

GETTING STARTED WITH **FULL-FUNNEL OPTIMIZATION**

Simple ideas you can test across your website funnel, all at once.



INTRODUCTION

Full-funnel optimization is the practice of looking at a user flow on your site and determining how you can improve the entire experience throughout the funnel to increase a conversion goal. Unlike when you optimize a single page on a site, full-funnel optimization requires that you define a goal (e.g. website conversion and increased ROI) and work backwards from that goal to identify areas where you can improve the user journey.

One of the challenges with optimizing your funnels is that it takes an enormous amount of time to test each feature and determine which ones will improve your overall conversion rate. Only 1 in 7 A/B tests results in a new design, which makes testing and optimizing an entire user journey throughout a number of web pages a very lengthy process. While all tests are theoretically a success in that you are trying to learn from or confirm a hypothesis, the reality is that you are looking to test specific designs and ideas that improve the experience on your site and improve outcomes for your business and end-customers.

Additionally, being able to understand how one page influences another adds an additional layer of complexity and understanding of statistical analysis. To say how one page design affects the next page or a page further down in the funnel is unscalable for most organizations and many are left looking at funnel optimization simplistically, i.e. trying to increase conversions on each page a step at a time in hopes of improving overall conversions.

In this paper, we will look at how Sentient Ascend™ can be applied to full-funnel optimization, how it automates the process of improving conversions across a funnel and give you tips and examples of different ideas you can test in your own funnels on your site.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Unlike traditional A/B testing solutions, Ascend is a full-funnel optimization system that leverages a form of AI called evolutionary algorithms.

“Full-funnel” means that Ascend will take into account all changes on any page that it is aware of when optimizing for your conversion goal, whether it be revenue, submission forms, or button clicks.

The system doesn’t focus on each individual page’s performance in a vacuum, but rather how the combination of all of the changes across all pages perform with respect to the defined goal.

For example, let’s say that the blue button is best at increasing CTR on the landing page, but that it results in a decrease in purchase rate, which is the end goal. Or, the blue CTA only works when the product details page CTA is also blue. Ascend takes those combinatorial nuances into account and optimizes based on the end goal.

GETTING STARTED

Having worked with conversion experts across many verticals—including ecommerce, online travel, and financial services—we have started to pull together some common ideas to improve conversions throughout a given funnel.

Before we get started, here are a few things to think about as you start identifying testing opportunities and setting up your experiment with Sentient Ascend.

AS ALWAYS, DEVELOP YOUR HYPOTHESIS FIRST

Before jumping right in and setting up an experiment and testing a bunch of ideas, work with your team to identify the goals you are trying to impact and workout what you think might be prohibiting your experience from improving the KPIs you are trying to measure.

