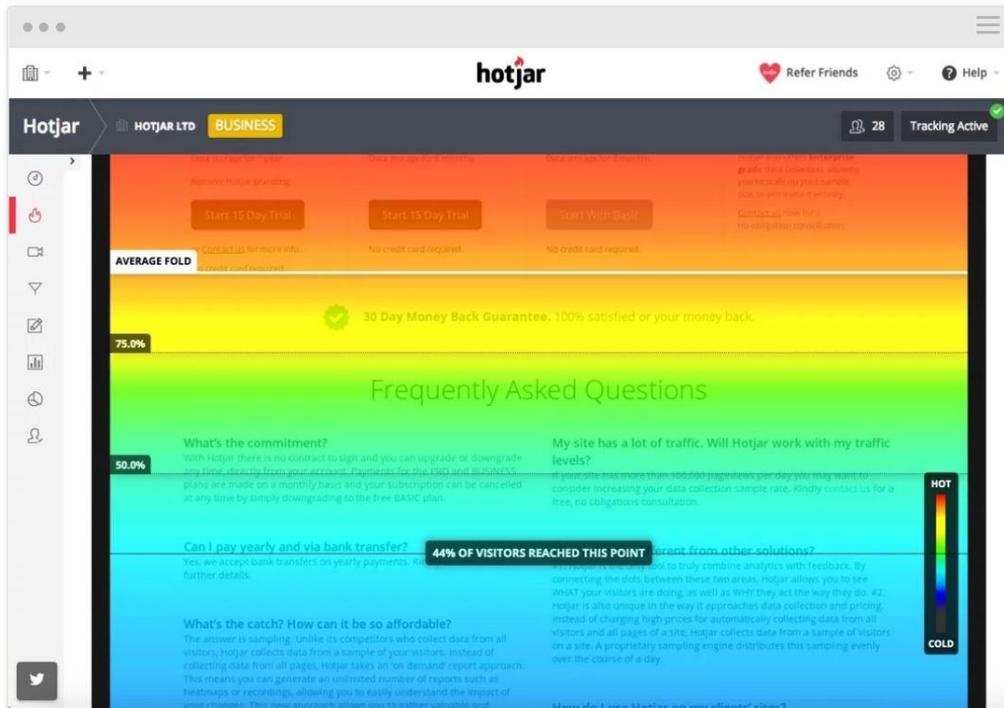


Figure 1.7: this image represents an example of scrollmap. From the average fold, you can see how the percentage of attention and number of users scrolling down has decreased

### User's session replays

Additionally, to study static heatmaps, tools like Hotjar, Inspectlet or Clicktale, allow for a full and real recording of users' sessions on the website or landing page. These videos come without audio or subtitle, but visually show exactly the path through which people go through in website.

What is required to draw out useful and meaningful insight from this activity, is time and concentration; conversion specialists usually dedicate from three to four hours to this type of analysis. Moreover, users' sessions recordings help to immediately identify relevant bugs and/or elements that make people abandon the page. For instance, if the aim is to verify the usability of forms, session replays can show if users are blocked in front of a long form or if they make mistake in filling it out. The only limit of this kind of technique is that it shows what actions

are people making, but not the reason or thoughts behind that interaction. Nevertheless, insights about “why” people are deciding, for example, to leave the page can be defined by conducting user testing.

#### *1.5.6 User testings*

User testing is definitely the most complete and demanding type of analysis to make; it covers the observation of real people using and interacting with the website. Unlike users’ session replays, user testing requires people to comment out loud what they are doing and to explain the reason why their doing that action, besides emotions and sensations they are feeling.

The success of this type of analysis depends largely on the experience of the interviewer, which usually knows the website or landing page and all of its problems; the type of questions asked to the interviewed must not include the answer, but should instead leave space for a natural and non-biased reply.

Typically, people are asked to solve and possibly complete different tasks on the website, which correspond to the key actions; it is a best practice to submit tasks that aim to reproduce the realest scenario users’ would make, so that the interview result as natural as possible. Protocols are created to define what interviewers will ask during the test, which usually consider at least three types of tasks:

1. Identify what the company offer is (general task)
2. Find a product or details about shipping information (specific task)
3. Purchase a product (funnel completion)

The aim of user testings is to find out element of friction during the experience, but also to confirm previous insights gathered by analysing users’ sessions. Probably, those mistakes identified in sessions replays will coincide with those emerging during the interview, but the addition is there will be an explanation closing the circle.

Experts say that to draw out meaningful results, a number of six test should be carried out; of course, test users must match the real target

audience of the website, both in demographic characteristics and type of device used (desktop or mobile), which has been identified and studied using Google Analytics.

Nevertheless, if time and resources are not enough to conduct user testing, there is another type of qualitative analysis which gives the possibility to marketers to “ear” what people have to say about the website or landing page: online surveys.

#### *1.5.7 Realtime website surveys or polls*

Sometimes, especially for those websites having great number of visitors, it is more efficient and effective to carry out online surveys. Questions can be asked directly on a website page or, for those who have already completed a purchase, by email; anyway, different intent can be pursued based on the type of survey conducted.

*Website feedback polls* are used to collect data and information from the website traffic, and are tools which intercept and involve only those visitors who are on the website, but still have not converted. There are different type of polls based on kind of information to be collected and on the page it is placed. As ConversionXL Institute propose, we can define two main types:

- On page polls
- Exit polls

On page polls are typically are presented while visitors are still navigating the website; questions that can be asked might include “what is the purpose of your visit?” or “Can you tell us something about your experience on the site? How you find it?”. Basically, these are questions which are asked with the intent to intercept needs and perception about the visit, to see if the page is able to provide relevant content.

One of the most common type of one page polls are those conducted in the cart or checkout page, to understand if visitors have found all necessary information or not.

Exit polls instead, are presented at the intent of the visitor to leave the page without interacting with the website; these are useful because the

allow marketers to understand why users are leaving and what they expected to find on the website.

Construction on online polls imply also the definition of the visual aspect and the time of appearance of the question; timing must be decided carefully. If the poll pops up immediately, visitors won't be able to answer to it, since they still have not started their experience on the site.

On the other hand, customer surveys are created to interview those people who have completed a purchase on the website; this might be send by email, even after month from the conversion. The aim is to gather information about how they felt during purchase funnel and how was it. Typically, for this type of survey, an economic incentive (e.g. discount on the website) is required for engage and motivate people to answer.

Some researchers have studied and observed the value of online survey over the years <sup>10</sup>, coming out with the definition of what might represent some of the major strengths in using this technique:

- Global reach
- Flexibility
- Speed and timeliness
- Technological innovation
- Convenience
- Easy of data entry and analysis
- Large samples easy to obtain

Many of these advantages have been made possible and have strengthen their value thank to the vast flexibility introduced by smartphones; through these devices people are in fact are always connected, therefore reachable by marketers at anytime and anyplace.

Speediness in collecting data with online survey and polls is counterbalanced by a relative slowness in analysing it, due to the

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<sup>10</sup> Results extracted from: Joel R. Evans, Anil Mathur, (2018) "The value of online surveys: a look back and a look ahead", Internet Research, Vol. 28 Issue: 4, pp.854-887

attention required. Given the easiness in processing and organizing gathered data, results coming from polls and surveys are analysed by categorizing answers into different classes, for example aggregating those regarding shipping costs and time or information about prices of products and so on. Moreover, since it has been proven that emotions matter and impact on the online buying decisions, sometimes there is the need to have a more complete understanding of how visitors and customers are feeling about their experience online. For this purpose, marketers may also generate a *word cloud* which helps to visually represent feelings expressed by users in the answers they gave to the polls. The biggest word in the word cloud constitutes the most common sentiment or emotion perceived by visitors in a given step of the funnel.

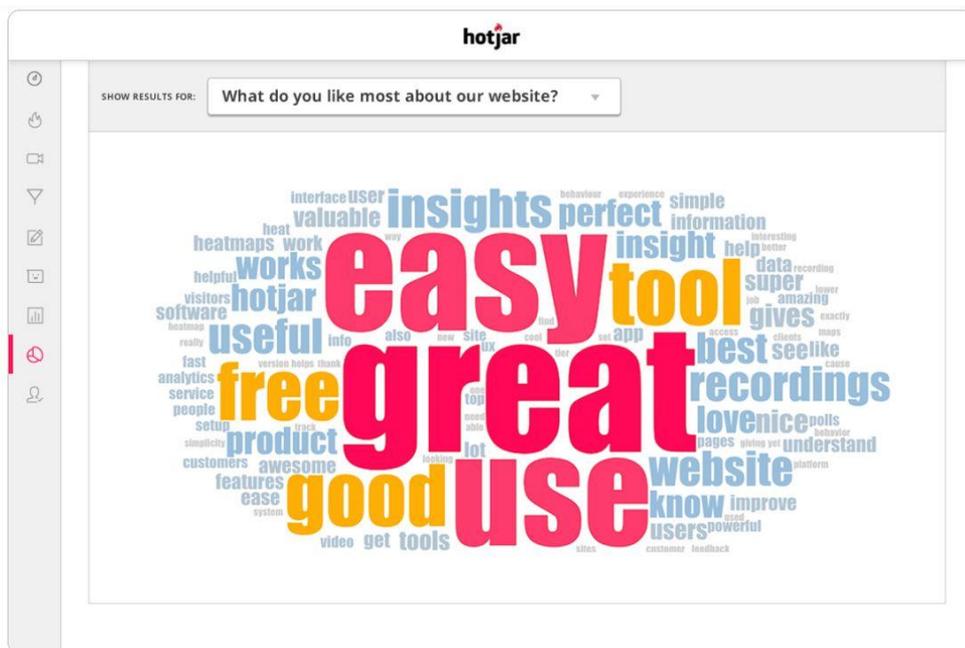


Figure 1.8: word cloud of what people think about their online experience. (source: [www.hotjar.com](http://www.hotjar.com))

It is clear that the center of the overall analysis and the focus to increase usability of websites or landing pages is the user; advertising operations and background might come at hand when trying to define who and what is that matters, but also how to target and reach them. In the next chapter, the connection between conversion rate optimization and advertising will be analysed, highlighting what are emotional triggers

to consider in designing a landing page, which also a website should reflect.

## **2. Defining, reaching and understanding consumers**

### **2.1 Introduction**

For every marketer, knowing and defining who the target audience is, is an essential and indispensable starting point to develop and draft a successful business strategy. This activity has the same importance also for designing and developing a significant and targeted website or specific landing page.

Specifically, landing pages are created for a peculiar purpose, which typically involves reaching and engaging with a group of users sharing some common characteristics and interests. For example, some companies that already registered a great amount of sessions and conversions on their website, might decide to design and develop a brand-new page, to launch or promote a specific service or product. In fact, generally landing pages are published in combination of a single advertising campaign, where the relevant audience for that product or service is set.

Anyway, definition of the audience is known to be an onerous activity, in term of time and effort required, but it has been recognized as to help and support all the creation and strategic functioning of online and offline activities.

There are several types of analysis which can be managed to understand the most of users and their behaviours, and then study them to build up some triggers and factor to increase website or pages usability. Choice can range between different techniques, including marketing surveys, usability tests which help to define demographic and behavioural characteristics, direct interviews to users, and/or through web analytics. The resulting output of all these activities, is the creation of marketing personas.

During the years there has been a great discussion over the utility of personas in creating critical parts of websites and landing pages, also in the effectiveness of depicting several user's information in a single stereotyped marketing persona.

In this chapter, some discussion over personas and how to create them will be made, up to the definition and identification of usefulness of landing page to reach the identified audience. Moreover, the last part of the chapter will be dedicated the optimization processes and the importance of unconscious emotion in designing an emphatic page design, but also understanding customers to successfully communicate and engage with the content.

## **2.2 Identification of users by using and creating marketing personas**

Websites are usually designed with the purpose of fulfilling someone's need for information or desire over a specific product; but, as defined in the previous chapter, users might be at different stages of the AIDA model, therefore showing different patterns of behaviours. Due to the presence of these dissimilarities, websites or landing pages need to be created in order to speak to and meet diverse types of visitors' needs; understanding what the visitor's role during the online experience is, might be a good starting point.

Some of the most common roles, usually equal independently from the type of business, are prospects, information seekers, competitors, potential business partners or clients; all of them visit the website or the landing page for a specific purpose, which can be variable. This is also the reason why roles differ from marketing personas.

In fact, roles are more changeable; as Ash writes in his book "Landing page optimization" (2012), people may experience and change their roles based on changes in their personal life. Every change of user role signifies also a change in their skills, mental frameworks and needs, that affects the way in which they search for information on the website or landing page.

Constantin (1999) in fact defines a user role as "a collection of attributes that characterize certain user populations and their intentional

interactions with the system”<sup>11</sup>, which should be understood by profiling all those relevant individual characteristics that depict users’ behaviour and choices.

One of the most diffused technique to profile users is by segmentation, which means that the target audience is divided into different groups based on some shared characteristics, like age, gender, education, particular skills, income, and so on.

An alternative and complementary approach is the direct grouping segmentation, which has been developed by Jiand and Tuzhilin (2009); this technique bases its success and strength in that it includes behavioural data and not only demographic ones, coming up with a definition of specific and distinct groups of customers based on their online purchasing behaviour. The two researchers explain that through this technique, marketers are able to identify customers and outline a unique model showing their behaviour, by defining “a set of mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive segments not based on computed statistics and particular clustering algorithms, but in terms of directly combining transactional data of several customers, such as Web browsing and purchasing activities”<sup>12</sup>. Thanks to the discovery of new tools and techniques like this one, it has been demonstrated that the activity of consumer profiling has brought enormous value to the process of marketing segmentation.

Another way through which target customers might be identified and segmented, is by the creation of marketing personas. This type of marketing technique has been highly criticized for its sometimes high oversimplification, but is has been proven to be an effective and relatively easy way for marketers to depict their customers.

Differently from the method described before, it bases its assumptions only from existing data gathered from specific research activities on users and already created archetypes; all the information collected are combined and used to create a characterization of a typical customer.

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<sup>11</sup> Constantine, L. L. and Lockwood, L. A. D. Software for use: a practical guide to the models and methods of usage-centered design. ACM Press/Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. 1st edition, New York, NY, USA 1999

The definition of what a marketing persona is might help to underline the common traits of this technique; personas are “abstractions of groups of real consumers who share common characteristics and needs. A persona is represented through a fictional individual, who in turn represents a group of real consumers with similar characteristics”<sup>13</sup>. It can be understood and outlined that personas are not real persons, but during the process of defining them, firms must spend their time and effort trying to create a close representation as possible to their visitors.

Since it should seem a close depiction of a real customer and should give a visual representation of such persona, a name and a picture are also assigned; anyway, what typically requires more effort from the marketing department is the creation of a narrative description of that customers.

Such representation should be the outcome of all data collected from the previous analysis, for example interviews conducted over a sample of customers or to those people of the firm who typically interact more frequently with customers, e.g. support centre.

This type of narrative description has a dual aim:

- make the archetype underline seem like a real person
- communicate a story regarding users’ needs, interest and emotions in the context of the site or landing page being designed

By including traits as interests, things people like or dislike, job description, hobbies and so on, the description will resemble the one of a real person, almost as he or she has wrote it.

The second part of the description is more about the consumer in the context of the website, landing page or general online experience, expressing it’s needs and objectives it wants to achieve. This description is done with the aim to communicate reasons behind choices

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<sup>13</sup> Miaskiewicz T., A. Kozar K., 2011. Personas and user-centered design. How can personas benefit product design processes? Elsevier Ltd.

about design, content and information given, which are motivated by customers' goals and emotions expressed.

Producing this type of outcome can sometimes seem easy and straightforward but, as said before, each single creation of a persona requires a lot of research behind it. Since information should contain ethnographic and demographic data about users, there are some activities that should be organized and conducted to obtain a great amount and possibly useful insights, concerning personal and technical information, and true opinions of visitors.

Recently there has been an addiction to all the other common activities that a company can carry out, which has fastened the overall process of collection of data, but on the other hand, has also questioned the utility of marketing personas: social media platforms.

Nowadays, people are proposed with a variety of social media which are used as places where to share interests, opinions and all the information they feel like to communicate to others; this continuous sharing of data has made possible for firms to infer potential buyers or consumers buying and information searching behaviour, therefore conceptualizing which attributes and characteristics a website or landing page should have. Moreover, this has also led to changes in the way data are collected and analysed; this kind of abundance of data, has almost substituted the need for survey research, but has also made more difficult for marketers to make sense of the data collected.

Some researchers have started to use social media, e.g. YouTube, to see how they impact in the process of personas creation; by analysing public available posts or videos, it is in fact possible to derive information like political orientation, brand affections and liking, unsatisfied needs and desires or personality traits.

Jisun, An, Kwak and Jansen (2018) have conducted a research over the validity of using social media data for creating and automatic personas building process. The main aim of their research was to prove that "real user behaviour and related demographic data concerning users of a product, service, or content can be rapidly and inexpensively collected

from variety of social platforms and analysed in order to generate personas in real time”<sup>14</sup>. They proved that through social media data, an effective marketing persona could be created, representing the actual situation of the target market, by also effectively separating different market segments.

They started by choosing a YouTube channel of a famous online media and mobile outlet company, AJ+; this firm mainly operates through social media, by sharing content of various platforms, like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and so on. The study focused all collection of data and subsequent analysis on the YouTube platforms, by using YouTube analytics APIs (Application Programming Interfaces).

For each video, they were able to collect different user data at an aggregate level, like age, gender, country location, and others; for each of these data, two metrics were considered: viewCount and viewPercentage.

Researchers first analysed the main country to which the video targeted, highlighting the percentage of female and male viewers (20.9% versus 79.1%); by doing this they were also able to show the percentage of views by age.

Subsequently, the Alchemy Taxonomy API was used to identify and differentiate between videos’ topics; each topic was ranked by the percentage of video produced and the percentage of video views.

Through this analysis, they created a real-time identification of typical personas, by demonstrating that the overall ranking for age grouping are highly correlated, but that some age differences can be denoted, proving the qualitative insight that some videos might be more appealing for specific target audience (differences are represented by bolded cells in the table below).

After defining that data generated by social media social media can help marketers in identifying specific market segments and building almost real-time personas, some advantage might be drawn from the use of

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<sup>14</sup> Jisun, An, Kwak H., Jansen B. J., (2018). Validating Social Media Data for Automatic Persona Generation. Qatar Computing Research Institute

social tools.

As a matter of fact, there are four main advantages in creating marketing personas, from the use of new digital techniques and online analytics tools:

1. the capability to gather and store a great amount of data in an automatic process, through the use of application programming interfaces (APIs),
2. a variety of data, which include not only behavioural data like those coming from surveys and interviews, but also quantitative ones, creating the ground for implementation of statistical methods,
3. scalability, thanks to the use of automatic analysis systems; marketers are able to synthesize and make sense of vast amount of data from different contents
4. fastness and almost real-time update of upcoming new data

These benefits should back up the fact that, understanding target customers is a required activity to create and design products or content of success; therefore, the process of creating personas and using observational and more technological techniques, has a recognized value.

Anyway, since Cooper introduced the idea of personas in 1999, also some critics have been devolved to this type of activity; specific problems can in fact be identified for each step of the process, from the creation, evaluation and final use of personas.

The first step, as the name suggests, refers to the creation of personas by specialists, schematizing and crystallizing the ideal consumer type and all its surrounding, ranging from age, interests, job, hobbies and so on.

The second phase is where decision makers evaluate the persona created, by measuring its value and utility; after the assessment, some changes and updates might need to be applied.

Last stage instead concerns the real use of personas as means to depict users in an ideal scenario and predict future strategies and choices.

About the creation stage, scholars like Pruitt and Grudin (2003), Vincent and Blandford (2014), and Hill (2017) criticized different aspect of the process. The main aspect pointed out by Hill is that the creation of personas requires considerable time and effort, even months; for creating an output such to be considered acceptable, lots of qualitative, quantitative and investigative analysis is required. This problem boosts another negative aspect, which is the fact that is highly probable projects for creating marketing personas are very expensive.

