A/B Testing

Drive Better Results with A/B Testing
Overview

While A/B testing has been around for years, many marketers haven’t tapped into the full potential of experimentation. Controlled experimentation removes assumptions and guesswork by truly measuring the impact of explicit changes. This empowers brands to conduct true data-driven marketing that is tailored specifically to their target audience.

What Is A/B Testing?

A/B testing enables marketers and campaign managers to test two or more versions of a given page to determine which version performs best according to the explicit criteria set by the organization. Ultimately, A/B testing enables marketers to create a better customer experience while also enhancing their ability to effectively manage campaigns.

Formal Definition:

A/B testing is an online marketing technique used to optimize website pages according to the behaviors of visitors. Marketers achieve this by creating one or more modified versions of a given webpage and running them at the same time during a designated testing period. Software then divides traffic between individual page versions and tracks how the changes affect users’ responses. The most commonly used technique is where a single modified variant is leveraged to test against the original variant. This is usually called split A/B testing.
How Do I Get Started and Execute?

In short, there are three steps to getting started with A/B testing. First, identify the problem or area for improvement. Second, create a theory or hypothesis. Finally, determine how to test this hypothesis. Putting this into practice seems very easy but A/B testing often results in confusion or misguided judgements. Here are focused steps for getting started with A/B testing:

1. Determine the problem you want to solve or the goal you want to achieve. This can include securing more sales, improving conversions, driving more traffic, etc.

2. Formulate a theory or hypothesis of why you believe an improvement is needed to the current process. This can be a complete solution to resolve the problem and the expected results of the suggested change or small steps to achieving your call.

3. Determine the appropriate duration of the test by understanding how much data you need to make your decision.

4. There will always be an element of randomness to any A/B test. Be sure to calculate in advance how much data you need to collect to ensure your sample is solid and your results are sound.

5. Create variations by leveraging technology, such as a CMS, to make the desired changes to an element on your website.

6. Run the A/B testing experiments across the audience by leveraging your technology, such as your CMS, to randomly display a variation of the defined elements.

7. A/B test your hypothesis. Design variations of your original home page and run the test for an amount of time, relevant to your goal and page traffic.

8. Measure and analyze the results of the collected data to compare the difference between the various versions once you’ve observed statistical significance in the results.

9. Pick winners and variations that deliver the best performance based on your needs.
Tips and Suggestions

Prioritize Your Hypotheses

Usually, teams have several different ideas on how to improve their conversion rates. This can lead to trouble as they either can’t agree on one test or they run several tests at the same time without enough traffic. As a best practice, teams should list all theories and then rank them by order of importance. It is common to score three categories based on impact of change, value and difficulty to execute.

Common Variants

When testing websites or applications, here are common design elements you can change up for testing purposes:

- Headlines
- Forms
- Page content
- Page layout and widgets
- Calls to action or any other button’s text, color, size or location
- Links
- Images
- Location or color of your CTA
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