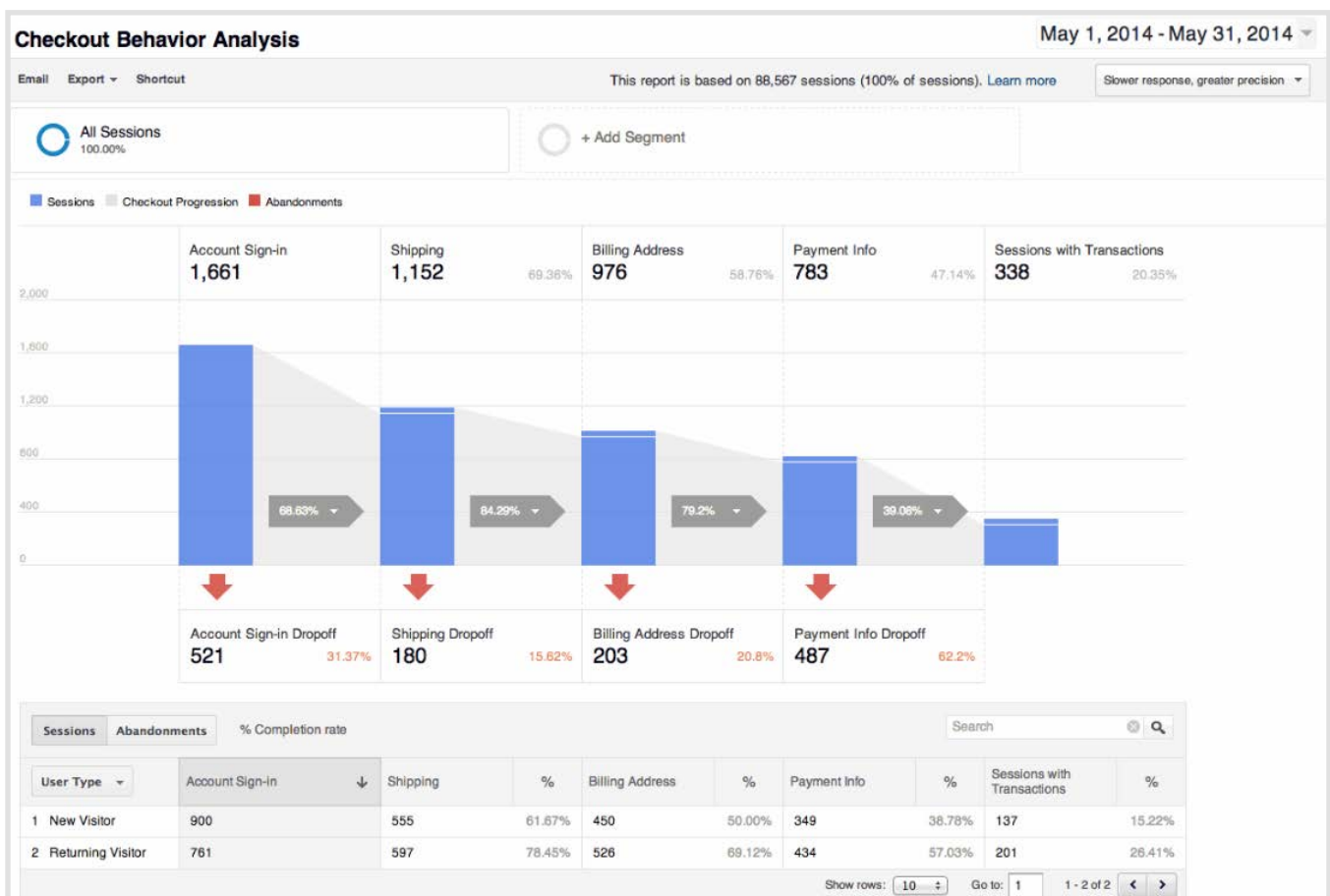
If your goal is to get users to complete bookings on your site, think about what is preventing them from doing it: Are there too many steps? Do you have a strong enough value prop to get a user to book with your site versus a competitor? Should certain actions be completed sooner or later in the journey? When you develop a hypothesis, you have to create assumptions about what is preventing visitors from completing your desired goals, and then work backwards to solve for them.

WORK BACKWARDS FROM YOUR GOAL

The best place to start when developing your testing hypothesis is to identify the conversion you are looking to improve and work your way backwards from that event. For example, if your goal is to increase the “Add to Cart” conversion on a product details page, identify all the steps preceding that event and include it in your experiment.

Additionally, look at where you have conversion drop-offs. If you are using a tool like Google Analytics, you can use the Goal Flow feature to look at your where users are dropping off in your funnel. This gives you a clearer idea of where in your funnel you are having issues in converting visitors.

Below is a sample ecommerce report that shows the exit rates at specific points in a checkout funnel:



Source: Analytics-Toolkit.com

CONSISTENCY OR BEST DESIGN?

When using a tool like Sentient Ascend, you have the opportunity for the AI to determine the best possible combinations of ideas that increase conversions throughout your entire funnel. With that, you should determine whether you want Ascend to identify the best combinations of ideas or prioritize brand and design consistency over the highest possible conversion.

Each possible version of your website funnel is called a “candidate” and is compared to your current website without changes, known as the “control”. If you decide to test candidates that are more consistent with the overall look and feel of your current website, try to at least look at the other top-performing candidates that you decided to hold back on and see if there are concepts or combinations that you might take influence from or form new hypotheses from.

IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

To get you started, we have outlined an example of full-funnel optimization on a travel website. This will help you think about the experiments you might want to try to optimize your own website funnel.

As always, we will work our way backwards from the end goal.

PAYMENT PAGE



Checkout buttons

When looking at what to test for your checkout CTA, don’t limit yourself to just button colors or language (though they are very important). Think also about the button’s size and position. From experiments we have run, we have seen brighter colors and action symbols perform better.

CHECKOUT

Confirm Booking

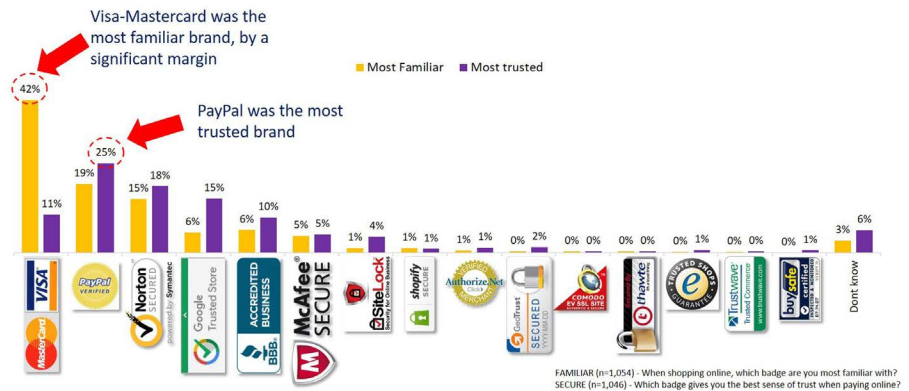


Proceed to Checkout

RESERVE NOW

Trust Symbols

Trust symbols have been known to improve conversions on websites, however, not all trust symbols are the same. In this ConversionXL Institute study, research found that familiarity with the trust symbol implied greater perception of security.



Source: ConversionXL, "Which Site Seals Create The Most Trust?" by Ben Labay; October 13, 2016

When looking at the CXL research, Norton, PayPal, Visa and MasterCard stood out as having high levels of trust. Surprisingly, McAfee and SiteLock didn't rank nearly as high.

Information Order

Imagine you work for the travel site. Perhaps you want to offer extra deals or insurance coverage for your travelers. Think about how you might re-order your various offers throughout your funnel to make it more appealing for customers to buy while they are completing their booking. You might also think about running a test with the offers *not* on the page, and instead introducing them at different points of the booking process.



PASSENGER DETAILS PAGE

Before your traveler gets to the checkout page, they will need to enter in their personal details and select different options, preferences, and additional offers available to them. Below are some ideas you can include in your experiment to help improve your booking conversions.

MY TRIPS

BOOK A TRIP

FLIGHT STATUS

CHECK IN

SIGN UP

LOG IN

BOOK A TRIP

Start Over

Flights

Passengers

Extras

Payment

FLIGHTS

TUE 03 OCT

SFO → JFK

06:15 AM → 2:47 PM

DL 1859

5h 32m | NONSTOP

Basic Economy (E)

+ More

Price per Passenger

\$230⁷⁰

Details

Seat assigned after Check In

Complete Delta Air Lines Baggage Information

Nonchangeable/ Nonrefundable

Taxes, Fees and Charges

\$45⁷⁰

TUE 10 OCT

JFK → SFO

07:00 AM → 10:35 AM

DL 426

6h 35m | NONSTOP

Basic Economy (E)

+ More

Total Price (USD)

\$276⁴⁰

Details

Seat assigned after Check In

Complete Delta Air Lines Baggage Information

Nonchangeable/ Nonrefundable

SEATS

SFO → JFK

JFK → SFO

1

Jeremy Miller

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SEAT ASSIGNED AFTER CHECK-IN

TRIP EXTRAS

It's About The Journey, Not Just The Destination.

Perk up your flight with Wi-Fi, Mileage Booster, Priority Boarding, and other extras that compliment your trip before, during, and after you fly.