Other than money and time, there is also scepticism to the validity of using personas in the marketing process; this is due to the fact that, as Chapman & Milham (2006) sustained, typically they are created using small investment on qualitative interview, resulting in insufficient data. This represent one of the main bias in which marketers can run into when creating marketing personas; the other problem is that there is a probability that resulting personas are biased from personal or organizational objectives of their creators. Such problems are difficult to identify and sometimes happen unconsciously.

Moreover, scholars including Chapman & Milham (2006), Bødker at al. (2012) and Matthews et al. (2012), pointed out also some issue in the evaluation of personas as an output. Typically, personas are qualitative descriptions and, since they usually lack quantitative data support, some find them barely credible; this made some scholars define them as “narratives” instead of instruments for marketing decisions, because of the difficulty in verify the significance of the output.

Moreover, since firms have different objectives and values, some decision makers might find marketing personas not useful for their specific purpose; this is due to the fact that the information is usually selected in an arbitrary way, which sometimes may be inappropriate for the use in question.

Sometimes, also the consistency of personas is questioned; Matthews (2012) discussed the fact that personas are a combination of a variety of unrelated data collected from diverse types of analysis, which does not ensure that all are taken into consideration. Also Bødker et al.

(2012) affirm this argument, comparing personas to “Frankenstein’s monster”.

These problems increase the probability that marketers won’t trust in using personas as a method to understand their market and take strategic decisions on them. Sometimes, all the effort in creating them is wasted, since some marketers choose to not use personas, without specific explanations. On the other hand, it might happen that personas are rejected based on subjective opinions, as the pre-acquired knowledge of the manager about customers.

Another misuse of personas is when marketers create them just to find a confirmation of some preconceptions; this might conduct to misleading assumption and to loss of meaningful explanation that could have emerged instead.

The final problem in using personas is that usually consumer behaviour is not static, but as need and desires change in time, it changes accordingly; this means that, even if a persona can be specific and representative of the target audience in a certain point in time, it should always be kept updated as new trends in the buying or information finding behaviour emerge. The problem is that the process to update personas is not immediate, as its creation, so this might lead to periods of stagnation.

Figure 2.3: Table summarizing main critics to the use of marketing personas

Category	Key issues	Authors
Creation of personas	a) persona creation takes a long time b) personas are expensive to create c) personas can be biased by their creators d) personas are based on non-representative data	Pruitt and Grudin (2003); Vincent and Blandford (2014); Hill et al. (2017)
Evaluation of personas	e) personas lack credibility f) personas are not accurate or verifiable g) the information in personas is not relevant for decision makers h) personas are inconsistent	Chapman and Milham (2006); Bødker et al. (2012); Matthews et al. (2012)
Use of personas	i) not using the created personas j) using personas for politics and power play k) using personas to justify preconceptions l) personas change in time	Rönkkö et al. (2004); Rönkkö (2005); Chapman and Milham (2006)

Source: Salminen J et al., (2018) *Are Personas Done? Evaluating the usefulness of personas in the age of online analytics. Personas studies, vol.4, no.2*

Personas are not the only way to identify and represent the target audience to create marketing strategies as efficient and effective as possible, but for sure are one of the most used tools in this activity. Anyway, after having deciphered and pictured who ideal and target customers are, marketers should choose how to communicate and engage with the audience. Between a variety of content that can be produced, companies can reach and present visitors some messages, promotions and information to garner their attention and/or strengthen the existing bond; one way to do this is to design and publish ad hoc *landing pages*.

### 2.3 Landing pages: types and best practices to reach and engage the audience

After defining the general shared characteristics that the target audience have, by keeping in mind that even if during the segmentation and creation of personas marketers generalize needs and desires, people still

have some unique and unconscious instincts, for which marketers should find some feasible and effective way to communicate to those visitors' feelings.

Nowadays, firms are struggling to be on the top position of Google SERP (Search Engine Return Pages), to make their website stand out and be the first to answer customers' needs. Such objective is usually obtained by investing on SEO activities.

SEO is the acronym for Search Engine Optimization which is defined as "the process of setting up a Website so that it ranks well for particular keywords within organic search results of major search engines"<sup>15</sup>; by guaranteeing that the website is between the best 10 rankings, for example of Google, it is almost assured that visitors and potential customers will find that website between the most credible and useful to satisfy their needs.

Anyway, such best position is a double-edged sword sometimes; since the website is believed to be between the best ones, by Google, owners of the site should always provide such a content that visitors find useful and appropriate for the research they have done. If the website is not able to provide adequate and pertinent content, conversion rate will probably lower, since visitors leave the page. This might generate the problem, that the position of the Google SERP for that specific site won't be maintained.

Such a problem highlights the importance of communicating and presenting users appropriate content, which takes into consideration how they are feeling about the specific needs and, most of all, about the usability of their online experience.

As a matter of fact, people can land on a website by directly and autonomously searching on the Google search bar, or by being invited and persuaded to visit the website, by an ad.

Online ads are useful e-marketing strategies that can be implemented when companies want to communicate to a specific target audience;

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<sup>15</sup> Jones. K., (2010) Search Engine Optimization: Your visual blueprint for effective Internet marketing. Wiley Publishing, Inc

they are part of the personalized digital content messages area, which usually are highly valued by customers. These types of messages are usually based on visitors and customers' buying behaviour, needs and on those elements, pointed out in the conversion research, they like or dislike. By using this strategy of communication, companies might search for attracting customers to view new pages or product, to discover a particular and limited promotion or to increase engagement and loyalty of returning customers. All these goals contribute to the realization of one big objective, which is the increase of retention and conversion rate.

When choosing this type of communication, marketers select a specific page where to drive potential customers or visitors; this page, for the fact of having the scope to “welcome” visitors, is called *landing page*.

### *2.3.1 What is a landing page: types and characteristics*

As Ash (2012) describes, it is “any webpage on which an Internet visitor first arrives on their way to an important action that the firm want them to take on the site”.

It represents a context which transfer the users coming from a search engine page, to the firm's website; indeed, companies can select the page they found to be most appropriate for the communication and conversion objective. For this reason, landing pages can be categorized into some classes:

- Homepage
- Search transfer
- Category or product browse
- Other

The *homepage*, as Becker and others (2009) describe, is the top-level page of the defined website; the choice of using the main page as a landing page has its risks and benefits. For example, the choice of showing the homepage as the landing page of an online advertising campaign is profitable only if the brand is well-known and visitors recognize its value immediately. On the other hand, a mistake in which

inexpert and smaller advertisers can run up against, is to show the main page of the website, when customers have no clue of who the brand is and what the site is offering. No positive results or performance can come from this type of campaign, because “unless the user searched for the advertiser’s brand name, using the homepage as a landing page does not make for a strong context transfer”<sup>16</sup>.

*Search transfer* work and have a different impact; in contrast to homepages, search transfers represent pages that are search results on the website. For example, by using filters provided on the listing page of an e-commerce, visitors can be landed to a specific page showing already searched and filtered results. The efficiency of this type of landing page is directly related to the context of the advertising campaign from which consumers reached the website. The crucial aspect is relevancy between the landing page and products, services or information promoted on the ad. Because of this, the success of using search transfer type of landing page, largely depend on how carefully phrases of the online ad are chosen, to reflect the context of the landing page.

Landing page as the type of *category or product browse* instead, represents a subsection of the general website, typically a category of a product page, that is related to the topic of the online ad. Usually these pages are not immediately visible, unless users specifically search for them; normally, these types of campaign aim to promote a specific promotion on products or services, or to foster the launch of a new feature, for example.

As describe in the research “What Happens after an Ad Click? Quantifying the Impact of Landing Pages in Web Advertising” conducted by Becker et al. (2009), this type of landing pages are the most appropriate when users are searching for general or specific product information, since landing on this page would draw them near to the final step and main conversion.

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<sup>16</sup> Becker, Broder, Gabrilovich, Josifovski, Pang. (2009). What Happens after an Ad Click? Quantifying the Impact of Landing Pages in Web Advertising. Research, 2821 Mission College Blvd, Santa Clara

The last class of landing pages is the most customizable one; the class *other* represents brand-new landing pages that almost seem to be not connected with the main website, since they have a specific and unique subdomain. The peculiarity of these pages is that they do not show or display exit links, which refer to those links taking away the visitors from the main purpose of the page; for this reason, visitors are not able to reach these pages from the homepage of website, but they are not available for those that have clicked on the campaign ad. Typically, marketers decide to create this pages for the only purpose to gather some new leads or to promote and distribute specific and technical information about a product or a service offer; when designing these pages, it is also important to consider the way in which things are promoted: empathic and compelling copywriting, like “limited time offer” or “try it now” help to engage and convince users to convert.

If the choice is to create and rely on a specific landing page, there are some common best practices and errors to avoid when creating it.

### *2.3.2 Frictions and best practices: structure of the page*

One of the most common problem and key issue to discuss in creating a successful landing page, is to define what is the purpose of the page and therefore what are visitors supposed to do with it.

Because of unclear topics and objective of the landing page, sometimes visitors spend a lot of time in understanding what they can do, getting confused and frustrated by unclear call-to-actions; this is the main reason behind lots of page and website abandons.

Developing a clear and intuitive page to attract visitors’ attention and stimulate their desire toward the offer or product presented and to avoid the problem presented above, requires specific effort in creating 4 “must be” elements:

- Page headline
- Sharp action block
- Sub-headline and short paragraph
- Clear call to action

The *page headline*, both for standalone pages or one of the types described above in this chapter, must explain exactly and in few words, what is the page about. The goal of this part of copywriting is to be synthetic but at the same time engaging, in stating the purpose of the underlying information.

Beyond the headline, it should be immediately clear for the visitor where the action is to be taken; for example, using different colours and shades in the background helps to attract users' visual focus, at the same time reducing his or her mental effort. For this, each landing page should contain a well-defined action block, which Tim Ash (2010) defines as a "a place for the visitor to interact with the page. It should draw the eye toward the desired activity on the page" whereas "the rest of the page should be plain and visually restrained".

The figure 2.4 shows that usually the headline is placed in this area, which is positioned as the first element of the page.

In order to make things even more clear for visitors, marketers should produce and integrate additional content to support and activate people interest toward the page. This content can be presented in the form of a *sub-headline*, which should state and motivate people to take the action, by enhancing and presenting the value for visitors. An alternative to the sub-headline is to include a *brief paragraph* or a *list* of the main feature of the offer or product/service; this should only encourage to take the action and to discover more about it, not explain in furthered details which instead could cause the opposite effect.

The final, little but essential element in which marketers should put a lot of attention and effort, is the definition of a *clear call to action or button*. It is usually comprehended in those elements to be placed within the action block, since it is the part with which visitors will interact; for this reason, it should clearly describe what is the "next step" and what will be the content displayed after the interaction. It is a good practice to make call to action as much as specific, in order to leave little space for uncertainties. For example, buttons like "Continue", "Subscribe" or "Submit" are of little empathy and they are not related to the content;

instead, when deciding the copywriting of main CTAs of landing page, marketers must focus on the visitors point of view, by reflecting it in the button label.

Moreover, also other features of CTAs should be considered when investing in making content clear and immediate for the user; for example, also colours play an important part in influencing and attracting visitors' attention. When choosing the colour of a button, marketers must use the website dominant background as a benchmark, to choose a complementary or contrasting colour for the call to action; this make the action clear and stand out of the page. Impact of colours in choices and actions, will be discussed in chapter three.

Additionally, since the CTA represents the main action, it should be placed above the fold of the page, which is the part to which users devote the majority of their concentration.

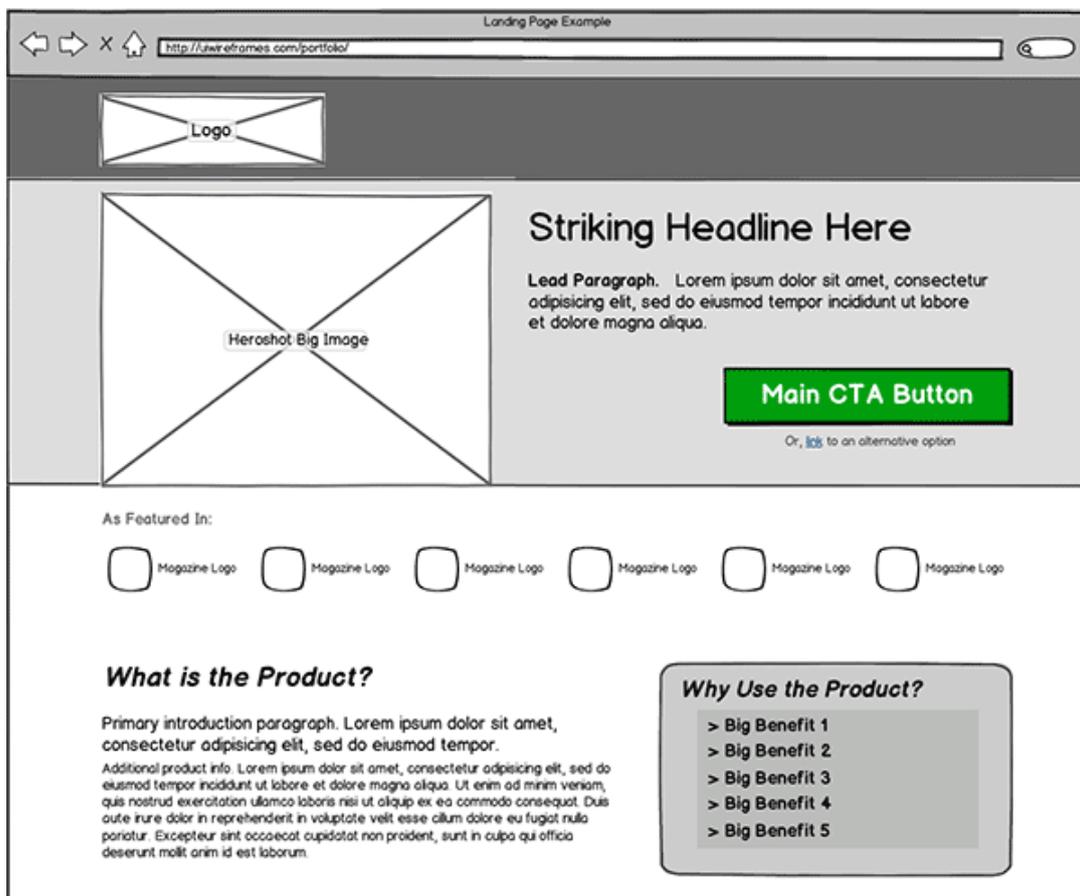


Figure 2.4: graphical wireframe of common elements in a landing page

### 2.3.3 Frictions and best practices: content and forms

Another known mistake is to presents visitors with such an amount of content that it does not represent clearness anymore, but just distraction. Distraction in fact can derive by various details, like: vast variety of choices or information, visual distraction (e.g. video and images) and outbound links.

As already stated in the first chapter, visitors are looking for time saving online experiences, where they do not need to seek and discover the information they needed between the context. Clutter and information overload are in fact common in many landing pages, especially for those promoting products; presenting visitors with too many alternatives can generate inactivity and paralysis, due to the difficulty to identify what can satisfy their needs. To avoid this problem, firms should attempt to group related choices into smaller categories and present them at the appropriate time of the funnel; if the issue is the presence of large text paragraph, then effort should be put into using lists and shortcuts to improve readability and usability (Ash, Page, Ginty, 2010).

Moreover, also images and video, which sometimes are used with the purpose to make things clearer, can instead represent an element of distraction to the main objective of the page. Many landings seem to demand for visitors' attention, due to the presence of big, contrasting images that leave little space for information which is relevant and useful for customers.

The book "Landing page optimization. The definitive guide to testing and tuning for conversions" (Ash, 2010) summarizes some of the most common errors in using graphical and visual elements in landing pages:

- *Wild background colours*; using dark or too much bright colours can distract and create a "threatening" atmosphere for visitors, who are not encouraged to continue the discovery of information
- *Garish text*; the use of big, bold and in capital letters headlines and texts reduce the readability of a landing page,

making people scroll and avoid that information. The addition of edging effects, shadows, transitions and other even worsen the situation

- *Visual embellishments and flourishes*; addition of visual embellishment, like special sections, bullet points and icons can complicate the identification of meaningful information. Sometimes icons can help to summarize and represent information, but they cannot entirely substitute content, with the sole purpose to shorten the landing page
- *Animation and video*; this refers to the misuse and abuse of animation, videos and motion on the landing page. Sliders, transition effects, video auto plays, all represent elements that can distract visitors from the action on the page. As the Nielsen & Norman Group has demonstrated, in their research on usability, image slideshows can create an effect called “banner blindness” which distract visitors from reading the information of the slider, due to the high speed of animation. Anyway, sometimes sliders are helpful because they allow to show multiple products in the same space, but in this case the transition should be controlled by visitors

Since sometimes landing pages are created with the scope of gathering information about users, the problem is in this case represented by the number of information asked in the form and the motivation to fill it out.

Number of fields and type of data asked in the form might be one of the biggest blocks to conversion; as Godin (2007)<sup>17</sup> sustains, visitors are in control of the interaction and of the information to enter in the landing page form. If visitors believe that an information, like the telephone number, is not appropriate and there is no such motivation or reason to insert it, they won't provide it. In terms of conversions, visitors will abandon the landing page, not fulfilling the objective for which it has

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<sup>17</sup> Godin S., (2007). “Permission marketing: turning strangers into friends and friends into customers”. Simon & Schuster

been created.

Researchers as Ash (2010) have outlined some usability best practices to improve form appearance and to communicate clearly “why” data requested are necessary; first, by looking at a form, it can almost be compared to an independent landing page: it has a title, additional information in support, blocks, a CTA and other information. To improve clarity and usability, the title is the starting point; the purpose of the form in the landing page should be stated from the title. What motivates people to fill it is a concise presentation, in the title and information below, of the main benefits they will get as a reward for the effort required to complete the form.

Moreover, also field labels represent meaningful and impacting elements on the motivation of visitors to give information; not all visitors might be expert in online navigation, so all labels should be as descriptive as possible.

Giving examples of the input, e.g. mail@gmail.com, can visually and logically help visitors and reduce the probability of committing errors. Last best practice is to explain the reason and the use it will be made of the data requested and eliminate all optional fields; people usually are more motivated to provide an information if the scope it is specified. For example, if the telephone number is mandatory, it should be explained that it is needed to recontact users to give them additional information; usually this is done by adding a little text near the reference field.

As said early, complexity of forms is one of the major elements increasing the percentage of landing page exits; as Ash (2012) highlights “the most important part of form creation is minimizing the number and complexity of form input fields”. This proves that unnecessary data, asked usually to gather the most out of the form, should be removed, leaving only the minimum information required to complete the form purpose.

To summarize, forms in order to be an effective tool to reach and engage the audience, should:

- Ask and comprehend only necessary fields

- Not be too long or complex; using a field logical order and avoid repetition are also best practices
- Be transparent about the purpose and the employment of data

Other problems regarding the use and creation of landing page might be identified, each usually strictly correlated to the purpose for which it has been created. Nonetheless, besides errors, other aspects might affect the perception and therefore the efficiency to reach and communicate with the audience.

By a study conducted in Canada, it has been found that users create and develop their initial impression over the landing page or website in the first 50 milliseconds, from the appearance of the page.<sup>18</sup> This initial impression proved to impact on emotions and feeling about the page, affecting also conversions; beside of the content, it is so proven that general appearance and other elements should be created thoughtfully, since they represent emotional triggers to boost conversions.

## **2.4 Optimization and testing**

The success of a landing page or website does not depend entirely on the developer and manager skills on promoting and creating the context to foster products or services; in fact, visitors need to be involved and considered, not only in the actual buying process, but even more in the optimization steps.

Businesses in general give a lot of attention to the design of website of landing page, since the first impact that it generates to customers, becomes the benchmark for all the subsequent online visits. Due to the necessity to understand how visitors evaluate and what they think of the graphical appearance of the page, firm started to used testing processes, like A/B testing techniques.

