

New Methods for Measuring the Effects of Onscreen Aesthetics

Richard Hazlett

Onscreen aesthetics convey an emotional tone that is an important aspect of onscreen communication. Standard measures have been unable to touch the effects of onscreen aesthetics. The impact of font personality on the reader's perception of the emotional tone of onscreen words and pages was investigated with affective decision tasks and brief page glimpse methods. The congruency of font and written content had a beneficial effect on communication. The methodology is explained and demonstrated.

About the Speaker:

Richard Hazlett has a Ph.D. in Psychology and is an Assistant Professor at Johns Hopkins University. His area of research interest in HCI is user emotional experience and product desirability, and he has presented his findings at numerous conferences and in publications in leading journals. He also maintains a private consulting practice in which he has applied his emotion measures to help a number of local and Fortune 500 companies develop their products and advertising.

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First Impressions have a Lasting Effect

- The aesthetics of your pages set the tone
 - Snap judgments occur in less than a 1/10th of a second
 - Web page preferences can be formed in 50ms
 - Based on visual properties of page
 - And can have a lasting effect on preference, opinions and usage
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Humans have Two Evaluative Systems

- System I: Automatic, fast & unreflective
 - Initial preferences are based on System I processing
 - System II: slow, effortful and deliberate
 - System II is the thinking we all know, and other factors besides preference and emotion are drawn into consideration
 - System I and II may not agree
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Visual vs. Word Processing

- Visual attributes of onscreen aesthetics are processed faster than word meaning
 - The results of visual processing then influence the processing of content
 - For visual information: if you see it, it has already affected you
 - Even though people are affected by visual aesthetics, they can't tell you about it
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Font Personality

- An ever-present and overlooked visual aesthetic is typeface or font
 - Fonts have been found to have personality traits based on design family (Serif, Sans-Serif, Modern, Monospace, Script/Funny)
 - People ascribe human-like traits to fonts
 - Fonts are credited with creating first impressions of pages and documents
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Testing the Effects of Font Personality on User's Impression of Content

- Microsoft's Advanced Reading Technology group was interested in finding effective methods for testing the effects of onscreen aesthetics
 - I tested the following hypothesis for them:
 - Congruency in personality of font with emotional tone of content facilitates processing and message communication
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Congruent and Incongruent Pairing of Typeface and Word Meaning

Congruent Corsiva	Congruent TRN	Incongruent Corsiva	Incongruent TNR
pretty	reliable	stable	lithe
gorgeous	cold	inhibited	lovely
stylish	calm	conformist	charming
trendy	staid	aloof	moody
sexy	constant	proper	attractive

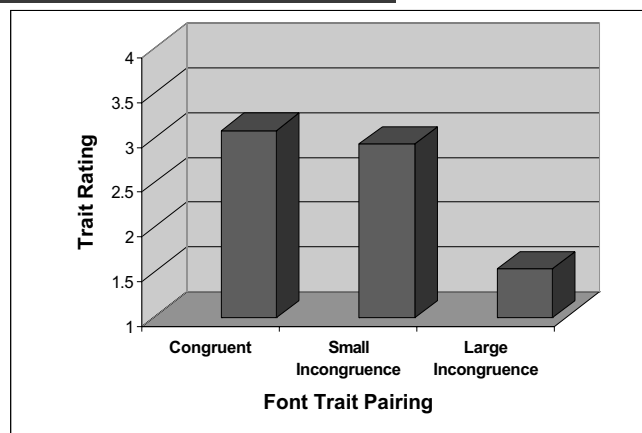
Page Test of Font Personality Effects

- A page of written material was briefly (700ms) flashed onscreen in different typefaces and participants made decisions about the tone of the page
 - The 700ms glimpse was enough for the format to make an impression,
 - but not enough for the content of the subject matter to register
 - Participants rated how well (on a 4-point scale) the tone of the page matched one of the six trait words
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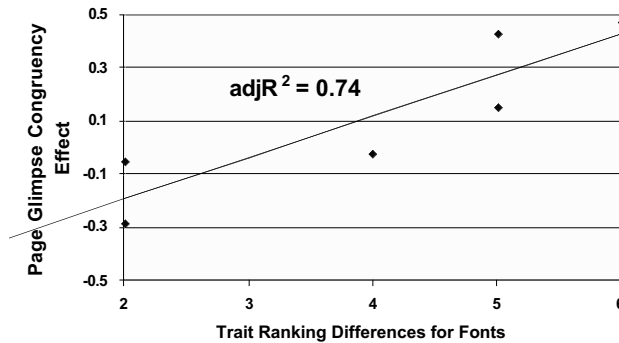
Page Glimpse Method

Demo

Font Congruency Effect for Brief Page Glimpse



Magnitude of Font Personality Difference Predicts Strength of Congruency Effect



Conclusions

- First impressions of web pages are important and lasting
 - Congruency in emotional tone of onscreen aesthetics and written content facilitates communication
 - The page glimpse method is a useful method for evaluating onscreen visual information independent of the effects of written language
 - The method is currently being developed for directly comparing different versions of web pages
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Thank you

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