

Simple opening page increases chance of website being used further

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If a website's homepage is full of information and images then visitors will click away faster than if they first see a quiet and clear page. So if you want your website to be used, it must have a simple opening page. NWO researcher Rik Crutzen concludes this in a study published online in the scientific journal *Interaction Studies*.

Psychologist Crutzen investigated the relationship between the complexity of a [website](#) and a visitor's willingness to use it. Students in a laboratory were shown various websites about [responsible drinking](#) behaviour and they then had to decide very quickly if they were inclined to use the website. The study revealed that the more [complex](#) the homepage, the lower the willingness of visitors to remain on the site.

Fancy extras

'Some website builders probably knew this already from experience but now it has also been scientifically demonstrated for the first time: showing a lot of [images](#) and information on the homepage puts users off,' says Crutzen explaining his results. 'All those fancy extras give a bad first impression. The visitor then leaves the page quickly and possibly never returns to the website again.' Quiet opening pages, however, make a good first impression. When the study subjects saw these pages their [willingness](#) to view the site further was considerably higher.

Website builders can use the outcomes of Crutzen's research to their advantage. 'They should not immediately overload the visitor with information and images. You do not get a second chance to make a first impression,' says Crutzen. 'This might seem obvious but many websites still have homepages that fail to clearly convey what the website is about.'

Health advice

In a follow-up study Crutzen will focus on the conditions health advice websites must satisfy to be used more. 'We know, for example, that websites with tips and information about giving up smoking, exercising more, and drinking less can help people to live a more healthy life. Unfortunately, however, little use is made of these websites. A simple opening page is a first possible improvement and with a follow-up study I want to demonstrate what other factors can contribute to a better use of these sites.'

Crutzen is a researcher at Maastricht University. His research is funded by a Veni grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

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