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<sup>18</sup> Gofman A., Moskowitz H.R., Mets T., (2009). "Integrating science into web design: consumer-driven web site optimization", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 26 Issue: 4, pp.286-298

Inventors of this technique, Dixon, Enos and Brodmerkle (2005) defines it as the process of “selecting one of at least two different versions of the webpage to be displayed to a user through an interactive user interface (e.g. web browser)”. This type of technique allows to know what is the content and design of the page that performs the best, based on customers’ view; however, even if this is an effective and less time-consuming technique, does not provide qualitative strong insights. In fact, A/B testing optimization processes give marketers the answer of what is the best design, and which one will convert best, but not a clear identification of which elements made the page better and what emotions it triggeres to customers.

Another limit of A/B testing is that the evaluation of responses is just an intuitive process of looking at responses of customers, but no rules are applied; as a matter of fact, A/B split tests only considers two versions of the same page, A and B, which is already a limited set of options. From these two alternatives, visitors select the “best” one, but probably that design is not the most efficient and optimized one. Traditional testing techniques, like A/B test, does not consider the evaluation of multiple options, conducting to unstable and non-representative results; Gofman and Moskowitz (2009) pointed out the presence of some advanced LPO or Landing Page Optimization method, which is the MVLPO or Multivariate Landing Page Optimization technique. It is a difference type of optimization in the sense that it involves not only two versions of the page, but multiple prototypes of it, ranging from hundreds to thousands.

#### *2.4.1 The Multivariate Landing Page Optimization technique*

As the authors describe, a typical multivariate optimization process consists in the creation of multiple design variations of a landing page, which are submitted to different groups of customers in order to study their reaction and navigation behaviour. The one which obtains the best results, in term of conversions, will be the chosen design of the landing; the analysis typically comprehend statistical methods to obtain a meaningful result, usually conjoint analysis which refers to “a class of

research and analytic procedures that estimate the contribution of individual elements or components from respondent reactions to the entire mixture or total concept”<sup>19</sup>.

Anyway, statistical and hypothesis type of optimization processes help only partially in the development of an emphatic and successful design; the main problem behind these techniques is that marketers are not able to understand what the core values and emotions behind customers’ specific choices and behaviour are. Since almost every action and purchase people take online is mainly guided by some intrinsic decision, analysis on this should be conducted to guide in the creation of a communicative and engaging design.

Specifically for this purpose, a German research centre, Gruppe Nymphenburg, more precisely Dr. Häusel (2011), developed a tactical guide and action model to identify the emotion system in customers’ head, the interaction it has with the brain and the impact that interactions have on the online behaviour, called the *Limbic map*.

#### *2.4.2 Definition and characteristics of the Limbic map*

This model is a cross-field study, linking different type of subjects from motivational and emotional psychology, to neurobiology and personality; when developing this model, the researcher based his theory on two important foundations: the dominance of the unconscious and the dominance of emotions.

Dr. Häusel sustains that almost 80% of the decisions are made unconsciously, and adopts the idea brought forth by a theory developed by Bargh (2009) known as the Unconscious Behavioural Guidance System. This proves that the unconscious can be a good evaluation and control system to guide and influence customers life, by linking and comparing past experiences to the current situation.

Moreover, the Limbic map adopts mainly a biologically oriented concept of emotions, meaning that it believes that motivators inducing

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<sup>19</sup> Gofman A., Moskowitz H.R., Mets T., (2009) "Integrating science into web design: consumer-driven web site optimization", Journal of Consumer Marketing, Vol. 26 Issue: 4, pp.286-298

to take an action, are emotions, and that there is a biological goal behind the emotional systems as a whole <sup>20</sup>. By using the term biological goal, the researcher means that emotions must safeguard people survival and propagation, fulfilling six specific tasks:

- Motivation
- Action
- Evaluation
- Regulation
- Preparation
- Social communication and synchronization

As it has been widely acknowledged, emotions represent the main triggers and motives for human actions, pushing people to act and select things based on some intrinsic mental objective. However, in every human brain, a variety of emotional systems coexists, each with a specific subset of objectives; therefore, the one which drives humans' action is currently the predominant one. The presence of this predominance determines also the entity and the type of action in the online environment. The presence of emotional systems allows also humans to evaluate the significance of the action, enabling to identify the utility and efficiency derived from it; additionally, emotions are also used by our brain as a benchmark to measure the congruence with the action taken and the main objective of the emotional system. The task of preparation is the most difficult to delineate, since it is usually more subjective than the other; it refers to the fact that, when brain and emotions perceive the gathered information as unnecessary or not useful for the objective accomplishment, then a psychological adaptation of emotions toward that action happen. This means that, due to the development of negative or passive emotions to that action and information, the brain "prepares" itself, making other emotions prevail to trigger subsequent different actions. The last task, refers to the fact that emotions are necessary for the psychological survival of humans, inducing them to communicate; through this communication, emotional

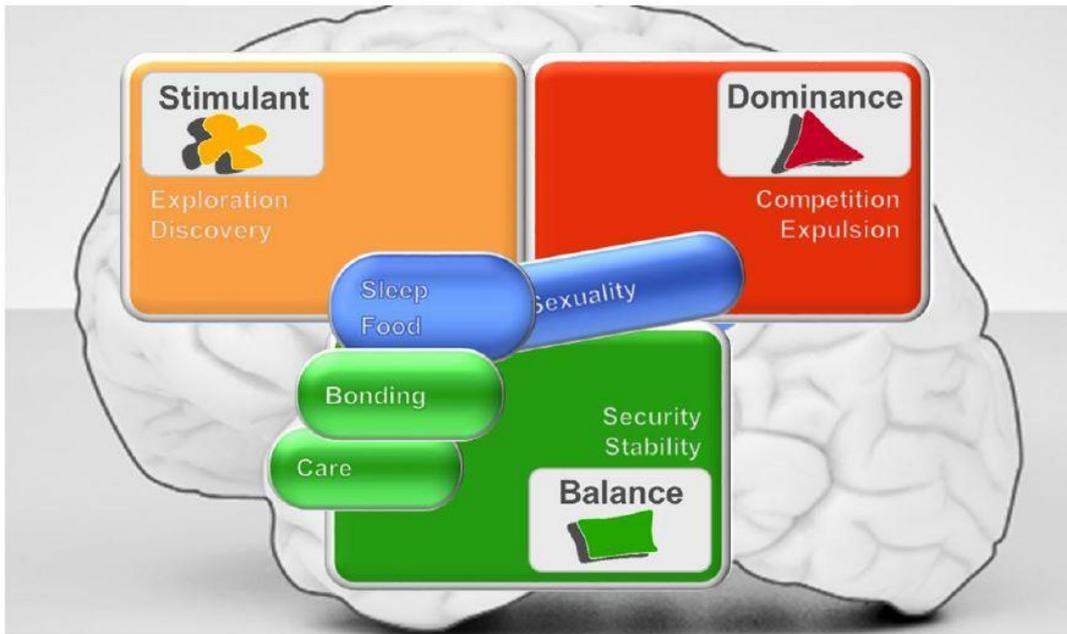
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<sup>20</sup> Häusel H.G., (2011). "The scientific foundation of the Limbic® approach". Gruppe Nymphenburg

objectives are synchronized by understanding intentions and signals, inducing people to influence and collaborate with others.

Taking these basic theoretical tasks of emotions as a basis, the Limbic map assumes that the human brain has three major emotional systems, shown in the figure below:

Figure 2.5: The Limbic map emotional systems



Source: Häusel H.G., (2011). “The scientific foundation of the Limbic® approach”. Gruppe Nymphenburg

The *stimulation system* regards all those activities triggered which aim to the discovery of new thing and radical new skills to learn; it is that system that include all those emotions that make people grow, from children to adult. Element of online pages including novelty, change, surprise and excitement will trigger this system.

The *dominance system* instead has the main focus on those objectives aiming to confirm and reinforce a specific status or position; usually is includes objectives like self-assertion, competition, power, autonomy, etc. Pages selling products or information which are connected with a specific status in the society, will trigger this system; people whose actions are influenced by this system, are going to avoid pages and websites which include elements communicating anger and powerlessness.

The *balance system* has a dual composition; this system in fact might be triggered both by secured related triggers like friendship, loyalty and harmony, or by negative ones like anxiety and fear. Its main objectives are related to risk avoidance and stability, which means that visitors which have this system as dominant, will appreciate reassuring and credibility elements in the page.

The Limbic map presents three main emotional systems as communicating parts, which are also surrounded by other minor systems; the interconnection between them generates different dynamics and conflict. For instance, the stimulation and dominance systems push emotions and therefore actions which are more risk oriented but, on the other hand, this behaviour is counterbalanced by the presence of the balance system. The presence of this bipolarity in the Limbic map, reflects the separation of our brain into two dynamics: avoidance and approach. Researchers like Carver (2009) explain that, based on the objectives which are proposed to them, which can be to avoid risks or to aim to a major objective, people respond differently to a specific task; therefore, some people might be more inclined to risk than other. Is the interaction between the systems which determines the behaviour that visitors will adopt; the Limbic map shows that prevalence of dominance and stimulation systems determines the preference for approach dynamics, whereas balance system mainly determines the avoidance for any action which contains risks.

The Limbic map constitutes a useful tool for the optimization of pages, since it identifies and presents customers' motives, from which visitors' types can be inferred.

In his paper, Häusel (2012) defines motives as “the actualization of the emotional systems in the concrete life context, or, transferred to consumption, in specific product categories”. They are represented by those desires and expectation that people nurture from a product, information or person with which they are interacting; these are the basic emotional foundation for the objective that are contemplated in the emotional system. Motives can also be separated in self-centered

and social one; the first type refer to the individualistic expectation of people's benefits from buying a product or service. The other type reflects the recognition that products and services sometimes as used as a tool to communicate a particular status.

Through the identification of motives and using the Limbic map to identify what emotions people associated to a specific page, it is possible to understand the "customers' type", which helps to determine which emotions and elements should the page trigger and contain, to improve the general conversion rate of the page.

The six types are presented in a document resulting from a research conducted by Thiollier and Häusel (2009), which are:

- Harmonizers
- Traditionalists
- Open-minded
- Disciplined
- Hedonists
- Performers
- Adventurers

Each type has a specific connection with the emotional systems of the Limbic map; *harmonizers* are usually more motivated by brand which communicate positive emotions and credibility, which are usually connected with the zone lower left zone between the balance and stimulant systems. *Traditionalists* are customers which, as for harmonizers, usually avoid risks and do not choose new things; since they are triggered by trust and safety, they are positioned in the lower right balance system zone. At the opposite there are *open-minded* which instead are always searching for latest and trending products or services; since they are attracted and excited by novelty, they are linked with the stimulation system. *Disciplined* are customers' type which show some similarities with traditionalists, but they do not give such importance to known products; what attracts them is the ease of use and proof of quality. Customers that are between the stimulant and dominance system are called *hedonists*; these are customers that search

for expensive and high-quality products, which are usually purchased through impulsive shopping. The only type of customers which value most rational choices than emotional ones, is the *performer*; usually triggers for this type are represented by famous brands and exclusivity, able to respond to their desire to be ambitious and assertive, for which reason are associated with the dominance system. The last category is represented by *adventurers*, which researches present as a niche; as for performers, they pursue objectives contemplated in the dominance system, like leadership, risk, power, fashion and so on. Motives pushing these people to complete the purchase are represented by elements showing added value and confirming the high quality of product or service's attributes.

When trying to create an empathic design or to find out what are the elements and emotions people associate to them, the use of the Limbic map can help to look beyond the visual and obvious design only. It also constitutes a psychological technique to define the target customers, which differs from the qualitative and quantitative ones; due to this, it should be added as an additional research step in the conversion research defined in the previous chapter.

The image below shows the final appearance of the Limbic map, including also customers' types: inside are placed all the value that customers might associate to a specific page; to these values is attached a specific emotion, which is the reason for which they have a defined and fixed position in the map.

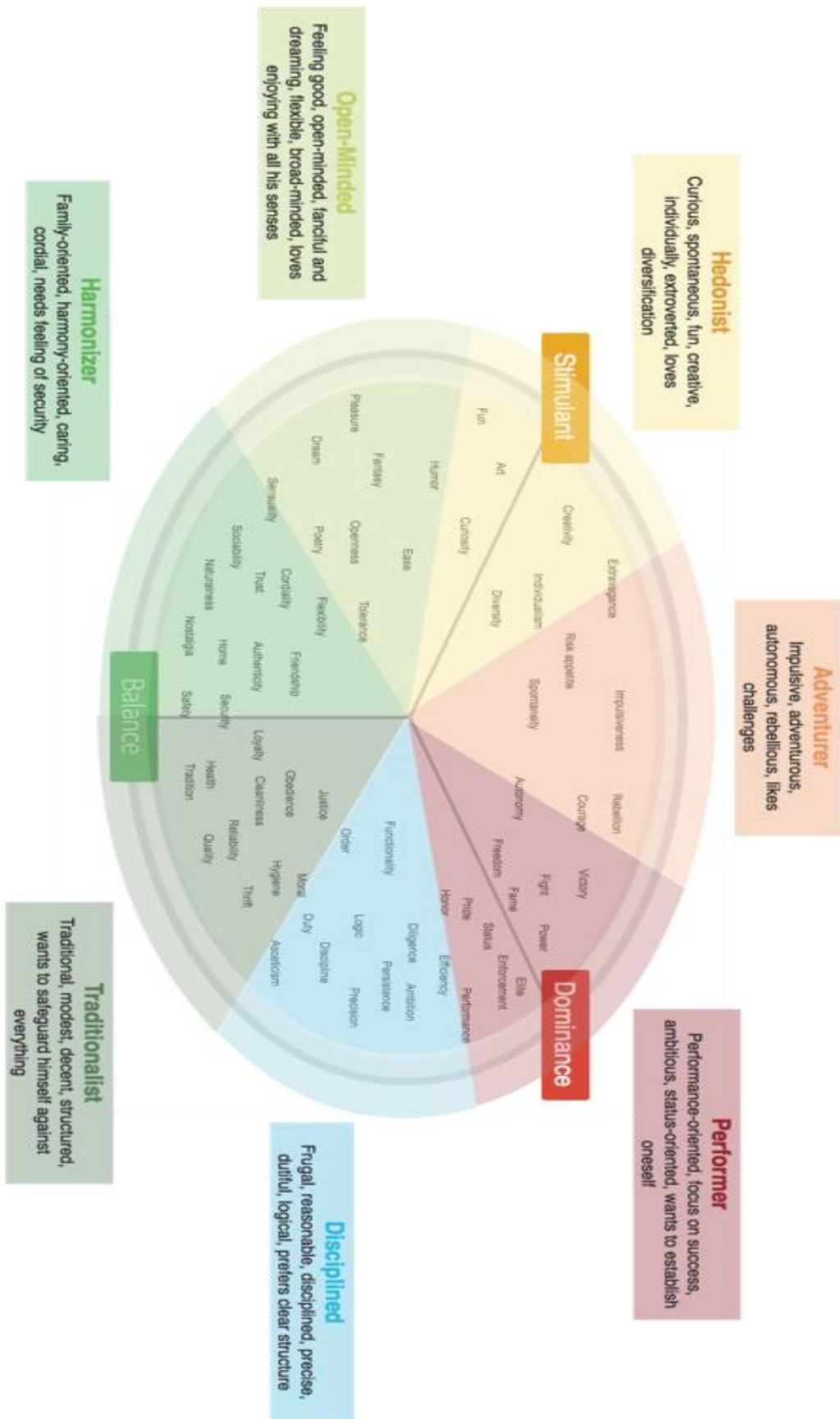


Figure 2.6. The representation of the complete Limbic map

As highlighted by these researches and by also remarking the importance of understanding and listening to visitors' needs, emotions have proven to be an essential element to consider when testing and creating the design and content of a page or a website. The next chapter will be devoted to understanding the elements of online pages that can trigger emotions and motives for users and what can be done to make them engage and psychologically attracted.

### **3. How and what online page elements control and trigger psychological and emotional mechanisms**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Emotions having a great influence on customers' choices and actions can propose firms with hard challenges, but also the possibility to gain massive competitive advantages.

In fact, great opportunities can come from the ability to control and evoke emotions by working on online page elements, appearance and contents.

In the end, firm with the ability to fulfil emotional needs of prospects or returning customers, will draw out possible positive effects on conversions for firms and increased satisfaction for customers. There are scholars sustaining this theory and one of the first one introducing this concept was Maslow in 1943, in his paper "The theory of human behaviour". In his model, he pointed out the importance of considering emotional needs in the buying behaviour of humans, by developing a pyramid picturing and categorizing all human needs, from the physiological to the self-actualization one. This kind of model has become one of the most famous cornerstones in different study fields, including the one of conversion optimization.

By taking his theory as starting point, firms can work on those emotional needs in the hierarchy, by introducing specific emotional triggers; these elements are represented by specific component of the landing page, ranging from images, copywriting, colours and so on, which will be discussed in the third part of this chapter.

In order to create and understand what potential elements could be best suited to trigger a particular emotion of visitors, it needs to be understood the concept of emotional design. This topic is explained for example by Norman (2004) in his book "Emotional design: why we love (or hate) everyday things". Basically, he describes the human brain as composed of three main parts that allow people to interpret, retain and act in different ways: the visceral, behavioural and reflective levels. Each one of these levels play at different stages and have different roles

in the actual, final choice; due to this, each part of our brain processes distinct feature of design. Therefore, elements of a landing page should be designed in order to present a style which satisfy all the “requirements” of the level of visitors’ brain.

Nevertheless, there are other effects that matter and influence how people perceive and then choose to act; as briefly outlined in the previous chapters, also people’s first impression over the specific page impact on their subsequent attitude toward the content and therefore, the brand of products or services presented.

In this chapter, detail over the field of emotional design will be discussed and introduced, also understanding why firms should care and take tests to find out customers’ first impressions. Moreover, the chapter will summarize how some elements and features of landing pages can influence and trigger emotions, possibly affecting first impressions and feelings. The table below summarizes the information in the chapter and the interplay between them.

### **Emotional design (Norman et al. 2004)**

- Three level of processing influence the perception and action people have over specific information and design, therefore...

### **Use of visual and design element to trigger emotions**

- Scholars like Linaard et al. (2006) proved that website aesthetics influence users' first impressions; colors and images help to trigger specific emotions. Attention to visual complexity and clutter

### **How to design for humans**

- Besides visuality, also copywriting matters (Teodorescu and Vasile (2015) et al.) which should speak to customers, considering their needs to trigger psychological effects (Maslow's hierarchy of needs)

### **3.2 Emotional design background and online layout**

As Norman (2004) presents in his book cited before, emotional design is a compound “art”, with which designer aim to create products or, in recent years, online pages that evoke the wished emotions, nevertheless generating a positive shopping or online experience. To reach this specific purpose, designer spend much of their effort in creating a context that connects and triggers the three previous mentioned brain levels: visceral, behavioural and reflective.

The succeeding design should be the one which establishes a connection with those levels, as well as that considering the emotional side of visitors’ evaluation and choice.

The three levels of processing are described as an approximation to the much more complex world of cognitive and emotional processing, but they constitute a good representation for designers to understand how to structure products and online pages design.

#### *3.2.1 Levels of processing*

The first level is represented by the *visceral processing*; Norman associated it with the general opinion that people have toward the appearance of a product. This type of first evaluation is common and usually equal to all people since it refers to the earliest judgment about the surrounding environment, dividing it in what is good or bad.

The visceral level is the most subconscious of all stages, but as it could be thought, it does not reside on past behaviours or choices; instead, as Norman at al. (2004) indicates, it is “perceptually-induced”, basically identical for each individual, like an subconscious mechanisms coming from the primordial instinct of animals to survive to unpredictable and possibly dangerous environments.