ADD EXTRAS

STORE YOUR CARD IN MY WALLET

FOR QUICK AND EASY CHECKOUT ON DELTA.COM

Call-to-Action Buttons

As mentioned before, try testing different calls to action (CTAs), button colors, positions, and sizes to make sure visitors can easily see what they need to do to go to the next step. In the case of Jambojet, a CTA could be tested below the booking summary, as the customer is most likely going to look at it right before completing their purchase .

Jambojet.com

1. Select Flights

2. Passenger Details

3. Pick a Seat

4. Contact Details

5. Review & Pay

2. Passenger Details

Please enter your passenger details and ensure that the name on your booking matches the name on your passport or ID

Does anyone in your group require special assistance, have a medical condition or is an expectant mother? [Click here.](#)

Adult: 1

Passenger 1: Adult

Title*

First Name (Given)*

Last Name (Surname)*

Ms

Dama

Mkenya

Date of Birth*

Document Type

Document Number

12

Decemr

1993

OR

- Please Select -

- Please Select -

Nairobi (JKA) - Eldoret

Baggage Type

Number of Bags

Weight

Price

Cabin Baggage (Hand Luggage)

One piece

Max 10kg

FREE

Checked Baggage

- Select bags -

- Please Select -

Special Baggage

Read our conditions on special baggage

- Please Select -

Eldoret - Nairobi (JKA)

Baggage Type

Number of Bags

Baggage Weight

Price

Cabin Baggage (Hand Luggage)

One piece

Max 10kg

FREE

Booking Summary

DEPART

21 Feb 2017

NBO - 06:30

EDL - 07:20

RETURN

23 Feb 2017

EDL - 19:00

NBO - 19:50

DEPARTURE

KES 3,200

✓

RETURN

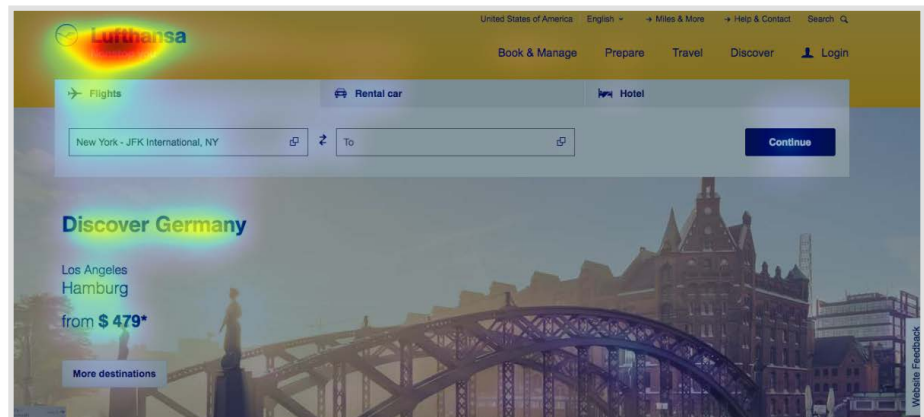
KES 3,200

✓

TOTAL PACKAGE PRICE

KES 6,400

One way to zero in on where to test different element features on your page is to use a heatmap tool like HotJar see where visitors are focusing the most attention:



Hold my fare

When a traveler has made it as far as entering all of their information, you might want to consider offering a “hold my fare” option in case he or she for some reason can not complete their booking at that time. When running your experiment, you can see what kind of impact this option has on your overall conversions.

Special offers

As the customer is going down the purchase path, why not fill the in-between stages with an ad for additional offers? For instance, when a customer fills out his or her personal info and pushes “next” to continue, test out placing an interstitial that shows upgrade offers.



HOME PAGE

No doubt, the home page is one of the most important parts of the customer journey, as it is the first thing the customer sees and functions as the top-of-the-funnel landing page. Here are some easy things you can test on the home page to see if you can improve overall conversions.