Due to this feature, typically emotions at this stage are really basic, since people just evaluate the state of the art as it is; generally, aspects of design that help to get a positive feedback from this level of processing concern only style. Subsequently, designers should give adequate attention to the appearance they wish to attribute to the online

page; at this stage, human brain care little about usability, effectivity or understandability, but only visual aesthetics features; therefore, landing pages as products' designers should play with "aesthetic sensibilities to drive visceral responses"<sup>21</sup>.

Such concern for visual aspects fuels the need for application of testing techniques, like five-seconds test, where meaningful insights can be obtained by visitors' opinions and impressions. The second part of this chapter will better explain why first impressions matter, confirming the importance of this type of analysis.

The second subconscious level at which basic emotions emerge, is the *behavioural processing*.

As for the first level, people still analyse and act based on subconscious patterns, but what changes at this level is the background influencing them. In fact, this is the stage at which past and learned skills govern the actual analysis and behaviour of people; in taking the action, only those appropriate past choices and routines are applied, which refers to the one that match the situation visitors are facing. For this reason, behavioural processing is still subconscious, since everything is path-dependent and influenced by previous learned thing, but often people are unaware of that effect.

At this level, people have no time and capacity for conscious control of actions and emotions; another aspect which is important to consider is that, given specific emotions and actions, people form sort of expectations toward that. Consequently, designers should take into account all the positive or negative affective responses of visitors; indeed, these represents the primary identifiable emotions toward the proposed environment.

Typically these expectations are associated and influences by success of the action and the perceived control over it; for this reason, people having a positive online experience on a page, will form also positive expectations, or "positive valence" as called from Norman (2013), and vice versa. All behavioural responses of visitors are also called

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<sup>21</sup> Norman D., (2013). The design of everyday things. Basic Books, Inc. New York, NY, USA

“expectation-induced”.

As demonstration that the visual aspect of an online page matter on expectations and opinions of visitors, a study conducted by Fogg et al. (2002) over how people evaluate a website’s credibility, can give meaningful insights.

They analysed and proposed to visitors different websites categories, from e-commerce to health and travel sites, and asked people to comment what elements convinced them about the credibility of the website. By analysing the comments, 46% of the overall 2400 responses, contained the topic “Design look”.

The visual design of the pages therefore has proven to influence the way people perceived a specific product or service, and comments contained evaluation of different elements from layout, colours, images, white spaces, copywriting and typography and so on. Confirming the point of view of Norman, comments included both positive and negative expectations of the websites; specifically, design turned out to be the first element visitors looked at, when assessing the credibility, especially for finance and travel branches.

Concluding the process of human processing is the *reflective level*; this is the unique step at which visitors are conscious and in control of their choices. As it is the final step, after people have unconsciously been influenced by their emotions, it is usually slower and more complex than the other two.

People are actually considering all the possible alternatives and consequences of making the choice and due to this complexity, it is precisely here that lot of emotions enter in play. Even if it confirmed that this level is the most rational one, the fact of assessing possible outcomes and effects produces “emotions that incorporate a sense of feeling derived from the affective components from the visceral and behavioural levels, along with a conscious interpretation of that feeling”<sup>22</sup>.

Furthermore, the reflective level is also influenced by culture and social

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<sup>22</sup> Norman D., Ortony A., (2003). Designers and users: two perspectives on emotion and design. “Foundations of Interaction Design” at the Interaction Design Institute

groups; demonstrating this theory, a research over how cultural differences impacted emotional responses to online environment has been conducted. Davis, Wang and Lindridge (2007), proposed to two different sample of people – Americans and Chinese students – to evaluate two different online stores, to see how their behaviour changed. The aim was to highlight and prove the presence of differences of emotional responses across collectivist and individualist cultural value systems.

The two websites differed in the presence of both high and low tasks cues, whereas one has only high signs; for example, one website had background colours and the other did not, or presence of animated icons or only texts, signal of secure connections versus not, and so on.

The results of the analysis show that website with basic and low cues had positive influence over the Americans' emotional reactions, whereas for Chinese visitors did not. The evaluation of different elements showed the emergence of various emotions, from pleasure to arousal, but the entity and the impact they had on the entire website, varied because of the cultural differences.

Therefore, since the reflective level is influenced by social and demographic features and largely depend on people understandings, it is also called “intellectually-induced”.

### *3.2.2 Interplay between actions and level of processing*

The system of processing can also be better understood by associating it with the seven staging of action process also outlined by Norman et al. (2013).

The seven stages are represented by distinct actions that a person makes to achieve a particular goal; they are:

- *Goal*: the person forms the goal
- Three for the execution of actions: *plan, specify and perform*
- And last three for the evaluation of taken actions: *perceive, interpret and compare*

The actions taken to execute and reach the purposed goal, and then evaluation of the general outcome, can start in two different ways: the

first case could be when a person defines a new goal and therefore the process starts from the top and continues with the three stages of execution. In this case it is called goal-driven behaviour.

On the other hand, the cycle can possibly start from the bottom, which means an event that has happened in the environment people are living in, triggers a specific action and therefore purpose. In this case the cycle is event-driven, and it continues with the three steps of evaluation.

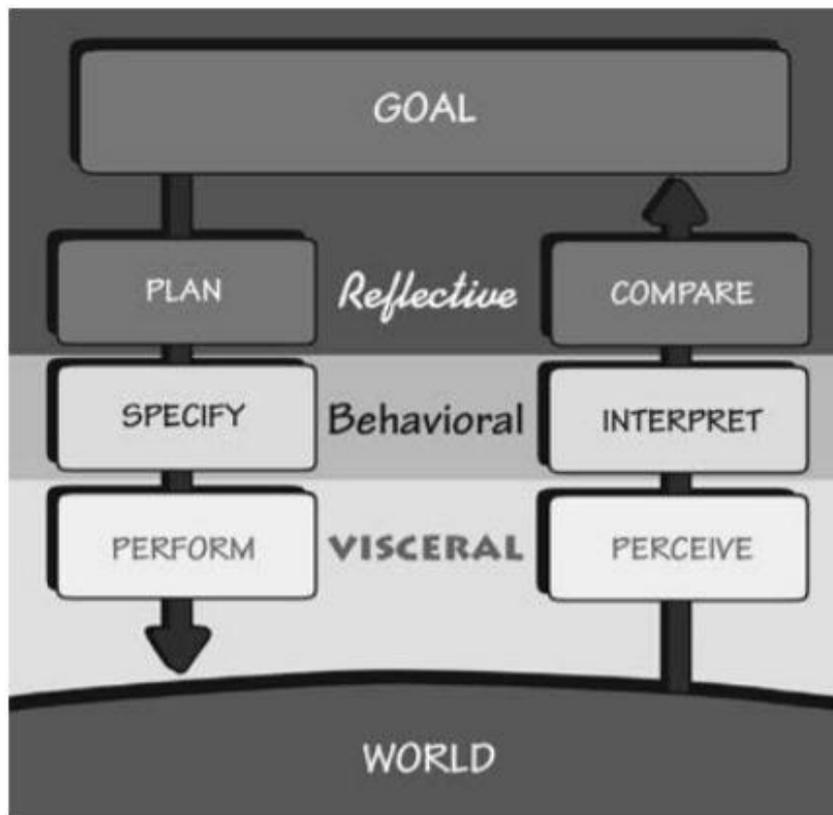
As shown in the *figure 3.1*, to each step of the seven stages of action process, a specific level of processing can be connected. At the lowest level, where people can be at the stage of performing a specific action or perceiving the state of environment, the visceral level enters in play. These stages usually involve emotions as anxiety or calmness, which are controlled by the visceral response of visitors, by simply assessing the “external” part of actions and effects.

In the middle part of the figure, Norman puts the behavioural level; at this stage the visitor is usually interpreting the perception he had or specifying the action he wishes to take. These actions are usually driven and include basic expectations, both from the execution side and giving rise to specific emotions, when the expectation has been confirmed.

The last part of the process presents the initial part of the planning of action stage and the final comparison of the outcome with the goal; at this level, the visitor usually is going through a reflecting processing, involving complex emotions like satisfaction or anger and fear.

This kind of process help to understand the kind of emotions, but also their entity, the visitors are going through when taking specific actions; sometimes users might not experience all the stages presented in this process, but when it is the case, it might be a very complex flow.

Figure 3.1. Level of processes and the stages of the action cycle



Source: Norman D., (2013). *The design of everyday things*. Page 56

### 3.2.3 Facilitating visitors' focus and action process

Role of designers, particularly UX designers for landing pages, is to reduce the complexity that visitors face in the overall online experience; the final aim should be to let people focus on the meaningful elements contributing to their positive emotional state and satisfaction. Usually, the most relevant elements are those presented in the second chapter when defining the main composing elements of a landing page: the headline or value proposition, the description and value of product or service and, most important, the final button or call to action.

There are some principles that can be followed and applied in order to guide and gain visitors' focus on the page, which include: *persuasion* and *facilitation*.

As Brian Cugelman explained in his workshop "Psychology for digital behavioural change" in 2019, persuasion requires the sending of a message and the use of all the available techniques to help the user to understand the offer, motivate to act, simplify the process of choice and

reassurance in the ease of use of the process. This can be divided into four subsets that contribute to facilitate, boost and motivate comprehension and interaction:

- Education
- Motivation
- Suggestion
- Reassurance

Designers in creating an online page should provide the content that not only conceptualize the product or the service, but also that influences visitors' perceptions by educating them; one way is to present detailed information, including as much features and specifics of the offer. If users are not provided with the adequate amount of data to conceptualize the product or service proposed, no emotions are likely to emerge, leading to low level of motivation.

*Educational content* is one of the elements to facilitate the process of recognition for users and if it not adequately managed, low value will be assigned to that page or website, which in turn will affect future experiences – like in the behavioural processing.

As highlighted in the previous paragraphs, emotions are somehow the fundamental engine of almost 95% of customers' actions; it is therefore useful for designers to include evident benefit statements and value proposition that speak to two broad emotions that may motivate people to act: *incentive* and *loss aversion*.

The first refers to those contents that communicate to visitors the general gain they will get in taking that specific action; this is commonly done through the value proposition, where audience are presented the general benefit, which motivates a specific behaviour. On the other hand, loss aversion plays on scarcity and urgency; it works at the exact opposite of incentive but aims to reach the same goal. This type of content communicate what visitors will lose if they do not perform that action; usually these contents also include specific deadlines or validity periods.

Another element which designer can use to ease the navigation for visitors, is to work on choice architecture; this means that, by organizing options with the objective to make some alternatives more appealing than others, visitors are *suggested* and guided to choose the best and most attractive alternative – which is also the best in term of benefits for users and firms.

Designers must also consider that some choices include the perception of risk for customers, which can range from low to high; it is therefore necessary to present adequate evidence and information to reduce that risk, playing on competitors' comparisons, credibility and endorsement from third sources, quality images, and so on.

Last, but usually the aspect which has the greatest impact on facilitating the action process, is *reassurance*; the most difficult part on the action process is the evaluation of the credibility of the source and information. Designers and marketers should propose visitors, not only their point of view, but also the confirmation that what is presented is credible and can possibly be the optimal solution for their problem. For example, customers' reviews are one of the elements that can reduce uncertainty and feeling of insecurity; anyway, sometimes the excess of assurances in online pages can have the opposite effect by making visitors suspicious of the truthfulness of the information.

Additional elements and techniques can be used to propose users the best and easiest navigation; for example, designers can also guide visitors toward the steps or the action they should make in the page. One way to do this is to create and propose a clear labelling system, both for content, forms and CTAs or to include in the page visual and graphical elements that direct and inform visitors of the path they should follow.

As the importance and impact of design and content of online pages has proven to matter on impression of users and subsequently, on their action process, designer and marketers should also understand how the page is performing. Research is not only useful in deciding how to construct a webpage, but also after the creation of it.

The next paragraph will discuss about the usefulness in performing first impression tests to understand users' impressions, to question online pages' usability, appeal, trust, reliability and aesthetical factors.

### **3.3 Emotions and users' first impression of landing pages**

The aesthetic and appeal of a landing page does not only make things clearer to facilitate and suggest visitors during the navigation, but has also a strong role to play in how users evaluate the subsequent content proposed.

In the first chapter it was mentioned that usability is a serious and undeniable important feature that a website should contemplate, since it affects the overall conversion funnel. Anyway, studies have proven that sometimes users can overlook usability problems and frictions during the navigation, just because they had a positive impression over the visual appeal of the online page. In fact, Lindgaard and Dudek (2002) conducted a study to explore the impact of aesthetic appearance of website and their usability; what they found out was that, given a visually appealing website, people had a positive impression about the overall navigation, even if some of them could not complete all the tasks.

This discovery allowed to determine that the visual first impact completely distracted and draw the attention of visitors out to usability problems.

Meaningful insights can be obtained from this research: first, it has been shown that the first elements which customers evaluate is the design and aesthetics, confirming the importance of spending effort in creating it. Second, the first evaluation and impression have an impact on the evaluation of the rest of the element, which can be both positive or negative; third, the first value that visitors attribute to the webpage can condition the emotional evaluation of the navigation.

Additionally, also Wu et al (2012) citing Hong et al. (2004) confirmed this point of view, by stating that “a website design that is more

conducive to users' tasks will generate more positive attitude among users and increase their willingness to revisit the website".<sup>23</sup>

Such important role of design must therefore be tested, to understand how customers' attitude toward the landing page or website will be. The main representatives of this field, in understanding users' first impression, whose research gave rise to numerous studies over this topic, seem to be Lindgaard et al. (2006). In his research, he and other authors, were able to demonstrate that people form a first stable judgment about a website screenshot, in just 50 milliseconds, and that such evaluation is stable during the subsequent navigation.

In this few amount of time, visitors evaluated the site generally, just looking at the general information or elements provided in the first part of the page; anyway, even if it can be obvious that the main impression is influenced by visual aspect, it is difficult to understand what might be attractive and a "beautiful" aesthetic for visitors, since it a very subjective evaluation.

Defining what beauty and aesthetics is, can result in a complex and almost useless activity, since the two can be overlapped; it is not clear, during the navigation, what visitors might be considering, if it is the general property of the object or if it is based on his/her emotional reasoning and experiences over the sense of beauty.

Moreover, not only first impression depends on aesthetic variables, but such visual evaluation is in turn also influenced by the visual complexity of the online page, and has subsequent impact on the overall impression.

### *3.3.1 Visual complexity and aesthetic*

Complexity is a topic which still show complexity in founding a common definition; as defined by Xing and Manning (2005), usually it is a concept that has sense only if it is referred and put in relation with a certain object. In the research, they give and present many definitions

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<sup>23</sup> Wann-Yih Wu, Chia-Ling Lee, Chen-Su Fu, Hong-Chun Wang, (2013) "How can online store layout design and atmosphere influence consumer shopping intention on a website?", International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, Vol. 42 Issue: 1, pp.4-24. Page 5

which come from different fields of activity, but also point out that all show three main aspects in common:

- Coherence, which refers to the numeric size of elements in the page
- Chaos, which refers to the variety of elements
- Gap, between the two which allows to make the structure identifiable

In the research of Tuch et al. (2012), they pointed out that there are many different studies which show that visual complexity of online pages influences the general aesthetic perception of visitors. They cited the study of Geisslet et al. (2006), which reported that “web pages of moderate complexity facilitate communication effectiveness and lead to more favourable consumer responses”. This type of effects has been also supported by the discovery that complexity can positively or negatively trigger specific users’ intentions and attitudes toward the general content of the page.

Another study conducted by Michailidou et al. (2008) on this field, mainly focused on visual complexity considering specific webpages elements, like images, text, tables, links and other.

The authors defined complexity as “the degree of difficulty in providing a verbal description of an image”; difficulties in the identification of single parts and the presence of clutter are, for example, representation of visual complexity. More specifically, if we refer to a specific landing page, visual complexity can be represented by the presence of diverse and not interconnected objects, information clutter and disorganization, coherence and symmetry between elements, but also the presence of a variety of colour, in particular those with no existing correlation.

Also the presence of an exaggerate amount of information, presented in the form of text, can represent a form of visual complexity for visitors, by creating information overload, affecting the general first impression of the page.

By looking at the results of the research conducted by Michailidou et al. (2008), a positive correlation between visual complexity and

aesthetics factors can be delineated; in fact, respondents were asked to rank different pages, giving a vote from 1 to 10. From the answers, a visually simple page has been described in two way, with two different designs:

1. Page with pale colours and clean space, where visitors were easily able to find the information they were searching for; space occupied by information was small, covering a narrow screen area. Moreover, one of the preferred designs had few links and images, introducing less confusion and disorientation
2. Other visitors described a visual simple page as one where information, images and other elements are well organized, presenting objects concerning a specific subject – different topics were not appreciated – making the specific purpose of the page easy to be understood and identified.

Likewise, from the results, also a description of what represents a visually complex page could be recapped; they referred at it as a page which presented too much information and categories of products or services, presenting different sizes and shapes. Moreover, the presence of great number of images, colours, buttons and animations was not appreciated; instead, visitors found those pages as full of elements of distraction, making them unable to understand the generic purpose and what they could do on that page.

These results confirmed that a direct correlation between complexity and visual elements exists and that more complex designs receive low appreciation, in terms of beauty and purpose, whereas less complex pages resulted in a general more favourable first impression. As said before, also colours and images might have significant impact on users' first impressions, since it exists a correlation between the colour and the emotion it could arise during the navigation of a specific landing or general webpage.

### 3.3.2 Colours and emotions

As Bonnardel et al. (2010) write, emotions are directly related to the choice of colours, which has been proven to influence users' feeling and reactions toward a specific content or product.

By looking at researches in the field, they found out that, even if there is a lack of precise theoretical rational insights to measure the how exactly colours impact on feelings, it is confirmed that choice of colours has a strong "influence on individual's feelings, attention, judgements and decisions – such as shopping intentions or perceived usability".

More specifically, for website pages, what matters for users is that all elements, especially content and colours, must create and communicate *balance*. When visitors perceive the presence of an equilibrium between what it is proposed and how it is presented, then their preferences toward that specific page seem to be favourable, mainly because of the perfect combination between content and colours used.

Other scholars (Gorn et al., 2004) also studied the impact of colours in the digital environment, by focusing on how the visitors' perception of a page download changed. Results of the study showed that some colours generated a feeling of relax and calm, which in turn influenced the perceive rapidity of the page load speed.

Specifically, these colours made visitors value those websites as faster and positively introduced in their mind a better image of the site, making them more inclined to judge the content positively and to share and recommend it to others.

Anyway, colours are not universally interpreted; in fact, perception, meaning and relative attached feelings to that colour can vary between cultures and also ages.

Terwogt et al. (2001) asked to specific groups of people, of different ages, to assign to a specific emotion a colour of their choice; results showed three main conclusions:

- Colours and emotion preferences change based on the age;

- for children, this relation is influenced by colour and emotions preferences;
- and that at all age, the relation between colours and emotions is consistent.

Additionally, they discovered that also the origin of the society in which people are living influences colours' preference; in fact, for western societies, favourites colours associated with positive emotions were mainly blue, red and green, whereas less preferred ones were white, yellow and black.

When developing and deciding how to structure the design and its visual characteristics, also the culture of the targeted visitors matters; the choice becomes even more complicated when the webpage is directed to multiple targets, having different cultural background.

Cyr et al. (2010) studied the impact of colour appeal in website design within and across cultures and they state that theoretically, two different point of view of the interplay between culture and colours exists. One is the Universalistic view and the other the Cultural Relativism; the first refers to a "pan-human cognitive processing of colour naming and colour perception"; the other one, the Cultural Relativism, is the prevalent in the digital environment, where the perception that people have over a colour mainly depends on the cultural associations and learning background.

Following this view, websites designs are therefore more appealing when their features are adapted to the cultural characteristics of their visitors. Authors in fact suggest that, when developing a webpage, it is meaningful to adapt not only the language of the site, but also other details, like:

- currency
- colour sensitivities
- name of products/services
- images and videos

In the research conducted by Cyr et al. (2010), they tested three different versions of webpages, of three colours: blue, yellow and grey; the

audience tested was from three distinct cultures: Canadian, Japanese and German.

Results showed differences in the colour perception and therefore appeal to the website; in general, all three countries had a negative impact with the yellow website and the blue type was perceived to be more trustworthy. Canadians had a preference toward the grey site, which was higher than Japanese and German people; on the other hand, Germans found the blue site to be more secure, whereas Japanese found it less appealing.

Therefore, even if no clear and drastic differences were showed, it proved that the country and the colour chosen influence on the general perception and attractiveness of a landing page.

The figure below summarizes the meaning attribute to each colour based on the society; it is a table which considers different researches in this topic, including one of the most important from Adams et. Al (1973), with some updates.

*Figure 3.2: The meaning of colour in different cultures*

Colour	Country-Culture cluster							
	Anglo-Saxon	Germanic	Latin	Nordic	Slavic	Chinese	Japanese	Korean
White	Purity	-	-	-	-	Death	Death	Death
	Happiness	-	-	-	-	Mourning	Mourning	Mourning
Blue	High quality	Warm	-	Cold	-	High quality	High quality	High quality
	Corporate	Feminine	-	Masculine	-	Trustworthy	Trustworthy	Trustworthy
Green	Masculine	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Envy	-	Envy	-	-	Pure	Love	Pure
Yellow	Good taste	-	-	-	-	Reliable	Happy	Adventure
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Red	Happy	Envy	Envy	-	Envy	Pure	Envy	Happiness
	Jealousy	Jealousy	Infidelity	-	-	Good taste	Good taste	Good taste
Purple	-	-	-	-	-	Royal	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	Authority	-	-
Black	Masculine	Fear	Masculine	Positive	Fear	Love	Love	Love
	Love	Anger	-	-	Anger	Happiness	Anger	Adventure
Orange	Lust	Jealousy	-	-	Jealousy	Lucky	Jealousy	Good taste
	Fear	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pink	Anger	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Authority	-	-	-	Anger	Expensive	Expensive	Expensive
Grey	Power	-	-	-	Envy	Love	Sin	Love
	-	-	-	-	Jealousy	-	Fear	-
Brown	Expensive	Fear	Fear	-	Fear	Expensive	Expensive	Expensive
	Fear	Anger	Anger	-	Anger	Powerful	Powerful	Powerful
Gold	Grief	Grief	Grief	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*Source: M Aslam, Mubeen. (2006). Are You Selling the Right Colour? A Cross-cultural Review of Colour as a Marketing Cue. Journal of Marketing Communications. 12. 15-30*

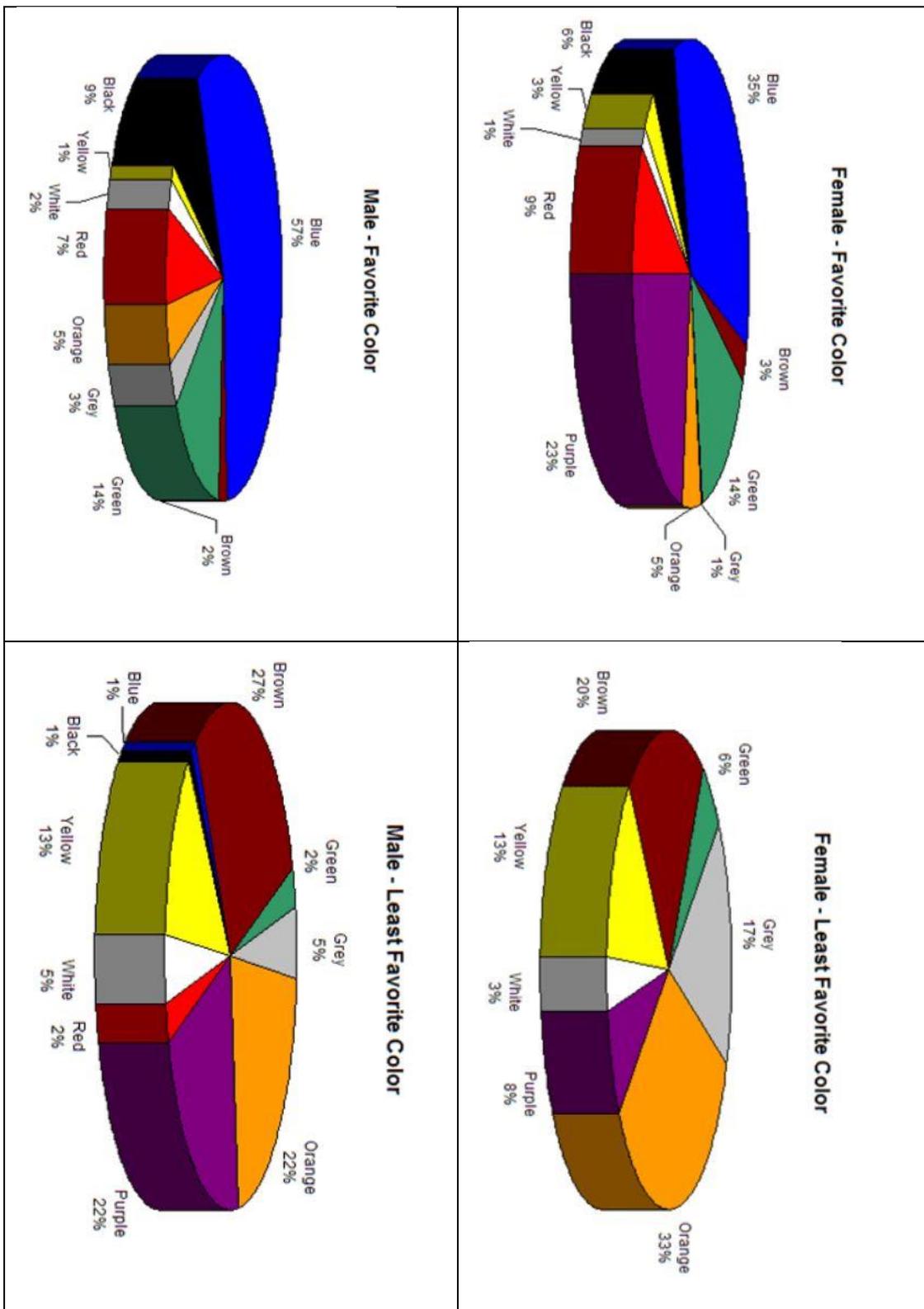
As culture has demonstrated to be very powerful in influencing and defining the meaning attached to a colour - which is transferred to the site perception – also gender present and show these differences.

Women and men usually have different perception of beauty and appeal, which affect their evaluation and final choice; Hallock (2003) conducted an academic survey to discover colour preferences over men and women.

He was able to outline the most and the least preferred colours for both genders; the results confirmed that blue is the most appealing colour both for women and men whereas, yellow, orange and brown are the least preferred one. The pie charts below show precisely the difference in percentage for each gender; these slightly dissimilarities can have a huge impact on the conversion of a landing page.

The final design should in fact be created based on previous studies over the target audience: a combination of the above described insights, gender and culture impact on colour, can positively help designers and marketers to realize the most appealing and engaging landing page.

Figure 3.3: Men and women most and least preferred colours



Source: <http://www.joehallock.com/edu/COM498/preferences.html>

Without any doubt, when designing a landing page there is a lot to take into consideration and to use at the best, to facilitate people experience

and general enjoyment; anyway, these characteristics should also combine the need of marketers to make people convert. Specifically, the challenge is to create a general page which can speak to a wide range of personalities, emotions and habits.

### **3.4 Designing for humans**

Basically, what can be inferred from all theories described in the second and third chapter, is that when exposed to a landing page, visitors scan and process the page by looking for some patterns that they find similar to their habits, but still that encompass something visually contrasting. Those aesthetic and cognitive elements on the page inspire and motivate surprise in users' brains; therefore, people are looking for a high compelling and contrasting situation in which, some of the elements, elicit unexpected emotions.

That moment of positive surprise, catches users' attention, letting them focus on the primary action to complete on the page.

Walter (2011) supports this argument, by saying that surprise is one of the most used tools by designers and that it is strictly connected on emotional responses. Not only customers have no time to lose to search for information, but also their reaction toward a surprising and contrasting element is really quick.

By playing with this behaviour, landing page designers should set up the design to activate an emotional response, which leaves no space and time for intellectual reasoning and evaluation.

As an example of how an unusual element can impact, some researchers have studied the effect that the introduction of emojis in advertisements and online pages, had on the overall buying intentions. They were able to demonstrate that emoticons can be used to activate people surprise and affect, leading to higher propensity toward purchase.

Particularly, the paper written by Das et al. (2019) describes that the use of emotions in advertising and marketing messages has an effect on viewer's and visitors perceived emotion; the introduction of these elements in the right part of the design can in fact influence the perception of the general brand and message.

As cited in the research, Lohmann et al. (2017) provided a little of theoretic explanation behind this phenomenon; they proposed that emojis have the “power” to engage and influence customers’ intentions due to the effect of *emotional contagion*. This refers to the fact that people identify and make that emotion from the emoticon as their own; by doing so, the emojis select and the users’ emotion should coincide.

The use of emoticons is like a sort of prediction of the emotion designers wish the customers will have toward the content and the page; this gives space for *anticipation*, which is the exact opposite of the surprise, having impact as well on the emotional engagement of users. Temporally speaking, it is the opposite practice of surprise, since it is about warning or indicating a desired future event, giving customers the adequate time to evaluate the experience they are having on the webpage.

In applying this type of design, visitors are left with time to read the content in the page, and conduct a complete evaluation, by empathizing with elements and information.

Useful elements to include in this case in landing pages are reviews; this type of content is intrinsically intertwined with purchase decisions. Usually prospect or customers are more inclined to “hear” others’ people voice and messages, since they perceive it as more trustworthy and credible.

Zablocki et al. (2019) write that reviews can be divided into cognitive and emotional; in the cognitive type, consumers write about how they perceived the quality of products or services, usually including details about features and functioning. On the emotional type instead, the main object of the review is how customers perceived their experience with the product or service, which means that they share related emotions to the products.

This last type of content can contain and be distinguished into some subsets of basic emotions, each one having distinct level of activity and intensity; in the paper of Zablocki is cited the hierarchical categorization proposed by Shaver et al. (1987), which classify basic

emotions into positive and negative, presenting other sub-dimensions. Positive basic emotions include love and joy, whereas negative refer to sadness, fear and anger; sub-dimensions instead represent those emotions that result from the combination of positive and negative sphere, corresponding to “liking and desire for love or worry and anxiety for fear”. Researchers sustain that these types of emotions are able to enhance the motivation and the engagement that customers have toward the offer, by unconsciously influence and defining attitudes and final behaviour.

Therefore, not only visual elements play a role in triggering customers’ emotions, but also copywriting, both from the company and users, has an impact on the final decision. There are in fact some best practice that can be followed to write compelling and emotional copywriting, which can induce positive attitudes and emotions.

What should be considered when talking about copywriting, are some, or most of the elements described in chapter two: headline, subheadline, content and call-to-actions.

The starting point when producing landing page copy is, as described by Teodorescu and Vasile (2015), to understand and summarize as much as possible the object or the offer which should be presented by the landing page; when copywriters have almost full knowledge about the subject, then the effort should be spent in proposing it an appropriate selling manner. This must be first done with the headline, that as described in the previous chapter should serve as a confirmation to visitors; authors suggest that each landing headline must present a triggering message, in order to get customers’ attention and induce them to discover more.

Even the subheadline performs almost the same purpose, in that it must enforce and support what is proposed in the headline, increasing customers’ interest; researchers Teodorescu and Vasile (2015) suggest to include in this element an “optional explanation to the headline that convinces a visitor to read further”.

Each copywriting elements, valid also for further content proposed in the page, should be written using language which, as Bullas (2019) said in the Digital Elite Camp conference in Tallinn, can be understood by fifth grade students. That is to say that copywriting should be concise and clear, focusing only on the subject of the landing, without introducing other information, just creating content clutter.

Moreover, it is suggested to include trust indicators which, as mentioned about for reviews, can improve visitors' confidence and perceived credibility of the offer. These types of elements include contacts information, testimonials for authenticity, security badges, seller logos, but also images and short videos which support and guarantee what it is described in the body copy.

Beside general and complex copy to present the offer, which covers much of the landing page, other small elements can turn out to be very effective in condition and guide visitors' emotions and choice.

For instance, CTA buttons has the "power" to catch people attention and, because of this, it should specify the action in a way of enhancing customers' desire and convince them of the convenience of the content of the landing page.

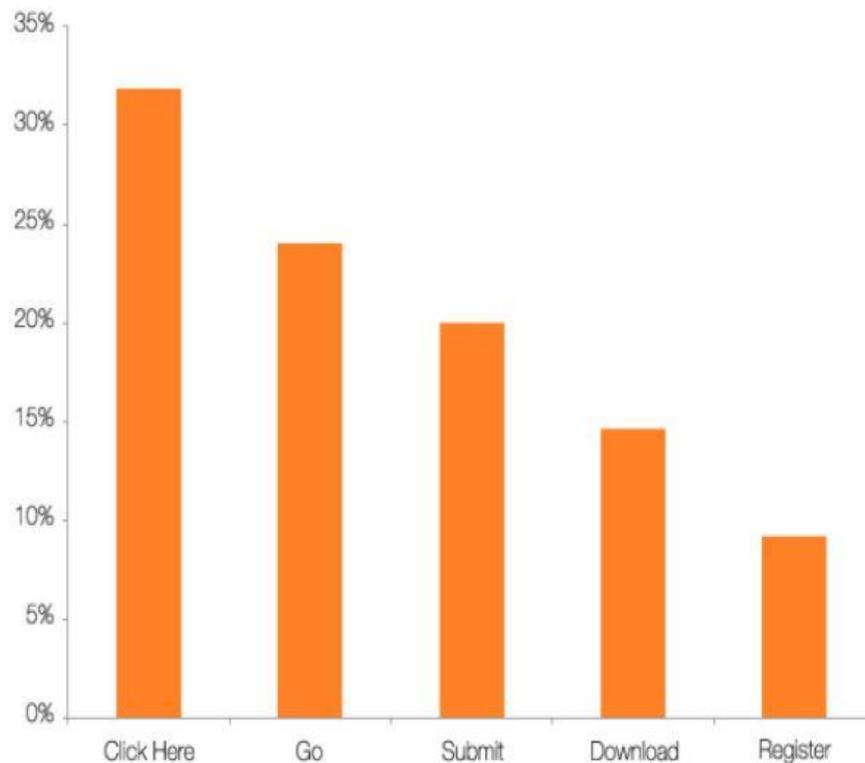
In order to be effective and emotionally inviting, there are some basic rules which marketers should follow when designing CTAs that should communicate something to humans:

- use a "unique" colour; this means that the CTA should stand out from the landing page in order to immediately show visitors the final purpose. This colour should be contrasting, but still in line with the style of the page; usually complementary colours are the best choice
- choose a simple shape; usually semi-round or square buttons are visually immediate, since people are more likely to unconsciously recognize them as something to click
- give CTAs adequate space and size; no elements should be placed near the button, in order to not take the attention out of the main action. Moreover, if the size or the style given to the

CTA will resonate as strange and unnatural to visitors, the probability of conversion will decrease

- in the CTA text, always include empathic phrases and action verbs; also introducing immediacy through words like “now” and “today” increases the probability that visitors will click the action. The table below shows, on average, the most efficient action verbs making customers click; of course, this is just a starting point, since all landing page have different objectives and themes, but it suggests what kind of CTA label can be effective

Figure 3.4. Percentage of click by button texts



Source: Teodorescu, I., Vasile, V., (2015). *Landing Pages Features to Attract Customers*, “Ovidius” University Annals, Economic Sciences Series Volume XV, Issue 2 /2015, 360-363

This paragraph showed that, even in a digital environment, marketers should consider that they are designing for emotional livings whose actions are highly probably influenced by a series of emotions. As said,

these emotions can be governed and triggered by proposing the right elements in the landing page. Anyhow, there are some psychological triggers that result from Maslow's needs pyramid that can help designer know what to include in a landing page to drive customers' attention and perception.

#### *3.4.1 Psychological triggers*

At the stage of choosing how to design and propose products or services on a landing page, elements and content should be created in order to speak and link to customers' needs.

Basically, a good theoretical starting point when structuring landing pages can be the previously mentioned Maslow hierarchy of needs; each of the pyramid level correspond to human needs that should find appropriate answer from the offer presented in the page where they land.

Needs in fact are strictly correlated to emotions, since starting from a perceived feeling of lack, visitors move toward finding something that can satisfy them; in the process of searching and evaluating information, emotions condition the steps, the final choice, but also the initially perceived need, by assigning it a value. Also, when the need is satisfied, other emotions emerge, that are then unconsciously arranged to the brand shown in the landing page.

Each of the level of emotional needs will be discussed, presenting what are the most appropriate and compelling elements to include, to fulfil that specific necessity.

##### *3.4.1.1 Physiological needs*

The bottom part of Maslow's model presents users physiological needs; the connection between landing pages and this type of needs seem difficult to identify, since they refer to the basic survival needs like food, water, sleep, safety, and so on. Usually, these types of triggers are more present for those products or services which include a physical involvement of users, but without considering the offer branch, triggers to include in the landing page should refer to the reduction of anxiety. As Teodorescu and Vasile (2015) suggest, in order to trigger positive

emotions, elements to include in this case concern information about product or services features, since customers are more motivated toward the evaluation; moreover, also trust concerning elements are to be included, since they answer to the basic safety need at the bottom of the model.

No matter the field of business, to induce positive feeling and motivate people having these physiological needs to convert, content should be thought to reassure visitors about their choice.

A summary of content and information to include regards:

- satisfaction guarantees
- content communicating the possibility to cancel or return the product anytime or without additional costs
- reviews of customers, reassuring that visitors are making the best choice
- security icons and symbols, like those reassuring of the safety of making payments online

#### *3.4.1.2 Safety needs*

These types of need relate to the above described physiological necessities, because it always refers to the capability of landing elements to reduce anxiety, but safety triggers must report to the trustworthiness of the offer.

Researches in this field suggest to include in landing pages all those common triggers of social proof, like testimonials and reviews; but this is not the only type of elements that can evoke positive emotional engagement, in fact marketers can include other messages communicating the reliability of the offer, such as “messages why is needed their e-mail address and that their personal data are not shared with other parties”<sup>24</sup>.

Usually, these types of contents are placed in combination with forms,

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<sup>24</sup> Teodorescu, I., Vasile, V., (2015). Landing Pages Features to Attract Customers, “Ovidius” University Annals, Economic Sciences Series Volume XV, Issue 2 /2015, 360-363

since users must be reassured of the use of private data given but might also be useful to confirm that someone will take care of their necessities.

#### *3.4.1.3 Love and belonging needs*

To define this type of triggers it can be useful to start by the sentence written by Teodorescu and Vasile (2015):

*“When it comes to love and belonging needs, the design and text of a landing page should create the sense of community”*

These are needs which are at a higher level, both in the model of Maslow but also in the power of emotions they can generate; people having these needs usually want to keep in touch with the brand and receive any news from upcoming products or new service features. Moreover, the other additional value that can emotionally engage people, is to include the possibility to communicate and discuss with other customers.

Testimonials and reviews are always the most efficient element that can triggers and convince people to convert, but also the copy in the page has an important role; for example, words like “Exclusive” or “Subscribe” and “Join now” can be engaging and psychologically persuade visitors’ action.

Sometimes these types of elements cannot be implemented in every landing page but, if the only way to retain and make people feel part of a community is sending them e-mail updates or the like, copywriting and messages should communicate the value of that subscription and emotionally involve visitors by highlighting the uniqueness of that conversion.

#### *3.4.1.4 Esteem needs*

Esteem triggers on landing pages can be proposed as small elements that confirm the value of the purchase and induce people to feel better about themselves. When projecting these triggers, the focus should be put on the customers and not on the product or service; for this reason, parts of the content and design of the landing page should not give particular attention to features or characteristics, but rather on general

benefits deriving from the purchase, like Teodorescu and Vasile (2015) sustain, demonstrating “how products/services improve life quality to make them feel good about their purchasing decision”.