Shortcut Design and Order

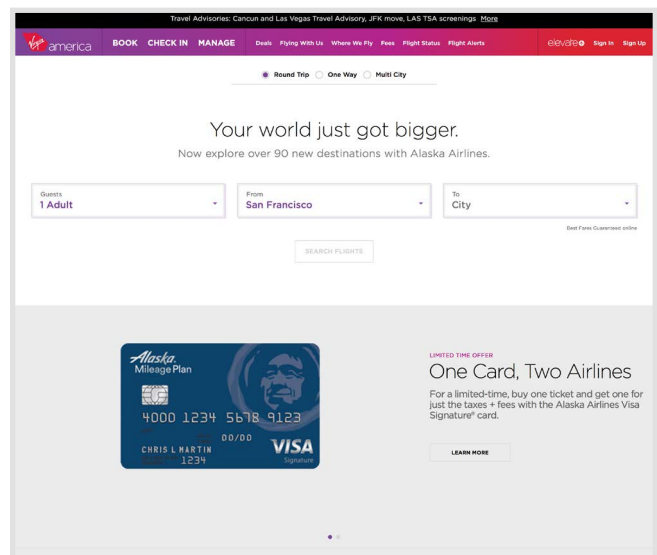
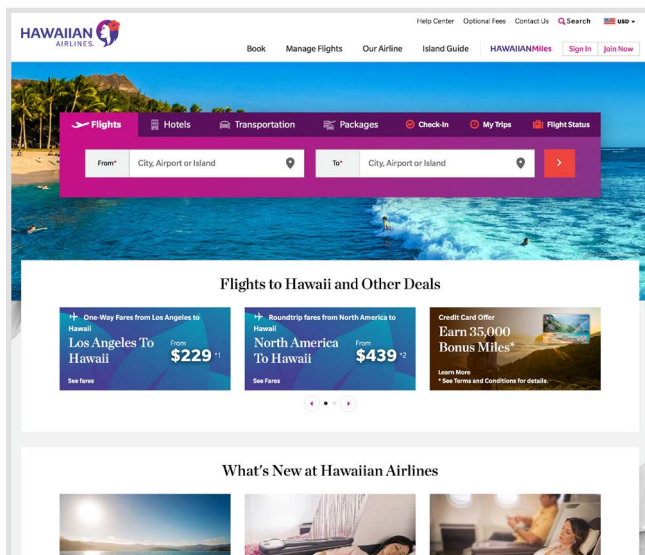
On the Hawaiian Airlines home page, they have a variety of useful shortcuts for travelers to select when booking their travel. Here are a few things you can try when setting up your experiment:

- **Color:** See if different colors help make options more clear and improve the overall experience.
- **Font size:** Is your text too small? Making font sizes larger can make shortcuts easier to read.
- **Order:** See if rearranging your shortcuts helps improve conversions for your various booking funnels.
- **Icons:** See if different icons and icon colors have any impact on conversion performance.

Booking widget colors, layout and information

Hawaiian Airlines clearly uses colors that are in line with their brand guidelines. However, if you are not limited to using just the colors from your brand palette, try experimenting with a variety of different colors to see if it impacts conversions. Sometimes different color combinations can improve the contrast between text and background, making text more clear and easy to read.

Also, perhaps there are things you could do to improve the layout of the booking widget. Should there be less information, or more? Should you include all the travelers' options in the widget or move some options to the main nav? If you look at Virgin America's home page vs. Hawaiian Airlines', you can see that Virgin have placed only the "picking your flight" option in their widget along with the other options in the top nav.



Promotional Offers

If one of your conversion goals is to get travelers to take advantage of the promotional benefits for signing up for a credit card or joining a loyalty program, you can test various messages, designs, and placements on your homepage.

CONCLUSION

With full-funnel optimization, you don't just test one page or feature, you test all possible combinations throughout many pages to find the most optimal interface for your business goals. Whether it be widget colors, icons, layout, or product detail presentation, the magic combination of all of these elements throughout your entire funnel can have dramatic effects on your conversion rates. Don't believe us? Give it a try! Test your website with Sentient Ascend today.

To learn more about how Sentient Ascend can improve conversions across your entire funnel, get in touch with us at ascend@sentient.ai.



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ABOUT SENTIENT TECHNOLOGIES

Sentient's mission is to transform how businesses tackle their most complex, mission-critical problems by empowering them to make the right decisions faster. Sentient's technology has patented evolutionary and perceptual capabilities that will provide customers with highly sophisticated solutions, powered by the largest compute infrastructure dedicated to distributed artificial intelligence.