These triggers can also be included as the main focus of the landing, for example referring directly to customers in the headline or design, such as including images of real persons with which consumers can identify, impacting and triggering positive emotions.

#### *3.4.1.5 Self-actualization needs*

This is the last emotional needs to which every marketer point and for which it structures the landing; these triggers have the final purpose to make people convert.

This last need does not require specific triggers to be constructed, since it is a consequence of all the previous needs and triggers described before; if the landing proposed prospects with all the elements to convince them of the credibility, reliability and uniqueness of the offer, then the final conversion is likely to happen.

Nonetheless, what can positively trigger customers’ emotions at this stage, is the perceived transparency; elements communicating this value should also be present, to make people sure about the purchase, but also subconsciously evoking a feeling of security and satisfaction. As an example, a landing page promoting a service could present some case studies or clients served.

Beside of the general insights that can be derived from Maslow hierarchy to understand elements that pages should contain to convince visitors, there are also other effect and subsequent best practices to consider, to use psychological phenomena as boosters for conversion.

#### *3.4.1.6 General effects to include in landing pages*

Previously it was mentioned the role of images in influencing customers feeling and choices; some visual elements in fact can generate what is called the *deictic gaze*.

As cited and briefly presented in the article published by Teodorescu and Vasile (2015), this effect occurs whenever a person sees someone

who is focused on something, and it generates an impulse making he or she look at the same object or situation.

This effect can be replicated in landing pages to unconsciously draw visitors' attention toward a CTA; for example, photos or background images of real people pointing or looking in the direction of the primary action button, can generate the same effect. In this case, customers are visually attracted and directed toward the objective of the page, without rationally knowing it.

Another psychological phenomenon which has positive effect on landing pages is the *primacy effect*, which will be part of the research topic of the fourth chapter of this thesis. As authors suggest, this effect show that people usually remember first things that are proposed on the landing page; because of this tendency, above the fold of the page should be displayed enough elements to make the offer clear, but also to engage and convince visitors to read further copy.

Last effect that supports previously statements that most important action and elements should always stand out of the page, is the *Von Restorff effect*.

It is defined as “the memoric influence of the distinctiveness of a single item presented in a list of homogeneous items”<sup>25</sup>, which means that in a page, customers identify and remember those elements that visually stand out from the rest of the content. As matter of fact, when choosing CTAs colours or the hierarchical structure between headline, subheadline and of body copy, each choice should be tested in order to understand if it is the most effective.

This chapter aimed to underline that there are many factors playing on the final conversion, but if everyone is aligned with the other, positive impacts can derive on the average conversion rate, consequently reducing the bounce rate.

The final chapter of this thesis will present the research conducted over two versions of the same landing page; changes in the design and the

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<sup>25</sup> Pick, D.,F., Sweeney, J., Clay, J.,A., (1991). Creative advertising and the von Restorff effect. Psychological Reports, 1991, 69, 923-926

copy were the result of some analysis activities, that will be described. Finally, by conducting a survey to test users first impression and emotional feeling for each of the two versions, it will be shown that by introducing strategic changes in the overall design of the landing, positive results can derive, in term of clarity of the offer and average conversion rate.

## **4. Case study, Ristruttura Smart - Iperceramica: testing clarity and perception of two landing pages**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This last chapter of this thesis aims to prove and support theoretical information and research in the conversion optimization and neuromarketing field done so far.

This research studies and analyses two versions of a landing page of Iperceramica, one of the largest Italian retail chain selling floorings, wall coverings, parquets and bathroom furnishing, as they describe themselves in the website.

They have relied and trusted MOCA Interactive srl, a digital marketing agency founded in 2004, in order to build and conduct research over their existing landing, which will be further explained and discussed in this chapter. As a result, a new landing page has been created to better reach their aim.

In the landing what they wanted to highlight was their high-quality design and offers of materials, by promoting their service of bath renovation, inviting people to contact them. The main objective and therefore conversion action of the page was in fact the completion of a form in the page.

In order to conduct this research over the two landings a questionnaire was built, which has been divided in three sections to understand:

- General website navigation habits and knowledge about landing pages;
- five second test technique and subsequent questions to understand clarity of the offer and first impression over the page;
- emotional unconscious attitude toward the page, through the use of a matrix which was constructed based on insights collected from the Limbic map showed in the second chapter.

At the end of the survey some demographic questions were included in order to understand characteristics of the responding target and possible correlation and pattern in the responses.

Purpose of this type of research over the two versions of Ristruttura Smart Iperceramica landing page, was to:

- investigate how the design of the pages contributed to the overall clarity of the offer
- what elements were attracting visitors' attention within five seconds time;
- do they contribute or not to a positive impression?
- what type of emotions and impression made composing element arouse
- which kind of landing page design was preferred and why, trying to explain reasons behind this preference

In order to investigate the respondents' perception over the viewed page, qualitative analysis methods were applied, by ranking all the answer and attributing to each of them a 1, if they corresponded to an identified category, and 0 if not. By using this type of analysis, useful qualitative and quantitative insights – by using percentages – got from the survey.

At the end, considering a time period of almost 3 months, by looking at Google Analytics and combining the data with the insights gathered from the survey, also meaningful results in term of conversion rate and bounce rate can be delineated.

This chapter has been structured to explain each step taken to build and conduct this research, showing the obtained results.

## **4.2 Objective of the research**

Expectations in creating this type of research was to prove that visual and emotional aspects matter in the overall perception and clarity of a landing page.

More specifically, the expected outcome is that most of the respondents

will be attracted by the visual elements proposed in the page; this will turn out in two contrasting results. It is supposed that, for the first version, people will be confused by elements in the page, generating a perception of the offer which will probably not resemble the true object of the page. On the other hand, for the second version, visual elements like the background image of the bath, will guide them toward a correct interpretation of the offer, generating also a positive emotional perception toward the page.

Secondly, from the use of the emotional matrix, insights toward the answers can be variable; potentially, given the landing layout and design, it is assumed that positive, attractive or relaxing emotions will be associated with the second version of the landing page, based on the atmosphere created by the background image, clarity of copywriting and the catchy structure. On the other hand, emotions and perceptions generated by the first version might result in more negative or stressing feelings, due to the difficulty in differentiating elements on the page and the chaotic design.

Insights on emotions will be also analysed and discussed considering age and gender of respondents: possibly some interesting pattern might emerge, showing differences of perceptions due to changes in the demographic variable considered.

Finally, also quantitative analysis over the data gather on Google Analytics for the two pages will be discussed; considering a period of almost three months (from June to August 2019), some deduction over the trend of both pages will be described, demonstrating if a correlation between emotions and perception over the page exists. Moreover, also the impact of changes in the two landings over bounce rate and conversion rate will be included.

### **4.3 Ristrutturazione Smart landing pages**

As previously written in this thesis, landing pages usually are designed following a specific common structure and elements, in order to propose and invite to discover a specific offer or product and services.

The objective of Ristruttura Smart Iperceramica was to promote, through a new landing page, a specific offer for the service of refurbishment, referring to the entire house. In fact, initially the offer was concerning the overall components of the house, for which the firm offered a specific service; in order to target and reach a specific segment of people who were potentially interested to this offer, they autonomously created a new landing page:

<https://www.ristrutturasmart.it/lp-casa> .

The landing is shown in the figure 4.1.

#### 4.3.1 Description of the landing pages

##### 4.3.1.1 First version

Figure 4.1: First version of Ristruttura Smart landing page

© RistrutturaSMART®  
Via Chiarola Nuova, 95/87  
41042 Fiorano Modenese (MO)  
P.I./CF. IT03797430364

What emerges by first looking at the design and structure of this landing page is the big screaming title “SUPER OFFERTA” and the related discounts of 10%. Also the brand Iperceramica is pretty evident, which aims to highlight to people who the owning company of this offer is.

Other emerging and evident elements, which are part of the must-have component to build a landing page, are a subtitle, which should better explain the offer and the form, which represents the action that the firm wishes visitors to take.

Speaking of visual elements, the company decided to include a evoking photo of the interior design of a house, with the expectation to persuade and engage people emotionally.

By this brief scan of the page, all the meaningful elements cited in the previous chapters are present; but, if we consider usability and ease of use of the page, the problem is about how and where they are positioned in the page.

As member of the Conversion Specialist team of the agency MOCA Interactive, it has been conducted an heuristic analysis over this landing page, making critical point and frictions emerge. This analysis is one of the techniques which was included and explained in the first chapter.

Concerning clarity, one of the critical issue related to the world of usability, some aspects of this first version of the landing page have emerged to be problematic.

The first critical issue was concerning the copywriting choices and the relative readability of the texts; words included in the title in fact, were too generic, not giving a clear and immediate hint over the object of the offer. Words like “super offer” can refer to any topic, but as already pointed out, the page must answer to the question “Am I in the right place?”, possibly doing that within first seconds – or more precisely, milliseconds - of loading of the page.

Moreover, as mentioned, in order to motivate and improve the probability of conversion, users need to have information to support, explain and persuade toward the service. This first landing page was designed in order to be synthetic and to show immediately the action the

firm wanted people to take: to complete the form and ask for more information about it. The choice of using an economic driver has emerged to be an efficient choice to invite and convince people of the value of the service, but it is not clear how Ristruttura Smart could help people to solve their problem of refurbishment.

Before creating the second page, which is explained afterwards in the chapter, MOCA Interactive has created and proposed some questions in form of feedback polls –one of the analysis techniques available by using Hotjar, were some questions are proposed on the website, for example in form of pop-ups, to collect information from user's traffic–two investigate people's opinion over the page.

What emerged was that, in general, people were incentivized by the discount – which was also the first information they focused on – but they were doubtful about the service Iperceramica could offer. This was an insight taken to build the second version of the landing page.

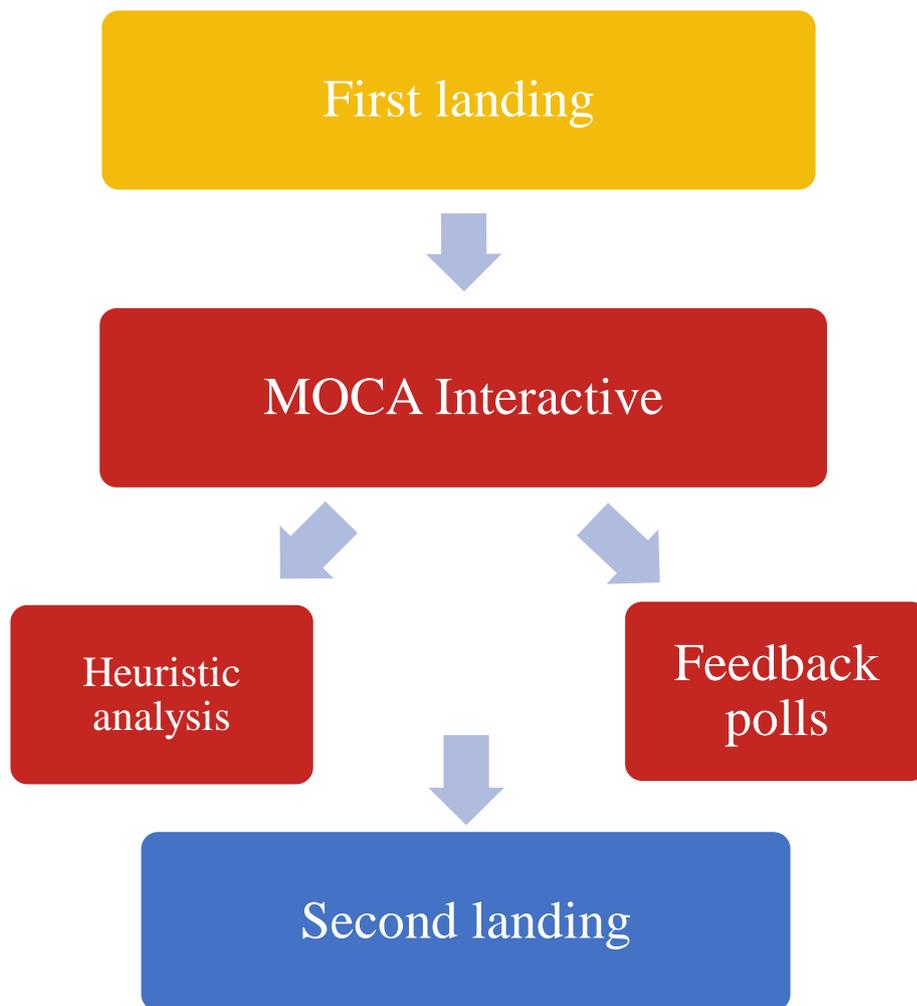
Continuing in the description of the structure of this page, another evident problem for those who concern usability is the scarce visual evidence of the button which refers to the key object of the landing. The CTA of the page, in fact, does not stand out from all the other elements and for this, may not persuade people to complete the form. Also dimensions and alignment of the button does not respect the best practices of usability: all the fields of the form are in fact centered, but the CTA is left-aligned, not following the visual path of completion. Moreover, especially when navigating the page by mobile devices, the small dimensions can produce friction to those taking the action of requesting more information, by making the interaction difficult. Additionally, also colours matter in the perception and trigger of the wanted action; the colour of the button in this first version is uniform to the main style of the page – white and yellow. This also reduced the probability and the clarity of what visitors should do on the page.

Talking about visual complexity, the page is relatively simple and plain, presenting few graphic elements, not distracting people from understanding what the page offers. Only one figure was included;

however, the image chosen might not be the most appropriate one, since it does not show the object of the offer, but just the context and the environment in which the service could be applied. This can somehow distract or confuse people about what they are seeing.

Some analysis over this page have been conducted, highlighting some critical points of it, which were possibly solved by the second version described below.

*Figure 4.2 Scheme representing steps and types of analysis from the first to the second landing page*



### 4.3.1.2 Second version

Figure 4.3: Second version of Ristruttura Smart landing page, designed after conducting research and analysis



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landed on the page identify and tell themselves: “Yes, I need to restructure my bath”. When copy speaks to potential customers, using also words that are common to their use, the probability that they will scroll the page and inform about the offer, could increase.

Additionally, the use of images has changed too. As it can be seen from the first section of the page – above the fold – the image plays a relevant role in explaining and communicating what does the page offer. A context image has been used as background: it does not give prominence to the object in the photo, but rather it creates a contextual suggestion, trying to evoke and trigger people’s emotion. The objective of this research was also to test this type of use of images, compared to the previous version, to see if it distracted from understanding the topic of the page.

A negative feature of this version, with respect to the previous one, is the length of the page; usually, people want to have relevant information in the upper part of the page, which can play in disadvantage to this type of landing page. However, several links were placed in the page to let people easily skip and go to a specific section and read information. The choice to create a longer landing page, even knowing this type of common behaviour, is justified by the fact that, following usability “rules”, each text, image, or element of the page should be given adequate space, in order to improve readability and clearness.

Another section which was not included in the first version, is the one referred to social proof – the screen of this part is not included in the figures above. The page in fact shows reviews of persons who already have benefit from Ipercaramica’s services; the purpose of including this type of content was to emotionally engage people, enjoying of all the relative emotion-related benefit described in the previous chapter. At the end of the research, also some quantitative data about the impact of this section on the conversion rate will be included.

One of the elements that were necessary to review, based on the analysis conducted by MOCA Interactive, was the CTA button’s style; since in

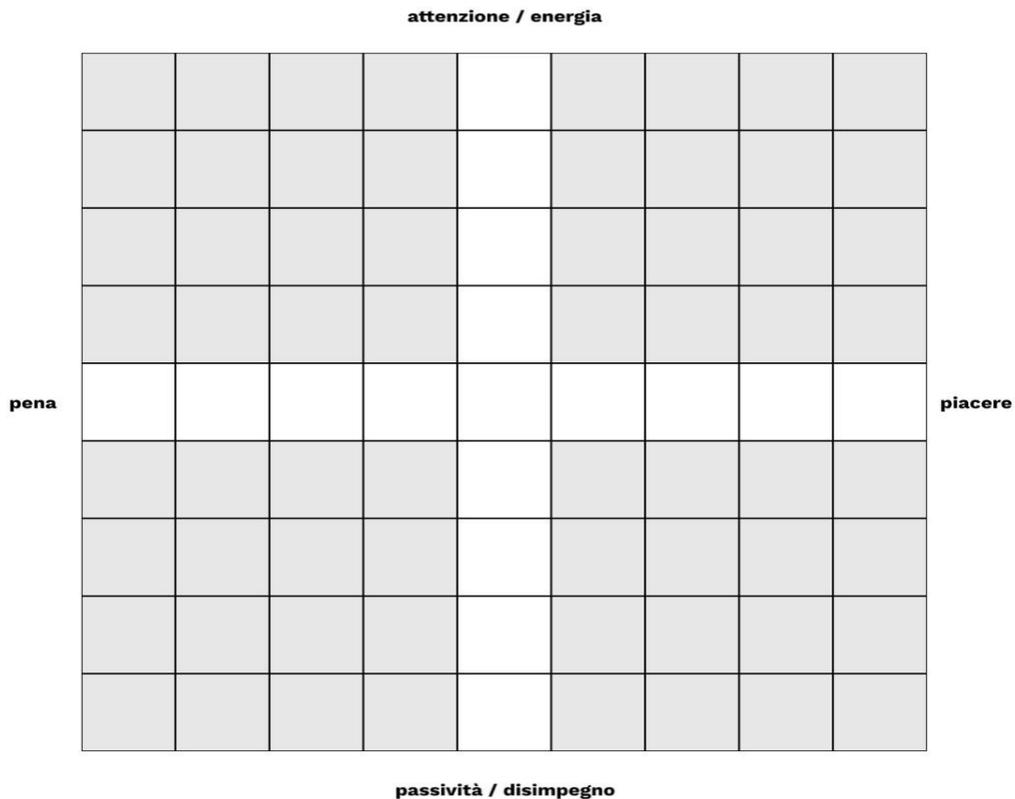
the previous version the main action was dominated by the other elements, first thing that was changed was the colour. In order to maintain a consistent style with the brand palette and to contrast with the yellow background of the form, the choice was between a range of complementary colours.

In order to reflect potential visitors' preference, both for women and men, the choice was blue; this colour in fact evokes feelings like trust, credibility and something communicating a strong corporate entity. Moreover, also the copywriting of the CTA has been adapted to the style chosen for the landing page; opposite to the first button, the second one is far more empathic, directing in first person to the action people make, using also action verbs to motivate even more to click.

Last important difference between the two landings, is the space and the hierarchy of information; in order to ease readability of texts and to highlight most important content, each text was sectioned and formatting like bold and underlined were used, to point key-information and the presence of links.

Features and clarity of both first and second version of the landing has been test by a questionnaire, aiming to understand users emotional perception and first impression over the two pages, by using the five second test technique and the emotional matrix (figure 4.4) that is inspired by the Limbic map developed by Häusel.

Figure 4.4: Matrix showed in the questionnaire



#### 4.4 Research: method and structure

To investigate all the above topics, it has been developed a questionnaire of twelve questions, excluding the demographic ones, by using the free tool Google Forms.

The overall structure of the survey has been divided in sections, which represent specific topics covered by the research, mainly concerning:

- consideration and opinions about usability, credibility and trust of a web page
- knowledge of what is a landing page
- 5 second test and the emotional matrix questions over the two landings
- preference between two screenshots of section of pages and reasons behind it

Time to complete the survey has been estimated around 3-4 minutes, depending on the attitude of respondents.

Tool that was used to allow the creation and feasibility of this questionnaire is the platform Userbob.com; on this, the two five second tests were built. It is a free tools which allows specialists to decide the URL on which the test will be conducted, the duration of the test, – which for this was of five seconds – the message to display before people take the test and the final URL where people will be send back after the test.

The final output by using this platform was a link – that was included in the questions of the survey – which lead directly to the five second test.

Complexity of the survey was tested against five people, which corresponded to those in target for the research; from the feedback, the questionnaire was easy to understand and well structured, hence no question was modified.

Due to this result, the five answers got from the test were included in the study and counted as part of the sample of responses.

#### *4.4.1 The research*

In the survey, respondents were asked to answer specific open questions concerning their habits, which were placed at the beginning of the questionnaire to introduce the audience to the topic of the test: web pages.

Questions were chosen to be open; the intention behind this was to let people deliberately answers with their own words, in order to derive their background, habits and expectation when surfing a specific page.

After these introductory questions, people were asked to choose between a range of possible “usability problems” or frictions – as it would be called in a conversion research analysis – that potentially would have let them abandon the page.

Types of options were taken from a range of potential usability problems, which are common in most of the landing pages or website that people can find online nowadays. The “Other” option has been included to gather other insights from respondents’ online experiences.

Subsequently, people were asked if they knew what a landing page was; answers were of the Boolean type: yes or no. This kind of answers allowed to categorize users based on their knowledge about the topic, which potentially could be a variable influencing the results.

These four questions had the objective to create a background, to introduce and therefore start with more specific inquiries.

At this stage, people were shown with the five second test over the first version of the page; after it, they have been asked some question to understand their perceptions and the overall clarity of the page.

Included questions were:

1. According to you and what you can recall, what did the page propose?
2. List up to five items that you remember from the page

First questions aimed to understand the clarity of the offer in the page, whereas the second one had two purposes: to understand the most prominent and evident elements on the page, and if those elements listed by the respondents were contributing to clarify or distract from the offer proposed.

To conclude the insights from the five second test, people were presented with an emotional matrix and asked to position themselves in one of the nine quadrants, each of them associated with specific combinations of emotions. The only reference were the variables placed on the axes of the matrix:

- X axis, *pity/pleasure*
- Y axis, *attention/passiveness*

In analysing the results, the matrix shown – figure 4.4 - has been combined with the corresponding matrix containing the emotions (figure 4.5); each quadrant has been associated with a specific or combination of feeling affecting the subconscious perception of the respondent.

Figure 4.5: Matrix showing corresponding emotions



Answers to this type of questions have been combined with gender and age of respondents, as it has been previously mentioned that perceptions, colour preferences and other “visual” variables, changed based on demographic values. This has been done to see potential emerging patterns.

The steps above described have been proposed also for the other version of the landing page, in order to obtain a comparison between the two, to add it to the quantitative data analysis proposed in the final part of this chapter.

Last section of the questionnaire was dedicated to demographic questions including:

- Gender
- Birth year
- Profession
- Interest (concerning the world of refurbishment)

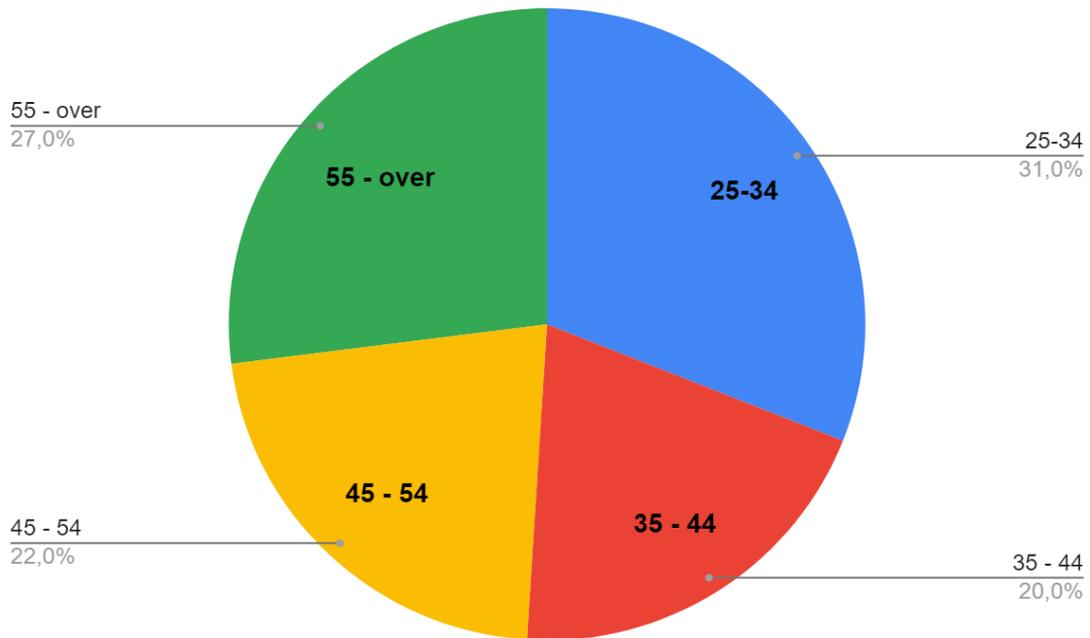
Estimated completion time was around three to four minutes.

## **4.5 Participants**

The use of Google Forms as the tool to create the questionnaire through which the research was conducted, represented an easy and rapid way to share the survey across different media. In fact, the questionnaire has been shared across different Facebook groups, aiming to target specific people who were interested to the theme of refurbishment and house care. A known limit of the use of social media, has been the low time and probability that the post containing the questionnaire would remain visible for many days; moreover, the fact that some were private or “closed” groups has affected the number of responses. Anyway, the questionnaire was left open for almost three weeks, reaching the amount of 150 collected answers.

The survey has been answered by different people of different ages, ranging from 24 to 64 years old; this confirmed the defined goal to target people who were potentially interested in the object of the Iperceramica – Ristruttura Smart landing project. This variety of ages represented a strength for the aim of the analysis, since it has given meaningful insights; in fact, as discussed in previous chapters, perceptions, emotions and opinions of human being might change significantly based on their experience and age. The graph below shows all the different ages of those who contributed; given the fact that most of respondents belong to the 30-40 age class, almost the 72% of them were employees, with the remaining being either professionals, students or retired.

Figure 4.5: Age of participants

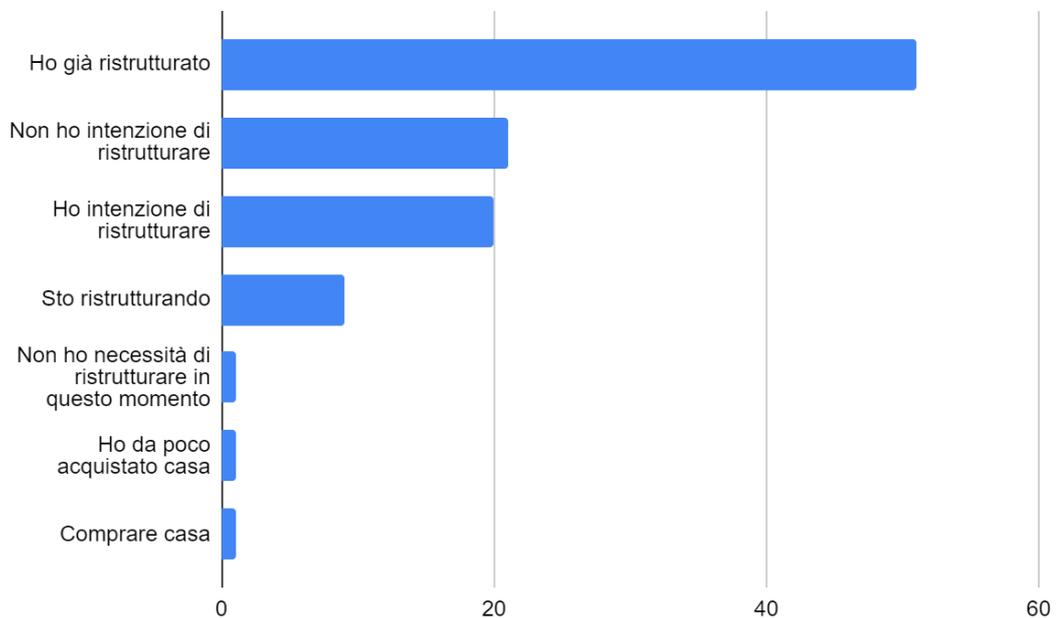


Moreover, the sample of 150 responses was almost equally distributed across gender: the 58% of respondents were women and the remaining 42% men. Considering the aim of the research, this represented a meaningful and useful starting point, since it allowed for almost an equal comparison between the insights. As age, this demographic variable has been used to see if some meaningful and interesting correlations or pattern between the different perceptions and emotions participant expressed when showed with the page, emerged.

In the questionnaire, respondents were also asked to describe their position regarding the refurbishment topic; in the analysis also these answers will be considered as a possibly influencing factors: eventually, perceived emotions will be influenced by the respondents' life experience and previous choices.

However, main differentiating and meaningful variables considered in the analysis were age and gender; in the graph below, all the interests have been categorized to have a unique and comprehensible total view of the answers.

*Figure 4.6: Categorization of participants' interest toward refurbishment*



#### **4.6 Analysis and results**

The paragraphs below will discuss and confirm many of the assumptions and objective of the research, listing the key findings derived from the analysis of responses.

First, answers given to the first questions clearly show that, even people do not pertain or work in the field of digital marketing, precise idea over what usability means or what respondents evaluate as a usable website, are present and structured in people's mind and expectations.

Indeed, when asked about what came to their mind, when thinking about a usable website, 56% of people answered "ease of use and intuitiveness". This result reinforces and confirms the presupposition made by Eisenberg (2006), discussed in the first chapter – paragraph 1.1 – that "providing and helping customers to easily get and see what they want...will reward with an action that speaks louder than words: a conversion".

Nevertheless, respondents gave other definitions to what they believed a usable website should contain or represent; as a matter of fact, topics as concreteness, clarity, utility (meaning the ability of the webpage to

answers to people needs) and design also emerged, pointing out that people do have a clear subconscious idea, which they unconsciously use as a benchmark to evaluate website they visit.

Figure 4.7: Word cloud showing respondents ideas about usability



A second key finding and important insight of this research, concerns trustworthiness and perceived reliability of a websites which, as already mentioned, plays a crucial role in the general conversion rate. Speaking of which, respondents gave clear and accurate definition of what are the elements or features they employ or connect to the definition of a reliable website, mainly referring to reviews (26%), clarity (24%) and trustworthiness associated to a known brand (20%). The result showing that people firmly use and transfer the reliability associated to the brand and its services or product, to all digital activities, confirms that companies must maintain and create a coherent and consistent brand voice between the offline and the online strategy. Indeed, as Joy B. discussed in the conference – Digital elite camp – in Tallinn (EE) in June 2019, “brand voice is a consistent way of writing

that effectively communicates your organizational personality to your audience”.<sup>26</sup>

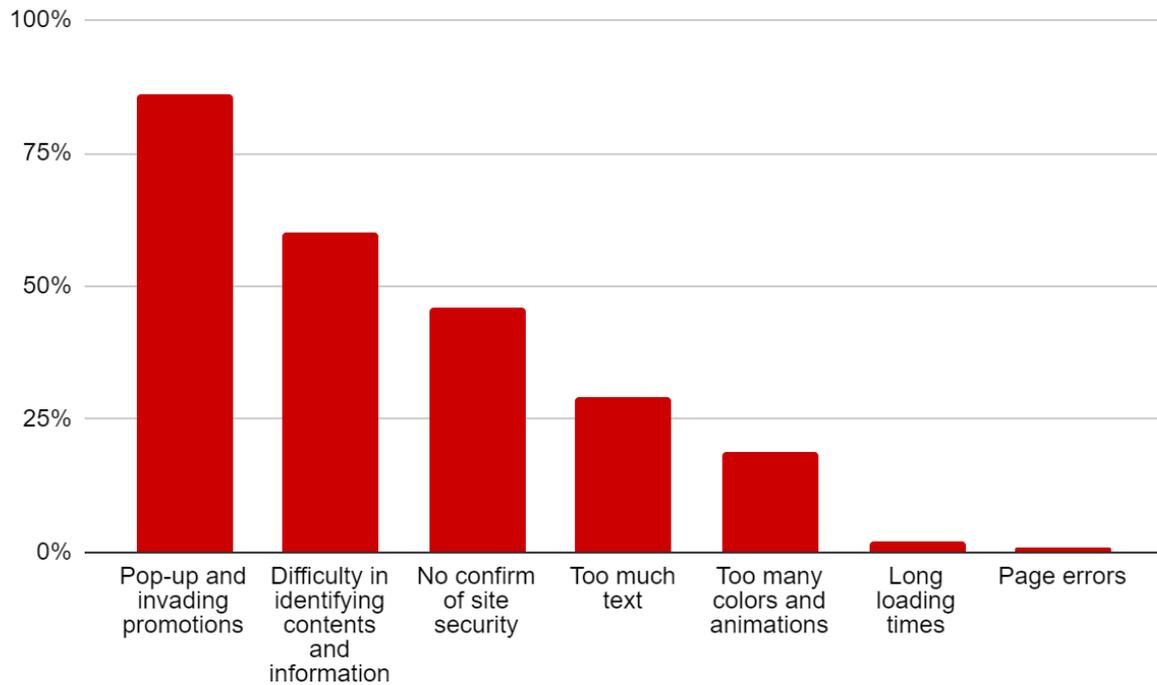
Moreover, research results confirm that people consider reviews a valuable content to understand and measure a page or website reliability.

The *figure 4.8* lists all the elements listed by respondents; as a matter of fact, answers mostly pertain to choices regarding the structure of a page, the design or the content displayed in it, which correspond to the most remembered elements of the two landings, discussed later in this paragraph. Additionally, almost 90% of respondents has highlighted the presence of pop-up and invading promotions on a page, as factors facilitating the abandonment of a page. In fact, Geisslet et al. (2006) suggested that “web pages of moderate complexity facilitate communication effectiveness and lead to more favourable consumer responses”; this shows a clear connection with all the other answers to the question “What elements will make you abandon a page?” depicted in the *figure 4.8*.

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<sup>26</sup> Slides available at <https://conversionxl.com/> (conference organizer)

Figure 4.8: Histogram showing potential abandoning factors



Third objective of the research was to study clarity of the two offers proposed through the landing pages; results from the questionnaire clearly show that elements composing the first landing does not help respondents in understanding its content. On the other hand, given the intended limited time – 5 seconds – of visualization of both pages, the second version of the landing page shows evident better results.

When analysing answers to the question “What did the page propose?”, proposed after the five second test, the 38% of respondents described the general topic of the offer as referred to “refurbishment”. This was indeed the service offered by Iperceramica, but the specific offer promoted in the landing page was narrow, referring only to the house. As a matter of fact, most of the answer were generic; moreover, problems in understanding the offer of the page are also confirmed by the fact that, a strong variability and variety in the answers exists. In fact, the remaining part of respondents displayed an evident uncertainty about the offer, which instead should be immediately clear thanks to the value proposition; as Ash (2010) says, the headline “must explain exactly and in few words, what is the page about”. This has

emerged to be a weak point for the first landing, since 62% of respondents did not understand the offer, answering that the page was selling/proposing:

- Real estate sale (15%)
- Furniture (7%)
- Building products / pottery sales (12%)
- Travels (3%)
- Advertising and promotions (16%)
- Contact information (5%)
- I do not know (6%)

By combining these answers with the elements of the page which respondents remembered after the five second test, it can be derived that some of them contributed to mistake their perception.

Indeed, people were mainly attracted by the colour of the page and the image in it – which is not surprising since visual elements like colours and figures are those that evoke people feelings and reactions (Bonnardel et al., 2010). More precisely, given the reduced time, answers show that people made hypothesis over the offer by recalling components of the image in the landing page.

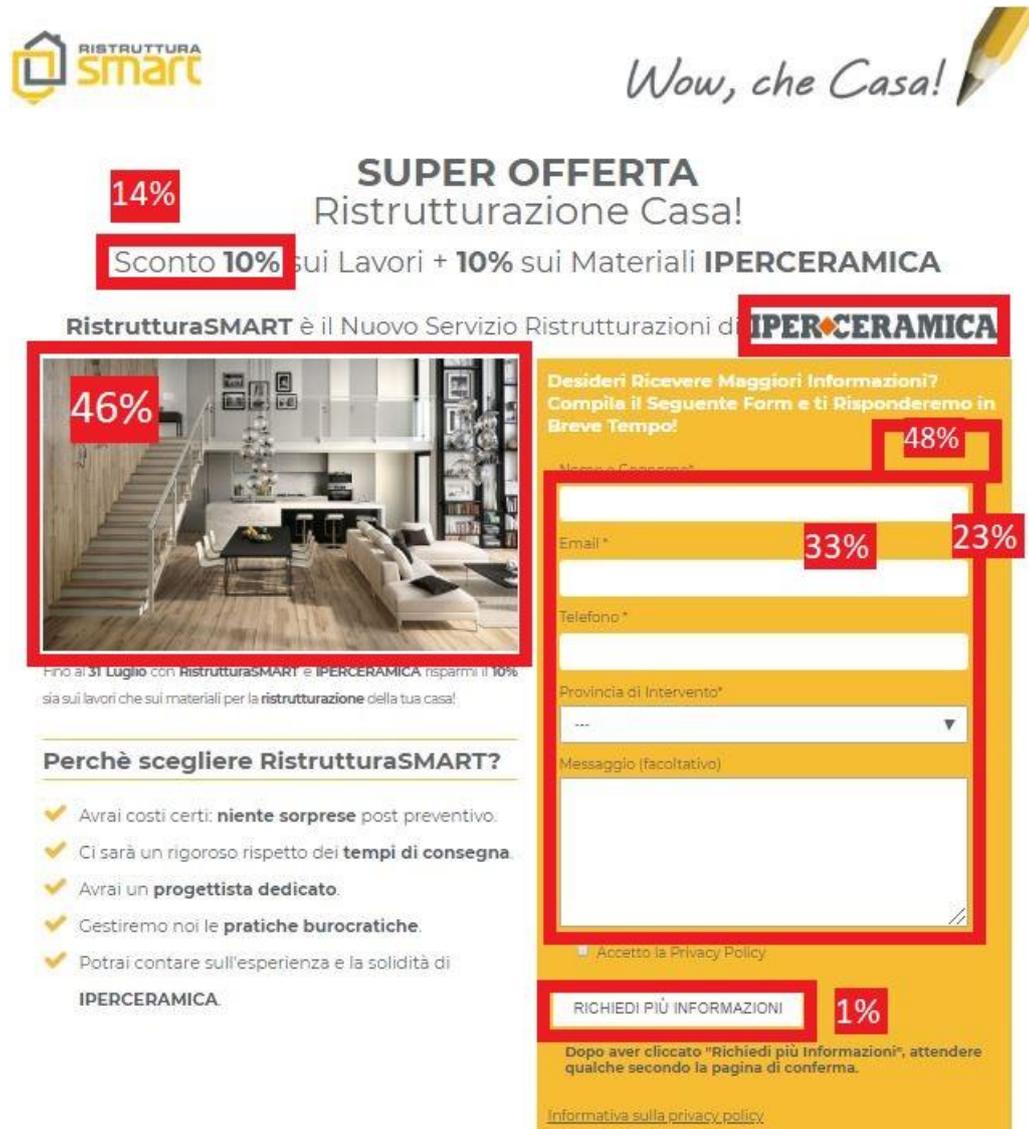
This proves and confirms how the choice of figures and icons represent a relevant and crucial aspect to consider in the overall strategy; this demonstrates that, given all the other elements, wrong design can lead to high abandon rate and therefore, low probability of conversion.

Recalling the *paragraph 2.2.2* – chapter 2 - there are four “must be” element that a landing page should contain; one of the most important is the CTA, or the button that allow the interaction representing the goal of the page. Furthermore, best practices suggest that this object should stand out and be easily identifiable from visitors; results of the research conducted over the first version of the landing page, shows the opposite result.

Indeed, only 3 respondents out of 150 saw and cite the presence of a button in the page; this upholds the above statements of this problem in the paragraph 4.2 of this chapter. The colour chosen for the CTA is not

enough contrasting with the style of the page, therefore less visible; this insight proves that improvement and style changes of the button are necessary. As a matter of fact, this is one of the main changes done by MOCA Interactive when redesigning the landing page. The following figure shows the most remembered elements: the higher the percentage, the more people mentioned that component.

Figure 4.9: Five second test most remembered elements – first landing



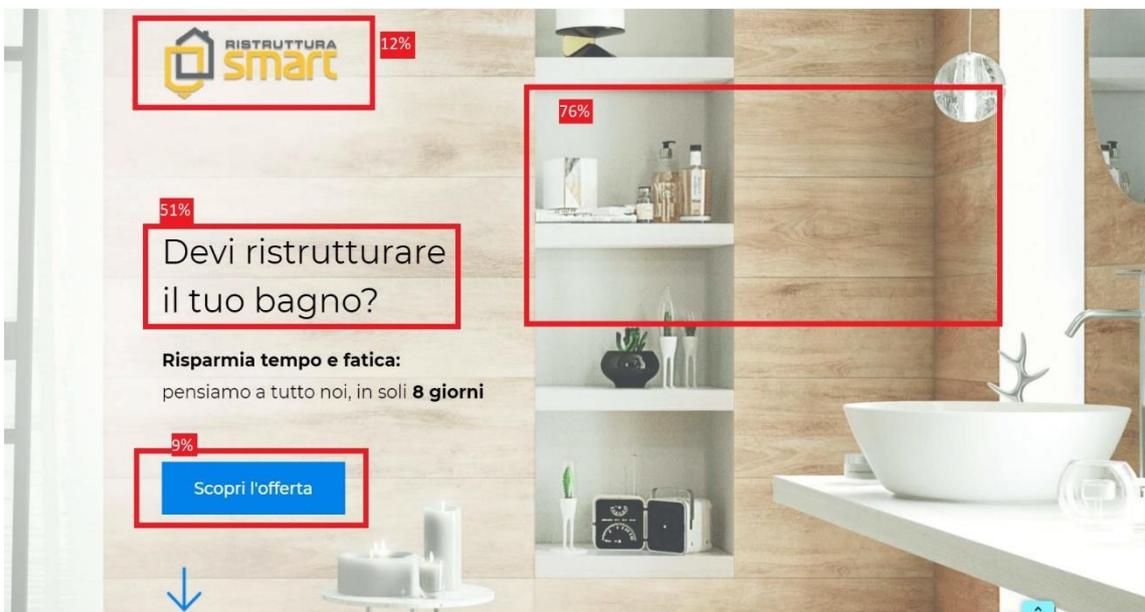
In contrast to what has emerged for the first landing, results regarding the second type have confirmed the above hypothesis described in the objective of this research. The expectation was to see that most of the respondents would correctly identify the object of the landing and that the way in which the landing has been structured, would contribute to make the offer clearer.

Indeed, differently to the first amount of answers, variability of topics has been lower; through the analyzation of responses, the 88% of participants have understood what was proposed in the page, still considering the reduced amount of time available.

The remaining 12% of answers did not contain the exact topic “bathroom refurbishment”, but by analysing the words used, people precisely got the hint that what was offered pertained to the bathroom. Furthermore, the style and design of the page has in this case contributed to a general better clarity; the visual priority given to the elements has drastically changed from the first to the second landing, and it was the purpose of this research to test its effectiveness.

Results from the five second test confirm the arrangement of the structure of the second landing; the figure below points out a reallocation of respondents’ visual priority.

*Figure 4.10: Five second test most remembered elements – second landing*



Even for the second landing, most of user attentions has been given to the background image, as for the first one; anyway, the style and design of the image has played differently to participants’ perception.

Due to the fact that, as sustained by Gorn et al (2004), colours impact on visitors’ perceptions and, as studied by Terwogt et al. (2001), that this varies based on gender and culture, in designing the second landing

the colour yellow has been overshadowed.

By consulting the figure 3.3 in the third chapter, it can be seen that yellow is one of the least preferred colour both for women and men; from the answers gathered, the removal of the priority of this colour from the page seems to have benefit the clarity of the offer.

Moreover, also the copywriting resulted as effective as for the visual elements; a great percentage of the respondents (51%) focused also on this component to understand the page's offer. This result also confirms the essential role played by the headline and texts.

Differently for the first landing instead, even if the percentage of responses is still low compared to the total, visibility of the CTA on the page has increased; the 7% of answers versus the 1% of the first page also recalled the presence of a button in the page. The difference is most likely to attribute to the change of colour and dimensions of the button; the action button is in fact more in contrast with the background, even if still respecting the complementarity with the colour yellow.

From a first screening of results, all the assumptions made for this research have been met.

Finally, also emotional perceptions over the two pages exhibit a clear preference and positive attitude toward the second landing page.

Both for women and men, after seeing the first design of the landing, the prevalent emotional perception were respondents positioned themselves, was in the second quadrant of the matrix, which corresponds to the dissatisfaction/frustration area.

People who had this impression over the page were those who found "too much text" and "Difficulty in identifying contents and information" as most blocking elements leading to the page abandonment. This can be interpreted as a correlation between the impression and the page structure: in fact, the space between the page content and the other elements is not adequately managed.

Anyway, both for the first and the second landing, emotional impressions and perceptions does not largely differ from men and

women; also for the second landing, the prevalent perception is “calmness”.

This feeling corresponds with the intended aim of the landing, which was to communicate the sense of tranquillity, connected to the house system.

On the other hand, age differences instead show some differences of impression over the two pages; respondents have been categorized into four age groups, women and men:

- 24 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 – 54
- 55 and over

Younger women (24-34, 35-44) displayed worst impression over the first page then the segments 45-54 plus 55 and over, which instead showed more neutral emotional perceptions. This could be explained by the different level of online experience or simply by style tastes. Also men showed almost the same behaviour, where the prevailing of negative emotions toward the page persist.

Second landing impressions presents more evident differences considering age as the influencing variable; as a matter of fact, young women (24-34) nurture more optimistic feeling toward the page – sixth quadrant of the matrix. Instead, men of the same age display more neutral feelings, which is representative of a lower level of interest for the object of the page.

On the contrary, to older respondents, whether men and women, the second landing page evokes contrasting impressions: for some, the content generates disinterest and frustration, for other calmness and neutrality. Given the age, this can be considered a consequence of the low or high interest for the topic proposed by the page; in fact, combining the answers, those showing negative impressions were those who already refurbished the house/bathroom. This insight shows that, even if the design is intended to be attractive and evocative, if visitors

are not interested to products or services proposed, then their perception of the page might still be negative.

To conclude, also participants' emotions present a connection with the above assumptions; the redesign of the landing page changed people's impression, from negative toward a positive attitude, by following the usability best practices. The following paragraph will go through a statistic and quantitative analysis of both pages results, analysing their bounce and conversion rate. It will be demonstrated that, the described impressions and feelings generated by the five second test, reflect also the analytic data on Google Analytics.

#### 4.7 Quantitative data: Google Analytics

Considering the period June – August 2019, the second landing presents a performance which is better than the first version; in fact, during this period, the bounce rate has drastically been reduced, from the 90% to the 53%. The trend is displayed in the graph below.

*Figure 4.11: Bounce rate trend of the two landing – Period June - August 2019*



This reduction reflects the perception that visitors had over the two pages: a positive impression is likely to be linked to a high time in page and therefore a low bounce rate.

Another positive result after the redesign of the page, is the increase in the conversion rate; for the first landing the percentage of people who completed the action on the page where about 1,33%. The second version instead, show a more positive trend, where the conversion rate is of 3,09%.

Given the better achievement on the conversion side, also the performance of single components of the second landing page has been analysed.

Using as benchmark session of the page without bounce – meaning those who at least interacted with elements in the page – there are some components of the landing which display a compelling correlation with the conversion rate.

Confirming the results of the research where participant attributed an important role to reviews in evaluating a page or website reliability, the section of the second landing dedicated to this type of content influences the conversion rate of 7,30%. This means that, a person who interacts and visualizes that content is more likely to conclude the macro-conversion. This behaviour is almost the same also for the FAQ (Frequently Asked Question) section.



Quantitative data are also in line with the above results; therefore, both emotions and human-generated content still matter in the online world, both for consumers' benefits, but also firms' performance.

This research proves that, by conducting researches to analyse people impression and following most of the usability best practices, there is a great probability that website or landing pages conversion rate will increase.

## Conclusions

Emotions of users have been discovered to play an important role, as they affect people's perceptions and subsequent actions toward a specific landing page.

This is one of the reasons for which is important to invest in all Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) activities, to detect ways to improve and increase revenues from the online channel.

As a matter of fact, thanks to all the available research techniques, companies can obtain both quantitative and qualitative insights and data of their website or page.

The aim of this thesis was in fact to prove that people's emotions and impressions impact on the general performance of a landing page and that, the choice of the components of the page must consider the target audience and their potential feelings.

In fact, Conversion Rate Optimization, can be defined as the analysis of consumers' behaviour, focusing on what motivates a particular market segment to react in a certain way to marketing elements, giving companies advices on how to respond and adjust their website or landing pages.

The company Iperceramica – firm object to this research – has invested in this kind of activities creating, in collaboration with MOCA Interactive (a digital marketing web agency), two landing pages for the project Ristruttura Smart. Through this research, efficiency of the design and general structure of both landing pages have been studied, in order to understand participants' emotional impression and the impact of that perceptions toward the general page performance.

Indeed, research techniques that consider emotions in the process of the evaluation of performance of a website or page should be implemented; this is particularly necessary since researches as Häusel (2011) discovered that subconscious emotions and perceptions represent the main driver of users' actions. More precisely, he developed a theory sustaining that almost the 80% of the human decisions are made unconsciously.

These unconscious emotions are usually triggered from a specific component of the page or the general design chosen for the structure of the landing page.

One of the key findings of this research has been that, given the same page, these emotional perceptions may vary depending on people's age and interest toward the argument of the offer described in the page.

Beside this discovery, it has been found that emotions and the general impression over the page emerges from specific components of the landing page, which are also responsible for the active or passive contribution to the general clarity of the offer.

Indeed, the second version of the landing page has been created with the purpose of creating a more efficient alternative to the first one, due to the presence of different usability problems.

As highlighted in the paragraph 4.2.1.1 of the last chapter, the first version showed a characteristic photo representing the interior design of a house; such visual element was placed in the page to positively persuade visitors through the use of stylish graphics. However, the research which was carried over this page, demonstrated the opposite result.

The fact that images and visual elements are the most recalled elements and that they attract people's attention, has been confirmed by the fact that, after the five second test, almost every respondent remembered the image used and the main colour of the page (yellow). Nonetheless, for the first landing, these elements confused people over the service proposed, potentially hindering the conversion rate and generate wrong impression over the offer. Indeed, responses were largely variable, varying also in term of field of the offer: this correspond to the described visual complexity.

As Michailidou et al. (2008) describe it, it is the conscious difficulty of visitors to provide a description of an image, by using words; authors describe also that this problem can impact, both positively or negatively, of people's intentions and attitudes toward a specific

content. This insight correspond to what has been discovered in the current research made over Iperceramica landing pages.

On the other hand, results pointed out different behaviours and insights for the second landing.

After conducting different types of usability analysis, the second landing pages was designed to solve those frictions of the first one; following some theory over colour psychology and colour influence, the landing was designed as to have a more clean structure, giving less relevance to the yellow colour of the brand.

In fact, Bonnardel et al. (2010) confirmed that colour affect human's emotions, influencing their attitude toward a specific content or product; therefore, it can be said that sometimes, this kind of features allows to save lot of efforts in the process of users' persuasion.

Anyway, the main colour of the landing, which was chosen based on Iperceramica's brand style, did not contribute to convince people of the offer, but instead generated the opposite effect. In fact, for the first landing page were the colour was prevalent than the second version, respondents' perceptions were associated to negative emotions, as dissatisfaction and frustration.

Due to these findings, choice of colours and images is therefore as important and the choice of which words to use to propose the product or service. Talking about copywriting and human-produced content, another emerging and meaningful result was that, even in the digital world, humans matter.

Between those elements influencing people's opinion over the reliability of a website or page, one of the most mentioned was reviews; results confirmed what highlighted in the paragraph 3.4 of the third chapter of the thesis, that reviews do have a strong impact on people perception and opinion over a webpage. In fact, theory suggests that others' opinions can influence potential customers in analysing and considering potential purchases. Zablocki et al. (2019) divide reviews in two types, cognitive and emotional, where in the first one opinion

over the quality of the offer is described, whereas in the second customers experience with using the product or service is presented.

Both types of reviews can represent useful indirect and low-effort communication tools to convince and influence prospects' emotions and perceptions. This kind of content has been included in the second version of the landing of Iperceramica, without having the assurance that those elements contributed to increase conversions and general revenues for the company.

Instead, considering those factors making people abandon the page, in support to the assumption made by Geisslet et al. (2006) – in chapter three – the majority of respondents highlighted that elements as pop-up and invading promotions on a page, facilitated the abandonment.

After almost two months of activities on the second landing, it was possible also to collect quantitative data to analyse its general performance, confirming the above findings.

In fact, the conducted research on Google Analytics confirmed the usefulness of reviews and other content, not only for customers, but also the conversion rate performance of the page.

As a matter of fact, the inclusion of reviews and a FAQ section on the page, showed a more than positive correlation with the conversion rate of the page; those visitors who interacted or viewed those contents were two times more incline to take the action and convert on the page.

To conclude, thanks also to the insights emerging from this research, it can be said that conversion rate optimization is increasingly showing its relevance for all types of companies' activities, still leaving space for meaningful improvements.

Indeed, analysing users' perceptions and behaviours can point out new growth path for online activities, from which marketers can generate increasing revenues and value.

Choices of how and what elements to propose must not be based on ones' preferences, but all the possible usability analysis and researches over the target segments should be implemented, in order to confirm

and expand the general knowledge over conversion optimization best practices.

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## **Appendix – Survey**

*Hi! I'm Angela Simioni and you are in front of this questionnaire because I am about to graduate in Innovation and Marketing, at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. I promise that it won't be a very long questionnaire, but I ask you the maximum effort and not to hold you back in saying what you think: there is nothing wrong with what you can write. The whole survey will take you just 3-4 minutes to complete.*

*You will be asked to answer closed but also open questions, expressing what you think and what are your impressions. You will also find some links among the first questions: it is a 5 second test in which you will be shown a specific web page, on which some questions will be addressed.*

*I hope the questionnaire will be interesting for you too, thanks again for the help!*

Q1 If you think about “usability” of a website or page, what does it recall to your mind?

Q2 What do you take into consideration to evaluate the reliability of a website or page?

Q3 Which of the item/problems listed below would make you leave the website or page instead? (you can choose more than one option)

- Lots of texts and content
- Too many colours and animations
- Pop-ups and intrusive promotions
- No confirmation and reassurance over the site security and reliability
- Confused information and content
- Others

Q4 Do you know what is meant by “landing page”?

- Yes
- No

After these introduction questions, 5 second test and emotional perception blocks has been proposed

(Introduction message) Click on the link below. You will see a web page, but only for five seconds. After this time, a black screen will appear and you will be redirected to the survey and proposed with some question. (first landing version)

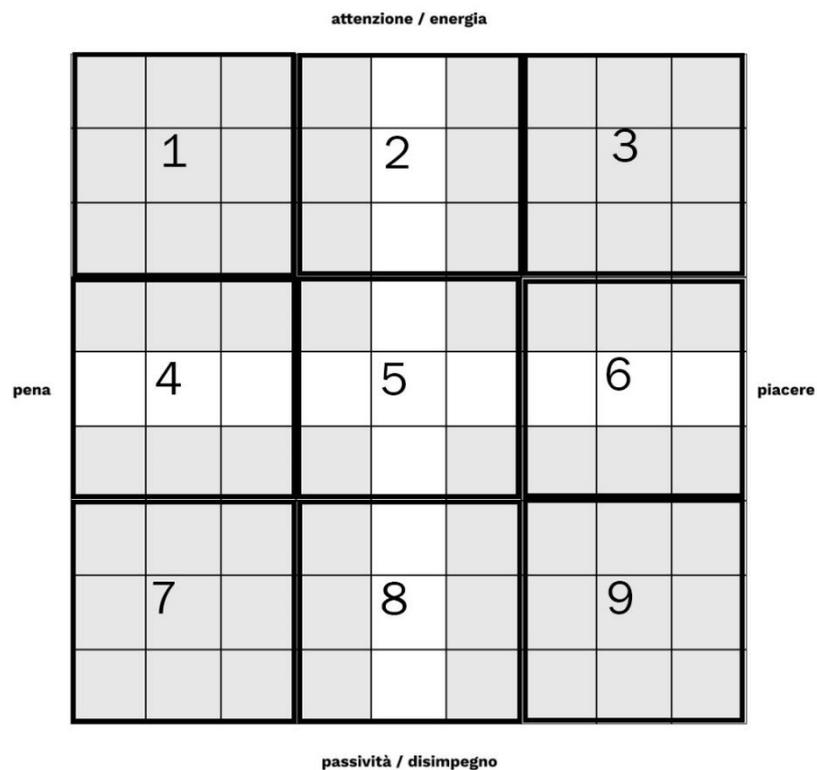
Q5 Based on your opinion, what did the page propose/offer?

---

Q6 List up to five elements that you can recall from the page

---

Q7 Look at the image below: in which quadrant would you position your emotional perception of the page?



- 1
- 2
- 3

- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

*(Introduction message)* I ask you to repeat the same process you just did. You will be shown a second page, also in this case for five seconds. At the end, you will see a black screen and you will be redirected to the survey. *(second landing version)*

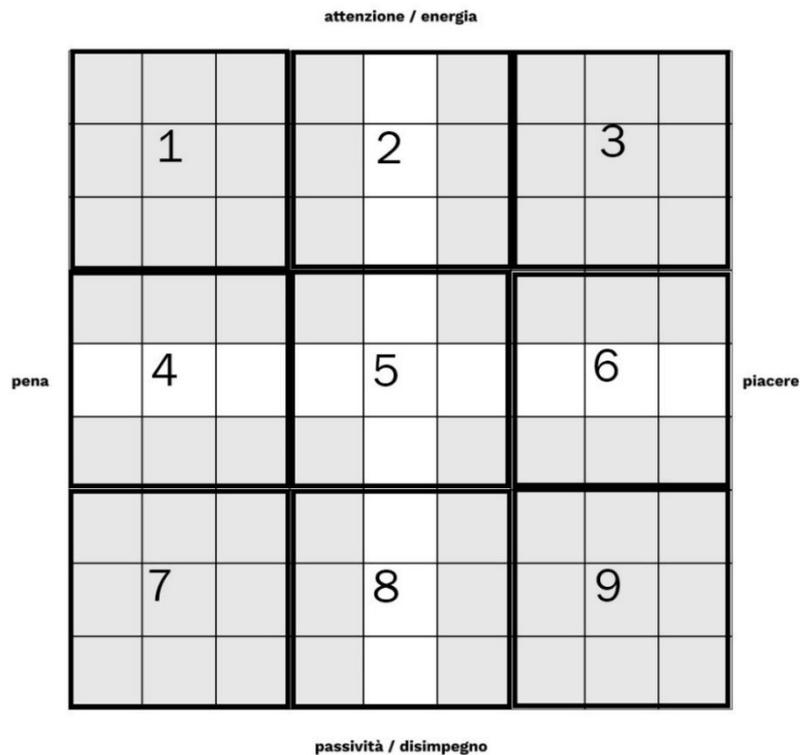
Q8 Based on your opinion, what did the page propose/offer?

---

Q9 List up to five elements that you can recall from the page?

---

Q10 Look at the image below: in which quadrant would you position your emotional perception of the page?



- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

*“Demographics” questions block*

Q11 What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

Q12 Your birth year

\_\_\_\_\_

Q13 What is your occupation?

- Student
- Employee
- Professional
- Others

Q14 What is your interest?

- I am going to restructure
- I am renovating
- I have already restructured
- Others